



Heritage Impact Assessment

The Old Rectory, North Wraxall

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1. Introduction

- 1.1** This Heritage Impact Assessment has been prepared by Dr Jonathan Edis, Director of HCUK Group, on behalf of David Salisbury Joinery. It relates to a proposed orangery (replacing a modern conservatory) and replacement greenhouse at The Old Rectory, North Wraxall, which is a grade II listed building within North Wraxall Conservation Area. The former rectory has been divided into three dwellings, for which there are three statutory addresses in the same list entry (Figure 4). For precautionary reasons the effect of the proposal on the setting of the other two dwellings (Little Rectory and Malet or Malet's House¹) has been considered in this assessment. For ease of reference, the whole building has been called the rectory, the former rectory and The Old Rectory at various places in this report.
- 1.2** The author of this assessment has more than forty years of continuous employment in the heritage sector, including ten years as a conservation officer advising local planning authorities on applications affecting heritage assets. A large number of those cases have involved alterations to listed buildings
- 1.3** A site visit was undertaken on 29 April 2025.

¹ The O.S. map in Figure 3 suggests that the whole building had been subdivided into two by the 1970s (Malet's House and The Old Rectory) and that the third dwelling (Little Rectory) was then created by the further subdivision of Malet's House.

2. Relevant Planning Policy Framework

- 2.1** The council is required by sections 16(2) and 66(1) of the Planning (Listed Building and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 to have special regard to the desirability of preserving a listed building and its setting when exercising planning functions. The council must give considerable importance and weight to the desirability of preserving the significance of the listed building, and there is a strong presumption against the grant of permission for development that would harm its heritage significance.²
- 2.2** There is a broadly similar duty arising from section 72(1) of the Act in respect of planning decisions relating to development within conservation areas.
- 2.3** For the purposes of this assessment, preservation equates to an absence of harm.³ Harm is defined in paragraph 84 of Historic England's Conservation Principles as change which erodes the significance of a heritage asset.⁴
- 2.4** The significance of a heritage asset is defined in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) as being made up of four main constituents: architectural interest, historical interest, archaeological interest and artistic interest. The assessments of heritage significance and impact are normally made with primary reference to the four main elements of significance identified in the NPPF.
- 2.5** The setting of a heritage asset can contribute to its significance. Setting is defined in the NPPF as follows:
- "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."*
- 2.6** Historic England has published guidance on development affecting the setting of heritage assets in *The Setting of Heritage Assets* (second edition, December 2017), better known as GPA3. The guidance proposes a stepped approach to assessment

² Barnwell Manor Wind Energy Limited v East Northamptonshire District Council and others [2014] EWCA Civ 137.

³ South Lakeland v SSE [1992] 2 AC 141.

⁴ Conservation Principles, 2008, paragraph 84.

in which Step 1 involves the identification of the relevant heritage assets, Step 2 establishes their significance, and Step 3 describes how the change within the setting of the assets might affect their significance. In cases where there is a resultant loss in significance, amounting to harm, Step 4 is engaged, requiring the discussion of mitigation.

2.7 The NPPF requires any harm to the significance of a designated heritage asset⁵ to be considered in terms of either “substantial harm” or “less than substantial harm” as described within paragraphs 214 and 215 of that document. National Planning Practice Guidance (NPPG) makes it clear that substantial harm is a high test, and case law describes substantial harm in terms of an effect that would vitiate or drain away much of the significance of a heritage asset.⁶ The Scale of Harm is tabulated at Appendix 1.

2.8 Paragraphs 214 and 215 of the NPPF refer to two different balancing exercises in which harm to significance, if any, is to be balanced with public benefit. Paragraph 18a-020-20190723 of National Planning Practice Guidance (NPPG) online makes it clear that some heritage-specific benefits can be public benefits. Paragraph 18a-018-20190723 of the same NPPG makes it clear that it is important to be explicit about the category of harm (that is, whether paragraph 214 or 215 of the NPPF applies, if at all), and the extent of harm, when dealing with decisions affecting designated heritage assets, as follows:

“Within each category of harm (which category applies should be explicitly identified), the extent of the harm may vary and should be clearly articulated.”

2.9 Paragraph 212 of the NPPF states that great weight should be given to the conservation of a designated heritage asset when considering applications that affect its significance, irrespective of how substantial or otherwise that harm might be.

2.10 Local heritage policy has been taken into account in the preparation of this assessment.

⁵ The seven categories of designated heritage assets are World Heritage Sites, Scheduled Monuments, Listed Buildings, Protected Wreck Sites, Registered Park and Gardens, Registered Battlefields and Conservation Areas, designated under the relevant legislation.

