



Groundschool, Irongate Farm (255)

Listed Building Consent Report
July 2025

Applicants: Weston Park Farms

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This statement, in accordance with the guidance, will:

- 1. Demonstrate how the proposals relate to the site context and the impacts upon it.
- 2. Explain the design principles and concepts and how they are applied to the proposals, including taking into account the local planning guidance and mitigating measures to minimise effects upon neighboring amenity and heritage assets.

The content of this statement is proportionate to the scale, complexity and nature of the application. It will tell the story by explaining the design thinking behind the proposal and how issues relating to access have been addressed using images, plans and diagrams to supplement the text.

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1. Summary

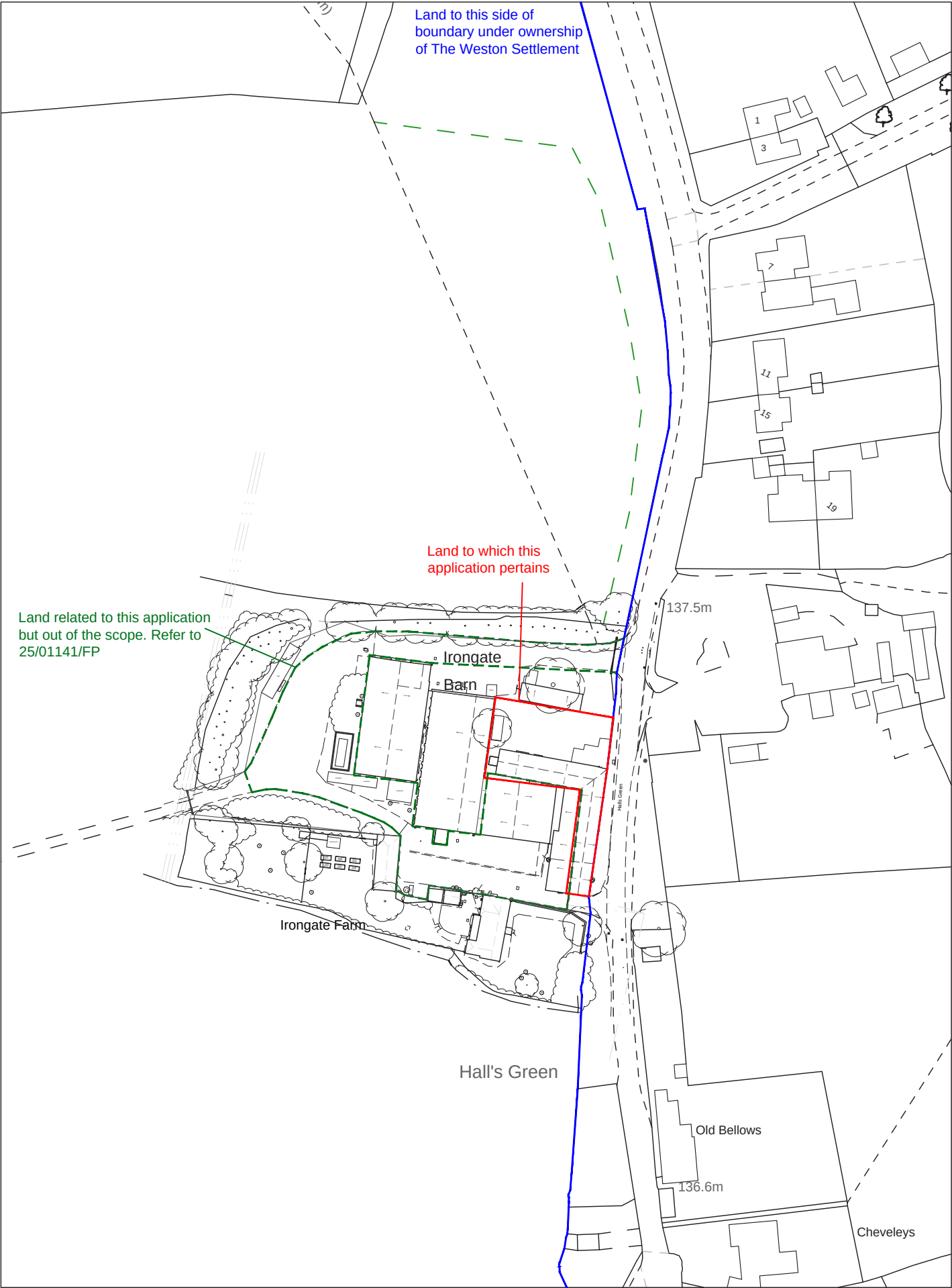
1.1 Summary - Phase 1: The Catalyst

The following is a description of the proposal:

Change of use of existing barn from storage and distribution (Use Class B8) to use as a community events and learning centre for agriculture, cookery and related rural based activities (Use Class F1). Repairs to timber frame and external weatherboarding, including new interfaces with adjacent new construction, making good after downtaking of harmful modern fabric. New internal wall linings. Replacement glazing and adjusted openings with new glazing, localised repairs to existing concrete floor slab. New services routes.



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1.2 Groundschool vision

Groundschool is a place where people can learn about whole sustainable food and farming. They want to create a future where everyone works together to produce food in a way that is good for the environment.

Groundschool will provide agricultural education and learning, through the shared wisdom of teachers and practitioners, to develop knowledge and skills and evolve a better way of farming, eating and living.

Groundschool is part of an agroecological movement spreading like a web of mycelia, with every collaboration, knowledge exchange, and inspired individual contributing to its spread.

Groundschool will provide comprehensive learning experiences in agroecology whilst developing a community of diverse enterprises with whom it will collaborate. Situated on a working farm, it will serve as a dynamic centre of learning, bridging the gap between theory and practice.

Groundschool's mission is to empower agricultural students, farmers transitioning to regenerative practices, and companies seeking sustainable solutions. We achieve this through hands-on learning experiences, innovative projects, and community collaboration. By creating a unique environment where education meets real-world application, Groundschool will play a crucial role in shaping the future of sustainable agriculture in the UK.

The project translates ideas of good food and ecology as advocated by the **Groundswell Festival**, a regenerative agriculture festival to be held in Hertfordshire every summer from 2026.



1.2 Groundschool vision

Groundschool and regenerative agriculture

Groundswell Festival provides a forum for farmers, growers, or anyone interested in food production and the environment to learn about the theory and practical applications of regenerative farming systems.

Groundswell is a practical show aimed at anyone who wants to understand the farmer’s core asset, the soil, and make better informed decisions. It is a two-day event featuring talks, forums and discussions from leading international soil health experts, experienced arable and livestock farmers, agricultural policy experts, direct-drill demonstrations and AgTech innovators.

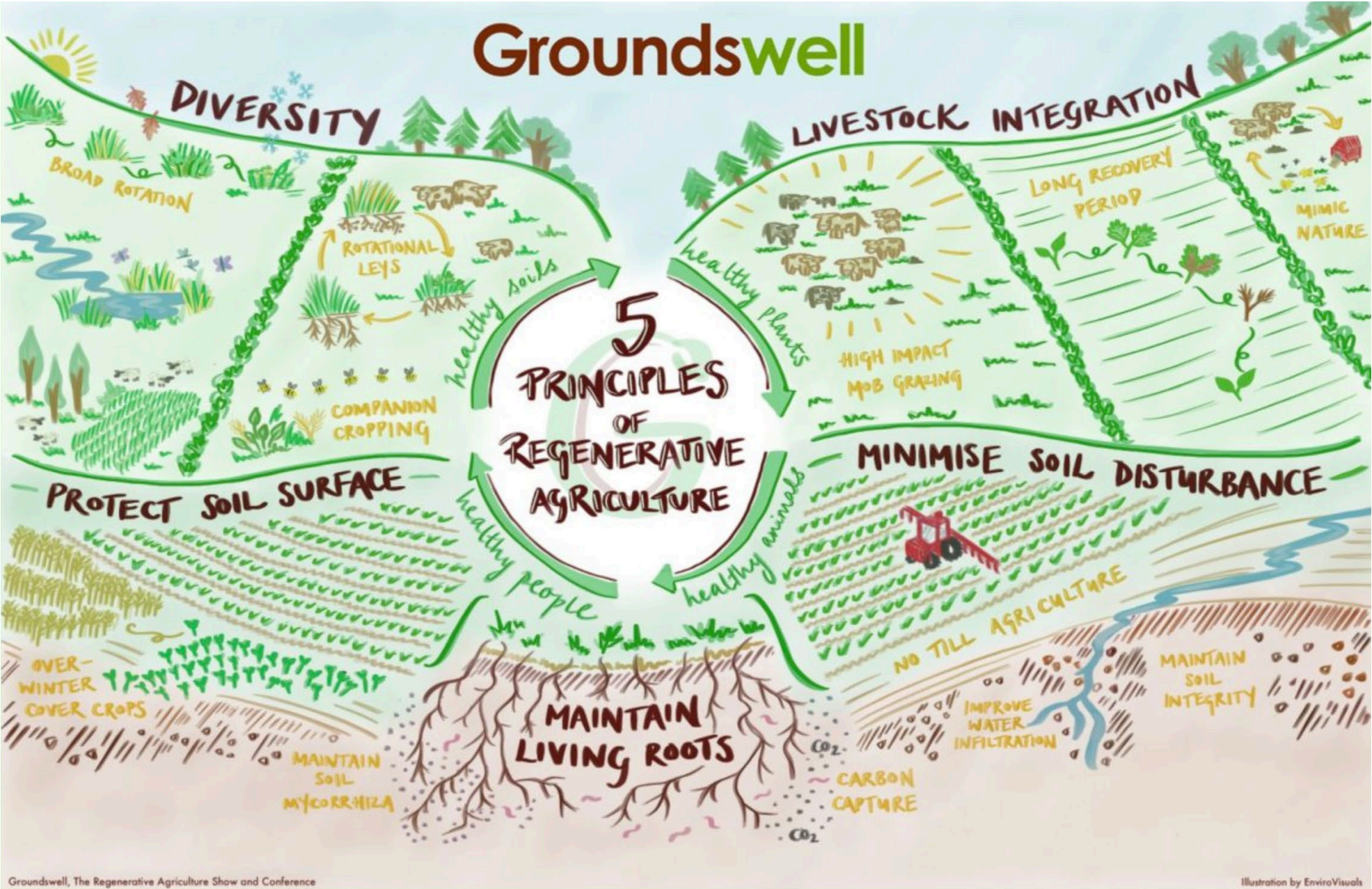
Groundswell was founded by the Cherry family on their mixed farm in Hertfordshire. John and Paul Cherry have farmed for over thirty five years, converting to a no-till system in 2010.

