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**ARCHAEOLOGICAL SOLUTIONS LTD**

**LAND ADJACENT TO VER LODGE, 9 PONDWICKS CLOSE,  
ST ALBANS, HERTFORDSHIRE**

**ARCHAEOLOGICAL MONITORING & RECORDING**

Authors: Zbigniew Pozorski	
NGR: TL 1434 0678	Report No: 4434
District: St Albans	Site Code: PCL 12
Approved: Claire Halpin	Project No: 4874
Signed:	Date: 14 October 2013

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**OASIS SUMMARY SHEET**

<b>Project details</b>			
<b>Project name</b>	<i>Site adjacent to Ver Lodge, 9 Pondwicks Close, St Albans, Hertfordshire</i>		
<p><i>In August and September 2013 Archaeological Solutions (AS) carried out an archaeological monitoring and recording on a site adjacent to Ver Lodge, 9 Pondwicks Close, St Albans, Hertfordshire (NGR TL 1434 0678). The monitoring was commissioned by Mr Chris Meadows of Ver Lodge in compliance with a planning condition attached to planning permission for the construction of a new dwelling.</i></p> <p><i>The site is located within the south-western part of the centre of St Albans and is bounded to the south by River Ver. The northern part of the site lies within the Scheduled Ancient Monument of the Saxon/medieval St Albans abbey. The southern boundary of the Abbey was identified on the site in 1970s and confirmed in 2012. The site also had a potential for Romano-British archaeological remains as it is located close to the east of Roman city of Verulamium.</i></p> <p><i>In the event the monitoring revealed no archaeological features or finds excepting the foundations of the 1930s Ver Lodge building.</i></p>			
Project dates (fieldwork)	20/08 – 05/09/2013		
Previous work (Y/N/?)	Y	Future work (Y/N/?)	N
P. number	4874	Site code	PCL 12
Type of project	<i>An Archaeological Evaluation</i>		
Site status	<i>Within Scheduled Ancient Monument</i>		
Current land use	<i>Woodland/garden</i>		
Planned development	<i>New residential dwelling</i>		
Main features (+dates)	-		
Significant finds (+dates)	-		
<b>Project location</b>			
County/ District/ Parish	<i>Hertfordshire</i>	<i>St Albans</i>	<i>St Albans</i>
HER/ SMR for area	<i>Hertfordshire HER</i>		
Post code (if known)	<i>AL1 1DG</i>		
Area of site	<i>c. 7200m<sup>2</sup></i>		
NGR	<i>TL 1434 0678</i>		
Height AOD (min/max)	<i>77/80m</i>		
<b>Project creators</b>			
Brief issued by	<i>Requirements of SADC and EH</i>		
Project supervisor/s (PO)	<i>Zbigniew Pozorski, Andrew Newton</i>		
Funded by	<i>Mr Chris Meadows</i>		
Full title	<i>Site adjacent to Ver Lodge, 9 Pondwicks Close, St Albans, Hertfordshire. Archaeological Monitoring &amp; Recording</i>		
Authors	<i>Pozorski, Z.</i>		
Report no.	<i>4434</i>		
Date (of report)	<i>October 2013</i>		

# LAND ADJACENT TO VER LODGE, 9 PONDWICKS CLOSE, ST ALBANS, HERTFORDSHIRE

## ARCHAEOLOGICAL MONITORING & RECORDING

### SUMMARY

*In August and September 2013 Archaeological Solutions (AS) carried out an archaeological monitoring and recording on a site adjacent to Ver Lodge, 9 Pondwicks Close, St Albans, Hertfordshire (NGR TL 1434 0678). The monitoring was commissioned by Mr Chris Meadows of Ver Lodge in compliance with a planning condition attached to planning permission for the construction of a new dwelling.*

*The site is located within the south-western part of the centre of St Albans and is bounded to the south by River Ver. The northern part of the site lies within the Scheduled Ancient Monument of the Saxon/medieval St Albans abbey. The southern boundary of the Abbey was identified on the site in 1970s and confirmed in 2012. The site also had a potential for Romano-British archaeological remains as it is located close to the east of Roman city of Verulamium.*

*In the event the monitoring revealed no archaeological features or finds excepting the foundations of the 1930s Ver Lodge building.*

### 1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 In August and September 2013 Archaeological Solutions (AS) carried out an archaeological monitoring and recording on a site adjacent to Ver Lodge, 9 Pondwicks Close, St Albans, Hertfordshire (NGR TL 1434 0678; Figs. 1 & 2). The monitoring was commissioned by Mr Chris Meadows of Ver Lodge in compliance with a planning condition attached to planning permission for the construction of a new dwelling (St Albans Planning Ref. 5/12/0146).

