

COLE2100: Land East of Bluebridge Industrial Estate, Halstead Heritage Impact Assessment



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1. Introduction

- 1.1 This Heritage Impact Assessment has been prepared by Place Services for Braintree District Council. This document provides an assessment of heritage impact for the proposed allocation site COLE2100, Land East of Bluebridge Industrial Estate (hereafter referred to as “the Site”) as referred to in the draft Local Plan. The location and extent of the Site is shown in **Figure 1**.
- 1.2 For the purposes of this assessment, the allocated area shall be referred to as ‘the Site’ and the 500m Essex Historic Environment Record (EHER) search area (buffer) shall be referred to as ‘the Study Area’. The site is approximately 11 hectares in size.
- 1.3 This report provides a baseline summary of the significance of identified heritage assets within the Study Area, based on documentary research and a site inspection. The aim is to assess the potential impact caused by development on the Site to the significance of the heritage assets.
- 1.4 This report identifies the designated and non-designated heritage assets within close proximity of the Site. The aim of the report is to identify the designated heritage assets that may be sensitive to change and have the potential to be impacted by future development on the Site.
- 1.5 As part of a planning application, any future development will require further assessment to fully understand the potential impact to the significance of the identified designated and non-designated heritage assets.
- 1.6 This assessment follows best practice procedures produced by Historic England (see **Appendix A** for details) and the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists¹, and is designed to meet the requirements of heritage planning policy contained in Section 20 of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)².
- 1.7 Planning policy, legislation and guidance relating to the historic environment (see **Appendix A** for detail) sets out the need to consider all elements of the historic environment to inform the planning process and, where appropriate, measures to mitigate adverse impacts from proposed developments.

¹ Chartered Institute for Archaeologists, January 2017. *Standard and guidance for historic environment desk-based assessment*

² Ministry of Housing Communities & Local Government, 2026. *National Planning Policy Framework*

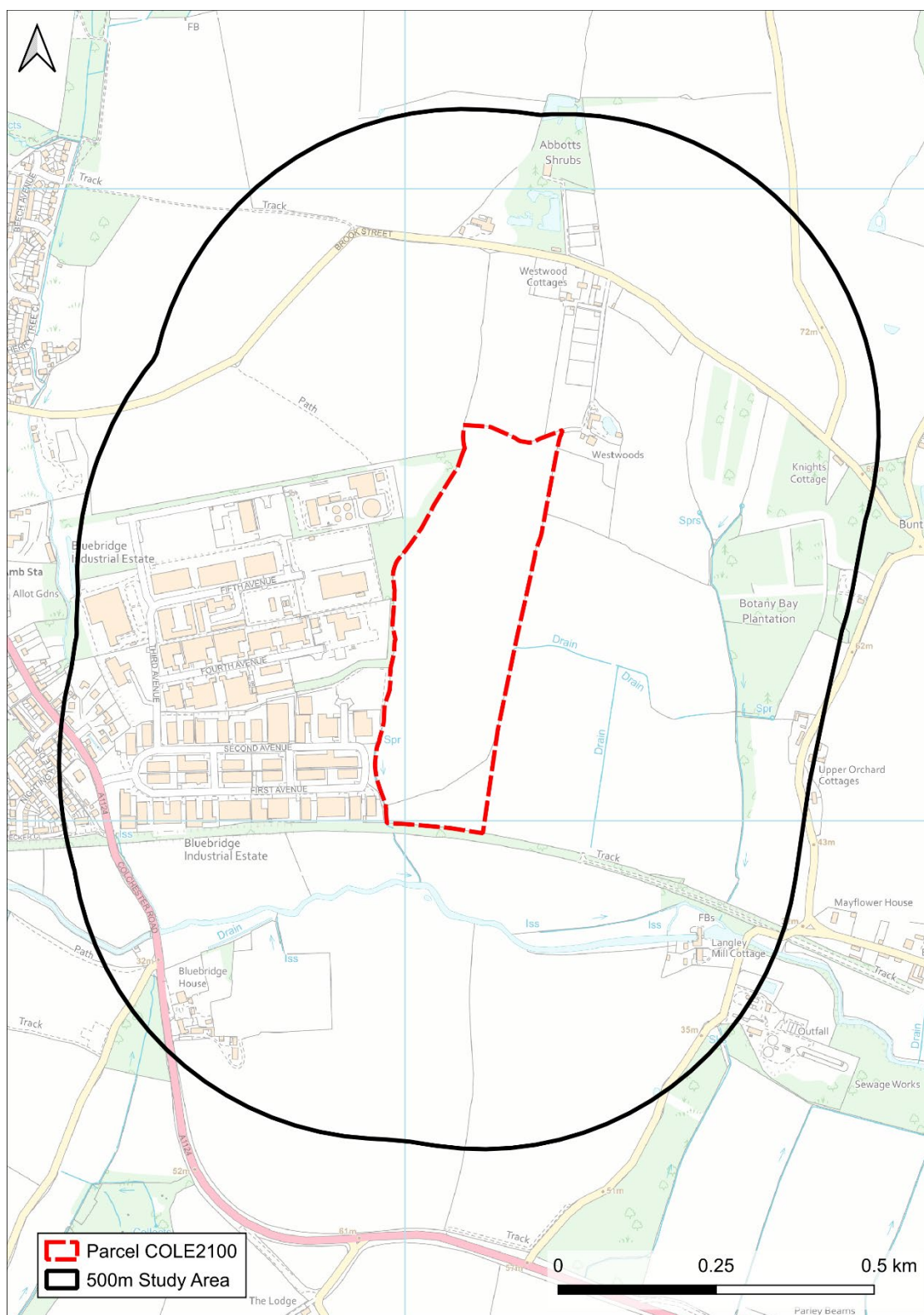


Figure 1 Location of Site COLE2100 and 500 metre Study Area

Methodology

- 1.8 This assessment has been undertaken to support the production the new Braintree District Local Plan. This is intended to provide an initial overview of the heritage assets which may be potentially affected and the form/extent of this impact.
- 1.9 The purpose of this document is to provide a detailed and proportionate historic environment evidence base, as required by Policy PM8 and Policy HE1 of the NPPF (August 2026), to establish the suitability of the Site prior to formal allocation.
- 1.10 The data in this report will be combined with other specialist reports to help identify the Sites to be allocated for development into the Local Plan. Should any planning applications be submitted for the Site, it is expected that a full and detailed Heritage Impact Assessment / Archaeological Desk-Based Assessment (and any relevant field investigations) are undertaken, as is required by Policy HE5 of the NPPF. Any future assessment should be informed by the nature and detail of the proposed development. As such it should be noted that this assessment is not exhaustive and the exclusion of reference to a heritage asset does not imply that it would not be impacted by a future development.
- 1.11 To determine the archaeological potential of the Site, a broad range of standard documentary and cartographic evidence was examined to determine the likely nature, extent, preservation, and significance of any known heritage assets that may be present within a 500m Study Area of the Site. A search of the Essex Historic Environment Record (EHER) was undertaken and this has informed the understanding of the Site, its historic context and relevant heritage assets for consideration.
- 1.12 This assessment has been informed by desk-top research and a site visit, carried out in August 2026. A walkover of the Site and environs were completed, to confirm the topography and existing land use, the nature of any existing buildings and monuments, identify any visible designated heritage assets (e.g., structures, buildings) and assess factors which may have affected the survival or condition of any known or potential assets. The site visit also extended into the Study Area, for the purposes of scoping heritage assets, as per Historic England setting guidance.
- 1.13 The assessment of significance, of the identified heritage assets, follows the heritage interest-led approach set out in the NPPF comprising archaeological, architectural, and historic interest. This has been guided by the definitions provided in the 'Planning Policy Guidance'.³ The assessment of significance is also informed by Historic England's Good Practice Advice in Planning (GPA) 'Note 2: Managing Significance in Decision Taking in the Historic Environment' (2015)⁴ and 'Advice Note 12: Statements of Heritage Significance – Analysing Significance in Heritage Assets' (2019).⁵

³ <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/conserving-and-enhancing-the-historic-environment>

⁴ Historic England. 2015. *Good Practice Advice in Planning (GPA) 'Note 2: Managing Significance in Decision Taking in the Historic Environment'*.

⁵ Historic England, 2019. *Statements of Heritage Significance: Analysing Significance in Heritage Assets - Historic England Advice Note 12*.

- 1.14 The assessment of the contribution made by the setting of the heritage assets follows the staged assessment approach set out in Historic England's guidance document 'Historic Environment Good Practice Advice in Planning Note 3 (Second Edition): The Setting of Heritage Assets' (GPA3, 2017).⁶
- 1.15 Section 3 of this report identifies any heritage assets potentially affected by future development and the potential for unknown or unrecorded (archaeological) heritage assets, in line with GPA3 Step 1. It also provides an overview of the historical development of the Site and its surroundings.
- 1.16 Section 4 provides an assessment of the significance of the heritage assets potentially affected by future development, including the contribution made by their setting, in line with GPA3's Step 2. It also includes an assessment of archaeological potential of the Site.
- 1.17 An assessment of the potential impact of a development on the identified heritage assets is presented in Section 5, in line with Historic England's GPA3.7 Step 3 of the staged approach outlines that assessment should assess the effects of the proposed development, whether beneficial or harmful, on the significance or on the ability to appreciate it. It also identifies impacts to the archaeological potential of the Site.
- 1.18 Section 6 concludes with a summary of the results of this assessment and provides recommendations relating to future development, in line with Step 4 of GPA 3.
- 1.19 References and sources consulted in the preparation of this report are listed at **Appendix A**.
- 1.20 The relevant legislation and policy context are set out in **Appendix A** of this report and a Glossary of terms is outlined in **Appendix B**. Relevant statutory designation descriptions are reproduced in **Appendix C** of this report.
- 1.21 **Appendix D** presents all relevant heritage asset and EHER records in the Study Area, a 500m radius from the Site boundary. The number references used in the text are those used by the EHER or National Heritage List.

