

LAND AT BANCROFT PARK, LITTLE ABINGTON, CAMBRIDGESHIRE

**GREATER CAMBRIDGE LOCAL PLAN REG
18: SITE SUBMISSIONS UPDATE 2025
HERITAGE REPRESENTATIONS**

07 MARCH 2025



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1.0 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 Montagu Evans LLP has been instructed by [REDACTED] to review and submit representations to the South Cambridgeshire District Council ('SCDC', 'the Council') in respect of their Site Submissions Update 2025.

THE SITE

- 1.2 The following report has had specific regard to the potential for new development on land at Bancroft (the 'Site'). This Site comprises c.12.2 hectares of greenfield land on the southwestern edge of Little Abington, South Cambridgeshire (Figure 1). The majority of the site comprises grass field / scrubland, although the northwestern corner takes in part of Sluice Wood.
- 1.3 The Site is bounded by the River Granta to the south and west; Church Lane and the back gardens of the residential dwellings on West Field and an adjacent arable field to the north; and St Mary's church and graveyard to the north-east. Granta Park, an important science, technology and biopharmaceutical business park, which is designated as an Established Employment Area in the adopted Local Plan (2018), is located to the west of the Site on the other side of the River Granta.

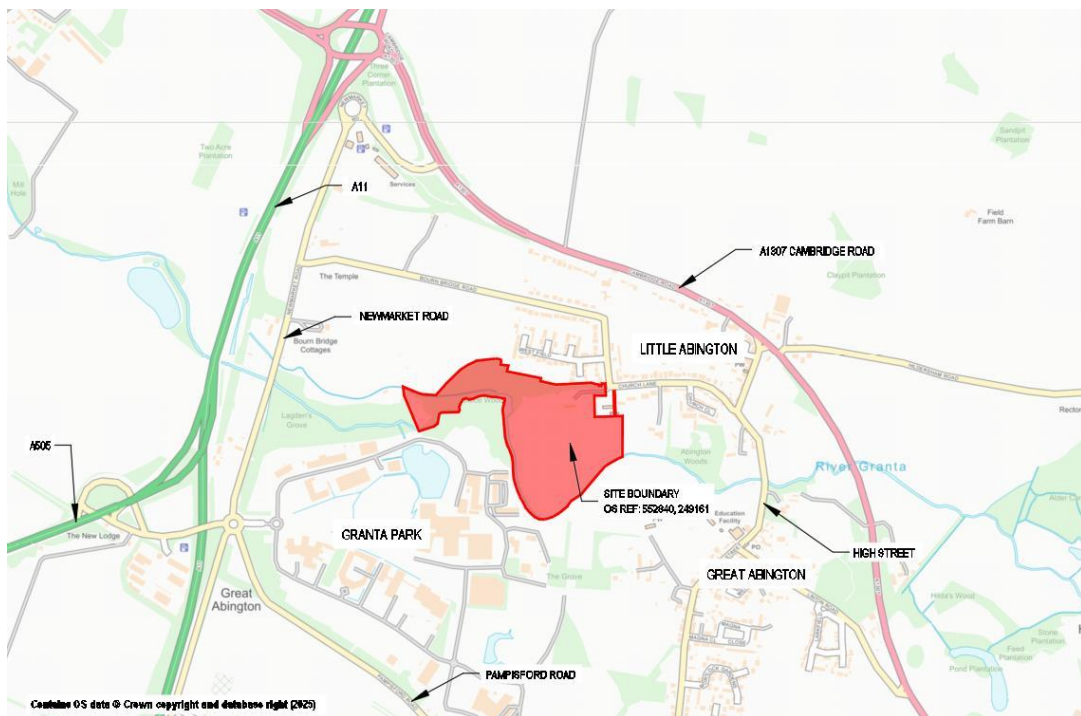


Figure 1 Site Location.

PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.4 Montagu Evans have been advising [REDACTED] on the heritage considerations pertaining to the Site. The Site is located within the Great and Little Abington Conservation Area ('CA') and within the vicinity of several listed buildings. It also contains earthworks and remnants of historic parkland within the redline boundary, which are treated as non-designated heritage assets ('NDHA').
- 1.5 The purpose of this statement is to assist the planning authority in its consideration of the principle of residential development within this Site, accepting that its capacity can only be established through careful options testing that protects the significance of heritage assets within the Site boundary and the surrounding area. That significance has, in our opinion, the potential to be used positively to create a distinctive place.
- 1.6 This study concludes that the site has the potential to accommodate an element of residential development, subject to a design that has regard to the identified heritage sensitivities. As the local plan progresses, it is BioMed Realty's intention to develop how such proposals could be designed and in discussion with the planning authority and other third parties as appropriate.

PERSONNEL

- 1.7 This report has been prepared by Kate Falconer Hall, Partner at Montagu Evans, and Ben Clark, Senior Heritage Adviser, also of Montagu Evans, professionals with expertise in heritage and related planning matters.

SUMMARY FINDINGS

- 1.8 In summary, and taking into account the relevant heritage context, there is scope for sensitive development within the bounds of the Site, subject to a number of considerations including but not limited to:
- 1.8.1 Scale and density of development and design approach relative to the character and appearance of the Great and Little Abington Conservation Area ('CA');
 - 1.8.2 Location of development relative to non-designated heritage assets within the Site boundary;
 - 1.8.3 Location of development relative to nearby listed buildings;
 - 1.8.4 Heritage benefits arising from sustainable re-use of assets and their potential contribution to placemaking also better revealing their significance.
- 1.9 As described later in this document, Historic England's The Historic Environment in Local Plans, Historic Environment Good Practice Advice in Planning: 1 (hereafter 'GPA1') encourages local authorities to plan positively for the historic environment, taking advantage of its placemaking opportunities and other planning benefits it can facilitate.

2.0 LEGISLATION AND POLICY CONTEXT

LEGISLATION

PLANNING (LISTED BUILDINGS AND CONSERVATION AREAS) ACT 1990

2.1 The Site is located within the Great and Little Abington Conservation Area and within the vicinity of several listed buildings. Sections 66(1) and 72(1) of the 1990 Act would therefore be engaged by new development.

2.2 Section 66(1) states:

In considering whether to grant planning permission for development which affects a listed building or its setting, the local planning authority or, as the case may be, the Secretary of State shall have special regard to the desirability of preserving the building or its setting or any features of special architectural or historic interest which it possesses.

2.3 In relation to conservation areas, Section 72(1) of the 1990 Act states:

In the exercise, with respect to any buildings or other land in a conservation area, of any [F1] functions under or by virtue of] any of the provisions mentioned in subsection (2), special attention shall be paid to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of that area.

2.4 These statutory duties convey the great weight which is given to the preservation of the significance of designated heritage assets. The great weight provision is supported by the policies contained at Chapter 16 of the NPPF, in particular paragraph 212 which states that “great weight should be given to the asset’s conservation”. Conservation is the process of managing change and not simply preserving the status quo for its own sake.

2.5 Conservation in this context means “to cause no harm”. Therefore, it is possible for development to have an effect on setting or character/appearance even a material one, but for that effect to be either neutral or beneficial. In the event of a harmful effect, then that is capable of being acceptable on the balance of benefits, including heritage and place making benefits.

2.6 We understand that whilst these provisions are engaged in the context of development control decisions, they are nevertheless relevant to plan-making activities because they form the stringent statutory framework against which any application relating to the Site would be assessed.

THE NATIONAL PLANNING POLICY FRAMEWORK (NPPF)

2.7 Chapter 3 of the NPPF (2024) outlines the Government’s policy regarding the plan-making.

2.8 Paragraph 32 of the NPPF states: “The preparation and review of all policies should be underpinned by relevant and up-to-date evidence. This should be adequate and proportionate, focused tightly on supporting and justifying the policies concerned, and take into account relevant market signals”.

2.9 Paragraph 36 of the NPPF concerns the examination of plans, stating: “Local Plans and spatial development strategies are examined to assess whether they have been prepared in accordance with legal and procedural requirements, and whether they are sound. Plans are ‘sound’ if they are:

- Positively Prepared – providing a strategy which, as a minimum, seeks to meet the area’s objectively assessed needs; and is informed by agreements with other authorities, so that unmet need from neighbouring areas is accommodated where it is practical to do so and is consistent with achieving sustainable development;
- Justified – an appropriate strategy, taking into account – the reasonable alternative, and based on proportionate evidence;

- Effective – deliverable over the plan period, and based on effective joint working on cross-boundary strategic matters that have been dealt with rather than deferred, as evidenced by the statement of common ground; and
 - Consistent with National Policy – enabling the delivery of sustainable development in accordance with policies in the Framework and other statements of national planning policy, where relevant.”
- 2.10 In the event that the Site is considered suitable for development, as recommended here, then Paragraph 203 of the NPPF provides strategic advice requiring local authorities to take account of the desirability of sustaining and enhancing the significance of assets, the wider benefits that conservation can bring and the opportunities for the historic environment to contribute to local character:
- Plans should set out a positive strategy for the conservation and enjoyment of the historic environment, including heritage assets most at risk through neglect, decay or other threats. This strategy should take into account:*
- a) the desirability of sustaining and enhancing the significance of heritage assets, and putting them to viable uses consistent with their conservation;*
 - b) the wider social, cultural, economic and environmental benefits that conservation of the historic environment can bring;*
 - c) the desirability of new development making a positive contribution to local character and distinctiveness; and*
 - d) opportunities to draw on the contribution made by the historic environment to the character of a place.*
- 2.11 Paragraph 203 may be read alongside the general guidance on development control, at paragraph 210, which explains the positive role heritage can play in placemaking.
- 2.12 The allocation of land within a CA or the setting of a listed building does not imply an inevitably that any scheme would be acceptable. This is because of the set of policies within the NPPF relating to proposals affecting heritage assets, particularly paragraphs 212 and 215, and the great weight given to conservation and the balancing out of any harm in the public interest. Furthermore, in the case of a CA, then Section 72(1) of the 1990 Act serves as an overarching statutory control.
- 2.13 Paragraph 212 would apply to any application which would follow on from an allocation, and it accords great weight to the conservation of an asset’s significance. The Framework policies relating to designated assets allow a balanced approach to decision making in the context of any and all applications whether or not they are subject to an allocation. In cases where a proposal causes harm, then this may be balanced out against benefits under the terms of Paragraphs 214 and 215.
- 2.14 The approach to NDHAs is the same except that harm or benefit is not weighted. Paragraph 216 states that in weighing up such applications affecting NDHAs, a balanced judgement will be required, having regard to the scale of any harm or loss, and the significance of the heritage asset.
- 2.15 There is, therefore, no in principle reason why the allocation of a greenfield Site, containing NDHAs, within a CA and the setting of listed buildings, should prevent new development within its boundaries; provided that it meets the requisite high standards of design that responds to the character and appearance of the CA, preserves the setting of listed buildings, and has a proportional, balanced impact on NDHAs. Any harm to heritage assets deriving from new development would need to be weighed in the planning balance under paragraphs 214, 215 or 216 as appropriate.
- 2.16 To this end, Historic England have published guidance on the treatment of heritage assets in local plan-making and site allocations. This guidance is titled *The Historic Environment in Local Plans Historic Environment Good Practice Advice in Planning: 1* (2015) (hereafter GPA1).

HISTORIC ENGLAND'S GUIDANCE ON PLAN-MAKING

- 2.17 The Historic England guidance on plan-making emphasises the importance of evidence gathering to establish significance of heritage assets. Paragraph 18 of GPA1 promotes the need for site allocations to be informed by an evidence base and an analysis of potential effects on heritage assets.
- 2.18 The Greater Cambridge Shared Planning service (GCSP) are in the process of collating their evidence base for the emerging Local Plan, which is consistent with Historic England's advice. The relevant documents within this development evidence base, which we have reviewed, includes:
- Strategic Heritage Impact Assessment (Chris Blandford Associates, 2021)
 - Strategic Heritage Impact Assessment – Baseline (Chris Blandford Associates, 2021)
 - Strategic spatial options assessment: Strategic Heritage Impact Assessment – Supplement (Chris Blandford Associates, August 2021); and
 - Strategic spatial options assessment: Landscape & Townscape – Supplement (Chris Blandford Associates, August 2021).
- 2.19 However, it is notable that the Great and Little Abington CA still does not currently benefit from an adopted conservation area appraisal or management plan despite being first designated in 1972.
- 2.20 Paragraph 10 of GPA1 encourages a 'positive strategy' in the formulation of local plans: A positive strategy in the terms of NPPF is not a passive exercise but requires a plan for the maintenance and use of heritage assets and for the delivery of development including within their setting that will afford appropriate protection for the asset(s) and make a positive contribution to local character and distinctiveness.
- 2.21 The allocation of the Site would allow for the development of such a strategy, through requiring good design appropriate to historic context.
- 2.22 Paragraph 13 of GPA1 advises that a number of factors should be considered when formulating a 'positive strategy' for the conservation of the historic environment during the local plan-making process. This advice includes the use of development management policies, or specific policies for specific assets or areas within the plan area.
- 2.23 Paragraph 24 of GPA1 indicates how planning obligations as part of future planning applications could be used on this Site to ensure increased public access, interpretation and management plans for the heritage assets therewithin.

