

HERITAGE NETWORK

Mill Farm, Charlton, Hertfordshire, SG5 2AE

HN1635

HERITAGE STATEMENT

INTRODUCTION

The Heritage Network has been commissioned by Howkins & Harrison LLP, acting on behalf of the Angela Taylor 2022 Discretionary Trust, to prepare a Heritage Statement (HS) in support of a planning application for the partial demolition and conversion of redundant agricultural buildings located at Mill Farm, Charlton Road, Charlton, Hertfordshire, SG5 2AE. The HS is intended to meet the requirements of paragraph 194 of the National Planning Policy Framework (DLUHC 2023) by describing the significance of any heritage assets affected by the proposed development, including any contribution made by their setting.

The Heritage Network is an independent practice specialising in archaeology and the historic environment. Founded in 1992, the company undertakes commercial projects for clients involved in housing and industrial development, pipeline and road construction, agriculture, landscaping, and the care and refurbishment of historic buildings. All of the practice's professional staff are accredited members of the *Chartered Institute for Archaeologists* (CIfA) and undertake to follow the Institute's professional standards and code of conduct.

The present project has been undertaken by David Hillelson BA MCIfA, the Heritage Network's Managing Director. David holds an honours degree in archaeology from the University of Durham and has extensive experience of the management of heritage projects, and of fieldwork in both urban and rural contexts. He has been the practice's principal officer since 1992 and specialises in the recording and analysis of historic buildings.

HISTORIC CONTEXT

Mill Farm lies on a small lane that runs ESE off Charlton Road, with the farmhouse lying on the SW side of the lane and on the western bank of the river Hiz, and the associated farm buildings lying on the NE side of the lane and on the eastern bank of the river Hiz (Figure 1). The farmyard is centred on NGR 517860 228020.

The Hertfordshire *Historic Environment Record* (HER) notes that Mesolithic and Neolithic worked flint has been collected in Priory Park within 250m to the east of the site (HER 30462, HER 30463 & HER 30465), indicating prehistoric activity in the vicinity.

Charlton forms a manorial hamlet of Hitchin, which was held by William the Conqueror at the time of the Domesday Survey of 1087 (Page 1912). Prior to the Conquest, the manor was held by tenants of Earl Harold. The manor was acquired by the Knights Templar before 1269 and was held by them, and subsequently by the Knights Hospitaller, together with nearby Temple Dinsley, until they were suppressed at the time of the Dissolution of the Monasteries in the 1530s. The manor then passed to Edward Pulter, who sold it to Ralph Radcliffe, from which time the manor has descended with Hitchin Priory. The HER notes that a 12th century sword was found in the footings for a garage building in the village in 1960 (HER 2052).

The Domesday Survey mentions a mill at Charlton rendering 20 pence (Williams and Martin 2003). This has been assumed to be a watermill and may be a predecessor of the present mill at Mill Farm. The local landscape is characterised by the post-medieval re-engineering of the river Hiz to create the mill pond and leats needed to drive the present water-wheel. The water management system is likely to have medieval origins. The HER records undated cropmarks (HER 17255), which could be medieval in date, located within 250m to the east of Charlton Mill.

Mill Farmhouse is Grade II listed (NHLE 1347568). The main building is recorded as being early to mid-19th century, but with an earlier back wing. A U-shaped building is shown straddling the millstream on Dury and Andrews' *Map of Hartford-shire* dated 1766, with buildings ranged on either side of the stream on the opposite side of the lane (Figure 2).

The farmhouse's present layout is reflected on the Hitchin *Tithe Map* of 1841 (Figure 3). The farm buildings on the opposite side of the lane are limited to the east side of the river Hiz and are depicted as a long narrow range on the river bank and a smaller block abutting the site boundary to the east.

The first edition of the 25-inch Ordnance Survey map (Figure 4), surveyed in 1878, shows a group of farm buildings on the present site, ranged around a small yard. On the western side, standing just back from the river bank, is a rectangular block abutting the lane and having a lean-to extension to its eastern and western elevations, with a square block attached to the north. A narrower building continues the northern elevation of this square block to the east, where it meets another building running NE to SW along the site boundary.

The second edition of the 25-inch Ordnance Survey map (Figure 5), surveyed in 1897, shows a similar layout, but the cross-range on the north side of the yard is shown to be open on its southern elevation, and an open-fronted and open-sided building has been added to its northern elevation. By 1922, the survey date for the third edition of the 25-inch Ordnance Survey map (Figure 6), this northern extension had been replaced by a closed building occupying the eastern end of the northern elevation of the cross-range, and another closed building on the north side of the eastern range.

There are no further large-scale historic maps of the area that are readily available, but the layout of the farmyard appears to be unchanged on the 6-inch map surveyed in 1946 (Figure 7). By 1960, however, the west range is shown to have been substantially extended to the north (Figure 8) and it is likely that the whole of the western range was rebuilt at the same time. The 1:10,000 map of 1976 shows the same layout (not illustrated).

The present layout of the farmyard is likely to have been established by 1982 (Figure 9).

A site visit was undertaken on 22 July 2024. On the west side of the farmyard is a long, narrow barn, Barn 1, built of London Brick Company 'Rustic' bricks with a ridged roof covered in corrugated cement asbestos sheets, extending north from the lane frontage, with a sliding wooden door on the east side of the south elevation closing a loading bay (Plate 1). The interior was not accessible at the time of the site visit, but a survey plan provided by the architects shows the first two bays as open, with a corridor running the remaining length of the building on the eastern side (Figure 10). A one bay wide room is accessed off the corridor at its southern end, but the remaining space could not be accessed by the surveyors; this space may contain grain bins. Against the west elevation of Barn 1, a roofed lean-to carries a duct that extends 18m south from the junction of Barns 1 and 2 (Plate 2).

A taller and wider block (Barn 2), also built of 'Rustic' bricks with a ridged cement asbestos roof, abuts Barn 1 on the northern side (Plate 3). This forms a single open space occupied by a corn dryer. Barn 2 has been extended to the north by a single bay structure (Barn 2a) faced and roofed in corrugated iron sheeting (Plate 4), and to the east by a single-bay, steel framed structure (Barn 2b), open to the east but otherwise faced and roofed in corrugated cement asbestos sheeting (Plate 5).

To the west of Barns 1 and 2 is Barn 3, a 4-bay concrete Tyler portal frame building (Plate 6) faced and roofed in corrugated cement asbestos sheeting with access from the north and south, used for hay bales and general storage.

On the east side of Barn 3, abutting the eastern farmyard boundary wall, is a small brick-built structure (Barn 4) with a hipped slate roof, which could be observed from the lane (Plate 7) and, to a limited extent from the yard to the south of Barn 3 (Plate 8), but was otherwise inaccessible.

In the northern angle between Barns 3 and 4 is a circular grain silo (Plate 9), with another smaller silo in the angle between Barns 2a and 2b (Plate 10). The farmyard to the north of the present site, is occupied by an Atcost portal frame barn and a variety of corrugated iron roofed pole barns (Plate 11).

