
ARCHAEOLOGICAL SOLUTIONS LTD

**NATIONAL SPORTS CENTRE,
BISHAM ABBEY, BERKSHIRE**

PROPOSED HYDROTHERAPY POOL

ARCHAEOLOGICAL MONITORING AND RECORDING

Authors: Zbigniew Pozorski MA	
NGR: SU 8475 8480	Report No. 3477
District: Windsor and Maidenhead	Site Code: AS 1270
Approved: Claire Halpin MIFA	Project No. 3718
Signed:	Date: February 2010

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OASIS SUMMARY SHEET

Project details			
Project name	<i>National Sports Centre, Bisham Abbey. Berkshire. Proposed hydrotherapy pool.</i>		
<p><i>In January and February 2010 Archaeological Solutions (AS) carried out a programme of archaeological monitoring and recording at the National Sports Centre, Bisham Abbey, Berkshire (NGR SU 8475 8480). The monitoring was commissioned by Turner & Townsend on behalf of Sport England, and was undertaken in compliance with a planning condition attached to planning approval for the construction of a new extension for the hydrotherapy pool.</i></p> <p><i>The site is located within the area of Bisham Abbey Scheduled Ancient Monument, and the site had an archaeological potential for medieval and post-medieval remains.</i></p> <p><i>In the event no archaeological features or finds were found, however, the groundworks were very limited in width and depth, and the natural geology was not revealed.</i></p>			
Project dates (fieldwork)	<i>20th January and 2nd February 2010</i>		
Previous work (Y/N/?)	<i>Y</i>	Future work (Y/N/?)	<i>N</i>
P. number	<i>3718</i>	Site code	<i>AS 1370</i>
Type of project	<i>Archaeological Monitoring and Recording</i>		
Site status	<i>Within Bisham Abbey Ancient Scheduled Monument</i>		
Current land use	<i>Garden</i>		
Planned development	<i>Extension to building for new hydrotherapy pool</i>		
Main features (+dates)	<i>-</i>		
Significant finds (+dates)	<i>-</i>		
Project location			
County/ District/ Parish	<i>Berkshire</i>	<i>Windsor and Maidenhead</i>	<i>Bisham</i>
HER/ SMR for area	<i>Berkshire SMR</i>		
Post code (if known)	<i>SL7 1RR</i>		
Area of site	<i>c. 5000m²</i>		
NGR	<i>SU 8475 8480</i>		
Height AOD (max/ min)	<i>29/28m AOD</i>		
Project creators			
Brief issued by	<i>Berkshire Archaeology</i>		
Project supervisor/s (PO)	<i>Zbigniew Pozorski, Gareth Barlow</i>		
Funded by	<i>Turner & Townsend Project Management on behalf of Sport England</i>		
Full title	<i>National Sports Centre, Bisham Abbey. Berkshire. Proposed hydrotherapy pool. Archaeological Monitoring and Recording</i>		
Authors	<i>Pozorski, Z.</i>		
Report no.	<i>3477</i>		
Date (of report)	<i>February 2010</i>		

NATIONAL SPORTS CENTRE, BISHAM ABBEY, BERKSHIRE PROPOSED HYDROTHERAPY POOL

ARCHAEOLOGICAL MONITORING AND RECORDING

SUMMARY

In January and February 2010 Archaeological Solutions (AS) carried out a programme of archaeological monitoring and recording at the National Sports Centre, Bisham Abbey, Berkshire (NGR SU 8475 8480). The monitoring was commissioned by Turner & Townsend on behalf of Sport England, and was undertaken in compliance with a planning condition attached to planning approval for the construction of a new extension for the hydrotherapy pool.

The site is located within the area of Bisham Abbey Scheduled Ancient Monument, and the site had an archaeological potential for medieval and post-medieval remains.

In the event no archaeological features or finds were found, however, the groundworks were very limited in width and depth, and the natural geology was not revealed.

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 In January and February 2010 Archaeological Solutions (AS) carried out a programme of archaeological monitoring and recording at the National Sports Centre, Bisham Abbey, Berkshire (NGR SU 8475 8480; Figs. 1 & 2). The monitoring was commissioned by Turner & Townsend Project Management on behalf of Sport England, in compliance with a planning condition required by the local planning authority (Windsor and Maidenhead Royal Borough Council), and a condition of Scheduled Monument Consent. The work was carried out during the groundworks for a new hydrotherapy pool extension to the sports injury clinic.

