

Devon County Council Historic Environment Record

Civil Parish & District: Clyst St George, East Devon	National Grid Reference: SX 9791 8886	Number:
Subject: Archaeological watching brief at Knowle House, Devon and Cornwall Fire Brigade HQ, Clyst St George, Devon.		Photo attached: N
Planning Application nos: 06/0818/FUL; 06/1405/FUL	Recipient museum: Royal Albert Memorial Museum	
OASIS ID: exeterar1-96271	Museum Accession no: 463/2006	
Contractor's reference number/code: EA 7482 (5865 5878)	Dates fieldwork undertaken: 09/10/2006 – 27/11/2006	

Background

The site (Fig. 1) is within the property known as Knowle House which lies just to the west of the village of Clyst St George but separated from it by the A376. Exeter Archaeology (EA) were commissioned to undertake archaeological observation and recording during the course of works intended for the establishment of an Urban Search and Rescue Unit at the site. The fieldwork was undertaken in accordance with a *Written Scheme of Investigation* (WSI) prepared by EA in 2006 under Project Code 5878 (and 5865) in response to a condition attached to the grant of planning permission by East Devon District Council (Refs. 06/0818 and 06/1405). The archaeological work was required by the Devon County Historic Environment Service (DCHES).

Historical background

The earliest recorded reference to Knowle House is from Trewman's Exeter Flying Post in 1830 when, following the death of Lady Collier, the property was put up for sale. It was described then as;

Knowle Cottage and 17 acres of garden laid out in an ornamental nature, with walled gardens, conservatory, aviaries, carriage houses, stables and cattlesheds.

Knowle House appears on the 1st edition OS plan of 1889-90 (Fig. 2). Further detail in EA report of 2006.

Description of works:

The observed ground works comprised several areas of activity within the proposed development footprint, including topsoil stripping, the preparation of a new access road, excavation for an attenuation tank and foundation trenches for new buildings. In addition, three test-pits were excavated within the footprint of the proposed main reception. The ground works were carried out using a 360 degree tracked excavator, fitted with a standard, toothless, grading bucket.

Results

Southern Access Road (Fig. 3)

Excavation work commenced at the eastern end of the access road at its junction with the present driveway and proceeded west to the proposed parking area, a distance of

approximately 95m by 3.5m wide. A short length of the road connected the parking area to the new training building.

Observations resulting from the topsoil stripping and reduction to formation level of the access road were as follows:

Deposit Sequence (at mid-way point in access road)

- 0-100mm. Turf.
- 100mm-400mm. Topsoil of mid-brown, friable to moderate compaction, silt/clay (40%: 60%) with occasional roots, brick fragments, coal fragments and small, rounded stones.
- 400mm. Natural subsoil. Mottled dark red/orange brown, moderate to firm, sandy/silt.

Note: the original ground surface appears to have been uneven and a greater depth of topsoil was apparent at the eastern end of the access road where natural subsoil was not observed at formation level.

Parking Area (Fig. 3)

Observations resulting from the reduction of a rectangular area (measuring 28m by 54m) to a formation level 500mm below the existing ground surface were as follows:

Deposit Sequence

- 0-100mm. Turf.
- 100-500mm. Topsoil of mid-brown, friable to moderate compaction, silt/clay (40%: 60%). With occasional roots, brick fragments, coal fragments, pottery fragments and small, rounded stones.
- 500mm Natural subsoil of mottled dark red/orange brown, friable to moderate, sandy/silt.

Accommodation Building, Dog Compound and Training Building. (Fig. 3)

Foundations for the above buildings were observed to a maximum formation depth of 1.3m. The deposit sequence was the same as that for the parking area.

Attenuation Tank (Fig. 3)

- A rectangular area with dimensions of 36m E/W by 5.8m N/S was excavated to a depth of 1.1m for the insertion of a foul water attenuation tank. A topsoil, identical to that observed in the proposed parking area (see above), was removed to a depth of 500mm. The remainder of the trench was excavated to the formation depth of 1.1m below the existing ground surface into a natural subsoil of mottled dark red/orange brown, friable to moderate, sandy/silt.

