

# HERITAGE NETWORK



**44-49 SHEPHALL GREEN,  
Stevenage, Hertfordshire**

HN861

***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 to the rear of 44 – 48 SHEPHALL GREEN Stevenage, Herts.**

Project Ref: HN861

LPA ref: 09/00298/FP

HER search no: 44/11

### *Archaeological Monitoring Report*

*Prepared on behalf of Stevenage Property Development Ltd*

by

Greg Jones, BA (HONS) MA AIFA

Report no. 604

*March 2011*

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*The cover photograph shows the site looking north*

## Acknowledgements

The fieldwork for this project was carried out by Greg Jones. The report text and illustrations were prepared by Greg Jones and edited by David Hillelson.

The Heritage Network would like to express its thanks to Peter French, Stevenage Property Developments Ltd, and Andy Instone, County Planning Archaeologist, HCC, for their co-operation and assistance in the execution of this project.

## Summary

<b>Site name and address:</b>	Land to r/o 44 – 48 Shephall Green, Stevenage, Herts, SG2 9XS		
<b>County:</b>	Hertfordshire	<b>District:</b>	Stevenage
<b>Village/town:</b>	Stevenage	<b>Parish:</b>	Stevenage
<b>Planning reference:</b>	09/00298/FP	<b>NGR:</b>	TL 2551 2282
<b>Client name and address:</b>	Peter French, Stevenage Property Developments Ltd, Equity House, 37a Queensway, Stevenage, SG1 1DA		
<b>Nature of work:</b>	Development of 4 new residential dwellings	<b>Current land use:</b>	Site of former scout hut
<b>Site Status:</b>	AAS6	<b>Reason for investigation:</b>	Direction of LPA (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>	1766m <sup>2</sup>	<b>Size of area investigated:</b>	122.80m <sup>2</sup>
<b>Site code:</b>	HN861	<b>HER search:</b>	44/11
<b>Organisation:</b>	Heritage Network	<b>Site Director:</b>	David Hillelson
<b>Project type, methods etc...</b>	Archaeological Evaluation	<b>Archive recipient:</b>	Stevenage Museum
<b>Start of work:</b>	26/05/2010	<b>Finish of work:</b>	06/09/2010
<b>Related HER nos:</b>	n/a	<b>Periods represented:</b>	Uncertain
<b>OASIS UID:</b>	Heritage1-75938	<b>Significant finds:</b>	None
<b>Monument types:</b>	1x ditch; 1 x pond		
<b>Physical archive:</b>	None		
<b>Previous summaries/reports:</b>	Nicholas, K., 2010, <i>Archaeological Evaluation on land to r/o 44-48 Shephall Green, Stevenage, Herts</i> . Report HN854		

**Synopsis:**

In response to a condition on the planning permission for four new dwellings to the rear of 44 - 48 Shephall Green, Stevenage, the Heritage Network was commissioned by the owner to undertake archaeological monitoring of the development groundworks. This represents the second phase of fieldwork on the site. A previous archaeological evaluation had demonstrated the presence of an undated linear feature and a modern backfilled pond.

The groundworks for the present project revealed more of both features previously recorded. The ditch may be pre-medieval on the basis of its alignment, although no dating material was recovered from its fill; and the pond, which is shown on the Ordnance Survey map of 1881, was backfilled with modern material but is likely to have post-medieval or earlier origins. However, no finds pre-dating the modern period were recovered from within the pond fill during the present project.

# 1. Introduction

**1.1** This report has been prepared on behalf of *Stevenage Property Developments Ltd*, as part of the archaeological monitoring of a proposed development site located on land to the rear of 44 – 48 Shephall Green, Stevenage; Hertfordshire.

**1.2** The investigation was a requirement of the planning consent for the development granted by Stevenage Borough Council (SBC) (ref. 09/00298/FP), 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 (ref. AI/09/0298-1), acting as archaeological advisers to SBC, and followed the provisions set out in their model *Design Brief for Archaeological Monitoring*.

**1.3** The study area is centred on NGR TL 2551 2282. It is situated on the west side of Shephall Green, to the rear of nos. 44 to 48. To the north and west are the grounds of Heathcote School, and to the south are the grounds of Greenside School. The development proposes the erection of four new houses, with associated services and access.

**1.4** The site lies within Area of Archaeological Significance No.6, as identified in the Local Plan. Shephall Green is known to contain archaeological and historic remains from the medieval period onwards.

