

# The Orchard Queen Street Hook Norton Oxfordshire



## Archaeological Watching Brief Report



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# The Orchard, Queen Street, Hook Norton, Oxfordshire

*Archaeological Watching Brief Report*

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*and illustrated by Julia Collins*

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## Summary

*In October and November 2011 Oxford Archaeology conducted a watching brief during the construction of a new dwelling at The Orchard, Hook Norton, Oxfordshire (NGR: SP 355 331). The watching brief recorded two phases of post-medieval worked soil overlying weathered natural, together with a post-medieval rubbish pit.*

*Evidence for a disturbed early medieval rubbish or cess pit was recovered from the backfill of an existing electric cable trench, but no evidence for the original feature could be observed within the trench sides. No other evidence for activity pre-dating the post-medieval period was encountered.*

## 1 INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 Scope of work

- 1.1.1 Oxford Archaeology (OA) was commissioned by Mr Russell Collins to undertake an archaeological watching brief on the site of a proposed new dwelling and detached garage with a studio/garden room.
- 1.1.2 Due to the potential for disturbance of below-ground archaeological deposits during groundworks for the proposed development a condition was attached to the planning consent requiring that an archaeological watching brief be maintained during the period of groundworks (planning ref: 11/00709/F). This was in line with PPS 5 and the local policy plan.
- 1.1.3 A brief was set by Richard Oram, the Planning Archaeologist for Oxfordshire County Archaeological Services (OCAS 2011) detailing the local authority's requirements for work necessary to discharge the planning condition, and OA produced a Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI) showing how it would meet these requirements (OA 2011).

### 1.2 Location, geology and topography

- 1.2.1 The site is located in the centre of Hook Norton, just off Queen Street, which runs north of the High Street (NGR: SP 355 331) (Fig. 1). The site comprised vacant domestic land containing a derelict garage.
- 1.2.2 The site lies on roughly level land at approximately 158 m AOD and the underlying geology is Lias clay (Geological Survey of Great Britain, sheet no. 218, 1968).

### 1.3 Archaeological and historical background

- 1.3.1 The archaeological and historical background of Queen Street, Hook Norton, has been prepared for a previous archaeological watching brief (OA 2003) and is reproduced here together with additional information provided in the brief (OCAS 2011).
- 1.3.2 The area of the development site is located in the historic core of Hook Norton. A settlement at Hook Norton is first mentioned as "Hocneratune" in the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle (c 925 AD), suggesting that it had its origins in the late Anglo-Saxon period. The proposed development is close to the church of St Peter's which is likely to have acted as a focus for the development of the early settlement. St Peter's Church dates to the 12<sup>th</sup> century, although archaeological investigations undertaken within the interior have identified architectural elements suggesting an earlier Anglo-Saxon origin.



- 1.3.3 Evidence of earlier activity in the Roman period and medieval settlement have been recorded immediately north of the church at Talbot House. A number of Roman coins were recovered from a well found at Talbot House, which also produced a number of pottery sherds.
- 1.3.4 Approximately 50 m to the west of the development site finds dating to the Medieval, Roman and Mesolithic periods have been recorded.
- 1.3.5 Previous archaeological work at the former garage site in Queen Street, approximately 50 m north of the site (now the post office), recorded undated cultivated land covered by 19<sup>th</sup> century development (OA 2003).

## 2 PROJECT AIMS AND METHODOLOGY

### 2.1 Aims

- 2.1.1 The aims of the watching brief were to:
  - (i) Preserve by record any archaeological deposits, structures or features encountered during the course of ground intrusions;
  - (ii) Seek to establish the extent, nature and date of any archaeological deposits, structures or features encountered within the scope of the ground intrusion;
  - (iii) Secure the analysis, conservation and long-term storage of any artefactual/ecofactual material recovered from the site;
  - (iv) To disseminate results through the production of a unpublished client ('grey literature') report and also to be available online as part of the OA library.
- 2.1.2 The work will be used to enhance the understanding and development of the site, particularly in regard to its relationship and placement within the Anglo-Saxon settlement and medieval town.

