

Hilltop Cottage Wigginton Staffordshire

ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION



EXPERTISE WHERE YOU NEED IT

Archaeology Warwickshire Report 1843

JUNE 2018



*Working for
Warwickshire*

Project: Hilltop Cottage, Wigginton, Staffordshire
Commissioned by: Jayne Merriman
Site Code: SHW18
Planning Reference: 18/00135/FUL
Planning Authority: Lichfield District Council
National Grid Reference: SK 2095 0685
Project Manager: Nigel Page MCIfA
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SUMMARY

Two 10m trial trenches were excavated on land adjacent to Hilltop Cottage in the village of Wigginton, Staffordshire, as part of an archaeological evaluation to support the planning application for the construction of a new house. The site is located on the village's north-eastern, edge close to house platforms and ridge and furrow associated with the settlement's former medieval extent. Despite the high potential for buried archaeology, no remains of archaeological significance were encountered with the only features recorded being of natural origin.

1 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 Planning permission is being sought from Lichfield District Council for the construction of a new dwelling in the grounds of Hilltop Cottage, Wigginton, Staffordshire, B79 9DW, in addition to the renovation of the cottage itself.
- 1.2 The proposed development is situated within the Wigginton Conservation Area, adjacent to extensive medieval village earthworks and associated ridge and furrow. Consequently, the applicant was required by Staffordshire County Council's Historic Environment Advisor to secure the implementation of a programme of archaeological trial trenching in accordance with a Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI) approved by the planning authority.
- 1.3 Archaeology Warwickshire were commissioned to undertake an archaeological evaluation to assess the development's potential implications for the historic environment. This took place on 11th June 2018. The work was carried out in accordance with the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists Standard and guidance for field evaluation (2014) and the approved WSI. This report and its associated archive will be deposited with The Potteries Museum and Art Gallery, Stoke-on-Trent, Staffordshire (Museum Accession No. 2018.LH.50). Printed and digital copies of the report will also be held by the Staffordshire Historic Environment Record and will be submitted to OASIS.

2 SITE LOCATION

- 2.1 The application area is centred on National Grid Reference (NGR) SK 2095 0685 in the village of Wigginton, Staffordshire. The site is positioned on an area of raised ground at the north-eastern edge of the village, within the Wigginton Conservation Area. It is bounded on the west by Main Road and to the north, south and east by fields under pasture. The site is bordered by hedges, with fencing on the eastern and southern sides and a stone wall along the western and northern sides. LiDAR imagery shows ridge and furrow extending across the fields to the north and east, with possible medieval house platforms to the south (Environment Agency, 2018). At the time of excavation the application area comprised unused waste ground with abundant vegetation and accumulations of building rubble and other material associated with ground clearance, but it had previously been grazed by sheep and had once been the garden to hilltop cottage (Owner *pers comm*)
- 2.2 The principal underlying bedrock geology is mudstone of the Gunthorpe Member. However a thin band of Siltstone of the Gunthorpe Member also runs around much of the village, close to the development site. There are no recorded superficial deposits in the area (British Geological Survey, 2018).

3 ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

- 3.1 The site lies within the Wigginton Historic Environment Character Zone and has been subject to a Heritage Statement (Hislop Heritage Services 2018), so the following summary has been taken from these documents.
- 3.2 There are no know prehistoric or Roman sites close to the village, although a possible barrow was noted to the southwest of the village during the 17th century.
- 3.3 Wigginton is thought to be a shrunken village and the site sits within an area of earthworks that may indicate the former village extent. The site and possible former village is surrounded by medieval ridge and furrow ploughing, which on aerial photographs available on Google Earth do appear to respect the earthworks of the possible former village.
- 3.4 The area around the village was enclosed by the later 18th century, when mapping showed the site with a building in the northeast corner, but not on the same footprint as the existing Hilltop Cottage. The cottage is first shown in its current position on the Ordnance Survey 1st edition map of 1884, but in a slightly different layout, with a small extension on its east side. It had been altered again by the time the 2nd edition map was published in 1902, but had taken its current form by the 1920s.
- 3.5 Small outbuildings were shown at the eastern end of the site on the 1st and 2nd edition maps, but these had gone by the 1920s and no other structures or features were recorded within the site. It appears that the position of the proposed new house has been garden and undeveloped since at least the 18th century (Old-maps.co.uk).

