

**RADLETT SRFI, ST ALBANS,
HERTFORDSHIRE**

**AN ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING
BRIEF**

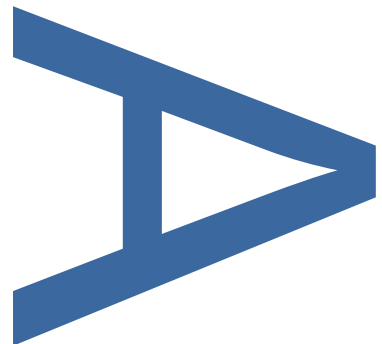
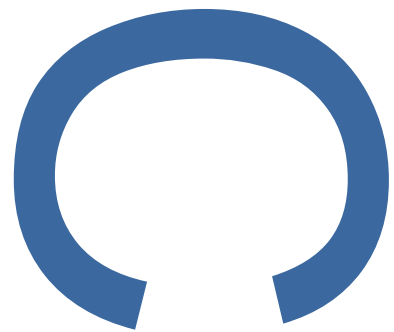
**LOCAL PLANNING AUTHORITY: ST
ALBANS DISTRICT COUNCIL**

**PLANNING APPLICATION NUMBERS:
APP/B1930/A/07/2045747/NWF**

PCA REPORT NO: 13931

SITE CODE: RAD19

NOVEMBER 2019



PRE-CONSTRUCT ARCHAEOLOGY

Radlett SRFI, St Albans, Hertfordshire: Archaeological Watching Brief

Local Planning Authority: St Albans District Council

Planning Reference: Ref: APP/B1930/A/07/2045747/NWF

Central National Grid Reference: NGR TL157 045

Site Code: RAD19

Report No. R13931

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ABSTRACT

This report describes the results of an archaeological watching brief carried out by Pre-Construct Archaeology at land south of Hedges Farm, St Albans, Hertfordshire. Two site visits were undertaken on 12th and 13th November 2019 during limited excavation of footings for a proposed Visitor Information Centre (VIC).

The groundworks revealed no archaeological features.

1 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 Archaeological watching brief was undertaken by Pre-Construct Archaeology Ltd (PCA) on land south of Hedges Farm, St Albans Hertfordshire AL2 2ET (centred on Ordnance Survey National Grid Reference (NGR) TL157045) on 12th and 13th of November. The watching brief was targeting the limited excavation of footings for a proposed Visitor Information Centre (VIC) immediately to the south of Hedges Farm (Fig 2).
- 1.2 The archaeological work was commissioned by RPS Consulting Limited to comply with an archaeological condition of constructing of a Visitor Information Centre (VIC) (Planning Reference: APP/B1930/A/07/2045747/NWF). This was due to the potential for archaeological remains to be present within the proposed development area (PDA). The work was undertaken in line with the National Planning Policy Framework published in 2012 and revised in 2018.
- 1.3 The monitoring was carried out in accordance with a Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI) prepared by Chris Clarke of RPS.
- 1.4 The aim of the monitoring was to record any archaeological features present in the footings of the Visitor Information Centre (VIC).
- 1.5 This report describes the results of the investigations. The site archive will be deposited at Verulamium Museum in St Albans.

2 GEOLOGY AND TOPOGRAPHY

2.1 Geology

2.2 The solid geology within the southern part of Plot 1, Plots 2, 5, 6, 7 and 8 prior to extraction was Glacial Gravel. The northern part of Plot 1 is Boulder Clay and a small portion of the western part of the area is Brickearth. The geology of Plot 3 is a mixture of Glacial Gravel, Upper Chalk and alluvium. Plot 4 is a mixture of Taplow Gravel, Upper Chalk, Glacial Gravel and alluvium (IGS 1979 1:625,000 scale).

2.3 Topography

2.4 The majority of the site lies on a relatively flat plateau overlooking the River Ver to the north and west. At its northern end beside A414, the site lies at c89m OD dropping to c73m OD at the southern end beside the M25. The north-western corner of the site drops quite sharply from c85m OD to c68m OD beside the River Ver. However, the topography of most of the site to the west of the railway has been altered following gravel extraction and therefore has been artificially lowered in the area of the Airfield).

