

Thakeham Tiles Ltd, Rock Road, Heath Common, Storrington, RH20 3AD

HERITAGE REPORT

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INTRODUCTION

Thakeham Tiles Works was the first company to own and occupy the site in the 1920s. The business and land were purchased by Mr A.L. King who incorporated Thakeham Tiles Limited in September 1933. His family continue to own and run the business, now in its fourth generation.

This report sets out to give historical context on land use, the railway and buildings on site.

1. History of the Site

The site was originally part of the 4000 acre Sandgate Estate. The site comprised of clearly demarked pasture land in the North and woodland within the central and Southern portion as shown in the historic map below from 1875.

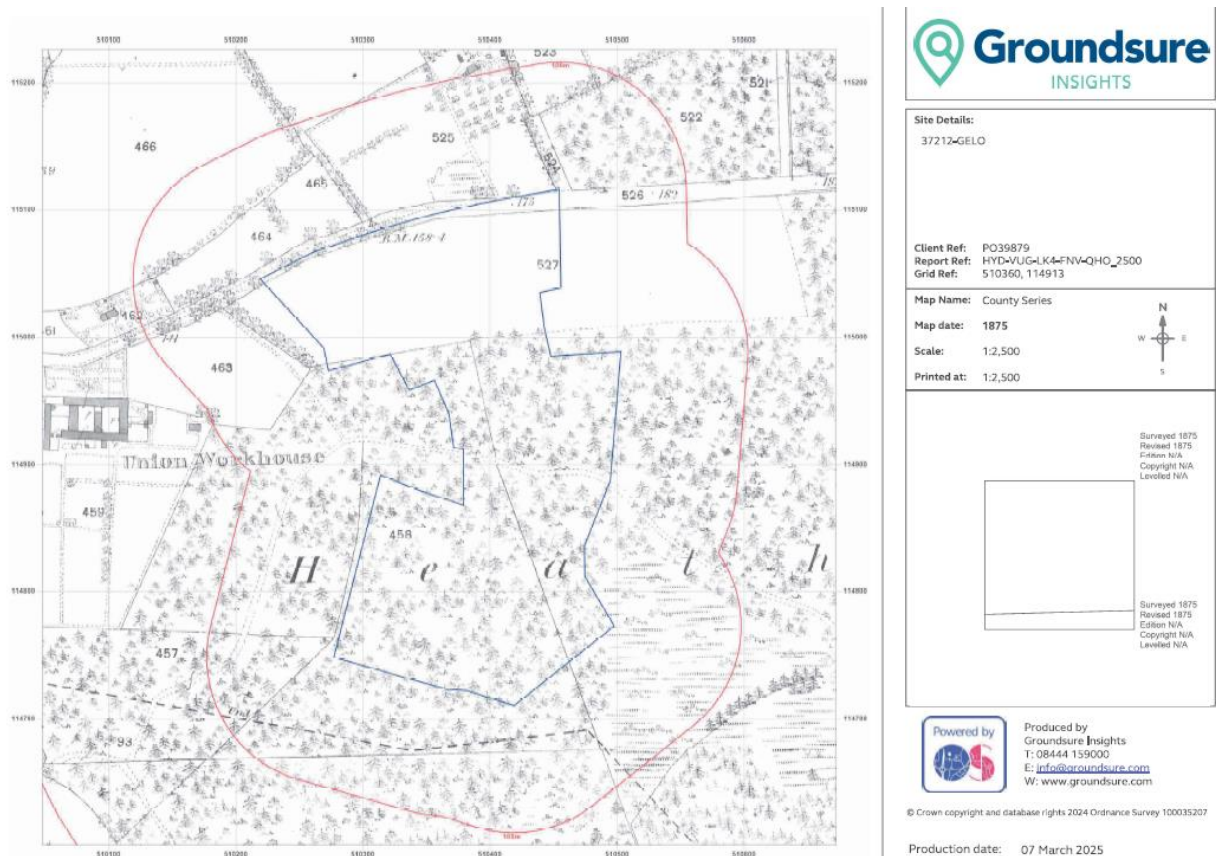


Figure 1

Conifers were planted within the region of 'Heath Common' bordering Rock Road, which in turn gave rise to the name 'The Plantation' as depicted in the Ordnance Survey Map below, 1909-1914.