PHASING

Apart from the eastern boundary wall, which is likely to be of 19th century date, the earliest structure within the proposed development site is Barn 4, a brick-built structure with a hipped slate roof that abuts the boundary wall and is first shown on OS mapping in 1922. Some earlier brickwork that is now incorporated in the eastern elevation of Barn 1 (Plate 12) was also noted in the site walkover, but its relationship to the earlier buildings on the site, as recorded on the 25-inch OS maps, could not be readily ascertained.

Barns 1 and 2 are contemporary and are likely to date to the immediate post-war period, when many farms were modernised to accommodate combine harvesters. The use of 'Rustic' bricks and cement asbestos roofing materials is typical of this period and the historic mapping indicates that construction took place between 1946 and 1960.

The historic mapping suggests that Barns 2a, 2b and 3 post-date 1976. Barn 2a appears to be an enclosed pole barn, of similar construction to the various structures occupying the northern farmyard, but the interior was not readily accessible on the site visit to confirm this. It is likely to predate Barn 2b, which is a more formal structure that could be contemporary with Barn 3. Barn 3 was built by Tyler Concrete Buildings Ltd, which was active between 1959 and 2020. It is likely that all three buildings, and the buildings occupying the northern farmyard, were in place by 1982 (see Figure 9).

SIGNIFICANCE

The farmyard at Mill Farm contains an amalgam of 20th century buildings enclosed to the east by a 19th century boundary wall. Barn 4, the next earliest structure, could be very late 19th century, but is more likely to date to the first two decades of the 20th century. It appears to have been out of use for some time and its purpose is uncertain, but it and the wall form the best defined above-ground vestiges of the pre-modern farm (apart from the farmhouse itself). The possible survival of below-ground evidence on the site should also be noted. The development of the East Anglian farmstead, from the mid-18th century to the start of the First World War, has been noted as an important topic in the regional research framework (Brown & Glazebrook 2000, 42), in the context of their increasing loss through redundancy, demolition and residential conversion. This gives the boundary wall, Barn

4, and the earlier brickwork noted as forming part of Barn 1, as well as potential below-ground remains, some regional significance. On the scale of significance encompassed in guidance published by the International Council on Monuments and Sites (ICOMOS 2011), this should be considered to be *Medium*.

The remaining buildings on the site date to the second half of the 20th century although Barns 1 and 2 could just date to the late 1940s. These two buildings in particular provide evidence of post-war changes in agricultural practice with the introduction of the combine harvester and the consequent need for industrial-scale grain-drying facilities. The East of England research agenda note that conversion of such buildings *often sees the loss of 20th century grain processing and other equipment, which is often overlooked or removed before recording takes place* (Andrew 2021). These buildings, therefore, have regional significance, which should be considered to be *Medium* following ICOMOS guidance.

While they contribute to the settings of the Conservation Area, listed farmhouse and historic farmyard, by helping to define the agricultural character of Mill Farm, Barns 2a, 2b and 3, and the associated grain silos, are considered to be of *Negligible* heritage significance.

The Conservation Area defines an area that contains buildings that contribute significantly to its historic character and a well-preserved and coherent historic landscape that, together, are considered to be of local and regional significance, which should be considered to be *Medium* following ICOMOS guidance.

Mill Farmhouse is a Grade II listed building that includes a waterwheel that is served by the adjacent millpond, mill race and associated leats. It is considered to be of local and regional significance, which should be considered to be *Medium* following ICOMOS guidance.

IMPACTS

The development proposes (Figure 11):

- (1) the demolition of Barns 2a, 2b, 3 and 4 and the adjacent grain silos;
- (2) the conversion of Barns 1 and 2 to residential use and the construction of two right-angled extensions to the eastern elevation of Barn 1;
- (3) the provision of associated services, car-parking and landscaping.

The farm buildings are no longer suitable for modern agricultural practice and an alternative use for the site has been sought that would retain its agricultural character, while repurposing the principal buildings. In the meantime, the buildings are deteriorating and the site has become overgrown.

The proposed development could have direct or indirect, positive or negative impacts on designated and non-designated heritage assets.

Two designated heritage assets are considered to be at risk of impacts from the proposed development. These are the Charlton Conservation Area and the Grade II listed Mill Farmhouse, both of which are protected by legislation. The possible impacts on the Conservation Area would be direct, as a result of changes to elements that make up the area and contribute to its significance. The possible impacts on the farmhouse would be indirect, affecting the setting that contributes to its significance.

Of the buildings within the farmyard, which would be directly affected by the proposed development, in line with guidance published by Historic England, none is considered to benefit from curtilage listing derived from the farmhouse, as they are separated from the farmhouse by a

public highway and the river Hiz, and all but Barn 4 and the boundary wall post-date 1948 (Historic England 2018). Nevertheless, as has been established above, Barns 1 and 2 have some regional archaeological significance arising from their evidential value in the development of 20th century crop processing, and Barn 4 and the boundary wall represent remnants of an earlier, post-medieval farmstead. These barns are, therefore, considered to be non-designated heritage assets, which will be impacted directly either by their conversion to an alternative use or through demolition.

The possibility that evidence associated with the post-medieval farmstead could survive below ground should also be noted, and the consequent impacts of development groundworks associated with extension footings, services and landscaping.

Conservation Area

The Charlton Conservation Area Character Statement states that the Conservation Area *is based around the former working landscape of the mill in the centre of the village at Mill Farm which is located off Charlton Road and is presently out of use, however its overshot water wheel can be seen from the road behind hoardings. The Conservation Area is defined by the former working nature of the landscape that was engineered to provide power to the mill.* (Wood 2019)

The farm buildings on the opposite side of the lane from the mill are clearly secondary within this characterisation, and are relevant to the operation of the farm rather than the mill itself. The buildings no longer have a useful agricultural function and are deteriorating to the aesthetic detriment of the Conservation Area, at the core of which they lie. The removal of some of the redundant industrial infrastructure and the repurposing of the principal buildings would result in a limited change to the character of the Conservation Area that is considered to be largely beneficial. Using ICOMOS guidance covering 'Magnitude of Impact', the proposed development would represent a *Minor* impact on the significance of the Conservation Area.

Mill Farmhouse

The principal view of the farmyard from the farmhouse encompasses Barns 1 and 2. The proposed development would remove the lean-to duct housing on the west side of Barn 1 and introduce a series of casement and French windows in the western elevations of Barn 1 and 2. Both barns would be re-roofed in natural slate with matching ridge tiles, as currently provided on Barn 4.

The significance of Barns 1 and 2 is principally evidential rather than aesthetic, and concern a recent phase of agricultural activity that is separate from the milling heritage associated with the farmhouse. The proposed changes are considered to represent aesthetic changes that would hardly affect the setting of the farmhouse.

