

Vine Cottage  
62 Stoke Road, Ashton  
Northamptonshire, NN7 2JN  
(NGR 476208, 250006)

## Archaeological Investigation

Souterrain Project SOU22-783  
Planning App. Ref. S/2021/0491/FUL  
HER Event No. ENN110465



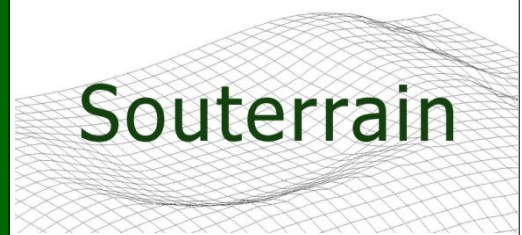
April 2022

*Produced for*

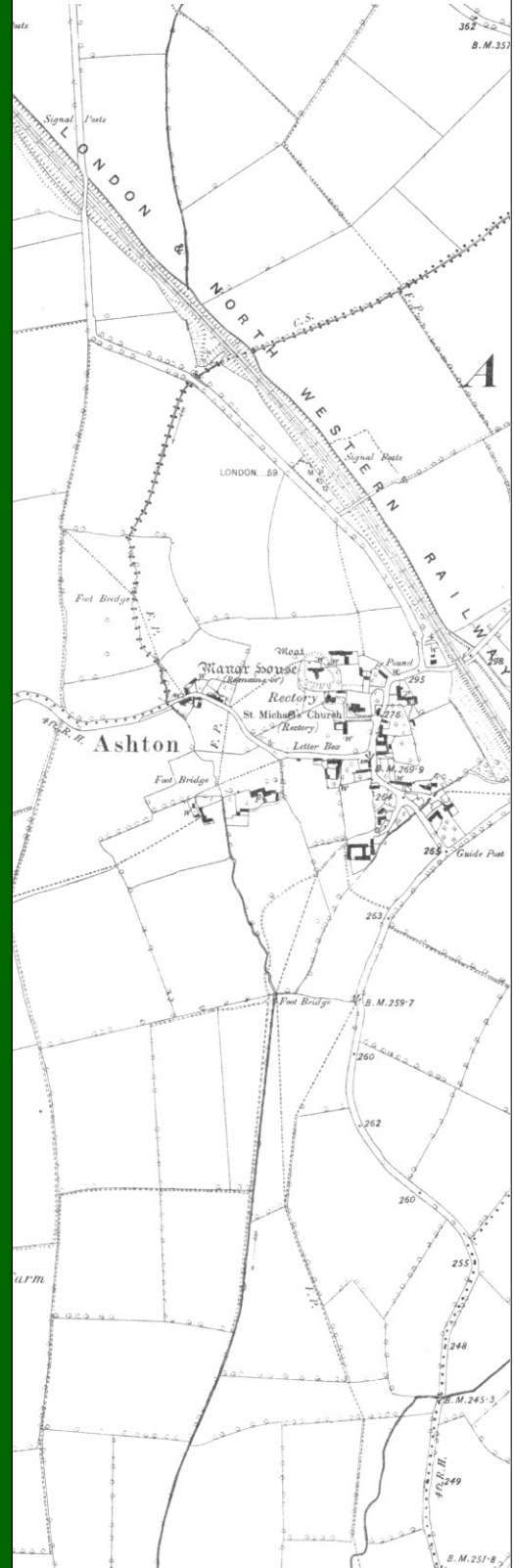
**Duggan Associates**

*on behalf of*

**Mrs Claire Costello**



**Archaeological Services Ltd**



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(Cambridge)

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**Mrs Claire Costello**

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Registered Office: 15 Grove Place, Bedford MK40 3JJ  
Registered in England and Wales No. 03394485  
e-mail: [gps@souterrain.biz](mailto:gps@souterrain.biz) [www.souterrain.biz](http://www.souterrain.biz)

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## Summary

*In March & April 2021 archaeological monitoring was carried out by Souterrain during groundwork for a new dwelling and garage at Ashton, a village and civil parish in the south of the county of Northamptonshire. The building plot lies on the western periphery of the village adjacent to the parish boundary.*

*Based on the historic origins of Ashton and occasional archaeological discoveries, the site was considered to have potential for buried remains pertaining to its medieval to post-medieval settlement, and before it, to the Romano-British rural landscape.*

*Foundation trenching provided a representative sample of the site's stratigraphy, the ground having previously suffered extensive modification in the modern period to site stables and equestrian areas. Modern made-ground overlay a truncated layer of topsoil, which in turn, directly overlay geological stratum. There were no archaeological features and the buried soil was devoid of artefacts.*

*The absence of anthropogenic-derived subsoil suggested that the land was uncultivated throughout the medieval and post-medieval periods. But other than this it was not possible to draw meaningful conclusions with regard to historic or earlier land-use in the area of development.*

*The report places the Application Site and property into its archaeological and historic context and provides an illustrative, photographic and descriptive account of the work.*

## **Preface**

*All statements and opinions in this document are offered in good faith. Souterrain Archaeological Services Ltd (Souterrain) cannot accept responsibility for errors of information or opinion resulting from data supplied by a third party, or for any loss or other consequence arising from decisions or actions made upon the basis of statements or opinions expressed in this document.*

## **Fieldwork & Report**

Martin Wilson BA Hons, MAAIS, MCIfA, MIEEnvSc, FSA Scot

## **Report edit**

Mercedes Planas BA Hons, MSc, MSc (Eng), MCIfA

Souterrain Archaeological Services Ltd  
Registered Office: 15 Grove Place, Bedford MK40 3JJ

[www.souterrain.biz](http://www.souterrain.biz)  
[gps@souterrain.biz](mailto:gps@souterrain.biz)

## 1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 This report presents an illustrated record of archaeological observations made prior to groundwork for a new dwelling at Vine Cottage, 62 Stoke Road, Ashton, Northamptonshire NN7 2JN (hereafter 'the Application Site').
- 1.2 It has been prepared by Souterrain Archaeological Services Ltd (Souterrain) for Duggan Associates on behalf of Mrs Claire Costello (the Developer).
- 1.3 The archaeological investigation was carried out in accordance with a Condition attached to a planning permission.

