



DESIGN AND ACCESS STATEMENT

Fives Court,
Mere, Wiltshire
BA12 6DH

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I.0 Introduction

This Design and Access Statement has been prepared by One50studio on behalf of Wiltshire Council In support of the full planning application for the partial-demolition of an unlisted building within a conservation area and change of use from a former care home to 20 affordable independent living apartments for over-60s at Fives Court, Mere.

This document is to be read alongside the proposed drawings and other reports submitted as part of this application.

This document provides an overview of the design process in response to the constraints and opportunities inherent within the site, aligned and presented with reference to the Wiltshire Design Guide and other relevant local and national policy.

Wiltshire Council



1.1 Site Location

Fives Court is located within the historic market town of Mere, a key local service centre in the south west corner of Wiltshire. The town is close to where the three counties of Wiltshire, Somerset and Dorset meet, with the neighbouring village of Zeals 2km to the west.

The site of Fives Court is to the south of the town centre and was first developed as a care home in the 1970s. The building was in use up until 2020 and has since been unoccupied.

1.2 Design Brief

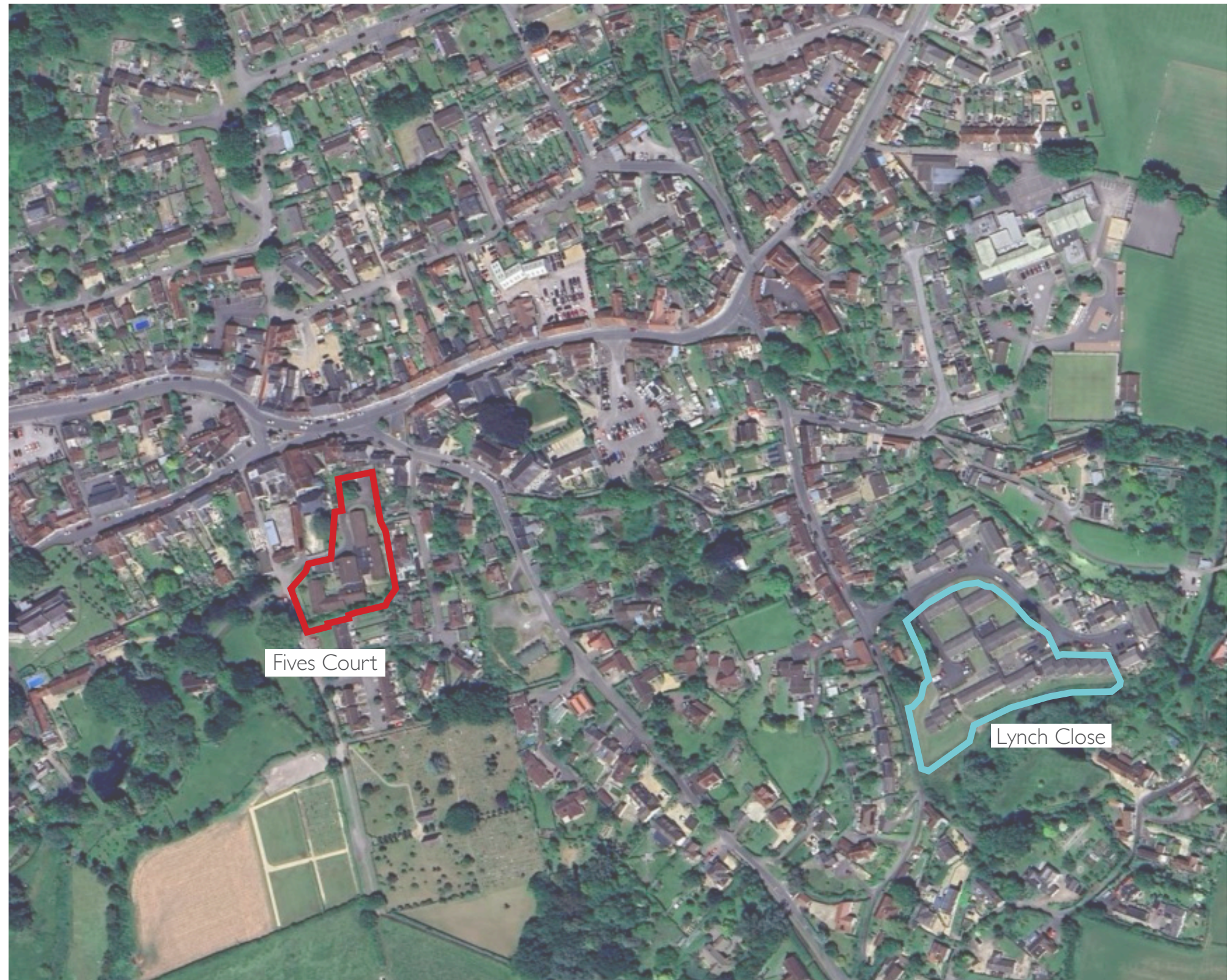
The initial brief requirement was to provide 20-25+ 1 and 2-bed units with a target of approximately 70% accounting for 2-bed apartments. This ratio was subject to change depending on the preferred approach to development on the site, with an aspiration to explore both new build and refurbishment options. The resulting design proposal has concluded the retention and reomdelling of the exiting building with the addition of a new first floor.

