

Land West of Witney Oxfordshire

Archaeological Desk-based Assessment: Addendum 1

Assessment of Hedgerows and Historic Field Boundaries



Oxford Archaeology

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Prepared by: Jonathan Chandler

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Checked by: Nick Shepherd
Position: Senior Project Manager
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Approved by: Nick Shepherd
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Signed.....



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Oxford Archaeology

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Janus House

Osney Mead

Oxford OX2 0ES

t: (0044) 01865 263800

f: (0044) 01865 793496

e: info@oxfordarch.co.uk

w: www.oxfordarch.co.uk

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Cover: Estate Map of 1822 based on a map of the Manor of Witney(1814-16)

LAND WEST OF WITNEY

ARCHAEOLOGICAL DESK-BASED ASSESSMENT:

ADDENDUM 1 (29TH MAY 2002)

ASSESSMENT OF HEDGEROWS AND HISTORIC FIELD BOUNDARIES

Summary

Barton Willmore Planning (BWP) has commissioned Oxford Archaeology to carry out an assessment of the hedgerows within an area of proposed development at North Curbridge (previously named 'Land West of Witney'). The assessment forms an addendum to the archaeological desk-based assessment carried out by the Oxford Archaeological Unit in March 1998. BWP have requested the additional work to ensure that future development on the site is carried out with regard to The Hedgerows Regulations (1997).

This hedgerow assessment has identified five mature hedgerows within the area of proposed development that are very likely to be pre-enclosure hedgerows of historical importance which are probably protected by the Hedgerow Regulations 1997 and a further seven mature hedgerows which may possibly be classed as historically important. In addition to identifying historic hedgerows, this report has identified several field boundaries (banks, ditches and drystone walls) which are themselves potentially of some historic interest, but which are not in themselves protected by the Regulations.

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1. Background to the project

1.1.1. Barton Willmore Planning has commissioned Oxford Archaeology (previously the Oxford Archaeological Unit/OAU) to carry out an assessment of hedgerows within an area of proposed development at North Curbridge. The assessment forms an addendum to the archaeological desk-based assessment ('Land West of Witney') carried out by OAU in March 1998 for Bovis Homes Ltd. Barton Willmore have requested the additional work to ensure that future development on the site is carried out with regard to The Hedgerows Regulations (1997). The Regulations are national legislation that ensures that historically significant hedgerows are protected from destruction.

1.1.2. The report provides a description of the hedgerows on the site and provides an assessment of their significance. It also provides an assessment of other historic field boundary elements that survive within the proposed development site, such as banks, ditches and drystone walls.

1.2. The Hedgerow Regulations 1997

1.2.1. The Hedgerow Regulations 1997 make provision for the protection of hedgerows considered to be of landscape and/or historical and natural history importance. The Hedgerow Regulations 1997 state that a hedgerow can be considered to be 'important' if it has existed for more than 30 years (Regulation 4). A hedgerow is considered to be 'historic' if is recorded in a document held at the Record Office as an integral part of a field system pre-dating the Enclosure Act (Schedule 1 Part II, 5). Before the removal of any hedgerow to

which these regulations apply, the owner must notify the relevant planning authority. If the planning authority considers the hedgerow to be of some historic significance, it may serve a hedgerow retention notice to the effect that the hedgerow should not be removed.

- 1.2.2. This report considers the historic and landscape importance of hedges. Natural history importance is considered elsewhere.
- 1.2.3. The area of proposed development lies within the township of Curbridge (within the ancient parish of Witney). The Parliamentary Enclosure Act concerned with enclosure of the open fields of Curbridge township dates to 1838 (Tate 1978, 217). It is likely that the open fields within the area of proposed development were enclosed shortly after the passing of the Act as the Tithe map of 1840 clearly shows planned enclosure of the open fields for the first time. This was formalised on the Enclosure Map and Award of 1844/5 (the two maps are almost identical). For the purposes of this assessment therefore, the definition of an important hedgerow as defined by the Hedgerow Regulations 1997 is any hedgerow which is likely to be earlier than the Enclosure Act of 1838, i.e. is shown along the line of a boundary on maps earlier than the Tithe map of 1840.

