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**AMBLER VIEW (ATKINS NURSERY),
MARSH LANE, STANSTEAD ABBOTTS,
HERTFORDSHIRE SG12 8HH**

ARCHAEOLOGICAL MONITORING & RECORDING

HER Request Ref: 4.14

Authors: Kamil Orzechowski (Fieldwork & Report)	
NGR: TL 38820 11495	Report No: 4560
District: East Herts	Site Code: AS 1682
Approved: Claire Halpin	Project No: 5704
Signed:	Date: 1 st May 2014

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OASIS SUMMARY SHEET

Project details			
Project name	<i>Ambler View (Atkins Nursery), Marsh Lane, Stanstead Abbots, Hertfordshire SG12 8HH.</i>		
<p><i>In April 2014 Archaeological Solutions (AS) carried out an archaeological monitoring and recording at Ambler View (Atkins Nursery), Marsh Lane, Stanstead Abbots, Hertfordshire SG12 8HH (NGR TL 38820 11495). The monitoring was commissioned by Mr Alan Greening, Architect on behalf of Between Time Ltd, in compliance with a planning condition attached to planning permission for the proposed retention of horticultural use and part change of use of the existing nursery for B1 office and workshop (East Herts District Council Planning Ref. 3/12/1051/FP).</i></p> <p><i>The monitoring revealed a thin layer of peat at a depth of 0.73m below the current ground surface. No archaeological finds or features were identified.</i></p>			
Project dates (fieldwork)	<i>22nd-24th & 28th April 2014</i>		
Previous work (Y/N/?)	<i>N</i>	Future work (Y/N/?)	<i>N</i>
P. number	<i>5704</i>	Site code	<i>AS 1682</i>
Type of project	<i>Archaeological Monitoring & Recording</i>		
Site status	<i>Within Area of Archaeological Significance 185</i>		
Current land use	<i>Nursery</i>		
Planned development	<i>Partial change of use</i>		
Main features (+dates)	<i>Peat layer</i>		
Significant finds (+dates)	<i>None</i>		
Project location			
County/ District/ Parish	<i>Hertfordshire</i>	<i>East Herts</i>	<i>Stanstead Abbots</i>
HER/ SMR for area	<i>Hertfordshire HER</i>		
Post code (if known)	<i>SG12 8HH</i>		
Area of site	<i>c. 2400m²</i>		
NGR	<i>TL 38820 11495</i>		
Height AOD (min/max)	<i>25-30m AOD</i>		
Project creators			
Brief issued by	<i>Advice from HCC HEU</i>		
Project supervisor/s (PO)	<i>Kamil Orzechowski</i>		
Funded by	<i>Between Time Ltd</i>		
Full title	<i>Ambler View (Atkins Nursery), Marsh Lane, Stanstead Abbots, Hertfordshire SG12 8HH. Archaeological Monitoring and Recording</i>		
Authors	<i>Orzechowski, K</i>		
Report no.	<i>4560</i>		
Date (of report)	<i>May 2014</i>		

**AMBLER VIEW (ATKINS NURSERY), MARSH LANE, STANSTEAD
ABBOTTS, HERTFORDSHIRE SG12 8HH**

ARCHAEOLOGICAL MONITORING & RECORDING

SUMMARY

In April 2014 Archaeological Solutions (AS) carried out an archaeological monitoring and recording at Ambler View (Atkins Nursery), Marsh Lane, Stanstead Abbots, Hertfordshire SG12 8HH (NGR TL 38820 11495). The monitoring was commissioned by Mr Alan Greening, Architect, on behalf of Between Time Ltd in compliance with a planning condition attached to planning permission for the proposed retention of horticultural use and part change of use of the existing nursery for B1 office and workshop (East Herts District Council Planning Ref. 3/12/1051/FP).

The site is situated within Area of Archaeological Significance 185 as identified on the EHDC Local Plan. The Area includes the medieval and post-medieval settlement, and evidence of occupation and other activity of earlier (prehistoric and Roman) date. In particular the site lies immediately adjacent to the site of a Mesolithic flint working floor, at 71 Roydon Road. At the latter 1300 struck flints were recorded, along with stakeholes of an associated shelter. Pig bones were also recovered and subsequent radiocarbon dating suggested a 9th century AD date, indicating Anglo-Saxon activity. A group of workers cottages were located approximately 110m to the north (HHER 12153).

