



The Swan Inn

Statement Of Heritage Significance And Impact Assessment

Applicant

Fraser’s Retail Ltd

Design Team

Architect - Tait Architects
Structural Engineer -
Mechanical Consultant -



Purpose

This document has been prepared by Tait Architects Ltd on behalf of Fraser’s Retail Ltd to accompany the planning application for the redevelopment of the existing public house ‘The Swan Inn’ in Three Mile Cross.

The proposal is for an extension to the rear of the existing Grade II Listed building to cater for a new kitchen, toilet facilities and restaurant seating areas.

June 2024

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1 Introduction

1.1 Executive summary

This document, dated March June 2024, has been prepared in order to assess the significance as well as the impacts on the historic built environment arising from the proposed re-development of the Grade II listed Swan Inn, located by Basingstoke Road in Three Mile Cross, Reading.

The proposals involve the removal of the unsightly and poor-quality outbuildings to the rear of the pub, which consist of a commercial kitchen, store room and WCs and replacing these structures with the new, quality facilities. In addition, the aspiration is to improve the flow within the building by allowing an additional accessible entrance and extending dining area. The design intends to visually open up the space, respect the historical structure providing a clear reading of the new interventions.

1.2 Relevant planning history

A pre-application has been submitted to the Wokingham Council in November 2023 and the written comments received from the Council in December 2023. The current proposals are to respond to the Councils' feedback and, with regards to the heritage aspects, the amendments have been made to:

- Reduce the mass and scale of the extension from 274sqm additional to the existing footprint (total 330m²) submitted for the pre-planning to 73sqm (total 128sqm) submitted for this full planning application;
- Recess the proposed north elevation further back to allow for the abutment of the proposed structure not to be incongruous to the historic elevation and the rear of the roof.

2 Policy, legislation and guidance

2.1 National Planning Policy Framework

There is a requirement under the National Planning Policy Framework, (NPPF) as presented in section 16 on *Conserving and enhancing the historic environment*, for an applicant of development proposals to ascertain what constitutes the 'significance' of any heritage assets identified, what potential effects the development proposals will have on that heritage asset's significance, and how such effects would be mitigated. The level of detail provided should be proportionate to the importance of each heritage asset, and no more than is sufficient to understand the potential impact that may arise from the development proposals.

Conserving heritage assets should be done in a manner appropriate to their significance, so that they can be enjoyed for their contribution to the quality of life of this and future generations. The NPPF covers all aspects of the historic environment and heritage assets, including designated assets (World Heritage Sites, Scheduled Monuments, Listed Buildings, Protected Wreck Sites, Conservation Areas, Registered Parks and Gardens and Registered Battlefields) and non-designated assets (local lists and archaeological sites of equivalent significance to scheduled monuments). The NPPF draws attention to the irreplaceable nature of heritage assets and the benefits their conservation can bring to the wider objectives of the NPPF in relation to sustainability, economic benefits and place-making.

The NPPF states that the significance of heritage assets (including their settings) should be identified, described and the impact of the proposal on the significance of the asset should be assessed. The planning application should include sufficient information to enable the impact of the proposals on the significance of the asset to be assessed.. The NPPF sets a minimum information standard and states that the level of detail should be proportionate to the heritage asset's

significance and the potential impact on that significance (Paragraph 200). In turn, Paragraph 201 states that: *"local planning authorities should identify and assess the particular significance of any heritage asset that may be affected by a proposal (including by development affecting the setting of a heritage asset) taking account of the available evidence and any necessary expertise. They should take this into account when considering the impact of a proposal on a heritage asset, to avoid or minimise any conflict between the heritage asset's conservation and any aspect of the proposal"*.

