

Land at Birch Business Park, Heywood, Greater Manchester
Archaeological Desk-Based Assessment
April 2026

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Report

Archaeological Desk-Based Assessment

Site

Land at Birch Business Park, Heywood, Greater Manchester

Client

Yeargate Limited

Date

April 2026

Planning Authority

Rochdale Borough Council

Grid Reference

SD 84277 08705

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Report Status

FINAL

Orion Ref

PN4880

Orion QA Ref

RQA-01460

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Timescales Used in This Report

Prehistoric

Palaeolithic	450,000 -12,000 BC
Mesolithic	12,000 - 4,000 BC
Neolithic	4,000 - 2,200 BC
Bronze Age	2,200 - 700 BC
Iron Age	700 - AD 43

Historic

Roman	43 - 410AD
Saxon/Early Medieval	410 - 1066AD
Medieval	1066 - 1485AD
Post Medieval	1486 - 1901AD
Modern	1901 - Present Day

Executive Summary

This archaeological desk-based assessment considers Land at Birchwood Business Park, Heywood (hereinafter referred to as the “Study Site”). In accordance with government policy (National Planning Policy Framework 2024), this assessment draws together the available archaeological, historic, topographic and land-use information in order to clarify the heritage significance and archaeological potential of the study site.

A review of the available evidence (as outlined above) has confirmed that the study site holds a *negligible* potential to contain archaeological material dating to the Roman and/or early Medieval periods, a *low* potential for Prehistoric remains, a *moderate* potential for Medieval remains, and a *high* potential for post-Medieval remains. Any such archaeological remains which do survive are expected to be of no more than *local* heritage significance.

Any groundworks associated with the proposed development would likely truncate and/or destroy any archaeological remains below ground within their developmental footprint, as would any groundworks associated with any related works (utilities, access roads etc.). This would particularly be the case for any remains within the footprints of the proposed units within the south west and north east extent of the study site.

This potential truncation and/or destruction of archaeological remains would be considered a permanent adverse change to these potential heritage assets. The resultant overall impact would depend on the heritage significance of those remains affected, which has been judged above as likely being no more than *local*.

Such impacts can likely be mitigated in advance of these proposed works. This would likely comprise a programme of geophysical survey, which would identify any anomalies within the study site of potential and/or probable archaeological origin.

Depending on the results of such investigations, further investigative and/or mitigative work may be required. This may include a programme of archaeological trial trenching, and/or strip, map, and sample archaeological excavation to fully record the nature and significance of any archaeological remains identified.

Such a programme of archaeological investigation and recording would ensure the preservation of such remains by record, likely mitigating the adverse impact upon their evidential value and heritage significance to a less than significant degree.

1.0 Introduction

- 1.1** This archaeological desk-based assessment considers land at Birch Business Park (Figure 1). It has been researched and prepared by Orion Heritage on behalf of Yeargate Limited. The site (hereinafter referred to as the “Study Site”) is located at grid reference SD 84277 08705. It has been prepared in advance of application for permission for industrial development of the study site.
- 1.2** In accordance with the Standard and Guidance for Historic Environment Desk-Based Assessment (Chartered Institute for Archaeologists 2020), the assessment draws together available information on designated and non-designated heritage assets, topographic and land-use information so as to establish the potential for non-designated archaeological assets within the study site. The assessment includes the results of a site survey, an examination of published and unpublished records, and charts historic land-use through a map regression exercise. The assessment also considers the setting of heritage assets, and provides an assessment of how their settings contribute to their significance.
- 1.3** The assessment enables relevant parties to assess the significance of heritage/ archaeological assets on and close to the study site and considers the potential for hitherto undiscovered archaeological assets, thus enabling potential impacts on assets to be identified along with the need for design, civil engineering or archaeological solutions. It also provides an understanding of any constraints to development of the study site due to the presence of nearby heritage assets, and provides an assessment of the potential impact development would have on the significance of heritage assets and also provides design responses that would serve to reduce that impact in line with local and national policy.
- 1.4** The study area used in this assessment is a 1km radius from the centre of the study site (Figures 2 and 3).
- 1.5** A site visit was not appropriate, as the study site comprises a small parcel of rough land with no above ground archaeological remains surviving. Aerial photography from 2026 confirms this layout of the study site.

Location, Topography and Geology

- 1.6** The study site comprises a single parcel of rough grassed land. It is located to the south west of the settlement of Heywood, and c.10.4km to the north of Manchester City centre. It is bounded by agricultural land to the north, east, and south, with an industrial site to the west of its main body. Part of the study site comprises an access road through this industrial site in a south west/north east orientation.
- 1.7** The solid geology of the study site comprises Pennine Lower Coal Measures Formation (mudstone, siltstone, and sandstone), deposited c.318-319 million years ago.

1.8 Superficial geological deposits within the study site comprise largely post-glacial till (laid down c. 110,000-11,700 years ago), with some very minor deposits of other sand and gravel to the north extent of the study site, laid down in the past 2.58 million years.

2.0 Aims, Objectives & Methodology

2.1 The principal aims of the desk-based assessment are to:

- Gain an understanding of the archaeological potential of the study site;
- Identify any archaeological constraints to the development of the study site; and to
- Assess the likely impact of the proposed development.

2.2 The results of the archaeological desk-based assessment will inform an archaeological strategy for further on-site assessment and formulation of a mitigation strategy, as appropriate to the archaeological potential of the study site.

2.3 This desk-based assessment conforms to the requirements of current national and local planning policy (including *National Planning Policy Framework 2024*) and it has been designed in accordance with current best archaeological practice, and the appropriate national and local standards and guidelines, including:

- Management of Recording Projects in the Historic Environment: MORPHE (English Heritage 2006);
- Code of Conduct (Chartered Institute for Archaeologists [CIfA] [revised edition] 2014); and
- Standard and Guidance for Historic Environment Desk-Based Assessment (CIfA January 2020).

2.4 It is noted that the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists defines desk-based assessment as:

“a programme of study of the historic environment within a specified area or site on land, the inter-tidal zone or underwater that addresses agreed research and/or conservation objectives. It consists of an analysis of existing written, graphic, photographic and electronic information in order to identify the likely heritage assets, their interests and significance and the character of the study area, including appropriate consideration of the settings of heritage assets and, in England, the nature, extent and quality of the known or potential archaeological, historic, architectural and artistic interest. Significance is to be judged in a local, regional, national or international context as appropriate.”

2.5 The Chartered Institute for Archaeologists Standard for desk-based assessment states that:

“Desk-based assessment will determine, as far as is reasonably possible from existing records, the nature, extent and significance of the historic environment within a specified area. Desk-based assessment will be

undertaken using appropriate methods and practices which satisfy the stated aims of the project, and which comply with the Code of conduct and other relevant regulations of ClfA. In a development context desk-based assessment will establish the impact of the proposed development on the significance of the historic environment (or will identify the need for further evaluation to do so) and will enable reasoned proposals and decisions to be made whether to mitigate, offset or accept without further intervention that impact.”

Methodology

2.6 The archaeological desk-based assessment will include:

- Map regression based on Ordnance Survey maps and tithe/enclosure maps and apportionments
- Examination of material currently held in the Greater Manchester Historic Environment Record, including Historic Landscape Characterisation for the proposed routes and for a 1km search radius; and
- Consultation of the National Heritage List for England.

2.7 The report will also include a consideration of LiDAR and aerial photography for the study site.

3.0 Planning Background and Development Plan Framework

Ancient Monuments & Archaeological Areas Act 1979

- 3.1** The Ancient Monuments & Archaeological Areas Act 1979 (as amended) protects the fabric of Scheduled Monuments but does not afford statutory protection to their settings.

National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) & National Planning Practice Guidance (NPPG)

- 3.2** Government policy in relation to the historic environment is outlined in Section 16 of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), entitled 'Conserving and Enhancing the Historic Environment'. This provides guidance for planning authorities, property owners, developers and others on the conservation and investigation of heritage assets. Overall, the objectives of Section 16 of the NPPF can be summarised as seeking the:

- Delivery of sustainable development;
- Understanding the wider social, cultural, economic and environmental benefits brought by the conservation of the historic environment;
- Conservation of England's heritage assets in a manner appropriate to their significance; and
- Recognition of the contribution that heritage assets make to our knowledge and understanding of the past.

- 3.3** Section 16 of the NPPF recognises that intelligently managed change may sometimes be necessary if heritage assets are to be maintained for the long term. The NPPF is supported by the National Planning Policy Guidance (NPPG). In relation to the historic environment, paragraph 18a-001 states that:

Conservation is an active process of maintenance and managing change. It requires a flexible and thoughtful approach to get the best out of assets as diverse as listed buildings in every day use and as yet undiscovered, undesignated buried remains of archaeological interest.

- 3.4** Paragraph 207 states that planning decisions should be based on the significance of the heritage asset, and that the level of detail supplied by an applicant should be proportionate to the importance of the asset and should be no more than sufficient to understand the potential impact of the proposal upon the significance of that asset.

Designated Heritage Assets

- 3.5** A key aspect of NPPF paragraphs 212-215 is whether a proposed development will result in substantial harm or less than substantial harm to a designated asset. However, substantial harm is not defined in the NPPF. Paragraph 18a-017 (Paragraph: 018 Reference ID: 18a-018-20190723) of the PPG provides additional guidance on substantial harm. The following quote refers to listed

buildings but the same principles applies to archaeological designated heritage assets. It states:

“Proposed development affecting a heritage asset may have no impact on its significance or may enhance its significance and therefore cause no harm to the heritage asset. Where potential harm to designated heritage assets is identified, it needs to be categorised as either less than substantial harm or substantial harm (which includes total loss) in order to identify which policies in the National Planning Policy Framework (paragraphs 194-196 now para 212-215 in the 2024 NPPF) apply.”

Within each category of harm (which category applies should be explicitly identified), the extent of the harm may vary and should be clearly articulated.

*Whether a proposal causes substantial harm will be a judgment for the decision-maker, having regard to the circumstances of the case and the policy in the National Planning Policy Framework. In general terms, substantial harm is a high test, so it may not arise in many cases. For example, in determining whether works to a listed building constitute substantial harm, an important consideration would be whether the adverse impact seriously affects a key element of its special architectural or historic interest. **It is the degree of harm to the asset’s significance rather than the scale of the development that is to be assessed.** The harm may arise from works to the asset or from development within its setting. (emphasis added).*

- 3.6** Paragraph 215 of the NPPF outlines that where a proposed development results in less than substantial harm to the significance of a heritage asset, the harm arising should be weighed against the public benefits accruing from the proposed development. Paragraph 18a-020 of the PPG (Paragraph: 020 Reference ID: 18a-020-20190723) outlines what is meant by public benefits:

“Public benefits may follow from many developments and could be anything that delivers economic, social or environmental objectives as described in the National Planning Policy Framework (paragraph 8). Public benefits should flow from the proposed development. They should be of a nature or scale to be of benefit to the public at large and not just be a private benefit. However, benefits do not always have to be visible or accessible to the public in order to be genuine public benefits, for example, works to a listed private dwelling which secure its future as a designated heritage asset could be a public benefit.”