⁶ Bedford Borough Council v SSCLG and Nuon UK Limited [2013] EWHC 4344 (Admin).

3. Statement of Significance

Introduction

3.1 This chapter of the assessment establishes the significance of the relevant heritage assets in the terms set out in the NPPF, and it comments on the contribution of setting to significance. The identification of the heritage assets equates in part to Step 1 of GPA3, and the assessment of significance equates to Step 2 of GPA3. Steps 2 and 3 of GPA3 are closely connected, so this chapter should be read in conjunction with Chapter 4 (Heritage Impact Assessment) and with the tabular methodology at Appendix 2.

North Wraxall Conservation Area

3.2 There appears to be no current character appraisal for North Wraxall Conservation Area (Figure 13), which in 1868 was described in The National Gazetteer of Great Britain and Ireland as follows:

"NORTH WRAXALL, a parish in the hundred of Chippenham, county Wilts, 7 miles N.W. of Chippenham, and 9 N.E. of Bath. It is situated on the line of the ancient Akeman Street, now the high road to Chippenham, and includes the hamlets of Upper Wraxall and Ford, at which latter place is a water-mill. The living is a rectory in the diocese of Gloucester and Bristol, value £485. The church, dedicated to St. James, contains tombs of the Yonges and Methuens. There is a National school. Lord Methuen is lord of the manor."

3.3 North Wraxall is a settlement with medieval and earlier origins. It contains the Church of St James (Figure 11) which has 13th century origins, and which has an outstanding group of late 18th century monuments within its churchyard, several of which are listed in their own right (Figure 12). There are several other buildings of special interest nearby, notably The Old Rectory and Court Close Farmhouse (also known as Court Close House) (Figure 13). The ancient street pattern, historic buildings and public and private spaces combine to make a place of special architectural and historic interest.

The Old Rectory

3.4

First designated on 20 December 1960, the former rectory (Figures 5 to 10) is described (9 December 1985) as follows, under the statutory addresses of Little Rectory, Malet House and The Old Rectory:

"Rectory, now 3 houses, rebuilt c1815-20 for Reverend M. Wyatt on core said to be C16. Roughcast, ashlar and rubble stone with stone tiled roofs, coped shouldered gables and diagonal end wall and ridge stacks. L-plan, extended, Tudor style. Two storeys and attic. South front, 3-window range, the right side a later extension with slate low pitched roof. Central projecting coped gable, windows in ashlar flush chamfered surrounds, 4-pane first floor window and ground floor large 2-light wooden mullion and transom window with small paned lights, deep hoodmoulds with label stops to both. Left side 4-pane upper window ground floor glazed door with traceried overlight in Tudor-arched surround. Gothic panelled shutters. Later right side, with wooden cross window to both floors, large ground floor window with hoodmould to match centre window and small paned lights. West front has coped gable end to right with 9-pane window over later canted bay with parapet and cross windows. To left c1815 and later range in filling angle of L-plan, 2 storeys with parapet and upper string course. Ashlar upper floor with 2 mid C19 oriels, stone mullion and transom lights. Roughcast ground floor with 3 Tudor-arched 20-pane windows. To left, roughcast entrance tower with upper stringcourse and parapet. Long second floor timber cross window, small first floor timber cross window, both in chamfered surrounds and ground floor Tudor-arched doorway. Original rear wing behind has 2 attic dormers to west side, and east side 3- storey, 2-window range, 6-pane upper lights, 9-pane to first floor, one 12-pane ground floor window and Glazed door. At north end, low cross-gabled range with north end diagonal stack and C19 2-light upper window and 4-light ground floor window with hoodmoulds to east side. Interior: c1815-20 work includes panelled-ceiling entrance hall with M Wyatt monogram, fine stone cantilevered stair with twisted iron balusters and south rooms with Tudor-style panelled ceilings and undercut foliage borders. House possibly rebuilt to designs by one of M. Wyatt's architect relations."

3.5

The Reverend Michael Wyatt (c.1780-1830) was the son of Thomas Wyatt of Sinai House, Burton upon Trent (1748-1820). Michael's elder brother Matthew (1773-

1831) was an architect, as was Michael's uncle⁷ Samuel (1737-1807). The outstanding architect in the family was James Wyatt (1746-1813) who designed, amongst other buildings, the Radcliffe Camera in Oxford. As is suggested in the list description, it seems quite possible that one or more of Michael's architect relations had a hand in the reconstruction of the rectory c.1815-c.1820.

