

M1/11R

*An Archaeological Desk-Based Assessment on a Proposed  
Housing Development on Land off St John's Street, Holbeach,  
Lincs.  
(Revised)*

(TF 36 24)

Planning Application No. H09/0401/00 FULL

*wrong.  
H09/0256/01*

By  
David New BA (Hons)

*No map regression  
No site specific historical ref.  
No SMR data  
No buildings data  
No location map for within  
Holbeach.  
No estimate of arch depths.*

For:  
South Holland District Council  
Housing & Planning Services Department  
Council Offices  
Priory Road  
Spalding  
Lincolnshire, PE1 2XE

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Report No. SAS01/DN/10

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## 1.0 Summary

*Site Name:* St John's Street, Holbeach.

*Clients Name:* DGM Properties Ltd.

*Archaeological Contractor:* Soke Archaeological Services Ltd.

*Archaeological Project Director:* Francis Pryor MBE MA PhD FSA MIFA.

*Archaeological Project Manager:* David Britchfield BA (Hons).

*Archaeological Project Officer:* David New BA (Hons).

*Archaeological Illustrator:* Louisa New MSc.

*National Grid Reference:* TF 3624.

*Planning Authority:* South Holland District Council.

*Nature of Development:* Proposed housing development.

## 2.0 Introduction

This desk-based assessment forms part of a planning application submitted prior to the development of four 2 bedroom terraced houses and two 2 bedroom semi-detached houses on land off St John's Street, Holbeach. Adjacent to the land is a house (19 St John's Street) that dates from 1834 (Plates 1 and 2), this will be retained as part of the development.

The Undertaker's office (Plates 3, 4 and 5) is to be demolished and the proposed development to be constructed on the same site. Very little of the new development is designed to encroach upon land that may contain undisturbed archaeological remains (Fig 3 and 4). The Undertaker's office has undergone a series of reconstructions, leaving many of the original structural walls. Any archaeological remains underlying this building are, therefore, unlikely to be complete.

This desk based assessment has been commissioned to gauge the level of damage that will be caused by the development and, in particular, to substantiate the theory that the subject site may be the birth place of William Stukely. Holbeach is where the family home of the famous antiquarian, William Stukely, lies. The Stukely family is of great importance to the town and William to the discipline of archaeology. It is, therefore, necessary to protect any monuments or remains that may relate to the Stukely family. Unfortunately there is very little evidence surrounding William Stukely's birth, apart from one sketch map drawn by William Stukely and dated 1703. This map has no scale, orientation or modern street names (Fig 5). The caption states that this was his "fathers dwelling at Holbeach". It has also been suggested that this was the place of his father and uncle's law firm. Due to the inaccuracy of the map it is difficult to draw any substantial conclusions as to where it is actually located. This is expanded upon in section 5.2.

Holbeach is an area of archaeological importance containing Medieval and Post Medieval remains and it is, therefore, necessary to take any opportunity to study the town's past.

## **2.1 *Planning Background***

In response to the proposed housing development on land off St John's Street (centred at National Grid Reference TF 3634) South Holland District Council have requested that a desk based study be carried out to gauge its impact on any archaeological remains. This will form part of an overall planning application commissioned by the client.

## **2.2 *Project Constraints***

With the exception of the limitation of available resources, which will be covered in more detail in section 6.3, there were no constraints associated with this project.

## **2.3 *Geology and Topography***

Holbeach is located 11km east of Boston and 20km south of Spalding (Fig. 1). The proposed development is situated within the town off the high street, on St Johns street and the corner of Fishpond lane (Fig 2).

The town is positioned on a ridge of marine silts running east west, the highest point of which is 4 metres O.D. The Holbeach River originally ran through the town but was diverted in the mid 18th century (Cope-Faulkner 1997, 4). Consequently the town sits on roddens which have produced gleyic brown calcareous soils (Robson, 1990, 26).

To the south are alluvial gley soils, also calcareous. These deposits overlay a geological strata of marine alluvium which seals solid upper Jurassic clay.

### 3.0 Aims and Objectives

#### 3.1 Standards - Institute of Field Archaeologists (1999)

This desktop study has been produced in line with the archaeological standards as defined by the Institute of Field Archaeologists (1999). A desktop, or desk-based assessment is defined as being:

*'..a programme of assessment of the known or potential archaeological resource within a specified area or site on land, inter-tidal zone or underwater. It consists of a collation of existing written, graphic, photographic and electronic information in order to identify the likely character, extent, quality and worth of the known or potential archaeological resource in a local, regional, national or international context as appropriate' (1999:2).*

The purpose of the desk-based assessment is, therefore, an assessment that provides a contextual archaeological record, in order to determine:

*the formulation of a strategy to ensure the recording, preservation or management of the resource*

*the formulation of a strategy for further investigation, whether or not intrusive, where the character and value of the resource is not sufficiently defined to permit a mitigation strategy or other response to be devised*

*the formulation of a proposal for further archaeological work within a programme of research.*

IFA (1999:2)

## 4.0 Methodology

### 4.1 Sources

#### 4.1.1 Archaeological Databases

Although it is recognised that national databases are an appropriate resource for this particular type of assessment, the local Sites and Monuments Record (SMR), held at Lincolnshire County Council, Lincoln, contains sufficient data to provide an accurate insight into the catalogued archaeological sites and finds within both the development area, and its surrounding landscape. A full listing of the relevant SMR data is included in Appendix C, and has been incorporated into the analysis in sections 5 and 6.

#### 4.1.2 Historical Documents

Historical documents specific to this study, such as charters, registers, will deeds etc, could not be found. Deeds of ownership were used to ascertain core dates of buildings although none could be directly related to the Stukely family. The Stukely family memoirs, which are held at Holbeach Library, Church Street, Holbeach, were consulted. The three volumes, however, did not provide any information regarding the location of the Stukely residence or William Stukely's birthplace.

#### 4.1.3 Cartographic and Pictorial Documents

The Lincolnshire archive, in Lincoln, was consulted in order to establish a map trail. The earliest map of Holbeach town was, however, dated 1828. This was too late to be of use and drawn after the street plan of Holbeach had been revised due to the establishment of the railway and the diversion of the Holbeach River.

