

**THE COTTAGE, POST OFFICE LANE,
ASHBY-CUM-FENBY, NORTH-EAST LINCOLNSHIRE**

RETROSPECTIVE SCHEME OF WORKS

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Report prepared for
Hodson Architects
on behalf of Mr. A. Dunk

by

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Summary

Archaeological monitoring and recording was carried out during the excavation of a trench on land at The Cottage, Ashby-cum-Fenby, North-East Lincolnshire. These works were undertaken because an archaeological watching brief required as a planning constraint had not taken place.

The modern village of Ashby-cum-Fenby lies within the shrunken medieval village of Ashby; the parish has incorporated the deserted medieval village of Fenby. Numerous earthwork remains of medieval Ashby have been recorded throughout the modern village, but none have been recorded on the development site.

The trench exposed a buried topsoil and a single large pit. Both were interpreted as dating to the nineteenth or twentieth century, and were considered to be of little archaeological significance.

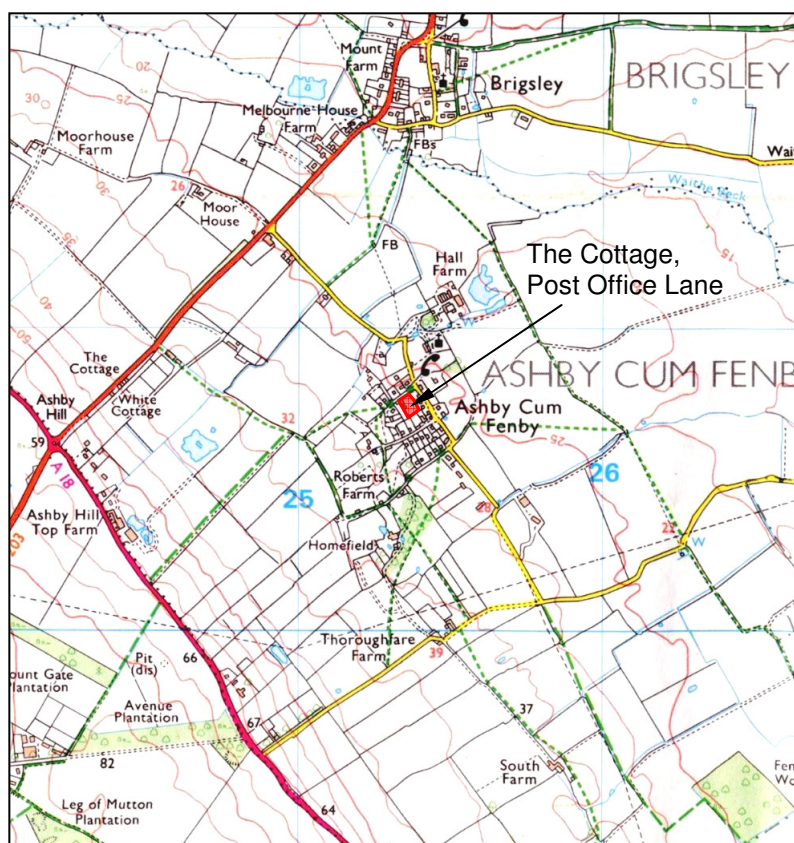


Figure 1: Location plan of the site at scale 1:25,000. The development site is marked in red.

1.0 Introduction

Pre-Construct Archaeological Services Ltd (PCAS) carried out a programme of archaeological observation and recording on a trench excavated on land at The Cottage, Post Office Lane, Ashby-cum-Fenby.

This work was carried out by agreement with the Historic Environment Team for North-East Lincolnshire, in order to substitute for an archaeological watching brief that had formed part of the planning condition but was not undertaken when development took place.

2.0 Site location and description (Figs. 1 & 2)

The village of Ashby-cum-Fenby is in the administrative district of North-East Lincolnshire, approximately 7.5km south-west of Grimsby and 15km north of Louth. It is situated at the foot of the eastern slope of the Lincolnshire Wolds where they join the coastal fenland. The A18 (Barton Street) runs along the side of the Wolds to the west of the village.



