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## The Stable Block, Sewell Manor, Central Bedfordshire

Historic Building Recording and Watching Brief

Report No. MK 184/19

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**The Stable Block, Sewell Manor,  
Central Bedfordshire**

**Historic Building Recording and Watching Brief**

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## **Summary**

CFA Archaeology Ltd has conducted a historic building recording on a mid to late 20th century stable block 30m to the south east of the Grade II listed Sewell Manor Farmhouse in Central Bedfordshire. A historic map regression has shown the presence of a building occupying the footprint of the current stables, and the building recording was undertaken prior to its conversion into a domestic dwelling to determine if any element of this earlier building remained. Detailed examination of the structure, however, showed the stables to be wholly modern. A watching brief carried out on the service trench recorded a make-up layer which was dated to the 19<sup>th</sup> century by an adjacent excavation.

## **1. INTRODUCTION**

### **1.1 Site Location and Description**

The Stable Block at Sewell Manor (hereafter ‘the stables’) lies at the western end of an unnamed track, off Sewell Lane and 0.5km west of the centre of North Dunstable in the Central Bedfordshire. The stables are centred at National Grid Reference SP 99526 23040 (Fig. 1), approximately 30m to the south east of Sewell Manor Farmhouse which is Grade II listed was remodelled in the 17th and 18th century has elements which dates from the 13<sup>th</sup>- 14<sup>th</sup> centuries.

The stables are constructed from breeze block, are linear in plan and aligned north west to south east with a grey slate covered half-hipped roof structure. At the south east side there is a large garage that has been photographed and described (see photographs).

### **1.2 Planning Background**

Planning permission has been granted to convert existing stables into a dwelling to undertake ground works to facilitate new services to the building.

The stable block is a non-designated heritage asset; however, an earlier building appears on the footprint of the current structure and the structure is situated close to a listed building and as a result, Condition 3 has been placed on the current planning application (CB/17/03566/FULL) Central Bedfordshire Council which states that:

*‘No work shall take place until a written scheme of heritage asset resource management; that includes archaeological investigations, historic building recording; provision for post excavation analysis and full publication, has been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The development hereby approved shall only be implemented in full accordance with the approved archaeological and historic building recording scheme.’*

A Historic England Level 3 building recording was considered by Local Authority to be a proportionate response to the proposed development, and in line with current guidance issued under Sections 197 and 199 of the National Planning Policy Framework NPPF (Revised 2018, and 2019). A written scheme of investigation was produced and agreed by the local authority which has guided this record.

## **2. AIMS AND OBJECTIVES**

The primary aim of the recording is to create a permanent record of the building prior to alteration and to determine whether there is any material remaining in the current building from an early structure that once occupied the site. The recording should show the current condition and character of the building and be available for wider consultation through the Central Bedfordshire Historic Environment Record, and online with the Archaeological Data Service (ADS). The results of the report will be used to inform future research and help in determining further mitigation.

### **2.1 Limitations**

Following production of a written scheme of investigation WSI building recording work took place on the 29th May 2019. Weather conditions on site were bright with sporadic showers and

there were strong winds. Although every effort was made to produce a full record of the buildings, the safety of the surveyor undertaking the work took priority over recording.

### **3. METHODS AND STANDARDS**

#### **3.1 Photographic recording**

An external photographic record was made of all sides of the stable block and the garage as near perpendicular to the elevations as possible within the constraints of the site. General external photographs were taken, including a number of oblique views of the cottage, showing its setting within the wider landscape.

An interior photographic record was made of all accessible rooms and features which were illustrative of the building's current and past use. The building was examined for any dated inscriptions, signage, makers' marks or graffiti that would contribute to an understanding of the building's development, however, none were found.

Photographs were taken with a high resolution digital SLR camera, and where it was safe to do so, an appropriately sized photographic scale was included in each photograph.

A register of the location, direction and subject of each shot was produced to accompany the photographic record and the position and direction of each annotated on a copy of the building plans and appended to this report (Appendices 1 and 2).

#### **3.2 Drawn record**

Prior to recording, a plan of the building was supplied by the client's architect. This was checked for accuracy on site using hand tapes and an electronic distance measure (EDM) and later altered for use in the report (Figs. 3a to 3d). Detailed measurements were taken during the survey and later used to produce a sectional drawing through the stables (Fig. 3e). The interior spaces of the stables were numbered and added to the plan (Fig. 3a) these numbers are referred to throughout the text to orientate the reader.

#### **3.3 Historic research**

As the building is modern the map regression has been limited to the use of historic map available online. Online searches were undertaken at the National Archives in Kew, local archives and of the archaeological grey literature available through the ADS. However, no records were identified which related to the stable block at Sewell Manor.

#### **3.4 Written account**

Written description and note were made on site, this included the materials used and methods of construction. A written account was also made of architectural features and functional details.

#### **3.5 Standards and Guidance**

All work undertaken was consistent with the standard of a level 3 survey, as detailed in the Historic England guidance; *Understanding Historic Buildings; A guide to good recording*

*practice* (2016) and in line with the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists' (CIfA) *Standard and guidance for the archaeological investigation and recording of standing buildings* (CIfA 2019).

### **3.6 Dissemination and Archiving**

The archive comprises all the digital photographs taken during the recording, a copy of this report together with plans, sections and elevation drawings.

The photograph archive conformed to best practice guidance (Historic England 2016a); with the images converted to uncompressed baseline v.6 TIFF accompanied by a site specific metadata that includes: A site specific ID, capture device, converting software, colour space, bit depth, resolution, date of capture, photographers name, and notes of any alterations made to the image.

All material created in a digital form conforms to recognised standards and guidelines issued by the Archaeology Data Service available at: (<http://guides.archaeologydataservice.ac.uk/>).

An OASIS form has been completed (Appendix 3) and a digital copy of the report uploaded to the OASIS website. Once the local authority has approved the report it will be made available as grey literature by the Archaeology Data Service (ADS) and a full archive will be deposited in line with WSI.

## **4. MAP REGRESSION**

Four historic maps have been consulted of the area surrounding the stable block: The first edition 25 inch to the mile scale Ordnance Survey map surveyed in 1879 (Fig. 2a) shows Manor Farm as a group of structures centred around 2 partially enclosed yards with a track leading from the main road to the south east, and a pond to the west. When geo referenced onto this map (Fig. 2a), the footprint of the current stable block overlays a rectangular structure on the south side of the yard closet to the main road. The building shown on the map is divided internally into 2 parts, with the north west end of the building wider than the south east end. To the south west side of the building shown on the map there is a field boundary. The building on the east side of the yard, where the modern garage now stands, is shown divided internally into 3 spaces.

The larger scale 6 inch to the mile Ordnance Survey map published in 1884 (Fig. 2b) has the same survey date of 1879 and unsurprisingly shows the buildings surround the yards unchanged. By the time the third edition of the 25 inch to the mile scale map is published in 1924 (Fig. 2c) the only change has occurred in the surrounding landscape where a trackway has been introduced into the field west of the farm.

