



LAND AT SEAGRY ROAD GREAT SOMERFORD

HERITAGE REPORT
FEBRUARY 2026

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Worlledge Associates

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WORLLEDGE ASSOCIATES



Worlledge Associates is an Oxford-based heritage consultancy, committed to the effective management of the historic environment. Established in 2014 by Nicholas and Alison Worlledge, Nicholas came to private practice with over 35 years' experience working in heritage management for local authorities. This intimate knowledge and understanding of council processes, and planning policy and practice, helps us to work collaboratively with owners and decision-makers to manage change to the historic environment.

Our team of dedicated researchers and specialists believe in the capacity of the historic environment to contribute to society's collective economic, social, and cultural well-being. We aim to identify what is significant about places and spaces in order to support their effective management and sustain their heritage value. We have worked with a wide range of property-owners and developers including universities and colleges, museums and libraries, large country estates, manor houses, farmsteads, cottages, town houses and new housing and commercial sites.

INTRODUCTION



The intelligent management of change is a key principle necessary to sustain the historic environment for present and future generations to enjoy. Historic England and successive government agencies have published policy and advice that extend our understanding of the historic environment and develop our competency in making decisions about how to manage it.

Paragraphs 4-10 of Historic England's Good Practice Advice Note 2 (Managing Significance in Decision-Taking in the Historic Environment) explains that applications (for planning permission and listed building consent) have a greater likelihood of success and better decisions will be made when applicants and local planning authorities assess and understand the particular nature of the significance of an asset, the extent of the asset's fabric to which the significance relates and the level of importance of that significance.

The National Planning Policy Framework ('NPPF') provides a very similar message in paragraphs 207 and 208 expecting both applicant and local planning authority to take responsibility for understanding the significance of a heritage asset and the impact of a development proposal, seeking to

avoid unacceptable conflict between the asset's conservation and any aspect of the proposal.

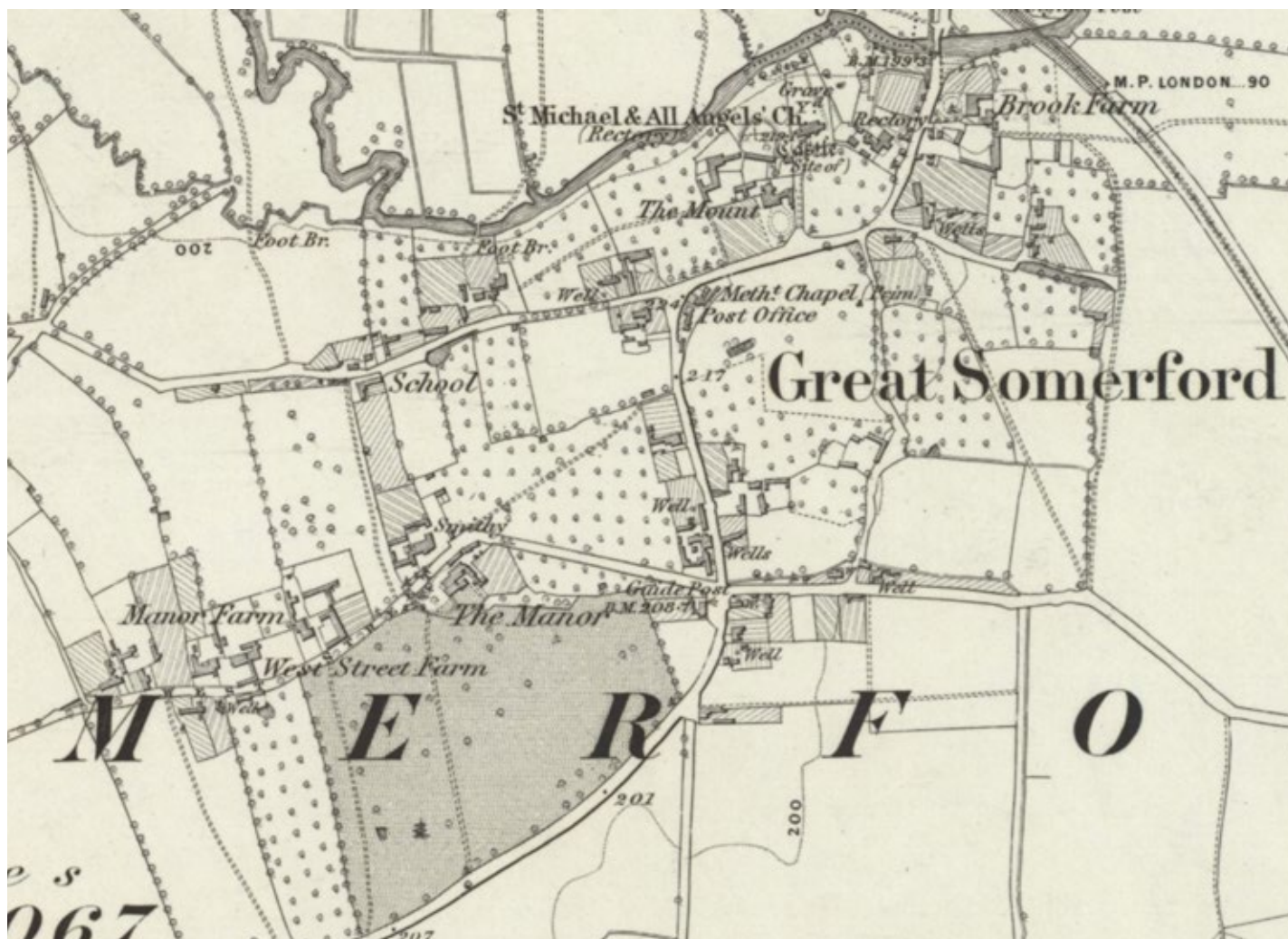
It has never been the intention of government to prevent change or freeze frame local communities and current policy and good practice suggests that change, if managed intelligently would not be harmful.

This Heritage Report has been prepared to accompany a planning application for 9 detached houses on part of the former parkland to Great Somerford Manor House, which lies within the Great Somerford Conservation Area. It includes a brief history of the development of Great Somerford, and then of Great Somerford Manor and the current Manor House.

The site will be described along with an assessment of its contribution to the Great Somerford Conservation Area. The report will provide a summary of the Heritage Policies, Guidelines and Advice with the relevant extracts included in Appendix 1.

The proposals will be outlined and an assessment provided of its impact on the Great Somerford Conservation Area.

BRIEF HISTORY AND DEVELOPMENT OF GREAT SOMERFORD



Extract from 6-inch to one-mile Ordnance Survey (OS) map 1885 showing the village

The following brief history draws on the 'Parishes: Great Somerford', in *A History of the County of Wiltshire: Volume 14, Malmesbury Hundred*, ed. D A Crowley, London, 1991. (VCH)

Great Somerford, 5 km. south-east of Malmesbury on the Bristol Avon, was called Somerford Mautravers from the later 13th century. From the 15th century the suffix, the surname of the lords of a manor in the parish, was gradually replaced by the prefix Broad or Great. The parish measure 672 ha. (1,660 a.).

