



DCO Submission

Environmental Statement

**Chapter 10:** Heritage (built and archaeology)  
**Appendix 10.4:** Built Heritage Statement of Significance

Document 6.10D

On behalf of  
**Oxfordshire Railfreight Limited**

Prepared by RPS Group  
**February 2026**

# Built Heritage Statement of Significance

Oxfordshire Strategic Railfreight Interchange

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## REPORT

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# 1 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 This Built Heritage Assessment has been researched and prepared by RPS, on behalf of Oxfordshire Railfreight Limited, in order to identify and assess the significance of built heritage assets that have the potential to be affected by the proposed development of a railfreight interchange on land south of Ardley, Oxfordshire (henceforth referred to as ‘the Application Site’).
- 1.2 This report should be read in conjunction with the Built Heritage Impact Assessment (Marrons, 2025) which provides an assessment of potential impacts on the identified sensitive built heritage assets in relation to the current plans and where relevant, discusses potential mitigation measures.
- 1.3 The Application Site (shown in **figure 1**) comprises two main areas, namely: a large irregularly shaped parcel situated between the London (Marylebone) to Birmingham railway line, RAF Upper Heyford, and the B430, on which it is proposed to build a rail freight interchange and associated development; and a second parcel centred on where the B4030 crosses over the M40, on which it is proposed to provide a link road to the M40. For ease of reference they will be referred to as ‘Area A’ and ‘Area B’ respectively in this report.
- 1.4 This report is concerned with built heritage assets (Listed Buildings, Conservation Areas, Registered Parks and Gardens, and non-designated built heritage assets) and Scheduled Monuments that have the potential to be impacted by the proposed development. The Application Site’s below-ground archaeological potential is addressed in a separate Archaeological Desk-Based Assessment (RPS 2021).
- 1.5 This report makes reference to the relevant legislation contained within the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 and both national and local planning policy. In addition, relevant Historic England guidance notably *Good Practice Advice Note 3: The Setting of Heritage Assets*, has been consulted to inform the judgements made. Relevant information, including the listing citations for the relevant heritage assets have also been consulted in preparing this Built Heritage Statement. The conclusions reached in this report are the result of detailed historic research; walkover surveys of the Site, RAF Upper Heyford, and publicly accessible locations in the surrounding area carried out in November to December 2020; map studies; desk-based historic research; and the application of professional judgement.

## 2 LEGISLATIVE AND PLANNING POLICY FRAMEWORK

- 2.1 The current national legislative and planning policy system identifies, through the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), that applicants should consider the potential impact of development upon 'heritage assets'. This term includes: designated heritage assets which possess a statutory designation (for example listed buildings and conservation areas); and non-designated heritage assets, typically compiled by Local Planning Authorities (LPAs) and incorporated into a Local List or recorded on the Historic Environment Record.
- 2.2 The current legislation and policy framework, including local policy, is provided in the Built Heritage Impact Assessment (Marrons 2025).

### National Guidance

#### Planning Practice Guidance (DCLG)

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

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

- 2.5 Conservation Principles outlines Historic England's approach to the sustainable management of the historic environment. While primarily intended to ensure consistency in Historic England's own advice and guidance, the document is recommended to LPAs to ensure that all decisions about change affecting the historic environment are informed and sustainable.
- 2.6 The guidance describes a range of heritage values which enables the significance of assets to be established systematically, with the four main heritage values being: evidential value; historical value; aesthetic value; and communal value.

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

- 2.7 The PPS5 Practice Guide was withdrawn in March 2015 and replaced with three Good Practice Advice in Planning Notes (GPAs) published by Historic England. *GPA1: The Historic Environment in Local Plans* provides guidance to local planning authorities to help them make well informed and effective local plans. *GPA2: Managing Significance in Decision-Making* includes technical advice on the repair and restoration of historic buildings and alterations to heritage assets to guide local planning authorities, owners, practitioners and other interested parties. *GPA 3: The Setting of Heritage Assets* replaces guidance published in 2011. These are complemented by the Historic England Advice Notes in Planning (HEANs).

## GPA2: Managing Significance in Decision-Taking in the Historic Environment (March 2015)

2.8 This document provides advice on numerous ways in which decision making in the historic environment could be undertaken, emphasising that the first step for all applicants is to understand the significance of any affected heritage asset and the contribution of its setting to that significance. In line with the NPPF and PPG, the document states that early engagement and expert advice in considering and assessing the significance of heritage assets is encouraged. The advice suggests a structured, staged approach to the assembly and analysis of relevant information:

1. Understand the significance of the affected assets;
2. Understand the impact of the proposal on that significance;
3. Avoid, minimise and mitigate impact in a way that meets the objectives of the NPPF;
4. Look for opportunities to better reveal or enhance significance;
5. Justify any harmful impacts in terms of the sustainable development objective of conserving significance balanced with the need for change; and
6. Offset negative impacts to significance by enhancing others through recording, disseminating and archiving archaeological and historical interest of the important elements of the heritage assets affected.

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

2.9 This advice note focuses on the management of change within the setting of heritage assets. This document replaces GPA3: The Setting of Heritage Assets (March 2017) and Seeing History in the View (English Heritage, 2011) in order to aid practitioners with the implementation of national legislation, policies and guidance relating to the setting of heritage assets found in the 1990 Act, the NPPF and PPG. The guidance is largely a continuation of the philosophy and approach of the 2011 and 2015 documents and does not present a divergence in either the definition of setting or the way in which it should be assessed.

2.10 As with the NPPF the document defines setting as *'the surroundings in which a heritage asset is experienced. Its extent is not fixed and may change as the asset and its surroundings evolve'*. Setting is also described as being a separate term to curtilage, character and context. The guidance emphasises that setting is not a heritage asset, nor a heritage designation, and that its importance lies in what it contributes to the significance of the heritage asset, or the ability to appreciate that significance. It also states that elements of setting may make a positive, negative or neutral contribution to the significance of the heritage asset.

2.11 While setting is largely a visual term, with views considered to be an important consideration in any assessment of the contribution that setting makes to the significance of an asset, and thus the way in which an asset is experienced, setting also encompasses other environmental factors including noise, vibration and odour. Historical and cultural associations may also form part of the asset's setting, which can inform or enhance the significance of a heritage asset.

2.12 This document provides guidance on practical and proportionate decision making with regards to the management of change within the setting of heritage assets. It is stated that the protection of the setting of a heritage asset need not prevent change and that decisions relating to such issues need to be based on the nature, extent and level of the significance of a heritage asset, further



weighing up the potential public benefits associated with the proposals. It is further stated that changes within the setting of a heritage asset may have positive or neutral effects.

- 2.13 The document also states that the contribution made to the significance of heritage assets by their settings will vary depending on the nature of the heritage asset and its setting, and that different heritage assets may have different abilities to accommodate change without harming their significance. Setting should, therefore, be assessed on a case-by-case basis.
- 2.14 Historic England recommends using a series of detailed steps in order to assess the potential effects of a proposed development on significance of a heritage asset. The 5-step process is as follows:
1. Identify which heritage assets and their settings are affected;
  2. Assess the degree to which these settings and views make a contribution to the significance of a heritage asset(s) or allow significance to be appreciated;
  3. Assess the effects of the proposed development, whether beneficial or harmful, on the significance or on the ability to appreciate it;
  4. Explore ways to maximise enhancement and avoid or minimise harm; and
  5. Make and document the decision and monitor outcomes.

## 3 HISTORIC BUILT ENVIRONMENT APPRAISAL

### Introduction

- 3.1 The following section provides an overview of the Application Site and its historic development, including the findings of an historic map progression study. It then outlines how built heritage assets potentially affected by the proposed development have been identified, before going on to assess the significance of the identified built heritage assets, including any contribution the Site makes to their significance.

### Site Overview

- 3.2 The Application Site (**figure 1**) comprises a large tract of land located to the south of Ardley, Oxfordshire. It is formed of two main areas, namely: a northern parcel of land in which the railway interchange and associated development is proposed (Area A), and a second parcel of land situated to the south-east for a proposed link road to the M40 (Area B).
- 3.3 Area A comprises an irregularly shaped parcel of largely agricultural land, currently divided into multiple field parcels and interspersed with belts of woodland. The northern boundary of Area A is formed by the London to Birmingham railway, which runs in a deep cutting, and to the east its boundary is formed by the B430. To the west, Area A largely adjoins RAF Upper Heyford, and it extends south towards Manor Farm. An un-named road passes east-west through the Site connecting Camp Road to the B430, off which are situated a reservoir and a green power composting facility currently run by Severn Trent Green Power. Ashgrove Farm also lies within Area A, to the north-east of centre. Ashgrove Farm is accessed off the B430 to the east, and much of Area A currently comprises the Farm's landholding.
- 3.4 Area B is centred on the point at which the B4030 crosses the M40, to the east of Middleton Stoney, and relates to the proposed access route to connect the rail freight interchange to the M40. Area B largely comprises parts of agricultural fields, belts of woodland and area of quarry, and traverses Middleton Road and Gagle Brook, running north-west to the B430.
- 3.5 Regarding topography, the Application Site lies on the eastern edge of the Upper Heyford Plateau, which forms part of a belt of upland Oolitic limestone, with the landform of Area A dominated by a valley running broadly NNE-SSW through this part of the Application Site. The high western edge of Area A lies at approximately 125 metres AOD, falling to approximately 108 metres AOD in the valley bottom. The land rises again to a height of approximately 115 metres AOD to the east of Area A adjacent to the B430.
- 3.6 Given the topography of the Application Site and the surrounding landscape, the availability of views out of, and into, the Application Site from its surrounds is varied. Views west, particularly from Area A, are limited by the Upper Heyford Plateau and largely take in the edge of the airfield and development just within its perimeter. Despite its closeness, there is also little intervisibility between the Site and the village of Ardley, even from the northern edge of Area A, with the settlement screened by Ardley Woods. There are longer-distance views east from the high western edge of Area A: some of these views take in Viridor Ardley Energy Recovery Facility, but the M40 motorway is not discernible, nor is the village Bucknell beyond. The village of Middleton Stoney can be seen from the southern reaches of Area A and from parts of Area B, but the intervening distance means individual buildings are not readily discernible.

## Historic Development

- 3.7 The Application Site lies across four historic parishes. Area A of the Application Site, in which the rail freight interchange and associated development is proposed, lies predominantly within the parish of Ardley, with the southern edge of Area A lying within the Parish of Middleton Stoney. Area B of the Application Site, which relates to the proposed link road to the M40, is divided between the parishes of Middleton Stoney, Bucknell and Chesterton.
- 3.8 Ardley, Middleton Stoney, Bucknell, and Chesterton are all recorded in the Domesday Survey of 1086 and are characterised by strongly nucleated settlement, with outlying farmsteads constructed in the surrounding landscape following parliamentary enclosure. These post-enclosure farmsteads include Ashgrove Farm, which lies within Area A of the Application Site and originates from the early- to mid-eighteenth century. Middleton Stoney parish is dominated by the extensive grounds of Middleton Park, which lies c.600m south of Area A and 750m west of Area B of the Application Site.
- 3.9 Lying between the villages of Ardley, Middleton Stoney, Bucknell and Chesterton, the Application Site has formed part of the agricultural hinterland of these settlements since the Medieval period. Since the enclosure of land in the four parishes during the eighteenth century, from which time detailed mapping of the Site is available, the Site has, on the whole, remained largely unchanged; although the early-1990s saw the construction of the M40 passing through Area B, and the twenty-first century has seen the introduction of quarrying and a green power composting facility within the Application Site's boundary. Several notable changes have also occurred to its surrounds, including the development of RAF Upper Heyford, and the more recent construction of the Viridor Ardley Energy Recovery Facility east of Area A.

