

Land off Meadow Lane, Iffley
Response to Application Proposals - Heritage
February 2023

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Report

Response to Application Proposals - Heritage

Site

Land off Meadow Lane, Iffley

Client

Friends of Iffley Village

Planning Authority

Oxford City Council

Grid reference

SP 52766 03961

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Executive Summary

This heritage response considers the submitted application proposals for Land off Meadow Lane, Iffley (the subject site) and the potential impact of the proposed development on the character and appearance of the Iffley Conservation Area and on the settings and significance of listed buildings and non-designated heritage assets located in its vicinity.

In accordance with Paragraph 194 of the *National Planning Policy Framework* (NPPF 2021) and Local Plan policy DH3 – Designated Heritage Assets, this report first identifies and describes the historical development of the subject site and outlines the significance of the designated and non-designated heritage assets before going on to consider the impact of the proposal on that significance.

The subject site is located within the Iffley Conservation Area (designated 1969), which requires assessment. It is contended that the assessment of the Conservation Area undertaken in the Heritage Statement in support of the application is insufficient as it fails to articulate the cumulative harm to the designated asset through the continued erosion of open space within the Conservation Area as a whole.

There are a number of Grade II listed buildings located in the vicinity of the site including Tudor Cottage (NHLE no. 1047316); Townsend Close (NHLE no. 1047315) and Wall and Gate of Townsend Close (NHLE no. 1369338); Number 92 (Rivermead) and Number 94 (NHLE no. 1369339); and Malthouse at rear and to north west of Number 94 (NHLE no. 1047317). Numbers 92 and 94 and the Malthouse are scoped out of the report owing to lack of intervisibility and the absence of historic ownership ties to the subject site.

There are no scheduled monuments within the wider vicinity of the subject site.

It is considered that Quince Cottage qualifies for consideration as a non-designated heritage asset on account of its age, contribution to townscape value and historic functional relationship to Townsend Close, and this asset will be assessed. Donnington Farmhouse, whilst dating from the later nineteenth century, has important local associative value, and shares historic ownership with the site, and is also considered to be of local listing status. The third building potentially deserving of non-designated heritage asset status is 425 Meadow Lane, which is believed to have 17th century origins, although the cartographic records have not been able to establish this.

The suite of documents accompanying the planning application has been reviewed in the compilation of this report, and it is considered that there is a consistent underplaying of the importance of the open space to the Conservation Area's character and appearance, and that the consequent level of harm arising from the proposals has been understated. This is corroborated by the Landscape and Visual Assessment review provided by Alison Farmer.

Section 4 of this report undertakes the assessment of significance of assets which are considered to have the potential to be impacted by the proposed development.

Development of the Horse Fields will permanently remove the contribution they make to the character and appearance of the Iffley Conservation Area. The views from Meadow Lane and Church Way where the fields are perceived in depth will be lost, and the historic linear morphology of the settlement will be negatively impacted. The rural character of Meadow Lane, historically a drover's road, will be diminished by the increase in vehicular traffic and road clutter, with the openings to this thoroughfare, and Church Way, resulting in the loss of historic hedgerow and walling. All of these elements impact negatively on the significance of the Conservation Area.

The proposed design scheme utilises red brick in Flemish bond as the principal construction material. Whilst there are examples of red-brick buildings within the conservation area, the characteristic historic building material is Cotswold stone, and it is considered that, far from creating a 'distinctive' development, the over-utilisation of red-brick, together with the cul-de-sac road layout, uniformity of unit footprints and the industrial warehouse appearance of the 2.5 storey elements, creates an unsympathetic and uncharacteristic addition.

The assessments contained within this report find that very low levels of less than substantial harm arise to the Grade II listed Townsend Close and associated Grade II listed wall and Tudor Cottage as a consequence of their encapsulation by the proposals, and urbanisation of their environs. It is acknowledged that the perception of this encapsulation and urbanisation is experienced principally in sequential views but, as intervisibility with the site is likely - particularly in the case of Townsend Close - and both buildings share historic functional connections with the land, it is considered that

there is potential for harm to arise. A low level of harm is identified to Quince Cottage and Donnington Farmhouse, considered as non-designated heritage assets.

The loss of the ancient pastoral fields, taken together with the cumulative impacts of the above harms to individual heritage assets within the conservation area, the cumulative impact of the loss of open green space in the context of the wider conservation area, and the rather homogenous and uncharacteristic appearance of the proposed development, are considered to result in a level of harm which amounts to substantial. Great weight is required to be given to the preservation of the significance of the affected assets (with the exception of Quince Cottage and Donnington House, which require a balanced judgement but no great weight) in the planning balance against the public benefits arising from the scheme, which should be substantial in nature per paragraph 201 of the NPPF.

Planning Policy SP42, in the reasoned justification, requires that development proposals for the allocation both conserve and enhance the unique characteristics of the conservation area. It is demonstrably the case that the application proposal fulfils neither of these requirements.

Planning policy requires that harm to the significance of heritage assets requires justification. The Heritage Statement, Design and Access Statement and Planning Statement all seek to justify the development on the grounds that the site is allocated. The allocation history review of the subject site undertaken in this report highlights that the site has only been considered for allocation since 2017, whereas it was consistently rejected for development proposals in the decades running up to this date. It is noted that there has been no material alteration to the physical appearance of the allocation site during this time.

The 2019 HELAA states that low density development of the site is possible without negatively impacting the Conservation Area. This statement conflicts with the LPA's acceptance of less than substantial harm arising from the development, and calls into question whether the site should have been allocated if undeliverable without harm to the Conservation Area.

It is therefore considered that the justification for the development, given the levels of heritage harm delivered, is wholly insufficient. It is also noted that errors and omissions in the Heritage Statement have caused the under-appreciation of the significance of the heritage assets affected, and the underplaying of harms arising to them.

The assessments within this report address this by:

- reference to historic ownership connections with the site (absent from the application Heritage Statement);
- consideration of the Conservation Area as a whole in respect of cumulative impact of loss of open space in the context of historic loss since designation (absent from the application Heritage Statement); and
- a full review of non-designated heritage assets, including the identification of those which qualify for this status although are not yet in receipt of it (absent from the application Heritage Statement).

It is considered that the level of harm to the Iffley Conservation Area clearly crosses the threshold into substantial harm, for not only is there the total loss of an area defined as important open space, but levels of harm to individual assets which require weight in their own right as regards conservation and the cumulative harm that arises to the conservation area.

The harm arising to the conservation area is manifest in:

- Loss of important open green space, identified within the Conservation Area Appraisal as such and protected by policy in terms of heritage harm. The application site is two-thirds of the last remaining ancient meadowland in Iffley, land which has high levels of cultural heritage per the Landscape Value identified in Table 2 of the landscape response (Farmer, 2023).
- Loss of the only remaining visual remnant of the historic settlement boundary in the context of the wider landscape setting to the west.
- Loss of views of designated historic assets (Townsend Close and Tudor Cottage) in views from the wider landscape.
- Loss of the rural character of Meadow Lane, a historic drover's road.
- Individual harm to the settings and significance of designated and non-designated assets within the conservation area

- Cumulative loss of open green space in terms of previous losses to the conservation area since designation.

The heritage harm arising as a consequence of development cannot be mitigated by design as any development on the site will require the loss of the open space and will generate similar harmful impacts on neighbouring designated assets. It is therefore considered that the allocation of the site is entirely in conflict with the local authority's heritage policy.

The conclusions of this report are therefore that the development generates substantial harm to the Iffley Conservation Area, which is considerably under-represented by the application documents, and insufficiently justified by the applicant.

1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 This heritage response considers Land at Meadow Lane, Iffley, Oxfordshire (Figure 1). The site (hereinafter referred to as the “Study Site”) is located at National Grid Reference SP 52766 03961.
- 1.2 The first section of this report echoes the requirement of NPPF paragraph 194 for applicants to describe the significance of heritage assets including contribution made by setting. The report draws together available information on designated and non-designated heritage assets. The assessment includes the results of a site survey, an examination of published and unpublished records, charts historic land-use through a map regression exercise and considers relevant local and national policy and guidance.
- 1.3 The Historic Environment Record has been consulted and the relevant designated and non-designated heritage assets located in the immediate vicinity are identified in Figure 2.
- 1.4 A site visit was undertaken on the 17th of February 2022 when the conditions were sunny and clear.
- 1.5 The second section of this report considers the submitted application (ref 22/03078/FUL) for the development of the site and reviews the proposed design of the development and the accompanying heritage statement.

Location and Description

- 1.6 The subject site is located at Meadow Lane, Iffley, Oxfordshire. The subject site is shown at Plates 1-6.
- 1.7 The study site is situated to the south of Meadow Lane. The site of the proposals is a roughly L-shaped field parcel which abuts Meadow Lane to the north, Church Way to the east, and existing domestic development on Meadow Lane, Church Way and Tudor Close to the north-east. On the west and south sides are lines of trees, filtering the site from open meadow land beyond. Approximately 195m to the west is the bank of the River Thames and the towpath, from which glimpsed views of the site are possible. The main access point is from a field gate on Church Way to the east of the site. The Meadow Lane thoroughfare is lined by 19th and 20th century detached properties. Church Way, on the east side, is more densely built up with detached houses and gardens with high vegetation. This historic development includes three listed buildings to the north-east: Tudor Cottage (NHLE no. 104316); Townsend Close (NHLE no. 1047315) and Wall and Gate of Townsend Close (NHLE no. 1369338), and the non-designated heritage assets of Quince Cottage, Donnington Farmhouse and 425 Meadow Lane. The site is located entirely within the Iffley Conservation Area, except for a small strip to its western boundary which falls within the setting of the conservation area.



Plate 1 View south across the meadow, from a gap in the hedges opposite 431 Meadow Lane.



Plate 2 View south across untouched meadow, from the Meadow Lane side.



Plate 3 The eastern extension of the site, looking west toward the river, viewed from Church Way opposite the junction with Tree Lane. No. 66 Church Way is visible to the left. Tipped debris in middle distance left by Council contractors in 2021



Plate 4 View west toward the river from the east side of Church Way, at the junction with Tree Lane.



Plate 5 View east into the study site, seen from the towpath on the west bank of the river.



Plate 6 View east across the subject site from Oriel Field (Viewpoint 10 in the application LVIA). Donnington Farmhouse and Townsend Close are apparent in this view in the winter months.

2.0 Planning Background and Development Plan Framework

Planning (Listed Building and Conservation Areas) Act 1990

2.0 The *Planning (Listed Building and Conservation Areas) Act 1990* sets out broad policies and obligations relevant to the protection of Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas and their settings.

2.1 Section 66(1) states:

In considering whether to grant planning permission for development which affects a listed building or its setting, the local planning authority or, as the case may be, the Secretary of State shall have special regard to the desirability of preserving the building or its setting or any features of special architectural or historic interest which it possesses.

2.2 Section 69 of the Act requires local authorities to define as conservation areas any *areas of special architectural or historic interest the character or appearance of which it is desirable to preserve or enhance* and Section 72 gives local authorities a general duty to pay special attention *to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of that area* in exercising their planning functions. These duties are taken to apply only within a Conservation Area. The Act does not make specific provision with regard to the setting of a Conservation Area, that is provided by the policy framework outlined below.

National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and National Planning Practice Guidance (NPPG)

2.3 Government policy in relation to the historic environment is outlined in Section 16 of the *National Planning Policy Framework 2021 (NPPF)*, entitled *Conserving and Enhancing the Historic Environment*. This provides guidance for planning authorities, property owners, developers and others on the conservation and investigation of heritage assets. Overall, the objectives of Section 16 of the NPPF can be summarised as seeking the:

- Delivery of sustainable development;
- understanding the wider social, cultural, economic and environmental benefits brought by the conservation of the historic environment;
- conservation of England's heritage assets in a manner appropriate to their significance; and
- recognition of the contribution that heritage assets make to our knowledge and understanding of the past.

2.4 Section 16 of the NPPF recognises that intelligently managed change may sometimes be necessary if heritage assets are to be maintained for the long term.

2.5 Paragraph 194 states that planning decisions should be based on the significance of the heritage asset, and that the level of detail supplied by an applicant should be proportionate to the importance of the asset, and should be no more than sufficient to understand the potential impact of the proposal upon the significance of that asset.

2.6 *Heritage Assets* are defined in Annex 2 as a building, monument, site, place, area or landscape identified as having a degree of significance meriting consideration in planning decisions, because of its heritage interest. Heritage assets include designated heritage assets and assets identified by the local planning authority (including local listing).

2.7 *Designated Heritage Assets* comprise: World Heritage Sites, Scheduled Monuments, Listed Buildings, Protected Wreck Sites, Registered Parks and Gardens, Registered Battlefields and Conservation Areas.

2.8 *Significance* is defined as: the value of a heritage asset to this and future generations because of its heritage interest. This interest may be archaeological, architectural, artistic or historic. Significance derives not only from a heritage asset's physical presence, but also from its setting.

2.9 *Setting* is defined 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. Elements of a setting may make a positive or negative contribution to the significance of an asset, may affect the ability to appreciate that significance or may be neutral.

- 2.10 The NPPF is supported by the *National Planning Policy Guidance (NPPG)*. In relation to the historic environment, paragraph 18a-002 states that:

Conservation is an active process of maintenance and managing change. It requires a flexible and thoughtful approach to get the best out of assets as diverse as listed buildings in everyday use and as yet undiscovered, undesignated buried remains of archaeological interest.

- 2.11 Paragraph 18a-001 makes a clear statement that any decisions relating to Listed Buildings and their settings and Conservation Areas must address the statutory considerations of the *Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990*, as well as satisfying the relevant policies within the National Planning Policy Framework and the Local Plan.
- 2.12 The NPPG outlines that although the extent and importance of setting is often expressed in visual terms, it can also be influenced by other factors such as noise, dust and vibration. Historic relationships between places can also be an important factor stressing ties between places that may have limited or no intervisibility with each other. This may be historic as well as aesthetic connections that contribute or enhance the significance of one or more of the heritage assets.
- 2.13 Paragraph 18a-013 states:

The contribution that setting makes to the significance of the heritage asset does not depend on there being public rights or an ability to access or experience that setting. The contribution may vary over time. When assessing any application for development which may affect the setting of a heritage asset, local planning authorities may need to consider the implications of cumulative change. They may also need to consider the fact that developments which materially detract from the asset's significance may also damage its economic viability now, or in the future, thereby threatening its on-going conservation.