⁶ Historic England 2017 *Historic Environment Good Practice Advice in Planning Note 3 (Second Edition): The Setting of Heritage Assets'* (GPA3)

⁷ *ibid*

2. Heritage Baseline

Heritage Assets

- 2.1 The scoping of this assessment has considered designated built heritage assets within 500m of the Site. The locations of heritage assets within the 500m Study Area are shown on **Figure 2**. The designation descriptions of listed buildings (scoped into this assessment) are in **Appendix C**.

Listed Buildings

- 2.2 There are no listed buildings within the Site boundary. The following three listed structures have been scoped in due to their proximity, visual relationship and historic association to the Site. Their inclusion has been informed by a site visit and desk-based assessment.

Listed Building	Grade	List Entry Number
Bluebridge House	II*	1337934
Walls, Railings And Gate 10 Metres West Of Bluebridge House	II	1170512
Coach House 30 Metres South Of Bluebridge House	II	1123209

Conservation Areas

- 2.3 The nearest conservation area is Halstead Conservation Area, which is roughly two kilometres from the Site and beyond the 500 metre Study Area. As a result of the distance, the intervening topography, trees and development, it has been scoped out of this assessment.

Scheduled Monuments

- 2.4 There are no scheduled monuments within the Site boundary or within the 500 metre Study Area.

Scoped out Designated Heritage Assets

- 2.5 The following designated heritage assets (within the Study Area) have been scoped out of this assessment. This has followed a site visit which confirmed they are unlikely to be impacted by the development of the Site due to their lack of visual, spatial, historical or functional connection to the Site. Should a planning application come forward in the future for development of the Site, the impact on these assets (or lack of) will need to be confirmed.

- 2.6 The buildings scoped out of this assessment are:

Listed Building	Grade	List Entry Number
Brook Farmhouse	II	1122452
Goldington's Cottage	II	1123245
Brick Barn Hall	II	1338281

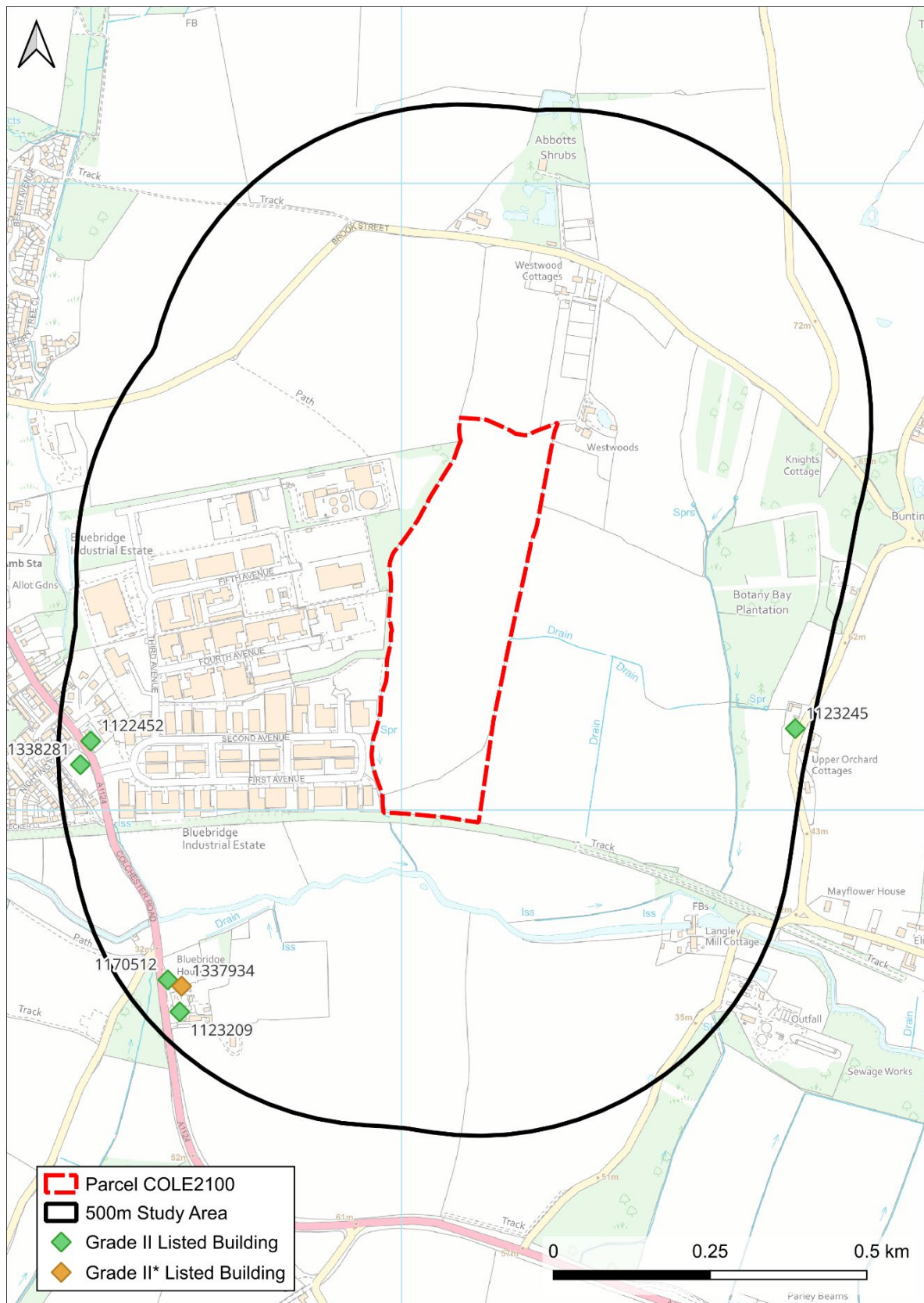


Figure 2 Map showing Designated Heritage Assets within the 500m Study Area

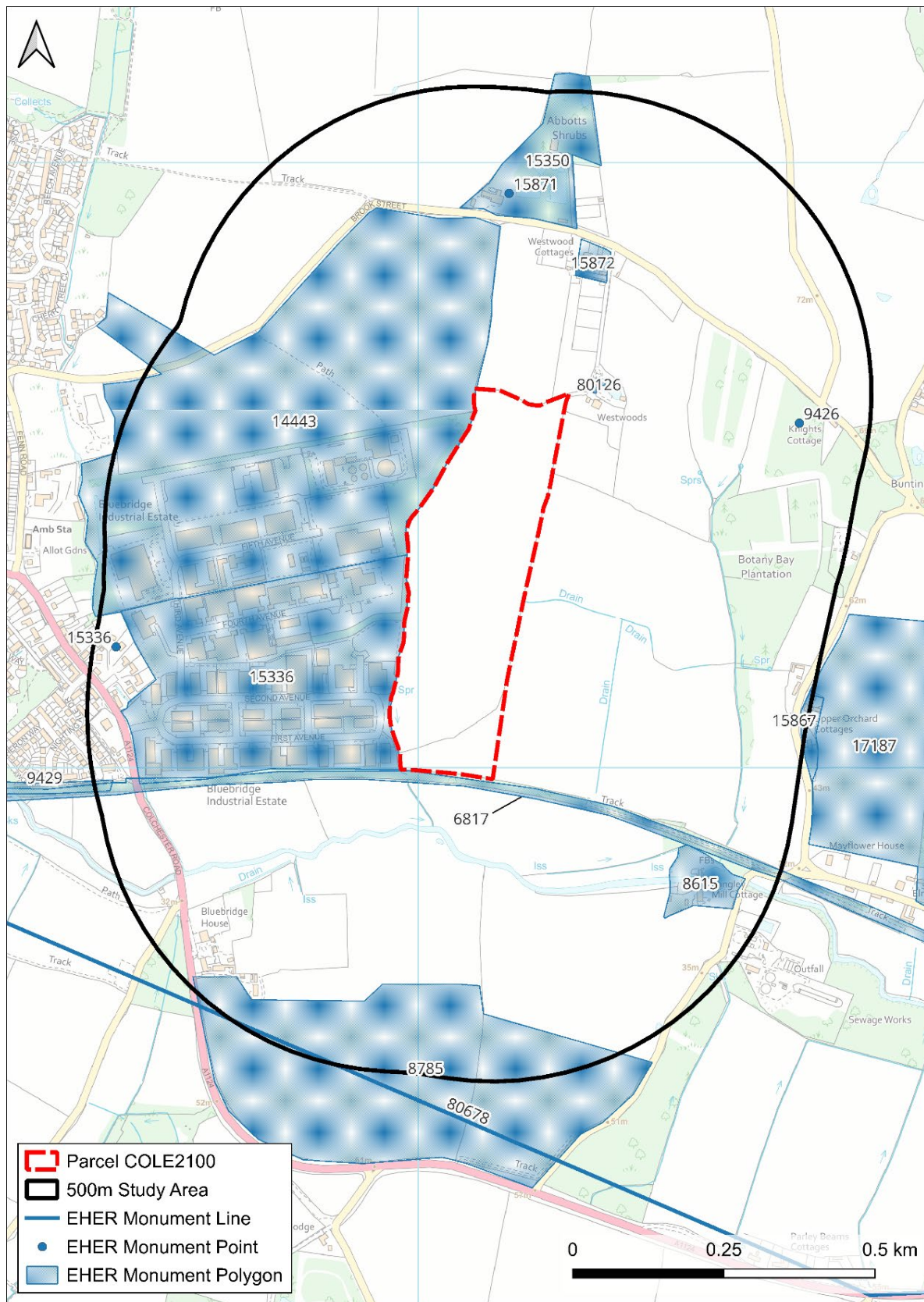


Figure 3 Map showing EHER records within the 500m Study Area, excluding Listed Buildings

