

**ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF REPORT:**  
**LAND ADJACENT TO 99 HIGH STREET, WATTON-AT-STONE, HERTFORDSHIRE**

Planning Reference: 3/12/1140/FP  
NGR: TL 30195 19348  
AAL Site Code: WAHS 15  
OASIS Reference Number: allenarc1-206814



Report prepared for Mr Adrian Mitchell

By  
Allen Archaeology Limited  
Report Number AAL 2015080

September 2015



Allenarchaeology



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## Document Control

Element:	Name:	Date:
Report prepared by:	Daniel Connor BA (Hons)	08/09/2015
Illustrations prepared by:	Daniel Connor BA (Hons)	08/09/2015
Report edited by:	Mark Allen BSc (Hons) MCIfA	09/09/2015
Report reviewed by:	Chris Clay BA MA (Hons)	10/09/2015
Report produced by:	AAL 2015080	10/09/2015

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### **Executive Summary**

- Allen Archaeology Limited were commissioned by Mr Adrian Mitchell to undertake an archaeological watching brief as a condition of planning consent for the construction of a new dwelling and conversion of existing stables on land adjacent to 99 High Street, Watton-at-Stone, Hertfordshire.
- The site lies in an area of archaeological potential, with significant prehistoric discoveries found within the local landscape, as well as later medieval and Saxon artefacts. The site is also adjacent to a Grade II listed 16<sup>th</sup> century building 'The White House'.
- The monitoring indicated that the development area was devoid of archaeological features or deposits, exposing a sequence of topsoil, subsoil and natural geology.

## **1.0 Introduction**

- 1.1 Allen Archaeology Limited were commissioned by Mr Mitchell to undertake an archaeological watching brief as a condition of planning consent for the construction of a new dwelling and conversion of existing stables on land adjacent to 99 High Street, Watton-at-Stone, Hertfordshire.
- 1.2 The fieldwork, recording and reporting was carried out in a manner consistent with current national guidelines, as set out in the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists '*Standard and guidance for archaeological watching briefs*' (CIfA 2014) and the English Heritage document '*Management of Research Projects in the Historic Environment*' (English Heritage 2006), and the regional guidelines in '*Research and Archaeology Revisited: a revised framework for the East of England*' (Medlycott 2011).

## **2.0 Site Location and Description**

- 2.1 The village of Watton-at-Stone is situated in the administrative district of East Hertfordshire District Council, approximately 9.6km southeast of Stevenage and 8km north of Hertford. The site is situated just off the High Street, which was formerly the main route between the two towns. The development area is narrow at its southern end but gradually widens out to incorporate the barn and garage; it is centred on NGR TL 30195 19348, at approximately 75m above Ordnance Datum.
- 2.2 The local geology comprises bedrock deposits of Seaford Chalk Formation, with mixed superficial deposits of Kesgrave Catchment sands and gravels and Clay with flints formation (<http://mapapps.bgs.ac.uk/geologyofbritain/home.html>).

## **3.0 Planning Background**

- 3.1 Full planning permission was granted by East Hertfordshire District Council for a '*New dwelling with part formed of conversion of existing stable with existing attached garage and parking*' (Planning Application Reference 3/12/1140/FP). Planning permission was granted subject to conditions, including for a programme of archaeological monitoring and recording during groundworks for the scheme.
- 3.2 The relevant planning policy which applies to the effect of development with regard to cultural heritage is Chapter 12: Conserving and Enhancing the Historic Environment of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) (Department for Communities and Local Government 2012).

## **4.0 Archaeological and Historical Background**

- 4.1 Prehistoric activity in the wider area is well known, with worked flint findspots off the High Street (HHER 9489) and off Church Lane (HHER 2974). In the wider area there have been significant discoveries of Iron Age 'Belgic' pottery to the east of the village and weapons and armour in a drain to the north. The significant bronze 'Aston mirror' now in the British Museum was also recovered from the wider area of the village, across the border into Aston (Rook et al 1982).
- 4.2 The Roman period is attested by a known Roman road which passes the village on the way to Verulamium from Braughing (HHER 4615). Cropmarks of parallel ditches adjacent to this road have been noted to the southwest of the village (HHER 7665). Roman pottery and coins spanning

the 1<sup>st</sup> to the 4<sup>th</sup> century AD have been found in gardens in Rivershill (HHER 9982) and Woodhall Park (HHER 1551) to the south of the site. Roman features including a corn-drier, flint platform, chalk floors with possible beam slots, cobbled floors and a post-hole were revealed at the Rye Field site on the Watton bypass east of the site (HHER 6554). A large collection (c.700) of 4<sup>th</sup> century coins have also been found in the ploughsoil by detector users. The remains of a Roman building and related artefacts have also been recorded near to where the Roman road from Welwyn to Braughing crosses the River Beane (HHER 1552).

