

Heritage Assessment



Land at Begbroke Science Park, Begbroke, Oxfordshire

On behalf of The University of Oxford

May 2018

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CONTENTS		PAGE NO.
1.0	INTRODUCTION	4
2.0	RELEVANT HERITAGE POLICY AND GUIDANCE	6
3.0	THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE HERITAGE ASSETS	8
4.0	EFFECTS ON HERITAGE SIGNIFICANCE	12
5.0	CONCLUSION	14

FIGURES

Figure 1	Location Plan
Figure 2	Extract from the tithe map 1844
Figure 3	Extract from the tithe apportionment
Figure 5	Satellite image
Figure 5	Framework Plan

1.0 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 This heritage assessment has been prepared by Heritage Collective on behalf of the Chancellor, Masters and Scholars of the University of Oxford ('the University of Oxford'), the Applicant and owners of the Science Park. It supports an outline planning application, with all matters reserved except for access, relating to land at Begbroke Science Park, Begbroke, in Oxfordshire (Figure 1). The application is for the residual (unimplemented) part of the 21,236m² of additional floorspace approved within what was known as the "long term" phase of further development at Begbroke Science Park. It is calculated at 9,900m² (see earlier permissions 15/00309/OUT and 01/00662/OUT) but a small amount of additional floorspace is required to meet short-term demand (i.e. a total of 12,500sqm).
- 1.2 Begbroke Science Park stands to the east of the A44, about 7km to the north-west of the centre of Oxford, and about 1.3km to the west of Kidlington, within the historic parish of Begbroke and within the administrative area of Cherwell District Council. There is a grade II listed building within the Science Park, first designated on 26 November 1951 and known as Begbroke Hill Farmhouse, which is officially described as follows:

"Farmhouse, now offices. c.1604 for Humphrey Fitzherbert. Coursed limestone rubble; gabled artificial stone slate roof with moulded kneelers to stone coping; stone end stacks. Double-depth plan. Jacobean style. 2 storeys and attic; 5-window range. 3-storey central porch has pyramidal finials to stone-coped gable; 2- and 3-light ovolo-moulded stone-mullioned windows; label mould over chamfered shallow-arched doorway with roundels set in spandrels and C20 door. Similar 3-light and 4-light windows; similar 2-light windows set in gabled dormers to end bays with pyramidal finials to stone-coped gables. Similar windows to sides and rear. C19 rear extension. Early C17 blocked chamfered pointed arch with moulded imposts to C17 cellar to rear right. Interior: porch has plaster quadripartite vaulted ceiling and stop-chamfered segmental-arched doorway. Stone-flag floors, Quartered beams to right, have moulded cornices and trailing scrolls and flowers to soffits of beams and frieze. Stop-chamfered beams to left and first floor. Restored winder stairs to rear right. Moulded and arched stone fireplace with sunk spandrels to first floor room on left. Butt-purlin roof, In 1604 Fitzherbert was accused of ruining nearby

roads by the frequent use of "late carriages for his buildings". (Buildings of England: Oxfordshire: p450; Information from the VCH)"

- 1.3 The former farmhouse now contains offices and conference facilities which have developed since 1960 when it became the headquarters of the Weed Research Organisation. In the 1980s it became the technology centre for the Cookson Group, and in 1998 it was bought by the University of Oxford. Initially used for atomic engineering and analysis, and as a business incubator, the farmhouse became the administrative centre for Begbroke Science Park in 2000. It is a cross-departmental research facility and Science Park with 14,200 m² office/laboratory space for twenty research groups and thirty high-tech science-based businesses and spin-outs. It also contains a conference venue and business training centre.

- 1.4 The proposed outline development is within the setting of the listed building. Therefore, the following assessment describes the potential impact of change on the setting and significance of the designated heritage asset, in accordance with advice in paragraph 128 of the National Planning Policy Framework. This report should be read in conjunction with the Archaeological Desk Based Assessment prepared by Archaeology Collective.