1.2 The monitoring was undertaken in accordance to requirements of the St Albans City & District Council District Archaeologist (SADC) and English Heritage (EH), and a written scheme of investigation (specification) prepared by AS (dated 11/03/2013), and approved by SADC and EH. . The monitoring was carried out under an amendment to Scheduled Monument Consent (SAM), as the site lies within the SAM. The project conformed to the Institute for Archaeologists (IfA) *Code of Conduct and Standard and Guidance for An Archaeological Watching Brief* (revised 2008), and 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:

- to ensure the archaeological monitoring of all aspects of the development programme likely to affect buried archaeological remains;
- to secure the adequate recording of any archaeological remains revealed by the development programme; and
- to secure the analysis, interpretation, publication (if required), long-term conservation and storage of the project archive.

### *Planning policy context*

1.4 The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF 2012) states that those parts of the historic environment that have significance because of their historic, archaeological, architectural or artistic interest are heritage assets. The NPPF 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. The NPPF requires applications to describe the significance of any heritage asset, including its setting that may be affected in proportion to the asset's importance and the potential impact of the proposal.

1.5 The NPPF aims to conserve England's heritage assets in a manner appropriate to their significance, with substantial harm to designated heritage assets (i.e. listed buildings, scheduled monuments) only permitted in exceptional circumstances when the public benefit of a proposal outweighs the conservation of the asset. The effect of proposals on non-designated heritage assets must be balanced against the scale of loss and significance of the asset, but non-designated heritage assets of demonstrably equivalent significance may be considered subject to the same policies as those that are designated. The NPPF states that opportunities to capture evidence from the historic environment, to record and advance the understanding of heritage assets and to make this publicly available is a requirement of development management. This opportunity should be taken in a manner proportionate to the significance of a heritage asset and to impact of the proposal, particularly where a heritage asset is to be lost.

## **2 DESCRIPTION OF THE SITE**

2.1 The site is located in the southern part of St Albans centre and to the immediate south of the former abbey grounds (Fig. 1). The cathedral is located c. 300m to the north. The river Ver bounds the site to the south whilst to the west and east are residential properties with associated gardens located at Pondwicks Close and Abbey Mill End. The northern part of the site (to the north of the presumed precinct wall) lies within the Scheduled Ancient Monument of St Albans abbey.

2.2 The site comprises rectangular plot not occupied by any standing structures with an exception of a garage of light-construction in the south-eastern corner. The site is occupied by the dense woodland along its boundaries. The central part is open with the presumed ditch crossing the site north-west/south-east.

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

3.1 The site lies between 77 and 80m AOD on land within the valley of the river Ver. The land falls towards the south in the direction of the river which bounds the site.

3.2 The site lies on the solid geology of Upper Chalk (laid down during the Turonian – Campanian period of the Upper Cretaceous) which forms much of the Chiltern Hills (British Geological Survey 1978). It is composed of white, massive-bedded, micritic limestone with courses of modular flints deposited in warm marine conditions. The site is located within the Ver valley and the gravel beds overlying the chalk.

3.3 The soils of central St Albans are unsurveyed due to the urban nature of the area; however, the soils in the surrounding area are those of the Charity 2 Association, which are described as well-drained fine flinty and silty soils in valley bottoms and calcareous fine silty soils over chalk or chalk rubble on the valley sides (Soil Survey of England and Wales 1983). These are found in the area to the south-west of the city.

### **4 ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND HISTORICAL BACKGROUND**

#### *Prehistoric*

4.1 The location of St Albans would have been conducive to prehistoric settlement due to its fertile soils and proximity to the river Ver. Neolithic flints have been discovered in the surrounding area of the city with small amounts of Bronze Age material also recovered. St Albans was substantially occupied in the Iron Age period in the area of Prae Wood, which lies 1km to the south-south-west of the site; the location of the Iron Age settlement and the precursor to *Verulamium* Roman town. Despite the probable occupation of St Albans throughout the majority of the prehistoric period, few excavations in the surrounding area have yielded remains earlier than the Iron Age. It is possible that earlier archaeology was truncated by the intense Roman, medieval and post-medieval development of the town.

