

**Highover Farm
Highover Way
Hitchin
Hertfordshire
SG4 0RQ**

Written Scheme of Investigation for
Historic Building Recording

Ordnance Survey National Grid Reference: TL19786 30691

May 2026

**Written Scheme of Investigation for Historic Building Recording at Highover Farm,
Highover Way, Hitchin, Hertfordshire, SG4 0RQ**

National Grid Reference: TL19786 30691

Written by: Adam Garwood

Site Code: TBC

Project Manager: Charlotte Matthews

Contractor: Pre-Construct Archaeology Limited

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1 BACKGROUND

- 1.1 Pre-Construct Archaeology Limited has been commissioned by Gill-Hudson Homes to prepare a Written Scheme of Investigation for a Level 3 Historic Building Recording focused upon the farmhouse and farm buildings at Highover Farm, Highover Way, Hitchin, Hertfordshire. The Historic Building Recording will be completed prior to the alteration or partial demolition of the historic farm buildings undertaken as part of the sites' redevelopment approved by the LPA under reference (25/01420/FP).
- 1.2 The site lies on the north-eastern edge of Hitchin and within the historic hamlet (now suburb) of Walsworth at NGR TL19786 30691 (Figure 1). It is located at a short distance north-west of the A505 Cambridge Road, north-east of Woolgrove Road and is accessed via Highover Way. Modern housing lies immediately to the south-east and south-west of the site and open fields, former farmland, to the north. The site encompasses 0.742ha of land which is currently occupied by a group of historic farm buildings laid out to a courtyard plan form. They include a timber-framed Grade II listed late C16 or early C17 Threshing Barn (A) and a curtilage listed, possibly C16 farmhouse (B), C17 timber-framed Hay Barn and complex of associated brick-built courtyard buildings dating to the C19. The farmstead also includes two modern C20 farm buildings/sheds erected within the former stockyards.
- 1.3 The Grade II listed threshing barn was added to the statutory list in 2018. Its citation reads: Threshing barn, constructed in the late C16 or early C17, and extended in the C18.
- 1.4 **MATERIALS:** *The threshing barn is timber-framed with weatherboard cladding over a flint plinth, having red brick infill laid in Flemish bond, and a slate roof covering.*
- 1.5 **PLAN:** *T-shaped in plan, comprising a rectangular-plan barn laid out on a south-west to northeast axis, with a porch projecting from the centre of the south-east elevation, and an aisle to the north-west side, most likely added in the C18.*
- 1.6 **EXTERIOR:** *The threshing barn has a steeply-pitched roof with a slate roof covering, plain bargeboards at the gable ends, and catslide roofs over the north-west aisle and south-east shelters. The timber-framed structure has weatherboard cladding over a flint plinth, having red-brick infill to the corners and some rebuilding to parts, including the western ends of the gable walls where it appears the north-west aisle may have been added in the C18. The gabled porch to the centre of the south-east elevation has double-leaf plank doors with strap hinges opening externally, under a jettied gable supported by knee braces. Outshot shelters were added to either side of the porch in the mid-C19, each having three timber posts supporting a slate roof (the south roof has collapsed entirely). The north-west elevation has double-leaf plank doors opening internally, directly opposite the porch of the south-east elevation.*
- 1.7 **INTERIOR:** *the interior is formed of seven bays, the central bay of which retains a cobbled threshing floor. The queen-post roof structure has clasped purlins, with diagonal bracing to the principal rafters, each of which were numbered by the carpenter. The tie beams have knee braces to the principal posts, the majority of which in turn have diagonal braces to the wall plate. The collar beams are at bay and half-bay intervals. The south-east wall appears to retain a high proportion of its original timber posts, studs and diagonal braces over an original flint plinth wall. The timber posts of the former north-west wall now stand on red-brick plinths. The north-west aisle (most likely added in the C18) has aisle tie beams bolted to the northwest principal posts, and knee braces to the north-west wall, which has closely-spaced studs and some diagonal braces. The gable walls retain a high proportion of their original flint construction, while their western ends have been rebuilt in brick, possibly when the north-west aisle was added in the C18. Parts of the north-west wall and porch have been repaired with red brick over various periods.*
- 1.8 A planning application (25/01420/FP) was submitted to North Hertfordshire District Council in June 2025 for the: *Change of use and external alterations to former agricultural buildings comprising grade II listed threshing barn and non-listed courtyard buildings. Partial demolition of courtyard building between proposed Units 1 and 2 to facilitate access. Single-storey rear extension to facilitate Unit 10. Subdivision and two-storey rear extension to farmhouse to form Units 11 and 12. Erection of new building for two dwellings (Units 13 and 14). Partial demolition and modify building for cycle storage to Units 2 to 8*

inclusive. Erection of building to accommodate 2 car port spaces for Unit 5 and refuse storage for Units 2-8 inclusive. Detached bin enclosure / cycle store buildings for Units 9 - 14 inclusive. Hard and soft landscaping in association with the provision of private and communal space. Boundary treatment, installation of 14no. EV charging points, installation of solar PV array on south facing roof slopes of Unit 14 and both the cycle and refuse storage buildings serving Units 2 -8 including provision of BNG area.

