

Mawles Farm
OX15 5RW

Heritage Statement

27th November 2019
Revision 01



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01

Overview and
context



Introduction

1.1 Introduction

This Heritage Statement has been prepared to accompany the planning application for the proposed conversion of Mawles Farm in Sibford Gower to create two dwelling houses. The site is located within the Sibford Gower and Burdrop Conservation Area (SGBCA) and the works involve the proposed conversion of a range of barns which are undesignated heritage assets identified as being of local significance within the Sibford Ferris, Sibford Gower and Burdrop Conservation Area Appraisal (SFSGBCA Appraisal).

The submission is made on behalf of Mr and Mrs Broom [The Applicants] in respect of Mawles Farm, Sibford Gower, OX15 5RW [The Site]. This Heritage Statement presents an overview of the history, character and appearance of the heritage assets and their relationship to other parts of the application site and local surroundings.

This statement then identifies the characteristics of Mawles Farm and its setting, which contribute to the special interest and historical significance of the application buildings. The design proposals are then assessed for potential negative impacts in relation to the special interest of the heritage assets and their setting.

This Heritage Statement should be read in conjunction with the drawings and Design Statement made as part of the same application.

1.2 Structure and content

The Statement is structured as follows:

Section 01 – Background information

An introduction to the location, history of the area and the farm and an analysis of the contextual information and built form.

Section 02 – Significance and impact assessment

Outline of the significance of the heritage asset, overview of the design proposals and an assessment of their impact.

1.3 Records consulted

The following sources have been consulted in the preparation of this Statement:

- **Cherwell District Council**, “*SGBCA Appraisal*”
- **Cherwell District Council**, “*Adopted Cherwell Local Plan 2011-2031, Part 1*”
- **Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government**, “*National Planning Policy Framework*” (February 2019 amendment)
- **Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government**, NPPF Practice Guidance
- **Historic England**, National Heritage List for England
- **Oxfordshire County Council**, Oxfordshire Historic Environment Record.
- **The Sibfords**, Sibipedia, <http://thesibfords.org.uk/sibipedia>
- **Historic England**, “*Conservation Principles*” (2008)

Background information

1.4 Location

Sibford Gower is one of a group of three historic settlements which sprang up around the Sib valley, located in the ironstone hills area to the west of Banbury in northern Oxfordshire (fig. 1). Sibford Gower is conjoined to its neighbour, Burdrop on the northern side of the river valley and the pair is treated as a single conservation area within the SFSGBCA Appraisal.

1.5 History

There is archaeological evidence of human activity in the local area from prehistoric times and Beesley’s History of Banbury (1841) records iron age barrows at Sibford Gower (now lost).

There are several theories, but it is unknown from where the place name Sibford derives. The Domesday Book records three manors at “Sibeford” at the end of the 11th century. The village names Sibford Ferris and Sibford Gower derive from the local Norman landholding families de Ferrieres and Goher respectively.

The landscape around the Sib Valley was well suited to sheep grazing and the local area prospered as a result of the lucrative wool trade in the 16th and 17th centuries. The relatively high density of farmsteads throughout the Sibford villages is testament to the importance and pervasiveness of farming at this time. The economic importance of farming continued into the 18th century when the rates book, post Inclosures Act, noted 8 farmsteads in Sibford Gower including Mawles Farm.

From 1870 onwards, the combination of a rise of cheap imports, mechanised farming practices and the economic draw of cities and towns led to the decline of the Sibfords population wherein the villages lost a third of their residents in a one hundred year period.



