



North Hertfordshire District Council

# Heritage Assessments

Heritage Assessment of Little Wymondley



June 2016

Amec Foster Wheeler Environment  
& Infrastructure UK Limited



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### Report for

Louise Symes  
Strategic Planning and Projects Manager  
North Hertfordshire District Council  
Council Offices, Gernon Road  
Letchworth Garden City  
Hertfordshire  
SG6 3JF

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### Main contributors

Chris Constable  
Helen Noakes  
Victoria Donnelly

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### Issued by

Chris Constable

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### Approved by

Sean Steadman

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### Amec Foster Wheeler

Floor 4  
60 London Wall  
London EC2M 5TQ  
United Kingdom  
Tel +44 (0) 203 215 1610

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### Document revisions

No.	Details	Date
1	Final Heritage Assessment	31/05/2016
2	Client Comments	27/06/2016



# Executive summary

## Purpose of this report

This report has been produced for the purpose of providing North Hertfordshire District Council of an appraisal of the potential impacts of a housing allocation site, upon the significance of both designated and undesignated heritage assets. The report makes recommendations as to the suitability and management of such allocations, as well as the compliance with national planning policy.

The proposal site at Little Wymondley covers an extensive area south of the village core. Subject to a revision of the proposal area, extensive landscaping and planting, a consideration of housing scales and types within the site and a highway design directing traffic away from designated heritage assets, a reduced proposal area could be development without negatively affecting the setting of designated heritage assets.



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# 1. Introduction

## 1.1 Purpose of the Document

North Hertfordshire District Council (NHDC) are currently preparing a new Local Plan to cover for the period 2011 – 2031. During this time, it is anticipated that NHDC will be planning for a minimum of 14,400 additional dwellings to meet its own objectively assessed housing needs. North Hertfordshire is currently unable to accommodate this level of growth on previously developed or brownfield sites. As a result, NHDC proposals have extended to, and are having to consider, large amounts of growth on greenfield sites, in sustainable locations and on the edges of urban settlements and larger villages.

The focus of this report is an allocation site to the south of Little Wymondley. Little Wymondley is located approximately 3 miles north west of Stevenage.

NHDC is planning to submit its proposed Local Plan Submission Draft to its Executive in September 2016. In January 2015, NHDC undertook public consultation on its Local Plan Preferred Options. A number of representations were concerned with regards the potential change to the settings of heritage assets of the proposed site allocations.

Of particular relevance is the representation submitted from Historic England (HE) with regard to specific sites. As a result, NHDC have commissioned Amec Foster Wheeler Environment & Infrastructure (Amec FW) to assess the potential impacts of housing allocation upon the significance of these heritage assets and make recommendations as to the suitability and management of such allocation.

## 1.2 Planning Policy and methodology

The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF, 2012) provides an active policy framework under which Heritage Assets are protected. Of particular relevance to the scheme are the following:

Paragraph 7 of the NPPF emphasises the role of heritage, and the positive enhancement of the historic environment as one of three dimensions to achieving sustainable development.

Paragraph 14 states that local authorities should positively seek opportunities to meet the development needs of their area. Proposals should also seek to conserve heritage assets in a manner appropriate to their significance.

Historic England<sup>1</sup> have produced a guidance document to enable the historic environment to play a positive role in identifying allocation sites which are suitable for development and providing advice on policies to ensure proposal sites protect and enhance the significance of heritage assets.

The NPPF<sup>2</sup> defines setting as:

“The surroundings in which a heritage asset is experienced. Its extent is not fixed and may change as the asset and its surroundings evolve. 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.”

The purpose of this guidance document<sup>1</sup> is to ensure that proposal sites comply with the requirements of paragraph 182 of the NPPF, in that sites are prepared, justified and consistent with national and local policy. This document provides a methodology for site selection and NHDC have made some specific requests for the study:

- ▶ Step one - Identify which heritage assets are affected by the potential site allocation;

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<sup>1</sup> Historic England (2015) The Historic Environment and Site Allocations in Local Plans. Historic England Advice Note 3.

