

Land to the west of the Old Thanet Way, Whitstable, Kent

Archaeological Desk-Based Assessment Report

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SUMMARY

This report presents a provisional desk-based assessment constituting rapid archaeological appraisal of land to the west of the Old Thanet Way, Whitstable, Kent (TR 11798 65580, centred; Fig 1). The report was commissioned by Quinn Estates Ltd in July 2016 in view of proposed development of the site.

The Proposed Development Area (PDA) is located within an area of some archaeological potential, and significant archaeological remains may be present.

This report recommends that a programme of archaeological evaluation be carried out within the PDA in advance of any proposed development, in order to full assess the nature, date, depth and likely significance of any surviving archaeological remains, and to inform a suitable scheme of mitigation if necessary.

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1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 This report presents a provisional desk-based assessment constituting rapid archaeological appraisal of land to the west of the Old Thanet Way, Whitstable, Kent (TR11798 65580, centred; Fig 1). The report was commissioned by Quinn Estates Ltd in July 2016 in view of proposed development of the site.
- 1.2 The proposed development entails construction of 28 dwellings, public open space, and associated access, parking, amenity space and landscaping. A programme of hedge and tree planting will shield the new development from the road and from existing properties to the west.
- 1.3 This assessment is a consultation document prepared for the client which may be submitted as part of a planning proposal (supplementing a heritage statement for example). It constitutes a pilot study assessing the potential for further research, either desk-based or in the field. Additional desk-based research and/or fieldwork may be requested by planning authorities or specified as conditions on any planning consent, although any request for further desk-based work should clearly demonstrate the benefits of such an approach as opposed to field evaluation, for example.
- 1.4 The objective of the current research, verbally agreed with the client and in accordance with the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), has been to view readily available existing evidence in order to assess the extent and nature of any heritage assets with archaeological interest within the Proposed Development Area (PDA), and thereby gauge the likelihood of heritage assets of archaeological interest being affected by development within the PDA.
- 1.5 Research has been undertaken to an appropriate level of detail in response to funding limitations which affect the affordable scope and provisional nature of the study, as well as the particular circumstances of the proposed development.

2. POLICY AND RESEARCH FRAMEWORKS

- 2.1 This report has been prepared in accordance with national and local policy regarding heritage assets and with reference to research frameworks.

National policy

- 2.2 The National Planning Policy Framework (DCLG March 2012) sets out a series of core planning principles designed to underpin plan-making and decision-taking within the planning system. In terms of development proposals affecting known heritage assets, the following principle states that planning should:

Conserve heritage assets in a manner appropriate to their significance, so that they can be enjoyed for their contribution to the quality of life of this and future generations.

- 2.3 By definition the historic environment includes all surviving physical remains of past human activity. Heritage assets include extant structures and features, sites, places and landscapes. The European Landscape Convention definition of a historic landscape describes: ‘an area, as perceived by people, whose character is the result of the action

and interaction of natural and/or human factors' (Council of Europe 2000: which came into force in the UK in March 2007; see research frameworks, below). Furthermore the historic landscape encompasses visible, buried or submerged remains, which includes the buried archaeological resource.

2.4 Policy 126 states that:

Local planning authorities should set out in their Local Plan a positive strategy for the conservation and enjoyment of the historic environment, including heritage assets most at risk through neglect, decay or other threats. In doing so, they should recognise that heritage assets are an irreplaceable resource and conserve them in a manner appropriate to their significance. In developing this strategy, local planning authorities should take into account:

- *The desirability of sustaining and enhancing the significance of heritage assets and putting them to viable uses consistent with their conservation;*
- *The wider social, cultural, economic and environmental benefits that conservation of the historic environment can bring;*
- *The desirability of new development making a positive contribution to local character and distinctiveness; and*
- *Opportunities to draw on the contribution made by the historic environment to the character of the place.*

2.5 When determining planning applications, the following policies are especially pertinent:

128. *Local planning authorities should require an applicant to describe the significance of any heritage assets affected, including any contribution made by their setting. The level of detail should be proportionate to the assets' importance and no more than is sufficient to understand the potential impact of the proposal on their significance. As a minimum the relevant historic environment record should have been consulted and the heritage assets assessed using appropriate expertise where necessary. Where a site on which development is proposed includes or has the potential to include heritage assets with archaeological interest, local planning authorities should require developers to submit an appropriate desk-based assessment and, where necessary, a field evaluation.*

129. *Local planning authorities should identify and assess the particular significance of any heritage asset that may be affected by a proposal (including by development affecting the setting of the heritage asset) taking account of the available evidence and any necessary expertise. They should take this assessment into account when considering the impact of a proposal on a heritage asset, to avoid or minimise conflict between the heritage asset's conservation and any aspect of the proposal.*

132. *When considering the impact of a proposed development on the significance of a designated heritage asset, great weight should be given to the asset's conservation. The more important the asset, the greater the weight should be. Significance can be*

harmed or lost through alteration or destruction of the heritage asset or development within its setting. As heritage assets are irreplaceable, any harm or loss should require clear and convincing justification. Substantial harm to or loss of a Grade II listed building, park or garden should be exceptional. Substantial harm to or loss of designated heritage assets of the highest significance, notably scheduled monuments, protected wreck sites, battlefields, grade I and II listed buildings, grade I and II* registered parks and gardens, and World Heritage Sites, should be wholly exceptional.*

139. *Non-designated heritage assets of archaeological interest that are demonstrably of equivalent significance to scheduled monuments, should be considered subject to the policies for designated heritage assets.*

- 2.6 The existence of the latter within a proposed development area can be partially investigated and to an extent predicted via desk-based assessment, but field evaluation and/or archaeological monitoring of groundworks are likely to be a planning requirement and should be expected.

