

# BLAGDON MANOR CLAWTON DEVON

Results of a Historic Building Appraisal  
& Impact Assessment



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**Blagdon Manor  
Clawton  
Devon**

**Results of a Historic Building Appraisal &  
Impact Assessment**

*For*

Steve & Liz Morey

*By*



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## *Summary*

*SWARCH was commissioned to undertake an appraisal and impact assessment at Blagdon Manor, Clawton, Devon. Blagdon Manor is a Grade II Listed house that was converted into a hotel in the late 20<sup>th</sup> century following a programme of renovation.*

*Blagdon House is comprised of a relatively high status complex of structures, periodically extended, arranged around a central courtyard. The manner in which it has developed indicates its initial high social status was maintained, with ongoing investment through the 17<sup>th</sup>-19<sup>th</sup> centuries and the need for expansion until at least the 19<sup>th</sup> century. The building is located on the site of a medieval sub-manor and has a relatively-well documented history.*

*Structurally the building is still relatively complete, and internally the building has retained the feeling and layout of a private house. The main reception spaces have been retained and several key internal features of historic interest such as the stair and fireplaces survive despite its conversion to a hotel in the late 20<sup>th</sup> century. Sympathetic conversion back to a private residence should have minimal impact on the surviving historic fabric or details.*

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*Cover plate: The east elevation of Blagdon Manor; from the east-south-east.*

Figure 1: Location map; the site is indicated. 7

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## Acknowledgements

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Thanks for assistance are due to:  
Steve & Liz Morey (the Clients), for access  
The staff of the Devon Heritage Centre

## 1.0 Introduction

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**Location:** Blagdon Manor

**Parish:** Clawton

**District:** Torridge

**County:** Devon

### 1.1 Project Background

South West Archaeology Ltd. (SWARCH) was commissioned by Steve & Liz Morey to conduct a historic building appraisal and impact assessment at Blagdon Court, Clawton, Devon (Figure 1). These works are to inform the proposed change of use of the property from a hotel to a private residence.

The work was undertaken in order to understand the date, form, function and development of the building from its origins, with the aim of understanding the impact of any proposed development on the historic elements of the building.

### 1.2 Topographical and Geological Background

Blagdon Manor is located north-west of the village of Ashwater and approximately 10km north-north-west of Launceston. It sits at approximately 160m AOD just below the summit of a hill, overlooking the head of a valley to the south, that contains Blagdon Wood.

The underlying geology is the mudstone and siltstone of the Crackington Formation (BGS 2013); this is overlain by the slowly-permeable seasonally-waterlogged clayey soils of the Hallsworth 1 association (SSEW 1983).

### 1.3 Historical Summary

Blagdon Manor is a Grade II Listed building in the parish of Clawton, Devon. Blaketon (OE 'black hill') was a sub-manor attached to the more important demesne Manor of Clawton held by Judhael of Totnes. Between 1207 and 1300 parts of the estate went on through the ownership of the de Valletorta, the de Bathe and Ferers families. In the 18<sup>th</sup> century the house and land were sold several times to a series of Yeoman farmers and agricultural investors. In 1889 William Madge Esq. bought Blagdon and the Madge family remained in residence until the 1980s, when the farm-holding was split upon sale. Having been restored and converted, the house has been run as a small hotel by owners Mr and Mrs Morey for 15 years.

### 1.4 Methodology

The building survey was undertaken by Emily Wapshott in July 2015 in accordance with Historic England and ClfA guidelines on the recording of standing buildings and structures. The survey was based on a rapid internal and external site inspection.

