

Archaeological watching brief at Stone Cottage, 7 The High Road, Felmersham Bedfordshire

Worcestershire Archaeology
for Nichole Goodland

June 2020



Find out more online:
www.explorethepast.co.uk



STONE COTTAGE 7 THE HIGH ROAD FELMERSHAM BEDFORDSHIRE

Archaeological watching brief report



©Worcestershire County Council

Worcestershire Archaeology
Worcestershire Archive & Archaeology Service
The Hive
Sawmill Walk
The Butts
Worcester
WR1 3PD

Explore
the Past

SITE INFORMATION

Site name: Stone Cottage
Local planning authority: Bedford Borough
Planning reference: 18/00055/FUL
Central NGR: SP 99202 57716
Commissioning client: Nichole Goodland
WA project number: P5586
WA report number: 2822
Oasis reference: fieldsec1-397358
Museum accession number: BEDFM 2020.41

DOCUMENT CONTROL PANEL				
Version	Date	Author	Details	Approved by
1	30/06/2020	B Williams	Version 1	TV Rogers

This report is confidential to the client. Worcestershire Archaeology accepts no responsibility or liability to any third party to whom this report, or any part of it, is made known. Any such party relies upon this report entirely at their own risk. No part of this report may be reproduced by any means without permission.

CONTENTS

SUMMARY	1
REPORT	2
1 INTRODUCTION	2
1.1 Background to the project	2
1.2 Site location, topography and geology.....	2
2 ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND HISTORICAL BACKGROUND	2
2.1 Introduction	2
2.2 Search Summary	2
3 PROJECT AIMS	3
4 PROJECT METHODOLOGY	3
5 ARCHAEOLOGICAL RESULTS	4
5.1 Trench descriptions.....	4
5.1.1 Trench deposit descriptions	4
6 ARTEFACTUAL EVIDENCE	5
7 DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS	6
8 PROJECT PERSONNEL	6
9 ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	6
10 BIBLIOGRAPHY	6

FIGURES

PLATES

APPENDIX 1: SUMMARY OF PROJECT ARCHIVE

An archaeological watching brief at Stone Cottage, 7 The High Road, Felmersham, Bedfordshire

By Beth Williams

With contributions by Rob Hedge

Illustrations by Beth Williams

Summary

An archaeological watching brief was undertaken at Stone Cottage, 7 The High Road, Felmersham, Bedfordshire (NGR SP 99202 57716). It was commissioned by Nichole Goodland, in advance of a proposed extension. Planning permission has been granted subject to a programme of archaeological works.

The site is an extension of the property, no 7 The High Road on the east side of the village of Felmersham. The property is bounded by the road to the west, by houses to the north and south, and by a meadow to the east. Groundworks were undertaken in two areas each comprising a foundation trench and a topsoil / oversite strip. The areas abutted the existing building on the southern and northern edges.

Previous excavation at properties in Trinity Close to the west uncovered archaeological remains of medieval and/or Saxon date including inhumations, the base of a pillar and an oven, but similar features were not present at Stone Cottage. The site had been heavily disturbed by modern construction and landscaping but there was no residual material present to suggest that medieval remains had been present prior to these works.

Report

1 Introduction

1.1 Background to the project

An archaeological watching brief was undertaken by Worcestershire Archaeology (WA) on 16th June 2020 at Stone Cottage, Felmersham, Bedfordshire (NGR SP 99202 57716). This comprised observation of two foundation trenches during groundworks associated with the extension of the existing dwelling. The project was commissioned by Nichole Goodland in advance of the proposed extension. Planning permission has been granted subject to a programme of archaeological works (18/00055/FUL).

The archaeological advisor to the local planning authority considered that the development had the potential to impact upon specific heritage assets. The site is adjacent to the postulated core of the medieval settlement of Felmersham (BBHER16943) and it was believed that the development had the potential to result in the loss of significant heritage.

The project conforms to a brief prepared by Bedford Borough Historic Environment Team (2019). A WSI was prepared by Worcester Archaeology (2020) and approved by Geoff Saunders.

The watching brief conforms to the industry guidelines and standards set out by the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists in the Standard and guidance: for an archaeological watching brief (CIfA 2014).