3.6

Although the former rectory has been subdivided into three dwellings it is self-evidently a very good example of a later Georgian ecclesiastical residence, closely associated with the nearby Church of St James which is listed grade I and which has medieval origins (Figures 4 to 11). It is a building near the heart of the village of North Wraxall, intimately bound up with the community for the past two centuries, and probably on the site of (or even containing) an even more ancient rectory. There are associations with the architecturally distinguished Wyatt family, and the composition of the facades is architecturally accomplished. The steep shouldered gables, oriels and chimneys are part of a Tudor Revival theme in which the verticality of some elements is almost Scottish Baronial in its effect (Figures 5 and 6). The heritage asset is of special architectural, historical and artistic interest, being set within spacious and well-maintained gardens that appears to have occupied their present confines and boundaries since the time of the tithe map in the late 1830s (Figure 1) if not rather longer than that. The garden setting, and the wider grouping of buildings and structures (some of which are of special interest in their own right) contributes to the significance of the listed building. In almost every sense the former rectory and its grounds make a positive contribution to the character and appearance of North Wraxall Conservation Area.

3.7

Map evidence dating from the 1830s (Figure 1) and 1880s (Figure 2) indicates that there was a longstanding glazed structure on the east gable of The Old Rectory. This had been demolished by the 1970s (Figure 3) and replaced by a detached building on the site of the present greenhouse,⁸ which leans against the wall that separates the garden of The Old Rectory from Malet's House. The gap between the east gable of The Old Rectory and the greenhouse was later infilled with a

⁷ The family relationships are reported slightly differently in various sources, but the main point for present purposes is that the Wyatts of Staffordshire produced a number of eminent architects.

⁸ It is uncertain as to whether the structure shown on the map of 1974 is the present greenhouse or an earlier manifestation of the same building. It is not shown as glazed, and yet other buildings in the immediate vicinity were shown with the cross-hatched glazing convention. There is no mention of it in the list description.

conservatory (which has now reached the end of its serviceable life) and a pergola. None of the buildings in question is of intrinsic heritage significance.

Summary of significance

- 3.8** North Wraxall Conservation Area embraces a settlement with medieval origins, containing the architecturally outstanding Church of St James (and its group of monuments) together with other important buildings, including The Old Rectory and Court Close Farmhouse. It is self-evidently a place of special heritage interest.
- 3.9** Listed grade II, the heritage asset is a very good example of a later Georgian rectory, closely associated with the grade I listed Church of St James. It has been closely connected with the community for centuries, and there are associations with the architecturally distinguished Wyatt family. The composition of the Tudor Revival facades is architecturally accomplished. The Old Rectory is of special architectural, historical and artistic interest, enjoying a spacious garden setting and grouping with other historic buildings and structures. It makes a positive contribution to the character and appearance of North Wraxall Conservation Area.

4. Heritage Impact Assessment

Introduction

- 4.1** This chapter of the assessment describes how the proposed development will affect the setting and significance of the heritage assets identified in the preceding chapter. It equates in part to Step 3 of GPA3. Steps 2 and 3 of GPA3 are closely connected, so this chapter should be read in conjunction with Chapter 3 (Statement of Significance) and with the tabular methodology at Appendix 2.

The proposed development

- 4.2** The proposed development involves an orangery (replacing a modern conservatory) and a replacement greenhouse on the site of the existing structures east of The Old Rectory (Figure 14). An intervening pergola will be removed. The structures in question are manifestly of no intrinsic heritage significance.

Effect on The Old Rectory

- 4.3** There will be no physical effect on The Old Rectory other than the junction or attachments where the existing conservatory is removed and the new orangery is attached. These are detailed considerations that should pose no difficulty, and that could in any case be conditioned if it were felt necessary to do so. The same applies to the boundary wall between the gardens of The Old Rectory and Malet's House, which will clearly need to be preserved and sensitively reincorporated into the new structure.
- 4.4** The character and appearance of The Old Rectory will be preserved by the replacement of modern piecemeal structures (of no intrinsic heritage interest) with a comprehensively designed orangery and greenhouse that will better reflect the original arrangement seen on 19th century maps. There will be no harm to the significance of the listed building, which will retain its Tudor Revival character.
- 4.5** Insofar as the development could be said to affect the surroundings (setting) of the other constituent parts of the Old Rectory (Malet's House and Little Rectory) this matter is addressed in the GPA3 exercise in Appendix 2. The self-evident

conclusion of this is that there will be no effect on these elements of the designated heritage asset.