Paragraph 203 notes that the local planning authorities should take an account of:

- *"the desirability of sustaining and enhancing the significance of heritage assets and putting them to viable uses consistent with their conservation;*
- *the positive contribution that conservation of heritage assets can make to sustainable communities including their economic vitality;*
- *the desirability of new development making a positive contribution to local character and distinctiveness."*

According to Paragraph 205, *"In considering the potential impacts on the development in the significance of a designated heritage asset, great weight should be given to the asset's conservation, irrespective of whether any potential harm amounts to substantial harm, total loss or less than substantial harm to its significance."*

Subsequently, as stated in Paragraph 206, *"Any harm to, or loss of, the significance of a designated heritage asset (from its alteration or destruction, or from development within its setting), should require clear and convincing justification."*

The following paragraphs discusses the principles of determining the planning applications based on the degree of the harm to the significance (or total loss of the significance) which harm should be *"weighed against the*

public benefits of the proposal including, where appropriate, securing its optimum viable use." (Paragraph 208).

2.2 Local Planning Policy

The local planning context is set out in Wokingham Borough Core Strategy Development Plan Document (adopted January 2010). The Wokingham Council is also currently working to update the Local Plan. The adopted supplementary planning documents include *South of the M4 Strategic Development Location Supplementary Planning Document* adopted in October 2011 and the Village Design Statement *A Vision for Our Villages: Ryeish Green, Spencers Wood, Three Mile Cross* produced in 2008. These documents discuss the importance of the quality of the new development, the aspirations and design guidelines in the context of the setting and history of the villages.

2.3 Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990

This 'Act' (as amended) outlines the provisions for designation, control of works and enforcement measures relating to Listed Building. Of relevance to the site's development proposals are the following:

Section 66(1) states that special regard to shall be had to the desirability of preserving the building or its setting or any features of special architectural or historic interest which it possesses in considering whether to grant planning permission that affects a listed building or its setting.

2.4 Planning Policy Guidance

The NPPF is supported by Planning Practice Guidance: Historic Environment (PPG) (2019). This provides further information on how to interpret and apply the NPPF in practice and the relationship to the legislative framework for planning and the historic environment. Relevant guidance to the site's development proposals includes:

- Heritage assets may be affected by direct physical change or by change in their setting. Being able to properly assess the nature, extent and importance of the significance of a heritage asset, and the contribution of its setting, is very important to understanding the potential impact and acceptability of development proposals;
- Setting is the surroundings in which an asset is experienced, and may therefore, be more extensive than its curtilage. All heritage assets have a setting, irrespective of the form in which they survive and whether they are designated or not.
- A thorough assessment on the impact on setting needs to take into account, and be proportionate to, the
- significance of the heritage asset under consideration and the degree to which proposed changes enhance or detract from that significance and the ability to appreciate it;
- Views of and from an asset will play an important part in the way in which we experience an asset; its setting is also influenced by other environmental factors such as noise, dust and vibration from other land uses in the vicinity, and by our understanding of the historic relationship between places;
- Harm to a heritage asset's significance may arise from works to the asset or from development proposals within its setting.

2.5 Historic Environment Good Practice Advice in Planning Notes

Historic England's *Historic Environment Good Practice Advice in Planning Note 3: The Setting of Heritage Assets* (2nd Ed.) (2017) provides more detailed advice on how to approach setting assessments and expands upon the NPPF and the associated PPG. A five-step process is proposed for proportionate assessment of a heritage asset's setting, which have been taken into account in preparing this Heritage Statement. These are set out in the Methodology section below.

3 Methodology

3.1 Historic England guidance

Identifying the elements that constitute a heritage asset's significance is outlined in English Heritage's (now: Historic England) Conservation Principles, Policies & Guidance (2008): Evidential, Historical (illustrative or associative); Aesthetic; and Communal. The document is currently being updated to re-lay the Historic England's approach to conservation in more accessible format aligned with the language of the National Planning Policy Framework and legislation.

This Heritage Statement's assessment of the identified heritage assets is in accordance with Historic England's *Historic Environment Good Practice Advice Note 3 (GPA 3): The Setting of Heritage Assets* (2nd edition) (2017), which in addition to the four values (evidential, historical, aesthetic and communal) stresses out the importance of the asset's setting. The 5-step process set out in GPA 3 requires an analysis of a heritage asset's 'setting', and the degree to which the setting contributes to that heritage asset's 'significance'. It also requires an assessment of how such a contribution, if any, may be altered by development proposals. This contribution can be positive, negative, or neutral.

