



JOHN MOORE HERITAGE SERVICES

HISTORIC BUILDING RECORD

ON

SMITHS FARM OUTBUILDINGS

SMITHS FARM, DIDCOT, OXFORDSHIRE

NGR SU 51798 90309 centred

DECEMBER 2018

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SUMMARY

The study buildings are located within the farmyard of Smith's Farm, off Foxhall Road, Didcot (NGR SU 51799 90311). Historically the farm was located on the western edge of Didcot village in the parish of Didcot, in the hundred of Moreton in Berkshire. The site is now located in Didcot civil parish in South Oxfordshire District of Oxfordshire.

The study buildings are two brick built farm buildings that form the northern and southern sides of the former farmyard, located to the west of Smith's Farmhouse, a grade II listed building. The buildings fall within the curtilage of this building; the site is also located within the Old Didcot conservation area.

The proposal is to demolish the buildings, which has already been consented to by the council.

The possible earliest structure is the southern building, elements of which may have originated as a medieval structure or, more likely, re-used from an earlier medieval building.

The low height of the ceiling on the ground floor suggests that the building served as a cow house rather than a stable, with an overhead loft presumably used for storing feed. However, a horseshoe over the door perhaps indicates otherwise. The building was extended to the west in the late 18th or early 19th century, when an additional stable building was added.

The northern building is likely to have been built in the late 18th or early 19th century; the western end of the building housed a cart or animal shelter shed, while the eastern end was divided into a series of probable loose boxes. The eastern rooms were later reworked in order to accommodate a refrigeration room.

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Origins of the Report

Planning permission was granted for the demolition of outbuildings and the construction of six one-bed units with ancillary works at Smiths Farm, Foxhall Road, Didcot (P16/S1806/FUL). The outbuildings fall within the curtilage of the Grade II listed Smiths Farm and as such a condition was attached to the permission requiring an Historic England level 2 survey to be undertaken prior to demolition.

1.2 Location

The site lies off Foxhall Road to the west of Smith's Farm, a grade II listed farm house. Historically the site was located on the western edge of Didcot village in the parish of Didcot, in the hundred of Moreton in Berkshire. The site is now located in Didcot civil parish in the South Oxfordshire district of Oxfordshire.

1.3 Description

The study buildings are two brick built farm outbuildings that form the northern and southern sides of a courtyard located to the west of Smiths Farm, with the farmhouse forming the eastern boundary and a brick wall forming the west. The north building is located at NGR SU 51797 90322 and the south at SU 51799 90296.

1.4 Geology and Topography

The study site is located on a gently sloping east facing slope, which is at about 75m AOD.

The bedrock geology comprises Upper Greensand Formation, calcareous sandstone and siltstone formed approximately 94 to 113 million years ago in the Cretaceous Period (<http://mapapps.bgs.ac.uk/geologyofbritain/home.html>).

2 RELEVANT LEGISLATION AND PLANNING POLICY GUIDANCE

2.1 Legislation and Treaties

The following pieces of legislation that are listed in historical order are obligatory, and thus significant aspects of the legislation must be adhered too. The relevant heritage acts thus cover the protection of significant heritage (archaeological and standing structures) remains, either below ground or as a standing structure. The identifiable acts came into force in 1857, 1947, 1973, 1979, and 1990.

“The *Burial Act*” of 1857 makes the removal of buried human remains an offence unless a Home Office (now Ministry of Justice) licence, or in relevant circumstances, a faculty from the diocesan consistory court, has first been obtained (HO 2004).



Figure 1: Study buildings

The “*Town and Country Planning Act*” of 1947 lays out the current planning procedures and all subsequent legislation is an adjunct or amendment to this piece of legislation passed after the Second World War. This piece of legislation includes specific points that related to the Historic Environment.

29. *Orders for the preservation of buildings of special architectural or historic interest.*

30. *Lists of buildings of special architectural or historic interest.*

“*The Protection of Wrecks Act*” of 1973 provides specific protection for designated Wreck sites. This piece of legislation does not affect most planning applications.

The “*Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Areas Act*” of 1979 discusses two types of structures: Scheduled Monuments and Ancient Monuments. Scheduled Monuments are automatically protected under the legislation, however, the legislation also provides cover for other monuments. This includes:

- Those that are demonstrably of equivalent significance to scheduled monuments and are thus subject to the same policies.
- Those that have yet to be formally assessed.
- Those that have been assessed as being nationally important and therefore, capable of designation, but which the Secretary of State has exercised his discretion not to designate usually because they are given the appropriate level of protection under national planning policy.
- Those that are incapable of being designated by virtue of being outside the scope of the Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Areas Act 1979 because of their physical nature.

This inevitably means that some nationally important sites for various reasons are not scheduled.

The “*Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act*” of 1990 provides protection for buildings considered to have significant architecture (Listed Building) and also for areas that are considered to have special architectural or historical interest (Conservation Area). There are three ranks for Listed Buildings that are I, II* and II; all of these grades are considered to represent various degrees of national significance. The criteria for these listings are provided in an appraisal document (DCMS 2010). Locally significant buildings should be catalogued by the local authority and kept on a Local List. Any alteration or destruction has to be legally sanctioned by the proper authorities. Particular notice should be taken of sections 16, 66 and 72 of this act, though section 69 may also be considered to have some merit.

This act means that there is a legal requirement to consult Historic England in respect to development that would affect a Grade I or II* listed building (structure and setting), and a development in a Conservation Area that would affect over 1,000 square metres. Development Management Procedure (England 2015) calls for consultation with Historic England on planning that would affect a Scheduled Monument, Registered Battlefield or a Registered Park and Garden (any grade).

Some of these pieces of legislation were designed with other Government policy to underpin the Country's commitment to international legislation and treaties. The two most significant pieces of legislation are the "*Convention Concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage*" of 1972 and also the "*European Convention on the Protection of the Archaeological Heritage*" of 1992. The former treaty is for the creation of a framework for the designation of sites of outstanding universal value that are termed World Heritage Sites. The British Government adheres to this as a member of UNESCO. The latter is also known as the Valletta Convention 1992, which is a development from the Paris Convention 1954 and the Granada Convention of 1985. The British Government is a signatory of all three Treaties. The principle of the latter is the incorporation into the planning process of archaeological decision making and the managed preservation of Archaeological Heritage.

These pieces of legislation covers a series of Designated Heritage Assets: World Heritage Site, Scheduled Monument, Listed Building, Protected Wreck Site, Registered Park and Garden, Registered Battlefield or Conservation Area. This designation means that the site is considered to be an archaeological site of national and in some cases international importance. Such sites are legally protected and can only be disturbed if sanctioned through the appropriate procedures and authorities (Historic England).

2.2 National Planning Guidelines and Policies

Section 16 of the revised National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF 2018) provides guidance related to heritage issues within the planning process. The chapter is titled *Conserving and Enhancing the Historic Environment*. This has been paired with a Planning Practice Guidance, initially published in 2014 and subsequently updated in 2018 (PPG 2014), which attempts to simplify the explanation of certain aspects of *NPPF*. These planning policies should create guidance for standard procedures concerning the treatment of the environment in and around Heritage Assets for planning authorities, property owners, developers, conservationists and researchers.

Paragraph 184 defines what Heritage Assets are in that they are '*sites and buildings of local historic value to those of the highest significance, such as World Heritage Sites which are internationally recognised to be of Outstanding Universal Value.*' The lower designation here is perhaps significant, because it indicates sites and buildings of local significance (entries on a locally produced list of significance or non-designated heritage assets). Heritage Assets are an irreplaceable resource and effective conservation delivers wider social, cultural, economic and environmental benefits.

