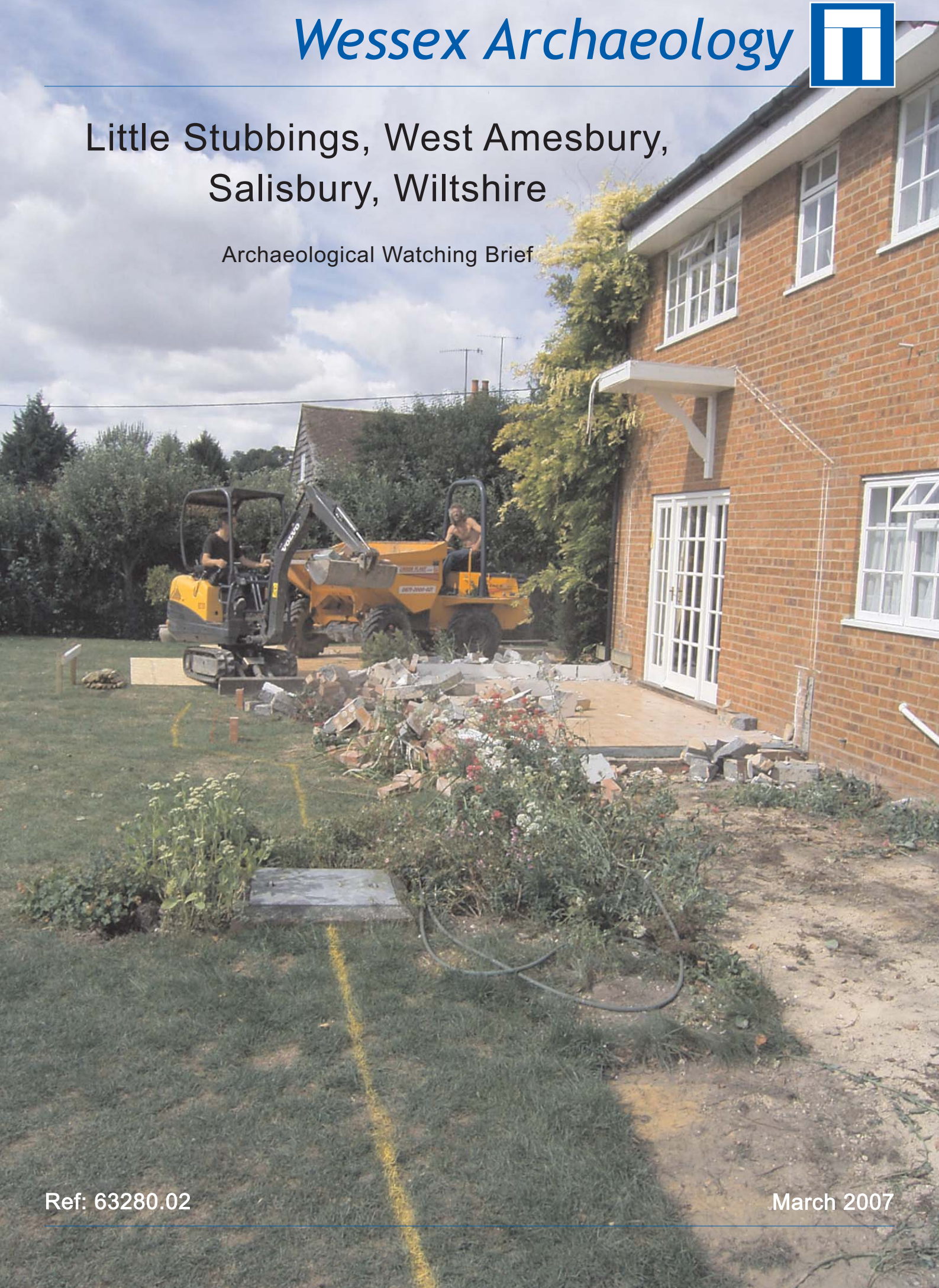




Little Stubbings, West Amesbury, Salisbury, Wiltshire

Archaeological Watching Brief



**LITTLE STUBBINGS, WEST AMESBURY,
NR SALISBURY, WILTSHIRE**

ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF

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LITTLE STUBBINGS, WEST AMESBURY, NR SALISBURY, WILTSHIRE

ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF

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Plate 4: Small soakaway, looking south-west

