

ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF

**2 SUN LANE
HARPENDEN
HERTFORDSHIRE**

**ASE Project No: 170353
Site Code: SWH17**

ASE Report No: 2018076



March 2018

Archaeological Watching Brief

Land at 2 Sun Lane
Harpenden
Hertfordshire

NGR: TL 13333 14584

Planning Ref: 5/2016/3754

ASE Project No: 170353
Site Code: SWH17

ASE Report No: 2018076
OASIS ID: 301284

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Abstract

This report presents the results of an archaeological watching brief undertaken during groundworks for construction of a soakaway and a small block of flats at 2 Sun Lane, Harpenden, Hertfordshire. The archaeological work was recommended by St Albans District Council. It was commissioned by Matthew Homes Ltd and carried out on 2/10/17, 9/10/17 and 12/10/17.

Two modern semi-detached houses formally occupied the central part of the site and were demolished before its redevelopment.

The watching brief observed the excavation of a large hole for the soakaway and foundation trenches for the block of flats. Other groundworks within the site were not monitored because they did not penetrate below the observed modern overburden deposits.

The soakaway and foundation trenches revealed no pre-modern deposits, features or finds.

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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 at the Institute of Archaeology, University College, London, was commissioned by Matthew Homes Ltd to undertake archaeological monitoring of groundwork for a new block of flats at 2 Sun Way, Harpenden, Hertfordshire.

1.1.2 The block of flats will stand in the north-central part of the site, and be surrounded by amenity areas and tarmac for parking.

1.2 Location, Geology and Topography

1.2.1 The town of Harpenden is situated within the district of St Albans, Hertfordshire. Sun Lane shares a junction with High Street in central Harpenden (Fig. 1). The site, at No. 2 Sun Lane, is of roughly rectangular plan, measuring c.36m long and c.24m wide and totalling an area of c.720sq m. It occupies a west-facing slope.

1.2.2 Harpenden is situated on the dip slope of the Chilterns in a dry valley separated from those of the River Lea to the north-east and the River Ver to the south-west. Harpenden High Street follows the course of the dry valley and is part of the direct route between St Albans and Luton.

1.2.3 The surface geology of the vicinity of the site comprises superficial deposits of River terrace, sand and gravel, flanked by Head deposits of clay, silt, sand and gravel. The underlying bedrock is chalk.

1.3 Planning Background

1.3.1 Planning consent 5/2016/3751 was granted by St Albans District Council for the demolition of the existing building at No. 2 Sun Lane and the construction of six two-bedroom flats, with accompanying parking and access, in its place.

1.3.2 Condition 7 of the condition states that:

No development related works shall take place within the site until a written scheme of archaeological work (WSI) has been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. This scheme shall include on-site work & off-site work such as the analysis, publication and archiving of the results, together with a timetable for completion of each element. All works shall be carried out and completed in accordance with the approved scheme, unless otherwise agreed in writing by the Local Planning Authority. This must be carried out by a professional archaeological/building recording consultant or organisation in accordance with the agreed written scheme of investigation.

Reason: To ensure adequate opportunity is provided for archaeological research on this historically important site. To comply with Policy 111 of the St Albans District Local Plan Review 1994 and the National Planning Policy Framework. To ensure the appropriate identification, recording and

publication of archaeological and historic remains affected by the development.

1.3.3 An archaeological desk-based assessment (ASE 2015) was prepared for the site, which highlighted the possibility of buried archaeological remains. The St Albans District Archaeologist consequently requested that watching brief works be undertaken during construction groundworks.

1.3.4 The methodology and programme of work for the watching brief was set out in a Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI) (ASE 2017), which was approved by the District Archaeologist prior to the commencement of the work.

1.4 Aims and Objectives

1.4.1 The research aims and objectives for the archaeological monitoring were set out in the WSI (ASE 2017). The general aim of the archaeological watching brief was to establish the presence of archaeological remains and, if present, to define their condition, location, date, character, form and function.

1.4.2 The specific aim of the watching brief was to establish the presence of medieval and post-medieval remains relating to settlement within central Harpenden.

