ARCHAEOLOGICAL SOLUTIONS LTD

PEARSE HOUSE, PARSONAGE LANE, BISHOP'S STORTFORD, HERTFORDSHIRE, CM23 5BQ

ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION

HER request No. 176/13

Authors:	Sam Egan (Fieldwork & report) Antony RR Mustchin (Editor)	
Illustrations:	Kathren Henry	
NGR: TL 50355 21665		Report No. 5547
District: East Herts		Site Code: AS1632
Approved: C. Halpin MIfA		Project No. 5506
Signed:		Date: 16 December 2013 Revised: 24/01/2014

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OASIS SUMMARY SHEET		
Project name	Pearce House, Parsonage Lane, Bishop's Stortford, Hertfordshire	

In December 2013 Archaeological Solutions Ltd carried out a programme of building recording, building monitoring and recording and also a programme of archaeological trial trench evaluation at Pearce House, Parsonage Lane, Bishop's Stortford, Hertfordshire CM23 5BQ (NGR TL 50333 21665). The programme was commissioned by Marden Homes Limited and was undertaken in compliance with a planning condition attached to planning approval for the proposed demolition of former stables, coach house and educational buildings and change of use of Pearse House to create 12No apartments, erection of 10no dwellings, associated parking, garaging, alterations to access, refuse and recycling storage and landscaping (East Herts Planning Ref. 3/13/0527/FP).

In the event the evaluation revealed no archaeological features or finds but the site was much disturbed by modern activity.

Project dates (fieldwork)	12/12/2013	3	
Previous work (Y/N/?)	N	Future work (Y/N/?)	N
P. number	5384	Site code	AS1644
Type of project	Archaeolog	gical evaluation	
Site status	Site of Pea	rse House	
Current land use	Pearse Ho	use, Coach House, stable	s and education buildings.
Planned development	Apartment	s and dwellings	
Main features (+dates)	None		
Significant finds (+dates)	none		
Project locations			
County/ District/ Parish	Hertfordsh	ire East Herts	Bishop's Stortford
HER for area	Hertfordsh	Hertfordshire Historic Environment Record	
Post code (if known)	CM23 5BQ		
Area of site	c. 0.82ha		
NGR	TL 50355 21665		
Height AOD (max)	c. 85m		
Project creators	<u>.</u>		
Brief issued by	HCC HEU		
Project supervisor/s (PO)	Sam Egan		
Funded by	Marden Homes Ltd		
Full title	Pearce House, Parsonage Lane, Bishop's Stortford,		
Authory	Hertfordshire, CM23 5BQ. Archaeological Evaluation		
Authors	Egan, S (Editor: Mustchin, ARR)		
Report no.	4457		
Date (of report)	December	2013 (Revised 24/01/2014	4)

PEARSE HOUSE, PARSONAGE LANE, BISHOPS STORTFORD, HERTFORDSHIRE, CM23 5BQ

ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION

SUMMARY

In December 2013 Archaeological Solutions Ltd carried out a programme of building recording, building monitoring and recording and also a programme of archaeological trial trench evaluation at Pearce House, Parsonage Lane, Bishop's Stortford, Hertfordshire CM23 5BQ (NGR TL 50333 21665). The programme was commissioned by Marden Homes Ltd and was undertaken in compliance with a planning condition attached to planning approval for the proposed demolition of former stables, coach house and educational buildings and change of use of Pearse House to create 12No apartments, erection of 10no dwellings, associated parking, garaging, alterations to access, refuse and recycling storage and landscaping (East Herts Planning Ref. 3/13/0527/FP).

This report describes the results of the trial trench evaluation.

The site lies on the southern side of Parsonage Lane, and comprises the existing Pearse House, Coach House, stables and education buildings. Pearse House dates from 1878 and replaced an earlier house known as 'The Villa'. It is an Arts & Crafts style building, in private residential use until after WWI when it passed into institutional use. It is believed to retain much of its original character and features. It is recorded on the Hertfordshire Historic Environment Record (HER 15987).

The site also has a potential for remains of earlier activity. Parsonage Lane shadows the line of Roman Stane Street leading from the contemporary settlement at Braughing to Colchester, and extensive evidence for late Bronze Age, Iron Age and Roman occupation has been investigated to the north east at Woodside Industrial Estate and the football ground (HER 9815-6, 10181). A shed of Saxon Ipswich Ware pottery has also been found on the south side of Parsonage Lane. The development of early settlement at Bishops Stortford is summarised in Hunns (2000).