A full listing of cartographic and pictorial documents used in this study is given in section 8.1 and Appendix C.

#### 4.1.4 Aerial Photographs

Due to the due to the urbanisation of the development area, it was not possible to provide evidence of cropmarks/soilmarks that would normally provide an indication to aspects of prehistoric settlement.

#### 4.1.5 Geotechnical Information

No Geotechnical survey has been carried out on this site. Any geological and stratigraphical information has been obtained from previous archaeological and historical investigations in the area.

#### 4.1.6 Secondary and Statutory Sources

Secondary and statutory sources, such as regional and period archaeological studies, landscape studies, dissertations and research frameworks are considered appropriate to this type of study, although little further information could be found relating to this particular area.

However, a list of other documentary sources, such as academic journal and publications etc., have been listed in section 8.0.

## 5.0 Summary of Archaeological Results

This section will discuss the results of the research in two parts: an overall archaeological background of the area and the connection of the site with William Stukely. Both these sections will be discussed together in the conclusion.

### 5.1 *The Archaeological Background*

Like so many towns in England Holbeach is first mentioned in the Domesday Survey of 1086. Several variations of its name occur; *Holebech*, *Holeben*, *Holobech*, and *Holobec*, all of which derive from the meaning Hollow or deep brook (Ekwall 1974, 244).

In the late 11th century Holbeach was owned by four different manors: The King, Crowland Abbey, Count Alan and Guy of Craon (Foster and Longley, 1976).

It is perhaps unsurprising that the town was in demand from so many patrons as Holbeach was a market town of some considerable wealth throughout the medieval period. This is partly due to the salt making industry located outside the town in the 12th - the 15th centuries.

Whilst the first records of a church in the town is from 1177 (Macdonald, 1890) others must have existed before this period, probably on the site of recorded churches. The majority of the present church dates from the 1340's (Pevsner and Harris, 1989). This is mostly due to the rebuilding that took place during the patronage of the Bishop of Lincoln. The north porch of the church is believed to have formed part of the gatehouse for the Medieval Moulton Castle. However, it has also been suggested that this unusual piece of church architecture may have come from the Hospital of St John of Jerusalem (Foster, 1891). Although the church would not normally allow military architecture to be incorporated into its buildings, it must be remembered that this was the end of the third crusade, a time where aggressive military actions and fundamentalist religion were inexorably linked.

The Hospital was founded by John of Kirton in 1351 and is believed to be on the spot where the Chequers Inn now stands, although its location has never been positively identified. The Hospital fell out of use in the 16th century and was later demolished by John Stukely (the father of William). John Stukely was responsible for much of the post medieval renovation of the town and was probably responsible for repositioning the Market Cross that originally stood northwest of the church.

The site is located close to Holbeach town centre and would have been an important commercial position throughout the medieval and post-medieval periods. Due to the high frequency of pre-20th century buildings, however, very little archaeological investigation has taken place in this part of Holbeach. It is, therefore, difficult to gauge

the type of remains that may be encountered on the subject site. According to the historical sources, Holbeach has been a highly prosperous market town throughout the medieval and post medieval periods. It is, therefore, important that, where appropriate, opportunities are taken in order to better understand the archaeological importance of the town.

## 5.2 *The William Stukely Connection*

This section is predominantly concerned with the birth place of William Stukely, the antiquarian. Stukely (1687-1765) was born in Holbeach and educated at Cambridge University. He returned to Holbeach to help put the family affairs in order after the death of his father. William later resumed his medical studies in London and practised as a G.P in Boston (Piggott, 1985).

It was his family that had the biggest impact on the town, improving drainage and acquiring a great deal of property. William Stukely's importance to the town as an individual came from his academic prowess as an antiquarian. The 18th century is also known as the age of enlightenment, people began to move away from religion to provide the answers to life, its origins and meanings, and towards science. William Stukely was one of those who embraced this new ethos and, for many archaeologists today, he embodies the move towards a more analytical approach to the discipline, although in later years his theories bordered on the fantastic (Piggott, 1985).

Stukely was a prolific letter writer and it is from his correspondence with friends and relatives that a picture of attitudes and day to day life within the town in the 17th and 18th centuries can be pieced together. Therefore, William Stukely is an important figure for both the academic fraternity, and Holbeach.

Whilst much documentary evidence surrounding the Stukely family survives, there is very little pertaining to either William's birth or birth place. The discussion will now focus on the available sources surrounding William Stukely's birth place.

Pevsner implies that William Stukely would have been born at his family home which he locates at TF 3565 2475. He says that the house, known as Stukely Hall, was set back from the high street and on the left, describing it as "The site of the Artisan/Mannerist family home of William Stukely, the antiquarian" (Pevsner and Harris, 1989. P.385). The Lincolnshire SMR record (SMR No. 20230) claims that the house Pevsner describes has a core date from the 18th century and only an Artisan/Mannerist facade. Although the building is now demolished, if the core date given by the county records is correct, this cannot be the birthplace of the antiquarian as he was born in the 17th, not the 18th century although there may have been an earlier house on the same site.

It has also been suggested that the subject site is the place of William Stukely's birth (Letter from Lewis Smith to Russ Delahoy, 2nd April 2001). The letter also states that the site may also be the location of his father and uncle's law firm. This fits a pattern of behaviour peculiar to fenland businesses. The family business would often be attached to the family home. There are numerous examples of such arrangements in and around the fenland area, for example, Peckover in Wisbech.

The only reference to William's birth place is a sketch map apparently drawn by him in 1703 (Fig. 5). The map shows a house in a formal garden of the time with an avenue leading to a wood. The squares with small dots and circles represent flower beds with walks. This is a formalised way of drawing gardens in the 18th century and can be seen in numerous sketches and plans by Celia Fiennes, a 17th/18th century garden enthusiast (Morris, 1982). The proposed development area is, therefore, located on the garden which would, almost certainly, not have survived the subsequent building programs. Figure 6 shows a Dovecote near to, but probably not on the subject site. Due to the inaccuracy of the Stukely map, however, even an approximate location for the Dovecote cannot be given.

