

**ARCHAEOLOGY  
DESK BASED  
ASSESSMENT**

**Land at Wigston,  
LEICESTERSHIRE**

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**Oct 2009**



# **ARCHAEOLOGICAL DESK BASED ASSESSMENT**

**Land at Wigston**

**LOCAL PLANNING AUTHORITY:  
OADBY AND WIGSTON  
DISTRICT COUNCIL**

**SITE CENTRED AT:  
SP 610976**

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**OCT 2009**

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## **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

- Land at Wigston, Leicestershire has been considered for its archaeological potential.
- The proposed development area can be shown to have a low potential for archaeological survival of evidence from the Palaeolithic, Mesolithic and Neolithic periods.
- The proposed development site has significant potential for evidence of Bronze Age, Iron Age, and Roman periods.
- The proposed development area also has low potential for archaeology from the Saxon, Medieval and Post-Medieval periods.
- The site, however, is a greenfield site with evidence of recent disturbance limited to quarrying in the south and further archaeological evaluation will certainly be necessary. At this stage there is no evidence of important archaeological remains at the site which would provide an impediment to development.

## **1.0 INTRODUCTION AND SCOPE OF STUDY**

- 1.1 This archaeological desk-based assessment has been researched and prepared by Michael Dawson of CgMs Consulting, on behalf of David Wilson Home.
- 1.2 The assessment considers the proposed development area off Cook Lane at Wigston, Leicestershire. The site is centred at National Grid Reference SK610 986 (Fig 1).
- 1.3 In accordance with local and central government guidance on archaeology and planning (PPG16) this assessment draws together the available archaeological, topographic and land-use information in order to clarify the archaeological potential of the proposed development area.
- 1.4 The assessment comprises an examination of evidence in the Leicestershire Historic Environment Record (HER), considers the results of nearby archaeological investigations, incorporates published and unpublished material and charts historic land-use through a map regression exercise.
- 1.5 The assessment identifies the potential impact of the proposed development on the archaeology as the basis for determining an appropriate mitigation strategy.

## **2.0 PLANNING BACKGROUND AND DEVELOPMENT PLAN FRAMEWORK**

- 2.1 In November 1990 the Department of the Environment issued Planning Policy Guidance Note 16 (PPG16) "Archaeology and Planning", providing guidance for planning authorities, property owners, developers and others on the preservation and investigation of archaeological remains.
- 2.2 In short, government guidance provides a framework which:
- Protects Scheduled Ancient Monuments
  - Protects the settings of these sites
  - Protects nationally important un-scheduled ancient monuments
  - In appropriate circumstances seeks adequate information (from field evaluation) to enable informed decisions
  - Provides for the excavation and investigation of sites not important enough to merit in-situ preservation.
- 2.3 Planning Policy Guidance note 15 1994 (PPG15) "Planning and the Historic Environment" provides a full statement of Government policies for the identification and protection of historic buildings, conservation areas and other elements of the historic environment. It provides a guidance for planning authorities, developers and others for the protection and assessment of Listed Buildings, the setting of Listed Buildings, Conservation Areas and the wider Historic Environment.
- 2.4 In considering any planning application for development, the local planning authority will be guided by the policy framework set by government guidance, in this instance PPG16 and PPG15, by current Development Plan policy and by other material considerations.
- 2.5 Until recently, the Leicestershire Structure Plan and the Oadby and Wigston District Local Plan 2001 were the adopted planning policy documents for the area of the study site, but both plan policies concerning archaeology expired in March 2008. Therefore, the current Development Plan for the area is the Regional Spatial Strategy for the East Midlands (RSS8, March 2009).

## **Regional Spatial Strategy (RSS) East Midlands Regional Plan (March 2009)**

### POLICY 26 Protecting and Enhancing the Region's Natural and Cultural Assets

*Sustainable development should ensure the protection, appropriate management and enhancement of the region's natural and cultural heritage. As a result the following principles should be applied:*

- *the region's internationally and nationally designated natural and historic assets should receive the highest level of protection;*
- *damage to natural or historic assets or their settings should be avoided wherever and as far as possible, recognising that such assets are usually irreplaceable;*
- *unavoidable damage must be minimized and clearly justified by a need for development in that location which outweighs the damage that would result*
- *unavoidable damage which cannot be mitigated should be compensated for, preferably in a relevant local context, and where possible in ways which also contribute to social and economic objectives;*
- *there should be a net increase in the quality and active management of natural and historic assets across the region in ways that promote adaptation to climate change , and an increase in the quality of environmental assets generally;*

