HERITAGE STATEMENT

PLANNING APPLICATION SUPPORTING DOCUMENT

Assessment of Heritage Significance and Heritage Impact

Land to the rear of 20 Fore Street, Westbury, Wiltshire

Prepared as an



Cover photograph: access from Fore Street.

AUGUST 2026

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Executive Summary

The application site comprises previously developed land to the rear of 20 Fore Street, Westbury, Wiltshire. It contains four existing single-storey lock-up garages, together with associated hardstanding and access.

No. 20 Fore Street is not a listed building, and the application site lies outside, but immediately adjacent to, the Westbury Conservation Area. The principal heritage consideration is therefore the potential effect of the proposed development upon the setting and significance of nearby designated heritage assets, and upon the character and appearance of the adjoining Conservation Area.

The surrounding Fore Street townscape includes a number of designated heritage assets, among them Grade II listed buildings. Their significance is derived principally from their historic fabric and architectural character, their relationship with the historic street frontage, and their contribution to the wider historic townscape.

The application site lies behind the established Fore Street frontage and is screened from the principal public views of the historic buildings. It contains later, utilitarian structures and no designated heritage asset.

The proposal is to remove the existing garage structures and erect three detached dwellings. It would require no alteration to a listed building and no development within the Conservation Area.

Taking account of the site's location and existing character, its relationship with the historic frontage, and the scale and form of the proposal, the development is considered capable of preserving both the character and appearance of the adjoining Westbury Conservation Area and the significance of nearby designated heritage assets. Subject to suitable detailed design, materials, boundary treatment and landscaping, the proposal is assessed as causing no harm to the significance of the relevant heritage assets.

1. Introduction

1.1 Purpose of the Statement

This Heritage Statement accompanies a planning application for development on land to the rear of 20 Fore Street, Westbury, Wiltshire.

It identifies the heritage assets that may reasonably be affected, describes their significance, considers the contribution made by the application site, and assesses the likely effects of the proposed development.

The scope of the assessment is proportionate to the nature and scale of the proposal and the heritage sensitivity of its surroundings. It is not intended as a comprehensive history of Westbury; rather, it sets out the information needed to reach a reasoned heritage assessment.

1.2 Scope and Methodology

The assessment draws upon historic mapping, published historical sources, the established character of Fore Street, the Westbury Conservation Area and nearby designated heritage assets, together with a visual appraisal of the site and its surroundings.

The approach follows the general principles for assessing heritage significance promoted by Historic England and established professional practice. Significance is considered with reference to archaeological, architectural, artistic and historic interest, including the contribution made by setting.

A distinction is drawn between the significance of a heritage asset and the effect of the proposal upon that significance. Harm is considered using the terminology of the National Planning Policy Framework.

1.3 Limitations

No destructive or intrusive archaeological investigation has been undertaken for this statement. The assessment is based on the available documentary and cartographic evidence, the physical character of the site and its surroundings, and the information available for the proposed development. A watching brief is nevertheless recommended during all deep excavations for foundations and service trenches. If any finds are encountered, more detailed archaeological investigation will be undertaken within those parts of the application site occupied by the proposed building footprints.

2. Site and Heritage Context

2.1 Location

Westbury lies in west Wiltshire, at the north-western edge of Salisbury Plain. The town occupies a historically important position between the chalk uplands and the lower-lying clay landscapes to the north and west.

Fore Street is one of the principal historic routes through the town centre. The application site lies behind No. 20 Fore Street, on the eastern side of the street.

2.2 Heritage Status

Neither No. 20 Fore Street nor the application site is listed. The site lies outside, but immediately adjacent to, the Westbury Conservation Area and therefore forms part of its wider setting. It is likely to have been used as either an orchard or gardens associated with the nearby listed asset now occupied by the Conservative Club. The principal curtilage of that property would, however, have extended into the area developed as Kingfisher Drive in 1998/1999.

The historic core and Fore Street contain a number of listed buildings. The closest relevant designated assets include the Grade II listed buildings at Nos. 14-18 Fore Street, together with other listed buildings along Fore Street and around the Market Place. The proposed development would not be visible from the Fore Street frontage and is not considered to affect the historic street frontage, which would remain as it is.

2.3 Nature of the Site

The application site is previously developed land. It contains four single lock-up garages dating from the later twentieth century, together with hardstanding and access. Recorded former uses include historic parking, a transport yard, and a builder's yard from the 1950s to the late 1970s, before its more recent use.

The site has therefore accommodated commercial and domestic parking, storage and yard-related activity. Its present character is utilitarian, rather than that of an intact historic garden, courtyard or agricultural plot.

3. Historical Background

3.1 Westbury

Westbury is of Saxon origin and is recorded as Westberie in the Domesday Survey of 1086. It developed as a market centre from the later medieval period, and weaving became an important part of its economy.

