



**HERITAGE IMPACT ASSESSMENTS  
SOLIHULL METROPOLITAN BOROUGH COUNCIL  
LOCAL PLAN REVIEW**

**REPORT No 5: SITE 13 - SOUTH OF SHIRLEY  
MARCH 2019**

**DAVID BURTON-PYE MBE  
DIP TP MRTPI IHBC  
CHARTERED TOWN PLANNER  
HISTORIC ENVIRONMENT CONSULTANT**

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David Burton-Pye MBE Dip TP, MRTPI, IHBC  
Chartered Town Planner – Historic Environment Consultant

29, Conway Road, PERTON, Wolverhampton  
Staffordshire, WV6 7RQ

07791 058351

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HERITAGE IMPACT ASSESSMENT: SITE 13 – SOUTH OF SHIRLEY



Figure 1 Aerial view of Site - Map data Google Earth

## 5.1 Location and General Description

- 5.1.1 This site lies south of the existing development limits of the suburb of Shirley Heath bounded to the west by the railway line from Birmingham New Street to Stratford, to the south by the Stratford Canal and to the east by field boundaries north and west of Dickens Heath Road and Tanworth Road.
- 5.1.2 The site can effectively be considered as comprising two parts divided by the track/footpath from Bills Lane in the north to Dickens Heath Road to the south east. To the west and south of this track the land is intensively and extensively used for the growing of Christmas trees whilst land to the north is mainly used as rough grazing with some tree plantations. There are football pitches and allotments off Dickens Heath Road to the east and vehicular access to Site 13 is restricted to private tracks serving the business of tree growing and the complex of converted farm buildings that comprise Whitlocks End Farm. This latter is the Grade II Listed building and comprises the only heritage asset affected by the proposed development site.
- 5.1.3 Pedestrian access is available via the public footpaths within the site. One effectively follows the northern boundary of the site from Bills Lane eastwards, the other runs south past Whitlocks End Farm to join the canal at the northern extremity of Dickens Heath. During the site visits conducted on 9<sup>th</sup> October and 30<sup>th</sup> November 2018 many walkers and dog walkers seemed to enjoy unrestricted access to the fields east of the conifer plantations.



Figure 2 Site 13 Location plan

## 5.2 Evidence from Historic Environment Record

5.2.1 The list description from the Historic England website is as follows:

Details

BILLS LANE 1. 5108 HOCKLEY HEATH

Whitlocks Farmhouse SP 17 NW 2/321 II

2. C17. Brick front, timber frame and red brick nogging to back and side. Tiled roof. 2 storeys, 2 lattice casement windows.

Listing NGR: SP1104277524

5.2.2 2/322 - Barn, Whitlocks Farm, Dickens Heath Road (Local List)

C17 or C18. Timber frame, red brick nogging, tiled roof. Small doorways with byre doors.

5.2.3 The Stratford-upon-Avon canal runs south of Site 13. Many canals are designated as linear conservation areas but that is not the case here. It is beyond the brief of these assessments to consider this in detail other than to note that the canal may be considered as a heritage asset.

### 5.3 Archaeological Assessment to inform the Solihull Metropolitan Borough Council Local Plan February 2018

5.3.1 Grid Ref: SP 1147, 7739

5.3.2 Site Size: 29.25 Ha

#### 5.3.3 Geology:

The bedrock geology across the site area is dominated by the Mercia Mudstone Group - Mudstone. Sedimentary Bedrock formed approximately 200 to 251 million years ago in the Triassic Period.

The superficial deposits across the site are composed of Glaciofluvial Deposits (Sands and Gravels), Glaciolacustrine Deposits (Clay and Silt), Alluvium (Clay, Silt, Sand and Gravel) and Till (Diamicton) that were formed up to two million years ago during the Quaternary Period. The local environment in which these deposits were formed was dominated by ice age and river conditions (British Geological Survey <http://www.bgs.ac.uk/>).

#### 5.3.4 Historic Landscape Character Summary:

Within the site the area is a mixture of small rectilinear fields (probably planned enclosure, 18-19th century in origin) and small irregular fields (probably piecemeal enclosure 16-18th century in origin) with a small training centre (Sans Souci) at the eastern end.