## 2. PLANNING BACKGROUND

- 2.1 West Northamptonshire Council (WNC) Planning Permission No. S/2021/0491/FUL was granted, subject to Conditions, on the 7<sup>th</sup> July 2021, for '*Demolition of Paddock Building, erection of new garage and detached dwelling house at the Application Site*'. The site plan and proposed plans and elevations are defined on the drawings by Duggan Associates, submitted with planning application<sup>1</sup>.
- 2.2 Prior to the grant of planning permission, the Planning Officer consulted the Archaeological Advisor for WNC, Liz Mordue, who noted the *archaeological potential of the site, viz: "The application site is located on the western edge of the settlement of Ashton, approximately 180m west of the moated manor, on the north side of Stoke Road. To the west of the application site is a watercourse, on either side of which possible occupation earthworks have been recorded; a map of 1720 names the field on the western side of the watercourse as Cold Higham Closes. The settlement may have formed an early part of the village of Ashton. There is the potential for remains, especially of medieval or post-medieval activity, to be present on the site"*<sup>2</sup>.
- 2.3 Thus, in view of the archaeological sensitivity of the locality, Condition No. 8 of the Planning Permission required an appropriate programme of archaeological mitigation work; in this case *Observation, Investigation, Recording*, during ground-work, followed by *Analysis & Publication* of the results. The reason for the Condition is to ensure that features of archaeological interest are properly examined and recorded in accordance with the National Planning Policy Framework (MHCLG, 2019).
- 2.4 Prior to the commencement of ground work a Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI) was prepared by Souterrain (Souterrain, 2021) on behalf of the Developer for the approval of the Archaeological Advisor. The WSI was then endorsed by WNC's Planning Officer.

## 3. LOCATION & ASPECT OF THE APPLICATION SITE

- 3.1 Ashton is a small Northamptonshire village in the civil parish of the same name. It is located in the south of the county, c.9 km south of Northampton and c.1.7 km northwest of the county boundary with Buckinghamshire. The Application Site is located on the north side of Stoke Road in the western periphery of the village, c. 200 m from the village centre and adjacent to the parish boundary with Roade (Fig. 1) which is marked by a stream.

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<sup>1</sup> Duggan Associates Drawings DA82, site plan, Feb 2021

<sup>2</sup> Consultation Response letter, Archaeology, S/2021/0491/FUL, 01.04.2021

- 3.2 The plot (Fig. 2) is centred on National Grid Reference 476208, 250006. It is about 484 sq.m and was formerly occupied by timber paddock outbuildings and surfaced in hard-standing and concrete. The ground height is around 83 m OD. The proposed area of ground disturbance (house, garage and access) is approximately 216 sq.m.
- 3.3 The underlying solid geology is mapped by the British Geological Survey as the Whitby Mudstone Formation (previously known as Upper Lias Clay), and described as “*medium and dark grey fossiliferous mudstone and siltstone, laminated and bituminous in part, with thin siltstone or silty mudstone beds and rare fine-grained calcareous sandstone beds; dense, smooth argillaceous limestone nodules very common at some horizons; phosphatic nodules at some levels. Nodular and fossiliferous limestones occur at the base in some areas*”<sup>3</sup>.

#### 4. ARCHAEOLOGICAL POTENTIAL

##### *Sources of Information*

- 4.1 This section expands upon the site’s archaeological and historical context outlined in the Archaeological Advisor’s consultation response (*ante*, 2.2). A summary of current knowledge is presented by broad period, with data drawn from a 500 m radius Study Area of the Application Site. The Northamptonshire Historic Environment Record (HER) is the primary source of archaeological information. Other sources include *Victoria History of the Counties (VCH)*, historic maps and archaeological reports, published and unpublished. Each discovery or site is cross-referenced numerically to location maps (Fig. 3 and 4). The HER UID and National Grid Reference for each HER record appears in the footnotes.

##### *The Prehistoric periods*

- 4.2 To date, evidence of the prehistoric periods within the Study Area is scant. It so far amounts to 17 sherds of Late Iron Age (or perhaps Romano-British) pottery, which were found when test pits were dug in the churchyard in 2005, in advance of service trenches. The pottery came from a possible field boundary ditch<sup>4</sup> (Fig. 3, **2**; c. 198 m ESE of the Application Site).

##### *The Roman period*

- 4.3 The archaeological data for the Romano-British period, albeit infrequent and slight, attests to past activity both within and around Ashton village. Discoveries have been made at four locations (Fig. 3, **1** to **4**). The earliest was 1948, when three Roman coins were found in a field on the north side of the village (Fig. 3, **1**; 310 m NE of the Application Site). One coin dated from the 1<sup>st</sup> century AD, another from the mid 4<sup>th</sup> century AD<sup>5</sup>. Evidence of rural activity was found in 2013 on land north of Stoke Road (Fig. 3, **4**; c. 200 m ESE of the Application Site). Investigation at a small building plot (81 sq. m), prior to development, uncovered a ditch, a pit and a gully dated to the 1<sup>st</sup> to early 2<sup>nd</sup> century AD<sup>6</sup>. The environmental data indicated that the site had been open grassland, suggesting that the features related to field systems some distance from settlement<sup>7</sup>. Similar evidence came from the north east side of the village<sup>8</sup> in 2016 when a trial trench exposed a ditch containing a few abraded sherds of Romano-British pottery (Fig. 3, **3**; c. 365 m ENE).

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<sup>3</sup> British Geological Survey, <http://www.bgs.ac.uk>