1.2 The monitoring was undertaken in accordance to Scheduled Monument Consent issued by English Heritage and a written scheme of investigation (specification) prepared by AS (dated 17/11/2009). It conformed to the Institute for Archaeologists (IfA) *Code of Conduct* and *Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Watching Briefs* (revised 2001).

1.3 The objectives of the project of archaeological monitoring and recording were:

- to ensure the archaeological excavation and 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;
- to secure the full analysis and interpretation of the site archive and the appropriate publication of the project results, if required; and
- to secure the analysis, long-term conservation and storage of the project archive.

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 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 DESCRIPTION OF THE SITE

2.1 The site is located in southern part of the Bisham Abbey complex, and comprises a small area to the rear (south-west) of the Sports Therapy Centre and south of the Sports Injury Centre. Bisham Abbey is situated c. 350m north-west of A404 and A308 road junction, c. 1.5km south of the town centre of Marlow and c. 5km north-west of Maidenhead, adjacent to the River Thames. The Bisham complex is occupied by a sports hall with associated facilities, including hard and grassed courts and pitches, accommodation blocks and access roads. In the north-west corner, the main administrative buildings occupy the Grade I Listed medieval and Tudor house. To the south of the main house, several other historic buildings survive, including a 15th century dovecote and former barns and agricultural buildings of contemporary date. The latter have been converted to private residential accommodation.

3 TOPOGRAPHY, GEOLOGY AND SOILS

3.1 Bisham Abbey and the adjacent village occupy the floodplain of the River Thames at approximately 29m AOD. A flat tongue of land mirrors the river profile in its wide meander to the north-east, while the local topography rises steeply from the main A404 road to the south-east at Inkydown and Fultness Woods to an eminence at Cookham Dean between 100 and 113m (Fig. 1). Soil maps illustrate a narrow band of Thames alluvium occupying the river margins, indicative of the more recent limits of flooding and deposition, while the former fields and flat lands extending through the area comprise the Sutton 2 Association, composed of a well-drained fine and coarse loamy soil (SSEW 1983).

4 ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

4.1 The archaeological and historical background to the site is presented in detail in the preceding desk-based assessment, which is summarised below (Prosser, 2001):

4.2 The assessment recorded that many of the buildings and sports pitches lie within the original enclosure of the medieval monastic precinct, which is a Scheduled Ancient Monument (SAM No. 19021) containing Grade I and Grade II Listed buildings. The former monastic precinct at Bisham is still traceable in outline within its square, formerly moated, enclosure. The site preserves a number of important buildings and fragments related to the monastery, associated secular buildings and elements of its subsequent development.

Prehistoric and Roman

4.3 Prehistoric activity in the Bisham area is poorly understood. Artefacts have been found extensively on the gravels of the river Thames, attesting long-term occupation, and cropmarks of possible Bronze Age burial mounds have been located close to the assessment area. Ephemeral Roman evidence is likewise found quite close to the abbey. Before the later Middle Ages however, East Berkshire was a poorly defined and peripheral area, in which colonisation and settlement is attested, though the archaeological resource remains inadequately quantified.

Medieval

4.4 During the 12th century, the manor was granted to the Knights Templar, who established a preceptory on the present site. A number of buildings dating from the later period of their occupation still exist, including the magnificent hall and porch with its impressive door, which are notable and important buildings of their type. After the suppression of the Order, the site was granted to the earls of Salisbury, who founded a priory for Augustinian canons in 1334. During the following two centuries, members of the family

continued to occupy the former preceptory buildings, which adjoined the priory range.

Post-medieval

4.5 The priory was suppressed during the dissolution of the lesser monasteries in 1536, but re-founded for a short time by King Henry VIII as a Benedictine abbey. After its second suppression in July 1537, the church was demolished and the associated buildings gradually removed by the Hoby family, who purchased the site and converted it to an aristocratic residence in Tudor Renaissance style. In 1780, the manor was purchased by the Vansittart family, who occupied the estate until a descendant gave the buildings over to the use of the Council for Physical Recreation in 1947. Though the site is now subdivided and has undergone much modification and alteration, it retains a wealth of historic landscape and buildings interest.

