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## HERITAGE APPRAISAL

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In respect of

**Land at North-East Aylsham  
(Site GNLP0336)**

On behalf of

**Westmere Homes**

**AHC REF: SW 9852**

**Date: March 2020**

[www.assetheritage.co.uk](http://www.assetheritage.co.uk)

**Annexe Offices, Linton Road, Oxford, OX2 6UD T: 01865 310563**

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## **1.0 INTRODUCTION, BACKGROUND AND SCOPE OF REPORT**

### Introduction

- 1.1 This report has been prepared and written by Sarah Watt, MCIfA, Director of Asset Heritage Consulting Ltd, on behalf of Westmere Homes. Its purpose is to provide an initial assessment of the potential impact on the historic environment of developing a c.21ha parcel of agricultural land at north-east Aylsham ('Land next to the River Bure') for a residential-led development of approximately 300 dwellings, a school and other supporting infrastructure, including a new riverside country park.
- 1.2 The report is submitted with representations made by Westmere Homes and their agents, Armstrong Rigg Planning, to the Stage C Regulation 18 Draft Strategy and Site Allocations consultation on the emerging Greater Norwich Local Plan (GNLP).
- 1.3 The Local Plan process has to date identified a 'preferred site' at Aylsham, comprising three adjoining land parcels ('Land south of Burgh Road'; GNLP0311, 0595 and 2060; hereafter also referred to collectively as 'the Preferred Site'). The Westmere Homes site (referenced GNLP0336) has been identified as one of two other suitable sites at Aylsham if additional or alternative sites are required. The other such site is other is GNLP0596, also referred to herein as the 'Other Alternative Site').
- 1.4 Assessments have been made of all these sites against various suitability objectives, including the historic environment, throughout the Local Plan process thus far. These assessments have all been based on desk-based exercises only and, while providing basic information on the locations of designated heritage assets, have inevitably resulted in very broad-brush assessments of potential impacts. The results of these desk-based assessments are summarised below.

### The Housing and Economic Land Availability Assessment (HELAA)

- 1.5 The Suitability Assessment in the HELAA (December 2017) rated GNLP0336 as 'amber' under both the Historic Environment and Townscape categories in its Impacts Analysis. Amber indicates that development could have a detrimental

impact but that the impact could be reasonably mitigated. The Preferred Site was rated green except for an amber rating under Townscape for GNLP0595, while GNLP0596 (the Other Alternative Site) was rated green for both constraints. A green rating equates to either a neutral or positive impact.

- 1.6 The explanatory text for GNLP0336 stated that there are no absolute constraints to the site's development, and does not refer further to the historic environment.

#### Sustainability Appraisal and Strategic Environmental Assessment (SASEA)

- 1.7 The SASEA report prepared by Lepus Consulting (January 2020) predicts potential effects of 'minor negative' significance on 'SA Objective 13 Historic Environment' arising from the development of each of these sites (pre-mitigation). A minor negative effect is explained thus:

*'The size, nature and location of the site would be likely to:*

- *Not quite fit into the existing location or with existing receptor qualities; and/or*
- *Affect undesignated yet recognised local receptors'.*

- 1.8 The approach used for this assessment was a 'precautionary' one, i.e. a worst-case scenario approach. The impacts assessed are therefore '*indicative summarily*', with the accompanying text providing a fuller explanation of the potential effect. The report also makes clear that the assessments are based on secondary data obtained from the Greater Norwich Development Partnership or freely available on the internet. The assessments made are therefore desk-based only.

- 1.9 The methodology used for the assessments is explained further (in section 2.22 of the report in Box 2.13). With regard to the attribution of a 'minor negative impact', this says: '*Where the development proposal lies adjacent to, or in close proximity to, a Grade II\* or Grade II Listed Building, a Scheduled Monument, or a Registered Park or Garden, or where the development lies in close proximity to a Grade I Listed Building, an adverse impact on the setting of the asset would be likely, to some extent, and a minor negative impact would therefore be*

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*expected. Potential impacts on Conservation Areas and their setting are recorded as minor negative impacts'.*

1.10 The site-specific text for Aylsham in the SASEA report simply notes the following, which is clearly indicative of a desk-based exercise that has considered only the distance of each site from known heritage assets:

- Westmere Homes site (GNLP0336): *'located within 300m from several Listed Buildings along Mill Row including 'The Belt' and 'Millgate House'... [and] located approximately 200m from Aylsham Conservation Area. Therefore, the proposed development at this site could potentially alter the setting of this Conservation Area, and as such have a minor negative impact on the local historic environment'.*
- Preferred Site: *'Site GNLP0595 is located approximately 100m from 'Bure Valley Farmhouse', and Sites GNLP0311 and GNLP2060 are located approximately 200m from this Listed Building'.*
- Other Alternative Site (GNLP0596): *'located adjacent to the Grade II listed 'Diggens Farmhouse'.*

1.11 Historic England's consultation response to the Scoping report for the SASEA noted that, *'The historic environment should be a factor when considering a method for the generation of alternative proposals. The impact of proposals on the significance of heritage assets should be taken into consideration at an early stage. In terms of sites, this should be based on more than just measuring the proximity of a potential allocation to heritage assets. Impacts on significance are not just based on distance or visual impacts, and assessment requires a careful judgment based on site visits and the available evidence base'.*

1.12 In response to this, the SASEA states that, *'it is recommended that where relevant, Heritage Statements are prepared alongside planning applications which are proportionate to the significance of the asset in question, in order to give site specific detail to the assessment'.*

1.13 The SASEA lists the adverse impacts that could potentially arise following development at 287 alternative sites and lists which Local Plan policies would be likely to help avoid them. Recommendations are provided where the policies

would be unlikely to mitigate, or fully mitigate, these impacts. The recommendations are to be integrated into the Plan to help mitigate the adverse impacts.

- 1.14 With regard to the potential '*alteration of character or setting of a heritage asset (Listed Buildings, Conservation Areas, Scheduled Monuments and RPGs)*', Policies 2 and 3 are expected to mitigate negative impacts on Grade I, Grade II\* and Grade II Listed buildings, and the setting of Scheduled Monuments and Registered Parks and Gardens.
- 1.15 Where uncertainty remains over the significance of assets and the details of development proposals and their impacts, it is recommended that, '*where a site proposal could potentially impact a heritage asset, a Heritage Statement could be required, proportionate to the significance of the asset. This would provide a site-specific assessment of the impact of a proposal on the heritage asset, and thereby help to conserve or enhance the local historic environment*'.

#### Scope and method

- 1.16 In light of the results of the broad-brush desk-based assessments undertaken so far in respect of the historic environment, Westmere Homes have instructed Asset Heritage to carry out a site-based appraisal of the heritage constraints pertaining to the site which they are promoting for residential-led development, GNLP0336, and of the potential impacts of its development on the historic built environment.
- 1.17 This appraisal is not a fully detailed Heritage Statement of the type that would be expected to be submitted with a planning application for the site because, at this stage, there are no detailed proposals for the site against which the impacts can be fully assessed.
- 1.18 However, the appraisal refers to the Development Framework plan prepared by Aspect Landscape Planning for Westmere Homes and represents the next tier up from the assessments which have already been carried out through the Local Plan-making process. (It should be noted that the appraisal considers the built historic environment only, and not the below-ground archaeological resource.)

- 1.19 The report thus considers whether the desk-based attribution to the site of an amber rating in the HELAA against Townscape and Historic Environment considerations, and the 'minor negative' assessment made in the SASEA in relation to the historic environment, are justified or whether these judgements can be revised on the basis of this more detailed site appraisal.
- 1.20 For comparative purposes, the Preferred and Other Alternative Sites have also been considered; as these sites were given a 'green' rating in the HELAA (and 'minor negative' ratings in the SASEA), it is useful, for purposes of consistency, to compare how these desk-based assessments reflect actual site-based conditions.
- 1.21 The site-based assessments were carried out on foot on 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> March 2020 in dry and mostly cloudy/overcast conditions. The main part of Site GNLP0336, comprising the arable field, was accessed along its northern, western and southern boundaries (avoiding the crop), and the northern part of the site alongside the River Bure was also accessed. The site was examined for inter-visibility and other relationships with known heritage assets, which were viewed from the public realm.
- 1.22 The Preferred and Other Alternative Sites were viewed only from the public realm and the assessments of these sites are therefore more summary than that for GNLP0336.
- 1.23 Desk-based historic map regression (of Ordnance Survey maps only) has also been carried out in order to understand the history and past uses of the respective sites and any relationships they may have had with known heritage assets.
- 1.24 Assessments of setting are implicitly based on the guidance provided by Historic England in *The Setting of Heritage Assets. Historic Environment Good Practice Advice in Planning: 3* (December 2017). The approach of assessing settings and significance and then the impact of proposals on them in order to inform decision-making is in line with the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), Planning Practice Guidance (PPG) and Historic England's Good Practice Advice in Planning Notes 2 and 3.



