

# HERITAGE NETWORK



**80 HIGH STREET  
Walkern, Herts.**

HN526

*Archaeological Monitoring Report*



# *THE HERITAGE NETWORK LTD*

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

Archaeological Director: David Hillelson, BA MIFA

## ‘THE LAURELS’

80 High Street, Walkern, Herts.

HN526

### *Archaeological Monitoring Report*

*Prepared on behalf of Mr & Mrs P Taylor*

by

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&

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Report no.396

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*The cover photograph shows a view of the property looking south-west*

## Acknowledgements

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

The Heritage Network would like to express its thanks to Mr and Mrs P Taylor and Jonathan Smith, Archaeology Office, Hertfordshire County Council, for their co-operation and assistance in the execution of this project.

## Summary

<b>Site name and address:</b>	The Laurels, 80 High Street, Walkern, Hertfordshire		
<b>County:</b>	Hertfordshire	<b>District:</b>	East Herts
<b>Village/town:</b>	Walkern	<b>Parish:</b>	Walkern
<b>Planning reference:</b>	3/04/1171/FP	<b>NGR:</b>	TL 28883 26292
<b>Client name and address:</b>	Mr & Mrs P Taylor, The Laurels, 80 High Street, Walkern, Herts, SG2 7PG		
<b>Nature of work:</b>	Rear extension	<b>Former land use:</b>	Garden plot
<b>Site status:</b>	AAS 29	<b>Reason for investigation:</b>	Direction of local planning authority (PPG 16)
<b>Position in planning process:</b>	After full determination (as a condition)	<b>Project brief originator:</b>	Local Authority
<b>Size of affected area:</b>	105m <sup>2</sup>	<b>Size of area investigated:</b>	105m <sup>2</sup>
<b>Site Code:</b>	HN526	<b>Other reference:</b>	n/a
<b>Organisation:</b>	Heritage Network	<b>Site Director:</b>	David Hillelson
<b>Project type, methods etc.:</b>	Monitoring	<b>Archive recipient:</b>	Stevenage Museum
<b>Start of work</b>	11/08/05	<b>Finish of work</b>	14/03/07
<b>Related SMR Nos:</b>	n/a	<b>Periods represented:</b>	Post medieval
<b>Oasis UID</b>	heritage1-12618	<b>Significant finds:</b>	None
<b>Monument types:</b>	Ditch, Post medieval; Pit, Post medieval; Well, Post medieval		
<b>Physical archive:</b>	Pottery, Brick, Tile, Glass, Clay pipe, Shell, Animal bone, Coal, Slate		
<b>Previous summaries/reports:</b>	None		

### Synopsis:

In response to a condition on the planning permission for a new single storey rear extension at The Laurels, 80 High Street, Walkern, Hertfordshire, the Heritage Network was commissioned by the developer to undertake the archaeological monitoring of the groundworks.

The monitoring of the groundworks associated with the new development revealed several features of post-medieval to modern date associated with the site's use as a domestic residence during these periods. No earlier activity was observed.

## 1. Introduction

**1.1** This report has been prepared at the request of Mrs and Mrs P. Taylor, as part of a programme of archaeological investigation in advance of development works at 'The Laurels', 80 High Street, Walkern, Hertfordshire.

**1.2** The investigation was a requirement of the planning consent for the development, under the provisions set out in Planning Policy Guidance Note No.16 (PPG16) on Archaeology and Planning (DoE 1990). The work was defined in a Design Brief for *Archaeological Monitoring and Recording* prepared by the *County Archaeology Office* (CAO) of Hertfordshire County Council (ref. JS 06/09/04), acting as advisers to East Herts District Council (planning ref. 3/04/1171/FP). A full specification for the work was contained in the Heritage Network's approved *Project Design*, dated April 2005.

**1.3** The study area (centred on NGR TL 28883 26292) is located on the western side of the High Street, opposite to the village allotments. The development involved the replacement of existing lean-to extensions to the western (rear) elevation with a new single storey extension and paved patio area.

**1.4** The site lies within the Area of Archaeological Significance no. 29 (AAS29) which defines the medieval core of Walkern in the District Local Plan. The village is recorded in the Domesday Survey, and the parish church of St Mary is a pre-Conquest foundation. The present building is listed Grade II for its group value, and dates to around 1700.

**1.5** The aim of the present project has been to identify and record any archaeological features and deposits which were 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.

**1.6** The present report is intended to complete the record of the project, and, together with the deposition of the archive for the project with Stevenage Museum, to complete the requirements of the planning condition.

