

An Archaeological Building Survey of the KCC Springfield Library Site, Sandling Road, Maidstone, Kent

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AN ARCHAEOLOGICAL BUILDING SURVEY OF THE KCC SPRINGFIELD LIBRARY SITE, SANDLING ROAD, MAIDSTONE, KENT



SWAT Archaeology

The Office, School Farm Oast, Graveney Road,

Faversham, Kent

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Peker Skyline Ltd are currently making preparations for the development of land at the former KCC Springfield Library site, Sandling Road, Maidstone in Kent (NGR 575650 156975). The proposed development is to comprise the erection of residential development comprising 100 flats and 14 houses and associated roads and parking (front cover).

A planning application for the proposed development (MA/12/2032) has been granted by Maidstone Borough Council with Condition 24 stating that:

No development, including demolition of existing structures, shall commence until a programme of building recording and analysis (the 'Programme') has been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The Programme shall include a written scheme of investigation, which shall be implemented in the implementation of the planning permission. The resulting report shall be submitted to the Local Planning Authority, the Historic Environment Record held by Kent County Council and the Maidstone Museum before first occupation of the development hereby permitted;

Reason: To prevent the unrecorded loss of a non-designated heritage asset.

1.2 The building recording was conducted in accordance with a SWAT specification issued in November 2016 and was carried out in November 2016 in accordance with a Level 3 survey as detailed in the English Heritage publication 'Understanding Historic Buildings': A Guide to Good Recording Practice' (2006) and the Institute of Field Archaeologists Standard and Guidance for the Archaeological investigation and recording of standing buildings or structures (2014) and KCC Archaeological Manuals 'A' & 'B'.

Level 3 is an analytical record. Building on Levels 1 and 2, there should be a systematic account of the building's origins, development and use. The evidence on which the analysis has been based should be included. This is likely to include documentary evidence such as old maps, photographs, written accounts referring to the house, past owners, architect etc. A full set of measured drawings, including architectural features i.e. cornicing, architraves etc where appropriate and a full internal and external photographic record.

1.3 In summary the work consists of a descriptive report accompanied by digital images and annotated plans as appropriate.

2.0 HISTORICAL/ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND

2.1 The development site

The Archaeological record, both in and around the Proposed Development Area (PDA) is diverse. The KCC HER data itemises the known archaeology in the immediate vicinity of the PDA. A watching brief in 2002 found some abraded pottery but no features predating the 19th century (EKE 9429). Some Roman pottery sherds found but the report notes the site is truncated and disturbed (EKE 6083). 19th century red brick wall foundations and some Roman and Late Medieval pottery sherds found (EKE 9471). In addition the former site of the County Emergency Centre was located under the KCC staff canteen, built in 1964 it is now believed destroyed (TQ 75 NE 442). A Roman road is known to the east of the site (TQ 74 SE 36).

The following information is paraphrased from the advice given by the KCC Senior Archaeological Officer:

The application site lies within a few metres of a possible prehistoric activity site and a major Roman road. This site was also occupied by buildings associated with the Springfield late post-medieval house with its associated Lodge and possible carriage house and stables (Wendy Rogers 09/01/2013).

A rapid map assessment of OS Historic Mapping and Aerial Photographs (Plates 1a-5a) show that in 1868 the site was mainly orchard and to the south of the site was situated 'Parkhouse Cottage' (Figure 4).

By 1897 a more substantial country house 'Springfield' had been built to the west of the site whilst on the site itself stables and a Lodge had been built (Figure 5).

Little changed to 1956 when the Springfield country house is now annotated as the 'Kent Education Committee Headquarters & Supplies Depot' (Figure 9).

By 1960-1964 the stables had been demolished to be replaced by the present library building. However, the Lodge still survives (Figure 11) until 1965-1970 when it has been demolished (Figure 12).

The structures to be demolished have historic significance as important examples of civic architecture in the late 20th century.

3.0 PARAMETERS

3.1 The recording was restricted to the structures on site to be demolished; however some consideration was given to historical context.

3.2 The photographic survey was conducted using digital photography and drone coverage of the exterior of the building. The use of drones for capturing important buildings is now an acknowledged part of historic building recording. To access the drone archive access here: <https://vimeo.com/190295406>

3.3 To see additional drone footage of other building and archaeological sites recorded by SWAT Archaeology access her: www.swatarchaeology.co.uk and go to 'NEWS'.

3.4 This work did not include any investigation of below ground archaeology. Such work is administered separately by SWAT Archaeology to a WSI prepared for KCC.

4.0 PROJECT OBJECTIVES

4.1 A Level 3 recording has been requested in line with English Heritage published guidance. 'Understanding Historic Buildings: A Guide to Good Recording Practice' (English Heritage -2006). A Level 3 recording is described as a 'descriptive record' to include inspection and description of the exterior and interior of the buildings. The report should establish identification of the building's location, age and type, and also some analysis of the building's development and use. This information should in the first instance be guided by external photographs of elevations and internal photographs of areas and significant features if appropriate. The study should also include copies of measured survey drawings of plans and elevations and detailed survey drawings (annotated or otherwise) and sketches of specific details of elements of interest where appropriate.

5.0 SUMMARY OF SITE

5.1 SWAT Archaeology were commissioned by Peker Skyline Ltd in October 2016 to undertake a programme of archaeological building recording and monitoring at the site of the KCC Springfield Library in Maidstone, Kent

5.2 The archive and documentary research was carried out using resources offered by the Internet and Ordnance Survey Historical mapping, and historical maps retained by the Kent Record Office (KCCHER). Maps studied at the KCCHER included the Andrews 1760 map, the Ordnance Survey Surveyors draft map c.1805.

5.3 The development site is at the former Springfield Campus, Sandling Road, Maidstone, Kent and extends to 1.42 Acres (0.575 hectares) and has planning consent granted for demolition of the existing buildings and the build of 114 residential units.

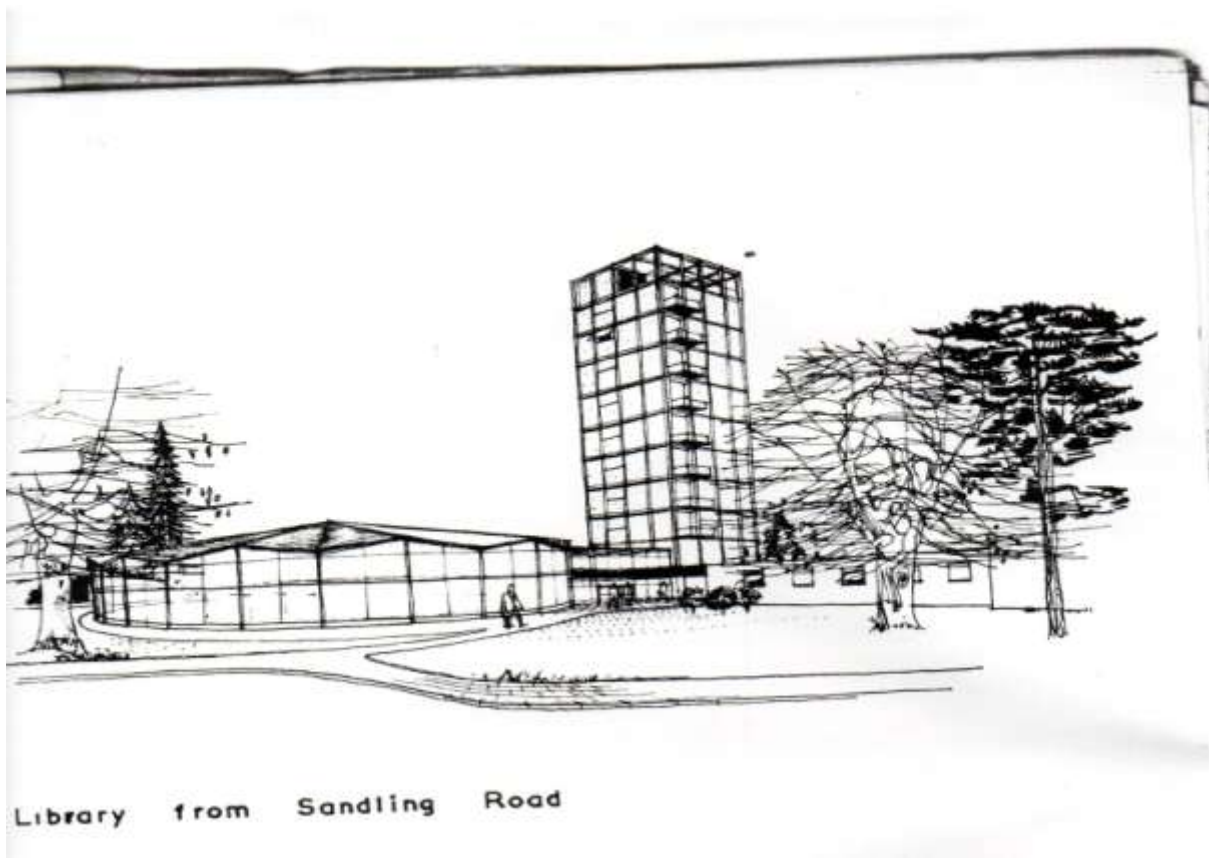
5.4 The Site sits prominently adjoining the roundabout junction of the A229 linking Maidstone town centre and the M20 through Junction 6. The Site is the former home of the Kent County Library and is occupied by a high rise block formally occupied by Kent County Council. The site being roughly rectangular in shape and level also contains parking and garage areas.

5.5 Outline planning consent was granted on 24th November 2009 for 100 flats and 14 houses and a community centre of 200sqm (Reference MA/09/0862) and subsequently renewed on 8th May 2014 (Reference MA/12/2032).

