

Fairclough Homes Ltd.

**Land at Bottrill Street, Nuneaton, Warwickshire
Phase 1 redevelopment**

NGR SP 3560 9210

ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF REPORT

Planning Ref. No. TP 028198

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Date: July 2000

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Bottrill St
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Summary

During May and June 1999, the Oxford Archaeological Unit (OAU) undertook a watching brief at land off Bottrill Road, Nuneaton, Warwickshire (NGR SP3560 -9210). The watching brief was undertaken in the course of contractor's excavations of footings for new buildings on the site of a former factory. The development site lies within the limits of the medieval Fontrevaultine Priory of St. Mary. The excavation of the building plots at the west part of the site did not reveal any features, structures or finds that may have been associated with the medieval buildings. It seems probable that given the homogenous nature of the soils here, the construction of the factory has removed any potential for archaeology of this period. The only structures revealed were brick walls with concrete foundations that date to the factory phase of the site. No significant archaeological features or finds were observed during this phase of the watching brief.

1 Introduction

- 1.1 This development (Planning Reference TP028198) consisted of the construction of 41 new units equipped with garages and/or parking spaces at land off Bottrill Street. The site, which lies within the precinct of a medieval priory, had previously been a factory.
- 1.2 The watching brief was commissioned by Fairclough Homes, and OAU undertook the Phase 1 fieldwork in May and June 1999, during excavation of the foundation trenches for units 1-14. The watching brief was carried out in accordance with a project brief set by and a Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI) agreed with Nuneaton and Bedworth Borough Council.

2 Background

- 2.1 The archaeological background to this watching brief has been the subject of a previous study (Andrews *et al*, 1981, 56-80). The results of this study are summarised below.
- 2.2 The development site (Fig. 1) lies within the limits of the precinct of the Fontrevaultine Priory of St. Mary (Warwickshire SMR No. WA 1655). The priory was founded between 1155 and 1159. The priory and the buried remains of the other religious buildings (WA 6311, WA 6313, WA 6314, WA 6315 & WA 6316) comprise a Scheduled Ancient Monument (National Monument no. 17005/01 & 17005/02).
- 2.3 A number of buildings such as barns, stables and dove-houses are known to have existed within the precinct although their exact location is not known. There are a number of other sites in the immediate area including the site medieval earthworks (WA 6312) and medieval fishponds (WA 6317). Sandstone rubble encountered in one of six geotechnical pits excavated in the vicinity of proposed plots (numbers 11-14) may have been associated with the remains of the Priory buildings, but could likewise be associated with the factory recently extant on the site.

- 2.4 The development area lies on Anker sand and gravels (British Geology Survey, 1994) and comprises an area of approximately 0.75 ha.

3 Aims

- 3.1 The aims of the watching brief were to identify and record the presence/absence, extent, condition, character, quality and date of any archaeological deposits exposed on site during the course of the works. Any archaeological deposits were to be recorded to established OAU procedures in order to secure their preservation by record (OAU 1992).

4 Methodology

- 4.1 A number of site visits were made by an archaeological supervisor to monitor the excavation of footing trenches for new buildings. 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 pro-forma sheets. Soil descriptions were made using standard charts for the approximation of percentage of inclusion types in soil deposits.
- 4.2 Over some of the site the existing ground levels at the time of the construction project were artificially raised and foundation trenches cut down through this made ground. This meant that little of the original ground levels were available for inspection. All of the spoil from the excavated trenches was nonetheless inspected for the presence of artefacts

5 Results

- 5.1 Demolition of extant factory structures and ground clearance was undertaken by the contractors prior to the excavation of the trench footings. The factory buildings had been extensive, occupying over 75% of the site that was later inspected during the watching brief (Fig. 2). The trenches that were excavated for the footings of the new units were generally 0.8 – 1.15 m deep and were 0.7 m wide. Landscaping and other intrusive works were also monitored during site visits. The phase 1 results are presented for building plots 1-14 that were inspected in May and June 1999 (Fig. 3). Except where localised disturbance and variations in soil types was encountered, the foundation trench sections revealed a consistent profile. This was recorded formally in three places across the western part of the site. The sequence of deposits further east was not recorded in detail, owing to the similarity of deposit.

