

GGHR2416: Land North of Bluebridge House, Halstead Heritage Impact Assessment



Client:
Braintree District Council

Date:
August 2026





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Project Details

Client: Braintree District Council
Project Number: F4260
Address: Braintree District Council, Causeway House, Bocking End, Braintree, CM7 9HB

Quality Assurance – Approval Status

Issue: 1
Date: 28/08/2026
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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 GGHR2416, Land North of Bluebridge House (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 areas shall be referred to as ‘the Site’ and the 500m Historic Environment Record search area (buffer) shall be referred to as ‘the Study Area’. The site is approximately 5 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*

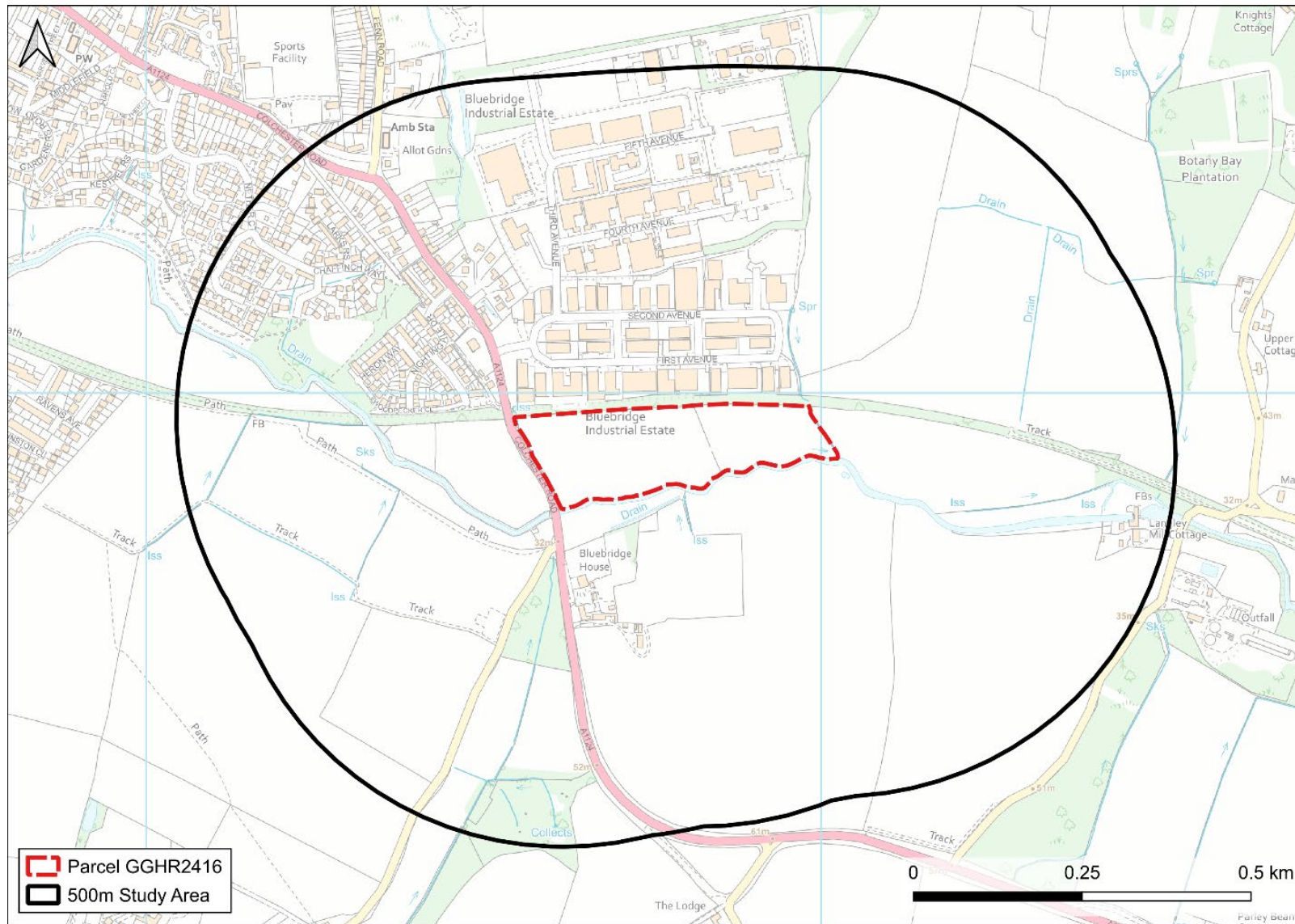


Figure 1 Location of Site GGHR2416 and 500 metre Study Area

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 Sites included in this document, 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 updated '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

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'*.

‘Advice Note 12: Statements of Heritage Significance – Analysing Significance in Heritage Assets’ (2019).⁵

- 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/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 HER records in the Study Area, a 500m radius from the Site boundary. The number references used in the text are those used by the Essex HER or National Heritage List.

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

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 heritage assets scoped out of this assessment are:

Listed Building	Grade	List Entry Number
Brook Farmhouse	II	1122452
Blue Bridge Cottage	II	1338280
Brick Barn Hall	II	1338281

