

HERITAGE NETWORK



LAND A/T STATION HOTEL Station Approach, Knebworth, Herts.

HN661

Archaeological Monitoring Report



THE HERITAGE NETWORK LTD

Registered with the Institute of Field Archaeologists as an Archaeological Organisation

Archaeological Director: David Hillelson, BA MIFA

LAND ADJACENT TO STATION HOTEL Station Approach, Knebworth, Herts.

HN661

Archaeological Monitoring Report

Prepared on behalf of Rapid Development Construction Ltd

By

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The cover photograph shows the site looking south

Acknowledgements

The fieldwork for this project was carried out by Mark Winter, David Kaye, Helen Ashworth and Geoff Saunders. The report text and illustrations were prepared by Chris Turner, and edited by David Hillelson.

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Summary

Site name and address:	Land adjacent to Station Hotel, Station Approach, Knebworth		
County:	Hertfordshire	District:	North Herts
Village/town:	Knebworth	Parish:	Knebworth
Planning reference:	06/02643/1	NGR:	TL 248 202
Client name and address:	Daniel Kitchener Rapid Development Construction Ltd, Unit 5a Algrey Trading Estate Cooks Way Hitchin, Herts.		
Nature of work:	New flats	Former land use:	Car park
Site status:	n/a	Reason for investigation:	Direction of local planning authority (PPG 16)
Position in planning process:	After full determination (as a condition)	Project brief originator:	Local Authority
Size of affected area:	700m ²	Size of area investigated:	700m ²
Site Code:	HN 661	Other reference:	n/a
Organisation:	Heritage Network	Site Director:	David Hillelson
Project type, methods etc.:	Monitoring	Archive recipient:	North Herts Museum Service
Start of work	24/04/2007	Finish of work	06/02/08
Related SMR Nos:	n/a	Periods represented:	Modern
Oasis UID	Heritage1-39298	Significant finds:	None
Monument types:	n/a		
Physical archive:	None		
Previous summaries/reports:	n/a		

Synopsis:

In response to a condition on the planning permission for flats and associated car parking on land adjacent to Station Hotel, Station Approach, Knebworth, Hertfordshire, the Heritage Network was commissioned by the developers to undertake the archaeological monitoring of the development groundworks.

The monitoring programme revealed no archaeological features, deposits, or artefacts predating the modern period.

1. Introduction

1.1 This report has been prepared on behalf of *Rapid Development Construction Ltd*, as part of the archaeological monitoring and recording of development works on land adjacent to Station Hotel, Station Approach, Knebworth, Hertfordshire.

1.2 The investigation was a requirement of the planning consent for the development granted by North Hertfordshire District Council (NHDC) (ref. 06/02643/1), under the provisions set out in Planning Policy Guidance Note No.16 (PPG16) on Archaeology and Planning (DoE 1990). The extent of the work was defined in consultation with the Historic Environment Unit (HEU) of Hertfordshire County Council and followed the standard model *Brief for Archaeological Monitoring and Recording*, prepared by the HEU, acting as archaeological advisers to the NHDC. A full specification for the work was contained in the Heritage Network's approved Project Design, dated March 2007.

1.3 The site is located in the core of Knebworth on the southern side of Station Approach, 100m to the west of the station, centred on NGR TL 248 202. The site has been used as a carpark in recent years. The development has involved the construction of a block of flats and car parking with associated landscaping.

1.4 The aim of the investigation 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), subject to the limitations of reasonable safety and practicality.

1.5 The present report describes the findings of the monitoring programme and is intended, together with the deposition of the site archive with the North Hertfordshire Museum Service, to complete the requirements of the planning condition.

2. Fieldwork

TOPOGRAPHY AND GEOLOGY

2.1 The site was covered by a mixture of tarmac and gravel to form a car park surface. The ground level rises gently by 0.50m from east to west across the site, which lies at approximately 98mAOD.

2.2 The soils of the area belong to the Hornbeam 3 association (582d), which is described as deep fine loamy over clayey and clayey soils with slowly permeable subsoils and slight seasonal waterlogging. Some slowly permeable seasonally waterlogged fine loamy over clayey soils. Calcareous subsoils in places.