**1.5** An archaeological evaluation of the site was carried out by the Heritage Network in March 2010. This demonstrated the survival of archaeological features, consisting of a linear ditch and a modern backfilled pond (Nicholas 2010). The linear feature possibly served as a boundary ditch and may be pre-medieval on the basis of its alignment, which appears to pre-date the establishment of the medieval settlement at Shephall Green, although no dating material was recovered from its fill. The pond, which is shown on the Ordnance Survey map of 1881, was backfilled with modern material but is likely to have post-medieval, or earlier, origins. On this basis the County Planning Archaeologist advised that a watching brief should be maintained on the development groundworks.

**1.6** The aim of the archaeological monitoring has been to consider the location, extent, date, character, condition, significance and quality of any remains that are liable to be threatened by the development, and to provide a local and regional, archaeological and historical context for them, in accordance with the current published regional research agenda (Brown and Glazebrook 2000), should they be discovered.

**1.7** The present report is intended to provide the planning authority with the results of the watching brief and, together with the deposition of the project archive with Stevenage Museum, will complete the requirements of the planning consent and allow the archaeological condition to be discharged.



## 2. Fieldwork

### TOPOGRAPHY AND GEOLOGY

**2.1** The site lies to the west of Shephall Green, Stevenage on an area of level ground at approximately 100m AOD. The land was previously occupied by a scout hut.

**2.2** The soils on the site are unsurveyed (U), described as ‘mainly urban and industrial areas’ (SSEW). However, adjacent soils belong mainly to the Hanslope Association (441b) and are described as ‘slowly permeable calcareous clayey soils. Some slowly permeable non-calcareous clayey soils. Slight risk of water erosion’ (SSEW). The underlying geology consists of superficial deposits of chalky till of the Lowestoft Formation overlying chalk (BGS).

### ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND

**2.3** Evidence for activity from the Neolithic period onwards has been recorded on the County Historic Environment Record (HER) from within a 500m radius of the study area.

**2.4** A Neolithic stone axe (HER 424) was found during the construction of the New Barnwell School, approximately 200m to the east. Two ditches of late Iron Age / early Roman date (HER 11604) were revealed during archaeological fieldwork on the site of a new building to the south-east of Shephalbury Manor, approximately 500m to the south-west. Although structural remains were uncovered, the finds collected from the ditch fills indicated domestic occupation nearby.

**2.5** By the late Saxon period it appears that a settlement, called *Escepehale* was established. The manor was held by the abbot of St Albans until 1066, after which time, as recorded in the Domesday Survey of 1086, it was divided between two manors. The smaller property, measuring 2 hides (c.240 acres) was held by the Archbishop of Canterbury, the larger estate, measuring 3 hides (c.360 acres) continued to be held by the Abbot of St Albans (Morris 1976). A total of 14 males are recorded as living on the two manors of Shephall, giving an estimated population of between 50 and 70. The area appears to have consisted of arable land, together with small amounts of meadow, pasture and woodland at this period. The two estates were later re-joined and continued in the ownership of the abbot.

**2.6** The medieval village (HER 2626) appears to have clustered around the church of St Mary (HER 736), parts of which date to the 14<sup>th</sup> century, and the green. Medieval pottery (HER 2918) has been recorded from the Broadhall Community Centre, approximately 300m to the north-west. Some of the sherds may have been manufactured locally as the remains of a medieval pottery kiln were uncovered in the vicinity of Wood Drive in 1957, approximately 350m to the south.

**2.7** The medieval manor (HER 10225) was located to the south of the village. Traces of ridge and furrow (HER 10227) have been identified on aerial photographs adjacent to the site of the medieval house.

**2.8** The house appears to have survived until the mid 19<sup>th</sup> century, when it was replaced by a larger brick-built house (HER 10226). During the Second World War this was used as accommodation for Polish soldiers and in 1947 it was bought by the Stevenage Development



Corporation, who leased it as a school to the London County Council. The 19<sup>th</sup> century house still survives, with a small park to the south, though the estate was largely developed.

**2.9** The Old Rectory (HER 12718) which stands on Shephall Green to the south of the church is thought to contain surviving medieval elements, though it largely dates to the 17<sup>th</sup> century and later. A number of other buildings of 17<sup>th</sup> century date still remain around the green, including the Red Lion Public House (HER 10564), no.9 Shephall Green (HER 11656) Fullers Mead and Mead Cottage (HER 11666) and Shephallbury farmhouse (HER13493). In this area post-medieval farms are often founded on earlier medieval farm sites.

**2.10** The first edition of the OS map, dated 1881, shows the site as an enclosed paddock, with a pond at its southern end and the yard of a school occupying the north-west corner (Figure 5).

