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AN ARCHAEOLOGICAL MITIGATION STRATEGY: MONITORING A PRESERVATION IN SITU SCHEME, LOCALISED INVESTIGATION AND RECORDING

CHER NO. 3496

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NGR: TL 186 620	Report No. 3807
District: St. Neots	Site Code: AS 1260
Approved: Claire Halpin MIFA	Project No. P3657
Signed:	Date: April 2011

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Project details			
Project name	*Former Dairy Depot, R/O 11-17 Church Street, St. Neots, Cambridgeshire. Archaeological Monitoring and Recording*		
In February and March 2011, Archaeological Solutions Ltd (AS) carried out a programme of archaeological monitoring and recording during groundworks associated with the residential development of the Former Dairy Depot, to the rear of 11-17 Church Street, St. Neots, Cambridgeshire (NGR TL 186 620). The monitoring was commissioned by Howard Project Management Ltd, and carried out in compliance with a planning condition attached to planning approval (Planning ref. 0900305F). *In December 2009, Archaeological Solutions Ltd conducted an archaeological trial trench evaluation (Adams 2010). It revealed features and deposits of medieval, late medieval, early post-medieval and modern date. Nineteenth-century structures (outbuildings and garden walls) and modern pits were recorded. The earlier activity comprised large ditches or possible quarrying, and some settlement activity (pits and postholes). The medieval and late medieval archaeology was sufficiently substantial, and at a significant depth, that it survived later activity.* *A mitigation strategy was implemented ensuring that the deeper stratigraphy of the site and the archaeology was preserved, and no archaeological features were revealed during the monitoring.*		
Project dates (fieldwork)	*1st & 8th February, 4th & 11th March 2011*		
Previous work (Y/N/?)	*y*	Future work (Y/N/?)	*N*
P. number	*3657*	Site code	*AS 1260*
Type of project	*Monitoring and Recording*		
Site status	*Area of Archaeological Interest*		
Current land use	*Hard standing*		
Planned development	*8 dwellings*		
Main features (+dates)	*None*		
Significant finds (+dates)	*None*		
Project location			
County/ District/ Parish	*Cambridgeshire*	*St Neots*	*St Neots*
HER/ SMR for area	*Cambridgeshire HER*		
Post code (if known)	-		
Area of site	*c. 1500m2*		
NGR	*TL 186 620*		
Height AOD (max/ min)	*c.16m AOD*		
Project creators			
Brief issued by	*Cambridgeshire Archaeology Planning & Countryside Advice Cambridgeshire County Council (CAPCA CCC)*		
Projectsupervisor/s(PO)	*Adam Dyson & Martin Brook*		
Funded by	*Howard Project Management Ltd*		
Bibliography			
Full title	*Former Dairy Depot, R/O 11-17 Church Street, St. Neots, Cambridgeshire. An Archaeological Mitigation Strategy.*		
Authors	*Matthew Adams*		
Report no.	*3807*		
Date (of report)	*April 2011*		

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AN ARCHAEOLOGICAL MITIGATION STRATEGY: MONITORING A PRESERVATION IN SITU SCHEME, LOCALISED INVESTIGATION AND RECORDING

SUMMARY

In February and March 2011, Archaeological Solutions Ltd (AS) carried out a programme of archaeological monitoring and recording during groundworks associated with the residential development of the Former Dairy Depot, to the rear of 11-17 Church Street, St. Neots, Cambridgeshire (NGR TL 186 620). The monitoring was commissioned by Howard Project Management Ltd, and carried out in compliance with a planning condition attached to planning approval (Planning ref. 0900305F).

In December 2009, Archaeological Solutions Ltd conducted an archaeological trial trench evaluation (Adams 2010). It revealed features and deposits of medieval, late medieval, early post-medieval and modern date. Nineteenth-century structures (outbuildings and garden walls) and modern pits were recorded. The earlier activity comprised large ditches or possible quarrying, and some settlement activity (pits and postholes). The medieval and late medieval archaeology was sufficiently substantial, and at a significant depth, that it survived later activity.

A mitigation strategy was implemented ensuring that the deeper stratigraphy of the site and the archaeology was preserved, and no archaeological features were revealed during the monitoring.

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 In February and March 2011, Archaeological Solutions Ltd (AS) carried out monitoring of an archaeological mitigation strategy during ground works associated with the residential development of the former dairy depot, to the rear of 11-17 Church Street, St. Neots, Cambridgeshire (NGR TL 186 620; Figs. 1 - 2). The strategy was commissioned by Howard Project Management Ltd, and was executed in compliance with a planning condition attached to planning approval (Hunts DC Planning Ref. 0900305F). The development comprises the construction of 2 town houses and 6 two-storey courtyard dwellings with an internal access road, with services, 4 soakaways and hard standing.