<sup>2</sup> National Planning Policy Framework (2012) Annex 2: Glossary.



- ▶ Step two - Understand what contribution the site (in its current form) makes to the significance of the heritage asset(s);
- ▶ Step three – Identify what impact the allocation might have on that significance, including the setting of heritage assets;
- ▶ Step four – Consider maximising enhancements and avoiding harm through design, layout or contributing to the significance of other heritage assets, mitigation measures;
- ▶ Step Five – Determine whether the proposed site allocation is appropriate in light of the NPPF's tests of soundness and the site can accommodate residential development without having an unacceptable impact upon nearby heritage assets; and
- ▶ Should the site be considered suitable recommend policy wording to ensure the appropriate protection of heritage assets for the specific sites.

In addition to these requirements Historic England<sup>3</sup> have provided comments about the proposed allocation. Historic England expressed concerns about the scale of the proposal site and its impact upon the significance and setting of several listed buildings, in particular likely impacts upon grade II\* Wymondley House, to the north of the site, grade I Wymondley Bury and grade II\* St Mary the Virgin Church.

The proposal site is described by Historic England as wrapping around Wymondley House and a number of other grade II listed buildings that occupy the south side of the Stevenage Road as it runs through Wymondley. Impacts upon St Mary the Virgin Church and Wymondley Bury may depend upon topography, landscaping and building design.

The site and surrounding heritage assets have been examined by a site visit which has assessed the setting of assets and potential change to the settings from the public realm, including rights of way in and around the site.

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<sup>3</sup> Letter from Historic England to North Hertfordshire District Council dated 6 February 2015 ref HD/P 5255



## 2. Heritage assets affected by the proposal site

### 2.1 Scheduled monuments

There are no scheduled monuments that would be affected by development on by the proposal site. Wymondley Priory, barn, moat, associated earthworks, enclosures, platforms, hollow way and conduit head (list entry 1013338) is located to the north side of Wymondley to the far side of the railway line.

### 2.2 Registered Parks and Gardens

There are no registered parks and gardens which would be affected by development on the proposal site.

### 2.3 Listed buildings

There are a number of listed buildings within the vicinity of the proposal site. Historic England specifically identified the grade I and grade II\* buildings as potentially impacted by the proposals.

The grade II listed building are generally located to the north and south sides of Stevenage Road, the main road through the village. The Dovecote at Wymondley Bury is located adjacent to Wymondley Bury to the east of the proposal site. North of Wymondley Bury, the Church of St Mary the Virgin stands to the south of the present village envelope and has some views west towards the proposal past the housing at the south end of Tower Close.

Wymondley House is located on the Stevenage Road. The proposal site includes presently undeveloped land to the west of the property that is occupied by woodland.

#### Grade I listed buildings

- ▶ Wymondley Bury (list entry 1347446).

#### Grade II\* listed buildings

- ▶ Church of St Mary the Virgin (list entry 1347444); and
- ▶ Wymondley House (list entry 1175971).

#### Grade II listed buildings

- ▶ Barn Range at Elms Yard (Stutley Brothers Limited) (list entry 1102467);
- ▶ The Elms including former barn range linked to East End (list entry 1102468);
- ▶ Plume of Feathers Public House (list entry 1102469);
- ▶ Blacksmiths Cottages in Blacksmith's Yard (list entry 1102470);
- ▶ The Croft (list entry 1102471);
- ▶ Dovecote at Wymondley Bury 15 metres to north west of House (list entry 1175903);
- ▶ Boro Cottages (list entry 1308120);
- ▶ The Laurels (list entry 1347464); and
- ▶ The Bucks Head Public House (list entry 1347465).



Grade II\* Wymondley Hall (list entry 1102501) is located to the north side of the settlement at Wymondley and is separated from the main body of the village by the railway line. This site is not considered to be affected by the proposal.

## 2.4 Conservation areas

There are no conservation areas that would be affected by development on the proposal site.

