

# **COYNE ENVIRONMENTAL**

**The Vinery  
Yeomans Drive  
Aston  
SG2 7EJ**



## **PRELIMINARY ECOLOGICAL APPRAISAL**

**January 2022**

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## INTRODUCTION

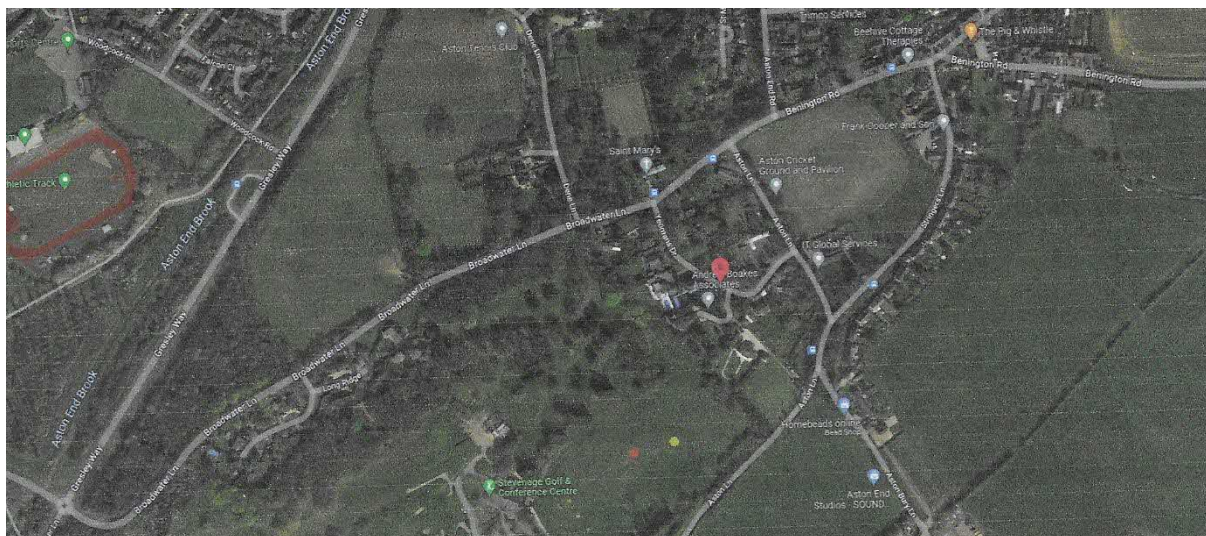
Andrew Boakes Associates has instructed Coyne Environmental to carry out a Preliminary Ecological Appraisal (PEA) at The Vinery, Yeomans Drive, Aston SG2 7EJ to establish the potential presence or absence of protected ecological features of significance. This is in preparation of the submission of a planning application. It is proposed to renovate the existing glasshouse as a new residence.

The completed PEA will enable the LPA to consider the impact of the proposal on wildlife. The authority can then discharge its legal obligations under the 'Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations' (2018) and any 'Outline Mitigation and Compensation Strategy' if required.

I am a qualified Ecologist, Associate of the Institute of Ecology & Environmental Management with over 35 years' experience in the environmental field. This includes being a licence bat worker (Bat Licence 2015-15943-CLS-CLS). The PEA survey was carried out on the 26<sup>th</sup> January 2023. This was conducted in the day time, (6 c) variable, light winds, dry.

## SITE

The site is in Aston, a village on the boundary with Stevenage New Town and on the edge of East Hertfordshire. It is classed as a Group 2 village and is in the Green Belt. Despite its close proximity to an expanding urban area, it is still a rural location with the attractive Beane valley to the east.



Aston, population 284 in 2001, is recorded in the Domesday Book and had several fine houses including Aston Bury and Aston House. The latter was a 17C mansion in large parklands opposite the parish church. In WW11 it was used by SOE and in 1961 was demolished by Stevenage Development Corporations leaving only the coach house, now Clock House (Listed Grade 11) and remanent of the kitchen garden (wall) and parkland trees.

This included the former vinery on the boundary wall with the original metal structure, on brick plinth walls and potting shed remaining. The glass house has no glazing left but is covered by overgrown ivy and the building generally is in poor condition. The surrounding grounds have

been cleared of most of the original vegetation but there is a large, mature yew in front of the site (from the original parkland)

Yeomans Drive is a private road with modern detached properties leading up to Clock House. All have large gardens with mature vegetation, some of it trees from the former Aston House parkland. The centre of the village is a compact collection of period dwellings with more recent infill and the majority are in a Conservation Area. (CA). Stevenage Golf Course, to the west, is a buffer zone from the new town.