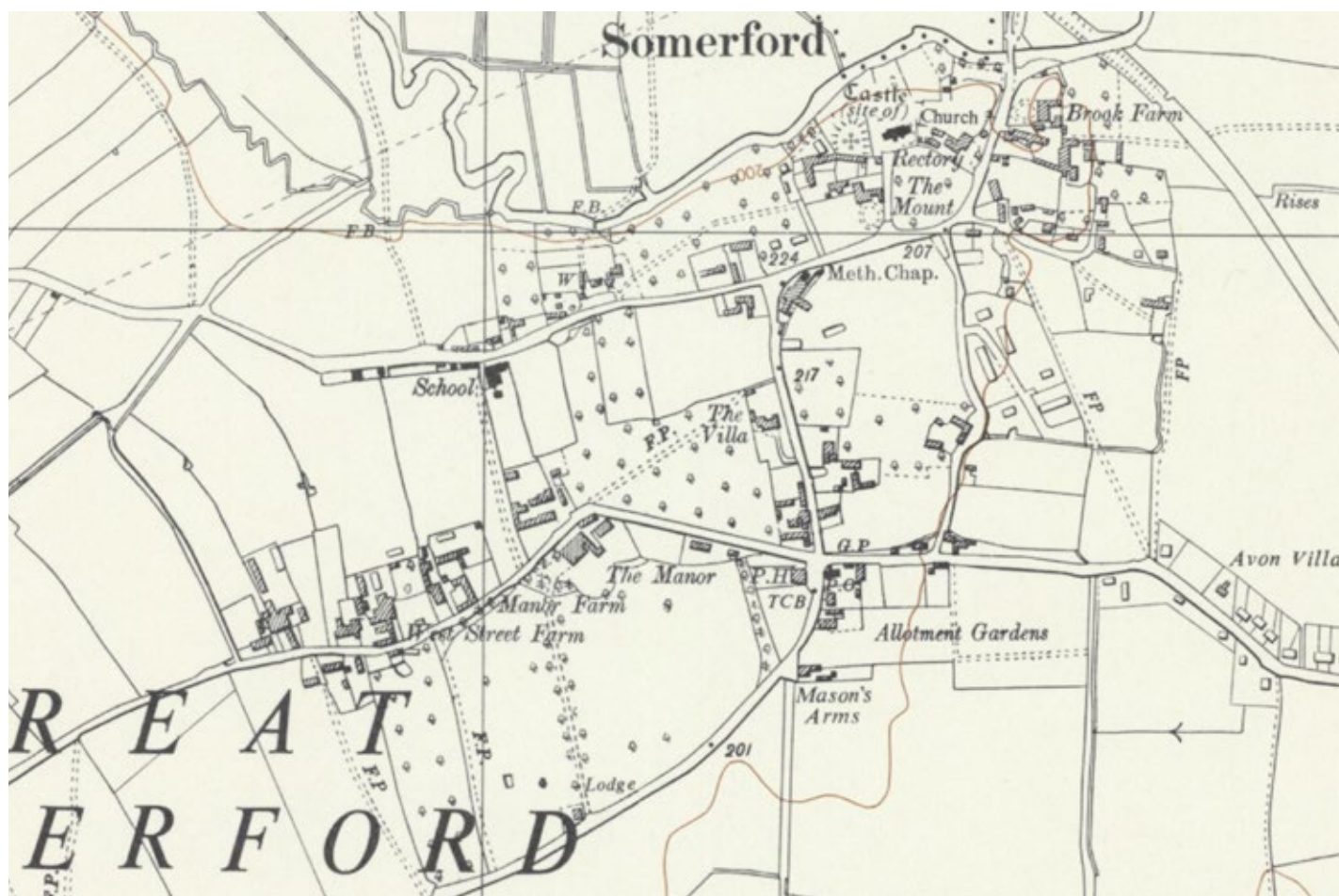
The village grew up on the south bank of the Avon presumably near the ford from which it took its name. A mound near the river is possibly the site of a motte-and bailey castle which may have been raised in the 12th century, and east of it the

church was standing by the late 12th century.

Great Somerford was unusual for Wiltshire because it had seven estates in 1086.

Apart from small pastures in the village it is likely that in the Middle Ages all Great Somerford's land was in open fields and common meadows and pastures. By 1809 c. 700 a., nearly half, of the parish had been inclosed. The main period of inclosure seems likely to have been the earlier 17th century.

Between 1801 and 1841 the population increased from 358 to 556. It fluctuated little between 1841 and 1891, when it was 530, but afterwards fell.



Extract from 1971 revision to the 6 -inch OS map showing little change.

In 1899 Kelly's Directory described Great Somerford as follows.

GREAT SOMERFORD is a parish and pleasant village, on the river Avon, with a station on the Malmesbury branch of the Great Western railway, 7 miles north from Chippenham, 4 south-east from Malmesbury and 89 from London, in the North Western division of the county, Malmesbury union, petty sessional division, county court, district and hundred, and in the rural deanery of Malmesbury and archdeaconry and diocese of Bristol. About 1 mile north of the village is the branch of the Great Western railway from Woottons Bassett to the Severn Tunnel. [...]

The registrar dates from the year 1700. The living is a rectory, net yearly value £400, including 291 acres of glebe, with residence, in the gift of Exeter College, Oxford, and held since 1888 by the Rev. Francis Hardwicke Manley

M.A. of that college. Here is a Primitive Methodist chapel, originally erected in 1872 as a free library; there is also a Primitive Methodist chapel at Startley. Sir Henry Bruce Meux bart. J.P. of Dauntsey Manor, Mrs. H. Birtill, William Hanks and J. P. Poole esq... Mrs. J. Birtill, are the principal landowners. The soil is loamy; subsoil, gravel. The land is chiefly in pasture. The area is 1,653 acres; rateable value, £2,716; the population in 1891 was 530.