## Historic Map Progression

- 3.10 One of the earliest maps to provide detail on the history of the Application Site is a c.1700 map of fields in Ardley (reproduced in the *Ardley Conservation Area Appraisal* (CDC, 2019)), which is annotated with the names of the individuals recorded in a *Deed of Inclosure of Ardley Common Fields* dated 12<sup>th</sup> February 1700. The map shows that a large part of Area A was enclosed at this time, to be held by John Parran, Lord of Bainton Manor, who also held Ardley Manor in this period. Ashgrove Farm, situated within Area A of the Application Site, originates from shortly after this enclosure and is first shown in Richard Davis' 1797 map of Oxfordshire (VCH). Bucknell Lodge, which lies adjacent to Area B of the Application Site, is also shown in Davis' map. Middleton Stoney was enclosed in 1709, Chesterton in 1768, the remainder of Ardley in 1770, and Bucknell was enclosed in 1780.
- 3.11 No tithe map survives for Chesterton parish, and there is only partial coverage of Bucknell parish, but there are tithe maps and apportionments for both Ardley (1839) and Middleton Stoney (1841). These maps (**figure 3**) and their accompanying apportionments show area A of the Application Site comprising multiple parcels of arable land and pasture, with some small parcels of woodland and furze. As in 1700, in 1839 a large part of Area A was owned by the Lord of the Manor (then the Duke of Marlborough). This landholding included, and appears to have been farmed from, Ashgrove Farm (parcel 89). The Farm, described in the tithe apportionment as a 'House, Farm, Homestead, Garden, Orchard, Barns and Yards' is shown situated on the east side of a brook or stream and comprises several ranges of buildings arranged around a rectangular yard.
- 3.12 The 1839 Ardley tithe map also shows a second cluster of buildings (parcel 73, described as 'cottages, farm homestead and yards') to the centre of Area A, and a further 'barn and yard' (parcel 75) to the south. A track is shown running east-west across Area A, passing immediately north of the buildings at parcel 73, and a 'bridle road' runs roughly north-south through Area A passing immediately west of parcel 73.

- 3.13 The 1841 Middleton Stoney tithe map and apportionment records the southern part of Area A in the possession of the Earl of Jersey and farmed from Middleton Grounds (later 'Manor') Farm. The Earl of Jersey owned the country house at Middleton Park, the park and garden of which are shown in detail in the tithe map. The section of Area B lying within Middleton Stoney Parish is also recorded as part of the Earl of Jersey's Middleton Park estate, occupied by a Mr Daniel Norman of the Jersey Arms Inn, Middleton Stoney. The remainder of Area B lying within the parish is recorded as glebe.
- 3.14 In the 1875-1880 Ordnance Survey map (**figure 4**) Ashgrove Cottages are shown for the first time, sited on the eastern edge of Area A adjacent to what is now the B430. The complex of buildings at Ashgrove Farm is also shown to have been expanded and, within Area A, a number of field parcels have been amalgamated into larger parcels. The cottages and farmstead to the centre of Area A (parcel 73 on the Ardley tithe map) appear to have been remodelled and are referred to as 'Scotland Barn', and the barn and yard formerly situated to the south (parcel 75 on the Ardley tithe Map) are no longer shown. Area B is shown to comprise multiple field parcels and is cut through by Middleton Road and what is now the B4030, but otherwise undeveloped.
- 3.15 The 1919-1923 OS map (**figure 4**) depicts the Birmingham to London (Marylebone) mainline railway running along the northern boundary of Area A of the Application Site for the first time, the railway having been opened in 1910. The road connection the B430 to Camp Road is also shown for the first time, crossing East-West across Area A, and an area of woodland on the southern edge of Area A, just north-east of Middleton Grounds Farm, is shown to have been expanded. The Application Site otherwise appears unchanged. Within the Application Site's surrounds, two new farms appear for the first time (Ardley Fields Farm east of Area A, and Neville's Farm situated north of the railway line), as does the Trow Pool Water Tower to the north of Area B, and the landscaped grounds of Bignell Park. The Application Site's surrounds otherwise appear broadly unchanged; although from 1916-1919 land to the west of Area A on the top of the Heyford Plateau was developed and operated for the first time as an airfield, in response to a requirement for adequately trained aircrews for the Royal Flying Corps during World War I.
- 3.16 The first airfield at Upper Heyford was short-lived, but in 1923 the land – part of which lay within Ardley parish- was re-purchased from New College Oxford and developed once again as an airfield. At the outbreak of the Second World War in 1939 the airfield consisted of a core of hangars and maintenance buildings, residential buildings, and a grass airfield to the north. RAF Upper Heyford saw service as a training base during WWII and was provided a concrete runway during the winter of 1943-44. However, its present form is owed to its role as a Cold War United States Air Force (USAF) Strategic Air Command base from 1950-1994.
- 3.17 The 1985 OS map (**figure 5**) shows RAF Upper Heyford adjoining the western boundary of Area A of the Application Site, and at Ardley, the village's coalescence with neighbouring Fewcott is apparent. Within Area A of the Application Site, a number of changes are apparent to the boundaries of the field parcels within. Other changes to Area A include: new agricultural buildings at Ashgrove Farm; the demolition of the farmstead at Scotland Barn; the introduction of tanks towards the north-west edge of Area A; a new caravan park off Chillgrove Drive; and, the construction of a reservoir on the south side of the unnamed lane connecting Camp Road to the B430. The yard and ranges of buildings at Manor (formerly 'Middleton Grounds') Farm, immediately south of Area A, is shown to have expanded in size to directly abut the Site boundary. Area B of the Application Site appears broadly unchanged except for the new residential property 'Linkslade', situated on the north side of the B4030 within the Site boundary.
- 3.18 Fewer details are provided in the 2001 OS map (**figure 6**), but the caravan park is no longer shown within the Application Site and the M40 motorway is shown for the first time, having been completed in 1991.
- 3.19 Further changes to the Application Site's surrounds are evident in the 2018 aerial photograph (**figure 7**), including the construction of the large Viridor Ardley Energy Recovery Facility (ERF) to

the east of Area A and a quarrying facility immediately south of the Viridor ERF, with the latter extending into the eastern edge of Area A of the Application Site. In more recent years the re-development of RAF Upper Heyford has also begun, which will eventually see more than 1000 homes, a primary school, social facilities and a 'creative city' developed on the former air base. Construction work commenced on the first phase of the re-development in 2013, and this can be seen in the 2018 Aerial Photograph. Within the Application Site itself, a green power composting facility was built adjacent to the reservoir in Area A c.2009, but no other significant changes are apparent in the Aerial Photograph.

## Assessment of Heritage Assets

### Methodology

- 3.20 In order to identify built heritage assets with the potential to be affected by the proposed development of the Application Site, an initial search radius of 2 kilometres was used. Following this, walkover surveys of the Application Site and publicly accessible locations in the surrounding area were carried out to identify the likely visual impact of the proposals on the historic built environment, including those assets initially identified and any situated beyond the initial search radius.
- 3.21 The Application Site contains one designated built heritage asset: the Grade II listed *Barn Approximately 40 Metres North of Ashgrove Farmhouse (not included)* (NHLE:1046879). As the name of the asset suggests, neither the farmhouse at Ashgrove Farm, nor is any of the rest of the farmstead, is included in the designation. However, the farmstead as a whole is recorded in the Oxfordshire Historic Environment Record (HER) and merits consideration as a non-designated heritage asset. It is therefore also assessed below. The Application Site contains no further built heritage assets.
- 3.22 Within the initial 2km search radius, 77 listed buildings, 6 Conservation Areas, and 1 Registered Park and Garden were identified (see **figures 2a and 2b**). However, it is considered that the proposed development of the Application Site will result in change to the setting of, and therefore has the potential to impact the significance of, only the following assets:
- Trow Pool Water Tower (Grade II; NHLE:1389392);
  - Troy Farmhouse (Grade II; NHLE:1225639);
  - Lodge Farmhouse (Grade II; NHLE:1200299);
  - Middleton Park Registered Park and Garden (Grade II; NHLE: 1001405);
  - Ardley Conservation Area; and
  - Upper Heyford Conservation Area.
- 3.23 Listed buildings in Ardley will be considered within the assessment of the Ardley Conservation Area. Likewise, the listed buildings within the Upper Heyford Airfield share no direct visual or functional connection to the Application Site but will be considered below under the assessment of the Upper Heyford Conservation Area. The group of Scheduled *Cold War structures at the former Upper Heyford Airbase* (NHLE: 1021399) are also assessed below alongside the Conservation Area and listed buildings within.
- 3.24 It is considered that no other built heritage assets will be affected by the proposed development of the Application Site. However, given the scale of the Site, it is recommended that a Zone of Theoretical Visibility (ZTV) and the findings of the Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment, in particular any relevant visualisation produced, be fed into the findings of the final Built Heritage Statement.

- 3.25 The following section of this report provides a detailed assessment of the significance of the assets identified above, with consideration given to any contribution made by their settings, as required under paragraph 189 of the NPPF.
- 3.26 Significance is defined in the NPPF as:  
*'The value of a heritage asset to this and future generations because of its heritage interest. The interest may be archaeological, architectural, artistic or historic. Significance derives not only from a heritage asset's physical presence, but also from its setting. For World Heritage Sites, the cultural value described within each site's Statement of Outstanding Universal Value forms part of its significance.'*
- 3.27 As noted above, Historic England's *Conservation Principles, Policies and Guidance* (2008) includes a methodology for assessing significance by considering 'heritage values'. However, the difference between this approach, and that in the NPPF amounts to one of terminology, with the overall intellectual approach used to analyse and understand significance being the same. NPPF terms will be used in the assessment below, but the equivalent heritage values are noted for reference.
- 3.28 Further information on the NPPF terms is provided in the PPG, which defines each of the four terms as follows:  
*'Archaeological interest* ['evidential value']: *As defined in the Glossary to the National Planning Policy Framework, there will be archaeological interest in a heritage asset if it holds or potentially holds, evidence of past human activity worthy of expert investigation at some point.*  
*Architectural and artistic interest* ['aesthetic value']: *These are interests in the design and general aesthetics of a place. They can arise from conscious design or fortuitously from the way the heritage asset has evolved. More specifically, architectural interest is an interest in the art and science of the design, construction, craftsmanship and decoration of buildings and structures of all types. Artistic interest is an interest in other human creative skill, like sculpture.'*  
*Historic interest* ['historic value']: *An interest in the past lives and events (including pre-historic). Heritage assets can illustrate or be associated with them. Heritage assets with historic interest not only provide a material record of our nation's history, but can also provide meaning for communities such as faith and cultural identity* ['communal value'].'

### **Barn Approximately 30 Metres North of Ashgrove Farmhouse (Grade II, NHLE: 1046879)**

- 3.29 **Description:** The Barn approximately 30 metres north of Ashgrove Farmhouse (**plates 1-3**) was designated as a Grade II listed building on 26<sup>th</sup> February 1988. It is the only listed building at Ashgrove Farm, and the Farm's earliest surviving structure, dating from the early to mid-eighteenth century. Originally a threshing barn, changing farming practices in the later-twentieth century left the building in use only for storage, and resulted in its neglect and decline. In 2008, Listed Building Consent was granted for the conversion of the listed Barn into a residential property (renewed in 2011 and again in 2016) as part of a wider scheme for the conversion of traditional agricultural buildings into dwellings at Ashgrove Farm [planning refs. 08/01521/LB, 11/00955/LB, and 16/01618/LB]; although the listed Barn is yet to be converted.
- 3.30 The Barn, which is constructed of course limestone rubble, is of six bays and has characteristic full height opposed door openings in the third bay. There are timber lintels over the opposed openings, but the original timber barns doors have been replaced with steel doors. There are also later-inserted doors in the ends of the building, one of which is ledged and braced and the other a cut-down four-panelled Victorian domestic latched door, as well as a further inserted opening at the west end of the Barn's south wall and a blocked doorway under a timber lintel in the south wall

of bay five. In addition to these doorways, later openings have also been inserted for modern fanning machinery: a pipe inserted within a rectangular opening in the south end of the west wall and two openings at the west end of the north wall for freestanding machinery. To the rear (north), there are two twentieth-century lean-to structures. The Barn retains its original roof structure, which has trusses with tie beams, collars, and two rows of butt purlins. However, the Barn's original slate roof covering was removed and replaced with corrugated sheeting, now much degraded, at some point before its listing in 1988.

