

# Sunnybank Wootton Wawen Warwickshire

## ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF



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Archaeology Warwickshire Report No 18110  
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*Working for  
Warwickshire*

**Project:** Sunnybank, Wootton Wawen, Warwickshire  
**Commissioned by:** Clive Corrie  
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## SUMMARY

*An archaeological watching brief was carried out on behalf of Mr Clive Corrie on land at Sunnybank, Alcester Road, Wootton Wawen, Warwickshire, during the excavation of foundation trenches for a replacement residential dwelling.*

*No significant archaeological remains were observed. A small assemblage of finds was recovered which included two medieval pottery sherds. These are no more than could be expected in an agricultural context so it is concluded that the development site is beyond the western extent of the medieval settlement of Wootton Wawen and within the agricultural hinterland.*

# 1 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 Planning permission has been granted by Stratford-on-Avon District Council for the construction of a new residential dwelling, new access and a replacement dwelling on land at Sunnybank, Alcester Road, Wootton Wawen, Warwickshire. Permission was granted on the condition that a programme of archaeological investigation is carried out in accordance with an approved Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI).
- 1.2 Archaeology Warwickshire were commissioned to undertake an archaeological watching brief in conjunction with the groundworks phase of the proposed development. Excavation of the foundation trenches for the replacement dwelling was observed by a suitably qualified archaeologist on 28<sup>th</sup> November 2018.
- 1.3 This report presents the results of that work. The work followed the guidance provided by the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists (CIfA), specifically the *Standard and guidance for an archaeological watching brief* (2014). The project archive will be held by the Warwickshire Museum under Site Code WW18.

## 2 SITE LOCATION

- 2.1 The site is located to the north of Alcester Road (B4089) on the western edge of the village of Wootton Wawen, Warwickshire (Fig 1). It is delimited to the north by a small field under pasture and to the south by the road and Wootton Wawen C of E Primary School beyond. Further to the west are allotments, while a neighbouring residential property is located to the east. The site slopes gently downwards from north to south before a steep incline leading to the road. Heavily ploughed-out undulations in the field to the north may be the surviving remnants of ridge and furrow.
  
- 2.2 The site is underlain by mudstone of the Mercia Mudstone group, with no recorded superficial deposits (BGS 2018).

### 3 ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

- 3.1 A casual find of Roman Pottery (Warwickshire Historic Environment Record No MWA 5217; EWA 5009) provides the earliest tangible evidence for human activity within the search area. No further information on the date and provenance of this find is given.
- 3.2 Settlement at Wootton Wawen predates the Norman Conquest. The land is described in a grant of *Aethelbald* in the 8<sup>th</sup> century. Some of the fabric in the present Church of St Peter dates from the Saxon period and many subsequent phases of renovation are also still visible (MWA 1596, EWA 6736, EWA 9650). A cemetery dating from the early medieval period lies north of the church (MWA 8880, EWA 2880) and there have been findings of large postholes for timber buildings which predate the early medieval graveyard (MWA 8881).
- 3.3 Two further burials were revealed outside the confines of the churchyard in 1861, in the location of the service buildings of Wootton Hall 250m to the north-east, when the old dairy was pulled down (MWA 1623). The skeletons were in a crouched position and were accompanied by the remains of a 'box' in which they were buried. The skeletons were undated.
- 3.4 The medieval settlement at Wootton Wawen (MWA 9115, EWA 7088, EWA 7089) was likely to have been centred around the church, which was initially founded as a minster in the early medieval Period. Following the conquest, the church and the land around it was given to the Benedictine Abbey of *St Peter De Castellion de Couches* who founded a small alien priory there (Scheduled Ancient Monument 1005727, MWA 1599, EWA 7087).
- 3.5 A dovecote is recorded among the priory buildings in 1281. No traces of the building remain but cartographic records place the site within the area of scheduling in the field to the west of the church (MWA 1615; EWA 7376)
- 3.6 Successive phases of medieval walls have been found within the churchyard (MWA 10286, EWA 7691), including buildings which predated the priory (MWA 8882). Medieval floor tiles were found during a watching brief in the churchyard (MWA 8904, EWA 6964).

