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**ARCHAEOLOGICAL SOLUTIONS LTD**

**8 CHURCH AVENUE,  
AMPTHILL, BEDFORDSHIRE**

**ARCHAEOLOGICAL OBSERVATION, INVESTIGATION,  
RECORDING, ANALYSIS AND PUBLICATION**

Authors: Walter McCall PhD MIFA (field work & report) Hannah Tweedie MPhil (research)	
NGR: TL 0372 3812	Report No. 3527
District: Central Bedfordshire	Site Code: AS 1304
Approved: Claire Halpin MIFA	Project No: P3859
Signed:	Date: April 2010

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**OASIS SUMMARY SHEET**

<b>Project details</b>			
<b>Project name</b>	8 Church Avenue, Ampthill, Bedfordshire. Archaeological Observation, Investigation, Recording, Analysis and Publication.		
<p>In April, 2010, Archaeological Solutions Ltd (AS) conducted a programme of archaeological monitoring and recording at 8 Church Avenue, Ampthill, Bedfordshire (NGR TL 03723 38118). The monitoring was undertaken during the groundworks associated with the construction of a single-story rear extension (Central Bedfordshire Council Planning Approval Ref. CB09/06693/FULL).</p> <p>The house lies within Ampthill, on the southern side of Church Street, within the core of the medieval town. Recent excavations in Ampthill have also yielded Saxon remains, although the evidence is scant.</p> <p>The monitoring comprised the observation of the ground reduction across the footprint of the extension, and the excavation of a continuous foundation trench. No archaeological features or finds were present.</p>			
Project dates (fieldwork)	26 April, 2010		
Previous work (Y/N/?)	N	Future work (Y/N/?)	N
P. number	P3859	Site code	AS 1304
Type of project	Monitoring and Recording		
Site status	-		
Current land use	Back garden patio		
Planned development	Single storey rear extension		
Main features (+dates)	None		
Significant finds (+dates)	None		
<b>Project location</b>			
County/ District/ Parish	Bedfordshire	Bedford	Ampthill
HER/ SMR for area	Central Bedfordshire Historic Environment Record		
Post code (if known)	-		
Area of site	48.8m <sup>2</sup>		
NGR	TL 03723 38118		
Height AOD (max/ min)	c.99.85		
<b>Project creators</b>			
Brief issued by	Central Bedfordshire Council Archaeologists (CBC)		
Project supervisor/s (PO)	W. McCall		
Funded by	Mr Chris Carr		
Full title	8 Church Avenue, Ampthill, Bedfordshire. Archaeological Observation, Investigation, Recording, Analysis and Publication.		
Authors	McCall, W. & Tweedie, H.		
Report no.	3527		
Date (of report)	April 2010		

## 8 CHURCH AVENUE, AMPHILL, BEDFORDSHIRE

### ARCHAEOLOGICAL OBSERVATION, INVESTIGATION, RECORDING, ANALYSIS AND PUBLICATION

#### Summary

*In April, 2010, Archaeological Solutions Ltd (AS) conducted a programme of archaeological monitoring and recording at 8 Church Avenue, Ampthill, Bedfordshire (NGR TL 03723 38118). The monitoring was undertaken during the groundworks associated with the construction of a single story rear extension (Central Bedfordshire Council Planning Approval Ref. CB09/06693/FULL).*

*The house lies within Ampthill, on the southern side of Church Street, within the core of the medieval town. Recent excavations in Ampthill have also yielded Saxon remains, although the evidence is scant.*

*The monitoring comprised the observation of the ground reduction across the footprint of the extension, and the excavation of a continuous foundation trench. No archaeological features or finds were present.*

#### 1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 In April 2010 Archaeological Solutions (AS) carried out a programme of archaeological observation, investigation, recording, analysis and publication at 8 Church Avenue, Ampthill, Bedfordshire (NGR TL 03 723 38118; Figs. 1 & 2). The monitoring was commissioned by house owner, Mr Chris Carr, in compliance with a planning condition attached to planning permission for a single-storey rear extension (Central Bedfordshire Council Planning Ref: CB09/06693/FULL; Fig. 7).