GREATER CAMBRIDGE LOCAL PLAN (REGULATION 18 PREFERRED OPTIONS 2021)

- 2.24 Cambridge City Council and South Cambridgeshire District Council are preparing a new Local Plan. Consultation on the Regulation 18 version of the Draft Local Plan, 'First Proposals', was undertaken in Autumn 2021.
- 2.25 Policy S/DS outlines the proposed Development Strategy for the area. The supporting text states: *The proposed development strategy for Greater Cambridge is to direct development to where it has the least climate impact, where active and public transport is the natural choice, where green infrastructure can be delivered alongside new development, and where jobs, services and facilities can be located near to where people live, whilst ensuring all necessary utilities can be provided in a sustainable way.*
- 2.26 The Site is located within the Rural Southern Cluster (RSC), which is earmarked for development that co-locates homes and jobs close to each other, with good quality public transport, cycling and walking links. In particular, the Development Strategy for the RSC refers to new smaller sites for housing and employment in villages that have very good public transport access and are close to jobs, citing the Wellcome Genome Campus expansion and the Babraham Research Campus (which would be allocated under Policy S/GC and S/BRC respectively).

2.27 There are similarities between the Site and the Babraham Research Campus in relation to heritage constraints. These constraints are reflected in the wording of Policy S/BRC, which requires development proposals to:

- Protect and enhance the landscaped setting of the site
- Preserve the appearance of the conservation areas, and the setting of the Grade II Listed Babraham Hall and the Grade I Listed St Peters Church.
- Protect and enhance the corridor of the River Granta (recognised as a county wildlife site)

2.28 The Site's proximity to Granta Park campus presents an opportunity to deliver new development that corresponds with the general Development Strategy and the objectives of the RSC to co-locate residential and employment. The Site also benefits from being outside of the Green Belt designation. Policies S/RSC and S/RRA, which relates to new site allocations and policy areas within the RSC to support homes and/or employment, could provide the mechanism through which the Site could be allocated.

2.29 Given the heritage sensitivities and landscape character, any allocation on the Site would also need to comply with emerging Policies GP/LC: Protection and enhancement of landscape, which requires developments to respond to the local landscape character and take opportunities for enhancement; and Policy GP/HA: Conservation and enhancement of heritage assets, which states that proposals affecting heritage assets will be considered in accordance with the guidance set out in the NPPF.

3.0 HERITAGE CONTEXT

- 3.1 This assessment has been prepared in accordance with the NPPF and Historic England guidance on how to assess the effect of development proposals on heritage assets and their settings – GPA2 and GPA3.
- 3.2 Paragraph 207 of the NPPF requires applicants to “describe the significance of any heritage assets affected, including any contribution made by their setting. The level of detail should be proportionate to the assets’ importance and no more than is sufficient to understand the potential impact of the proposal on their significance”.
- 3.3 ‘Significance’ for heritage policy is defined in the NPPF (Annex 2) as:

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.

- 3.4 The NHLE and SCD have identified designated heritage assets, such as listed buildings and conservation areas. The HER and the analysis carried out in this appraisal have identified site observations have identified non-designated heritage assets.

IDENTIFICATION OF HERITAGE ASSETS ON THE SITE

- 3.5 The history of the Site and its surroundings is detailed in the report by Dr Paul Stamper, which is appended to this report (see **Appendix 3.0**).
- 3.6 The Site is located within the Great and Little Abington Conservation Area. Therefore, any development proposals would have a direct impact (physical change) to this designated heritage asset.
- 3.7 There is one record on the Cambridgeshire HER (CHER) that falls within the Site boundary. This comprises ‘earthworks’ potentially relating to a medieval settlement (Cambridgeshire Historic Environment Record: 06194). The Site may have also formed part of the Great Park associated with Abington Hall. The Great Park is not a designated heritage asset, like a Registered Park and Garden, but it is identified on the CHER (no. 12284). It is, therefore, considered as a non-designated heritage asset for its local interest. Owing to the shared development history of the Repton landscape, the Site is considered as part of the Great Park NDHA for the purposes of this report.

SETTING CONSIDERATIONS

- 3.8 This assessment has followed step 1 of GPA3 to identify which heritage assets may be affected by the Proposed Development as a result of change to the contribution that setting makes to their significance. Setting is defined in the NPPF as follows:

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.

- 3.9 In order to understand the nature and location of heritage assets in the area surrounding the Site, an initial study area of a 500-meter (m) radius of the Site was identified.
- 3.10 The relevant heritage assets are as follows:
- Parish Church of St Mary the Virgin (Grade II*, NHLE: 1309328). Adjacent to the north-east boundary of the Site.
 - Parish Church of St Mary (Grade II*, NHLE: 1161650). Approximately 200m to the south-east of the Site at the nearest point.
 - Abington Hall (Grade II*, NHLE: 1127722). Approximately 75m to the south of the Site at the nearest point.

- 3.11 It is noted that there are additional listed buildings within the vicinity of the Site. The separating distance to the Site boundary, the sloping topography and dense tree planting, and the private domestic character of the heritage assets themselves means that development of the type being considered would be unlikely to change the context in which they are appreciated. As a result, they have been excluded from the below appraisal.
- 3.12 A description of the significance and setting of the heritage assets that may be sensitive to the Proposed Development is provided below.

SUMMARY OF HERITAGE CONSTRAINTS

- 3.13 The heritage constraints applicable to the Site can be summarised as follows:
- The entire Site is located within the Great and Little Abington Conservation Area. Its open, green character and the presence of historic earthworks and remnants of an early 19th century designed landscape makes a positive contribution to the character and appearance of the CA.
 - The historic earthworks on the Site are considered to be non-designated heritage assets. The earthworks are concentrated within the south half of the Site.
 - The early 19th century designed landscape by Repton has historic associations with nearby Abington Hall (Grade II*). The Site is bordered by the recut river channel and is largely characterised by open parkland with some surviving parkland trees. Again, the significance of the former parkland is best appreciated in the southern half of the Site, where the relationship to Abington Hall is most legible.
 - The Site contributes positively to the setting of Abington Hall and the nearby parish churches (all Grade II*) by providing a green, open backdrop which emphasises their historically rural context.

4.0 STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

HERITAGE ASSETS WITHIN THE SITE

GREAT AND LITTLE ABINGTON CONSERVATION AREA

- 4.1 Great and Little Abington Conservation Area was designated on 21 January 1972 and amended on 11 November 1993. There is currently no Appraisal document for the CA.
- 4.2 In its current form, the CA encompasses the historic cores of both Great and Little Abington, which were historically two distinct parishes separated by the River Granta. The built form of the CA is organised along the main High Streets (formerly the Cambridge-Linton road) connecting both villages and characterised by ribbon development set against a rural hinterland of open fields. There are two churches, both Grade II*-listed, which form focal points within the CA and reinforce the historic development pattern of the two villages. The rural character and appearance of the CA is further reinforced by the historic building stock, comprising a range of houses and cottages exhibiting traditional materials in a vernacular style.
- 4.3 The CA boundary also takes in a series of open fields and wooded areas to the east and west of the village centres and on either side of the River Granta. The topography and high proportion of green, open space in the CA is an important element of its character and appearance, as this has directly influenced the linear pattern of development and uses of the built form. Furthermore, the loose grain and low density of development within the CA, combined with the surrounding open green space and fields, allow for visual and setting relationships that hark back to Great and Little Abington's rural origins and further enhance the former's character and appearance.
- 4.4 The Site comprises a large area of green open space and flood plain extending to the River Granta in the south-west part of the CA. For the reasons outlined above, it is considered to make a positive contribution to the character and appearance of the CA and provides a setting for several highly designed heritage assets in the vicinity.

EARTHWORKS WITHIN THE SITE (CHER: 06194)

- 4.5 The earthworks lie across the Site, between the Parish Church of St Mary and the River Granta. Their history and significance is described in detail in the appended report by Dr Paul Stamper. The earthworks are considered to be a non-designated heritage asset on account of their evidential and historic interest in association with the nearby farmsteads and watercourses of Little Abington. The open character and undeveloped condition of the surrounding Site allows the various cropmarks and features to be appreciated. However, their interest is somewhat obscured by the lack of interpretation and limited access to the Site. Overall, the earthworks are of medium significance as a non-designated heritage asset.

GREAT PARK, GREAT ABINGTON HALL, GREAT ABINGTON (CHER: 12284)

- 4.6 The remains of the Great Park surrounding Abington Hall, designed by Humphry Repton is identified by both the CHER and Parks & Gardens UK and considered to be a non-designated heritage asset. The history and significance of the parkland is discussed in detail in the appended report by Dr Stamper. The Site is considered to form part of the Great Park to the north of the River Granta.
- 4.7 In summary, the significance of the Great Park is derived from its local historic interest and amenity value as an early-19th century landscape designed by Humphry Repton for the owners of Abington Hall. The Repton association adds interest to the designed landscape, elements of which do survive: the open parkland either side of the river; the recut river channel; and the surviving parkland trees with some notable veterans in the park's northernmost section. The parkland provides an important setting for Abington Hall, with views northward across it to Little Abington's church, perhaps seen in Repton's design as an eyecatcher.
- 4.8 However, much of the designed landscape to the south of the river, around the Hall itself, has been lost following the development of the Granta Science Park. This has somewhat diminished the visual relationship between Abington Hall and the surviving areas of parkland. Furthermore, the parkland east of the Little Abington church is now given over to houses and dense planting. Other encroachments include the modern house (43 Church Lane) west of St Mary's church, and the churchyard extension.

- 4.9 Overall, there is now little semblance of a coherent designed landscaped garden. However, due to the historic association with Repton and the Grade II* Abington Hall, and the surviving landscape features to the north and east (including the Site), the parkland is considered to be of medium local significance as an NDHA.

HERITAGE ASSETS OUTSIDE OF THE SITE

PARISH CHURCH OF ST MARY THE VIRGIN (GRADE II*)

- 4.10 The Parish Church of St Mary the Virgin was listed Grade II* in 1967. It is adjacent to the north-east boundary of the Site.
- 4.11 The Church dates from the medieval period and comprises walls of flint rubble with clunch and limestone dressings, which is characteristic of eastern England. The nave and base of the tower is thought to have been built in the 11th century, with the chancel and north chapel added in the 13th century. The west tower was rebuilt in the early 14th century and the south porch was added c.1500. The church was restored in 1885 by architect J.P. St Aubyn, when the red plain tiled roof was added.
- 4.12 The significance of the asset is derived principally from its architectural and historic interest as a well-preserved example of a medieval parish church. The form, construction and materiality of the church is evidence of its piecemeal development over a long period of time and is rooted in the locality. This significance extends to the interiors, which feature a large quantity of historic fixtures and fittings, including several monuments. The church also derives interest from its association with the architect James Piers St Aubyn, who was known for his church architecture and restorations.

Setting

- 4.13 The Church is located to the west of the historic core of Little Abington. The context and proximity afforded by the surrounding village contributes positively to the significance of the listed building as a rural parish church. The Grade II-listed Old Vicarage to the east of the listed church indicates a historic functional relationship, which further reinforces its context.
- 4.14 The church is set centrally within an enclosed churchyard which includes a graveyard. This immediate setting underscores its prominence within the locality and provides an intimate, pleasant space from which to appreciate the quality of the church's external form and materiality.
- 4.15 The Site comprises a large, open field extending to the south-west of the churchyard, which slopes downwards towards the River Granta. In its current form it makes a positive contribution to the setting of the listed church. The open, green character and sloping topography of the Site provides a visually attractive backdrop for the listed church and emphasises its rural surroundings. The Site also allows for unimpeded intervisibility between the listed church, Abington Hall (Grade II*) to the south-west and St Mary the Virgin to the south-east (Grade II*) across an open green landscape.

