

## Ictis Heritage Research – Historic Building Assessment



Figure 1 - The Swan Inn c. 1973. Image From - [https://www.closedpubs.co.uk/somerset/northpetherton\\_swan.html](https://www.closedpubs.co.uk/somerset/northpetherton_swan.html)

### The Building History of Tesco Express/The Swan Inn, NORTH PETHERTON, SOMERSET

Tesco Express, 68 Fore Street,  
North Petherton  
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## **1. Executive Summary**

This report examines the historical and architectural development of the former Swan Inn, now operating as a Tesco Express, located on Fore Street in North Petherton, Somerset. The study explores the origins, evolution and significance of the building within the wider historical and commercial development of the town.

Documentary evidence indicates that the Swan Inn was formally recorded in 1727; however, the structure itself dates to the 17<sup>th</sup> century and occupies a long, narrow burgage plot typical of medieval and post-medieval town development. The layout and location of the building suggest that it likely originated as a small-scale domestic tippling house or alehouse before developing into a formally recognised inn during the early modern period.

The report places the Swan Inn within the wider historical context of North Petherton, examining the town's development as a commercial and administrative centre and the growth of inns, alehouses, and brewing activity from the medieval period onwards. Evidence of social facilities such as a fives court and assembly room in the 19<sup>th</sup> century demonstrates the importance of the Swan Inn as a community and entertainment venue, contributing to the economic and social life of the town.

Architectural analysis highlights the significance of the surviving burgage plot layout, street-facing commercial orientation, and deep rear development, which provide physical evidence for the building's gradual expansion and long-term commercial use. Although the building was converted into a Tesco Express in 2012, this represents a continuation of its historic commercial function rather than a loss of heritage value, reflecting successful adaptive reuse within the historic town centre.

This report provides a clear evidence base for understanding the historical and architectural significance of the Swan Inn and can support future heritage interpretation, conservation, planning considerations, or community heritage initiatives.

Overall, the former Swan Inn represents an important element of North Petherton's historic environment, demonstrating continuity of commercial activity from a probable post-medieval tippling house to a formal inn and modern retail premises. The building provides valuable insight into the development of hospitality, trade, and community life within the town and contributes to the historic character of Fore Street and the wider urban landscape.

## **2. Introduction**

### *2.1. Purpose of the Report*

This report has been prepared to examine the historical and architectural development of the former Swan Inn, now operating as a Tesco Express, on Fore Street in North Petherton, Somerset. The purpose of the study is to investigate the origins, evolution, and historical significance of the building and to place it within the wider development of the town's commercial and hospitality landscape.

The report aims to provide a clear and evidence-based account of the building's history, drawing upon documentary sources, historic maps, architectural analysis, and local historical

context. Particular attention is given to the development of inns and alehouses in North Petherton and the role of the Swan Inn within this network of commercial and social establishments.

## *2.2. Scope of Study*

The scope of this report focuses on the historical development, architectural form, and heritage significance of the Swan Inn building and its surrounding setting. It examines the growth of North Petherton as a commercial and administrative centre, the emergence of inns and hospitality establishments along Fore Street, and the architectural evolution of the Swan Inn from a probable tippling house to a formal inn and modern retail premises.

This study considers documentary evidence from the medieval and post-medieval periods through to the modern conversion of the building into a Tesco Express in 2012. It also includes analysis of the burgage plot layout, historic commercial development and the buildings' role within the town's social and economic life.

This report is intended as a historical and heritage assessment and does not constitute a full structural survey or archaeological investigation. Instead, it provides an interpretive analysis of the available evidence to support an understanding of the building's development and significance.

## *2.3. Methodology*

This research for this report has been undertaken using a combination of documentary and architectural analysis.

Primary and secondary sources have been consulted to identify references to inns, alehouses, and commercial activity in North Petherton, including historic records and documentary evidence relating to the Swan Inn and other hospitality establishments in North Petherton. Appendix A provides a chronological list of recorded inns and alehouses to support this analysis.

Architectural and spatial analysis has been used to examine the building's burgage plot layout, street orientation, and rear development, allowing for interpretation of its historical function and evolution. Historic maps and photographs have also been used to support the understanding of changes to the site over time.

This combined approach allows for a balanced interpretation of both documentary and physical evidence, providing a comprehensive understanding of the Swan Inn's historical development.

## **3. Location and Setting**

The former Swan Inn, now operating as Tesco Express, is located on Fore Street in the historic town of North Petherton, Somerset. The building stands on the east side of the churchyard of St Mary the Virgin Church, within the traditional commercial centre of the

village. A marketplace once stood almost opposite, within the bounds of Pound Street and Back Lane (now Clare Street and Queen Street), and Fore Street was the site of a shirehall (the administrative centre for the North Petherton Hundred), courthouse and guildhall in the 14<sup>th</sup> century.



*Figure 2 - The position of the Swan Inn on Fore Street (The boundary of St Mary's Church is visible at the bottom left) - From Google Street View*

The building lies within the historic core of North Petherton and contributes to the character of the Fore Street streetscape, forming part of a historic commercial and ecclesiastical setting centred on St Mary's Church.

The surrounding area is characterised primarily by later historic buildings, reflecting the continued development of the town from the medieval period onwards. The parish church is among the oldest surviving buildings in the town, dating to the 14<sup>th</sup> century, and forms a prominent landmark within the town. Several historic inns were historically located in close proximity along Fore Street, and nearby Hammet Street, fluctuating between approximately three and ten establishments between the 17<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. This concentration of commercial, administrative, and hospitality buildings indicates that the area around the church and Fore Street formed the historic core of North Petherton.

The former Swan Inn occupies a long and narrow plot, still visible today, with a street-facing frontage onto Fore Street and a deep building line extending to Mill Street at the rear. This layout reflects the historic development pattern of the town, where properties were arranged along narrow plots extending back from the street (commonly known as Burgage plots). The form and orientation of the building suggest a historic commercial plot within the established town layout, contributing to its significance within the historic environment.

#### 4. Historical Background of North Petherton

North Petherton is a historic market town in Somerset, strategically located between Bridgwater, Taunton, the Quantock hills, and the Somerset Levels. The town's origins extend back to the early medieval/late Saxon period, developing as a centre for trade, agriculture and local administration. By the 14<sup>th</sup> century, it was granted a market (1318),<sup>1</sup> and was the administrative hub of the North Petherton Hundred and the connected Royal Hunting Forest of Petherton Park.<sup>2</sup> The town's layout reflects typical medieval planning, with narrow burgage plots extending primarily from Fore Street, providing both commercial frontage and space for workshops, storage, agriculture, and domestic use. These plots were an economic planning strategy, enabling landowners to collect rent while facilitating trade and production.