### 2.2 Methodology

- 2.2.1 The watching brief was undertaken as a series of site visits conducted during any groundworks which had the possibility of impinging upon areas of potential archaeology. These works included topsoil stripping, foundation trenches and service trenching.
- 2.2.2 All features and deposits were issued with unique context numbers, and context recording was in accordance with established OA practices. Bulk finds were collected by context. Black-and-white negative photographs and colour digital photographs were taken of all recorded sections and features together with a general record of the works.
- 2.2.3 Site plans were drawn at an appropriate scale (normally 1:50 or 1:100) with larger scale plans of features as necessary. Section drawings of features and sample sections were drawn at a scale of 1:20.

## 3 RESULTS

### 3.1 Description of deposits

- 3.1.1 Preliminary work on the site consisted of the excavation of a new connecting service trench from Queen Street, disconnection of an existing electricity supply, topsoil stripping, and the realignment of an existing sewer main.



- 3.1.2 The new dwelling consisted of two separate buildings, the detached garage and workshop and the new dwelling.

### ***The service trench***

- 3.1.3 This measured 0.5 m wide by 0.7 m deep (Fig. 2, Fig. 3, Sections, 1, 2 and 3, and Fig. 4, Section 6).
- 3.1.4 A layer of undisturbed natural light reddish brown clay was encountered at 0.5 m below the current ground level (8). This deposit contained a quantity of sub-angular small to medium sized stones. Cutting this deposit in Section 2 was a 1.9 m diameter by 0.4 m deep shallow circular pit (4). It was filled by a mid grey sandy silt (5) which produced a quantity of 19<sup>th</sup> brick rubble and sherds of Victoria pottery.
- 3.1.5 Overlying fill 5 and layer 8 elsewhere was a layer of yellowish grey-brown clay silt measuring between 0.2 m and 0.25 m in depth (2 and 7). This produced fragments of brick and stone as well as fragments of earthenware and clay pipe stem dating to the 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century.
- 3.1.6 Covering this layer was a dark grey brown silt loam (1 and 6) measuring between 0.15 m and 0.2 m in depth. This was the present day topsoil and turf.
- 3.1.7 At the Queen Street end of the trench, the truncated remains of a 0.65 m wide drystone wall (3), were recorded running parallel to the eastern edge of Queen Street (Fig. 2, and Fig. 3, Section 1). The foundation trench for this feature was cut into the surface of layer 1.

### ***The sewer diversion***

- 3.1.8 As the new garage block would straddle the existing sewer main it was necessary to divert the sewer by installing a new length of pipework running north-west to south-east across the site (Fig. 2). An exploratory trial pit was dug first in order to determine depth of the connection to the existing sewer Fig. 4, Section 4). In order to dig a trench down to the required depth (> 2 m at the south-eastern end) it was necessary to step the pipe trench sides. As part of this procedure, an easement 2.6 m wide and between 0.5 and 0.6 m deep was dug between the two connections (Fig. 2, Fig. 4, Section 5).
- 3.1.9 The stratigraphy recorded in both sections was similar with a continuation of layer 8 being encountered at 0.5 m below the current ground level. Overlying layer 8 was a continuation of layer 7 measuring between 0.2 m and 0.25 m in depth, this in turn was covered by a continuation of the present day topsoil (6).
- 3.1.10 In approximately the centre of the site layer 6 was overlaid by a 0.12 m deep lens of pale brown silt with a large number of plaster inclusions (11). This was roughly circular, c 5 m diameter.

### ***Electric cable pit***

- 3.1.11 As the new sewer pipe would cross the run of the original electricity supply it was decided to sever the supply at the northern boundary. This necessitated the excavation of a pit to locate the existing cable sited at the end of the access road against the site boundary and measuring approximately 1.5 m long, 0.6 m wide and 1 m deep. The electricity trench (10) (Fig. 2) measured approximately 0.5 m wide and was backfilled with a mix of redeposited material (9). A quantity of angular sherds of medieval pottery were recovered from the backfill with traces of a greenish yellow material (cess?) adhering to them. These sherds presumably originated from a disturbed rubbish/cess





pit but no evidence for the feature could be discerned within the sides of the exploratory pit. It is possible that they were moved laterally during the backfilling process.

### ***The detached garage and workshop***

- 3.1.12 This was located in the south-west corner of the site (Fig. 2). Prior to the excavation of the foundation trenches, the area of the base slab was excavated to a depth of 0.5 m below ground level. The stratigraphy exposed during this operation was similar to section 4, with the two layers of post-medieval cultivation 6 and 7 overlying the natural 8. The area had been heavily disturbed by both modern service trenches and by foundation pads for the temporary doctor's surgery.