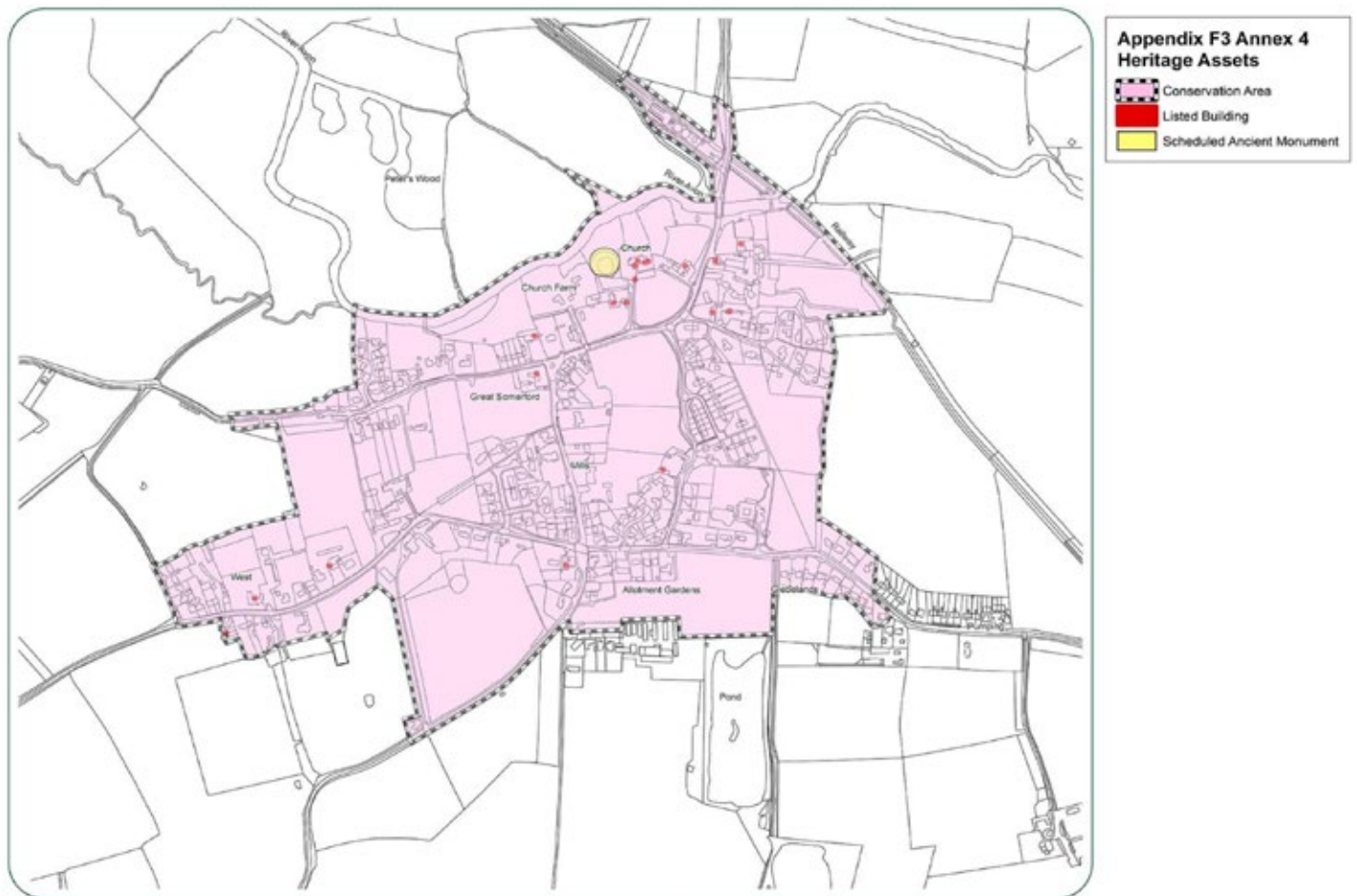
In 1921 the population was 421, and 448 in 1931. Thereafter the building of private and council houses caused it to increase: it was 662 in 1971, 668 in 1981.

In 1975 much of the village was included in a Conservation Area.

In 2001 the population was 592, in 2011 593 and in 2021 635, due to some new housing development.



Recent satellite image showing areas of new development within and on the edge of Great Somerford.



Map of the Conservation Area of Great Somerford

GREAT SOMERFORD MANOR AND MANOR HOUSE



Extract from 1808 Enclosure Award map showing the Manor House and ranges of buildings on the northern side of West Road (red)

There were seven separate Domesday estates in Great Somerford. The VCH 1991 provides considerable detail on these estates. The descent of the former manor house, the grounds of which the proposed development forms part, is summarised from the VCH as follows, with additional information from newspaper and journals.

- 1086 Teodric held the estate
- 1242 The manor was held by Kington St. Michael priory in 1242–3, of Geoffrey de Sifrewast
- 1538 At the Dissolution the Crown granted it to Sir Richard Long (d. 1546)
- 1544 Conveyed to his brother Robert (d. 1564) who succeeded by his brother William.
- 1570 Manor to John Yew.
- 1577 Yew sold it in 1577 to Sir John Thynne (d. 1580), and it descended in the direct male line to [...] Thomas Thynne, Viscount Weymouth (d. 1714), [...] and in the direct male line to Thomas, Viscount Weymouth (cr. marquess of Bath 1789, d. 1796), and Thomas, marquess of Bath (d. 1837).
- 1809 Enclosure map for Broad Somerford shows Manor House on the north side of West Road.

- 1810 Thomas, Marquess of Bath sold the estate, three houses and 123 a., to John Parsloe (d. 1849).
- 1853 Parsloe's trustees offered for sale the manor and other land owned by Parsloe in the parish, a total of 223 a.

The Devizes and Wiltshire Gazette on 12 October 1854 carried an advert for the sale of the freehold tithe-free estate with the manor or reputed manor of Somerford, containing together 233 acres [...] The House, a considerable portion of which is of modern structure, is suitable for a residence of a respectable family, and the farm buildings, yards and premises which are all in good repair, are conveniently arranged for the use of the Farm. There is also a substantially built malthouse, with two cottages on the premises. [...] The messuage, homestead, malthouse, and 186 acres of land are let to a respectable tenant, for a term of years which expires at Christmas 1857. The remaining 37 acres will be sold subject to a lease dependant on two lives aged 66 and 68 years, under a yearly rent of 15s 9d

This advert suggests the manor house forms part of the 186-acre holding, with no reference to a garden or park to the Manor House.



Extract from 6-inch to one-mile Ordnance Survey map, 1885 showing 'The manor' on the south side of West Road with garden, and parkland shaded grey, running south to Seagry Road.