## **METHODOLOGY**

**2.11** The timetable for the fieldwork followed the client's groundwork schedule. Eight site visits were made to monitor the development groundworks.

**2.12** Machining was undertaken using a tracked excavator fitted with 0.6m toothed bucket.

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

## **RESULTS**

**2.14** The proposed new houses are situated on the west side of Shephall Green, to the rear of nos. 44 to 48 (Figure 2).

**2.15** The foundation trenches measured 0.6m in width and were excavated to between 0.8m and 1.4m in depth.

**2.16** The stratigraphy revealed in the trenches was uniform across the site and consisted of a layer of mixed silt and gravel overburden, between 0.15 and 0.20m in depth, above very dark grey (5YR 3/1) silty clay topsoil, 0.35m in depth (Figure 4). Beneath this was a light olive brown (2.5YR 5/3) clay subsoil, 0.55m thick, over the light yellowish brown (2.5YR 6/4) natural clay.

**2.17** Plot 1 was located in the south-eastern corner of the site. Excavation of its footings trenches revealed the line of a northwest-southeast aligned linear ditch (Figure 3). Small sections were revealed within the foundation trenches, with cut [102] exposed in the eastern footings trench, cut [104] in the central footings trench and cut [106] in the northern footings trench. The feature measured between 0.9m – 1.2m in width, over 8m in length and between 0.6m -1m in depth, with irregular sides (Figure 4; Plates 1-4). Its base was not encountered in any section. The fills in each section, contexts (101), (103) and (105), were identical and comprised yellowish brown (10YR 5/6) loose sandy clay, with occasional chalk and charcoal flecks. This feature, which appeared to curve to the east at its southern end, equates to ditch feature [402] revealed in Trench 4 of the Phase 1 evaluation. No finds or dating evidence were recovered from any fill.

### *Table of contexts in Plot 1:*

Context	Type	Description	Dimensions (m)		
			Length	Width	Depth
(101)	Fill	Yellowish brown (10YR 5/6) crumbly sandy clay with occasional charcoal flecking and very occasional chalk fragments	0.6+	1.2	0.6
[102]	Cut	Cut of linear feature same as [104] and [106]	0.6+	1.2	0.6
(103)	Fill	Yellowish brown (10YR 5/6) crumbly sandy clay same as (101) and (105)	0.6+	1.4	0.7
[104]	Cut	Cut of linear feature same as [102] and [106]	0.6+	1.4	0.7
(105)	Fill	Yellowish brown (10YR 5/6) crumbly sandy clay same as (101) and (103)	0.6+	0.9	1.0
[106]	Cut	Cut of linear feature same as [102] and [104]	0.6+	0.9	1.0

**2.18** Plot 2 was located to the south-west of Plot 1 in the southern half of the site (Figure 2). The foundation trenches of Plot 2 had been excavated prior to arrival and had also been partially filled with concrete to stop trench collapse due to the dryness of the clay subsoil, which was cracking. The northern and southern edges to the pond were noted in the footings to the south-eastern room. They contained the modern backfill to the former pond, context (201), which was similar to the pond fill encountered during the Phase 1 evaluation and comprised very dark greyish brown (2.5Y 3/2) clay silt, 0.80m in depth, containing modern brick fragments and plastic debris (Plates 5 & 6). No finds predating the modern period were present.

*Table of contexts in Plot 2:*

Context	Type	Description	Dimensions (m)		
			Length	Width	Depth
(201)	Fill	Soft dark greenish grey (GLEY 4/1) slightly clayey silt with small rounded stones and brick and plastic fragments. Modern fill of pond.	0.8+	0.6+	0.8

**2.19** Plots 3 and 4 were located on the western side of the site, to the north-west of Plot 2. No archaeological finds or features were uncovered in their footings trenches.

## 3 Discussion

**3.1** The site lies within the boundaries of the medieval village of Escepehale on level ground which lies at approximately 100m AOD.

**3.2** The excavation of the foundation trenches in Plot 1 exposed a north-west to south-east aligned linear ditch, sections [102], [104] & [106], which appears to curve to the east at its southern end. This apparently equates with ditch [402], exposed in Trench 4 during the Phase 1 evaluation. No dating evidence was recovered from the fills in the sections. However, the alignment of the ditch does not correlate to the existing boundaries, suggesting that it may predate the establishment of the medieval settlement at Shephall Green.