In the event the monitoring revealed a thin layer of peat at a depth of 0.73m below the current ground surface. No archaeological finds or features were identified.

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 In April 2014 Archaeological Solutions (AS) carried out an archaeological monitoring and recording at Ambler View (Atkins Nursery), Marsh Lane, Stanstead Abbots, Hertfordshire SG12 8HH (NGR TL 38820 11495; Figs. 1 & 2). The monitoring was commissioned by Mr Alan Greening, Architect, on behalf of Between Time Ltd in compliance with a planning condition attached to planning permission for the proposed retention of horticultural use and part change of use of the existing nursery for B1 office and workshop (East Herts District Council Planning Ref. 3/12/1051/FP).

1.2 The monitoring was undertaken in accordance to a brief issued by Hertfordshire County Council Historic Environment Unit (HCC HEU; dated 12/03/2014), and a written scheme of investigation

(specification) prepared by AS (dated 18/03/2014), and approved by HCC HEU. The project conformed to the Institute for Archaeologists (IfA) *Code of Conduct and Standard and Guidance for An Archaeological Watching Brief* (revised 2008), 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.

1.4 The main research issues for the project are to identify any archaeological remains during monitoring of the groundworks for the proposed development. The site had the potential to reveal further evidence of prehistoric flint working/occupation and Saxon/medieval remains in particular.

Planning policy context

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 to the south of Marsh Lane, Stanstead Abbots, and comprises the existing Atkins Nursery with glasshouses etc. It is proposed to retain the horticultural use of the site and part change the use of the existing Atkins Nursery building for B1 office and workshop use.

3 TOPOGRAPHY, GEOLOGY AND SOILS

3.1 Stanstead Abbots is situated at approximately 25-30m AOD on the east bank of the River Lea, just to the north of where it is joined by the River Stort. The Lea Valley has been subjected to a large amount of gravel quarrying in post-medieval and modern times.

3.2 The local soil is of the Fladbury 1 association described as stoneless clay soils sometimes with calcareous in places. These are above river alluvium and the solid geology of Thanet Formation, but the site is very close to the boundary with Upper Cretaceous chalk.

4 ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

4.1 The site is situated within Area of Archaeological Significance 185 as identified on the EHDC Local Plan. In particular, Atkins Nursery lies immediately adjacent to the site of a Mesolithic flint working floor, investigated in 1971 when a swimming pool was built at 71 Roydon Road. This site is given a central grid reference approximately 40m to the north-east of the nursery. Here, over 1300 struck and worked flints, including scrapers, blades, microliths and a tranchet axe were recorded, along with stakeholes in a hollowed area indicative of an associated shelter. Bones of a pig cut into three parts were also present, and subsequent radiocarbon dating of the larger bones suggested a 9th century AD date, pointing to later activity in the Anglo-Saxon period taking place in the vicinity (HHER 4022). The flint was in the upper part of a layer of riverine sand, covered by a thin layer of peat that partly incorporated the pig bones. In turn this was sealed by a layer of 'gley' and modern made ground. Such sites are known along the banks of the River Lea and Stort (Britchfield and Grant 2003).

4.2 There is only limited evidence for Iron Age and Roman activity in the area, which is mainly focused on Ermine Street running on a south-north alignment approximately 4km to the west. However, some undated cropmarks exist around the village, while to the north of St. James' Church, situated 1.1km south-east of Atkins Nursery, a single Roman cremation burial was identified (Britchfield and Grant 2003). The now redundant Grade I listed medieval church itself contains Roman tile incorporated in its fabric, suggesting the presence of a Romano-British building in the locality.

3.3 Stanstead Abbots was recorded as having seven burgesses at the time of Domesday (1086). At this time it was composed of two estates, a mill, meadow, pasture and woodland. The manor was retained by the Crown until 1559, later passing through a number of owners. The core of the historic settlement was centred on High Street, and several buildings there date from the late medieval period. This includes the Grade II* listed Red Lion Inn, located 480m north of Atkins Nursery, which was originally an open hall house with cross wings (HHER 10278). One of the closest known buildings of medieval origin is Grade II listed Abbots House, located 230m to the north off Roydon Road, which dates from the late 15th/early 16th centuries (HHER 10283). The area of Cats Hill, provided with a central grid reference 350m east of the nursery (TL 391 115), was an area of common land that probably dates back to the medieval period (HHER 12557). The tithe map shows that the common was being encroached upon by the early 19th century, and also shows a pound at the above grid reference (HHER 30327).