It is important to remember, however, that it only cites the groundplot of his father's dwelling as it was in 1703. It is, therefore, unclear whether this was William's birthplace or a later residence of his father's. Paul Cope-Faulkner suggests that the street branching off from High Way may read Drake's Lane (an alternative name for Fishpond's Lane) (Cope-Faulkner, 1997). He then surmises that High Way must be Barrington Gate and the Barley Pit is located in the Chapel Street/St John's Street area. If this is the case then the building shown on the Stukely map, fronting High Way, is located on part of the development plot where buildings dating from the early 20th century stand. These buildings are to be retained, therefore, any structural remnants of the building shown on the Stukely map would be unaffected by the proposed development. The proposed development would most likely be located on a plot labelled by Stukely as the "kitchen garden". As this area has already been developed (Fig 4) the "kitchen garden" is unlikely to have survived. There are a number of problems, however, relating to the map and its interpretation, the first of these is that it is not accurately located nor does it show orientation or scale.

This interpretation maybe correct even though the road on Stukely's map, identified as Drake's Lane by Cope-Faulkner is indecipherable and difficult to identify as any modern road. The road labelled as 'High Way' could be Barrington Gate as this was the main route into town until the river was diverted ("high way" simply meaning "main road"). Stukely's sketch map, however, does not seem to bear any relation to the true orientation of either Barrington Gate or Fishpond lane. This may mean that either the map is of another area further east of the subject site or that Stukely had drawn an inaccurate

map. The later is not an unlikely scenario as it is well documented that on a number of occasions he drew totally inaccurate and, as the Oxford scholar Thomas Hearne put it, "fanciful" maps. One such example was Stukely's plan of Silchester, a Roman town built as an irregular polygon, which he drew as a regular oblong with rounded corners (Piggott, 1985). If, however, the sketch does represent the development area then it is still unclear as to where the plot of land lies due to the inaccuracy of the map. It is also important to mention that due to the absence of scale and street names this map can be superimposed on a number of locations on the modern Holbeach street plan. Whilst this is probably the most accurate fit it is still only a tenuous location.

There is, however, the possibility that the "high way" on Stukely's map is the modern High Street, a closer corruption of the original name, rather than Barrington Gate (Fig 6 shows this location). The route of St John's Street and Fishpond Lane fit Stukely's plan more comfortably this way. A comparison can be made with Spalding where the High Street was neither the main road into town or the main shopping centre. Instead it was lined with various lawyers, bankers and Mercantile offices. If this location is correct then the proposed development site sits on an area of land that appears on Stukely's map as an undeveloped area, possibly a field or waste land. His father's residence, therefore, fronted the High Street and has been subsequently built upon.

Whether the map is aligned with Barrington Gate or the High Street, the proposed development would be located in the garden sketched by William Stukely in 1703.

Evidence for the place of William Stukely's birth is slight and where attempts have been made to locate it they have often been muddled and contradictory. Even the Stukely map appears to offer little substantial evidence to suggest the precise location of his father's plot.

## **6.0 Conclusions**

### **6.1 *Summary***

The Holbeach area is of national archaeological importance. It is clear from historical and archaeological sources that the town was a thriving economy throughout the Medieval and Post-Medieval periods. This was initially due to the salt making industry and later the huge numbers of sheep which were grazed on the marshes around the town. Holbeach is also the birth place of William Stukely, the antiquarian, and although his activities and those of his family are well documented, the precise location of his birth place is not. As a result it is almost impossible to track the site of his birth using either historical or archaeological sources.

It is important, however, to take opportunities to learn more about Holbeach when they present themselves.

Due to successive construction and reconstruction on the site it is probably safe to assume that any archaeological remains encountered here would be highly disturbed. Figures 3 and 4, and Plate 5 show that the proposed development overlays the existing Undertakers building and, in the main, does not extend onto undisturbed ground. Remodelling of the Undertakers office has left a disproportionate number of structural walls, the footings of which would, no doubt, have disrupted the most recent archaeological remains. The majority of the Stukely residence shown on figure 5 is a garden which would not have survived the various phases of construction that have taken place in this area.

The question of William Stukely's birth place is the domain of the historian and not the archaeologist. Archaeology is an imprecise science, therefore, any connections made to an individual are, at best, tenuous.

The main conclusions drawn from this study are:

a) The documentary sources surrounding William Stukely's birthplace are fragmentary and contradictory.

b) The most substantial piece of evidence citing his birthplace is a map drawn by him in 1703 showing his father's dwelling.

c) The plot shown on this map may not indicated William's birthplace but a later place of residence of his father.

d) The map is inaccurately located with no scale or orientation and cannot be related to the proposed development site with any certainty. William Stukely is also well documented as drawing inaccurate and even 'fanciful' maps (Piggott, 1985).

e) If it is assumed that the Stukely plot is located on the High Street and between St John's Street and Chapel Street then the proposed development lies on an open field or waste land.

f) If, however, the plot fronts onto Barrington Gate then the proposed development site is probably located in the garden area.

g) If any archaeological remains, from any period, do exist they are unlikely to be complete due to progressive remodelling of the Undertaker's Office.

h) The proposed development is unlikely to cause further disruption to possible archaeological remains as the construction plans follow the approximate outline of the existing building.

## **6.2 *Reliability and Limitations of Sources***

The sources pertaining to the Medieval and Post Medieval remains within Holbeach were reliable and could be used with accuracy. The sources that were used, including Lincolnshire SMR, to substantiate the claim that the subject site was the birth place of William Stukely were muddled and contradictory. The Stukely family memoirs, held at Holbeach Library, were consulted but shed no light on the specific focuses of this assessment. The only substantial piece of evidence for Stukely's family home is a sketch map which appears to be wholly inaccurate with no scale or orientation. The map had only one legible road name, "high way", which is an 18th century vernacular term for "main road". The Lincolnshire archive, at Lincoln, was consulted in order to establish a map trail for Holbeach. The earliest map, however, was dated 1828, by then the Holbeach River had been diverted and the street names and layout had changed. As a result, no solid conclusions could be drawn to either prove or disprove the claim.

## **7.0 *Other Considerations***

### **7.1 *Archive***

Subject to any contractual requirements on confidentiality, three copies of this desktop assessment will be submitted to South Holland District Council within six months of completion.

