

Aveley House, School Street, Churchover, Warwickshire

Archaeological Watching Brief



understanding heritage matters

Report No 1216
March 2012



*Working for
Warwickshire*

Project: Aveley House, Churchover

Commissioned by: Mr and Mrs J Grove

Project Report No. 1216

Site Code: CA11

NGR: SP 5110 8062

Planning Reference: R10/2216

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Date: March 2012

Report reference: *Gethin, B, & Jones, R, 2012 Aveley House, Churchover, Warwickshire, Archaeological Watching Brief, Archaeology Warwickshire Report 1216*

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Summary

An archaeological watching brief at Aveley House, School Street, Churchover, was carried out during soil stripping and the digging of foundation and service trenches associated with a new extension. A single medieval feature was found, a probable drainage ditch aligned across the rear of a putative medieval building fronting School Street. A relatively large assemblage of 12th- to 16th-century pottery was recovered from this feature. Other post-medieval pottery sherds, mainly dating from the 17th-19th centuries, probably relate to the occupation of the present building. The pottery assemblage is the largest and most important yet recovered from Churchover and taken together, the finds would seem to suggest that the Aveley House site has been occupied for most of the past 700 years.

1 Introduction

1.1 Planning permission has been granted by Rugby Borough Council for the erection of a two-storey rear extension at Aveley House, School Street, Churchover (Planning Ref. R10/2216). The development site lies within the medieval settlement of Churchover in a prominent position on the main thoroughfare and therefore in an area where archaeological remains might survive. It was therefore a condition of planning permission that the applicant should secure the implementation of a programme of archaeological work to be carried out in conjunction with the development.

1.2 A programme of fieldwork, consisting of the archaeological observation of soil stripping, foundation trenches and service trenches, in accordance with a Brief prepared by the County Planning Archaeologist on behalf of the Planning Authority, was commissioned from Archaeology Warwickshire and carried out in August 2011. This report presents the results of that work.

1.3 The project archive will be deposited with Rugby Museum under the site code CA11.

2 Location

2.1 The development site is located on the western side of the street frontage of School Street in the village and parish of Churchover. It is located at National Grid reference SP 5110 8062. The development consists of extensions to an existing 18th-century building.

2.2 The underlying geology of the area is Oadby Till, a brown, or reddish brown pebbly clay (British Geological Survey 1994).

3 Methodology

3.1 The watching brief was designed to observe any groundworks associated with the development and record as far as possible, the nature of the archaeological resource on the site.

3.2 The work undertaken involved the examination of early map evidence as well as records of archaeological remains in the area and local historical journals and other publications. Fieldwork involved an archaeologist being present during groundworks. As the work progressed it became evident that the observation of all the groundworks involved in the development would not be fruitful. The Planning Archaeologist was therefore convinced that the mitigation could be concluded once the ground reductions and a cross-section of trenches had been observed.

4 Archaeological and Historical Background

4.1 There is no known prehistoric or Romano-British activity within the immediate vicinity of Churchover, although the site of the small Roman town of Tripontium (Warwickshire Historic Environment Record No. HER MWA 2788), on Watling Street, is only 2.5km to the south-east.

4.2 The manor of Churchover is mentioned in Domesday as *Wavre*, it having been held by 'Waga' before the conquest. In 1086 it had become the property of Robert de Stafford. A document confirming a gift of land to Coombe Abbey by Roger de Waver, in the reign of Henry II (1154-1189), is the first reference to the village as Church Waver, the origin of its current name.

4.3 The extrapolated bounds of the medieval village (MWA 9506) include the existing part of the village and several areas of deserted settlement which survive as earthworks. The manor of 'Wavre' gained the right to hold a market in 1257, although it remains unclear whether this refers to Churchover or the deserted settlement of Cestersover (MWA 3500), just over 1km to the north-west as both names contain the element 'Over' from 'Wavre'. Cestersover certainly became a separate manor and is in a different parish, Monks Kirby.

4.4 The parish church of Holy Trinity (MWA 2781) is medieval in origin but was largely rebuilt in 1896 by the architect Bassett Smith (VCH 1951, 63-64). The surviving medieval fabric consists of the south arcade, dating from the late 13th century, the south door, also 13th century in date and the west tower is 15th century although the tower and steeple were both restored in 1911.

