
ARCHAEOLOGICAL SOLUTIONS LTD

**19 SHILLINGTON ROAD, PIRTON,
HERTFORDSHIRE, SG5 3QJ**

ARCHAEOLOGICAL MONITORING & RECORDING

HER Enquiry No. 112/17

Author: Andy Newton (Fieldwork and report) Kate Higgs MA (Oxon.) (Background research)	
NGR: TL 1439 3195	Report No: 5470
District: North Herts	Site Code: AS 1918
Approved: Claire Halpin MCI fA	Project No: 7274
	Date: 27 October 2017

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OASIS SUMMARY SHEET**Project details**

Project name	19 Shillington Road, Pirton, Herts, SG5 2QJ
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In September 2017 Archaeological Solutions Ltd (AS) carried out a programme of archaeological monitoring and recording to the rear of 19 Shillington Road, Pirton, Hitchin, Hertfordshire, SG5 3QJ (NGR TL 1439 3195; Figs. 1 - 2). The monitoring was undertaken in compliance with a planning condition attached to planning approval for construction of an extension to an existing outbuilding so as to create a garage and utility room (North Herts District Council Planning Ref.17/01211/1HH). The monitoring was required based on the advice of Hertfordshire County Council Historic Environment Advisor

The site is located within the village of Pirton, which is situated within the district of North Hertfordshire. The site lies on the southern frontage of Shillington Road which passes through the western section of the historic core of Pirton. The medieval and post-medieval core of Pirton is identified as Area of Archaeological Significance No. 75 on the NHDC Local Plan.

No archaeological features or finds were present. The site stratigraphy appeared intact and therefore had archaeology been present it would likely have been preserved.

Project dates (fieldwork)	18, 19 September 2017
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Previous work (Y/N/?)	N	Future work	N
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P. number	7274	Site code	AS 1918
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Type of project	Archaeological monitoring & recording
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Site status	Area of Archaeological Significance No. 75
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Current land use	Residential dwelling & garden
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Planned development	Proposed extension
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Main features (+dates)	None
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Significant finds (+dates)	None
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Project location

County/ District/ Parish	Hertfordshire	North Herts	Pirton
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HER for area	Hertfordshire Historic Environment Record (HER; enquiry No. 112/17)
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Post code (if known)	SG5 3QJ
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Area of site	c. 200m ²
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NGR	TL 1439 3195
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Height AOD (max/ min)	c. 68m AOD
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Project creators

Brief issued by	Hertfordshire County Council Historic Environment Team
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Project supervisor/s (PO)	Archaeological Solutions Ltd
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Funded by	Mr & Mrs Testa
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Full title	19 Shillington Road, Pirton, Herts, SG5 2QJ. Archaeological Monitoring & Recording
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Authors	Newton, A. & Higgs, K.
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Report no.	5470
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Date (of report)	October 2017
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PROPOSED EXTENSION, 19 SHILLINGTON ROAD, PIRTON, HERTFORDSHIRE, SG5 3QJ ARCHAEOLOGICAL MONITORING & RECORDING

SUMMARY

In September 2017 Archaeological Solutions Ltd (AS) carried out a programme of archaeological monitoring and recording to the rear of 19 Shillington Road, Pirton, Hitchin, Hertfordshire, SG5 3QJ (NGR TL 1439 3195; Figs. 1 - 2). The monitoring was undertaken in compliance with a planning condition attached to planning approval for construction of an extension to an existing outbuilding so as to create a garage and utility room (North Herts District Council Planning Ref.17/01211/1HH). The monitoring was required based on the advice of Hertfordshire County Council Historic Environment Advisor

The site is located within the village of Pirton, which is situated within the district of North Hertfordshire. The site lies on the southern frontage of Shillington Road which passes through the western section of the historic core of Pirton. The medieval and post-medieval core of Pirton is identified as Area of Archaeological Significance No. 75 on the NHDC Local Plan.