PARISH CHURCH OF ST MARY (GRADE II*)

- 4.16 The Parish Church of St Mary was listed Grade II* in 1967. It is approximately 200m to the south-east of the Site at the nearest point.
- 4.17 The Church dates from the medieval period and comprises walls of flint rubble with clunch and limestone dressings, which is characteristic of eastern England, and slated and plain tiled roofs. The chancel and nave is thought to have been built in c.1200, the west tower was added in c.1225. The south porch was built in the 14th century and the windows to the nave and south aisle were replaced in the 15th century. The church was restored during the late Victorian period.
- 4.18 The significance of the asset is derived principally from its architectural and historic interest as a well-preserved example of a medieval parish church. The form, construction and materiality of the church is evidence of its piecemeal development over a long period of time and is rooted in the locality. This significance extends to the interiors, which comprise a large quantity of historic fixtures and fittings, including several monuments.

Setting

- 4.19 The Church is located to the west of the historic core of Great Abington. The context and proximity afforded by the surrounding village contributes positively to the significance of the listed building as a rural parish church.
- 4.20 The church is set centrally within an enclosed churchyard which includes a graveyard. This immediate setting underscores its prominence within the locality and provides an intimate, pleasant space from which to appreciate the quality of the church's external form and materiality.
- 4.21 To the north of the listed church there are large open fields extending to the River Granta, which provide a visually attractive backdrop that corresponds with its rural character. The Site forms an extension to this landscape setting to the north-west of the River Granta, and allows for unimpeded intervisibility between the listed church, Abington Hall (Grade II*) to the west and St Mary the Virgin to the north-west (Grade II*). However, owing to the separating distance to the listed building, and the extent of interposing landscape features, the Site is secondary to the immediate landscape setting of the listed church.

ABINGTON HALL (GRADE II*)

- 4.22 Abington Hall (now occupied by the British Welding Research Association) was listed Grade II* in 1967. It is located approximately 75m to the south of the Site at the nearest point.
- 4.23 The building comprises an early-18th century country house of three storeys over a basement. It is built of red brick, tuck pointed with gauged-brick dressings and limestone details, and slated roofs with chimneys concealed. It was built for Maximilian Western, under the direction of Richard Humberstone using a team of local craftsmen. The Hall remained in residential use until 1946, when the British Welding Research Association bought the property along with 24 acres.
- 4.24 The significance of the asset is derived principally from its architectural interest as a well-preserved 18th century country house with surviving historic interiors. It also possesses historic interest for its associations with notable former occupants, including the Earls of Oxford and Chatham.

Setting

- 4.25 Historically, Abington Hall benefitted from landscaped grounds and parkland designed by Humphry Repton in c.1800. The history of the Repton landscape is described in detail in the appended report by Dr Stamper and its significance is outlined below. Where it survives, the landscaped grounds and parkland are redolent of Abington Hall's former grandeur and thus makes a positive contribution to the setting of the listed building.
- 4.26 Much of the designed landscape to the south of the river, around the Hall itself, has been redeveloped with modern buildings belonging to Granta Science Park. This has greatly altered the character of the listed building's immediate setting and visually distracts from its prominence within the landscape.
- 4.27 In its current form, the Site likely comprises some of the last surviving elements of Repton's designed landscape to the north of the River Granta, including open parkland and the recut river channel. It makes a positive contribution to the setting of Abington Hall, as a remnant of its historic parkland setting, and enables views across open, green landscape towards the listed building from Little Abington.

5.0 CAPACITY FOR FURTHER DEVELOPMENT

KEY HERITAGE AND DESIGN CONSIDERATIONS

- 5.1 The key heritage sensitivities on the Site comprise:
- the Great and Little Abington Conservation Area designation;
 - the presence of historic earthworks (a non-designated heritage asset) on the Site;
 - the remnants of an early-19th century designed landscape (parkland) by Humphry Repton (a non-designated heritage asset) on the Site; and
 - the proximity of three Grade II*-listed buildings to the north-east, south-east and south.
- 5.2 As discussed above, the Site is considered to make a positive contribution to the CA as it provides an open buffer to the west of Great and Little Abington, reinforces the rural character of the historic settlements, and provides a pleasant backdrop to the surrounding built forms. A change in the character of the Site, from open land to residential use, has the potential to affect its positive contribution to the CA and would need to be managed carefully.
- 5.3 In considering the potential for development within the site, it is noted that parts of the site are relatively more or less sensitive to change through development. It is the finding of this analysis that the areas of the site that are less sensitive to development are located within the centre of the ownership boundary, to the south of the woodland and towards the north of the area identified as containing the Earthworks.
- 5.4 This part of the Site has been identified as the least sensitive part of the Site owing to the enclosure afforded by dense tree planting, limited above ground presence of the NDHAs, and the proximity of later 20th century development to the north and west.
- 5.5 It is considered that this part of the Site could support new residential development in a manner that is consistent with the aims and objectives of the emerging Local Plan.
- 5.6 The positioning of development towards the northern edge of the Site could provide an extension to the existing settlement of Little Abington, with the potential to utilise an existing access route via Church Lane.¹ It is considered that residential development is the most appropriate form in this context given the pervading character of the CA and pattern of development within Little Abington more generally.
- 5.7 Given the local designations, it is expected that a landscape-led approach to the redevelopment of the Site would be necessary. This would be both in relation to the layout and scale of the new development and the maintenance of the undeveloped areas to ensure that proposals integrate sufficiently into the open pastureland and respond to the surrounding semi-rural context.
- 5.8 There is a potential to make a positive contribution to local character and distinctiveness through high quality design which responds to the surrounding rural and wooded context.
- 5.9 By focussing new development footprint within the yellow area shown on the Heritage Asset Plan (see Appendix 1.0), the majority of the Site would be maintained in its current condition and any impacts on appearance and character would be confined to a geographically limited area. By focussing development to the north of the area, the impacts on the more prominent features of the NDHAs within the Site would be avoided.
- 5.10 It is suggested that the entire Site be included within an allocation. There is presently no public access to the Site, and hence no opportunity to appreciate its interest. The presence of development in the central part of

¹ This location is also supported by the Flood Risk Assessment submitted alongside this report.

the Site would, simultaneously, encourage people to visit the earthworks and historic parkland for general leisure and amenity purposes.

5.11 Enhancement measures could be identified in a detailed allocation policy that would promote the conservation of the earthworks and historic parkland and the wider conservation area. Such measures could include:

- Retention of open land adjacent to the River Granta;
- Design codes intended to promote distinctive forms of development, reinforcing the character and appearance of the CA;
- Building offsets and retention of viewing corridors between surrounding Grade II* listed buildings;
- Promoting differential densities to take heritage sensitivity into account, and integration of landscape with new forms of development to mitigate impact on appreciation of retained landscape; and
- A landscape-led scheme to manage visual impacts across the Site and better reveal the significance of heritage assets within its boundaries and immediate vicinity.

5.12 In line with HE's guidance on local plans, we would endorse the preparation of a conservation strategy for the CA as part of the next stage of plan preparation.

6.0 CONCLUSION

- 6.1 In conclusion, it is our view that the emerging Local Plan could identify the Site on the following basis:
- 6.1.1 First, it represents a generous area of greenfield land adjacent to the historic settlement of Little Abington and the science, technology and biopharmaceutical park at Granta Park.
 - 6.1.2 Second, the identification of the Site for development presents an opportunity for a positive conservation strategy, in line with NPPF guidance (see paragraph 203) and as elaborated and endorsed in HE guidance on local plans (see again paragraphs 10, 13, 17 and 24).
 - 6.1.3 Third, that such a strategy would support distinctive place making, again in line with the NPPF (paragraph 210) and related design guidance (the National Design Guide).
 - 6.1.4 Fourth, the inclusion of the earthworks and historic parkland within an allocation would facilitate the long-term physical conservation of the assets and improved public access.
 - 6.1.5 Fifth, a conservation strategy can be prepared as part of the next stage allocation process, in consultation with all relevant and interested parties. This can become a reference document in the allocation and inform outline and reserved matters applications. It would establish principles and potential locations, and would be accompanied by a design document treating landscape and architectural concepts and approaches.
- 6.2 The identification of the Site as suitable for residential development presents an opportunity to promote a positive vision for the historic environment and its appreciation within the RSC. Through appropriate and sensitive design, informed by an appreciation of heritage significance, there is an opportunity to create a distinctive and memorable place. This proposition is not novel and is consistent with guidance from Historic England.
- 6.3 At regulation 19 stage, with a supportive emerging allocation, BioMed Realty will engage with SCDC and GCSP to develop that positive vision through design and a conservation strategy. This work can inform the drafting of any allocation policy to ensure the objectives of conservation as defined in Chapter 16 NPPF are delivered through applications which maximise heritage and other planning outcomes.

APPENDIX 1.0

HERITAGE

ASSET PLAN

HERITAGE ASSET PLAN

- Site
- Earthworks within the site (CHER: 06194)
- Great Park, Great Abington Hall, Great Abington (CHER: 12284)
- Area Less Sensitive to Development

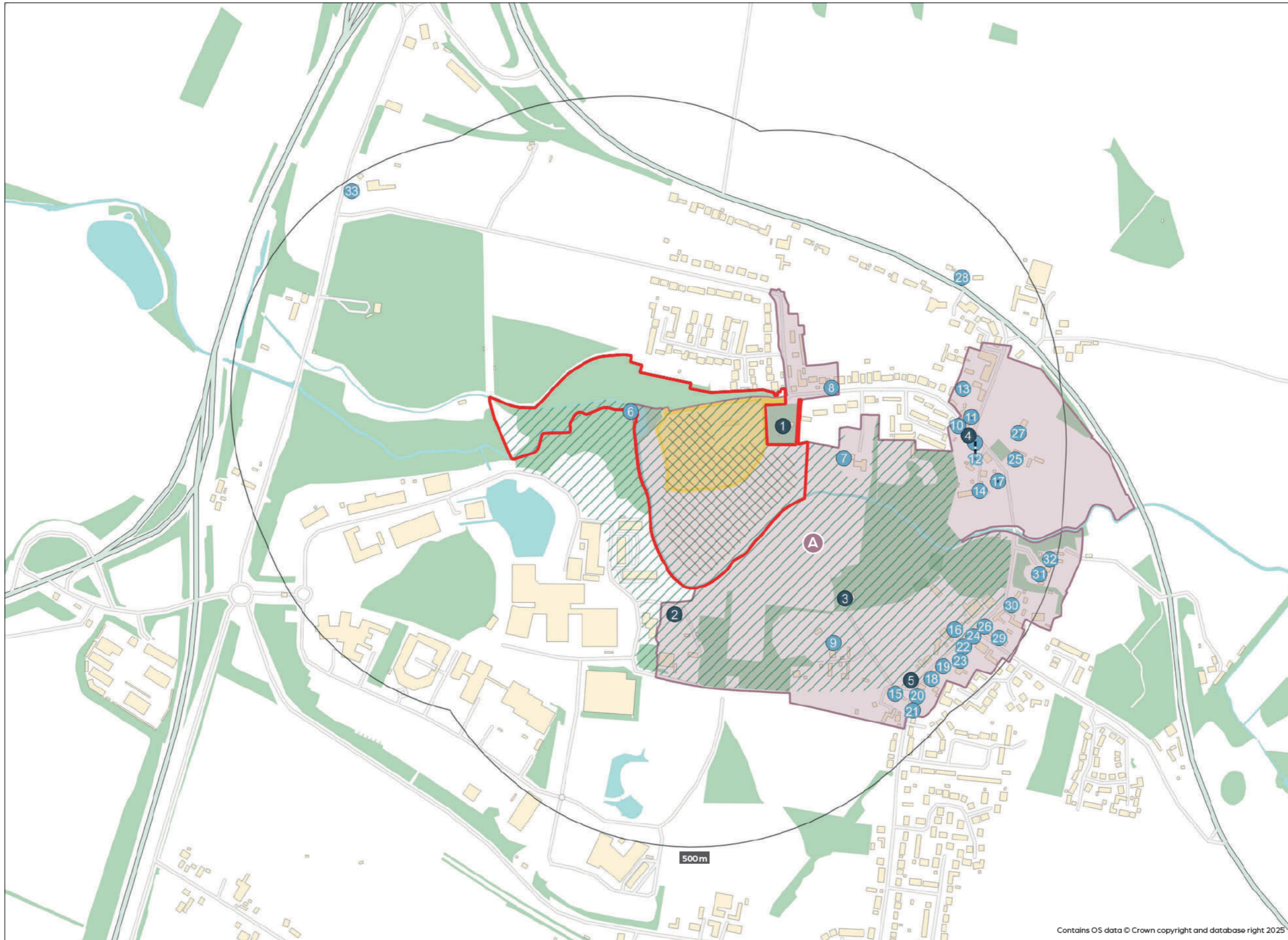
Conservation Areas

A. Great and Little Abington CA

Listed Buildings

- Grade II***
1. Parish Church of St Mary The Virgin
 2. Abington Hall, British Welding Research Association
 3. Parish Church of St Mary
 4. Abington Pottery
 5. Gildencroft