In the wider study area to the north of the site and bordering it is the settlement of Shirley and Shirley Heath which is predominantly post 1955 detached and semi-detached housing. Even further north this housing forms large estates of interwar semi-detached housing. Interspersed between this housing are a number of

**schools and an area of ancient woodland (Bill's Wood) and on the eastern side the TRW works.**

South and east of the site are a number of enclosures with planned, piecemeal and mixed enclosure patterns. The majority are irregular in form pointing to an earlier phase of enclosure probably 16th-18th century in origin. Interspersed amongst this enclosure are 19th century or older farmsteads.

Further south and west, on the other side of the Stratford Canal, is the settlement of Dickens Heath mostly late 20th century detached housing.

To the west of the site is a recent plantation, fairly large in size which appears to be a Christmas Tree business.

#### Designated Sites

##### 5.3.5 Scheduled Monuments within the PSS:

None

##### 5.3.6 Scheduled Monuments within the study area (1km buffer from PSS boundary):

None

##### 5.3.7 Conservation Areas within the PSS:

None

##### 5.3.8 Conservation Areas within the study area (1km buffer from PSS boundary)

None

##### 5.3.9 Listed Buildings within the PSS:

None

##### 5.3.10 Locally Listed Buildings within the PSS:

None

#### 5.3.11 ARCHAEOLOGY:

Previous known archaeological work within the PSS:

The Solihull Historic Environment Record has no record of any previous archaeological work having been undertaken across this site.

Known archaeological sites within the PSS:

MSI9038: Ridge & Furrow; North of Three Maypoles

MSI10977: Ridge & Furrow; W of Highfield Farm

#### 5.3.12 Past Disturbance to the PSS:

It is probable that the majority of the site has been in agricultural use since at least the medieval period. Whilst this agricultural activity may have caused some damage to any archaeological deposits predating this use, this damage is unlikely to have been extensive. The westernmost fields have been for at least the past six years, for the growing of Christmas trees. This is likely to have had an impact on any archaeological features that survive across that area. There is also some localised disturbance associated with the construction of buildings across the eastern part of the site. This is likely to have had some impact on any archaeological features that survive across those areas.

#### 5.3.13 Archaeological Potential of the PSS:

It is probable that the majority of the site has been in agricultural use since at least the medieval period. Whilst this agricultural activity may have caused some damage to any archaeological deposits predating this use, this damage is unlikely to have been extensive. The westernmost fields have been for at least the past six years, for the growing of Christmas trees. This is likely to have had an impact on any archaeological features that survive across that area. There is also some localised

disturbance associated with the construction of buildings across the eastern part of the site. This is likely to have had some impact on any archaeological features that survive across those areas.

#### 5.3.14 Site Sensitivity to change:

Archaeology:

Development of this site is likely to have a significant negative archaeological impact upon any archaeological deposits which survive across this area. It is also likely to have an impact on the setting of historic buildings, including Listed buildings, which survive in the vicinity of this site.

#### 5.3.15 Historic Landscape Character:

Any development will change the historic landscape character of this area from its present state which consists of a mixture of small rectilinear fields (probably planned enclosure) and small irregular fields (probably piecemeal enclosure) with a small training centre (Sans Souci) at the eastern end.

The brook and parish boundary cross this site dating back to at least the 19th century if not earlier.

#### 5.3.16 Planning Recommendations for the PSS:

A programme of archaeological assessment should be undertaken, the first phases of which should comprise detailed desk-based (including a walkover survey) and geophysical survey. This should include an assessment of the impacts of the proposed development on any historic buildings which survive across and in the vicinity of the application site. This should be followed by a programme of evaluative fieldwork, including trial trenching, the scope of which should be informed by the results of the earlier surveys. This fieldwork should be undertaken prior

to the determination of any planning application in order to provide sufficient information to enable a reasoned and informed planning decision to be made. The archaeological evaluation will inform the development of a strategy, if appropriate, to mitigate the potential archaeological impact of the proposed development; this strategy may include designing the development to avoid impacting archaeological deposits of national significance which are worthy of conservation.