2.5 The River Ver runs north-east/south-west through the north-western part of the study site continuing southwards close to the western boundary. The River Colne passes c300m to the south of the site on a north-east/south-west alignment. Within the study site groundwater has collected within the quarry pits. The western and northern parts of the study site therefore drains westwards into the River Ver and the south-eastern part of the study site drains south-eastwards into the River Colne.

3 ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND

3.1 The following background material derives from the Historic Landscape Assessment (CgMs 2004) and Archaeological Desk-Based Assessment (CgMs 2007) for the site.

Prehistoric

3.2 A number of Palaeolithic artefacts have been recorded within the study area. These are a worked flint found during gravel extraction within Site 5 (Site 1 – Heritage Environment Record (HER) 405) (Fig. 2). An assemblage of two axes, one implement and some perforated stones have been recorded immediately to the west of Plot 3 and 4 (Site 2 – HER 592). Single hand axes have also been recorded from the Old Parkbury gravel pit (Site 3 – HER 692, 693 & 1882) and to the west of Plot 5 (Site 4 – HER 9750, Site 5 – HER 9752, Site 6 – HER 9764). These are all casual finds of artefacts and while they are indicative of surviving gravels underlying the sites having some limited potential, most of the 8 development sites (except for 3 and 4) have been subject to extraction and therefore have zero potential. Sites 3 and 4 have potential for artefacts lying at some considerable depth below ground level.

3.3 From the evidence contained in the Hertfordshire HER, the area was occupied during the early Prehistoric periods. However, the dating and/or the provenance of many of the recorded artefacts is vague. A number of early Prehistoric finds have been recorded within Site 5, an assemblage of residual Mesolithic and Neolithic artefacts (1 scraper, 19 blades and 8 flakes) were recovered with Iron Age finds during the excavation of a Roman villa ahead of gravel extraction on the west side of the River Ver c. 500m within Plot 5 (Site 7 – HER 2928, 4548, 9755). The same HER record notes a further 30 flint artefacts of Mesolithic-Neolithic date from 'Park Street' but there is no record of their exact location or the circumstances of their discovery. Two assemblages of undated, but probable Mesolithic-Bronze Age date were discovered on the edge, and within, the river valley in Plot 3. The finds at Site 8 comprise 4 flint implements (HER 4547) and the finds at Site 9 comprise of 24 scrapers, 7 knives, 4 awls, 2 burins, 5 retouched flakes and blades and a single core (HER

4546). The Site 9 assemblage is quite substantial and was found on a spur overlooking the River Ver which may have been a focus for settlement/occupation.

- 3.4 Excavations at Old Parkbury, to the south Site 1 and the M25 revealed an early Neolithic boat burial containing a skeleton in a wooden box and remains of two other wooden containers. Adjacent were six post-hole built Neolithic round houses and associated rubbish pits containing Grooved Ware sherds (Site 10 – HER 6977).
- 3.5 A single pit with two associated post holes of Bronze Age date were recorded during the excavation of the Park Street Roman villa c. 500m to the west of the site (Site 11 – HER 603). When the records of the excavation were reassessed in the 1980s it was suggested that an adjacent scatter of post holes were probably contemporary with the pit and therefore, there are hints that the western bank of the River Ver was occupied at this time. A Bronze Age palstave has been recorded in Park Street (Site 12 – HER 9756) which was probably a votive offering in the river. A gold torc was reported to have been found at Parkbury in 1744 and a second one was reported to also have been found in 1748 (Site 10 – HER 2927).

Iron Age

- 3.6 During the late Iron Age the area shows increasing contact between the local tribes and continental Europe. Recognizable settlements usually took the form of farmsteads, often in groups and surrounded by field systems and sometimes with associated cemeteries nearby. Coinage begins to appear in the southeast of England particularly in the area controlled by the Catuvellauni. Coin inscriptions show that “Verlamion” had a royal mint in the period from roughly 20 BC to 10 AD, producing coins on behalf of the king Tasciovanus, which implies that it was the tribal centre of the area.
- 3.7 During the early 1930s, a series of excavations were undertaken in the area to the south of the later Roman city, as well as within the City itself, particularly around the modern Prae Wood area to the north of the study site, where complexes of ditches and settlement enclosures and hearths were discovered.

This was identified as being the Iron Age “oppidum” of Verlamion, with a habitation area in the north separated by a palisade or fence from an area to the south designated for livestock.