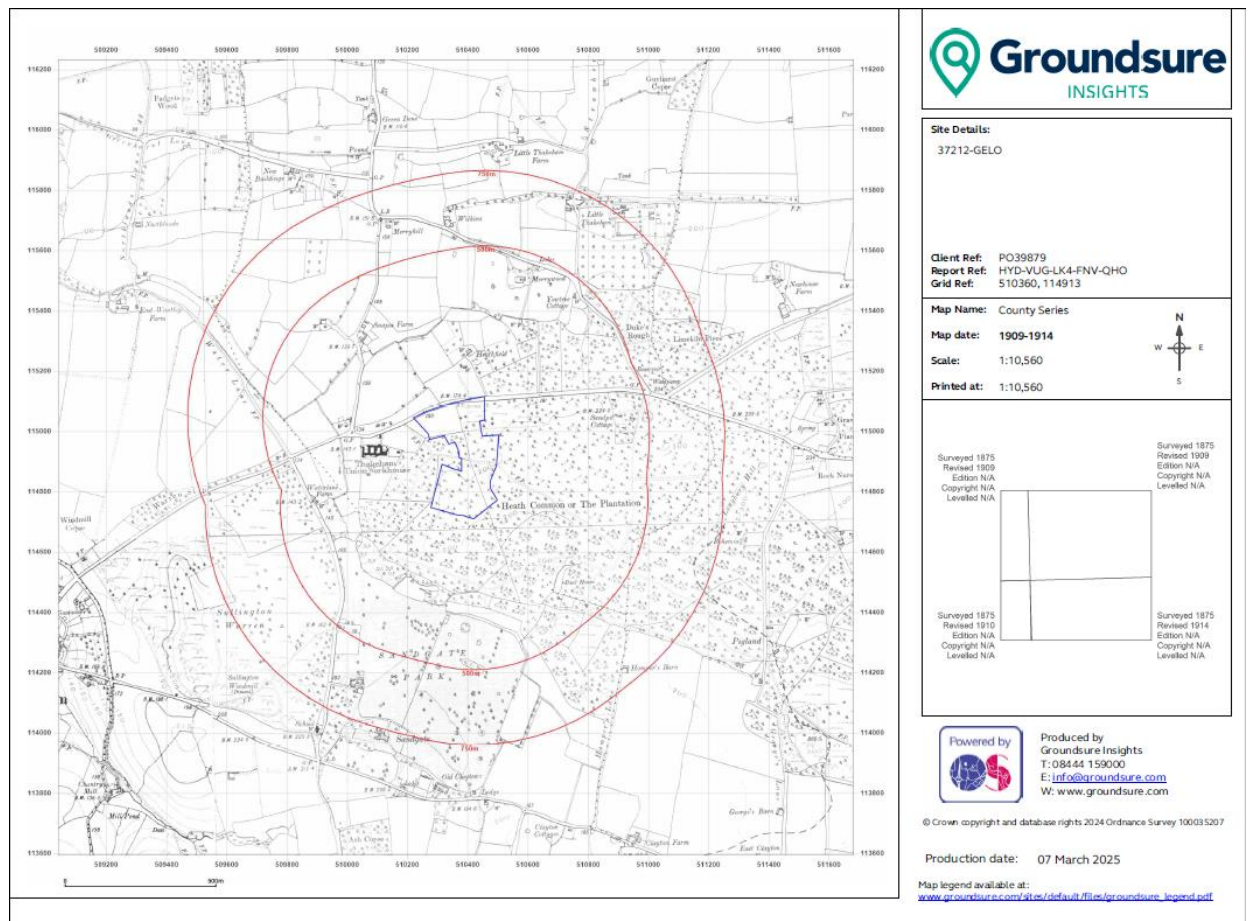


Figure 2

The Estate slowly fragmented from 1887 and accelerated by 1917, a large portion being sold for residential purposes with this particular site being sold for industrial use. The site benefited from an outcrop of 'Lower Greensand' on a ridge in the southern region. Mr Frank Knight, a local business man and builder, purchased the land in the 1920s, and incorporated the company 'Thakeham Tiles Works', quarrying the sand to mix with cement and produce much needed roofing tiles for the local house building industry.

Below is an article printed in the Town and Country News, 14th November 1930.

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TOWN AND COUNTRY NEWS

November 14, 1930

A ROOFING TILE OF OUTSTANDING MERIT

By WILLIAM HARVEY

"When we build let us think we build for ever."—ROBINS.

Good tiles last for ever! For centuries now they have proved their complete reliability and durability for roofing purposes—that is, when quality is made the first consideration—and for generations they have formed the favourite roofing material for the British home. In appearance the tile has no rival. It is pleasant, homely and picturesque, and harmonises perfectly with either rural or urban surroundings. While, for winter warmth, summer coolness and general hard-wearing qualities it is unequalled.

Since the war there has been a bigger demand than ever for roofing tiles. They are continually being adopted in preference to slates and other materials by architects and builders for housing schemes and every conceivable type of building throughout the country, and their employment has increased to such an extent that the manufacture of many millions every year is now essential. For this reason, it is perhaps just as well to issue a word of warning against the cheap and unsatisfactory article which is being placed on the market, at present, by makers, both at home and abroad, as a result of this keen demand.



General view of the works which cover 14 acres, from the noted Sussex sand quarries of Mr. F. Knight.



Mr. F. Knight.

True economy in building lies in the use of materials which are in themselves a permanent investment requiring low maintenance costs. Such materials are not found among those which are produced upon a basis of price only. At the same time it is a fallacy to assume, as many people do, that good tiles are necessarily expensive building items. If they are purchased in the right market there is no reason why the total cost of roofing with tiles should exceed the figure involved in the use of any other material. In fact, there are cases where a considerable saving may be effected by the use of tiles, apart from the saving in roof timber as a result of their use.

It will be appreciated, however, that the manufacture of tiles of quality calls for exceptional skill, suitable raw materials and a wide experience of building requirements, and nowhere are these factors combined more successfully than in the production of the Thakeham Roofing Tile, which is manufactured only by Frank Knight of The Thakeham Tile Works, Heath Common, Storrington, Sussex.

The new "Thakdam" tile is



Entrance from the main road to the works. On the right is a sand-loading dump.

November 14, 1930

TOWN AND COUNTRY NEWS



Loading the raw material for dispatch to the sheds.

Produced from the finest and most noted Sussex sand and Portland cement combined, either with or without colouring. It is made to a beautiful dark red or a deep maroon, so much admired by the modern architect, and the colour goes right through the tile. It can also be left in the "natural," which open matures, and which has been much admired by all those who have inspected it. To quote the words of a prominent architect, "it is so produced that it possesses such a remarkably fine texture that it is difficult to distinguish it from hand-made clay tiles."

Some idea of its all-round quality and reasonable price may be gathered from the fact that Mr. Knight is at the moment completing a contract for half-a-million tiles, which he was successful in obtaining in spite of keen foreign competition. Indeed, so superior in quality is the Thakeham tile, and so close in price for delivery inland, when compared with the foreign tile, that Mr. Knight does not fear competition in that direction, except, perhaps, in the actual ports where the foreign goods are discharged. Roofing with the Thakeham tile costs.



Returning for more.

for use that is

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Figure 3

Mr Knight had trialled the production of building blocks by the time Mr A. L. King bought the land and company from him in 1933. 'Thakeham Tiles Ltd' was incorporated on 29th September 1933 and by 1937 building blocks and decorative walling products were officially added to the range.

The site closed for the duration of World War 11. The Canadian military were housed in Sandgate House, slightly further to the South, and they used the Thakeham Tiles site to store and maintain their transport division of tanks and lorries.

In 1946 the company reopened and the existing ranges were continued to be manufactured. Hall & Co. bought the land where Sandgate House stood and the buildings were demolished so that the sand could be extracted from the newly established Sandgate Quarry. Thakeham Tiles ceased extracting the sand on their own site and started to buy in the sand from Sandgate Quarry, storing volumes of it in the southern pit area.

The aerial photograph below from 1947 shows the extent of the Thakeham Tiles quarry footprint at this point in time.



Figure 4

By the mid-1950s roofing tiles were no longer being manufactured. To the current day the company produces building blocks, concrete paving and a range of decorative walling products.

Groundsure
INSIGHTS

Site Details:
37212-GELO

Client Ref: PO39879
Report Ref: HYD-VUG-LK4-FNV-QHO
Grid Ref: 510360, 114913


Map Name: Provisional
Map date: 1957-1961
Scale: 1:10,560
Printed at: 1:10,560

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Edition N/A
Copyright N/A
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Map legend available at:

2. Historical Land Use

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Below is an aerial image from 1959 which evidences slow colonisation of the self-set Pines in the southern section.



Figure 6



Figure 7

The photograph above is the view westwards across the pit area from Ridge Top, Bracken Lane, taken in 1961. Small to medium sized Scots Pine are growing in an erratic fashion on the sandy floor of the pit. Sullington Warren can be seen centre back with its tree lined ridge.

In June 1980 an inert waste licence was issued from West Sussex County Council which permitted the company to infill the quarry floor with its own waste material such as discarded concrete products that were not fit for sale. The map overleaf, figure 8, accompanied the licence that was issued.

The inert waste was never infilled to the full extent of the permitted area and the last recorded infill in the compacted central region was in December 1982. Due to the economic recession in the early 90s the company decided to relinquish the licence by April 1994.