2. METHODOLOGY AND SOURCES CONSULTED

- 2.1.1. The assessment comprised two stages:
 - A re-examination of the main cartographic sources in order to attempt to date field boundaries. Figure 1 marks the date of each boundary based on historic map evidence of when the boundary is first shown on maps.
 - A site visit carried out on the 16th of May 2002. The visit took the form of a rapid examination of each hedgerow/field boundary, a photographic record and a brief written description.
- 2.1.2. The assessment also involved consulting an ecological study of the proposed development site undertaken by Bioscan Environmental Consultancy in February 1998 (BEC 1998). The study included consideration of the ecological value of the hedgerows and involved some evaluation of age based on the degree of structural complexity and species diversity within the hedge (no species count was made, only assessment based on two categories, 'species poor' and 'species rich'). In general evidence for high complexity and diversity (defined as a 'mature' hedge hereafter) can be an indication of greater age. The Bioscan survey placed the hedges into only two groups, those likely to be less than 30 years old and those *at least* 50-80 years old (allowing for the possibility that they may be much older).
- 2.1.3. This assessment attempts to further define the possible age of the hedges by combining the historic map evidence and ecological data. However, this can only provide a crude indication of date and of those hedges that might be afforded protection by the 1997 Regulations. While general trends were visible, with mature hedges most often associated with the older boundaries and recent hedges with post-enclosure and modern boundaries, there were a number of exceptions that highlight the limitations of this kind of approach (e.g. mature hedges on post-enclosure boundaries and young hedges on historic boundaries, see section 5.2.3).
- 2.1.4. The hedgerow reference numbers used in the present report are the same as those used in the Bioscan study, with the exception of hedgerow H11, which has been subdivided (H11a and H11b). For ease boundaries are referred to in the same way.

3. FIELD BOUNDARIES SHOWN ON HISTORIC MAPS

- 3.1.1. The original desk-based assessment report (OAU 1998) provides a full list of all maps consulted as part of that study. The following maps were used in the present assessment to determine when field boundaries first appeared within the area of proposed development:

- A map of the manor of Witney *c* 1662;
 - An estate map of 1822 based on Map of the Manor of Witney made in 1814-16)
 - The Tithe Map (1840)
 - The Enclosure Map (1844)
 - The OS 1st Edition 25" Map (1864)
- 3.1.2. All the information collated from the historic maps has been tabulated in Table 1.
- 3.1.3. The earliest map dated to 1662 is not detailed but shows the south-western limit of a medieval deer park in the north-eastern part of the site. The park was owned by the Bishop of Winchester park and is first mentioned in 1279 (see OAU 1998, 6). The park would have been enclosed by a 'park pale' in the form of a bank, ditch or fence used to demarcate the extent of the park and to keep deer within the confines of the park. Examination of the hedgerow along the probable sections of the park pale (see Figure 1) revealed the presence of a low bank and a silted ditch along its length, with a mature hedgerow along some sections.
- 3.1.4. Davies' Map of Oxfordshire, dated to 1793-4 (OAU 1998, Figure 4 and cover), shows the area of proposed development as open fields named Curbridge Field. Although the map is not detailed it shows buildings and field boundaries outside the proposed development site but not within it.
- 3.1.5. The estate map of 1822 (OAU 1998, Figure 5) is based on a map made in 1814-16 and shows the proposed development site as open fields. The map shows the individual strips and furlongs (field divisions) of the medieval communal open field system. In the medieval period the boundaries of fields may have been marked by hedges but the furlongs which subdivided them are likely to have been demarcated by a bank and/or ditch only (Rackham 1986, 164). Some of the medieval furlongs have survived as field boundaries along the south-western side of the Colwell Brook and in the southern part of the area of proposed development. Some of these surviving boundaries have mature hedgerows (see below).
- 3.1.6. The Tithe map of 1840 shows the general layout of the area of proposed development as we see it today, with the regular layout of fields and the removal of several former trackways shown on earlier maps dated to 1793-94 and 1833 (see OAU 1998). The removal of the tracks and the formal division of the open fields indicates that Parliamentary Enclosure had been carried out prior to the Tithe Commissioner's survey, immediately after the Enclosure Act was passed in 1838, i.e. between 1838-40. The Enclosure Map of 1844 would appear to simply be a formalisation of what was already recorded on the Tithe map, and that by this date all of the open fields within the proposed development site had already been enclosed.

