

# Minerva Archaeology Ltd

Historic Environment Services

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## ARCHAEOLOGICAL REPORT



WOOLPACK CROFT  
WESTMILL  
HERTFORDSHIRE.

Archaeological Monitoring

Ref: MA 314  
Planning ref: 3/21/1118/HH

VERSION 1.0

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# MINERVA ARCHAEOLOGY LTD.


*Historic Environment Services*

Managing Director: Mark Sycamore, BA ACIfA

Woolpack Croft  
Westmill  
Hertfordshire

Project ref: MA 314  
Planning ref: 3/21/1118/HH  
HER enquiry ref: 157/21  
OASIS ref: minervaa1-433486

## Archaeological Monitoring and Recording Report

*Prepared at the request of* 

*by*

Katrina Weber-Moll BA MA ACIfA

Report No. 47

October 2022

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## Contents

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1.Introduction .....	Page 2
2.Site Background .....	Page 3
3.Methodology .....	Page 8
4.Fieldwork Data .....	Page 10
5.Discussion .....	Page 14
6.Bibliography .....	Page 16
7.Illustrations .....	after Page 19
Appendix 1 .....	Survey data

## Acknowledgements

The fieldwork for this project was carried out Mark Sycamore and Katrina Weber-Moll. The report text and illustrations were compiled by Katrina Weber-Moll, and was edited by [REDACTED]. Minerva Archaeology would like to express its thanks to [REDACTED] and Allison Tinniswood at Hertfordshire County Council for their co-operation and assistance in the execution of this project.

## Summary

Minerva Archaeology is an independent practice specialising in archaeology and the historic environment. The company undertakes a wide variety of commercial archaeological projects for clients involved in housing and industrial development, pipeline and road construction, agriculture and landscaping.

In order to advise the local planning authority on the potential archaeological impact of a proposed development at Woolpack Croft, Westmill, Hertfordshire, Minerva Archaeology was commissioned to undertake an archaeological monitoring and recording across the site.

No significant archaeological features, artefacts or deposits were encountered during the archaeological monitoring. This demonstrates that the potential risk of the development impacting remains of archaeological significance, may be considered to be *Low* for all periods.

## Introduction

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**1.1** This report has been prepared at the request of [REDACTED], to cover a programme of archaeological work to be carried out as a process of investigation and mitigation as a condition of planning consent for the development at Woolpack Croft, Westmill, Hertfordshire, SG9 9LJ.

**1.2** The present site lies within the historic core of the village, opposite the medieval church of St Mary the virgin, centred at NGR TL 36935 27093. Woolpack Croft is a grade II 17<sup>th</sup> century listed building (listing 1102243) and the site lies on the southern side of the high street within the Westmill conservation area (Figure 1).

**1.3** The development consisted of the construction of a single storey rear extension to the existing property.

### *Planning*

**1.4** In July 2021, the Historic Environment Team (HET) of Hertfordshire County Council, in line with Paragraph 189 of the revised National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), advised the need for archaeological monitoring and recording, to provide information on any potential archaeological remains which may be affected by development of the site.

### *Scheme of Investigation*

**1.5** It was considered that the best strategy to mitigate the loss of any potential archaeological resource during the development of the site, was to carry out a programme of monitoring and recording of the groundworks to ensure that an appropriate record is made of any archaeological features and deposits that may be directly impacted by the development groundworks.

**1.6** The monitoring programme included all groundworks, including grubbing out of foundations, soakaway and services on site. (Figure 1).

## Site Background

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### *Study Area*

**2.1** In order to establish the archaeological and historical context for the site, the overview set out below has been drawn under licence from the Hertfordshire County *Historic Environment Record* (HER), Minerva Archaeology's own records and other sources. The study area extends to a 500m radius around the centre of the site.

### *Topography*

**2.2** The present site is located in core of the village, 100m to the west of the village green. Westmill lies on the gentle slope down to the River Rib to the west. Woolpack Croft lies at approximately 80m AOD.

### *Geology*

**2.3** The site lies at the junction of several quaternary soils associated with the River Rib and its tributaries. Alluvium and head deposits consisting of clay, silt, sand and gravels.

**2.4** The underlying solid geology consists of Lewes Nodular Chalk Formation and Seaford Chalk Formation, a Sedimentary Bedrock formed approximately 84 to 94 million years ago in the Cretaceous Period (bgs.ac.uk/).