2.0 RELEVANT HERITAGE POLICY AND GUIDANCE

2.1 The decision maker is required by section 66(1) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 to have special regard to the desirability of preserving a listed building or its setting. The decision maker must also give considerable importance and weight to the desirability of preserving the listed building. There is a strong presumption against the grant of permission for development that would harm the special interest of the listed building, though the presumption can be overcome if the harm is mitigated or outweighed by public benefits, as is explained in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF).

2.2 For the purposes of this assessment “preserve” means to do no harm.¹ Harm is defined by Historic England as change which erodes the significance of a heritage asset.²

2.3 The significance of a heritage asset is defined in the NPPF as being made up of four main constituents, architectural interest, historical interest, archaeological interest and artistic interest. The setting of the heritage asset can also contribute to its significance. Setting is defined in the NPPF as follows:

“The surroundings in which a heritage asset is experienced. Its extent is not fixed and may change as the asset and its surroundings evolve. Elements of a setting may make a positive or negative contribution to the significance of an asset, may affect the ability to appreciate that significance or may be neutral.”

2.4 This assessment has regard to Historic England’s guidance on setting, generally known as GPA3, revised in December 2017. GPA3 does not prescribe a single methodological approach for assessments relating to the setting of heritage assets.

¹ South Lakeland District Council v Secretary of State for the Environment and Another, House of Lords, [1992] 2 W.L.R. 204.

² Paragraph 84 of *Conservation Principles* 2008 (this document is currently undergoing public consultation as part of a revised draft).

- 2.5 The assessments of heritage significance and impact are normally made with primary reference to the four main elements of significance identified in the NPPF.
- 2.6 The NPPF requires the impact on the significance of the heritage asset to be considered in terms of either “substantial harm” or “less than substantial harm” as described within paragraphs 132 to 134 of that document. National Planning Practice Guidance (NPPG) makes it clear that substantial harm is a high test, and recent case law describes substantial harm in terms of an effect that would vitiate or drain away much of the significance of a heritage asset.
- 2.7 Paragraph 132 of the NPPF states that great weight should be given to the conservation of a designated heritage asset when considering applications that affect its significance.
- 2.8 This assessment is confined to the significance of heritage assets and the impact of change on that significance. It does not address the planning balance in which public benefit is weighed against the degree of harm, if any.

3.0 THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE HERITAGE ASSETS

Historic background of Begbroke Hill Farmhouse

- 3.1 Begbroke Hill Farmhouse is said to have been built for the Fitzherbert family about 1604, and it is described in the Victoria County History (V.C.H.) as follows:

*"The Giffard and FitzHerbert manor house possibly stood on the site later occupied by Orchard House, west of the church. A new manor house, later called Begbroke Hill, was built in the south-east corner of the parish ½ mile east of the Oxford-Woodstock road, probably by Humphrey FitzHerbert, who was accused in 1604 of ruining Begbroke's roads by his 'late carriages for his buildings'. In 1662 the house was assessed at the high number of 13 hearths. It has a symmetrical south front of five bays with a three-storeyed central porch. The principal rooms were to either side of an entrance passage, and there was a kitchen wing on the north-west and a staircase in the angle between that wing and the front range. A cellar behind the main east room is not built over and may have been constructed soon after the house was built. A stone barn and other farm buildings of various dates west of the house were incorporated into the office and laboratory buildings of the Weed Research Organization."*³

- 3.2 Begbroke tithe map, dated 1844, provides a good idea of the disposition of the farmhouse and its outbuildings in the early Victorian period, augmented with details of agricultural land use in the tithe apportionment (Figures 2 and 3). The farm was owned by Thomas Robinson esquire, who was resident at Ivy House, Yarnton, at the time of the 1841 census. He was described as being of independent means, and he seems to have been a partner in the Old Bank in Oxford. The farm was occupied by a middle aged farmer named Mathew Young who lived in the neighbouring parish of Kidlington at the time of the 1841 census.