The Historic Landscape Character of this area should be taken into account when considering any planning application for this site.

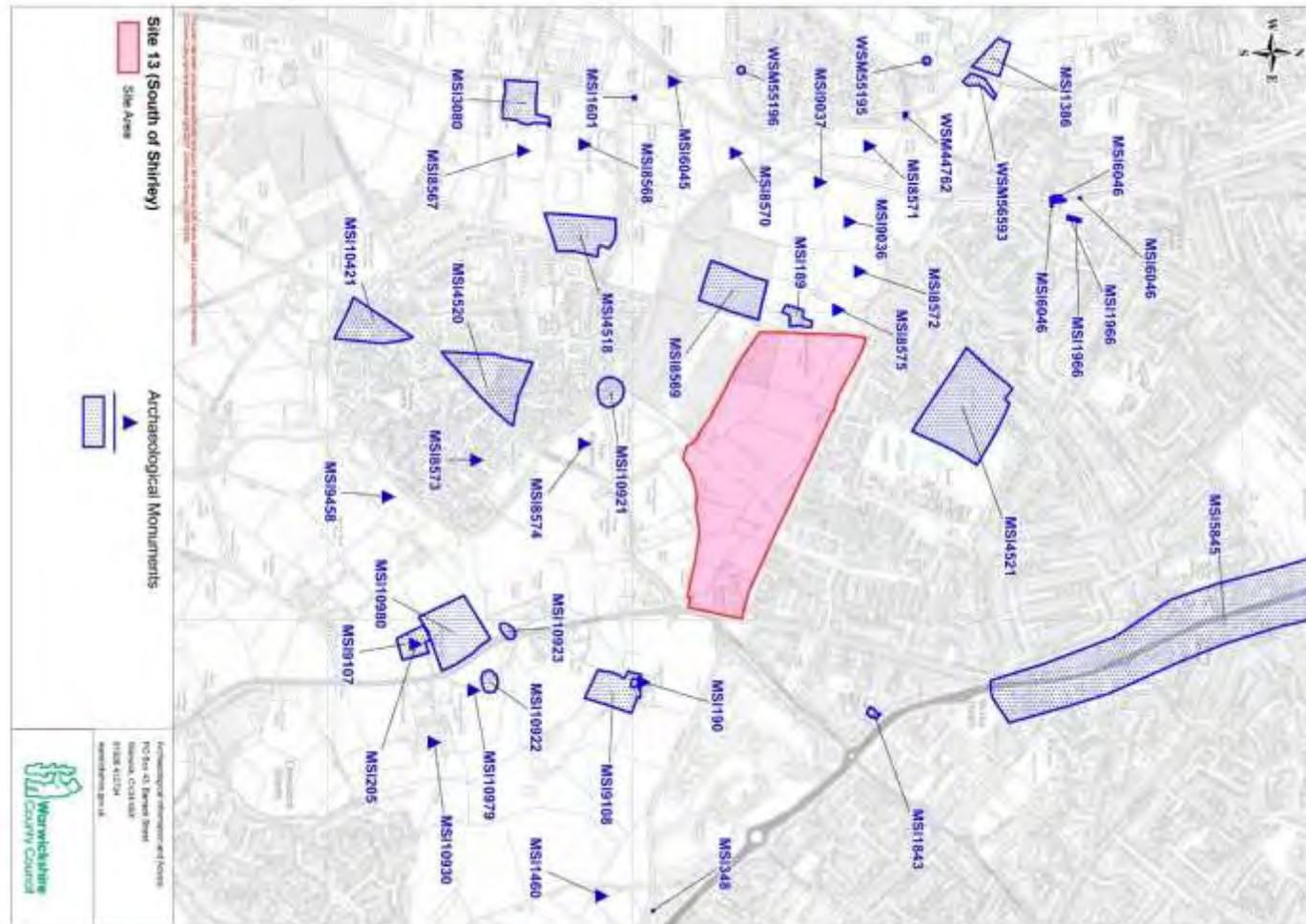


Figure 3 Archaeological monuments - information supplied by Warwickshire Archaeological Information and Advice



## 5.4 Historic Mapping

5.4.1 The heritage assets affected by the proposed site are Whitlocks End Farm (Grade II) and the barn at Whitlocks End Farm (Local list). Historic mapping is derived from the Tanworth Tithe Map and the 1<sup>st</sup> Edition Ordnance Survey map 1884. The tithe map is dated 1842 and the farm is shown as Parcel 2257.