During the nineteenth century, the town underwent economic change, including industrial development associated with local clay resources and the arrival of the railway in 1848. Much of Westbury's surviving built environment reflects the expansion and adaptation of this period.

The historic town centre comprises vernacular cottages, houses, commercial premises and civic buildings. Its architecture becomes more formal around the Market Place, while Fore Street is predominantly domestic and vernacular in character.

3.2 Fore Street

The historic character of Fore Street is derived principally from its established street frontage. Buildings are generally two storeys and of modest domestic scale, with roof ridges predominantly parallel to the highway. Brick, render and traditional domestic joinery are characteristic materials and details.

There is no rigid architectural uniformity. Differences in height, frontage, material and detail reflect incremental development, subdivision, rebuilding and alteration over several centuries.

3.3 Historic Development of the Site and No. 20

Historic mapping shows that the land behind the present Fore Street frontage has changed in form and use over time. Earlier maps record buildings and open land associated with the historic frontage; later mapping shows extensions, further building and the subdivision of plots.

The evidence suggests that No. 20, in its present form, is substantially the result of nineteenth- and twentieth-century development and alteration, rather than the survival of an intact eighteenth-century building.

The rear land has also been subject to later use and substantial disturbance. The existing garages are twentieth-century structures and contain no surviving historic fabric associated with the town's earlier development.

4. Heritage Designations and Planning Policy

4.1 Listed Buildings

Listed buildings are designated heritage assets. Their significance, including the contribution made by their setting, is a material consideration in determining planning applications.

The nearest listed buildings on Fore Street are predominantly vernacular and domestic in character. The Grade II listed group at Nos. 14-18 forms part of the historic frontage and contributes to the architectural and historic interest of the town.

The proposal involves no demolition of, alteration to, or physical intervention in any listed building.

4.2 Westbury Conservation Area

The Westbury Conservation Area covers the historic core of the town. The application site lies directly beside, but outside, its designated boundary.

The character of the Conservation Area is strongly influenced by its historic street frontages, building scale, roof forms, materials, views, and the spatial relationships around Fore Street and the Market Place.

As the application site lies outside the Conservation Area, the relevant issue is not direct change within the designated area, but whether development on adjoining land would adversely affect its character, appearance or significance through a change in setting.

4.3 National and Local Planning Policy

The National Planning Policy Framework requires great weight to be given to the conservation of designated heritage assets, proportionate to their importance. It also requires proposals affecting heritage assets to take account of the desirability of sustaining and enhancing their significance, and of putting them to viable uses consistent with their conservation.

Wiltshire's planning policy framework similarly seeks to protect, conserve and, where appropriate, enhance the historic environment. New development is expected to respond positively to its historic context through its scale, form, design and materials.

The statutory duty relating to Conservation Areas requires special attention to be paid to the desirability of preserving or enhancing their character or appearance.

5. Description of the Application Site and Surroundings

5.1 Existing Site

The site is reached from Fore Street by an existing access leading to the rear land. It is largely hard surfaced and contains four single-garage structures of later twentieth-century date.

The existing development is functional and utilitarian in appearance, and visually secondary to the principal buildings fronting Fore Street.

5.2 No. 20 Fore Street

No. 20 Fore Street is an undesignated building adjoining the application site. Insofar as it contributes to the wider historic townscape, its principal significance lies in its relationship with the Fore Street frontage, rather than in its later rear fabric and structures.

The building has undergone substantial alteration and refurbishment, including changes to internal finishes, joinery and services. No alteration to its principal frontage is proposed.

5.3 Surrounding Townscape

Fore Street is characterised by a near-continuous sequence of relatively small, two-storey buildings. Designated and undesignated buildings combine to form a varied but recognisable historic frontage.

The more formal architecture around the Market Place contrasts with the predominantly vernacular character of Fore Street. The application site is subordinate to this frontage and is not a prominent element of the public realm.

6. Assessment of Heritage Significance

6.1 Significance of No. 20 Fore Street

No. 20 Fore Street is not a designated heritage asset. Its contribution to the historic townscape is limited and arises primarily from its position in the established Fore Street frontage.

Its later internal fabric and rear development are of limited heritage value. The principal consideration is therefore the preservation of the building's relationship with the street and its wider contribution to the character of Fore Street.

6.2 Significance of Nearby Listed Buildings

The nearby listed buildings are of architectural and historic interest because of their surviving historic fabric, domestic scale, materials and detailing, and their contribution to the established Fore Street townscape.

They are principally experienced from the public street, from which their elevations, roof forms, proportions and relationship with neighbouring buildings can be appreciated.