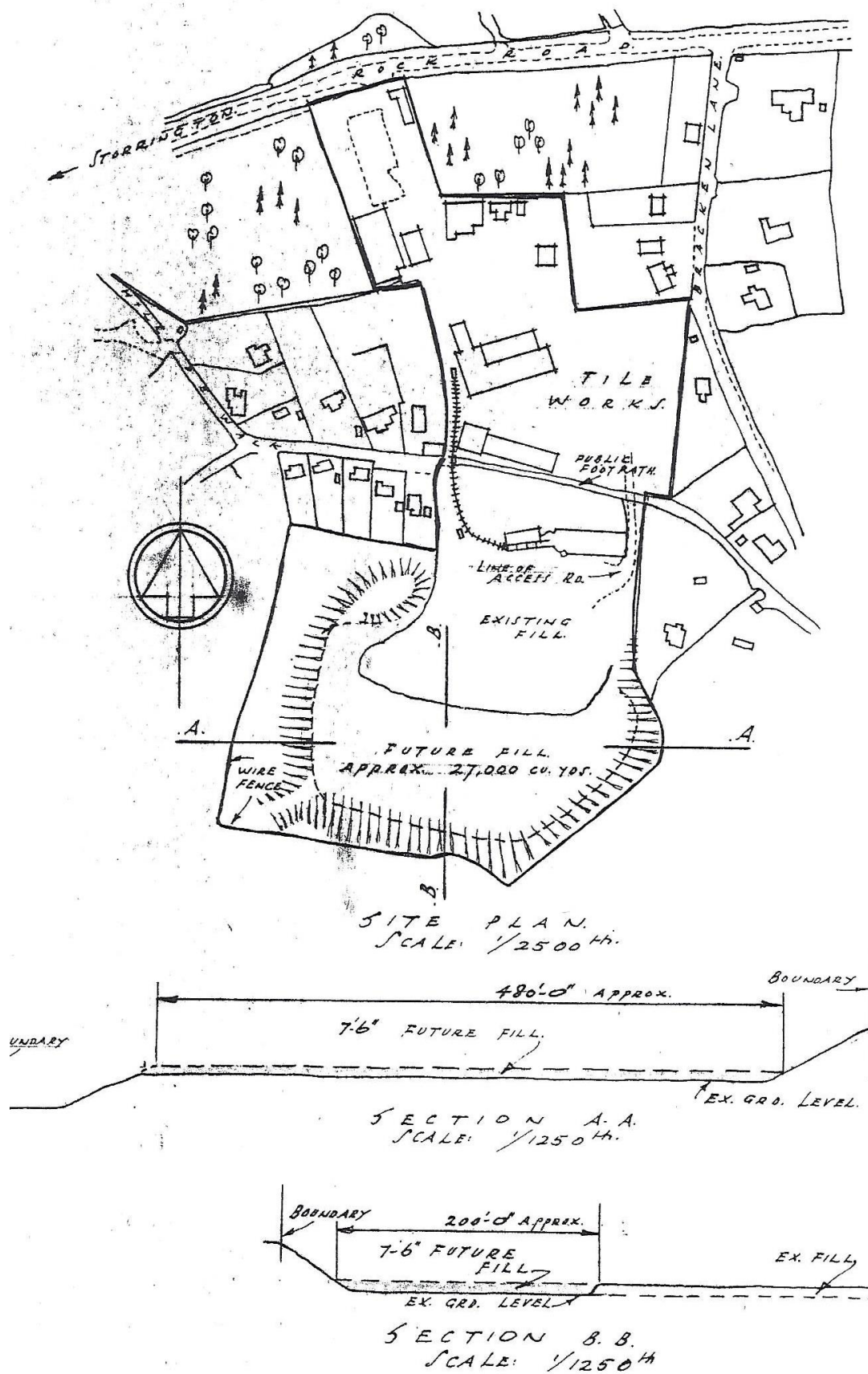


Figure 8

Figure 9 below depicts historical land use.