Effect on North Wraxall Conservation Area

- 4.6** The existing conservatory and greenhouses structures are tucked into a corner of the garden of The Old Rectory where they do not play a part in public views. The replacement structures will be similarly discreet. The change will not harm the significance of North Wraxall Conservation Area.
- 4.7** There will be enhancement, and public benefit, arising from the improved amenity of The Old Rectory, and the investment in its future.

Summary of effects

- 4.8** The proposed development will not harm the significance of The Old Rectory or the setting and significance of Malet's House and Little Rectory. The Tudor Revival character of the building will be preserved. There will be no harm to the character and appearance of North Wraxall Conservation Area. The proposal will not engage paragraphs 214 or 215 of the NPPF, and there will be no conflict with local heritage policy. The effect will fall off the bottom of the scale in Appendix 1. For the purposes of the council's duties under sections 16(2) and 66(1) of the Act there will be preservation. For the purposes of the duty under section 72(1) there will be enhancement arising from the improved amenity in The Old Rectory and the investment in its future.

5. Conclusions

- 5.1** North Wraxall Conservation Area embraces a settlement with medieval origins, containing the architecturally outstanding Church of St James (and its group of monuments) together with other important buildings, including The Old Rectory and Court Close Farmhouse. It is self-evidently a place of special heritage interest.
- 5.2** Listed grade II, the heritage asset is a very good example of a later Georgian rectory, closely associated with the grade I listed Church of St James. It has been closely connected with the community for centuries, and there are associations with the architecturally distinguished Wyatt family. The composition of the Tudor Revival facades is architecturally accomplished. The Old Rectory is of special architectural, historical and artistic interest, enjoying a spacious garden setting and grouping with other historic buildings and structures. It makes a positive contribution to the character and appearance of North Wraxall Conservation Area.
- 5.3** The proposed development involves an orangery (replacing a modern conservatory) and a replacement greenhouse on the site of the existing structures east of The Old Rectory. An intervening pergola will be removed. The structures in question are manifestly of no intrinsic heritage significance.
- 5.4** The proposed development will not harm the significance of The Old Rectory or the setting and significance of Malet's House and Little Rectory. The Tudor Revival character of the building will be preserved. There will be enhancement to North Wraxall Conservation Area arising from the improved amenity in The Old Rectory and the investment in its sustainability.

Appendix 1

Scale of Harm

Scale of Harm	
Total Loss	Total removal of the significance of the designated heritage asset.
Substantial Harm	Serious harm that would drain away or vitiate the significance of the designated heritage asset
Less than Substantial Harm	High level harm that could be serious, but not so serious as to vitiate or drain away the significance of the designated heritage asset.
	Medium level harm, not necessarily serious to the significance of the designated heritage asset, but enough to be described as significant, noticeable, or material.
	Low level harm that does not seriously affect the significance of the designated heritage asset.

HCUK, 2019

Appendix 2

GPA3 Assessment

In assessing the effect of the proposed development on the setting and significance of The Old Rectory, including Malet's House and Little Rectory, it is relevant to consider how the following factors may or may not take effect, with particular reference to the considerations in Steps 2 and 3 of GPA3. The following analysis seeks to highlight the main relevant considerations.

Relevant Considerations

<i>Proximity of the development to the asset</i>	The proposed development is within the garden of The Old Rectory and it abuts the wall between the gardens of The Old Rectory and Malet's House,
<i>Proximity in relation to topography and watercourses</i>	There are no particular watercourses to consider, and the local topography within the garden itself is effectively level for all practical purposes.
<i>Position of development in relation to key views</i>	A peripheral view to the right of the south garden front (Figures 6, 8 and 9) will be affected (improved). The view of the east gable (Figure 7) does not qualify as a key view when compared with the other elevations. Although it will be affected, it will be changed without harming the significance of the listed building.
<i>Orientation of the development</i>	The new structure will be aligned along the garden wall, effectively replacing the probable volume of the original 19 th century glazed structure here (Figures 2 and 4).
<i>Prominence, dominance and conspicuousness</i>	The proposed development will not be prominent, dominant or conspicuous in relation to any heritage asset.
<i>Competition with or distraction from the asset</i>	The proposed development will not compete with or distract from any heritage assets.
<i>Dimensions, scale, massing, proportions</i>	The dimensions, scale, massing and proportions of the proposed development have been designed to as to minimise the effect on heritage assets.
<i>Visual permeability</i>	The proposed development will be visually permeable to the extent that it will be predominantly glazed.