In addition to the residential accommodation, the brief sought to provide reasonable communal facilities, to facilitate external visiting groups as well as suitable external amenity spaces and sufficient resident and visitor parking and minibs drop-off space.

The following specific brief requirements were also identified;

- Internal mobility scooter store
- Minimum of two lifts, connected at first floor to allow continued access if one is out of order
- Aspiration for all bathrooms to have two doors, with access direct from a bedroom and for visitors from the hallway

The intention for this new independent living scheme is to provide new accommodation for residents currently living in nearby Lynch Close sheltered bungalows to facilitate that site to be redeveloped.



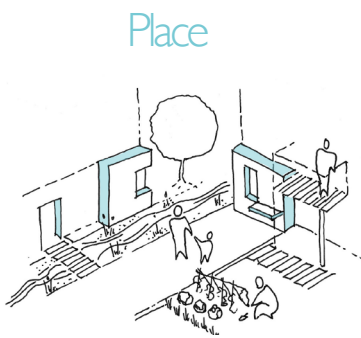
1.3 Project Summary

The scheme at Fives Court has been designed in accordance with the Wiltshire Design Guide and this document demonstrates how the project is being prepared by the Wiltshire housing team to meet the three golden threads:

Health, Wellbeing and Community - The building is aiming to provide new accommodation for existing and future older residents in Mere providing socially rented homes, in perpetuity, exempt from the Right to Buy policy. The scheme also provides a shared community resource in a new day centre for use by local older persons groups to support those with dementia and wider health issues.

The right homes in the right places - The site could not be more sustainably located for older residents in Mere, nestled within a quiet side street and providing access on foot to local amenities, shops and public places within the town. The scheme has been developed with support from the local residents of Lynch Close in Mere and through consultation with immediate neighbours. The scheme design has developed in response to this consultation which is described in detail on page 26, with the aim that the proposal can be seen as a respectful neighbour whilst providing these much needed homes in central Mere.

Sustainability and Climate Resilience - The proposal seeks to retain a significant proportion of the existing stone and ground floor walls, insulating and upgrading these existing structures whilst providing lightweight accommodation above to minimise the weight added to the retained elements, and aiming to meet the forthcoming Future Homes Standards. Overheating will be managed with external shading that also controls overlooking, and natural ventilation will be provided to enable healthy internal environments. The priority of the Wiltshire Housing team is minimising carbon emissions in use but the intention to retain key elements and use low carbon methods to construct the additional accommodation will also help to provide resilient lower embodied carbon solutions and support fabric first highly insulated Homes.



