

# Archaeological watching brief at 3 Leasowes Court, Coach Drive, Fladbury, Worcestershire



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Archive and Archaeology Service  
The Hive, Sawmill Walk,  
The Butts, Worcester  
WR1 3PD

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Author: Graham Arnold – [garnold@worcestershire.gov.uk](mailto:garnold@worcestershire.gov.uk)  
Contributors:  
Illustrator: Carolyn Hunt  
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## **Archaeological watching brief at 3 Leasowes Court, Coach Drive, Fladbury, Worcestershire**

Graham Arnold (project leader)

Illustrations by Carolyn Hunt

### **Summary**

An archaeological watching brief was undertaken at 3 Leasowes Court, Coach Drive, Fladbury, Worcestershire (NGR SO 99336 46306; HER WSM 69893). It was undertaken on behalf of Mr and Mrs Filmer and Anglian Home Improvements, who were constructing a conservatory. Planning permission was granted by Wychavon District Council, subject to conditions including a programme of archaeological works.

The site lies on the western edge of Fladbury. The development was considered by Aidan Smyth, Archaeology and Planning Advisor for Wychavon District Council, to affect potential heritage assets due to the proximity of a cursus complex, recently discovered in the field to the west of the development site. It was advised that a watching brief was appropriate mitigation on groundworks associated with the development.

Groundworks were monitored with a modern surfacing, made ground levelling and garden soils overlying natural sand and gravels recorded at 0.40m below the ground surface. The trenches were a maximum of 0.80m deep and were frequently cut by modern ceramic drains associated with the modern housing.

No significant archaeology relating to the potential cursus monument or other later settlement activity found in the field to the west of the site was found during groundworks, suggesting that the ground was either raised or truncated in the 19th Century when the original farm buildings were constructed.

## Report

### 1 Background

#### 1.1 Reasons for the project

An archaeological watching brief was undertaken at 3 Leasowes Court, Coach Drive, Fladbury, Worcestershire (NGR SO 99336 46306; Figure 1). It was commissioned by Mr and Mrs Filmer and Ella Cole of Anglian Home Improvements, who were constructing a conservatory for which a planning application had been granted by Wychavon District Council (reference 17/02014/HP) subject to conditions.

The area was considered to include potential heritage assets including a cursus complex, recently discovered in the field to the west of the development site. The site is recorded by the HER as WSM34643, an elongated enclosure, which is related to the Prehistoric ritual and settlement landscape of Fladbury (WSM40864) the significance of which may have been affected by the application.

The project conforms to the generality of briefs prepared by Aidan Smyth, Archaeology and Planning Advisor for Wychavon District Council, who advised that a watching brief was appropriate mitigation on groundworks associated with the development. A Written Scheme of Investigation was produced (WA 2018) and approved by Aidan Smyth.

The project also conforms to the *Standard and guidance: Archaeological watching brief* (ClfA 2014a), and *Standards and guidelines for archaeological projects in Worcestershire* (WCC 2010),.

### 2 Aims

The aims of the watching brief were to observe and record archaeological deposits, and to determine their extent, state of preservation, date and type, as far as reasonably possible within the constraints of the Client's groundworks.

### 3 Methods

#### 3.1 Personnel

The project was led by Graham Arnold (BA (hons.), MSc), who joined Worcestershire Archaeology in 2009 and has been practicing archaeology since 2002. The project manager responsible for the quality of the project was Tom Rogers (BA (hons.); MSc; MCIfA). Illustrations were prepared by Carolyn Hunt (BSc (hons.); PG Cert; MCIfA). Robert Hedge (MA Cantab, PCIfA) contributed the finds report.

#### 3.2 Documentary research

Prior to fieldwork commencing a search was made of the Historic Environment Record (HER).

##### *Documentary sources*

Published and grey literature sources are listed in the bibliography.

#### 3.3 Fieldwork strategy

A detailed specification has been prepared by Worcestershire Archaeology (WA 2016).

Fieldwork was undertaken on 15 February 2018. The site reference number used by the Historic Environment Record to record archaeological "events", and site code used in the archive is WSM 69893. The Worcestershire Archaeology project number is P5237.

Groundworks related to the development, amounting to just over 12m<sup>2</sup> in area, were excavated by hand under archaeological supervision. The location of the groundworks is indicated in Figure 2. The footing excavation was undertaken by hand. Clean surfaces were inspected and selected deposits were excavated to retrieve artefactual material and environmental samples, as well as to

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determine their nature. Deposits were recorded according to standard Worcestershire Archaeology practice (WA 2012).

### **3.4 Structural analysis**

All fieldwork records were checked and cross-referenced. Analysis was effected through a combination of structural, artefactual and ecofactual evidence, allied to the information derived from other sources.