<i>Materials and design</i>	Materials and design are for later consideration, but are intended to be predominantly timber and glass.
<i>Diurnal or seasonal change</i>	No issues are anticipated in respect of diurnal or seasonal change.
<i>Change to built surroundings and spaces</i>	The built surroundings and spaces around The Old Rectory will be improved and upgraded.
<i>Change to skyline, silhouette</i>	There will be no changes to important skylines or silhouettes.
<i>Change to general character</i>	The general character of The Old Rectory and its surroundings will be materially improved.

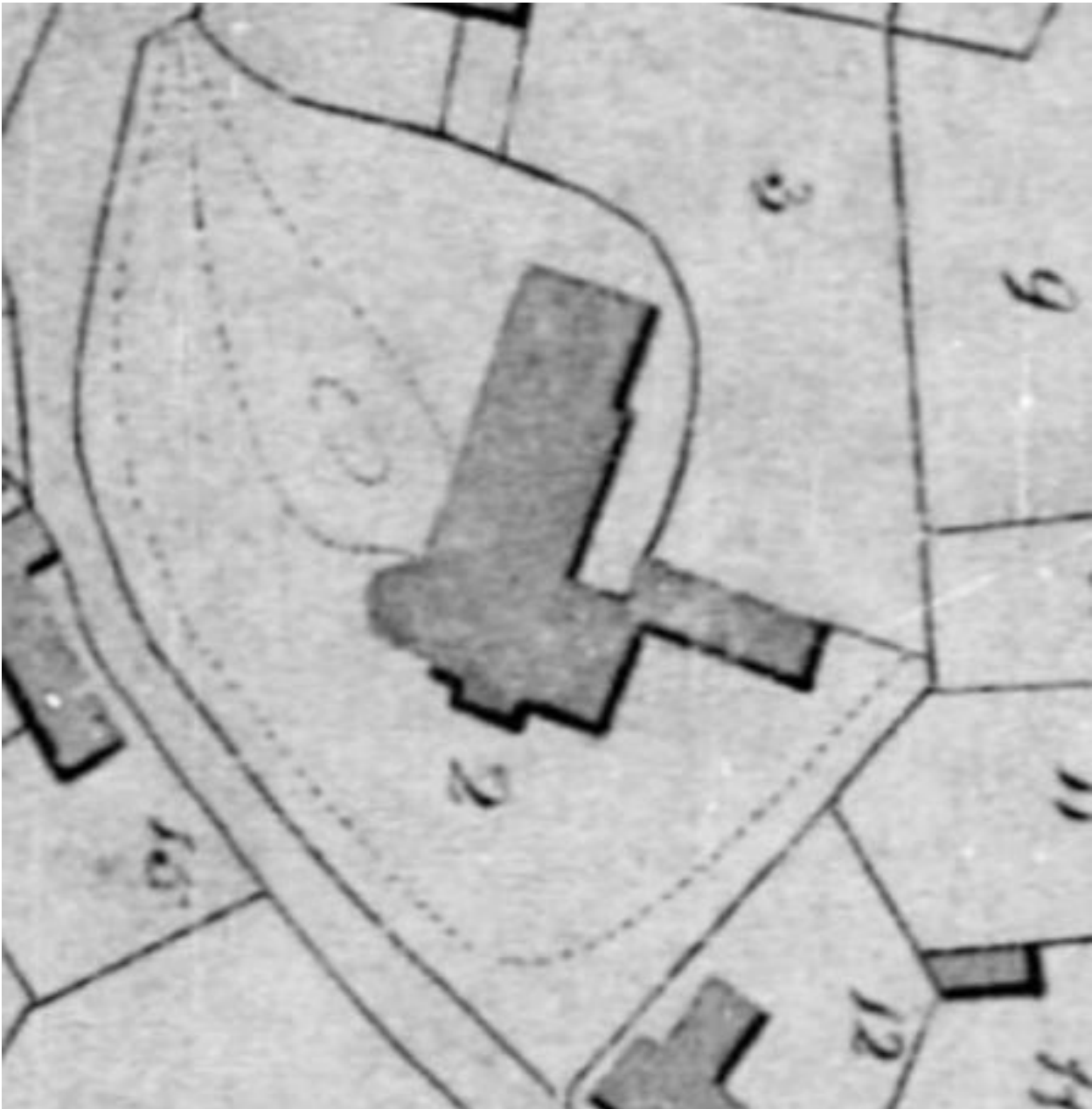


Figure 1 – Extract from the tithe map of North Wraxall c.1837, rotated through 90° so that north is generally towards the top. The tithe apportionment (4 April 1837) states that the Reverend Thomas John Wyld owned and occupied land parcel 2 which was described as “House Garden and Yard” within the glebe land (i.e. a piece of land serving as part of a clergyman's benefice and providing income).