### ***The new dwelling***

- 3.1.13 This was located in the centre of the site and measured approximately 15 m x 10 m (Fig. 2). Within the eastern half of the site the foundation trenches encountered the top of the underlying bedrock (13) at a depth of 1.5 m below the current ground level (Fig. 5, Section 7). At the western edge of the site, layer 13 was encountered at a depth of 0.3 m below the current ground level (Fig. 5, Section 8). Layer 13 was overlaid by a yellow-brown clay (12), measuring 0.85 m along the eastern edge of the plot reducing down to 0.18 m in depth in the region of section 8.
- 3.1.14 Layer 12 was covered by a 0.22 m deep layer of reddish brown clay silt (8), a probable continuation of that observed within Section 4. Both layers 8 and 12 elsewhere were overlaid by the modern topsoil and turf (6).

## **3.2 Finds**

- 3.2.1 Angular and sub-angular fragments of bricks were recovered from layers 1, 2, 6 and 7. The size of the bricks dated them to the late 18<sup>th</sup> to 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. Sherds of glazed earthenware and creamware, together with clay pipe stem, all dating to between the 18<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries were also recovered from the same deposits.
- 3.2.2 A number of sherds of chalk tempered ware, including pieces of both cooking and serving pots, were recovered from the backfill of an electric cable trench (9). These have been provisionally dated to between the 11<sup>th</sup> and 13<sup>th</sup> centuries.
- 3.2.3 The presence of the brick fragments was noted but they were not retained. All other dating evidence was kept.

## **3.3 Environmental remains**

- 3.3.1 No deposits suitable for palaeo-environmental sampling were encountered during the course of the watching brief.

## **4 DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS**

- 4.1.1 Layers 8, 12 and 13 are natural deposits and are part of the underlying geology of the area.
- 4.1.2 Pit 4 located in the service trench represents a 19<sup>th</sup> century domestic rubbish pit, probably associated with the nearby residences. The location and alignment of the truncated remains of wall 3 suggest that it probably formed part of a boundary wall extending along the eastern edge of Queen Street. Subsequent development of the area, such as the construction of the "New House", to the immediate north of the development site, has necessitated the construction of a new site access resulting in the reduction of the wall down to ground level.



- 4.1.3 The area appears to have been subject to two phases of cultivation: an earlier phase composed of the buried soil horizon 7, and the present day topsoil and turf (1 and 6). Dating evidence recovered from layer 7 suggest an 18<sup>th</sup> century date for this deposit. Layers 1 and 6 produced artifacts dating to the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries.
- 4.1.4 No features pre-dating the 18<sup>th</sup> century were encountered during the course of the watching brief. A quantity of late Saxon/early medieval pottery was recovered from the backfill of a modern electricity trench which suggests the presence of 11<sup>th</sup>-13<sup>th</sup> century activity in the immediate vicinity, but no evidence for any features could be observed within the confines of the pit dug to expose the electricity cable, and no further evidence such as other residual finds or truncated features were recorded within the remainder of the site.
- 4.1.5 A study of the architecture of the immediately surrounding buildings suggests that prior to the 19<sup>th</sup> century the focus of activity within Hook Norton was located either side of the High Street, with expansion of the village to the north and west along Queen Street occurring in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. This combined with the results of the watching brief suggest that any burgage plots associated with the buildings fronting the High Street terminated at the southern boundary wall, which might still occupy its original, historic, position.
- 4.1.6 The cultivation observed across the site together with the site's name suggests that the site was retained as a paddock or orchard during this period.
- 4.1.7 The results of the watching brief are similar to those recorded during building work on the site of the current post office, 50 m to the north, in 2003.