#### *Romano-British*

4.2 At its height the Roman town of *Verulamium* was the third largest settlement in Britain (Pevsner & Cherry 1997). It was founded in AD 50, yet reputedly destroyed by Queen Boudicca ten years later. It became one of Britain's largest Roman centres with a forum basilica complex (opened in AD

79), an amphitheatre and public bathhouses all situated to the south-west of modern St Albans, with the important communication route of Watling Street running through the centre. There was no known fort in the town and the town walls were not built until the 2<sup>nd</sup> century AD. Much of *Verulamium* was destroyed by fire in AD 155. The remains of the town are known from over 80 hectares enclosed within 3<sup>rd</sup> century city walls. Extensive archaeological work has taken place within *Verulamium* and has revealed numerous remains including Romano-Celtic temples, theatre, kilns, sewers, buildings, timber-framed shops, tiled floors, furnaces, cobbled tracks, roads and city walls (Pevsner & Cherry 1997; Niblett & Thompson 2005).

### *Anglo-Saxon*

4.3 By the 8<sup>th</sup> century the Saxon town of St.Albans/*Verulamium* was known as *Watlingchester* or *Verulamchester* and was described by the historian Bede in AD 730 as containing the '*beautiful church worthy of Alban's martyrdom*' (St Albans Archaeology & History website). The location of the Benedictine Abbey of St Alban was thought to have been the spot where the Christian martyr, Alban was executed in approximately 324 AD. St. Albans Abbey was founded in AD 793 by King Offa of Mercia, although the site lay within the manor of Kingsbury, which belonged to the Saxon kings and was bought by Alfric before he became abbot of St. Albans (Page 1912). The Kingsbury *burh* was possibly located to the north of the abbey. Although the manor of Kingsbury was not listed in the Domesday Book of 1086, it is thought that the '*pond for fish*' listed in the town of St Albans' entry refers to Alfric's large fishpond known as '*Fischpol*' (Page 1912). St Albans School, a public school which occupies a site to the west of the Abbey and which includes the 14th century Abbey Gateway, was founded in AD 948.

4.4 The abbey was probably sacked by the Danes around 890 and the office of abbot remained vacant from c.920 until the 970s when the efforts of Dunstan reached the town. There was an intention to rebuild the abbey in 1005 when Abbot Ealdred was licensed to remove building material from *Verulamium*. Flint was used with a lime mortar and then either plastered over or left bare. With the great quantities of brick, tile and other stone in *Verulamium* the Roman site became a prime source of building material for the abbey and other projects in the area, up to the 18th century. Renewed Viking raids from 1016 stalled the Saxon efforts and very little from the Saxon abbey was incorporated in the later fabric.

### *Medieval*

4.5 Medieval St Albans soon took the form recognisable today with settlement moving across the river Ver from the Roman city to the abbey precincts and extending further away from there up the hill to the north and east. By 1086 the town of St Albans incorporated 10 hides, land for 16 ploughs, a park for woodland beasts and three mills valued at 40s and the town had a population of 500 people. In AD 1077 Paul of Caen, the first Norman Abbot, began rebuilding the Abbey of St Albans (St Albans Archaeology & History website). St. Peter's Street, High Street, Market Place,

Holywell Street and Fishpool Street were probably all well established in approximately their present positions by the 11<sup>th</sup> century. The medieval period also saw the division of the town into four wards, roughly corresponding to the built-up areas of the four modern parishes of St Stephen, St Michael, St Peter and the Abbey of St Alban itself. These were each given a constable of the peace and two chief pledges to maintain order by Abbott Richard de Wallingford (1260 – 1291). By 1327 the boundaries of the borough had been formerly recorded although it is likely that they had already been determined well before then. The Priory was dissolved in 1539 and the Abbey Church became the parish church when it was bought by the local people in 1553 (Page 1912).

4.6 The cruciform abbey was the largest built in England at that time, it had a chancel of four bays, a transept containing seven apses, and a nave of ten bays—fifteen bays long overall. The crossing tower was built using bricks from Roman Verulamium. The monastic abbey was completed in 1089. In the current structure the original Norman arches survive principally under the central tower and on the north side of the nave. The arches in the rest of the building are Gothic, following medieval rebuilding and extensions, and Victorian era restoration. A nunnery (Sopwell Priory) was founded nearby in 1140. The abbey was extended in the 1190s by Abbot John de Cella; as the number of monks grew from 50 to over a 100, the abbey was extended westwards with three bays added to the nave. A new gateway, now called the Abbey Gateway, was built to the abbey grounds in 1365, which was the only part of the monastery buildings (besides the church) to survive the dissolution, later being used as a prison and now part of St Albans School. The abbey is registered as Scheduled Ancient Monument (1003526).