### **7.2 *Copyright***

Soke Archaeological Services Ltd shall retain full copyright on the commissioned report, under the Copyright, Designs and Patents Act 1988 with all rights reserved, excepting that it hereby provides an exclusive licence to the client for the use of this document by the client in all matters directly relating to the project.

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Ordiinance Survey 1931, *Holbeach Sheet 2*.

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Mark Dennis Architectural Services, *Proposed Development off St John's Street & Barrington Gate Holbeach, Lincolnshire*. For: *DGM Properties Ltd*. Drawing No. 00.041/04.

William Stukely, 1703, *Groundplot of my fathers dwelling at Holbeach, 1703*. (Lincolnshire SMR).

9.0 Appendix A - Illustrations

*Figure 1: Regional Plan.*

*Figure 2: Site Location Plan.*

*Figure 3: Proposed Housing Development Plan.*

*Figure 4: Existing Property Plan.*

*Figure 5: Sketch Map drawn by William Stukely in 1703 citing his father's house.*

*Figure 6: Comparison between Stukely's map and the modern street plan of Holbeach in the Fishpond Lane area. (aligned with the modern High Street).*

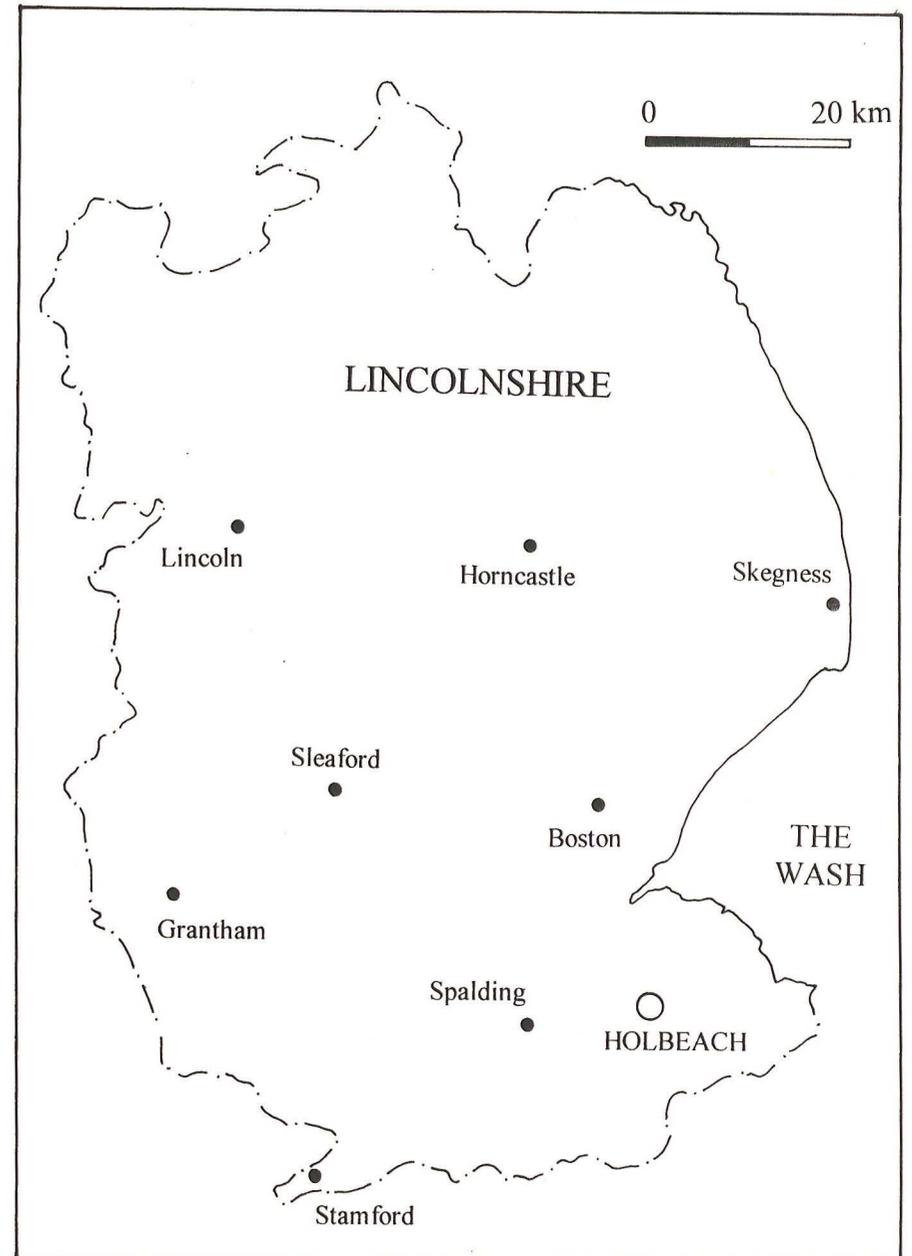
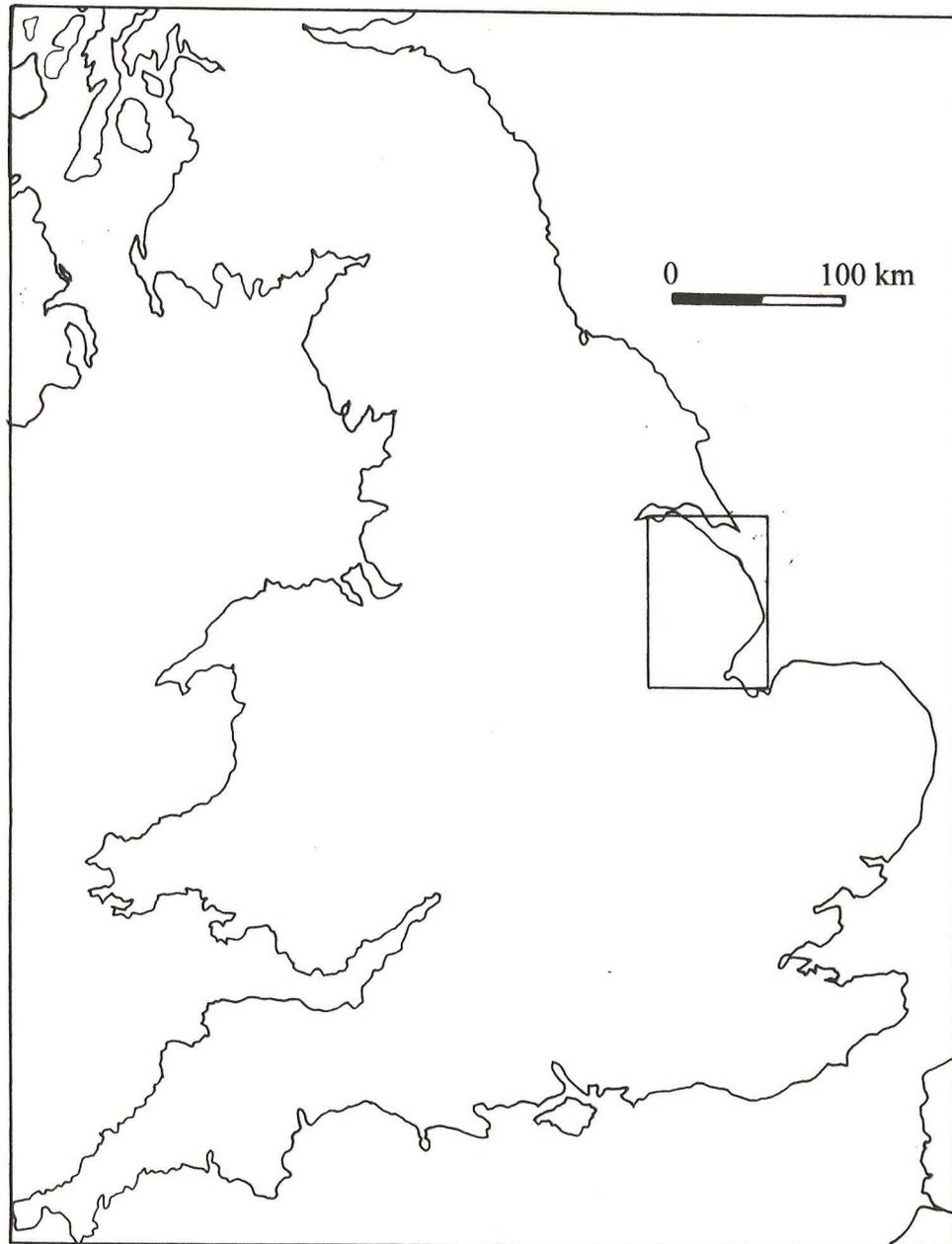
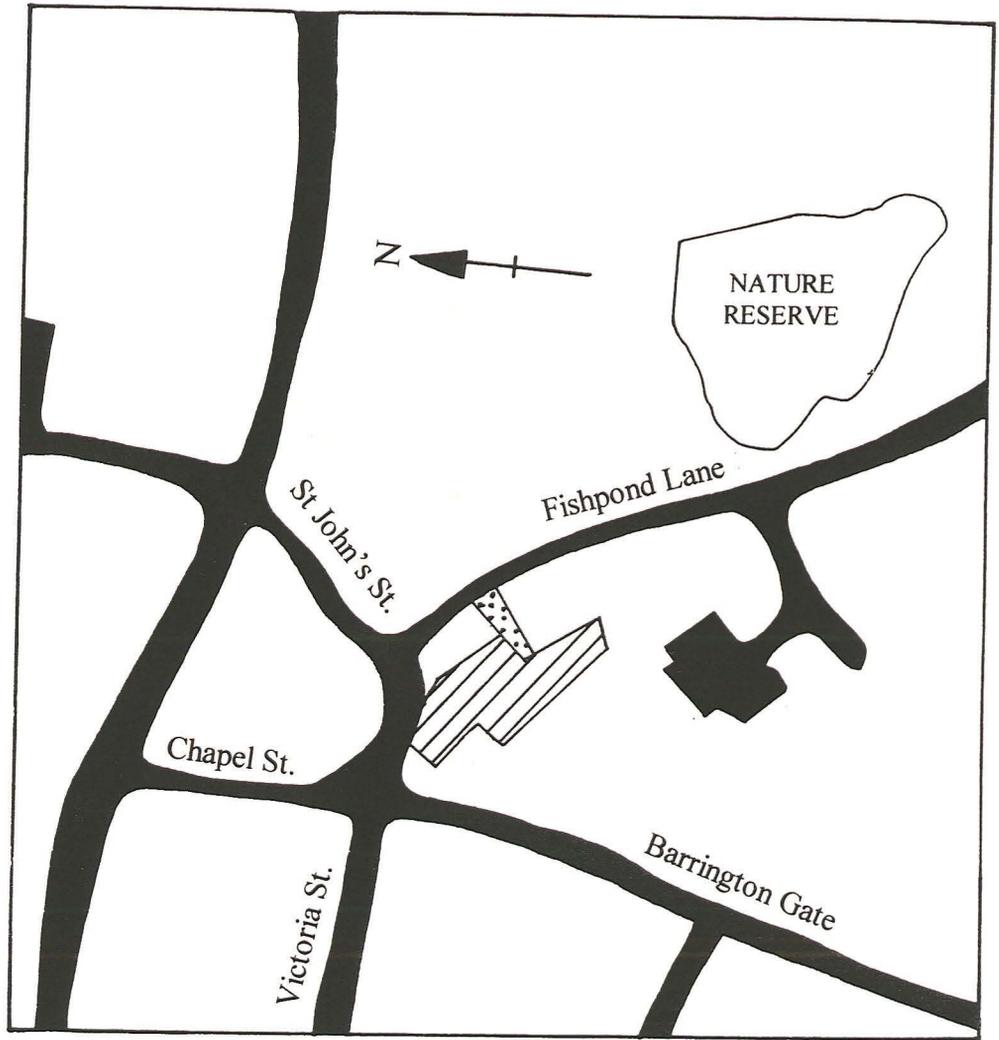
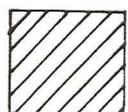
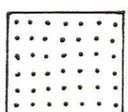


