

PROPOSED HOUSE AND GARAGE, WICKEN HOUSE, WICKEN BONHUNT, ESSEX

ARCHAEOLOGICAL MONITORING AND EXCAVATION

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NGR: TL 4997 3347	Report No. 3848
District: Uttlesford	Site Code: WTWH 10
Approved: Claire Halpin MIFA	Project No. 4111
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CONTENTS

OASIS SUMMARY SHEET

SUMMARY

- 1 *INTRODUCTION***
- 2 *DESCRIPTION OF THE SITE***
- 3 *TOPOGRAPHY, GEOLOGY AND SOILS***
- 4 *ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND HISTORICAL BACKGROUND***
- 5 *METHODOLOGY***
- 6 *DESCRIPTION OF RESULTS***
- 7 *CONFIDENCE RATING***
- 8 *DEPOSIT MODEL***
- 9 *DISCUSSION***
- 10 *DEPOSITION OF THE ARCHIVE***

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

BIBLIOGRAPHY

OASIS SUMMARY SHEET

Project details			
Project name	<i>Wicken House, Wicken Bonhunt, Essex</i>		
<p><i>In November 2010 Archaeological Solutions (AS) carried out archaeological monitoring and excavation at Wicken House, Wicken Bonhunt, Essex (NGR TL 4997 3347). The monitoring was commissioned by City & Country Group in compliance with a planning condition attached to planning permission for the construction of a residential dwelling and garage.</i></p> <p><i>The site is situated within the village of Wicken Bonhunt, c. 2km west of Newport and 6km south-west of Saffron Walden, Essex. It is located within an area thought to be the site of a deserted/shrunken medieval village, possibly dating from 11th century.</i></p> <p><i>In the event the monitoring revealed no archaeological features or finds.</i></p>			
Project dates (fieldwork)	<i>18th and 19th November 2010</i>		
Previous work (Y/N/?)	<i>N</i>	Future work (Y/N/?)	<i>N</i>
P. number	<i>4111</i>	Site code	<i>WTWH 10</i>
Type of project	<i>Archaeological Monitoring and Excavation</i>		
Site status	<i>-</i>		
Current land use	<i>Former dwelling</i>		
Planned development	<i>Replacement dwelling and garage</i>		
Main features (+dates)	<i>-</i>		
Significant finds (+dates)	<i>-</i>		
Project location			
County/ District/ Parish	<i>Essex</i>	<i>Uttlesford</i>	<i>Wicken Bonhunt</i>
HER/ SMR for area	<i>Essex HER</i>		
Post code (if known)	<i>CB11 3UG</i>		
Area of site	<i>c. 1.5ha</i>		
NGR	<i>TL 4997 3347</i>		
Height AOD (min/max)	<i>c. 78m AOD</i>		
Project creators			
Brief issued by	<i>ECC HEM</i>		
Project supervisor/s (PO)	<i>Zbigniew Pozorski</i>		
Funded by	<i>City & Country Group</i>		
Full title	<i>Wicken House, Wicken Bonhunt, Essex. Archaeological Monitoring and Excavation</i>		
Authors	<i>Pozorski, Z.</i>		
Report no.	<i>3848</i>		
Date (of report)	<i>June 2011</i>		

PROPOSED HOUSE AND GARAGE, WICKEN HOUSE, WICKEN BONHUNT, ESSEX

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SUMMARY

In November 2010 Archaeological Solutions (AS) carried out archaeological monitoring and excavation at Wicken House, Wicken Bonhunt, Essex (NGR TL 4997 3347). The monitoring was commissioned by City & Country Group in compliance with a planning condition attached to planning permission for the construction of a residential dwelling and garage.

The site is situated within the village of Wicken Bonhunt, c. 2km west of Newport and 6km south-west of Saffron Walden, Essex. It is located within an area thought to be the site of a deserted/shrunken medieval village, possibly dating from 11th century.

In the event the monitoring revealed no archaeological features or finds.

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 In November 2010 Archaeological Solutions (AS) carried out archaeological monitoring and excavation at Wicken House, Wicken Bonhunt, Essex (NGR TL 4997 3347; Figs. 1 & 2). The monitoring was commissioned by City & Country Group in compliance with a planning condition attached to planning permission for the construction of a residential dwelling and garage (Uttlesford District Council Planning Ref. UTT/1260/10/FUL).

