

389 GOSBROOK ROAD, CAVERSHAM

Built Heritage Statement

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REPORT

Quality Management

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Prepared and issued by:

RPS

Jonathan Smith
Deputy Operations Director
BA (Hons) MA PGCE PGDip MCIfA IHBC

Burlington House, Lypiatt Road
Cheltenham, Gloucestershire GL50 2SY

T +44 1242 259 290
E j.smith@rpsgroup.com

Prepared for:

Trustees of Blue Infinity SSAS Pension

Guy Brown
Director

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1 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 This Built Heritage Statement has been researched and prepared by RPS, on behalf of the Trustees of Blue Infinity SSAS Pension. The report is provided to support an application for the proposed development of land forming 389 Gosbrook Avenue, Lower Caversham, Reading, Berkshire (hereafter referred to as 'the Site').
- 1.2 An earlier iteration of this Statement informed the design and master planning process for the submitted scheme. This process was also informed by the review and advice of Reading Design Review Panel (meeting 17th September 2020) and that too of relevant Reading Borough Council officers at a pre-app meeting of 5th October 2020. Comments and advice from these meetings were distilled in a pre-application letter of advice, dated 14th October 2020 and provided by Ethne Humphreys, Senior Planning Officer at Reading Borough Council.
- 1.3 The Site is 504m² in area and is roughly rectangular in plan. The Site, along a short boundary fronts onto Gosbrook Road to the north and, on a longer boundary, to Send Road to the west. The garden of Ivy Farmhouse, a Grade II listed building, is to the east and housing on Send Road to the south. The Site is currently occupied by multi-phased light industrial and office buildings of no greater height than one-and-a-half storey's equivalent. There is broken hard-standing to the frontage with a low brick wall addressing the back of pavement to Gosbrook Road. There is further car parking to the rear (south).
- 1.4 The Site includes no built heritage assets (including statutorily designated and those identified on the List of Locally Important Buildings and Structures) and is not within a conservation area or its setting. The only potentially affected built heritage asset is the Grade II statutory listed building, Ivy Farmhouse. This listed building is situated immediately adjacent to the Site, to the east at 393 Gosbrook Road.
- 1.5 The proposed development comprises demolition of existing industrial unit and erection of a two-and-a-half storey residential development, consisting of 5 x 1 bedroom flats and 1 x 2 bedroom flat, associated parking and landscaping.
- 1.6 This report refers to and is framed within the relevant legislation contained within the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990, the NPPF and local planning policy. In addition, relevant Historic England guidance, notably GPA3: *The Setting of Heritage Assets and Conservation Principles*, has been consulted to inform the judgements made. Relevant information, including the listing citations for the potentially affected heritage assets have also been consulted in preparing this Built Heritage Statement. The conclusions reached in this report are the result of detailed historic research, a walkover survey of the Site and publicly accessible locations in the surrounding area, map studies and the application of professional judgement.
- 1.7 The walkover survey of the Site and surrounding area was conducted on Tuesday 25th February 2020. The weather was fine and clear, allowing for a robust appreciation of built heritage considerations. Full external access was afforded to the Site and to the main office building fronting the plot. The assessment of Ivy Farmhouse was based on Historic England data, archive research and an external survey from the public realm.
- 1.8 The findings of this report are based on the known conditions at the time of writing and all findings, conclusions and design advice are time limited to no more than one year from the date of this report.

2 LEGISLATIVE AND PLANNING POLICY FRAMEWORK

- 2.1 The current national planning policy system identifies, through the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), that applicants should consider the potential impact of development upon 'heritage assets'. This term includes non-designated heritage assets, typically compiled by Local Planning Authorities (LPAs) and incorporated into a Local List and/or recorded on the Historic Environment Record (HER).

Legislation

- 2.2 Where any development may affect certain designated heritage assets, there is a legislative framework to ensure proposed works are developed and considered with due regard to their impact on the historic environment. This extends from primary legislation under the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 (hereafter 'the Act').
- 2.3 The relevant legislation in this case extends from sections 16 and 66 of the 1990 Act which states that special regard must be given by the decision maker, in the exercise of planning functions, to the desirability of preserving or enhancing listed buildings and their setting. The Site is within the setting of the Grade II listed Ivy Farmhouse [NHL 1113490].
- 2.4 The meaning and effect of these duties have been considered by the courts, including the Court of Appeal's decision in relation to Barnwell Manor Wind Energy Ltd v East Northamptonshire District Council [2014] EWCA Civ 137. The Court agreed within the High Court's judgement that Parliament's intention in enacting section 66(1) was that decision makers should give '*considerable importance and weight*' to the desirability of preserving (i.e. keeping from harm) the setting of listed buildings.

National Planning Policy

National Planning Policy Framework (Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government, February 2019)

- 2.5 The NPPF is the principal document that sets out the Government's planning policies for England and how these are expected to be applied.
- 2.6 It defines a heritage asset as a: '*building, monument, site, place, area or landscape identified as having a degree of significance meriting consideration in planning decisions, because of its heritage interest*'. This includes non-designated heritage assets.
- 2.7 Section 16: Conserving and Enhancing the Historic Environment relates to the conservation of heritage assets in the production of local plans and decision taking. It emphasises that heritage assets are '*an irreplaceable resource and should be conserved in a manner appropriate to their significance*'.
- 2.8 For proposals that have the potential to affect the significance of a heritage asset, paragraph 189 requires applicants to identify and describe the significance of any heritage assets that may be affected, including any contribution made by their setting. The level of detail provided should be proportionate to the significance of the heritage assets affected. This is supported by paragraph 190, which requires LPAs to take this assessment into account when considering applications.
- 2.9 Under *Considering potential impacts*, the NPPF emphasises that '*great weight*' should be given to the conservation of designated heritage assets, irrespective of whether any potential impact

equates to total loss, substantial harm or less than substantial harm to the significance of the heritage assets.

- 2.10 Paragraph 195 states that where a development will result in substantial harm to, or total loss of the significance of a designated heritage asset, it directs the decision maker to refuse the application, unless this harm is necessary to achieve substantial public benefits, or a number of other criteria are met. Where less than substantial harm is identified, paragraph 196 requires this harm to be weighed against the public benefits of the proposed development. The decision maker is not directed to refuse the application in such a case.

National Guidance

Planning Practice Guidance (DCLG)

- 2.11 The Planning Practice Guidance (PPG) has been adopted in order to aid the application of the NPPF. It reiterates that conservation of heritage assets in a manner appropriate to their significance is a core planning principle.
- 2.12 Key elements of the guidance relate to assessing harm. It states that substantial harm is a high bar that may not arise in many cases and, that while the level of harm will be at the discretion of the decision maker, generally substantial harm is a high test that will only arise where a development seriously affects a key element of an asset's special interest. It is the degree of harm, rather than the scale of development, that is to be assessed. The guidance also advises that where harm is identified, either substantial or less than substantial, to the significance of a heritage asset, that *'within each category of harm [...], the extent of the harm may vary and should be clearly articulated'* [18a-017].