Indicative image of the proposal from within the entrance courtyard



Indicative image of the proposal from the entrance at Angel Lane



Indicative image of the proposal from above

2.0 Context Analysis

2.1 Site Context

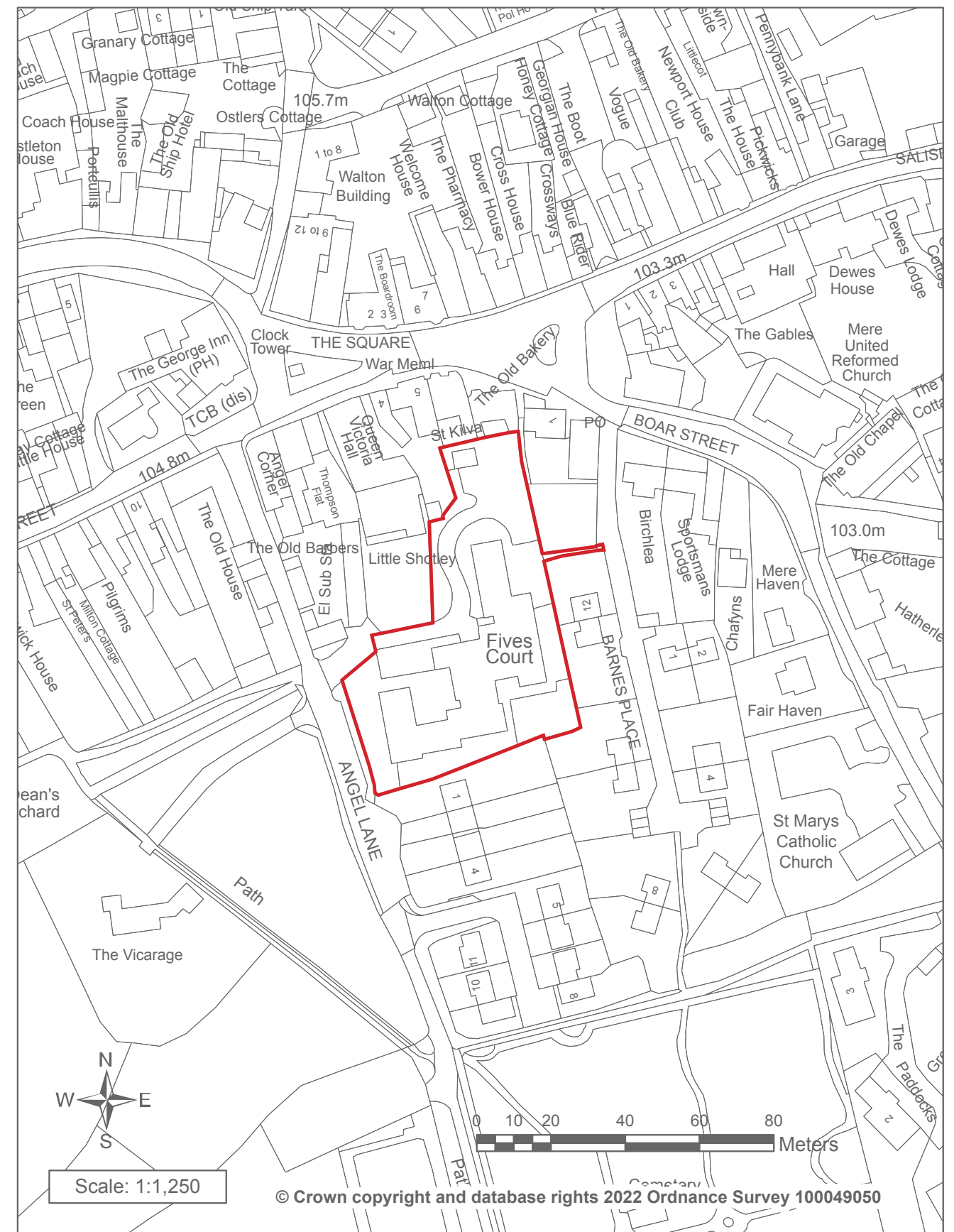
The site of Fives Court sits within the centre of Mere and is located south of the main building line of the historic central market place known locally as The Square.

It is currently occupied by a large purpose-built care home dating from the 1970's, with a small garage and parking court located within the northern part of the site. The building is broadly arranged with an L shaped footprint and is predominantly single storey at its northern and western extents, increasing to two storeys at the centre of the plan. A more detailed review of the existing building is provided through the later sections.

There are two points of access onto the site, through the eastern and western boundaries. The access from the east is via a small gated pedestrian access path directly off Barnes Place. The access from the west is via Angel Lane and across a shared vehicular driveway with the neighbouring property to the north, Little Shotley.