## AREA DESIGNATIONS

Management and protection of biodiversity within the UK planning system is set out through European and UK legislation. The Wildlife and Countryside Act (1981) is the main protection for the environment. Wildlife conservation is set out in the UK Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP). There is also legislation for specific species, Bats are protected under the Wildlife and Countryside Act (1981), Protection of Badgers Act 1992, EU Habitats and Birds Directive and more general guidance, Conservation (Natural Habitats &c) Regulations 1994, which defines "European Protected Species " (EPS) and EU Biodiversity Strategy 2011-2020. This study and report have also taken into account BS 42020 (2013) Biodiversity -Code of Practice for Planning and Development

The Hertfordshire Biodiversity Partnership has developed the Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP) for the county as A 50-year Vision for wildlife and natural habitats of Hertfordshire along with the Hertfordshire Strategic Green Infrastructure Plan 2010. These all are aimed at ensuring the environment of Hertfordshire and its wildlife is adequately protected.



It is Area 38 of the HCC Landscape Character Area map. An area of uniform fields, primarily pasture, well managed hedges and woodlands (oak/hornbeam), with parklands and golf course, lying between Stevenage Brook and the River Beane valley. Soils are mainly calcareous clay over chalky till. The nearest HMWT Nature Reserve is Ridlins Mere

## CONDITION

A full Phase 1 Habitat Survey was not deemed necessary, as this is a site that appears to have few natural features. However, if the survey identifies any wildlife of significance, measures will be taken as set out in the JNCC guidance Handbook for Phase 1 Habitat Surveys (2010) and CIEEM Guidelines (2017).

The application site is a historic remnant of Aston House former kitchen garden and part of the remaining enclosing brick wall. It is a good example of a Victorian glasshouse for growing vines, of metal glazing bars on a brick-built plinth base, constructed on the outside of the garden wall, with an adjacent original wooden door giving access to the potting shed. This is on a raised base, with brick steps leading to the brick building and slate roof. The potting sheds main side wall is covered in decorative clay hanging tiles.



The whole structure is in poor condition. Dense ivy covers the former glazing but vines (assumed dormant) are still trained along the back wall. This is in reasonable condition for its age. The potting shed is a single room with sloping ceiling and rafters and tiles above and no void between. The whole room is in poor condition but the external walls and the hanging cladding appear sound with no signs of cracks or broken tiles.

Most of the external area has been recently cultivated and is currently bare ground with only a small section of grass remaining, near the access door. A few deciduous shrubs have also survived in this area. It is thus a habitat of limited ecological value for wildlife. Surrounding gardens and the area in general is very rural in character and beyond the immediate vicinity of the site is open countryside of greater biodiversity value.

## ECOLOGICAL EVALUATION

The application site is former garden were due to lack of management, as it is no long in use, and redundant, both the vinery and potting shed are in poor condition The immediate surroundings has little remaining vegetation. It would initially appear to be a habitat of minimal ecological value. The building was inspected first, starting with the roof space for evidence of roosting bats.

This is a single boarded roof structure of tiles and plasterboard ceiling. So, there is no loft or other space above, where wildlife and bats in particular could use. A full assessment in line with the Bat Conservation Trusts Bat Surveys, Good Practice Guidelines, 3<sup>rd</sup>. edition 2016, was therefore not considered necessary. The room and external walls, particularly the dense ivy and other spaces were however inspected. No evidence of bat droppings, discarded meals (insect wings) and investigations of the few openings /cracks were looked for but nothing was found.

As the garden has been mainly recently been cultivated there is only a small area of lawn left. These grasses are basically a close sward of common meadow grass and rye. A monoculture habitat with no selective herb species un-attractive to nectar seeking insects or butterflies. The few shrubs on site, by the boundary wall, were deciduous ornamentals of little use for birds as nest sites, food sources (winter berries), singing posts etc. and no birds were observed on the survey. On the British Trust for Ornithology (BTO) guidelines the site would be classed as of low for Avifauna potential.

As most of the original vegetation had been removed, no runs or other indication of animal activity (mole hills) were evident. [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]. As there are no water courses in the area, amphibians such as frogs, toads and protected species like Great Crested Newt (GCN) would not be encountered. A GCN Suitability Index was therefore not considered necessary.



## ASSESSMENT

From the above environmental evaluation, it can be seen that the site has minimal ecological value or any features of significant biodiversity. This has shown that the site has few opportunities for wildlife but that there are other areas of greater value in the adjacent gardens and countryside beyond. Any proposal to change this could be compensated with appropriate mitigation measures incorporating ecological enhancement if required. The ecological evaluation confirms that this is a depleted habitat of minimal wildlife value and with limited biodiversity.

