

JOHN MOORE HERITAGE SERVICES

**STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE &  
IMPACT ASSESSMENT**

**ON**

**UPPER PARK FARM,  
BECKLEY, OXFORDSHIRE**

**NGR SP 57246 11417**

*On behalf of*




*c/o*

*Roderick James Architects LLP*

**NOVEMBER 2015**

**REPORT FOR**

  
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## CONTENTS

1 INTRODUCTION	1
1.1 Location	1
1.2 Commission	1
1.3 Aims of Investigation	1
2 BACKGROUND	3
2.1 Designation	3
2.2 History of Development	3
3 DESCRIPTION OF UPPER PARK FARM / INTEGRITY OF STRUCTURE	6
3.1 Introduction and General Description	6
3.2 Façades	6
3.3 Internal	6
4 ASSESSMENT	8
4.1 Phases	8
4.2 Listed status	8
4.3 Historic and Architectural Assessment	9
5 THE CURRENT PROPOSAL	9
6 THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE SUBJECT SITE	9
6.1 Evidential Value	9
6.2 Historical Value	10
6.3 Aesthetic Value	10
6.4 Communal Value	10
6.5 Summary of Significance	10
7 CONCLUSIONS	11
8 BIBLIOGRAPHY	11

## FIGURES

Figure 1	Site location	2
Figure 2	Ground floor showing major areas of development	4
Figure 3	First floor showing major areas of development	5

## **1 INTRODUCTION**

### **1.1 Location**

Upper Park Farm, Beckley, Oxfordshire (NGR SP 57246 11417) is located within the historic parish of Beckley (Figure 1). The parish was set within the historic Hundred of Bullington, earlier Headington, and the historic County of Oxfordshire. Historic changes were made to the parish in 1829 and 1932 (VCH 1957, 56-76). Beckley is now within the civil parish of Beckley and Stowood, the district of South Oxfordshire, and the modern County of Oxfordshire.

The building is of an L shaped structure made up of main ranges with the front one facing the west with the others extending towards the east. The farmhouse sits within a lightly wooded area that extends to the west, south and the east. To the south of the farmhouse there is an outbuilding, beyond which and slightly further away there are further farm buildings. To the north of the house there are fields and beyond the wooded area to the east, south and west there are further fields.

Topographically the site is located on the crest of a bluff between 110m and 115m Ordnance Datum. The bluff is located on the north edge of the hill on which the village of Beckley is located, with the hill being roughly aligned east to west and with the bluff in this location facing towards the north and northeast.

The underlying geology of the site consists of the West Walton Formation ([mapapps.bgs.ac.uk/geologyofbritain/home.html](http://mapapps.bgs.ac.uk/geologyofbritain/home.html)) an undifferentiated sedimentary bedrock of mudstone, siltstone and sandstone formed approximately 156 to 165 million years ago in the Jurassic Period.

### **1.2 Commission**

This report was commissioned by Nicholas Wordie of Roderick James Architects LLP on behalf of their clients [REDACTED]. The report was requested on behalf of the Planning Authority by the Conservation Officer Sally Stradling, who represents South Oxfordshire District Council in these matters.

### **1.3 Aim of Investigation**

This report is the smaller of the two requested by Sally Stradling and concerns a Statement of Significance and an Impact Assessment. This report sets out the significance of the listed building and its features and fabric. An impact assessment sets out how the proposals would impact on the identified significance of the listed building and sets out options for mitigation, based on Historic England's Conservation Principals, 2008, using the value system to identify significance (historic, evidential, aesthetic, communal).

