



JOHN MOORE HERITAGE SERVICES

**A DESK-BASED ASSESSMENT  
OF  
BRAEMORE, LEIGHTON ROAD,  
GREAT BILLINGTON, BEDFORDSHIRE**

*On behalf of*

*M.E. West & Associates*

**FEBRUARY 2012**

**REPORT FOR** M.E. West & Associates.  
42B High Street  
Leighton Buzzard  
Bedfordshire  
LU7 1EA

**PREPARED BY** David Gilbert

**SITE VISIT** 1<sup>st</sup> February 2012

**REPORT ISSUED** 14<sup>th</sup> February 2012

**ENQUIRES TO** John Moore Heritage Services  
Hill View  
Woodperry Road  
Beckley  
Oxfordshire OX3 9UZ  
  
Tel/Fax 01865 358300  
Email: [info@jmheritageservices.co.uk](mailto:info@jmheritageservices.co.uk)

**JMHS Project No:** 2577

**OASIS No.** johnmoor1-119267

**CONTENTS**

	<b>Page</b>
<b><i>SUMMARY</i></b>	<b>1</b>
<b>1 INTRODUCTION</b>	<b>2</b>
1.1 Origins of the Report	2
1.2 Planning Guidelines and Policies	2
1.2.1 Government Planning Policy Guidance	2
1.2.2 The Bedfordshire Structure Plan	2
1.2.3 South Bedfordshire Local Plan	3
1.3 Aims and Objectives	3
1.4 Methodology	4
<b>2 THE SITE</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>3 PROPOSED SCHEME OF DEVELOPMENT</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>4 ARCHAEOLOGICAL &amp; HISTORICAL BACKGROUND</b>	<b>6</b>
4.1 Historical Background	6
4.2 Cartographic Evidence	7
4.3 Known Archaeological Sites	7
<b>5 DISCUSSION</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>6 CONCLUSION</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>7 BIBLIOGRAPHY</b>	<b>10</b>
7.1 Books and Documents	10
7.2 Historic Maps	10
7.3 Online resources	11
7.4 Aerial Photographs	11
<b>FIGURES</b>	
<b>Figure 1</b> Site location	5
<b>Figure 2</b> Billington Conservation Area	12
<b>Figure 3</b> Listed Buildings	13
<b>Figure 4</b> Heritage Assets in the Area	14
<b>Figure 5</b> Enclosure Map (additional plan) of 1848	15

**SUMMARY**

*This desk-based assessment was commissioned as part of the consideration to develop an area to accommodate a double storey detached double garage with first floor office.*

*This development is located within the Conservation Area and consideration must be given in the design to the impact on the character of the area.*

*The development proposed must have due regard for the setting of the listed buildings in the area.*

*The development would have an impact on any undesignated belowground assets in the area, although there is a low potential for such assets to be present, any encountered may have a high significance to the early development of Great Billington.*

## **1 INTRODUCTION**

### **1.1 Origins of the Report**

This archaeological desk-based assessment was commissioned by M E West and Associates as part of the consideration of a proposal for a development at Leighton Road, Great Billington, Leighton Buzzard, Bedfordshire.

### **1.2 Planning Guidelines and Policies**

This report has been prepared in accordance with Planning for the Historic Environment (PPS 5) issued by the Department for Communities and Local Government (2010); and with the policies relevant to archaeology in the *Bedfordshire Structure Plan 2011* (1997). In format and contents this report conforms to the standards outlined in the Institute for Archaeologists' guidance paper for desk-based assessments (IfA revised 2008).

#### **1.2.1 Government Planning Policy Guidance**

Planning for the Historic Environment (PPS 5 2010) provides guidance related to archaeology within the planning process. The following Policy points are key to this development:

**HE4.1** Local planning authorities should consider whether the exercise of permitted development rights would undermine the aims for the historic environment. If it would, local planning authorities should consider the use of an article 4 direction to ensure any development is given due consideration

**HE6.1** Local planning authorities should require an applicant to provide a description of the significance of the heritage assets affected and the contribution of their setting to that significance. The level of detail should be proportionate to the importance of the heritage asset and no more than is sufficient to understand the potential impact of the proposal on the significance of the heritage asset. As a minimum the relevant historic environment record should have been consulted and the heritage assets themselves should have been assessed using appropriate expertise where necessary given the application's impact. Where an application site includes, or is considered to have the potential to include, heritage assets with archaeological interest, local planning authorities should require developers to submit an appropriate desk-based assessment and, where desk-based research is insufficient to properly assess the interest, a field evaluation.

