

# Land off Forton Road / Plough Lane, Newport Shropshire

## ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF



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Archaeology Warwickshire Report No 2032  
MARCH 2020



*Working for Warwickshire*

**Project:** Land off Forton Road / Plough Lane, Newport,  
Shropshire

**Commissioned by:** Galliers Homes

**Site Code:** SFN18

**Planning Reference:** TWC/2017/0233

**Planning Authority:** Telford and Wrekin

**National Grid Reference:** SJ 7508 2044

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## SUMMARY

*A programme of archaeological monitoring and recording was undertaken during ground reduction and excavation of service trenches on behalf of Galliers Homes during the groundworks phase of a residential development.*

*No significant archaeological finds or features were exposed, strongly suggesting that the site had been farmland until the 1980s. The only features revealed were those associated with the Plough Farm Nursery established in the late 1980s.*

# 1 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 Planning permission has been granted by Telford and Wrekin Council for the construction of a up to 55 new dwellings at the site of Plough Farm Nursery, Plough Lane, Newport, Shropshire (TWC/2017/0233). An archaeological condition requiring observation of groundworks was attached to the outline consent.
  
- 1.2 Archaeology Warwickshire (AW hereon) were commissioned to carry out a programme of archaeological recording in accordance with a Written Scheme of Investigation, that was carried out in conjunction with the groundworks phase of the development and this report presents the results of that work. The work was carried out between October 2019 and March 2020. The archive will be deposited with Shropshire Museums.
  
- 1.3 This work was carried out in accordance with the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists Standard and guidance for a watching brief (2014).

## 2 SITE LOCATION

- 2.1 The application area is centred on National Grid Reference SJ 7508 2044 to the north-east of Newport, Shropshire, in the parish of the same name. The site is located on the northern side of Plough Lane.
- 2.2 The underlying bedrock geology of the site is Wildmoor Sandstone member (British Geological Survey 2018).
- 2.3 The site lies on the eastern slope of a broad north-south ridge. Within the site itself the ground slopes gently from the west, east and south with the lowest point being around halfway along the northern boundary. A pronounced gully runs north-south across the centre of the site and there is a small terrace near the entrance from Plough Lane. Beyond the northern boundary the modern A41 bypass is located within a cutting, and around 250m further to the east the River Meese marks the Shropshire – Staffordshire border. The site was situated in Staffordshire until 1974.

### **3 ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND HISTORICAL BACKGROUND**

- 3.1 A Heritage Impact Assessment was carried out in March 2017 by Geoff Tann (Tann 2017) and this forms the archaeological and historical background to the site.
- 3.2 Map regression carried out for the Heritage Impact Assessment (*ibid.*) showed that the site has been in agricultural use since at least 1767. A building is present on the 1967-1986 Ordnance survey map to the east of the site, but otherwise the site has not been developed.
- 3.3 The agricultural land was associated with Plough Farm to the south-west of the development site on the corner of Plough Lane and Forton Road. Searches of the Historic Environment Records for both Shropshire and Staffordshire revealed archaeological activity in the wider area, from the Mesolithic period onwards (*ibid.*). The lack of site specific data meant that the archaeological potential of the site was unknown.

## 4 AIMS AND METHODS

- 4.1 The main aim of the work was to record any significant archaeological deposits revealed by the development, to collate the fieldwork records into an archaeological archive and present the results of the fieldwork for dissemination.
- 4.2 An experienced archaeologist was present for each period of ground disturbance when notified by the client in accordance with WSI. Where potential archaeological deposits were encountered, the supervising archaeologist assessed and recorded them before they were disturbed.
- 4.3 The excavation of 124m of sewer pipe trench was observed in the southern part of the planned course of Street 2, in the planned course of Street 1 from the intersection of Streets 1 and 2 westwards for 90m, and also across Plough Lane. The trenches were 1.2m wide and excavated to a depth of up to 3.0m. Five 2.5m by 2.5m turbo shafts were also observed along the sewer trench. Four further areas (T1: 14.4m x 2.5m, T2: 13.0m x 1.9m, T3: 13.0m x 1.9m, and T4: 13.0m x 3.5m) were observed during reduction to natural geology. These were targeted 'hot spots' to allow rapid sampled investigation across the site at locations adjacent to planned house plots. Areas in the western and eastern parts of the site were observed during topsoil reduction. Excavation was by a machine using a toothless bucket.