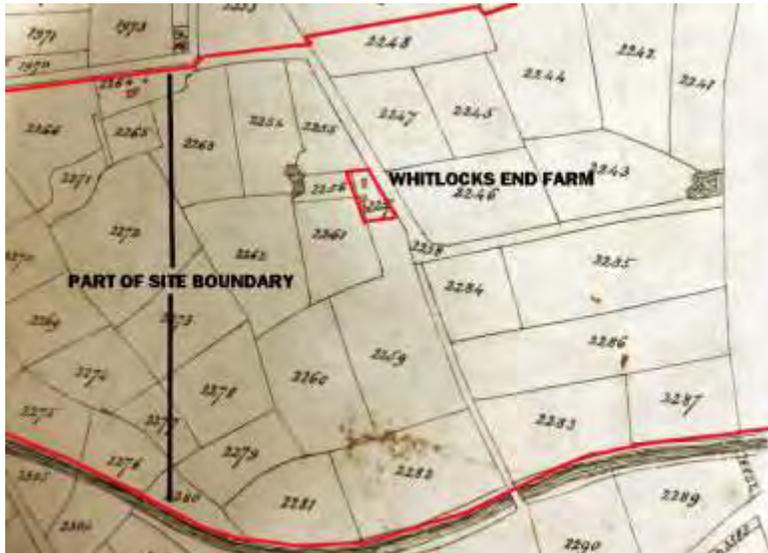


Figure 5 Extract from Tanworth Tithe Map

5.4.3 The first edition Ordnance Survey map 1884 shows the area in more detail. Current field patterns are recognisable as are the immediate surroundings of the house.



Figure 6 Extract from 1st edition Ordnance Survey Sheets

5.5 Photographic evidence

- 5.5.1 The landscape character of much of Site 13 is difficult to establish visually due to its state of cultivation with large areas of conifer plantations associated with the Christmas Tree business operating from the adjoining premises on **Bill's Lane**. **These plantations cover extensive areas of land and ground level photographs would provide little evidence of the site's appearance.** This is best appreciated from the aerial photograph at Figure 1.
- 5.5.2 The Stratford Canal provides an established southern boundary to the site.
- 5.5.3 The field boundaries in the eastern part of the site are enclosure parcels with hedgerows and mature trees elevated slightly above the surrounding field levels on raised embankments.



Figure 7 Winding hole on Stratford Canal south of site



Figure 8 Track into site from south-east corner via public footpath from junction of Dickens Heath Lane and Tithe Barn Lane



Figure 9 Track leading north into site from Stratford Canal at Dickens Heath



Figure 10 Typical view into conifer plantations



Figure 11 Gable end of Whitlocks End Farm; Listed Grade II



Figure 12 Part of the complex of converted farm buildings at Whitlocks End Farm



Figure 13 Part of the complex of converted farm buildings at Whitlocks End Farm



Figure 14 View of hedgerow trees in field parcels to east of site



Figure 15 View of hedgerow trees in field parcels to east of site



Figure 16 Stitch 1 in fields to east of site



Figure 17 Stitch 2 in fields to east of site



Figure 18 Stitch 3 in fields to east of site



Figure 19 stitch 4 in meadows to east of site

5.6 Assessment of Evidence

5.6.1 In assessing the impact that the proposed development site may have on heritage assets this report takes note of the following legislation, policy and guidance:

Section 66 of the Act which requires the LPA to

**"consider the desirability of preserving the building or its setting".**

As stated in the NPPF the setting of a heritage asset is defined 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".*

