

## Archaeological Services & Consultancy Ltd

**WALKOVER ASSESSMENT:  
MOGGERHANGER PARK  
MOGGERHANGER  
BEDFORDSHIRE**

NGR: TL 1343 4865

*on behalf of the Moggerhanger House Trust*



Jonathan R. Hunn BA PhD MIFA

May 2008

ASC: 1044/MPM/01

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## Site Data

<i>ASC site code:</i>	MPM	<i>Project no:</i>	1044
<i>OASIS ref:</i>	Not applicable	<i>Event/Accession no:</i>	Not applicable
<i>County:</i>	Bedfordshire		
<i>Village/Town:</i>	Moggerhanger		
<i>Civil Parish:</i>	Moggerhanger		
<i>NGR (to 8 figs):</i>	TL 1343 4865		
<i>Extent of site:</i>	c.10ha		
<i>Present use:</i>	Historic grounds		
<i>Planning proposal:</i>	Restoration and refurbishment		
<i>Planning application ref/date:</i>	c.10ha		
<i>Local Planning Authority:</i>	South Bedfordshire		
<i>Date of survey:</i>	March 4 <sup>th</sup> 2008		
<i>Commissioned by:</i>	Gordon Cain FRICS Cain & Co The Water Tower Tainters Hill Kenilworth CV82 GL		
<i>Client:</i>	Moggerhanger House Trust		
<i>Contact name:</i>	Gordon Cain		

## Internal Quality Check

<i>Primary Author:</i>	Jonathan R. Hunn	<i>Date:</i>	30/4/08
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<i>Edited/Checked By:</i>		<i>Date:</i>	
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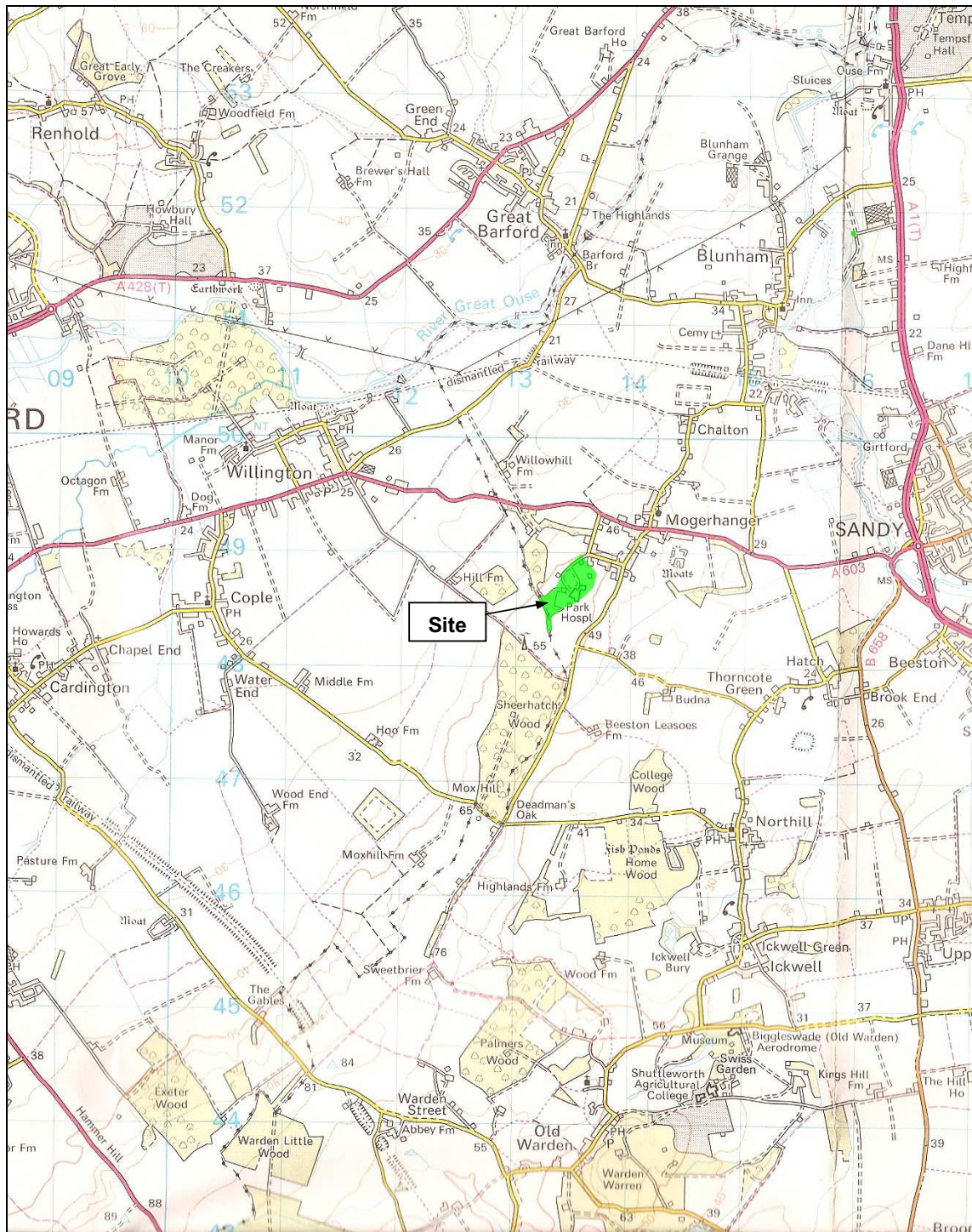
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*Cover:* South east side of the Soane mansion