Archaeological and Historical Overview

- 2.7 The information below is derived from desk-based and archival research and a review of the Essex Historic Environment Record (EHER) (**Figure 3**).
- 2.8 This archaeological and historical overview is focused to the Site and surrounding heritage assets. The overview has considered the Site, and its environs, by period.

Prehistoric (1,000,000 BC to 43 AD)

- 2.9 There is no recorded prehistoric activity within the Site with limited evidence for prehistoric activity within the wider landscape. However, the geology of the Colne Valley, with its river terraces and alluvial deposits, has the potential to contain settlement activity from the prehistoric period onwards.
- 2.10 An extensive cropmark complex, located to the south of the Site is also likely to be of an Iron Age to Roman date (EHER 8785) and could represent evidence of settlement with a rectangular enclosure with an entrance.

Roman (43 AD to 410 AD)

- 2.11 There is limited evidence for the Roman period within the Study Area, with a single find spot with a Middle Iron Age to Roman date (EHER 55932) located to the north-west of the Site and a Roman storage jar found to the east of the Site (EHER 9426).
- 2.12 The projected line of the Godmanchester to Colchester Roman Road is located on the southern boundary of the Study Area (EHER 80678).

Early Medieval and Medieval (410 AD to 1540 AD)

- 2.13 Within the Site and Study Area there are no Saxon finds or features recorded.
- 2.14 The closest traces of Saxon settlement have been identified to the west of the Study Area, in the form of a vestigial drystone wall, with pounded earth and brick rubble floor (EHER 8604). Another example was represented by occupation debris only but further Saxon settlement in the area is also indicated by surface finds of Saxon pottery (EHER 8607) in the area. There was likely to have been a Saxon church on the present site of St Andrew's Church.
- 2.15 Within the Study Area, to the west of the Site cropmarks of a probable medieval field system are recorded (EHER 14443).
- 2.16 In 1086 the Domesday Book records four holdings, a reasonably large population within the Halstead area, with an unusually high proportion of smallholders and freemen. The early medieval settlement is likely to have evolved around the crossing-place of the River Colne, on what is now the Braintree-Sudbury Road.

- 2.17 In 1251 Abel de St Martin, who held one of the Halstead manors, was granted the right to hold a market in Halstead. Halstead grew to be the dominant market-town in the area through the medieval period (EHER 9429).
- 2.18 The Site is located outside of the historic settlement at Halstead within the rural landscape which would have been characterised by dispersed polyfocal settlements comprising church/manor complexes, farmsteads and cottages, linked by linear greens and ends.

Post-Medieval and Industrial (1540 AD to 1900 AD)

- 2.19 The southern boundary of the Site follows the route of the former line of the Colne Valley railway (EHER 6817). The industrial heritage of the area also includes brick-making sites (EHER 15350 & 15336) and mills (EHER 8615).
- 2.20 Langley Mill (EHER 8615) is shown on the 1777 Chapman and Andre Map of Essex (**Figure 4**) and was a small eighteenth century weatherboarded watermill with tiled roof, two storeys and (unusually) no locum hoist. To the south of the mill is a detached mill house, now renamed Mill Cottage. The mill house post-dates the mill (nineteenth century) and is brick built with hipped slate covered roofs.
- 2.21 In the early post medieval period Halstead remained a small market-town, with a primarily agriculturally based economy with small scale manufacturing and the income from trading at the town's market.
- 2.22 The later, post medieval period saw major changes to the town and its development through the introduction of silk weaving and related trade in the eighteenth century. After the establishment of Courtauld's silk factory in the 1820s the family firm became the town's major employer in the nineteenth and for most of the twentieth century, playing a significant role in most aspects of urban life. Over the next century the factory expanded until Courtauld's closed in 1982.
- 2.23 In addition to Courtauld, other significant employers included iron foundries and breweries, while agriculture remained as a significant contributor to the local economy and society. The area remained largely agricultural and the landscape around the Site includes surviving farms such as Westwood Farm (EHER 80126), which is identified on the Chapman & Andre Map of Essex of 1777 (**Figure 4**).

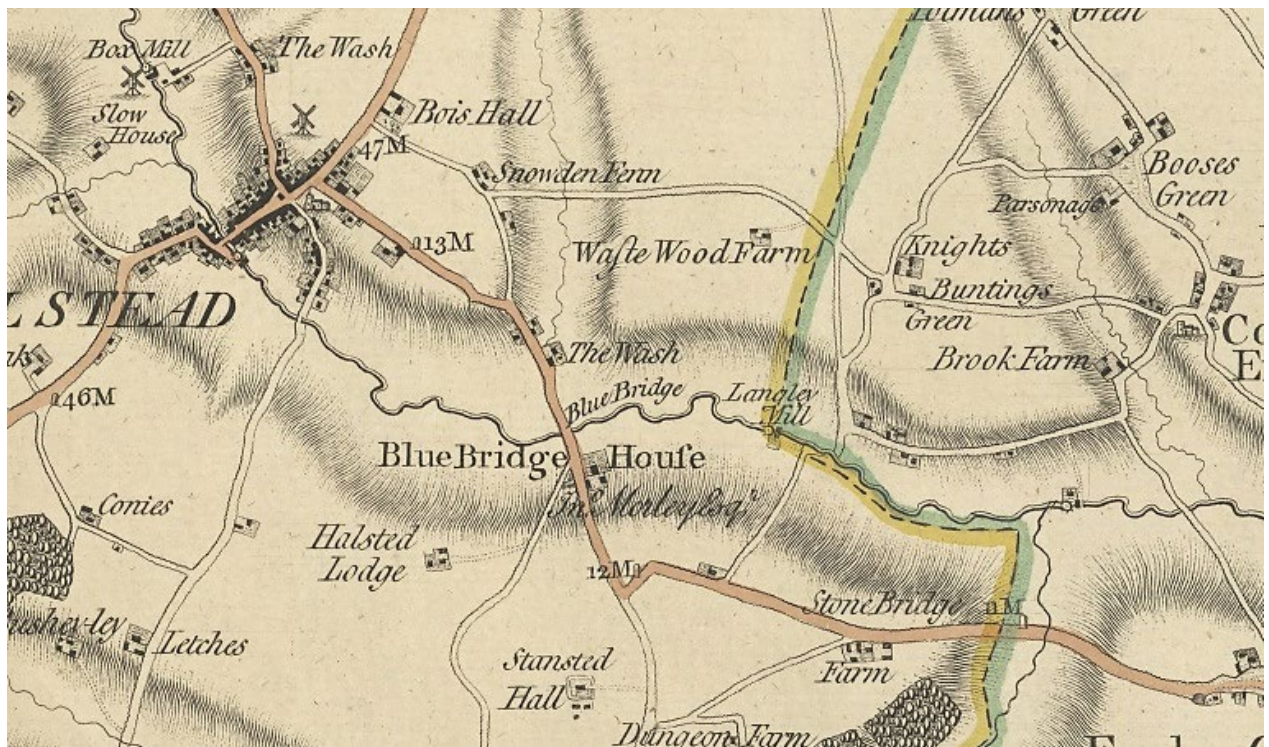


Figure 4 The Chapman and Andre Map of Essex, 1777, showing Halstead to the top left, with Site at the approximate centre of the image, to the northeast of Bluebridge House

2.24 The Tithe Map of 1838 shows the Site in agricultural use and divided into four plots (**Figure 5**). Plot 129 is the most detailed and is formed by a rectangular enclosure within Plot 128, illustrated with hop poles. The accompanying Tithe Appointments provides the information on ownership and use and it is notable that the owner of the plots, Rev Brook Bridges Harvey was also the landowner of Bluebridge House and farm

2.25 The Tithe Appointment entries of 1838 for the four plots that are within the Site:

Plot	Owner	Occupier	Use
132	Reverend Brook Bridges Harvey	Samuel Shick	Arable
131	Reverend Brook Bridges Harvey	Samuel Shick	Arable
128	Reverend Brook Bridges Harvey	Samuel Shick	Hops
129	Reverend Brook Bridges Harvey	Samuel Shick	Hops