Conservation Principles, Policies and Guidance (English Heritage, April 2008)

- 2.13 Conservation Principles outlines Historic England's approach to the sustainable management of the historic environment. While primarily intended to ensure consistency in Historic England's own advice and guidance, the document is recommended to LPAs to ensure that all decisions about change affecting the historic environment are informed and sustainable.
- 2.14 The guidance describes a range of heritage values which enables the significance of assets, including non-designated assets, to be established systematically, with the four main heritage values being:
- Evidential value: which derives from the potential of a place to yield evidence about past human activity;
 - Historical value: which derives from the ways in which past people, events and aspects of life can be connected through a place to the present;
 - Aesthetic value: which derives from the ways in which people draw sensory and intellectual stimulation from a place; and
 - Communal value: which derives from the meanings of a place for the people who relate to it, or for whom it figures in their collective experience or memory.

Historic Environment Good Practice Advice in Planning

- 2.15 The three Good Practice Advice in Planning Notes (GPAs) were published by Historic England. GPA1: *The Historic Environment in Local Plans* provides guidance to local planning authorities to help them make well informed and effective local plans. GPA2: *Managing Significance in Decision-Taking in the Historic Environment* includes technical advice on the repair and restoration of historic buildings and alterations to heritage assets to guide local planning authorities, owners, practitioners and other interested parties. GPA 3: *The Setting of Heritage Assets* replaces guidance published in 2011. The relevant guidance in this case is GPA2 and GPA3.

GPA2: Managing Significance in Decision-Taking in the Historic Environment (March 2015)

- 2.16 This document provides advice on numerous ways in which decision making in the historic environment could be undertaken, emphasising that the first step for all applicants is to understand the significance of any affected heritage asset and the contribution of its setting to that significance. In line with the NPPF and PPG, the document states that early engagement and expert advice in considering and assessing the significance of heritage assets is encouraged. The advice suggests a structured, staged approach to the assembly and analysis of relevant information:

- Understand the significance of the affected assets;
- Understand the impact of the proposal on that significance;
- Avoid, minimise and mitigate impact in a way that meets the objectives of the NPPF;
- Look for opportunities to better reveal or enhance significance;
- Justify any harmful impacts in terms of the sustainable development objective of conserving significance balanced with the need for change; and
- Offset negative impacts to significance by enhancing others through recording, disseminating and archiving archaeological and historical interest of the important elements of the heritage assets affected.

GPA3: The Setting of Heritage Assets (Second Edition; December 2017)

- 2.17 As with the NPPF the document defines setting as '*the surroundings in which a heritage asset is experienced. Its extent is not fixed and may change as the asset and its surroundings evolve*'. Setting is also described as being a separate term to curtilage, character and context. The guidance emphasises that setting is not a heritage asset, nor a heritage designation, and that its importance lies in what it contributes to the significance of the heritage asset, or the ability to appreciate that significance. It also states that elements of setting may make a positive, negative or neutral contribution to the significance of the heritage asset.
- 2.18 While setting is largely a visual term, with views considered to be an important consideration in any assessment of the contribution that setting makes to the significance of an asset, and thus the way in which an asset is experienced, setting also encompasses other environmental factors including noise, vibration and odour. Historical and cultural associations may also form part of the asset's setting, which can inform or enhance the significance of a heritage asset.
- 2.19 This document provides guidance on practical and proportionate decision making with regards to the management of change within the setting of heritage assets. It is stated that the protection of the setting of a heritage asset need not prevent change and that decisions relating to such issues need to be based on the nature, extent and level of the significance of a heritage asset, further

weighing up the potential public benefits associated with the proposals. It is further stated that changes within the setting of a heritage asset may have positive or neutral effects.

- 2.20 The document also states that the contribution made to the significance of heritage assets by their settings will vary depending on the nature of the heritage asset and its setting, and that different heritage assets may have different abilities to accommodate change without harming their significance. Setting should, therefore, be assessed on a case-by-case basis.
- 2.21 Historic England recommends using a series of detailed steps in order to assess the potential effects of a proposed development on significance of a heritage asset. The five-step process is as follows:
- Identify which heritage assets and their settings are affected;
 - Assess the degree to which these settings and views make a contribution to the significance of a heritage asset(s) or allow significance to be appreciated;
 - Assess the effects of the proposed development, whether beneficial or harmful, on the significance or on the ability to appreciate it;
 - Explore ways to maximise enhancement and avoid or minimise harm; and
 - Make and document the decision and monitor outcomes.

Local Planning Policy

- 2.22 In considering any planning application for development, the planning authority will be mindful of the framework set by government policy, in this instance the NPPF, by current Development Plan Policy and by other material considerations. In this instance, the local planning context is prescribed by Reading Borough Council, whose relevant policies and guidance is reproduced below. The Local Plan for Reading is the document that contains the policies guiding how Reading will develop up to 2036, which is the end date of the plan. It identifies the amount of development that will take place, the areas and sites where development is expected to be accommodated, and where it will be restricted, and sets out policies for how planning applications will be decided.

Reading Borough Local Plan (adopted November 2019)

- 2.23 The Reading Borough Local Plan was formally adopted on November 2019. This document sets out the overarching planning policy framework for the borough from the period from 2019-2036. The policies relevant to cultural heritage in this case are:

Policy EN1: Protecting and Enhancing the Historic Environment

- 2.24 *Historic features, areas of historic importance and other elements of the historic environment, including their settings will be protected and where possible enhanced. This will include:*

- *Listed Buildings;*
- *Conservation Areas;*
- *Scheduled Monuments;*
- *Historic parks and gardens; and*
- *Other features with local or national significance, such as sites and features of archaeological importance, and assets on the Local List.*

All proposals will be expected to protect and where possible enhance the significance of heritage assets and their settings, the historic character and local distinctiveness of the area in which they are located. Proposals should seek to avoid harm in the first instance. Any harm to or loss of a

heritage asset should require clear and convincing justification, usually in the form of public benefits.

Applications which affect Listed Buildings will not have an adverse impact on those elements which contribute to their special architectural or historic interest including, where appropriate, their settings.

[...].

Applications which affect, or have the potential to affect, the significant features of heritage assets should be justified by a Heritage Statement.

[...].

