

MIDDLE ASTON (OX)

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Thomas & Co.

**FORMER FIRED EARTH SITE
MIDDLE ASTON, OXFORDSHIRE**

NGR SP 4756 2703

ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF REPORT

Planning Application No. 99/00955/OUT

Oxford Archaeological Unit
April 2001

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Prepared by: J Dalton/R Bashford Date: March/April 2001
Checked by: J Hiller Date: 11/4/2001
Approved by: <i>R. Hillier</i> ASSISTANT DIRECTOR Date: <i>17/4/2001</i>

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Summary

In April and May 2000 Oxford Archaeological Unit (OAU) undertook a watching brief at the former Fired Earth site in Middle Aston, Oxfordshire (NGR SP 4756 2703). The site appears to have been covered with an extensive layer of 'demolition' or landscaping rubble, that directly overlay the natural sand. This landscaping, that appears to have also involved the removal of former soil horizons that may have been present, probably took place at the time of the construction of the factory that formerly occupied the site. Nothing of archaeological significance was recorded during the watching brief.

1 Introduction

- 1.1 It is proposed to construct new dwellings with associated garages, parking and services on the former Fired Earth site at Middle Aston, Oxfordshire (NGR SP 4756 2703). The site occupies a central position within the village (Fig. 1) An archaeological watching brief was attached to the development in accordance with the planning consent which was granted under PPG 16, as the development site lies within an area of archaeological potential.
- 1.2 OAU prepared a Written Scheme of Investigation for the project (OAU 2000) in response to the brief prepared by the county archaeologist.

2 Background

- 2.1 The first documentary reference to Middle Aston occurs in the 1086 Domesday Survey. The place-name 'Aston' dates from at least the late Anglo-Saxon period, and means "east tun" or village, and may indicate an origin for the settlement in this earlier period. A plan dating from 1682 depicts structures in the vicinity of Home Farm to the east of the development site, suggesting that the core of the present-day village may date at least to the late medieval period.
- 2.2 The development site lies within the historic core of Middle Aston at approximately 116 m OD. The underlying geology comprises fine-course loamy soils over ironstone. Land use at the time of the watching brief consisted of demolished buildings of the former Fired Earth Company, including a showroom and warehouses.

3 Aims

- 3.1 The aims of the watching brief were to identify any archaeological remains exposed on site during the course of the redevelopment and to record these to established OAU standards (OAU, 1992), in order to secure their preservation by record.

4 Methodology

- 4.1 The watching brief was undertaken by means of separate inspection visits; all digging was undertaken by mechanical excavator.
- 4.2 Within the constraints imposed by health and safety considerations the deposits exposed were cleaned, inspected and recorded in plan, section and by colour slide and monochrome print photography. Written records were also made on proforma sheets.

5 Results

- 5.1 The initial phases of groundwork comprised the demolition of the existing buildings and the removal of concrete slabs covering the site. Thereafter the excavation of the house plot foundations was monitored (Fig. 2)
- 5.2 All foundation trenches within the house plots were excavated to an average depth of 1 m, and were 0.8 m wide. In general the sequence of deposits observed comprised natural sand at the base over the trenches, directly overlain by a thick layer of 'demolition rubble/made ground'.
- 5.3 The demolition rubble varied in depth from a maximum of 0.8 m at the north of the site (Plot 1) to a minimum depth of 0.2 m at the south end of the site (Plot 5). The layer of demolition rubble within the limit of Plot 1 had previously been truncated by both live and redundant service trenches, that were backfilled with a mixture of broken tiles, probably from the factory.

6 Finds

No finds were recovered during the watching brief.

7 Environmental results

No environmental soil samples were taken in the course of the project.