- 2.14 The key test in NPPF paragraphs 201-202 is whether a proposed development will result in substantial harm or less than substantial harm. However, substantial harm is not defined in the NPPF. Paragraph 18a-017 of the NPPG provides additional guidance on substantial harm. It states:

Whether a proposal causes substantial harm will be a judgment for the decision taker, having regard to the circumstances of the case and the policy in the National Planning Policy Framework. In general terms, substantial harm is a high test, so it may not arise in many cases. For example, in determining whether works to a listed building constitute substantial harm, an important consideration would be whether the adverse impact seriously affects a key element of its special architectural or historic interest. It is the degree of harm to the asset's significance rather than the scale of the development that is to be assessed.

- 2.15 Paragraph 202 of the NPPF outlines that where a proposed development results in less than substantial harm to the significance of a heritage asset, the harm arising should be weighed against the public benefits accruing from the proposed development. Paragraph 18a-020 of the NPPG outlines what is meant by public benefits:

Public benefits may follow from many developments and could be anything that delivers economic, social or environmental progress as described in the National Planning Policy Framework (Paragraph 8). Public benefits should flow from the proposed development. They should be of a nature or scale to be of benefit to the public at large and should not just be a private benefit. However, benefits do not always have to be visible or accessible to the public in order to be genuine public benefits.

- 2.16 Paragraph 203 states:

the effect of an application on the significance of a non-designated heritage asset should be taken into account in determining the application. In weighing applications that affect directly or indirectly non-designated heritage assets, a balanced judgement will be required having regard to the scale of any harm or loss and the significance of the heritage asset.

- 2.17 In considering any planning application for development, the planning authority will be mindful of the framework set by government policy, in this instance the NPPF, by current Development Plan Policy and by other material considerations.
- 2.18 Government policy in relation to landscape is outlined in Section 15 of the National Planning Policy Framework 2021 (NPPF), entitled *Conserving and Enhancing the Natural Environment*. This provides guidance for planning authorities, property owners, developers and others on the conservation and investigation of all aspects of the natural environment.

With regard to this report it is the contribution of Cultural Heritage to the natural environment, through the AONB designation, that is the relevant element of the policy.

- 2.19 Paragraph 176 states that great weight should be given to conserving and enhancing landscape and scenic beauty in National Parks, the Broads and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty which have the highest status of protection in relation to these issues. The paragraph continues:

The conservation and enhancement of wildlife and cultural heritage are also important considerations in these areas, and should be given great weight in National Parks and the Broads.

- 2.20 Government Guidance on the natural environment states that Management Plans for AONBs

do not form part of the statutory development plan, but they help to set out the strategic context for development. They provide evidence of the value and special qualities of these areas, provide a basis for cross-organisational work to support the purposes of their designation and show how management activities contribute to their protection, enhancement and enjoyment. They may contain information which is relevant when preparing plan policies, or which is a material consideration when assessing planning applications.

Local Planning Policy

- 2.21 The Oxford Local Plan (Adopted June 2020) is the relevant development plan. The Local Plan contains the following relevant policies including DH3 – Designated Heritage Assets which states:

DH3 – Designated Heritage Assets

Planning permission or listed building consent will be granted for development that respects and draws inspiration from Oxford's unique historic environment (above and below ground), responding positively to the significance character and distinctiveness of the heritage asset and locality.

For all planning decisions for planning permission or listed building consent affecting the significance of designated heritage assets, great weight will be given to the conservation of that asset and to the setting of the asset where it contributes to that significance or appreciation of that significance.

An application for planning permission for development which would or may affect the significance of any designated heritage asset, either directly or by being within its setting, should be accompanied by a heritage assessment that includes a description of the asset and its significance and an assessment of the impact of the development proposed on the asset's significance. As part of this process full regard should be given to the detailed character assessments and other relevant information set out any relevant conservation area appraisal and management plan.

The submitted heritage assessment must include information sufficient to demonstrate:

- a) *An understanding of the significance of the heritage asset, including recognition of its contribution to the quality of life of current and future generations and the wider social, cultural, economic benefits they may bring; and*
- b) *That the development of the proposal and its design process have been informed by an understanding of the significance of the heritage asset and that harm to its significance has been avoided or minimised; and*
- c) *That, in cases where development would result in harm to the significance of a heritage asset, including its setting, the extent of harm has been properly and accurately assessed and understood, that it is justified, and that measures are incorporated into the proposal, where appropriate, that mitigate, reduce or compensate for the harm.*

Where the setting of an asset is affected by a proposed development, the heritage assessment should include a description of the extent to which the setting contributes to the significance of the asset, as well as an assessment of the impact of the proposed development on the setting and its contribution to significance.

Substantial harm to or loss of Grade II listed buildings, or Grade II registered parks or gardens, should be exceptional. Substantial harm to or loss of assets of the highest significance, notably scheduled monuments, Grade I and II listed buildings, Grade I and II**

registered parks and gardens, should be wholly exceptional. Where a proposed development will lead to substantial harm to or loss of the significance of a designated heritage asset, planning permission or listed building consent will only be granted if:

- i) The harm is necessary to achieve substantial public benefits that outweigh the harm or loss; or all of the following apply:
- ii) The nature of the asset prevents all reasonable uses of the sites; and
- iii) No viable use of the asset itself can be found in the medium term (through appropriate marketing) that will enable its conservation; and
- iv) Conservation by grant funding or similar is not possible; and
- v) The harm or loss is outweighed by the benefit of bringing the site back into use;
- vi) A plan for recording and advancing understanding of the significance of any heritage assets to be lost, including making this evidence publicly available, is agreed with the City Council.

Where a development proposal will lead to less than substantial harm to a designated heritage asset, this harm must be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal. Clear and extensive justification for this harm should be set out in full in the heritage assessment.

2.22 Local Plan Policy DH2 – Views and Building Heights contains the following:

Planning permission will be granted for developments of appropriate height or massing, as demonstrated by the following criteria, all of which should be met:

- a) *Design choices regarding height and massing have a clear design rationale and the impacts will be positive; and*
- b) *Any design choice to design buildings to a height that would impact on character should be fully explained, and regard should be had to the guidance on design of higher buildings set out in the High Buildings TAN. In particular, the impacts in terms of the four visual tests of obstruction, impact on the skyline, competition and change of character should be explained; and*
- c) *It should be demonstrated how proposals have been designed to have a positive impact through their massing, orientation, the relation of the building to the street, and the potential impact on important views including both in to the historic skyline and out towards Oxford's green setting.*

2.23 Land at Meadow Lane is designated for development under Policy SP42: Land at Meadow Lane. The Plan notes that any development proposals would be expected to conserve and enhance the unique characteristics of the Iffley Conservation Area in order to comply with the requirements of Policies DH2 and DH3. Policy SP42 reads:

Planning permission will be granted for residential development at Land at Meadow Lane. The minimum number of homes to be delivered is 29. Other complimentary uses will be considered on their merits.

A biodiversity survey will be expected to assess the biodiversity value of the site and it should be demonstrated how harm will be avoided, mitigated or compensated.

Development should be designed to ensure that there is no adverse impact on the Iffley Meadows SSSI. To minimise impact upon the Iffley Meadows SSSI, development proposals will be expected to incorporate Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems and may be required to be accompanied by a groundwater study.

A planning application must be accompanied by a site-specific flood risk assessment and development should incorporate and mitigation measures.

2.24 Paragraph 9.201 of the reasoned justification to the policy states:

Any development proposals would be expected to conserve and enhance the unique characteristics of the Iffley Conservation Area in order to comply with the requirements of Policies DH2 and DH3.

Supplementary Planning Guidance

2.25 There is no adopted or forthcoming supplementary guidance in respect of the Meadow Lane site.

2.26 The adopted Iffley Conservation Area Appraisal (2009) has been referenced in the compilation of this report.

Historic Environment Good Practice Advice In Planning Note 2: Managing Significance in Decision-Taking in the Historic Environment (Historic England 2015)

2.27 The purpose of this document is to provide information to assist local authorities, planning and other consultants, owners, applicants and other interested parties in implementing historic environment policy in the NPPF and NPPG. It outlines a six-stage process to the assembly and analysis of relevant information relating to heritage assets potentially affected by a proposed development:

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

Historic Environment Good Practice Advice In Planning Note 3: The Setting of Heritage Assets (Historic England 2017)

2.28 Historic England's Historic Environment Good Practice Advice in Planning Note 3 provides guidance on the management of change within the setting of heritage assets.

2.29 The document restates the definition of setting as outlined in Annex 2 of the NPPF. Setting is also described as being a separate term to curtilage, character and context; while it is largely a visual term, setting, and thus the way in which an asset is experienced, can also be affected by noise, vibration, odour and other factors. The document makes it clear that setting is not a heritage asset, nor is it a heritage designation, though land within a setting may itself be designated. Its importance lies in what the setting contributes to the significance of a heritage asset.

2.30 The Good Practice Advice Note sets out a five-stage process for assessing the implications of proposed developments on setting:

1. Identification of heritage assets which are likely to be affected by proposals;
2. Assessment of whether and what contribution the setting makes to the significance of a heritage asset;
3. Assessing the effects of proposed development on the significance of a heritage asset;
4. Maximising enhancement and reduction of harm on the setting of heritage assets; and
5. Making and documenting the decision and monitoring outcomes

2.31 The guidance reiterates the NPPF in stating that where developments affecting the setting of heritage assets results in a level of harm to significance, this harm, whether substantial or less than substantial, should be weighed against the public benefits of the scheme.

Allocation History of the Site

2.32 In 1994, the Donnington Hospital Trust sought to have the subject site allocated for development within the Local Plan and not have it considered under the then Policy EN5 as Special Open Space. The Trust were unsuccessful, and the site remained as important open space under EN5. At the March/April 1994 Planning Inquiry the conclusion reached by the Inspector was that the site was correctly designated. At paragraph 9, under the heading Housing Considerations, the following is stated:

There will always be strong development pressures within Oxford, therefore the Council is particularly concerned about the cumulative effects of infilling which could give rise to town cramming if all sites are not carefully considered and controlled.

2.33 In May 2011 Oxford City Council published their Sites and Housing DPD Preferred Options Consultation Document, in which – as recorded at Appendix 4 – the site was rejected in the call for sites, the reasoning given being as follows:

Development on the site would have a detrimental effect on the conservation area, as well as difficulties creating a suitable access. The Iffley Conservation Area Assessment notes that the site is important because of the long views it allows out of the conservation area and across the fields to the Thames and beyond. The Landscape Character Appraisal of Oxford (2002) notes the importance of the low density development playing an important part in the character of the area. Development of this site would also result in the urbanisation of the view from the river to Iffley and would be counter to the linear nature of the village. Potential access is off Church Way, although the proximity of the roundabout opposite the Tree Hotel and the location on an inside bend mean it would be difficult to create a safe access.

- 2.34 The 2014 Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment (SHLAA) confirms that the Memorial Field and Horsefields (which are referred to as two parcels, SHLAA refs 388 and 389) were rejected as an allocation through the Local Plan and states:

The site was considered through the Sites and Housing Plan but was rejected as development is unlikely to be possible without a significantly negative effect on the conservation area. This constraint remains.

- 2.35 The comments regarding the impacts of development are identical for the Church Way (Memorial Field) and Meadow Lane (Horsefields) land parcels.
- 2.36 The 2017 Housing and Employment Land Availability Assessment (HELAA) identified that the application site was suitable for low density development which would not have a negative impact on the conservation area. There is no transparency in respect of how this judgement was made, given that the site remained in the CA and maintained the same function with regard to the landscape character and influence on settlement morphology. The methodology for the HELAAs in the period 2017 – 2019 is identical. The only difference is the availability of the site.
- 2.37 The 2019 HELAA is the latest available document in terms of land assessment. Appendix A lists the Meadow Lane site (Ref 389) as available for development, and states:
- Low density development would not have a negative impact upon CA area. Site suitable for development. Site is allocated for residential in Proposed Submission Draft 2019.*
- 2.38 There is no separate reference for Church Way, as in the 2014 SHLAA, and it is assumed that both land parcels are now combined within the Meadow Lane HELAA site reference.
- 2.39 In the Schedule of Main Modifications produced in relation to the adopted Local Plan, it is noted that the Inspector required the insertion of text within the supporting justification to Policy SP43 stating that *Any development proposals would be expected to conserve and enhance the unique characteristics of the Iffley Conservation Area in order to comply with the requirements of Policies DH2 and DH3.*
- 2.40 Given the sensitive nature of the allocated site and its history of previous rejections for allocation on grounds that have not materially altered, it is surprising that this text was not incorporated within the policy itself. This has created an irresolvable tension within the policy, which requires a minimum number of units to be delivered that appears impossible to achieve whilst conserving and enhancing the conservation area.

3.0 Historical Context and Location of Heritage Assets

Introduction

3.0 The following section presents a historical development of the site and wider area through the results of a map regression exercise and review of relevant background documentation.

3.1 The location of designated and non-designated heritage assets within and surrounding the site are also discussed below; these are shown on Figure 2.

Historical Background

Summary: Iffley

3.2 The village of Iffley, Oxfordshire is a historic township along the east bank of the Thames, around 1.9 miles to the south-east of central Oxford.

3.3 The name Iffley (sometimes Giffley or Yiffley) likely derives from the Old English 'gīfete', meaning a plover or small bird, and 'lēah', meaning a forest clearing ('Iffley', Key to English Place Names).

3.4 The Domesday Book records that the Manor of Iffley was held by Earl Aubrey of Coucy, and included land for 6 ploughs, a fishery, 24 acres of meadow and a furlong of pasture and 2 acres of woodland (DB Phillimore ref: Oxfordshire 18,1). There is no mention of a mill in Domesday, but mill rents are recorded from the late 12th century. The mill was owned by Oxford burgesses and later by Lincoln College, who owned it until it burned down in 1908. The Manor seems to have been held by Henry of Oxford in the 12th century and later given by him to Geoffrey Clinton. At this point the Manor was held together with parts of Church Cowley (Lobel, 1957).

3.5 Clinton probably granted the Manor to the Norman family of St. Remy, who probably funded the construction of the Church of St Mary the Virgin c. 1160 (NHLE no. 1047319). The advowson was given to Kenilworth Priory, which had been founded by the Clintons. Late in the 12th century the Manor was successfully claimed by Richard FitzNiel and the Clinton claim disappeared. The Hundred Rolls of 1279 recorded that Iffley housed 15 tenants, 17 customary tenants (copyholders), and 7 cottagers engaged in agricultural labour. There was also mention of a man who mowed the Lord's meadows (Bird, 2003, pp. 5-7).