## **CONCLUSION**

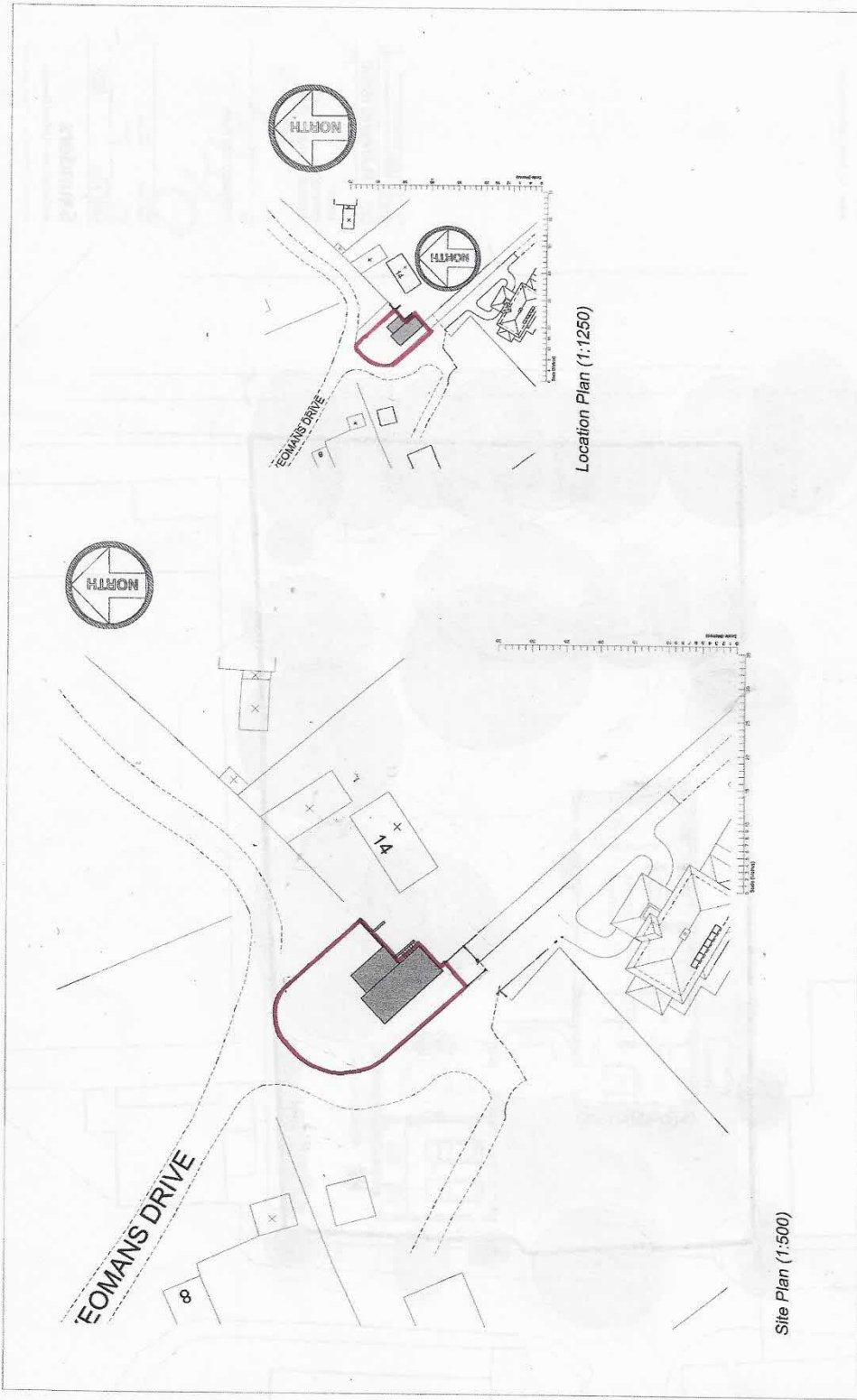
Andrew Boakes Associates has instructed the commissioning of a PEA of details of the ecology of the site and its wildlife to the proposed development. This Report details the findings of the survey which indicates that there is a low probability of the presence of significant wildlife on the site and therefore this should not affect the development proceeding.

Therefore, in my professional opinion this survey, analysis and PEA Report satisfy the requirements in respect of biodiversity enhancement and European Protected Species, in particular. I recommend that the application can be considered on this basis and that no further environmental surveys are necessary to determine the application.