### *Previous Stages of work*

**2.5** No previous stages of archaeological work have been conducted on the site prior to the present stage of works.

### *Archaeological Areas (Alert, Areas of significance etc)*

**2.6** The site lies within Area of Archaeological Significance No.50 (AAS50), as identified in the District Local Plan.

### *Conservation Areas*

**2.7** The site lies within the Westmill Conservation Area as designated in the East Hertfordshire Local Plan.

### *Scheduled Monuments*

**2.8** There are no scheduled monuments within the study area.

### *Listed Buildings*

**2.9** 28 listed buildings are located within the 500m study area, the majority are grade II, with the exception of the parish church and Westmill bury farm which are grade II\*. The listed buildings date predominantly from the 16-18th centuries and are clustered along the high street and village green.

**2.10** Woolpack Croft is a grade II listed building (1102243). Its listing states:

*House. C17 or earlier. Timber frame plastered with steep thatched roof. 3-unit plan house with central chimney a third from W end and internal gable chimney at E end. One and a half storeys house along street. Eyebrow dormers with 2-light casement windows at eaves, 2 on N (in middle and E part) and in middle on S. 2 3-light flush casement windows below dormers on N front. Entrance now at rear. Windows in W end. Side-purlin roof with drip-board across purlin-ends on E gable.*

*Interior: chamfered axial beams and exposed joists, straight tension braces, and chamfered lintol to wide fireplace. C20 block at to rear not of special interest.*

### **Ancient Woodland**

**2.11** No Ancient Woodlands lie within the 500m study area (MAGIC, 2021).

### **Historic Parks and Gardens**

**2.12** No Registered Parks and Gardens lie within the site or within the 500m study area and none are within a 2km radius of the site (MAGIC, 2021).

### **Registered Battlefields**

**2.13** No Registered Battlefields are located within or in the immediate vicinity of the study area (MAGIC, 2021).

### **Significant Heritage Assets and Historic Narrative**

**2.14** The Hertfordshire County HER lists all known heritage assets, including evidence of archaeological activity, ranging from chance finds to full-scale excavations. The HER has been consulted for the study area (500m radius) from the site centre. The accumulated evidence shows that the study area lies in a significant archaeological landscape.

- The site lies within the historic core of Westmill, which is thought to have its origins in the late Anglo-Saxon period (HER 2658). There has been little development of the village since the middle of the 19th century.
- The earliest archaeological evidence within the study area is a Roman coin (HER 1585), found by chance in fields 230m to the south of the site. The line of the Roman road known as Ermine Street runs 500m to the east of the present site.
- Westmill is mentioned in the Domesday survey as both 'Westmele' and 'Wesmele, possibly indicative of two manorial estates (HER 2568). The name means 'west mill', which is thought to refer to a mill on the River Rib, which runs 280m to the east of the site. However, no evidence for a mill associated with this settlement has been found and its location remains unknown.
- The settlement is thought to have a medieval planned layout with the parish church (HER 4262) and the Westmill Bury manorial site (HER 11176) at its core. The present manor house (HER 15955), 155m to the east, is a red brick building dating from the early 18th century, which has been used as a farmhouse (Grade II\* and outbuildings Grade II listed).
- The Grade II\* listed parish church of St Mary (HER 4262), to the north of the site, has an 11th century Anglo-Saxon nave, with other additions to the church dating from the 12th and 15th centuries. Roman bricks have been reused in some parts. The church was thoroughly restored in 1875.
- There are number of historic buildings dating from 16/17th centuries onwards within Westmill. 50m to the west of the site lies Archers Hall (Grade II Listing 1347550) which has its origins in the 17<sup>th</sup> century. Church cottages (Grade II Listing 1295943) 10m to the east, was originally a single house dating from the 17<sup>th</sup> century. Church house (Grade II Listing 1102242), 50m to the east has a wing dating from the 16<sup>th</sup> century. The Sword in Hand public house, a timber framed building dating from the 16th century lies 25m to the west of the site on

the street frontage (HER 31120). Pilgrims Row, 60m to the west, consists of five grade II listed, terraced cottages, built in the early 18th century (HER 16503).