- 3.7 Further evidence for medieval activity in Wootton Wawen includes a Royal Route mentioned in an itinerary (MWA 8673), human remains found to the east of the church which could relate to a possible, earlier church site (MWA 9143) and earthworks such as a hollow-way (MWA 9850; EWA 7376) and a pond (MWA 9851, EWA 9133, EWA 7376).
- 3.8 Manor farm once had a moat which has been largely filled in (MWA 1616). It is shown on early Ordnance Survey maps but is otherwise undocumented (Fig 2). There are many moated sites in the Arden which date from the late 13<sup>th</sup> century and it is possible that the Manor Farm moat is one such example. There are four Listed Buildings in the Manor Farm complex. The farmhouse dates from the 16<sup>th</sup> century (NHLE 1382243) and comprises a central hall with cross wings at either end. It is partly timber-framed and its early date has meant it is Grade II\* Listed. The stables, cart shed and barns are mainly early 18<sup>th</sup> century in date (NHLE 1382246, 1382245, 1382244).
- 3.9 The location of the medieval manor at Wootton has not been verified but it is thought to have been in the vicinity of Wootton Hall. Wootton Hall is Grade II\* Listed and incorporates a 16<sup>th</sup>-century house (NHLE 13882249). Several of the features associated with the country house are included on the HER and include the surrounding parkland (MWA 7340, EWA 6695).
- 3.10 Another possible former focus of medieval activity is present on the opposite side of the A3400 to the church, in fields to the south of the village (MWA 4534). Several building platforms show on aerial photographs just south of the former parish workhouse building, now a private dwelling which has 16<sup>th</sup>-century origins (MWA 19890). A raised earthwork causeway runs south in the direction of a prominent mound 3 to 5 metres high. The status of this feature is uncertain although it has been variously interpreted as a castle, and an ice house (MWAs 6011 and 4533). It is scheduled as fishponds (NHLE 1005728; MWA 1598) and interpreted as being the remains of a formal designed layout similar to other known 17<sup>th</sup>-century gardens when assessed by English Heritage in November 2013 (EWA 10390).
- 3.11 Ridge and furrow is present within some of the fields surrounding the village (MWA 9848, EWA 7376) some of which dates to the period following the dissolution as it



- overlies the site of the monastic buildings (MWA 9848) to the south-west of the church.
- 3.12 Elsewhere in Wootton Wawen, a platform, possibly relating to the site of a former cottage in documentary sources dating from 1589 is recorded in the field to the south of Manor Farm (MWA 9849).
- 3.13 A number of records relating to transport during the Imperial period are recorded on the HER and include a three-span estate road bridge over the Alne to the south of Wootton Hall (MWA 20308), another bridge over the brook near to the Bull Head Inn (MWA 20306) and two records of turnpike routes: MWA 8686 Turnpike Road from Alcester to Wootton Wawen and MWA 4775 Turnpike Road from Edgehill to Birmingham via Stratford (MWA 4775). A milestone exists on the road bridge on the Stratford Road and shows 'To London 100 miles, Stratford on Avon 2, Birmingham 16, 1806' (MWA 7959).
- 3.14 The application site is outside the Wootton Wawen Conservation Area. The nearest listed buildings are The Bulls Head (NHLE Ref: 1382206; Grade II) and Hawthornes (NHLE 1382237; Grade II) both of which are approximately 100m to the east. A number of other Listed Buildings exist along the Stratford Road and reflect the historic settlement morphology of buildings aligned along this route.
- 3.15 The Ordnance Survey 1<sup>st</sup> Edition map of 1887 (Fig 2) depicts the application area as a narrow E-W oriented field, parallel to the road and bordered to the north, west and east by similar rectilinear fields. A small structure is shown in the field's north-east corner, but the site is otherwise devoid of structural features and clearly lies to the west of the village itself.

