

**Archaeological Evaluation Report
18 – 20 Ebury Road
Rickmansworth, Hertfordshire**

NGR TQ 0586 9439

Local Planning Authority: Three Rivers District Council

Planning Ref: 10/0412/FUL, 10/0413/CAC

**ASE Project No: 5169
Site Code: ERH11**

**ASE Report No: 2012027
OASIS ID: archaeol6-119079**

**By Giles Dawkes
With a contribution from Karine le Hégarat**

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**Archaeology South-East
Units 1 & 2
2 Chapel Place
Portslade
East Sussex
BN41 1DR**

**Tel: 01273 426830
Fax: 01273 420866
Email: fau@ucl.ac.uk**

Abstract

Archaeology South-East was commissioned by Home Plans to undertake an archaeological evaluation at 18-20 Ebury Road, Rickmansworth, Hertfordshire. A single trial trench was recorded on the 25th and 26th January 2011.

No archaeological finds or features were recorded and no evidence for the medieval or post-medieval development of Rickmansworth was recorded. Modern truncation to a depth of c. 1m sealed a sequence of alluvial deposits c. 1m thick. An environmental sample taken from the uppermost alluvial deposit contained no evidence of human activity.

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Site Background

1.1.1 Archaeology South-East (ASE), the contracting division of The Centre for Applied Archaeology (CAA) at the Institute of Archaeology (IoA), University College London (UCL) was commissioned by Home Plans to undertake an archaeological evaluation in advance of the redevelopment at 18-20 Ebury Road, Rickmansworth, Hertfordshire. The site is centred on National Grid Reference TQ 0586 9439 and its location is shown in Figure 1.

1.2 Geology and Topography

1.2.1 The site lies upon gravels deposited by the River Colne. To the south lies the drainage channel called Town Ditch, flowing west into the Colne at the rear of the properties on the south side of Ebury Road.

1.2.2 The site is situated in the town of Rickmansworth and is bounded on the east, north and west by existing buildings and to the south by Ebury Road. It is roughly rectangular in shape and measures 450m².

1.3 Planning Background

1.3.1 Planning consent for the development of the site has been granted (Ref.: 10/0412/FUL & 10/0413/CAC). The development comprises the demolition of the existing buildings on the site and the erection of eight semi-detached houses, as well as the construction of a new access road and associated parking and landscape works. An archaeological Desk Based Assessment of the site was prepared in 2003 for a previous application (SAS 2003). Having considered this planning application and the Desk Based Assessment Andy Instone, Hertfordshire County Council (HCC) Planning Archaeologist, in his capacity as archaeological advisor to Three Rivers District Council, recommended that a programme of archaeological work be undertaken. Condition 10 states:

“No development shall take place within the proposed development site until the applicant, or their agents, or successors in title, have secured the implementation of a programme of archaeological work in accordance with a written scheme of investigation, which has been submitted to the planning authority and approved in writing.

No use or occupation shall take place until the approved written scheme of investigation for archaeological works has been implemented in full”.

REASON: To ensure that an appropriate scheme of archaeological investigation and recording is undertaken and that a suitable contingency exists for the rapid investigation of any archaeological remains in accordance with PPS5 guidance and Policy C14 of the Three Rivers Local Plan 1996 – 2011.

1.3.3 Accordingly, a Written Scheme of Investigation (ASE 2011) was prepared and approved by HCC prior to the commencement of work. The evaluation was then carried out in accordance with this document (*ibid*).

1.4 Aims and Objectives

1.4.1 The WSI (*ibid*) outlined the following aims and objectives:

1.4.2 The evaluation will aim to determine, as far as is reasonably possible, the location, form, extent, date, character, condition, significance and quality of any surviving archaeological remains, irrespective of period, liable to be threatened by the proposed development. An adequate representative sample of all areas where archaeological remains are potentially threatened will be studied.

1.4.3 The evaluation will also seek to clarify the nature and extent of existing disturbance and intrusions and hence assess the degree of archaeological survival of buried deposits and any surviving structures of archaeological significance.

