

Thremhall Priory Barns Takeley Essex



Archaeological Watching Brief Report



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Client: Cowper Griffith

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UTT/1707/05/LB

NGR: TL 5325 2160

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Takeley, Essex*****ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF REPORT*****CONTENTS**

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SUMMARY

In August 2006 Oxford Archaeology (OA) carried out an archaeological watching brief at Thremhall Priory Barns, Takeley, Essex (NGR: TL 5325 2160). The work was commissioned by Cowper Griffith in advance of conversion and extension of existing buildings. The watching brief revealed widespread evidence of demolition debris (principally brick fragments) probably associated with the dissolution of the Priory. This had been heavily disturbed and truncated by 20th century ground reduction. The truncated foundations of an agricultural building, c.19th century, were also observed.

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Scope of work

- 1.1.1 In August 2006 Oxford Archaeology (OA) carried out an archaeological watching brief at Thremhall Priory Barns, Takeley, Essex (NGR: TL 5325 2160). The work was commissioned by Cowper Griffith in respect of a planning application for conversion of existing buildings and elements of new build (Planning Applications No. UTT/1704/05 and UTT/1707/05/LB).
- 1.1.2 A project brief was set by Richard Havis, the Historic Environment Management (HEMT) Officer for Essex County Council Historic Environment Branch, setting out the requirements and standards for the archaeological work (ECC, 2006).
- 1.1.3 OA prepared a Written Scheme of Investigation detailing how it would meet the requirements of the brief (OA, 2006).

1.2 Location, geology and topography

- 1.2.1 The site is located on the northern side of the B1256, to the west of Takeley village, and immediately adjacent to Thremhall Priory (Fig. 1). The site covers an area of approximately 0.33 hectares, and is currently occupied by a series of timber framed buildings. The site lies at approximately 97 m above OD and the underlying geology is "Till" (Quaternary Boulder Clay) (British Geological Survey Sheet no. 222).

1.3 Archaeological and historical background

- 1.3.1 The archaeological background to the watching brief was prepared for the WSI for the project (OA, 2006) and is reproduced below.
- 1.3.2 The site of Thremhall Priory, immediately to the east of the development area, is formed by an almost rectangular moated enclosure, with a smaller moated area in the south-east corner. The moat is 9-12 m wide on the south, with an average width of 6 m elsewhere. Much of the eastern arm of the moat is dry. This is the site of an Augustinian Priory, of which no remains survive above ground apart from the bowl

of a font buried in the garden, which was removed in 1938. The priory was founded in the 12th century by Gilbert de Mountfitchet or his son Richard (ECC, 2006).

- 1.3.3 An inventory at the Dissolution in 1536 records a “quire”, two “alters”, a Lady Chapel, Convent Hall and parlour, buttery, kitchen, brewhouse, cakehouse, ‘osarye’, hall, second chamber and third, ‘daryry’, and stable (Historic Environment Record (HER), 4599). Excavations at Thremhall Priory have found extensive evidence of medieval structures located beneath the present house, now largely demolished. The documentary sources indicate a number of buildings some of which may extend into the area of Thremhall Farm. Archaeological excavation by the Field Archaeological Group in the grounds of Thremhall Priory Farm found evidence of 13th century occupation which is likely to be associated with the Priory (Vaughan, 2001). A range of post-medieval features were also identified.
- 1.3.4 A record exists of a tile kiln being found in the proximity of the priory in the 1940’s (HER 4601). No date or exact location is given for this kiln, but it is probably of Roman or medieval date.

2 PROJECT AIMS AND METHODOLOGY

2.1 Aims

- 2.1.1 To identify and record the presence or absence, extent, condition, quality and date of archaeological remains in the areas affected by the development.
- 2.1.2 To preserve by record any archaeological deposits or remains that may be disturbed or destroyed during the period of groundworks.
- 2.1.3 To make available the results of the archaeological investigation.

2.2 Methodology

- 2.2.1 The watching brief was conducted as series of site visits maintaining a continuous archaeological presence during any intrusive groundworks. These works included topsoil stripping, creation of new access routes and the excavation of foundation trenching.
- 2.2.2 A site plan showing the extent of these works and any archaeological features was maintained at a scale of 1:100 (Figs. 2 and 3) and any recorded sections were drawn at a scale of 1:20 (Fig. 3). All features and sections were photographed using colour slide and black and white print film. A general photographic record of the work was also made. Recording followed procedures detailed in the *OA Field Manual* (ed D Wilkinson, 1992).

