

A DESK-BASED ASSESSMENT FOR FIRLE STABLES,
FIRLE, EAST SUSSEX.

Archaeology Services Lewes

Project number: 146-18



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SUMMARY

A Desk-Based Assessment and Historic Building Assessment of the stable buildings within the Firle Estate, East Sussex, BN8 6LP, has been prepared in advance of a planning application. This covers the proposed conversion of the stables to provide modern bathroom facilities, a bar, seating areas, car parking space and a new bridal suite for the wedding venue in the adjacent riding school. The Site is currently in use as stables as well as residential accommodation and garage space. The proposed works are presented in two phases and phase two will be carried out under a separate planning application and is directly dependent upon finances at this point in time.

The assessment has concluded that the Site has below-ground potential for the following periods:

*Prehistoric – Low
Romano-British - Low
Anglo-Saxon - Low
Medieval - High
Post-medieval – High*

However, it is not recommended that a watching brief is carried out on below-ground interventions such as the service run to the building, as the ground works will be minimal, with a single service trench situated in an area previously monitored and known to be made ground to a depth of at least 0.80m. Additionally, the car parking area will impact to a maximum of 150mm within ploughsoil.

In addition, the building assessment concluded that the works to the buildings for Phase 1 will be very limited, the overall form of the structure will not be greatly compromised, and further building recording is not considered to be necessary for this phase. However, for Phase 2, it is recommended that the important clock room should be fully recorded to an Historic England Level 3 survey before any permitted development begins. In addition, the outbuilding to the rear should be fully recorded prior to development, if the proposals are successful.

Some setting issues are highlighted by the assessment, but these are considered to be of low impact as the majority of the work will be internal and of a temporary nature and will not have any permanent effect on the overall setting of the estate or the Conservation Area.

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 Archaeology Services Lewes (ASL) has been commissioned by the agent, Glenn Moore, on behalf of the Firle Estate Manager Alastair Deighton, to carry out an archaeological appraisal, consisting of a Desk-Based Assessment (DBA), preliminary walkover survey of the land and a photographic record of the stable buildings within the Firle Estate, East Sussex, BN8 6LP (Figs. 1 and 2; herein referred to as the Site). The buildings are currently partially in use as traditional stables with two residential flats situated within the central block of the stables. Additionally, there is a central garage/storage room at ground floor level with a clock room above. The Georgian Riding School is currently being converted into use as a wedding venue, with a new floor being installed under approved Listed Building consent, reference number: SDNP/17/06221/LIS.
- 1.2 Proposals for the Site are presented in two phases; Phase 2 will be carried out under a separate planning application and is directly dependent upon finances at this point in time. Phase 1 plans are to create two new bathrooms in the north-west corner, at ground floor level, with a new doorway opened up in an existing blocked window between the stables and the riding school. Phase 2 plans are to convert the ground floor garage into a bar, with an existing and original stable in the north-east wing being restored and retained as a seating area.
- 1.3 At first floor level, Phase 2 plans are to convert an existing bathroom into a kitchen and a bedroom into a bathroom. It is our understanding that no significant alterations are planned for the existing lounge and second bedroom. However, a new bridal suite is proposed within the existing clock room. It is our understanding that no further alterations will occur elsewhere within the stables.
- 1.4 Externally for Phase 1, a small bin store is proposed, with two disabled parking spaces flanking the south side of the riding school. Parking for 150 cars is also proposed for Phase 1, in a field behind the rear access road into Firle Place, created on existing land with 'Grasscrete'.
- 1.5 The renovation of an existing outbuilding to the rear of the riding school, to create a kitchen and storage facility, is also planned for Phase 2 but these plans have not yet been drawn up.
- This report follows the recommendations set out by the Institute for Archaeologists in *Standards and Guidance for Archaeological Desk-Based Assessments* (CIfA 2014; updated 2017).
- 1.6 The Site is situated at TQ 47213 07105 in Firle parish. A wider Study Area of 1 km radius has been considered to place the Site in context.
- 1.7 The riding school and stables were Grade II* Listed by Historic England, as one entry, on March 17th, 1952. This was amended on August 20th, 1965. The Listing reads as follows:

*'FIRLE 1. 5206 17.3.52. The Stables of Firle Place 20.8.65 Riding School of Firle Place to west of the house TQ 4707 33/483B II**

2. Late C18 or early C19. The Stables form 3 sides of a courtyard. White brick. Slate roof. The central side has a centre portion of ashlar with 3 coachhouse doors on the ground floor flanked by pilasters with lunette windows above, a balustraded parapet with a solid centre containing a clock face between twin pilasters. Behind this is an octagonal bell turret. The flanking portions of the central side are of white brick. Each has a slight projection at its centre containing a round-headed doorway with semi-circular fanlight and one window over. The projecting wings have a similar central projection with doorway and window over and 2 windows on each side of this, the ground floor windows being round-headed. The ends of the wings are flanked by coupled stone pilasters and have a lunette window each at first floor level. The wings are joined by a wrought iron railing having 3 double gates in the centre with crested overthrow. At the back of the central side of the Stables are residential quarters having 2 storeys and 6 windows. The ground floor is faced with flints, above red brick. Glazing bars intact. The Riding School adjoins the Stables to the north-west and is contemporary. Red brick. Hipped slate roof. Five lunette windows to the east and west walls, placed high up.'

- 1.8 The overall aims of this study are to inform the owners, who may want to know more about the history of their property, as well as to aid commissioned professionals, such as planners, surveyors and architects, whose job it is to conserve and protect the building, whilst enabling it to be carefully adapted for contemporary living. Finally, it serves as a record for the future; to inform academics and to create a long-term, permanent record for posterity.
- 1.9 The specific objectives of this report are to provide a brief overview of the date and the form of construction of the extant building, with the specific aim of establishing the date of the historic fabric which will be impacted by the proposals if permission is granted. In noting this, the significance of the historic fabric, both individually and as a group, can be assessed. Additionally, the significance will be weighed against the benefits of the proposals, with recommendations given.
- 1.10 It should be noted that this survey is non-intrusive and that the report is an appraisal, rather than a definitive statement. Therefore, any discussions on the presence or absence of below-ground archaeological remains should be regarded as *an indicator of potential*. The only way to produce a definitive statement would be for a geophysical survey or trial trenching to define the presence/absence of any archaeological remains within the Site. Furthermore, the report on the standing building should not be regarded as a detailed archaeological record, nor should it be taken as definitive.

2.0 SITE TOPOGRAPHY AND GEOLOGY

The underlying geology of the site is West Melbury marly chalk formation with potential deposits of Head (clay, silt, sand and gravel) within approximately 100m

South West of the Site¹. The development site itself lies at an approximate height of 30m above sea level, based at the proposed building location.

3.0 PLANNING BACKGROUND

3.1 Town and country planning legislation and procedures

- 3.1.1 In March 2012, Government policies relating to planning were defined in the National Planning Policy Framework. Section 12 (paragraphs 126–141) of the framework (*Conserving and enhancing the historic environment*) outlines specific policies relating to the historic environment and the role it plays in the Government's definition of sustainable development.
- 3.1.2 Local planning authorities are required to '*set out in their Local Plan a positive strategy for the conservation and enjoyment of the historic environment*', recognising that '*heritage assets are an irreplaceable resource*' and should be conserved '*in a manner appropriate to their significance*'.
- 3.1.3 The framework requires that planning applicants should '*describe the significance of any heritage assets affected*' by their application, '*including any contribution made by their setting*'.

3.2 The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)

In 2012 the NPPF set out the Government's planning policies for England and how these are expected to be applied. It sets out the Government's requirements for the planning system only to the extent that it is relevant, proportionate and necessary to do so. It provides a framework within which local people and their accountable councils can produce their own distinctive local and neighbourhood plans, which reflect the needs and priorities of their communities. Section 12 of the NPPF relates to conserving and enhancing the historic environment and requires local planning authorities to 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;
- opportunities to draw on the contribution made by the historic environment to the character of a place.

¹ (<http://mapapps.bgs.ac.uk/geologyofbritain/home.html>)

The following sections of the NPPF relate to this planning application and we believe that the application, along with the Heritage Statement, addresses these requirements as follows:

128. In determining applications, 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 a 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.

131. In determining planning applications, local planning authorities should take account of:

- *the desirability of sustaining and enhancing the significance of heritage assets and putting them to viable uses consistent with their conservation;*
- *the positive contribution that conservation of heritage assets can make to sustainable communities including their economic vitality; and*
- *the desirability of new development making a positive contribution to local character and distinctiveness.*

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.*

134. Where a development proposal will lead to less than substantial harm to the significance of a designated heritage asset, this harm should be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal, including securing its optimum viable use.

135. The effect of an application on the significance of a non-designated heritage asset should be taken into account in determining the application. In weighing applications that affect directly or indirectly non-designated heritage assets, a balanced judgement will be required having regard to the scale of any harm or loss and the significance of the heritage asset.

4.0 ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

4.1 Introduction

The Historic Environment Record (HER) maintained by the East Sussex Records Office (ESRO) was previously consulted for the estate and the results have been used with the kind permission of the ESCC County Archaeologist, reference number: 484/15. Listed Building data was acquired from English Heritage. Details were taken of all archaeological sites and listed buildings within a 500m radius (the Study Area) with all reference numbers below relating to the HER database.

Archaeological Notification Areas

East Sussex County Council, which advises the local planning authorities on archaeological matters, has identified various Archaeological Notification Areas (ANAs) throughout the county which are plotted onto maps. These ANA maps are to be considered during the process of planning applications, in association with the County Archaeologist acting as consultant, but the areas have no statutory status or protection. The development is situated within an area high in Archaeological Notification Areas (ANAs); there are six (Fig. 3) within the village of Firle which defines the historic core of the medieval and post-medieval village of Firle (DES9187). In addition, there is an area of prehistoric and Romano-British activity (DES9188), a deserted medieval village (DES 8787) to the east and a windmill site (DES9462) to the west.

Archaeological events and sites

There are seven archaeological events (Fig. 4) and thirty archaeological sites recorded (Fig. 5). In addition, a large part of the Firle Estate constitutes a Registered Park and Garden (Fig. 6) and there is one Scheduled Monument (Fig. 7) within the 500m radius.

Listed Buildings

There are thirty five Listed Buildings recorded within the Study Area (Fig. 8).

Conservation Areas

The Study Area is located centrally within the Firle Conservation Area (Fig. 9).

4.2 Archaeological periods represented

A suggested timescale of the archaeological periods referred to in this report is shown below.

Prehistoric: Palaeolithic (c. 750,000 BC–c. 10,000 BC)

Prehistoric: Mesolithic (c. 10,000 BC–c. 5,000 BC)

Prehistoric: Neolithic (c. 5,000 BC–c. 2,300 BC)

Prehistoric: Bronze Age (c. 2,300 BC–c. 700 BC)

Prehistoric: Iron Age (c. 700 BC–AD 43)

Romano-British (AD 43–c. AD 410)

Anglo-Saxon (c. AD 410–AD 1066)

Medieval (AD 1066–AD 1540)

Post-medieval (AD 1540 to date)

4.3 Prehistoric period

Several artefact finds near to the Site have been recovered, including a small Bronze Age knife-dagger (MES1415) which is said to have been found 4ft below the surface. Nearby, a Bronze Age chisel (MES1416) was also recovered, possibly part of a Later Bronze Age hoard found in Firle. Finally, another Bronze Age artefact was recovered which was a bronze axe (MES1418); the three find spots are all located 200m south-west of the Site.

A concentration of Late Iron Age and fire-fractured flints were found (MES7212) 300m south of the Site. Field walking in 2005 adjacent to this find spot identified a further concentration of Late Iron Age and Romano-British pottery (MES15551), which is likely to represent the site of a small farmstead. Metal detectorists have also recovered Iron Age and Romano-British metalwork in this area.

ASL formerly conducted a watching brief on service pipe trenches for a new biomass system for the estate in 2016 which uncovered several features, including a possible prehistoric ditch running through Areas 2 and 4 with the potential for further prehistoric activity in Area 2, where residual Bronze Age pottery was recovered. A small, residual spread of residual prehistoric flintwork was also recovered from the field in Area 1.

4.4 Roman period

A Roman road (RR 144 Margary), known as the Seaford-Firle road (MES2667), runs approximately 560m to the east of the Site, with a possible undefined extension continuing north to Ripe. A small assemblage of Romano-British East Sussex Ware pottery (MES7212) was found 300m south of the Site.

The watching brief conducted by ASL in 2016 also uncovered a possible Roman track or metalled floor surface with Roman pottery above this in Area 2, approximately 100m south of the Site.

4.5 Saxon period

At least one barrow in the vicinity is thought to be the possible site of the Saxon Totnore Hundred Moot (MES1399) which is recorded as measuring nine yards in diameter, one foot high and hollow in the centre (Bannister, N. 2008. Historic Landscape Characterisation of Sussex). There are two mounds in this area, very close

together, which have been ploughed down but these lie more than 750m south-west of the Site and are not likely to have an association.

4.6 Medieval period

The Parish Church of St Peter's Church (13th/14th century) (MES1392) lies approximately 30m west of the riding school wall. The chancel has a north (or Gage) chapel which is now the vestry and the church has a nave with aisles, a south porch and west tower. The Chancel is 13th century, with the remainder being 14th century in date. The Gage chapel contains brasses and monuments to the members of the Gage family of Firle Place.

The medieval Market Village of West Firle (MES21979) is believed to date from at least 1086, and most likely much earlier, and is referred to as *Ferla* or *Ferle* in the Domesday Book.

The watching brief conducted by ASL in 2016 also recovered residual 13th–15th century material from the field in Area 1, some 200m south of the Site.