In the event the evaluation revealed no archaeological features or finds but the site was much disturbed by modern activity.

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 In December 2013 Archaeological Solutions Ltd (AS) carried out a programme of building recording, building monitoring and recording and also a programme of archaeological trial trench evaluation at Pearce House, Parsonage Lane, Bishop's Stortford, Hertfordshire CM23 5BQ (NGR TL 50333 21665; Figs.1-2). The programme was commissioned by Marden Homes Ltd and was undertaken in compliance with a planning condition attached to planning approval for the proposed demolition of former stables, coach house and educational buildings and change of

use of Pearse House to create 12No apartments, erection of 10no dwellings, associated parking, garaging, alterations to access, refuse and recycling storage and landscaping (East Herts Planning Ref. 3/13/0527/FP).

- 1.2 The programme was conducted according to two design briefs issued by Hertfordshire County Council Historic Environment Unit (HCC HEU, Alison Tinniswood, dated 25th September 2013), and a specification (Written Scheme of Investigation) issued by AS (dated 3rd October 2013), approved by HCC HEU. It was carried out according to the Institute of Archaeologists *Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Evaluation* (revised 2008), and conformed with the guidelines set down in the document Gurney (2003) *Standards for Field Archaeology in the East of England*, East Anglian Archaeology Occasional Paper 14/ALGAOEE.
- 1.3 This report describes the results of the trial trench evaluation.
- 1.4 The principal objectives for the evaluation were:
 - the archaeological evaluation of the site via trial trenching, followed by such appropriate preservation and/ or mitigation measures indicated as necessary by the evaluation
 - the provision of an adequately detailed project report and the dissemination and publication of the project results, as appropriate

Planning policy

- 1.5 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.
- 1.6 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 lies on the southern side of Parsonage Lane, and comprises the existing Pearse House, Coach House, stables and education buildings. Pearse House dates from 1878 and replaced an earlier house known as 'The Villa'. It is an Arts & Crafts style building, in private residential use until after WWI when it passed into institutional use. It is believed to retain much of its original character and features. It is recorded on the Hertfordshire Historic Environment Record (HER 15987).

3 THE EVIDENCE

3.1 Topography, geology & soils

- 3.1.1 Bishop's Stortford lies within the valley of the north-south course of the River Stort, which runs through the centre of the town. The site is situated at *c*.85m AOD, on the upper slope of the eastern side of the moderately sloped river valley, with the River Stort c.1.3km to the west.
- 3.1.2 Bishop's Stortford is situated on a cusp of two solid geologies: the Lower Eocene Reading Beds to the north and the Eocene London Clay to the south, with the site situated on the latter (BGS 1978). Along the River Stort is a narrow band of (Cretaceous) Upper Chalk. Overlying the solid geology, the drift geology is mainly Boulder Clay, although the valley of the Stort also contains terrace gravels that may be particularly evident closer to the river.
- 3.1.3 Within the valley of the River Stort, which includes the site, the soils are of the Melford association (571o), described as deep, well-drained fine loamy over clayey, coarse loamy over clayey and fine loamy soils, some with calcareous clayey subsoils (SSEW 1983).

3.2 Archaeological & historical background

Prehistoric

3.2.1 The Bishop's Stortford section of the Stort valley has produced few finds of early prehistoric date, particularly in contrast to the Lea valley to the south-west, of which the Stort is a tributary. However, an excavation at Nos. 109 – 119 Dunmow Road and 650m to the south-west of the site revealed a scatter of ditches and pits 'tentatively identified as being archaeological', as well as two small sherds of undiagnostic 'prehistoric pottery' (HER 9923). The later prehistoric period is well-represented in the Thorley area, partly on the basis of extensive archaeological investigations in the vicinity of Woodside Industrial Park, which lies 400m to the east. Late Bronze Age occupation is attested by ditches, small pits and post structures (HER 9815), with further late Bronze Age/early Iron Age coarse flint-tempered

pottery, struck flint and fragments of animal bone known from the new football ground on Dunmow Road (HER 10181). Early Iron Age to Roman period pits, ditches and ring gullies were also observed at Woodside (HER 9816).

