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**ARCHAEOLOGICAL SOLUTIONS LTD**

**SIX HILLS HOUSE, KINGS ROAD/LONDON ROAD,  
STEVENAGE, HERTFORDSHIRE**

**ARCHAEOLOGICAL MONITORING & RECORDING**

HER Enquiry No. 175/15

Authors: Zbigniew Pozorski	
NGR: TL 2670 2366	Report No: 5055
District: Stevenage	Site Code: AS 1802
Approved: Claire Halpin	Project No: 6233
Signed:	Date: 26 February 2016

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**OASIS SUMMARY SHEET**

<b>Project details</b>			
<b>Project name</b>	<i>Six Hills House, Kings Road/London Road, Stevenage, Hertfordshire</i>		
<p><i>Between November 2015 and February 2016 Archaeological Solutions (AS) carried out archaeological monitoring and recording at Six Hills House, Kings Road/London Road, Stevenage, Hertfordshire (NGR TL 2670 2366). The monitoring was commissioned by Land Charter Homes in compliance with a planning condition attached to planning permission for the construction of 4No new bin and cycle stores, 1No sub station and 1No pumping station in association with the residential conversion of a former office block.</i></p> <p><i>The site lies adjacent to the Six Hills Tumuli, a group of round barrows of the 1<sup>st</sup>/2<sup>nd</sup> century date and Scheduled as Ancient Monuments. It also lies next to the course of the Roman/medieval road which equates to the course of London Road. The medieval settlement of Stevenage was centred on the High Street (an earlier Roman road) to the north. Therefore the site had a potential for Romano-British and medieval archaeological remains but the groundworks were smallscale.</i></p> <p><i>In the event the monitoring revealed no archaeological features or finds. The site appeared to be significantly truncated by modern construction works.</i></p>			
<b>Project dates (fieldwork)</b>	<i>26/11/2015, 21-22/01 and 23/02/2016</i>		
<b>Previous work (Y/N/?)</b>	<i>N</i>	<b>Future work (Y/N/?)</b>	<i>N</i>
<b>P. number</b>	<i>6233</i>	<b>Site code</b>	<i>AS 1802</i>
<b>Type of project</b>	<i>Archaeological Monitoring &amp; Recording</i>		
<b>Site status</b>	<i>-</i>		
<b>Current land use</b>	<i>Former office block</i>		
<b>Planned development</b>	<i>Residential conversion</i>		
<b>Main features (+dates)</b>	<i>-</i>		
<b>Significant finds (+dates)</b>	<i>-</i>		
<b>Project location</b>			
<b>County/ District/ Parish</b>	<i>Hertfordshire</i>	<i>Stevenage</i>	<i>Stevenage</i>
<b>HER/ SMR for area</b>	<i>Hertfordshire HER</i>		
<b>Post code (if known)</b>	<i>SG1 2TP</i>		
<b>Area of site</b>	<i>c.6000m<sup>2</sup></i>		
<b>NGR</b>	<i>TL 2670 2366</i>		
<b>Height AOD (min/max)</b>	<i>c.63m AOD</i>		
<b>Project creators</b>			
<b>Brief issued by</b>	<i>Requirements of HCC HEU</i>		
<b>Project supervisor/s (PO)</b>	<i>Zbigniew Pozorski</i>		
<b>Funded by</b>	<i>Land Charter Homes</i>		
<b>Full title</b>	<i>Six Hills House, Kings Road/London Road, Stevenage, Hertfordshire: Archaeological Monitoring &amp; Recording</i>		
<b>Authors</b>	<i>Pozorski, Z.</i>		
<b>Report no.</b>	<i>5055</i>		
<b>Date (of report)</b>	<i>February 2016</i>		

## **SIX HILLS HOUSE, KINGS ROAD/LONDON ROAD, STEVENAGE, HERTFORDSHIRE**

### **ARCHAEOLOGICAL MONITORING & RECORDING**

#### **SUMMARY**

*Between November 2015 and February 2016 Archaeological Solutions (AS) carried out archaeological monitoring and recording at Six Hills House, Kings Road/London Road, Stevenage, Hertfordshire (NGR TL 2670 2366). The monitoring was commissioned by Land Charter Homes in compliance with a planning condition attached to planning permission for the construction of 4No new bin and cycle stores, 1No sub station and 1No pumping station in association with the residential conversion of a former office block.*