The town's economy was historically diverse. Agriculture dominated the surrounding landscape, producing cereals and livestock, while the market supported trade in everyday goods. In the 17<sup>th</sup> century, malting became an important industry in North Petherton.<sup>3</sup> There were several malthouses and breweries in Hammet Street, Fore Street, and Mill Street.<sup>4</sup> The malthouse in Hammet Street, run by a Mr Samuel Burston, supplied malt as far as Taunton and Bristol,<sup>5</sup> and a later brewery on Fore Street, run by a Mr Thomas Starkey, employed twenty men in 1871.<sup>6</sup>

North Petherton's location, on the important main road between Bridgwater and Taunton, meant that it also catered to travellers and merchants travelling between the two larger towns, creating a demand for inns, alehouses and associated commercial facilities. Although Fore Street was not originally part of the main road (which followed modern Old Road),<sup>7</sup> it emerged as the principal commercial and administrative axis of the town, which contributed to Fore Street becoming the principal commercial route through North Petherton between Bridgwater and Taunton.

Hospitality establishments would have been a central feature of the town's social and economic fabric. Documentary evidence indicates that by the mid-14<sup>th</sup> century, there were multiple ale sellers operating in North Petherton,<sup>8</sup> likely catering to both residents and visitors. The 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries saw considerable growth of inns along Fore Street, with the number of establishments fluctuating between three and ten over the centuries.<sup>9</sup> These inns would have provided lodgings, stables, food and drink, and spaces for social and civic gatherings, reflecting their importance in both the local economy and community life.

Significant inns historically documented in North Petherton include:

- The Swan Inn – First recorded in 1727<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Gathercole (2003).

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> Baggs and Siraut, (1992).

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid.

<sup>7</sup> Gathercole (2003).

<sup>8</sup> Somerset Heritage Centre, DD/SAS NP 9.

<sup>9</sup> Baggs and Siraut, (1992).

<sup>10</sup> Somerset Heritage Centre, North Petherton parish records (D/P/pet. N 13/2/1).

- The New Inn (Clarence Hotel/Walnut Tree) – Documented in the 18<sup>th</sup> Century<sup>11</sup>
- The George – First mentioned in 1619<sup>12</sup>

The town's urban form and surviving building outlines via street patterns demonstrate continuity of commercial use over several centuries. The historical evidence highlights the Swan Inn's significance. Its place in the town's core and proximity to civic and religious landmarks show us a tangible link to North Petherton's early commercial and social life. Its history is embedded within the town's broader narrative of medieval planning, economic activity, and hospitality provision, making it a key focus for understanding the development of North Petherton as a historic market town.

## 5. Development of Inns in North Petherton

Inns and alehouses formed an essential part of North Petherton's economic and social structure from the medieval period onwards. As a market town situated on regional travel routes, serving a wide hinterland, the settlement required facilities to accommodate travellers, merchants, and local residents. The concentration of hospitality establishments along Fore Street and nearby Hammet Street reflects the town's role as a commercial and administrative centre, with inns providing accommodation, food, drink, stabling, and spaces for social interaction.

Early documentary evidence indicates that ale was being sold in North Petherton by the mid-14<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>13</sup> Records from 1349 show that 22 people were presented for breaching the Assize of Bread and Ale,<sup>14</sup> a regulation on the price, weight and quality of bread and ale, indicating that ale-selling establishments were present in this period.

By the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries, Inns in North Petherton had become more formalised establishments, often occupying prominent plots along Fore Street. These inns were not only drinking houses, but also provided accommodation for travellers, likely moving between Bridgwater and Taunton (or beyond), stabling for horses, and venues for local meetings and community gatherings. Some larger inns sometimes included assembly rooms or additional facilities, demonstrating their importance as social hubs within the town.

The number of inns in North Petherton likely fluctuated due to changing economic conditions, population levels, and patterns of travel and trade.

Most inns were located on Fore Street, close to the church, marketplace, and administrative buildings, allowing for easier access to services for travellers and residents.

Certain inns appear to have played more prominent roles, likely due to their location, size, and longevity. Establishments such as the George, which was located west of the church on the opposite side of Fore Street, provided accommodation and meeting spaces,<sup>15</sup> possibly due to its proximity to the main road, which followed modern High Street. While others may have

<sup>11</sup> Ibid; Somerset Heritage Centre estate maps and deeds (DD/SLM; DD/DHR deed 1766); *Kelly's Directory of Somerset* (1897); and Somerset Heritage Centre, D/R/bw 22/1/39.

<sup>12</sup> Somerset and Dorset Notes and Queries, Vol. 10, p. 300.

<sup>13</sup> Somerset Heritage Centre, DD/SAS NP 9.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid.

<sup>15</sup> Post Office Directory of Somerset (1861, 1875).

acted solely as alehouses with no or little accommodation. The Swan Inn formed part of this wider system. Its location east of the church and position on Fore Street suggest it functioned as both a local social venue and service point for travellers.

The development and persistence of inns in North Petherton demonstrates the town's sustained role as a commercial and social hub over several centuries.

A Chronological list of recorded inns and alehouses in North Petherton is provided in Appendix A, illustrating the continuity and change in hospitality establishments over time and placing the Swan Inn within the broader historical context of the town.

This broader development of hospitality establishments provides essential context for understanding the Swan Inn as part of a structured and evolving commercial network.

## 6. The Swan Inn: Historical Development

### 6.1. Early Development: Tippling House or Alehouse (Late Medieval Period 1300-1500 and Early Modern Period 1500-1750)

The former Swan Inn building originated as an early commercial property dating to the 17<sup>th</sup> century,<sup>16</sup> occupying a long and narrow burgage plot along Fore Street. Although the inn is first formally recorded in 1727,<sup>17</sup> the form and layout of the building suggest that commercial activity on the site may predate this record. It is probable that the building began as a smaller-scale hospitality establishment known as a tippling house or alehouse, before developing into a formally recognised inn in the early 18<sup>th</sup> century.



Figure 3 - The Swan Inn, depth of plot showing burgage layout - From Google Street Maps

Tippling houses and alehouses were common features in the medieval period and were different to the modern sense of pubs and inns. These establishments were domestic dwellings, often simple domestic structures, constructed using materials such as timber framing and wattle and daub, on burgage plots where ale and cider were produced and sold

<sup>16</sup> Somerset Heritage Centre, North Petherton parish records (D/P/pet. N 13/2/1).

<sup>17</sup> Ibid.

for extra income, usually by women known as alewives. The modern “pub” from “public house” reflects this opening of the domestic home to the public. It was far from a commercial establishment; there would have been little to no accommodation, and they instead served as purely local drinking establishments catering to local residents and agricultural workers. However, over time, these alehouses expanded, gained licenses, and developed into larger inns, more recognisable of the modern notion.

The physical characteristics of the Swan Inn building support this interpretation. The structure occupies a long, narrow burgage plot, with a street-facing frontage and deep rear extension, which would have accommodated domestic or working space (See figure 4). This layout would have been well-suited and is typical of early alehouses or tipping establishments, where drink could be sold at the front from the domestic property, and stored, brewed and produced behind.



*Figure 4 - The Swan Inn shown on 1770 Map of North Petherton*

The concentration of ale sellers and inns in North Petherton from the 14<sup>th</sup> century onwards further strengthens this argument. Smaller drinking establishments likely operated alongside later and larger inns. The Swan’s location within the town’s commercial core would have made it an ideal site for an early establishment, serving local residents and travellers passing through the town.