## 2. Fieldwork

### TOPOGRAPHY AND GEOLOGY

**2.1** The site lies within the village of Walkern on the western slope of the valley of the River Beane. The affected area was formerly the site of lean-to extensions on the rear of the property and an area of lawn. It covers an area of approximately 95m<sup>2</sup>. The site sits at approximately 85mOD, the levels rising to the west and dropping away slightly to the east.

**2.2** The underlying natural geology consists of plateau drift, covered with soils of the Hornbeam 2 Association (582c). These comprise deep fine loamy over clayey soils with slowly permeable subsoils and slight seasonal waterlogging (SSEW 1983).

### METHODOLOGY

**2.3** The timetable for the fieldwork followed the client's groundwork schedule. A number of site visits were made to supervise the ground reduction within the footprint of the new extension, the ground reduction for landscaping in the garden, and the excavation of foundations for the new extension.

**2.4** Ground reduction was undertaken using a combination of a 360<sup>0</sup> mini-digger and a 180<sup>0</sup> wheeled excavator both fitted with toothless ditching buckets, and under direct archaeological supervision.

**2.5** Spoil from the various stages of the groundworks was inspected for archaeological artefacts.

**2.6** All fieldwork was carried out in accordance with the approved *Project Design*, current health and safety legislation, and the appropriate IFA and ALGAO guidance documents.

### MONITORING AND RECORDING

#### Stratigraphy

Context	Type	Description	Dimensions (m)			Level (mOD)
			Length	Width	Depth	
01	Topsoil	Greyish brown (10YR 5/2) loose silty loam, with frequent rounded and sub-angular pebbles, roots and ceramic building material	>4.00	>4.00	0.40	c.85.00
02	Subsoil	Reddish brown (5YR 4/4) compact clay silt, with frequent small stones, ceramic building material, charcoal and mortar flecks; moderate roots and chalk flecks.	>4.00	>4.00	0.55	c.84.60

#### Fieldwork Results

27.

2.7 The groundworks included the demolition of lean-to structures at the rear of the existing building, reduction of part of the existing raised lawned area, and the excavation of the footings trenches for the new extension.

### **Ground Reduction (Building footprint)**

2.8 An area measuring approximately 8m long by 7m wide was reduced by a maximum of 0.95m. The reduction exposed only the topsoil (1) and subsoil (2) and did not reach the natural geology. It was noted that the ground level on the present site was at least 0.40m higher than that of the adjacent property to the south.

2.9 The topsoil (1) contained modern debris such as plastic toys and knitting needles. Artefacts such as post-medieval tile, pottery and glass were observed within subsoil layer (2). These were not collected, but their presence suggests that this is a post-medieval garden soil layer below the current modern topsoil (1).

2.10 Two archaeological features were revealed during the reduction of the subsoil, a well, context [3] and a post-medieval rubbish pit, context [4].

Context	Type	Description	Dimensions (m)			Level (mOD)
			Length	Width	Depth	
03	Structure	Circular brick-lined well, with domed top, 0.90m in diameter and c.6.50m in depth.	0.90	0.90	c.6.50	c.84.60
04	Pit cut	Sub-circular cut, with steep straight sides, base below limit of excavation. Aligned roughly east – west. Contains (5).	>1.00	0.70	>0.55	c.84.60
05	Pit fill	Greyish brown (10YR 5/2) compact clay silt, with frequent small stones, roots and charcoal flecks.	>1.00	0.70	>0.55	c.84.60

2.11 Well [3] was located at the northern end of the reduced area, approximately 2.00m from the drive and 5.53m from the rear of the existing building (Figure 2). It was circular in plan, with a domed top of red brick bonded with a lime mortar. No bonding material was present between the bricks lining the shaft.

2.12 Pit [4] was cut into the sub-soil at the southern side of the reduced area, approximately 1.16m from the southern property boundary and c.6.80m from the rear of the existing building (Figure 2). Owing to the weather conditions at the time of excavation, which consisted of strong bright sun, this feature was initially seen only in section during the reduction of the sub-soil. The exposed area measured over 1m in length, 0.70m in width and over 0.55m in depth, with steep straight sides. The western side appeared to continue beyond the limit of excavation and the base was not reached.

2.13 The pit contained fill (5), a compact greyish brown clay silt, with frequent small roots, pebbles, gravel and charcoal flecks. Artefacts recovered from this fill include pottery of 18<sup>th</sup> / 19<sup>th</sup> century date, oyster shell, tile pieces and animal bone. These suggest that this was a domestic rubbish pit to the rear of the house.

**2.14** The remains of the brick footings for the former extensions were revealed following removal of the spoil heap. These consisted of a wall, 2 bricks wide (0.22m), which enclosed an area measuring 2.90m east to west and 4.45m north to south (Figure 2).