- 3.31 **Significance:** The listed threshing barn at Ashgrove Farm is an asset of high national significance, which is reflected in its designation as a Grade II listed building, despite its current neglected condition. Its significance derives in part from its historic special interest as the oldest surviving element of an eighteenth-century Oxfordshire farmstead (Ashgrove Farm) that was one of the first outlying farms to be constructed following the Enclosure of land in Ardley at the turn of the eighteenth century. The Barn also possesses historic special interest as it provides a material record of a once common, but now obsolete, agricultural building type developed specifically for the processing and storing of wheat; although this material record has been lessened by later changes and the physical degradation of the building over time. The significance of the Barn is also derived from the architectural special interest it possesses illustrating local vernacular styles and construction techniques from the eighteenth century. The lean-to structures to the rear are not of special interest.
- 3.32 **Setting:** The immediate setting of the asset is largely defined by the Ashgrove Farm farmstead (**plates 4-6** - assessed separately below), of which it forms a constituent part. The other buildings currently comprising the farmstead, which include pigsties, stables and loose boxes, modern open barns, cottages, and a brick-built early to mid-Victorian farmhouse, were all constructed later than the listed Barn. Nevertheless, these buildings help to place the asset in its functional, agricultural context, as well as providing an understanding of the historic development and changing functions of the Ashgrove farmstead over time, contributing to the asset's historic special interest. It is also from within this immediate setting that the Barn's historic structure can be most readily seen, and therefore its historic and architectural special interest best appreciated. The immediate setting of the Barn consequently makes a strong positive contribution to its significance.
- 3.33 The wider setting of the asset principally comprises the surrounding open fields to the north, south, and west of the farmstead. Much of this agricultural land has been functionally connected to Ashgrove Farm since at least the turn of the eighteenth century. It therefore shares an enduring functional connection to the asset and helps to place the asset in its historic rural and agricultural context, contributing to its historic special interest. There is, however, only limited intervisibility between the asset and the surrounding rural and agricultural landscape as a result of the local topography (the Farmstead is situated in a valley bottom), and the screening effect of other the other farmstead buildings and belts of trees close to the farmstead (**plate 7**). Moreover, the rural and agricultural context provided by the Barn's wider setting is detracted from somewhat by the audible presence of the M40 to the east. The asset's wider setting therefore makes a mixed contribution to the significance of the listed Barn. Where this contribution is positive, it is secondary to the contribution made by the asset's historic form and fabric and its immediate setting.
- 3.34 **Contribution of the Application Site:** The asset lies within Area A of the Application Site, as does the entirety of Ashgrove farmstead, and much of the agricultural land comprising the asset's wider setting. Historic mapping shows that the southernmost extent of Area A does not share a historic connection to the asset, having been part of the land holding of Manor (formerly Middleton Grounds) Farm from at least 1841, and nor does it share a direct visual connection with the asset. This part of Area A therefore makes a lesser contribution to the significance of the listed Barn; but overall, Area A makes an important contribution to the significance of the asset.

- 3.35 Area B of the Application Site lies to the south-east of the listed Barn. It shares no known historic functional connection with the asset, nor any visual connection with the asset, and is not considered to contribute to the significance of the asset.

### Ashgrove Farm (Non-designated, HER: MOX27753)

- 3.36 **Description:** Ashgrove Farm comprises a collection of buildings which form a historic farmstead situated within Area A of the Application Site (see **plates 4-6**). As noted above, the farmstead has early-eighteenth century origins, having been one of the first outlying farmsteads built in Ardley parish following its enclosure. Its current range of buildings date from the early-mid eighteenth century to the mid-twentieth century and consist of the listed threshing barn (assessed separately above), pigsties, stables and loose boxes, workshops, modern open barns, and a brick-built farmhouse, arranged loosely around a rectangular yard, with a pair of model cottages c.1870 situated a short distance to the east at the entrance from the B430.
- 3.37 The farmstead in its current form displays four distinct phases of development. The earliest phase is now represented only by the early to mid-eighteenth century listed threshing barn. The second phase includes the earlier part of the farmhouse and stable block attached to the listed threshing barn, which lack distinct features for dating but appear in the 1839 Ardley tithe map. At some point between 1839 and 1894, the latter part of the farmhouse, the workshop building, the southernmost stable block, and the pair of model cottages were constructed under the ownership of the Duke of Marlborough. Finally, the large, modern agricultural buildings were erected during the twentieth century. As noted above, in 2008, permission was granted for the conversion of several of the Farm's traditional agricultural buildings into residential dwellings, with this permission being renewed in 2011 and again in 2016. The buildings are yet to be converted.
- 3.38 **Significance:** Ashgrove Farm possesses low, local heritage significance. This significance is derived in part from the local historic interest the Farm possesses as one of the earliest post-Enclosure outlying farms in Ardley and the surrounding parishes, helping to illustrate the change in agricultural practices that accompanied this eighteenth-century transformation of land ownership and use. The later buildings, specifically the second and third phases, illustrate further changes over time in local farming practices, which also contributes to the Farm's local historic interest. In its current condition, the Farm is considered to be of only limited aesthetic value, but it possesses a degree of local architectural interest where its traditional farm buildings display vernacular styles and materials. The pair of model cottages are of historic and architectural interest in illustrating the Victorian fashion for estate 'improvement', although their architectural interest and the aesthetic value they possess is somewhat detracted from by later alterations including the insertion of uPVC windows. The modern agricultural buildings on the Farm are of no historic or architectural interest.
- 3.39 **Setting:** The asset's setting largely comprises the surrounding open fields to the north, south, and west of the farmstead. Much of this agricultural land forms part of the Farm's landholding and has done since the turn of the eighteenth century. It therefore shares an enduring functional connection to the farmstead and helps to place it in its historic rural and agricultural context, contributing to its local historic interest. There are also some long-distance views of the asset from within this surrounding agricultural landscape (**plate 7**), although the contribution these make to an understanding of its local heritage significance varies due to the large modern agricultural sheds screening the older parts of the farmstead in some views. The asset's setting is not wholly rural and agricultural, however, with the edge of RAF Upper Heyford visible from the farmstead, and the M40 a notable audible presence. The Virador Ardley ERF also features in views of the farmstead from the surrounding landscape. These aspects of the asset's setting represent more recent urban and industrial interventions in the local area and detract somewhat from an understanding of the asset's historic rural context. Therefore, whilst setting makes an important contribution to the significance of Ashgrove Farm, some elements make a lesser or negative contribution.



- 3.40 **Contribution of the Application Site:** The farmstead at Ashgrove Farm lies wholly within Area A of the Application Site, as does much of the agricultural land comprising the asset's setting. Historic mapping demonstrates that the southernmost extent of Area A does not share an historic connection to the asset, having been part of the land holding of Manor (formerly Middleton Grounds) Farm from at least 1841, and nor does it share a direct visual connection with the asset. This part of Area A therefore makes a lesser contribution to the significance; but overall, Area A makes an important contribution to the significance of the farmstead.
- 3.41 Area B of the application Site lies to the south-east of Ashgrove Farm. It shares no known historic functional connection with the farmstead, nor any visual connection with the asset. It is therefore not considered to contribute to the significance of the asset.

## Trow Pool Water Tower (Grade II; NHLE:1389392)

- 3.42 **Description:** The Trow Pool Water Tower ([plate 8](#)) was first listed at Grade II on 22<sup>nd</sup> August 2001. The Water Tower was built in 1909 by Major Philip Hunloke, who then held Bucknell Manor, to serve the Manor estate and the village of Bucknell. It remained in use until the 1950s when mains water was installed. The Water Tower is constructed of local rubble stone and has a concrete cap, metal platform, and tiled roof. It is square in planform, with flared corner piers, each of which supports an impost, from which springs a single large arch to each façade. Each arch has a keystone, voisoirs and banding, with the arches to the north and south facades open to the hollow centre of the tower, and those to the east and west facades blind with stone ledges at the bottom. At ground floor level there is an entrance to the north side, providing access to the hollow centre of the Tower. At the upper level there is a lead water tank, around which wraps a projecting metal platform, a concrete section and a hipped roof with a flat cap.
- 3.43 **Significance:** The Trow Pool Water Tower is an asset of national heritage significance, which is reflected in its designation as a Grade II listed building. This significance is derived in part from the historic special interest the asset possesses illustrating the development in public water supply provision that took place in England in the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth century following the nineteenth-century discovery of the link between certain diseases (namely cholera) and foul water. Moreover, as well as being an important physical reminder of these significant advancements in health and sanitation, the Tower also illustrates the wealth, social status, and philanthropic role of local landowners in the early-twentieth century. Although functional in its purpose, the Water Tower is not utilitarian in design. Instead, it is treated architecturally, demonstrating that aesthetic considerations were just as important to Major Hunloke, who clearly intended to make an impressive visual statement reflecting his wealth and status within the locality. This also contributes to the Water Tower's special historic and architectural interest.
- 3.44 **Setting:** Trow Pool Water Tower has an extensive setting as the height of the asset means that it is visible from a large swathe of the surrounding landscape (see [plate 9](#)). Such views of the asset allow for a clear appreciation of its architectural special interest, as well as imbuing the asset with landmark status. The water tower is visible from the western edge of Bucknell, with which it shares an historic association, having been built to supply the village with piped water. However, the construction of the M40 in the late-1980s to early-1990s served to sever the Water Tower from the village and much of Bucknell parish, which has weakened the legibility of this historic relationship. The M40 also passes very close to the Water Tower, and whilst the Tower has since served as a landmark for motorway traffic, which has increased its status in this regard, the noise arising from motorway traffic is so great when stood in the immediate vicinity of the asset that it has a substantially detrimental effect on the ability to appreciate the historic and architectural interest of the asset close up.
- 3.45 **Contribution of the Application Site:** Area A of the Application Site principally lies to the west of the Water Tower and Area B lies to the south and south-west. The Water Tower is not readily

visible from Area A, but there are views of the asset from Area B, which contribute to the ability to appreciate its significance. The Application Site shares no direct historic connection to the water tower and is not otherwise considered to contribute to the asset's significance.

## Troy Farmhouse (Grade II, NHLE: 1225639)

- 3.46 **Description:** Troy Farmhouse (**plate 10**) was designated as a Grade II listed building on 26<sup>th</sup> February 1988. It is a large farmhouse largely dating from the early-eighteenth century, altered and extended during the nineteenth century. The Farmhouse is L-shaped in planform and arranged over two storeys with attics. It is constructed of coursed squared limestone and brick, with Welsh slate roofs from which four prominent brick chimney stacks protrude. The building's front elevation faces south onto Somerton Road and is of five bays with the right-hand bay being constructed of narrower rubble stone, indicating that it perhaps has earlier origins. Each of the bays has a three-light casement to both the ground and first floors, except for bay three, which has a two-light window above a glazed door. There is also a small window to the right of bay four. Above, there are five gabled dormers set into the roof, with nineteenth century bargeboards. A lower wing returns on the right, with further casements, and the rear of the main range is partly obscured by a nineteenth-century brick-built wing.
- 3.47 Whilst the listed Farmhouse dates from the early-eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, Troy Farm dates from the sixteenth century and was likely built on the site of fifteenth-century manor house known as 'Somertons'. The Farm has a well-preserved Scheduled turf maze of likely fifteenth to seventeenth century origin cut into the garden opposite the listed Farmhouse, of which very few examples survive in England (NHLE: 1468043). It is from this maze that Troy Farmhouse derives its name, as the name 'Troy' is used figuratively to denote a scene of confusion and was often given to mazes (VCH).
- 3.48 **Significance:** Troy Farmhouse is an asset of national heritage significance, which is reflected in its designation as a Grade II listed building. This significance derives in part from the historic special interest the asset possesses as an example of an historic Oxfordshire farmhouse with early-eighteenth century origins providing a material record of an agricultural building and dwelling from this period. The asset's significance also derives from the architectural special interest of the building, the principal range of which illustrates local vernacular design and methods of construction from the eighteenth century, with the later additions illustrating nineteenth-century fashions and the increased availability and use of imported materials (brick and Welsh slate) in this period. The Farmhouse is also of considerable aesthetic value, which has been enhanced by a patina of age. It also possesses some archaeological interest (potential evidential value) given that the right-hand bay of the principal range appears like it may pre-date the rest of the building, and that further investigation may reveal further information about the fifteenth-century manor house that previously stood on the site.
- 3.49 **Setting:** The immediate setting of Troy Farmhouse comprises the large plot in which it is situated, which extends to the south of Somerton Road. This plot comprises a small area of mature gardens to the front and rear of the property, the latter of which contains a swimming pool; a tennis court to the west; a former yard and outbuildings to the north and east, some of which have been converted to use as holiday lets, and some of which appear to be in use as a vehicle repair garage; and well-treed grounds to the south of Somerton Road containing the historic turf maze. This immediate setting is visually attractive and, as a result, makes a positive contribution to the aesthetic value of the asset. The yard and outbuildings to the north and east of the asset also contribute positively to the asset's legibility as an historic working farmhouse, which is detracted from somewhat by the domestic character of its gardens, particularly the swimming pool and tennis court. The historic turf maze contributes to the historic special interest of the asset, as well as being of heritage interest in its own right.

