

**LAND NORTH OF BRICK KILN ROAD  
STEVENAGE  
HERTFORDSHIRE**

**ARCHAEOLOGICAL MONITORING AND  
RECORDING**

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Compiled by	Checked by	Approved by
Alison Bell	Robert Wardill	Drew Shotliff

Produced for:  
Persimmon Homes (Thames Valley) Ltd  
Vanwall Business Park  
2 Vanwall Road  
Maidenhead SL6 4UB



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## Preface

*Every effort has been made in the preparation and submission of this document and all statements are offered in good faith. Albion Archaeology cannot accept responsibility for errors of fact or opinion resulting from data supplied by a third party, or for any loss or other consequence arising from decisions or actions made upon the basis of facts or opinions expressed in this document.*

*Albion Archaeology  
St Mary's Church  
St Mary's Street  
Bedford, MK42 0AS  
☎: 01234 294001  
Fax: 01234 294008  
E-mail: office@albion-arch.com  
Website: www.albion-arch.com*

## Version History

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## Structure of Report

The project and its background are introduced in Section 1. This is followed by an outline of the methodology employed during the project in Section 2 with the results of the fieldwork presented in Section 3. Section 4 is a bibliography and Sections 5 and 6 are appendices.

## Key Terms

Throughout this project design the following terms or abbreviations are used:

<i>The Client</i>	Persimmon Homes (Thames Valley) Ltd
<i>WSI</i>	Written Scheme of Investigation
<i>CPA</i>	County Planning Archaeologist
<i>LPA</i>	Local Planning Authority
<i>HER</i>	Historic Environment Record
<i>IFA</i>	Institute of Field Archaeologists



## **Acknowledgements**

*The project was commissioned by Persimmon Homes Ltd and monitored on behalf of the Local Planning Authority by Andy Instone of Hertfordshire County Archaeological Service.*

*This report was prepared by Alison Bell with contributions from Joan Lightning (illustrations) and Jackie Wells (finds).*



### **Non-technical Summary**

*Between January and May 2007, Albion Archaeology carried out a programme of archaeological observation, investigation and recording on development groundworks at land north of Brick Kiln Road, Stevenage, Hertfordshire.*

*The site lies within an area of archaeological significance, the land having been the location of a brick works in the early part of the 19<sup>th</sup> century.*

*The archaeological works were occasioned by the construction of a housing development which involved the removal of an area of turf and topsoil and the excavation of a soakaway trench and housing foundations.*

*Observations of the groundworks revealed disturbance, probably associated with the brick works, in the form of large backfilled pits and footings for a terrace of cottages believed to have housed the workers of the brick works. These buildings were demolished in the 1960s.*



## 1. INTRODUCTION

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### 1.1 *Background*

The development of Land North of Brick Kiln Lane, Stevenage comprised the construction of 60 houses and associated access roads and services (Figure 2). The site of the development was located in an area of archaeological significance as designated in the Local Development Plan and, as a consequence, the Local Planning Authority attached a condition to the planning permission requiring that a programme of archaeological monitoring and recording be carried out on the construction groundworks. This was in accordance with advice received from Hertfordshire County Planning Archaeologist (CPA).

Albion Archaeology was commissioned to undertake this work in accordance with a Brief (HCC 2006) and subsequent Written Scheme of Investigation (Albion Archaeology 2007) which was approved by the CPA prior to the commencement of fieldwork.

### 1.2 *Site Location and Description*

The development area measured approximately 1 hectare in area. It was situated to the west of Stevenage town, north of Brick Kiln Road and adjacent to the mainline railway at National Grid Reference TL 232 246 (Figure 1). Prior to development, the land comprised a mix of scrubland and disused allotments that sloped uphill towards the north.

### 1.3 *Archaeological Background*

Stevenage appears to have its origins in the Saxon Period (HER18); it is recorded in Domesday Book as 'Stigenace'.