4 AIMS AND METHODS

- 4.1 The main aim of the evaluation was to determine if any significant archaeological remains were present in the area to be developed; to form an understanding of their value and their potential to shed light on the subsequent development of the area.
- 4.2 Secondary aims include placing the results in their wider local and regional contexts as appropriate.
- 4.3 The objectives were to locate, record and analyse archaeological materials and deposits and to disseminate the results in an appropriate format.
- 4.4 Two trenches were opened up by a small 360° excavator fitted with a 1m wide toothless ditching bucket. Both trenches were 10m long and 2m wide. Trench 1 was located as specified in the WSI, but with a slight adjustment to maintain a safe distance from an overhead power line. Trench 2 was angled to the north-east due to the presence of a large mound of rubble and earth and to avoid the power line. Topsoil, made ground and subsoil were removed under the supervision of an experienced archaeologist until either the top of archaeological remains or geological natural was reached.

5 RESULTS

Geological Natural

- 5.1 The geological natural in both trenches comprised a mixture of red brown, yellow brown and blue/yellow grey clay or silty clay, with intrusions of sub-rounded pebbles and other small stones (102 and 203). In Trench 1 it was encountered around 0.57m below the present ground surface, while in Trench 2 it occurred at a depth of 0.77m. The pebble inclusions often existed in concentrations, while in Trench 1 small natural channels were noted running through the clay. Patches of light yellowish grey sand were also noted in Trench 1. Initially it was thought these might be archaeological features, but on testing they were shown to be natural/geological.

Deposit Sequence

- 5.2 A possible gully (103) was recorded running northwest-southeast at the southwestern end of Trench 1. It had gently sloping, uneven sides with an uneven base 0.11m deep, and was filled by dark grey brown sand with pebble inclusions (104). The feature produced no finds and its form, alongside the composition of its fill, suggested it was most probably a natural channel in the surface of the clay and not associated with human activity.
- 5.3 Overlying the natural clay in both trenches was subsoil comprising greyish brown sandy loam with pebble inclusions (101), and red/grey brown silty clay with inclusions of small stones and charcoal flecks and smears (202), which may represent a former plough soil.
- 5.4 In Trench 2 the subsoil was relatively thin (0.14m) due to the presence of an overlying layer of made ground (201), 0.33m thick, comprising dark red brown clayey silt which graded upwards to dark grey brown. It was characterised by occasional small stones, frequent charcoal smears and moderate flecks, smears and fragments of modern CBM. This may be associated with a process of landscaping which apparently took place sometime in the late 20th century (Owner *pers comm*).
- 5.5 Similar material was also recorded to a depth of 0.29m below present ground surface in Trench 1 where it formed part of the topsoil (100); a dark grey brown sandy loam, with stones, brick and tile fragments and post-medieval pottery sherds (not retained). In Trench 2 the topsoil (200) was found to be 0.3m thick, comprising dark grey brown

clayey silt, which incorporated occasional charcoal flecks and smears, occasional small rounded and sub-rounded stones and occasional CBM fragments. Towards the ground surface the deposit was characterised by fine rooting associated with the turf.

6 CONCLUSIONS

- 6.1 Trial trenching in the grounds of Hilltop Cottage, Wigginton, Staffordshire, encountered no significant archaeological remains, with the only recorded feature being a natural channel in the surface of the clay natural. This reflected the variability of the geological natural in Trench 1.
- 6.2 The results are perhaps surprising given the site's proximity to known medieval features, including upstanding village earthworks comprising house platforms, hollow ways and ridge and furrow to the north, east and south. The probable explanation is that the site lay beyond the extent of the medieval settlement; although it is also possible that activity in this part of the village was ephemeral, leaving few physical traces. Features may also have been truncated by later agricultural activity and landscaping.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Archaeology Warwickshire would like to thank Jayne Merriman for commissioning the work, facilitating site access and providing a machine.