No archaeological features or finds were present. The site stratigraphy appeared intact and therefore had archaeology been present it would likely have been preserved.

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 In September 2017 Archaeological Solutions Ltd (AS) carried out a programme of archaeological monitoring and recording to the rear of 19 Shillington Road, Pirton, Hitchin, Hertfordshire, SG5 3QJ (NGR TL 1439 3195; Figs. 1 - 2). The monitoring was undertaken in compliance with a planning condition attached to planning approval for construction of an extension to an existing outbuilding so as to create a garage and utility room (North Herts District Council Planning Ref.17/01211/1HH). The monitoring was required based on the advice of Hertfordshire County Council Historic Environment Advisor

1.2 The monitoring was carried out in accordance with a brief issued by Hertfordshire County Council Historic Environment Advisor (HCC HEA, Simon Wood, dated 27 June 2017), and a specification compiled by AS (20 July 2017). It adhered to the requirements of the document *Standards for Field Archaeology in the East of England* (Gurney 2003) and the *CifA Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Watching Briefs* (2014).

1.3 The requirements of the project were:

- Archaeological monitoring of all groundworks associated with the new development;
- The provision of an adequately detailed project report; and
- The dissemination and publication of the project results, as appropriate.

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 within the village of Pirton, which is situated within the district of North Hertfordshire. The site lies on the southern frontage of Shillington Road which passes through the western section of the historic core of Pirton. The medieval and post-medieval core of Pirton is identified as Area of Archaeological Significance No. 75 on the NHDC Local Plan.

2.2 The site comprises a roughly rectangular plot of land, which covers an approximate area of 200m². It is bounded to the immediate north by

Shillington Road, and to the east and west by residential dwellings comprising Nos. 17 and 21 Shillington Road respectively. To the immediate south of the site is agricultural land. The site contains the dwelling of No. 19 Shillington Road with an existing outbuilding to the rear and south-east of the house.

3 TOPOGRAPHY, GEOLOGY AND SOILS

3.1 The Pirton area is characterised by its location at the base of the Chiltern Hills. The surrounding relief thus slopes significant down to the north-west, with the site located at approximately 68m AOD. Given its location at the foot of the Chiltern Hills, Pirton incorporates a number of springs and small watercourses, particularly those located 300m to the north-west of the site.

3.2 The underlying geological formation of the local area consists of West Melbury Marly Chalk Formation (BGS 2015). It is overlain by a drift geology of chalk, as well as soils of the Wantage 2 Association, which are described as shallow well-drained calcareous silty soils (SSEW 1983).

4 ARCHAEOLOGICAL & HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Prehistoric

4.1 Only sparse evidence for early prehistoric activity is known locally, with the majority of known prehistoric activity focussed on the uplands of the Chiltern Hills, such as Knocking Knoll Long Barrow, to the south-west. Circular gullies at Priors Hill and 220m to the south-west may represent the remains of prehistoric burial mounds, or may relate to 5th - 9th century settlement in the same field (HER 31109). A possible bronze hoard, consisting of four axes and a lump of metal is also recorded within the parish of Pirton (HER 553). A rough pottery base found in Pirton may be Iron Age or Anglo-Saxon in date (HER 195).

Romano-British

4.2 An extensive Romano-British settlement is recorded in Dane Field to the south-west of the site and extending towards Priors Hill. It includes buildings, a kiln and metal-working debris, and the settlement may have continued into the 6th or 7th centuries. Romano-British activity including pits and ditches have been recorded at Pollards Way and at Pirton Primary School (HERs 18649 & 17170). Isolated finds within Pirton also include Romano-British pottery found in the school playground (HER 1475); a Roman spindle whorl (HER 1480); and re-deposited Roman sherds in the Norman earthwork bank of the castle at Toot Hill (HER 1477).