Figure 2: Location plan of the development site (outlined in red) at scale 1:1250. Plan supplied by Hodson Architects.

Post Office Lane is on the north side of Ashby-cum-Fenby, running in a south-easterly direction off the north-west to south-east running main road through the village. The development site fronts on to the south-eastern side of Post Office Lane, in an area characterised by new-build dwellings.

The site is a large, sub-rectangular plot, measuring roughly 70m x 45m, with the long axis oriented north-west to south-east. The Cottage, a modern dwelling, occupies the western corner of the plot; prior to the current development, the plot was otherwise chiefly open land, occupied by several derelict garage buildings and sheds and a greenhouse on a concrete base.

3.0 Geology and topography

The local drift geology of the area consists of glacial till, with pre-Holocene geomorphology of sub-glacial drainage channels, overlying solid Welton Formation chalk (BGS, 1990).

The site lies slightly higher than Post Office Lane, and slopes very gently towards the north-north-east. The area lies roughly midway between the 30m and 25m contour lines.

4.0 Archaeological and historical background

The place-names Ashby and Fenby are both Scandinavian, with the Old Danish suffix *-by*, 'farmstead, village'. Ashby may be derived from the Old Danish personal name *Aski*, giving 'Aski's farm', or from the Old Norse *askr*, an ash, 'the village where ash trees grow'. Fenby simply means 'the village in the fen', referring to the village's position at the foot of the Wolds, on the edge of the eastern fenland; it is probably a partial Scandinavianisation of an Anglo-Saxon name based on the Old English *fenn* (Cameron, 1998).

The Domesday Survey of 1086 records Ashby and Fenby as individual settlements. Ashby was divided into three small estates, each of which comprised ploughland, meadow and managed woodland; together, they supported a population of 29 recorded taxpayers. Arable farming was extensive enough for Ashby to have its own mill; there is no record of a church (Morgan and Thorne, 1986).

Although Domesday Book does not record a church in Ashby, one must have been built relatively soon after its compilation, as the parish church of St. Peter, on the north side of the modern village, incorporates some remnants of a Norman structure. The church has frequently been altered and extended, but also retains fragments of medieval stained glass in the chancel windows (Pevsner and Harris, 1989).

Both villages declined during the medieval period, and Fenby was eventually abandoned altogether, with the parish being subsumed into Ashby in the late sixteenth century. The extent of medieval Ashby is still partially visible in fields and grassed areas in and around the modern village, as a complex of earthworks indicating the site of the medieval moated manor on the north side of the village, the boundaries of small, privately owned fields and smallholdings, and ridge-and-furrow earthworks outside the village, where the strip ploughing of the communally worked medieval fields has been preserved by subsequent use of the land as pasture. The Lincoln Historic Environment Record has recorded no such earthworks on the development site itself, although earthworks are recorded within plots all around it, suggesting that the site historically lay on a piece of common land near the centre of the medieval village (Gardner, 2004).

