

**Warren Farm,  
Aldworth, West Berkshire**

**Watching Brief**

**For Chesterman Commercial Holdings Limited**

by Clare Challis

Thames Valley Archaeological Services Ltd

Site Code WFA 04/76b

**June 2005**

## Summary

**Site name:** Warren Farm, Aldworth, West Berkshire

**Grid reference:** SU 5485 8165

**Site activity:** Watching Brief

**Date and duration of project:** 14th January- 1st March 2005

**Project manager:** Steve Ford

**Site code:** WFA 04/76b

**Summary of results:** No archaeological finds or features

**Location and reference of archive:** The archive is presently held at Thames Valley Archaeological Services, Reading and will be deposited with West Berkshire Museum in due course.

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Report edited/checked by: Steve Preston 30/06/05 Jennifer Lowe 08/07/05
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# Warren Farm, Aldworth, West Berkshire An Archaeological Watching Brief

by Clare Challis

**Report 04/76b**

## **Introduction**

This report documents the results of an archaeological watching brief carried out at Warren Farm, Aldworth, West Berkshire (SU 5485 8165) (Fig. 1). The work was commissioned by Mr J. Sprately of Sprately and Woodfield, Overy Farm, Dorchester-on-Thames, Oxfordshire, OX10 7JU on behalf of Chesterman Commercial Holdings Limited

Planning consent (04/00382/FUL & 04/00383/FUL) has been granted for conversion and redevelopment work at the farm to construct a new residence and garages following demolition of the existing building along with conversion of redundant farm buildings. The consent is subject to a condition which requires an archaeological watching brief to take place during groundworks. This is in accordance with the Department of the Environment's Planning Policy Guidance, *Archaeology and Planning* (PPG16 1990), and the Council policies on archaeology.

The fieldwork was carried out to a specification approved by Mr. Duncan Coe of West Berkshire Council. The fieldwork was undertaken by Steve Ford, Pamela Jenkins, Andy Taylor and Jennifer Lowe between 14th January and 1st March 2005 and the site code is WFA 04/76.

The archive is presently held at Thames Valley Archaeological Services, Reading and will be deposited at West Berkshire Museum in due course.

A building record also required as part of the planning consent and has been reported on separately (Challis 2005).

## **Location, topography and geology**

Aldworth is located on the Berkshire Downs to the west of Goring and the Thames Valley. Warren Farm lies on the outskirts of Aldworth to the northwest of the centre of the village. (Figs 1 and 2). The site lies at approximately 183m above Ordnance Datum, on a boundary between upper chalk and clay with flints (BGS 1980).

## **Archaeological Background**

The settlement of Aldworth forms part of the Compton Hundred (referred to as *Nachededorn* or 'Nakedthorne' Hundred in Domesday Book) and has been known as *Alderworthe* and *Aldwicke* signifying the 'old town'. In Domesday Book it is spelt *Elleorde* which is the corruption of two Saxon words meaning 'ancient' and 'worth' which is the term for a place of habitation (Hewett 1844)

Several features of archaeological interest lie within the vicinity of Warren Farm. Lowbury Hill is located approximately 1km to the north-west of the site and comprises a Romano-British enclosure and probable site of a Romano-Celtic temple from the 2nd century AD along with an Anglo-Saxon barrow. There is also evidence for prehistoric activity on the site in the form of late Bronze Age/Early Iron Age pottery (Fulford *et al.* 1995). A field system representing a phase of arable cultivation is located immediately to the east of Warren Farm and has been dated from pottery to the late Iron Age, continuing into the Romano-British period (Richards 1986). At Thurle Down to the east of the site, several earthworks are visible from the air including possible enclosures and platforms. Associated pottery represents both the Bronze Age and Iron Age and a small barrow cemetery lies on the valley floor (Richards 1978). Several tumuli are located within the area, one within approximately 200m of the site.

## **Objectives and Methodology**

The purpose of the watching brief at Warren Farm was to excavate and record any archaeological deposits affected by the new construction work. This involved the examination of areas of topsoil stripping, landscaping and ground reduction and the digging of trenches for foundations and services as necessary. All spoilheaps were monitored for finds.

## **Results**

The areas observed during the watching brief are located on Figure 3.

The exposed sections of an excavated cellar, to a depth of 2m, were observed in the location of the proposed new dwelling. These were excavated through chalk natural. No archaeological features were evident and solution hollows in the chalk were all that was present.