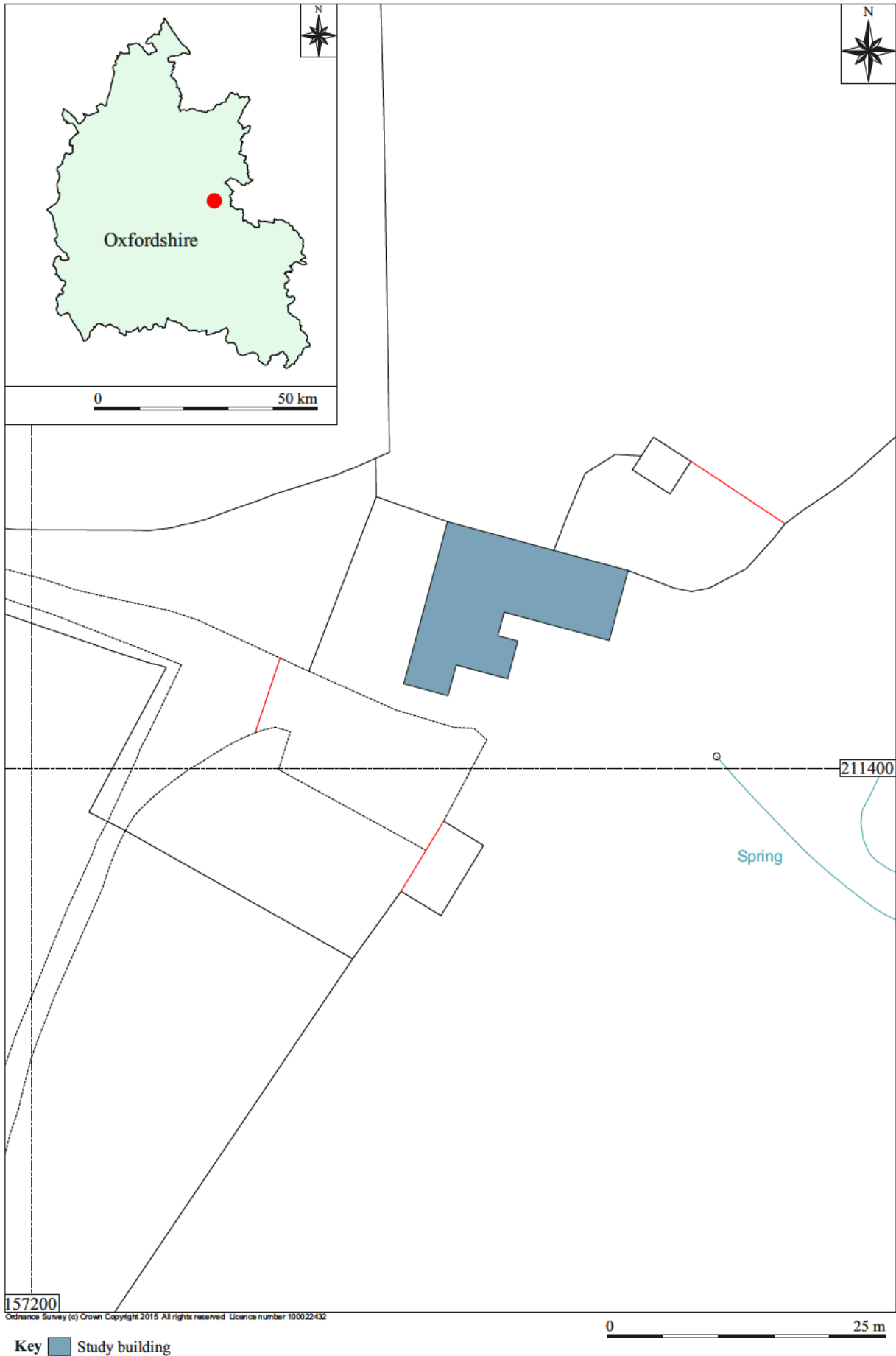


Figure 1: Site location

## **2 BACKGROUND**

### **2.1 Designations**

Upper Park Farmhouse is a grade II listed building (Historic England UID: 246538: SP 57243 11414) with the following designation:

*Farmhouse, now house. Late C16/early C17, remodelled c.1700. Timber framing with brick infill; limestone rubble with brick dressings; old plain-tile roof with brick gable stacks, 2-unit plan, extended to L-plan. 2 storeys, and 2 storeys plus attics. 5-window front has taller 3-window early C18 range, to left, with enlarged C20 windows to ground and first floors and a central dormer. Timber-framed range, to right, has brick infilling in Flemish bond with flared headers. Gable wall, to right, rebuilt with massive brick-quoined projecting chimney. Rear wing, to right, has brick quoins and possibly earlier squared blocks at plinth level. C20 extension in angle of ranges. Interior: Exposed framing with first-floor cross beam lodged on hewn brackets; heavy jowled posts to end frame; clasped-purlin roof with queen-post truss and curved windbraces; dog-leg stair, with heavy turned balusters, rising to attic; very wide open fireplace; C18 fireplace; old plank doors with original ironmongery.*

The building has a slight description in the VCH (1957, 56-76) where it is stated that:

*Upper Park Farm remains substantially a part 16<sup>th</sup>- and part 17<sup>th</sup> century building, built of rubble and of timber framed red brick.*

Upper Park Farm is not included in the Buildings of England: Oxfordshire (Sherwood and Pevsner 1974, 447-449), with only the church of Saint Mary, the moated site of Beckley Park and the Roman Villa being mentioned.