- 3.50 Beyond its immediate setting Troy Farmhouse is surrounded by agricultural fields, some of which share an historic functional connection with the asset, and which help to place the asset in its historic and functional context, contributing to its historic special interest. During the twentieth century, however, the asset's historic rural and agricultural surrounds were impinged upon firstly by the arrival of the London to Birmingham Railway that passes c.500m north of the asset, and secondly by the development of RAF Upper Heyford to the south. The railway line has a very limited visual impact on the asset's setting, and RAF Upper Heyford's visual and audible impact has lessened since it was decommissioned by the USAF in the early-1990s. However, the latter is still considered to detract from the ability to appreciate the asset's historic and agricultural setting, and therefore detracts somewhat from the asset's significance.
- 3.51 **Contribution of the Application Site:** The north-easternmost corner of Area A of the Application Site lies c.1km east-south-east of Troy Farmhouse at its nearest point. From the north-eastern corner of Area A there are some glimpsed views of Troy Farmhouse's brick chimney stacks (**plate 11**), and the north-eastern corner of Area A is also experienced as part of the asset's rural and agricultural surrounds when approaching the asset along Somerton Road. However, the north-eastern corner of the Application Site forms only a very small part of these rural and agricultural surrounds, appears in the context of the adjoining airfield, and is not visible from the asset itself nor its immediate setting. Furthermore, the glimpsed views of the asset's chimneys available from the Application Site provide little to no appreciation of the overall historic and architectural significance of the listed farmhouse. The northern-eastern corner of Area A of the Application Site therefore makes only a very limited contribution to the significance of the asset. The remainder of the Application Site is not considered to form part of the asset's setting.

### Lodge Farmhouse (Grade II, NHLE: 1200299)

- 3.52 **Description:** Lodge Farmhouse, formerly known as Bucknell Lodge, was designated as a Grade II listed building on 26<sup>th</sup> February 1988. The Farmhouse (**plate 12**), which is situated off Middleton Road, Bucknell, dates from the early and late-eighteenth century. The Farmhouse is constructed of limestone rubble, with a plain-tile roof and (rebuilt) brick chimney stacks. The building is arranged over two storeys and faces west onto Middleton Road. The front façade is of four bays, with the three left-hand bays representing the earlier phase of the building, which originally had a two-unit central stair plan. In the later-eighteenth century an additional bay and rear wing were added to the right-hand side, creating the current 'L' planform. The earlier three bays have two-light leaded casements flanking a central doorway and the added bay has a further doorway and a casement to each floor. The rear wing has timber casements and a 'County' insurance plaque, and the rear of the main range has further timber casements, some of which retain leaded glazing. The NHLE entry for Lodge Farmhouse notes that internally, there are large chimney breasts to both the older and newer sections of the building, and a blocked oven.
- 3.53 **Significance:** Lodge Farmhouse is an asset of high, national heritage significance, which is reflected in its designation as a Grade II listed building. The asset's significance derives partly from its historic special interest providing a material record of a rural agricultural building and dwelling dating from the eighteenth century. The asset's significance also derives from the architectural interest and aesthetic value the asset possesses, given that the building's original floorplan remains evident despite its later-eighteenth century extension, and that the building illustrates local vernacular architectural styles and construction techniques from the period.
- 3.54 **Setting:** Lodge Farmhouse's immediate setting is formed of the large plot in which it is situated, which mostly lies on the east side of Middleton Road, but which also extends to a small area on the west side of the road. The plot is enclosed by a low rubble stone wall and comprises a driveway to the south of the Farmhouse; a yard and outbuildings to the rear, some of which appear to remain in use, although in a dilapidated condition; open grassed areas; and a kitchen garden in the area to the west side of Middleton Road. The northern extent of the Farmhouse's plot is well

planted with mature trees. This immediate setting, especially the yard and outbuildings to the rear, makes a positive contribution to the asset's legibility as an historic working farmhouse. Furthermore, whilst the age of the existing outbuildings is unclear, they appear to broadly retain the layout shown in late-nineteenth century mapping, further contributing to the historic special interest of the asset.

- 3.55 An oil depot lies immediately north of the walled plot of Lodge Farmhouse, which is considered a detracting element of the asset's wider setting. It is partly screened in views of the asset by tall coniferous hedges, but as a non-native evergreen species, these too are somewhat incongruous. The asset's wider setting otherwise largely comprises agricultural fields, across which there are long-distance views in all directions due to the elevated nature of the asset's location. This surrounding agricultural land, some of which shares an historic functional connection with the asset, helps to place the asset in its historic and functional context, thereby contributing to its historic special interest; although this is detracted from somewhat by the M40 motorway, which passes c.450 metres east of the Farmhouse and has a notable audible presence in the immediate setting of the Farmhouse.
- 3.56 **Contribution of the Application Site:** Area B of the Application Site passes just south of Lodge Farmhouse. The belt of woodland that runs along the course of Gagle Brook partly screens the north-western reaches of Area B, but there is clear intervisibility between the asset and large parts of the rest of Area B. Area B also features in views of the asset from the B4030 bridge over the M40). At present, Area B largely comprises part of the asset's wider agricultural surrounds and makes a positive contribution to the significance of the asset in this regard. Available views of the asset from within Area B also contribute to the ability to appreciate the historic and architectural special interest of the asset. Overall, therefore, Area B is considered to make a positive contribution to the significance of Lodge Farmhouse as part of its wider setting, albeit a contribution that is secondary to those made by the asset's historic form and fabric and its immediate setting.
- 3.57 Area A of the Application Site lies c.1.1 km north-west of Lodge Farmhouse at its nearest point. It shares no known historic functional connection with the asset, nor was it discernible in long-distance views from the asset. Area A is not therefore considered to form part of the setting of Lodge Farmhouse.

## Middleton Park (Grade II, NHLE: 1001405)

- 3.58 **Description:** Middleton Park was designated as a Grade II Registered Park and Garden on 29th October 1998. It comprises a country house (separately designated at Grade I) with the remains of early-eighteenth century pleasure grounds based on a Medieval park, surrounded by an eighteenth to early-nineteenth century landscape park. The Park is in private ownership and access was therefore not available during the walkover surveys carried out to inform this report. The following description is based on the NHLE entry for Middleton Park and other secondary sources.
- 3.59 Middleton Park lies to the west of the village of Middleton Stoney. The c.330 ha park is defined by the parish boundary and wall to the south, a strip of farmland between the perimeter belt and the ancient monument known as Ash Bank to the west, and the B4030 public road to the north and east, along with the village of Middleton Stoney, which also lies to the east. Its topography is generally level, with the ground falling away gently to the west and south. The main entrance to the Park is from Middleton Lodge (listed at Grade II alongside its accompanying screen and gates), which stands at the south end of Middleton Stoney village.
- 3.60 The principal building within the RPG is Middleton Park, which stands at the centre of its parkland and enjoys views across the gently falling ground to the west and south. This country house, the fourth on the site, is listed at Grade I and was built 1934-38 to the designs of Sir Edwin and Robert

Lutyens for the 9th Earl of Jersey. Since 1974 it has been divided into private flats. Other buildings include a Grade II\* listed service wing and forecourt lodges, a Grade II\* listed garage wing and further forecourt lodges, Grade II listed walls and urns situated in close proximity to the house, and a Grade II listed icehouse. The Grade II\* listed parish Church of All Saints, a Grade II listed Wayside Cross, and the Scheduled remains of Middleton Stoney Castle also lie within the boundary of the RPG, with these separately designated assets relating to the original location of Middleton Stoney village, prior to the expansion of the parkland in 1824-25.

- 3.61 Middleton Park house stands at the southern end of an extensive, roughly rectangular area of pleasure grounds, c.800m long and 325m wide. It is separated from the surrounding landscape park by an encircling ha-ha. To the south of the house there is a sunken lawn, bordered on the west and east sides by low retaining walls supporting terraces planted with flowering shrubs, above which are grassed terrace walks. The northern two-thirds of the pleasure grounds is planted as commercial woodland ('Home Wood'). Home Wood appears to be the site of the Medieval park (it is labelled as 'The Park' in a 1710 map) and is cut through by various rides and paths. A kitchen garden complex lies to the north-east of the house, within the pleasure ground area.
- 3.62 The surrounding park, created in the second half of the eighteenth century, is now mostly under plough, which has led to the loss of many parkland trees. However, its boundaries remain well enclosed by tree belts and areas of woodland and there remain a number of substantial clumps within. A pair of lakes lie on the western boundary of the Park.
- 3.63 **Significance:** Middleton Park is an asset of high, national heritage significance, which is derives from those remaining and often fragmentary built and landscape elements within its boundary that illustrate its past use and design – from the Medieval emparkment of Home Wood through the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, to the changes made by the of 9<sup>th</sup> Earl of Jersey in the 1930s. It is a multi-layered landscape, in which each surviving phase contributes to the RPG's significance through demonstrating changing styles and fashions of landscape design and architecture, as well as the changing demands of the owners of the Middleton Park estate. The RPG's significance is further enhanced by its historic association with leading designers of the eighteenth to twentieth centuries: Sanderson Miller, Edward Blore, Thomas Cundy, and Sir Edwin and Robert Lutyens. Not all elements within the RPG contribute to its significance however, with areas of ploughed agricultural land in particular considered a detracting element, having resulted in the loss of areas of treed parkland.
- 3.64 **Setting:** As demonstrated in the historic map progression contained in **figures 3-8**, Middleton Park's surrounds have remained largely unchanged since the parkland was expanded to its current extent in the early-nineteenth century. The estate's wider landholding appears to have been sold off, but the RPG nevertheless remains set within a largely agricultural landscape, and therefore continues to be experienced as an isolated country seat. The relationship between the RPG and Middleton Stoney also makes an important contribution to the significance of the asset, with much historic built form in the village having been constructed following the expansion of the RPG's parkland in the mid-18820s, which resulted in the demolition of a large part of the village as it existed at that time. Relatively few of the RPG's design features or buildings can be seen from beyond the Park's boundaries, however, as a result of the well-treed boundaries. Consequently, the asset's heritage significance is difficult to appreciate from its setting.
- 3.65 **Contribution of the Application Site:** The Application Site lies c.600m north and c.750m east of Middleton Park RPG at its nearest points and currently forms a part of the asset's wider rural and agricultural setting, which contributes to an appreciation of the significance of Middleton Park as an isolated country seat. As demonstrated in the 1839-1841 Tithe Maps and Apportionments for Ardley and Middleton Stoney parishes, the southern extent of Area A of the Application Site formerly shared a functional connection with the asset. However, is not readily appreciable that part of Area A once formed part of the wider Middleton Park estate. This is largely due to the lack of visual connection between the Site and RPG: there are some glimpsed and more sustained

long-distance views to Area A from along the B4030 where it adjoins the RPG (**plate 13**), but the well-planted nature of the RPG's boundary with this public road means the Site is unlikely to be visible from within the RPG itself. Furthermore, where there are return views of the RPG from within Area A, the RPG is discernible only by the presence of mature specimen trees, and therefore very little of its significance is appreciable (**plates 14 and 15**). Similarly, whilst there are some long-distance views from Area B in which the RPG can be discerned by the presence of specimen trees, there are unlikely to be any return views of the Area B from within the RPG. The Site is therefore only considered to make a small positive contribution to the significance of Middleton Park RPG, which derives from it forming a part of the assets. Overall, therefore, the Site is considered to make only a very small contribution to the significance of Middleton Park as part of its wider setting.