Fig. 1 - Site location

Site and building layout

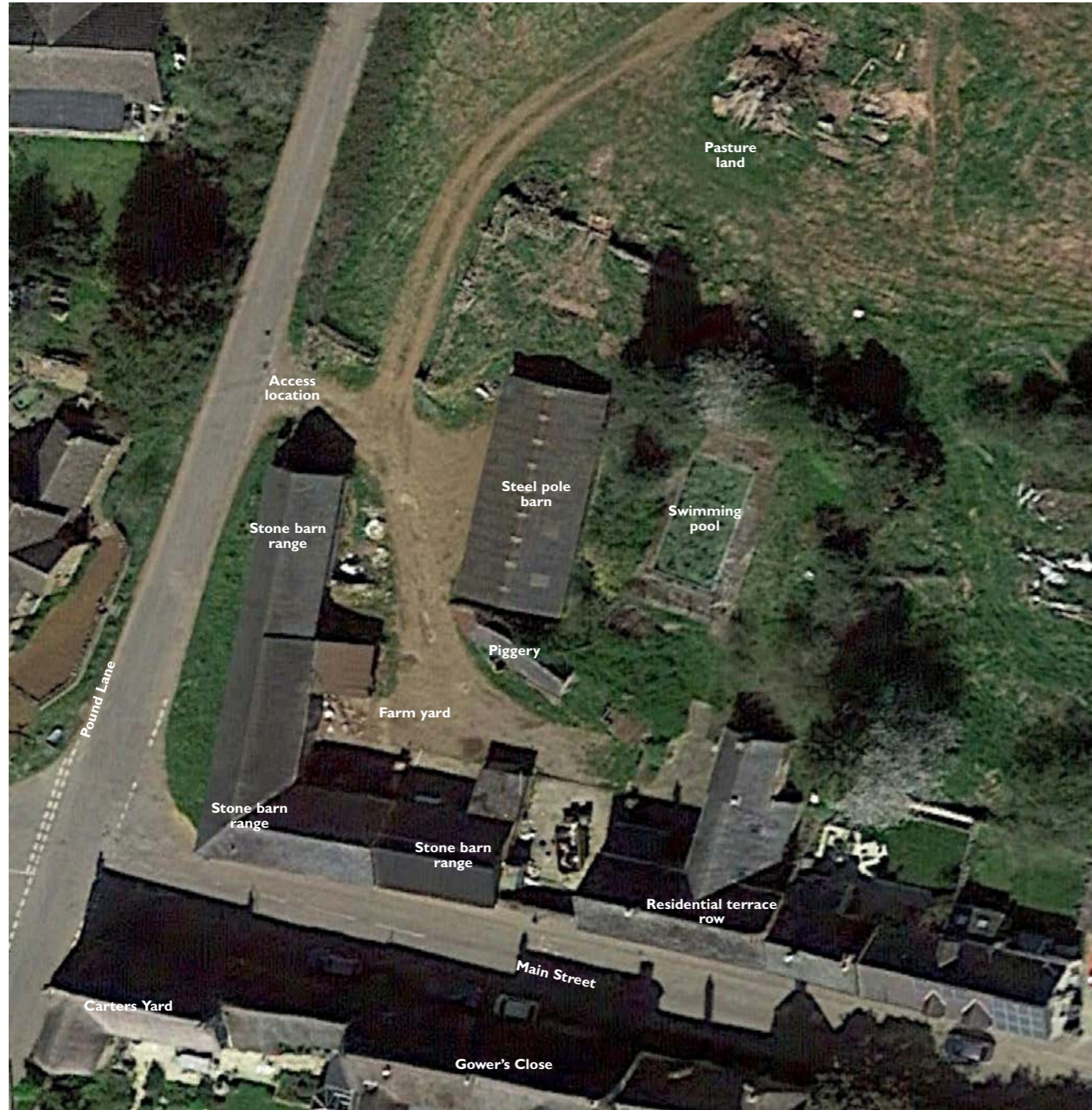


Fig. 2 - Aerial view of Mawles Farm



Fig. 3 - Stone and brick barn range



Fig. 4 - Piggery



Fig. 5 - Steel pole barn



Fig. 6 - Swimming pool

1.5 Site and building layout

Mawles Farm sits at the heart of Sibford Gower. It is located directly adjacent to the village crossroads at the intersection between Main Street, Pound Lane and Colony Road. The application Site is surrounded on three sides by residential dwellings with pasture land to the north under the same title. The topography of the area is undulating with a prevailing north to south gradient. The combination of sloping terrain and homogenous architecture makes the village setting particularly picturesque, a characteristic quality of settlements within the Ironstone Hills landscape character area.