1.4.3 Further specific research aims were identified with reference to the East of England research framework:

- Progress in dating the origins of greens and green-side settlements needs to be reviewed. Are there regional variations? (Medlycott 2011, 70)
- The impact of the primary communication routes on the region's development and character is of considerable interest, this includes major routes such as the Great North Road, secondary routes, railways, rivers and marine transport and ports (Medlycott 2011, 78)
- Research into the development and nature of post-medieval field systems and farmsteads (Medlycott 2011, 79)

1.5 Scope of Report

1.5.1 This report presents the methods and results of the archaeological watching brief carried out during groundwork associated with the redevelopment of the site. The watching brief was recommended and monitored by St Albans City and District Council.

1.5.2 The monitoring was undertaken by Mark Germany of ASE in October 2017.

2.0 ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND

2.1 Overview

2.1.1 The following archaeological and historical background information has been summarised from a desk-based assessment produced for the site in February 2015, which collated data from archaeological, cartographic and documentary sources, including the Hertfordshire Historic Environment Record (HHER) and the Hertfordshire Record Office (HRO) (ASE 2015).

2.1.2 The locations of sites and findspots alluded to below are shown on Figure 1.

2.2 Period Summaries

Prehistoric

2.2.1 The site and its surrounding area have no known prehistoric remains.

Roman

2.2.2 Roman remains have been found within the wider area of the site. These include coins and a potter's die (HHER 665 and 675), and puddingstone querns (HHER 2886). Pieces of masonry (HHER 10453) from St Nicholas' churchyard to the near south-west are possibly Roman in date (Thompson 2002, 5).

Anglo-Saxon

2.2.3 No Saxon remains have been discovered within 500m of 2 Sun Lane.

2.2.4 Harpenden is thought to have been established in the Anglo-Saxon period along the route interlinking St Albans and Luton, now the A1081, of which Harpenden High Street is a part. The placename Harpenden derives from the Anglo-Saxon for 'military highway'.

2.2.5 In 1060, Edward the Confessor granted much of Wheathampstead, including Harpenden, to Westminster Abbey (Page 1908). The resulting estate was organised into two large manors, Wheathamstead and Harpenden.

Late medieval

2.2.6 The manorial centre of Harpenden was situated at Harpendenbury, c.2.3km west of the site. The lands between its demesne and that of Wheathampstead were granted out as freehold tenements (Thompson 2002, 9).

2.2.7 Whilst the present church of St Nicholas (HHER 4383) is largely post-medieval in date, it was founded as a roadside Chapel of Ease to the distant Wheathampstead (HHER 4383), with the earliest mention of it dating to 1221 (Thompson 2001, 11). In 1319, it was granted the right to hold burials and the churchyard was established. The church, c.150m south-west of the site, may perhaps have been a focal point for settlement in the late medieval period.

- 2.2.8 Grade II* listed Hall House (HHER 9494; List No. 1174441), situated at 2 Southdown Road c.475m south-east of the site, is late medieval in date.

Post-medieval/Modern

- 2.2.9 There are numerous heritage assets within Harpenden, including a number of 16th-century buildings in relatively close proximity to the site. To the west of the site, located at numbers 71–71a and 73 High Street, is a Grade II listed 16th-century and later timber-framed building (List No. 1347176). Grade II* listed Bower's House (HHER 10450; List No. 1102993), off the High Street c.150m south of the site, is also 16th-century or possibly earlier in date.
- 2.2.10 The road through Harpenden was not a major coaching route like the nearby Watling Street, but was nonetheless important for its carrier service to London. It was turnpiked in 1743 and a toll-gate was situated on the High Street, just to the south of the junction with Sun Lane. The traffic through Harpenden was served by a number of inns/public houses including, the Grade II listed 17th-century Inn on the Green (List No. 1102996) and the Grade II listed 17th- to 18th-century Cross Keys (HHER 10474; List No. 1347175). The Cock is first mentioned in 1637, but the existing building is 18th-century in date (HHER 10473). Sun Lane is first referred to as such in 1747, although the public house 'The Sun', now the Red Cow, at the east end of the road, was present until 1799.
- 2.2.11 During the 19th century, construction of three railway lines to Harpenden assisted its growth and suburbanisation. The town's expansion was further enabled by the selling of the Packe and Pym estate in 1882.
- 2.2.12 In 1928, Sun Lane was widened as part of traffic alleviation measures and as a work creation programme. This scheme resulted in the demolition of buildings on Sun Lane and the partial demolition of numbers 71–73 High Street. Numbers 6, 8, 10 and 12 Sun Lane were constructed following this widening.
- 2.2.13 Subsequent mid to late 20th-century development in the area included construction of Tollgate House between 2 Sun Lane and the buildings of the High Street frontage.
- 2.2.14 The latest building to occupy 2 Sun Lane was a pair of semi-detached houses in the central north part of the site. No part of this structure was standing when the archaeological work began.