Paragraphs **185** of the NPPF indicates that the authority should set out a plan for the conservation and enjoyment of the historic environment, and produce an at risk list. The paragraph raises four key points, which Local Authorities should take account of:

- the desirability of sustaining and enhancing the significance of heritage assets and putting them to viable uses consistent with their conservation;
- the wider social, cultural, economic and environmental benefits that conservation of the historic environment can bring;
- the desirability of new development making a positive contribution to local character and distinctiveness; and

- opportunities to draw on the contribution made by the historic environment to the character of a place.

Paragraph **186** of NPPF deals with the consideration of designation of Conservation Areas by local planning authorities, and the ability of these to undermine and devalue the concept of conservation and special interest.

Paragraph **187** and **188** of NPPF reiterates the requirement of each local authority to maintain a Historic Environment Record, which is up to date, and its public accessibility. This covers the assessment and prediction of significant sites (Historic Environment Assessment).

The following paragraphs are also relevant to the effects of the proposed development on Heritage Assets:

189. In determining applications, local planning authorities should require an applicant to describe the significance of any heritage assets affected, including any contribution made by their setting. The level of detail should be proportionate to the assets' importance and no more than is sufficient to understand the potential impact of the proposal on their significance. As a minimum the relevant historic environment record should have been consulted and the heritage assets assessed using appropriate expertise where necessary. Where a site on which development is proposed includes or has the potential to include heritage assets with archaeological interest, local planning authorities should require developers to submit an appropriate desk-based assessment and, where necessary, a field evaluation.

190. Local planning authorities should identify and assess the particular significance of any heritage asset that may be affected by a proposal (including by development affecting the setting of a heritage asset) taking account of the available evidence and any necessary expertise. They should take this assessment into account when considering the impact of a proposal on a heritage asset, to avoid or minimise conflict between the heritage asset's conservation and any aspect of the proposal.

191. Where there is evidence of deliberate neglect of, or damage to, a heritage asset, the deteriorated state of the heritage asset should not be taken into account in any decision

192. In determining applications, local planning authorities should take account of:

- the desirability of sustaining and enhancing the significance of heritage assets and putting them to viable uses consistent with their conservation;
- the positive contribution that conservation of heritage assets can make to sustainable communities including their economic vitality; and
- the desirability of new development making a positive contribution to local character and distinctiveness

The use of the terms '*significance of any heritage assets affected*', and '*the level of detail should be proportionate to the assets' importance*' in paragraph **189** are problematic and vague in some cases, as due to the nature of archaeological sites and historic buildings it is not always apparent what the significance of the site is prior to development, degradation and in some cases total destruction. Pre-application research is often only as good as the available knowledge and in some cases the person conducting the investigation. Indeed '*significance*' is further addressed in PPG 2014 and the fact that in many of these records the account is not necessarily an exhaustive explanation.

Policies on the level of harm to a Heritage Asset are set out in paragraphs **193** and **194** of *NPPF*.

193. When considering the impact of a proposed development on the significance of a designated heritage asset, great weight should be given to the asset's conservation (and the more important the asset, the greater the weight should be). This is irrespective of whether any potential harm amounts to substantial harm, total loss or less than substantial harm to its significance.

194. Any harm to, or loss of, the significance of a designated heritage asset (from its alteration or destruction, or from development within its setting), should require clear and convincing justification. Substantial harm to or loss of:

- grade II listed buildings, or grade II registered parks or gardens, should be exceptional;
- assets of the highest significance, notably scheduled monuments, protected wreck sites, registered battlefields, grade I and II* listed buildings, grade I and II* registered parks and gardens, and World Heritage Sites, should be wholly exceptional

195. Where a proposed development will lead to substantial harm to or total loss of significance of a designated heritage asset, local planning authorities should refuse consent, unless it can be demonstrated that the substantial harm or loss is necessary to achieve substantial public benefits that outweigh that harm or loss, or all of the following apply:

- the nature of the heritage asset prevents all reasonable uses of the site; and
- no viable use of the heritage asset itself can be found in the medium term through appropriate marketing that will enable its conservation; and
- conservation by grant-funding or some form of charitable or public ownership is demonstrably not possible; and
- the harm or loss is outweighed by the benefit of bringing the site back into use.

196. Where a development proposal will lead to less than substantial harm to the significance of a designated heritage asset, this harm should be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal including, where appropriate, securing its optimum viable use

These paragraphs are further discussed and clarified in PPG 2014. These discussions focus on disrepair and damage, viability, deliberate damage and neglect, compulsory purchase, use of the land, successive harmful changes, and also optimum viable use. There is also a section on appropriate marketing to demonstrate the redundancy of a heritage asset qualifying paragraph **195** of the NPPF.

The *NPPF* makes provisions for protecting the significance of non-designated heritage assets in paragraph **197**; while paragraph **198** discusses loss of the whole or part of a heritage asset.

197. The effect of an application on the significance of a non-designated heritage asset should be taken into account in determining the application. In weighing applications that affect directly non designated heritage assets, a balanced judgement will be required having regard to the scale of any harm or loss and the significance of the heritage asset.

198. Local planning authorities should not permit loss of the whole or part of a heritage asset without taking all reasonable steps to ensure the new development will proceed after the loss has occurred.

Paragraph **199** of NPPF discusses wider implications to local authorities and that not every outcome will necessarily be favourable to the developer.

199. Local planning authorities should require developers to record and advance understanding of the significance of any heritage assets to be lost (wholly or in part) in a manner proportionate to their importance and the impact, and to make this evidence (and any archive generated) publicly accessible (footnote). However, the ability to record evidence of our past should not be a factor in deciding whether such loss should be permitted.

The footnote (Copies of evidence should be deposited with the relevant Historic Environment Record, and any archives with a local museum or other public depository) here refers to the Historic Environment Record and local museums amongst other depositories. The phrase "*The ability to record evidence of our past should not be a factor in deciding whether such loss should be permitted*" implies that a paper record of a site is not equivalent to the loss of a significant heritage site. This latter phrase echoes World and European conventions of protection for significant heritage sites.

Paragraphs **200** and **201** discuss World Heritage Sites and Conservation Areas and the loss of assets within them.

200. Local planning authorities should look for opportunities for new development within Conservation Areas and World Heritage Sites and within the setting of heritage assets to enhance or better reveal their significance. Proposals that preserve those elements of the setting that make a positive contribution to the asset (or which better reveal its significance) should be treated favourably.

201. Not all elements of a Conservation Area or World Heritage Site will necessarily contribute to its significance. Loss of a building (or other element) which makes a positive contribution to the significance of the Conservation Area or World Heritage Site should be treated either as substantial harm under paragraph 133 or less than substantial harm under paragraph 134, as appropriate, taking into account the relative significance of the element affected and its contribution to the significance of the Conservation Area or World Heritage Site as a whole.

A final paragraph outlines the potential for conflict between enabling development and the preservation of heritage assets.

202. Local planning authorities should assess whether the benefits of a proposal for enabling development, which would otherwise conflict with planning policies but which would secure the future conservation of a heritage asset, outweigh the disbenefits of departing from those policies.