The application Site is located at a strongly defined area of Sibford Gower centred around the crossroads at Mawles Farm. The Site currently contains a collection of redundant farm buildings which date from the 18th - possibly 17th - century onwards. The most prominent of the grouping is the L-shaped stone barn range which follows the south and west perimeter of the Site. Within this succession of adjoining structures is a cart shed and loading bay, milking parlour and a threshing barn. To the north-west of this range is the piggery. This single-storey building abuts a stone retaining wall and was originally part of an opposing L-shaped range forming the northern extremities of an enclosed farm yard. Today the piggery stands alone but retains a close physical relationship with a large twentieth century steel pole barn located immediately to the north.

The modern barn was constructed in the 1990s as a replacement storage shed and has an open-front on the principal elevation facing onto the yard opposite the vehicle access point on Pound Lane. The steel barn is cut into the existing terrain and serves as a retaining structure for higher ground to the north and east.

In addition to the aforementioned buildings, the application Site also contains several distinctive landforms. Ironstone walls ubiquitous to the area mediate level changes between the farm yard and pasture land, while a below ground swimming pool resides at the higher level in the north-eastern corner of the application Site. The pool was constructed at a similar time as the steel pole barn and formed part of the amenity garden facilities installed by a previous occupant.





Fig. 7 - Site location plan

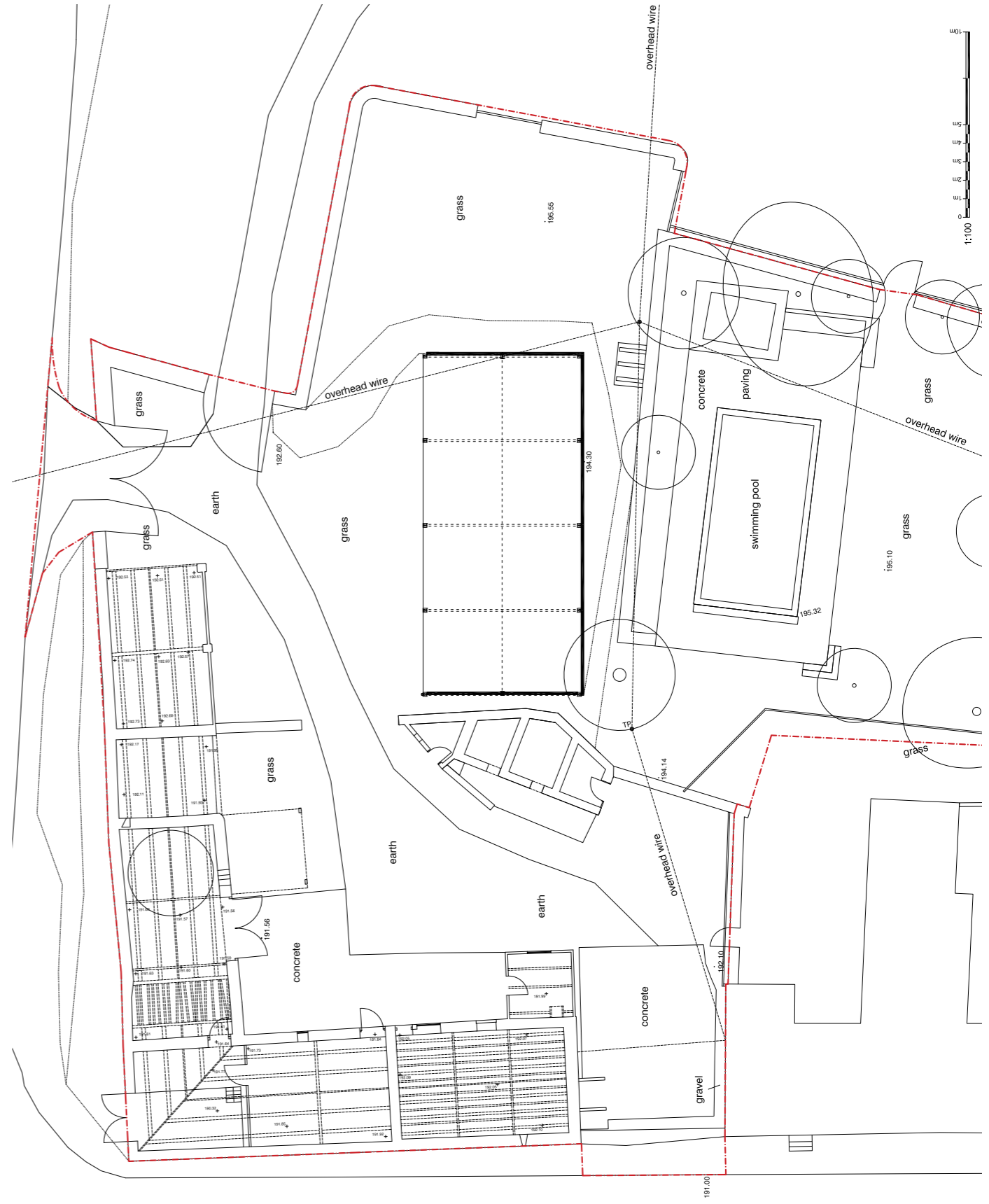


Fig. 8 - Ground floor plan as existing

History, character and appearance

1.6 History

Mawles Farm is one of two remaining agricultural developments in Sibford Gower. Following the death of the previous occupant in 2016, the site is yet to find a sustainable alternative use. All other farms in the village have been converted into dwellings. Mawles Farm's prominent location and history justifies acknowledgement within the SFSGBCA as an undesignated heritage asset which makes a positive contribution to its surroundings.

Historical map regression shows how Mawles Farm has evolved since the 19th century. First evidence of the farm can be seen within the adjacent 1887 map (fig. 9). This shows the farmstead sub-divided into 2 separate yards but under the same title (the f-shaped brace symbol indicates a boundary with no change in title number). The subdivision would have been for functional reasons to separate different farming operations or to allow easier management of the animals between the yard and pasture land. The entrance to the yard is located on Pound Lane in the same location as the present day gate. On Main Street, the southern range of barns extends all the way to the terrace of cottages so that the building roof line runs continuously along the street elevation from the crossroads.