- 3.7** No harm occurs where a proposed development will have no direct physical effects on heritage assets and/or where a proposed development is outside of the setting of a designated heritage asset. In such instances, there will be no adverse effects on the significance of designated heritage assets.

Non-Designated Heritage Assets

- 3.8** Paragraph 216 requires the decision-maker to take into account the effect on the significance of non-designated heritage assets and to take a balanced

judgement having regard to the scale of harm or loss and the significance of the asset(s) potentially affected.

NPPF Definitions

- 3.9** *Heritage Assets* are defined in Annex 2 as a building, monument, site, place, area or landscape identified as having a degree of significance meriting consideration in planning decisions, because of its heritage interest. It includes designated heritage assets and assets identified by the local planning authority (including local listing).
- 3.10** *Archaeological Interest* is defined as a heritage asset which holds, or potentially could hold, evidence of past human activity worthy of expert investigation at some point. Heritage assets with archaeological interest are the primary source of evidence about the substance and evolution of places, and of the people and cultures that made them.
- 3.11** *Designated Heritage Assets* comprise: A World Heritage Site, Scheduled Monument, Listed Building, Protected Wreck Site, Registered Parks and Garden, Registered Battlefield or Conservation Areas designated under the relevant legislation.
- 3.12** *Significance* is defined as the value of a heritage asset to this and future generations because of its heritage interest. This interest may be archaeological, architectural, artistic or historic. Significance derives not only from a heritage asset's physical presence, but also from its setting.
- 3.13** *Setting* is defined as 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.

Local Planning Policy

- 3.14** The Rochdale Publication Core Strategy (October 2016) has the following policy relating to the historic environment.

P2 - Protecting and enhancing character, landscape and heritage

1. We will protect and enhance the borough's character, the distinctiveness of its town centres, housing areas and countryside, and the qualities of its landscapes, utilising the considerable potential of these assets in development and regeneration schemes.

We will do this by:

- a. Requiring new development to integrate successfully with the key natural features of the borough, e.g. river valleys and the Pennine landscape;
- b. Requiring new development to take opportunities to protect and open up important views of hills and valleys which are part of the borough's unique character;
- c. Restoring the River Roch and other water bodies to their place as key and attractive features of the borough, including opening up waterways where they have been covered, and enhancing their setting, heritage assets and biodiversity potential;
- d. Protecting, enhancing and utilising outstanding cultural landscapes, such as the Cheesden Valley area and around Littleborough and Hollingworth Lake; and
- e. Conserving and enhancing townscape character.

2. We will protect the borough's heritage by:

- a. Conserving, enhancing and promoting key heritage assets, both statutory and non-statutory, including consideration of their wider settings. Key heritage assets of the borough include:
 - Four outstanding conservation areas: Central Rochdale, Middleton and Littleborough town centres and Rock Nook / Summit;
 - Other designated assets such as listed buildings, conservation areas, registered parks and scheduled ancient monuments;
 - The heritage of the Co-operative movement, the Rochdale Pioneers and the Labour movement;
 - The Edgar Wood and J. H. Sellers cultural heritage;
 - The heritage of the seventeenth and eighteenth century vernacular tradition; and
 - The engineering heritage, including mills, canals and railways.
- b. Conserving, enhancing and utilising other non-statutory heritage assets of local interest, be they buildings, parks, gardens or archaeological sites, including promoting their sensitive restoration;
- c. Using heritage assets positively and intelligently to strengthen identity and image and support the visitor economy, particularly in development and regeneration schemes; and

d. Prioritising the conservation of heritage assets at risk from decay, giving special attention to designated heritage assets in this regard.

Guidance

Historic Environment Good Practice Advice In Planning Note 2: Managing Significance in Decision-Taking in the Historic Environment (Historic England 2015)

- 3.15** The purpose of this document is to provide information to assist local authorities, planning and other consultants, owners, applicants and other interested parties in implementing historic environment policy in the NPPF and NPPG. It outlines a six-stage process to the assembly and analysis of relevant information relating to heritage assets potentially affected by a proposed development:
- Understand the significance of the affected assets;
 - Understand the impact of the proposal on that significance;
 - Avoid, minimise and mitigate impact in a way that meets the objectives of the NPPF;
 - Look for opportunities to better reveal or enhance significance;
 - Justify any harmful impacts in terms of the sustainable development objective of conserving significance and the need for change; and
 - Offset negative impacts on aspects of significance by enhancing others through recording, disseminating and archiving archaeological and historical interest of the important elements of the heritage assets affected.

4.0 Archaeological and Historic Baseline

Archaeological Heritage Assets

- 4.1** The heritage assets under consideration have been identified by means of a review of the following resources:
- Greater Manchester Historic Environment Record (HER) Data;
 - The National Heritage List for England (NHLE) held by Historic England ;
 - Historic England Archive;
 - Pastscape;
 - Local studies and record office research; and
 - Review of historic mapping.
- 4.2** This resource has been used to provide an understanding of the heritage assets which may be affected by the proposed development. This chapter will describe the heritage assets which may be affected and assess their significance.

Previous archaeological investigations

- 4.3** There are no previous archaeological investigations within the study site. However, the north of the study site borders the c.122ha of land covered by a series of desk-based assessment, walkover studies, and aerial photography assessment (EGM4370) across the north and north east of the wider 1km study area. This assessment concludes potential for all archaeological periods across the north extent of the study area, particularly from the prehistoric and/or Medieval.
- 4.4** Within the wider study site, the closest intrusive archaeological investigation comprises a series of test pitting and trial pitting (EGM6034), as well as open excavation (EGM552). The initial pitting and trenches recorded a likely medieval tap-slag furnace, as well as considerable quantities of in-situ slag and evidence of ore roasting upon site. It is noted that no definitive archaeological remains dating to the Prehistoric or Roman periods were recorded, fitting with the lack of such remains recorded within the wider area (see below, Sections 4.7-4.13).

Undated

- 4.5** There are no undated archaeological remains recorded by the HER within the study site.
- 4.6** Situated c.600m to the south west of the study site, several linear cropmarks show the presence of possible earthworks and ditches, possibly showing the location of undated field systems and a possible deserted settlement. The exact period and nature, however, is uncertain due to the lack of further investigation at this site.

Prehistoric

- 4.7 There are no archaeological remains dating to the prehistoric period recorded by the HER within the study site.
- 4.8 The wider study area appears to fall within a broad palaeolithic landscape, with Pilsworth Moor (MGM6032) to the north west and Siddal Moor (MGM6054) to the east. Both overly post-glacial deposits of gravels, although the area is not well understood archaeologically.
- 4.9 A sub-rectangular cropmark situated c.75m to the north west of the study site (MGM3652) may date from the later Bronze age, although the HER states that it is more likely to be the remains of post-Medieval mining operations in the area.
- 4.10 Overall, the relative lack of recorded remains dating to the prehistoric across the study site and study area suggests a *low* potential for such remains to be preserved within the study site itself.

Roman

- 4.11 There are no archaeological remains dating to the Roman period recorded by the HER within the study site or within the wider study area.
- 4.12 The nearest recorded activity from this period is that of the purported route of a Roman road c.5.3km to the west of the study site, which continues from the *vicus* at Manchester into the north west of England.
- 4.13 Considering this lack of archaeological evidence for Roman activity within the study site and study area, there is a *negligible* potential for such remains to survive within the study site.

Saxon and early Medieval

- 4.14 There are no archaeological remains dating to the early Medieval period recorded by the HER within the study site or within the wider study area.
- 4.15 The study site falls within the parish of Middleton, specifically on the border between the township of Pilsworth and the Whittle portion of the township of Heap. The name 'Pilsworth' comes from the Old English for 'Pil's enclosure', 'Heap' from the Old English for 'heap' and 'Middleton' from the Old English for 'middle farm' (Place-Names 2025). These names suggest an early Medieval origin, although none of these settlements are recorded in the Domesday Survey (Open Domesday 1086), suggesting they were minor hamlets or farmsteads at most.
- 4.16 Considering this, there is a *negligible* potential for archaeological remains dating to the early Medieval period to survive within the study site.

Medieval

- 4.17** There are no archaeological remains dating to the Medieval period recorded by the HER within the study site.
- 4.18** However, a concentration of activity has been recorded by archaeological investigations (EGM6034) within the south west extent of the study area. These include numerous earthworks (banks and ditches) interpreted as field systems and house platforms of a deserted Medieval settlement (MGM3641), situated c.680m south west of the main body of the study site. Surrounding this are remains of further field systems and evidence for ridge and furrow ploughing (MGM3642 and MGM3643) to the north and south of the abandoned settlement, as well as focus of later Medieval industrial work (MGM3644), situated to the north west of the settlement focus.
- 4.19** The evidence for this local industry comprises remains of slag recovered during investigations on the 1980s, alongside post pits, clay foundations, and some evidence for quarrying. excavations in 2022 (EGM6034) revealed parts of a Medieval furnace, as well as evidence for ore roasting on site and considerable amounts of *in situ* slag.
- 4.20** Other examples of Medieval settlement are noted c.740m to the south east of the study site, in the form of Lower Whittle (MGM6210). Considerable evidence for ridge and furrow ploughing surrounds this area, particularly across the north of the settlement, to the east of the study site (MGM3722 and MGM3654). This sets the study site within a clear later Medieval rural and agricultural landscape.
- 4.21** Another known settlement or early farm site was situated c.860m to the south of the study site, being Whittle Fold (MGM6034). The possible remains of a moated site (MGM3657) are situated c.1km to the east of the study site, comprising an L-shaped cropmark, which may have formed part of the moat of a homestead.
- 4.22** Whittle, within Heap, is largely descended with Bury. The manor of Bury was originally held as one knight's fee of the lord of Tottington. The earliest recorded tenant was Adam de Bury, whose family's tenure probably dates back to the early 12th century. The manor remained with the de Bury family until the early 14th century, including Henry de Bury, who made a settlement of the manor in 1313 shortly before he was killed during local disturbances in 1315. Upon the death of Henry's son without issue, the manor passed to his daughter, Alice, and her husband, Roger de Pilkington. The Pilkington family maintained possession for over 150 years. This period of ownership ended in 1485 when the lands of Sir Thomas Pilkington were forfeited to the Crown due to his adherence to Richard III. In 1489, the new king granted the manor to the Earl of Derby. The manor then descended regularly through the Stanley family for nearly four hundred years.
- 4.23** As stated above, the study site falls within the parish of Middleton, and Pilsworth does not seem to have ever been a separate manor. Rather, it largely

descended with Middleton. In the 12th century, the manor of Middleton formed part of the Montbegon fee of Tottington, which was later held by the Lacys and the Dukes of Lancaster. The first recorded tenants were the de Middleton family, beginning with Roger de Middleton around 1180. The manor remained with this local family for several generations until 1322, when the male line failed and the estate passed to Maud de Middleton and her husband, Thomas de Barton. The Barton family maintained ownership for over a century until Margery Barton, the heir to the estate, was contracted to marry Ralph Ashton in 1439. By 1480, Sir Ralph Ashton held the manor in right of his wife, Margery. The Ashton family oversaw the estate for nearly three centuries.