*The site lies adjacent to the Six Hills Tumuli, a group of round barrows of the 1<sup>st</sup>/2<sup>nd</sup> century date and Scheduled as Ancient Monuments. It also lies next to the course of the Roman/medieval road which equates to the course of London Road. The medieval settlement of Stevenage was centred on the High Street (an earlier Roman road) to the north. Therefore the site had a potential for Romano-British and medieval archaeological remains but the groundworks were smallscale.*

*In the event the monitoring revealed no archaeological features or finds. The site appeared to be significantly truncated by modern construction works.*

#### **1 INTRODUCTION**

1.1 Between November 2015 and February 2016 Archaeological Solutions (AS) carried out archaeological monitoring and recording at Six Hills House, Kings Road/London Road, Stevenage, Hertfordshire (NGR TL 2670 2366; Figs. 1 & 2). The monitoring was commissioned by Land Charter Homes in compliance with a planning condition attached to planning permission for the construction of 4No new bin and cycle stores, 1No sub station and 1No pumping station in association with the residential conversion of a former office block (Stevenage Borough Council Planning Ref. 15/00078/FP).

1.2 The monitoring was undertaken in accordance to requirements of the Hertfordshire County Council Historic Environment Unit (HCC HEU), and a written scheme of investigation (specification) prepared by AS (dated 23/04/2015), and approved by HCC HEU. The project conformed to the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists (CIfA) *Code of Conduct and Standard and Guidance for An Archaeological Watching Brief* (2014), 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 on the western side of London Road and south of Six Hills Way in the centre of Stevenage New Town (Fig. 1). It comprises the existing building of Six Hills House and car park. Railway lines are just to the west and another office block is situated to the south.

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

3.1 The site is located within an urban area. Land further to the west of the site and the A1(M) road, however, remains relatively rural in character and is

dominated by gently undulating slopes and small wooded valleys occupied by arable farmland. Stevenage lies along the course of the Stevenage Brook, which is a much culverted tributary of the river Beane located 600m to the east of the site. The site is located at a height of approximately 93m AOD.

3.2 The drift geology of the site comprises undifferentiated glaciofluvial deposits overlying a solid geology of Upper Cretaceous Upper Chalk (British Geological Survey 1978). Local soils are of the Ludford Association, which are described as well-drained, flinty and loamy soils, overlying glacio-fluvial deposits, including gravel and clay-with-flints (Soil Survey of England and Wales 1983).

## 4 ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

### *Prehistory*

4.1 There have been suggestions of long-established and possibly widespread occupation within the Stevenage area, however no settlement focus has been identified and little excavation has been carried out (Thompson 2002, 2). The closest prehistoric finds to the site are c.170m to the north-west where a Neolithic flint implement and axe were discovered (HHER 2239 & 612). Further afield a Palaeolithic handaxe was discovered during redevelopment c.640m to the north (HHER 418), and a collection of three Palaeolithic handaxes was discovered c.430m to the north-east (HHER 1758).

### *Romano-British*

4.2 The road that runs from north to south through the town is certainly medieval but may have Roman origins, however only a few coin findspots are recorded along its route through the town. One such findspot lies c.470m to the north; a bronze coin of Marcus Aurelius (161-171 AD), found in 1957 (HHER 431). It seems likely that the road was part of a route from Welwyn to Baldock; following the valley towards the known Roman road from Baldock to the north, however its southern section is now disguised within the New Town (HHER 10565). Another argument for its Roman date is that it runs in a straight line past the monuments of the Six Hills barrows (HHER 36, 4291, 4292, 4293, 4294, 4295), an argument which is also used to prove the barrows themselves are Roman; as they run directly past the road (HHER 1577). However all that is clear is that the barrows were dug a long time ago and no certain finds are recorded (Thompson 2002, 3). They are similar in shape, size and layout to other lines of larger early Roman tumuli known in Britain and Europe, however nothing conclusive is known (HHER 1577).

### *Saxon*

4.3 An early Saxon sunken-floored structure has been found on the northern banks of the Stevenage Brook, c.3km to the south-east of the site; a rare indication of Saxon settlement in Hertfordshire. At present it cannot be said that *late* Saxon occupation had its origins in this early settlement; it may

be that the stream brought only intermittent settlement until a much later date (Thompson 2002, 4).