4.5 A number of post-medieval buildings survive in the area including a Grade II listed timber-framed shelter-shed (MWA 8157), which dates from the 18th century and was originally thatched. A Congregational chapel (MWA 2787) is shown, just to the north of the church, on the Ordnance Survey map of 1887.

4.6 Several small-scale pieces of archaeological work have taken place in Churchover. An evaluation trench (EWA 6980) excavated at Church Farm exposed several undated features and a single ditch which contained pottery probably dating from the 12th-13th century (MWA 8915). A watching brief at 'The Spinney' in School Street (EWA 9189), recovered a few sherds of 17th- to 19th-century pottery (MWA 12354). A watching brief at Woodbine Cottage (EWA 9234) found 17 unstratified sherds of medieval and post-medieval pottery whilst no remains were found during observation of foundation trenches at Ash Tree Farm (EWA 6765). Most recently sherds of 12th/13th-century pottery were recovered during a watching brief to the rear of The Coach House, along with other material of 18th- to early 20th-century date (Coutts and Gethin 2011).

4.7 No Estate maps or Tithe maps of Churchover exist at the Warwickshire County Record Office. The earliest detailed map is the Ordnance Survey map of 1887 which depicts a very similar village to that of today. A gap in the housing, at the west end of Church Street, between the church and the Greyhound Inn stands out. To some extent this gap still exists today, now mostly being gardens for two large houses, and it might well represent an area of the village that became depopulated during the later medieval period. The current site has changed remarkably little by 1904, after which, a boundary wall, separating the house from outbuildings to the west, has been removed along with a small outbuilding.

4.8 From the outside Aveley House appears to date to the mid 19th century. It has brick walls with a decorative pattern formed by yellow bricks laid end on (headers) and red bricks laid lengthways (stretchers). The interior of the building retains some elements of timber framing which might suggest an earlier, possibly 17th century, origin. However, many of the timbers show signs of re-use (Dr Nat Alcock pers comm) and it is quite possible that the 19th century rebuild used a large amount of material from earlier buildings.

5 Watching Brief (Fig 4)

5.1 Foundation trenches and soil stripping were carried out with a 3 tonne mini-excavator with a 0.45m wide toothed bucket and a 1.00m toothless ditching bucket. An area measuring 8.40m x 7.40m immediately to the rear of the house was first excavated with the toothed bucket after being unable to penetrate the hard ground with a toothless bucket. This exposed the foundations for the house (9) which consisted of a single row of header bricks laid on top of two courses of roughly cut limestone blocks.

5.2 After the area was stripped of 0.85m of a olive brown clay loam (2), the foundation trenches were dug for the new extension. These were between 5.30m and 5.70m long, 0.60m wide and 0.90m deep and were cut into the geological natural which here consisted of two different types of soil, one an olive clay (3), the other a sandy clay (4).

5.3 A ditch (5) was observed running across the site, aligned WNW by ESE. It was 1.30m wide and between 0.15m and 0.20m deep and was filled by a dark yellowish brown sandy clay (6) which contained 62 sherds of medieval pottery as well as fragments of animal bone and roof tile. Also running across the site was a French drain (7) which may have been contemporary with the house. The drain was 0.25m wide and 0.40m deep, its fill contained broken bricks, roof tile and 18th to 19th-century pottery (8).

5.4 Both features were sealed by a 0.44 to 0.54m layer of olive brown clay loam (2); this in turn was overlaid by 0.31m of very dark grey clay loam (1), which contained a large quantity of post-medieval pottery of 17th to 19th century date, animal bone, clay, pipe fragments, vessel glass and plaster.

5.5 At the west end of the excavation three drain trenches were dug, running SW-NE. The trenches were between 1.50m and 4.50m long, 0.30m wide and between 0.25m and 0.35m deep. The three trenches converged at the south-west corner where a 1m square manhole was excavated.

5.6 A further service trench ran across the rear garden and then along the driveway to an existing manhole at the north-west end of the house. The trench within the lawn was 0.30m

wide and was 0.90m deep. The trench was excavated down to geological natural (4) which was overlain by 0.59m of layer 2 and 0.31m of layer topsoil (1). At the NNW end of the trench a brick wall was uncovered (11). This was probably a previous garden wall and was sealed by the topsoil (1). The wall was 0.26m wide, at least three bricks (0.33m) in depth and ran parallel to the existing garden wall (12). The trench was then continued down the existing driveway. Within the drive it was only 0.25m wide and up to 0.30m deep. The geological natural was not exposed with the make-up of the trench consisting of 0.20m of modern hardcore (14) covered by up to 0.10m of modern tarmac (13).

