

# HERITAGE NETWORK

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**Land to the rear of  
48 ASHWELL STREET  
Ashwell, Herts.**

HN764

***ARCHAEOLOGICAL  
MONITORING REPORT***



Land to the rear of  
48 ASHWELL STREET  
Ashwell, Hertfordshire

Project Ref.: HN764  
HER enquiry no.: n/a

*Archaeological Monitoring Report*

*Prepared on behalf of Costdeal Ltd.*

*By*

Helen Ashworth, BA (HONS) AIFA

Report no.799

*July 2013*

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The cover photograph shows a general view across Plot 2, looking SE

## Acknowledgements

The fieldwork for this project was carried out by Mark Winter, Robin Densem and James Snee. The report text and illustrations were prepared by Helen Ashworth and edited by David Hillelson.

The Heritage Network would like to express its thanks to Mr L. Houghton, Costdeal Ltd; Peter Farmer, architect; and Andy Instone, Historic Environment Unit, HCC, for their co-operation and assistance in the execution of this project.

## Summary

<b>Site name and address:</b>	Land to the rear of 48 Ashwell Street, Ashwell, Hertfordshire		
<b>County:</b>	Hertfordshire	<b>District:</b>	North Herts
<b>Village/town:</b>	Ashwell	<b>Parish:</b>	Ashwell
<b>Planning reference:</b>	1/1927/02	<b>NGR:</b>	TL 26808 39485
<b>Client name and address:</b>	Costdeal Ltd, c/o 83 Tilehouse Street, Hitchin, Hertfordshire, SG5 2DY		
<b>Nature of work:</b>	New dwellings	<b>Former land use:</b>	Garden
<b>Site status:</b>	AA31	<b>Reason for investigation:</b>	Direction of Local Planning Authority (PPG16)
<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>	1280m <sup>2</sup>	<b>Size of area investigated:</b>	294m <sup>2</sup>
<b>Site Code:</b>	HN746	<b>HER 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>	North Herts Museums
<b>Start of work</b>	01/10/2008	<b>Finish of work</b>	10/07/2013
<b>Related HER Nos:</b>	n/a	<b>Periods represented:</b>	Roman?
<b>Oasis UID</b>	heritage1-155227	<b>Significant finds:</b>	none
<b>Monument types:</b>	Ditch		
<b>Physical archive:</b>	None		
<b>Previous summaries/reports:</b>	Winter, M. 2008, <i>Land to the Rear of 48 Ashwell Street, Ashwell, Herts: Archaeological Evaluation Report</i> , Heritage Network Report no.495 Winter, M. 2008 <i>Land to the Rear of 48 Ashwell Street, Ashwell, Herts. Interim Archaeological Summary</i> . Heritage Network Report no.511		

**Synopsis:**

In response to a condition on the planning permission for the development of land to the rear of 48 Ashwell Street, Ashwell, Hertfordshire, and following an archaeological evaluation, the Heritage Network was commissioned by Costdeal Ltd to undertake the archaeological monitoring of the development groundworks.

The work was undertaken in two phases. Phase 1, which covered the monitoring of the footings for a garage in the south-western corner of the site, was carried in October 2008. No archaeological features, deposits or finds were uncovered in this area.

Phase 2, carried out in July 2013, covered the monitoring of the footings to two new dwellings to the north of the garage. Two parallel linear features were identified during this stage of the project. They appear to have been located between 1m and 2m apart. Linear [206] was observed to terminate within the north-eastern footings of Plot 1, but continued to the north-west beyond the footings. Only the eastern side of feature [201] was observed in the western footings of Plot 2 and it continued beyond the footings trenches.

No finds were recovered from the fills of either feature. This, together with paucity of finds from the features encountered in both the previous evaluation stage and during the investigation at Moules Yard, suggests that this area was not located in the immediate vicinity of a settlement. It is possible that the present site lay within an area of enclosed fields away from any occupation site.

# 1. Introduction

**1.1** This *Project Design* has been prepared on behalf of *Costdeal Ltd*, as part of a programme of archaeological investigation on land to the rear of 48 Ashwell Street, Ashwell, Herts.

**1.2** The archaeological work was a requirement of the planning consent granted by North Hertfordshire District Council (NHDC) (ref: 1/1927/02) under the provisions set out in Planning Policy Guidance Note No.16 (PPG16) on Archaeology and Planning (DoE 1990). The first stage of the project consisted of an archaeological evaluation which uncovered a number of undated archaeological features which may be of Romano-British date.

**1.3** The extent of the present stage of work was defined in correspondence with the Historic Environment Unit (HEU) of Hertfordshire County Council, acting as archaeological advisers to the NHDC. It conforms with the model *Design Brief for Archaeological Monitoring and Recording* issued by the HEU.

**1.4** The study area is centred on NGR TL 26808 39485, immediately to the south of the historic core of Ashwell. The site is bordered to the north by nos. 47–51 Silver Street, to the west by Ashwell School, to the south by the garden of 48 Ashwell Street, and to the east by Moules Yard.