Romano-British

3.2.2 The earliest settlement at Bishop's Stortford dates to the Roman period, and was located to the north of the medieval town, where *Stane Street* crossed the Stort. The East Herts Archaeology Society confirmed the route of *Stane Street* across the valley in excavations in 1976 (HER 6250: Wright 1982). Parsonage Lane to the immediate north-east of the site is known to follow the route of Roman Stane Street eastwards from the Roman settlement, towards Roman settlements at Great Dunmow, Braintree, and the *colonia* of *Camvlodvnvm* (Colchester); the course of which has not been lost despite the medieval diversion into the town of Bishop's Stortford (HER 4681). The available evidence suggests that settlement was located in the Cannons Close area to the north of *Stane Street*, whilst a late Roman stone coffin containing human bones was found on the Dunmow Road and 600m to the south-west (HER 1093).

Anglo-Saxon & medieval

3.2.3 During the Saxon period, a new settlement was established in the North Street/High Street/Market Street area of the town, adjacent to a new fording point (Hunns 2000). The site therefore lay beyond the extent of both the medieval settlement and to the south-west of Thorley, yet a small sherd of late Saxon 'grey Ipswich-ware' was found in a heap of spoil along the southern frontage of Parsonage Lane and within the Pearse House site (HER 17735). After the Norman Conquest, Waytemore Castle was constructed to guard the crossing of the Rover Stort and the emerging settlement of Bishop's Stortford. From the medieval period onwards, Bishop's Stortford developed into a thriving market centre for the region, attested by the large number of inns in the town. During this period the area in which the site is located was probably open land, used for agriculture, as no medieval findspots are recorded in the area surrounding the site.

Post-medieval & later

3.2.4 The settlement of Bishop's Stortford grew in size and importance throughout the post-medieval and later periods. Although it was still described as a considerable market town in 1770, Bishop's Stortford was noted for its horse and cattle fairs and leather-working industry, and later its malting industry, fuelled by the establishment of The Essex and Herts Turnpike Trust and the construction of the Stort Navigation. Post-medieval findspots in the area surrounding the site are limited to the farmsteads of Crab Farm and Stortford Hall (HERs 15985 & 18457), whilst early modern remains include The Fox Brewery, Church Manor House and the late 19th century infectious wards associated with the Union Workhouse (HERs 10756, 12277 & 15521). The modern encroachment of Bishop's Stortford towards the site is attested by the presence of a WWII pillbox on the Dunmow Road, a WWII cold store, as well as The Nag's Head, which stands 600m to the south-west and comprises a 1936 Art Deco public house (HER 30170).

- 3.2.5 The HER database reveals that Pearse House, which stands within the site, is a large Arts and Crafts style house, originally named *Plaw Hatch* and built by Frederick William Blunt in 1878 (HER 15987). It was constructed on a site occupied by an earlier house known as 'The Villa' or 'The Cottage', which is judged to have been demolished c. 1870. Local history sources suggest that a building has stood on the site of *Plaw Hatch* since the 16th century and the previous structure had been destroyed by fire in the 1850s, yet remained until its demolition (Bishop's Stortford & Thorley; a history and guide website). The first documented owner of Pearse House was Frederick William Blunt, who purchased the property 29th September 1877 and resided there until 1891. The site was subsequently occupied by Mrs. Fanny (Francis) Rowley Smith, whilst in 1901 it was sold via Sir Walter Gilbey to Charles John Hegan (*ibid*.).
- 3.2.6 Local history also documents that the site, as *Plaw Hatch*, remained in the ownership of the Hegan family until 1920 when it was sold to Selwyn Robert Prior and his wife Margaret. It was sold again in 1936 to Danzie Wilson and Patrick Gee (Solicitor), re-sold to Dr. Henrietta Trevithick and in 1942 43 the house was made available for the war effort (Bishop's Stortford & Thorley; a history and guide website). In 1944, the site was occupied by nurses from the St John's Ambulance Brigade, with its cellars converted for use as an air raid shelter, whilst by 1945 the house was used as an officers' mess by USAF 344th Bombardment Group stationed at Stansted. After World War II, *Plaw Hatch* was acquired by Herts and Essex High School as a boarding house for girls and was subsequently renamed Pearse House in honour of the school's headmistress, Miss. Pearse (*ibid.*).
- 3.2.7 Boarding at the Herts and Essex High School ended in July 1966 and as a result Pearse House was taken over by the Education Committee of Hertfordshire and run as a residential centre for county, junior and middle schools (Bishop's Stortford & Thorley; a history and guide website). From 1978 onwards, the site was acquired by Phillip H. Levy and its institutional use continued as a management training and conference centre, as well as a reception centre for private functions and special occasions. Pearse House was reputedly one of the first venues in the country to offer civil wedding ceremonies conducted by registrars (*ibid.*). However, by 2011, the business had fallen into voluntary liquidation and the site has since stood vacant.
- 3.2.8 Cartographic sources confirm that the site was occupied by a former stricture, which stood in much the same location at Pearse House. The parish of Bishop's Stortford tithe map, which dates to 1839, depicts the main structure within the site as a roughly inverse L-shaped and smaller building in the western section of the site and to the south-west of the former coach house and stables (Ref. DSA4/21/2). It is therefore likely that the extant former coach house and stables buildings re-date 1839 and is a remnant of the original *Plaw Hatch*. The accompanying tithe award (Ref. DSA4/21/1) reveals that the property's garden lay to the west and beyond the extent of the site (#598), yet was owned and occupied by Frederic Vander Meulin in 1839. The majority of the site, however, consisted of meadow parkland (#595) also owned by Meulin.
- 3.2.9 Later 19th century cartographic sources confirm that the original *Plaw Hatch* had been demolished and replaced by the extant structure by 1879. The 1st edition

