

9A Plymouth Road, Barnt Green

Heritage Statement

1. Introduction

1.1 SCOPE OF HERITAGE STATEMENT

This Heritage Statement has been produced to inform the planning application process in connection with a proposed replacement dwelling at 9A Plymouth Road, Barnt Green

Bromsgrove and Redditch Borough Council has requested an appraisal of the impact of the proposed redevelopment upon Barnt Green Conservation Area.

1.2 POLICY

1.3 RELEVANT LEGISLATION, POLICY AND GUIDANCE

1.3.1 Legislation

The importance of protecting conservation areas and their settings is clearly recognised through the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas).

1.3.2 National Planning Policy Framework

National planning policy on how cultural heritage should be assessed is given in National Planning Policy Framework, published in March 2012. This covers conservation areas and other aspects of heritage and the historic environment, including listed buildings, registered parks and gardens, battlefields and archaeology. The relevant policies are reproduced below. Chapter 12 Conserving and enhancing the historic

128. 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.

129. 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.

132. 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. The more important the asset, the greater the weight should be. Significance can be harmed or lost through alteration or destruction of the heritage asset or development within its setting. As heritage assets are irreplaceable, any harm or loss should require clear and convincing justification. Substantial harm to or loss of a grade II listed building, park or garden should be exceptional. Substantial harm to or loss of designated heritage assets of the highest significance, notably scheduled monuments, protected wreck sites, battlefields, grade I and II* listed buildings, grade I and II* registered parks and gardens, and World Heritage Sites, should be wholly exceptional.

133. 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.

134. 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.

1.3.3 Planning Practice Guidance (PPG)

Planning Practice Guidance (PPG) Conserving and Enhancing the Historic Environment was published in April 2014 as a companion to the NPPF, replacing previous Circulars and other supplementary guidance. In respect of heritage decision-making, the NPPG stresses the importance of determining applications on the basis of significance and explains how the tests of harm and impact within the NPPF are to be interpreted.

In particular, the NPPG includes the following in relation to the evaluation of significance and harm.

“Heritage assets may be affected by direct physical change or by change in their setting. Being able to properly assess the nature, extent, and importance of the significance of a heritage asset, and the contribution of its setting, is very important to understanding the potential impact and acceptability of development proposals.

Whether a proposal causes substantial harm will be a judgment for the decision taker, having regard to the circumstances of the case and the policy in the National Planning Policy Framework. In general terms, substantial harm is a high test, so it may not arise in many cases. For example, in determining whether works to a listed building constitute substantial harm, an important consideration would be whether the adverse impact seriously affects a key element of its special architectural or historic interest. It is the degree of harm to the asset’s significance rather than the scale of the development that is to be assessed. The harm may arise from works to the asset or from development within its setting.

1.3.4 Bromsgrove District Plan

The Bromsgrove Plan was adopted in January 2017. It contains policies relevant to the historic environment (reproduced at Appendix A).

With respect to the proposed redevelopment, the following policies are particularly relevant:

BDP20.3 Development affecting Heritage Assets, including alterations or additions as well as development within the setting of Heritage Assets, should not have a detrimental impact on the character, appearance or significance of the Heritage Asset or Heritage Assets.

BDP20.9 Development within or adjacent to a Conservation Area should preserve or enhance the character or appearance of the area.

BDP20.10 The demolition of buildings or the removal of trees and other landscape features which make a positive contribution to an area’s character or appearance will be resisted.

BDP20.14 In considering applications that directly or indirectly affect Heritage Assets, a balanced judgement will be applied having regard to the scale of any harm or loss as a result of proposed development and the significance of the Heritage Asset.

BDP20.17 Applications likely to affect the significance of known or potential Heritage Assets or

their setting should demonstrate an understanding of their significance in sufficient detail to assess the potential impacts. This should be informed by available evidence and, where appropriate, further information to establish significance of known or potential Heritage Assets.

2. Barnt Green: a brief overview

A recent authoritative study of Victorian and Edwardian architecture in and around Birmingham¹ notes how, from the 1890s, improved suburban railway services around the city enabled wealthier families to live much further from the centre of Birmingham. The most notable developments at that time were the Earl of Plymouth's Barnt Green Estate and the Four Oaks Estate at Sutton Coldfield, as well as numerous substantial houses in Northfield, Yardley, Olton and Solihull.