Policy EN6: New Development in an Historic Context

2.25 *'In areas characterised by heritage assets, the historic environment will inform and shape new development. New development will make a contribution to the historic character of the area by respecting and enhancing its architectural and visual qualities and considering how heritage considerations can influence the design of new development. When determining planning applications for new development, the following factors will be taken into consideration:*

- *The positive contribution of the development to the existing historic townscape (scale, height, mass, proportion, plot size, street form, materials, significant vistas and views, and open space);*
- *Sensitivity to historic context;*
- *Reflection of borough-wide major heritage themes that contribute to local distinctiveness (e.g. patterned brickwork or former worker terraced housing); and*
- *Whether development promotes and/or improves access to previously undiscovered or neglected historic significance'.*

3 ASSESSMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Introduction

- 3.1 This assessment of significance and design advice is concerned only with the heritage significance of Ivy Farmhouse, a Grade II statutorily designated heritage asset, in relation to the Site (389 Gosbrook Road, Lower Caversham). The Site forms a part of the identified heritage asset's setting. No other heritage assets, designated or non-designated, would be affected by development of the Site.
- 3.2 The following section provides a summary description of the historic development of the area including the Site. It then goes on to assess Ivy Farmhouse's significance.

Historic Development

- 3.3 The Site is on flat land just to the north of the River Thames. The Lower Caversham Tithe map of 1844 [not reproduced here] shows that the Site was originally land subdivided from Butlers Meadow as a three-part garden to Ivy Cottage. Butlers Meadow extended from Gosbrook Road to Mill Green on the banks of the Thames, north-south, and from the adjacent plots beside the subsequent Send Road and Forge Close, east-west. The Tithe map also records a further house and garden, as a long north-south range to the immediate east of Ivy Cottage, part within the footprint of the current eastern extension. A small, square building, ancillary to Ivy Cottage and within its 1844 grounds (and within the redline of the Site), is shown in the Cottage's front garden to the west and set back from Gosbrook Road.
- 3.4 The Site is currently fronted by Gosbrook Road to the north and Send Road to the west. The grounds and building of the Grade II listed Ivy Farmhouse are to the east and a mid-twentieth-century bungalow in its own grounds to the south. The predominantly mid-twentieth-century surviving light industrial and office buildings on the Site are of no heritage value.
- 3.5 The Site has broken hard-standing to the frontage with a low brick wall in some disrepair addressing the back of pavement to Gosbrook Road. There is a semi-mature tree in the north-western corner. The main frontage building is a three-bay, single-storey brick building dating to the 1950s [Fig.5]. It replaced a smaller, late nineteenth-century (or possibly earlier) building [Fig.3] that was shown on the Tithe map. This building had a small rear extension in 1879 [Fig.2], which had been removed by 1898 [Fig.3].
- 3.6 The office is of red brick in plain stretcher bond, three bays to the front (north) with a hipped, flat-tiled roof. Brick chimney stacks pierce the hips at each end. Original Crittall windows survive in each gable end.
- 3.7 The single-storey ranges (of one-and-a-half-storey equivalence in the centre of the Site) to the rear are piecemeal light industrial development seen from the later twentieth century [Fig.6]. This encapsulated an earlier late nineteenth-century southern range which, despite the addition of six brick buttresses over flint footings, is in an early state of collapse. This range includes a garage at the west end and its roof is a shallow cat-slide to the Site's central element.

Assessment of Significance

389 Gosbrook Road

- 3.8 The predominantly mid and later twentieth-century light industrial and office buildings on the Site are of no heritage value. No part of this piecemeal development is recognised as a non-designated

heritage asset in Reading Borough Council's List of Locally Important Buildings and Structures. There is no reference to the Site in the Historic Environment Record. There is no indication from the walk-over survey and this assessment that any part of the Site includes a heritage asset.

- 3.9 The Council's pre-application advice letter of 14th October 2020 notes that the building currently on the Site *'is not considered to be of any particular architectural merit'* and that *'removal of the existing building provides an opportunity for improving the setting of the Listed Ivy House, which is a landmark building in the Gosbrook Road street scene'*. The advice also references an earlier application for development of the Site, noting that *'under application 011316 [which also allowed for the demolition of the current buildings], the proposal was seen to enhance the setting of the listed building, considering the harm caused by the existing building on the site'*.

Ivy Farmhouse

- 3.10 Ivy Farmhouse, previously Ivy Cottage, was constructed in the seventeenth century and re-encased in the eighteenth century in a Flemish bond red brick with burnt (over-fired) headers. The listing citation notes:

'Two storeys and attic. Red and silver-grey brick on rendered flint plinth. String at first-floor level. Old tile roof. Central square chimney (circa 1650 if not older) with corbelled head. Three bays. Modern glazing bar sashes. Central segmental-headed door (modern) in plain frame. Nineteenth-century trellis approach with cast-iron 'panel' standards, end to street has post and lintel structure and weather boarded end. Interior: inglenook fireplace; curved collars to roof trusses. T-plan, brick and flint to rear'.

- 3.11 Its main elevation, to the north, is of three bays. The eastern end is finished with flint panels below the gable. The house is set back from Gosbrook Road with an arcaded trellis extending from the front door to the back of pavement [Plate 1]. A range to the rear (south) gives the building a 'T-shaped' plan. The range sports a first-floor, large, bayed oriel window in its southern elevation with an attic casement above set within a lime-washed, rendered gable [Plate 2]. Later twentieth-century extensions extend to the west of the south range (through which the building is attached to the frontage building in the Site) and, more extensively to the east. A twentieth-century external brick flue is positioned on the western gable [Plate 3] and an earlier, probably a nineteenth-century stack, serves the rear range [Plate 2].
- 3.12 The fenestration is eight-over-eight pane Georgian-style sashes, five windows in the main (northern) elevation (three over two) [Plate 1], with two in the eastern gable (one over one) [Plate 4]. Those at ground-floor level and in the eastern gable have segmental arches, the remainder lintels. The western elevation includes two blocked windows that conform to this layout. Later, off-centre and smaller casement windows have been inserted in the western gable, one at ground-floor level and the other at attic level [Plate 3]. The latter mirrors a similarly-positioned window in the eastern elevation [Plate 4]. This is also a later insertion, probably post-dating the restoration of the eastern elevation [see planning reference below].
- 3.13 The historic mapping indicates a great deal of remodelling of the asset to the rear and at the gables. The nineteenth-century mapping shows a small western extension to the rear range [Figs 2&3]. A glasshouse/conservatory has been added on the eastern side by 1913 [Fig.4], with a lean-to structure on the eastern elevation by 1956 [Fig.5]. By this time, the garden has been subdivided to form the Site to the west and the office building has replaced the square-planned ancillary building seen on the Tithe map and the earlier OS mapping [Fig.5].
- 3.14 By 1968 there has been further extension to the eastern gable with the full development of the Site as currently seen [Fig.6]. What cannot be seen on the historic mapping is the later twentieth-century extension of the listed building to the west (so that it then, as now, abutted the building on Site) and the substantial extensions to the east.