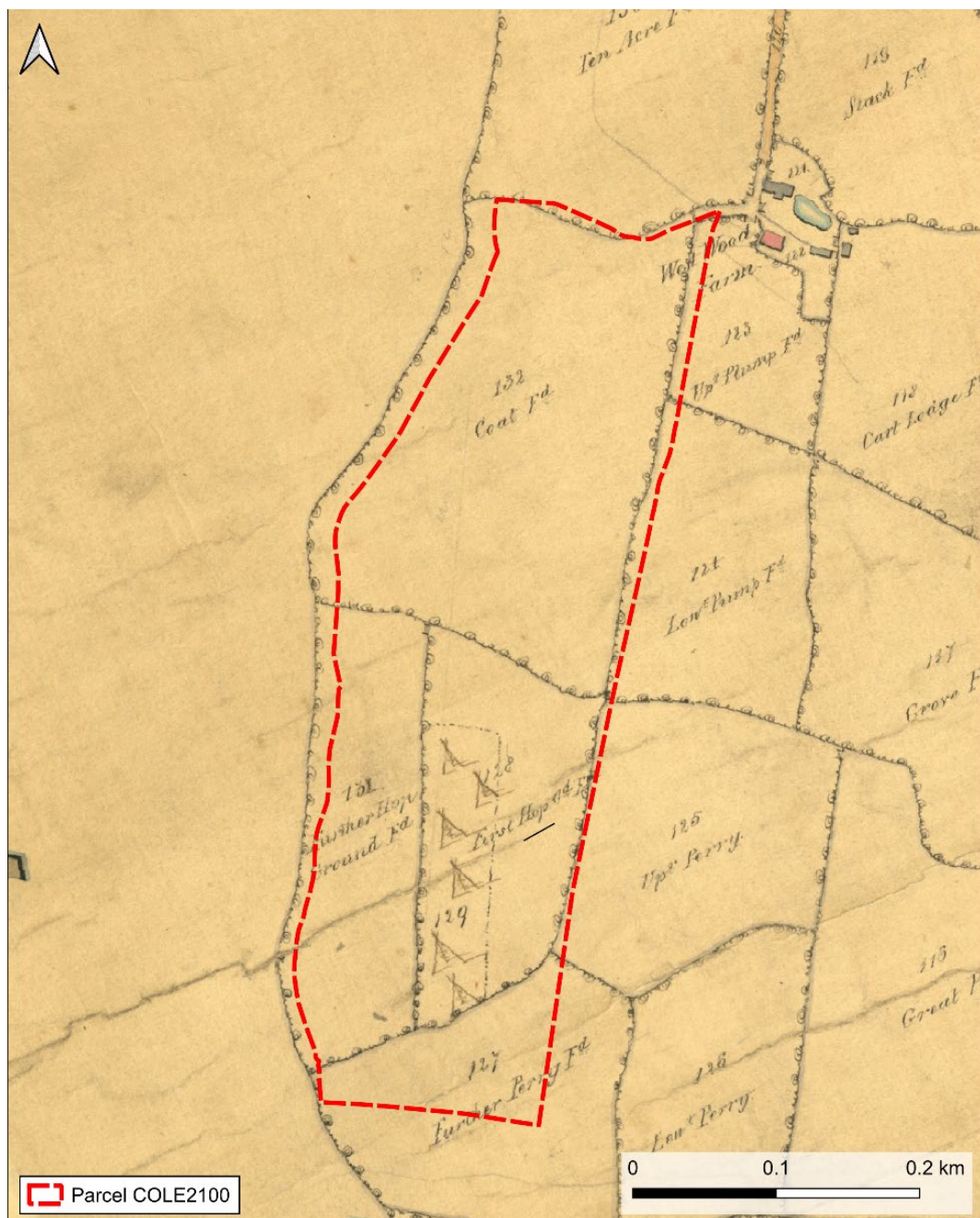


Figure 5 The Tithe Appointment Map of 1838 showing the plots within the Site

2.26 Prior to the coming of the railways, Halstead had been an important coaching stage at the intersection of north-south and west-east routes. The first section of the Colne Valley Railway line between Chappel and Halstead was built by the Colne Valley Railway Company and completed by the end of 1859 opening on April 16, 1860 (**Figure 6**). The line ran six miles from Chappel and Wakes Colne to the east⁸ and along with the railway line, Halstead Station was constructed within the town at Trinity Street and a goods yard was built close to the Courtauld Factory on Factory Lane West. Physical evidence for the railway line is present within the landscape along its route, including cuttings, embankments buildings and bridge sites.

⁸ Halstead and District Local History Society: <https://www.halsteadhistory.org.uk/colne-valley-railway.html>

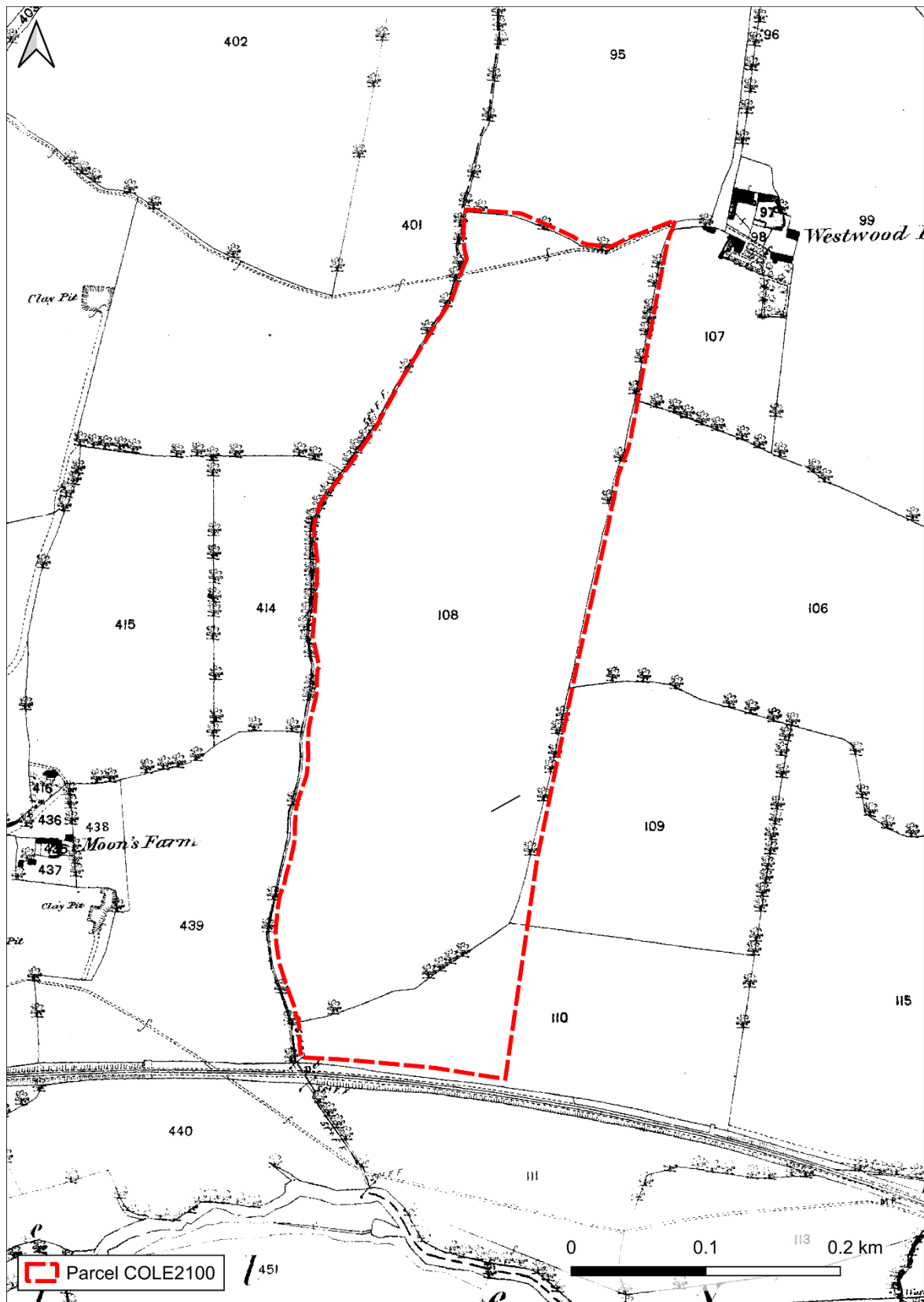


Figure 6 The First Edition OS map c1875

- 2.27 In the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries the railway played an important economic role distributing products to and from Halstead. However, by the mid-twentieth century the line had begun to decline and in 1964, the goods service between Yeldham and Halstead ceased. By April 1965, the Colne Valley Line closed completely and Halstead Station was demolished.
- 2.28 The railway played an important role allowing passenger transport. In addition, the distribution of goods and products from the Colne Valley for eventual delivery across a wide area, even internationally was possible. Locally manufactured bricks, agricultural produce, equipment and textiles were transported and the railway network transformed the local economy.