6.3 Significance of the Westbury Conservation Area

The significance of the Conservation Area derives from the survival of the historic town plan, the concentration of historic buildings, the relationship between buildings and streets, its varied but coherent architectural character, and the cumulative contribution of individual buildings and spaces.

The application site makes only a limited contribution to that significance. It lies outside the designated boundary, behind the principal street frontage, and contains later utilitarian development.

6.4 Archaeological Interest

Westbury has the potential to contain archaeological remains associated with the development of the historic settlement. The application site has, however, been subject to previous development and ground disturbance. The garages, hardstanding, access and historic uses are likely to have reduced the survival of shallow archaeological deposits across parts of the site.

6.5 Overall Significance

For this assessment, the principal nearby designated heritage assets are considered to be of moderate to considerable significance, depending upon their individual designation and surviving historic interest. The contribution made by the application site to that significance is limited.

7. The Proposed Development

The proposal comprises the removal of four existing single lock-up garages and the erection of three detached dwellings on previously developed land to the rear of 20 Fore Street.

It would provide additional housing through the effective use of previously developed land. The proposed buildings are domestic in scale and would sit behind the established Fore Street frontage.

No works are proposed to the principal elevation of No. 20 Fore Street, to any listed building, or within the Westbury Conservation Area.

8. Assessment of Heritage Impact

8.1 Direct Effects

There would be no direct physical effect upon any listed building. The site lies outside the Conservation Area and the proposal would not alter the historic fabric of the designated area.

8.2 Effects on Setting

The relevant consideration is the effect of the new development upon the setting of the historic Fore Street frontage and the adjoining Conservation Area.

The site lies behind the established frontage and already comprises a developed rear area of garages, hardstanding and access. The proposal would therefore change an already developed part of the town, rather than introduce development into an intact, open historic landscape.

The principal views of, and opportunities to appreciate, the listed buildings are from Fore Street. The proposal would neither interrupt nor materially alter those views.

8.3 Effect on the Conservation Area

The development would be experienced principally as an addition behind the established townscape. It would neither replace the historic street frontage nor establish a new building line on Fore Street.

The defining characteristics of the Conservation Area would therefore be retained, including the established street frontage, its building rhythm, and public views of the historic buildings.

8.4 Magnitude of Harm

Given the limited contribution of the existing site to heritage significance, the position of the proposal behind the principal frontage, and the absence of physical intervention in any designated asset, the change is assessed as causing no harm to the significance of nearby designated heritage assets.

The proposal is likewise considered capable of preserving the character and appearance of the adjoining Conservation Area.

9. Archaeological Considerations

Westbury's historic origins mean that archaeological potential cannot be ruled out. Nevertheless, the application site is previously developed and has experienced substantial ground disturbance.

Should the Local Planning Authority consider archaeological conditions necessary, a proportionate watching brief or further investigation could be secured by condition. This Heritage Statement does not identify archaeological mitigation as necessary at this stage, because the available evidence does not indicate that nationally significant archaeological remains are likely to be affected.

10. Mitigation and Design Considerations

The following principles should inform the detailed design and implementation of the development:

- The new dwellings should remain subordinate to the established Fore Street frontage when viewed from public locations.
- The development should maintain a clear distinction between the historic street frontage and the later rear development.
- Building scale, roof form, materials and detailing should respond positively to the domestic character of the surrounding area.
- Boundary treatments and landscaping should avoid unnecessary visual intrusion and should assist in integrating the development with its surroundings.
- No unnecessary alteration should be made to the principal historic character of No. 20 Fore Street.
- Construction should avoid unnecessary disturbance outside the application site.

11. Conclusion

The application site is previously developed land behind 20 Fore Street, Westbury. Neither No. 20 nor the application site is listed, and the site lies outside, but immediately adjacent to, the Westbury Conservation Area.

The recommendation for refusal prepared by Wiltshire Council's Senior Conservation Officer, Janice Gooch, does not identify evidence that a feature of historical importance formerly occupied the application site. Major construction has taken place on surrounding plots that demonstrably held a significant relationship with Ferndale House, yet no archaeologically important discoveries were made. Nor is evidence provided to show that the application site was anything other than vacant land during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries; the available evidence indicates that most land in the area was in agricultural use. In those circumstances, the complete absence of historical evidence should not, in itself, be relied upon as a reason for refusing the application.

The surrounding historic environment includes several designated heritage assets, notably the listed buildings within the historic Fore Street frontage. Their principal significance derives from their historic fabric, architectural character and contribution to the established street scene.

The existing site is visually and functionally secondary to that frontage. Its later twentieth-century garages and hardstanding make only a limited contribution to the significance of nearby heritage assets.