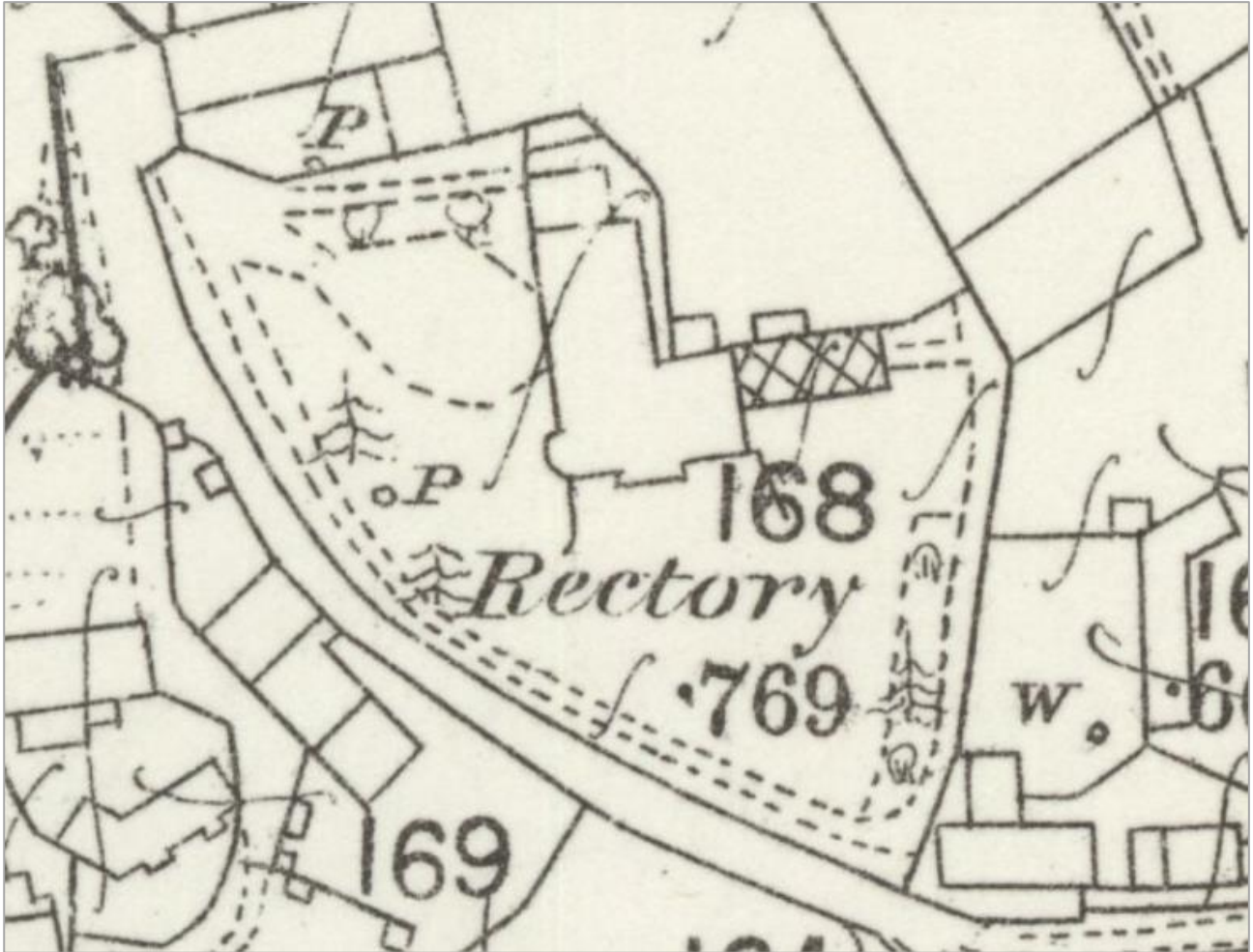


Figure 2 – Extract from the O.S. map of 1886, surveyed 1881-1885.