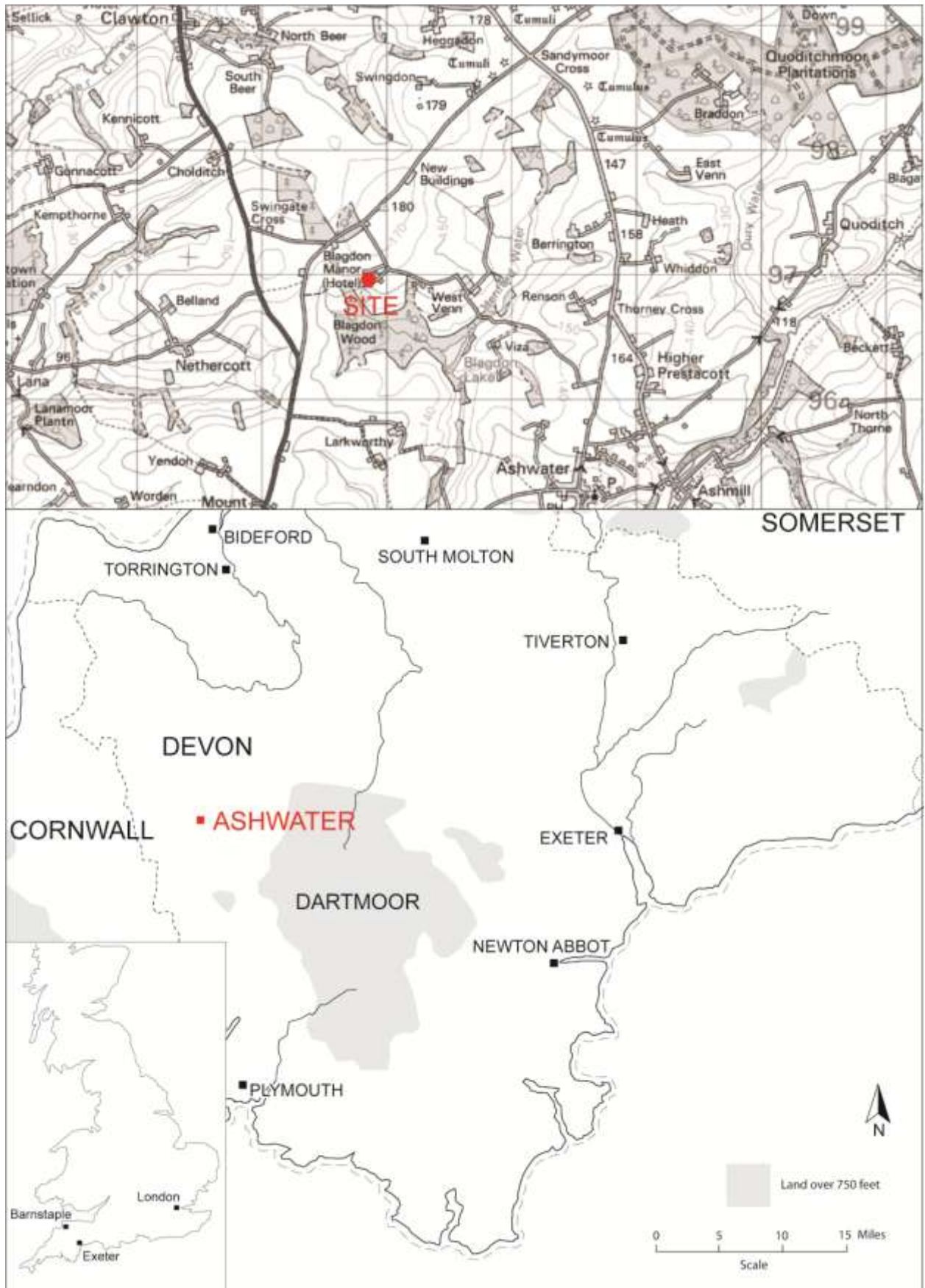


Figure 1: Location map; the site is indicated.

## 2.0 Results of a Desk-based Appraisal

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### 2.1 Historical Background

Blagdon Manor is a Grade II Listed building in the parish of Ashwater, Devon. Having been restored and converted, the house has been run as a small hotel by the owners for 15 years. The current and previous owners have undertaken research on the history of the house, which is presented as a small booklet for hotel guests. A précis of that history is laid out here:

*Blaketon* (OE 'black hill') was a sub-manor attached to the more important demesne Manor of Clawton, and thus formed part of the Honour of Hurberton and Totton (Harberton and Totnes) held by Judhael of Totnes. Bladgon itself was first documented in 1238 (Gover *et al.* 1992). In 1241 Bladgon was held with Moor Killatree, Parnacot (both Pyworthy) and Tenacre (Clawton) by John de Rem' for 1¼ knight's fee from Reginald de Valletorta (Reichel 1942).