1.2 Site location, topography and geology

The site is located at the existing property Stone Cottage, 7 The High Road, Felmersham. The site is bounded by the road to the west, by houses to the north and south, and by a meadow to the east.

Groundworks were undertaken in two areas located at the northern and southern edges of the east side of the existing building. These areas both consisted of a topsoil/oversite strip and a 0.7m wide foundation trench along the boundaries that did not abut existing buildings. A 2m wide terraced and slabbed gated car port/driveway lay over the northern area, abutting the building. A conservatory sat in the north western corner of the southern area. These features were partially or fully demolished and removed to permit the new extension.

The house stands upslope from the road and the garden around it has been landscaped and/or cut into during previous developments so that the ground was level around the immediate boundary of the house but sloped upwards to the north and east. To the north the ground sloped and dropped away on the other side of the property boundary, while to the east the ground levelled out.

The underlying geology comprises bedrock of Blisworth Limestone formation overlain by superficial deposits of Stoke Goldington Member sand and gravel (BGS 2020).

2 Archaeological and historical background

2.1 Introduction

Prior to fieldwork commencing, a search of the Bedford Borough HER was completed, covering a 1000m radius around the site. Previous associated excavation reports were also consulted. A summary of the results of this research are presented below.

2.2 Search Summary

The development site is located at the edge of the postulated core of the medieval settlement of Felmersham (BBHER16943). Excavations undertaken from the 1940s to present, as well as additional finds made within the search area have demonstrated multi period activity from the Iron

Age onwards, with occupation evidence from the Late Saxon period through to the 13th century. Settlement earthworks were still visible when the village was photographed from the air in the 1940s.

In 1980, human remains were found in the back garden of adjacent No 1 Trinity Close by the residents (MBD2688). Two articulated skeletons, plus remains of two or three other individuals were recorded. A pottery rimsherd and copper alloy clothing fastener found with one of the skeletons are thought to indicate a date in the 14th century. The burials were oriented east-west in the Christian custom, but were found at some distance from the present churchyard. It is thought likely that at some date the churchyard was insufficient, possibly due to an epidemic, especially as burials from Pavenham and Radwell also took place at Felmersham.

Archaeological investigations undertaken during construction of an extension at the adjacent 2 Trinity Close by Worcestershire Archaeology revealed further burials along with the remains of a well-preserved medieval oven associated with a possible high status building evidenced by an apparent large stone packed post base.

The High Road is on the eastern side of Felmersham, a small village which is still contained within its Medieval boundaries (MBD16896). There are 17 listed buildings in the village including The Old Rectory (MBD5664) and The Stables (MBD 10265), which stand to the east of The High Road.

Archaeological investigations undertaken in the 1940s identified evidence of occupation from the Late Saxon period through to the 13th century and settlement earthworks within this area were still extant and visible on aerial photographs taken in the 1940s (BBHER70).

In the wider village, a record of 43 sherds of coarse greyware pottery, of late Iron Age or Roman date were found at Felmersham Church 100m north of the site (MBD1345).

Two Anglo Saxon burials were uncovered during an archaeological evaluation of 'The Plough' former pub (EBD247) 160m north east of the site. However, no further burials were revealed during a further evaluation on an adjacent site for an extension to the Churchyard (EBD177).

A human skull and longbones were found by the riverbank at Felmersham (EBB968). These were collected and removed by the police, without being seen by an archaeologist, as the farmer was cultivating the field. The findspot was visited, but nothing of archaeological interest was seen, except for two parts of a large red deer antler.

An archaeological evaluation of 22 trenches took place along the route of an Anglian Water main replacement scheme between Felmersham and Carlton (EBB1011). The evaluation uncovered limited archaeological remains at the Felmersham end of the pipeline, with only a single trench revealing any archaeological features. This trench (Trench 20) contained three ditches – two containing Romano-British pottery fragments and one 14th century.

3 Project 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.

In particular, the aims of the watching brief were to establish whether further inhumations or related Anglo Saxon or medieval features present in the gardens of Nos 1 and 2 Trinity Close extend as far as this property and if possible, to further characterise their nature, survival and date.

4 Project methodology

A Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI) was prepared by Worcestershire Archaeology (WA 2020). Fieldwork was undertaken on 16th June 2020.