## APPENDIX A. ARCHAEOLOGICAL CONTEXT INVENTORY

Context	Type	Depth	Width	Length	Comments	Finds	Date
1	Layer	0.2 m – 0.3 m	-	-	Present day topsoil and turf	Brick	C19th/ C20th
2	Layer	0.35 m	-	-	Made ground/ disturbed soil	Brick, glass	C19th/ C20th
3	Structure	0.6 m	0.8 m	> 1 m	Truncated remains of a boundary wall fronting Queen St	-	-
4	Cut	0.4 m	1.9 m	1.9 m	Rubbish pit, possible reused tree throw hole	-	C19th/ C20th
5	Fill	0.4 m	1.9 m	1.9 m	Backfill of pit 4	Brick, pottery	C19th/ C20th
6	Layer	0.2 m – 0.25 m	-	-	Present day topsoil	Brick, glass, pottery	C19th/ C20th
7	Layer	0.25 m	-	-	Disturbed soil similar to 2	Brick	C19th/ C20th
8	Layer	> 0.3 m	-	-	Natural clay, possible colluvium	-	-
9	Fill	1.6 m	0.6 m	1.3 m	Backfill of modern electric cable trench	Pottery	C20th
10	Cut	1.6 m	0.6 m	1.3 m	Modern electric cable trench	-	C20th
11	Layer	0.12 m	5 m	5m	Dump of modern building debris	Brick	C20th
12	Layer	0.2 m – 0.8 m	-	-	Natural clay	-	-
13	Layer	> 0.3 m	-	-	Top of underlying limestone bedrock	-	-