## 5 RESULTS

- 5.1 Geological natural loose, reddish brown sand (3 and 21) was recorded at a depth of 0.1m - 2.0m; firm red brown sand (12, 24 and 27) was recorded at a depth of 0.7m - 0.8m, and loose yellow brown sand was recorded at a depth of 0.7m from the existing land surface. The subsoil also varied slightly across the site, being 0.1m thick reddish brown sandy silt (4) at the northern end of Street 2 and Street 3, 0.4m thick dark greyish brown sandy silt (20) below the verge of Plough Lane, 0.4m thick yellowish brown sand (23 and 26) in Trenches 1, 2 and 3, and 0.3m thick light brown sand (29) in Trench 4. Topsoil, where not previously removed, consisted of 0.3m – 0.4m thick brown silty sand (1) or sandy silt (22, 25 and 28).
- 5.2 The area accessed via the Plough Lane entrance (currently used for the site offices, and previously the main entrance and car park for the plant nursery had been built up and levelled in the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century or very early 21<sup>st</sup> century. A previous land surface or subsoil (14) on the side of the original slope consisted brown and grey-brown silty sand, very similar to the topsoil (1) elsewhere on the site, but with some broken brick and tile in it. This lay directly on the geological natural (3), making it more likely a truncated subsoil than the original land surface. Overlying 14 were traces of a hardstanding (16) consisting of stones in yellowish grey-brown crushed concrete or mortar; and several deposits of later 20<sup>th</sup> century waste (18), including plastic potato sacks, hose pipe, used timber, and broken brick and tile. It would thus appear that this was the plant nursery's original carpark when it opened in the late 1980s before the ground was built up to produce a level entrance and carpark. The ground was built up with sand (15) up to 0.6m thick, which is similar to the natural geology on other parts of the site. Overlying 15 was another hardstanding layer (13). This 0.15m thick layer, made up of dark grey sandy silt with frequent broken brick, broken tile, stones, and plastic sheeting, would have been the surface of the carpark before the current construction work began.
- 5.3 Cut 9 was revealed in the area stripped for the intersection of Streets 2 and 3: a short curved gully, 0.15m deep and over 2.0m long, possibly a burrow, filled with greyish brown sand (8) containing 19<sup>th</sup> or 20<sup>th</sup> century glass and one sherd of Midlands Blackware pottery.

- 5.4 Two features were revealed near the centre of the planned line of Street 3. A probable posthole (4), filled with reddish brown clay (5), was cut into the subsoil. This contained a fragment of modern brick. Nearby there was a concrete post pad (10), also revealed in the subsoil, which was overlaid by grey sandy silt (11) containing an iron nail or hook.
- 5.5 A further oval flat based pit (6) was revealed at the intersection point of Streets 2 and 3. This contained a fill of reddish brown clay (7) but no finds. This fill was similar to fill 5 in post hole 4, and as this feature was revealed in the subsoil just as post hole 4 was, a modern date can be nominally assigned.
- 5.6 The trenches T1 – T4 revealed no archaeological features.

## 6 CONCLUSIONS

- 6.1 No significant archaeological deposits or finds were recorded during the programme of archaeological work. This accords with Tann's (2017) view that the site was undeveloped farmland, probably arable, until at least the later 18<sup>th</sup> century when the Plough Inn (later Plough Farm) was built to the west and Plough Cottage to the south-west. No evidence of buildings from either of these intruding onto the site itself was revealed, and thus it is probable that the site remained farmland until the plant nursery was established in the late 1980s. The features that were revealed are of recent origin and probably all associated with the plant nursery.
- 6.2 Tann (*ibid.*, 4,6) suggested that Plough Lane may have medieval origins and that the current work might reveal more about its construction, but its modern tarmacadam surface sits directly on the natural geology.
- 6.3 The gully running roughly south-north across the centre of the site, although on the same alignment as the field boundaries to the south, does not correspond to any field boundaries on the 1797 Estate Map, 1838 Tithe Map or 1881 Ordnance Survey 1:2,500 map (as reproduced in Tann 2017), or to any watercourse on said maps, and does not continue in the field to the north of the A41. It may thus be another modern feature associated with the plant nursery.