Ordnance Survey map depicts *Plaw Hatch* with a footprint very similar to now, yet with a large glass house or conservatory along its western elevation. In 1879, its coach house and stables buildings stood between the house and Parsonage Lane, but the footprint of the former stables were significantly smaller than present, and formed the eastern side of the quad. The majority of *Plaw Hatch's* gardens were beyond the site's extent in 1879 (#405), and as a result much of the site consisted of agricultural land (#403). No significant alterations have occurred within the site according to subsequent late 19th and 20th century cartographic sources, with the site labelled only as Pearse House from 1970 onwards.

4 METHODOLOGY

- 4.1 Seven trenches were excavated using a mechanical excavator fitted with a toothless ditching bucket (Fig. 2). The trenches measured 150m (in total) x 1.80m. Trench 5 was moved slightly from its proposed location, Trench 1 was shortened and Trench 3 was not excavated due to practical constraints
- 4.2 Topsoil and undifferentiated overburden were mechanically excavated under close archaeological supervision. Exposed surfaces were cleaned by hand and examined for archaeological features. Deposits were recorded using *pro forma* recording sheets, drawn to scale, and photographed as appropriate. Excavated spoil was searched for finds and the trenches were scanned by a metal detector.

5 DESCRIPTION OF RESULTS

The individual trenches are described below:

Trench 1 (Figs. 2-3)

Sample section		
0.00 = m AOD		
0.00 – 0.05m	L1000	Tarmac.
0.05 – 0.18m	L1002	Modern levelling layer. Mid reddish brown, compact, crushed brick.
0.18 – 0.23m	L1003	Modern construction layer. Pale bluish grey, compact, clay.
0.23m+	L1004	Modern construction layer. Mid, orange brown, silty clay with frequent small to medium brick

Description: No archaeological feature or finds were present.

Trench 2 (Figs. 2-3)

Sample section 0.00 = m AOD		
0.00 - 111 AOD	L1000	Tarmac. As above Tr.1.
0.00 = 0.04111	L1000	Taimac. As above 11.1.
0.04 – 0.12m	L1001	Modern construction layer, pale yellow, loose, gravel.
0.12 – 0.32m	L1003	Modern layer. As above Tr.1.
0.32m+	L1007	Natural. Mid, bluish yellow, compact, clay.

Description: No archaeological feature or finds were present.

Trench 3

Unexcavated due to practical constraints.

Trench 4 (Figs. 2 - 3)

Sample section 0.00 = m AOD		
0.00 - 0.11m	L1005	Modern crushed brick within a mid reddish brown, loose, silty clay.
0.11 – 0.33m	L1006	Subsoil. Mid orange brown, compact, silty clay.
0.33m+	L1007	Natural. As above Tr.2

Description: No archaeological feature or finds were present.