**1.5** The site lies within Area of Archaeological Significance No.31, as identified in the District Local Plan, which defines the medieval village of Ashwell and an extensive area of cropmarks, identified from aerial photographs, to the south-east.

**1.6** The aim of the present project has been to consider the location, extent, date, character, condition, significance and quality of any remains which were liable to be threatened by the development, and the establishment of a local and regional archaeological and historical context for them, if they were discovered, in accordance with the current published local and regional research agenda (Glazebrook 1997; Brown and Glazebrook 2000; Medlycott 2011).

**1.7** It was considered that the investigation had the potential to contribute to an understanding of the origins and development of the settlement at Ashwell and its precursors.

**1.8** The development involves the construction of two new dwellings, accompanying garages and associated landscaping and services.

## 2. Fieldwork

### *SITE TOPOGRAPHY AND GEOLOGY*

**1.1** The study area is centred on NGR TL 26808 39485, immediately to the south of the historic core of Ashwell on land sloping from 64mAOD in the southeast to 58.47mAOD in the northwest (Figure 1). The site is bordered to the north by nos. 47–51 Silver Street, to the west by Ashwell School, to the south by the garden of 48 Ashwell Street, and to the east by Moules Yard.

**2.1** Locally the soils are derived from the Upton 1 Association (342a) described as ‘shallow well drained calcareous silty soils over chalk. Mainly on moderately steep, sometimes very steep land. Deeper fine silty calcareous soils in coombes and dry valleys’ (SSEW 1983).

**1.2** The underlying geology comprises chalk of the Zig Zag Chalk Formation, formed approximately 99 to 94 million years ago in the Cretaceous Period (British Geological Survey).

### *METHODOLOGY*

**2.2** The fieldwork involved a series of site visits to supervise the excavation of the footings trenches for the new dwellings and the garages. This work was carried out in two phases, with Phase 1 covering the monitoring of the footings to the garage in the south-western corner of the site and Phase 2 covering the monitoring of the footings for the two new dwellings.

**2.3** All potential archaeological features and deposits were sampled to ascertain their nature, depth, date, and quality of preservation.

**2.4** All identified contexts were photographed and recorded using the appropriate pro forma. Scaled plans and sections were drawn on pro forma sheets, at scales of 1: 50, 1:20 and 1:10.

**2.5** The machining was undertaken using a tracked 360° excavator fitted with a ditching bucket, 0.45m or 0.65m wide as required.

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

**2.7** All recording work was carried out in accordance with current health and safety legislation, and both IfA and ALGAO standards.

### *MONITORING AND RECORDING*

#### *Plot 1*

**2.8** Plot 1 was located on the south-western side of the site (Figure 2). It encompassed an area of approximately 114m<sup>2</sup>, with footings trenches measuring 0.65m in width and up to 1.80m in depth (Plate 1). The stratigraphy observed in the trenches comprised a layer of dark greyish brown (10YR 4/2) silty sand topsoil (203), with frequent roots, 0.60m in depth, above the white (10YR 8/1) chalk natural (205).

**2.9** A single linear feature, cut [206] was encountered at the northern end of the plot (Figure 3). This was aligned NNW – SSE and measured over 10m in length, 1.80m in width and 0.80m in depth. It had steep sides and a concave base and contained fill (207), a firm brown silty sand with moderate chalk gravel (Plate 2). No finds were recovered from the fill to date the feature.



**2.10** No other features, deposits or artefacts were encountered in Plot 1.

### **Plot 1 Garage**

**2.11** The garage to Plot 1, which encompassed an area of 36m<sup>2</sup>, was located in the south-western corner of the site, to the south of Plot 1 (Figure 2).

**2.12** The footing trenches, which measured 0.80m wide by 1.00m deep, were excavated in October 2008. The stratigraphy exposed in the sections consisted of 0.40m of dark greyish brown (10YR 4/2) loose sandy clay topsoil overlying the white (10YR 8/1) chalk natural (Plate 3).

**2.13** No archaeological features, deposits, or artefacts were encountered in this area.

### **Plot 2**

**2.14** Plot 2 was located to the east of Plot 1 (Figure 2). It encompassed an area of approximately 147m<sup>2</sup>, with footings trenches measuring 0.65m in width and over 1m in depth (Plate 4).

**2.15** The stratigraphy observed in the trenches was similar across the area of the plot and comprised a layer of loose dark greyish brown (10YR 4/2) sandy silt topsoil (203), approximately 0.50m in depth, with frequent roots. Below this was a layer of greyish brown (10YR 5/2) clayey silt subsoil (204), approximately 0.24m in depth. The underlying natural chalk (205) was encountered below (204) at depths of between 0.75m and 1.10m.

**2.16** A single cut feature [201] was identified on the western side of the plot. This appeared to be a wide linear ditch, although only the eastern side was revealed in the footings trenches (Figure 4, Plates 5-6). It was aligned north-west to south-east and measured over 13.50m in length, over 2.5m in width and over 1m in depth, with steeply sloping sides along most of its exposed length. A break of slope was noted at the southern end (Figure 5, section 1).