1.2 Previously, in December 2009, Archaeological Solutions Ltd conducted an archaeological trial trench evaluation (Adams 2010). It revealed features and deposits of medieval, late medieval, early post-medieval and modern date. Nineteenth-century structures (outbuildings and garden walls) and modern pits were recorded. The earlier activity comprised large ditches or possible quarrying, and some settlement activity (pits and postholes). The medieval and late medieval archaeology was sufficiently substantial, and at a significant depth, that it survived later activity. Based on the results of the evaluation an archaeological mitigation strategy (allowing for monitoring a preservation *in situ* scheme, localised investigation and recording) was agreed with Cambridgeshire County Council Historic Environment Team (CCC HET).

1.3 The mitigation strategy was conducted in accordance with a brief prepared by (CCC HET) (dated 09/11/2010), and a specification compiled by AS (dated 15/11/2010). The project adhered to the *Code of Conduct* of the Institute for Archaeologists. It also adhered to the IfA's *Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Excavation* and *Archaeological Watching Briefs (both revised 2008);* and *Standards for Field Archaeology in the East of England* (Gurney 2003).

1.4 The project aimed to:

- Monitor the limited depth foundation design and describe in a monitoring report
- Ensure that any archaeological features exposed during ground works were recorded and interpreted to an acceptable standard
- Ensure that any significant discoveries or artefact evidence were recorded and analysed to an acceptable standard
- To ensure that, if significant remains are encountered, resources and approach for dealing with these are agreed with the client and CCC HET.

Planning Policy Context

1.5 PPS5 (2010) states that those parts of the historic environment that have significance because of their historic, archaeological, architectural or artistic interest are heritage assets. The Planning Policy Statement aims to deliver sustainable development by ensuring that policies and decisions that concern the historic environment recognise that heritage assets are a non-renewable resource, take account of the wider social, cultural, economic and environmental benefits of heritage conservation, and recognise that intelligently managed change may sometimes be necessary if heritage assets are to be maintained for the long term. It aims to conserve England's heritage assets in a manner appropriate to their significance. It states that opportunities to capture evidence from the historic environment and to contribute to our knowledge and understanding of our past, and to make this publicly available, should be taken, particularly where a heritage asset is to be lost.

2 SITE DESCRIPTION
THE NATURE OF THE DEVELOPMENT AND ARCHAEOLOGICAL REQUIREMENTS

2.1 The site lies within an area of archaeological potential within historic core of the town of St Neots, on the eastern side of Church Street.

2.2 The parish church of St Mary lies close by to the east of the site on the opposite side of Church Street. The area is generally flat, but slopes gently towards the Fox Brook, a tributary of the river Ouse which skirts the site to the south, lying at approximately 15m AOD. The site lies on First Terrace sands and gravels of the Great Ouse, overlying solid deposits of Oxford Clay.

2.3 Earlier prehistoric activity is known from this part of the Ouse valley, including Palaeolithic evidence from an area of Saxon settlement excavated to the north-east of the site, sites closer to the river producing Mesolithic flints, evidence of Neolithic occupation and a Bronze Age ring-ditch. Iron Age activity is also attested near to the river to the south-west. Several significant Roman sites have also been identified in the town, with evidence for 3rd – 4th century occupation along with earlier finds evidence at Eynesbury to the south the Hen Brook, and pottery from the area of the later Saxon settlement areas.

2.4 Excavations since the 1930s have revealed the remains of a late Saxon settlement, characterised by timber buildings, a defensive ditch and evidence of farming and industrial activity, to the south-east of the parish church. The evidence points to 9th century and later occupation, often preserved from truncation by later medieval activity. Earlier Saxon activity is suggested in the area of the priory. Middle Saxon activity is known from Eynesbury, including a possible pagan cemetery, on the riverside to the south-west, whilst a 6th century cremation and inhumation cemetery was discovered to the north in the 19th century.

2.5 The excavations from the 1930s onwards suggest that the late Saxon settlement was bounded by the Fox Brook, Church Street and Cambridge Street. The settlement extended over a considerable area (8 ha) and it related as much to Hen Brook and the area around St Mary's Church as it did to the Ouse bridgehead and the priory to the west.

2.6 The Saxon settlement of St Neots, and the present town, are on the first/second gravel terrace of the Ouse, immediately east of the river. The Middle Ouse valley in which St Neots and the other Saxon settlements (e.g. Eaton Socon, Eynesbury, Great Paxton) lie, is in a well-developed river system.

2.7 Various finds of Saxon material indicate shifting settlement in the early,

middle and late Saxon periods (e.g. an early Saxon cemetery was found in the 19th century at the west end of Avenue Road). The river crossing and priory would have played an important part in the development of the Saxon and medieval town.