4.7 Post medieval period

Firle Place (MES1394) is a late 15th- or early 16th-century house with the original edifice appearing to have been built about 1470. It is not probable that any part of the original building is now remaining, and though part of the present edifice bears evident marks of antiquity, it is of much more recent date than the original structure. A building interpretative survey was conducted in 1993 by David and Barbara Martin, University College London, where it was established that in the early 16th century Sir John Gage built, or more probably rebuilt, Firle Place. Further significant changes were made between 1744–54 and 1754–83. The exterior of the house is mainly 18th century in date, but a portion of the south front is of 16th century date, with a Henry VIII gable.

A series of terraced gardens and a landscape park at Firle Place (MES1426) extend to approximately 1ha within parkland of about 100ha, with adjacent woodland and agricultural land. A walled kitchen garden also exists, 200m to west-north-west of the house. The park may have been established during the mid-16th century as a deer park and landscaped during the 18th century. Formal gardens and possibly the terraced gardens were created during the early 19th century.

The stables and riding school (MES24283) associated with Firle Place are believed to be late 18th century to early 19th century in date and are situated 30m west of Firle Place. A documentary and photographic research field survey of the riding school was conducted in 2007 (Martin. R., Sussex Industrial Arch. Society. 'Riding School, Firle Place') but the stables were not included in this. The stables form three sides of a courtyard; behind this is an octagonal bell turret. At the back of the central side of the stables are residential quarters and the riding school adjoins the stables to the north-west and is contemporary in date. The service pipe trenches will run to this building, where the boiler room for the estate is currently located.

The location of Firle Windmill (MES1431) lies 300m west of the Site. This was known to have been a corn mill which is marked on the 1873 Ordnance Survey (OS) map

(Fig. 12) but seems to have fallen out of use by the second edition map and is gone completely by 1908 (Fig. 14). The mill appears to have been short-lived.

In 2014 a small watching brief (MES24690) at Place Farm recovered a few 16th–18th-century roof tiles. The excavations failed to yield any significant archaeological results, but this may be due to the small area sampled. The tile is likely to have come from the 18th century (or earlier) barn that originally stood on the site, and perhaps the made ground originates from the time of its destruction in the 1970s. It is possible that both these deposits relate to the rebuilding of the barn after the fire in the 1970s.

At Place Farm there are still extant agricultural buildings recorded on the Tithe and later maps which lie approximately 150m west of the Site. These include two flint and brick 18th-century barns (MES25553 and MES26437) by Shire House. In addition, there are two 19th-century or earlier barns (MES25555 and MES25554) as well as a former pond, now filled in (MES25556). The watching brief conducted by ASL in 2016² also uncovered former 18th-century walls which would have once created a walled garden to the west of the house. In addition, evidence for re-landscaping of the rear access drive was revealed in Area 4 and residual 14th–19th-century material was recovered from the field in Area 1. More relevant to this Site is that the 18th-century stable foundations were exposed and recorded.

There are several listed buildings within Firle (Fig. 6) but the majority of these lie outside of the development area within the main street which runs through the village. The nearest listed building to the Site is Church Farm (DES1694), an 18th century farmhouse some 100m to the west and associated with a dovecot (DES1397). An 18th-century thatched summerhouse or ornamental dairy (MES 1395) lies approximately 120m south-east of the Site. A late 17th-century to early 18th-century barn (DES 2275) situated 175m west of the Site was surveyed by ASL in 2016³. This was found to have originally comprised a full timber-frame, six-bay barn with a hipped and thatched roof, later changed in the mid-18th century to provide an extra bay. Beyond this and the curtilage of Firle Place itself, all other listed buildings lie to the north of The Street and will not be impacted by the development. It is unlikely that any associated outbuildings linked to the known listed structures will be impacted and so all other historical and listed buildings within Firle will not be further discussed further.

5.0 CARTOGRAPHIC EVIDENCE

- 5.1 The earliest map reference located is an estate map dating to 1775 (Fig. 10). This shows an empty plot with no buildings within the area.
- 5.2 The Tithe map for West Firle (Fig. 11), dating to 1843, shows both the stables and the riding school as well as the outbuilding behind, which it is proposed to convert into a kitchen during Phase 2. This outbuilding is shown on a reduced footprint to the

² Fisher, L., 2016. *A watching brief at Place Farm, Firle, East Sussex. ASL grey literature report: 73–15.*

³ Fisher, L. 2016. *Historic Building Record for the Barn, Place Farm, The Street, Firle, East Sussex. ASL grey literature report: 90–16.*

extant building that currently occupies the plot. Various other small outbuildings can be seen to the rear.

- 5.3 The Ordnance Survey (OS) map of 1873 (Fig. 12) shows no changes, except the outbuilding to the rear now occupies a larger footprint which is the same as we see today.
- 5.4 Successive OS maps 1898 (Fig. 13), 1908 (Fig. 14) and 1961 (Fig. 15) show no further changes

6.0 WALKOVER SURVEY

6.1 A walkover survey of the site was undertaken by the author on 27th March 2018. The weather was fine but overcast. The objective of the walkover survey was to identify the adjacent topography as well as any landscape or archaeological features not evident on existing maps, and also to assess any areas of disturbance that may have impacted upon any potential below-ground archaeology. The walkover survey was rapid, with notes taken at the time, and was not intended as a detailed survey. The photograph locations are shown in Figs. 16 and 17 in the appendix.

6.2 Building Assessment

The objective of the building assessment was to provide a brief overview of the date and the form of construction of the existing building(s) on the site. In addition, any removed structures or features were identified, along with their relationship to those still extant. In noting this, the significance of the structures individually and as a group can be assessed. The building is divided into three parts: the projecting north-east wing (Plate 1), the former coach house in the central range (Plate 2) and the projecting south-east wing which is not being developed so is not discussed here.



Plate 1. The projecting north-east wing of the stables.



Plate 2. The former coach house in the central range of the stables.

6.3 Assessment of the building at ground floor level (photograph locations in Fig. 16)

The north-east projecting wing is currently used for stabling alongside a modern engine room. The central range is used partly for residential accommodation and also as a garage/storage area. There is a door into the stable from the courtyard on the south-east side. The stable is in its original form, with tongue and groove panelled walls, part brick floor with some later ceramic 'cobbles' and in-built stalls providing space for two horses (Plate 3). A pedestrian door which would have led into the residential accommodation on the south-west side has been blocked from the rear, although the door is still *in situ* (Plate 4). A modern door has been inserted into the opposing wall which leads into the modern engine room for the estate.



Plate 3. The original stalls in the stables.



Plate 4. Original pedestrian door into the residential annexe now blocked on the reverse side.

The flat in the north-west corner of the central range at ground-floor level consists of a kitchen, living room and L-shaped corridor leading to a flight of stairs to the first-floor accommodation. There are two doors giving access into the flat; one in the rear south-west facing elevation, which is a replacement door under an original segmental fanlight and frame (Plate 5) and one in the front, north-east facing elevation, which is discussed below.



Plate 5. The original rear pedestrian door into the residential annexe.

The kitchen is entirely modern, with few surviving elements exposed, with a ceramic tiled floor, Artex/plastered walls and an under-plastered ceiling. There is a part-glazed, 19th-century stripped pine door, which is not *in situ* and has been cut to fit. The picture rails and skirting are modern and a modern casement window has been fitted into an older frame which may be original. The wall on the south-east side is

partitioned to the hallway and this steps out slightly at the rear door where it partly conceals the frame and the fanlight, so is likely to be a later addition (see right hand side of Plate 5). There is a blocked doorway between the kitchen and the hallway at the far north-east end of the corridor. In addition, there is a blocked window aperture (Plates 6 and 7) which would have looked out over the riding school in the north-west wall, which is now fitted with shelves. This is 1.53m above floor level, a with cut-and-rub soldier course over the blocked aperture; there are no jambs and the cill is wooden; this is all painted. The proposals are to open this aperture and remove the lower courses to provide a doorway from the wedding venue in the riding school to the new bathroom facilities here. This would involve the removal of the lower course of bricks (0.88m high), which was previously boarded, as evidenced by a row of corroded nails. It was noted that these bricks appeared 'sharper', with fewer layers of paint, probably due to the former panelling.

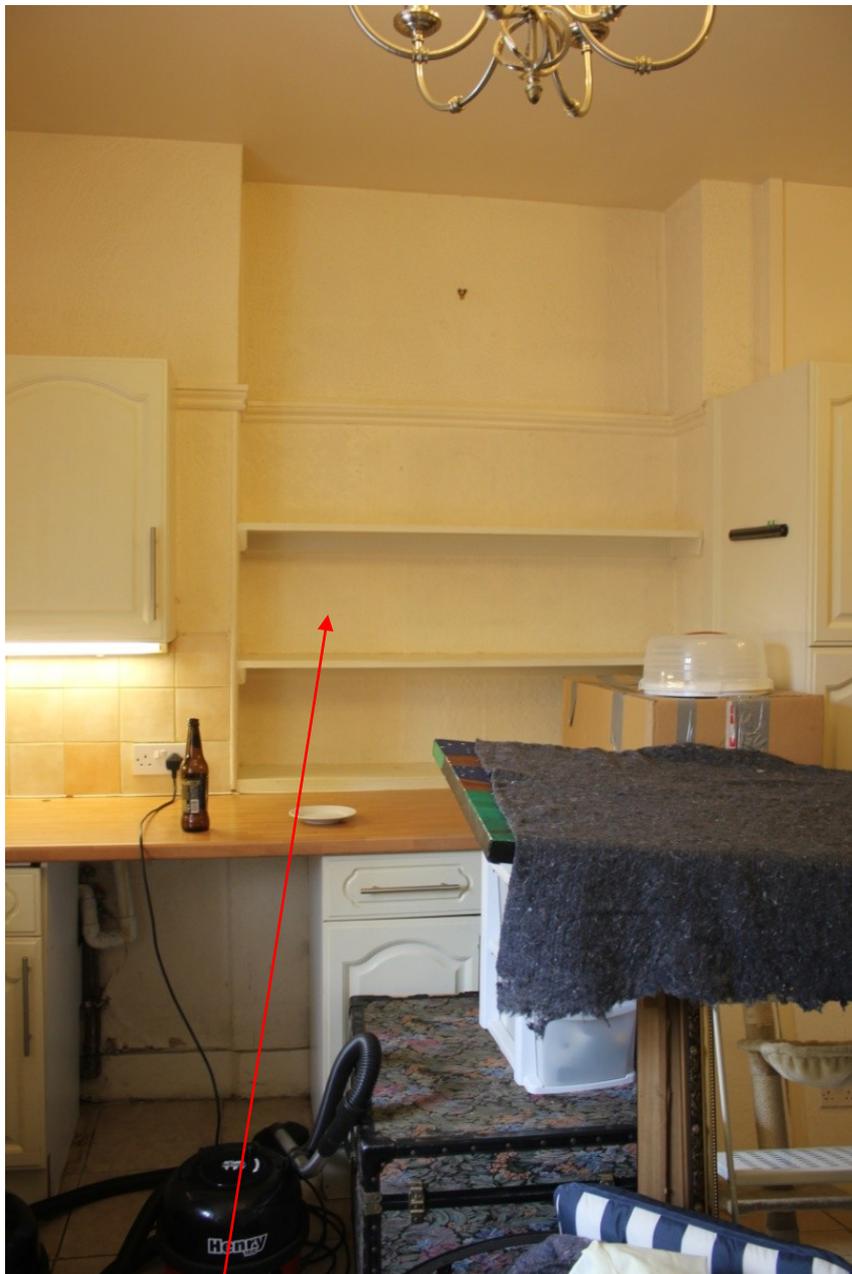


Plate 6 Blocked window which originally looked into the riding school.



Plate 7. Blocked window within the riding school.

The living room at ground-floor level is entered through a modern door off the hallway and has also been renovated, with modern fittings and decoration with Artex/wallpaper-covered walls above a modern chair rail. The floor is covered with ceramic tiles, presumably laid on floorboards as evidenced by significant cracks from movement. There is patched skirting around the room and the windows are modern sashes in older frames, with one top sash on the north side being older, with horns. The wall to the north-east side is partitioned to the hallway and has a blocked doorway evident here. There is also a chimney breast apparent which has been blocked up in the north-west side of the room (Plate 8).



Plate 8. Blocked fireplace in the ground floor living room.

The L-shaped hallway has a step down from the rear door, with ceramic tiled flooring and a cornicing around the perimeter of the ceiling which appears truncated at the blocked doorway into the stable on the north-east side. There is high skirting board at 0.34m around the perimeter which leads into the living room but continues over the blocked doorway into the kitchen. There is a chair rail at a height of 1.44m on the south-east side, with vertical tongue and groove wooden panelling below which has been plastered over (Plate 9).



Plate 9. Plastered wall panelling in the hallway.

The north-west wall also has plastered panelling, but here it appears horizontally fixed (Plate 10). The architrave into the existing kitchen doorway is probably early 20th century (Plate 11).



Plate 10. Horizontal panelling plastered over in the hallway.



Plate 11. Door into kitchen.

The hallway turns at right angles through what appears to be a later, knocked-through aperture leading into the central range. The tiled flooring continues, with papered walls, plastered ceiling and modern skirting and architrave throughout. The original door (Plates 12 and 13) leading in from the courtyard on the north-east side is original, with a similar segmental fanlight to that in the rear doorway and panelled reveals. The stairwell (Plate 14) leading to the first floor is located here and this is probably a mid-20th century replacement. It is carpeted, with closed stringers and panelling, and there is a door in the space below the stairwell.



Plate 12. The original pedestrian door into the residential annexe in the front wall.



