

# HERITAGE NETWORK



## **63-65 BENSLOW RISE Hitchin, Herts.**

*(HN425)*

*Archaeological Monitoring Report*



# THE HERITAGE NETWORK LTD

*Registered with the Institute of Field Archaeologists as an Archaeological Organisation*

Archaeological Director: David Hillelson, BA MIFA

63-5 BENSLOW RISE

Hitchin, Herts.

HN425

## *Archaeological Monitoring Report*

*Prepared on behalf of Macrame Properties Ltd.*

by

Karin Semmelmann, MA PIFA

Report no.224

February 2004

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## Acknowledgements

The fieldwork for this project was carried out by David Hillelson, Geoff Saunders and Karin Semmelmann. The report text and illustrations were prepared by Karin Semmelmann. The report was edited by David Hillelson.

The Heritage Network would like to express its thanks to Robert Moore, Macrame Properties Ltd; Ricky Cooper, groundworks contractor; and the staff of the County Archaeology Office, HCC, for their co-operation and assistance in the execution of this project.

## Summary

<b>Site name and address:</b>	63-5 Benslow Rise, Hitchin, Herts.		
<b>County:</b>	Hertfordshire	<b>District:</b>	North Herts.
<b>Village/town:</b>	Hitchin	<b>Parish:</b>	Hitchin
<b>Planning reference:</b>	02/001379/1	<b>NGR:</b>	TL 1949 2949
<b>Client name and address:</b>	Macrame Properties Ltd. PO Box 28, Gosmore End House, Gosmore, Hitchin		
<b>Nature of work:</b>	New development	<b>Present land use:</b>	Garden
<b>Size of affected area:</b>	c.1675m <sup>2</sup>	<b>Size of area investigated:</b>	c.1675m <sup>2</sup>
<b>Site Code:</b>	HN425	<b>Other reference:</b>	n/a
<b>Organisation:</b>	Heritage Network	<b>Site Director:</b>	David Hillelson
<b>Type of work:</b>	Monitoring & recording	<b>Curating Museum:</b>	North Herts Museums
<b>Start of work</b>	19/06/2003	<b>Finish of work</b>	31/01/2004
<b>Related SMR Nos:</b>	n/a	<b>Periods represented:</b>	Victorian
<b>Previous summaries/reports:</b>	n/a		

**Synopsis:** As the result of an archaeological condition on the planning permission for the construction of two new dwellings, detached garages and associated groundworks to the rear of Benslow Nursing Home, Benslow Rise, Hitchin, Herts, the Heritage Network was commissioned by the developers to monitor the construction groundworks.

The only archaeological features revealed during the present investigation were associated with a 19<sup>th</sup> century stable block which had been demolished in 2002. These were located at a considerable depth below the present ground surface and were not investigated further.

# 1. Introduction

**1.1** This report has been prepared on behalf of Macrame Properties Ltd, as part of a programme of archaeological work associated with proposed building development at 63-5 Benslow Rise, Hitchin, Herts. The planning permission for the development, granted by the North Hertfordshire District Council (NHDC), was subject to a standard archaeological condition, in accordance with to the provisions of the Department of the Environment's *Planning Policy Guidance Note 16* (PPG16). The scope of the required work followed the *Design Brief for Archaeological Monitoring and Recording* issued by the *County Archaeology Office* (CAO) of Hertfordshire County Council, acting as advisers to NHDC (ref. SB 16/06/03).

**1.2** The site is located on the eastern side of Benslow Rise, to the rear of Benslow Nursing Home, centred on NGR TL 1949 2949 (see Figure 1). The development proposed to construct two new dwellings with detached garages and associated services and landscaping.

**1.3** The site was considered by the planning authority to lie in an area of high archaeological potential, possibly in the vicinity of an ancient burial mound. The County Sites and Monuments Record includes entries for finds of implements dating to the Mesolithic, Neolithic and Bronze Age within 100m of the site.

