

**Church Farm Cottage, Astwick Road, Astwick, Bedfordshire.**

HN1410

Report No.1134

<b>Site name and address:</b>	Church Farm Cottage, Astwick Road, Astwick, Bedfordshire, SG5 4BH		
<b>County:</b>	Bedfordshire	<b>District:</b>	Central Bedfordshire
<b>Village/town:</b>	Astwick	<b>Parish:</b>	Astwick
<b>Planning reference:</b>	CB/17/02892/FULL	<b>NGR:</b>	TL 2140 3857
<b>Client name and address:</b>	Julian Whippy & Angie Rogers, Church Farm Cottage, Astwick Road, Astwick, Bedfordshire, SG5 4BH		
<b>Nature of work:</b>	New extension	<b>Present land use:</b>	Garden & Driveway
<b>Site Status:</b>	Astwick Conservation Area	<b>Reason for investigation:</b>	Direction of local planning authority (NPPF)
<b>Position in planning process:</b>	As a condition	<b>Project brief originator:</b>	Local Authority
<b>Size of affected area:</b>	1250m <sup>2</sup>	<b>Size of area investigated:</b>	57m <sup>2</sup>
<b>Site Code:</b>	HN1410	<b>Museum reference:</b>	BEDFM 2018.10
<b>Organisation:</b>	Heritage Network	<b>Site Director:</b>	David Hillelson
<b>Project type, methods etc.</b>	SMR & O/R	<b>Archive Recipient:</b>	Higgins Art Gallery & Museum, Bedford
<b>Start of work</b>	30/05/2018	<b>Finish of work</b>	05/06/2018
<b>Related HER Nos:</b>	2073, 2074, 2076	<b>Periods represented:</b>	Modern
<b>Oasis UID:</b>	heritage1-307841	<b>Significant finds:</b>	None
<b>Monument types:</b>	None		
<b>Physical archive:</b>	None		
<b>Previous summaries/reports:</b>	Collins, M. 2017 <i>Archaeological Desk-based Assessment: Church Farm Cottage, Astwick Road, Astwick, Hitchin, SG5 4BH</i>		

**Introduction:**

In response to a planning condition on the conversion of a garage to living space and the construction of an extension linking the garage to the main house at Church Farm Cottage, Astwick Road, Astwick, Bedfordshire (Figure 1), the Heritage Network was commissioned by the landowner to undertake a programme of archaeological mitigation on the development groundworks. Planning permission for the development (CB/17/02892/FULL) was granted by Central Bedfordshire Council (CBC), subject to a suite of archaeological conditions issued under the provisions set out in the Department of Communities and Local Government's *National Planning Policy Framework* (NPPF). A full specification for the work carried out is contained in the Heritage Network's approved *Project Design* (Turner 2018), as defined by the *Brief for archaeological investigation, recording, analysis and publication* issued by the Archaeology Team (AT) at CBC (Utrata 2017).

The site lies in the historic core of the village, situated on the northern side of Astwick Road, adjacent to the Grade II\* listed medieval St Guthlac's Church, and centred on NGR TL 2140 3857 (Figure 1). It is located within the Astwick Conservation Area and is bounded by the church to the north-west, Astwick Road to the south-east and farms to the north-east and south-west. The course of the River Ivel runs approximately 200m to the south, while a small stream, a tributary of the Ivel, flows approximately 70m to the north.

Although not statutorily listed, Church Farm Cottage is a locally important building. It was constructed in the 18<sup>th</sup> century, with stud and plaster walls and a thatched gabled roof (Plate 1). The exterior is rendered, with pargetting to the rear elevation (Collins 2017). It was extended to the north-east in the 1960s or 1970s to provide a double garage. An undated aerial photograph of the property, supplied by the present owners, possibly shows the cottage immediately after this extension was built (Plate 3). The detached garage is a single storey structure with a clay tiled roof (Plate 2). A planning application was submitted in 1987 to change to the former garage to residential accommodation and to build the present detached garage (Central Bedfordshire Council 2018).

## **Fieldwork:**

The proposed new extension is located in the north-western corner of the site, against the north-eastern elevation of the cottage and the north-western elevation of the detached garage. The works for the present investigation involved a Strip, Map and Sample exercise on the footprint of the new extension and the monitoring of the excavation of a new drainage trench and septic tank to the south-east of the cottage.