1.2 The archaeological observation, investigation, recording, analysis and publication was undertaken according to a brief issued by the Central Bedfordshire Council (CBC) Archaeologists (*Brief for a Programme of Archaeological Observation, Investigation, Recording, Analysis and Publication at 8 Church Avenue, Ampthill, Bedfordshire*; dated 01/03/2010) and a written scheme of investigation (specification) prepared by AS (dated 23/03/2010). The project conformed to the Institute of Archaeologists (IfA) *Code of Conduct and Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Watching Briefs* (revised 2008). It also adhered to *Standards for Field Archaeology in the East of England* (Gurney 2003).

1.3 The project aimed to determine the nature, function and character of any archaeological remains and to understand any remains within their cultural and environmental setting. The objectives of the project were to identify and record any features of interest that are exposed during groundworks for the proposed development. Specific objectives were to:

- establish the date, nature and extent of activity or occupation in the development site;
- establish the relationship of any remains identified with the surrounding contemporary landscapes;
- recover artefacts to assist in the development of a regional type series; and
- recover palaeo-environmental remains in order to determine local environmental conditions

## **Planning policy context**

1.4 PPG16 (1990), the national Planning Policy Guidance Note which applies to archaeology and PPG 15 (1994) the national Planning Policy Guidance Note which applies to conservation of the historic environment (by protecting the character and appearance of Conservation Areas and protecting listed buildings (of architectural or historical interest) from demolition and unsympathetic change and safeguarding their settings as far as is possible) have been replaced by Planning Policy Statement 5 (2010), the national Planning Policy Statement that applies to the historic environment.

1.5 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 The site is located at 8 Church Avenue, Ampthill, Bedfordshire, within the historic core of the town (NGR SP 9456 9556; Fig.1). It comprises a detached residential dwelling, and it is proposed to construct a new single-storey rear extension.

## **3 TOPOGRAPHY, GEOLOGY AND SOILS**

3.1 The site lies off the southern side of Church Street, in the town of Ampthill. Church Avenue lies at a height of c.100 m AOD.

3.2 The geology of the area comprises Woburn Sands Formation of the Lower Greensand (BGS 1978) The site lies close to the boundary of two different soil associations, the Frilford association and the Evesham 3 association (SSEW 1983).

Soils of the Frilford association are characterised as deep well drained sandy and coarse loamy soils with some ferruginous sandy and some coarse loamy soils which are affected by groundwater. Soils of the Evesham 3 association are characterised as slowly permeable calcareous clayey and fine loamy over clayey soils with some areas of permeable seasonally waterlogged non-calcareous clayey soils.

## 4 ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

4.1 Ampthill was recorded in the Domesday Book and is likely to be of at least Saxon origin, although no Saxon evidence has so far been recorded from the town centre. The right to hold a weekly market and an annual fair were granted in the 13<sup>th</sup> century. The core of the historic town is located on the junction of four roads, (Church Street, Dunstable Street, Woburn Street and Bedford Street), the first three of which were certainly laid out by the 15<sup>th</sup> century. Medieval buildings are recorded at St Andrew's Church (HER 859), the Feoffee Almshouses (HER 2825), 27-29 Church Street (HER 6135), 113 and 115-117 Dunstable Street (HER 6198, 6199), and it is likely that some of the extant 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> century buildings conceal earlier cores.

4.2 Recent excavations at Ampthill Great Park and Ampthill Castle (HER 1369 and 810) have revealed evidence of Saxon and early medieval activity at the top of the Greensand ridge leading to the northern edge of the town. It has been suggested that a motte and bailey castle was originally located in the area, but the only evidence for this is a roughly circular earthwork, which was more likely to have been created due to quarrying for road repair, or as a landscaping feature for planting trees (HER 2808). Ampthill Great Park (HER 1369) was originally used as a medieval deer park, surrounding the 'castle', which was actually a mansion house constructed by Sir John Cornwall in the early 15<sup>th</sup> century. Ampthill Great Park was subject to landscaping by Lancelot 'Capability' Brown in 1771-1772.

4.3 Little in the way of archaeological investigation has taken place within the town, but it is likely that the earliest settlement in the town would have been close to St Andrew's Church (BCC 2005). Refurbishment works on the floors of the church revealed an earlier probably Romanesque structure (HER 859). Other early remains were identified during a watching brief on groundworks for an extension to Katherine House, on the west side of Dunstable Street. A small medieval pottery assemblage dating from the 12<sup>th</sup>-14<sup>th</sup> centuries was recovered and is believed to represent rubbish pits located behind former buildings fronting on to the street. These results suggest that the western end of Church Street was at the core of the early town.