The Gloucester to Birmingham line was opened in 1840 and a station at Barnt Green was provided in 1846, apparently at the request of the principal local landowner, Lord Windsor, Earl of Plymouth.² However, it was not until the 1890s that the Plymouth estate began to sell off plots for development, firstly around the station. By 1900 Barnt Green consisted of terraced houses including several shops lining both sides of Hewell Road, parallel with the railway line. At one end stood the Victoria Hotel; at the other end a stone house tucked under the railway embankment was occupied by Lord Windsor's bailiff.

At the same time existing buildings such as Barnt Green Farmhouse (now the Red House; listed Grade II) were remodelled in period styles. To the west of the railway more ambitious architect-designed houses were built in generous plots of an acre or more for professional people and industrialists who commuted in by rail to work in Birmingham. A second phase of development began after further land sales in 1919, with further growth throughout the century.

Turning to Plymouth Road itself, in 1893 this was a minor road connecting Twatling Road with Mearse Lane, its western half passing through fields and its eastern part bisecting Peter's Wood, a fairly extensive area of largely coniferous woodland (Figure 1). By 1905 about ten detached houses had been built in large plots laid out either side of Plymouth Road in what had been Peter's Wood (no longer labelled by the Ordnance Survey), with some still larger properties, including Peterscourt and Southwood, further west (Figure 2). Little had changed by 1953, with just a few houses added to the west end of Plymouth Road (Figure 3).

From the 1960s Barnt Green saw accelerated infill development, mostly of larger detached houses. That was as true along Plymouth Road as elsewhere, where the A, B, and C numbering of houses reflects the sub-division of plots. This gradually changed the character of Barnt Green, although to some extent the impact of the change was lessened through the retention of by now mature examples of specimen trees and hedgerows.

Over the last decade the pace of change has quickened still further, and along with further infill and new cul-de-sacs many single-storey houses have been rebuilt as larger, sometimes very large, two- or three-storey houses.

That has certainly been so along Plymouth Road, both within, adjoining and beyond the conservation area, a process which continues.

The recent planning

¹ Phillipa Ballard (ed.), Birmingham's Victorian and Edwardian Architects (2009), p. xviii

² Historical overview based on Bromsgrove DC, 'Barnt Green Conservation Area' (leaflet, nd); http://villageonline.co.uk/village/features/fullhistory/village_where_the_shops_came_first; and development history of Barnt Green in general and along Plymouth Road in particular is treated in more detail in the Design Statement 3 which accompanies this application.

3. Designations: the conservation area and listed buildings

Barnt Green was designated a conservation area in 2001 to reflect the community's concerns that the area's character was being eroded by higher density cul-de-sac development.⁴⁵ It comprises three areas: Shepley; Fiery Hill; and Cherry Hill. Within the conservation area there are three listed buildings (The Clock House; Briarwood; and The Red House) with a fourth, Barnt Green Inn, just to the east. None of the listed buildings stands close enough to 9A Plymouth Road to have a relationship in terms of setting, the nearest being Briarwood, 200m north and separated from 9A by development and trees.

While no conservation area assessment is available, it can be deduced that the greater part of Plymouth Road was excluded from the conservation area because it lacked the necessary special architectural or historic interest to merit designation.

4 Bromsgrove DC, 'Barnt Green Conservation Area' (leaflet, nd)

4. Setting

4.1 RECENT DEVELOPMENT NEAR 9A PLYMOUTH ROAD

The southern halves of the gardens of 9 to 11B Plymouth Road were sold off for development. Planning permission was granted between 2014 and 2017 for the erection of six detached executive homes - Helen's Gate - set in a staggered east-west row. Construction began in 2017 and is now complete.

This development abuts the conservation area boundary.

A number of substantial houses have been built in recent years that adjoin the conservation area, and in some case separate 9A from the conservation area, in the same way that Helen's gate does to the rear of the property. This is graphically illustrated on Figures 6 and 7.

4.2 SETTING OF 9A PLYMOUTH ROAD

The house 9A Plymouth Road stands outside the Barnt Green conservation area, although close to two of its boundaries: one takes in the east end of Plymouth Road, the other land north of Brookhouse Road. The original southern boundary of the garden of 9A Plymouth Road extended to meet the latter boundary at the point it turns south towards the junction of Brookhouse and Shepley Roads. The construction of the Helen's Gate development has severed this connection, and the south boundary of 9A's garden now lies c.70m north of the conservation area's boundary.