As stated in GPA 3

*Setting is not a heritage asset, nor a heritage designation, though land within a setting may itself be designated (see below Designed settings). Its importance lies in what it contributes to the significance of the heritage asset.*

Significance has been assessed by reference to the NPPF glossary as follows:

*The value of a heritage asset to this and future generations because of its heritage interest. The interest may be archaeological, architectural, artistic or historic. Significance derives not only from a heritage asset's physical presence, but also from its setting. For World Heritage Sites, the cultural value described within each site's Statement of Outstanding Universal Value forms part of its significance.*

Whitlocks End Farm and its setting

5.6.2 As described in Section 5.1 the site lies immediately adjacent to the current limits of development of Shirley Heath. The mid-late C20 housing alongside the northern boundary is a clear expression of the urban edge nature of the land. The commercial growth and sale of Christmas trees at Woods Farm off Bills Lane is an intensive use. West of this business is the Birmingham-Stratford railway line (with the associated Shirley Station) and a series of fishing pools that lie between the railway line and Haslucks Green Road.

5.6.3 As outlined in paragraph 5.5.1 above, the nature of the uses around the listed building have impacted strongly upon the experience of the asset. To some extent this is further compounded by the alterations to the listed building and the conversion of the associated farmstead (to residential use). Whilst the latter may have preserved the buildings the conversions have at the same time reduced the architectural and historic interest of the farmstead. The author notes that the HER makes no reference to the historic farmstead.

5.6.4 Using the criteria set out in paragraph 2.12 of the Introductory Statement at Table 1 the importance of Whitlocks End Farm is medium and that of the locally listed barn is low

MEDIUM	Grade II Listed Buildings
LOW	*Setting that has been compromised *Locally Listed Buildings *Historic Buildings of modest quality in their fabric or historical associations

5.6.5 Using the criteria set out in paragraph 2.12 of the Introductory Statement at Table 3 the sensitivity of Whitlocks End Farm to further change is

LOW	Some aspects of the original setting has been compromised at specific locations within that setting
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5.6.6 From the NPPF Glossary the potential archaeological interest of the site and building is assessed in paragraphs 5.3.14 to 5.3.16 above.

5.6.7 **The building's** architectural and historic interest has been compromised by the alterations and conversions to residential development.

5.6.8 Using the advice in the NPPF as set out in Section 3 of the Introductory Statement and the advice in GPA 3 as set out in Section 4 of this report regarding Step 2 and assessing whether, how and to what degree setting contributes to the significance of Whitlocks End Farm this statement considers that:

- The change of use of the building from a farmhouse and farm buildings to residential use and holiday accommodation has altered the character of the farmstead and its immediate surroundings.
- The wider surroundings have been extensively altered by the establishment of the tree growing business.
- Whilst some of the field boundaries shown on the Tithe and early Ordnance Survey maps can just about be distinguished as parcels of land in the plantations, the associated hedges and trees have been removed and hence nothing remains of these landscape features.

- Historic field boundaries still exist between some of the fields east of the track serving the heritage asset towards the eastern end of the site. These are a distinctive feature as the hedges and trees are planted on slightly raised embankments that set the boundaries slightly above the level of the adjoining fields

5.6.9 This report considers that development of the site could have a minor negative impact on the setting of Whitlocks End Farm as required by Section 66 of the Act and would cause no harm to its setting as set out in the NPPF.

5.6.10 This could be moderated or mitigated by careful attention to its immediate surroundings which should be addressed in any masterplan for the site. This is addressed in Section 5.7 below

## 5.7 Minimising harm and enhancing significance

5.7.1 This assessment concludes that the setting of the designated heritage asset has been negatively impacted by the current use of the land, but that new development has the potential to enhance its significance by the following means:

- Development adjacent to the west and south of the asset should be the subject of a detailed design brief to outline suggested layout, scale, massing and materials for any new dwellings in the vicinity of the heritage asset.
- Any landscape scheme should consider the reinstatement of former hedgerows with suitable tree planting to re-create the field patterns shown on the early maps.
- Development at the east end of the site should retain the field patterns, hedgerows and trees that currently exist.