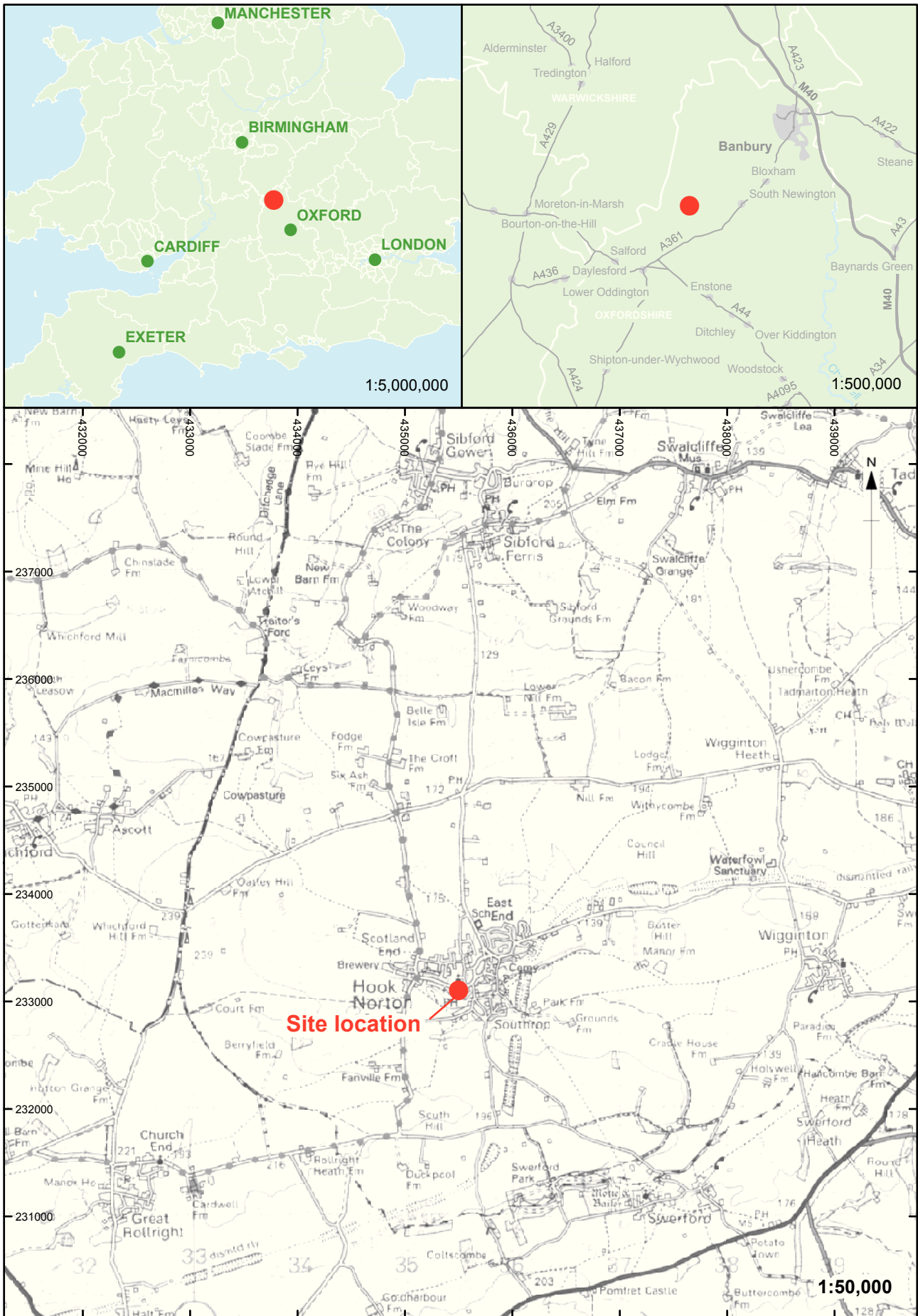
APPENDIX B. BIBLIOGRAPHY AND REFERENCES

- OA, 2003                    *Former Garage Site, Queen Street, Hook Norton, Oxfordshire: Archaeological Watching Brief Report*
- OA, 2011                    *The Orchard, Queen Street, Hook Norton: Written Scheme of Investigation for an Archaeological Watching Brief*
- OCAS, 2011                *The Orchard, Queen Street, Hook Norton: Design Brief for an Archaeological Watching Brief*



## APPENDIX C. SUMMARY OF SITE DETAILS

Site name:	The Orchard, Queen Street, Hook Norton, Oxfordshire
Site code:	HKQS 11
Grid reference:	Centred at NGR SP 355 331
Type of watching brief:	Watching brief on the machine excavation of building foundations and associated service trenches.
Date and duration of project:	October and November 2011, four site visits
Area of site:	Approximately 1200 m <sup>2</sup>
Summary of results:	<p>The watching brief recorded two phases of post-medieval worked soil overlying weathered natural together with a post-medieval rubbish pit.</p> <p>Evidence for a disturbed early medieval rubbish or cess pit was recovered from the backfill of an existing electric cable trench, but no evidence for the original feature could be observed within the trench sides. No other evidence for activity pre-dating the post-medieval period was encountered.</p>
Location of archive:	The archive will be lodged with the Oxfordshire County Museum Service under the accession number OXCMS:2011.157