Figure 1 - Regional Plan

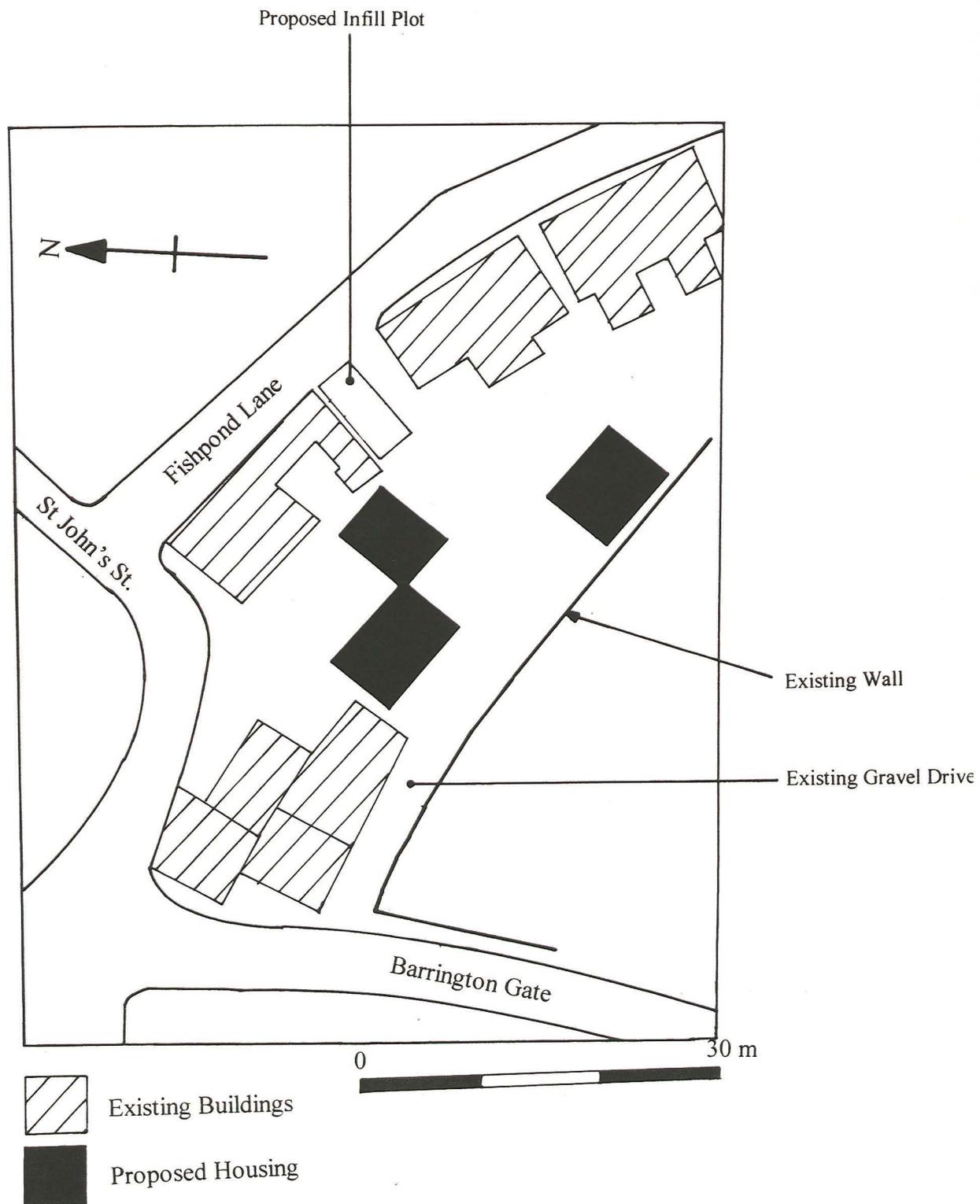


 Desktop Assessment Area

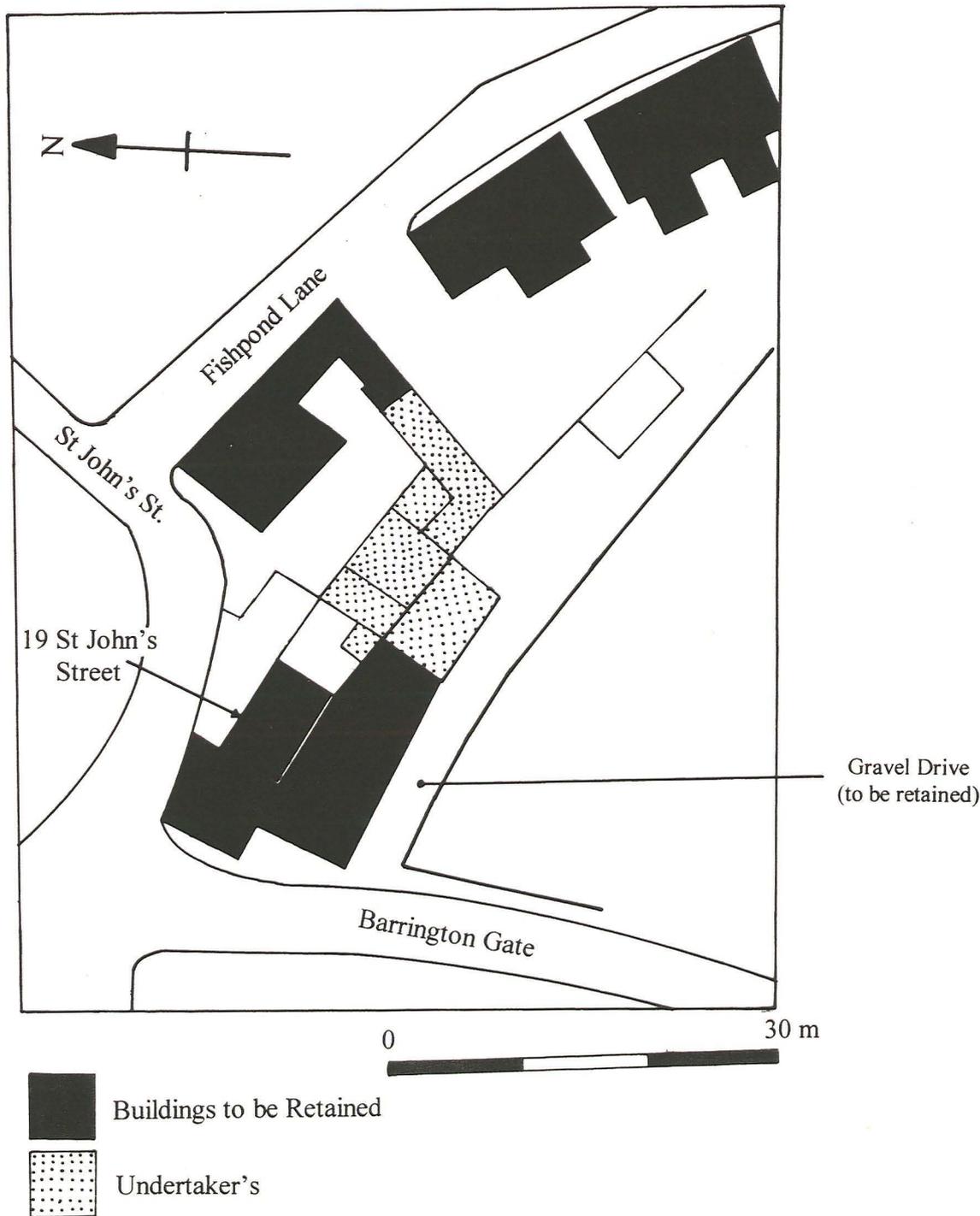
 Site of Watching Brief



*Figure 2 - Site Location Plan*