- Historic mapping from the late 19th century to the middle of 20th century show little change to the village. Buildings, one of which is marked as a smithy, adjacent to the eastern boundary of the site have been demolished during the second half of the 20th century, to provide access for new modern properties. a range of buildings, orientated broadly north-south along the western boundary of the site appear to have been incorporated into the present site and demolished also during the latter half of the 20th century.
- 350m to the east is the site of former Westmill railway station, which has been demolished (HER 5541). The station was part of the Ware, Hadham & Buntingford branch of the Great Eastern Railway, opened in 1863 and closed in 1965.
- Archaeological work 70m to the north west, at the rear of Pilgrims Row, encountered ditches of a possible late post-medieval or 20th century date (HER 31389) .



## Methodology

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### *Introduction*

**3.1** All work was carried out in accordance with the approved Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI) (Turner 2021), current health and safety legislation, and with ClfA and ALGAO guidance documents.

### *Fieldwork*

**3.2** The overburden was removed, under close supervision, to the first significant archaeological horizon or to the natural geological horizon, as appropriate, using a 7-tonne tracked mechanical excavator fitted with a 0.60m wide toothless bucket.

**3.3** Spoil from the machining was scanned for archaeological artefacts both visually and using a metal detector.

**3.4** All identified trenches were photographed and recorded using the appropriate pro-forma. Scaled plans and sections were drawn on drafting film at scales of 1:20 and 1:50.

### *Schedule of site visits*

Date	Staff	Hours	Comments
04/05/2022	KWM	9.5	Monitoring of footings and soakaway
08/05/2022	MS	1.5	Record of service trench

### *Post excavation*

**3.5** During the course of the excavations no artefacts or ecofacts were recovered. As such, no physical archive was retrieved for post excavation processing and analysis or the attention of appropriate specialists.

### *Archive Deposition and OASIS*

**3.6** The results of the present stage of work will be uploaded to the Archaeology Data Service's OASIS database.

**3.7** On completion of all stages of the present project, it is intended that the full archive, including the documentary records owned by Minerva Archaeology, and the material records owned by the client and held in the care of Minerva Archaeology, will be deposited with Hertford Museum, Hertford.

### *Copyright*

**3.8** Minerva Archaeology shall retain full copyright of any commissioned reports, tender documents or other project documents, under the Copyright, Designs and Patents Act 1988, with all rights reserved; excepting that it hereby provides an non-exclusive licence to the client for the use of such documents by the client in all matters directly relating to the project as described in the Project Brief and the Written Scheme of Investigation.

**3.9** Minerva Archaeology will assign copyright on completion of the project to the museum or repository undertaking the ultimate curation of the archive, but will retain the right to be identified as the author of all project documentation and reports as defined in the Copyright, Designs and Patents Act 1988 (Chapter IV, s.79).

## Fieldwork Data

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### *Site Stratigraphy*

**4.1** The site at Westmill was a well maintained and level back garden. The observed stratigraphy varied across the site. The west side of the site, where a patio area had been located, consisted of a hardcore layer, measuring 0.40m in depth, overlaying a mid grey brown, softly compacted silty clay subsoil, measuring 0.20m in depth. Beneath the subsoil lay a mid orange brown, moderately compacted, sandy silty clay natural substratum.

**4.2** On the east and south side of the site, the observed stratigraphy consisted of a dark grey brown, softly compacted, grass-covered, silty clay topsoil, measuring 0.35m in depth. This overlay a mid grey brown, softly compacted, silty clay subsoil, measuring 0.50m in depth. The natural substratum was observed to be a mid orange brown, moderately compacted, sandy clay.

### **MONITORING DATA**

**4.3** The areas monitored during the course of the development include the footings for new extension, a soakaway and a service trench connecting the existing extension to the soakaway (Figure 2).

### **Footings**

**4.4** The footprint of the new extension was rectangular in shape, measured 8.20m in length, 4.10m in width, and was orientated southwest to northeast. Footings for the new extension were excavated on three sides and formed a U-shape, measuring 0.60m in width and 1.00m in depth.

**4.5** The west side half of the footprint of the new extension was previously covered by a patio area. The topmost layer observed consisted of a hardcore layer, made up of CBM and rubble and measuring 0.40m in depth (Plate 1). This overlay a softly compacted silty clay subsoil, measuring 0.20m in depth, and including occasional CBM. This overlay a mid orange brown, moderately compacted, sandy, silty clay natural substratum with frequent flint inclusions (Plate 2).

**4.6** The east side showed a grass-covered layer of topsoil, consisting of a dark grey brown, softly compacted, silty clay with moderate rubble and rubbish and occasional CBM inclusions. It measured 0.35m in depth. This overlay the subsoil, measuring 0.30m in depth (Plate 3 and Figure 3).