5.2 Plots 1-6 (Fig. 3)

The trench sections observed for Unit Plots 1 – 6 all revealed the following sequence of deposits. At the base of the trenches lay a very compact silty clay loam with 10-15% pebbles (3) that was visible for a depth of 0.4 m. This material was interpreted as the natural subsoil. Above lay a mid-brown/orange silty clay loam with 10-15% pebbles (2) that was 0.3 m thick. The deposit was clean and produced no dating evidence. At the top of the trench sequence lay a

brown silty clay loam with a pinkish hue that contained 10-15% pebbles (1). The material was dry to the touch, indicating a sterile environment, presumably produced by the former overlying factory buildings.

At the south-west corner of plots 4-6 an isolated piece of brick walling (4) was identified. The bricks lay upon an offset concrete foundation (5) that was broken out by the contractors. The wall was clearly modern, and formed part of the previous factory building known on the site. No finds were recovered in association with the structure. Excavation of footings for a double garage at the rear of plots 1-6 revealed a further brick wall (6) associated with the factory phase of the site. The contractors likewise removed this wall.

5.3 Plots 10-12 (Fig. 3)

The trenches for these units revealed a slightly more clayey deposit (7) at the base of the sequence that contained rounded pebbles throughout. This layer was overlain by a pinkish brown silty clay loam mixed with bricks and tile (8), that was up to 0.25 m thick, presumably representing the demolition levels of the former factory building.

5.4 Plots 13 and 14

The excavated deposits were similar to those observed in the previous areas of the site. A stained light brown stony deposit containing 10% pebbles was observed at a depth of 0.4 m. This layer was probably the natural subsoil that had been contaminated. No features or finds were observed during the excavation of these trenches.

6 Finds

- 6.1 No finds were recovered during this phase of watching brief. Modern materials present in the area of plots 13 and 14 clearly belonged with the demolition phase of the factory site, and these artefacts were not retained for further analysis.

7 Discussion

- 7.1 Although the development lies in the vicinity of the Priory of St. Mary, there was no evidence in this phase of watching brief to indicate that any features, deposits or structures associated with the medieval site were present on this site. It is possible that the land at the outskirts of the Priory was never used, or was agricultural at the time of the Priory's use.
- 7.2 The construction of the factory on the site may also have removed the potential for the survival of archaeological features on the site. The homogenous nature of the soils recorded in the area of the plots 1-14 suggests, however, that prefactory soils might survive relatively undisturbed except by the foundations of the factory buildings.

Context information

<i>Context</i>	<i>Type</i>	<i>Depth</i>	<i>Comments</i>
1	Layer	0.12 m	Soil level, sterile
2	Layer	0.3 m	Clay loam and pebbles
3	Layer	0.4 m	Compact clay loam and pebbles, natural subsoil
4	Wall	0.8 m	Brick walling, factory phase
5	Footing	-	Concrete footing for wall 4
6	Wall	0.6 m	Brick wall, factory phase
7	Layer	0.4 m	Clayey layer, similar to 2
8	Layer	0.25 m	Demolition rubble
9	Layer	0.1-0.3 m	General patches of overburden, concrete bases for former buildings etc

References

Andrews, D, Cook, A, Quant, V, Thorn J C, and Veasey, E A 1981 The archaeology and topography of Nuneaton Priory in *Transactions of the Birmingham and Warwickshire Archaeological Society*, 91, 56-80

British Geological Survey 1:50 000 series, England & Wales, Sheet 169, Coventry, Solid and Drift Geology 1994

OAU 1992 Oxford Archaeological Unit Field Manual, (Wilkinson, D, ed, first edition, August 1992).