3.6 The Manor of Iffley passed through FitzNiel's descendants into the 14th century. Its descent was complicated until it came to the Crown in 1382. It was granted to the Queen's chamberlain, Sir Richard Abberbury, for life (Lobel, 1957). Sir Richard Abberbury was licensed to found the Hospital of Donnington and to endow it with Iffley Manor in 1393. Now known as Donnington Manor, the Iffley estate was subsequently always held by the Hospital and associated with various patrons. In 1514 Donnington Manor was granted to the Duke of Suffolk, who sold it to the King. The Hospital was briefly dissolved and then refounded by Elizabeth I in 1601. She granted the Manor, rights to the Hospital and the dependent Manor of Iffley, to the Earl of Nottingham. It was held by the Packer family until 1746, then passing via marriage to Winchcombe Henry Hartley. Their male line died out in 1881 and was partitioned among female heiresses. In 1907 Iffley Manor, with Donnington, passed to Countess E. Ada Palatiano (Lobel, 1957).

3.7 Iffley's economic history has been dominated by agriculture, with cottagers managing small strips of land. The major farms were Court House, attached to the Donnington Manor Estate, and 'the Manor House', historically owned by Lincoln College. Before enclosure Iffley had a three-field system, with fields named Upper Field, Lower Field and Hawkwell, as well as meadow land to the west of the village (Lobel, 1957). There are records of meadow by the river held in common and distributed by lot as early as the 12th century. By the 13th century some meadow was held by the Lord, and some by a few free tenants (Lincoln College Muniments, 18 June 1295; LC/EL/IFF/D/4). The present Meadow Way was named for Iffley Meadow, one of the pre-inclosure township fields. Together with Tree Lane it formed a continuous sheep-way leading to medieval meadows to the west of Iffley.

3.8 Tenant farmers from Shotover with grazing rights in Iffley Meadows exercised these seasonally via the continuous 'Sheepway' drovers' road (now called 'Tree Lane' in Iffley) linking distant places that had no intervisibility with each other.' These rights were overseen by the Manorial Court sited to the south of St Mary the Virgin and now called 'Court Place' and connected via Church Way to the Iffley Meadows fields. Further historic connections via Church Way and Meadow Lane arose from grain grown on tenanted fields being transported

for grinding in Iffley Mill. Further uses of this route were from 'Court Farm' and the common woodland used for coppicing south of the Manorial Court.

- 3.9 There was considerable pushback to the enclosure of fields in this part of south Oxfordshire. An Enclosure Act for Iffley was passed in 1815, but was not enacted until 1829, a relatively late date (Private Act, 55 George III, c. 102). The noted local landscape painter William Turner of Oxford (1789-1862) recorded the appearance of unenclosed fields on the north-west side of Iffley in the 1853 painting *Haymaking, Study from Nature, in Osney Meadow, near Oxford, looking towards Iffley* (Waites, 2012, pp. 73-74) (Plate 6). The painting likely shows the last farming on Osney Meadow before its enclosure the following year, and a view across the historic farmland to the north-west of Iffley.



Plate 7 *Haymaking, Study from Nature, in Osney Meadow, near Oxford, looking towards Iffley*. William Turner, 1853. Shows the agricultural character of the surrounding area before enclosure, including a stone in the foreground marking a pre-enclosure field division.

- 3.10 The character of Iffley changed in the late 18th century, with the construction of large country houses within reach of Oxford for wealthier occupants. An inquiry by the Charity Commission in 1894-96 criticised Donnington Hospital for allowing some of the smaller houses on its property to fall into disrepair (OHC QSD/C/133).
- 3.11 The Rose Hill estate was built in the 1930s and the post-war period on old agricultural land to the south of Iffley (Symonds, 2000). This gave Iffley a close suburban neighbour and cemented its incorporation into Oxford's commuter belt. Donnington Hospital Trust owned much of Iffley's open land until the 1960s, when some of their green space was sold off for infilling. Aside from some infilling from the 1960s, the historic spine of Iffley retains its rural character as historic farmland has been retained on the west and the east, toward the riverbank. The application site forms part of this rural hinterland character.

The Study Site and Historic Map regression

- 3.12 Early mapping of Oxfordshire, such as the 1659 Morden Map (Figure 3) shows Iffley as a minor settlement with a church on the east bank of the Thames. County survey maps from the 18th century show the morphology of the settlement: the 1761 Rocque Map (Figure 4) shows the main roads in Iffley, with the settlement centred around Church Way and Mill Lane. The 1767 Jefferys Map (Figure 5) shows the village as a small linear settlement parallel with the riverbank. Buildings along the roads are limited, and the meadows beside the riverbank are empty. The Mill is also shown and labelled.

- 3.13 The 1811 Stevens Ordnance Survey Drawing (Figure 6) shows the topography of the village in more detail. Church Way, Tree Lane and Mill Lane are all visible, and the rough position of the study site is discernible. There was no development on the meadowlands, but a few buildings are shown along Church Way. The same is true of the 1830 First Series Ordnance Survey Map (Figure 7); the pattern of built development is restricted to the main roads, with the meadow land to the west side, including the application site, untouched.
- 3.14 On the Iffley Enclosure Map of c. 1830 (Figure 8; OHC POX0082372) the identified site falls into the plots marked 79, 80, 81, 82, 83 and 84. The original Award (OHC PC145/H1/1) could not be consulted to see who occupied these new enclosures. The northern section of the site adjacent to Meadow Lane is labelled 'J. Danbe'. The occupier of the land at this time was a member of the Danbe family, who were millers in Iffley from the late 18th century until 1866 (OHC GB/160/O12/L2; Lobel, 1957, pp. 189-206). The greater part of the manorial estate was let out to smallholders following enclosure (Lobel, 1957).
- 3.15 In 1837, Parliament considered a proposal for a section of the Great Western Railway to run through Iffley, supported by Isambard Kingdom Brunel (Oxford and Great Western Union Railway Bill). This would involve creating an embankment parallel with Church Lane as far north as Meadow Lane, partly running through the present study site. The proposal was unsuccessful following local opposition. Plans of Iffley were made at this time showing the study site (Figure 9), but the Book of the Reference could not be consulted (PA HL/PO/PB/3/plan215). The Minister and Poor Men of Donnington Hospital had twenty lessees in 1837, including John Hardy and John Westlake, who were involved in the public inquiry regarding the proposed railway (Oxford and Great Western Union Railway Bill, Minutes of Evidence, 26th April 1837, pp. 4-5).
- 3.16 Tithe Commissioners arrived in Iffley in 1839. At this time large sections of Iffley and its surrounding areas had not yet been enclosed (Bird, 2003, p. 12). When the survey was confirmed and the tithe map was produced in 1847, much of the map still showed that land as being strip-farmed (Figure 10). The study site was not shown on the Iffley Tithe Map.
- 3.17 The earliest detailed Ordnance Survey mapping for the area is the 1875-1878 1:2,500 map (Figure 11). The site was undeveloped meadow with trees shown along the west, south and north-eastern boundaries. Townsend Close, then named 'Elm Lodge', Tudor Cottage, Quince Cottage and 425 Meadow Lane are visible.
- 3.18 As the site has always been undeveloped meadow, there is little change to be seen on later Ordnance Survey maps. On the 1921 1:2,500 map (Figure 12) 400 Meadow Lane was added on the north side of the site, and several further properties on the north side of the road. The 1955-1956 1:2,500 Ordnance Survey map (Figure 13) shows further additions on the north side of Meadow Lane. On the 1981-1993 1:2,500 Ordnance Survey map (Figure 14) the Tudor Close houses can be seen for the first time to the north-east of the site. Aside from infilling along Church Way and Meadow Lane, there has not been any significant development in the setting of the study site.

Heritage Assets

Scheduled monuments

- 3.19 There are no scheduled monuments in the vicinity of the study site.

Listed Buildings

- 3.20 There are 6 listed buildings within a 250m radius of the study site although, owing to topography, tree planting and intervening built form, some of these lack direct intervisibility and can be scoped out of assessment except insofar as they contribute to the wider Iffley Conservation Area. Grade II listed Townsend Close (NHLE no. 1369338) and its Wall and Gate (NHLE no. 1369338) will be assessed as a group, as they share potential intervisibility, co-visibility, sequential visibility and a historic ownership link with the study site. The Grade II listed Tudor Cottage (NHLE no. 1047316) will also be considered, as it shares historic ownership links with the site, although it lacks co-visibility and its scale and orientation makes intervisibility less likely.

Conservation Areas

- 3.21 The Iffley Conservation Area, within which the subject site is located, will be assessed within this report.

Non-Designated Heritage Assets

- 3.22 Oxford City Council maintains the Oxford Heritage Asset Register (OHAR) where nominations for buildings are considered at committee. The Council have not published details of the nomination criteria online, beyond the statement that the buildings contribute to the character of Oxford and its neighbourhoods through their locally significant historic, architectural, archaeological or artistic interest, although selection criteria are detailed in the nomination form and include Age, Rarity, Integrity, Group Value and Oxford's Identity. Quince Cottage, Donnington Farmhouse and 425 Meadow Lane are not on the adopted list, nor on the current list of nominations, but their age and contribution to the streetscene in the vicinity of designated heritage assets, together with associative value in the case of Donnington Farmhouse, would make them potential candidates for consideration, and they are included within this assessment for completeness.

4.0 Proposed Development and Potential Impact on Heritage Assets

Background

- 4.0 This section identifies and assesses the impacts of the proposal on the significance of the heritage assets located within and in the vicinity of the subject site. In assessing the heritage impacts of the proposal, the relevant policies cited in section 2.0 have been referenced.

The Proposed Development

- 4.1 The proposed development comprises a residential development of 32 units, with an access road onto Meadow Lane, and pedestrian and cycle access to Church Way. The properties which front onto Church Way are accessed independently from this thoroughfare, and are constructed with Cotswold stone cladding, whilst the remainder of the development is of red-brick construction in Flemish bond. The buildings all have pitched slate roofs and are of two to two-and-a-half storeys in height. Their orientation to the roadside is varied, although the footprints are in the main, broadly similar. The proposals also incorporate associated highways works and landscaping.

Potential Impacts on Heritage Assets

- 4.2 As noted in paragraph 3.20, there are several listed buildings located in the immediate vicinity of the subject site, which also lie within the Iffley Conservation Area. The proposed development, therefore, has the potential to impact on the settings and significance of the heritage assets identified.
- 4.3 In order to understand how any new development could affect the significance of these heritage assets, it is important to understand the specific heritage values which combine to inform that significance. An understanding of the contribution setting makes to its significance is also considered.

Listed Buildings in the vicinity

Townsend Close Group – Townsend Close (NHLE no. 1047315) and Wall and Gate of Townsend Close (NHLE no. 1369338)

Description and setting

- 4.4 Located c. 95m to the east of the subject site these two Grade II listed buildings are described as follows in their listings:

Townsend Close

Early/Mid C19. Brick, rendered and painted. 2 storeys and attic. Sash windows with glazing bars in moulded architraves; some casements. Timber trellis porch. Pedimented eaves and gables. Timber modillion cornice, slate roof.

Wall and Gate of Townsend Close

Early/Mid C19. Red brick wall. Rendered piers with moulded caps and ball finials. 4-panel wood door.



Plate 8 Townsend Close and the wall and gate, seen from the corner of Meadow Lane and Church Way. Image from geograph.org.uk.

- 4.5 The significance of these designated heritage assets is principally derived from the levels of historic and aesthetic value generated by their built form. Townsend Close is a good example of a mid-19th century villa, with architectural details such as the bow windows and pilasters on the west side indicating the high status of the building. Townsend Close derives historic illustrative value as evidence of the growth and wealth of Iffley in the 19th century, as a result of demands for housing near Oxford for the professional classes. The two assets also contribute group value through their historic association; the retention of their original fabric preserves the historic character of Meadow Way as it appeared before modern infilling.
- 4.6 The assets strongly relate to each other in terms of immediate setting. Townsend Close is set within a garden plot to the north and west, lined by high trees and bushes and the high brick wall, which divide the property from Meadow Lane. The east end of Townsend Close faces directly onto Church Way, overlooking the road and another brick wall opposite. Townsend Close is visually prominent when approaching along Church Way or Meadow Lane due to its height. The assets' wider setting is defined by their position on the corner of the two streets, marking the transition into the historic core of Iffley village. The open fields to the west of Townsend Close, along Meadow Lane, form part of the asset's wider setting, informing the rural character of the area to the north-west of Iffley. Given the height of the asset and the window located within the rear pediment gable, the asset would likely have a degree of intervisibility with the subject site.

Impact of Development

- 4.7 The proposals result in the loss of open space within the Iffley Conservation Area, and an erosion of the legibility of the historic morphology of the settlement. The proposed development will be experienced in the context of the asset and, whilst it is recognised that the asset is currently experienced in the context of twentieth century development in its setting, will result in the encapsulation of the asset to the west and further suburbanising of its environs, resulting in the interruption and potentially severance of views to the river plains. As identified in the traffic audit (Velocity Transport Planning, 2023) there is inadequate parking provision within the development which will inevitably lead to parking overspill and increase in the presence of cars within the historic streetscape. It is considered that the proposals therefore have the potential to harm the significance of the asset, with this harm considered to be at the lower end of less than substantial.

Tudor Cottage (NHLE no. 1047316)

Description and setting

- 4.8 Located to the north-east of the site, approx. 50m to the north of the site's eastern extension. This Grade II listed building is described as follows in its listing description:

Timber framed with brick infill and rubble gable end. 1 storey and attic. 2 tripartite casements and gabled porch below; 2 gabled casement dormers above. Tiled roof.



Plate 9 Tudor Cottage viewed from the north along Church Way, with part of Townsend Close visible in foreground.