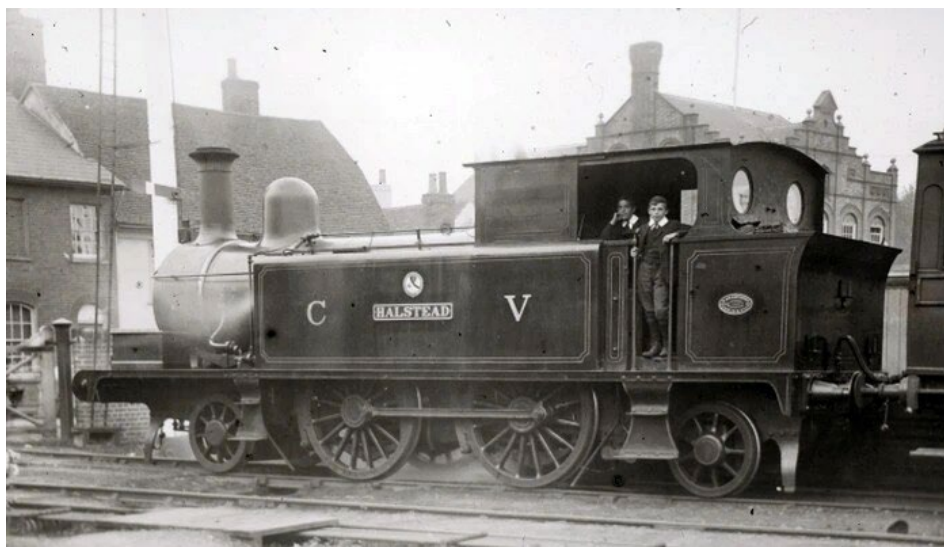


Figure 7 The "Halstead" locomotive at Halstead station on route to Haverhill, c1900⁹

⁹ Halstead and District Local History Society: <https://www.halsteadhistory.org.uk/colne-valley-railway.html>

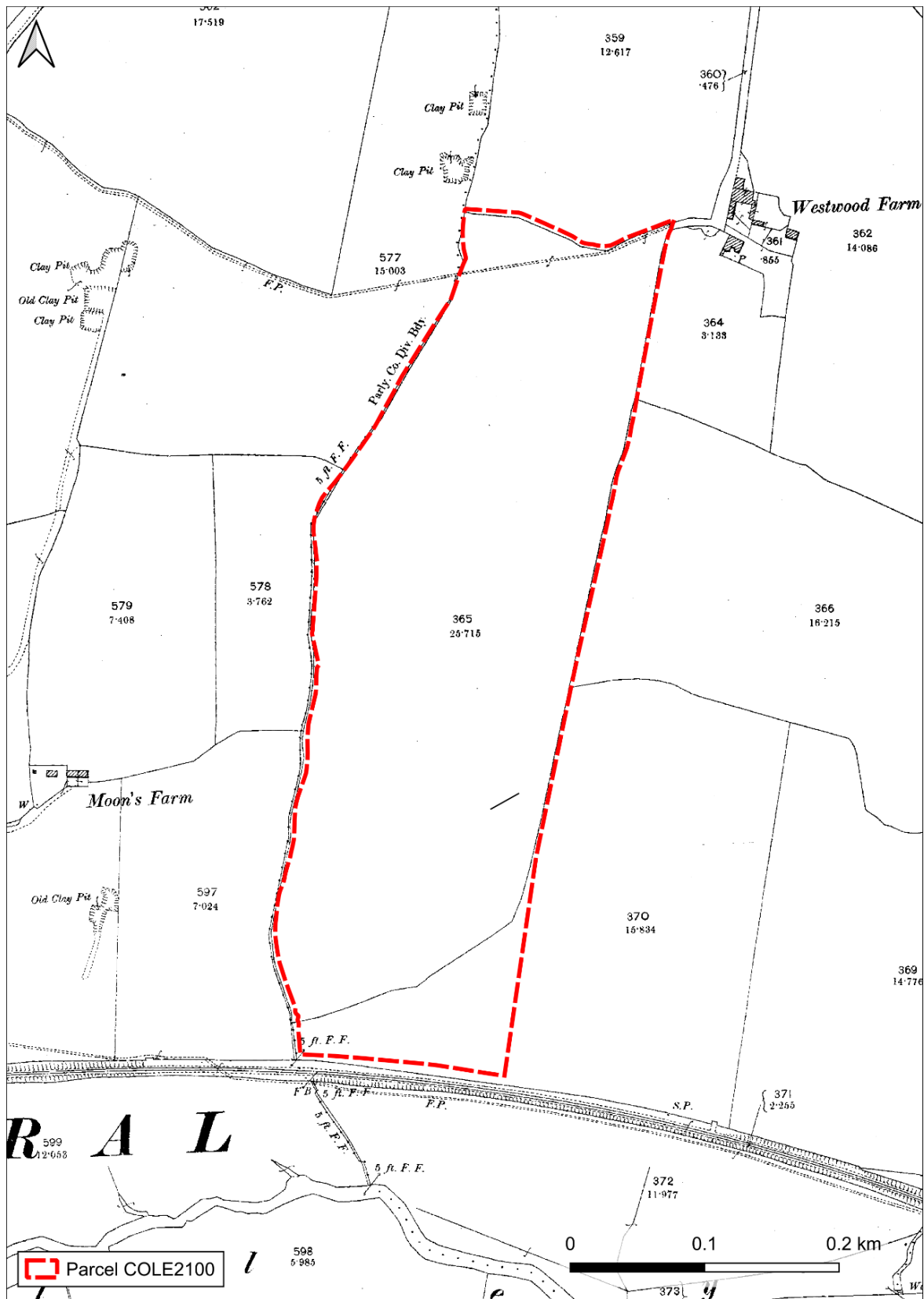


Figure 8 Second Edition OS map c1897

Twentieth Century onwards (1901 AD onwards)

- 2.29 To the north of the Study Area, twentieth century Courtauld buildings built by Katherine Mina Courtauld for her nephew and workers are located north and south of Brook Street, (EHER 15871-2).
- 2.30 In the early 1960s passenger services were withdrawn but the line remained open between Chappel and Yeldham for goods traffic.
- 2.31 The area around Blue Bridge remained essentially undeveloped until the mid-1960s, when construction began on the Bluebridge Industrial Estate, on a site to the north of the River Colne (**Figure 10**)¹⁰. By 1974 a total of 25 warehouses had been built. Expansion of the site was undertaken in the mid-1980s. Further recent development includes the residential estate at Nightingale Drive, to the west of Colchester Road, which was completed by 2018.

¹⁰ Halstead Gazette 5th January 2017: *Business is still booming at Bluebridge Industrial Estate*

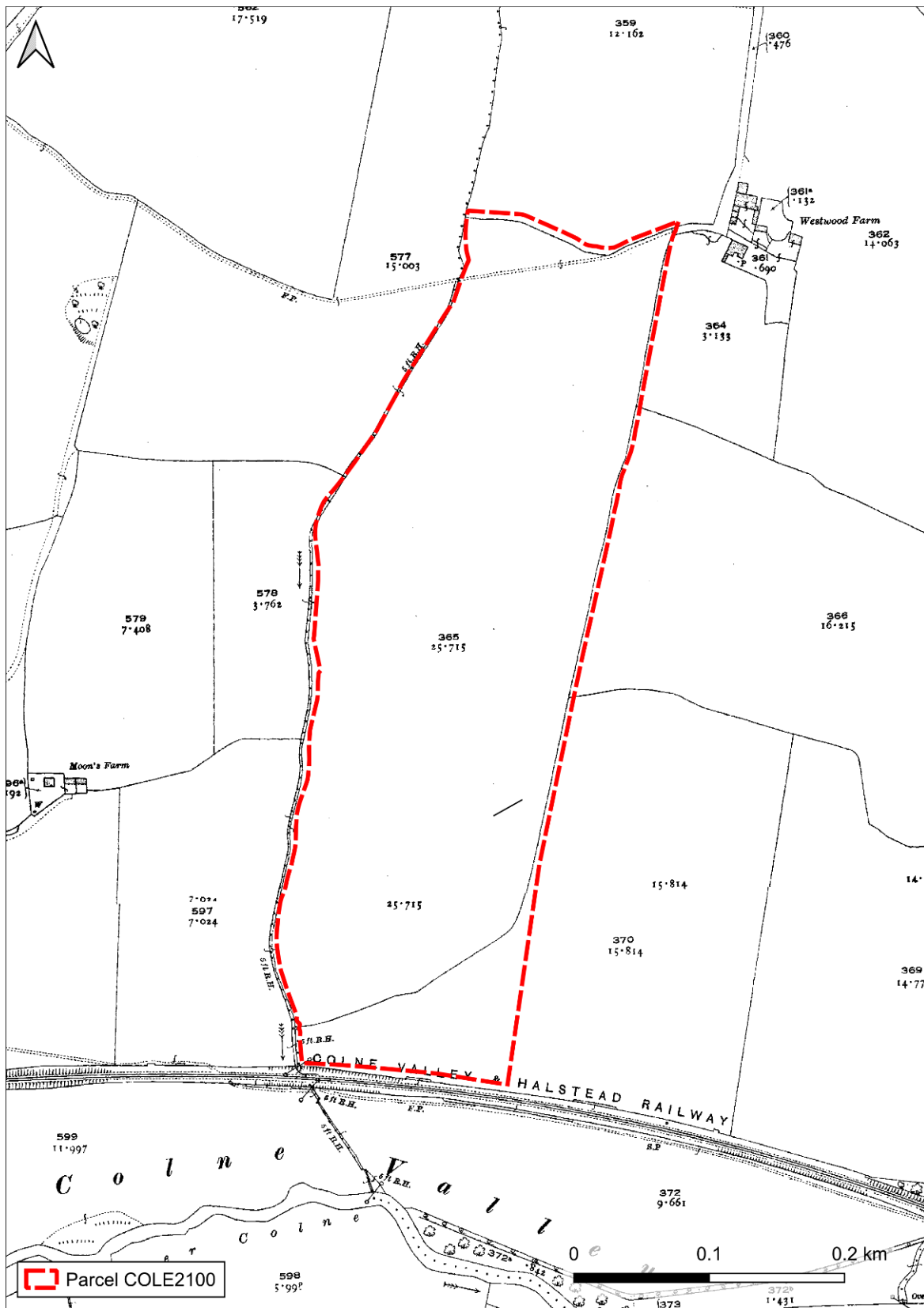


Figure 9 Third Edition OS map c1920



Figure 10 The Bluebridge Industrial Estate, under construction in the late 1960s (Halstead Gazette)