At this time, the buildings are arranged as opposing L-shaped groups with the piggery running diagonally within the southern yard. This basic double-yard arrangement persisted until recent times (fig. 11). Substantial remnants of the stone dividing wall remain on the site and run from

east to west between the piggery and the main barn range.

The opposing L-shaped building groupings remained until the late 1990s when the barns on the northern yard were replaced with the steel pole barn that can be seen on site today (fig. 12).

On Main Street, in the 1887 and 1905 maps (figs 9 + 10), a second row of buildings to the north of the cottages runs parallel with the street. These structures were possibly associated with small holdings or ancillary uses for the housing. This pattern is now lost, but can be detected in the present day line of retaining walls to the backs of the gardens. The cottage immediately adjacent to the application site has subsumed the northern building into its footprint and this gives an indication of the position of the second line of buildings.

The connection between the farm barns and the adjacent row of terraced housing was lost by 1922 (fig 11). The present connecting wall dates to more recent times, being constructed of solid concrete blockwork with stone facings to the street side.

1.7 Character and appearance

Despite its central location, the existing site has a private and secluded character. It appears pared back; the internal courtyard has limited access and austere external elevations. Internal views into the yard are only possible from the street when viewed directly adjacent to the access



Fig. 9 - OS map from 1887



Fig. 10 - OS map from 1905



Fig. 11 - OS map from 1922



Fig. 12 - OS map from present day

gate and boundary wall on Pound Lane.

Buildings on the site echo this restrained character and have a utilitarian quality and simple spaces. Windows and doors are larger in scale than on residential dwellings and predominantly face into the yard with very few openings found on the outer walls.

The existing barn range and piggery are simply designed single-storey structures, constructed of ironstone rubble with gabled roofs. Areas of brickwork, including around openings and horizontal timber cladding are present in later additions and alterations to the farm buildings. Roofs are covered with a mixture of slate and corrugated iron. The latter has been identified within the SFSGBCA as a key characteristic of the undesigned heritage.

“Most other buildings are roofed in Welsh slate or plain clay tiles and few have more modern materials. Corrugated iron remains on a couple of out buildings, including the prominent Mawles Farm and this is an indication that the village has not been gentrified but retains reminders of its agricultural origins.”

(Sibford Ferris, Sibford Gower and Burdorp Conservation Area Appraisal; Cherwell District Council).