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|--|--|--|
| <p>1861 The purchaser was a William Beak. In the 1861 census William Beak (61) is listed as living at the Manor House, West Street, Great Somerford, giving his occupation as farmer of 335 acres employing 9 men and 4 boys. In the household is his wife Annie (63) and son William (21), dairymaid and housemaid.</p> <p>1870 William wife Ann died. In the 1871 census William Beak (71) is living at the Manor House giving his occupation as Land owner. His son William E Beak (31) is living in Main Street, giving his occupation as farmer of 200 acres employing 12 men 4 boys.</p> <p>1873 William Beak died with his effects worth under £5,000. His only son William inherited the Manor House farm. In the 1881 census he is living at the Manor House, with his wife, 4 daughters, 5 sons and 4 servants. He gives his occupation as farmer of 375</p> | <p>1885 The Ordinance Survey map, 1885, shows the Manor House on the south side of West Road with associated parkland running south to Seagry Road. The VCH suggests the road was moved in order for the house to be sitting in a garden and park rather than facing onto West Road. A new drive was constructed from Seagry Road to the house, the former street elevation of which now overlooked the park.</p> <p>1888 W. E. Beak sold the estate, including Manor House Estate</p> | <p>acres employing 14 man 4 boys.</p> <p>The Bath Chronicle and Weekly Gazette on 17 May 1888 carried an advert for the sale of Somerford Manor estate in 17 Lots, comprising 331 acres.</p> |
|--|--|--|



Plan from the 1888 Sales brochure (Wiltshire and Swindon History Centre ref: 1033/207/126)

Lot 1 - The pleasantly situated residence known as the Manor House, with conservatory, vinery, warm early walled garden, pleasure grounds, tennis court, excellent stabling for 9 horses, with double coach-house, saddle room and sleeping room over; carpenters shop, apple store &c., convenient farm buildings consisting of engine house, barn, storeroom, granary, cart-horse stable, stable, wagon-house, poultry houses, cattle sheds and

yards; productive orchard in full bearing, and nicely timbered park-like lands, in the occupation of Mr. Richard Canning, the whole containing 41a 0r 20p.

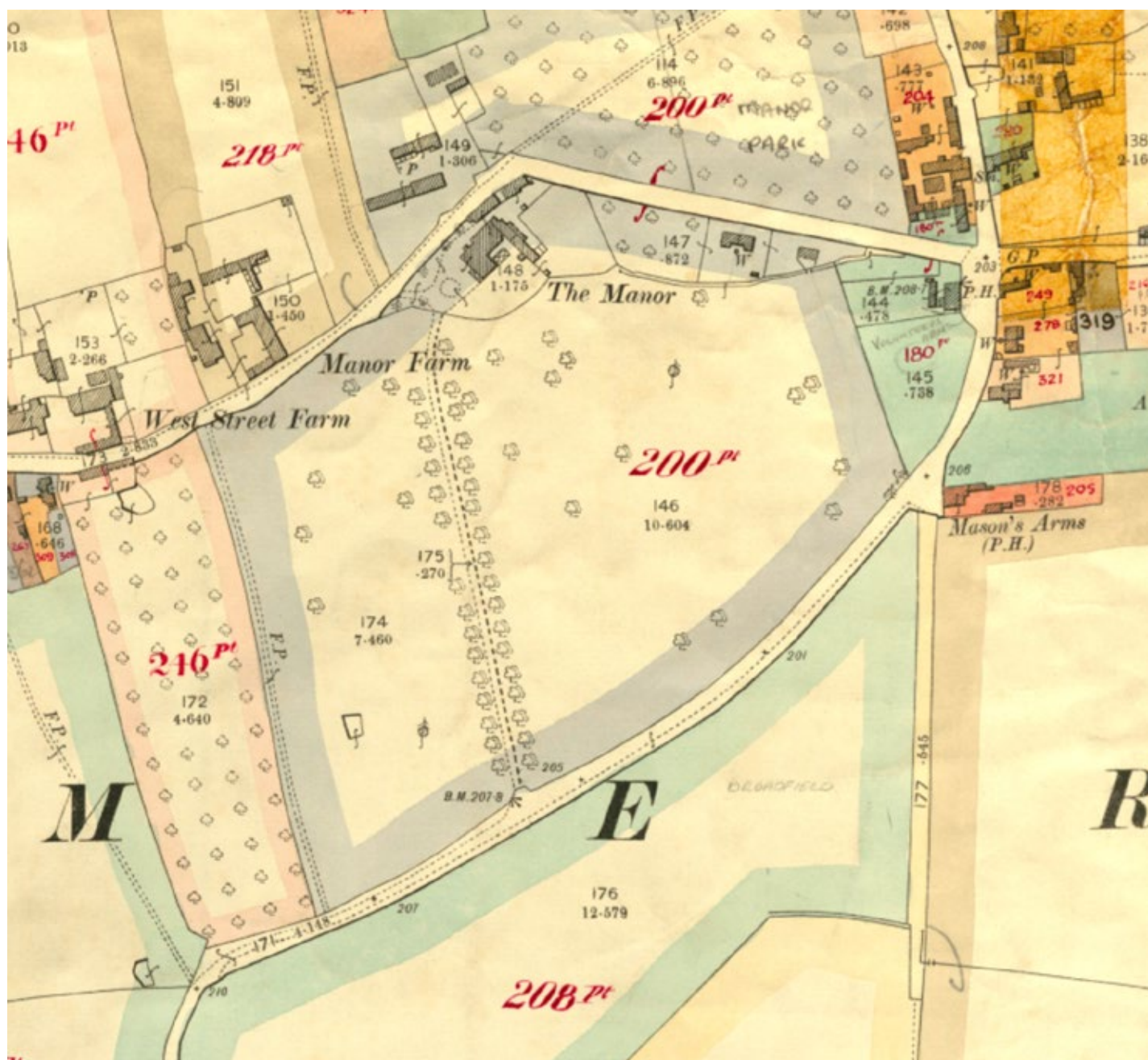
Western Daily Press on 2 June 1888 reported on the sale, noting the Manor House, farm buildings and grounds sold for £3,000, with Manor Farm fetching £3,900. It does not indicate who purchased the Manor House.



Lot 1 from plan from the 1888 Sales brochure (Wiltshire and Swindon History Centre ref: 1033/207/126)

1910 The District Valuation records a Captain. E C Hamilton as the owner and occupier of Great Somerford Manor, and describes a 'house, buildings

and land, comprising 28 acres. The transcript notes that the Manor House with other properties were sold on the 7th July 1905 for £10,000.



An extract from the c1910 District Valuation map, based on the 1899 revision to the 1885 25-inch OS map, showing the extent of The Manor House, shown as portion 200 bounded by light grey. Note a planted avenue running north from Seagry Road.

1919 Country Life on 5 July 1919 carried an advertisement for the sale of The Manor House, Great Somerford, described as picturesque, carefully restored and thoroughly modernised. The sale comprised 85 acres of rich pasture land and one arable field, approached by avenue carriage drive, about a quarter of a mile in length with lodge.

According to the VCH.