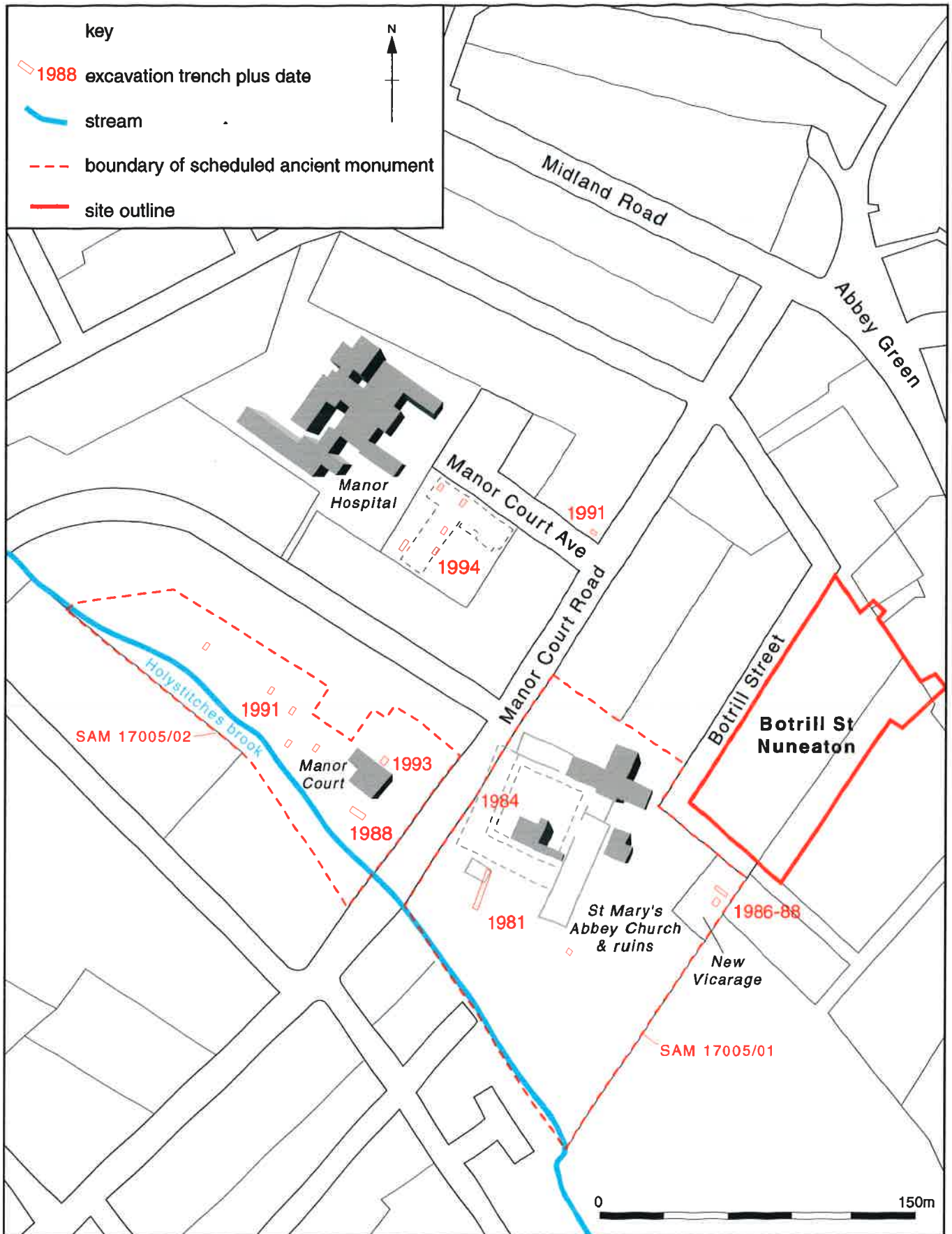


Figure 1: Site location in relation to scheduled ancient monument

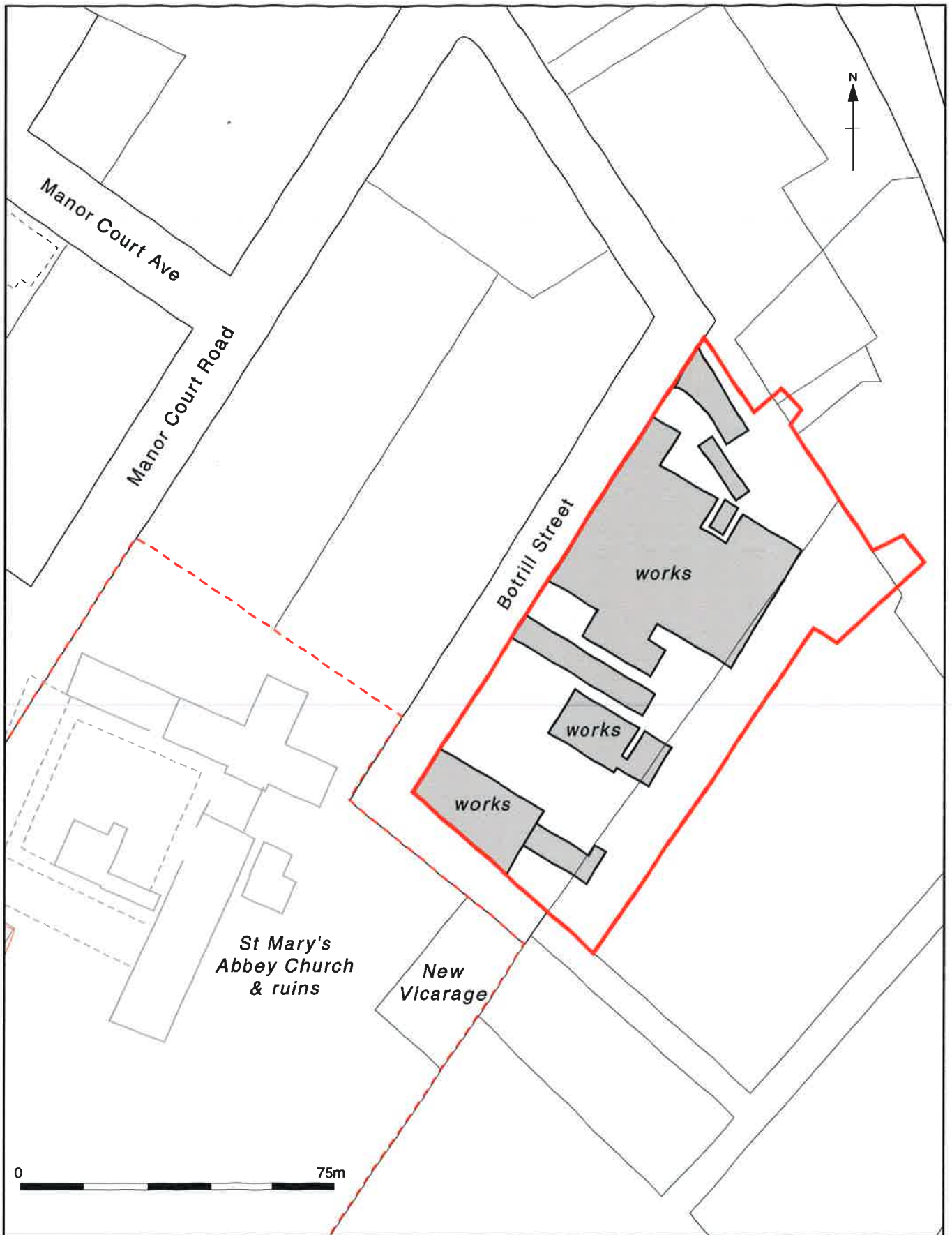


