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**ARCHAEOLOGICAL SOLUTIONS LTD**

**PROPOSED MANEGE, BIRCHALL FARM,  
BIRCHALL LANE, COLE GREEN, HERTFORD,  
HERTFORDSHIRE**

**AN ARCHAEOLOGICAL 'STRIP, MAP & RECORD'  
INVESTIGATION**

Authors: Zbigniew Pozorski	
NGR: TL 27164 11704	Report No: 5299
District: East Herts	Site Code: AS1836
Approved: Claire Halpin	Project No: 6647
	Date: 26 January 2016

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**OASIS SUMMARY SHEET**

<b>Project details</b>			
<b>Project name</b>		<i>Proposed Manege, Birchall Farm, Birchall Lane, Hertford, Hertfordshire</i>	
<p><i>In April 2016 Archaeological Solutions (AS) carried out an archaeological 'strip, map &amp; record' investigation of land at Birchall Farm, Birchall Lane, Hertford, Hertfordshire (NGR TL 27164 11704). The project was commissioned by Mr Richard Wilson and was undertaken in compliance with a planning condition attached to planning permission for the construction of a ménage.</i></p> <p><i>The site lies within an area of archaeological importance adjacent to the course of an extant medieval moat which may relate to a possible medieval double homestead moat. The central moated area lies in the area of the proposed manege and therefore the site may directly overlie the backfilled moat.</i></p> <p><i>In the event no archaeological features or finds were revealed. The ground reduction was shallow and the natural was not exposed. Removal of the topsoil revealed modern made ground.</i></p>			
Project dates (fieldwork)		25/04/2016	
Previous work (Y/N/?)		N	Future work (Y/N/?)
P. number		6647	Site code
Type of project		AS1836	
Site status		An Archaeological 'Strip, Map & Record' Investigation	
Current land use		Farm	
Planned development		Menage	
Main features (+dates)		None	
Significant finds (+dates)		None	
<b>Project location</b>			
County/ District/ Parish		Hertfordshire	East Hertfordshire
HER/ SMR for area		Cole Green	
HER/ SMR for area		Hertfordshire HER	
Post code (if known)		SG14 2NR	
Area of site		800m <sup>2</sup>	
NGR		TL 27164 11704	
Height AOD (min/max)		81m AOD	
<b>Project creators</b>			
Brief issued by		HCC HEAT	
Project supervisor/s (PO)		Zbigniew Pozorski	
Funded by		Mr Richard Wilson	
Full title		Proposed Manege, Birchall Farm, Birchall Lane, Hertford, Hertfordshire. An Archaeological 'Strip, Map & Record' Investigation	
Authors		Pozorski, Z.	
Report no.		5299	
Date (of report)		May 2016	

# **PROPOSED MANEGE, BIRCHALL FARM, BIRCHALL LANE, COLE GREEN, HERTFORD, HERTFORDSHIRE**

## **AN ARCHAEOLOGICAL 'STRIP, MAP & RECORD' INVESTIGATION**

### **SUMMARY**

*In April 2016 Archaeological Solutions (AS) carried out an archaeological 'strip, map & record' investigation of land at Birchall Farm, Birchall Lane, Hertford, Hertfordshire (NGR TL 27164 11704). The project was commissioned by Mr Richard Wilson and was undertaken in compliance with a planning condition attached to planning permission for the construction of a ménage.*

*The site lies within an area of archaeological importance adjacent to the course of an extant medieval moat which may relate to a possible medieval double homestead moat. The central moated area lies in the area of the proposed manège and therefore the site may directly overlie the backfilled moat.*

*In the event no archaeological features or finds were revealed. The ground reduction was shallow and the natural was not exposed. Removal of the topsoil revealed modern made ground.*

### **1 INTRODUCTION**

1.1 In April 2016 Archaeological Solutions (AS) carried out an archaeological 'strip, map & record' investigation at land at Birchall Farm, Birchall Lane, Hertford, Hertfordshire (NGR TL 27164 11704; Figs. 1 & 2). The project was commissioned by Mr Richard Wilson and was undertaken in compliance with a planning condition attached to planning permission for the construction of a manège (East Herts Planning Ref. 3/16/0097/FUL).

1.2 The project was undertaken in accordance the requirements of Hertfordshire County Council Historic Environment Advisory Team (HCC HEAT) and a written scheme of investigation (specification) prepared by AS (dated 21/03/2016) and approved by HCC HEAT. The project conformed to the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists (CIfA) *Code of Conduct and Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Excavation* (2014), and the document *Standards for Field Archaeology in the East of England* (Gurney 2003).