3.2 Sources consulted

The sources consulted in this statement consist of:

- The cartographic studies based on the records available in the Royal Berkshire Archives and the British Library;
- Archival references such as deeds or surveys available in the Royal Berkshire Archives;
- Historic photographs available online as well as in the Royal Berkshire Archives;
- Historic Environment Record (HER) search;
- Literature review.



Fig. 2, View 01 The Swan Inn, Mitford Hall to the left-hand side, the fuel station to the right-hand side.



Fig. 3, View 02 The Swan Inn, main elevation off Basingstoke Road.



Fig. 4, View 03 Fuel station to the left-hand side, Post Office and Newsagent to the right-hand side. The Swan Inn mostly obscured, the sign visible.



Fig. 5, View 04 The Swan Inn as seen from the car park.

5 Heritage Assessment

5.1 Historical Background

Basingstoke Road was the historic route south from the Thames Valley, connecting Reading to Odiham, Farnham, and Portsmouth. Alehouses and coaching inns served travellers on the main road, and Three Mile Cross developed at the junction with the chief route east to Shinfield parish church and Wokingham, and the route west to Grazeley and Mortimer (Our Village, 2008).

The first references to Three Mile Cross arise from the will of William Woolascott in 1740 and relate to the King's Head (later known as the Rose or the Globe Inn), now the Swan Inn. The 1761 John Rocque map, Fig. 7, depicts the settlement around Three Mile Cross, focused around the junction at Basingstoke Road.

5.2 Phases of development

A depiction of the Swan Inn is found on the 1756 Map of Earl of Fingal's Estate in Shinfield (see Fig. 6, left). What appears to be a later modification of the original rectangular shape of the building are two extensions fronting Basingstoke Road; currently, only the southern one remains. No ancillary outbuildings to the rear are identified.

Following is the 1761 John Rocque map of Berkshire (Fig. 7, right). This map is of a different scale and less detailed than the previous estate map, but it seems to depict the removal of the northern extension. There is a building to the east, likely belonging to the adjacent plot to the south.



Fig. 6, 1756, Map of Earl of Fingal's Estate in Shinfield, the site circled.



Fig. 7, 1761 John Rocque map of Berkshire, the site circled.

Following is the 1790 Thomas Pride map of Berkshire (Fig. 8), which shows no significant changes and very little detail. The site is not clearly marked, as it seems that some of the buildings are merged into one for depiction purposes.

The description of the building, found in “Our Village, Sketches of Rural Character and Scenery” by Mary Russell Mitford in 1828 reads:

“The next tenement is a place of importance, the Rose Inn [now: The Swan Inn]; a white-washed building, retired from the road behind its fine swinging sign, with a little bow-window room coming out on the one side, and forming, with our stable on the other, a sort of open square, which is the constant resort of carts, wagons, and return chaises. There are two carts there now, and mine host is serving them with beer in his eternal red waist coat.”

The following cartographic reference is the 1838 Shinfield Tithe map (Fig. 9), which depicts modifications to both the front and rear of the building. To the front, the northern extension has been demolished. There are now outbuildings to the rear of the building: two rectangular ones attached to the south, as well as two free-standing ones to the north. The barrel store to the rear is shown, later extended into a storeroom.

The Garden Wall is dated 1823, as per the inscription on the stone set in the wall.