The development site is situated outside of the medieval settled area but within an area of later archaeological significance. Late 19<sup>th</sup>-century Ordnance Survey mapping of the site show a complex of brick workings (HER11208) located adjacent to the Great Northern Railway (Figure 3). The HER notes that 'by 1898 the works were less extensive and the area east of the railway appears to be disused. Activity on the west side of the railway was also scaled down. A sizable structure, possibly a drying shed, survives in the brickfield on the north side of what is now Brick Kiln Road'.

In 1897 a Palaeolithic hand axe (HER9087) was retrieved from the deposits within the Brick Kiln Road area.

### 1.4 *Project Objectives*

The principal objectives of the archaeological works were to investigate and record any remains that were uncovered during the development of the site. The work also aimed to ensure that any artefactual or ecofactual material recovered from the site was adequately assessed, conserved and stored, and that the results of the project were published, as appropriate.



## 2. METHODOLOGY

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The programme of archaeological monitoring was undertaken between 16<sup>th</sup> January and 8<sup>th</sup> May 2007. During this period all excavations which required monitoring were completed. A mechanical excavator was used for all excavations which were carried out under archaeological supervision

The archaeological works adhered to the methods set out in the WSI (Albion Archaeology, 2007) and these are summarised below:

- All stripping of overburden or excavation of foundations and service trenches to be monitored.
- All disturbed soil to be scanned for artefacts.
- Any excavated deposits to be recorded in accordance with Albion Archaeology's *Procedures Manual* (2001) and the requirements detailed in the CPA's Brief.
- All archaeological observations to be drawn at a suitable scale on base plans tied in to the OS national grid.
- A photographic record to be made of all works and deposits.

Throughout the project, the standards set out in the IFA Codes of Conduct and Standards and Guidance documents (specifically *Standard and Guidance for an Archaeological Watching Brief*, September 1999), and English Heritage's *Management of Archaeological Projects* (1991) were adhered to.

The project archive will be deposited with Stevenage Museum.



### 3. RESULTS

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#### 3.1 *Description of Groundworks*

The groundworks for the development comprised the following:

- Stripping of turf and topsoil from the development area.
- Excavation of a soakaway trench beneath the development access roads, 2m wide and up to 3m deep.
- Excavation of house foundation trenches, *c.*0.5m wide and various lengths and depths.

#### 3.2 *Fieldwork Results*

Turf and topsoil (100) was removed from the development area and the excavated spoil and stripped ground was scanned for finds.

Recovered artefacts included pottery, tile and brick fragments dating to 18<sup>th</sup> century and later (see Appendix 2). Some brick foundations (103) were exposed during the stripping and these were in the approximate location of a terrace of cottages illustrated on 19<sup>th</sup>-century mapping (Figures 4 and 5).

The stripping revealed that the topsoil was 0.15-0.20m thick across the site. In the west of the development area the topsoil overlay a layer of silty clay (101) containing plastic debris and modern brick, tile and glass fragments. This layer appears to have been put in place to build up the land prior to its use as allotments.

Within other parts of the site there were several layers of similarly dumped material beneath the topsoil (102, 105, 106, 107). Those towards the south of the site were probably associated with the construction of the housing estate to the south of Brick Kiln Road.

The excavation of the soakaway trench and the footings for the new houses revealed the continuation of the foundations for the presumed terrace cottages (111) as well as parts of three pits. The largest of the pits [114] was filled by material (115) very similar in colour and texture to the natural geological deposits (see below) and contained occasional brick fragments. This pit was in excess of 30m in diameter and 2.5m deep. A second pit [117] was filled with dark brown silty clay (118), also containing occasional brick fragments. The smallest of the three pits [112] cut through pit [114]; its fill (113) contained large quantities of modern rubbish including frequent fragments of metal. It was not possible to see the full extent of any of the three pits as they were not exposed within the construction groundworks.

Geological deposits were observed within the groundworks and comprised yellow grey clay containing numerous chalk fragments (108) above light red brown sand containing occasional stones (116).





No artefacts pre-dating the 18<sup>th</sup> century were found during the archaeological monitoring.