- 4.24** Considering the surrounding evidence for Medieval settlement and agricultural activity, there is a *moderate* potential for related remains of this period to survive within the study site. However, this potential is somewhat mediated by the post-Medieval agricultural activity within the study site, as well as evident Modern truncation, which may have damaged or removed remains preserved in the topsoil and upper layers.

Post Medieval

- 4.25** There are no archaeological remains dating to the Medieval period recorded by the HER within the study site. To the immediate west of the study site, extractive pits (marl, colliery etc.) are noted (MGM10484), likely dating to the 19th century and demonstrating a local economy alongside the agricultural exploitation of the area. A possible 'bell pit' (MGM3638) is noted further afield (c.1km to the south west of the main body of the study site) being a primitive form of mineral extraction where the upper entrance hole is more narrow than the extraction space beneath, leaving a distinctive depression in the landscape when it collapses. Although such pits sometimes date from the prehistoric period, this is more likely to be 17th/18th century by context.
- 4.26** The 1662 Joan Blaeu Map of Lancashire (Figure 4) does not show any detail of the study site itself, although does depict the settlements of Bury to the north west, Middleton (with a depicted park) to the east, and Hawood Chappel/Heywood to the north. More immediately to the study site, Lower Whittle sees continued use and occupation during this time, with a 17th century farmhouse (MGM3724) noted here.
- 4.27** Into the 18th century, numerous farmsteads are recorded as being established to the south and west of the study site (such as MGM3716 at Broom Hill Farm and MGM3707 at Higher Barn), with some (MGM3747, c.800m south west of the main extent of the study site) showing the continuation of Medieval settlement, with barns being built at Meadowcroft Farm during this century. Also at this time, quarrying and associated structures are noted c.250m northwest of the study site.
- 4.28** The 1828 Bingley and Hennet Map of Lancashire (Figure 5) shows several of the key routes which surround the study site at present day, including what appears to be Pilsworth Road to the north and Moss Hall Road to the west.

Furthermore, Higher Field farm is clearly depicted as a single L-shaped building c.200m to the west of the study site. The study site itself is depicted as presumably agricultural lands within the Middleton area, c.2.3km to the south west of the historic centre of Heywood. To the north of the study site, another farmstead named Haysill Fold is also depicted, although this does not survive to present day.

4.29 The 1839 Pilsworth tithe survey (Figure 7) lists the site across the following plots of land:

Plot No.	Plot Name	Owner	Occupier	Landuse
198	Brick Kiln Field	The Right Honourable Earl Of Wilton	Moses Partington	Pasture
199	Marled Field	The Right Honourable Earl Of Wilton	Moses Partington	Pasture
200	Site of cottages and gardens	The Right Honourable Earl Of Wilton	Moses Partington	Gardens &c.
201	Little Meadow	The Right Honourable Earl Of Wilton	Moses Partington	Meadow
202	Long Field	The Right Honourable Earl Of Wilton	Moses Partington	Pasture
203	Little Rough	The Right Honourable Earl Of Wilton	Moses Partington	Pasture

4.30 The 1838 Heap Bridge tithe survey (Figure 6) lists the site across the following plots of land:

Plot No.	Plot Name	Owner	Occupier	Landuse
932	Cottage	John Hall, leasehold under the Earl of Derby	John Hall	Pasture
938	Odd Field	John Hall	John Hall	Arable
1074	Fensher New Field	Abraham Wood, leasehold under the Earl of Derby	Richard Bridge	Arable

4.31 This shows the study site at this time was agricultural in use, with a variety of arable, pasture, and meadow. It is noted that 'cottages and gardens' (Plot 200) fell within the south west extent of the main body of the study site. The names of some of the fields (Marled Fields, Brick Kiln Field etc.) point to previous local industrial use, as recorded by the HER back into the 18th century, particularly to the west and south west of the main body of the study site.

4.32 The Ordnance Survey map of 1851 (Figure 8) shows the main body of the site to largely comprise of three agricultural parcels of land at the 'Higher Fields', with the southern corridor passing through two other parcels at 'Crow Fields'.

The cottages noted above may also be seen in likely association with the Crow fields.

- 4.33** A field to the immediate north west of the study site is shown to contain a single rectangular building. The remains of extraction pits are noted to the immediate west of the study site, by this point likely as ponds. The Ordnance Survey map of 1893 (Figure 9) shows that the study site has been combined into a single parcel of land, with some minor rearrangement of field boundaries noted in the surrounding fields. At this time, the Historic Landscape Characterisation within the HER shows this land to be post-Medieval piecemeal enclosures (HGM22441), showing gradual increase of enclosure size throughout the later 19th and earlier 20th centuries. The cottages and gardens noted above are no longer depicted, likely having been demolished by this time.
- 4.34** Into the 19th century, this extractive economy appears to have expanded, with examples noted across the wider study area. These include at least three groupings of mine shafts across the west extent of the study area (MGM3715, MGM3711, and MGM3709). Approximately 600m south by south west of the main body of the study site, a group of three mining shafts (MGM3712) are recorded as a 'mining flash', a lake formed by subsidence of the shafts and tunnels beneath. Several other shafts within this area either date from the 19th century or possibly earlier (such as MGM3650 and MGM3649).
- 4.35** A brickfield (MGM3725) is also noted c.1km to the east of the study site.
- 4.36** Into the 20th century, the Ordnance Survey map of 1938 (Figure 10) shows no real change within the study site and immediate environs. Likewise, the Ordnance Survey map of 1958 (Figure 11) does not show any change with the exception of some parcel agglomeration to the north west of the study site. The remains of the extraction pits to the west of the study site are still depicted.
- 4.37** Little change is noted after this point within the Ordnance Survey mapping. Further afield, the mapping of 1974-1977 shows the erection of nearby industrial estate, beyond Pilsworth Road c.520m to the north and north east of the study site.
- 4.38** Also by this point, the M62 has been constructed c.800m to the south east of the study site, truncating a former quarry and some woodland, although not disrupting those historic farms noted above (Lower Whittle etc.). Throughout this time, Heywood also expands to the west, largely with residential development.
- 4.39** Another (albeit far smaller) industrial site is depicted to the immediate south west of the main body of the study site by the Ordnance Survey Mapping of 1968-81 (Figure 12). The southern corridor of the study site comprises an access road through this industrial site.
- 4.40** The surrounding landscape does not appear to change as depicted in later mapping with the majority of field boundary arrangements being maintained. However, a landfill does displace the reservoir c.1km to the west of the study

site by mapping 1999, as well as the historic farmstead of Hill Top found here (MGM18192).

- 4.41** By the Ordnance Survey map of 2025 (Figure 15), the study site is depicted as rough ground.

Analysis of LiDAR Data and Aerial Photography

- 4.42** Analysis of LiDAR DTM data does not reveal any anomalies likely to be of archaeological origin, due to modern grounds seeming to have truncated the top soil.
- 4.43** Aerial photography is available for the study site from Google Earth between the years 1985 to 2025. Due to the relative poor quality of the 1985 image, details of the study site are not visible.
- 4.44** The 2000 photograph shows the study site comprising of rough grassland of uncertain use. However, the 2003 image shows that some groundworks have occurred within the south west extent of the main body of the study site, with this truncation appearing to the spread to most of the rest of the main body of the site by the 2005 image.
- 4.45** These groundworks appear to have stopped by the 2013 image, which shows bare earth covering most of the main body of the study site. Images up until 2020 show the study site overgrowing with grass and some trees. However, the 2020 image itself shows further groundworks have again spread into the study site from the south west, with the apparent storage of equipment within the south west corner of the main body.
- 4.46** These works continue until the image of 2023, which shows some grassing over, suggesting any ground works have ceased. However, the tracks within the west and north extent of the study site have not grassed over, suggesting they are still in relatively constant use at this point.
- 4.47** The 2025 image shows this also to be the case, with the main body of the study site comprising overgrown groundworks.

Summary of Archaeological Potential and Assessment of Significance

- 4.48** A review of the available evidence has confirmed that the study site holds a *negligible* potential to contain archaeological material dating to the Roman and/or early Medieval periods. The study site also contains a *low* potential for Prehistoric remains, a *moderate* potential for Medieval remains, and a *high* potential for post-Medieval remains. For the most part, any surviving remains are likely to be agricultural in nature, such as the former field boundary noted in the 1851 Ordnance Survey map of the study site. There is some potential for the foundations of the post-Medieval cottage noted within the south west extent of the main body of the study site to survive below ground, although there has been modern truncation in this area which reduces this potential.

4.49 Other than this, potential exists for isolated artefacts (pottery sherds etc.) deposited as midden on the fields, paleoenvironmental remains dating to the Prehistoric period (pollen etc.), surviving within any glacial deposits recorded as beneath the study site. However, any such archaeological remains which do survive are expected to be of no more than *local* (low) heritage significance. Any archaeological remains which contribute towards regional research frameworks may have their significance elevated accordingly.

5.0 Proposed Development and Potential Impact on Heritage Assets

Site Conditions

- 5.1 The site is currently a single parcel of rough grassland (formally agricultural), with a narrow corridor passing through the industrial site to the south west.

The Proposed Development

- 5.2 The proposed development is for the erection of two industrial units, with associated vehicle access and parking areas. Unit A would be raised within the south west extent of the main body of the study site, with Unit B within the north east extent. The southern corridor of the study site would provide access through the exiting industrial site to the south west.

Potential Archaeological Impacts and Mitigation Measures

- 5.3 A review of the available evidence (as outlined above) has confirmed that the study site holds a *negligible* potential to contain archaeological material dating to the Roman and/or early Medieval periods, a *low* potential for Prehistoric remains, a *moderate* potential for Medieval remains, and a *high* potential for post-Medieval remains. Any such archaeological remains which do survive are expected to be of no more than *local* heritage significance.
- 5.4 Any groundworks associated with the proposed development would likely truncate and/or destroy any archaeological remains below ground within their developmental footprint, as would any groundworks associated with any related works (utilities, access roads etc.). This would particularly be the case for any remains within the footprints of the proposed units within the south west and north east extent of the study site. There is also the potential for the proposed access roads and parking areas within the south west extent of the study site to truncate/destroy any surviving foundations of the post-Medieval cottages noted in this area. However, due to previous Modern groundworks, such preservation is not likely.
- 5.5 This potential truncation and/or destruction of archaeological remains would be considered a permanent adverse change to these potential heritage assets. The resultant overall impact would depend on the heritage significance of those remains affected, which has been judged above as likely being no more than *local* (low).
- 5.6 Such impacts can likely be mitigated in advance of these proposed works. This would likely comprise a programme of geophysical survey, which would identify any anomalies within the study site of potential and/or probable archaeological origin. However, the effectiveness of such a survey may be reduced by the Modern groundworks evidenced on site.
- 5.7 Depending on the results of such investigations, further investigative and/or mitigative work may be required.
- 5.8 Such a programme of archaeological investigation and recording would ensure the preservation of such remains by record, likely mitigating the

adverse impact upon their evidential value and heritage significance to a less than significant degree.