1.3 The 'strip, map & record' investigation aimed to identify any evidence of the medieval moated site, including occupation of the central platform and former infilled lines of the moat, which may be revealed during groundworks for the proposed development.

### *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 at Birchall Farm, Birchall Lane, Cole Green, Hertfordshire and c.2km south-east of Welwyn Garden City centre and c.3.5km west of Hertford.

2.2 The site comprises a grassed area to the immediate east of the existing farm buildings and adjacent to the water-filled course of a former moat. It is proposed to building a menage, extending to some 40m x 20m.

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

3.1 The site is situated at c.80m AOD on land very gently ascending towards the north. The solid geology of the area is characterised by recent and Pleistocene glacial gravel overlying a solid geology of Cretaceous Upper Chalk of the Lewes Nodular Chalk Formation and Seaford Chalk Formation (British Geological Survey 1978). Soils on the site are generally the well

drained sandy loams of the Ludford association, described as locally flinty, though clay soils are present to the east (Soil Survey of England and Wales 1983).

## 4 ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

4.1 Evidence for prehistoric activity on the plateau overlooking the River Mimram appears focussed on the Bronze Age, although Palaeolithic flint axes have also been recovered close to the river and its tributaries. Excavation on the route of the Cole Green By-Pass to the east, south of Panshanger Park, revealed evidence for a late Bronze Age or early Iron Age settlement (McDonald 2004), and elements of this landscape appear to extend towards the site. Late Bronze Age/early Iron Age postholes, pits and linear features containing flint-tempered pottery were recorded c.100m to the east of Birchall Farm (HER 18655); with a further widespread scatter of contemporary features and finds c.200m to the north-west (HER18652-3). Late Bronze Age pots and ditches containing pottery have also been recorded c.700m to the north-west (HER 12767-8), and that area around Green Lane and Birchall Wood has revealed extensive cropmarks, the bulk of which remain undated, although some have been postulated a plough-raised Bronze Age round barrows (i.e. HER 2811, 2794 & 2810)

4.2 Late Iron Age to Roman activity in the wider area is well-attested, but closer to the site is largely limited to enclosures and field systems, including ditches c.250m north-west of the site (HER 18654 & 2813). A Roman ditch has also been recorded in Birchall Wood to the north (HER 18656), while rectangular earthworks in Rolls Wood further to the west have been postulated as a Roman enclosure, but could also be potentially medieval (HER 7965).

4.3 The site lies within an area of archaeological importance adjacent to the course of an extant medieval moated site, which would have contained a homestead (HER 682). The structure of the medieval moat is not fully understood and it may have been a double moat with a second island on the south side; however this may have been the first phase of post-medieval embellishment. The moat currently survives as a narrow elongated pond, which would have formed the eastern arm and part of the northern arm. The moat is shown enclosing the island that would have been occupied by a homestead on estate maps of 1703-4 (Richmond & Thomas 2011: figs.3-4), and on subsequent Ordnance Survey maps of 1880 and 1898; however when the lane to the south of the site was straightened to by-pass the farm in 1972, much of the moat was filled in. The existing farmhouse adjacent to the south-west of the moat was built in the late 18<sup>th</sup> century; however the north range of the farmyard is older and includes a 17<sup>th</sup> century timber-framed barn (HER 17634). The site of the proposed ménage is to the east of the existing farm buildings, and appears to overlie the southern arm of the moat, and possibly the south-eastern corner. In addition to Birchall, a second moated homestead was located to the south-west on the edge of Moat Wood (HER2814), while medieval pits and ditches containing local pottery were recorded in Birchall



Wood to the north (HER 18651), demonstrating that this was an extensive rural agricultural landscape.

4.4 The medieval agricultural landscape continued into the 18<sup>th</sup> century, with field boundaries depicted on estate maps, which are now visible as cropmarks, notably to the east and west of Birchall Wood (HER 2170, 2848 & 2904), and also c.300m to the east of the site (HER 7695 & 7696). One such ditch was recorded c.350m to the north during an archaeological evaluation (HER 18657). In the 18<sup>th</sup> century the local landscape was transformed by the construction of Panshanger House c.800m to the north-east, with extensive kitchen gardens, parkland and dower house (HER 11901, 7334, 11897 & 11900), though Birchall appears to have remained beyond the south-western extent of the estate.

