

**An Archaeological
Watching brief on land at White House farm,
144 Main Street, Asfordby,
Leicestershire (SK 7070 1909).**

Andrew Hyam and James Meek

Checked by Project Manager

SignedDate.....

Name.....

For: Mr. Robert Holmes

University of Leicester Archaeological Services

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An Archaeological Watching brief on land at White House farm, 144 Main Street, Asfordby, Leicestershire (SK 7070 1909).

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1. Summary

An archaeological watching brief was undertaken by University of Leicester Archaeological Services on land to the rear of White House farm, 144 Main Street, Asfordby (SK 7070 1909) during the excavation of foundation trenches for two proposed new buildings and a garage on behalf of Mr. Robert Holmes.

The development area was located some 100m to the north of Main Street on ground formerly used as part of White House farm. No earth-fast archaeological features were identified during the watching brief other than former land drains, confirming that the area was formerly used as farmland. It is most likely that medieval and post-medieval activity was limited to the area closer to Main Street.

The site archive will be held by the Historic & Natural Environment Team, Leicestershire County Council under the Accession Number XA21.2006.

2. Introduction

An archaeological watching brief was commissioned from University of Leicester Archaeological Services by Mr. Robert Holmes during the initial groundworks at the residential development on land to the rear of White House farm, 144 Main Street, Asfordby, Leicestershire (SK 7070 1909 – Figs. 1 and 2). The planning permission is for two detached houses and a garage (Fig. 4).

The site was formerly used as a stockyard for White House farm, that had been covered with a stoney surface. This had been scraped off by a mechanical prior to the watching brief commencing. The Ordnance Survey Geological Survey of Great Britain Sheet 142 (Melton Mowbray) indicates that the underlying geology is likely to consist of Boulder Clay. The site lies at a height of *c.*69.00 m O.D.

The Senior Planning Archaeologist of the Historic and Natural Environment Team of Leicestershire County Council (HNET LCC) requested a watching brief be undertaken as a condition on planning permission, to identify and record any archaeological remains of significance. A brief detailing the required works was prepared by the Senior Planning Archaeologist (HNET LCC 2006).

The watching brief was undertaken by ULAS on 12th and 13th January 2006.