Anglo-Saxon

4.3 The potential continuity of settlement from the Romano-British to Anglo-Saxon periods at Dane Field and Priors Hill, is a partial indicator of the

settlement pattern at Pirton during the latter (Page 1908). At Priors Hill, which lies 150m to the south-west of the site, archaeological investigations have revealed dense occupation in the early to middle Saxon period, which included human burials (HER 31108). Further recent investigations between that site and the High Street recorded additional Saxon and medieval features, with deep pits, ditches and gullies.

4.4 Test-pitting across the village has plotted numerous scatters of Saxon and medieval pottery (HER 16620) that suggest polyfocal settlement – probably a series of farmsteads rather than contiguous settlement – prior to the construction of the motte-and-bailey castle in the 12th century. Substantial evidence for another node of settlement and possibly the beginning of the nucleation of Pirton has been recorded c.200m to the south-east of the site and in the vicinity of The Fox public house, where a Saxo-Norman cemetery, possible early church and other buildings were recorded (HERs 9676, 9677 & 11409). A silver penny of king Offa, dated c. AD792 - 796, was also found in a ploughed field at Pirton (HER 9470).

Medieval

4.5 By the time of the Domesday Survey, a thriving manorial estate was held at Pirton by the Archbishop of Canterbury (HER 1487; Morris 1976), and in the 12th century a motte and bailey castle was constructed at Toot Hill c.370m to the south-east (HERs 32 & 12426). St Mary's Church was also constructed in the 12th century (HER 4315), and substantial medieval remains including earthworks, ditches, pots and possible forerunners to farms have been recorded close to the motte-and-bailey to the south-east of the site (HERs 9680 & 746). The village appears to have shrunk in the 14th century, potentially to no more than clusters of farmsteads or cottages separated by greens, such as Great Green (HER 12427).

4.6 Many of the farmsteads in and around the village may have their origins in the medieval period, including Rectory Farm c. 200m to the west, which was a moated site (HERs 2221 & 6302). A late medieval open hall house is recorded at Bury End (HER 15903). No. 28 Shillington Road, which lies to the west of the site, comprises a late medieval timber-framed house (HER 15906). Further medieval remains from Pirton include cropmarks of ridge and furrows (HER 15956), and finds of a 12th - 13th century lead alloy seal die (HER 9471) and unstratified sherds (HER 13757).

Post-medieval and later

4.7 The post-medieval period in Pirton may be characterised by its agricultural character, with post-medieval farms including Hammonds Farm (HER 4513), Rectory Farm (HERs 154, 4715 & 6300), and Wright's Farm, which was known before the late 19th century as *Haxham's Farm* (HER 18773). Other post-medieval buildings of note include Hammond's Almshouses (HER 16666) and The Fox public house, which was built in the 17th century as a two-storey two-cell house (HER 18265). To the immediate west of the site is the Grade II listed Lavender Cottage at No. 21 Shillington

Road, which is an early 16th century open hall house, updated and extended in the early 17th century (HER 30146).

5 METHODOLOGY

5.1 The monitoring encompassed the groundworks associated with the construction, in particular the excavation of the foundation trenches was observed.

5.2 The archaeological monitoring comprised the observation of groundworks, the inspection of 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.

6 DESCRIPTION OF RESULTS Fig.2

Sample sections of the stratigraphy encountered were recorded:

<i>Sample Section 1</i>		
<i>West facing</i>		
<i>0.00 = 68.74m AOD</i>		
0.00 – 0.07m	L1000	Gravel Layer. Loose gravel
0.07 – 0.21m	L1001	Tarmac
0.21 – 0.24m	L1002	Made Ground. Friable, dark yellow coarse, gritty sand.
0.24 – 0.53m	L1003	Subsoil. Soft, mid grey fine silty clay with occasional rooting throughout.
0.53m+	L1004	Natural Deposits. Very firm, very pale grey clay with sparse rooting.