As seen in Appendix A, a tippler was recorded in 1594, and in 1619, a tippler and innkeeper were recorded.<sup>18</sup> Assuming that the inn referred to in this source is The George (which was first recorded in the same year and does not reflect the typical evolution from burgage alehouse to inn), it is probable that the tippler evolved into either the Lion (later the New Inn and modern Walnut Tree) or the Swan, both of which reflect typical continuity from domestic tipplers to commercial inns.

The Swan and the Lion are the most likely candidates for an early tippler/ale house, though post-medieval and industrial building work may have destroyed other evidence. Whether the sources in Appendix A are also referring to separate tipplers in 1594 and 1619 is also unknown.

It is therefore likely that the George Inn was built as a purposeful Inn rather than developing from a tippler, and that the tippler mentioned is likely the Swan or the Lion. In either case, it is probable that both were operating on some level as tippling/ale houses before becoming established inns.

In 1727, the Swan is officially recorded as an inn; however, the building dates to the 17<sup>th</sup> century,<sup>19</sup> suggesting that a formalised process occurred to transform the tippling house into a hospitality establishment. This transition likely occurred sometime between 1619 and 1699, a period of post-medieval expansion in North Petherton, allowing for alehouses to meet an increasing demand for accommodation and commercial services.

The survival of the burgage plot layout and the continued commercial use of the site provide important evidence for this early origin, suggesting continuity of function from a modest ale house to a fully developed inn. This early phase of development forms the foundation for the Swan Inn's later historical significance and demonstrates its role within the broader evolution of North Petherton's hospitality network.

Overall, the documentary evidence, combined with the survival of the burgage plot layout, strongly suggests that the Swan Inn originated as a domestic alehouse or tippling establishment before evolving into a formalised inn by the early 18<sup>th</sup> century. This phased development reflects wider patterns of hospitality growth in English market towns and forms an important foundation for understanding the Swan Inn's historical and architectural significance.

## 6.2. *First Recorded Inn (1727)*

The Swan Inn is first formally recorded in documentary sources in 1727,<sup>20</sup> where it is identified as an established inn located on the east side of the churchyard along Fore Street. This reference provides the earliest clear evidence of the building operating as a licensed hospitality establishment and confirms its presence within the developing network of inns in North Petherton during the early 18<sup>th</sup> century.

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<sup>18</sup> Somerset Heritage Centre, D/D/Ca 98 (deeds); and Somerset Heritage Centre Q/RLa 33 (Quarter Sessions Licensing Records).

<sup>19</sup> Somerset Heritage Centre, North Petherton parish records (D/P/pet. N 13/2/1).

<sup>20</sup> Somerset Heritage Centre, North Petherton parish records (D/P/pet. N 13/2/1).

By this date, North Petherton already supported several inns and alehouses. The George (1619),<sup>21</sup> The White Horse (1676, renamed the Nags Head in 1725),<sup>22</sup> The Anchor (1699),<sup>23</sup> and the Lion (1711, rebuilt as the New Inn in 1724).<sup>24</sup> The concentration of inns in North Petherton by 1727 is average for a market town; however, at its maximum by the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, North Petherton was home to seven recorded inns, which is slightly above average for a smaller town. This would suggest that growth was due to expansion.

The early 18<sup>th</sup> century was a period of increasing regulation and formalisation of inns and ale houses across England. Licensing laws and parish oversight meant that establishments operating as inns were more frequently recorded in documentary sources, including county histories and local records. The appearance of the Swan in 1727, therefore, likely reflects not the construction of the building at that date, but the point at which it became formally recognised within the licensed hospitality system.

The Swan's location east of the churchyard placed it in a prominent and commercially advantageous position within the town. Its proximity to other inns and civic buildings suggests that it played an active role in the social and economic life of North Petherton, serving as both a local meeting place and a facility for travellers. This position reinforces the interpretation that the building had already been operating in some commercial capacity prior to its first recorded mention.

The 1727 record, therefore, marks an important stage in the development of the Swan Inn, representing the transition from a probable domestic alehouse or tipping establishment to a formally recognised inn within the town's hospitality network. This early documentation confirms the Swan's place within the historic commercial core of North Petherton and establishes a clear foundation for its later development during the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries.

### *6.3. 18<sup>th</sup>-19<sup>th</sup> Century Development and Social Role*

During the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries, the Swan Inn appears to have developed into a well-established and socially significant hospitality building within North Petherton. Following its first recorded mention in 1727, the inn formed part of a stable network of licensed establishments along Fore Street, serving both the local population and travellers passing through the town. This period represents the height of the Swan's role as a commercial and communal centre, reflecting broader developments in hospitality and social life in English market towns.

By the 19<sup>th</sup> century, inns in North Petherton were no longer solely places for drinking and accommodation, but functioned as important social institutions within the community. They hosted meetings, provided recreational space, and supported local economic activity. The Swan Inn appears to have been part of this wider development, with evidence suggesting that it offered facilities beyond basic hospitality, indicating its importance within the town's social structure.

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<sup>21</sup> Somerset and Dorset Notes and Queries, Vol. 10, p. 300.

<sup>22</sup> Somerset Heritage Centre, DD/SL 15; and Somerset Heritage Centre Quarter Sessions and Estate Records.

<sup>23</sup> Somerset Heritage Centre Quarter Sessions Records (Q/SR 213/2, 9).

<sup>24</sup> Somerset Heritage Centre, North Petherton Parish Records (D/P/pet.n 13/2/1); and Somerset Heritage Centre estate maps and deed (DD/SLM; DD/DHR deed 1766).



Figure 5 - Potential location of Fives Court (mark of previous wall visible within marked oval) - From Google Street Maps



Figure 6 - Potential location of Fives Court - From Google Street Maps

A key indicator of this expanded role is the recording of a Fives court in 1838,<sup>25</sup> associated with the Swan Inn, which may have been located by the wall next to the present disabled parking bays for Tesco Express, based on physical interpretation (See figures 5 and 6), although this remains interpretive and requires further documentary or archeological confirmation since it may have taken place in the church yard as is

seen in other examples.<sup>26</sup> Fives courts were recreational sporting spaces, typically attached to inns, schools or public buildings, and were used for ball games similar to handball and squash. Its presence suggests that the Swan functioned as a social and recreational hub, providing facilities for leisure and community interaction. This indicates a level of investment and development beyond that of a simple drinking establishment and reflects the growing importance of inns as centres of communal life in the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

Further evidence of the Swan's social role is the recording of an assembly room in 1898 (visible today as a large attached brick building at the rear of the property, which also acted as a carriage shed).<sup>27</sup> Assembly rooms were commonly associated with larger inns and public buildings and were used for meetings, events, and social gatherings, including local societies, celebrations, and public functions. The addition of such a space suggests that the Swan Inn had developed into a significant venue within North Petherton, capable of hosting community events and serving a broader civic function.

<sup>25</sup> Somerset Heritage Centre, North Petherton Tithe Award.

<sup>26</sup> Longman (2012).

<sup>27</sup> Somerset Heritage Centre, estate records (D/R/bw 16/11/1, 18).



*Figure 7 - 19<sup>th</sup>-century Assembly Room and carriage shed extension visible today (stable at the far left) - From Google Street Maps*

The development of recreational and assembly facilities reflects wider changes in rural and small-town society during the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries. Inns increasingly acted as focal points for community interaction, particularly in market towns where formal civic spaces were limited.