Trench 5 (Figs. 2-3)

Sample section 0.00 = m AOD		
0.00 – 0.11m	L1000	Tarmac.
0.11 – 0.20m	L1001	Modern layer. As above Tr.2
0.20 – 0.30m	L1002	Modern layer. As above Tr.1
0.33 – 0.41m	L1003	Modern layer. As above Tr.1
0.41 – 0.57m	L1004	Modern layer. As above Tr.1
0.57m+	L1007	Natural. As above Tr.2

Description: No archaeological feature or finds were present.

Trench 6 (Figs. 2-3)

Sample section 0.00 = m AOD		
0.00 – 0.11m	L1005	Modern crushed brick. As above Tr.4
0.11 – 0.27m	L1006	Subsoil. As above Tr.4
0.27m+	L1007	Natural. As above Tr.2

Description: No archaeological feature or finds were present.

Trench 7 (Figs. 2-3)

Sample section 0.00 = m AOD		
0.00 - 0.07m	L1005	Modern crushed brick. As above Tr.4
0.07 – 0.28m	L1006	Subsoil. As above Tr.4
0.28m+	L1007	Natural. As above Tr.2

Description: No archaeological feature or finds were present.

Trench 8 (Figs. 2-3)

Sample section 0.00 = m AOD		
0.00 - 0.08m	L1005	Modern crushed brick. As above Tr.4
0.08 – 0.33m	L1006	Subsoil. As above Tr.4
0.33m+	L1007	Natural. As above Tr.2

Description: No archaeological feature or finds were present.

6 CONFIDENCE RATING

6.1 It is not felt that any factors inhibited the recognition of archaeological features or finds.

7 DEPOSIT MODEL

- 7.1 The site was commonly overlain by Tarmac L1000 (up to 0.05m thick) in the northern and north-western parts of the site and by modern crushed brick L1005 (0.00 0.11m thick) in the south-eastern sector.
- 7.2 Within majority of the site below the tarmac, modern made ground construction (0.05 0.32m below the existing ground level). The most substantial deposits, L1001, comprised a pale yellow, loose, gravel; L1002, comprised a mid reddish brown, compact, crushed brick levelling layer; L1003 was a pale, bluish grey, compact clay levelling layer; and L1004 was a mid orange brown, silty clay with frequent small to medium brick fragments.
- 7.3 Subsoil L1006, was only present in the south-eastern part of the site (Trenches 4, 6, 7 and 8) and consisted of a mid orange brown, compact, silty clay (0.16-0.25m thick).
- 7.4 The natural geology, L1007, was present at 0.32-0.57m below the existing ground level and comprised a light to mid bluish yellow, compact, clay.

8 DISCUSSION

8.1 The site had a potential for remains of earlier activity. Parsonage Lane shadows the line of Roman Stane Street leading from the contemporary settlement at Braughing to Colchester, and extensive evidence for late Bronze Age, Iron Age and Roman occupation has been investigated to the north east at Woodside Industrial Estate and the football ground (HER 9815-6, 10181). A sherd of Saxon Ipswich Ware pottery has also been found on the south side of Parsonage Lane. The development of early settlement at Bishop's Stortford is summarised in Hunns (2000).

8.2 In the event the evaluation revealed no archaeological features or finds, and the site was much disturbed by modern activity.

9 ARCHIVE DEPOSITION

9.1 Archive records, with an inventory, will be deposited with the finds from the site at Bishop's Stortford Museum. The archive will be quantified, ordered, indexed, cross-referenced and checked for internal consistency. In addition to the overall site summary, it will be necessary to produce a summary of the artefactual and ecofactual data.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Archaeological Solutions Ltd (AS) would like to thank Marden Homes Ltd for funding the project, in particular Mr Ivor Watson for his kind assistance.

AS would also like to thank Strutt & Parker LLP for their assistance and Dr Isobel Thompson (Hertfordshire Historic Environment Record Office) for the provision of data.

AS is pleased to acknowledge the advice and input of Ms Alison Tinniswood of Hertfordshire County Council Historic Environment Unit.