The final map used to plot changes in the buildings is published in by the Ordnance Survey in 1955 (Fig. 2d). This map shows new buildings erected in the fields to the north west of the farm and a large structure has been added to the building occupying the footprint of the stables. This large structure is a shed and the partially remains of this was noted on site.

## 5. BUILDING RECORD

### 5.1 External description

The stables are constructed from breezeblock, externally rendered, and orientated on a north-west to south-east axis with regularly spaced stable doors on the north-east side overlooking a yard (Photograph 1). The stable block is rectilinear in plan, measuring 28.1m in length by 5.27m wide. The width of the building is extended on the north east side by over sailing roof eaves that form a covered walkway 2.24m wide running the full length of the building (Photographs 11 and 12).

The half-hipped roof structure over the stables is slate covered and supported on the outer block walls and by regular spaced wooden posts along the length of the walkway. Under the covered walkway at the south-east end of the building there are two stacks of worked timber (Photograph 15 and 18). A limited inspection of these was possible, revealing the presence of angled pegged tenon joints identifying their former use as principal rafters from an early roof structure.

There are 8 equally spaced stable doors along the north east elevation of the building and to the south-east side of each door there is a window opening fitted with a wooden single glazed casement window frame with diamond pattern leaded lights (Photograph 14). Each of the stable doors are fitted with metal strap hinges (Photograph 13) and above each door and window combination there is an inserted timber feature formed from machine-cut softwood (Photograph 17).

At the south east end of the stable block, there is a 9th doorway and window combination, but with no decorative timber feature above. The stable door at this end of the building opens onto a large internal space (Photograph 23) which is currently used as storage, but probably functioned as a tack room.

The north west gable end of the stables is rendered externally and there is a single four-light casement window with diamond patterned leaded lights (Photograph 5). The south west elevation of the stables is constructed against the brick wall of a now demolished shed (Photograph 7) the footprint of which can be seen on the Ordnance Survey map published in 1955 (Fig. 2d). At the south east end of the south west elevation the breezeblock construction of the stables is exposed along with the underside of the roof structure (Photograph 6).

The wall of the former shed on the south west side of the stables (Photograph 9) is 23.5m in length and constructed in two separate phases: The north-west half of the wall is constructed from breezeblock but sits on earlier courses of brick, while at the south-east end of the wall is constructed entirely with modern engineering brick. Approximately 0.7m above the external ground level, on the south west side of the building, a levelling layer of cast-concrete is exposed in the former shed wall. The height of this levelling layer corresponds to the internal floor level of the stable block. The north east elevation of the stables (Photograph 9) has a single window opening but the wooden window frame has been removed.

The slate covered roof over the stables has a centrally placed raised ventilator (Photographs 19 and 27), and the roof ridge is capped with stone. To either gable, there is a stone volute moulded finial with floral embellishment (Photograph 21).

Internally the stable block is divided into eight equally sized cells (2.6m x 4.8m), with each cell separated by a full height breezeblock partition. As noted earlier there is a large storage room at the south-east end of the stables measuring 4.3m by 4.8m but this only contains a raised water tank (Photograph 23) and has a cast concrete floor with a drainage channel to one side (Fig. 3a).

There is a garage block which runs at a 90° angle from the south-east end of the stables forming the south east extent of the yard (Photograph 2). The garage has a timber frame with modern engineering brick in filling the gaps between the wooden frame. There are four large double doors in the north east elevation of the garage and the roof structure matches the stables; being covered with grey slate tiles, half hipped with decorative stone finials to either end (Photograph 4). Externally, the timber frame of the garage has been coated with black paint and some of the frame is former from telegraph poles.

## **5.2 Internal description**

Each stable has a cast concrete floor with a regular square shaped pattern stamped into it for extra grip. In stables 1, 3, 5, 6, and 8 (Fig. 3a) there is a brick-built corner trough with a tethering ring set against the south-west wall. Along the north east wall of each stable there is a continuous drainage channel that passes through the breezeblock partitions to drain hole at the south-east end of the building (Photograph 24). Each of the stable blocks contains a water tap (Fig. 3a) and in stables 4, 5, 6, 7 and 8 there is a water drinker with an internal ball valve (Photograph 25) controlling the water supply from an overhead cistern in stable 6 (Photograph 28).

The roof over the stables is supported by softwood purlins and rafters (Photograph 29) and along the south-west pitch of the roof there is a continuous skylight running the full length of the building (Photograph 26).

Internally, the garage on the south east side of the yard is open plan and currently used as a play area and storage. There is a modern raised modern wooden floor surface and there is plasterboard to the walls and the ceiling (Photograph 22).

## **6. WATCHING BRIEF**

A watching brief was carried out on the new wall foundations on 15th October 2019. The trenches were uniformly 0.9m deep and 0.35m wide. A consistent chalk/clay mix was recorded below the modern concrete surface and make-up (0.1m and 0.15m deep respectively). The new foundation trench (Fig. 4.1) did not penetrate the layer nor did the earlier shallow wall foundations (Fig 4.1 to the north of the stables and 4.2 to the east).

## **7. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION**

Evidence obtained from the historic mapping shows a building occupying the footprint of the stable block (Figs 2a to 2c), which is a wholly modern structure dating from the latter part of the 20th century. The survey has shown that the only evidence of an earlier building on site is the presence of wooden roof timber that are stacked under the walkway (Photograph 15), and the current owner believes that these were brought to the site by the previous owner and are not from an any early building on site. The breeze block wall of the wall former shed (Photograph 7) is constructed on a lower course of brick but this probably dates from early 20th century.



The watching brief on the drain run recorded a thick chalky make-up layer also found and dated to the 19<sup>th</sup> century in the excavation to the east of the Stables (CFA, 2019, layer 003). The modern concrete floor and shallow wall foundations of the Stables cut into this layer but did not penetrate it.

## **8. BIBLIOGRAPHY**

CFA, 2019 Stable Cottage, Manor Farm, Sewell, Archaeological evaluation, Report No. MK172/19

CIfA 2019, Standard and Guidance for the Archaeological Investigation and Recording of Standing Buildings or Structures

Historic England, 2016. Understanding Historic Buildings; A guide to good recording practice, London: Historic England.