In 2024 Groundswell welcomed nearly 8,000 delegates. This growth reflects the snowballing of interest in Regenerative Agriculture, not only from farmers but also from policy makers attracted by the ‘public benefits’ of such systems such as carbon sequestration and flood/drought prevention. And then there are the Foodies who come to find new and better ways to join the conversation about how and what we might grow in the future; they don’t need to be told that food tastes better when it grows in healthy soil.



SESSION APPLICATIONS ARE OPEN FOR GROUNDSWELL 2025
Do you have an idea for a session at Groundswell 2025 (2nd & 3rd Sept)?
30/09/2024

GROUNDSWELL FESTIVAL HELPS DRIVES PROGRESSIVE CHANGE IN AGRICULTURE
The UK's only two-day on-farm regenerative agriculture conference, Groundswell, sold out for another year...



Despite these other interest groups, Groundswell remains a show ‘for farmers, by farmers’; the festival aims to explore ways of working with nature to grow food in a profitable way, embodying the saying ‘Resilience is Fertile’ as profitability is a key factors that makes an operation resilient.

Closely linked to Groundswell, the Groundschool initiative is designed to reach a wider audience. It aims to increase knowledge of produce and cooking skills, and to see the food cycle as a whole.

Source:
<https://groundswellag.com/>

1.2 Groundschool vision

Groundschool and community-focused food projects

Groundschool considers the implementation of a variety of initiatives, including but not limited to: collaboration with **Granville Community Kitchen (GCK)**, the organisation of culinary education programmes, and analogous educational sessions.

Granville Community Kitchen empowers the community through food related activities enabling the South Kilburn community to access nutritious, affordable and sustainable food. GCK reaches out to marginalised people in the community such as those with long term health conditions, learning disabled adults and those experiencing hunger and food insecurity. It builds food literacy, skills and confidence. This is achieved through cookery classes, volunteering opportunities, and organic food growing. GCK reduces isolation and strengthens community cohesion through regular group activities including community meals, film nights and community events.

Groundschool will offers the opportunity to learn, exchange knowledge and ideas with short courses that provide information to enable and understand how we can create a resilient food system that is kind to the planet and builds profitable businesses.



Source:
<https://granvillecommunitykitchen.org.uk/>

1.3 Building description and land use

The site presents a compelling opportunity to enhance the relationship between the barns and the immediate vicinity by integrating regenerative agricultural methods and products, which will serve as an educational vehicle that will benefit the local community.

The site currently consists of a series of agricultural barns that have been used for various purposes and were built during different time periods. The barn addressed in this application is a timber frame barn structure constructed potentially in the late 19th Century.

The site is actively engaged in agricultural activities and commercial use. Behind a dense wall of vegetation, there is a greenhouse and various crops. These activities will continue and coexist with the new land use plan.

Focusing on the “L”-shaped timber barn, which is located within the curtilage of a grade II* listed farmhouse. This building is next to an existing addition that is in poor condition and already contains some services. There are existing openings between the timber barn and the infill structure, which has a negative impact on the historic asset. The timber barn also has an existing opening into the concrete barn, which was constructed in the 1960s.

The current use of the timber barn for is storage and distribution (Use Class B8). In the past, the barn was used to shelter cattle, evidence of which can still be seen from the remains of a concrete silage trough.



1.3 Building description and land use

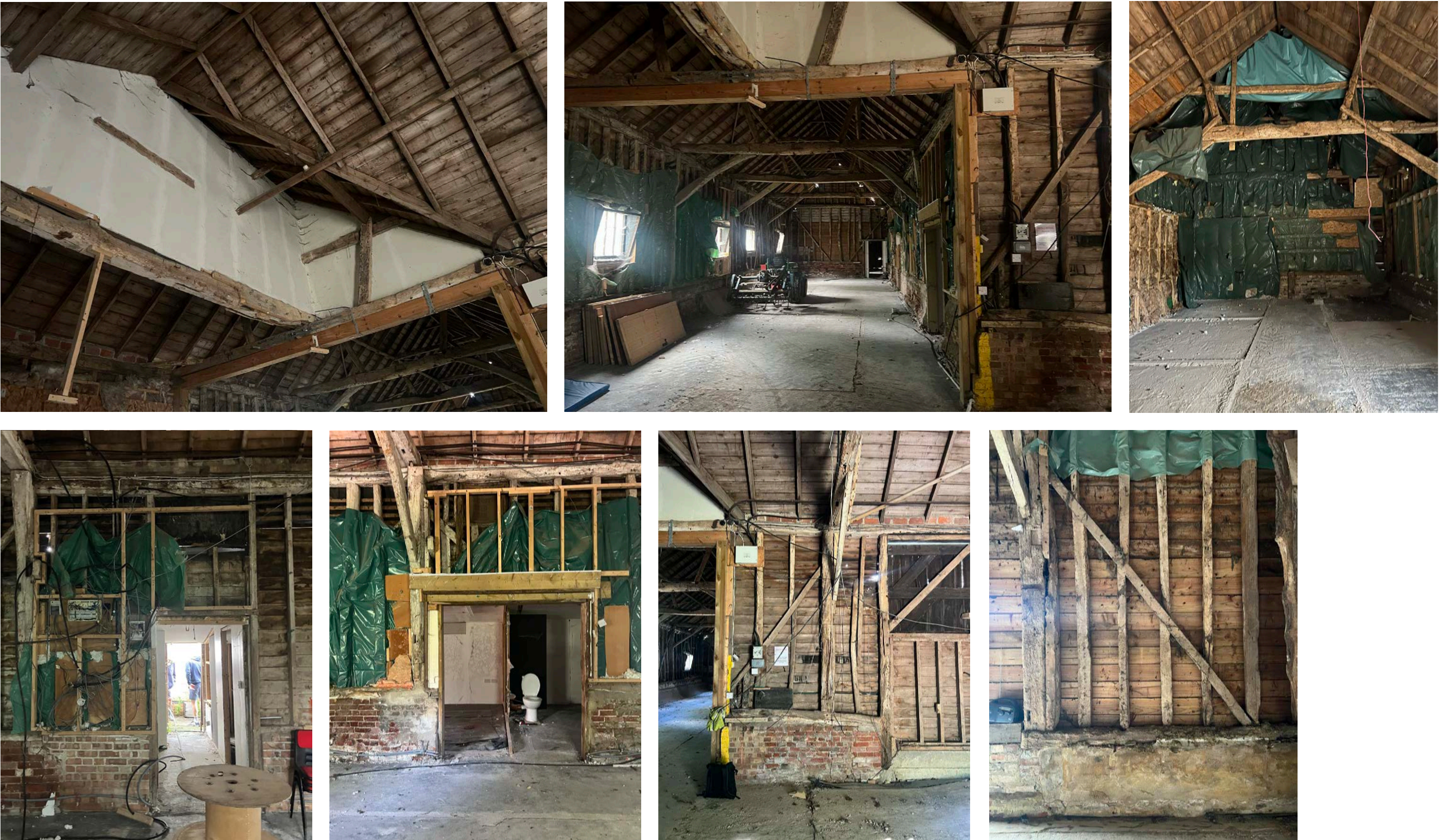
The scope of the project is highlighted in white on the aerial view on this page.

The following photographic survey gives an overview of the condition of the existing barn. Further information is given in the statement of heritage significance in section 4.0 and the condition survey in section 5.0.



1.4 Photographic survey of the condition of the buildings

Historic barn - internal views



1.4 Photographic survey of the condition of the buildings

Historic barn - external views



2. Context of the site

2.1 Heritage and land use evolution

The barn associated with this planning application forms part of the Irongate Farm site, which includes several barns as described in section one of this report.

An examination of archive maps indicates that the forms of the barns date from the late 19th century (see illustration on the right). The site has historically functioned as a farm and includes the Irongate Farmhouse, listed grade II* since 1987 under reference number 1347439.

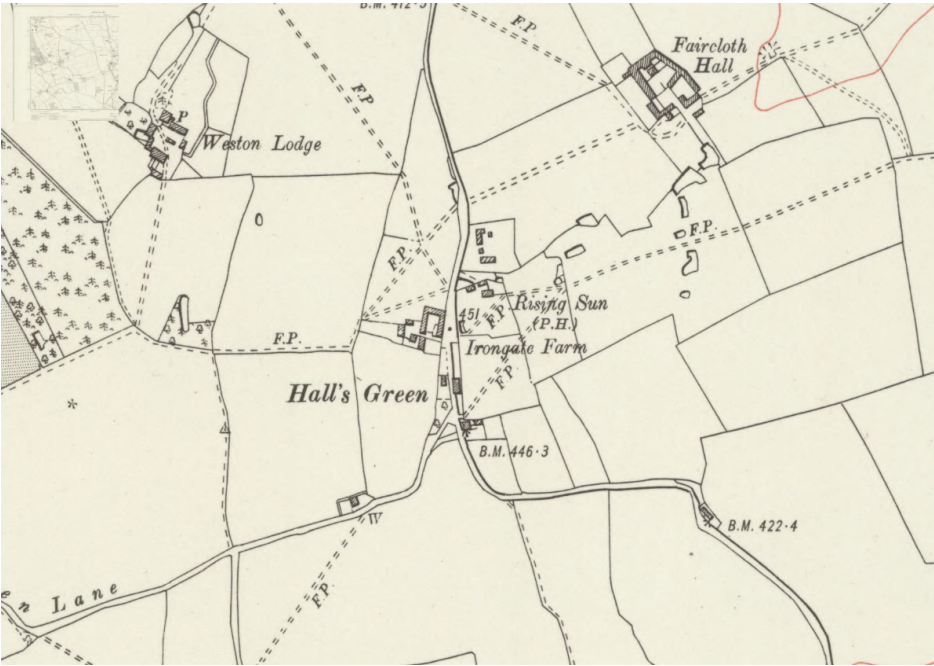
The farmhouse is thought to date from the late 16th or early 17th century. It has a 17th-century rear staircase and stair tower, and the front elevation was altered in the early 18th century, with further alterations to the windows in the 19th century. Notable features of the farmhouse include a timber frame resting on brick sills, a plain-edged roughcast front, and a steep old red tile roof extending to the front and rear. The building also has a half-hipped rear wing, an intricate roof structure and a distinctive chimney stack.