**2.17** It contained fill (202) a pale brown (10YR 6/3) slightly clayey silt with frequent small chalk nodules and occasional charcoal flecks. No dateable finds were recovered from this fill. The feature was previously encountered, as ditch [109], in Trench 1 during the earlier evaluation (Winter 2007).

**2.18** Modern drainage trenches were also noted in the western footings trenches (Figure 5, sections 1-3). These had been cut into the top of the fill of linear [201].

**2.19** No other features, deposits or finds were encountered in this area.

## 3. Discussion

### ARCHAEOLOGICAL SETTING

**3.1** The study area lies within Archaeological Area no.31 (AA31), defined in the district local plan as incorporating the village of Ashwell and land to its south-east.

**3.2** The present site is situated on Ashwell Street, an ancient trackway which runs north-east from the Icknield Way, an important prehistoric route linking the East Anglian coast and Wessex, towards Steeple Morden. The proximity of the Icknield Way would undoubtedly have encouraged early settlement in Ashwell and its environs.

**3.3** Evidence for prehistoric occupation has been recovered from Westbury Farm, 650m west of the present study area (SMR no. 9672). An archaeological evaluation in 1997 revealed an alignment of five pits, a further isolated pit and a linear ditch all dated to the prehistoric period.

**3.4** Neolithic stone and flint implements, including Greenstone axes (SMR nos. 206, 207 & 208) and flint arrowheads (SMR no. 209) have also been found at Westbury Farm.

**3.5** Arbury Banks, an Iron Age hillfort (NMR 365512) lies approximately 850m south-west of the study area. It covers approximately 12.5 acres (c.5 hectares) and traces of internal features have been observed on aerial photographs.

**3.6** A number of Romano-British coins and pottery sherds were found in 1977 by a metal detectorist to the south of the High Street, between 550m and 660m north-east of the present site (SMR no 2973 and 4848). Coins have also been recovered from the area of the springs, approximately 650m to the north-east (SMR 4848). A hoard of 500 Roman coins was found at Ashwell End, approximately 1.3km north-west, in 1876.

**3.7** Additionally located to the north-east, approximately 1.2km from the present site, is an extensive Roman settlement, focused on a shrine, and previously identified as a Roman villa (SMR CB90).

**3.8** Evaluation and excavation at Moules Yard to the immediate northeast of the current site revealed a boundary ditch, post holes and pits (HER 13707) (Figure 2). All of the discrete features recorded on that site were located outside of the boundary ditch which curved from a north-south orientation to northwest-southeast. The datable assemblage from the site was limited but the ditch did yield a small amount of Romano-British pottery dating to c.AD 100-350 (Walsh and Wilson 2000, p10). The ditch had a U-shaped profile measuring 17m+ long, 1.54m wide and 0.38m deep and contained a whitish grey clayey chalk primary fill overlain by a mid grey chalky clay fill (*ibid.* p7).

**3.9** The supposed line of a Roman road, Viatores number 230, runs approximately 950m to the east of the site (SMR 4692).

**3.10** Very little archaeological evidence for Saxon activity in Ashwell has been recorded. A single inhumation burial, of probable Anglo-Saxon date, has been recorded approximately 500m east of the site (SMR 456).

**3.11** A number of archaeological features were revealed in the centre of the present site during the earlier evaluation. These comprised four pits and one ditch. This ditch was also encountered during the present stage of the investigation on the site. The pits appeared to be arranged in a linear formation, to the southwest of the ditch, running on the same NW-SE alignment. No dating evidence was recovered from the pits and the ditch yielded only 1 sherd of undiagnostic, shell tempered pottery.

**3.12** During the current phase of monitoring work, two parallel linear features were identified during the present stage of the project. They appear to have been located between 1m and 2m apart. Linear [206], at the north-western end of Plot 1, was observed to terminate within the north-eastern footings, but continued to the north-west beyond the footings. Only the eastern side of feature [201] was present in the western footings in Plot 2 and it continued beyond the footings trenches.

**3.13** No finds were recovered from the fill of either feature. This, together with paucity of finds from the features encountered in both the evaluation stage and during the investigation at Moules Yard, suggests that this area was not located in the immediate vicinity of occupation. It is possible that the present site lay within an area of enclosed fields away from any focus of settlement.

### CONCLUSIONS

**3.14** It was considered that the investigation had the potential to contribute to an understanding of the origins and development of the settlement at Ashwell and its precursors.

**3.15** No clear occupation features were encountered, but archaeological investigations on the present site have revealed a number of probable boundary features, including a small pit alignment and two linear ditches, one of which, cut [201], is apparently substantial in size. Only one sherd of undiagnostic pottery was recovered from either stage of investigation on the present site.

**3.16** The evidence suggests that the study area was located away from the immediate area of settlement, within an area of enclosed fields.