## Ardley Conservation Area

- 3.66 **Description:** Ardley Conservation Area was designated in August 2005, at which time a *Conservation Area Appraisal* was also produced. This document was reviewed and a draft revised *Conservation Area Appraisal* issued in November 2019. The information contained in these documents and have helped inform the following assessment of significance.
- 3.67 Ardley Conservation Area encompasses the historic core of the village, an irregular nucleated settlement focused on several historic routeways, the Medieval parish Church, and Ardley Wood (the site of a Norman ringwork, later reused as a dry-moated settlement site). The settlement has Medieval origins; however, the village largely comprises seventeenth, eighteenth, and nineteenth-century farmhouses, houses, and cottages, with the settlement having a strong agricultural base. Built form within the Conservation Area is constructed of a very limited palette of materials, predominantly local oolitic limestone, with later buildings incorporating or being entirely built of brick, which visually unifies the village and is a strong contributor to its character. Limestone has also been used to construct drystone walls, which are the dominant means of enclosure throughout the Conservation Area and contribute greatly to its character and a sense of enclosure. The historic core of Ardley has incorporated some modern infill development, but the majority of new development in the village lies on its edges and is not included in the Conservation Area. A sizeable residential development constructed in the late-twentieth century to the north of the village has caused some coalescence with the neighbouring village of Fewcott; although this residential development is separated from the historic core of the village by paddocks, which are also of significance as they contain archaeological evidence of Ardley as a shrunken Medieval village.
- 3.68 The layout of built form and open spaces within the Conservation Area also contributes to its character and special interest, with the irregular, 'double loop' form of the settlement around the church and seventeenth-century former rectory having remained constant throughout the settlement's history. Whilst provided with a sense of enclosure by its many stone boundary walls, the structure and character of the village as a whole is quite open, with few buildings directly addressing the street, which allows for views across the settlement. Key views within the settlement include those of the church tower, which forms a focal point within the village, and views of prominent corner buildings and others within the street-scene that possess particular visual interest. The village also has many lanes and footpaths, which provide a permeable character to the Conservation Area and have a distinct rural quality. The village's generous grassy verges, many mature trees, and hedgerows are also important contributors to the Conservation Area's rural character.
- 3.69 **Significance:** The significance of Ardley Conservation Area is largely derived from the architectural and historic interest of its built form, which is largely vernacular, relates to the village's agricultural base, and possesses a high level of aesthetic value. Four of the Conservation Area's buildings or structures are listed in their own right, including the Church of St Mary, which is listed

at Grade II\* (NHLE: 1046881) and is a focal point within the Conservation Area (although not readily visible from beyond). The significance of the Conservation Area is also derived from its archaeological interest. This is provided by the Scheduled ringwork situated on the south-western edge of the Conservation Area in Ardley Wood, which is one of a limited number of surviving example of this type of fortification in England and therefore of particular significance to our understanding of the Norman period. Evidence of its re-use as a moated settlement later in the Medieval period also provides evidence of the early development of Ardley. Archaeological remains in the paddocks to the north of the village provide evidence of Ardley's reduction in size during the later Medieval period and further contributes to the Conservation Area's archaeological interest and significance.

- 3.70 **Setting:** Setting makes a mixed contribution to the significance of Ardley Conservation Area. The Conservation Area is surrounded to the south, east, and west by agricultural fields and woodland, which contributes positively to an understanding of the Conservation Area's historic interest as a rural settlement whose economy and development depended upon agriculture for much of its history. However, to the north, a sizeable residential development was developed in the third quarter of the twentieth century. This has resulted in the coalescing of Ardley and neighbouring Fewcott, which detracts from the ability to appreciate these as having developed as distinct settlements, and therefore their historic interest. Since 1910, the agricultural land to the south of Ardley Conservation Area has been cut through by the London to Birmingham Railway, and there was a station at Ardley until 1963, which seems have been utilised for cattle and quarried materials as well as passengers. However, the presence of the railway and station appears to have had little impact on the development of the settlement and, as the railway line runs in a cutting, it has a low visual impact on the Conservation Area and its setting. Indeed, the visual connection between the Conservation Area and the surrounding landscape is somewhat limited due the screening effect of the trees and hedgerows within and around the edges of the Conservation Area. Few views or 'positive vistas' are identified looking out of the Conservation Area in Cherwell District Council's 2019 draft *Conservation Area Appraisal* and this document likewise notes that '*there are few views into Ardley Conservation Area from the surrounding area as the village is fairly well screened on a flat topography*'. As a result, it is difficult to appreciate the historic, architectural and archaeological interest of the Conservation Area from beyond its boundaries.
- 3.71 **Contribution of the Application Site:** The northern boundary of Area A of the Application Site lies in relatively close proximity to the Conservation Area, just beyond the London to Birmingham Railway, and formed part of the settlement's agricultural hinterland for much of its history. Area A is experienced as part of the Conservation Area's wider rural and agricultural surrounds when approaching the village from the south along the B403 (although the rural character of this has been somewhat detracted from by the presence of quarry, green power, developments along this route). However, there is no direct intervisibility between the Site and Conservation Area, as a result of the local topography and screening effect of Ardley Woods and other trees to the south side of the Conservation Area (**plate 16**). Area A is therefore considered to make only a very low contribution to the significance of Ardley Conservation Area. Area B is not considered to form part of the asset's setting.

## Upper Heyford Conservation Area

- 3.72 **Description:** RAF Upper Heyford was designated in its entirety as a Conservation Area in 2006, alongside which Cherwell District Council produced a *Conservation Area Appraisal*. A number of other appraisals and management plans have been produced for the airbase since 2000, largely in the context of plans for it to provide a new settlement of about 1000 dwellings and necessary supporting infrastructure. However, it is the 2006 *Conservation Area Appraisal*, alongside a

walkover survey of the Conservation Area carried out in December 2021, that has principally informed the following assessment.

- 3.73 Like many airbases throughout Britain, RAF Upper Heyford began life as a First World War flying field. Construction began in 1916 but ceased in 1919 following the end of the war. The abandonment of the site by the RAF was short-lived, however, as in 1925 the airfield was redesigned, and became the model on which airfields of its type were based on during the interwar period. The airfield saw active serving during WWII and was one of a limited number of bases selected at the end of this period of conflict to be transformed into a purpose-built airbase to house aircraft of the United States Air Force (USAF) Strategic Air Command (SAC), in response to the start of the Cold War.
- 3.74 Work to transform the airfield into a purpose-built USAF airbase began in 1950. However, as the prevailing political Cold War strategy moved from 'Mutually Assured Destruction' to 'Sustained Deterrence' in the late-1960s (a strategy of retaliation), the requirements of the frontline forces changed and so too did RAF Upper Heyford. One element of this change was the deployment of F-111E bombers at RAF Upper Heyford, which had the ability to respond at any time under any conditions, carrying intermediate-range nuclear weapons. With this change in tactic came the need for protected bases from which to operate, and the concept of 'Hardened Airfields' came into prominence, with the construction of Hardened Aircraft Shelters (HAS) that are now seen as quintessentially 'Cold War' structures (**plate 17**). Many structures relating to this period survive in a largely unaltered state at RAF Upper Heyford, resulting from the base having been decommissioned in 1993, and therefore never having undergone the evolution into twenty-first century warfare that other USAF airfields have.
- 3.75 **Significance:** Upper Heyford Conservation Area derives some significance from having been the model on which many RAF airfields were based in the Interwar period, and from its active role during WWII. However, the significance of the Upper Heyford Conservation Area is primarily as a Cold War Airbase that is of particular importance due to its completeness. As stated in the *Conservation Area Appraisal* (2006), the Conservation Area's form and the structures within are illustrative of the shift in Cold War strategic defence policy from mutually assured destruction to one of flexible response, and the scale of the airbase reflects the size of the perceived threat and magnitude of financial investment that was made to counter it. Five of the Cold War structures within the Conservation Area have been designated as listed buildings: three nose dock hangars listed at Grade II (NHLE: 1392505, 1392506, and 1392507); the control tower listed at Grade II (NHLE: 1392508) (**plate 18**); and the former squadron HQ listed at Grade II (NHLE: 1392509). A Scheduled Monument has also been designated covering five distinct parts of the airbase: the Quick Reaction Alert Hardened Aircraft Shelter complex, including aircraft shelters, security fence, watch tower, fuel supply point and hardened crew building; the Northern Bomb Stores and Special Weapons Area, contained within a security fence; the Avionics Maintenance Facility; the hardened Telephone Exchange (**plate 19**); and the Battle Command Centre (**plate 20**). These structures are of national heritage significance and make a particularly strong contribution to the historic and architectural interest of the Conservation Area. In turn, the wider Conservation Area makes an essential contribution to the significance of these assets as their respective settings. However, the character and significance of the Conservation Area is more than just a collection of parts, with each area within it – including the residential zone – crucial to the functioning of the site.
- 3.76 **Setting:** The Conservation Area's location on the Upper Heyford Plateau was no doubt an important consideration in its selection as a location to build an airfield 1916. However, in its active role in World War Two and in its later, more significant role as a USAF SAC base during the Cold War, it was not intended to interact with, or be integrated into, its surroundings. This is reflected in the tall barbed-wire perimeter fencing which served both as an impenetrable physical barrier between the base and its surroundings, and marks a clear boundary between two landscapes of vastly differing character: the functional Cold War landscape of the airbase, which was developed



over a relatively short period during the twentieth century, and the rural and agricultural landscape that surrounds it, which has evolved slowly over time and is multi-layered, with different buildings types and materials that relate to the underlying geology.

- 3.77 By virtue of its elevated location, there are long-distance views available from the Conservation Area over surrounding landscape, particularly to the west where the land falls precipitously into the Cherwell Valley, providing long, panoramic views across the valley. However, such views are incidental and, with the exception of views to the north towards RAF Croughton (which was also taken over by the USAF in 1950, as a communications station), these aren't considered to contribute to the Conservation Area's core significance as a USAF SAC Cold War airbase. Furthermore, as noted in the *Conservation Area Appraisal* (2006),

*'the topography of the airbase and the surrounding land is such that the base can be seen from a number of locations...there are no views from public places into the site that give the observer an understanding of the layout, beyond the fact that there is a high concentration of HASs at the north end. Views are of individual buildings and structures and the observer cannot 'read' the landscape from outside'.*

The effect of this is that it is difficult to appreciate the historic and architectural interest of the Conservation Area from beyond its boundaries. Overall, setting therefore makes a very limited contribution to the significance of the Conservation Area.

- 3.78 **Contribution of the Application Site:** As discussed above, setting is considered to make a very limited contribution to the significance of the Upper Heyford Conservation Area, and this includes the Application Site, of which Area A directly abuts the Conservation Area's eastern boundary (**plate 21**). The Application Site shares no functional relationship with the Conservation Area. Moreover, whilst the airbase is as a dominant visual feature from the north-western edge of Area A and some Cold War structures are visible, including a number of HASs, parts of the runway, and bomb storage buildings to the south-east edge of the Conservation Area, such views provide no meaningful understanding of the airbase's layout, and little appreciation of the overall significance of the Conservation Area (see **plate 22**). None of the separately listed or scheduled structures are readily discernible from the Application Site and it is therefore not considered to contribute to the significance of any of these heritage assets. The majority of Area B shares no visual connection to the Conservation Area (nor any historic or functional connection to the airbase) and therefore does not form part of its setting.

## 4 CONCLUSION

- 4.1 This Built Heritage Appraisal has been researched and prepared by RPS, on behalf of Oxfordshire Railfreight Limited, in order to identify and assess the significance of built heritage assets with the potential to be affected by the proposed development of a rail freight interchange and associated infrastructure on land south of Ardley, Oxfordshire (the Application Site).
- 4.2 This document is intended to provide the baseline assessment of built heritage assets. This report should be read in conjunction with the Built Heritage Impact Assessment (Marrons, 2025) which provides an assessment of potential impacts on the identified sensitive built heritage assets in relation to the current plans and where relevant, discusses potential mitigation measures.