- 3.15 Of the latter, the planning history of Ivy Farmhouse, held with Reading Borough Council, records the extensions to the east. This involved the demolition of the twentieth-century conservatory and eastern additions, with the construction of a larger garage and a separate residence. The citation for planning application 85/TP/0466 consented 19th August 1985 states:
- ‘Demolition of garage block and erection of granny annexe with double garage, removal of fire escape and restoration of windows on all floors on eastern elevation. Removal of canopy to front door, reconstruction of ki’.*
- The canopy remains and the truncated ‘ki’ on the summary application form would most likely be related to the kitchen [Plates 2&4].
- 3.16 The historic mapping also shows that the asset’s setting has significantly altered through the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. The Tithe map and the first edition Ordnance Survey mapping show extensive and well-laid out, formally planted gardens to the south, south-west and west [Fig.2]. This setting becomes quickly changed, with the garden eroded and reduced by the end of the nineteenth century with the setting out of new roads (for example Send Road to the west and Bryant’s Avenue opposite the asset to the north – the former taking directly from the garden), and the development of housing and industrial units [Fig.3].
- 3.17 The boundary, a brick wall, between the Site and the asset’s grounds is likely to be no earlier than 1898 in date. That element towards Gosbrooke Road is likely to date to the second half of the twentieth century. That element to the rear is formed of reused Victorian/Edwardian bricks but is likely to be late 1960s in date. That between could not be assessed. The boundary wall is not identified as a non-designated heritage asset.
- 3.18 As Ivy Farmhouse historically loses garden from the south and west through the twentieth century (with the industrial development of the Site) [Figs 5&6], the building gains garden to the east [Fig.6]. Meanwhile, by the middle of the twentieth century, the area around the Site and Ivy Farmhouse is entirely built up, predominantly for residential use, but with industrial units too, predominantly along Send Road [Figs 6&7].
- 3.19 **Summary:** Ivy Farmhouse, Grade II [NHL 1113490], was designated in 1957. It is of high significance, reflected by its designation. Ivy Farmhouse is a seventeenth-century, ‘T’- plan house of two storeys and attic significantly remodelled in the eighteenth century and through the twentieth century. Original/early features include T-shaped plan, Flemish bond brickwork and seventeenth-century or earlier central chimney stack [designation citation].
- 3.20 **Significance:** The primary contributors to Ivy Farmhouse’s significance is its historical, evidential and aesthetic values largely embodied in the building’s fabric, form and its Georgian style. The immediate setting (its domestic garden) provides a small positive contribution to the asset’s significance as a small remnant of its early domesticated grounds. However, it has lost most of its original/early domestic gardens (to the south, south-west and west) and, with the densely built up surrounding area, derives negligible contribution to its significance from its setting.
- 3.21 The Site, as a small part of the asset’s setting (with notable inter-visibility and a residual, historic association) currently does not contribute positively to the asset’s significance. It encloses the asset to its west and south-west with unsympathetic and unattractive light industrial mid and later twentieth-century piecemeal development. It abuts the listed building, albeit via a late twentieth-century extension, and delivers the visually jarring and aesthetically inconsistent corrugated tin and asbestos cement roof cladding, and steel chimney flues close to the western side of the asset and its grounds. Additionally, the current poor condition of the open front to the Site onto Gosbrook Road similarly delivers a visually jarring and aesthetically negative impact within the Farmhouse’s setting.

- 3.22 The Site forms a small portion of the asset's setting and, as noted by the Council in their pre-application advice letter of the 14th October 2020, currently makes a negative contribution to the asset's significance and that significance's legibility.
- 3.23 Gosbrook Road, predominantly the Victorian terrace opposite the Site and Ivy Farmhouse [Plate 5], comprises a form and materiality (red brick with some extensive polychromatic brick detailing and portrait fenestration) that can be seen as an aesthetically positive element within Ivy Farmhouse's setting.

4 PROPOSALS AND ASSESSMENT OF IMPACT

- 4.1 The development proposal for the Site comprises the demolition of existing buildings and erection of a two-and-a-half storey residential development, consisting of 5 x 1 bedroom flats and 1 x 2 bedroom flat, associated parking and landscaping. The car park is to the rear (south) and landscaped garden to the frontage (north). The tree in the north-western corner will be retained.
- 4.2 The Site itself contains no designated or non-designated heritage assets. The Site is within the setting of only one built heritage asset, Ivy Farmhouse (Grade II listed, NHLE 1113490) situated immediately east of the Site. The only sensitivity in built heritage terms arising from the Site's development relates only to the Site forming a small part of Ivy Farmhouse's wider setting.
- 4.3 The proposed development will introduce additional height to the Site, with a substantially smaller footprint of development than is currently the case. The existing buildings on the Site cover an area of c.255m². The proposed footprint is c.152m² in area, thereby representing a reduction of footprint in the order of 40%. There will be a footprint gain to the west, with a large reduction in footprint to the east (close to the heritage asset) and to the south. The development pulls back from the listed building and delivers a significant, new gap between Ivy Farmhouse and the new building. Additionally, the development will not abut the listed building, as is currently the case.
- 4.4 The frontage of the development onto Gosbrook Road will be set behind the frontage line of Ivy Farmhouse and the space fronting the Site planted as a garden. The back-of-pavement wall will be rebuilt and topped with railings. The proposed development includes portrait fenestration throughout, which accords with the character of the immediate area (the better example being the nineteenth-century terrace opposite the Site on Gosbrook Road).
- 4.5 In summary, the proposed development is a cohesive and coherent design of contemporary style that reflects the form of the surrounding residential developments, in contrast to the Site's current negative and incoherent condition.