3 RESULTS

3.1 Description of deposits

- 3.1.1 The watching brief can be broadly divided into two separate areas, approximately 38 m length of 0.6 m wide trenching was excavated for the foundations of the new extension, while an area of approximately 100 m² was stripped in front of the proposed visitors office for a carpark.
- 3.1.2 Within the area of the new extension (Fig. 3) the underlying natural (13), a pale yellow-brown clay containing flint nodules was encountered at a depth of 0.5 m below the current ground level (Fig. 4). This layer was cut by a series of foundation cuts 15, 17 and 20 (Fig. 4, Sections 11, 12 and 13 respectively). Cuts 15 and 17 were exposed only within the northern side of the foundation trench suggesting that they were termini of walls. Cut 20 could be seen within both the north-south lengths of foundation trenching suggesting a linear feature. Within these cuts were trench built brick structures (14, 16 and 19) using similar sized hand made frogged bricks, measuring 0.22 m long, 0.105 wide and 0.06 m deep, probably early 19th century in date. These were laid using a lime mortar in English stretcher bond and it is highly probable that they are all part of the same building. All the structures had been truncated suggesting that it had been demolished down to ground level.
- 3.1.3 Within the area of section 12, Structure 16 was butted by a layer of dark grey silt clay (18) containing wire cut brick fragments and a fragment of iron barrel hoop. This may be a result of animal disturbance such as pig rooting. Overlying this deposit and the structures was a layer of dark grey-brown clay silt (12) measuring between 0.1 m and 0.25 m in depth. This layer contained numerous abraded fragments of brick and tile. It's composition suggests that it may be the original topsoil horizon, however there is evidence (the unevenness of it's depth and level upper interface) to suggest that this had been truncated during an earlier phase of building work. Overlying this was a layer of made ground (11) composed of a yellow clay mixed with crushed limestone. This contained many examples of modern construction debris and measured between 0.15 m and 0.25 m in depth. A modern landscaping layer of topsoil and turf (10) completes the stratigraphy.
- 3.1.4 Within the area of the proposed carpark 0.2 m depth of the modern topsoil (10) was removed together with 0.1 m depth of the underlying modern made ground (22). No earlier deposits were exposed.

3.2 Finds

- 3.2.1 A substantial number of abraded small fragments of ceramic building material were observed within Layer 12. These were considered to be too fragmentary to be diagnostic and were recorded but not retained. A number of modern (19th and 20th century) bricks and other artefacts (iron pipe, angle iron, bottle glass and a factory made scythe blade) were also recorded from this deposit and these also were

recorded, but were not retained. A description of the bricks used in structures 14, 16 and 20 was recorded within their appropriate context sheets, but no examples of the bricks were retained.

3.3 Palaeo-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 No evidence for structures relating to Thremhall Priory were observed during the course of the watching brief. This may be explained by the relatively small areas examined, although it is also possible that this area was outside the main area of activity of the Priory. The brick structures observed appear to be part of an open fronted agricultural building dating to the 19th century, built upon the same alignment as the present day buildings.
- 4.1.2 Layer 12 appears to have been the original topsoil horizon for the area. The large amount of abraded ceramic building material observed within the context may be associated with the dissolution and subsequent demolition of the Priory. Their abraded appearance would suggest that they have been present within the layer for a period of time. There was no evidence for any earlier deposits separating this layer from the undisturbed natural 13, and this layer may be the result of widespread animal disturbance of the site.
- 4.1.3 No dating evidence earlier than the 19th century was observed during the course of the watching brief. Its absence may support the supposition that this area was outside the main area of activity of the Priory.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1 ARCHAEOLOGICAL CONTEXT INVENTORY

<i>Context</i>	<i>Type</i>	<i>Depth/ Height</i>	<i>Width</i>	<i>Comments</i>	<i>Finds</i>	<i>Date</i>
10	Layer	0.2 m	-	Modern topsoil and turf	-	C20th
11	Layer	0.2 m	-	Modern made ground	-	C20th
12	Layer	0.1 m - 0.25 m	-	Buried topsoil	Brick, bottle glass, metal	C19th/ C20th
13	Layer	> 0.8 m	-	Natural clay	-	-
14	Structure	0.4 m	0.5 m	Base of a brick pier	Frogged brick	C19th
15	Cut	0.4 m	0.5 m	Foundation cut	-	C19th
16	Structure	0.4 m	0.5 m	Base of a brick pier	Frogged brick	C19th
17	Cut	0.4 m	0.5 m	Foundation cut	-	C19th
18	Layer	0.2 m	0.6 m	Demolition debris	Brick, metal	C19th
19	Structure	0.2 m	0.4 m	Truncated base of a brick wall	Frogged brick	C19th
20	Cut	0.2 m	0.4 m	Foundation cut	-	C19th
21	Structure	0.4 m	> 7.0 m	Group number, consists of 14, 16 and 19	-	C19th
22	Layer	> 0.1 m	-	Modern made ground	Traffic cone, brick	C20th