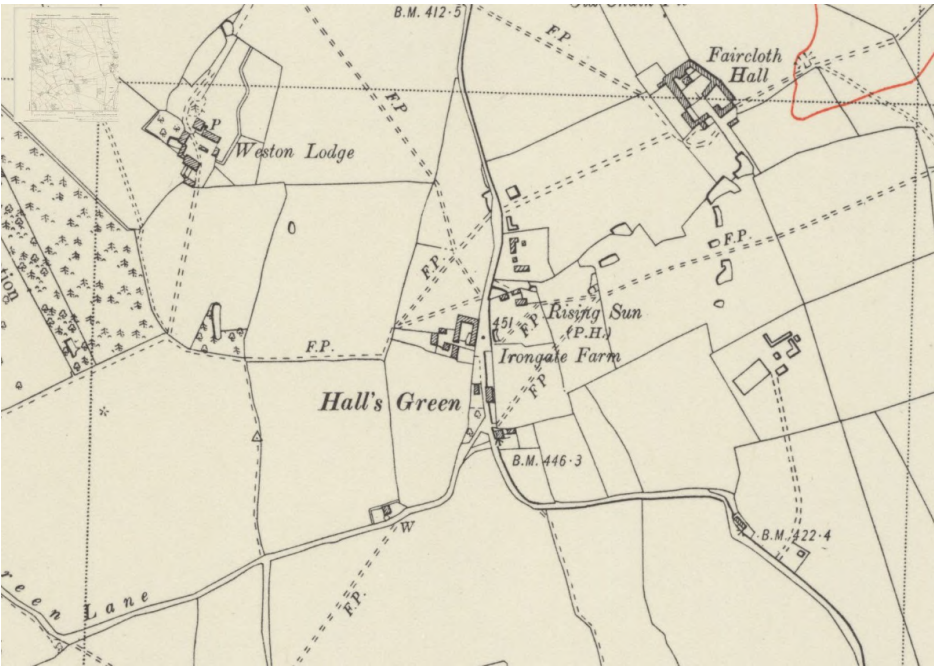
1884



1924



1950



2.1 Heritage and land use evolution

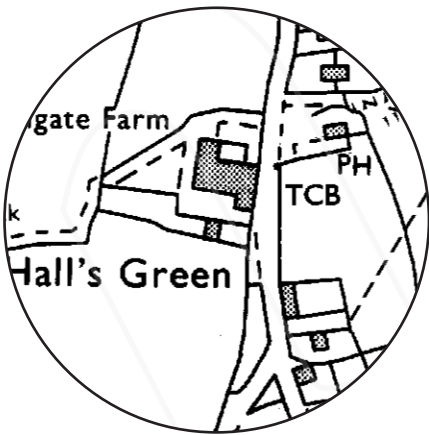
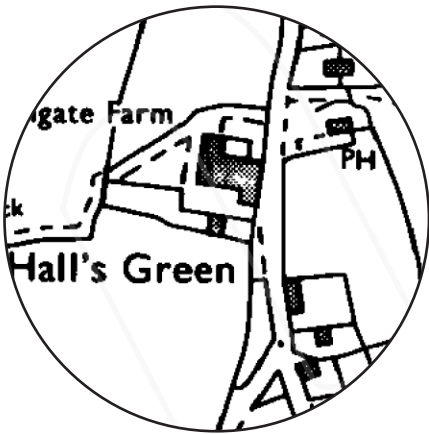
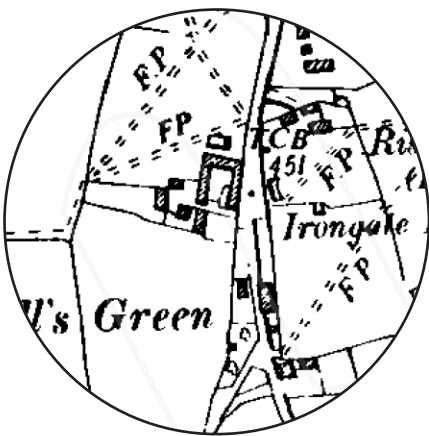
The pedestrian paths have been in place for many years, as indicated on the 1884 map, and they remain in use today.

The historic barn, illustrated in maps from 1884 to 1960, has a horseshoe shape and was likely the primary barn associated with the farmhouse for many years. Between 1884 and 1950, there was very little change in terms of buildings and land use, as suggested on the following page.

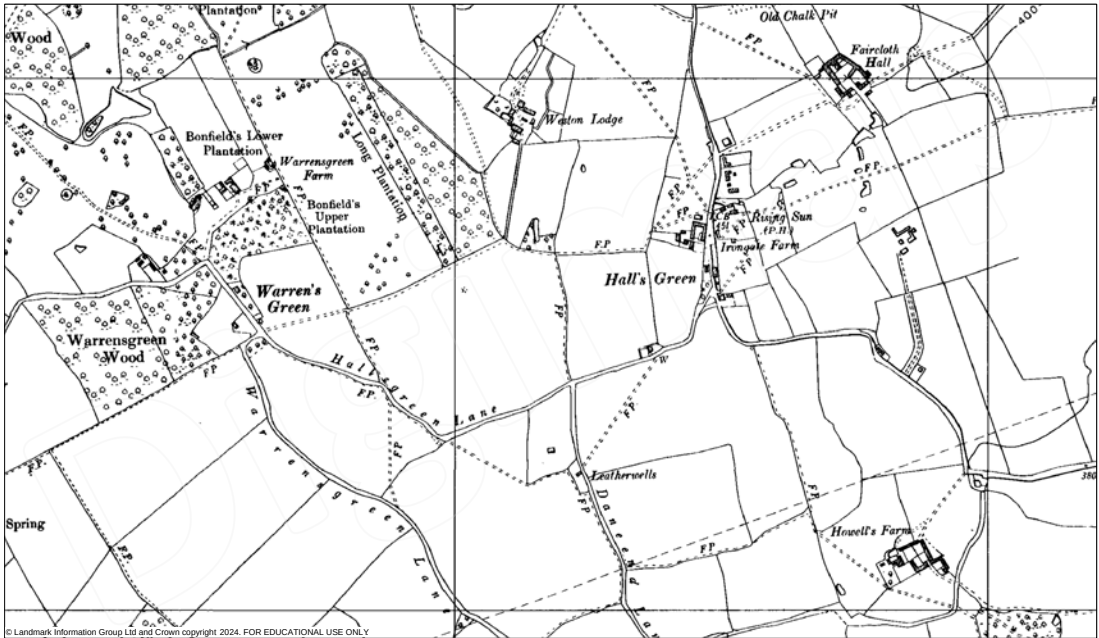
In 1960, the U-shaped barn was still present and was associated with another barn depicted on the 1979 map.

All of the barns were originally used for agricultural purposes and the current lawful use of the barns is in accordance with the application for change of use of the barns to B8, a use class that designates property for storage or distribution purposes, including warehouses, logistics centres and outdoor storage, which was approved in 2021.

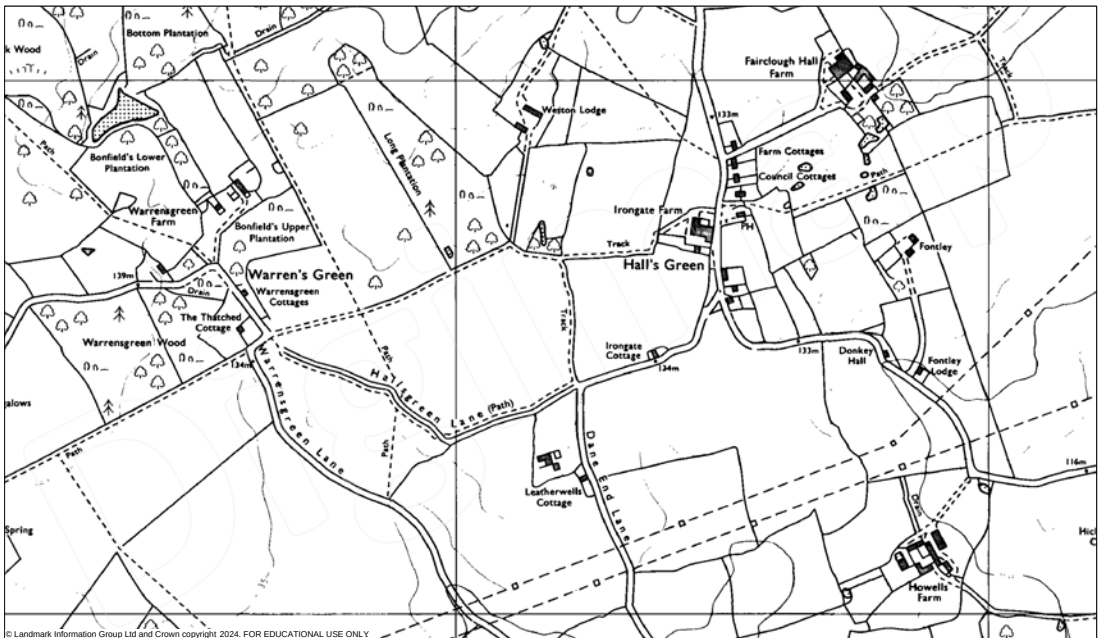
This indicates that the barn in question is currently in use as B8. The current planning application proposes a change of use to Class F1, which includes educational and non-residential uses such as schools, libraries, museums, places of worship and exhibition halls.



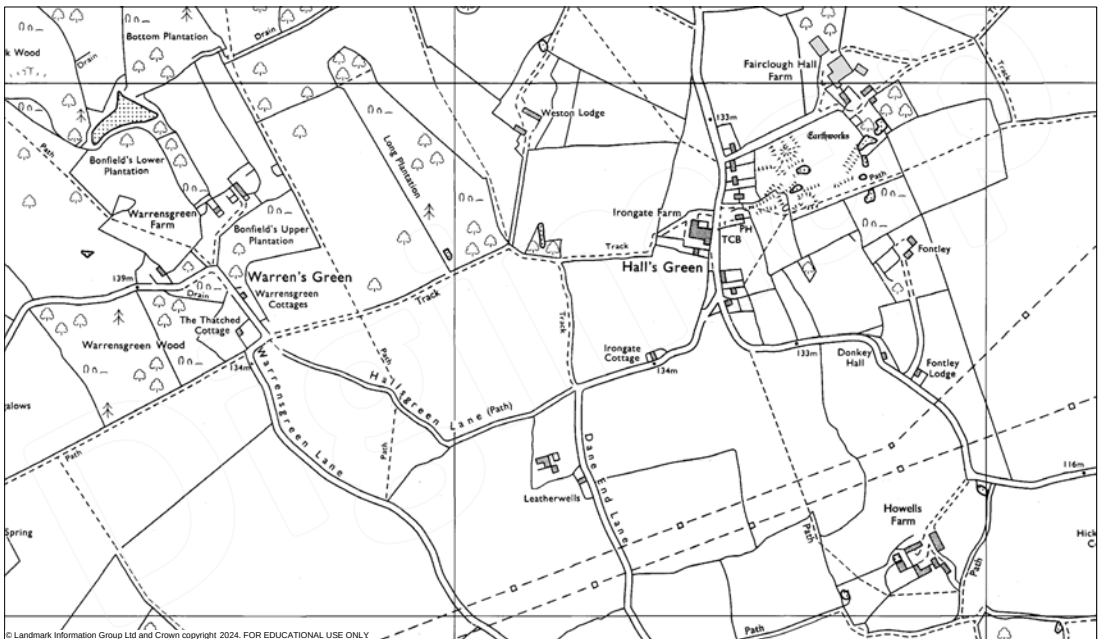
1960



1979



1994



2.2 Curtilage structure

Listed building. As noted in section 3.2, the farmhouse is a Grade II* listed building. The curtilage of a building (the principal listed building) is generally any area of land and other buildings around and connected to that principal building. The courts have said that there are three key factors to be taken into account in assessing whether a structure or object is within the curtilage of a listed building:

- i. the physical layout of the listed building and the structure;
- ii. their ownership, both historically and at the date of listing;
- iii. the use or function of the relevant buildings, again both historically and at the date of listing.