- 3.8 More recent work suggests that this interpretation was rather too simple, as it is now known that Verlamion covered a much larger area including under the later Roman city and to the south and west of the 1930s excavations. Current thinking visualizes the oppidum as a complex of open spaces, fields and trackways, interspersed with farmsteads, small settlements and cemeteries. The focal point may have been a royal building in the centre of what later became the Roman town, where significant amounts of coin-moulding debris have been found. The type of settlement can be described as an “unenclosed nucleated settlement” carrying out the functions of a town, such as trade, administration and the like but with a particularly heavy bias towards farming
- 3.9 The study site lies c3km to the south west of the oppidum within what is likely to have been a relatively densely populated and intensively occupied landscape. Evidence of Iron Age settlement in the vicinity of the study site was recorded during the excavation of the Park Street villa (Site 7 – HER 198). Hints of early Iron Age occupation comprised a number of early and mid Iron Age pottery sherds were recovered as residual finds in later Roman features as well as from a ‘general Belgic level’. The implication of the ‘Belgic level’ deposits is that there may have been long-lived occupation on or near the site during the earlier Iron Age. The excavation revealed a late Iron Age settlement comprising at least two rectangular buildings which produced pottery, a ‘slave chain’ and three Iron Age coins. Occupation appears to have dated from the early 1st century AD and while it appears that the occupation may have been widespread, the majority of the deposits of this date were destroyed by gravel extraction with no archaeological investigation. A single late Iron Age coin (c. 40BC) has been recorded at 24 Branch Road, Park Street c. 100m to the west of the study site (Site 13 – HER 9763).
- 3.10 An Iron Age roundhouse has been recorded during a watching brief in Colney Park (within area 7) (Site 14 – HER 7313).

- 3.11 Late Iron Age settlement has also been recorded at Old Parkbury to the south of the M25 (Site 10 – HER 4819 & 9707).
- 3.12 The area to the east of the railway and within the grounds of Napsbury Hospital is occupied by a series of undated cropmarks of presumed Prehistoric and/or Roman date (Site 15 – HER 6013 & 6014). These cropmarks have been designated as an Area of Archaeological Significance and extend into the northern portion of the study to the east of the railway. Further features of a presumed Prehistoric date were recorded during an evaluation on the northern side of the hospital which are likely to be associated with the cropmarks (Site 16 – HER 9671). The presence of these cropmarks is evidence of an extensive area of occupation and associated activity both within and to the east of Plot 2. Although there are no records of such features to the west of the railway, it is considered possible that similar remains may have been present prior to gravel extraction.

Roman

- 3.13 The study site lies c2.3 km to the south east of the Roman town of Verulamium. Although the development of the town will have influenced the surrounding landscape, the details of the town do not have direct bearing on the study site and will not be repeated here. Watling Street, the principal Roman road from London to Verulamium, runs north south just to the west of the site and forms its western boundary at the southern tip beside the M25 (Site 17 – HER 4576). The road would have been a major focus point of settlement throughout the period. However, with the exception of the south-eastern corner, it is considered unlikely that the study site contains any remains directly associated with Watling Street itself. It is conceivable that remains associated with the road may be present within the site margins.
- 3.14 Excavations ahead of gravel extraction to the west of the River Ver c. 400m to the west of the study site revealed the remains of a corridor villa comprising 5 rooms and a cellar facing east toward the River and Watling Street (Site 7 – HER149, 1469, 9796 & 9797). The villa also possessed a separate bath building, various outbuildings, a timber wharf along a palaeochannel of the

River Ver and possibly an aqueduct. The date of the villa is a little uncertain but it has produced 1st – 2nd century occupation debris. However, two 4th century burials in lead lined coffins laid within flint walled enclosures have been recorded 75m to the north east of the villa, thereby implying that the villa was occupied until at least the 4th century.

- 3.15 There has been a report of a Roman villa within the northern end of Plot 1 (Site 18). This is based on parch marks that have been noted on aerial photographs. The origins of these marks are not clear and supporting evidence has yet to be presented.
- 3.16 Excavations at Old Parkbury to the south of the M25 have revealed a Roman tile kiln and works (Site 10 - HER 2929 & 4838).
- 3.17 The cropmarks recorded to the east of the railway, partially within Plot 2 are undated (Site 5). However, it is possible that these are Roman in date and may represent a settlement that may have Iron Age origins but was also occupied during the Roman period.