Footings excavated immediately to the south-west of the cellar were observed to a depth of 2m and were approximately 1m in width. Some evidence of disturbance associated with the demolition of the existing dwelling was evident but no archaeological features were present in this area.

Stripping was conducted under archaeological supervision in an area to the south of the proposed new dwelling for the insertion of gas tanks. The topsoil was removed to a depth of 0.20m to expose a thin layer of clay with flint inclusions, no archaeological finds or features were observed.

Footings for the construction of two carports in the centre of the site were observed to a depth 0.70m and were 0.85m wide. Again these cut through the chalk natural and no archaeological finds or features were present.

An area of chalk natural was also observed after the removal of a pigsty however no archaeological features were present.

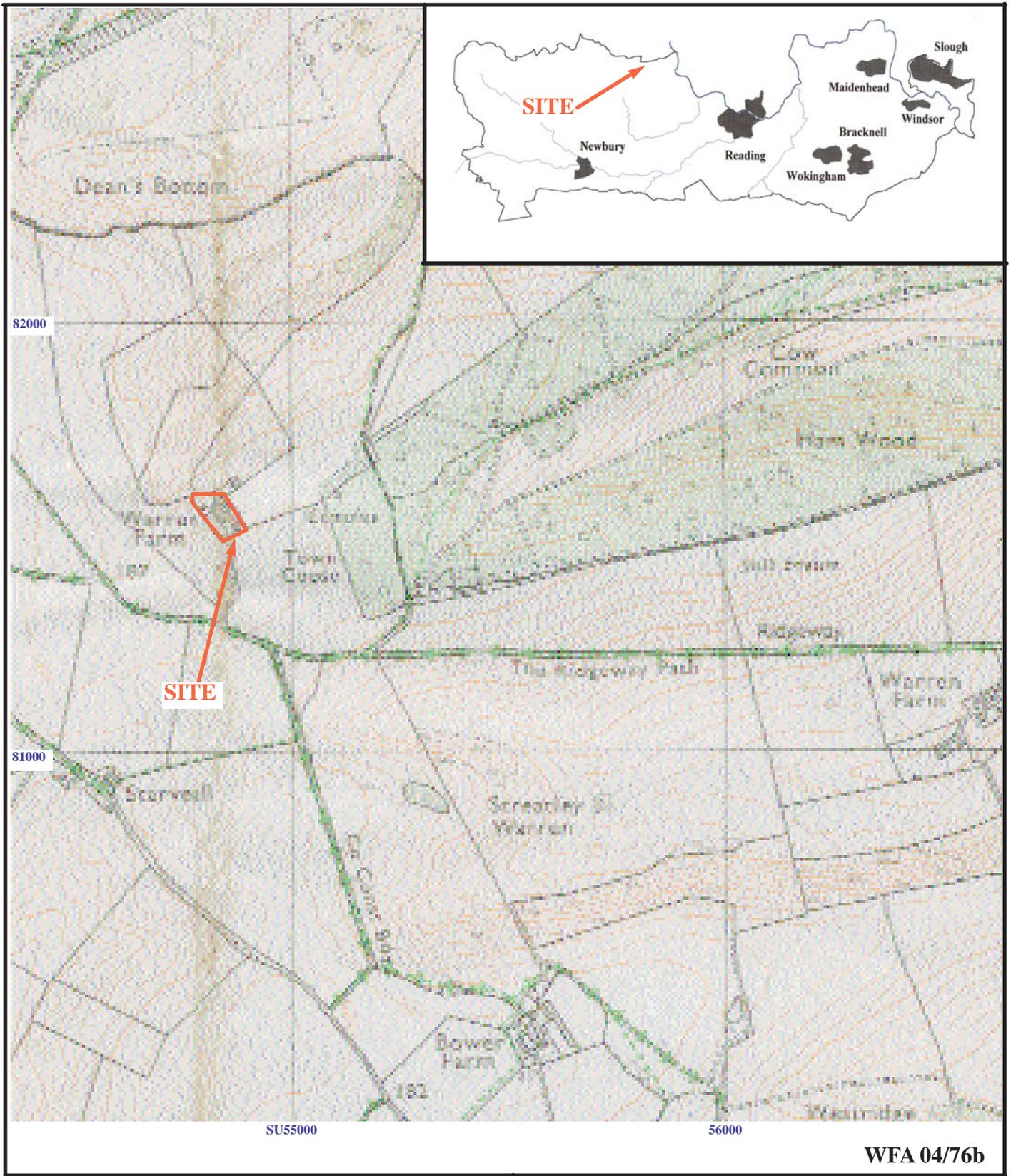
Footings were excavated around the perimeter of Barn A to a depth of 1.60m and around Barn B to a depth of 2m and a width of 0.80m. They cut the chalk and clay natural and no archaeological finds or features were observed in any of the trenches including an additional trench through the centre of Barn A to a depth of 3m.