**PLATES**



**Plate 23: Grade II listed Barn at Ashgrove Farm, front (south) elevation**



**Plate 24: Grade II listed Barn at Ashgrove Farm, roof structure**



**Plate 25: Grade II listed Barn at Ashgrove Farm, rear (north) elevation**



**Plate 26: View west from east end of yard at Ashgrove Farm**



**Plate 27: Stable block at Ashgrove Farm, front (north) elevation**



**Plate 28: Barn housing workshops at Ashgrove Farm, rear (north) elevation**



**Plate 29: View of Ashgrove Farm from fields to north**



**Plate 30: Trow Pool Water Tower, adjacent to M40 (right)**



**Plate 31: Distant view of Trow Pool Water Tower, from bottom of track leading to Lodge Farmhouse**



**Plate 32: Troy Farmhouse, front (south) elevation (Google Images)**





**Plate 33: Chimney stacks of Troy Farmhouse, viewed from Area A of Application Site**



**Plate 34: Lodge Farmhouse, front (west) elevation**



**Plate 35: View towards southern edge of Area A of Application Site taken from entrance to footpath off B4030, on eastern edge of Middleton Stonery**



**Plate 36: View towards Middleton Stonery and Middleton Park RPG from footpath along southern edge of Dewars Farm Quarry**



**Plate 37: View south towards Middleton Park RPG from unnamed road between Camp Road and B430, across southern-most part of Area A**



**Plate 38: Illustrative view towards Ardley from Area A of Application Site**



**Plate 39: Scheduled Hardened Aircraft Shelter (HAS) at RAF Upper Heyford**



**Plate 40: Listed Control Tower at RAF Upper Heyford**



**Plate 41: Scheduled Telephone Exchange at RAF Upper Heyford**



**Plate 42: Interior of Scheduled Command Centre at RAF Upper Heyford**



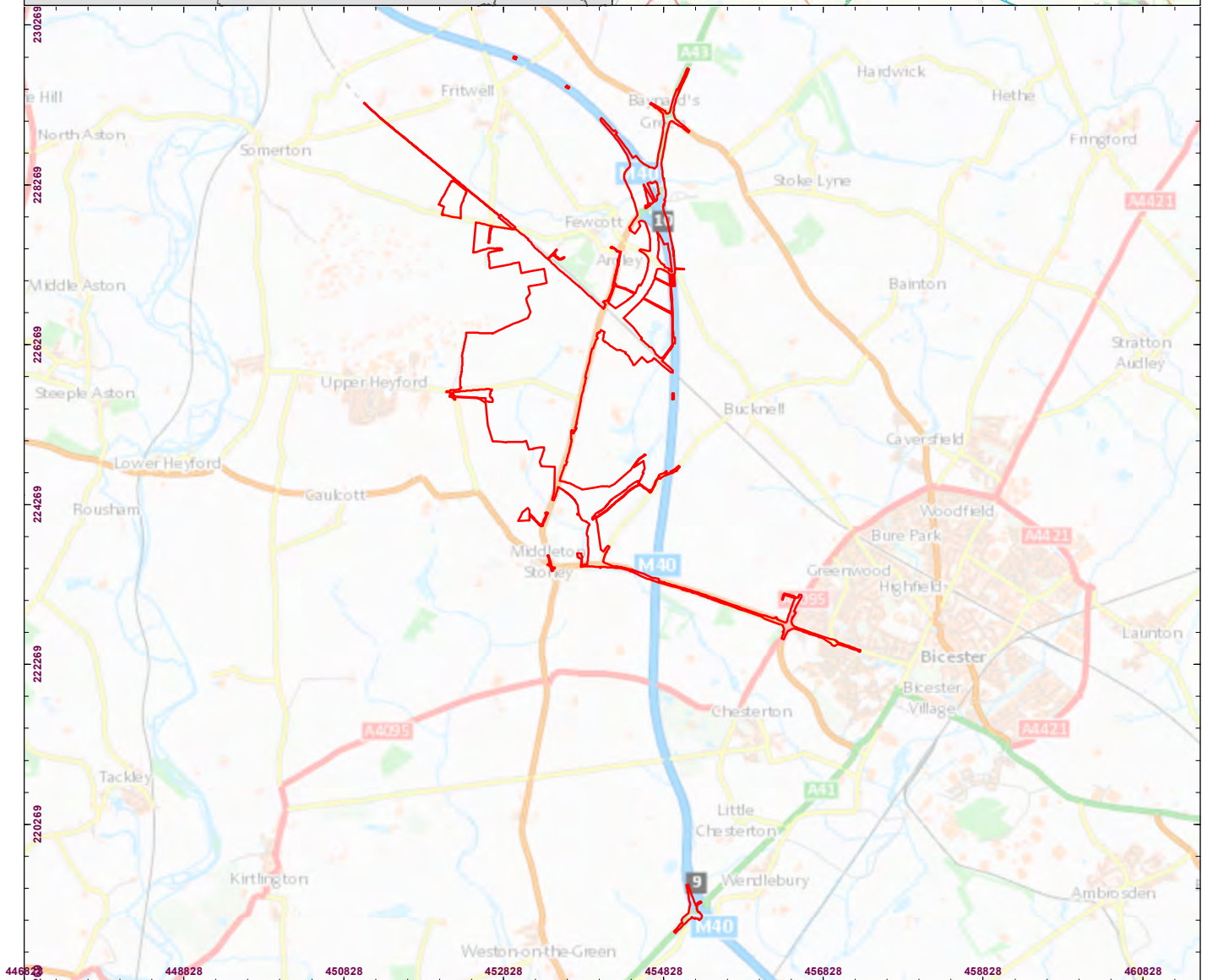
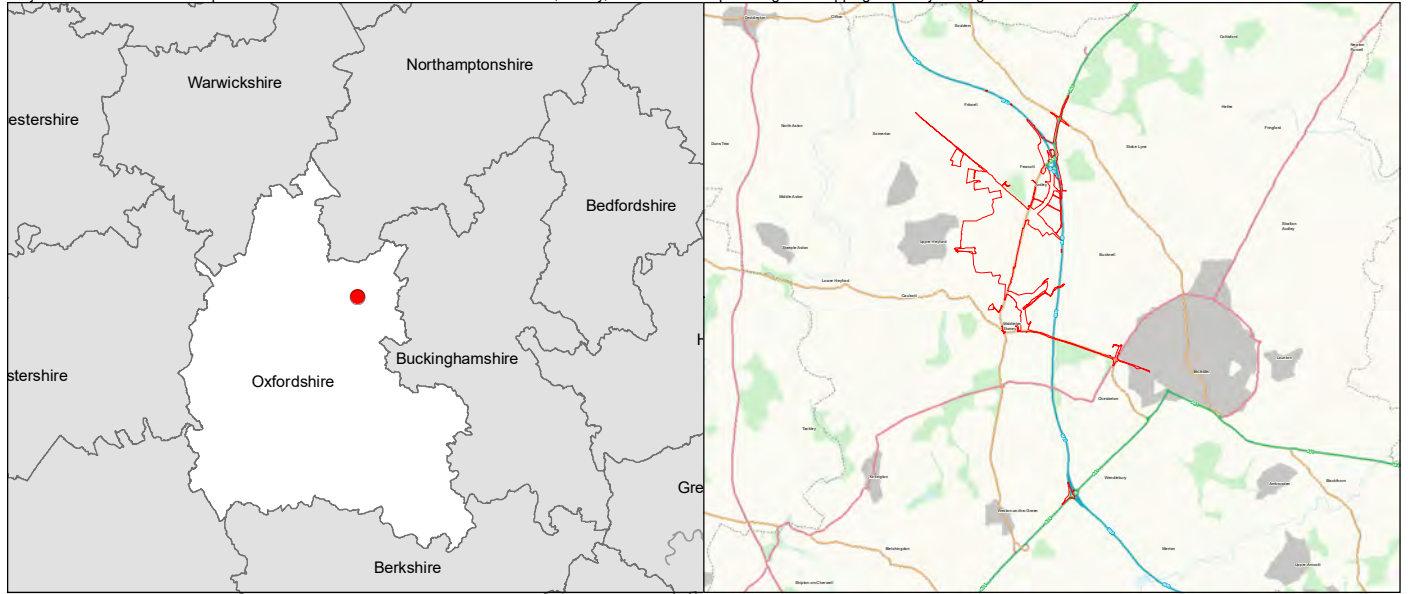
**Plate 43: View towards Ardley across north-western corner of Area A of the Application Site, from northern edge of runway at RAF Upper Heyford**



**Plate 44: Illustrative view of bomb stores in RAF Upper Heyford, from western edge of Area A of Application Site**



**FIGURES**



 Site Boundary

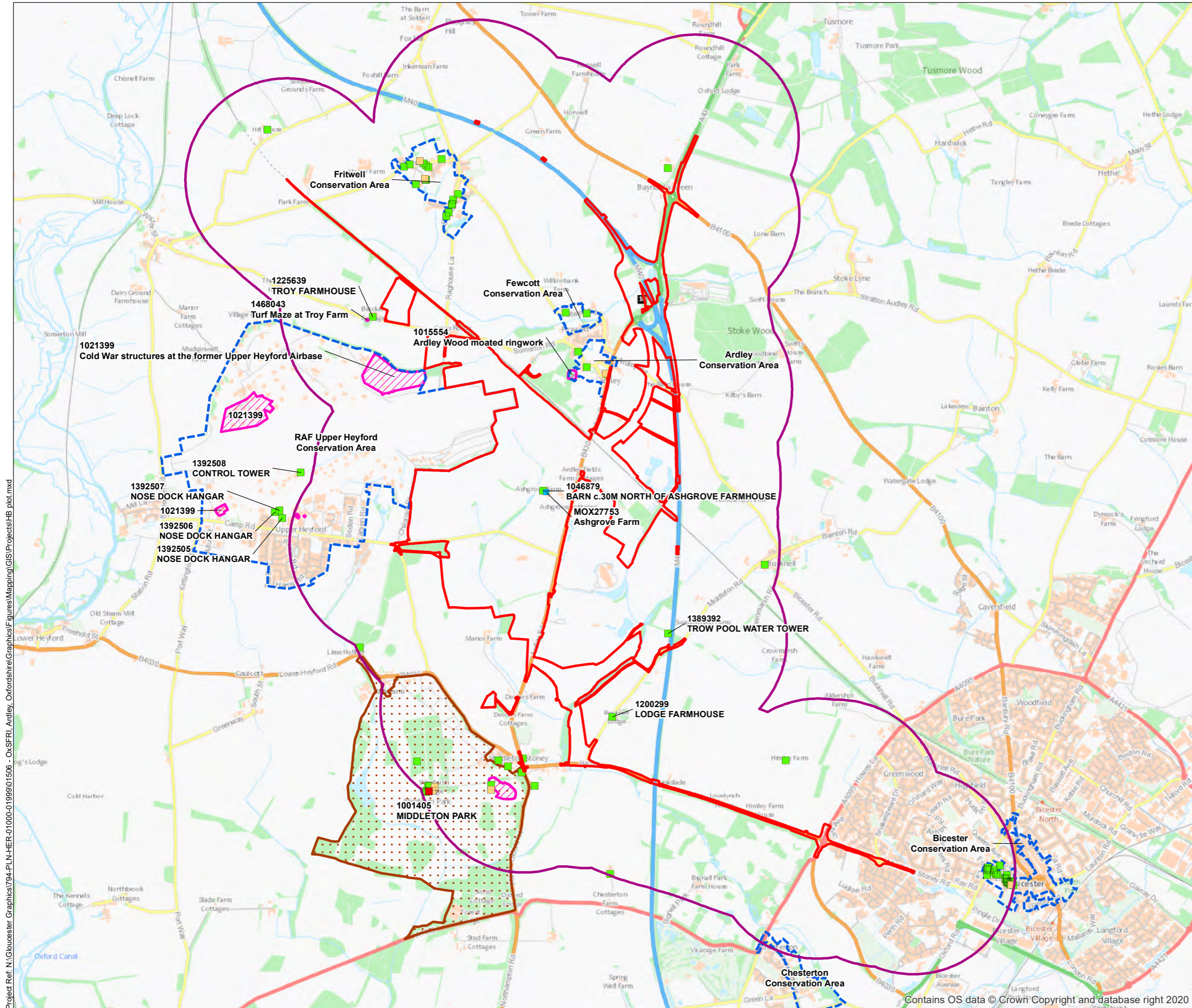


0 1,000 2,000m  
Scale at A4: 1:80,000



Figure 1  
Site Location





**Legend**

- Site Boundary
- 1km search buffer
- Designated Heritage Assets:
- Listed Buildings**
- Grade**
- I
- II\*
- II
- Conservation Areas
- Scheduled Monuments
- Registered Parks and Gardens
- Non-designated Heritage Assets:
- Non-designated assets