1.2 The monitoring was undertaken in accordance to a brief issued by Essex County Council Historic Environment Branch (ECC HEM; dated 01/10/2010), and a written scheme of investigation (specification) prepared by AS (dated 04/10/2010), and approved by ECC HEM. The project conformed to the Institute for Archaeologists (IfA) *Code of Conduct and Standard and Guidance for an Archaeological Watching Brief* (revised 2008), *Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Excavation* (revised 2008), as well as the document *Standards for Field Archaeology in the East of England* (Gurney 2003).

1.3 The project aimed to excavate and record any buried archaeological remains revealed during the groundwork phase of the project. It aimed to record the location, extent, date, character, condition, significance and quality of any surviving archaeological remains. Particular attention was required on assessing:

- Evidence for the development, date and layout of the area of potential deserted/shrunken medieval settlement
- Evidence for any early buildings/structures
- Evidence for any domestic, agricultural or industrial activity

Planning policy context

1.4 PPS5 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 DESCRIPTION OF THE SITE

2.1 Wicken Bonhunt is located c. 2km west of Newport and 6km south-west of Saffron Walden, Essex (Fig. 1). The site lies to the north of the B1038 road, in the centre of the village. The church of St Margaret is located to the immediate south-west of the site.

2.2 The property comprises Wicken House, a Grade II listed mid-Victorian building known also as Wicken Hall, located in the centre of the site of c.2.4ha (Fig. 2). The house is surrounded by park-style gardens and a recreation ground is also located within the north-eastern part of the site. To the immediate north-west of Wicken House another building, the Coach House is located. The current archaeological investigation relates to the area adjacent to the Coach House, to the west, where a modern building was situated. The modern building was known as Warden's House, and it was demolished prior to the new development. Several small outbuildings are present close to the both houses.

3 TOPOGRAPHY, GEOLOGY AND SOILS

3.1 The site lies on a relatively gentle slope between 75.50m and 79.80m AOD. The land falls in the direction of the Wicken Water stream which flows through the village along the main B1038 road.

3.2 The solid geology of the area is of Upper Cretaceous Chalk of the White Chalk Subgroup (British Geological Survey 1978). Soils on the site are soils of the Hanslope association, described as slowly permeable calcareous clayey soils with some non-calcareous soils (Soil Survey of England and Wales 1983).

4 ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

4.1 Evidence of extensive occupation during the Saxon period was found at Bonhunt Farm, c. 1.2km east of the site (EHER 181-186). The earliest remains date possibly to 5th century and the settlement was inhabited continuously through to the medieval period, at least to the 13th century. The largest phase of occupation occurred during the middle Saxon and early medieval periods, between 8th and 11th century. The remains included a large cemetery, more than 30 buildings and structures (e.g. a hall house, granary, house, water mill, workshops, well and hearth), boundary ditches and large quantities of pottery. Bonhunt Farm area has also produced scattered archaeological remains of Bronze Age, Iron Age and Roman date.

4.2 Wicken Bonhunt was mentioned in Domesday Book as two separate manors of *Wica* and *Banhunta* (Williams 2003). These refer to the two settlements of Wicken and Bonhunt, which later in the Elizabethan period became one village. Wicken was situated where today is the centre of the village whilst Bonhunt was located next to Newport, in the area where M11 motorway passes over B1038 road. Wicken derives its name from old English word *Wic* (plural *Wicum*) meaning “dairy farm” and Bonhunt owes its name to “Bana’s huntsmen” or the old English (*ge*)*bann-huntan* meaning “huntsmen liable to be summoned” (Web 1).

4.3 The oldest building in the village is St Helen Chapel, located c. 1.2km to the east, within the Saxon settlement of Bonhunt, next to M11 motorway. The chapel is believed to have been built in 10th century as it contains Saxon architectural features. Records from 1340 suggest that the chapel was private and attached to the Bonhunt manor. The chapel was dissolved in 1543 and left to decay. In the early 20th century an attempt to restore the chapel has proven unsuccessful.