### **Footings Trenches**

**2.15** The internal dimensions of the new extension measured 7.10m long and 4.45m wide. The footings trenches were 0.40m wide on the northern and western sides, but varied between 0.40m and 0.80m on the southern side. The trench depth varied between 0.70m and 1.18m.

**2.16** The stratigraphy in the northern trench consisted of a make-up layer below the former rear extension, 0.20m deep, above natural clay. The stratigraphy in the western trench consisted of a layer of sub-soil, context (2), 0.10m deep, above natural red-brown clay, 0.50m deep. Below this was clean natural blue clay.

**2.17** The sections in the southern footings trench revealed a greater amount of disturbance, particularly at the southeastern end, closest to the existing house and below the previous extension (Figure 3). The remains of its red brick footings extended west for 3.07m and stood three courses high (0.19m). Below was a layer of concrete, 0.34m deep at the eastern side adjacent to the house, and 0.58m deep at the western end.

**2.17.1.** A layer of black charcoal and silty clay, 0.25m deep, lay beneath the concrete at the eastern end. This contained frequent post-medieval brick and tile pieces, possibly demolition rubble. Below this was a layer of mixed grey clay and gravel, 0.13m deep, above the natural clay which was revealed at 0.91m below the reduced surface.

**2.17.2.** These layers were all cut by feature [06], which was visible in section at approximately 2m west of the house and lay directly under the concrete at the western end of the former extension. The exposed area measured 1.07m wide and 0.74m deep, with steep straight sides and a flat base. It contained fill (07), a grey brown clay silt with frequent post-medieval brick and tile pieces. This has been interpreted as a possible pit as it was only present in the south facing section. The presence of this feature is likely to explain the depth of later concrete in this area.

**2.18** Beyond this point a number of drains were visible in section, which continued into the neighbouring property. These appear to be modern in date. The stratigraphy at the western end of the trench was similar to that revealed in the western footings.

Context	Type	Description	Dimensions (m)			Level (mOD)
			Length	Width	Depth	
06	Feature cut	Possible pit, seen in south-facing section in southern footings trench. Steep straight sides, flat base. Contains (7)	-	1.07	0.74	c.84.23
07	Feature fill	Fill of possible pit. Greyish brown (10YR 5/2) clay firm silt, with frequent CBM and charcoal flecks.	-	1.07	0.74	c.84.23

### *Garden landscaping*

**2.19** Ground reduction was undertaken to the rear of the new extension to create a patio and a garden terrace. The stratigraphy in this part of the site varied slightly from that observed beneath the new extension. It consisted of a layer of loose, very dark greyish brown, silty clay topsoil over a firm, dark olive brown, clay subsoil. The underlying geology consisted of firm, olive brown clay with grey clay lenses and chalk inclusions.

**2.20** The area reduced for the patio measured approximately 6.65m by 5.0m. The ground level in this area was reduced by a maximum of 1.0m. A single feature, ditch [08], was observed during this stage of the groundworks.

**2.21** A linear cut [08] was observed crossing the new patio area on a north-west – south-east alignment. The feature, which was not excavated, measured approximately 0.45m wide. The single firm, bluish grey, redeposited clay fill (09) yielded two fragments of undiagnostic post-medieval – modern peg tile. The linear appears to run into pit [04]. The artefact assemblages from the two features suggest they are not contemporary and indicate that linear [08] is the later feature. The feature was not, however, observed extending beyond the pit.

**2.22** A short length of brickwork [10] was observed running along the centre of the linear. The brickwork measured 2.8m long by 0.21m wide and survived to a depth of only two courses. An intact brick was recovered and has been dated to 1840-1850. It is not clear as to whether the brickwork held a structural function associated with the linear cut or whether it is a fragment of brickwork dumped into it.

**2.23** A further stage of reduction was undertaken to create a garden terrace. This area measured approximately 5.0m by 5.0m and was reduced by a maximum of 0.65m. The continuation of linear [08] was observed faintly in this area, but the depth reached was not great enough to fully clarify its extent.

**2.24** No further archaeological features were observed.

Context	Type	Description	Dimensions (m)		
			Length	Width	Depth
08	Linear	Linear cut feature aligned NW – SE. Preserved below impact level of groundworks.	10.50 +	0.45	-
09	Fill	Firm, bluish grey (Gley2 6/1), clay. Fill of [08].	10.50 +	0.45	-
10	Structure	Short length of brickwork observed in ditch [08].	2.80	0.21	0.13

### *Concordance Finds Assessment*

Context	Pottery		CBM		Glass		Clay pipe		Shell		An. bone		Coal		Slate	
	No	Wt	No	Wt	No	Wt	No	Wt	No	Wt	No	Wt	No	Wt	No	Wt
(05)	52	2330	3	315	8	220	1	2	26	760	9	300	1	30	2	20
Plinth			1	2530												
Ditch			2	160					1	15	3	235				



27.