The functional character of the steel pole barn is consistent with its immediate surroundings. Constructed in the late twentieth century, the building reflects modern farming practice and the need for larger footprints. The ridge height is only slightly higher than the main barn ranges and the piggery. The shallow roof pitch, however, allows for a higher eaves to support the use of modern agricultural machinery and to increase storage capacity. This distinction is further reinforced by its component based construction with an exposed steel portal frame structure, concrete panel walls, ventilating timber boarding and profiled fibre-cement sheet roof.



Fig. 13 - External appearance from the crossroads



Fig. 14 - Coursed ironstone rubble and walling stone



Fig. 15 - Brick and timber alterations



Fig. 16 - Steel pole barn

Extent

1.8 Extent of the asset

The Site is located at the Sibford Gower crossroads where Main Street, Pound Lane and Colony Road intersect.

The application boundary condition on each elevation is varied with the north and east overlooking pasture land and the south and west facing into the village. Due to the topography and building groupings, the interior of the Site has limited visual connection with the surrounding streets. The L-shaped barn range on the southern and western perimeters of the site shield the interior from the rest of the village. The piggery and steel pole barn can only be seen from the public realm when viewed directly from the site entrance on Pound Lane. Outward facing openings in the L-shaped barn range are confined to three locations, a narrow barn slit on Main Street and two openings along Pound Lane, although there is evidence of at least two further historic openings on the same elevation.

The southern fringe of the site significantly contributes to the character of the village and its crossroads. The L-shaped barn range plays a prominent role in the formation of a strong streetscape along Main Street, with tight building lines and narrow roadways that epitomise a small village setting. This distinctive character is further reinforced by

the presence of Carters Yard and Gower's Close, two Grade II listed designated assets located on the south side of Main Street.

With a limited connection to the village, the application Site retains a strong relationship to the pasture land directly to the north. Like Mawles Farm, this land has been identified in SFSGBCA as making a positive contribution to the wider conservation area, both for its visual character and evidential importance.

“Land north of Mawles Farm, which contributes to the view from the heart of the village retaining the agricultural character and also provides an appropriate setting to the farm group.” (Sibford Ferris, Sibford Gower and Burdorp Conservation Area Appraisal; Cherwell District Council).

1.9 Archaeology

The areas surrounding Sibford Ferris, Sibford Gower and Burdorp have been settled from an early period with evidence of both Iron-Age and Roman settlements nearby. Given its location in the historic core of Sibford Gower, the Site may be considered of archaeological interest.