### POLICY 27: Regional Priorities for the Historic Environment

*The historic environment should be understood, conserved enhanced, in recognition of its own intrinsic value, and its contribution to the region's quality of life.*

*Across the region and particularly in areas where growth or regeneration is a priority, development should promote sensitive change of the historic environment. To achieve this local authorities should:*

- *identify and assess the significance of specific historic assets and their settings;*
- *use characterization to understand their contribution to the landscape or townscape in areas of change;*
- *encourage the refurbishment and re-use of disused or under-used buildings of some historic or architectural merit and incorporating them sensitively into the regeneration scheme;*
- *promoting the use of local building materials; and*

- *recognize the opportunities for enhancing existing tourism attractions and for developing the potential of other areas and sites of historic interest as part of Green Infrastructure, having regard to potential impacts on biodiversity.*

### **3.0 GEOLOGY AND TOPOGRAPHY**

#### **3.1 Geology**

3.1.1 The British Geological Survey indicates that the solid geology of the proposed development site comprises the Lower Lias clays of lower Triassic date.

3.1.2 The soil types are generally heavy clay loams.

#### **3.2 Topography**

3.2.1 The proposed development area is located to the east of the town of Wigston. The lower southern part of the site is situated astride a small brook, part of the tributary system which forms the headwaters of the River Sence. In the north the site lies within a wider deeper valley south of Newton Lane where there is another stream which flows towards the River Sence.

3.2.2 The land surface of the proposed development site in the southern area south of Cooks Lane is predominantly pasture with a single arable field at the eastern end. The eastern part of the proposed development site is all arable.

#### **4.0 ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND HISTORICAL BACKGROUND** **(Including Map Regression Exercise)**

##### 4.1 Timescales used in this report:

###### **Prehistoric**

Palaeolithic	450,000 -	12,000 BC
Mesolithic	12,000 -	4,000 BC
Neolithic	4,000 -	1,800 BC
Bronze Age	1,800 -	600 BC
Iron Age	600 BC -	AD 43

###### **Historic**

Roman	AD 43 -	410
Saxon/Early Medieval	AD 410 -	1066
Medieval	AD 1066 -	1485
Post Medieval	AD 1486 -	1749
Modern	AD 1750 -	Present

##### 4.2 **Introduction**

4.2.1 The report which follows is a consideration of archaeological finds and features within the proposed development area. In addition archaeological and historical evidence within a study area, 1km from the proposed development site, has been taken into account to identify patterns of past activity which might contribute in assessing the proposed development area's potential to contain significant archaeology.

##### 4.3 **Palaeolithic and Mesolithic**

4.3.1 A single Palaeolithic flint has been found (LHER 7634) within the study area from a quarry by Kilby bridge.

4.3.2 The presence of Palaeolithic archaeology is notoriously hard to predict. The majority of evidence from the wider region is from individual artefacts with few in-situ sites (Cooper, 2006). Overall, the proposed development area can probably be defined as having a very low potential.

4.3.3 No Mesolithic evidence has been found on or near the proposed development site. Mesolithic finds have slight potential in the area where they may be distributed in the plough soil, the remains of activities from hunter gatherer groups.

#### 4.4 **Late Prehistoric (Neolithic, Bronze Age and Iron Age)**

4.4.1 No Neolithic material has been recorded from the proposed development area, though a Bronze Age burlal (LHER4977) has been found south east of White Gate Farm. This was found during ditch widening and comprised an urned cremation and several flints which may have been grave goods. This discovery suggests there is real potential to find further contemporary Bronze Age burials within the proposed development area.

4.4.2 Iron Age settlement is known from a site close to Wigston Cemetery (LHER 4965), west of the proposed development area. This suggests that the area in general has potential for further settlement of this period. However as no late prehistoric activity has been identified within the proposed area or within the immediate vicinity of the proposed development area the overall potential for the proposed development area, therefore, can be defined as medium.

#### 4.5 **Roman**

4.5.1 Roman period evidence of settlement was recovered from the same site as Iron Age settlement evidence close to Wigston cemetery (LHER 4965) and there are Roman finds from east of Spring Cottage (LHER 4982) east of the proposed development area. This distribution of settlement evidence suggests there is significant potential for archaeology of the Roman period within the proposed development area.

