

PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT AT HOLLINS CLOSE

UNSWORTH, METROPOLITAN BOROUGH OF BURY



HERITAGE ASSESSMENT

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GARRY MILLER HERITAGE CONSULTANCY

Garry Miller is a heritage consultant, architectural historian and published author who has spent more than 40 years studying and working with buildings of town and countryside, in particular those of North West England. His career as a consultant began in the mid-1980s with the Preston-based Nigel Morgan Historic Building Consultancy, of which he became a partner in 1992 upon its rebranding as Datestone. In 1997 he was commissioned by the Heritage Trust for the North West, a buildings preservation trust based at Barrowford, Lancashire, to produce an in-depth regional study of vernacular houses in southwest Lancashire: the result, *Historic Houses in Lancashire: The Douglas Valley, 1300-1770* was published in 2002. The book was described as ‘scholarship as its best’ by *Country Life* (June 2003), and ‘well analysed and presented’ in *Transactions of the Ancient Monuments Society* (Vol 48, 2004); and was widely cited in the 2006 *Buildings of England* volume on Liverpool and Southwest Lancashire. Extensive research on the houses of Georgian and Regency Liverpool has also been undertaken, with a view to future publication. Following the success of his Douglas Valley book, Garry Miller established his own consultancy, producing analytical and interpretive reports on historic buildings, in particular the heritage assessments required to support planning applications affecting the historic environment. His area of operation encompasses the North West, Midlands, North Wales and parts of Cumbria and North and West Yorkshire. Several local authorities have cited his assessments as examples of best practice, and reports on more than 150 buildings or sites are produced annually.

THIS REPORT

Date of issue: February 2024

Purpose: for planning submission

Text: Garry Miller

Site survey: Garry Miller, Peter Miller

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1: EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report supports proposed development of a site at the junction of Hollins Close and Hollins Lane, Unsworth, in the Metropolitan Borough of Bury, Greater Manchester. The site is an undeveloped plot of land adjoining modern housing on Hollins Close, which stands where the outer residential area of Unsworth meets the open space of Bury Golf Course. The site lies within the designated Green Belt.

Outline proposals have been submitted to Bury Metropolitan Borough Council for a detached dwelling upon the site. The application has been made on the basis that limited infill is allowed within existing villages within the Green Belt under the current National Planning Policy Framework and also policies OL1/2 and OL1/3 of the Bury Unitary Development Plan. This has been challenged by Bury MBC on the basis that Unsworth is not a named village within the Green Belt, although this policy is now out of date with advice contained in the NPPF.