### Confidence Rating

**3.17** Conditions on site were generally acceptable for the identification and recording of any potential archaeological remains, and as such 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
01/10/2008	MW	1	Monitor excavation of Plot 1 garage footings
02/10/2008	MW	3	Monitor excavation of Plot 1 garage footings
03/07/2013	RGD	8	Monitor excavation of Plot 2 footings
04/07/2013	RGD	10	Monitor excavation of Plot 2 footings
10/07/2013	JS	7	Monitor excavation of Plot 1 footings

## 5. Bibliography

Archaeology Data Service: <http://www.ads.ahds.ac.uk/catalogue>

British Geological Survey: <http://bgs.ac.uk/opengeoscience>

Brown, N. & Glazebrook, J. 2000, *Research and Archaeology: a framework for the eastern counties, 2. Research agenda and strategy*. East Anglian Archaeology

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Gurney, D. et al, 2003, *Standards for Field Archaeology in the East of England*. ALGAO (EER)

Heritage Gateway: <http://www.heritagegateway.org.uk>

Institute of Field Archaeologists, 1999 *Standard and Guidance for Watching Briefs*. (IfA)

Medlycott, M. (ed.) 2011 *Research and Archaeology Revisited: A Revised Framework for the East of England*. East Anglian Archaeology Occasional Paper no.24

Soil Survey of England and Wales (SSEW) 1984 *Soil Map 1:25000 scale, Sheet 4, Eastern England*. SSEW: Rothamsted, Harpenden

Winter, M. 2008a *Land to the r/o 48 Ashwell Street, Ashwell, Herts. Archaeological Evaluation Report*. Heritage Network report no.495

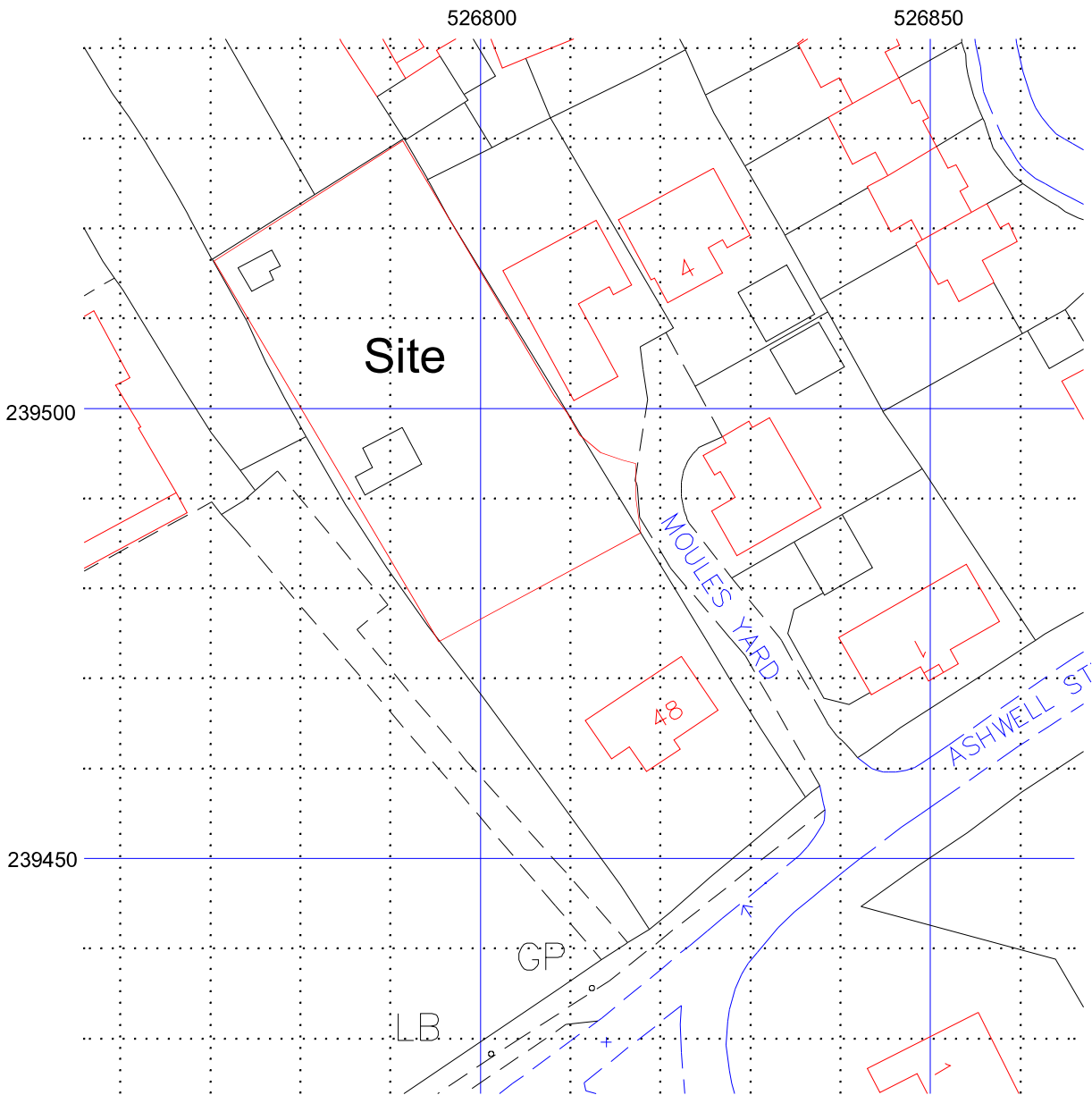
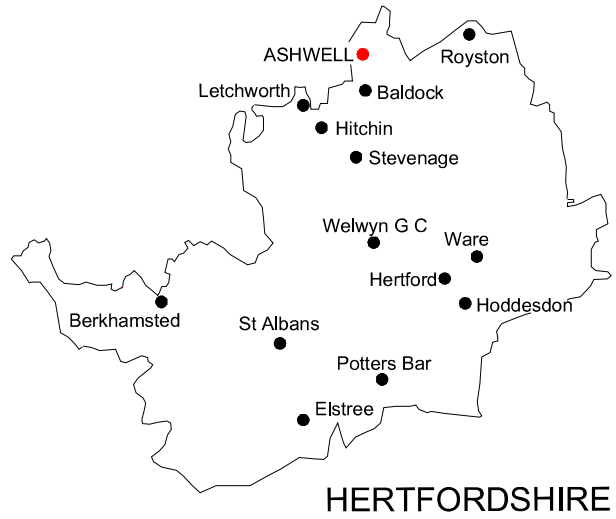
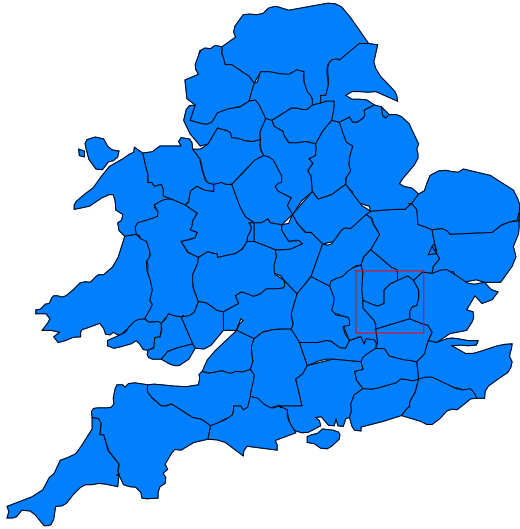
Winter, M. 2008b *Land to the r/o 48 Ashwell Street, Ashwell, Herts. Interim Archaeological Report*. Heritage Network report no.511