The three detached dwellings would be positioned behind the historic frontage. They would not physically affect a listed building, introduce development within the Conservation Area, or materially alter the principal public views of the historic buildings along Fore Street.

On the basis of the evidence reviewed, and having regard to the nature, scale and location of the proposed development, the proposal is considered to preserve the character and appearance of the adjoining Westbury Conservation Area and to cause no harm to the significance of nearby designated heritage assets.

Subject to the detailed design principles set out in this statement, the proposal is therefore considered to accord with the heritage objectives of national planning policy and the relevant heritage policies of the Wiltshire planning framework.

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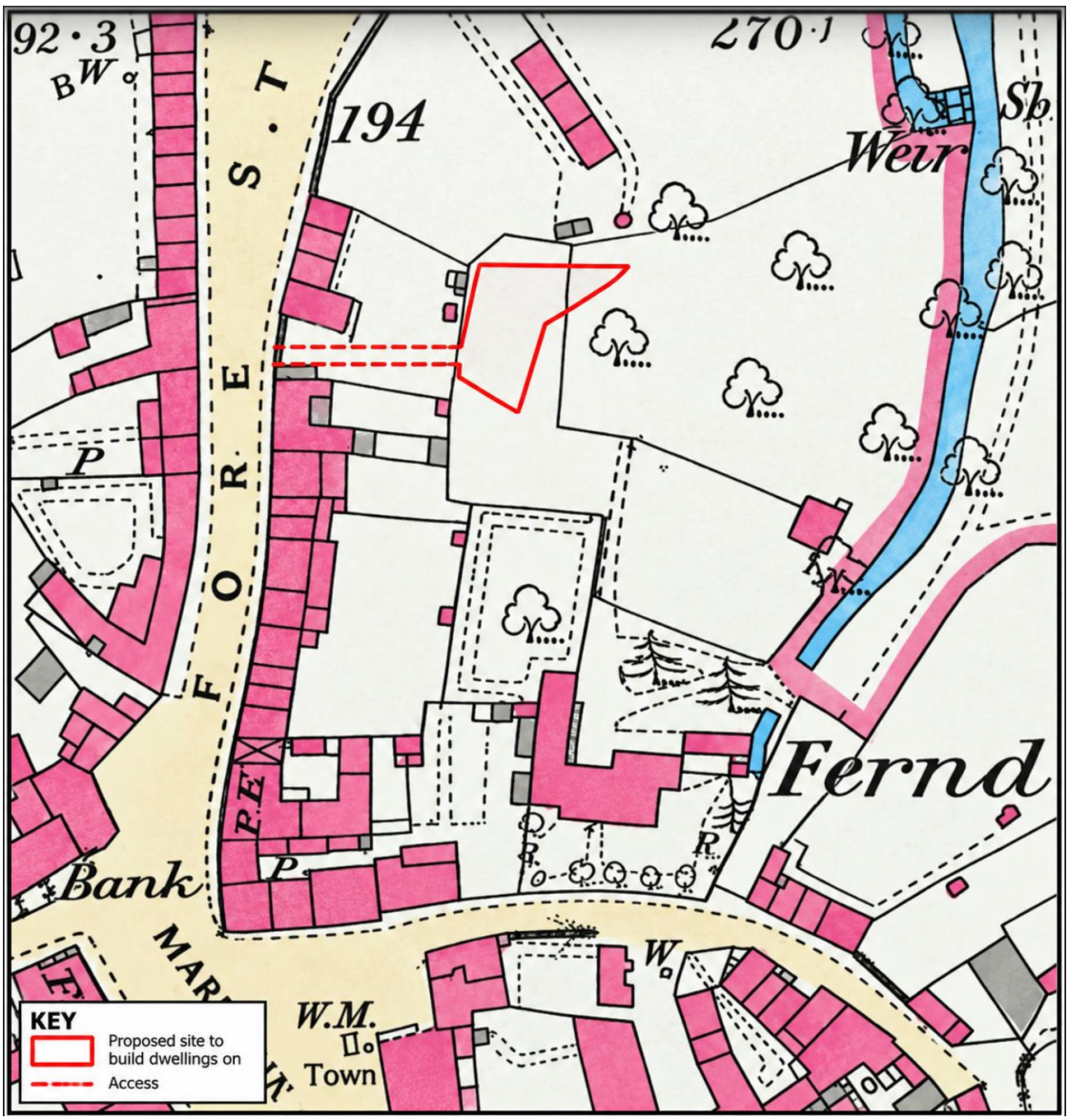
Westbury Conservation Area Appraisal (2023), local conservation area character assessment.

Appendix 1 – Significance and Impact Framework

The following framework provides a proportionate description of heritage significance and potential effect. It is an assessment aid and does not replace the statutory terminology used in the planning system.