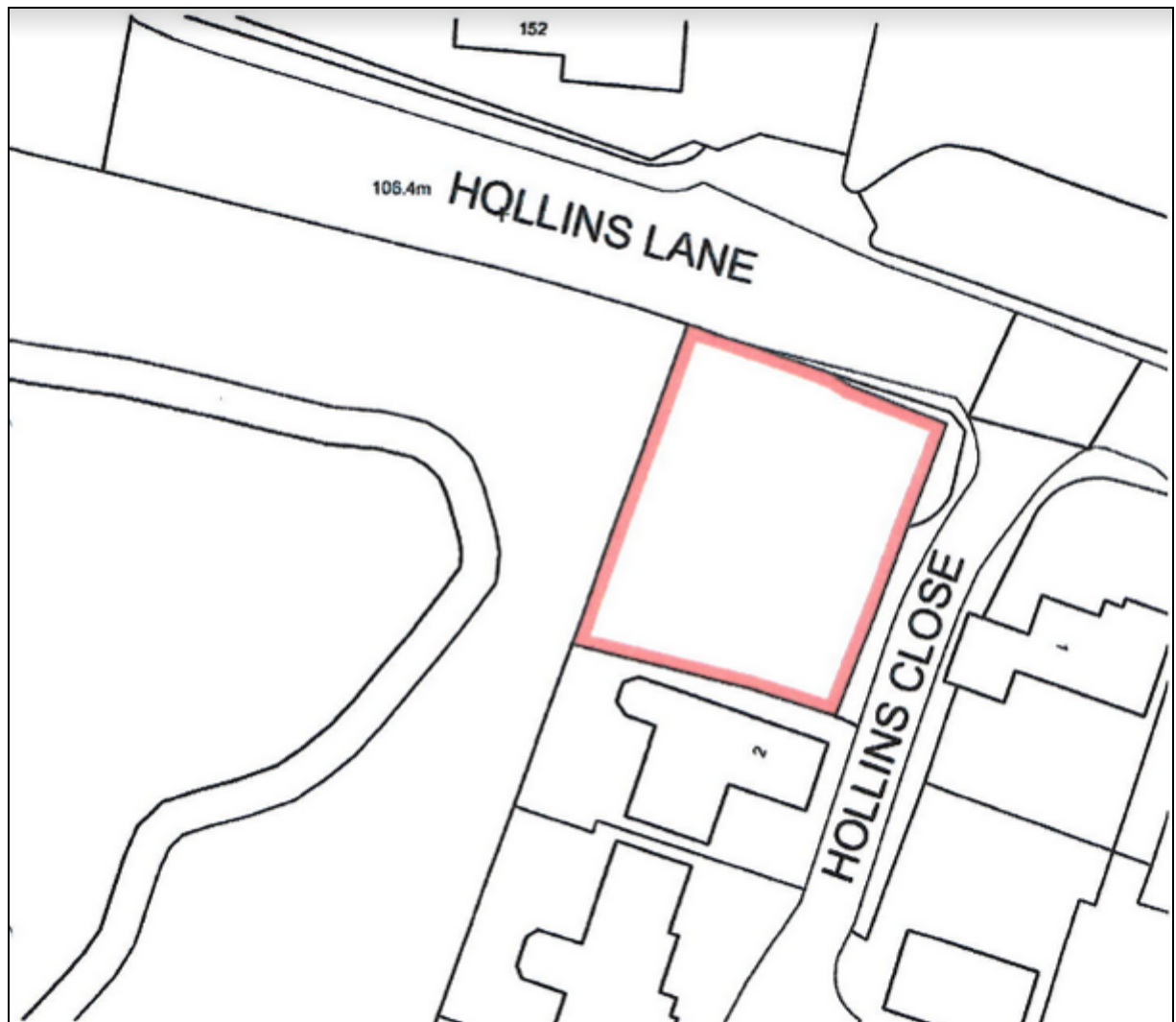
It is demonstrated in this report that Unsworth developed during the 19th century from a scattered rural settlement into a clearly-defined linear village. The presence of St George's Church from 1730, to be followed by a Methodist Church, schools, post office, public house and a club with bowling green, along with a population of 2,000 by the 1870s, all confirm it had attained village status. Significant expansion along Hollins Lane close to the site occurred in the mid-19th and mid-20th century, and more recently with the development of Hollins Close. These more limited developments all represent an organic growth of the original community.

Given the above, development of the application site would not be inappropriate as it adjoins established development and would appear as a natural, continuation of the settlement pattern of the village.

The proposal for development of the site should therefore be considered favourably in this context.

2: THE SITE

The application site is located on the northern fringe of Unsworth, one of the communities within the Metropolitan Borough of Bury, Greater Manchester. It is a vacant plot which stands on the south side of Hollins Lane, at its junction with Hollins Close, where it adjoins modern housing along both sides of the latter and lies directly north of 2 Hollins Close. The area to the north, east and south is predominantly residential, while Bury Golf Course stands to the west.



Map 1. The application site

3: THE PROPOSAL/SCOPE OF THIS REPORT

3.1 Designations

The application site is located within the designated Green Belt.

3.2 Proposed development

Outline proposals have been submitted to Bury Metropolitan Borough Council for a detached dwelling upon the site.

3.3 Scope and purpose of this report

This report has been produced in support of the proposal.

As fully explained in the accompanying Planning Statement, the application has been made on the basis that limited infill is allowed within existing villages within the Green Belt under the current National Planning Policy Framework and also policies OL1/2 and OL1/3 of the Bury Unitary Development Plan. This has been challenged by Bury MBC on the basis that Unsworth is not a named village within the Green Belt, although this policy is now out of date with advice contained in the NPPF. This report will demonstrate that historically Unsworth has possessed the characteristics of, a village since the 18th century and that the application site adjoins an area in which the settlement significantly expanded from the mid-19th to the mid-20th century.

4: DEFINITION OF A VILLAGE

The term ‘village’ is not described in the NPPF. However the *Oxford English Dictionary* definition of a village is as follows:

A collection of dwelling-houses and other buildings, forming a centre of habitation in a country district; an inhabited place larger than a hamlet and smaller than a town, or having a simpler organization and administration than the latter.