Local policy

- 2.7 Applying the same general principles on a local scale, the most relevant Canterbury District Local Plan (Canterbury City Council 2014, currently under review) policies are HE2–3 (World Heritage Sites); HE4–5 (Listed Buildings); HE6 (Conservation Areas), HE7–9 (infrastructure, changes to shopfronts etc.) HE 11 and 12 (Archaeology); and HE13 (Historic Landscapes, Parks and Gardens).

Research frameworks

- 2.8 The national and local policy outlined above should be considered in light of the non-statutory heritage frameworks that inform them. While the regional South East Research Framework for the historic environment (SERF)¹ is still in preparation, initial outputs are available on-line and have been considered in preparing this report, in order to take current research agendas into account.

3. LOCATION, GEOLOGY AND TOPOGRAPHY

- 3.1 The PDA is situated on the western side of the A2990, the Old Thanet Way. The ground is currently open grassland, the northernmost tip divided from the rest of the site by a north-west to south-east running hedge line. It is bounded to west by existing properties and Whitstable Community College, east by the Old Thanet Way, south by Millstrood Road and some of the properties fronting it, and to the north by open land (Fig 1). The area lies at a height of approximately 30m OD.
- 3.2 Bedrock geology within the PDA is shown as London Clay formation- Clay And Silt with no overlying superficial deposit recorded.²

¹ http://www.kent.gov.uk/leisure_and_culture/heritage/south_east_research_framework.aspx

² <http://mapapps.bgs.ac.uk/geologyofbritain/home.html>

4. DESIGNATIONS

- 4.1 The PDA does not affect or impact on any world Heritage Sites, Scheduled Ancient Monuments, Registered Battlefields, Conservation Areas, or registered Parks and Gardens.
- 4.2 Little Millstrood is a Grade II Listed property dated to the eighteenth century located adjacent to the south-western limit of the PDA (List No. 1336884).

5. ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND HISTORICAL EVIDENCE

- 5.1 A search of the Canterbury Urban Archaeological Database (UAD) as well as the up to date Canterbury Archaeological Trust on-line Gazetteer,³ and a list of reports of archaeological investigations not yet included in the HERs was undertaken at the CAT offices. In addition, the CAT Annual Reports on-line and grey literature report lists and reports have been checked. The UAD and reports search covers a radius of 1km around the PDA (centred on NGR 611798 165580). These records have been assessed in terms of their particular relevance to the PDA and only significant evidence is cited in this report. Further (on-line) historic environment records (KCC Historic Environment Records; National Monuments Records) were also consulted in comparison via the Heritage Gateway.
- 5.2 It has been considered beyond the means of this project to pursue detailed questions requiring an in-depth study of primary documentary and cartographic sources. General historical context for archaeological findings is provided where applicable/significant in terms of results, and a survey of published and unpublished maps (including geology and contour survey) has been undertaken. A full list of maps consulted is provided in the list of sources at the end of the report. Only maps showing significant topographical developments are reproduced here.
- 5.3 No pertinent geophysical surveys were available. Only photographs, images or results showing significant features or topographical developments are reproduced, the findings incorporated with map regression, documentary evidence and archaeological sections of the report as appropriate and fully referenced.
- 5.4 All results of analyses are presented below in synthesis and in order of chronology.

Prehistoric (c 500,000BP – AD 43)

- 5.5 A number of pits and linear features dated to the Neolithic, middle Bronze Age and/or early Iron Age are recorded from a site on Invicta Road c. 165m north-west of the PDA, which was excavated in 2008 (TR 16 NW 208).
- 5.6 Unlike the chalklands located to the south-east, heavy clay geology within the study area does not lend itself to the formation of cropmarks, which, when visible from the air, can often give good indication about the presence of potential archaeological features. An aerial photograph of the PDA from the 1940s (Plate 1) does however show a clear ring-shaped marking towards the central area of the site. This is still visible in the 1960 aerial view (Plate 2), with potentially further markings located at the southern

³ <http://www.iadb.co.uk/i3/item.php?ID=CAT:GAZ>

end of the PDA. This is not the only marking of this type in the area: a ring ditch cropmark visible on a 2013 aerial image on Google Earth is recorded by the HER *c.* 980m south-east of the PDA (TR 16 SW 146). This has been measured at 36m in diameter, with a possible secondary ditch measuring 15m at its centre. Unlike the potential feature within the PDA, the one identified from the 2013 view is not at all apparent in any of the earlier or later photographs. The crop mark within the site has not been recorded by the HER, although this is perhaps because it is not visible in the 2013 image due to ground cover within the PDA at that time.