2.3 Archaeological Investigation

- 2.3.1 There have been no archaeological investigations at the site itself. Those within the wider area have comprised the building recording of air raid shelters at Bowers Parade and Leyton Green (HHER EHT5608–9) and the Post Office (HHER EHT7373).

3.0 ARCHAEOLOGICAL METHODOLOGY

3.1 Fieldwork Methodology

- 3.1.1 The watching brief was undertaken by an ASE archaeologist, monitoring construction groundworks that had the potential to expose, damage or destroy any archaeological remains that might be present.
- 3.1.2 A Risk Assessment and Method Statement (RAMS) (ASE 2017) was prepared prior to commencement of the work.
- 3.1.3 The fieldwork monitored all groundworks deeper than the thickness of the topsoil and subsoil (c.0.6m). These consisted of a hole for a soak-away and the foundation trenches for the new block of flats (Fig. 2). The holes were dug by a large tracked excavator equipped with a broad toothless ditching bucket.
- 3.1.4 The hole for the soakaway was vertical-sided, measuring 3.6m wide and 4m long. Its monitoring ceased when the natural deposits were encountered.
- 3.1.5 The foundation trenches were vertical-sided, measuring 1.6m wide and 1.10m deep. The machine excavation of the foundation trenches for the west half of the block of flats was monitored; however, ASE was not given the opportunity to monitor the subsequent excavation of the foundation trenches for the east half of the flats (Fig. 2).
- 3.1.6 Standard ASE excavation, artefact collection and recording methodologies were employed throughout. All work was undertaken in accordance with the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists (CIfA) *Code of Conduct* (CIfA 2014a) and the *Standard and Guidance for an Archaeological Watching Brief* (CIfA 2014b). ASE is a Registered Archaeological Organisation with the CIfA.
- 3.1.7 Written records were produced on *pro forma* context record sheets and plans and sections were drawn at appropriate scales.
- 3.1.8 A full digital photographic record of the soak-away and foundation trenches was compiled, which also included working shots to represent more generally the nature of the site and fieldwork.
- 3.1.9 No archaeological finds were recovered nor environmental soil samples collected during the monitoring works.

3.2 Fieldwork Constraints

- 3.2.1 No archaeological investigations were undertaken elsewhere within the site, as no other construction groundworks penetrated below the topsoil and subsoil overburden layers.

3.3 Site Archive

- 3.3.1 The site archive is currently held at the offices of Archaeology South-East and will be deposited with the St Albans Museum Service in due course. The contents of the site archive are tabulated in Tables 1 and 2 below.

Context sheets	3
Section sheets	0
Plans sheets	1
Colour photographs	0
B&W photos	0
Digital photos	30
Context register	0
Drawing register	0
Watching brief forms	3
Trench Record forms	0

Table 1: Quantification of site paper archive

Bulk finds (quantity e.g. 1 bag, 1 box, 0.5 box 0.5 of a box)	0
Registered finds (number of)	0
Flots and environmental remains from bulk samples	0
Palaeoenvironmental specialists sample samples (e.g. columns, prepared slides)	0
Waterlogged wood	0
Wet sieved environmental remains from bulk samples	0

Table 2: Quantification of artefact and environmental samples

4.0 RESULTS

4.1 Summary

- 4.1.1 The monitored machine-cut soak-away measured 3.60m by 40m and was excavated down to the surface of the natural deposits.
- 4.1.2 The monitored machine-cut foundation trenches varied in width from 0.40m to 1.60m and were generally 1.10m in depth. The machine excavation of the foundation trenches for the west half of the block of flats was monitored; however, ASE was not given the opportunity to monitor the subsequent excavation of the foundation trenches for the east half of the flats
- 4.1.3 The observation of groundworks for the soakaway and the building foundations identified no archaeological features or artefacts, or remains of the semi-detached houses that formerly occupied the site.