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**Figure 1:** General location (scale 1:50,000)

## Summary

*A walkover survey was undertaken on at Moggerhanger Park, Bedfordshire on behalf of the Moggerhanger House Preservation Trust in early 2008. Its purpose was to note the presence of above ground structures, earthworks, historic buildings and landscape features in order contribute towards the restoration and refurbishment of the historic grounds.*

### 1. Introduction

- 1.1 In March 2008 *Archaeological Services and Consultancy Ltd* (ASC) carried out an archaeological walkover survey of a site at Moggerhanger Park, Moggerhanger, Bedfordshire, to inform development proposals for the site. The project was commissioned by Gordon Cain FRICS on behalf of the Moggerhanger Trust.

1.2 ***Archaeological Services & Consultancy Ltd***

*Archaeological Services & Consultancy Ltd* (ASC) is an independent practice providing a full range of archaeological services including consultancy, field evaluation, mitigation and post-excavation studies, historic building recording and analysis. ASC is recognised as a *Registered Archaeological Organisation* by the Institute of Field Archaeologists, in recognition of its high standards and working practices.

1.3 ***Management***

The assessment was carried out under the overall direction of **Jonathan Hunn** BA PHD MIFA, an established archaeologist with extensive experience in managing archaeological projects in England. Jonathan holds a first degree in Archaeology and History from the University College of North Wales (Bangor), and a PhD from the University of Southampton (Dept of Geography). Jonathan has held managerial posts with *English Heritage*, *Hertfordshire Archaeological Trust*, *Oxford Archaeological Unit* and *Tempvs Reparatum Ltd*, and has acted as archaeological consultant for *Hertfordshire County Council* and *English Heritage*.