4.4 There was some kind of settlement here in 1086; called *Sticenaeece*, meaning 'at the strong oak' however where it was located is debated; there is little indication of late Saxon occupation here, especially on the highway. The estate belonged to the king but granted to the abbey of Westminster in 1062 at which time there may have been small settlement on the site of the later medieval manor house and parish church c.2.5km to the north-east of the site (Thompson 2002, 4).

#### *Medieval*

4.5 At the end of the 11<sup>th</sup> century when Domesday was compiled the manor of Stevenage, the property of Westminster Abbey, was settled by 28 families. Within this area the population was scattered, with small knots of settlement at the many Greens and Ends (Thompson 2002, 5). There are some localised examples of this type of settlement in the surrounding area, one to the north-west has now been incorporated into the New Town and dates back to 1248 (HHER 11210). Another lies on the edge of the modern town c.800m to the west and is first documented in 1360 (HHER 30281).

4.6 The settlement was focused around the parish church and demesne house, on high ground and visible from much of the parish c.2.5km to the north-east. The gravitation of settlement from the church to the highway in the valley does not appear to have begun before the 13<sup>th</sup> century; southern boundary of which was located c.1.1km to the north of the site. The market town is a comparatively late foundation, the grant (of a weekly market and annual fair) not being made until 1281 (Thompson 2002, 5).

#### *Post-medieval*

4.7 After the Dissolution Stevenage, being still Westminster Abbey lands, passed to the Bishop of London. During the 16<sup>th</sup> century the highway became part of the Great North Road and Stevenage gained provenance as a coaching town; being the third posting stage after London (Thompson 2002, 9).

4.8 During the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> century the town continued to flourish due to the coaching trade, the site still lay further south than the town's extents; brickworks were founded c.600m to the west of the site, though only on a small, rural scale (HHER 30591). Another brickfield, c.200m to the south-east is marked on the 1881 OS map and presumably served the Six Hills workers cottages nearby (HHER 13134). The guild of literature and art was built in 1865 to house impoverished writers and artists; c.260m to the north. However it was not as successful as was first envisioned and closed in 1897 (HHER 10577).



## Modern

4.9 Stevenage was designated a New Town in 1946 when the population size was under 8,000, by 1971 it had grown to approximately 67,000 and new housing covered the parishes of Stevenage, Shephall and Knebworth. The centre of the new town was centred south of the Old High Street, nearer to the site. Town Square; part of the first large pedestrians-only shopping centre in Britain opened in 1959 and new industries, factories and warehouses spread southwards (Thompson 2002, 29-30).

## 5 METHODOLOGY

5.1 The groundworks monitored comprised the construction of four new cycle stores, new drainage to the west and south of the building, and a new pumping station with associated drainage (Fig. 2).

5.2 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.

## 6 DESCRIPTION OF RESULTS

6.1 Deposits located within monitored area were recorded in sample sections presented below.

<i>Sample section 1 (DP 2)</i> <i>Test pit within new cycle store to north-east of the building,</i> <i>facing south-south-east</i> <i>0.00 = 63.17m AOD</i>		
0.00 – 0.23m	L1000	Topsoil. Mid to dark grey, friable, sandy silt.
0.23 – 0.70m+	L1001	Modern made ground. Light to mid yellowish brown, loose, silty sand with frequent CBM fragments.

<i>Sample section 2 (DP 4)</i> <i>Service trench to north-west of the building, facing west-south-west</i> <i>0.00 = 63.23m AOD</i>		
0.00 – 0.05m	L1002	Tarmac.
0.05 – 0.30m	L1003	Modern made ground. Light red, compacted, CBM rubble.
0.30 – 0.60m+	L1004	Modern made ground. Mid brownish grey, compact, silty clay with moderate CBM fragments.

<i>Sample section 3 (DP 9)</i> <i>Excavation for new pumping station, facing west-south-west</i> <i>0.00 = 63.33m AOD</i>		
0.00 – 0.36m	L1005	Topsoil. Mid grey, friable, sandy silt with frequent roots.
0.36 – 0.55m	L1006	Subsoil. Dark grey, friable, silty sand.
0.55 – 0.70m+	L1007	Natural. Light brownish yellow, compact, silty clay.