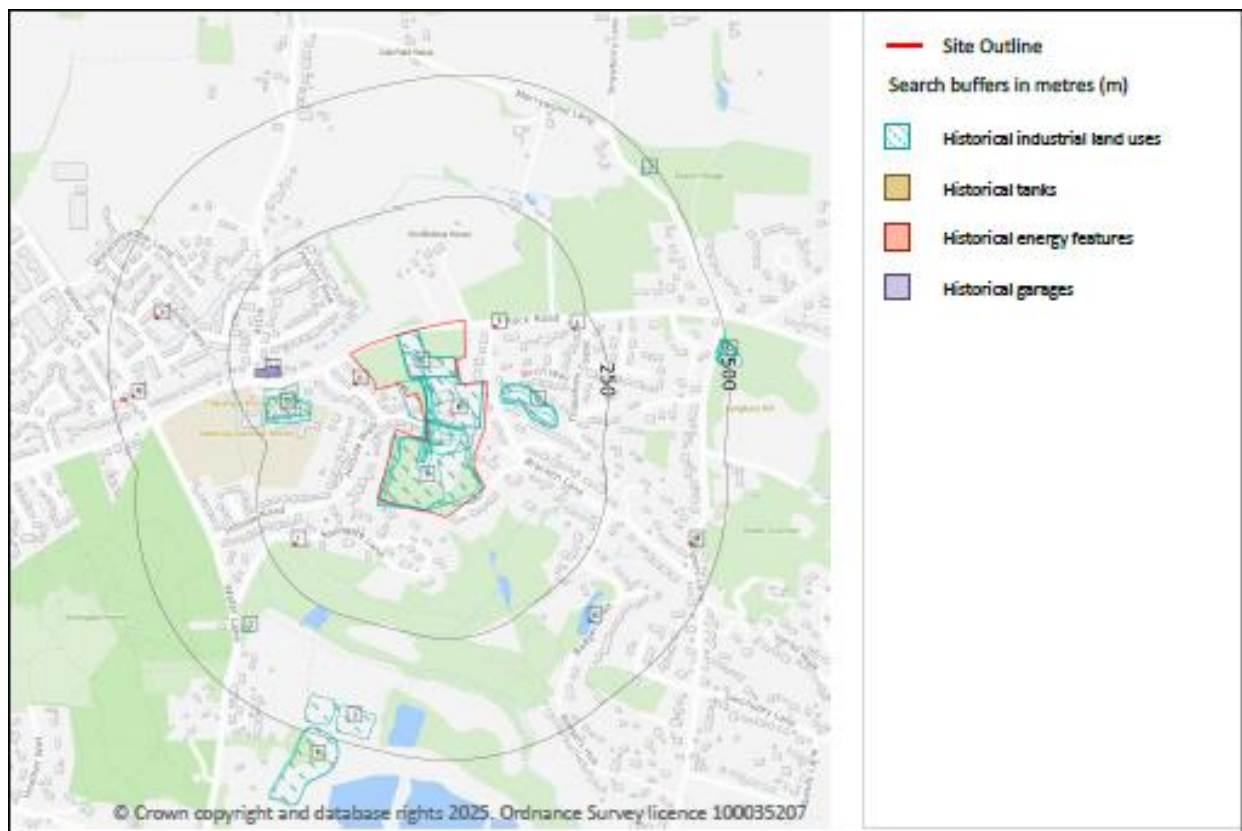
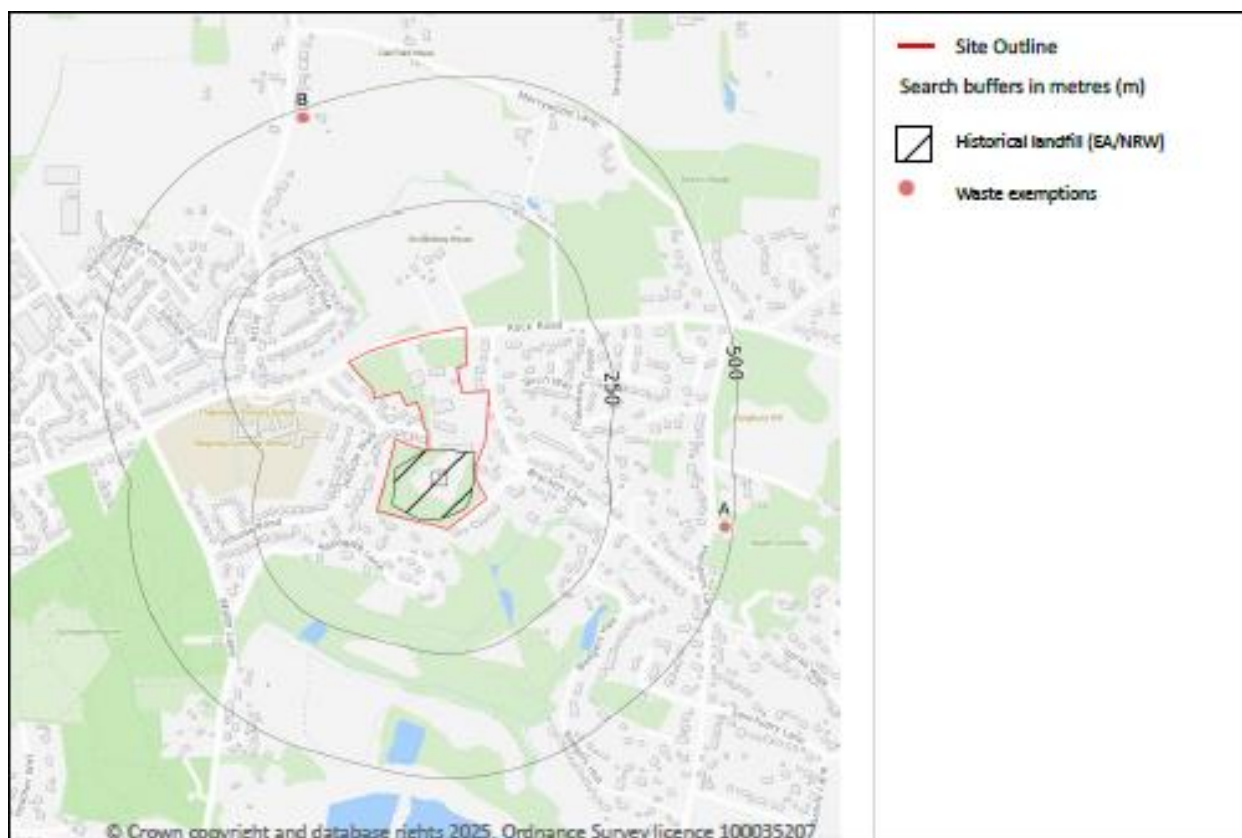


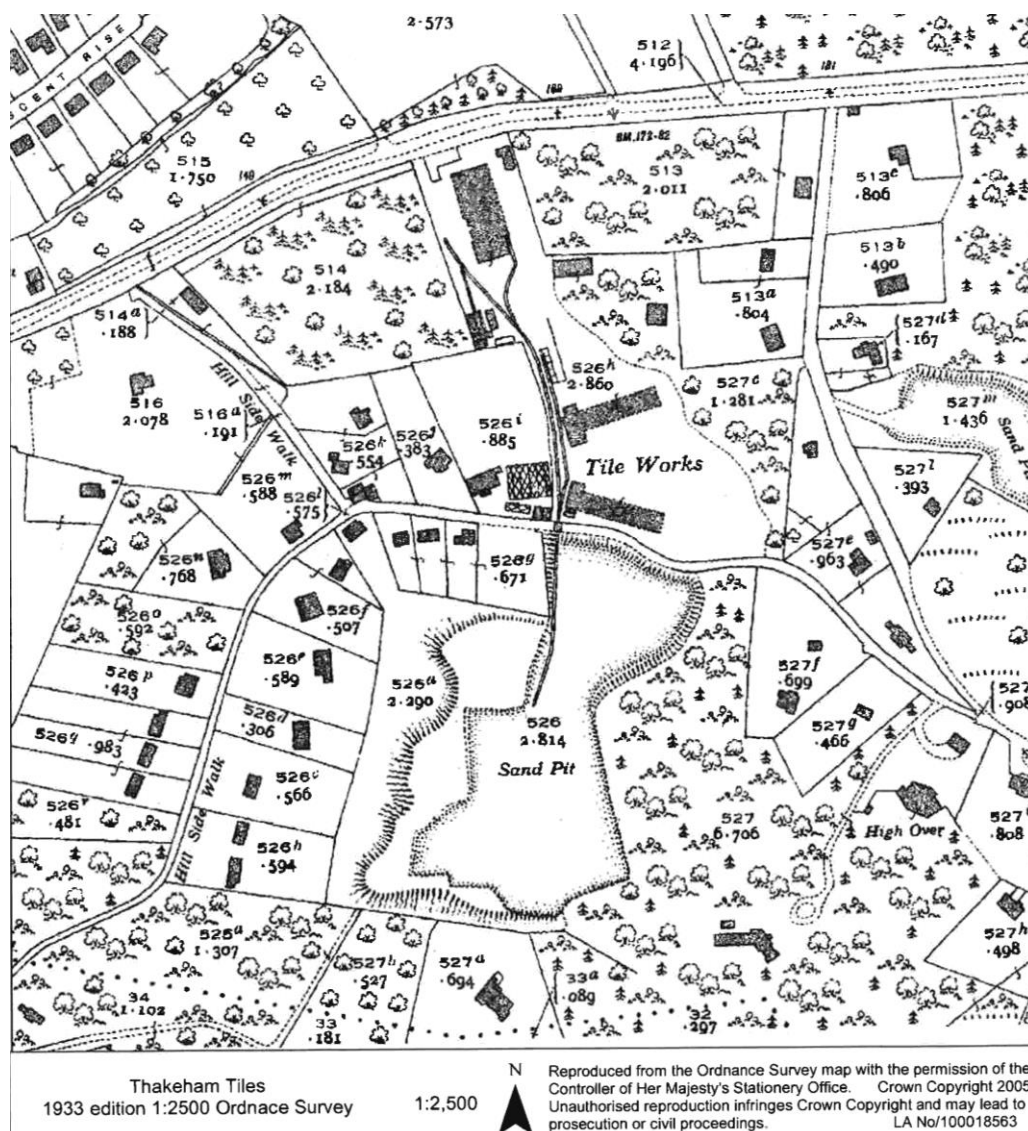
Figure 10 below shows historic landfill licence information for the site.