- Grade II**
6. Walls and Plaques to Former Sluice on River Granta West of Parish Church of St Mary
 7. The Old Vicarage
 8. Churchview
 9. Hall Farmhouse
 10. 1, Church Lane
 11. Jeremiahs Cottage, and Princes Cottage
 12. 28, 30 and 32, High Street
 13. 4, Church Lane
 14. Damson Cottage
 15. The Old Guild House
 16. Long Thatch
 17. The White House, and 48 and 50, High Street
 18. Garage to South West of No 97
 19. 93, High Street, and Pump to Rear of No 93
 20. 103 and 105, and 107, High Street
 21. 109, High Street
 22. The Old Forge
 23. 87, High Street
 24. Toll Gate Cottage
 25. The Old House
 26. 81, High Street
 27. 5, High Street
 28. 8, Cambridge Road
 29. The Old Bakery, and Ivy Lodge
 30. Three Tuns
 31. Abington Lodge
 32. Coach House to North of Abington Lodge
 33. Temple Cafe and Restaurant



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LOCATION:
Land at Bancroft Park

DATE:
March 2025

SCALE:
1:7,500 @ A3

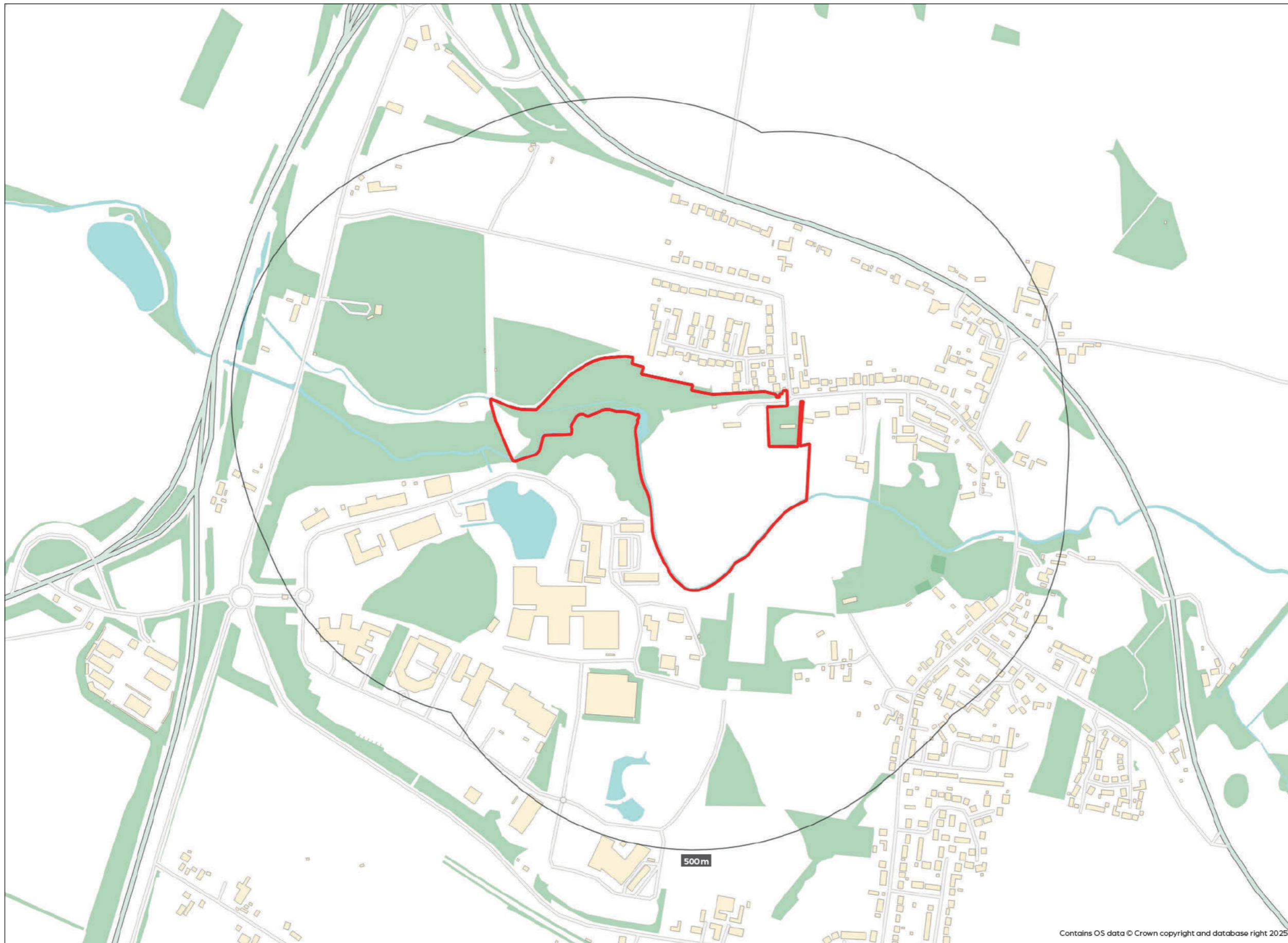
FIGURE:

▲ NORTH

MONTAGU EVANS
CHARTERED SURVEYORS
70 ST MARY AXE,
LONDON, EC3A 8BE
T: +44 (0)20 7493 4002
WWW.MONTAGU-EVANS.CO.UK

BASE PLAN

□ Site



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LOCATION:
Land at Bancroft Park

DATE:
March 2025

SCALE:
1:7,500 @ A3

FIGURE:

▲ NORTH



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APPENDIX 2.0

LIST

DESCRIPTIONS

ABINGTON HALL, BRITISH WELDING RESEARCH ASSOCIATION

Listed on the National Heritage List for England. Search over 400,000 listed places

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Official list entry

Heritage Category:**Listed Building**

Grade:**II***

List Entry Number:**1127722**

Date first listed:**22-Nov-1967**

List Entry Name:**ABINGTON HALL, BRITISH WELDING RESEARCH ASSOCIATION**

Statutory Address 1:**ABINGTON HALL BRITISH WELDING RESEARCH ASSOCIATION, PAMPISFORD ROAD, CB21 6AL**

This List entry helps identify the building designated at this address for its special architectural or historic interest.

Unless the List entry states otherwise, it includes both the structure itself and any object or structure fixed to it (whether inside or outside) as well as any object or structure within the curtilage of the building.

For these purposes, to be included within the curtilage of the building, the object or structure must have formed part of the land since before 1st July 1948.

[Understanding list entries](https://historicengland.org.uk/listing/the-list/understanding-list-entries/) (<https://historicengland.org.uk/listing/the-list/understanding-list-entries/>)

[Corrections and minor amendments](https://historicengland.org.uk/listing/the-list/minor-amendments/) (<https://historicengland.org.uk/listing/the-list/minor-amendments/>)

Location

Statutory Address:**ABINGTON HALL BRITISH WELDING RESEARCH ASSOCIATION, PAMPISFORD ROAD, CB21 6AL**

The building or site itself may lie within the boundary of more than one authority.

County:**Cambridgeshire**

District:**South Cambridgeshire (District Authority)**

Parish:**Great Abington**

National Grid Reference:**TL 52741 48833**

Details

TL 5248, 11/25

GREAT ABINGTON, PAMPISFORD ROAD (North Side), Abington Hall, British Welding Research Association

22.11.67

II*

Country house. 1711-13, much altered in the late 18th Century. Built for Maximilian Western, under the direction of Richard Humberstone, using a team of craftsmen which included the Cambridge mason Robert Grumbold. Exterior first painted c.1815 for Lord Chatham. Red brick, tuck pointed with gauged-brick dressings and with limestone details, painted with exception of south facade. Slated roofs; chimneys concealed. Three storeys with service basement. North facade of nine 'bays', with central five 'bays' slightly recessed and with giant pilastered quoins flanking end bays; continuous moulded cornice and plain parapet. Main entrance with recessed C20 glazed door and fanlight in round arch. Portico raised on stone steps with four Roman-Doric columns and entablature. Fixed-light window shaped to double-recessed round arch above; recessed hung sash windows in flat gauged-brick arches of fifteen, twelve and nine panes. Garden facade with five pedimented central 'bays', slightly advanced. Ground-floor windows and central entrance replaced with garden casements. Open verandah, a wooden trellis design with standards of three slender grouped shafts of eleven 'bays' bowed in plan to the centre 'bays' with a concave roof.

INTERIOR: The three south-facing rooms form part of the plan of the original house. North D-planned lobby, two storeys high with Doric columns carrying first-floor passage, central east-west corridor with access to east, west and south rooms with open string staircase to north west. Ceilings to lobby and staircase with enriched moulding enclosing oval panels, and enriched cornices to main rooms and corridor; late C19 Jacobean revival ceilings to two south rooms. Central room with Ionic columned recess to west and chimney piece with swags, urns and figures in Adam-style, has imported C17 oak panelling. Recessed buffet with panelled doors to cupboards in south-west room, north-west room has Corinthian columns at the south end and chimney piece with foliated consoles and swags and figures in the surrounds. North-east room with C20 partitions retains an early C19 marble chimney piece with fluted pilasters. Ground floor windows with panelled shutters, and six-panelled doors with applied mouldings to each panel. Door architraves moulded with frieze and cornice enriched with urns swags and festoons. The south-west room has an inserted ceiling. The upper floors have been altered for student accommodation, and a concrete staircase built to the north-east.

The grounds were laid out by Humphry Repton c.1800. The late C18 and early C19 details are similar to those at Abington Lodge also the home of Mr Mortlock. The estate was owned by the Earls of Oxford till 1610; Mr Mortlock purchased the estate in 1779. The last Mortlock owner was transported for firing on his uncle, vicar of Little Abington,

whom he believed had cheated him out of part of his inheritance. The house was let to the Earl of Chatham amongst others in the early C19.

Palmer, W.M. 'The Neighbourhood of Hildersham', 1924 R.C.H.M. Report 1951 V.C.H., Vol. VI, p Pevsner. Buildings of England, p395

Listing NGR: TL5274148833

Legacy

The contents of this record have been generated from a legacy data system.

Legacy System number:**51867**

Legacy System:**LBS**

Sources

Books and journals

Palmer, W M, The Neighbourhood of Hildersham, (1924)

Pevsner, N, The Buildings of England: Cambridgeshire, (1970), 395

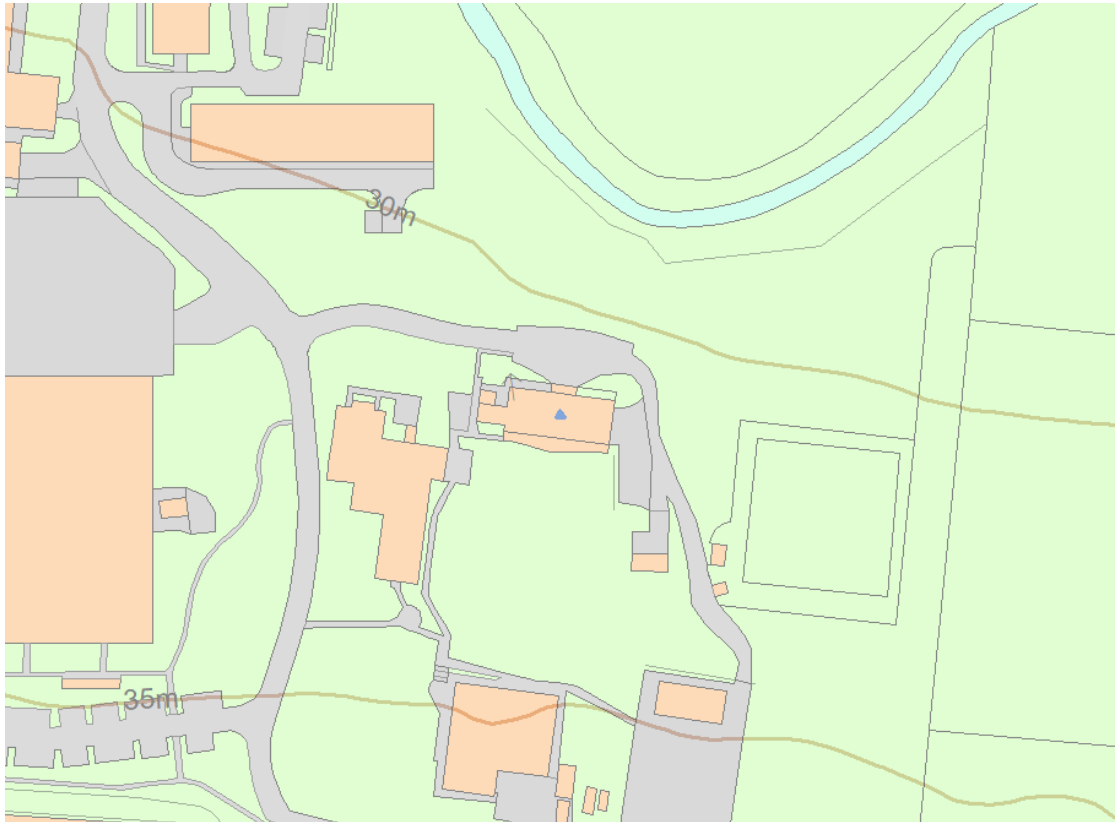
Salzman, L F, The Victoria History of the County of Cambridgeshire and the Isle of Ely, (1978)

Other

Reports on Buildings in the Parishes of Babraham Great Abington Hildersham Linton Little Abington and Pampisford Cambridgeshire, (1951)

Legal

This building is listed under the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 as amended for its special architectural or historic interest.



