

# 1 HIGH STREET, RICKMANSWORTH, HERTFORDSHIRE

## ARCHAEOLOGICAL MONITORING AND RECORDING

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NGR: TQ 0628 9470	Report No. 3871
District: Three Rivers	Site Code: AS1414
Approved: Claire Halpin MIFA	Project No. P4092
Signed:	Date: July 2011

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IN PEOPLE** | Bronze

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**OASIS SUMMARY SHEET**

<b>Project details</b>			
<b>Project name</b>		<i>1 High Street, Rickmansworth, Hertfordshire</i>	
<p><i>Between May and July 2011 Archaeological Solutions (AS) carried out an archaeological monitoring and recording at the site at No 1 High Street, Rickmansworth, Hertfordshire (NGR TQ 0628 9470). The monitoring was commissioned by Oakford Homes in compliance with a planning condition attached to planning permission for the construction of a single four-storey residential block.</i></p> <p><i>The site is situated in the Lea valley, to the SW of the centre of Stanstead St Margarets. It lies adjacent to an Area of Archaeological Significance, which identifies the medieval settlement of Rickmansworth. The site had a potential for medieval and post-medieval archaeological remains.</i></p> <p><i>In the event the monitoring revealed no archaeological features or finds.</i></p>			
Project dates (fieldwork)		<i>23-24/05, 24/06, 01 and 12/07/2011</i>	
Previous work (Y/N/?)		<i>N</i>	Future work (Y/N/?)
P. number		<i>4092</i>	Site code
Type of project		<i>Archaeological Monitoring and Recording</i>	
Site status		<i>-</i>	
Current land use		<i>Not occupied</i>	
Planned development		<i>New residential block</i>	
Main features (+dates)		<i>-</i>	
Significant finds (+dates)		<i>-</i>	
<b>Project location</b>			
County/ District/ Parish		<i>Hertfordshire</i>	<i>Three Rivers</i>
HER/ SMR for area		<i>Hertfordshire HER</i>	
Post code (if known)		<i>WD3 1ET</i>	
Area of site		<i>c. 80m<sup>2</sup></i>	
NGR		<i>TQ 0628 9470</i>	
Height AOD (min/max)		<i>c. 49m AOD</i>	
<b>Project creators</b>			
Brief issued by		<i>HCC HEU</i>	
Project supervisor/s (PO)		<i>Zbigniew Pozorski</i>	
Funded by		<i>Oakford Homes</i>	
Full title		<i>1 High Street, Rickmansworth, Hertfordshire. Archaeological Monitoring and Recording</i>	
Authors		<i>Pozorski, Z.</i>	
Report no.		<i>3871</i>	
Date (of report)		<i>July 2011</i>	

# 1 HIGH STREET, RICKMANSWORTH, HERTFORDSHIRE

## ARCHAEOLOGICAL MONITORING AND RECORDING

### SUMMARY

*Between May and July 2011 Archaeological Solutions (AS) carried out an archaeological monitoring and recording at the site at No 1 High Street, Rickmansworth, Hertfordshire (NGR TQ 0628 9470). The monitoring was commissioned by Oakford Homes in compliance with a planning condition attached to planning permission for the construction of a single four-storey residential block.*

*The site is situated in the Lea valley, to the SW of the centre of Stanstead St Margarets. It lies adjacent to an Area of Archaeological Significance, which identifies the medieval settlement of Rickmansworth. The site had a potential for medieval and post-medieval archaeological remains.*

*In the event the monitoring revealed no archaeological features or finds.*

### 1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Between May and July 2011 Archaeological Solutions (AS) carried out an archaeological monitoring and recording at the site at No 1 High Street, Rickmansworth, Hertfordshire (NGR TQ 0628 9470; Figs. 1 & 2). The monitoring was commissioned by Oakford Homes in compliance with a planning condition attached to planning permission for the construction of a single four-storey residential block (Three Rivers District Council Planning Ref. 08/1479/FUL).