### **3.5 Artefact methodology**

#### **3.5.1 Artefact recovery policy**

Recovery of artefacts was undertaken according to standard Worcestershire Archaeology practice (WA 2012). In the event no artefacts pre-dating the modern period were identified. This included white porcelain and stoneware fragments within a modern made ground that had glass, brick rubble and modern refuse.

### **3.6 Statement of confidence in the methods and results**

The methods adopted allow a high degree of confidence that the aims of the project have been achieved.

## **4 The application site**

### **4.1 Topography, geology and archaeological context**

The underlying geology is mapped as Charmouth Mudstone with superficial deposits of the Wasperton sand and gravel deposits, associated with the river Avon (BGS 2018).

The garden to the rear of the property is level and lies at c. 27m AOD.

The area around the development site has evidence of continued settlement and use over a long period of time, in multiple periods.

Cropmarks relating to Bronze Age and Iron Age enclosures (Figure 3) were identified in an evaluation (Phear 2007; WSM 35964& 35967) and later watching brief (Wainwright 2011; WSM 40837) with Romano-British, medieval and post-medieval land management use for Spring Hill Nurseries on land to the west of the current development site. This has been recorded as a Prehistoric Ritual and Settlement Landscape Component (WSM 40864).

In recent years a cursus complex has been discovered in the field to the west of the development site (WSM34643). Cursi represent one of the earliest forms of monument in Britain, normally associated with the mid Neolithic period. The monuments have been classified as fossilised routeways or processual ways in ritual landscapes. The cursus is referred to in the introduction of *The Buildings of England Worcestershire* (Brooks and Pevsner, 2007, 11).

The Fladbury cursus complex (WSM 40864) was identified from cropmarks on aerial photography (Glyde 2005; Figure 3) and has been studied in detail by Dr Neal Johnson of the University of Worcester (Johnson 2009; WSM 49654). Part One of the cursus appears to continue past the field boundary and into the proposed development site.

Watching briefs have also been carried out previously at neighbouring properties for extensions with no significant archaeology recorded (Deeks 1999 – WSM 27102; Lee 2009 - WSM 40825).

### **4.2 Current land-use**

The site is currently a rear garden of a house, with cultivated fields to the west of Leasowes Court.

## 5 Results

### 5.1 Structural analysis

The trenches and features recorded are shown in Fig 2.

#### Trench 1

Maximum dimensions: Length: 4.00m Width: 3.22m Depth: 0.00 – 0.80m BGS

Context	Classification	Description	Depth below ground surface (b.g.s) – top and bottom of deposits
100	Modern surfacing	Garden patio slab bedding of red sand and limestone brash hardcore	0.00 – 0.20m
101	Made ground	Compact dark blackish brown sandy clay with frequent modern cbm, bricks, porcelain, glass and modern refuse. Compacted layer of made ground to provide firm layer to build surfacing. .	0.20 – 0.40m
102	Natural	Firm orangey brown sand with frequent gravels, with modern disturbance from roots and made ground in top 0,20m, becoming more orange and cleaner with depth. Cut by modern drainage	0.40 – 0.80m
103	Garden topsoil	Firm dark blackish brown clayey silt with moderate charcoal flecks and moderate modern refuse, cbm and porcelain. Cut by modern drainage pipes.	0.30 – 0.80m

#### 5.1.1 Phase 1: Natural deposits

The natural strata of brownish orange sandy gravel was observed at a depth of 26.60m AOD and a maximum depth of 26.15m AOD. This was cut by modern drainage and overlaid by a 19<sup>th</sup> century made ground and modern garden soil (Plates 4-6).

#### 5.1.2 Phase 2: modern deposits

A 19<sup>th</sup> century made ground and modern garden soil were observed overlying and cutting into the natural sands. Modern ceramic drainage was also recorded cutting through the natural ground on the western edge of the excavation and running across the south end of the footings trench (Figure 2).

### 5.2 Artefact analysis

A sample of the finds from the made ground (101) were retained for analysis. This included fragments of white china porcelain, clay pipe and a fragment of the base of a stoneware jar analysed by specialists and thought to date from the 19<sup>th</sup> Century. The made ground also contained modern machine made red bricks, glassware and modern refuse. It is thought this deposit is a 19<sup>th</sup> Century levelling layer associated with the original farm building. The assemblage is typical of domestic waste in this period and may have been transported on to site from elsewhere to provide a compact surface to build on.

## 6 Conclusions

No evidence of the cursus monument or any other significant archaeology was observed during the groundworks. Modern surfacing, made ground and drainage trenches were recorded overlying and



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cutting the natural sand and gravel strata. The area has probably been built up or truncated when the farm buildings were constructed in the 19<sup>th</sup> Century.

## 7 Publication summary

Worcestershire Archaeology has a professional obligation to publish the results of archaeological projects within a reasonable period of time. To this end, Worcestershire Archaeology intends to use this summary as the basis for publication through local or regional journals. The client is requested to consider the content of this section as being acceptable for such publication.