- 3.3 The tithe apportionment describes the main building (Plot 75) as a farmhouse with outbuildings, yard and garden – the garden being to the east and north-east of the building. Most of the fields immediately around

³ V.C.H. Oxford, volume 12, 1990.

the farmhouse were in use as pasture, though Plot 73 was in arable cultivation (Figures 2 and 3).

- 3.4 The buildings to the west of the farmhouse, mentioned in the V.C.H. as having been incorporated into the office and laboratory of the Weed Research Organisation, were completed in 1974 to the designs of the architects Westwood, Piet, Poole and Smart.

Significance of the listed building

- 3.5 The listed building is significant for the following reasons:

Architectural interest: Begbroke Hill Farmhouse is a good example of a Jacobean farmhouse built in a freestanding position within its own land and grounds, later adapted for improved agricultural purposes in the Georgian and Victorian periods.

Historic interest: There is a direct historic association with the Fitzherbert family, and possibly with the earlier Giffard family which had held land in the parish since the medieval period. Despite later changes and alterations, the farmhouse is also a physical reminder of the early 17th century social structure in rural Oxfordshire, and it acts as a direct link with a remote time in the past.

Archaeological interest: The physical fabric of the building, and its gradual evolution over time, is of archaeological significance in its own right.

Artistic interest: There is an artistic component within the demonstrably Jacobean architecture of the building, and in many respects the building is aesthetically pleasing.

- 3.6 Begbroke Hill Farmhouse is a building of local and regional heritage interest.

Setting of the listed building

- 3.7 The setting of the listed building (that is, the surroundings within which its significance can be experienced) can be described as follows:

The Science Park: The uses on the Science Park since it was acquired by the Weed Research Organisation in 1960 must have greatly altered the former agricultural character of the yard, gardens and land around the listed building. For example, the metalled roads to the south and east of the former farmhouse have been formalised in the past half century or so, and there is now a car park to the east on what was once pasture in a field called The Paddock (see Figures 2 and 3). New buildings have been constructed to the north, to the extent that the relationship between the farmhouse and its farmland has already been weakened. It is no longer possible to appreciate the significance of the listed building from all parts of the Science Park.

The land surrounding the Science Park:

- 3.8 The Science Park has introduced a rectangular enclosure into the surrounding agricultural land since the 1970s, and the earlier arrangement of field boundaries has been altered. External views of the listed building from this land are limited, and there is no longer a sense of it being the centre of a farm.

Contribution of setting to significance

- 3.9 The agricultural land surrounding the Science Park does not make a strong contribution to the significance of the listed building.
- 3.10 The Science Park has become part of the setting of the listed building (Figure 4). Although the setting of the farmhouse has been significantly changed and altered in the past 60 years, and although the listed building could not be mistaken for a working farm, the building has adapted to its campus-like surroundings. This process began at least as long ago as 1974, when the conversions and extensions by Westwood, Piet, Poole and Smart were undertaken. To that extent, the Science Park has provided a new setting and a new purpose for the listed building, which is an adaptation that contributes positively to its significance.

Statement of significance

3.11 Begbroke Hill Farmhouse is of special interest for the following principal reasons:

- Architecturally it is a good example of a Jacobean farmhouse built in a freestanding location within its own fields.
- It illustrates an aspect of the social structure of Oxfordshire in the 17th century, and it has links with the ancient Giffard and Fitzherbert families.
- It has fabric of intrinsic archaeological interest.
- The relatively new campus-like setting that has evolved around the building since the 1960s has replaced much of the earlier agricultural setting, providing a positive relationship in which the fabric of the old building is woven into the new.

3.12 Considerable importance and weight should be attached to the preservation of the designated heritage asset.

4.0 EFFECTS ON HERITAGE SIGNIFICANCE

The outline proposal

4.1 The outline planning application, with all matters reserved except for access, relating is for the residual (unimplemented) part of the 21,236m² of additional floorspace approved within what was known as the “long term” phase of further development at Begbroke Science Park. Planning permission is sought for additional floorspace of up to 12,500m² to meet short-term demand. The Framework Plan (Figure 5) identifies the following elements within the red line:

- Zone A – Two areas (2.47ha and 0.38ha) of existing built development, including the listed building.
- Zone B – 0.47ha of proposed development to the north (north-east) of the existing built development.
- Zone C – 0.52 ha of proposed development to the north-west of the existing built development.
- Zone D – 0.22ha of proposed parking to the east of the listed building, in an area where there is an existing car park.