## 2.5 Archaeology

The Little Wymondley Archaeology Area crosses into the proposal site along the north and east boundaries of the area. The Historic Environment (Archaeology) team at Hertfordshire County Council should be consulted on archaeological implications for the proposal sites.

## 3. The site and heritage assets

### 3.1 The contribution of the site to the significance of heritage assets

Figure 1, Appendix B shows the location of the proposal site in relation to heritage assets.

The proposal site provides a green backdrop to the village when viewed from the Stevenage Road. This appears in some areas between buildings where it is possible to glimpse views of the land to their rear, such as the site adjacent to Wymondley Chapel, shown in Plate 1, Appendix A. The site is generally visible as glimpses of trees and occasional constrained views of open land whilst moving along Stevenage Road. From this street, there are few opportunities from the public realm to view the site from the core of the village until the west end of the village by Wymondley House where the proposal site meets the Stevenage Road up to the junction with Blakemore End Road. The central part of the proposal site is characterised by belts of trees and hedge lines which break up the landscape and provide the vegetation which is visible in glimpses between buildings from Stevenage Road. The visibility of the vegetation increases as the site rises to the south, but is constrained by buildings to the Stevenage Road frontage.

The southernmost area of the proposal site is presently a single arable field. It is evident from the scale of this field that many field boundaries have been lost, there is also no tree cover within this area, which reduces its visibility and contribution to the setting or significance of heritage assets in its present form. The 10m contour plan shows the land rising to the south of the village with this single field occupying a plateau bounded by the A602 to the south.

The proposal site meets the Stevenage Road to the west of Wymondley House. Presently this element of the site is occupied by mature trees and unmanaged scrub growth. West of Wymondley House, and within its grounds, there is a lawn, possibly a former bowling green. South of the lawn, and also visible from the street, is a property which appears to occupy the former kitchen or walled garden, shown in Plate 2, Appendix A with the proposal site visible to the rear. The main frontage of the house faces west, as does the extension to the north, with its polygonal-ended conservatory. The most significant frontage of the building, and later additions to the building focus on this frontage that faces to the west. The proposal site, to the west of the house, contains a significant and deep belt of trees which separate the designated heritage asset from adjacent modern housing.

The Church of St Mary the Virgin is located to the west of the proposal site. There is housing north of the church, separating it from the Stevenage Road. West of the church there is housing in and around Tower Close. The church stands below the 90m contour which marks the edge of the plateau above this contour that contains the south half of the proposed allocation. Views from the church are constrained to the north by the rising ground, housing at the south end of Tower Close and the hedge lines marking the footpath north from Tower Close. Other hedge lines and planting that bound the public right of way running west of Tower Close further restrict the visibility of the site from the church. The setting of the church is compromised by housing to the south and west of the site abutting the graveyard boundary. Plate 3, Appendix A shows the view south west from the church towards the proposed allocation.

Wymondley Bury stands north of the church, approximately 200m east of the proposal site. The contribution of the site to the significance of Wymondley Bury was assessed from the path north of Tower Close near to the MUGA where there is a view of the listed building. Plate 4, Appendix A shows a view of Wymondley Bury from this location. Whilst above the 90m contour, Wymondley Bury is significantly lower than the land within the proposal site to the west. The house is separated from the site by two hedge lines, and there are a number of mature trees within the grounds of Wymondley Bury between the house and the fields to the west. Views into the site are further constrained by the hedge lines and planting which run north from Tower Close and are adjacent to the footpath running west of Tower Close, which together with the planting around the MUGA, restricts the visibility of the proposal site from Wymondley Bury. Beyond these areas of planting, aerial photographs show that the north side of Wymondley Bury is extensively planted with many mature trees. This area of planting significantly constrains the setting of Wymondley Bury to the south east of the house.

Figure 2, Appendix B shows the theoretical viewpoints from the Church of St Mary the Virgin and Wymondley Bury into the proposal site. These viewpoints have been drawn without reference to obvious topographic changes and have been drawn to be constrained by significant planting only, such as the hedgerow and planting running south from Tower Close and the copse south west of Wymondley Bury.