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Web resources

www.britishlistedbuildings.co.uk www.british-history.ac.uk www.english-heritage.org.uk

APPENDIX 1 ARCHIVE CONTENTS

Records	Number
Brief	Υ
Specification	Υ
Registers	5 (Context, Drawing Sheet, Drawing,
	Photo, Digital Photo)
Context Sheets	8
Site drawings A1	0
Site drawings A3	1
Site drawings A4	0
Site photographs b/w	7
Site photographs colour slides	7
Digital Photographs	11

APPENDIX 2 HER SUMMARY SHEET

Site name and address:	Pearce House, Parsonage Lane, Bishop's Stortford, Hertfordshire	
County: Herts	District: East Herts	
Village/Town:	Parish: Bishop's Stortford	
Planning application	East Herts Planning Ref. 3/13/0527/FP	
reference:		
Client name/address/tel:	Marden Homes Ltd	
Nature of application:	Conversion to apartments and new dwellings	
Present land use:	Pearse House, Coach House, stables and education buildings	
Size of application area:	Size of area investigated	
c.0.82.ha	c. 270m ²	
NGR (8 figures):	TL 50355 21665	
Site Code:	AS1644	
Site director/Organization:	Archaeological Solutions Ltd	
Type of work:	Trial trench evaluation	
Date of work:	12/12/2013	
Location of finds/Curating	Bishop's Stortford	
museum:		
Related SMR Nos:	Periods represented: none	
Relevant previous	-	
summaries/reports: -		
Summary of fieldwork		
results:	In December 2013 Archaeological Solutions Ltd carried out an trial	
	trench evaluation at Pearce House, Parsonage Lane, Bishop's Stortford,	
	Hertfordshire CM23 5BQ (NGR TL 50333 21665).	
	The evaluation revealed no archaeological features or finds. The site	
	had been much disturbed by modern activity.	
Author of suppressing	Data of Common or o	
Author of summary:	Date of Summary:	
Sam Egan	December 2013 (Revised 24/01/2014)	