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PARISH CHURCH OF ST MARY THE VIRGIN

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Official list entry

Heritage Category:**Listed Building**

Grade:**II***

List Entry Number:**1309328**

Date first listed:**22-Nov-1967**

List Entry Name:**PARISH CHURCH OF ST MARY THE VIRGIN**

Statutory Address 1:**PARISH CHURCH OF ST MARY THE VIRGIN, CHURCH LANE**

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Unless the List entry states otherwise, it includes both the structure itself and any object or structure fixed to it (whether inside or outside) as well as any object or structure within the curtilage of the building.

For these purposes, to be included within the curtilage of the building, the object or structure must have formed part of the land since before 1st July 1948.

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Location

Statutory Address:**PARISH CHURCH OF ST MARY THE VIRGIN, CHURCH LANE**

The building or site itself may lie within the boundary of more than one authority.

County:**Cambridgeshire**

District: **South Cambridgeshire (District Authority)**

Parish: **Little Abington**

National Grid Reference: **TL 52950 49197**

Details

TL 5249 LITTLE ABINGTON CHURCH LANE (South Side)

9/31 Parish Church of 22.11.67 St Mary the Virgin

||*

Parish Church. C11 nave and base of tower, chancel early C13 and north chapel later C13, west tower rebuilt early C14, south porch c.1500. Restoration 1885 at expense of vicar A.H.D. Hutton, and architect J.P. St Aubyn employing Mr Rickett, stone mason. Walls of flint rubble with clunch and limestone dressings, C19 red plain tiled roof with patterned ridge tiles. South elevation: Tower of two stages with west angle buttresses of three stages up to belfry height; embattled parapet. Restored two-light belfry window and lancet-light below. Nave with plain gable parapet and limestone quoins on shallow stepped plinth. South doorway C11 with plain circular head and square jambs, chamfered impost (similar to blocked north door with carved ornament cut back to surface of outer wall). South porch rebuilt C19 retaining original roof with carved braces and embattled and moulded cornice. Early C14 window to left hand of two trefoiled-ogee-lights with a quatrefoil in a two-centred arch. Window to right hand of three cinquefoil-lights with cusped spandrels and square head and label. Chancel with parapet gable and cross finial without buttresses, priest's doorway C13 with stop-chamfered jambs and two-centred head with label, restored. Window to left hand late C14 with two ogee-cinquefoil-lights and transome rebuilt originally for shutters, window to right hand also late C14 of two wide cinquefoil-lights in a square head. Interior: Chancel arch, two-centred with responds and moulded capitals and bases standing on original C11 nave wall, squint in north most corner with wrought semi circular head, piscina with two two-centred arches enriched with dogtooth ornament with central octagonal shaft with moulded cap and base. Screen, early C16 with four-centred head to opening with four narrow bays on either side of panels with ogee-cinque-foiled heads with cusped spandrels. Nave with C13 two-centred arch of two chamfered orders to chapel now used as organ chamber and vestry, the west wall has a two bay wall arcade with two-centred arches and mask stops. Tower arch two-centred of three continuous chamfered orders. Roofs partly restored; chancel roof three bays, and nave roof four bays, one of collar rafter type with side purlins and braced principal rafters, the original principal timbers are moulded. Font. C13 square bowl with stop-chamfered central pier and small octagonal shafts with moulded caps and bases. South door of nave C14 or C15, feathered boards with round head and planted moulding. Restored C15 pews. C17 communion table. Coffin recess in south wall of tower; two pieces of C13 coffin lid in south porch. **Monuments:** In chancel, white marble tablet to Rev Andrew Penn and others 1800; tablet with gadrooned cornice supporting obelisks and central shield in strapwork with caryatids and verse to Oliver Dalton, 1618; white marble tablet to John Chester Penn 1823 and others; white marble tablet to Thomas Fassett 1820; floor slab in white stone to Sarah Bridge Barlow and her husband, 1815 and 1828; in the north chapel in a vault beneath the remains of Dorothy wife of Thomas Fasset 1797. Glass in chancel 'Adoration of Magi', 1901 by Kempe.

V.C.H., Vol. VI, p17 R.C.H.M. Report 1951 Pevsner. Buildings of England, p427 Palmer, W.M. Notes on Essex MS 1775 left with W M Cole of N door.

Listing NGR: TL5295049197

Legacy

The contents of this record have been generated from a legacy data system.

Legacy System number:**52012**

Legacy System:**LBS**

Sources

Books and journals

Pevsner, N, The Buildings of England: Cambridgeshire, (1970)

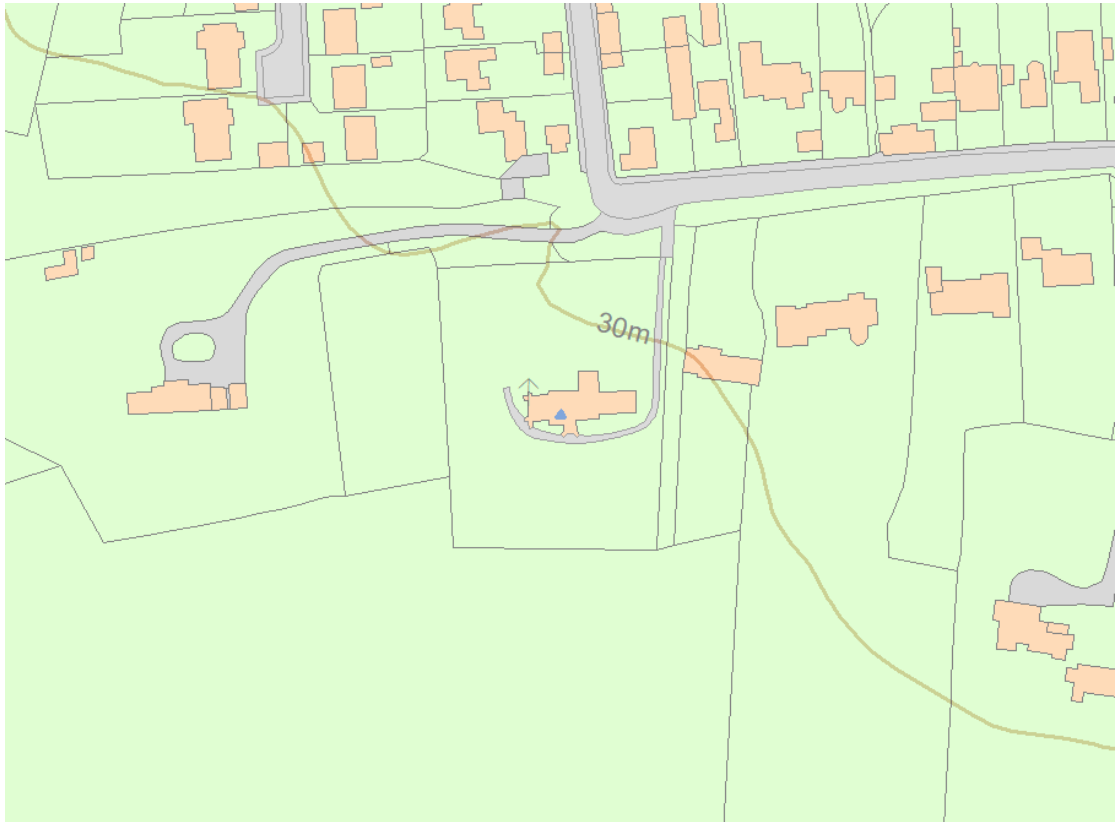
Salzman, L F, The Victoria History of the County of Cambridgeshire and the Isle of Ely, (1978), 17

Other

Reports on Buildings in the Parishes of Babraham Great Abington Hildersham Linton Little Abington and Pampisford Cambridgeshire, (1951)

Legal

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PARISH CHURCH OF ST MARY

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Official list entry

Heritage Category:**Listed Building**

Grade:**II***

List Entry Number:**1161650**

Date first listed:**22-Nov-1967**

List Entry Name:**PARISH CHURCH OF ST MARY**

Statutory Address 1:**PARISH CHURCH OF ST MARY, HIGH STREET**

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[Corrections and minor amendments](https://historicengland.org.uk/listing/the-list/minor-amendments/) (<https://historicengland.org.uk/listing/the-list/minor-amendments/>)

Location

Statutory Address:**PARISH CHURCH OF ST MARY, HIGH STREET**

The building or site itself may lie within the boundary of more than one authority.

County:**Cambridgeshire**

District:**South Cambridgeshire (District Authority)**

Parish:**Great Abington**

National Grid Reference:**TL 53070 48864**

Details

TL 5248 GREAT ABINGTON HIGH STREET (West Side)

11/20 Parish Church of 22.11.67 St Mary

GV II*

Parish church. Chancel and nave c.1200; west tower c.1225; tower arch and inserted south arcade and aisle early C14. South porch C14. Windows to nave and south aisle replaced in C15. North doorway blocked with inserted C19 window. Restorations 1895-7 and 1900. Walls of flint rubble with clunch and limestone dressings. Slated and plain tiled roofs; spire covered with lead. South elevation: Tower of two stages with plain parapet, moulded string below belfry and roll-moulded string below ground stage windows, wall advanced to west as two stage buttress. Two-light belfry window recessed in two-centred arch. South aisle with plain parapet and diagonal buttresses of two stages; two restored cinquefoil-light windows with vertical tracery and two-centred arches. South porch, opening very weathered, two-centred arch of two moulded orders, south doorway renewed with C15, or earlier, door with vertical boards and integral moulded battens. Chancel with one central original lancet window, larger single-light window with two-centred arch to west and double lancet-light window with quatrefoil above to east. Interior: Nave arcade of four bays with two-centred arches of two chamfered and moulded orders; quatrefoil piers and semi quatrefoil responds with moulded capitals and bases. Steps in north wall with C15 window above to former rood loft. Tower arch two-centred, of two chamfered orders with semi octagonal responds with moulded caps and bases. Window in west wall of three graded lancet-lights. Chancel structurally undivided from nave with wooden boarded barrel vaulted roofs. Double piscina in south wall of chancel and aumbrey in north wall with moulded label and small finial. Font C13, plain octagonal bowl on circular base. Pulpit c.1634; C17 communion table. Monument in chancel to Sir Wm Hatton Knight 1639 by W. Wright; a recumbant figure in armour with small lion below feet on pedestal with two moulded enriched panels; above, an inscribed tablet between scrolled consoles under a curved pediment with cartouche of arms. Glass fragments in tracery of east window, centre window nave north wall, and south aisle window of a figure standing in an archway of an embattled town. The nave and chancel were both originally thatched.

Map. Gt. Abington 1687, C.R.O. Palmer, W.M. Wm Cole of Milton R.C.H.M. Report 1951 V.C.H., Vol. VI, p17 Pevsner.

Buildings of England, p394

Listing NGR: TL5307048864

Legacy

The contents of this record have been generated from a legacy data system.