- 5.7 It is possible that the origin of these markings lies in the Prehistoric period. Round barrows first began being used in the late Neolithic, although the most common date for these features is early Bronze Age. Round barrows have for a long time been identified as individual burial monuments, often clustered together in 'barrow cemeteries', although the complexity of their role and function has only recently begun to be studied (Champion 2007, 84). Potential circular crop markings were investigated in the wider vicinity during archaeological investigations prior to the extension of the new Thanet Way in 1990, although no barrow features were identified (Jon Rady pers comm. 2016). The location of two confirmed barrows is however recorded *c.* 1.8km to the south-east of the PDA at Clowes Wood (TR 16 SW 8).
- 5.8 Contractors at Doggerell Acre *c.* 200m west of the PDA encountered human remains during groundworks in 2013. Initially Kent Police were contacted, as the burial was thought to be potentially of recent date; subsequent forensic investigation however identified the remains as archaeological in nature (Cropper 2013, 3). No datable finds were recovered, nor samples of bone removed for dating. The remains were only partially uncovered, but appeared to be those of a child or young person. The skull was encountered at a depth of *c.* 1.2m below the existing ground surface, within an undisturbed looking clay deposit. The body lay on its back along a north-west to south-east alignment, with the one arm which was exposed flexed (Cropper 2013, 2). The head is recorded by the report as being at the west (possibly more accurately north-west as this is the orientation recorded) and noted in brackets that this is Christian practice (Cropper 2013, 3), however the depth and location of this burial (well outside of any recorded Christian burial grounds) indicates an earlier and most likely prehistoric date for this grave.
- 5.9 Although proven evidence for activity of Bronze Age date in the close vicinity is scant, that for the Iron Age period is more plentiful. Evaluation and excavation at Whitstable Community Centre *c.* 100m west of the PDA in 2004 identified three pits and a fragment of a linear feature dating to the middle Iron Age. All yielded sparse pottery of middle Iron Age date, the pits also containing fired clay and the linear feature or ditch a fragment of burnt flint (O'Brien 2005, 5).
- 5.10 Features containing material of late Iron Age/ Romano-British date were also recorded at the community centre site. These comprised of an 'L' shaped feature with rounded terminals, two oval and two circular pits, each containing Roman pottery alongside the late Iron Age finds (O'Brien 2005, 5-6). The Iron Age evidence from this site strongly suggests settlement activity of this date somewhere nearby.
- 5.11 Features at the Whitstable Community Centre site were encountered at a depth of between *c.* 29.35m OD and *c.* 29.90m OD (O'Brien 2005, Fig 4- not reproduced here)

Romano-British (c AD 43 – 450)

- 5.12 At the Whitstable Community Centre site, Iron Age activity appears to have continued into and throughout the Romano-British period. Included within the late Iron Age/Romano-British phasing, but described as Romano-British in the report were a series of co-axial boundary ditches, angled on an east-west and north-south alignment and located towards the north-western area of the site (O'Brien 2005, 5). The earlier ditches were cut by a large north-east to south-west aligned linear (O'Brien 2005, 6). Ceramic building material and pottery again suggest occupation close by. Activity spanning the Iron Age into the Romano-British period is also known from the wider vicinity, for example at Chestfield, all information adding to the bigger picture of the local landscape at that time.
- 5.13 The remains of a Romano-British building were identified on land c 640m south-east of the PDA in 1962 (TR 16 SW 5). The structure, recorded as a 'cellar' was discovered during the levelling of a disused railway cutting and measured c 2.5m wide. It had been constructed from broken tile, and had a clay floor, upon which lay remnants of fallen painted plaster. No further evidence of buildings in the vicinity has subsequently been noted during ploughing, and this may have been an isolated structure, however, this seems unlikely. Pottery recovered indicated that the building dated to the late first or early second century AD.

Anglo-Saxon (c 450 –1066)

- 5.14 During the Anglo-Saxon period the land that Whitstable now occupies comprised mainly of poorly drained salt marshes prone to flooding, and so was not a suitable area for occupation. Settlement did develop on higher ground located towards the present Church Street, c.550m north of the PDA, but this was only a small community, with its economy based around fishing and salt making (KCC undated, 3). Some re-used architectural elements of possible Anglo-Saxon date have been found within the medieval church fabric (KCC undated, 4), but no archaeological remains dating to this period are recorded by the HER in the vicinity, although an undated burial identified in 1960 (TR 16 NW 9) located close to the existing church could potentially relate to the early church and settlement.

Medieval (c 1066 – 1540)

- 5.15 Medieval Whitstable developed a distance away to the west of the original Anglo-Saxon settlement. A sea wall constructed by 1290 and land drainage allowed settlement to begin taking place in a small area where it was not possible before (KCC undated, 3).
- 5.16 Study of the later cartographic evidence suggests a dispersed settlement pattern of farms in the vicinity of the PDA, some potentially with their origin in the medieval period. In the wider area, evidence for the assarting of woodland can be seen, raising the possibility woodland once extended closer to or even within the area now occupied by the PDA. This is thought unlikely however, as place name evidence seems to suggest that the northern boundary of Blean Forest has not in fact changed much since the medieval period (Parfitt *et al* 2016, 37). Deeds also exist dated 1354 and 1491 to a 'Strood' in this area, potentially an antecedent to Millstrood Farm (Richard Cross *pers comm.* 2016).

Post-medieval (c 1540 – 1900)

- 5.17 The existing sea wall remained the only method of sea defence in Whitstable until the late sixteenth century, and so it is unlikely that settlement in the existing town area could have expanded greatly before that date (KCC undated, 3). Set back a little distance from the coast, the PDA sits within a landscape of post-medieval farmsteads, the most notable being Millstrood Farm (MKE 86189) c. 220m south-west of the PDA, and Rayham Farm (MKE 86194) c. 600m to the east. The development of farms away from villages is well known in Kent for this period and follows improvements made in agricultural practices during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries (Barber 2013, 5). There is also evidence for post-medieval clay quarrying in the area, for example at Rayham Farm c 665m east of the PDA (TR 16 NW 90).
- 5.18 The site of the Post-medieval building Frog Hall is shown on a map by Andrews, Dury and Herbert dated 1769 (Fig 2). This was located c. 185m west of the PDA, and was demolished at some point in the early nineteenth century (TR 16 NW 207). This map also shows that South Street, Millstrood Road had been established by this date, as had the arcing section of road which forms the eastern boundary of the PDA- now part of the A2990, the Old Thanet Way. It is also clear from this map and the Mudge map dated 1801 (Fig 3) that the field boundary pattern respect the line of South Street.
- 5.19 The Ordnance Survey map for 1876 (Fig 4) is far more detailed and shows the by then established railway line located to the east of the PDA. It also shows the sub-rectangular pond which still exists just beyond the north-western boundary of the site. The PDA itself is shown as open fields with one boundary crossing north-west to south-east across the site, and another, slightly irregular boundary or hedge line with trees running north-east to south-west across the site, running behind the eighteenth century Listed property of Little Millstrood (TR 16 NW 1197). By 1898 (Fig 5) the irregular boundary or hedge line has gone, and detail shows more development taking place on land further to the west of the PDA by that date.