3. History of the Railway

In the late 1920s a narrow 2 foot gauge railway was constructed for locomotives to transport the sand from the pit area to the manufacturing sheds located on the frontage to Rock Road.

Figure 11 below shows the 1933 Ordnance Survey map with the railway clearly visible on the western side of the site.



By 1937 the track extended to 150 yards long and became more elaborate, several points being installed to take the railway to other parts of the works. Three petrol locomotives were built by hand and powered by Trojan engines.



Figure 12

Images above taken in late 1930s show views of the frontage on to Rock Road, and views of the railway both to the south and to the north from the centre of the site.

By the mid-1950s the locomotives, tracks and locomotive sheds were extended and became an integral part of the manufacturing process.

Figure 13 below is an aerial photograph taken in January 1963 before clearance took place in the areas marked by red ink. Note the steep sandy banks to the quarry on its east side and erratic growth of the self-set Scots pines on the quarry floor.

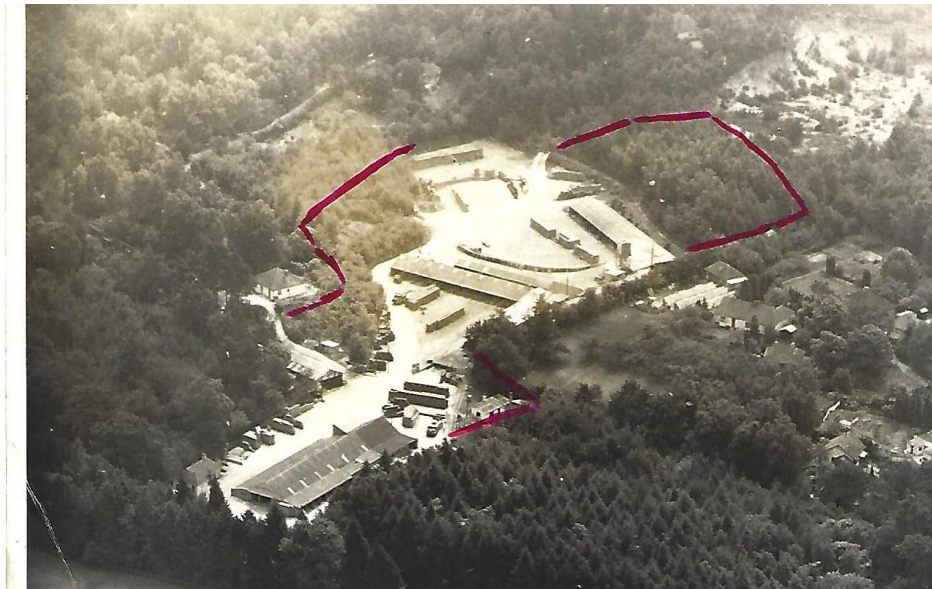
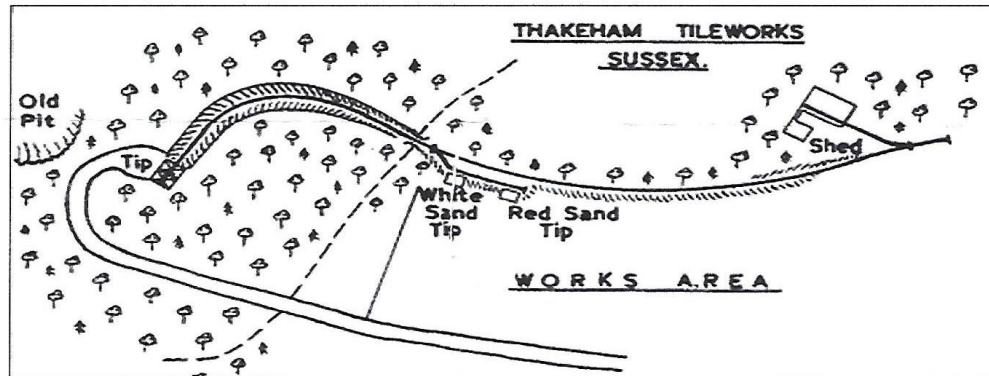


Figure 14 below shows the clearing in the middle of the site in order to commence building Shed 4, known as 'The Barn'.



Figure 15 below shows hand drawings of the railway evolving through the year of 1963 as major clearance works and building took place.