- 4.9 The significance of this designated asset is derived primarily from the historic and aesthetic value generated by its built form. It is an example of Oxfordshire's rural vernacular style with original timber framing, retaining the appearance of an unaltered Tudor house. Formerly called Donnington Cottage, the asset was held of the manorial estate on 99-year leases, and therefore relates to Iffley's historic association with the Hospital estate. Views of the asset along Church Way preserve the historic rural character of the thoroughfare in spite of the modern infilling on both sides.
- 4.10 Tudor Cottage faces north and is set within a garden plot surrounded by a low wall. Its immediate setting is now defined by the garden and the modern buildings around Tudor Close to the north-west. It is primarily experienced from an approach along Church Way, and maintains co-visibility with Townsend Close. The cottage has a historic ownership link with the study site, although the imposition of the Tudor Close development has made this relationship less visually apparent.

Impact of Development

- 4.11 The proposals result in the loss of open space within the Iffley Conservation Area, and an erosion of the legibility of the historic morphology of the settlement. The proposed development will be experienced in the context of the asset through sequential views and, whilst it is recognised that the asset is currently experienced in the context of twentieth century development in its setting, will result in the encapsulation of the asset to the west. As identified in the traffic audit (Velocity Transport Planning, 2023) there is inadequate parking provision within the development which will inevitably lead to parking overspill and increase in the presence of cars within the historic streetscape. It is considered that the proposals therefore have the potential to harm the significance of the asset, with this harm considered to be at the lower end of less than substantial.

Conservation Areas

Description and setting

- 4.12 Iffley Conservation Area was designated in 1969 and covers an area of c. 27.8ha. A Conservation Area Appraisal was adopted in 2009 and forms the basis for this assessment.

On page 3 of the Appraisal the special interest of Iffley Conservation Area is outlined as follows:

- *The position of Iffley, on the outskirts of the city, but retaining its character as a separate and independent village community.*
- *Its history as a rural community is still evident in the character of many of the buildings and surviving green spaces, grazed by sheep, horses and cattle.*
- *The village is within walking distance of Oxford, and continues to be used as an area of refreshment and recreation for city residents.*
- *The towpath and riverside meadows, both within and beyond the boundary, form an important part of the natural and ecological habitats of the village.*
- *Although the meadows are not within the conservation area, they are essential in maintaining the green setting around the village, separating it from Oxford's suburbanisation.*
- *The architectural heritage of the village is heterogeneous, from 12th century to contemporary, the character of which depends on a delicate balance between ancient and modern.*
- *The gardens, trees, hedges, walls and remaining open spaces are as important as the built elements in creating the unique character of the conservation area.*
- *The lock and river although beyond the boundary of the conservation area are important to the village in terms of the historic pedestrian route to Iffley along the towpath.*

4.13 The view across the water meadow toward the river from between Nos. 60 and 66 Church Way is identified as a key view and an important area of green space in the Conservation Area Appraisal. It is noted that this field has been in continuous ownership by the Donnington Hospital Trust and has been in various communal uses, as the site of the village stocks, and as a cricket field. The view west across the meadows between Nos. 68 and 78a Church Way is also identified as a key view, as is Glebe Field to the south, one of few remaining open spaces in the village core. On the south side of the Conservation Area, the junction of Church Way, Abberbury Road and Mill Lane is identified as the site of key views in all directions. The Appraisal also identifies views into the Conservation Area from the towpath and also from Iffley Turn and Abberbury Road.

4.14 The green space at Meadow Way is included in the character assessment of the Northern Section of the Conservation Area (page 12). It is noted that "*Meadow Lane retains a predominantly rural quality, gently sloping down to the meadows flanking the western boundary of the conservation area*". The buildings along Meadow Lane and the upper part of Church Way are heterogeneous in age and style, with some key buildings such as Townsend Close and Tudor Cottage. The view from Church Way is described in the CAA as follows:

'Immediately opposite the junction of Tree Lane with Church Way is the first of two opportunities for long views. The first gap is between nos. 60 and 66 Church Way, important in terms of the long views out of the conservation area, extending across fields beyond the River Thames and onward to Bagley Wood and Boars Hill. These spaces are grazed by animals, reinforcing the rural nature of the village. They are privately owned, but the public enjoyment of the views is an important aspect of the overall character of the conservation area.'

4.15 Whilst the direct impacts of the development are principally confined within a single character area of the Iffley Conservation Area, the loss of the Horse Fields has an impact beyond the character area through cumulative impact to the Conservation Area as a whole.

4.16 A review of the Conservation Area boundary against historic mapping shows the successive loss of open green space within the conservation area since its designation in 1969. The 1:10,000 mapping from 1976-77 shows Allotment gardens to the south of Tree Lane, to the junction of Tree Lane and Church Way, and an area of open space to the north of Tree Lane. These areas collectively amounted to about 0.7 hectares. By 1999 the allotments and half of the previously open ground north of Tree Lane have been developed, with the consequence that the open spaces of the land to the western section of the conservation area gain in value. The Horse Fields site occupies approximately 1 hectare and thereby exceeds the historic cumulative loss by some 25 percent.

4.17 Given that the aesthetic quality of the historic allotment parcels, noting the patchwork nature of their usage, is undoubtedly inferior to the pastoral character of the Horse Fields, the loss of the latter has undeniably greater potential to impact on the character and appearance of the conservation area. The landscape report (Farmer, 2023) identifies the Horse Fields as

representing two-thirds of the remaining ancient meadow and pastoral land within the conservation area, and identifies that no other area of open land within the conservation area fulfils the same function – i.e. the transitioning of the settlement edge towards the wider meadowland. This function is evident in Viewpoints 8 and 10 of the application LVIA, where the perception of the historic settlement being located on rising ground is retained at the application site. The encroachment of development onto the lower slopes toward the floodplain since the 1970s is otherwise evident in these views.

- 4.18 Other open space within the conservation area includes the grounds of Grove House, the churchyard, Iffley Glebe and the Rivermead Nature Park. These areas are intrinsically tied to their designated listed buildings and reserve designation and are thereby less vulnerable to infill erosion. It is noted however that the Glebe land received its status as protected land in response to development pressure.
- 4.19 Notwithstanding these factors, the contribution to the character and appearance of the conservation area made by the Horse Fields and Memorial Field in terms of the illustrative value they generate regarding the historic development of the settlement is of equal value.
- 4.20 The importance of the meadowland swathe of land to the western boundary of the conservation area lies in its tying in of the wider water meadow and riparian landscape to the historic settlement. The visual perception of this tying in is characterised by deeper, channelled views for the Horse Fields than for the Memorial Field, but both are equally important in terms of illustrating the historic importance of the land to the morphology of the historic settlement. The Horse Fields in its present state makes a very positive contribution to the character and appearance of the Iffley Conservation Area.
- 4.21 When the above contribution is considered in the context of the degree of loss of open space within the conservation area historically, the contribution made by the subject site can rightfully only be considered to be of an extremely positive level.



Plate 10 The key view across the meadows between Nos. 68 and 78a Church Way, comprising the meadow to the south of the study site.



Plate 11 Iffley Glebe, one of the remaining open green spaces along Church Way.

Impact of Development Proposal

- 4.22** The proposed development will result in the loss of historic meadowland and change the character of the field parcels from their present rural pastoral state to that of a residential cul-de-sac development. The presence and orientation of the properties to be accessed from Church Way will largely sever the view into the field from the roadside, and whilst a degree of verdancy may be generated by the proposed landscape planting, this view will be fundamentally altered. A wider view into the subject site will be created from Meadow Lane, but this view will consist of what is an essentially suburban character development of a

homogenous appearance designed to create 'distinctiveness' but essentially appearing uncharacteristic.

- 4.23 As identified in the landscape report (Farmer, 2023) in views from the west, the subject site is the only clearly legible section where the historic settlement edge is experienced, and the experience of this will be lost as a consequence of development.
- 4.24 The highways and access provision for the site will also require the loss of historic walling and hedgerow in order to create the required visibility splays and pedestrian and cyclist access provision. As identified in the traffic audit (Velocity Transport Planning, 2023) there is inadequate parking provision within the development which will inevitably lead to parking overspill and increase in the presence of cars within the historic streetscape. It has been established in the assessments above that the proposals also lead to the encapsulation of two Grade II listed buildings, and also that of two non-designated heritage assets (see below). Whilst each of the harms identified to the individual buildings are very low in extent, they have a cumulative impact in terms of the significance of the Conservation Area. The loss of the ancient meadow land from within the Conservation Area has a further negative cumulative impact in respect of the historic loss of open space within the asset since its designation in 1969. When all these harms are taken into consideration, it is considered that the overall result is substantial harm to the conservation area.
- 4.25 Whilst there is no definition of what constitutes substantial harm within the NPPF, National Planning Policy Guidance (NPPG) states that substantial harm could arise where an adverse impact seriously affects a key element of the asset's significance. In respect of Conservation Areas the guidance states:
- An unlisted building that makes a positive contribution to a conservation area is individually of lesser importance than a listed building. If the building is important or integral to the character or appearance of the conservation area then its proposed demolition is more likely to amount to substantial harm to the conservation area [...] The same principles apply in respect of other elements which make a positive contribution to the significance of the conservation area, such as open spaces.*
- 4.26 It is considered that, in this case, the level of harm to the Iffley Conservation Area clearly crosses the threshold into substantial harm, for not only is there the total loss of an area defined as important open space, but levels of harm to individual assets which require weight in their own right as regards conservation and the cumulative harm that arises to the conservation area.
- 4.27 The harm arising to the conservation area is manifest in:
- Loss of important open green space, identified within the Conservation Area Appraisal as such and protected by policy in terms of heritage harm. The application site is two-thirds of the last remaining ancient meadowland in Iffley, land which has high levels of cultural heritage per the Landscape Value identified in Table 2 of the landscape response (Farmer, 2023).
 - Loss of the only remaining visual remnant of the historic settlement boundary in the context of the wider landscape setting to the west.
 - Loss of views of designated historic assets (Townsend Close and Tudor Cottage) in views from the wider landscape.
 - Loss of the rural character of Meadow Lane, a historic drover's road.
 - Individual harm to the settings and significance of designated and none-designated assets within the conservation area
 - Cumulative loss of open green space in terms of previous losses to the conservation area since designation.
- 4.28 The heritage harm arising as a consequence of development cannot be mitigated by design as any development on the site will require the loss of the open space and will generate

similar harmful impacts on neighbouring designated assets. It is therefore considered that the allocation of the site is entirely in conflict with the local authority's heritage policy.

Potential Impacts on Non-Designated Heritage Assets

- 4.29 As noted in paragraph 3.21, there are three potential Non-designated Heritage Asset located in the immediate vicinity of the subject site. The proposed development, therefore, has the potential to impact on the setting and significance of these buildings.

Quince Cottage

Description and setting

- 4.30 Located c. 35m to the north-east of the subject site at its closest point, this building dates from the early nineteenth century, being recorded on the 1837 Railway Map of Iffley (Figure 9), with an extension of footprint being discernible by the first edition Ordnance Survey mapping. Aerial photography shows that a single storey rear extension has been added to the property, although no planning application for this is held online. Reference to mapping at 1:2500 shows that the building still had its original rectangular footprint in 1994, so the addition is likely to post-date the mid-1990s. Later mapping at 1:10,000 is not sufficiently detailed to record the change in footprint.
- 4.31 The historic portion of the building is raised from a rectangular footprint with the roadside (rear) elevation being constructed of painted coursed rubblestone with ashlar quoins to the ends of the façade. This elevation has no fenestration. Above is a hipped slate roof with a single centrally located eaves stack. The east elevation is of painted brick construction and has an eaves level window, which appears to be of timber construction. The west elevation is similarly of painted brick with eaves level timber casement window. The single storey extension wraps around the south-west corner of the building and has a red clay tile roof with two Velux windows. The garden-facing façade of the property was not accessible, although from satellite photography it appears there is a long dormer window which suggests the roof void has been converted.
- 4.32 The significance of the asset is derived primarily from the age, materials and construction methods of the building, together with its streetscape value in terms of evidencing the historic morphology of the settlement.
- 4.33 The asset's setting comprises its garden plot and roadside frontage to which it makes an idiosyncratic contribution by being the only back of pavement building and on account of its blank street facing frontage. The subject site is co-visible in glimpsed views on Meadow Lane, and likely to be experienced from the first floor windows. In its present state it makes a positive contribution to the setting of the asset through the provision of historic context. The building was formerly the stables for the Grade II listed Townsend Close and, whilst not considered to be curtilage listed, derives a high degree of significance from this relationship. The historic functional status also accounts for the ashlar quoin detail, as the stables – whilst ancillary in function – were clearly intended to reflect the status of their owners. There are historic ownership links with the subject site, although these have been severed since the 1960s. On balance it is considered that the subject site makes a minor contribution to the significance of the asset.

Impact of Development Proposal

- 4.34 The proposals result in the loss of open space within the Iffley Conservation Area, and an erosion of the legibility of the historic morphology of the settlement. The proposed development will be experienced in the context of the asset through sequential views and, whilst it is recognised that the asset is currently experienced in the context of twentieth century development in its setting, will result in the encapsulation of the asset to the north, and further urbanisation of its environment. As identified in the traffic audit (Velocity Transport Planning, 2023) there is inadequate parking provision within the development which will inevitably lead to parking overspill and increase in the presence of cars within the historic streetscape. It is considered that the proposals therefore have the potential to harm the significance of the asset, with this harm considered to be of a low level.

Donnington Farmhouse

Description and setting

- 4.35 Located c. 20m to the north of the subject site, Donnington Farmhouse is depicted on the 1921 edition of the Ordnance Survey mapping. The building is raised from an irregular footprint over two storeys with a rendered and coursed stone façade, red clay tile roof and a central stone corbelled stack. The principal frontage has two gabled windows at first floor, with stone lintels and cills, and ground floor windows with stone cills and headers set beneath a stone string course.
- 4.36 The significance of the asset is derived partially from the age, materials and construction methods of the building, together with its streetscape value in terms of evidencing the historic morphology of the settlement. It is significantly augmented by its association with Professor Sir John Grimley Evans, a pioneer of geriatric medicine and Emeritus Professor of Green Templeton College, Oxford.
- 4.37 The asset's setting comprises its garden plot and roadside frontage, together with the subject site which shares intervisibility and co-visibility with the asset. In its present state the site makes a positive contribution through the provision of rural context to the building which was formerly of a function related to the land.