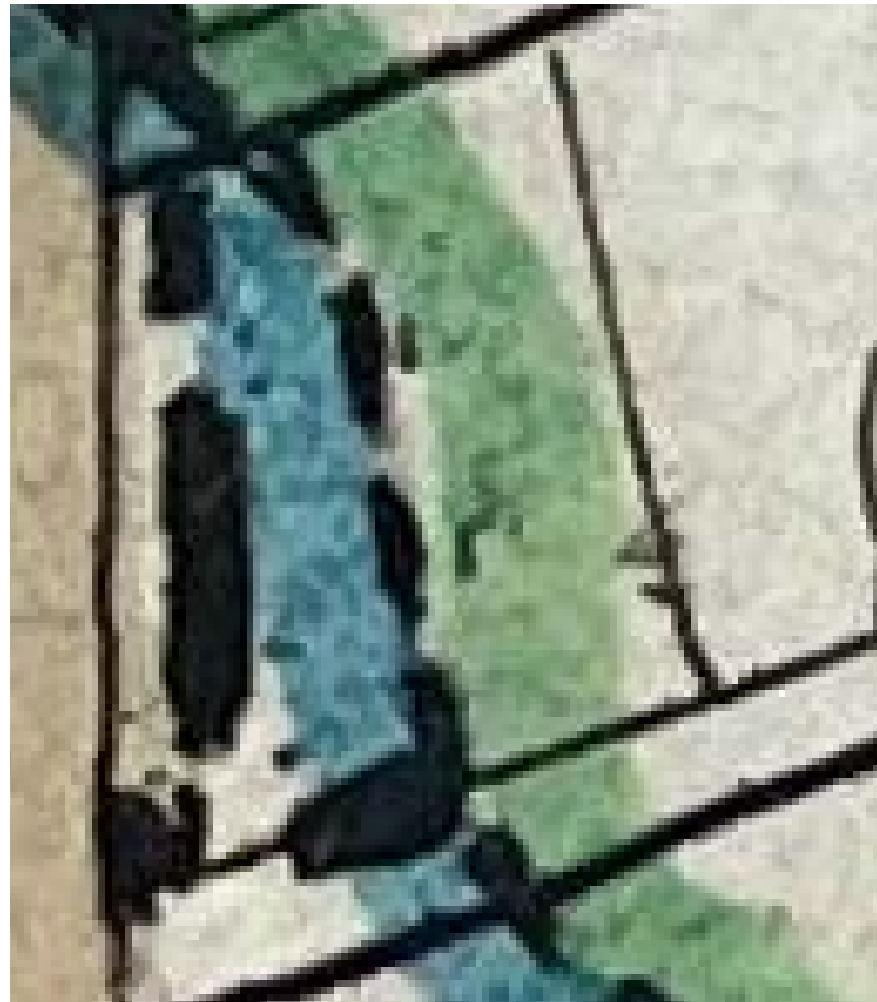


Fig. 8, 1790 Thomas Pride map of Berkshire.