February 1963



November 1963

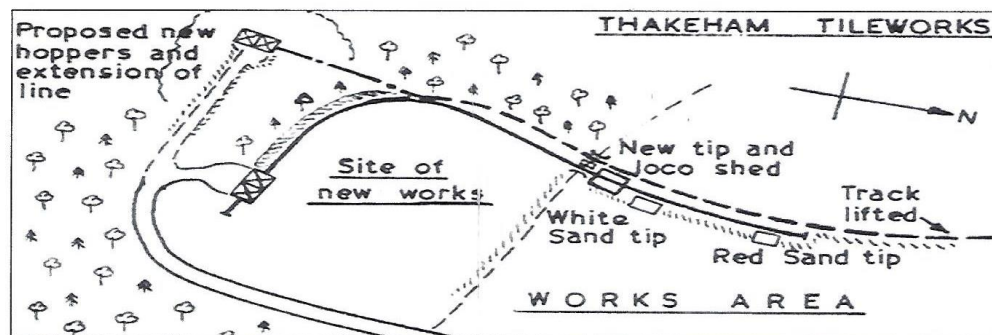
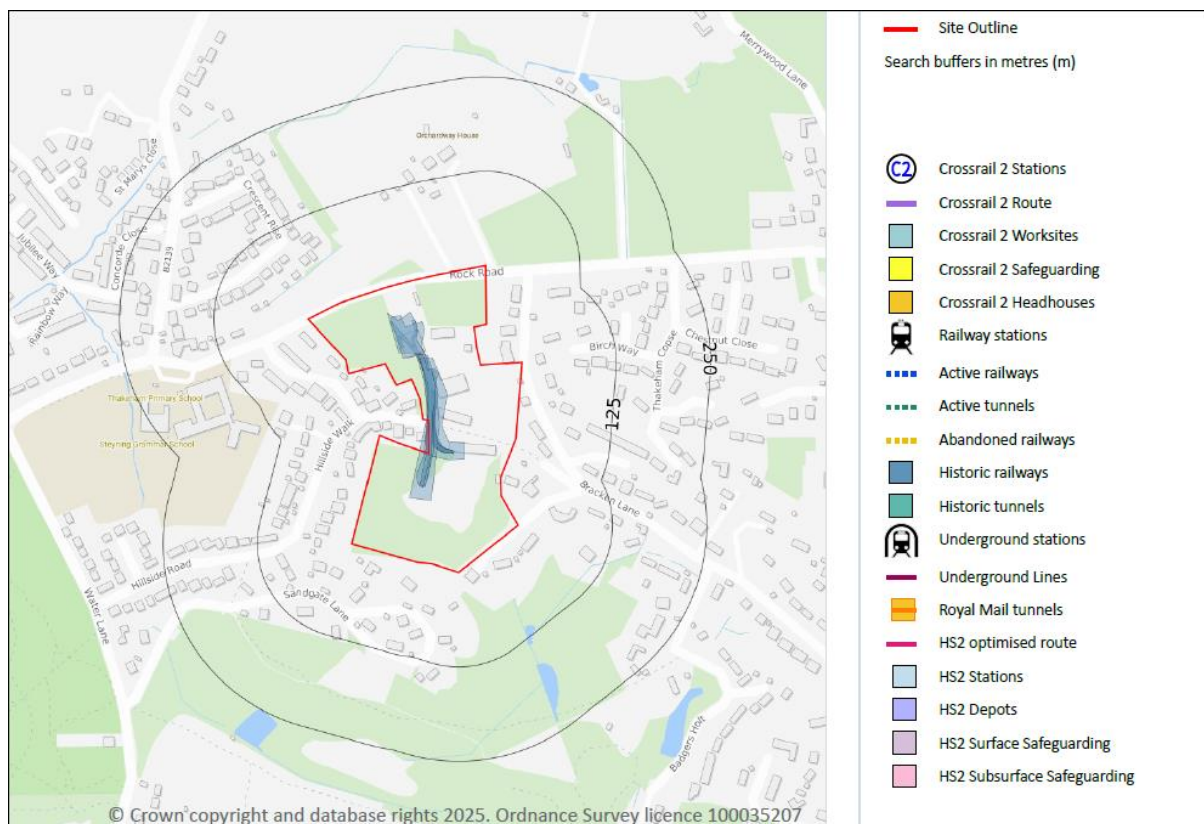


Figure 16

The photo above shows one of the locomotives with wagon attached crossing the bridge over the footpath and on its way to deliver aggregates to the manufacturing shed.

Figure 17 below shows the historical mapping of the railway and associated buildings.



In 1980 the decision was made to install a modern belt conveyor which could transport the aggregates that were stored and mixed in the pit area to the various manufacturing sheds.

The Amberley Chalk Pits Museum was offered the entire railway including the track, wagons and locomotives on the condition that it was completely removed over one weekend, which was agreed and completed.

The railway at Thakeham Tiles finally closed on Friday 14th November 1980. Some of the track, one of the locomotives and some wagons are still in use at the Chalk Pits Museum today.

In 2009 a local enthusiast researched and published a book entitled 'The Thakeham Tiles Railway'.

4. History of the Buildings

Having explored the evolution of the site from the 1920s through to the current day it is evident that some buildings have been replaced over time as the demands of the site and market has required.

The original tile manufacturing shed on the frontage to Rock Road was eventually demolished and replaced by a large manufacturing shed called the Sussex Shed, this being built slightly back from the road frontage. The Sussex Shed was built with block walls and corrugated roofing material.

The photograph below, viewed from the 'Barn' storage yard looking north to the Rock Road entrance was captured in late 1963.

The tin curing bays for the block machine are situated behind the stack of walling products. Two rectangular block buildings with fabricated roofs sit on the middle section and the pitched tile roof and chimney of St Joseph's bungalow can be viewed on the right of the picture behind the trees. The front office by Rock Road is also of traditional pitch roof and chimney structure.

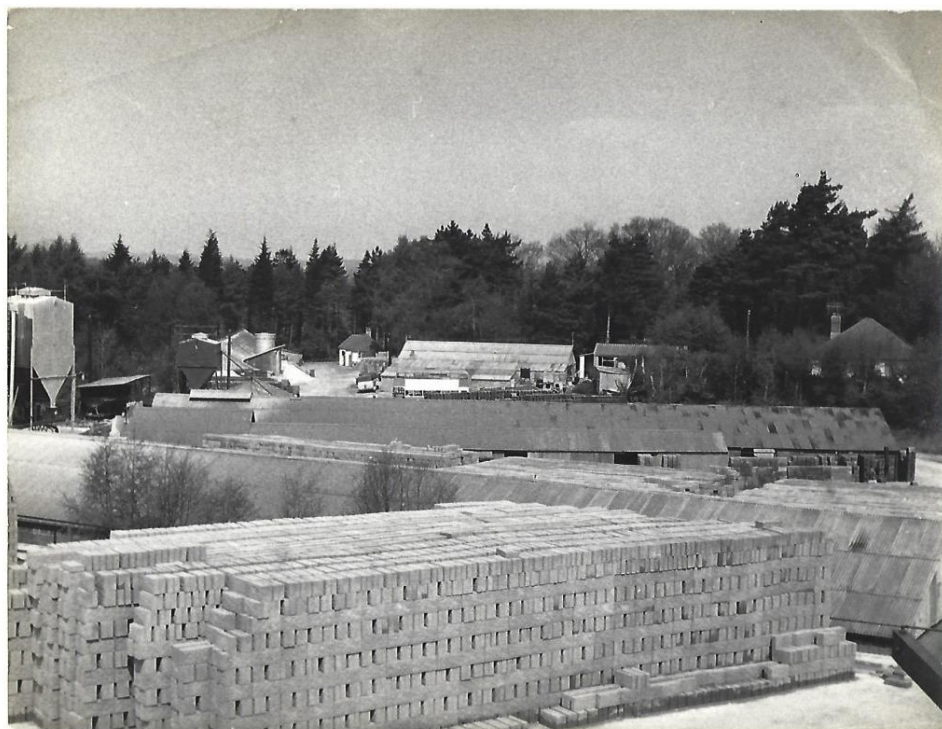


Figure 18

The photograph below shows the new Regency Shed (one side left open at this stage) having been constructed behind the Sussex Shed. Elizabeth Cottage and the greenhouses are clearly visible to the south of the Regency Shed.



Figure 19

The Sussex Shed building was eventually demolished in the early 1980s. All footings were removed and concreted over to form part of the Regency storage yard.