4.2 Deposit Sequence

- 4.2.1 Deposit sequences were consistent across the monitored area. The groundwork for the soakaway exposed a straightforward stratigraphic sequence of topsoil [01], and where present subsoil [02], overlying natural strata [03] (Table 3).
- 4.2.2 The topsoil encountered across the site consisted of dark grey friable sandy silt clay [01]. It was c.0.40–0.6m thick and had infrequent small gravel stones.
- 4.2.3 A thin layer of subsoil [02] underlying the topsoil was encountered in the central-south part of the site during the archaeological investigation. Measuring c.0.20m thick, it consisted of slightly grey/brownish orange friable silty clay with infrequent small gravel stones.

4.2 Monitoring of the Groundworks

- 4.2.1 The excavation of the soak-away uncovered undisturbed natural deposits [03] beneath 0.4m of topsoil [01] and 0.2m of subsoil [02].
- 4.2.2 The excavation of the foundation trenches for the block of flats revealed 0.60m of topsoil [01] directly overlying natural deposits [03].
- 4.2.3 The exposed surface of the natural deposit comprised brownish orange sandy clay with pebbles and chalk fragments. In the observed foundation trenches, this graded down into pale brownish white sandy silt (presumably overlying chalk bedrock?).
- 4.2.4 No archaeological features or deposits were revealed during the monitoring of these groundworks.
- 4.2.5 Within the area of the soak-away, topsoil [01] was found to contain a small amount of post-medieval/modern artefacts, including ceramic building material, glass, iron and plastic. No other artefacts were retrieved during the course of the works, nor were environmental soil sample collected.

Context	Type	Interpretation	Max. Length m	Max. Width m	Deposit Thickness m
01	Layer	Topsoil	Site	Site	0.40-0.60
02	Layer	Subsoil	Site	Site	0.20
03	Layer	Natural	Site	Site	-

Table 3: List of recorded contexts

5.0 FINDS AND ENVIRONMENTAL SAMPLES

5.1 Summary

- 5.1.1 The monitoring of the groundworks revealed no finds other than infrequent pieces of modern glass, iron scrap, pieces of plastic and post-medieval/modern ceramic building material; all of which were present within topsoil [01].
- 5.1.2 None of these objects were retained for analysis.
- 5.1.3 No bulk samples for environmental analysis were collected as part of the archaeological monitoring work, as no pre-modern deposits were encountered other than the natural.

6.0 DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

6.1 Overview of stratigraphic sequence

- 6.1.1 A straightforward stratigraphic sequence was observed across the site, comprising topsoil (0.40m thick) and subsoil (0.20m thick) deposits overlying the natural strata. On average, the natural deposits were encountered c.0.60m below ground level
- 6.1.2 The monitored groundwork revealed no archaeological features, although this is perhaps due to its small extent.

6.2 Deposit survival and existing impacts

- 6.2.1 The fieldwork revealed no clear evidence for truncation, layered stratigraphy, previous groundwork or remains of the previous semi-detached houses, possibly due to small scope and size of the monitored areas.

6.3 Potential impact on archaeological remains

- 6.3.1 If archaeological features exist within the un-investigated parts of the site, then they most likely were cut into the natural deposits and lie beneath c.0.6m of topsoil and subsoil.

6.4 Consideration of research aims

- 6.4.1 The results of the watching brief have no potential to contribute to the pursuit of any of the specific aims listed in section 1.4, as no archaeological features, deposits or finds have been discovered.

