

275-291 HEMDEAN ROAD, CAVERSHAM,
BERKSHIRE

ARCHAEOLOGICAL MONITORING AND
RECORDING

ARCHAEOLOGICAL SOLUTIONS LTD

**275-291 HEMDEAN ROAD,
CAVERSHAM, BERKSHIRE**

ARCHAEOLOGICAL MONITORING AND RECORDING

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NGR: SU 7116 7593	Report No. 3087
County: Berkshire	Site Code: AS 1085
Approved: Claire Halpin	Project No. 2930
Signed:	Date: May 2008

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OASIS SUMMARY SHEET

Project details			
Project name	275 – 291 Hemdean Road, Caversham, Berkshire		
Project description	<p><i>During May 2008 Archaeological Solutions Ltd (AS) carried out a programme of archaeological monitoring and recording during the groundworks at 275 – 291 Hemdean Road, Caversham, Berkshire, NGR SU 7116 7593. The programme was undertaken in response to a planning condition required by Reading Borough Council (based on the advice of their archaeological advisors, Berkshire Archaeology) prior to the construction of 14 residential dwellings.</i></p> <p><i>The site lies toward the rear of the properties 279-291 Hemdean Road, Caversham, Reading, encompassing part of their mature garden plots, and also includes the extant dwellings of 275 and 277 Hemdean Road. The site covers a total area of c.0.44ha. The Historic Environment Record records finds dating from the Palaeolithic to the post-medieval periods have been recovered within 1km of the site.</i></p> <p><i>The monitoring and recording, undertaken to date, revealed no archaeological remains.</i></p>		
Project dates (fieldwork)	May 2008		
Previous work (Y/N/?)	N	Future work (Y/N/?)	N
P. number	2930	Site code	AS1085
Type of project	Archaeological monitoring and recording		
Site status	N/A		
Current land use	Residential – houses and gardens		
Planned development	14 residential dwellings.		
Main features (+dates)	None		
Significant finds (+dates)	None		
Project location			
County/ District/ Parish	Berkshire	Reading East	Caversham
HER/ SMR for area	Berkshire SMR		
Post code (if known)			
Area of site	0.44ha		
NGR	SU 7116 7593		
Height AOD (max/ min)	c.58m		
Project creators			
Brief issued by	Berkshire Archaeology		
Project supervisor/s (PO)	Archaeological Solutions Ltd		
Funded by	Michael Shanly Homes (Thames Valley)		
Bibliography			
Full title	275-291 Hemdean Road, Caversham, Berkshire: Archaeological Monitoring and Recording		
Authors	Green, R.		
Report no.	3087		
Date (of report)	May 2008		

275-291 HEMDEAN ROAD, CAVERSHAM, BERKSHIRE ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION (TRIAL TRENCHING)

SUMMARY

During May 2008 Archaeological Solutions Ltd (AS) carried out a programme of archaeological monitoring and recording during the groundworks at 275 – 291 Hemdean Road, Caversham, Berkshire, NGR SU 7116 7593. The programme was undertaken in response to a planning condition required by Reading Borough Council (based on the advice of their archaeological advisors, Berkshire Archaeology) prior to the construction of 14 residential dwellings.

The site lies toward the rear of the properties 279-291 Hemdean Road, Caversham, Reading, encompassing part of their mature garden plots, and also includes the extant dwellings of 275 and 277 Hemdean Road. The site covers a total area of c.0.44ha. The Historic Environment Record records finds dating from the Palaeolithic to the post-medieval periods have been recovered within 1km of the site.

The monitoring and recording, undertaken to date, revealed no archaeological remains.

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 In May 2008 Archaeological Solutions Ltd (AS) carried out a programme of archaeological monitoring and recording at 275-291 Hemdean Road, Caversham, Berkshire RG4 7QP (NGR SU 7116 7593) (Figs.1-2). The monitoring was undertaken on behalf of Michael Shanly Homes (Thames Valley) in response to a planning condition required by Reading Borough Council (based on the advice of their archaeological advisors, Berkshire Archaeology).