<i>Sample section 4 (DP 10)</i> <i>Excavation for new pumping station, facing east-north-east</i> <i>0.00 = 63.36m AOD</i>		
0.00 – 0.09m	L1002	Tarmac.
0.09 – 0.31m	L1008	Levelling layer. Dark red, loose, crushed CBM and debris.
0.31 – 0.55m	L1006	Subsoil. As above, Sample Section 3.
0.55 – 0.65m+	L1007	Natural clay. As above, Sample Section 3.

<i>Sample section 5 (DP 10)</i> <i>Service trench adjacent to new pumping station, facing south-south-east</i> <i>0.00 = 63.41m AOD</i>		
0.00 – 0.05m	L1002	Tarmac.
0.05 – 0.17m	L1009	Levelling layer. Dark red, loose, crushed CBM and gravel.
0.17 – 0.38m	L1010	Dark grey, compact, clayey silt, possibly contaminated.
0.38 – 0.60m+	L1007	Natural clay. As above, Sample Section 3.

*Description: No archaeological features or finds were identified.*

The groundworks related to the construction of the new cycle stores comprised a shallow (maximum 0.30m) ground reduction revealing only modern made ground. To investigate further the nature of deposits a test pit was excavated (Fig. 2).

## **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 modern deposits, in particular Tarmac L1002 and its basal/levelling layers beneath (0.20 – 0.30m thick in total). Topsoil (L1000 and L1005; 0.15 – 0.40m thick) was present within areas previously lawned along perimeter fence. Below were deposits of modern made ground (0.30 – 0.50m+ thick) and Subsoil L1006 was only located within the south-eastern corner of the site where the new pumping

station would be built. L1006 consisted of dark grey, friable, silty sand and it was 0.20 – 0.25m thick.

8.2 The natural clay, L1006, was present at 0.35 – 0.60m below existing ground level and comprised a light brownish yellow, compact, silty clay.

## **9 DISCUSSION**

9.1 The site had a potential for archaeological remains, in particular for Romano-British and medieval archaeology. The site is adjacent to the Six Hills Tumuli, a group of round barrows of the 1<sup>st</sup>/2<sup>nd</sup> century date and Scheduled as Ancient Monuments. It also lies next to the course of the Roman/medieval road which shadows London Road. The medieval settlement of Stevenage was centred on the High Street (an earlier Roman road) to the north.

9.2 In the event no archaeological features or finds were revealed, and no residual finds were recovered. The majority of the site was significantly affected by modern works related to the construction of the office block. The least disturbed area was the location of new pumping station in the south-eastern sector of the site. The new groundworks required for the project were very small-scale.

## **10 DEPOSITION OF THE ARCHIVE**

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

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

Archaeological Solutions would like to thank Land Charter Homes for funding the project, in particular Mr Jim Regan for his assistance on site.

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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Gurney, D. 2003 *Standards for Field Archaeology in the East of England*. East Anglian Archaeology Occasional Paper no. 14

SSEW 1983 *Soil Survey of England and Wales: Soils of South East England (sheet 4)*. Harpenden, Rothamsted Experimental Station/Lawes Agricultural Trust

SSEW 1983 *Soil Survey of England and Wales: Legend for the 1:250,000 Soil Map of England and Wales* Harpenden, Rothamsted Experimental Station/Lawes Agricultural Trust

Thompson, I. 2002 *Stevenage: Extensive urban survey project assessment report* Hertford, Hertfordshire County Council

## APPENDIX 1 CONTENTS OF THE ARCHIVE

Records	Number
Brief	N
Specification	Y
Registers	3 (Context, Drawing, Digital Photo)
Context Sheets	10
Site drawings A1	0
Site drawings A3	1
Site drawings A4	0
Site photographs b/w	0
Site photographs colour slides	0
Digital Photographs	28