The site

4.6 A trial trench evaluation carried out by HAT (now AS) examined linear anomalies revealed by a resistivity survey (Stratascan 2001). A wide shallow ditch containing abraded pottery of a high medieval date was recorded. Sparse residual sherds of High Medieval (12th–14th century) pottery were found (Crank 2002). The development of the sports facilities, since 2002, has been carried out over a number of phases of archaeological monitoring and under Scheduled Monument Consent. The most recent phase of works comprised the monitoring of the construction of new clay tennis courts, and monitoring during repairs to a fire hydrant. AS also recently carried out an historic building appraisal of nibs attached to curtilage listed walls adjacent to the proposed new hydrotherapy pool (Prosser and Collins 2010). This noted that a retaining wall lying adjacent to the appraisal structures was probably constructed on the foundations and lower courses of a 16th century precursor, which was raised in the 18th century to create an enclosed kitchen garden. The latter is recorded on 19th century maps. Technical analysis suggests that the nib walls are contemporary with this period and probably relate to a doorway leading from the former shrubbery, to the kitchen garden. The walls are, however, constructed of reused medieval masonry, including chalk, Reigate stone and flint.

5 METHODOLOGY

5.1. 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.

5.2 The principal element monitored was the mechanically-excavated ground reduction for the proposed hydrotherapy pool with associated services. The foundations were piled.

6 DESCRIPTION OF RESULTS

6.1 The deposits present within the excavation are recorded in sample section shown below

<i>Excavation for hydrotherapy pool, S side, facing N</i> <i>0.00 = 28.52m AOD</i>		
0.00 – 0.07m	L1000	Current yard surface. Mid grey, firm, sandy silt.
0.07 – 0.22m	L1001	Made ground. Mixed pale brownish yellow, loose, sand and mid greyish brown, firm, clayey silt.
0.22 – 0.49m	L1002	Made ground. Mid greyish brown, firm clayey silt.
0.49m+	L1003	?Alluvium. Mid reddish brown, firm, clayey silt.

Description: No archaeological features or finds were identified.

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 DISCUSSION

8.1 The site had a potential for archaeological remains, in particular for medieval and post-medieval remains associated with the Bisham Abbey complex.

8.2 In the event no archaeological features or finds were revealed but the groundworks were very limited in width and depth.

9 DEPOSITION OF THE ARCHIVE

9.1 Archive records, with an inventory, will be deposited with any donated finds from the site at the Reading Museum. The archive will be quantified, ordered, indexed, cross-referenced and checked for internal consistency. In addition to the overall site summary, it will be necessary to produce a summary of the artefactual and ecofactual data.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Archaeological Solutions would like to thank Turner & Townsend Project Management for commissioning this project on behalf of Sport England, in particular Mr Martyn Hopwood for his assistance.