PPG 2014 broadens the discussion on World Heritage Sites, Designated Heritage Assets, and non-designated heritage assets and calls for consultation in various planning applications with Historic England, Natural England and the Department for Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS). There is further direction concerning consent and lawfulness and consultation and notification requirements. Local planning authorities are required to consult or notify the following groups in certain planning applications: Historic England, The Garden Trust, the national Amenity Societies (listed as the Ancient Monuments Society, Council for British Archaeology, the Georgian Group, the Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings, the Victorian Society, and the Twentieth Century Society) on certain applications.

2.3 Local Planning Policy

Up until 2013 Planning Policy had incorporated the use of regional plans. The plan for the South East (the region to which Oxfordshire is included) was revoked 25th March 2013. The revocation of the South East Plan decentralises planning powers back to local authorities.

The *Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004* and *NPPF* make provision for the use of a development plan. *NPPF* indicates that continued use of the Local Plan is required for decision making in the authority (sections **58** and **126**). The current Local Plan will, therefore, continue to form the basis for determining local planning

applications until superseded by documents produced for the Local Development Framework are available, which includes a new draft Local Plan.

Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 states that:

If regard is to be made to the development plan for the purpose of any determination to be made under the Planning Acts the determination must be made in accordance with the plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise.

South Oxfordshire District Council formerly adopted the South Oxfordshire Local Plan 2033 (SODC) in October 2017. The Local Plan is designed to guide the changing use of land in the district and define its future purpose. Those rules that control the historic environment are listed in Section 8: Natural and Historic Environment. The significant policies are as followed:

Policy ENV6: Historic Environment

Proposals for new development that affect heritage assets (designated and non-designated) must conserve or enhance the significance of the heritage asset and its setting. Proposals will be supported particularly where they:

- i) make a positive contribution to local character and distinctiveness; and/or
- ii) make a positive contribution towards wider social and economic benefits; and or
- iii) provide a viable future use for a heritage asset that is consistent with the conservation of its significance; and/or
- iv) protect a heritage asset that is currently at risk

The council will work with landowners, developers, the community, Historic England and other stakeholders to:

- i) ensure that new development conserves, and where possible enhances, designated heritage assets and non-designated heritage assets and their settings;
- ii) ensure that vacant historic buildings are appropriately re-used as soon as possible to prevent deterioration of condition;
- iii) seek to reduce the number of buildings on the 'Heritage at Risk' Register;
- iv) encourage better understanding of the significance of scheduled monuments on the 'Heritage at Risk' Register and to aid in their protection;
- v) better understand the significance of Conservation Areas in the district through producing Conservation Area Character Appraisals and Management Plans;
- vi) identify criteria for assessing non-designated heritage assets and maintaining a list of such assets as Locally Listed Buildings; and
- vii) encourage Heritage Partnership Agreements, particularly for Listed Buildings on any 'at risk register;
- viii) support Neighbourhood Development Plans where they seek to assess their heritage assets and add to the evidence base.

Applicants will be required to describe, in line with best practice and relevant national guidance, the significance of any heritage assets affected including and contribution made by their setting. The level of detail should be proportionate to the assets' importance. In some circumstances, further survey, analysis and recording will be made a condition of consent.

Policy ENV7: Listed Buildings

Proposals for alteration of, addition to or partial demolition of a listed building or for development within the curtilage of, or affecting the setting of a listed building must:

- i) conserve or enhance the heritage significance and setting;
- ii) respect any features of special architectural or historic interest, including, where relevant, the historic curtilage or context, such as burgage plots, or its value within a group and/or its setting, such as the importance of a street frontage or traditional shopfront; and
- iii) be sympathetic to the listed building and its setting in terms of its siting, size, scale, height, alignment, materials and finishes (including colour and texture), design and form, in order to retain the special interest that justifies its designation through appropriate design and in accordance with the South Oxfordshire Design Guide.

Where a proposed development will lead to substantial harm to or total loss of significance of a designated heritage asset consent will only be granted where it can be demonstrated that the substantial harm or loss is necessary to achieve substantial public benefits that outweigh the harm or loss.

Where a development proposal will lead to less than substantial harm to the significance of a designated heritage asset, this harm should be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal, including securing its optimum viable use.

Proposals for the change of use of a listed building or building within its curtilage will be viewed favourably where it can be demonstrated that the new use can be accommodated without any adverse effect on the special architectural or historic interest of the building and its appearance or character.

Proposals for the substantial or total demolition of a listed building will only be granted in exceptional circumstances, as they are a finite and irreplaceable resource.

Applications involving listed buildings should describe the significance of any heritage assets affected, including any contribution made by their setting. The level of detail provided should be proportionate to the asset's significance.

Policy ENV8: Conservation Areas

Proposals for development within or affecting the setting of a Conservation Area must conserve or enhance its special interest, character, setting and appearance. Development will be expected to:

- i) contribute to the conservation area's special interest and its and its relationship with the setting. The special characteristics of the Conservation area (such as existing walls, buildings, trees, hedges, burgage plots, traditional shopfronts and signs, farm groups, medieval townscapes, archaeological features, historic routes etc.) should be preserved;
- ii) take into account important views within, into or out of the conservation area and show that these would be retained and unharmed;
- iii) respect the local character and distinctiveness of the conservation area in the terms of the development's: siting; size; scale; height; alignment; materials and finishes (including colour and texture); proportions; design; and form, in accordance with the South Oxfordshire Design Guide and any relevant Conservation Area Character Appraisal;
- iv) be sympathetic to the original curtilage of buildings and patterns of development that forms part of the historic interest of the conservation area;
- v) be sympathetic to important spaces such as paddocks, greens, gardens and other gaps or spaces between buildings which make a positive contribution to the pattern of development in the conservation area;
- vi) ensure the wider social and environmental effects generated by the development are compatible with the existing character and appearance of the conservation area; and/or
- vii) ensure no loss of, or harm to any building or feature that makes a positive contribution to the special interest, character or appearance of the conservation area.

Where a proposed development will lead to substantial harm to or total loss of significance of a Conservation area, consent will only be granted where it can be demonstrated that the substantial harm is necessary to achieve substantial public benefits that outweigh that harm or loss.

Where a development proposal will lead to less than substantial harm to the significance of a Conservation Area, this harm will be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal.

Wherever possible the sympathetic restoration and re-use of structures which make a positive contribution to the special interest, character or appearance of the conservation area will be encouraged to prevent harm through the cumulative loss of features which are an asset to the Conservation Area.

Applicants will be required to describe, in line with the best practice and relevant national guidance, the significance of any heritage assets affected including any contribution made by their setting. The level of detail should be proportionate to the assets' importance. In some circumstances, further survey, analysis and recording will be made a condition of consent.

3 BACKGROUND

3.1 Designation

The Study buildings themselves are not listed; however they fall within the curtilage of Smiths Farm, a grade II listed building. This is listed as:

Smiths Farmhouse and attached walls (UID: 248615), Foxhall Road. Farmhouse. Early C17 with later alterations. Timber framing to left; rendered infill; render, probably on timber framing to centre and right; old plain-tile hipped roof; brick ridge stack to left of centre. 2 storeys and attic; 3-window range. Part-glazed plank door to left of centre with open brick porch with hipped old plain-tile roof. 2-light metal leaded casement to right. 4-light metal leaded casement to right of centre. 2-light metal casement to left. 2-light metal leaded casements to first floor centre and right. 4-light casement to left. Cross-gable to centre with 2-light casement. Timber framing to right return. Grey brick with red brick dressings to left of left return, tile-hanging to first floor right. Interior not inspected. Wall forming forecourt and brick wall to left with angled coping

The site is also located on the western side of the Didcot Old Conservation Area, which was established in 1979.