By the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the Swan Inn had become an established and multifunctional building within North Petherton, combining hospitality, recreation, and community functions. Its development during this period demonstrates the continued importance of inns in shaping the social and economic life of the town and highlights the Swan's role as a key component of the historic commercial and communal landscape.

#### *6.4. 20<sup>th</sup> Century Use, Closure, and Commercial Continuity*

During the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the Swan Inn continued to operate as a licensed public house, maintaining its long-standing role within the community. Like many historic inns in small English market towns, the Swan gradually experienced changes in function and importance as patterns of travel, transport, and social activity evolved. The decline of traditional coaching routes, the rise of motor transport, and changing social habits reduced the demand for smaller inns and local public houses, leading to the closure or transformation of many historic hospitality establishments.

Despite these wider changes, the Swan Inn remained part of the town's commercial landscape, continuing the long tradition of trade and public use associated with its burghage

plot location along Fore Street. In 2012, the Swan Inn closed and was adapted for retail use as a Tesco Express.<sup>28</sup>

Although the building no longer operates as an inn, its historic form and location continue to reflect its earlier function. The long, narrow burgage plot remains legible, and the street-facing commercial frontage maintains the building's relationship with Fore Street and the surrounding historic environment. This survival of form and function contributes to the understanding of the site's development and reinforces its importance within the town's historic commercial landscape.

The 21<sup>st</sup>-century transition of the Swan Inn from a public house to a retail premises, therefore, represents not a loss of function but a continuation of its commercial role in a modern context. The building's survival and adaptation highlight the importance of maintaining historic structures within active use, ensuring their continued contribution to the character and identity of North Petherton. This phase of development marks the final stage in the Swan Inn's historical evolution, demonstrating its transformation from a probable early alehouse to a formal inn, and ultimately to a modern commercial premises.

## **7. Architectural Analysis**

This section examines the physical structure of the building and interprets its architectural development through spatial layout, construction methods, and surviving features.

### *7.1. Overview of the Building*

The former Swan Inn (now Tesco Express) is a historic commercial building located on Fore Street in the centre of North Petherton. The structure occupies a long and narrow burgage plot typical of medieval town development. Although the building has undergone significant modification over time, particularly during its conversion into a retail premise with domestic dwellings behind, the overall plot form and spatial organisation reflect its origins as a historic commercial and domestic property.

The surviving architectural form supports the interpretation that the building developed gradually from a smaller domestic structure into a larger commercial inn. The building today reflects both commercial and residential functions, and despite modern alterations, its layout continues to reflect the historic organisation of the site.

### *7.2. Burgage Plot Layout*

The burgage plot layout of the former Swan Inn is one of the most important pieces of architectural evidence for its early origins.

Burgage plots were a defining feature of medieval town planning.<sup>29</sup> They were long, narrow land divisions that typically ran back from a main street. They were usually established in the

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<sup>28</sup> Longman (2012).

<sup>29</sup> Hoskins (1955); Platt (1976).

medieval period as part of planned town layouts, designed to maximise frontage along commercial streets while providing sufficient depth for domestic workshops, gardens, storage areas, or animal pens.

The layout strongly supports the argument that the building originated as a domestic small-scale tipping/ale house before developing into a larger inn.

The survival of this plot form demonstrates continuity of land use and supports the interpretation that commercial and hospitality activity has taken place on this site for several centuries, linking the Swan Inn to medieval and early post-medieval patterns of urban development in North Petherton.

### 7.3. Street Frontage and Commercial Orientation

The building's position directly on Fore Street reflects its historic commercial role.

Historic inns and alehouses were typically located along main streets to maximise visibility, accessibility, and trade. Fore Street formed the primary commercial hub of North Petherton, though not the original main road; it later became so due to increased traffic and modernised highway routes. Fore Street connected the church, marketplace, and other administrative buildings in the medieval and post-medieval periods. The Swan's frontage onto this street would have allowed it to serve both local residents and travellers moving through the town.

The street-facing element would originally have functioned as the public face of the establishment, where ale and cider would have been sold, and customers would have entered the building. In earlier periods, this frontage would have included signage and a main entrance (now moved), and would have reflected a domestic home and, later, an official inn.



Figure 8 - Visible sections on the building - From Google Street Maps

The first segment (see figure 8) is likely the oldest, and perhaps built on the original burgage house, while the next section is possibly an extension, though it seems to be of a similar date

to the first section. The rear of the property (seen in figure 5), which includes the assembly hall and carriage shed, is almost certainly 19<sup>th</sup> century.

Modern alterations have changed the external appearance, moving the entrance way to the east side of the building; however, the fundamental street-facing orientation remains unchanged.

#### *7.4. Rear Development and Functional Space*

The most significant architectural feature of the Swan Inn is its deep rear development, which reflects the evolution of the building's function over time.

As an early alehouse, the rear of the plot would have been used for brewing and cider production, storage of barrels and supplies, domestic living space, and areas for growing food, tending animals, and workshops. As the building developed into a formal inn, these rear areas would have expanded to accommodate additional commercial and social functions.

As a formal inn, the layout would likely reflect a similar form to what we see today. The alehouse would have been toward the front of the property, fronting the street, with an eastern courtyard and stabling area to the south (now built over by houses), and rooms would have been toward the rear of the property, either single or double storey.

Documentary evidence suggests that by the 19<sup>th</sup> century, additional facilities had been constructed, including an assembly room and a fives court, indicating substantial rear development.

This expansion reflects a common pattern in historic inns, where rear spaces were gradually developed to accommodate growing demand for social activities alongside commercial.

#### *7.5. Building Materials and Construction*

Although much of the original structure has been altered, the Swan Inn likely reflects typical construction methods used in North Petherton in the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries, based on regional building traditions in Somerset.

Buildings in the town were typically built with local stone and timber framing, with brick and stone extensions in later periods.

Early alehouses would have been simple domestic buildings constructed with locally available materials. As these buildings developed into inns, they were frequently expanded and reinforced using more durable construction techniques.

The long-term survival of the Swan Inn suggests a gradual process of rebuilding and adaptation, with older elements potentially incorporated into later structural phases. The current structure likely contains layers of construction representing different periods of development, although modern alterations obscure most of this evidence.

### *7.6. 19<sup>th</sup> Century Expansion and Social Facilities*

By the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the Swan Inn had clearly developed into a significant social and commercial building. The presence of a five-sided court and an assembly room indicates that the building had moved beyond its earlier role as a simple ale house and had become an important community venue.

Assembly rooms were often used to hold public meetings, social gatherings, local inquests, events, and to provide entertainment. This suggests that the Swan Inn played a central role in the social life of North Petherton during the Victorian period.

Architecturally, this would have required a larger internal space with further expansion, reflecting economic growth and increasing demand for these facilities in the town.

### *7.7. Modern Alterations and Tesco Conversion (2012)*

The conversion of the Swan Inn into a Tesco Express in 2012 resulted in significant internal and external alterations; however, the core structure and plot layout remain intact. Internal partitions were removed, and the modern shopfront was installed. Despite these changes, the building continues to function as a commercial premises, maintaining the historic role of the site as a place of trade and public access.