Curtilage and farmhouse. Irongate Farmhouse, listed grade II* in 1987, stands in its own garden with a series of barns nearby. The main farmyard lies to the north, separated from the farmhouse by a farm track, with a series of barns built in different periods.

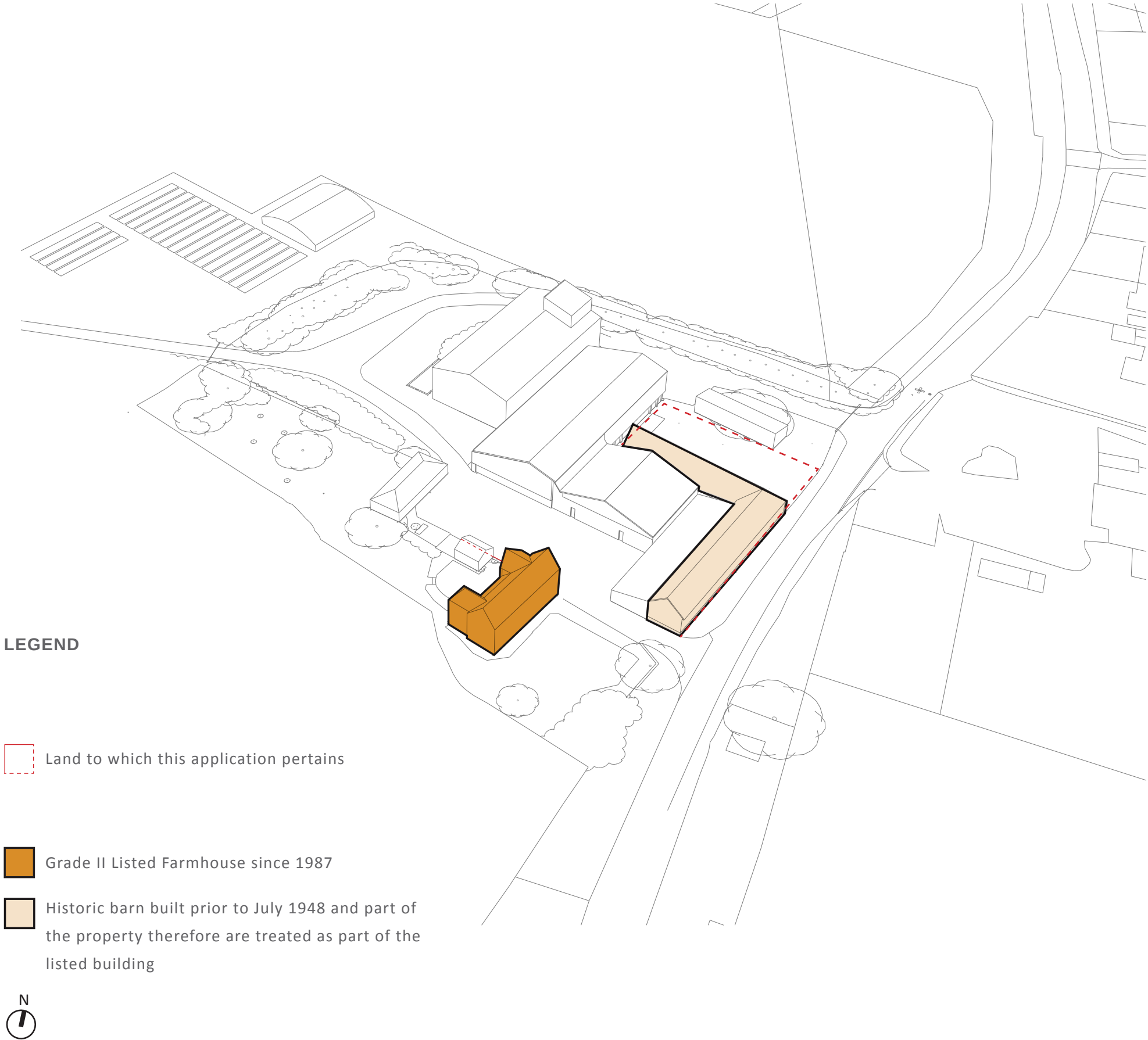
The question therefore arises as to whether the farm buildings fall within the curtilage of the listed building and, if so, whether they should be regarded as part of the listed building.

As demonstrated in the maps presented in the preceding section, the L-shaped barn was originally associated with the farmhouse and is likely to be within the curtilage of the designated listed building.

Nevertheless, in consideration of the period during which the concrete barn under consideration in this planning application was constructed, it is improbable that it falls within the curtilage of the farmhouse.

Source:
HEAG125 Listed available at: <https://historicengland.org.uk/images-books/publications/listed-buildings-and-curtilage-advice-note-10/>

Buildings and Curtilage Historic England Heritage Protection Guide under Listing, at [Historic England.org.uk/advice/hpg/has/listed-buildings/](https://historicengland.org.uk/advice/hpg/has/listed-buildings/)



2.3 A response formed by an appraisal of the local agrarian context of architecture within north hertfordshire

The following is a (non-exhaustive) high level summary of research and analysis undertaken as a means to develop a design response that relates in a substantial manner to the existing agrarian typologies that exist in North Hertfordshire. This approach aims to diverge from a pastiche or selective approach to architectural heritage. Whilst we live in ‘urban age’ (UN 2010), the ‘rural’ landscape beyond the greenbelt is arguably subject to huge physical, economic and social changes (Brenner 2015) over the next century. What is missing from current national planning policy or supplementary design guidance is an appraisal of the current agrarian landscape, how it reflects our present condition and future architectural approaches within this context.

2.3.1 Agrarian Architecture: Regional variations

The Historic England National Farmsteads Character Statement (2015), identifies a very broad range of building types, traditions and styles that exist currently across the southern region. A distinction is made between more traditional ‘area specific’ typologies and modern styles, forms and technologies that were adopted across the nation from the late 18th Century onwards through increased standardisation. Historic England classify buildings within the former category as having an inherent value related to a local sense of place.

2.1.2 The origins of traditional rural buildings in Hertfordshire

Pevsner references how many historic rural dwellings in this area from the 15th century were conceived as orthogonal aisled halls composed under single roof spans with low eaves. The Hall and the hearth were central to the design of rural homes. Pevsner’s analysis of the rural architecture of Hertfordshire links its influences strongly to its natural and geological resources. There was a lack of durable building stone, however materials such as pudding stone, Flint, and the tradition of

clay products such as tiles and brickwork are commonplace for civic buildings and those with a higher status. The use of timber framing however was widespread within rural settings across the county. This was partly the result of large supplies of suitable timber in the area. In addition to expressive timber structures, decorative geometric fenestration techniques also emerged. Pevsner also refers to the widespread use of timber weatherboarding as exemplified at the great barn at Croxley Green.

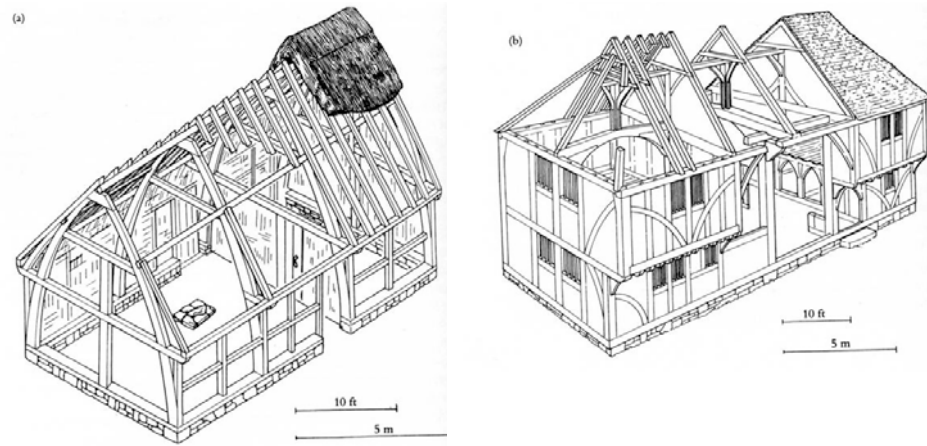
The influence of new timber technologies began to define the character



The great barn at Croxley Green

of structures in the rural environment following the widespread rebuilding of farm buildings in the 15th century. This included more efficient trusses and regulated framing which prolonged the longevity of these structures. Pirton Grange is an example of a typical internal plan with an emphasis on a full height volume from ground to roof with a large hearth.

The Influences of the ‘Weald’ hall houses from East Sussex and East



Hall Houses, ref: (C) Clive Rodger



Pirton Grange, ref: (C) British History Online

Anglia also exist in Hertfordshire, these included features such as projecting jetties over-sailing roofs, curved bracing and cross passages linking front and rear doors. More formal Georgian and Victorian influences emerged over the last two centuries, and were arguably adapted to the existing traditions of materials and construction systems.

Nikolaus Pevsner, Pevsner Architectural Guides, Hertfordshire, Yale University Press, 2019- P26-27, p58-62

2.1.3 The development of modern rural buildings in Hertfordshire

In addition to planned model farms and agricultural settlements, the industrial revolution introduced construction systems and building forms. Machine-made brick was commonly used in the inter-war period. This was in combination with metal roofs, features such as windows, patent glazing enlarged space standards and concrete floors which emerged as a result of changing hygiene standards led to larger shallower roof spans. Multifunctional sheds and their associated hard standings for vehicles and moving stock, widely introduced in the 1950s, are a vital feature of the modern farming industry.