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## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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<http://mapapps.bgs.ac.uk/geologyofbritain/home.html> Accessed December 2016.

Steele, W. 2018 *WSI for Watching Brief at Land off Forton Road/ Plough Lane, Newport, Shropshire*. Archaeology Warwickshire.

Tann, G. 2017 *Proposed Residential Development, Land off Forton Road/Plough Lane, Newport, Shropshire, Heritage Impact Assessment Report*.



1. Posthole 4, looking north



2. Pit 6, looking south



3. Pit / gully 9, looking east



4. Hard core layer 16, with old subsoil 14 below and built up ground 15 above. Looking south



5. Old subsoil 14 with dump deposit 18 and built up ground 15 above, and natural geology 3 below. Looking south



6. Trench T1, looking east

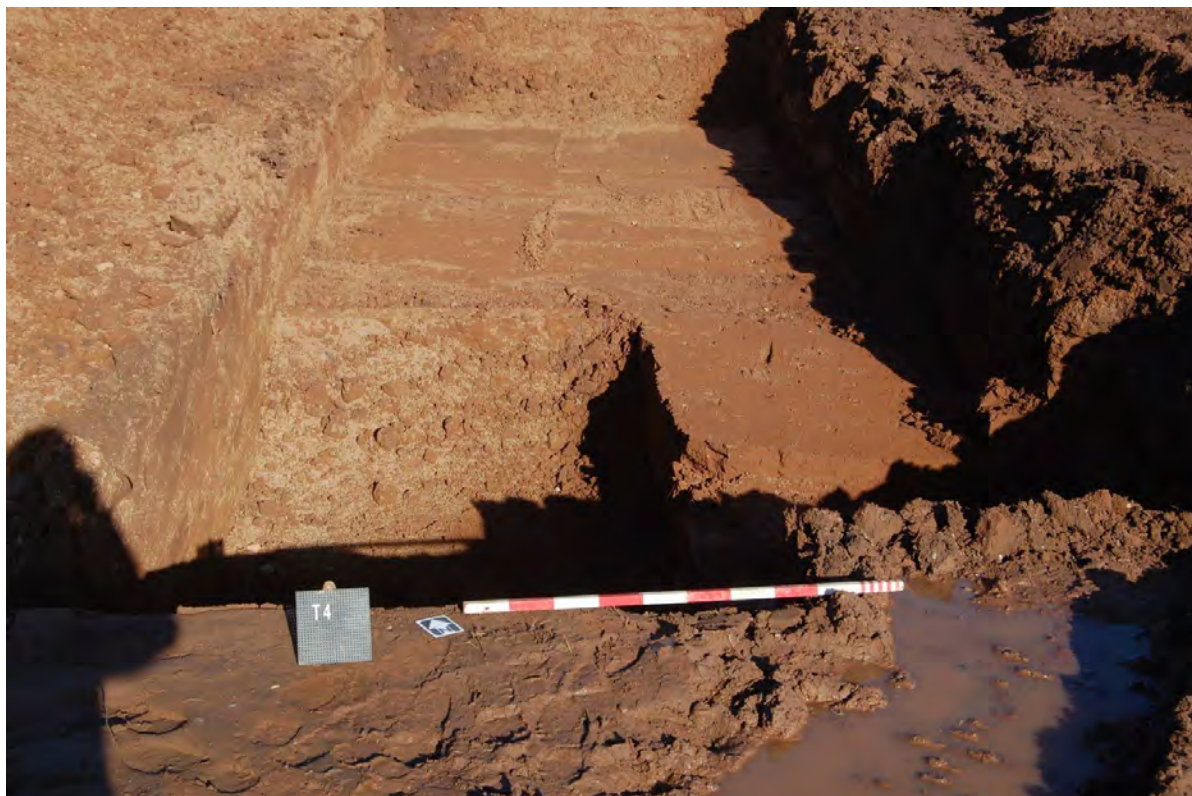




7. Trench T2, looking north



8. Trench T3, looking southeast



9. Trench T4, looking northeast

## APPENDICES

### A List of contexts

<b>Context</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Length (m)</b>	<b>Width (m)</b>	<b>Thickness (m)</b>	<b>Interpretation</b>
1	Brown sandy silt			0.3	Topsoil
2	Reddish brown sandy silt			0.1	Subsoil
3	Reddish brown sand				Geological natural
4	Oval cut with bowl shaped profile	0.4	0.2	0.06	Possible post hole modern
5	Reddish brown clay fill of 4	0.4	0.2	0.06	Fill of 4
6	Sub circular/oval cut of flat bottomed pit	0.9	0.55	0.16	Pit
7	Reddish brown clay fill of 6	0.9	0.55	0.16	Fill of 6
8	Greyish brown sand with 19 <sup>th</sup> or 20 <sup>th</sup> century glass and Midlands Blackware pot sherd	2.0+	0.9	0.15	fill of pit 9
9	Cut of pit. Gentle sides, bowl shaped base, banana shaped in plan where visible	2.0+	0.9	0.15	Pit, short gully or burrow
10	Concrete	0.5	0.3		Concrete pad
11	Grey sandy silt lying on top of 10, Contained iron nail	0.5	0.3		Layer
12	Reddish brown firm sand				Lens of geological natural. Same as 24
13	Dark grey sandy silt with demolition rubble within it			0.15	Surface of yard within Plough Lane entrance
14	Grey brown to brown silty sand with infrequent small stones and infrequent flecks of charcoal			0.2	Old land surface
15	Brownish red sand with slightly lighter patches and infrequent small stones			0.6	Redeposited natural used to build up level of carpark at the Plough Lane entrance

16	Yellowish grey-brown mortar or crushed concrete with very frequent stones			0.15	Hardcore hardstanding for previous surface of carpark at the Plough Lane entrance. Later 20 <sup>th</sup> century