Reception Building (Fig. 3)

Three test-pits were excavated across the footprint of the reception building.

The deposit sequence recorded was as follows:

Test-Pit 1

The dimensions of this test-pit were 900m N/S by 1.45m E/W.

Deposit Sequence:

- 0-530mm. Garden soil of mottled red and dark grey/brown, loose to friable, sandy/clay (40%: 60%). With occasional roots, coal fragments, pottery

fragments and small stones

- 530mm-820mm. Topsoil of red-brown, moderate to firm, silty/sand (20%: 80%) with occasional roots and small stones
- 820mm-1.1m Natural subsoil of mottled dark red/orange brown, friable to moderate, sandy/silt.

Test Pit 2: Dimensions of this test-pit were 1m N/S by 1.45m E/W.

Test Pit 3: Dimensions of this test-pit were 1.06m N/S by 1.5m E/W.

The deposit sequence for test pits 2 and 3 is that recorded for test pit 1.

Main Reception Building and car parking area (Fig. 3)

Work for the main reception building and an associated car park began with the removal of topsoil across the turfed area at the south and west of Knowle House. The removed topsoil comprised approximately 350mm of mottled dark grey/brown and red/brown, friable, silt/clay. This material probably constituted the remnants of the old garden soil which occupied this area until at least the 1890s.

During this initial phase of reduction the remains of an ornamental garden path lying on a distinctive curved alignment to the southwest of Knowle House was exposed. The walkway was constructed of a 2m wide compacted off-white, lime mortar surface, flanked on both sides by cobbled borders. Both the outer and inner edges of the path way were punctuated at 1.6m intervals by small plinths. The presence of these plinths suggest that the path way was equipped with some form of roof, the design of which is not known.

A second, less elaborate, path way was exposed toward the west side of the area, aligned approximately northwest to southeast. This path comprised a gravel path approximately 2m wide edged on either side by a single row of cobbles. This path lay at approximately right angles to the ornamental path.

Finds

A total of ten sherds of pottery were recovered, including one sherd of post-medieval pottery which was identified as a fragment of a Westerwald stoneware tankard (post 1680). Also found was a glass bottle seal with the initials 'IJD' which is dated on stylistic grounds to the 18th century.

Conclusion

Observations made during the course of the groundworks at various locations within the development footprint suggest a lack of any clearly recognisable archaeological features or deposits earlier than the 19th century although the earlier post-medieval pottery and glass could hint at some 18th century activity. The features of certain 19th century date include ornamental garden paths which appear to match those depicted on the 1st edition OS map of 1889/90. For example, part of a substantial and well-made curving garden path leading from the rear of Knowle House, perhaps to a summerhouse, was observed on site and shows clearly on the OS map (Fig. 2).

Project archive and OASIS entry

The site records have been compiled into a fully integrated site archive which is currently held at the offices of Exeter Archaeology under project number 7482. The archive will be deposited under the accession number (463/2006) with the Royal Albert Memorial Museum, Exeter within three months of its re-opening to receive such archival material.

This report has been submitted to the on-line archaeological database OASIS (Online AccesS to the Index of archaeological InterventionS) under the number exeterar1-96271.

Reference

2006: Written Scheme of Investigation for Archaeological Monitoring and Recording at the Urban Search and Rescue Facility, Clyst St George, Exeter. Unpublished document at Exeter Archaeology.

2006: Archaeological Assessment of land at Knowle House, Clyst St George. Unpublished Report, Exeter Archaeology **06.62**.