2.8 Previous archaeological investigations have been undertaken within the bounds of the development site (and continued eastwards). In the early 1960s, Addyman recorded structural remains, with evidence of at least one recognisable building. He also investigated the foundations, walled garden and mortared yard of Hall Place in the central northern part of the site, which was the premier St Neots residence in the post-medieval period (17th-18th centuries), and overlay a medieval fish pond.

2.9 Excavations by AS in advance of development close by to the south at Hall Place/Church View in 2007 revealed evidence of prehistoric activity (including a Bronze Age cremation burial), Roman, late Saxon, medieval and post-medieval activity (HER 00567b) (Newton *et al* 2009).

2.10 The site has been subject to a previous archaeological evaluation (AS 2009). It revealed features and deposits of medieval, late medieval, early post-medieval and modern date. Nineteenth-century structures (outbuildings and garden walls) and modern pits were recorded. The earlier activity comprised large ditches or possible quarrying, and some settlement activity (pits and postholes). The medieval and late medieval archaeology was sufficiently substantial, and at a significant depth, that it survived later activity.

2.11 The development of the site comprised the construction of two town houses, six two-storey courtyard dwellings, an internal access road, services, four soakaways and hard standing (Figs. 3 – 5). A Preservation of Archaeological Remains *In Situ* (PARIS) construction scheme was agreed with CCC HET and the client. The construction scheme was designed to ensure that medieval archaeological remains, which were located at significant depth, and, to a slightly lesser extent, post-medieval archaeological remains, were preserved *in situ*. Construction comprised the use of a piled foundation design. It was agreed that ground beam and pile cap base depth would be limited and that machining for their installation would not exceed 600mm below the present ground level. It was understood that services and soakaways would require deeper excavation. Archaeological monitoring of all of the stages of construction that required groundworks was required in order to fulfil the archaeological condition placed on the planning consent. The monitoring requirement was designed to ensure that the foundation design was implemented in accordance with the agreed scheme and to record this fact within the report of the results. It also served to ensure that archaeological remains encountered in more invasive, unavoidable impact areas (services, soakaways etc) were subject to archaeological investigation and monitoring.

5 METHODOLOGY

5.1 The archaeological monitoring comprised the observation of all intrusive groundworks. Exposed surfaces were cleaned by hand and examined for archaeological features. Deposits were recorded using pro forma recording sheets, drawn to scale and photographed as appropriate. Excavated spoil was searched for archaeological finds.

5.2 The deepest ground works which could be observed comprised the excavation of a service trench (0.60 wide x *c.*1m deep) and a foul drain (Fig. 6).

6 RESULTS

6.1 The site was visited on the 1st and 8th February and 4th and 11th March 2011.

6.2 The groundworks were completed in three phases. The first phase saw ground reduction down to 0.30m into L2001 in the western area of the site. No excavation was required in the eastern area of the site. The requirements of the PARIS detailed that excavation was to occur no deeper than 0.60m. Once the first phase was completed, phase two saw a sub base of 0.30m placed on top of the current ground level before any toe beams could be excavated. When this was completed the toe beams were excavated to a depth of 0.25m within the 0.30m of the sub base. In the eastern area of the site service trenches were excavated to a depth of 0.75m from finished ground level. This meant that that service trenches were only 0.45 – 0.60m below original ground level. Once complete the piling was added to a depth of 0.60m below original ground level, 0.90 below finished ground level.

6.3 The ground reduction in the western area of the site, the pile foundations, foul drain run and a 20m service trench were conducted under archaeological supervision. The ground reduction was undertaken and the services were excavated using a tracked 360º excavator fitted with a toothless bucket. The piles were inserted using a piling rig. Sections and bases of ground beams and service trenches were inspected for archaeological features/stratigraphy.

6.4 Three sample sections were recorded and are tabulated below.

Sample Section 1

Located on S section of foul drain North Facing 0.00m = 15.93m AOD		
0.00 – 0.20m	L2000	Concrete Surface. Light grey, hard, concrete
0.20 – 0.60m+	L2001	Made Ground. Mid grey brown, compact, clay silt with occasional CBM

Sample Section 2

Located on S section W end of service trench North Facing 0.00m = 15.55m AOD		
0.00 – 0.40m	L2000	Concrete Surface. As Above.
0.40 – 0.66m	L2001	Made Ground. As Above.
0.66 – 0.90m+	L2002	Made Ground. Dark brown grey, compact, clay silt with frequent small stones, occasional charcoal fleck and chalk

Sample Section 3

Located on S section E end of service trench North Facing 0.00m = 15.72m AOD		
0.00 – 0.28m	L1000	Concrete Surface. As Above.
0.28 – 0.45m	L1001	Made Ground. As Above.
0.45 – 0.75m+	L1002	Made Ground. As Above.

