

**SITE 5
LAND AT ROYSTON ROAD
BALDOCK**

HISTORIC BUILDING ASSESSMENT

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Contents

Preface.....	3
Structure of this report	3
Non-Technical Summary	4
1. INTRODUCTION	5
1.1 Planning Background	5
1.2 Site Location and Description	5
1.3 Aims and Objectives.....	5
2. ARCHITECTURAL AND HISTORICAL BACKGROUND	6
2.1 The Smallholding Movement – Land fit for Heroes	6
2.2 The Movement in Hertfordshire	6
2.3 Smallholdings in Baldock	7
3. ASSESSMENT	9
3.1 Methodology	9
3.2 General Description of Buildings	9
4. RECOMMENDATIONS	11
5. BIBLIOGRAPHY	12



List of Figures

- Figure 1: Site location
- Figure 2: Ordnance Survey map (1925, with additions in 1950 as shown)
- Figure 3: Warren Farmhouse: front (south) elevation
- Figure 4: Warren Farmhouse: west and north elevations
- Figure 5: Warren Farmhouse: north elevation
- Figure 6: Warren Farm: outbuildings (view north)
- Figure 7: Warren Farm: outbuildings, eastern range (view north-west)
- Figure 8: Warren Farm: outbuildings, western range (view north-east)
- Figure 9: Warren Farm: piggery (view north-west)

All photographs are by Albion Archaeology and are bound at the back of this report.



Preface

Every effort has been made in the preparation of this document to provide as complete a report as possible, within the terms of the specification. All statements and opinions in this document are offered in good faith. Albion Archaeology cannot accept responsibility for errors of fact or opinion resulting from data supplied by a third party, or for any loss or other consequence arising from decisions or actions made upon the basis of facts or opinions expressed in this document.

This report has been prepared by Hester Cooper-Reade (Business Manager), checked by Joe Abrams (Project Manager) and approved by Drew Shotliff (Operations Manager).

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Structure of this report

This report presents the results of an historic building assessment of buildings at Site 5, Royston Road, Baldock. After an introductory section and sufficient historical background to place the building in context, the results of the assessment are described. A selection of photographs and plans are included to illustrate the text. A synthesis of the results and the conclusions of the assessment are presented. Section 4 contains recommendations for further work.



Non-Technical Summary

Vincent and Gorbing (on behalf of Hertfordshire County Council, HCC) are gathering baseline information on five sites at the edge of Baldock for future land allocation. These Potential Development Areas (PDAs) include land at Site 5, Royston Road, Baldock.

The Hertfordshire County Council, County Planning Archaeologist (CPA) identified that Site 5 contained several buildings of historic significance. The CPA required more information on the character of these buildings in order to advise the Local Planning Authority (LPA) on their built heritage potential.

Albion Archaeology were commissioned to gather this data, and on 23rd April 2009 carried out a built heritage assessment of the built heritage area (BHA) and prepared a report on the results (this document).

The BHA comprises a c.20ha parcel of land, centred on (NGR) TL 2583 3451. It is situated along the north side of Royston Road, Baldock which forms the boundary between the parishes of Clothall and Bygrave. Of the eight dwellings within the BHA, only two are in local authority ownership. One of these (House No. 4) will be sold as soon as the existing tenancy ends. House no. 6, Warren Farm, and its associated outbuildings, are therefore the only buildings that will fall within the PDA.

The houses within the PDA were built sometime after 1925 as local authority smallholdings under the provisions of the 1908 Smallholdings and Allotments Act, and the 1919 Land Settlement (facilities) Act and Housing and Town Planning Acts. These Acts were the direct result of Lloyd George's major post-war programmes to create a country "fit for heroes".

No. 6 Royston Road, known as Warren Farm, comprises a detached dwelling house and associated outbuildings. The house is currently occupied separately from the surrounding agricultural land. In addition, part of the former smallholding is now used for light industrial storage. The outbuildings comprise a range of storage sheds and stock houses which form three sides of an open courtyard and a more recently built piggery.