4.4 Other archaeological investigations in Ampthill have included a watching brief during underpinning work along part of the northern wall of the Feoffee Almshouses (HER 2825). During this work part of the stone foundations were uncovered along with an undated human skeleton and a collection of human bone, post-medieval pottery and clay pipe fragments. A watching brief at 45 Woburn Street, a Grade II listed early 19<sup>th</sup> century building, revealed the foundations of an earlier building with rows of *ox tibiae* driven into the ground alongside. Seventeenth-century pottery and bone pins, possibly used for making pillow lace, were found among the foundations.

During works at Church Street (HER 16118), the footings of a probable 19<sup>th</sup> century brick building were recorded.

4.5 Consultation of the Central Bedfordshire HER revealed that the mansion of Ampthill House and its grounds were located within the area of Church Avenue, the house was demolished in 1960. The house was built in an Italian style, and its grounds included a tennis ground, greenhouses, and stables. To the north of the site a tile kiln was in operation during the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> centuries (HER 8833). Historic maps (Figs. 3 – 5) record the site as being within the grounds of Ampthill House.

## 5 METHODOLOGY (Figs. 6 & 7)

5.1 A small terraced patio area at the rear of 8 Church Avenue was stripped of paving slabs (DP 1). The topsoil was reduced by a maximum depth of 0.30m across the footprint of the extension, c. 48.80m<sup>2</sup> in total. A continuous foundation trench, 0.50 x 22.0m, was excavated around the perimeter to a depth of c.0.80m (DP 2 & 6).

## 6 DESCRIPTION OF RESULTS (Figs 6 & 7)

### Sample Section 1 (DP 3)

North side, south facing 0.00m = 99.83m AOD		
0.00 – 0.40m	L1000	Topsoil. Fine, mid grey brown silty sand with occasional small angular and rounded stones.
0.40 – 0.67m	L1001	Made Ground. Loose, mottled mid orange brown and dark grey silty sand.
0.67m+	L1002	Natural geological deposit. Loose, light yellow and orange sand.

### Sample Section 2 (DP 4)

East side, west facing 0.00m = 99.87m AOD		
0.00 – 0.23m	L1000	Topsoil. As above.
0.23 – 0.80m	L1001	Made Ground. As above.
0.80m+	L1002	Natural sand. As above.

### Sample Section 3 (DP 5)

South side, north facing 0.00m = 99.85m AOD		
0.00 – 0.23m	L1000	Topsoil. As above.
0.23 – 0.58m	L1001	Made Ground. As above.
0.58m+	L1002	Natural sand. As above.

*Description:* No archaeological finds or features were present.

## **7 CONFIDENCE RATING**

7.1 It is not felt that any factors restricted the identification of archaeological features or the recovery of finds during the monitoring and recording.

## **8 DEPOSIT MODEL (Fig. 6, DP 3 - 5)**

8.1 The same stratigraphic sequence was observed throughout the length of foundation trench. It comprised topsoil (L 1000), overlying a thick deposit of made ground (L1001) which overlay the natural drift geology of sand (L1002).

8.2 Topsoil L1000 comprised a very fine and loose silty sand. Below L1001 was L1001, a thick (0.27 – 0.57m) made ground layer of mottled orange and grey silty sand which served to increase the level of the terrace. The drift geology below comprised a very loose, bright yellow and orange sand (0.58 – 80m below the present day ground level).

## **9 DISCUSSION**

9.1 The background research identified the potential for medieval archaeology based on the site's location within the historic core of Ampthill. Saxon remains have also been discovered at Ampthill.

9.2 The site yielded no archaeological features or finds. The only layers present were associated with the landscaping of the back garden.

## **DEPOSITION OF THE ARCHIVE**

Archive records, with an inventory, will be deposited at Bedford Museum under Accession No. BEDF M.2010.19. The archive will be quantified, ordered, indexed, cross-referenced and checked for internal consistency.

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

Archaeological Solutions would like to thank Mr Chris Carr for his co-operation and funding of this project.

AS would like to acknowledge the assistance of the Bedfordshire & Luton Historic Environment Record.