1.2 The monitoring was conducted in accordance with a brief issued by Berkshire Archaeology (dated June 2007), and a specification prepared by AS (dated 20th June 2007). It also complied with the Institute of Field Archaeologists' (IFA) *Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Watching Briefs (revised 2001)*.

1.3 The aims of the archaeological monitoring programme were:

- to ensure the archaeological monitoring of all aspects of the development programme likely to affect archaeological remains;
- to secure the adequate recording of any archaeological remains revealed by the development programme;
- to secure the full analysis and interpretation of the site archive and the publication of the project results, if appropriate;
- to secure the conservation and long-term storage of any artefactual/ecofactual material recovered from the site.

Planning policy context

1.4 The relevant planning policies which apply to the effect of development with regard to cultural heritage are Planning Policy Guidance Note 15 'Planning and the Historic

Environment’ (PPG15) and Planning Policy Guidance Note 16 ‘Archaeology and Planning’ (PPG16) (Department of the Environment).

1.5 PPG16 (1990) is the national Planning Policy Guidance Note which applies to archaeology. It states that there should always be a presumption in favour of preserving nationally important archaeological remains *in situ*. However, when there is no overriding case for preservation, developers are required to fund opportunities for the recording and, where necessary, the excavation of the site. This condition is widely applied by local authorities.

1.6 PPG15 (1994) is the national Planning Policy Guidance Note which applies to the conservation of the historic environment by protecting the character and appearance of Conservation Areas and protecting listed buildings (of architectural or historical interest) from demolition and unsympathetic change and safeguarding their settings as far as is possible. This condition is also widely applied by local authorities.

2 SITE DESCRIPTION

2.1 The site lies to the rear of the 277-291 Hemdean Road, Caversham, Reading, encompassing part of their mature garden plots, and also includes the extant dwelling of 275 Hemdean Road. It encompasses an area of *c.*0.44ha. It is proposed to construct 14 dwellings, following the demolition of the existing structures of 275 and 277 Hemdean Road.

2.2 The site lies within Caversham, which is located immediately to the north of Reading. Caversham is separated from Reading by the river Thames which flows on an approximate west to east alignment *c.* 1.25km to the south of the site at 275-291 Hemdean Road. Central Reading is located *c.* 2.25km to the south. The environs of the site are of a mainly suburban nature, with steeply sloping back garden plots to the north-east. To the rear of the site lies a moderately steeply sloping wooded area on the edge of the school grounds to the north-east of the site.

3 THE EVIDENCE

3.1 Topography, geology & soils

3.1.2 The natural geology of the site is that of the gravel terrace of the River Thames, overlain by the junction of soils of the Coombe 1 and Wickham 4 associations (SSEW 1983) at a height of *c.*58m AOD. Topographically the site is situated on the south facing slope of the Thames Valley where the land begins to drop sharply towards the river, however it is within *c.*250m of where the valley crests at *c.*80m AOD in the area of High Down School.

3.1.3 The underlying solid geology of the Caversham area is Cretaceous Upper Chalk although areas of Ypresian London Clay lie to the south-east in the area of eastern Reading and areas of Palaeocene Reading Beds are located to the north-east and the west.

3.2 Archaeological and historical background

3.2.1 The proposed development site is located in an area of archaeological potential due to its proximity to several recorded areas of archaeological activity, specifically relating to prehistoric and Roman activity. However trial trench evaluations at High Down School, c.400m north of the site, did not reveal any traces of archaeological remains (Milbank 2006) and at Buckingham Drive c.500m east of the site, only revealed 19th century or later features (Grant *et al* 2004). The general area is known for localised gravel extraction throughout the later 19th/20th century, occurring across many parts of Reading.