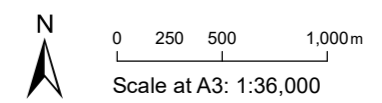
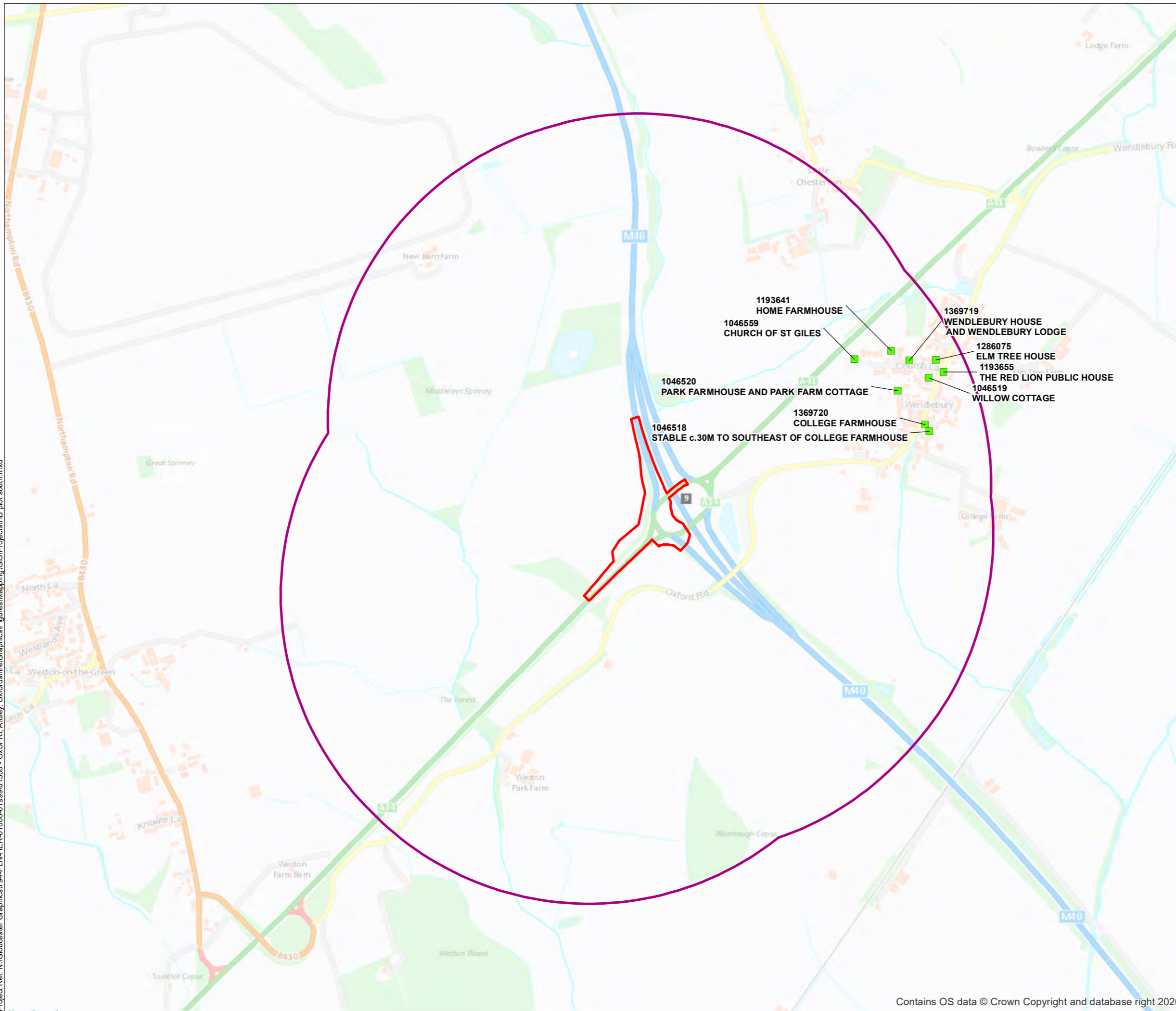


Figure 2a (North)  
Heritage Assets Plot

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Contains OS data © Crown Copyright and database right 2020

Project Ref: N:\Gbauresster\_Graphics\794-PLN-HER-01000-01999\01506 - OXSFRI, Ardley, Oxfordshire\Graphics\Figures\Mapping\GIS\Projects\HB\_plot\_south.mxd



**Legend**

- Site Boundary
- 1km search buffer

Designated Heritage Assets:

**Listed Buildings**

**Grade**

- I
- II\*
- II



0 125 250 500m

Scale at A3: 1:12,000



Figure 2a (South)

Heritage Assets Plot



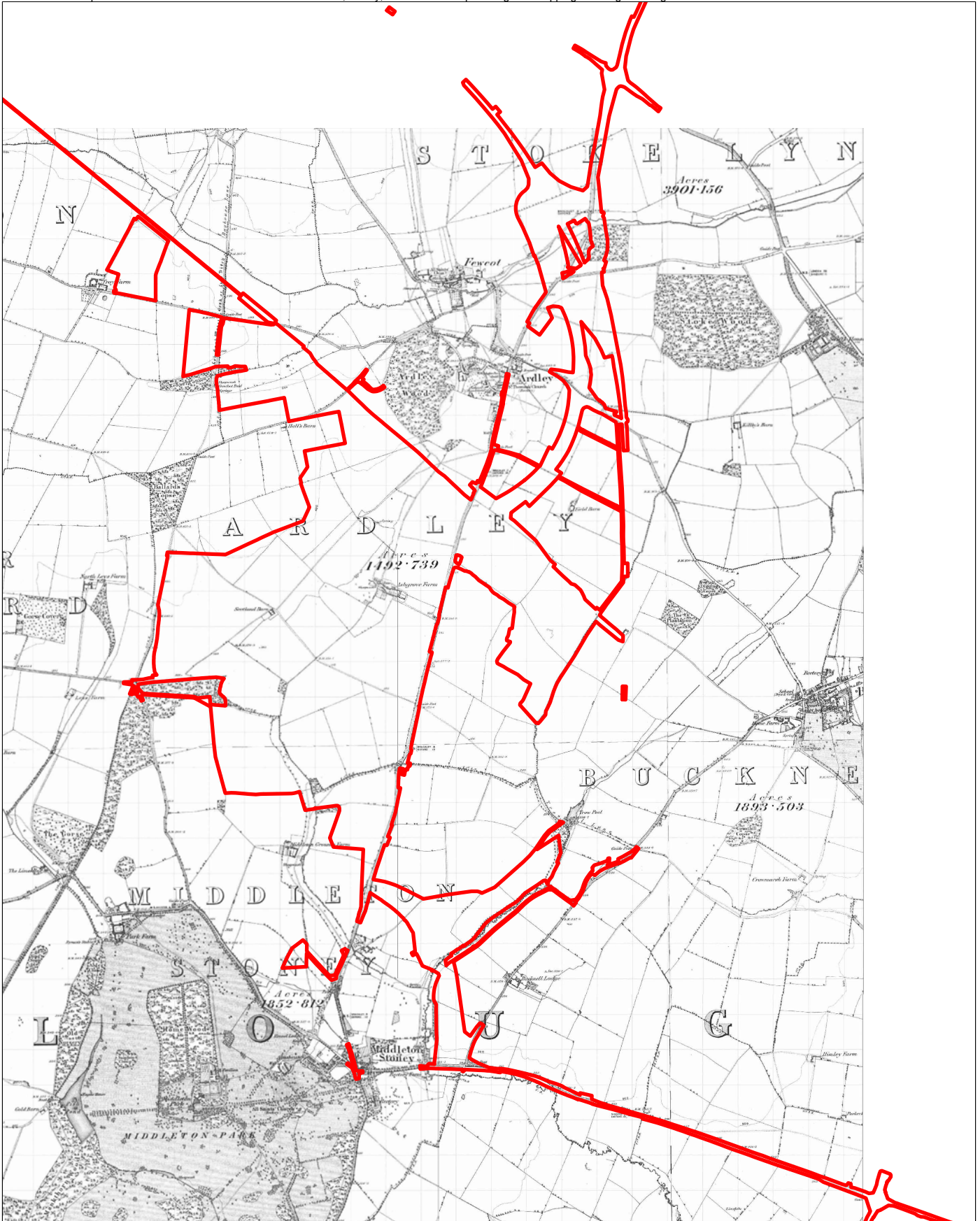
 Site Boundary



0 250 500m  
Scale at A4: 1:30,000



Figure 3  
1839 Ardley Tithe Map, and 1841  
Middleton (Middleton Stoney)  
Tithe Map



