

# Ambrey Archaeology Ltd

## Archaeological Monitoring and Recording (watching brief) at Upton House Farm, Elmley Lovett, Droitwich

Version 1

Event No: WSM81019

Planning ref. W/24/00169/HP

Project ref. AMB249

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## Summary

Archaeological monitoring and recording was carried out by Ambrey Archaeology on the excavations of groundworks at Upton House farm, Elmley Lovett, Droitwich (NGR 387183 269515).

It was carried out on behalf of Mr and Mrs Newland, who have been granted planning permission by Wychavon District Council for construction of a two storey front and single storey side and rear extensions, using part of an existing stable block as a car port.

The scheduled area of Elmley Lovett deserted medieval village is located within 500m to the west of the development and it was considered that there may be a potential for the survival of archaeological deposits associated with this monument at the site.

Upton House was built in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century to replace an earlier house. It is associated with a 19<sup>th</sup> century farmstead arranged around a courtyard to the east of the farmhouse.

Permission for the development was granted, subject to conditions, including the provision of a historic building recording and a programme of archaeological monitoring and recording. The building recording was carried out by another contractor. A written scheme of investigation was submitted and approved by Wychavon district Council and the watching brief on groundworks (excavation of foundation trenches for the proposed extensions) was carried out by Elizabeth Connolly of Ambrey Archaeology over three days from November 2024 to March 2025.

The works were carried out using a tracked excavator and under archaeological supervision. The watching brief found modern disturbance in each of the areas excavated, due to previous works such as installation of services. The brick and rubble foundations of a garden wall and shed which had stood until recently to the immediate south and south-east of the main house were recorded as was the foundation of a recently demolished porch to the north.

In two locations, possible farm or garden surfaces and structures were recorded; to the rear of the house the partial remains of a cobbled surface were recorded at about 0.80m below present ground level and the possible remains of the foundation of a wall were recorded to the north of the house. No dateable artefacts were recovered within these deposits. However the width of the foundation suggested that the wall would have been slight and so was likely a garden feature.

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## 1. Background

This report describes the results of archaeological monitoring, carried out by Ambrey Archaeology, of groundworks at Upton House farm, Elmley Lovett, Droitwich (NGR: 387183 269515).

It was commissioned by Timothy Smith Ltd on behalf of Mr and Mrs Newland, who have been granted planning permission by Wychavon District Council (WDC) for construction of a two storey front and single storey side and rear extensions, using part of an existing stable block as a car port (Planning ref. W/24/00169/HP).

A heritage consultation response prepared by Aidan Smyth, Archaeology and Planning Advisor to WDC (dated 14<sup>th</sup> June 2024), set out the requirement for a level 2 building record of the house and archaeological monitoring to be maintained on groundworks required for the development. The level 2 building recording was undertaken by Mike Napthan Archaeology.

Prior to the works a Written Scheme of Investigation was produced by Ambrey Archaeology (AA 2024) and approved by WDC.