4.4 The church of St Margaret, to the immediate south-west of the site, is of Norman origin; however, the only surviving element dating to 11th century is the square, lead-lined Norman font. The chancel is of 12th century origin and contains original lancet windows, piscina and sedilia (Web 1). The church was largely restored in 19th century.

4.5 During the construction of the house on the site in 1986, surviving floor levels relating to the medieval property were recorded (EHER 6742). It is thought that this part of Wicken Bonhunt is the site of a deserted/shrunken medieval village. Pottery of 11th century and later date have been found across this area and a windmill formerly stood to the north-east of the site, visible until 1920s.

4.6 There was a rectory to the north of the church which burnt down in 1590. The replacement house was located further away from the church, and was in use until mid-19th century. Wicken House was built in 1856 as the new rectory under the vicar John Hanson Sperling. It is a large Grade II Listed building built in Gothic style with decorative barge board gables and clustered Elizabethan style chimney. The house served to the church until 1919 when it

was auctioned and became a private property under the name Wicken House. The land belonging to the house has reduced from its original 44 acres (almost 20ha) to today's size of c. 2.4ha. In 1945 the property was sold to Essex County Council and was used as a school, and later an activity centre for young people. The property was sold off in 2007.

5 METHODOLOGY

5.1. The archaeological monitoring comprised the observation of groundworks, the inspection of the subsoil and natural deposits for archaeological features and the examination of spoil heaps and the recording of soil profiles. Archaeological features and deposits were recorded using *pro-forma* recording sheets, drawn to scale and photographed as appropriate. Excavated spoil was checked for finds and the excavated area was scanned by metal detector.

5.2 The area of investigation was located to the west of the Coach House where another building, Warden's House, existed until recently (Fig. 2). The groundworks comprised soil stripping within the complete area of the proposed new dwelling garage.

6 DESCRIPTION OF RESULTS

Deposits located within the area of excavation were recorded in sample section shown below.

<i>NW part of the excavation area. Sample section, facing SE</i>		
<i>0.00 = 75.65m AOD</i>		
0.00 – 0.16m	L1000	Topsoil. Blackish dark grey, soft, sandy silt.
0.16 – 0.28m	L1001	Subsoil. Brownish mid grey, compact, clayey silt.
0.28m+	L1002	Natural brownish dark yellow, compact, clay.

Description: The modern foundations and drainage of the former dwelling were visible. No archaeological features or finds were identified.

7 CONFIDENCE RATING

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

8 DEPOSIT MODEL

8.1 The site was commonly overlain by Topsoil L1000, a dark, blackish dark grey, soft, sandy silt (0.15 – 0.30m thick). It overlay Subsoil L1001, a brownish mid grey, compact, clayey silt (0.10 – 0.25m thick).

8.2 The natural clay, L1002, was present at 0.25 – 0.50m below existing ground level and comprised brownish dark yellow, compact clay.

9 DISCUSSION

9.1 The site had a high potential for archaeological remains, in particular for the Saxon and medieval archaeology. Such remains have been found in the vicinity of the site and it is located within an area thought to be a site of a deserted/shrunken medieval village, possibly dating from 11th century.

9.2 In the event no archaeological features or finds were revealed. No indication of any previous development of the site was identified except the modern foundations and drainage of the former dwelling. Little evidence of previous truncation appeared to have taken place. No residual finds were recovered.

10 DEPOSITION OF THE ARCHIVE

10.1 Archive records, with an inventory, will be deposited with any donated finds from the site at Saffron Walden Museum. The archive will be quantified, ordered, indexed, cross-referenced and checked for internal consistency

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Archaeological Solutions would like to thank City & Country Group for funding the project and for their assistance (in particular Mr David Brown).

AS would also like to acknowledge the input and advice of Mr Richard Havis of Essex County Council Historic Environment Branch.

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Web 1: <http://www.wickenbonhunt.org.uk>

Web 2: <http://www.recordinguttlesfordhistory.org.uk>

PHOTOGRAPHIC INDEX



DP 1. The site at Wicken House, Wicken Bonhunt, Essex. View NE.



DP 2. The area of ground reduction. View NE.