AS is also pleased to acknowledge the advice and input of Ms Hannah Firth, Central Bedfordshire Council Archaeologist.



## BIBLIOGRAPHY

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## PHOTOGRAPHIC INDEX



1  
*Footprint of house extension stripped of paving stones. Looking north east.*



2  
*North-east corner of foundation trench from above. Looking south.*



3  
*Sample section 1. Looking north.*



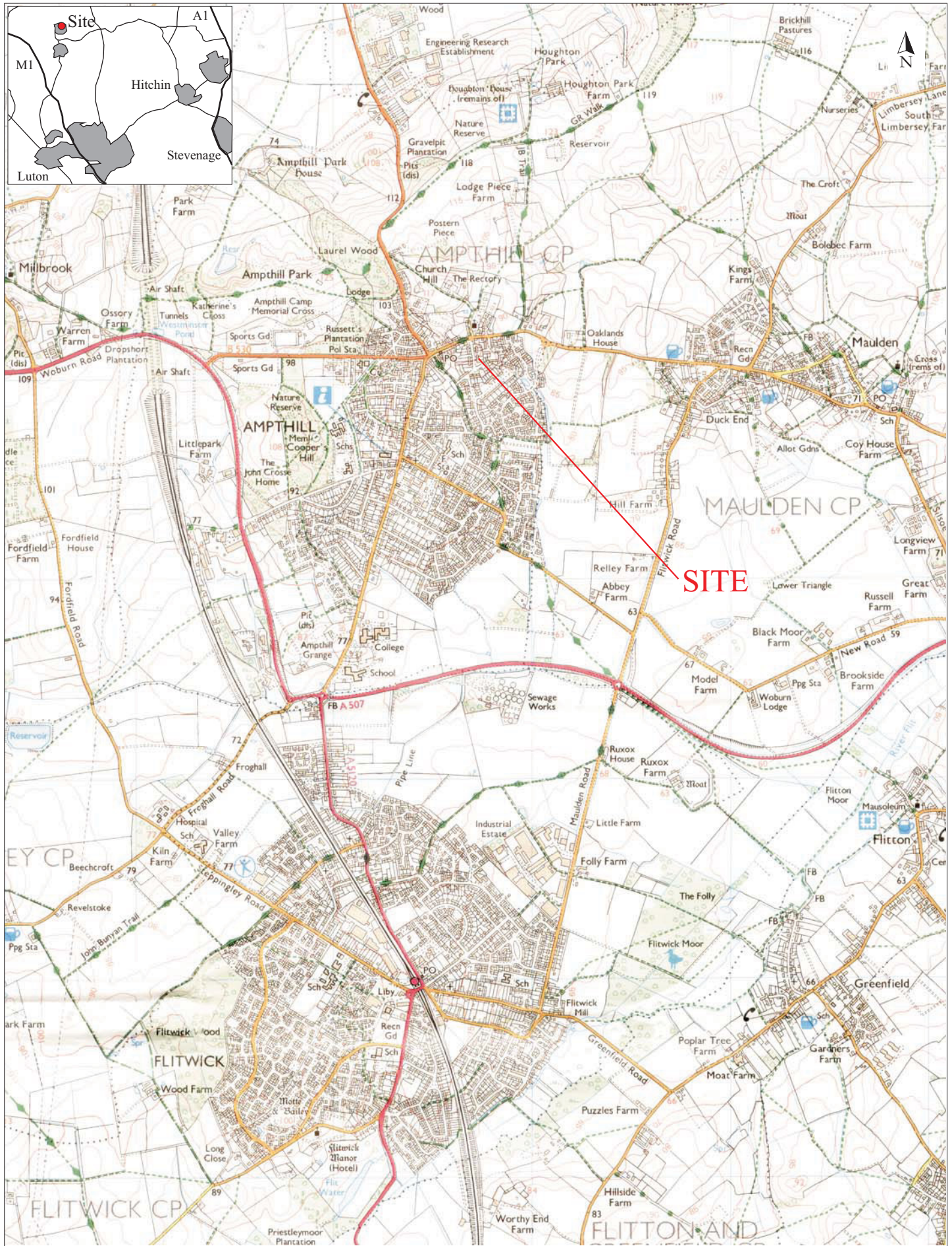