*The William II transferred the Honour of Totnes to his favourite Roger of Novant (Nonant). Bladgon continued to be controlled by the Nonant family until 1205, when Joel's great-grandson William de Braiose disputed their claim and the lands were divided.*

*Between 1207 and 1300 parts of the estate went on through the ownership of the de Valletorta, the de Bathe and Ferers families; in part this was due to changes in the holding of the senior Manor of Clawton. In 1325 a Richard de Blakedon is recorded in church records and in 1346, a Walter de Blakedon appears in records holding the Manor. The Blakedon family then held the seat until the 17<sup>th</sup> century, when the name changed to Blagdon. The Civil War may have ejected the family from their holdings, as by 1691, a William Downe holds the Manor. There are however Blagdon family burials in Ashwater churchyard, which continue well into the 18<sup>th</sup> century.*

*In the 18<sup>th</sup> century the house and land were sold several times, to a series of Yeoman farmers and agricultural investors. It may be at this time the house gained the name Blagdon Farmhouse, rather than Manor. In 1844 Blagdon was sold to B. Mervyn Marshall Esq. and the tithe apportionment records the estate at this time as being of 256 acres. In 1889 a William Madge Esq. bought Blagdon and the Madge family remained in residence until the 1980s, when the farmholding was split upon sale.*



## 3.0 Historic Building Assessment

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### 3.1 Setting

The house stands in the north-west corner of a small holding of c.3.5ha. To the south and east it is framed by grass lawns and agricultural fields, to the north-west and north by a converted cob and stone barn. The group is accessed off a parish road from the north-east. To the west are further barns and farmhouse of a separate holding, currently run as a campsite.

### 3.2 Building Description

#### 3.2.1 Exterior

The house is of rubble stone and cob construction, on stone footings, rendered and painted under slate roofs, partly slate hung to the courtyard, with stone and brick chimney stacks.

The house has an asymmetrical, two-storey, four-window front (east) elevation, with 19<sup>th</sup> century horned-sash windows. There is a massive stone axial stack to the north and a smaller stone axial stack to the south. The roof is of slate with a leaded ridge. To the south end of the elevation a modern conservatory has been added within the last 15 years; this encloses the window and door openings to the south of the elevation. The 19<sup>th</sup> century door noted in the Listing survives. A part-glazed 20<sup>th</sup> century porch stands in the left return of the cross-wing, replacing an earlier porch (of Marland brick, as noted in the Listing). The cross wing has a single sash window to ground and first floor on its south elevation.

The south elevation is an asymmetrical, two-storey, five-window range. To the east, the elevation drops back, enclosed partly by the large modern conservatory, where the building has been remodelled. To the west there is the projecting hipped gable of the west range, abutted by a lean-to on its eastern side. The windows are a mix of 19<sup>th</sup> century and modern casements, with modern French windows in the projecting gable to the west. The roof is of slate with a leaded ridge.

The west elevation is an elongated asymmetrical three-window range, with off-set gabled porch. The elevation is set back to the south end. The west elevation is of one-and-a-half storeys, with two first-floor dormer windows to the northern end (the northern dormer is an addition). The windows are a mixture of modern and 19<sup>th</sup> century casements. There is a large gable-end stack to the north and a massive axial stack to the south. The roof is leaded, of low level to the north, set higher to the south, with a leaded ridge.

The north elevation of the west range is gabled, with a stone stack, as described in the Listing. The courtyard is bounded by a wide c.2m high cob wall with slate coping, set with a large modern plank door. The courtyard is covered by a modern conservatory-style canopy. The east range within the courtyard is partly slate hung, as is the stair projection. The north elevation of the cross-wing is an asymmetrical two-window range; a large canted bay window and wide tripartite sash window to the ground floor, with two sash windows to the first floor, all horned, and of 19<sup>th</sup> century date. There is a lean-to to the west end, with modern plank boarded double doors. The roof is of slate with a leaded ridge, hipped to the west, forming an elongated cat-slide roof over a small lean-to. There is an east gable-end brick chimney stack and a brick stack within the slope of the lean-to roof to the west.

### 3.2.2 Plan and Form of the Building

In plan, the house comprises three ranges, arranged on the east, south and west side of a narrow central courtyard, with a thick cob wall enclosing the courtyard to the north.