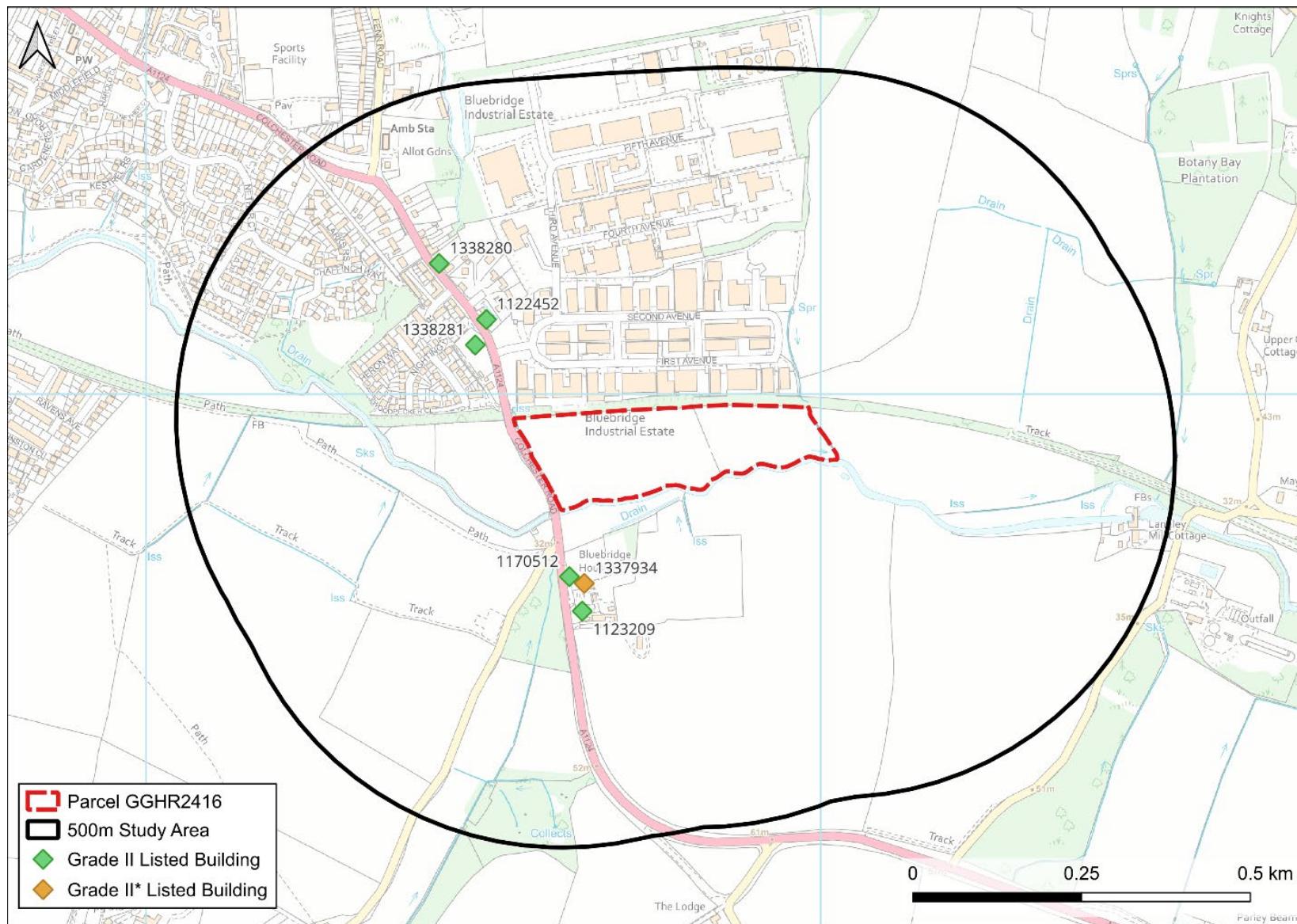


Figure 2 Map showing Designated Heritage Assets within the 500m Study Area

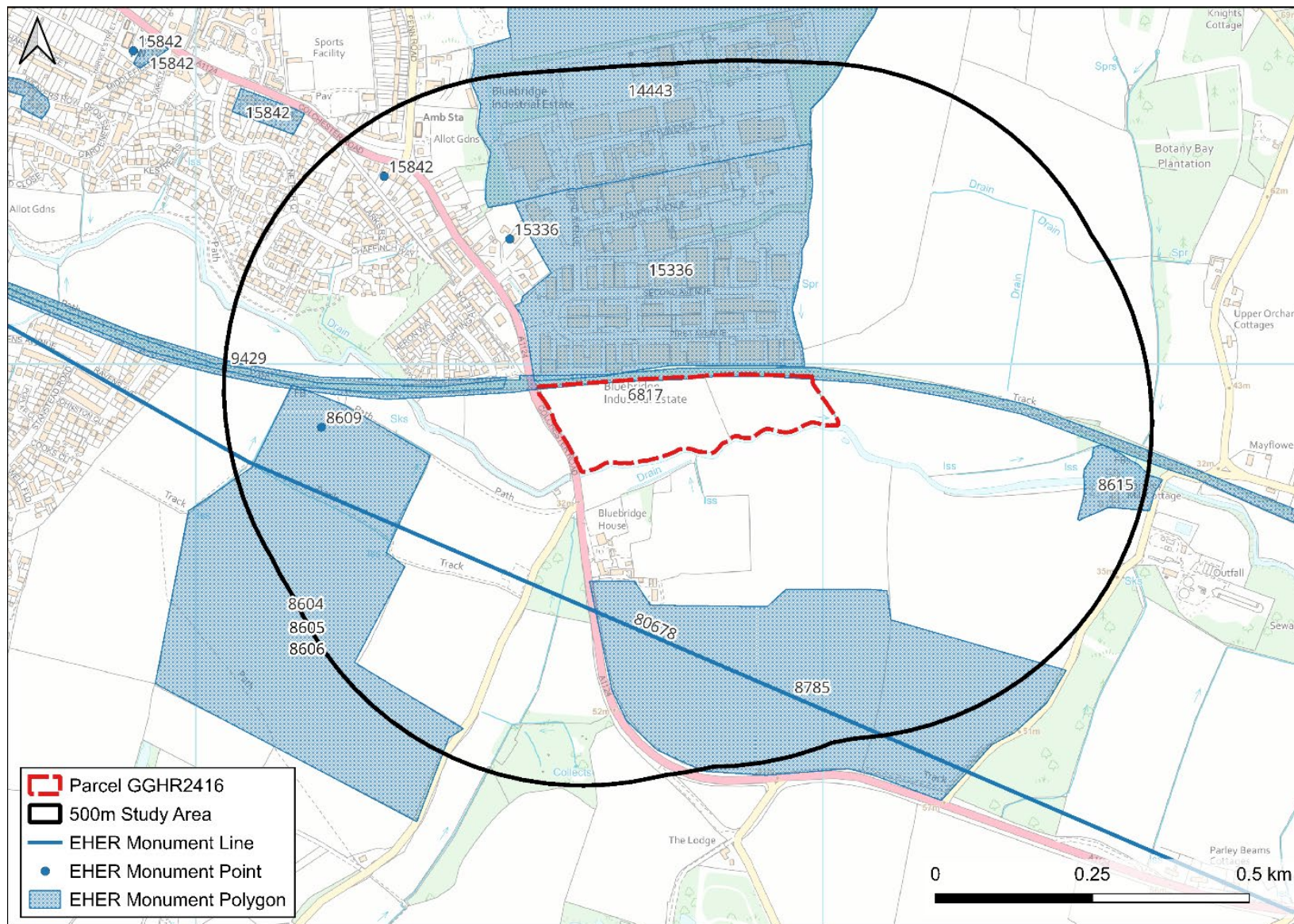


Figure 3 Map showing Essex HER records within the 500m Study Area, excluding Listed Buildings