4  
*Sample section 2. Looking east.*



5  
*Sample section 3. Looking south.*

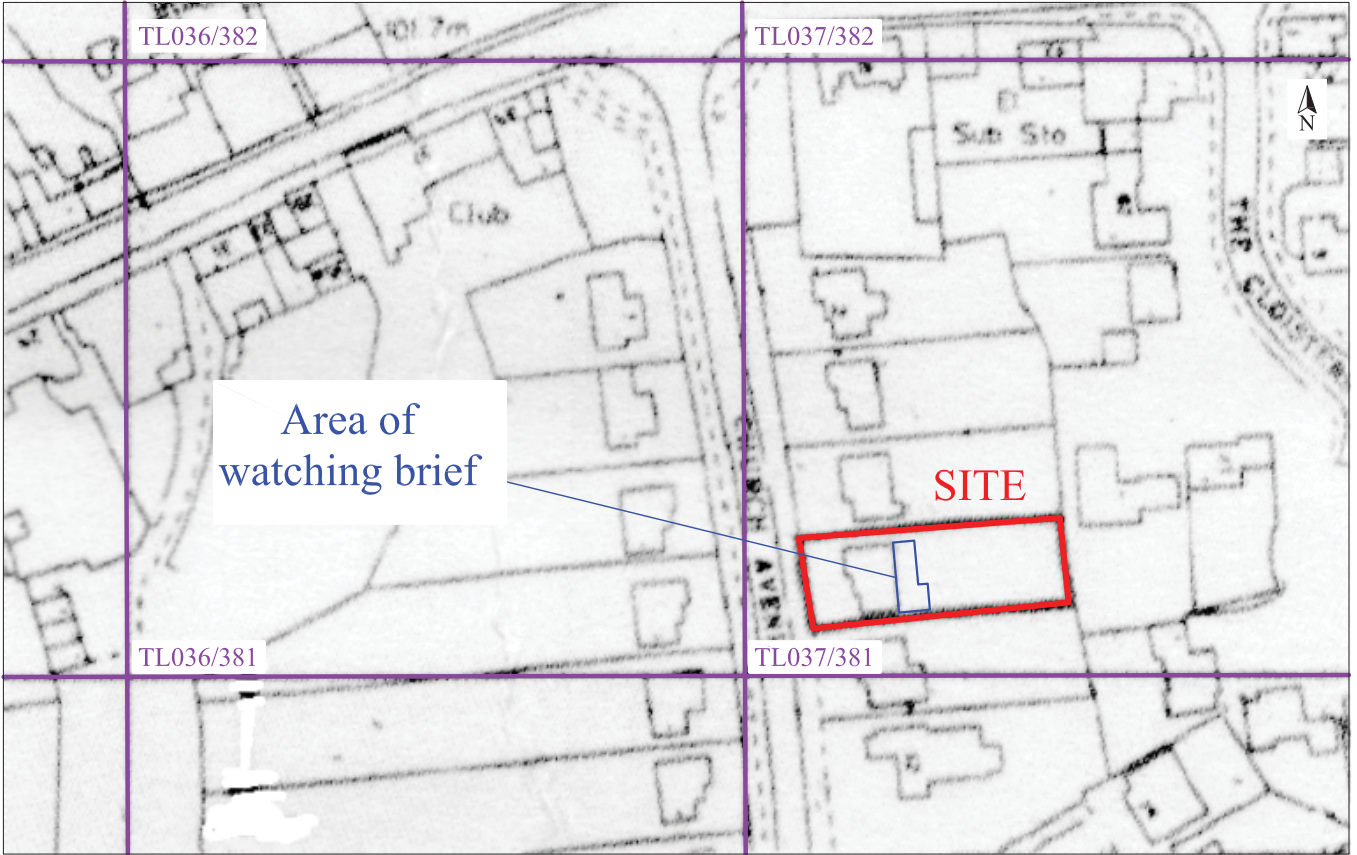


6  
*Excavated foundations. Looking south west.*



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*Archaeological Solutions Ltd*  
**Fig. 1 Site location plan**  
 Scale 1:25,000 at A4



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**Fig. 2 Detailed site location plan**  
Scale 1:1250 at A4