**3.3** The backfill to a pond, context (201), was exposed in the eastern footings trenches in Plot 2. The fill contained modern machine made brick fragments and plastic debris, indicating that it had been backfilled in the modern period. This was the same feature which was encountered in Trench 3 of the Phase 1 evaluation. It is likely to be the pond shown on the 1881 map (Figure 5), which may have had post-medieval or earlier origins.

### Conclusions

**3.4** The present project has exposed more of the ditch encountered during the Phase 1 evaluation on the site. However, no dateable artefacts were present in the excavated sections and it has tentatively been interpreted as pre-medieval in date on the basis of its alignment, which does not correlate to the existing boundaries of the medieval settlement. It is likely to form part of a boundary feature, but the lack of any finds suggests that it lay at a distance from any habitation.

**3.5** A pond, which is shown on the Ordnance Survey map of 1881, and was located during the Phase 1 evaluation, was observed at the southern end of the site. It had been backfilled with modern material but is likely to have post-medieval or earlier origins. However, the foundation trenches did not expose the base of the pond so it is unclear if any earlier deposits still remain in situ.

### Confidence Rating

**3.6** During the course of the fieldwork, the overall conditions were generally acceptable for the identification of potential features and deposits, and for their investigation. The footings trenches were narrow and deep, marginally limiting visibility, as did the bright sunlight. On this basis the overall confidence rating for the work should be considered to be *Moderate* to *High*.

## 4 Bibliography

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Morris, J. 1976, Domesday Book, Hertfordshire (Phillimore)

Soil Survey of England and Wales (SSEW) 1983 Soil Map Sheet 4, South-East England. Scale 1:250,000.

## 5 Illustrations

Figure 1 .....	Site Location
Figure 2 .....	Site Layout
Figure 3 .....	Plot 1 Plan
Figure 4 .....	Plot 1 Sections
Figure 5 .....	Ordnance Survey Map, 1881

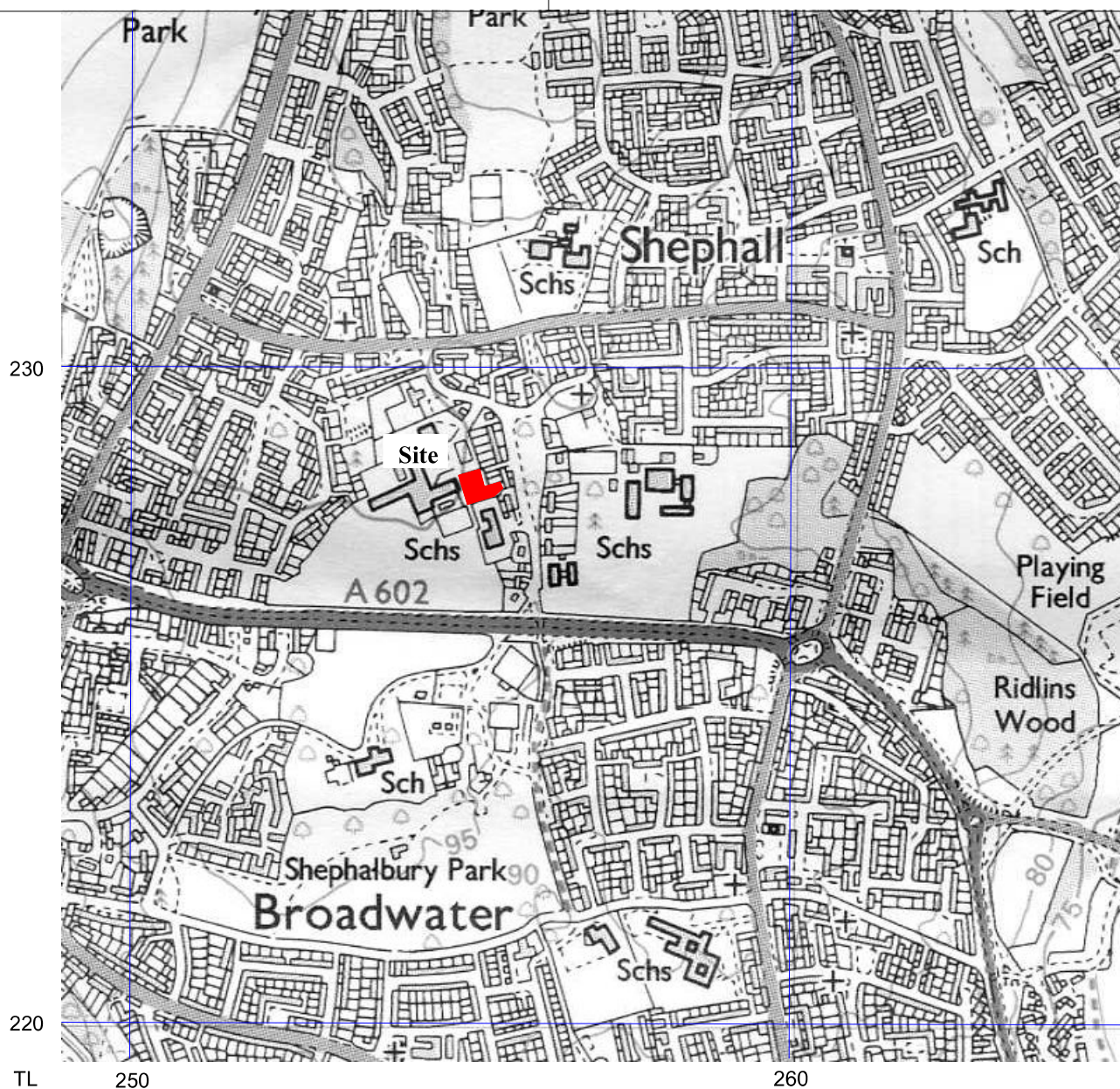
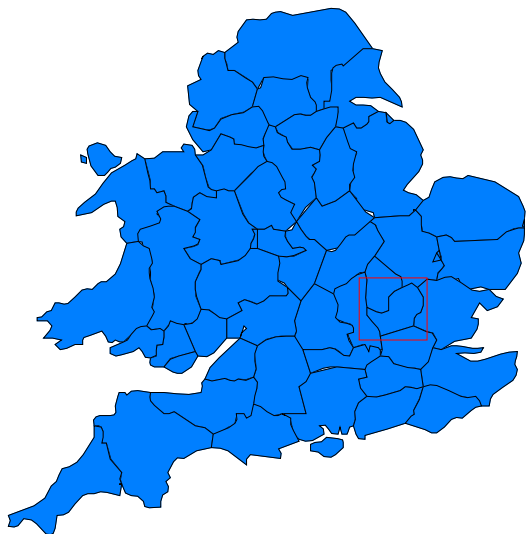
Plate 1 .....	Ditch [102], Plot 1, looking east
Plate 2 .....	Ditch [104], Plot 1, looking south
Plate 3 .....	Ditch [104] Plot 1, looking west
Plate 4 .....	Ditch [106] Plot 1, looking north
Plate 5 .....	Pond (201) Plot 2, looking south
Plate 6 .....	Pond (201) Plot 2, looking east