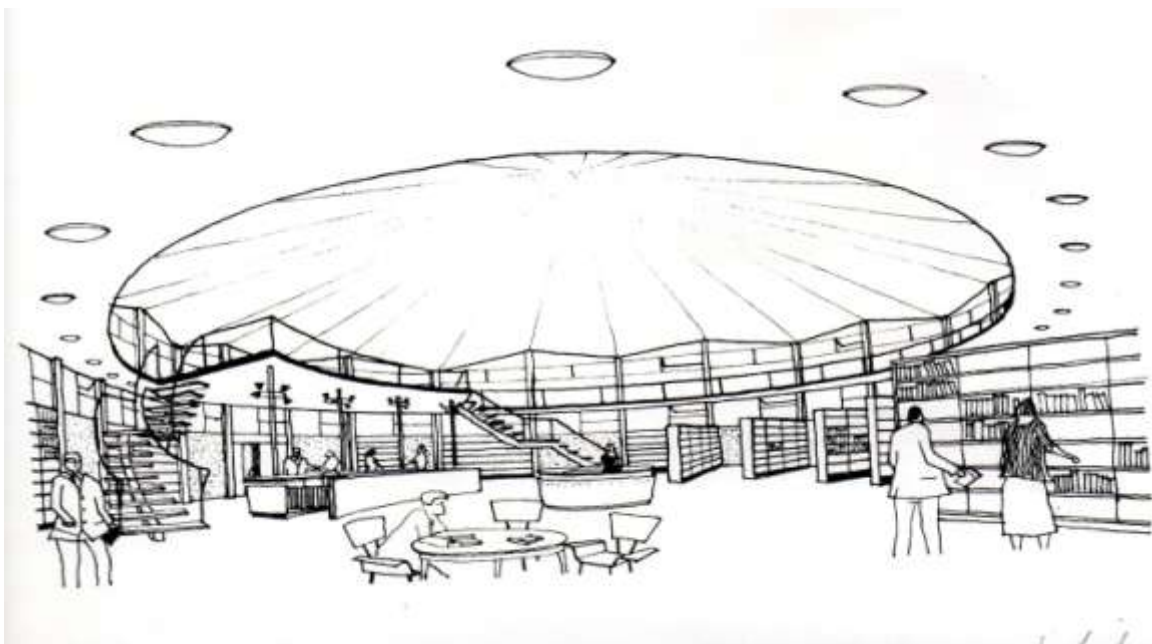
6.0 SUMMARY OF STANDING BUILDINGS

6.1 On 3rd April 1959 The Springfield Development Committee met to discuss five schemes of expansion which included a new County Library premises approved by the council but awaiting Ministry approval at an estimated cost of £144,100.00 and an additional cost of Archives of £19,700.00.

6.2 The archive (KCC C/A17/5) has attached plans and sketches which show simple perspective sketches indicating the type of building envisaged (below) and Plates 24, 25, 26.



Perspective sketches c. April 1959



6.3 Also included in the KCC HER archive are two major folded plans which show:

- (a) The site at present (with new buildings shown dotted and superimposed)
- (b) The layout of the site as recommended, in order to solve the various problems of site access and car parking.

6.4 The committee meeting records also itemise the demolition of existing buildings on site and these include 'two existing caretakers cottages', and the 'old buildings' at present housing the County Library.

6.5 Additional information from the meeting held by E. T. Ashley Smith FRIBA County Architect were details of the tendering process and include a tender 'for a contract containing foundations and frame'

7.0 DISCUSSION

7.1 The committee meeting notes of 3rd April 1959 indicate the type of build envisaged by Ashley Smith (foundations and frame) for the tower block at KCC Springfield.

7.2 The materials development post-WWII and structural science largely determined the structural evolution of the tower block at Springfield. The 'Chicago frame' and pre-war tower block design in the UK were predominantly steel framed, with conventional in-fill panels of brick. Traditional brickwork was also occasionally used at this time, up to about eleven storeys in height.

7.4 Significant improvements in reinforced concrete technology just after the Second World War encouraged the development of cast in situ, and pre-cast concrete buildings. In the early 1950's reinforced concrete frames with in-fill panels predominated, later giving way to frame construction including 'crosswall', 'egg box' and 'box frames'. At the same time, the concept of cladding came into its own.

7.5 High rise buildings place special demands on their exposed components, so research was done into developing materials to incorporate qualities of weatherproofing, good looks, durability and insulation. Materials such as steel, aluminium, asbestos, wood,

concrete and later, plastics were all developed in different forms that would take on these qualities.

7.6 Exact construction information is hard to come by and is not often available from design details, as a lot of high rise blocks were built under 'design and build' contracts and details were never recorded.

7.7 The tower block at KCC Springfield is no different but on-site survey has confirmed the tower block was built on the Column and Beam construction type with a framework of reinforced concrete columns and beams cast in situ with the floors cast in situ and the internal walls constructed of lightweight aggregate blocks and the external wall panels of factory supplied 'one size' constructed with galvanised steel Crittall windows set within a steel frame with potentially an asbestos cement panel.

7.8 The Reading Room is a unique building with important design features and is of national importance. The survey team were somewhat surprised that the building is not listed and is due for demolition.

7.9 The site survey took place on 14th 15th October and the building survey report and photographs can be seen in the following Appendix 1.

7.10 The Building Recording digital archive and digital report will be deposited with the KCCHER team at County Hall and the paper archive will be retained by SWAT Archaeology until such time a suitable museum is able to accept the archive.

APPENDIX 1



Plate 1. The exterior of the Tower Block. Column and Beam construction with factory produced external panels. All 11 floors were used as a book depository with 'Music' on Floor 2 to 'Classic Fiction' on Floor 11.

Access to all floors was by an internal cast in situ concrete staircase or by a single lift (looking north-east).



Plate 2. The concrete stairs located in the south-east corner of the tower block



Plate 3. Tower Block Floor 5. Showing the book cases set on rails



Plate 4. Tower Block Floor 7. Showing the north-east corner and external balcony

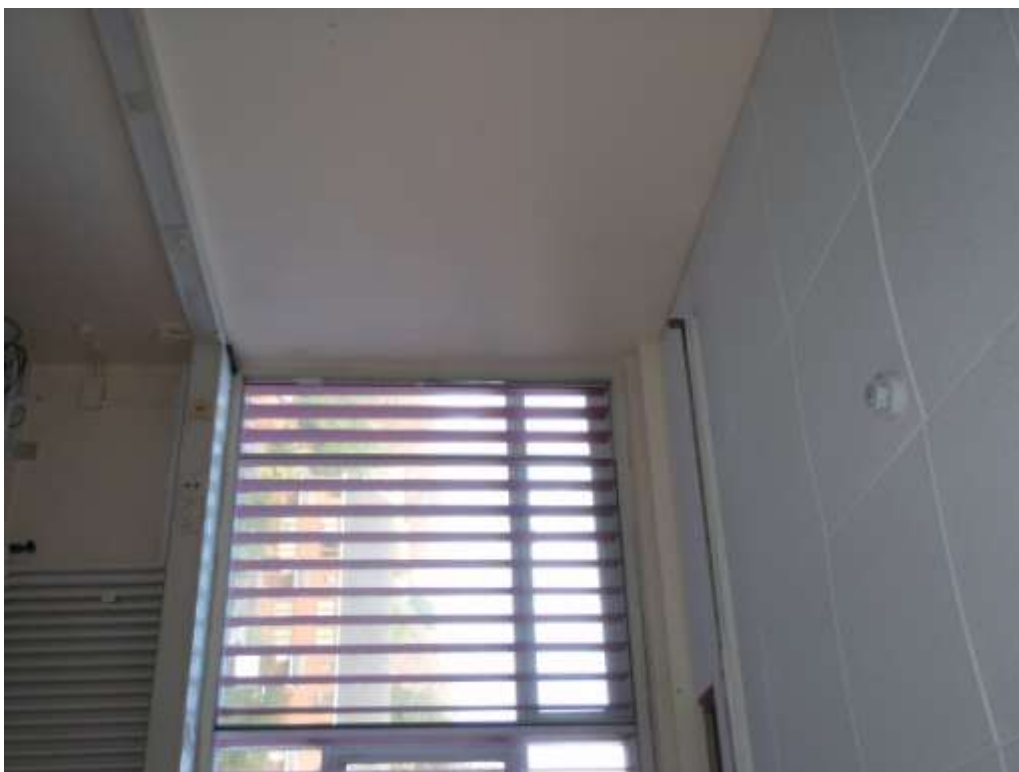


Plate 5. Tower Block. Detail of acoustic tiles and interior decoration



Plate 6. Exterior view of Tower Block (looking north)



Plate 7. Exterior view of Tower Block (looking north-east)



Plate 8. Entrance to the double storey corridor linking the admin block on the left and the reading room on the right. Modular construction with factory supplied external panels and a later porch



Plate 9. To the left of the entrance a single storey cantilevered building set on a brick plinth, sheathed with timber boarding and with a copper covered flat sloping roof



Plate 10. Inside the entrance and to the left a floor of offices



Plate 11. View of the entrance area and reception desks of the library



Plate 12. Close up view of library reception desks



Plate 13. View of book shelves on ground floor of the library



Plate 14. View of ground floor and upper floor of the library. The library is a polygon built design, again a modular build with the ground floor bookshelves radiating out and capped by an upper gallery with access by two timber open tread staircases



Plate 15. A close up view of the extraordinary glass fibre 3D polygon diffused light fitting set in the centre of the ceiling



Plate 16. View of polygon downlighter and upper storey



Plate 17. View of upper storey showing one of the staircases



Plate 18. View of upper storey showing polygonal roof and downlighters



Plate 19. View of upper storey showing polygonal roof and bookcases



Plate 20. View of upper storey



Plate 21, View of upper storey roof



Plate 22. Exterior view of library showing modular panels



Plate 23. Close-up of one of the library panels set into a prefabricated steel frame (painted grey) and roofed with a lightweight polygon structure



Plate 24. Aerial view of the site of KCC Springfield and to access the exterior views by drone 'control and click' here: <https://vimeo.com/190295406>