6 Pottery by Stephanie Rátkai

6.1 The pottery numbered 178 sherds and came from stratified contexts (1, 6, and 8). There was also a small amount of unstratified material. The pottery could mainly be divided by eye into medieval fabric or post-medieval ware groups (Tables 1 and 2). The pottery was quantified by sherd count only. In Table 1 the name of the fabric is followed by the Warwickshire County Pottery Type Series (*WCPTS*) code. The unstratified sandy cooking pot sherd could not be paralleled and has been given a generic code denoting a moderately sandy ware with medium-sized grits.

The medieval pottery

6.2 Most of the medieval pottery came from context (6). The main supplier of ceramics seems to have been the Chilvers Coton kilns, near Nuneaton. About 80% of the medieval pottery overall came from this source. A small mudstone-tempered ware sherd from (6) contained very large (4mm+) lumps of mudstone. A similar fabric was noted at Bascote (Rátkai 2009) and was coded StR20. The fabric is uncommon but is probably a very coarse version of the Chilvers Coton B fabric and if not made in the area of the excavated kilns must, nevertheless, have been made in their vicinity.

Table 1 The medieval pottery

| Context Fabric | Date | WCPTS | 1 | 6 | U/S | Total |
|--|-------------|---------|---|----|-----|-------|
| ?Local sandy cooking pot | 13th-14th | Sq01-09 | | | 1 | 1 |
| Chilvers Coton A | c1250-?1325 | WW01 | 1 | 22 | 3 | 26 |
| Chilvers Coton B | c1225-1300 | StR20 | | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| Chilvers Coton C | c1300-1500 | Sq30 | 2 | 17 | 2 | 21 |
| Chilvers Coton D (proto-Midlands Purple) | 15th | Sq30 | | 8 | 1 | 9 |
| Reduced Deritend ware | c1200-1325 | RS01 | | 1 | | 1 |
| Midlands Purple | 15th-16th | MP | | 4 | | 4 |
| North Warwickshire granitic ware | c1225-1300 | StR11 | | 1 | | 1 |
| Potters Marston | 12th-14th | StR30 | | 1 | 1 | 2 |
| Shelly limestone-tempered ware | 13th | CL01 | | 6 | | 6 |
| Mudstone-tempered ware | c1225-1300 | StR20.3 | | 1 | | 1 |
| Total sherd count | | | 3 | 62 | 10 | 75 |

6.3 The presence of Potters Marston ware indicates that pottery from just over the border in Leicestershire was finding its way to Churchover. This ware, together with the granitic ware and the mudstone-tempered ware seem to be typically (although not exclusively) found in the eastern fringes of Warwickshire. The shelly limestone-tempered ware is likely to have been made in Northamptonshire, possibly in the Rockingham Forest area. Reduced Deritend ware, made in Birmingham, is found widely distributed in Warwickshire. The pottery seems to represent a date range of *c*1250 to *c*1450.

The Post-medieval pottery

6.4 Although some of the pottery could have been made in the 17th century, the general appearance of the post-medieval assemblage suggests that this is material of the 18th or possibly 19th centuries. Context (8) contained 12 sherds from a storage jar with an internal black glaze which probably dates to the late 18th century. If the industrial slipware sherds from the same context, which came from a carinated bowl, are not intrusive then the coarseware jar could date to the early 19th century. The coarseware in context (1) consisted mainly of sherds with a light orange-brown fabric. There were 16 rim sherds, representing 13 vessels, all bowls or pancheons with a dark brown glaze. These were difficult to date with great accuracy but the rim forms favour a date no earlier than the 18th century.