The *Wikipedia* description of a village is similar, reading:

A village is a clustered human settlement or community, larger than a hamlet but smaller than a town (although the word is often used to describe both hamlets and smaller towns), with a population typically ranging from a few hundred to a few thousand. Although villages are often located in rural areas, the term urban village is also applied to certain urban neighborhoods. ... Further, the dwellings of a village are fairly close to one another, not scattered broadly over the landscape, as a dispersed settlement. ... In Great Britain, a hamlet earned the right to be called a village when it built a church

Unsworth is today an established community that is generally regarded as a village, and possesses the amenities that one would expect to find there, such as schools, shops and eating and drinking establishments. Its role as such is a historic one that has been established for approaching two centuries, as will be examined in the following section.

5: DEVELOPMENT OF UNSWORTH VILLAGE

5.1 Historical summary

Unsworth lay anciently within the township of Pilkington, part of the parish of Prestwich with Oldham. Pilkington is first recorded in 1200 and Unsworth was originally one of three recognised divisions or hamlets within it, located to the east of the township along with Whitefield in the centre and Outwood to the west.

A church at Unsworth, St George's, was built in 1730, which indicates its population must then have been large enough to warrant it. This event is likely to have marked the emergence of Unsworth as a village. However at this early date it is physically likely to have been a somewhat dispersed settlement of farms and cottages, and the OS mapping of the mid-1840s (following page) shows it still remained essentially thus.

However various historical sources show that Unsworth possessed the amenities of a village by the second half of the 19th century. The *National Gazetteer of Great Britain and Ireland* (1868) describes Unsworth as follows:

UNSWORTH, a chapelry (a subdivision of an ecclesiastical parish with its own chapel) in the parish of Prestwich, hundred of Salford, county Lancaster, 2½ miles S.E. of Bury, its post town, and 6 N.E. of Manchester, on the river Roach. The soil consists of clay and peat. The living is a perpetual curacy in the diocese of Manchester, value £150, in the patronage of the Rector of Prestwich. The church, dedicated to St. George, was rebuilt in 1842, and has a stained E. window. There is an endowed National school, at which a Sunday-school is held. The Independents, Wesleyans, and Primitive Methodists have each a chapel. A fair is held on the last Monday in July.

A similar description is given in the *The Imperial Gazetteer of England and Wales* (1870-1872):

UNSWORTH, a chapelry, with three hamlets, in Prestwich parish, Lancashire; 2½ miles SSE of Bury r. station. It has a post-office under Bury, and a fair on the last Monday of July. Pop., about 2,000. The living is a p. curacy in the diocese of Manchester. Value, £200. Patron, the Rector of Prestwich. The church was rebuilt in 1842. There are three dissenting chapels, and an endowed school with £20 a year.

Both these entries confirm the presence of an established community of 2,000 inhabitants, with a church, fair, post office, chapels and Sunday School, all of which tend to confirm that Unsworth had evolved into an identifiable village by the second

half of the 19th century. Furthermore, *Barrett's 1883 Directory of Bury* refers to Unsworth as one of the villages or hamlets within the township of Pilkington.