4.2 New development will be limited to 12.6m above the existing ground level, which is equivalent to the height of the tallest existing buildings.

Change within the setting of the listed building

4.3 The proposed development will bring about change within the setting of the listed building. However, the proposed built development in Zones B and C will be separated from the listed building by existing development and infrastructure. They will be sufficiently far from the listed building (at over 120m and 140m respectively) not to affect important views inward or outward, and they will be part of the wider context of a campus that has in itself become a positive setting for the listed building. The height of the new development will not exceed the height of existing buildings which are closer

to the listed building. Zone D, which is the car park, does not alter the setting of the listed building.

Effect on significance of the listed building

- 4.4 On the evidence of the Framework Plan there is no reason to suppose that the change within the setting of the setting of the listed building will lead to the erosion of any of its significance, or that paragraphs 133 or 134 of the NPPF would be engaged.

Summary of effects on the significance of the listed building

- 4.5 On the evidence of the Framework Plan there is no reason to believe that either the setting or the significance of the listed building will be harmed as a result of the change arising from the proposed development.
- 4.6 There is no reason, on present evidence, that paragraphs 133 and 134 of the NPPF would be engaged.
- 4.7 There is good reason to believe that there will be preservation for the purposes of the decision maker's duty under section 66(1) of the Act.

5.0 CONCLUSION

- 5.1 Begbroke Hill Farmhouse is a good example of a Jacobean farmhouse built in a freestanding position within its own land and grounds, later adapted for improved agricultural purposes in the Georgian and Victorian periods. There is a direct historic association with the Fitzherbert family, and possibly with the earlier Giffard family which had held land in the parish since the medieval period. Despite later changes and alterations, the farmhouse is also a physical reminder of the early 17th century social structure in rural Oxfordshire, and it acts as a direct link with a remote time in the past. The physical fabric of the building, and its gradual evolution over time, is of archaeological significance in its own right. There is an artistic component within the demonstrably Jacobean architecture of the building, and in many respects the building is aesthetically pleasing
- 5.2 The Science Park has become part of the setting of the listed building. Although the setting of the farmhouse has been significantly changed and altered in the past 60 years, and although the listed building could not be mistaken for a working farm, the building has adapted to its campus-like surroundings. This process began at least as long ago as 1974, when the conversions and extensions by Westwood, Piet, Poole and Smart were undertaken. To that extent, the Science Park has provided a new setting and a new purpose for the listed building, which is an adaptation that contributes positively to its significance.
- 5.3 A very high priority should be given to the conservation of the designated heritage asset, and considerable importance and weight should be attached to any harm affecting its significance.
- 5.4 New buildings are proposed at distances of more than 120m from the listed building, restricted to 12.6m above existing ground level. They will be no taller than existing buildings that stand nearer to the listed building. Parking arrangements will not change the significance of the listed building.
- 5.5 Paragraphs 133 and 134 of the NPPF will not be engaged. There will be preservation for the purposes of the decision maker's duty under section 66(1) of the Act.