Summary

Wessex Archaeology was commissioned by Mr P W K Moss ('the Developer') to carry out an archaeological watching brief during groundwork for extensions to the dwelling known as Little Stubbings. The house is located in West Amesbury, near Salisbury, Wiltshire. The Site is centred on Ordnance Survey NGR 414180 141525, and hereafter referred to as 'the Site'.

Planning permission has been granted by the local planning authority, Salisbury District Council. Archaeological conditions were applied to the Planning Consent (S/2005/2409) by the Local Authority on the advice of the Stonehenge Curatorial Unit, English Heritage, required that an archaeological watching brief be carried out during groundwork for the development, based on the advice of Ms A Chadburn, Inspector of Monuments. The Watching Brief was conducted over a six month period, the first phase covered the construction of an extension to the rear of the property, the second phase undertaken in 2007 covered the groundworks for the construction of soakaways to the rear of the property.

Archaeological remains have been recorded in and around Amesbury and the small hamlet of West Amesbury dating to the late prehistoric, Anglo-Saxon, medieval and post-medieval periods. The Site is located adjacent to the Stonehenge World Heritage Site. The Avenue linking Stonehenge to the River Avon is visible on aerial photographs to the north of the Site and a projection of its course would suggest that it passes through the Little Stubbings Site.

The Watching Brief recorded no archaeological features, deposits or structures. The Watching Brief identified that the upper levels of the natural chalk had been truncated during landscaping of the site in the 1970s when Little Stubbings was built.

Acknowledgements

Wessex Archaeology would like to acknowledge the assistance of Mr P W K Moss, the 'developer'. The assistance of Amanda Chadburn and Rachel Foster, Stonehenge Curatorial Unit, English Heritage, is also acknowledged.

The project was managed for Wessex Archaeology by Peter Reeves. The watching brief was carried out by SteveThompson (extension) and Rebecca Fitzpatrick (soakaways). This report was compiled by Steve Thompson and Peter Reeves, the illustrations were prepared by Kitty Brandon.

LITTLE STUBBINGS, WEST AMESBURY, NR SALISBURY, WILTSHIRE

ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Project Background

1.1.1 Wessex Archaeology was commissioned by Mr P W K Moss ('the Developer') to carry out an archaeological watching brief during groundwork for a development to the front and rear of Little Stubbings located at West Amesbury, Salisbury, Wiltshire. Hereafter referred to as the 'Site', the development is centred on NGR 414180 141525 (**Figure 1**).

1.1.2 Mr P W K Moss had been granted planning permission (Application No. S/2005/2409) to add extensions to Little Stubbings (**Figure 2**). The proposed works involved the addition of a large extension to the rear of the property, the construction of a porch to the front of the house, and the construction of soakaways. The watching brief was required by the Local Authority acting on advice from the Stonehenge Curatorial Unit, English Heritage as a condition of planning consent and was carried out on the below ground element of these works.

1.1.3 The watching brief was undertaken following advice from Ms Amanda Chadburn, Inspector of Monuments concerning the archaeological potential of the Site and the appropriate programme of archaeological work that should be undertaken. A Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI) was implemented according to the '*Standards and Guidance for an archaeological watching brief*', Institute of Field Archaeologists (1994, revised 2001) and the brief provided by English Heritage.

1.1.4 The watching brief was carried out in accordance with a Project Design (Wessex Archaeology 2006), which was agreed in advance of the fieldwork by Rachel Foster, Stonehenge Curatorial Unit.

1.1.5 The Watching Brief was undertaken in the early summer of 2006, this latter, second phase was undertaken in the winter of 2007 (**Figure 2**).

1.2 Site Location and Description

1.2.1 The Site lies to the north of West Amesbury House, on the south side of Stonehenge Road (**Figure 1**) and comprises a private dwelling.