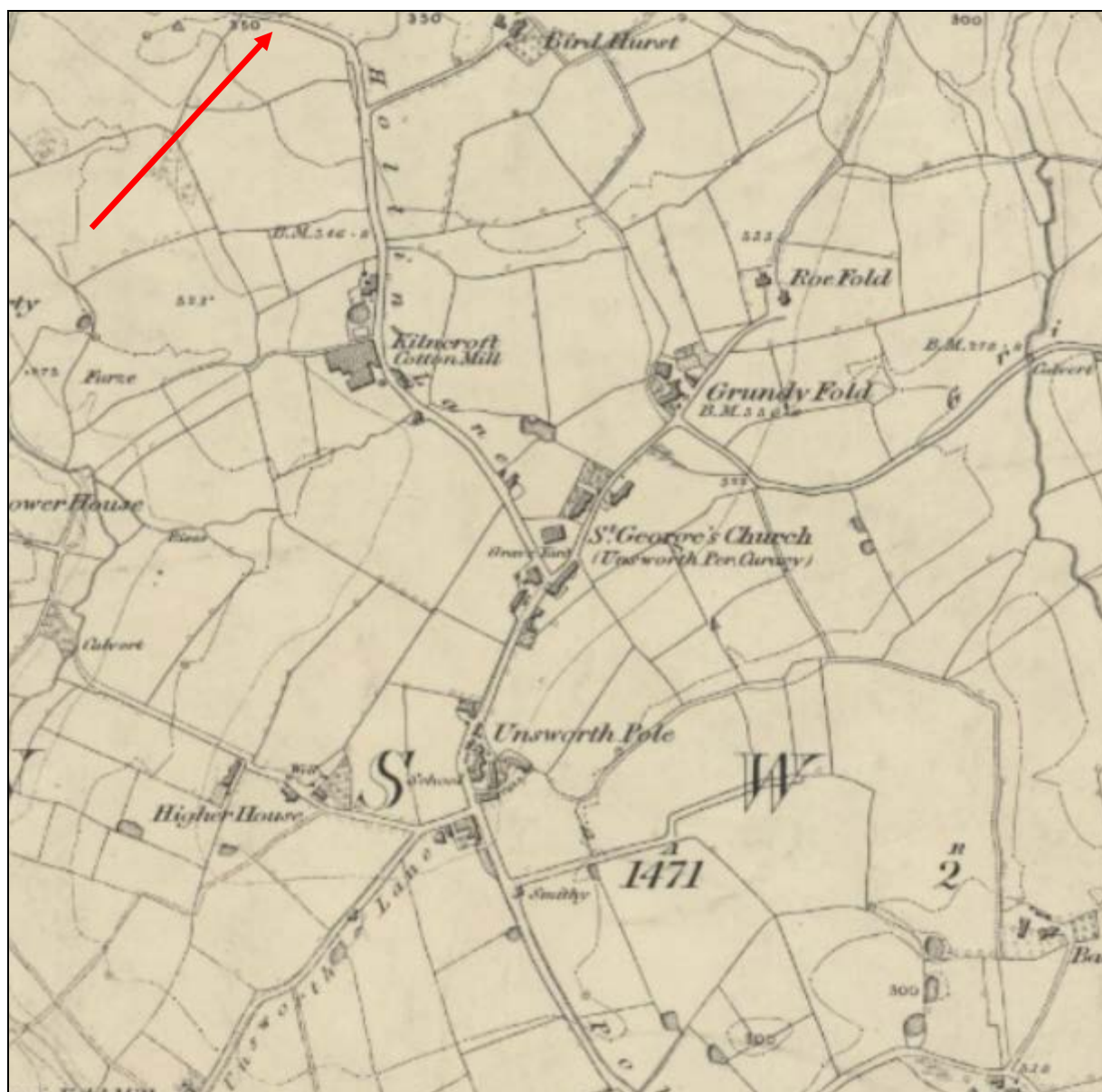
In 1911, the *Victoria County History of Lancashire* (volume 5, 1911) also specifically refers to a village at Unsworth, stating:

Unsworth village lay in the centre of its division on the higher ground between two brooks running north to Whittle Brook and to the Roch.