#### 4.6 **Anglo-Saxon, Medieval and Early Post-Medieval**

4.6.1 Throughout the Medieval and early Post-Medieval period the proposed development site has remained within the parish of Wigston. The name Wigston derives from the Old English Viking's *tun* or farm. Wigston probably originated in the Anglo-Saxon period, but was later dominated by Norse settlers and it is first mentioned in the Domesday survey of 1086 as *Wikingestone*, later spelt *Wikingeston* in 1191. The settlement recorded in Domesday is today north of the proposed development and was known in the past as Wigston Magna to distinguish it from Wigston Parva. Historically the parish was located in the Guthlaxton Hundred in the county of Leicestershire (Nichols 1811, 273).

## **5.0 SITE CONDITIONS AND THE PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT**

(Impact on the Buried Archaeological Deposits)

### **5.1 Site Conditions**

5.1.1 The proposed development area is open land on the southern and eastern margin of Wigston. Presently pasture to the south and arable land to the east it has remained in cultivation probably throughout the historic period.

### **5.2 The Proposed Development**

5.2.1 The proposed development is for housing.

5.2.2 The development will result in the significant disturbance at the proposed site.

## **6.0 SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS**

- 6.1 Land at Wigston has been considered for its archaeological potential.
- 6.2 In accordance with Local Authority policy and Government policy, as set out in PPG16 "Archaeology and Planning", a desk based assessment has been undertaken to clarify the archaeological potential of the study area.
- 6.3 The proposed development area can be considered to have a very low potential for the Palaeolithic and Mesolithic.
- 6.4 The proposed development area can be considered to have very low potential for the Neolithic, but significant potential for Bronze Age burial.
- 6.5 The proposed development area can be considered to have some potential for archaeology of the Iron Age and the Roman period. This is due to the evidence found near Spring Cottage Farm which may extend into the development area.
- 6.6 The proposed development area has a low potential for the Saxon, Medieval and Early Post-Medieval periods. This is because the proposed development area is located beyond the historic core of the village of Wigston.
- 6.7 Past impacts on the archaeological potential at the study site can be characterised as largely agricultural with some significant effects in the south west resulting from quarrying.
- 6.8 On the basis of the available evidence, it is considered that any as yet unrecorded remains that may be present will not prejudice the principle of development. In the event of a planning application being submitted, the archaeological advisor for Leicestershire County Council will probably request further archaeological assessment. This will take the form of geophysical survey, and may be followed by targeted trial trenching. The timing of such a requirement would need to be negotiated with the council.
- 6.9 Given the archaeological evidence for the proposed development area, it is considered that archaeology will not provide a fundamental impediment to development.

## **SOURCES CONSULTED**

1. **General**

Leicestershire Records Office  
Leicestershire Historic Environment Record

2. **Bibliographic**

Cooper, N, 2006. *The Archaeology of the East Midlands, An Archaeological Resource Assessment and Research Assessment*. ULAS Mono 13.

Ekwall, E 1980. *The Concise Oxford Dictionary of English Place-names. Fourth Edition*. Oxford at the Clarendon Press. Thetford.

Hoskins W G 1957 *Midland peasant: the economic and social history of a Leicestershire village* (CRO L914.2 WIG)

Hoskins W G 1941 Murder and sudden death in Medieval Wigston, *TLAS 1940-41*

Hoskins 1957 *Population of an English Village 1086-1801: a story of Wigston Magna*  
TLAHS XXXIII 1957

Lewis S (ed) 1848 *A Topographical Dictionary of England*, pp. 600-603.

Nichols 1807. *The History and Antiquities of the County of Leicester. Vol. IV, Part 1*.