Two foundation trenches, amounting to 17m² in area, were excavated across the site. The location of the trenches is indicated in Figure 2. The northern trench abutted the previous extension, and the

southern filled the corner between the original property and the extension, with a conservatory being removed from the area to permit the new extension.

Deposits considered not to be significant were removed under constant archaeological supervision using a 360° tracked excavator, employing a toothed bucket. Subsequent excavation was undertaken by hand.

Observation of excavated areas was undertaken during and after machine excavation. The exposed surfaces were sufficiently clean to observe well-differentiated archaeological deposits, though any less clear may have not been identified.

Deposits were recorded according to standard Worcestershire Archaeology practice (WA 2012) and trench locations were hand planned and tied into fixed objects recorded on OS MasterMap.

All fieldwork records were checked and cross-referenced.

The project archive is currently held at the offices of Worcestershire Archaeology. Subject to the agreement of the landowner it is anticipated that it will be deposited at The Higgins Bedford under accession number BEDFM 2020.41.

5 Archaeological results

4.1 Trench descriptions

Neither trench revealed deposits or finds of archaeological significance.

Trench 1 had been heavily disturbed by the construction of previous foundations and the laying of a patio. Below this point the natural substrate appeared to be undisturbed.

Trench 2 consisted primarily of modern made ground related to previous development of the site. Where witnessed the natural contained no indication of further disturbance.

4.1.1 Trench deposit descriptions

Context	Brief description	Max depth (m)	Depth from ground surface (m)	Comments
100	Topsoil	0.15	0.00	Mid-loose, mid-grey silty clay
101	Modern Patio	0.2	0.00	Modern patio. Yellowish white paving slabs laid with cement on crushed red gravel
102	Made ground	0.22	0.2	Mixed subsoil and buried topsoil beneath 101
103	Subsoil	0.4	0.42	Moderately compact, mid-yellowish orange silty clay
104	Natural substrate	Unex.	0.88	Compact, mid-yellowish orange clay
105/106	House foundations	0.4+	0.00	Cut and cement filled foundation trench for the original house
107/108	Previous extension foundations	0.8+	0.00	Cut and cement filled foundation trench for the previous extension
109/110	Conservatory foundations	0.5	0.00	Cut and cement filled foundation trench for the conservatory

Table 1: Summary context descriptions in Trench 1

Context	Brief description	Max depth (m)	Depth from ground surface (m)	Comments
200	Topsoil	0.15	0.00	Mid-loose, dark greyish brown silty clay
201	Subsoil	0.1	0.15	Mid-loose, mid-greyish brown silty clay
202	Made ground	1.1	0.25	<p>A substantial made ground layer sitting over the natural 203. It appears that the ground was built up to level the properties garden, and the land could be seen to drop off over the northern side of the property boundary.</p> <p>The layer contained an abundance of modern rubbish deposits, including plastic buttons, glass jam jars and bottles, scrap metal and scrap building materials/debris.</p> <p>The layer contained drainage pipes linked to the previous extension. No cut for these pipes was visible suggesting the material was deposited or redeposited as the extension was constructed.</p>
203	Natural substrate	Unex.	1.28	Compact, mid-yellowish orange clay
204/205/ 206	Cut and fill of driveway	0.25	0.00	<p>A driveway cut into the topsoil, subsoil and made ground and abutting the northern edge of the previous extension.</p> <p>Dark material had been compacted, laid over with red gravel and cement had been used to hold the slabs in place. A looser grey gravel was placed around the edge of the slabs.</p>
207/208	Previous extension foundations	0.4+	0.00	Cut and cement filled foundation trench for the previous extension

Table 2: Summary context descriptions in Trench 2

5 Artefactual evidence by Rob Hedge

Recovery of artefacts was undertaken according to standard Worcestershire Archaeology practice (WA 2012).

A small assemblage of modern artefacts was recovered from made ground deposits. They include four clear glass machine-made bottles of mid-20th century date; one plain and one transfer-printed sherd of 19th or 20th century white earthenware; a fragment of an iron bracket; a plastic button; and a fragment of brick.

The finds are typical of 19th and 20th century domestic deposits. They do not require further analysis, and (subject to confirmation from the receiving museum) are unlikely to warrant inclusion in the site archive.