### Plot 1 - Strip, Map & Sample Area

The footprint of the new extension was stripped under close archaeological supervision using a 3 tonne, tracked excavator, fitted with a 1.2m wide ditching bucket (Plate 4). This area measured approximately 8m by 6m and was reduced in depth by between 0.40m and 0.70m. Whilst the intention was to strip to the natural or the first archaeological horizon, removal of the topsoil revealed that this area had been significantly disturbed by the insertion of a number of service pipes and trenches (Figure 2, Plates 5-7). These included two brick-lined drain access points, with a wide trench running between them, which were located within the area of the new extension. The various services crossed each other and were encountered at different depths, making it impossible to undertake an effective Strip, Map and Sample exercise.

A test pit was excavated between the services in the centre of Plot 1 from a depth of approximately 0.40m below the present ground level (Plate 8). This measured 1.10m in length, 0.80m in width and 0.50m in depth. The stratigraphy revealed in the Plot 1 sections comprised very dark brown loose silty sandy clay topsoil, 0.10m in depth, with occasional rooting, above a mixed deposit of dark greyish brown friable silty clay with patches of light grey clay, 0.80m in depth (Figure 4, Plate 9). This deposit contained frequent inclusions of tile, concrete, red brick, ceramic and plastic.

The test pit was excavated at this level and revealed more of the same made ground, to a depth of 0.40m below the reduced surface. This deposit overlay a natural light yellow loose stony gravel layer, which was encountered at a depth of approximately 0.90m below the present ground level (Figure 4). The base of the test pit flooded rapidly, suggesting that the gravel layer is an aquifer.

### Footing Trenches

As a result of the problems carrying out the Strip, Map and Sample exercise, the Archaeology Team at CBC requested that the extension footing trenches be monitored in order to understand the impact of the development on the potential archaeological resource. A trench was excavated extending north-west from the garage and measuring 2m in length, 0.40m in width and 1.30m in depth. Another service was encountered and the water table was reached at this depth, so the trench was abandoned (Plate 10). The sections revealed only made ground. On this basis the foundation design was changed to a raft construction, requiring only shallow footing trenches which would not breach the made ground, therefore no further monitoring of the extension groundworks was required.

### Plot 2 - Drainage Trench

A drainage trench was excavated from the south-western corner of Plot 1, running south-eastwards within the driveway to the property (Figure 3). The trench measured 10.50m in length, 0.40m in width and was excavated to a depth of 1.20m (Plate 11). The stratigraphy within the trench consisted of light brown driveway gravel, 0.05m in depth, above a layer of tarmac, 0.05m in depth (Figure 4, Plate 14). This overlay a mixed sand levelling layer, 0.40m in depth. Below this was a mixed deposit of dark greyish brown friable silty clay with patches of light grey clay, over 0.70m in depth, similar to that observed in Plot 1. The natural light bluish grey, firm clay was encountered at a depth of approximately 1.16m below the present ground level at the southern end of the trench only, but was immediately covered by water (Figure 4, Plate 12).

### Plot 3 - Septic Tank

A trench for a septic tank was excavated at the southern end of Plot 2 (Figure 3). It measured 3.70m in length 1.20m in width and 1.10m in depth (Plate 13). The stratigraphy in Plot 3 was different to that observed in Plots 1 and 2, comprising a layer of very dark brown, loose silty clay topsoil, approximately 0.30m in depth, containing frequent rooting, which overlay a mid brown firm silty clay subsoil, 0.5m in depth, containing occasional stones and rooting (Plate 14). Below this was a natural light yellow gravel layer, 0.3m in depth, which directly overlay light bluish grey clay natural, which was exposed at a depth of approximately 1.11m below the present ground level. The gravel layer in this area was also water-bearing and the trench soon flooded.

No archaeological features, deposits or finds were revealed in Plot 3.

## Discussion:

The present site lies in the core of the village of Astwick, immediately adjacent to the medieval parish church of St Guthlac. The core of the cottage dates to the 18<sup>th</sup> century, but was extended in the 1960s or 1970s to provide a double garage while the detached garage was built in the late 1980s or early 1990s.

The monitoring of the development groundworks at Church Farm Cottage revealed considerable disturbance by live services in the area of the new extension (Plot 1), making the Strip, Map and Sample exercise impractical in this area. However, a test pit excavated in the centre of Plot 1 revealed a considerable depth of overburden which sat directly above water-bearing natural gravels. Excavation of a drainage trench running south into the front garden revealed a similar depth of overburden above natural clay.