*Figure 3 - Proposed Housing Development Plan*



*Figure 4 - Existing Property Plan*

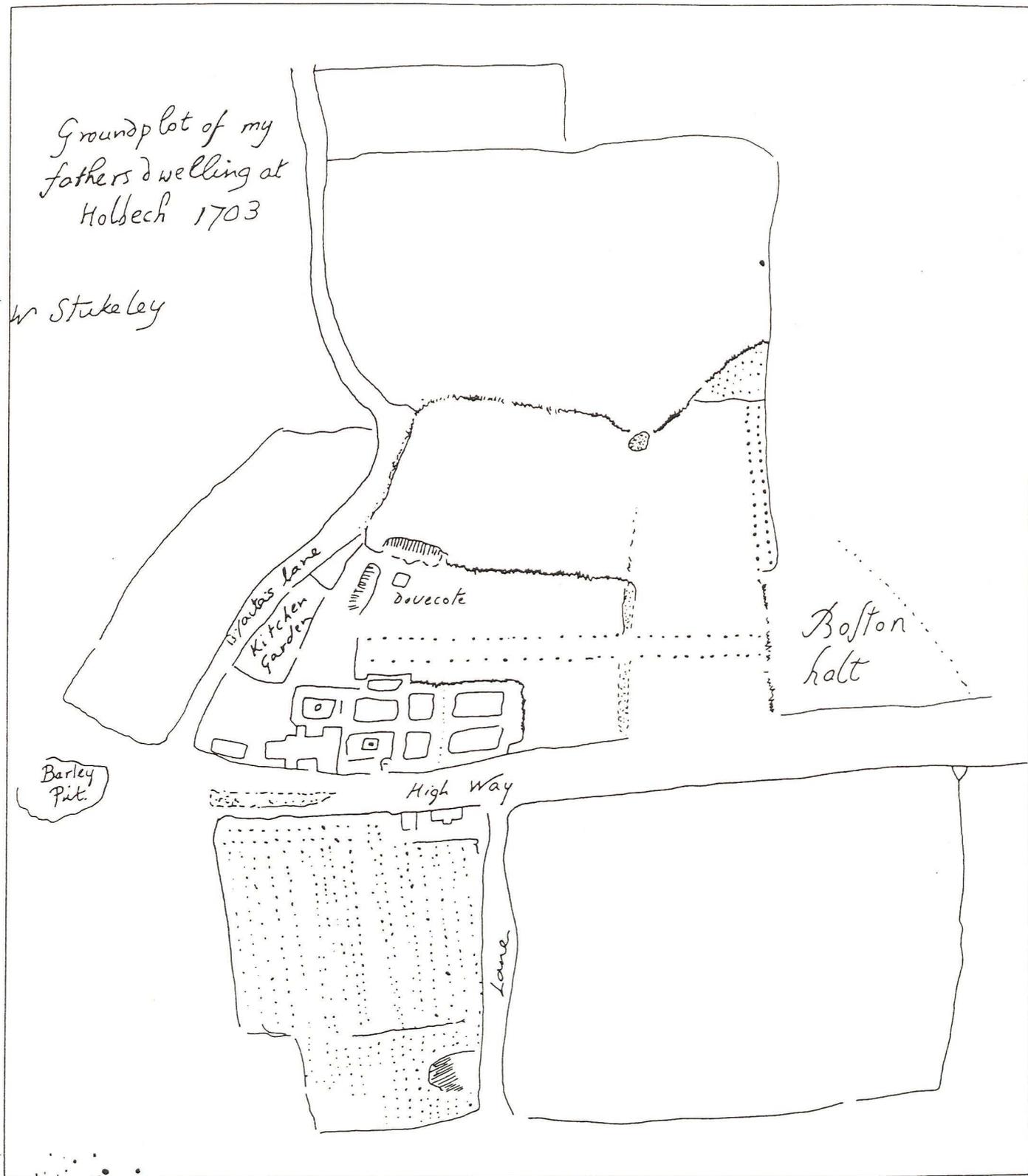
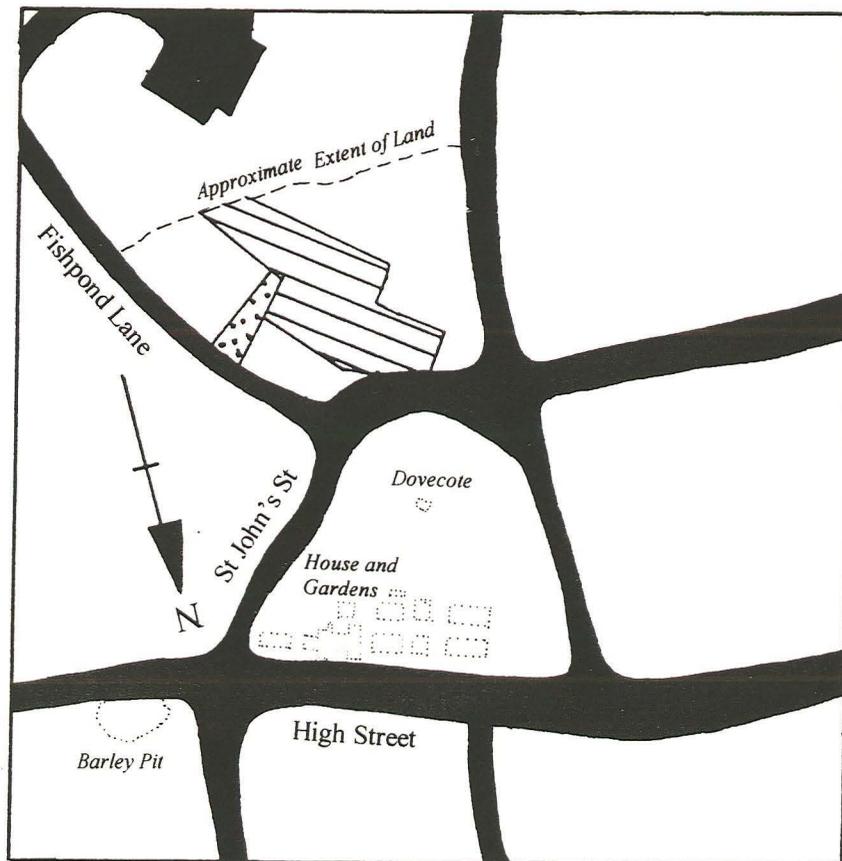
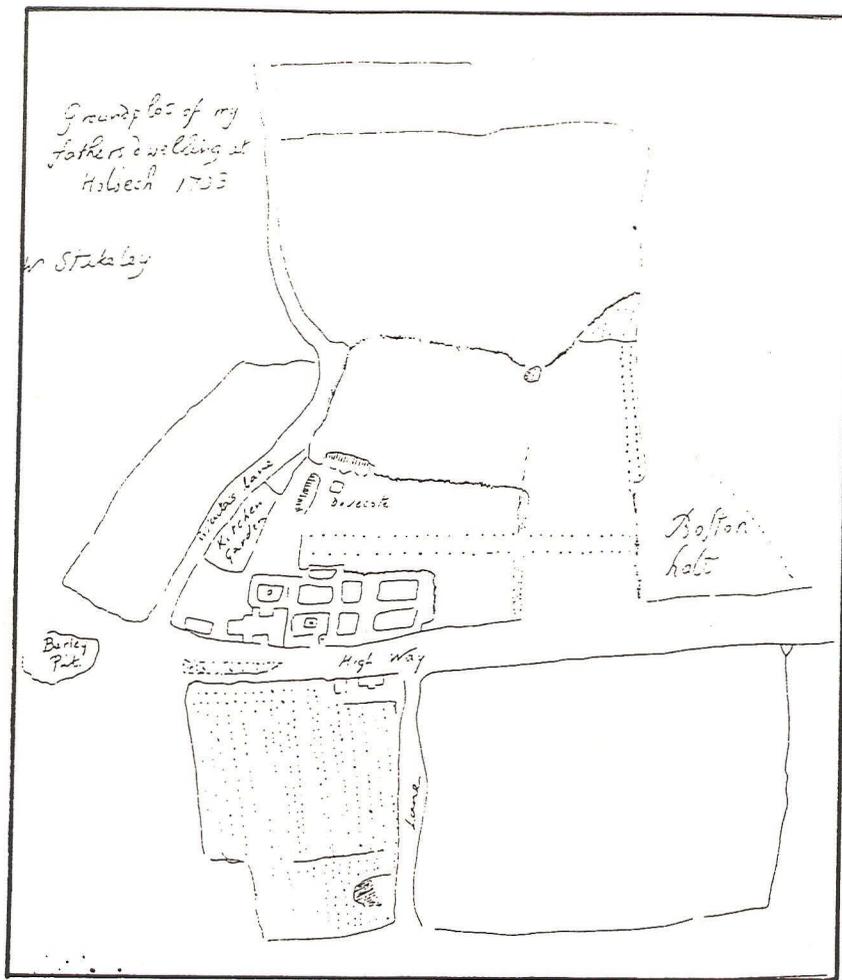