4.3 ASSESSING SETTING

How the impact of a development on any heritage asset, including a conservation area, should be assessed is set out in Historic England's Good Practice Advice Note 3, The Setting of Heritage Assets (2nd edn December 2017).

Borrowing from the NPPF, this defines setting as 'the surrounds in which a heritage asset is experienced' (page 2). It acknowledges that while setting is today understood to be potentially multi-faceted, 'the contribution of a view, or views, to the significance of heritage assets and the ability to appreciate that significance' will almost always need to be considered (page 1, para. 5). In this case other considerations noted – noise, dust and vibration – are not believed to be relevant, other than a short-term, temporary impact during construction.

4.4 VIEWS FROM THE CONSERVATION AREA

The contribution of views to setting, and the inter-relationship between them, are explored in The Setting of Heritage Assets (page 6 and onwards). That makes the point that some views were deliberately composed, whereas others are unplanned or fortuitous. In the case of the substantial late Victorian and Edwardian houses of Barnt Green, many occupied elevated with outward views, although in most cases these views will have been foreshortened or lost as

trees have matured and further houses have been built.

There are potentially views to 9A Plymouth Road from two parts of the conservation area. The first is from the east end of Plymouth Road. However, from here, between the edge of the conservation area and 9A and indeed beyond, the view west along the tree-lined road (Figure 5) is dominated by the several large, recently-built or rebuilt properties on the south side of the road (numbers 7A, 7B and 9; Figure 6), while to the north are again modern properties, notably the ambitiously-scaled new-build effectively opposite 9A (Figure 7; Design Statement, Figure 8).

The second potential views are from the northern limits of the conservation area along Brookhouse Road, Shepley Road and the south end of Twatling Road. Until recently there would have been glimpsed views northward from here, uphill across paddocks, to the rear of 9A and the later 20th-century and 21st-century properties flanking it along Plymouth Road (Figures 8-10). These houses are now hidden from view by the tall, closely spaced houses of Helen's Gate.

4.5 VIEWS TO THE CONSERVATION AREA

Until the recent construction of Helen's Gate there were slightly downhill views from the rear of 9A Plymouth Road (and especially from its upper floor) on an arc to the south across the central part of the Barnt Green conservation area. While specimen trees in the conservation area rise above and to either side of the new development, views of buildings within the conservation area are otherwise blocked off (Figure 11).

From the upper floor of 9A Plymouth Road, and from its front gate, there are glimpsed views broadly eastwards to the houses, and the planting around them, of that part of the conservation area comprising the east end of Plymouth Road. However, interposed on both sides of the road (and especially impacting on the south side of the road) are the modern properties noted above and these dominate the view.

5. 9A Plymouth Road: architectural quality

9A Plymouth Road is a linear, gable-roofed, two-storey house, probably of the 1960s. The east end ground-floor area was originally open, later being enclosed to form a garage, include a first-floor living room on a solid floor slab, opening on to a rear balcony. While of a higher specification than many houses of its date, most would concur with the conservation officer that it 'is of no architectural or architectural significance', and with the officer's conclusion that the building's loss would not be detrimental on conservation grounds.

The proposed replacement has been designed to better reflect the recent developments within the vicinity.

6. Conclusion

This assessment clearly demonstrates that the proposed redevelopment of 9A Plymouth Road will have at the very worst, a negligible adverse visual impact on the Barnt Green conservation area and its setting, including views to and from the conservation area. Upon the vast majority of the conservation area there would be no effect. Recent modern development within the conservation area and adjoining it (graphically shown by Figure 7) and, of particular relevance along Plymouth Road, has already altered the character of the neighbourhood through infilling, intensification and construction within sub-divided plots.

Whilst the proposed development is larger than the existing structure, its design is more akin to the substantial] houses of Barnt Green than the mundane, out of place 1960s dwelling that it replaces.

Taking account of the current situation in the neighbourhood, the proposed scheme and the policy contained within NPPF and the Bromsgrove Local Plan, it is concluded that the development does not create an adverse effect upon the conservation area of sufficient magnitude to a refusal.