4. HEDGEROWS EXAMINED ON SITE VISIT

- 4.1.1. All information collated from the the Bioscan report and an examination of hedgerows on the site visit is contained within Table 1 below.
- 4.1.2. Eleven out of the 19 hedgerows within the area of proposed development are defined as 'mature' in that they are complex structurally and contain a diverse range of plant species (hedges H1-3, H4 (north-eastern section), H5 (north-eastern section), H9, and H13-17).
- 4.1.3. The remaining hedges are classed as of low complexity and species poor and are suggested as of recent origin.

5. ASSESSMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

5.1. Introduction

5.1.1. Table 1 includes a summary of the assessment of significance for each hedgerow and field boundary feature within the area of proposed development. Figure 1 shows the date the boundary first appears on maps and also shows which hedgerows are mature and which are recent, based on species diversity and structural complexity.

5.2. Historic hedgerows

5.2.1. This report assesses the importance of hedgerows within the proposed development site on historic grounds only. For an assessment of importance in terms of wildlife, refer to the Bioscan Study (BEC 1998).

5.2.2. Probably historic hedgerows comprise:

- Five mature hedgerows, H9, H13 and H15-17, identified along boundaries defining the edge of the common fields on the 1822 map (Figure 2). These hedgerows are very likely to be pre-enclosure hedgerows (as they mark field rather than furlong boundaries), classed as historically important and protected by the Hedgerow Regulations.

5.2.3. Possibly historic hedgerows that may be protected comprise:

- Two mature hedgerows identified on the 1822 map (Hedgerows H4 (north-eastern section), H5 (eastern section)). These define two sides of a probable medieval trackway running alongside furlong divisions, although they may have been planted following Parliamentary Enclosure of 1838-40. It should be noted that the western and central sections of these two hedges were clearly on post-enclosure boundaries (where the original line of the track had been diverted) yet there was no discernible break or difference in the hedge. This suggests that the entire hedge may be post enclosure and that the relative maturity of the hedges alone is not a good guide to their absolute age (see section 2.1.3 above).
- Two mature hedgelines H2 and H8 running along a furlong boundaries marked on the 1822 map.
- Three mature hedgerows identified along park boundaries shown on the 1662 map (H1, H3 and H14). These hedgerows are also shown as later furlong boundaries in 1822 suggesting the hedgerows may have been planted following Parliamentary Enclosure of 1838-40. A hedge 11a, part of the park boundary, was topped by a hedge of recent date, again indicating that there is no simple relationship between the boundaries and the hedges.

5.2.4. Field boundaries H6 (north), H10, H11b and H12, laid out as part of Parliamentary enclosure in 1838-40, had only recent hedgerows (although note the mature hedges topping H4/5 above). These are not protected by the Hedgerow Regulations but may have landscape value.

5.2.5. Hedge H7 when inspected on the ground no longer survived. Boundary H8 is probably a furlong boundary but the hedge is recent. The boundary to H18 was marked on the 1622 map but the hedge is also clearly recent.

5.3. Historic field boundaries

5.3.1. The low bank and ditch shown on the map of 1662 may represent the remains of the medieval park pale. Remains of the pale would be of high local significance and may require recording if the feature were to be affected by the proposed development.