**4.7** Deposit (101) was observed beneath the subsoil, consisting of a dark, grey brown, softly compacted, silty clay, measuring 3.50m in length, 3.5m in width and 0.20m in depth. It included moderate amounts of CBM, occasional glass, chalk, animal bones, slate and pot sherds (Plate 4 and Figure 3).

**4.8** No archaeological features, deposits, or finds were encountered in this element.

## Soakaway

**4.9** A soakaway was excavated 5m southeast of the new extension. It measured 1.20m in length, 1.20m in width and 1.50m in depth. The stratigraphy showed a dark grey brown, softly compacted, silty clay topsoil, measuring 0.27m in depth, that included frequent rubbish and occasional small subangular and subrounded stones (Plate 5 and Figure 3).

**4.10** Beneath the topsoil lay a mid grey brown, softly compacted, silty clay subsoil, measuring 0.58m in depth, and included frequent small to medium, subangular and subrounded stones, as well as occasion CBM. This overlay the mid orange brown, moderately compacted, sandy clay natural substratum, that included frequent small to medium, subangular and subrounded flints.

**4.11** No archaeological features, deposits, or finds were encountered in this element.

## Service trench and manhole

**4.12** A service trench was excavated extending from the existing extension in southeast direction and then turning south to the soakaway. It measured 15.70m in length, 0.35m in width and 0.30m to 0.60m in depth. The service trench showed a dark grey brown, softly compacted, silty clay topsoil, measuring 0.30m in depth, and included frequent rubbish, moderate amounts of CBM and occasional small subangular and subrounded stones (Plate 6).

**4.13** This overlay a mid grey brown, softly compacted, silty clay subsoil, measuring 0.15m in depth, and included frequent small to medium, subangular and subrounded stones, as well as occasion CBM. The natural substratum was not reached.

**4.14** A manhole was excavated in between the footprint of the new extension and the soakaway for an existing drain. It measured 1.20m in length, 0.80m in width and 0.50m in depth. The manhole showed a dark grey brown, softly compacted, silty clay topsoil, measuring 0.25m in depth, and included frequent rubbish, moderate amounts of CBM and occasional small subangular and subrounded stones. Beneath this a modern drain was observed. The new manhole will service this drain. Subsoil and the natural substratum were not reached.

**4.15** No archaeological features, deposits, or finds were encountered in this element.

## ARTEFACTS AND ECOFACTS

**4.16** No artefacts were observed, or collected through the duration of the evaluation.

## Environmental samples

**4.17** No samples were taken during this stage of works.

## Discussion

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### *Aims and Objectives*

**5.1** The aims of the present investigation have been to monitor all groundworks associated with the development, to ensure that an appropriate record is made of any archaeological features and deposits that were directly impacted by the development groundworks, in accordance with the research criteria of the project.

**5.2** It was considered that the investigation had the potential to contribute to a better understanding of the origins and development of Westmill from Anglo-Saxon period onwards. In particular, possible medieval and post-medieval industrial and agricultural practices associated with activity to the rear of the historic property, as well as the nature and extent of settlement and field pattern in the Anglo-Saxon and medieval periods.

### *Evidence*

**5.3** The present site formed the well-kept back garden of the Woolpack Croft dating to the 17<sup>th</sup> century or earlier. The site was mostly grass-covered with a patio area covering part of the proposed footprint of the new extension.

**5.4** The observed topsoil contained some rubbish and rubble and it's possible the topsoil was imported from elsewhere to level the garden. The garden was also on a slightly higher level, than the neighbouring properties.

**5.5** Deposit (101) was observed within the footings beneath the subsoil on the east side of the footprint of the new extension. The finds from this deposit included slate, glass, CBM, animal bone, as well as an undecorated white porcelain dinner plate. It is therefore considered to be a post-medieval deposit. No cut was observed and no discolouration of the natural substratum underneath was visible, therefore the deposit might have served levelling purposes.

**5.6** Deposit (101) was only observed in the footing trench. It was not visible in the service trench, soakaway or manhole, indicating it is confined to eastern side of the footing trench.

### *Conclusion*

**5.7** The investigation of the present site had the aim of gathering data that might increase our understanding of the origins and development of Renhold from the prehistoric period onwards, in particular:

- The origins and development of Westmill from the Anglo-Saxon period onwards;
- Possible medieval and post-medieval industrial/ agricultural practices associated with activity to the rear of the historic property;
- The nature and extent of settlement and field pattern in the Anglo-Saxon and medieval periods.