U/S	2	190														
<b>Total</b>	<b>54</b>	<b>2520</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>3005</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>220</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>775</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>535</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>20</b>

**2.25** The topsoil, context (1) and sub-soil, context (2) contained finds of modern and post-medieval date, including ceramic building material and plastic artefacts. These were noted, but not collected.

### *Artefacts*

#### *Pottery*

**2.26** A total of 54 sherds, weighing 2520g, was collected from one stratified and one unstratified context during the present investigation.

**2.27** Approximately 92% of the assemblage by weight was collected from the fill of pit [04]. The pottery from the feature all dated to the period 1600 – 1770 and comprised the remains of at least 13 separate vessels, including 2 flared bowls in green-glazed red ware, a flanged bowl in green-glazed red ware, a Staffordshire slip-trailed plate and a black-glazed jar base. A single sherd of blue and white Delft ware / Maiolica was also present. All of these wares are commonly found on post-medieval occupation sites.

**2.28** Two undiagnostic bodysherds, recovered unstratified, are of 18<sup>th</sup>-19<sup>th</sup> century date.

**2.29** Although no complete vessels were present, the bulk of this material was in good condition, suggesting that it was in its primary place of deposition. It appears to represent a typical domestic pottery assemblage of 17<sup>th</sup>/18<sup>th</sup> century date.

#### *Recommendations*

**2.30** As no complete vessels were recovered, and the vessel types are common on post-medieval domestic sites, no further work is recommended on this assemblage.

#### *Ceramic Building Material (CBM)*

**2.31** A total of 6 fragments of CBM, weighing 3005g, was recovered from three stratified contexts during the present investigation.

**2.32** A single brick, representing 84% of the assemblage by weight, was recovered from a short length of brickwork [10] in linear [08]. The brick measures 210mm in length by 100mm in width by 63mm in depth. The brick, which is of 1840-1850 date, is handmade and of high quality, but has been overfired (Tom Doig, pers.comm).

**2.33** Three fragments of post-medieval peg tile were recovered from the fill of pit [04]. They are all post-medieval in date, and probably contemporary with the pottery.

**2.34** Two undiagnostic fragments of post-medieval-modern peg tile were recovered from the fill of linear [08].

#### *Recommendations*

27.

**2.35** Due to the small size of the assemblage, no further work is recommended on this material.

#### *Glass*

**2.36** A total of 8 fragments of glass, weighing 220g, was recovered from the fill of pit [04]. The bulk of the assemblage consisted of fragments of brown glass, including the base of an 18<sup>th</sup> century wine bottle.

#### *Recommendations*

**2.37** Due to the fragmentary nature of this material, no further work is recommended.

#### *Miscellaneous Finds*

**2.38** A small group of miscellaneous finds was also collected from the fill of pit [04]. This consisted of 1 fragment of clay pipe stem, weighing 2g, a piece of coal, weighing 30g, 2 slate fragments, weighing 20g, and a fossil shell, weighing 20g. All of these are common finds in this area and on post-medieval sites.

#### *Recommendations*

**2.39** This assemblage has no archaeological value and therefore, no further work is recommended.

#### *Ecofacts*

##### *Animal bone*

**2.40** A total of 12 fragments of animal bone, weighing 535g, was collected from two stratified contexts during the present investigation.

**2.41** A total of 9 fragments, weighing 300g, was collected from the fill of pit [04]. The bulk of the material from the pit appears to have come from large animals, possibly cattle, with two small chicken bones. They appear to represent food remains, as several of the bones show cut marks.

**2.42** A further 3 fragments, weighing 235g, were collected from the fill of ditch [08]. These also appear to have come from cattle. One of the bones shows gnawing marks, possibly by a small mammal, suggesting that it lay exposed for sometime prior to being buried.

#### *Recommendations*

**2.43** Given the small and fragmentary nature of this assemblage, no further work is recommended.

#### *Marine Shell*

**2.44** A total of 27 oyster shells, weighing 775g, was collected from two stratified contexts during the present investigation.

27.

**2.45** Approximately 98% of the assemblage by weight was collected from the fill of pit [04]. The assemblage contains several large, barnacle-encrusted shells, as well as examples of smaller, possibly less mature, animals. They appear to represent food remains and are frequently found in post-medieval domestic contexts.