- 5.3.2. The two drystone wall noted along the line of mature hedgerows H14 and H15 predate the hedgerows but are likely to be of post-medieval date. The structural remains of the walls are not protected but are of local significance.
- 5.3.3. Field boundary elements other than hedgerows, such as a bank or a ditch may be contemporary with the hedgerow but may possibly represented an earlier demarcation (e.g. associated with the furlongs and headlands of the medieval open field system). Such elements would be of local historic interest.

Table 1: Summary of hedgerow and map assessment

For the sake of consistency and to avoid confusion, the hedgerow reference numbering is the same as that used for the BEC Ecology report (BEC 1998). It has been necessary however to subdivide several of the hedges (i.e. H11 = H11a and H11b).

Hedgerow No.	Description of Hedgerow*	Bank, ditch or wall present?	First map evidence for field boundary	Summary	Significance	Hedgerow covered under Hedgerow Regulations?
H1	Mature hedgerow with diverse structure and vegetation.	Very slight bank, possibly simply root formation rather than artificial bank.	First shown in c 1662	The date of the hedgerow is uncertain. It was probably laid down during Parliamentary Enclosure in 1838-40, but may be earlier. The bank may be the remains of a medieval park pale.	Hedgerow - uncertain, potentially historically important; Historic boundary - high local importance	Possibly
H2	Mature hedgerow with diverse structure and vegetation. Managed/trimmed.	Silted ditch on west side of hedgerow	First shown in 1822	The date of the hedgerow is uncertain. It was probably laid down during Parliamentary Enclosure in 1838-40, but may be earlier. The boundary formed out of a medieval furlong.	Hedgerow - uncertain, potentially historically important; Historic boundary - local importance	Possibly
H3	Mature hedgerow with diverse structure and vegetation. Managed/trimmed.	Hedgerow sits on a low 0.5 m high by 1.0 m wide bank with a silted ditch on NE side.	First shown in c 1662	Bank may be the remains of a medieval park pale. The hedgerow may also be of this date or may have been laid down during Parliamentary Enclosure in 1838-40.	Hedgerow - uncertain, potentially historically important; Historic boundary - high local importance	Possibly
H4	Mature hedgerow with diverse structure and vegetation.	Narrow ditch on eastern side (alongside trackway). The field to the west of the hedgerow is higher than the trackway to the east.	North-eastern section first shown in 1822 South-western section first shown 1840	The south-western section of the hedgerow was probably laid down during Parliamentary Enclosure in 1838-40. The north-eastern section may be earlier and follows the line of a medieval furlong.	South-western section of the hedgerow - little importance; North-eastern section of the hedgerow - uncertain, potentially historically important; Historic boundary - local importance	W/central section - no E section - possibly