### 3.2 The impact of allocation to the significance of heritage assets

No details of a scheme have been provided for assessment as part of this study. Amec Foster Wheeler have been asked to assess the impact of the whole proposal area for housing<sup>4</sup>, however works to the south part of the proposal area are likely to consist only of open space and sports pitches. The full development of the proposal site for housing would alter the setting of Wymondley Bury by introducing housing into constrained views to the west from the house towards the water tower, MUGA and agricultural land. As Plate 2, Appendix A shows Wymondley Bury itself is heavily screened by planting.

Figure 2, Appendix B shows assumed views from St Mary the Virgin Church and Wymondley Bury onto the proposal site. As plates 3 and 4, Appendix A have shown, the actual views from these designated assets are far more restricted than those suggested by the map. The careful management and design of any housing development west of the path continuing from Tower Close and the introduction of significant planting and landscaping to screen views would reduce any impact, however the presence of the A602 to the south boundary is likely to constrain the use of this area for housing.

The proposal boundary is drawn to the rear of properties on the Stevenage Road, as shown in Figure 1 Appendix B. The construction of housing from this location south could significantly alter the character of the listed buildings fronting onto the Stevenage Road, by removing the views to the rear that are presently of open space and trees. Most significantly the proposal could harm the character of grade II\* Wymondley House. At present, there has been a significant level of modern development to the rear of Wymondley House, and adjacent to Stevenage Road, however this development can be read as in areas of former stabling and servicing for the house; it is also away from the more significant facades and is limited in scale. Development to the street frontage west of Wymondley House could significantly impact upon views of the primary façade of the building from the Stevenage Road, and considerably change the setting of the building by removing the tree belt and planted screening separating the grade II\* listed building from adjacent modern developments to the west.

At present the full development area, as suggested in Figure 1 Appendix B, would negatively impact upon the setting of numerous listed buildings, including grade II\* Wymondley Hall. Subject to considered design and improvements to the landscape and screening, development within the site west of Wymondley Bury could be achieved.

### 3.3 Mitigation and enhancement potential

Little Wymondley is characterised by a landscape within the village, and its immediate surroundings of tree belts and plantation areas. While many hedgerows have evidently been lost, the surviving hedgerows frequently contain mature trees and property boundaries, where they meet the open, farmed landscape. The further loss of hedgerows and trees within the arable field at the south of the proposal area is regrettable. Research will show where former field boundaries were located and these should be reused to provide divisions.

As Figure 2, Appendix B suggests, an area of development within the wider site is possible. The site visit and examinations of aerial photographs showed that to the rear of the properties fronting onto Stevenage Road there is an almost continuous row of field boundaries. The north boundary of the proposal site should be moved south to align with this boundary. The boundary should be reinforced with additional planting and a considered layout of properties to the south of the 90m contour line.

The proposal site should only meet the Stevenage Road at the junction with Blakemore End Road, to ensure road access is away from any of the listed buildings, however the extensive planting to both street frontages

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<sup>4</sup> Email from Louise Symes dated 18 April 2016

should be maintained, and traffic access should be to Blakemore End Road. This area of the site should be used for larger housing standing within landscaped grounds.

The proposal site should not include the area of planting to the street frontage west of Wymondley House and should follow the extensive planted boundary to the rear of Wymondley House, as shown in Figure 2 Appendix B.

The extensive belt of trees to the rear of grade II listed The Croft and Boro Cottages should be retained and enhanced to ensure the listed buildings are successfully screened from the site. The area of trees to the rear of the Bucks Head should also be retained.

To the west of the site in the view from Wymondley Bury, the existing planting and boundaries should be managed and enhanced to improve screening. Any housing in this immediate area should be restricted in scale, potentially to 1 ½ storeys to reduce potential impacts upon views from Wymondely Bury.