REFERENCES

BGS British Geological Survey 2018 *Geology of Britain Viewer*
<http://mapapps.bgs.ac.uk/geologyofbritain/home.html>? Accessed June 2018

Environment Agency 2018 LIDAR Composite Digital Terrain Model (DTM) – 1m

Hislop Heritage Services 2018 Hill Top Cottage, Wigginton, Staffordshire: Heritage Statement. January 2018



1: Trench 1, looking north-east



1: Trench 2, looking north-north-east



3: General site view, looking north-east, showing Hilltop Cottage and Trench 2



4: Hilltop Cottage, looking north-west

APPENDICES

A List of contexts

Trench	Context	Description	Depth (m)	Comment
1	100	Dark greyish brown sandy loam; stones, brick/tile fragments, 18 th century pottery (not retained); very compact; clear horizons; made ground	0.29	Topsoil
1	101	Greyish brown sandy loam; pebbles; compact; clear horizons	0.48	Subsoil
1	102	Red and yellow clay with patches of pale yellow, dark sand; pebbles and stone inclusions; compact; clear horizons		Geological Natural
1	103	Gently sloping uneven sides; uneven base; E-W	0.11	Cut of natural gully
1	104	Dark grey brown sand; pebbles; loose; clear horizons	0.11	Fill of (103)
2	200	Dark greyish brown clayey silt; occasional charcoal flecks and smears, occasional small rounded and sub-rounded stones, occasional CBM fragments; firm/compact, softer towards top; moderate horizons – grades into (201)	0.3	Topsoil/turf
2	201	Dark reddish brown clayey silt; occasional small stones, frequent charcoal flecks, moderate CBM flecks, smears and fragments; soft where moist,	0.38	Made ground

		but otherwise firm; moderate horizons		
2	202	Dark reddish/greyish brown silty clay; occasional small stones, moderate charcoal flecks and smears; moderately compact; moderate horizons	0.14	Subsoil
2	203	Patches of dark reddish brown, orangey brown, yellowish grey and bluish grey silty clay; occasional manganese smears, patches/concentrations of pebbles; firm; good horizons		Geological Natural

C oasis form

PROJECT DETAILS		OASIS No	archaeol27-316333
Project name	Hilltop Cottage, Wigginton, Staffordshire		
Short description (250 words max)	Two 10m trial trenches were excavated on land adjacent to Hilltop Cottage, Wigginton, Staffordshire. The site is located on the village's north-eastern edge close to housing platforms and ridge and furrow associated with the settlement's former medieval extent. Despite the high potential for buried archaeology, no remains of archaeological significance were encountered with the only features being of natural origin,		
Project type (Eg DBA, Eval etc)	Evaluation		
Site status (None, NT, SAM etc)	None		
Previous work	No		
Current land use	Grassland Heathland 5		
Future work (yes, no, unknown)	No		
Monument type / period			
Significant finds (artefact, type, period)	None		
Methods & techniques	Sample trenches		
Development Type	Dwelling		
Prompt	NPPF		
Position in planning process	Pre-application		
PROJECT LOCATION			
County	Staffordshire		
Site address (inc postcode)	Hilltop Cottage, Wigginton, Staffordshire, B79 9DW		
Study area (sq.m or ha)			
OS Easting & Northing (use grid sq letter code)	SK 2095 0685		
Height OD	76.6m		
PROJECT CREATORS			
Organisation	Archaeology Warwickshire		
Project brief originator			
Project design originator	Nigel Page MC/FA		
Director/supervisor	Alexander Portch PhD		
Manager	Nigel Page MC/FA		
Sponsor or funding body			
PROJECT DATE			
Start date /end date	11/06/18		
ARCHIVES	Location (Accession no)	Content (eg pottery, animal bone etc)	
Physical	None		
Paper	Potteries Museum and Art Gallery (2018.LH.50)	Diary; Plans; Unpublished text; Context Sheets; Photographs	