The northern boundary of the site is backed onto by a row of 2 / 2.5 storey properties which form the frontage to The Square to the north. These form the key historic core of the town with the properties ranging in age from the 17th Century to the current day. The eastern and southern boundaries of the site are backed onto by a number of residential properties dating from the middle to late 20th century. These properties are located at a higher level to that of Fives Court, reflecting the rising topography to the south of the town.

To the west of the site lies Angel Lane, which is occupied by a number of single storey older agricultural buildings, some of which have been converted to residential or commercial premises. Directly opposite the site entrance are driveways to larger private properties, Deans Orchard and The Vicarage to the church which is located 500mm further west of the site. The aim of this new independent living scheme, upon initial letting, is to offer accommodation to residents currently living in the nearby Lynch Close sheltered bungalows, enabling the redevelopment of that site.





View of Mere from Castle Hill - Fives Court and key landmarks highlighted

2.2 Wider Context

The centre of Mere is designated as a conservation area, with the site at Fives Court located just within the boundary on its southern edge.

It is understood that a conservation area appraisal of Mere does not currently exist, however to assist in the development of proposals for this site, an initial analysis of the urban context has been developed over the following pages. A Heritage Impact Statement is submitted with this application.

There are a number of listed structures and buildings close to the site, with these making up the majority of buildings forming the historic streetscape of the town. Castle Hill which overlooks the town to the north is also designated as a Scheduled Monument and forms a key backdrop to the town.

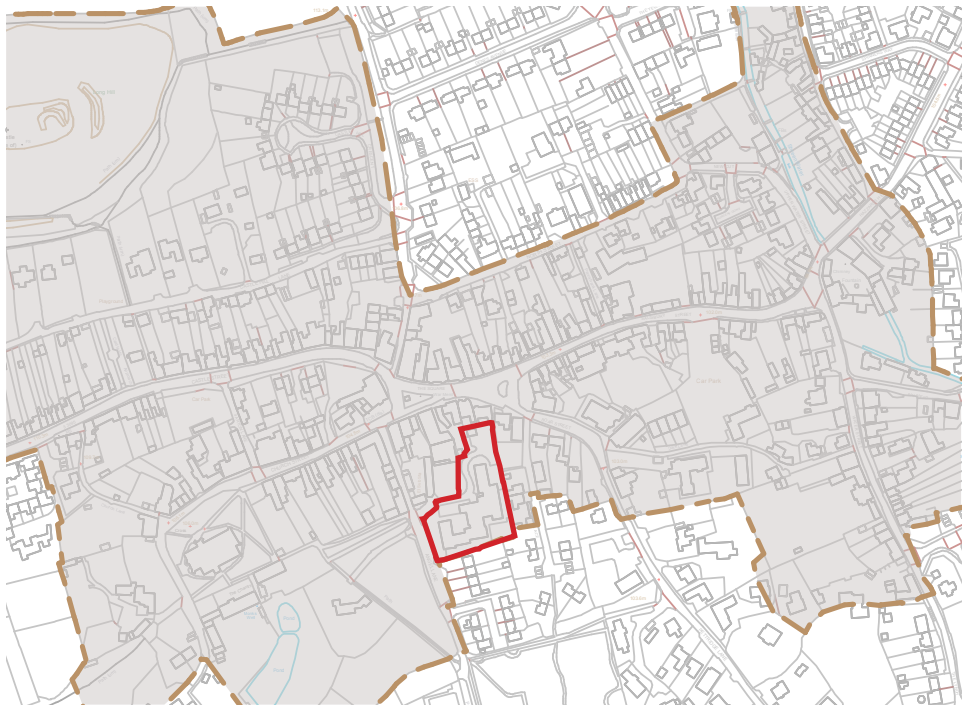
The closest listed structure to the site is the ‘Fives Court Wall’ located 100m north west of the site and accessed via Angel Lane. This wall is believed to be the historic location of a courtyard where the game of fives was played.