- 4.3 Watton-at-Stone is mentioned in the 10<sup>th</sup> century as *Wattun* when it belonged to Westminster Abbey. In the Domesday Survey of 1086 the manorial estate is referred to as both *Wodtune* and *Watone*, possibly from the Old English *Wad-* meaning woad with the suffix representing a farm. The Domesday Book recorded at least two mills and mixed woodland, pasture and cultivated fields (Williams and Martin 2002). The historic village core is designated as an Area of Archaeological Significance (HHER 2679).
- 4.4 The additional part of the village's name 'Stone' was added in the early 14<sup>th</sup> century and is believed to refer to a lump of Hertfordshire Puddingstone, probably used as a marker which is reputedly still visible on the corner of the Waggon and Horses public house (Beams Ltd 2010).
- 4.5 Notable medieval remains include Watton Place, which lies further along the High Street from the site and is a timber-framed 15<sup>th</sup> century building (HHER 17664). The parish Church of St Andrew and St Mary was entirely rebuilt in the 19<sup>th</sup> century but is believed to lie over its 15<sup>th</sup> century precursor (HHER 4360). A Lammas field representing historic common ground lies to the east of the site across the River Beane (HHER 12505). Cropmarks of possible field boundaries are recorded north of Mill Lane (HHER10293) and of ridge and furrow south of Church Lane (HHER 7660). The village green is also likely to be former medieval common land (HHER 12507).
- 4.6 The site lies behind No. 99 High Street (now the White House), which is a Grade II Listed 16<sup>th</sup> century timber-framed house, which was extended in the 17<sup>th</sup> century and re-fronted in brick in the 18<sup>th</sup> century. This building became the White Horse public house in the 19<sup>th</sup> century (HHER 16857). The existing stable block is an 18<sup>th</sup> or early 19<sup>th</sup> century timber-framed structure previously used as a barn or outbuilding, and which in the early to mid-19<sup>th</sup> century formed part of a long range of outbuildings running back from the High Street frontage. A Historic Building Appraisal has previously been produced for the site itself (Beams Ltd 2010), which discusses the historic buildings present on the site in detail.

## 5.0 Methodology

- 5.1 The groundworks for the new extension were monitored over a two day period, Thursday 12<sup>th</sup> to Friday 13<sup>th</sup> February 2015. All groundworks were carried out using a tracked excavator, fitted with a toothless bucket, and were monitored at all times by an experienced field archaeologist.
- 5.2 A full written record of the archaeological deposits was made, with each deposit given a unique three-digit identifier (context number). Colour photography formed an integral part of the recording strategy, with photographs referenced with an identification board, scales and a directional arrow.



## **6.0 Results**

- 6.1 The earliest deposit recorded during the groundworks was a mid brownish red clayey sand with very frequent stones, 102, which represents the natural geology. Sealing 102 was a mid-brown clayey silt subsoil 101 overlain by a soft dark brown clayey silt topsoil 100 (Plate 1). The sequence was consistent throughout the site and no finds were recovered.



*Plate 1: Southeast facing representative section, 2m scale*

## **7.0 Discussion and Conclusion**

- 7.1 The groundworks did not identify any features or deposits of archaeological interest, exposing a sequence of topsoil, subsoil and natural geology extending to the limit of excavation at up to 1.10m below the present ground level.
- 7.2 The evidence indicates a negligible archaeological potential for the locality, and that the development has had no impact upon any deposits of archaeological significance.

## **8.0 Effectiveness of Methodology**

- 8.1 The methodology employed was appropriate to the nature and extent of the residential development. It has indicated a negligible archaeological potential for the development site.

## **9.0 Acknowledgements**

- 9.1 Allen Archaeology Limited would like to thank Mr Mitchell for this commission.