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 (**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. Within the wider landscape, the geology of the Colne Valley, with its river terraces and alluvial deposits, would have been a favourable location for settlement activity.
- 2.10 Investigations to the south-west of the Site at Greenstead Hall, identified a quantity of Belgic pottery and a possible hut site, a strong indication of Iron Age settlement within the vicinity (EHER 8605). Further evidence of settlement in the form of cropmarks comprising a ring ditch and a large sub-rectangular enclosure with an entrance, of typical Iron Age shape, is located 250 metres south of the Site (EHER 8785).
- 2.11 Undated earthworks to the north of the railway embankment may also indicate occupation of this period (EHER 8609). There are no earlier records of prehistoric activity which predate the Iron Age within the Study Area.

Roman (43 AD to 410 AD)

- 2.12 No known evidence of Roman activity is recorded within the Site.
- 2.13 To the south-west of the Site, at Greenstead Hall, excavations uncovered the site of a third to fourth century AD Roman pottery kiln and second-fourth century building remains, including a hypocaust, indicating the site of a probable Roman villa (EHER 8604). This may have been associated with the projected line of the Godmanchester to Colchester Roman Road recorded to the south of the Site (EHER 80678).

Early Medieval and Medieval (410 AD to 1540 AD)

- 2.14 Traces of Saxon settlement have been identified 200 metres west of the Site. This possible hut site was represented by 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). There was likely a Saxon church on the present site of St Andrew's Church in the historic core of the settlement of Halstead at the crossroads of Hedingham Road and Head Street.
- 2.15 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.

- 2.16 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).
- 2.17 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.
- 2.18 The Site is located adjacent to the River Colne. In the wider area, extensive areas of meadow pasture adjacent to the river are evidenced by cropmarks indicating water management. The Site would have included valuable grazing land on the outskirts of the medieval town.

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

- 2.19 The northern 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 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 Located north of the Site were late-eighteenth to early-twentieth century brickworks at Brook Farm. Red bricks, tiles, drain pipes and grey stock bricks were produced from the 1780s. Until 1840 one kiln was present, but by the 1870s at least two kilns and three clay mills were in use. Two clay pits were also on site but clay was also supplied from Moons farm nearby to the east. Both farms are depicted on the Tithe Map (**Figure 5**) and the First Edition Ordnance Survey (OS) map (**Figure 6**).
- 2.22 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.
- 2.23 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.
- 2.24 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.

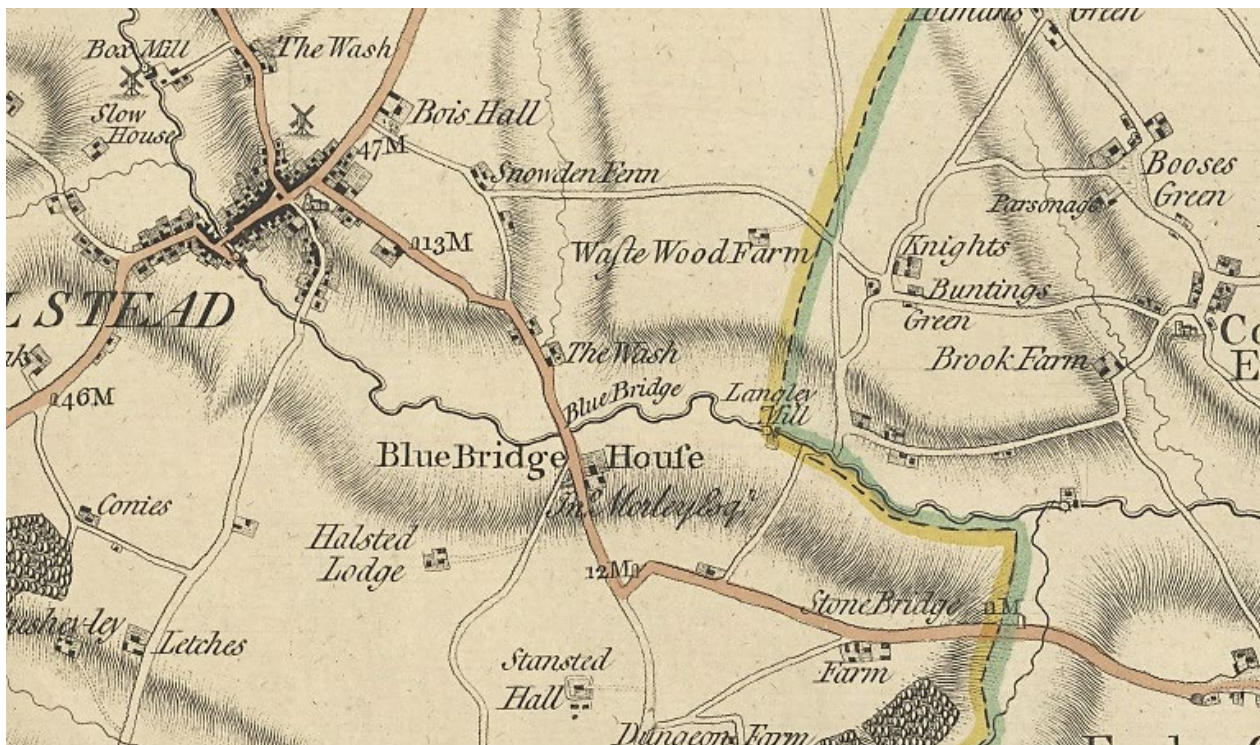


Figure 4 The Chapman and Andree Map of Essex, 1777, showing Halstead to the top left, with Site is at the approximate centre of the image, to the northeast of Bluebridge House.