<sup>4</sup> HER6994/0/1 - MNN142620, SP 7652 4998

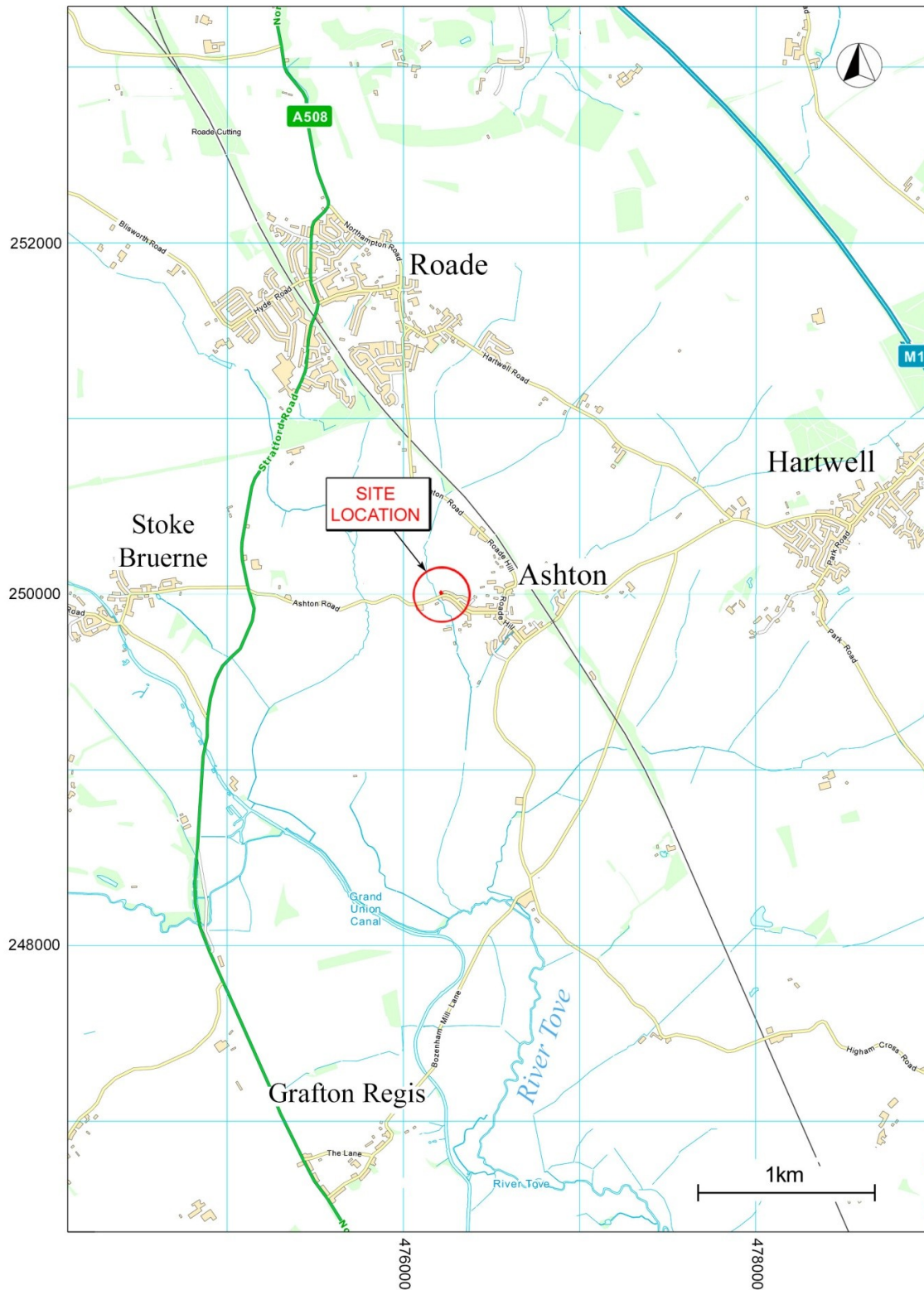
<sup>5</sup> HER4703/0/0 - MNN28185, SP 765 501

<sup>6</sup> HER6994/0/2 - MNN164955, SP 7640 4998

<sup>7</sup> HER 6994/0/2 - MNN164955, SP 7652 4998

<sup>8</sup> HER4703/0/1 - MNN170444, SP 7655 5010





**Figure 1: General Location of Application Site**

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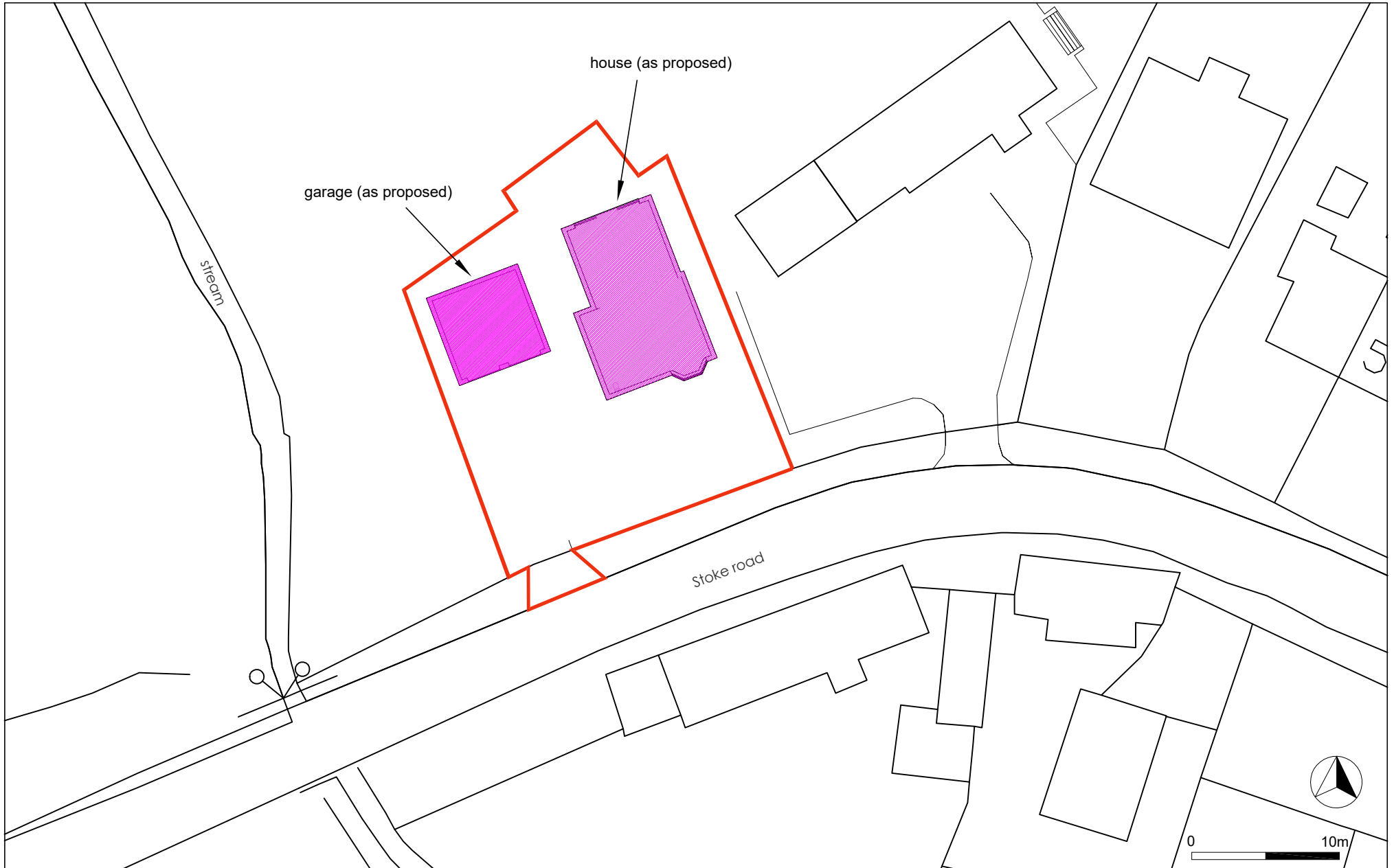