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Figure 1: Site location

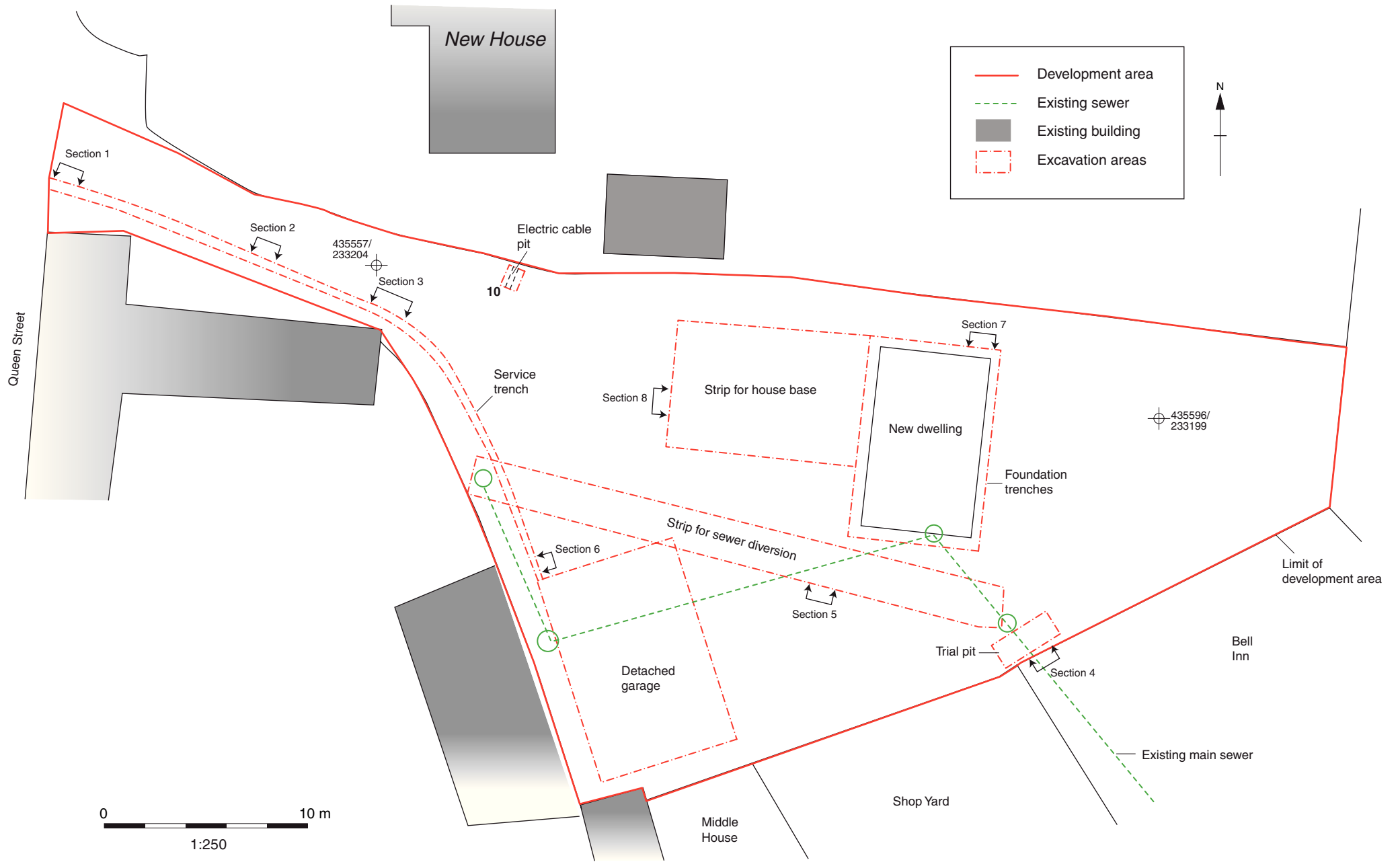
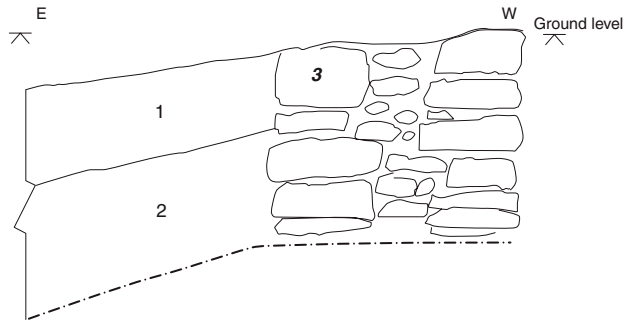