1.4 ***The Site***

1.4.1 ***Location & Description***

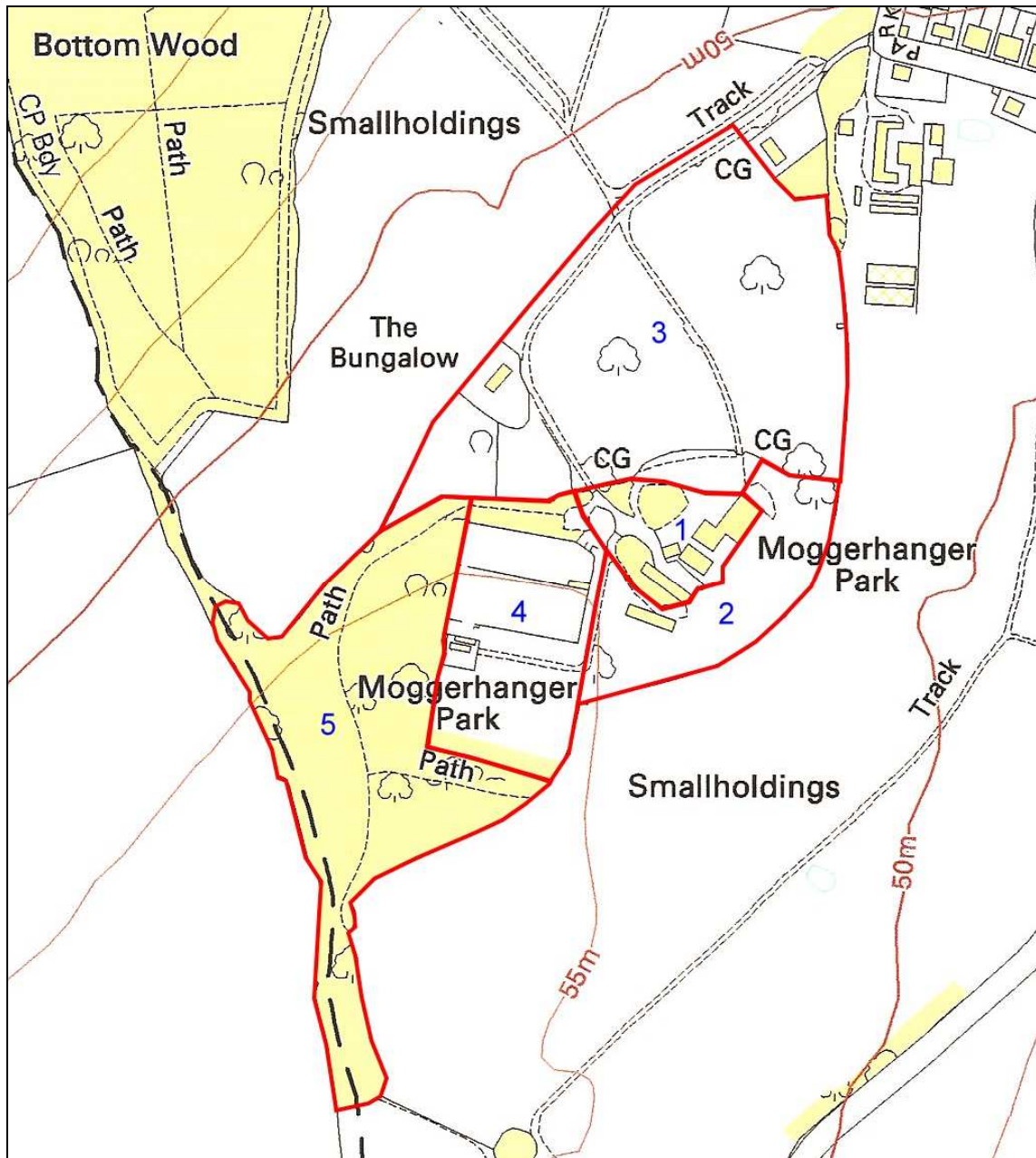
Moggerhanger Park is located about 8km east of Bedford and 3km west of Sandy, Bedfordshire. The survey site lies within the park on gently undulating terrain, about 4km south of the confluence of the rivers Great Ouse and Ivel. It comprises an irregular teardrop shape extending 600m north-south and 250m east-west (an area of c.10ha). About half the area is made up of parkland and the grounds to the east of the house, about a third is composed of mixed secondary woodland, the remainder consisting of the immediate grounds of the mansion and its former kitchen garden. Access is obtained from the northern end of the estate and its boundaries composed of a mix of iron fencing, post and wire fences, hedges and a ha-ha on its eastern side.

A detailed description of the site appears in Section 4 of this report.

#### 1.4.2 *Geology*

The site lies athwart the 50 and 55m contours (AOD) on soils belonging to the Evesham 3 Association (Soil Survey 1983, 411c). These are derived from Jurassic and Cretaceous clay and the soils *'are mostly slowly permeable clayey or fine loamy over clayey, usually calcareous and are seasonally waterlogged. They are formed in clay or mudstone bedrock which is patchily covered by thin drift'* (Hodge *et al* 1984, 189).