PHOTOGRAPHIC INDEX



1 General shot of site before excavation



General shot of site before excavation



3 Post excavation shot of Trench 1



Post excavation shot of Trench 2



Post excavation shot of Trench 4



7 Post excavation shot of Trench 6



Post excavation shot of Trench 5



8 Post excavation shot of Trench 7



10 Sample section in Trench 1

9 Post excavation shot of Trench 8



11 Sample section in Trench 2



12 Sample section in Trench 5

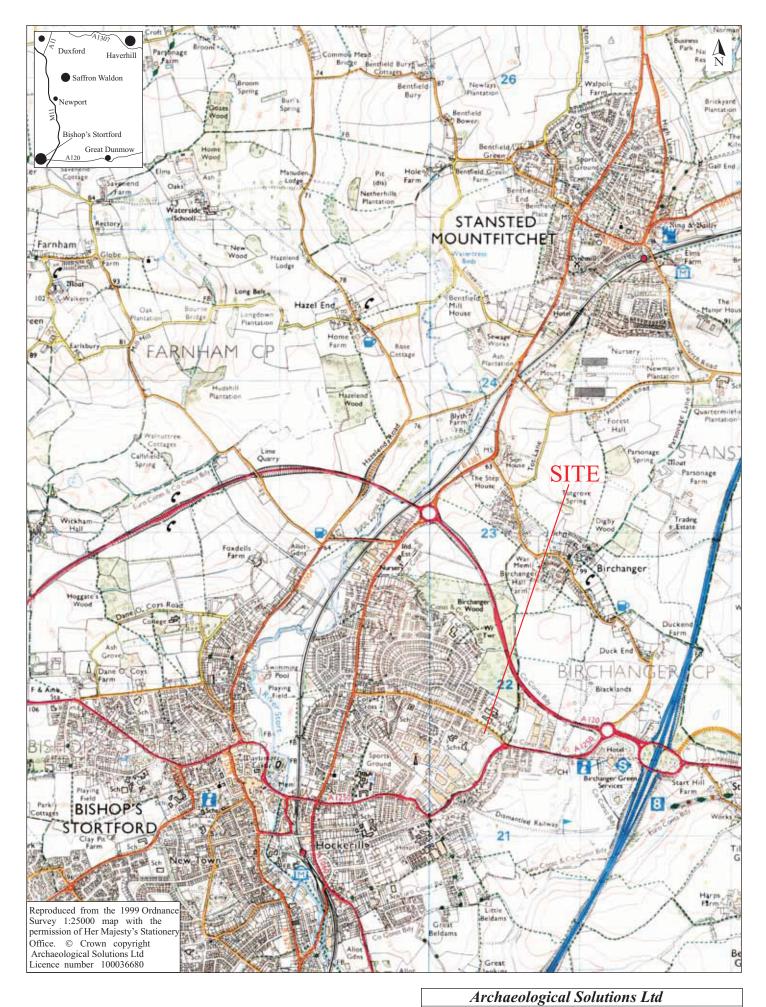
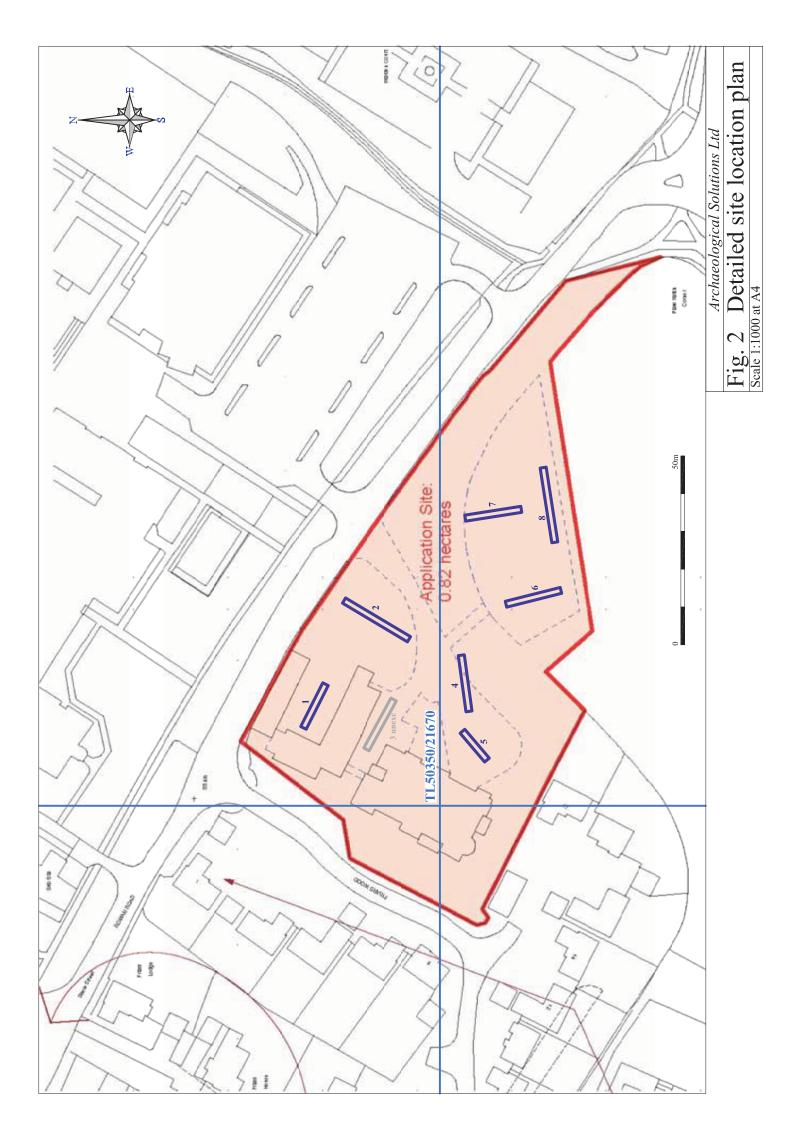