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PHOTOGRAPHIC INDEX



DP 1. Bisham Abbey, Berkshire. View NW



DP 2. Sports Injury Centre and Sports Therapy Centre. View SE



DP 3. The groundworks. View NE



DP 4. The groundworks. View N



DP 5. The ground works. View SE

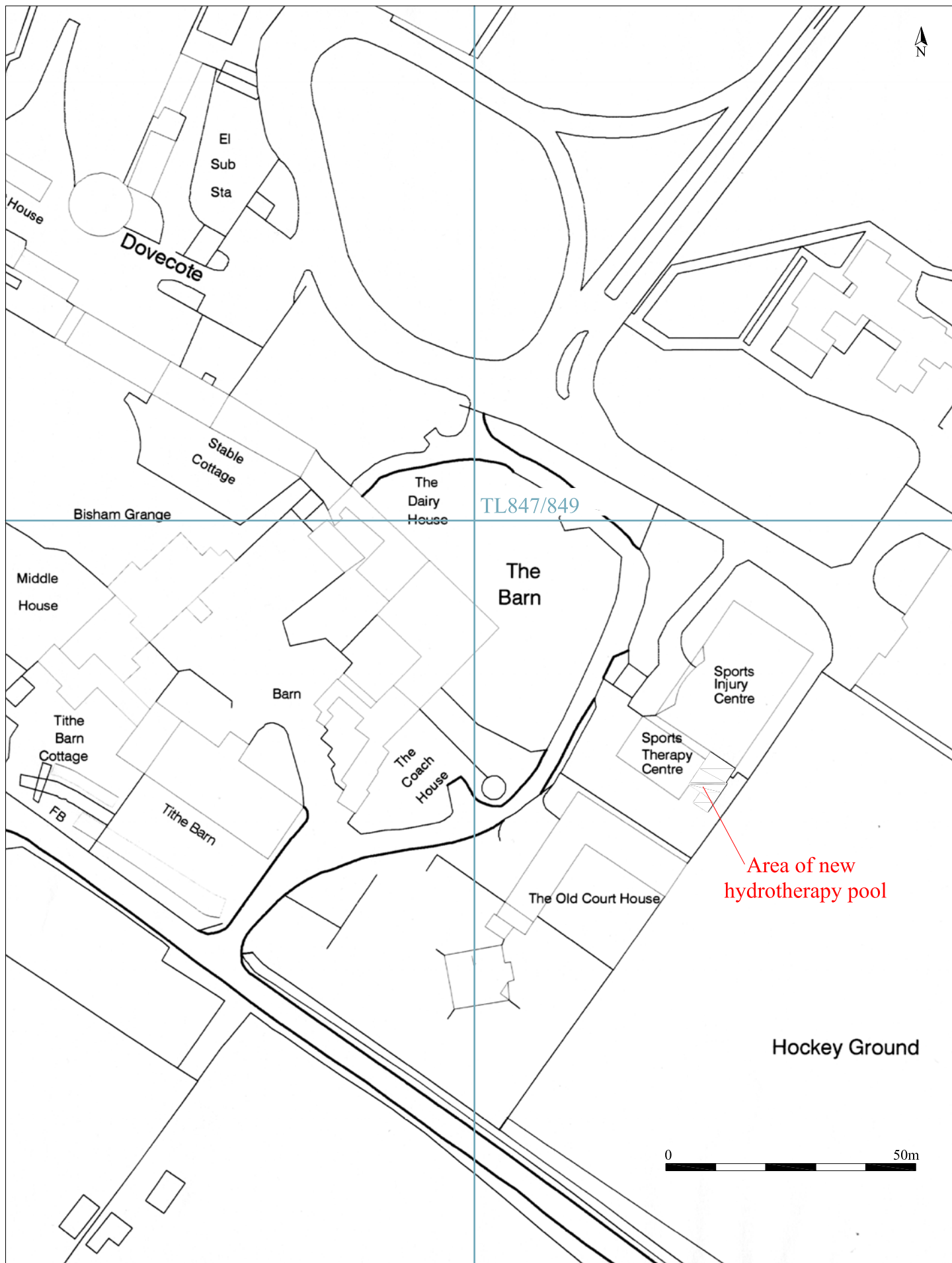


DP 6. Working Shot. View N

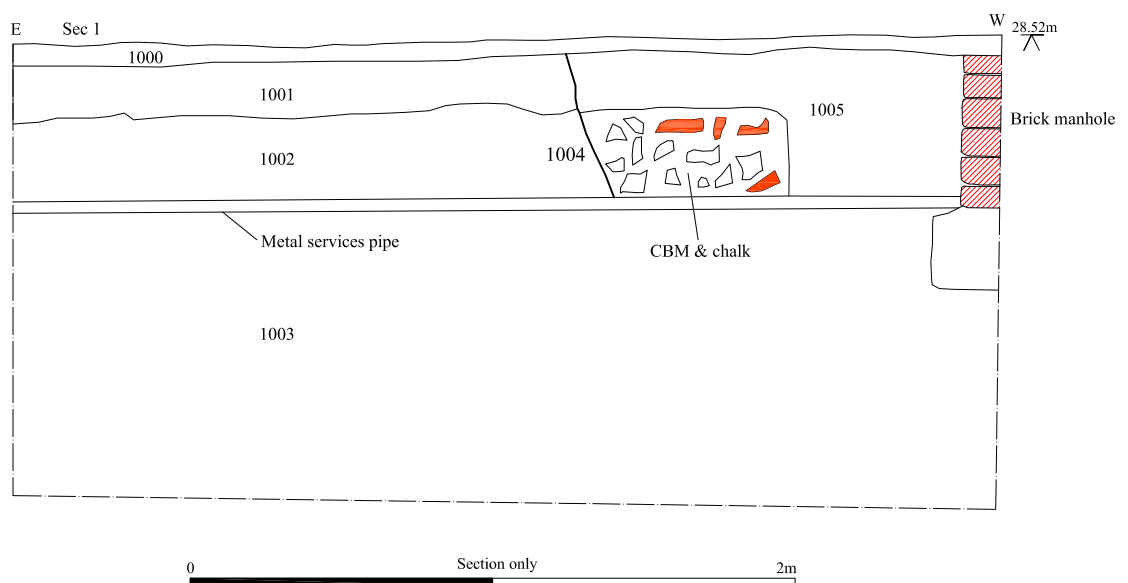