**1.4** The aim of the monitoring programme has been to identify and record any archaeological features and deposits which might have been uncovered, and to retrieve artefactual and ecofactual elements which would allow the date, character, and significance of the site to be assessed in accordance with current regional research agenda (Brown and Glazebrook, 2000), and subject to the limitations of reasonable safety and practicality.

**1.5** The present report, which details the results of the fieldwork, will be submitted to the planning authority and, subject to their approval, will complete the requirements of the planning condition.

## 2. Fieldwork

### *SITE TOPOGRAPHY AND GEOLOGY*

**2.1** The site slopes from the south-east to the north-west. The ground beyond the eastern boundary of the site forms part of a former Victorian chalk pit and limeworkings which drops away steeply to the East Coast Mainline railway track.

**2.2** The natural is a light yellowish brown silty sand with some chalk flecks, overlying Chalk.

### *RESULTS*

#### *Footings trenches*

**2.3** The footings trenches for plot 65 and both garages were inspected. They were dug by a JCB excavator fitted with a 0.60m toothed bucket, and were between 1.30 and 2.30m deep (see Figure 2). No archaeological features or deposits were revealed.

**2.4** Through an oversight by the client, the footings for plot 63 were not monitored. This was referred to the CAO for consideration and, on the basis of the monitoring of the other footings, and the expected monitoring of the proposed planter, it was agreed that no further mitigation would be required.

#### *Planter trench*

**2.5** The planter trench, which was U-shaped and linked the two properties, was approximately 14.9m long and 3.0m deep. The trench cut through material that was redeposited from elsewhere on the site, and had been used to level the area of a former Victorian stable block. The sides were very unstable and ranged between 0.80 and 3.50m in width.

**2.6** The remains of the east wall of the stable were revealed in both arms of the trench (see Figure 2). The south return wall was observed in the north facing section of the southern arm of the planter trench and an internal wall was observed in the north facing section of the northern arm of the trench. The walls were constructed with frogged, red bricks measuring 27 x 10 x 7cm (10  $\frac{1}{2}$  x 4 x 2  $\frac{3}{4}$  inches), set in a lime mortar.

**2.7** The stable floor lay 2.80m below the existing ground surface. Although some stable pavements had been noted by the groundworkers when the stable was demolished (Ricky Cooper, pers.comm.), the floor encountered during the present groundworks was made of concrete.

**2.8** No further archaeological features or deposits were revealed.

### 3. Discussion & Conclusion

**3.1** The only archaeological features revealed during the present investigation were the remains of a 19<sup>th</sup> century stable block which was demolished in 2002. These were located at a considerable depth below the present ground surface and were not investigated further.