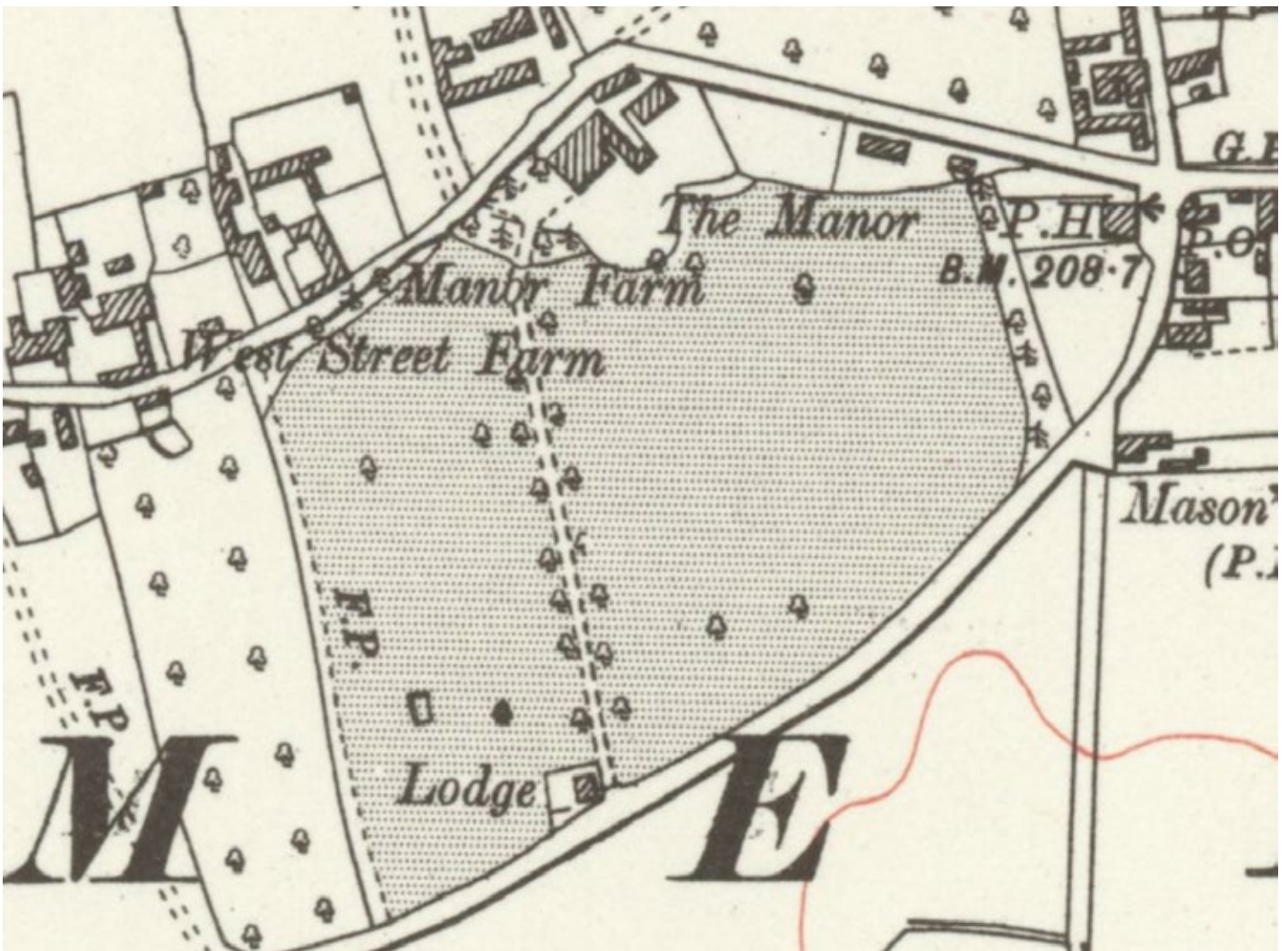
In the early 19th century, apparently for John Parsloe, a tall block containing an entrance hall and

staircase was built on the south side of the 17th-century block: it was extended eastwards in the later 19th. The 17th-century block was heightened and refronted c. 1900 to match the early 19th-century extension, and in the early 20th century a long north-south service range was built from the south side of the 18th-century range.

1921 Revision to the 1885 and 1899 6-inch OS map shows the avenue and also a lodge fronting onto Seagry Road.



Image from the south of Great Somerford Manor House from Country Life 5 July 1919



Extract from 1921 revision to the 6-inch OS map showing the avenue and lodge to Seagry Road

1927	Country Life on 5 November 1927 advertised for sale, on the instructions of the executors of the Manor House, Great Somerford with 190 acres [...] If desired the house, stables, lodge and two cottages with 28 ½ acres could be sold separately. It was advertised again in Country Life on 31 March 1928, presumably as no sale took place in 1927. It appears that Lord Mostyn purchased the estate, but does not appear to have occupied it.	advertised for sale with offers in the region of £60,000. According to the VCH 'Fittings of the 18th century were introduced into the house in the mid 20th century. The late 19th century part of the house was demolished and the inside of the house rearranged and divided into two c. 1977'.
1931	Country Life on 9 May 1931 advertised for sale, on the instructions of Lord Mostyn, the Manor House and 45 acres of well-timbered park.	
1935	Country Life on 18 May 1935 again advertised the Manor House and 45 acres of park on the instructions of Lord Mostyn.	
1938	Country Life on 16 July 1938 again advertised the Manor House and 45 acres on the instructions of Lord Mostyn.	
1977	Country Life on 9 June 1977 noted that Great Somerford Manor House in 12 acres was being	

RECENT PLANNING HISTORY

N/01/01836/FUL	Construction of Cart house and Stables – approved
N/05/02328/FUL	Erection of a conservatory – approved
19/04484/FUL	Proposed Annex Built from Existing Garage and Stable – refused
20/01584/FUL	Proposed Annex Built from Existing Garage and Stable – approved
PL/2022/05026	Proposed new garage – refused – dismissed on appeal

SITE DESCRIPTION

Map regression shows how the site boundaries have changed with the historically associated 'parkland' becoming increasingly divorced from its functional and visual relationship with the 19th century manor house. A series of 25-inch OS maps shows the changes to the house and grounds from 1885.



1885 Ordnance Survey map shows the rearranged routes with Manor House now accessed from the south and the historic route effectively extinguished with the late creation of the parkland. The house is shown with its own private pleasure grounds with a wall and tree planting between the garden and the open ground beyond

In c1977 the Manor House was divided into two, with the kitchen garden and land to the east fronting West Road appearing to form part of the eastern half. Two additional houses have been built fronting West Road.



1899 Ordnance Survey map shows a drive formalised with an avenue of trees. A part of the pleasure grounds to the east is shown developed with a separate house and outbuilding.



1921 Footprint of house increased to the south, with the garden boundary extended south. A Lodge is constructed on Seagry Road adjacent to the avenue



Extract from RAF aerial image 14 April 1946 (Historic England RAF/106G/UK/1416)



Extract from recent satellite image of the Manor House and grounds shows that the garden to the western side of the Manor House has been extended to the south-east and east with the new boundary planted, resulting in a clear delineation between it and the open land to the south and south-east. The lodge and the land to the west of the drive are in different ownership.



The application site

DESCRIPTION OF THE CONSERVATION AREA

The conservation area was first designated in 1991 and then the boundary extended in 2006 to include land associated with the railway, world war II defences and the Free Gardens Allotments. There is no conservation area appraisal explaining the reasoning for the boundary and no assessment of the area's special interest – its character and appearance.