## **Conclusion**

The watching brief at Warren Farm revealed no archaeological finds or features.

## **References**

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- Hewett, W, Jnr, 1844, *The History and Antiquities of the Hundred of Compton, Berkshire*, John Snare, Reading
- PPG 15, 1994, *Planning and the Historic Environment*, Dept of the Environment Planning Policy Guidance 15, HMSO
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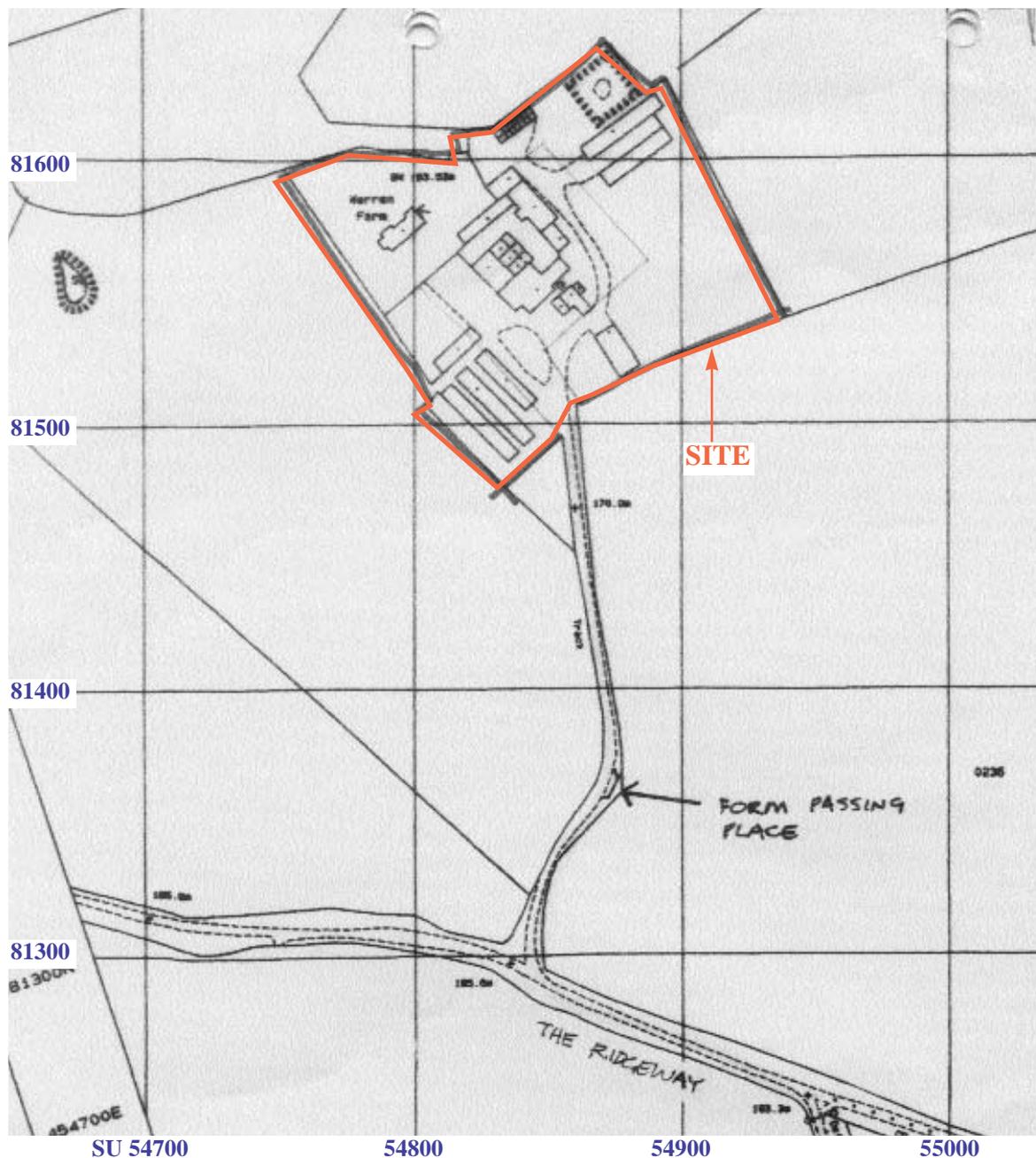
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Figure 1. Location of site within Aldworth and West Berkshire.