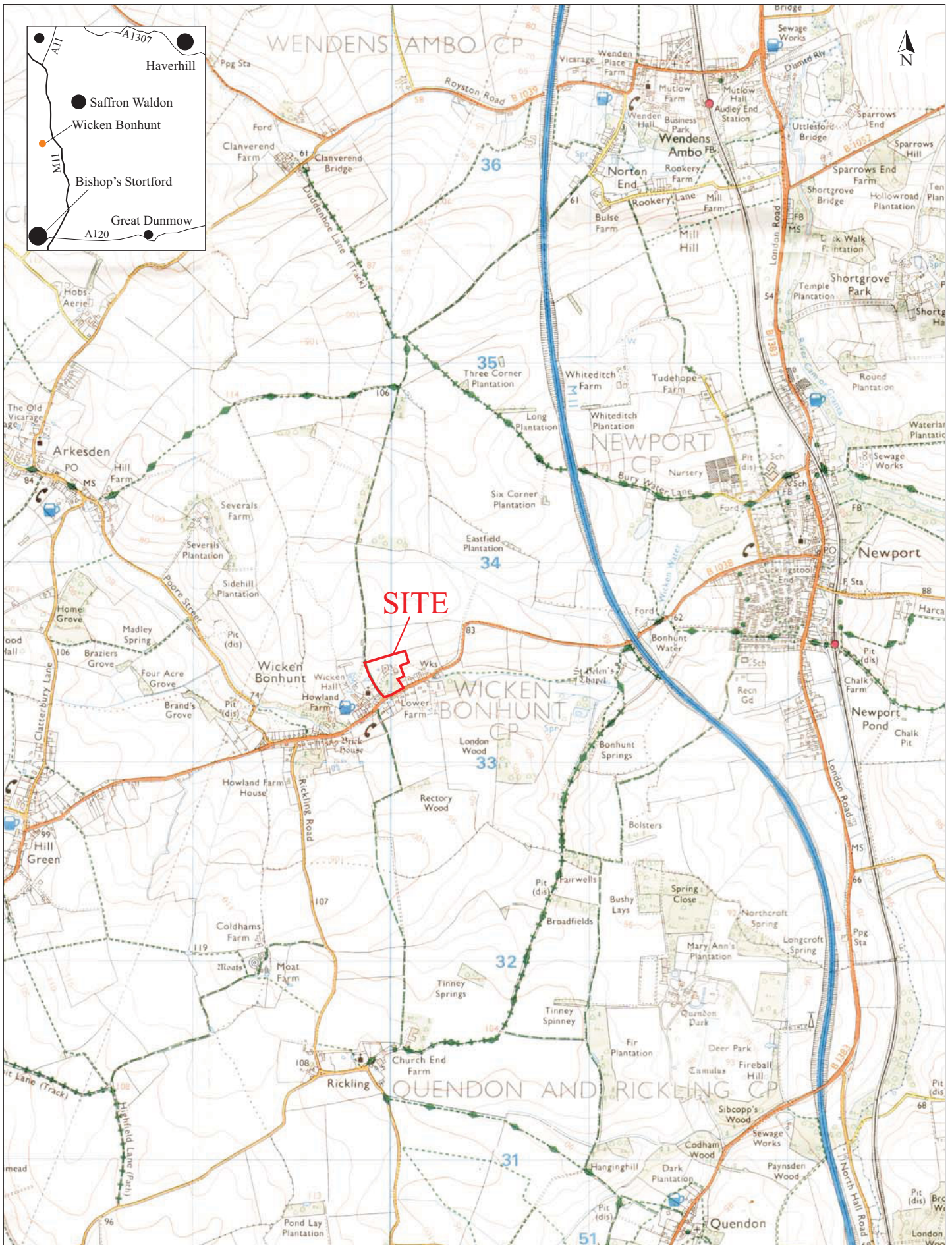
DP 3. The area of ground reduction. View SW.



DP 4. NW part of the area of ground reduction. View NW.