Impacts on Heritage Significance of Ivy Farmhouse

- 4.6 **Significance:** The primary contributors to Ivy Farmhouse's high significance (reflected by its designation) is its historical, evidential and aesthetic values largely embodied in the building's fabric, form and its Georgian style. The immediate setting (its current domestic garden) provides a small positive contribution to the asset's significance as a small remnant of its early domesticated grounds. However, it has lost most of its original/early domestic gardens (to the south, south-west and west) and, with the densely built up surrounding area, currently derives a negligible level of positive contribution to its significance from its setting.
- 4.7 The Site, as a small part of the asset's setting (with notable inter-visibility and a residual, historic association) currently does not contribute positively to the asset's significance, as is noted in the Council's pre-application advice letter of 14th October 2020. The current buildings on the Site enclose the asset to its west and south-west with unsympathetic and unattractive light industrial mid and later twentieth-century piecemeal development. It abuts the listed building and its boundary wall, consequently placing a visually jarring and aesthetically inconsistent corrugated tin and asbestos cement roof cladding, and steel chimney flues close to the asset and its grounds. Additionally, the current poor condition of the open front to the Site onto Gosbrook Road similarly delivers a visually jarring and aesthetically negative impact within the Farmhouse's setting. In summary, the Site forms a small portion of the asset's setting and currently makes a negative contribution to the asset's significance and that significance's legibility.
- 4.8 **Impacts on significance:** the proposed demolition of all current structures on Site and the development of a two-and-a-half storey building of six apartments will introduce a structure of

greater height on the Site and this would of itself cause a degree of harm to the heritage asset's significance. This height will be in the order of a half storey higher than Ivy Farmhouse at its highest point. However, the higher part of the development will address Send Road away from the listed building. The opposite side of Send Road includes a recent three-storey development.

- 4.9 The development will be positioned further away from Ivy Farmhouse than is currently the case, being set close to Send Street, with the roof pitching away from the listed building. This will form a significant separation between the buildings. This separation will be enhanced by the whole development being set behind the frontage line of Ivy Farmhouse onto Gosbrook Road. The existing buildings on the Site cover an area of c.255m². The proposed footprint is c.152m² in area, thereby representing a reduction of footprint in the order of 40%. There will be a footprint gain to the west, with a large reduction in footprint to the east (close to the asset) and to the south.
- 4.10 The above changes will allow a greater legibility of the listed building's frontage and western gable as one approaches the asset from the west along Gosbrook Road. Similarly, the perception from the east of Ivy Farmhouse as it addresses Gosbrook Road will be less visually competed with by the Site, being set behind the asset's frontage line, as advised by the Council officers in their pre-application letter of advice 14th October 2020. There will also be a clear gap of separation, profoundly more so than is currently the case, when looking straight at Ivy Farmhouse's frontage from the north down Briant's Avenue.
- 4.11 The development's main elevation addresses Send Road where the main entrance is made architecturally legible (by height, centre of mass and detailing signifiers). The development's northern elevation has been kept relatively simple. This, with the materials palette, allows the development to maintain a subservience to the heritage asset, in that the development does not compete architecturally with Ivy Farmhouse. It is simple, neat and unfussy in its detailing. The use of balconies and terraces on the northern elevation has been avoided.
- 4.12 While Reading Design Review Panel (DRP) were keen to highlight a significant number of positive design elements in the iteration of the scheme presented to them, they advised that the secondary hipped element to the east, thereby addressing the listed building, fell short in its resolution. This was a view also held by the Council officers following the pre-application meeting. It was considered that the angle of the hip end and level of the eaves did not sit comfortably with Ivy Farmhouse.
- 4.13 The updated design of the submitted scheme has wholly acted on this commentary and advice from the pre-application process. The hip has been simplified to a single, lower pitch in this location and the eaves have also been lowered in height. This has reduced the actual and the perceived massing of this part of the proposal's roofscape. This has consequently minimised the proposal's sense of massing in relation to the listed building (thereby centring the massing of the building towards Send Road), allowing the proposed development to be seen as subservient to and a profound separation from Ivy Farmhouse in this part of Gosbrook Road's street scene [see pp.27-28 of the DAS for comparable views of the submitted scheme with the pre-application scheme from the north and north-west].
- 4.14 The development delivers a garden space with semi-formal planting to the north frontage to Gosbrook Road and, therefore, gives reference to the Site as part of the asset's original grounds [Fig.2]. The existing tree is to be retained and the back-of-pavement is addressed with a good quality brick wall topped with simple, elegant railings. The development's landscaping and the setting back of the building behind Ivy Farmhouse's frontage line improves the legibility of the asset's significance when approaching it from the west along Gosbrook Road and the landscape quality of this element of the asset's setting.
- 4.15 **Summary:** The only aspect of the proposed development that would deliver any degree of harm to the significance of Ivy Farmhouse is the quantum of height of the new building. This, however, is

mitigated, and the significance of the asset and its legibility is enhanced, by reducing the footprint of development by c.40%; by setting of the footprint of the building close to Send Road; that the bulk of the added height and centre of the building's mass is addressing Send Road and the pre-existing three-storey residential building opposite; that the building's roof pitches away from the listed building with a simple, low hip that has a 'softened' relationship with Ivy Farmhouse; that the building has greater separation from the asset's western gable; is set back from Ivy Farmhouse's frontage line; significantly opens up views from the south-west of the asset's rear wing from Send Road; and delivers quality landscaping and boundary treatment that gives some reference to the asset's original grounds extended across the Site.

- 4.16 The development delivers a cohesive, attractive and unified development that bookends onto Send Road. The height of the building is carefully managed to focus onto Send Road where it sits well to maintain and enhance the existing townscape at this junction. The proposed development references architectural form in the local area (for example in terms of portrait fenestration). The legibility of the asset's significance is improved in all approaches along Gosbrook Road (particularly in the key view from the west/north-west), in that from the north on Briant's Road and there is a significant improved legibility of the listed building's rear wing from the south-west on Send Road.
- 4.17 The Site forms a small portion of the asset's setting and currently makes a negative contribution to the asset's significance and that significance's legibility. The development scheme will deliver a minor degree of harm to the significance of Ivy Farmhouse by introducing two-and-a-half storeys of height to the Site. However, all other impacts on the asset's significance delivered by the development (set out in summary above at 4.11) will be positive. Consequently, the aggregate impact of the proposal to the high significance of Ivy Farmhouse is a minor level of enhancement, including to that of the legibility of the asset's significance. This contrasts profoundly with the current situation.