A septic tank at the southern end of the drainage trench revealed an undisturbed stratigraphy, comprising layers of topsoil and subsoil above an aquifer, formed of a layer of gravel. This overlay the solid clay. All trenches flooded at the point where they met the natural gravels or clay.

The accumulated evidence indicates that the site has been subject to considerable post-medieval and modern disturbance. The depth of made ground directly above the natural substrate indicates significant ground reduction and subsequent deliberate build-up around the cottage, possibly to avoid damp from the underlying aquifer. No clear evidence for when this occurred was encountered during the present project. No archaeological features, deposits or finds were revealed during the course of the present investigation and no information was gained that could be considered to contribute to the research aims for the project, as defined in the approved Project Design.

## Illustrations:

Figure 1	Site Location
Figure 2	Plan of Plot 1 (extension footprint)
Figure 3	Plan of Plots 2 and 3
Figure 4	Indicative Sections
Plate 1	Church Farm Cottage, looking NW
Plate 2	Existing garage, looking NE
Plate 3	Area of SMS, looking SE
Plate 4	SMS footprint, showing services, looking N
Plate 5	SMS footprint, showing 3 services, looking NW
Plate 6	SMS footprint, showing another 3 services, looking NW
Plate 7	SMS footprint, showing another 3 services, looking SW
Plate 8	Man hole within SMS footprint, looking SE
Plate 9	More services revealed within SMS footprint, looking N
Plate 10	Test pit within SMS footprint, looking S
Plate 11	Test pit section, looking NW
Plate 12	Footing trench, within SMS footprint, looking SE
Plate 13	Plot 3 (drainage trench), looking NE
Plate 14	Plot 3, indicative section, looking SE

## Printed sources:

Collins, M. 2017 *Archaeological Desk-based Assessment: Church Farm Cottage, Astwick Road, Astwick, Hitchin, SG5 4BH*.

Turner, C. 2018 *Church Farm Cottage, Astwick Road, Astwick, Bedfordshire: Archaeological Project Design*. Heritage Network