Plate 13. Detail of the door latch in the front entrance door.



Plate 14. The 20th-century stairs, probably replacing earlier ones.

The former coach house is now a garage space in the central range (Plate 15) and is divided into three bays and has an original brick floor. There is a plastered wall on the north-west side, a partially painted brick wall to the south-west side and a plastered wall on the south-east side. The access into the space is through three, full height, double-width doors in the north-east side off the courtyard. In-between the doors are four brick piers with four projecting piers on the rear wall which support four cross- beams for the floor above.



Plate 15. The former coach house with clock room above and clock tower surmounting the roof.

There are two triangular apertures in the ceiling (Plate 16) on the south and north corners, which form panelled access routes for the weights of the clock above, which would have moved down through the apertures when the clock was working.



Plate 16. Triangular apertures for the clock weights with access ladder to re-set these.

There is a ladder leading up to the weights in the south corner, but this is missing in the north corner where a modern boiler is situated. There are wooden sleepers over what is presumed to be a car inspection pit in the south-eastern bay and a central hatch in the ceiling to the clock room above. A former doorway into the stables in the south-east wall has been blocked up (Plate 17) and there is a small niche (Plate 18), complete with wooden lintel, in the opposing north-west side where a new doorway is proposed. The function of this niche is not known; a patch of missing plaster here reveals some brick but also a horizontal timber, which may mark a blocking of a former doorway. However, this cannot be verified at present without further, intrusive investigation.



Plate 17. Blocked doorway into Flat 2 in the south-east wall.



Plate 18. Niche in the north-west wall of the coach house.

6.4 Assessment of the building at first floor level (photograph locations in Fig. 17).

The stairs give access to a small hallway which opens to a small bathroom, two bedrooms, a lounge and a series of cupboard spaces off the hallway which house the boiler and provide storage. All rooms are modern, with carpeted/linoleum-covered floors, plastered ceilings, modern doors and papered walls throughout. The only original exposed features here are diagonal beams exposed in the ceilings of all rooms, which appear to be a form of horizontal bracing (Plate 19). There are also some further overhead cross-beams exposed in the cupboard space and the lounge (Plate 20). There is an opaque, sliding sash window in the bathroom which is a 20th century addition.



Plate 19. Diagonal, horizontal bracing in the ceiling at first floor level.



Plate 20. Diagonal brace and cross-beam in the first floor living room.

A door leading off the hallway in the south-east side gives access into the clock room, which is sub-divided into three areas. The room was filled with stored items during the survey, so access was difficult in places. Each sub-divided area has a sliding sash, Diocletian window looking out over the courtyard. These have concealed sashes and are set back from the front, with replacement windows in the original frames. The roof is constructed with six, forelocked, kingpost principal trusses (Plate 21), jointed into a ridge-board at the apex and with clasped purlins. All beams are pit-sawn softwood which are pegged in place, except some tiebeams which appear to be hardwood. There are iron straps bolted in-between the tiebeams and the kingposts. The rear wall to the south-west and the front to the north-east side are exposed brickwork laid in English Bond; the side walls are Flemish Bond.



Plate 21. Kingpost truss.

The first area on the north-west side houses one of the weights for the clock in the north-west corner, with a small space sub-divided in the area by means of a panelling with a thick handrail above, almost like an animal pen (Plate 22). The function of this is not known. It measures 2.82 long by 1.12m wide and is 0.91m high and lined with tin on the inside walls. The flooring in this area is softwood boards, 0.24m wide, and it is open to the roof.



Plate 22. Clock weight in the corner with boarded 'pen'.

The second area provides a partitioned space where the clock mechanism is housed. The clock face internally is inscribed 'Rich Comber, Lewes 1804 (Plate 23). Richard Comber was the son of a barber from the Cliffe area of Lewes⁴, who died in 1817 and is buried in Saint Michael Church, High Street, Lewes. This space is divided by means of plank and stud partition walls to three sides (all pegged in place), with a central Diocletian window overlooking the courtyard on the north-east side. The flooring is softwood boards, 0.24m wide.

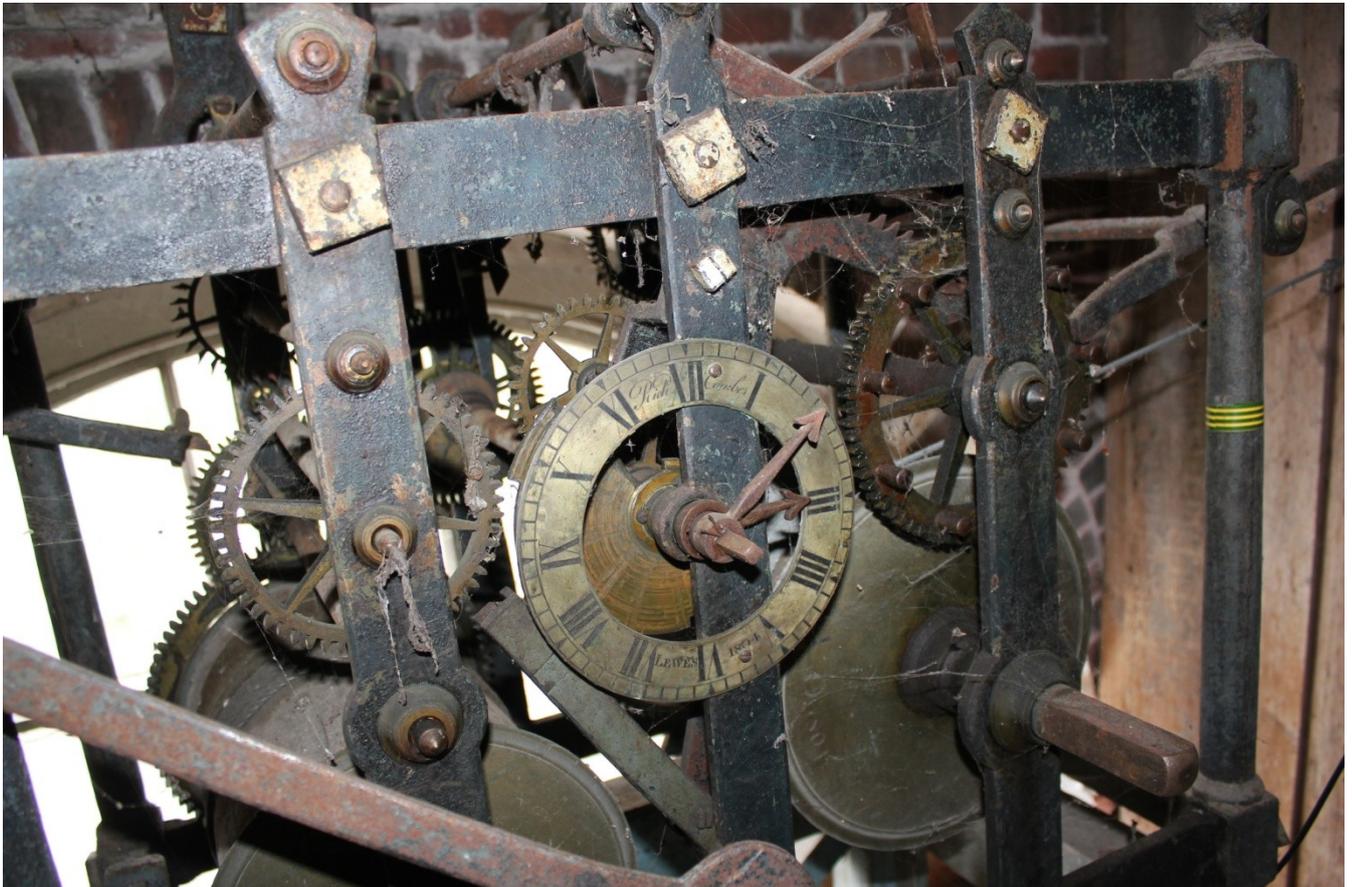


Plate 23. Internal clock face and mechanism.

There are two narrow doors giving access into the area, via a short step up (0.26m) to a central platform where the clock sits (Plate 24). The doorway on the north-west side housed a re-used 17th-century, oak panelled door, which has since been removed but sits adjacent to the doorway (Plate 25).

⁴ <https://www.sussexexpress.co.uk/news/timely-exhibition-of-clock-making-in-lewes-1-6456641>



Plate 24. Central window adjacent to the clock mechanism. Note the weight cable running off the left side.



Plate 25. Re-used 17th-century panelled door.

The door in the south-east side is a 19th-century ledge and plank door with iron strap hinges and various pencilled re-setting dates and information relating to the clock (Plate 26).



Plate 26 Ledge and plank door with re-setting notations.

The earliest of these dates, which are also spread around the partition walls, is 1844. This is situated on the south-east side of the ledge and brace door which states the following:

'January 10th 1844 started'

Other information seen on the south-east partition is as follows:

'First week in July 1844 (see Plate 27)'

and also 'set clock face June 16th 1851'

'New clock line in July 4th 1882'

'New clock line in 1900 this side'

'New clock line in 1903 Feb'

'New line both sides October 26th 1914 FB'

'Pulley rusts after O this side 11-3-1982 R.W. Holford'

'NE wire this side 22-4-88'

'New string rod to hammer 20-2-1985'

'New wire this side 2-9-93'.



Plate 27. Pencilled dates on the rear partition wall of the clock room.

The pendulum no longer swings, and the octagonal bell tower overhead is centrally positioned (Plate 28).



Plate 28. Looking up at the base of the bell tower.

Behind the space partitioned off for the clock mechanism is a narrow storage area which is full of stored items and appears blocked on the north-west side, so this could not be investigated further (Plate 29).



Plate 29. Small storage area behind the clock room.

Beyond this, to the rear, is a small room which would have provided accommodation at one point, as it once contained a small fireplace which stood on a metal plate in the south-west corner of the room, with a flue which protruded through the wall, lined with lead flashing (Plate 30). It is likely that this room was created here in the early 20th century.



Plate 30. Small accommodation room with former fireplace in corner.

There has been significant water ingress in the roof here (Plate 31) which has brought the ceiling down in places and is progressing through the floor, which are softwood boards, 0.17m wide. The walls and ceiling are constructed with softwood

tongue and groove boards and there is a peg-rail on the south-east wall. The floor-to-ceiling height is 2.22m and there is a sliding sash window with four lights over four, which is likely to be early 20th century (Plate 30).



Plate 31. Water ingress in the roof has rotted the ceiling boards.

The third area provides storage space and has significant water ingress from the modern pipes situated within (Plate 32). The floor is covered with hardboard here, and there is a small, partition space in the south-east corner which is not accessible, but which contains a water tank above, so probably houses a boiler for the second flat below. The second clock weight is housed in the south-west corner of this area (Plate 33).



Plate 32. Area 3 with modern pipes and water leak seeping into the floor.



Plate 33. The second weight balance for the clock in the south-west corner.

6.5 Assessment of the outbuilding

It is proposed that this building (Plate 34) is converted to provide a kitchen and storage for the wedding venue as part of Phase 2. Consequently, this will be considered under a separate application and is not discussed in full here, other than by means of a photographic survey.



Plate 34. The building proposed for conversion in Phase 2.



Plate 35. The stable in the outbuilding on the north-east side.

It is clear from the map regression exercise that this building has two phases, with a stable built first (Plate 35) and then four open-fronted storage bays (Plates 36 and 37) built at some point after 1843, two with double-width locking doors.



Plate 36. The open-fronted and lockable storage bays added to the outbuilding after 1843.



Plate 37. Small lockable room formed in the open storage bay of the outbuilding.

6.6 Topographical assessment of the land to the rear

A field to the rear of the access road which runs to the rear of the stables, is proposed to become car parking for 150 cars. This field is essentially flat.



Plate 38. Earthwork running across the field where the proposed car park is to be situated.

An earthwork is visible in this field, running in an east-to west orientation across the field (Plate 38). It is not known what this feature is.



Plate 39. The southern part of the field for the proposed car park.

The more southerly part of the field shows no earthworks and is flat (Plate 39). Part of this area was previously excavated and monitored by ASL during the biomass development and several features and artefacts were found here. This included a possible Roman trackway at a depth of 0.80m and residual prehistoric pottery. However, the car park surface will be constructed with 'Grasscrete' with just 75mm of soil being stripped prior to laying plastic matting for the surface. Consequently, this will only impact on ploughsoil.

7.0 ASSESSMENT OF ARCHAEOLOGICAL POTENTIAL

7.1 A review of the features and buildings recorded and detailed earlier indicates that although the Site has potential for below-ground archaeology, this is not likely to be impacted by the proposals.

7.2 Prehistoric

The Study Area has produced some evidence for prehistoric occupation.

The potential of the Site for this period is Low.

7.3 Romano-British

The Study Area has produced some evidence for Romano-British occupation, with a possible Roman track some 100m south of the Site but not orientated towards the buildings.

The potential of the Site for this period is therefore Low.

7.4 Anglo-Saxon

The Study Area has produced little clear evidence for Anglo-Saxon occupation. Although a possible barrow lies 750m to the south-west. this does not have any connections to the Site in general.

The potential of the Site for this period is therefore Low.

7.5 Medieval

The Study Area has produced some evidence for medieval occupation and the Site is situated within a medieval village and lies within 30m of the medieval church.

The potential of the Site for this period is high.

7.6 Post-medieval

The post-medieval history of the Site is significant, with further evidence likely to survive as buried archaeological deposits.

The potential of the Site for this period is High.