- 1.9 On consultation with the LPA (North Herts DC) Senior Historic Environment Advisor, Andy Instone states that:
- 1.10 The Historic Environment Record (HER) notes that the farmstead is shown on the 1844 tithe map as 'High-Over Farm'. The name, meaning 'the high bank or slope' is documented since the thirteenth century. From the mid fifteenth century Highover was owned by wealthy wool merchants named Pulter and regarded as a manorial estate. In 1690 it consisted of the farmhouse, outbuildings, barns, stables and land, both arable and pasture. The current house is timber-framed and probably of sixteenth or seventeenth century date (HER17200). The Threshing Barn is Listed Grade II as being of architectural and historic significance and dates from at least the seventeenth century (LB 1452743). The site includes a hay barn of similar date, early nineteenth century stables and other buildings. I therefore believe that the proposed development is such that it should be regarded as likely to have an impact on heritage assets of archaeological interest and I recommend that the following provisions be made, should you be minded to grant consent:
- 1.11 1) The archaeological historic building recording of the historic buildings, prior to any development taking place; 2) The archaeological building recording of all interventions to the fabric of those buildings in areas where such works might reveal information relating to the development of the building, and for the purpose of recording any original historic features (etc.) that may be exposed, this includes the removal of floor surfaces; 5) The analysis of the results of the archaeological work with provision for the subsequent production of a report and an archive, and the publication of the results.
- 1.12 I believe that these recommendations are both reasonable and necessary to provide properly for the likely archaeological implications of this development proposal. I further believe that these recommendations closely follow the policies included within Policy 16 of the National Planning Policy Framework, and relevant guidance contained in the National Planning Practice Guidance, and in the Historic Environment Good Practice Advice in Planning Note 2: Managing Significance in Decision-making in the Historic Environment (Historic England, 2015). In this case three appropriately worded conditions on any planning consent would be sufficient to provide for the level of investigation that this proposal warrants.
- 1.13 **A** No demolition/development shall take place/commence until an Archaeological Written Scheme of Investigation has been submitted to and approved by the local planning authority in writing.
- 1.14 **B** The demolition/development shall take place/commence in accordance with the programme of archaeological works set out in the Written Scheme of Investigation approved under condition (A)
- 1.15 **C** The development shall not be occupied/used until the site investigation and post investigation assessment has been completed in accordance with the programme set out in the Written Scheme of Investigation approved under condition (A) and the provision made for analysis and publication where appropriate.
- 1.16 The East Anglian Archaeology: Research and Archaeology: A Framework for the Eastern Counties 2. Research Agenda and Strategy states that the East Anglian Farmstead (1750-1914) is a crucial, but understudied component of the East Anglian Landscape. Such farm buildings are of major importance in the development of the 'Victorian High Farming tradition' when new ideas culminated in significant alterations in the design and layouts of buildings. It is recommended that prior to the change of use of the farm buildings they are 'preserved by record' through an archaeological recording survey which can build on the baseline research undertaken in the DBA. This will record both the external and internal of the structures identifying features that relate to its original function.

- 1.17 This document forms the Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI) for the Level 3 historic building recording at Highover Farm. The building recording will be carried out in accordance with the approved written scheme of investigation (WSI). The WSI is in accordance with Chartered Institute for Archaeologists (CIfA 2022) *Code of Conduct*, (CIfA 2020) *Standard and guidance for the archaeological investigation and recording of standing buildings or structures*, the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) (2024), and North Herts District Council's policy towards built heritage. It sets out in detail the methodology that will be employed by Pre-Construct Archaeology Limited.
- 1.18 Pre-Construct Archaeology Limited is a *Registered Archaeological Organisation* with the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists.