Figure 2: Location of proposed development

### **The Saxon and Medieval Period**

- 4.4 The first mention of Ashton is in the Domesday survey of 1086, when Winemar the Fleming was tenant-in-chief and Dodin the resident lord. Prior to the Norman Conquest the estate was held by an Anglo-Saxon called Healfdene of Hanslope. The Domesday record is perhaps a reasonable indicator of the size of the late Saxon *vill*, with 11 households (5 villagers, 5 smallholders and a slave), possibly between 55 people (*c.f.* Powell-Smith, 2011). The cultivable land was worked by 3 plough teams, including a team on the demesne. Other resources comprised woodland and 5 acres of meadow. It may be reasonably inferred that the nucleated village originated in the late Anglo-Saxon era, a period of widespread landscape reorganization, whereby dispersed settlements and farmsteads were brought together to be centralized around church and manor house surrounded by a planned open field system (*c.f.*, Lewis 2006, 191, Edgeworth 2007, 93). Improved social cohesion and increased productivity were the likely objectives. However, nothing is known of the layout of the *vill* or the demesne during the late Anglo-Saxon to early Norman period and negligible archaeology of the period has been found.
- 4.5 The descent of the manor of Ashton and its tenants has been traced as far as reasonably possible by *VCH*, down to the 18<sup>th</sup> century. Winemar held the manor as part of his barony of Hanslope (Bucks.). By 1131, it was held by Michael of Hanslope, before passing along the female line of inheritance to family of Maudit. The earls of Warwick are recorded as overlords of the manor between the mid 13<sup>th</sup> and mid 15<sup>th</sup> centuries. In 1329, Ashton manor was bought by Philip de Hartshill, who subsequently conveyed it to John de Hartshill (Lord Hatch). In 1367, the estate was inherited by John's eldest daughter, Elizabeth, wife of John Culpeper and it was subsequently acquired by their son Thomas and his wife Eleanor. The overlordship remained in the Culpeper family until 1537-8 when it was acquired by the Crown in an exchange of lands. Subsequently, the manor became a part of the honour of Grafton. The lease was held by the Marriot family from 1534 until to the early 17<sup>th</sup> century, thereafter by the Cooke family until the early 18<sup>th</sup> century.
- 4.6 The historic core of Ashton is located c. 200 m east of the Application Site. It is dominated by two major monuments of the medieval period: the moated site of Ashton Manor<sup>9</sup>, domicile of the lords of the manor, which covers about 0.64 hectares: and the parish church of St. Michael and All Angels<sup>10</sup>. Very limited investigation has taken place at the moated site. Occupation layers of 13<sup>th</sup> / 14<sup>th</sup> century date were revealed in 1994<sup>11</sup>, and the remains of a 12<sup>th</sup> century outbuilding were found in 2000<sup>12</sup>. The church is the oldest standing building (Fig. 4, **11**). Its earliest architectural feature is a 14<sup>th</sup> century arcaded aisle and its oldest relic is a 12<sup>th</sup> century font; but a much earlier foundation is not precluded. The actual extent of the medieval churchyard<sup>13</sup> is not known (Fig. 4, **11**). The oldest standing vernacular building is cottage at Roade Hill, which is largely early to mid 17<sup>th</sup> century but appears to have originated in the 14<sup>th</sup> century (Fig. 4, **17**; c.455 m SE).
- 4.7 To the west and northwest of the Application Site is an extensive tract of pasture (c. 6.2 ha.), anciently known as Cold Higham Closes, which is considered to be the site of a deserted village (Fig. 4, **5**)<sup>14</sup>. It contains a number of earthworks, some of which have been

<sup>9</sup> HER 4701/1 - MNN15482, SP 7645 5003 (84m by 76m)

<sup>10</sup> HER 4701/2/1 - MNN105002, SP 76523 49977

<sup>11</sup> HER 4701/1/6 - MNN31167, SP 7644 5005 (24m by 2m)

<sup>12</sup> HER 4701/1/5 - MNN103969, SP 7644 5005

<sup>13</sup> 4701/2/2 - MNN142614, SP 7647 5005

<sup>14</sup> HER4702 - MNN1798, SP 76568 50000

identified as building platforms and enclosures (Fig. 4, **6 - 8**)<sup>15</sup>. The greater part (c. 4.5 ha) of this historic site lies on the west side of the stream, in Roade parish. At the south-western end is the site of a former mansion house (Fig. 4, **9**)<sup>16</sup>, which is thought to have been built in the mid 16<sup>th</sup> century; but had gone by 1757.

- 4.8 In recent years, traces of medieval life have occasionally come to light on new house plots in the village. They comprise: a possible 13<sup>th</sup> century field boundary ditch, 3.55 m wide, found at 14 and 16 Hartwell Road in 2011<sup>17</sup> (Fig. 4, **18**; c. 475 m SE of the Application Site); a ditch found c. 30 south of the moated manor in 2014, thought to be an overflow drain from the moat (Fig. 4, **13**: c. 200 m E)<sup>18</sup>, and another possible medieval ditch revealed in evaluation trenches at Roade Hill in 2016 (Fig. 4, **14**; c. 400 m ENE)<sup>19</sup>.
- 4.9 To the south of the village a small relict portion (c. 1.7 ha) of the former medieval open fields survives as ridge and furrow earthworks<sup>20</sup> (Fig. 4, **15**; c. 265 m SE). The parish was inclosed by private Act of Parliament in 1819, yet it is evident from a map of 1727 that piecemeal enclosure began much earlier.

#### **Archaeological Knowledge of the Application Site**

- 4.10 There are no recorded archaeological discoveries at the Application Site, although historic map evidence is of interest. The first detailed and accurate map of Ashton was chain-surveyed in 1727 to show the extent of the Duke of Grafton's estate. The boundaries shown on the map are of reliable accuracy. All of the buildings depicted are, however, shown in 'birds-eye view'.
- 4.11 The map shows a dwelling on the north side of Stoke Road, to the east of The Old Mansion (Site **9**), which appears to coincide with the Application Site. Figure 5 in this report is a traced extract of the map with approximate location of the Application Site superimposed. In 1727 the land of the Application Site was part of a freehold. At that time there were just two freeholds at Ashton, the rest of the parish held by the Duke of Grafton. Fairly recent research (Riden & Insley, 2002) presumes that the cottage was one of two, leased with a few acres of land in 1626 to Thomas Osborne D D. At that time Stoke Road was known as Doctor's Lane, presumably named after the doctor (*ibid.*). By 1819 the land was in the possession of William Peasnell and the cottage was gone. By 1831 the property belonged to local farmer called William Dumsby. A well shown on the road frontage in 1883 (Fig. 6) may have been associated with the former cottage.