7.7 Summary of potential

This DBA only considers the *potential* of the Site in principle. Often, the conclusions, if considered to prove that the potential for archaeology is high, can only be tested by fieldwork in order to confirm whether remains are actually present

This potential for the discovery of hitherto unknown archaeology has been supported by a review of the known archaeological sites near to the Site. Therefore, the potential for new sites/findspots being located within the proposed development area is summarised as follows:

Prehistoric – Low

Romano-British - Low

Anglo-Saxon - Low

Medieval - High

Post-medieval – High

To conclude, the Site is considered to lie within an area of high archaeological potential for the medieval and post-medieval periods. However, this is only based on below-ground potential.

8.0 EXISTING IMPACTS ON ARCHAEOLOGICAL POTENTIAL

- 8.1 The site has been in use as a stable yard and riding school since the late 18th century and has seen relatively minimal progressive building or demolition. There has been no obvious landscaping within the yard itself (which is paved over with small stone blocks) and the driveways to the buildings appear to be contemporary, as shown in the map regression. There have therefore been few apparent truncations of any subsurface archaeology other than in the areas where the buildings stand. The depths of the foundations for the brick buildings extend to 0.70m. However, approximately three years ago a capping covering the original well in the east corner of the stable yard is known to have collapsed. This has since been repaired and made good.
- 8.2 The building has been the subject of some minor alterations, probably in the mid-20th century when the flats were updated and re-decorated. In addition, the stables on the south-east wing were updated and one of the stables in the north-west wing was stripped out and refitted in recent years when converted to an engine room. This area was not accessible on the day of the survey, so we cannot comment further on this. A new doorway has been knocked through between the stables and the riding school, as part of the permitted alterations.
- 8.3 Previous ground works were monitored by ASL in the rear yard of the stables when the biomass service trenches were excavated. This showed the ground to be made ground to a depth of at least 0.80m and buried topsoil or natural geology was not

encountered. Clearly this area has been subjected to much disturbance, probably when the stables were built, and it is probable that the area was made level prior to laying the estate access road here. The groundworks which extended across and beside the access road also proved this to be the case, with deep deposits of made ground encountered here.

9.0 ASSESSMENT OF IMPACT OF PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT

9.1 Statement of Significance

The significance of the stables is focussed on the survival of the Grade II* Listed 18th/19th-century structures. They are visually cohesive, with the stables being two-storied and built in bricks of a similar type. They represent a high-status coach house and stables from this period, with some original stalls retained, although a significant number of these have been replaced. The presence of the living quarters for stable-hands above adds to the significance of the intact survival, especially when combined with the clock house and tower. This is an important and significant structure to have survived to the present day. The proposed change of use for the clock room would significantly alter the original layout and function of this room. However, the final plans for this room lie in Phase 2 and have not been seen yet, so it is difficult to comment further. As such, it is considered significant enough to request complete restoration and preservation of this facility.

The structures themselves provide potential for further understanding of the past, as they have not been fully recorded, with some historic fabric still fully exposed in parts across the buildings which are still eminently 'readable'. The riding school has been previously fully recorded, but not the stables which have only been subjected to a rapid survey for this assessment. There is some potential for below-ground evidence within the building, but it is our understanding that floors will not be reduced or altered.

9.2 Impact of Proposed Development for Phase 1

- According to information provided by the client, the aim of the proposed works is to convert the existing flat on the north-west side to provide two new bathrooms in the existing kitchen and living room at ground floor level, with access through two new doorways from the new wedding venue based within the riding school. A service trench approximately 1.0m long and 0.60m in depth is proposed to be excavated outside the building to connect the toilet facilities to the main sewage pipe. **This building is currently used throughout the year for community functions and is without toilet facilities. These proposals lie in the less significant areas of the building and have already been compromised by the fitting of a new kitchen with existing drains in place. In our opinion, this proposal will cause minimal harm on the historic fabric and will help to create an enhanced heritage asset by providing wider social benefits and putting the building to a viable use.**
- Additionally, one temporarily blocked doorway in the existing living room will be in-filled permanently. **Once again, this proposal lies in the least significant area and as**

long as this is mindful of how it is fitted into the existing doorframe, then this is not considered to give cause for concern.

- At first floor level, new facilities are proposed to convert an existing bathroom into a kitchen and a bedroom into a bathroom. It is our understanding that the existing lounge and bedroom do not have significant alterations planned. These proposals again lie in the less significant areas of the building and have already been compromised by the fitting of a bathroom with some existing drains in place. In our opinion, this proposal will cause less than substantial harm to the historic fabric if new pipe work does not impact on it.
- Externally there will be a small bin store and two disabled parking spaces flanking the south side of the Riding School. These areas are likely to be situated in areas of thick, made ground behind the riding school in an area used as a staff car park, which is hidden behind an existing wall, so the setting will not be affected. In our opinion, this proposal will cause less than substantial harm to the historic fabric and will help to create an enhanced heritage asset by providing wider social benefits and putting the building to a viable use.
- Parking for 150 cars is proposed in a field behind the rear access road into the Firle Place, created on existing land with 'Grasscrete'. This area has already been excavated, so we know the depths of any surviving archaeology. The maximum depth we understand this will be excavated to is 150mm. In our opinion this will not impact below-ground archaeology and will affect the setting of the heritage asset on a temporary basis only, as the car park will not be used permanently throughout the year. Therefore, we consider this to be an essential part of providing wider social benefits and putting the site to a viable use.

It is our understanding that no further alterations will occur elsewhere within the stables.

9.3 Impact of Proposed Development for Phase 2

- A new bridal suite is proposed within the existing clock room. This is in a highly significant area and if not approached in the right manner could cause substantial harm to the historic fabric. However, if approached with conservation ideals in mind, it could provide an excellent opportunity to draw on the contribution made by the heritage asset to the character of a place and could protect the facility for the future. However, it is to be recommended that the clock be fully restored, including the wooden panelling surrounding it, although we cannot comment further until proposals are drawn up in full.
- In addition, the ground floor garage will be converted into a bar and a new doorway is proposed for the north-west wall, giving access into the new toilet facilities beyond. This is in a highly significant area and if not approached in the right manner could cause substantial harm to the historic fabric. However, there is a possibility that the proposed doorway is actually re-instating an original door, although we cannot prove this without further investigation. As long as the floor remains intact,

and any new fittings are mindful of the historic fabric here, it is likely the proposal will cause less than substantial harm.

- It is proposed that the remaining original stable be restored for use as a seating area and the former doorway in the south-west wall be re-opened, giving access to the toilet facilities beyond. These stalls are original and highly significant, so this would provide another excellent opportunity to draw on the contribution made by the heritage asset to the character of a place and could protect the facility for the future. All fittings should be moveable and not fixed to the historic fabric.
- There are plans to renovate an extant outbuilding to the rear of the riding school to create a kitchen and storage facility but plans for these have not been drawn up yet. We can comment that this is a less significant building which is currently under-used, so early indications are that any proposals might provide wider social benefits by putting the building to a viable use.

Finally, there are plans to convert the end room in the north-east projecting wing. The plans for this have not been drawn up and the room was not available to survey on the day, so we cannot comment on this further.

9.3 Setting issues relating to designated sites

Heritage England (formerly English Heritage) provides guidance on establishing the significance of heritage assets and on defining the settings of listed buildings. These are the Good Practice Advice Notes in Planning Note 2, Managing Significance in Decision-Taking, and Good Practice Advice Notes in Planning Note 3, The Setting of Heritage Assets.

The GPA Note 2 stresses that understanding the significance is important to achieve conservation of the asset. An understanding of the extent of the significance will lead to an understanding of how adaptable the building is. The level of significance helps to determine how policies should be applied.

In this case, the significance of the stable and riding school buildings lies in their historic character, appearance and fabric, as well as the former/current uses of the buildings. Their external appearance is particularly significant in the current setting and some of the original internal appearance is intact, especially the surviving stalls and the clock room.

They sit within the historic estate, detached but related in form and function to the other historic buildings, as well the Listed Park and Garden attached to the property. Its location does give it a distinctive role in the locality but not one that is fully used (certainly that of the riding school) or fully accessible at present and so the prominence is slightly debased.

All sides of the stables are visible locally, so the form and structure of the building has retained its significance. Other Listed Historic Buildings lie scattered to all sides, making up the rest of the estate.

This assessment of the significance of the stables confirm that their significance lies in the form, structure and appearance of the building; some of the internal appearance of the rooms within the residential flats has little interest from a heritage point of view, due to their modern age. One wall will be slightly impacted by the proposals, where two new doorways are proposed. This does not give great cause for concern but a sympathetic approach with conservation ideals would be advised considering its late 18th century origins.

In general, the proposals avoid any interruption of the simple character or treatment of the main building. The plans are mainly for internal work and so they will not draw the eye.

The main 15th-century Listed Building of Firle Place and its setting, along with its stables and riding school, form a small but harmonious grouping in a pristine historic environment; modern dwellings do not encroach into the group, giving uninterrupted historic settings, views and curtilage that must be preserved. We believe the proposals will not deter from this.

As there will be little impact to the *setting* of the heritage asset, when viewed as a whole, and when tested against the structured approach in the National Planning Policy Framework, it is found to represent less than substantial harm to the *wider* setting.

According to paragraph 134 of the National Planning Framework, the loss of the heritage asset should be weighed against the public benefit of the proposal. The public benefit of the proposal is that the area will be enhanced by creating a viable and balanced commercial/domestic function with the creation of new accommodation and a new venue for the wider community, whilst preserving and enhancing the more significant buildings. It represents inward investment.

There are some setting issues regarding the car parking area, but as this is designed to be grass, and used for occasional parking, it will not have any permanent effect on the overall setting of the estate. The proposals would not contribute adversely to the appearance of the Conservation Area. In short, we believe that the works will not affect the character.

10.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 10.1 As noted in section 1.5 above, it necessary to bear in mind that desk-based appraisals do not provide a *definitive* statement on the likelihood of archaeological deposits being present within the proposed development area. Therefore, we must stress that this appraisal can only suggest the potential of that area to contain archaeological features/find spots. This is based entirely on this non-intrusive report, utilising observations made during the walkover survey as well as available historical data. As such, the conclusions presented herein can only be proven by the addition of fieldwork techniques. This assessment is my considered view based upon the recent survey on 27/3/18, as well as the notes made at that time in discussion with all parties. This interpretive study is based upon my knowledge and experience of such buildings and is intended as advice. Many of the views which inform the conservation of historical buildings are to some extent subjective – particularly with regards to more recent extensions and

alterations – therefore I would like to state that there is no guarantee that the opinions expressed within this document will be endorsed by the local planning authority.

- 10.2 As the works to the buildings for Phase 1 will be very limited, and the overall form of the structures will not be greatly compromised, further building recording is not considered to be necessary for this phase. However, for Phase 2, it is recommended that the stables and the important clock room, should be fully recorded to an Historic England Level 3 survey before development begins. In addition, the outbuilding to the rear should be fully recorded prior to development.
- 10.3 It is not recommended that a watching brief is carried out on below-ground interventions, such as the service run to the building. One of these, to the rear of the building, was previously monitored by ASL in 2016, which recorded 0.80m of made ground immediately adjacent to the proposed trench. In addition, the planned ground reduction for the services is minimal and the car parking area will be constructed with 'Grasscrete' and is anticipated to be excavated to a maximum depth of 150mm, thus only within ploughsoil.
- 10.4 The only controversial issue is the conversion of the clock house to a bridal suite. We do not have details of this at present, so it is difficult to comment further, other than to say that this is a highly significant heritage asset which should be approached with delicacy and restored, including the wooden partition walls which surround the clock mechanism.
- 10.5 It is recommended that the water leak from the new pipes is stemmed as a matter of urgency, along with the leak in the roof, before more historic fabric is impacted.
- 10.4 The above comments should be discussed with the Archaeological Officers of East Sussex County Council, as well as the Conservation Officer.