THE HERITAGE NETWORK LTD

Land to the rear of 44-48 Shephall Green,  
Stevenage, Herts

HN861



Site Location

Scale 1:10000

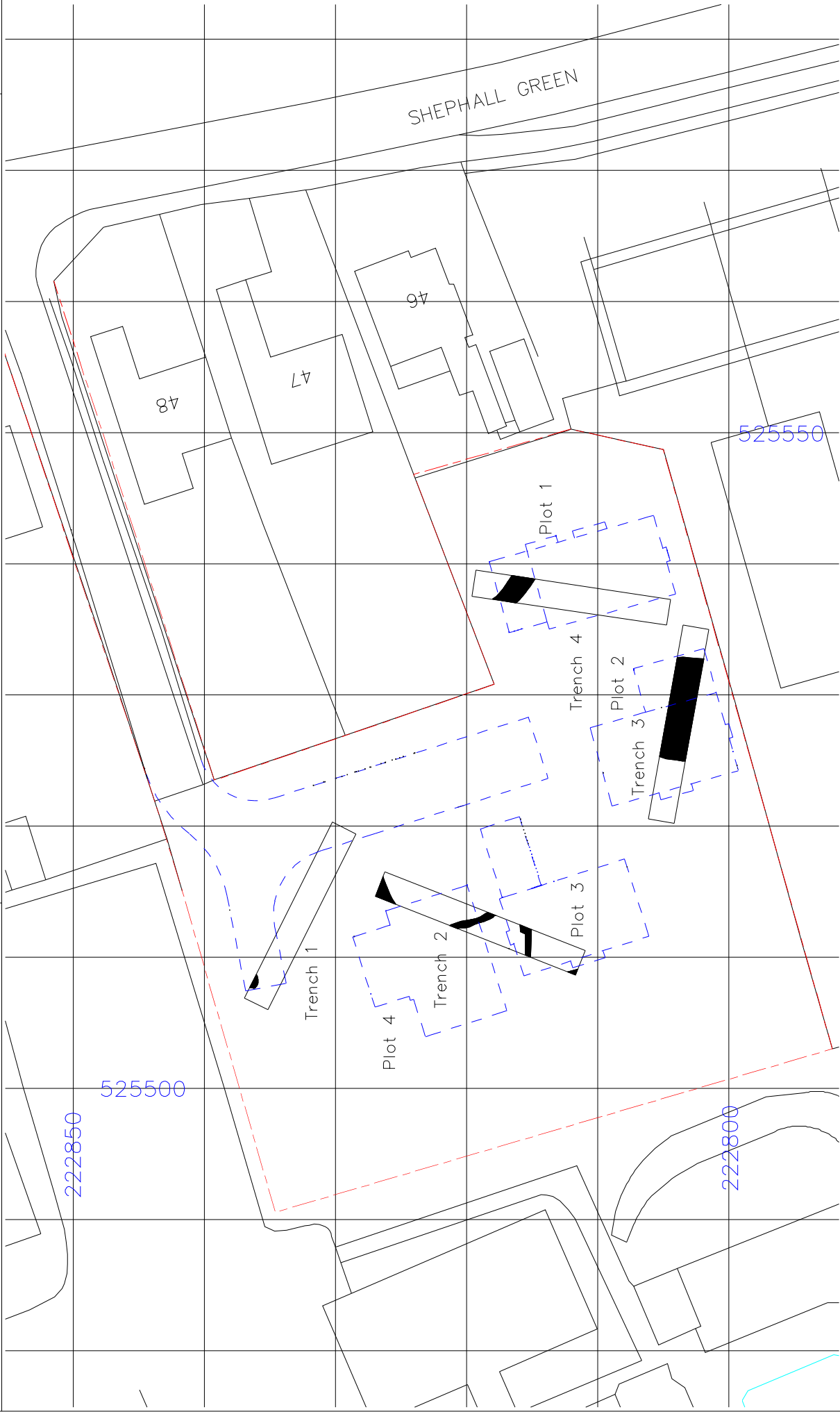
(Reproduced from the Ordnance Survey with the permission of the controller of Her Majesty's Stationery Office, Licence no.AL100014861)

Figure 1

THE HERITAGE NETWORK LTD

Land to the rear of 44 - 48 Shephall Green, Stevenage, Herts.