6 Discussion and conclusions

In conclusion, on this occasion excavation at Stone Cottage, Felmersham did not reveal or disturb any deposits or finds of archaeological significance. It is clear that the property has been extensively disturbed by previous phases of modern construction and landscaping. Furthermore there was no evidence of disturbed archaeological deposits or residual artefacts and it is therefore likely that the settlement or institution which was partially uncovered in Trinity Close did not extend this far and was perhaps defined by the central part of the village, bounded by The High Road, Grange Road and Hunts Lane.

The methods adopted allow a high degree of confidence that the aims of the project have been achieved. Conditions were suitable in all trenches/areas to identify the presence or absence of archaeological features. It is considered that the nature, density and distribution of archaeological features provides an accurate characterisation of the development site as a whole.

7 Project personnel

The fieldwork was led by Beth Williams.

The project was managed by Tom Rogers, MCIfA. The report was produced and collated by Beth Williams. Specialist contributions and individual sections of the report are attributed to the relevant authors throughout the text.

8 Acknowledgements

Worcestershire Archaeology would like to thank the following for the successful conclusion of this project: Nichole Goodland, and Geoff Saunders (Archaeological Advisor, Bedford Borough).

9 Bibliography

BGS, 2020 Geology of Britain viewer. Available: <http://mapapps.bgs.ac.uk/geologyofbritain/home.html>
Accessed: 18th June 2020

ClfA, 2014a *Standard and guidance: for an archaeological watching brief*. Reading: Chartered Institute for Archaeologists

ClfA, 2014b *Standard and guidance: for collection, documentation, conservation and research of archaeological materials*. Reading: Chartered Institute for Archaeologists