A considered pattern of housing across the site, as indicated here and a strong focus upon a landscaping scheme which reconstructs lost boundaries within the site and enhances, with additional planting and trees.

## 4. Does the allocation meet the NPPF tests of soundness?

Paragraph 182 provides details of the NPPF test of soundness. The local plan should comply with the following tests:

- ▶ Positively prepared – the plan should be prepared based on a strategy which seeks to meet objectively assessed development and infrastructure requirements, including unmet requirements from neighbouring authorities where it is reasonable to do so and consistent with achieving sustainable development;
- ▶ Justified – the plan should be the most appropriate strategy, when considered against the reasonable alternatives, based on proportionate evidence;
- ▶ Effective – the plan should be deliverable over its period and based on effective joint working on cross-boundary strategic priorities; and
- ▶ Consistent with national policy – the plan should enable the delivery of sustainable development in accordance with the policies in the Framework.

The proposal site examined here has the potential to make a contribution to the objectively assessed housing needs of North Hertfordshire. Proposals presented here and policy suggestions indicate that development within the proposal site is possible, subject to a reduced scale of buildings and additional planting to screen existing listed buildings and maintain their settings.

## 5. Policy recommendations

The following policy recommendations should help guide development of this proposal site:

- ▶ Planting to the margins of the proposal site should be maintained and reinforced. This is especially the case for the north boundary of the site where it meets properties to the south of Stevenage Road;
- ▶ Significant groups of trees, such as those to the rear of the Bucks Head Public House, within the proposal area should be secured from development and protected as open space;
- ▶ Former field boundaries and land divisions should be researched in historic maps and used to divide the site up to rebuild the historic landscape character of the area;
- ▶ Within the view west from Wymondley Bury housing should be restricted to 1 ½ storeys in height;
- ▶ It is recommended that traffic access should be onto Blakemore End Road, with only walking and cycling routes connecting into Little Wymondley village; and
- ▶ If the proposal site is to provide vehicle access into Little Wymondley village the cumulative impact of this will need to be considered as traffic engineering interventions may impact upon views of and the settings of listed buildings.



## Bibliography

Letter from Historic England to North Hertfordshire District Council dated 6 February 2015 reference HD/P 5255

National Planning Policy Framework (2012) Annex 2: Glossary.

Historic England (2015) The Historic Environment and Site Allocations in Local Plans. Historic England Advice Note 3.



# Appendix A

## Photographic Gazetteer



Plate 1: a view of the proposal site south from Stevenage Road.



Plate 2: the proposal site south of grade II\* Wymondley House looking towards the former walled garden



Plate 3: view from the Church of St Mary the Virgin, Little Wymondley towards the proposal site. The water tower adjacent to the proposal site is visible in the centre of the photograph.