## 6. Illustrations

Figure 1 ..... Site location  
Figure 2 ..... Site layout  
Figure 3 ..... Feature [206], plan and section  
Figure 4 ..... Plot 2 plan, showing feature [201]  
Figure 5 ..... Plot 2 sections

Plate 1 ..... Plot 1, general view, looking N  
Plate 2 ..... Plot 1, ditch [206] in section, looking NW  
Plate 3 ..... Plot 1 garage, indicative section, looking NW  
Plate 4 ..... Plot 2, general view, looking SSE  
Plate 5 ..... Plot 2, ditch [201] section 2, looking NW  
Plate 6 ..... Plot 2, ditch [201] section 3, looking SE

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Site Location

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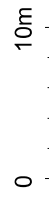
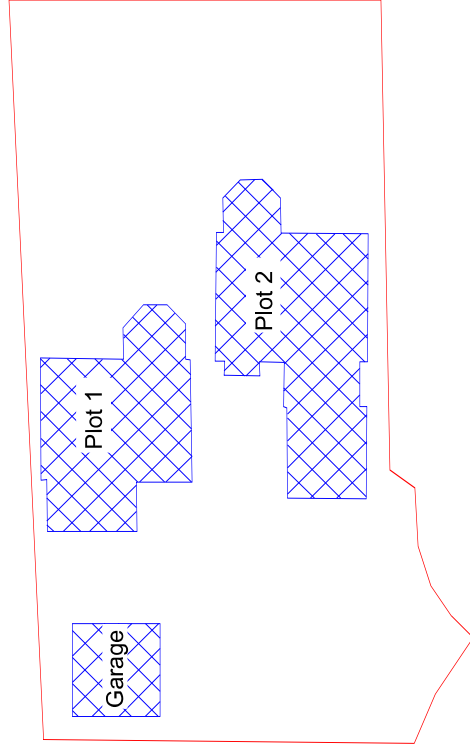
THE HERITAGE NETWORK LTD