1.4.4 Within these parameters, the evaluation of this site presents an opportunity to address the following objectives:

- 1) Is there any evidence for the medieval or post-medieval development of Rickmansworth?

1.5 Scope of Report

1.5.1 This report details the results of the archaeological evaluation carried out on the 25th and 26th January 2012 and has been prepared in accordance with the WSI (*ibid*). The work was carried out by Giles Dawkes (Senior Archaeologist) and John Cook (Archaeological Surveyor) and was managed by Andy Leonard (fieldwork), Jim Stevenson and Dan Swift (post-excavation).

2.0 ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND

2.1 The following archaeological background is reproduced from the WSI (ASE 2011) which was drawn from a Desk Based Assessment prepared by Sutton Archaeological Services for the site (SAS 2003). For a full account of the archaeological background of the site and area, please refer to that document.

Prehistoric

- 2.2 Several prehistoric flint implements and flakes have been found at Mill End, approximately 1.7km to the east of the site, including triangular hand axes, scrapers and flakes, some of which were unrolled and therefore likely to be of local origin. Palaeolithic flints have also been recovered from Tolpits House and to the north of Tolpits Plantation.
- 2.3 Excavations at Town Whard, c. 230m to the east of the site, uncovered a struck flint of Mesolithic date. Neolithic flint implements have also been found in the area, including a tranchet axe.
- 2.4 There is little evidence for Bronze Age activity or occupation within the vicinity of the site other than c. 1.5km to the northwest of the site, where a hoard of bronze artefacts was found including axe heads and ingots.
- 2.5 Iron Age pottery has been found at Chorleywood, c. 3km to the northwest of the site and at Berry Lane Woods, c. 2km to the northwest of the site. However, there has yet to be found any evidence for occupation from this period.

Roman

- 2.6 There is evidence for Roman occupation in the broad area of Rickmansworth, in the form of two 2nd century villas to the southeast, and further occupation to the north, at Loudwater and Solesbridge. Hertfordshire in general has a large number of Roman roads which would have brought with them wealth and settlement.

Saxon and Medieval

- 2.7 There is no archaeological evidence for Saxon activity in Rickmansworth. However, the name is derived from the personal Saxon name *Ryckmer* and *Worth*, meaning wood or farm. King Ecgrith granted *The Manor of Rychemareworde* to the Abbey of St Albans in 796AD so it is likely there was a Saxon settlement here.
- 2.8 The Domesday Survey of 1086 refers to Rickmansworth as *having land for twenty ploughs, and containing four Frenchmen, and forty-one labourers, and bondmen of different grades.*
- 2.9 Although there is no mention of a church in the Domesday Survey, a chaplain is referred to in 1119. It is probable that the Saxon and medieval settlement

lay around the church of St Mary's, to the southeast of the site, with ribbon development progressing along Church Street.

- 2.10 Rickmansworth was granted a charter for a weekly market in the 13th century which was subsequently confirmed by King Henry VIII in 1542.

Post-medieval

- 2.11 Transportation was to play a crucial role in the growth of Rickmansworth from the 18th century. In 1790 the Grand Junction Canal was built. Coal was transported along the river network to the Rickmansworth Gas Company (opened in 1854) and in 1862 the London & North West railway was built. This continued to expand and in 1887 the Metropolitan railway was constructed.
- 2.12 Rocque's map of 1745 depicts Rickmansworth as an established town with the main occupation along the High Street. The site itself appears unoccupied until the early 19th century. The Rickmansworth Tithe map of 1839 shows the site contained a yard and outbuildings. This overall layout did not change much throughout the 19th century with the exception of some additional buildings.
- 2.13 A borehole survey of the site demonstrated the presence of River Terrace gravels between 1.7m and 2.8m below ground level, with up to 2m of overlying alluvium (BRN Environmental 2007).