5 CONCLUSION

- 5.1 This Built Heritage Statement has been researched and prepared by RPS, on behalf of the Trustees of Blue Infinity SSAS Pension. The report is provided to support an application for the proposed development of land forming 389 Gosbrook Avenue, Lower Caversham, Reading, Berkshire.
- 5.2 The Site includes no built heritage assets (including statutorily designated and those identified on the List of Locally Important Buildings and Structures) and is not within a conservation area or its setting. The only affected built heritage asset is the Grade II statutory listed building, Ivy Farmhouse. This listed building is situated immediately adjacent to the Site, to the east at 393 Gosbrook Road. The proposed development scheme will have no impact on the significance of any other built heritage assets. The Site is currently occupied by multi-phased light industrial and office buildings. The Site forms a small portion of the asset's setting and currently makes a negative contribution to the asset's significance and that significance's legibility.
- 5.3 The scheme will deliver a minor degree of harm to the significance of Ivy Farmhouse by introducing two-and-a-half storeys of height to the Site. However, all other impacts on the asset's significance delivered by the development will be positive (summarised above at 4.11). Consequently, the aggregate impact of the proposal to the high significance of Ivy Farmhouse is a minor level of enhancement, including to that of the legibility of the asset's significance.
- 5.4 Since the aggregate impact of the proposed development is of a minor enhancement to the listed building's significance and legibility of that significance, no statutory test (under the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990) is engaged in this case. This report refers to and is appropriately framed within the relevant legislation contained within, the NPPF and local planning policy. Since there is an aggregate level of enhancement, the scheme accords with relevant elements of the NPPF and local policy. There is no planning balance to be made in relation to built heritage considerations for the decision maker in this case.
- 5.5 The Reading Design Review Panel, when viewing an earlier iteration of the submitted scheme, *'considered that the fundamental principals of the building layout, landscape improvements and vehicular access would likely enhance the setting of the adjacent listed building'*. When regarding the same iteration, the Council stated in their letter of pre-application advice 14th October 2020, that *'overall there is no objection to the redevelopment of the Site in design terms, and the proposals are welcomed in principal'*. This advice was subject to the submitted scheme setting back the frontage line of the proposed building when addressing Gosport Road and minimising the effect of massing on the listed building by simplifying the hip on the eastern side of the proposal. These amendments have been successfully achieved in the submitted scheme.
- 5.6 It is concluded that the proposed development of the Site will cause an aggregate minor enhancement to the significance of Ivy Farmhouse and the legibility of that significance. As such, in regard to built heritage concerns, the application can be consented.

PLATES



Plate 1: Front (northern) elevation of Ivy Farmhouse



Plate 2: View of rear range of Ivy Farmhouse (from southeast)



Plate 3: View of the Site's frontage and Ivy Farmhouse from the northwest

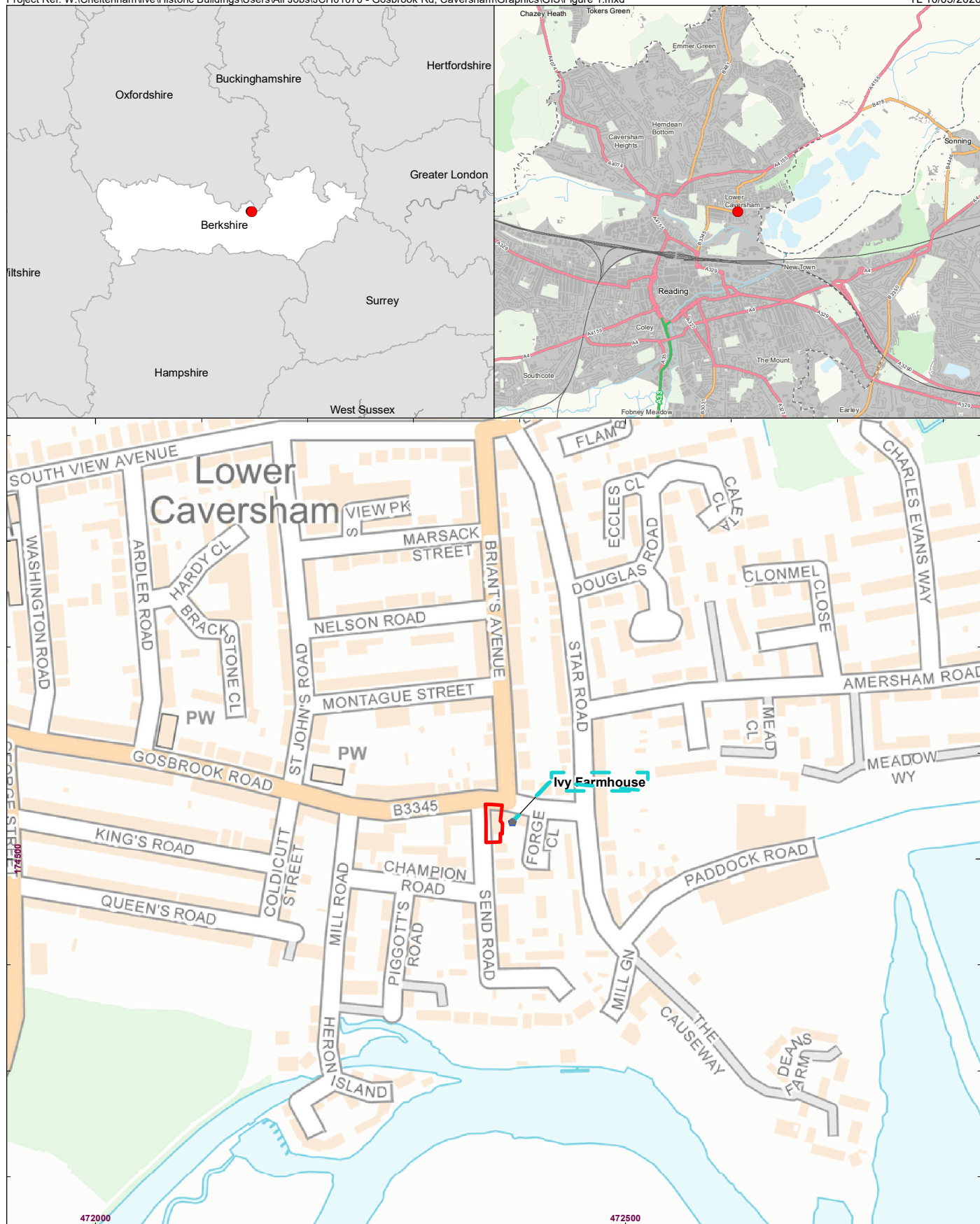


Plate 4: View of Ivy Farmhouse from the east



Plate 5: View of Victorian brick-built terrace on Gosbrook Road to the north of the Site