### **3.3 Conclusion**

Monitoring of the development groundworks revealed remains of brick-making activities as indicated on early Ordnance Survey mapping.

This included sections of brick wall most likely representing the remains of a terrace of cottages identifiable on the 1881 Ordnance Survey map. A long-time local resident confirmed that the houses were demolished during the 1960s, and believed them to have been built in the late 1800s for employees of the brick works.

The two larger pits identified within the development area probably represent clay extraction pits. No evidence of the large building noted in the HER as visible on the Ordnance Survey map of 1898 was found during the monitoring works. It is likely, therefore, that the foundations of this building were completely removed either when it was demolished or at some later date.



#### 4. REFERENCES

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Hertfordshire County Council (HCC), 2006. *Design Brief for Archaeological Monitoring and Recording*.

Albion Archaeology, 2001. *Procedures Manual Volume 1 Fieldwork*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edn,

Albion Archaeology, 2007. *Land North of Brick Kiln Road, Stevenage, Hertfordshire: Written scheme of Investigation for Archaeological Monitoring and Recording 2007/1*



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## **5. APPENDIX 1: CONTEXT DATA**

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Area: 1

Extent (ha): 1

OS Co-ordinates: TL2320024600

Description: Area of development groundworks and archaeological monitoring

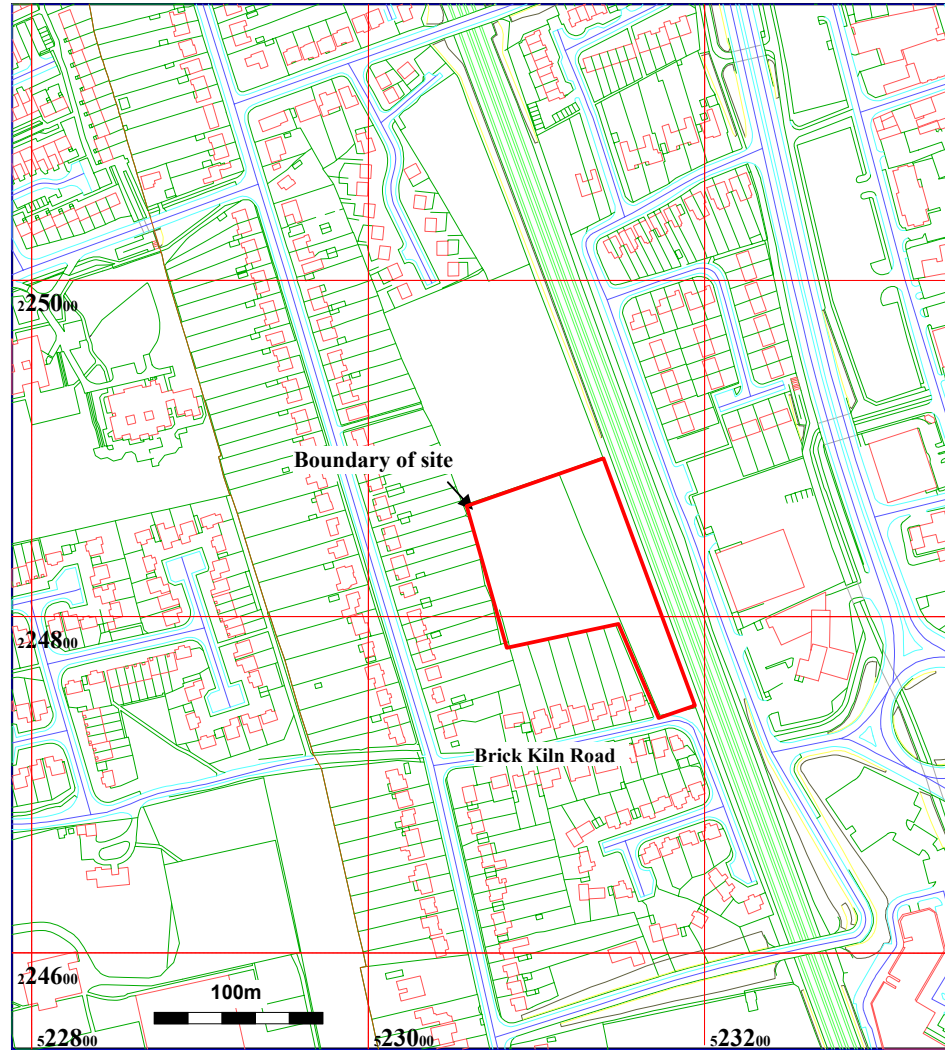
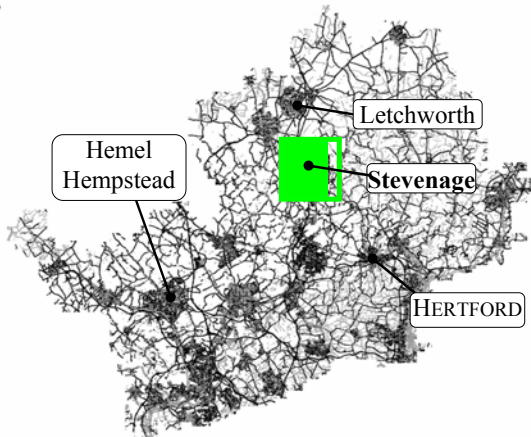
Context:	Type:	Description:	Excavated:	Finds Present:
100	Topsoil	Friable dark grey silt frequent small-large ceramic building material, frequent small-large stones.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
101	Modern disturbance	Firm . mixture of mid grey silt and light yellow brown silty clay. Contains frequent brick, metal objects, plastic, ceramic and gun cartridges	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
102	Make up layer	Firm mid grey silty clay frequent small-large ceramic building material. Contained metal objects, glass and plastic	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
103	Wall	Cemented . Brick built wall, one full course remained, mortared with cement, ashlar	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