Modern (c 1900 – 2000)

- 5.20 The 1908 Ordnance Survey map (Fig 6) shows that no change had taken place within the PDA since the turn of the century. By the time the 1935 Ordnance Survey map had been produced (Fig 7), Invicta Road and its properties had been established, as had Clifford Road to the west, with its associated property boundaries abutting the boundary line of what is now the wester limit of the PDA.
- 5.21 By 1946 the Ordnance Survey map (Fig 8) shows that there had still been no change within the PDA itself, the north-west to south-east running boundary still present, as indeed it is today, preserved in the existing hedgerow boundary. The existing hedgerow line and the modern rail route are shown clearly on an aerial image of the PDA, taken in 2013 (Plate 3 Google earth image).

6. INTERIM IMPACT ASSESSMENT

Existing impacts

- 6.1 Very little in the way of previous or existing impacts within the PDA, apart from field boundaries and likely a continuation of post-medieval land drainage, are evident from the sources studied. The potential for below ground archaeological remains to survive intact is therefore considered at least moderate.

Archaeological assessment

- 7.1 Evidence from aerial photography, and from the identification of a potential prehistoric burial not far from the PDA indicate that there is potential for prehistoric funerary remains of Neolithic to early Bronze Age date to be present within the PDA. Should archaeological remains of this date be encountered, they would be of regional research significance.
- 7.2 The 2004 excavation at Whitstable Community Centre revealed evidence for activity dating from the mid Iron Age through to late Romano-British period to be present on the site. The potential for further features spanning these dates to be present within the PDA is considered moderate to high, with the possibility that any such archaeological remains encountered be of regional research significance.
- 7.3 Little in the way of archaeological evidence for Anglo-Saxon activity in the vicinity of the PDA has been recorded, and aside from historical evidence for a small settlement located c. 550m to the north of the site, centred around an early church, very little is known from the area for this period. The potential for archaeological remains of Anglo-Saxon date to be present within the PDA is therefore considered to be low, although should they be encountered they are likely to be considered of at least regional research significance given their rarity.
- 7.4 The potential for archaeological remains of medieval date to be present within the PDA is to be considered low, the most likely features to be present relating to agricultural use and land drainage. Features of this date, if encountered, can be of regional research significance, being of interest in unravelling the development of the area in the medieval period, as little evidence is currently known.
- 7.5 Similarly, any surviving post-medieval remains will likely relate to agricultural use and land drainage. The existing hedgerow boundary within the PDA (the position of which is to be moved within the proposed scheme of works) has existed since at least the late nineteenth century, if not before. Further archaeological features of post-medieval date if encountered are potentially of local research significance

Potential impacts

- 7.6 There is a considerable potential for any surviving archaeological remains within the PDA to be negatively affected by the proposed development, which involves groundworks and remodelling of the site including the construction of new housing units and associated facilities.

Mitigation recommended

- 7.7 A programme of archaeological evaluation should be carried out in advance of any building work, in liaison with the Local Authority Archaeologist, so as to establish the presence or absence of buried archaeological remains. If such remains are discovered and are assessed to be at risk from the proposed development, further mitigation appropriate to the established significance of those remains may be required, in the form of an archaeological excavation or preservation in situ. If excavated, archaeological remains will be 'preserved by record' and the information generated made public, again via means appropriated to their significance.
- 7.8 All archaeological work should be carried out in accordance with written schemes of investigations and in consultation with the Canterbury City Council Archaeological Officer. Archaeological assessment and mitigation may be expected as part of the process of a planning application to redevelop the PDA with the details comprising reports through to final publication as appropriate, subject to submission and approval to satisfy the discharge of conditions attached to planning consents.

7. CONCLUSION

- 8.1 The PDA is located within an area of archaeological potential, with a continuation of the Iron Age and Romano-British activity identified at Whitstable Community Centre in 2004 most likely to be present. In addition, earlier archaeological remains might be present, based on evidence from aerial survey of the area and the record of a potential prehistoric burial *c.* 200m from the site.
- 8.2 It is recommended that a programme of archaeological evaluation be carried out within the PDA, in advance of any proposed development in order to full assess the nature, date, depth and likely significance of any surviving archaeological remains, and to inform a suitable scheme of mitigation if necessary.

SOURCES

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MAPS AND VIEWS CONSULTED:

Andrews, Dury and Herbert 1769

Mudge 1801

Ordnance Survey 1876

Ordnance Survey 1898

Ordnance Survey 1908

Ordnance Survey 1935

Ordnance Survey 1946

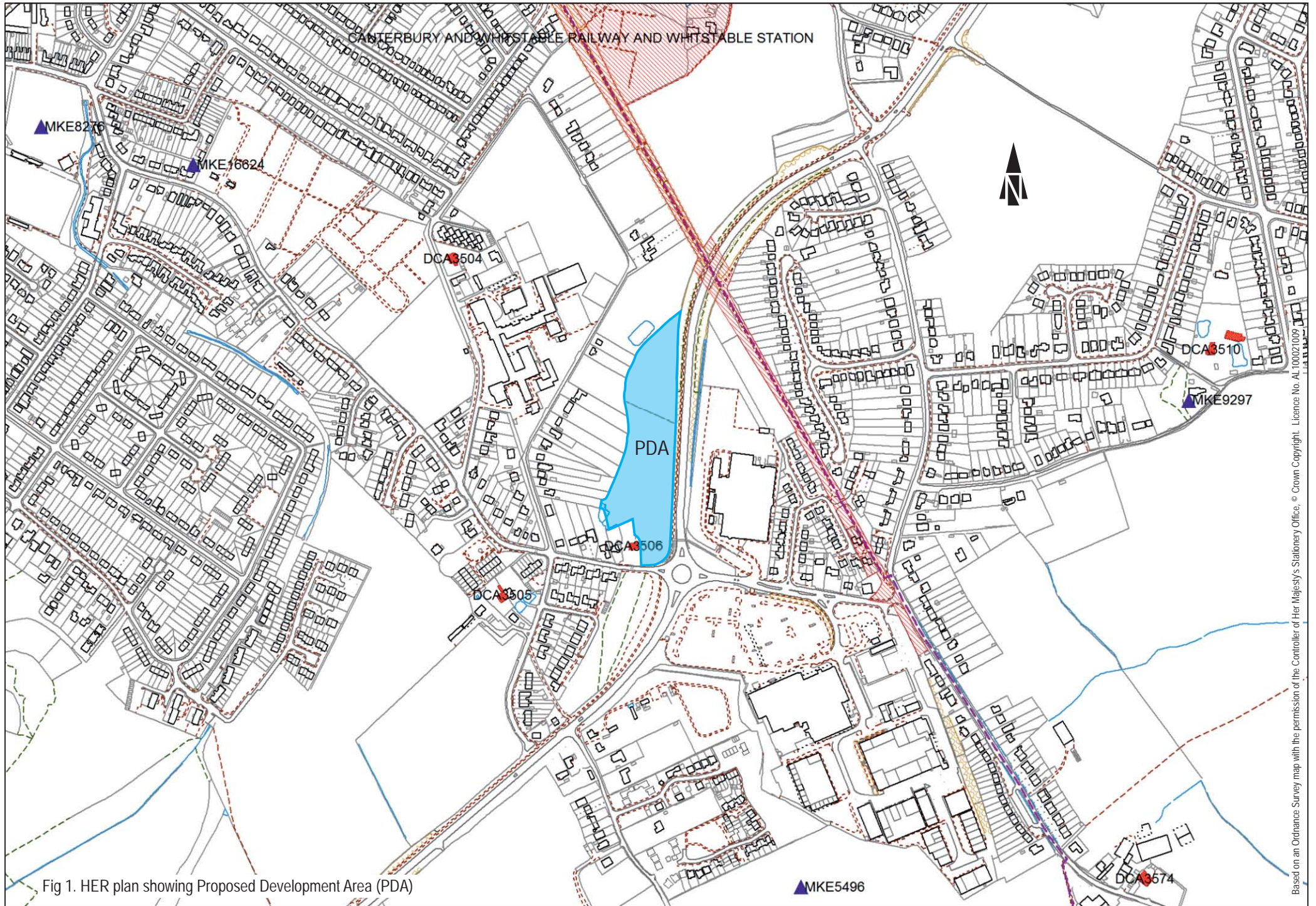


Fig 1. HER plan showing Proposed Development Area (PDA)