Digital	Potteries Museum and Art Gallery (2018.LH.50)	Digital photographs
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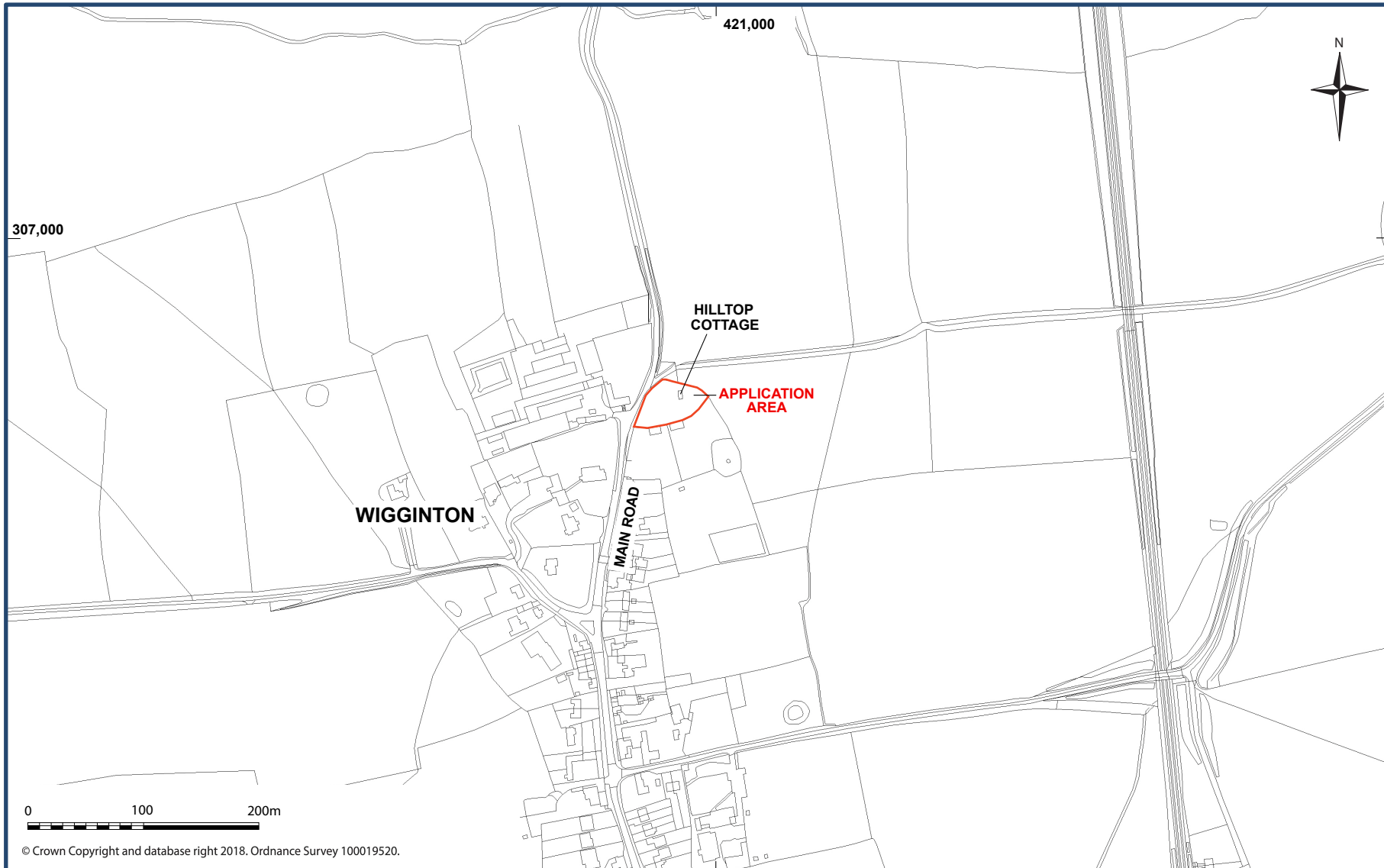