Although unremarkable, these buildings represent an important aspect of social and agricultural history. Many of the buildings associated with the smallholding movement have been demolished or converted beyond recognition, as amply evidenced by most of the remaining former smallholdings along Royston Road.

A low level photographic record, accompanied by a measured plan to show internal layout and some further historical research to set the building in context, would ensure that a proper record is made before demolition or conversion. Although the building retains some of its original form, fixtures and fittings have been up-dated. Internal photographs are only necessary to show the current state of the building. A comparison with any extant buildings from similar smallholdings would be useful in order to determine the use of standard designs.



1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 *Planning Background*

Vincent and Gorbng (on behalf of Hertfordshire County Council, HCC) are gathering baseline information on five sites at the edge of Baldock for future land allocation. These Potential Development Areas (PDAs) include land at Site 5, Royston Road, Baldock.

The Hertfordshire County Council, County Planning Archaeologist (CPA) identified that Site 5 contained several buildings of historic significance. The CPA required more information on the character of these buildings in order to advise the Local Planning Authority (LPA) on their built heritage potential.

On 23rd April 2009 Albion Archaeology carried out a built heritage assessment of the buildings within the built heritage area (BHA) and prepared a report on the results (this document).

1.2 *Site Location and Description*

The BHA comprises a c.20ha parcel of land, centred on (NGR) TL 2583 3451. It is situated along the north side of Royston Road, Baldock which forms the boundary between the parishes of Clothall and Bygrave parish (Fig.1).

Of the eight dwellings within the BHA, only two are in local authority ownership. One of these (House No. 4) will be sold as soon as the existing tenancy ends. House no. 6, Warren Farm, and its associated outbuildings, are therefore the only buildings that will fall within the PDA. In addition, houses no. 4 and 6 are the only buildings not to have undergone extensive alteration and redevelopment in more recent times. Whilst access to House No. 4 was not possible at the time of the survey due to the age of the current tenant, House No. 6 was assessed as the exemplar of this set of buildings.

1.3 *Aims and Objectives*

The purpose of the work was to provide an assessment of the significance of the buildings and to recommend an appropriate level of pre-development mitigation, if required. In order to achieve this, the following objectives were set:

- Understand the historical context and development of the building through rapid overview of documentary sources
- Describe the structure and development of the building through a walk-over survey
- Provide illustrative material for the report in the form of low-level jpeg format photographs.
- Produce a suitably illustrated report to describe the results of the work.

Note: the digital photographs taken as part of this survey are for illustrative purposes and do not represent a full archival quality photographic survey.



2. ARCHITECTURAL AND HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

2.1 *The Smallholding Movement – Land fit for Heroes*

The houses along this part of Royston Road were built sometime after 1925 as local authority smallholdings under the provisions of the 1908 Smallholdings and Allotments Act, and the 1919 Land Settlement (facilities) Act and Housing and Town Planning Acts. By the end of the First World War, Hertfordshire County Council already had a history of acquiring land by lease or outright purchase and by 1919 the county had either bought or leased 6,435 acres and let 161 smallholdings using the powers of the 1908 Act (see www.hertsdirect.org).

The 1919 Land Settlement and Housing and Town Planning Acts were the direct result of Lloyd George's major post-war programmes to create a country "fit for heroes". The Housing and Town Planning Act empowered local authorities to embark on municipal housing for the first time, whilst Land Settlement Act made the metropolitan borough councils allotment authorities for the first time and opened up allotments to all, not just the 'labouring population'.

Prior to the First World War the question of 'the land for the people' had attracted widespread discussion, in particular the ideas of redistribution of land *via* small holdings (Howkins, 2003). There had been limited pre-war legislation of a permissive kind, but during the war, demand grew for government action as part of reconstruction which would enable ex-soldiers to become smallholders and eventually farmers.

In 1918, the Selbourne committee had made recommendations that alongside a minimum wage and a minimum price for cereals, the government should promote colonies of smallholders, many recruited from ex-soldiers. At the end of December 1919, County and Borough councils received a circular from the Board of Agriculture instructing them to 'proceed at once to consider what land can be acquired in your county for the settlement of ex-servicemen'. Land could be purchased and, subject to Board approval, central Government would cover losses between income and expenditure up to 1925.