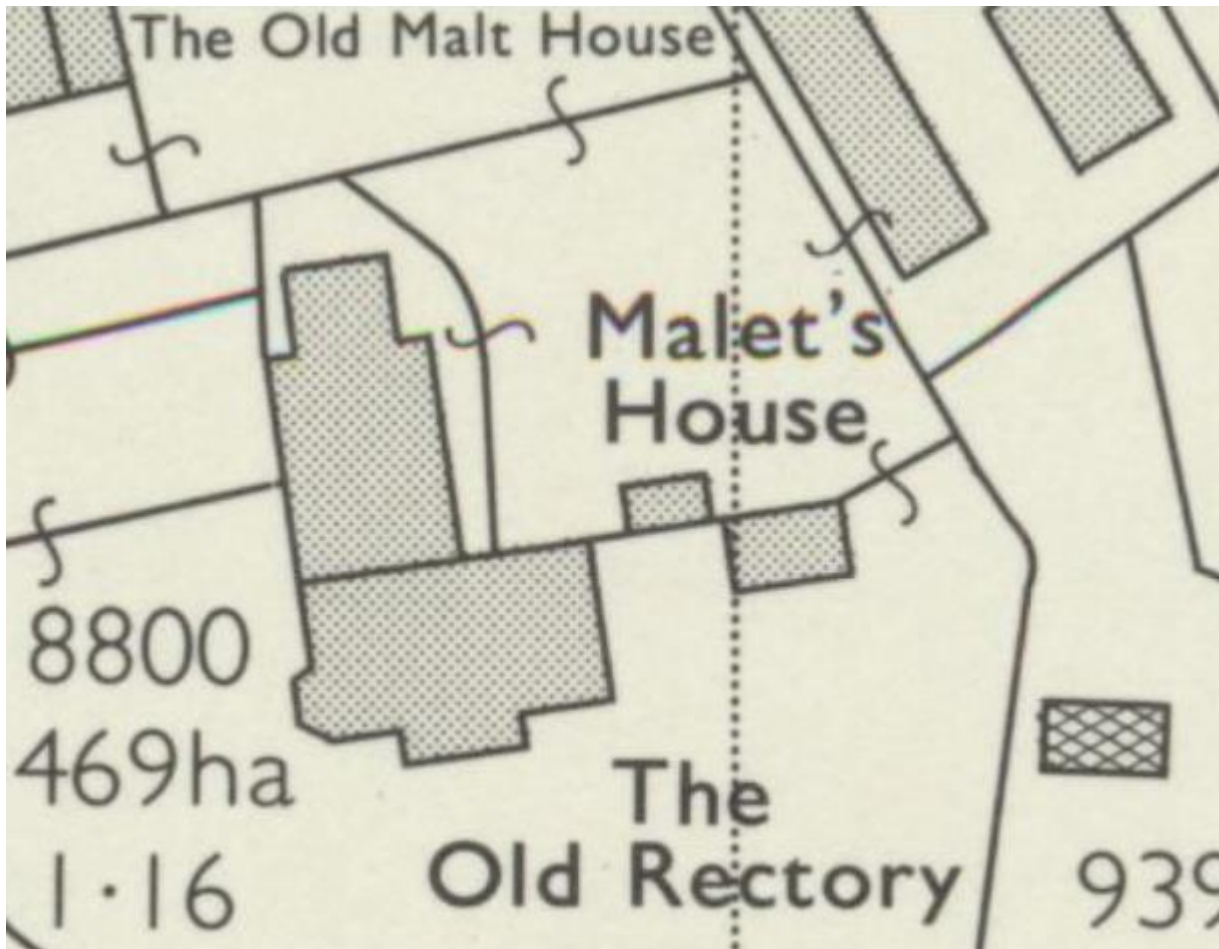


Figure 3 – Extract from the O.S. map of 1974, revised 1973.



Figure 4 – Extract from the Wiltshire Planning Explorer. The inset below has an overlay of the footprint of the building as it was in the 1880s (taken from the map in Figure 2).