#### *Post-medieval & modern*

4.7 Post-medieval development of the town saw the construction of roads, specifically catering to the coaching trade, as St. Albans formed the first stop on the coaching route north from London. It accounts for town's numerous inns, many dating from Tudor times. Later development saw the steady expansion of various industries such as printing, engineering, clothing and hat manufacture, while the construction of the railway in 1858 allowed an increase in communication and trade. The Abbey Church was granted Cathedral status and the town received a City charter in 1877. In the inter-war years it became a popular centre for the electronics industry. After the World War II the town expanded significantly as it took a part in the post-War redistribution of population out of London (St Albans Archaeology & History website).

#### *The site*

4.8 The site was subject to an archaeological evaluation in July 1975 (Saunders & Havercroft 1978). An evaluation trench 70m long was excavated along the long axis of the site, revealing the line of the robbed southern precinct wall along and a bank and ditch outside (to the south). The wall was c. 1.60m wide and the ditch was c. 7m wide. On the southern side of the ditch a clay bank was present.

4.9 In 2012 AS conducted an archaeological evaluation on the site (Pozorski 2012). The project aimed to precisely locate the archaeological features identified during the 1970s evaluation of the site in order to inform the current development proposals. The evaluation revealed the former precinct boundary and associated ditch. The features compared to those recorded in 1970s but were now accurately plotted. The boundary was orientated north-west/south-east. The area to the south of the boundary features did not contain archaeological remains and this accords with the results of the previous evaluation. It was concluded that any development within this area is likely to have a limited impact. The remains revealed during that project were described in summary as follows:

*Ditch F1001 was present in the southern part of the trench and co-incident within the linear depression visible on the surface. It was 4.50m wide within the trench and also contained fills L1002 and L1003. Former Precinct Wall F1004 was 1.50m wide and again it contained fill L1005, a light brown, fairly loose, gravel. The ditches were separated by L1006 (0.75m wide), a light brown, compact, sandy silt. To the north of F1004 a deposit of dark grey, friable, sandy silt with moderate gravel (L1007) was present.*

## **5 METHODOLOGY**

5.1. The archaeological monitoring comprised the observation of all 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.

5.2 The principal elements monitored were mechanically-excavated service trench for a new property, ground reduction within footprint of the proposed house, access road and within presumed extent of earlier Ver Lodge building (Fig. 2). Further archaeological monitoring will be carried out during tree planting proposed mainly in the northern part of the site.

## **6 DESCRIPTION OF RESULTS**

6.1 *Ground reduction area within footprint of the new house and associated access road.*

The groundworks within the southern part of the site, within footprint of the proposed house were relatively shallow (0.15 – 0.25m) and revealed no archaeological features or finds. Deposits present within the area comprised mainly Topsoil L2006, a mid greyish brown, soft, sandy silt with frequent roots. Below was the natural was a reddish and brownish yellow, firm, clay L2007.

In the area of the course of the temporary access road and adjacent to the existing Ver Lodge dwelling remains of early to mid 20<sup>th</sup> century building were present. These consisted of Walls M2003, M2004 and M2005 (Fig. 3; DP 7 – 8) rectangular in plan and extending towards the house to the north-east. The walls were separate lengths of the same structure which was only partially revealed. The walls (0.23m wide) were constructed with red frogged bricks (0.230 x 0.110m; LBC branded) bonded with a greyish yellow sandy mortar. The part of the structure within current site measured 12 x 5.50m with and was orientated north-north-east/south-south-west corresponding with the existing house. A possible bay window or porch (4 x 1.30m) was part of M2005 in the north-western part of the structure, facing east-north-east.

## 6.2 Service trench for the new house.

No archaeological features or finds were identified. Deposits located within the trench were recorded in sample sections presented below.

<i>Sample section 1 (DP 10)</i> <i>South-west end of the trench, facing north-north-east</i> <i>0.00 = 78.20m AOD</i>		
0.00 – 0.28m	L2006	Topsoil. Mid greyish brown, soft, sandy silt with frequent roots.
0.28 – 0.53m+	L2007	Natural. Reddish and brownish yellow, firm, clay.