1.2 The monitoring was undertaken in accordance with an advice issued by Hertfordshire County Council Historic Environment Unit (HCC HEU; dated 20/09/2010), and a written scheme of investigation (specification) prepared by AS (dated 21/09/2010), and approved by HCC HEU. The project conformed to the Institute for Archaeologists (IfA) *Code of Conduct and Standard and Guidance for An Archaeological Watching Brief* (revised 2008), as well as the document *Standards for Field Archaeology in the East of England* (Gurney 2003).

1.3 The objectives of the project of archaeological monitoring and recording were:

- The investigation and recording of any surviving archaeological remains within the area of the new development in accordance with the requirements of the HCC HEU advice;

- The analysis, conservation and long-term storage of any artefactual/ecofactual material recovered from the site in appropriate conditions;
- The provision of an adequately detailed project report that will place the findings of the monitoring and recording of the development programme in their local and regional context, having made reference to the relevant regional research agendas and through cartographic, documentary and other research;
- The full analysis and interpretation of the site archive in order to promote local and regional research, and the appropriate.

### *Planning policy context*

1.4 Planning Policy Statement 5 (PPS5; 2010) states that those parts of the historic environment that have significance because of their historic, archaeological, architectural or artistic interest are heritage assets. The Planning Policy Statement aims to deliver sustainable development by ensuring that policies and decisions that concern the historic environment recognise that heritage assets are a non-renewable resource, take account of the wider social, cultural, economic and environmental benefits of heritage conservation, and recognise that intelligently managed change may sometimes be necessary if heritage assets are to be maintained for the long term. It aims to conserve England's heritage assets in a manner appropriate to their significance. It states that opportunities to capture evidence from the historic environment and to contribute to our knowledge and understanding of our past, and to make this publicly available, should be taken, particularly where a heritage asset is to be lost.

## **2 DESCRIPTION OF THE SITE**

2.1 Rickmansworth is located on an area of hilly ground between the rivers Chess and Colne (Fig. 1). The historic core of Rickmansworth is centered on High Street and Church Street. At the far eastern end of the town High Street turns northwards before being crossed by the railway and terminating at a junction with the A404. The site is located on the eastern side of the street, at its very end adjacent to the railway. It comprises rectangular plot of land currently not occupied by any standing structure.

## **3 TOPOGRAPHY, GEOLOGY AND SOILS**

3.1 Rickmansworth sits on a solid plateau and river terrace drift (sands gravels and clays), which is overlain by soil of the Marlow association, well-drained fine loamy over clayey and clayey soils (Soil Survey of England and Wales 1983). This type of soil is prone to slight seasonal waterlogging. Peat and alluvium deposits are present on land closer to the river Colne to the south. The underlying geology of the site comprises head Upper Chalk (British

Geological Survey 1978). The site is located on relatively flat land and at c. 49m AOD.

## 4 ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

### *Prehistoric*

4.1 There is evidence that the area now occupied by the town of Rickmansworth and its surrounding countryside has been inhabited by people since the later Palaeolithic period ((10,000 B.C.) (Munby 1977)). Mesolithic (8,000 – 4,000 B.C.) and Neolithic (4,500 – 2,500 B.C.) flint tools have been retrieved in the parish although finds have tended to occur outside the town rather than within the present urban area itself (Seddon 1999). An evaluation at Town Wharf in 1995 (Zeepvat 1995) revealed struck and burnt flints. There have been fewer archaeological finds dating from the Iron Age (700 B.C. – 100 B.C.) but extensive evidence of occupation reappears later from around A.D. 40 – A.D. 70. There are numerous examples of Roman estates in the countryside surrounding the town, although again none have been discovered within the present urban area. There has been speculation that the lower parts of the town near the rivers may have been too marshy for cultivation by Roman farmers.

### *Romano-British*

4.2 The Colne and Chess valleys were seemingly relatively well populated in the Romano-British period, with a number of villa estates, industrial sites and other settlements. However, only sparse Roman remains are recorded close to the assessment site and none have been discovered within the present urban area. There has been speculation that the lower parts of the town near the rivers may have been too marshy for cultivation by Roman farmers.