## 10.0 References

Beams Ltd, 2010, *Barn adjacent to 99 High Street Watton-at-Stone Hertfordshire Historic Building Appraisal*, Unpublished client report

CIfA, 2014, *Standards and guidance for archaeological watching briefs*. Reading, Chartered Institute for Archaeologists

Department for Communities and Local Government, 2012, *National Planning Policy Framework*. London, Department for Communities and Local Government

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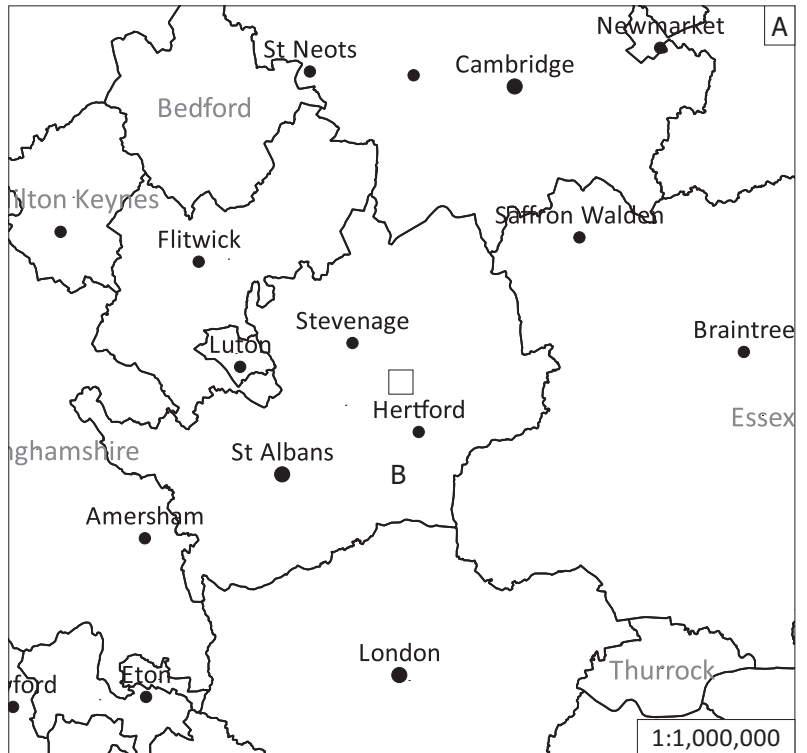
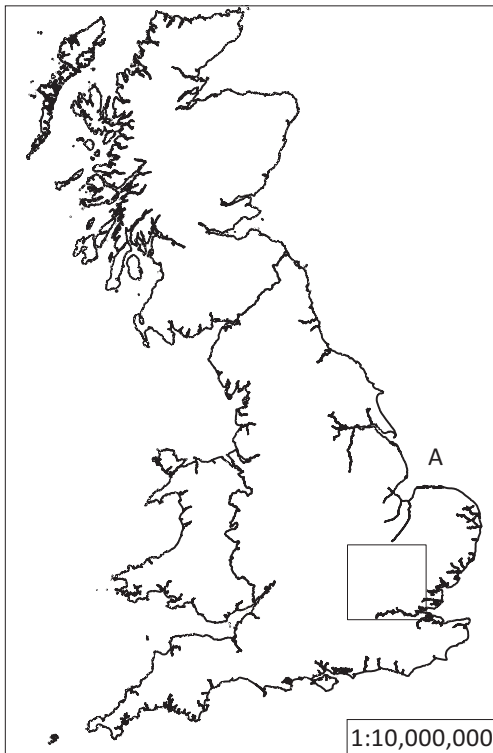
Rook A.G., P.R. Lowery, R.D.A. Savage and R.L. Wilkins, 'An Iron Age mirror from Aston, Hertfordshire', *Archaeological Journal*-2, 62 (1982), pp. 18-34

Williams, A and G. H. Martin, 2002, *Domesday Book: A Complete Translation*, Penguin Books: London

### Appendix 1: Context Summary List

Context	Type	Description	Interpretation
100	Layer	Soft, dark brown clayey silt, very occasional small rounded stones, 0.15m thick. Seals 101	Topsoil
101	Layer	Soft, mid brown clayey silt, very occasional small rounded stones, 0.2m thick. Seals 102, sealed by 101	Subsoil
102	Layer	Friable, mid brownish red clayey sand, very frequent small rounded stones, coarse sand and medium angular stones, 0.75m+ thick. Sealed 101	Natural Geology





**Figure 1:** Site location outlined in red

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Site Code	WAHS 15
Scale	1:10,000,000 1:1,000,000 1:25,000 @ A4
Drawn by	D Connor
Date	20/03/15

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Lincoln  
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Cambridge  
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[www.allenarchaeology.co.uk](http://www.allenarchaeology.co.uk)

