

# New Field House Stowe School Stowe Buckinghamshire



## Archaeological Watching Brief Report



**Oxford Archaeology**

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Signed... 

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## New Field House, Stowe School, Stowe, Buckinghamshire

*ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF REPORT*

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## SUMMARY

*In December 2002 Oxford Archaeology (OA) carried out an archaeological watching brief at New Field House, Stowe School, Stowe, Buckinghamshire (NGR SP 6655 3700). The work was commissioned by Stowe School in advance of construction of an extension on the side of New Field House. The watching brief did not reveal any archaeological features or deposits.*

### 1 INTRODUCTION

#### 1.1 Location and scope of work

- 1.1.1 In December 2002 Oxford Archaeology (OA) carried out an archaeological watching brief at New Field House, Stowe School, Stowe, Buckinghamshire (Fig. 1). The work was commissioned by Stowe School in respect of a planning application for an extension to New Field House (Planning Application No. 02/2002)
- 1.1.2 A project brief was set by David Radford the Buckinghamshire Archaeological Officer.
- 1.1.3 OA prepared a Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI) detailing how it would meet the requirements of the brief (OA, 2002).

#### 1.2 Geology and topography

- 1.2.1 The application site lies within the School grounds, which are generally level, at approximately 130 m OD. The underlying geology is clay.

#### 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, 2002) and is reproduced below.
- 1.3.2 The background to the site has been previously extensively researched by OA and comprised a study area of 0.5 km radius surrounding the School. SMR references were numbered and located on a map of the area and included in a gazetteer. A summary of the research is presented below with a gazetteer at the end of this document. The study identified 12 archaeological entries relevant to the site (OA 1 - 12 - see Gazetteer at end of this WSI).
- 1.3.3 The earliest known human activity within the study area dates to the Roman period and a Roman villa of early 4th century date lies c 500 m north-west of the Site (OA 11). The main Towcester to Alchester Roman Road (OA 1) runs south-west/north-east c 200 m to the west and the Fenny Stratford to Buckingham road (OA 2), lies immediately to the north of the site on a south-east/north-west alignment.
- 1.3.4 Roman pottery kilns were uncovered nearby in the early 1990s (Marshall 1999, Booth 1999). Part of a pottery kiln was salvage recorded in 1990, and further indications of a kiln were noted in 1995. Among the artifacts recovered was a

quantity of pink-grogged ware from both kiln locations. This material dates from the 2nd-4th centuries (Booth and Green, 1989), and similar material has been found by the National Trust's archaeologists during ground disturbance in and around the gardens of Stowe Park. A Saxon relic has been found by the gardeners at Stowe.

- 1.3.5 Domesday records four manors, which are likely to have represented the pre-conquest settlements within the area. In the early medieval period these settlements became nucleated around a church and manor house. The four manors recorded in Domesday comprise Stowe (OA 9), Boycott, Lamport (OA 8) and Dadford (of which the latter two were divided into two holdings each).
- 1.3.6 Recorded as *Stor* in Domesday, it was leased from the Bishop of Bayeux by Robert d'Oilly and Roger of Ivry in 1086. In the 13th century it was granted to Osney Abbey (Oxfordshire), who held it until the dissolution. It was eventually granted to Queen Elizabeth, who proceeded to grant it to Thomas Wright in 1590. In 1591 the manor of Stowe was sold to the Temple family, who had made their money from sheep farming.
- 1.3.7 The mansion, which stands in the Grade I listed registered park at Stowe dates originally to the 16th/17th centuries, and was remodelled in the 18th century. The original manor house was demolished and replaced by Sir Richard Temple before his death in 1697. Later his son (the first Lord Cobham) re-built the front and added the wings. The house was further enlarged by Earl Temple, who died in 1779 and afterwards by the Marquis of Buckinghamshire. During this time, the Temple family had begun to invest heavily in the gardens. The first Lord Cobham, who died in 1749, had started to extend the area of parkland (which had been present as a deer park from the 13th century). By the end of the 1720's due to the ever expanding Stowe Park (OA 6), the village of Stowe, which in 1712 had 31 houses (OA 9), had been largely cleared, leaving only the 13th century church of the Assumption of St. Mary the Virgin (OA 12).
- 1.3.8 The land within Stowe manor became an extensive, complex pleasure garden, surrounding a country mansion, probably one of the finest examples of later Renaissance houses in England. Worked on by a number of famous landscape designers, including Charles Bridgeman and Capability Brown, by the 18<sup>th</sup> century it was supremely influential to English landscape gardening. At its largest the designed landscape and woodlands covered some 250 hectares.
- 1.3.9 Notable post-medieval structures in the grounds include Conduit House and the Bourbon Tower, both probably of 18th century date.
- 1.3.10 Recent archaeological work at the School by OA includes a watching brief at Drayson Hall, a watching brief on Stowe House Forecourt works as part of Stowe House Restoration Campaign (OA 2002a, 2002b) and further work for the National Trust in the Parkscape of Stowe (OA forthcoming).