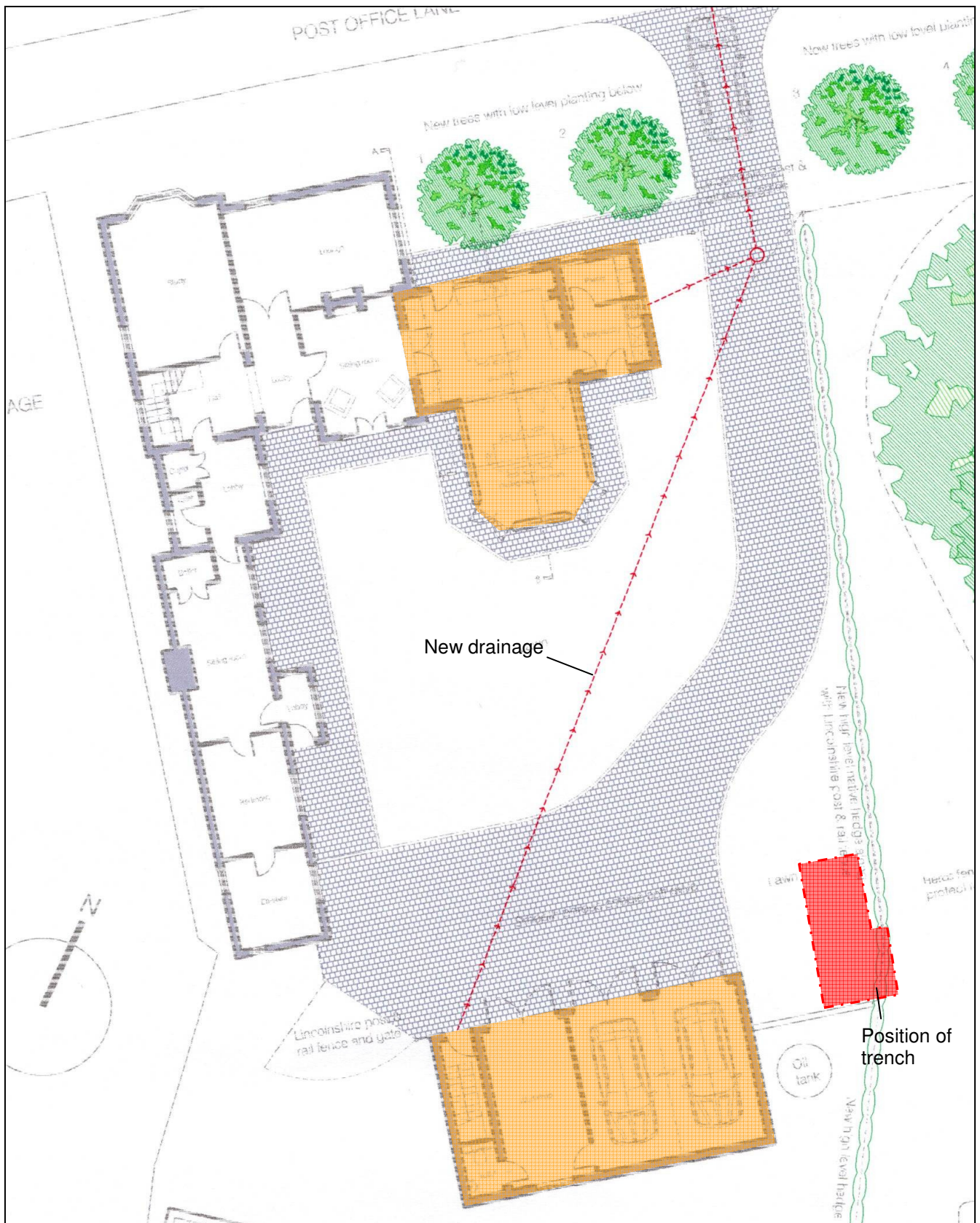


Figure 3: Plan of the development site at scale 1:200. The new development is marked in orange, and the position of the trench in red.

The present owner, Mr. Alistair Dunk, believes that the site was formerly occupied by a cottage dating from the 16th century. This was replaced on the same footprint about seven years ago by the present building (pers. comm., 15/03/11).

5.0 Methodology

Construction work on the house extension had been completed at the time of the archaeological intervention, and the foundations for the garage had been laid (plates 1 and 2). The 'remedial' trench was positioned close to the north-eastern side of the plot, in order to avoid newly laid drainage (fig. 3)

The archaeological intervention took place on March 15th, 2011. The trench was excavated using a back-acting 180° excavator fitted with a smooth-bladed ditching bucket. It was 5.5m long and between 1.7m and 2.1m wide, and was excavated to a depth of 1.0m, slightly below the surface level of the natural glacial till (context no. 004). Initial excavation encountered a shallowly buried metal pipe: excavation was halted in this area, and the trench was moved 0.5m to the west in order to avoid it (plate 3). An additional sondage was machine excavated 0.70m into the natural to ensure that it had been correctly identified as such (plate 5).

The exposed surfaces were cleaned by hand, and the trench was planned at a scale of 1:50, with section drawings at 1:20 (fig. 4). All features and deposits seen were recorded on a standard PCAS trench recording sheet, and a colour photograph record was made (appendix 1). The fieldwork was completed on the same day, and was undertaken by Mike Rowe.