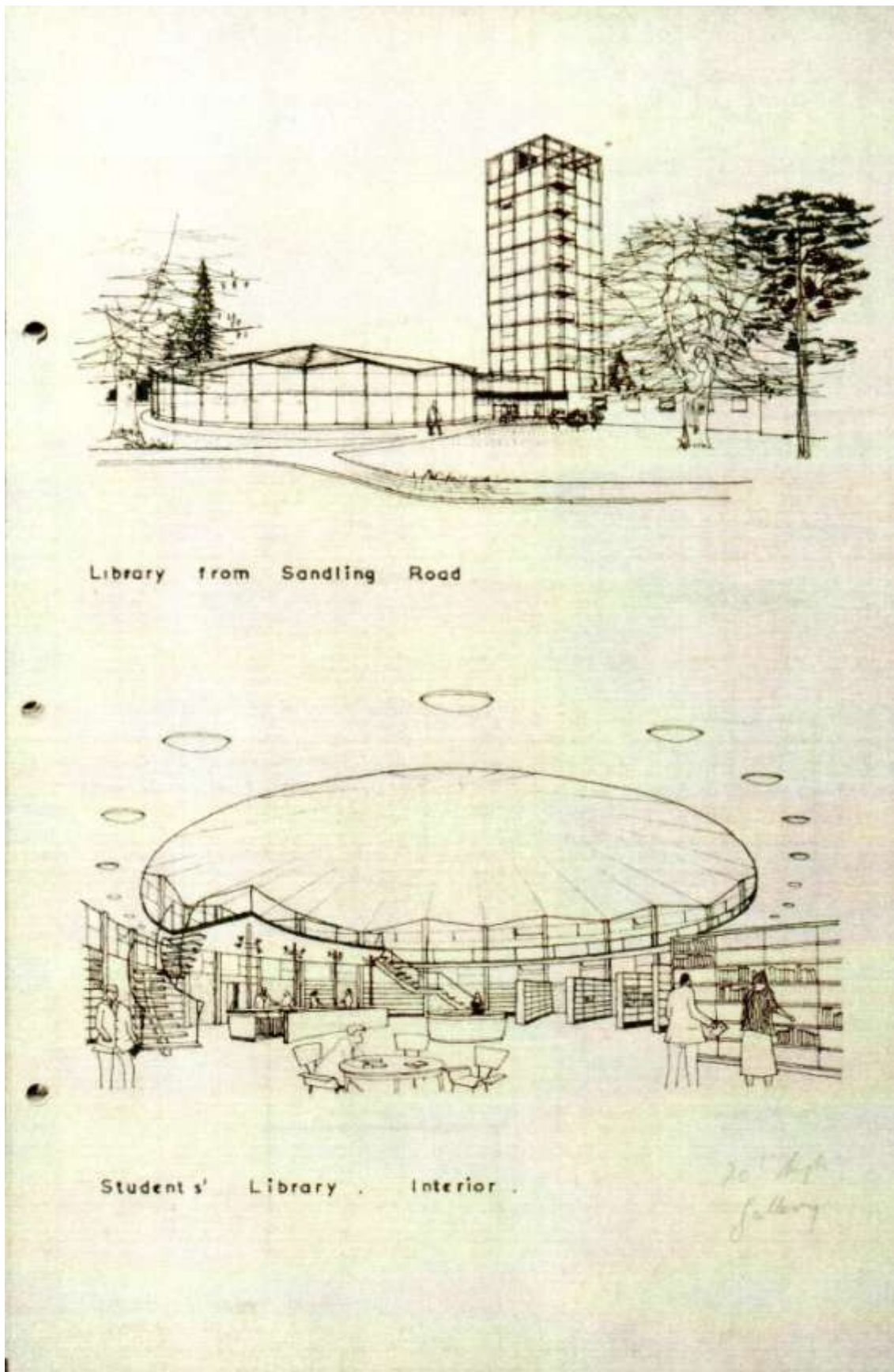


Plate 25. Students Library interior by E. T. Ashley Smith FRIBA (C/A17/5)