Fig 1: Location of application area

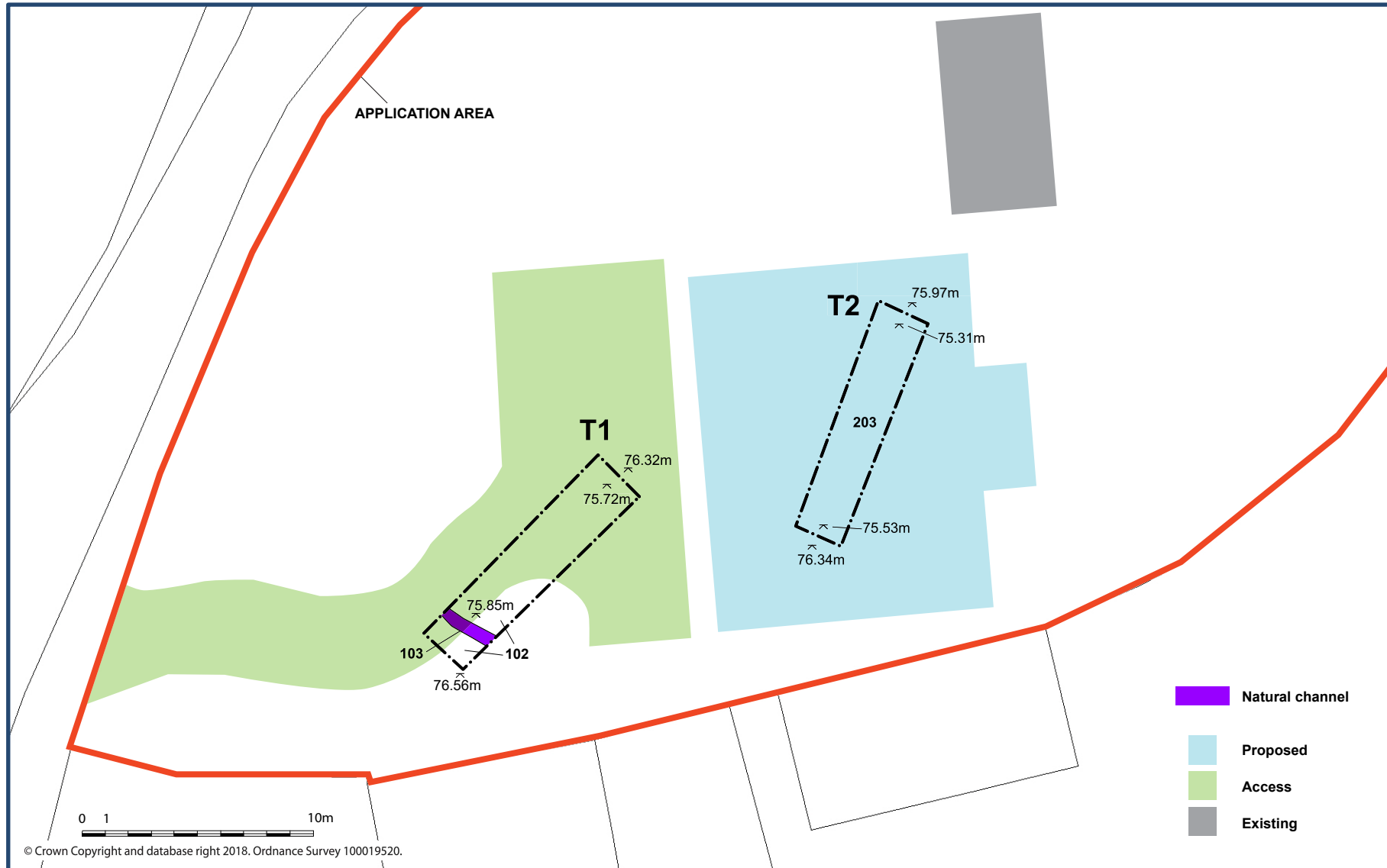


Fig 2: Location of excavated trenches