Hedgerow No.	Description of Hedgerow*	Bank, ditch or wall present?	First map evidence for field boundary	Summary	Significance	Hedgerow covered under Hedgerow Regulations?
H5	Mature hedgerow with diverse structure and vegetation. Managed/trimmed.	No discernible bank or ditch, although trackway to west of hedgerow is higher than field level to east of hedgerow.	North-eastern section first shown in 1822 South-western section first shown 1840	The south-western section of the hedgerow was probably laid down during Parliamentary Enclosure in 1838-40. The north-eastern section may be earlier and follows the line of a medieval furlong.	South-western section of the hedgerow - little importance; North-eastern section of the hedgerow - uncertain, potentially historically important; Historic boundary - local importance	W/central section - no E section - possibly
H6	Little structural or vegetation diversity - probably of fairly recent origin.	Hedgerow marks a substantial change in field level. The field to the NE is c 1 m higher than the field to the SW.	North shown in 1840, but south on 1822 map as furlong boundary.	The hedgerow is recent but follows an Enclosure boundary to the north and an older furlong to the south.	Hedgerow - little importance Historic boundary - local importance	No
H7	Hedgerow has been removed. Wire fence.	--	First shown in 1822	No elements of hedgerow or boundary survive.	n/a	n/a
H8	Mature hedgerow with diverse structure and vegetation.	Broad c 1 m wide silted ditch on SW side.	First shown in 1822	The date of the hedgerow is uncertain. It may have been planted to demarcate the boundary of the open fields as early as the medieval period.	Hedgerow - uncertain, potentially historically important; Historic boundary - local importance	Possibly
H9	Mature hedgerow with diverse structure and vegetation. Managed/trimmed.	Hedgerow marks a change in field level. The field to the NE is c 0.5 m higher than the field to the SW.	First shown in 1822	The date of the hedgerow is uncertain. It may have been planted to demarcate the boundary of the open fields as early as the medieval period.	Hedgerow - uncertain, probably historically important; Historic boundary - local importance	Probably
H10	Little structural or vegetation diversity - probably of fairly recent origin.	--	First shown in 1840	The hedgerow is recent but follows a boundary laid out by Parliamentary Enclosure between 1838-40.	Hedgerow - little importance	No
H11a	Little structural or vegetation diversity - probably of fairly recent origin.	Hedgerow sits on a very slight bank with a broad c 1 m wide silted ditch on SW side.	First shown in c 1662	The hedgerow is recent but follows a bank and ditch of a medieval park pale.	Hedgerow - little importance Historic boundary - high local importance	No
H11b	Little structural or vegetation diversity - probably of fairly recent origin.	Hedgerow sits on a very slight bank with a broad c 1 m wide silted ditch on SW side.	First shown in 1840	The hedgerow is recent but appears to follow a field boundary that formed out of a medieval furlong.	Hedgerow - little importance Historic boundary - local importance	No

Hedgerow No.	Description of Hedgerow*	Bank, ditch or wall present?	First map evidence for field boundary	Summary	Significance	Hedgerow covered under Hedgerow Regulations?
H12	Little structural or vegetation diversity - probably of fairly recent origin, although there are occasional mature trees within hedgerow.	Broad ditch, silted in sections, along western edge of hedgerow along the side of the road.	First shown in 1840	The hedgerow is recent but follows a boundary laid out by Parliamentary Enclosure between 1838-40.	Hedgerow - little importance Historic boundary - local importance	No
H13	Mature hedgerow with diverse structure and vegetation on the northern side of Colwell Brook (immediately outside proposed development site)	Very slight bank overgrown with nettles, possibly the remains of former field boundary, on the southern side of Colwell Brook (within site).	First shown in 1822	The date of the hedgerow is uncertain. It may have been planted to demarcate the boundary of the open fields as early as the medieval period.	Hedgerow - uncertain, probably historically important; Historic boundary - local importance	Probably
H14	Mature hedgerow with diverse structure and vegetation.	The hedgerow straddles a ruinous 0.5 m wide drystone wall that survives as rubble up to 0.3 m.	First shown in c 1662	The date of the hedgerow is uncertain. It was probably laid down during Parliamentary Enclosure in 1838-40, but may be earlier. The bank may be the remains of a medieval park pale.	Hedgerow - uncertain, potentially historically important; Historic boundary - uncertain (high local importance if subsurface remains of pale survive)	Possibly
H15	Mature hedgerow with diverse structure and vegetation.	The hedgerow straddles a 0.5 m wide drystone wall that is partly ruinous but in many places survives up to 1.0 - 1.3 m tall.	First shown in 1822	The date of the hedgerow is uncertain. It may have been planted to demarcate the boundary of the open fields as early as the medieval period.	Hedgerow - uncertain, probably historically important; Historic boundary - local importance	Probably
H16	Mature hedgerow with diverse structure and vegetation on the eastern side of Colwell Brook (immediately outside proposed development site)	Very slight bank overgrown with nettles, possibly the remains of former field boundary, on the western side of Colwell Brook (within site).	First shown in 1822	The date of the hedgerow is uncertain. It may have been planted to demarcate the boundary of the open fields as early as the medieval period.	Hedgerow - uncertain, probably historically important; Historic boundary - local importance	Probably
H17	Mature hedgerow with diverse structure and vegetation on the eastern side of Colwell Brook (immediately outside proposed development site)	Very slight bank overgrown with nettles, possibly the remains of former field boundary, on the western side of Colwell Brook (within site).	First shown in 1822	The date of the hedgerow is uncertain. It may have been planted to demarcate the boundary of the open fields as early as the medieval period.	Hedgerow - uncertain, probably historically important; Historic boundary - local importance	Probably