<i>Sample Section 2</i>		
<i>East facing</i>		
<i>0.00 = 68.70m AOD</i>		
0.00 – 0.01m	L1000	Gravel Layer. As above. S.S. 1
0.01 – 0.15m	L1001	Tarmac. As above. S.S. 1
0.15 – 0.20m	L1005	Made Ground. Mixed red and yellow coloured brick rubble.
0.20 – 0.39m	L1003	Subsoil. As above. S.S. 1
0.39m+	L1004	Natural Deposits. As above. S.S. 1

<i>Sample Section 3</i>		
<i>South facing</i>		
<i>0.00 = 68.70m AOD</i>		
0.00 – 0.03m	L1000	Gravel Layer. As above. S.S. 1
0.03 – 0.09m	L1001	Tarmac. As above. S.S. 1
0.09 – 0.21m	L1002	Made Ground. As above. S.S. 1
0.21 – 0.45m	L1003	Subsoil. As above. S.S. 1
0.45m+	L1004	Natural Deposits. As above. S.S. 1

Description: No archaeological features or finds were present.

7 CONFIDENCE RATING

7.1 Within the parameters of the monitoring it is not felt that any factors restricted the identification of archaeological features or finds.

8 DEPOSIT MODEL

8.1 The site was overlain by modern loose gravel surface L1000 (0.01 – 0.07m thick). L1000 overlay Tarmac L1001 (c.0.06-0.14m thick). Beneath L1001, Made Ground L1002 and L1005 were encountered. L1002 was a friable, dark yellow coarse, gritty sand (c.0.03-0.11m thick), while L1005 comprised a mixed red and yellow coloured brick rubble (c.0.05m thick). The made ground overlay Subsoil L1003, a soft, mid grey fine silty clay with occasional rooting observed throughout (c.0.19-0.29m thick).

8.2 The natural, L1004, was encountered between 0.39 – 0.53m below the present ground surface. It comprised a very firm, very pale grey clay with sparse rooting observed throughout.

9 DISCUSSION

9.1 The site is located within the village of Pirton, which is situated within the district of North Hertfordshire. The site lies on the southern frontage of Shillington Road which passes through the western section of the historic core of Pirton. The medieval and post-medieval core of Pirton is identified as Area of Archaeological Significance No. 75 on the NHDC Local Plan.

9.2 No archaeological features or finds were present. The site stratigraphy appeared intact and therefore had archaeology been present it would likely have been preserved.

DEPOSITION OF THE ARCHIVE

Archive records, with an inventory, will be deposited with North Hertfordshire Museums Service. The archive will be quantified, ordered, indexed, cross referenced and checked for internal consistency.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Archaeological Solutions would like to thank Mr & Mrs Testa for funding the archaeological monitoring and recording, and for their assistance.

AS is also pleased to acknowledge the staff of the Hertfordshire Historic Environment Record, in particular Dr. Isobel Thompson. AS would also like to thank the staff of the Hertfordshire Archives and Local Studies (HALS), based in County Hall, Hertford.

AS would like to acknowledge the input and advice of Dr Simon Wood, Historic Environment Advisor, Hertfordshire County Council

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APPENDIX 1 CONTENTS OF THE ARCHIVE

Records	Number
Brief	Y
Specification	Y
Registers	Context, Photo, Digital Photo, Drawing
Context Sheets	6
Site drawings A1	-
Site drawings A3	1
Site drawings A4	-
Site photographs b/w	-
Site photographs colour slides	-
Digital Photographs	12