Figure 5 - Copy of William Stukeley's Sketch Map, 1703



*Figure 6 - Comparison between Stukeley's Map and Part of Modern Holbech*

10.0 Appendix B - Plates

*Plate 1: 19 St John's Street, from the Front.*

*Plate 2: 19 St John's Street, from the East showing Remodelling.*

*Plate 3: The Front Entrance of the Undertakers Office.*

*Plate 4: Detail of Remodelling to the Eastern part of the Undertakers Office.*

*Plate 5: Rear of Proposed Development Site, Showing Successive Phases of Remodelling.*



*Plate 1: 19 St John's Street, from the Front.*



*Plate 2: 19 St John's Street, from the East showing Remodelling.*



*Plate 3: The Front Entrance of the Undertakers Office.*



*Plate 4: Detail of Remodelling to the Eastern part of the Undertakers Office.*



*Plate 5: Rear of Proposed Development Site, Showing Successive Phases of Remodelling.*

## 11.0 Appendix C - SMR Data

<i>SMR Number.</i>	<i>Period.</i>	<i>Details.</i>	<i>National Grid Reference.</i>
20230-LI20230	Post Medieval (1540AD-1900AD)	Site of Stukely Hall and Gardens.	TF35652475
22227-LI22227	Medieval (1066AD-1539AD)	Site of a Preaching Cross.	TF35852485
22201-LI22201	Post Medieval (1540AD-1900AD)	Clay Pits, Fishponds Lane.	TF36302450
22232-LI22232	Medieval (1066AD-1539)	Site of All Saints Hospital, Holbeach.	TF35912484
23663-LI80760	Post Medieval (1540AD-1900AD)	Post Medieval Remains found at the High Street.	TF359248
20227-LI20227	Medieval (1066AD-1539AD)	Medieval Settlement of Holbeach.	TF36002470
20557-LI20557	Post Medieval (1540AD-1900AD)	Post Medieval Settlement of Holbeach.	TF36002470