**5.8** Despite evidence for archaeological activity from the Anglo-Saxon period onwards being identified within 1000m of the study area, no significant archaeological features, artefacts or deposits were encountered during the monitoring.

**5.9** This demonstrates that the potential risk of the development impacting remains of archaeological significance, may be considered to be Low for all periods.

### *Confidence Rating*

**5.10** During the course of the fieldwork, the conditions were acceptable for the identification of potential features and deposits, and for their investigation. As such the confidence rating for the work may be considered to be *High*.

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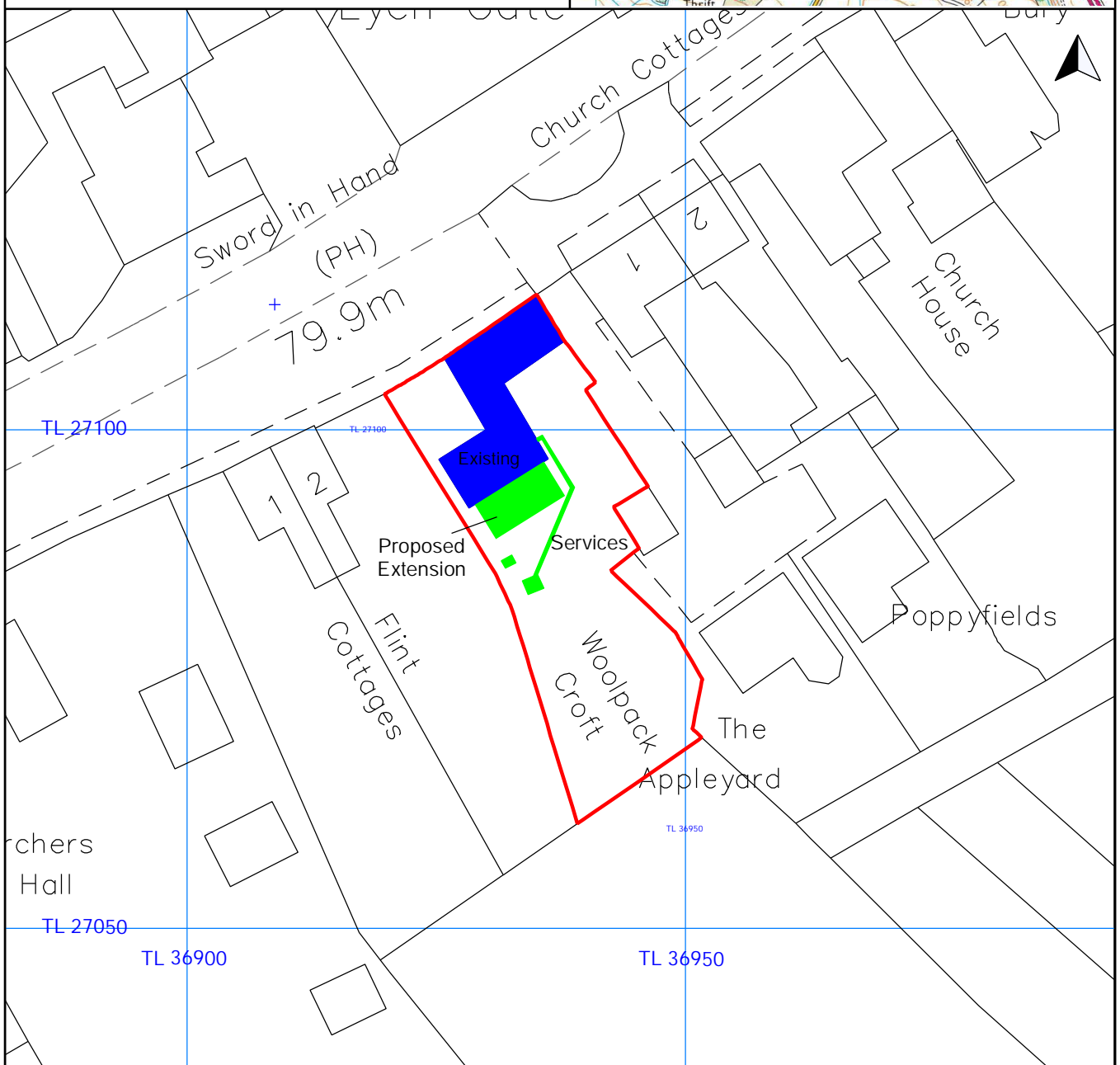
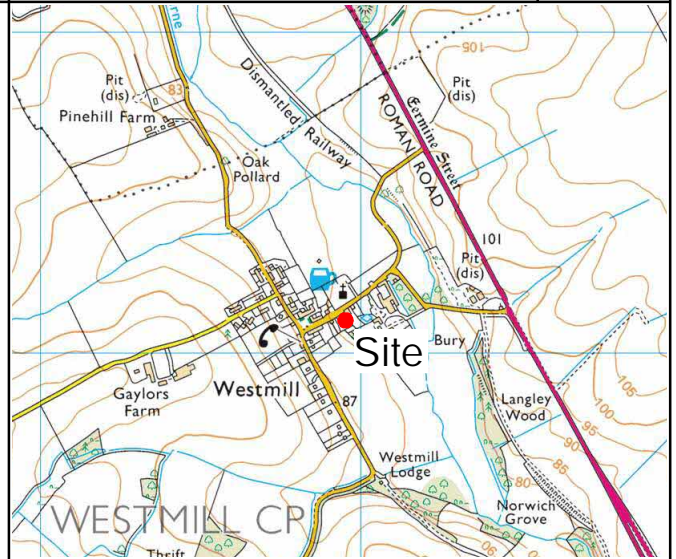
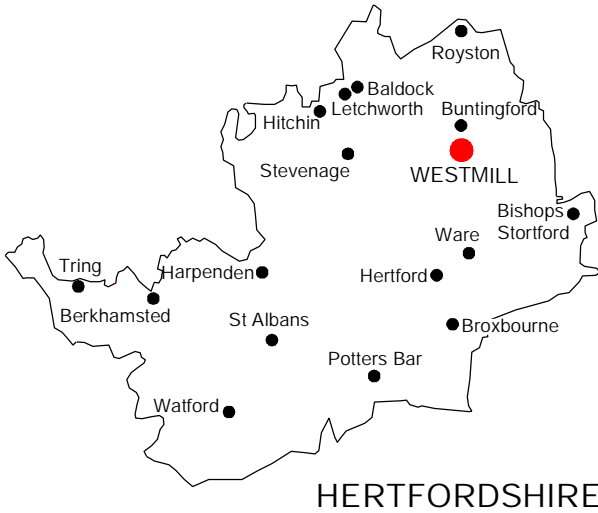