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## **2.0 ASSESSMENT OF SITE GNLP0336 ('LAND NEXT TO RIVER BURE')**

### Description of site

- 2.1 GNLP0336 is a 21.34 ha greenfield site on the north-eastern edge of the town. The larger part of the site, lying south of an east-west field boundary south of the River Bure, comprises a large arable field while land to the north encompasses the meandering course of the river and the former Aylsham Navigation immediately north of it, and the rough pasture to its south, with an additional block of similar land north of the river to the north-east against the A140.
- 2.2 To the east, the site is bounded by the raised embankment and bridge carrying the A140 over the river. To the south is Bure Meadows, a recently constructed residential development of c.300 dwellings (on a previously allocated site, AYL2).
- 2.3 To the west lies currently undeveloped open land divided by fencing into regular parcels, part of Aylsham Learning Federation grounds, with Aylsham High School immediately to the south-west on Sir William's Road. The southern part of this area is the Aylsham High School Expansion Site (Phase 1), which has permission for a new single-storey community building containing a gym, multi-use hall and café, and a 3G sports pitch (planning ref: 20190804). The northern part of the area is Phase 2 of the school expansion site, which is expected to be developed with further sports facilities.
- 2.4 The northern boundary of the site is for the most part formed by the River Bure, with the open rough pasture land north of the river backing onto industrial and commercial developments along the road known as Dunkirk. This road itself borders the north-eastern corner of the site against the A140.

### History

- 2.5 In the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, the site encompassed three of a series of four regular rectangular parcels of land aligned north-south, with their shared northern boundary being the existing east-west hedged boundary that divides the arable field from the land by the river. The fourth (western) parcel of land represents

the High School Expansion Sites. To the south lay further agricultural fields (now developed with the Bure Meadows estate) and to the east lay a woodland plantation that is still extant, but is now divided from the site by the A140 which was constructed cutting across agricultural fields in the late 1970s.

- 2.6 The field boundaries dividing the larger part of the site into three parcels were taken out sometime in the 1960s or '70s, to form a single large field.
- 2.7 In the northern part of the site, the River Bure flows adjacent to the 9.5-mile long Aylsham Navigation running between Aylsham and Coltishall; this was constructed following a 1773 Act of Parliament, and opened in October 1779. The Navigation was created partly by improving the existing river and partly by excavating a series of parallel canals, most of which have since become the main river course. A new canal basin was excavated alongside the Aylsham watermill and a channel cut north of it to a staithe, where warehouses were built to house the goods that were transported in and out by wherry. The Navigation saw its peak usage in the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century before the railway arrived in the town in 1880. Flooding and destruction of the locks put the Navigation out of use in 1912 and in 1928 it was finally closed. The canal basin was infilled in 1974.

### Heritage assets

#### *Designated heritage assets*

- 2.8 The nearest designated heritage assets to the site are the cluster of Grade II listed buildings on Mill Row to the west, the closest of these being Belt Farm, which is c.170m from the north-western corner of the site and c.240m from the western edge of the large arable field in which new built development would be concentrated. The buildings on Mill Row are included within the Aylsham Conservation Area except for Belt Farm, the conservation area boundary running west of this.
- 2.9 There are a number of listed buildings along Millgate (included in the conservation area). However, these buildings have no potential to be affected by the development of the site, which lies well beyond what might reasonably be considered the significant settings of these buildings.