Table 2 The Post-Medieval Pottery

| Context | Date | 1 | 8 | Total |
|-------------------------------|-----------------------|-----------|-----------|------------|
| Fabric | | | | |
| Blackware | 17th-18th | 6 | 6 | 12 |
| Brown salt-glazed stoneware | 18th-19th | 2 | | 2 |
| Coarseware (buff-light brown) | 18th-19th | 56 | 2 | 58 |
| Coarseware (overfired) | 18th-19th | 2 | | 2 |
| Coarseware (cream) | 18th-19th | | 12 | 12 |
| Coarseware (red) | 18th-19th | 1 | | 1 |
| Industrial slipware | early 19th | | 1 | 1 |
| Mottled ware | later 17th-mid 18th | 5 | | 5 |
| Scratch blue | 1740s-1760s | 1 | | 1 |
| Shining black/Jackfield? | Mid-late 18th | 1 | | 1 |
| Slip-coated ware | Later 17th-18th | 1 | | 1 |
| Slipware (embossed) | Later 17th-early 18th | 1 | | 1 |
| Slipware (feathered) | Later 17th-early 18th | 6 | | 6 |
| Slipware (joggled) | Later 17th-early 18th | 1 | | 1 |
| Slipware (trailed) | Mid 18th-19th | 3 | | 3 |
| White salt-glazed stoneware | 1720s-1760s/70s | 1 | | 1 |
| Yellow ware | 17th-18th | 1 | | 1 |
| | | 88 | 15 | 103 |

6.5 The post-medieval assemblage is dominated by utilitarian coarsewares, of the kinds that would have been used in a kitchen or out-building. There has been little opportunity to study these wares in this area of Warwickshire and sources for them are obscure. However, Polesworth and Ticknall are possibilities. The one yellow ware sherd is from a pancheon-like vessel, its fabric being the same as the jar from context (8). This form has not been noted

further west in Warwickshire. The brown salt-glazed stoneware sherds were from a jar or flagon and represent another utilitarian form.

6.6 The remaining pottery could all be classed as coming from table wares. The slipwares, although of standard forms, were clearly from a different source from those found further west in the county, but again there is insufficient comparanda to determine where that source might have been. All the slipware vessels were platters i.e. mould-formed shallow dishes and all the rim sherds had a 'pie-crust' edge. Drinking vessels were made in mottled ware (cylindrical mugs), blackware and 'shining black' (also known as Jackfield Ware). There were only two sherds which might be termed tea wares; a white salt-glazed stoneware bowl rim and a scratch blue hemispherical bowl with foot-ring.

6.7 Despite the presence of the industrial slipware sherds in (8), the post-medieval assemblage looks as if it should date to the 18th century. The pottery has a definite rural look, since most of the fancier wares, tea wares and formal dining wares are almost entirely absent; on most urban sites this would not be the case.

7 Conclusions

7.1 Medieval ditch (5) contained pottery which dated from the 12th to 16th century, though the majority of sherds would seem to date the ditch to the late 13th or early 14th century with perhaps a small amount of 15th- to 16th-century Midlands Purple sherds either intrusive or deriving from the top of the ditch. The function of the ditch is enigmatic but given its near-parallel alignment to School Street and its relative shallowness it is likely to have acted as a drain at the back of a putative building on the street frontage.

7.2 Other post-medieval pottery sherds, mainly dating from the 17th to 19th centuries probably relate to the occupation of the present building. The pottery assemblage is the largest and most important yet recovered from Churchover and taken together, the finds would seem to suggest that the Aveley House site has been occupied for most of the past 700 years.

Acknowledgements

Archaeology Warwickshire would like to thank Mr and Mrs J Grove for commissioning the work and the County Planning Archaeologist for preparing the brief. Thanks also to Dr Nat Alcock for looking at photographs of the interior of Aveley House. The project was managed by Stuart Palmer and work on site was carried out by Rob Jones and Bryn Gethin. This report was written by Bryn Gethin and Rob Jones with illustrations by Candy Stevens. It was edited by Stuart Palmer and checked by Catherine Coutts.

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Ordnance Survey 1905 *Second Edition 1:2500 map*, Warwickshire Sheet 23.7.