APPENDIX 2 HER SUMMARY SHEET

Site name and address:	<i>19 Shillington Road, Pirton, Herts, SG5 2QJ</i>
County: <i>Hertfordshire</i>	District: <i>North Herts</i>
Village/Town: <i>Pirton</i>	Parish: <i>Pirton</i>
Planning application reference:	<i>North Herts District Council Planning Ref.17/01211/1HH</i>
Client name/address/tel:	<i>Mr & Mrs Testa</i>
Nature of application:	<i>Extension</i>
Present land use:	<i>Residential</i>
Size of application area:	Size of area investigated <i>c.10m2</i>
NGR (8 figures):	<i>TL 1439 3195</i>
Site Code:	<i>AS</i>
Site director/Organisation:	<i>Archaeological Solutions Ltd</i>
Type of work:	<i>Archaeological monitoring and recording.</i>
Date of work:	<i>18, 19 September 2017</i>
Location of finds/Curating museum:	<i>North Herts</i>
Related SMR Nos:	Periods represented: <i>Modern</i>
Relevant previous summaries/reports: -	
Summary of fieldwork results:	<p><i>In September 2017 Archaeological Solutions Ltd (AS) carried out a programme of archaeological monitoring and recording to the rear of 19 Shillington Road, Pirton, Hitchin, Hertfordshire, SG5 3QJ (NGR TL 1439 3195; Figs. 1 - 2). The monitoring was undertaken in compliance with a planning condition attached to planning approval for construction of an extension to an existing outbuilding so as to create a garage and utility room (North Herts District Council Planning Ref.17/01211/1HH). The monitoring was required based on the advice of Hertfordshire County Council Historic Environment Advisor</i></p> <p><i>No archaeological features or finds were present. The site stratigraphy appeared intact and therefore had archaeology been present it would likely have been preserved.</i></p>
Author of summary: <i>Newton, A.</i>	Date of Summary: <i>October 2017</i>