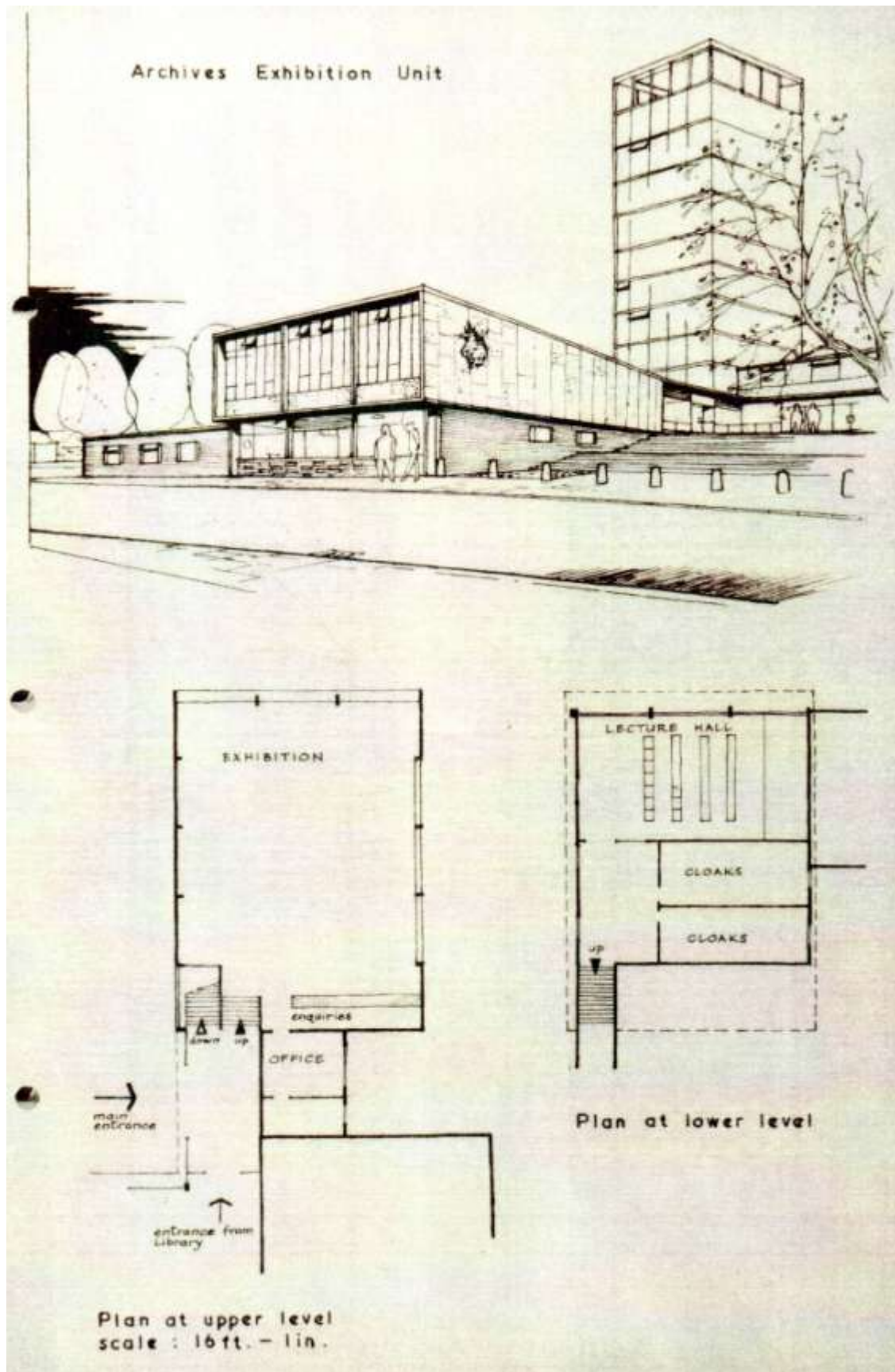


Plate 26. Book tower and lecture hall

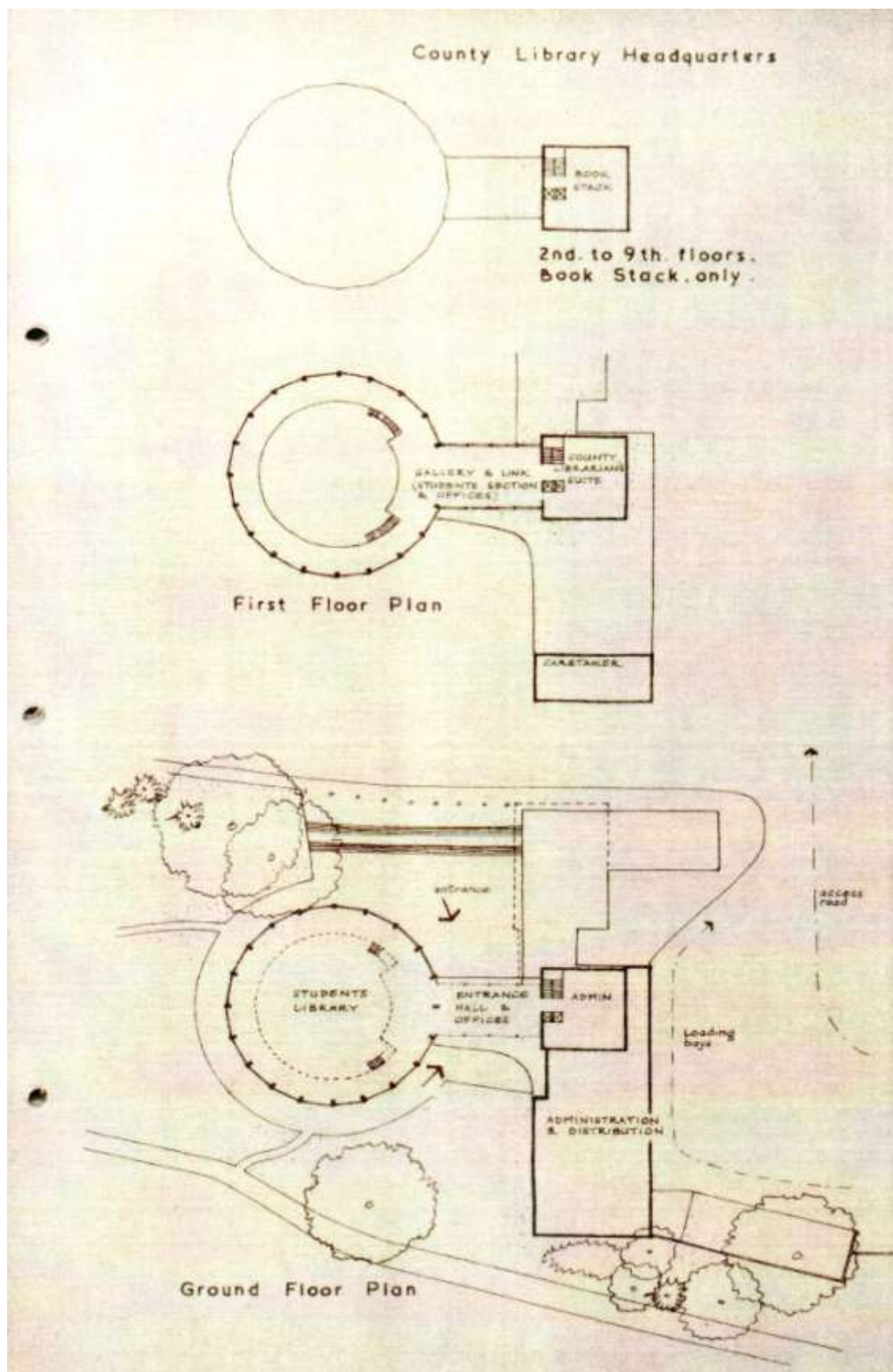


Plate 27. Proposed plans



Figure 1: Site location map, scale 1:5000.