**HE6.2** This information together with an assessment of the impact of the proposal should be set out in the application (within the design and access statement when this is required) as part of the explanation of the design concept. It should detail the sources that have been considered and the expertise that has been consulted.

#### **1.2.2 The Bedfordshire Structure Plan**

The Bedfordshire Structure Plan (1997) includes the following policies that will affect this development:

##### **Policy 13**

##### **Preserving Features**

Historic features will be preserved and managed by:-

- (i) resisting proposals likely to have an adverse effect upon the character and appearance of historic buildings and Conservation Areas and their settings.
- (ii) promoting measures likely to secure the conservation of historic buildings, especially those identified as being 'at risk'.
- (iii) preserving Scheduled Ancient Monuments and other sites of major archaeological significance, together with their settings, by resisting proposals likely to have an adverse effect upon them;
- (iv) ensuring that provision is made for an appropriate level of investigation and recording in advance of any development which is likely to damage or destroy sites and buildings of significance;
- (v) encouraging the protection and management of historic landscape features, including historic parks and gardens, ancient woodland and ancient hedgerows.

#### **Policy 14**

##### **Enhancing Features**

Measures and proposals likely to enhance the character and appearance of historic buildings, Conservation Areas and their settings, archaeological sites and historic landscapes will be promoted. This includes:-

- (i) the preparation of conservation briefs;
- (ii) the preparation of management plans;
- (iii) the requirement for a high standard of design.

### **1.2.3 South Bedfordshire Local Plan**

The South Bedfordshire Local Plan (2004) highlights a single policy that will affect this development:

#### **POLICY BE1**

When considering proposals for development the district planning authority will seek the preservation and conservation of scheduled ancient monuments and other sites of archaeological importance and their setting as appropriate by:

- (i) requiring that sufficient information is provided by developers, including where necessary the results of evaluation by fieldwork, through an agreed programme of archaeological investigation and recording, to evaluate the importance of the site and the impact of the proposal on the site;
- (ii) resisting or modifying development proposals likely to have an unacceptable adverse effect upon sites and their settings by seeking in turn the preservation and conservation of significant archaeological features on the site;
- (iii) requiring developers to provide for and fund excavation and recording of archaeological remains prior to development in those cases where the local planning authority accept that in situ preservation is not justified. Such provision will be secured through agreements, planning obligations or planning conditions; and
- (iv) the district planning authority will encourage and support steps to achieve the appropriate management and interpretation of sites of archaeological importance.

### **1.3 Aims and Objectives**

The primary aim of the desk-based assessment is to provide a professional appraisal of the archaeological potential of the site. This follows the Government guidance in PPS 5 by presenting a synthetic account of the available archaeological and historic data and its significance at an early stage in the planning process. The report will provide the evidence necessary for informed and reasonable planning decisions concerning the need for further archaeological work. The information will allow for the development of an appropriate strategy to mitigate the effects of development on the archaeology, if this is warranted.

In accordance with PPS 5, the report presents a desk-based evaluation of existing information. It additionally follows the Institute for Archaeologists (IfA) *Standard* definition of a desk-based assessment (IfA revised 2008). In brief, it seeks to identify and assess the known and potential archaeological resource within a specified area ('the site'), collating existing written and graphic information and taking full account of the likely character, extent, quantity and worth of that resource in a local, regional and national context. It also aims to define and comment on the likely impact of the proposed development scheme on the surviving archaeological resource.

The IfA *Standard* states that the purpose of a desk-based assessment is to inform appropriate responses, which may consist of one or more of the following:

- The formulation of a strategy for further investigation, whether or not intrusive, where the character and value of the resource is not sufficiently defined to permit a mitigation strategy or other response to be devised.
- The formulation of a strategy to ensure the recording, preservation or management of the resource
- The formulation of a project design for further archaeological investigation within a programme of research

In accordance with PPS 5, the desk-based assessment forms the first stage in the planning process as regards archaeology as a material consideration. It is intended to contribute to the formulation of an informed and appropriate mitigation strategy.

#### **1.4 Methodology**

The format of the report is adapted from an Institute for Archaeologist *Standard Guidance* paper (IfA, revised 2008).