2 HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

- 2.1 Highover Farm appears as Hehovere, Heivovre, Heyovere in the 13th century, Heghover in 1309 Highofer in 1488 and Highover from 1554. 'Highover' means the high bank or slope (Glover, Mawer and Stenton 1938). Walsworth or Walford, appears in the early field names of Hitchin as Walvey, Walshamstead Walvern (Ed III, 10). "Worth" is a suffix was applied to an enclosed homestead or farm; the prefix Wal- represents A.S. weala, the gen. plural. Waltonsworth and Walcott can be interpreted as either the land/homestead of the serfs implying it was close to an important estate (Glover, Mawer and Stenton 1938). The estate referred to in this place name is almost certainly the Saxon estates of the Hicca centred at Hitchin, indicating a Saxon origin for the settlement which is also attested by the Domesday entry. Hitchin derives its names from *Hicce*, the name of the local tribe recorded in a seventh century. The Hundred of Hitchin was established in the 10th century and covered a very large estate including the site (Lisboa, 2017).
- 2.2 In 1086 Domesday describes Hitchin a large settlement with 45 villagers, 17 smallholders, 12 slaves and 29 cottagers. Other resources: 2.5 lord's lands. Meadow 4.25 ploughs. Woodland 600 pigs. 4 mills, value 2.66 and one church. Hitchin itself was assessed at 5 hides only, although there was land for thirty-eight ploughs (including the land belonging to the minster). The total value of Hitchin and its appurtenances was £106, whilst the sokes belonging to the manor were worth £40. Other resources included meadow 4.25 ploughs, woodland for 600 pigs. 4 mills, value 2.66 and a church. The feudal services of Avera and Inward were due from sokemen but the manor of Hitchin was unique in levying Inward. In the 13th century the manor of Hitchin was granted by William Rufus to Bernard de Balliol. Walsworth is not mentioned in Domesday. A second entry is shown in Domesday for Hitchin (Morris 1975e 1,19). It was held by Earl Harold in 1066 and then King William also the tenant-in-chief. It was also transferred to Bernard Balliol and then to the Templars and Knights of St John (ibid).
- 2.3 Highover Farm most likely has its origins as a medieval farmstead, first documented between 1287 and 1294 (Gover, Mawer & Stenton, 1938). A deed of 1438 refers to tenements, lands, pastures and meadows with hedges and ditches in the hamlet of Highover which were sold by John Poydras of Almshoe to John Pulter and Nicholas Mattok of Hitchin and Thomas Pulter, a canon of St Paul's Cathedral. Manorial accounts of 1460 mention a messuage and a cottage at Highover in addition to John Pulter's property there. An inquisition post-mortem for 1488 refers to Highover as a manor, reflecting the wealth of the Pulter family as wool merchants. In 1556 Edward Pulter is recorded as owning the farm called Highover with 20 acres of land for which he paid the lord of the manor 2lb of pepper a year as well as a monetary rent. Pulter was also recorded as owning a copyhold tenement and cottage at Highover, and by 1676 these cottages had been absorbed into Highover Farm. The Pulter family did not live at Highover; for much of the C15 and early C16 they resided in the parsonage in Hitchin (now the site of Churchgate) which they leased from Elstow Abbey (Collins & Coward, 2025).
- 2.4 In 1690, Highover farmhouse with its out buildings, barns, stables, 400 acres of land and 36 acres of pasture in the parishes of Hitchin and Great Wymondley were leased to William Maling. In the 1750s Pulter Forester was required to sell some of the family's estates, and his son William sold Highover and his other property in Walsworth to the Reverend Thomas Whitehurst in 1766. Whitehurst obtained an Act of Parliament to enclose the open fields of Walsworth, and commissioned Thomas Bateman to map his estates in Walsworth in 1767 and Ickleford in 1771. The 1767 map (Figure XXXXX) shows a simpler but similar layout to what currently survives at Highover Farm, with the irregular form of the medieval farmstead (house, barns and outbuildings) orchard and pond, surrounded by the 'straight' lines of the new enclosures. By the 1780s Whitehurst was in serious financial difficulties; in 1783 and 1786 he mortgaged parts of his Walsworth estate, and in 1791 the Walsworth estate was auctioned to repay his mortgages and debts. The sales particulars described the estate as 'three eligible farms' with 605 acres of rich, arable land, meadow and pasture 'in a beautiful and Sporting Part of the Country within One Mile of Hitchin (being one of the first Markets in the Kingdom)' and 'near a navigable River, which is expected to be continued through Part of the Estate'. Whitehurst's Walsworth estate was sold in 1803, and again in 1822 (ibid).
- 2.5 The farmstead is shown on the 1844 tithe map (Figure XXXX) as 'High-Over Farm', with the L-plan farmhouse at the south-east side of a rectangular plan farmyard, stables and hay barn at the south-west side, threshing barn and attached farm building at the north-west side, and an L-plan farm building at the