6.0 Summary and Conclusions

- 6.1 This historic environment desk-based assessment considers land at Birch Business Park, which is proposed for industrial development.
- 6.2 A review of the available evidence (as outlined above) has confirmed that the study site holds a *negligible* potential to contain archaeological material dating to the Roman and/or early Medieval periods, a *low* potential for Prehistoric remains, a *moderate* potential for Medieval remains, and a *high* potential for post-Medieval remains. Any such archaeological remains which do survive are expected to be of no more than *local* heritage significance.
- 6.3 Any groundworks associated with the proposed development would likely truncate and/or destroy any archaeological remains below ground within their developmental footprint, as would any groundworks associated with any related works (utilities, access roads etc.). This would particularly be the case for any remains within the footprints of the proposed units within the south west and north east extent of the study site, as well any surviving foundations of the post-Medieval cottages noted within the south west extent of the main body of the study site.
- 6.4 This potential truncation and/or destruction of archaeological remains would be considered a permanent adverse change to these potential heritage assets. The resultant overall impact would depend on the heritage significance of those remains affected, which has been judged above as likely being no more than *local*.
- 6.5 Such impacts can likely be mitigated in advance of these proposed works. This would likely comprise a programme of geophysical survey, which would identify any anomalies within the study site of potential and/or probable archaeological origin.
- 6.6 Depending on the results of such investigations, further investigative and/or mitigative work may be required.
- 6.7 Such a programme of archaeological investigation and recording would ensure the preservation of such remains by record, likely mitigating the adverse impact upon their evidential value and heritage significance to a less than significant degree.

Sources

General

British Library

The National Archives

Greater Manchester Historic Environment Record

Cartographic

1662 Joan Blaeu Map of Lancashire

1828 J Bingley and G Hennet map of Lancashire

1838 Tithe Map of Heap Bridge

1839 Tithe Map of Pilsworth

Ordnance Survey 1851 1;10,560

Ordnance Survey 1893 1;2,500

Ordnance Survey 1938 1;10,560

Ordnance Survey 1958 1;2,500

Ordnance Survey 1977 1;10,000

Ordnance Survey 1981 1;2,500

Ordnance Survey 2006 1;10,000

Ordnance Survey 2025 1;10,000

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APPENDIX A – GAZETTEERS

GAZETTEER OF HERITAGE ASSETS

In order to understand the nature and extent of the surrounding archaeological resource, a study area of a 1km buffer of the site was adopted. The following gazetteer represents all of the entries from the Greater Manchester HER (GMHER).

PREFREF	NAME	PERIOD
MGM3640	Cropmarks at Meadowcroft Fold	Unknown
MGM3645	Cropmark and earthwork bank at Meadowcroft	Unknown
MGM3648	Linear cropmark at Whittle	Unknown
MGM6032	Pilsworth Moor	Prehistoric
MGM6054	Siddal Moor (Doctor's Moss)	Palaeolithic to Post Medieval
MGM3652	Sub-rectangular enclosure at Higher Fields	Bronze Age to Post Medieval
MGM3644	Meadowcroft Fold (excavations and fieldwalking)	Medieval
MGM3657	Cropmark at New Gap Farm	Medieval
MGM3654	Ridge and furrow, north of Stock Nook	Medieval to Post Medieval
MGM6034	Whittle Fold settlement	Medieval to Post Medieval
MGM6210	Lower Whittle settlement	Medieval to Post Medieval
MGM3641	Earthworks at Meadowcroft	Medieval to Post Medieval
MGM3642	Ridge and furrow at Meadowcroft Fold	Medieval to Post Medieval
MGM3643	Earthworks at Meadowcroft	Medieval to Post Medieval
MGM3721	Ridge and furrow at Siddal Moor Farm	Medieval to Post Medieval
MGM3722	Ridge and furrow at Doctor Fold Lane	Medieval to Post Medieval
MGM3730	Dark cropmark and ridge & furrow (site of)	Medieval to Post Medieval
MGM3649	Mine shafts at Pilsworth	Post Medieval
MGM3650	Mine shafts, near Higher Fields	Post Medieval
MGM3651	Mine shafts, south of Higher Fields	Post Medieval

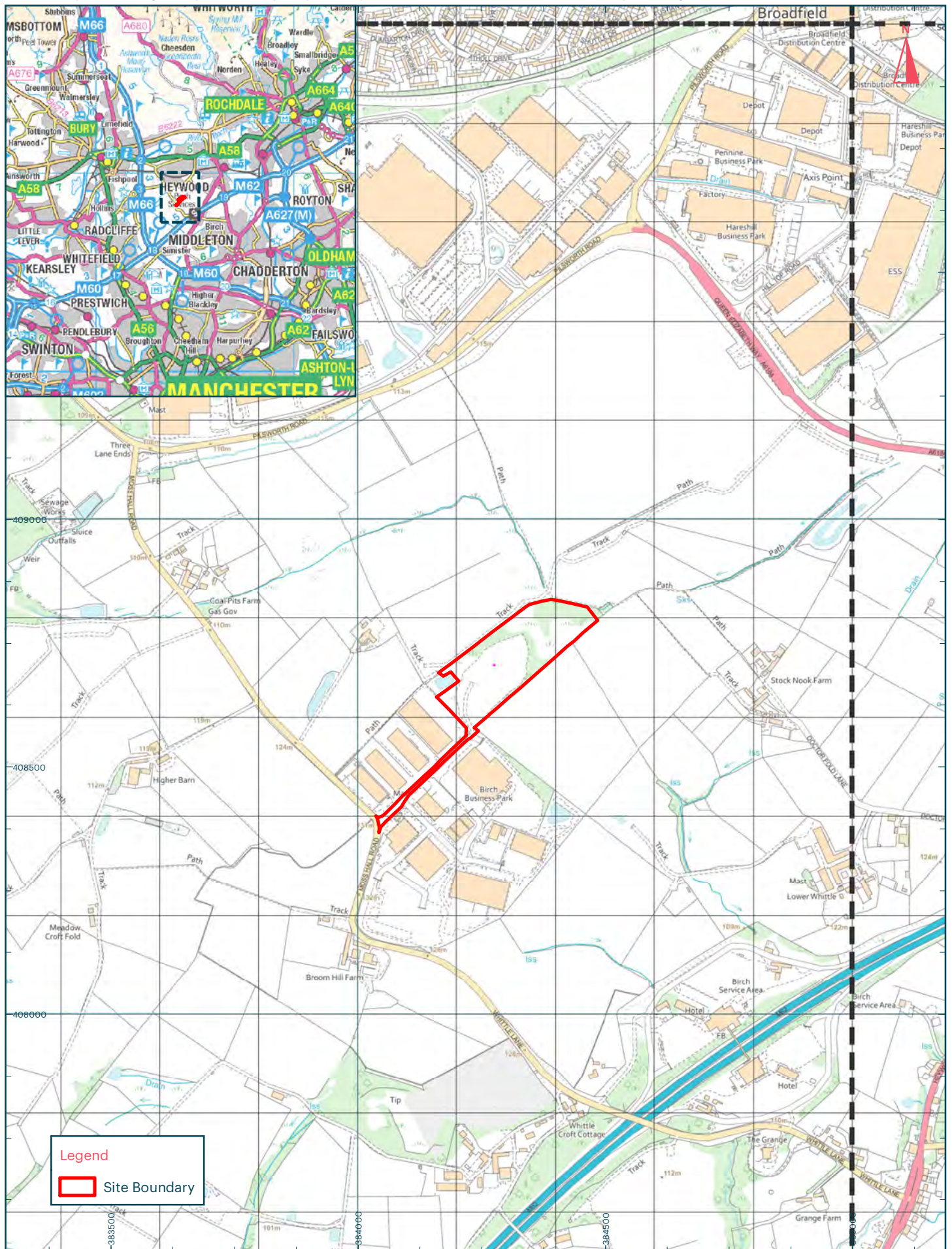
PREFREF	NAME	PERIOD
MGM3653	Mine shafts at Stock Nook	Post Medieval
MGM3655	Linear feature	Post Medieval
MGM3656	Mine shafts at New Gap Farm	Post Medieval
MGM3704	Disused quarry at Brightley Brook	Post Medieval
MGM3723	Large earthwork feature	Post Medieval
MGM3719	Old lane off Whittle Lane	Post Medieval
MGM10486	Four structures (site of)	Post Medieval
MGM10482	Pit â possible clay extraction site	Post Medieval
MGM10484	Pits â possible marl/ clay extraction site	Post Medieval
MGM3709	Circular depression west of Moss Hall Road	Post Medieval
MGM3711	Old mine shafts near Moss Hall Road	Post Medieval
MGM3712	Mining flash	Post Medieval
MGM3715	Circular cropmarks at Higher Fields Farm	Post Medieval
MGM3725	Rectangular depression behind the Gardener's Arms public house	Post Medieval
MGM3638	Thurston Fold (possible pits)	Post Medieval
MGM3724	Lower Whittle Farmhouse	Post Medieval to Modern
MGM3647	Meadowcroft Fold brick barns	Post Medieval to Modern
MGM3707	Higher Barn Farmhouse	Post Medieval to Modern
MGM3710	Coal Pits Farm	Post Medieval to Modern
MGM3716	Broom Hill Farm	Post Medieval to Modern
MGM3718	Whittle Farm Farmhouse	Post Medieval to Modern
MGM3708	Wall of reused stone	Post Medieval to Modern
MGM10481	Three Arrows Inn (site of)	Post Medieval to Modern
MGM10483	Stock Nook	Post Medieval to Modern
MGM10531	Whittle Cottage	Post Medieval to Modern
MGM3727	New Gap Farm	Post Medieval to Modern
MGM3646	Meadowcroft Fold Georgian farmhouse	Post Medieval to Modern
MGM3720	Siddal Moor Farm	Post Medieval to Modern
MGM3713	Higher Fields Farm	Post Medieval to Modern
MGM19480	Hareshill or Hares Hill Farm (formerly Haysill) (site of)	Post Medieval to Modern

PREFREF	NAME	PERIOD
MGM3717	Rectangular features at Whittle Fold	Post Medieval to Modern

GAZETTEER OF PREVIOUS EVENTS

The following gazetteer represents all events recorded by the GMHER within the 1km study area.