Anglo-Saxon & Medieval

- 3.18 There are no records of any sites or features of Anglo-Saxon date within the study area. The site is beyond the nearby settlements that may have Anglo-Saxon origins and therefore, it is considered to have low potential for Anglo-Saxon remains.
- 3.19 There is a supposed deserted Medieval village at Napsbury (Site 19 – HER 1829). Its existence is only known through documentary sources and its location is actually unknown. It is possible that it consisted of scattered houses or possibly could have been at Broad Colney. Whatever is correct, it is unlikely to have extended into any of the proposed development sites.
- 3.20 The remains of the 12th century St John's the Baptist Church lies immediately to the east of Plot 7 (Site 20 – HER 4267). However, it is unlikely that remains associated with this extend into Plot 7.
- 3.21 The Park Street Pest House was supposedly constructed in the 14th century to

quarantine Black Death victims (Site 21 – HER 7309). However, there is no evidence to validate this and it is considered more likely that it did not exist before the 16th/17th century. 61-63 Park Street is a late Medieval hall house (Site 22 – HER 9500). The only other record of Medieval finds is a hoard of 221 gold coins of largely Medieval date found hidden in Medieval cottages opposite Park Street Mill in 1886 and it has been suggested that this was related to a resting place for pilgrims visiting the Abbey at St. Albans (Site 23 – HER 9703). A forge associated with Park Mill since the 14 century is recorded within Park Street (Site 24 – HER 9701). The implication of the presence of these Medieval structures is that there was at least some sort of Medieval settlement at Park Street but this is likely to be quite small and would not have extended into Plot 1 or 5.

- 3.22 To the south of the M25, Old Parkbury was a Manorial house (Site 25 – HER 9704, 9705 & 0706). Remains associated with this site are will not have extended into any of the proposed development sites.

Post-Medieval & Modern

- 3.23 The northern part of the study site lies within the parish of St. Peter's and the central and southern parts of the study site within the St. Stephen's Parish, both parishes are part of St. Albans rural district, Hertfordshire. Hedges Farm, which is depicted on the Bryants Map of 1822 and is the only evidence of occupation within the study site during the Post-Medieval period. Bryants map also depicts a lane running from Park Street in the west to Hedges Farm in the east.

- 3.24 There are no pre-enclosure or enclosure maps for the study site, suggesting that the land was enclosed at a late date.

- 3.25 The earliest map which clearly illustrates the study site is the Tithe map of 1840. Hedge's Farm is shown in detail on the St. Peters Tithe Map. The fields surrounding the farm are recorded in the St. Peters parish Tithe Award as being in a variety of uses including arable and pasture. The lane depicted on the Bryants map appears to have been reduced to a farm track following field boundaries. Further to the west on the slopes of the Ver Valley, the St.

Stephen's Tithe Award generally records fields as meadow. Within the central

and southern parts of the study site, fields are generally recorded as being in arable use.

- 3.26 The land was purchased in 1929 by Handley Page Ltd and by 1930 Radlett Aerodrome was opened for the assembly and testing of aircraft (HERR 9905 at TL 1561 0330). At Radlett Aerodrome hangers were built along Watlington Street at Colney Street to the south of the study site. In 1941 flight sheds were built at Park Street (to the west of the study site) and the airfield was extended north which required Stroud Wood to be felled and levelled. In the late 1950s and early 1960s new factories were built at Colney Street (south of the study site).
- 3.27 For Plots 1, 2, 5, 6, 7 and 8, the modern period is characterised by mineral extraction undertaken since WWII. Between 1970 and 1990 the airfield remained unused and by the mid 1990's large areas of the airfield were quarried for gravel. The majority of the structures, including the airstrips have been demolished or dug up and therefore, there is little remaining off the airfield within Plot 1.
- 3.28 The recent land use of Plots 1, 2, 5, 6, 7, and 8 will be considered in turn demonstrating the extent of the gravels workings.
- 3.29 Gravel extraction at Plot 1 commenced after the closure of the Radlett Airfield. However, it is only on the 1999 OS map that the pit is depicted at which time it occupied the majority of the eastern half of the area. Aerial photographs taken in 2003 show that the majority of the rest of the site had been extracted by that time and reinstated. On later aerial photographs the south western corner of the site is shown as having been subject to extraction as there is a visible drop round the edges of the site with small bodies of water within the main part of the site that were not visible on previous photographs. Therefore, with the exception of a small portion of the site at the northern end, any archaeological remains formerly located within Plot 1 will have been destroyed or badly damaged.
- 3.30 Gravel extraction within Area 2 commenced after WWII and by 1960 the southern most end of the site was occupied by a gravel pit. By the time the

1972-8 OS map was published the majority of the southern end of the site had been extracted and the central portion was an active gravel pit.