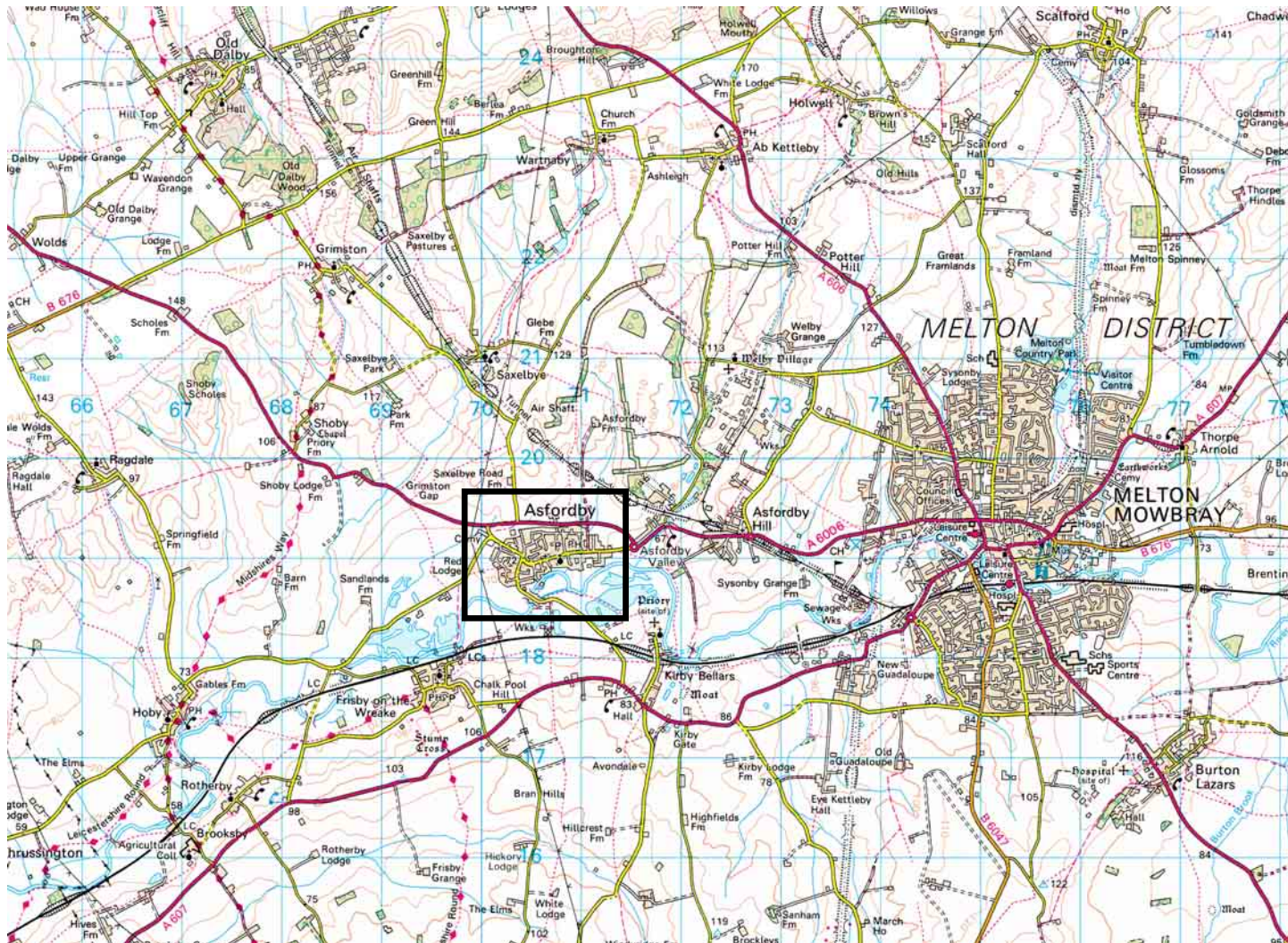


Figure 1. Location of proposed development area.

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Figure 2. Location of proposed development area.

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3. Objectives

The objective of the archaeological work was:

- To ascertain the presence/absence of any archaeological deposits
- To establish the character, extent and date range of any archaeological deposits to be affected by the proposed groundworks.
- To record any archaeological deposits to be affected by the groundworks.
- To produce an archive and report of any results.

4. Methodology

The archaeological work followed the requirements of the Brief (HNET LCC 2006).

A mechanical excavator with a 0.6m wide bucket was used to excavate the foundation trenches. The former stoney surface had been removed prior to the start of the watching brief.

All foundation trenches were examined for archaeological deposits.

All layers and potential archaeological deposits were investigated and recorded.

5. Historical and Archaeological Background (Meek 2003; Fig. 3)

5.1 *Archaeological Background*

5.1.1 The Leicestershire and Rutland Sites and Monuments Record lists a number of Roman, Anglo-Saxon and medieval sites in the vicinity of the proposed development area.

5.1.2 Prehistoric finds have been located to the west of the proposed development area including; a number of large flint cores (Leicestershire and Rutland Sites and Monuments Record Number **LE7568**); a Neolithic-Bronze Age flint scatter (**LE8867**); a Bronze Age ring ditch cropmark (**LE3329**); two unfinished pebble hammers of probable Mesolithic date (**LE7066**).

5.1.3 Two Late Roman coins were found within a garden on Klondyke Street (**LE7956**).

5.1.4 The remains of two Late Saxon crosses exist within All Saints Church (**LE3338**).

5.1.5 All Saints Church is thought to be of early medieval date (**LE3337**) being recorded in the Matriculus of 1220. The Saxon crosses may suggest that an earlier church was present here. Other medieval remains in the village include a possible socket stone into which the modern cross is placed (**LE3336**) and the possible site of a medieval watermill predating Asfordby Mill (**LE3334**).