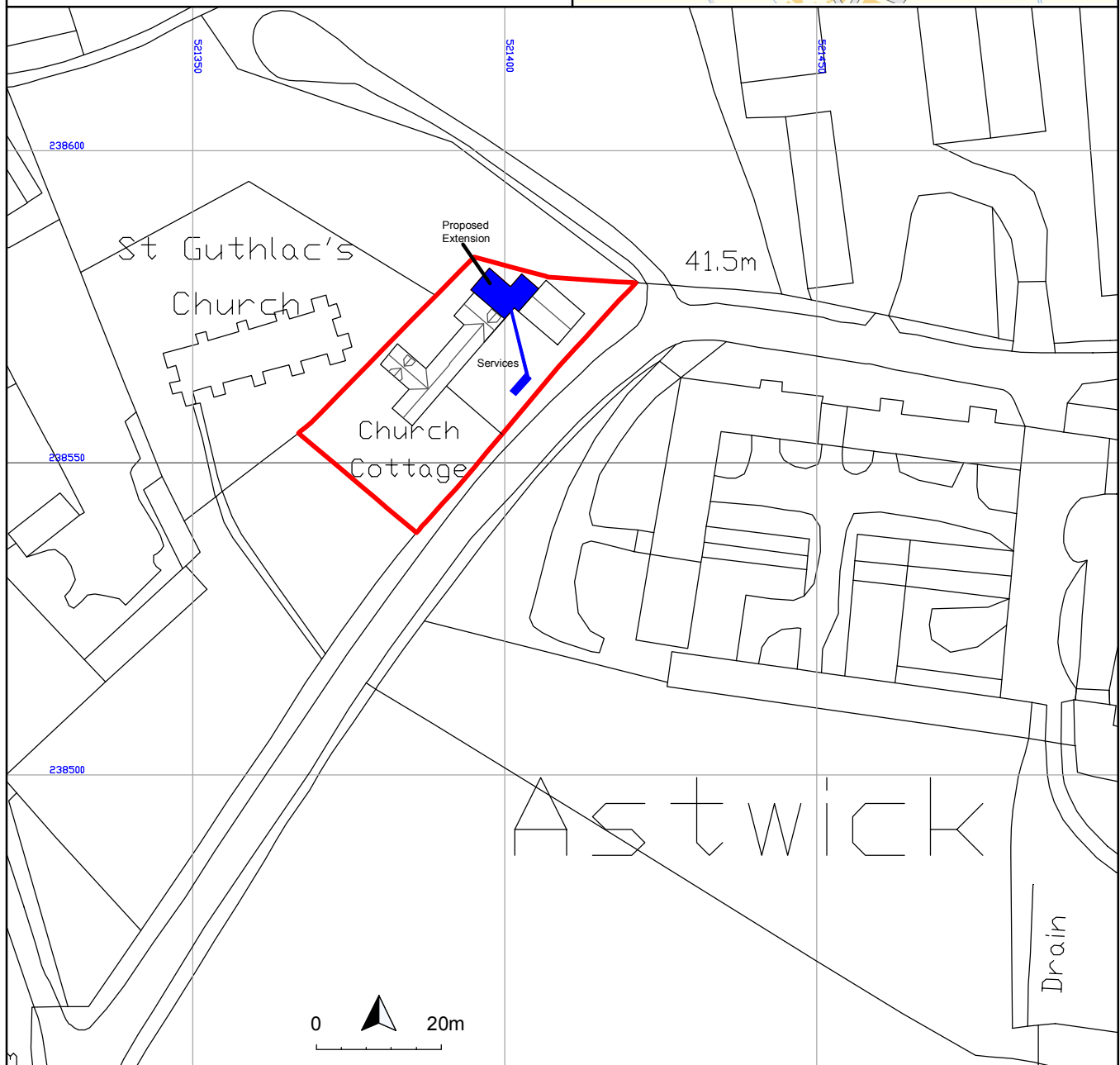
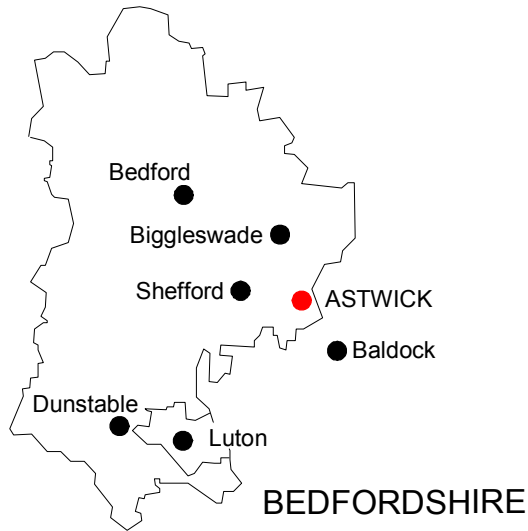
Utrata, S. 2017 *Brief for a scheme of archaeological investigation, recording, analysis and publication: Church Farm Cottage, Astwick Road, Astwick*. Archaeology Team, Central Bedfordshire Council.

## Internet sources:

Central Bedfordshire Council 2018 *Church Farm Cottage Planning Officer Delegated Report*. Available from <https://app.box.com/embed/preview/bgb7rziip22iwzydsdyksk49g1ausvkx?direction=ASC&theme=dark> [accessed 11 October 2018]