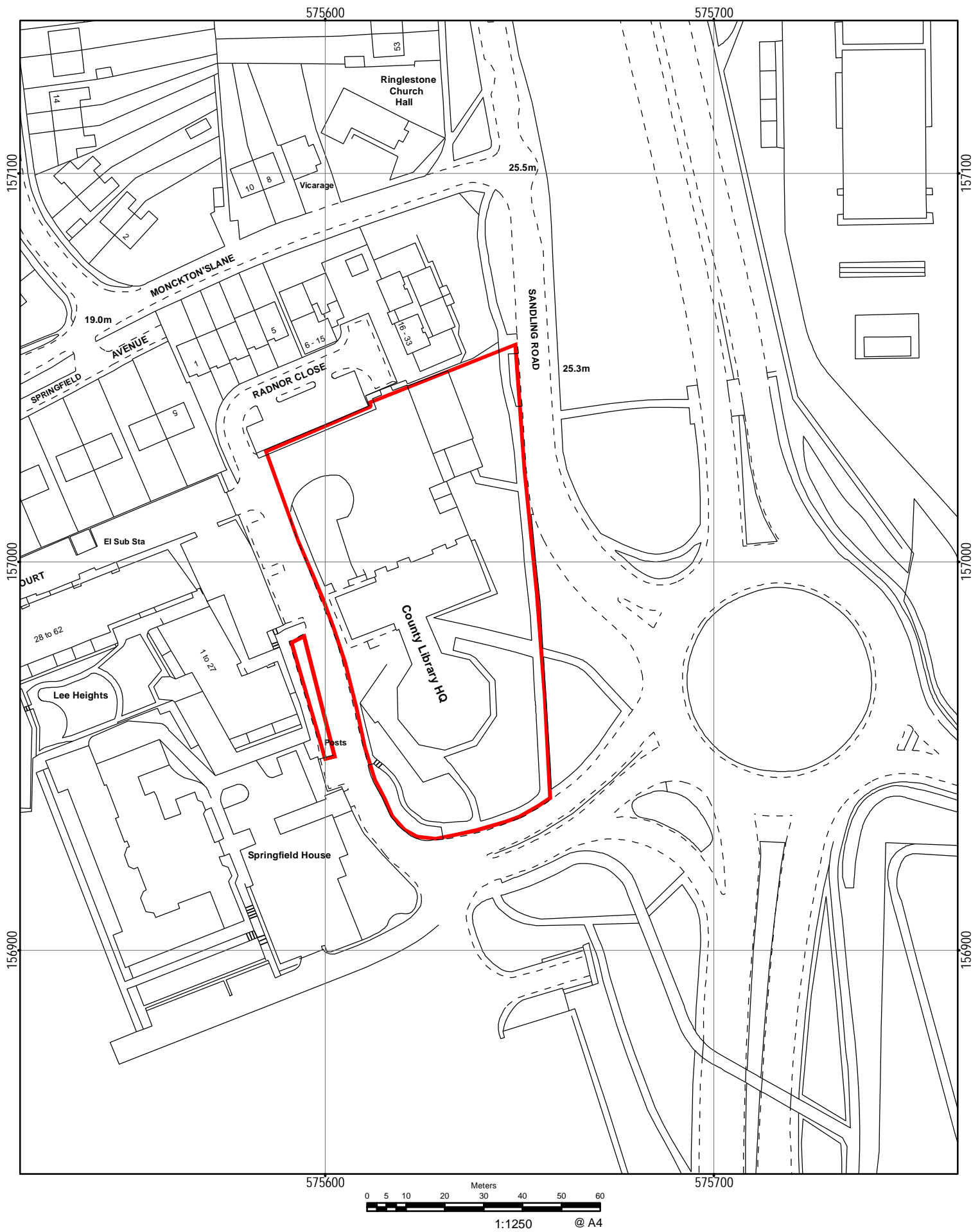


Figure 2: Former County HQ. Site location plan, scale 1:1250



Figure 3: OS 1864 map, scale 1:2500

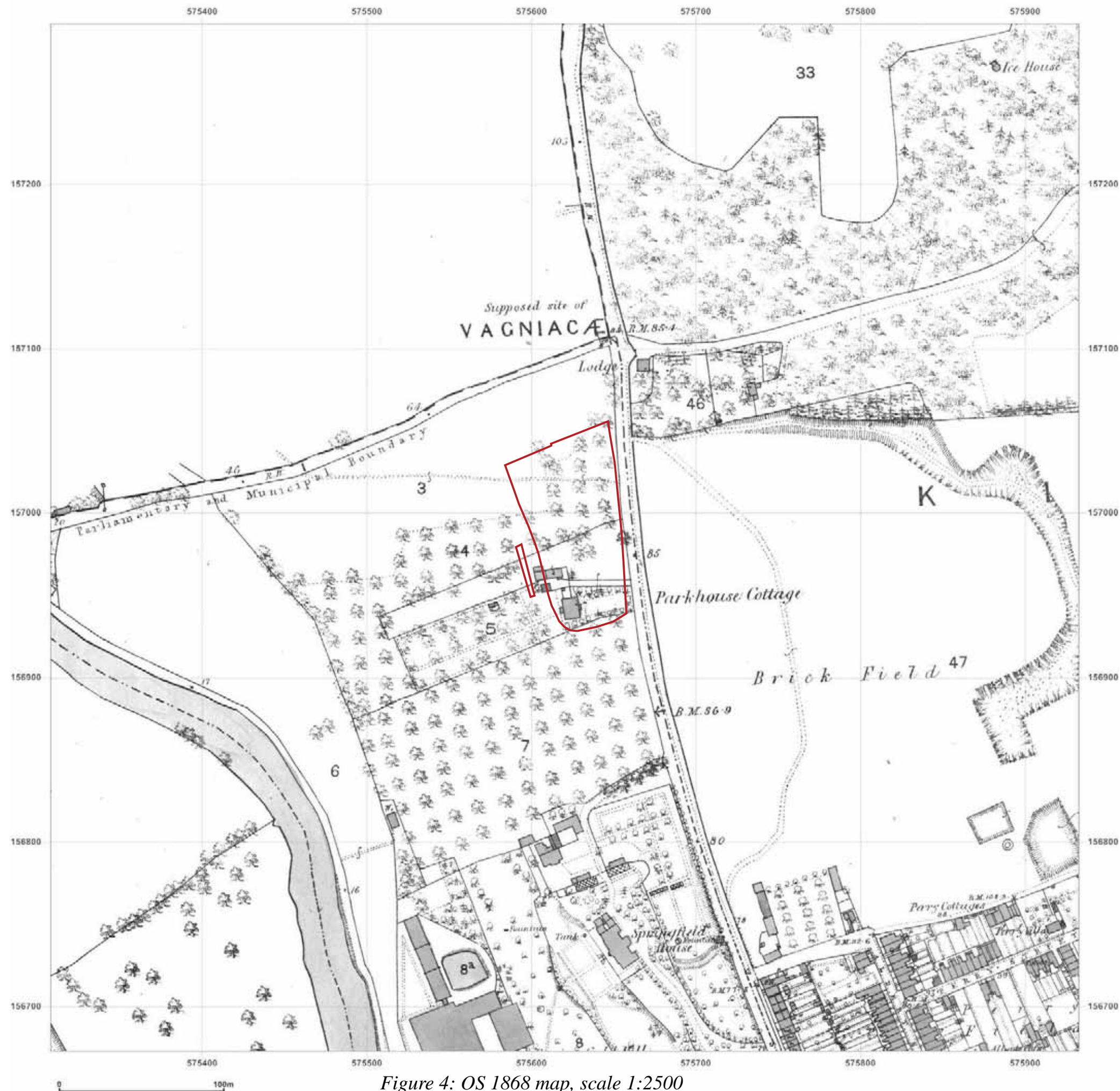


Figure 4: OS 1868 map, scale 1:2500



Figure 5: OS 1897 map, scale 1:2500



Figure 6: OS 1908 map, scale 1:2500

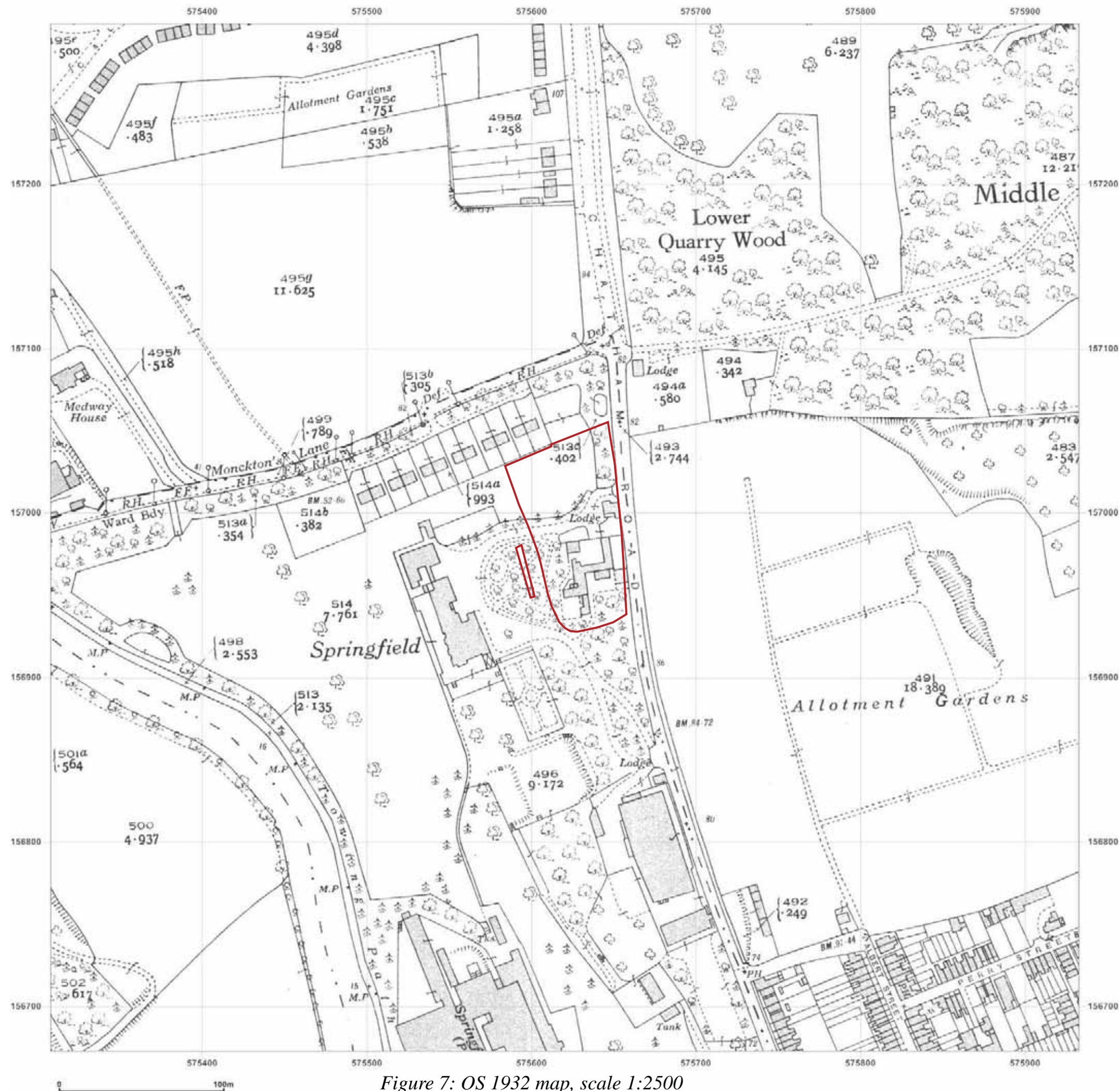


Figure 7: OS 1932 map, scale 1:2500

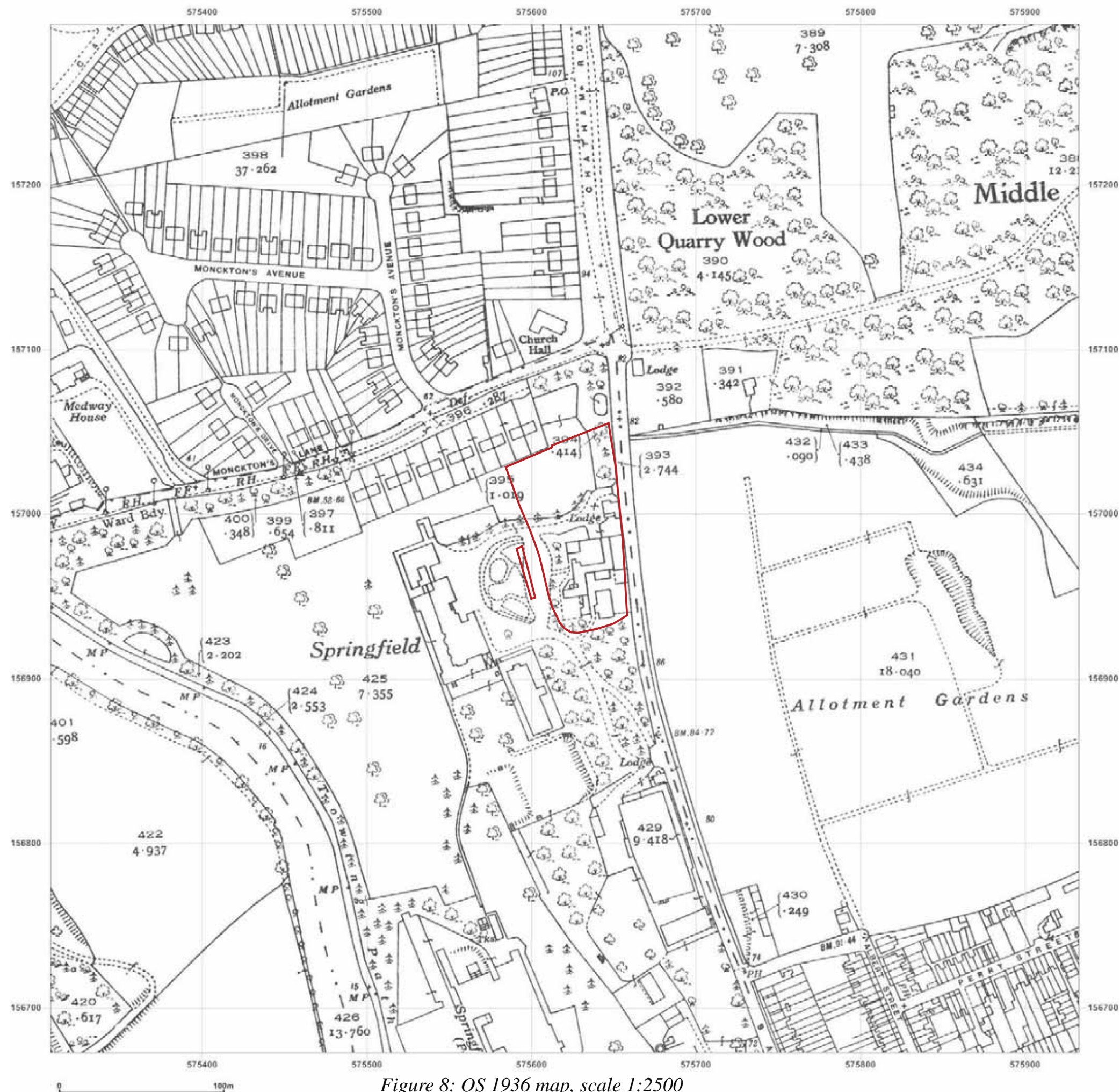