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- 2.10 The approach onto Mill Row from Millgate at its western end has a rural appearance, bounded on the north side by the long brick boundary wall (noted in the Conservation Area Character Statement as an 'unlisted building of interest') to the large garden of the listed Bure House, a building of 1768 with a three-storey five-bay 'polite' Georgian frontage to Millgate. The wall on this side and buildings standing directly on the lane frontage on the south side (including the listed late 18<sup>th</sup>-century No.6) give the lane an enclosed character, the view along it in part terminated by the listed late 18<sup>th</sup>-century former Aylsham Watermill and in part by the gable end of the late 18<sup>th</sup>-century Nos.30-32 Mill Row.
- 2.11 No.30 is the western end building of a row of listed 18<sup>th</sup>-/early 19<sup>th</sup>-century brick buildings, including No.32, Millgate House (the former miller's house) and a former granary, now converted to residential use, the focus of this enclave of buildings being the late 18<sup>th</sup>-century Aylsham Watermill, a large and imposing three-storey building now converted to apartments following a period of inclusion on the Norfolk Buildings at Risk Register. The original construction was in 1771 by Robert Parmeter, possibly in anticipation of the 1773 Act of Parliament authorising the construction of the Aylsham Navigation, although it is possible there had been a much earlier mill on the same site. The building was greatly extended in 1798.
- 2.12 The Aylsham Conservation Area Character Statement (Broadland District Council, March 2008) refers to these buildings as forming an '*attractive, tightly-knit group*'. This is a sound assessment: the buildings are roughly contemporary with each other and associated with the former mill, and they share the same setting, the principal feature of which is the riverside setting and mill pond. The mill group also shares a historical relationship with Parmeter's old Maltings (also now converted to residential use) on Millgate, the gable end of which terminates the view west along Mill Row. The character of the group is thus inward-looking: views are local between buildings and the streetscapes are not experienced in conjunction with views across open land (**Plates 1-5**).
- 2.13 This group of buildings, and this part of the conservation area, has no inter-visibility with the site, and the large arable field within the site has no meaningful relationship with these designated heritage assets.

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- 2.14 The northern part of the site alongside the river makes some contribution to the wider setting of the Mill Row part of the conservation area, primarily because the river and the former Navigation are connected to the Mill and associated buildings, and to the former staithe north of the mill. As such there is a physical and historical-functional connection here between the mill and the local landscape beyond it. However, this land is not open to the public and the relationship cannot currently be appreciated in any meaningful way (**Plate 6**).
- 2.15 Beyond this group of buildings to the east, Mill Row passes beyond the conservation area boundary and continues between high laurel hedges, which give this eastern section of the lane the character of a private drive, at the end of which is the Grade II listed Belt Farm, a building of unique appearance to the lane frontage with its second-floor front bays carried on two high open arches and the characteristic Aylsham Dutch gable (presumably influenced by those on the 17<sup>th</sup>-century Blickling Hall) dated 1741 (**Plates 7 & 8**). The house was extended on the other side in c.1820 and the 1890 OS map shows extensive gardens extending south to Sir William's Lane, with an entrance lodge (still extant) on the corner of this and Gashouse Hill. The larger part of these grounds was sold off in 1954 to provide land for the new Aylsham High School.
- 2.16 A collection of farm and outbuildings (some perhaps connected with the early 19<sup>th</sup>-century tannery at the Belt Farm) stand east and south-east of this building, with the brick-built unlisted Belt Cottage standing within the farmyard at the eastern end of the lane (**Plate 9**). North and north-east of this is a modern works complex. The land within the site south of the River Bure seems in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century to have been part of the Belt Estate's 250 acres of farmland.
- 2.17 The unlisted Belt Cottage and an adjacent farm building can be seen from the footpath outside the western boundary of the site, across the Phase 2 High School Expansion land, with similar glimpsed views from the southern boundary of the site (and from points within the site) through gaps in the tree coverage along the site's western boundary (**Plates 10-13**). Some of these views from outside the western boundary also allow a distant glimpse beyond these and other outbuildings of the hipped pantiled roofs of the listed Belt Farm, but this is not a view of any significance.