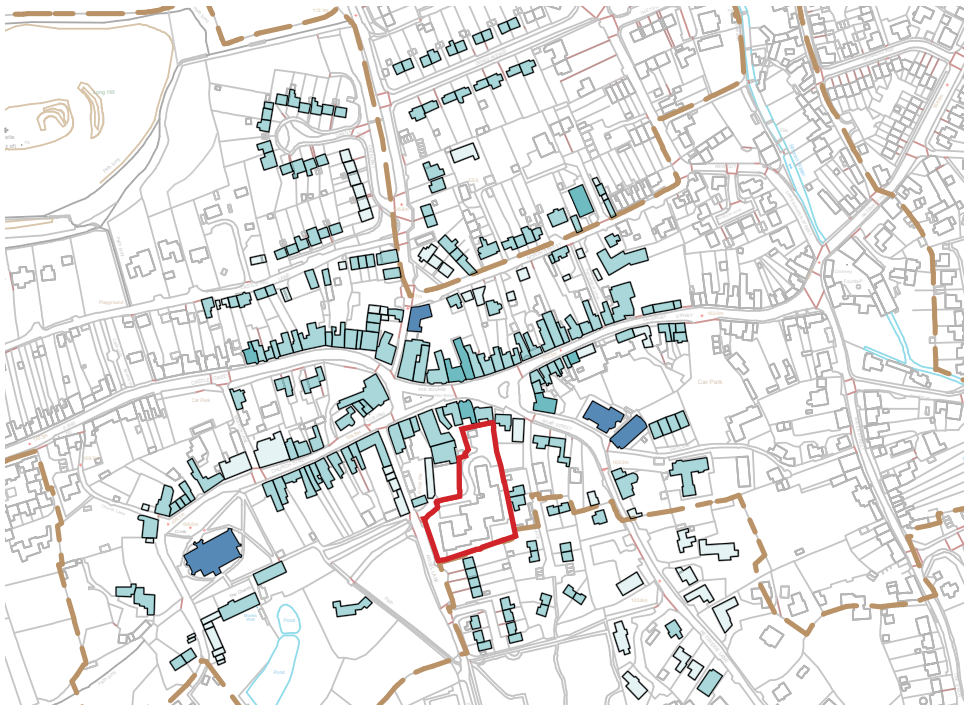
Listed buildings in Mere centre with the Scheduled Monument of Castle Hill in the background.



Listed buildings to the north of the site, facing onto The Square.