LISA JAYNE FISHER BA (Hons), MA, ACIfA

Principal Archaeologist

Archaeology Services Lewes

April 2018



(OS map licence ASL number: 100055392)

Fig. 1. Site Location. *Reproduction in whole or in part is prohibited without the prior permission of the Ordnance Survey ©Crown copyright and database rights 2017.*

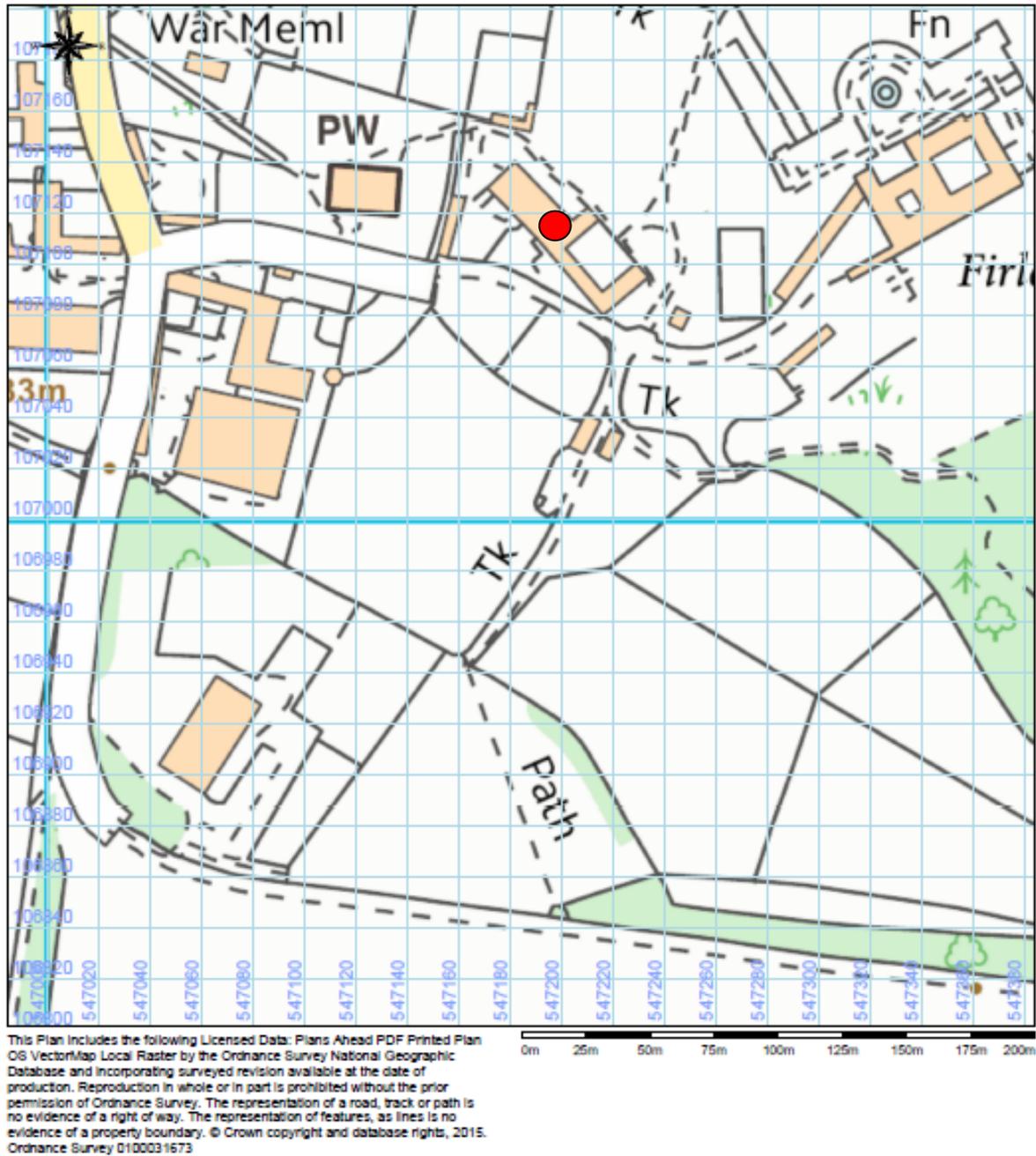


Fig. 2. Site plan with buildings for conversion centred on the red dot.

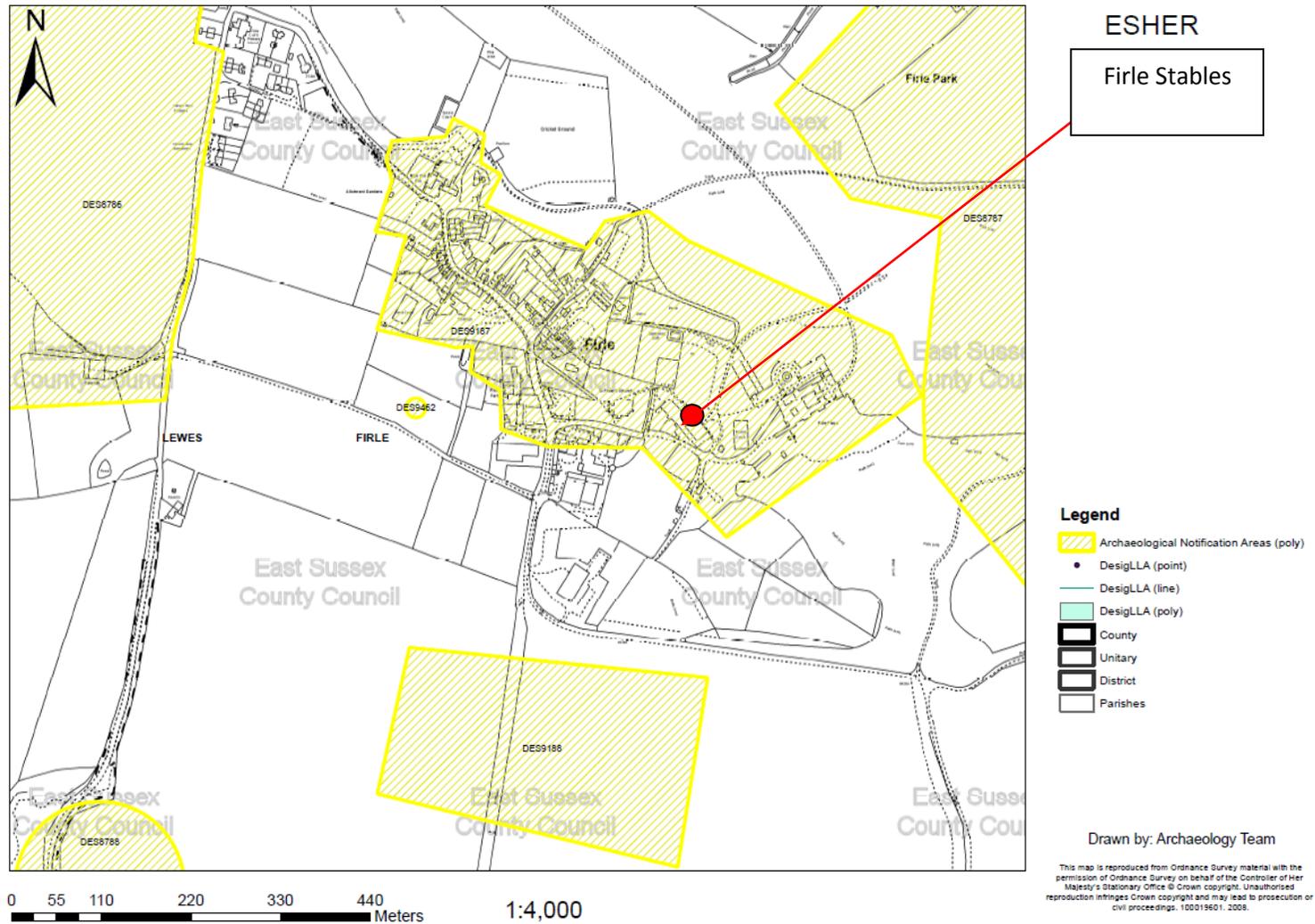


Fig. 3. Archaeological Notification Areas within Firle.

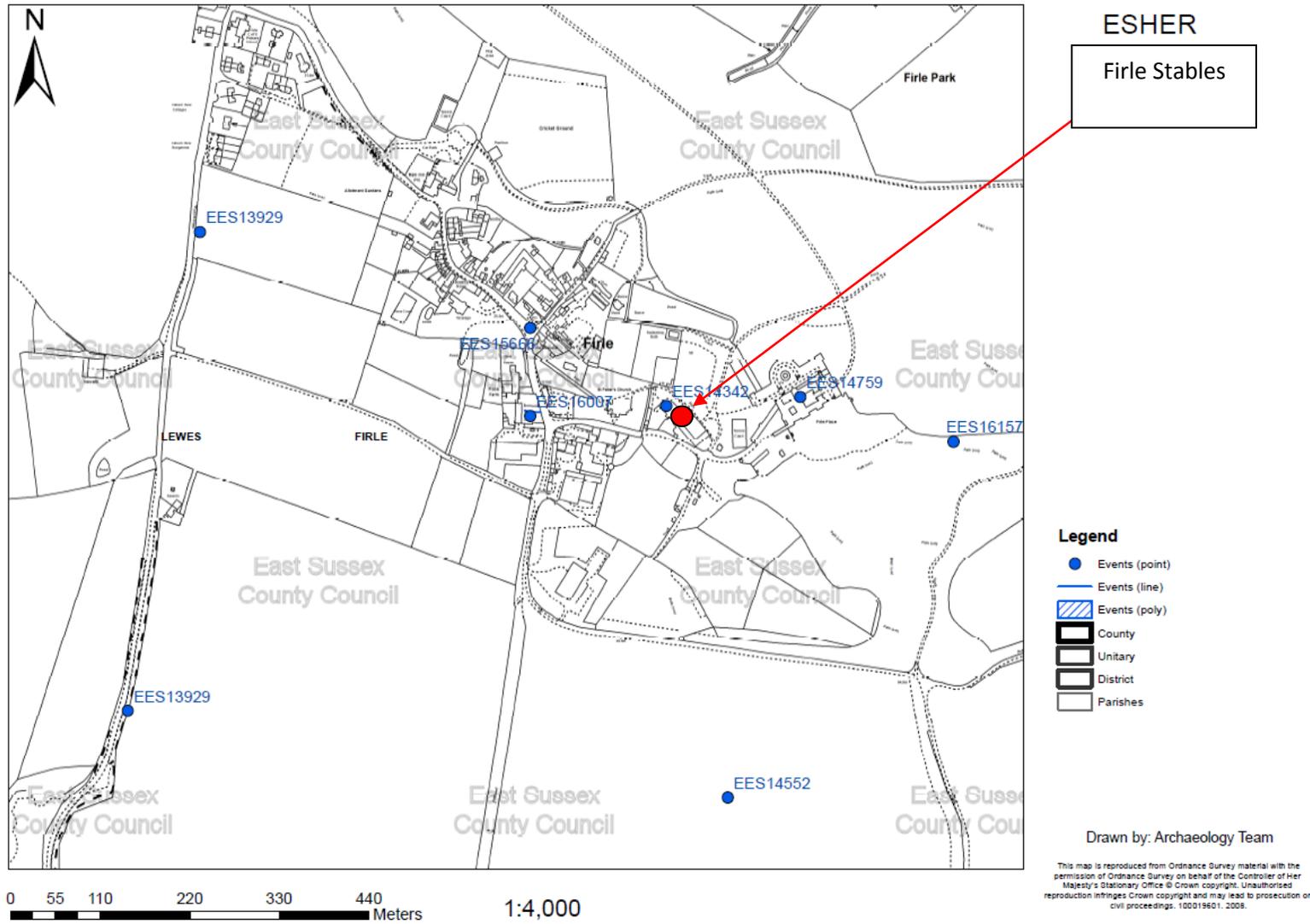


Fig. 4. Archaeological events in Firle.

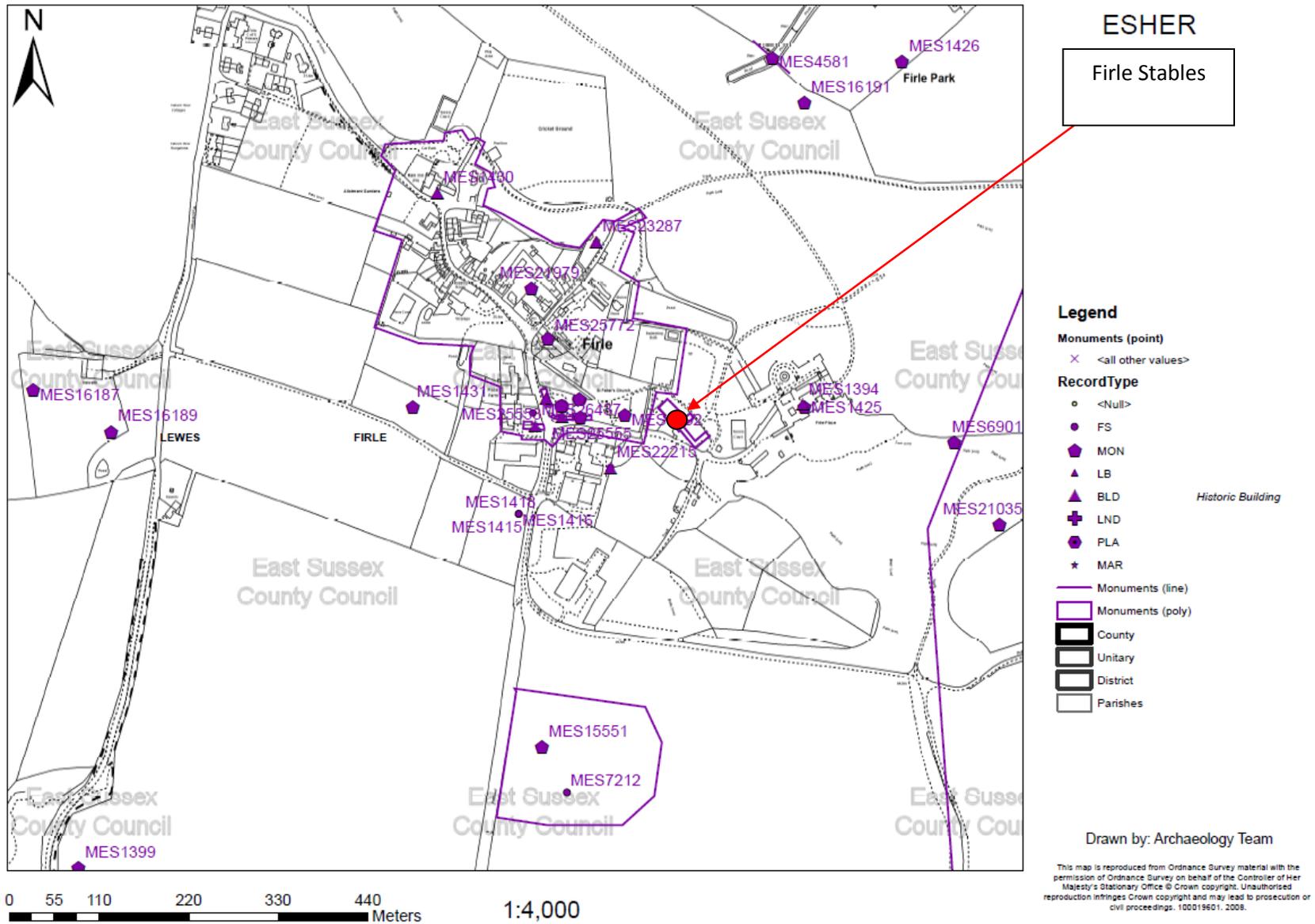


Fig. 5. Archaeological sites in Firle.