## **REFERENCES**

Site Plan  
Proposals Plan  
Village Diagram  
Aston Conservation Area  
Aston Historic Map  
East Herts Local Plan  
The Wildlife and Countryside Act (1981)  
BS 42020 (2013) Biodiversity -Code of practice for planning and development.  
EU Biodiversity Strategy 2011-2020.





Location Plan (1:1250)

Site Plan (1:500)

**DRAWING TITLE**  
Existing Site and Location Plan

**DATE**  
Nov 2022

**SCALE**  
AS @ 1:250/500

**JOB No.**  
1012-22

**DRAWING No.**  
100

**REV. No.**  
A.

**CLIENT**  
The Vinley  
Eomans Drive  
Aston

**ANDREW BOAKES**  
CHARTERED ARCHITECT

MEMBER RIBA  
REGISTERED ARCHITECT

MEMBER RIBA  
REGISTERED ARCHITECT

MEMBER RIBA  
REGISTERED ARCHITECT

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MEMBER RIBA  
REGISTERED ARCHITECT

REV.	DESCRIPTION	DATE	BY

REV.	DESCRIPTION	DATE	BY

REV.	DESCRIPTION	DATE	BY

REV.	DESCRIPTION	DATE	BY



Site Plan (1:500)

DRAWING TITLE	Proposed Block Plan
DATE	Nov 2022
SCALE	A3 @ 1:500
JOB No.	1012-22 101
DRAWING No.	101
REV No.	A.

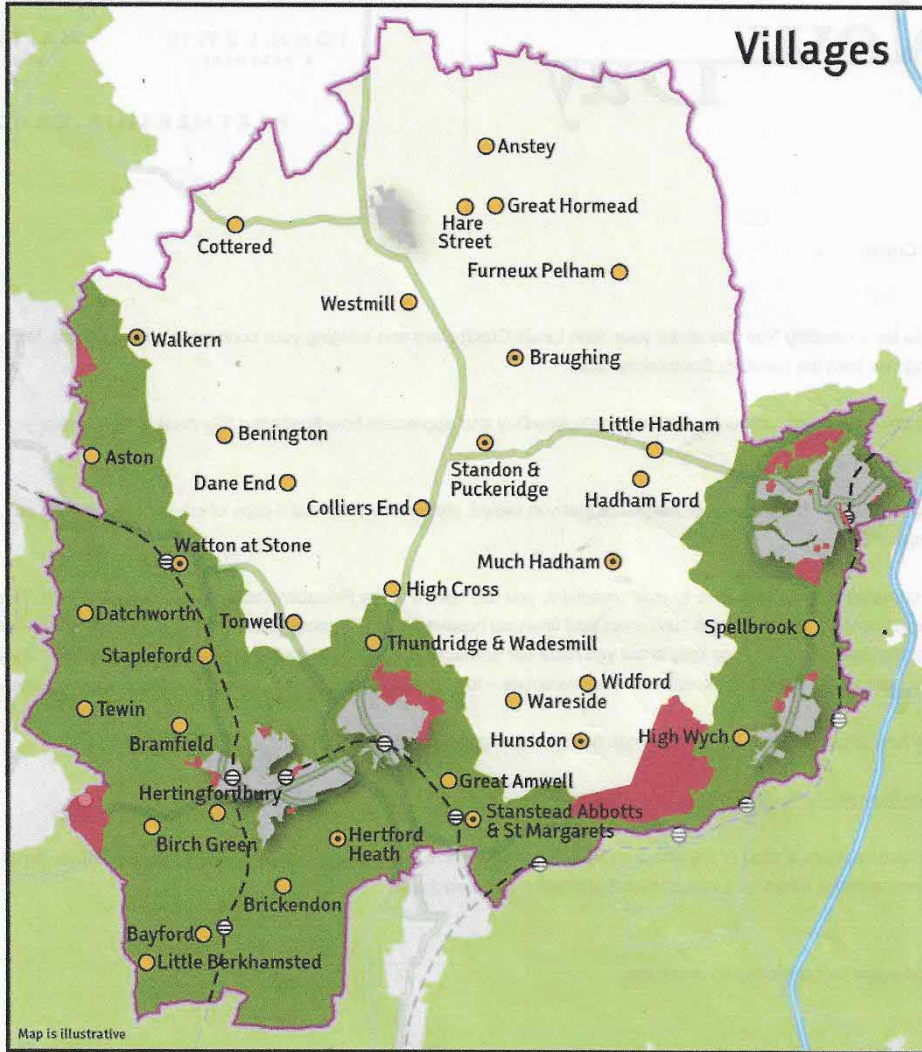
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 TELEPHONE: 01438 888818  
 FACSIMILE: 01438 888173