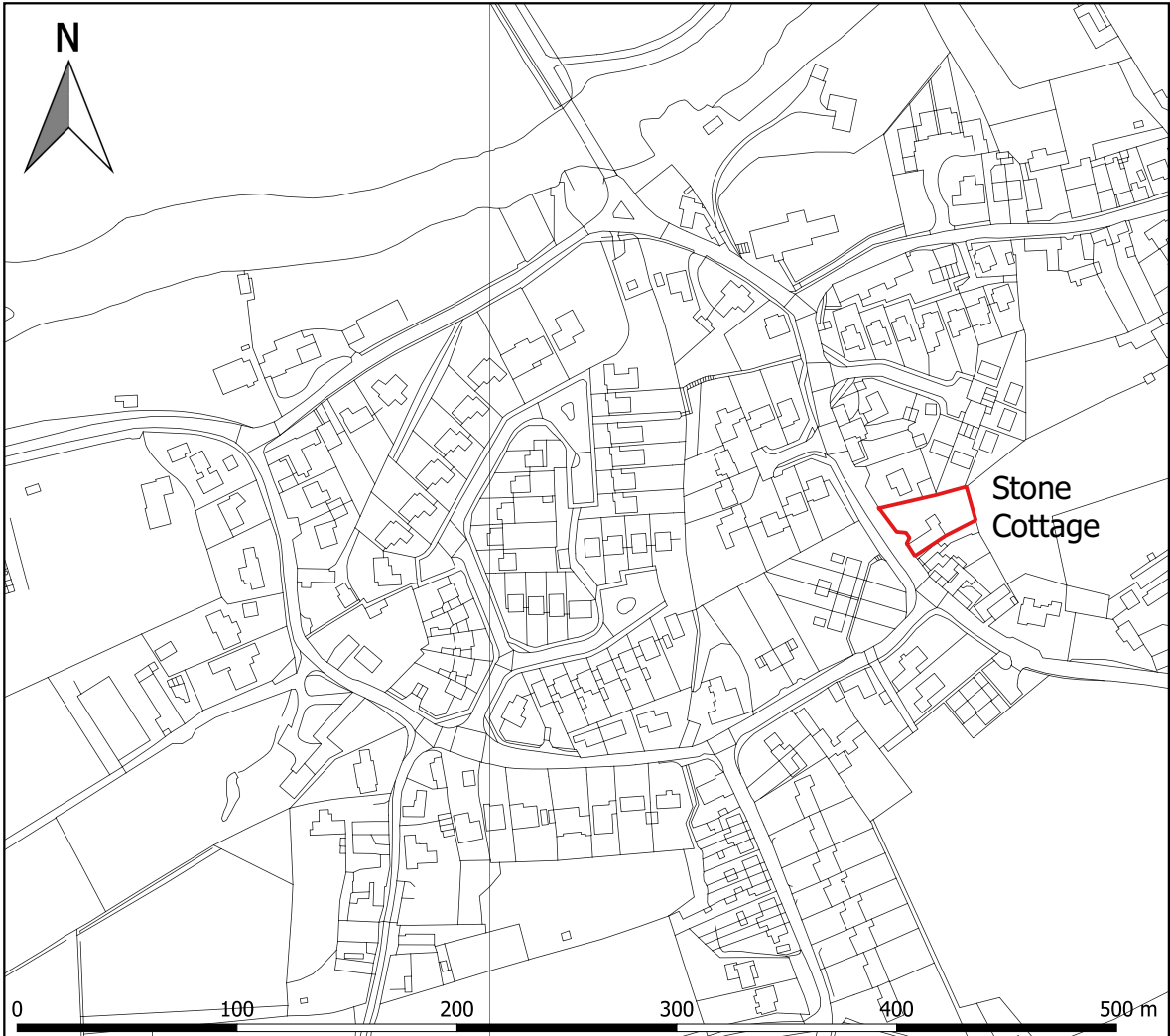
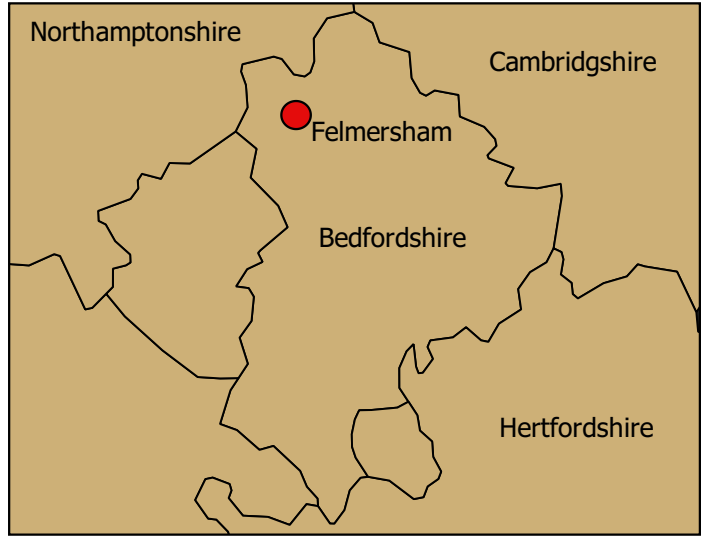
ClfA, 2014c *Standard and guidance: for the creation, compilation, transfer and deposition of archaeological archives*. Reading: Chartered Institute for Archaeologists

Bedford Borough Historic Environment Team, 2019 *Brief for a programmer of Archaeological observation, investigation, recording, analysis and publication at Stone Cottage, 7 The High Road, Felmersham, Bedfordshire*, Bedford Borough Council Historic Environment Team Unpubl document dated March 2019. Bedford Borough Council

WA, 2012 *Manual of service practice, recording manual*, Worcestershire Archaeology Unpubl report **1842**. Worcestershire County Council

WA, 2020 *Written Scheme of Investigation for archaeological watching brief at Stone Cottage, 7 The High Road, Felmersham, Bedfordshire*, Worcestershire Archaeology Unpubl document dated 3rd June 2020. Worcestershire County Council