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<sup>15</sup> HER 4701/0/2 - MNN24624, HER 4702/0/5 - MNN125292, SP 7609 5013 (76m by 89m); HER 4702/0/4 - MNN125293 SP 7609 5013 (21m by 16m); 4702/0/6 - MNN125295, SP 7609 5000 (11m by 19m)

<sup>16</sup> HER 4702/0/2 - MNN116544, SP 761

<sup>17</sup> HER 4701/0/8 - MNN144135, SP 7662 4976

<sup>18</sup> HER 4701/1/9 - MNN169883 SP 76405 49989

<sup>19</sup> HER 4702/0/7 - MNN170445 SP 7659 5010

<sup>20</sup> HER 8594/0/3 - MNN136417, SP 76453 49807 (106m by 158m)

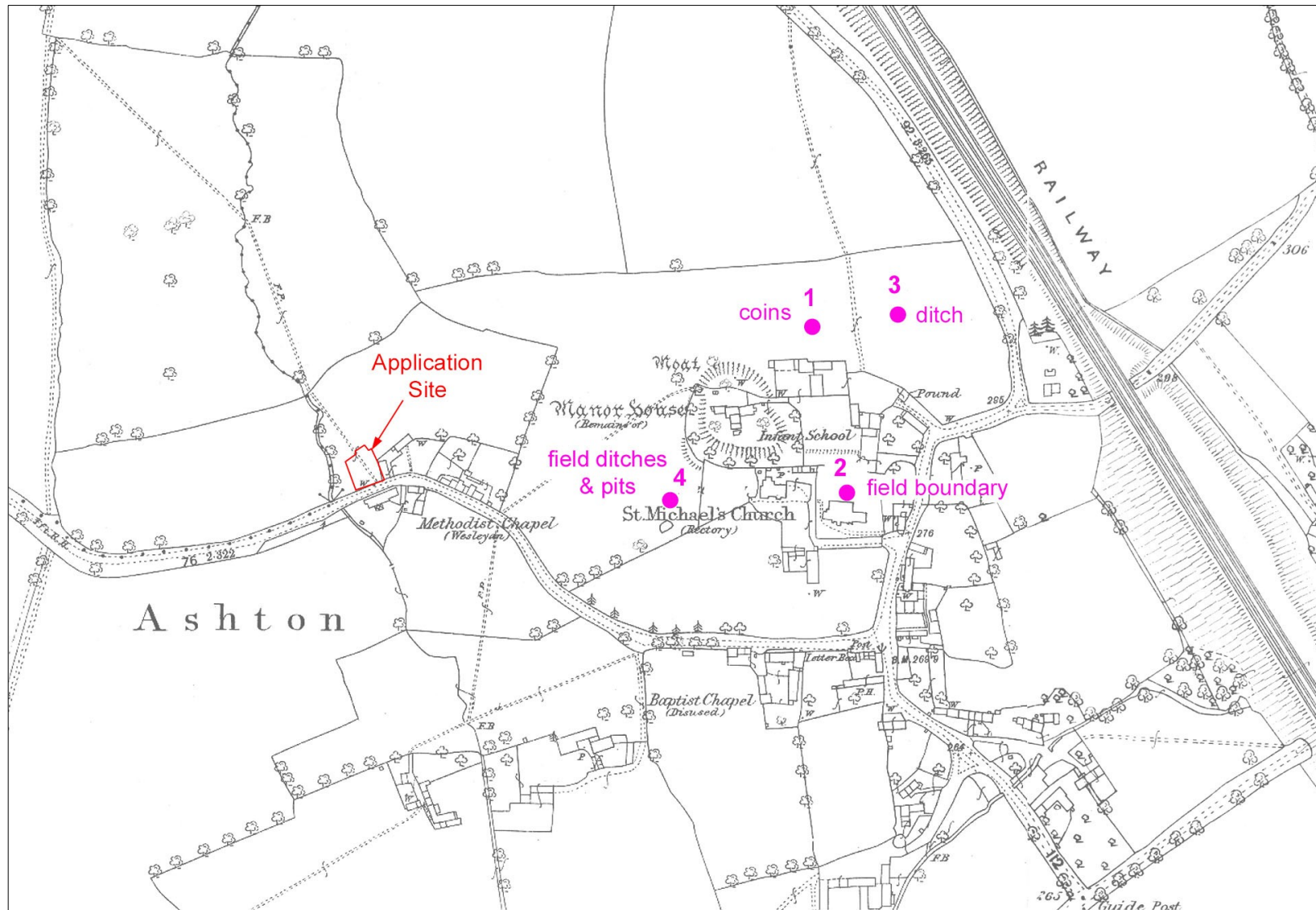


Figure 3: Distribution of Romano-British discoveries within the Study Area (base map: OS 1<sup>st</sup> edn. 25" 1884)