Legacy System number:**51858**

Sources

Books and journals

Palmer, W M , William Cole of Milton, (1935)

Pevsner, N, The Buildings of England: Cambridgeshire, (1970), 394

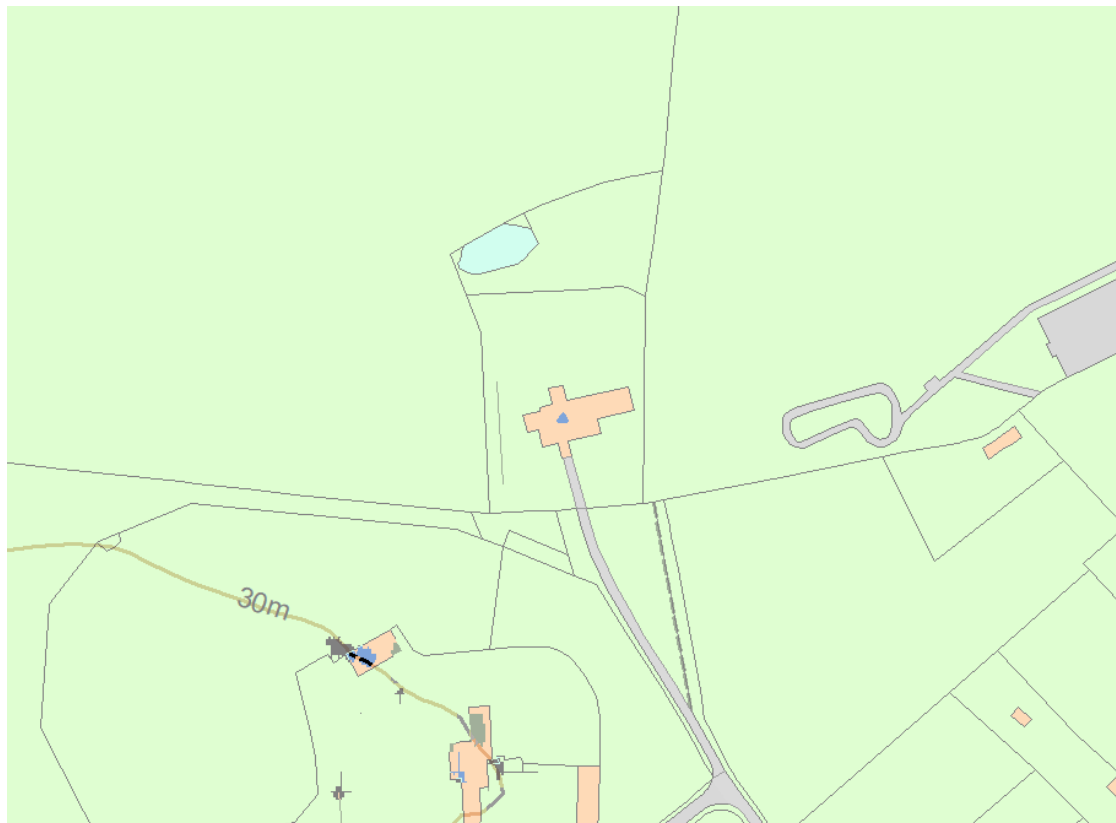
Salzman, L F, The Victoria History of the County of Cambridgeshire and the Isle of Ely, (1978), 17

Other

Reports on Buildings in the Parishes of Babraham Great Abington Hildersham Linton Little Abington and Pampisford
Cambridgeshire, (1951)

Legal

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Map

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APPENDIX 3.0

EXPERT

REPORT BY DR

PAUL

STAMPER

A REPORT ON EARTHWORKS AND THE PARKLAND AT LITTLE ABINGTON, CAMBRIDGESHIRE

1. INTRODUCTION

Bancroft Park, Little Abington, forms Site 026 in the South Cambridgeshire Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment (SHLAA) Report (2013). It covers c. 8.3 hectares. It is bounded in the western and south sides by the River Granta; trees along a former lane on the north side, and St Mary's churchyard on the north-east. Much of the site, historically, would have been managed riverside meadowland. South of the River Granta is Great Abington Hall, and Granta Park, a science, technology and biopharmaceutical park.

This report addresses first the date and character of earthworks on the Site recorded on the Cambridgeshire Historic Environment Record (HER), and second the 18th-century and later designed landscape associated with Great Abington Hall, and specifically a connection with Humphry Repton.

A great deal of detailed work on documentary sources (notably the Clark Kennedy archive in the Cambridgeshire Record Office) relating to Great Abington was undertaken c.2004 by Dr Twiggs Way in relationship to a boundary dispute. A copy of her 81-page report, 'Final Report on The Relationship Between the Wall at Rear of no.109 High Street and the Historic Designed Landscape of Abington Hall Estate: with notes concerning the Estate Management of Great Abington' is lodged with the Cambridgeshire Historic Environment Record (SCB 19385). It is drawn on below and referenced in footnotes as 'Way 2004'. The report's value is gratefully acknowledged. Key sources, viewed independently, proved to be a series of maps held by the Cambridgeshire Record Office, reproduced and cited below.

A site visit was made on 9 January 2025.

2. EARTHWORKS

2.1 Overview

Earthworks lie across the large field between Little Abington's parish church and the River Granta, the lower part at least historically meadowland which was liable to flooding. The clearest known image of the earthworks is an oblique air photo taken in 1975 looking roughly north-east (Figure *). The earthworks also appear on satellite images, although with less clarity (Figures *-*), and on LiDAR imagery (Figure *).



Figure 2.1. View north-east across the Site in 1975. Source: Cambridge University Committee for Air Photography (CUCAP) BSG60 1975 04 09, available at [Aerial photos from around the UK and beyond](#)



Figure 2.2. Source: Google Earth 2008.



Figure 2.3. Source: Google Earth 2024.



Figure 2.4. LiDAR imagery.

The earthworks are identified in an entry in the Cambridgeshire Historic Environment Record, made in 1977, which reports ‘The field ... contains many amorphous earthworks, including some field drains, the rest due to quarrying. There are also possible indications of a small former habitation to the south of the church.’

The earthworks have recently been re-assessed by the Cambridge Archaeological Unit in a letter dated 28 November 2024. Its initial conclusions (discussed further below) are that the earthworks represent:

- rectilinear enclosures and mounds near the church which are consistent with former house platforms and boundaries (medieval and/or post-medieval)
- former channels of the river
- a large rectangular ditched enclosure, south-west of the church,
- draining ditches/field boundaries to the west of the large rectangular enclosure

Our independent assessment of the earthworks follows below.

2.2 Possible settlement earthworks

The CAU, as cited above, noted ‘rectilinear enclosures and mounds near the church which are consistent with former house platforms and boundaries (medieval and/or post-medieval).’

Our site visit noted irregular earthworks close to the south boundary of the churchyard, with what may be a section of a minor holloway close to the south-west corner of the churchyard, possibly relating to an historic access way down the side of the churchyard (Figure 2.5).

Just off the churchyard’s south-east corner is a sub-rectangular depression, conceivably a crewyard (that is a yard where cattle were overwintered). These earthworks probably relate to a modest building which appears on a map of Little Abington of 1603 (Figure 2.6).¹ It seems likely the holloway noted in the previous paragraph gave access to the building from Church Lane to the north. This building had disappeared before 1803 (Figure *).



Figure 2.5. Possible slight holloway crossing left to right off the south-west corner of the churchyard. View east, with hollow of possible crewyard beyond..

¹ Unfortunately on this map Norden does not distinguish between houses (on other maps sometimes indicated by a chimney) and barns.



Figure 2.6. John Norden's map of Little Abington, 1603, showing the red roofed building south of the church. (Source: Cambs RO R103/).

The earthworks' significance is assessed below in section 4.

In terms of the wider question of whether, irrespective of whether or not it is represented in earthwork form, there may have been early (that is late Saxon or medieval) settlement west or south of St Mary's church it is worth considering the cartographic evidence, notably Norden's map of 1603, the Ordnance Survey field drawing of 1799, and the enclosure award map of 1803 (Figures 2.7 - 2.9).

These show how St Mary's church (listed Grade II*, which Pevsner notes has 'early Norman' fabric) then stood at the end of Little Abington's straggling street village. The location of a parish church at the head of a settlement is not uncommon, and the church was often juxtaposed with the manor house reflecting the typical origin of a church as a lord's private chapel. Here, as noted by the VCH, 'No evidence has been found giving the site of Little Abington manor-house.' That is presumably explained by the fact that the manor of Little Abington was sold in 1590 to Robert Taylor, already lord of Great Abington, who also acquired further land here in 1591. Thereafter the manors of Great and Little Abington descended together, with the chief house being Great Abington Hall.² This raises the possibility that until 1591 there was a manor house at Little Abington, with the most likely site being close to the church.

² [Parishes: Great and Little Abington | British History Online](#) sv Manor and Other Estates.

Most probably, any manor house stood to the church's east, west or north. A site to the south is less likely, as St Mary's church stands just beyond the point where the ground first rises appreciably off the floodplain, there being relatively little 'dry' land to the south. See below, Section 5 for a note on a possible archaeological evaluation.



Figure 2.7. Norden's mapping of the village in 1603. Houses straggle along a long curving street. But for the one building to its south, the church (with blue roof) stands isolated (Source: Cambs RO R103/).

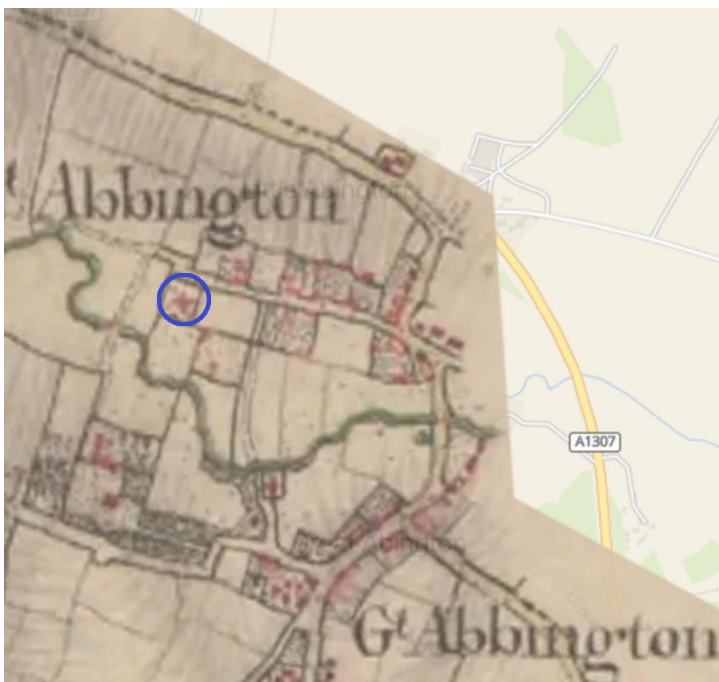


Figure 2.8. Ordnance Survey mapping of the Abbingtons in 1799. Source: British Library OSD 146-1. St Mary's church is ringed.



Figure 2.9. The enclosure award map of 1803. The distribution of buildings shown here had altered little since 1603 (Source: Cambs RO R60/24/2/50),

2.3 Former river channels

The cartographic and documentary evidence allows more to be said about earthworks identified as former river channels, and associated ‘feeders’ into that. As discussed below (and seen clearly on LiDAR imagery, Figure 2.12), before the first decade of the 19th century the River Granta divided into two as it passed between the Abingtons. Between the two river courses was Little Abington's Midsummer Meadow – that is hay meadow, probably communal, cut at midsummer³ - which the VCH records was liable to flooding.⁴

A much earlier line of the river is indicated by the parish boundary between the Abingtons as mapped by the Ordnance Survey in the late 19th century, which diverges away from the line of the river mapped between 1603 and 1803. This boundary was presumably established (like most) in the early Middle Ages, following what was then the centre line of the river.

³ Such meadows were often called Lammas Meadows, as grazing animals were excluded until Lammas Day (1 August).

⁴ [Parishes: Great and Little Abington | British History Online](#) sv Economic History.



Figure 2.10. Norden's map of 1603 which shows the Granta following two courses. The subdivided Midsummer Meadow lies between them. Great Abington Hall is at the lower margin (Source: Cambs RO R103/).



Figure 2.11. Little Abington as shown on the enclosure Award map of 1803. The twin courses of the river remain. Close (paddock) boundaries east of the church have had their boundaries straightened as part of the enclosure process, while Midsummer Meadow has passed into the sole ownership of John Mortlock, the new lord of the manor (Source: Cambs RO R60/24/2/50).

In terms of the earthworks, the northerly and southerly courses of the river in 1803 and earlier can be clearly seen on LiDAR imagery (marked 'FRC' on Figure 2.12) running either side of the loop of the modern course of the river.



Figure 2.12. LiDAR imagery with suggested interpretation. FRC marks former river channels running either side of the looping modern course of the Granta.