Level	Typical characteristics	Potential heritage effect
Exceptional	Very high significance; nationally or internationally important heritage interest.	Substantial change may result in substantial harm.
Considerable	Very high architectural, historic or archaeological interest, commonly associated with highly important designated assets.	Change requires particularly strong justification and careful assessment.
Moderate	Recognisable historic, architectural or archaeological interest, including many Grade II assets and locally important features.	Harm may be less than substantial depending on scale and nature of change.
Neutral / Limited	Little or no heritage significance; later or altered fabric with limited contribution to heritage value.	Change may have no material heritage effect where setting and significant attributes are retained.
Negative	Features which detract from the significance, appearance or understanding of a heritage asset or historic area.	Removal or improvement may provide a heritage benefit.

Figure 1. First Edition Ordnance Survey map (1844–1888).



First Edition Ordnance Survey map (1844-1888). The application site is marked by the purple arrow. Ferndale and its extensive gardens are visible, together with a track connecting Ferndale to the orchard. The blue arrow marks the present beer garden and the black arrow marks Ferndale.

The proposed development site did not form an integral part of Ferndale's formal gardens. No evidence has been submitted to show that it served any other use before its modern development for garages and car parking.

Figure 2. Westbury Conservation Area and proposed development site.

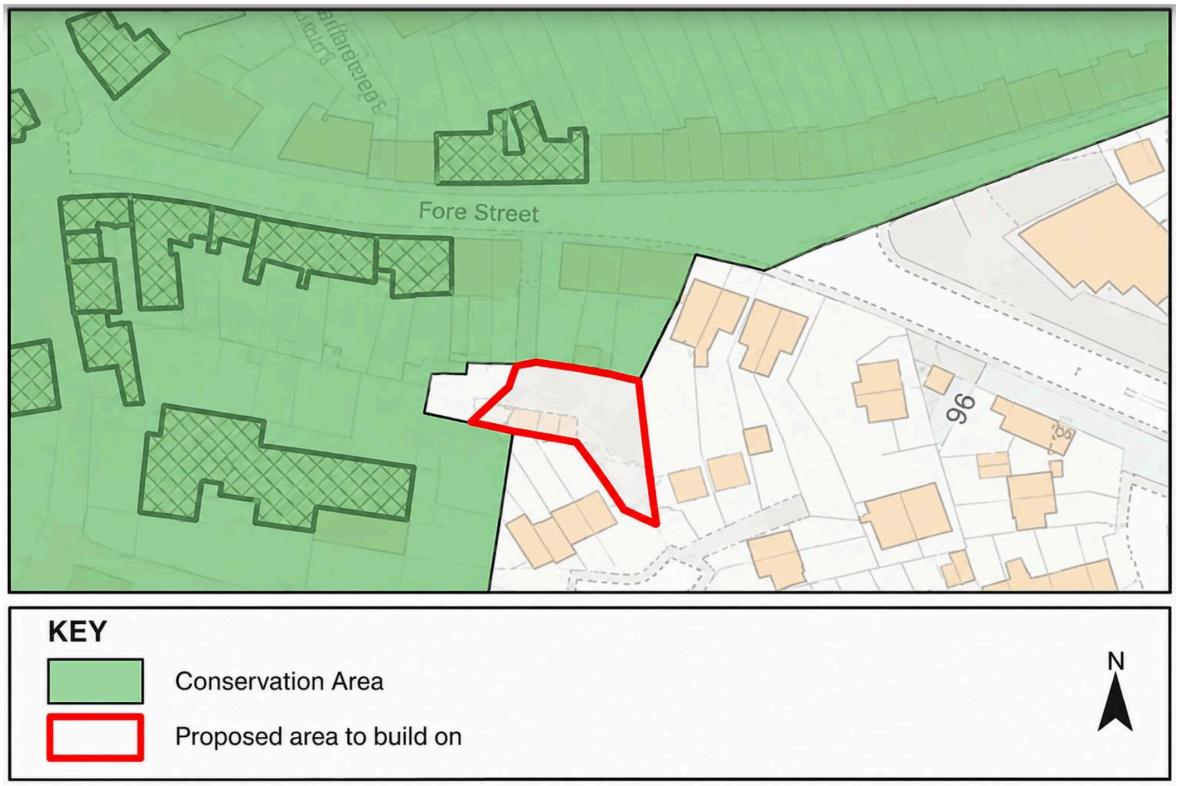


Figure 3. No. 20 Fore Street and proposed development site.