A Historic England Level 4 Building Recording was requested by Sally Stradling. This was carried out in October and November 2015, providing a 'comprehensive analytical record' (Yeates and Stranks 2015). The report sets out the historic significance of the building, within the context of Beckley Park and village, as well as a thorough recording of the external and internal parts of the building and provides phases.

### **2.2 History of Development**

A history of the development of the surrounding area will be inserted into the subsequent larger report (Yeates and Stranks 2015). The manor and park have been in existence from the latter early medieval period, and have significant periods of its history associated with the royal family. The park appears to possibly have early medieval origins but was considerably enhanced in the 13<sup>th</sup> century.

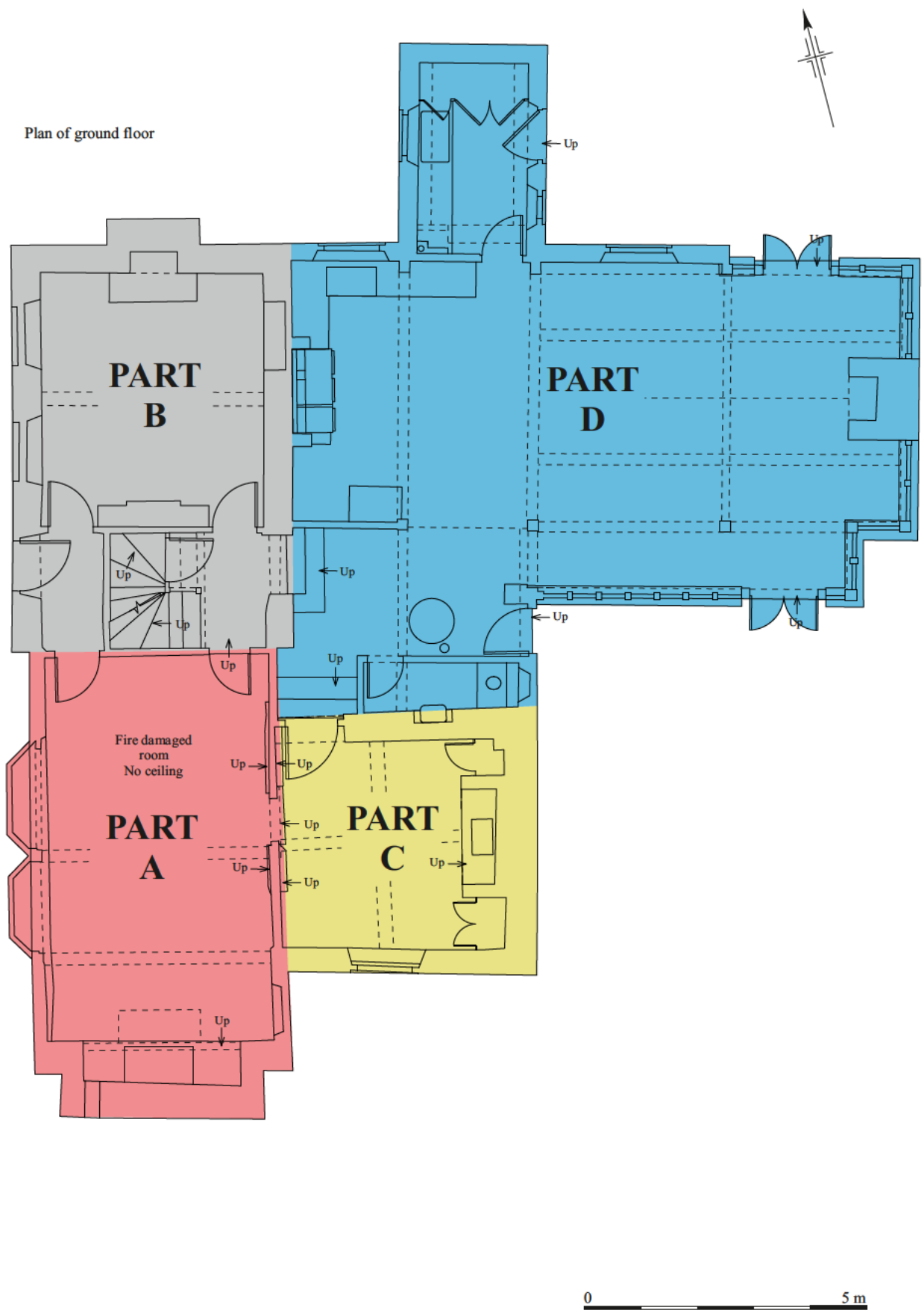
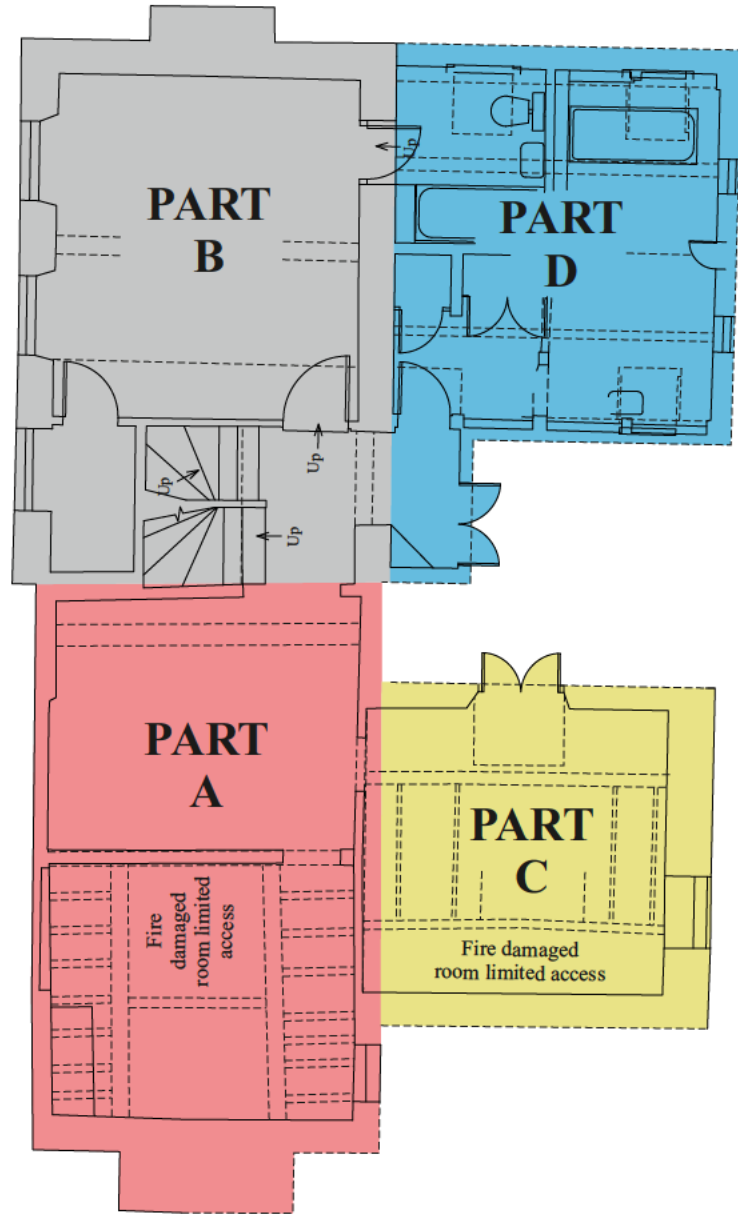