3.2 Cartographic Evidence

Smiths Farm is first depicted in detail on the Didcot Tithe map of 1842 (Figure 2). Here the farm is laid out in an irregular U-plan; the farmyard extends to the west of the current boundary and a series of dispersed farm buildings are seen. The study buildings are depicted, although the northern building is longer than at present. The configuration of the buildings does not change when they are depicted on the Inclosure map of 1852 (Q/RDC/26/B). The site is depicted in greater detail on the 1:2500 First Edition Ordnance Survey County Series map of 1878; the farm is seen to be in the same configuration as the earlier tithe map. The farmyard is separated from the farmhouse by a boundary wall that runs north-south between the two study buildings. The surviving northern building is divided into two; the western half is depicted to be open on its southern side. To the west of the open section is a larger rectangular building that is no longer present. The configuration of the buildings does not change when depicted on later editions of the 1:2500 scale maps (Figure 3).

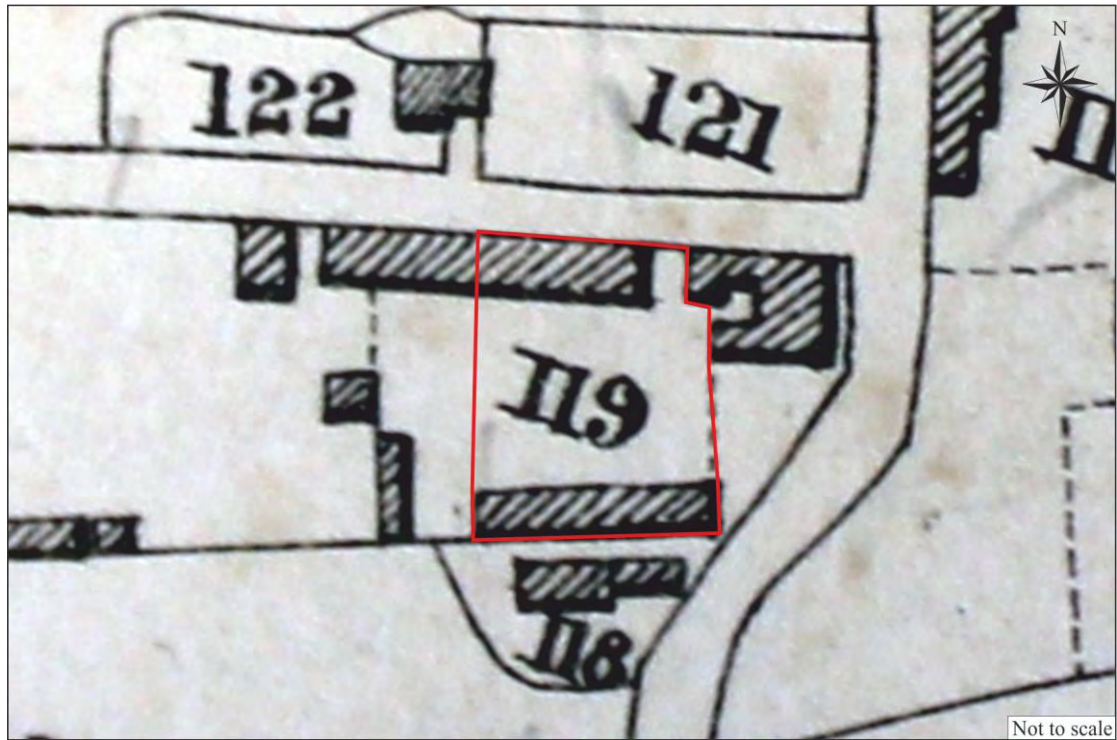


Figure 2: Didcot tithe map of 1842 (D/D1/47/1).

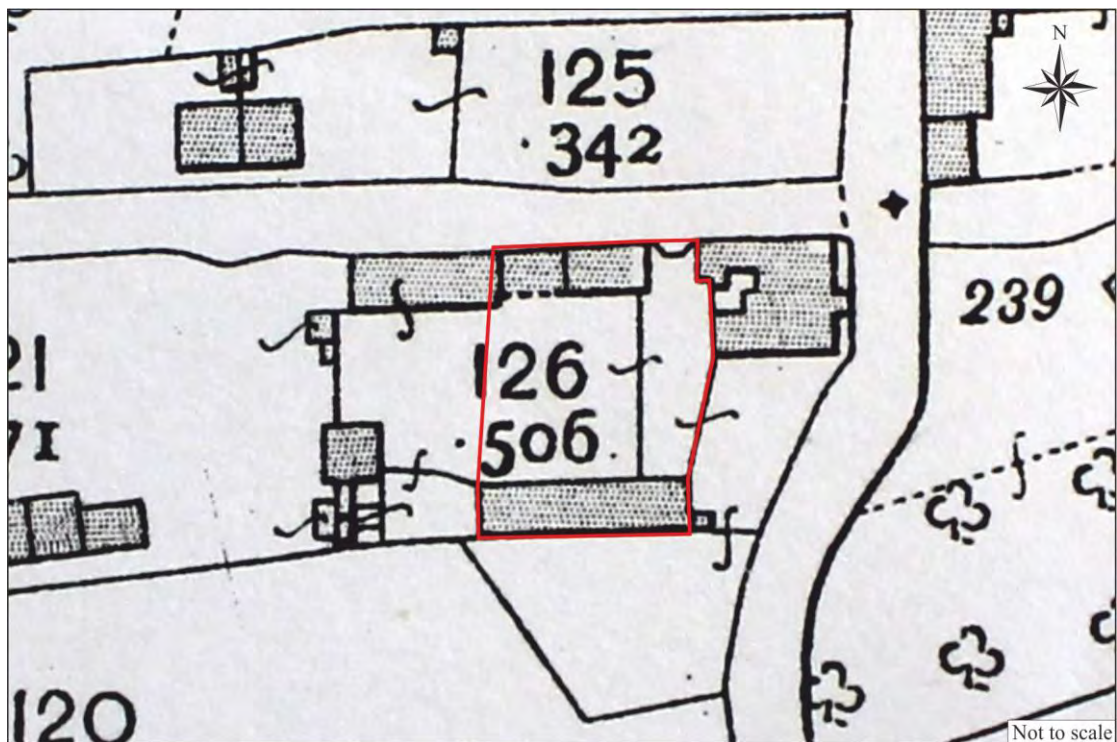


Figure 3: 1:2500 OS County Series Berks XV.7 1912

4 DESCRIPTION OF SMITHS' FARM OUTBUILDINGS

4.1 Introduction and General Description

The northern building is a single storey structure predominantly of red brick, with a section of weatherboarding on the southern elevation; the roof is gabled and tiled with plain clay tiles.

The southern building has an eastern part that is one and a half storeys and built of red brick, with a gabled red clay plain tile roof. The western part is a single storey, also of red brick with a plain tile roof; the western end of the roof is half-hipped while the eastern is gabled.