Fig 2. Detail from Andrews, Dury & Herbert's map of 1769



Fig 3. Detail from William Mudge's map of 1801



Fig 4. Detail from an Ordnance Survey map of 1876

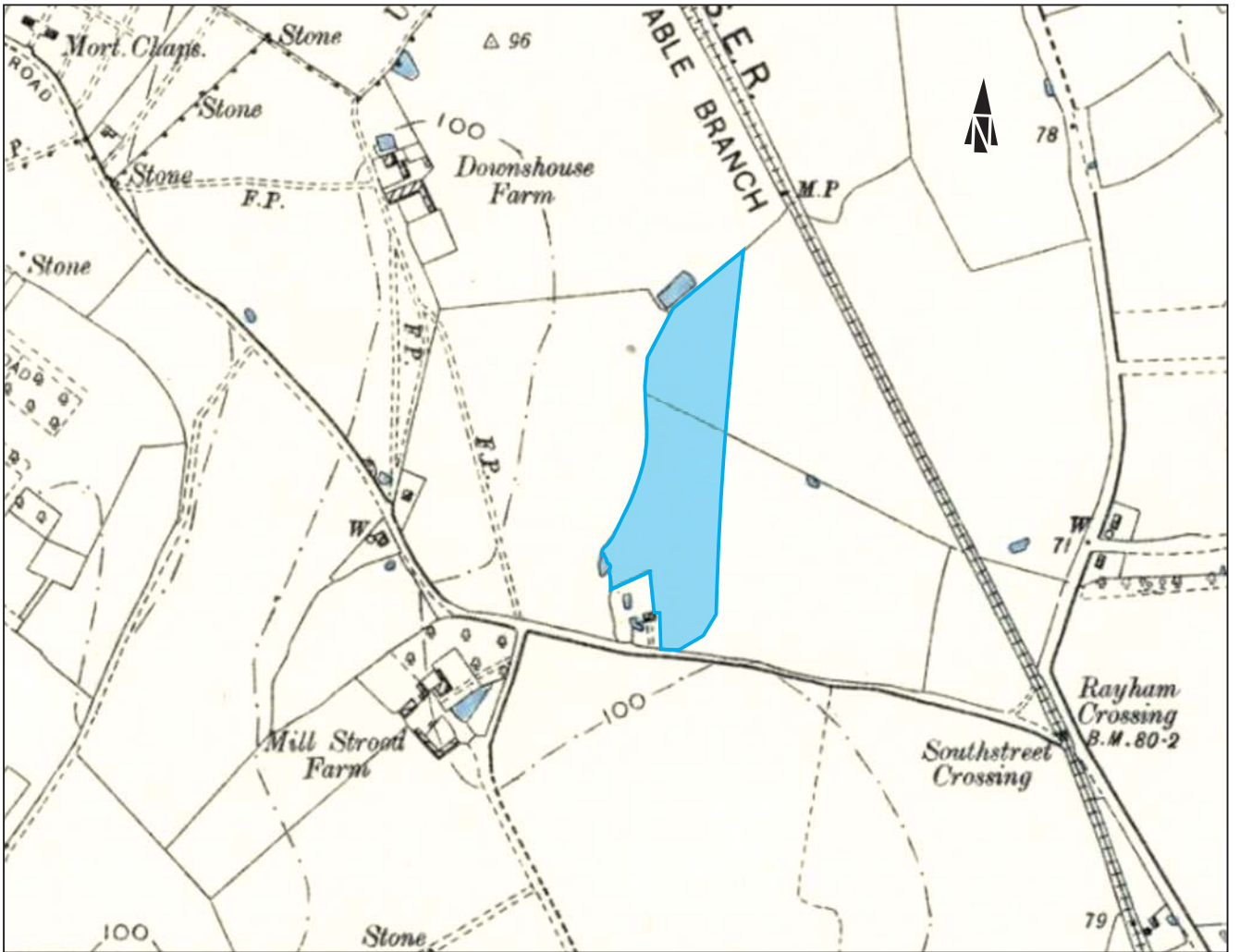


Fig 5. Detail from an Ordnance Survey map of 1898