3.31 The extent of gravel extraction is documented with the Desk-Based Assessment (CgMs 2007).

Previous Archaeological Investigation

3.32 In 2007, a programme of targeted geophysical survey was undertaken within Plots 1, 2 and 4. In general, the results of the survey were very limited, with the only anomalies considered to be of archaeological interest being identified in the central area of Plot 4. These anomalies were interpreted as representing possible former ridge and furrow cultivation and a possible former field boundary or ditch (ASUoD 2007).

3.33 As part of the current phase of archaeological evaluation, the Phase 1 evaluation was undertaken by PCA in Plots 1 & 2 in August and September 2016, with the trial trenches located in three distinct locations, Areas A to C (Fig. 1). The greatest concentration of archaeological features was identified in Area A consisting of a Romano-British ditch and possible pond, a 20th century trackway, and several undated ditches. In Area B, the archaeological features present were limited to two undated postholes, while in Area C no archaeological features were identified due to extensive modern truncation (PCA 2016).

4 METHODOLOGY

4.1 Excavation and Sampling

- 4.1.1 The ground reduction was undertaken by mechanical excavator, with removal of all soil horizons down to 1.5m in depth. The machine was removing a level spit of no more than 0.25m depth. Ground reduction was carried out under archaeological supervision using a mechanical excavator with toothless 60 cm ditching bucket. Overburden deposits were set aside beside each trench and examined visually and with a metal-detector for finds retrieval.
- 4.1.2 Field excavation techniques and recording methods are detailed in the PCA Fieldwork Induction Manual (Operations Manual I; Taylor & Brown 2009).

4.2 Recording Methodology

- 4.2.1 High-resolution digital photographs were taken at all stages of the watching brief process. Digital Photographs were taken of all deposits.

5 QUANTIFICATION OF ARCHIVE

5.1 Paper Archive

Context register sheets	1
Context sheets	3
Plan registers	n/a
Plans at 1:50	n/a
Plans at 1:20	n/a
Plans at 1:10	n/a
Plans at 1:5	n/a
Section register sheets	n/a
Sections at 1:10 & 1:20	n/a
Trench record sheets	n/a
Photo register sheets	1
Small finds register sheets	n/a
Environmental register sheets	n/a

5.2 Digital Archive

Digital photos	69
GPS survey files	0
Digital plans	0
GIS project	0
Access database	0

5.3 Physical Archive

Struck flint	0
Burnt flint	0
Pottery	0
Ceramic building material (CBM)	0
Glass	0
Briquetage	0
Small Finds	0
Slag	0
Animal bone	0
Shell	0
Environmental bulk samples	0
Environmental bulk samples (10 litre buckets)	0
Monolith samples	0
Other samples (specify)	0
Black and white films	0
Colour slides	0

6 ARCHAEOLOGICAL RESULTS

- 6.1 Archaeological monitoring was undertaken during the excavation of two strip footings for a proposed Visitor Information Centre (VIC). The excavated footings were 0.6m wide, 1.5m deep and 8.5m in length.
- 6.2 Average OD height of the area before striping of vegetation was around 87.7m.
- 6.3 Monitoring of machine excavations recorded a 0.3m layer of topsoil (context 1), a 0.2m layer of subsoil (context 2), with natural (Context 3, a mid yellowish-brown clay) encountered at a depth of 0.5m. Excavation continued to a formation depth of 1.5m.
- 6.4 The natural ground was composed of mid yellowish-brown clay. The natural was overlain by a light grey-brown silty clay subsoil which in turn was overlain by a dark greyish-brown silt.
- 6.5 No archaeological features or artefacts were identified during the archaeological watching brief.

7 DISCUSSION

7.1 No archaeological features or artefacts were identified during the archaeological watching brief.

8 ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

- 8.1 Pre-Construct Archaeology Ltd would like to thank RPS Consulting Limited for commissioning the work. The project was managed for PCA by Mark Hinman and was supervised by Ryszard Molenda. Figures accompanying this report were prepared by Rosie Scales of PCA's CAD Department.