2.2 *The Movement in Hertfordshire*

The response was mixed, with some councils acquiring more land than others — the rate of uptake largely dependant on political will. As a result of the 1919 Act 255,000 acres were bought and nearly 16,740 tenants eventually settled on holdings of various sizes, many of which contained no buildings at all (Hall, 1936).

By 1920, Hertfordshire had received 619 applications from ex-servicemen and had purchased land at Kings Langley, Tring and alongside Royston road in Baldock (see www.hertsdirect.org). Legislation made it possible for the local authority to set the smallholdings up as a co-operative venture whereby groups of smallholders shared the use of equipment, horses and labour. Hertfordshire County Council set up a number of small scale co-operatives at Bushey, Wilkins Green and Kings



Langley and, although a similar co-operative was planned at Baldock, this was never implemented (see www.hertsdirect.org).

Provision of tenanted farms and allotments by local authorities was subject to further pieces of legislation, each of which impacted on the smallholdings movement. Although the holdings at Baldock represent a relatively early phase, ongoing legislative developments may have had an impact on tenancy arrangements, layout and development of the holdings and the scale of capital investment undertaken by the County Council.

After 1926 local authorities were given much greater operational control but with less central funding. This was accompanied by a shift in emphasis towards letting to those who already had experience of farming; in particular, farm workers who wished to better themselves were more likely to acquire tenancy. From 1931, during the depression years, and until the 1947 Agriculture Act, there was a move back towards letting smallholdings to the unemployed and those in need. By 1939 the Hertfordshire Estate had stabilised at around 6,250 acres, slightly smaller than that of 1920, although the number of holdings was considerably larger at 236 (see www.hertsdirect.org).

The next phase of investment was in the 1950s/60s when the improved state of British agriculture led to increased capital investment. Whilst many old farmhouses were sold off or demolished a number of new standard houses and farmsteads were built, especially on the smaller-scale, family-run, dairy farms. In addition, new amalgamated holdings were established on land at Kings Langley, Tring, Roestock, Chiswell Green, Holwell, Pirton and Chapmore End.

2.3 Smallholdings in Baldock

The land at Royston Road, Baldock contained one of the county's last remaining ancient strip field systems with commoners' rights. The strip fields are clearly shown on the first and second edition Ordnance Survey Maps.

The small holdings are not present on the 1922 Ordnance Survey Map, suggesting it was a few years before they were established. However, by the time of the next survey in 1950, a number of smallholdings are shown laid out along Icknield Way (Fig. 1). The plots are of varying sizes and extend back to the railway line. Some of the plots do not have associated accommodation and it is likely that, at least to begin with, these were tenanted separately, rather than attached to one or other of the nearby smallholdings.

The arrangement on the far easternmost of the plots is a little unclear. It appears that the smallholdings are laid out as two perpendicular strips running either side of a larger field. The two buildings shown on the map would have been a house and associated range of farm buildings. The latter has recently been re-built as a dwelling. The two easternmost smallholdings, Warren Farm and the current No. 8 Royston Road, have more extensive outbuildings than the other smallholdings and are, or appear to have been, associated with the larger plots. The houses, a mixture of detached and semi-detached, were all of one size and design. Standard designs,



until 1926 approved by central government, were used throughout. The houses at Baldock were rendered; those built elsewhere, if not rendered, were clad with black-stained weatherboard.



3. ASSESSMENT

3.1 Methodology

Throughout the project the IfA's *Standard and Guidance for the Archaeological Investigation and Recording of Standing Buildings and Structures* and English Heritage's *Understanding Historic Buildings* (2006) have been used for guidance. All work has been done in accordance with the IfA *Code of Conduct*.

The assessment comprised a site visit with internal and external inspection. Low level jpeg photographs were taken for illustration purposes. These photographs do not represent archival quality digital images. As the house is still occupied and contains the personal possessions and furnishings of the tenant, internal photographs were not taken.

3.2 General Description of Buildings

The following section should be read in conjunction with Figures 2-9.