104	Foundation	Cemented . Foundation pad for wall (103). Three courses surviving, ashlar, cemented. Protrudes out 50-70mm from the wall on the inside of the building, made of the same brick as the wall.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
105	Dump material	Firm black sandy silt occasional small-medium stones.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
106	Dump material	Firm dark brown red clay silt occasional large ceramic building material, moderate small-medium stones.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
107	Dump material	Firm mid red silty sand occasional small stones.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
108	Natural	Firm light yellow grey silty clay frequent small-medium stones.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
109	Foundation trench	Linear N-S base: flat dimensions: max depth 0.58m, min length 1.m.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
110	Fill	Friable dark grey sandy silt .	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
111	Wall	Cemented . Two courses surviving, ashlar, cemented and made from red brick	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
112	Pit	Oval profile: 45 degrees base: concave dimensions: max depth 1.7m, max length 5.m.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
113	Fill	Friable dark brown grey sandy silt frequent large ceramic building material. Frequent Large Metal Fragments	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
114	Pit	N-S profile: concave dimensions: min breadth 5.m, min depth 2.5m, min length 5.m.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
115	Fill	Plastic light yellow grey silty clay occasional large ceramic building material. Contains occasional dark grey silty sand lenses forming tip lines at northern and eastern edge of the pit	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
116	Natural	Loose light red brown sand occasional small-large stones.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
117	Pit	Irregular profile: concave dimensions: max breadth 4.5m, max depth 1.75m, min length 15.m.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
118	Fill	Firm dark brown silty clay occasional large ceramic building material.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>



## 6. APPENDIX 2: FINDS DATA

Feature	Feature type	Spot date	Find type
100	Topsoil	C18-19	Glazed earthenware pottery sherd (29g); Glazed ceramic wall tile fragments (104g); Pantile fragment (290g); brick fragments (3.1kg)
101	Make-up layer	Modern	Glazed earthenware teapot spout (61g)
106	External dump	C18-19	Peg tile & brick fragment (1.7kg)