3.0 ARCHAEOLOGICAL METHODOLOGY

- 3.1 The original intention was to excavate 2 trenches within the proposed development area (as shown on Figure 2 of the WSI; ASE 2011), however, the presence of a large dump of asbestos immediately below the ground surface in the western area of the site led to the abandonment of Trench 1. Additionally, Trench 2 could not be located in the proposed location due to its use as a driveway for an adjacent property, so was located in the north of the development area (Figure 1).
- 3.2 The trench was located using a Global Positioning System (DGPS) and DGPS Total Station (Leica 1205 R100 Total Station, Leica System 1200 GPS).
- 3.3 The trench was excavated under archaeological supervision by a JCB machine fitted with a toothless ditching bucket.
- 3.4 The excavation was taken down in small spits to the top of the underlying geology which was manually cleaned to identify any archaeological features. The sections of the trenches were cleaned to observe and record stratigraphy. All removed spoil was scanned for the presence of stray, unstratified artefacts.
- 3.5 All encountered deposits, features and finds were recorded according to accepted professional standards in accordance with the WSI (ASE 2011) using pro-forma ASE record sheets. Deposit colours were verified by visual inspection.
- 3.6 A photographic record of the work was kept and forms part of the site archive which is presently held at the Archaeology South-East offices at Portslade and will be offered to a suitable local museum or archive repository at the end of the project.

4.0 RESULTS

(Figures 3, 4 and 5)

- 4.1.1 The trench was 5.8m x 3.5m in plan. The top of the trench was at c. 46.58m AOD. The trench was stepped at c. 1.2m depth and a smaller sondage of the same length x 0.8m wide was excavated to the base of the sequence at a depth of 2.2m. No archaeological features or finds were recorded.
- 4.1.2 Yellow-brown coarse terrace gravels [1/005] were encountered at the base of the trench at c. 44.56m AOD.
- 4.1.3 Overlying the gravel was a series of alluvial layers at least 0.9m thick. The lowest, a stiff grey clay [1/004], was sealed beneath a stiff blue grey gravelly clay [1/003] and was in turn beneath a dark brown silty sandy clay [1/002].
- 4.1.4 A bulk sample <1> was taken from [1/002] as this appeared to contain organic material.
- 4.1.5 Cutting [1/022] and [1/003] were two modern pits [1/006] and [1/007] filled with brick rubble and concrete fragments [1/009] and [1/008]. Both pits were seen to extend beyond the northern and southern limits of the trench. These were not excavated.
- 4.1.6 Overlying the pits and sealing the entire sequence was a layer of modern overburden [1/001].

Number	Type	Description	Max. Length	Max. Width	Max. Depth
1/001	Layer	Modern overburden	Tr.	Tr.	1.20m
1/002	Layer	Alluvium	Tr.	Tr.	0.5m
1/003	Layer	Alluvium	Tr.	Tr.	0.7m
1/004	Layer	Alluvium	Tr.	Tr.	0.1m
1/005	Layer	Terrace gravel	Tr.	Tr.	N/A
1/006	Cut	Modern pit			-
1/007	Cut	Modern pit			0.62m
1/008	Fill	Modern pit fill			N/A
1/009	Fill	Modern pit fill			N/A

Table 1: Recorded contexts

5.0 THE ENVIRONMENTAL SAMPLE By Karine Le Hégarat

- 5.1 Evaluation work at Ebury Road revealed the presence of stratified alluvial deposits at c. 1m below ground level. A 40L bulk soil sample was taken from dark brown organically rich clay sedimentary deposit [1/002] interpreted as upper alluvium. Sampling aimed to establish evidence for environmental indicators which could help characterise the past environment and any likely human use of this environment. Sampling also aimed to evaluate the potential to obtain a date for the accumulation of the deposit.
- 5.2 A subsample of 3L taken from the organically rich sample was wet sieved through geological sieves measuring 8mm, 4mm, 2mm, 1mm, 500µm and 250µm and each fraction was retained in water. The fractions were scanned for environmental remains under a stereozoom microscope at 7-45x magnifications and an overview of their contents is recorded in Table 2.
- 5.3 The fractions were dominated by detrital vegetation and comprised traces of small flint pebbles measuring up to 10mm. The sample produced only a very small quantity of archaeobotanical remains preserved by waterlogging. There was a small amount of very fine fragments of probable stems, roots and/or rhizomes, none of which were identifiable. There was also a small assemblage of uncharred woody debris consisting principally of small-sized twigs measuring <4mm. A single moderately well preserved fragment of roundwood >25mm, which may be suitable for dating was recorded and three waterlogged wild/weed seeds of possible bugle (cf. *Ajuga*) were also present. No other environmental indicators such as insects, bones and shells and no artefacts were recorded in the sample.
- 5.3 Sample <1> produced principally some fine organic detritus. However, no botanical remains provided convincing evidence of a wetland environment. Deposition in a potentially woody/shrubby environment is suggested by the remains of bugle which can grow in woodland, shady places and damp environments and by the presence of infrequent twigs. These scarce remains might represent a waterside environment; however, they may equally derive from elsewhere deposited here by water. The sample yielded no evidence for human activities and overall the botanical remains are too infrequent to provide significant information regarding local vegetation, or the post-depositional and sedimentary history of the floodplain.