HN861

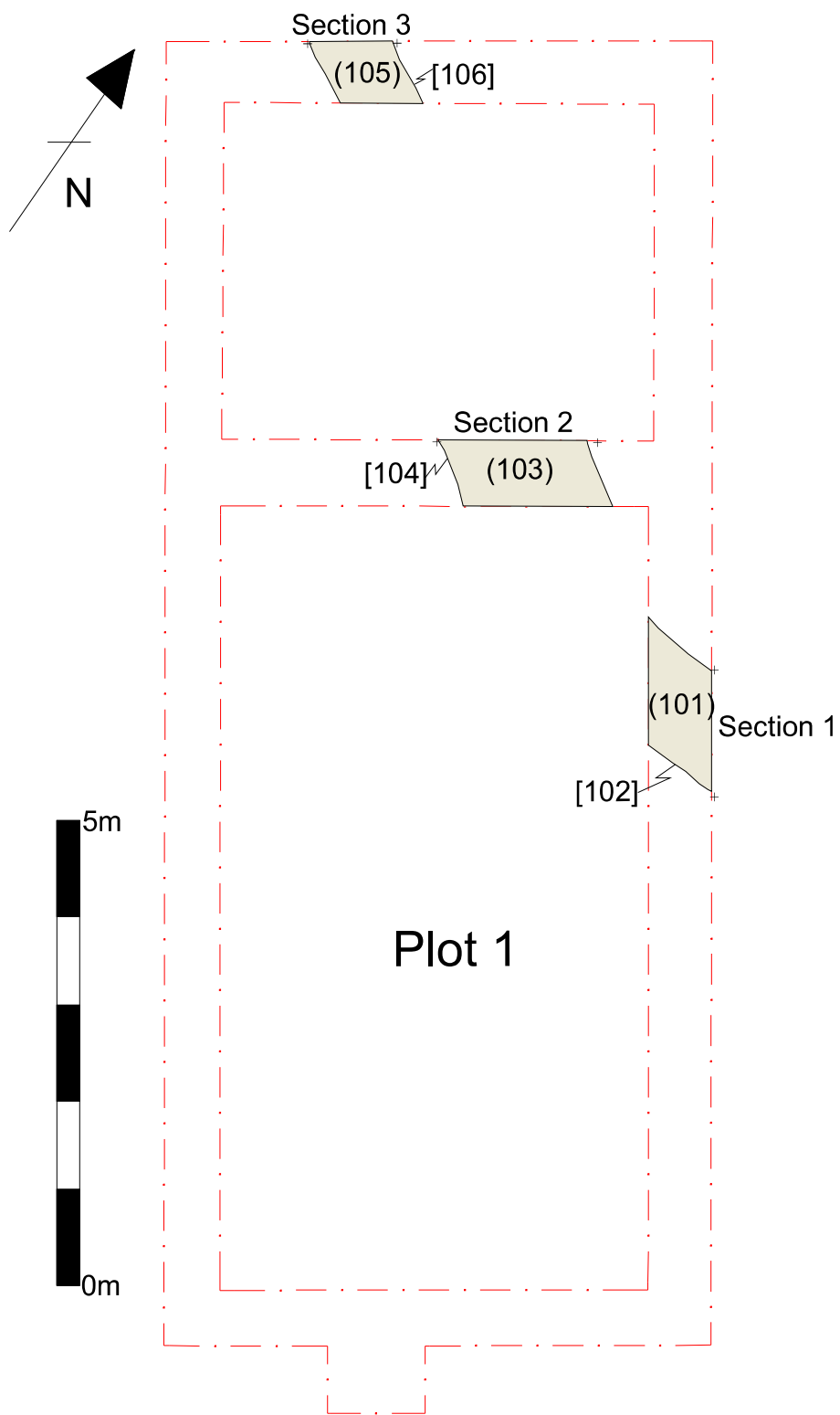


Site layout

Ordnance Survey (c) Crown Copyright 2010. All rights reserved. Licence number 100020449