The complex developmental form of the building is possibly more obvious than when the building was initially Listed, due in part to the extensive later 20<sup>th</sup> century renovations. This would suggest an initial single range to the east of later 16<sup>th</sup> or possibly early 17<sup>th</sup> century date. A parallel range to the west, of early 17<sup>th</sup> century date, was either built contemporaneously, or followed shortly after, most probably as a domestic service range. This was followed in the late 17<sup>th</sup> century by the aggrandisement of the east range, possibly contemporary to the formation of the south range within the courtyard. The east range, clearly of superior status, was further developed in the 18<sup>th</sup> century with the stair projection, and then again in the 19<sup>th</sup> century by the addition of the cross-wing, providing an additional formal reception room. The west range was extended to the south in the 18<sup>th</sup> century, providing another domestic hearth, then altered in the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

### 3.2.3 Layout of the Building

The east range is of single-depth three-cell plan, with a later stair projection and narrow lean-to addition on the western side. The central room of the east range is the largest in the building complex and to the north end is a large stack with date stone of 1683. This may have been inserted into an open hall, there being two large chamfered beams with cut sockets to the south end, served by opposing doorways, which may represent a screen passage. The roof trusses over this space, and ceiling height on the first floor, are set higher than elsewhere in the range, although the base of the trusses have been boxed in. To the north a large unheated room has been divided by later partitions to form the lobby and office. This is abutted to the east by a cross-wing of later date. To the south, the space beyond the putative open hall has been altered and possibly wholly rebuilt, but there is a deep blocked window opening in the east elevation and there is a stone axial stack. On the first floor the partitions have been altered to provide hotel bedrooms with bathrooms, but the central space roughly correlates with that below, the putative hall; the stair rises to this room which has a narrow landing.

The cross-wing is to the north of the east range. This is of single-cell plan on both ground and first floor, accessed directly via the lobby on the ground floor and via a corridor formed from modern partitions on the first floor, altered to allow for the creation of hotel suites.

The west range is also of a basic single-depth three-cell plan. This contains an earlier two-cell range, the north and central room. Both ground floor rooms of this possible earlier range are heated by a gable-end stack to the north and an off-centre axial stack to the south. A possible cross passage runs to the north side of the main (central) room, where an off-set gabled porch serves a doorway with high timber lintel in the west elevation; the opposing opening is now blocked with a slate "creamer" in the east wall. To the south, the wall thicknesses differ and the west elevation is set back, with a later fireplace forced into the back of the earlier stack, indicating a rebuilding or extension of the range here. The partitions have been altered on the first floor to provide hotel bedrooms.

The south range links the east and west ranges. Its historical layout is unclear as it was stripped out and comprehensively renovated in the later 20<sup>th</sup> century by the previous owners. It now comprises one large ground floor room, with two small lobbies to the north side, accessing the courtyard. On the first floor the partitions have been altered to provide hotel bedrooms and a stair has been inserted to the north side for access.

### 3.3 Architectural Appraisal

#### 3.3.1 The east range

A slate slab floor survives in the lobby in the east range, which is served by a fine 18<sup>th</sup> century doorway with fanlight and deep-fielded panelled door. There are some large chamfered beams on the ground floor in the north room of the east range (divided into lobby and office) and the central room (putative open hall). The chamfers on these beams are quite deep, the beams having been scratch-molded to carry later plaster ceilings; they are now partly-exposed and would suggest a 17<sup>th</sup> century date, the end of one beam exhibits run-out stops. There is a large stone stack of 17<sup>th</sup> century date, with dressed stone quoins and moulded drip course which serves the central room; on the ground floor it bears a date stone of 1683. A fine 19<sup>th</sup> century fireplace, noted here in the Listing, was removed during the 20<sup>th</sup> century renovation undertaken by the previous owners. The early 18<sup>th</sup> century staircase survives, with a sash window lighting the stairwell. There are some fine sets of early 18<sup>th</sup> and late 18<sup>th</sup>/early 19<sup>th</sup> century window seats and panelled shutters. On the first floor there are large roof trusses, boxed-in with beaded timber in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. The 17<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> century panelling described for these rooms in the Listing appears to have been lost during renovation work undertaken by the previous owners. Other roof trusses to the northern end of the east range can be seen to be of probable 19<sup>th</sup> century date, where the roof was altered through the addition of the cross-wing. No further investigation was undertaken in the roof space over this range.

#### 3.3.2 The cross-wing

The ground floor of the 19<sup>th</sup> century extension contains a fairly complete drawing room of that period: a marble fireplace, with mantelshelf on scrolled brackets and acanthus leaf decoration; a bay window, panelled shutters to the other sash; plaster beaded cornice to the ceiling and deep-beaded skirting boards; shallow arched beaded-moulded alcoves framing the fireplace, now set with shelves. The ground floor room is accessed off the lobby with by a deep-panelled door casement and six-panel 19<sup>th</sup> century door. On the first floor there are further deep-beaded skirtings and sash windows.