2.3 The underlying geology consists of a layer of greyish-brown clay-with-flints, approximately 0.70m thick, above reddish brown boulder clay. The boulder clay was observed at approximately 1.20m below the modern ground level.

METHODOLOGY

2.4 The timetable for the fieldwork followed the client's groundwork schedule. A total of twelve site visits were made to supervise and monitor the excavation of a test pit, foundation trenches, ground reduction, footings for the carpark retaining walls, soakaway and associated service trenches.

2.5 The machining was undertaken using a tracked 360° excavator fitted with a toothless ditching bucket.

2.6 All work was carried out in accordance with the approved *Project Design*, current health and safety legislation, and both IFA and ALGAO standards.

MONITORING AND RECORDING

Stratigraphy

2.7 The observed stratigraphy on the site consisted of a layer of modern tarmac and gravel with a modern levelling layer measuring 0.28m thick. This was overlying 0.30-0.50m of greyish brown clay with flints. The layer beneath this was a clean natural reddish brown clay with flint and gravel inclusions.

2.8 Natural clay with flints was encountered in all stages of the groundworks.

Test pit

2.9 A test pit was excavated prior to the footings trenches in the south-eastern corner of the proposed building. The test pit was orientated approximately east to west, measuring 0.75m wide, 4.5m long and 1.6m deep. No features or artefacts were observed during this stage of works.

Footings trenches

2.10 A series of footings trenches for the new flats were excavated across the southern half of the site (Figure 2). These ranged in width from 0.60 to 0.95m and were approximately 1.6-1.8m in depth.

2.11 Two truncated tree boles measuring 0.80 wide and approximately 0.60m deep were observed beneath the grey clay layer. They contained a dark grey silty fill with clear evidence of root activity. No artefacts were recovered from these features.

Retaining walls

2.12 A series of footings trenches for retaining walls around the carpark and along the street frontage were excavated in the northern half of the site. These ranged in width from 0.5-0.60 wide and 0.7-1.2m in depth.

2.13 No features or artefacts were encountered during this stage of the works

Service trench and Soakaway

2.14 A service trench, 0.45m wide, was excavated along the western side of the footings for the flats and ran northwards through the carpark to the main road. A second spur ran from the north side of the building (Figure 2).

2.15 The soakaway measured 2.3m square and was situated in the eastern half of the new car park. The soakaway was excavated to a depth of c.2.5m. Fragments of modern ceramic building material, glass and tarmac were observed within the greyish brown leached clay layer.

2.16 No features or artefacts were encountered in the service trench or soakaway.

3. Discussion

3.1 There have been a number of chance prehistoric finds within the vicinity of the site. In 1887, Palaeolithic implements including 7 handaxes, 1 flake and 1 miscellaneous object were found c.200m east of the current site, in a cutting for the Great Northern Railway (NMR 365421). A further 5 handaxes, 1 flake and 2 miscellaneous objects of Palaeolithic date have also been found in Knebworth (NMR 1149152).

3.2 A Neolithic jadeite axe was recovered during construction of a car park at the station hotel immediately east of the current site (NMR 365418) and a second Neolithic axe was recovered in St Martins Lane c. 500m to the east (NMR 365305). A bronze hoard including at least one palstave (NMR 365417) was found during the nineteenth century, c. 800m to the west in the Park Wood ancient woodland.

3.3 In addition, a Roman coin was recovered c. 400m south of the current site in Sun Heath Meadow (NMR 364853).

3.4 The groundworks demonstrated the presence of a layer, c.0.5m thick beneath the original car park surface, which consisted of natural clay with flints stained gray by leaching from above. This layer had an odour of oil/ fuel and the change in colour appears to be the result of leaching from the modern carpark surface.

3.5 The monitoring of the groundworks associated with the development revealed no archaeological features, deposits, or artefacts predating the modern period. Two tree boles were observed within the footings for the new flats, but no finds were recovered.