Land to the rear of 48 Ashwell Street, Ashwell, Hertfordshire

HN764

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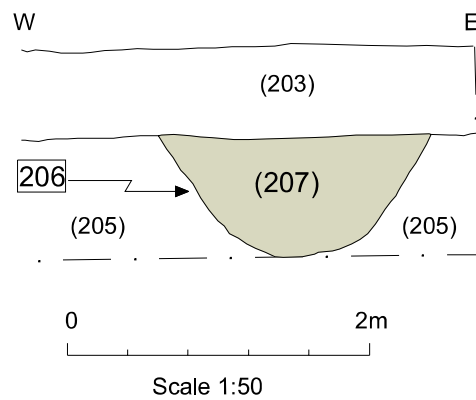
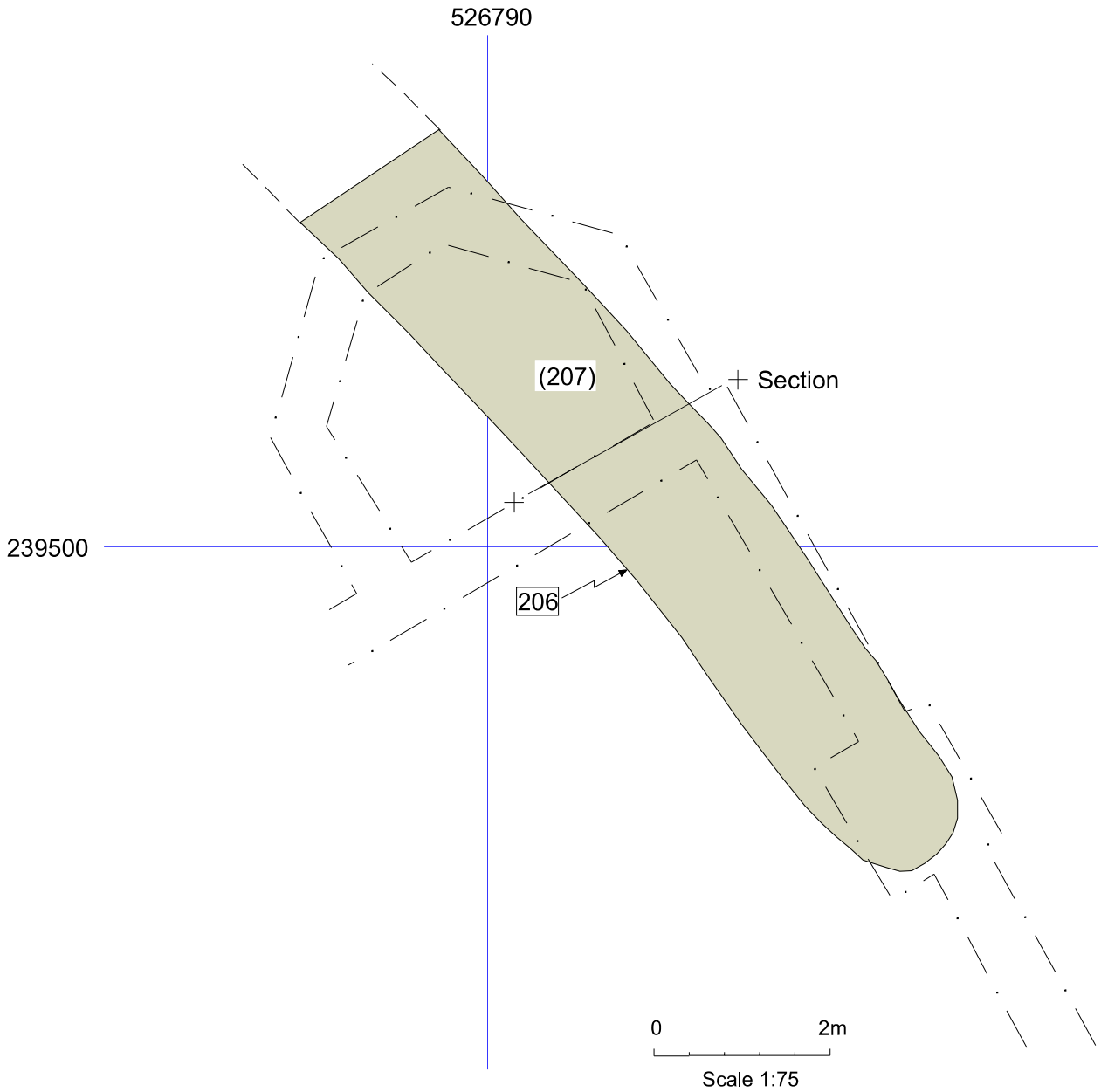
Moules Yard