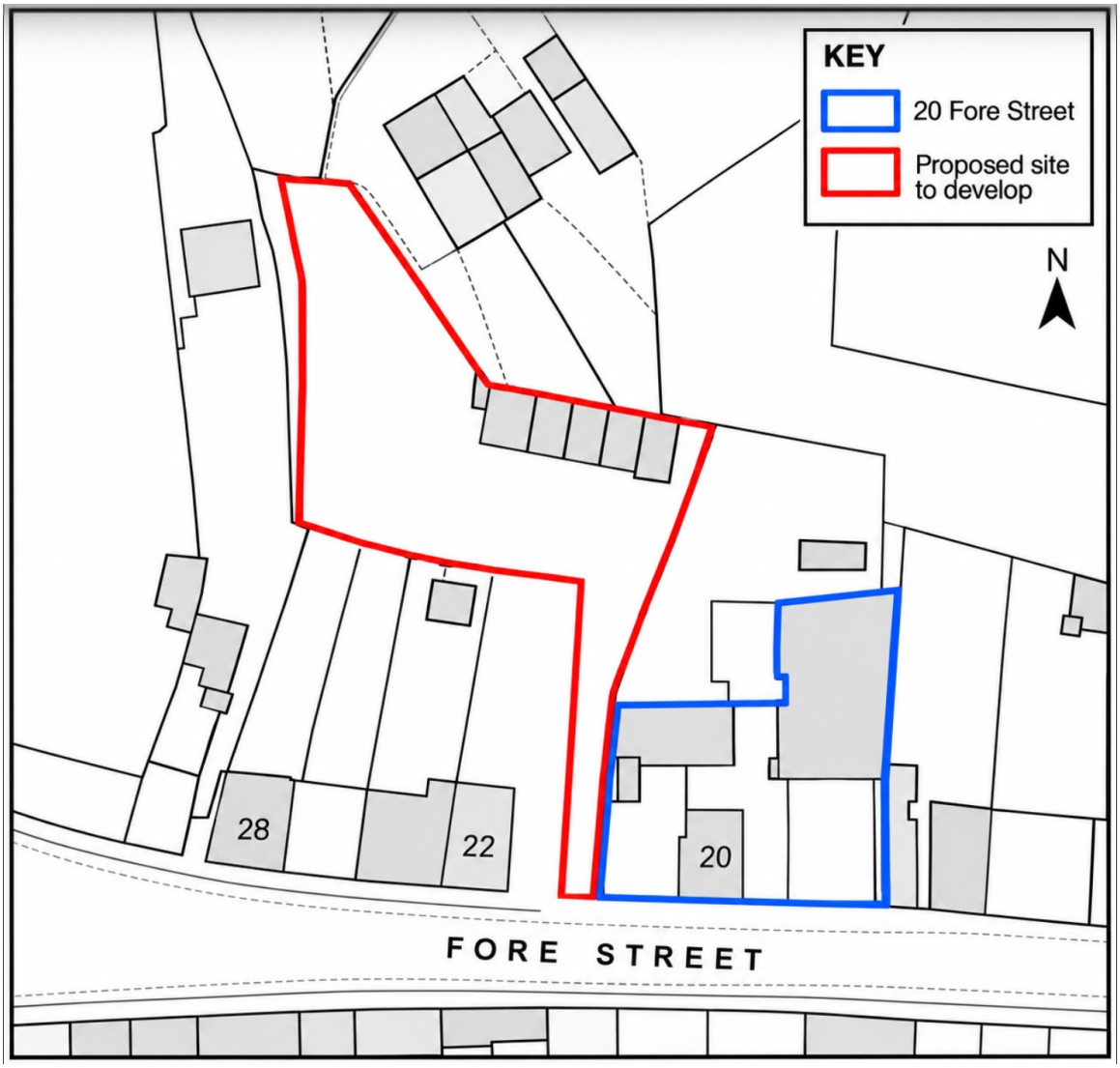
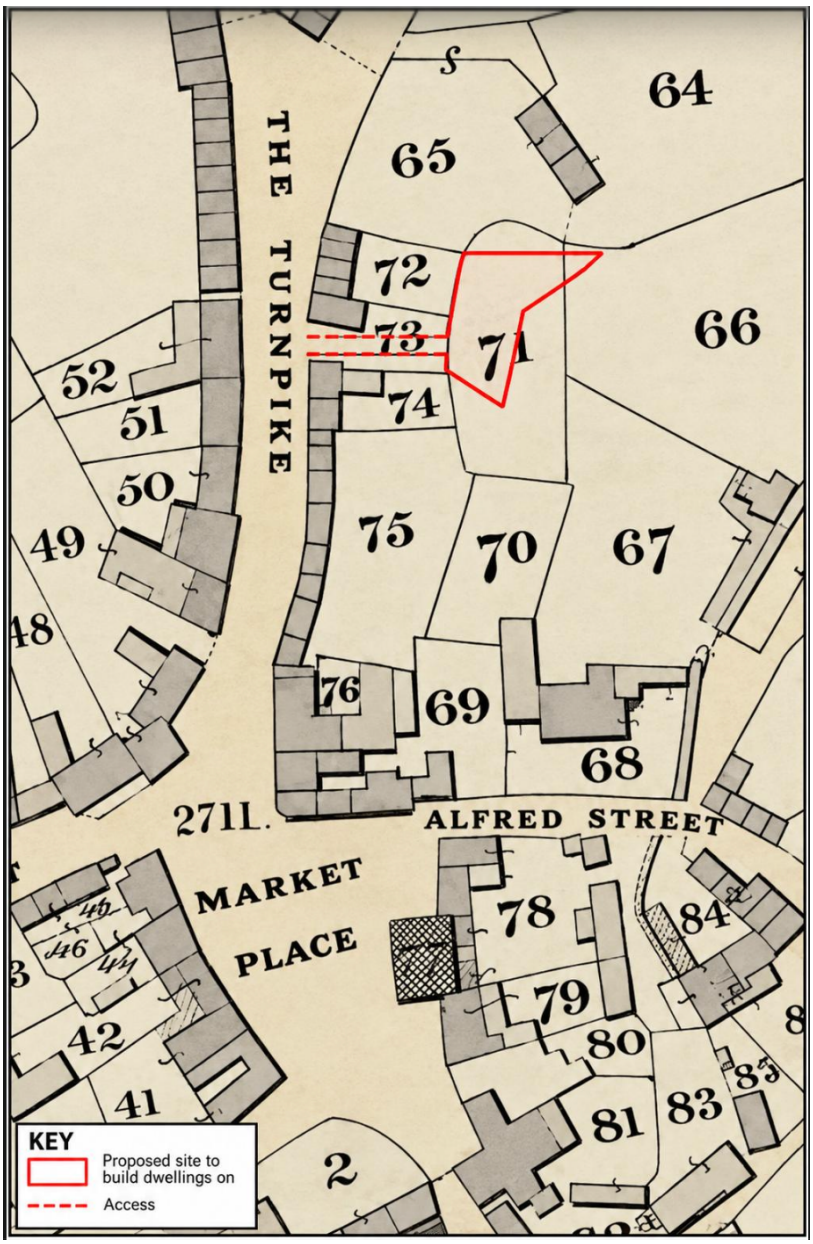