Hedgerow No.	Description of Hedgerow*	Bank, ditch or wall present?	First map evidence for field boundary	Summary	Significance	Hedgerow covered under Hedgerow Regulations?
H18	Little structural or vegetation diversity - probably of fairly recent origin.	---	First shown in c 1662	Recent hedgerow planted along a historic boundary between the road and open fields.	Hedgerow - none Historic boundary -likely to have been affected by road	No

*For species type refer to BEC 1998

6. CONCLUSION

- 6.1.1. This hedgerow assessment has identified five mature hedgerows within the area of proposed development that are *probable* pre-enclosure hedgerows of historical importance protected by the Hedgerow Regulations 1997. These comprise Hedgerows H9, H13, H15 -17.
- 6.1.2. This assessment has identified seven mature hedgerows which may *possibly* be classed as historically important and so may protected by the Hedgerow Regulations. These are Hedgerows H1, H2, H3, H4 (north-eastern section), H5 (north-eastern section), H8 and H14.
- 6.1.3. Hedges H6, H7, 10, 11a, 11b, 12, and 18 are probably recent and will not be protected unless otherwise designated Important Hedges by the local planning authority.
- 6.1.4. In addition to identifying historic hedgerows, this report has identified several field boundaries which are themselves potentially of some historic interest including a low bank and ditch shown on the map of 1662 in the north-eastern part of the site which may represent the remains of the medieval park pale. Remains of the pale would be of high local significance and may require recording if the feature were to be affected by the proposed development. Two drystone wall noted along the line of mature hedgerows H14 and H15 predate the hedgerows but are likely to be of post-medieval date. The structural remains of the walls are not protected but are of local significance. Field boundary elements such as a bank or a ditch may be contemporary with the hedgerow but may possibly represented an earlier demarcation (e.g. associated with the furlongs and headlands of the medieval open field system). Such elements would also be of local historic interest.

Oxford Archaeology
May 2002

Appendix One

Bibliography

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OAU (March 1998) *Land West of Witney. Archaeological Desk-based Assessment*. Oxford Archaeological Unit client report for Bovis Homes Ltd.

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Cartographic sources

COS = *Centre for Oxfordshire Studies, Westgate Centre, Oxford.*

Map of a Portion of the Manor of Witney reduced from an old map dated 1662. Map can be found within *Witney, IV 1653 1797*. B/MS Top Ox.m.d.212/f10-11. Reproduced as Map III in Bolton and Malsen 1985.

Davies' Map of Oxfordshire (1793-94)

Estate Map (based on Map of the Manor of Witney made in 1814/1815/1816) (1822) OA/Marshall II/viii/6

Tithe Map (1840) COS 1840/27/47

Enclosure Map (1844) COS MPC 886

Ordnance Survey 1" Map (1833)

Ordnance Survey 1st Edition 25" Map (1864)

Barton Willmore. North Curbridge West Witney: Concept Plan. Project no. 7634. Drg. no. 101. Date: 09.05.02. Scale 1:2500