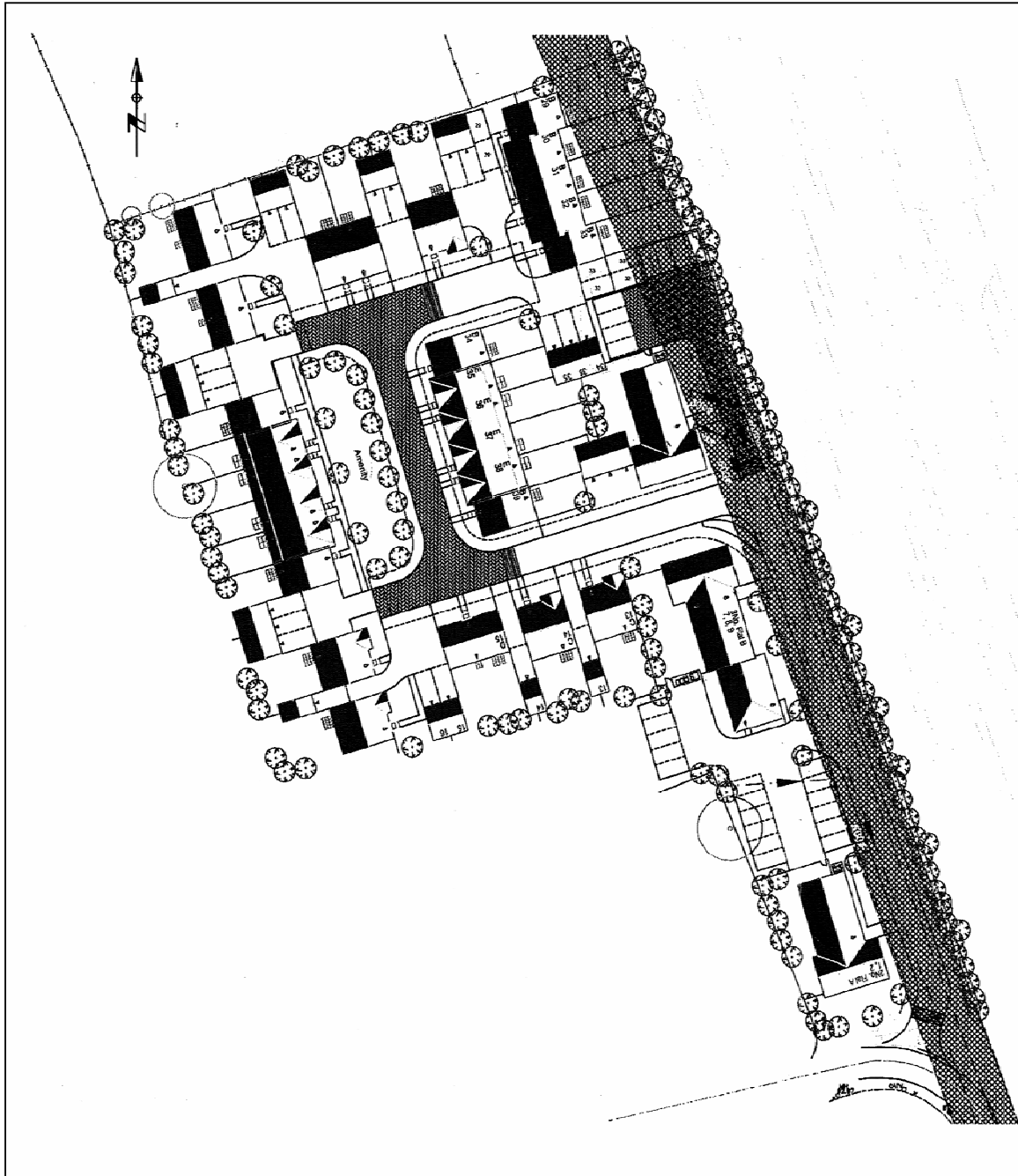
**Table 1: Finds Summary by Feature**



**Figure 1: Site location map**

Base map reproduced from the Ordnance Survey Land-line Map (2004), with the permission of the Controller of Her Majesty's Stationery Office, by Bedfordshire County Council, County Hall, Bedford.