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Appendices

List of Contexts

| <i>Context</i> | <i>Description</i> |
|----------------|----------------------|
| 1 | Topsoil |
| 2 | Layer |
| 3 | Clay natural |
| 4 | Sandy clay natural |
| 5 | Ditch cut |
| 6 | Fill of ditch |
| 7 | French drain cut |
| 8 | Fill of French drain |
| 9 | House foundations |
| 10 | Cut for 11 |
| 11 | Brick wall |
| 12 | Brick wall |
| 13 | Tarmac |
| 14 | Modern hardcore |

List of Finds (not pottery)

| <i>Context</i> | <i>Description</i> | <i>Type</i> | <i>Date</i> | <i>No</i> |
|----------------|--|-----------------------|-------------|-----------|
| 1 | Clay pipe | stem | c18th/19th | 3 |
| 1 | Glass | vessel | c18th/19th | 4 |
| 1 | Bone | animal | | 8 |
| 1 | Plaster | wall | | 2 |
| 1 | Brick | decorative | | 1 |
| 1 | Bone | Animal (not retained) | | 25 |
| 1 | Bone | Disc | | 1 |
| | (29mm diameter with a centre hole of 9mm, 3mm thick, with a bevelled edge) | | | |
| 6 | Tile | Roof, hand-made | medieval | 1 |
| 6 | Bone | Animal | | 5 |
| 6 | Stone | Whetstone | medieval | 1 |