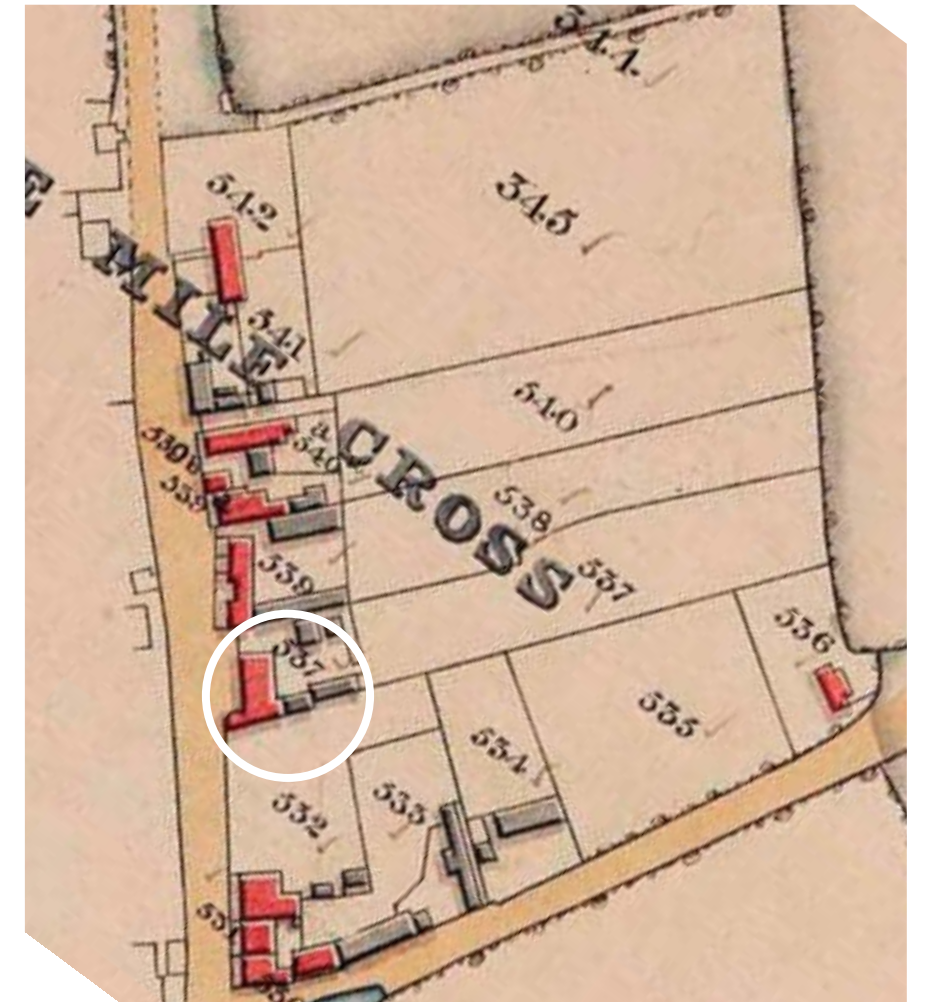


Fig. 9, 1838 Shinfield Tithe map, the site circled.

The 6-inch Ordnance Survey map shows no significant changes since 1838, except that the two free-standing outbuildings appear to have merged into one. However, the contemporary 25-inch Ordnance Survey map depicts a greater degree of detail, including the rectangular shape merged with the rear of the building. These Ordnance Survey maps are last references found prior to the modifications to the east elevation of the Swan Inn.

There are various planning records dating between 1966 and 1989, but the study of these has not been pursued further in this instance.