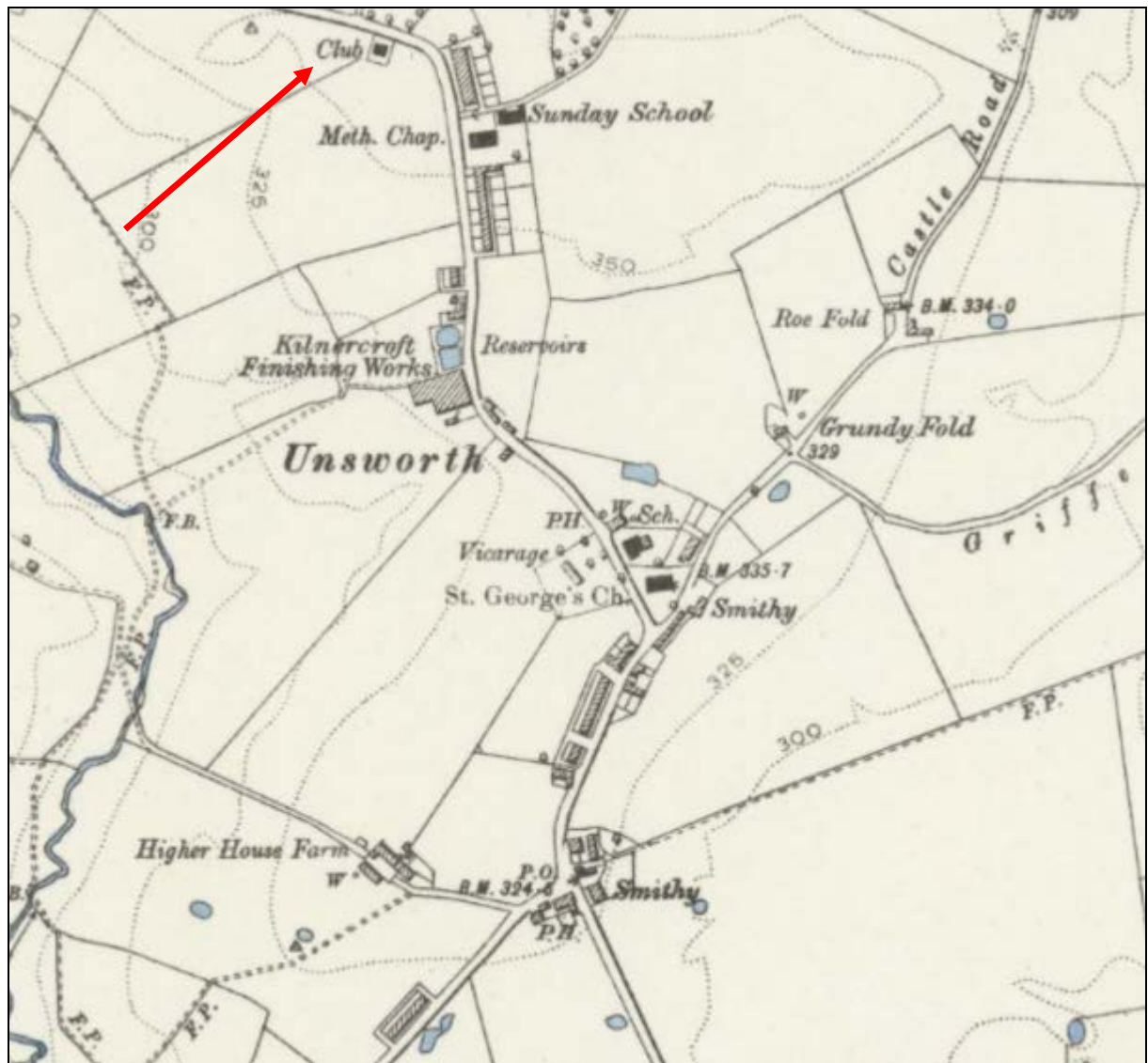
Pilkington ceased to exist as a township in 1894, and a new, enlarged township of Unsworth was created, formed by a merger with Pilsworth. This new township was governed by a parish council, a type of governance which frequently applies to villages.

4.2 Growth of the village – map evidence

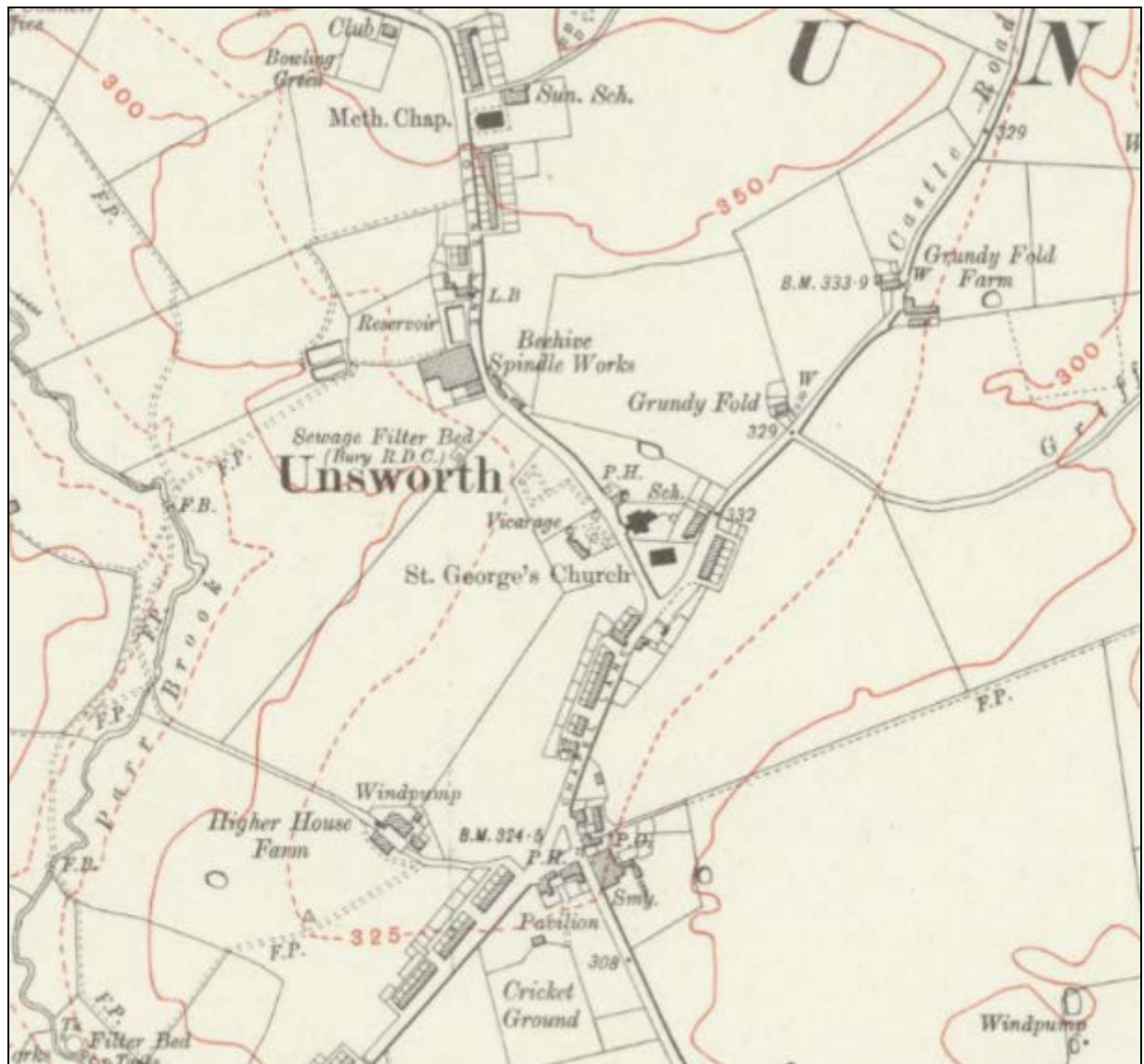
The map sequence on the following pages confirms how the village expanded during the later 19th century to the mid-20th century and how the application site adjoins a significant northern extension of the settlement that was made during that time.