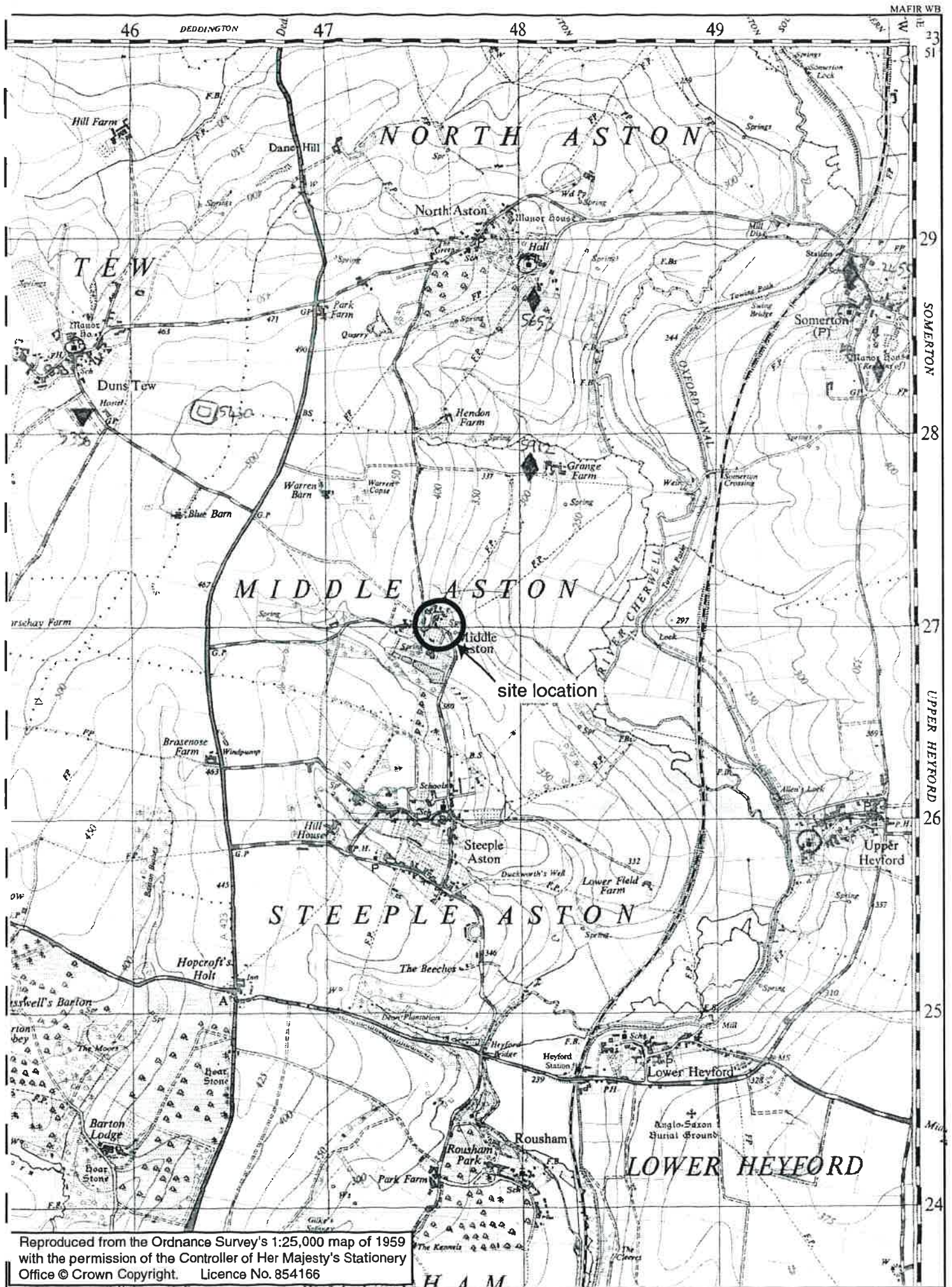
8 Discussion

- 8.1 No archaeological features or deposits were observed during the groundwork. Where the natural sand was exposed, no features were observed.

- 8.2 The deep build up of mixed building materials across the site suggests that the site had been previously landscaped, prior to the construction of the factory here.

Reference

OAU, 1992 Oxford Archaeological Unit Field Manual, (First edition, August 1992).



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Figure 1: Location of site.