**Figure 2:** Plan of the grounds and subdivisions for descriptive purposes (*scale 1:5000*)

## **2. Aims & Methods**

- 2.1 This work has been carried out in order to provide information on the anticipated scope of works that might be required during the proposed refurbishment and restoration of the grounds at Moggerhanger Park.
- 2.2 The aims of the Walkover Survey were carried out in order to:
- To consider the significance of any above-ground structures, historic buildings or historic landscape features present.
  - To identify any earthworks of archaeological interest within the estate
  - To identify any surviving traces of ridge & furrow cultivation strips within the estate
  - To identify any traces of the historic garden that may survive and to assess its extent and state of preservation
  - To assess the present site use and ground conditions, with a view to the appropriate deployment of fieldwork techniques, if required by the AA.



### 3. Archaeological & Historical Evidence

- 3.1 More detailed information is supplied elsewhere in a separate document on this aspect of the site's history and archaeology. What is offered below is simply a brief summary of information that is obtained from readily available sources.
- 3.2 Immediately to the north of the site a late 6<sup>th</sup> century Anglo-Saxon cremation urn was found in 1934 (Kennet 1972, 39-44). There is no direct mention of Moggerhanger in Domesday, as it is believed to be included in the 10 hides belonging to the Chalton holding (Page 1912, 228-33). The earliest record of its name occurs in the early 13<sup>th</sup> century as *Mogarhangre* (Mawer & Stenton 1926, 91). The manor of Moggerhanger can be traced through a series of aristocratic families in the medieval period, most notably the Ferrers (Earls of Derby) and the de Groby families (*ibid.*). In the later part of the 18<sup>th</sup> century the manor passed to the Thornton family, in whose hands it remained through much the 19<sup>th</sup> century (*ibid.*). The present house was designed by Sir John Soane for Godfrey Thornton, a director of the Bank of England, and after 1805 his son Stephen Thornton (Pevsner 1968, 127). The gardens were laid out by Sir Humphrey Repton (Woodward 2006, 83). For much of its history Moggerhanger was a hamlet of Blunham and did not become a parish in its own right until 1860 (Youngs 1980, 9). The house became a hospital (Park Hospital) at the end of the First World War and remained as such until the latter part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century (Woodward 2006, 82-6). The Moggerhanger House Preservation Trust was set up in 1997 (*ibid.*).

## **4. Walkover Survey**

### **4.1 Introduction**

An initial walkover survey was undertaken of the above site in early March 2008. A digital record was made which supplemented those taken on an earlier visit in late January 2008. For the purposes of the report the grounds have been subdivided into five areas or land parcels (LP) and these are described in sequential order.

### **4.2 Area 1**

This includes the mansion, stable block, adjoining buildings and the immediate area to the north-west (photo numbers: 7, 10, 14, 16-18, 20, 54-5, 57 and 60). Apart from the ice house the only archaeological feature is the faint remains of a ditched boundary in the shrubbery on the north western side of this area. This may be a continuation of another ditched boundary, which lies on the north side of Area 4 (Fig 1.)

### **4.3 Area 2**

This area lies immediately to the east of the mansion in what is proposed to become the 'Pleasure Gardens' (photo numbers: 5, 6, 8, 58-9). Apart from the corrugated iron building the area is now down to lawn. It is clear from superficial indentations that this area once housed the site of a number of temporary structures. These will be visible on aerial photographs taken during and since World War II. There are several fine standard trees of some antiquity in this area. The eastern side of this zone is demarcated by the remains of a ha-ha (Plate 3). There is no evidence for the presence of former garden features associated with the house. To judge by the character of this area it is probable that the ground level has been raised in the past to create a flat terrace, presumably associated with the mansion.

### **4.4 Area 3**

This area lies to the north of the mansion and consists of open parkland termed 'The Close'. The area is down to rough grass and is dotted with a variety of large deciduous trees (photo numbers: 13, 15, 32 and 56). Much of this area is covered by traces of ridge and furrow, all aligned on a roughly east/west axis (Fig. 3). The ridge and furrow is mostly absent on the east side of the park. It is also difficult to discern on the extreme western side of the park. This is presumably due to the former presence of temporary structures associated with Park Hospital. The boundary of this area is defined by an iron fence on its eastern side. The fence on the western side is of post and wire construction and is of 20<sup>th</sup> century date. The most visible modern intrusions in the parkland are several asphalt access roads. Apart from the ridge and furrow there are no other relict features surviving in this area.