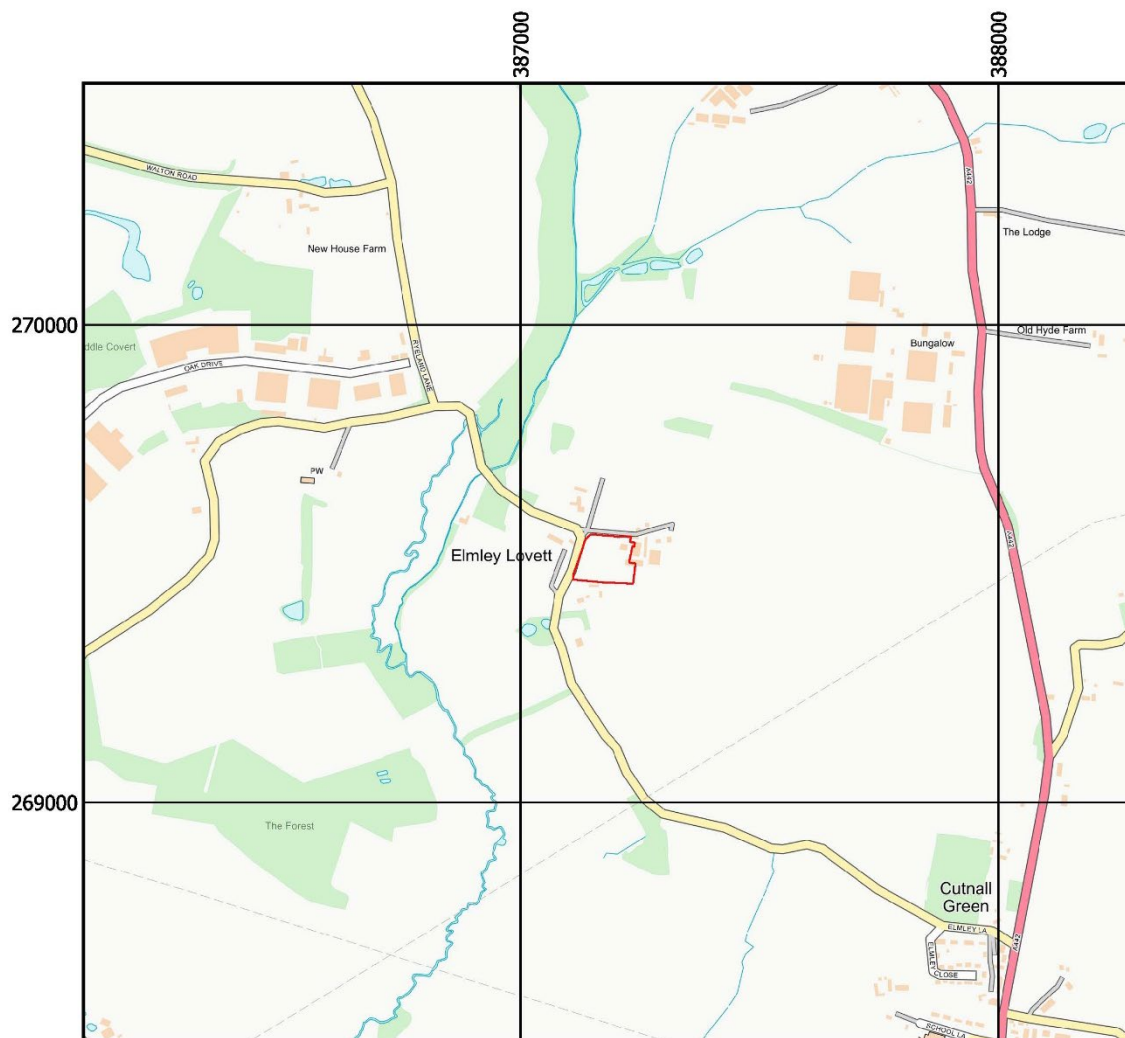


Figure 1. Site location (Base map: Ordnance Survey [2025] open data)

## 2. Aims

The Chartered Institute for Archaeologists defines archaeological monitoring and recording (previously known as ‘watching brief’) as a formal programme of observation, investigation and recording conducted during works carried out for non-archaeological reasons, where there is a possibility that archaeological deposits may be disturbed or destroyed. This will be within a specified area or site on land, in an inter-tidal zone or under water (CIfA 2023, *Standard for archaeological monitoring and recording*).

## 3. Site location and topography

Upton House Farm is located approximately 8km NNW of the town of Droitwich and 7km SSE of Droitwich in a gently undulating landscape comprising a mix of pasture and arable land. The farmstead is located immediately to the south of a track which leads east from Elmley Lane, itself a minor road which leads to Cutnall Green, just over 1km to the south-east. The Elmley Brook flows about 430m to the west.

Bedrock at the site is the Helsby Sandstone Formation – Sandstone, a sedimentary bedrock formed between 247.1 and 241.5 million years ago during the Triassic period. No superficial deposits are mapped (BGS, 2025).

## 4. Archaeological context

An event number for the project (WSM81019) has been provided by the Worcestershire Historic Environment Record (HER) and a search of the HER with a radius of 1km of the site was obtained (Ref. #1649120). There are numerous monuments and events recorded within this area. Selected monuments within the immediate vicinity of the site are depicted on Figures 2 and 3 and described below.

No prehistoric activity was recorded within a 1km search radius on the Worcestershire HER, but an area of Palaeolithic potential associated with Holt Heath sand and Gravel (WSM56937) is located approximately 400m to the south-west.

An area of Roman activity (WSM28809) located about 850m to the south was identified due to a pottery scatter (WSM39810).

### Medieval

The settlement of Elmley Lovett is documented from the 9<sup>th</sup> century and lay within the Forest of Ombersley until around 1230. The boundary of Feckenham Forest (WSM42160) runs approximately 800m to the north of Upton House farm.

The deserted medieval village of Elmley Lovett (WSM02248, Scheduled Monument ref 1017254), is located to the west of the Elmley Brook, within about 400m of the site. The deserted settlement surrounds the churchyard of St Michael’s Church (WSM00489) and includes the remains of house sites, gardens and allotments and associated hollow ways, field boundaries, enclosures, fishponds (WSM07567) and remains of ridge and furrow cultivation. A moated medieval manorial complex (WSM02247) lies adjacent to the church. The earliest surviving material in the church is of 14<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> century date.

The settlement was surrounded to the south and east by medieval ridge and furrow which may

have delineated the extent of the medieval settlement suggesting that these areas formed part of the village ploughlands. There are four areas of ridge and furrow recorded on the HER to the north-east of the church (WSM34594) and to the south and west of Upton House Farm; (WSM15909; WSM34592; WSM34593 and WSM15910). Elmley Lovett Mill, shown on the 1840 tithe map at a point about 350m to the west of Upton House Farm, was a watermill likely to have dated to the late 11<sup>th</sup> century (WSM03103).



Figure 2. Medieval monuments on the HER in the vicinity of the site (site outlined in red)  
Basemap (2025) OS Opendata

### Post medieval

The site is located in HLC area HWR13599; Elmley Lovett, a nucleated cluster settlement. The original moated manorial site at Elmley Lovett is thought to have been replaced by Elmley Lodge (WSM02394) about 700m to the south-east of Upton Farm. A half-timbered house of c. 1635, it was demolished in 1890. Upton House is located just outside the area of a deer park and gardens associated with Elmley Lodge (WSM28910).

Upton Farm is recorded on the Worcestershire Historic Environment record as (WSM60637), an extant 19<sup>th</sup> century (?) unlisted farmstead with unconverted buildings. Other 19<sup>th</sup> century farmsteads in the immediate vicinity include Tinker's Farm (WSM60638), about 80m to the south-west. A brick-built smithy (WSM45677), rebuilt in 2001, is located to the north-east of Upton Farm. The building is shown on the 1810 Elmley Lovett tithe map.