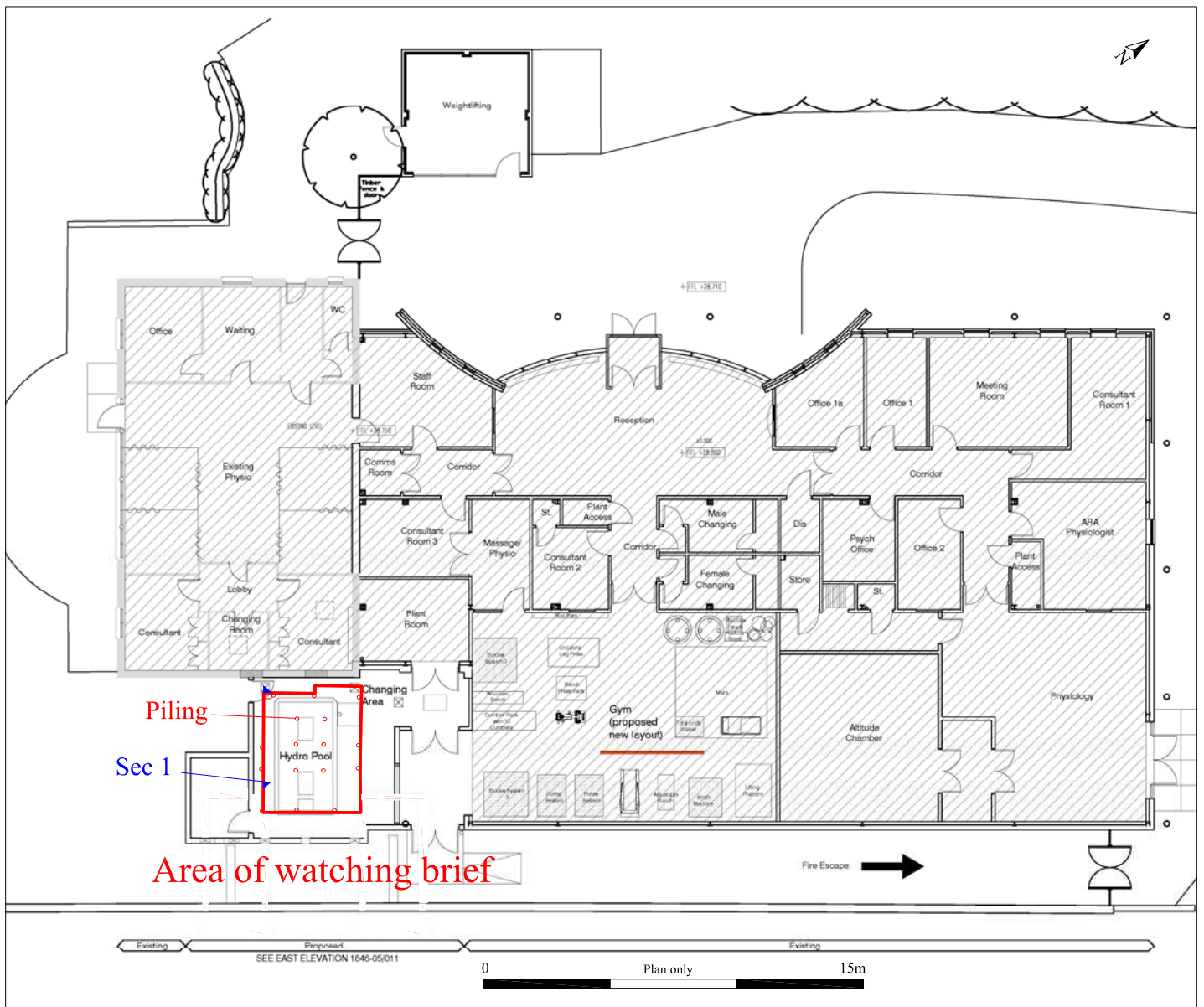


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Fig. 1 Site location plan
 Scale 1:25,000 at A4



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Fig. 2 Detailed site location plan
 Scale 1:1000 at A4



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Fig. 3 Location of hydrotherapy pool
 Scale Plan 1:250, section 1:25 at A4