In summary, the work has involved:

- Identifying the client's objectives
- Identifying the cartographic and documentary sources available for consultation
- Assembling, consulting and examining those sources

The principal sources consulted in assessing this site were the Historic Environment Records for Bedfordshire and the Bedfordshire and Luton Archives and Records Service. The first holds details of known archaeological sites. The other contained copies of relevant early editions of Ordnance Survey maps, other cartographic sources and documentary sources. Archaeological sites in Bedfordshire within 500 m of the proposal site have been noted. Aerial photographs of the area held at the National Monuments Record in Swindon were consulted.

The extent to which archaeological remains are likely to survive on the site will depend on the previous land use. The destructive effect of the previous and existing buildings/infrastructure/activity on the site has therefore been assessed from a study of available map information and other documentary sources.

In order that the appropriate archaeological response/s can be identified, consideration has been given to the need for further assessment and evaluation by fieldwork, in order to identify and locate surviving archaeological deposits on the site.

## 2 THE SITE (Figure 1)

The location of the proposed development site is at Leighton Road, Great Billington, Leighton Buzzard, Bedfordshire. The site is centred at grid reference SP 94061 22775 located within the Billington Conservation Area (Fig. 2).

The geology of the site has been identified from British Geological Survey Map (sheet 220) as Gault Formation but the site lies close to Quaternary Till deposits to the south.

## 3 PROPOSED SCHEME OF DEVELOPMENT

It is proposed to use this site to erect a double storey detached double garage with first floor office.