From a heritage perspective, this conversion represents adaptive reuse rather than complete redevelopment. The retention of the building and its plot form ensures that the historical footprint of the Swan Inn survives within the modern townscape. The Tesco Express, therefore, represents a continuation of the building's long-standing commercial function rather than a break in its historical development.

### *7.8. Architectural Significance*

The architectural significance of the Swan Inn lies in its survival as a historic burgage plot with a commercial building that demonstrates long-term continuity of use. The building provides important physical evidence for the development of inns and hospitality establishments in North Petherton and reflects broader patterns of urban and economic change from the medieval period to the present.

Although modern alterations have changed the appearance of the structure, the underlying architectural form and spatial organisation remain significant and contribute to the historic character of Fore Street.

## **9. Significance and Conclusion**

The former Swan Inn represents an important historic commercial building within the centre of North Petherton, reflecting several centuries of economic, social and architectural development along Fore Street. Documentary evidence and surviving architectural form suggest that the building originated as a small-scale domestic tippling house or ale house during the medieval period, before becoming an established inn in the post-medieval period.

This evolution reflects wider patterns of hospitality development within the town, where domestic properties on burgage plots gradually expanded to meet increasing demand for accommodation, drink, and social space.

The survival of the long and narrow burgage plot demonstrates continuity of land use from the medieval period onwards. The street-facing commercial orientation and deep rear development reflect the gradual expansion of the property as it evolved into a significant hospitality establishment. By the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the presence of a fives court and assembly room indicates that the Swan Inn had become an important social venue, contributing to the communal and economic life of North Petherton.

The building forms part of a wider network of historic inns and alehouses that supported trade, travel, and local industry within the town. Its location within the traditional commercial core, close to the church and former marketplace, reinforces its role within the historic townscape and highlights its contribution to the development of Fore Street as a centre of commercial activity.

Although the building was converted into a Tesco Express in 2012, this represents a continuation rather than a loss of its historic function. The site has maintained its commercial and public role for several centuries, evolving from a domestic alehouse to a formal inn and now to a modern retail premises. This continuity of use enhances its heritage significance and demonstrates the successful adaptation of a historic commercial building to modern economic needs.

Overall, the former Swan Inn holds considerable historical and architectural significance as a surviving example of North Petherton's hospitality and commercial heritage. The combination of documentary evidence, burgage plot layout, and long-term continuity of use supports the interpretation that the building developed from an early tippling house into a formal inn and finally its modern retail function. As such, it remains an important element of the town's historic environment and provides valuable insight into the evolution of commercial buildings and community life in North Petherton from the post-medieval period to the present. The building, therefore, represents an important heritage asset within North Petherton and contributes to the understanding of historic commercial development in Somerset market towns.

## **Appendix A: Licensed and Recorded Premises in North Petherton**

This appendix provides a chronological list of known licensed premises and ale-selling establishments in North Petherton, based on documentary and cartographic evidence. Where premises changed names over time, they are grouped together under the same entry. Dates represent first recorded references and estimated operating periods where known.

### **Medieval and Early Post-Medieval Ale Selling**

#### Unlicensed Ale sellers

- First Recorded: 1349
- Location: Not Specified

*Notes: 22 Individuals presented at the assize of 1349 for breaching ale-selling regulations, indicating widespread informal ale production and sale within the settlement.*

#### Early Tipplers and Innkeepers

- Tippler (1594)
- Tippler and Innkeeper (1619)
- Inn Holder (1646)
- Locations: Not specified

*Notes: These likely represent early licensed or semi-licensed ale sellers. Documentary evidence suggests possible association with the later George Inn or Swan Inn, though this remains uncertain.*

#### Suppressed Alehouses (1640)

- Primmere Corner Alehouse
- Tuckerton Alehouse
- North Moor Alehouse

*Notes: These were rural or peripheral alehouses targeted during the mid-17th-century regulation and suppression of disorderly drinking establishments.*

### **Established Inns and Taverns (17<sup>th</sup>-18<sup>th</sup> Century)**

#### The George Inn

- First Recorded: 1619
- Estimated end: 1980
- Location: Fore Street

*Notes: One of the longest-running inns in North Petherton and likely one of the principal coaching inns.*

### White Horse – Nag’s Head

- White Horse: 1676-1725
- Nag’s Head: 1725-c.1770
- Location: Fore Street (West of Church)

*Notes: Appears on the 1770 map but had closed before 1800.*

### Anchor

- First Recorded: 1699
- Estimated end: Unknown
- Location: Not specified

*Notes: Limited documentary evidence survives.*

### **18th-20<sup>th</sup> Century Inns and Hotels**

#### Lion/White Lion – New Inn – Clarence Hotel – Walnut Tree

- Lion/White Lion: 1711-1724
- New Inn: 1724-1897
- Clarence Hotel: 1897-1978
- Walnut Tree: 1978-Present
- Location: Fore Street (North of Church)

*Notes: Extended in the 1930s and 1980s. Continuous occupation, unsure of modern building dating/construction.*

#### The Swan Inn

- First Recorded: 1727
- Estimated end: 2012
- Location: Fore Street (East of Church)

*Notes: Constructed in the 17<sup>th</sup> century, fives court (1838) and the assembly room (1898).*

#### Harp – Ring of Bells

- Harp: 1765-1786
- Ring of Bells: 1840-1924
- Location: Hammet Street

*Notes: Name change. May have been another name between the two or possibly retired and reopened.*

### Mitre

- First Recorded: 1798
- Estimated end: 1909
- Location: Hammet Street

## **19<sup>th</sup> Century Expansion**

### Globe

- Start: 19<sup>th</sup> Century
- Status: Ongoing
- Location: High Street

### Bird in Hand

- Start: 19<sup>th</sup> Century
- Status: Closed (date unknown)
- Location: Pound Street (now Clare Street)

### Royal Hotel

- Start: 19<sup>th</sup> Century
- Status: Closed (date unknown)
- Location: Back Lane (now Queen Street)

### Willian IV

- Start: 19<sup>th</sup> Century
- Status: Closed (date unknown)
- Location: Not specified

### Masons Arms

- Start: 19<sup>th</sup> Century
- Status: Closed (date unknown)
- Location: Hammet Street

## **20<sup>th</sup> Century Premises**

### The Lamb

- Start: 20<sup>th</sup> Century
- Status: Ongoing
- Location: Fore Street

## Appendix B: Swan Inn Chronology/Timeline

This appendix provides a chronological timeline of the development of the Swan Inn, North Petherton, from its likely origins as a medieval burgage plot and alehouse through to its modern use as a retail premises. This timeline is based on documentary, cartographic, and secondary historical sources used throughout this report.