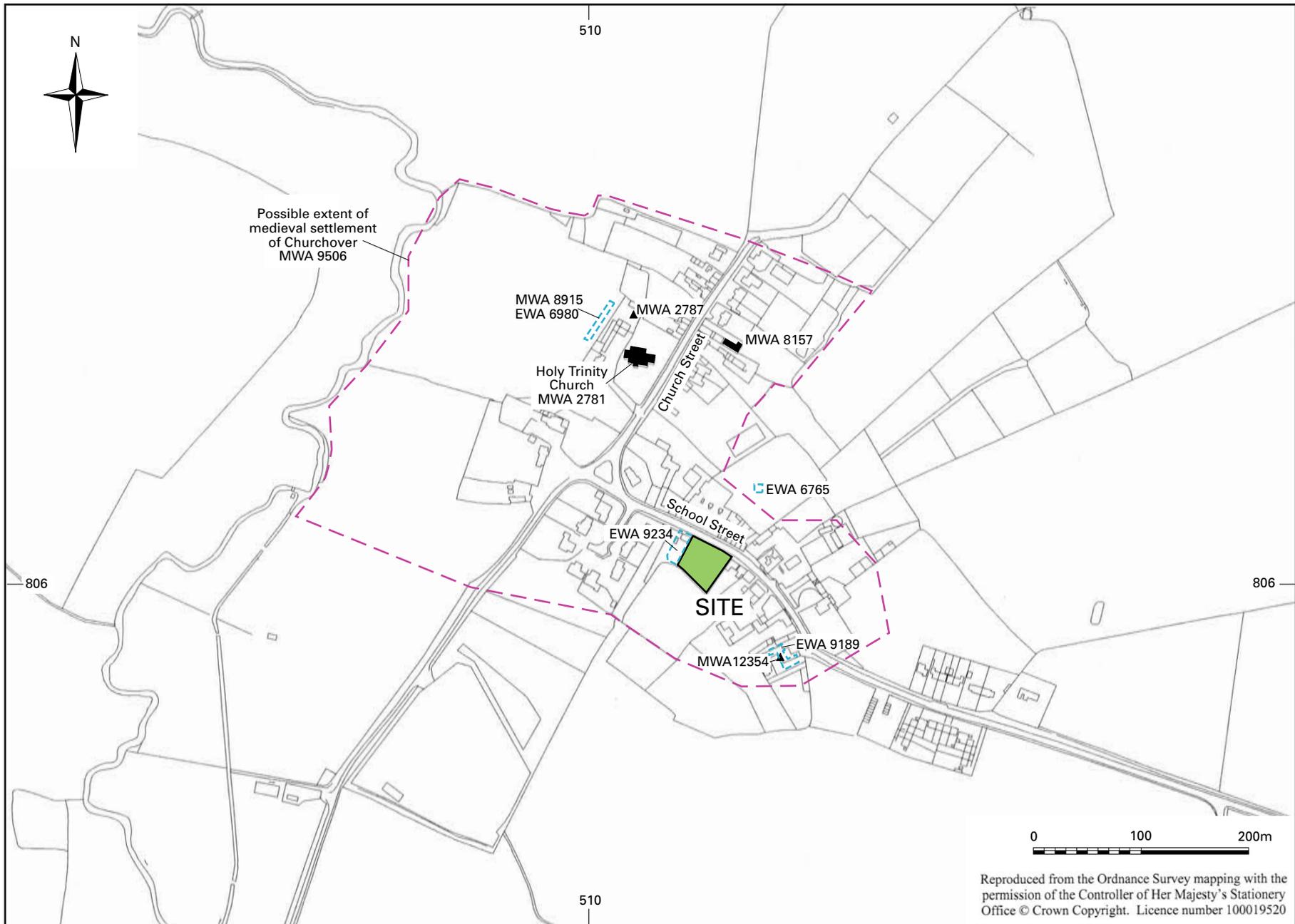


Fig 1: Site location

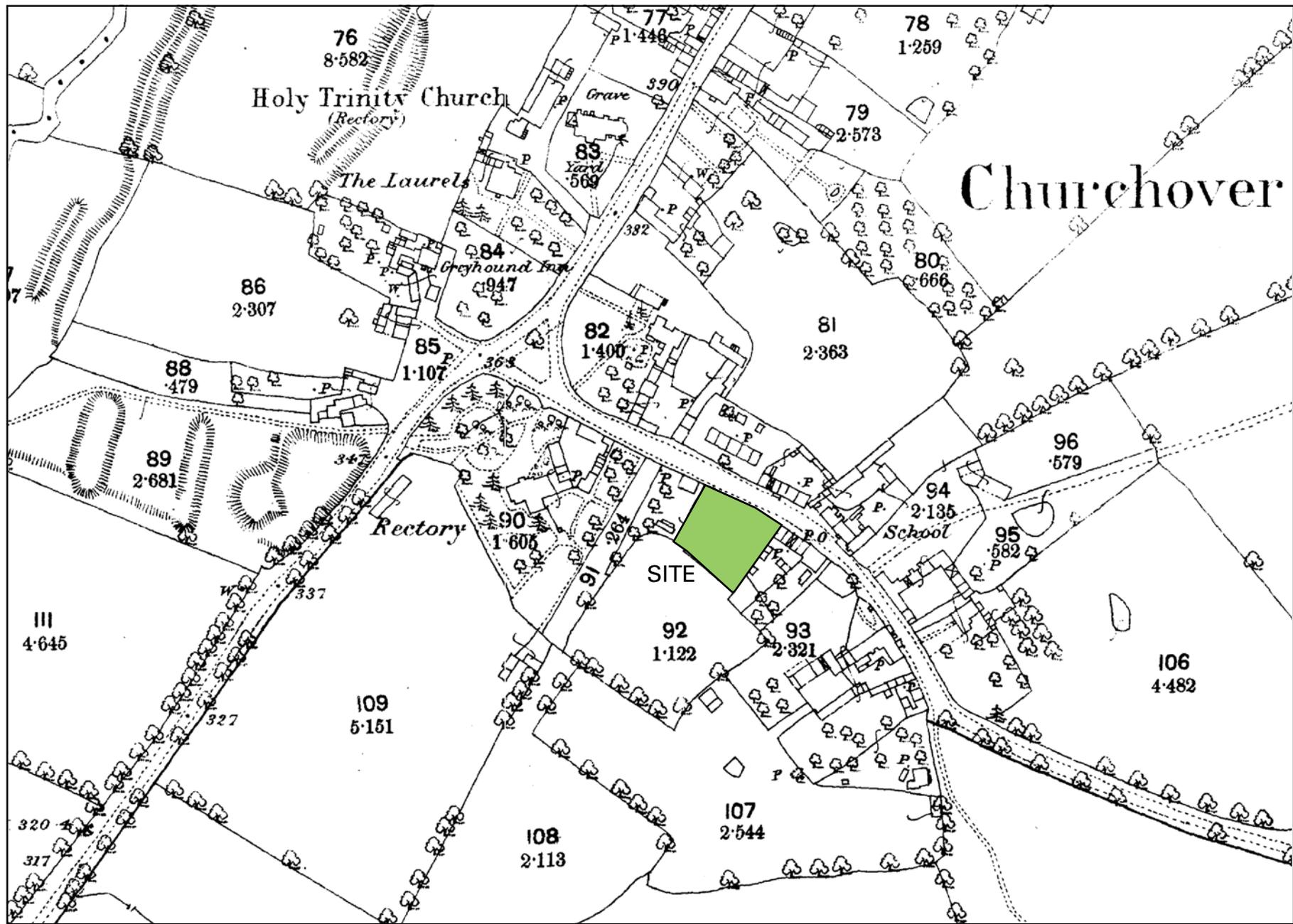


Fig 2: Detail from First Edition Ordnance Survey map of 1887 showing location of site