FIGURES



 Site Boundary



0 50 100m
Scale at A4: 1:5,000

rps MAKING
COMPLEX
EASY

Figure 1

Site Location

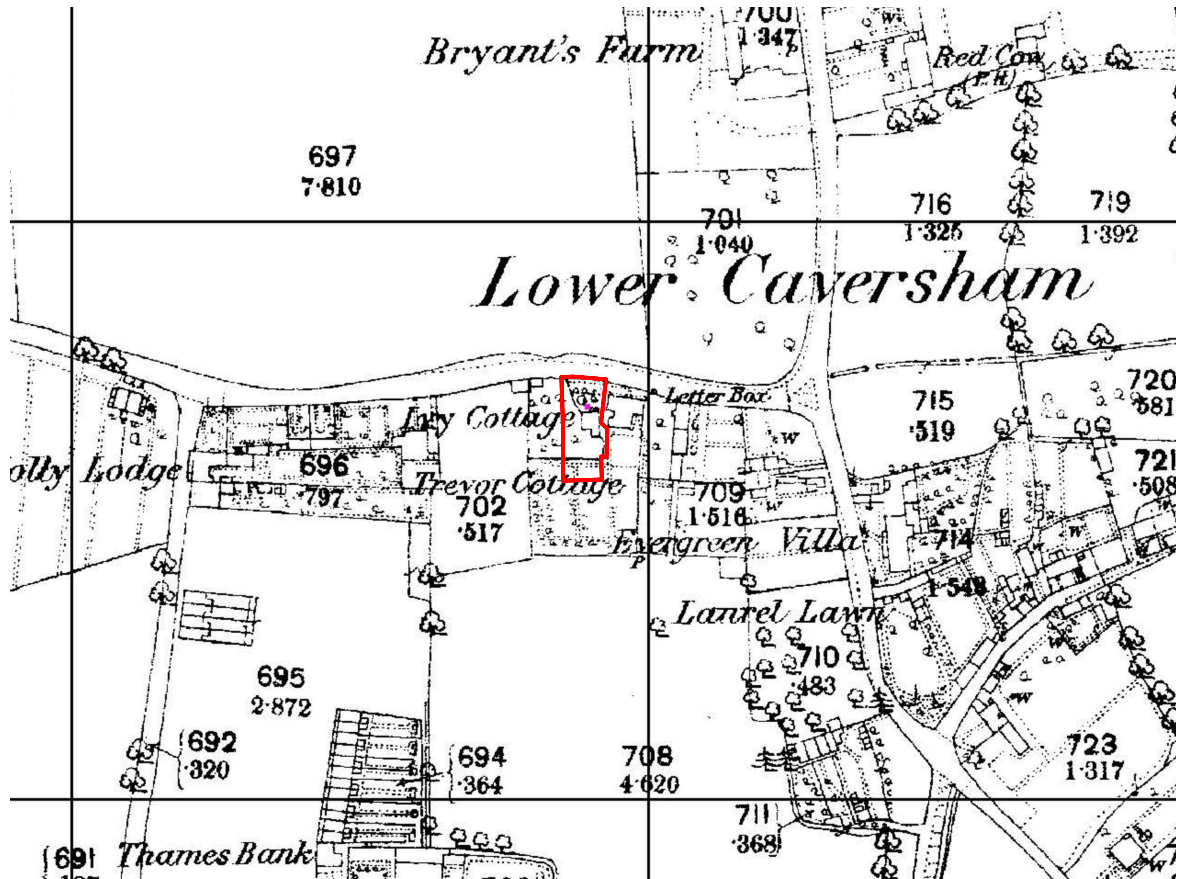


Figure 2: 1879 Ordnance Survey Map

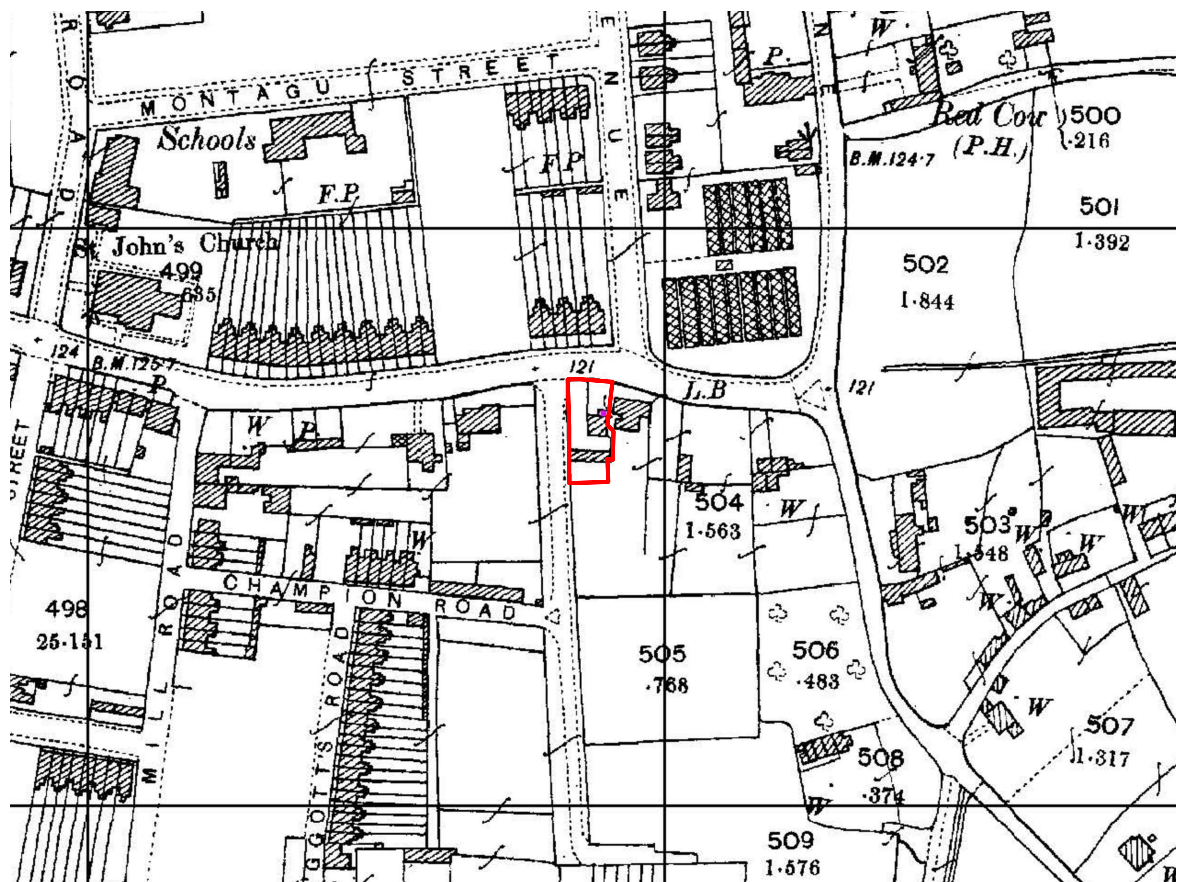


Figure 3: 1898 Ordnance Survey Map