Description: No archaeological features or finds were present during the monitoring.

7 CONFIDENCE RATING

7.1 It is not felt that any factors inhibited the recognition of archaeological features or finds during the programme of monitoring and recording.

8 DEPOSIT MODEL

8.1 Concrete Surface L2000 was the upper most layer across site and was a light grey, hard, concrete. It overlay a Made Ground Layer, L2001, which was a mid grey brown, compact, clay silt with occasional CBM. This overlay another Made Ground Layer, L2002, which was a dark brown grey, compact, clay silt with frequent small stones, occasional charcoal fleck and chalk.

9 DISCUSSION

9.1 The preceding trial trench evaluation revealed features and deposits of medieval, late medieval, early post-medieval and modern date (Adams 2010). Nineteenth-century structures (outbuildings and garden walls) and modern pits were recorded. The earlier activity comprised large ditches or possible quarrying, and some settlement activity (pits and postholes). The medieval and

late medieval archaeology was sufficiently substantial, and at a significant depth, that it survived later activity.

9.2 A Preservation of Archaeological Remains *In Situ* (PARIS) mitigation strategy was implemented ensuring that the deeper stratigraphy of the site and the archaeology was preserved. No archaeological features were revealed during the monitoring.

DEPOSITION OF THE ARCHIVE

Archive records, with an inventory, will be deposited with any donated finds from the site at the Cambridge County Archaeological Store (CCAS). The archive will be quantified, ordered, indexed, cross-referenced and checked for internal consistency. In addition to the overall site summary, it will be necessary to produce a summary of the artefactual and ecofactual data.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Archaeological Solutions Limited would like to thank Howard (Project Management) Ltd for commissioning and funding the programme of monitoring, and Amber Developments (St Ives) Limited for their kind assistance.

AS also gratefully acknowledges the input and advice of Ms Kasia Gdaniec at Cambridgeshire Archaeology, Cambridgeshire County Council Planning and Countryside Advice.

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1
General site view. Looking west.