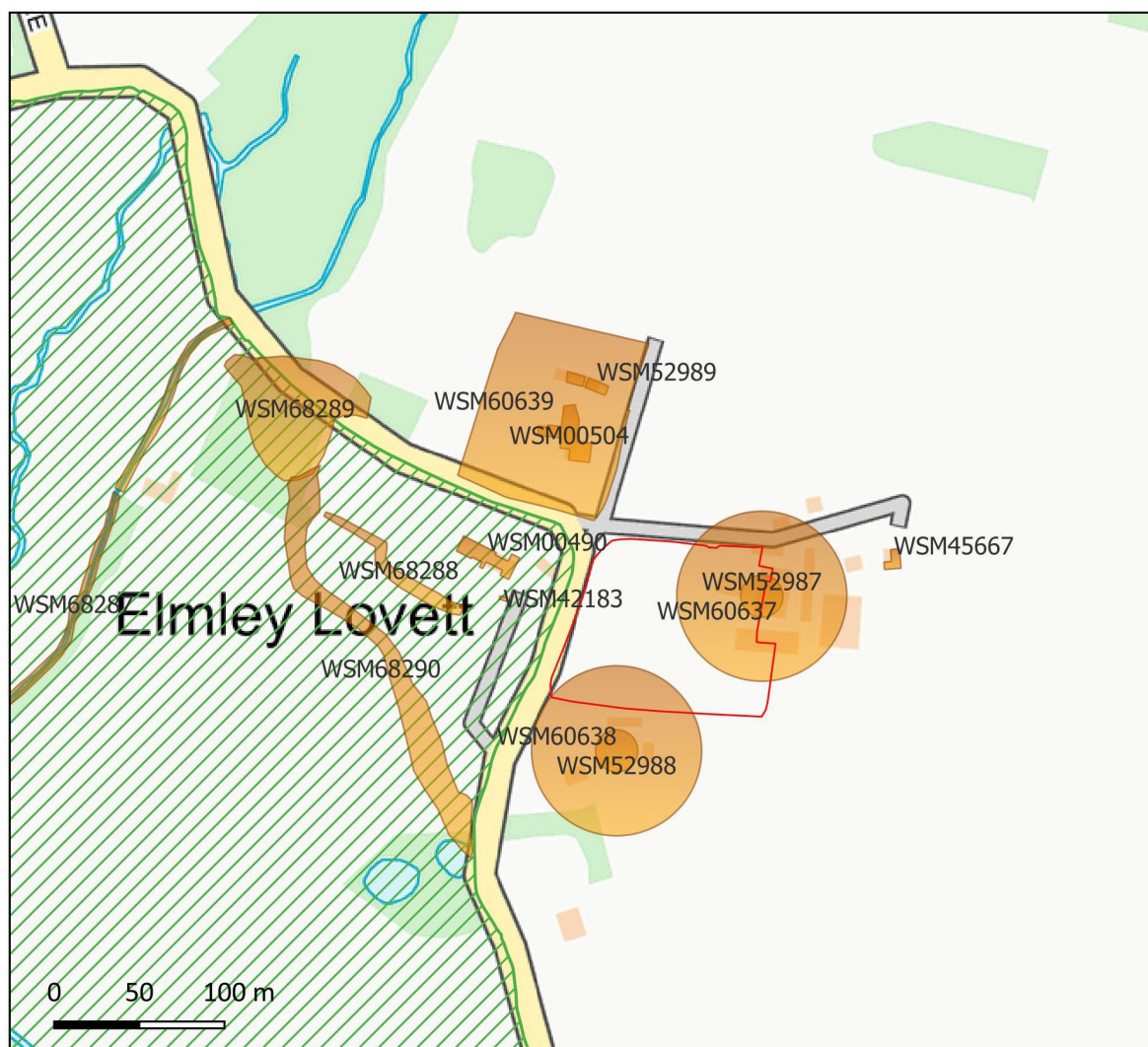


Figure 3. Post medieval monuments on the HER in the vicinity of the site (site outlined in red)  
Basemap (2025) OS Opendata

A Level 2 building recording of Upton House Farm, including a comprehensive map regression, was undertaken by Mike Napthan Archaeology prior to the evaluation (MLA 2025) which found the following:

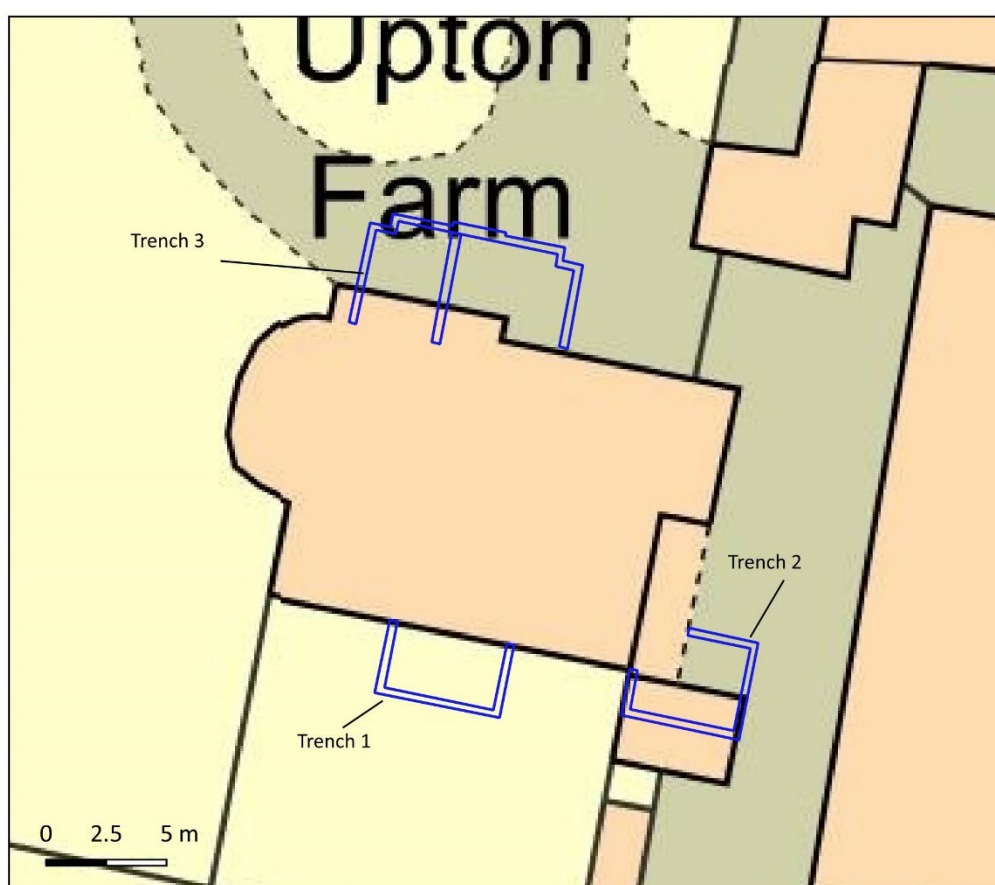
*Upton House appears to have been built in the 1870s to replace an earlier, smaller house which stood in the area of the NE corner of the present house. The house resembles a gentleman's residence and is to an individual design by an unknown architect. The land had been tenanted by George Winnall, farmer of 'Upper Hyde; also of Lower Hyde, Upton and Stone House' from the early 1850s and it is probable that the house was rebuilt shortly after his death in 1873 (MLA 2025).*

## 5. Methods

### 5.1 Fieldwork

Archaeological monitoring was carried out by Elizabeth Connolly MA, ACIfA over three days from November 2024 to March 2025. The project was carried out to the standards set out in *Guidelines for archaeological work in Worcestershire*.

Three foundation trenches were excavated in the areas of the proposed extensions. Trench 1, in the location of a proposed garden room, was excavated on 7<sup>th</sup> November 2024. Trench 2, in the location of a proposed office, was excavated on 9<sup>th</sup> December 2024. Trench 3 was located in the area of a proposed new entrance to the house and was excavated on 5<sup>th</sup> March 2025.



*Figure 3. Trench locations*

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Excavation of the foundation trenches was undertaken using a mechanical excavator under archaeological supervision.

Context recording was undertaken using context sheets and other pro-forma recording sheets and photographs were taken with a Nikon D3200 SLR camera.

## 5.2 Post excavation works

Following excavation, all context sheets were checked and cross referenced. Provision will be made to upload the digital archive of the project via OASIS (project id.: ambreyar2-533330).

## 6. Stratigraphic results

*Photograph locations can be found in Figures 5 – 7 at the back of the report. Details of contexts recorded can be found in Appendix 1.*

**Trench 1** (Fig. 5) was located to the SSW of the house and comprised 3 arms, the north-south oriented wings measuring 3m, joined by an E-W wing of 5m. Prior to the excavations the site had been cleared (Plate 1) leaving the top layer of made ground (101); a moderately loose mid-brown sandy silt containing roots and infrequent pebbles and some broken pipe work. The foundation plinth of the house (Plate 2) was evident in the east and west arms (108) and in the western arm a gas pipe (109) was recorded close to the surface within (101).

A further layer of made ground comprising cbm and small cobbles in sandy silt (102) was recorded approximately 0.27m below ground level in the western arm of the trench, measuring 0.10m in thickness. This overlay the natural substrate which was a compact, purplish brown sandy clay, disturbed by services, including (104) a clay drainpipe in the western N-S arm of the trench, which lined up with a downpipe on the house.

In the east-west arm of the trench, beneath a buried tarmac surface (106) at 0.57m bgl, a surface comprising cobbles and cbm and modern pottery (105, Plate 3) overlay the natural substrate.

Overlying the natural substrate in the south-western corner of the trench was the remains of a brick surface set in asphalt (107, Plate 4).

**Trench 2** (Fig. 6), located to the SE of the SE corner of the house, comprised four arms, 2m N-S, 5m E-W, an eastern N-S arm of 4m and a northern arm of 3m. Prior to groundworks taking place a surface of Shropshire Blue brick was removed by the contractors. Some bricks remained in the eastern part of the trench (211) with a modern water pipe (209) running beneath them along the eastern edge of the trench (Plate 5).

Elsewhere the top layer of the trench was similar to that in Trench 1; a layer of made ground comprising a loose silty clay with cbm (201). Immediately beneath this, two brick courses of a former garden wall (202) were encountered in the western arm of the trench (Plate 6). The brick courses were laid on a thin layer of concrete. The wall comprised two rows of bonded brick, oriented NE-SW, with a central cavity with a concrete filling. It mostly lay directly on the natural substrate (204), but at the northern end of the trench where it met the SE corner of the house, part of the house foundation (217) was revealed; comprising a dressed sandstone rubble over a brick and rubble plinth 0.60m deep.