2.4 The ditched enclosure

A rectilinear ditched enclosure-like earthwork is prominent on the 1975 air photograph (Figure 2.1). While less clear on recent satellite imagery and LiDAR the earthwork is easily traced on the ground, especially its east-west arm. As CUAU suggests, it is difficult to identify a function for it, although it is notable that the north-south arm appears to run up to, and stop, at the 1803 and earlier northerly river line, strongly suggesting a drainage function. However, no such feature appears on the early mapping.



Figure 2.13. View east along the east-west arm of the so-called ditched enclosure. The ditch terminates just beyond the fallen tree.

At the east end of the east-west arm is a spoilheap-like earthwork, possibly relating to historic quarrying.



Figure 2.14. Possible quarrying spoilheap. View south to Abington Hall.

2.5 Additional features (i) ridge and furrow

As marked on Figure 2.12, the LiDAR imagery clearly shows a large block of east-west ridge and furrow west of St Mary's church, running up to a well-defined boundary on its west side (best seen on Figure 2.4). The ridging is straight and narrow, suggesting a late post-medieval date, that is 18th- or 19th- century. The ridging could not be seen at ground level during the site visit.

43 Church Lane, a large modern house west of St Mary's church, is apparently superimposed on the ridging.

Slight north-south ridging is also visible on the LiDAR imagery west of the ditched enclosure, but again not at ground level..

2.6 Additional features (ii) tree throw pits

On the 1975 AP (Figure 2.1) a number of small, ringed, features (best described as polo-mint-style) can be seen, three in a line, on the east side of the ditched enclosure. Other small circular features occur elsewhere. These probably represent the positions of lost (felled, fallen, or rotted) parkland trees.

2.7 Additional features (iii) Sluice Wood and its watercourses

Sluice Wood, at the north-west corner of the site, does not appear on any mapping of 1803 or earlier and was probably planted in the early 19th century as part of the parkland landscaping,

in part to conceal brick sluice walls on the River Granta. The original three-sluice dam and new cut were part of a scheme for flooding the water meadows between Abington and Babraham two miles to the north-west, designed and partly executed by Hugh May (1621) in c.1654 for his cousin Thos Benet of Babraham.⁵

A law suit c.1720 against John Benet by Thomas Western, lord of the manor of Great Abington, required a flood gate to be erected to prevent flooding in Abington. Two limestone plaques of 1721 (listed Grade II: NHLE number 1127654) are set in what are now highly degraded (later) brick sluice walls in the eastern part of the wood. Both are inscribed 'The bottom or lowest part of this stone is the height of ye Floodgate of this sluice 1721'.



*Figure *. View west in Sluice Wood. One of the listed panels can be seen towards the left-hand end of the brick wall below the coppice stool. This is the main course of the River Granta.*

⁵ Text in this para based on the cited List entry.

3 GREAT ABINGTON HALL AND THE HUMPHRY REPTON CONNECTION

3.1 History and documentary evidence

Great Abington Hall stands on the site of the medieval manor house of the Earls of Oxford. It was rebuilt c.1712 by Maximillian Western, the son of a wealthy ironmonger who also built new stables to the north-west of the Hall. The present late 18th-century house (listed Grade II*) was probably built around the core of the 1712 house. The rebuilding may have been commissioned by James Pierson, a London merchant, who bought the house from the Revd. Charles Western in 1784. Pierson himself sold on to a Cambridge banker, John Mortlock, in 1800.⁶ An Enclosure Act had been passed two years before, and Mortlock seems to have embraced the improvement of his estate with enthusiasm, almost immediately bringing in Humphry Repton, England's leading landscaper, to transform the Hall's surrounds. Improvement continued up to and beyond his death in 1816.⁷



Figure 3.1. The north, entrance, front of Abington Hall (postcard view c.1909 x 1919), which looks across its parkland. Source: <https://hildersham.ccan.co.uk/>

Repton's involvement at Great Abington is certain, but frustratingly poorly documented. He did not always produce a presentation leather-bound 'Red Book' setting out his proposals to a client (such attracted an additional fee), and none is known here.

Dorothy Stroud, Repton's first biographer, was the first to note his involvement, citing mention of Abington in Repton's 1803 publication *Observations on the Theory and Practice of Landscape Gardening*.⁸ The relevant entry there is:

⁶ T. Mowl and L. Mayer, *The Historic Gardens of England: Cambridge and the Isle of Ely* (2013), 152.

⁷ Way 2004, 22-4. For Repton see Appendix A.

⁸ D. Stroud, *Humphry Repton* (1962), 165

‘Among the second’ [type of alterations, where changes to a house have made it necessary to make alterations to the grounds] ‘may be mentioned those, in which the entrance of the house being changed, new rooms added, or barns, stables, and kitchen-gardens removed, new arrangements have taken place, as at Abington Hall...’⁹

Elsewhere in the same publication, in discussing the different classes of landscaping, he includes Abington among places where the landscaping involved the alteration of grounds to suit a much-enlarged or changed house.¹⁰

The documentary evidence dealing with Repton’s involvement at Abington makes no mention of the wider parkland.¹¹ Two things, however, offer evidence that he was its designer, even if the chronology is imprecise. The first is the inclusion of a view by Repton of Abington in its parkland included in *Peacock’s Polite Repository* for 1803, which had been sent to print in 1802 (Figure 3.2).¹² This was probably a version of Repton’s proposals for improvement, before work began, but it is notable for the emphasis given to the serpentine treatment of the River Granta with smooth parkland to either side.



Figure 3.2. Abington Hall, as depicted by Repton in *Peacock’s Polite Repository* for 1803. Source: [English Historical Fiction Authors: A 19th century Check-out Inventory: Lord Chatham and Abington Hall](#)

⁹ Reprinted in J.C. Loudon, *The Landscape Gardening And Landscape Architecture Of The Late Humphry Repton, Esq.: Being His Entire Works On These Subjects* (1840), 284 [Way gives the page reference to the 1803 original as p.137]. The formal setting of the Hall is shown on a map of c.1803, Cambs RO P60 24/2/30.

¹⁰ Way gives the page reference to the 1803 original as p.186.

¹¹ Way’s week-long trawling of the Clark-Kennedy archive at the Cambridgeshire Record Office found no reference to Repton in bills, accounts, letters etc, although she acknowledges that there was much she didn’t see.

¹² The *Repository* was produced annually from c.1790 – 1870s, and contained useful information such as lists of government officials, the senior military, members of the nobility, M.P.s and Royal birthdays. Each month had a miniature engraving at the top of the page. Repton must have entered into an agreement with William Peacock to supply illustrations in 1789 (thereby promoting his landscaping business), an arrangement which lasted until 1808.

The Granta's re-routing and broadening to bring it closer to the Hall is discussed further in section 3.2. In a wider context, such a treatment of water, to create the ideal of a serpentine river crossing the park in the fore- or mid-ground of the house (here on the entrance side), was an essential component of the landscaping schemes of 'Capability' Brown' (1716-83), England's leading place-maker of the mid- to late 18th century. Often these rivers were an artificial construction, involving massive earth moving, and the re-routing and damming of earlier streams and fishponds.¹³

Whilst often working on far more modest commissions than Brown – spatially and otherwise – most of Repton's landscapes, at least until his later years, involved the creation or modification of lakes or river-like pieces of water. As with Brown, the benefits could be practical as well as aesthetic (Repton thought water 'cheerful') through the adjoining land being drained and made more productive.¹⁴ Repton claimed his skill in managing water came through his observations of civil engineers cutting canals.¹⁵

An analogous and apparently contemporary example of a river's treatment by Repton can be found in his 1797 proposals for the treatment of the River Tern at Attingham (Shropshire) which, as it ran through meadowland below the house, was braided and prone to flood in winter and to dry up in summer droughts. Repton's objective was 'to secure a constant and permanent effect of water', 'an ample river, majestically flowing'. As Daniels has observed, 'Repton's drawing of the improved river, swinging in a smooth curve towards the mansion, recalls Hearne's illustration from *The Landscape* [1794] of a scene which [Richard Payne] Knight despised, grounds "dressed in the modern style."¹⁶

3.2 The cartographic evidence

The mapping reproduced above shows the landscape north of Abington Hall before imparkment, and the re-routing of the Granta. The next detailed mapping (there is no tithe map from the 1840s for either of the Abingtons) is that by the Ordnance Survey of the mid-1880s (Figure 3.3) shows a very different landscape from that of eighty years previously. In the years after 1800 the surrounds of the Hall and its wider setting had been transformed, notably through the removal of the public road to its south and the opening up of the ground to its north front, where a carriage drive now approached from the west to a turning circle.

The opening up of the ground to the north of the Hall allowed a view across the new parkland. The park was well dotted with parkland trees and extended north and east across where field boundaries had been removed to Little Abington. Its church lay within the park, as did Great Abington's 400m to the south, an exceptional double inclusion. However, perhaps the most notable change c.1800 had been the re-routing of the northern course of the River Granta from a point south of Little Abington Vicarage into a serpentine curve, and the closing of the southern course westward of Great Abington church.¹⁷ Opposite Abington

¹³ D. Brown and T. Williamson, *Lancelot Brown and the Capability Men* (2016), 108-13

¹⁴ T. Williamson, *Humphry Repton: Landscape Design in an Age of Revolution* (2020), 191-3

¹⁵ S. Daniels, *Humphry Repton: Landscape Gardening and the Geography of Georgian England* (1999), 134

¹⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁷ The proposed new line is pencilled as an annotation on the Great Abington enclosure Award map of 1803: Cambs R60/24/2/30.

Hall it broadened slightly, presumably to enhance the view northward across the park, to St Mary's church which, perhaps fortuitously, acted as an eyecatcher. By the 1880s a footpath ran south-west from Little Abington church to a bridge across the river close to the Hall's stables, presumably replacing the north-south track shown in 1799 and 1803 (Figure 2.8 and 2011).¹⁸



Figure 3.3. OS 6 inch mapping, Cambridgeshire sheet LV.SW (surveyed 1885, published 1886). Historic OS mapping courtesy of the National Library of Scotland.

Through the use of a grey tone the park was shown more clearly on the six-inch mapping of 1901 (Figure *).

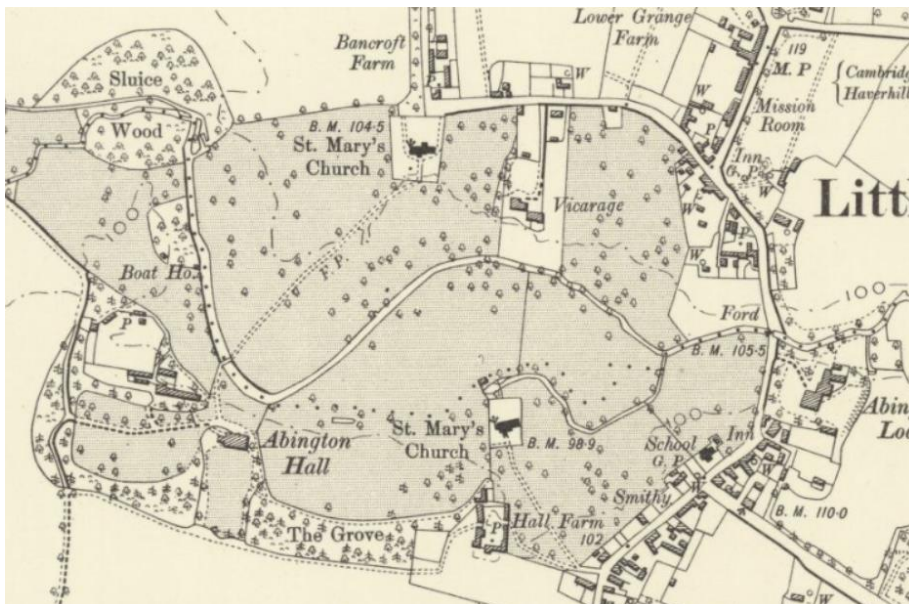


Figure 3.4. OS 6 inch mapping, Cambridgeshire sheet LV.SW (surveyed 1901, published 1904)

¹⁸ The footpath may have been closed in the 1960s when the bridge across the Granta was removed: Figure 3.5.



Figure 3.5. Postcard view c.1909 x 1919 showing the Green Bridge to the north of Abington Hall leading across the River Granta to link the Hall's grounds (to left) with the park. The bridge was apparently removed in the early 1960s. Source: <https://hildersham.ccan.co.uk/>



Figure 3.6. View south-west along the Granta to Abington Hall. Mapping suggests the sweet chestnuts on the left-hand bank post-date 1885.

The park's significance is assessed below in section 4.

3.3 Change in the later 20th century

Great Abington Hall and its estate remained in the ownership of the Mortlocks until the Second World War, but after that it became the property of the British Welding Research Association and was converted into flats and offices. Granta Park, a science, technology and biopharmaceutical park began to be developed around the Hall in the late 1990s.