EVENT ID	NAME
EGM4369	Land at South Heywood
EGM6244	South Heywood Commercial Plot 3
EGM5341	Westâ East Link Main Pipeline
EGM4370	South Heywood
EGM6002	South Heywood (Phase 6)
EGM6034	Meadowcroft Fold
EGM5473	Manchester Road
EGM6385	Hareshill Road
EGM552	Meadowcroft Fold



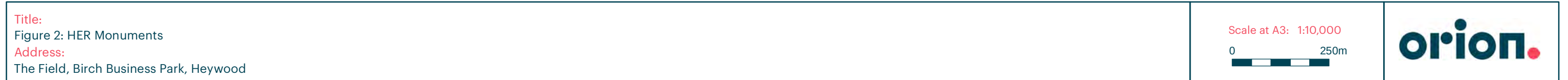
Title:
Figure 1: Site Location

Address:
The Field, Birch Business Park, Heywood

Scale at A4: 1:10,000

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Legend

 Approximate Site Location

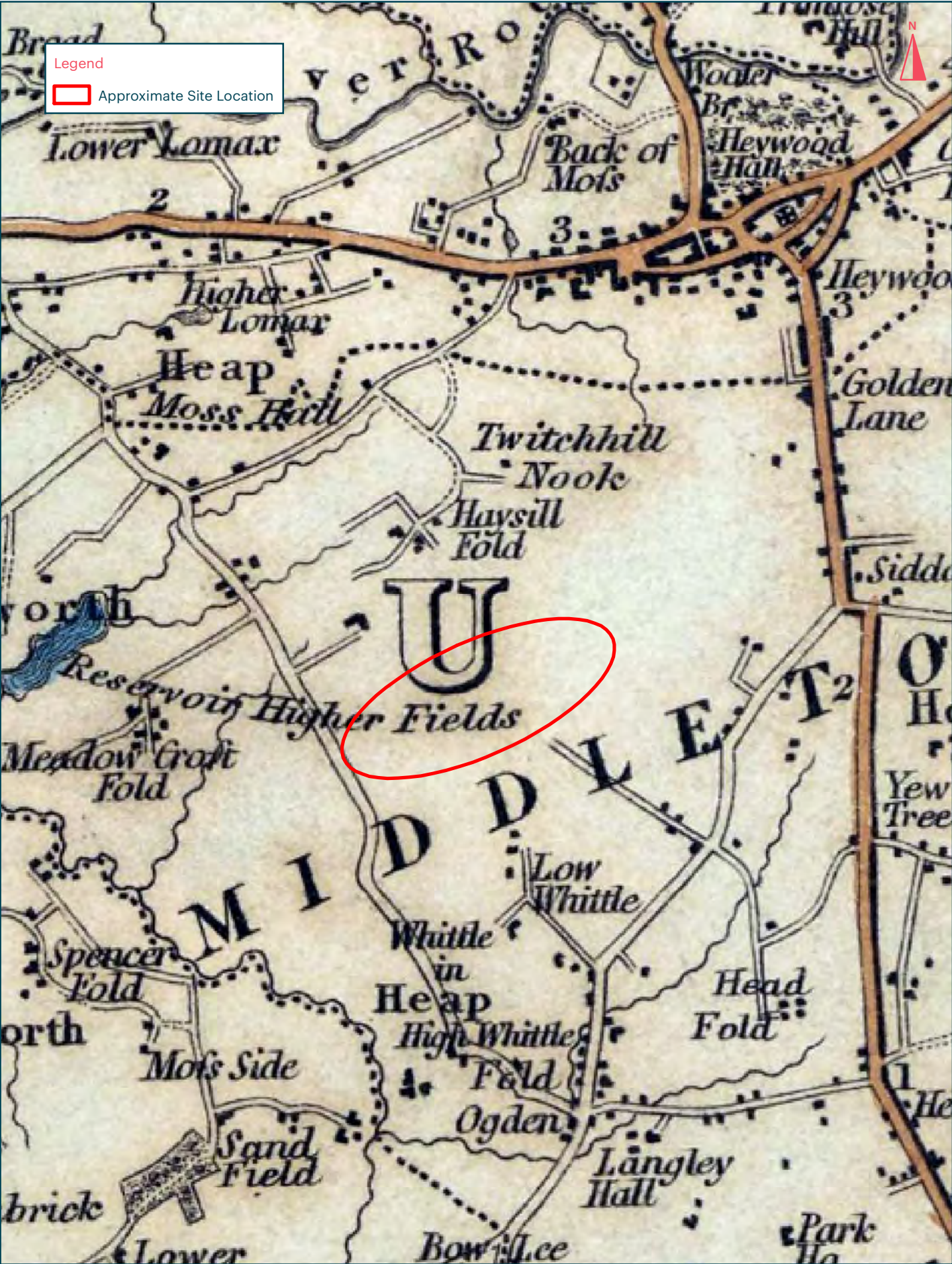


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Figure 4: 1662 Joan Blaeu Map of Lancashire

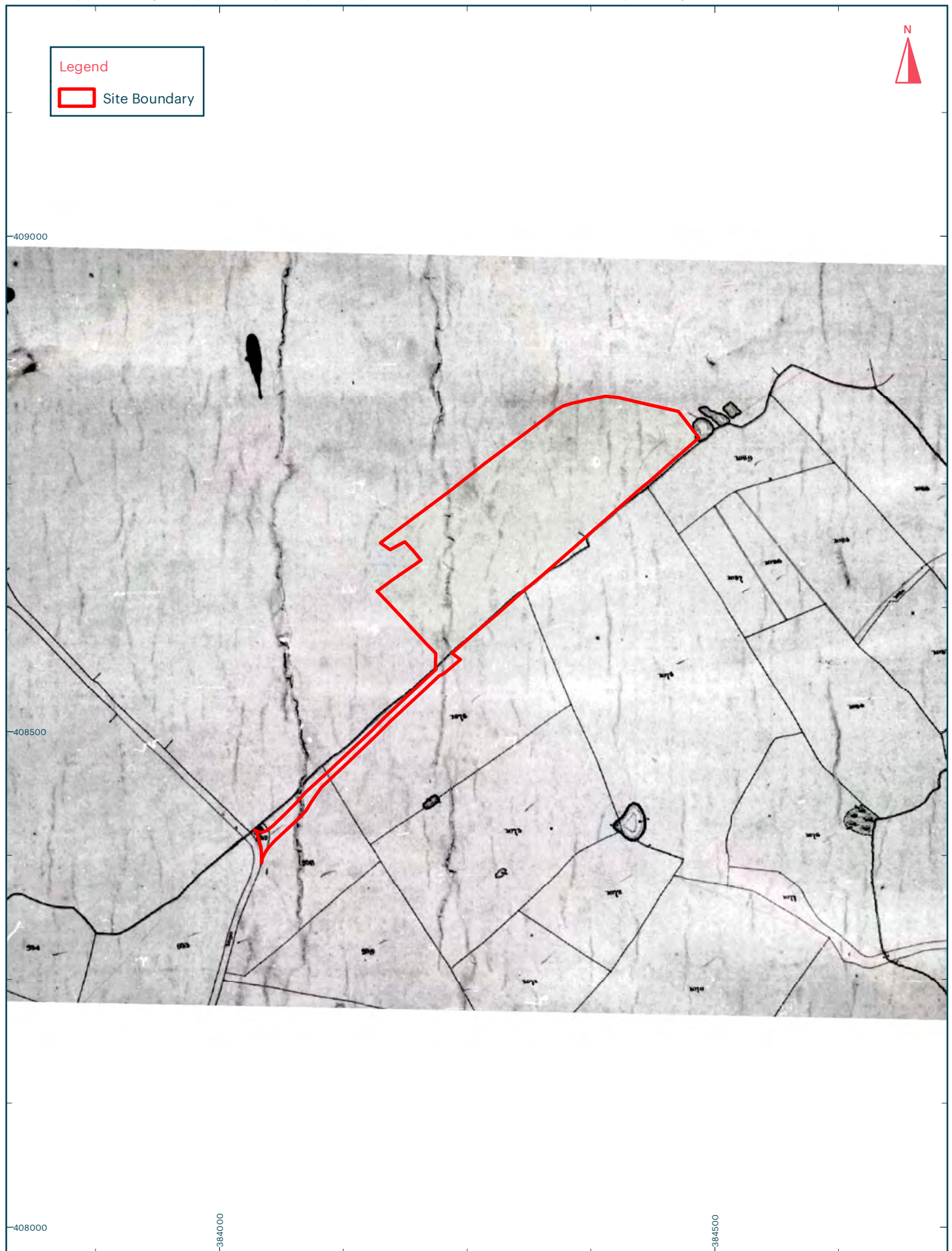
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The Field, Birch Business Park, Heywood

Not to Scale:
Illustrative Only





Title: Figure 5: 1828 J Bingley and G Hennet map of Lancashire Address: The Field, Birch Business Park, Heywood	Not to Scale: Illustrative Only	
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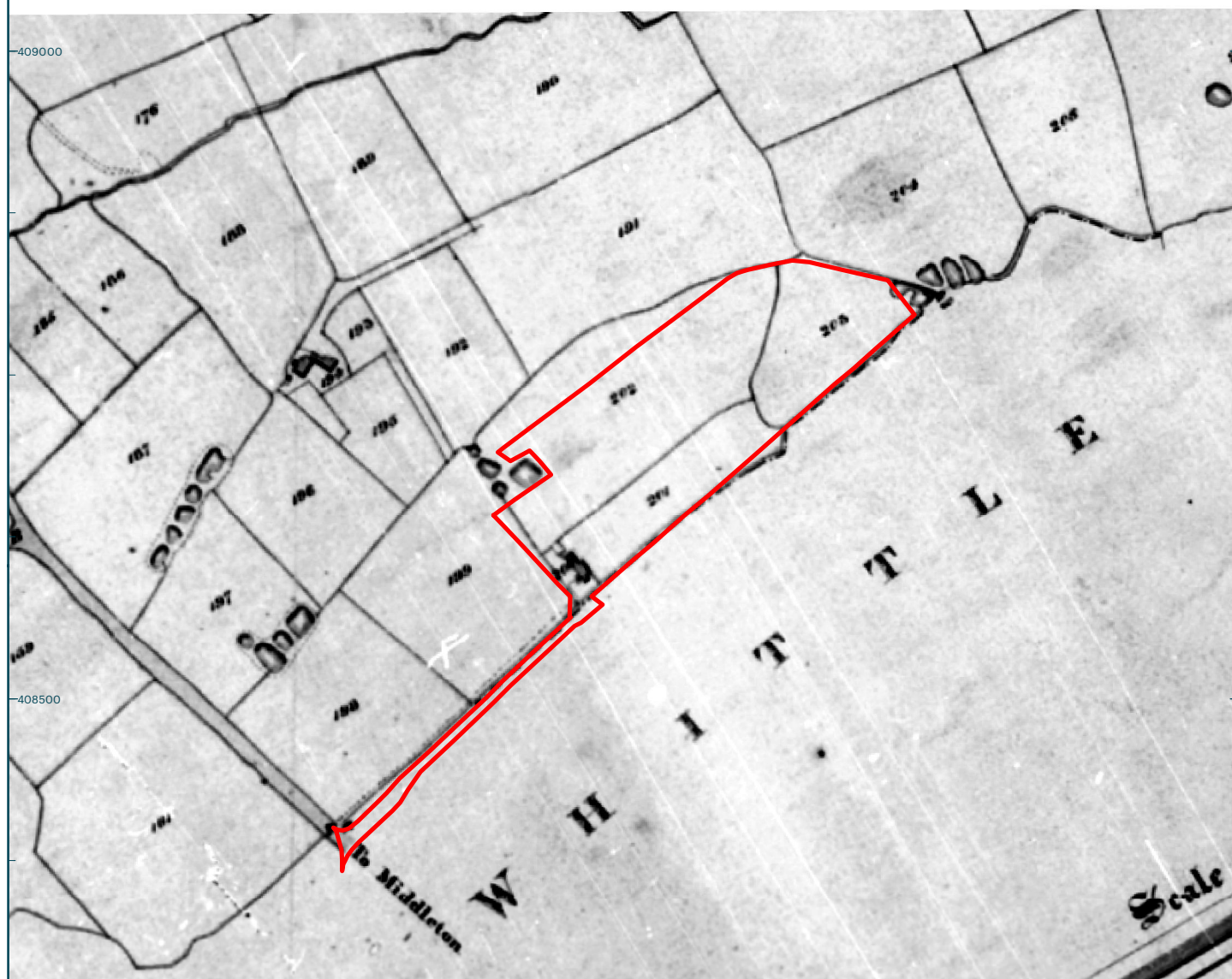