north-east side. A report on Mr Wilshire's land at Walsworth in 1861 stated that 'Highover Farm has a very fair Homestead and a good House which is conveniently placed, but the land although of good quality has been very much neglected'. The following year Highover Farm (then with 420 acres) was let to Richard Pedder who was recorded in 1881 as farming 422 acres, employing 14 men and 10 boys, and having two resident female servants. The 1881 Ordnance Survey (OS) map (Figure XXXX) shows the farmstead with the same layout as the 1844 tithe map, with the exception that a store was added to the north-west corner between the hay barn and threshing barn; the building formerly attached to the north-east side of the threshing barn was replaced by a detached range of cart sheds; and the building to the north-east side of the farmyard was replaced by a linear range of cattle sheds. The layout of these buildings has not changed since the publication of the 1881 OS map, save the addition of a small number of farm buildings to the interior of the farmyard. Alterations were carried out to the front elevation of the farmhouse about 1890, and a perpendicular two storey extension was added to the north-east corner of the farmhouse around 1910 (ibid). The OS map of 1964 (Figure XXXX) shows a similar layout to the late C10 map although two sheds have been added into the former stockyards.

3 STANDARDS

3.1 All works will be undertaken in accordance with standards set out in:

- ClfA (2020) *Standard and guidance for the archaeological investigation and recording of standing buildings or structures*.
- Historic England (2016) *Understanding Historic Buildings: A Guide to Good Recording Practice*.

3.2 Health & Safety procedure and a risk assessment will be undertaken prior to commencement of works.

4 METHOD STATEMENT

4.1 Aims and objectives

4.1.1 The aim of the building recording at Highover Farm is to provide a record of the buildings in their present condition and context prior to their partial loss or alteration. The purpose is to clarify the historic and structural development of the buildings surveyed and to better understand their development and use. The aim is to compile a lasting record and archive, to analyse the results and to disseminate these results. This record is to be in accordance with requirements defined by a Historic England Level 3 survey.

4.1.2 The record needs to consider:

- Materials and method of construction
- Date (s) of the structures
- Function and internal layout
- Fixtures and fittings
- Original and later phasing, additions and their effect on the internal/external fabric and the level of survival of the original fabric.
- The significance of the site in a regional context

4.1.3 Specific research questions of the building recording are:

- To identify the original structural elements, features and fittings of the buildings.
- To determine the architectural evolution of the buildings, including uncovering evidence relating to their construction date.
- To establish the evolution and history of the farm complex as a whole

4.2 Monitoring procedures

4.2.1 Andy Instone Senior Historic Environment Advisor for Hertfordshire LEADS will monitor the project on behalf of the local planning authority. The building recording will take place in June 2026.

4.2.2 Notification of the start of the survey work shall be given to the Historic Environment Advisor one week in advance of its commencement.

4.2.3 Any variations of the Written Scheme of Investigation shall be agreed with the Historic Environment Advisor prior to them being carried out.

4.2.4 Reasonable access, subject to the health and safety requirements at the site, will be granted to representatives of the Local Planning Authority, the Client and the Client's representative, who wish to be satisfied, through site inspections, that the recording is being conducted to proper professional standards and in accordance with the agreements made.

4.3 Access and safety

4.3.1 All relevant health and safety legislation, CDM, COSHH regulations and codes of practice will be respected. The Health and Safety policies of Pre-Construct Archaeology Limited will be followed and in accordance with all statutory regulations. The work will conform to existing site policies and procedures.

4.3.2 Accommodation (if required), toilet facilities and washing facilities for the attendant building archaeologist will be provided by the Client and be located within reasonable distance of the buildings.

4.4 Recording systems

4.4.1 A unique-number site code (tbc) will be used for the building records.

- 4.4.2 The recording systems adopted during the investigations will be fully compatible with those most widely used elsewhere in Herts.
- 4.4.3 The site archive will be so organised as to be compatible with other building recording archives produced in the Local Authority area.

4.5 Historic Building Recording

- 4.5.1 A Level 3 historic building recording will be carried out on the historic buildings prior to alteration or demolition. More recent (post war) buildings or structures will be recorded at a correspondingly lower level.

Documentary Research

- 4.5.2 This phase of work will consist of expanding and supplementing our understanding of the buildings through a study of relevant historic maps and other records. These will be used to provide a historical background in the report. Online sources will be researched and a visit will be made to the Hertfordshire Archives in Hertford.

Drawn Survey

- 4.5.1 The historic buildings will be surveyed utilising existing auto-CAD plans, sections and elevations supplied by the client. The plans and sections will be annotated on site with historic detail as well as photographic annotations and the finished drawings reproduced within the report.