**2.46** A single shell was recovered from the fill of linear [08].

### *Recommendations*

**2.47** Given the small size of the assemblage no further work is recommended on this material.

### 3. Discussion and Conclusion

**3.1** The site lies within *Area of Archaeological Significance No.29* as defined in the East Herts Local Plan. This area includes the Anglo-Saxon and medieval core of Walkern. The village is recorded in the Domesday survey, and the 11<sup>th</sup> century parish of St Mary is a pre-conquest foundation. Romano-British artefacts of 1<sup>st</sup> – 4<sup>th</sup> century date were recovered during construction works approximately 500m to the south-west (NMR 365011), and a cremation urn from the same period was recovered during construction work at the school in Church End approximately 650m to the north-east (NMR 365014).

**3.2** The monitoring of the groundworks associated with the development revealed a well [03], two pits [04] and [07], and a linear cut [08], dating from the post-medieval period onwards.

**3.3** The post-medieval brick lined well, context [03] was located to the rear of the house. The well had been capped with a dome of red bricks bonded with lime mortar. Several wells are shown on the first edition Ordnance Survey. Their precise location is unclear but one is marked close to the study area.

**3.4** A pit, cut [4], which contained pottery of 17<sup>th</sup>/18<sup>th</sup> century date, animal bone and marine shell, was located at the rear of the house, close to the southern property boundary. This was clearly used for the deposition of domestic rubbish, including food remains and broken pots.

**3.5** Pit [07], which contained several fragments of brick and tile of 19<sup>th</sup> century date, was located close to the rear of the house. Only a small percentage of the feature was observable within the footings trench for the new extension and its function remains uncertain.

**3.6** Linear cut [08], which yielded peg tile of post-medieval – modern date, was located to the rear of the house. A short length of brickwork [10] of mid 19<sup>th</sup> century date ran along the centre of the ditch. The feature does not appear to have served as a boundary as it does not relate to the existing property boundaries which are known to have been established by this date.

#### *Conclusion*

**3.7** The archaeological fieldwork on the present site identified features associated with the site's use as a domestic residence during the post-medieval and modern periods. No evidence of activity pre-dating this was observed.

#### *Confidence Rating*

**3.8** During the course of the fieldwork, the conditions were generally acceptable for the identification of potential features and deposits, and for their investigation.

**3.9** There are no circumstances which would lead to a confidence rating for the work which was less than High.

## 4. Schedule of Site Visits

Date	Staff	Hours	Comments
11/8/05	DJH	1	Preliminary visit
31/8/05	HMA	5	Monitor ground reduction
07/09/05	HMA	2	Inspect footings trenches
09/05/06	GIS	8	Monitor ground reduction
14/03/07	GIS	4	Monitor ground reduction

## 5. Bibliography

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Soil Survey of England and Wales 1983 *Soil Map Sheet 4, Eastern England, Scale 1:250,000*