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Figure 6: 1838 Tithe Map of Heap Bridge
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 Site Boundary

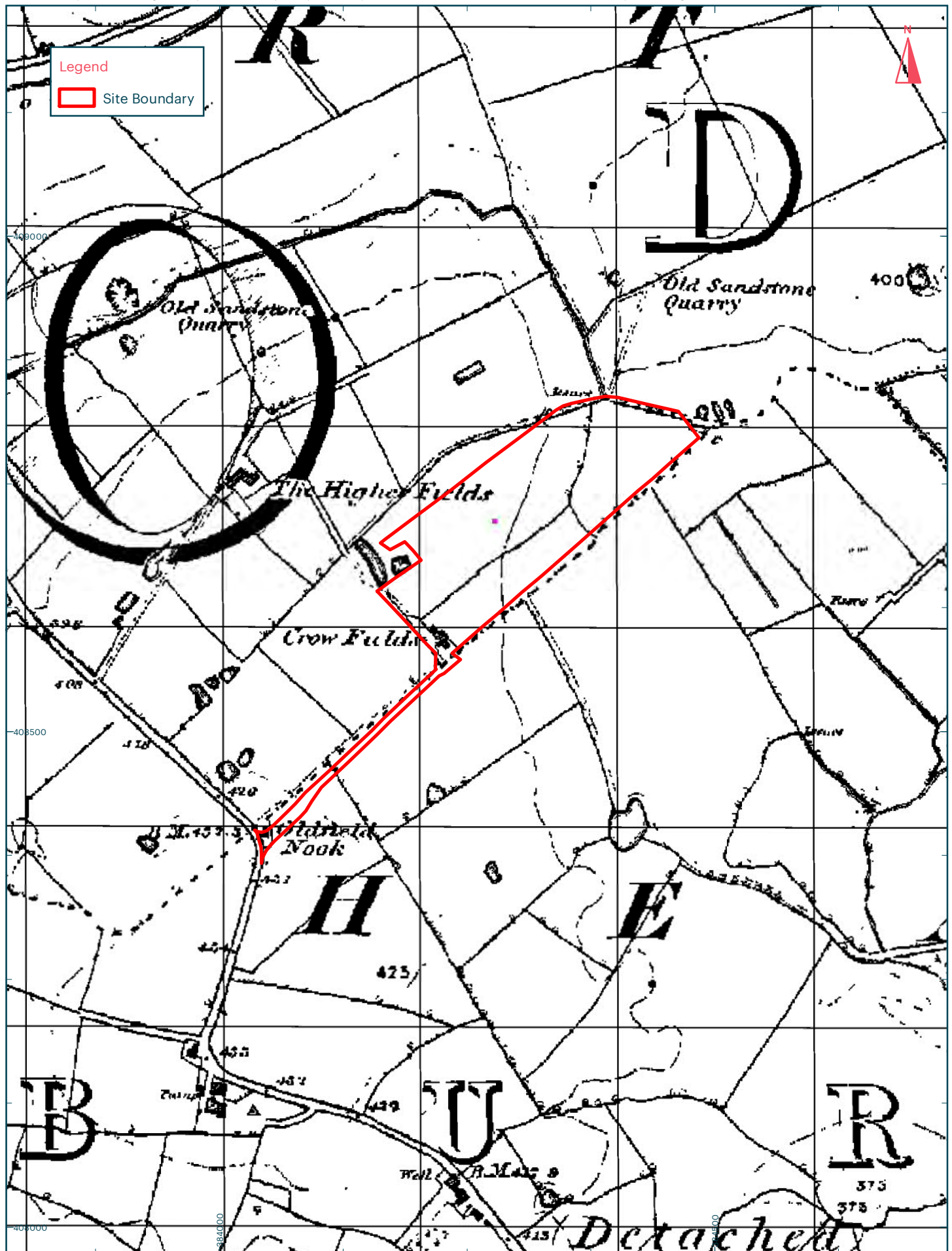
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Figure 7: 1839 Tithe Map of Pilsworth

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The Field, Birch Business Park, Heywood

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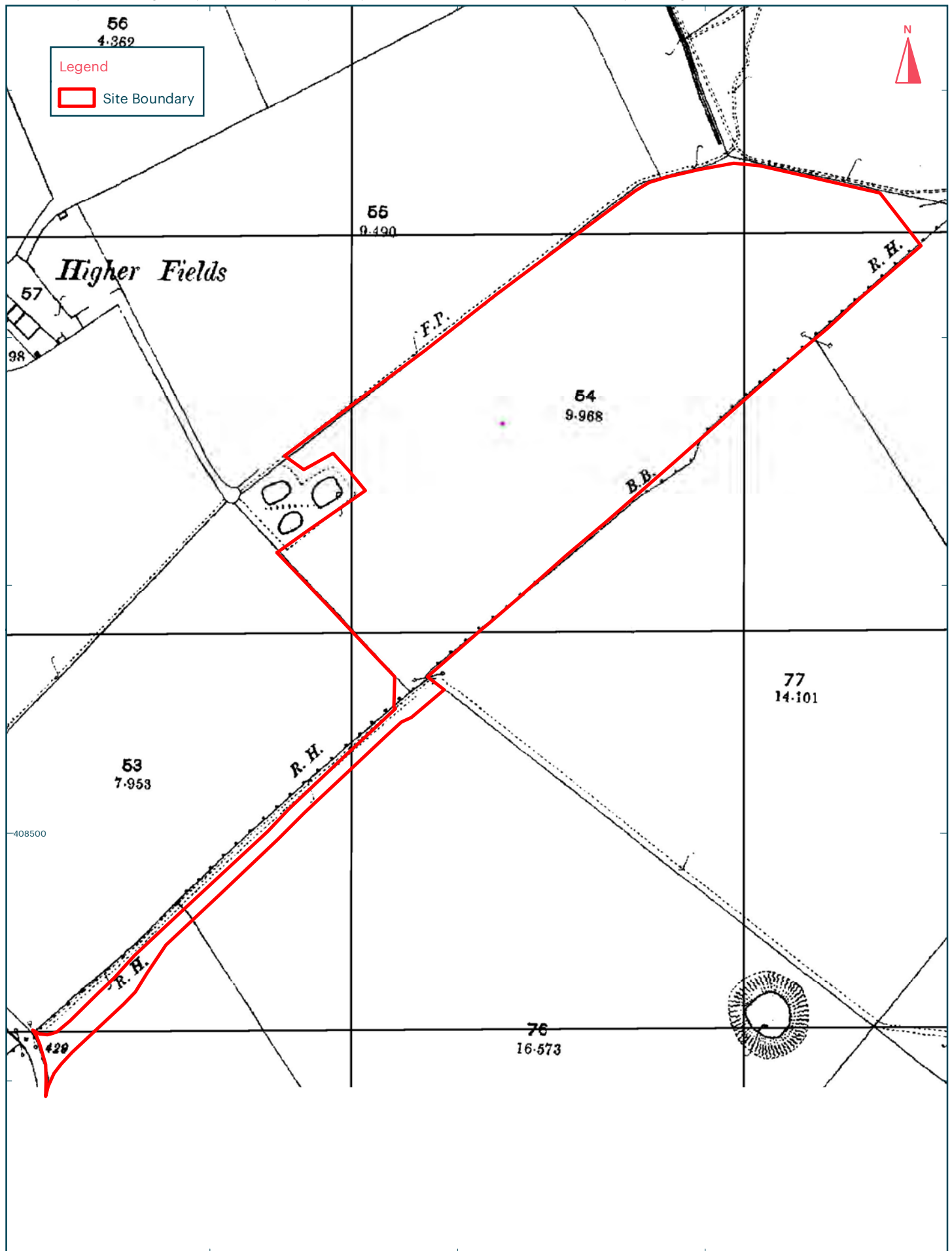


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Figure 8: Ordnance Survey 1851 1:10,560
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Scale at A4: 1:5,000