Figure 8: OS 1936 map, scale 1:2500

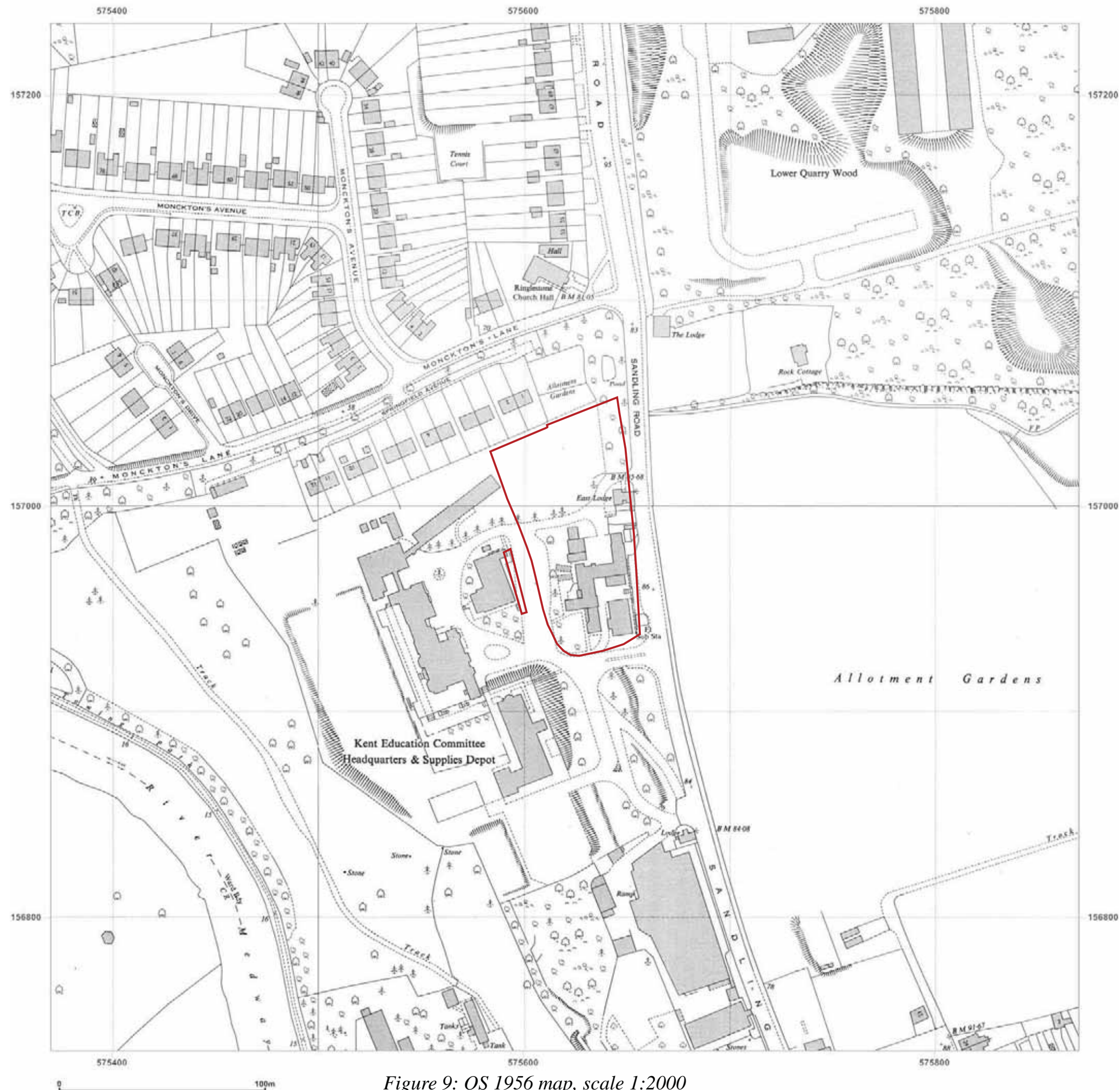


Figure 9: OS 1956 map, scale 1:2000



Figure 10: OS 1956-1957 map, scale 1:2500



Figure 11: OS 1960-1964 map, scale 1:2500



Figure 12: OS 1965-1970 map, scale 1:2000



Figure 13: OS 1972 map, scale 1:2000

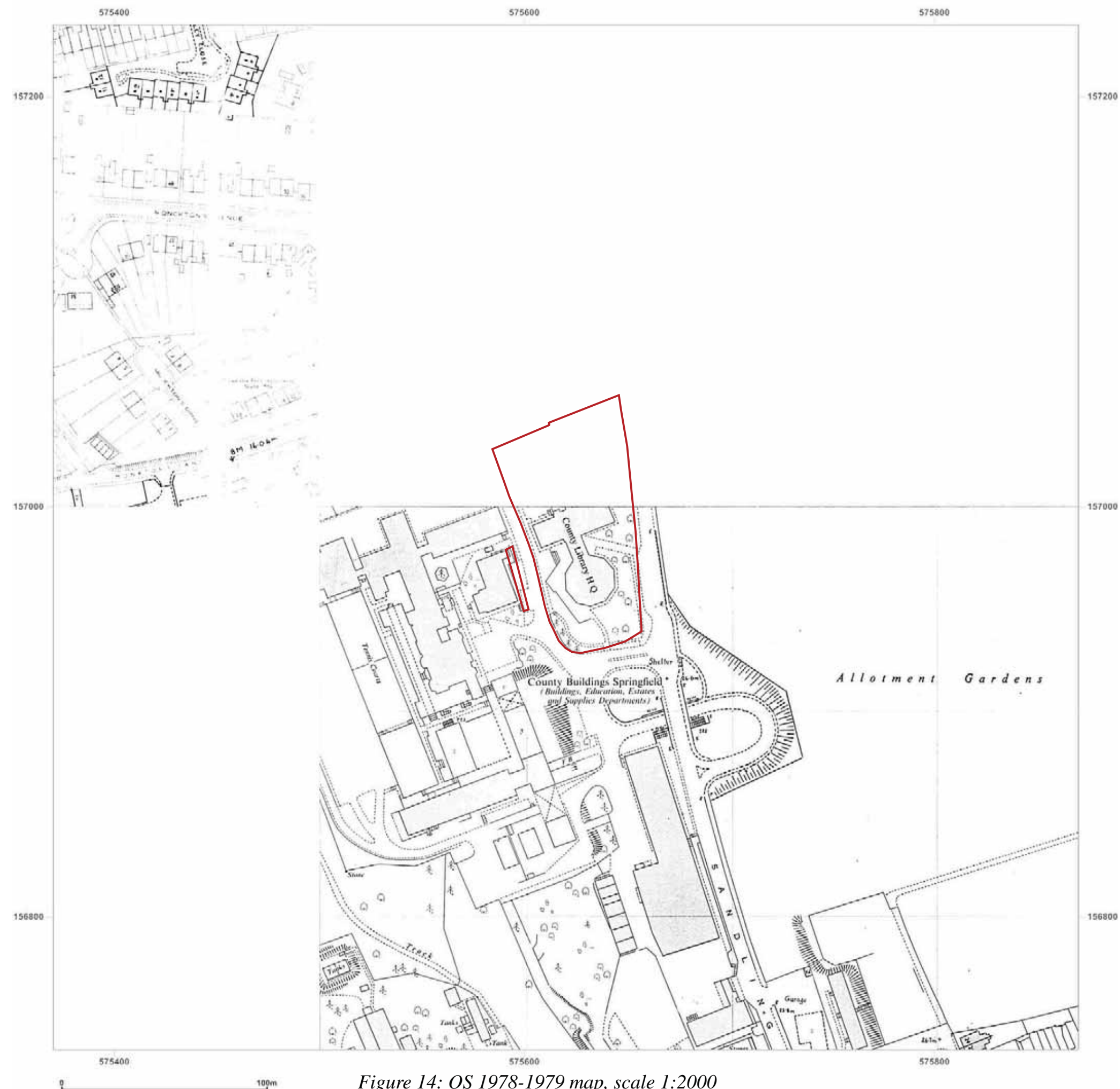


Figure 14: OS 1978-1979 map, scale 1:2000

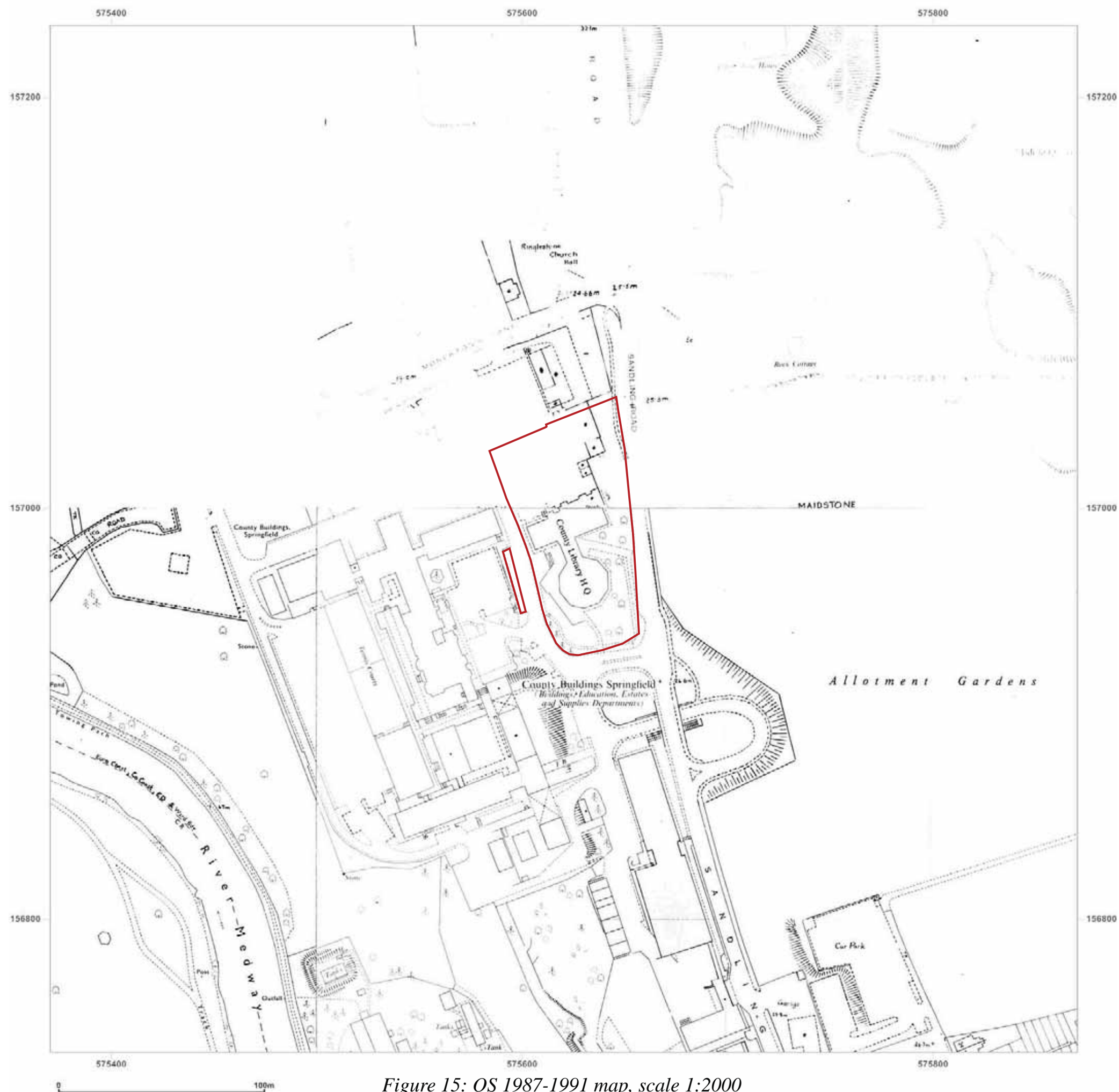