Using ICOMOS guidance, the proposed development would represent a *Negligible* impact on the significance of Mill Farmhouse.

Barns 1 and 2

Barns 1 and 2, and their surviving in-situ plant, represent evidence of major changes in agriculture that took place in the years immediately following the Second World War with the widespread introduction of the combine harvester. The loss of such evidence without record has been noted in the regional research agenda and Barns 1 and 2 are considered to be heritage assets accordingly.

The present proposals would see the removal of the grain processing plant from the buildings and their remodelling to become dwellings, with the addition of windows and doors, the construction of

extensions to the east and the replacement of cement asbestos roofing with slate. These changes would represent a significant modification to the heritage assets.

Following ICOMOS guidance, the proposed development would represent a *Moderate* direct impact on the significance of Barns 1 and 2.

The proposals would also see the demolition of Barns 2a, 2b, 3 and 4 and the associated modern grain silos that form the agricultural setting of Barns 1 and 2.

Following ICOMOS guidance, the proposed development would represent a *Moderate* indirect impact on the significance of the setting of Barns 1 and 2.

Barn 4 and Eastern Boundary Wall

Barn 4 and the eastern boundary wall are relicts of the post-medieval farmstead with Barn 4 representing the last addition to the pre-modern farm, as shown on historic mapping. The loss of post-medieval farmsteads has been noted in the regional research agenda and Barn 4 and the boundary wall are considered to be heritage assets accordingly.

The present proposals would see the retention of the boundary wall but the demolition of Barn 4. These changes would represent a slight change to the boundary wall that would be hardly noticeable, but the complete loss of Barn 4.

Following ICOMOS guidance, the proposed development would represent a *Negligible* direct impact on the significance of the boundary wall, but a *Major* direct impact on the significance of Barn 4.

The proposals would also see the demolition of Barns 2a, 2b, 3 and 4 and the associated modern grain silos that form the agricultural setting of the boundary wall.

Following ICOMOS guidance, the proposed development would represent a *Moderate* indirect impact on the significance of the setting of the boundary wall.

Archaeological evidence

The potential that the site could preserve buried evidence for the post-medieval farmstead, or earlier features and deposits, cannot be ignored.

The present proposals would result in ground disturbance associated with footings for the eastern extensions to Barn 1, the introduction of services, and associated landscaping, which could result in a significant modification of the archaeological resource.

Following ICOMOS guidance, the proposed development would represent a *Moderate* direct impact on potential archaeological features and deposits, in particular those associated with the post-medieval farmstead.

SIGNIFICANCE OF EFFECT AND MITIGATION

Under ICOMOS guidance, 'significance of effect' represents a balance between the value (or significance) of the heritage asset and the scale of the impact (whether adverse or beneficial), and is expressed as a grade from *Neutral* to *Very Large*. This grade can be reduced through the implementation of appropriate mitigation measures, as allowed for under paragraph 205 of the National Planning Policy Framework (DLUHC 2023).

The Charlton Conservation Area is a heritage asset of *Medium* significance that would be subject to a *Minor* but positive impact as a result of the development proposals. Accordingly, the effect of the

development on the Conservation Area can be graded as *Slight Beneficial* and no mitigation is required.

Mill Farmhouse is a heritage asset of *Medium* significance, the setting of which would be subject a *Negligible* impact as a result of the development proposals. Accordingly, the effect of the development on Mill Farmhouse can be graded as *Neutral* and no mitigation is required.

Barns 1 and 2 are heritage assets of *Medium* significance, which would be subject to *Moderate* direct and *Moderate* indirect negative impacts as a result of the development proposals. Accordingly, the effect of the development on Barns 1 and 2 can be graded as *Moderate Adverse*. On the basis that the significance of these heritage assets is essentially evidential, appropriate mitigation of the impacts could take the form of a Level 3 Historic Building Record of Barns 1 and 2, as defined in Historic England guidance (Historic England 2016), with a Level 1 record of the wider farmyard. The implementation of such a record would reduce the effect of the development on Barns 1 and 2 to *Neutral*.

Barn 4 and the eastern boundary wall are heritage assets of *Medium* significance. Barn 4 would be subject to *Moderate* direct impacts as a result of the development proposals, and the boundary wall would be subject to *Moderate* indirect impacts. Accordingly, the effect of the development on Barn 4 can be graded as *Large Adverse* and to the boundary wall as *Moderate Adverse*. On the basis that the significance of these heritage assets is essentially evidential, appropriate mitigation of the impacts could take the form of a Level 3 Historic Building Record of Barn 4 and the boundary wall, with a Level 1 record of the wider farmyard. The implementation of such a record would reduce the effect of the development on Barn 4 and the boundary wall to *Neutral*.

There is a possibility that heritage assets, in the form of buried archaeological features and deposits of *Medium* significance could survive on the site. Such assets would be subject to *Moderate* direct impacts as a result of the development proposals. Accordingly, the effect of the development on buried archaeological remains can be graded as *Moderate Adverse*. Appropriate mitigation of the impacts could take the form of a programme of archaeological investigation, the implementation of which would reduce the effect of the development on the archaeological resource to *Neutral*.

CONCLUSION

The present report has been prepared to meet the requirements contained in paragraph 194 of the National Planning Policy Framework (DLUHC 2023). It has identified and considered the designated and non-designated heritage assets on and in the vicinity of the site, and the potential for the discovery of non-designated below ground archaeological remains. It has defined the significance of these assets and assessed the likely impacts of the proposed development on that significance in order to assign a grade to those effects, and it has proposed appropriate mitigation, in line with the requirements contained in paragraph 205 of the National Planning Policy Framework, which would reduce the assigned grade to an acceptable level.

The present site forms the farmyard to Mill Farm, Charlton, but is separated from the farmhouse by a public lane and the river Hiz. The farmyard was extensively remodelled in the second half of the 20th century to accommodate changes to agricultural practice following the Second World War. Changes to agricultural practice in the 21st century have meant that the farmyard and its buildings and plant are now redundant and the present development proposals seek to remodel the farmyard again and repurpose two of the redundant barns.

The site lies within the Charlton Conservation Area and is close to the Grade II listed Mill Farmhouse. The present study has demonstrated that the development proposals would have a *Slight Beneficial* effect on the Conservation Area, through the removal of deteriorating and redundant agricultural buildings and the resultant aesthetic benefit, and a *Neutral* effect on the setting of Mill Farmhouse.

The eastern farmyard wall and Barn 4, which abuts it, are part of the post-medieval farmstead that preceded the mid-20th century remodelling. The importance of such farmsteads has been highlighted in the East Anglian archaeological research agenda, and the gathering of information about the form and function of their buildings represents an important research topic. Archaeological investigation of areas where intrusive groundworks are proposed, and the preparation of an historic building record of the eastern farmyard wall and of Barn 4, would reduce the adverse effects on the buildings and on the buried resource arising from the proposed development to *Neutral*.