The front sales office had a flat roofed extension added to the south face in 1968 as can be seen in photograph below. The entire structure was demolished and rebuilt to its current form in 1982.



Figure 20

The photograph below shows the area south of St. Joseph's bungalow being block paved for additional parking in 1982.



Figure 21

The map overleaf illustrates the current layout of the site and its associated buildings.

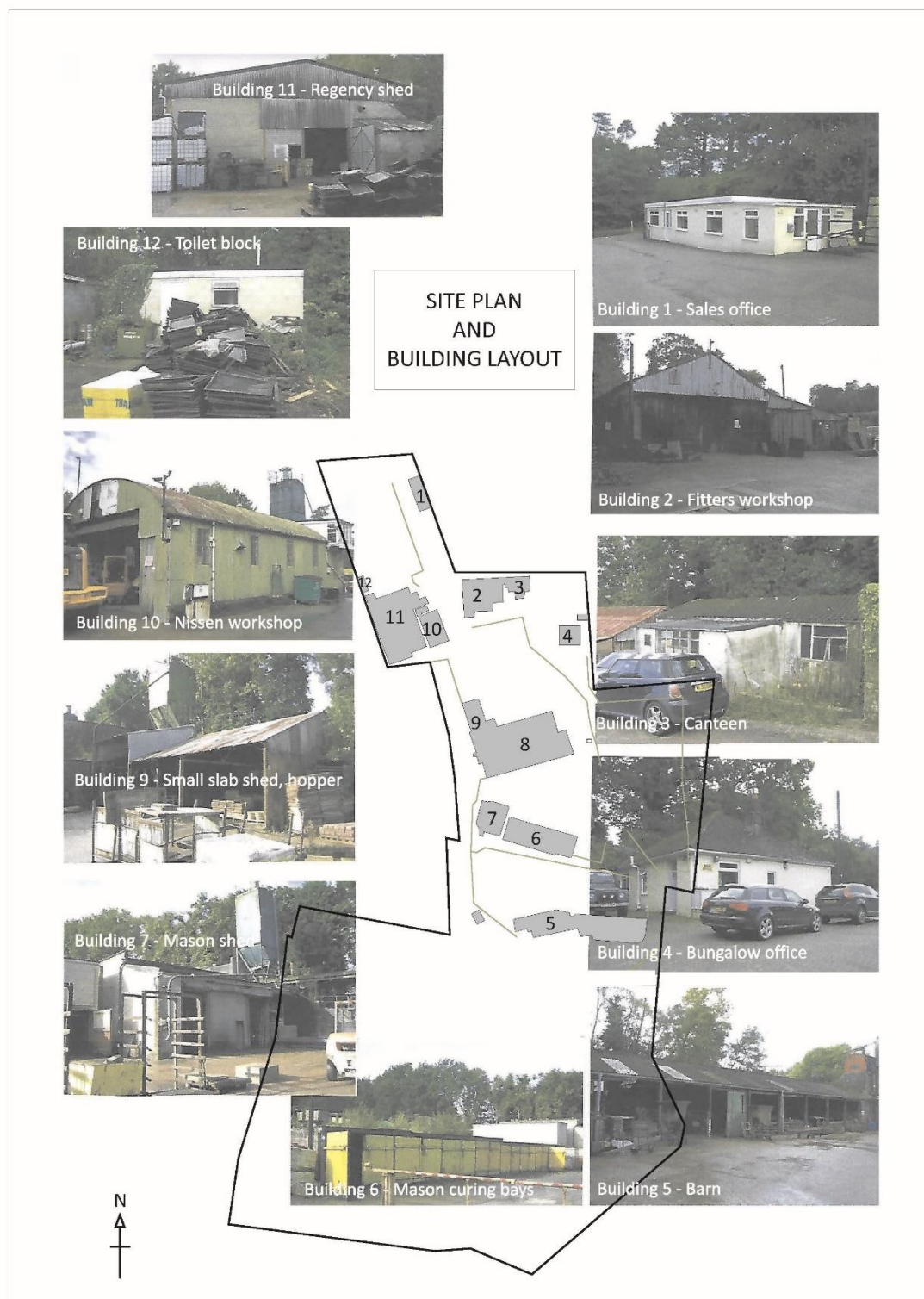


Figure 22

The table below describes the current structures with age and build form explained, to be viewed in conjunction with the current site plan and layout, figure 22.

Building Number	Built	Form and construction materials
1 - Front sales office	1982	Small, single storey, rectangular building constructed from building blocks with single brick wall at northern end. Features modern PVC style doors and window frames.
2 - Fitters workshop	Mid to late 1940s	Two storeys, medium sized structure featuring steel framed RSJ construction, corrugated steel roof and wooden slatted sides.
3 - Canteen	1960	Painted block building, Crittall framed windows and concrete fibre panelled roof.
4 – St Joseph’s office	1930s	Small, single storey, square structure with standard A frame wooden roof construction, clad in tiles. Modern PVC window frames.
5 – Shed No. 4, Barn	1968	Rectangular, open sided structure with single brick wall running length at rear. Has steel RSJ frame and features corrugated roofing material. Number of skylights towards rear. Small shed to west is old locomotive shed, now the compressor shed.
6 - Mason curing bays	1970s	Medium sized warehouse building, 2 storeys, of brick construction with flat roof, roofing felt and modern plastic guttering.
7 – Shed No. 3, Mason	1968s	Small square flat roofed structure with brick construction.
8 - Shed No. 2A, paving	1970s	Large rectangular warehouse structure composed of brick and building block, no windows or skylights.
9 – Shed 2B, small slabs	1970s	Two storey, mixture of brick and building block with corrugated material flagging sides and roof.
10 - Nissen workshop	1940s	Two storey, building block and corrugated steel construction, arched roof and metal window frames. Second storey features square, wooden office structure.
11 – Shed No. 1, Regency	1980s	Large, rectangular warehouse. Composite of brick, corrugated steel and other corrugated materials. Roof lined with lead flashing, is traditional steel A frame and features numerous sky lights.
12 - Toilet block	1970s	Small single storey, rough block “shed” construction. Doors and windows old style wooden structures and flat roof is laid with roofing felt.

Table 1

Figure 23 below is an extract from local Planning History which enables dates to be fixed for the demolition and construction of various buildings on site.