Figure 16: OS 1993 map, scale 1:2000

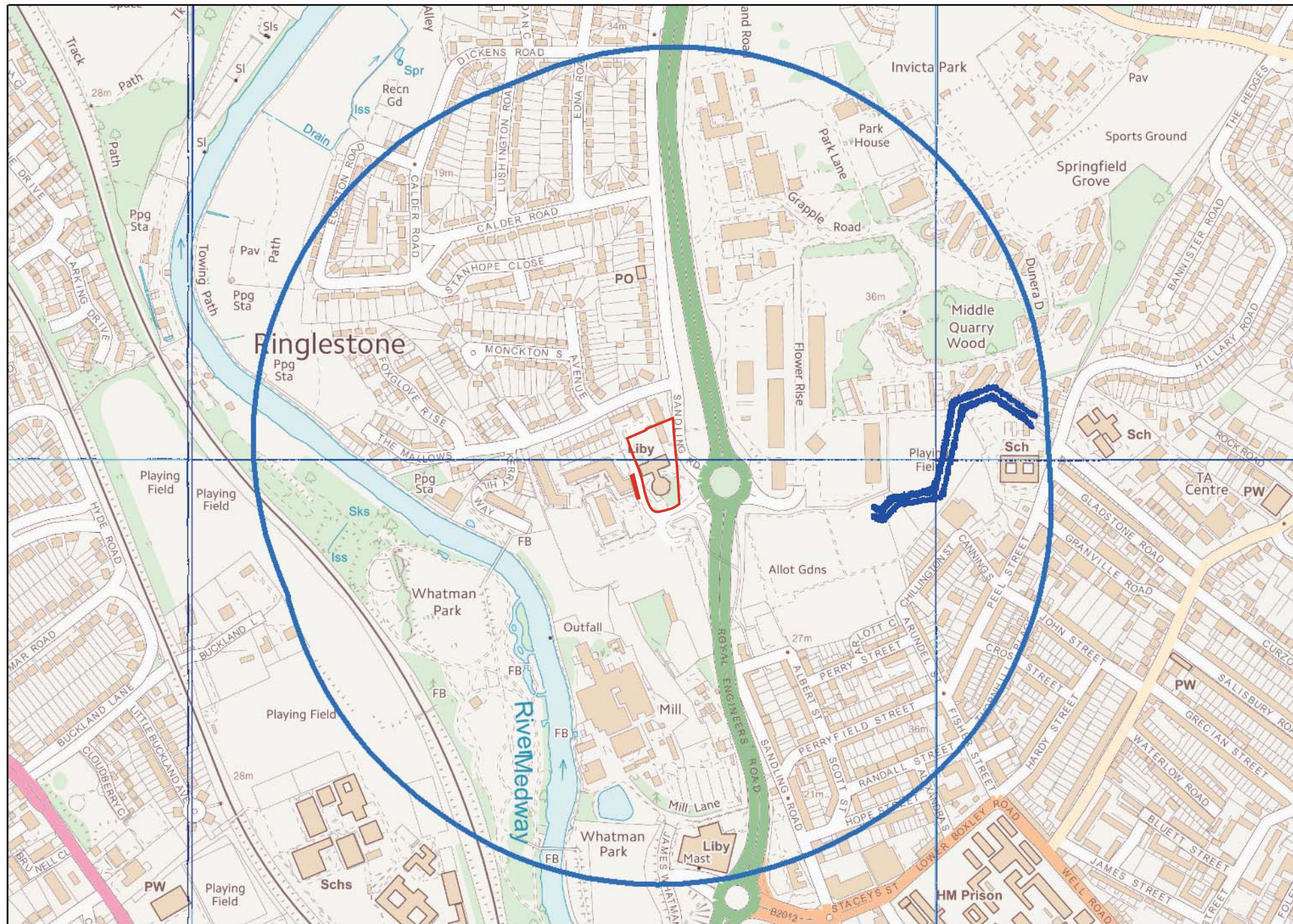


Figure 17: OS 1994 map, scale 1:2000



Figure 18: OS 1995 map, scale 1:2000

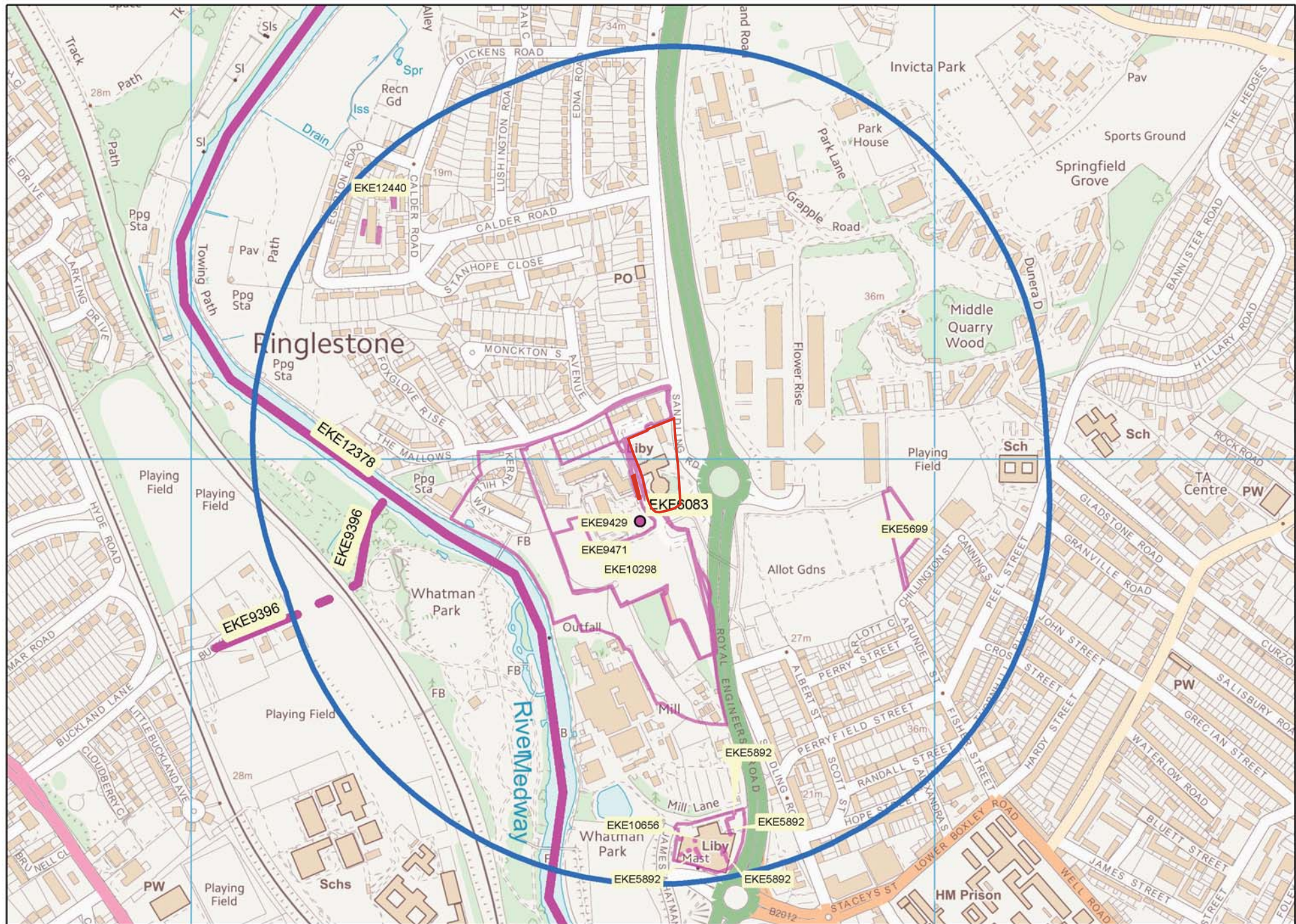
Kent Historic Environment Record - Springfield - Anti-tank ditch (from 1946 aerial photo)



Legend



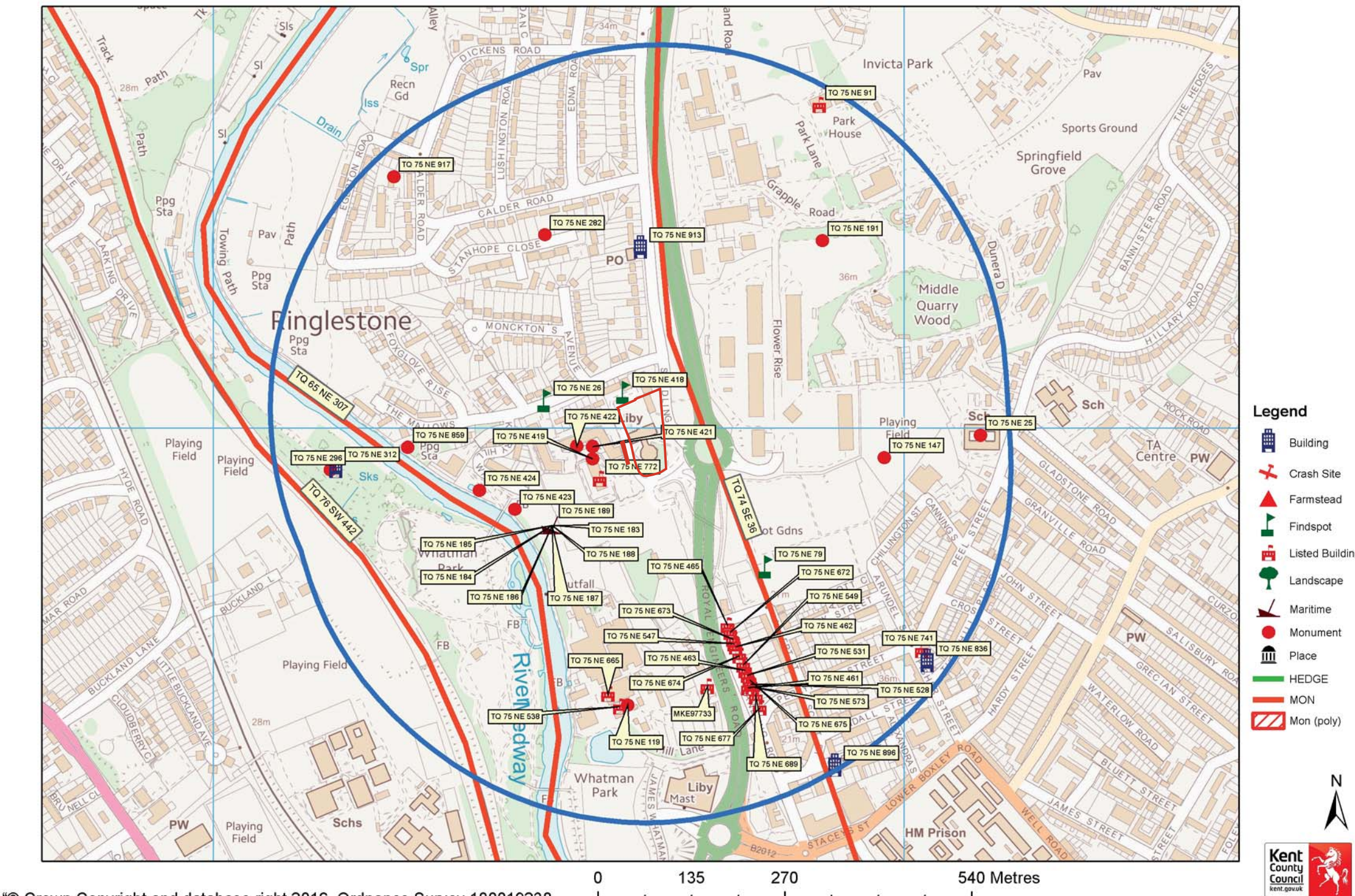
Kent Historic Environment Record - Springfield - Events