2
Water service trench. Looking east.

3
Sample Section 2. Looking south.

4
Sample Section 3. Looking south.

5
Sample Section 1. Looking south.

6
General site view & piling rig. Looking south.

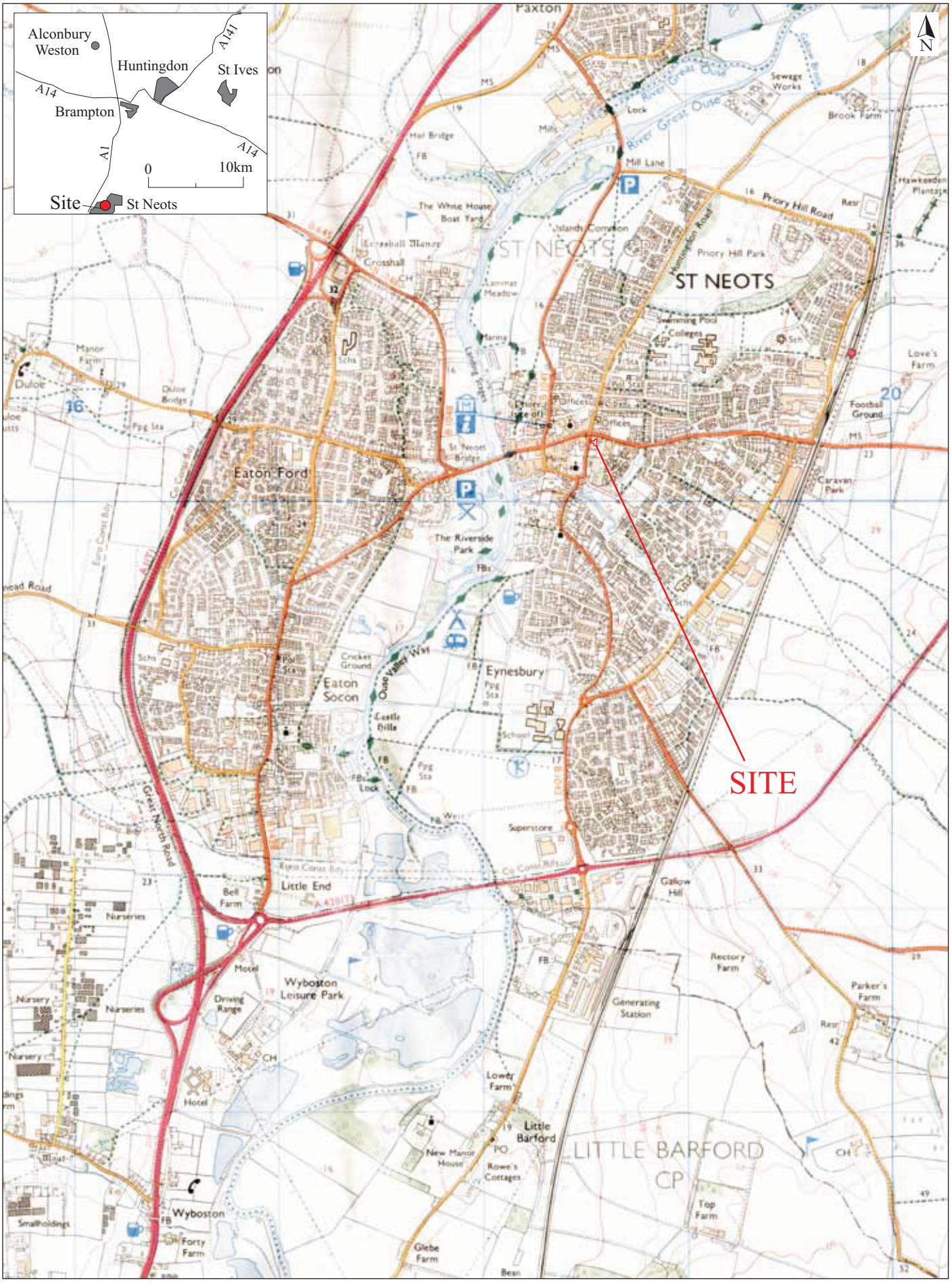

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Fig. 1 Site location

Scale 1:25,000 at A4

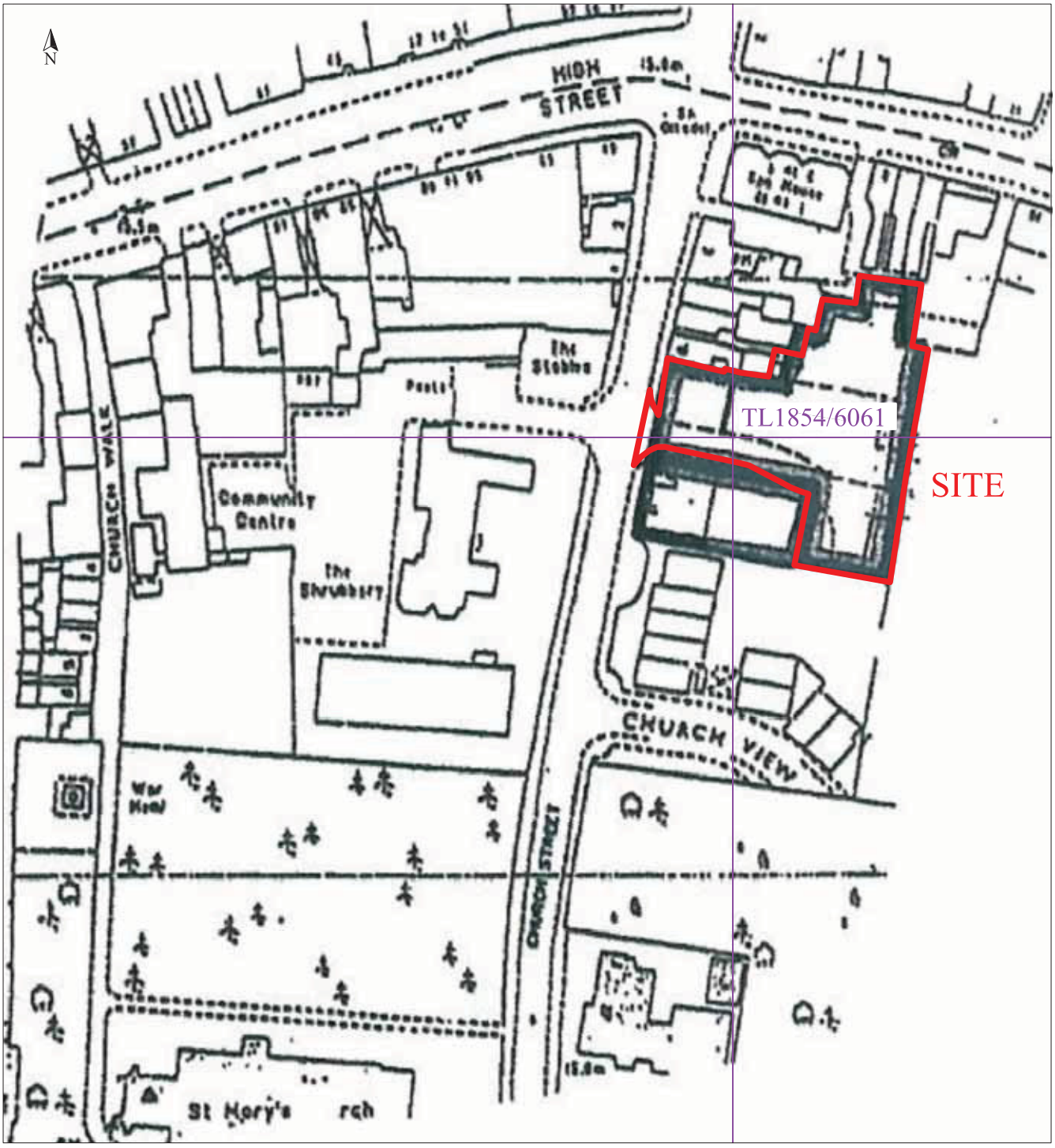