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**Figure 2:** Plan of development (not to scale)

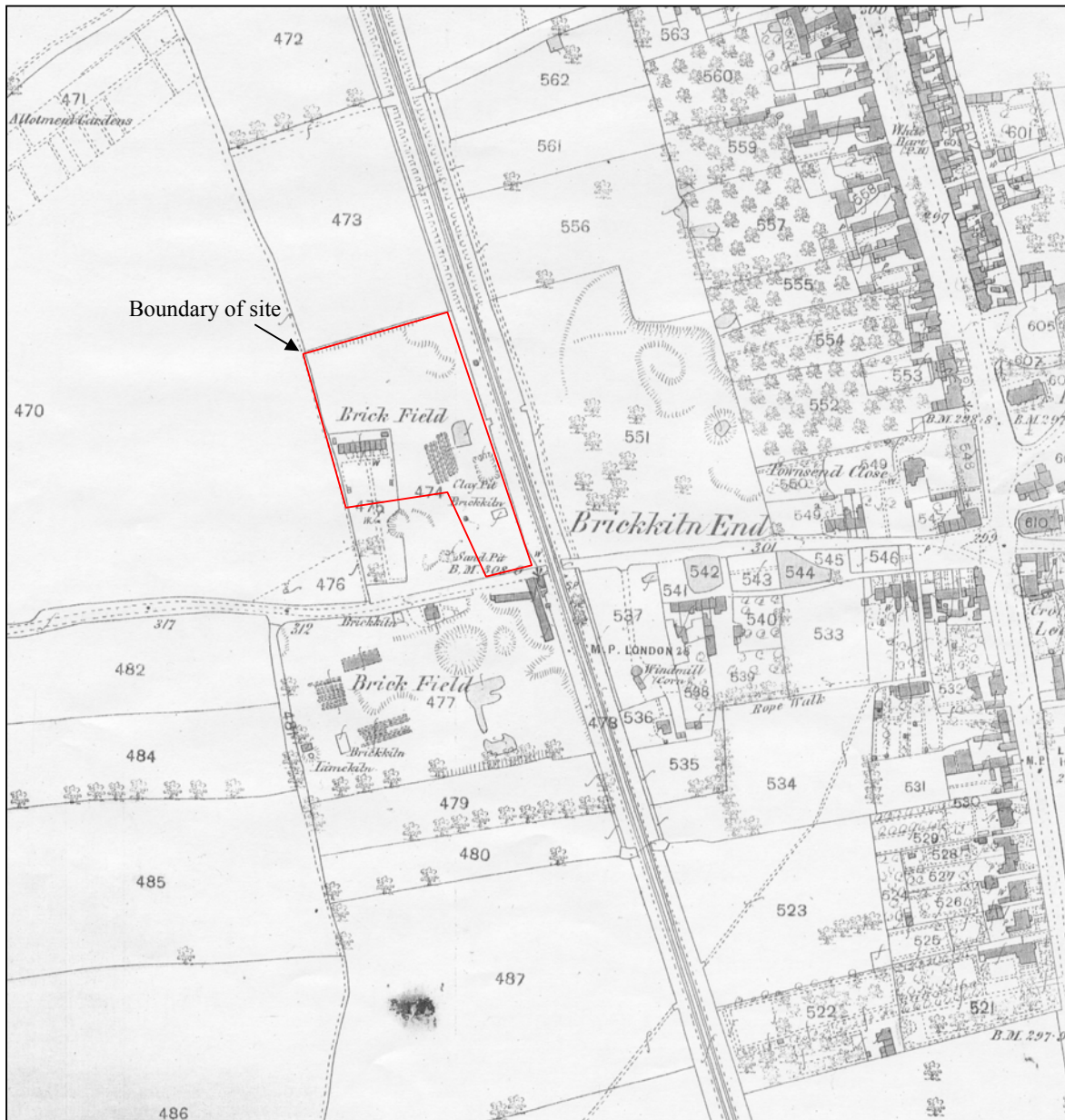