1.2.2 The Site lies at approximately 72m above Ordnance Datum. Natural deposits comprised Valley Gravel overlying Upper Chalk.

1.2.3 The Site to the rear of the house where the proposed extension is to be built comprises an area *c.*35 m². Of this *c.*14 m² is currently occupied by the

foundations for a conservatory to be demolished, *c.*10 m² is occupied by a large concrete slab with the remaining *c.*11 m² under lawn and flower beds. The conservatory base sits proud of the rest of the garden by *c.*0.20m.

- 1.2.4 The rear garden of Little Stubbings is clearly higher than the gardens to the west of Carters Row, and the land to the north and east, suggesting a certain amount of made ground is present.

1.3 Archaeological Background

- 1.3.1 Archaeological remains of the late prehistoric, Roman, Anglo-Saxon medieval and Post-medieval periods have been recorded in and around Amesbury and the small hamlet of West Amesbury, previously known as Little Amesbury. The Site is located adjacent to the Stonehenge World Heritage Site. The Avenue linking Stonehenge to the River Avon is visible on aerial photographs to the north of the Site. The World Heritage Site contains numerous prehistoric monuments and over 200 hundred Bronze Age barrows are known to the north, east and west of the village.
- 1.3.2 The Avenue is a Scheduled Monument (SM 10390) and takes the form of a linear feature providing a formal approach to Stonehenge and linking it with the River Avon at West Amesbury. Little Stubbings, which falls outside the Scheduled Area, is located within the centre of the projected line of the Avenue as it passes through West Amesbury toward the river (**Figure 2**). The Avenue is a key part of the World Heritage Site.
- 1.3.3 The relationship between the key monuments and the River Avon is under active research by a number of universities and of particular interest is the area where the Avenue meets the river.
- 1.3.4 The Avenue consists of parallel banks, each approximately 6m wide and 0.2m high enclosing a corridor approximately 12m in width. The banks are flanked by outer ditches, approximately 3m wide and 0.2m deep.
- 1.3.5 Partial excavations immediately to the north of West Amesbury House in 1973 established the Avenue's position, and a measured survey to the south of the house in 1987 located the banks of the Avenue preserved within an area of post-medieval garden earthworks. The Avenue at this point is only 20m away from the River Avon and expands to an approximate width of 42m. The excavation in 1973 established the location of the eastern ditch. Although the property of Little Stubbings does not lie within the Scheduled area, there is potential for archaeological remains to exist which may have been previously missed or which were partially left *in situ*.
- 1.3.6 Partial excavations near Stonehenge on the north side of the A344 produced chips of bluestone and antler picks from the ditches, the latter returned a radio carbon date of 1730 BC. Worked flint and pieces of antler were retrieved from the excavation at West Amesbury.
- 1.3.7 The Heel Stone is located within the Avenue 24m from the entrance and inclined toward the centre of Stonehenge. The Heel Stone is surrounded by a

ditch of 12m diameter and 2m width surviving as a partial earthwork. In 1979 partial excavation yielded a further stone hole, 2m to the north-west of the Heel Stone, and geophysical surveys undertaken along a 240m length of the avenue between 1979 and 1980 suggested possible positions of further stone holes.

- 1.3.8 West Amesbury House dates to the seventeenth century and contains within the elements of a medieval building thought to be related to the nearby site of the Priory at Amesbury.
- 1.3.9 Little Amesbury is separated from Amesbury by the River Avon and Vespasian's Camp, an Iron Age hillfort that has no known association with the Roman Emperor of that name.
- 1.3.10 The World Heritage Site and the area alongside the River Avon are subject to the ongoing active field research project known as the Stonehenge Riverside Project.

2 OBJECTIVES

- 2.1.1 The objective of the watching brief was to determine, as far as is reasonably possible, the location, extent, date, character, condition, significance and quality of any surviving archaeological remains liable to be impacted upon by the proposed development within the area.
- 2.1.2 The aim of the watching brief was to monitor groundwork associated with preparation of the Site for foundations for the proposed extension and porch that were to be added to the existing dwelling. This was to ensure that archaeological remains that may be revealed by groundwork were investigated and recorded appropriately.
- 2.1.3 The second phase monitored whether there were any archaeological structures, features or deposits revealed by the groundworks associated with the construction of drainage runs and associated soakaways.