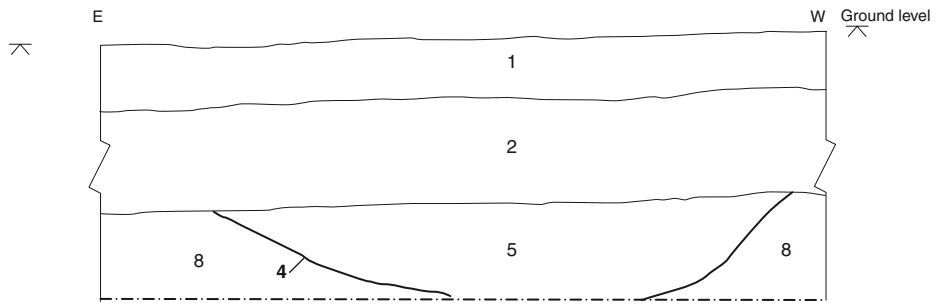
Figure 2: Site plan



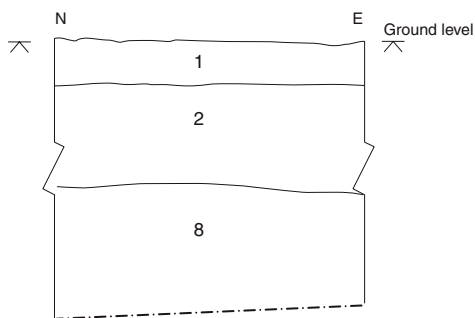
### Section 1



### Section 2



### Section 3



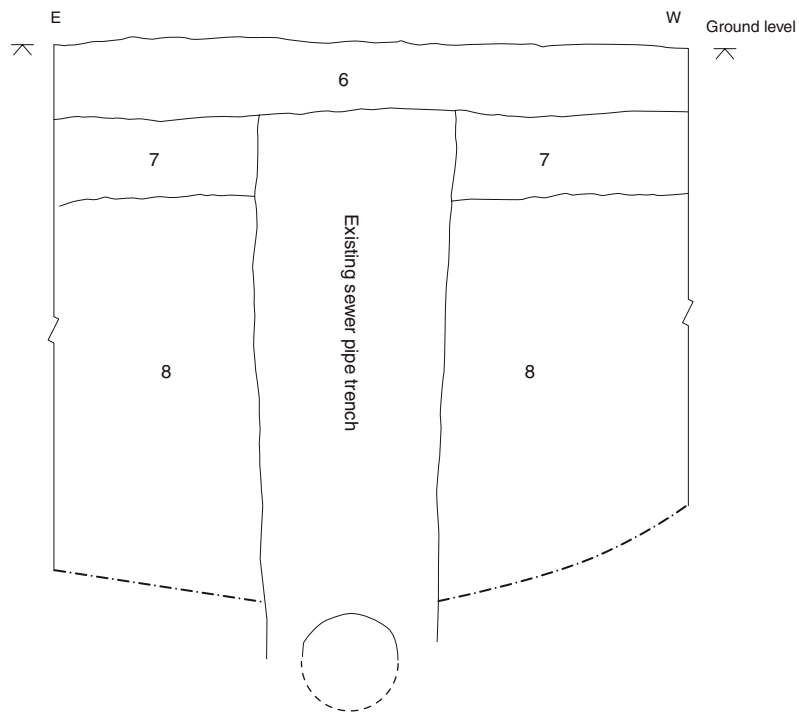
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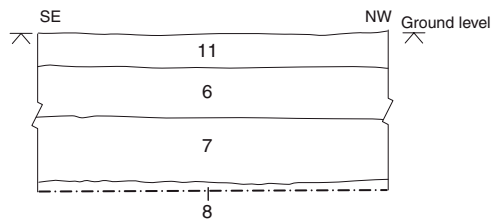
Figure 3: Sections 1-3



### Section 4



### Section 5



### Section 6

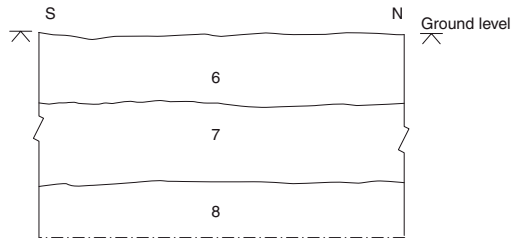


Figure 4: Sections 4-6

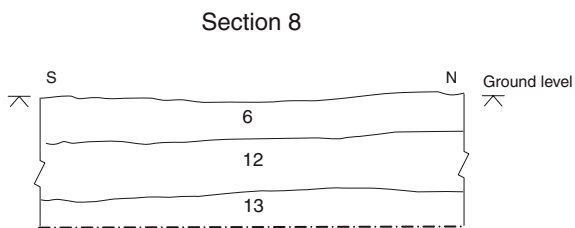
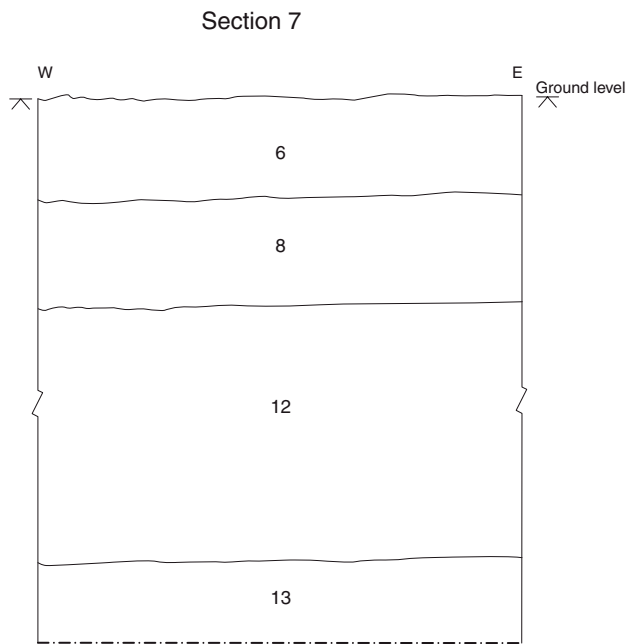


Figure 5: Sections 7-8





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