## APPENDIX 2 HER SUMMARY SHEET

<b>Site name and address:</b>	Six Hills House, Kings Road/London Road, Stevenage, Hertfordshire
<b>County:</b> Herts	<b>District:</b> Stevenage
<b>Village/Town:</b>	<b>Parish:</b> Stevenage
<b>Planning application reference:</b>	Stevenage Borough Council Planning Ref. 15/00078/FP
<b>Client name/address/tel:</b>	Land Charter Homes
<b>Nature of application:</b>	Residential refurbishment
<b>Present land use:</b>	Disused office block
<b>Size of application area:</b> c.7200m <sup>2</sup>	<b>Size of area investigated</b> c.60m <sup>2</sup>
<b>NGR (8 figures):</b>	TL 2670 2366
<b>Site Code:</b>	AS 12802
<b>Site director/Organization:</b>	Archaeological Solutions Ltd
<b>Type of work:</b>	Archaeological Monitoring & Recording
<b>Date of work:</b>	26/11/2015, 21-22/01 and 23/02/2016
<b>Location of finds/Curating museum:</b>	Stevenage
<b>Related SMR Nos:</b>	<b>Periods represented:</b> None
<b>Relevant previous summaries/reports:</b> -	-
<b>Summary of fieldwork results:</b>	<p>Between November 2015 and February 2016 Archaeological Solutions (AS) carried out an archaeological monitoring and recording at Six Hills House, Kings Road/London Road, Stevenage, Hertfordshire (NGR TL 2670 2366). The monitoring was commissioned by Land Charter Homes in compliance with a planning condition attached to planning permission for the construction of 4No new bin and cycle stores, 1No sub station and 1No pumping station in association with residential conversion of a former office block.</p> <p>In the event the monitoring revealed no archaeological features or finds. The site appeared to be significantly truncated by modern construction works.</p>
<b>Author of summary:</b> Z Pozorski	<b>Date of Summary:</b> February 2016

## PHOTOGRAPHIC INDEX



DP 1. Test pit within cycle store to the north-east of the building. Looking north-north-east.



DP 2. Test pit within cycle store to the north-east of the building. Sample section 1. Looking north-north-west.



DP 3. New cycle store to the south-west of the building. Looking west-south-west.



DP 4. Drainage trench to the north-west of the building. Sample section 2. Looking east-north-east.



DP 5. Works to the south of the building. Looking west-south-west.



DP 6. The Six Hill Tumuli. North-east view from location of new pumping station.



DP 7. Excavation for new pumping station. Looking north-north-east.



DP 8. Excavation for new pumping station. Looking south-south-east.



DP 9. Excavation for new pumping station. Sample section 3. Looking east-north-east.



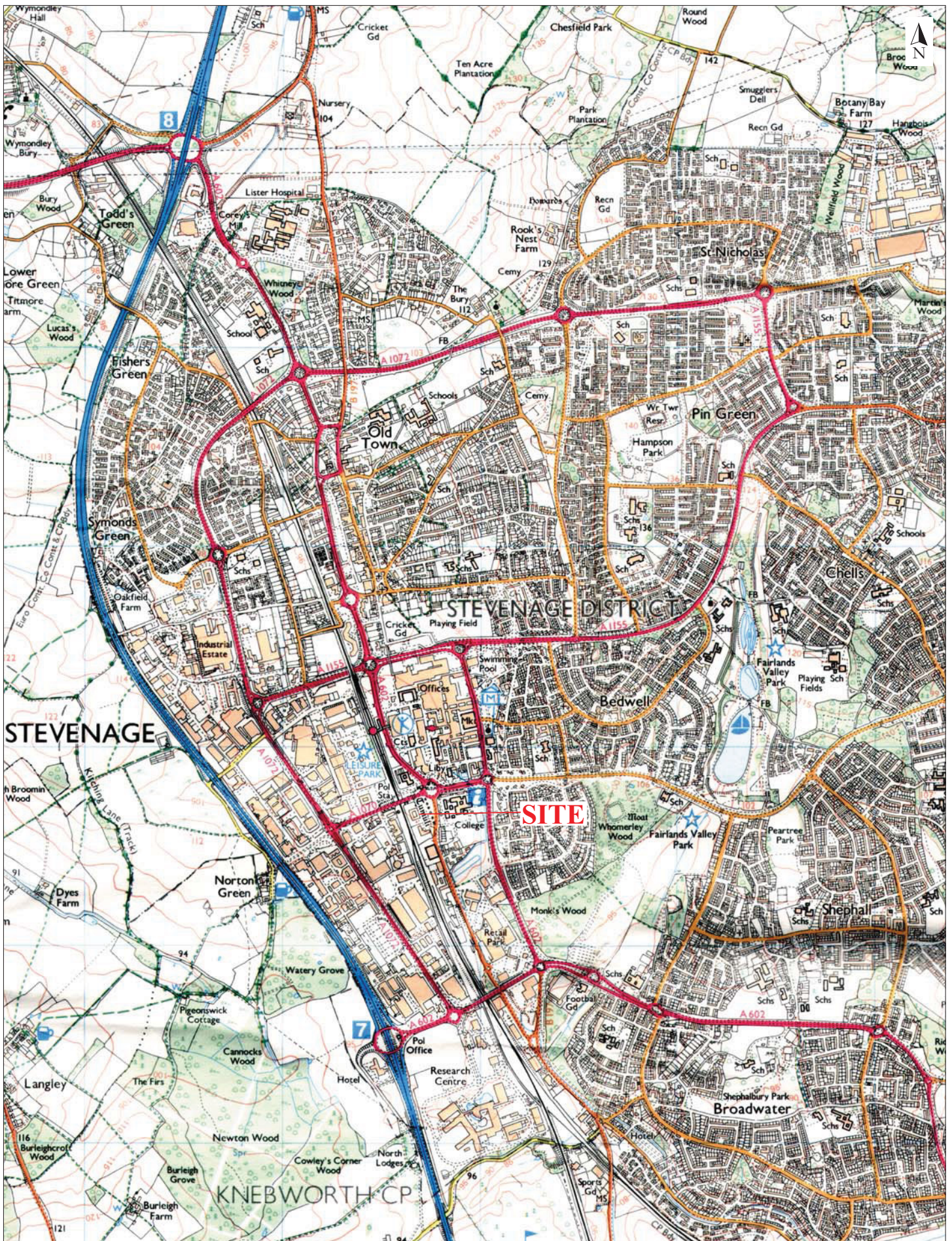
DP 10. Excavation for new pumping station. Sample section 4. Looking west-south-west.



