

**LAND AT 71 HILL TOP ROAD,  
OXFORD.**

**NGR: SP 5387 0573**

**ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION**

**Quality Assurance**

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## **SUMMARY**

On the 18<sup>th</sup> October 2012 Foundations Archaeology undertook a programme of archaeological evaluation on land at 71 Hill Top Road, Oxford (NGR: SP 5387 0573) (Figure 1). The project was commissioned by David O'Neill of VO Properties.

Planning permission (ref: 12/01853/FUL) has been granted by Oxford City Council for the demolition of the existing building at 71 Hill Top Road and the construction of a new domestic dwelling. The planning approval carried an archaeological condition which required an archaeological evaluation in advance of building works to inform any requirements for further mitigation in accordance with the principles of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF, 2012).

The project comprised the excavation and recording of one 10m by 2m trench across the area of proposed development (Figure 2).

No archaeological features or deposits were present within the evaluation trench and there was no evidence of activity predating the late Post-medieval/Modern period. The top of the natural sands was disturbed by rooting holes and lines which, along with the subsoil, contained a mixture of late Post-medieval/Modern finds.

The presence of an intact subsoil indicated that the site area had not been truncated and that the absence of archaeological features could be considered a true absence.

## GLOSSARY OF ARCHAEOLOGICAL TERMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

### Archaeology

For the purpose of this project, archaeology is taken to mean the study of past human societies through their material remains from prehistoric times to the modern era. No rigid upper date limit has been set, but AD 1900 is used as a general cut-off point.

### CBM

Ceramic Building Material.

### Medieval

The period between the Norman Conquest (AD 1066) and *circa* AD 1500.

### Modern

The period from 1900 to the present day.

### Natural

In archaeological terms this refers to the undisturbed natural geology of a site.

### NGR

National Grid Reference from the Ordnance Survey Grid.

### OD

Ordnance datum; used to express a given height above sea-level. (AOD Above Ordnance Datum).

### OS

Ordnance Survey.

### Post-medieval

The period between *circa* AD 1500 and AD 1900.

### Prehistoric

The period prior to the Roman invasion of AD 43. Traditionally sub divided into; *Palaeolithic* – c. 500,000 BC to c. 12,000 BC; *Mesolithic* – c. 12,000 BC to c. 4,500 BC; *Neolithic* – c. 4,500 BC to c. 2,000 BC; *Bronze Age* – c. 2,000 BC to c. 800 BC; *Iron Age* – c. 800 BC to AD 43.

### Roman

The period between AD 43 and AD 410.

## 1 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 This report presents the findings of an archaeological evaluation undertaken by Foundations Archaeology on 18<sup>th</sup> October 2012 on land at 71 Hill Top Road, Oxford (NGR: SP 5387 0573). The project was commissioned by David O'Neill of VO Properties.
- 1.2 Planning permission (ref: 12/01853/FUL) has been granted by Oxford City Council for the demolition of the existing building at 71 Hill Top Road and the construction of a new domestic dwelling. The planning approval carried an archaeological condition which required an archaeological evaluation in advance of building works to inform any requirements for further mitigation in accordance with the principles of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF, 2012).
- 1.3 The archaeological works were undertaken in accordance with the agreed Written Scheme of Investigation (2012), based upon a brief issued by David Radford, the Oxford City Archaeologist (2012), and the Institute for Archaeologists' *Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Field Evaluation* (1994, rev. 2008)
- 1.4 The Written Scheme of Investigation was also compliant with *The Management of Research Projects in the Historic Environment* (MoRPHE) issued by English Heritage (2006) and with the IfA *Codes of Practice and Conduct*. Foundations Archaeology is a registered archaeological organisation and is certified to BS EN ISO 9001: 2008 for quality assurance in the provision of archaeological services.

## 2 PROJECT BACKGROUND

- 2.1 Planning permission (ref: 12/01853/FUL) has been granted by Oxford City Council for the demolition of the existing building at 71 Hill Top Road and the erection of a three storey terrace (including basement) building to provide two semi-detached dwellings with associated car parking, bin and cycle stores. The planning approval carried a condition which required an archaeological evaluation in advance of building works to inform any requirements for further mitigation in accordance with the principles of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF, 2012).
- 2.2 The site lies to the east of the centre of Oxford with 20<sup>th</sup> century domestic build to the northwest, Oxford Golf Clubhouse to the south and the golf course beyond to the south and east. A care home lies to the east and an area of open field to the northeast, beyond the back gardens of houses fronting Hill Top Road. At the time of the evaluation the existing domestic dwelling had been largely demolished and the area of excavation fell within the lawn to its southwest.
- 2.3 The underlying geology comprises Beckley Sandstone Member ([www.bgs.ac.uk](http://www.bgs.ac.uk)).