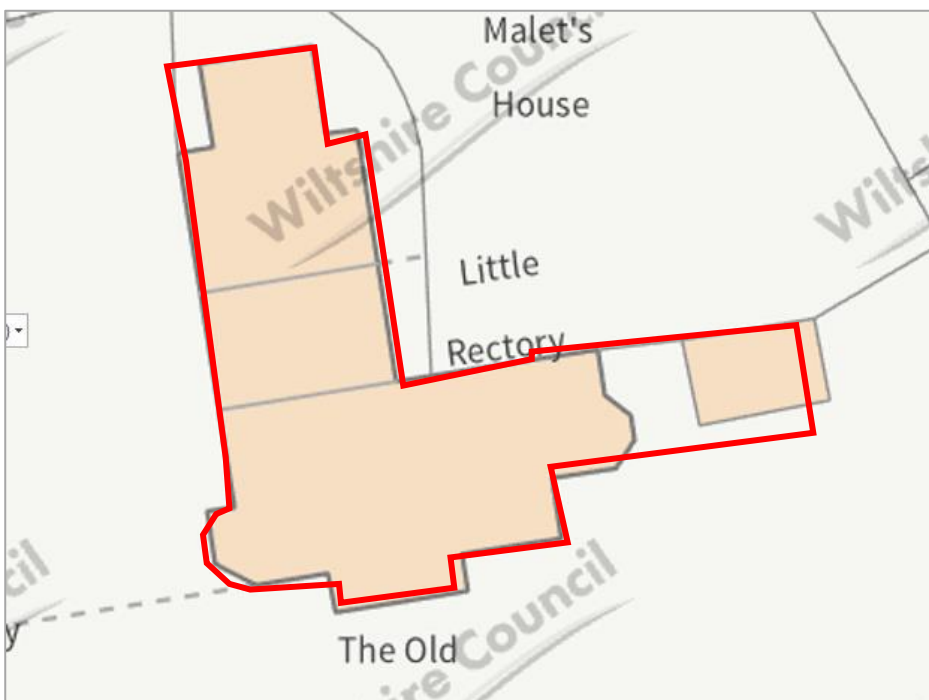




Figure 5 – The Old Rectory – front (west) elevation.



Figure 6 – The Old Rectory – garden (south) elevation.



Figure 7 – The Old Rectory – east gable elevation with greenhouse and conservatory.



Figure 8 – Angled view of the east elevation, including the existing conservatory.



Figure 9 – Modern greenhouse and pergola east of The Old Rectory.



Figure 10 – General view from the south-east.



Figure 11 – The Church of St James seen from the south.



Figure 12 – 18th century monuments in the churchyard.

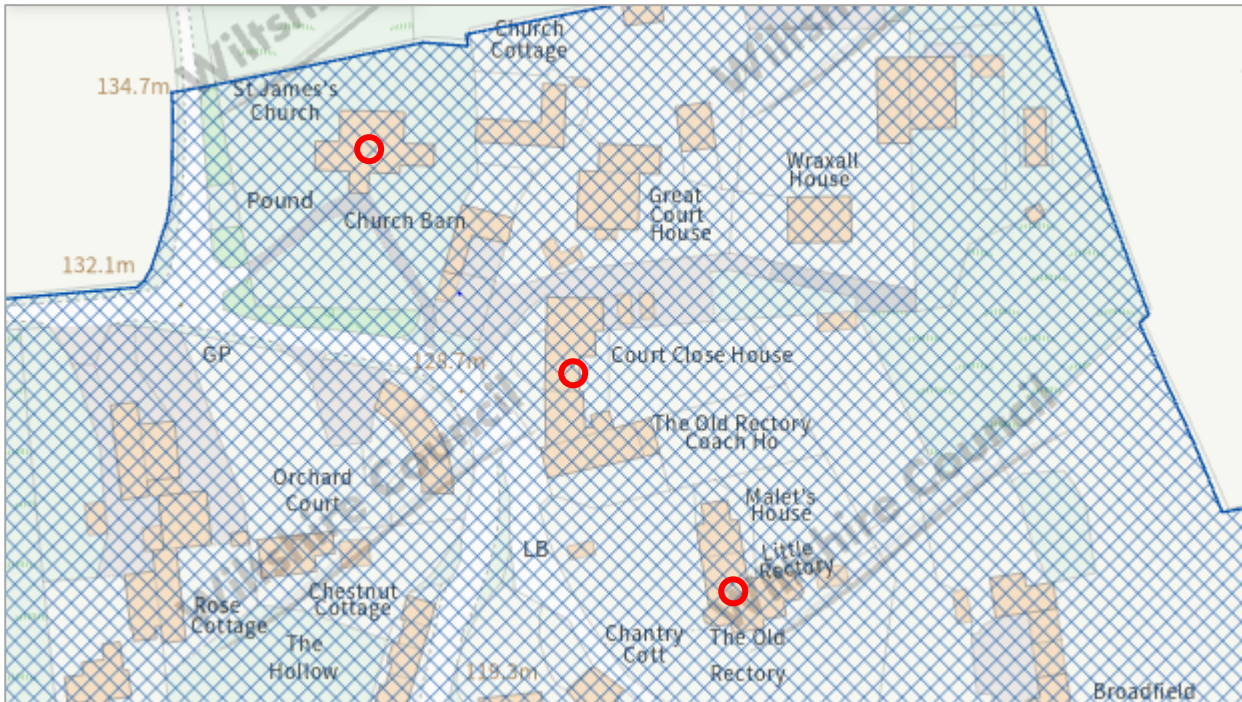


Figure 13 – Extract from the Wiltshire Planning Explorer showing part of the extent of North Wraxall Conservation Area. Buildings mentioned in this assessment have been indicated with a red circle.



Figure 14 – Existing and proposed elevations, and explanatory plan.