Figure 3.7. Air photograph 1945. Source: Google Earth.

Air photography in 1945 (Figure 3.7) and OS six-inch mapping published in 1951 shows the Hall and surrounds, and the park (c. 87 a. in 1929), were little if at all changed since 1901. Later OS mapping at a lesser scale, again suggests little change before the 1960s.¹⁹ In 1978 the VCH noted the park around Abington Hall, ‘was and remains well stocked with trees.’²⁰ However, by 2008 (Figure 2.2) no trees stood on the southern half of the Site although notable veterans remain today in its northern part.

¹⁹ OS 1:25,000 sheet TL54NW – A (surveyed / revised pre-1930 to 1959, published: 1960)

²⁰ [Parishes: Great and Little Abington | British History Online](#) sv Introduction.



*Figure *. View west across the northern parkland to Sluice Wood showing veteran trees.*

In the later 20th century there were various encroachments into the former parkland. To the east of Little Abington's church is now houses and dense planting. Other encroachments include the modern house (43 Church Lane) west of the church. An earlier encroachment was a churchyard extension which OS mapping shows took place between 1885 and 1901.

4 SIGNIFICANCE

4.1 Earthworks

We would raise a cautionary note concerning the CAU's initial interpretation that some of the earthworks south of the church are 'rectilinear enclosures and mounds ... consistent with former house platforms and boundaries (medieval and/or post-medieval)'. Instead, as discussed above (section 2.2), they appear to relate to a house or farmstead mapped in 1603 but gone by 1803. While the earthworks would presumably be deemed a 'non-designated heritage asset' they would fall far short of meeting the tests for national designation through scheduling.

The possibility is raised above that a pre-1591 manorial site may lie close to the church. Here, only archaeological evaluation might advance understanding.

Most of the earthworks on the site relate to historic watercourses, and possibly management of the meadowland. The documented improvement of the natural flood meadows in the mid-17th century, and the installation of sluice gates in 1721, is a good and interesting example of this form of agricultural improvement, which was in vogue at that time. The listing of the

sluice features gives them appropriate and adequate protection although it seems likely that since listing in 1985 the condition of the walls they are set in has markedly deteriorated. Restoration (which would be difficult) would be a heritage benefit in any scheme. The former courses of the River Granta are of most of interest in terms of Repton's re-routing of the river.

4.2 The designed landscape

Based on the discussion above, it appears likely (although unproven²¹) that the landscaping around Great Abington Hall by Humphry Repton which began around 1803 also involved the creation of a small landscape park extending northwards across the River Granta. Trees were planted, and the river was re-aligned into a new serpentine cut passing nearer to the front of the Hall.

The Repton association adds interest to the designed landscape, elements of which do survive: the open parkland either side of the river; the recut river channel; and the surviving parkland trees with some notable veterans in the park's northernmost section. The parkland provides an important setting for the Hall, with views northward across it to Little Abington's church, perhaps seen in Repton's design as an eyecatcher. However, much of the designed landscape to the south of the river, around the Hall, has been lost, with the Hall now being abutted by the buildings of the Granta Science Park. Furthermore, the parkland east of the Little Abington church is now given over to houses and dense planting. Other encroachments include the modern house (43 Church Lane) west of St Mary's church, and the churchyard extension.

In conclusion, the parkland is undoubtedly of local significance. However, primarily because of the losses set out in the previous paragraph, we believe the parkland north of the Hall would fall well short of the criteria for inclusion on Historic England's Register of Parks and Gardens of Special Historic Interest.²²

5 FURTHER WORK

Better understanding is needed of any below-ground archaeology south and west of the church through an archaeological evaluation, starting with geophysical survey. As CAU suggests, any such remains could, potentially, be an impediment to development.

Dr Paul Stamper, Montagu-Evans LLP

January 2025

²¹ Our conclusion is in line with that of Way (2004, 18)

²² As set out in <https://historicengland.org.uk/images-books/publications/drpgsg-rural-landscapes/>

APPENDIX A: HUMPHRY REPTON (1752-1818)

In the late 18th century Humphry Repton became the undisputed successor to Lancelot ‘Capability’ Brown as improver of grounds to the landed gentry of England. In all some 400 commissions are known.

Of a well-to-do family, he was intended for a mercantile career but, failing in that, retired to the country, where he learned something of the management of land and had an opportunity to develop his talent as an amateur painter of watercolour landscapes. In 1788 Repton set out with the professed intention of becoming England’s leading landscape gardener, following the death of Capability Brown in 1783. Early in his career he worked very much in Brown’s arcadian style, but later developed a more individual approach introducing variety and even formality to his designs, especially in pleasure grounds around the house.

Contributing largely to his success was his method of making watercolour drawings of the grounds upon which he was asked to advise, with his proposed alterations displayed on an overlay. Like other landscape designers, Repton also tried his hand at architecture but usually worked in association with others who had the necessary professional qualifications. He quarrelled with one of these, John Nash, who, he claimed, stole from him the idea of using a Mughal style of architecture for the Royal Pavilion at Brighton and who in large part used his design. Later he collaborated with his own son, John Adey Repton, a trained architect.

His parks were attacked by the proponents of the Picturesque for what they saw as his artificiality (set against their fondness for rugged wildness), but Repton countered that designed landscapes should not only be seen, but be used. In fact, they should be a stage for a range of activities, and must combine ‘beauty and utility’. For him, a paternalistic Tory, the Brownian park represented the exclusivity of the landed elite, and its members’ rejection of the traditional paternalistic responsibilities of the landlord – the lord of the manor – to his tenants and the local community more widely. That exclusivity he increasingly considered foolhardy and dangerous, a conviction only strengthened by the French Revolution and the subsequent movements in Britain for reform and the foundation of radical societies which the government regarded – especially those with an unlimited membership and nationwide association – as dangerous.

In practical terms this conviction was expressed, for instance, by his proposals to extend a unifying language of estate furniture – gates and fences in a particular style, cottages and farms painted or colourwashed in the same colour – beyond the park to the wider estate, blurring the boundary of the designed landscape for those visiting or experiencing a place. Repton, like Brown (and this fundamental point is typically not appreciated by modern commentators on 18th-century designed landscapes) knew that the park was integral to the wider estate, and was working farmland, albeit with a heavy emphasis on grazing, on stock rearing, on haymaking, and wood and timber production.

By the 1780s, and especially during and after the wars with France from the 1790s, much of Repton's work was for the *nouveau riche* – an industrialist as often as not – would buy an estate just far enough from the town to play the part of a country gent, and just close enough to keep an eye on his factories. Then he would call on Repton to give the place a make-over, a stage-set on which he could act out the role of landowner.

Repton wrote extensively on his approach to landscape design, publishing a number of treatises and polemics – essentially promotional vehicles for his business - in the years either side of 1800, the principal works being *Sketches and Hints on Landscape Gardening* (1795), *Observations on the Theory and Practice of Landscape Gardening* (1803), and *Fragments on the Theory and Practice of Landscape Gardening* (1816). These were gathered in a 600-page compendium by J.C. Loudon in 1840, *The Landscape Gardening and Landscape Architecture of the Late Humphry Repton Esq. Being His Entire Works on these Subjects*.

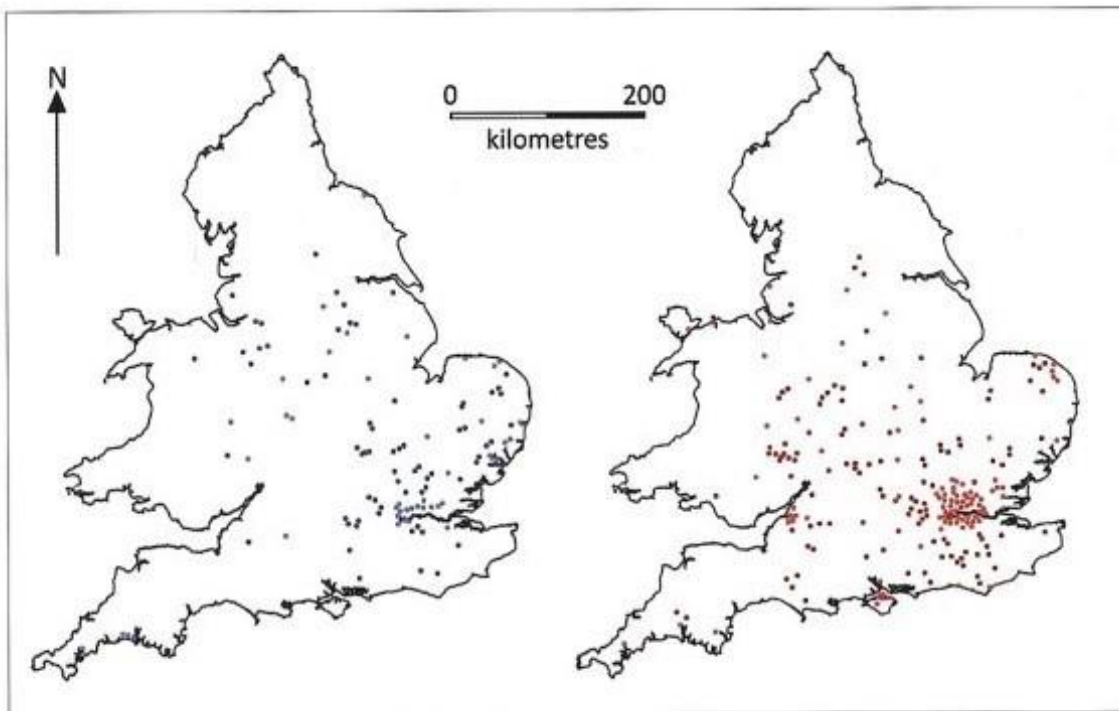
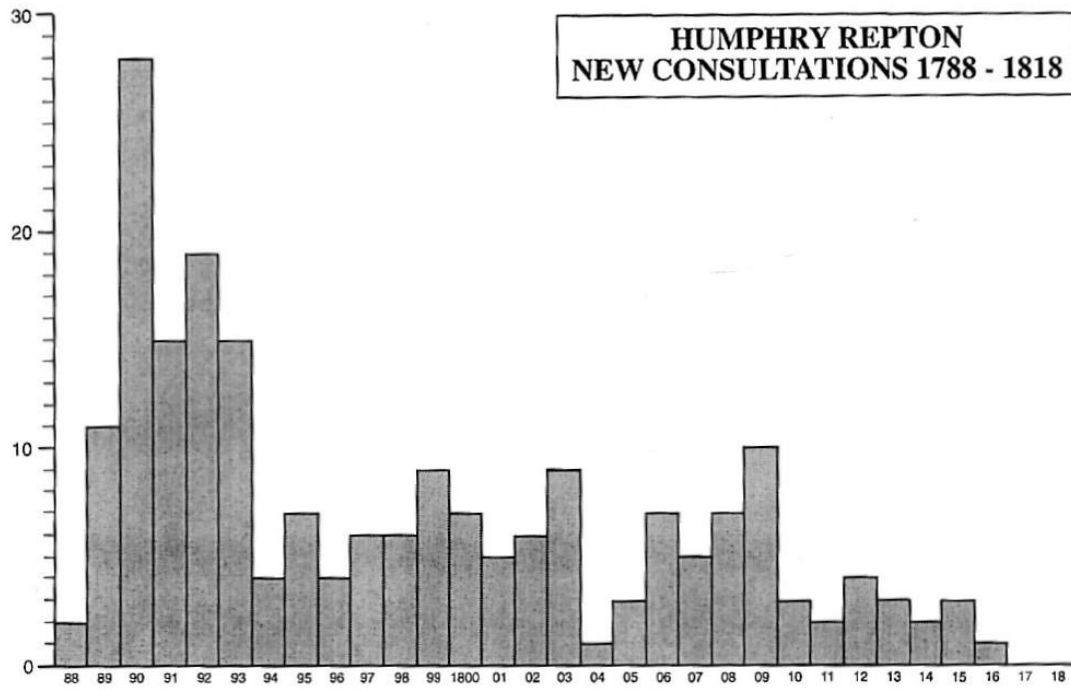


Figure *. Repton commissions before 1795 (left) and after (right). After 1795, in part because of the closure of Europe after the outbreak of war with France, but perhaps more through client-to-client recommendations, far more were concentrated around Repton's home county of Essex. Source: ¹ T. Williamson, *Humphry Repton: Landscape Design in an Age of Revolution* (2020), 70.



*Figure *. Repton's commissions, by year. Source: S. Daniels, Humphry Repton – Landscape Gardening & the Geography of Georgian England (1999)*

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