### *Anglo-Saxon and medieval*

4.3 Although it is thought that King Offa granted the manor of Rickmansworth to the abbey of St Albans in the eighth century A.D., the earliest reliable proof of the town's existence comes from the Domesday Book of 1086. This described "Prichemareworde" as a manor with 45 inhabitants having rights of fishing, common and pasture. The settlement also had a water mill, 20 ploughs and pannage for 1,200 pigs. However, little is known about the medieval form of the settlement, though it likely to have been focussed on the High Street/Church Street and church. The town was recorded as *Rykemersworye*, *Rykesmaresworth* and as *Rickmersworth* in the 13<sup>th</sup> century and as Rickmansworth by the 16<sup>th</sup> century (Page 1908).

4.4 The manor and church of Rickmansworth both came under the ownership of the abbey of St. Albans, an arrangement confirmed by Pope Honorius III in 1219 and continued until the dissolution of the monasteries under Henry VIII in the 1530s. During the Peasants' Revolt of 1381 the people

of Rickmansworth played an active role by extracting a charter of liberties by force from the abbot. This extended the inhabitants' rights to fish and make use of common land while also giving them greater freedom to sell land should they wish to do so (Page 1908).

### *Post-medieval and modern*

4.5 Rickmansworth was chartered in 1542, under the reign of Henry VIII, at around which time a large timber-framed market-house was constructed in the High Street. The town was granted a licence to have a market on Saturdays and an annual fair at the feast of the Assumption. This market building was demolished in 1805, and a new one was built nearby three years later. However, the railway encouraged trade in nearby Watford as opposed to Rickmansworth, the market closing as a result of various factors, stiff competition being the main cause. This market house was pulled down in 1868, on the site of which the present day Town Hall was built (Page 1908).

4.6 A silk mill appeared in the High Street towards the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> or early 19<sup>th</sup> century (Munby 1977). It was described in 1808 as having been recently built (Page 1908, 373). Printing and paper-making were also important local industries, as well as brewing, straw plaiting and later, materials manufacturing.

4.7 The transport network proved to be the key to growth in the area. Located on the route of two 18<sup>th</sup> century turnpike roads (Hatfield to Reading Trust and Pinner Trust), Rickmansworth contained a number of coaching inns. The Grand Junction Canal was opened in 1796 and a number of small branches dug to serve businesses in the town. The canal was used for gravel removal from the large pits (now lakes) nearby and also served the Rickmansworth Gas Company and breweries in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. The first railway arrived in 1862, linking Watford Junction and Church Street. This spurred development of a goods yard and terraced housing around the station, which closed in 1952-4. The Metropolitan Line arrived in 1887, and is still present. A Brewery is shown on the site on the 1873 1st edition Ordnance Survey map. By 1898 the site has been enclosed to the north by the embankment for the new railway line.

## **5 METHODOLOGY**

5.1 The principal elements monitored were the below ground demolition of the former buildings (removal of concrete floor slabs and grubbing out previous foundations). On advice from HCC HEU, this was followed by the monitoring of mechanically-excavated foundation trenches for the new block (Fig. 3). A new service trench located in the west/central part of the site was also monitored.

5.2. The archaeological monitoring comprised the observation of the groundworks, the inspection of the subsoil and natural deposits for archaeological features and the examination of spoil heaps and the recording

of soil profiles. Archaeological features and deposits were recorded using *pro-forma* recording sheets, drawn to scale and photographed as appropriate. Excavated spoil was checked for finds and the excavated area was scanned by metal detector.

## 6 DESCRIPTION OF RESULTS

6.1 Deposits located within the area of excavation were recorded in sample sections shown below.

<i>S/central foundation trench. Sample section 1, facing W (DP 10)</i> <i>0.00 = 48.47m AOD</i>		
0.00 – 1.30m	L1000	Made ground. Light reddish brown, loose, sand with frequent CBM fragments and rubbish.
1.30m+	L1001	?Made ground. Mid yellow, compact, silty clay with occasional CBM fragments.