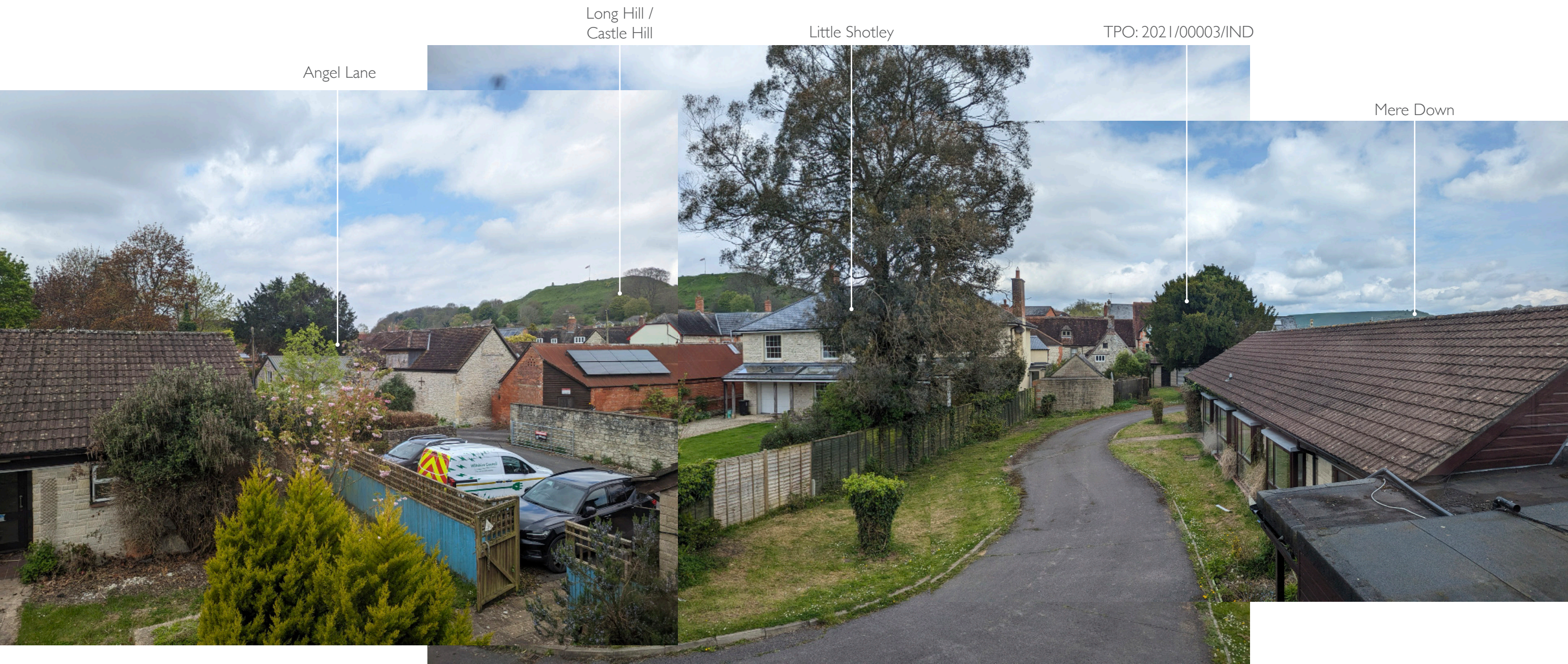
Mere Conservation Area



Height analysis of surrounding buildings in Mere.



Materials analysis of surrounding buildings in Mere.



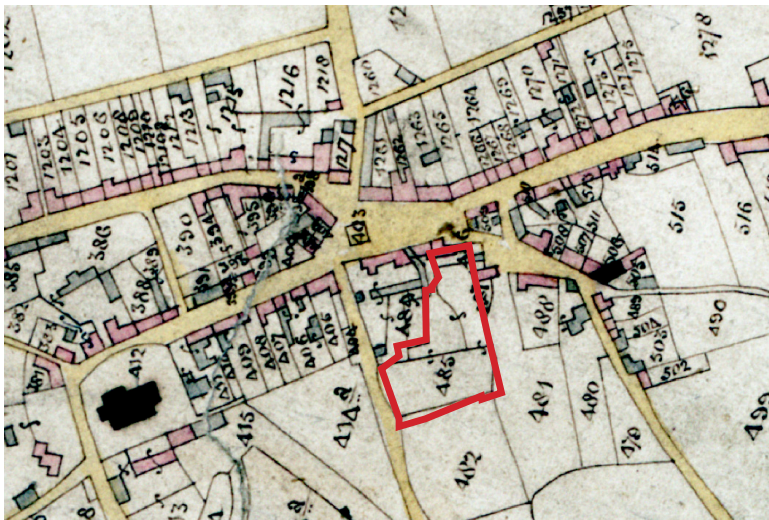
Composite image showing context looking north

A desk based Archaeological Report (*Land at Fives Court, Angel Lane, Mere, Wiltshire - Archaeological Desk-Based Assessment*) is submitted as part of this application, which provides further details on the immediate site and the wider village of Mere.

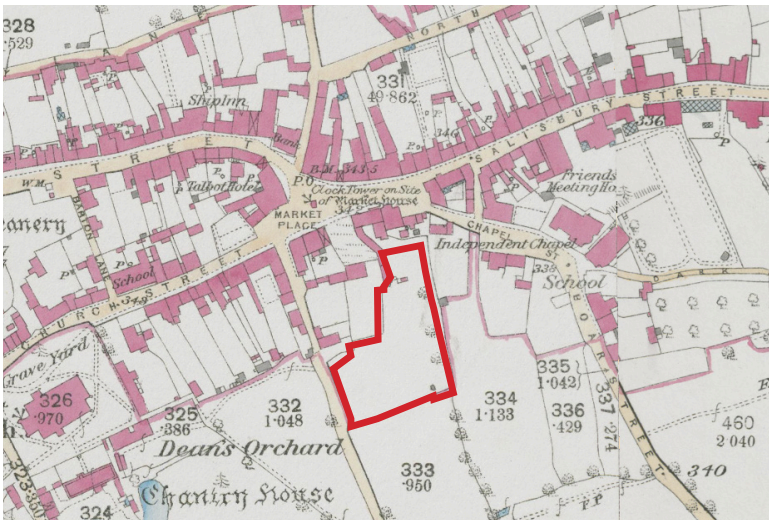
The historic maps to the right illustrate the development of the centre of Mere since 1840, with Fives Court site highlighted in red. These maps indicate that the site remained free of structures throughout the 1800s, during which it was likely used as gardens and agricultural paddocks.