Prehistoric (c. 500,000 BC – AD 43)

3.2.2 The location of Reading on the gravel terraces along the River Thames pre-supposes its attractiveness to prehistoric settlers. In relatively close proximity to the site a number of Palaeolithic finds have been highlighted. The area of Plateau Gravel around 70 & 72 Peppard Road was identified during an archaeological desk based assessment by CgMs Consulting in 2002 as having produced a considerable number of Palaeolithic artefacts and it was concluded that surviving areas of the deposit warranted careful consideration. Adjacent to Peppard Road, drainage work on Bulmore Drive in 1930-31 produced a collection of Palaeolithic material in the Levallois typology in excellent condition and probably indicative of a site in the immediate vicinity. Additional evidence of prehistoric settlers near the site was recovered from Sutton's Pit, a gravel extraction pit that contained Neolithic and Bronze Age material. During the Bronze Age, the area around Reading became increasingly important; the Kennet valley forged a vital link between the Thames valley and the chalk downs of Berkshire, and the area became intensively exploited.

3.2.3 Other isolated prehistoric finds have been recorded across Reading town centre, including flint tools and metal weapons dating from the Mesolithic through to the late Iron Age, while south-west of Reading at Small Mead Farm (Reading Business Park) extensive archaeological remains from the Neolithic, Late Bronze Age and Roman periods have been recorded (Moore & Jennings 1992). Finds have also been recovered in association with the Rivers Thames and Kennet. During the Iron Age, the Kennet valley came within the territory of the Atrebates, whose tribal stronghold was at *Calleva*. Although little Iron Age evidence has been found in Reading itself to date, evidence for settlement activity has been excavated at Wickhams Field, north of the M4, and at Binfield, east of Reading.

Roman (AD 43 – 410)

3.2.4 The centre of Roman settlement in the Reading region was the town of Silchester (*Calleva Atrebatum*), c.9km south-west of Reading. No main Roman roads pass through Reading and the evidence suggests that the area consisted of small, rural settlements. The evidence for Roman activity consists of isolated finds that include a 4th century coin recovered from the grounds of Hemdean School, c.200m south of the site. Other Roman finds in Reading consists of isolated finds, such as pottery and coins and a Roman inhumation at the old Reading College.

Anglo-Saxon (AD 410-1066)

3.2.5 Reading was originally a Saxon town, thought to have been founded during the 5th to 6th centuries. Finds recovered generally seem to date to the later Saxon period, and include a 9th century coin hoard, a 9th century skeleton with a Viking sword discovered during the construction of the railway, pottery and a few Saxon weapons.

Medieval (1066 – 1550)

3.2.6 By the time of the Domesday Survey in 1086, Reading had developed into a town, the smallest of three such towns recorded in Berkshire, with its centre around St Mary's Church. Despite modern development, the medieval town plan is still visible as a wedge-shaped outline of its principal streets – including West Street, Horn Street, London Street and Friar Street. Caversham is situated to the north of this centre, with the site located c.2km north of Friar Street, and appears to have been a prospering rural margin just outside the town in 1086.

3.2.7 Although Reading began as a self-governing borough, it lost much its independence when the town was given to Reading Abbey as part of its foundation endowment. The latter was founded by Henry I for Cluniac monks in 1121 and it occupied a large area at the eastern edge of the medieval town. It had a major impact on the economy and the layout of the town. In Caversham a 15th to 16th century holy well was discovered on Priest Hill and is later mentioned in 1727 as St. Anne's Well, located on a field between the Mount and Priest Lane. Reading has yielded much evidence associated with medieval activity, consisting of isolated finds, and excavations producing medieval pottery and other finds, sometimes in association with buildings. Medieval cess pits, industrial sites and evidence of land reclamation have also been identified. The main industry in Reading during the medieval period was cloth making, and the wealthiest individuals in the town were directly associated with this trade.