 Site Boundary

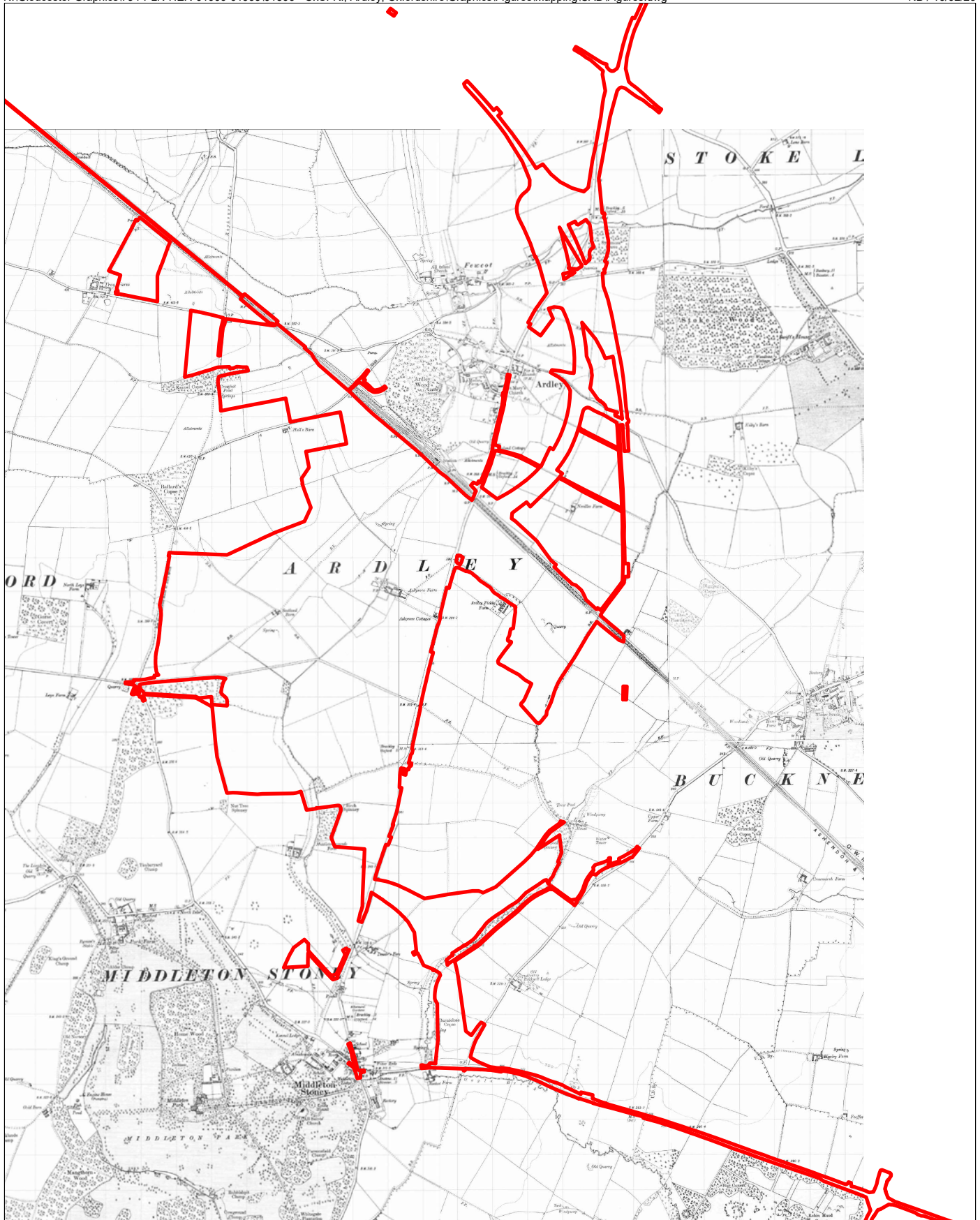


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Figure 4

1875-1880 Ordnance Survey Map



 Site Boundary

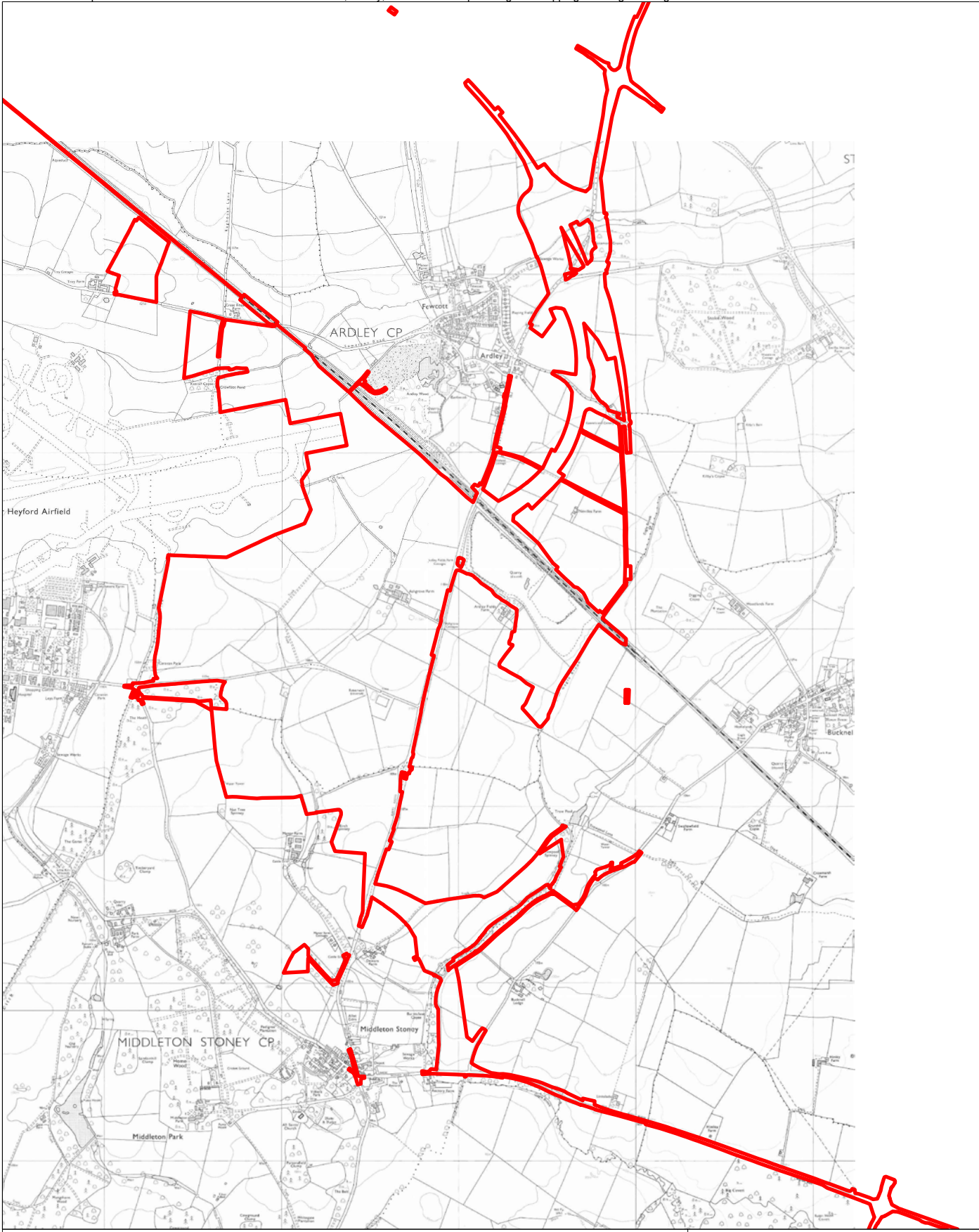


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Scale at A4: 1:30,000



Figure 5

1919-1923 Ordnance Survey Map



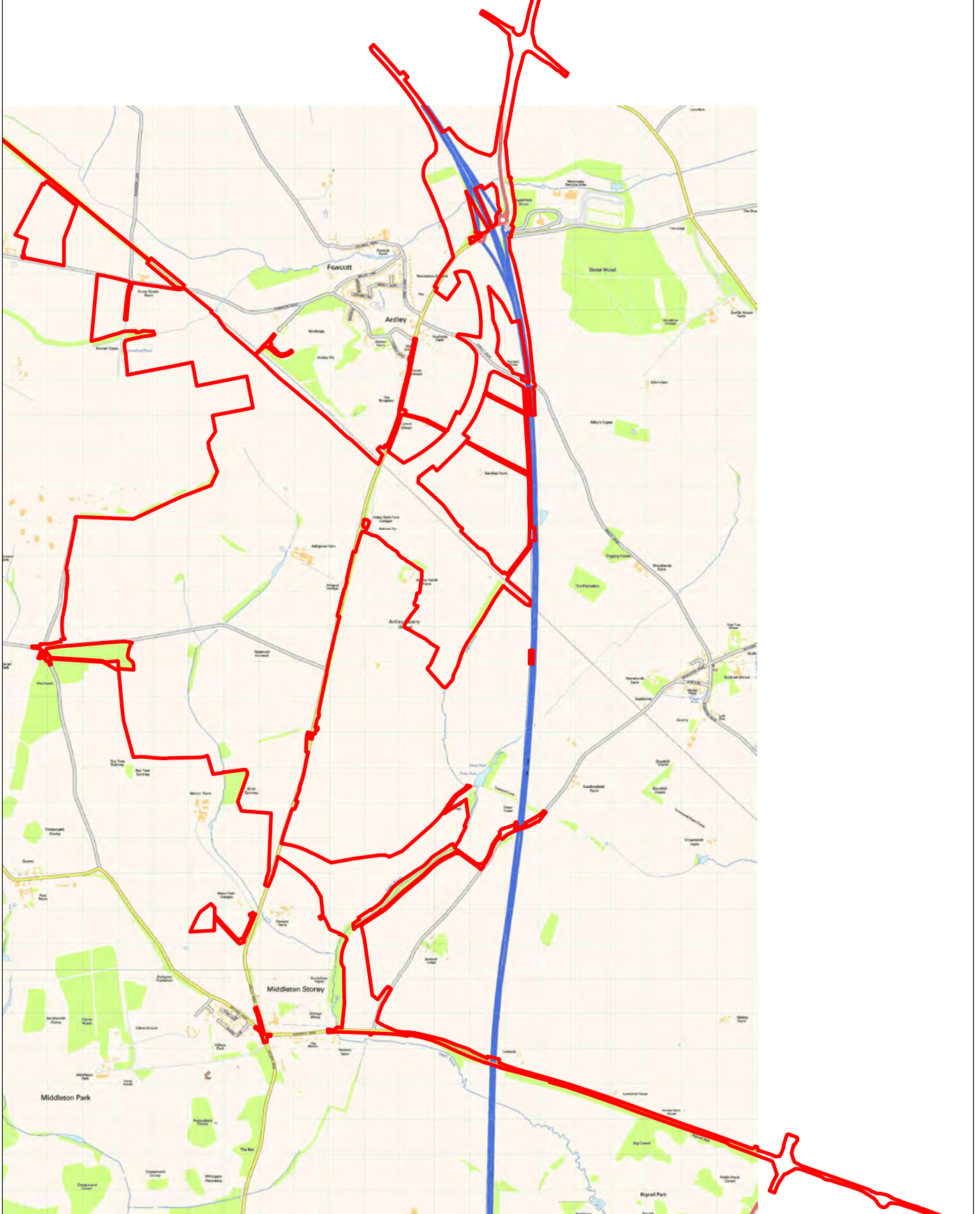
 Site Boundary



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Scale at A4: 1:30,000



Figure 6  
1980-1985 Ordnance Survey Map



 Site Boundary

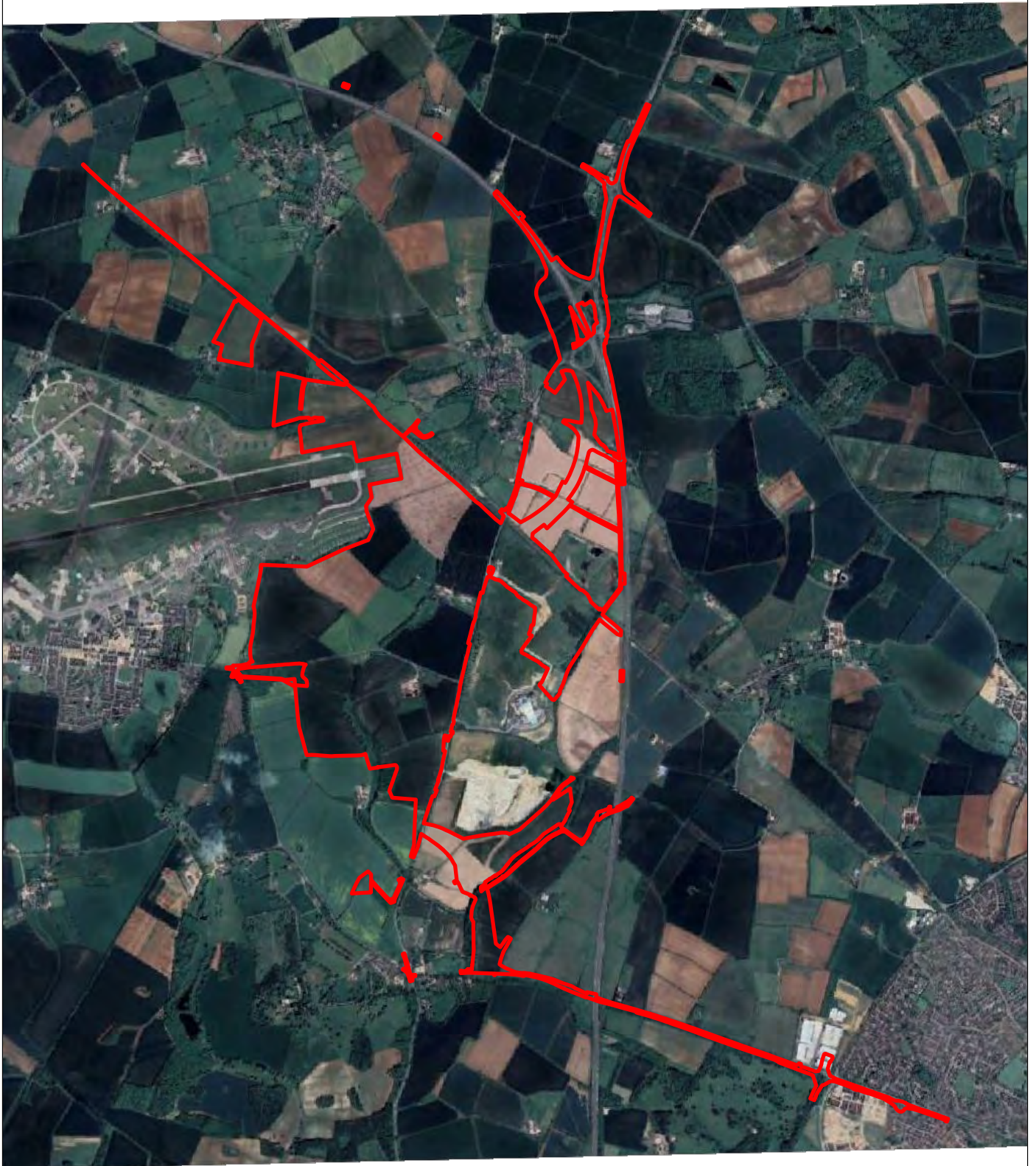


0 250 500m  
Scale at A4: 1:30,000



Figure 7

2001 Ordnance Survey Map



 Site Boundary



0 250 500m  
Scale at A4: 1:30,000



Figure 8

2022 Aerial Photograph  
(Google Earth)



## REFERENCES

### General

Oxfordshire Historic Environment Record (HER)

Historic England Archive, Swindon (HEA) (online only)

National Heritage List England (NHLE)

National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)

National Planning Practice Guidance (PPG)

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### Online Resources

Heritage Gateway - <http://www.heritagegateway.org.uk>

Historic England - <http://list.historicengland.org.uk/>

Images of England – [www.imagesofengland.org.uk](http://www.imagesofengland.org.uk)

National Archives – <http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk>

British Library – <http://explore.bl.uk>

Vision of Britain – <http://www.visionofbritain.org.uk>

MAGIC – [www.magic.gov.uk](http://www.magic.gov.uk)

Pastscape- <http://www.pastscape.org.uk>

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