Historic England 2016a: Digital Image Capture and File Storage: Guidelines for Best Practice (available at <https://historicengland.org.uk/images-books/publications/digital-image-capture-and-file-storage/>)

### **Historical Mapping**


Ordnance Survey map of Bedfordshire Sheet No XXXII.1 Surveyed: 1879 Published: 1880

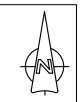
Ordnance Survey map of Bedfordshire Sheet No. XXXII.NW Surveyed: 1879 Published: 1884

Ordnance Survey map of Bedfordshire Sheet No. XXXII.1 Surveyed: 1922 Published: 1924

Ordnance Survey map Sheet No SP9 Published: 1955



**Key:**  
 Site Boundary



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Title:  
**Site location plan**

Project:  
**The Stable Block, Sewell Manor,  
 Bedfordshire:  
 Historic Building Recording**

Client:  
**Jawgroup**

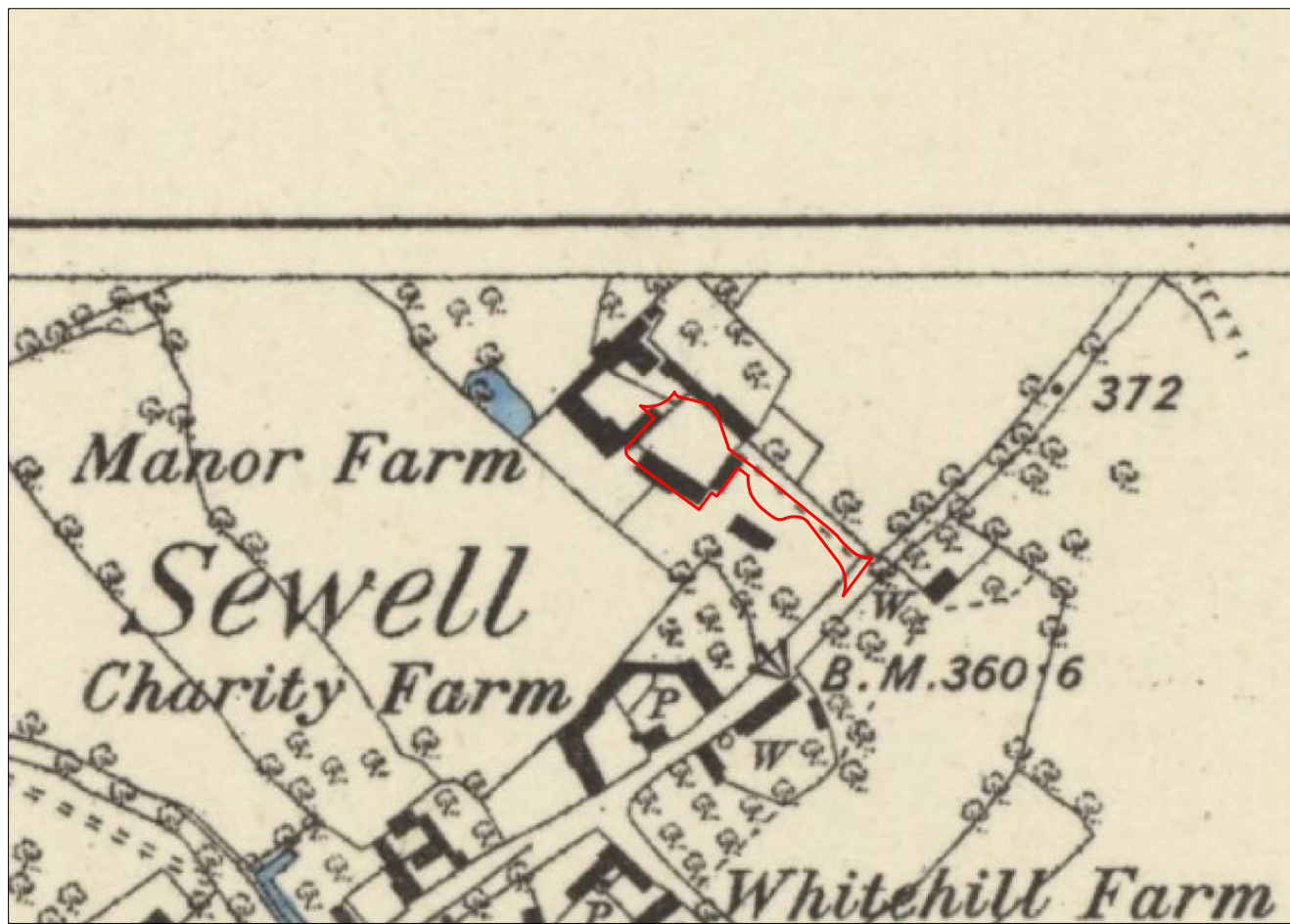
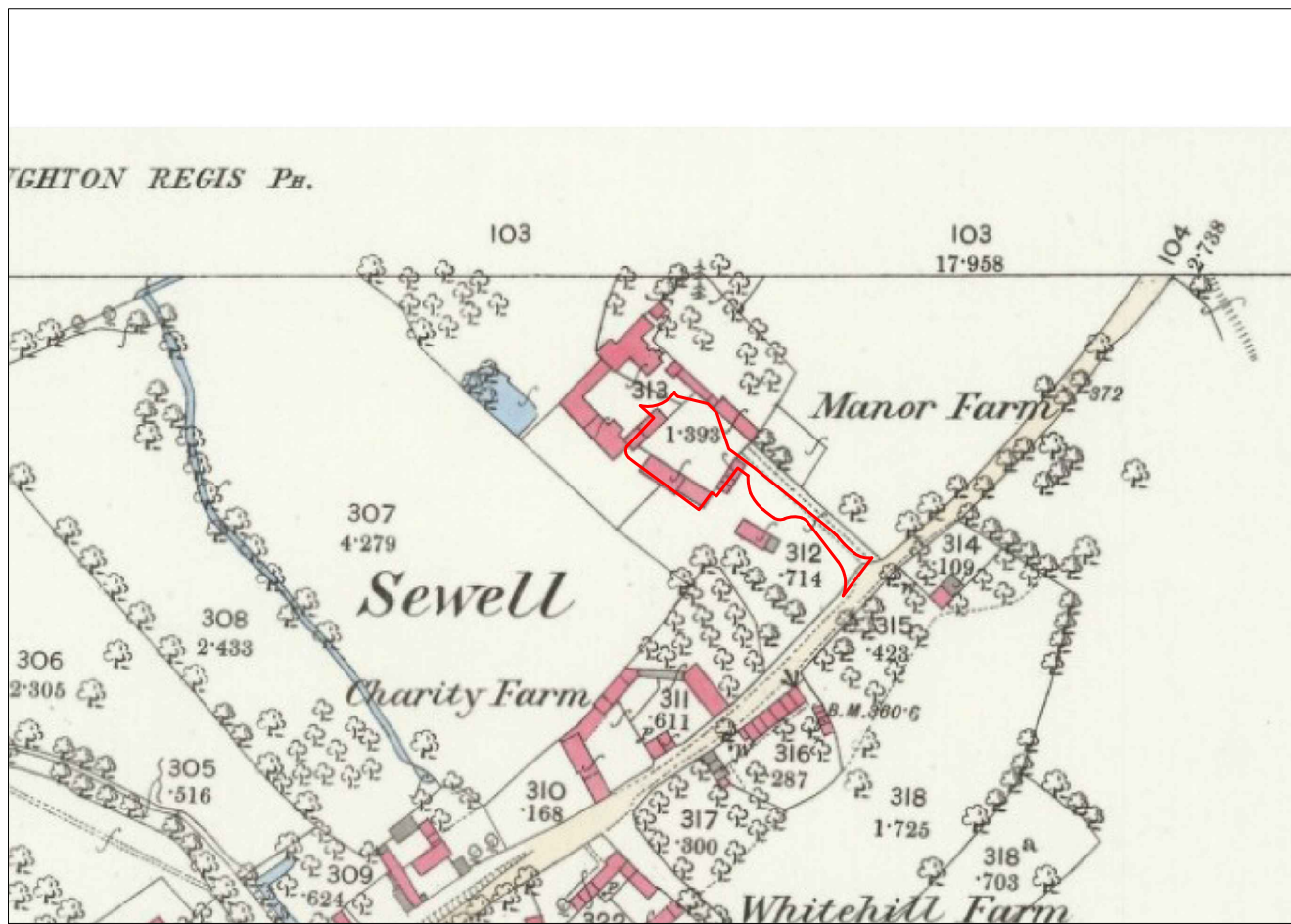
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Key:

Site Boundary

Fig. 2a - Extract from the Ordnance Survey map of Bedfordshire Sheet No XXXII.1 Surveyed: 1879  
Published: 1880

Fig. 2b - Extract from the Ordnance Survey map of Bedfordshire Sheet No. XXXII.NW Surveyed: 1879  
Published: 1884

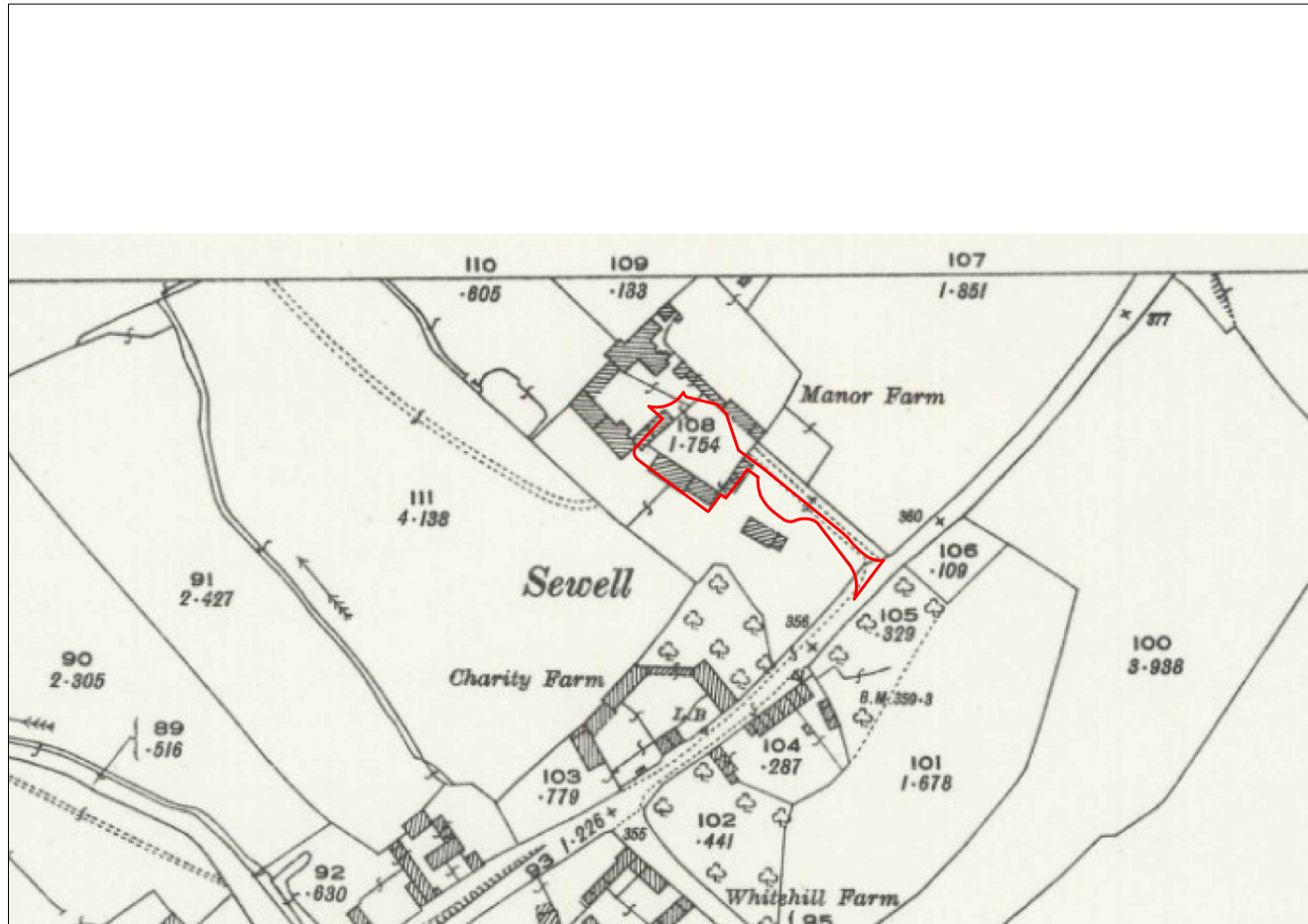


Fig. 2c - Extract from the Ordnance Survey map of Bedfordshire Sheet No. XXXII.1 Surveyed: 1922  
Published: 1924

Fig. 2d - Extract from the Ordnance Survey map Sheet No SP9) Published: 1955



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Title:  
Historic map regression

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Bedfordshire:  
Historic Building Recording