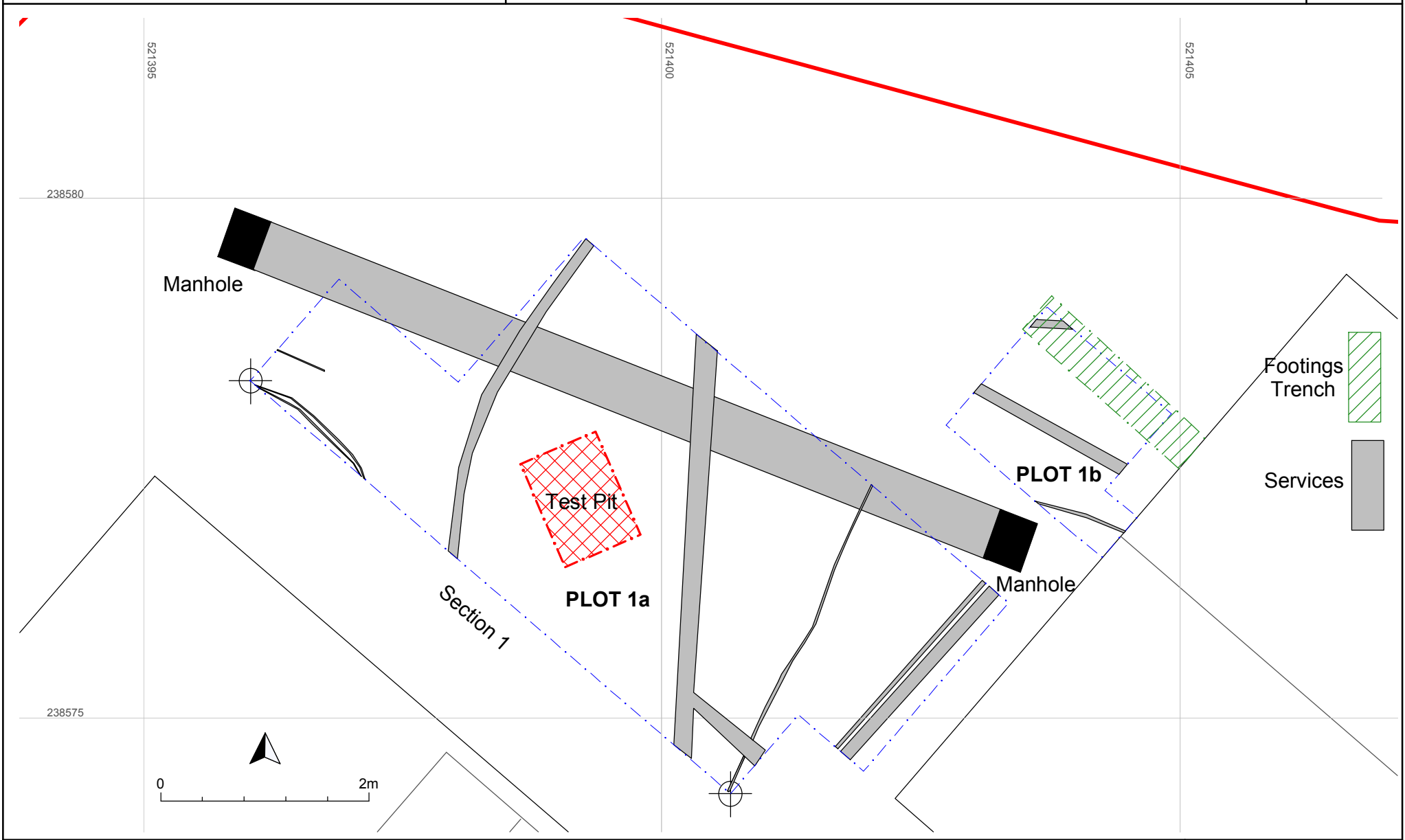
Daniel Phillips BA (Hons) ACIfA  
June 2018 Issued October 2018