<i>W/central foundation trench. Sample section 2, facing W (DP 11)</i> <i>0.00 = 48.37m AOD</i>		
0.00 – 0.38m	L1002	Mid to dark grey, loose, concrete rubble with sand.
0.38 – 1.30m	L1000	Made ground. As above.
1.30m+	L1001	?Made ground. As above.

<i>S foundation trench. Sample section 3, facing N (DP 12)</i> <i>0.00 = 48.58m AOD</i>		
0.00 – 0.64m	L1000	Made ground. As above.
0.64m+	L1001	?Made ground. Dark greyish brown, compact, sandy silt with moderate gravel and occasional CBM fragments.

*Description:* The site was commonly overlain by Made Ground L1000, a modern deposit consisted of demolition CBM fragments, sand and rubbish. It varied 0.60 – 1.50m in depth. This deposit was also a backfill of the area between foundations of the former building which were a subject to removal. L1000 overlay earlier deposits of stiff made ground, L1001 and L1003. The natural geology was not encountered.

No archaeological features or finds were present.

## 7 CONFIDENCE RATING

7.1 It is not felt that any factors inhibited the recognition of archaeological features or finds during the programme of archaeological monitoring and recording.



## 8 DISCUSSION

8.1 The site had a potential for archaeological remains, in particular for the medieval and post-medieval archaeology. Such remains could relate to the historic core of Rickmansworth located just to the south-west of the site.

8.2 The site stratigraphy was characterised by substantial modern disturbance, related to the construction and usage of the modern building, and recently demolished prior to the new development. The earliest layer may have been represented by deposit of ?made ground, L1003, recorded in the south-west corner of the site. A bottle from the local Rickmansworth Brewery was found within the upper levels of L1003 suggesting a late 19<sup>th</sup> – early 20<sup>th</sup> century date for the deposit.

## 9 DEPOSITION OF THE ARCHIVE

9.1 Archive records, with an inventory, will be deposited with any donated finds from the site at Three Rivers Museum. The archive will be quantified, ordered, indexed, cross-referenced and checked for internal consistency

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Archaeological Solutions would like to thank Messrs Peter Gray and Stuart Greenwood of Oakford Homes for commissioning the project and for their assistance.

AS would also like to acknowledge the input and advice of Mr Andy Instone of Hertfordshire County Council Historic Environment Unit.

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## APPENDIX 1      CONTENTS OF THE ARCHIVE

<b>Records</b>	<b>Number</b>
Brief	N
Specification	Y
Registers	3 (Context, Drawing, Digital Photo)
Context Sheets	4
Site drawings A1	0
Site drawings A3	0
Site drawings A4	1
Site photographs b/w	0
Site photographs colour slides	0
Digital Photographs	28

## APPENDIX 2 HER SUMMARY SHEET

<b>Site name and address:</b>	1 High Street, Rickmansworth, Hertfordshire
<b>County:</b> Hertfordshire	<b>District:</b> Three Rivers
<b>Village/Town:</b>	<b>Parish:</b> Rickmansworth
<b>Planning application reference:</b>	Three Rivers District Council Planning Ref. 08/1479/FUL
<b>Client name/address/tel:</b>	Peter Gray of Oakford Homes
<b>Nature of application:</b>	Construction of a residential block
<b>Present land use:</b>	Not occupied land
<b>Size of application area:</b> c. 2500m <sup>2</sup>	<b>Size of area investigated</b> c. 600m <sup>2</sup>
<b>NGR (8 figures):</b>	TQ 0628 9470
<b>Site Code:</b>	AS 1414
<b>Site director/Organization:</b>	Archaeological Solutions Ltd
<b>Type of work:</b>	Archaeological monitoring and recording
<b>Date of work:</b>	23-24/05, 24/06, 01 and 12/07/2011
<b>Location of finds/Curating museum:</b>	Three Rivers
<b>Related SMR Nos:</b>	<b>Periods represented:</b> None
<b>Relevant previous summaries/reports:</b> -	-
<b>Summary of fieldwork results:</b>	<p>Between May and July 2011 Archaeological Solutions (AS) carried out an archaeological monitoring and recording at the site at No 1 High Street, Rickmansworth, Hertfordshire (NGR TQ 0628 9470). The monitoring was commissioned by Oakford Homes in compliance with a planning condition attached to planning permission for the construction of a single four-storey residential block.</p> <p>The site is situated in the Lea valley, to the SW of the centre of Stanstead St Margarets. It lies adjacent to an Area of Archaeological Significance, which identifies the medieval settlement of Rickmansworth. The site had a potential for medieval and post-medieval archaeological remains.</p> <p>In the event the monitoring revealed no archaeological features or finds.</p>
<b>Author of summary:</b> Z Pozorski	<b>Date of Summary:</b> July 2011