Sample Number	Context	Deposit	Sample Volume	Sub-sample processed	Sieves used	Macrobotanical Remains	Identification and preservation notes	Wood	Notes on Preservation of Wood	Faunal remains	Insects and Fly pupae
1	1/002	Upper alluvium	40L	3L	8, 4, 2, 1mm, 500 & 250 µm	P	Uncharred: cf. <i>Ajuga</i> sp. (3, ++), small fragments of stems, rootlets, rhizomes (fractions >1mm: *, + and fractions <1mm: ***, +)	P	Uncharred: fraction >8mm - fragment of roundwood (1, ++), 8mm in diameter, 25mm in length); fractions 4-8mm - twigs 12 to 15mm in length (*, ++); fractions <4mm - twigs (*, +)	-	-

Table 2: Assessment result for sample <1> from upper alluvium (1/002)

Key: Flot quantification (* = <5 items, ** = 5-10 items, *** = 11-25 items, **** = 26-100 items and ***** = >101items) and preservation (+ = poor, ++ = moderate, +++ = good). Presence of remains is denoted as 'P'

6.0 DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

- 6.1 The archaeological evaluation confirms the results of the earlier borehole survey and demonstrated the presence of an alluvial sequence at the site; however, no archaeological finds or features were recorded and no evidence for the medieval or post-medieval development of Rickmansworth was recorded.
- 6.2 In terms of deposit survival; a borehole in the western part of the site (WS04; BRD Environmental 2007) recorded c. 2.5m of made ground overlying (natural terrace) gravel, indicating that this area has suffered substantially from modern truncation, possibly associated with the dumping of the asbestos in this area. To the east of this, in the vicinity of the archaeological evaluation trench, similar thicknesses of alluvium, ie: c. 1m, were recorded as were found in the boreholes in this part of the site (WS02 and WS03; *ibid*) beneath c. 1m of modern truncation. Towards the eastern boundary of the site another borehole (WS05; *ibid*) recorded thicker deposits of alluvium with slightly less evidence of modern truncation.
- 6.3 An environmental sample <1> was taken from the uppermost alluvial deposit viewed in the evaluation trench [1/002] with the aim of understanding depositional processes and past environment in this area of the site. The sample contained no evidence of human activity. It did produce some organic material, however, no botanical remains providing definitive evidence of a wetland environment were found and what possible wetland indicators were present may derive from elsewhere and may have been deposited here by water action. The results of the sample should therefore be seen as inconclusive.

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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HER Summary Form

Site Code	ERH 11					
Identification Name and Address	18-20 Ebury Road, Rickmansworth					
County, District &/or Borough	Hertfordshire					
OS Grid Refs.	TQ 0586 9439					
Geology	Terrace gravel					
Arch. South-East Project Number	5169					
Type of Fieldwork	Eval. ✓	Excav.	Watching Brief	Standing Structure	Survey	Other
Type of Site	Green Field	Shallow Urban ✓	Deep Urban	Other		
Dates of Fieldwork	Eval. Jan 12	Excav.	WB.	Other		
Sponsor/Client	Home Plans					
Project Manager	Andy Leonard					
Project Supervisor	Giles Dawkes					
Period Summary	Palaeo.	Meso.	Neo.	BA	IA	RB
	AS	MED	PM	Other Modern ✓		
<p><i>Archaeology South-East was commissioned by Home Plans to undertake an archaeological evaluation at 18-20 Ebury Road, Rickmansworth, Hertfordshire. A single trial trench was recorded on the 25th and 26th January 2011.</i></p> <p><i>No archaeological finds or features were recorded and no evidence for the medieval or post-medieval development of Rickmansworth was recorded. Modern truncation to a depth of c. 1m sealed a sequence of alluvial deposits, c. 1m thick. An environmental sample taken from the uppermost alluvial deposit contained no evidence of human activity.</i></p>						