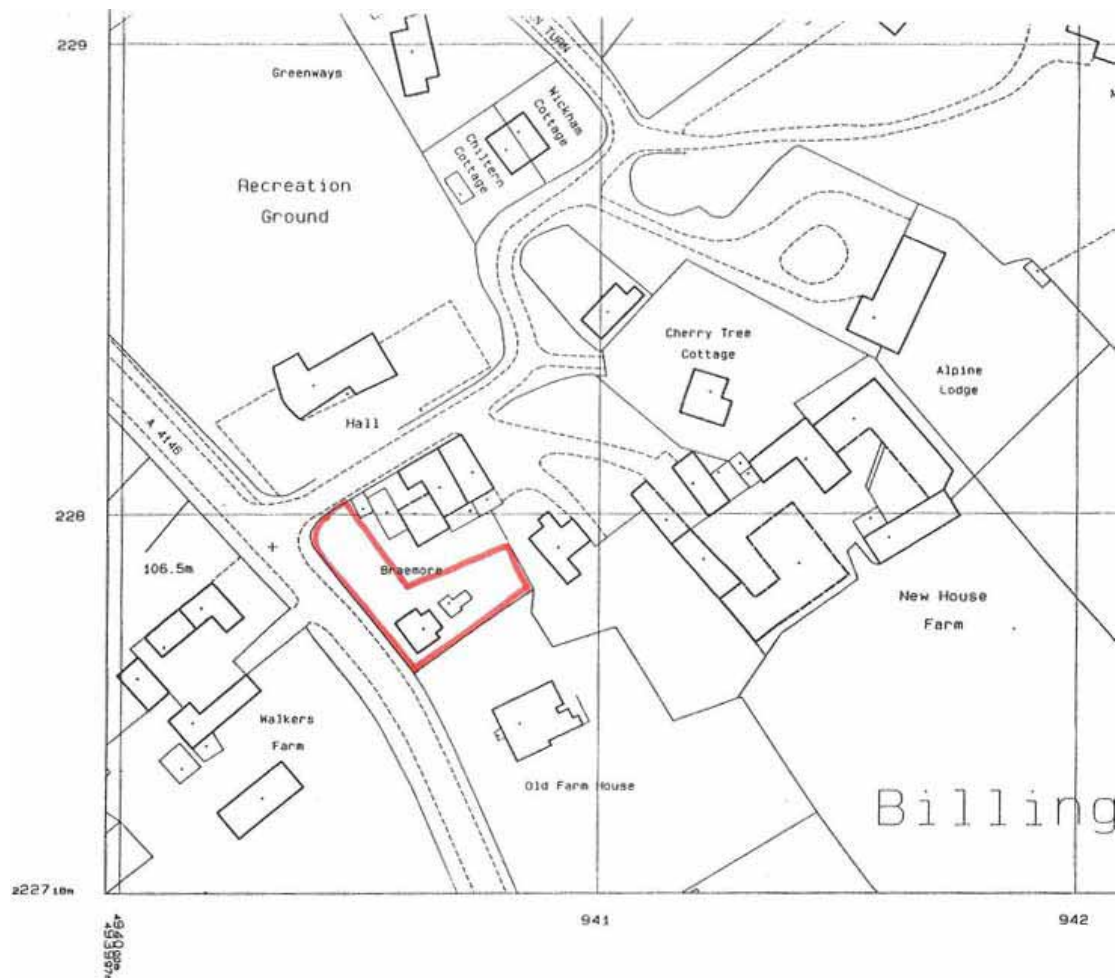




Figure 1. Location Map

## **4 ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND HISTORICAL BACKGROUND**

### **4.1 Historical Background**

The ancient parish of Leighton Buzzard included the chapelries of Billington, Eggington, Heath and Reach and Stanbridge, which during the 19th century have been formed into ecclesiastical parishes, that of Billington in 1810 (VCH 1912)

Leighton, with its hamlets of Billington, Eggington, Heath and Reach and Stanbridge, was not subject to the jurisdiction of shire and hundred, but formed a soke. As early as 1194 the Prior of Leighton, acting for the Abbess of Fontévrault, claimed as lord of the vill to be exempt from suit of county and hundred, and brought an action against the Sheriff of Bedfordshire, Simon de Beauchamp, who, 'contrary to the charter of the king,' exacted these services and took the cattle of the prior as pledges.

The soke is mentioned in 1390, and in 1635 the jurisdiction of the lord of the manor is evinced by the appointment of ale-tasters, flesh-tasters, tithingmen, field-letters, leather-sellers, a registrar, jurors and constables for the town and its hamlets at the court baron of Sir Thomas Leigh.

The manor of Leighton, later known as Grovebury, appears at Domesday as part of the ancient demesne of the Crown. It was the largest of the royal manors in Bedfordshire, and consisted in 1086 of 47 hides. Seventeen of these had been added by Ralph Tallebosc, whereof ten had been held by Wensi the Chamberlain and seven by Starcher, a thegn of King Edward. The manor was retained by the Crown during the ensuing century, and Henry I granted a yearly rent of £56 from its issues to the abbey of Fontévrault, a Benedictine house in Normandy. In 1164 Henry II made a grant of the manor itself to the abbey. Fontévrault had at the time of this grant no cell in England, but after the suppression of Amesbury Priory, Wiltshire (c. 1174–80), on account of the evil lives of the prioress and nuns, Fontévrault established a cell there. In consequence of this foundation Leighton is found described in confirmatory charters as appurtenant to Amesbury, but in the reign of Richard I a cell of Fontévrault was founded at Leighton itself, known as La Grove or Grovebury, to which this manor became attached.

The Abbess of Fontévrault obtained a confirmation of the grant from King John in 1200 and from the pope in the following year. The manor was given by the abbess to Mary of Woodstock, daughter of Edward I, a nun at Amesbury, to hold for her life, and she was in possession in 1316 and in 1324.

The priory was dissolved with the other alien religious houses in 1414, and the manor and house of Grovebury were granted to Sir John Philip and his wife Alice. On her death in 1475 it passed to her son John Duke of Suffolk, who with his wife Elizabeth, sister of Edward IV, alienated it in 1480 to the Dean and Canons of St. George at Windsor, with whom it remained until after the middle of the 19th century (VCH 1912).

## 4.2 Cartographic Evidence

The earliest available map is the Enclosure Map of 1844 (BLAR: MA65) this however shows no detail in the area of the development site. A reproduction of a plan attached to the award of 1848 (BLAR: MA79/4) shows the area in more detail (Fig. 5), so does the Tithe Map of 1847 (BLAR: MAT29/5). Both show the development area to be entirely within an enclosed parcel of land marked as 84 on the Tithe and 26 on the Enclosure. This is called the “Green and Pit” on the Tithe apportionment. It clearly has a large L-shaped “pond” within it and is described as “grass and water”. It was held by the trustees of the late Thomas Stevens.

Land to the south and east is open ground attached to the farm of Thomas Pratt, marked as 85 on the Enclosure map but split in two on the Tithe (29 and 30). Land adjacent to the lane to the north is marked as Recreation and Allotments, and is held by the Chapelwardens (for the time being) in 1847.