## 2 PROJECT AIMS AND METHODOLOGY

### 2.1 Aims

- 2.1.1 To identify and record the presence/absence, extent, condition, quality and date of archaeological remains in the areas affected by the development.
- 2.1.2 To make available the results of the archaeological investigation.

### 2.2 Methodology

- 2.2.1 The garden wall and vegetation was removed. The area of the extension was reduced to formation level at 0.2 m below ground surface. The foundation trenches were then marked out and excavated with a mini digger (Fig 3).
- 2.2.2 All archaeological observations were planned at a scale of 1:100. A general photographic record of the work was made. Recording followed procedures detailed in the *OAU Fieldwork Manual* (ed D Wilkinson, 1992).

## 3 RESULTS

### 3.1 Description of deposits

- 3.1.1 The ground works exposed a natural of light reddish brown clay with patches of flinty gravel (3). Overlying this along the southern half of the site was a 0.15 m thick layer of subsoil of dark reddish brown silty clay (2). These were both disturbed by a number of root holes filled with a dark brown silty clay (4). This was sealed by 0.24 m thick layer of dark greyish brown silty clay loam (1) topsoil.

### 3.2 Finds

- 3.2.1 No finds were recovered during the watching brief.

### 3.3 Palaeo-environmental remains

- 3.3.1 No deposits suitable for environmental sampling were identified during the watching brief.

## 4 DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

- 4.1.1 The results from the watching brief revealed no archaeological features or deposits. In the past the site has been terraced into the side of the slope, which may have removed any archaeological remains.

## APPENDICES

## APPENDIX 1 ARCHAEOLOGICAL CONTEXT INVENTORY

<i>Context</i>	<i>Type</i>	<i>Depth</i>	<i>Width</i>	<i>Length</i>	<i>Comments</i>	<i>Finds</i>
1	Layer	0.20 m			Topsoil	None
2	Layer	0.10 m			Subsoil	None
3	Natural				Natural Clay	
4	Cuts	0.20 m	0.75 m	1 m	Root holes	None

## APPENDIX 2 BIBLIOGRAPHY AND REFERENCES

IFA, 1999 Standard and Guidance for archaeological watching briefs

OAU, 1992 Fieldwork Manual (1st edition, ed. D Wilkinson)

OA, 2002a Drayson Hall, Stowe. Watching Brief Report

OA, 2002b Stowe House Forecourt. Watching Brief report

OA, 2002 New Field House, Stowe School, Buckinghamshire Written Scheme of Investigation

## APPENDIX 3 Gazetteer of Archaeological References: Stowe School

OA No	SMR No	Description	NGR
1	2980	Main Roman road from Towcester to Alchester. There are traces of an agger north of Boycott farm.	SP 68464206 to SP 68194000
2	2979	Roman Road from Fenny Stratford to Buckingham, with the Little Brickhill to Bletchley branch. Traces, with remains of agger noted at Stowe Park.	SP 88404301 to SP 62174104
3	4896	Post-medieval brick works, lime kiln and smithy run by and for Stowe estate. No visible remains of any structures remain. A house called Lower Boycott has been built in the center of the site and the old brick pits landscaped into ornamental water gardens.	SP 66553730
4	6331	Building survey of Home Farm	-
5	5212	Post-medieval sawmill and watermill. The sawmill (originally driven by a water wheel, is believed to have been erected for its present purpose (never as a corn mill) by the late Duke of Buckingham.	SP 66963773
6	4208	Post-medieval manor and garden remains of Stowe Park. The works within this garden is too numerous to mention, though a brief description is included in the report.	SP 67453742
7	5215	Medieval Stowe watermill was, in the 17 <sup>th</sup> century, at the bottom of the village, somewhere close to the present Octagon Pond. It	SP 678370