Impact of Development Proposal

- 4.38 The proposals result in the loss of open space within the Iffley Conservation Area, and an erosion of the legibility of the historic morphology of the settlement. The proposed development will be intervisible with the asset and experienced in the context of the asset through sequential views and, whilst it is recognised that the asset is currently experienced in the context of twentieth century development in its setting, will result in the encapsulation of the asset to the west and south and a significant urbanisation of its hitherto rural setting. As identified in the traffic audit (Velocity Transport Planning, 2023) there is inadequate parking provision within the development which will inevitably lead to parking overspill and increase in the presence of cars within the historic streetscape. It is considered that the proposals therefore have the potential to harm the significance of the asset, with this harm considered to be of a low level.

425 Meadow Lane

Description and setting

- 4.39 Located c. m to the north of the subject site at its closest point, this building first appears on historic mapping in the 1875-1878 edition of the Ordnance Survey. It is noted that there is no tithe map available for the area in the vicinity of the subject site, but the building is not recorded on the 1830 enclosure map, although the land holdings are shown in the name of Edward King. By the first edition of the Ordnance Survey the plots have been re-numbered, with plot the Enclosure plot 44 subdivided into plots 44 and 45, and the former plot 44 renumbered to 46. 425 Meadow Lane appears within plot 45 on the OS mapping.
- 4.40 The building is raised from a rectangular plan, with the main element being of two storeys, having single-storey extensions at either end. The building is constructed of rubblestone under a slate roof, with the central section having a centrally located ridge stack. The coursed rubblestone construction is indicative of an early construction date, but without further inspection of the property any precision in dating is difficult. Fenestration appears to be of timber frame casement type.

The significance of the asset is derived primarily from the age, materials and construction methods of the building, together with its streetscape value in terms of evidencing the historic morphology of the settlement.

- 4.41 The asset's setting comprises its garden plot and roadside frontage, together with the subject site which shares co-visibility with the asset. Direct intervisibility with the site is not available owing to the presence of the mature garden hedge to the garden plot frontage. In its present state the site is considered to make a very minor positive contribution to the significance of the asset through the provision of rural context to the building.

Impact of Development Proposal

- 4.42 The proposals result in the loss of open space within the Iffley Conservation Area, and an erosion of the legibility of the historic morphology of the settlement. The residential development of the site would be co-visible with the asset from Meadow Lane, looking east, with the loss of the rural landscape character of the site evident, and an increase in the urbanisation of the surroundings of the asset. As identified in the traffic audit (Velocity Transport Planning, 2023) there is inadequate parking provision within the development which will inevitably lead to parking overspill and increase in the presence of cars within the

historic streetscape. These factors are considered to generate a low degree of harm to the asset's significance, through loss of rural context and increased urbanisation.

5.0 Review of Planning Application Documents in respect of Heritage Matters

5.1 Application ref 22/03078/FUL was validated on 28 December 2022. The planning application is supported by a Design and Access Statement (DAS), Application Drawings including plans elevations and sections of the site and the buildings proposed to be erected, and a suite of documentation in support of the proposals. Of specific relevance to Built Heritage considerations are the Heritage Statement, DAS and the Planning Statement. Whilst the LVIA has been reviewed in context of heritage value, its merits are discussed within a separate consultation report (Alison Farmer Associates, 2023).

5.2 The following is noted:

HE Consultation

5.3 Historic England have declined to comment on the application and, whilst noting the caveat in respect of the merits of the scheme, it is an indication that HE considers that harm levels are such that they may be decided by the LPA without consultation. Given the underplaying of the impact on the significance of the conservation area through the progressive loss of open space, it would be worth contacting them in this regard to make this point.

Planning Policy

5.4 Allocation Policy SP42 does not refer to heritage within the policy, but the supporting wording states that the expectation would be for development to conserve and enhance the unique characteristics of the Iffley CA in order to comply with policies DH2 and DH3. The policy, when read as a whole, requires the preservation and enhancement of the CA.

5.5 The policies require that great weight is given to the preservation of significance of designated heritage assets. The built heritage statement accompanying the application states that the allocation of SP42 means that the Council accept that development will generate less than substantial harm to the Iffley Conservation Area. In this it seems that they contradict the expectation of the delivery of policy SP42 to conserve and enhance.

Heritage Statement

5.6 The scoping out of Townsend Close and Tudor Cottage from the supporting heritage statement assessment is disagreed with as an appropriate methodology. If the site has the potential to be intervisible with a heritage asset, and particularly as the site forms an important element of the CA character and appearance, the affected assets should require assessment. No mention of historic ownership links to the site is referred to in the heritage statement, which is a significant omission in terms of the understanding of the setting of the assets.

5.7 The consideration of non-designated heritage assets within the heritage statement is insufficient. No reference is given within the scoping to historic mapping in terms of locating buildings of an age with potential to be considered. The building located back of pavement along Meadow Lane named Quince Cottage in the vicinity of the site appears on the 1837 Railway Map and would likely qualify for NDHA status. The HER appears only to have been reviewed online via Heritage Gateway, which is insufficient for planning and development purposes, and no reference has been made to Oxford City Council's Heritage Asset Register having been consulted, with reference only to the Conservation Area Appraisal being reviewed.

5.8 The historic development and map regression section contains no reference to pre-Ordnance Survey mapping or archival sources utilised in the understanding of the history of the site and the surrounding settlement. No archival material or historic cartographic sources are referenced.

5.9 Analysis of the conservation area within the heritage statement downplays the importance of the site against the context of the open space to the west, almost suggesting that the setting of the CA in this area is of more importance than the designated open space itself. The analysis focuses on the single character area rather than discussing the character of the CA as a whole and the role that the open fields play within the designation, given the historic erosion of open space within the remainder of the CA.

Design and Access Statement

- 5.10 This document states within section 3.3 – Constraints – Heritage and Conservation that there will be no impact on the nearby listed buildings. This statement is not supported by evidence in relation to historic ownership, which in turn has not been considered within the Heritage Statement.
- 5.11 In section 3.5 Constraints – Landscape and Ecology, the only reference to impacts on the CA are in relation to loss of boundary wall treatment, no reference is made to the loss of important open space.
- 5.12 In section 3.6 Opportunities the graphic does not highlight all the Grade A trees identified within the previous Landscape section and indicates the loss of one of them (although it states in Section 4.7 that all Category A trees are to be retained). Loss of trees within the CA has a detrimental impact on the character and appearance. This factor has not been highlighted within the heritage statement.
- 5.13 Section 4.9 – Proposed Masterplan. The consequence of restricting access from Church Way to two properties and the provision only of a footpath and cycle path results in the remaining development taking the form of a cul-de-sac. The two other cul-de-sacs in the CA, Anne Greenwood Close and Bay Tree Close, do not appear on Ordnance Survey mapping before 1999; it cannot therefore be argued that the layout of the proposals represents a response to a characteristic of the Conservation Area which has any historic value.
- 5.14 It is noted that the material palette is restricted within the bulk of the development to red-brick in Flemish bond, and that this is a reduction in materials from the previous iteration of the design scheme in response to comments from the Oxford Design Panel (Section 4.8 – ODRP commentary). Whilst it is accepted that too much material differentiation can create a jarring visual effect, the predominance of brick (with the single exception of the block fronting Church Way) appears uncharacteristic of the area. It is not considered that this achieves successful placemaking in this regard.
- 5.15 Whilst the typology of a two storey property with a third floor in the roof apex is relatively common, in this particular instance it is argued that it infringes on the recommendations of the policy for the site. The material treatment and styling of the 2.5 storey element gives it a somewhat industrial warehouse character, and this is considered to be inappropriate in the sensitive heritage context.

Planning Statement

- 5.16 The assessment of the impact on the conservation area at 6.49 underplays the impact of the loss of open space on the conservation area as a whole. Paragraph 6.50 is incorrect as the assessment within the heritage statement does not present a full understanding of the significance of the heritage asset as it only discusses one element of the CA and has no regard to cumulative impact on the asset's significance. Paragraph 6.52 again presents the justification argument that because the site is allocated the less than substantial harm is acceptable. This is an argument which is directly in conflict with Oxford City Council's approach in historic appeals in respect of impacts to conservation areas; Manor Place, Oxford for example.

6.0 Summary and Conclusions

- 6.1 Section 4 of this report undertakes the assessment of significance of assets which are considered to have the potential to be impacted by the proposed development.
- 6.2 Development of the Horsefields will permanently remove the contribution they make to the character and appearance of the Iffley Conservation Area. The views from Meadow Lane and Church Way where the fields are perceived in depth will be lost, and the historic linear morphology of the settlement will be negatively impacted. The rural character of Meadow Lane, historically a drover's road, will be diminished by the increase in vehicular traffic and road clutter, with the openings to this thoroughfare, and Church Way, resulting in the loss of historic hedgerow and walling. All of these elements impact negatively on the significance of the Conservation Area.
- 6.3 The proposed design scheme utilises red brick in Flemish bond as the principal construction material. Whilst there are examples of red-brick buildings within the conservation area, the characteristic historic building material is Cotswold stone, and it is considered that, far from creating a 'distinctive' development, the over-utilisation of red-brick, together with the cul-de-sac road layout, uniformity of unit footprints and the industrial warehouse appearance of the 2.5 storey elements, creates an unsympathetic and uncharacteristic addition.
- 6.4 The assessments therefore find that very low levels of less than substantial harm arise to the Grade II listed Townsend Close and Tudor Cottage as a consequence of their encapsulation by the proposals. It is acknowledged that the perception of this encapsulation is experienced principally in sequential views but, as intervisibility with the site is likely - particularly in the case of Townsend Close - and both buildings share historic functional connections with the land, it is considered that there is potential for harm to arise. A low level of harm is also identified to Quince Cottage and 400 Meadow Lane, both considered as a non-designated heritage assets.
- 6.5 Planning Practice Guidance identifies at paragraph 19 (Ref 18a-019-20190723) that substantial harm to a conservation area is likely to arise if – in the case of unlisted buildings – the nature of the building is important or integral to the conservation area. The same principles apply in respect of other elements, such as open spaces, which make a positive contribution to the significance of the conservation area. The Horse Fields are identified within the conservation area appraisal as *“one of the last remaining important open spaces within the village”*.
- 6.6 The loss of the ancient pastoral fields, taken together with the cumulative impacts of the above harms to individual heritage assets within the conservation area, the cumulative impact of the loss of open green space in the context of the wider conservation area, and the rather homogenous and uncharacteristic appearance of the proposed development, are considered to result in a level of harm which amounts to substantial. Great weight is required to be given to the preservation of the significance of the affected assets (with the exception of Quince Cottage and Donnington Farmhouse, which require a balanced judgement but no great weight) in the planning balance against the public benefits arising from the scheme. In accordance with paragraph 201 of the NPPF, the public benefits arising from the development must be of a substantial nature.
- 6.7 Planning Policy SP42, in the reasoned justification, requires that development proposals for the allocation both conserve and enhance the unique characteristics of the conservation area. It is demonstrably the case that the application proposal fulfils neither of these requirements.
- 6.8 Planning policy requires that harm to the significance of heritage assets requires justification. The Heritage Statement, Design and Access Statement and Planning Statement all seek to justify the development on the grounds that the site is allocated. The allocation history review of the subject site undertaken in this report highlights that the site has only been considered for allocation since 2017, whereas it was consistently rejected for development proposals in the decades running up to this date. It is noted that there has been no material alteration to the physical appearance of the allocation during this time.
- 6.9 The 2017 and 2019 HELAA state that low density development of the site is possible without negatively impacting the Conservation Area. This statement conflicts with the LPA's acceptance of less than substantial harm arising from the development, and calls into question whether the site should have been allocated if undeliverable without harm to the Conservation Area.

- 6.10 It is therefore considered that the justification for the development, given the levels of heritage harm, is insufficient. It is also noted that errors and omissions in the Heritage Statement have caused the under-appreciation of the significance of the heritage assets affected, and the underplaying of harms arising to them.
- 6.11 The assessments within this report seek to address this by:
- reference to historic ownership connections with the site (absent from the application Heritage Statement);
 - consideration of the Conservation Area as a whole in respect of cumulative impact of loss of open space in the context of historic loss since designation (absent from the application Heritage Statement); and
 - a full review of non-designated heritage assets, including the identification of those which qualify for this status although are not yet in receipt of it (absent from the application Heritage Statement).
- 6.12 It is considered that the level of harm to the Iffley Conservation Area clearly crosses the threshold into substantial harm, for not only is there the total loss of an area defined as important open space, but levels of harm to individual assets which require weight in their own right as regards conservation and the cumulative harm that arises to the conservation area.
- 6.13 The harm arising to the conservation area is manifest in:
- Loss of important open green space, identified within the Conservation Area Appraisal as such and protected by policy in terms of heritage harm. The application site is two-thirds of the last remaining ancient meadowland in Iffley, land which has high levels of cultural heritage per the Landscape Value identified in Table 2 of the landscape response (Farmer, 2023).
 - Loss of the only remaining visual remnant of the historic settlement boundary in the context of the wider landscape setting to the west.
 - Loss of views of designated historic assets (Townsend Close and Tudor Cottage) in views from the wider landscape.
 - Loss of the rural character of Meadow Lane, a historic drover's road.
 - Individual harm to the settings and significance of designated and none-designated assets within the conservation area
 - Cumulative loss of open green space in terms of previous losses to the conservation area since designation.
- 6.14 The heritage harm arising as a consequence of development cannot be mitigated by design as any development on the site will require the loss of the open space and will generate similar harmful impacts on neighbouring designated assets. It is therefore considered that the allocation of the site is entirely in conflict with the local authority's heritage policy.
- 6.15 The conclusions of this report are therefore that the development generates substantial harm, which is considerably under-represented by the application documents.