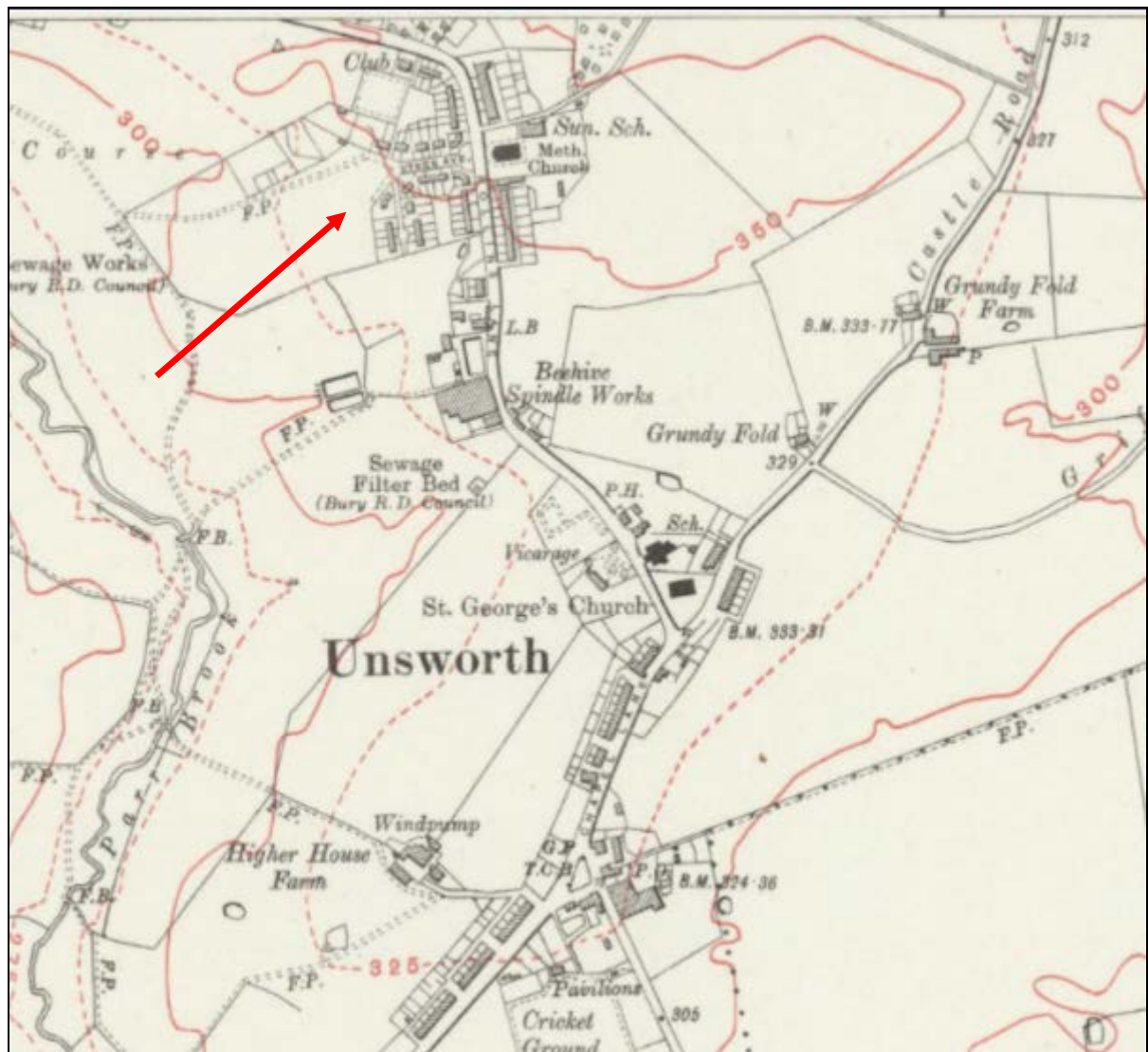
The six-inch OS map surveyed 1844-1845 shows Unsworth was then essentially a small, rural community, with most buildings situated at the junctions of Pole Lane (now Parr Lane) with Unsworth Lane in the south and Hollins Lane to the north. At this time, the village was a dispersed settlement whose focal point was the church of St George, built at the junction of Hollins Lane with Pole Lane in 1730 and rebuilt in 1842. The arrow indicates the location of the application site.