<i>Sample section 2 (DP 11)</i> <i>South section of the trench, facing north-north-east</i> <i>0.00 = 78.29m AOD</i>		
0.00 – 0.45m	L2006	Topsoil. As above.
0.45 – 0.65m+	L2008	Subsoil. Mid greyish brown, moderately loose, sandy silt with frequent small stones and sub-angular flints.

<i>Sample section 3 (DP 12)</i> <i>South section of the trench, facing north-north-east</i> <i>0.00 = 78.29m AOD</i>		
0.00 – 0.51m	L2006	Topsoil. As above.
0.51 – 0.71m+	L2009	Light grey, loose, sandy chalk.

<i>Sample section 4 (DP 13)</i> <i>South-east part of the trench, facing north-west</i> <i>0.00 = 78.35m AOD</i>		
0.00 – 0.34m	L2006	Topsoil. As above.
0.34 – 0.57m+	L2011	Light grey, firm, chalky silt.

<i>Sample section 5 (DP 14)</i> <i>South-east part of the trench, facing west-north-west</i> <i>0.00 = 78.35m AOD</i>		
0.00 – 0.31m	L2010	Topsoil. Mid greyish brown, loose, sandy silt.
0.31 – 0.57m	L2013	Light grey, moderately firm, chalky silt.
0.57m+	L2012	Subsoil. Light reddish brown, compact, clayey silt.

<i>Sample section 6 (DP 15)</i> <i>South-east part of the trench, facing west-north-west</i> <i>0.00 = 78.25m AOD</i>		
0.00 – 0.29m	L2010	Topsoil. As above.
0.29 – 0.56m+	L2012	Subsoil. As above.

<i>Sample section 7 (DP 16)</i> <i>Central part of the trench, facing east-south-east</i> <i>0.00 = 78.60m AOD</i>		
0.00 – 0.37m	L2010	Topsoil. As above.
0.37 – 0.59m+	L2012	Subsoil. As above.

<i>Sample section 8 (DP 17)</i> <i>North part of the trench, facing south-east</i> <i>0.00 = 78.75m AOD</i>		
0.00 – 0.22m	L2010	Topsoil. As above.
0.22 – 0.43m	L2012	Subsoil. As above.
0.43 – 0.65m+	L2017	Natural light reddish brown, compact, silty clay.

<i>Sample section 9 (DP 18)</i> <i>North part of the trench, facing south-south-east</i> <i>0.00 = 78.70m AOD</i>		
0.00 – 0.55m	L2010	Topsoil. As above.
0.55 – 0.68m	L2012	Subsoil. As above.
0.68 – 0.78m+	L2018	Black, firm, clayey silt.

## 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 DEPOSIT MODEL

8.1 The site was commonly overlain by Topsoil L2006 (=L2010), a mid greyish brown, soft to loose, sandy silt (0.20 – 0.55m thick). In central/east

and north-east parts of the site it overlay Subsoil L2008 (a mid greyish brown, moderately loose, sandy silt with frequent small stones and sub-angular flints; 0.20m+ thick) and L2012 (a light reddish brown, compact, clayey silt; 0.28m+ thick).

8.2 The natural clay, L2007 (= L2017), was present at 0.20 – 0.45m below existing ground level and comprised a light reddish and brownish yellow and reddish brown, compact, silty clay.

## **9 DISCUSSION**

9.1 The site had a potential for archaeological remains, in particular for Romano-British, Saxon and medieval archaeology. The northern part of the site lies within the Scheduled Ancient Monument of the Saxon/medieval St Albans abbey. The southern boundary of the Abbey was identified on the site in 1970s and confirmed in 2012. The site also had a potential for Romano-British archaeological remains as it is located close to the east of Roman city of Verulamium.

9.2 In the event the only archaeological remains present were the foundation walls of early to mid 20<sup>th</sup> century date adjacent to the existing Ver Lodge house. The foundations presumably were relics of the western extent of original 1930s Ver Lodge dwelling. It is understood that the recorded layout of the foundations will be adapted in future extension of the house being at least partial reconstruction of the earlier building.

9.3 The southern part of the site, as it was assessed earlier, did not contain archaeological remains. Deposits revealed along the course of service trench were likely of modern origin and may have been related to the garden and construction of Ver Lodge.

## **10 DEPOSITION OF THE ARCHIVE**

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

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

Archaeological Solutions would like to thank Mr Chris Meadows for funding the project and for his assistance.

AS would also like to acknowledge the input and advice of Mr Simon West of St Albans City & District Council.