2.25 The Tithe Map of 1838 shows the Site in agricultural use and divided into five plots. Plots 731 and 730 were owned by The Honourable William Pole-Tylny-Long-Wellesley and occupied by the tenant Joseph Linnett. Plots 732, 729 and 733 were owned by Sir Edward Giles King and occupied by the tenant Robert Rayner.

2.26 The Tithe Appointment entries of 1838 for the five plots that make up Site GGHR2416:

Plot	Owner	Occupier	Use
731	The Honourable William Pole-Tylny-Long-Wellesley	Joseph Linnett	Arable
730	The Honourable William Pole-Tylny-Long-Wellesley	Joseph Linnett	Grass
732	Sir Edward Giles King	Robert Rayner	Grass
733	Sir Edward Giles King	Robert Rayner	Arable
729	Sir Edward Giles King	Robert Rayner	Arable

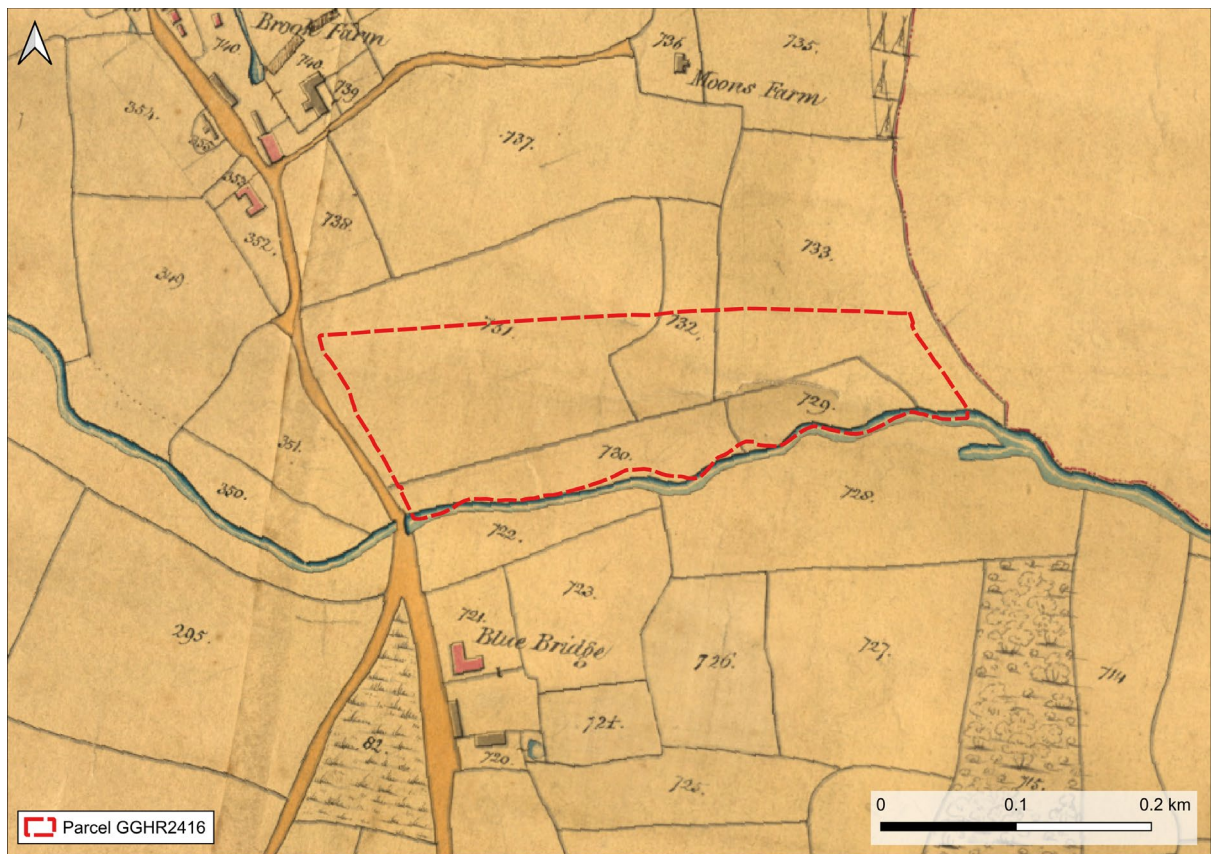


Figure 5 The Tithe Appointment Map of 1838 showing the plots within the Site

- 2.27 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 7**). 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>