The courses of bricks forming part of the foundation which extended into the trench at this point were retained in situ (Plate 7). Further to the south, a land drain (208) ran under (202). A layer of made ground to the west of the wall comprised a purplish brown clay mixed with soft dark brown silty clay (203), containing moderate charcoal flecking and small stones, with modern ceramic, cbm and glass. In the E-W arm of the trench, to the east of wall (202), another layer of made ground (205) comprised mixed loose ashy sandy clay with frequent cbm and mortar (Plate 8). A ceramic drain

(206) was recorded in this layer. The brick foundations of the eastern wall of a recently demolished shed (207) were encountered in the eastern arm of the trench, similar to garden wall foundations (202). A line of foundation stones for the covered walkway was uncovered (210) and a plinth for the standing wall comprising coursed rubble and brick (216, Plate 9). Plate 10 shows the trench fully excavated.

**Trench 3** (Fig. 7), located to the front of the house where the ground slopes noticeably westwards. The trench was located in the area of a recently demolished porch and to the west of a cellar and trench comprised three main arms, one 4m N-S along the west of the trench, and 3.5m along the eastern side, with an arm measuring 7m running E-W between them. This was joined to the other arms by dog legs of about 1m. A fourth arm of 4.6m lead to the former front door of the house from the E-W trench.

Made ground was recorded in Trench 3 comprising a soft grey sand with frequent charcoal (301) (Plate 11). The area was heavily disturbed by services – a gas pipe in the west of the trench close to the house (302) two drainage inspection chambers one (304) of concrete on breeze blocks in the west of the trench and one brick built chamber in the central trench (309), both measuring about 1m<sup>2</sup> with plastic drain pipes leading to and from them (303) and (310). Further foul pipes/drainage pipes were recorded in the trench (312) and (313) (Plate 12).

In addition the footing of the removed porch was recorded (308) comprising a line of sandstone rubble, 0.50m wide (Plate 13).

The possible foundation or demolition layer from a former garden wall was recorded (311); comprising a sandstone boulder and smaller stones and cbm in a mortar-rich matrix, 1 layer of stones maximum 0.70m wide (Plate 14).

The natural substrate was recorded from a depth of 0.20m (305). Plate 15 shows the trench fully excavated.

## 7. Discussion

Archaeological monitoring of groundworks found modern disturbance in each of the areas excavated, due to previous works such as installation of services. The brick and rubble foundations of a garden wall and a shed which had stood until recently to the immediate south and south-east of the main house were recorded as was the foundation of a recently demolished porch to the north.

In two locations, surfaces and structural features were recorded which may be related to earlier buildings which stood at the site. To the rear of the house in Trench 1, partial remains of a cobbled surface were recorded at about 0.80m below ground level. This may have been a farm surface associated with either Upton House in its current form or with the earlier building which stood on the site. No dateable finds were recovered from this context.

The remains of a masonry structure, of rubble and brick, were recorded to the north of the house in Trench 3. A single course of stones overlay bricks which were not bonded with any regularity and the feature may have been the remains of a demolished structure deposited in this location as a revetment or to build up the ground. If it is the remains of a wall foundation the wall is likely to have been a garden feature.

## 8. Acknowledgements

Ambrey Archaeology would like to thank the following for their assistance in completing this project; Timothy Smith for commissioning the project and Aidan Smyth of Wychavon District Council for monitoring the project.

## 9. Bibliography

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Mike Napthan Archaeology (MNA) 2025 *Building recording at Upton House Farm, Elmley Lovett, Worcestershire, WSM81020*, unpublished report, dated 8<sup>th</sup> January 2025

SWDP, 2016 The adopted South Worcestershire development plan (SWDP) 2016, available at [http://www.swdevelopmentplan.org/?page\\_id=12262](http://www.swdevelopmentplan.org/?page_id=12262)

Worcestershire Archive and Archaeology Service (WAAS) 2024 *Standards and Guidelines for Archaeological Projects in Worcestershire*