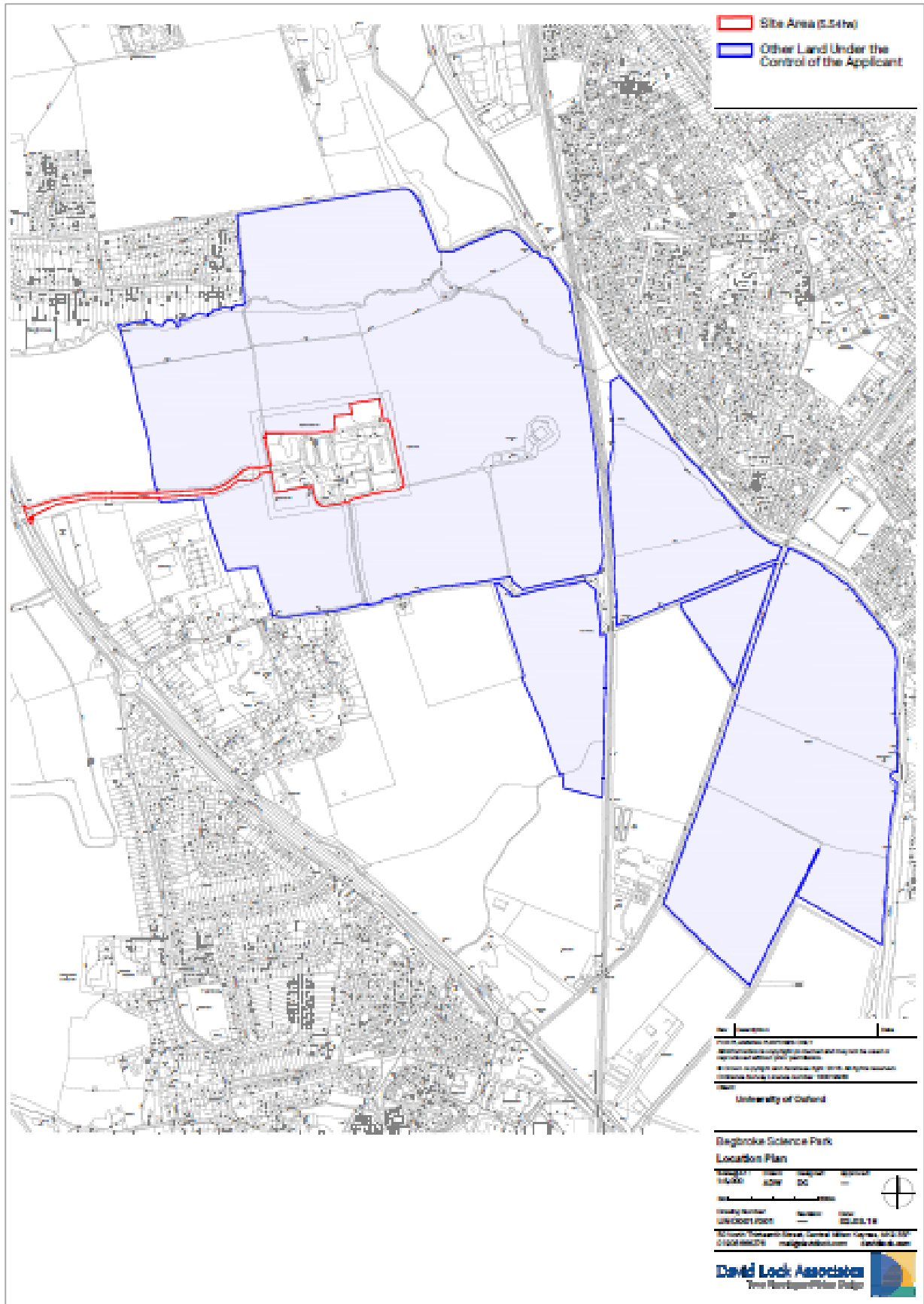


Figure 1 – Location Plan

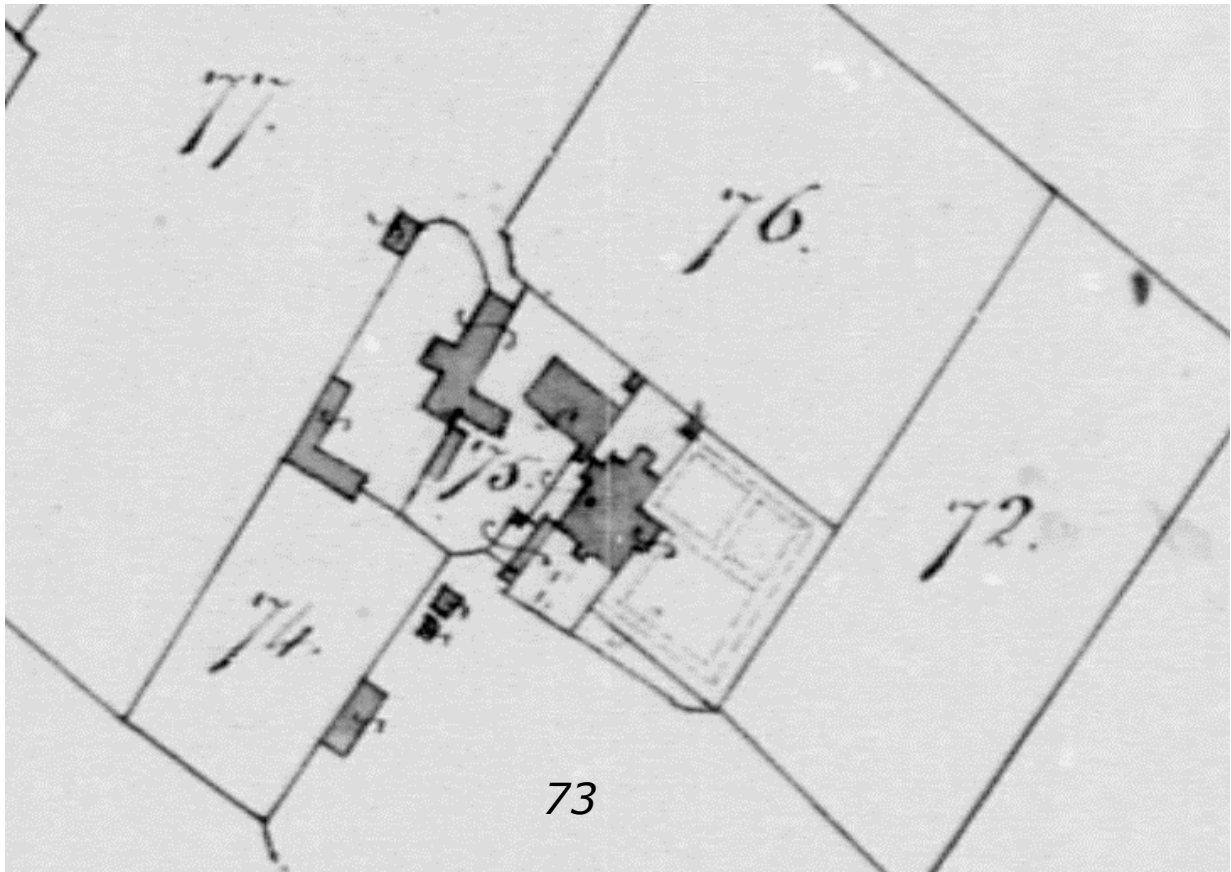


Figure 2 – Extract from the Begbroke tithe map of 1844 (north is not exactly at the top of the original map). Plot number 73 has been annotated manually because the original number is off the edge of the extract.

LANDOWNERS.	OCCUPIERS.	Number referring to the Plans.	NAME AND DESCRIPTION OF LANDS AND PREMISES.	STATE OF CULTIVATION.
Robinson Thomas Esquire (cont ^d)	Mathew Young	75	Farm house Outbuildings Yard & Garden.	
		65	Land field	Arable
		66	Coppice	Wood
		67	Coppice	do
		62	Watering Ground	Pasture
		72	The Paddock	do
		73	Dill Ground	Arable
		74	Cherry Orchard	Pasture
		76	Orchard	do
		77	Begbroke Close	do
		89	Hewleys Marsh	do
		90	Hewleys Marsh	do
		92	Upper Lime Hill	do
		100	Lower Lime Hill	do

Figure 3 – Extract from the Begbroke tithe apportionment showing the ownership, occupation and land use in plots 72, 73, 74, 75, 76 and 77 as shown on the map in Figure 1.



Figure 4 – Satellite image. The listed building is arrowed.



Figure 5 – Framework Plan.