3 METHODOLOGY

- 3.1.1 Arrangements were made with Mr P W K Moss to ensure that groundwork was effectively monitored by a qualified archaeologist and that this work was identified in the construction programme. Close liaison with the developer was established in order that due notice of groundwork was provided to Wessex Archaeology, English Heritage and Wiltshire County Council and that sufficient time was allowed to carry out archaeological monitoring, investigation and recording work where required.
- 3.1.2 The area stripping and excavation of the foundation trenches for the house extension took place between 22nd and 24th August 2006. The excavation of the soakaways and drainage runs occurred between the 11th and 15th January 2007.

- 3.1.3 Prior to the commencement of groundworks the existing conservatory to the rear of the property was demolished (**Plate 1**).
- 3.1.4 All archaeological deposits were recorded using Wessex Archaeology's *pro forma* record sheets with a unique numbering system for individual contexts.
- 3.1.5 A full photographic record of the investigations and individual features was maintained, utilising digital images. The photographic record illustrated both the detail and general context of the archaeology revealed and the Site as a whole.
- 3.1.6 A unique site code was agreed prior to the commencement of works. The code is 63280. All excavated artefacts and materials were transported to the offices of Wessex Archaeology in Salisbury where they were processed and assessed for this report. The excavated material and archive, including plans, photographs and written records are currently held at the Wessex Archaeology offices under the project code 63280.

4 RESULTS

4.1 Introduction

- 4.1.1 The Watching Brief was undertaken in two phases. The first phase in August 2006 monitored the ground clearing and cutting of foundation trenches for the rear extension to the house. The proposed works (**Figure 2**) were reduced to a smaller rear extension and the porch was not added to the front of the building. The soakaways and associated drainage runs were monitored in January 2007, all of the actual works monitored are illustrated in **Figure 3**.

4.2 Watching Brief Results

- 4.2.1 The excavation of the foundations for the extension entailed the footprint area of *c.*35m² being excavated to a reduced dig level of 0.40m below the current ground surface (**Plate 2**). The footings for each wall were excavated a further 0.60m to a total depth of 1m below the current ground surface.
- 4.2.2 Following the removal of a 0.50m thick concrete foundation slab of the demolished conservatory, a *c.*0.15m thick concrete slab to the east of the conservatory base and 0.12m of topsoil and turf (**101**) a levelling layer (**102**) was encountered.
- 4.2.3 The levelling layer (**102**) consisted of compact light grey brown coloured silty clay containing abundant inclusions of sub-angular and sub-rounded flint nodules and flint fragments *c.*0.06m in size. Other than where the layer had been cut away for construction of the former conservatory base slab the levelling layer had a consistent thickness/depth of 0.48m. The layer also contained a mix of re-deposited natural chalk and building rubble. This deposit was probably brought in to landscape the area just prior to the building of Little Stubbings *c.*1978.

- 4.2.4 The reduced dig level for the extension did not extend below this levelling layer, however the excavations for the wall footings did.
- 4.2.5 The wall footings were excavated to a width of 0.60m and to a depth of 1m below the current ground surface. The footings penetrated into the underlying natural geology (**103**) by c.0.40m. It was clear in the section that the upper layers of the underlying natural geology had been removed, most probably, during the levelling and landscaping of the Site prior to the building of the main house. The original topsoil and subsoil covering the chalk had been removed as had the upper-most levels of the natural chalk. This created a very sharp and clear horizon between the chalk (**103**) and the overlying make-up layer (**102**).
- 4.2.6 An identical sequence was observed during the excavation of the drainage runs and associated soakaways. Throughout the length of their runs the drainage channels remained within **102** although the amount of building debris decreased as the runs progressed south (**Plate 4**).
- 4.2.7 The small soakaway, aligned north-east to south-west cut slightly into the underlying chalk (**103**). The deeper, 0.80m, larger soakaway cut into the chalk where at this point the chalk was observed to be mixed with the overlying gravels through the process of solifluction (**Plate 3**).
- 4.2.8 No archaeological features were identified cutting the natural chalk geology although a number of natural solifluction channels were identified. No archaeological deposits were observed overlying the chalk.