Figure 1

Ordnance Survey 1st edition 1893

Figure 2

Ordnance Survey 1st edition

Figure 3

Ordnance Survey 1953
Conservation Area boundary
Garden of 9A

Figure 4

Helen's Gate: visualisation from north, above 9A Plymouth Road.

Figure 5

View north-west along eastern end of Plymouth Road showing trees and hedges

Figure 6

New build abutting the conservation area: 7A and 7B Plymouth Road, with the white number 9 beyond, looking west from the conservation area boundary. The location of 9A is arrowed.

Figure 7

The east end of Plymouth Road, looking east. Number 9A to bottom right. The construction of Helen's Gate behind has not yet begun. The conservation area is shown. New buildings are noted and clearly show that the redevelopment of 9A will not substantially alter the existing context where new development has been permitted adjoining the conservation area and separating 9a from it

Figure 8

View north from Brookhouse Road to rear of new properties on Helen's Gate (arrowed).

Figure 9

View north-west from east end of Brookhouse Road. Helen's Gate glimpsed to left extremity (arrowed)

Figure 10

View west from south end of Twatling Road. Helen's Gate

Figure 11

9A from Plymouth Road with Helen's Gate

Appendix A

Bromsgrove District Local Plan Historic Environment Policy

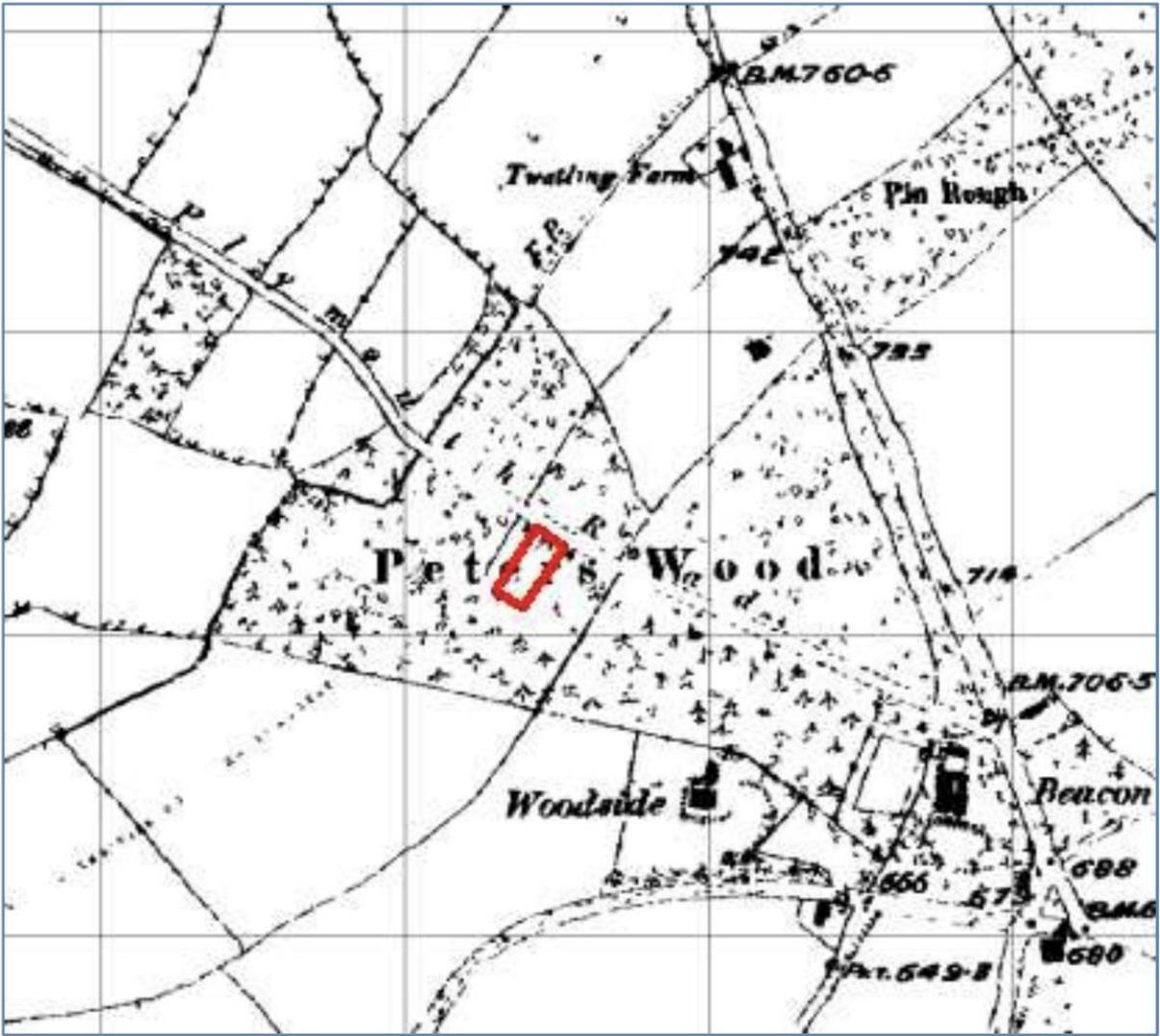


Figure 1

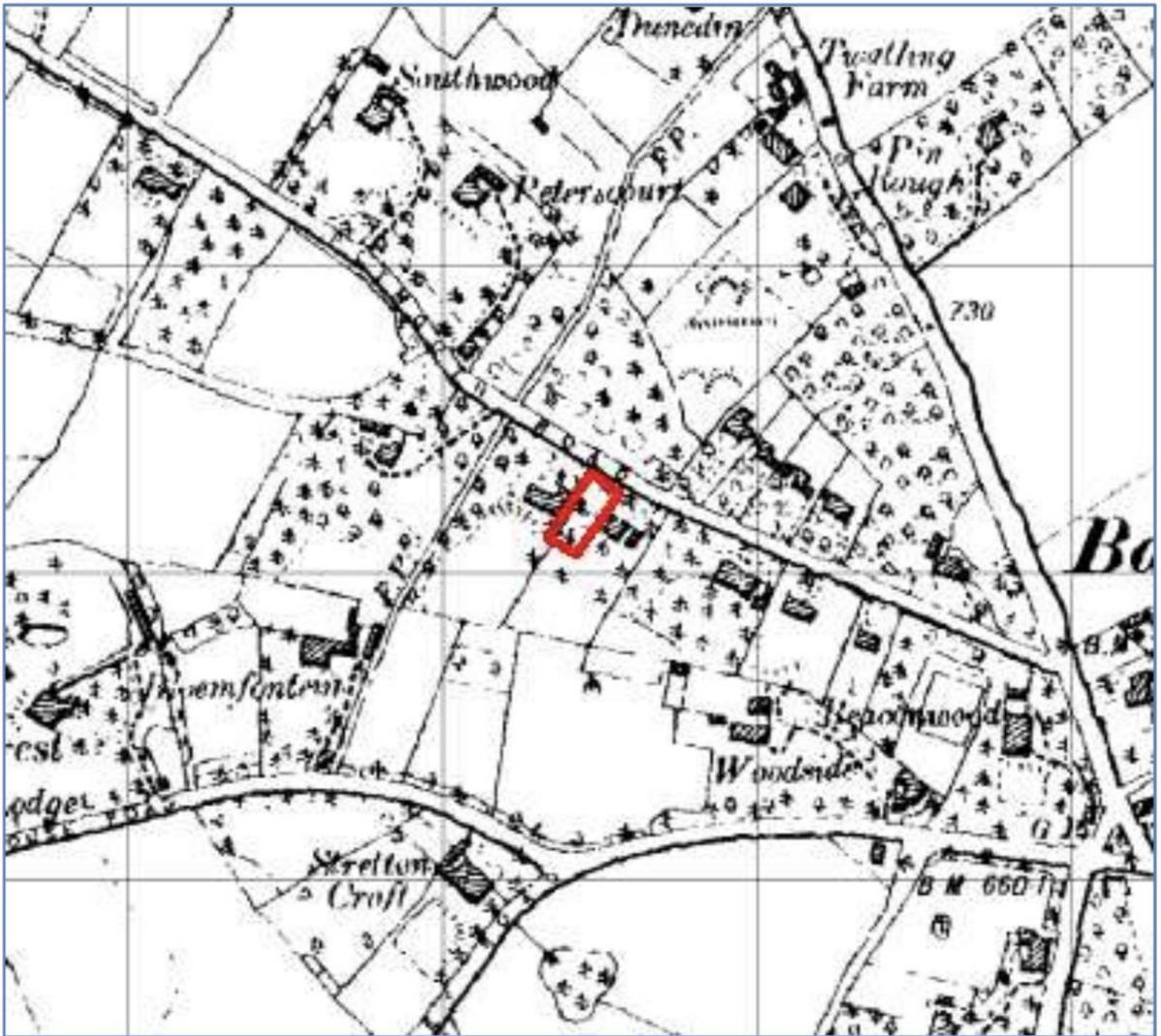


Figure 2

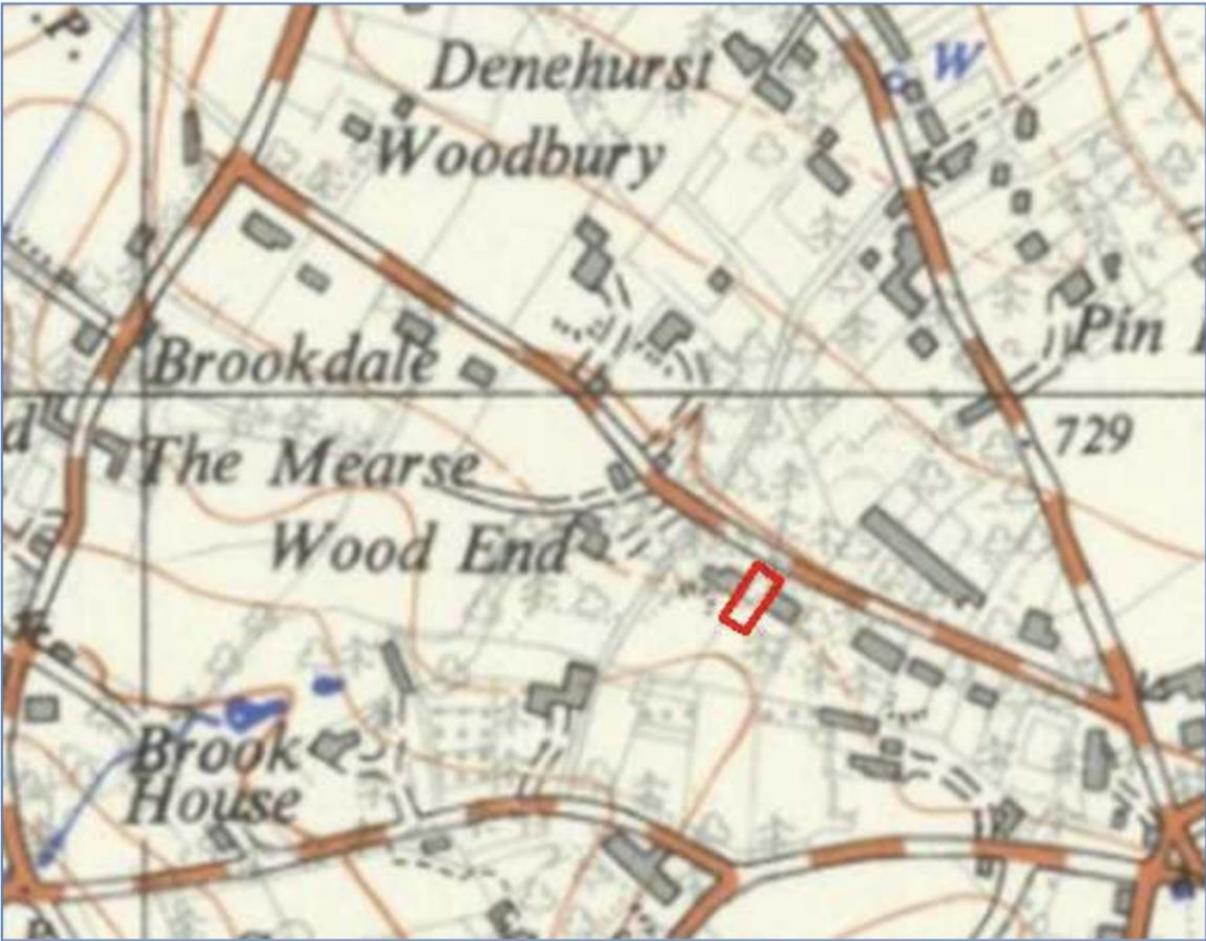


Figure 3



Figure 4



Figure 5



Figure 6



Figure 7



Figure 8



Figure 9



Figure 10



Figure 11