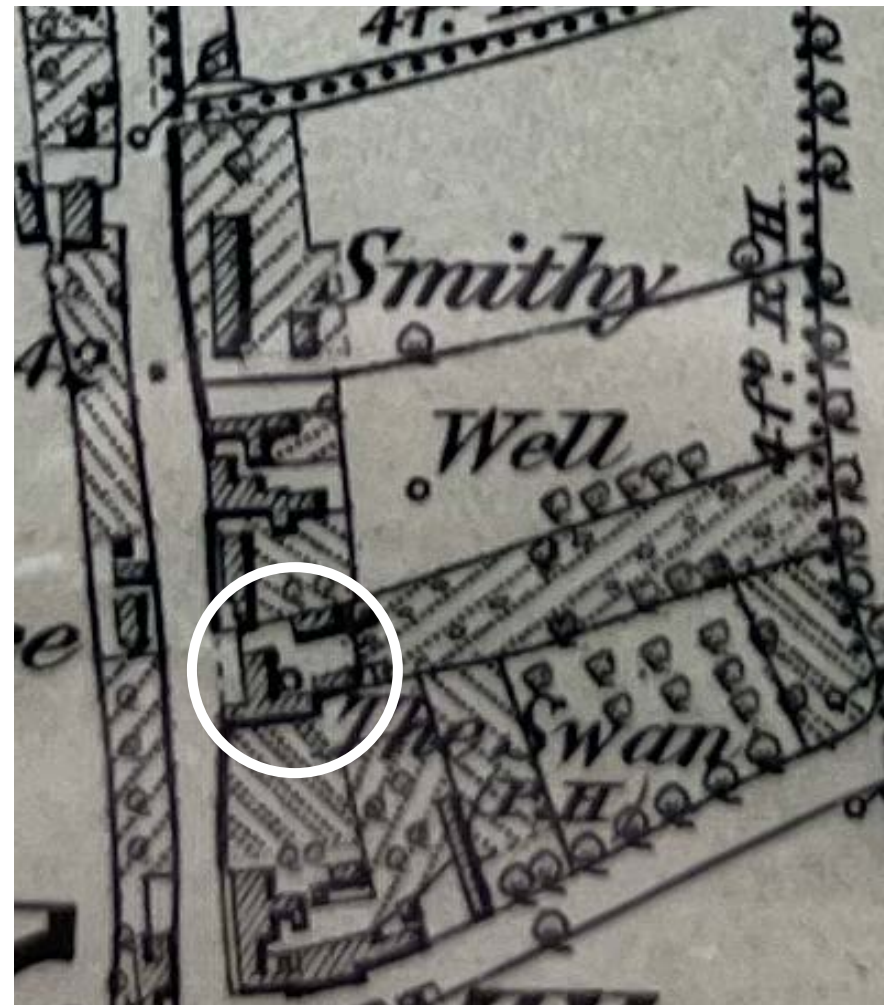


Fig. 10, 1842-1952 6-inch OS map.

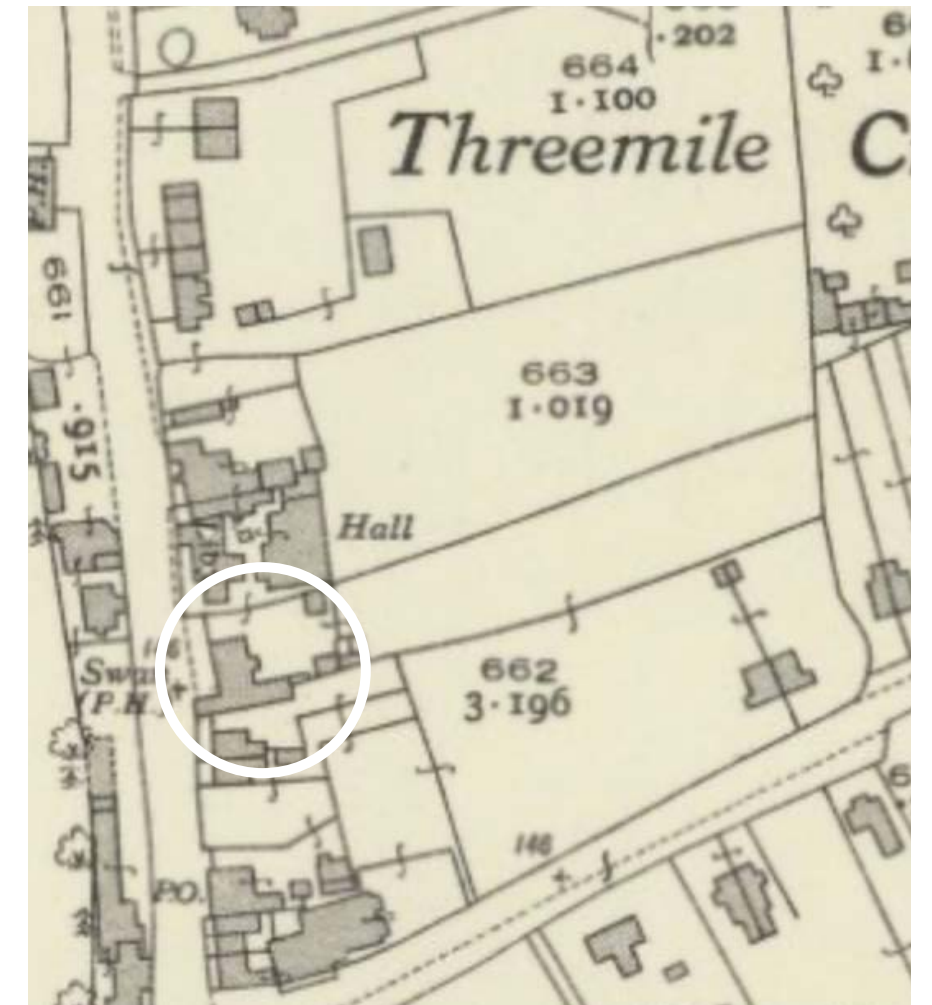


Fig. 11, 1841-1952 25 inch OS map.