From the early 1900s a large building appears on the north western boundary, adjacent to the property now known as Little Shotley. It is not currently known what this was used for, with the archaeological report suggesting it was for agricultural purposes.

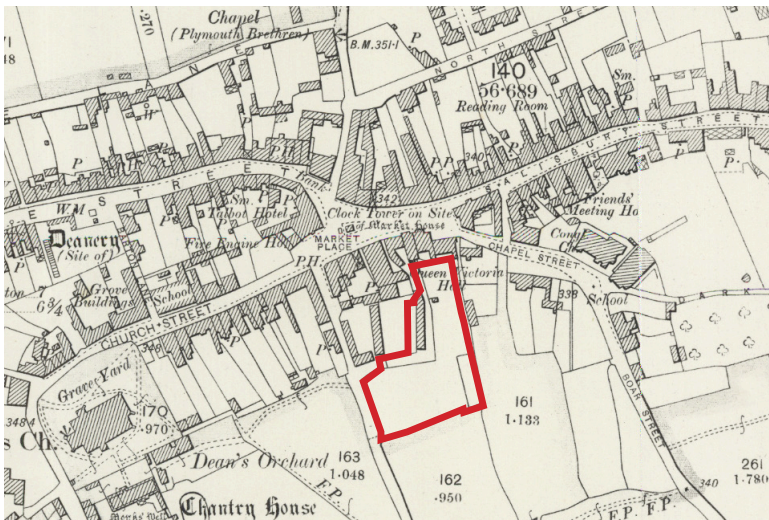
The removal of this previous building is also not documented, however it is suspected that this formed part of the development works for the present building in the early 1970s.