#### 3.3.3 The west range

Slate slab floors survive throughout the ground floor. There are large, deep chamfered beams to the central room of probable 17<sup>th</sup> century date with cut stops. There is also a late 18<sup>th</sup>/early 19<sup>th</sup> century window seat and panelled shutters in the west wall. To the south side, this central room is served by a very large dressed stone block-built 17<sup>th</sup> century stack, with dressed cheeks to the fireplace and chamfered bressumer beam over. To the west side are the remains of a large integral former smoking chamber, with arched stone roof and flue to the main stack (a cloam oven is mentioned in the Listing but has since been removed or lost during the renovation works undertaken by the previous owners). This central room is also served by the stone gabled porch, with narrow slit window, with possible cross passage, at the northern end. A later 18<sup>th</sup> or 19<sup>th</sup> century slate slab-built "creamer" has been built into the eastern opening to the former cross-passage. The room to the south is possibly part of a rebuild or extension, with a large open hearth of early 18<sup>th</sup> century date forced into the rear of the earlier stack. This hearth has a brick-built bread oven and herringbone-slate integral fire-back. The room to the north is served by another 17<sup>th</sup> century gable-end stack, of lower status than the dressed stone example to the south. A fine 19<sup>th</sup> century cast-iron grate has been set into this stack on the ground floor. On the first floor all partitions have been moved around to accommodate hotel suites and are now mostly modern. However, there are some large crude truss blades survive, incorporated within the largely modern roof structure over the central room, and may be 17<sup>th</sup> century in date. Those at the northern end are 19<sup>th</sup> century in appearance, being of sawn timber. This roof was not examined in detail.

#### 3.3.4 The south range

This was apparently in poor condition by the later 20<sup>th</sup> century, and the previous owners completely stripped out and restored the structure. It appears no internal fittings or features survive, although a stone-built well survives under the floor. Within the roof structure there appear to be a few reused truss blades and there is one complete but much-altered truss to the west end. A section of roof, with square-set heavy purlins and pegged rafters, survives to the south-west corner, where the roof over the south range meets that over the west. This is adjacent to the 17<sup>th</sup> century stack, into which one of the purlins is socketed. This is possibly the remains of a later 17<sup>th</sup> century roof. This roof was not investigated or noted in the Listing. The ground floor has been fitted out as a modern commercial kitchen and the partitions on the first floor are all modern, altered to provide hotel suites. Some later 18<sup>th</sup> or possibly 19<sup>th</sup> century structural timbers survive to the east end on the first floor, in an area which appears to have been heavily rebuilt/reconfigured in this period. The courtyard has been restored since the Listing, its fine cobbled surface having been exposed and cleaned.

### 3.4 Summary of Significance

The east range exhibits features of the 17<sup>th</sup> century, such as chamfered beams (exposed and restored since the Listing) but structurally may represent the earliest surviving building on the site. Details such as the fine 17<sup>th</sup> century stack with date stone, the fine early 18<sup>th</sup> century staircase with turned balusters (boxed in when the Listing was undertaken) and addition of the formal features of the 19<sup>th</sup> century drawing room in the cross-wing, identify this as the reception range/putative former hall range and of the highest status within the building complex.

The west range retains some fine early 17<sup>th</sup> century features. Such details as the fireplace (unblocked and restored since the Listing) in the central room are of good quality, evidence of a building of notable status. The smoking chamber and later development of the creamer would suggest this may have been a domestic service wing for the larger complex.

The south range may retain an element of a roof structure from the later 17<sup>th</sup> or even very early 18<sup>th</sup> century. This range appears to be an infill between the two earlier parallel ranges. No significant features, other than the covered well, survive in this range but it is important as indicative of the complex development of Blagdon.

### 3.5 Impact Assessment

The building has undergone a number of changes since it was Listed in 1986; some historical details appear to have been lost, but other features have been exposed (such as the cobbled yard and fireplace in the west range) and the building is easier to read as a result. The conversion of the property into a hotel necessitated a number of changes, particularly at first floor level, but returning the property to the status of a private residence should not require in any significant changes to surviving historic details and fabric.

## 4.0 Conclusions

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The house has been significantly renovated since the original Listing, from which it now differs in both exterior and interior description details. However, the general overview and assessment of phasing is largely unchanged.