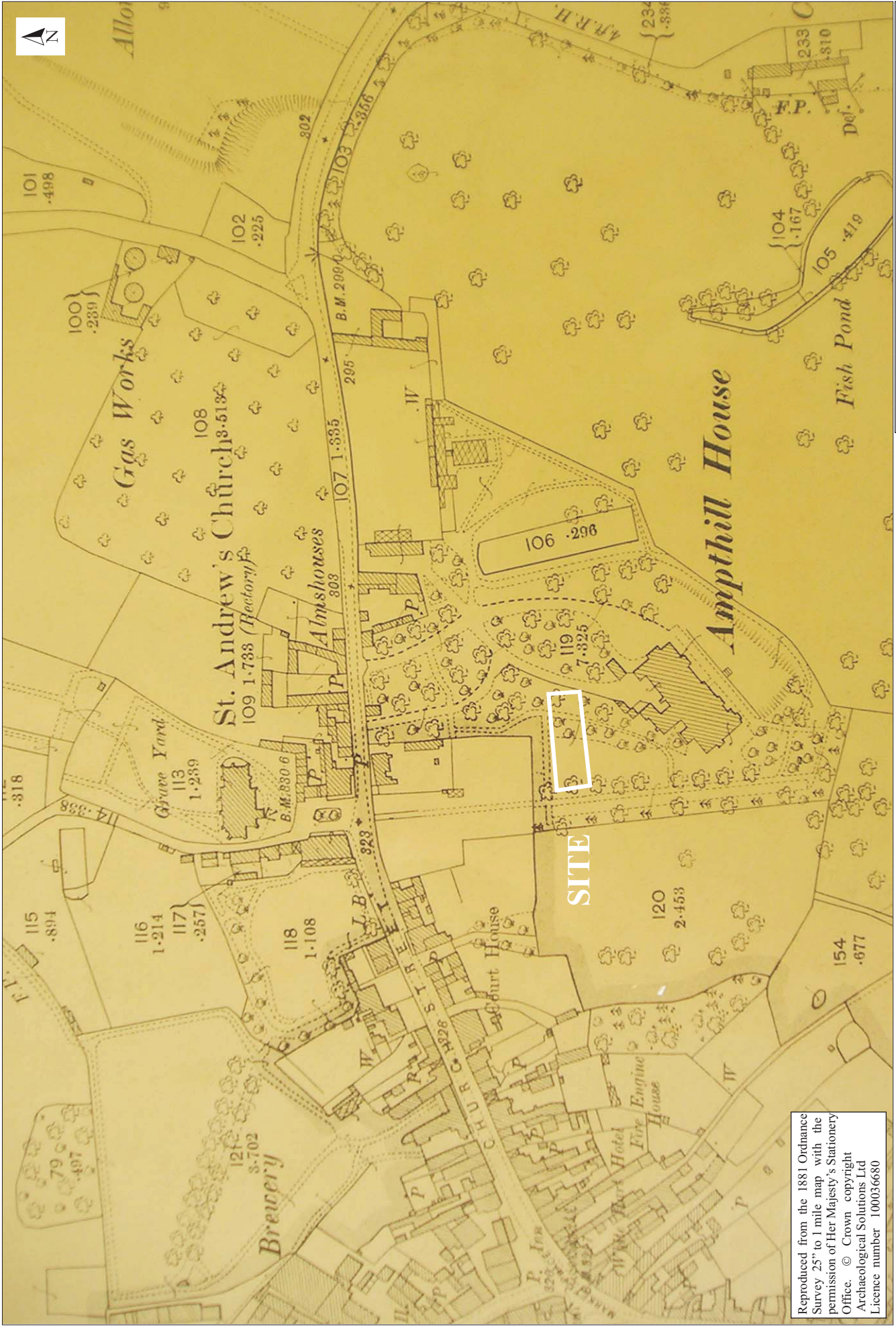


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Fig. 3 OS map, 1881

Not to scale, reproduced from the 25" to 1 mile OS map