Although the earliest plans or cartographic references have not been found, the discernment of phases in the development of the Swan Inn can be seen in five phases:

Phase 1

The rectangular footprint, consisting of a four-bay structure, originates from the 16th century. Two hearths and chimneys are identified.

Phase 2

The building was extended to the east, resulting in a roof with a low slope. The barrel store was added.

Phase 3

Before 1756, an extension was added to the southwest corner, and an opening was created to allow connectivity. The extension to the north-west was demolished between 1828 and 1838.

Phase 4

Before 1838, an extension to the barrel room was added. The Garden Wall was built in 1823.

Phase 5

A modern extension have been added to the rear. The office, built along the Garden Wall is a replacement structure of previous outbuildings in this location.

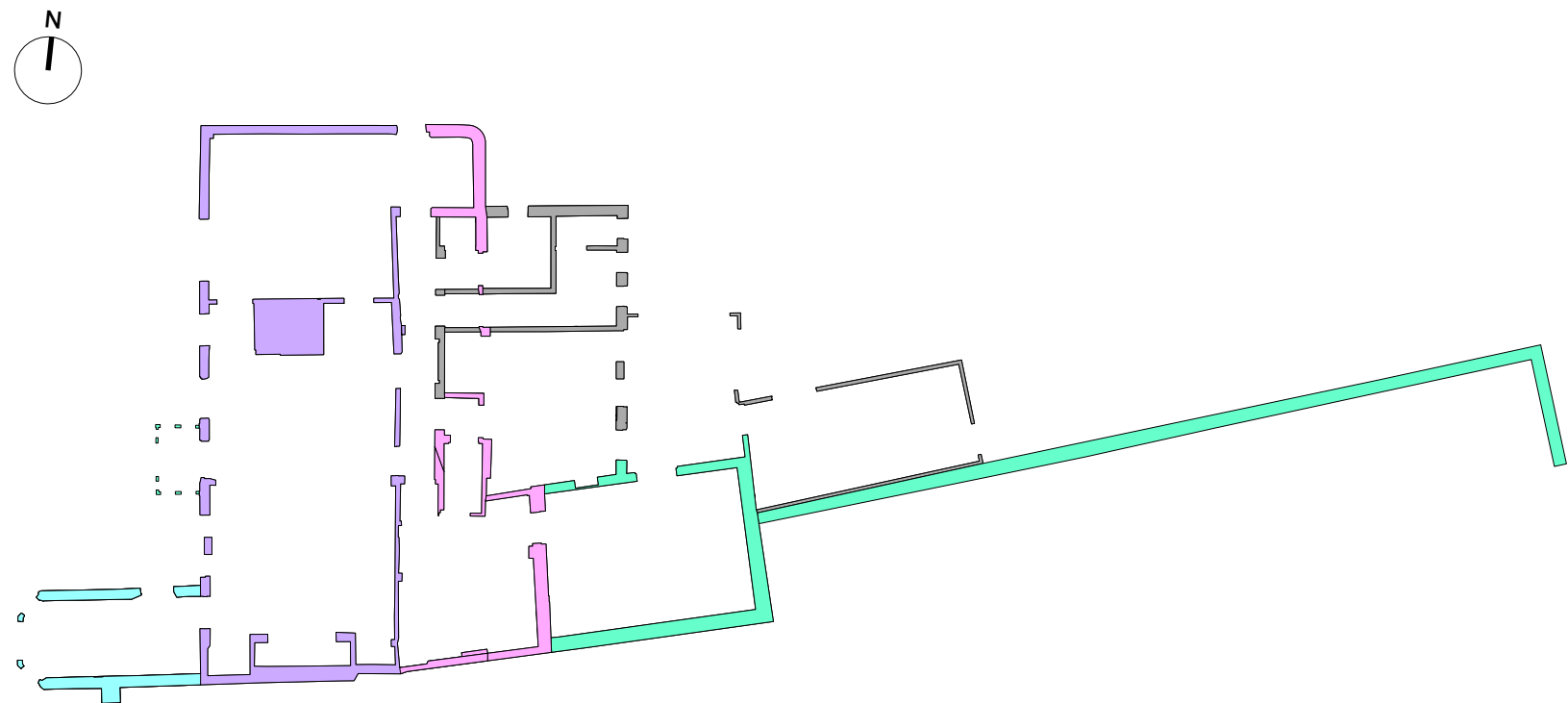


Fig. 12, Historical Phases, Ground Floor, not to scale.