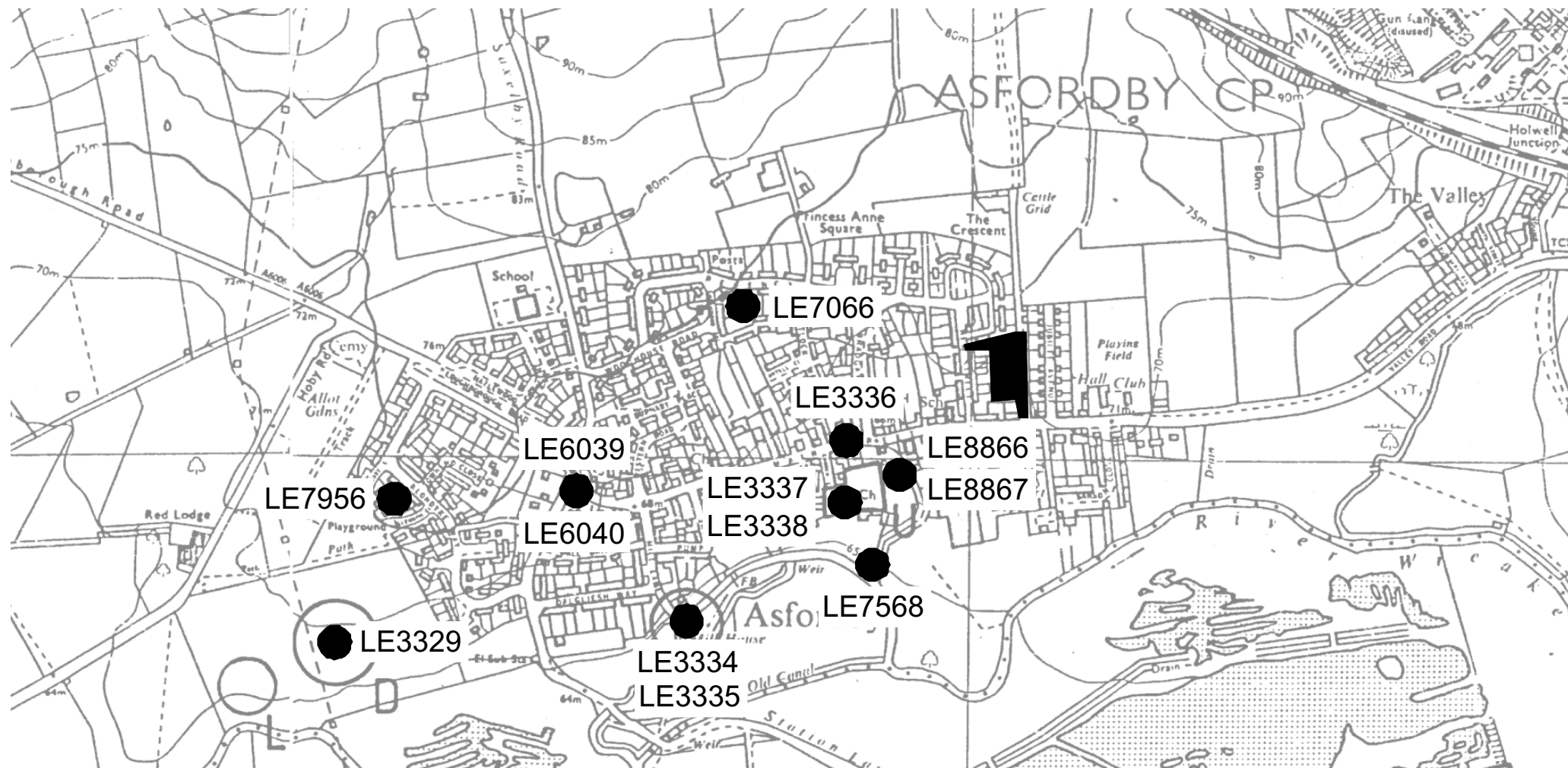


Figure 3: Sites and Monuments Record Information in the area of Asfordby, the central part of the village is LE8865 (not to scale)
Information from Leicestershire and Rutland Sites and Monuments Record, Leicestershire County Council Heritage Services

5.1.6 Post medieval finds in the vicinity include; Asfordby Mill (**LE3335**); 159 Main Street (**LE6039**); a cistern in the outbuildings of 159 Main Street (**LE6040**); and the remains of a post-medieval house and oven revealed during a watching brief to the east of the church (**LE8866**).