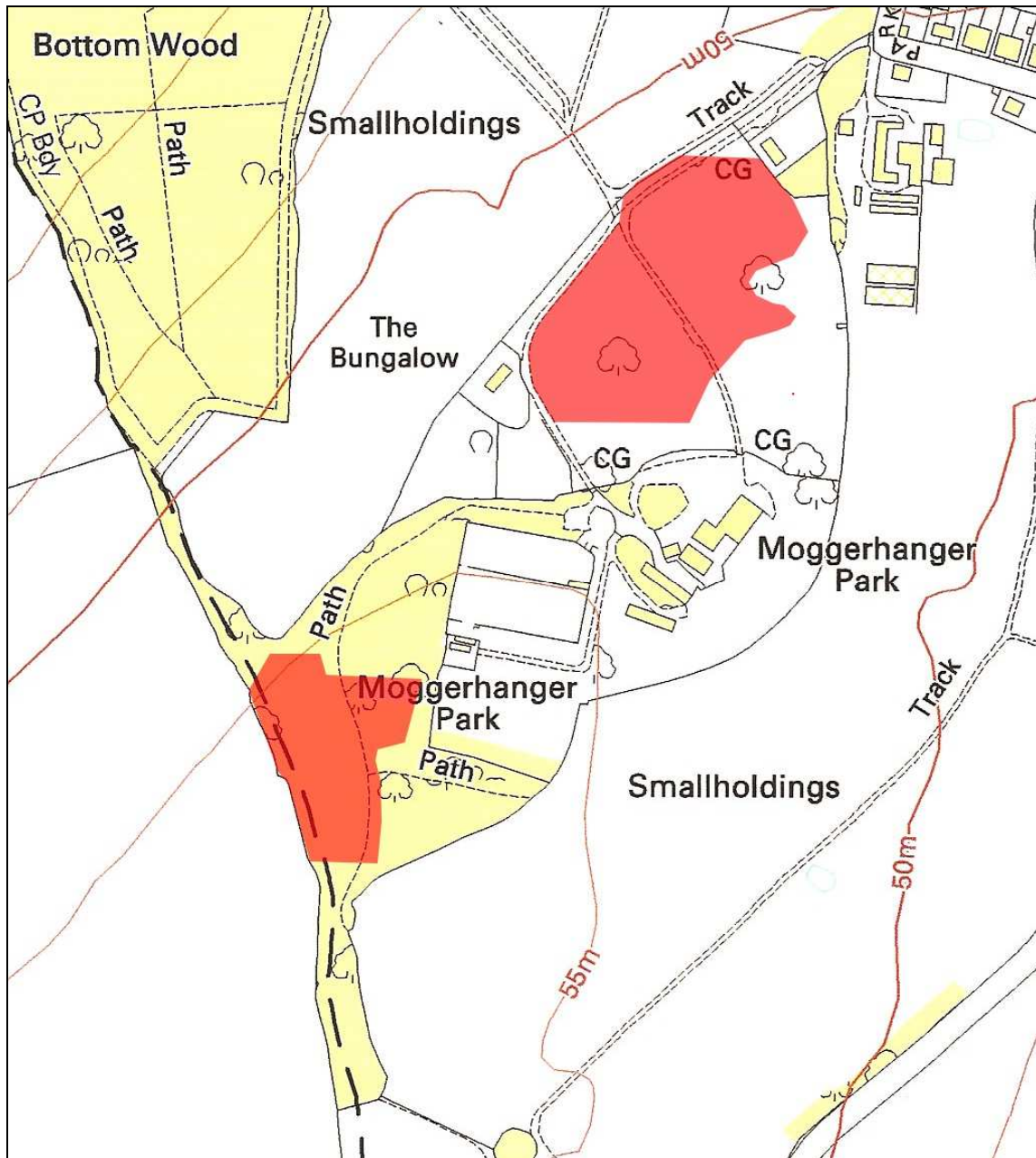
### **4.5 Area 4**

This area includes the wooded strip to the north of the kitchen garden, the kitchen garden, the former green houses/potting sheds and orchard (Fig 1). The most obvious features are the walls of the kitchen garden and various structures and buildings associated with the maintenance of the estate (photo numbers: 3, 4, 21-31). These structures, which include an old timber mill, are of various dates. Most appear to be of