Post-medieval and modern

3.2.8 During the 16th century, Reading went into a decline. This was caused by the dissolution of the Abbey, the down-turn in the cloth industry and the loss of population due to plague and influenza. By the 17th century, the main industry in Reading was based on malting barley for beer, an industry much influenced by the direct transport link with London along the rivers. A number of wharfs were established and in the 1715 the river Kennet Navigation Act was passed, leading to the construction of 20 locks, further increasing Reading's river trade.

3.2.9 During the Victorian period, Reading developed into a busy and commercial manufacturing town with the arrival of the Great Western Railway. Along with brewing and malting, a brick-building industry grew up. The largest employer in the town was Huntley and Palmers - the largest biscuit manufacturers in England in the 1860s, along with Sutton & Son Seeds. All of these industries owed much of their success to the railway.

4 PREVIOUS ARCHAEOLOGICAL INVESTIGATION

(TRIAL TRENCHING)

4.1 During October 2007 Archaeological Solutions Ltd (AS) carried out an archaeological evaluation of land at 275 – 291 Hemdean Road, Caversham (Sparrow & Peachey 2007). The evaluation revealed two postholes, F1022 and F1024, of modern date, and Pit F1020 which was dated to either the post-medieval or modern period. No earlier features were identified. The features excavated were confined to the boundaries of the site; Trenches 3a and 3b in the centre of the site produced no features.

5 METHODOLOGY

5.1 The archaeological monitoring comprised the observation of all groundworks, inspection of subsoil and natural deposits for archaeological features, the examination of spoil heaps and the recording of soil profiles. Deposits were recorded by means of *pro forma* recording sheets, drawn to scale and photographed as appropriate. Excavated spoil was searched for archaeological finds.

5.2 The monitoring and recording encompassed the groundworks associated with the excavation of foundation and drainage trenches for the first phase of the new development. A site visit was undertaken to monitor these works on 16/05/07.

6 DESCRIPTION OF RESULTS (Fig. 2, DPs: 1-4)

6.1 An area of undisturbed ground on the side of a moderately sloping slope, measuring approximately 30m x 20m, was stripped of overburden to the level of the natural. The area was then terraced to accommodate heavy equipment. The terracing cut substantially into the slope, truncating the chalky natural. No archaeological features or finds were identified as the overburden was removed prior to terracing.

7 CONFIDENCE RATING

7.1 It is not felt that any factors inhibited the recognition of archaeological features and finds.

8 DEPOSIT MODEL

8.1 The stratigraphy of the slope which was the subject of the archaeological monitoring comprised topsoil (L1000) to a depth of 0.33m above a layer of colluvium, L1004. The latter consisted of pale-mid yellowish, grey-brown, firm, silty clay to a depth of between 0.36m and 1.0m. Below L1004, L1006 was a mid brownish orange, silty sand colluvium, L1006, to a depth of between 0.50 and 1.50m. Below L1006 was the natural chalk.

8.2 Steeper portions of the slope exposed during the terracing revealed recent topsoil to a depth of 0.40m, overlying the natural chalk.

9 DISCUSSION

9.1 No archaeological features or finds were present within the areas subject to the archaeological monitoring and recording. No residual material of pre-modern date was recorded.

10 ARCHIVE DEPOSITION

10.1 Archive records, with an inventory, will be deposited at Reading Museum. The archive will be quantified, ordered, indexed, cross-referenced and checked for internal consistency.

11 ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

11.1 Archaeological Solutions Limited would like to thank Michael Shanly Homes (Thames Valley), and in particular Mr. Sean Strowger, for their co-operation and funding of the evaluation.

11.2 AS would also like to acknowledge the input and advice of Ms Mary O'Donoghue of Berkshire Archaeology.

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PHOTOGRAPHIC INDEX



DP 1: North end of the area subject to monitoring, view S.



DP 2: South end of the area subject to monitoring, view N.