Barns 1 and 2 were purpose-built in the post-war period to house grain processing plant, which still survives. The desirability of recording such surviving buildings and their associated plant has been highlighted in the East Anglian archaeological research agenda. The archaeological recording of Barns 1 and 2 and their associated plant would reduce the adverse effects on them arising from the proposed development to *Neutral*.

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ILLUSTRATIONS

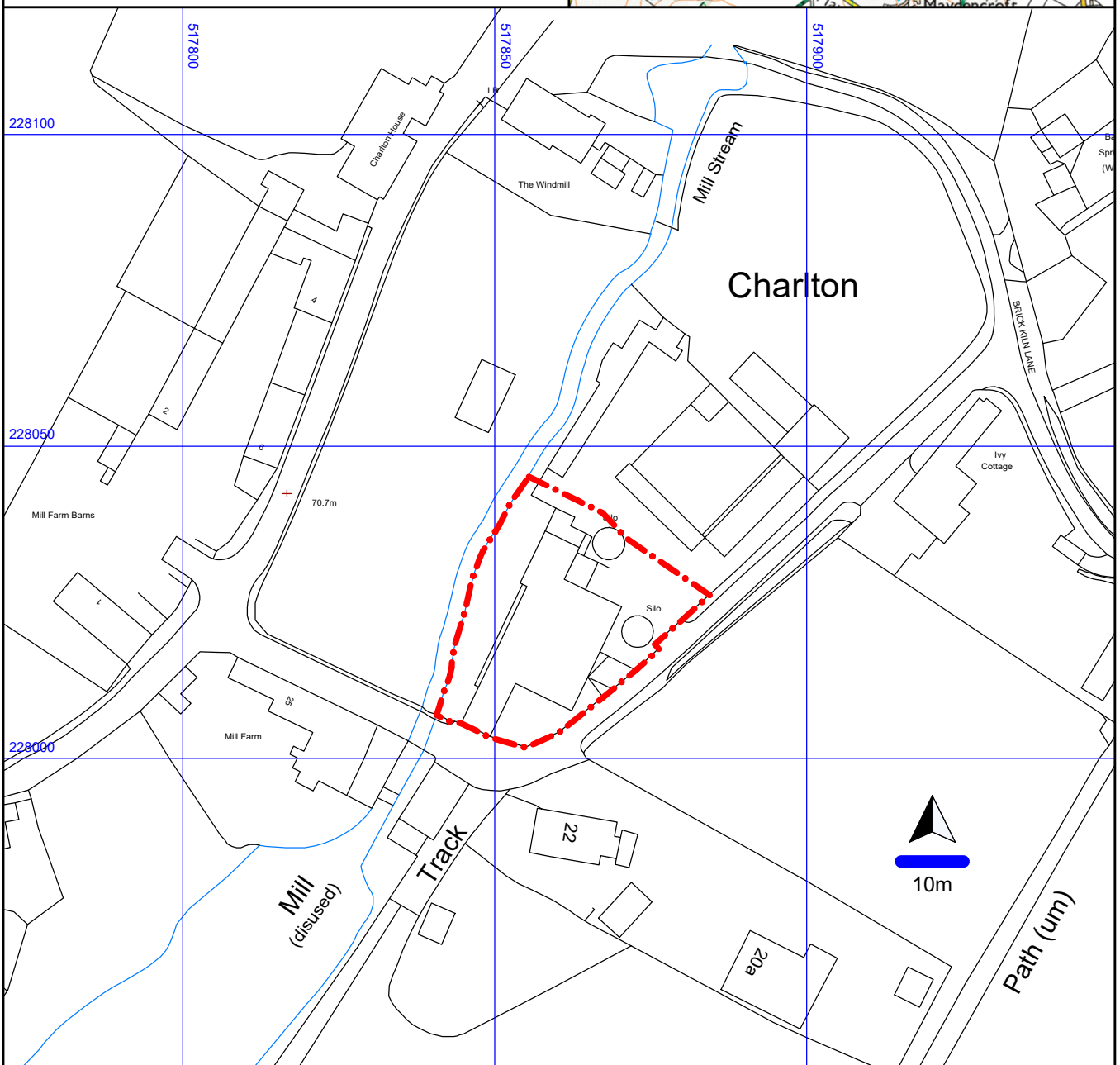
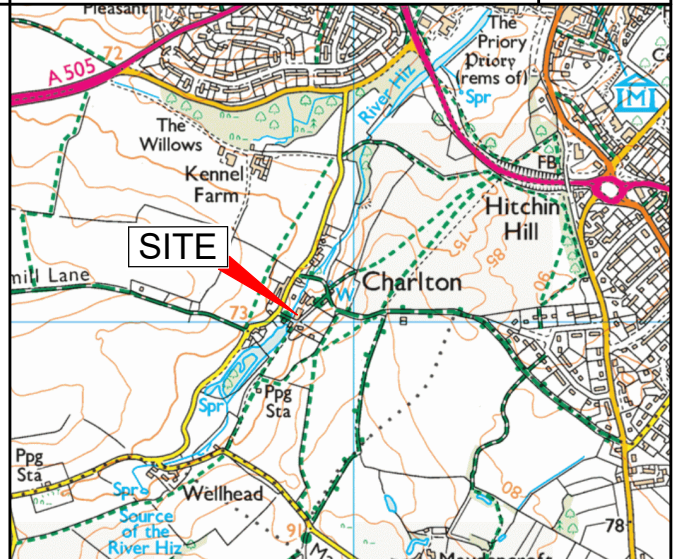
Figure 1	Site location and layout
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Plate 12	Earlier brickwork in west elevation of Barn 1, facing SW

David Hillelson BA MCifA
22 August 2024

HERITAGE NETWORK

Mill Farm, Charlton, Herts.