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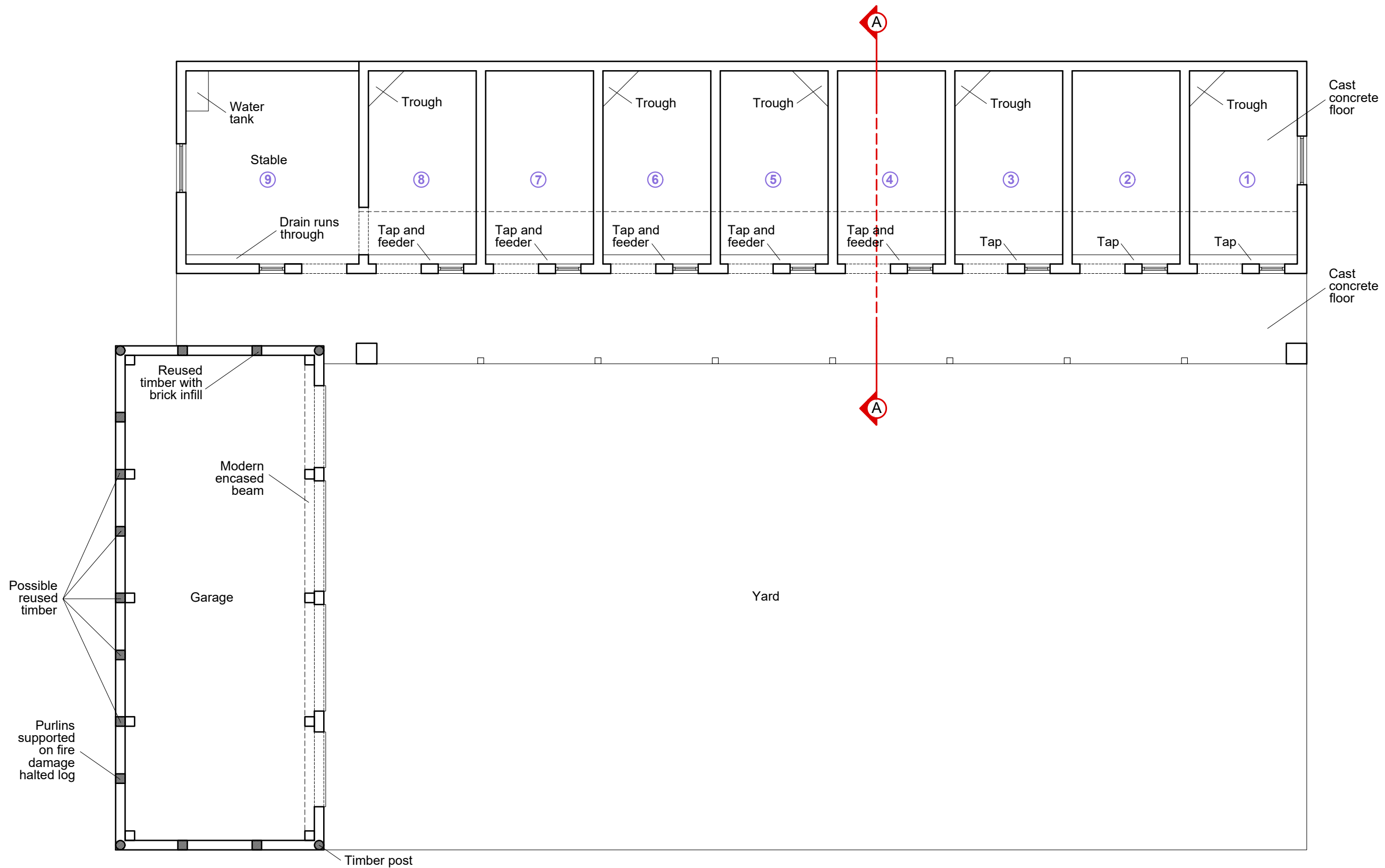
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Report No.: MK184/19	Fig. No.: 2
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Key:



⑥ Stable number



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Title:  
Existing Plan

Project:  
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Recording

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Scale at A3:  
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Report No.: MK184/19	Fig. No.: 3a
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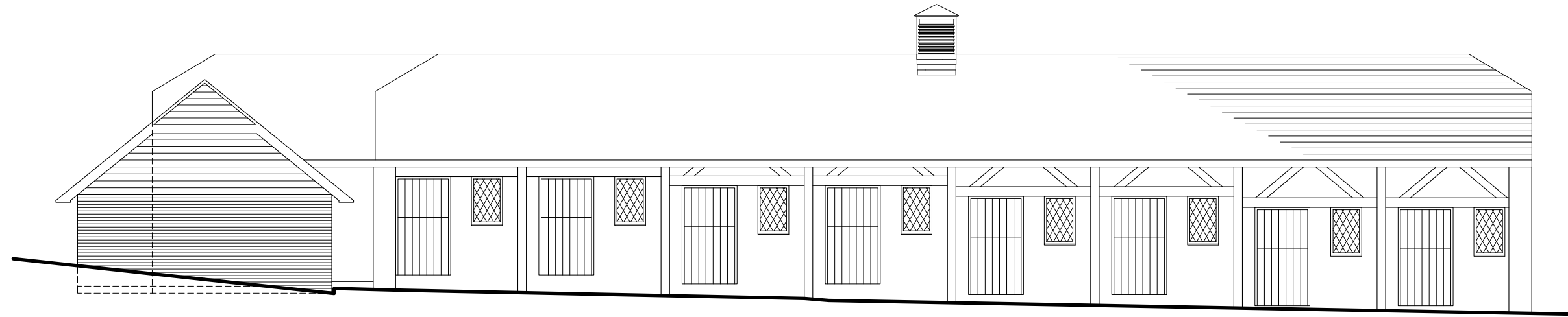