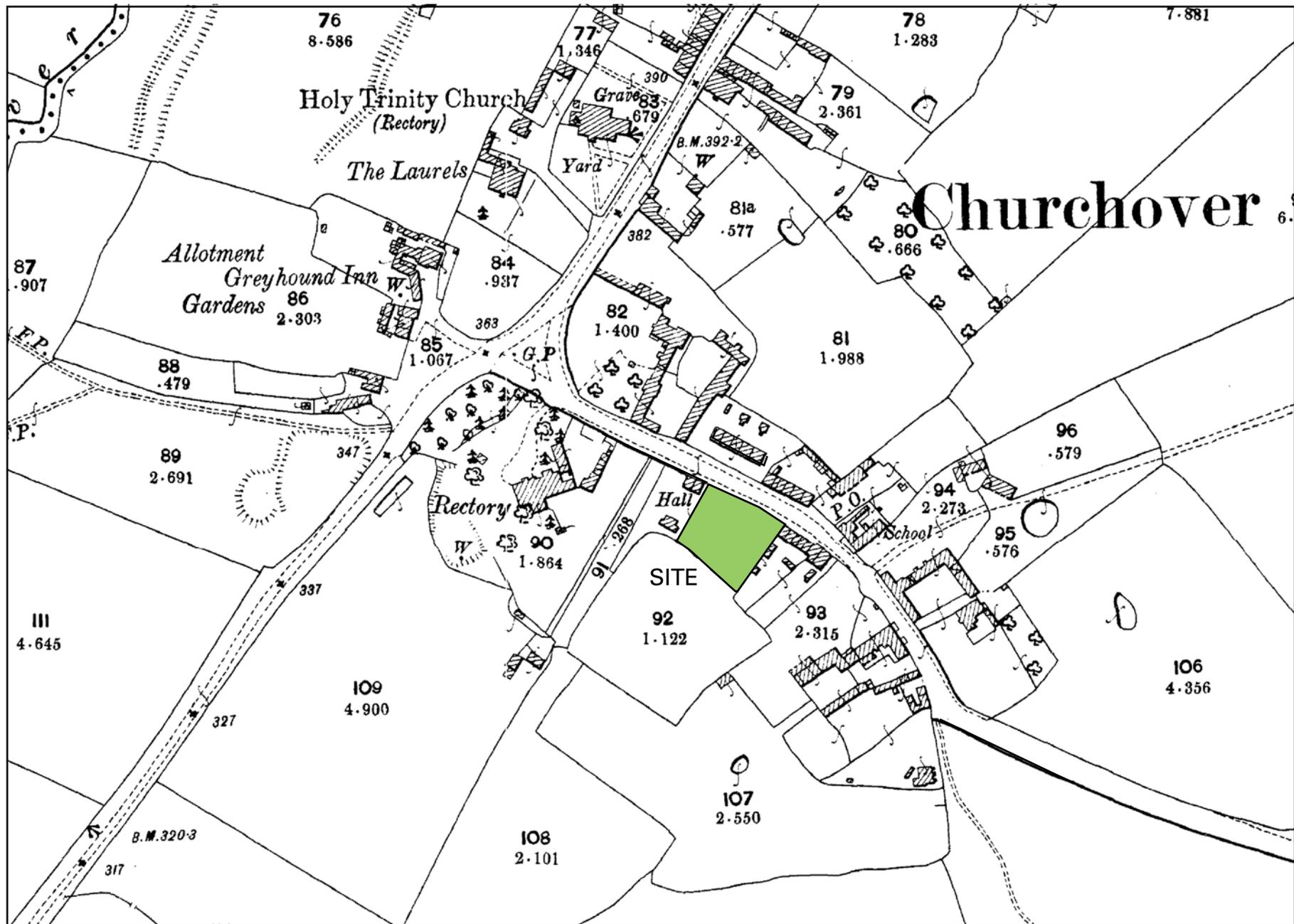


Fig 3: Detail from Second Edition Ordnance Survey map of 1904 showing location of site