- 2.18 From this boundary and certain points along the south boundary (and possibly from some points within the site itself) there are occasional distant and incidental views to the turret and top of the tower of the Grade I listed Parish Church of St Michael. However, in all cases, the modern High School buildings intervene disruptively in the foreground of these views (**Plates 14 &15**).
- 2.19 The wider physical setting of the conservation area is of mixed character, in some areas (surrounding the northern half of the conservation area) comprising open agricultural land and in others (to south, south-east, south-west and west) comprising modern residential developments.
- 2.20 On this east side of the conservation area the setting contains a mix of open land, industrial development, the school and the new Bure Meadows residential development. Indeed, the site is framed by industrial development to the north, the A140 to the east and the Bure Meadows development to the south and does not therefore comprise 'pristine' open farmland on the edge of the town. It therefore contributes little to providing an edge of settlement rural aspect, which is found instead beyond the barrier of the A140.

*Undesignated heritage assets*

- 2.21 The Norfolk County Council Historic Environment Record (HER) records the former Aylsham Navigation (ref: 29856); this, which crosses the northern part of the site, should be considered an extensive non-designated heritage asset.
- 2.22 The HER also records Dunkirk Mill (ref: 55354) on the south side of the road known as Dunkirk, an 'industrial hamlet' which runs east-west to the north of the site's northern boundary. This was a former steam mill, built in 1856 to manufacture animal feed and grain and is marked on the 1890 OS map as a corn mill and bone mill. It comprised wooden-framed and slatted buildings with tiled roofs for the main factory and brick outbuildings for offices and stables. The roller mill operated until 1967 and was partially demolished in c.1975. The site appears to be in various uses today but the surviving wooden building is in a parlous state.

- 2.23 The southern boundary of this former mill site abuts the north-western corner of GNLP0336 and the former Aylsham Navigation with which it presumably had a close relationship before this was wound up in 1928. Beyond this former working relationship, the complex has no other meaningful relationship with the site.
- 2.24 Opposite the former mill site on the north side of Dunkirk is the unlisted Miller's House, dated 1860. This is an attractive building with prominent Aylsham-style Dutch gables and might be considered a non-designated heritage asset despite its non-inclusion on a 'local list' or in the HER. Now in private ownerships the building has largely lost its historical context with the former mill although the single-storey brick offices immediately opposite still form a meaningful part of its physical setting. The GNLP0336 site makes no contribution to its setting other than through its connection to the river and former Navigation, as per the former mill site itself.

#### Potential impacts of development

- 2.25 Informed by the preceding assessment, the residential and school development proposed in the large arable field part of the site is unlikely to have any impact, either adverse or beneficial, on the settings of the listed buildings considered or that of the conservation area. The Development Framework plan shows how this development will be closely integrated with the existing Bure Meadows development and the Aylsham High School site.
- 2.26 The existing tree and shrub screening along the western edge of the site and along the northern boundary to the arable field will be retained and enhanced, visually containing the developable area.
- 2.27 However, the creation of a 'country park' in the northern part of the site alongside the River Bure, creating a wetland and wildlife area and footpaths for public access and enjoyment offers the potential for a beneficial impact on heritage assets.
- 2.28 The management and opening-up of this area to public use will increase awareness of the Aylsham Navigation, offering opportunities for heritage interpretation that can enhance public understanding of the role this played

historically in the industry and economy of the town. This will also ultimately work to better reveal the significance of the Grade II listed watermill and associated buildings and infrastructure such as the staithe, and the connection to the Dunkirk industrial area, including its former steam mill and miller's house.

### **3.0 THE PREFERRED AND OTHER ALTERNATIVE SITES: SUMMARY ASSESSMENT**

#### **3.1 The Preferred Site (GNLP0311, 0595 & 2060; 'Land south of Burgh Road')**

##### Description of site

- 3.1.1 The Preferred Site comprises three adjoining greenfield sites, GNLP0311, 0595, and 2060. Together these comprise 12.86ha lying on the east side of the town between Burgh Road to the north, the A140 to the east and the Bure Valley Railway to the south. To the west lies 1970s' residential development. Beyond Burgh Road is the recent Bure Meadows housing development and a recreation ground while beyond the Bure Valley Railway there is further 1970s' and later residential development.
- 3.1.2 Site 0311 comprises a large irregular arable field, while 0595 is laid to grass and accommodates a weekly car boot sale. 2060 is a smaller arable field.