9 BIBLIOGRAPHY

9.1 Printed Sources

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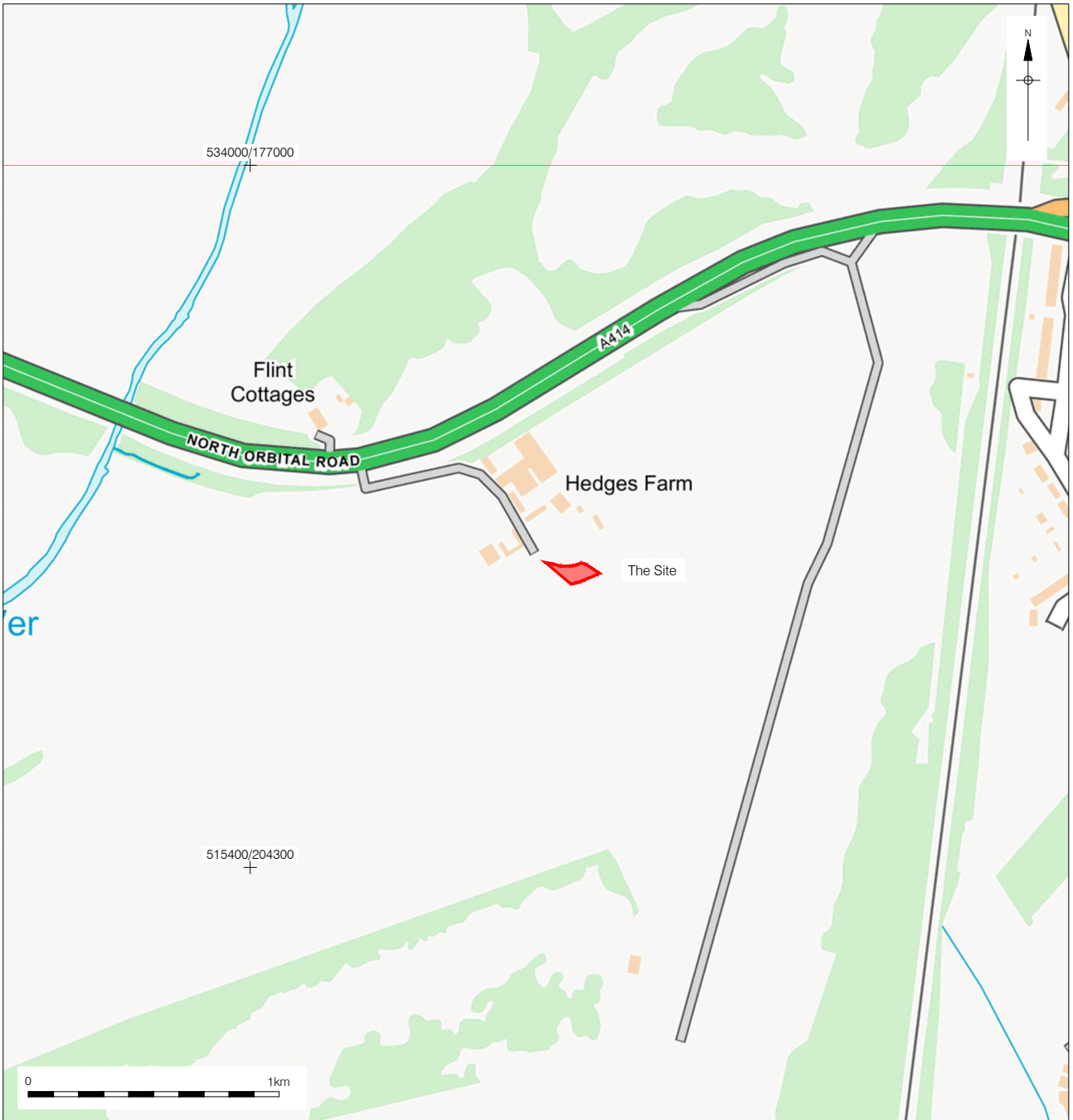
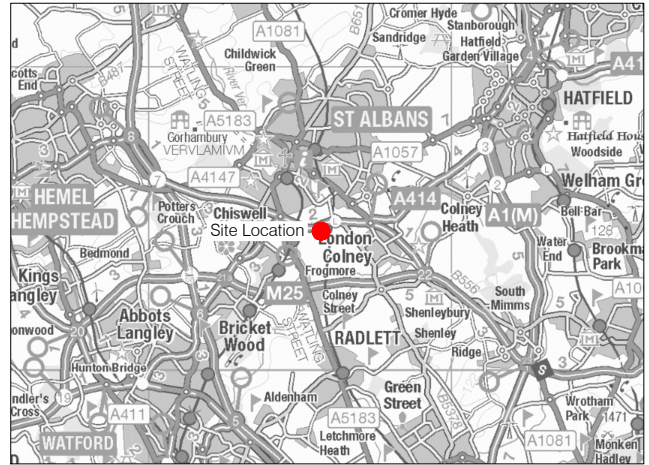
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11 APPENDIX 1: PLATES