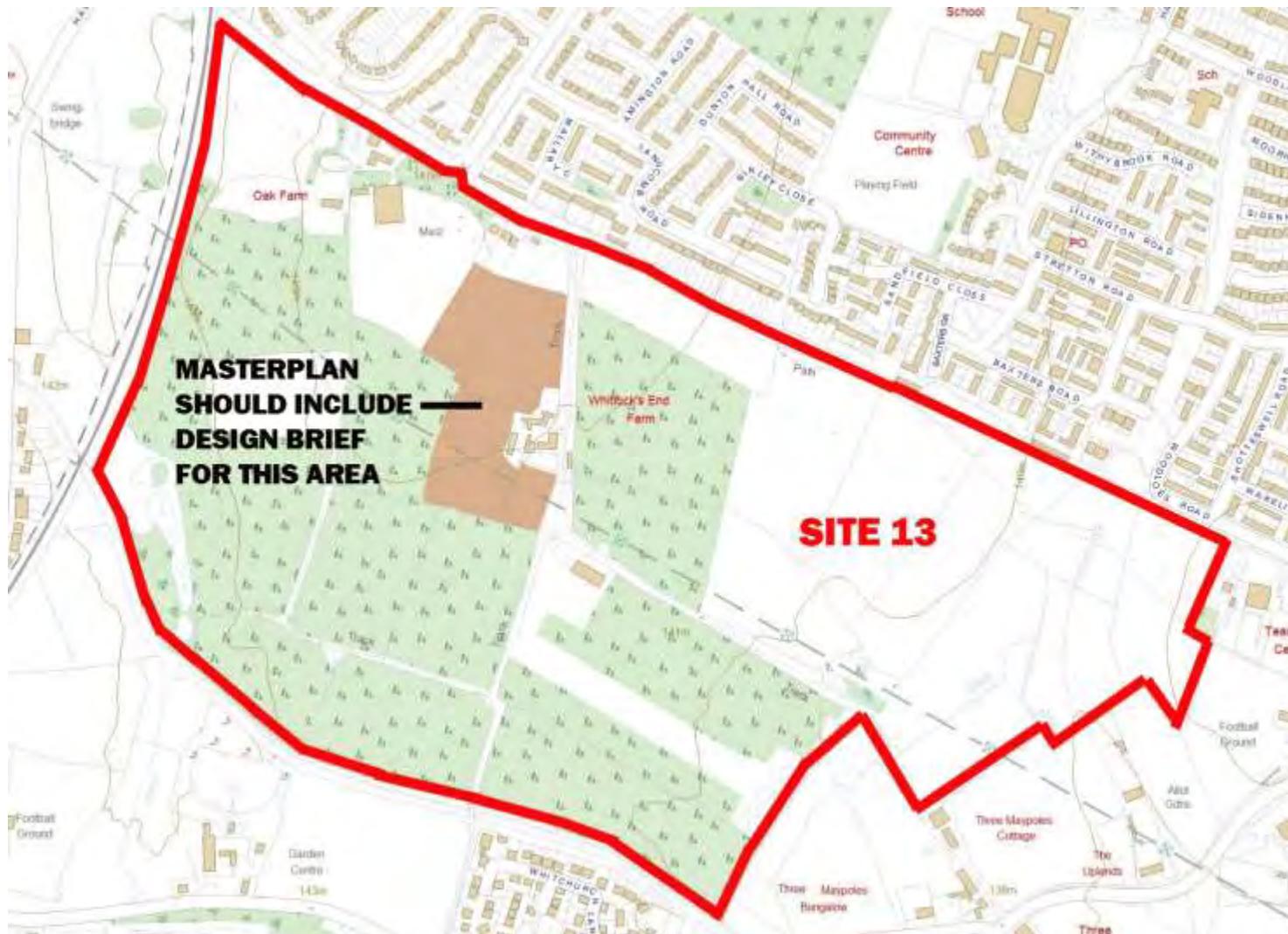


Figure 20 Area for detailed design brief