Fig. 17 - Site relationship to its surroundings



Fig. 18 - Stone barn elevations as existing

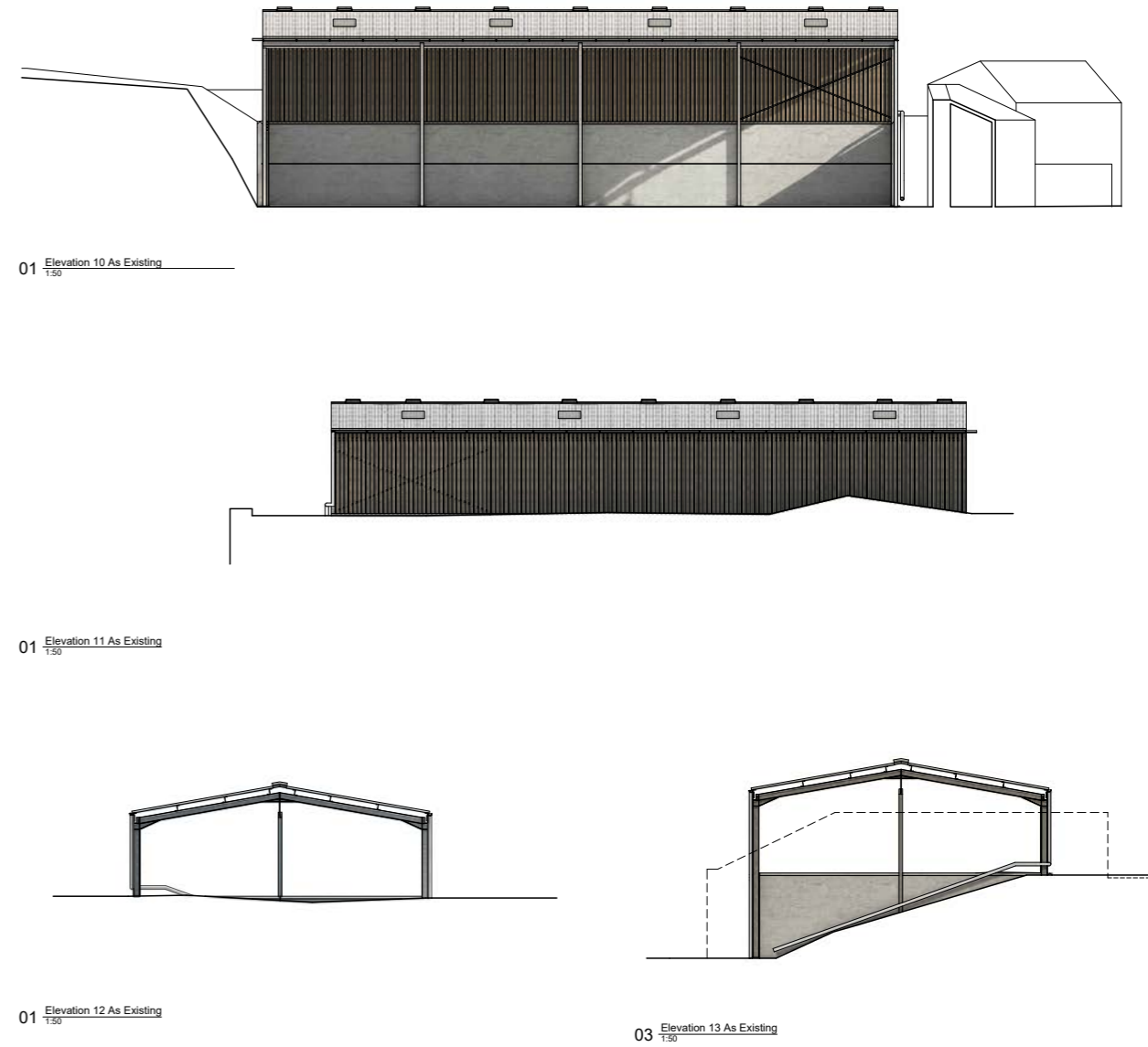
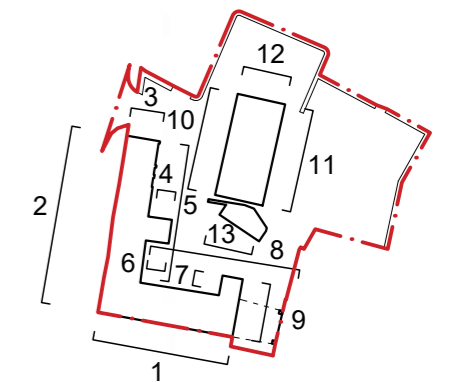


Fig. 19 - Steel barn elevations as existing

Key



Planning parameters

1.9 Sibford Gower and Burdrop were jointly designated as a conservation area in January 1988. Figure 20 below shows the Site in relation to the conservation area and its designated assets.

Sibford Gower is the largest of the three settlements located in the conservation area. The village has a mixture of architectural styles, materials and street patterns. Although the vast proportion of buildings are residential dwellings of varying size, the village does benefit from a school, a Friends' Meeting House, Methodist Chapel and the Wykham Arms public house. Early mapping suggests that the village originated as a small cluster set around a duck pond positioned between Main Street and Colony Road.

Today, the village can be classified into four distinct areas. These are as follows:

- The crossroads including Mawles Farm and Carters Yard
- The cottages along Main Street and Bonds End Lane
- The Glebe farm cluster
- Colony Road

The overall impression of the village and its adjoining counterpart, Burdrop, is one of a quiet rural settlement

nestled on the side of a rolling valley. The village's relationship to the surrounding countryside is critical to its underlying character and atmosphere. Historically, it developed as a farming community with several working farms. Today, its street patterns, building clusters, undulating terrain and views to the surrounding countryside provide clues to these agricultural roots.