## PHOTOGRAPHIC INDEX



DP 1. 1 High Street, Rickmansworth. View SE.



DP 2. The site. View SW.



DP 3. Removal of existing paving and foundations. View ENE.



DP 4. W part of the site. View S.



DP 5. The site during removal of existing paving and foundations. View E.



DP 6. NW corner of the site. View W.



DP 7. S foundation trench. View W.



DP 8. SW corner of the site. View WNW.



DP 9. W foundation trench. View SW.



DP 10. S/central foundation trench. Sample section 1. View E.



DP 11. W/central foundation trench. Sample section 2. View E.



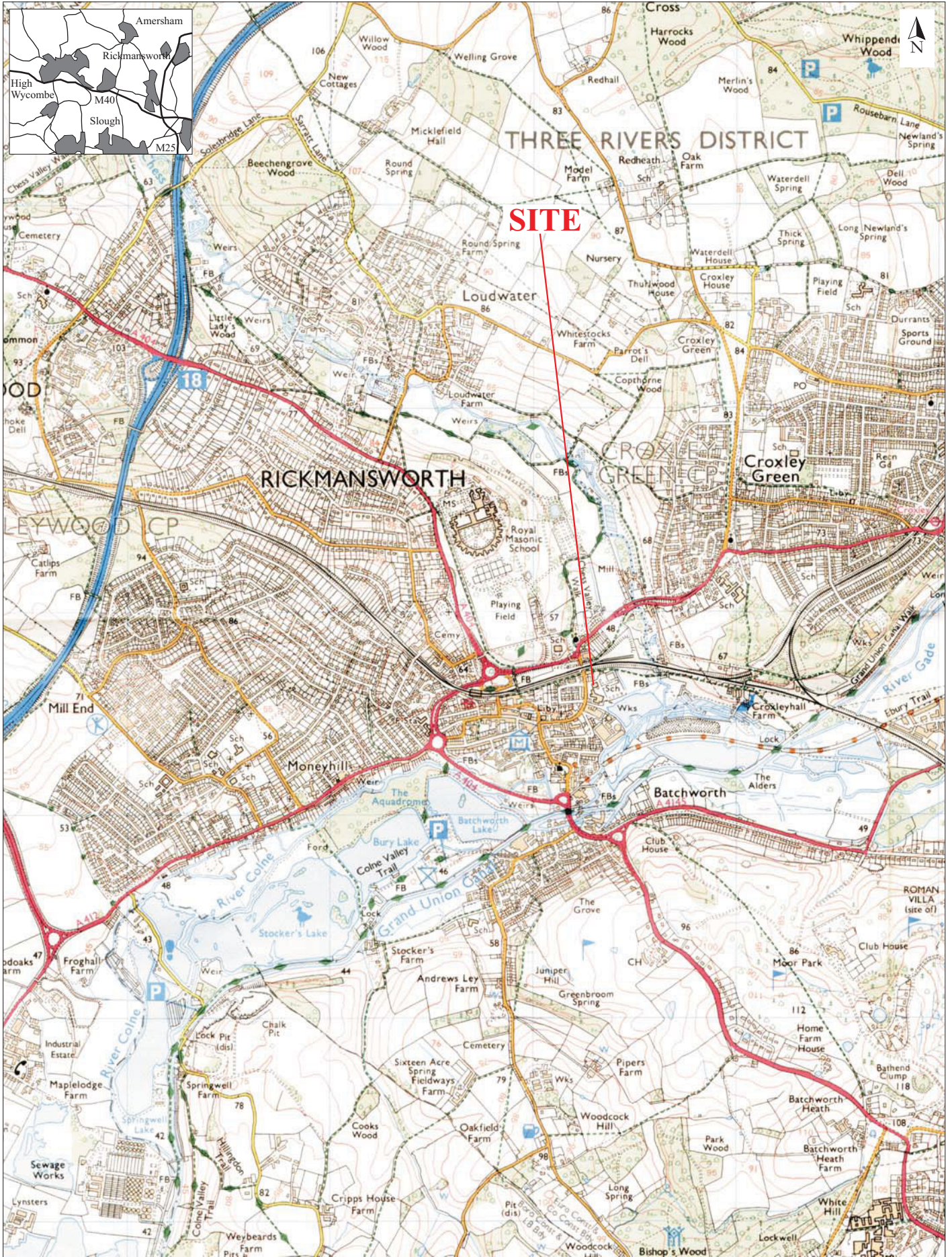
DP 12. S foundation trench. Sample section 3. View S.