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Fig. 2 Detailed site location plan
Scale 1:1000 at A4

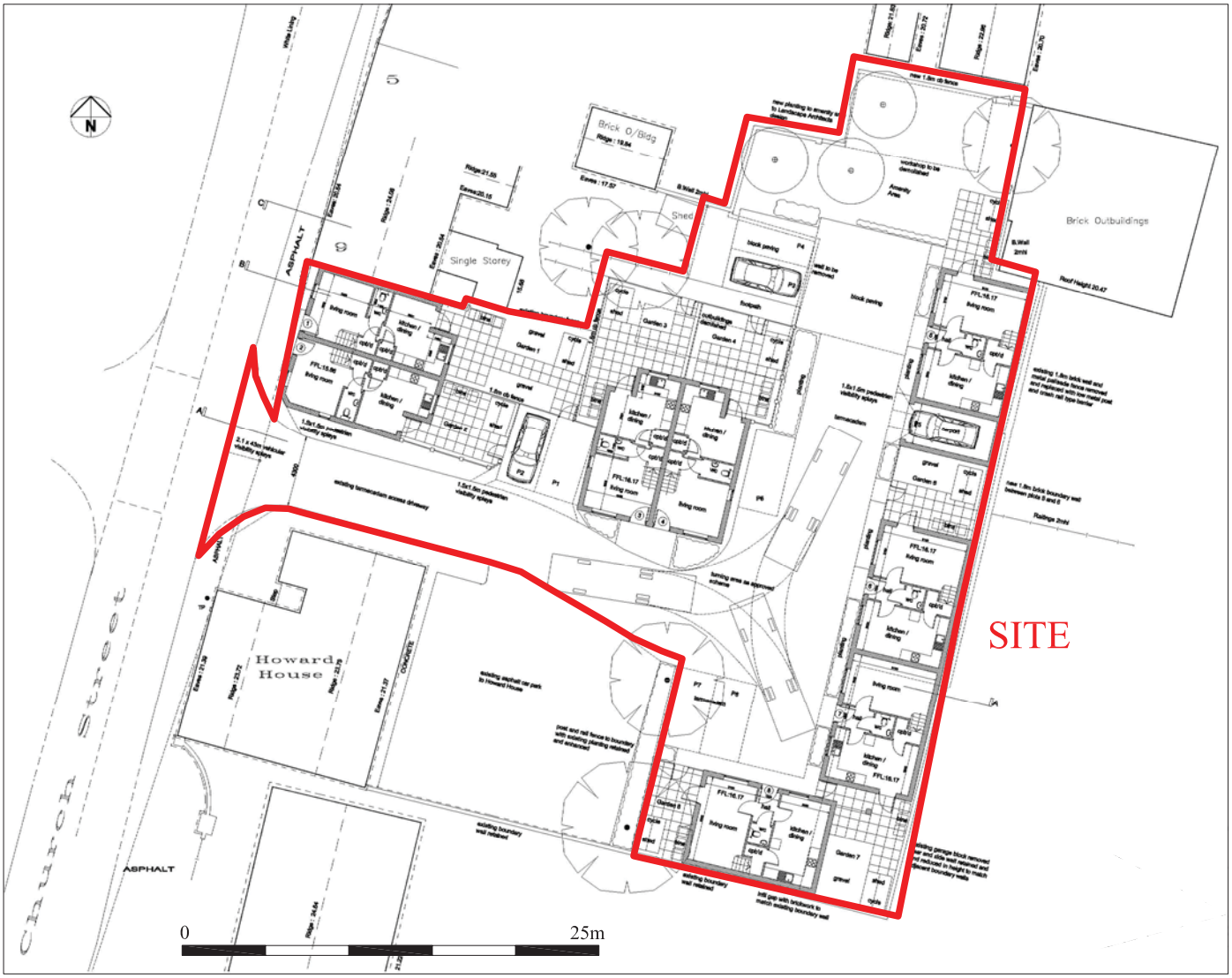

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Fig. 3 Proposed development plan

Scale 1:400 at A4

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Fig. 4 Indicative foundations for planning application