The 1:2,500 OS Map 1890 shows the area of the site to be very similar to today although there are less buildings adjacent to the site to the north. Old Farm House is not depicted to the south. The present buildings on site can clearly be seen. The grounds are depicted with trees. The 1:2,500 OS Map 1901 shows a similar situation, although Old Farm House is now present.

## 4.3 Known Archaeological Sites

A study of all known archaeological sites in the Bedfordshire HER within 500m has been carried out; these have been listed by chronological period (Fig. 4).

### Prehistoric

A small collection of struck flint found during field-walking and evaluation trenching over 500m to the north-west (centred SP 935 233) points to a very low level of prehistoric activity in the area (EBD575, EDB638 - not illustrated Fig. 4)

An Iron Age hill fort (HER 528) with a single rampart is situated at the top of Billington Hill 300m to the southeast. Limited excavations in the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century produced Iron Age pottery, and also material thought to be in a Bronze Age style. Excavations between 1997 and 2003 found a substantial Iron Age ditch containing a great deal of burnt debris and two inhumation burials.

A linear earthwork (HER 1114) possibly connected with the Iron Age hill fort is located 250m to the south-southeast (not illustrated Fig. 4). A copper alloy Iron Age coin of Cunobelin (MBD20724) was found 500m to the south of the site.

### Roman

Damage was caused by bulldozing operations in the 1950s and by gravel digging to the Billington Hill fort (HER 528), the spoil heaps from which produced pottery of Roman date. A very worn copper Roman coin (MBD20705) was found 500m to the south of the site. A few sherds of Romano-British pottery were found over 500m to the north-west of the site during field-walking (EBD575 - centred SP 935 233).

### **Medieval**

Medieval ridge and furrow is evident to the west of the village (HER 5206) but can also be seen to the east on recent satellite images. Further extensive areas of ridge and furrow were recorded to the north and west during trial trenching in 2007 (EBD638, TVAS 2007).

Two village greens are noted within Billington, both close to the road, one to the north (HER 10774) and one to the south (HER 10773). It is common for a settlement of this size to only have one green and therefore it is possible that Billington started as two small hamlets and expanded along the road. It is also possible that it became polyfocal as it developed as is seen at other settlements in Bedfordshire. The main part of the settlement is speculated to be to the south of the development site (HER 16883) close to the church, although it appears the church was positioned between the two hamlets that would later constitute Great Billington.

St Michael's Church (HER 1022) was built in the 13th century as a Chapel of Ease. This implies that the local was populated enough to warrant such a building at this time. Excavation around Billington hill fort recorded the presence of 13<sup>th</sup> century building platforms (HER 528) 400m to the southeast of the site. Settlement in this area could have commenced at a contemporary date with the Church.

### **Post Medieval**

The site lies within the area of Billington Conservation Area. The County HER lists 26 assets of post-medieval date within this area dating from the 17<sup>th</sup> century onwards. Although these add to the character of the area the site visit noted that the majority are screened from view from the site by trees and hedgerows.

The closest of these is Walker's Farmhouse (HER 6832, DBD1491), on the opposite side of Leighton Road from the site, which is a Grade II listed 17<sup>th</sup> century building. The Gables (HER 5553, DBD1489) and the Orchard's (HER 6830, DBD1488) on Gaddesden Turn both roughly 100m to the northwest are also Grade II listed 17<sup>th</sup> century buildings. Just beyond these was the location of a cruckbuilt cottage, now demolished (HER 10771). The former Wesleyan Methodist (HER 6831) chapel built 1838, now a private house, lies just to the northeast of the site (Figs. 3 & 4).

Excavation around Billington hill fort recorded the presence of post-medieval building platforms (HER 528) 300m to the southeast of the site.

### **Modern**

Set within an open field, 500m to the southwest, was the site of a heavy anti-aircraft

artillery battery during World War 2 (HER 13463).

### **Undated**

Sub-circular cropmarks or soilmarks along with traces of soilmarks or cropmarks are apparent on aerial photographs 500m to the south-southwest of the site. These features may be geological in origin.

## **5 DISCUSSION**

Map evidence suggests that quarrying took place on the site prior to 1847. The full extent is unknown, however the Tithe map records a large area of water known as the pit although this is just outside the boundaries of the site. Such quarrying reduces the potential for archaeological remains to be present.

Prehistoric and Roman finds are known from the south of the study area, with the focus apparently on the fortifications at Billington Hill. The development site is considered to have a very low potential for remains of this period to be present. Any remains present would likely consist of agricultural field systems or practices and would have a relatively low significance.