6.5 Conclusions

- 6.6.1 The monitoring of groundworks at No. 2 Sun Lane has revealed no archaeological pre-modern layers, features or finds. It is likely that no significant remains were present in the wider site.

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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Appendix 1: HER Summary

Site name and address: 2 Sun Lane, Harpenden, Hertfordshire, AL5 4ET		
County: Hertfordshire	District: St Albans	
Village/Town: Harpenden	Parish: Harpenden	
Planning application reference: 5/2016/3754		
HER Enquiry reference: None		
Funding source: Client		
Nature of application: Urban residential development		
Present land use: Vacant land previously developed		
Size of application area: 720sq m	Size of area investigated: c.56sq m	
NGR (to 8 figures minimum): TL 13333 14584		
Site code (if applicable): SWH17		
Site director/Organization: Mark Germany, Archaeology South-East		
Type of work: Watching brief		
Date of work:	Start: 02/10/17	Finish: 12/10/17
Location of finds & site archive/Curating museum: St Albans Museum Service		
Related HER Nos: None	Periods represented: Modern	
Relevant previous summaries/reports: None		
Summary of fieldwork results:		
<p>Archaeology South-East monitored groundworks for the construction of a soak-away and a block of flats at 2 Sun Lane, Harpenden in October 2017.</p> <p>The watching brief monitored the excavation of a large hole for a soakaway and foundation trenches for a small block of flats. Other site groundworks were not monitored because these did not penetrate below the observed overburden deposits.</p> <p>The soakaway and foundation trenches revealed no pre-modern deposits, features or finds.</p>		
Author of summary: Mark Germany	Date of summary: March 2018	

Appendix 2: OASIS ID**OASIS ID: 301284****Project details**

Project name	2 Sun Lane, Harpenden, Hertfordshire
Short description of the project	Archaeological monitoring of groundwork for construction of a soakaway and a block of flats revealed occasional modern artefacts in the topsoil, but no pre-modern archaeological features or finds.
Project dates	Start: 02-10-2017 End: 12-10-2017
Previous/future work	No / No
Any associated project reference codes	SWH17 - Sitecode
Any associated project reference codes	170353 - Contracting Unit No.
Type of project	Field evaluation
Site status	None
Current Land use	Vacant Land 1 - Vacant land previously developed
Significant Finds	NONE None
Methods & techniques	"Visual Inspection"
Development type	Urban residential (e.g. flats, houses, etc.)
Prompt	Direction from Local Planning Authority - Direction 4
Position in the planning process	After full determination (eg. As a condition)

Project location

Country	England
Site location	HERTFORDSHIRE ST ALBANS HARPENDEN 2 Sun Lane, Harpenden
Postcode	AL5 4ET
Study area	720 Square metres
Site coordinates	TL 13333 14584 51.817921086327 -0.355582529445 51 49 04 N 000 21 20 W Point

Project creators

Name of Organisation	Archaeology South East
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Project brief originator	St Albans City and District Council District Archaeologist
Project design originator	ASE
Project director/manager	Andy Leonard
Project supervisor	Mark Germany
Type of sponsor/funding body	Client

Project archives

Physical Archive Exists?	No
Physical Archive recipient	St Albans (Verulamium) museum
Digital Archive recipient	St Albans (Verulamium) museum
Digital Media available	"Images raster / digital photography","Text"
Paper Archive recipient	St Albans (Verulamium) museum
Paper Media available	"Context sheet","Drawing","Photograph","Plan","Report"