# Illustrations

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Figure 1 ..... Site location  
 Figure 2 ..... Site Plan  
 Figure 3 ..... Sections

Plate 1 ..... Footings Looking North west  
 Plate 2 ..... Footings, indicative section Looking North west  
 Plate 3 ..... Footings looking south west  
 Plate 4 ..... Footings, (101) looking south east  
 Plate 5 ..... Soakaway looking south east  
 Plate 6 ..... Service run looking south east  
 Plate 7 ..... Manhole looking south east

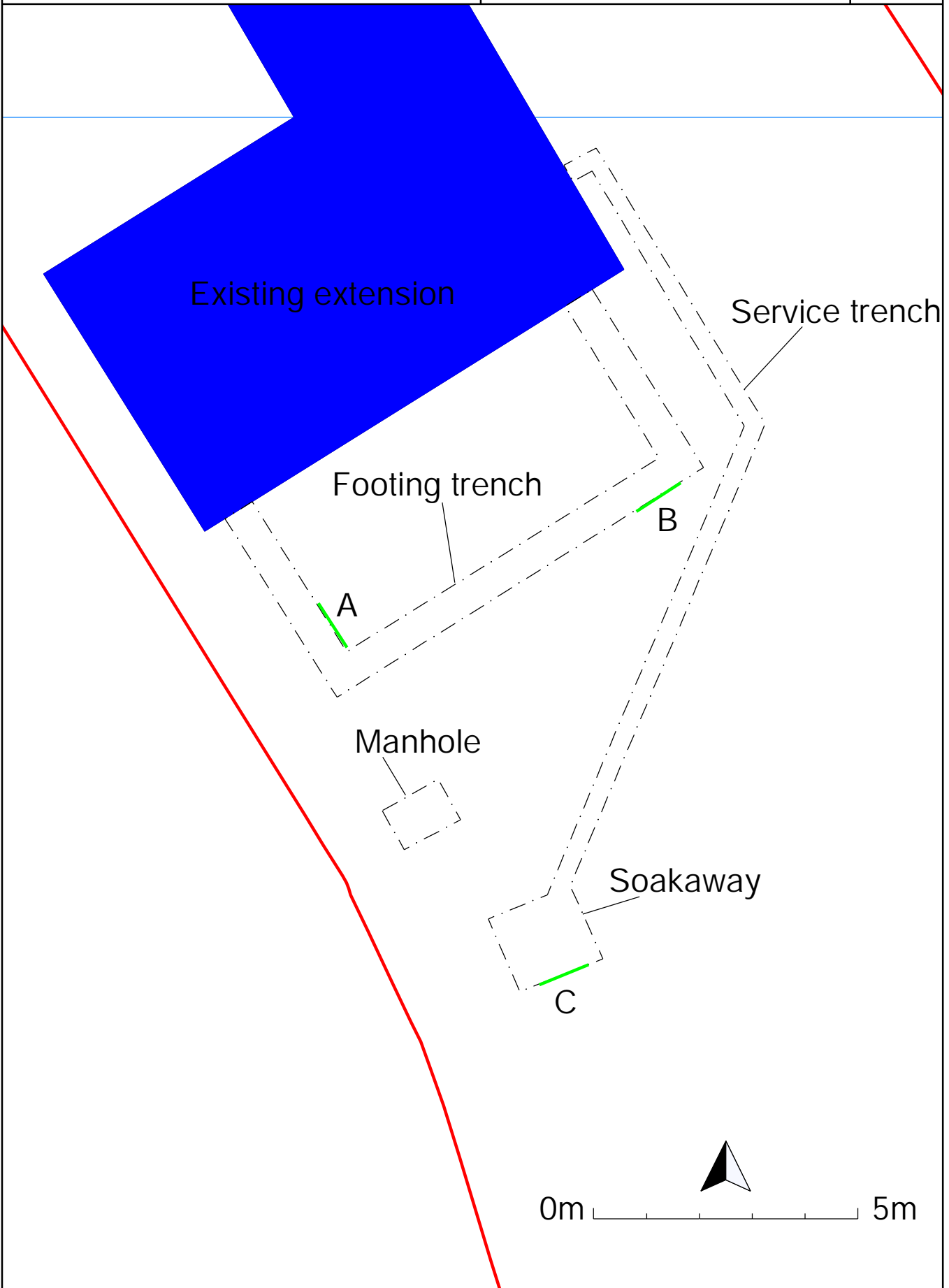


Site location and layout

Ordnance Survey (c) Crown Copyright. All rights reserved. Licence number 100061774