OASIS Form

OASIS ID: archaeol6-119079

Project details

Project name	Archaeological Evaluation Report
Short description of the project	Archaeology South-East was commissioned by Home Plans to undertake an archaeological evaluation at 18-20 Ebury Road, Rickmansworth, Hertfordshire. A single trial trench was recorded on the 25th and 26th January 2011. No archaeological finds or features were recorded and no evidence for the medieval or post-medieval development of Rickmansworth was recorded. Modern truncation to a depth of c. 1m sealed a sequence of alluvial deposits, c. 1m thick. An environmental sample taken from the uppermost alluvial deposit contained no evidence of human activity.
Project dates	Start: 25-01-2012 End: 26-01-2012
Previous/future work	No / Not known
Any associated project reference codes	ERH11 - Sitecode
Type of project	Field evaluation
Site status	None
Current Land use	Other 13 - Waste ground
Methods & techniques	'Test Pits'
Development type	Small-scale (e.g. single house, etc.)
Development type	4 houses
Prompt	Planning condition
Position in the planning process	After full determination (eg. As a condition)

Project location

Country	England
Site location	HERTFORDSHIRE THREE RIVERS RICKMANSWORTH 18 – 20 Ebury Road, Rickmansworth
Postcode	WD3 1BN
Study area	7.00 Square metres

Site coordinates TQ 50586 19439 50.9541101942 0.144225348654 50 57 14
N 000 08 39 E Point

Height OD / Depth Min: 45.38m Max: 45.70m

Project creators

Name of Organisation Archaeology South-East

Project brief originator Archaeology South-East

Project design originator Archaeology South-East

Project director/manager Andy Leonard

Project supervisor Giles Dawkes

Type of sponsor/funding body Home Plans

Name of sponsor/funding body Home Plans

Project archives

Physical Archive Exists? No

Digital Archive recipient Local Museum

Digital Archive ID ERH11

Digital Contents 'Stratigraphic','Survey'

Digital Media available 'Survey','Text'

Paper Archive recipient Local Museum

Paper Archive ID ERH11

Paper Contents 'Stratigraphic','Survey'

Paper Media available 'Context sheet','Correspondence','Miscellaneous Material','Photograph','Plan','Report'

Project bibliography 1

Publication type Grey literature (unpublished document/manuscript)