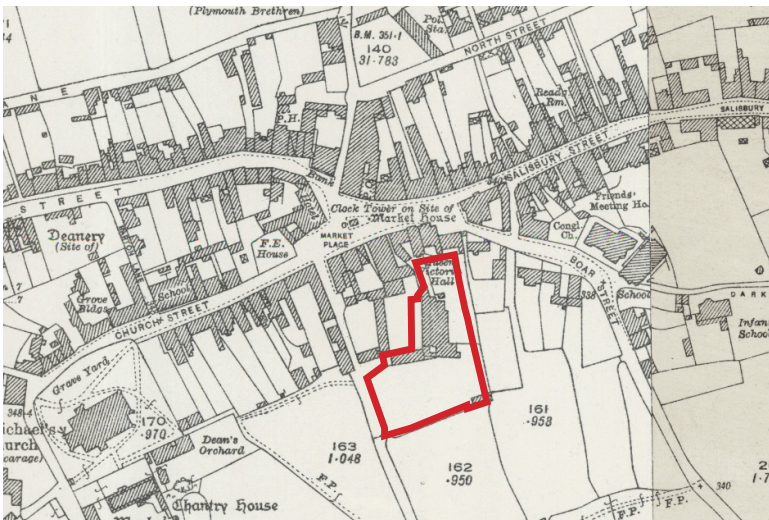
1840



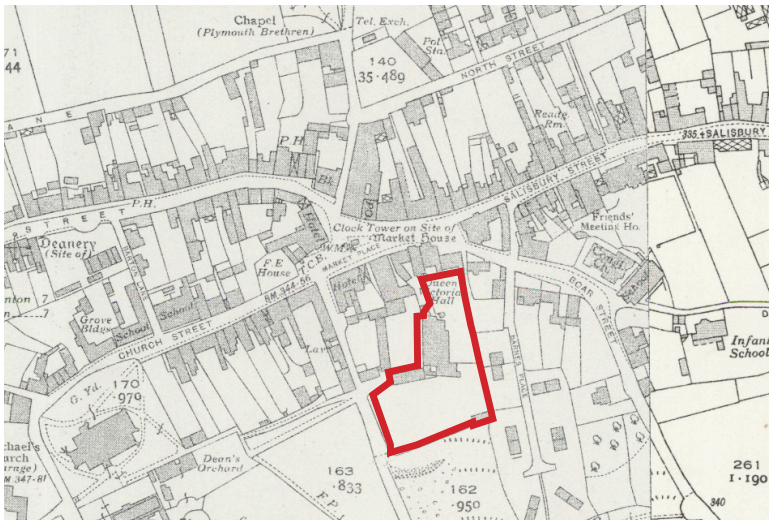
1844 - 1888



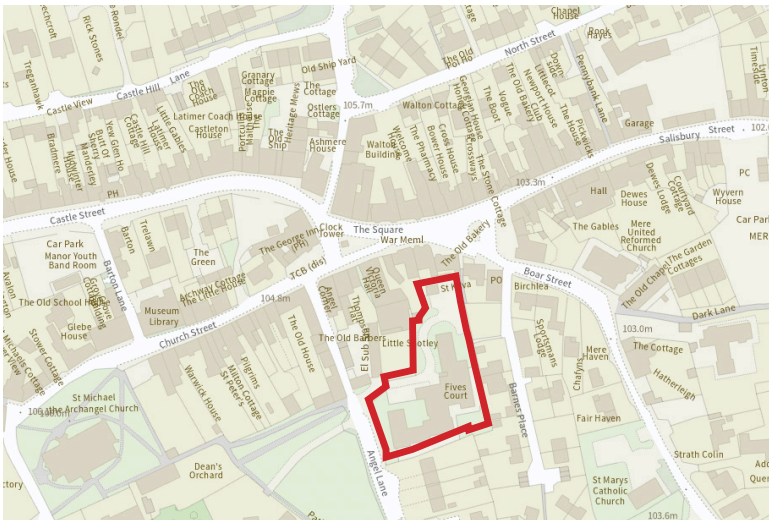
1894 - 1903



1898 - 1939



1921 - 1943



Present

2.6 Existing Building

The existing building is nestled in a quiet location in close proximity to the high street. It sits in an existing landscape which historically provided private garden space and secure curtilage to the habitable bedrooms of the previous care home use.

The building was built in the 1970s and is dated, bearing little reference in form or massing to the neighbouring properties within the conservation area which is predominantly two storey.

The external walls are faced using reconstituted North Cerney random course block-work and are in a good condition, as is the ground floor slab. Projecting PVC bay windows interspersed regularly along the ground floor are in a poor condition. The large pitched roofs are covered in concrete tiles and gables are clad above ground floor with timber cladding.

The existing energy centre located right in eyeline of the entrance has a stone chimney for the boiler flue. This feature along with the two storey central block add a greater sense of height and scale to the middle of the existing building.

Whilst there are limited short range views from ground floor windows into the garden areas there are views to the north towards Castle Hill from this central two storey building.

The overall building is also noticeable within Mere from Castle Hill.



2.7 Site Constraints

The site experiences a number of common constraints which any design proposal needs to respect; however there are a number of specific site challenges that drive the design on the site. These are;

Minimise overlooking - The site is a neighbour to houses on three sides but the houses to the east and south are particularly close to the boundary. The houses to the east have rear windows within 8m of the boundary and some part of their rear gardens adjacent to the boundary.

Trees and existing parking - The large TPO tree to the northern boundary needs to be retained; this limits the options for this area.

Historical context - The historic grain, massing, materials and features of the immediately adjacent conservation area should inform the design proposal.

Access - Vehicular access is from Angel Lane. Pedestrian access can be provided from both Angel Lane and Barnes Place. *PJA Transport Assessment* provides an assessment of historic and anticipated vehicular movements from the site in relation to the capacity of occupants.

Contamination - There is some below ground contamination which can be managed on site and capped to mitigate risk, retention of existing surfaces is beneficial

Archaeology - It is identified that there could be archaeological interest in the site and it is accepted that necessary archaeological conditions may be applied to monitor any excavation works.