Present theory suggests that the site is outside the main area of medieval settlement. However, there is speculation of a more fragmented settlement pattern during the earlier medieval period. The map evidence would suggest that the development site is likely to be located on an earlier green and that the one marked to the north is of a post-medieval date. Also the “water feature” recorded as the Pit may indicate quarrying in the area. The name is suggestive of this more than that a pond was constructed. A very low potential must be assumed for remains of the medieval period. Any remains present would therefore likely be related to dwellings and associated structures or plot boundaries. Such remains would have a relatively high local significance.

Due to the number of buildings of a post-medieval date in the area and for the same reasons as the medieval period the potential for remains of this date to be present in the development site should be considered to be low to moderate. Again such remains would have a relatively high local significance.

The significance of such remains has been rated high due to their potential to facilitate the better understanding of the urban development of Billington, establish its basic chronology, status and morphology. There is also their potential to enlighten aspect of the economy and social organisation including commercial or industrial activities. The importance of which has been highlighted in the regional research framework (Brown & Glazebrook 2000, Medlycott 2008).

The potential for remains of a later date is considered low, and any remains of this date would also have a low significance.

## 6 CONCLUSION

The development is located within the Conservation Area and consideration must be given in the design to the impact on the character of this area (Fig. 2).

Although the development site does not contain any designated heritage assets, the listed building adjacent as well as those close by are considered nationally significant. Therefore any development proposed within the study area must have due regard for the setting of these assets.

The development would have an impact on any undesignated belowground assets in the area. Such assets are likely to be associated with medieval settlement in the area. Although there is a low potential for such assets to be present any encountered may have a high significance to the early development of Great Billington at both a local and regional scale.

## 7 BIBLIOGRAPHY

### 7.1 Books and Documents

Brown, N and Glazebrook, J. 2000 *Research and Archaeology: a framework for the eastern counties, 2. research agenda and strategy*

Department for Communities and Local Government 2010 *Planning for the Historic Environment* (PPS 5)

Glazebrook, J. (ed.) 1997 *Research and Archaeology: a framework for the eastern counties, 1. resource assessment*

Institute for Archaeologists 2008 *Standard and Guidance for archaeological desk based assessment.*

Medlycott, M (ed.) 2008 *Research and Archaeology Revisited: a revised framework for the east of England*

TVAS 2007 Pratt's Quarry Extension, Great Billington, Leighton Buzzard, Bedfordshire: an Archaeological Evaluation.

VCH 1912 *A History of the County of Bedford: Volume 3*

### 7.2 Historic Maps

Enclosure Map, 1844 (BLARS: MA65)

Tithe Map, 1847 (BLARS: MAT29/5)

Enclosure Plan 1848 (BLARS: MA79/4)

1:2,500 OS Map 1890  
 1:2,500 OS Map 1901  
 1:2,500 OS Map 1926  
 1:2,500 OS Map 1972

### 7.3 Online Resources

South Bedfordshire Local Plan

[http://www.centralbedfordshire.gov.uk/\\_sbdc-localplan/DATA/contentsfr.html](http://www.centralbedfordshire.gov.uk/_sbdc-localplan/DATA/contentsfr.html)

### 7.4 Aerial Photographs

Sortie No	Frame No.	Centre	Date
RAF/CPE/UK/1965	3418	SP 937 227	10 APR 1947
RAF/CPE/UK/1965	3419	SP 943 226	10 APR 1947
RAF/CPE/UK/2483	3236	SP 938 231	10 MAR 1948
RAF/CPE/UK/2483	3237	SP 944 233	10 MAR 1948
RAF/541/20	4133	SP 937 225	15 MAY 1948
RAF/541/20	4134	SP 945 227	15 MAY 1948
RAF/58/374	5093	SP 942 232	01 MAR 1950
RAF/58/374	5094	SP 939 231	01 MAR 1950
RAF/58/486	5095	SP 940 226	06 JUN 1950
RAF/58/4627	340	SP 942 218	16 AUG 1961
RAF/58/4646	179	SP 947 237	28 AUG 1961
RAF/58/4646	180	SP 938 236	28 AUG 1961
RAF/543/1426	433	SP 944 233	28 AUG 1961
RAF/543/1426	434	SP 937 233	28 AUG 1961
RAF/541/340	3213	SP 940 220	26 JUL 1949
RAF/541/273	3009	SP 946 232	21 JUN 1949
RAF/541/273	3010	SP 940 230	21 JUN 1949
OS/71484	1786	SP 939 227	07 SEP 1971
OS/71484	1787	SP 945 227	07 SEP 1971
OS/64020	346	SP 942 229	12 MAY 1964
OS/89066	98	SP 944 226	08 APR 1989
OS/89066	99	SP 944 231	08 APR 1989
OS/89067	132	SP 945 224	08 APR 1989
OS/89067	133	SP 945 230	08 APR 1989
OS/89102	441	SP 942 229	03 MAY 1989
OS/89102	442	SP 941 226	03 MAY 1989
OS/91239	66	SP 942 228	08 SEP 1991
OS/96630	130	SP 944 231	15 JUN 1996