As a whole the building represents the survival of a relatively high-status courtyard house, the ongoing development is suggestive of the continuing social status of the building, with investment throughout the post-medieval period with the need for expansion until at least the 19<sup>th</sup> century. The building is located on the site of a medieval sub-manor and has a relatively well-documented history.

Structurally the building is still relatively complete, and internally the building has largely retained the feeling and layout of a private house. The main reception spaces have been retained and several key internal features of historic interest such as the stair and fireplaces survive despite the late 20<sup>th</sup> century conversion to a hotel. Sympathetic conversion back to a private residence should have minimal impact on the surviving historic fabric or details.

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## Appendix 1

### Details of the DoE Building listing

Blagdon Farmhouse, Clawton

Grade II

Farmhouse. Early C17 origins, C18 and C19 alterations. Cob on stone rubble footings and stone rubble, partly whitewashed and plastered, partly hung with rag slates on the courtyard side. Slate roofs hipped and gabled at ends, 6 chimney stacks: the main (east) range has 2 axial stacks, a C19 brick chimney shaft to the rear and a gable end stack to the C19 wing; the west range has a massive axial stack and a gable end stack.

Complex development. The plan is of 3 ranges round a narrow central courtyard, the south range is shorter, linking the longer east and west ranges. The east range has a crosswing at the north end. The evolution of the house is now entirely clear owing to the development of the east range in the C18 and C19. The east range may have been the early hall range served by a kitchen range at the west; alternatively, the west range, which is clearly early C17 in the origin may have been a hall range reduced in status to a kitchen when the east range was added in the later C17. The linking south range may also be C17 in origin. The east range was originally single depth and 3-rooms wide and the C17 axial stack to the north may have been the hall stack. There is no obvious evidence of a passage. In the circa early C18 a central rear stair projection and rear left and right single-storey lean-tos give an additional half room width to the earlier single-depth arrangement. In the C19 a cross wing was added at the right (north) end, and the internal partitions were altered. The west wing has also evolved; it is single depth and 3-rooms wide in plan but the south end is slightly set back and may be an addition of the C18 or C19. The middle ground floor room is early C17 with a massive fireplace at the south end, the north end of the C19 crosswing projecting at the right (north) end.

Asymmetrical 4-window front with a C19 half-glazed door with margin glazing to the left and a large C19 porch into the left return of the crosswing. C19 sash windows throughout except for first floor window right which is C20. The sashes are 4-pane, ground floor window right is a paired sash. The right return of the wing has a canted bay window with a lead tent roof and sash windows, 1 ground floor tripartite sash and 2 first floor sashes with glazing bars. The west elevation of the west wing has a gabled stone porch on the front to the right, a first floor gabled dormer and C19 fenestration of casement windows with glazing bars and one 4-pane sash. The courtyard, paved with pitched stones is completed by a cob wall linking the east and west ranges.

Interior: The east range has some C18 joinery and a C18 stair with boxed-in balusters. Ground floor room rear right has boxed-in cross beams and C17 joists with scatch mouldings are said to exist behind the ceiling plaster. The putative C17 hall has a good C19 chimney piece, some fragments of C17 and C19 panelling exist on the first floor, probably not in situ. The west range preserves a C17 ground floor room with a chamfered cross beam with runout stops and a massive partly blocked fireplace with stone rubble jambs. The right-hand room in the range has a chimney stack abutting the C17 stack, a large open fireplace with cloam oven and a feature that may be a smoking chamber. Roofspaces not inspected but may be of interest. Blagdon Manor is an extremely interesting example of an evolved house of C17 origins and high status. The interior has been very little altered since the C19 and the survival of the external slatehanging round the small courtyard is a particularly attractive feature of the building.

Listing NGR: SX3694096985

Appendix 2  
Historic Building Assessment: Supporting photos



The east elevation of Blagdon Manor; viewed from the east-south-east.



The south elevation of Blagdon Manor; viewed from the south-south-east.





The door into the courtyard; viewed from the south.



The cobbled courtyard surface; viewed from the south.



View of the brick-built bread oven; viewed from the south-west.



View of part of one of the surviving A-frame two-part truss blades pegged at the top. A collar with spiked joints is braced across the A-frame, with a later additional rough-cut and irregular beam for strength; the collar has sockets for a partition. One original large square-set purlin socketed into the south truss blade. Viewed from the west.



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