3.4 There are a number of post-medieval listed buildings located along High Street, most notably 18th century Grade II* listed Stanstead Hall (HHER 18493). A group of 17th century almshouses located 230m to the east of Atkins Nursery are also Grade II* listed (HHER 102777). During the later post-medieval period the local area was dominated by maltings built in the 18th and 19th centuries. The closest extant group are located approximately 230-280m to the north, on The Maltings Industrial Estate (HHER 5395, 5396, 10274), and others were situated on High Street (HHER 10271, 10273). A group of workers cottages arranged around a courtyard, which were associated with the maltings have been identified on historic maps. They were located approximately 110m north of Atkins Nursery on the corner of Roydon Road and Marsh Lane (HHER 12153). The cottages were destroyed in 1934, but an excavation there identified the remains of one of the buildings named Poppy Cottage.

5 METHODOLOGY

5.1 The ground works observed comprised the site clearance/ground reduction and excavation of a service trench

5.2 The area on the north-western side of the greenhouses was reduced and a service trench extending from the greenhouse, northwest, to the proposed parking area was excavated.

5.3 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

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

<i>Sample section 1</i> <i>0.00m – 28.09m AOD</i>		
0.00 – 0.09m	L1000	Demolition layer. Compact, yellowish brown clay silt with very frequent concrete fragments.
0.09 – 0.41m	L1001	Buried garden soil. Friable, grey brown sandy silt with occasional/moderate small stones, and sparse chalk and charcoal flecks. It contained very small CBM and glass fragments.
0.41 – 0.73m	L1002	Possible alluvial layer. Firm, mid yellowish brown silty clay with occasional charcoal and CBM flecks.
0.73 – 0.79m+	L1003	Peat layer. Spongy, black sandy peat with very occasional rounded and sub-rounded stones.

<i>Sample section 2</i> <i>0.00m – 28.05m AOD</i>		
0.00 – 0.50m	L1004	Modern trackway. Compact, hardcore in a dark brownish grey soil matrix.
0.50 – 0.75m+	L1002	As above, Section 1.

<i>Sample section 3</i> <i>0.00m – 28.10m AOD</i>		
0.00 – 0.36m	L1001	As above, Section 1
0.36 – 0.64m+	L1002	As above, Section 1

<i>Sample section 4</i> <i>0.00m – 28.09m AOD</i>		
0.00 – 0.19m	L1004	As above, Section 2
0.19 – 0.38m+	L1002	As above, Section 1

Description: No archaeological features or finds were identified. A thin layer of peat was observed in Sample Section 1.

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 Immediately in front of the greenhouses the uppermost layer comprised a demolition layer. L1000 was a compact, yellowish brown clay silt with frequent concrete fragments (0.09m thick). Below L1000 was Garden Soil L1001, a friable, grey brown sandy silt with occasional/moderate small stones, and sparse chalk and charcoal flecks (0.30 – 0.36m thick). It contained very small CBM and glass fragments. Below L1001 was an alluvial layer, L1002, a firm, mid yellowish brown silty clay with occasional CBM flecks. At the base of the exposed sequence, only visible in Sample Section 1, was a thin (0.06m) layer of spongy, black sandy peat with sparse rounded and sub-rounded stones.

8.2 Beyond the northern corner of the greenhouse the uppermost layer, L1004, a trackway comprising compact, hardcore in a dark brownish grey soil matrix (0.19 – 0.50m thick). Below L1004 was Layer L1002 as above.

9 DISCUSSION

9.1 The site is situated within Area of Archaeological Significance 185 as identified on the EHDC Local Plan. The Area includes the medieval and post-medieval settlement, and evidence of occupation and other activity of earlier (prehistoric and Roman) date. In particular the site lies immediately adjacent to the site of a Mesolithic flint working floor, at 71 Roydon Road. At the latter 1300 struck flints were recorded, along with stakeholes of an associated shelter. Pig bones were also recovered and subsequent radiocarbon dating suggested a 9th century AD date, indicating Anglo-Saxon activity.