Title Archaeological Evaluation Report

Author(s)/Editor(s) Dawkes, G

Other bibliographic details ASE Report No: 2012027

Date 2012

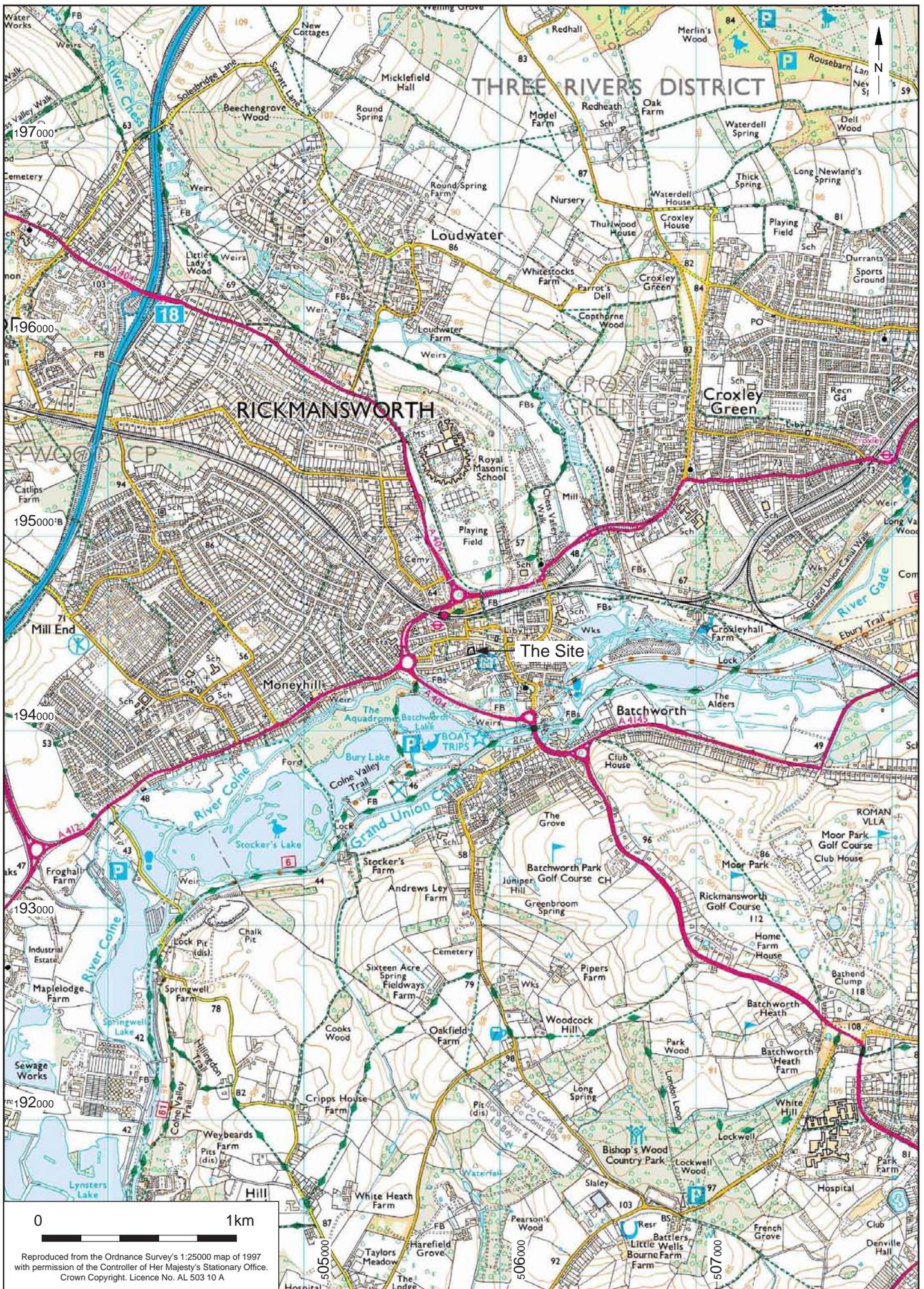
Issuer or publisher ASE