APPENDIX 2 BIBLIOGRAPHY AND REFERENCES

BAA, 2006 *Generation 1 Environmental Statement, Volume 4, Archaeology and Cultural Heritage*

ECC, 2006 *Archaeological Monitoring at Thremhall Priory Farm, Takeley*

IFA, 2001 *Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Watching Briefs*

OA, 2000 *OA Environmental Guidelines for sampling*

OA, 2006 *Thremhall Priory Barns, takeley, Essex : Written Scheme of Investigation for an Archaeological Watching Brief*

OAU, 1992 *Field Manual (ed. Wilkinson D)*

Vaughan, T., 2001 *Thremhall Priory Farm, Takeley, Essex Archaeological Evaluation* Field Archaeology Unit unpublished report

APPENDIX 3 SUMMARY OF SITE DETAILS**Site name:** Thremhall Priory Barns, Takeley, Essex**Site code:** TATHPB 06**Grid reference:** TL 5325 2160**Type of watching brief:** Machine excavation of service and foundation trenches, ground reduction**Date and duration of project:** 15th to 21st August 2006, 2 site visits**Area of site:** 0.33 hectare**Summary of results:** Evidence of widespread 20th century ground reduction, foundations of a probable 19th century agricultural building, evidence of widespread demolition debris probably associated with the dissolution of the Priory**Location of archive:** The archive is currently held at OA, Janus House, Osney Mead, Oxford, OX2 0ES, and will be deposited with the Saffron Walden Museum in due course, under the following accession number: SAFWM:2006.37