3. Site Assessment

- 3.1 A site visit was undertaken on 3rd August 2026. A visual assessment was undertaken of the Site and Study Area and the heritage assets within (where publicly accessible), including consideration of how their setting contributes to significance. During the site visit the weather was dry, sunny, and bright.

General Description

- 3.2 The Site comprises an open, agricultural field and includes part of a second field at its south-eastern corner, separated from the first by a hedgerow and tree boundary. The Site is bounded to the west by the Bluebridge Industrial Estate. Immediately to the south is the Public Footpath 4 Colne Engaine, which follows the embankment and route of the former old Colne Valley Railway line, utilising the old railway trackbed and running east to west. Beyond the former railway line to the south is the River Colne. Adjacent to the east and north are further undeveloped agricultural fields. Along the Site's northern boundary is Halstead Urban Public Footpath 22 which runs east to west.
- 3.3 Adjacent to the north-west is the site of HASA2179 (Land North and East of Halstead), while adjacent to the southwest is the site of GGHR2141 (Land to the Southeast of Halstead).
- 3.4 Topographically, the site rises at its northern end to an approximate height above sea level of 68 metres, sloping down to the south towards the River Colne to a height of roughly 39 metres.

4. Assessment of Significance

Significance Criteria

4.1 To assess the heritage significance of the identified heritage assets, this report has drawn guidance from Historic England,¹¹ which recommends making assessments under the categories of: Archaeological interest, Architectural and artistic interest, and Historic interest. These interests together contribute to the overall significance of a place or site.

4.2 These attributes of significance are described as:

- **Archaeological interest**

There will be archaeological interest in a heritage asset if it holds, or potentially holds, evidence of past human activity worthy of expert investigation at some point.

- **Architectural and artistic interest**

These are interests in the design and general aesthetics of a place. They can arise from conscious design or fortuitously from the way the heritage asset has evolved. More specifically, architectural interest is an interest in the art or science of the design, construction, craftsmanship and decoration of buildings and structures of all types. Artistic interest is an interest in other human creative skills, like sculpture.

- **Historic Interest**

An interest in past lives and events (including pre-historic). Heritage assets can illustrate or be associated with them. Heritage assets with historic interest not only provide a material record of our nation's history but can also provide meaning for communities derived from their collective experience of a place and can symbolise wider values such as faith and cultural identity.

4.3 Setting also contributes to the significance of a heritage asset. The NPPF notes that setting is: *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.*

4.4 As outlined in Section 2 of this report, this assessment has followed the steps set out in the Historic England Guidance document GPA3: The Setting of Heritage Assets.¹² Following Step 1, which requires the identification of the heritage assets and their settings that may be affected by a proposal (undertaken in Section 3 of this report), the below statements of significance are carried out in line

¹¹ Historic England, 2019. *Statements of Heritage Significance: Analysing Significance in Heritage Assets - Historic England Advice Note 12.*

¹² Historic England, December 2017. *The Setting of Heritage Assets - Historic Environment Good Practice Advice in Planning Note 3 (Second Edition)*

with Step 2 which states: Assess the degree to which these settings and views make a contribution to the significance of the heritage asset(s) or allow significance to be appreciated.

4.5 In relation to Step 2, the guidance document details that 'The starting point for this stage of the assessment is to consider the significance of the heritage asset itself and then establish the contribution made by its setting'. It also provides a (non-exhaustive) checklist of potential attributes of a setting that may help to demonstrate its contribution to significance, which may relate either to the asset's physical surroundings or the experience of the asset. These attributes include:

- Topography;
- Other heritage assets;
- Green space, trees and vegetation;
- Openness, enclosure and boundaries;
- Surrounding landscape or townscape character;
- Tranquillity, remoteness, 'wildness';
- Diurnal changes; and
- Land use.

Statements of Significance

Designated Heritage Assets: Listed Structures

- 4.6 The Grade II* listed Blue Bridge House, its Grade II listed walls, railings and gate and the coach house form a group of three designated heritage assets. The buildings and structures have group value and can be appreciated as a historic grouping of house, coach house, walls, gates and associated agricultural structures. The three designated heritage assets is assessed here as a group. The listed buildings were not fully accessible and so the listing descriptions have been consulted to help understand their significance, along with desktop research.

Bluebridge House (Grade II*, List Entry Number: 1337934); Walls, Railings and Gate 10 metres west of Bluebridge House (Grade II, List Entry Number: 1170512); Coach House 30 Metres South Of Bluebridge House (Grade II, List Entry Number: 1123209)

- 4.7 Bluebridge House was built by John Morley (1656–1732) on the site of an earlier mansion in c1714. Morley was a prominent local figure known as 'Merchant Morley' who was originally a Halstead butcher but rose to be one of the largest land agents for wealthy gentry¹³. The house is built of red brick in Flemish bond in the Queen Anne Style, with a late eighteenth-century columned porch, a fanlight over the front door, sash windows and decorative brick detailing. The building is in an elevated position and a prominent feature above the meadows and banks of the River Colne to the north.
- 4.8 The Grade II listed walls, railings and gate are likely to be early eighteenth century in date and probably contemporary with the construction of Bluebridge House by John Morley on the site of an earlier mansion (Historic England describe them as late seventeenth to early eighteenth century). The railings are cast and wrought iron, with the walls being predominantly of red brick and Portland stone dressings. The north end of the wall has a sloping moulded brick coping and buttress strips, connecting with the wall and railings that form the west boundary. The scrolled, wrought iron gate includes the initials J.M. (for John Morley) in wrought iron and a lantern.
- 4.9 The Coach House is to the south of Bluebridge House, within the Grade II listed walls and as a Grade II listed building it is considered to be of special architectural and historic interest. According to Historic England it has seventeenth-century origins, with eighteenth century phases of development, which if correct, would mean that it pre-dates Bluebridge House. It is built of red brick in Flemish bond (as is the house), with decorative brickwork and roofed with handmade red plain tiles. There is some surviving historic timber framing internally, which provides evidence for its phased construction and development. The materials and historic fabric demonstrate the longevity of the use of traditional Essex building materials and historic craftsmanship and the building has architectural and aesthetic value.

¹³ Cobbold Family History Trust. *John Morley*: <https://family-tree.cobboldfht.com/people/view/15088>

Significance

- 4.10 The significance of Bluebridge House is demonstrated by its Grade II* listing, as a particularly important building of more than special interest. Only approximately 5.8% of listed buildings are Grade II*. The building has well preserved historic features and fabric, both internally and externally, and it partly derives its special interest from its architectural and aesthetic value. In addition, the building has historical value, being directly associated with the prominent local figure, John Morley. The heritage asset also derives significance from its setting as it was built as a large, high-status country house, on a site that was historically outside the extent of the town of Halstead.
- 4.11 The Grade II listed walls, railings and gate have architectural and aesthetic interest, due to their ornate finish, fine craftsmanship and high-quality materials. In addition, they have historic value due to their association with John Morley. The gates attest to the wealth and status of the Morley family and the subsequent owners of Bluebridge House.
- 4.12 The Coach House is a good example of its type and provides physical evidence for the evolution of service buildings, associated and ancillary to a high-status, rural estate. It has a direct association with the Grade II* listed Bluebridge House and its founder John Morley and has clear historic interest. The Coach House served Bluebridge House as an ancillary service building and provides evidence of estate management, domestic arrangements and personal transport long before the advent of motor vehicles. The building was converted to residential use, probably in the mid-late twentieth century¹⁴.

Setting

- 4.13 Today, while Halstead has grown and modern development has encroached towards the listed building from the north, it remains separated from urban development by open fields and the River Coln. The setting of Bluebridge House retains its agrarian, rural character and allows an appreciation of its status, as a large country house at the centre of an estate, demonstrating the former influence and wealth of the owners.
- 4.14 The undeveloped rural setting of the listed walls, railings and gate to Bluebridge House provides a backdrop against which their significance and that of the house can be appreciated. The presence of the boundary within the rural landscape provides a physical record of the extent to which the society of the past controlled, owned and used the rural landscape. The original layout of the wall within the landscape and the enclosure of land intended for the house, demonstrate the status, former influence and wealth of the owners. The listed boundary would have been a visible feature within the landscape, providing a first impression of those visiting the house in the past. The rural setting provides scenic views, with trees, the River Colne and meadows, which gives a sense of tranquillity and seclusion. This tranquillity has been somewhat impacted by the volume of traffic on the Colchester Road, yet it remains palpable from other perspectives.