Place of issue or publication Portslade

Description grey lit bound report

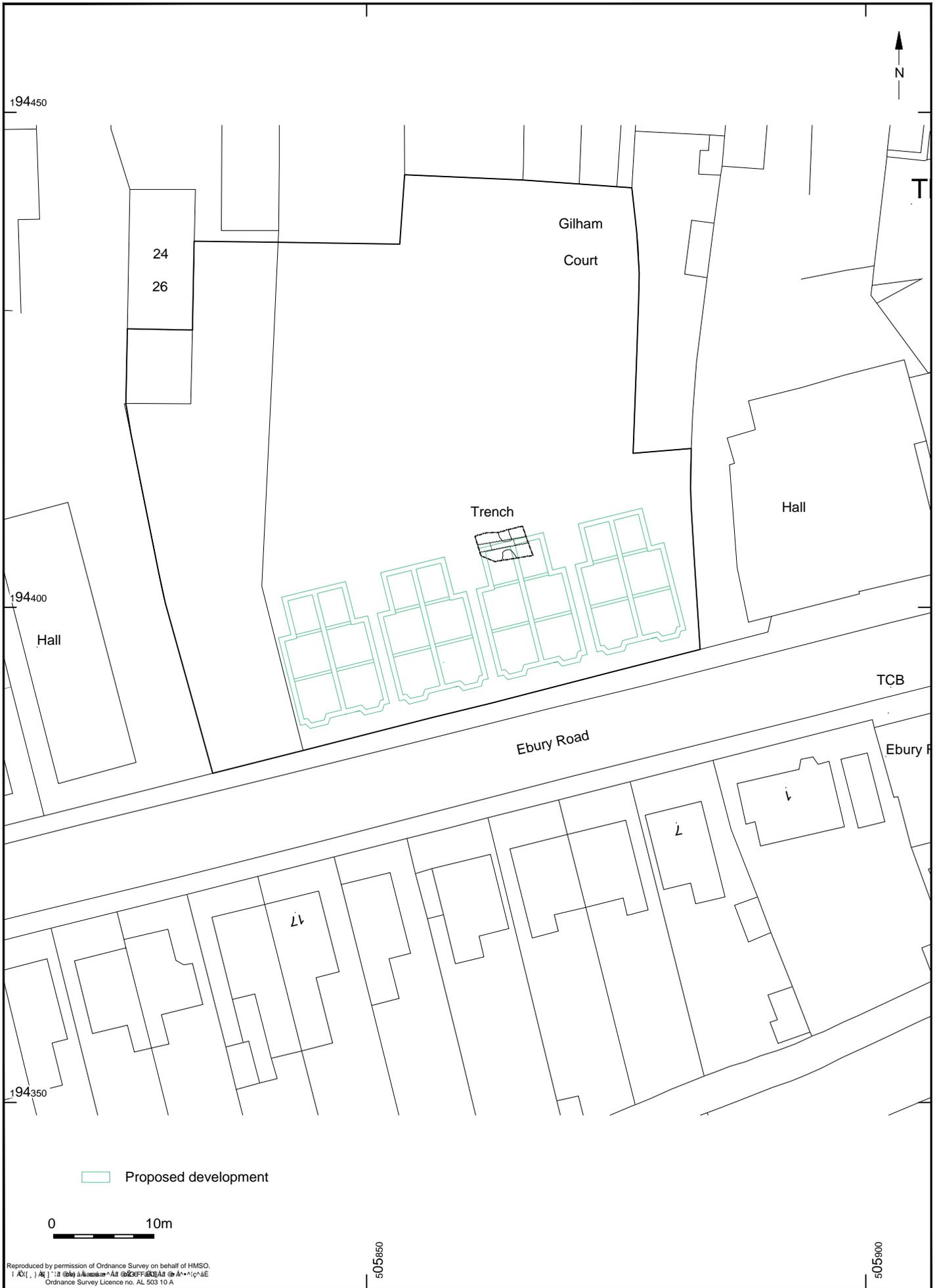
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Entered on 9 February 2012