5 FINDS

- 5.1.1 The lack of features or deposits was accompanied by an absence of artefacts across the area under observation. No artefacts were observed or retrieved from the deeper areas of excavation, the foundation trenches and soakaways.
- 5.1.2 Within the upper soil levels removed from the area of development occasional surface artefacts were observed. Finds were recovered from a single context during the watching brief (make-up layer **102**).
- 5.1.3 The finds, out of context, comprised one piece of burnt, unworked flint of unknown date, two prehistoric worked flint flakes which diagnostically belong to the later prehistoric period, and two sherds of post-medieval pottery.

6 ENVIRONMENTAL

- 6.1.1 Throughout the watching brief no archaeological features or deposits were observed and therefore no environmental samples were taken. Solifluction structures and deposits observed during the deeper excavation contained no organic deposits and therefore these were not sampled.

7 CONCLUSION

- 7.1.1 It is clear, from the observations on Site, that no archaeological remains were present within the foundations for the extension to the rear of Little Stubbings. Although the underlying natural basal geology had suffered a degree of truncation during the construction of the main house in the late 1970s it is unlikely that this truncation had removed any archaeology which may have been present.
- 7.1.2 The second phase of the watching brief in areas previously undisturbed by construction also demonstrated a lack of archaeology.
- 7.1.3 The projected line of the Avenue is likely to be correct as the monument is unlikely to turn dramatically at a point so near to its end (**Figure 1**). On this basis Little Stubbings is sat within the monument with the west bank and its associated ditch passing through the gardens of Carters Row and the eastern bank and ditch passing through the garage of the Little Stubbings (**Figures 2 and 3**). The extension and associated soakaways are positioned within the central area between the two parallel banks and ditches.
- 7.1.4 Archaeological research undertaken in 1979 and 1980 by English Heritage has shown that there is the potential for stone holes for the setting of additional stones similar to the Heel Stone, to be positioned within the Avenue. The identification of such a feature within the footings for the proposed extension would have added considerable information to the current research being undertaken in the relationship between the Avenue and the Avon, however no such evidence was identified.
- 7.1.5 Similarly, whereas artefacts or parts of artefacts probably related to the construction of the avenue and its ditches, stone and antler tools, have been found elsewhere along the route of the Avenue no such artefacts were observed at Little Stubbings.
- 7.1.6 Previous archaeological research on the Avenue has in places retrieved fragments of blue and sarsen stone, indicative maybe of the transportation of stones along the Avenue to either the stone circle or, similar to the heel stone, to be set as lithic uprights within the bed of the avenue itself. The watching brief did not detect any exotic stone types within the areas of development.
- 7.1.7 Within the area of the extension, along the routes of the drainage runs and the soakaways a very clear unconformity in the expected natural sequence of deposits was observed. The surface of the chalk appeared to have been terraced and the natural sequence of subsoil and topsoil that should have been present had been removed. The natural profile had been replaced by **102** the surface of which had been laid to lawn.
- 7.1.8 The conclusion of the report is that although Little Stubbings is located within the Avenue there is, within the areas that were developed, no evidence relating to its construction neither is there evidence for the presence of any features/structures within or associated with it.

- 7.1.9 Following discussion with English Heritage (Amanda Chadburn and Rachel Foster) it is probable that more of the area was excavated in 1973 than that which is recorded in the official records.
- 7.1.10 The report concludes that the unconformity of the natural sequence of deposits discovered during the watching brief can be dated between the site investigations of 1973 and the construction of the house in 1978.
- 7.1.11 The results of the watching brief suggest that archaeological features and deposits that may have been present within the route of the avenue located within the footprint of the house and gardens of Little Stubbings have been removed.

8 ARCHIVE

- 8.1.1 The project archive covering both phases of the watching brief is currently held at the offices of Wessex Archaeology in Salisbury, under the site code reference 63280. In due course it will be deposited with the appropriate museum.