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## 8 Acknowledgements

Worcestershire Archaeology would like to thank the following for their kind assistance in the successful conclusion of this project, Mr and Mrs Filmer, Peter Goring (Field Manager), and Ella Cole (Planning Administrator), Anglian Group and Aidan Smyth, Archaeology and Planning Advisor for Wychavon District Council.

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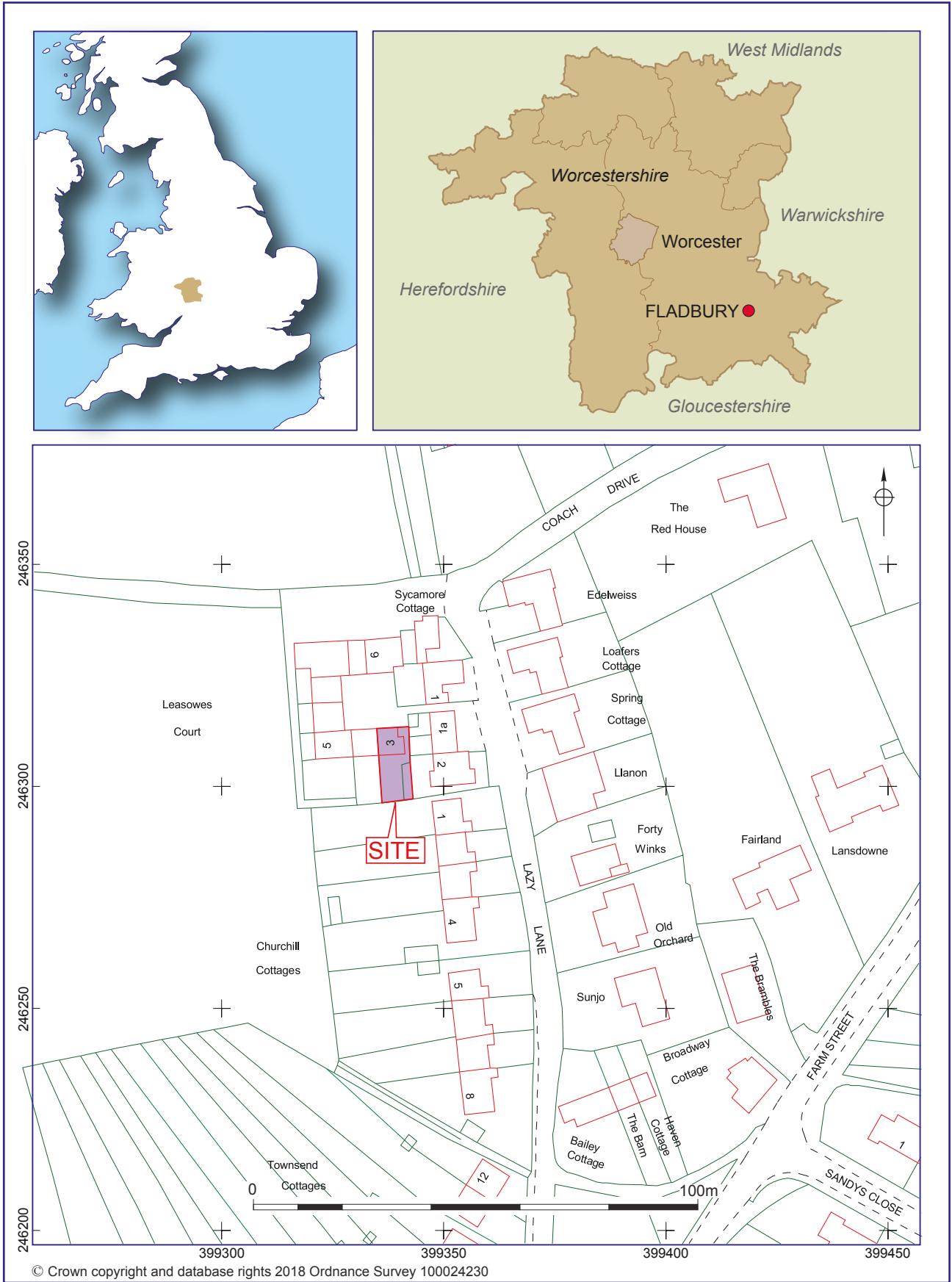
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## Figures