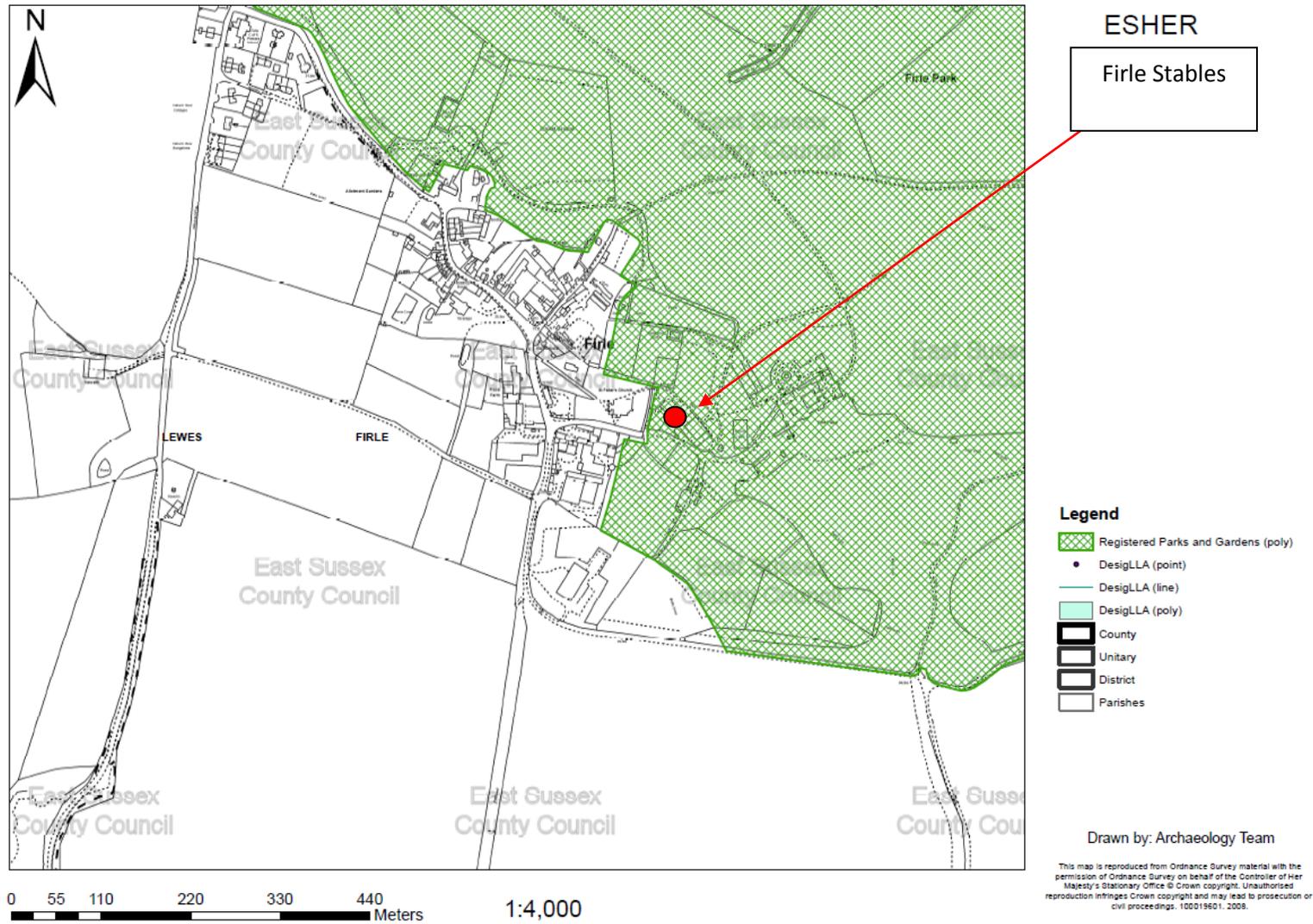


Fig. 6. Registered Park and garden within Firle.

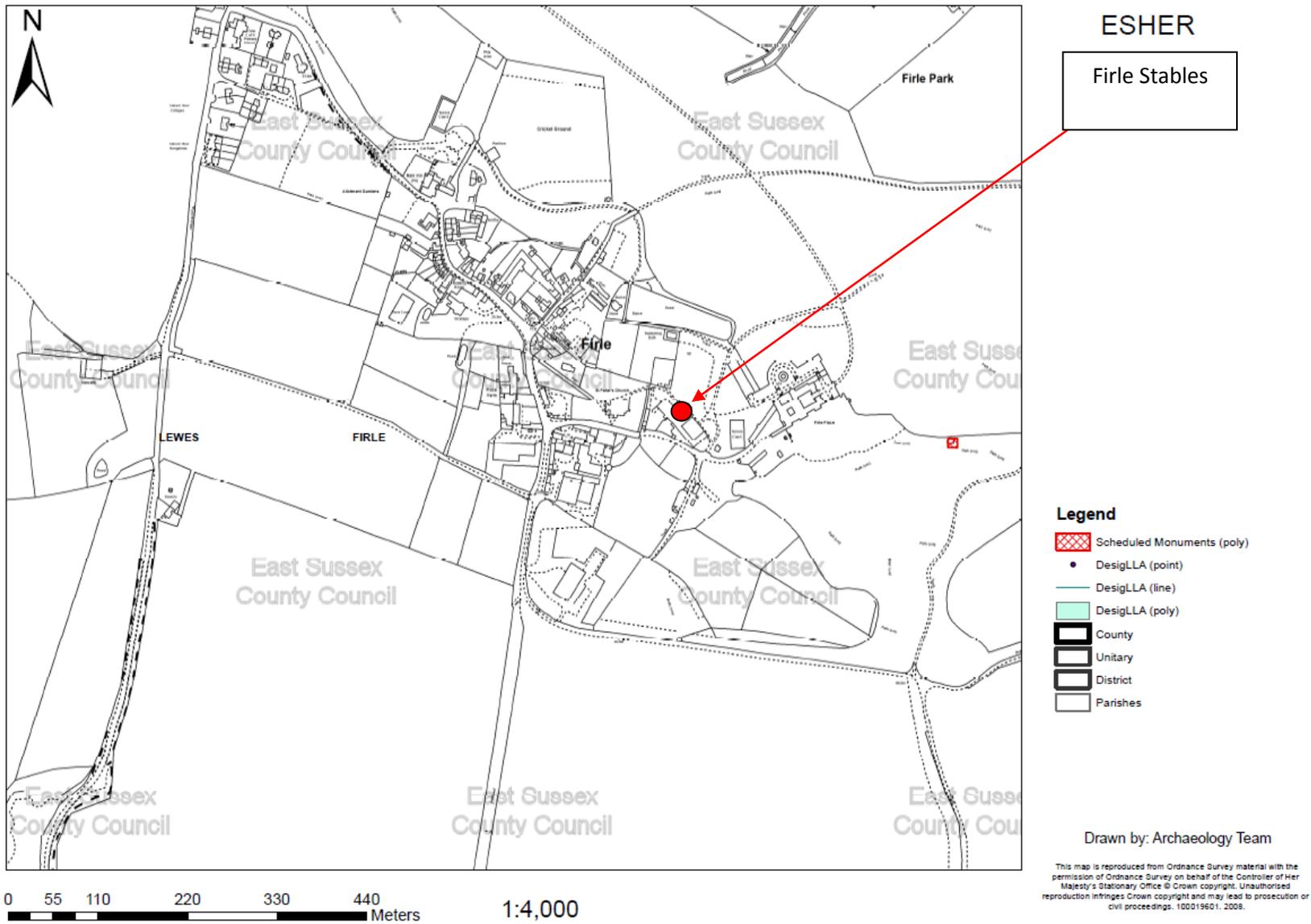


Fig. 7. Scheduled Monument in Firle.

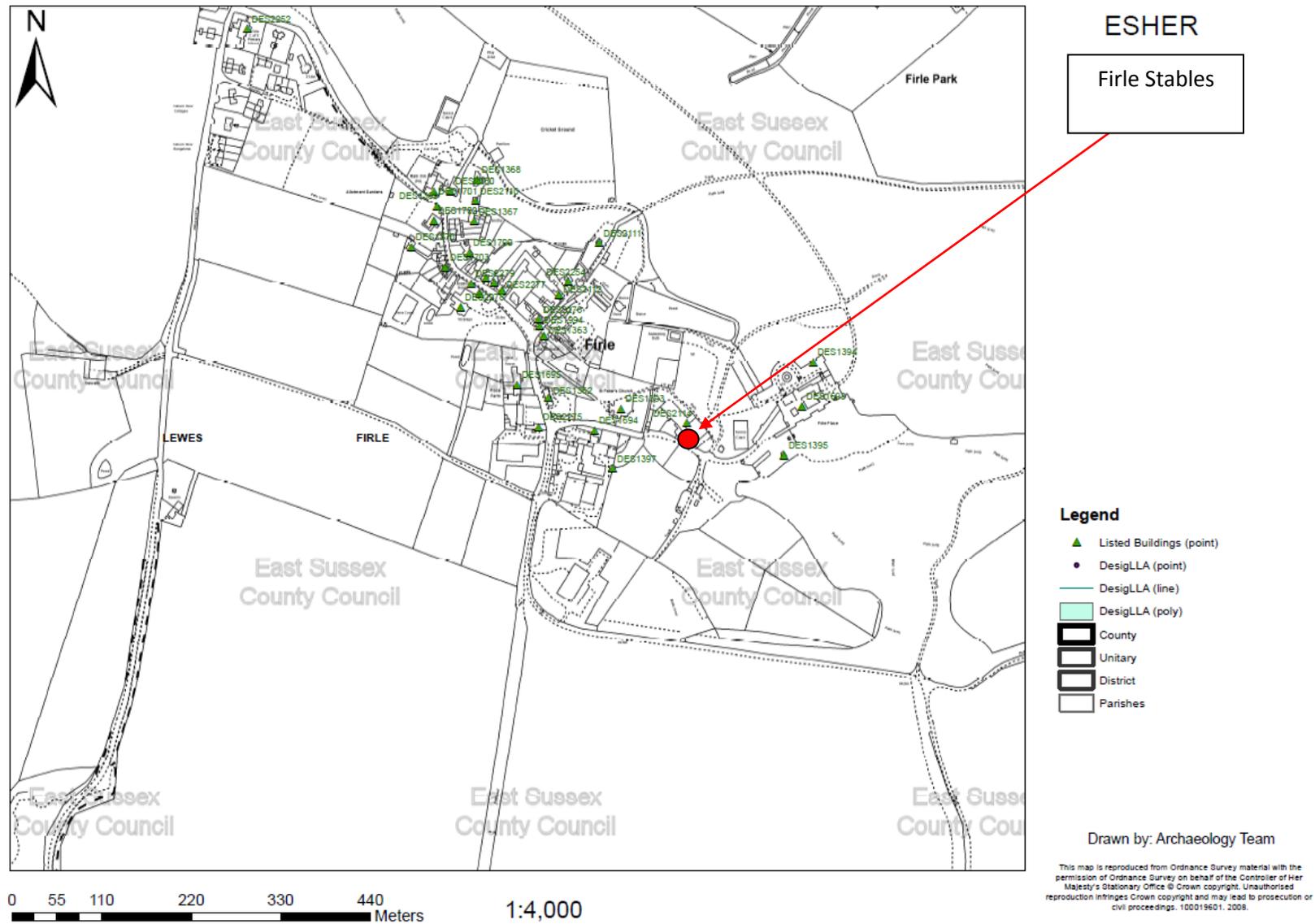


Fig. 8. Listed buildings in Firle.