¹⁴ Braintree District Council. Planning Application reference no. 11/00639/LBC

- 4.15 While the primary significance of the Coach House is derived from its historic fabric and its relationship with Bluebridge House, its setting makes an important contribution to its significance. The immediate setting of the Coach House is defined by its position within the group of heritage assets at Bluebridge House and its functional relationship and subservient status and an ancillary building can be appreciated.
- 4.16 Its wider setting is characterised by the wider rural landscape, which allows an appreciation of the asset's significance. The rural setting retains its historic agricultural character, allowing the building's original function as a coach house, serving a country house estate, to be appreciated. There are few modern intrusions which would undermine the ability to understand its significance as part of the historic group at Bluebridge House.

Contribution made by the Site

- 4.17 The Tithe Map and Appointments of 1838 show that the Site was in the same ownership as Bluebridge House, with the owner being the Reverend Brook Bridges Harvey, while the house was occupied by Robert Evans. While there is a link through historic ownership, the agricultural field that became the Site was tenanted or occupied by Samuel Shick in 1838 and thus not directly used by the tenant occupier of the Bluebridge estate, Robert Evans.
- 4.18 The undeveloped Site is part of the wider rural setting of the Grade II* listed building. This setting generally retains its historic agrarian character and this aspect of the setting is a positive element and allows the significance of the asset to be appreciated. However, the site is separated from Bluebridge House by an intervening field (Site GGHR2416), hedge boundaries and mature trees. It is unknown if there are any direct views of the Site from the upper floors of Bluebridge House but given the intervening distance, topography and mature trees this is unlikely.
- 4.19 There is also a degree of separation between the listed walls, railings and gate, with an intervening field (Site GGHR2416), hedge boundaries and mature trees. While only a proportion of the north-west corner of the wall could be easily accessed and viewed during this assessment, there is likely to be no intervisibility between the Site and the listed wall, railings and gate. While the Site forms part of the setting of the heritage asset, its contribution to an understanding of its significance is limited.
- 4.20 There is a considerable degree of separation between the Site and the Coach House. In the first instance, views to the north from the Coach House will be dominated by the Grade II* listed Bluebridge House. There is unlikely to be any intervisibility between the Coach House and the Site and the ability to appreciate the significance of the asset is not influenced by the Site.
- 4.21 The route of the Colne Valley Railway line (EHER 6817) to the south of the Site is a historic feature and while it has altered the historic landscape setting of the listed buildings to the south west, it provides evidence of the historic changes and evolution of the landscape and their setting.



Figure 11 The north-west corner of the Grade II listed wall to Bluebridge House is to the right of the photograph. The Site is beyond the distant treeline to the left of the picture



Figure 12 The Grade II* listed Bluebridge House, a prominent feature, looking south from Blue Bridge over the River Colne

Archaeological Potential

- 4.22 It is not possible from this study alone to fully resolve the archaeological potential of the Site. Any future proposal for development within the Site will need to be informed by further assessment which would be likely to include aerial photographic assessment, geophysics and trial trench evaluation.
- 4.23 There are no undesignated heritage assets recorded on the EHER within the Site, however, there are several located within the 500m Study Area (see Section 3 and **Appendix D**), and there is the potential for further, as yet unidentified, archaeological features and finds to be present within the Site. The lack of archaeological records within the Site is likely to reflect the lack of archaeological investigation rather than lack of deposits being present.
- 4.24 The recorded archaeological features within the Study Area comprise the following monuments, discussed by period:
- 4.25 The Site is located to the north of the River Colne and alluvial deposits within the valley have potential to preserve environmental remains associated with prehistoric, and later, features which can inform on the local environment as well as preserve a wider range of archaeological remains.
- 4.26 Evidence for the Iron Age and Roman periods is limited within the Study Area, consisting mainly of unstratified findspots (EHER 55932, 9426) Potential settlement activity is indicated through cropmark evidence (EHER 8785), however the date of these has not been established through fieldwork. Therefore, it is considered that there is a low to moderate potential for Iron Age and Roman activity within the Site.
- 4.27 There are no Saxon features with either the Site or the Study Area, indicating a low potential for remains of this period.
- 4.28 During the medieval and post-medieval periods, the Site comprised of agricultural land associated with the medieval settlement of Halstead, located to the west of the Site. The cartographic evidence suggests that the current field layout has post-medieval origins, but the field system may have earlier origins. Small-scale industrial activity took place in the surrounding area during the post-medieval period possibly associated with quarrying and brickmaking. Therefore, it is considered that there is a low to moderate potential for archaeological deposits of a medieval and post-medieval date within the Site.
- 4.29 Given the limited known truncation, any archaeological deposits located here will potentially survive in good condition.

5. Potential Impact of Development

- 5.1 This section assesses the potential impact of development within the Site upon the heritage significance of the identified heritage assets. The Site has been identified as having potential for allocation within the local authority's draft local plan; no specific usage or outline masterplan has been provided for the Site. As such, the assessment is based on the principle of development. The scoping of heritage assets and assessments will need to be reconsidered if the proposals exceed the typical development found in the area. The assessments of impact will also need to be revisited as detail is added to the masterplan framework for the Site.
- 5.2 The assessment of the potential impact of development upon the setting of the identified heritage assets has been considered using the guidance detailed in Historic England's GPA3: 'The Setting of Heritage Assets'¹⁵.

Designated Heritage Assets

Listed Buildings

- 5.3 The listed buildings have been grouped together to consider the impact of the development of the Site as they form an associated group.

Bluebridge House (Grade II*, List Entry Number: 1337934); Walls, Railings and Gate 10 metres west of Bluebridge House (Grade II, List Entry Number: 1170512); Coach House 30 Metres South Of Bluebridge House (Grade II, List Entry Number: 1123209)

- 5.4 Agrarian land around this historic complex makes an important contribution to how their significance is experienced, appreciated and understood. The undeveloped rural character of the group's setting surrounds the assets in all directions. While there are historic links through ownership between the group of assets and the Site, the development of the Site is unlikely to have a visual impact, when experiencing the assets within their setting. The route of the former Colne Valley Railway to the south of the Site represents a historic evolution of the landscape setting of the listed heritage assets.
- 5.5 The development of the Site is unlikely to result in harm to the significance or the ability to appreciate the significance of the group of listed buildings.

Archaeology

- 5.6 The Site has no recorded archaeological sites within its boundary, although the EHER suggests the landscape has been active through most periods since the Iron Age. The Site comprises an agricultural field to the east of modern Halstead and as such any archaeological deposits surviving

¹⁵ Historic England, December 2017. *The Setting of Heritage Assets - Historic Environment Good Practice Advice in Planning Note 3 (Second Edition)*

will only have been impacted by agricultural activity, primarily ploughing, or horticultural activities. Given the limited known truncation, any archaeological deposits located here will potentially survive in good condition.

- 5.7 The Site has not had any previous evaluation completed within the boundary and no archaeological work has been undertaken within the Study Area. However, the Site is located within a landscape of occupation evidenced by preserved remains of Iron Age, Roman, early medieval and post medieval occupation within the wider landscape.
- 5.8 There is cartographic and aerial evidence of agricultural features to the west of the Site, with further cropmark evidence of occupation in the Study Area. It is not possible from this study alone to resolve the archaeological potential of the Site and therefore the impact of development is unknown. Any future proposal for development within the Site will need to be informed by further assessment which would be likely to include geophysical assessment and trial trench evaluation.
- 5.9 Should development happen within the Site, there will likely be an adverse impact which would result in truncation and loss of any surviving archaeological deposits.

6. Conclusions and Recommendations

- 6.1 This Heritage Impact Assessment has been prepared by Place Services for Braintree District Council. This document provides an assessment of heritage impact for the proposed allocation site COLE2100.
- 6.2 The significance of designated heritage assets has been assessed. It is considered that development of the proposed allocation would not result in harm to the significance of the following listed buildings.

Listed Building	Grade	List Entry Number
Bluebridge House	II*	1337934
Walls, Railings And Gate 10 Metres West Of Bluebridge House	II	1170512
Coach House 30 Metres South Of Bluebridge House	II	1123209

- 6.3 A future assessment should also explore the presence of any further non-designated built heritage assets within the Site and its environs which may be affected by future development. One such potential asset is the Colne Valley Railway line (EHER 6817), which runs approximately west to south-east, adjacent to the southern boundary of the Site. This railway line is also accessible as a public footpath (Footpaths 1 and 4), which leads through the rural countryside. The mitigation of the impact on any NDHAs could also be considered with screening and to a degree, harm could be partially offset through enhancement and maintenance of an asset.
- 6.4 With regards to archaeology, there are a number of undesignated heritage assets recorded on the Historic Environment Record within the Site and 500m Study Area (see Section 3 and **Appendix D**), and there is the potential for further, as yet unidentified, archaeological features and finds to be present within the Site. This study has suggested potential for archaeological deposits throughout the Site and also that previous truncation is considered to be limited to agricultural activity. It is not possible from this study alone to resolve the archaeological potential of the Site and therefore the impact of future development is not fully understood. Any future proposal for development within the Site will need to be informed by further assessment which would be likely to include geophysical survey and trial trench evaluation.
- 6.5 Much of the Site is formed of agricultural fields and as such any archaeological deposits surviving will only have been impacted by agricultural activity, primarily ploughing, or horticultural activities. Given the limited known truncation, any archaeological deposits located here will potentially survive in good condition. Given the nature of residential development, there is potential for high impact if a proposal completely removes archaeological deposits which survive.