1.10 Undesignated heritage asset

The stone barns at Mawles Farm are an undesignated heritage asset. According to Historic England, undesignated Heritage Assets are buildings or sites that make a positive contribution to local character or to a location's sense of place through their heritage value. Although not formally listed as a designated asset, Mawles Farm has been identified by Cherwell District Council to be of sufficient value to warrant the undesignated heritage asset status. The Site has been noted on several occasions in the SFSGBCA as below:

"9.14.1 Traditionally Sibford Gower was a large farming community; however, over recent years a majority of the farms have been converted into dwellings, with the exception of Mawles Farm right on the crossroads at the heart of the village and Home Farm on the outskirts."

"9.15.1 Sibford Gower has a more formal layout than Burdrop and is based on a cross road of Pound Lane/ Colony Road running north south, and Main Street (which leads into Acre Ditch), running east west along the contours of the valley. The crossroads is very tightly defined with a strong building line to the north west and Mawles Farm / Carters Yard abutting the highway."

"9.15.4 Sibford Gower has four distinct areas: the cross roads area with the large barn of Mawles Farm indicating the wealth farming brought to the village and Carters Yard opposite; the cottages which run along Main Street and Bonds End Lane; the Glebe Farm cluster; and finally, Colony Road."

"9.18.5 Most other buildings are roofed in Welsh slate or plain clay tiles and few have more modern materials. Corrugated iron remains on a couple of out buildings, including the prominent Mawles Farm and this is an indication that the village has not been gentrified but retains reminders of its agricultural origins."

"9.19.1 The building line at the cross roads at the centre of the village is tightly defined, particularly at the east where Mawles Farm and Carters Yard provide a strong edge. Further east along Main Street the properties on the north side display a range of metal railings, walls, picket fences and estate style horizontal railings at the back of the footway and this reinforces the linear urban character. The south side of Main Street offers a softer feel with larger plots, so stone walls and vegetation predominate. Further east, beyond the conservation

area boundary, properties of more recent construction are set back from the street behind hedges and this creates a more suburban character."

"9.20.1 Farm land adjacent to the village is important visually and also assists in anchoring the village to its agricultural roots. This includes Land north of Mawles Farm, which contributes to the view from the heart of the village retaining the agricultural character and also provides an appropriate setting to the farm group."

"9.21.4 Mawles Farm is a working farm at the heart of the village. The loss of this activity and the solid masonry walls without significant openings and its corrugated iron roof, which would be hard to retain if the building were ever to be converted to another use, would alter the character of the village."

"9.23.4 ... (T)he farmland around the village, particularly north of Mawles Farm and south of Acre Ditch, is important in ensuring the village retains its connection with its agricultural heritage and that the village and Burdrop retain their separate identities. There is thus very little opportunity within the village for new development that would not harm its established character."