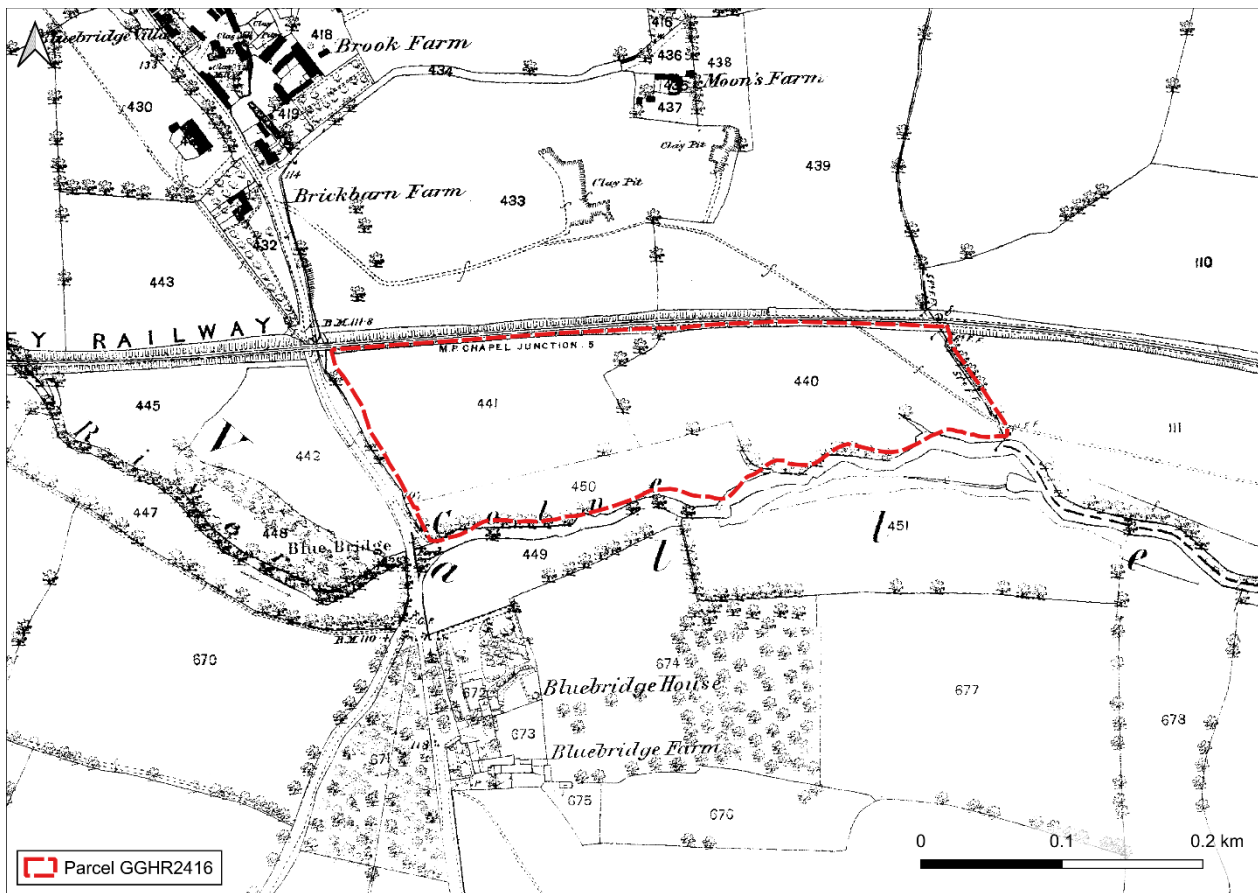


Figure 6 First Edition OS map c1897

- 2.28 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.
- 2.29 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 and equipment, and textiles were transported and the railway network transformed the local economy.

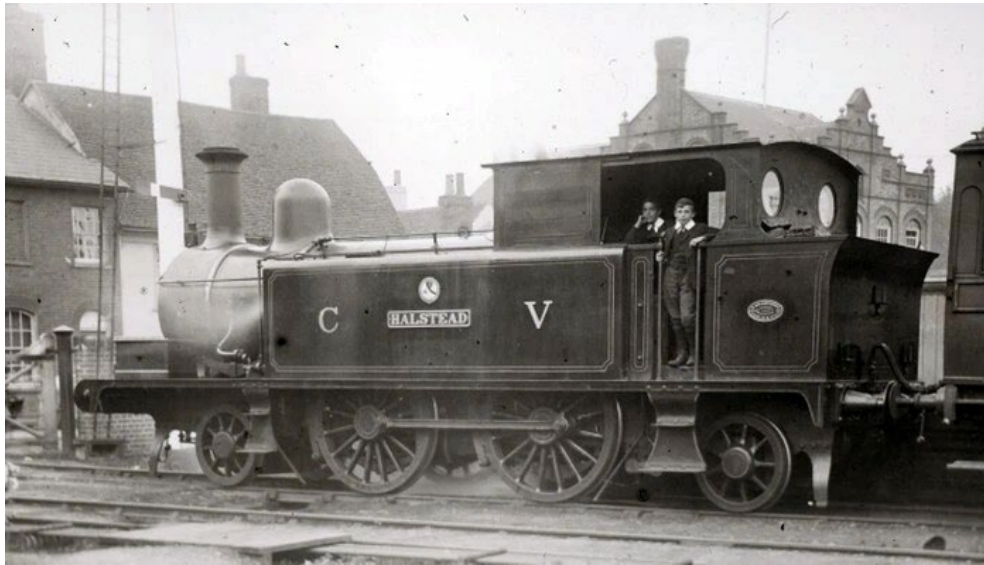


Figure 7 The "Halstead" locomotive at Halstead station on route to Haverhill, c1900⁹

Twentieth Century onwards (1901 AD onwards)

2.30 There are examples of early twentieth-century housing in the form of 'Courtauld houses', on Colchester Road, northwest of the Site (EHER 15842). Between the 1920s to 1935, Samuel Augustine Courtauld had 45 houses built for company staff.