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 1847 Iffley Tithe Map – IR 30/27/79.
 1875-78 1:2,500 Ordnance Survey Map
 1921 1:2,500 Ordnance Survey Map
 1955-56 1:2,500 Ordnance Survey Map
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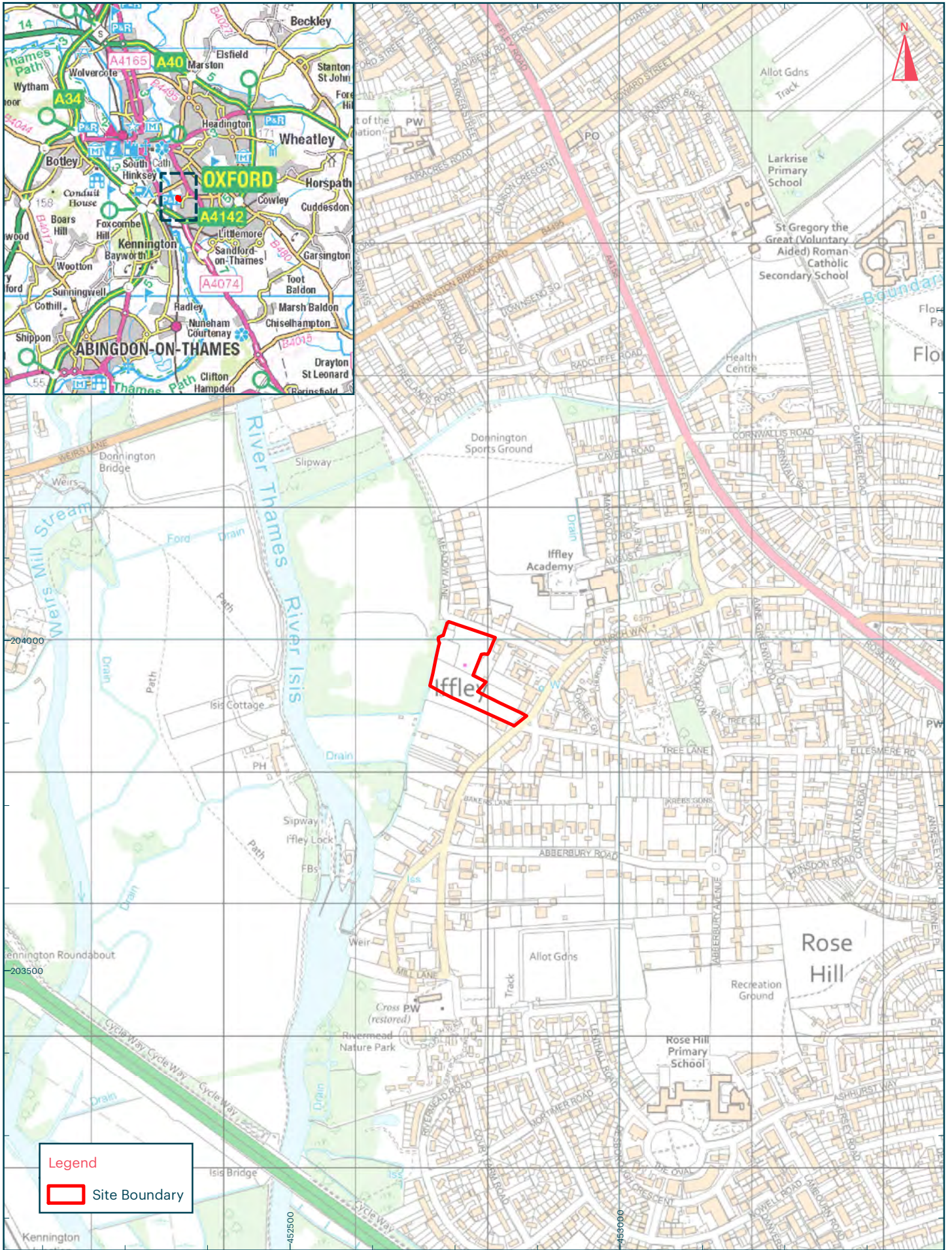
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Plate 11 400 Meadow Lane viewed from Meadow Lane with the subject site to the right of the image (source : Google Street View)



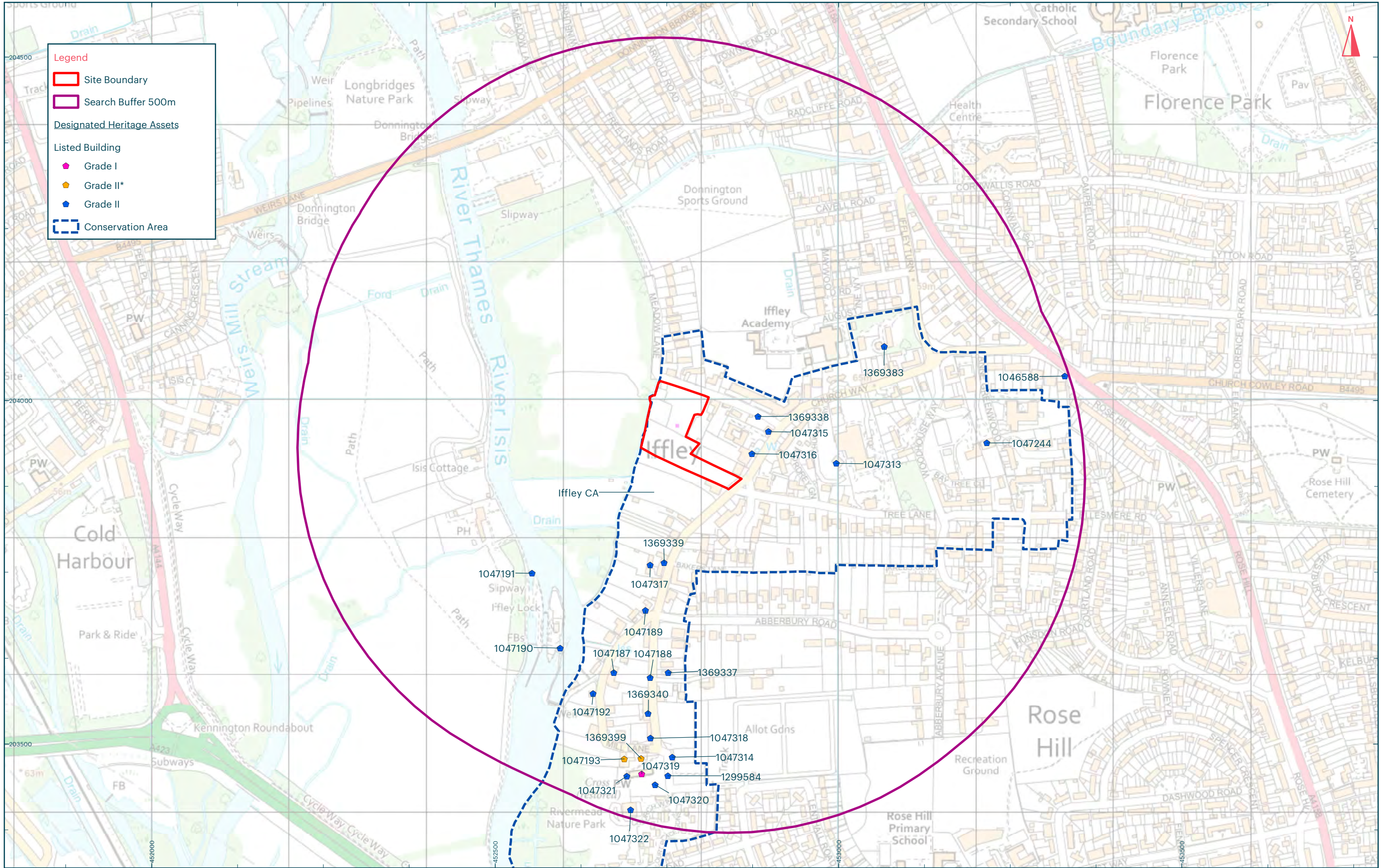
Plate 12 425 Meadow Lane, viewed from Meadow Lane looking east (source: Google Street View)



Title:
Figure 1: Site Location
Address:
Land off Meadow Lane, Iffley

Scale at A4: 1:7,500






Title:
Figure 2: Location of Listed Buildings in vicinity
Address:
Land off Meadow Lane, Iffley

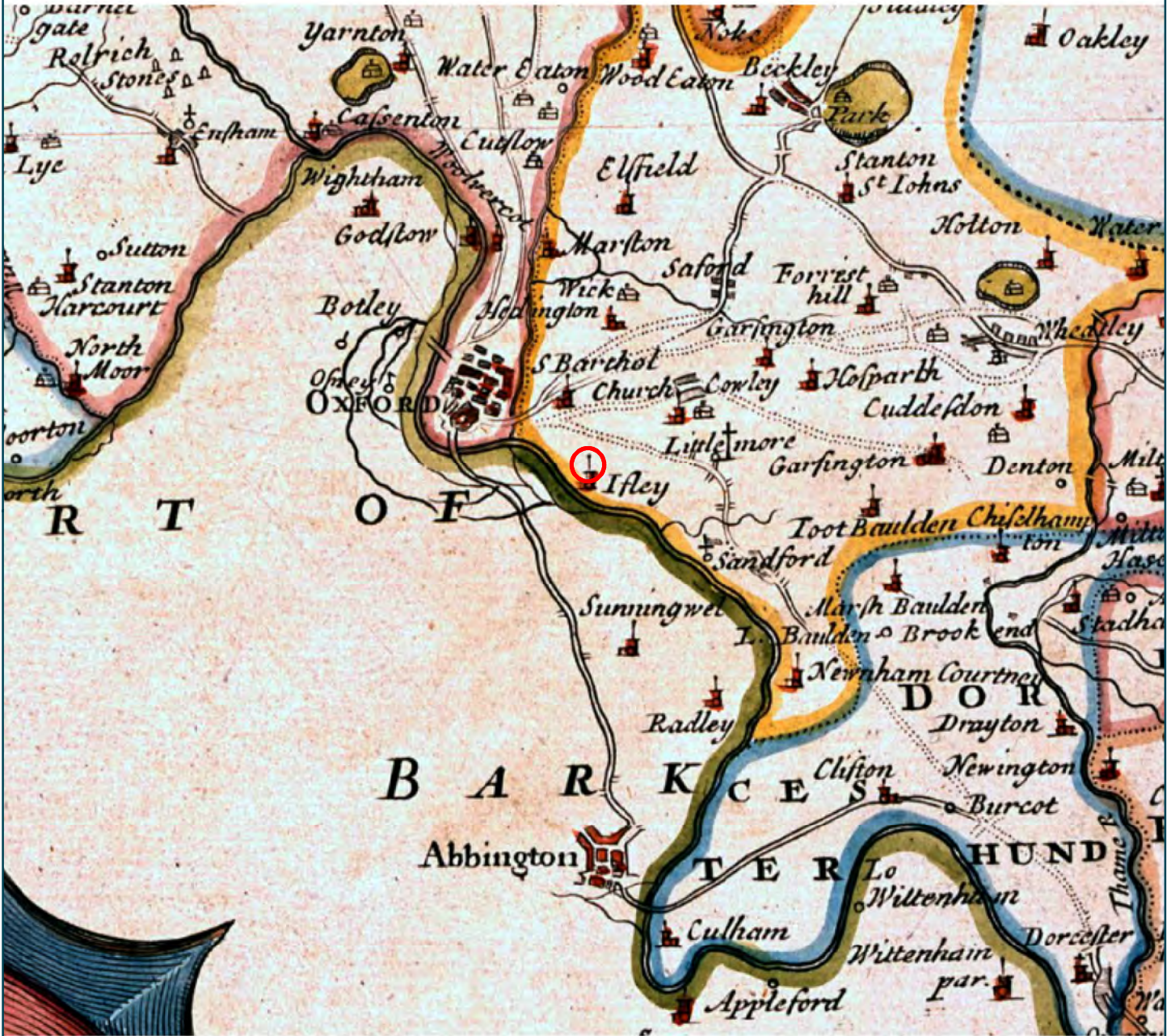
Scale at A3: 1:5,000
0 150m





Legend

 Approximate Site Location



Title:
Figure 3: 1659 Morden Map
Address:
Land off Meadow Lane, Iffley

Not to Scale:
Illustrative Only





Title:
Figure 4: 1761 Rocque Map
Address:
Land off Meadow Lane, Iffley

Scale at A4: 1:15,000
0 500m

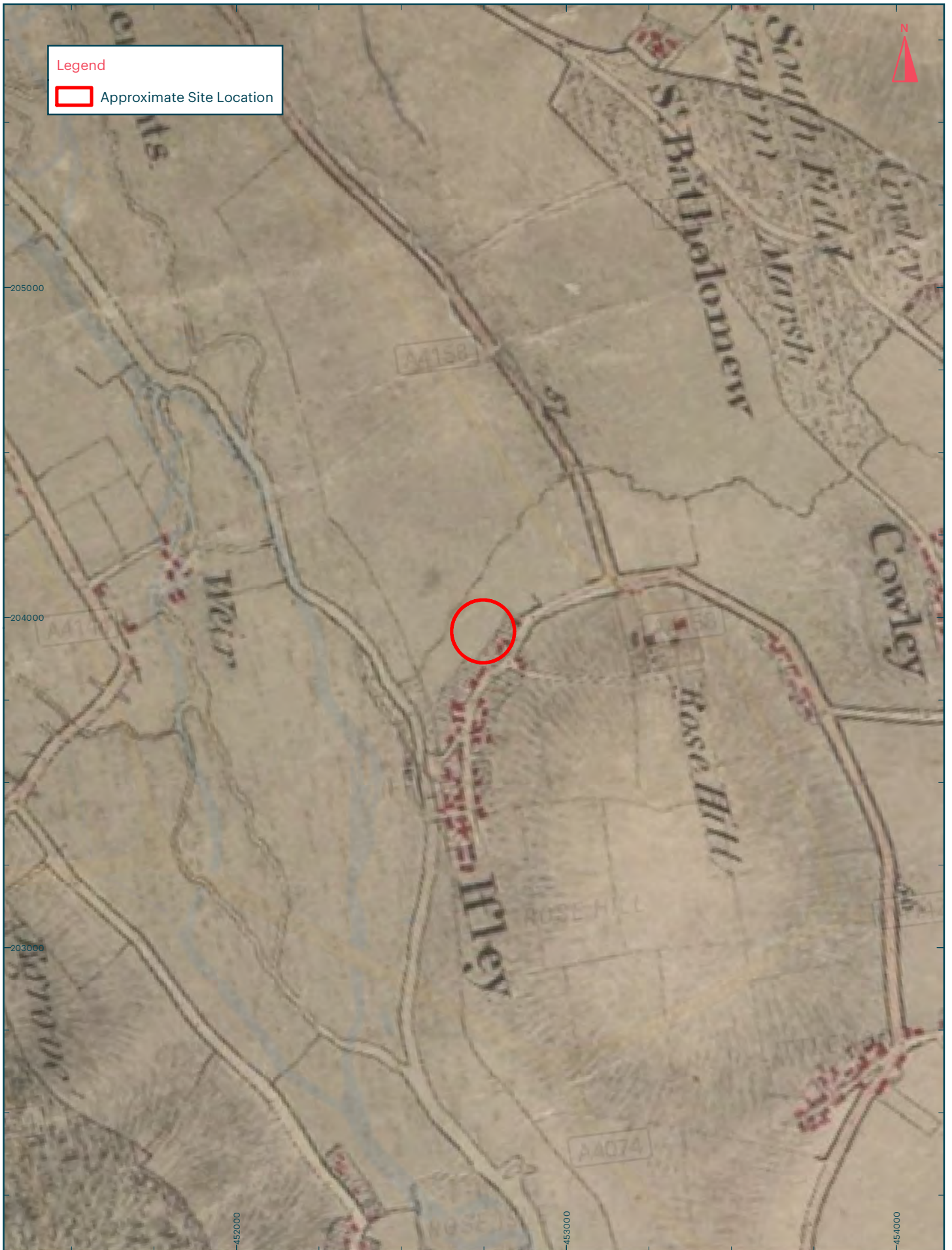




Title:
Figure 5: 1767 Jefferys Map
Address:
Land off Meadow Lane, Iffley

Scale at A4: 1:15,000
0 500m





Title:
 Figure 6: 1811 Stevens Ordnance Survey Drawing
Address:
 Land off Meadow Lane, Iffley