Photography

- 4.5.2 A Level 3 photographic record will be made comprising both general and detailed shots (external and internal/features/joinery/ etc) in colour digital photographs. A photographic scale will be included in the case of detailed photographs. The photographic record will be accompanied by a photographic register detailing (as a minimum) location and direction of shot; where possible, the photographic record will be tied into the drawn record.

Written Analysis

- 4.5.3 Descriptive and interpretative notes will be made of the buildings, both externally and internally. The description will include the materials, dimensions, method of construction including brickwork, joinery, fenestration, spatial configuration, phasing and evidence of fixtures/fittings.

4.6 Timetable and Staffing

- 4.6.1 It is anticipated that the on-site building recording will take 3 days for the building archaeologist (Adam Garwood). The report will be completed within six weeks of the completion of on-site recording.
- 4.6.2 Key team members will include Charlotte Matthews Head of Historic Buildings and Adam Garwood, Historic Building Specialist. The following staff will form the project team:

1x Project Manager

1x Historic Building Specialist

1x CAD Illustrator

5 REPORT

- 5.1 A report will be prepared based on the above record, presenting the results of the building recording. The full report shall be submitted to the Historic Environment Advisor within a length of time (but not exceeding 4 months) from the end of fieldwork. A single digital copy of the report shall be supplied to the Historic Environment Advisor.
- 5.2 The report will have the following contents:
- Author and date
 - Non-technical summary
 - Site location information (including maps) and descriptions
 - Introduction
 - Context of the project
 - Planning permission references
 - Historical background
 - Aims and objectives
 - Methods
 - Description of the buildings
 - Discussion and conclusions
 - Archive deposition details
 - Description of archive contents
 - Drawings (plans and elevations)
 - Selected photographs to illustrate the text
 - HER event number
 - Oasis form
- 5.3 The building recording report will contain annotated drawings including a location map and an overall plan showing all buildings. The discussion and conclusions should be made (where appropriate) with reference to the objectives outlined in Brown and Glazebrook (2000) and Medlycott (2011).
- 5.4 All parts of the OASIS online form must be completed for submission to the EHER. This should include an uploaded .pdf version of the entire report (a paper copy should also be included with the archive). A copy of the Oasis sheet will be emailed to the editor of the Herts Archaeology and History Journal for inclusion in the annual round-up of projects in the journal.
- 5.5 The report will be prepared as soon as possible after completion of the on-site work and will be submitted to the Client, The North Herts Museum (Curator) and the Hertfordshire Historic Environment Record. Publication of the results at least to a summary level shall be undertaken in the year following the archaeological field work.

6 ARCHIVE AND DEPOSITION

- 6.1 The project archive will be held temporarily at the offices of Pre-Construct Archaeology Limited in Cambridge immediately following the on-site work. The archive will be purely digital and will be deposited with the Archaeological Data Service in due course.
- 6.2 A copy of the report will accompany the digital archive when it is deposited with the Archaeological Data Service.
- 6.3 The digital archive will comprise a digital copy of the report, high resolution photographs and also any other digital data recovered from the site. This will be archived in accordance with ClfA 2020 *Standard and guidance for the creation, compilation, transfer and deposition of archaeological archives*).
- 6.4 Data Management Plan for the digital archive is included as Appendix 1. This will be updated as the project progresses.