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DP 1. The site. Looking south-south-east.



DP 2. Outer boundary ditch of the priory. Looking west.



DP 3. West part of ground reduction area within footprint of proposed building. Looking north-north-east.



DP 4. North part of ground reduction area. Looking east.



DP 5. Ground reduction area. Looking south-east.



DP 6. Area of earlier building of Ver Lodge. Looking south-south-west.



DP 7. Foundation Wall M2003. Looking north-north-east.



DP 8. Foundation Wall M2004. Looking east-south-east.



DP 9. Service trench. Looking north-north-east.



DP 10. Service trench. Sample section 1. Looking south-south-west.



DP 11. Service trench. Sample section 2. Looking south-south-west.



DP 12. Service trench. Sample section 3. Looking south-south-west.



DP 13. Service trench. Sample section 4.  
Looking south-east.



DP 14. Service trench. Sample section 5.  
Looking east-south-east.



DP 15. Service trench. Sample section 6.  
Looking east-south-east.



DP 16. Service trench. Sample section 7.  
Looking west-north-west.



DP 17. Service trench. Sample section 8.  
Looking north-west.



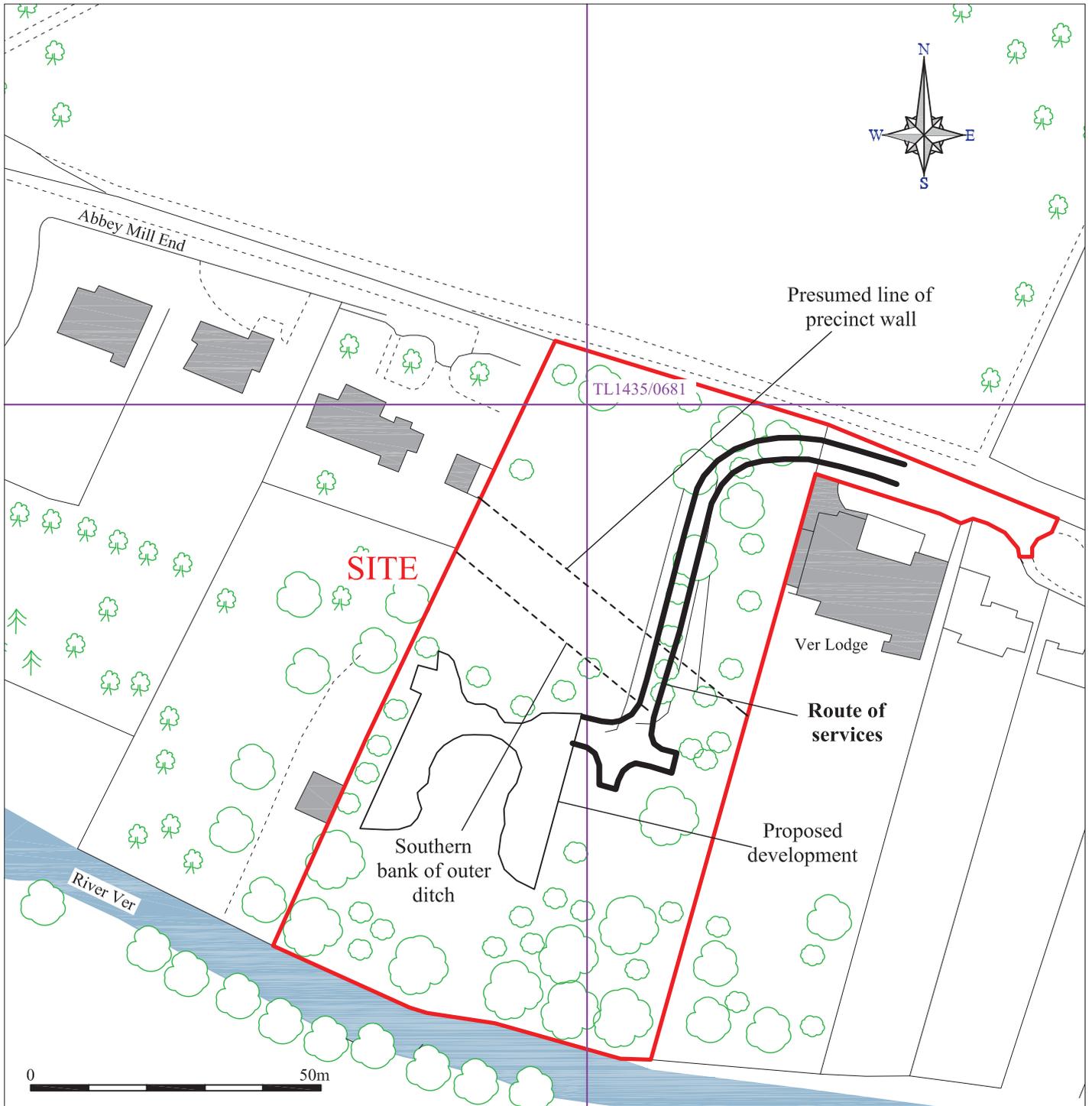
DP 18. Service trench. Sample section 9.  
Looking north-north-west.