- The crossroads
- The cottages
- Glebe Farm cluster
- Colony Road

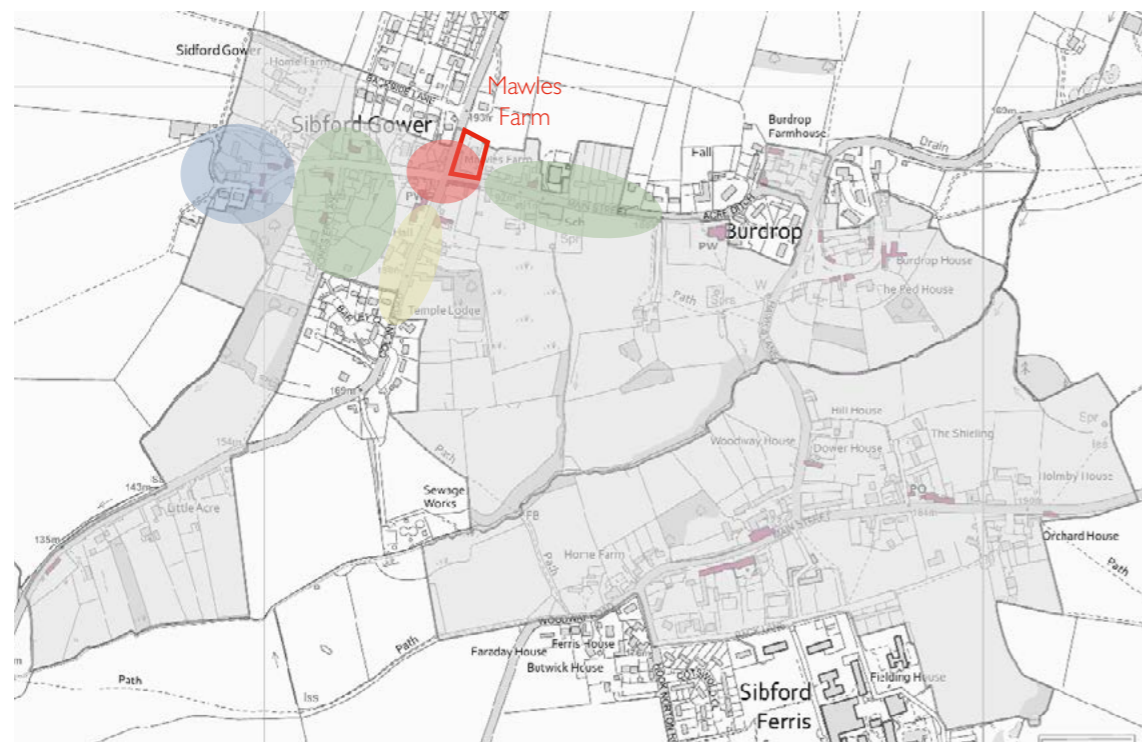


Fig. 20 - Sibford Gower and Burdrop Conservation Area Map - listed buildings and structures in purple



Fig. 21 - Looking East along Main Street



Fig. 22 - View of Mawles Farm from the pasture land

Designated heritage assets

1.11 Designated assets

Mawles Farm is adjacent to two heritage assets: the Grade II listed Carters Yard and Gower's Close. It is also within close proximity to the Manor House and The Wykham Arms Public House.

1.11.1 Carter's Yard

Carter's Yard is a Grade II listed property on the south side of Main Street, adjacent to Mawles Farm. The building was listed as a designated heritage asset in 1988 for its group value and importance to the village crossroads. The listing description is as follows:

"SIBFORD GOWER BURDROP ROAD SP3436-3536 (South side) 16/173 Crossways 13.6.88 GVII House. c.1600 with C20 alterations.

Coursed ironstone rubble. Steeply pitched thatched roof. Brick end stack. L-plan. 2 storeys. Ground floor has a 2-light wood mullioned window and C20 windows. Attic has a reset 2-light lancet window. Thatched staircase bulge on left. Entrance in single-storey thatched part on left of main building. Plank door and wood lintel. Small rectangular C20 windows in wood frames. Interior has stud walls, beams, joists and fireplace with bressumer. Photograph in NMR. Important corner site. Once Crossways was known as Tantony. Included for group value."



Fig. 23 - Carter Yard viewed from Main Street

1.11.2 Gower's Close

East of Carter's Yard is Gower's Close. The Grade II listed house also faces towards Mawles Farm from the south side of Main Street. The listing description is as follows:

"House. 2 parts. Left part early to mid C18. Right part C16/C17. Later alterations. Left part. Coursed ironstone rubble. Steeply pitched thatched roof. Brick end stack. 2-unit plan. 2 storeys. 3-window range. Approximately central entrance has C20 thatched porch, flanked by blocked fixed-light windows with c20 pointed arched heads. First floor has a single light and two 2-light wood mullioned and transomed windows with wood lintels. Right part. Single storey plus attic. Ground floor has arched garage entrance on right and 3 small C20 pointed windows and a C20 window. Attic has 3 eyebrow dormers and a large dormer. Interior: wide inglenook fireplace with chamfered bressumer and bread oven. Chamfered spine beam. Partly original roof with principal and common rafters and collars."



Fig. 24 - Gower's Close viewed from Main Street

Relevant planning history

1.12 Relevant planning history

The following planning application has been lodged with Cherwell District Council and is relevant to the application Site:

Address: *Mawles Farm Sibford Gower Banbury Oxon OX15 5RW*

Proposal: *Demolish and replace existing outbuildings for housing of livestock and storage.*

Application validation date: *05th July 1996*

Decision: *Application Permitted*

The above application was made in reference to the steel pole barn constructed on the site at the turn of the twenty-first century.



Fig. 25 - Steel pole barn