7 BIBLIOGRAPHY

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8 FIGURES

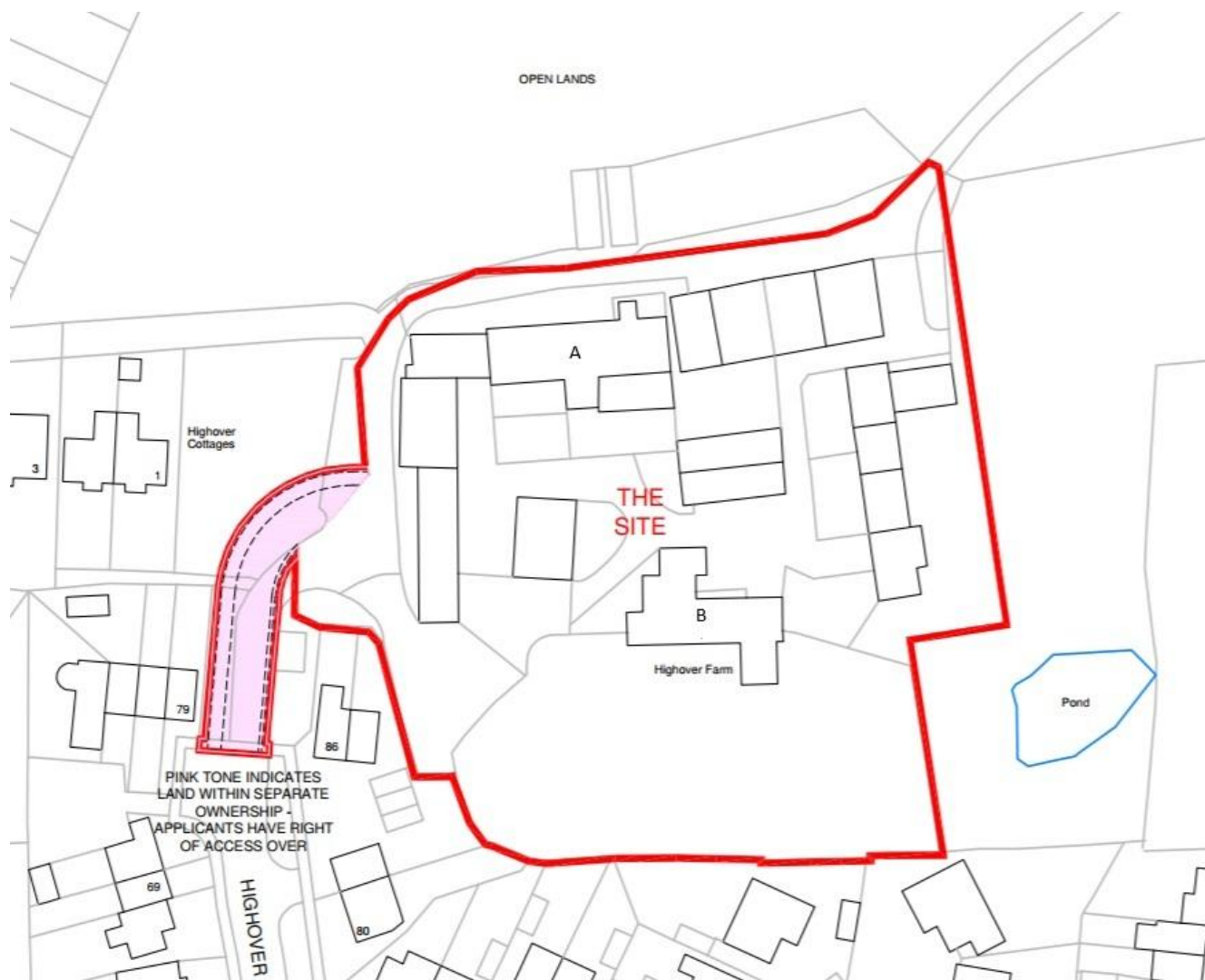


Figure 1 – Site Location Plan

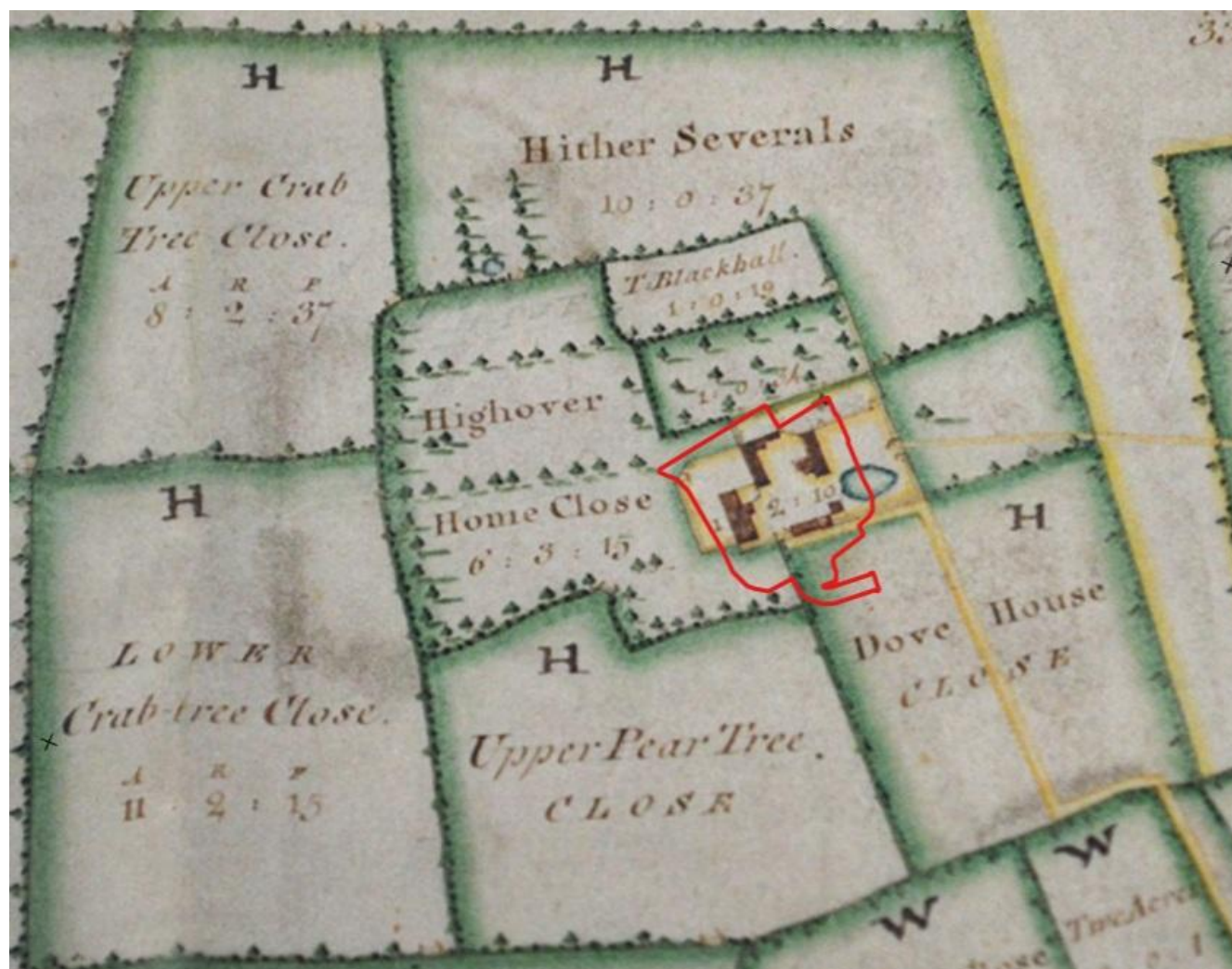


Figure 2: Walsworth Enclosure Map of 1767 (ref: 58882)



Figure 3 Hitchin Tithe Map of 1844 (DEWS.P29)



Figure 4 Ordnance Survey Map surveyed 1879 published 1881 (sheet VII.14)



Figure 5 Ordnance Survey Map surveyed 1964 (sheet TL1930NE)