Figure 2: Ground floor showing major areas of development

Plan of first floor



0 5 m

Figure 3: First floor showing major areas of development



### **3 DESCRIPTION OF UPPER PARK FARM / INTEGRITY OF STRUCTURE**

#### **3.1 Introduction and General Description**

The current building is a structure with four main components, two of which are located in the Front Range and two to the rear of the building. These have been categorised as parts A to D (Figures 2-3). The south part of the Front Range (part A) is a two storey structure with timber framing and brick infill and with a significant gable end chimney on the south side. The roof is of clay tile. The north part of the north range is a two and a half storey addition (part B), which has a gable end chimney at its north end. The structure is of limestone with brick detail. The roof is of clay tile. To the rear on the south side is a further extension of one and a half storeys (part C). This also has a gable end chimney. The extension is constructed of limestone-rubble and has a clay tile roof. The extension to the rear of the north part of the Front Range has a one and a half storey component built in limestone rubble and brick detail (part D). It has a clay tile roof and dormer gables. The second part of this extension is in glass and has a clay tile roof.

All comments regarding the structural appraisal of the timbers are from the structural engineers report prepared by David Symonds Associates (Symonds 2015).

#### **3.2 Façades**

The western façade is made up of two parts, (Part A) to the south of the principal elevation a two storey two cell timber framed range c.1540 (VCH 1957, 56-57). A projecting gable chimney stack to the south end is a 17<sup>th</sup> century remodelling in rubble stone and brick, with brick quoins. The northern part of the range is the taller of the two at two and a half storeys (Part B). This range is built from rubble stone and brick quoins.

Though the south part (the timber framed structure) appears to be sound from the outside it is apparent from the internal remains that this is not the case and that the structure will have to be rebuilt. Primary structural components will have to be replaced and secondary components will have to be analysed to see if they can be reused.

The north elevation is made up of Part B, the 17<sup>th</sup> /18<sup>th</sup> century range and east range; and Part D the 20<sup>th</sup> century range. Part B is two and a half storeys with a projecting chimney, built from rubblestone and with brick quoins. Part D projects eastward. The roofline steps down from the one and a half story elevation to the conservatory which is one level. There is a projecting gable end chimney on the east end of the range.

The east elevation is dominated by the gable ends of parts D and C. Part D is the 20<sup>th</sup> century extension, which has a staggered roof line. Viewing the property from the east you can see the U-shape formation in the roof. The gable end of part C lies to the south.

The south elevation has a staggered line, with the conservatory of part D extending to the east on the north side of the main part of the façade. The south part of the elevation is otherwise dominated by sections A and C. The gable end of part A contains a large projecting chimney of the 16<sup>th</sup> century with later 17<sup>th</sup> reworking. To the east stepped backward is part C, an early 17<sup>th</sup> century range of one and a half storeys.

### 3.3 Internals

Part A is the oldest part of Upper Park Farm, the two cell timber framed section. Within the lounge there is a fireplace that is mentioned in the Historic England building listing. There are three remaining corbels supporting transverse beams, as well as other significant examples of historic timber framed joinery, chamfering of stops, mortise joints, and L-ties. Located between the southern and central transverse beam there is a joist directly in front of the bay window that has three diamond cuts into the underside. These are the location for diamond shaped mullions, which are a primitive feature of Tudor architecture. There is a brief period of use from 1539 to 1567 when these features were used and the windows were essentially unglazed (McCann undated). Dividing rooms F3 and F4 there are two thick studs and six slimmer studs within the wall. It can be observed that the two studs are in fact chamfered door jambs, with a simple chamfered and overhead door arch, which is sandwiched between the two jambs. The door arch is of a particular Tudor style and can be dated to a similar arch type seen in Flintshire dated 1577 (Alcock and Hall 1994 20). The doorway has been closed off and a minor stud placed floor to arch in the centre of the doorway. Room F4 has wide timbers floorboards, which are dark in colour in the room. It is possible that these date from before the late 18<sup>th</sup> century. These features are extremely significant historically, but severely fire damaged.

The damage caused by the fire is mostly based within the northern area of room G5 and room F3. Here the structural report mentions that three of the five frames have been completely destroyed at first floor level and that there is damage to the horizontal ties. Secondary components at the first floor level have also been destroyed (Symonds 2015). Secondary components at ground floor level are considered to be in good condition. The brickwork requires removal and replacement. The two frames on the south side have suffered less damage. This means that due to the damage caused to the timber frame in both the west and east walls of part A of the structure it is proposed here that the walls will be removed and that they will be rebuilt with replacement primary structural elements and an analysis of the secondary elements so that it is possible to establish if these components are structurally sound.

The key dating components here include the horizontal member with the diamond mullion fittings. In this location the features appear to be unaffected by fire but the structural nature of the piece has to be tested for its integrity. The features on the first floor between rooms F3 and F4 are so fire damaged that none can be saved, and a replacement structure is required.

There is a proposal to widen the doorway from room G5 and G4 on the ground floor, which will affect the timber framing as it is now.

The structural report also noted that the floor is suffering from wet rot (Symonds 2015). This means that parts of the floor also require replacement. It is considered to be a result of the fact that the floor level in this part of the building is lower than the ground level on the west side of the building.