Figure 3: 1881, 1<sup>st</sup> Edition Ordnance Survey Map



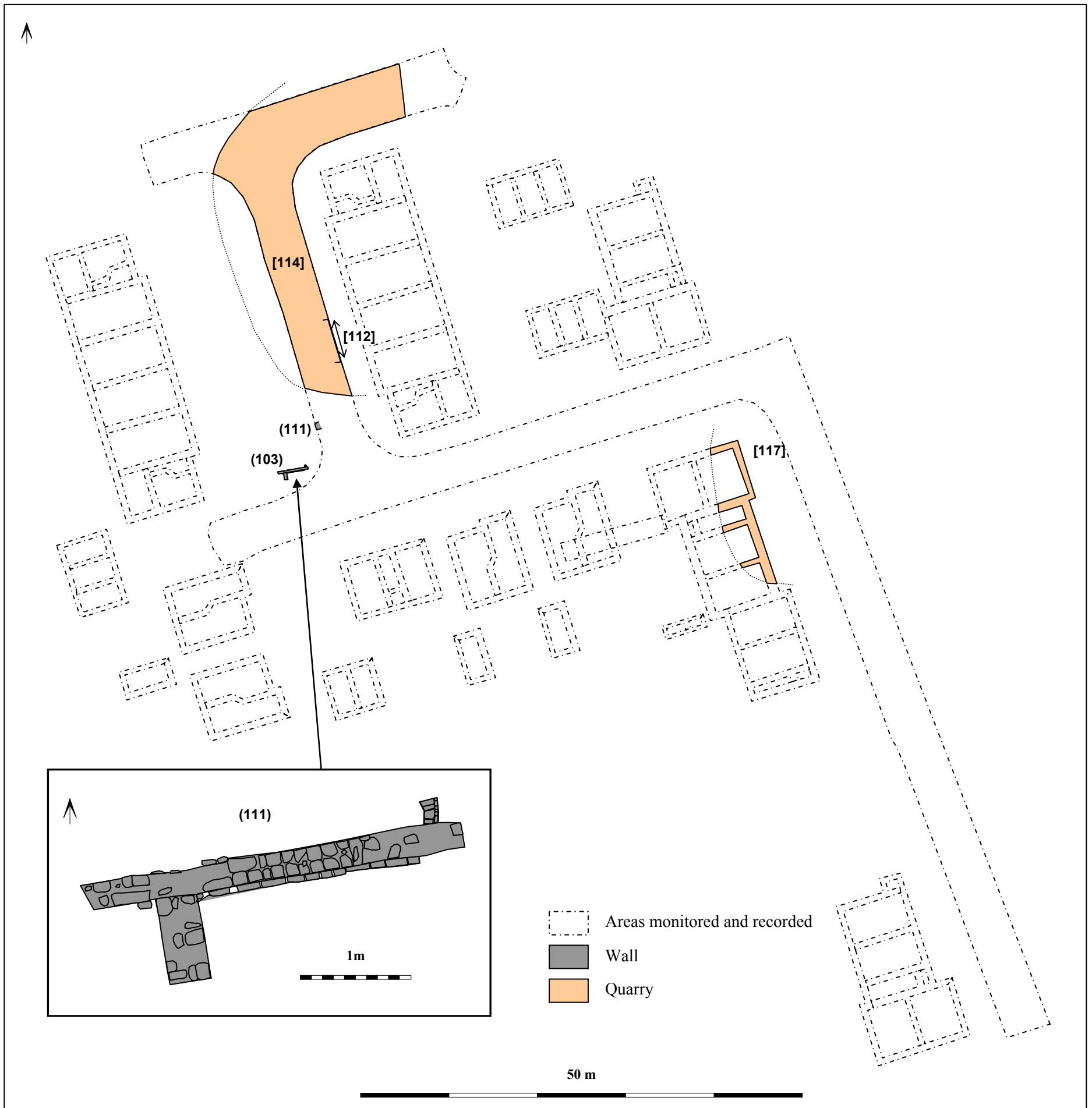