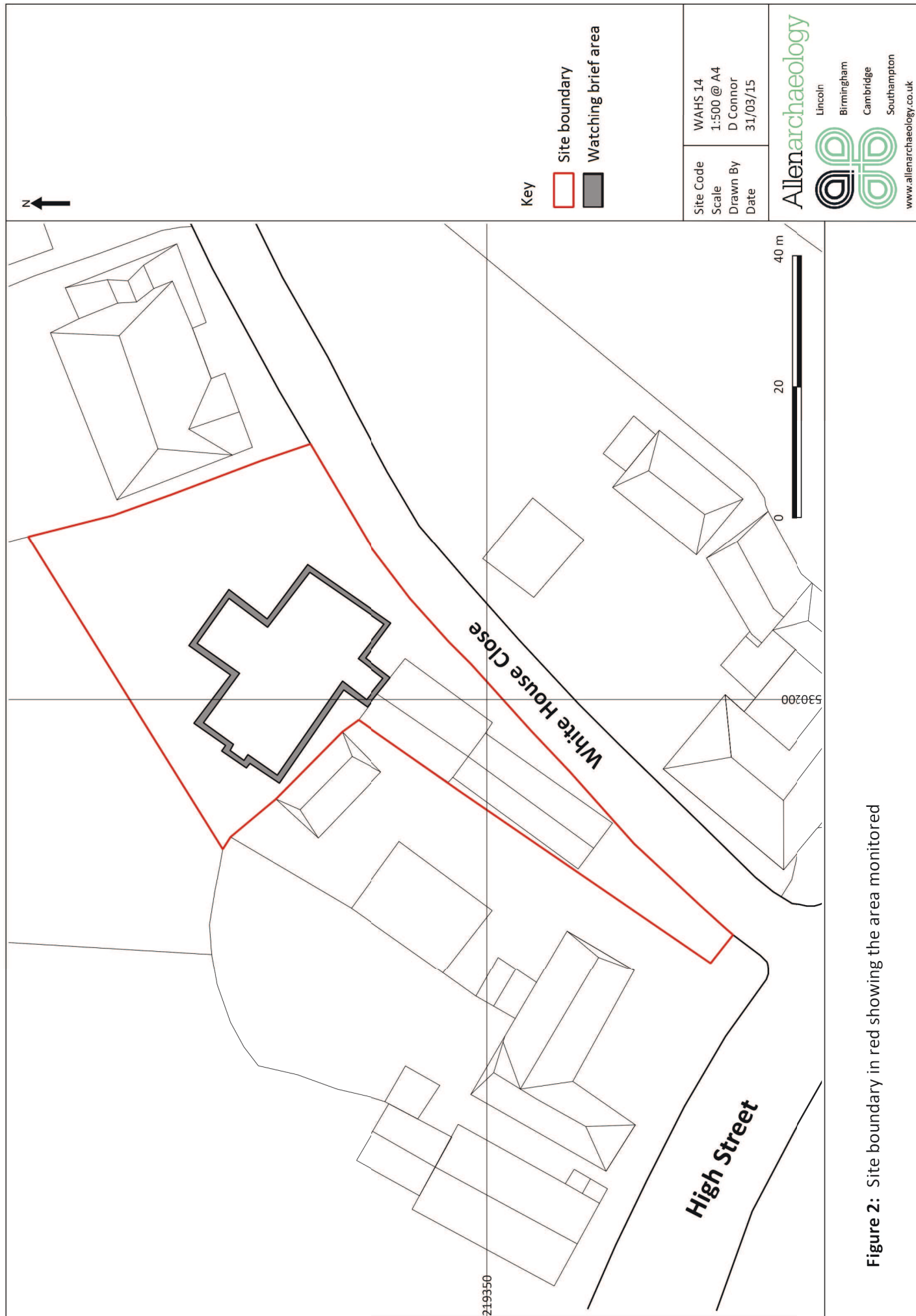
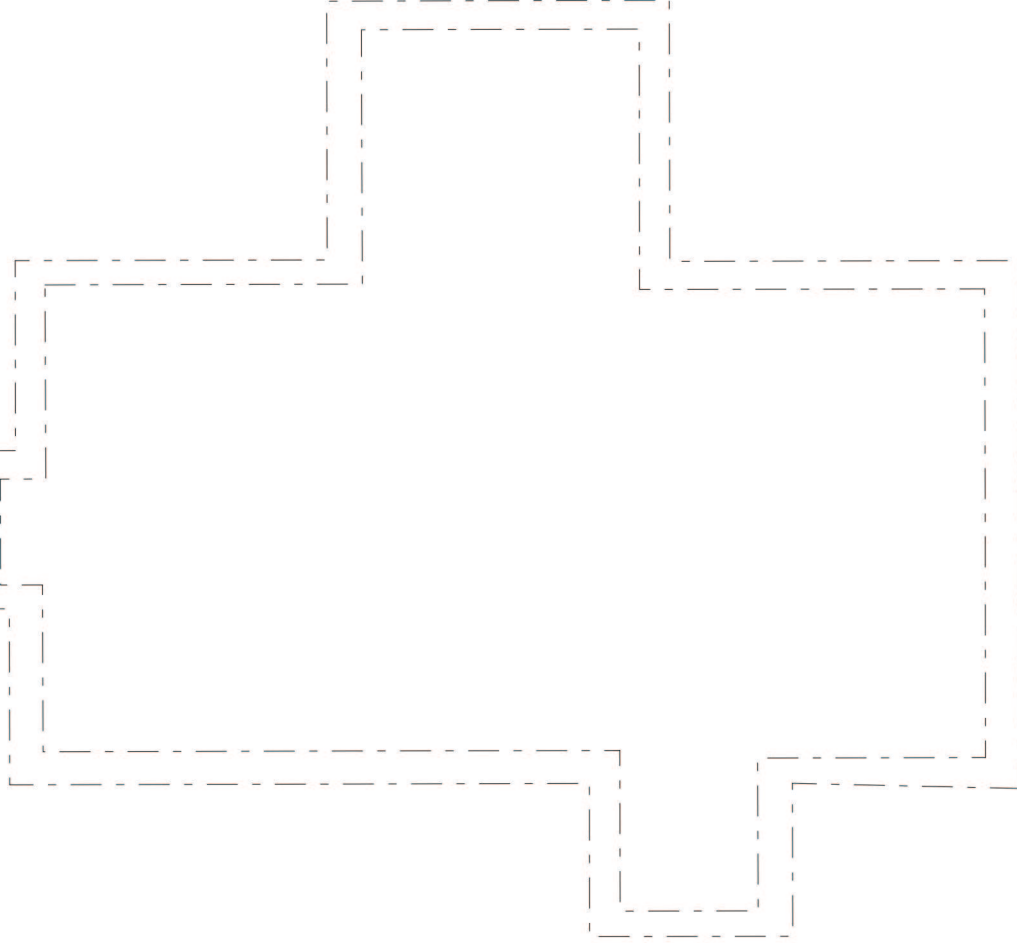