Date/Period	Event	Evidence/Source	Notes
Medieval period (pre-1500)	Burgage plot established along Fore Street	Burgage plot layout, settlement morphology	Linear plot with long rear yard typical of medieval commercial properties
Late medieval–early post-medieval	Likely informal alehouse/tipling house operating on plot	Burgage layout and roadside position	Common development of domestic ale-selling in market settlements
16th–17th century	Continued use as domestic/commercial roadside property	Settlement development patterns	Gradual evolution toward licensed premises likely
1727	First recorded reference to the Swan Inn	Documentary reference (VCH and primary records)	Marks official recognition as an inn
18th century	Swan operates as established coaching and village inn	Parish and licensing records	Positioned near church and marketplace, ideal for travellers
Late 18th–early 19th century	Expansion and continued use as public house/inn	Trade directories and licensing records	Growth reflects increasing transport and commercial activity
19th century	Swan Inn recorded in directories and licensing documents	Trade directories, licensing registers	Stable and established public house
Late 19th century	Continued operation as village inn	Census and trade records	Typical rural inn serving local community
Early 20th century	Swan Inn still operating	Maps and licensing records	Likely modest structural alterations
Mid–late 20th century	Decline of traditional inn use	Licensing and commercial changes	Shift in village commercial landscape
2012	Inn closes and building converted	Planning and commercial records	Change from hospitality to retail use
Present day	Building operates as Tesco Express	Modern commercial use	Historic structure remains part of Fore Street streetscape

## Appendix C: Glossary of Terms

This glossary explains historical, architectural, and historic environment terms used throughout this report to assist readers who may not be familiar with building history or heritage terminology. Definitions are simplified for clarity and relate specifically to their use within this report.

<b>Term</b>	<b>Definition</b>
Alehouse	A licensed or semi-licensed establishment selling ale and other alcoholic drinks, often operating from a domestic building in the medieval and early modern period.
Burgage Plot	A long, narrow plot of land typical of medieval towns and villages, usually with a building facing the street and a long rear yard used for domestic, commercial, or agricultural activity.
Cartographic Evidence	Historical maps used to understand the development, layout, and changes to buildings and settlements over time.
Census	A government record of the population taken every ten years (from 1801 in England), providing information on residents, occupations, and property use.
Coaching Inn	An inn providing accommodation, food, and stabling for travellers and horses along major transport routes, particularly common in the 17th–19th centuries.
Commercial Premises	A building used for business purposes such as shops, inns, or services rather than purely domestic occupation.
Fore Street	The principal street of a settlement, typically forming the main commercial and transport route and often lined with shops, inns, and public buildings.
Historic Environment	The physical remains of past human activity, including buildings, landscapes, streets, and archaeological features.
Hundred	A historic administrative division of a county used for taxation, governance, and legal administration during the medieval and early modern periods.
Inn	A licensed establishment providing accommodation, food, and drink for travellers and locals. Inns were generally larger and more formal than alehouses.
Licensing	The legal permission granted to sell alcohol, usually recorded in parish, county, or licensing registers and court records.
Licensing Register	Official records listing premises and individuals granted permission to sell alcohol or operate public houses and inns.
Medieval	The historical period in England generally dated from c.1066 to c.1500.
Morphology	The study of the physical layout and development of settlements, buildings, and land plots over time.
Parish	The smallest administrative and ecclesiastical division of a county, centred on a church and used for local governance, record-keeping, and community organisation.
Post-Medieval	The period after the medieval era, generally c.1500–1750.
Primary Source	Original historical evidence created at the time being studied, such as maps, parish records, licensing documents, and trade directories.

Public House	A licensed premises selling alcoholic drinks to the public, commonly referred to as a pub.
Secondary Source	A modern interpretation or analysis of historical evidence, such as books, academic articles, or historical surveys.
Settlement Development	The process by which a town or village grows and changes over time in terms of layout, buildings, and land use.
Shirehall	An administrative building used for local government, legal, or judicial functions, often associated with county or hundred administration.
Tippler	An informal ale-seller, often operating from a private house before formal licensing systems were fully established.
Trade Directory	A historical publication listing businesses, tradespeople, and services within a town or county, commonly used for 18th–20th century research.
Victoria County History (VCH)	A major scholarly series documenting the history of English counties using primary historical sources and academic research.
Yard Plot	The rear section of a burgage plot used for storage, brewing, stabling, workshops, or domestic activity.