Historic England, Historic Farmsteads South-east of England, Character Appraisal Parts 1 & 2, P20-22.

2.1.4 New housing beyond the greenbelt

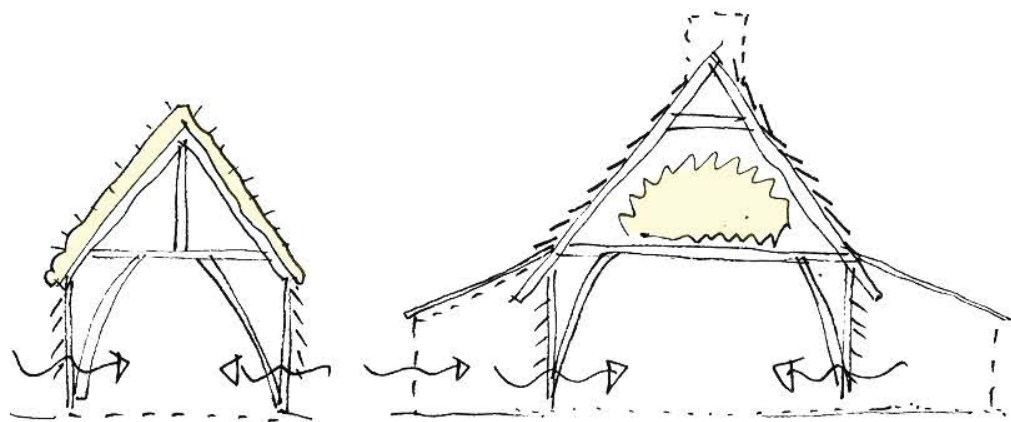
During the late 19th early 20th Century, improved rail transportation, rural and urban intensification around London led to new rural housing typologies and the formation of new towns and ‘garden cities’ within

Hertfordshire. Influential architectural languages were developed by during the arts and crafts era and adapted locally by architects such as Parker and Unwin. In contrast to mass produced forms of architecture, this approach advocated site specific architectural responses evolved that were informed by local traditions and materials. In contrast to traditional workers cottages or farmhouses, many were designed conscious of a leisure orientated relationship to the landscape above agrarian functional considerations. This included plan forms and openings related to their garden settings.

2.1.5 The design principles of ‘working’ agricultural buildings

- The relationship between the functional, environmental requirements and resulting influence upon the architectural expression is described in the Historic England National Farmsteads Character Statement (2015),
- Natural ventilation, light and the requirements for ever-increasing structural efficiency as a result of space and hygiene standards have been the driving influences in the development of this architectural typology over the last 500 years.

- Historically, steep tall roof forms were developed to accommodate higher quantities of hay in the lofts and permit ventilation.
- The use of clay tiles and slates necessitated minimum roof pitches for large spans resulting in large scale forms. The advent of corrugated metal and cement products capable of lower pitches arguably changed the relationship between these buildings and the landscape.
- Roof spans have increased over time to accommodate greater feeding and stalling layouts as agricultural technologies developed.
- Cooling and natural ventilation were as critical as obtaining warmth and shelter particularly with the use of upper levels for storage of dairy goods and fodder.
- Variegated roof forms and cat slides were often the result of additions and the economic changes that required combination barns and other mixed uses.
- The gables are largely turned to the road, often as larger elevations that face yards. This created a secondary relationship to laneways and streets.
- Form follows function; ornament and embellishment of these structures often related to the structural material requirements and local craft techniques.

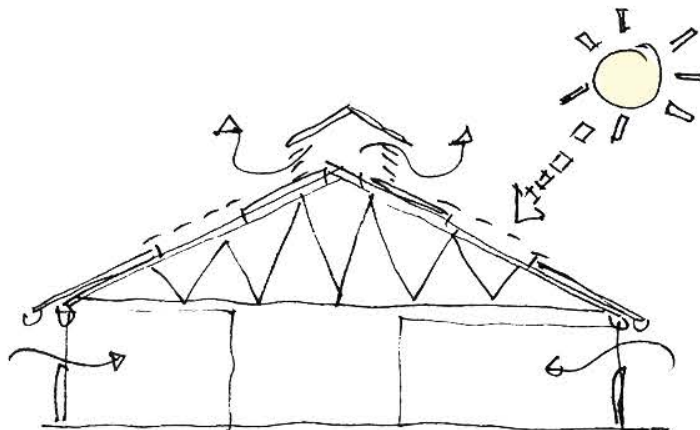


15th - 17th Century

- Narrow span cruck frame
- King post trusses
- Tiling or thatch
- Ventilated

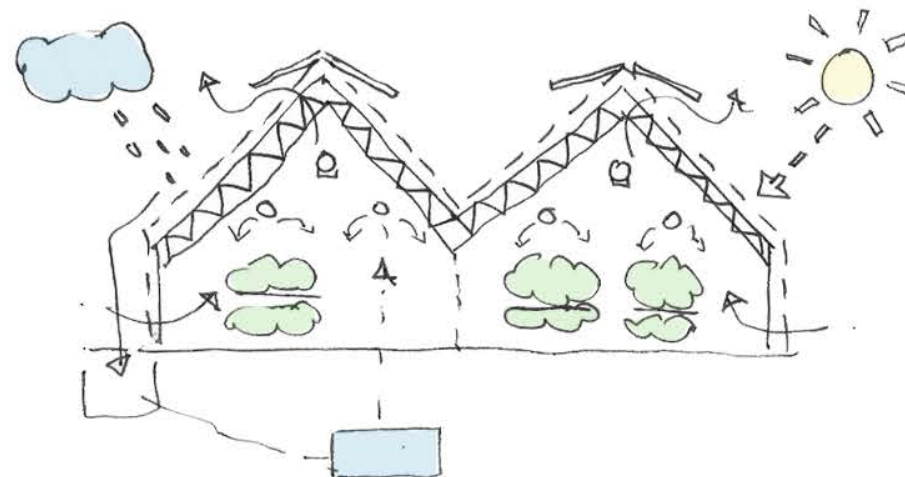
18th - early 20th Century

- Wider span trussed frames (cord and collar), high pitches
- Tall storage lofts (fodder)
- Tiling or slates
- Ventilated
- Lean-to or pitched Annexe
- Ventilation louvres, occasional cowls



20th - 21st Century

- Wider steel trusses lower pitches single storey.
- Sheet roofing and lightweight cladding
- Natural lighting and increased ventilation and hygiene standards



21st Century

- New ‘smart’ agrarian typologies, controlled climate high yield greenhouses.
- Space frames and modular glazing systems
- Optimised ventilation shading , water collection and irrigation technologies.

2.1.6 Summary

In addition to its group value, the historic barn has evidential value as a precedent type for the development of vernacular language for rural buildings and dwellings in Hertfordshire. Although without the scope of this application, this appraisal has also informed the design of the development proposed under 25/01141/FP, which has been considered in the context of its relationship to the historic barn.

Key design principals of agrarian architecture identified following this analysis:

- A building that follows the tradition and legacy of rural buildings that have evolved through engineered response to climate and structural efficiency.
- A singular form that is shaped by the environmental characteristics of the site, responding to light, ventilation and that bring enjoyment as well as function to the spaces internally.
- An emphasis on the roof as a key driver for the expression with the elevation as a means to provide a sense of scale, signify internal uses and articulate openings.
- Large functional openings to the landscape for views and access in the manner of working agricultural buildings.
- A building which sits delicately upon the land, transparency, and lightweight construction.
- A use of materials that reflects the local vernacular in a modern and honest manner. Materials such as timber, metal sheeting, and tiling and a celebration of modular construction.
- Sharp and elegant detailing that is related to the function of each built element. i.e. integrated eaves gutters, coordinated renewable technologies.

2.1.7 Examples of agrarian typologies: working buildings and dwellings within the area



Modern barns at Irongate Farm, Hall's Green



Historic barns at Warren's Green Farm



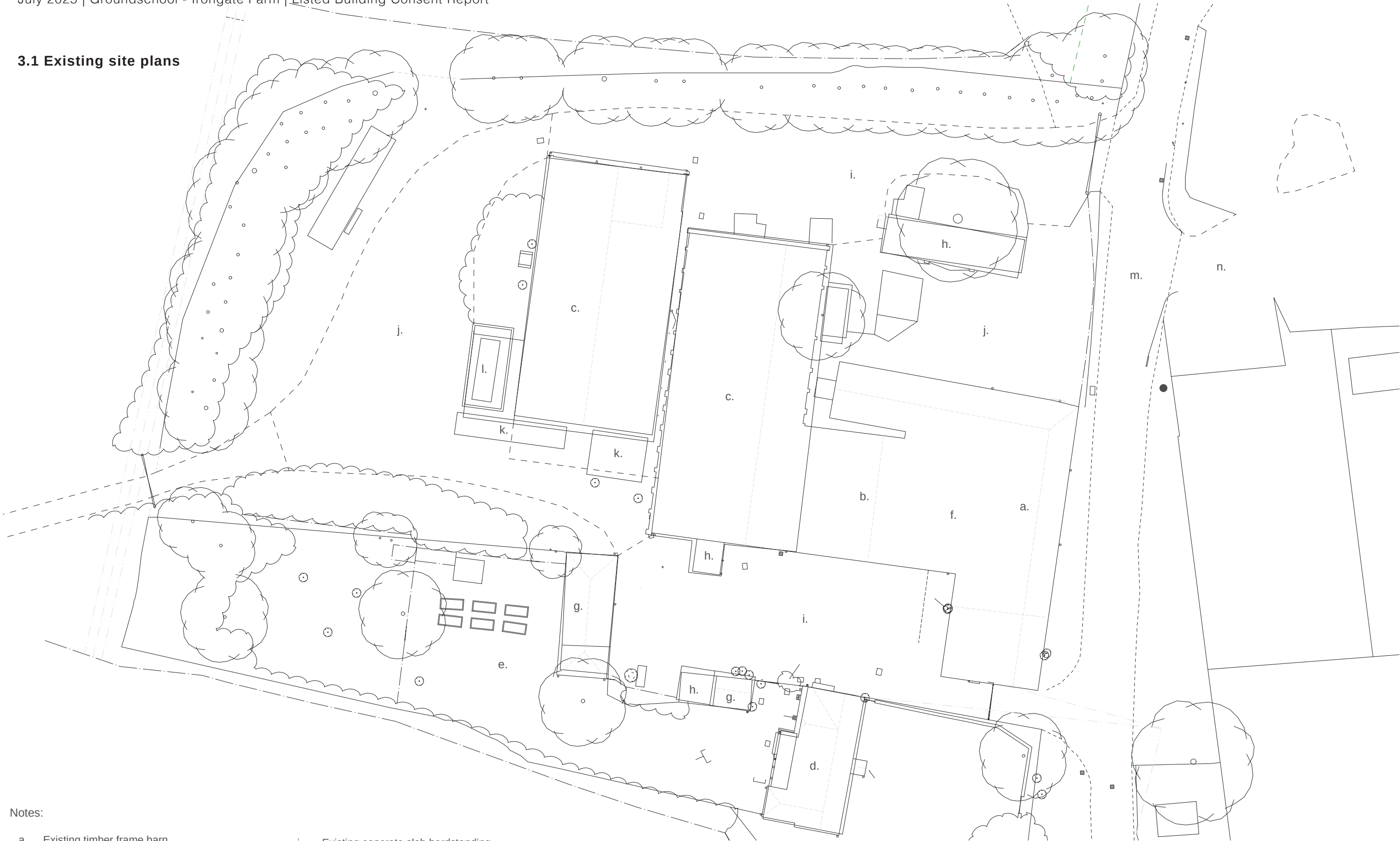
New development housing, Weston



Oakley Farm, Weston

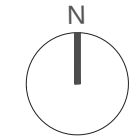
3. Existing plans

3.1 Existing site plans



Notes:

- a. Existing timber frame barn
- b. Existing concrete frame barn
- c. Existing steel frame barn
- d. Existing grade I listed farmhouse
- e. Existing farmhouse garden
- f. Existing infill structure, in poor condition
- g. Existing barn with black timber weatherboarding and tiled roof
- h. Existing outbuildings/lean to structure with black timber weatherboarding and corrugated roof
- i. Existing concrete slab hardstanding
- j. Existing hoggin surface
- k. Existing storage containers
- l. Existing tank (defunct)
- m. Laneway with 30mph limit
- n. Access and parking for neighboring public house



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1 2 5 10 20m 1:200

Note: This drawing is copyright.
Note: These layouts are preliminary until further surveys are undertaken.
Note: Scale and boundaries are indicative.
Note: Ownership boundary indicative based on OS data.
Note: Red dotted line is shown as site boundary.
Note: Elevation key plan not to scale.

Michael Collins Architect LLP

Groundschool, Irongate Farm
Job No. 255 Existing Site Plan
- Roof Plan

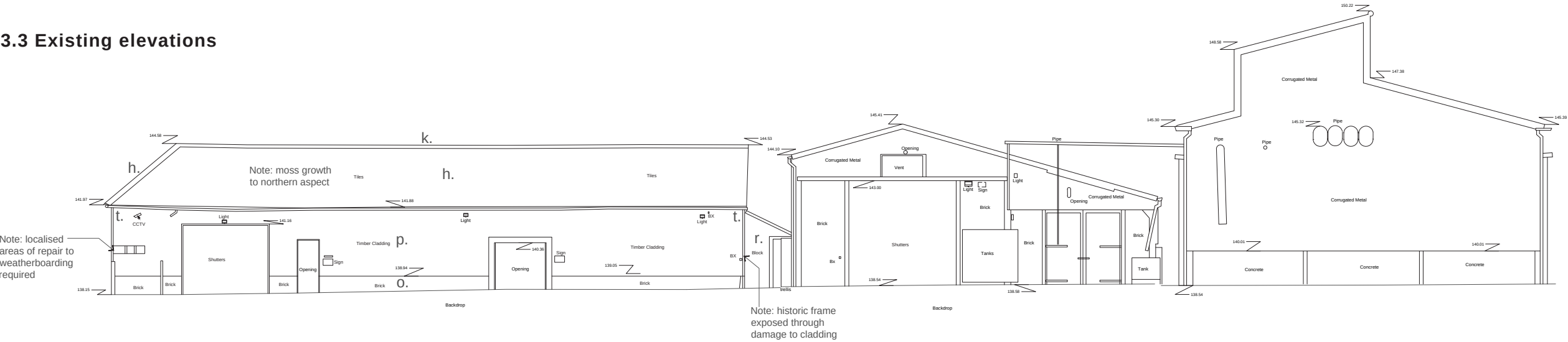
Stage: Stage 3
Status: Planning

002

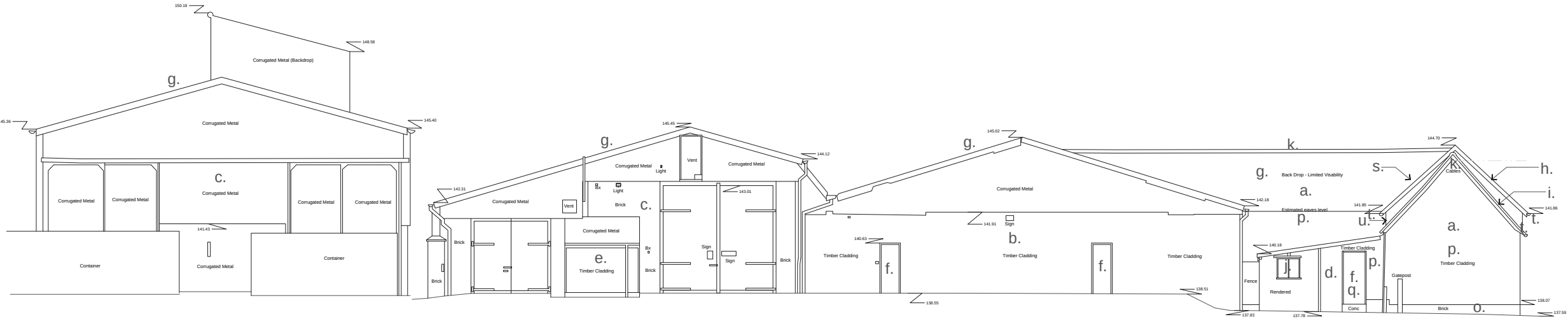
REVISION: Scale 1:200 @:A1



3.3 Existing elevations



Elevation One (North)



Elevation Three (South)

Notes:

- a.

Existing timber frame barn
- b.

Existing concrete frame barn
- c.

Existing steel frame barn
- d.

Existing infill structure, in poor condition
- e.

Existing outbuildings/lean to structure with black timber weatherboarding and corrugated roof
- f.

Existing timber door
- g.

Existing corrugated roof - metal or fiber cement
- h.

Existing fibre cement slate tiles
- i.

Existing red clay tiles
- j.

Existing timber framed window
- k.

Existing wet fixed ridge
- n.

Existing metal frame windows with mullions, repairs with perspex and animal wire
- o.

Existing brick plinth with black paint
- p.

Existing black painted/tar timber weatherboarding
- q.

Door clad in vertical weatherboard
- r.

Existing blockwork (painted white) lean-to with felt roofing
- s.

Existing lead valley
- t.

Existing uPVC rainwater goods
- u.

Plywood cladding with waterproof membrane over
- v.

Existing village notice board



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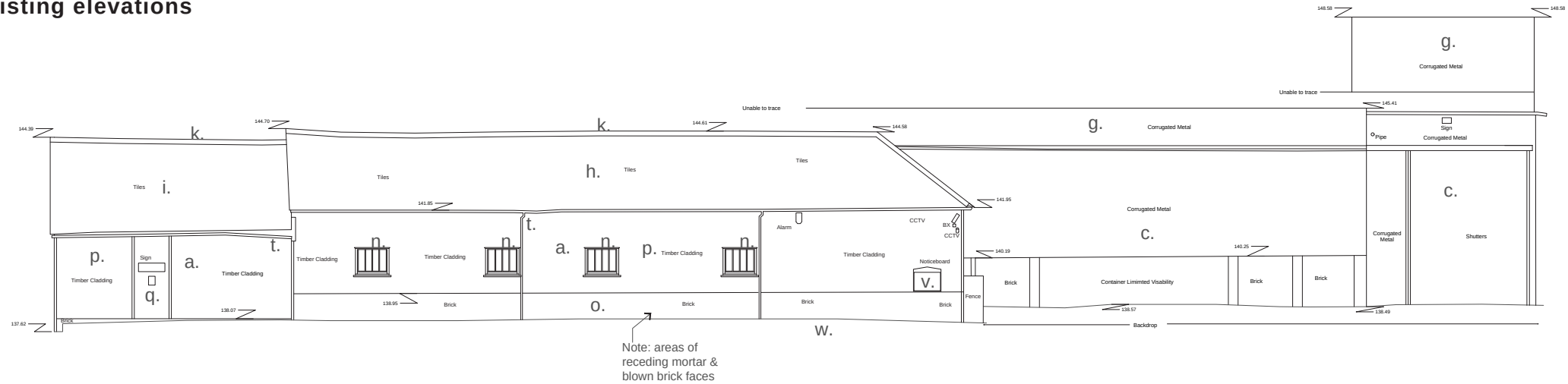
Groundschool, Irongate Farm
Job No. 255 Existing Elevations

Stage: Stage 3
Status: LBC

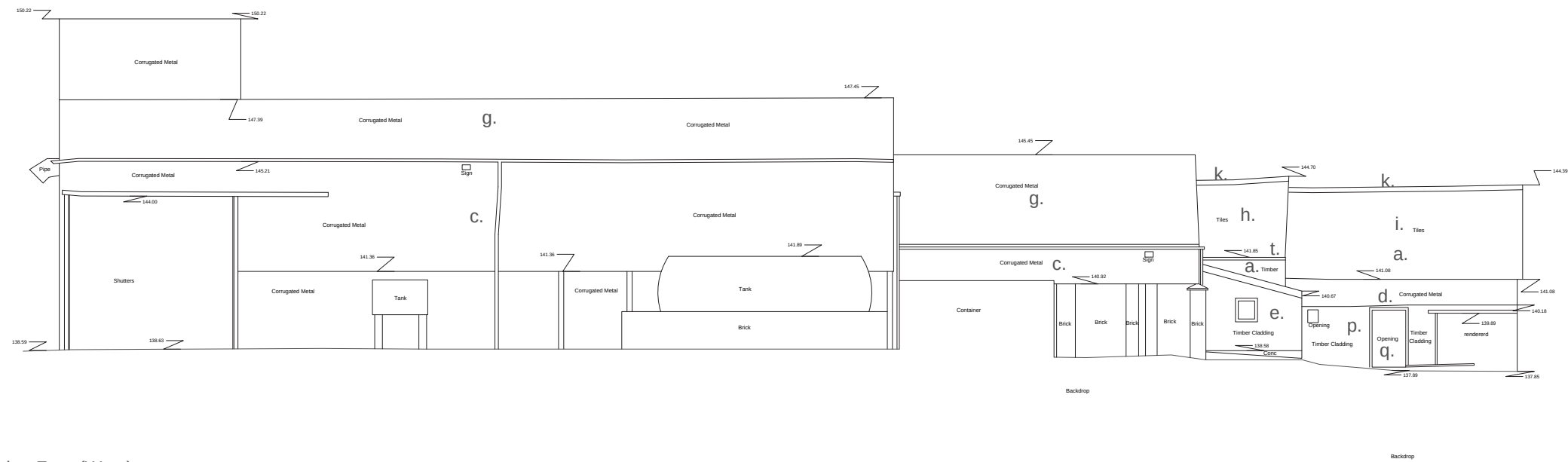
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REVISION: LBC
Scale: 1:100 @A1