DP 13. N foundation trench. View W.



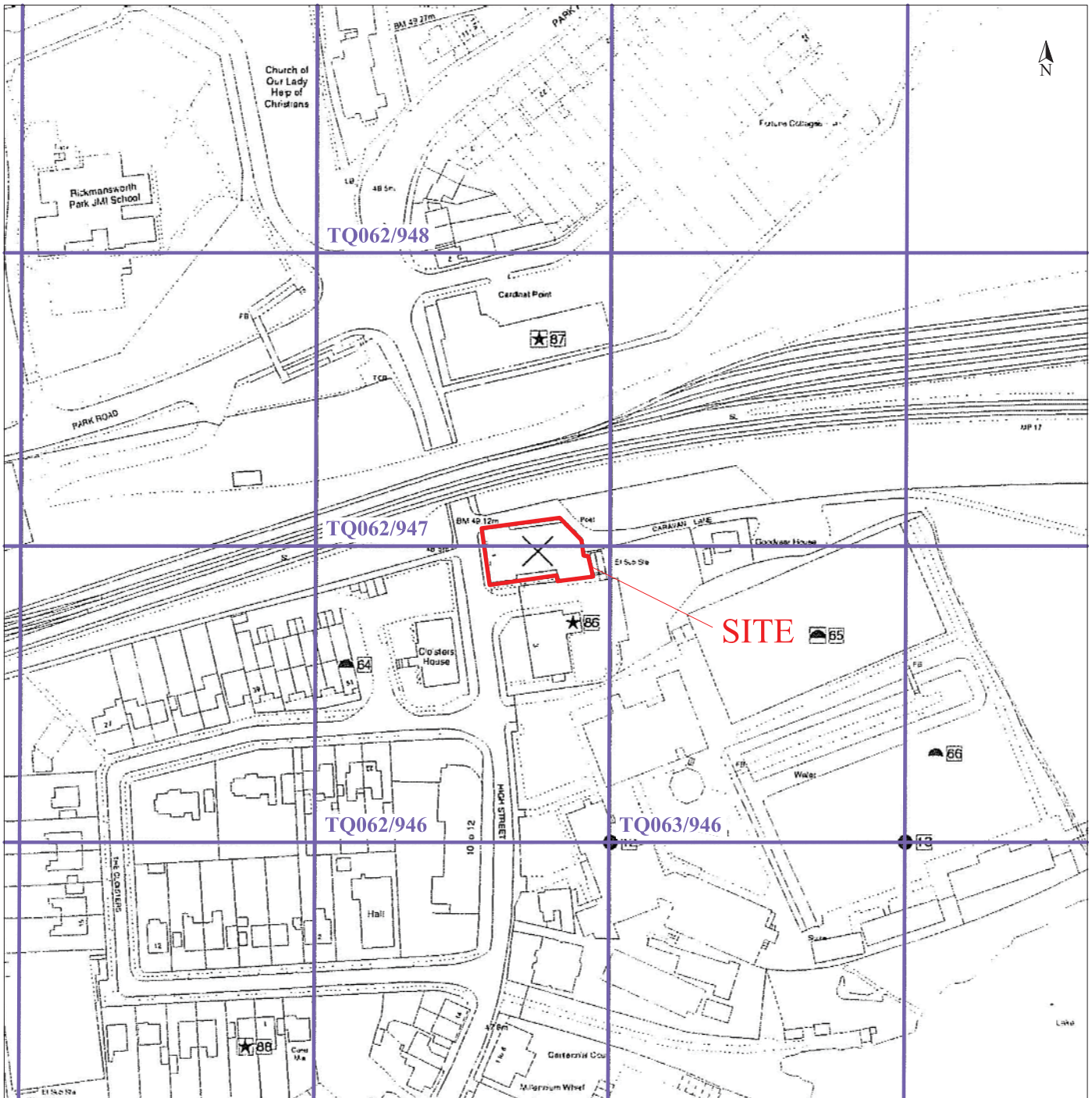
DP 14. Service trench to the NE of proposed block. View NE.