Site location and layout

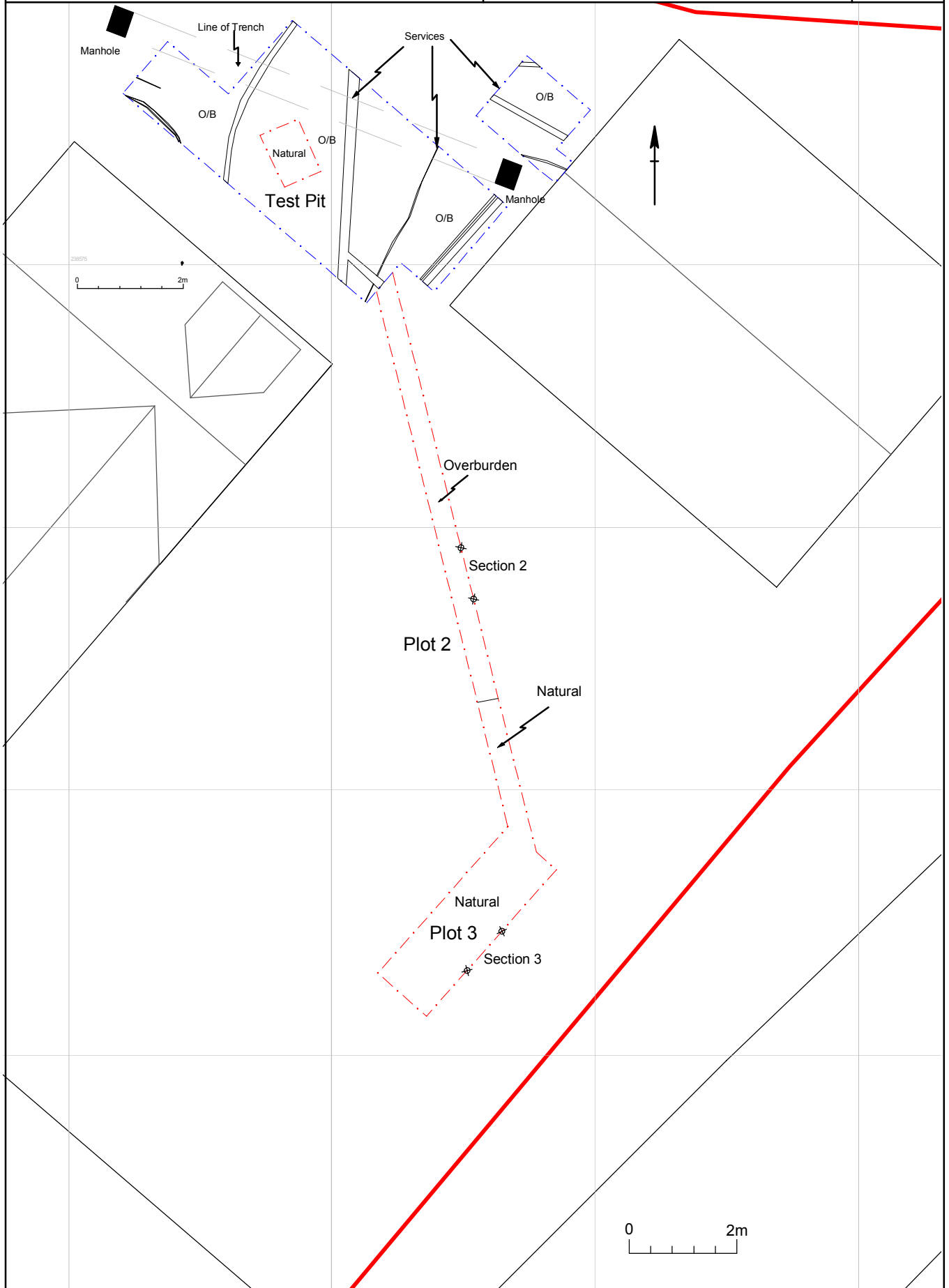
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Plan of Plot 1 (Extension footprint)

Scale 1:50

Figure 2

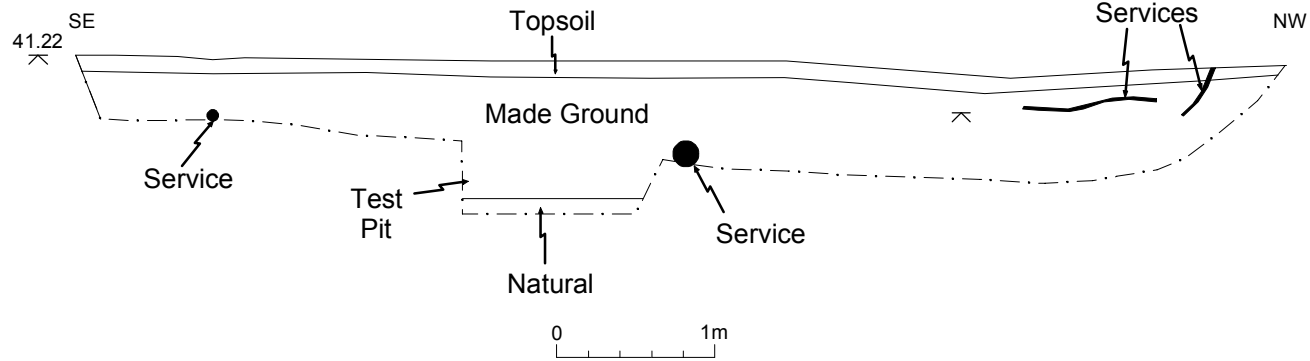


Plan of Plots 2 and 3

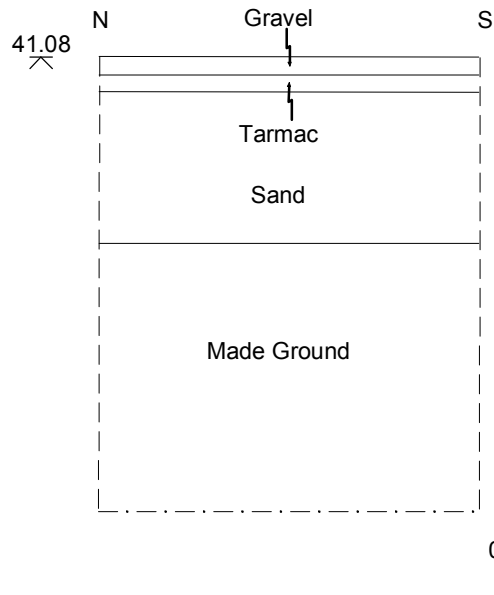
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Figure 3