Server:go/oaupubs1_RozZ*TATHPB06*TAHPBWB*Thremwell Priory Bams*int*07.09.06



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Figure 1: Site location

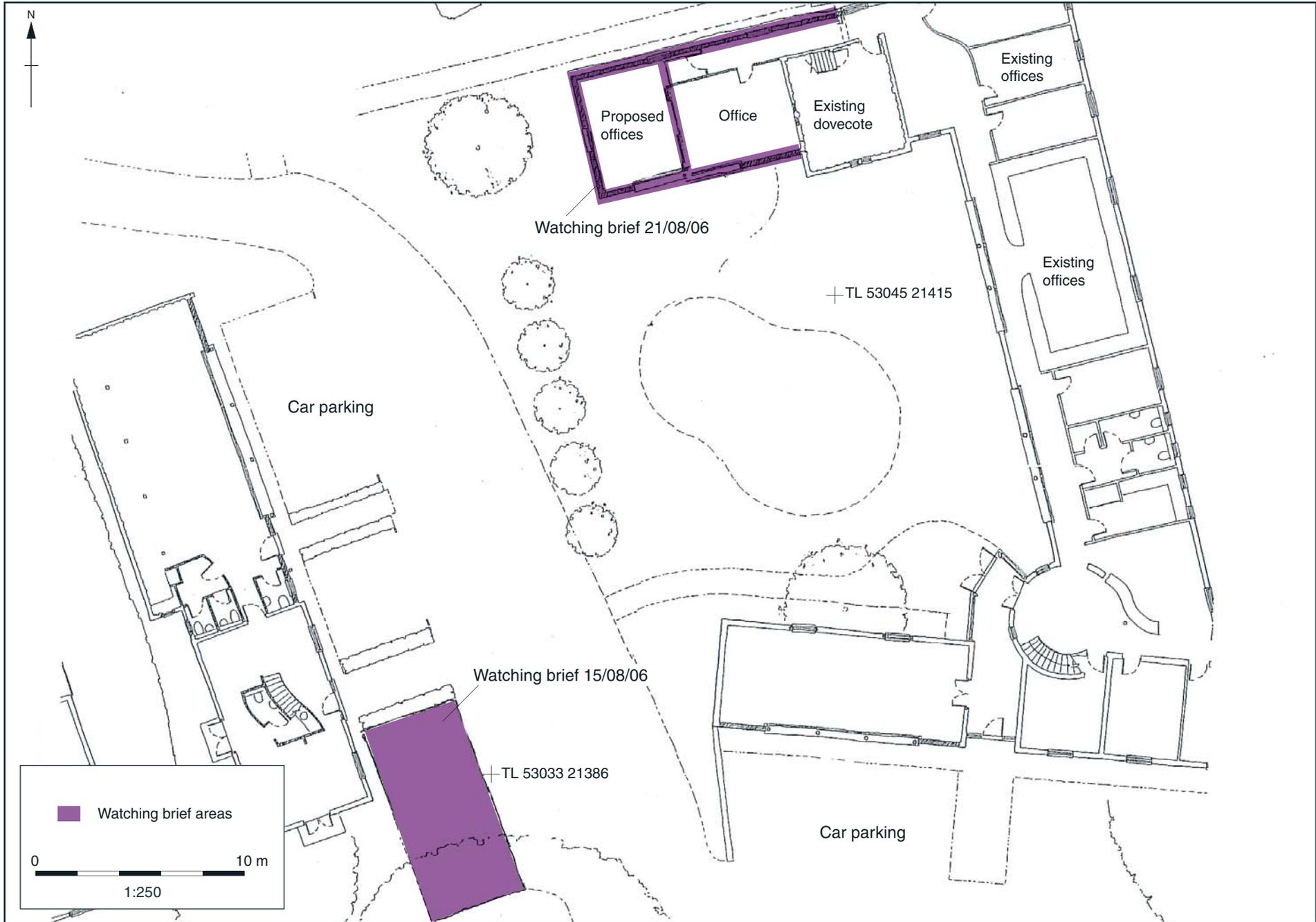
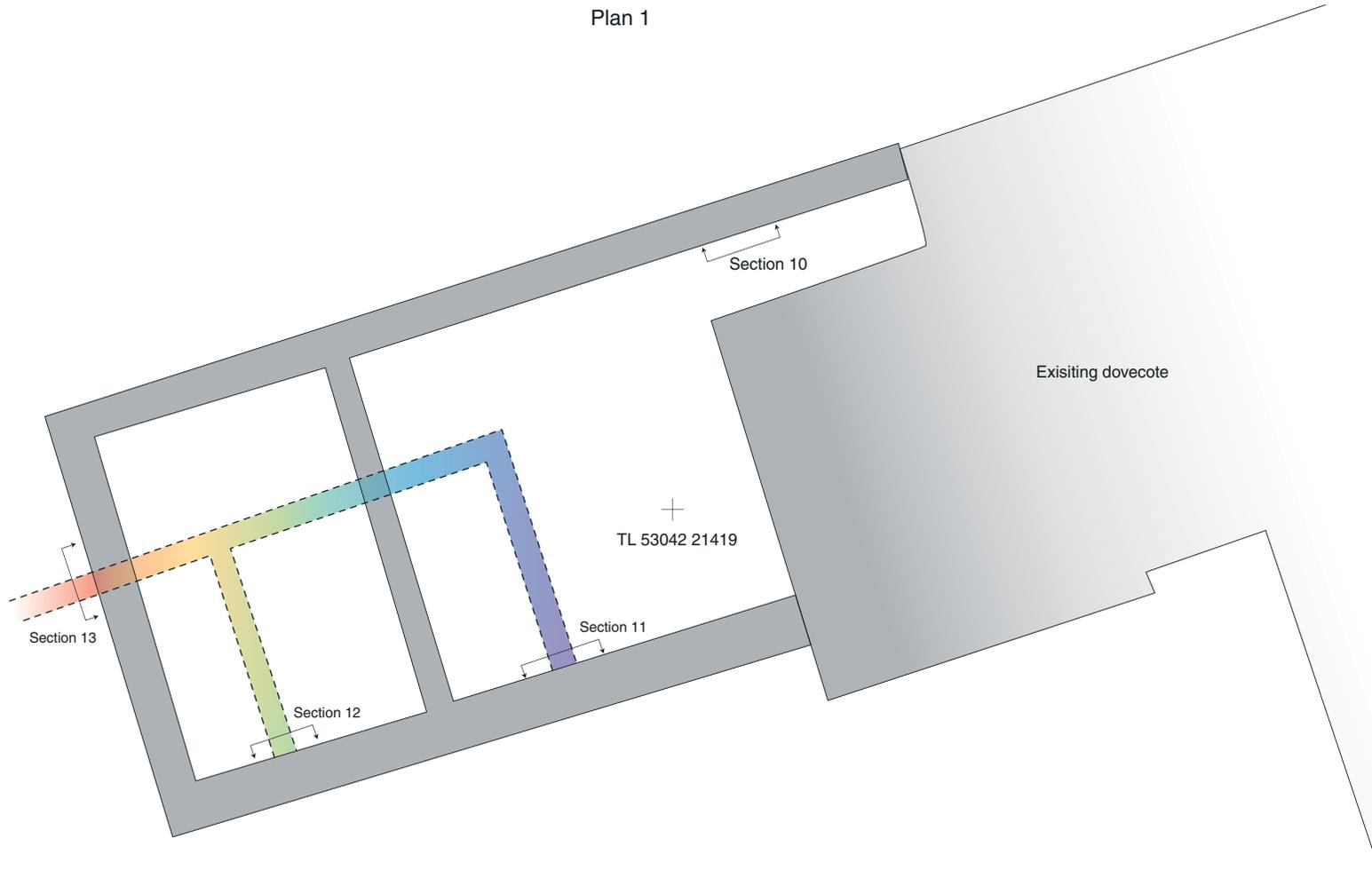