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**Fig. 1 Site location plan**  
 Scale 1:25,000

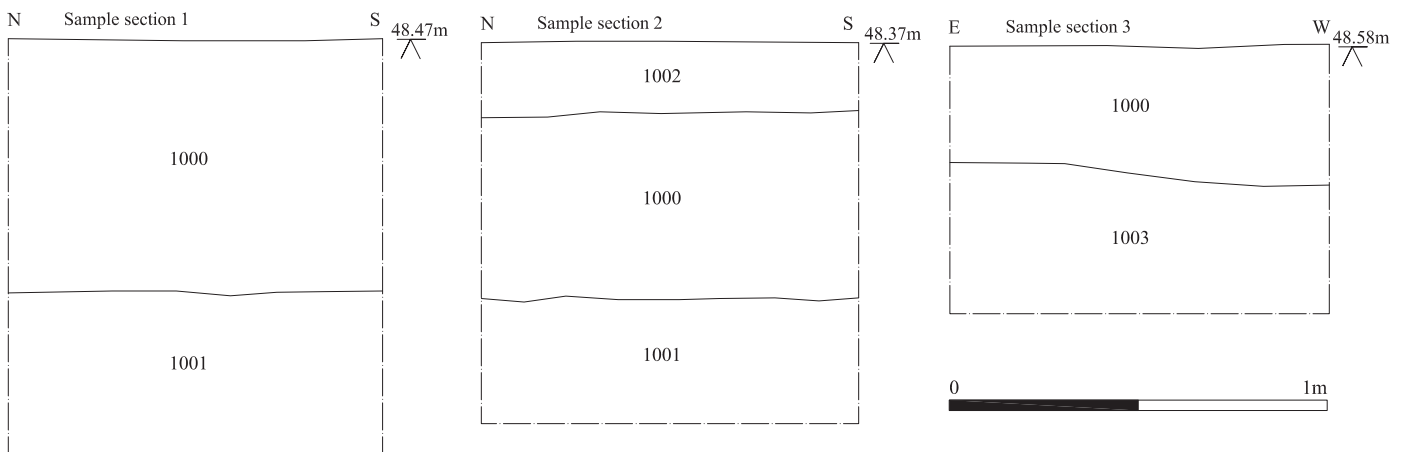
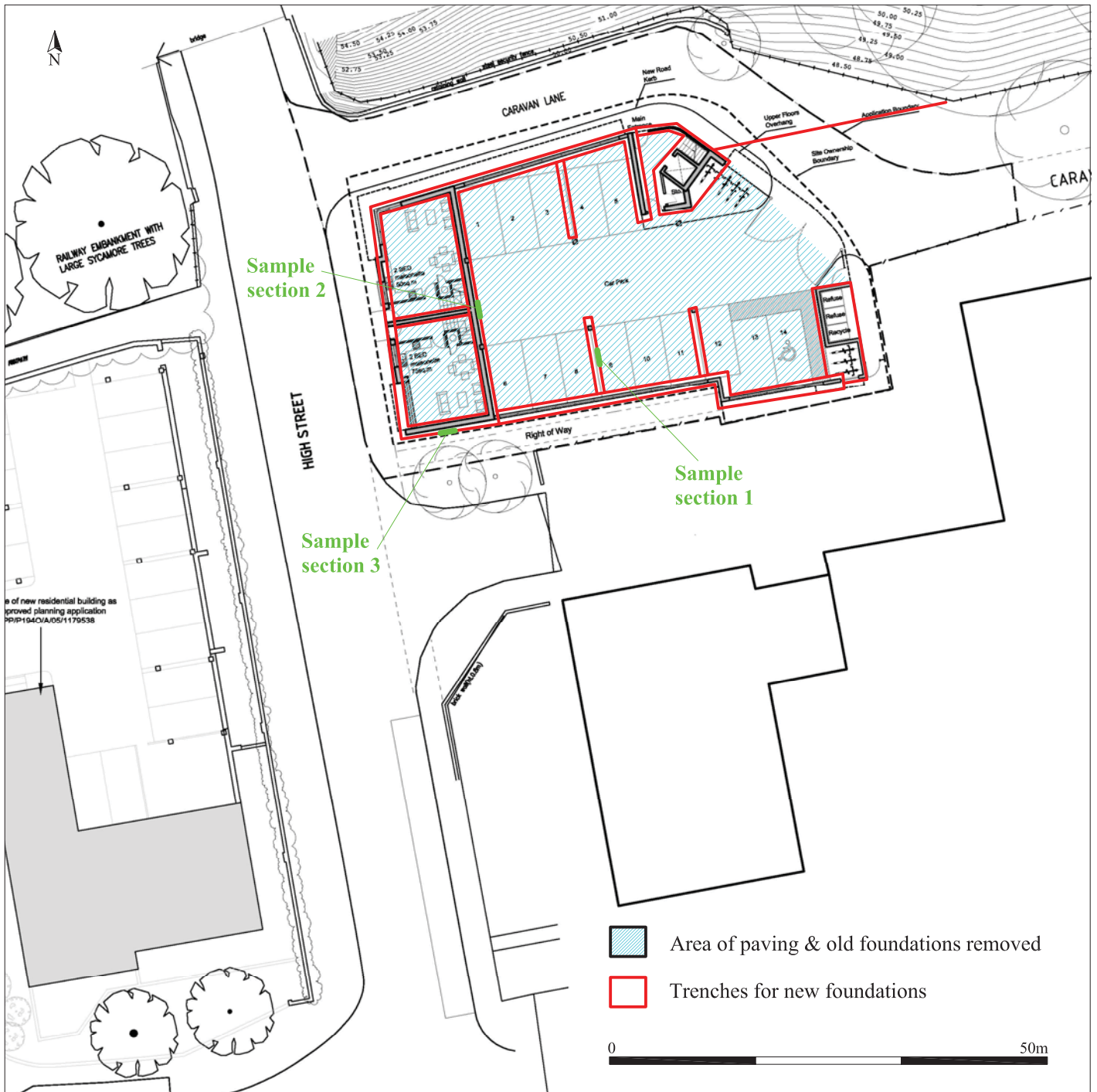




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0 150m

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**Fig. 2 Detailed site location plan**  
 Scale 1:2000 at A4



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**Fig. 3 Area of monitoring**  
 Scale Plan 1:400, sections 1:50 at A4