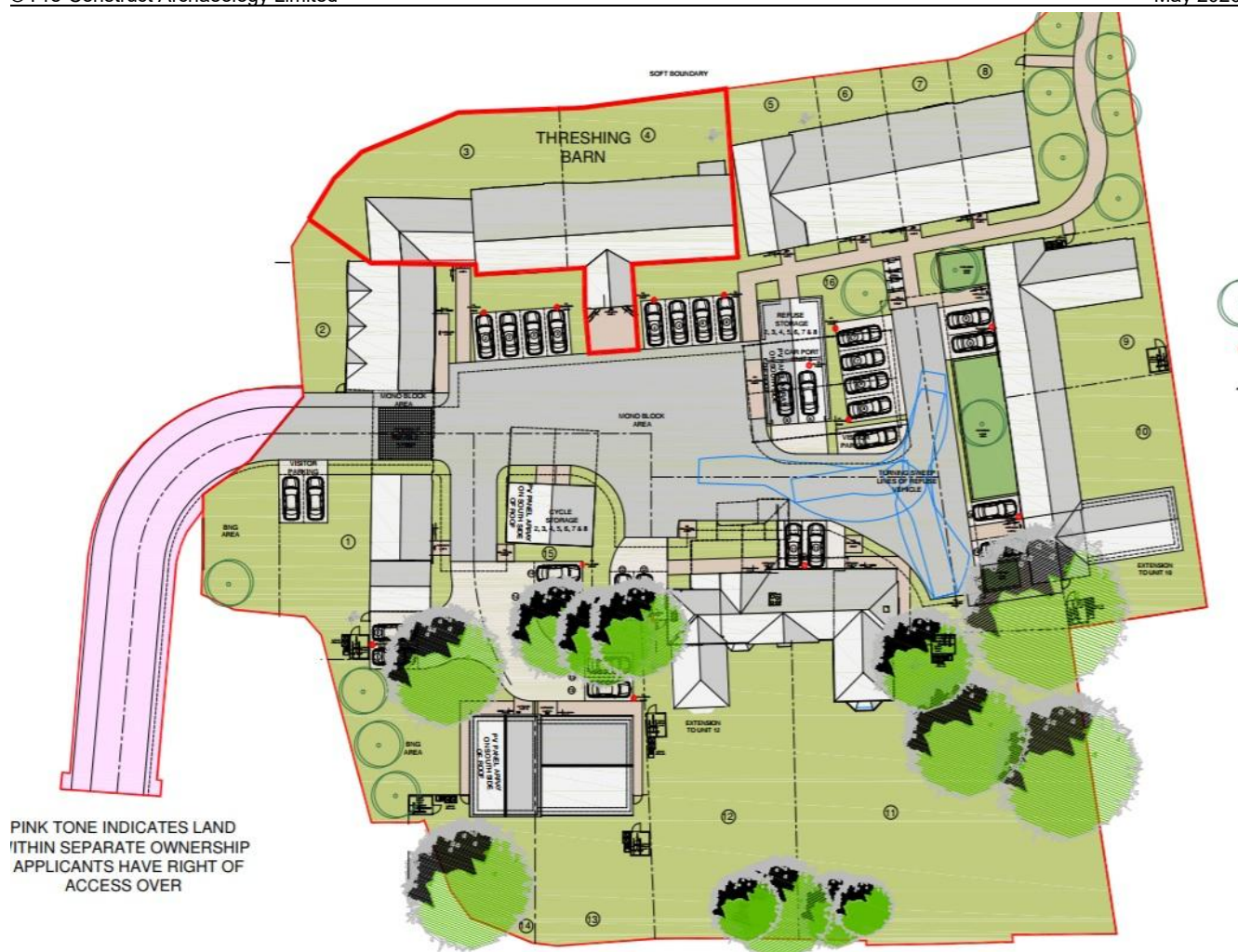


Figure 6 Proposed Masterplan

9 APPENDIX 1: DATA MANAGEMENT PLAN

Work Digital / Think Archive - Data Management Plan Overview

The sections below are the basic components of the Data Management Plan. Each section comprises a series of sections which need to be completed. The Work Digital / Think Archive guidance provides a full version of this document which includes Questions to Consider, Guidance and Examples where appropriate.

Section 1: Project Administration
Key project details, unique identifiers and contacts Pear Tree Cottage and Stables, Cambridge Road, Stansted Mountfitchet, Essex, CM24 8TA Site Code: tbc Charlotte Matthews: PCA Project Manager [REDACTED]
Section 2: Data Collection
- What data will you collect or create? Digital photographs of the buildings to be converted - How will the data be collected or created? Photographic Survey
Section 3: Documentation and Metadata
What documentation and metadata will accompany the data? Photographic register
Section 4: Ethics and Legal Compliance
How will you manage any ethical, copyright and Intellectual Property Rights (IPR) issues?
Section 5: Storage and Backup
How will the data be stored, accessed and backed up during the research? On the server in the PCA Cambridge Office which is backed up daily.
Section 6: Selection and Preservation
- Which should be retained, shared, and/or preserved? Photographs selected to be used in the report - What is the long-term preservation plan for the dataset? Archaeology Data Service - Have you contacted the data repository? Not yet. - Have the costs of archiving been fully considered? Yes, in the fee proposal.
Section 7: Data Sharing and Accessibility
- How will you share the data and make it accessible? Archaeology Data Service - Are any restrictions on data sharing required? No
Section 8: Responsibilities
Who will be responsible for data management? Charlotte Matthews, PCA Project Manager

This document forms part of the Work Digital / Think Archive guidance for digital archives prepared by DigVentures, on behalf of Archaeological Archives Forum and in partnership with the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists. The project was funded by Historic England (Project No. 7796).

Section 1: Project Administration

Project ID / OASIS ID
Project Name
Project Description
Project Funder / Grant reference
Project Manager
Principal Investigator / Researcher
Data Contact Person
Date DMP created
Date DMP last updated
Version
Related data management policies

Section 2: Data Collection

What data will you collect or create?
How will the data be collected or created?

Section 3: Documentation and metadata

What documentation and metadata will accompany the data?

Section 4: Ethics and legal compliance

How will you manage any ethical, copyright and Intellectual Property Rights (IPR) issues?

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Section 5: Data Security: Storage and Backup

How will the data be stored, accessed and backed up during the research?

Section 6: Selection and Preservation

Which data should be retained, shared, and/or preserved?
What is the long-term preservation plan for the dataset?
Have you contacted the data repository?
Have the costs of archiving been fully considered?

Section 7: Data Sharing

How will you share the data and make it accessible?
Are any restrictions on data sharing required?

Section 8: Responsibilities

Who will be responsible for implementing the data management plan?



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PCA DURHAM

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e: [REDACTED]

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PCA NEWARK

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e: [REDACTED]

PCA WARWICK

2 PLESTOWES BARN
HAREWAY LANE, BARFORD
WARWICKSHIRE CV35 8DD

t: [REDACTED]

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PCA WINCHESTER

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