5.1.7 The historic core of the village, that is thought to have Late Saxon origins (**LE8865**) is shown on the Sites and Monuments Record to extend over the proposed development area. No known earthworks exist within the village area and it is thought that this may be as a result of the modern growth of Asfordby covering any that may have once been present (Hartley 1987).

5.2 *Historical Background*

5.2.1 Domesday Book records that both King, and the King's Servants held land at Asfordby (Morris 1979). The entries as transcribed in Morris (1979) are:

Land of the King

In Asfordby 12 c.(carucates) of land. 2 mills at 8s; Meadow 20 acres.

Land of the King's Servants

[In Goscote Wapentake]

Ralph Framen holds 3 1/2 c. (carucates) of land in Asfordby in commendation from the King.

2 villagers who have 6 ploughs.

Meadow, 12 acres.

Value 10s.

Carucate: - A measurement of land for tax purposes, used in Danish counties, the equivalent of [c.120](#) acres.

Villager: Member of the peasant class with most land.

Plough: In *Domesday* the word implies a plough team with its eight oxen and the plough itself. The measure of a carucate was originally the amount of land which such a team could plough in one day.

5.2.2 From the Domesday Book entries it is difficult to get a clear understanding of the actual size of the village at the time. Only 2 villagers are recorded for Asfordby, and although only the heads of households would have been recorded for the survey, the record of 6 plough teams would suggest that other people lived in the parish, but being of a lower status they were not recorded. Asfordby lies in an area that is thought to have had a less nucleated settlement pattern at the time of the Domesday Survey, in contrast to areas in the east of Leicestershire, and it is likely that further outlying dwellings/farms would have existed in the surrounding parish although again were not recorded in the survey.

6. Results

The foundation trenches for the first house plot in the north-east corner were partially excavated before the archaeologist attended the site. The foundation trenches were open and were observed for any surviving archaeological remains. A single round section land drain was visible running along the easternmost section.

The ground surface was covered with a grey-brown silty clay with abundant broken brick fragment inclusions – surviving to a depth of 0.04 – 0.06m. Below this layer was a very similar soil but without the brick fragment components of a depth between 0.12 – 0.2m. The natural below this layer was a clean light brownish grey clay. Trenches were excavated to a depth of between 1 – 1.5m.

The second house plot was excavated in the north-western corner of the site. It was excavated through an identical sequence of soils. A plastic land drain was visible on the same alignment as the ceramic drain noted in the first house plot which may have replaced an earlier ceramic land drain.

The garage was excavated in the southern part of the site area through a similar sequence of soils again. No archaeological deposits were revealed.

No significant finds were recovered from the site, with only occasional sherds of modern glazed pottery noted, but not retained.

7. Conclusions

Despite being in an area of potential archaeological interest close to the historic core of Asfordby the watching brief produced no evidence of archaeological activity. A number of land drains crossed the site, demonstrating that the area had been formerly used as agricultural land, as is evident from the first edition Ordnance Survey map of the area until it became used as a stockyard for White House Farm and covered with stoney material.

The early OS maps show the buildings (barns) on the western side of the site area that are to be retained, but do not show any structures within the proposed development area. The site boundary along the northern edge of the site is also shown on all of the earlier OS maps. This still exists as a hedge boundary. The boundary to the east is a modern fence, but follows the line of an earlier boundary. The fence to the south would appear to have moved slightly to the south to line up with the existing building.

The watching brief would appear to confirm that earlier development in Asfordby (medieval and post-medieval) was probably confined to ribbon development along Main Street. Structures were not confined only to the street frontages, as can be seen with the location of Old Hall Farm set back from the frontage, but no structures, other than agricultural buildings are shown as far back as the proposed development area.

Andrew Hyam and James Meek
ULAS
University of Leicester
University Road
Leicester LE1 7RH
Tel: 0116 252 2848
Fax: 0116 252 2614

8. Bibliography

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9. Acknowledgements

The fieldwork was undertaken by Andrew Hyam. The project was managed by James Meek.