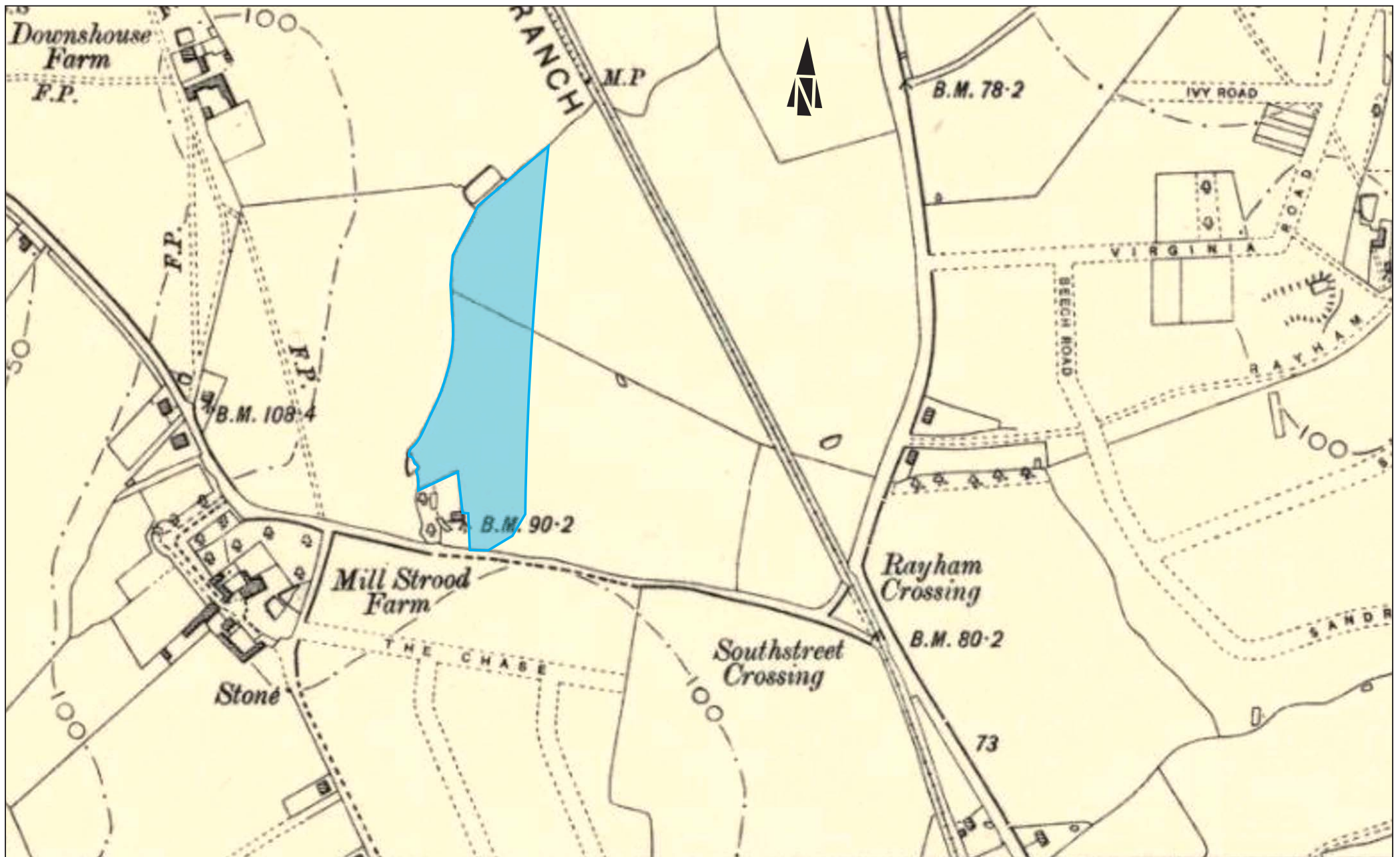


Fig 6. Detail from an Ordnance Survey map of 1908

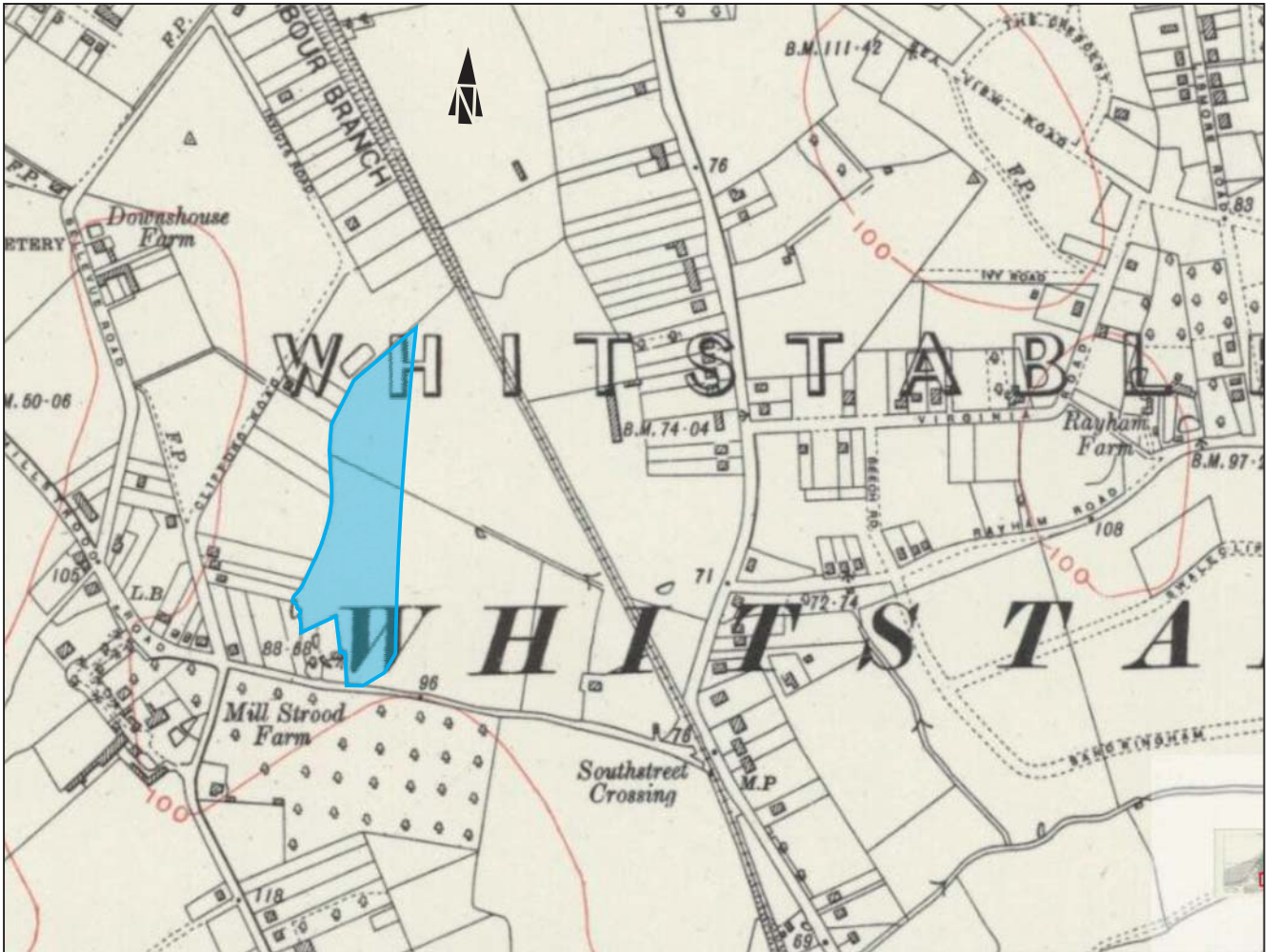


Fig 7. Detail from an Ordnance Survey map of 1935

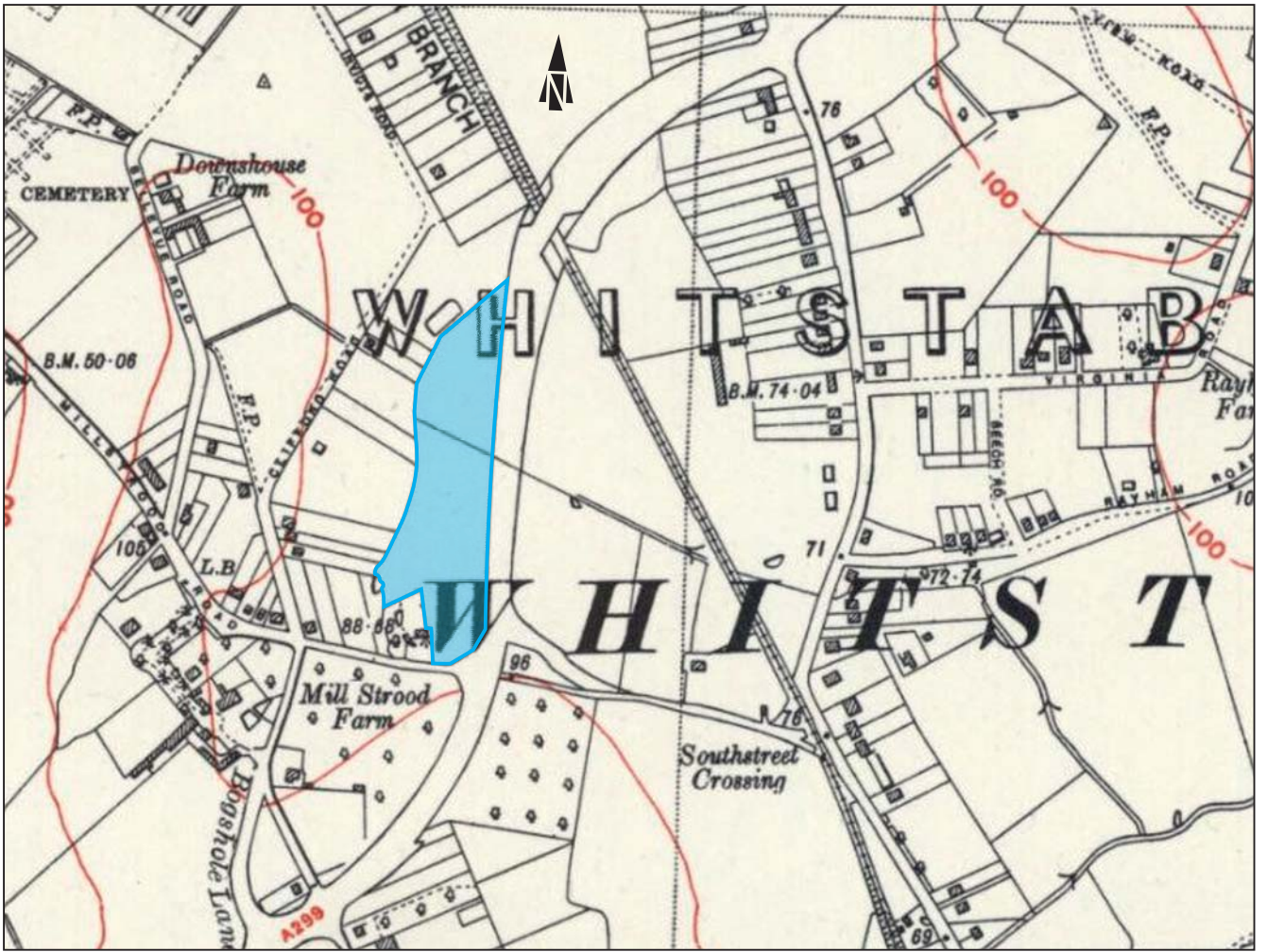