19<sup>th</sup>-century date, though some could conceivably belong to the late 18<sup>th</sup> century. The greenhouses look more Edwardian in date or possibly later. Apart from the aforementioned structures the only other noteworthy features are the ditched boundary at the south-west corner of the orchard (photo number 39) and an old wooden gate (photo number 61).

#### **4.6    *Area 5***

This area lies on the south east side of Moggerhanger Park and consists of mainly secondary woodland (Fig. 1) (photo numbers: 1, 2, 35-8, 43-52). Apart from some box and occasional holly the vegetation is deciduous and of a relatively 'light and open' aspect. There are mature oak trees present on the periphery but most of the interior vegetation consists of hazel, elder (often ivy clad), hawthorn, ash standards, beech, dead elm suckers, occasional oaks and some larch trees. There are a number of sycamore trees to the north of the kitchen garden area. The ground flora looks rich in snowdrops and bluebells, although it was too early in the season to make a proper appraisal. To the west of the kitchen garden is a large swathe of ridge and furrow (Fig. 2). The furrows are some 12m apart from centre to centre. The ridges are about 8m wide and no more than 300mm high and appear to be aligned on a WSW-ENE axis, broadly similar to those observed in the park (Area 3). Cutting across the ridge and furrows are various ditches, presumably associated with the early lay out of the mansion grounds. The only other features identified in this area were an old well (photo no. 46) and a pit filled with domestic waste in the form of bottles and containers (photo no. 44). The latter looks to be of late 19<sup>th</sup> – early 20<sup>th</sup> century date.



**Figure 3:** Extent of ridge and furrow in the grounds of Moggerhanger Park



**Plate 1:** View north to location of potting sheds in Area 5



**Plate 2:** Corrugated tin building looking north in Area 2



**Plate 3:** remains of ha-ha on east side of mansion



**Plate 4:** View west past mansion



**Plate 5:** View north along present carriage drive



**Plate 6:** Exterior of ice house looking SE





**Plate 7:** Old saw mill looking south



**Plate 8:** View west towards potting sheds & old green houses in Area 4



**Plate 9:** Internal view of potting area



**Plate 10:** View south of ridge & furrow and mansion beyond



**Plate 11:** Domestic waste dump in Area 5



**Plate 12:** Old well looking south east





**Plate 13:** Area of ridge & furrow looking southwards



**Plate 14:** Interior of ice house



**Plate 15:** Area 3 (parkland) looking south



**Plate 16:** View west across Area 2

## **5. Conclusions**

- 5.1 The topographical evidence for the site points to the imposition of the late 18<sup>th</sup>-century mansion on a former medieval landscape. The remains of ridge and furrow only survive within the park because, unlike the surrounding area, it has never been ploughed. Within the present estate the most obvious features are associated with the existing mansion. Some elements, such as the ice house and stables are clearly associated with Sir John Soane. Others, such as the several boundaries within the woodland zone and the kitchen garden area, are probably associated with the architect's work but this is by no means certain, at least if judged purely on the physical evidence. Many of the structures and outlying buildings look 19<sup>th</sup>-century in date, as does the ha-ha. However, without documentary confirmation of this it is difficult to be certain. In conclusion, one may say that the physical remains, by themselves, are not particularly remarkable. However, as part of an assemblage associated, either directly or indirectly, with the work of Sir John Soane, they form an interesting and important legacy.

## **7. Acknowledgements**

ASC is grateful to Gordon Cain for commissioning this survey on behalf of the Moggerhanger House Trust. Thanks are due to Kate Harwood, Kevin Levitt of the Bedfordshire Gardens Trust and Bob Morwood of Mid Beds District Council for discussing the landscape of Moggerhanger Park.

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