## Figures

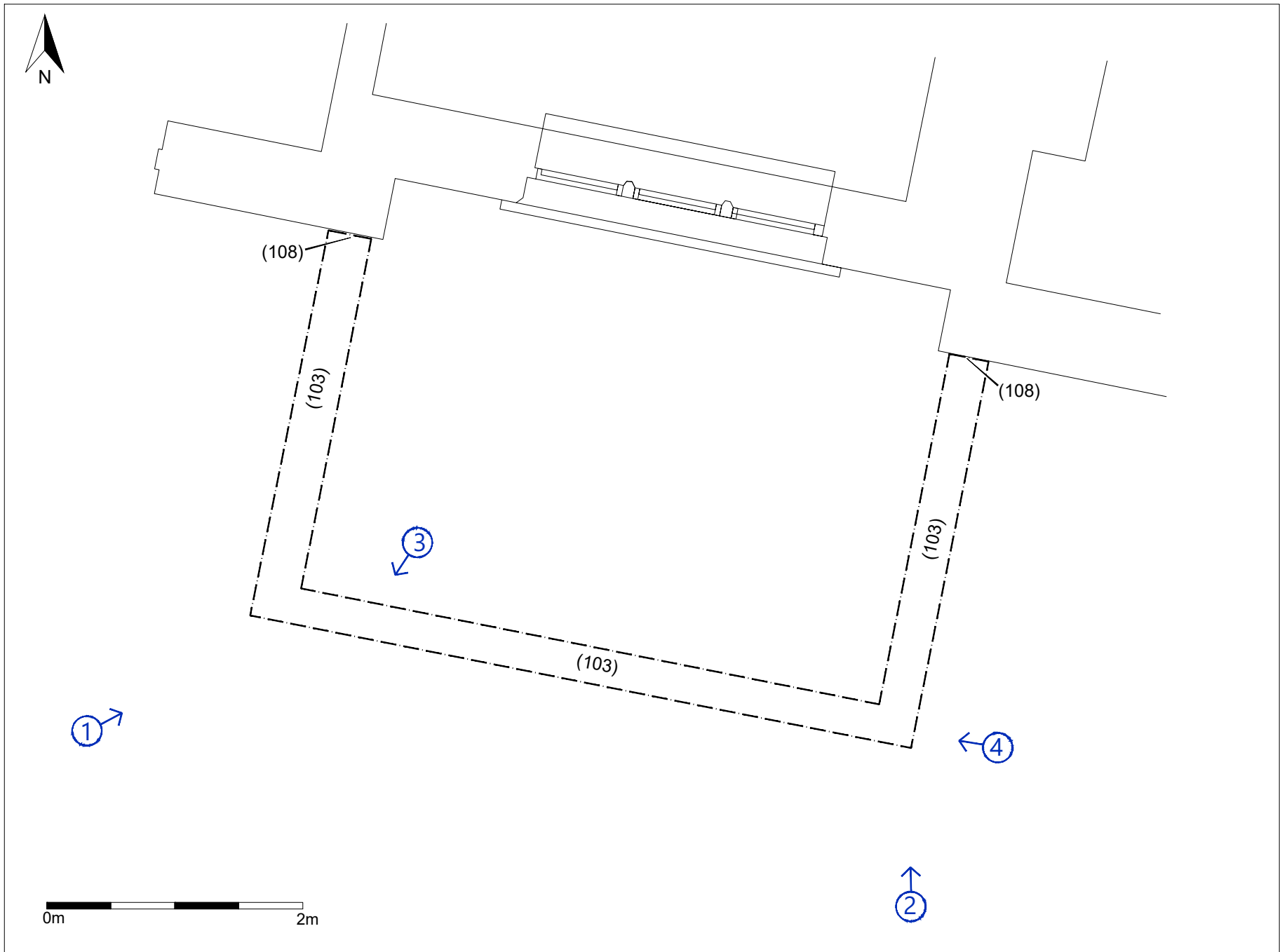


Figure 5. Plan of Trench 1

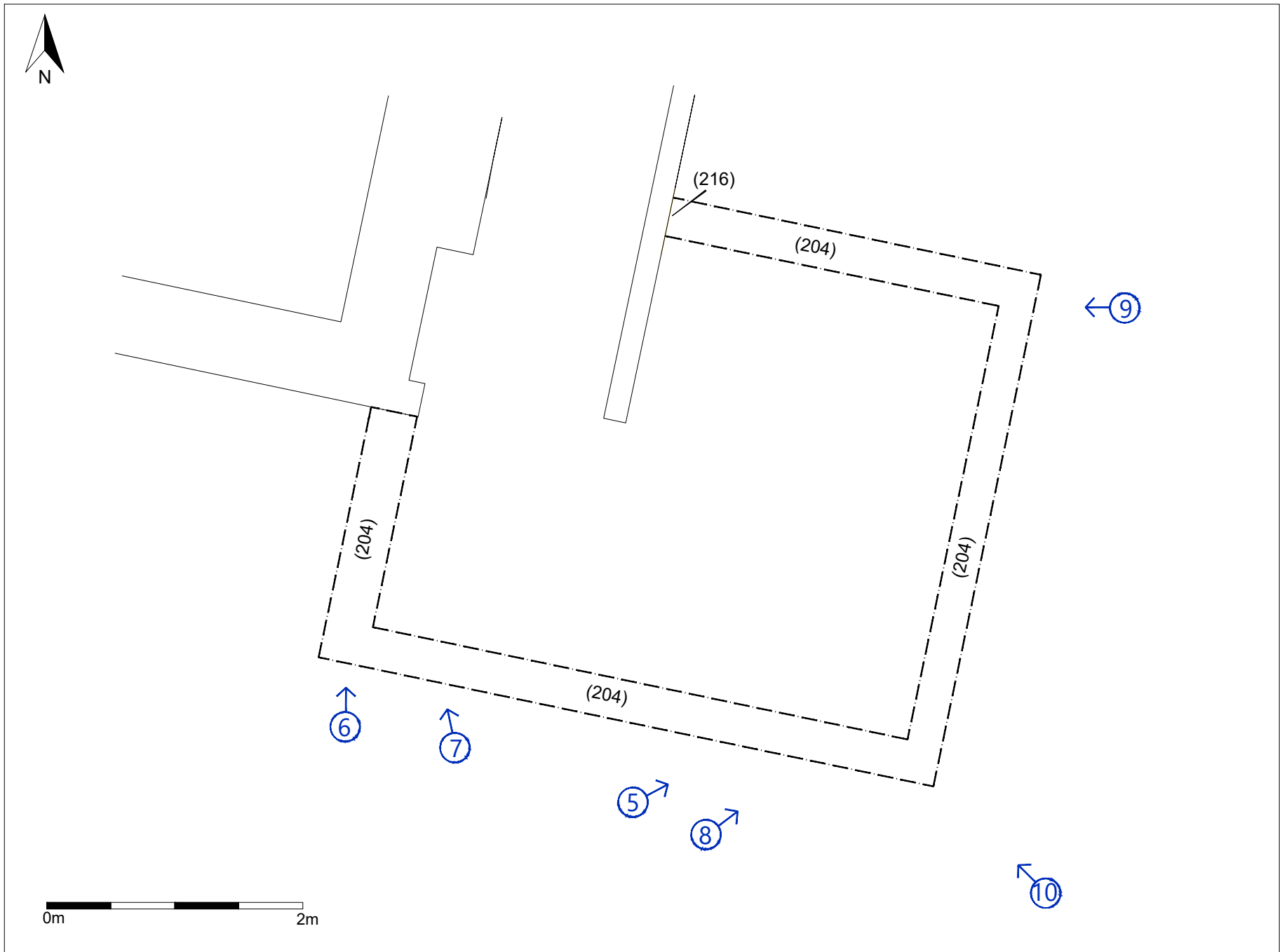


Figure 6. Plan of Trench 2

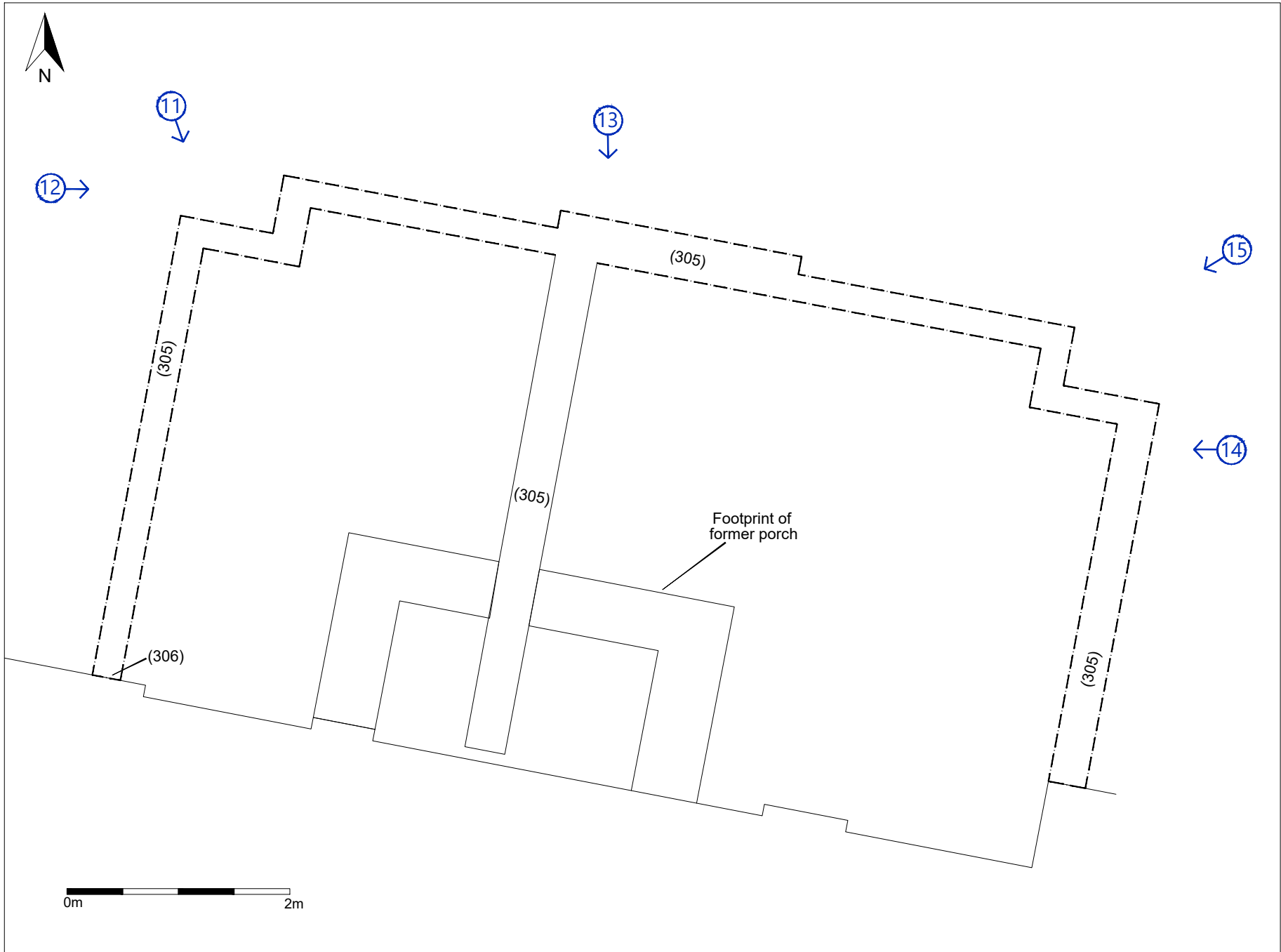


Figure 6. Plan of Trench 2

## Plates



*Plate 1. View north-east mid way through excavation of Trench 1*



*Plate 2. View NNE of eastern arm of Trench 1, scale 1m*



*Plate 3. View SSW of (105), cobbled layer, Trench 1, scale 0.50m*



*Plate 4. View WNW along southern arm of Trench 1, scale 2m*



*Plate 5. View ENE of southern arm of Trench 2*



*Plate 6. View NNW of wall (202), scale 1m*



*Plate 7. View NNW of part of house foundation (217), scale 1m*



*Plate 8. View NE of the southern arm of Trench 2*



*Plate 9. View ENE along northern arm of Trench 2, scale 1m*



*Plate 10. View NW of Trench 2*



*Plate 11. View SSW  
along the western arm of  
Trench 3, scale 1m*

*Plate 12. View ESE along north-  
ern boundary of Trench 3, scale  
1m*





*Plate 13. View SSW along central arm of Trench 3, scale 1m*

*Plate 14. View WNW of 9311) possible garden wall foundation, scale 0.40m*





*Plate 15. View SW of Trench 3*

## Appendix 1 Context descriptions

### Trench 1

Max depth 1.1m.