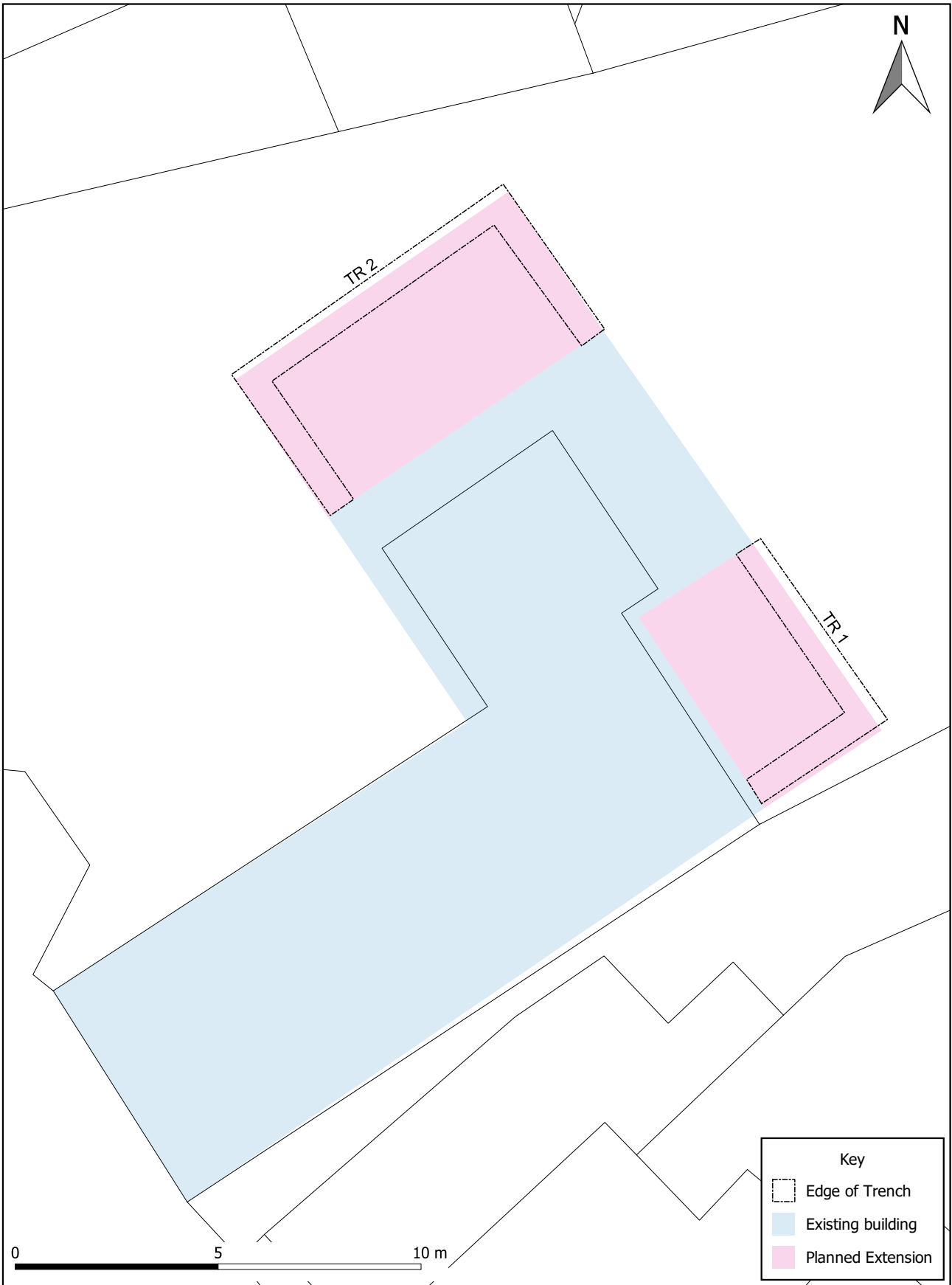
Figures



© Crown copyright and database rights 2020 Ordnance Survey 100024230

Location of the site

Figure 1



© Crown copyright and database rights 2020 Ordnance Survey 100024230

Trench Locations

Figure 2

Plates



Plate 1: NW facing section of Trench 1 showing the original house foundations and disturbed ground layers 101 and 102. 2x1m scale, facing south east



Plate 2: SE facing section of Trench 1 showing the foundations of the previous extension and conservatory. 1m scale, facing north west



Plate 3: SE and SW facing sections of Trench 2 showing the made ground layer 202, the driveway 204, and the foundations of the previous extension. 2x1m scale, facing north east

Appendix 1: Summary of project archive

TYPE	DETAILS*
Artefacts and Environmental	None
Paper	None
Digital	Database, GIS, Images raster/digital photography, Text

**OASIS terminology*

The project archive is currently held at the offices of Worcestershire Archaeology. Subject to the agreement of the landowner it is anticipated that it will be deposited at The Higgins, Bedford.