3. **Cartographic**

1777 John Prior's Map of Leicestershire

1889; 1904 Ordnance Survey 25" Sheet XXXVII

1889; 1904 Ordnance survey 6" Sheet XXXVII SE

**APPENDIX 1**  
HER Baseline Data

## SOURCES OF INFORMATION

### LEICESTERSHIRE HISTORIC ENVIRONMENT RECORD (LHER)

HER data within 1km of the proposed development site:

Leicestershire HER No	Description
LHER4965	Iron Age and Roman site south of Wigston cemetery
LHER4966	Anglo-Saxon cemetery and possible occupation site Wigston cemetery.
LHER4973	Crop marks north west of Meadow View
LHER 4976	Post medieval quarry
LHER4977	Bronze Age burial
LHER4978	Kilby Bridge
LHER4982	Roman finds east of Spring Cottage
LHER6921	Medieval finds west of Seven Oaks Farm
LHER6923	Medieval coin west of White Gate Farm
LHER7634	Palaeolithic flint from quarry north east of Kilby Bridge
LHER13904	Kilby Bridge signal box*
LHER16083	Midland Railway
LHER16300	Leicestershire & Northamptonshire Union Canal
LHER17034	Kilby Bridge Lime Works
LHER17035	Limekiln at Cooks Lane