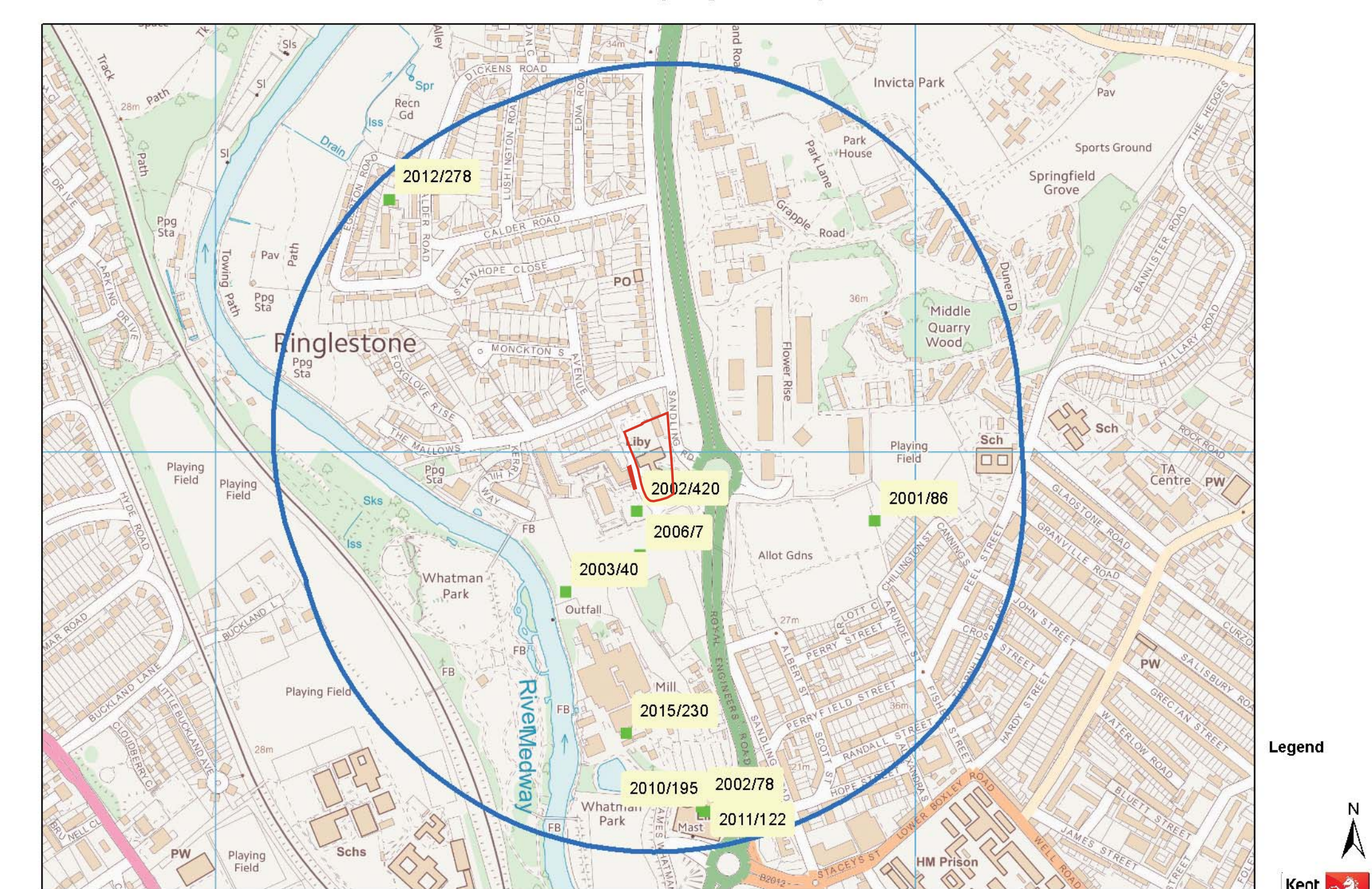
Legend



Kent Historic Environment Record - Springfield - Monuments



Kent Historic Environment Record - Springfield - Reports



Legend





Plate 1: Google Earth aerial photograph from 1940.



Plate 2: Google Earth aerial photograph from 1960.



Plate 3: Google Earth aerial photograph from 1990.



Plate 4: Google Earth aerial photograph from 2003.

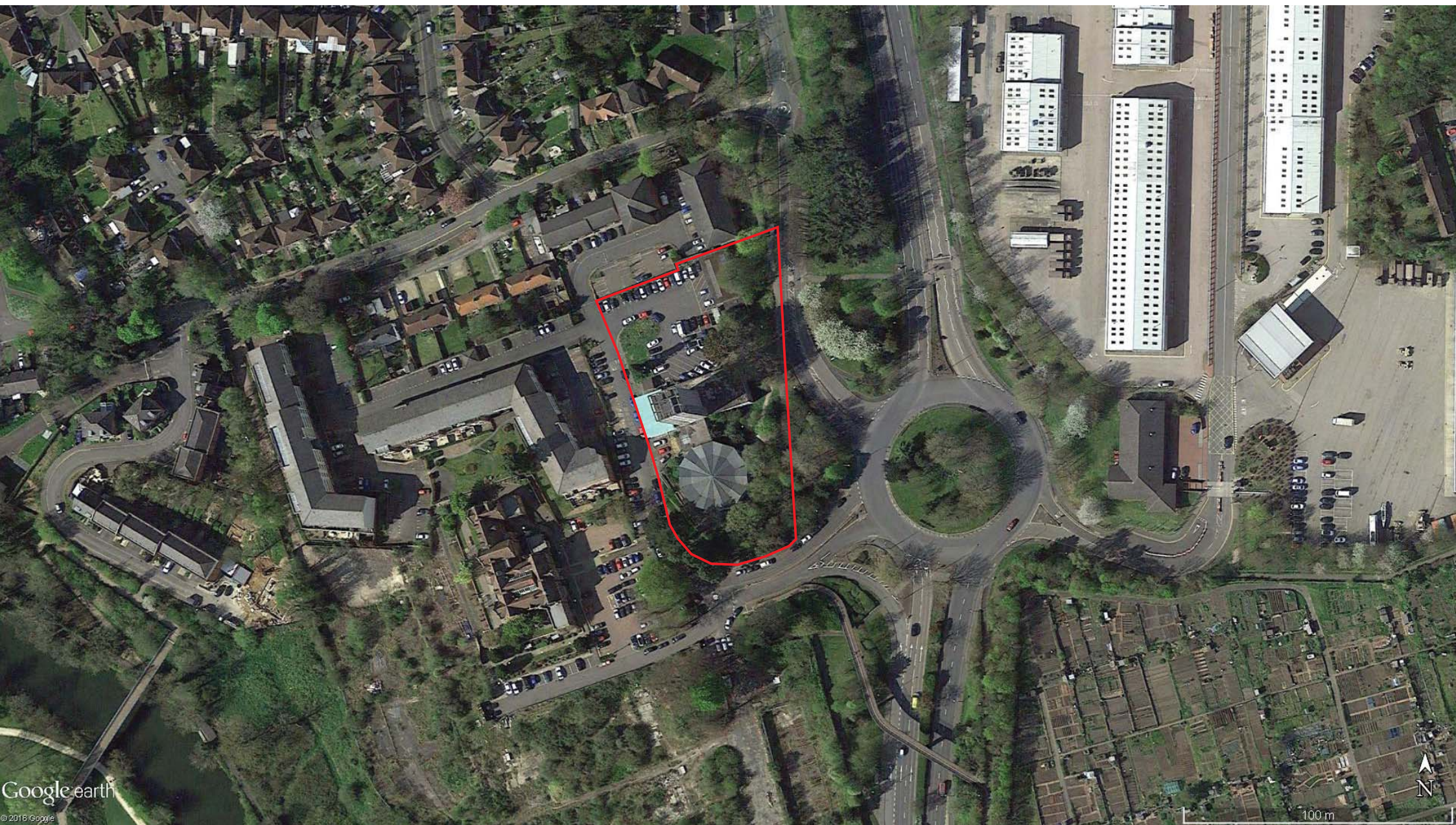


Plate 5: Google Earth aerial photograph from 2015.