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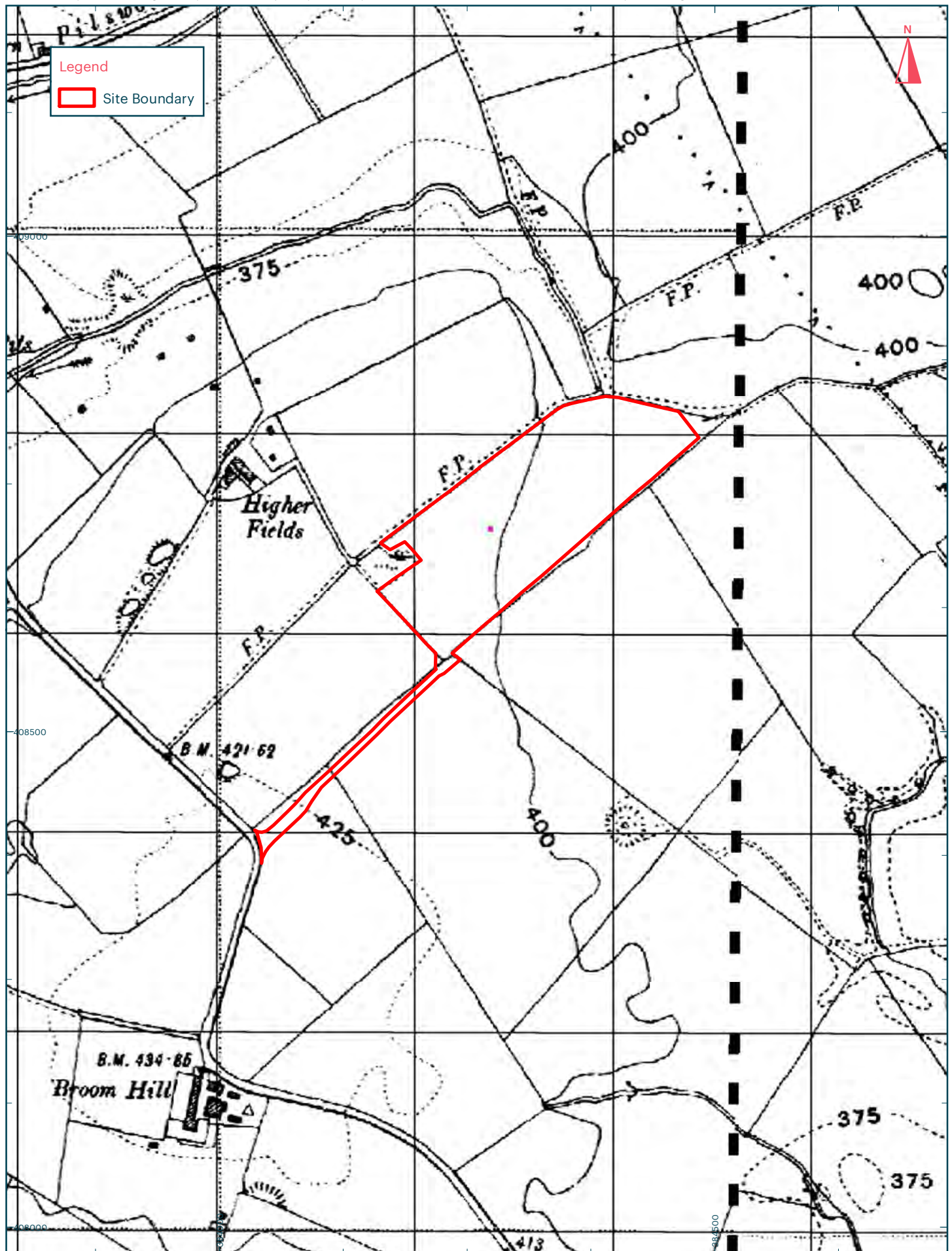


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Figure 9: Ordnance Survey 1893 1;2,500
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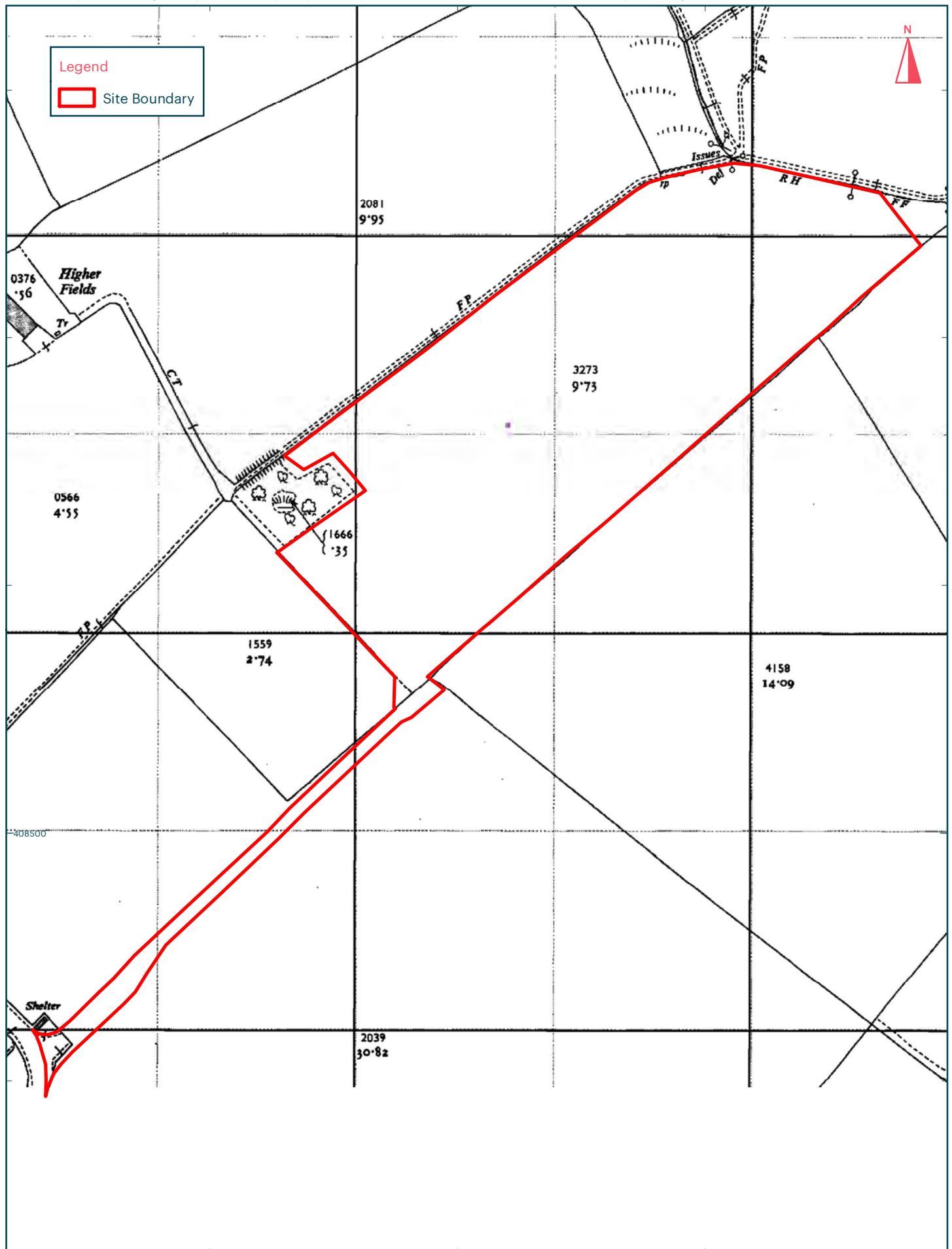


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Figure 10: Ordnance Survey 1938 1;10,560
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Scale at A4: 1:5,000

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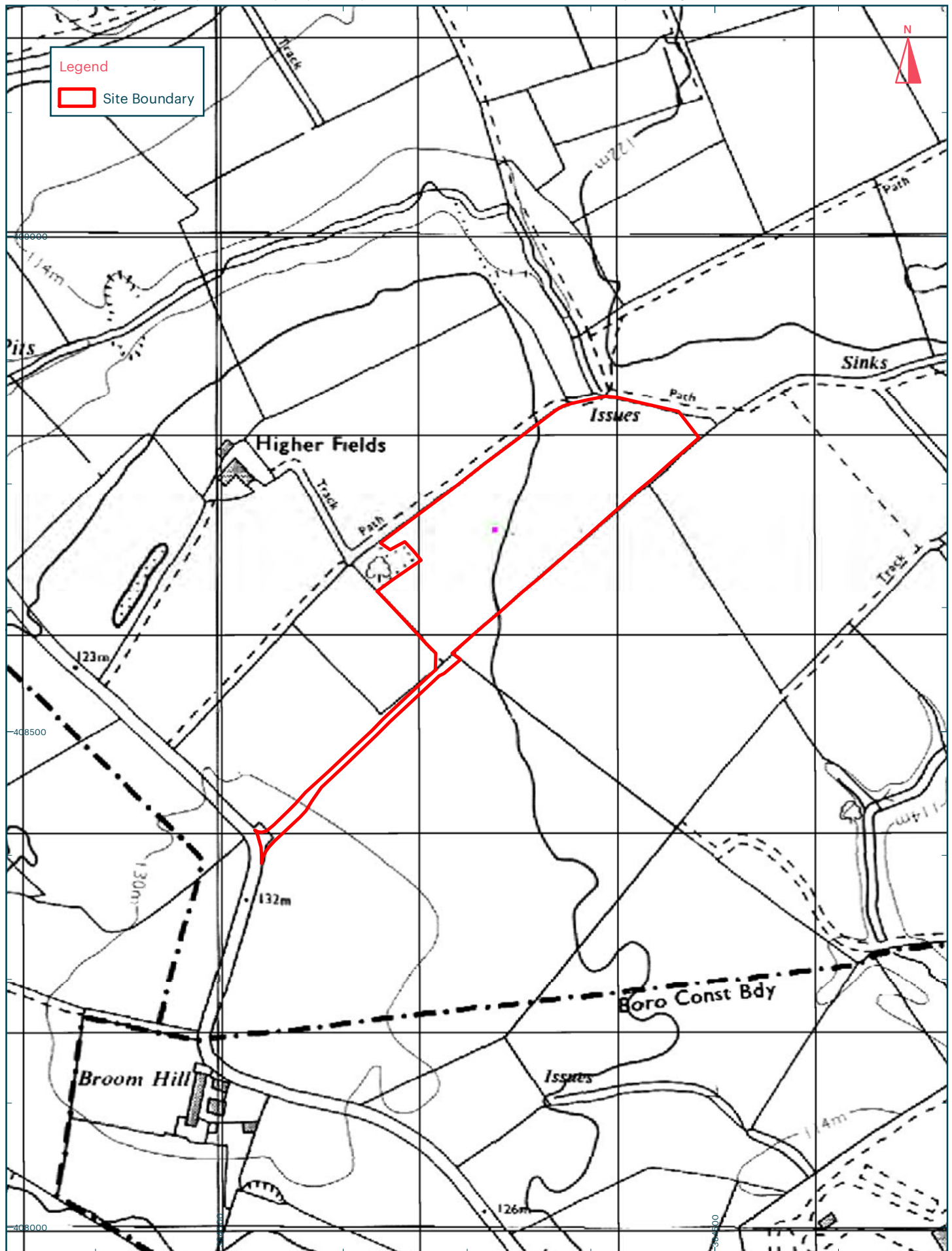