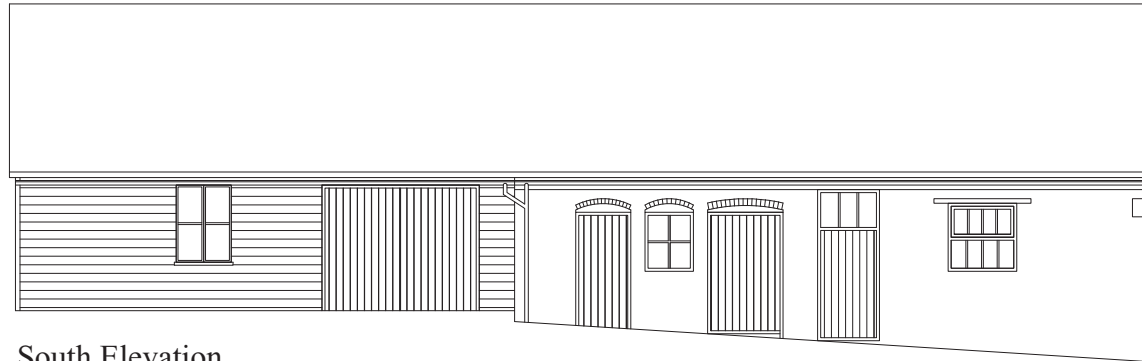
4.2 External Elevations

Northern Building (Figures 4 & 6)

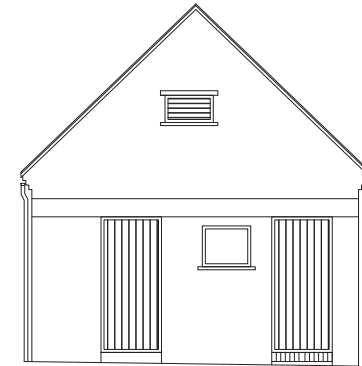
The southern elevation of the northern building comprises two sections (Plate 1). The western section is weatherboarded, and consists of 3 structural bays. The left hand bay is blank. The central bay contains a rectangular fixed window of 4 panes and the right bay contains a planked double door. The eastern section is of red brick set in a Flemish garden wall bond and also of three structural bays; brick corbelling is present below the eaves. The bricks used in construction measure 223mm x 105mm x 66mm. The left hand bay is occupied by a plank door headed by a segmental brick arch. To the right of the doorway is a rectangular window. The second bay is occupied by a wider doorway containing a plank door and headed by a segmental brick arch; to the right is another doorway, also containing a plank door. This doorway is headed by a mullioned light of 3 panes. The third bay is occupied by a boarded up window. This is headed by a timber lintel.



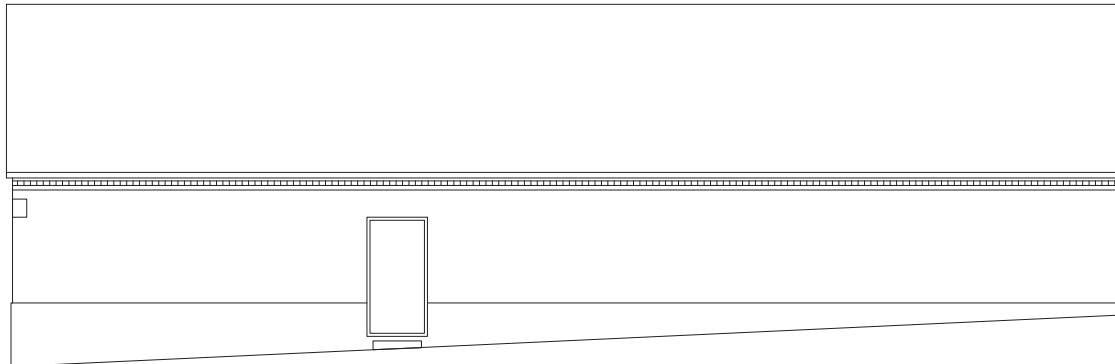
Plate 1: North building, southern elevation.



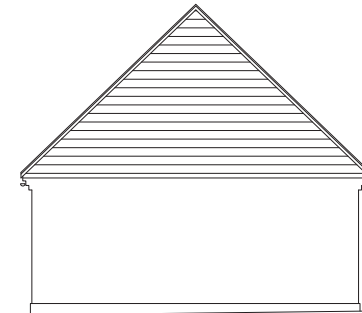
South Elevation



East Elevation



North Elevation



West Elevation

Figure 4: External elevations - north building

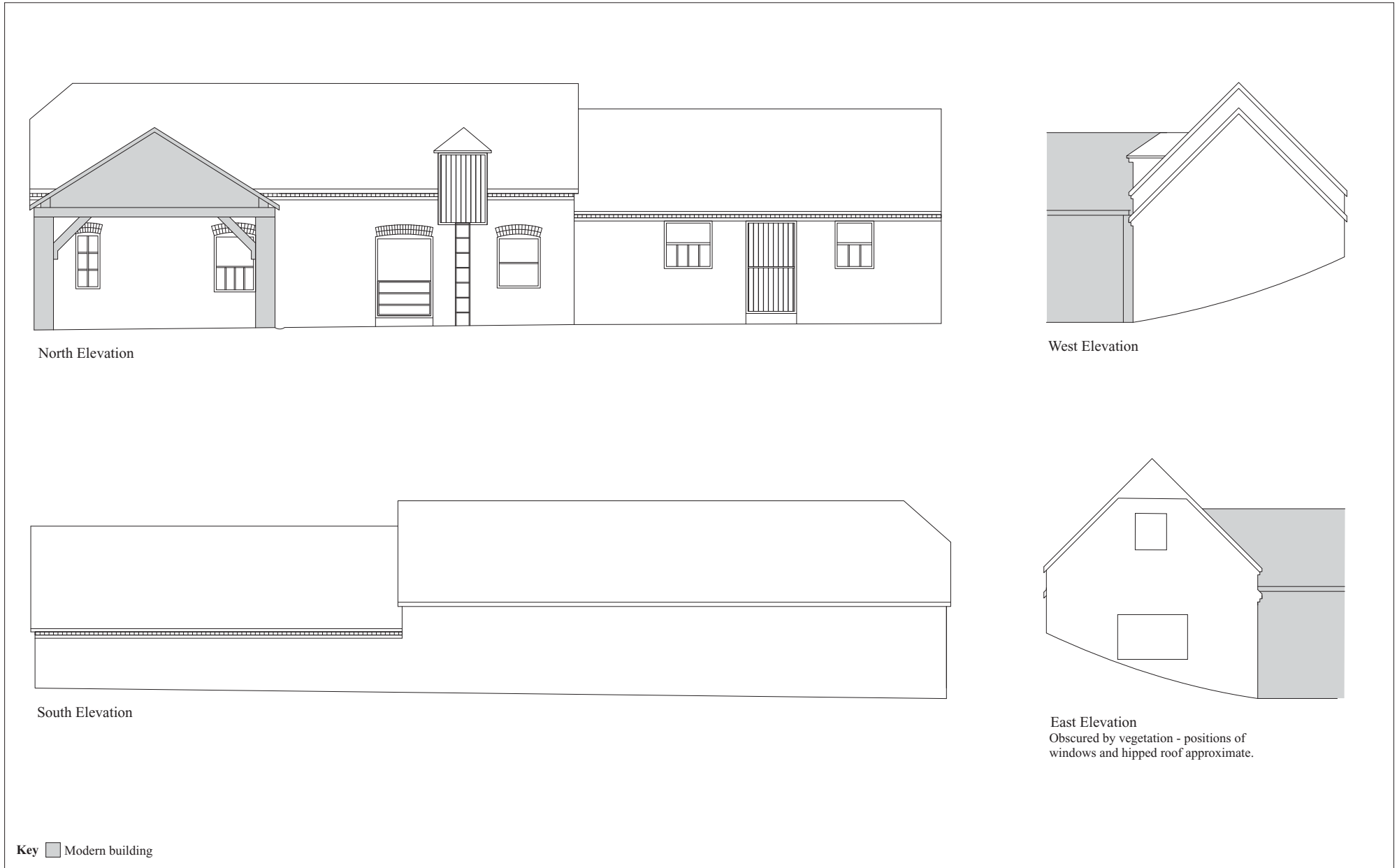


Figure 5: External elevations - south building



Plate 2: North building, eastern and northern elevations.