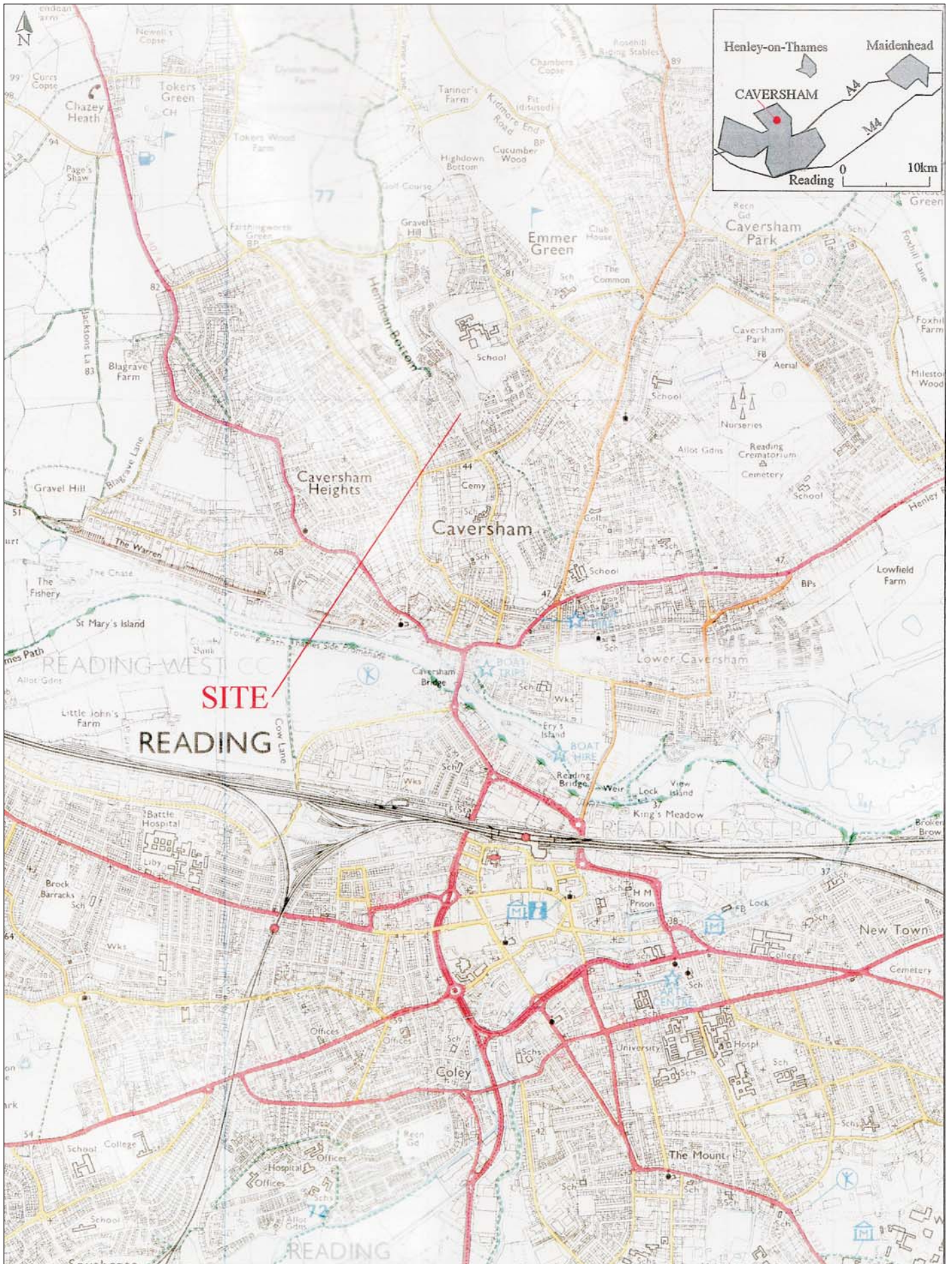
PHOTOGRAPHIC INDEX



DP 3: North end of the area subject to monitoring, view SW.



DP 4: Topsoil being removed from the area subject to monitoring, view N.



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



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 Fig. 2 Area of monitoring
 Scale 1:400 at A3