HN1635

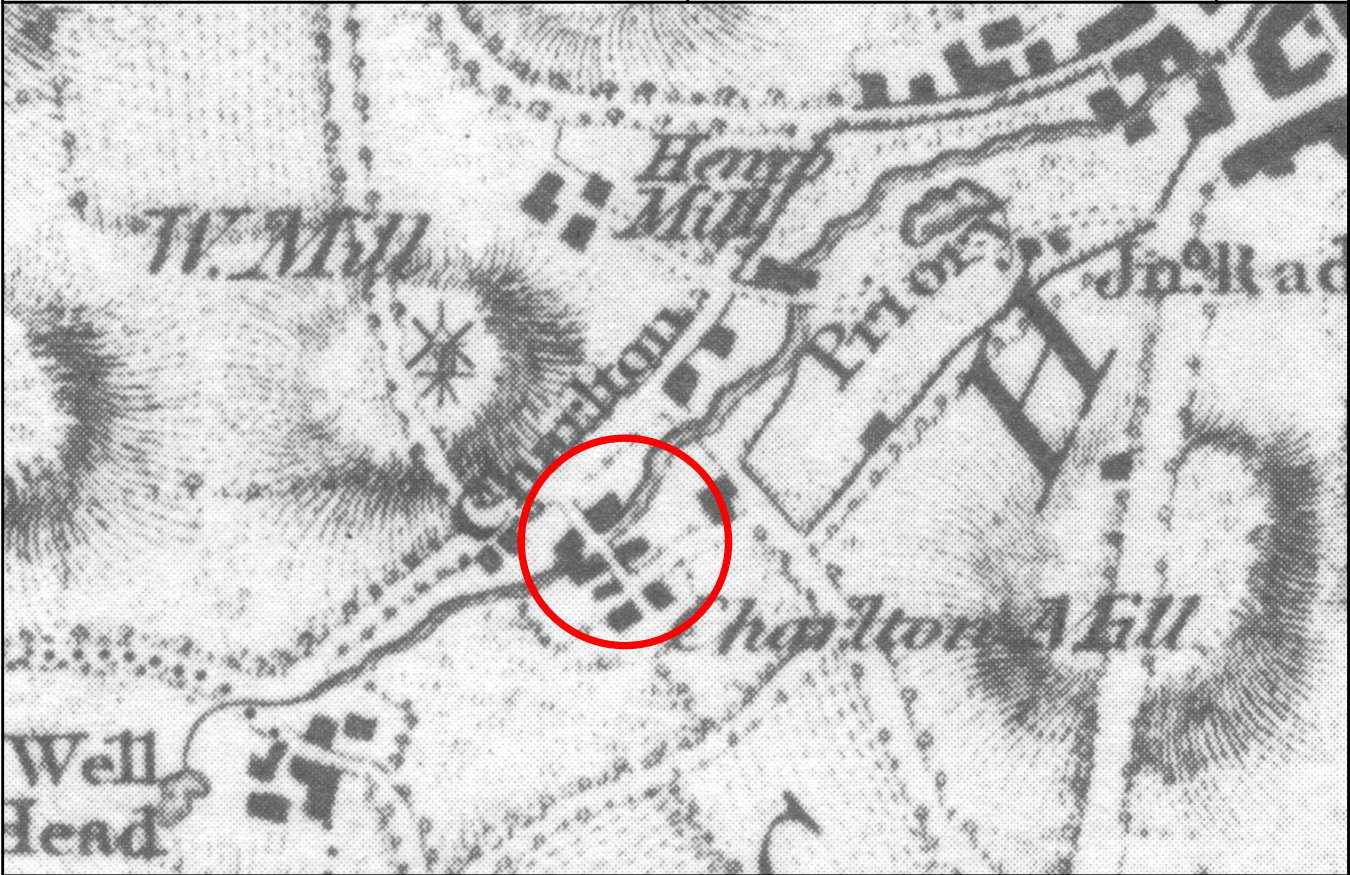


Site location and layout

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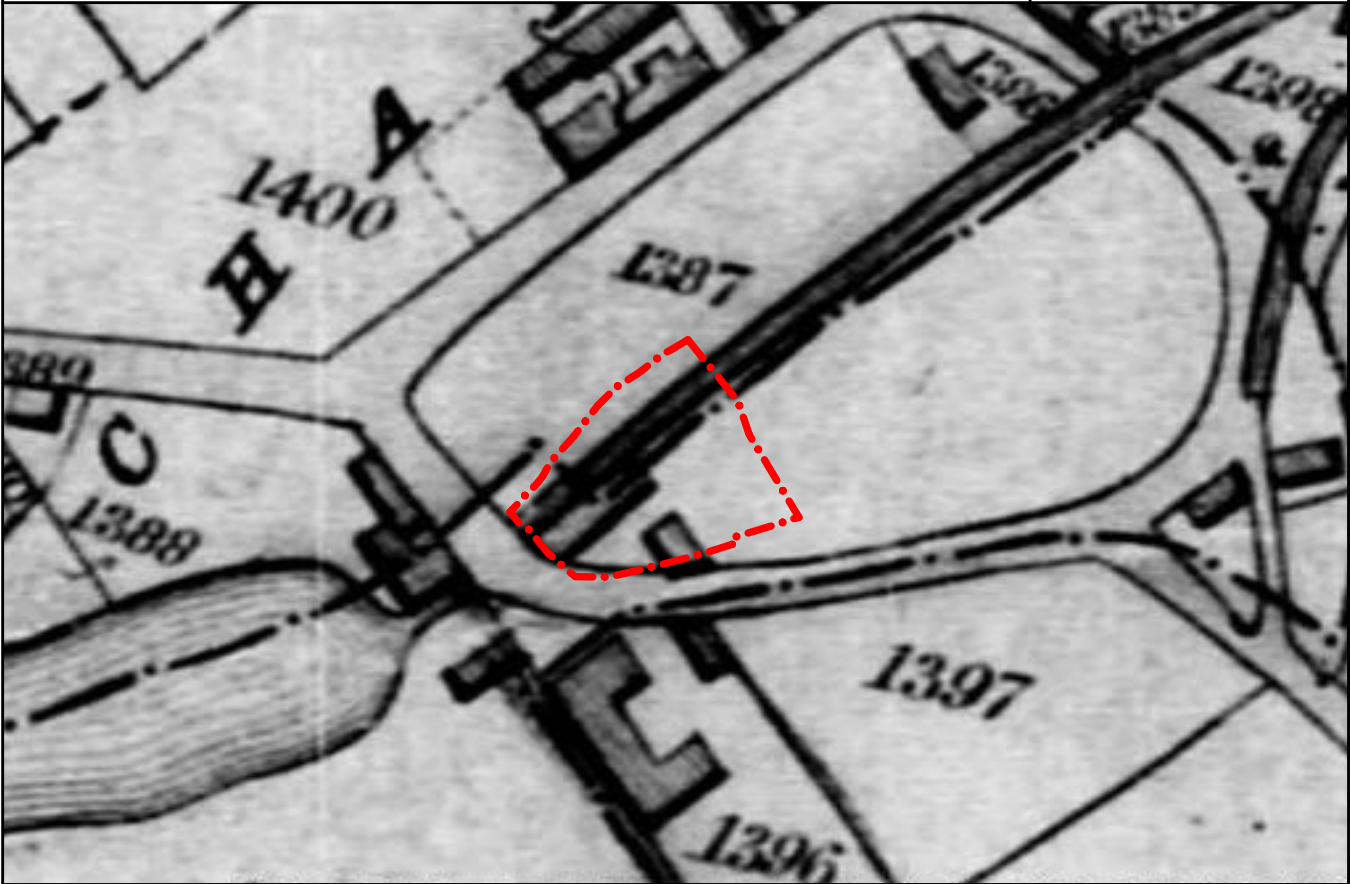
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Figure 1