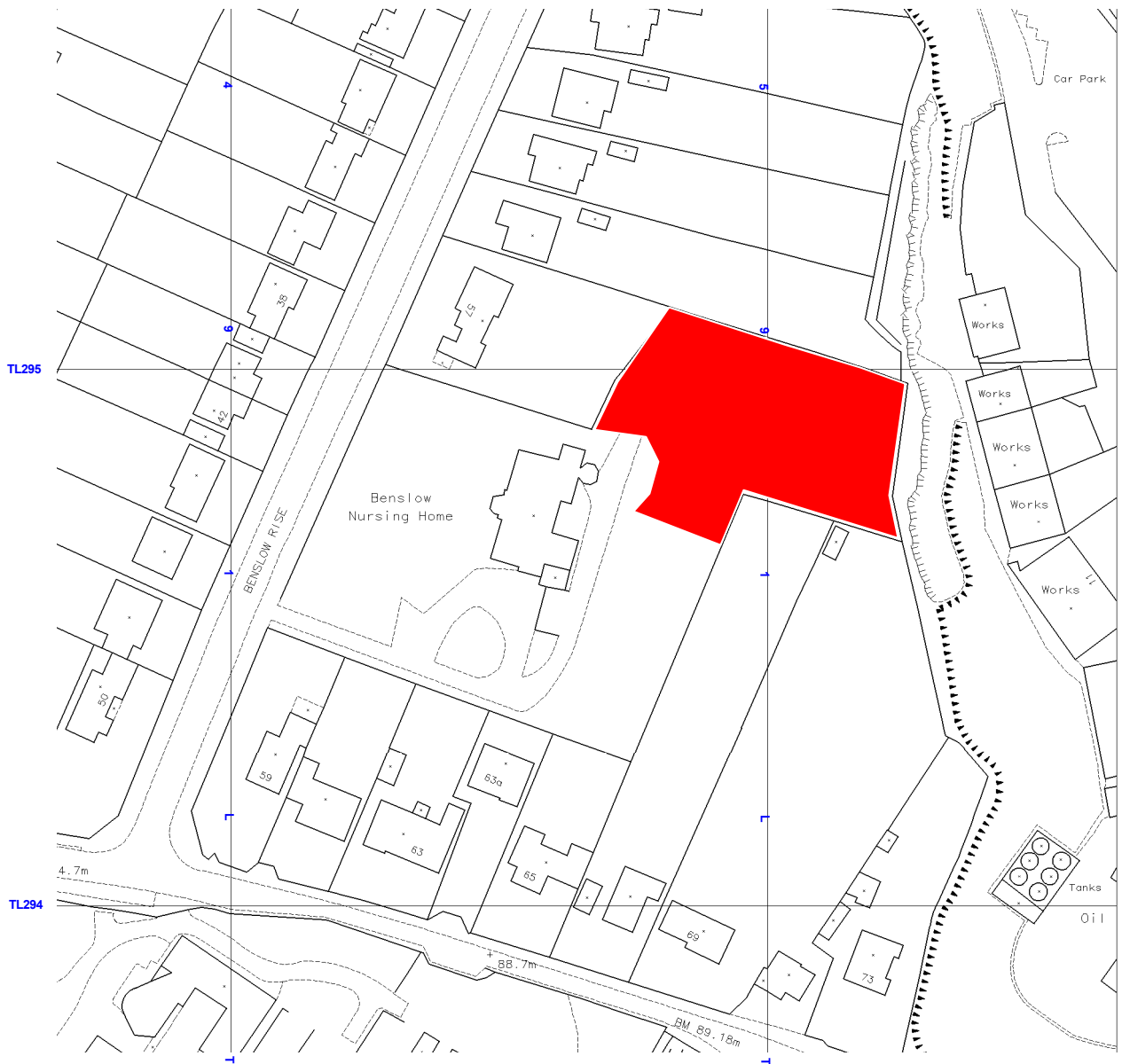
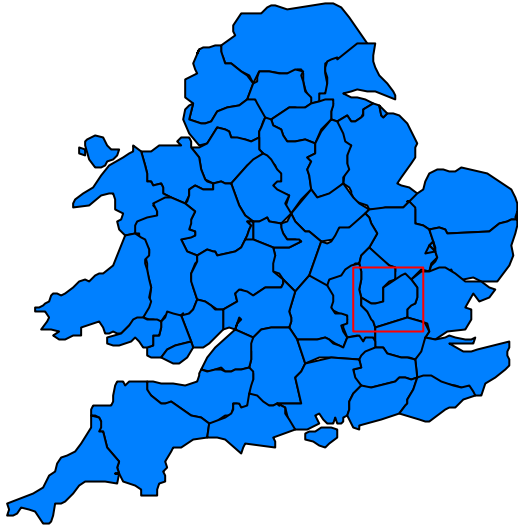
### 4. Schedule of Site Visits

Date	Staff	Hours	Comments
19/06/03	DJH	2	Site meeting & inspect northern garage
20/06/03	DJH	2	Inspect northern garage footings
14/07/03	DJH	1	Inspect footings for plot 65
15/07/03	DJH	2	Inspect footings for plot 65
31/07/03	KS	1	Inspect southern garage footings
28/01/04	KS	4	Monitor planter trench
29/01/04	GIS	1	Inspect & record planter trench
30/01/04	GIS	1	Inspect & record planter trench