\* Listed Buildings

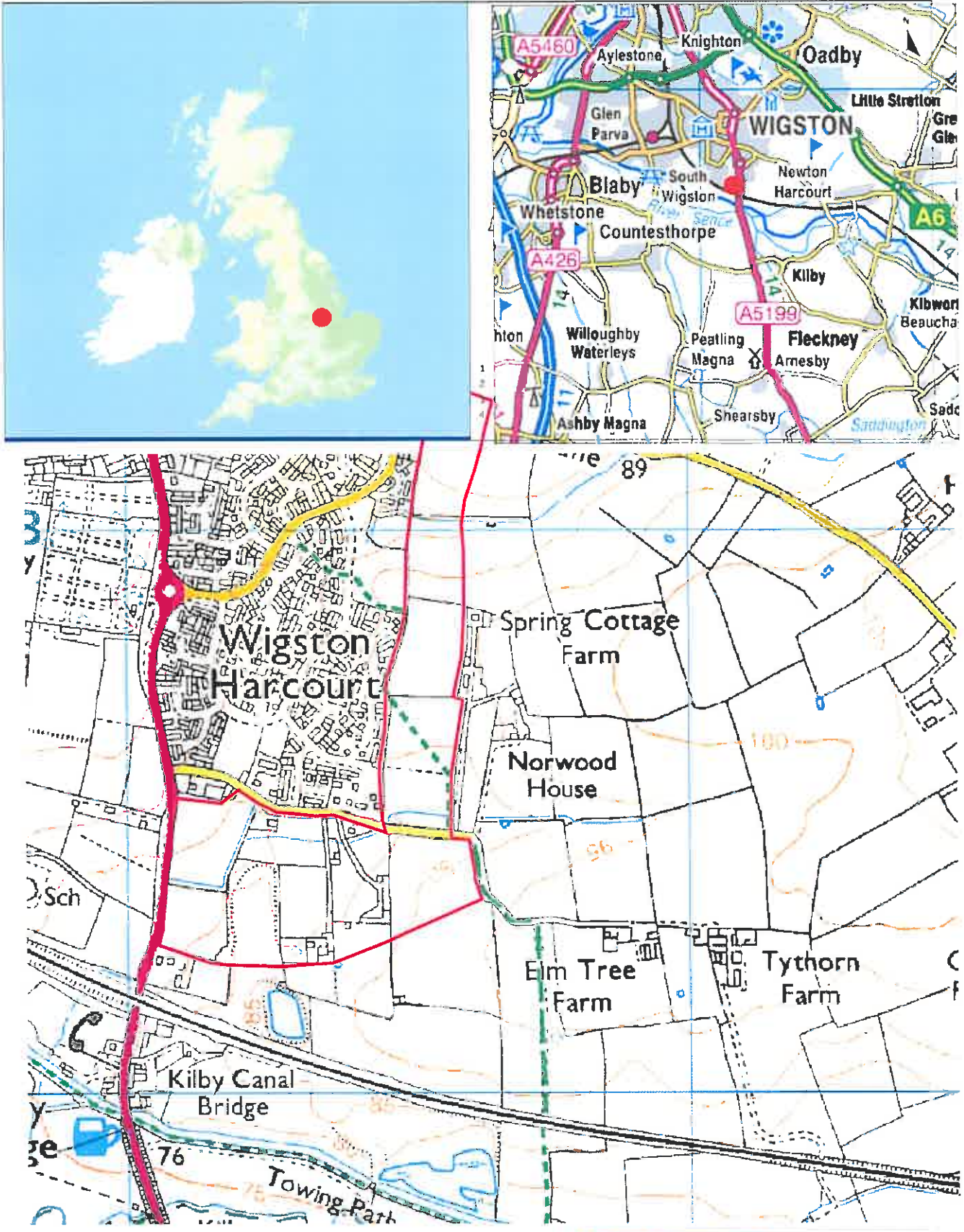

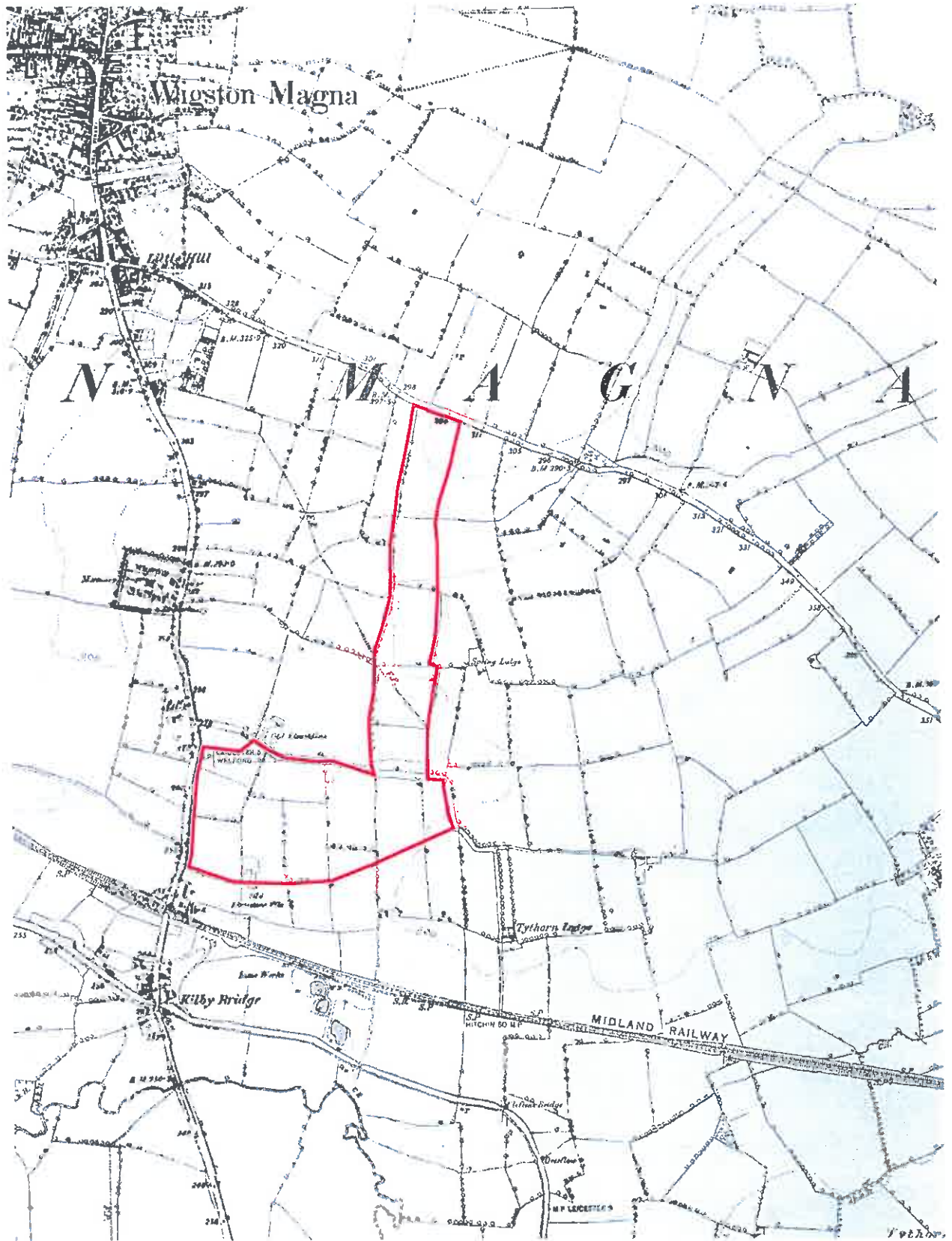


Figure 1: Site location

○ Site location

 <p>London Chatterton Luttering Newark Blithburgh SHEFFIELD www.cglls.co.uk Planning &amp; Development Architecture &amp; Interiors</p>	Land at Wigston	
	Not to scale Illustrative only	
	30/10/09	Drawn by: MD Checked by:






 proposed development site

Figure 3 OS 1st Edition 1887



Land at Wigston

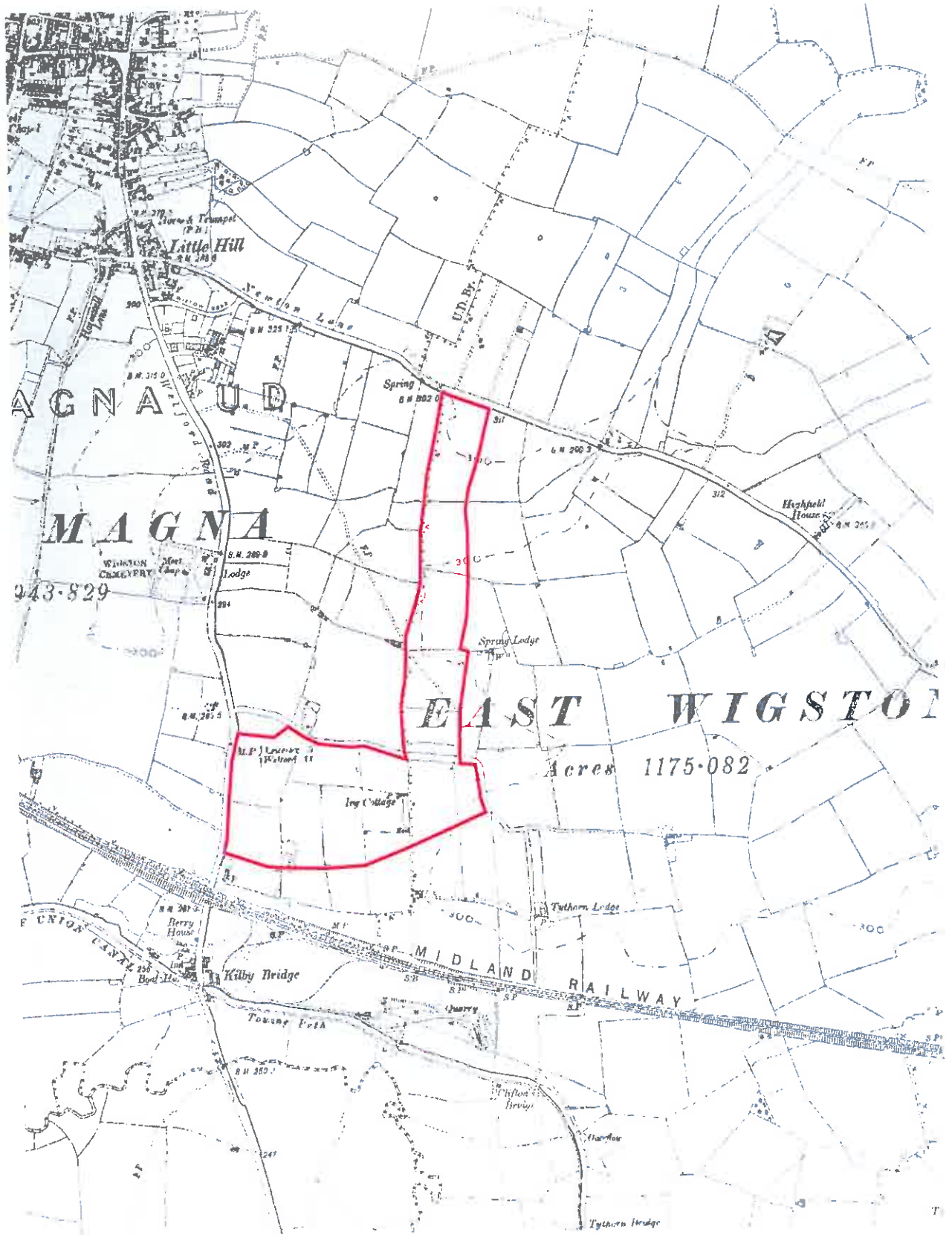
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proposed development site

Figure 4 OS 2nd Edition 1902



Land at Wigston

Not to scale  
Illustrative only

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Figure 5 Land at Wigston in 2009. The upper photograph shows the pasture land to the south, the lower the arable land to the east.



Land at Wigston		 London Chesham Esher Newark Northampton www.cgms.co.uk General & Specialist Management & Survey Services
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