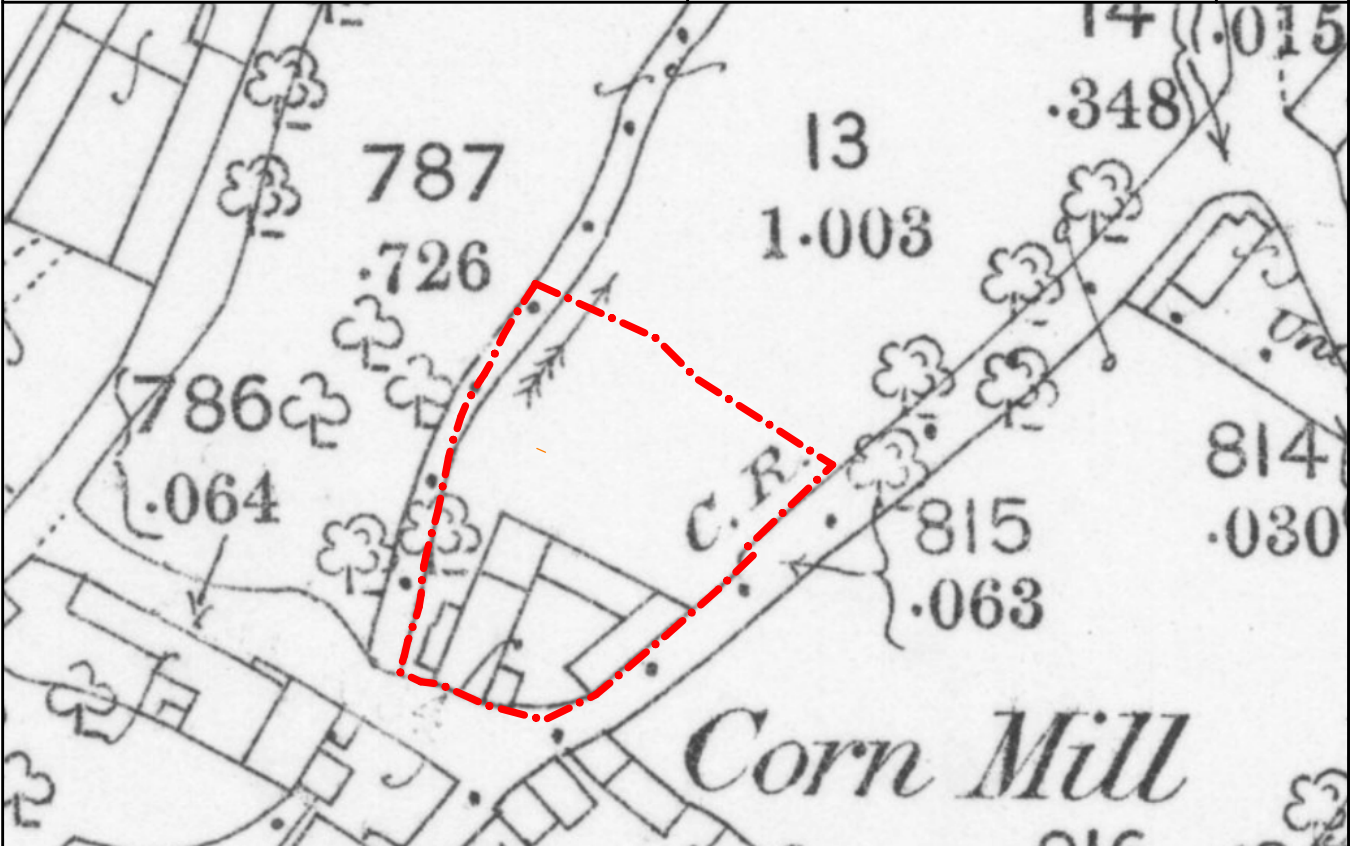
Dury & Andrews' Map of Hertfordshire, 1766
Hertfordshire Record Society, 2004

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Figure 2



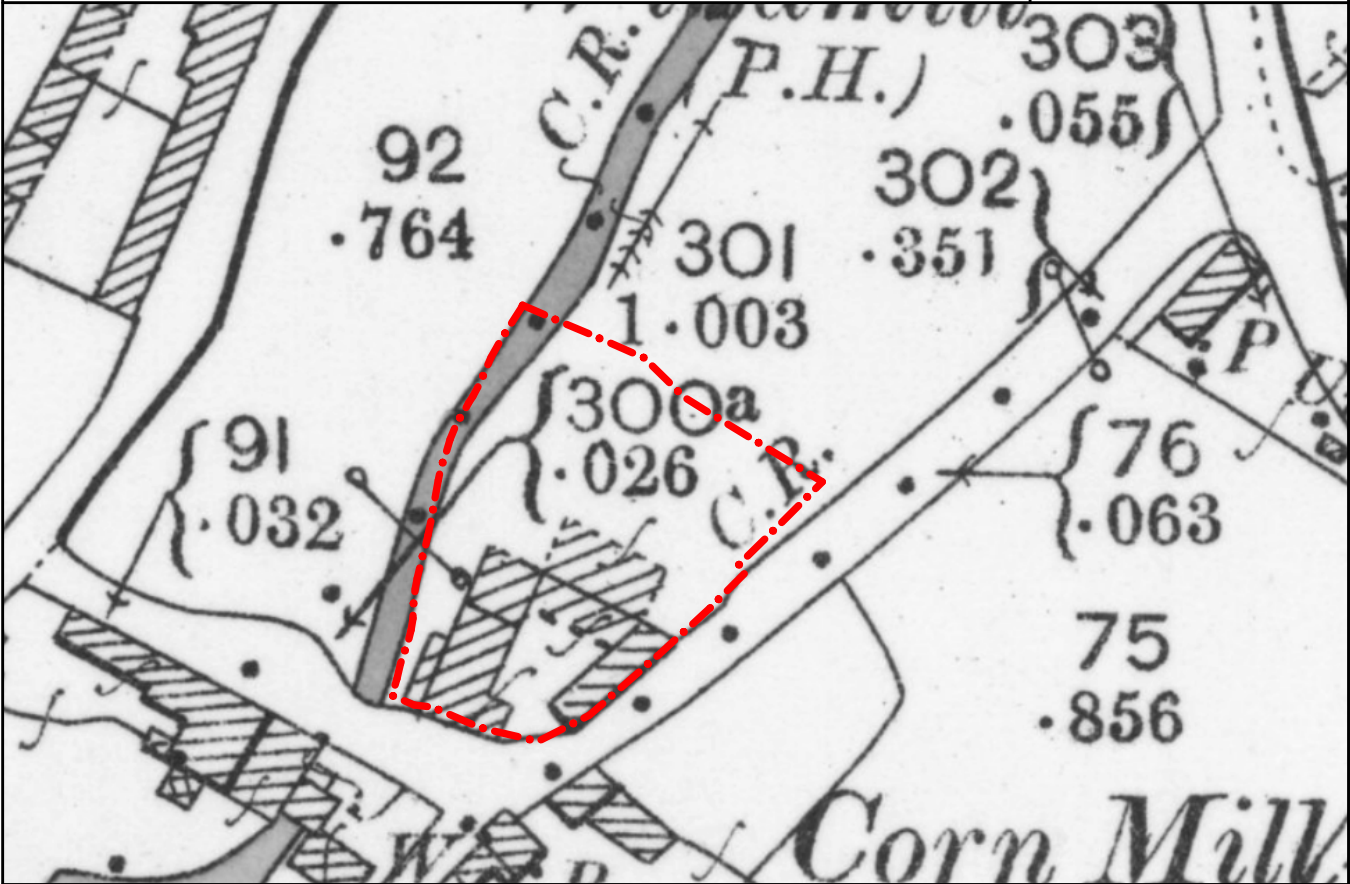
Hitchin Tithe Map, 1841
The Genealogist, 2024