Figure 4: Location of identified features

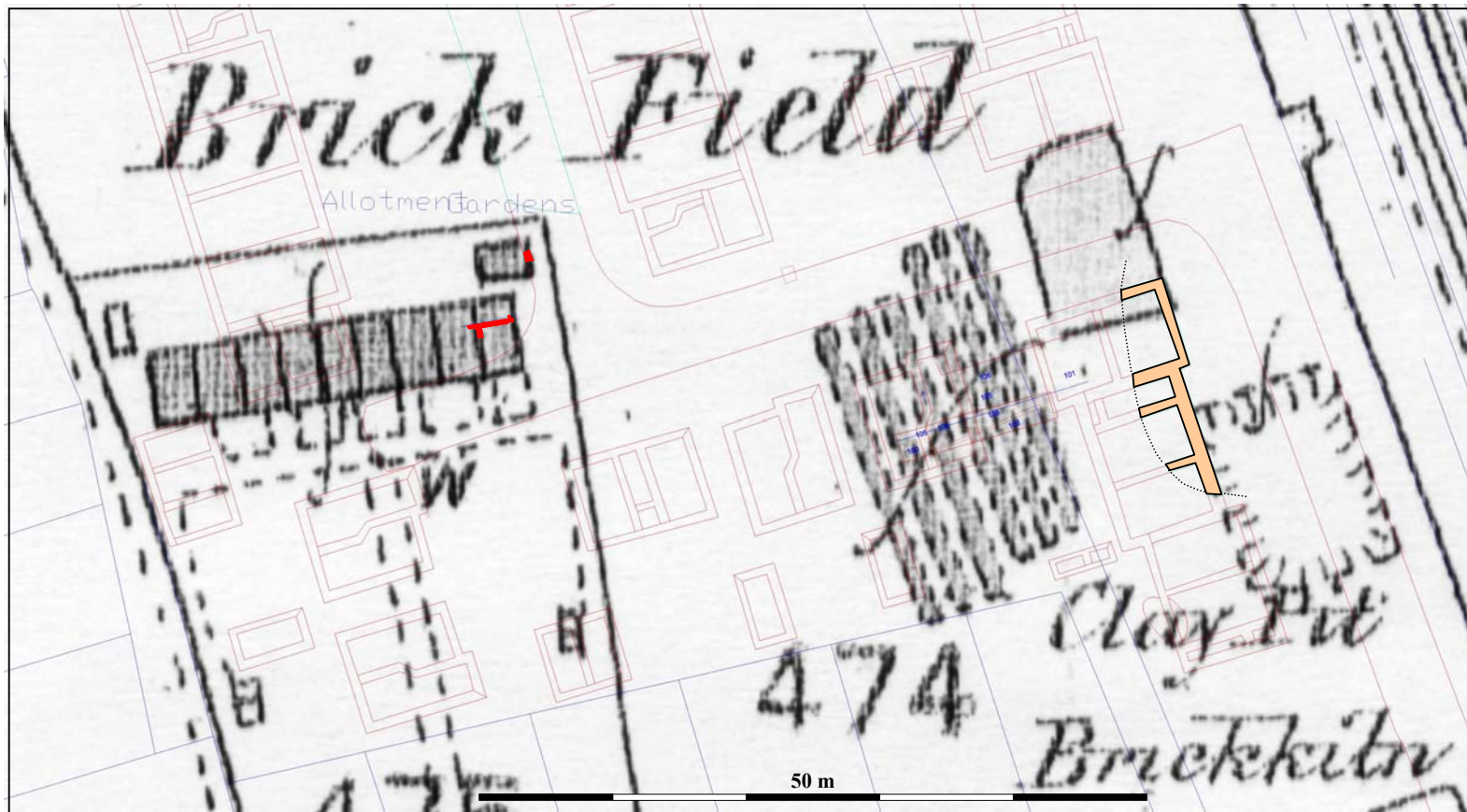


Figure 5: Identified features overlaid onto 1881 OS map