Fig. 1 Site location plan
Scale 1:25,000 at A4



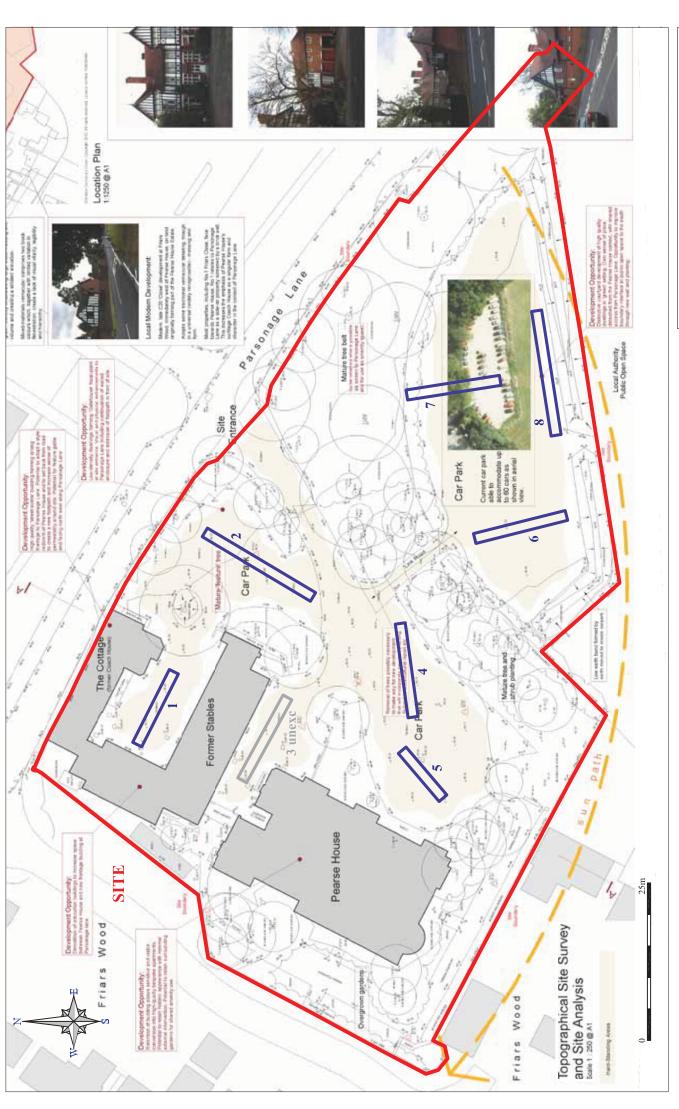


Fig. 3 Trench location plan
Scale 1:600 at A4

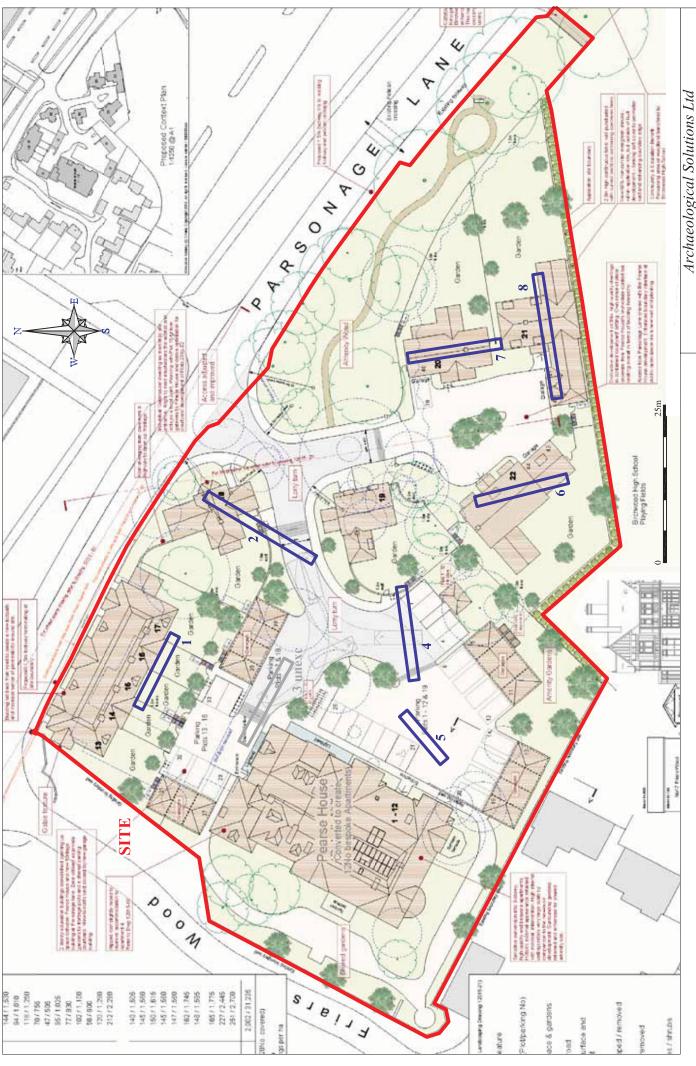


Fig. 4 Proposed development plan