No. 6 Royston Road, known as Warren Farm, comprises a detached dwelling house and associated outbuildings. The house is currently occupied separately from the surrounding agricultural land. In addition, part of the former smallholding is now used for light industrial storage. The outbuildings comprise a range of storage sheds and stock houses which form three sides of an open courtyard and a more recently built piggery. The piggery was built, on land that had been a separate plot. This suggests that the land holding associated with Warren Farm was extended to take on the neighbouring plot, perhaps during the period of re-investment in the 1950s and 60s.

3.2.1 Farmhouse

Warren Farmhouse is built of rendered brick and has a hipped roof clad with asphalt shingles. The lower courses of brick, in English bond, are exposed. There are two simple chimneys with ceramic pots. In plan form the house is rectangular with a small lean-to extension to the rear (north) built to contain the bathroom and toilet. A wooden-framed conservatory attached to the rear of the house (adjacent to the lean-to extension) is not part of the original build. There is a small, flat-roofed, largely glazed entrance porch at the centre of the front (south elevation). Although the window openings have not been altered, replacement UVPC double-glazing has been inserted throughout.

The house is set back from the road with a small front garden. The present garden continues to the rear and side of the house, although it is unlikely that this arrangement mirrors the former layout of the smallholding. The western boundary of the garden is, however, in the same place as indicated on the 1950 Ordnance Survey map (Figure 2). This shows that the fence line forming the western boundary of the garden comprised pre-fabricated concrete blocks set in concrete fence posts. Although the present fence is not sufficiently weathered to suggest it was part of the original build, it is possible that it represents a like-for-like replacement of pre-existing material.



Internally, the house comprises two rooms either side of a central corridor with kitchen to the rear and a toilet/bathroom within the lean-to extension. Upstairs the former layout comprised four compartments, one of which has been converted into a smaller bedroom and bathroom. Despite some changes to layout, the plan form of the building has not altered greatly. Internal refitting has meant that none of the original fixtures and fittings survive.

3.2.2 Outbuildings

A range of weatherboard-clad outbuildings are located to the west of the house. These buildings are timber-framed on a brick plinth and have partially hipped roofs with a small upper gable to give added height. The roofs are clad with square asphalt tiles laid in a diamond pattern. The 1950 Ordnance Survey Map shows the range of outbuildings associated with this smallholding within their own fenced boundary. The former fence lines can only be traced partially in the present layout.

The main range of outbuildings is set around three sides of a small square yard, open-fronted along the southern, Royston Road, side. The yard has been subdivided to form a stockyard and adjacent path by the insertion of a concrete block wall parallel to the easternmost north-south range. It is likely that the east-west range fronting the small yard was open-fronted although this has now been infilled with breeze blocks. The path formed by the insertion of the concrete block wall allows separate access to the eastern range and a door into the northern range. The eastern and western ranges contain a number of separate stock and storage sheds including, in the western range, a small barn with double doors. The concrete block piggery to the west is a later addition.



4. RECOMMENDATIONS

Although unremarkable, these buildings represent an important aspect of social and agricultural history. Many of the buildings associated with the smallholding movement have been demolished or converted beyond recognition, as amply evidenced by most of the remaining former smallholdings along Royston Road.

A low level photographic record, accompanied by a measured plan to show internal layout and some further historical research to set the building in context, would ensure that a proper record is made before demolition or conversion. Although the building retains some of its original form, fixtures and fittings have been up-dated. Internal photographs are only necessary to show the current state of the building.

A comparison with any extant buildings from similar smallholdings would be useful in order to determine the use of standard designs.