## 5 METHODOLOGY

5.1 The intrusive groundworks on the site comprised ground reduction within the proposed new manege area measuring 40 x 20m (Fig. 2). The work was carried out using a mechanical 180° excavator fitted with a toothless ditching bucket. The ground reduction comprised removal of the topsoil which was replaced with drainage material (stone) topped with a membrane and surface material. No drainage pipework was inserted.

5.2 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.

## 6 DESCRIPTION OF RESULTS

Deposits revealed within the investigated area are presented in sample section below.

<i>Sample section 1 (DP 6): north end, south facing</i>		
<i>0.00 = 81.02 AOD</i>		
0.00 – 0.33m	L1000	Topsoil. Dark grey, soft, sandy silt.
0.33m +	L1001	Mid yellow with grey, friable, clayey silt and gravel.

*Description:* No archaeological features or finds were present within the area of new manege. A modern drain, orientated east/west extending from the farm buildings to the moat traversed the stripped area.



## **7 CONFIDENCE RATING**

7.1 It is not felt that any factors inhibited the recognition of archaeological features or finds except the shallow depth of the excavations which limited the extent of the investigation.

## **8 DEPOSIT MODEL**

8.1 The site was commonly overlain by Topsoil L1000, a dark grey, soft, sandy silt (0.10 – 0.35m thick). The ground reduction was relatively shallow (0.20 – 0.35m) and within the majority of the area it exposed modern made ground. In the northern part of the stripped area the topsoil was overlain by made ground. The central part of the stripped area contained modern debris.

## **9 DISCUSSION**

9.1 The site had a potential for archaeological remains, in particular for medieval and post-medieval archaeology. It is located within a medieval moated site and possibly part of the investigated area overlay the infilled section of the moat.

9.2 In the event no archaeological features or finds were revealed. The ground reduction was shallow and the natural was not exposed. Removal of the topsoil revealed modern made ground.

## **10 DEPOSITION OF THE ARCHIVE**

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

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

Archaeological Solutions would like to thank Mr Richard Wilson for funding the project and for his assistance.

AS would also like to acknowledge the input and advice of Ms Alison Tinniswood of Hertfordshire County Council Historic Environment Advisory Team, and the Hertfordshire HER staff.

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Richmond, A. & Thomas, A., 2011. *Archaeological desk-based assessment: land at Birchall Farm, Welwyn Garden City, Hertfordshire*. Lafarge Aggregates

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## APPENDIX 1      CONTENTS OF THE ARCHIVE

<b>Records</b>	<b>Number</b>
Brief	N
Specification	Y
Registers	1 (Context, Digital Photo)
Context Sheets	3
Site drawings A1	0
Site drawings A3	0
Site drawings A4	1
Site photographs b/w	0
Site photographs colour slides	0
Digital Photographs	20

## APPENDIX 2      HER SUMMARY SHEET

<b>Site name and address:</b>	Birchall Farm, Birchall Lane, Hertford, Hertfordshire
<b>County:</b> Herts	<b>District:</b> East Herts
<b>Village/Town:</b>	<b>Parish:</b> Cole Green
<b>Planning application reference:</b>	East Herts Planning Ref. 3/16/0097/FUL
<b>Client name/address/tel:</b>	Mr Richard Wilson
<b>Nature of application:</b>	Construction of new menage
<b>Present land use:</b>	Farm
<b>Size of application area:</b> c.800m <sup>2</sup>	<b>Size of area investigated</b> 800m <sup>2</sup>
<b>NGR (8 figures):</b>	TL 27164 11704
<b>Site Code:</b>	AS1836
<b>Site director/Organization:</b>	Archaeological Solutions Ltd
<b>Type of work:</b>	'Strip, map & record' investigation
<b>Date of work:</b>	03/05/2016
<b>Location of finds/Curating museum:</b>	Hertford
<b>Related SMR Nos:</b>	<b>Periods represented:</b> None
<b>Relevant previous summaries/reports:</b> -	-
<b>Summary of fieldwork results:</b>	<p><i>In April 2016 Archaeological Solutions (AS) carried out an archaeological 'strip, map &amp; record' investigation of land at Birchall Farm, Birchall Lane, Hertford, Hertfordshire (NGR TL 27164 11704). The project was commissioned by Mr Richard Wilson and was undertaken in compliance with a planning condition attached to planning permission for the construction of a ménage.</i></p> <p><i>In the event no archaeological features or finds were revealed. The ground reduction was shallow and the natural was not exposed. Removal of the topsoil revealed modern made ground.</i></p>
<b>Author of summary:</b> Z Pozorski	<b>Date of Summary:</b> January 2017

## PHOTOGRAPHIC INDEX



DP 1. The site. View towards the farm.  
Looking south-west.