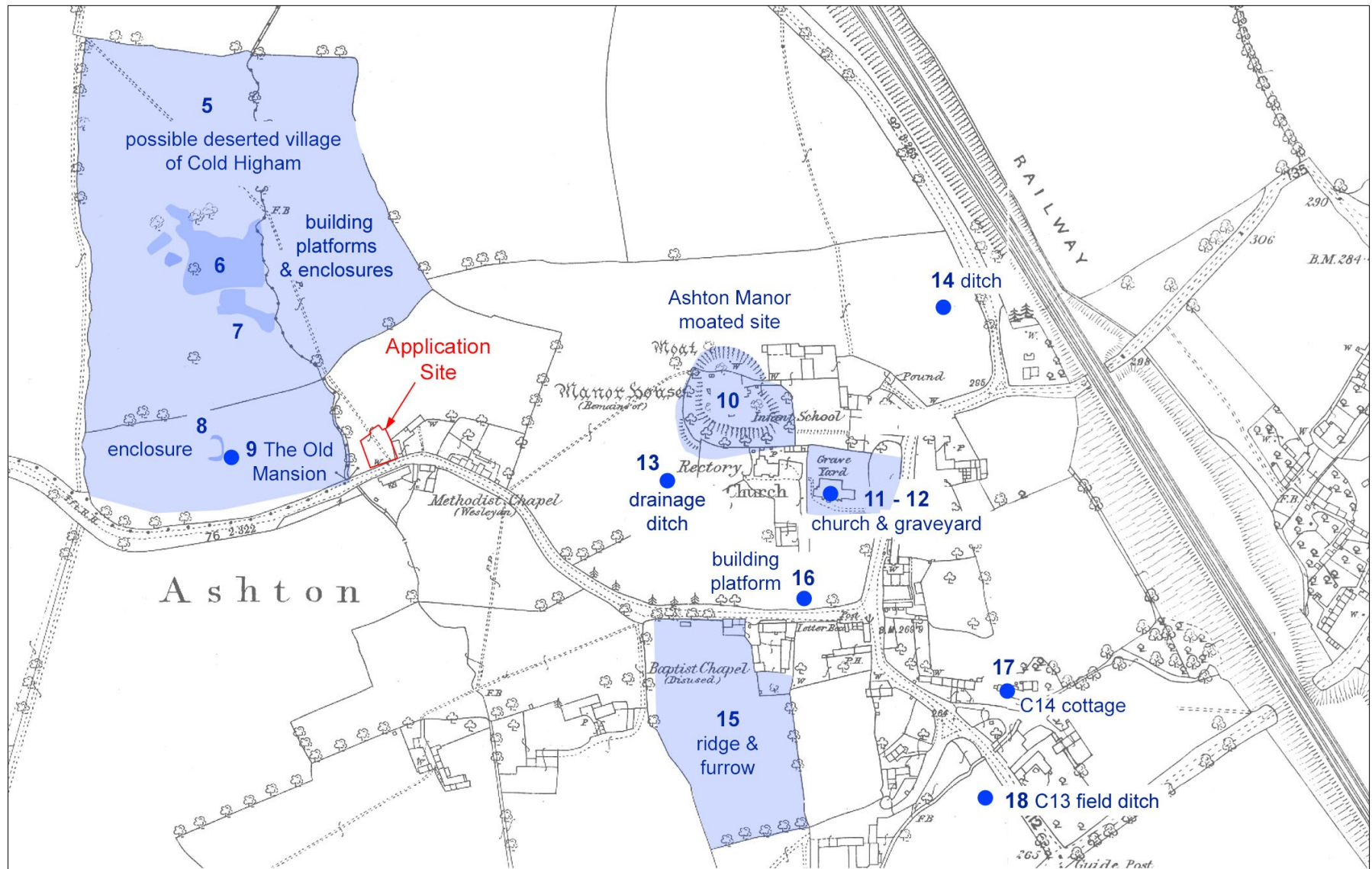


Figure 4: Distribution of medieval sites and discoveries within the Study Area (base map: OS 1<sup>st</sup> edn. 25" 1884)