- 2.4 The site has not previously been subject to archaeological investigation, but it lies within an area of known archaeological potential. The site lies within a landscape of Roman field systems. It is also within pottery manufacturing areas associated with the nationally important Oxford pottery industry, also of Roman date. The closest recorded manufacturing sites lies at Churchill Hospital (HER 3615) approximately 100m east of the site which was characterised by 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> century AD kilns.
- 2.5 Evidence for a metalworking site has recently been discovered at Southfield Golf Course 90m south of the proposed development area (JMHS, 2012). The finds could relate to either the late Prehistoric or early Roman period. A watching brief was undertaken in advance of the excavation of three new ponds on the golf course which recorded a large pit with hammerscale debris within its fill and a second pit with a flue and associated postholes and stakeholes. Burnt stone were found within the flue, possibly indicating industrial iron working. Other postholes were recorded within the area which could relate to a Prehistoric fenceline or building.
- 2.6 The main potential of the site was, therefore, for the recovery of finds and/or features relating to the later Prehistoric and Roman periods, with particular emphasis on pottery and metalworking industries of these periods. This did not prejudice the evaluation against recovery of data related to other periods.

### **3 AIMS**

- 3.1 The aims of the archaeological evaluation were to gather high quality data from the direct observation of archaeological deposits in order to provide sufficient information to establish the nature, extent, preservation and potential of any surviving archaeological remains. In turn this will allow reasonable planning decisions to be taken regarding the archaeological provision for the areas affected by the proposed development.
- 3.2 These aims were achieved through pursuit of the following specific objectives:
- i) to define and identify the nature of archaeological deposits on site, and date these where possible;
  - ii) to attempt to characterise the nature and preservation of the archaeological sequence and recover as much information as possible about the spatial patterning and extent of features present on the site;
  - iii) to recover a well dated stratigraphic sequence which will attempt to determine the complexity of the horizontal and vertical stratigraphy present, and to recover coherent artefact, ecofact and environmental samples;
  - iv) to determine the potential of the site to provide palaeoenvironmental and/or economic evidence and the forms in which such evidence may be present;

v) to establish the character, extent and preservation of any Iron Age or Roman activity.

#### **4 METHODOLOGY**

- 4.1 One 10m x 1.8m trench was excavated within the footprint of the proposed build, as shown on Figure 2.
- 4.2 Topsoil and non-significant overburden was removed to the top of the archaeological deposits or natural, whichever was encountered first. This was achieved by the use of a 360° mechanical mini-digger, equipped with a toothless grading bucket, working under constant archaeological direction. Thereafter, all additional investigation was conducted manually by archaeologists.
- 4.3 All excavation and recording work was undertaken in accordance with the Written Scheme of Investigation and the Foundations Archaeology Technical Manual 3: Excavation Manual.
- 4.4 Limited hand excavation was undertaken in order to assess identified features. Spoil tips were scanned by eye for unstratified finds.

#### **5 RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

- 5.1 Natural deposits comprising mid orange soft sand were encountered at a depth of 0.30m to 0.34m (90.90m AOD) from the existing ground level. A sondage, measuring 1m wide by 2m long by 1.05m deep (90.01m AOD), was excavated through the natural sands in the northeast corner of the trench (see Figure 3, Photograph 3). The natural orange sands were present to a depth of 0.70m (90.20m AOD) below the existing ground level, below which were yellow sands with a low clay content.
- 5.2 The natural deposits were overlain by subsoil (102), 0.20m to 0.24m thick, consisting of a soft mid brown silt sand with orange mottling which contained a few artefacts including modern glass shards, small CBM fragments, animal bone fragments and late Post-medieval/Modern China Wares. The subsoil was sealed by a thin topsoil layer (101), 0.10m thick, which consisted of dark brown soft silt sand.
- 5.3 The top of the natural deposits was significantly disturbed by rooting lines and holes. A number of these 'features' were investigated which confirmed that they were very shallow, up to 0.05m in depth, and irregular in plan and section. They were filled with a deposit visually identical to the subsoil and contained a similar mixture of finds.
- 5.4 Modern disturbance within the trench was present in the form of two service trenches towards the south end of the trench and a sub-square feature, akin to a

geophysical test-pit, partially visible at the centre of the trench. These were filled with re-deposited natural yellow sands.

## **6 CONCLUSION**

- 6.1 No archaeological features or deposits were present within the evaluation trench and there was no evidence of activity predating the late Post-medieval/Modern period. The top of the natural sands was disturbed by rooting holes and lines which, along with the subsoil, contained a mixture of late Post-medieval/Modern finds.
- 6.2 The presence of an intact subsoil indicated that the site area had not been truncated and that the absence of archaeological features could be considered a true absence. This does not preclude the possibility of significant finds or features in the vicinity of the site.
- 6.3 The archive is currently held at the offices of Foundations Archaeology, but will be deposited within 12 months with the Oxfordshire County Museum Service under an accession number to be confirmed. A short note will be submitted for publication in the relevant local archaeological journal and an OASIS form will also be submitted to ADS.