The Great Somerford (incorporating Startley) Neighbourhood Plan (2016-2026) provides a very brief description of the history of the village and elements of the conservation area that are identified as holding some significance.

It explains the development of the road network and the historic development of the village on higher ground with stone retaining walls enclosing the lanes and surrounding paddocks. It identifies the ancient farmsteads and hedgerows that define the early origins as a farming community. In relation to the application site's context, the Neighbourhood Plan identifies the 'chestnut avenue to the Manor House' as a heritage asset. The Plan also identifies 'local green spaces', all of which are sited within the conservation area. The application site does not form part of any of these identified green spaces. Beyond this there is no published evidence of the area's special character, hence it is necessary to prepare a short summary:

The road layout of the village is a loose network with routes broadly running east-west and north-south. The lanes are

lined by buildings, old and new, often clustering around junctions and crossroads. The through routes could be described as the primary routes, off which are spurs, some historically leading out to the farmsteads and the fields, others representing the 20th century development of smaller housing developments.

The survival of the Free Garden allotments holds historic interest and contribute to the village's verdant qualities – creating green enclaves between building clusters or linear developments.

Winding roads means that there are no long views and no single 'designed' viewing places. The area is experienced as a series of incidents or points of interest as one moves through the area. The green paddocks provide breathing spaces between building lines or groups and are often experienced framed by buildings (old or new). Hedgerows, tree belts, roadside trees help soften outlines and filter views, contributing to the sense of a village in the countryside. The village does not have a clearly defined edge (as one might find in a nucleated or planned development; the experience is a gentler transition, with built forms gradually becoming less the focus of any view. More recently, the farmsteads located towards the edge of the village have been or are being redeveloped, adding a new characteristic and point of interest to the village's built fabric.



1. Broadfield Farm development, a spur of Seagry Road, creating a new secondary lane



2. Looking east into the village from Seagry Lane. Note the short views, green verges, and hedgerow trees. The junction on the right leads into the Broadfield Farm development. The application site is just behind the photographer on the left side.



3. One of the crossroads in the village, with a mix of building ages, and more predominantly, hard surfaces1301



4. One of the green spaces that provides colour and texture and a point of variation between the clusters or lines of built forms. Note the green space is framed by a more recent housing development.



5. A view along West Street looking back into the village. Note how the boundary walls, hedgerows and trees channel views.



6. A 'green' lane looking towards the new housing at Somerbrook – the greenery and historic routes help to give context and a setting to the new developments in the village.



7. One of the series of secondary lanes that help to establish the sense of a highway hierarchy – principal lane, secondary lane and then tertiary 'spurs'.



8. Somerbrook, a tertiary spur, the redevelopment of one of the village edge farmsteads



9. Opposite the parish church, whilst an open space, long views are limited by roadside boundary features and the bend in the road. It seems probable that the ranch style fencing on the right replaced a hedge and hedgerow trees, because it seems out of character with the boundary detailing throughout the village. It does allow views to the church, but it does also impart a somewhat sparse or barren quality to the space.

HERITAGE SIGNIFICANCE AND CONTRIBUTION TO THE CONSERVATION AREA



Extract from 1921 revision to the six-inch OS map with the grounds to the south of the of The Manor shaded, the 1930-72 revision to 10,560 scale map and the Conservation Area boundary

Significance is defined by the National Planning Policy Framework as:

'The value of a heritage asset to this and future generations because of its heritage interest. That interest may be archaeological, architectural, artistic, or historic. Significance derives not only from a heritage asset's physical presence, but also from its setting'.

Placing the area in its historical context and describing its characteristics and appearance is an important component of the evidence gathering exercise to inform understanding of a place's significance and contribution to the conservation area.

The Great Somerford Manor House and its grounds is not included in the National Heritage List for England and only a part of the 19th and 20th century grounds to the south, and east of the avenue, are included in the Great Somerford Conservation Area designated in 1991.

The application site sits within the conservation area, located

in the southeast corner of what was once the former parkland to the Manor House.

Whilst there was once a designed and visual relationship between the Manor House and the Park, this no longer survives and is not experienced as such. The historic parkland is now in separate ownerships and the development of the gardens to the Manor House and landscaping have intentionally severed the visual connection.

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Extract from the 1946 RAF aerial and satellite image taken 22 April 2021 showing the expanded garden and planting to the southern boundary.



Looking south down the drive the remnants of a parkland, with the cluster of trees are recognisable, but the absence of any use, the visibility of housing around the perimeter detracts from any aesthetic or historic significance. The application site lies to the left of this view.



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It is not clear why the land to the south of the Manor House is included within the conservation area. It cannot be because of its late 19th century development as parkland, as the conservation area includes only the east portion of that parkland. If it was the case that the parkland was considered important, then it would be reasonable to conclude that the whole of the historic parkland would be included.,

The Neighbourhood Plan in identifying Local Green Spaces in the village has followed the advice set out in paragraphs 106 and 107 of the National Planning Policy Framework. This states that to be designated as a local green space where the space is:

b) demonstrably special to a local community and holds a particular local significance, for example because of its beauty, historic significance, recreational value (including as a playing field), tranquillity or richness of its wildlife; (emphasis added)

As a part of the Development Plan for the area, that the Neighbourhood Plan does not identify the area as holding any aesthetic or special historic interest, is an important consideration establishing that the contribution the site makes to the special interest of the conservation area, if any, must be very limited.

If the area is included as a green buffer as a mechanism to protect the village's setting, then this would be a misuse of the designation process and objectives. It is inappropriate to include land around a conservation area as a means to protect its setting. Historic England 2019 Conservation Area Appraisal, Designation and Management Second edition, Historic England Advice Note 1, paragraph 73, explains that 'Conservation area designation is not generally an appropriate means of protecting the wider landscape'. If this was the reason why this land was included, then it would suggest that inclusion as part of the conservation area is not justified.

The research carried out as part of this report has identified that the land once formed part of a designed parkland associated with the redevelopment of the Manor House in the 19th century. Recognising that the Neighbourhood Plan has identified the tree lined avenue (the Chestnuts have been replaced) as a heritage asset it is reasonable to conclude

that the extent of any contribution that the parkland makes to the significance of the conservation area derives from the tree lined avenue. Whilst the Neighbourhood Plan does not explain what heritage significance the tree lined avenue holds it would be reasonable to conclude that its significance may derive from the following:

- Evidence of the 19th century redevelopment of the Manor House, and
- The creation of a new, picturesque approach to the Manor House
- Evidence of the wealth and authority of the new owner of the Manor House (and wider farming estate)
- Together with the lodge generating a sense of seclusion and exclusivity.

SUMMARY OF HERITAGE POLICIES AND GUIDELINES



Conservation principles, policy and practice seek to preserve and enhance the value of heritage assets. With the issuing of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) the Government has re-affirmed its aim that the historic environment and its heritage assets should be conserved and enjoyed for the quality of life they bring to this and future generations.