Scale 1:625

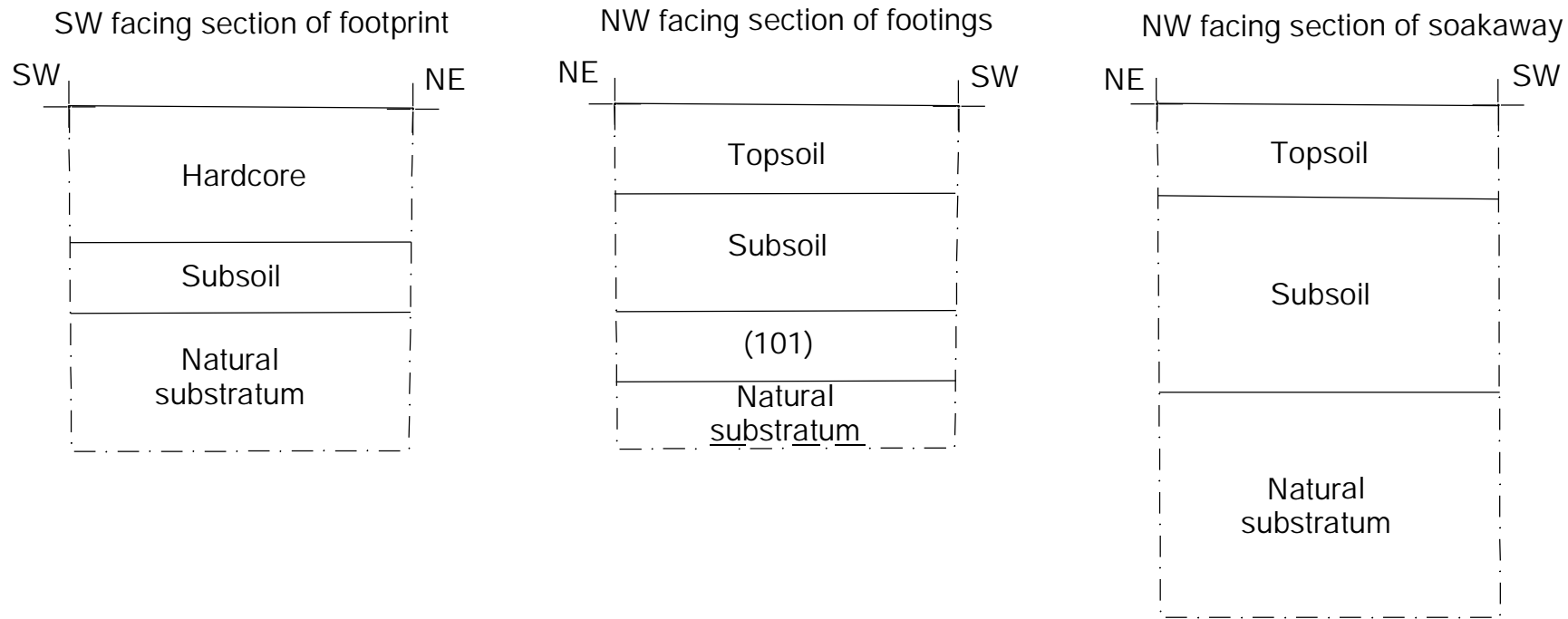
Figure 1



Site Layout with Proposed Extension

Scale 1:100

Figure 2



0m  1m

Indicative sections

Scale 1:20

Figure 3

## PLATES

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Plate 1: Footings of extension –Looking Northwest.

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Plate 2: Footings of extension, indicative section –Looking Northwest.



Plate 3: Footings of extension –Looking Southwest.

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Plate 4: Footings of extension, deposit (101) –Looking Southeast.



Plate 5: Soakaway –Looking Southeast.

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Plate 6: Service run –Looking Southeast.



Plate 7: Manhole –Looking Southeast.



## Appendix 1

### HERTFORDSHIRE HISTORIC ENVIRONMENT RECORD

#### SUMMARY SHEET

<b>Site name and address:</b> Woolpack Croft, Westmill, Hertfordshire		
<b>County:</b> Hertfordshire	<b>District:</b> East Hertfordshire	
<b>Village/Town:</b> Westmill	<b>Parish:</b> Westmill	
<b>Planning application reference</b> 3/21/1118/HH		
<b>HER Enquiry reference:</b> 157/21		
<b>Nature of application</b> Housing		
<b>Present land use:</b> Private Garden		
<b>Size of application area:</b> 820m <sup>2</sup>	<b>Size of area investigated</b> 80m <sup>2</sup>	
<b>NGR (to 8 figures minimum):</b> TL 36935 27093		
<b>Site code (if applicable)</b> MA 314		
<b>Contractor:</b> Minerva Archaeology Ltd		
<b>Type of work :</b> Monitoring		
<b>Date of work</b>	<b>Start:</b> 04/05/2022	<b>Finish:</b> 08/05/2022
<b>Location of finds &amp; site archive/Curating museum:</b> The Hertford Museum, Hertford		
<b>Related HER Nos:</b> None	<b>Periods represented</b> Post Medieval	
<b>Relevant previous summaries/reports :</b> Turner, C. 2021: Woolpack Croft, Westmill, Hertfordshire. Written Scheme of Investigation for Monitoring and Recording. Minerva Archaeology Ltd.		
<b>Summary of fieldwork results:</b>  Minerva Archaeology is an independent practice specialising in archaeology and the historic environment. The company undertakes a wide variety of commercial archaeological projects for clients involved in housing and industrial development, pipeline and road construction, agriculture and landscaping.  In order to advise the local planning authority on the potential archaeological impact of a proposed development at Woolpack Croft, Westmill, Hertfordshire, Minerva Archaeology was commissioned to undertake an archaeological monitoring and recording across the site.  No significant archaeological features, artefacts or deposits were encountered during the archaeological monitoring. This demonstrates that the potential risk of the development impacting remains of archaeological significance, may be considered to be <i>Low</i> for all periods.		
<b>Author of summary</b> K. Weber-Moll	<b>Date of summary</b> 21/07/2022	