##### History

- 3.1.3 In the late 19<sup>th</sup> century these three adjoining sites were made up of six irregular agricultural enclosures, part of a wider area of agricultural land extending from the built-up area of Aylsham. By the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century development was spreading eastwards from the town and by the 1970s the fields in between the site and the edge of the town had been developed with housing. The A140 was constructed in the late 1970s, cutting across the fields at the eastern edge of the site.
- 3.1.4 In the last few years the Bure Meadows development has been constructed north of Burgh Road and there have been associated modifications to the road network with the construction of a roundabout at the junction of Burgh Road and the A140 and a new petrol filling station.
- 3.1.5 Prior to the construction of the A140, Burgh Road had its junction with Bure Valley Lane, at which junction stood Bure Valley Farm. These were, in the late



19<sup>th</sup> century, rural tree-lined lanes surrounded by agricultural fields. Bure Valley Lane was effectively made redundant, except as a farm access track, by the construction of the A140.

#### Heritage assets

- 3.1.6 The site as a whole is separated from the conservation area's eastern boundary by the area of 1970s' housing development around Station Road, Morton Road and Forster Way. This latter development, which already comprises the immediate physical setting of the conservation area in this location, indicates that the development of the site is unlikely to have any adverse impact on that setting.
- 3.1.7 The SASEA notes that GNLP0595 is located c.100m from the Grade II listed Bure Valley Farmhouse, and that Sites GNLP0311 and GNLP2060 are located c.200m from it. As these sites are being considered together as a single site for development, the relative distances of each from this listed building are largely irrelevant.
- 3.1.8 Bure Valley Farmhouse (now named Sutton Farmhouse) is a Grade II listed 18<sup>th</sup>-century farmhouse with origins in c.1600. It stands within an enclosed yard fronting onto Bure Valley Lane, with farm buildings extending south-west along the line of the lane, including an unlisted 17<sup>th</sup>-century barn (now converted) recorded on the HER (ref: 52844).
- 3.1.9 The enclosed nature of the land around the listed building provides it with a distinct and well-defined immediate setting and it retains a wider rural setting to east and south (**Plate 16**). However, its outlook to the west and north has changed significantly, first by the construction of the A140 and more recently by the development of Bure Meadows, associated modifications to the road junction and the development of the north side of the roundabout with a new petrol filling station (**Plate 17**).
- 3.1.10 A 'buffer' of open land comprising fenced pasture with a tree screen against the A140 has been retained between Bure Valley Lane and the A140 and there are

trees against Bure Valley Lane which provide further screening between the farm and the busy road – more so in the summer months (**Plates 18 & 19**).

3.1.11 Beyond the A140 to the west the Preferred Site does currently provide an open outlook albeit the houses along its boundaries are visible, which significantly diminish rural character (**Plate 20**).

3.1.12 The Bure Valley Railway (East Norfolk Railway, Aylsham Branch) is recorded on the HER (ref: 13587) and may be considered as an extensive non-designated heritage asset. It opened in Aylsham in 1879 but was closed in 1952. The section from Wroxham to Aylsham has been re-laid as a narrow gauge railway for steam trains with a footpath alongside. West out of Aylsham the line continues as the Marriott Way footpath.

#### Potential impacts of development

3.1.13 The development of the site will potentially have a cumulative impact on the erosion of the rural setting of the listed Bure Valley/Sutton Farmhouse, by introducing new residential development into its still relatively open aspect to the west. However, the value of this openness to the setting of the listed building is already relatively limited because of the residential developments around its western, southern and northern edges, and because of the busy nature of the A140.

3.1.14 At most, a minor adverse impact on the significance of the listed building may result from the development of the site within its wider setting. Appropriate mitigation may reduce this impact further.

### **3.2 The other alternative site (GNLP0596; 'Norwich Road')**

#### Description of site

3.2.1 This site is an 11.95 ha greenfield site comprising arable land to the south and east of the built-up area of the town. Its northern boundary is formed by the rear boundaries of houses on Copeman Road, and its western boundary by Norwich Road, with housing development beyond to the west. The modern

Aylsham Lodge Hotel encroaches into the fields on the site off the Norwich Road. The southern boundary is formed by the A140, with agricultural fields extending beyond. The eastern boundary is formed by Buxton Road and housing development, and by the rear boundaries of Diggins Farmhouse and the properties to its north.