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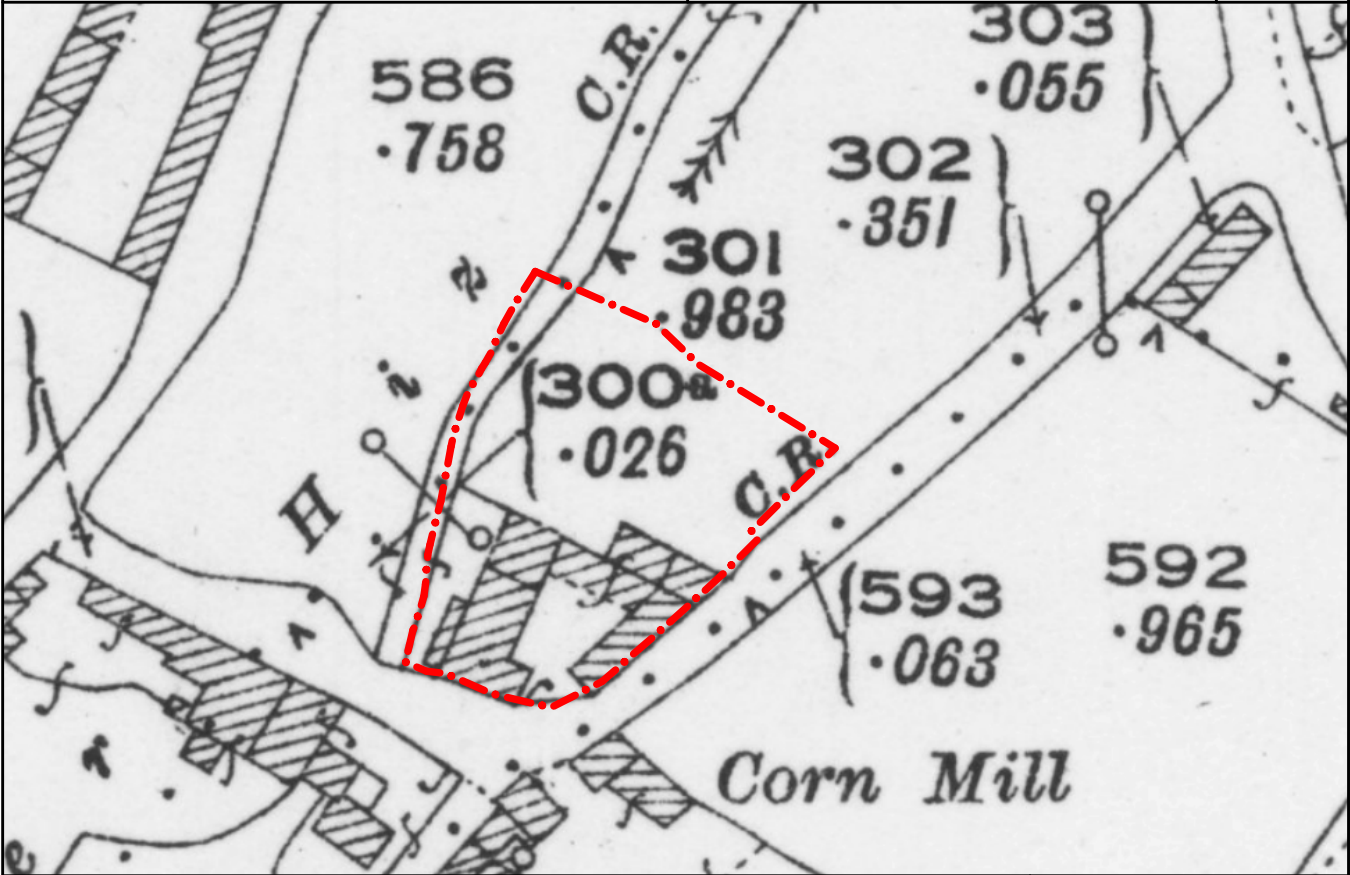
Ordnance Survey, 25-inch series, 1878
National Library of Scotland

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Figure 4



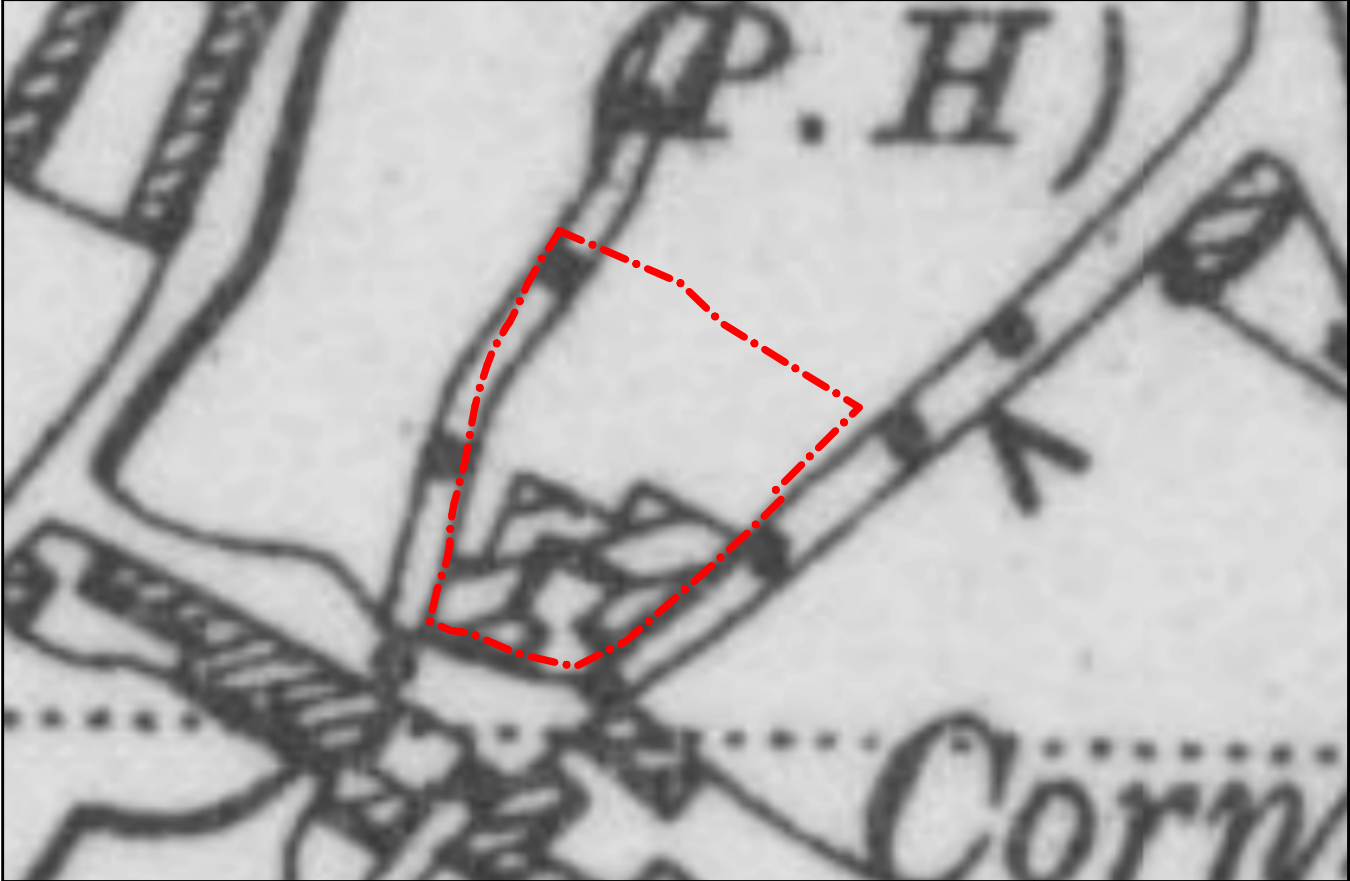
Ordnance Survey, 25-inch series, 1897
National Library of Scotland