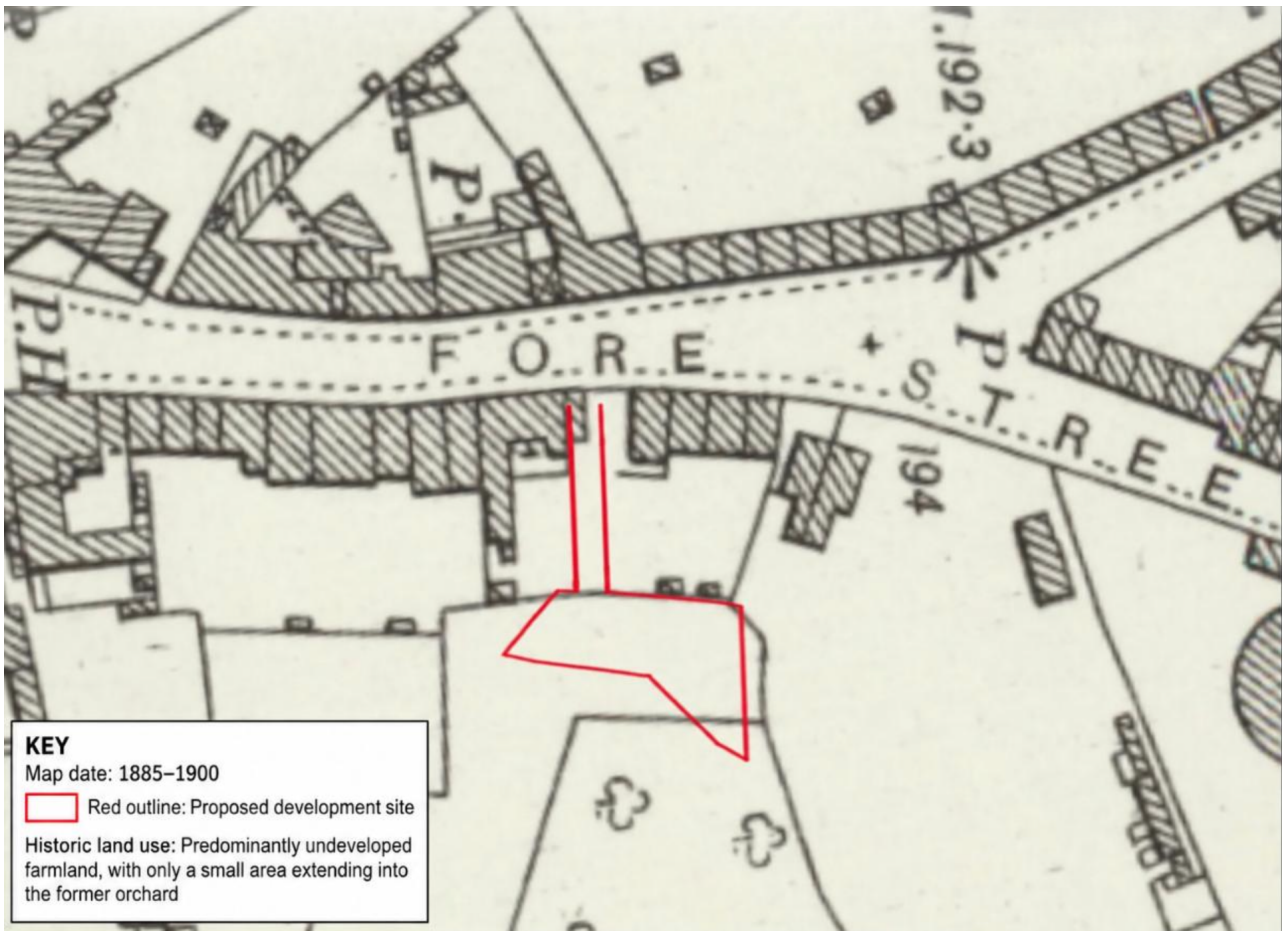