5. BIBLIOGRAPHY

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<http://www.hertsdirect.org/envroads/environment/countryside/envlandman/historyre>

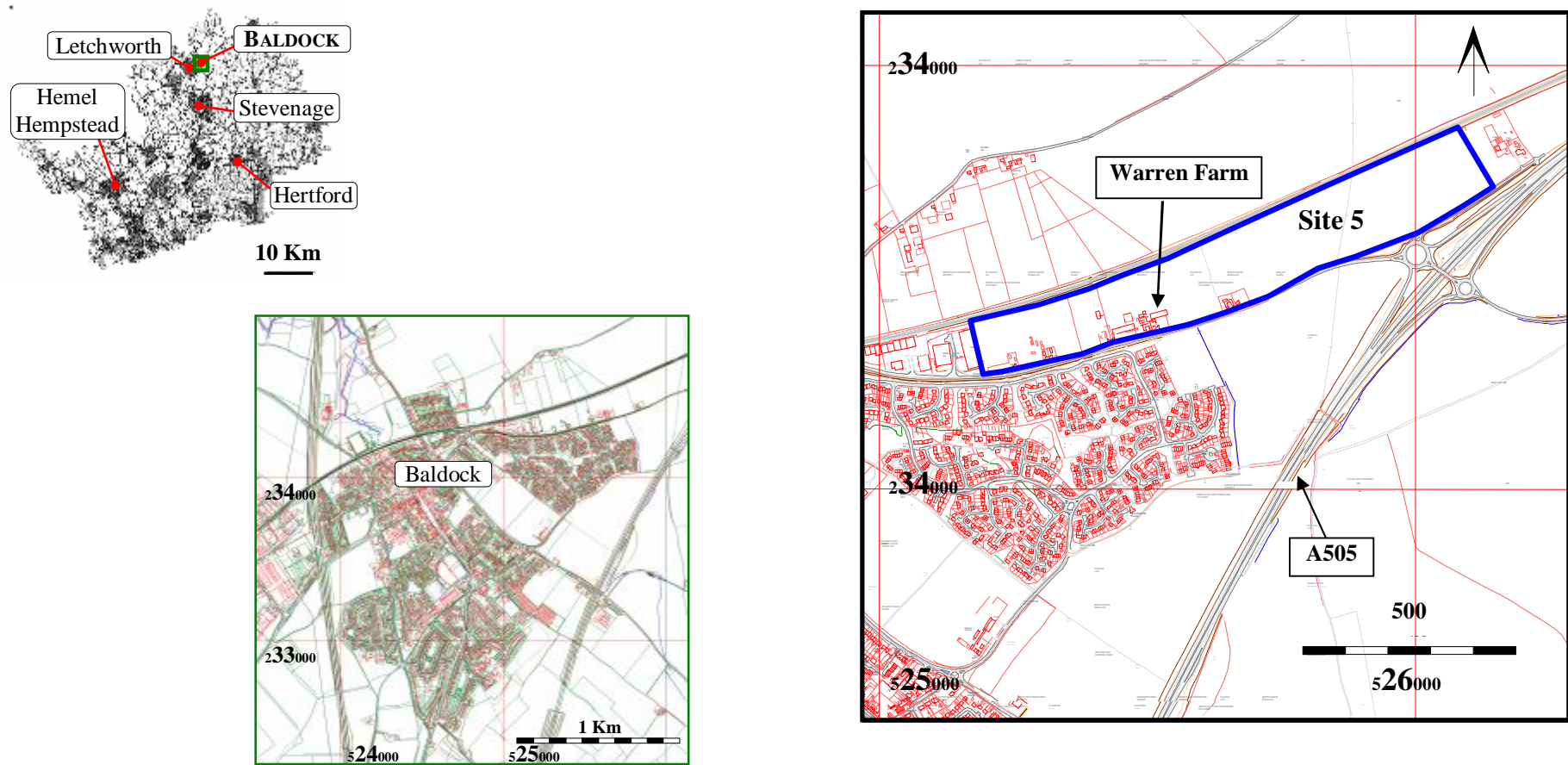


Figure 1: Site location

Base map reproduced from the Ordnance Survey Map with the permission of the Controller of Her Majesty's Stationery Office, by Bedfordshire County Council, County Hall, Bedford. OS Licence No. 100017358 (LA). © Crown Copyright.