The edition surveyed in 1890-1891 shows significant change had occurred in the intervening years, and the settlement pattern had intensified, with terraces, probably for workers at the Kilnercraft finishing works, appearing south of St George's Church and at the northern end of Hollins Lane, where a Methodist Chapel and Sunday School had now appeared. A club (on later editions identified as a Conservative Club) had also been built adjoining what is now the application site (indicated). A public house opposite St George's is also indicated, and a school, vicarage and two smithies also shown. Essentially Unsworth had developed in the past four decades into a linear village straggling north-south along its principal lanes, and possessed the typical amenities of that period.



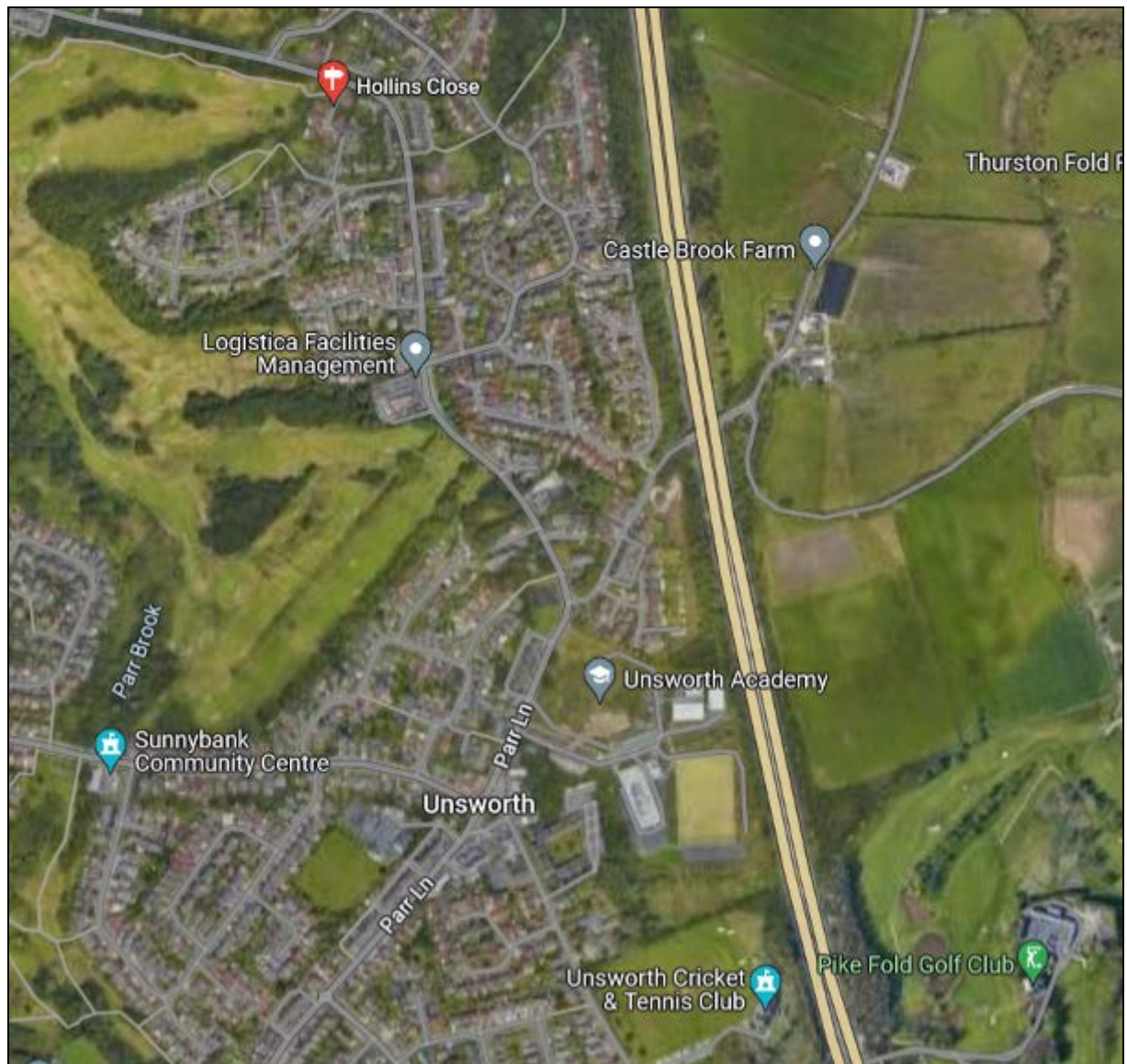
The edition of 1910 shows relatively little change in the village, the most notable occurrence being the appearance of further terraces to the south along Parr Lane (formerly Unsworth Lane). A bowling green is now shown to the rear of the club on Hollins Lane, a feature typical of rural village life in this era.