The northern elevation of the building is brick built (Plate 2). A brick plinth is present, increasing in height as the ground drops from west to east. The brick corbelling evident below the eaves on the southern elevation is seen again here. A doorway is located in the third bay from the eastern end of the elevation; this is occupied by a metal plated door.

The eastern elevation contains two doorways, both containing planked doors (Plate 2). The left hand door is accessed by a concrete step, while the right is accessed by a brick step. A boarded up window is located between the doors to the right of centre. Located above the doors is an exposed wooden tie beam that runs the width of the gable; in the centre of the gable is a louvered wooden vent.

The western elevation is blank; the lower wall is built of brick while the gable is weatherboarded.

Southern Building (Figure 5)

The eastern half of the building, which is 1 ½ storeys, comprises 3 ½ bays (Plate 3). The building is built of bricks measuring 226mm x 95mm x 67mm that are set in an English bond; half a bay at the western end of the structure is built of bricks measuring 223mm x 105mm x 66mm set in a Flemish garden wall bond, suggesting it may be a later addition. Brick dentilation is present below the eaves.

The left hand bay of the north elevation contains a small rectangular fixed window of 6 panes headed by a segmental brick arch (Plate 4). The middle bay contains a rectangular fixed window headed by a segmental brick arch. The right hand bay contains a wide doorway headed by a segmental brick arch that opens onto the ground floor. A metal barred gate is present in the lower half of the doorway. Located above and to the right of this is a doorway to the first floor; this is located at a higher level and is accessed by a metal ladder. The doorway sits within a small hipped and tiled dormer that extends from the roof. The sides of the dormer are weatherboarded. The half bay contains a 2 light rectangular window; the upper light is a casement while the lower is a fixed light, also containing a single pane. To the right of this window is an iron downpipe.



Plate 3: Southern building, northern elevation.

The western end of the building is a single storey structure of 3 bays (Plate 3). This is built of brick in a Flemish garden wall bond. Brick corbelling is again evident below the eaves. The left hand bay of the northern elevation contains a square fixed light window of 1 pane over 4, headed by a wooden lintel. This is blocked from inside the building; to the left of the window is an iron downpipe. The central bay contains a wide doorway occupied by a planked stable door, headed by a wooden lintel. The right hand bay contains a square boarded up window.



Plate 4: Southern building, eastern end of northern elevation.

The eastern and western elevations of the building were covered in vegetation at the time of the visit and so could not be seen; the southern elevation, viewed from a footpath that ran behind the building, was also totally obscured by vegetation.

4.3 Interior (Figure 6)

Northern Building

Room G1 is entered from the south through planked double doors. These appear to be a modern addition; as does the weatherboarding that forms the southern wall of this room.



Plate 5: Northern building, modern weatherboarding and original post in room G1.

Adjacent to this wall are two posts, set on stone pads, which support truss beams (Plate 5). The north and east walls of the room are whitewashed. The eastern wall is rendered to a height of approximately 1.00m, above which the brick is exposed; the northern wall has a concrete plinth to a height of 0.4m; the base of the western wall has two courses of concrete block, overlain by red brick. The floor is concrete. The room is open to the roof; three bays are visible, formed from two tie beam trusses with angled posts and clasped-purlins (Plate 6). The central bay also contains a metal tie in the place of a king post. Lateral beams extend west from the centre of the tie beams into the apex of the roof; these are likely to be a modern addition, installed in order to counter the lean of the roof timbers, which are slanted to the east. The gables at each end of the room are boarded.



Plate 6: Northern building, roof truss in room G1.

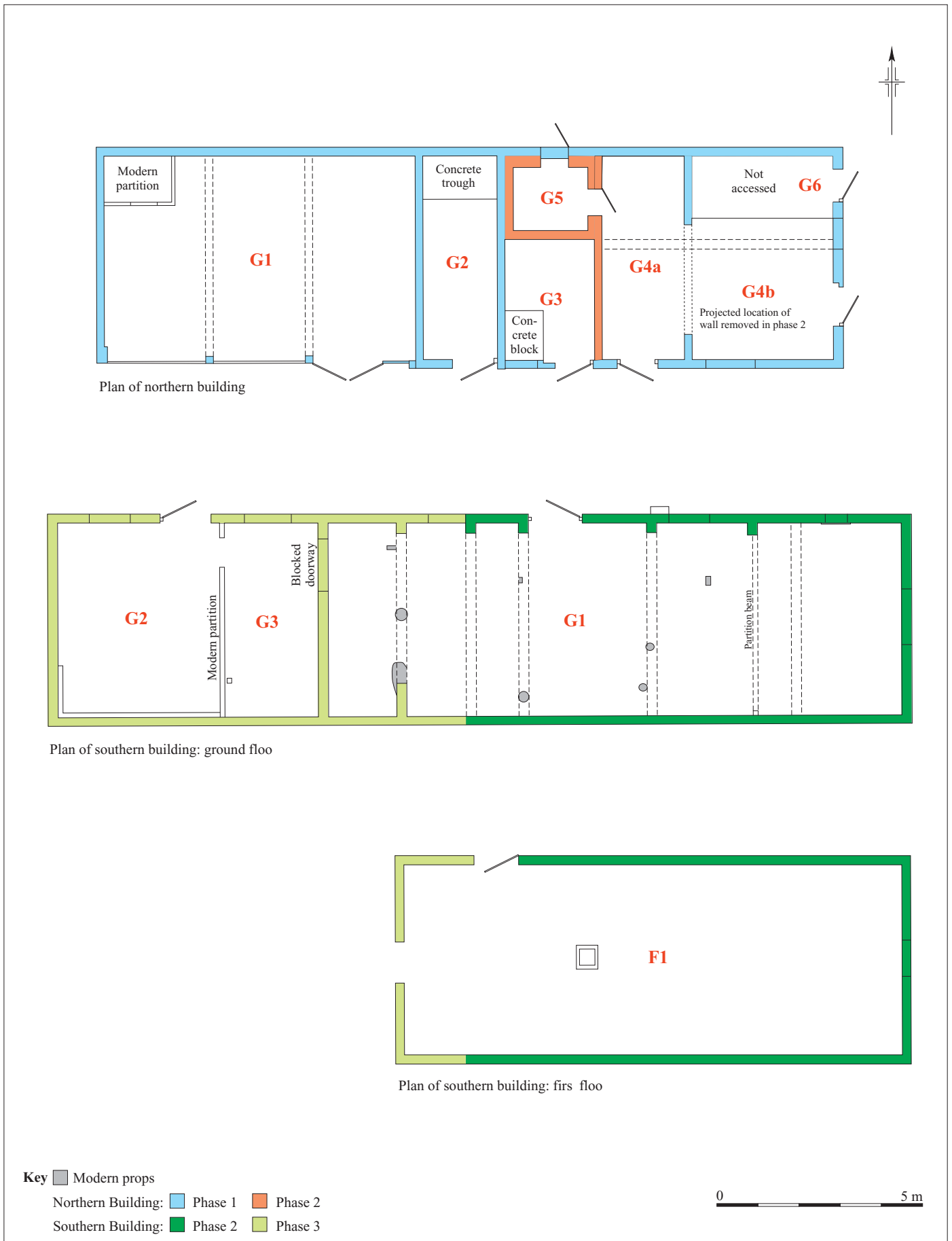


Figure 6: Floor plans

Room G2 is entered from the south through a planked door; the southern wall is brick, finished in whitewash. The eastern wall has a brick plinth approximately 0.4m in height; above this the wall is timber framed, with brick infill, to a height of approximately 1.5m. Above this are 4 courses of concrete block, extending to the base of a tie beam (Plate 8). A small hay rack is attached to this wall.