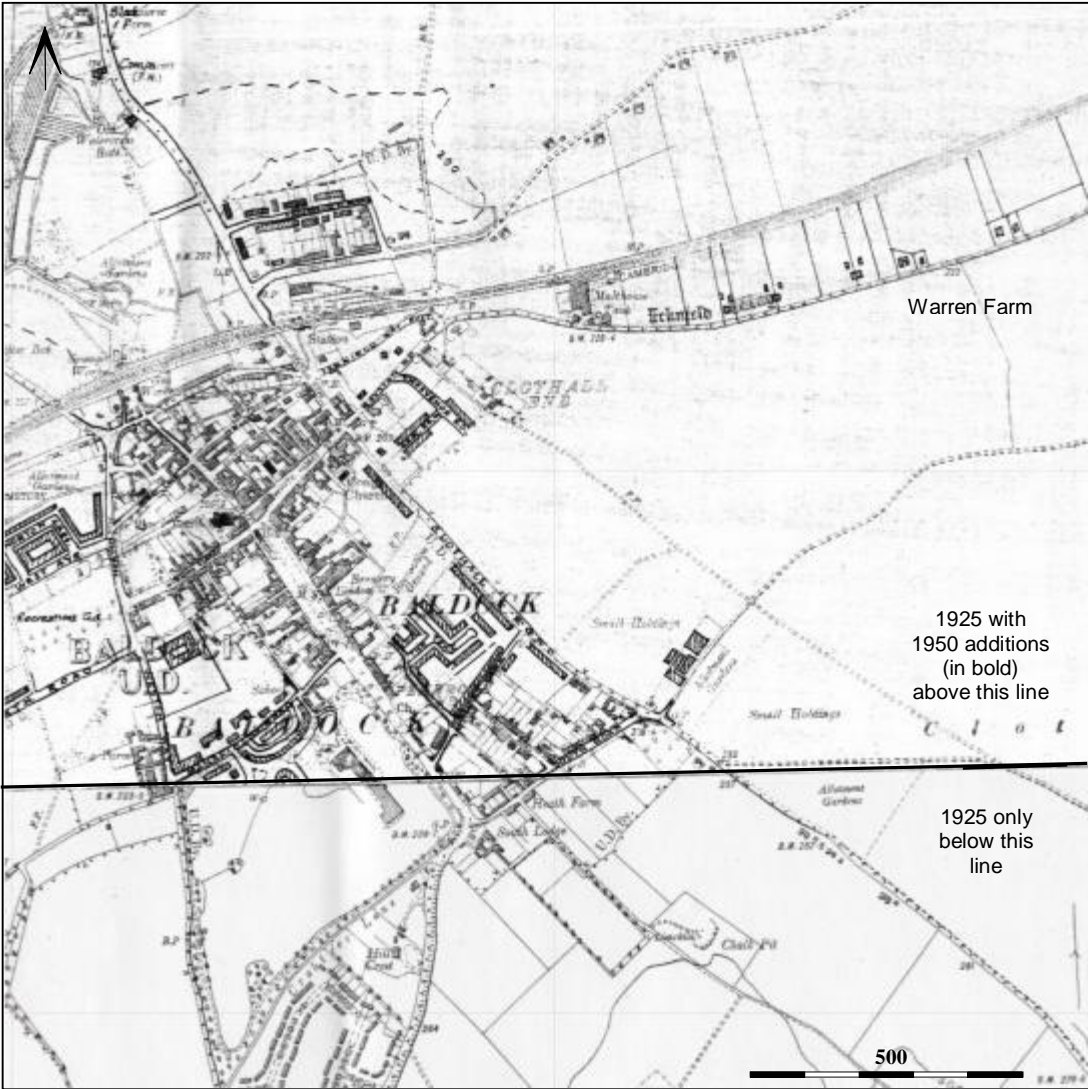


Figure 2: Ordnance Survey map (1925, with additions in 1950 as shown). Scale approximate



Figure 3: Warren Farmhouse: front (south) elevation



Figure 4: Warren Farmhouse: west and north elevations



Figure 5: Warren Farmhouse: north elevation



Figure 6: Warren Farm: outbuildings (view north)



Figure 7: Warren Farm: outbuildings, eastern range
(view north-west)



Figure 8: Warren Farm: outbuildings, western range
(view north-east)



Figure 9: Warren Farm: piggyery (view north-west)