DP 11. Service trench for new pumping station. Looking east.



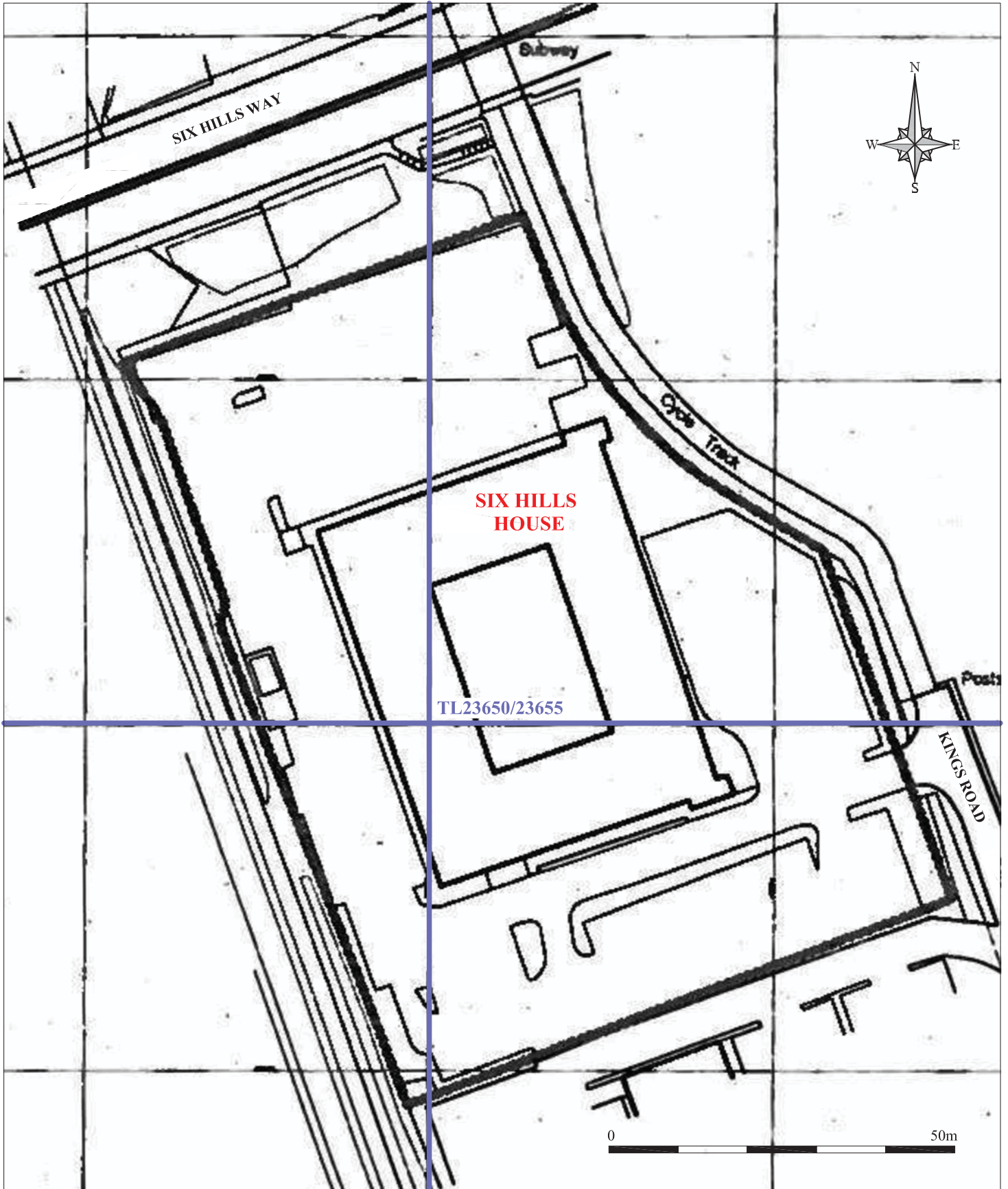
DP 12. Service trench for new pumping station. Sample section 5. Looking north-north-west.