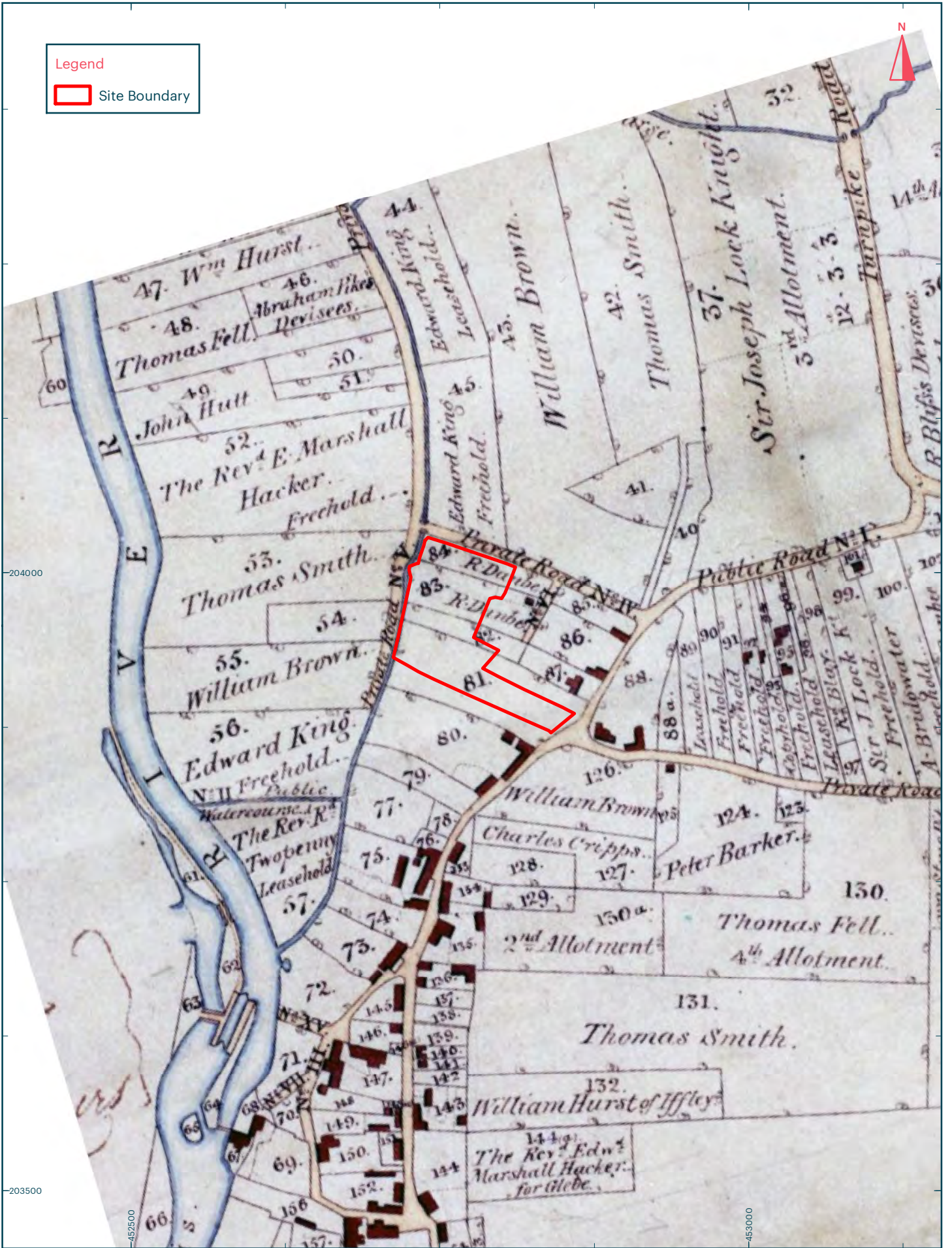




Title:
Figure 7: 1830 First Series Ordnance Survey Map
Address:
Land off Meadow Lane, Iffley