17	Brick rubble in greyish brown sand			0.2	Demolition material. Variation of 18?
18	Brown sand containing CBM, plastic sacking, hose pipes, and timber			0.2	20 <sup>th</sup> century refuse dump from plant nursery – contained plastic potato sacks
19	Dark grey tarmac			0.1	Surface of Plough Lane and footpath that leads off it
20	Dark greyish brown sandy silt			0.4	Subsoil below verge of Plough Lane
21	Orange sand with occasional small stones				Geological natural (same as 3)
22	Dark grey brown sandy silt			0.3-0.4	Topsoil in trenches T1 and T2. Same as 1
23	Yellowish brown sand with no inclusions			0.4	Subsoil in trenches T1 and T2.
24	Red brown firm sand				Geological natural in trenches T1 and T2. Same as 12
25	Brown silty sand			0.4	Topsoil in trench T3
26	Yellowish brown sand			0.4	Subsoil in trench T3
27	Reddish brown firm sand				Geological natural in trench T3
28	Brown silty sand			0.4	Topsoil in trench T4
29	Light brown sand with infrequent small stones			0.3	Subsoil in trench T4. Differs from subsoil in trenches T1-T3 as no yellow tinge but more small stones. Very difficult to differentiate from the geological natural below it (30)
30	Yellow brown sand				Assumed geological natural in trench T4.

## B List of Finds (not retained)

<b>Context</b>	<b>Material</b>	<b>Quantity</b>	<b>Date/Comments</b>
8	Glass	1	Modern glass
8	Pottery	1	MB02 Midlands Blackware, 1600-1800, pancheons to 1900
11	Iron	1	Bent square-section nail or hook

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### Project details

Project name	Land off Forton Road
Short description of the project	A programme of archaeological monitoring and recording was undertaken during ground reduction and excavation of service trenches on behalf of Galliers Homes during the groundworks phase of a residential development. No significant archaeological finds or features were exposed, strongly suggesting that the site had been farmland until the 1980's. The only features revealed were those associated with the Plough Farm Nursery established in the late 1980's.
Project dates	Start: 01-10-2019 End: 28-02-2020
Previous/future work	Yes / Not known
Any associated project reference codes	SFN18 - Sitecode
Any associated project reference codes	TWC/2017/0233 - Planning Application No.
Type of project	Recording project
Site status	None
Current Land use	Industry and Commerce 3 - Retailing
Investigation type	"Watching Brief"
Prompt	National Planning Policy Framework - NPPF