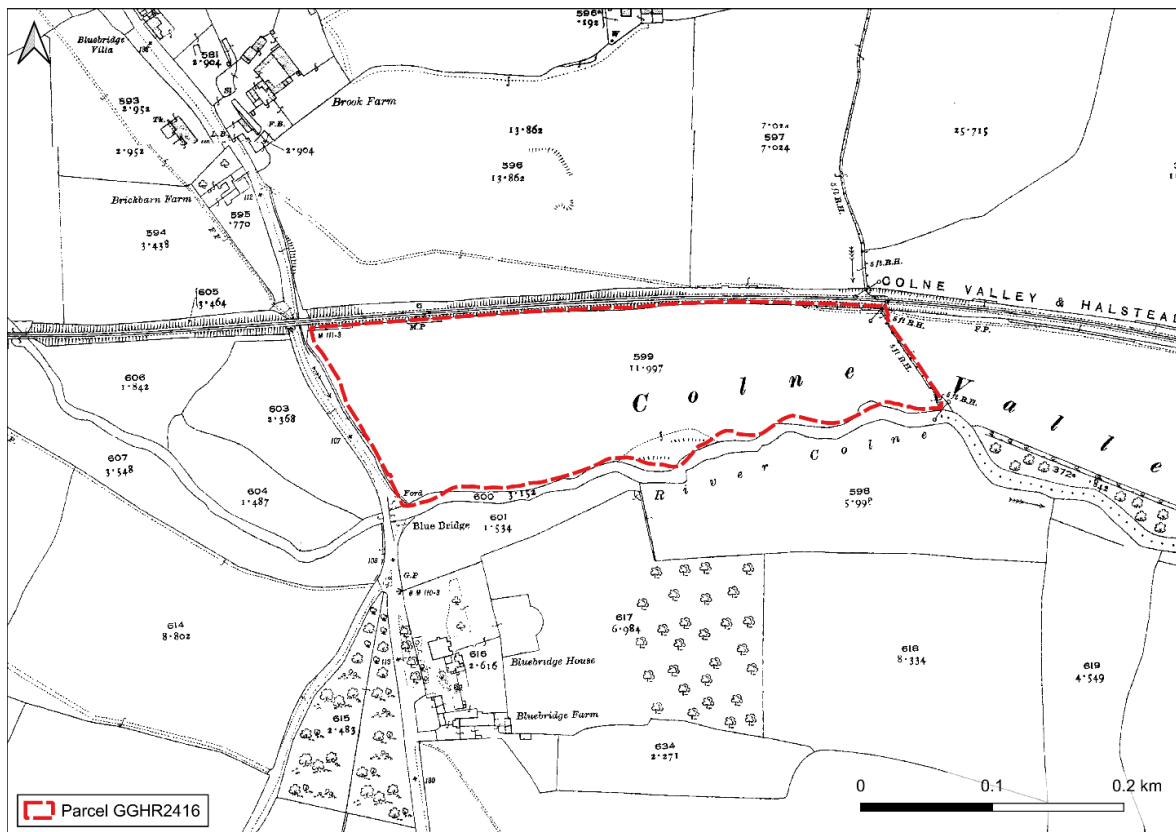


Figure 8 The Third Edition OS map published c1923-1925

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

- 2.31 In the early 1960s passenger services along the Colne Valley Railway were withdrawn but the line remained open between Chappel and Yeldham for goods traffic.
- 2.32 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 Colne¹⁰. 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.



Figure 9 The Bluebridge Industrial Estate, under construction in the late 1960s (Halstead Gazette).

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

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 with tree and hedge boundaries. The Site is bounded to the west by the Colchester Road (A1124) and to the north by the former line of the Colne Valley Railway, directly to the north of which is the Bluebridge Industrial Estate.
- 3.3 Immediately to the south is the River Colne and beyond the river is the site of the historic Bluebridge House and its associated buildings. The Colchester Road crosses over the Colne at Blue Bridge, adjacent to the Site's south-western corner. Beyond to the east are further fields, with hedge boundaries. Public Footpath 25 begins at the northeast corner of the Site and continues to the east, adjacent to the former railway line.
- 3.4 Adjacent to the northeast is the Site of COLE2100, while adjacent to the south-west is the Site of GGHR2141.
- 3.5 Due to its position adjacent to the river, topographically the site is level and low-lying, with a height above sea level of between 35 and 39 meters, being slightly higher along its northern boundary.



Figure 10 View from the north-east corner of the Site looking south-west.

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.
- 4.7 The three separate designated assets at Bluebridge House share a strong historic, functional, architectural and visual relationship. Together they provide evidence for the development and operation of an historic estate, with origins in the early-eighteenth century. The three assets form the key elements of a high-status, country house and estate complex centred on the Grade II* listed Bluebridge House. The ancillary coach house served the practical transportation needs of the household, while the walls, railings and gates controlled access and defined the extent of the property, its approach and immediate gardens. The individual heritage assets enhance the significance of each other and together they illustrate the establishment, development and functioning of a prosperous early Georgian estate. The three assets share their setting and the surviving undeveloped, rural character of the setting enhances their significance.

Bluebridge House (Grade II* listed, List Entry Number: 1337934)

- 4.8 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 building is in an elevated position and a prominent feature above the meadows and banks of the River Colne to the north.

Significance

- 4.9 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 partly derives its significance from its architectural interest. 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.
- 4.10 The building has historic interest being directly associated with the eighteenth century figure, John Morley. A notable historical figure of Halstead was John Morley (1656–1732), who was a butcher by trade, but who rose to become one of the most successful land 'jobbers' or estate agents for the

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

landed gentry, such as for the second Earl of Oxford. He was nicknamed 'Merchant Morley', yet he remained proud of his origins and it is thought that in honour of his first trade, he would slaughter a pig annually in Halstead market, receiving a silver groat (4d or one-third of a shilling) as payment. When granted a coat of arms in 1722, he included a figure of a butcher holding a poleaxe for his crest.

- 4.11 Morley's extensive income and commission earned through arranging land sales and marriage negotiations for the wealthy, allowed him to buy the estate and Tudor house of Munchensies, just outside Halstead by the River Colne in the early eighteenth century. In 1714 he built Bluebridge House on the site of the earlier house and the front wrought-iron gates bear his initials, 'J.M'. His is also believed to have painted the nearby 'Blew Bridge' blue. He died at Bluebridge House on 20 January 1732 and was buried beneath an altar-tomb in Halstead church.



Figure 11 John Morley from a 1716 portrait **Figure 12 Bluebridge House around 1787.**¹⁵

¹⁴

Setting and Contribution to Significance

- 4.12 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 at the time outside the extent of the town of Halstead. It is unknown if there were any designed views from the house to the north-east (towards the Site), which were the intended result of landscaping (popular on country estates in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries) and if so, to what extent these views have survived.
- 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 (in particular the Site) and the River Colne. The setting of Bluebridge House retains its agrarian, rural character

¹⁴ McCabe & Abel. John Morley and Bluebridge House <https://www.mccabeandabel.co.uk/bluebridge-house>

¹⁵ Ibid

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.

Contribution made by the Site

- 4.14 The Tithe Map of 1838 shows that at that time there were no direct links between the Site and Bluebridge House through ownership or use. However, the undeveloped Site is part of the immediate rural setting of the listed building, and it retains its historic agrarian character. This aspect of the setting and the contribution made by the Site is highly positive and allows the significance of the asset to be appreciated.
- 4.15 The Site currently provides an important open, green buffer against existing modern development, including separating the listed building from the Bluebridge Industrial Estate. There are important, direct views of the Grade II* listed building from the Site. Bluebridge House is also in an elevated position and views from the listed building are likely to take in much of the Site. The site's undeveloped, tranquil, green character is a positive attribute, which allows the listed building to be appreciated within its historic setting and context.



Figure 13 The Grade II* listed Bluebridge House visible looking south from within the boundary of the Site



Figure 14 A zoomed in view from the Site showing the presence and visibility of the Grade II* listed Bluebridge House and its Grade II listed wall.

Walls, Railings and Gate of Bluebridge House (Grade II listed, List Entry Number: 1170512)

- 4.16 The 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 (the list description notes 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.

Significance

- 4.17 The walls, railings and gate have architectural interest, due to their ornate finish, fine craftsmanship and high-quality materials. In addition, they have historic interest due to their association with the prominent local figure of John Morley (1656–1732). The gates attest to the wealth and status of the Morley family and the subsequent owners of Bluebridge House.