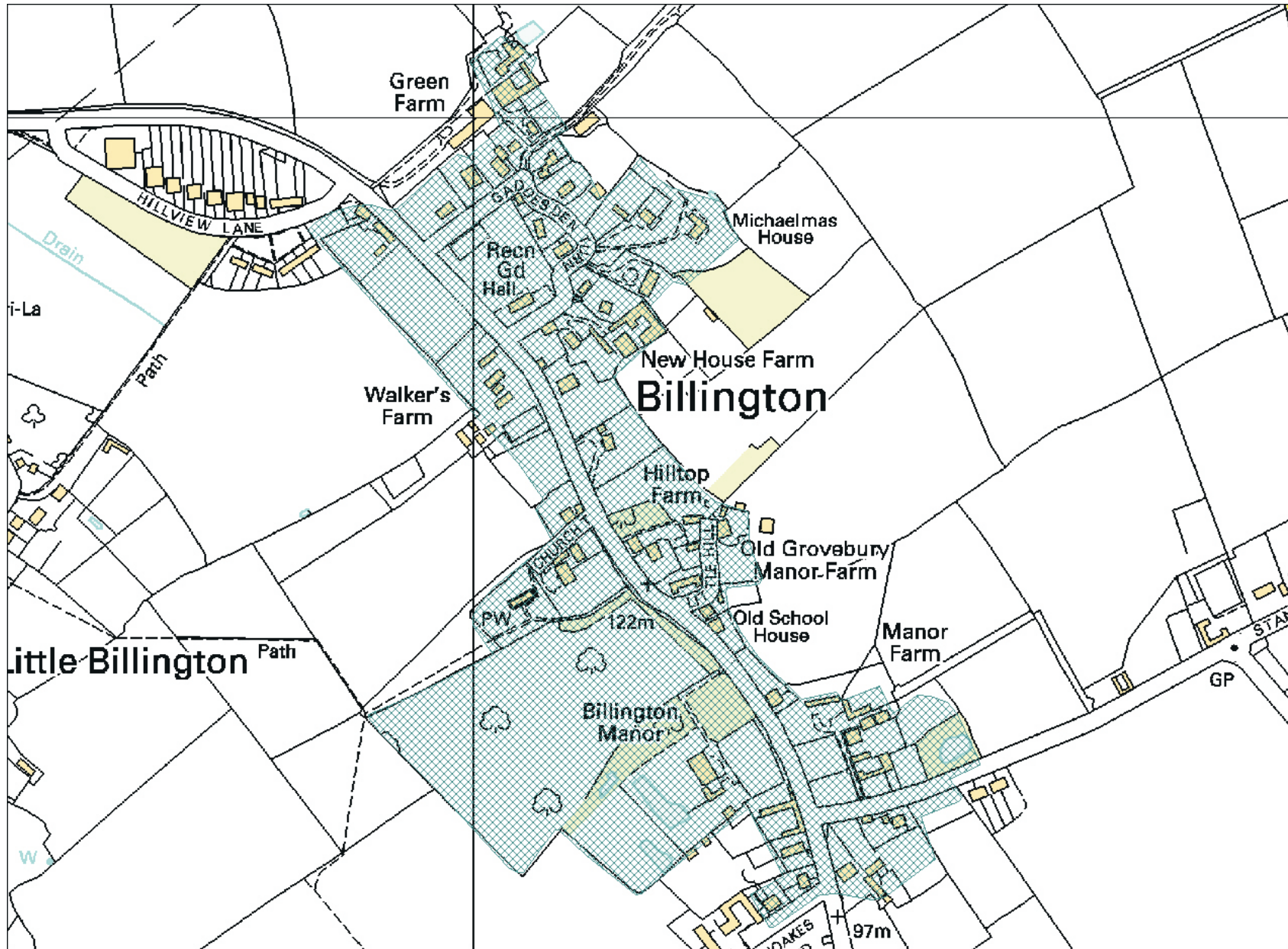


Figure 2. Billington Conservation Area