Fig 8. Detail from an Ordnance Survey map of 1946



Plate 1. Aerial photograph from 1940 (Google Maps)



Plate 2. Aerial photograph from 1960 (Google Maps)

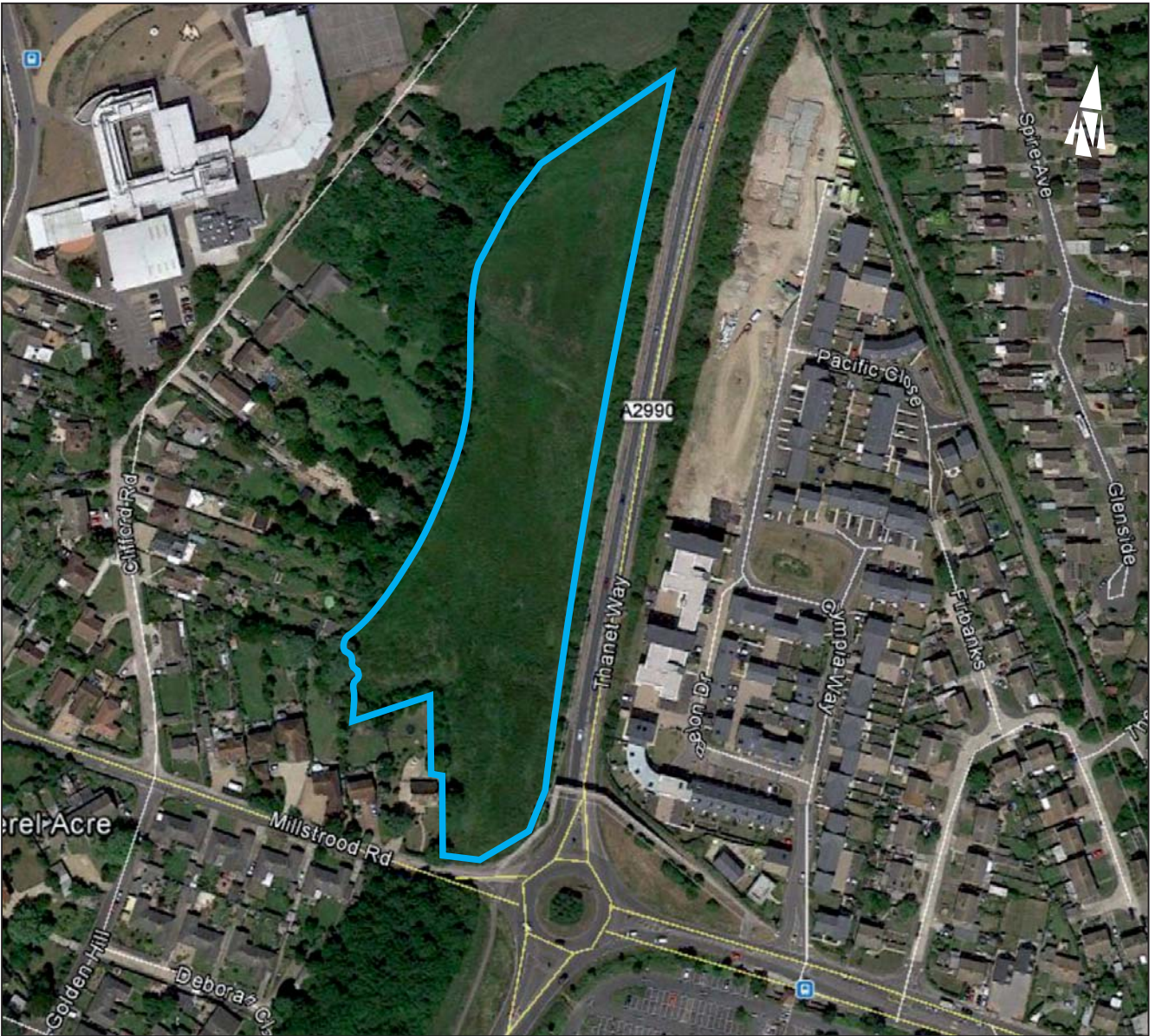


Plate 3. Aerial photograph from 2013 (Google Maps)