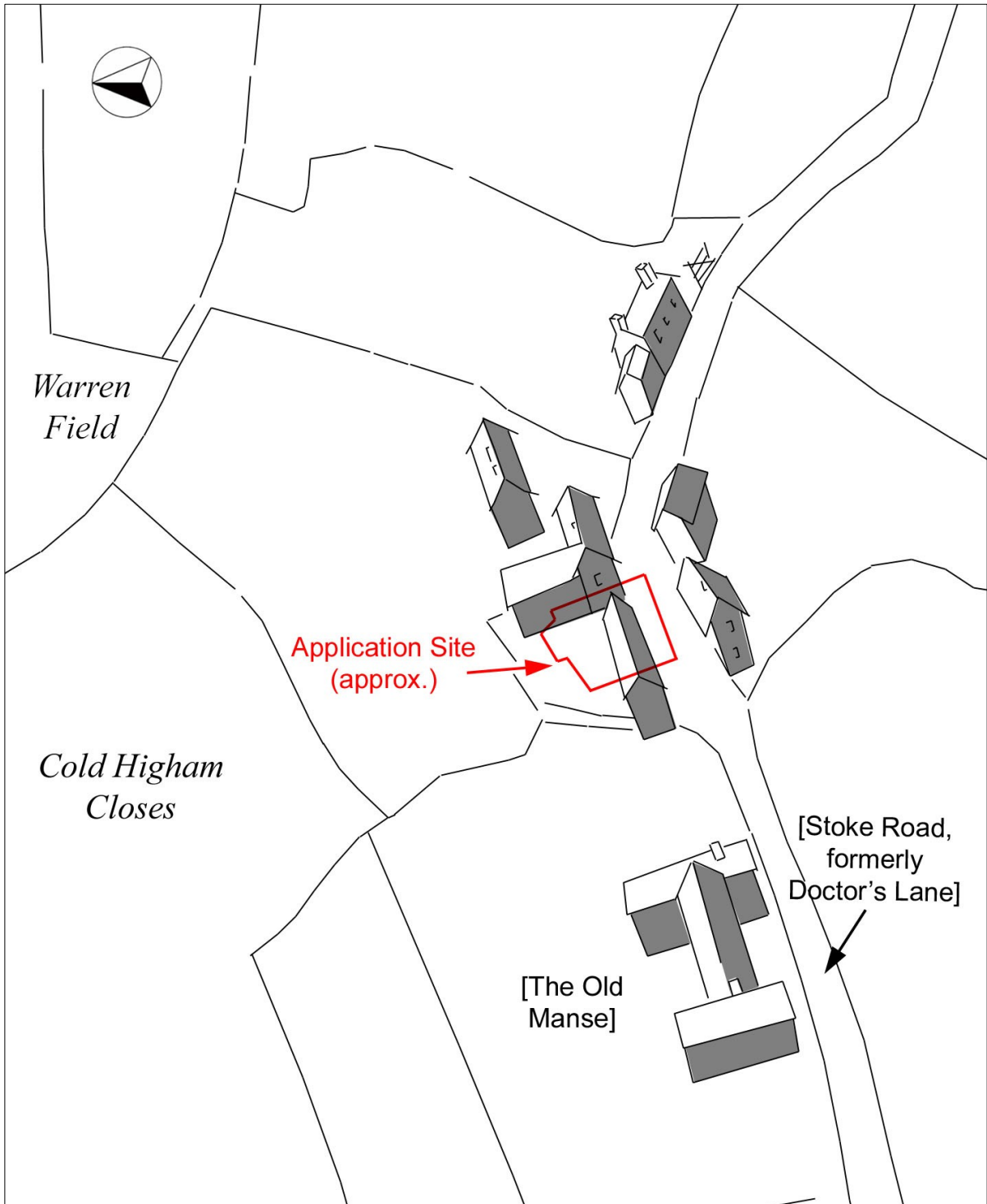


Figure 5: Traced extract of 1727 map, with Application Site super-imposed

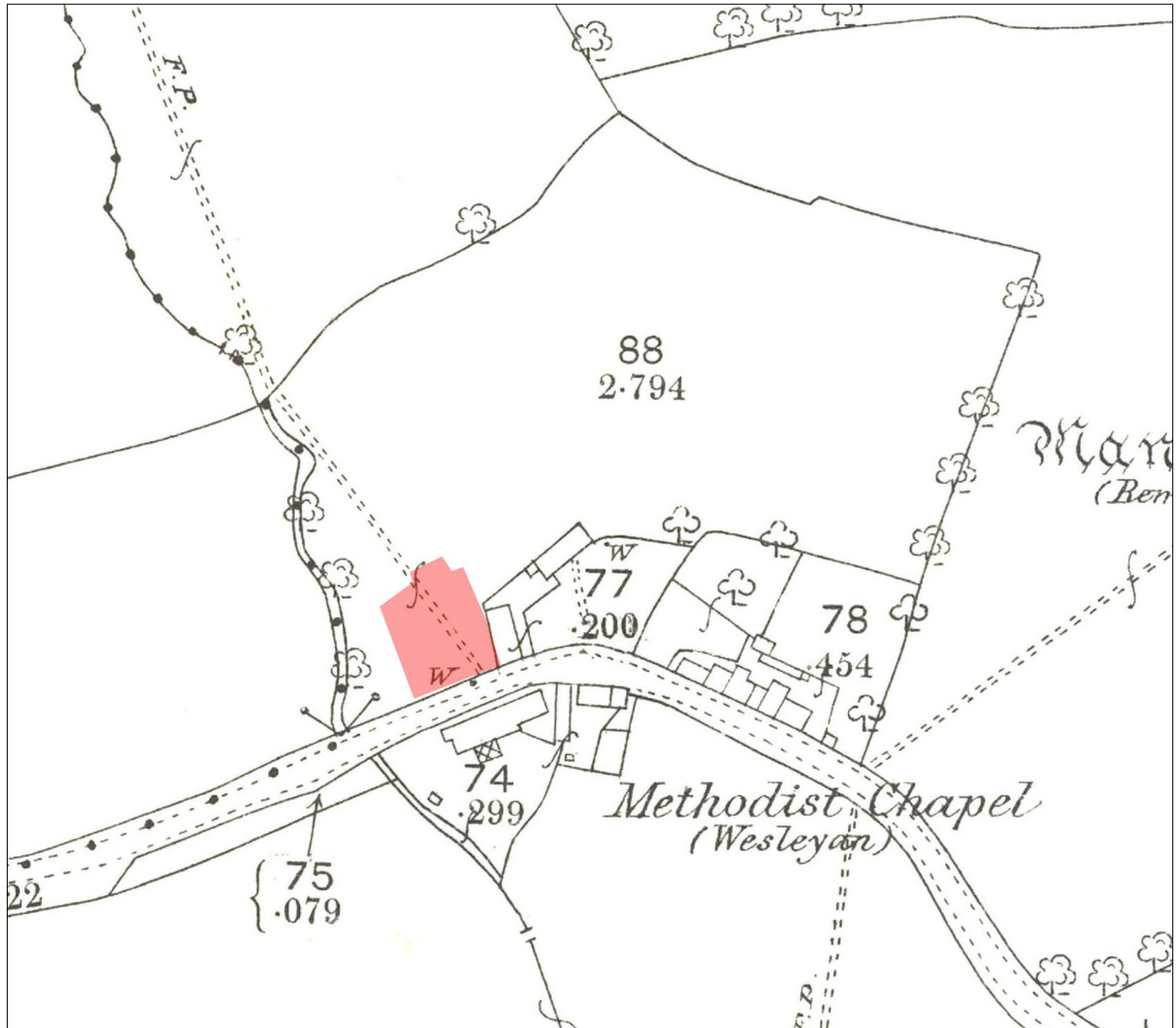


Figure 6: Extract of Ordnance Survey first edition 25" map showing approx. location of Application Site

## 5. RESEARCH AIMS

### Broad Objectives

5.1 The broad objectives of the investigation were to:

- i. establish the date, nature and extent of activity or occupation in the development site;
- ii. establish the relationship of any remains found to the surrounding contemporary landscapes;
- iii. recover artefacts to assist in the development of type series within the region;
- iv. recover palaeo-environmental remains to determine local environmental conditions; this to be an intrinsic part of the investigation.



### **Specific Objectives**

- 5.2 Extrapolation of archaeological evidence from around the village suggested that the Application Site had reasonable potential for buried remains of the Romano-British period, particularly relating to the rural economy. Any such finds would be significant in the context of current regional research priorities (Knight, Vyner & Allen 2012).
- 5.3 With regard to Ashton's medieval settlement, the existing scant amount of archaeological data serves to illustrate that its origin, development and extent is poorly understood. As such, a key objective of the investigation was to identify and recover data that might augment knowledge of the medieval village; and likewise contribute to regional research. A site-specific objective of the investigation was to shed light on the origin and nature of the former cottage shown on the 1727 map.

## **6. INVESTIGATION RESULTS**

*Note: Photographs referred to in the text are prefixed by 'P'*

### **Fieldwork Approach & Methodology**

- 6.1 The archaeological fieldwork was carried out on the 11<sup>th</sup> and 30<sup>th</sup> of March 2022. The investigation was conducted with respect to the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists' Code of Conduct and *Standard and Guidance for an Archaeological Watching Brief* (rev. 2020) and with due regard to Health and Safety.

### **Method of Foundation Construction**

- 6.2 Preliminary geotechnical site investigation in February 2022 revealed the existence of a main storm drain to the immediate east of the proposed new house footprint. As a result, a piled and ring-beam foundation was introduced throughout. Once the piles were in place, trenching for the ring-beam was undertaken. The foundations of the new garage, to the west of the new house comprised trenched foundations. Other than this, no significant ground reduction took place. The excavation of trenches was closely monitored at all times by an archaeologist, with the facility to make investigations and records as appropriate. All machine excavation was carried out with mechanical excavator fitted with a toothless bucket.

### **Observations**

- 6.3 Prior to the investigation the development area had been cleared of a timber-built stable block and associated structures. The existing ground across the proposed house footprint was fairly level (P 1 - P3) - between c. 82.37 m OD in the south and 82.39 m OD in the north (Fig. 7). The western half of the garage was slightly lower around 82.00 m OD, the ground on a gentle slope towards the stream.
- 6.4 Foundation trenches were dug to c. 1 m. The first layer encountered in the area of the house footprint was a layer of modern made-up ground (001) comprised of gravelly hardcore, 0.3 to 0.45 m thick, laid above a sheet of geo-textile (P 5 - P11). The variation in thickness indicated a former undulating ground surface.
- 6.5 Beneath the made-ground was a layer of soft, dark greyish brown clayey soil (002), which varied between 0.1 and c. 0.3 m in thickness (P 5 - P11). This was likely to have been the remains of a former ground layer (topsoil).