## **7 BIBLIOGRAPHY**

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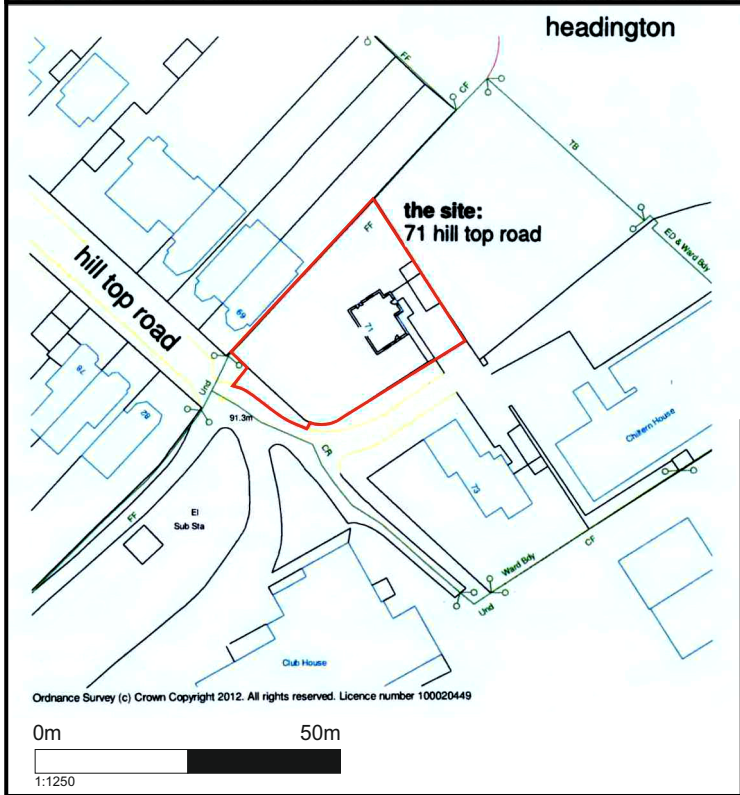
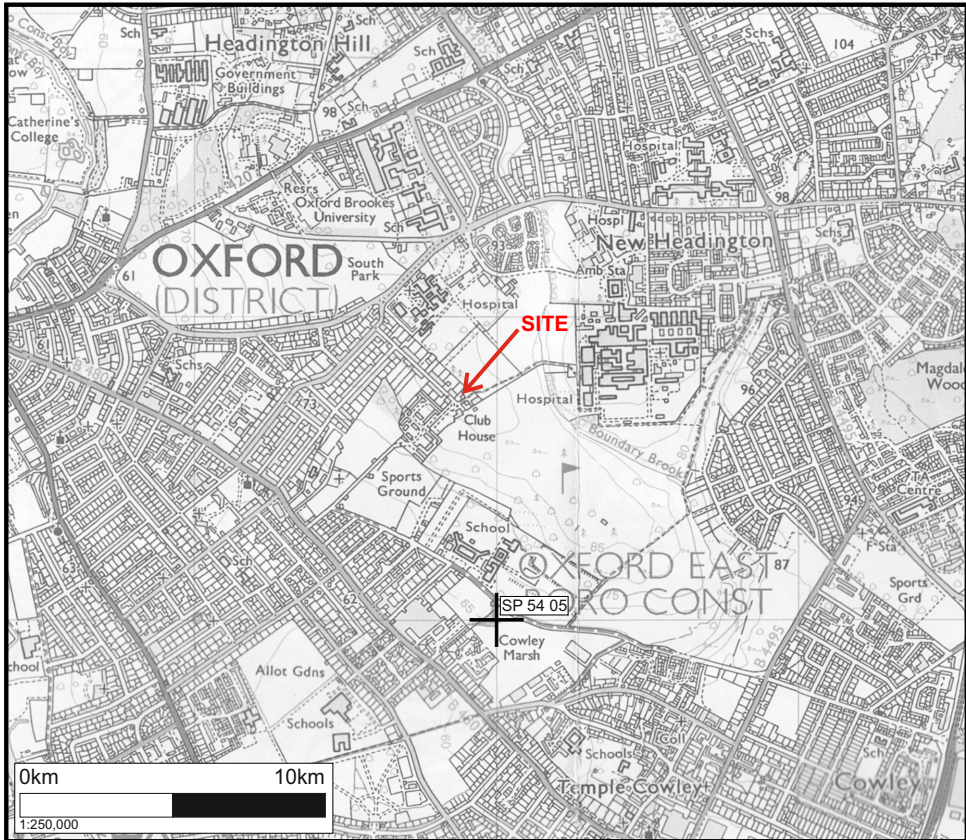
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## **8 ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

Foundations Archaeology would like to thank David O'Neill and associate of VO Properties and David Radford of Oxford City Council for their assistance during the course of this project.