## Appendix D: Diagrams

Diagram 1: Stages and Sections of The Swan Inn as a Burgage Plot

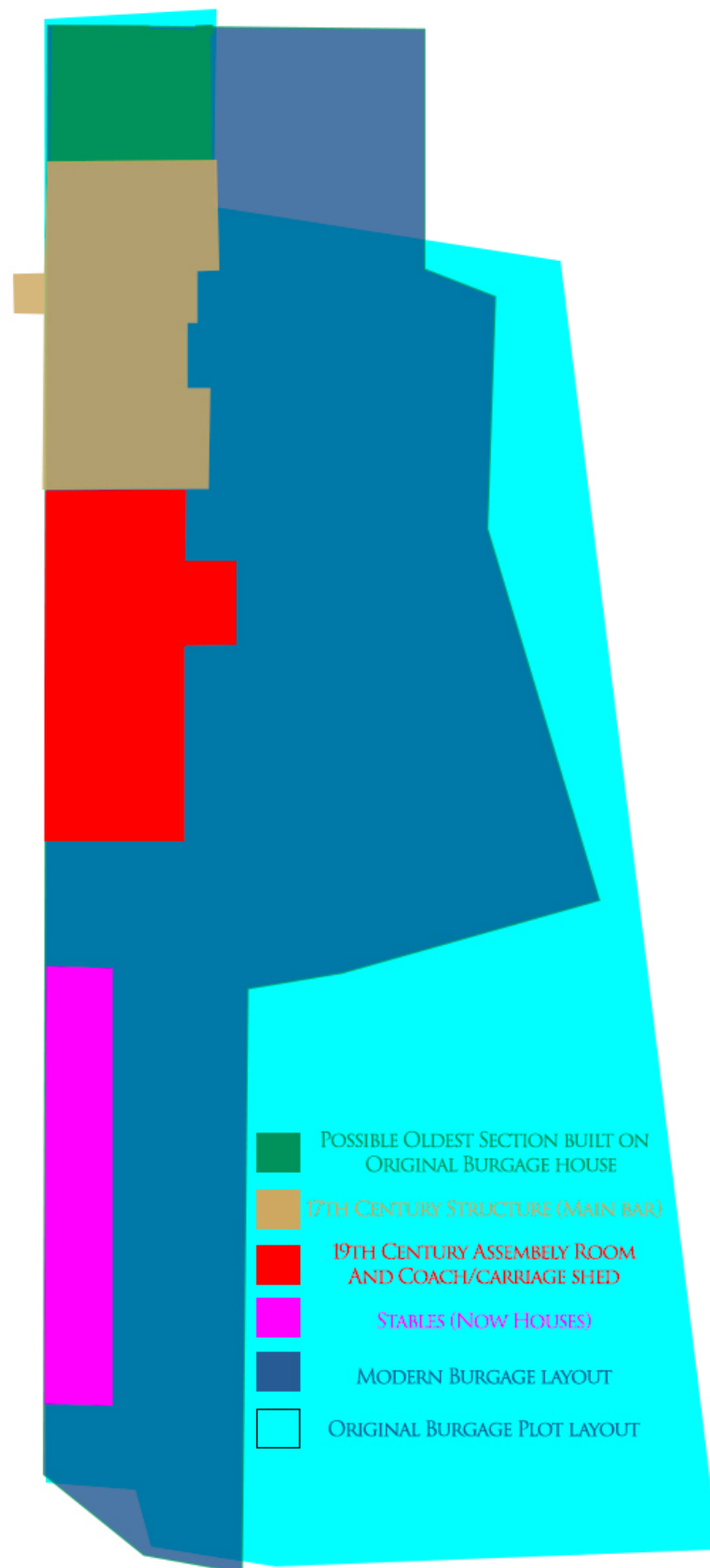


Diagram 2: Floor Plan of the Swan Inn

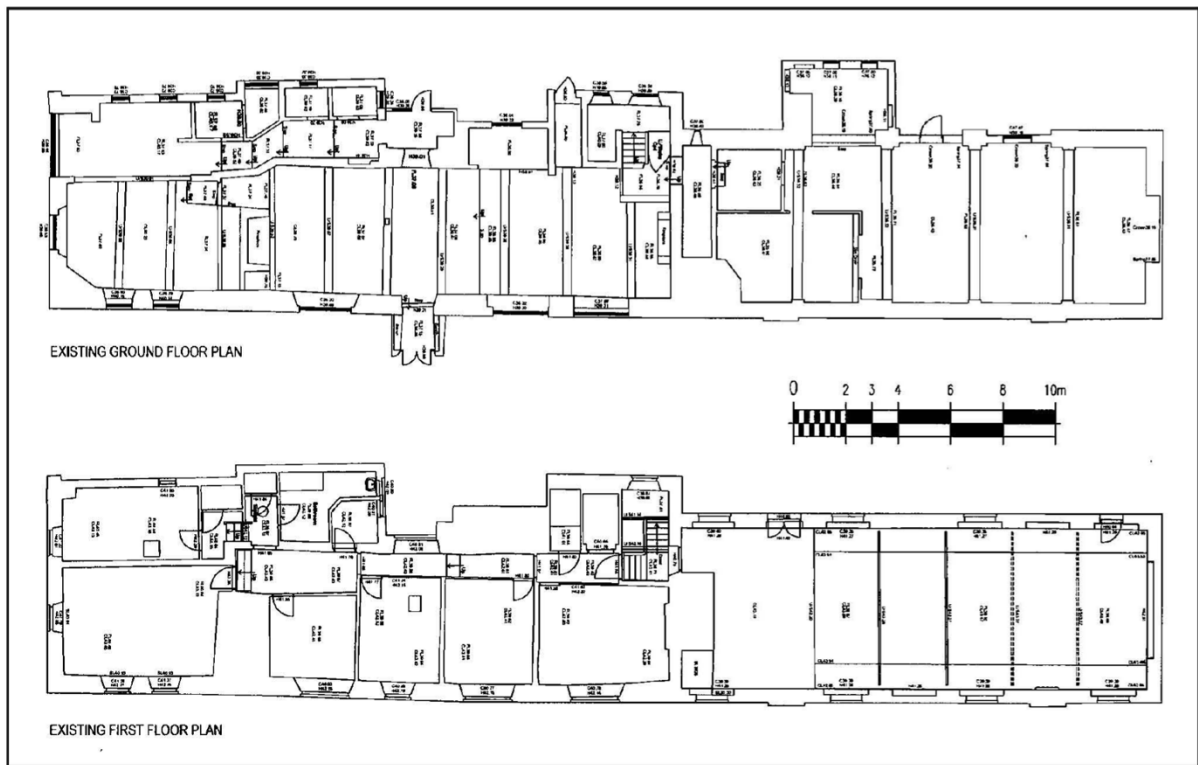
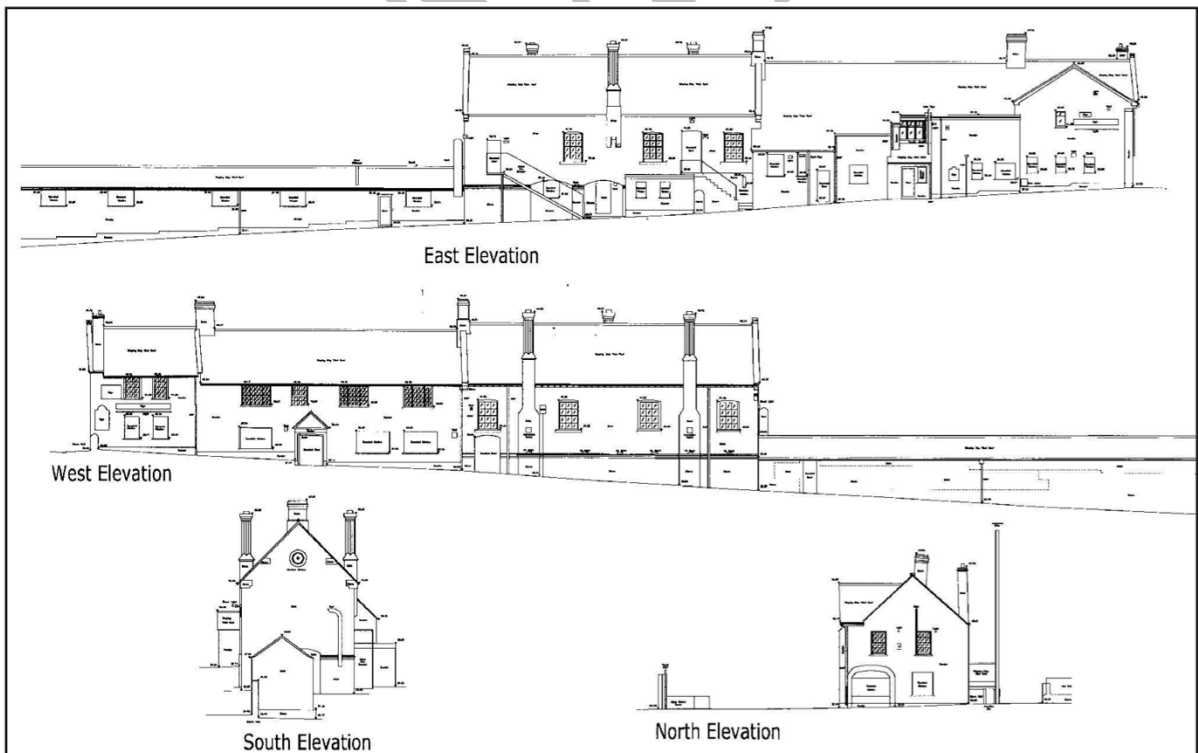