Figure 2: Site boundary in red showing the area monitored

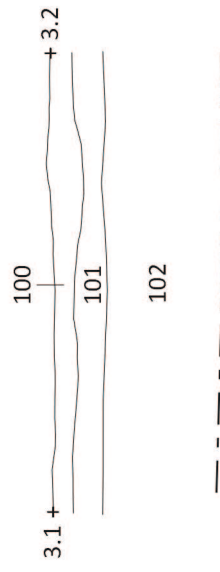


3.1 + - - - + 3.2



0 Scale 1:100 5 m

### Southeast Facing Section



0 Scale 1:50 2 m

Site Code  
Scale  
Drawn By  
Date

WAHS 14  
1:150&1:50 @ A4  
D Connor  
31/03/15

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**Figure 3:** Plan and representative section



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**Lincoln**  
**Whisby Lodge**  
**Hillcroft Business Park**  
**Whisby Road**  
**Lincoln**  
**LN6 3QL**

Tel/Fax: +44 (0) 1522 685356  
Email: [info@allenarchaeology.co.uk](mailto:info@allenarchaeology.co.uk)

**Birmingham**  
Arion Business Centre  
Harriet House  
118 High Street  
Birmingham  
B23 6BG

Tel/Fax: +44 (0) 800 610 2545  
Email: [birmingham@allenarchaeology.co.uk](mailto:birmingham@allenarchaeology.co.uk)

**Cambridge**  
Wellington House  
East Road  
Cambridge  
CB1 1BH

Tel/Fax: +44 (0) 800 610 2550  
Email: [cambridge@allenarchaeology.co.uk](mailto:cambridge@allenarchaeology.co.uk)

**Southampton**  
International House  
Southampton International Business Park  
George Curl Way  
Southampton  
SO18 2RZ

Tel: +44 (0) 800 610 2555  
Email: [southampton@allenarchaeology.co.uk](mailto:southampton@allenarchaeology.co.uk)