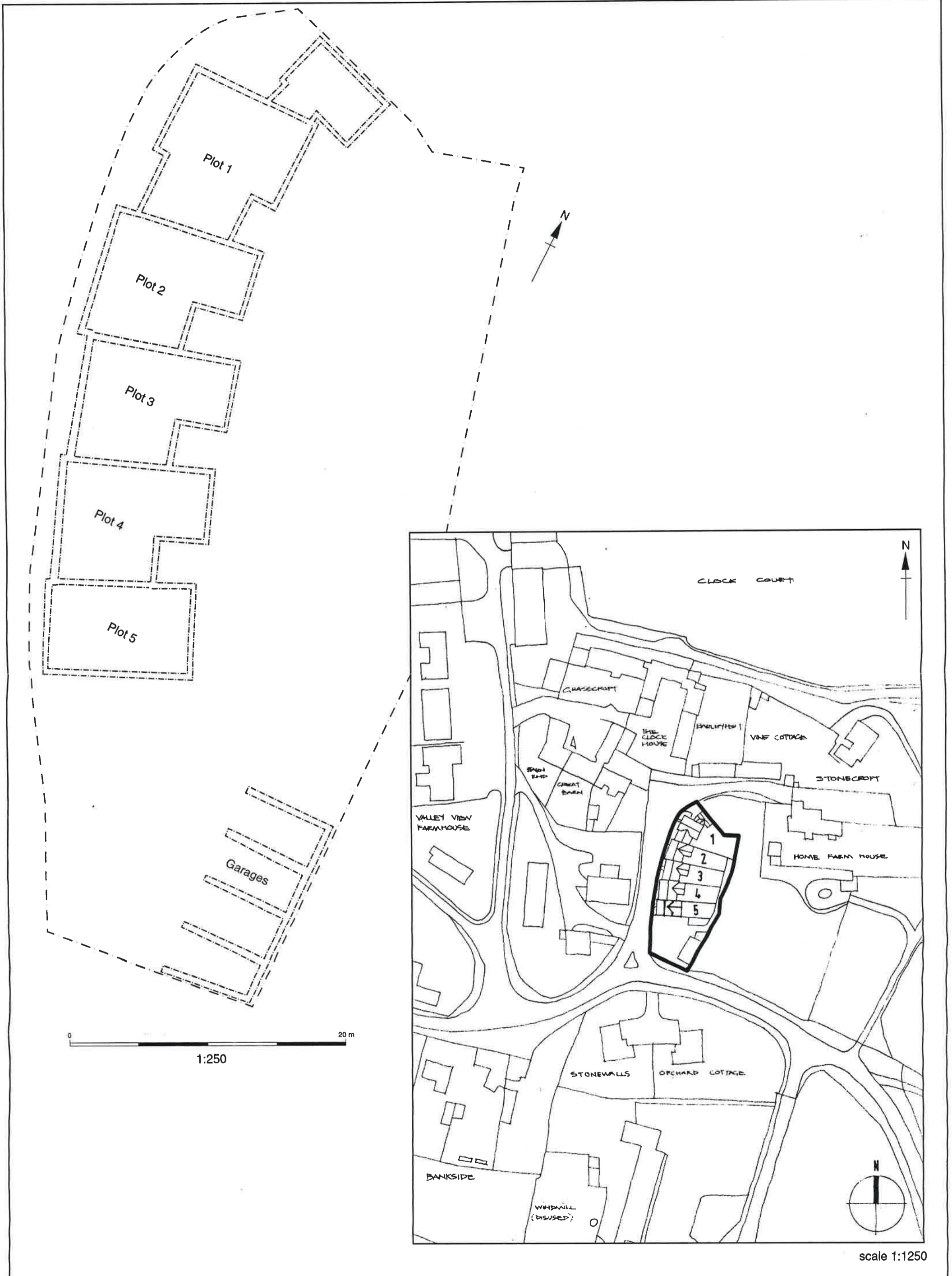


Figure 2: Plan of the site.



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