Setting and Contribution to Significance

- 4.18 The undeveloped and tranquil rural setting of the listed walls, railings and gate to Bluebridge House provides a backdrop against which their significance can be appreciated. The Site forms an immediate part of this agrarian setting. The presence of the historic boundary provides a physical record of the extent to which the landscape was controlled, owned and used. The original layout of the wall and the enclosure of land intended for the house demonstrate the status, influence and wealth of the owners. The listed boundary would have been a visible feature within the landscape, providing a first impression of the house. 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 within the Site it remains appreciable.

Contribution made by the Site

- 4.19 The Site makes an important and positive contribution to the ability to appreciate the significance of the heritage asset and provides an important open, green buffer against encroaching modern development. While the agricultural fields that became the Site were not owned or tenanted by persons associated with Bluebridge House, there is a direct visual association between the listed walls, railings and gate and the Site. The north wall to Bluebridge House can be viewed from within the Site (**Figure 14**), while the Site forms a backdrop to views of the wall's north-west corner from Colchester Road (**Figure 15**). The Site forms an important part of the setting of the heritage asset and its tranquil, green and undeveloped character makes a positive contribution to understanding its significance.



Figure 15 The north-west corner of the Grade II listed wall on the right of the image. The Site is on the other side of the Colchester Road.

Coach House 30 Metres South Of Bluebridge House (Grade II listed, List Entry Number 1123209).

- 4.20 The Coach House is to the south of Bluebridge House, within the Grade II listed walls. As a Grade II listed building it is considered to be of special architectural and historic interest. The list description attributes seventeenth-century origins, with eighteenth century phases of development, which if correct, would mean that it pre-dates Bluebridge House.

Significance

- 4.21 The Coach House derives significance from its architectural interest. 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 is of archaeological interest.
- 4.22 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 has been converted to residential use, probably in the mid-late twentieth century¹⁶.

Setting and Contribution to Significance

- 4.23 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.
- 4.24 Its wider setting is characterised by the wider rural landscape, which allows an appreciation of the asset's significance. The building's rural setting retains much of its historic agricultural character, allowing its 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

- 4.25 Views to the north from the Coach House are likely to be dominated by the Grade II* listed Bluebridge House although the Site forms an important part of the asset's wider setting. While intervisibility between the Coach House and the Site may be interrupted by the presence of

¹⁶ Braintree District Council. Planning Application reference 11/00639/LBC

Bluebridge House and the listed wall, the tranquillity of the Site is a positive aspect and enhances the ability to appreciate the significance of the asset.



Figure 16 The Grade II* listed Bluebridge House, a prominent feature, looking south from Blue Bridge over the River Colne.

Archaeological Potential

- 4.26 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 a geophysical assessment and trial trench evaluation.
- 4.27 There are no known non-designated heritage assets (NDHAs) of archaeological interest within the Site however several NDHAs are recorded on the Historic Environment Record 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.
- 4.28 The Study Area has several recorded archaeological features, these comprise the below monuments, discussed by period.
- 4.29 The Site is located within the valley 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.

- 4.30 Iron Age activity within the Study Area is attested to by settlement evidence (EHER 8605) and features identified through cropmarks (EHER 8785). As such, there is low to moderate potential for Iron Age archaeological features to survive within the Site.
- 4.31 Evidence of a Roman occupation site, interpreted as a villa, is known to the west of the Site at Greenstead Hall and a Roman road is also projected within the vicinity (EHER 8604, 80678). There is a low to moderate potential for Roman remains to be encountered within the Site.
- 4.32 At Greenstead Hall, a small number of Anglo-Saxon features and finds were excavated (EHER 8607), indicating low potential for remains of this period.
- 4.33 During the medieval and post medieval periods, the Site comprised agricultural land to the south-east of the small medieval settlement of Halstead, bounded by the River Colne and Colchester Road. It is highly likely that field boundaries or water management features of this date are preserved within the Site as these features are evident on the first edition Ordnance Survey map and aerial photography. There is therefore high potential for encountering medieval/postmedieval archaeological remains within the Site.
- 4.34 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.
- 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.¹⁷

Designated Heritage Assets

Designated Heritage Assets: Listed Buildings

Bluebridge House, Wall, Railings and Gate, and Stables

- 5.3 The three closely grouped designated heritage assets associated with Bluebridge House, which are the house itself, its wall and railings and the coach house, have been grouped together in the below assessment of impacts.
- 5.4 Agrarian land around this historic site, its buildings and structures makes an important contribution to how their significance is experienced, appreciated and understood. To its immediate north, its west, south and east, the undeveloped, tranquil, rural character of the group's setting remains and this enhances the appreciation of the assets' significance. There are no historic links through ownership between the group of assets and the Site. Yet the development of the Site would have a negative impact on their significance, individually and as a group. As a result, there would be a notable level harm to the significance of this group of assets.
- 5.5 The development of the Site would bring modern development up to the northern edge of the group of assets, removing an important open, green buffer against existing modern development along Colchester Road, including the Bluebridge Industrial Estate and the modern housing development at Nightingale Drive. The result would be the initial absorption of the historic country house and associated buildings, into Halstead's encroaching urban development from the north.
- 5.6 Along with the visual impacts of the development of the Site, the prevailing rustic and tranquil character of the setting of the asset group would be diminished. Environmental factors, such as

¹⁷ Historic England, December 2017. The Setting of Heritage Assets - Historic Environment Good Practice Advice in Planning Note 3 (Second Edition)

noise, bustle, traffic movement, lighting, compounded through diurnal and seasonal changes would permanently and negatively alter the immediate setting of the assets.

- 5.7 Individually, the greatest impact would be on the Grade II* listed House which overlooks the Site and its Grade II listed wall, which both have a visual presence from within the Site. When considered on its own, the impact on the Grade II listed stables is likely to result in a lesser level of harm than the other two assets. However, the significance of the group of heritage assets and their collective importance and the combined effect of the impact of the Site's development is to be considered.