Site layout

Scale 1:500  
Figure 2





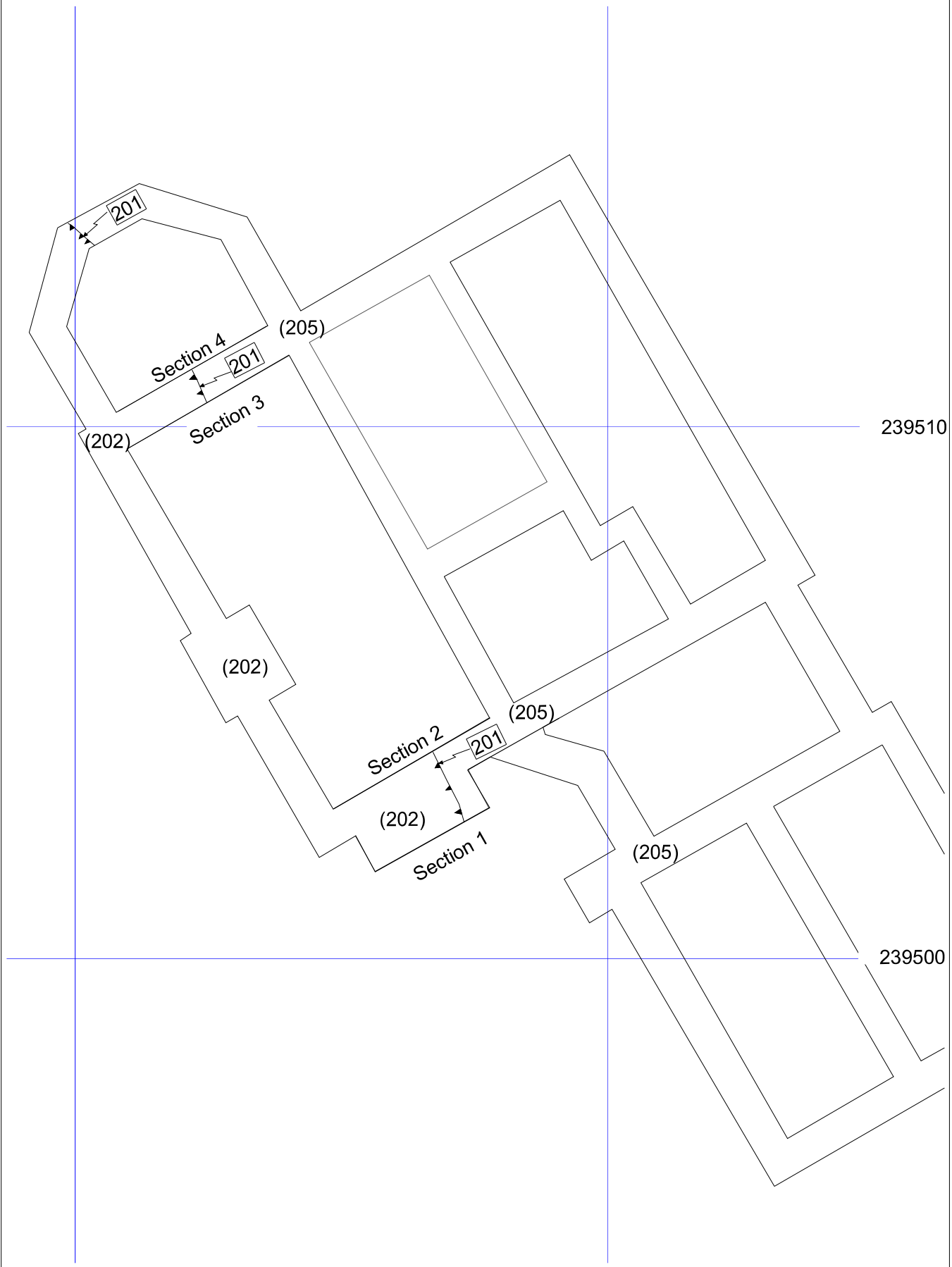
Plot 1: Feature [206]: plan and section

Scale as shown

Figure 3

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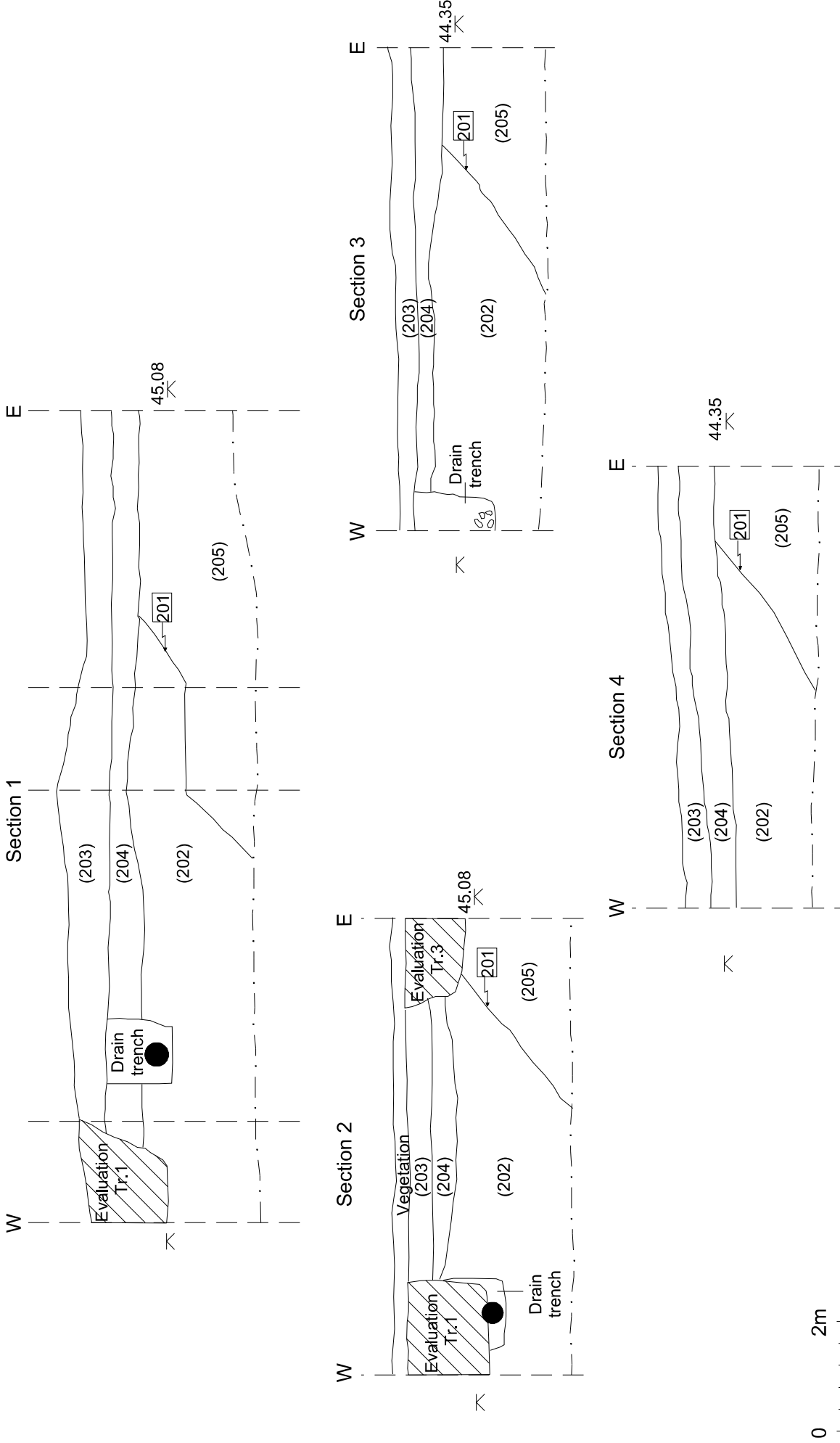
526800