6.0 Results

The trench was sealed by a disturbed soil layer, 001, with frequent modern refuse, which was interpreted as a landscaping topsoil post-dating the construction of The Cottage. Below 001 was a second topsoil, 002, which contained 19th and 20th century debris, and probably represented an earlier ground surface pre-dating the construction of The Cottage.

At the south-eastern end of the trench, layer 002 was cut by a large pit with irregular sides (plate 3). The full extent of pit 005 was not seen, as it extended beyond the trench footprint to the south and east, and it could not be excavated beyond a depth of 0.5m due to flooding. Two fills were recorded. The upper fill, 007, was a layer of redeposited material that appeared to be a levelling deposit; it was noted that the modern topsoil was deeper above the pit, indicating that considerable settling of its contents had occurred and repeated levelling actions had been necessary. Below fill 007 was a mixed clayey silt deposit, 006, which contained quantities of 19th and early 20th century refuse. Brick, mortar and pottery fragments were noted, but no animal bone was seen, suggesting a demolition dump rather than a midden.

The buried topsoil 002 overlay a layer of dirty-looking reddish-brown clay, 003, which appeared to be a naturally arising subsoil (Plate 4). Below 003 was the natural glacial till, yellowish-brown clay 004: the interpretation of this deposit was confirmed by the excavation of a machine sondage (Plate 5).

7.0 Conclusion

A single feature, pit 005, was seen during the archaeological intervention. As this feature contained 19th and 20th century artefacts, and cut a relatively modern buried