The site is located within the Great Somerford Conservation Area. Accordingly, the property is subject to the provisions of national policies set out in the NPPF and several Historic England Good Practice Planning Guidelines and Advice Notes, namely.

- Good Practice Advice Note 2 – Managing Significance in Decision- Taking in the Historic Environment March 2015 (GPA2)
- Historic England Advice Note 2 – Making Changes to Heritage Assets
- Conservation Principles, Policies and Guidance (2008)

Historic England's approach to effective management of the historic environment is best summed up in paragraph 86 of its 'Conservation Principles' (2008), which states:

'Keeping a significant place in use is likely to require continual adaptation and change; but provided such interventions respect the values of the place, they will tend to benefit public (heritage) as well as private interests in it. Many places now valued as part of the historic environment exist because of past patronage and private investment, and the work of successive generations often contributes to their significance. Owners and managers of significant places should not be discouraged from adding further layers of potential future interest and value, provided that recognised heritage values are not eroded or compromised in the process'.

It is also subject to the Heritage Policy in the Wiltshire Core Strategy Adopted January 2015 and the Great Somerford Neighbourhood Plan.

The Relevant extracts of the National and Local Heritage Policies, Guidelines and Advice are included at Appendix 1.

PROPOSAL



The application site is located in the south-east corner of the paddock, with a new access proposed onto Seagry Road. It constitutes a small part of the former parkland site. The identification of the site for development is informed by an understanding of the historic topographic framework of the village and follows historic and more recent precedents for the 'tertiary spurs'. The village is characterised by its loose knit development character – cluster of rows of buildings interspersed with green spaces, hedgerows and tree belts. The site is located to follow this form so that it will be visibly and physically connected with existing development, such as at the new development at Broadfield Farm.

The location for the new housing allows the tree lined avenue leading up to the Manor House to retain its sense of a picturesque approach with the element of exclusivity retained with the open space on either side of the drive, thus preserving its setting.

The nature of this part of the village, primarily the manor house and its grounds, exhibits phases of change with the road network and the qualities of the surrounding remodelled to

suit new owners' expectations, latest fashions and demands. With the fragmentation and sale of the manor's lands further changes to the qualities of the landscape were introduced, including a tree belt along the eastern edge of the former parkland as a mechanism to provide a visual buffer.

The use of tree belts, clumps, and individual trees to determine a landscape character, to conceal objects and to control views, is rooted in the history of landscape design. Whilst this is an outline application such an approach could be used very successfully to create a new edge to the former park and to help integrate the new development with the existing built forms and green spaces. It is recognised that green spaces, trees, and hedges contribute significantly to the core characteristics of the village. The village is not a static entity, and the neighbourhood plan envisages and supports growth to sustain the viability and vitality of the village. It is reasonable to conclude from this that the development of the site for housing presents an opportunity to add another chapter in the evolving character and physical extent of the village, in a way that positively contributes.

ASSESSMENT OF IMPACT



The absence of a conservation area appraisal to support the designation of the conservation area makes it difficult to understand what it is (or was) about the village that the Council determined held special interest that was desirable to preserve or enhance.

Analysis suggests that the inclusion of this paddock to the south of the Manor was almost accidental and arguably was ill informed.

Following the conclusions set out earlier, about the extent, if any, of contribution to the conservation area it can be concluded that:

- Development of the site would preserve the tree lined avenue to the Manor House
- The setting of the avenue would also be preserved with the picturesque route and sense of arrival retained
- The development would redefine this edge of the conservation area and village, but without erasing the evidence of the former parkland.
- Indeed, with appropriate landscaping the sense of a parkland setting could be retained and enhanced
- The paddock is currently underused and with no incentive for investing in any landscape management any qualities that it currently possesses will be gradually depleted. Development provides an incentive and opportunities to reinvigorate the aesthetic and historic qualities of the wider area.
- Given that the garden setting to the Manor House has also changed and is now laid out to be independent of the paddock and not reliant on any curated views across the space it can be concluded that the setting of the house will be unaffected.

CONCLUSION



In the absence of a conservation area appraisal that establishes the reasons for the designation and that articulates the area's heritage significance preparation of this report has relied on a rapid assessment of the character and appearance of the area in order to inform understanding of the area's significance and the impact this proposed development will have on that significance.

The Neighbourhood Plan identifies the tree lined avenue as having heritage significance but not the remainder of the former parkland. This would suggest that the site does not possess any heritage significance that should be preserved (i.e. not developed) and that therefore the assessment of impact needs to examine the way the new development would impact on the wider characteristics of the village and on the setting of the tree lined avenue.

As discussed above it is concluded that:

- the significance of the tree lined avenue and the qualities if its approach to the Manor House would be preserved;
- The existing setting of the Manor House would be preserved;
- Subject to suitable landscaping and detailed matters of design and siting the proposed development would integrate with the overall character of the village and not result in harm.

Should it be considered that the development would result in harm, then it can only be concluded that this harm would derive from the development of part of the former parkland. Given the evidence above it would reasonable to conclude that this harm, which would be at the bottom end of the scale of less than substantial could be minimised by design and landscaping.

APPENDIX 1: NATIONAL AND LOCAL HERITAGE POLICIES, GUIDELINES AND ADVICE

NATIONAL PLANNING POLICY FRAMEWORK

Conservation principles, policy and practice seek to preserve and enhance the value of heritage assets. With the issuing of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), the Government has re-affirmed its aim that the historic environment and its heritage assets should be conserved and enjoyed for the quality of life they bring to this and future generations.

In relation to development affecting a designated heritage asset the NPPF states in paragraphs 205 and 206 that:

‘When considering the impact of a proposed development on the significance of a designated heritage asset, great weight should be given to the asset’s conservation (and the more important the asset, the greater the weight should be). This is irrespective of whether any potential harm amounts to substantial harm, total loss or less than substantial harm to its significance.

Any harm to, or loss of, the significance of a designated heritage asset (from its alteration or destruction, or from development within its setting), should require clear and convincing justification.’

Paragraph 203 of the NPPF, however, also advises Local Planning Authorities that.

In determining applications, local planning authorities should take account of:

- a) the desirability of sustaining and enhancing the significance of heritage assets and putting them to viable uses consistent with their conservation.
- b) the positive contribution that conservation of heritage assets can make to sustainable communities including their economic vitality; and
- c) the desirability of new development making a positive contribution to local character and distinctiveness.

THE PLANNING PRACTICE GUIDANCE (PPG)

This seeks to provide further advice on assessing the impact of proposals explaining that what matters in assessing the level of harm (if any) is the degree of impact on the significance of the asset. It states:

‘In determining whether works to a listed building (or its setting) 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.’