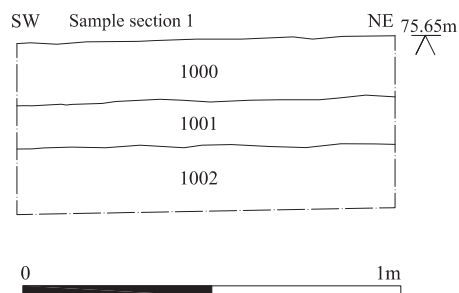
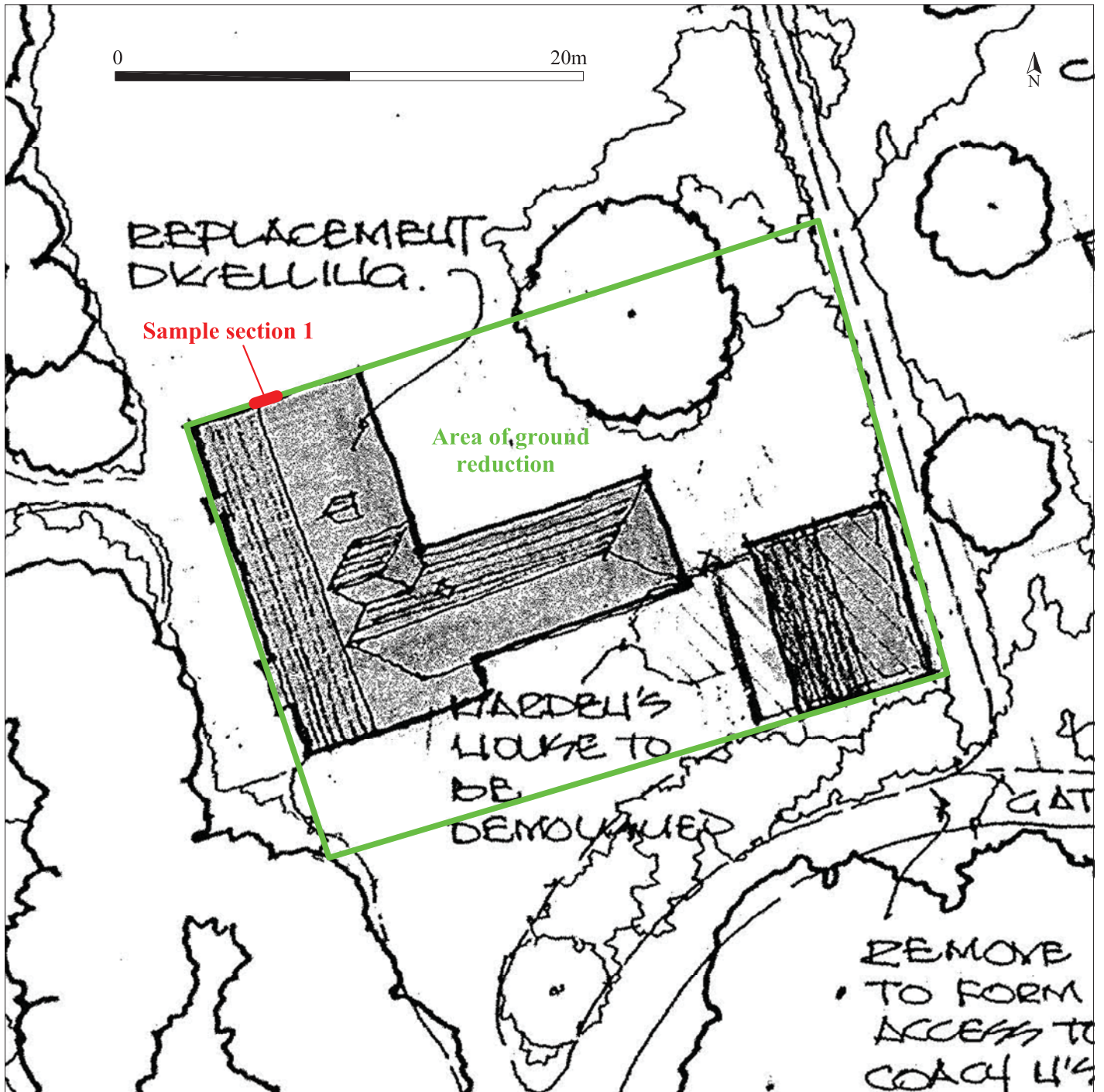


DP 5. NW part of the area of ground reduction. Sample section. View NW.



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Fig. 1 Site location plan
 Scale 1:25,000 at A4



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Fig. 3 Section location plan

Scale Plan 1:250, section 1:20 at A4