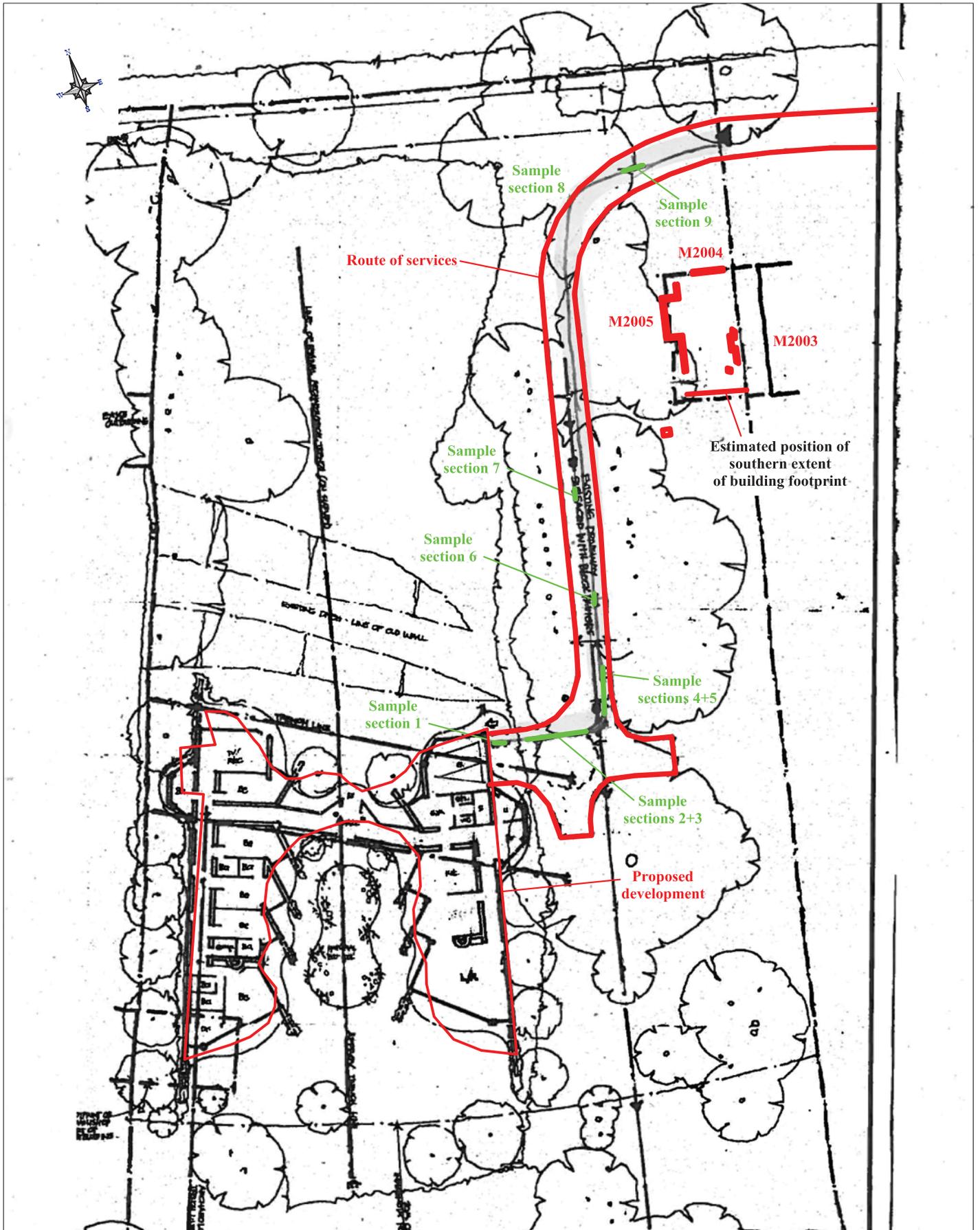


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*Archaeological Solutions Ltd*  
**Fig. 1 Site location plan**  
 Scale 1:25,000 at A4