The NPPF explains in paragraphs 207 and 208 the differences between ‘substantial’ harm and ‘less than substantial’ harm, advising that any harm should be justified by the public benefit of a proposal.

In cases where there is less than substantial harm, paragraph 208 states:

‘Where a development proposal will lead to less than substantial harm to the significance of a designated heritage asset, this harm should be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal including, where appropriate, securing its optimum viable use’.

The PPG also seeks to provide a clearer understanding of what constitutes ‘public benefit’, as it is the public benefit that flows from a development that can justify harm. In weighing the public benefits against potential harm, considerable weight and importance should be given to the desirability to preserve the setting of listed buildings.

Public benefits can flow from a variety of developments and could be anything that delivers economic, social, or environmental progress as described in the NPPF, paragraph 8.

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. It explains that public benefits can include heritage benefits, such as:

- Sustaining or enhancing the significance of a heritage asset and the contribution of its setting
- Reducing or removing risks to a heritage asset
- Securing the optimum viable use for a heritage asset.

HISTORIC ENGLAND 'CONSERVATION PRINCIPLES' (2008)

Works of alteration, extension, or demolition need not involve any harmful impact and may be necessary to ensure a building has a viable future. Historic England explains its approach to managing the historic environment and how we experience places stating in in 'Conservation Principles' (April 2008) paragraph 88:

'Very few significant places can be maintained at either public or private expense unless they are capable of some beneficial use; nor would it be desirable, even if it were practical, for most places that people value to become solely memorials of the past'.

It also points out in paragraph 92:

'Retaining the authenticity of a place is not always achieved by retaining as much of the existing fabric as is technically possible'.

It also comments in paragraph 86:

'Keeping a significant place in use is likely to require continual adaptation and change; but provided such interventions respect the values of the place, they will tend to benefit public (heritage) as well as private interests in it. Many places now valued as part of the historic environment exist because of past patronage and private investment, and the work of successive generations often contributes to their significance. Owners and managers of significant places should not be discouraged from adding further layers of potential future interest and value, provided that recognised heritage values are not eroded or compromised in the process'.

Further, in relation to new works and alterations in paragraph 138 states:

New work or alteration to a significant place should normally be acceptable if:

- a. there is sufficient information comprehensively to understand the impacts of the proposal on the significance of the place.
- b. the proposal would not materially harm the values of the place, which, where appropriate, would be reinforced or further revealed.
- c. the proposals aspire to a quality of design and execution

which may be valued now and in the future.

Amongst the Government's planning objectives for the historic environment is that conservation decisions are properly informed.

HISTORIC ENGLAND'S 'GOOD PRACTICE ADVICE NOTES 3: THE SETTING OF HERITAGE ASSETS'

Paragraph 19, of this practice note, explains that.

Amongst the Government's planning policies for the historic environment is that conservation decisions are based on a proportionate assessment of the particular significance of any heritage asset that may be affected by a proposal, including by development affecting the setting of a heritage asset'.

From this summary of the national heritage management policy framework, it is clear that there is a complex assessment decision-making process to navigate when considering change within the historic environment.

Central to any decision is the recognition that history is not a static thing, and that the significance of our historic environment derives from a history of change.

S72 PLANNING (LISTED BUILDINGS AND CONSERVATION AREAS) ACT 1990

Section 72 of the Act requires that local planning authorities 'In the exercise, with respect to any buildings or other land in a conservation area, [...] special attention shall be paid to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of that area.'

There have been a number of Court of Appeal decisions which have provided interpretations of the requirements of these sections.

In the Court of Appeal, *Barnwell Manor Wind Energy Ltd v East*

Northants District Council, English Heritage and National Trust, [2015] 1 W.L.R. 45, Sullivan L J made clear that to discharge this responsibility means that decision makers must give considerable importance and weight to the desirability of preserving the setting of listed buildings when carrying out the balancing exercise (of judging harm against other planning considerations).

In *Jones v Mordue & Anor* [2016] 1 W.L.R. 2682 the Court of Appeal explains how decision makers can ensure this duty can be fulfilled: that by working through paragraphs 131 -134 of the NPPF, in accordance with their terms a decision maker will have complied with the duty under sections 16, 66(1) and 72. This report follows this advice to ensure consistency with the duty to preserve or enhance.

In the Court of Appeal [*Catesby Estates v Steer and SSCLG*, 2018] the concept of setting was explored. In paragraph 15 of the judgement Justice Lindblom rehearses the Planning Inspector's considerations, commenting that the Inspector found it difficult to disassociate landscape impact from heritage impact. The focus of the judgement is to determine the extent to which visual and historical relationships between places contribute to define the extent of setting. Three general conclusions are made:

- a) The decision maker needs to understand the setting of a designated heritage asset, even if it cannot be delineated exactly.
- b) There is no one prescriptive way to define an asset's setting - a balanced judgement needs to be made concentrating on the surroundings in which an asset is experienced and keeping in mind that those surroundings may change over time.
- c) The effect of a development on the setting of a heritage asset and whether that effect harms significance.

WILTSHIRE CORE STRATEGY ADOPTED JANUARY 2015

The Wiltshire Core Strategy provides up-to-date strategic planning policy for Wiltshire and covers the period up to 2026. It includes the following policy to 'ensure that Wiltshire's important monuments, sites and landscapes and areas of historic and built heritage significance are protected and enhanced in order that they continue to make an important contribution to Wiltshire's environment and quality of life'

CORE POLICY 58 ENSURING THE CONSERVATION OF THE HISTORIC ENVIRONMENT

Development should protect, conserve and where possible enhance the historic environment.

Designated heritage assets and their settings will be conserved, and where appropriate enhanced in a manner appropriate to their significance, including:

- i. nationally significant archaeological remains
- ii. World Heritage Sites within and adjacent to Wiltshire
- iii. buildings and structures of special architectural or historic interest
- iv. the special character or appearance of conservation areas
- v. historic parks and gardens
- vi. important landscapes, including registered battlefields and townscapes.

Distinctive elements of Wiltshire's historic environment, including non-designated heritage assets, which contribute to a sense of local character and identity will be conserved, and where possible enhanced. The potential contribution of these heritage assets towards wider social, cultural, economic and environmental benefits will also be utilised where this can be delivered in a sensitive and appropriate manner in accordance with Core Policy 57 (Ensuring High Quality Design and Place Shaping).

Heritage assets at risk will be monitored and development proposals that improve their condition will be encouraged. The advice of statutory and local consultees will be sought in consideration of such applications.

GREAT SOMERFORD (INCORPORATING STARTLEY) NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN 2016 - 2026

The neighbourhood plan seeks to manage development in a way that can deliver new housing that respects the rural character of the village and that protects the identified green spaces.

At paragraph 7.4 it explains that 'In planning for the future of the village this plan strikes an appropriate balance between meeting the clear and demonstrable affordable housing need; the locally specific constraints in terms of the character of the village and its heritage assets;'