Figure 2: Site location in relation to former factory buildings

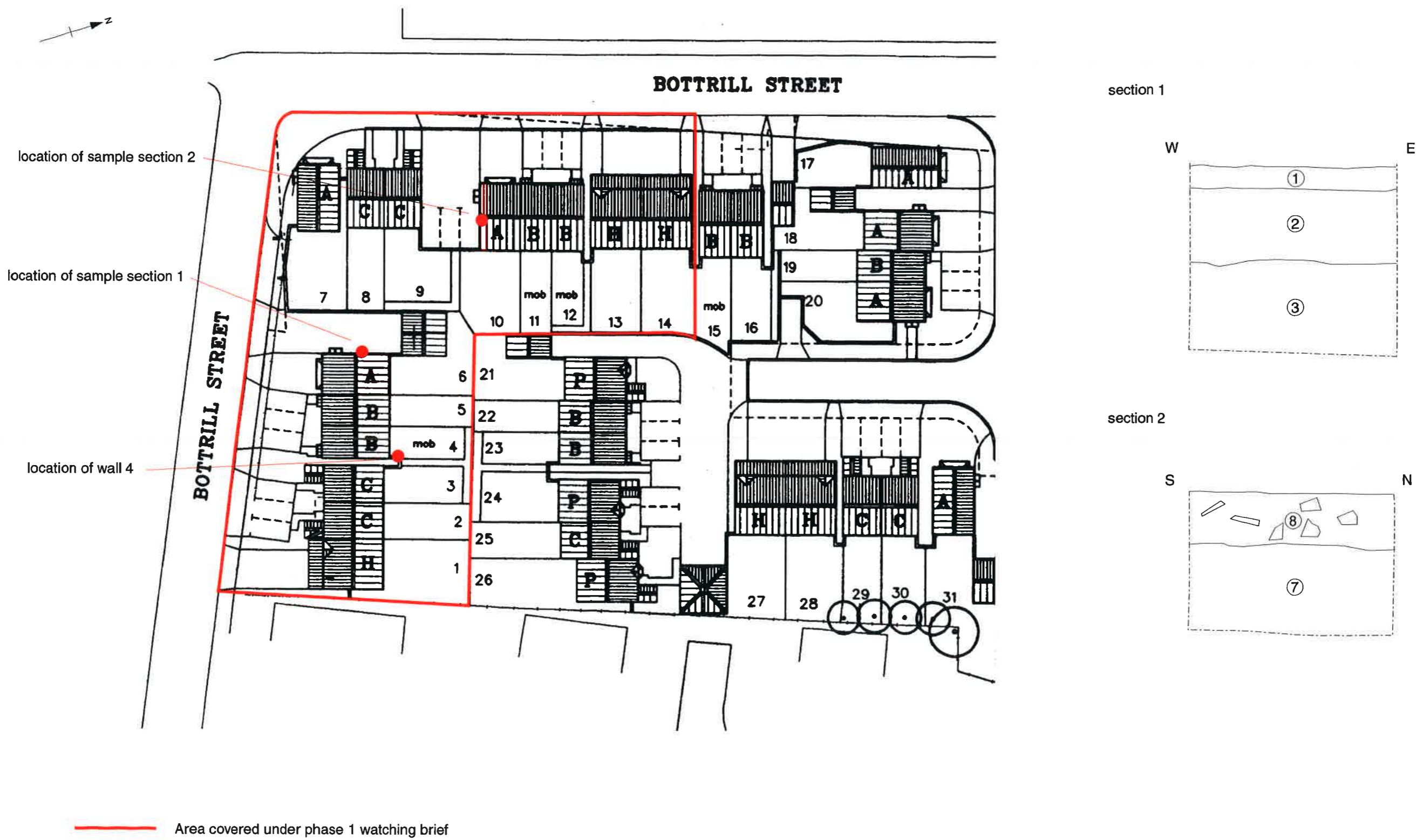


Figure 3: Location of sample trenches and area covered under phase 1 watching brief



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