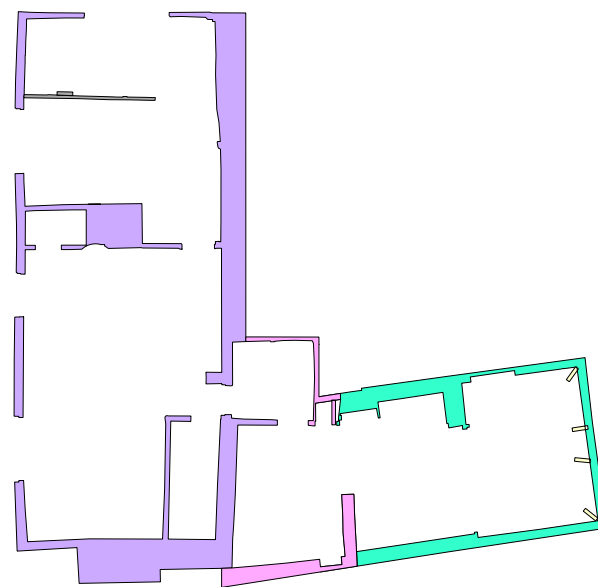


Fig. 13, Historical Phases, First Floor, not to scale.

5.3 Setting

The view from Basingstoke Road remains relatively unchanged. The early 20th-century photograph, Fig. 14 (below), depicts the Grade II Mitford cottage on the left-hand side. The boundary brick wall replaced previous wooden fence but has retained its current form to the present day. The northern elevation of the Swan Inn shows the arrangement before the addition of the top window in the gable. The timber work and brick plinth were originally painted white, later exposed as bare brick, as seen in Fig. 14 (below, left), and subsequently repainted. This photograph also shows the east elevation before the addition of the door opening and potentially the alteration of a doorway into a window, as seen today. The central entrance is added, a simple brick and timber structure extending from the plinth.

A chimney is visible at the rear. It is also noteworthy that the sign was positioned to the south of the building in the earlier photograph and to the north in the later one.

This view is particularly important as it represents the long-standing relationship between the two buildings as described by Mary Russell in "Our Village". This is the main view from the Basingstoke Road which affords the understanding of the two elevations (north and east) and the drive between the two properties. It introduces the idea of the beer garden on the back, whilst maintaining a level of privacy for the Swan Inn to operate on the commercial level and host the necessary facilities hidden from the main road which are not "competing" with the historical structure.



Fig. 14, Early 20th century photograph.



Fig. 15, Mid 20th century photograph.

The lithograph further illustrates the historical relationship between the two properties, the Swan Inn and the Grade II Mitford Hall. While the Swan Inn property is not depicted in the illustration, it abuts Mitford Hall via a drive leading to the rear of the pub, and the two properties share a boundary wall. The stables at Mitford Hall, historically extending to the south and rear, have now been replaced with the extension to the cottage and the Three Mile Cross Church building.



Fig. 16, Mitford Hall (from a lithograph published by Mr. Lovejoy, of Reading, while Miss Mitford was in residence).

The mid-20th century photograph (Fig. 17, below) is provided as a reference to the contemporary depiction of the north elevation of the Swan Inn and its setting. The view includes the unchanged setting of Mitford Hall to the north. The separating brick wall has retained its height and form, and the driveway between the two properties is clear and unobstructed.



Fig. 17, Mid 20th century photograph.



Fig. 18, As existing (2024).