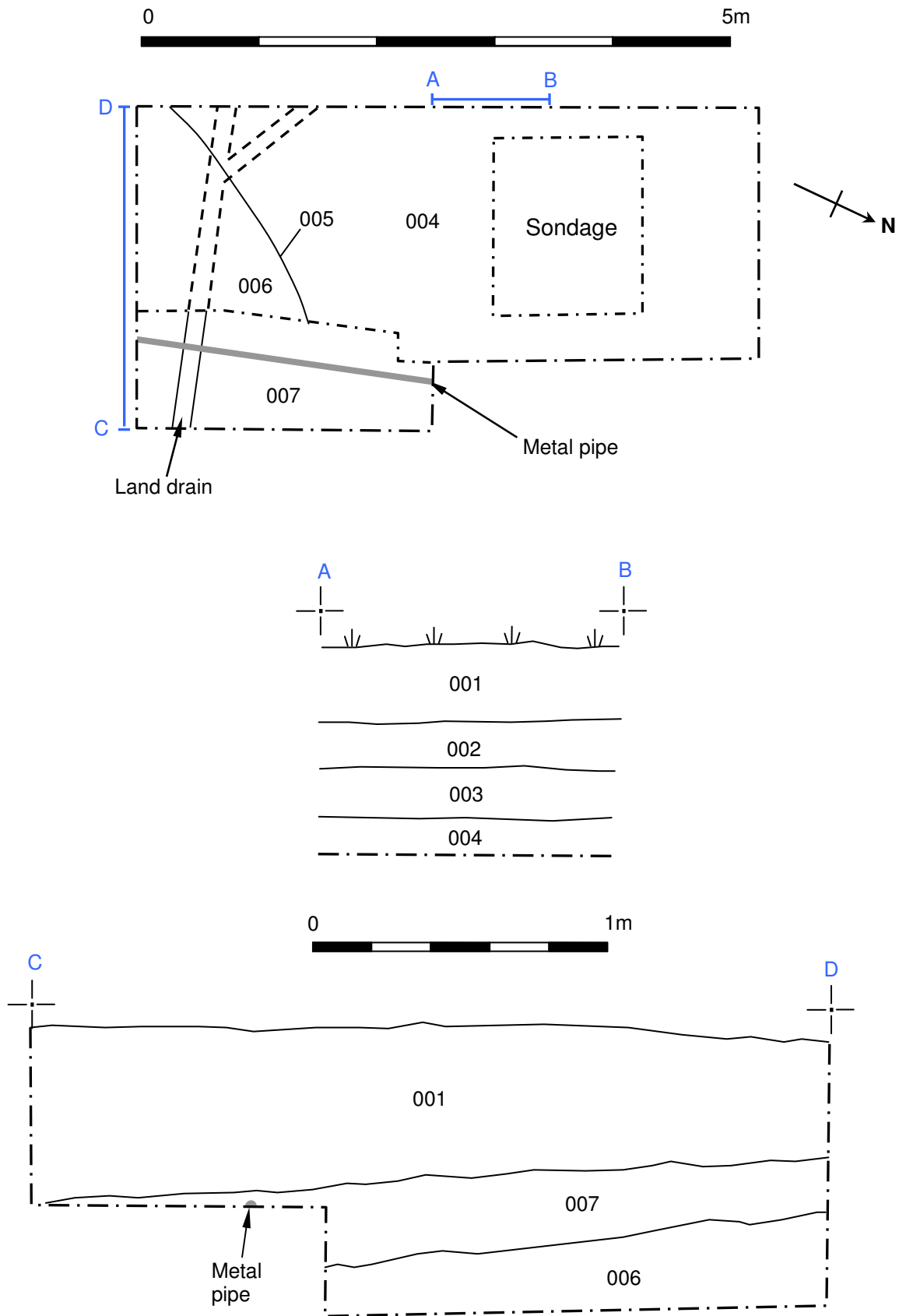


Figure 4: Plan of the trench at scale 1:50, with sections at 1:20.

soil dating to roughly the same period, it was considered to be of little archaeological significance, and the finds retrieved from it were discarded.

8.0 Bibliography

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9.0 Acknowledgements

PCAS Ltd would like to thank Hodson Architects for this commission and Mr. A. Dunk (landowner) for his co-operation during the groundworks.

10.0 Site Archive

The paper archive is currently held at the offices of PCAS Ltd, Saxilby, Lincolnshire, and will be deposited with the Northern Lincolnshire Museum Service within six months of the completion of the project. No artefacts were retained.

Appendix 1: Colour Plates



Plate 1: Composite shot of the site before trenching began, looking south from the site entrance.



Plate 2: Composite shot of the site before trenching began, looking north towards Post Office Lane across the foundations of the new garage building.



Plate 3: The south-eastern end of the trench, looking ESE, showing pit 005 and the course of the metal pipe that required the repositioning of the trench.



Plate 4: Sample section in the western side of the trench, looking west.



Plate 5: Excavation of a sondage in the north-western end of the trench, looking north-west.

Appendix 2: Context Summary

| Context No. | Type | Relationships | Description | Finds/Dating | Interpretation |
|-------------|-------|--|---|---|--|
| 001 | Layer | Sealing all deposits | Disturbed soil, generally c. 0.20m deep, but up to 0.60m deep where it overlies pit 005 | Frequent modern refuse | Modern topsoil, probably post-dating the construction of The Cottage |
| 002 | Layer | Cut by pit 005; sealed by modern topsoil 001 | Dark brown, slightly sandy, silty loam topsoil with heavy root growth, containing occasional small stones; up to 0.15m deep | 19 th -20 th century | Buried topsoil layer pre-dating the construction of The Cottage |
| 003 | Layer | Below buried topsoil 002; above natural 004 | Mid reddish-brown slightly silty clay with rare pebbles and ironstone fragments | None | Subsoil |
| 004 | Layer | Below all deposits and features | Light- to mid-yellowish-brown clay with small chalk flecks and rare small pebbles | None | Natural drift deposit (glacial till) |
| 005 | Cut | Cuts buried topsoil 002 | Large pit with irregular side: extended outside excavated area. Not excavated to full depth. | N/A | Possible quarry pit or soakaway |
| 006 | Fill | Fill of pit 005, below fill 007 | Very mixed mid-brown clayey silt | 19 th and early 20 th century refuse including brick, mortar and pottery – not retained | Possibly site clearance: domestic waste seems less likely, as no bone was observed |
| 007 | Fill | Upper fill of pit 005, above fill 006 | Redeposited material | None | Ground levelling deposit |