## 4 AIMS AND METHODS

- 4.1 The main aim of the work was to record any significant archaeological deposits revealed or disturbed by the development, to collate the fieldwork records into an archaeological archive and present the results of the fieldwork in this report for dissemination.
- 4.2 This report will describe and discuss the extent, character and dates of all archaeological remains exposed and place the results in their local and regional contexts.
- 4.3 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.
- 4.4 An experienced archaeologist was present for each period of ground disturbance, when notified by the client, in accordance with the WSI. Where potential archaeological deposits were encountered, the supervising archaeologist assessed and recorded them before they were disturbed.
- 4.5 Trenches were opened by a 360° mechanical excavator fitted with a 0.6m wide bucket (Photo 1). The occurrence of bedrock near ground surface levels precluded the use of a toothless bucket.
- 4.6 Generally trenches were 0.6m wide, but in the southwest corner of the development area they were up to 1.6m, while in the south-east they were up to 0.9m (Fig 3). Prior to trench excavation and before the watching brief commenced, the ground was reduced by up to 0.8m to create a level surface. Thereafter trenches were excavated to a maximum depth of 1.15m.

## 5 RESULTS

- 5.1 No significant archaeological features were observed in any of the excavated foundation trenches or in the area of ground reduction.
- 5.2 Trenches were excavated by up to 0.2m into the natural bedrock, which comprised light yellowish grey mudstone (103). This was overlaid by around 1.15m of predominantly reddish brown clay (102), incorporating occasional small sub-rounded stones and, towards its base, bands or lenses of light grey clay up to 0.1m thick (Photo 2).
- 5.3 The natural clay was mostly sealed beneath yellowish brown clayey sand subsoil (101), which incorporated small sub-rounded stones (gravel). This deposit varied in thickness but was generally around 0.15m thick. Towards the southern end of the south-west facing section of the westernmost trench the subsoil increased in thickness and may have been associated with a possible furrow (Photo 3).
- 5.4 Topsoil across the entire site comprised dark greyish brown sandy silty loam, which was thickest (0.45m) towards the north where it also included significant rooting associated with previous vegetation cover. In the site's south-western corner it was capped by a layer of turf associated with the garden for the existing Sunnybank dwelling.

## 6 CONCLUSIONS

- 6.1 The archaeological watching brief carried out during groundworks for a replacement residential dwelling on land at Sunnybank, Wootton Wawen, has uncovered no evidence for pre-modern activity on the site. A possible furrow which contained medieval and 20<sup>th</sup> century pottery was noted in one of the trenches suggesting the site was subject to arable agriculture in the medieval or post-medieval periods, while the extensive rooting in the topsoil was likely associated with the vegetation cover that preceded the site's redevelopment.
  
- 6.2 The results of this work suggest the site lay beyond the western extent of the medieval settlement of Wootton Wawen within the surrounding agricultural hinterland.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Archaeology Warwickshire would like to thank Mr Clive Corrie for commissioning the work.

## REFERENCES

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

Landmark 2003 First Edition Ordnance Survey map of 1887, Sheet 37.04, 1:2500, digital edition



1: Foundation trenches under excavation, looking south



2: East-facing section of westernmost foundation trench showing deposit sequence with topsoil (100) overlying thin subsoil (101) and natural clay (102) covering the mudstone bedrock (103)



3: Possible furrow in east-facing section of westernmost foundation trench



4: General site shot following excavation of observed foundation trenches, looking north-east



## APPENDICES

### A List of contexts

<b>Context</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Width (m)</b>	<b>Thickness (m)</b>	<b>Comment</b>
<b>100</b>	Dark greyish brown sandy silty loam, with frequent rooting and frequent small-medium-sized sub-rounded pebbles. Soft/loose with clear horizons.	>5	0.45	Topsoil
<b>101</b>	Yellowish brown clayey sand with frequent sub-rounded stones (gravel). Loose with moderate horizons.	>5	0.15	Subsoil
<b>102</b>	Reddish brown clay, with occasional small sub-rounded stones (possibly derived from 101). Firm with clear horizons. Incorporated bands/layers of light grey clay, up to 0.1m thick.	>5	1.15	Natural Substrate
<b>103</b>	Light yellowish grey mudstone. Solid with clear horizons.	>5	≥0.2	Bedrock