Plot 2 plan

Scale 1:100

Figure 4



Plot 2 sections





Plate 1: Plot 1, general view, looking N



Plate 2: Plot 1, ditch [206] in section, looking NW



Plate 3: Plot 1 garage, indicative section. looking NW



Plate 4: Plot 2, general view, looking SSE



Plate 5: Plot 2, ditch [201], section 2 looking NW



Plate 6: Plot 2, ditch [201], section 3, looking SE





## Appendix

### OASIS Data form

<b>OASIS ID: heritage1-155227</b>	
<b>Project details</b>	
Project name	land to the r/o 48 Ashwell Street
Short description of the project	In response to a condition on the planning permission for the development of land to the rear of 48 Ashwell Street, Ashwell, Hertfordshire, and following an archaeological evaluation, the Heritage Network was commissioned by Costdeal Ltd to undertake the archaeological monitoring of the development groundworks. The work was undertaken in two phases. Phase 1, which covered the monitoring of the footings for a garage in the south-western corner of the site, was carried in October 2008. No archaeological features, deposits or finds were uncovered in this area. Phase 2, carried out in July 2013, covered the monitoring of the footings to two new dwellings to the north of the garage. Two parallel linear features were identified during this stage of the project. They appear to have been located between 1m and 2m apart. Linear [206] was observed to terminate within the north-eastern footings of Plot 1, but continued to the north-west beyond the footings. Only the eastern side of feature [201] was observed in the western footings of Plot 2 and it continued beyond the footings trenches. No finds were recovered from the fills of either feature. This, together with paucity of finds from the features encountered in both the previous evaluation stage and during the investigation at Moules Yard, suggests that this area was not located in the immediate vicinity of a settlement. It is possible that the present site lay within an area of enclosed fields away from any occupation site.
Project dates	Start: 01-10-2008 End: 10-07-2013
Previous/future work	Yes / Not known
Any associated project reference codes	HN764 - Contracting Unit No.
Type of project	Recording project
Site status	Local Authority Designated Archaeological Area
Current Land use	Other 5 - Garden
Monument type	DITCH Uncertain
Significant Finds	NONE None
Investigation type	"Watching Brief"
Prompt	Direction from Local Planning Authority - PPG16
<b>Project location</b>	
Country	England
Site location	HERTFORDSHIRE NORTH HERTFORDSHIRE ASHWELL r/o 48 Ashwell Street
Study area	294.00 Square metres
Site coordinates	TL 26808 39485 52 0 52 02 19 N 000 09 03 W Point
Name of Organisation	Heritage Network
Project brief originator	Local Authority Archaeologist and/or Planning Authority/advisory body

Project design originator	Heritage Network
Project director/manager	David Hillelson
Project supervisor	Mark Winter
Project supervisor	James Snee
Type of sponsor/funding body	Developer
<b>Project archives</b>	
Physical Archive Exists?	No
Digital Archive recipient	North Herts Museums Service
Digital Contents	"other"
Digital Media available	"Images raster / digital photography", "Text"
Paper Archive recipient	North Herts Museum Services
Paper Contents	"other"
Paper Media available	"Context sheet", "Diary", "Drawing", "Photograph", "Plan", "Report"
<b>Project bibliography 1</b>	
Publication type	Grey literature (unpublished document/manuscript)
Title	Land to the rear of 48 Ashwell Street, Ashwell, Hertfordshire. Archaeological Monitoring Report
Author(s)/Editor(s)	Ashworth, H.
Other bibliographic details	Report no. 799
Date	2013
Issuer or publisher	Heritage Network
Place of issue or publication	Letchworth, Herts.
Description	A4 booklet, comb bound, green cover, 10 pages, 5 figures, 6 plates