Scale 1:400 at A4

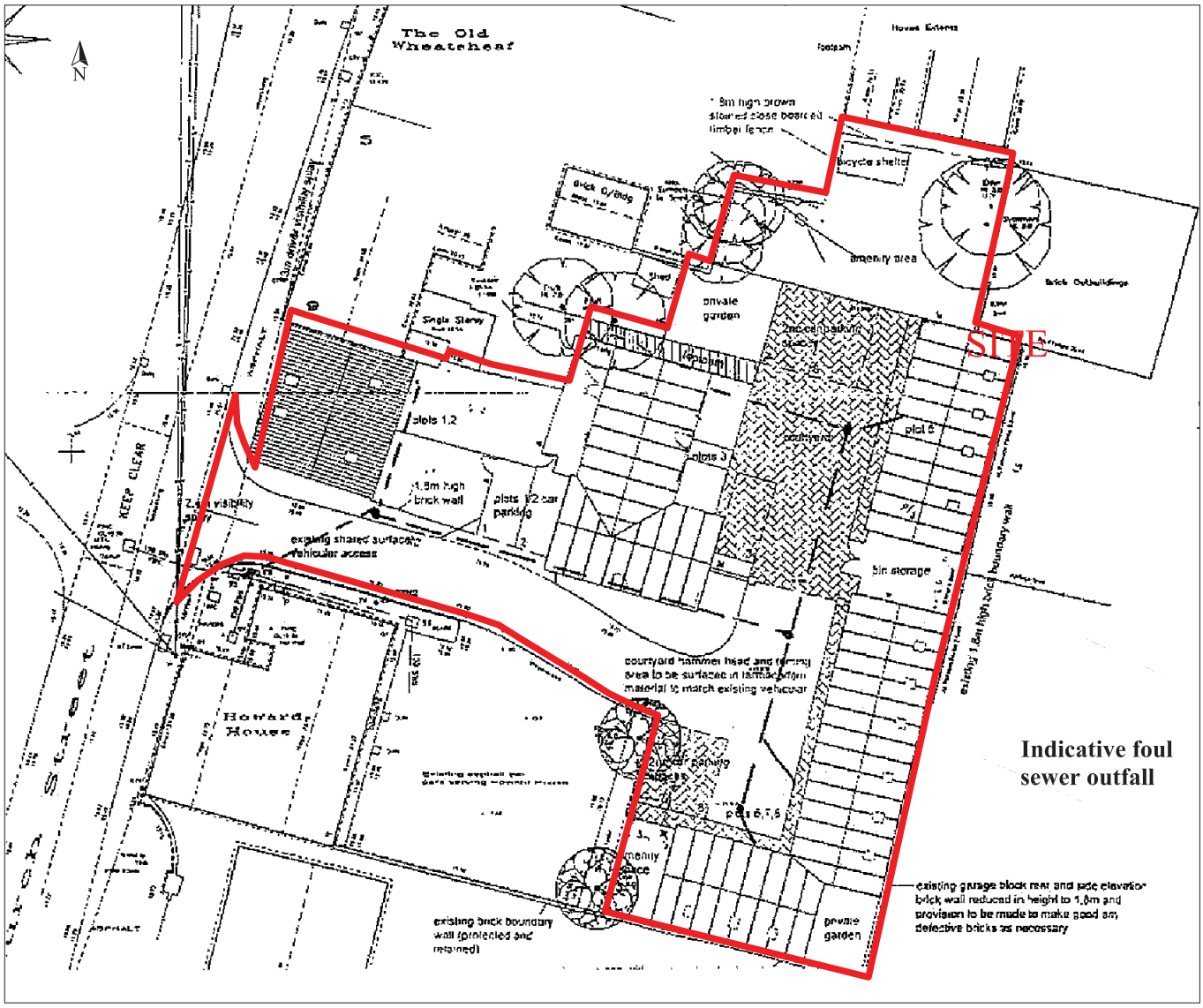

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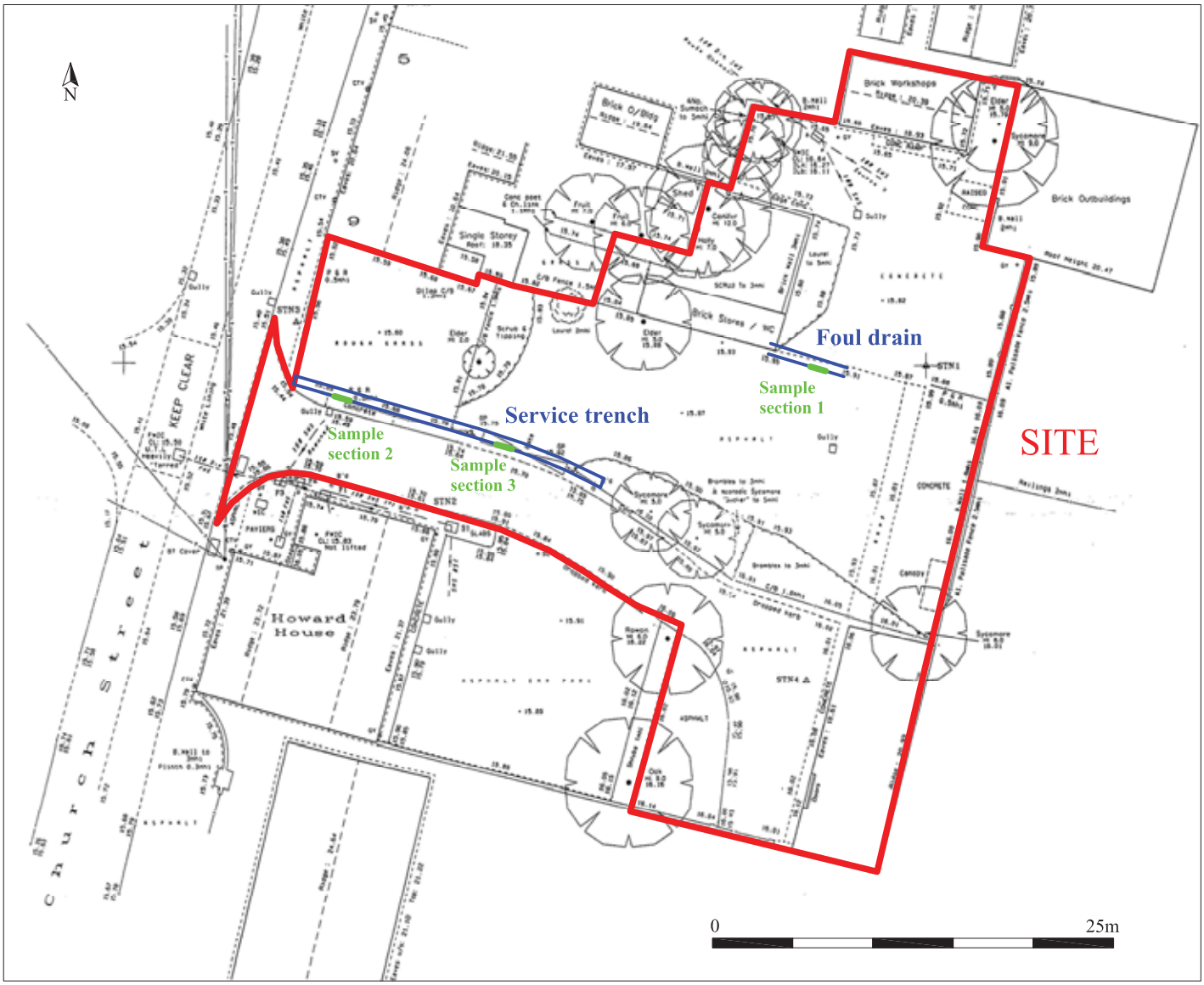
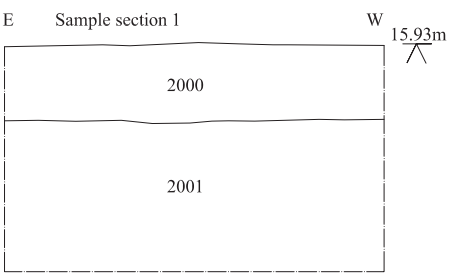
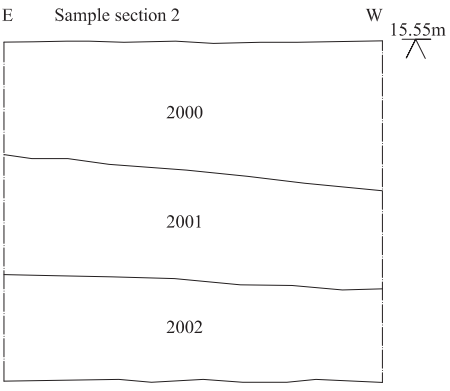
Fig. 5 Services plan
Scale 1:400 at A4







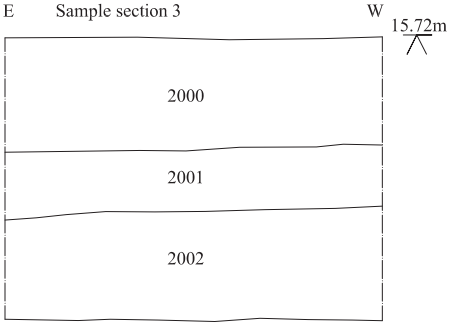


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Fig. 6 Trench location plan

Scale 1:400 at A4