3.3 Existing elevations



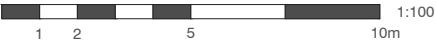
Elevation Two (East)



Elevation Four (West)

Notes:

- a. Existing timber frame barn
- b. Existing concrete frame barn
- c. Existing steel frame barn
- d. Existing infill structure, in poor condition
- e. Existing outbuildings/lean to structure with black timber weatherboarding and corrugated roof
- f. Existing timber door
- g. Existing corrugated roof - metal or fiber cement
- h. Existing fibre cement slate effect tiles
- i. Existing red clay tiles
- j. Existing timber framed window
- k. Existing wet fixed ridge
- n. Existing metal frame windows with mullions, repairs with perspex and animal wire
- o. Existing brick plinth with black paint
- p. Existing black painted/tar timber weatherboarding
- q. Door clad in vertical weatherboard
- r. Existing blockwork (painted white) lean-to with felt roofing
- s. Existing lead valley
- t. Existing uPVC rainwater goods
- u. Plywood cladding with waterproof membrane over
- v. Existing village notice board
- w. Existing grass verge and ditch



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Note: This drawing is copyright.
Note: These layouts are preliminary until further surveys are undertaken.
Note: Scale and boundaries are indicative.
Note: Ownership boundary indicative based on OS data.
Note: Red dotted line is shown as site boundary.
Note: Elevation key plan not to scale.

Michael Collins Architect LLP

Groundschool, Irongate Farm
Job No. 255 Existing Elevations Two

Stage: Stage 3
Status: LBC

005
REVISION: LBC
Scale 1:100 @:A1

4. Statement of Heritage Significance

4.1 Introduction

This statement of significance aims to incorporate and understanding of the evolution of the heritage asset, its significance overall and the significance of individual components. It will Identify those aspects of its character that will need to be respected as part of the adaptive reuse of this building. Furthermore, it will assess the site and the capacity for change of the buildings.

4.1.1 Terms of reference

This heritage statement describes the importance of Irongate Farm’s heritage features, providing a compelling rationale for its preservation. Section 3 therefore considers its historical, architectural, artistic, and archaeological values to assesses the potential impact of proposed works, addressing the following:

- **Scope:** Define the boundaries of the heritage asset and its setting.
- **Purpose:** State the goal of the statement, which is to understand and protect the heritage asset’s significance.
- **Content:** Outline the information that needs to be included, such as historical data, architectural features, and impact assessment.
- **Methodology:** Specify the methods used for assessing the asset’s significance, including site visits, research, and consultation with experts.
- **Resources:** Identify the necessary resources, such as personnel with expertise in heritage and planning.
- **Review:** Outline the process for reviewing and updating the statement over time.

This Statement of Heritage Significance highlights potential threats to this significance and aims to highlight and enhance these special qualities so that they can be retained for future generations. The

findings of this Statement will provide an objective framework to guide decisions on the future management of the building, from its use, repair and general maintenance.

4.1.2 The site

The site involves a curtilage Listed Barn associated with the grade II* listed Irongate Farmhouse located in Hall’s Green.

The farmhouse is the main listed asset, but is not subject to this application and no works are planned. Refer to 3.3. The farmhouse however is notable for its exterior decoration, its form and significant internal features. It is an example of “an unusually elaborate 3-cells house” (Historic England). The residence is situated immediately in a garden to its front and rear.

4.1.3 The scope of the statement

The Heritage Statement considers the surroundings in which the barn is experienced. Its extent is not fixed and may change as the asset and its surroundings evolve. This statement considers the barns to be a landmark within the public realm experienced through views from afar but also more intimately as a result of adjacent walking routes.

4.1.4 Methodology

The following methodology was adopted in preparation of the Statement of Significance

- Understanding the site: In-depth inspection of the building; compilation of photographic record; assessment of current physical condition; including review of previous condition.
- Assessment: Identification and presentation of the significances, vulnerabilities, constraints and gaps in knowledge and understanding of the site; threats to significance.

4.1.5 Legislative and guidance context

This appraisal has been conducted in accordance with the general guidelines set out in British Standard 7913:2013 ‘Guide to the

Conservation of Historic Buildings’ and also the Historic England publications ‘Informed Conservation’ and ‘Conservation Principles, Policies and Guidance,’ 2008 and in particular responds to policies outlined in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF).

In respect of information requirements, it sets out that: “In determining applications, local planning authorities should require an applicant to describe the significance of any heritage assets affected, including any contribution made by their setting.

The level of detail within this statement is deemed proportionate to the assets’ importance and to understand the potential impact of the proposal on its significance.”

Guidance on the implementation and interpretation of historic environment policy has been provided by the following Historic England publications:

- Enabling Development and Heritage Assets Historic Environment Good Practice Advice in Planning Note 4, 2020
- Historic England 2015: GPA2 (Managing Significance in Decision-Taking in the Historic Environment)
- Historic England 2017: GPA3 (The Setting of Heritage Assets)
- Historic England 2019: HEAN12 (Statements of Heritage Significance: Analysing Significance in Heritage Assets)
- ClfA 2014 (Updated 2020): Standard and Guidance for Historic Environment Desk Based Assessment.

Although non-statutory, there are several key international charters which guide best practice in terms of protecting cultural heritage, as follows:

- Venice Charter, 1964, Charter for the Conservation and Restoration of Monuments and Sites.
- Grenada Charter, 1985, Charter for the Protection of Architectural Heritage of Europe
- Burra Charter, 1988, Australia ICOMOS Charter for the Conservation of Places of Cultural Significance.

Further guidance:

BS 7913: 2013 Guide to the conservation of historic buildings (adopted Dec 2015)

3.2 UNDERSTANDING OF PLACE

4.2.1 Sources

An understanding of the history and evolution of the barn at Irongate Farm has been undertaken through written and cartographic records along with analysis of the building’s physical structure. Despite alterations and modernisations in some areas, the original fabric remains prevalent. A study was carried out to identify visible fabric and potential alteration. The physical evidence has been recorded and documented, and is elaborated upon within this document. This physical evidence is supported by historic maps and Historic Environment Records.

4.2.2 The context of Irongate Farm

The agricultural history of North Hertfordshire is deeply intertwined with the county’s overall development. The many historic agricultural buildings across Hertfordshire, such as the structures subject to this application, have an evidential value of the historic agrarian society that existed prior to the industrial revolution.

The Domesday Book recorded the existence of forests, arable land, and meadows in North Hertfordshire (Historic England 2022). These elements contributed to the development of the vernacular architecture of agricultural buildings. The later medieval period saw the growth of village communities and the expansion of farming around settlements.

The village of Weston was a medieval settlement and is known for its dispersed settlement pattern. Halls Green is an example of a place that developed on one of the main roads from Weston around a number of historic farms.

Cartographic and field evidence combine to indicate the former existence of a settlement of at least three farms and associated cottages, and the piecemeal changes in it over the last three and a half centuries. These were Lodge Farm, Fairclough Hall Farm (also called



19th Century map illustrating the pattern of farms around Weston

© National Library of Scotland (2025). Surveyed 1804-1815, revised 1831-1834.

Halls Green Farm) and Irongate farm. To the west there was a medieval deer park. Irongate farm dates to the C16th, and its land stretched south close to the edge of The Great Northern Road.

In the 19th and early 20th Century further dwellings appeared including the conversion of a former 18th century cottage in 1904 owned by the Dimsdale family into the Rising Sun Public House across the road from Irongate farm.

4.2.3 The evolution of Irongate farm and the significance of the heritage assets subject to this application

Irongate Farmhouse was built c.1600, and elaborately upgraded inside in the late 17th century and outside in the early 18th century. It is noted by Historic England as comprising of an “unusually elaborate 3-cells house with surviving internal features”.

Whilst no mention is made in the listing of the barns, HER records describe the grade II* farmhouse as having four ranges of farm buildings arranged around a rectangular yard north of the house; the north and east wings (subject to these proposals) survive. This is also evidenced by cartographic analysis which illustrate the former farmyard facing the house in the typical pattern of buildings incrementally gathering around this space.

The existence of the farmhouse provides evidence of the presence of barns as part of a close knit collection of buildings. The range of barns have a strong evidential value in terms of the former farmyard and are a key contributor to the significance of the main house. The relatively closed and large scale aspect of the barns along the carriageway elevation are a key part of the historic inward looking character of the streetscape.

4.2.3 The significance of the heritage asset subject to these proposals

The current L shaped Weatherboarded timber framed barns potentially date from the late 19th century, with structures in their place from an earlier date. The 1600s and 1700s saw a surge in timber building, with sophisticated construction techniques and the widespread use of timber for both residential and agricultural building. The bay width, scale and form of construction of the barn at Irongate suggests however that the current structures are more contemporary than the farmhouse itself.

The form of the barns, evidence of previous porches and scale of the openings suggests these were used largely as threshing barns with potentially the southern portion accommodating animals. The original yard has been infilled, porches removed but evidenced internally by more recent (assumed victorian or edwardian wall infills). The orientation of the barns has changed from the south where these faced the historic yard fronting the farmhouse to the north as a result of the new concrete barn and others.

The existing structure is composed of a half cruck frame formed from hand cut timbers with mortice and tennon joints set on Jowled posts. Timbers are secured to the posts with pegs and iron clasps. The roof appears to have been subject to various alterations, evidence of salvaged historic timbers and sawn timbers. The roof has sawn sarking and rafters mixed occasionally with historic rafters of a more baltic appearance, the roof appears generally as an early 20th century addition to the more historic oak structure.

The dwarf walls are subject to extensive damage potentially from successive mucking out but also the introduction of new concrete floors.

The presence of two entrances from historic mapping and differential floor levels between both barns may suggest the presence of a partition wall between both barns.