Diagram 3: Elevation Plan of the Swan Inn

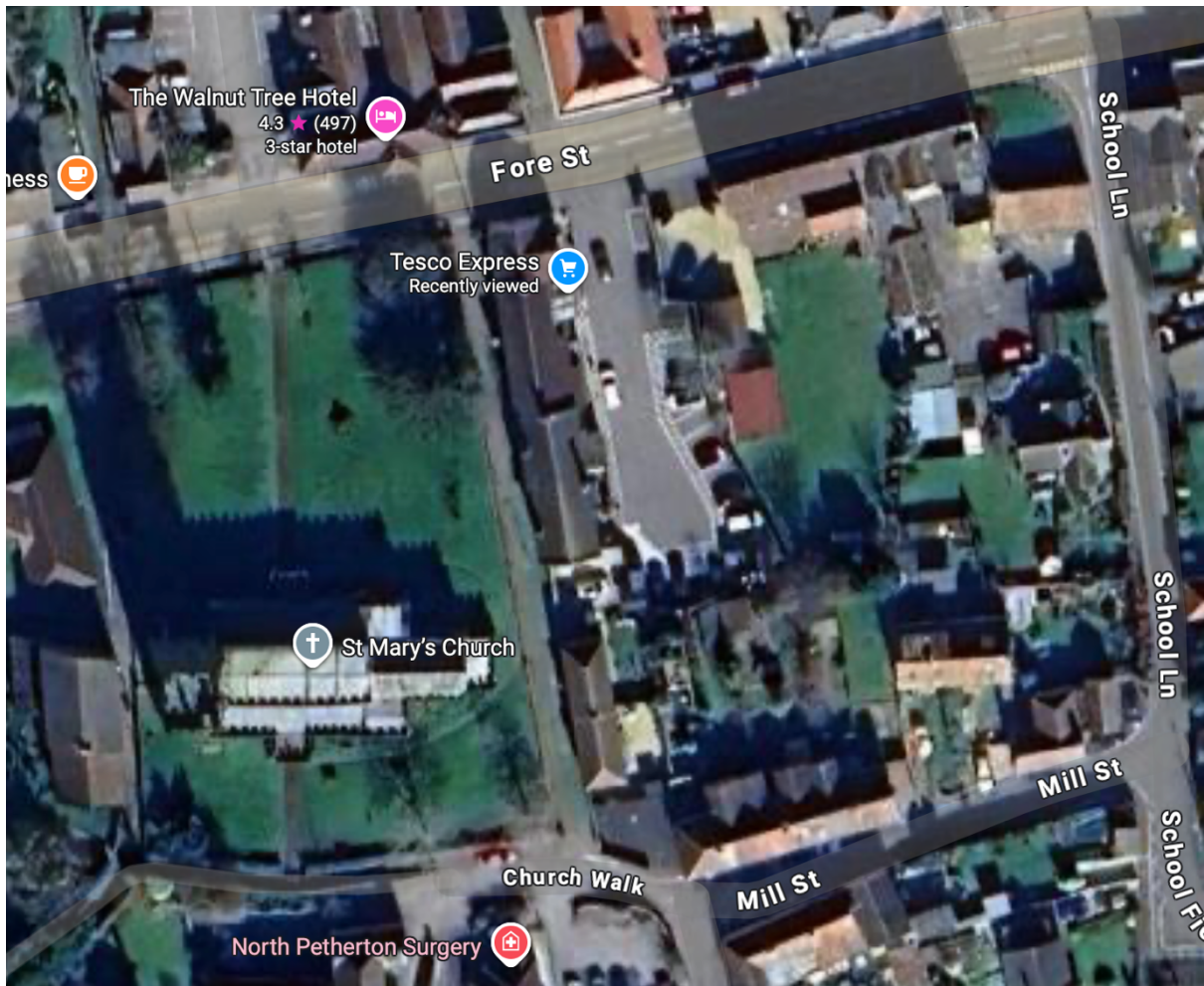


**Appendix E: Maps**

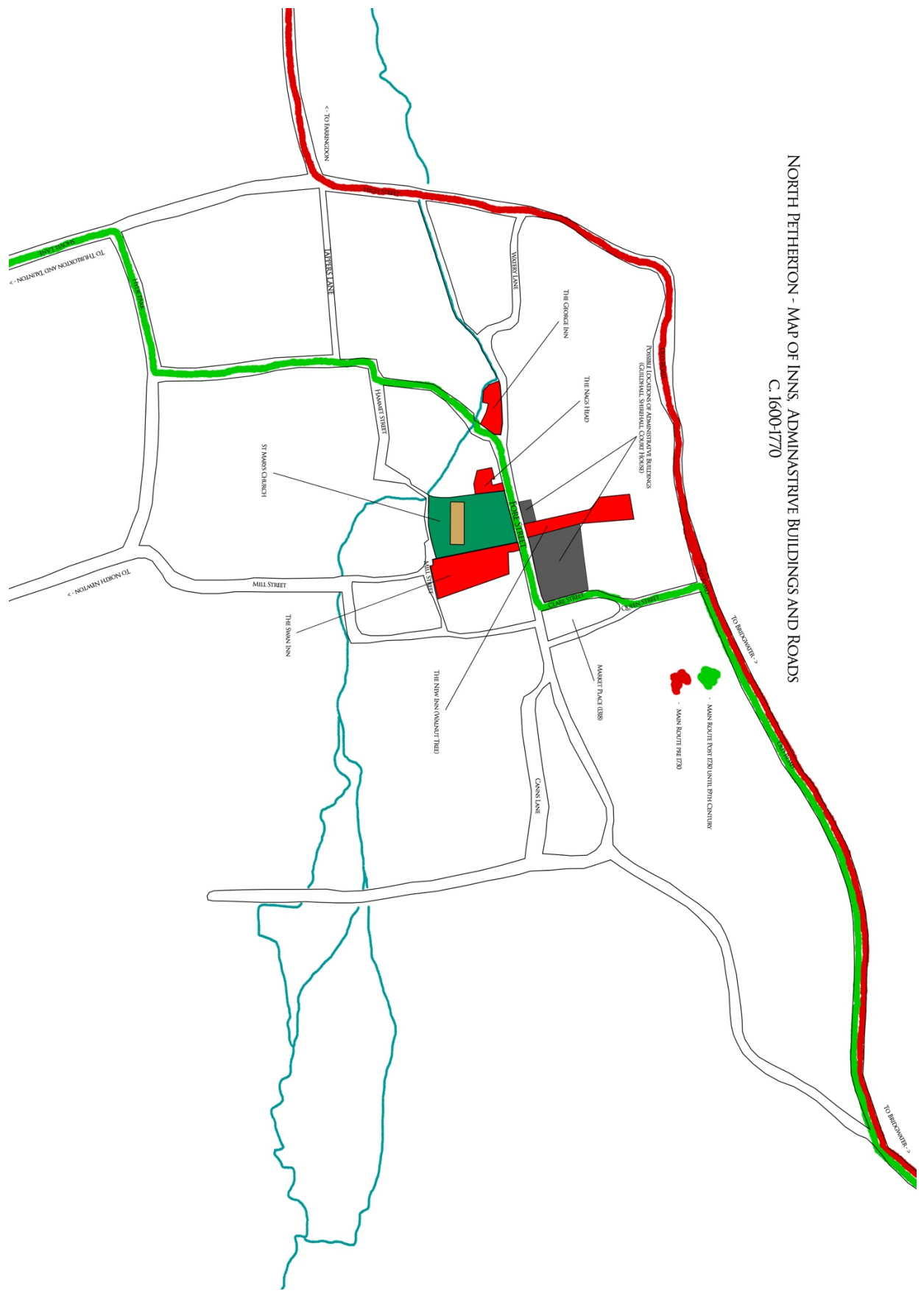
Map 1: 1770 Map showing the Swan Inn



Map 2: Satellite view of Tesco Express (Former Swan Inn)



Map 3: Map of Roads, Inns and Administrative Buildings



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