9.2 The presence of the peat layer revealed in Sample Section 1 could be of some importance, suggesting the Mesolithic activity close by may have been the result of the exploitation of a wetland habitat. However, in the event no archaeological features or finds were present.

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

AS is grateful to Between Time Ltd for funding the monitoring and also Alan Greening, Architect.

AS would also like to acknowledge the input and advice of Ms Alison Tinniswood of Hertfordshire County Council Historic Environment Unit, and the Hertfordshire Historic Environment Record.

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WEB SITES

www.britishlistedbuildings.co.uk
www.heritagegateway

APPENDIX 1 CONTENTS OF THE ARCHIVE

Records	Number
Brief	Y
Specification	Y
Registers	3 (Context, Drawing, Digital Photo)
Context Sheets	5
Site drawings A1	0
Site drawings A3	0
Site drawings A4	1
Site photographs b/w	0
Site photographs colour slides	0
Digital Photographs	22

APPENDIX 2 HER SUMMARY SHEET

Site name and address:	Ambler View (Atkins Nursery), Marsh Lane, Stanstead Abbots, Hertfordshire SG12 8HH.
County: Herts	District: East Herts
Village/Town:	Parish: Stanstead Abbots
Planning application reference:	East Herts District Council Planning Ref. 3/12/1051/FP
Client name/address/tel:	Between Time Ltd
Nature of application:	Partial change of use
Present land use:	Nursery
Size of application area: c.2400m ²	Size of area investigated c.2400m ²
NGR (8 figures):	TL 38820 11495
Site Code:	AS 1682
Site director/Organization:	Archaeological Solutions Ltd
Type of work:	Archaeological Monitoring & Recording
Date of work:	22 nd -24 th & 28 th April 2014
Location of finds/Curating museum:	Hertford Museum
Related SMR Nos:	Periods represented: None
Relevant previous summaries/reports: -	-
Summary of fieldwork results:	<p><i>In April 2014 Archaeological Solutions (AS) carried out an archaeological monitoring and recording at Ambler View (Atkins Nursery), Marsh Lane, Stanstead Abbots, Hertfordshire SG12 8HH (NGR TL 38820 11495). The monitoring was commissioned by Mr Alan Greening, Architect, on behalf of Between Time Ltd in compliance with a planning condition attached to planning permission for the proposed retention of horticultural use and part change of use of the existing nursery for B1 office and workshop (East Herts District Council Planning Ref. 3/12/1051/FP).</i></p> <p><i>In the event the monitoring revealed a thin layer of peat at a depth of 0.73m below the current ground surface. No archaeological finds or features were identified.</i></p>
Author of summary: Kamil Orzechowski	Date of Summary: May 2014

PHOTOGRAPHIC INDEX



1

General view of site. Looking southwest



2

General shot of ground reduction taking place. Looking southwest



3

Service trench looking southwest



4

Sample section 1. Looking northwest.