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Figure 11: Ordnance Survey 1958 1:2,500
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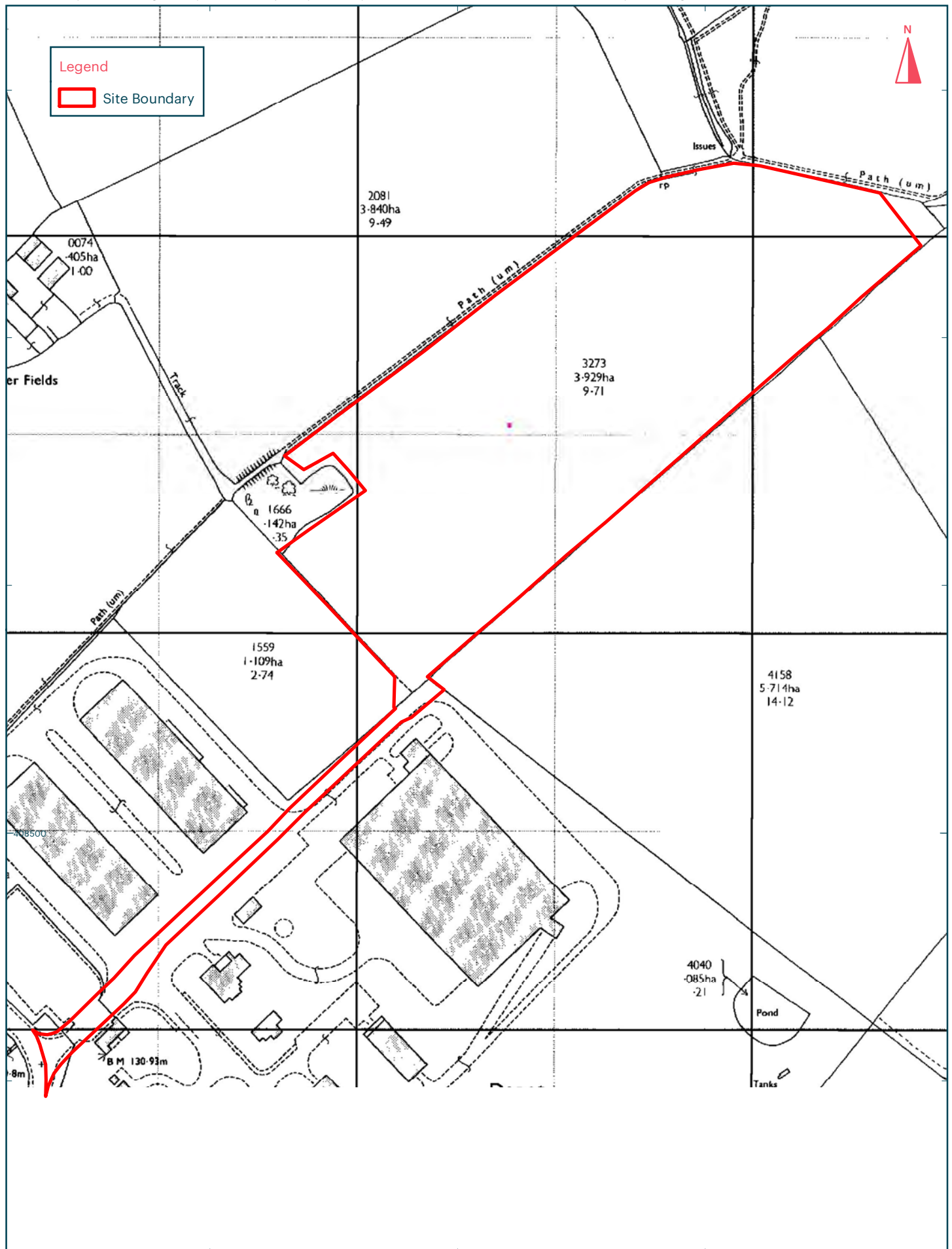
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Figure 12: Ordnance Survey 1977 1:10,000
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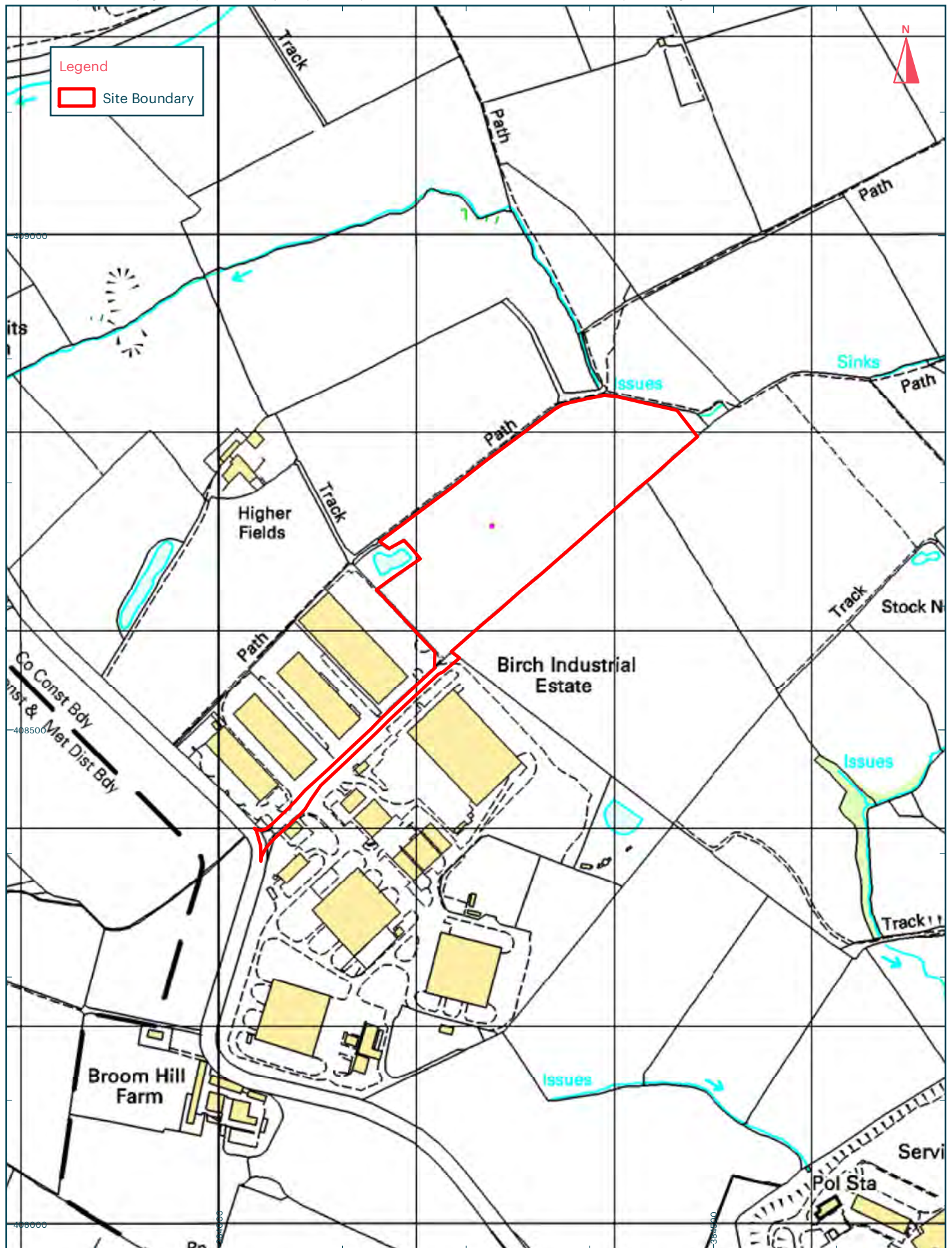


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Figure 13: Ordnance Survey 1981 1:2,500
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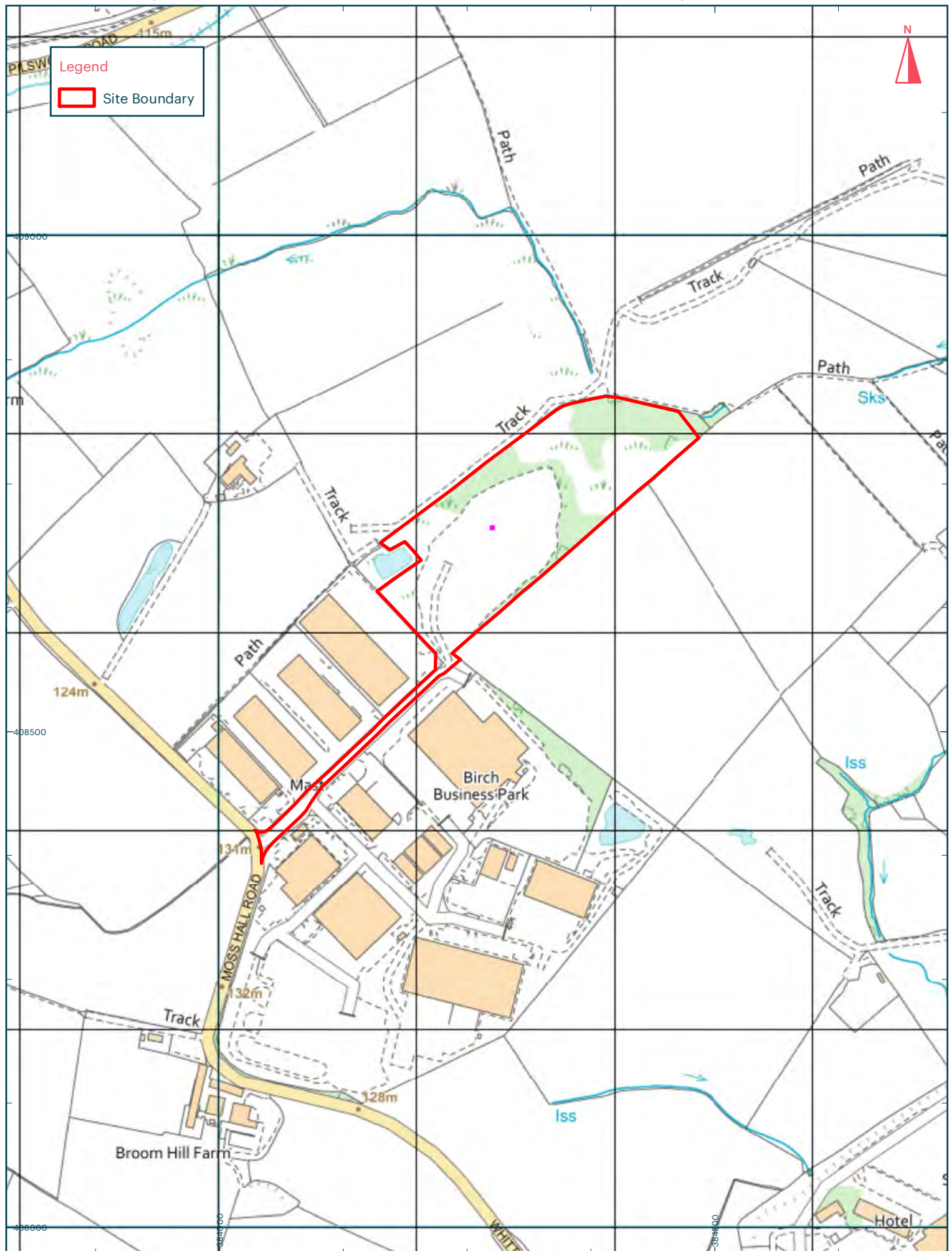


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Figure 14: Ordnance Survey 2006 1:10,000
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Title:
Figure 15: Ordnance Survey 2025 1;10,000
Address:
The Field, Birch Business Park, Heywood

Scale at A4: 1:5,000

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