In part B it is possible to see other significant features. In room G7 is the door to the cellar, a five plank with alternate facing planks and has original ironmongery with three T-hinges similar to examples dating from 1713, found in Gloucestershire, and a later version 1745 in Suffolk (Alcock and Hall 1993, 21-27) and a drop lock earliest date also 1745, Gloucestershire (Alcock and Hall 1993, 21-27), and two keyholes, of which one has a

diamond shaped backing that has since been painted over earliest date of 1669 found in Suffolk (Alcock and Hall 1993, 34). The study G6 south wall contains doors at both ends. The two-panelled timber doors are probably original. The doorframe of one of these doorways contains two wooden pegs, one either side of the top rail, suggesting that this is an original doorway. There does however appear to be an original transverse beam and cills, some of the carpentry of the door frames and also parts of the dogleg stair are listed.

The main part of the northern extension is sound, however, there are areas that are damaged and will require replacement. The timber structure between parts A and B will have to be replaced. The principal structural elements are extremely fire damaged and will have to be replaced (Symonds 2015). Analysis of secondary components will have to take place to recognise what is structurally sound and what is not. The roof of part B shows extensive fire damage and will thus have to have various parts of the structure replaced. The cellar door and the historic part of the stairwell is largely intact and just fire damaged.

In Part C there are high quality original chamfered beams and corbels to the ceiling of the dining room. Before the site inspection (Oct 8<sup>th</sup> 2015), plastic sheeting on a raised wooden frame had been placed in both F3 & F5 to provide protection from further material deterioration, however this meant that historically important rooms were inaccessible resulting in incomplete recording of historic features.

The west wall of this part of the structure has already been noted as having principal structural elements as being damaged and replaced. Secondary components will also have to be replaced.

The modern 20<sup>th</sup> century extension is in good condition with none or limited damage (Symonds 2015).

## **4 ASSESSMENT**

### **4.1 Phases**

It is evident from the plan and internal observations that the building is of four major basic phases, although there are always caveats. The earliest part of the building is a timber-framed two cell structure, rectangular in shape of which certain parts (part A) date back to c.1540. There are three further phases of the building one of which is the late 17 to early 18<sup>th</sup> century development of the building (part B), and a section to the east of part A, which is early to mid-17<sup>th</sup> century (part C). Finally there is an extension abutting parts B and C to the north; a 20<sup>th</sup> century addition (Part D).

### **4.2 Listed Status**

The building is a Grade II designated listed building and is therefore considered to be of 'special architectural or historic interest', and it is considered to be of national importance due to its example of timber framing.

### 4.3 Historic and Architectural Assessment

The building can be seen as containing four main phases of activity. The parts of timber framing that survive in the building are considered to be of a national importance.

## 5 THE CURRENT PROPOSAL

The current document is in order to inform and provide guidance on any future building works that will take place at the subject site, assessing impact on the identified significance of the building and set out options for mitigation.

The current proposal is to restore the current building, a building of national importance that has been severely damaged by fire. The fire damage has caused significant structural problems (Symonds 2015). The proposal is to repair and make sound and water proof part B of the structure as the initial phase. The secondary phase will tackle the more complicated part A and C of the structure, which appears to require the rebuilding of west and east walls of part A. Primary structural timbers will have to be replaced, while secondary timbers will have to be assessed for structural integrity.

## 6 THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE SUBJECT SITE

The descriptive appraisal will evaluate the building on the subject site against listed selection criteria 'Principles of Selection for Listed Buildings' (DCMS 2010). Historic England's (formerly English Heritage) criteria outlined in 'Conservation Principles, Policies and Guidance,' which partially overlap with the Statutory Criteria, have also been considered and encompass the following values:

- **Evidential Value** - relating to the potential of a place to yield primary evidence about past human activity;
- **Historic Value** – relating to ways in which the present can be connected through a place to past people, events and aspects of life;
- **Aesthetic Value** – relating to the ways in which people derive sensory and intellectual stimulation from a place;
- **Communal Value** – relating to the meanings of place for the people who relate to it, and whose collective experience or memory it holds.