Fig 3b - Existing north east elevation

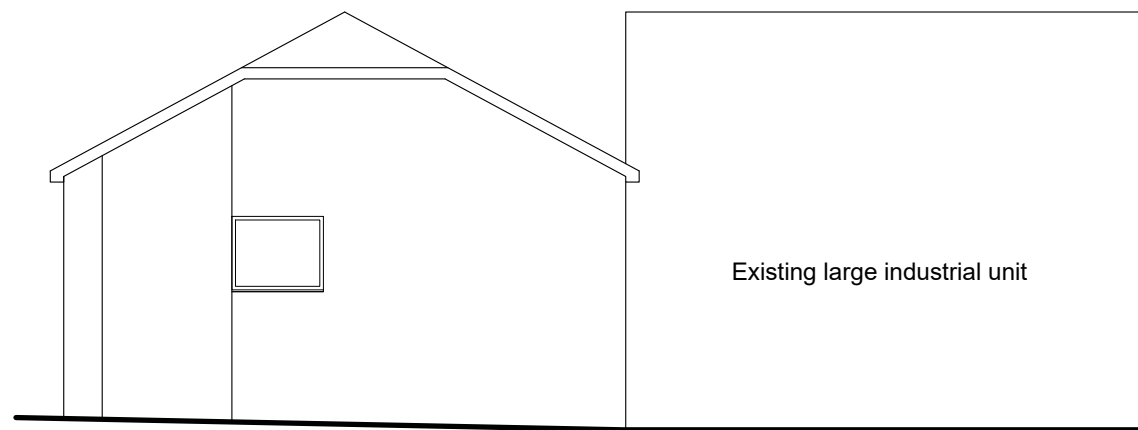


Fig 3c - Existing north west elevation

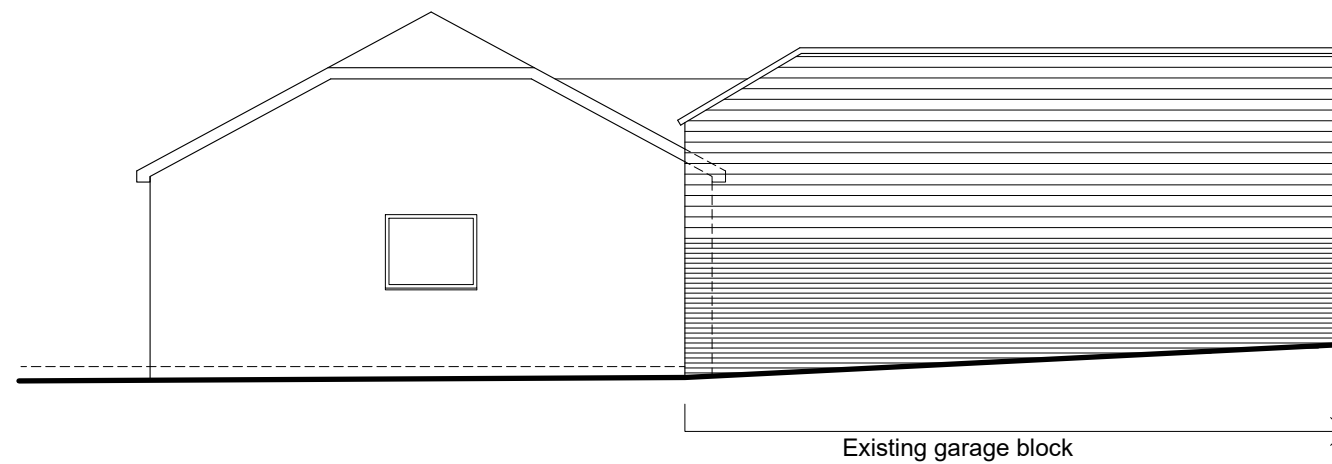


Fig 3d - Existing south east elevation

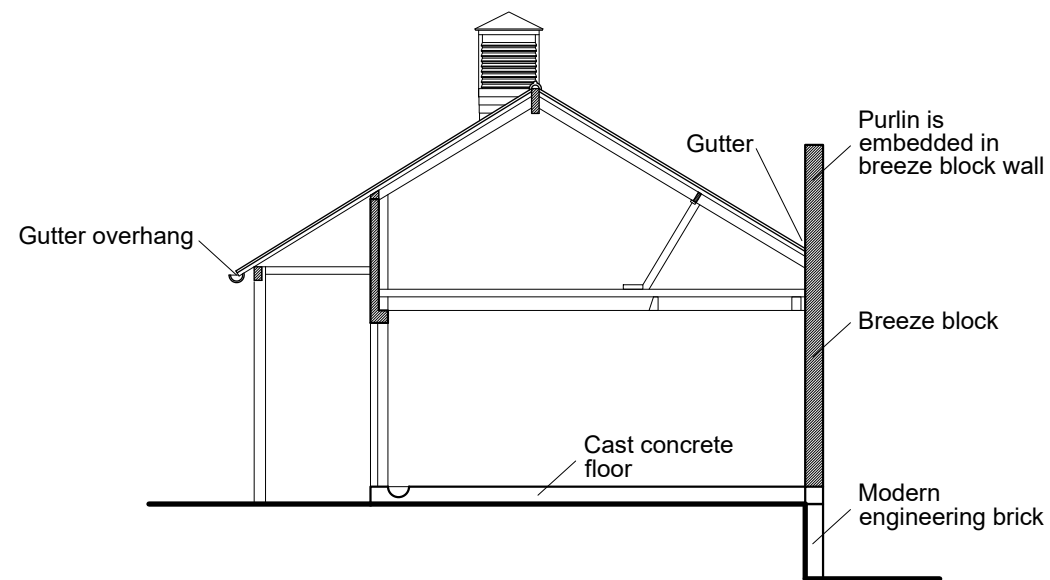


Fig 3e - Section AA



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Title:  
**Existing Elevations and Section**

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Scale at A3:  
**1:100**

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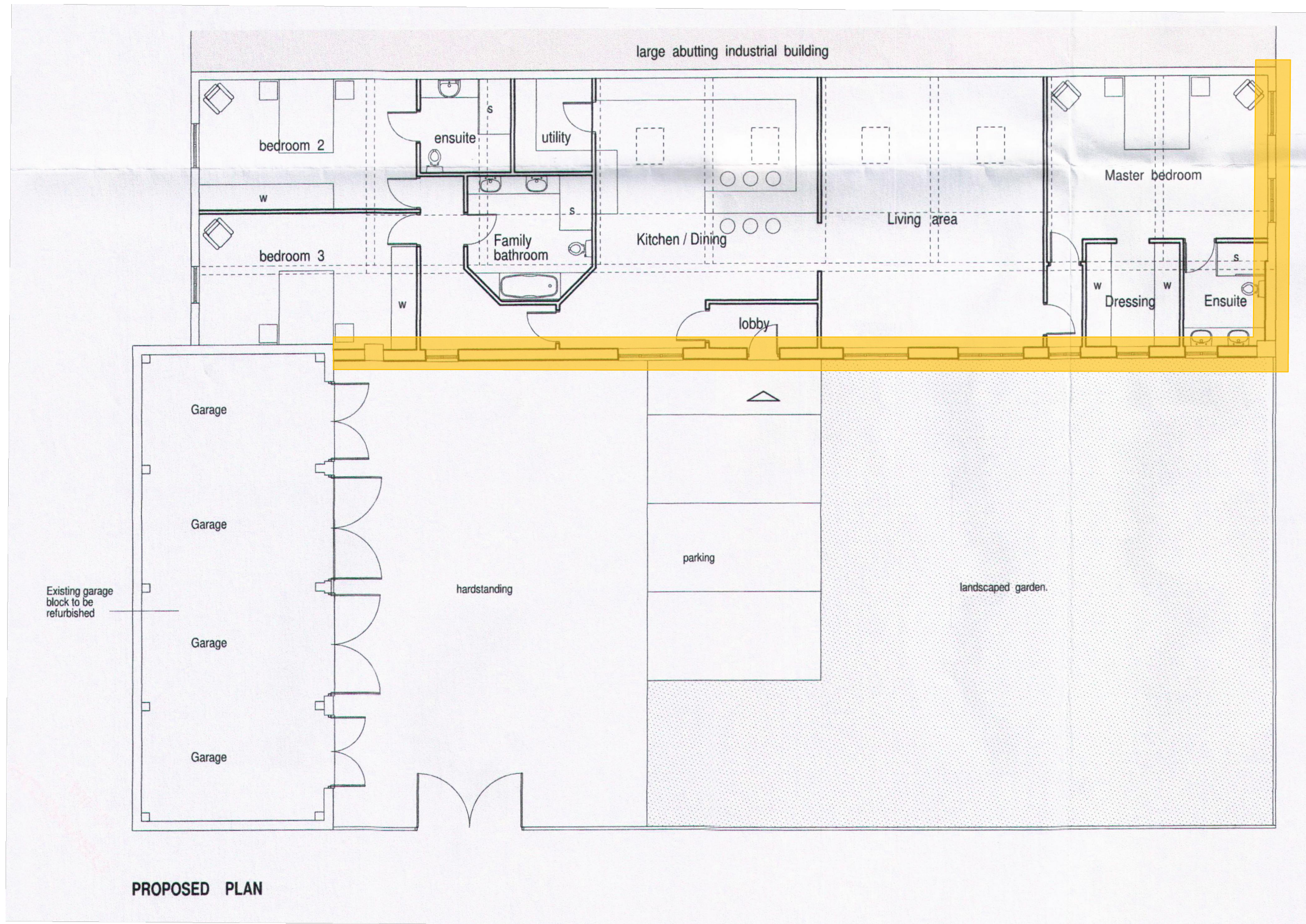
Report No.: <b>MK184/19</b>	Fig. No.: <b>3b-3e</b>
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Key:



Area of Watching Brief



PROPOSED PLAN

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Title:  
Location of watching brief on foundation trench

Project:  
The Stable Block, Sewell Manor, Bedfordshire: Historic Building Recording

Client:  
Jawgroup

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1:100

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Report No.: MK184/19	Fig. No.: 4.1
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Fig. 4.2 - Watching Brief – service trench (north of stables)



Fig.4.3 - Watching Brief – service trench (east of stables)

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Fig. 4.4 - Overall view of service trenches

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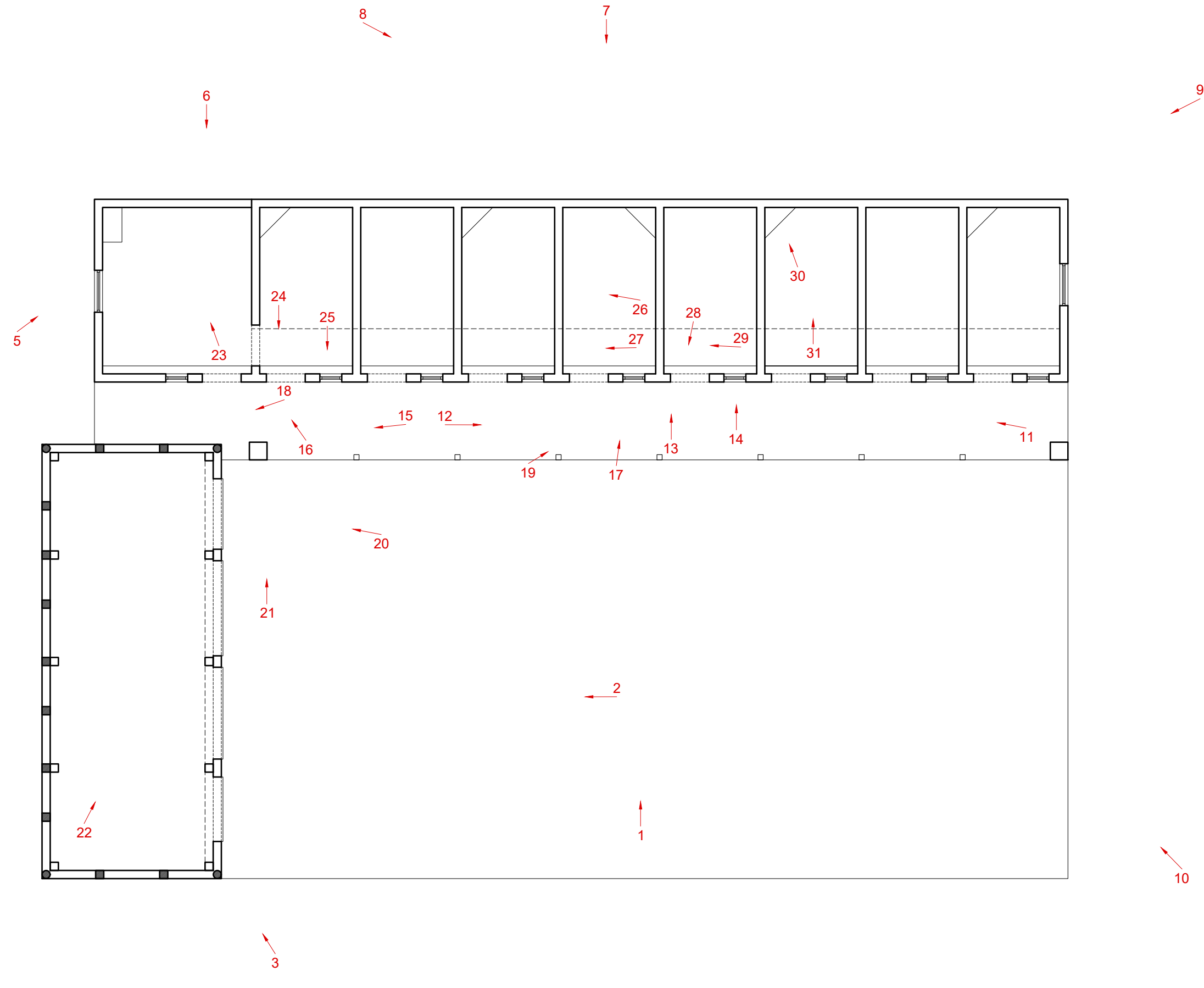
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Report No: <b>MK184/19</b>		Fig. No: <b>4.4</b>

## APPENDIX 1: PHOTOGRAPHIC REGISTER AND DIRECTIONS ON PLAN


Photograph No.	Digital ref.	Direction	Description
1	SMDB3_01	SW	North east elevation of the stable block
2	SMDB3_02	SE	North west elevation of the garage
3	SMDB3_03	S	East corner of the garage showing the hipped roof and timber posts infilled with modern brick
4	SMDB3_04	W	Setting shot showing the garage and its relationship to the Manor House
5	SMDB3_05	W	Window in the south east elevation of the stable block
6	SMDB3_06	NE	South west elevation of the stable block showing the brick wall of the demolished shed and the south east end of the stable block
7	SMDB3_07	NE	Breeze block and brick construction of the demolished shed forming the south west elevation of the stable block
8	SMDB3_08	N	South west elevation of the stable block with the timber-framed barn in the background
9	SMDB3_09	E	West corner of the stables showing how the block is built up against the demolished shed wall
10	SMDB3_10	S	Setting showing the garage and its relationship to the stable block
11	SMDB3_11	SE	Covered walkway at the north east side of the stable block
12	SMDB3_28	NW	Covered walkway along the north east side of the stables
13	SMDB3_15	SW	Strap hinge to the stable doors
14	SMDB3_16	SW	Casement window in the north east elevation of the stable block
15	SMDB3_18	SE	Old roof timbers some of which have pegged tenon joints
16	SMDB3_17	S	Wooden stable doors
17	SMDB3_27	SW	Inset timber feature above the doorways of the stables
18	SMDB3_19	SE	North corner of the garage with timbers from an early building stacked against the south west gable
19	SMDB3_29	W	Wooden ventilator hood on the north east pitch of the stable roof
20	SMDB3_31	SE	Spiral finial on the hipped south west end of the garage
21	SMDB3_30	SW	Spiral finial on the hipped south east end of the stables
22	SMDB3_21	SW	Interior of the garage showing a suspended ceiling and wall cladding
23	SMDB3_20	S	Interior view of Room 9 at the south east end of the stables showing a water tank
24	SMDB3_23	NE	Drain running along the north east edge of the stables
25	SMDB3_22	NE	Water drinker in one of the stables
26	SMDB3_26	SE	Roof structure over the stables showing the continuous skylight
27	SMDB3_25	SE	Inside of the wooden roof ventilator
28	SMDB3_14	NE	Cistern to control water flow to the drinkers in each stable