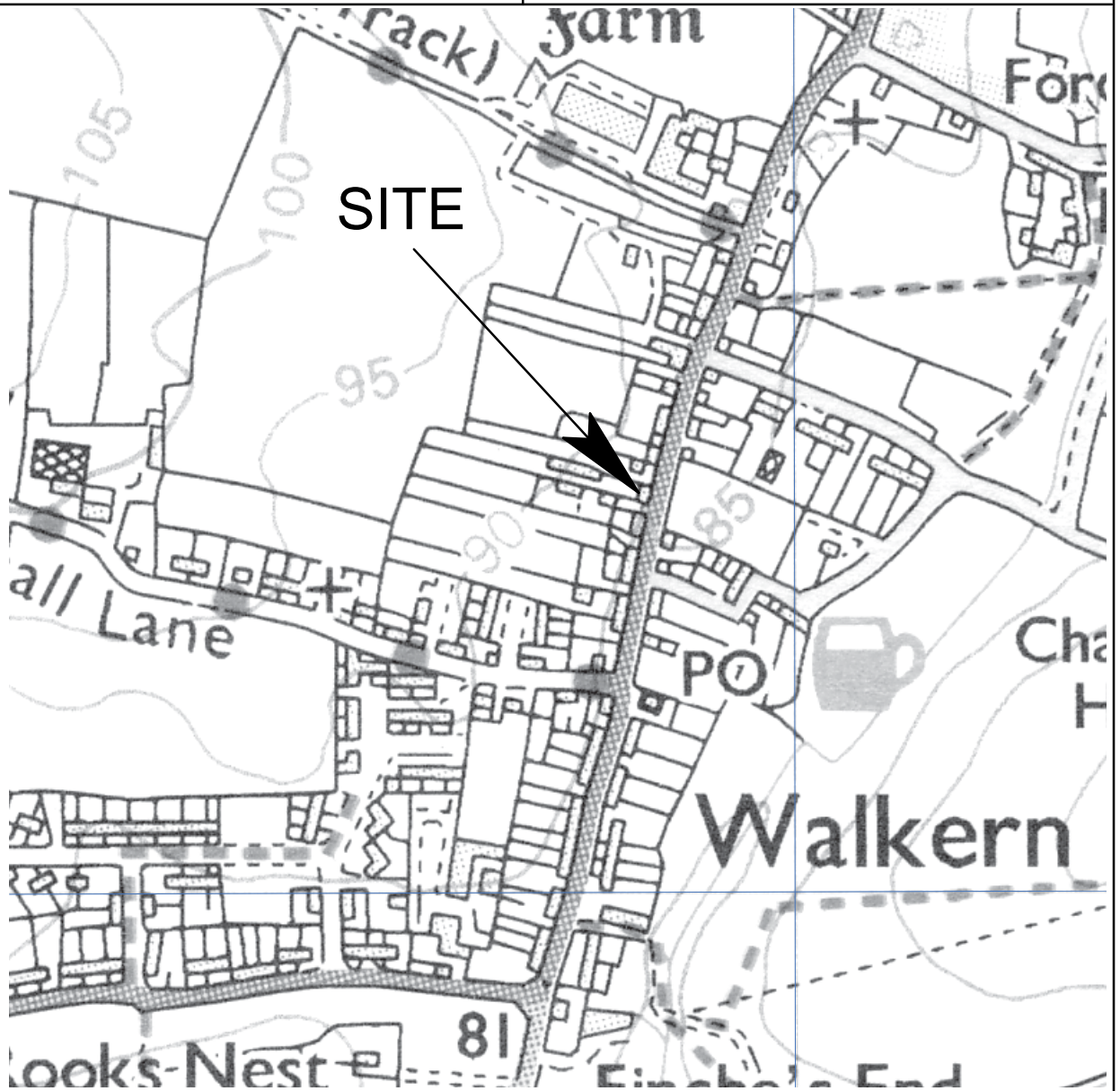
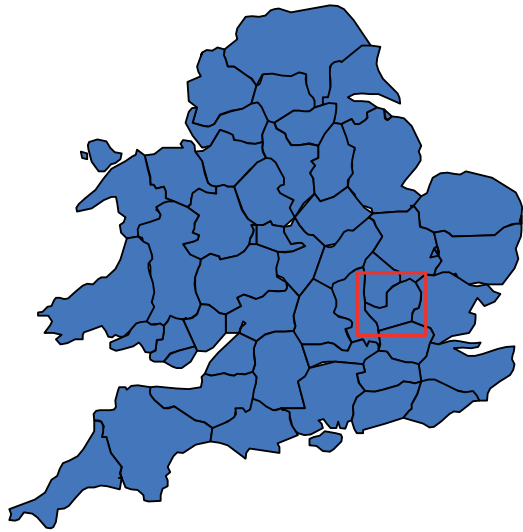
## 6. Illustrations and Plates

Figure 1 .....	Site location
Figure 2 .....	Site layout: ground reduction
Figure 3 .....	Site layout: footings
Figure 4 .....	Feature sections
Plate 1 .....	Ground reduction-Building footprint
Plate 2 .....	Well [03]
Plate 3 .....	Footings trench section
Plate 4 .....	Ground reduction-Garden landscaping