The northern wall is whitewashed; a concrete trough is present at the base of the wall. Associated with the trough is a metal frame to which two collars are attached (Plate 7). The western wall is brick, with a horizontal timber beam at a height of approximately 1.2m. This wall extends to the base of a truss. The room is open to the roof and two trusses are visible; the western truss has a king strut and tie-beam; two angled struts and two queen struts are also present on either side of the truss. The eastern truss has a tie-beam with angled struts. A support has been added that extends from the eastern wall to a collar beam near the apex of the western truss. This has failed. The floor is concrete.



Plate 7: Northern building, trough and collars in room G2.



Plate 8: Northern building, original partition with later concrete block extension in room G2.

Room G3 is entered from the south through a planked door. This door sits within a larger doorway, the western side of which is infilled by two vertical wooden planks.

To the west of the door is a rectangular fixed light window with 4 panes separated by wooden glazing bars. Three rectangular vents are present at the top of the wall (Plate 9). The eastern and northern walls are built from concrete blocks; the western wall is the same as the eastern wall of room G2. The floor is unfinished concrete and the ceiling is plain board.



Plate 9: Northern building, ventilation in room G3.

Rooms G4a and G4b appear to have been created by removing a wall between two smaller rooms. Room G4a is entered from the south through a planked door. The eastern wall contains an opening to room G4b; the northern wall is blank. The western wall contains the doorway to room G5; to the south of this doorway a machine of unknown function is mounted onto the wall. Room G4b is entered to the west from room G4a (Plate 10); there is no barrier between the two rooms. The southern wall of room G4b contains a square 2 light window; the upper light is a bottom hung casement of 4 panes while the lower is a fixed light, also containing 4 panes; a partially blocked doorway that contains a plank door is located on the eastern wall, to the north of which is a 2 light side hung casement window with 1 pane in each light. With the exception of some pipework the northern wall is blank. The floor of rooms G4a and G4b are tiled; the tiles extend up the base of the walls by a single course. A transverse steel beam is present at ceiling height in the presumed location of the former wall between rooms G4a and G4b; a longitudinal beam runs from the centre of the eastern gable end into the western wall of G4a. This appears to be a re-used wall post.



Plate 10: Northern building, eastern wall of room G4b.



Plate 11: Northern building, room G4a showing later refrigerator door.

Room G5 is entered on the eastern side from room G4a. It is accessed via an insulated door. The room appears to have been designed for refrigeration. The lower half of each wall is metal lined, as is the floor, while the upper parts of the walls are boarded (Plate 12). The northern wall contains a doorway giving access to the exterior. A fan is present on the western wall.

Room G6, accessed from the eastern gable end of the building, was not accessible due to the installation of emergency wooden supports on the gable end.



Plate 12: Northern building, western wall of refrigeration room (room G5).

Southern Building

Room G1 is accessed on its northern side through a metal framed gate. The walls are rendered to a height of approximately 1.2m, above which the fair-faced brickwork is whitewashed. The floor of the room has a concrete slab. A square opening is present in the ceiling of the room, located centrally on the longitudinal axis of the building, to the east of the doorway (Plate 13). This opens into a shaft that extends upwards into the roof.



Plate 13: Southern building, square opening in ceiling of room G1.

From east to west the northern wall contains: a single light side hung casement window with 2 panes over 3; this is protected by 5 horizontal metal bars. To the west of the window at ceiling height is a transverse beam which supports longitudinal joists

for the floor above. The beam is chamfered but has no decorative stops. To the west of the beam is a brick support, upon which rests a transverse beam at ceiling height; unlike the beam to the east this is not load bearing and may indicate the location of a former partition. A casement window of 2 lights is located to the west of this support; the upper light of the window is missing, although the remaining fixtures indicate that this light was a bottom hung casement. The lower light is fixed and contains 4 vertical panes. Another brick support is located to the west of the window; this supports a load bearing transverse beam which in turn supports ceiling joists. This beam is also chamfered; the southern end displays simple run out stops. Where found in domestic buildings these have been dated to 1599, 1608/9 in Hampshire examples (Roberts 2010, 113), which appears too early for this building but could include timber of an older date, or indicate the beginning of a style that continued to be used.



Plate 14: Southern building, northern wall of room G1



Plate 15: Southern building, room G1 showing reused or repositioned beam.

The entrance to the room is located to the west of this beam (Plate 14); a further brick support with transverse ceiling beam is located on the western side of the doorway. To the west of this beam is a further brick support, upon which rests a transverse beam at ceiling height; this support marks the position, seen both on the exterior and interior of the building, where the size and bond of the brickwork changes, indicating a

separate phase of construction. This beam is chamfered and appears to have been reused or re-positioned; joints for joists are present along the length of the beam however these do not house the joists present in the ceiling (Plate 15).

Immediately to the west of the support is a two light window. Both lights are missing, however, the remaining fixtures indicate that the top light was a bottom hung casement. A single metal bar, set horizontally, is present in front of the lower light; rust staining indicates that two additional bars were present below this but have since been removed. To the west of the window is a final brick support and beam which also marks the end of the ceiling created by the first floor, beyond this point the westernmost end of the room is open to the roof.



Plate 16: Southern building, southern wall of room G1 showing rail for hay rack attached to ceiling beam and possible partition beam.

The eastern wall contains a large central window; this was blocked and no evidence of glazing was seen. The southern wall is relatively devoid of features (Plate 16). A timber rail is set into the wall at a height of approximately 1.3m; from the western end of the wall this runs for a length of approximately 9m; this may be associated with a square sectioned rail attached to the carrier beams that runs parallel, approximately 0.5m north of the southern wall. Only a short section of this beam is present, although notches in the transverse carrier beams indicate that it ran for a similar distance as the wall rail. These features are likely to be the remnants of a hay rack. A post is located against the wall, 3.5m from the eastern end; this supports a transverse non-load bearing beam that is possibly associated with a former internal partition. A brick support is located 3.5m from the western end of the wall; this holds a transverse beam and is mirrored by a similar support on the northern wall. Located 1.5m from the western end of the wall is a short brick wall that extends approximately 0.8m north from the wall. This is also associated with a transverse beam that runs to a corresponding brick support on the northern wall.



Plate 17: Southern building, access point to room G2 in western wall of room G1.

The western wall contains a blocked hatch that opens into room G3 (Plate 17); this is 1.12m in height and 1.1m in width. The westernmost section of the room is open to the roof; the western wall extends to the height of the purlins, which are supported on brick pedestals built into the wall. Above the purlins the wall contains horizontal boarding.