DP 2. Excavation area. Looking south-east.



DP 3. North part of excavation area.  
Looking west-south-west.



DP 4. Central/north part of excavation area.  
Looking north-west.

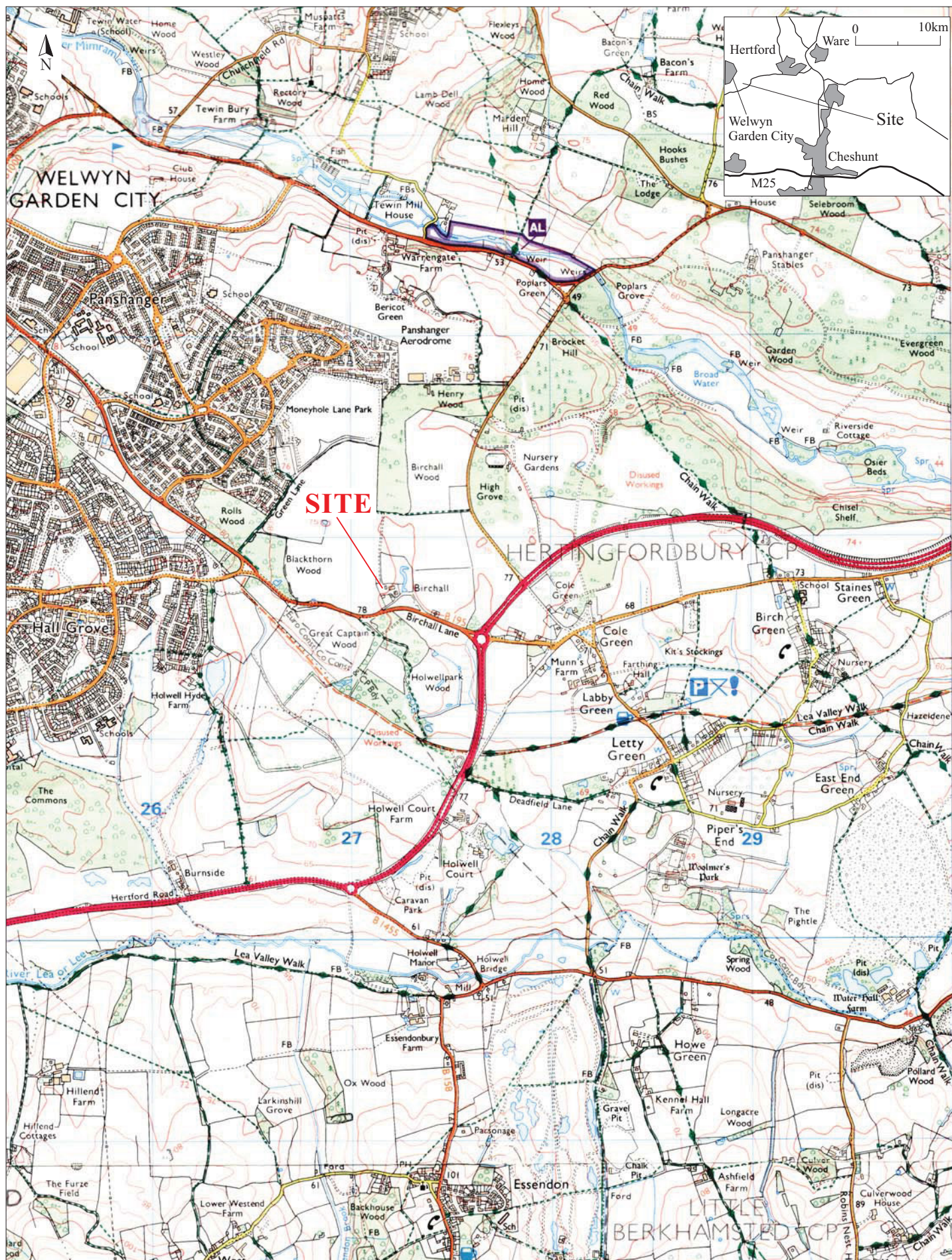


DP 5. Excavation area. Looking north-north-west.



DP 6. Sample section 1. Looking north-north-west.