5

Sample section 2. Looking southeast



6

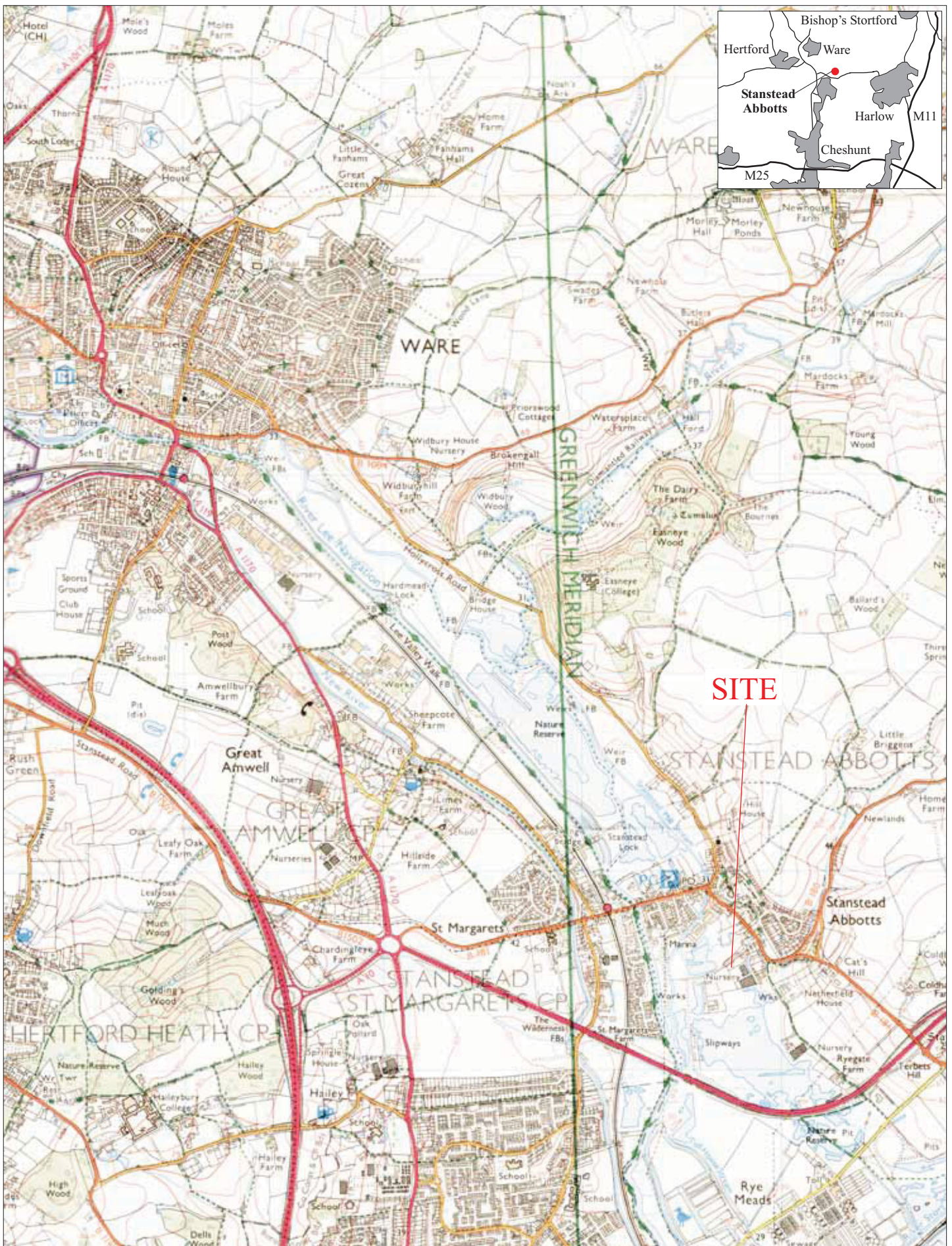
Sample section 3. Looking northwest.