Room G2 is accessed on its north side from the courtyard. The room is entered through a planked stable door and a modern panel door. The walls of the room have been clad in wooden sheeting, obscuring any original features (Plate 18). The floor is a concrete slab. A window is located in the north wall to the west of the door, however this has been blocked from the inside; the eastern wall contains a doorway to room G3. The remaining walls are blank.



Plate 18: Southern building, northern wall of room G2.

Room G3 is accessed on its west side from room G2 through a modern panel door. This room seems to be a modern creation through the insertion of a stud partition and its separation from room G2 (Plate 19). A post is located against this wall, approximately 1.0m from the southern wall; this extends through the ceiling. The north wall contains a window; however, this is blocked from the inside. The remaining walls are blank.



Plate 19: Southern building, southern wall of room G3.

Room F1 is accessed via a metal ladder from the courtyard. This room could not be accessed during the site visit due to safety concerns. However, views of the room were possible from room G1 due to the deterioration of the floor of F1. The room is a low-walled half storey loft, located above room G1. The floor is boarded.

The eastern gable contains an unglazed square window (Plate 22); the western gable contains a low window or access point headed by a segmental arch that opens into room G1 (Plate 23). The roof structure is divided into 3 ½ bays; these are formed by 3 trusses. The extension to the western end of the building, as indicated by the brickwork, has resulted in the creation of an additional ½ bay. The trusses are upper base cruck trusses with a single collar and trenched purlins (Plate 21); metal ties run horizontally from the back of each cruck blade into the wall, performing the function of a cruck-spur. Cruck construction is recognised as a means of construction from the late 13th century to the late 15th century (Roberts 2010, 15). This is indicative of the timber frame being from an earlier medieval building.

A square wood planked structure, located in the centre of the room, rises from the floor into the roof; there was no evidence that this structure could be accessed from within the room (Plate 20). As such this may be a ventilation shaft, installed in order to allow the circulation of air through the ground floor of the building.



Plate 20: Southern building, roof trusses and vent structure in room F1.



Plate 21: Southern building, roof trusses in room F1.



Plate 22: Southern building, window in eastern gable wall in room F1.



Plate 23: Southern building, access between rooms G1 and F1 at western end of room G1.

5 ASSESSMENT

5.1 Phases

Northern building

Phase 1

The western end of building (room G1) was a cart or shelter shed, open on its southern side. To the east the building appears to have been divided into four rooms, each accessed from the exterior; rooms G2, G3 and G4a were accessed from the southern side of the building while G4b and G6 were accessed from the eastern side. During this phase rooms G3 and G4a formed a larger room; the current door to room G4a may have originally been a window. Internally rooms G2 and G3/G4a were separated by a half height partition; the partition survives, although it has been extended upwards at a later date. The form of these rooms indicates that they may have been loose boxes; extant features including a trough survive in room G2, while a series of three metal vents are located above the door to room G3.

Based on physical evidence the only indication of date is that the general size of the bricks, and in particular their depth of 67mm, and must post-date the brick legislation of 1769 (Harmon 1981, 30-31). This building is therefore likely to originate as a structure of the late 18th century to the early 19th century. The building is first depicted, apparently in its current form, on the Didcot tithe map of 1842 (Figure 2).

Phase 2

The internal wall dividing rooms G4a and G4b was removed, creating a single larger room and a concrete block partition wall was erected between rooms G3 and G4a. A refrigeration room (room G5) was inserted into the northern half of room G3, with doorways to access the room present in room G4a and in the northern exterior wall of the building. The external walls of the refrigeration room are also built of concrete block.

Southern building

Phase 1

The crucks and some of the chamfered and stopped beams are derived from an original cruck building, and as such may have been part of an earlier medieval barn or hall house that would date from the late 13th to the late 15th century. Whether the timbers seen here represent the *in-situ* alteration of an earlier building, or removal and re-use from a different building is not certain; the most likely explanation given the general lack of evidence for any other medieval fabric is that the timber has been reused from an earlier building.

Phase 2

This phase consisted of a detached 1 ½ storey brick building. The size of the brick used in construction is about 66mm in depth and as such it was produced post 1769

(Harmon 1981, 30). The low height of the ceiling on the ground floor suggests that the building served as a cow house rather than a stable, with the loft above serving as a feed store or a granary. However, a horseshoe above a door perhaps indicates that the building served as a stable. The surviving evidence for this comprises the upper rail of the feed rack and notches where the rack continued, indicating its presence along the southern wall of the building. There is also possible evidence of internal partitions in the form of transverse timbers that do not appear to be load bearing. Internal bars on the windows of the building are likely to have been installed in order to avoid damage as a result of animal movement.

Phase 3

This phase saw an extension to the western side of the building. This extended the 1 ½ storey building by ½ a bay, adding a window to the northern wall and an internal access point to the first floor. The purpose of this section is unclear; however the most likely explanation is that it was added in order to move feed between floors internally. A single storey building was added to the west of the 1 ½ storey building. The form of this building indicates that it was also a cow house or stable, although no internal features were seen that could provide further evidence. The building appears to be in this configuration when first depicted on the Didcot Tithe Map of 1842 (Figure 2).

Phase 4

At some point both buildings were stripped of their presumed internal divisions and fittings. The walls of the single storey building were clad in wooden board and the larger room was sub-divided into two and the windows were blocked; a sign on the door of the building indicates that these rooms were used for chemical storage. The larger building appears to have been used for general storage.

5.2 Historic and Architectural Assessment

The southern building is an important surviving structure as it contains three cruck trusses, either indicating that this is the remains of a medieval building or, more likely, that it contains re-used medieval structural elements.

The ground floor of the southern building served as a stables or cowhouse, with the loft presumably used for storing feed. At some point this building was extended, adding an additional stable to the western end. The extension of the building and the construction of the northern building may date to the later 18th or early 19th century.

There is relatively little evidence pertaining to the original function of the buildings; as such interpretation is predominantly reliant on their architectural forms. The northern building is likely to have served as a cart/shelter shed and series of loose boxes for either cattle or horses.

These buildings appear initially to be typical of historic farm buildings in the region; however, this belies the fact that the south building has rare features and may be a medieval building at its core. The extension of the southern building and addition of the northern building help to demonstrate the growth of the farm through the late 18th

and 19th centuries. There is little survival of any original features, likely as a result of continual adaption and use.

6 CONCLUSIONS

The study buildings are located within the farmyard of Smith's Farm, off Foxhall Road, Didcot (NGR SU 51799 90311). Historically the farm was located on the western edge of Didcot village in the parish of Didcot, in the hundred of Moreton in Berkshire. The site is now located in Didcot civil parish in the South Oxfordshire District of Oxfordshire.

The study buildings are two brick built farm buildings that form the northern and southern sides of the former farmyard, located to the west of Smith's Farmhouse, a grade II listed building. The buildings fall within the curtilage of this building; the site is also located within the Old Didcot conservation area.

The proposal is to demolish the buildings, which has already been consented to by the council.

The possible earliest structure is the southern building, elements of which may have originated as a medieval structure but most likely re-used in this building.

The low height of the ceiling on the ground floor suggests that the building served as a cow house rather than a stable, with an overhead loft presumably used for storing feed. However, a horseshoe over the door perhaps indicates otherwise. The building was extended to the west in the late 18th or early 19th century, when an additional stable building was added.

The northern building is likely to have been built in the late 18th or early 19th century; the western end of the building housed a cart or animal shelter shed, while the eastern end was divided into a series of probable loose boxes. The eastern rooms were later reworked in order to accommodate a refrigeration room.

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7.2 Historic Maps

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