		existence constituted one of the obstacles to Cobham's laying out the gardens. Due to the necessity of a watermill, Cobham bought the neighbouring Boycott manor in 1717-18, which had a mill, converting Stowe's mill pond into a garden feature.	
8	4025	The Saxon and medieval manor of Lamport, it was formerly in 2 parts. A hamlet of some importance at one time, there are a range of earthworks representing medieval house platforms, a hollow way and possible tracks.	SP 68403740
9	0590	Medieval village of Stowe, which in 1712 consisted of 32 houses and a population of 180, but owing to the encroachment of Stowe Park has practically disappeared and appears to have relocated to Dadford.	SP 678374
10	6307	Originally identified as a possible moat feature in recent years archaeological assessment has suggested that it is more likely to be the former site of the 18 <sup>th</sup> century 'Chinese House'.	SP 678376
11	0773	A Roman villa of considerable size, dating to the early years of the 4 <sup>th</sup> century, with associated baths, a tank, pottery kiln, coins and tessellated pavements was first excavated in c.1837. Later investigation in the area, in advance of field-drainage, has revealed considerable quantities of Romano-British material (mainly sherds and tiles).	SP 72273528
12	1718	The medieval church of the 'Assumption of St. Mary the Virgin'. Built in stages from the 13 <sup>th</sup> century onwards it originally consisted of a chancel and an aisleless <i>Nave</i> . It appears to have been rebuilt in the 15 <sup>th</sup> century and restored in the 19 <sup>th</sup> century. It stands in a churchyard, surrounded by the gardens of Stowe house.	SP 67603735

**APPENDIX 4 SUMMARY OF SITE DETAILS****Site name:** New School House, Stowe School, Stowe, Buckinghamshire**Site code:** STSCNF 02**Grid reference:** NGR SP 6655 3700**Type of watching brief:** Ground work for new extension to New Field House.**Date and duration of project:** One site visit on the 18/12/2002.**Area of site:** 7 m x 6.3 m**Summary of results:** No archaeological features or deposits were discovered.**Location of archive:** The archive is currently held at OA, Janus House, Osney Mead, Oxford, OX2 0ES, and will be deposited with Buckinghamshire County Museums Service in due course, under the following accession number:





Figure 1: Site location

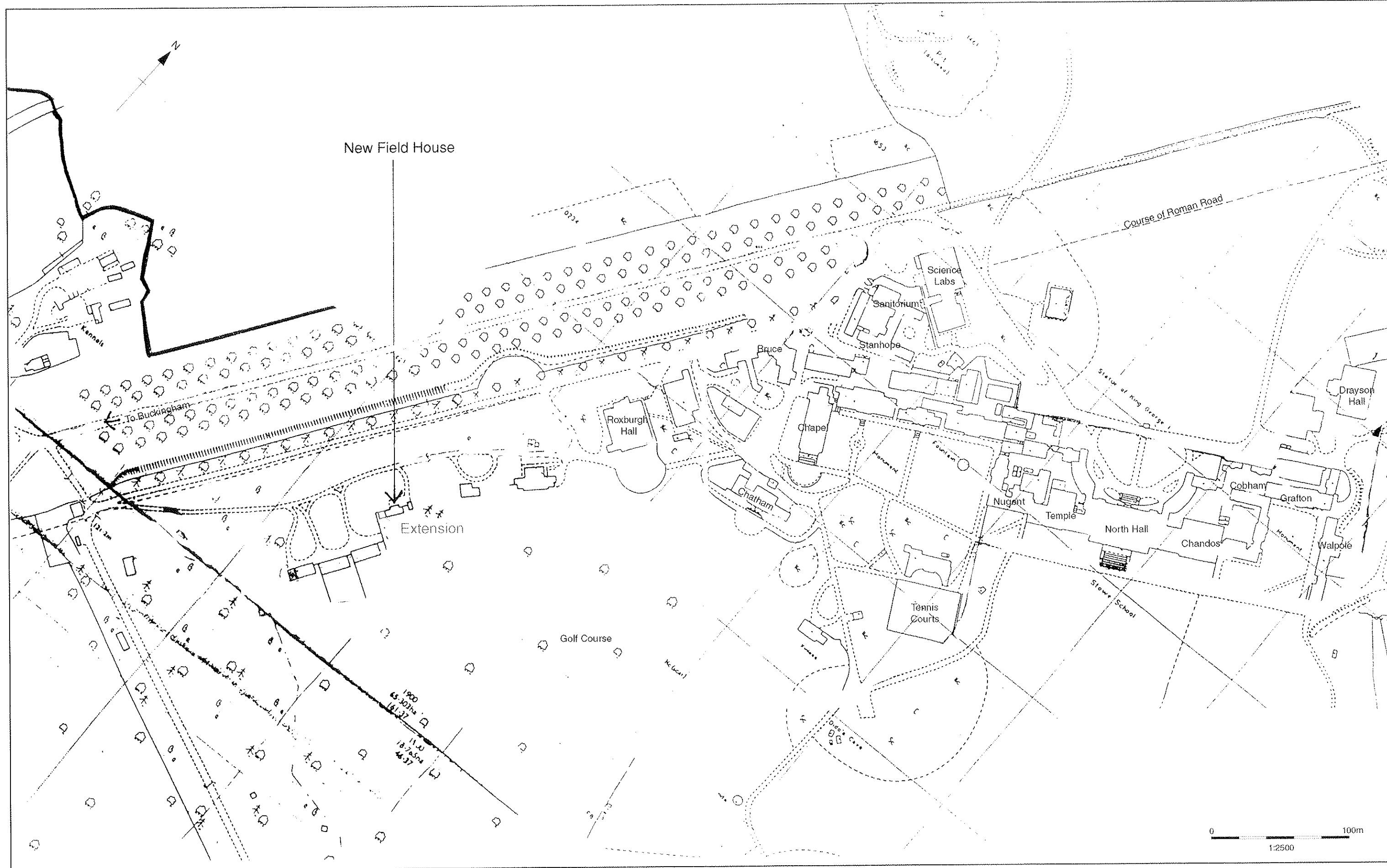


Figure 2: Site Plan of Area of Watching Brief



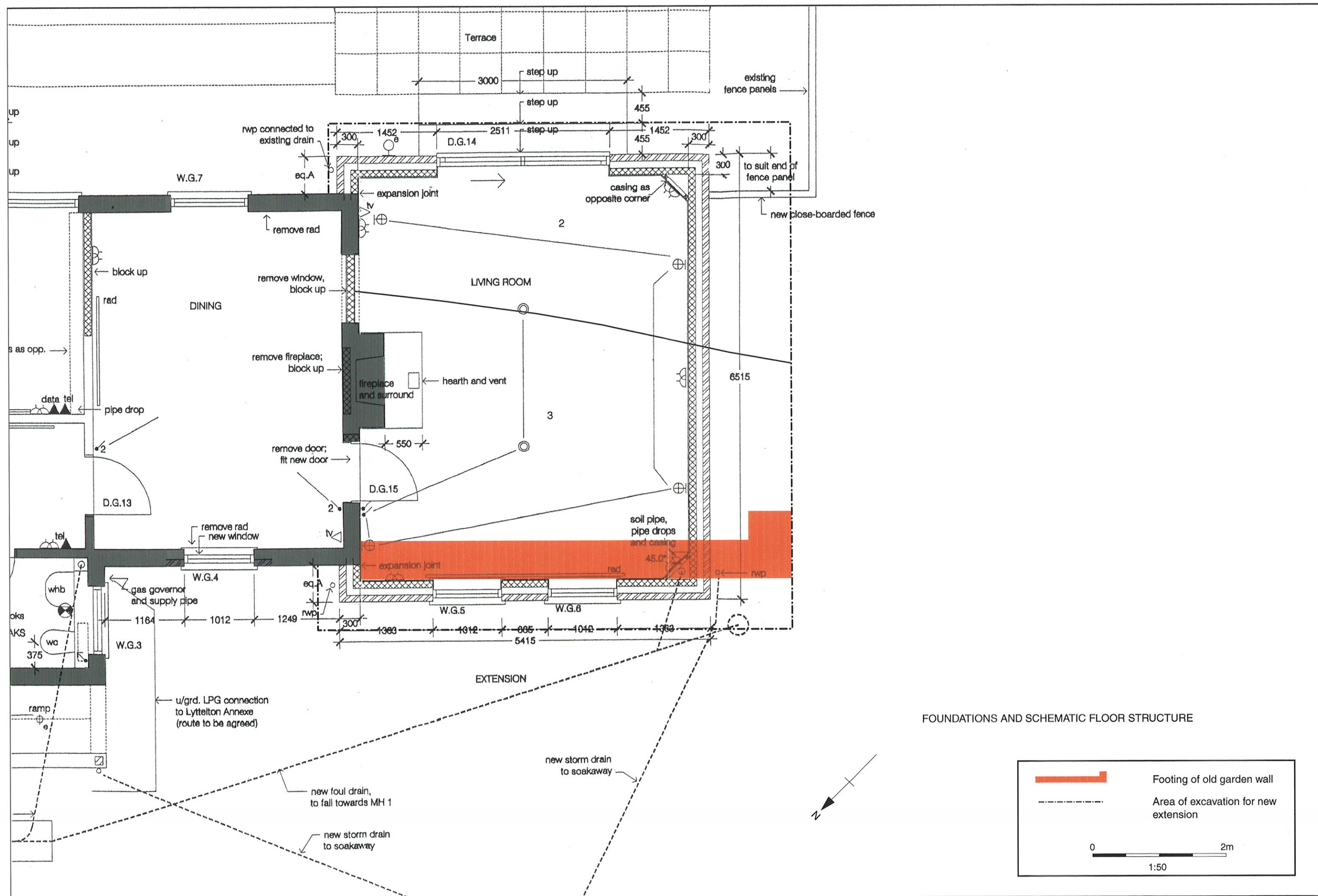


Figure 3: Plan of Area of Watching Brief Showing Contexts 2 and 3



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