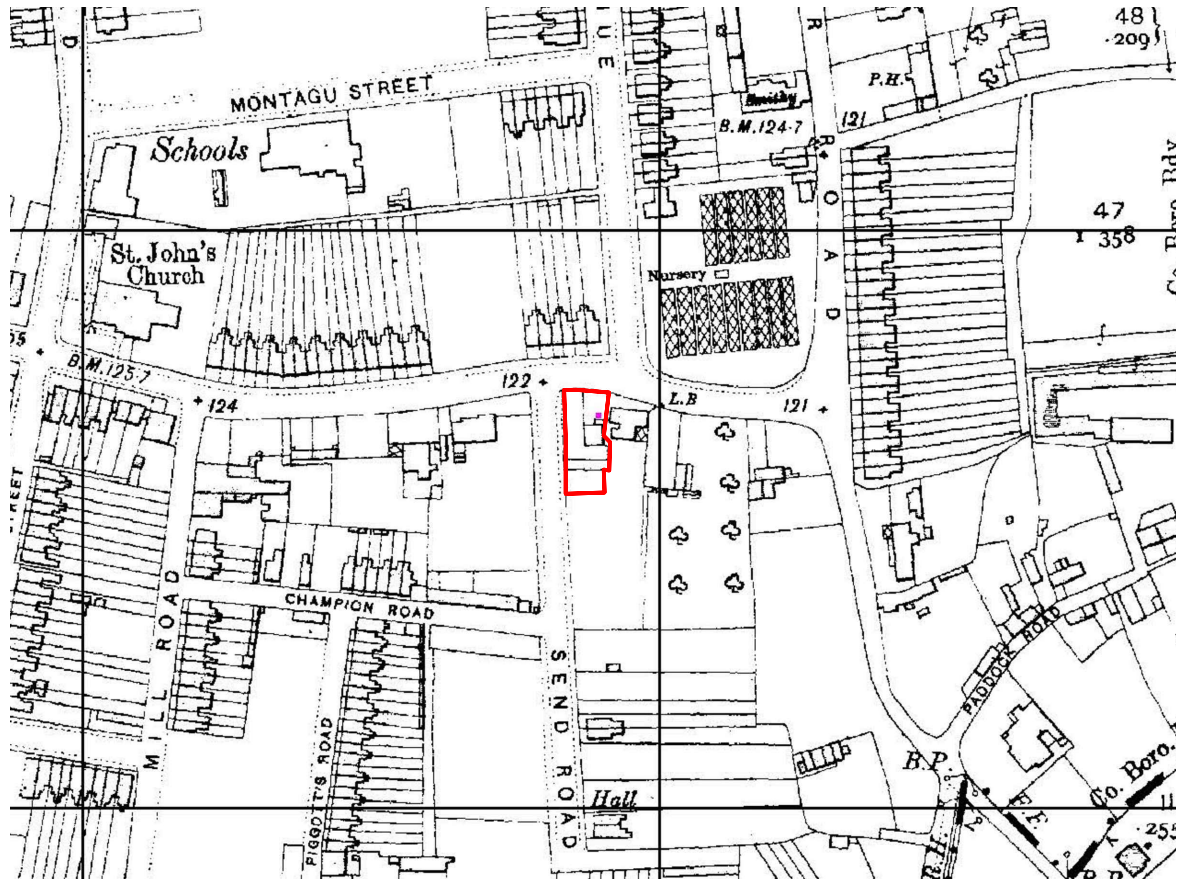


Figure 4: 1913 Ordnance Survey Map

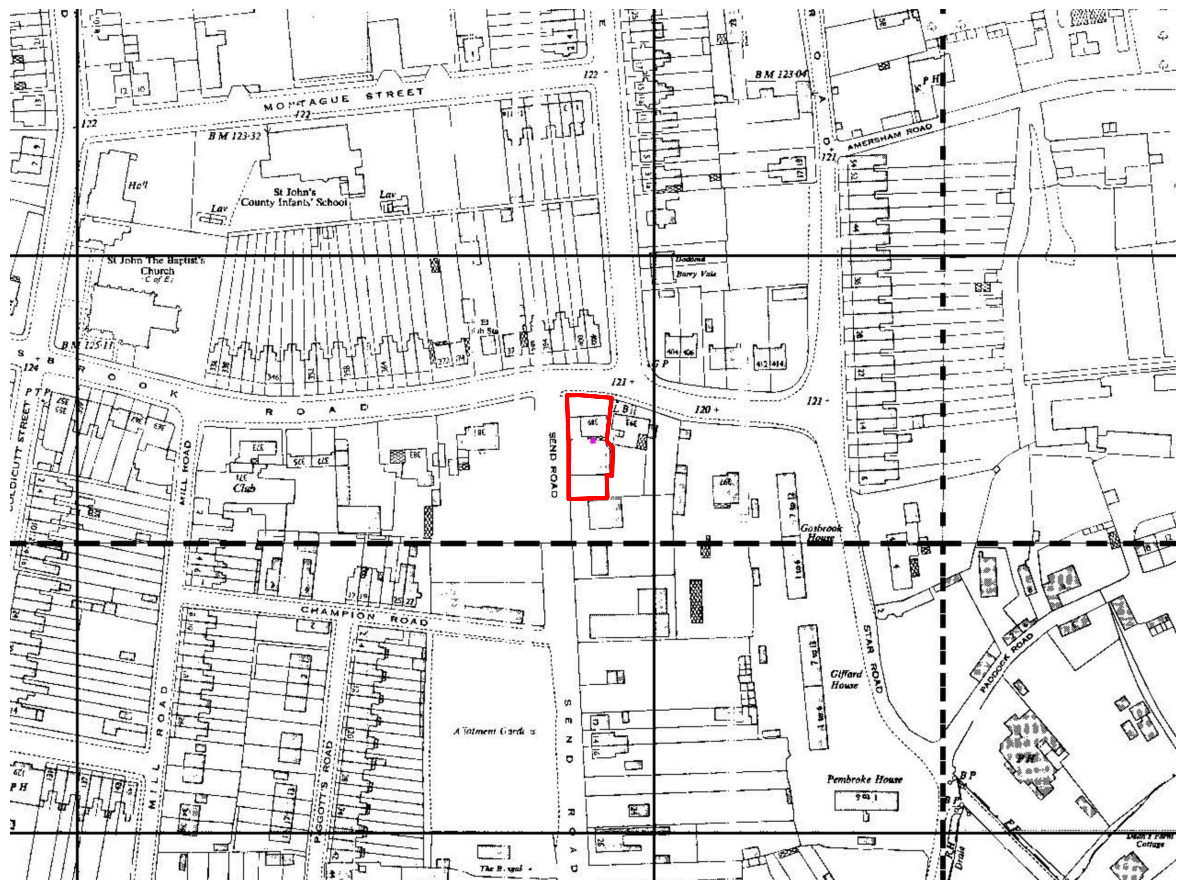


Figure 5: 1956 Ordnance Survey Map



Figure 6: 1968 Ordnance Survey Map



Figure 7: 2020 Ordnance Survey Map



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