Ordnance Survey (OS)

1:10560 map 1st edition c.1889-90 Sheets 80.16 and 92.4

Recorder:

J. Bell (Exeter Archaeology)

J.P. Salvatore (Exeter Archaeology)

Date sent to HER:

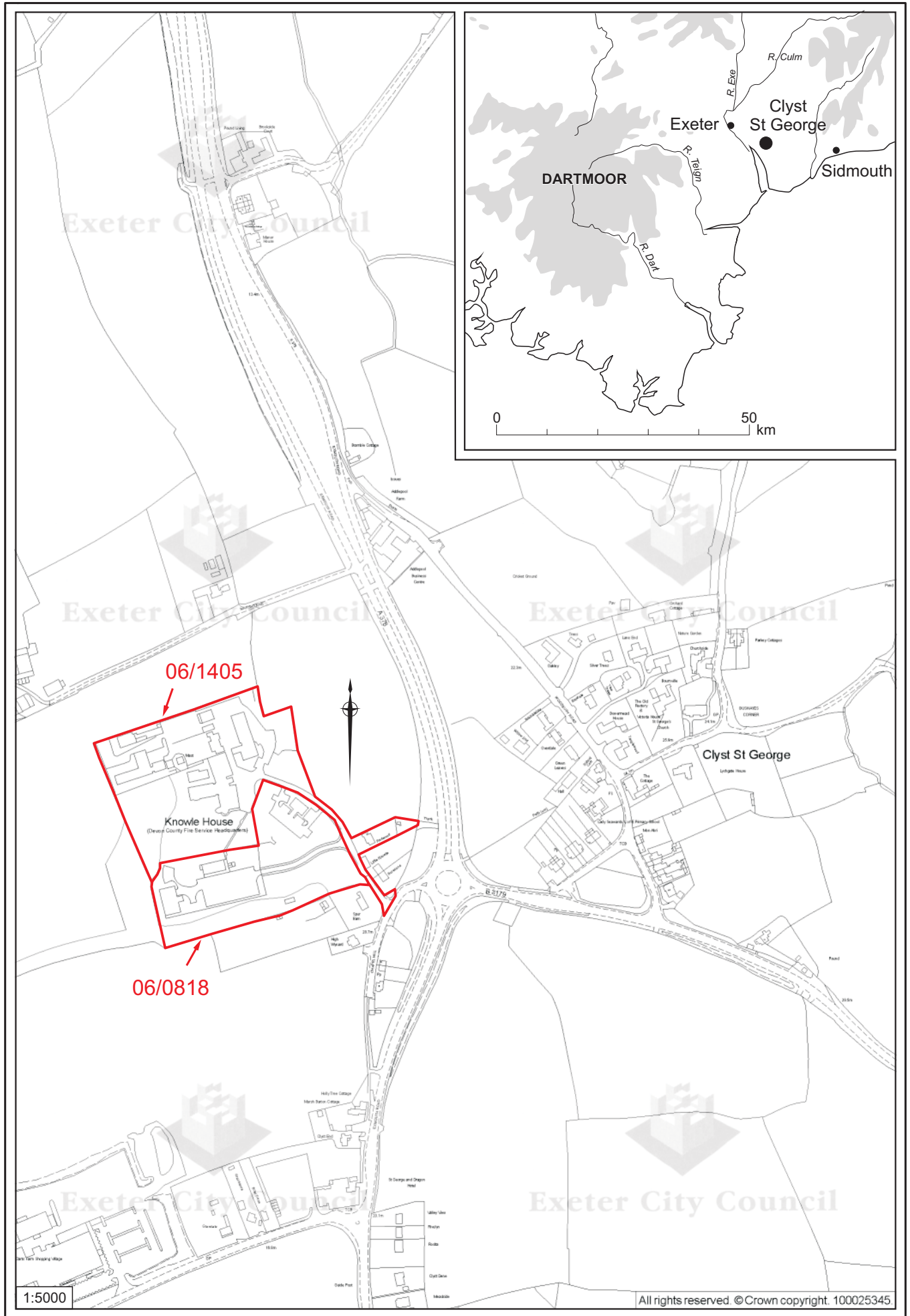


Fig. 1 Location of site.