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Figure 5



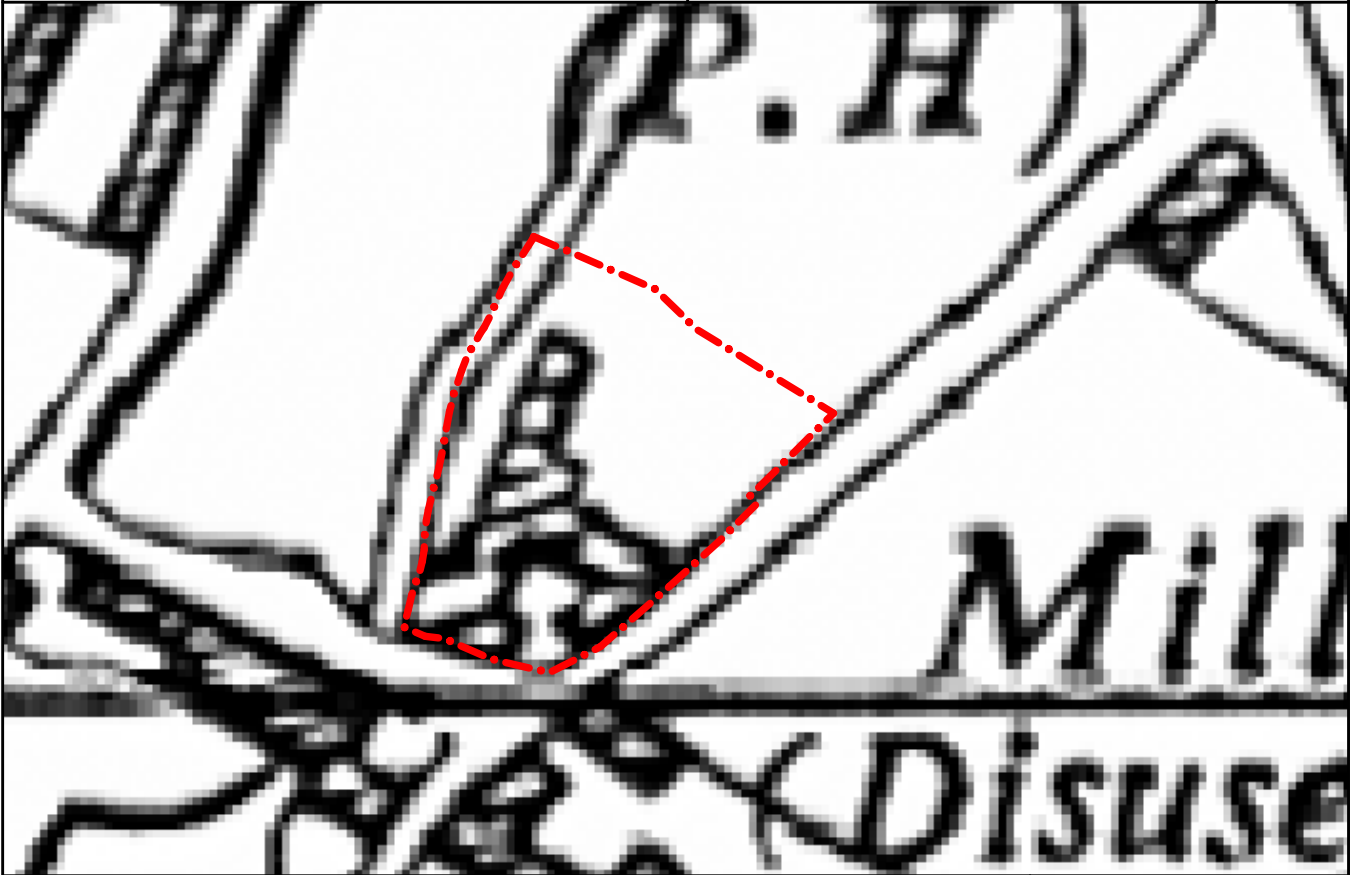
Ordnance Survey, 25-inch series, 1922
National Library of Scotland

Scale 1:750
Figure 6



Ordnance Survey, 6-inch series, 1946
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Scale 1:750
Figure 7



Ordnance Survey, 6-inch series, 1960
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Scale 1:750
Figure 8



Ordnance Survey, 1:10,000 series, 1982
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Scale 1:750
Figure 9



Courtesy BBR Architects

Scale 1:150

Figure 11



Plate 01 - Barn 1, south & west elevations, facing NE



Plate 02 - Lean-to carrying duct alongside Barn 1, facing NE (Courtesy Google Streetview)



Plate 03 - Barn 2, south and west elevations, facing NE



Plate 04 - Barn 2a, north elevation, facing SW



Plate 05 - Barn 2b, east elevation, facing W



Plate 06 - Barns 1 & 3, facing N



Plate 07 - Barn 4, facing SW



Plate 08 - Barn 4, south elevation, facing N



Plate 09 - Grain silo in N angle of Barns 3 & 4, facing S



Plate 10 - Grain silo in angle between Barns 2a & 2b, facing SW



Plate 11 - Farmyard to the N of the present site, facing N



Plate 12 - Earlier brickwork in east elevation of Barn 1, facing SW