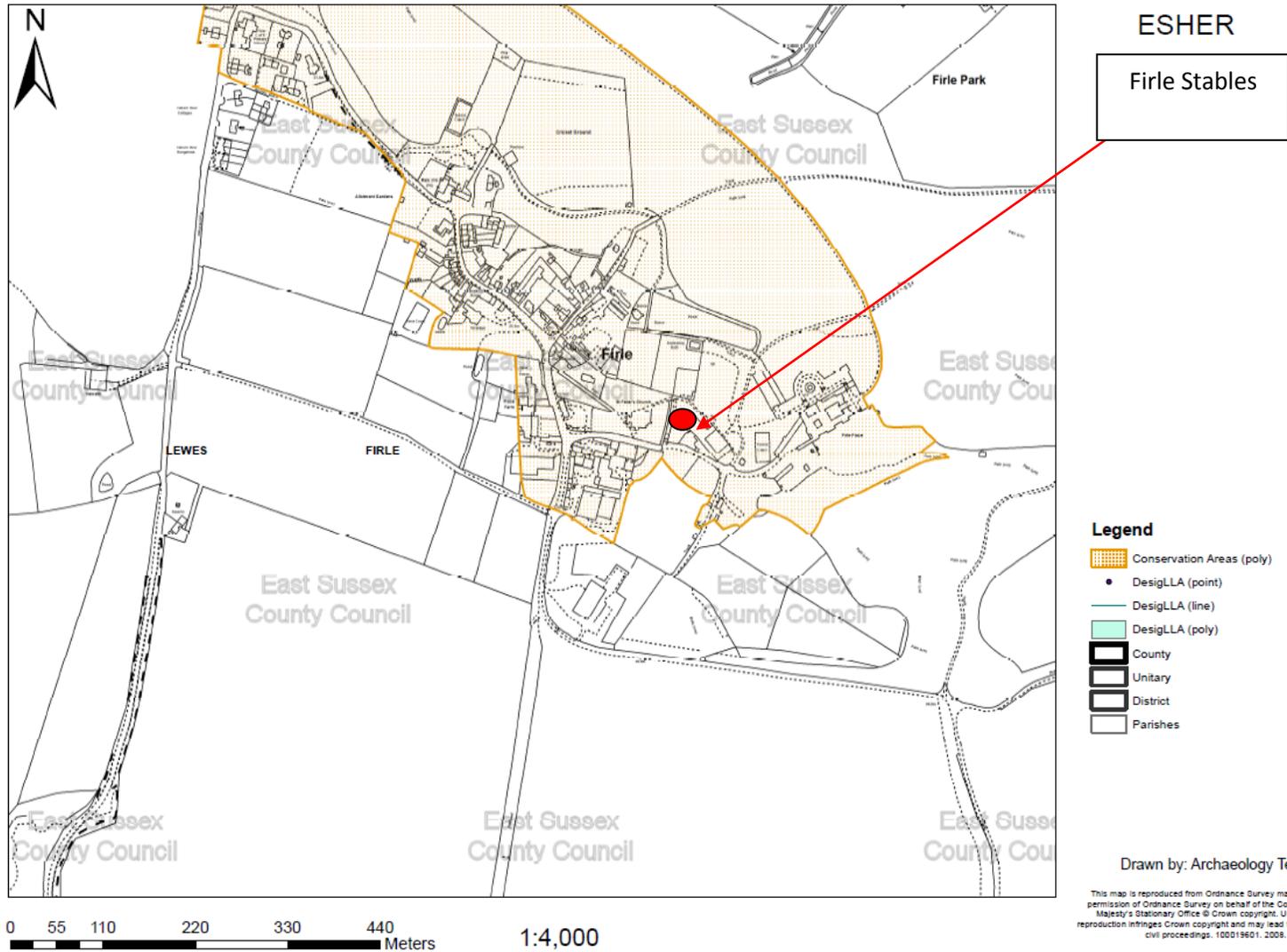


Fig. 9. Firle Conservation Area.

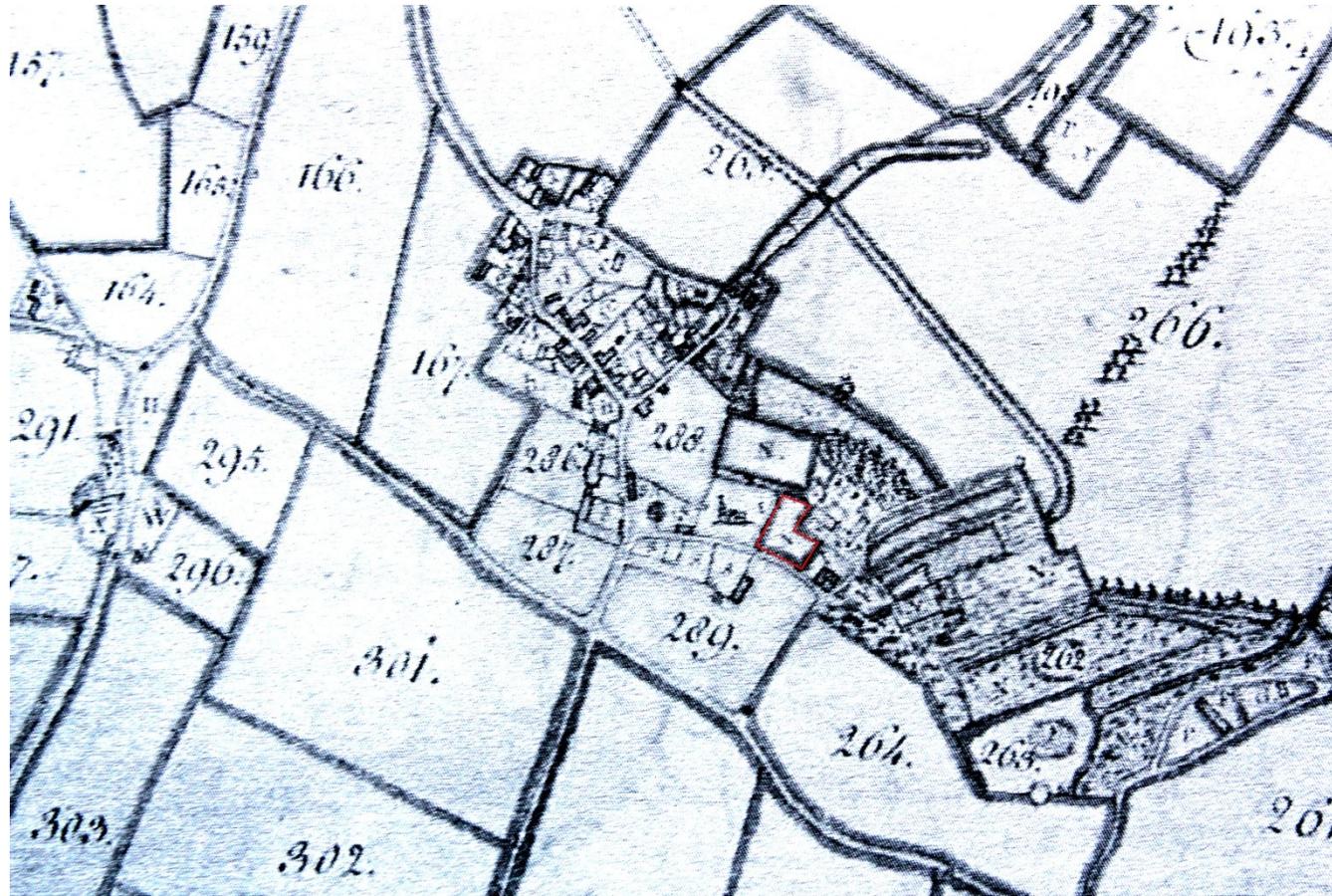


Fig. 10. The 1775 estate map of Firle, with the Site plot outlined in red.

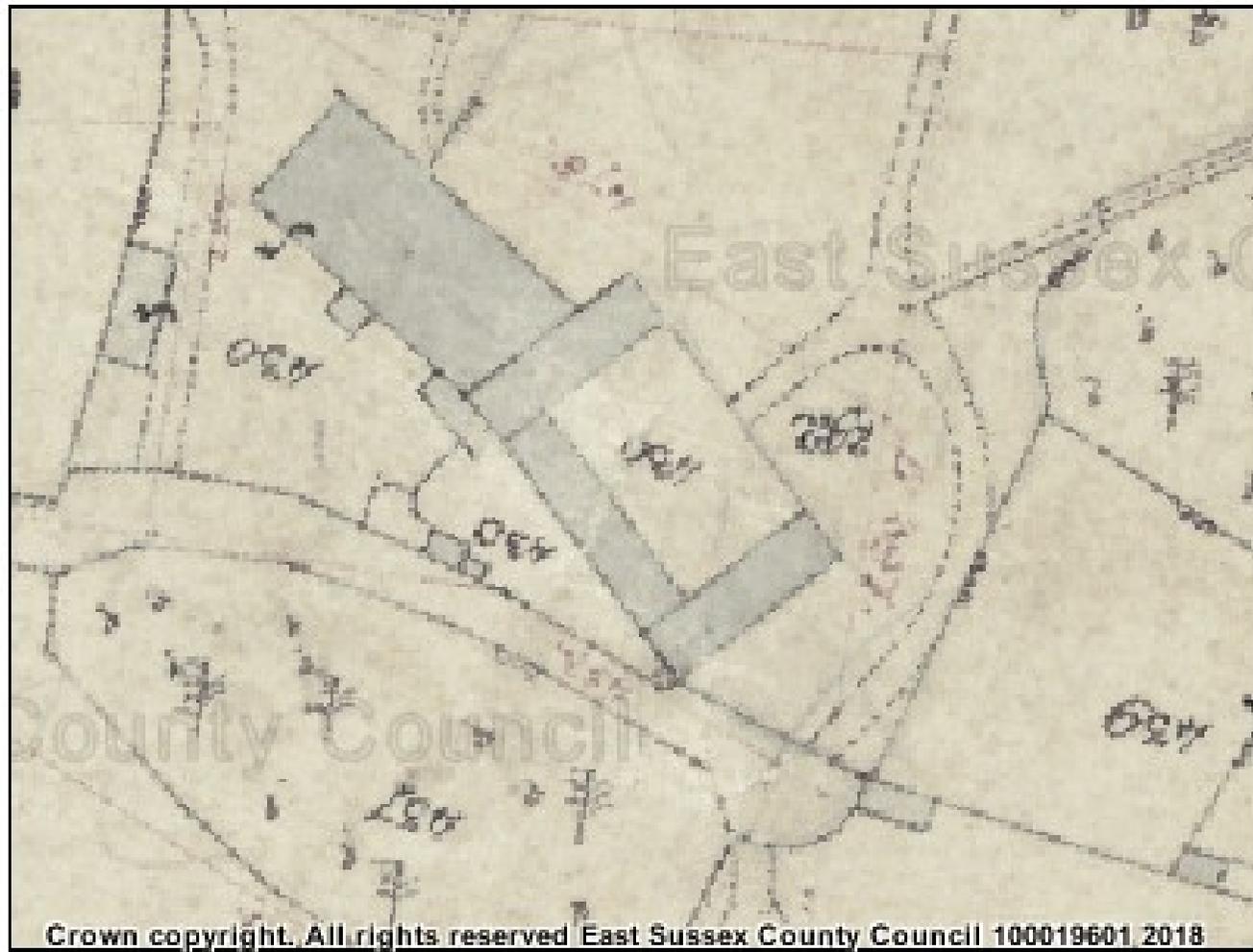


Fig. 11. West Firle tithe map c.1843 (TD/E36).

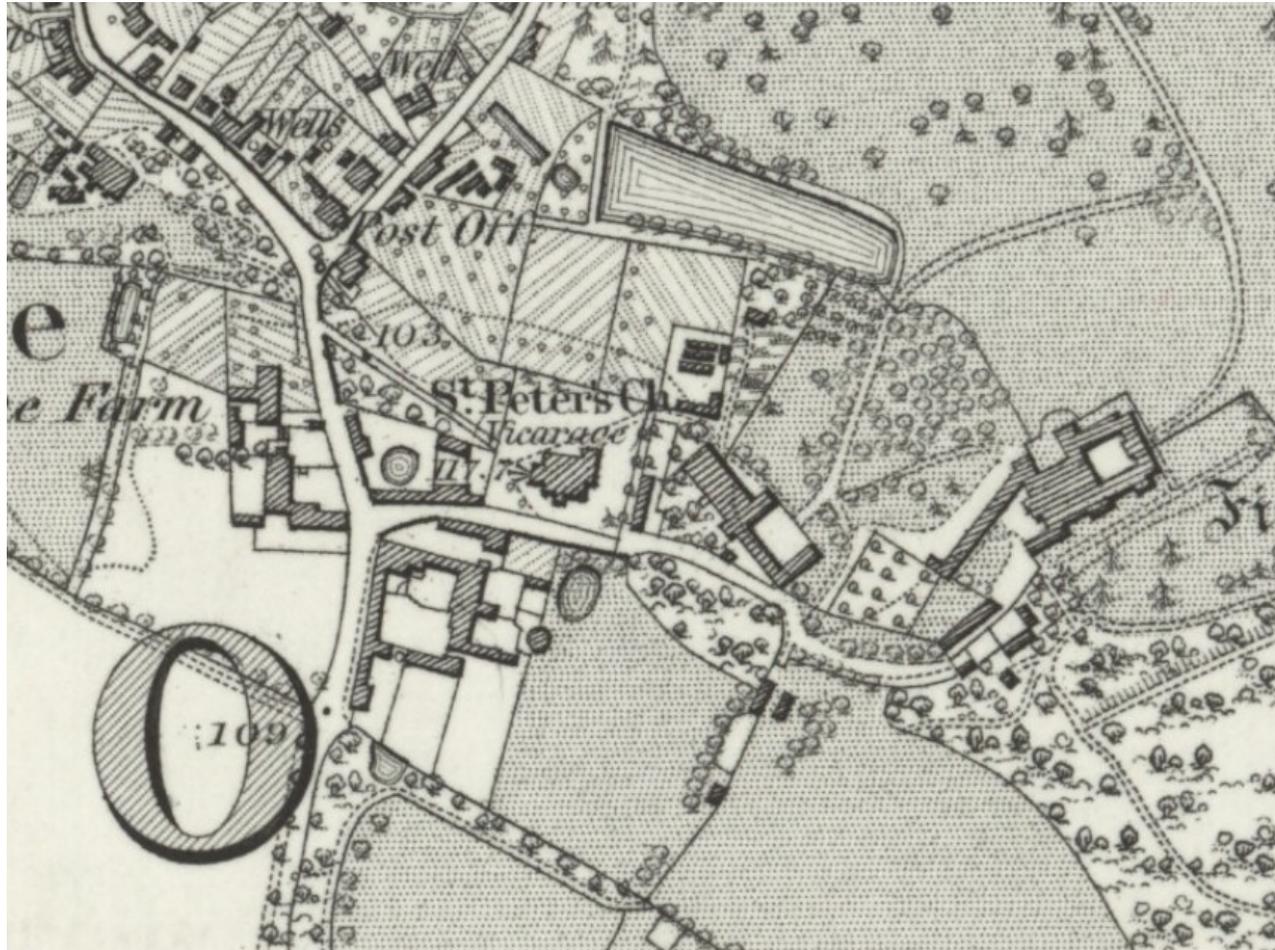


Fig. 12. Ordnance Survey map from 1873.