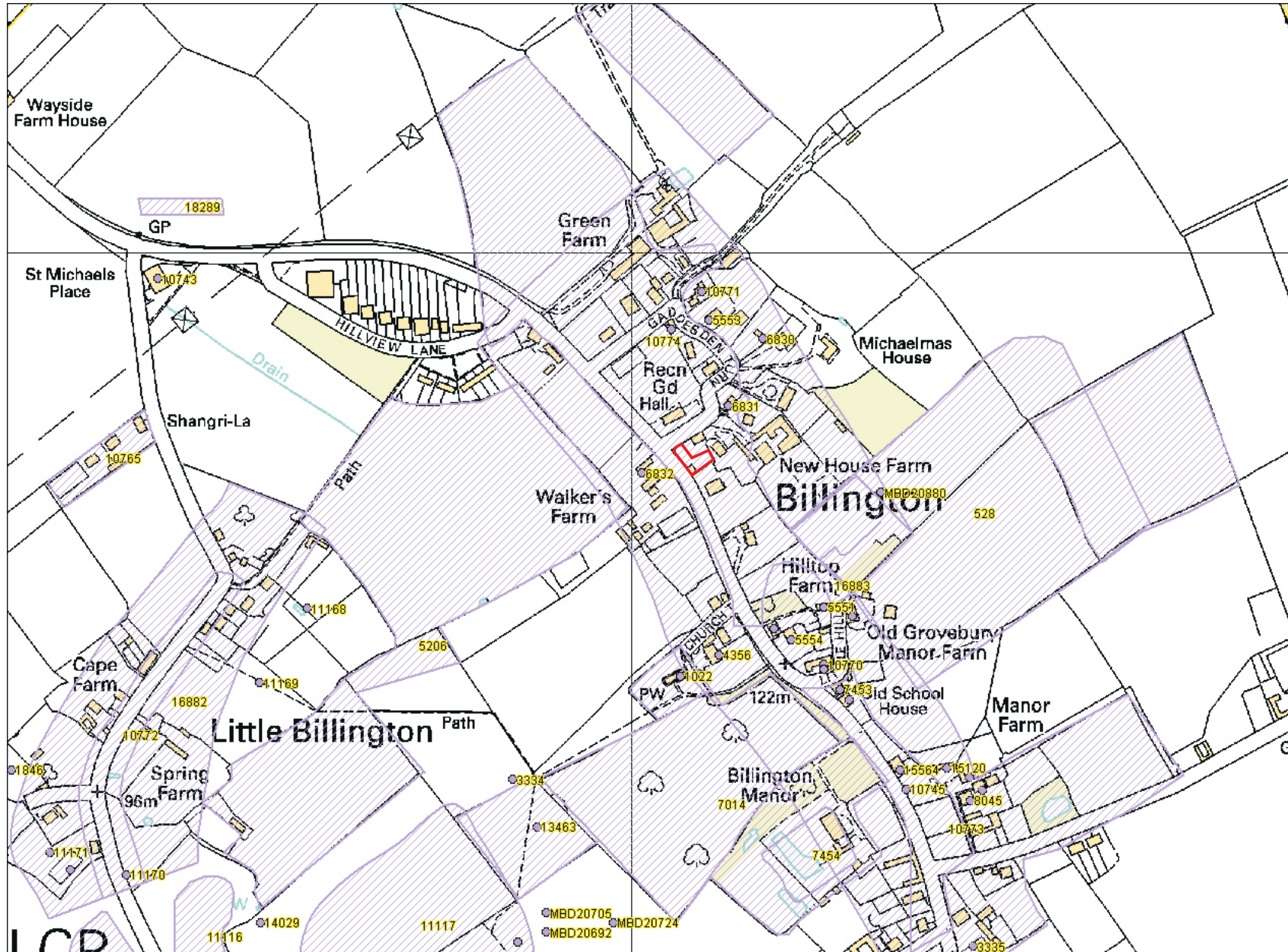




Figure 5. Enclosure Map (additional plan) 1848