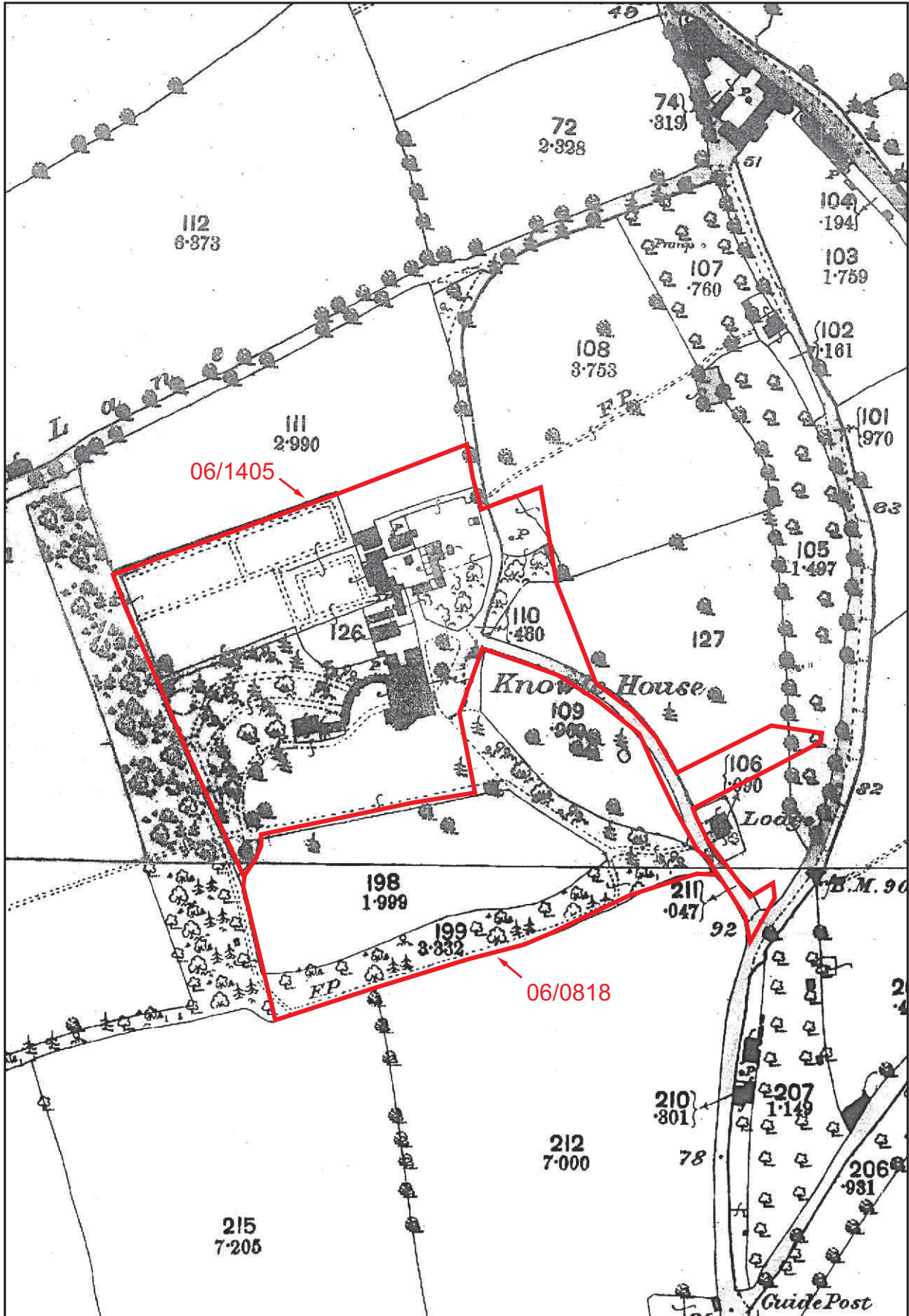


Fig. 2 The site in 1889/90. Reproduced from OS sheets 80.16 and 92.4. Scale 1:2500.