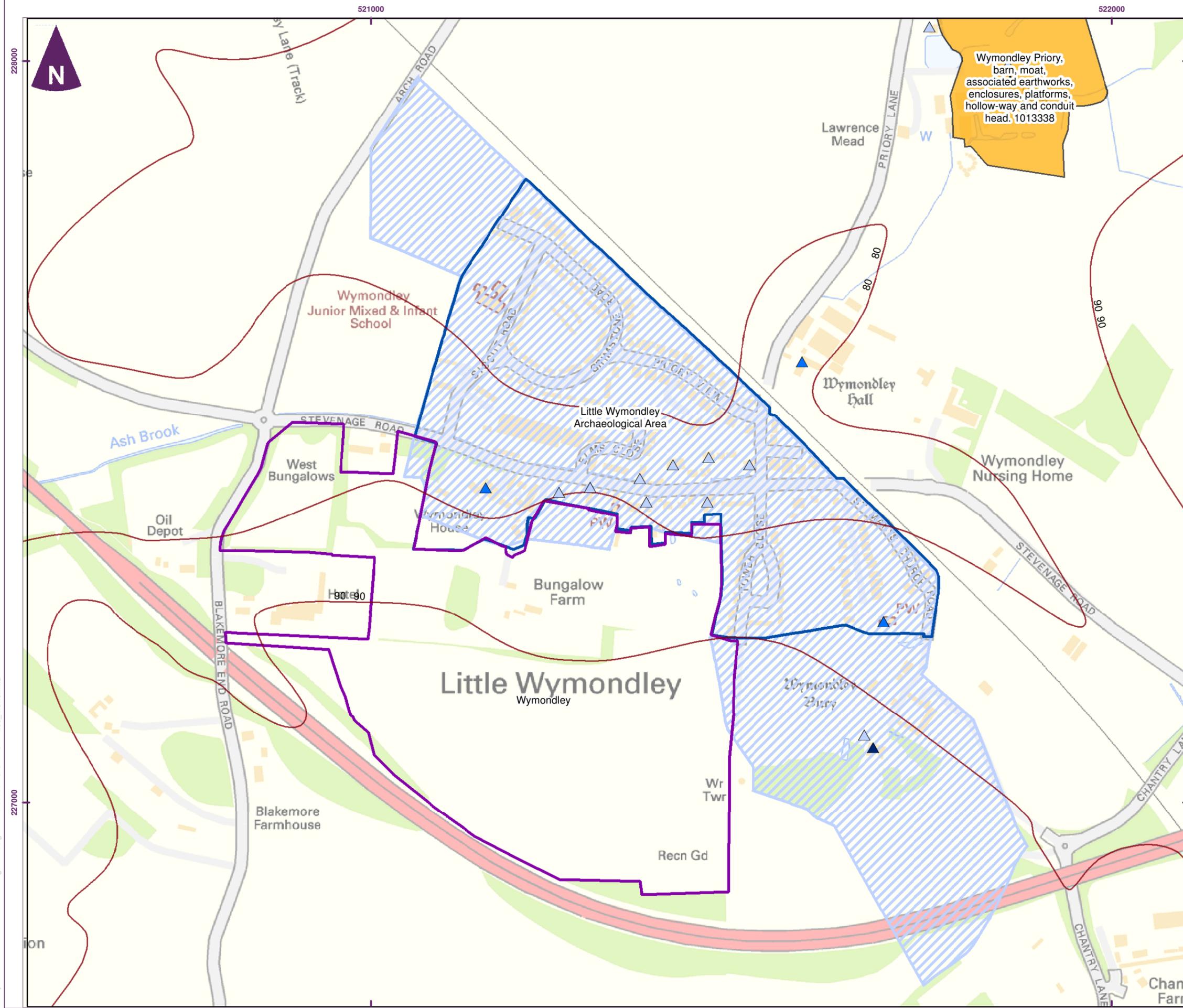


Plate 4: Wymondley Bury viewed from the footpath south of Tower Close



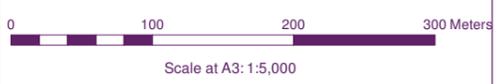
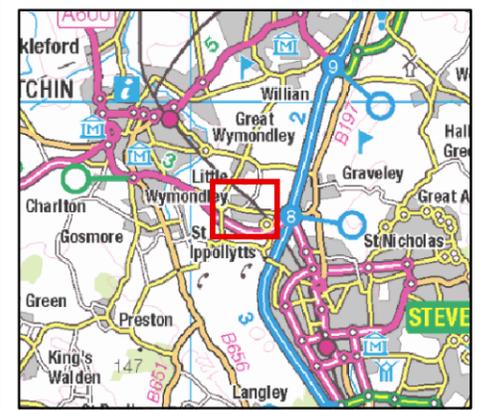
# Appendix B

## Figures



**Key**

- Elevation
- Proposed allocation area
- Scheduled Monuments
- Listed Buildings**
- Grade**
- I
- II\*
- II
- Conservation Areas
- Registered Parks and Gardens
- Core of modern settlement
- Archaeological designations



Client  
 North Hertfordshire District Council

North Hertfordshire proposed allocations  
 Heritage Asset constraints plans

**Fig. 1 Proposed Allocation for Little Wymondley**

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