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80 High Street, Walkern

HN526

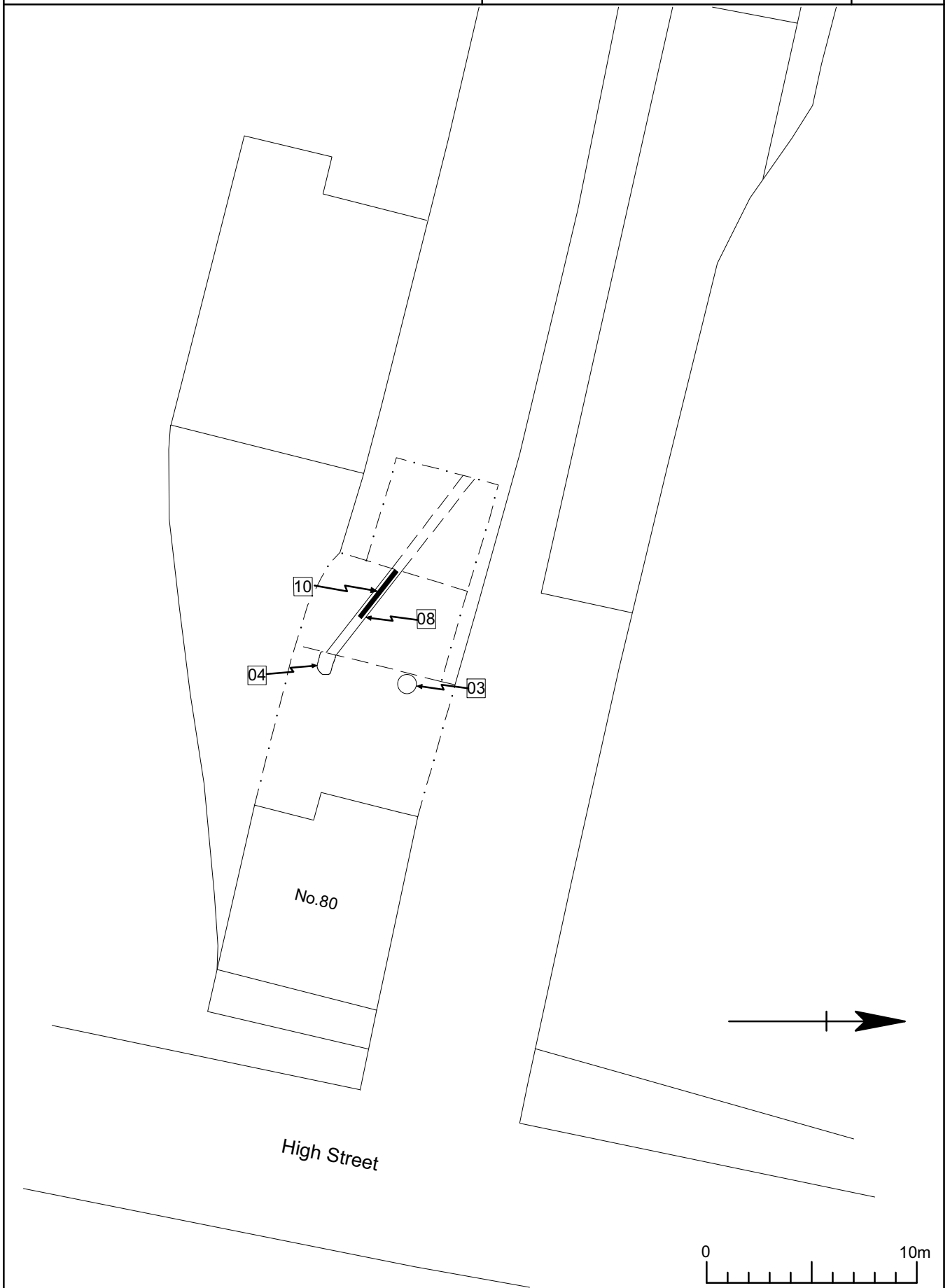


Site Location

Scale 1:5000

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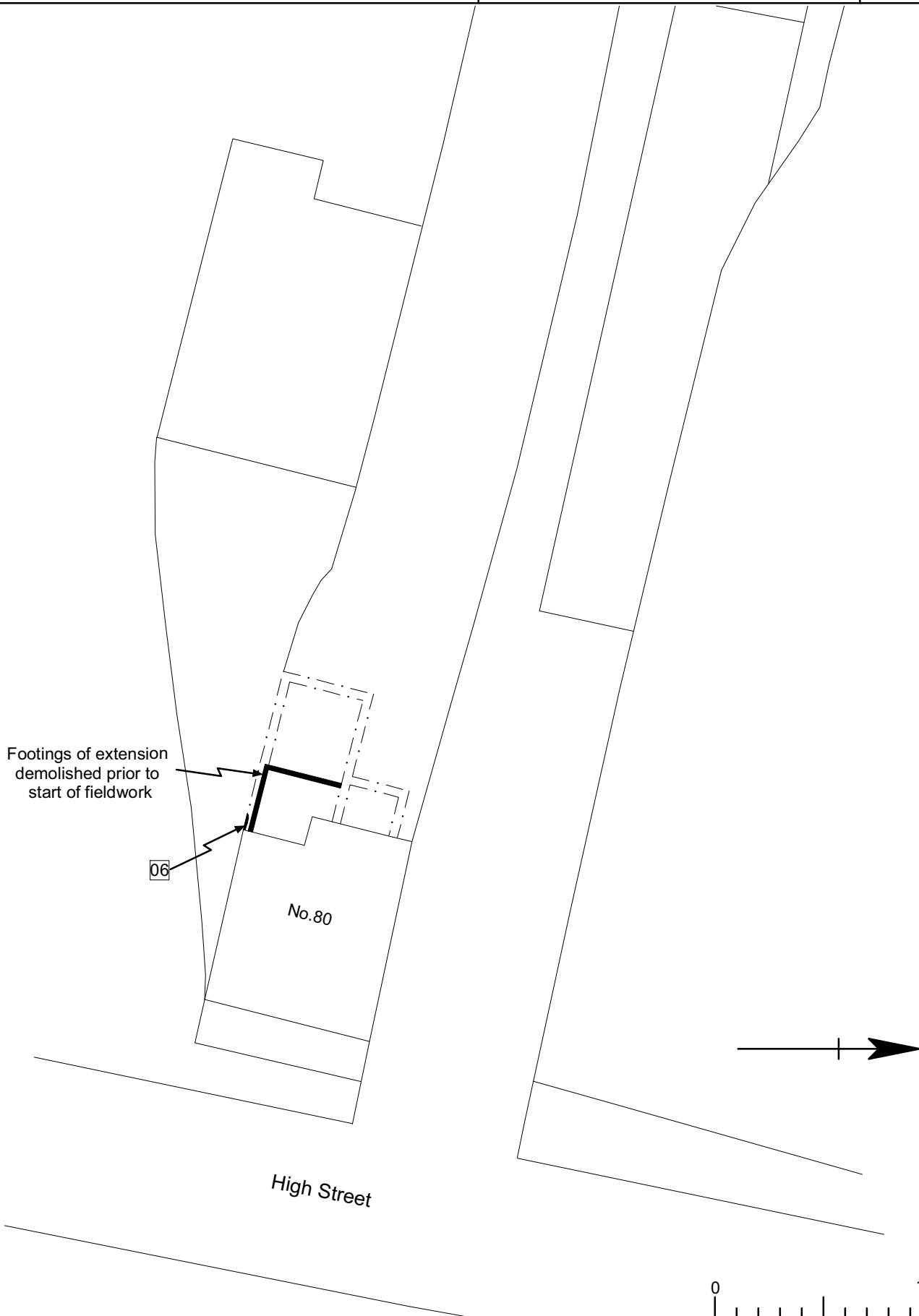
Figure 1