### 5. Illustrations

Figure 1 ..... Site location

Figure 2 ..... Site layout



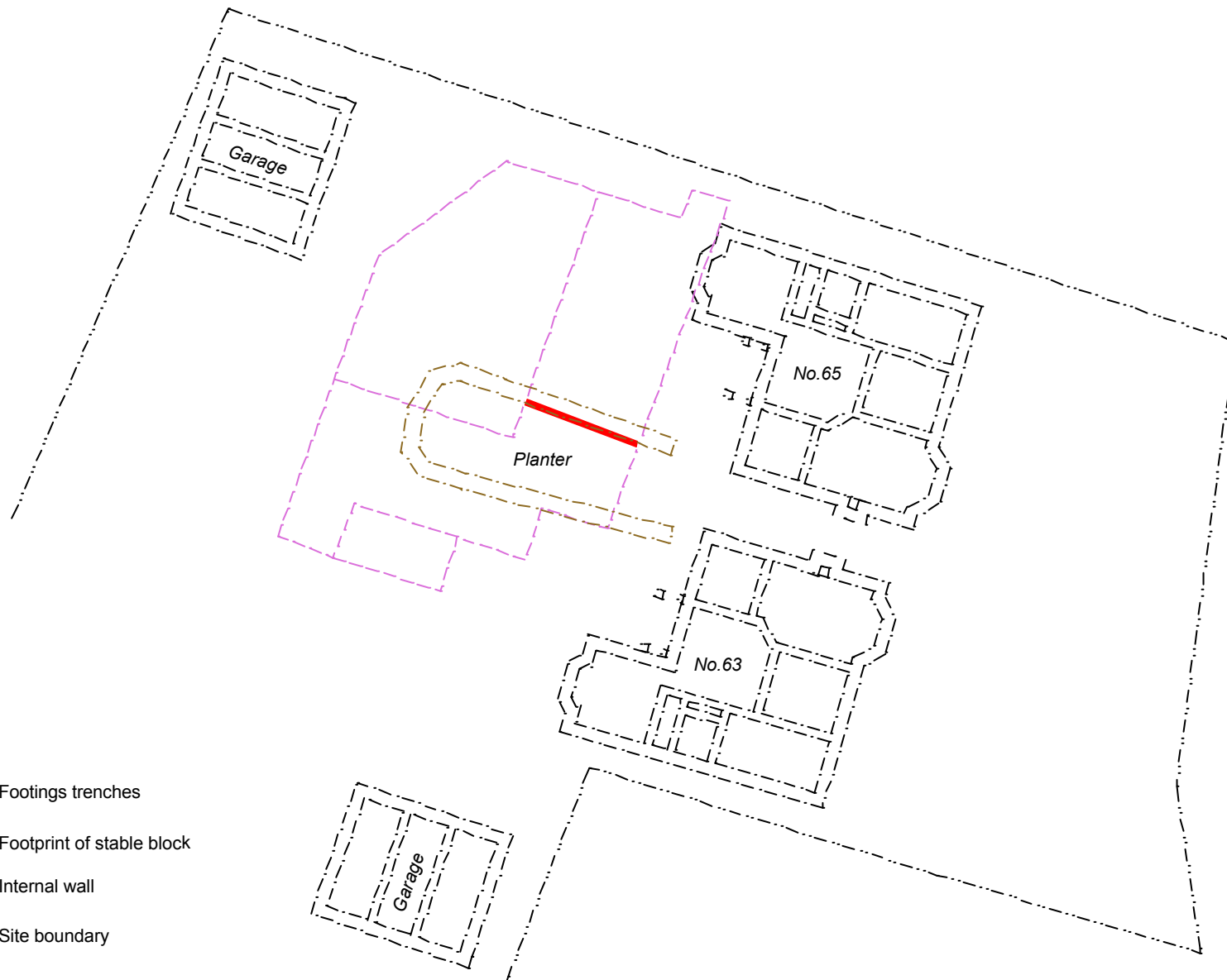
Site Location

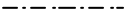



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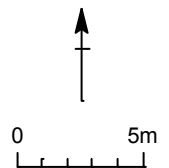
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Figure 1





-  Footings trenches
-  Footprint of stable block
-  Internal wall
-  Site boundary



Site layout

Scale 1:300

Figure 2