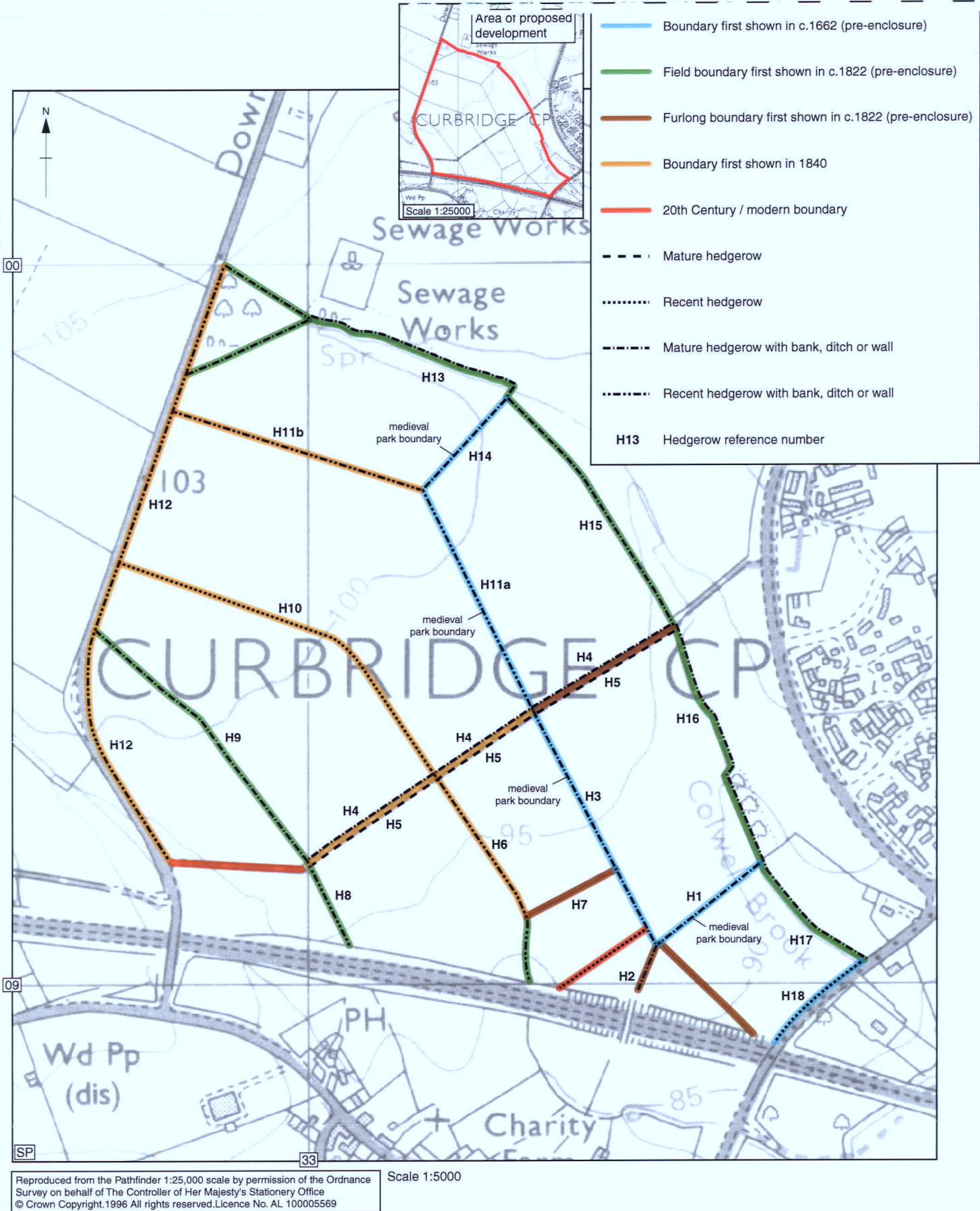


Figure 1: Assessment of hedgerows and historic field boundaries

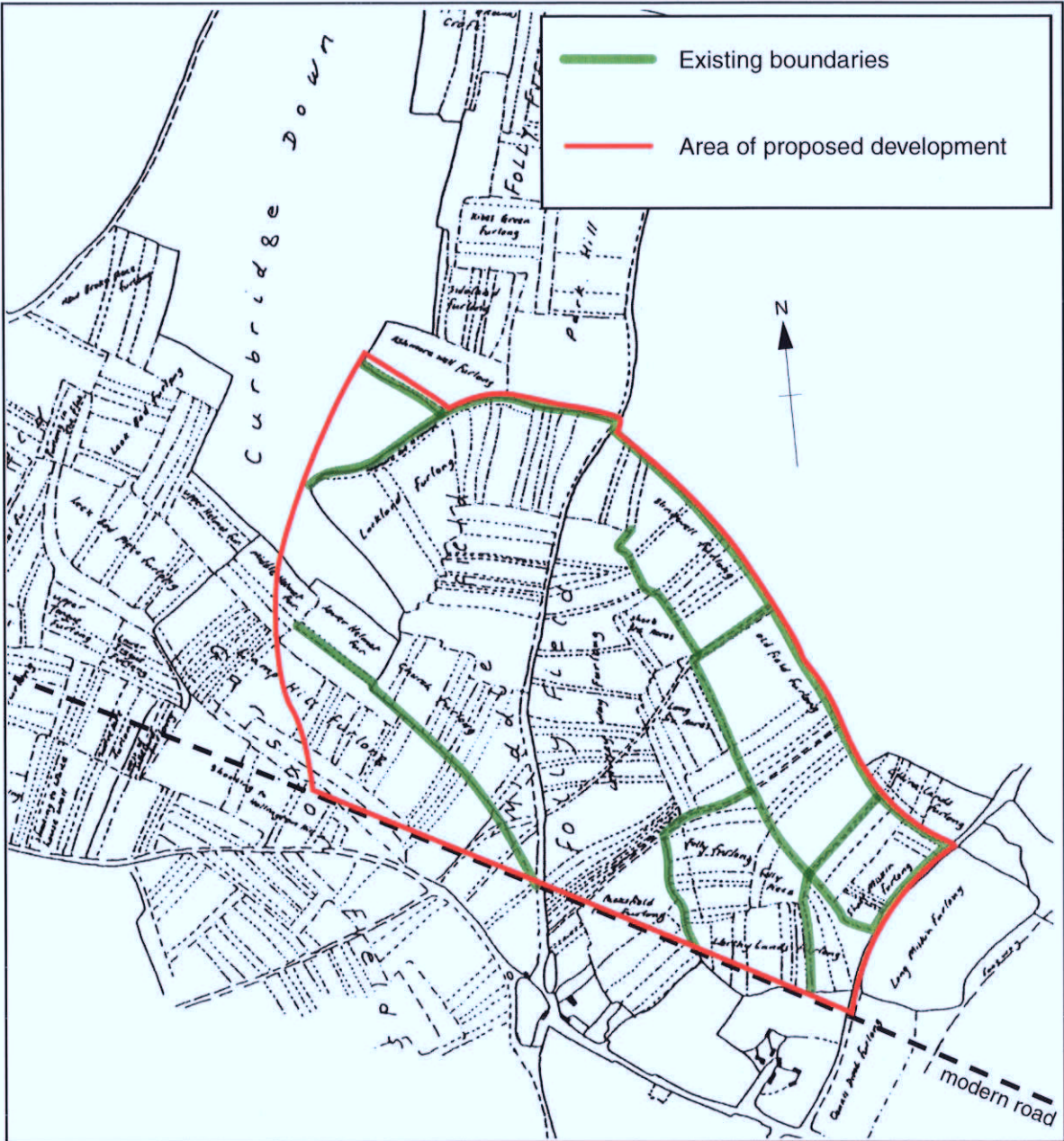


Figure 2: Copy of an Estate Map of 1822, based on a map of the Manor of Witney (1814-16), showing existing boundaries



Oxford Archaeology

Janus House
Osney Mead
Oxford OX2 0ES

t: (0044) 01865 263800
f: (0044) 01865 793496
e: info@oxfordarch.co.uk
w: www.oxfordarch.co.uk



Oxford Archaeology North

Storey Institute
Meeting House Lane
Lancaster LA1 1TF

t: (0044) 01524 848666
f: (0044) 01524 848606
e: lancinfo@oxfordarch.co.uk
w: www.oxfordarch.co.uk

Director: David Jennings, BA MIFA FSA



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