Archaeology

- 5.8 The Site has no recorded archaeological sites within its boundary although the EHER suggests the landscape has been active through all periods since prehistory. The Site comprises an agricultural field just south of the extent of modern Halstead 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.
- 5.9 The Site is located within the valley of the River Colne and there is high potential for the preservation of environmental remains within alluvial deposits, especially if deposits are waterlogged.
- 5.10 The Site has not been previously investigated and limited archaeological evaluation has been undertaken within the Site's vicinity. The Site is however located within a wider landscape of occupation evidenced by preserved remains of Iron Age, Roman, early medieval and post medieval occupation within the 500m Study Area. There is also cartographic and aerial evidence of agricultural features within the Site. 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.
- 5.11 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 Site (GGHR2416).
- 6.2 The significance of designated heritage assets has been assessed. It is considered that development of the proposed allocation would result in harm to the significance of the following listed buildings and, in terms of the NPPF, Policy HE6 Paragraphs 1 and 3 are relevant:

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 The harmful impacts are indirect and relate to impact on setting and how it contributes to the asset's significance. This impact is found in the urbanisation of rural land and removal agricultural land. These types of impacts are typically challenging to fully mitigate, and it is unlikely harm will be avoided.
- 6.4 Policy HE6 Paragraph 1 of the NPPF requires that when considering the impact of a proposed development on the significance of a designated heritage asset, substantial weight should be given to the asset's conservation (and the more important the asset, the greater the weight). Any harm to, or loss of significance of a designated heritage asset (including from development within its setting) should require clear and convincing justification as set out in Policy HE6 Paragraphs 4 to 6 of the NPPF. Policy HE6 Paragraph 5 of the NPPF requires that where a development proposal will lead to harm to the significance of a designated heritage asset, this harm should be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal.
- 6.5 Local planning authorities should also take account of the desirability of new development responding to its context (including the history, character and features of the site and its setting) such as through the restoration, reuse and integration of heritage assets as required by Policy DP3 Paragraph 1 of the NPPF
- 6.6 The local authority should also have special regard to the desirability of preserving the listed buildings and their setting or any features of special architectural or historic interest they possess in accordance with Section 66(1) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990.
- 6.7 The degree of harm to assets, and their significance, is dependent on how any measures to avoid or minimise harm are realised. There is also potential for heritage benefits arising from the conservation and interpretation of these assets.

- 6.8 With regards to archaeology, there are a number of non-designated heritage assets recorded on the Essex Historic Environment Record within the 500m Study Area (see Section 3 and **Appendix D**), and there is the potential for, as yet unidentified, archaeological features and finds to be present within the Site. This study has suggested high potential for archaeological remains of the post medieval period and low to moderate potential for the remaining periods within the Site, and also that previous truncation is considered to be limited to agricultural activity.
- 6.9 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 a geophysical assessment and trial trench evaluation. The only known features within the Site comprise agricultural linears likely of post-medieval (or medieval) date which may be adversely impacted by future development.
- 6.10 The Site is comprised of an agricultural field 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

- 6.11 With regard to mitigation, while it may be possible to lessen the level of some of the impacts, it is unlikely that any mitigation measures would effectively remove the harm to the group of designated heritage assets in this instance. The interruption of views to and from Bluebridge House could be avoided, with the restriction of minimal development to the far eastern end of the site, retaining open land at the centre and western end. Along with the retention of open space, measures to avoid or minimise negative impacts to the assets could include appropriate layouts, reducing housing quantum/density, screening and the careful consideration of the location, orientation, density, and scale of any development within the Site.
- 6.12 Open spaces and green buffers as part of the design and layout of the development should be considered early in the design stage. The establishment of designed, 'productive' landscapes (such as orchards, allotments, nutturies) close to the assets may mitigate harm by retaining some sense of their historically productive, agrarian surroundings. Screening of nearby development alone is unlikely to reduce the harm resulting from the impact on the setting of the heritage assets, due to the fundamental loss of the land use and character.
- 6.13 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.

- 6.14 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.
- 6.15 Further assessment at planning application state should also explore the presence of any 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 southeast, adjacent to the southern boundary of the Site. The line was constructed and open by 1860 and ran for just over 100 years and it varies in form along its route, being an embankment to the east and a cutting to the western approach to Halstead. 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.
- 6.16 Regarding archaeology, early discussion should be held with the Local Planning Authority to define an appropriate programme of archaeological evaluation to both assess the extent of the known archaeological features as well as define previously 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 assessment and trial trench evaluation. The results of these investigations will further inform the development masterplan.

7. References and Sources

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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 (2026) MHCLG	Chapter 20: Conserving and enhancing the historic environment Annex 2
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) ¹⁸

<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>
<i>Lucam or Lucam Hoist</i>	<i>A traditional covered, projecting structure at the top of a mill, barn, or warehouse that houses a lifting winch or sack hoist. It allows heavy items like grain or goods to be pulled up from the ground and the overhang keeps the items clear of the building's wall</i>

¹⁸ 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: HER 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
8604	Roman settlement at Greenstead Hall	Excavations uncovered the site of a 3rd to 4th century AD Roman pottery kiln; 2nd-4th century building remains, including a hypocaust, indicating the probable site of a Roman villa; a hut associated with Iron Age or Saxon pottery. There is also a cropmark	Roman
8605	Possible Late Iron Age settlement at Greenstead Hall	Traces of Iron Age settlement: quantity of Belgic pottery in at least two concentrations (one on the site of a Roman building at TL 82092968).	Late Iron Age
8607	Possible Early Medieval settlement at Greenstead Hall	Traces of Saxon settlement.	Early Medieval
8609	Undated earthworks, Halstead	Lindsay (source 1) refers to earth walls on the valley floor just north of the railway embankment.	Unknown
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
9429	Medieval to post-medieval town of Halstead	A planted town founded by Abel de St Martin, to whom the grant of a market was made in 1251. A market town probably existed at this time and the area was probably extended. The town benefited from the rise in the East Anglian cloth trade, its increasing	Medieval to Modern
14443	Cropmark of post-medieval field boundary, west of Westwoods	Cropmark of field boundary.	Unknown
15336	Site of late 18th-early 20th century brickworks at Brook Farm, Halstead	Late C18 to early C20 brickworks	Late 18th century to Edwardian
15842	Early 20th century housing, 'Courtauld houses', Colchester Road	Early C20 Courtauld housing.	Early 20th century to Mid 20th century
80678	Roman road between Godmanchester and Colchester	Roman road running from Godmanchester to Colchester.	Roman