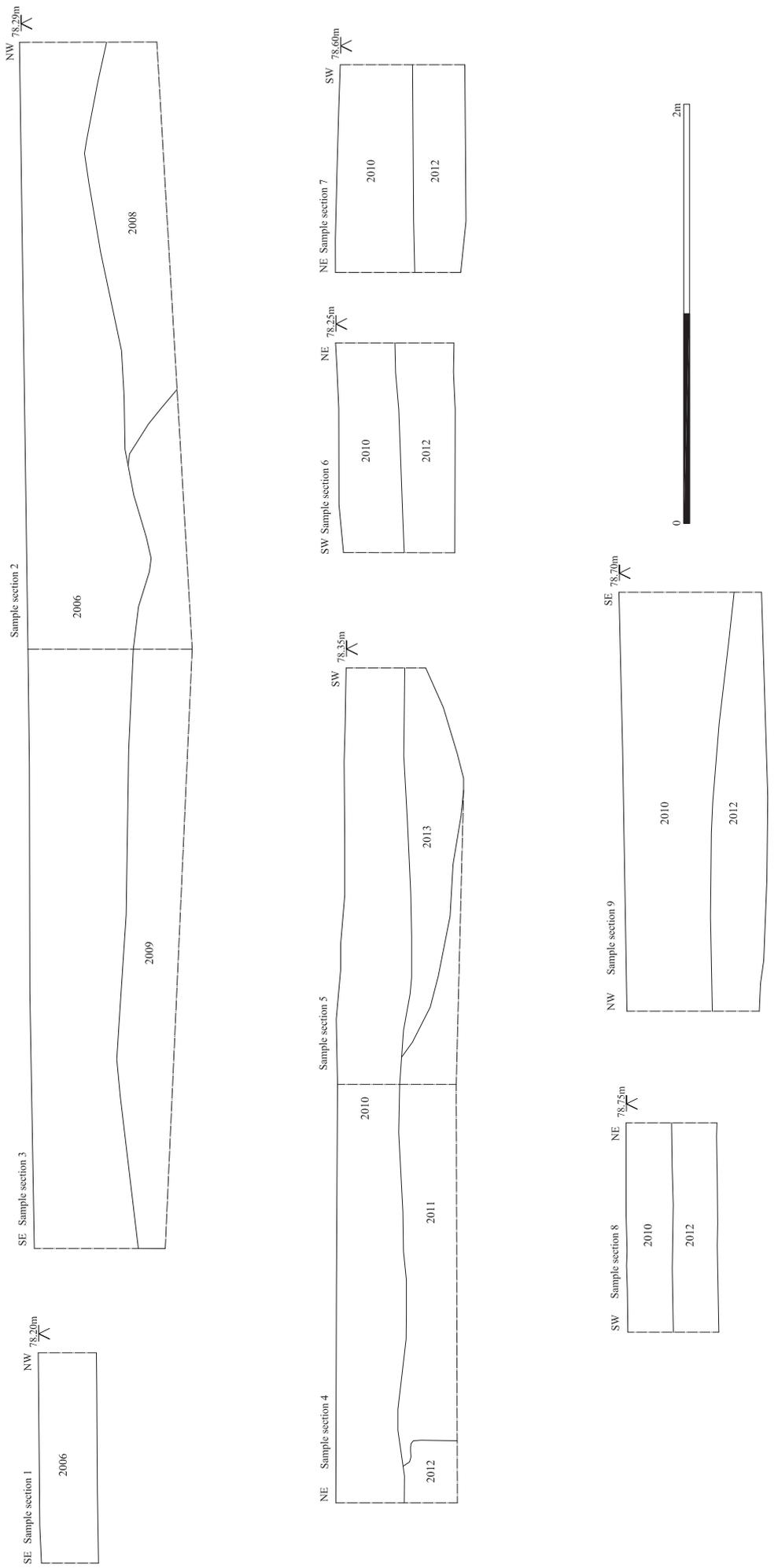


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**Fig. 2 Detailed site location plan**  
 Scale 1:1000 at A4



0 25m

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**Fig. 3 Sample section location plan**  
 Scale 1:250 at A4



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**Fig. 4 Sample sections**  
 Scale 1:20 at A3