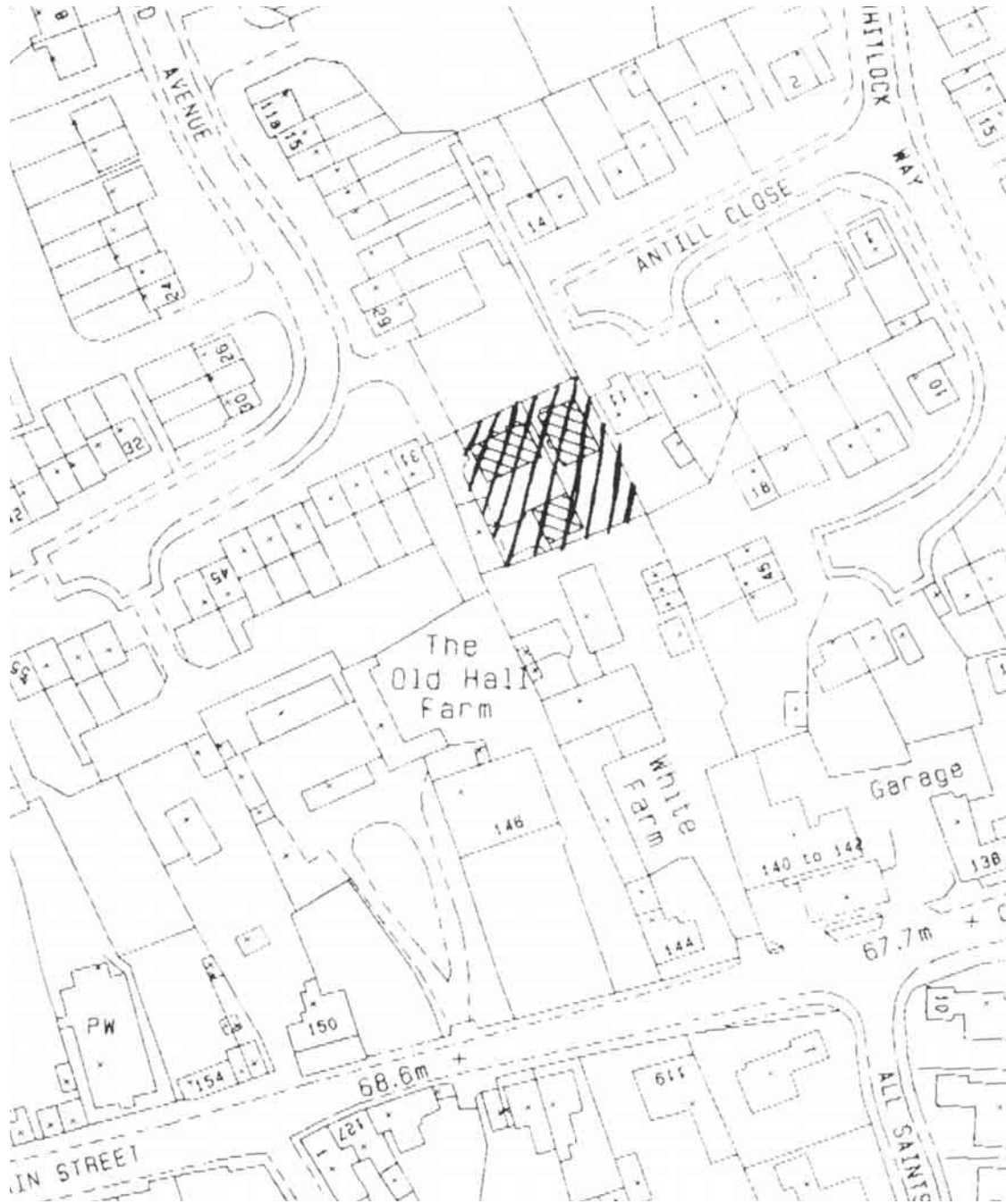


Figure 4: Development proposal plan



Plate 1: North-eastern house plot (view south-west)
– with Old Hall Farm visible in background



Plate 2: North-western house plot (view west)



Plate 3: View south across garage area (following concreting of trenches) from between both house plots.