Figure 4. 1840s tithe map.



1840s Tithe Map. The proposed site is plot No. 71, with access through plot No. 73.

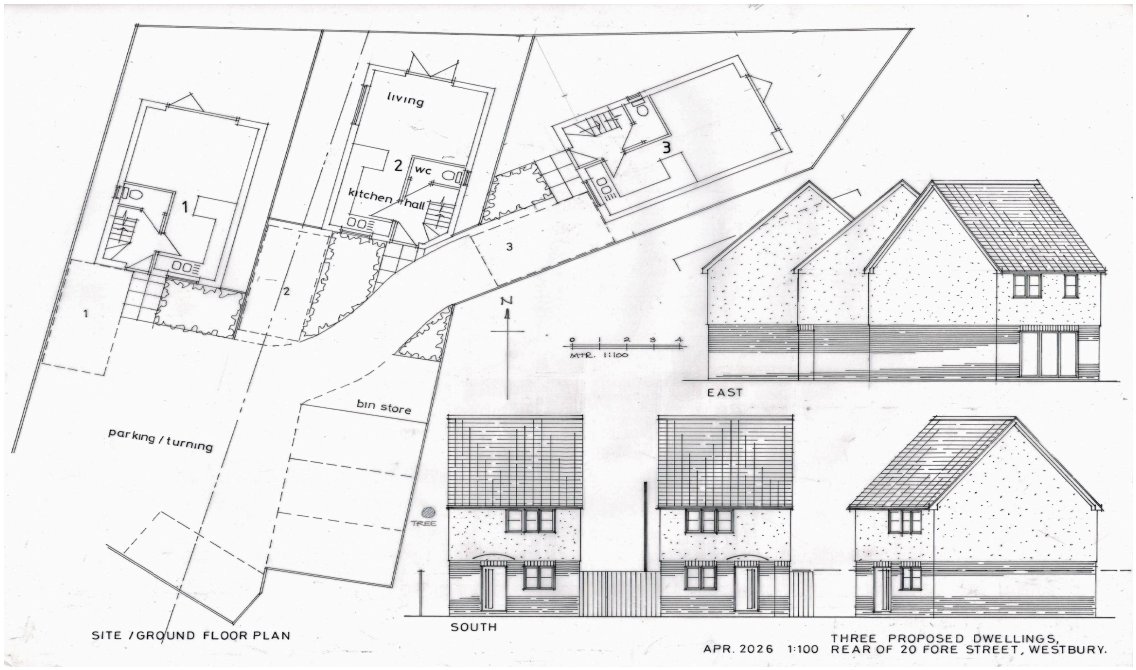
The historic asset formerly known as Ferndale House, now the Conservative Club, owned several plots around the proposed site. Plot 67 was the orchard; plot 70 was a garden and remains the grassed beer garden today; and plot 67 is now occupied predominantly by the Conservative Club hall and car park. Plot 66 formed Ferndale's orchard and is now largely occupied by Kingfisher Drive. The proposed development occupies a small part of the undesignated land recorded as plot 71.





0S map from Georeferenced national Maps Viewer National Library. 1827-1880. showing undeveloped land on the site location.

Figure 5. Proposed development drawing.



End of Heritage Statement