### 6.1 Evidential Value

The external and internal timber frame construction in part A dates back to the 16<sup>th</sup> century and in places is undamaged. For instance, externally the west elevation has very little apparent fire damage, apart from to the roof. Internally the south section of the lounge, the east wall and the north wall at ground level, have also escaped fire damage. However the internal west wall (grid line 3-5) and the whole upper level of part A has mostly been destroyed. That said, even after the recent fire there are many good examples of traditional craftsmanship remaining. Further examples in the dining room, (part C) the study and

basement (part B) have also escaped fire damage. Although there has been much alteration to the property over the years, there is a range of historic evidence remaining which has been untouched by fire. There may be ways to salvage some of the timber members that are fire damaged possibly by repurposing them as has been done historically within the building already. **Therefore evidential value is medium.**

## 6.2 Historical Value

Upper Park Farm in Beckley is a rare and in places well preserved example of a mid-16<sup>th</sup> century vernacular timber-framed cottage and expresses the historical development of the adjacent Beckley Park and village. It was built c.1540, along with Middle Park Farm and at the same time as the Tudor Hunting Lodge. It is understood from cartographic evidence that the building sat within the historic Deer Park of Beckley, and was probably an agricultural property in service to Beckley Park. Upper Park Farm remained in the Estate of the Earl of Abingdon until 1919 when his lands were sold at auction to the property tenants. At this time Upper Park Farm had 121 acres. There is not a substantial amount of information on Upper Park Farm, but its association with Beckley Park and its aristocratic lineage, is an interesting one. It can be assumed that the materials for the building were sourced locally; the timbers will have been brought in from the neighbouring woodland, from within the estate lands and the limestone will have been taken from local quarries, now closed (SODC 1998, 5). Many similar timber-framed properties exist locally, therefore the property has a regional value. As a listed building the structure has a national significance. **Its historic value is therefore high.**

## 6.3 Aesthetic Value

Upper Park Farm represents a bygone era of vernacular building, and the organic evolution of place. The building echoes its rural environment through the use of locally sourced and natural materials, illustrating both cultural identity and historic context within the rural environment. Views looking west from the cottage are of a dense wall of rich conifers and developed trees framing the garden, with long range views to the north overlooking the Otmoor Nature Reserve and the old Deer Park of Beckley. To the east views are to the small lake below the house and reaching up towards the nearby enclosing hills. Upper Park Farm is a typical example of a vernacular building style and by its very nature reinforces the connection to community history through its visual impact; therefore its **Aesthetic value is medium.**

## 6.4 Communal Value

Nearby to Upper Park Farm was a Roman Villa, all of this section of land is on a high tract of ridge. It could be suggested that the land was seen as important because of its height and outlook as well as historic access to natural spring water. Upper Park Farm is not a building with much community value, apart from its historic connection to Beckley Park. It sits outside of the village and can only be accessed via a private track. **Therefore communal value is low.**

## 6.5 Summary of Significance

Evidential value is medium even though the building was fire damaged and heavily altered during the 1990s there are sections of very well preserved historic material still preserved in

the building. Historical Value is high because of the date and name association with Beckley Park and its national designation. Aesthetic value is medium due to the buildings contribution to place and setting through its classic vernacular style. Communal value of the property is low because the property has no known communal connections and is situated on the outside of the village therefore not seen by people.

## **7 CONCLUSIONS**

Upper Park Farm is a building located in the historic parish of Beckley, the Hundred of Bullingdon and the County of Oxfordshire. The building is now located in South Oxford District and in the Modern County of Oxford.

The site is historically associated with the manor of Beckley and the establishment in the parish of Beckley of a hunting park. The date at which the park originates from is not known precisely but it was developed into the form and historical status by Richard Earl of Cornwall and King of the Romans.

Upper Park Farm is a structure that contains four major visible building phases, although other phases can also be recognised that are no longer extant. Part A of the building was a structure built at some time from 1539 to 1568, a fact that can be recognised due to the fittings for diamond shaped mullions and Tudor arched doorway. The VCH (1957, 56-76) suggests that the date is *c.*1540, one which probably relies on the observation of the diamond mullion fittings. Part C represents phase 2 of the building, its lower profile and metalwork appear to suggest that this structure is early to mid-17<sup>th</sup> century. Part B represents the third phase of the building that is probably mid to late 17<sup>th</sup> century, or at the very latest early 18<sup>th</sup> century. These are the most significant part of the historic building. Part D is a modern addition.

Evidential value is medium even though the building was fire damaged and heavily altered during the 1990s there are sections of very well preserved historic material still preserved in the building. Historical Value is high because of the date and name association with Beckley Park and its national designation. Aesthetic value is medium due to the buildings contribution to place and setting through its classic vernacular style. Communal value of the property is low because the property has no known communal connections and is situated on the outside of the village therefore not seen by people.

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