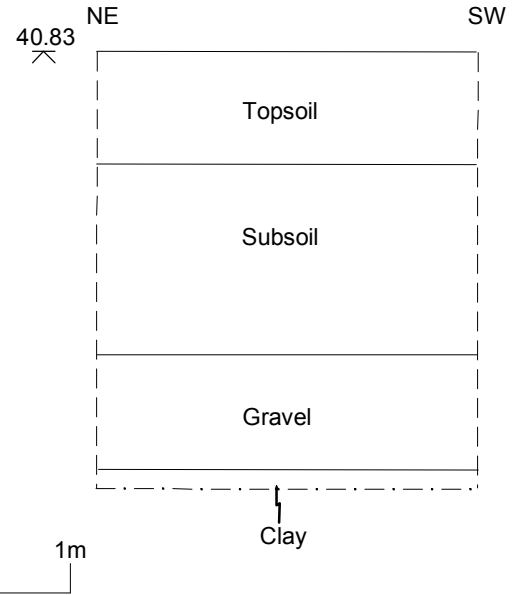
Section 1



Section 2



Section 3



Indicative Sections

Scale 1:50 & 1:20

Figure 4





Plate 01 - Church Farm Cottage, looking NW



Plate 02 - Existing garage, looking NE





Plate 03 - Undated aerial photo, supplied by the clients



Plate 04 - Area of SMS, looking SE





Plate 05 - Plot 1, looking N



Plate 06 - Plot 1b, looking NW



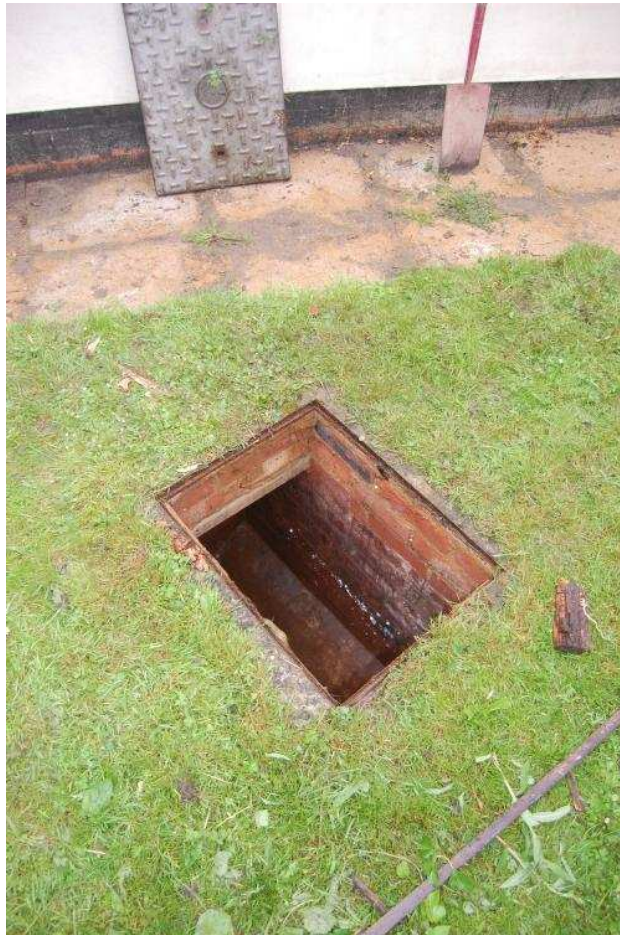


Plate 07 - South-eastern access point, looking SE



Plate 08 - Test pit within Plot 1a, looking S





Plate 09 - Plot 1a sections, looking NW



Plate 10 - Excavated footings trench, looking SE





Plate 11 - Plot 2 (drainage trench), looking N



Plate 12 - Plot 2 indicative section, looking W





Plate 13 - Plot 3 (septic tank), looking NE



Plate 14 - Plot 3 indicative section, looking SE