Scale at A4: 1:15,000
0 500m

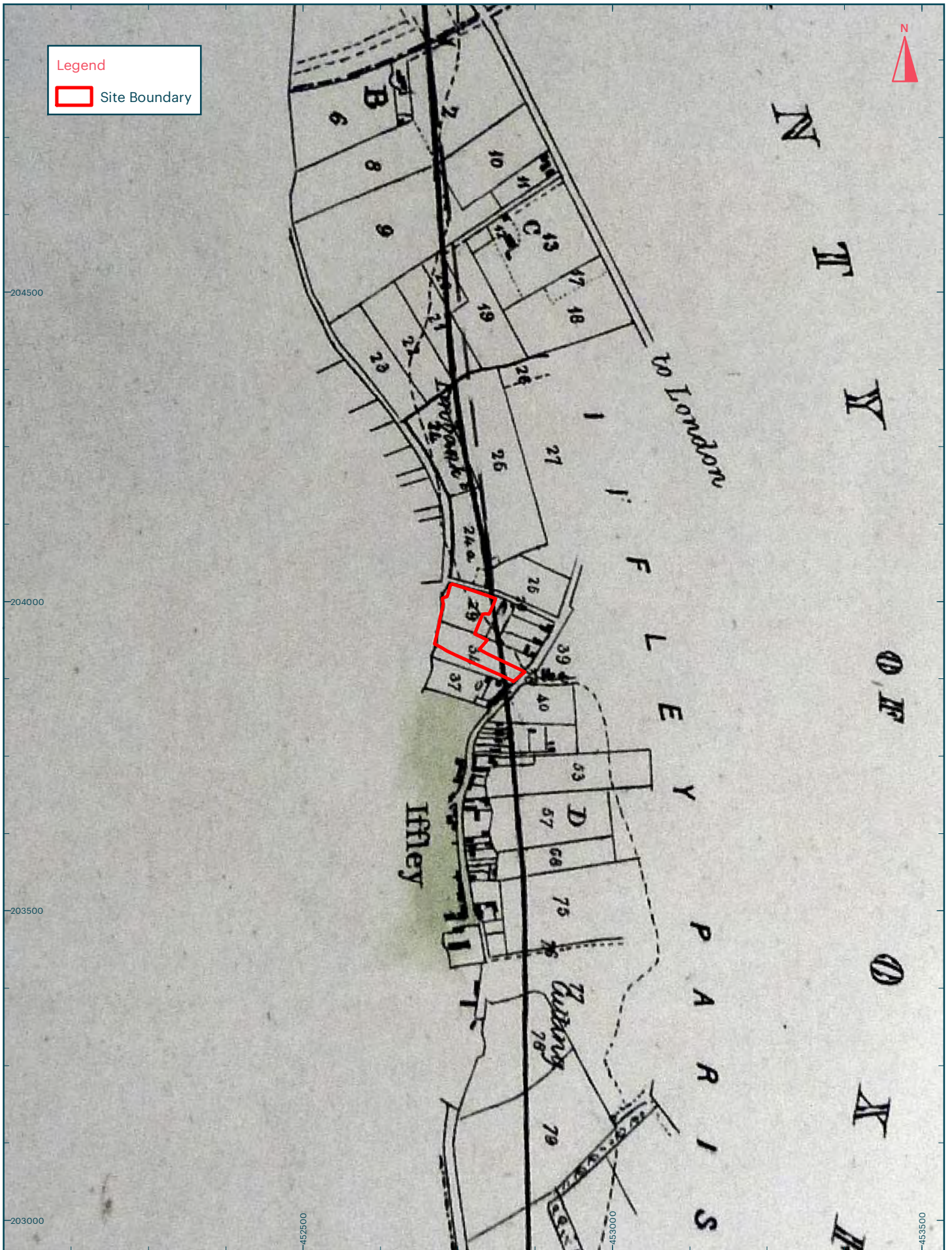




Title:
Figure 8: 1830 Iffley Enclosure Map
Address:
Land off Meadow Lane, Iffley

Scale at A4: 1:4,000
0 125m

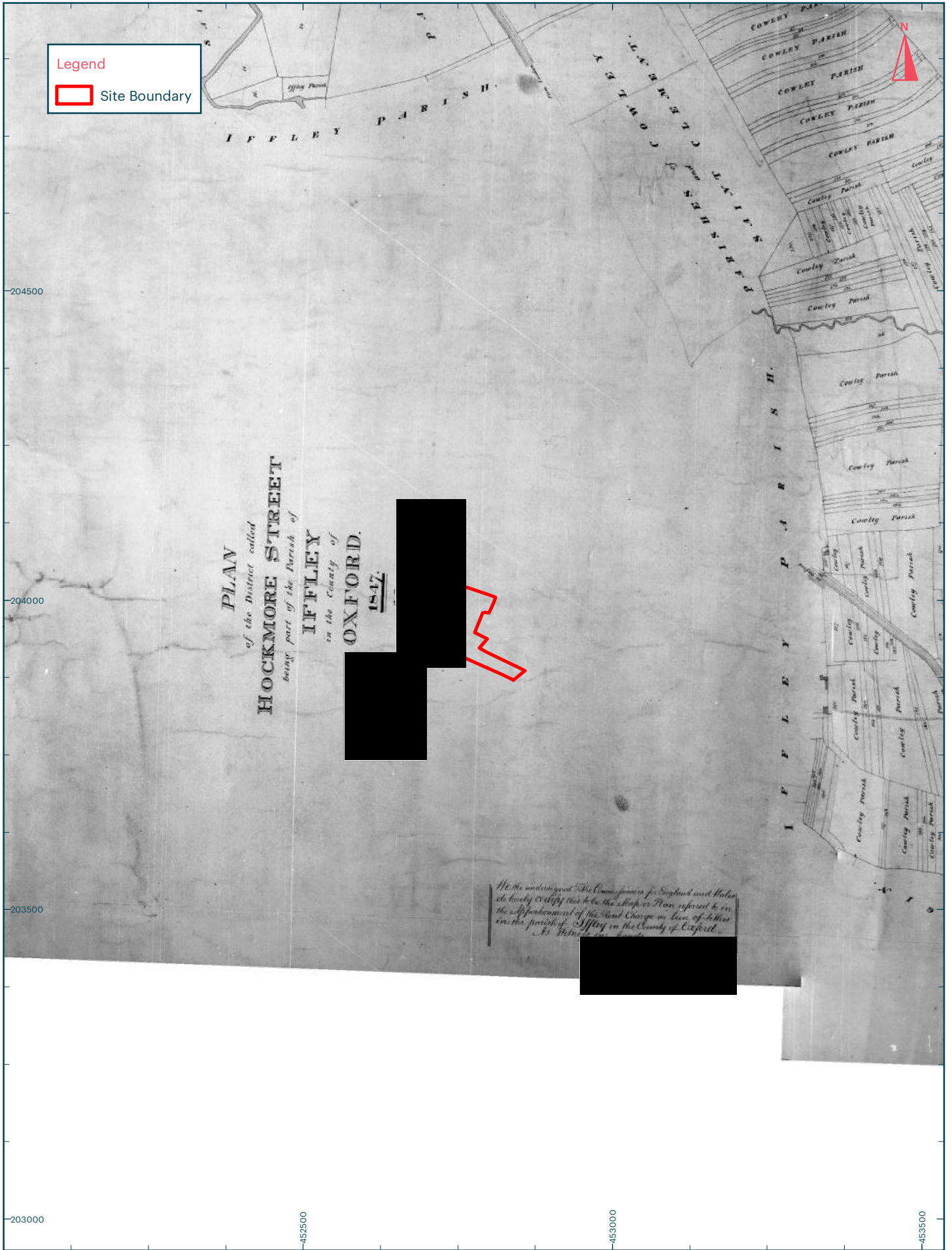




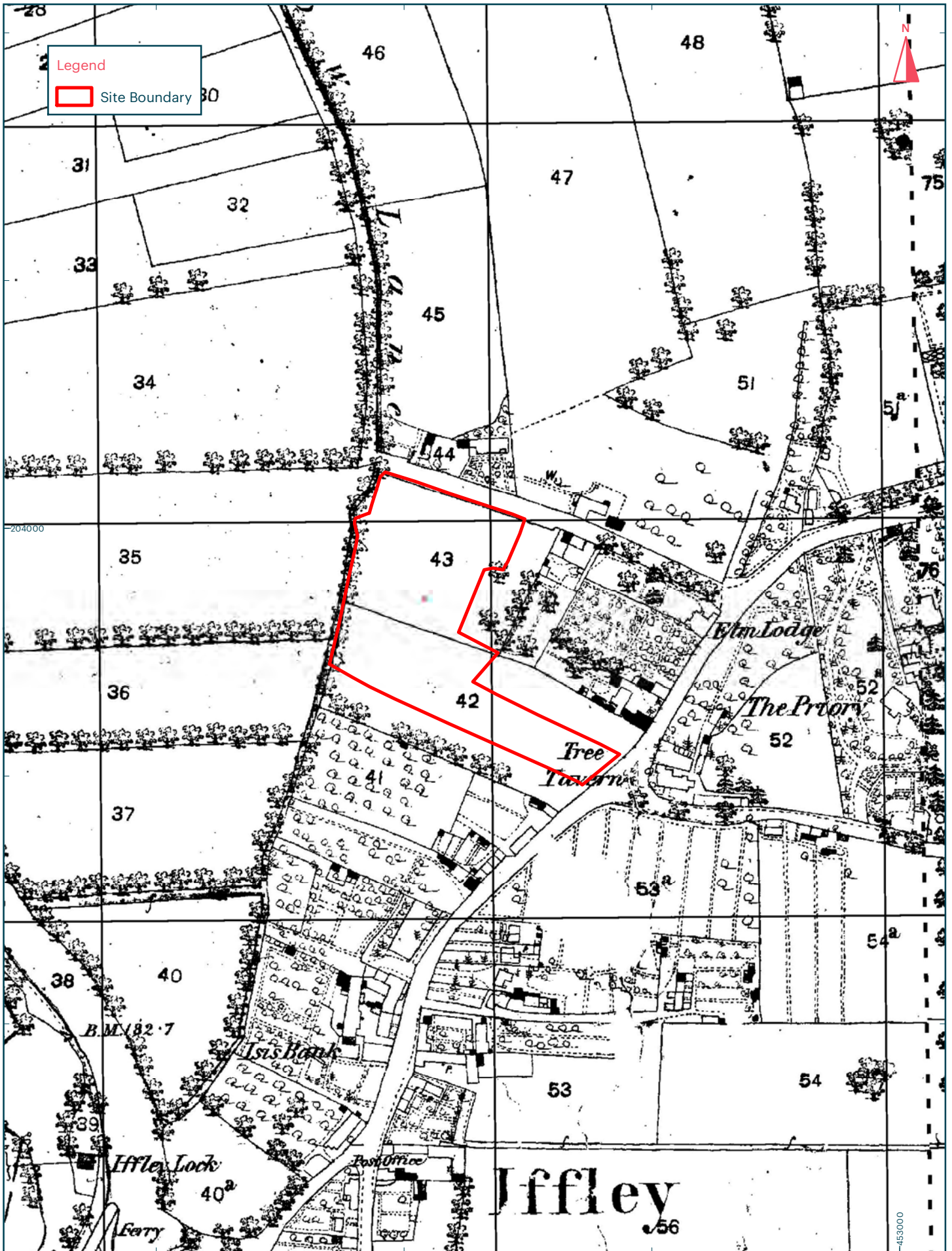
Title:
Figure 9: 1837 Railway Plan Map
Address:
Land off Meadow Lane, Ifley

Scale at A4: 1:8,000
0 250m





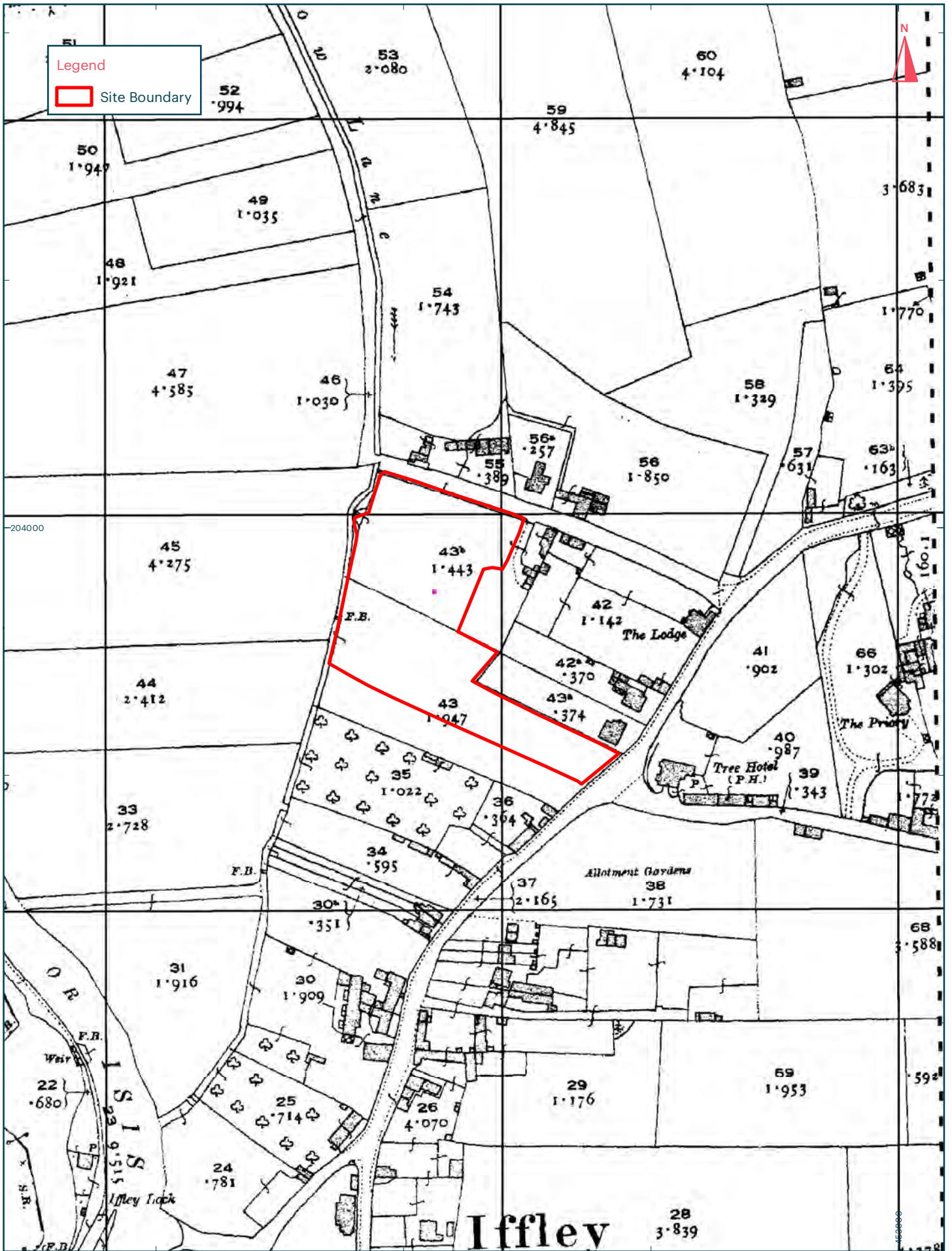
<p>Title: Figure 10: 1847 Iffley Tithe Map</p> <p>Address: Land off Meadow Lane, Iffley</p>	<p>Scale at A4: 1:8,000</p> <p>0 250m</p>	
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Title:
 Figure 11: 1875-78 1:2,500 Ordnance Survey Map
Address:
 Land off Meadow Lane, Iffley

Scale at A4: 1:2,500
 0 80m

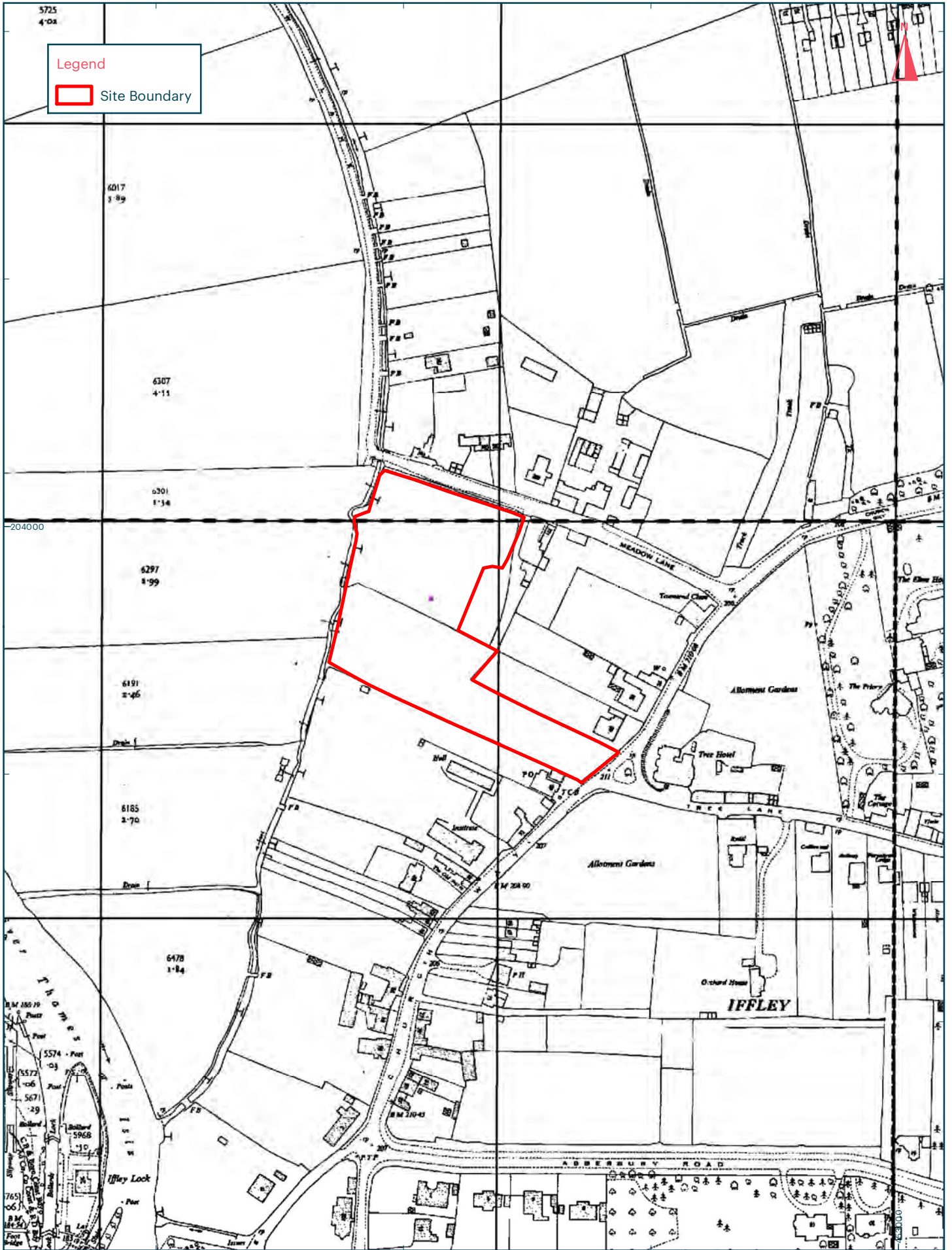




Title:
 Figure 12: 1921 1:2,500 Ordnance Survey Map
Address:
 Land off Meadow Lane, Iffley

Scale at A4: 1:2,500
 0 80m

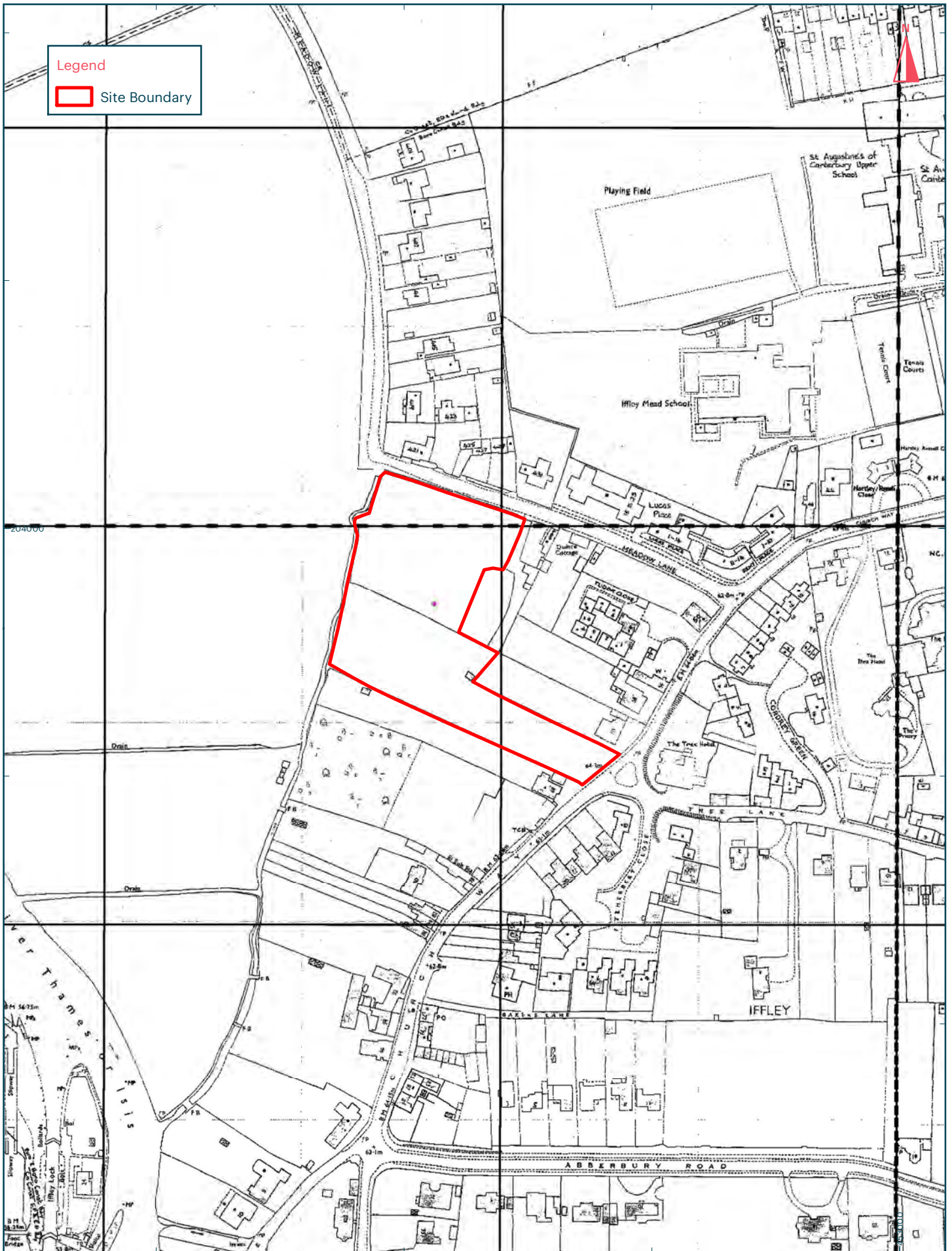




Title:
 Figure 13: 1955-56 1:2,500 Ordnance Survey Map
Address:
 Land off Meadow Lane, Iffley

Scale at A4: 1:2,500





Title:
 Figure 14: 1981-1993 1:2,500 Ordnance Survey Map
Address:
 Land off Meadow Lane, Iffley