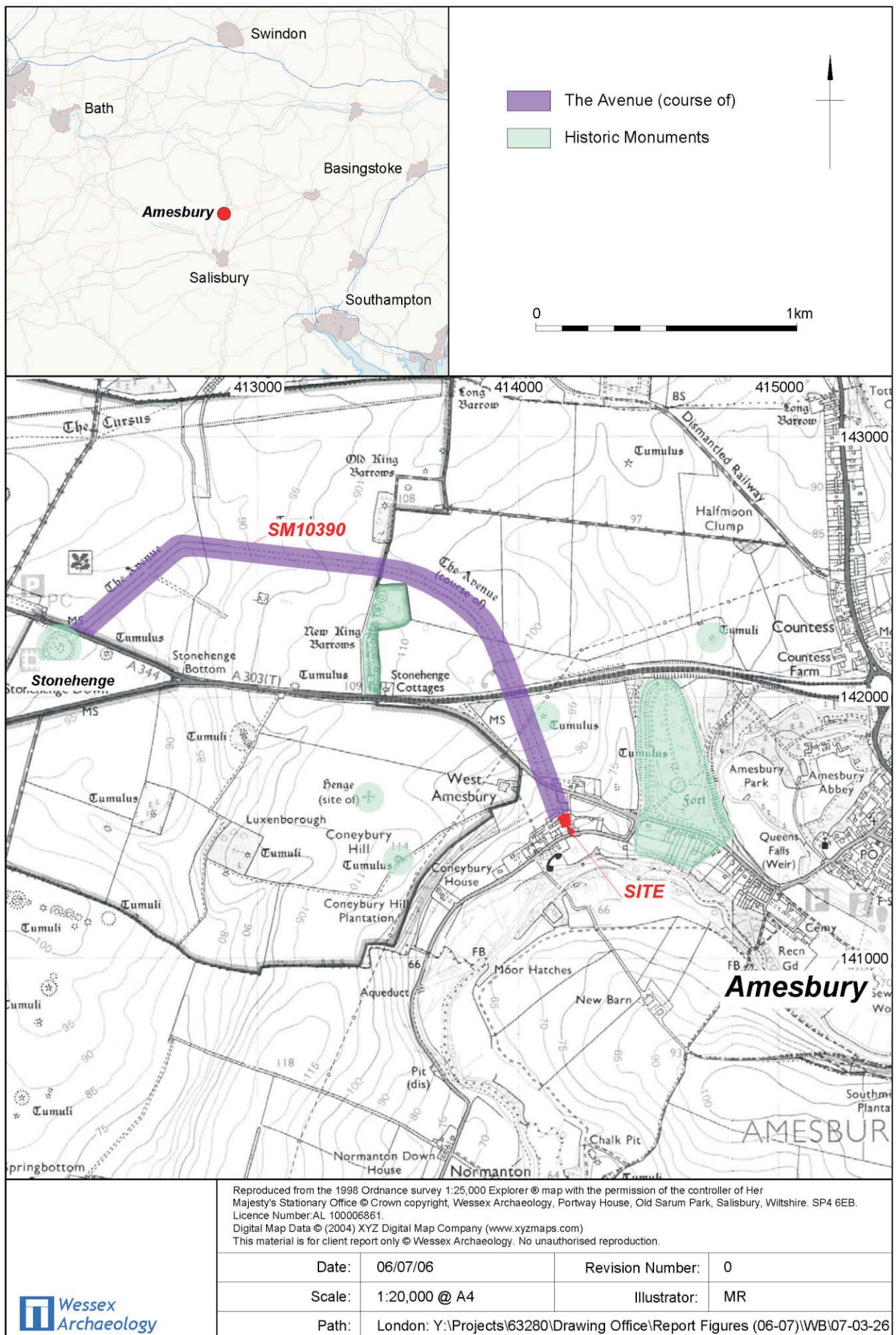
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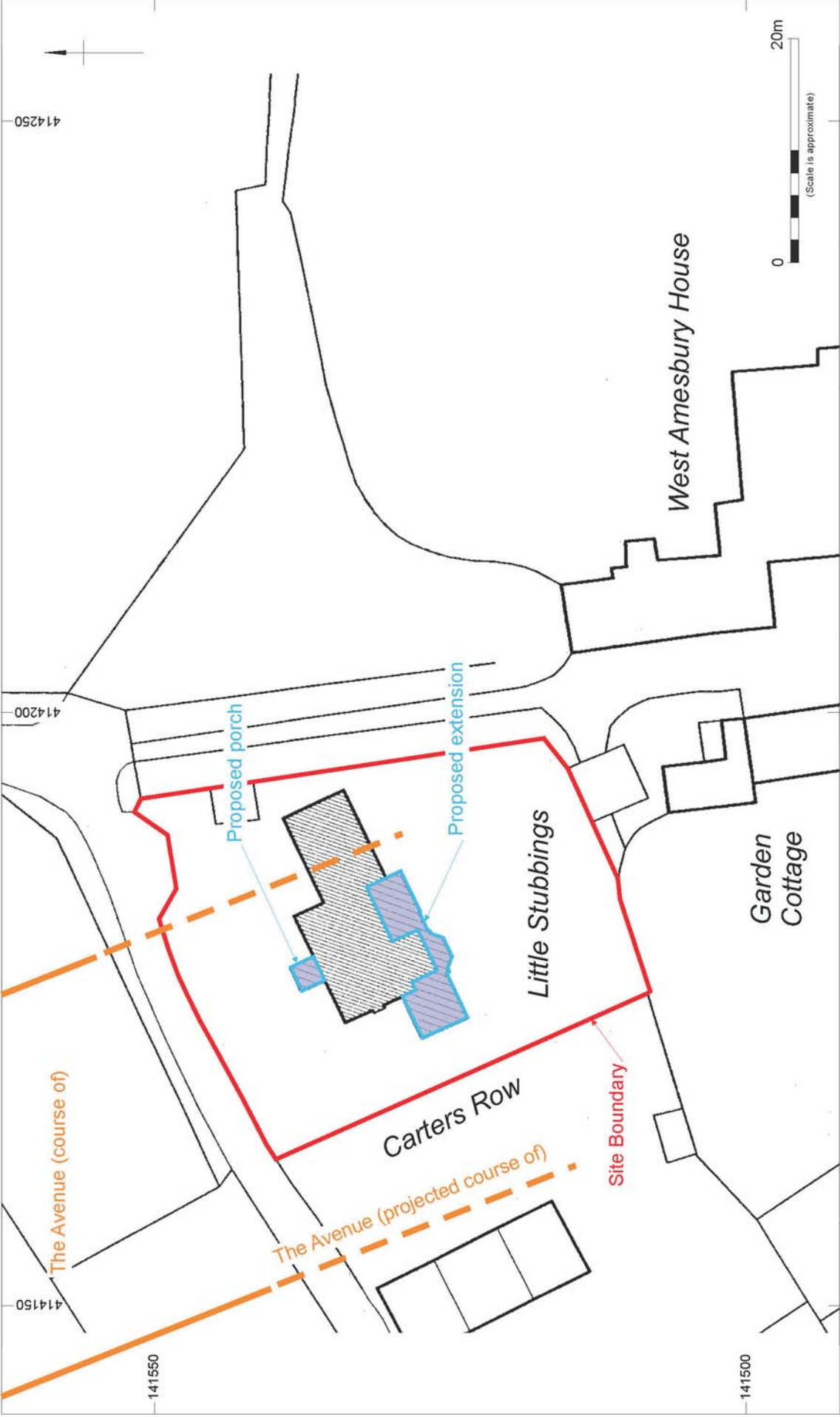
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Site Location Map showing 'The Avenue' (course of) and other nearby Historic Monuments