29	SMDB3_24	SE	Softwood purlins and rafters over the stables
30	SMDB3_13	S	Detail of the corner trough in Stable No.3 showing a tethering ring
31	SMDB3_12	SW	Internal view of Stable No.3 showing a corner trough





**Key:** 

 Photo location/direction

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Title:  
**Photographic directions on plan**

Project:  
**The Stable Block, Sewell Manor,  
 Bedfordshire: Historic Building  
 Recording**

Client:  
**Jawgroup**

Scale at A3:  
**1:120**

Drawn by: CA	Checked: SW	Date: 08/08/2019
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Report No.: MK184/19	Fig. No.: Appendix 2
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Photograph 1: North-east elevation of stable block



Photograph 2: North-west elevation of garage

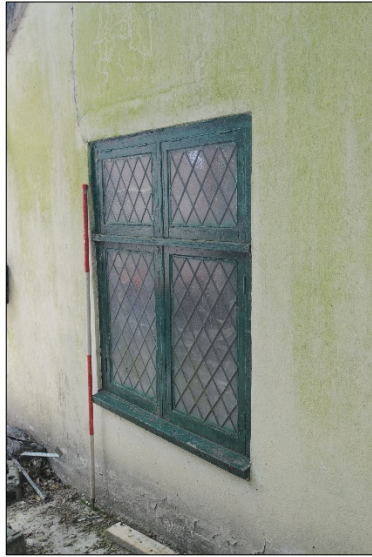


Photograph 3: East corner of garage showing hipped roof and timber posts infilled with modern brick



Photograph 4: Setting shot showing garage in relation to manor house





Photograph 5: Window in south-east elevation of stable block



Photograph 6: South-west elevation of stable block showing brick wall of demolished shed and south-east end of stable block



Photograph 7: Breeze block and brick construction of demolished shed forming south-west elevation of stable block



Photograph 8: South-west elevation of stable block with timber-framed barn in background





Photograph 9: West corner of stables showing block built up against demolished shed wall



Photograph 10: Setting showing garage and relationship to stable block



Photograph 11: Covered walkway at north-east side of stable block (looking south-east)



Photograph 12: Covered walkway at north-east side of stable block (looking north-west)





Photograph 13: Strap hinge to the stable doors



Photograph 14: Casement window in north-east elevation of stable block



Photograph 15: Old roof timbers, some of which have pegged tenon joints



Photograph 16: Wooden stable doors





Photograph 17: Inset timber feature above stable doorway



Photograph 18: North corner of the garage with timbers from an early building stacked against the south west gable



Photograph 19: Wooden ventilator hood on the north east pitch of the stable roof



Photograph 20: Spiral finial on the hip of the south west end of the garage





Photograph 21: Spiral finial on the hipped south-east end of stables



Photograph 22: Interior of the garage showing a suspended ceiling and wall cladding



Photograph 23: Interior view of Room 9 at south-east end of stables showing a water tank



Photograph 24: Drain running along north-east edge of stables





Photograph 25: Water drinker in one of the stables



Photograph 26: Roof structure over the stables showing continuous skylight



Photograph 27: Inside of the wooden roof ventilator



Photograph 28: Cistern to control water flow to the drinkers in each stable





Photograph 29: Softwood purlins and rafters over the stables



Photograph 30: Detail of the corner trough in Stable No. 3 showing tethering ring



Photograph 31: Internal view of Stable No. 3 showing corner trough

## APPENDIX 3: OASIS FORM

OASIS ID: [cfaarcha1-404964](#)

### Project details

Project name	The Stable Block, Sewel Manor, Central Bedfordshire Historic Building Recording and Watching Brief
Short description of the project	CFA Archaeology Ltd has conducted a historic building recording on a mid to late 20th century stable block 30m to the south east of the Grade II listed Sewell Manor Farmhouse in Central Bedfordshire. A historic map regression has shown the presence of a building occupying the footprint of the current stables, and the building recording was undertaken prior to its conversion into a domestic dwelling to determine if any element of this earlier building remained. Detailed examination of the structure, however, showed the stables to be wholly modern. A watching brief carried out on the service trench recorded a make-up layer which was dated to the 19th century by an adjacent excavation.
Project dates	Start: 29-05-2019 End: 29-05-2019
Previous/future work	Not known / Not known
Any associated project reference codes	SMDB3 - Sitecode
Type of project	Building Recording
Site status	Conservation Area
Current Land use	Residential 1 - General Residential
Monument type	BUILDING Modern
Significant Finds	NONE None
Methods & techniques	"Photographic Survey"
Prompt	Planning condition

### Project location

Country	England
Site location	BEDFORDSHIRE SOUTH BEDFORDSHIRE HOUGHTON REGIS The Stable Block, Sewel Manor, Central Bedfordshire
Postcode	LU6 1RP
Study area	590 Square metres
Site coordinates	SP 99526 23040 51.896566443935 -0.553407189537 51 53 47 N 000 33 12 W Point

### Project creators

Name of Organisation	CFA Archaeology Ltd
Project originator	brief County Archaeological Planning Officer
Project design originator	CFA Archaeology Ltd

Project director/manager Mark Roberts

Project supervisor Paul Gwilliam

Type of Developer  
sponsor/funding  
body

---

### Project archives

Physical Archive No  
Exists?

Digital Archive Luton Culture  
recipient

Digital Media "Images raster / digital photography","Text"  
available

Paper Archive Luton Culture  
recipient

Paper Media "Correspondence","Drawing","Map","Photograph","Report"  
available

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### Project bibliography 1

Publication type Grey literature (unpublished document/manuscript)

Title The Stable Block, Sewell Manor, Central Bedfordshire

Author(s)/Editor(s) Gwilliam, P.

Date 2020

Issuer or publisher CFA Archaeology

Place of issue or publication Milton Keynes

Description Digital PDF HBR report

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Entered by Peter Boyer (pboyer@cfa-arch.co.uk)

Entered on 9 June 2021



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