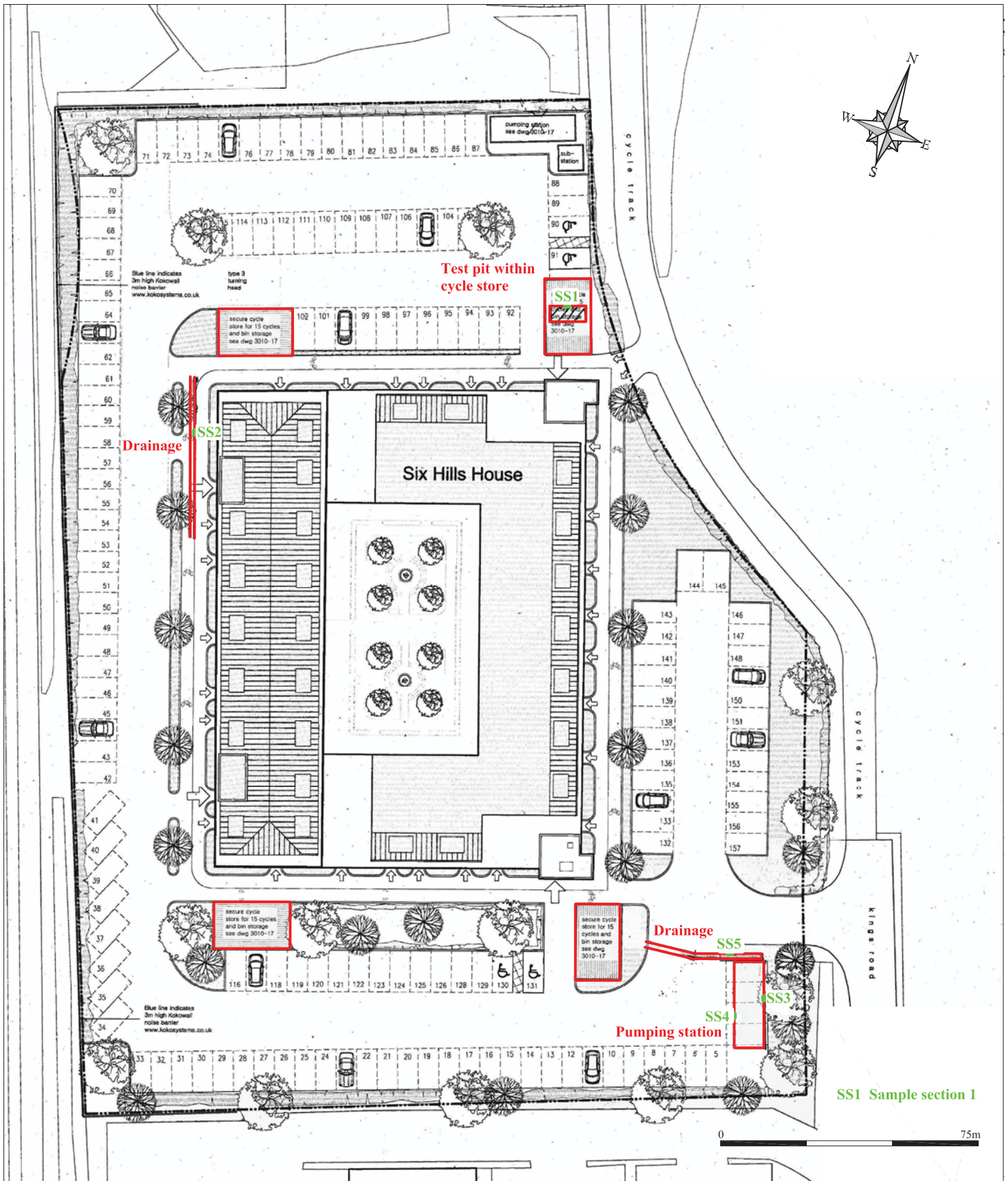
Reproduced from the 1999 Ordnance Survey 1:25000 map with the permission of Her Majesty's Stationery Office. © Crown copyright Archaeological Solutions Ltd Licence number 100036680