### History

- 3.2.2 In the late 19<sup>th</sup> century this site formed part of agricultural fields south-east of Aylsham. 'Diggins's Farm' (formerly Dalins Farm, according to the HER (ref: 13479)) stood on Buxton Road close to its junction with Bure Valley Lane and Orchard Lane, all then rural tree-lined lanes. The farm buildings stood north of the farmhouse.
- 3.2.3 By the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century a small number of houses had been built east of the farmhouse fronting onto Bure Valley Lane but, by the 1970s, housing development had expanded south-east across fields from the town towards what is now the northern boundary of the site, and along its western edge on Norwich Road. Orchard Lane, which had formed the southern boundary of the fields within the site was widened as part of the A140 when this was constructed in the late 1970s., leaving only a small stub of this lane in place where it continued round to the junction with Buxton Road and Bure Valley Lane.
- 3.2.4 Since the 1970s the site has lost its internal field boundaries. The farm buildings to the north of Diggins Farmhouse appear to have been sold off and converted/redeveloped to form separate private properties.

### Heritage assets

- 3.2.5 The site is distant from the south-eastern boundary of the conservation area and separated from it by dense 20<sup>th</sup>-century housing developments.
- 3.2.6 The Grade II listed 18<sup>th</sup>-century Diggins Farmhouse stands immediately outside the eastern boundary of the site. The building has a Dutch gable characteristic of many of the town's historic buildings, and prominent dentilled cornicing. It is difficult to see more than a glimpse of the upper part of the building over the

high boundary hedges to the lane and it is also well screened from the site to its rear by fencing and trees, although the extent of this screening was difficult to determine without accessing the site (**Plate 21-23**).

3.2.7 The land within the site was presumably historically farmed from Diggens Farm but the farmhouse is now separated from its former farm buildings to the north, which have been converted into residential use, and the functional connection with the land has presumably been lost.

3.2.8 The farm, like Bure Valley Farm to the north-east, was once an isolated farmstead surrounded by agricultural fields, and the site continues to provide an open aspect to the west of the farmhouse. However, the rural character of the site has been diminished by the development of its north and west boundaries with housing. Land south and east of the farmhouse (beyond the A140) remains of rural character.

#### Potential impacts of development

3.2.9 The development of this site has the potential to have a minor adverse impact on the significance of Diggens Farmhouse arising through development within its setting and the loss of an open aspect to its west.

3.2.10 The building is no longer part of a working farm and has lost its historical-functional connection with the adjoining farmland. It also appears relatively well screened from the site. Given these circumstances, it is likely to be possible to mitigate the impact arising through design.

## 4.0 CONCLUSION

- 4.1 The site-based assessment of the GNLP0336 site contained in this report has identified no potential for an adverse impact on heritage assets likely to arise from the development of the site in the manner proposed by the Development Framework plan.
- 4.2 Although the HELAA gave the site an 'amber' rating under the Townscapes and Historic Environment categories (indicating the possibility of a detrimental impact that could be mitigated) and the SASEA assessment identified the potential for minor negative effects on the historic environment, these assessments were based on desk-based exercises that considered only the distance of the site from the conservation area and the nearest listed buildings.
- 4.3 The site-based work has been able to conclude that there is no meaningful inter-visibility or otherwise significant relationship between the site and the heritage assets identified and therefore that the historic built environment offers no heritage constraints to the site's development as proposed.
- 4.4 Indeed, a minor positive impact can be anticipated through the opening up of the riverside land in the northern part of the site to public access. This will present the opportunity to better reveal the connection of the river and the Aylsham Navigation (a non-designated heritage asset) to the town and conservation area, and particularly to the Grade II listed former watermill and other listed buildings and historic infrastructure that stand to the west on Mill Row.
- 4.5 The Preferred Site and Other Alternative Site have also been considered, albeit more summarily as these sites were not themselves accessed other than by viewing them from the easily accessible public realm.
- 4.6 In respect of the Preferred Site, the HELAA gave the GNLP0595 element an amber rating for 'Townscapes' with a green rating for Historic Environment and a green rating in both respects for 0311 and 2060. The SASEA identified the potential for a minor adverse impact on the historic environment based on the proximity of the Grade II listed Bure Valley Farmhouse.