Plate 1 Pre-excitation shot facing west



Plate 2 Working shot facing east



Plate 3 East footing facing south-east



Plate 4 East footing section facing north-east

12 APPENDIX 2: OASIS FORM

OASIS DATA COLLECTION FORM: England

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OASIS ID: preconst1-373992

Project details

Project name	Radlett SRFI, St Albans, Hertfordshire
Short description of the project	This report describes the results of an archaeological watching brief carried out by Pre-Construct Archaeology at land south from Hedges Farm, St Albans Hertfordshire. Two site visits were undertaken on 12th and 13th November 2019 during limited excavation of footings for a proposed Visitor Information Centre (VIC). The groundworks revealed no archaeological features.
Project dates	Start: 12-11-2019 End: 13-11-2019
Previous/future work	Yes / Not known
Any associated project reference codes	RAD16 - Sitecode
Type of project	Recording project
Site status	None
Current Land use	Grassland Heathland 2 - Undisturbed Grassland
Monument type	N/A None
Significant Finds	N/A None
Investigation type	""Watching Brief""
Prompt	Planning condition

Project location

Country	England
Site location	HERTFORDSHIRE ST ALBANS LONDON COLNEY and south from Hedges Farm, St Albans, Hertfordshire
Postcode	AL2 2ET
Study area	0.01 Hectares
Site coordinates	TL 1561 0464 51.728055555556 -0.325833333333 51 43 41 N 000 19 33 W Point

Lat/Long Datum	Unknown
Height OD / Depth	Min: 0.5m Max: 0.5m

Project creators

Name of Organisation	PCA Central
Project brief originator	Hertfordshire County Council
Project design originator	Chris Clarke
Project director/manager	Mark Hinman
Project supervisor	Ryszard Molenda
Type of sponsor/funding body	Consultancy
Name of sponsor/funding body	RPS Group

Project archives

Physical Archive Exists?	No
Digital Archive recipient	Verulamium Museum
Digital Archive ID	RAD19
Digital Contents	"none"
Digital Media available	"Images raster / digital photography"
Paper Archive Exists?	No

Project bibliography

1

Publication type	Grey literature (unpublished document/manuscript)
Title	LAND SOUTH OF HEDGES FARM, RADLETT, ST ALBANS, HERTFORDSHIRE: Archaeological Watching Brief
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13 APPENDIX 3: HERTS HER SUMMARY FORM (HERTS ONLY)

Site name and address: Radlett SRFI, St Albans, Hertfordshire		
County: Hertfordshire	District: St Albans	
Village/Town: Radlett	Parish: London Colney	
Planning application reference: APP/B1930/A/07/2045747/NWF		
HER Enquiry reference:		
Client name, address: RPS		
Nature of application: Advancing the development		
Present land use: Grassland		
Size of application area: c 0.1a	Size of area investigated: c 1a	
NGR (to 8 figures): TL 3270 1273		
Site code (if applicable): HBGH18		
Site director/Organisation: Ryszard Molenda/ Pre-Construct Archaeology Ltd		
Type of work: Watching Brief		
Date of work:	Start: 12.11.2019	Finish: 13.11.2019
Location of finds & site archive/Curating museum: Verulamium Museum		
Related HER Nos: N/A	Periods represented: N/A	
Relevant previous summaries/reports: Evaluation report (PCA report no. R.12623)		
Summary of fieldwork results: No archaeological features were identified during the archaeological watching brief		
Author of summary: R. Molenda	Date of summary: 14.11.2019	

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