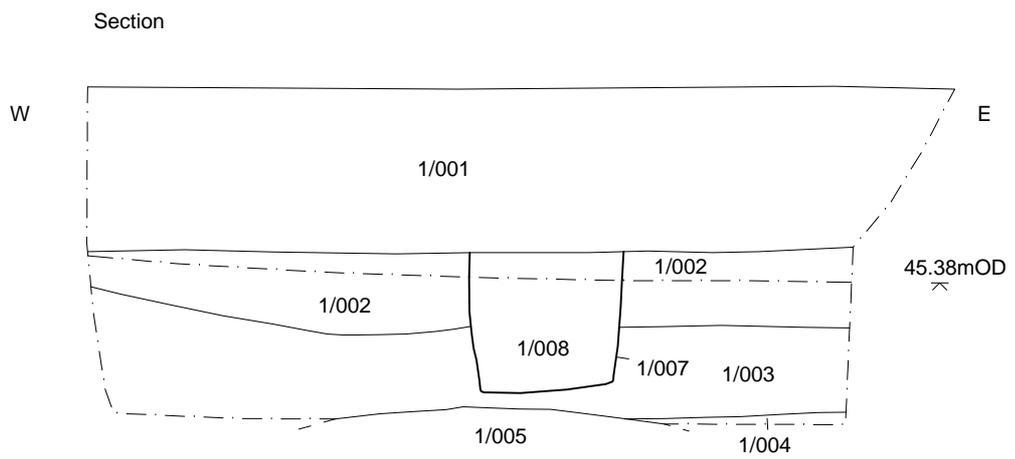
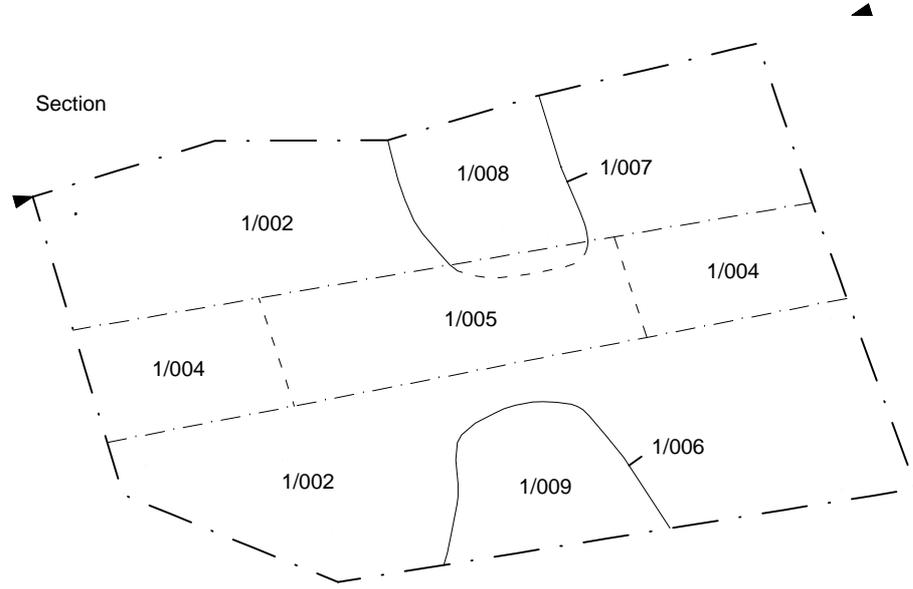
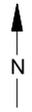


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© Archaeology South-East		18 Ebury Road, Rickmansworth		Fig. 1
Project Ref: 5169	Jan 2012	Site location		
Report Ref: 2012027	Drawn by: JLR			



Archaeology South-East		18 Ebury Road, Rickmansworth	Fig. 2
Project Ref: 5169	Jan 2012	Trench location	
Report Ref: 2012027	Drawn by: JLR		



 Archaeology South-East		18 Ebury Road, Rickmansworth	Fig. 3
Project Ref: 5169	Jan 2012	Trench plan and section	
Report Ref: 2012027	Drawn by: JLR		



Photograph of the trench viewed from the south-west at a depth of c. 1m below ground level, showing the top of context 1/002 and the two modern pits 1/006 and 1/007

© Archaeology South-East		18 Ebury Road, Rickmansworth	Fig. 4
Project Ref: 5169	Jan 2012	Photograph	
Report Ref: 2012027	Drawn by: JLR		



Photograph of the eastern end of the lower sondage viewed from the south at a depth of c. 2m below ground level showing the base of the modern overburden 1/001 and contexts 1/002, 1/003, 1/004 and to the right of the image at the base of the trench gravel 1/005

© Archaeology South-East		18 Ebury Road, Rickmansworth	Fig. 5
Project Ref: 5169	Jan 2012	Photograph	
Report Ref: 2012027	Drawn by: JLR		

Head Office
Units 1 & 2
2 Chapel Place
Portslade
East Sussex BN41 1DR
Tel: +44(0)1273 426830 Fax:+44(0)1273 420866
email: fau@ucl.ac.uk
Web: www.archaeologyse.co.uk



London Office
Centre for Applied Archaeology
Institute of Archaeology
University College London
31-34 Gordon Square, London, WC1 0PY
Tel: +44(0)20 7679 4778
Fax:+44(0)20 7383 2572
Web: www.ucl.ac.uk/caa

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