1960 Ref. No: T/11/60 Status: Application Permitted	Installation of cement storage silo (From old Planning History)
1960 Ref. No: T/41/60 Status: Application Permitted	Canteen (From old Planning History)
1961 Ref. No: T/11/61 Status: Application Permitted	Pre-fab steel canteen building (From old Planning History)
1961 Ref. No: T/35/61 Status: Application Permitted	Cement storage silo (From old Planning History)
1961 Ref. No: T/38/61 Status: Application Permitted	Raised concrete road, platform for delivery of sand (From old Planning History)
1961 Ref. No: T/8/61 Status: Application Permitted	Cement storage silo (From old Planning History)
1962 Ref. No: T/25/62 Status: Application Permitted	Garage (From old Planning History)
1962 Ref. No: T/4/62 Status: Application Permitted	Garage addition to workshop (From old Planning History)
1963 Ref. No: T/2/63 Status: Application Refused	Site for 2 caravans (From old Planning History)
1964 Ref. No: T/29/64 Status: Application Permitted	Extension of existing storage sand bins Comment: + br (From old Planning History)
1964 Ref. No: T/41/64 Status: Application Permitted	Wall block making building (From old Planning History)
1965 Ref. No: T/41/65 Status: Application Permitted	Lean-to extension cement sand block making (From old Planning History)
1966 Ref. No: T/19/66 Status: Application Permitted	Proposed mens toilets (From old Planning History)
1966 Ref. No: T/2/66A Status: Application Permitted	2 painted signs Comment: Temporary consent (From old Planning History)
1966 Ref. No: T/34/66 Status: Application Permitted	Proposed mens toilets (works) (From old Planning History)
1967 Ref. No: T/11/67 Status: Application Permitted	Block making shed (From old Planning History)
1967 Ref. No: T/12/67 Status: Application Refused	Alterations and additions to farm store for colour mix (From old Planning History)
1967 Ref. No: T/26/67 Status: Application Permitted	Proposed narrow gauge railway locomotive maintenance workshop building (From old Planning History)
1967 Ref. No: T/27/67 Status: Application Permitted	Extension to office (From old Planning History)
1967 Ref. No: T/30/67 Status: Application Permitted	Proposed 20 ton weighbridge (From old Planning History)
1968 Ref. No: T/4/68 Status: Application Permitted	Demolition of old block making shed and new shed (From old Planning History)
1968 Ref. No: T/40/68 Status: Application Permitted	Amendment to t/4/68 (From old Planning History)
1968 Ref. No: T/41/68 Status: Application Permitted	Vehicle maintenance and workshop building (From old Planning History)
1969 Ref. No: T/37/69 Status: Application Permitted	Two bay extension to block making shed (From old Planning History)
1970 Ref. No: T/5/70 Status: Application Permitted	Portable toilet unit (From old Planning History)
1970 Ref. No: T/6/70 Status: Application Permitted	Vehicle maintenance - amendment t/41/68 (From old Planning History)
1971 Ref. No: T/39/71 Status: Application Permitted	Underground cable and pole transformer (From old Planning History)
1973 Ref. No: T/31/73 Status: Application Permitted	Demolition of part of existing shed drying bays (From old Planning History)
1973 Ref. No: T/41/73 Status: Application Permitted	Residential bungalow use as office (From old Planning History)
1976 Ref. No: T/23/76 Status: Application Permitted	Alteration and acoustic treatment sheds (From old Planning History)
1976 Ref. No: T/19/76 Status: Application Permitted	Additional office and stores (From old Planning History)
1976 Ref. No: T/32/76 Status: Application Permitted	Extension to block making shed (From old Planning History)
1976 Ref. No: T/36/76 Status: Application Permitted	Alterations and provision of acoustic treatment shed (From old Planning History)
1978 Ref. No: T/38/78 Status: Application Permitted	Construction of a new block making shed to replace existing shed (From old Planning History)
1978 Ref. No: T/51/78 Status: Application Permitted	Toilet block (From old Planning History)
1980 Ref. No: T/21/80 Status: Application Permitted	Extension to slabmaking shed and making machine (From old Planning History)
1980 Ref. No: T/29/80 Status: Application Permitted	Warehouse development site (From old Planning History)
1980 Ref. No: T/32/80 Status: Application Refused	Change of use of land to car park area for works staff and employees Comment: Appeal dismissed may 1981 (From old Planning History)
1980 Ref. No: T/5/81 Status: Application Withdrawn	Pole sign (From old Planning History)
1982 Ref. No: T/3/82 Status: Application Permitted	Portakabin (demolition of damaged offices) (From old Planning History)
1983 Ref. No: T/55/83 Status: Application Permitted	Extension to existing offices (From old Planning History)
1984 Ref. No: T/20/84 Status: Application Permitted	New drying sheds and toilets (From old Planning History)
1985 Ref. No: T/52/85 Status: Application Refused	Erection of light industrial building Comment: Outline (From old Planning History)
1986 Ref. No: T/41/86 Status: Application Permitted	Extension to block making shed (From old Planning History)
1987 Ref. No: T/42/87 Status: Application Permitted	Proposed extension to block making shed no.3 (From old Planning History)
1988 Ref. No: T/4/88 Status: Application Permitted	Extension to block curing shed (From old Planning History)
1988 Ref. No: T/72/88 Status: Application Refused	First floor office extension (From old Planning History)
1988 Ref. No: T/76/88 Status: Application Permitted	Extension to block curing shed (From old Planning History)
1990 Ref. No: T/50/90 Status: Application Withdrawn	Section 64 determination on the demolition of an unsafe property Site: Elizabeth Cottage Hilltop Walk Rock Rd Storrington
2004 Ref. No: DC/04/0612 Status: Application Refused	Erection of first floor extension and alterations to main entrance of existing office
2005 Ref. No: DC/05/0464 Status: Application Permitted	Single storey extension to form lobby and WC and external alterations
2005 Ref. No: DC/05/2193 Status: Application Permitted	Use for manufacture, storage and distribution of concrete products (Lawful Development Certificate - Existing)
2012 Ref. No: DC/12/0619 Status: Application Permitted	Surgery to 4 x Oak and 3 x Chestnut trees (Land to the south of Heathside, Hillside Walk, Storrington)
2013 Ref. No: DC/13/0812 Status: Application Permitted	Extension to curing sheds (Lawful Development Certificate - Proposed)
2016 Ref. No: DC/16/0214 Status: Application Permitted	Surgery to 3 x Oak Trees, 5 x Sweet Chestnut Trees, and 1 x Beech Tree (Tree Preservation Order)
2017 Ref. No: DC/17/1315 Status: Application Permitted	Surgery to 3 x Beech, 3 x Silver Birch, 2 x Chestnut, 3 x Pines, 1 x Oak
2018 Ref. No: DC/18/0738 Status: Application Permitted	Surgery to 7 x Silver Birch, 5 x Chestnut, 1 x Beech
2018 Ref. No: DC/18/2029 Status: Application Permitted	Outline planning application for demolition of all existing buildings, the erection of 90 dwellings
2023 Ref. No: DC/23/1688 Status: Application Permitted	Surgery to 1 x beech, 5 x Chestnut, 3 x Oaks, 1 x Silver Birch

CONCLUSION

The historical evidence of buildings past and present on the site demonstrates that the buildings have been constructed in materials which served their purpose for the manufacturing, storage, transport and office requirements for the industrial process. On an individual and collective basis these buildings hold minor historical significance.