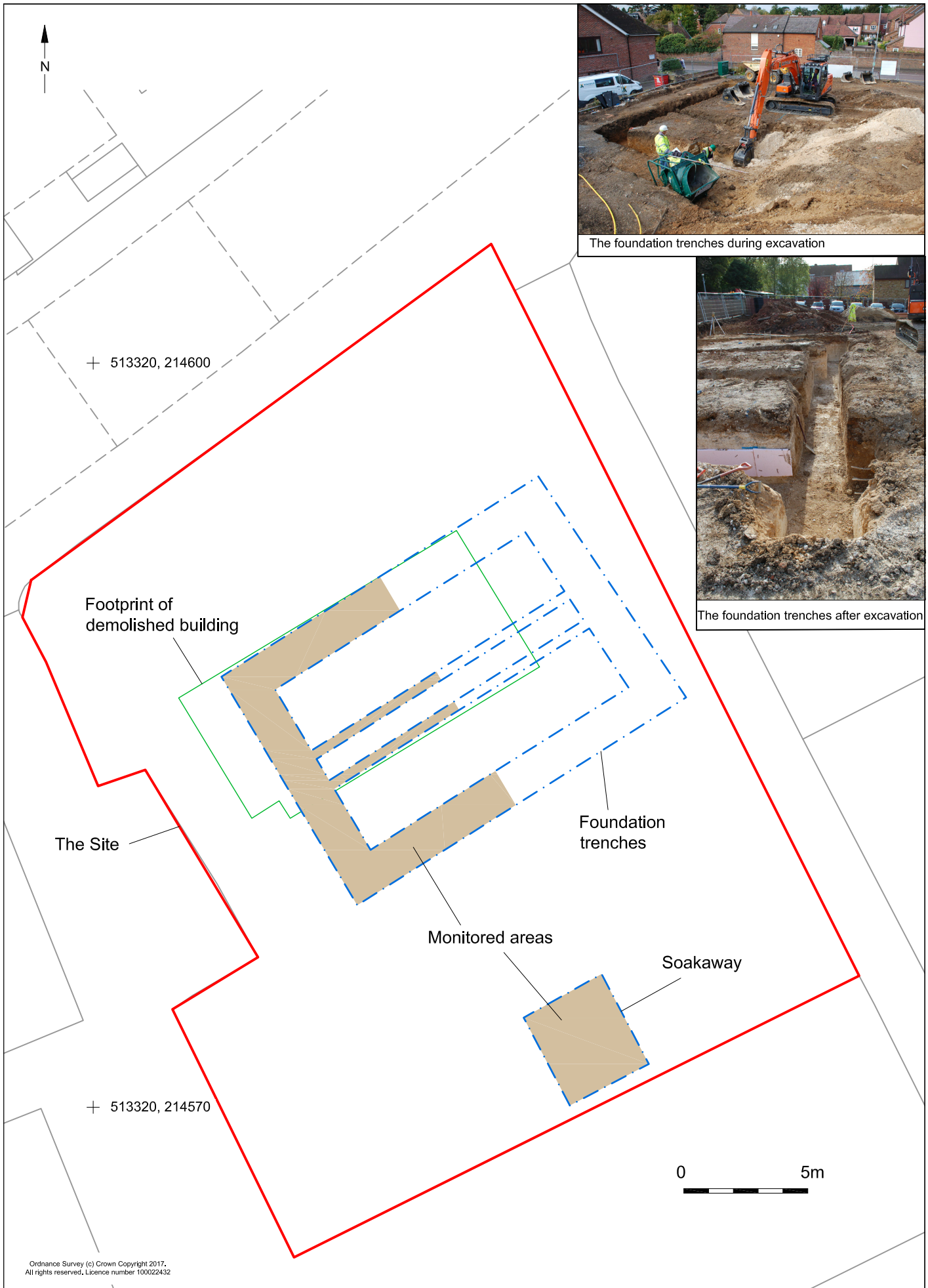
Project bibliography 1

Publication type	Grey literature (unpublished document/manuscript)
Title	Archaeological watching brief. 2 Sun Lane, Harpenden, Hertfordshire
Author(s)/Editor(s)	Germany, M.
Other bibliographic details	ASE rep. 2017481
Date	2017
Issuer or publisher	Archaeology South-East
Place of issue or publication	Witham
Description	A4. 17 pages of text. 3 tables. 2 illustrations



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© Archaeology South-East		2 Sun Lane, Harpenden, Herts		Fig. 1
Project Ref: 170353	Feb 2018	Site location		
Report No: 2018076	Drawn by: APL			



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© Archaeology South-East		2 Sun Lane, Harpenden, Herts	Fig.2
Project Ref: 170353	Feb 2017	Location of monitored areas	
Report Ref: 2018076	Drawn by: APL		

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