Scale 1:400

Figure 2

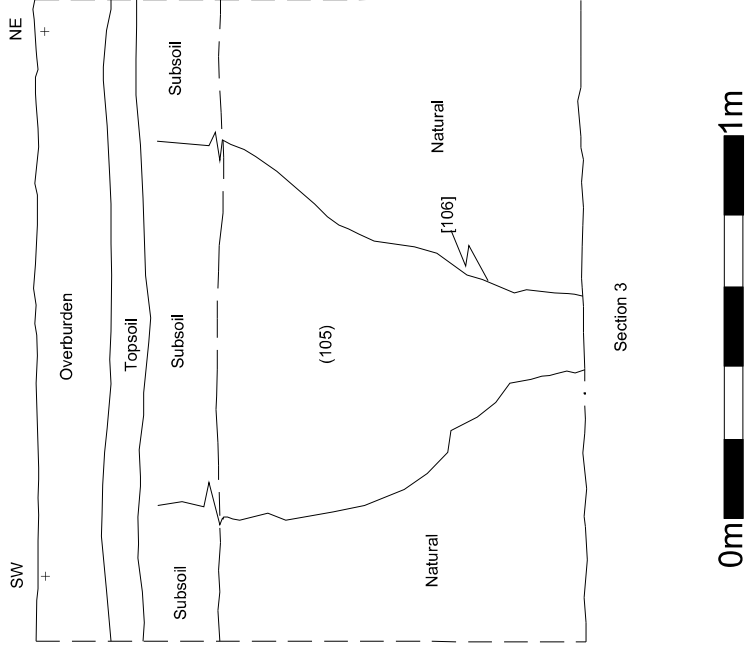
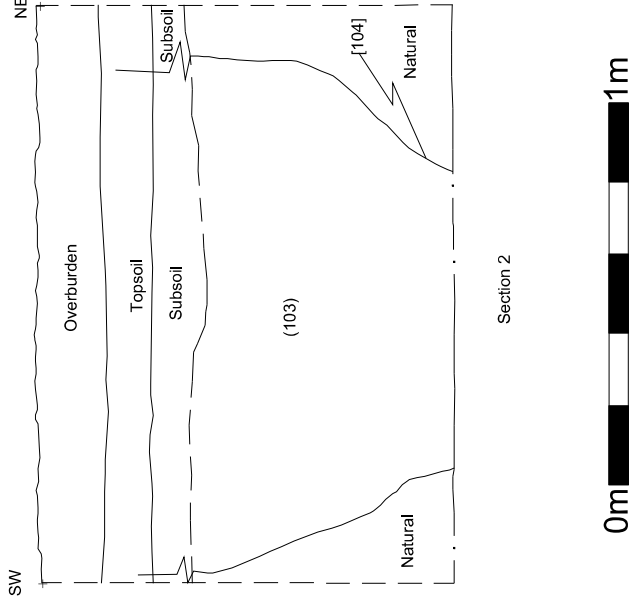
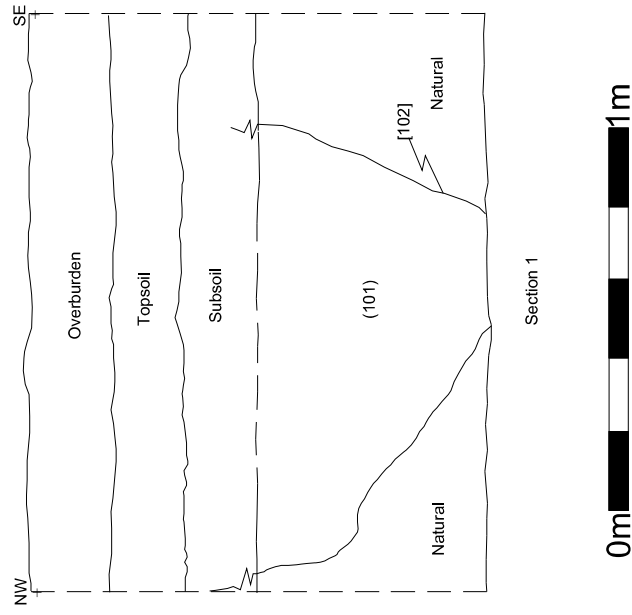