- 6.6 There was no subsoil present. The solid geological stratum consisted of firm blue-grey clay which was overlain by a thin intermittent and undulating superficial geological deposit of dark yellowy-brown gravels: c. 0.05 – 0.1 m thick.
- 6.7 In the area of the garage footprint the anthropogenic-derived stratigraphy comprised turf-covered topsoil c. 0.35 m thick above modern rubble, c.0.25 m thick (P4). The solid geological stratum was encountered around 82.10 m OD: c. 0.6 m below existing ground level.
- 6.8 Approximately 80% of the excavation of foundation trenches was subject to archaeological observation (Fig. 7). This was considered sufficient gain an adequate understanding of the extent of modern ground modification and of the unlikelihood of encountering features of archaeological significance. The archaeological investigation was thus terminated through agreement with the council's Archaeological Advisor.

## 7. CONCLUSIONS

- 7.1 The absence of anthropogenic-derived subsoil (i.e. redundant ploughsoil) in the area of development seems to suggest that the land was uncultivated in the medieval and post-medieval periods. Other than this it was not possible for meaningful conclusions to be drawn with regard to historic land-use at the development site.
- 7.2 Throughout the early modern period the land appears to have been used for stock grazing. Aerial imagery shows that the development area was modified at some time between May 2009 and December 2010<sup>21</sup> with the introduction of hard-standing, and a small structure with dual-pitched roof (?stable block) erected on the site of the new proposed garage. By 2017 the building had been removed and a larger configuration of stable blocks and paddocks were in existence across the entire development area.
- 7.3 There were no artefacts in the buried topsoil, no trace of the post-medieval cottage and, equally, no identifiable traces of any archaeology of earlier periods.

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<sup>21</sup> Google historic imagery

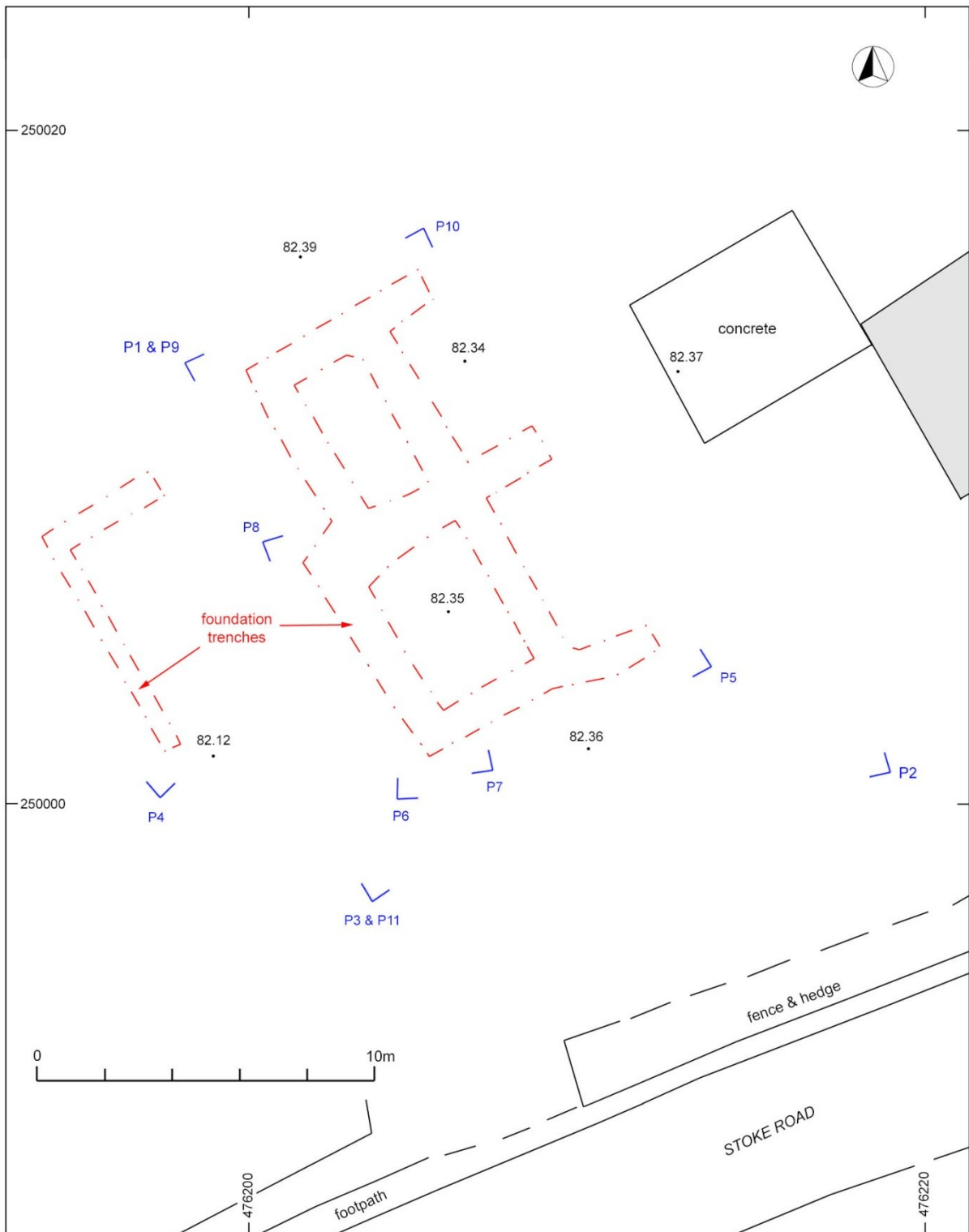


Figure 7: Plan of area of investigation showing relative heights (m OD) and direction of photographs





P1. Pre-commencement overview Facing SE



P2. Pre-commencement overview. Facing NW



P3. Pre-commencement overview. Facing NE



P4. Garage foundation trench. Facing N



P5. House foundation trench. Facing NW



P6. House foundation trench. Facing NE





P7. House foundation trench. Facing NW



P8. House foundation trench. Facing SE



P9. House foundation trench. Facing SE



P10. House foundation trench. Facing SW



P11. Overview of house foundation trenches. Facing NNE



## 8. ARCHIVE & REPORT

- 8.1 The archive is intended as a public-accessible record: the report to be housed in the Northamptonshire Historic Environment Record. Copyright is retained by Souterrain Archaeological Services Ltd from whom permission may be sought for reproduction.
- 8.2 The OASIS (Online Access to the Index of Archaeological Investigations: [www.oasis.ac.uk](http://www.oasis.ac.uk)) identification number for this project is **souterra1- 506070**. All survey and photographic data is contained in this report.

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## 10. REFERENCES

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**Historic Maps**

(NA = Northamptonshire Archives)

1727. Plan of Duke of Grafton's Manors of Hartwell, Ashton & Roade, NA Map/360

1818. Ashton, Roade, Northamptonshire Inclosure Map (NA Map/2932) & reference table

1884. Ordnance Survey 25" map of Northamptonshire, surveyed 1883