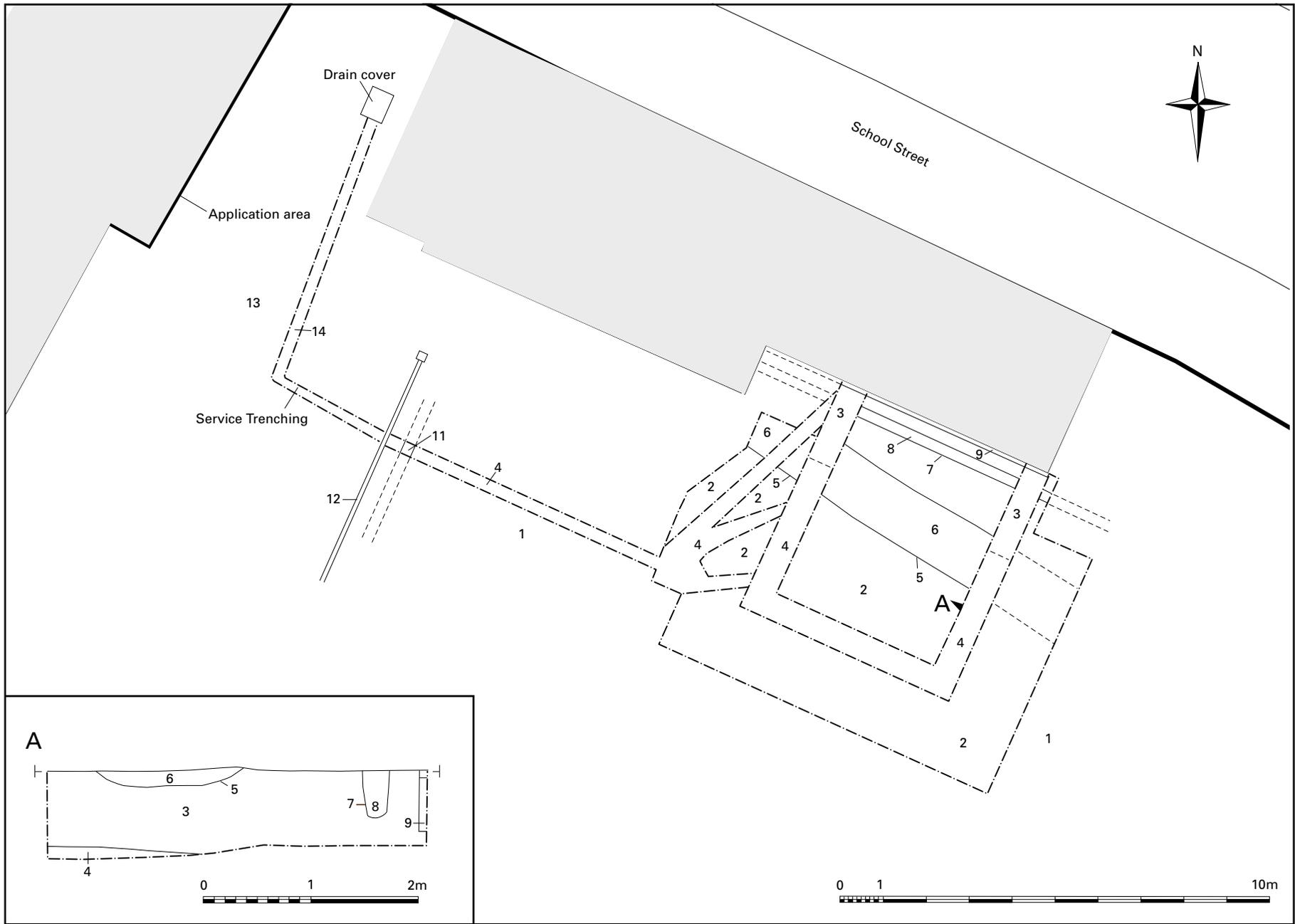


Fig 4: Averley House and the location of ground reductions and trenches observed



Fig 5: Reduced area and foundation trenches viewed from the SE



Fig 6: Aveley House foundation (9)



Fig 7: Service trenches