Plot 1 Plan

Scale 1:75

Figure 3





Plot 1 Sections







Plate 1: Ditch [102] looking east



Plate 2: Ditch [106] looking south





Plate 3: Ditch [104] looking west



Plate 4: Ditch [106] looking north





Plate 5: Pond (201) looking south



Plate 6: Pond (201) looking east





# Appendix

## Oasis Data Entry Form

<b>OASIS ID: heritage1-75938</b>	
<b>Project details</b>	
Project name	Land r/o 44-48 Shephall Green, Stevenage
Short description of the project	<p>In response to a condition on the planning permission for four new dwellings to the rear of 44 - 48 Shephall Green, Stevenage, the Heritage Network was commissioned by the owner to undertake archaeological monitoring of the development groundworks. This represents the second phase of fieldwork on the site. A previous archaeological evaluation had demonstrated the presence of an undated linear feature and a modern backfilled pond.</p> <p>The groundworks for the present project revealed more of both features previously recorded. The ditch may be pre-medieval on the basis of its alignment, although no dating material was recovered from its fill; and the pond, which is shown on the Ordnance Survey map of 1881, was backfilled with modern material but is likely to have post-medieval or earlier origins. However, no finds pre-dating the modern period were recovered from within the pond fill during the present project.</p>
Project dates	Start: 26-05-2010 End: 06-09-2010
Previous/future work	No / Not known
Any associated project reference codes	HN861 - Contracting Unit No.
Type of project	Archaeological Monitoring
Site status	Local Authority Designated Archaeological Area
Current Land use	Waste Ground
Monument type	Ditch Uncertain; Pond Uncertain
Significant Finds	None
Development type	Housing estate
Prompt	Direction from Local Planning Authority - PPG16
Position in the planning process	After full determination (eg. As a condition)
<b>Project location</b>	
Country	England
Site location	HERTFORDSHIRE STEVENAGE Land r/o 44-48 Shephall Green
Postcode	SG2 9XS
Study area	1766.00 Square metres
Site coordinates	TL 2541 2286 51.8897222222 -0.1775 51:53:23N 0:10:39W Point
Height OD / Depth	Min: 98.00m Max: 99.00m
<b>Project creators</b>	
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	Greg Jones
Type of sponsor	Developer
Name of sponsor	Stevenage Property Development Ltd
<b>Project archives</b>	

Physical Archive Exists?	No
Digital Archive recipient	Stevenage Museum
Digital Contents	none
Digital Media available	Images raster / digital photography
Paper Archive recipient	Stevenage museum
Paper Contents	none
Paper Media available	'Context sheet', 'Diary'; 'Drawing'; 'Photograph', 'Plan', 'Report', 'Section'
<b>Project bibliography 1</b>	
Publication type	Grey literature (unpublished document/manuscript)
Title	Land to the rear of 44-48 Shephall Green, Stevenage, Hertfordshire: Archaeological Monitoring Report
Author(s)/Editor(s)	Jones. G.,
Other bibliographic details	Report Number 604
Date	2011
Issuer or publisher	Heritage Network
Place of issue or publication	Letchworth, Hertfordshire
Description	A4 booklet, comb bound, green cover, 8 pages, 5 figures, 6 plates