Recommendations & Mitigation

- 6.6 Within the decision-making process, early discussions should be undertaken with Historic England and the Local Planning Authority, as appropriate, to discuss appropriate layouts considering the heritage assets affected. This should consider how attempts to avoid or minimise harm to the assets

have been explored, for example reducing housing quantum/density and the careful consideration of the location, orientation, density, and scale of development within the Site.

- 6.7 A detailed Heritage Impact Assessment, required at planning application stage, should define the impact on all heritage assets within proximity to the Site and consider how attempts to avoid or minimise harm to the asset have been explored, for example avoiding built development and retaining the landscape character in the environs of heritage assets where the active agrarian land is found to contribute to its setting.
- 6.8 A future assessment should also explore the presence of any further non-designated built heritage assets within the Site and its environs which may be affected by future development, including the former Colne Valley railway line.
- 6.9 These discussions should also examine opportunities for new ways any proposed development may allow for the public to engage with the heritage assets within the Site, and enhance the way they are experienced, appreciated and understood.
- 6.10 Regarding archaeology, early discussion should be held with the Local Planning Authority to define an appropriate programme of archaeological evaluation to define and assess the extent of any unknown deposits within the Site. This assessment has identified that there is the potential for archaeological deposits within the Site and these should be assessed by a desk-based assessment. Any future proposal for development within the Site will need to be informed by further assessment which would be likely to include a geophysical survey and trial trench evaluation. The results of these investigations will further inform the development masterplan.

7. References and Sources

Bibliography

Primary Sources:

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1839 Halstead Tithe Maps

Google Earth aerial imagery

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Secondary Sources:

Place Services & Braintree District Council, Unpublished Draft Halstead Conservation Area Character Appraisal and Management Plan

Cobbold Family History Trust, John Morley <https://family-tree.cobboldfht.com/people/view/15088>

McCabe and Abel, Bluebridge House, <https://www.mccabeandabel.co.uk/bluebridge-house>

Halstead and District Local History Society, Colne Valley Railway, <https://www.halsteadhistory.org.uk/colne-valley-railway.html>

Halstead Gazette, <https://www.halsteadgazette.co.uk>

Appendix A: Legislation, National Planning Policy & Guidance

LEGISLATION/POLICY/ GUIDANCE	DOCUMENT	SECTION/POLICY
Primary Legislation	Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990	Section 66: General duty as respects listed buildings in exercise of planning functions. Section 72: General duty as respects conservation areas in exercise of planning functions.
National Planning Policy	National Planning Policy Framework (August 2026) MHCLG	Chapter 20: Conserving and enhancing the historic environment
National Planning Guidance	National Planning Practice Guidance (2019) DCLG	ID: 18a
National Planning Guidance – Historic England	Historic Environment Good Practice Advice in Planning 1 - The Historic Environment in Local Plans (2015) Historic Environment Good Practice Advice in Planning 2 - Managing Significance in Decision-Taking in the Historic Environment (2015) Historic Environment Good Practice Advice in Planning 3 - The Setting of Heritage Assets (2nd Edition, 2017) Historic England Advice Note 4: Tall Buildings (2015) Historic England Advice Note 12: Statements of Heritage Significance (2019)	

Appendix B: Glossary

Glossary (National Planning Policy Framework) ¹⁶

<i>Archaeological interest</i>	<i>There will be archaeological interest in a heritage asset if it holds, or potentially may hold, evidence of past human activity worthy of expert investigation at some point. Heritage assets with archaeological interest are the primary source of evidence about the substance and evolution of places, and of the people and cultures that made them.</i>
<i>Conservation (for heritage policy)</i>	<i>The process of maintaining and managing change to a heritage asset in a way that sustains and, where appropriate, enhances its significance.</i>
<i>Designated heritage asset</i>	<i>A World Heritage Site, Scheduled Monument, Listed Building, Protected Wreck Site, Registered Park and Garden, Registered Battlefield or Conservation Area designated under the relevant legislation.</i>
<i>Heritage asset</i>	<i>A building, monument, site, place, area or landscape identified as having a degree of significance meriting consideration in planning decisions, because of its heritage interest. Heritage asset includes designated heritage assets and assets identified by the local planning authority (including local listing).</i>
<i>Historic environment</i>	<i>All aspects of the environment resulting from the interaction between people and places through time, including all surviving physical remains of past human activity, whether visible, buried or submerged, and landscaped and planted or managed flora.</i>
<i>Historic environment record</i>	<i>Information services that seek to provide access to comprehensive and dynamic resources relating to the historic environment of a defined geographic area for public benefit and use.</i>
<i>Setting of a heritage asset</i>	<i>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.</i>
<i>Significance (for heritage policy)</i>	<i>The value of a heritage asset to this and future generations because of its heritage interest. That interest may be archaeological, architectural, artistic or historic. Significance derives not only from a heritage asset's physical presence, but also from its setting.</i>

¹⁶ Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government, August 2026. *National Planning Policy Framework*

Appendix C: Designation Descriptions

All descriptions are sourced from the National Heritage List.

Walls, Railings and Gate 10 Metres West of Bluebridge House

Heritage Category: Listed Building

Grade: II

List Entry Number: 1170512

Date first listed: 21-Jun-1962

Date of most recent amendment: 10-Apr-1987

Statutory Address 1: Walls, Railings and Gate 10 metres west of Bluebridge House, Colchester Road

Listing NGR: TL8262729730

5/143 Walls, railings and gate 10 metres west of Blue- 21.6.62 bridge House (Formerly listed as Gate & Iron railings in front of Blue- bridge House and Garden GV II Wa11) Walls, railings and gate. Late C17 or early C18. Cast and wrought iron, red brick and Portland stone. Wall at N end of site with sloping moulded brick coping and buttress strips, connecting with wall and railings forming the W boundary. This has spear-headed railings on a low wall either side of the gateway, and at each end are short lengths of high wall with diapering, terminated by square brick piers with moulded copings. Scrolled wrought iron gate, scrolled and foliate overthrow with initials J.M. (for John Morley) in wrought iron and lantern. 2 stone steps with console-shaped abutments.

Bluebridge House

Heritage Category: Listed Building

Grade:II*

List Entry Number:1337934

Date first listed:07-Aug-1952

List Entry Name: Bluebridge House

Statutory Address 1: Bluebridge House, Colchester Road

National Grid Reference 82649 29720

House. Early and late C18, of earlier origin. Red brick in Flemish bond with strips of blue-grey headers, roofed with handmade red plain tiles. Double range plan facing W with internal end stacks in front range. 2 storeys with attics. 5-window range of sashes of 12 lights with flat arches of rubbed brick, frames set slightly back from wall plane. Central 6-panel door with fanlight in late C18 porch with open pediment on columns with neo-classical capitals. Stone plaque over porch with the date 1714, the name of the then owner John Morley, and the arms of the Butchers' Company. Narrow brick pilasters frame each end and the central bay. Brick band between storeys and brick eaves cornice with dogtooth course. Parapet gables. Incorporates some C17 timber framing of an earlier structure. One room has late C18 panelling. Staircase has original C18 handrail and twisted balusters. RCHM 4.

Coach House 30 Metres South of Bluebridge House

Heritage Category: Listed Building

Grade:II

List Entry Number:1123209

Date first listed:21-Jun-1962

Date of most recent amendment:10-Apr-1987

List Entry Name: Coach House 30 Metres South of Bluebridge House

Statutory Address 1: Coach House 30 Metres South Of Bluebridge House, Colchester Road

Listing NGR: TL8264629679

Coach-house, now a dwelling. C17 and C18. Red brick in Flemish bond with blue-grey diapering, roofed with handmade red plain tiles. Rectangular plan aligned N-S. 2 storeys. C20 leaded casements. Parapet gables. Some C17 and C18 framing internally. Included for group value.

Appendix D: EHER maps and Gazetteer

EHER	Name	Summary	Period
6817	Route of the Colne Valley Railway	The Colne Valley Railway was opened in 1862 and ran from Haverhill to Chappel. It closed in 1965.	Mid 19th century to Mid 20th century
8615	Post-medieval mill, 'Langley Mill', River Colne	Langley Mill.	Post Medieval
8785	Cropmark of possible Iron Age ring ditch and enclosure at Bluebridge Farm	Cropmarks of a ring ditch and a large subrectangular enclosure with an entrance, of typical Iron Age shape were seen as cropmarks during aerial reconnaissance in 1980.	Iron Age
9426	Roman storage jar, west of Knights Farm	Romano-British storage jar.	Roman