**B** List of Finds not retained

<b>Context</b>	<b>Material</b>	<b>Quantity</b>	<b>Date/Comments</b>
100	CBM	1	Probably C20th
100	Clay Pipe	1	Stem (C16th – 19th)
100	Pottery	2	x1 sherd of white-glazed ( <b>MGW</b> ); x1 sherd of pancheon (C18 <sup>th</sup> – 19th)
101	CBM	1	Probably C20th
101	Glass	1	Post-medieval/modern green bottle glass fragment
101	Pottery	2	X 2 fragments of medieval pottery ( <b>RS</b> – C13th – 14 <sup>th</sup> )

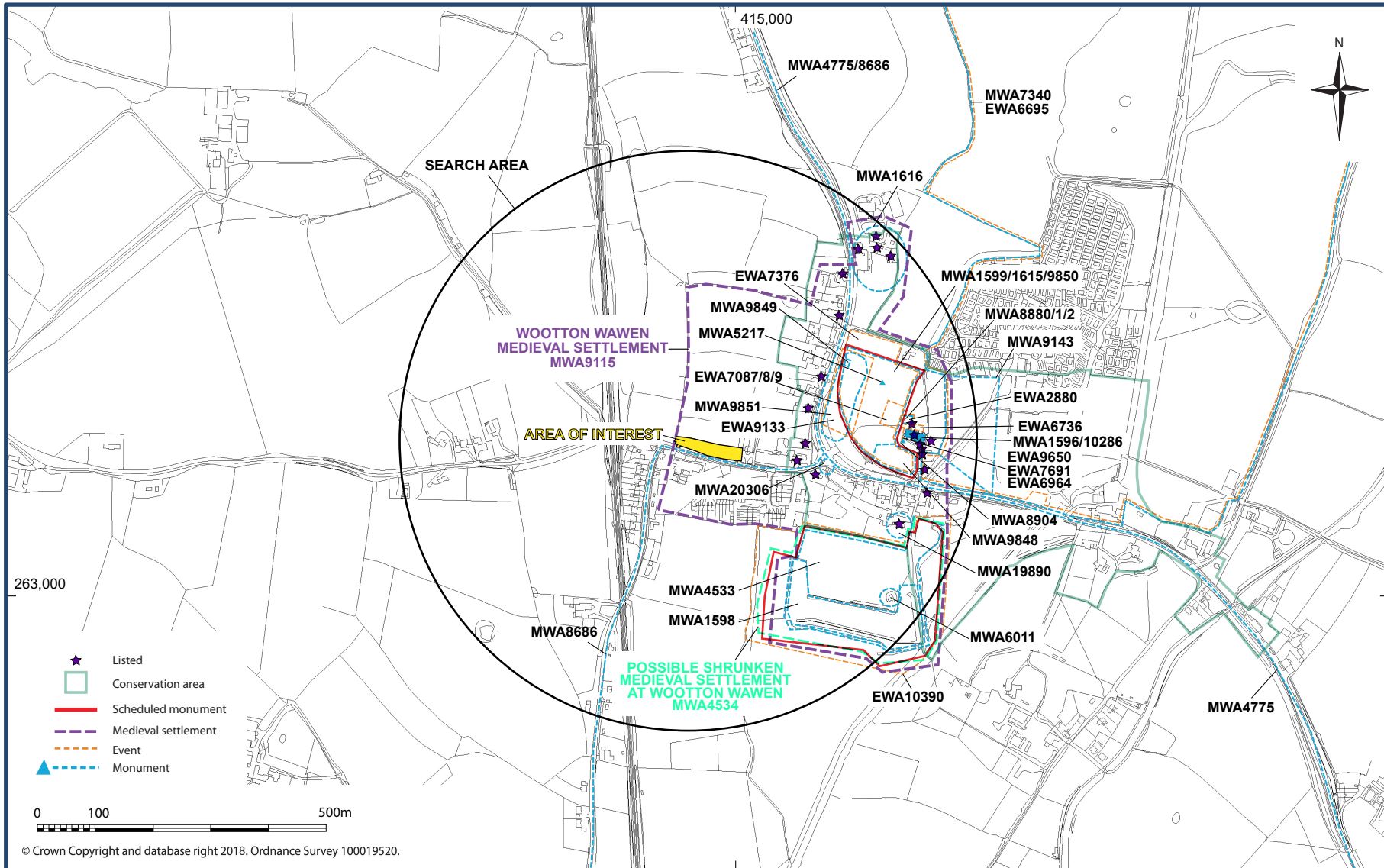