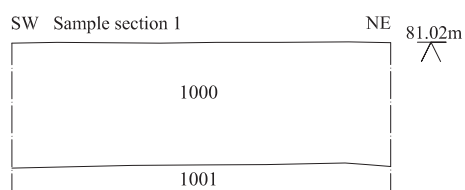
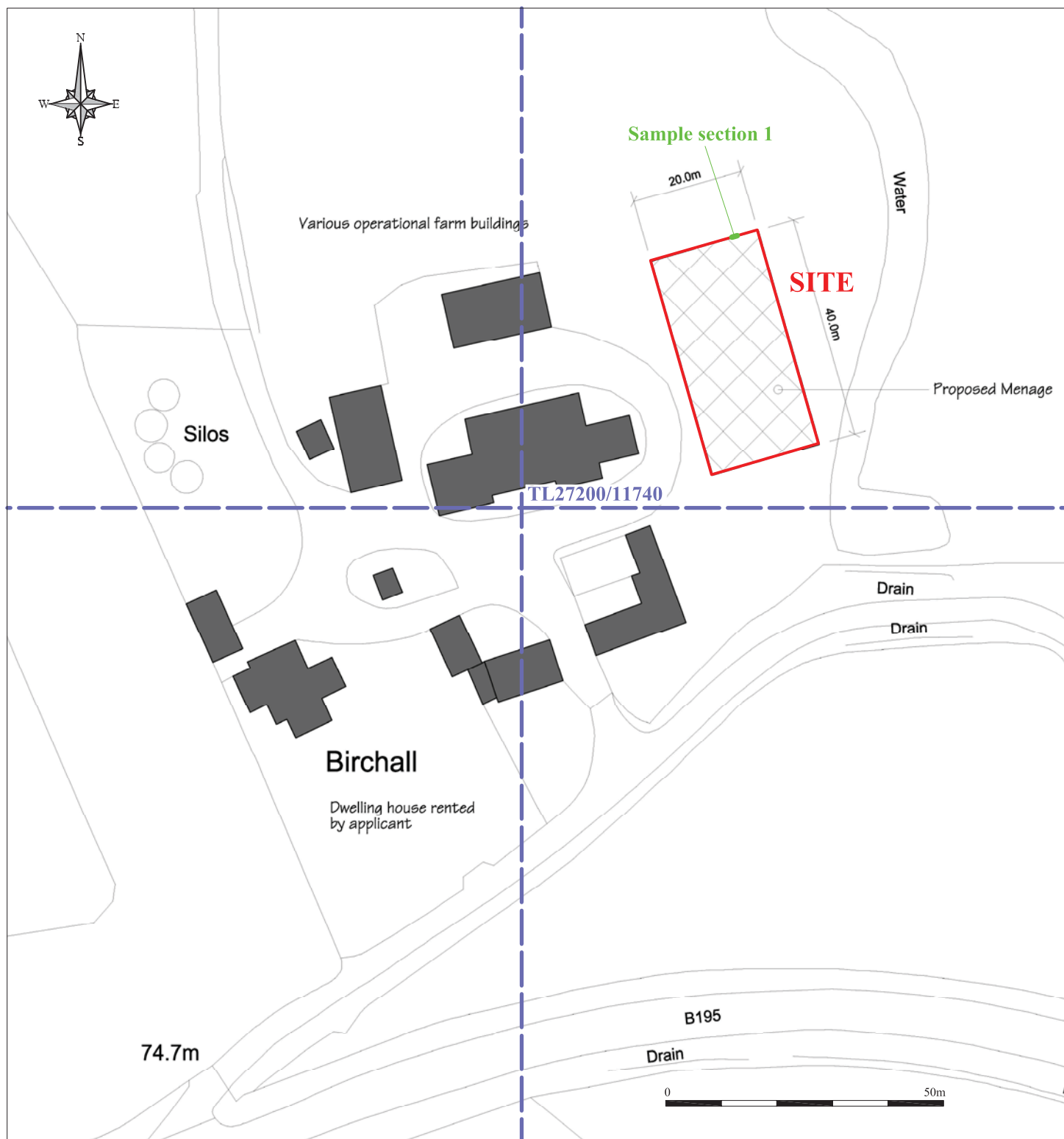




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**Fig. 1 Site location plan**  
Scale 1:25,000  
Birchall Farm, Cole Green, Hertford (P6647)





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<b>Fig. 2 Detailed site location plan</b>
Scale 1:1250 at A4
Birchall Farm, Cole Green, Hertford (P6647)