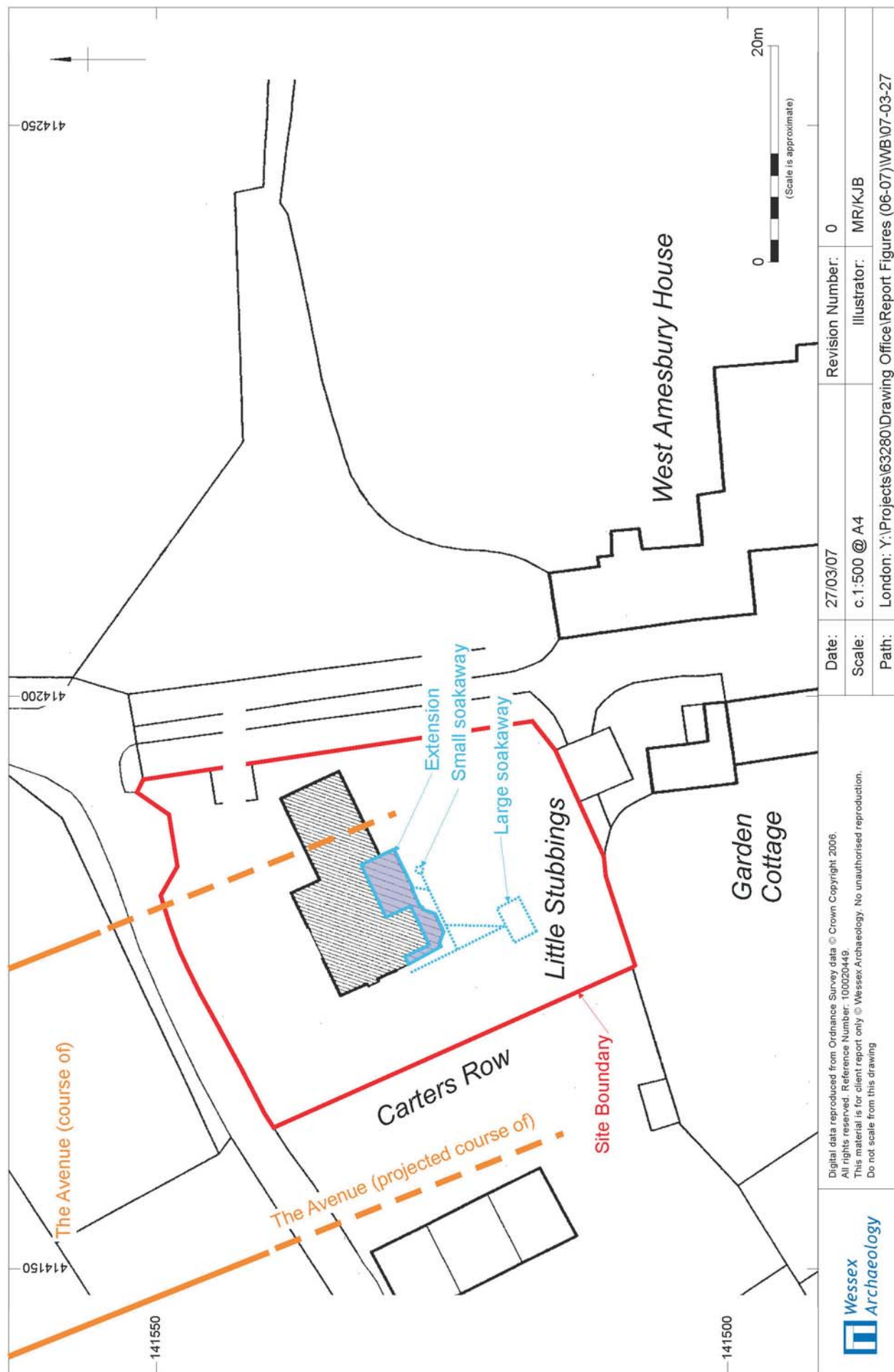
Figure 1



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Site Plan showing location of proposed extension and porch

Figure 2



Site Plan showing location of extension and soakaways

Figure 3



Plate 1. Proposed extension viewed from the west



Plate 2. Proposed extension area cleaned, looking north-west



Plate 3. Large soakaway, looking south-west



Plate 4. Small soakaway, looking south-west



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