Context	Depth (bgl)	Description	Interpretation
101	Mostly 0-0.27m to 0 - 0.57m in western arm	Moderately loose, mid-brown sandy silt, contains roots and infrequent pebbles. One sherd of modern ceramic	Made ground/disturbed topsoil
102	0.27 – 0.37m	Moderately compact mid brown sandy silt with frequent cbm and small cobbles. Contains charcoal and burnt roots	Made ground/demolition layer
103	0.37 – 1.1m	Compact, purplish-brown sandy clay	Natural
104		Clay pipe in western N-S arm of trench. Lines up with down pipe on house	Modern drainage
105	0.80m	In east-west arm of trench. Partially surviving layer of cobbles and cbm, overlies natural.	Cobbled layer – possible former farm surface
106	0.57m	Tarmac surface with bricks and stones. 0.15m thick. Below (101), overlying (103). Overlay an electric pipe coming from west. Present for the full width of the W arm and about 1m into E - W arm. Overlies cobbles in E - W arm	Modern surface
107	0.50m	Brick surface in concrete or asphalt. In SW corner of Trench 1. Only seen in section	Farm/yard surface
108	0.25m – 1.1m	Foundation plinth, present in E and W arm	Foundation for Upton House
109		Gas pipe Yellow gas pipe close to wall in W arm	Modern service

## Trench 2

Max depth 1.2m

Context	Depth (bgl)	Description	Interpretation
201	0-0.10m	Loose mid brown silty clay with CBM, charcoal	Made ground/disturbed topsoil
202	0.20 -0.35m	Wall comprising two rows of bonded brick, oriented NE-SW The wall had a central cavity filled by ?concrete  0.30m wide  Exposed for 2.3m  2 brick courses laid on a single course of sandstone rubble with some concrete	Line of removed garden wall
203	0.20-0.40m	Soft dark brown silty clay mixed with purplish clay. Contained moderate charcoal flecking and small stones. Contains modern ceramic, cbm and glass. To west of brick wall.	Made ground
204	0.35m+	Compact purplish brown clay with grey mottling in places	Natural substrate
205	0.20-0.40m	To E of brick wall beneath (201) - mixed loose layer of ashy sandy clay with frequent cbm and mortar  (in E-W arm of trench)	Demolition/made ground
206	0.40m	Ceramic pipe in (205)	Land drain
207	0.20 -0.35m	Coursed bricks, bonded with and laid on concrete	Wall (modern)  East wall of former shed
208	0.30m	Land drain under wall (202)	Modern service
209	0.10m	Thin metal pipe running N-S arm in E edge of trench  Below modern bricks	Modern service, possibly former water
210	0.20m	E-W foundation of kerbing which runs in line with corner of lean-to (covered walkway)	
211		Layer of bricks overlying (201) in E part of trench	Modern brick surface

		Formed part of surface which had overlain the whole area of trench 2 but which had been removed by contractor prior to the WB Removed layer of Staffordshire blue bricks	
212	0.10-0.40m	Loose sand and mortar. Contains modern pipe and lumps of concrete	Demolition
213		Ceramic pipe	? foul pipe
214	0.10 – 0.80m	Compact red clay below (211) Overlies stone plinth, in steps, for building	Foundation trench
215	0.40m	Land drain under wall (202)	
216	0.20m – 0.80m	Plinth for house foundation (in steps)	
217	0.20m – 1.1m +	Brick plinth for foundation in western part of trench, below (202)	

### Trench 3

Max depth 1.3m

Context	Depth (bgl)	Description	Interpretation
301	0.24 – 0.30m (0.34m closer to NW of house)	Soft grey sand with frequent charcoal	Made ground
302	0.10m	Yellow gas pipe in N-S arm of trench, immediately to the N of the house	
303	0.20m	Plastic drain pipe assoc with down pipe to front of house	
304	0.20m	1m square concrete inspection chamber on breeze blocks	
305	0.20m+	Compact purplish clay	Natural
306	0.20m – 0.80m +	Corner of stone footing just by western edge of (?) pilaster on frontage	Footing

		Footing of shaped sandstone rubble	
307	0.20m	Clay pipe leading westwards from (304)	Natural substrate
308	0-0.2m	Line of sandstone rubble, 0.50m wide, in central N-S arm of footing	Former footing of removed porch
309	0.20m – 1.2m	Manhole and structure, c 2.5m N of door, central trench Brick built about 1m <sup>2</sup>	Foul drainage inspection chamber
310	0.20m	Plastic foul pipe leading to manhole	
311	0.40m – 0.60m	?sandstone boulder and smaller stones and cbm in a mortar-rich matrix; 0.70m wide max, 1 layer of stones, lies on natural substrate	Possible foundation for a former garden wall
312	0.20m	Drainpipe running NW-SE associated with a gulley on the house	Modern drainage
313	0.20m	Foul water pipe, plastic	Modern drainage/sewer