REV	DESCRIPTION	DATE	BY	CHECKED	DATE

COMMENT (3)



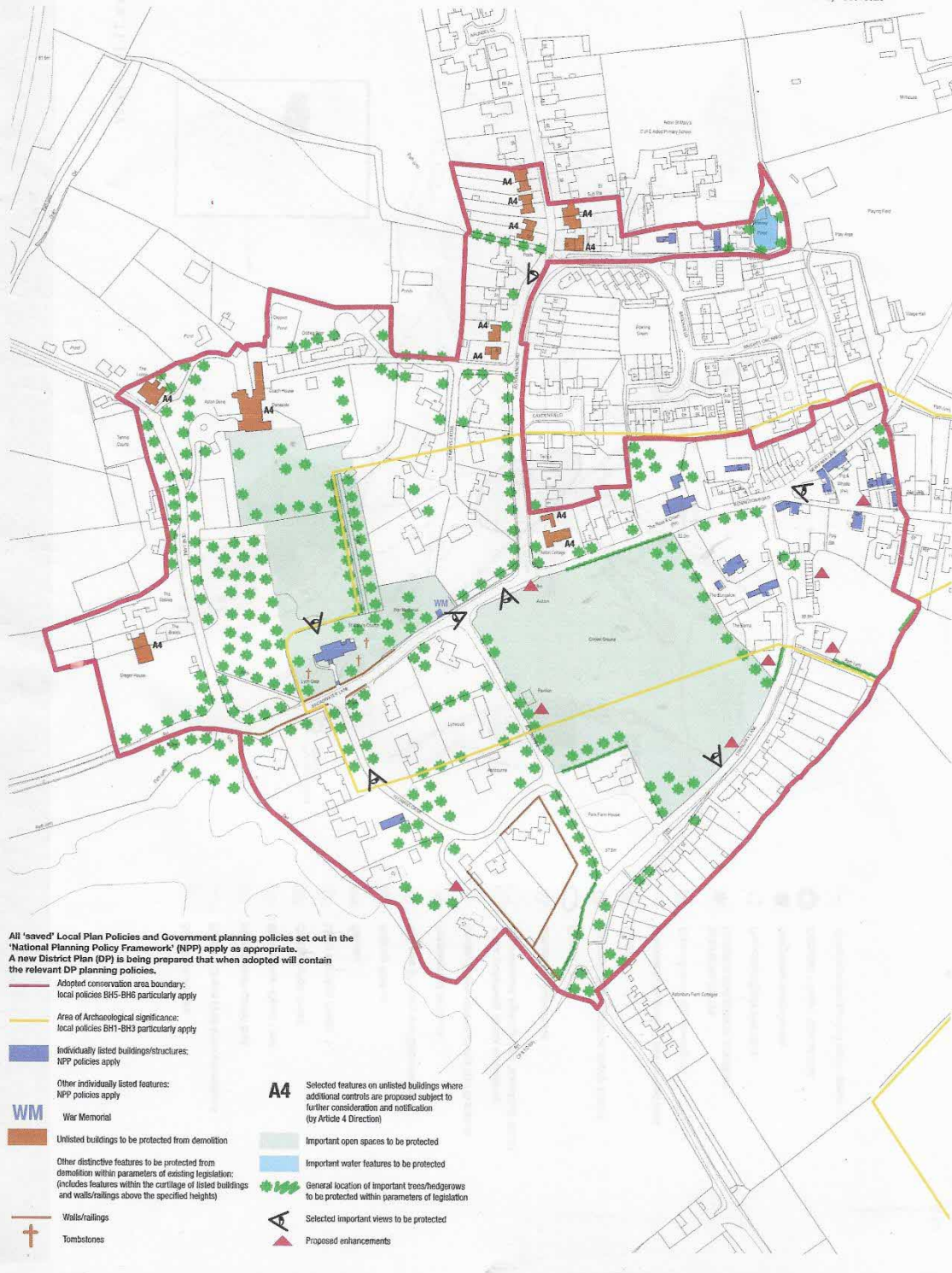
Figure 10.1: Key Diagram for the Villages



- Green Belt
- Rural Area Beyond the Green Belt
- Site allocations
- Group 1 village
- Group 2 village
- ⊖
 Railway station
- District/County boundary

# Aston conservation area appraisal and management plan Plan 2 adopted management plan

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Ordnance Survey 100018528



# Plan 1 Adopted Aston Conservation Area approximately plotted on map dating from 1874

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