4.2.3 Condition

The building is currently in a poor condition and it is important that works are carried out relatively quickly to arrest further damage to the heritage asset through the elements and from harmful additions.

4.2.5 Threats to heritage

Modern additions to the barn have caused harm that requires rectification in order to preserve the barn for future use. These include the blockwork infill building and lean-to on the west gable end. Areas of insulation and waterproofing membranes have also been installed in some areas between the historic timbers. The material choice and workmanship of these additions accelerate issues of damp and decay.

It is important that in addition to essential repairs, other improvements are made to the building to enable use as an agricultural teaching space that can off-set the perceived maintenance and cost burden. likely to be a determining factor in the decision making process.

4.2.6 Securing appropriate uses

The most effective method of protecting a building’s heritage values is to ensure its continued use. The perceived maintenance and cost burden. likely to be a determining factor in the decision making process. Therefore, it is important to consider that in addition to essential repairs, other improvements to the building are needed to enable use as an agricultural learning space. Consequently, the work subject of the LBC is designed to address modifications that will enhance the building’s use and return it to its historical function as an agricultural building.

The key to successful building conservation is managing change in a sustainable way to ensure the cultural value of the buildings is passed on to future generations. An open, flexible and forward-looking approach, based on an informed understanding of the site and buildings, is fundamental to good conservation practice.

4.3 APPROACH TO SIGNIFICANCE

A consensus among the various authoritative sources indicates that a statement of heritage significance is predicated on values in terms of the historic, aesthetic, and landscape contribution, which must be safeguarded.

The basis of protection for buildings of cultural heritage significance is understanding their unique identity, expressed as a collection of values that can be enshrined by a place – in other words, what is important, and what aspects of the building contribute to that importance.

The following assessment of significance is laid out in accordance with the documents Historic England Conservation Principles, 2008 and British Standard 7913: Conservation of Historic Buildings, 2013, which acknowledge that understanding both the tangible and intangible significances of a historic building enables effective decision making about its future.

The principles state that sustainable management of a heritage asset must begin with gaining an understanding of its cultural heritage values, and then by setting out its significance, in order to guide appropriate conservation decision making which seeks to sustain those values.

First, Historic England Conservation Principles, 2008, clearly states, “A ‘statement of significance’ of a place should be a summary of the cultural and natural heritage values currently attached to it and how they interrelate, which distills the particular character of the place. It should explain the relative importance of the heritage values of the place (where appropriate, by reference to criteria for statutory designation), how they relate to its physical fabric, the extent of any uncertainty about its values (particularly in relation to potential for hidden or buried elements), and identify any tension between potentially conflicting values. So far as possible, it should be agreed by all who have an interest in the place. The result should guide all decisions about material change to a significant place.”

Further, The ICOMOS Charter for the Conservation of Places of Cultural Significance (1988, also known as The Burra Charter), lays down the principles for assessing cultural significance, defined as “the aesthetic historic, scientific or social values for past, present and future generations.”

Finally, the approach to signification uses the Assessment of Cultural Values BS Standard 7913 framework, that identifies four categories of primary values, paraphrased as follows:

Evidential value

An element of an historic asset that provides evidence about past human activity, including standing structures that are easily visible, as well as those that may be hidden below ground or under water. This aspect of value is strongly related to physical remains, but may also include documentary sources, pictorial records and artefacts.

Historical value

These aspects of significance are often less tangible than physical evidence, including associations with notable people, or historical events or developments. They often connect past people, events and aspects of life with the present, and are likely to have changed with time of shifting perspectives. Historical values are less vulnerable to change than evidential values.

Aesthetic value

This is derived from the way in which people draw sensory and intellectual stimulation from an historic asset, including its appearance and how it lies within its setting. As such, this aspect of value is more subjective than the preceding classifications, being particularly sensitive to change over time and subject to fluctuations depending on many factors.

Communal value

This element of value derives from the meanings an historic asset holds for those who relate to it, or for whom it forms part of a collective experience, or memory. This may include emotional links, and aspects of the site that people can relate to their collective history and heritage. It is important to remember that not all aspects of communal value are positive, and can often relate to uncomfortable experiences and events. Aspects of social value are included in this category. Communal value will change over time.

4.4 SUMMARY STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

- In summary the key heritage significances are;
- The L shaped plan, which is evidence of the former farmyard is considerable.
 - The open aisled interior evidence of the former use as a threshing barn is of considerable value
 - The internal base course and timber framed structure and contribute to the historic value of the agrarian craftsmanship and socioeconomic development of similar farms across hertfordshire. The trusses themselves are of exceptional value. Areas of framing are mixed with new timber and have been subject to change and are of considerable value.
 - The closed appearance of the barns from the road and functional nature of openings provides an evidential value of their former use.

Whilst the site does not contain rare examples of well-preserved or unique farm buildings the scale of these structures is significant. The site has experienced significant change, with over 50% loss of historic form and legibility and the addition of many additional buildings which have changed the original orientation and access. Therefore, it is recommended that remedial measures be implemented in order to mitigate any potential further decline.

4.5 RELATIVE SIGNIFICANCE

As identified by BS 7913, where changes to the fabric or use of a historic building or its setting are planned, the potential impact of that change on its significance should be identified and quantified.

The impacts from change can either be direct (i.e. affecting the fabric or character of the historic building), or indirect, (i.e. altering spatial qualities or relationships within its setting). Change that protects or reveals the historic building’s significance should be encouraged, whilst change that has the potential to be detrimental to the significance of the historic building should be avoided where possible.

The various spaces or elements within the historic timber barn at Irongate Farm have been assessed and graded, based upon the contribution they make to the overall significance of the building. This will assist in the future conservation and management of the building, to protect and enhance the significance. A guide to the grading levels is outlined as follows:

Exceptional Significance

A space or element of the building, which is of great importance, and is integral to the overall significance and character of the building. Layout and original fabric are intact, and the space or element is a strong example of a particular period or style.

Considerable Significance

A space or element of the building, which makes an important contribution to the significance and character of the overall building. Layout and original fabric are substantially intact, and the space or element is a good example of a particular period or style.

Moderate Significance

A space or element of the building which contributes to the overall significance of the building but is not a key component.

Neutral Significance

A space or element which neither contributes, nor detracts from the significance of the building.

Negative

A space or element which detracts from the significance of the building.

4.6 TABLE OF RELATIVE SIGNIFICANCE

The various spaces or elements within the Historic Barn at Irongate Farm have been assessed and graded in the table below, based upon the contribution they make to the overall significance of the building. This will provide an objective framework to assist in the future conservation and management of the building, to ensure the special qualities are retained over the various phases of works.

A guide to the grading levels is outlined below and highlighted on the accompanying colour coded floor plan:

Exceptional Significance

A space or element of the building, which is of great importance, and is integral to the overall significance and character of the building. Layout and original fabric are intact, and the space or element is a strong example of a particular period or style.

Considerable Significance

A space or element of the building, which makes an important contribution to the significance and character of the overall building. Layout and original fabric are substantially intact, and the space or element is a good example of a particular period or style.

Moderate Significance

A space or element of the building which contributes to the overall significance of the building but is not a key component.

Low Significance

A space or element which makes little or no contribution to the significance of the building.

The elements or spaces have been subsequently graded according to their sensitivity to change as outlined below:

Very High

Even minimal change or alteration has the potential to negatively impact upon the significance of the building.

High

Some small degree of change or alteration is possible, without having negative impact upon overall significance.

Moderate

A reasonable degree of change is possible.

Low

The space is not of special importance and a considerable degree of change is possible.



Exterior Elevations and Elements					
Area	Significance (see 4.5)	Contribution to Overall Significance (see 4.6)	Sensitivity to Change (see 4.6)	Key Elements of Significance	Additional Comments
L-shaped plan	- Legacy of originally ‘u’-shaped barn/collection of barns - Scale and form indicative of construction date - Evidence of former use as threshing barn	CONSIDERABLE	HIGH	Plan is evident of former farmyard	Principal facade has shifted to the north elevation due to construction of modern infill buildings
Open aisled interior	Evidence of former use as threshing barn	CONSIDERABLE	MODERATE	Open bays	Difference in floor level suggests a dividing wall may have been present historically
Internal base course & timber framed structure	- Construction methods and materials indicative of time period - Surviving example of agrarian craftsmanship	EXCEPTIONAL / CONSIDERABLE	HIGH	- Red clay brick dwarf walls - Half cruck frame - Mortice and tenon joints on jowled posts - Pegged posts with iron clasps	- Modern wall infill uses generic stock bricks - Damage to original brickwork from repeated mucking out and insertion of concrete floor slab and services
Closed appearance of barns	- Closed appearance from the road - Evidence of inward facing relationship to farmyard and farmhouse - Modern metal frame windows inserted to road elevation	CONSIDERABLE	HIGH	- Large functional openings to north yard - Closed appearance from road elevation	No remains of historic porches but an opening in it’s place to the north elevation remains
Floor	- Modern concrete floor slab - Cannot rule out presence of historic floor finish beneath	LOW	LOW	Concrete silage trough is cast in with floor slab - evidence of former function	Difference in floor level suggests a division of barns for different functions

EXTERIOR ELEVATIONS AND ELEMENTS					
AREA	SIGNIFICANCE (see 4.5)	CONTRIBUTION TO OVERALL SIGNIFICANCE (see 4.6)	SENSITIVITY TO CHANGE (see 4.6)	KEY ELEMENTS OF SIGNIFICANCE	ADDITIONAL COMMENTS
Roof trusses & timber framing, incl. columns	- Cruck frames mostly original - Wall and sole plates mostly original - Collars appear original or repurposed original	EXCEPTIONAL	HIGH	- Original timber cruck frames - Original wall and sole plates - Areas of original wall frames	Some repairs to frames with harmful modern timber requires rectification to support longevity
Walls	- Wall bays vary in condition and ratio of original-modern timber - Areas of wall infill use non-matching stock bricks and modern sawn timber sections - Evidence of material reuse for repairs - empty mortices	CONSIDERABLE	HIGH	- Original timber wall frames and cross bracing - External weatherboarding with black finish - Walls facing original farmyard	- Legacy of original openings visible though contrasting areas of modern infill - Walls facing the original farmyard are of highest significance but due to impact of the newer barns are in the poorest condition due to the highest composition of modern infill
Recent partitions and linings	- Modern timber stud frames filling with insulation and waterproof membranes - Areas of plasterboard over historic timbers	HARMFUL	LOW		Harmful use of inappropriate insulation and waterproofing require removal to prevent further deterioration of the original timber frame