Figure 2: Site plan



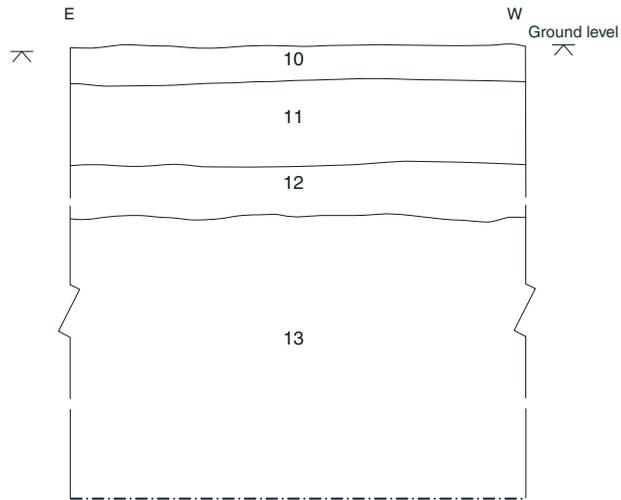
Existing buildings

Proposed alignment of structure 21

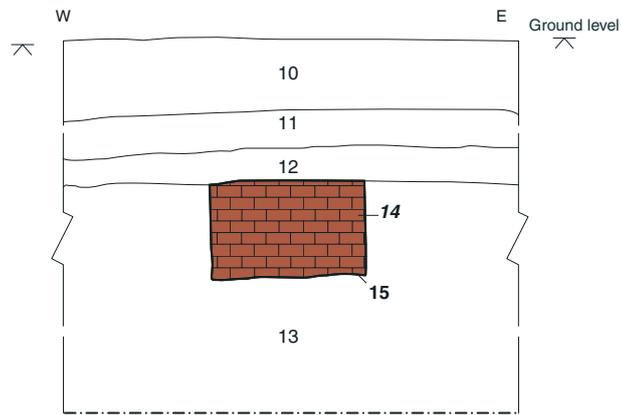


Figure 3: Plan of extension showing location of sections

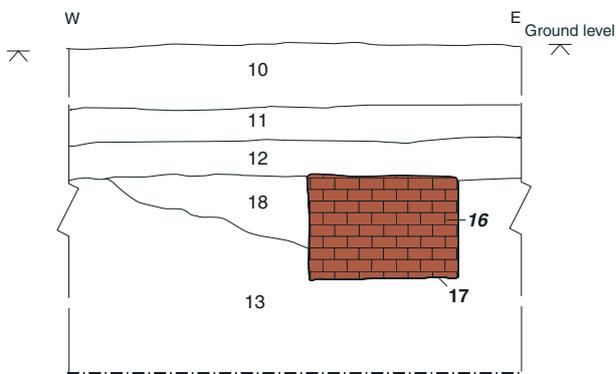
Section 10



Section 11



Section 12



Section 13

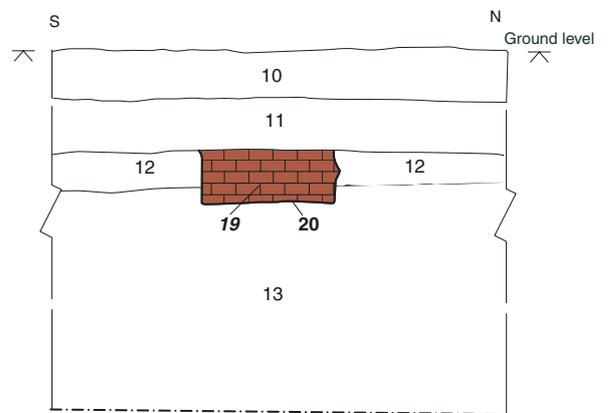


Figure 4: Sections



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