PHOTOGRAPHIC INDEX



1
View of the site before removal of gravel and tarmac



2
View of footings looking south-east



3
View of footings looking north-east



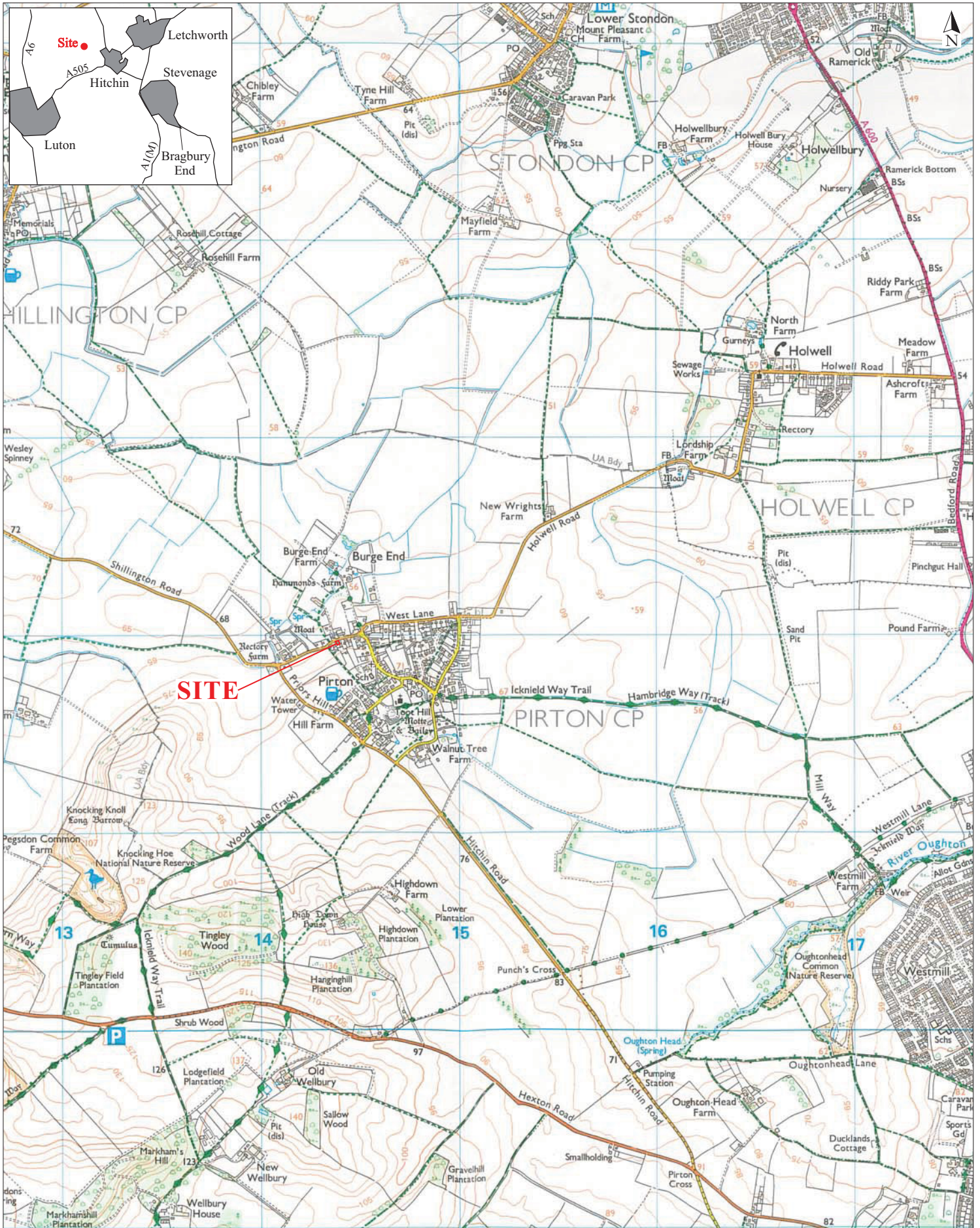
4
Sample section 1



5
Sample section 2

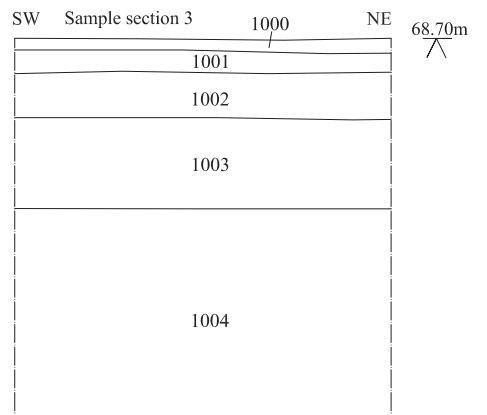
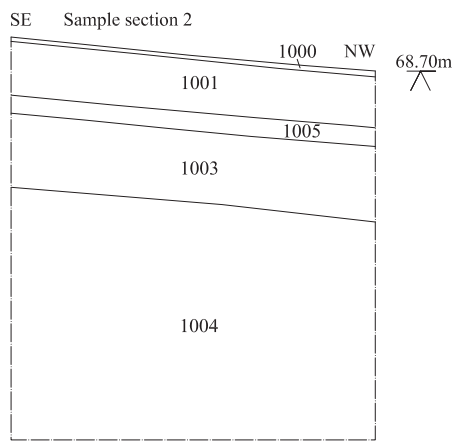
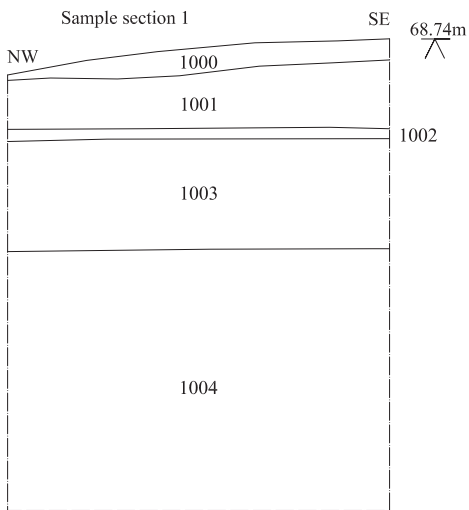