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**Fig. 4 OS map, 1901**

Not to scale, reproduced from the 25" to 1 mile OS map

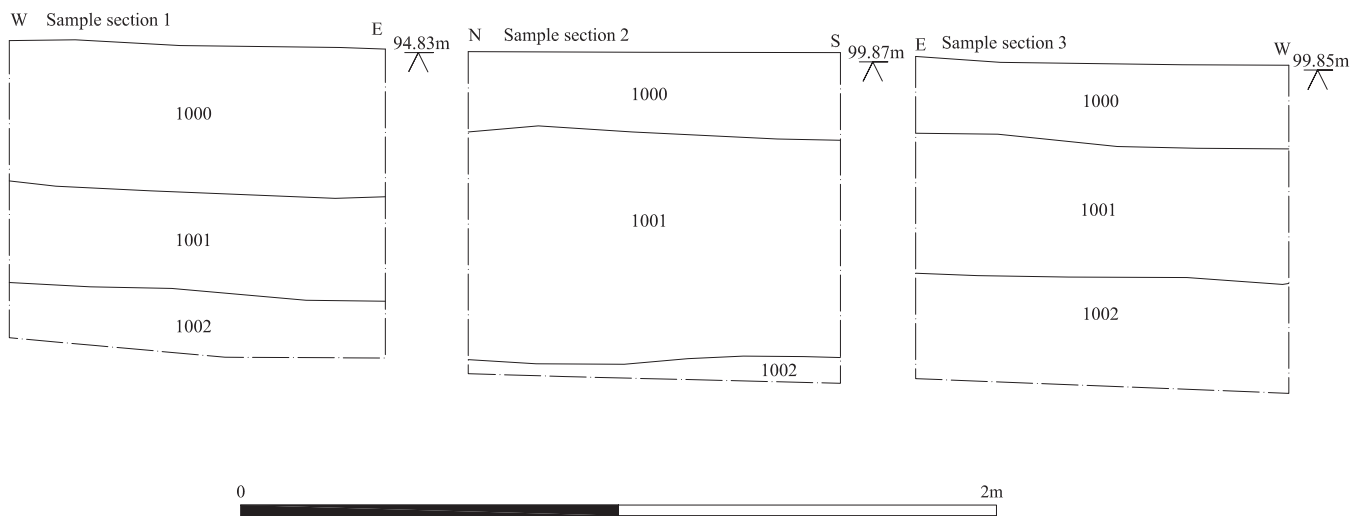
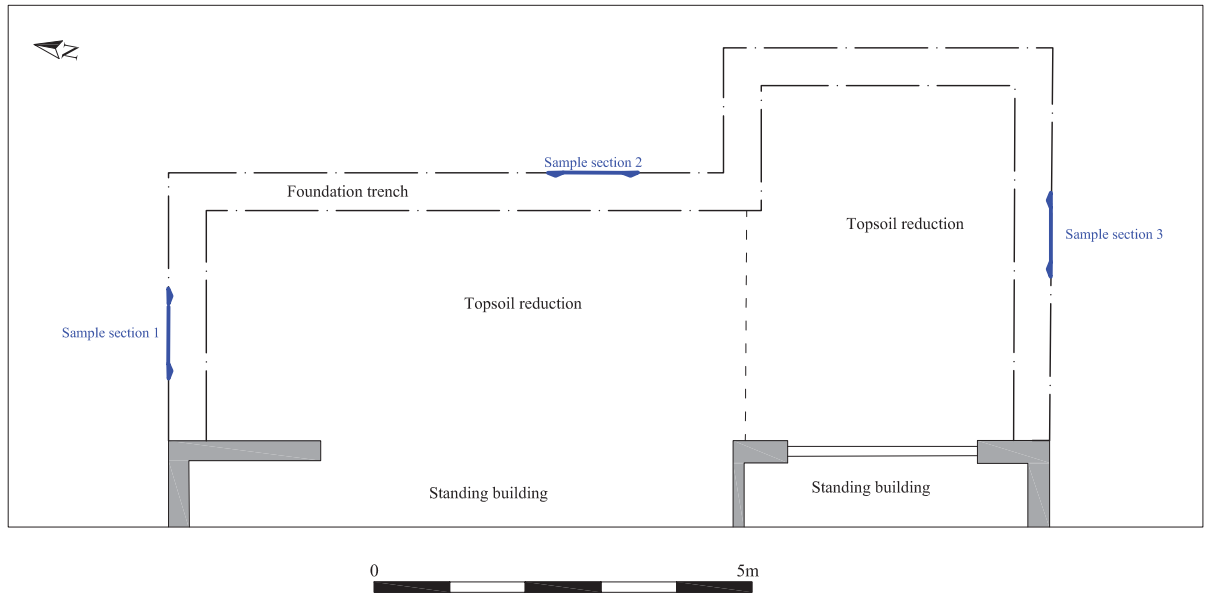