- 4.7 The site-based assessment has identified that there may be potential for a minor negative impact arising from development within the wider open setting of the Grade II listed Bure Valley/Sutton Farmhouse, but that this impact is likely to be limited and could be reasonably mitigated.
- 4.8 The HELAA gave GNLP0596 (the Other Alternative Site) a green rating for Townscapes and Historic Environment while the SASEA identified the potential for a minor adverse impact on the historic environment based on the proximity of the Grade II listed Diggens Farmhouse.
- 4.9 The site-based assessment has identified that there may be potential for a minor negative impact arising from development within the wider open setting of the Grade II listed Diggens Farmhouse, but that this impact is likely to be limited and could be reasonably mitigated.
- 4.10 In summary, it is concluded that none of the assessed sites is considered to have significant heritage constraints such that these could prevent their development, but that development of the Preferred Site and Other Alternative Site has the potential to have a minor negative impact on heritage assets.
- 4.11 Moreover, this assessment concludes that the development of GNLP0336 as proposed under the Development Framework Plan has the potential for a beneficial impact in respect of the northern part of the site and that the assessment of impact on the historic environment given in the SASEA in respect of this site could reasonably be revised from 'minor negative' to 'negligible' or potentially 'minor positive'.



**Plate 1: Looking west along Mill Row to the former Maltings, with the rear of Bure House, and its garden wall, to right**



**Plate 2: Looking east along Mill Row with Bure House garden wall to left and view terminated by the former watermill**



**Plate 3: View east along Mill Row towards listed watermill and listed Nos.30-32 to right**



**Plate 4: Listed former granary and Mill House on south side of Mill Row opposite the former watermill**





**Plate 5: Former watermill and mill pond, looking west**



**Plate 6: View west across the former Aylsham Navigation and the River Bure (to the left) in the general direction of Mill Row**



**Plate 7: Looking east along the end of Mill Row towards The Belt**



**Plate 8: The Grade II listed Belt Farm, north elevation to Mill Row**



**Plate 9: Belt Cottage at the eastern end of the Belt Farm site**



**Plate 10: View west from footpath running along and outside of the western boundary of GNL0336 towards the unlisted Belt Cottage**



**Plate 11: Highly magnified image of Plate 10; the hipped roof with leaded ridges beyond Belt Cottage belongs to the Grade II listed Belt Farm**



**Plate 12: View north-west from southern boundary of GNL0336 towards Belt Cottage (to right of tree in centre of image)**



**Plate 13: Highly magnified image of Plate 13**



**Plate 14: Magnified view towards tower of St Michael's Church, seen above roofs of High School buildings looking west from southern boundary of GNLP0336**



**Plate 15: Magnified view towards tower of St Michael's Church, seen above roofs of High School buildings looking west from western boundary of GNLP0336**



**Plate 16: The grade II listed Bure Valley (Sutton) Farmhouse, viewed from junction of Burgh Road with Bure Valley Lane**



**Plate 17: View south-east along Burgh Road to new roundabout with A140; Bure Valley Farm seen beyond (site GNLP0595 to right)**



**Plate 18: Looking west towards Preferred Site from close to Bure Valley (Sutton) Farmhouse (fenced land to left provides a buffer of open land between the farm and the A140)**



**Plate 19: Looking east from eastern boundary of Preferred Site towards Bure Valley Farmhouse**





**Plate 20: Looking south-west from the A140 in front of Bure Valley Farmhouse across part of the Preferred Site towards housing development along its southern boundary**



**Plate 21: The Grade II listed Diggins Farmhouse from Buxton Road**



**Plate 22: Former farm buildings associated with Diggins Farmhouse seen from Buxton Road**



**Plate 23: Looking south-east across GNL0596 from Buxton Road: Diggins Farmhouse is concealed behind trees somewhere to right of the visible buildings on the site's eastern edge**