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Figure 2. Plan of site.

Scale: 1:2500

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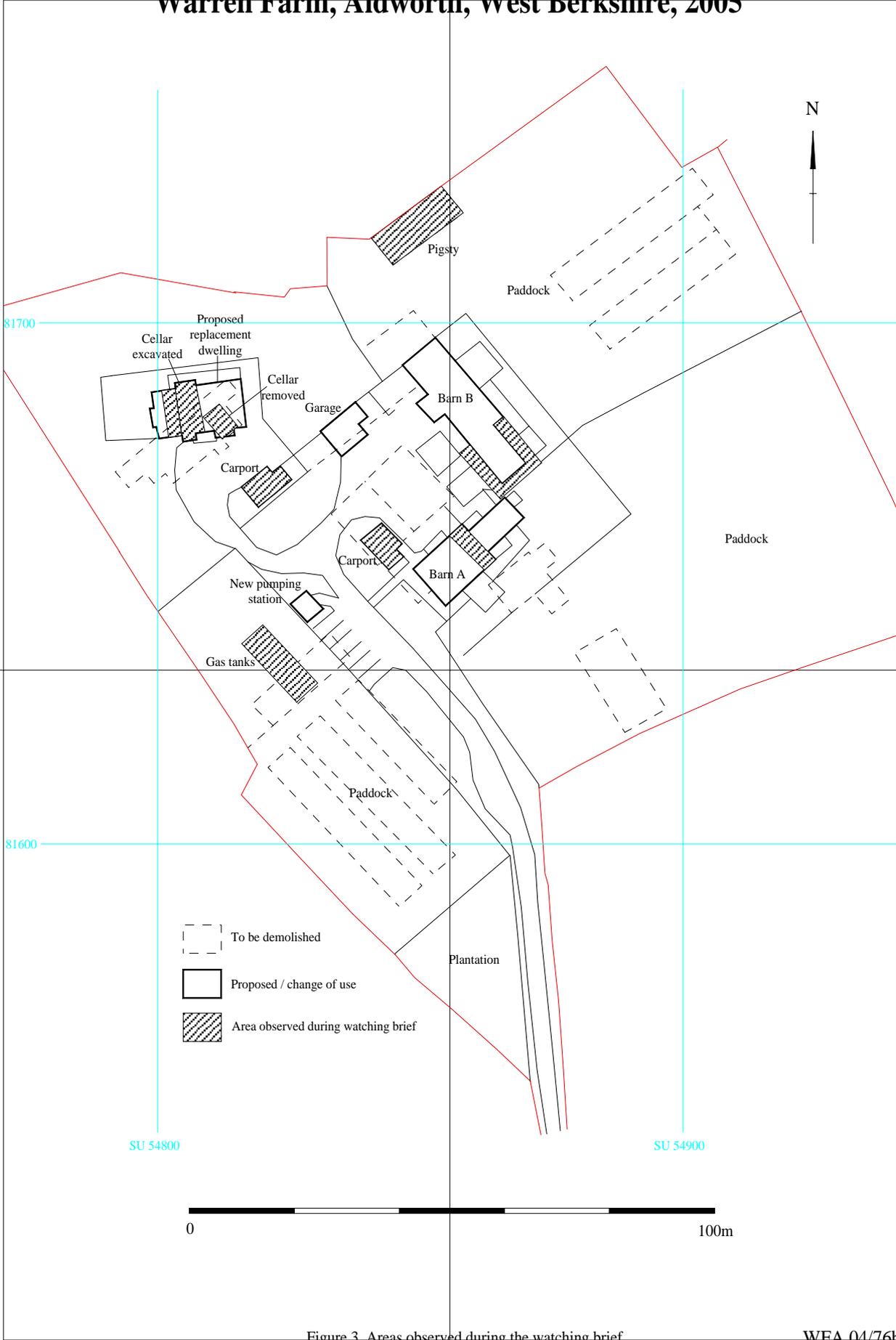


Figure 3. Areas observed during the watching brief