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**Fig. 1 Site location plan**  
 Scale 1:25,000 at A4  
 Six Hills House, Stevenage, Hertfordshire (P6233)

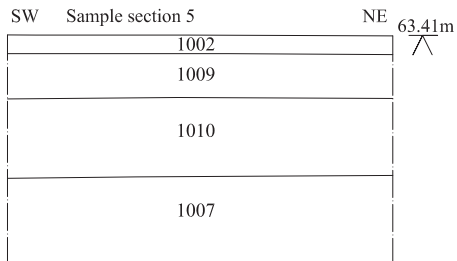
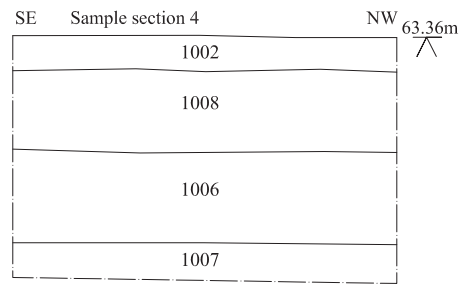
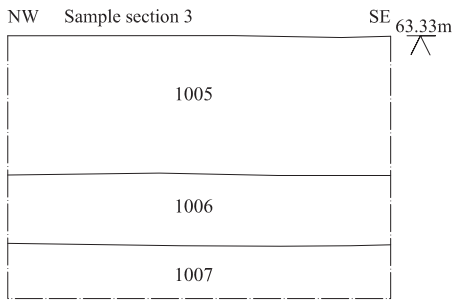
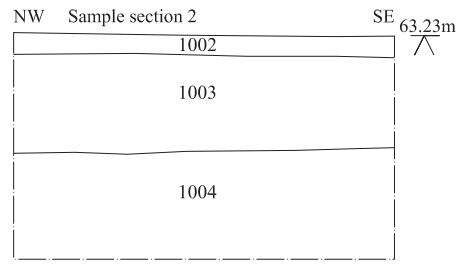
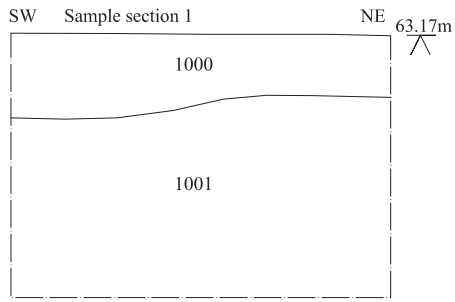




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**Fig. 2 Detailed site location plan**  
Scale 1:750 at A4  
Six Hills House, Stevenage (P6233)



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 Fig. 3 Areas monitored  
 Scale 1:1500 at A4  
 Six Hills House, Stevenage (P6233)



<i>Archaeological Solutions Ltd</i>
<b>Fig. 4 Sample sections</b>
Scale 1:20 at A4
Six Hills House, Stevenage (P6233)