7
Sample section4. Looking southeast

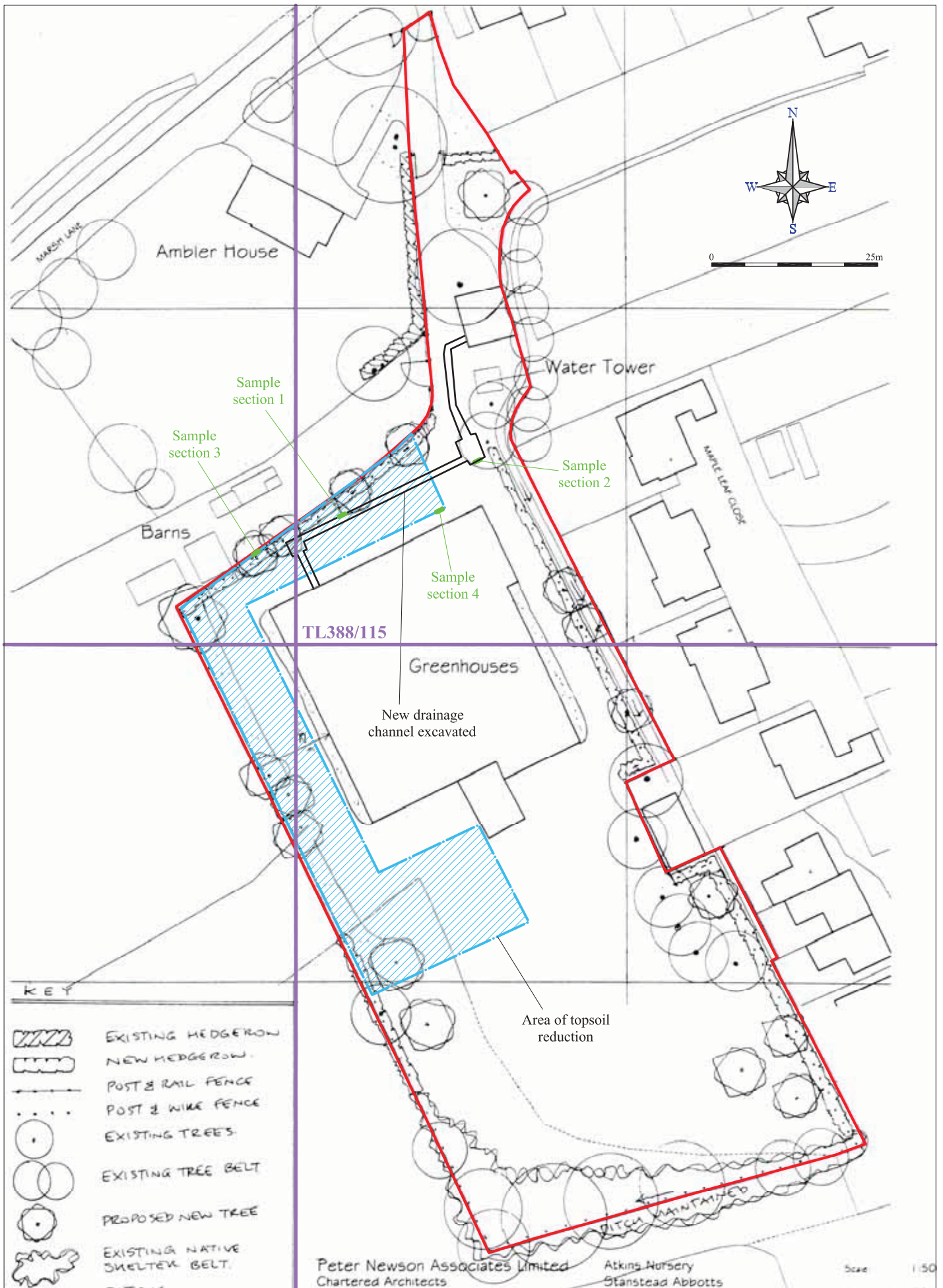


8
Backfill after topsoil strip. Looking northeast

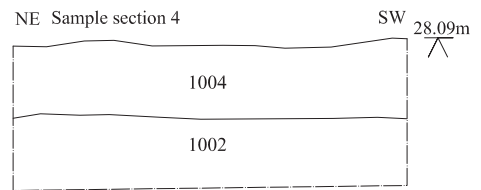
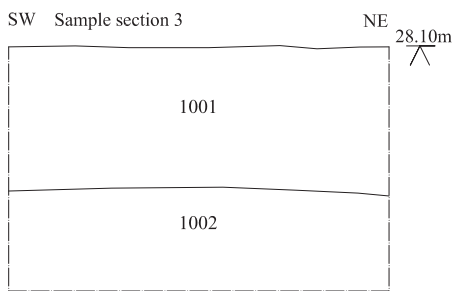
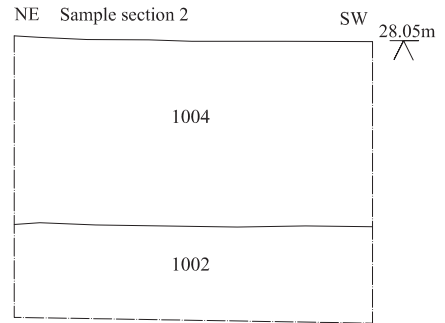
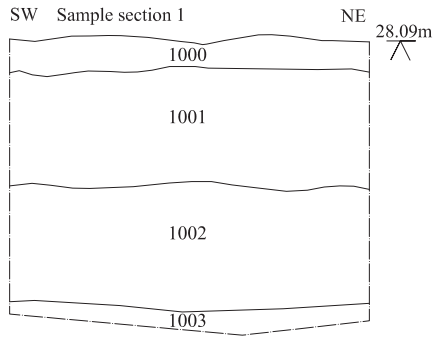


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Fig. 1 Site location plan
 Scale 1:25,000 at A4



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Fig. 2 Detailed site location plan
 Scale 1:1250 at A4



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Fig. 3 Sample sections
 Scale 1:20 at A4