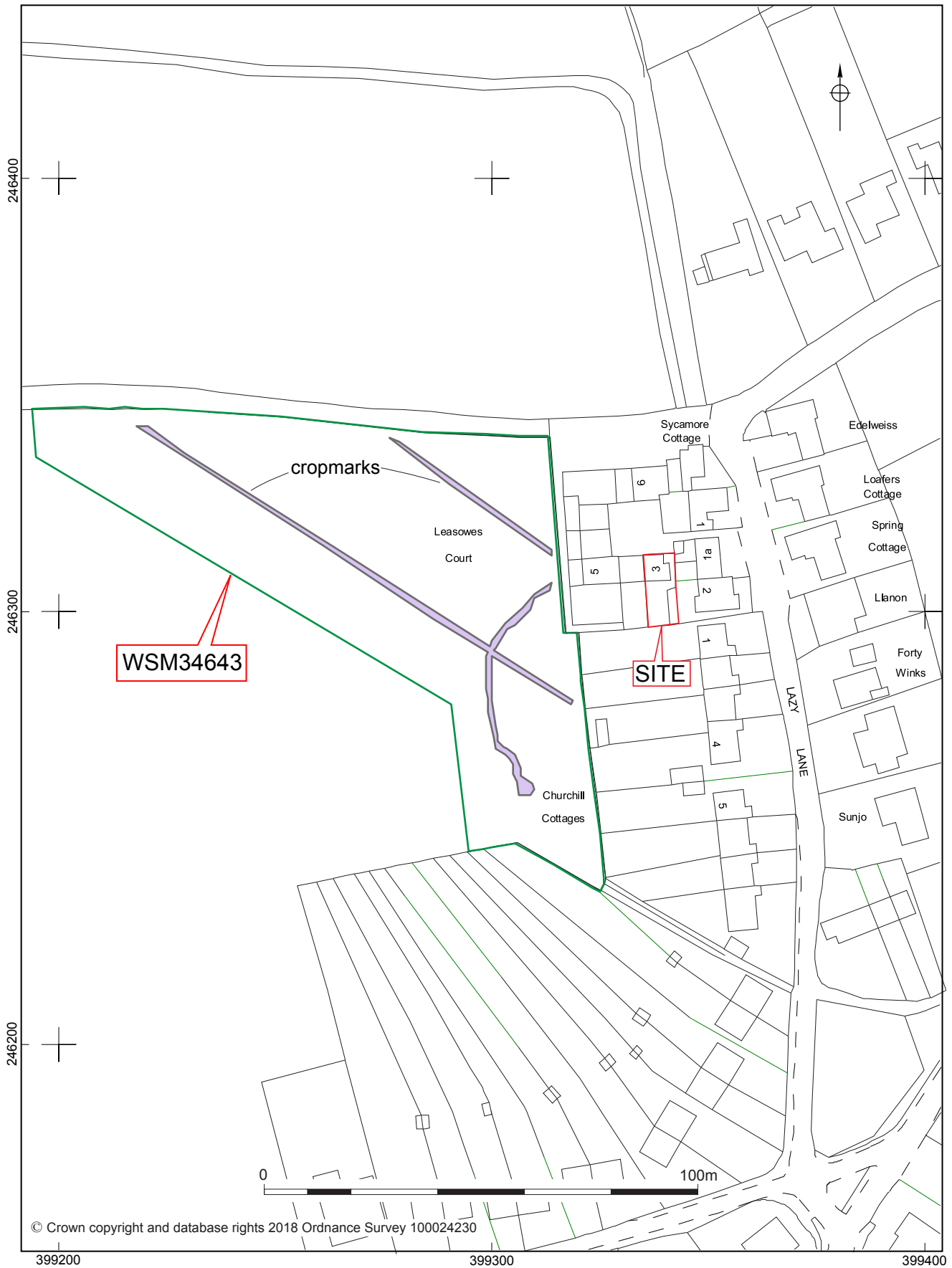
Location of the site

Figure 1



Trench location plan

Figure 2



Location of the cropmarks

Figure 3



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## Plates



*Plate 1 The field to the west of 3 Leasowes Court with the cursus enclosure ditch. View south.*



*Plate 2 The northern frontage of Leasowes Court looking southwest.*

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*Plate 3 The area of the conservatory before excavation with modern surfacing removed. 2x1m scales looking north.*



*Plate 4 The footing trenches excavated. Western side was left due to presence of modern drain. 2x1m scales, looking north.*

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*Plate 5 West section of made ground and natural sand. View east. 2x1m scales.*



*Plate 6 The garden soils and backfill from modern ceramic drains. View southwest. 2x1m scales.*

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## **Appendix 1 Technical information**

### **The archive (site code: WSM 69893)**

The archive consists of:

- 1 Field progress reports AS2
- 1 Photographic records AS3
- 20 Digital photographs
- 1 Drawing number catalogues AS4
- 1 Scale drawings
- 1 Trench record sheets AS41
- 1 Copy of this report (bound hard copy)

The project archive is intended to be placed at:

Worcestershire County Museum  
Museums Worcestershire  
Hartlebury Castle  
Hartlebury  
Near Kidderminster  
Worcestershire DY11 7XZ  
Tel Hartlebury (01299) 250416

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