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Fig. 5 OS map, 1925

Not to scale, reproduced from the 25" to 1 mile OS map

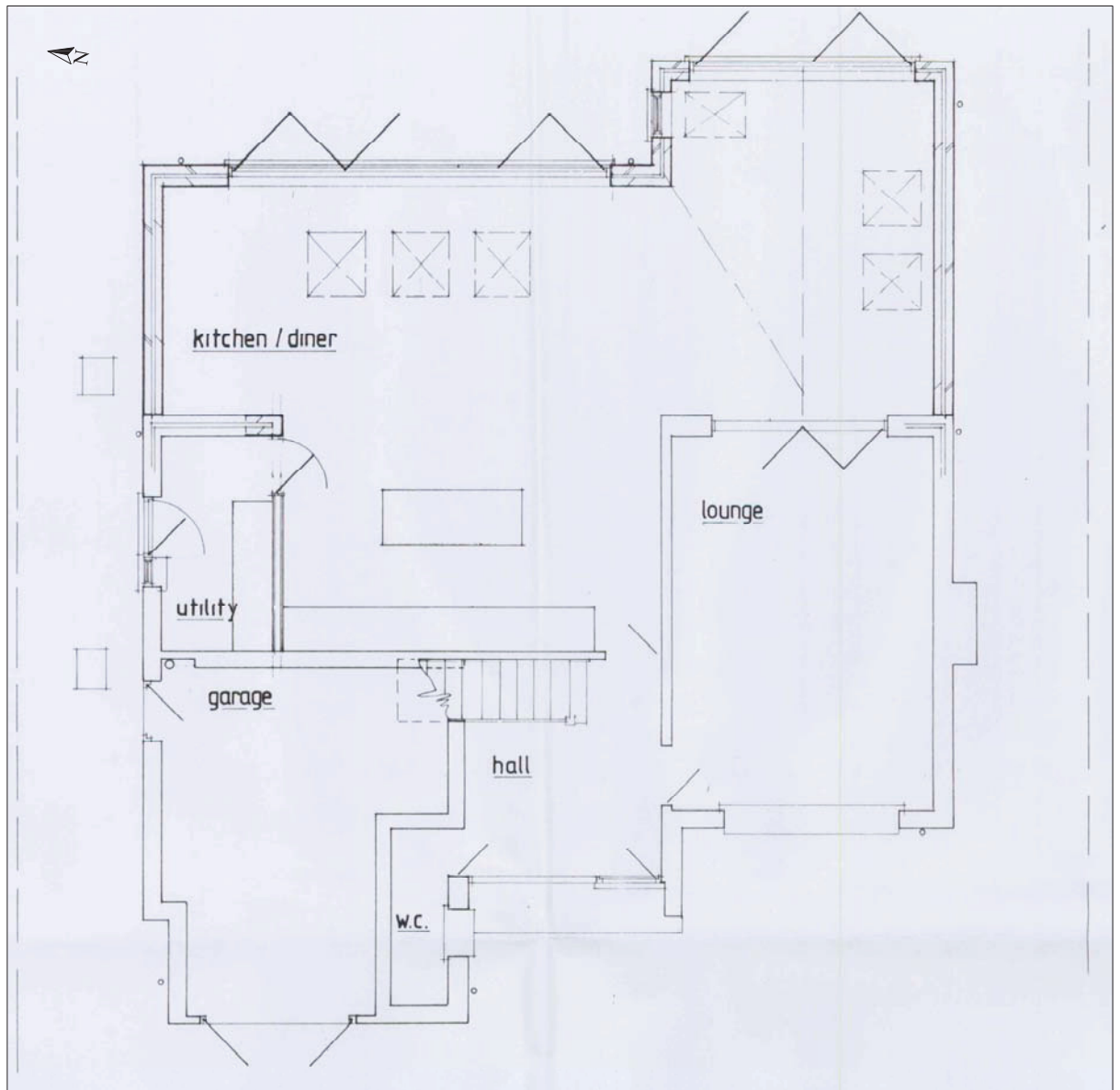


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**Fig. 6** Area of watching brief & sections

Scale plan at 1:100 & sections at 1:20 at A4





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**Fig. 7 Proposed development plan**  
Scale 1:100 at A4