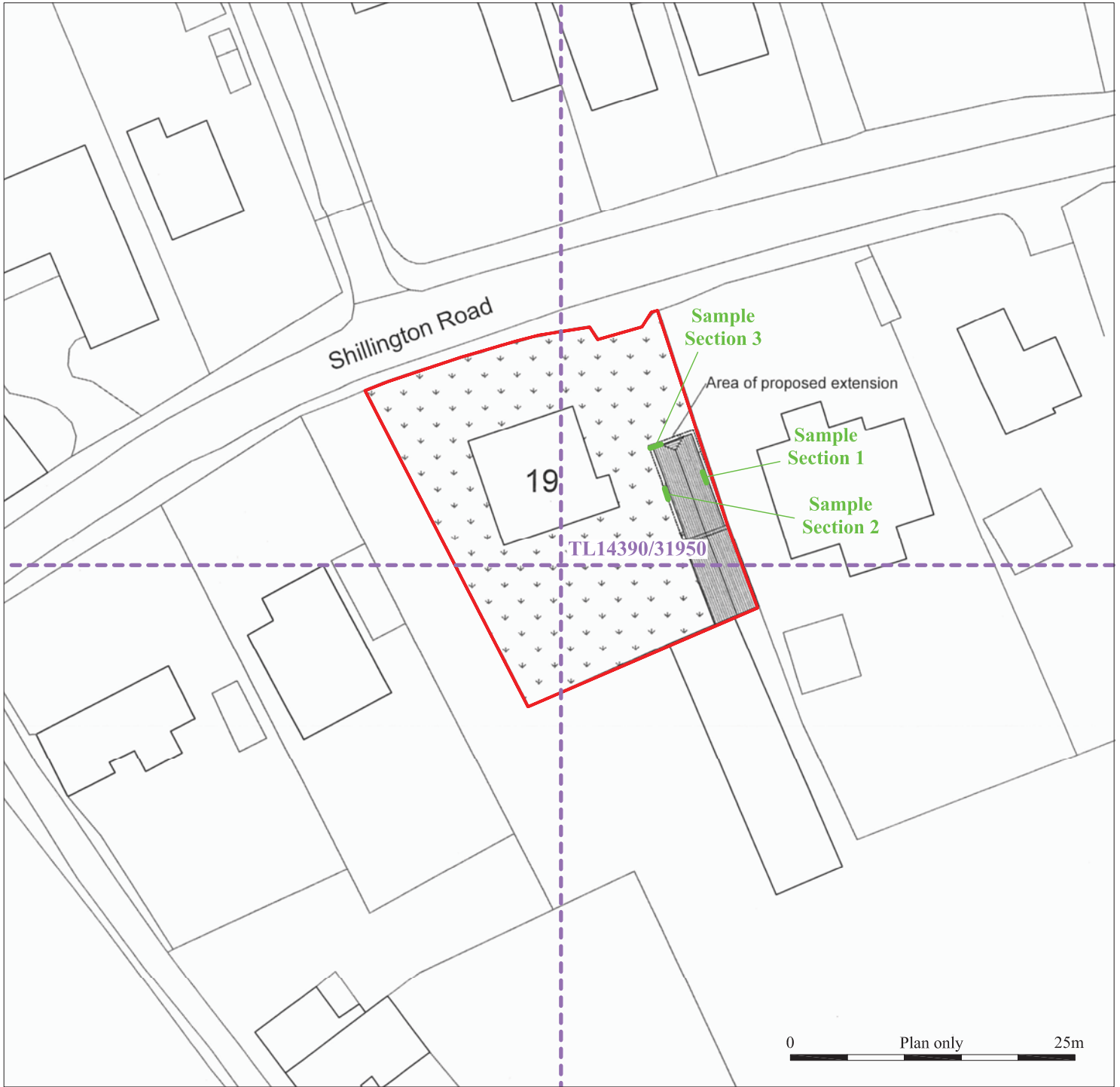


6
Sample section 3



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Fig. 1 Site location plan
 Scale 1:25,000 at A4
 Shillington Road, Pirton, Hertfordshire (P7274)



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Fig. 2 Detailed site location plan

Scale 1:500 and 1:20 at A4

Shillington Road, Pirton, Hertfordshire (P7274)