Confidence Rating

3.6 All elements of the development were monitored and 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
24/04/07	HMA	2	Monitor excavation of footings trench
25/04/07	HMA	8	Monitor excavation of footings trenches
26/04/07	GIS	4	Monitor excavation of footings trenches
27/04/07	HMA	6	Monitor excavation of footings trenches
03/05/07	DK	2	Monitor excavation of drainage trench
10/05/07	HMA	3	Monitor excavation of boundary wall footings trench
14/05/07	DK	5	Monitor excavation of boundary wall footings trench
16/05/07	HMA	2	Monitor excavation of drainage trench
16/05/07	DK	5	Monitor excavation of drainage trench
21/05/07	MW	1	Monitor excavation of soakaway
29/05/07	GIS	2	Monitor excavation of soakaway and drainage trench
06/02/08	MW	2	Monitor excavation of retaining wall footings trench

5. Bibliography

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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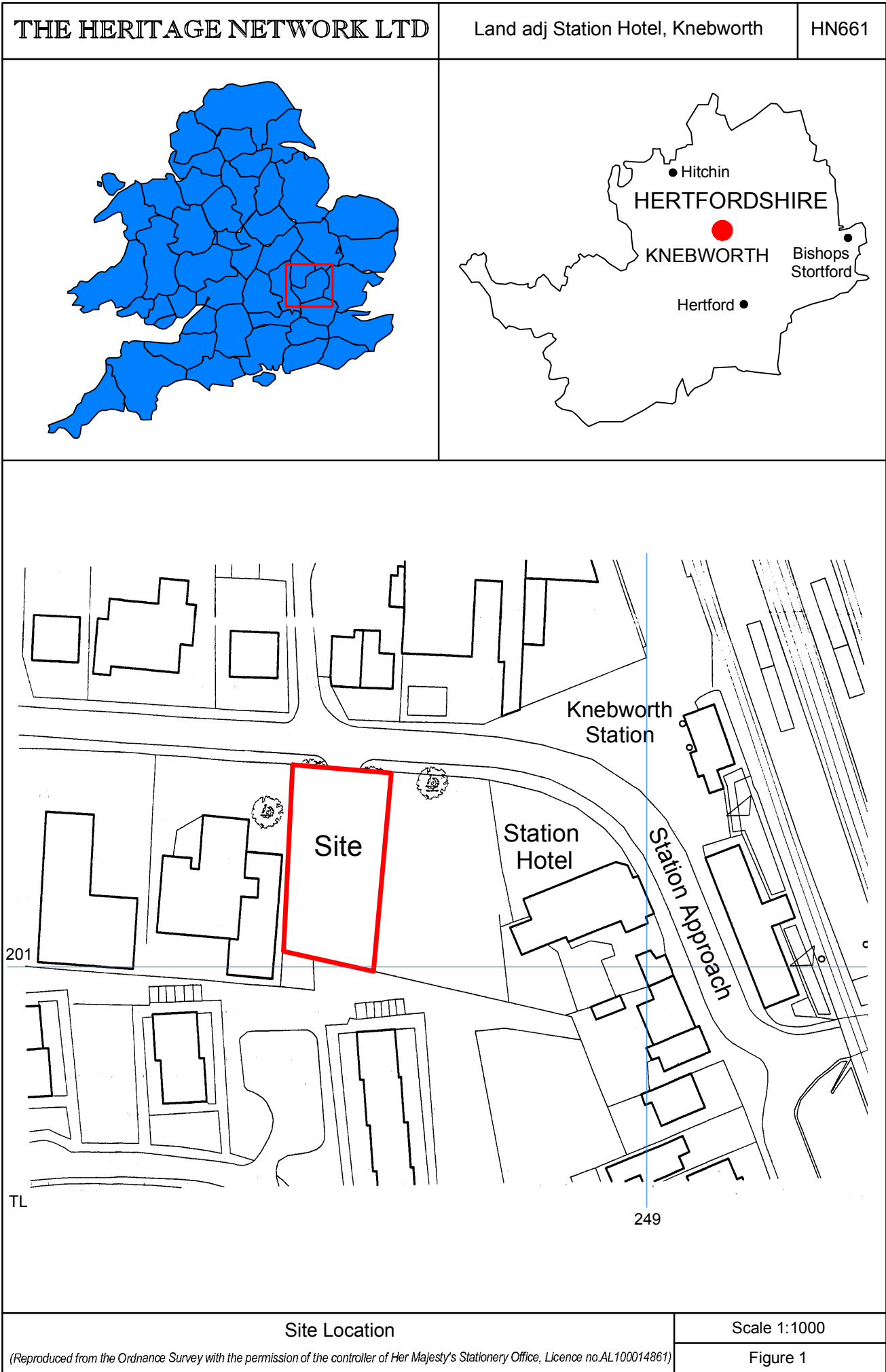
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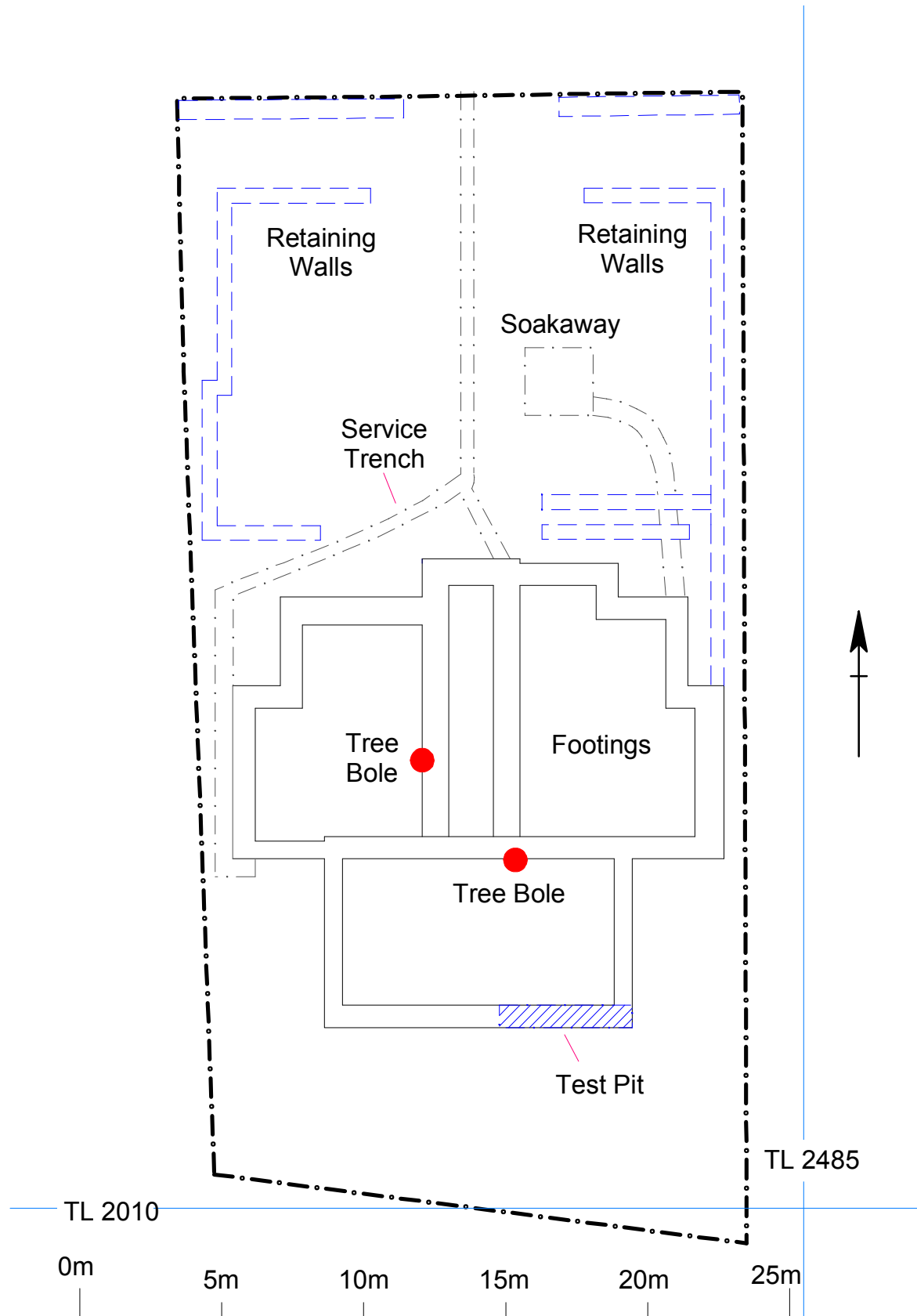
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6. Illustrations

Figure 1.....Site Location

Figure 2.....Site Layout





Site Layout

Scale 1:200

Figure 2