### Project location

Country	England
Site location	SHROPSHIRE TELFORD AND WREKIN CHETWYND Land off Forton Road
Postcode	TF10 8BS
Study area	0 Square metres
Site coordinates	SJ 7508 2044 52.780631664083 -2.369494992703 52 46 50 N 002 22 10 W Point

### Project creators

Name of Organisation	Archaeology Warwickshire
Project brief originator	hugh Hannaford
Project design originator	Will Steele

Project director/manager Caroline Rann  
Project supervisor Simon Davies

### Project archives

Physical Archive Exists? No  
Digital Archive recipient Shropshire Museum  
Digital Media available "Database"  
Paper Archive recipient Shropshire Museum  
Paper Media available "Report"

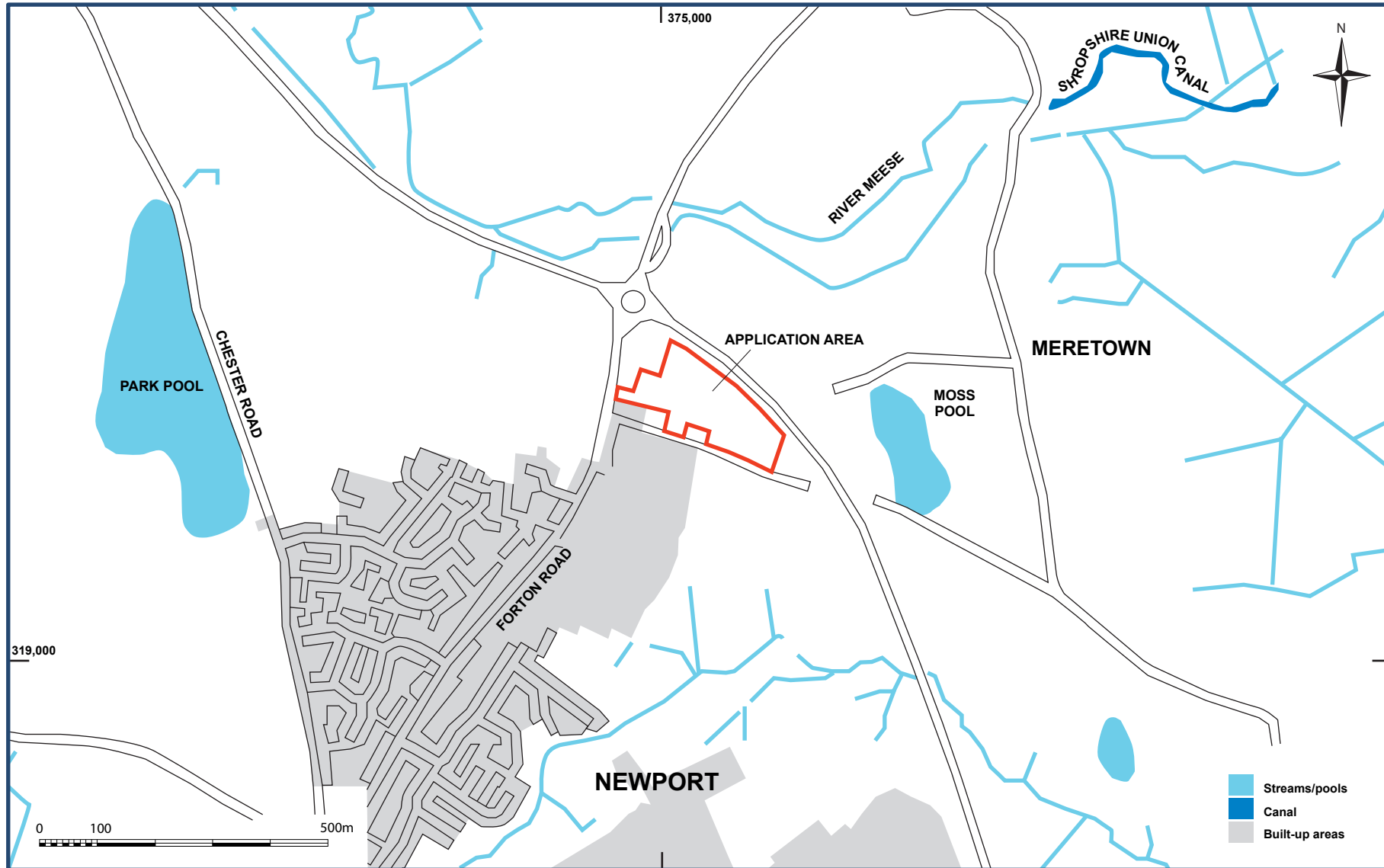
### Project bibliography 1

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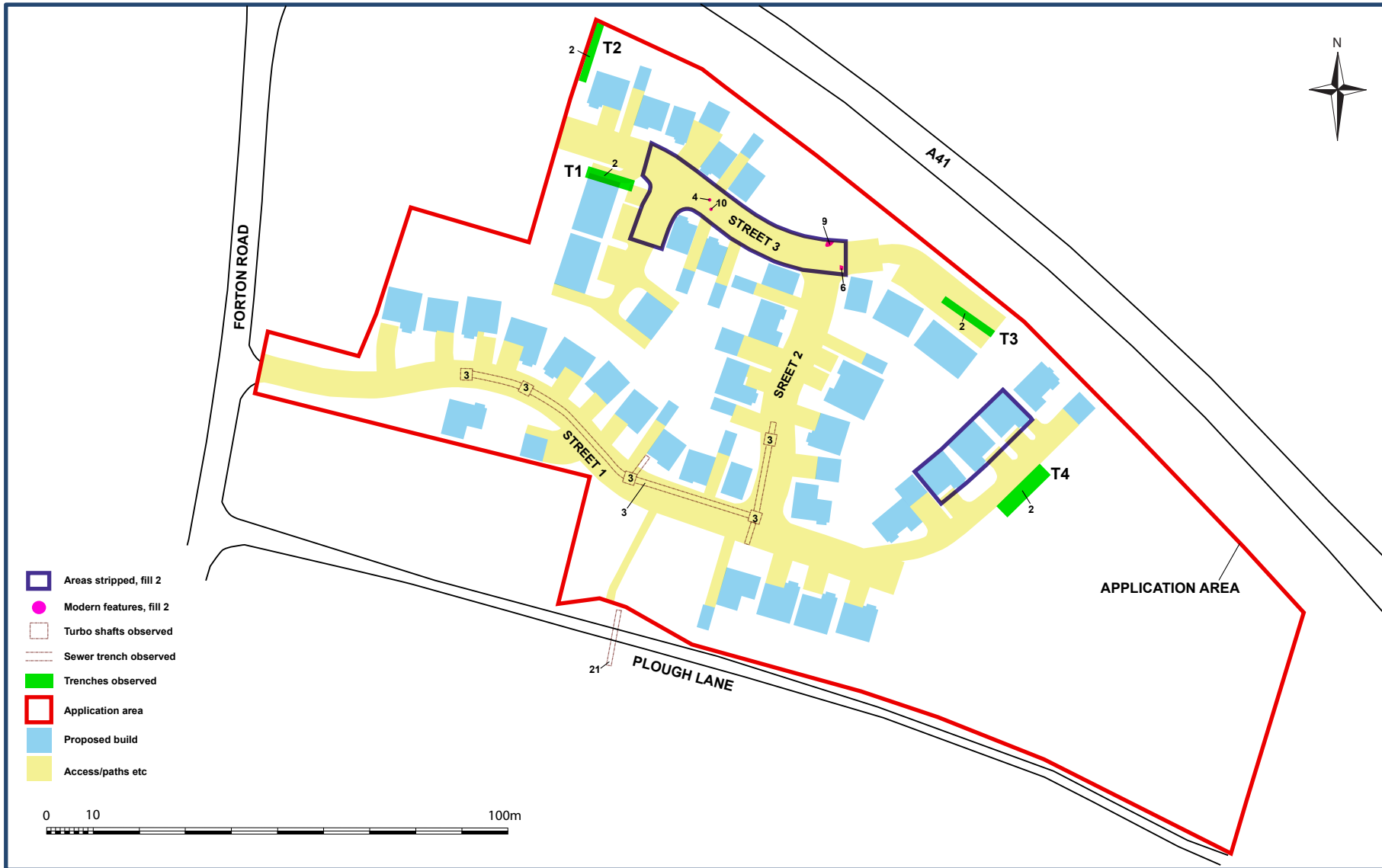


Fig 2: Location of groundworks observed