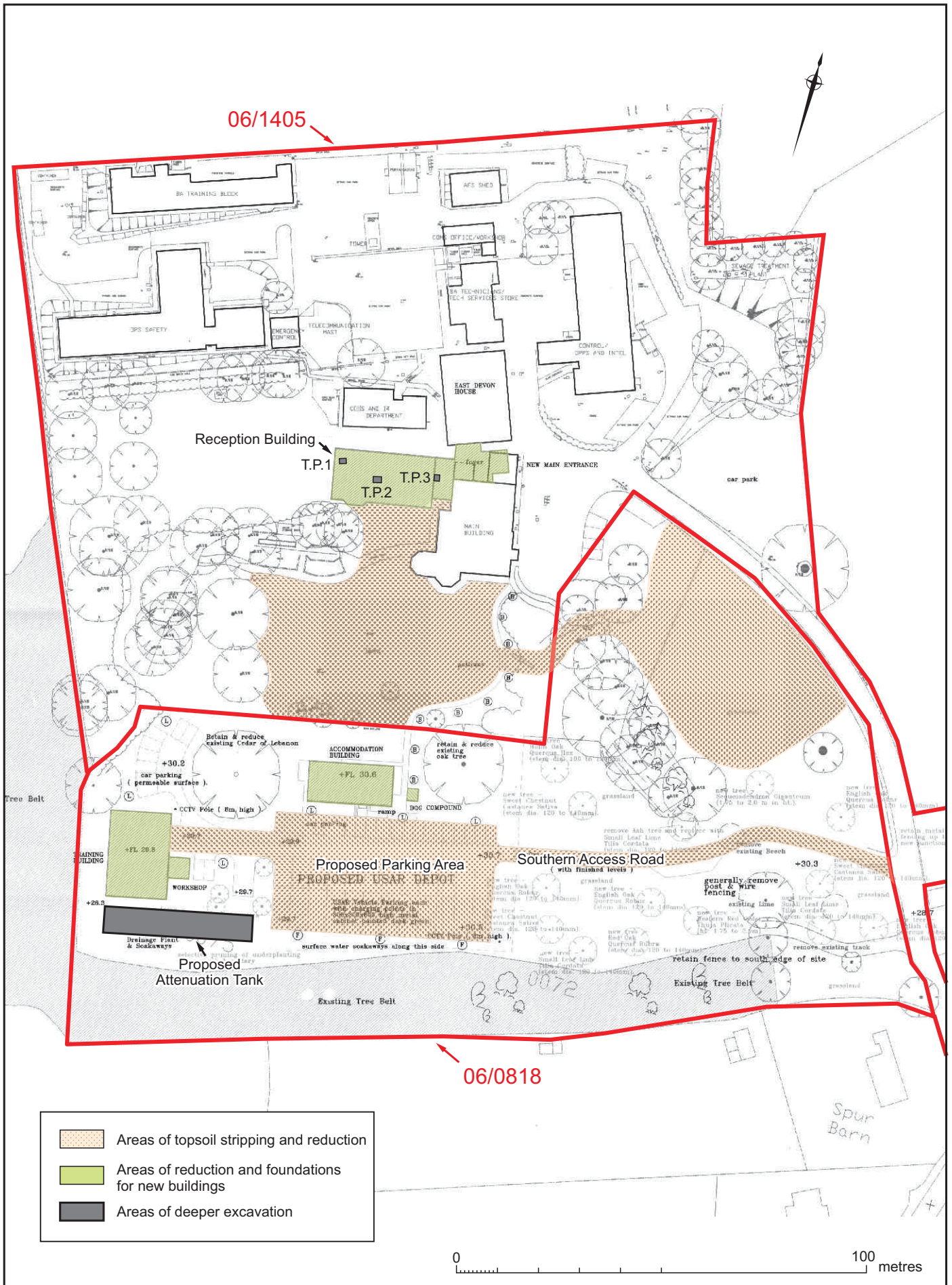


Fig. 3 Areas of intervention and observation. Plan supplied by Devon Fire and Rescue Service.