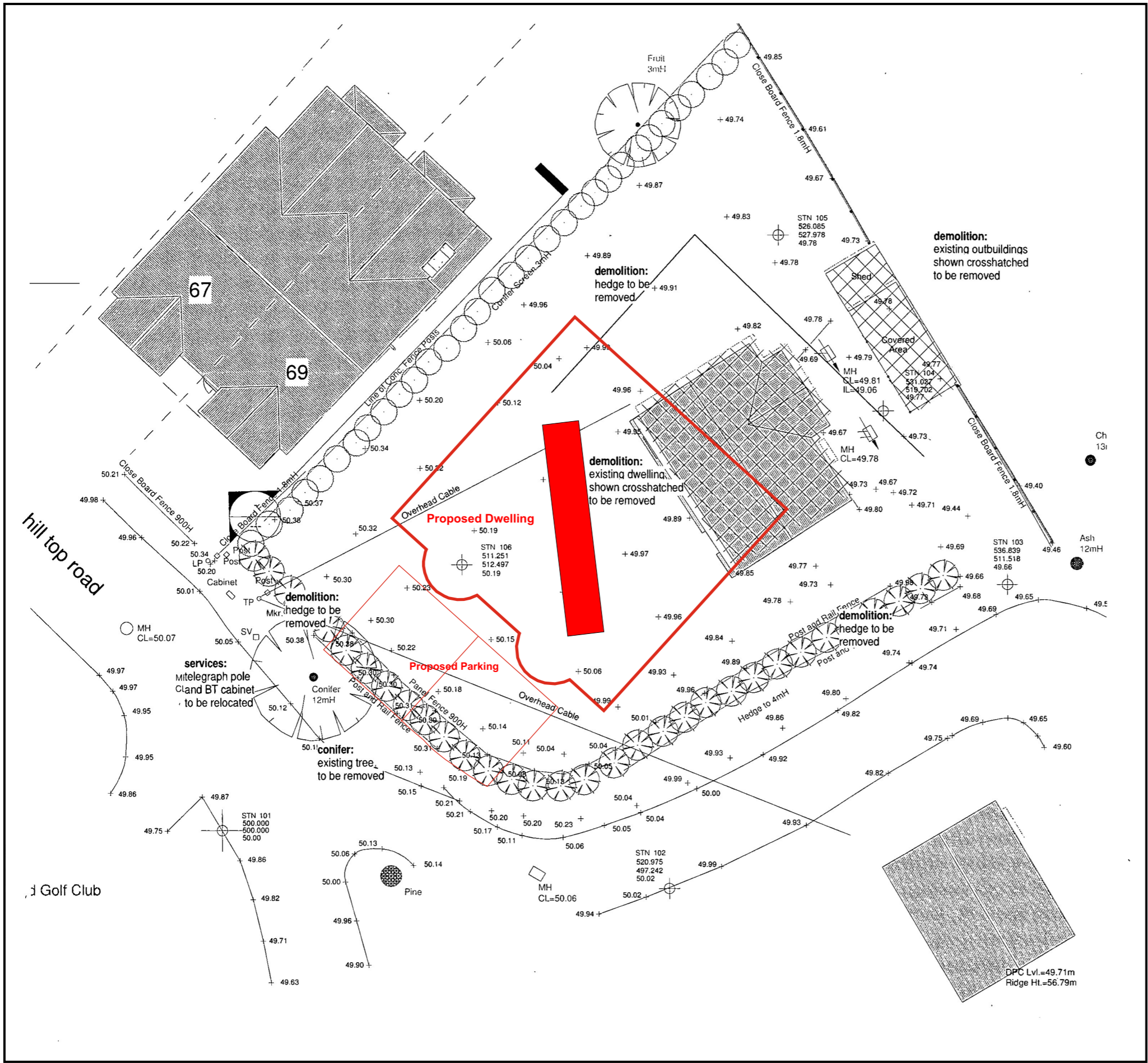


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**Site Code: HRT12**  
**Accession Code:**



**FIGURE 1: Site Location**



Site Code: HRT12  
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— PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT  
 ■ TRENCH LOCATION

0m 10m  
 1:200

**FIGURE 2: Trench Location Plan**



**PHOTOGRAPH 1: NORTH FACING SHOT OF TRENCH 1**



**PHOTOGRAPH 2: SOUTH FACING SHOT OF TRENCH 1**



**PHOTOGRAPH 3: SONDAGE, EAST FACING SECTION**

**Site Code: HRT12**  
**Accession Code:**

**FIGURE 3: Photographs**