A significant extension of the village had occurred by 1932, as the OS edition of that year records the development of a small housing estate, close to the proposal site, centred on Sykes Avenue. The greatest density of building in Unsworth village was now at the northern end of the settlement along Hollins Lane.



The edition of 1965 shows further expansion at the village's northern end, with Hunters Hill forming an extension of the earlier development on Sykes Avenue. Development had now clearly gravitated away from the historic core of the village around St George's Church.



Present-day aerial imagery shows the extensive growth that has occurred in the late 20th century and thereafter, with Unsworth expanding beyond its historic village settlement pattern. Essentially it has now become what could be regarded as an urban village rather than the rural entity it had been in the past.

6: THE APPLICATION SITE

The application site is a vacant plot at the junction of Hollins Close and Hollins Lane, and, as noted above, stands within an area which has seen significant expansion of the original village both in the mid-later 19th century and in more recent times. Hollins Close itself is a small development of recent housing, built on the site of the Conservative Club and bowling green recorded on the historic OS maps. Owing to its proximity to them, the application site appears not as countryside but rather as a plot where development was intended but never carried out. Within its immediate vicinity is the built evidence of the historic northward expansion of the village along Hollins Lane, which comprises mid-19th century terraced houses and 1930s dwellings along this road and Sykes Avenue. Directly opposite is an extensive new development centred on Church Meadow and Haweswater Close, which is essentially a recent extension of the settlement beyond its original bounds on Hollins Lane.



Aerial view showing the application site (indicated) in its setting context



View towards the site from Hollins Lane, with Hollins Close on left



Looking from same viewpoint towards 19th century terraces and 1930s housing on Hollins Lane

7: CONCLUDING SUMMARY

It has been demonstrated in this report that Unsworth developed during the 19th century from a scattered rural settlement into a clearly-defined linear village which extended northwards along Hollins Lane to adjoin what is now the proposal site. The presence of St George's Church from 1730, to be followed by schools, a post office, public house, club and bowling green, along with a population of 2,000 by the 1870s, all confirm its historic village status. Significant expansion along Hollins Lane adjoining the site occurred in the early 20th century along Sykes Road, followed more recently by Hollins Close. These developments all represent an organic growth of the original community.

Given the above, development of the application site would not be inappropriate as it adjoins established housing at Hollins Close and would appear as a natural continuation of the settlement pattern that emerged from the mid-19th to the mid-20th century.

The proposal for development of the site should therefore be considered favourably in this context.