Fig 1: Location of area of interest and Historic Environment information

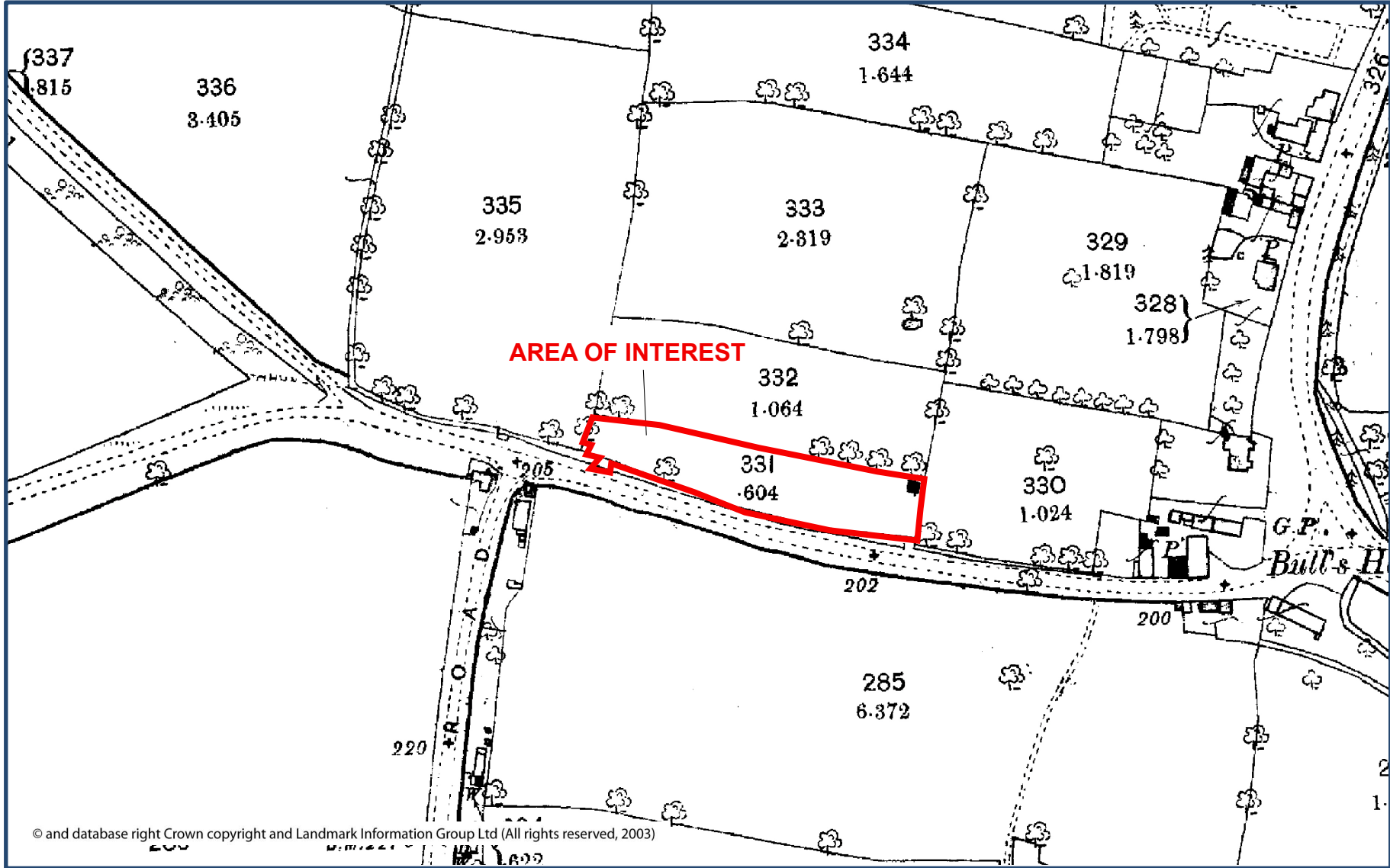


Fig 2: Detail from First Edition Ordnance Survey map of 1887

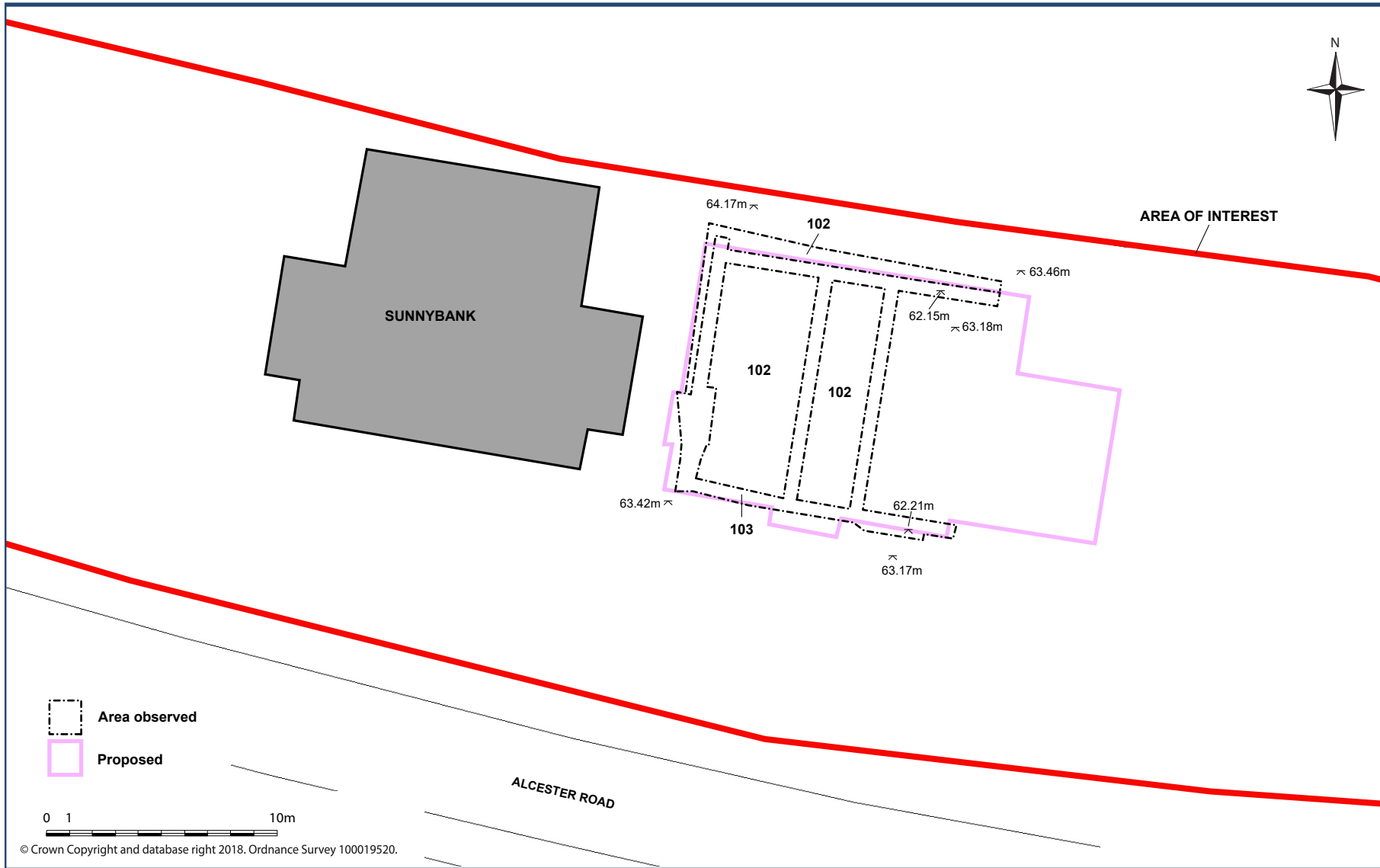


Fig 3: Location of proposed development