Features Identified During Ground Reduction

Scale 1:250

Figure 2



Footings of extension demolished prior to start of fieldwork

06

No. 80

High Street



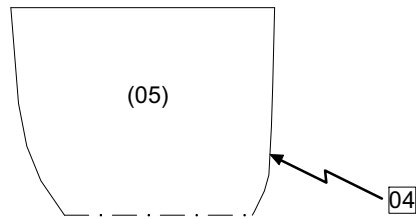
Features Identified In Footings Trenches

Scale 1:250

Figure 3



East facing section through pit [04]



North facing section through footings trench showing pit [06]

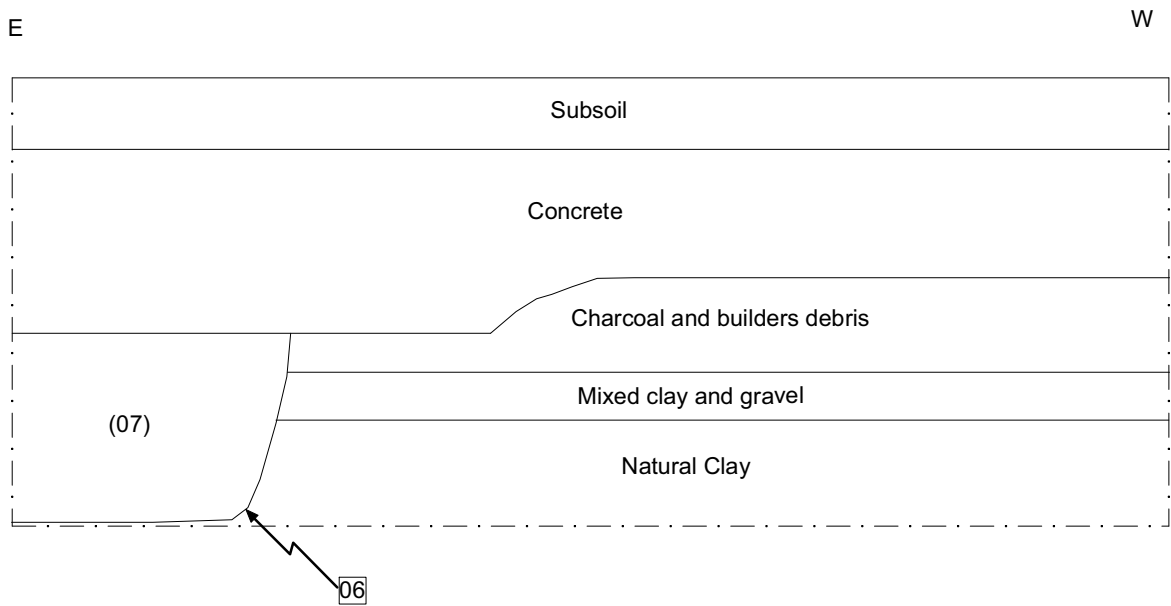




Plate 1: Ground reduction - building footprint, looking north east



Plate 2: Well [03], looking west



Plate 3: Footings trench section, looking south



Plate 4: Ground reduction - Garden landscaping, looking north west