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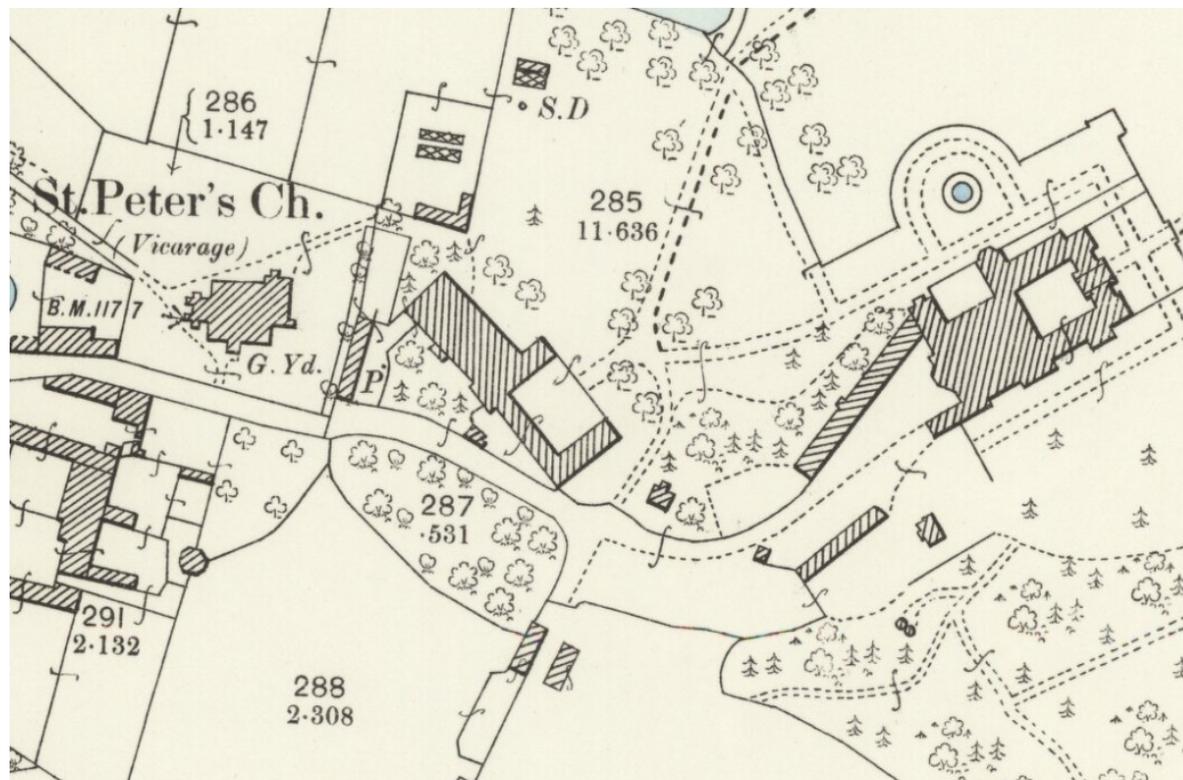


Fig. 13. Ordnance Survey map from 1898.

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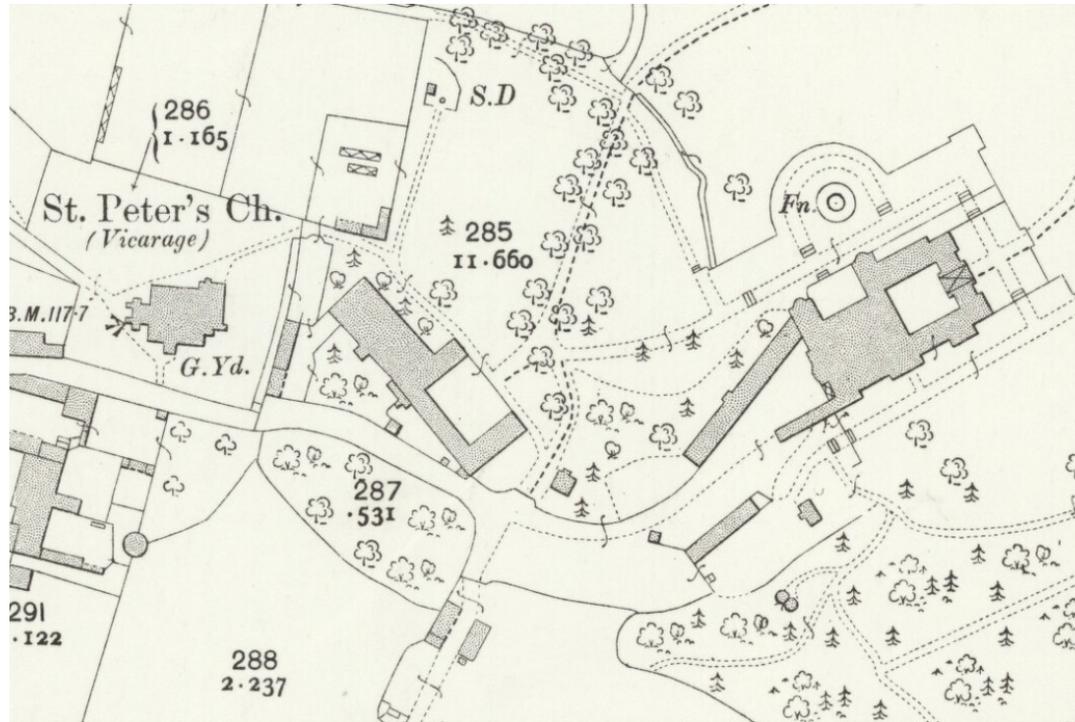


Fig. 14. Ordnance Survey map from 1908.

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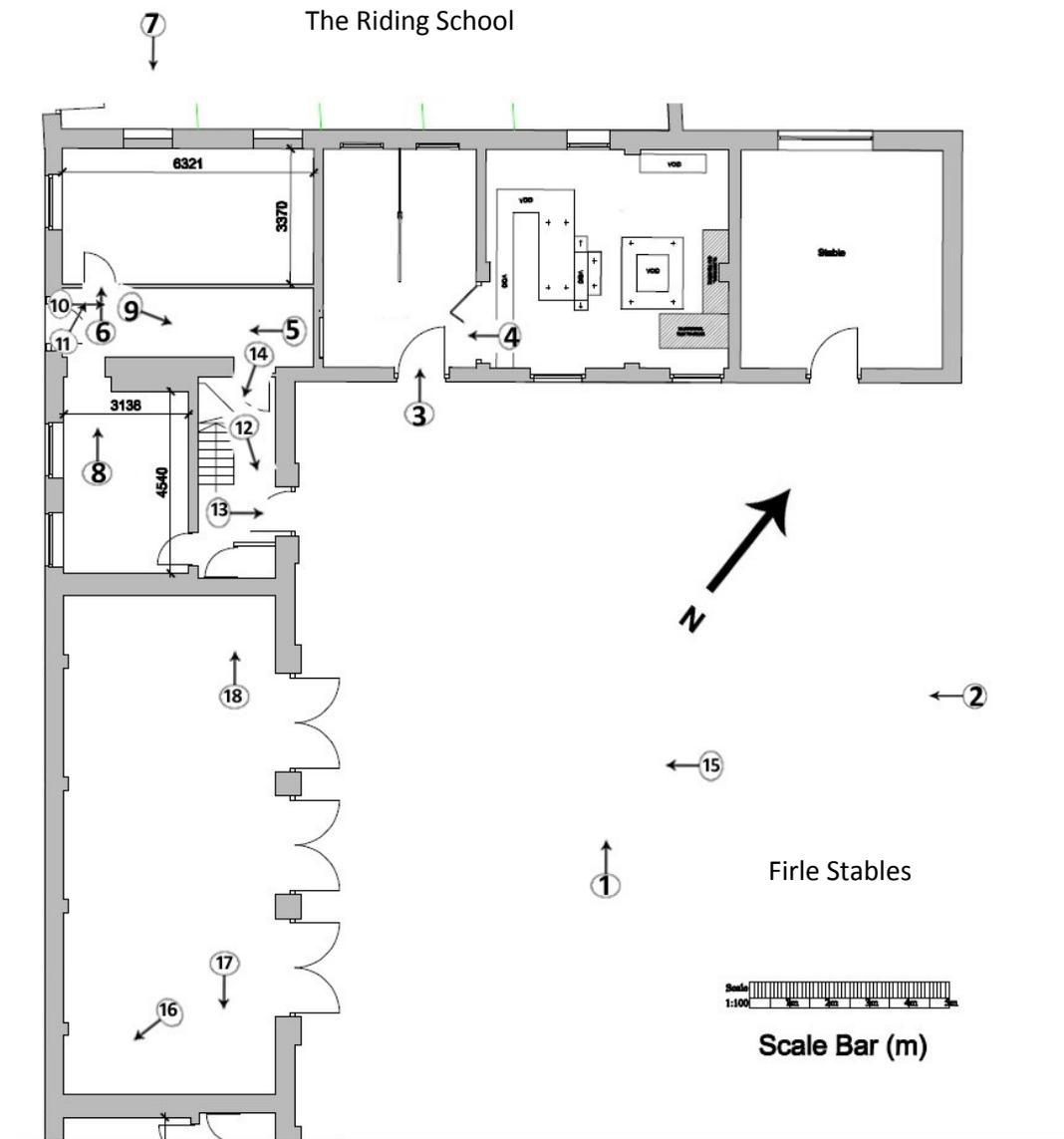


Fig. 16. Ground floor plan and photograph locations based on architect's plan ©Glenn Moore Associates drawing number 1718/160/02.

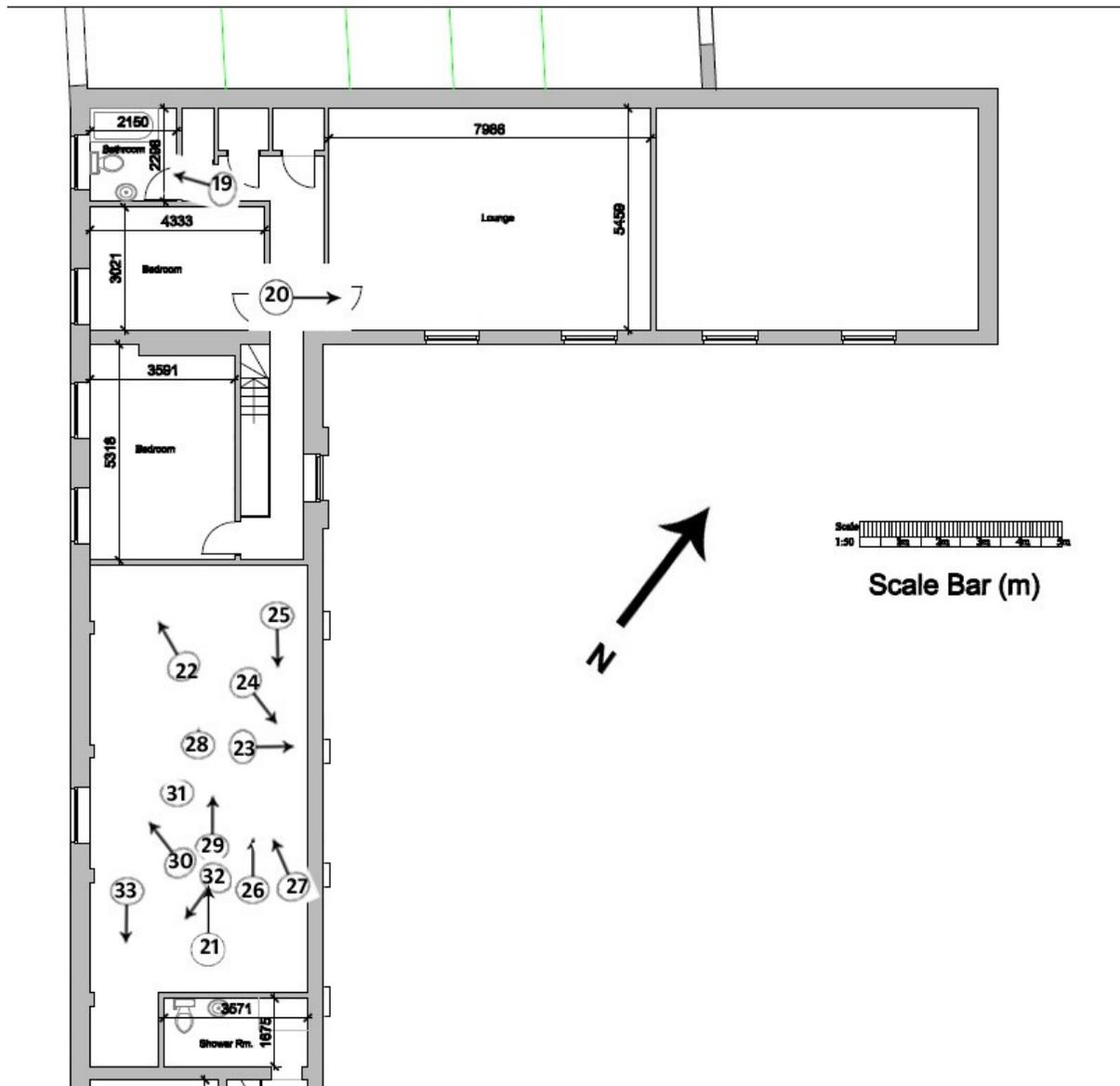


Fig. 17. Ground floor plan and photograph locations based on architect's plan ©Glenn Moore Associates drawing number 1718/160/07.

A DESK-BASED ASSESSMENT FOR FIRLE RIDING SCHOOL AND
STABLES, FIRLE, EAST SUSSEX.

Archaeology Services Lewes

Project number: 146-18

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