
ARCHAEOLOGICAL SOLUTIONS LTD

**THE TOWN HOUSE,
84 TILEHOUSE STREET,
HITCHIN, HERTFORDSHIRE**

ARCHAEOLOGICAL MONITORING AND RECORDING

Authors: Zbigniew Pozorski MA	
NGR: TL 18125 28990	Report No. 3452
District: North Hertfordshire	Site Code: AS 1262
Approved: Claire Halpin MIFA	Project No. 3539
Signed:	Date: December 2009

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OASIS SUMMARY SHEET

Project details			
Project name	<i>The Town House, 84 Tilehouse Street, Hitchin, Hertfordshire</i>		
<p><i>In December 2009 Archaeological Solutions (AS) carried out a programme of archaeological monitoring and recording at The Town House, 84 Tilehouse Street, Hitchin, Hertfordshire (NGR TL 18125 28990). The monitoring was commissioned by RAK Group Ltd, and was carried out during the groundworks for a new brick boundary wall to replace existing railings.</i></p> <p><i>The site is located within historic core of Hitchin. It lies within Area of Archaeological Significance No.142, which encompasses the medieval town. The site had an archaeological potential for Saxon, medieval and post-medieval remains.</i></p> <p><i>In the event no archaeological features or finds were found but the groundworks were very limited in width and depth, and the natural geology was not revealed.</i></p>			
Project dates (fieldwork)	<i>10th December 2009</i>		
Previous work (Y/N/?)	<i>N</i>	Future work (Y/N/?)	<i>N</i>
P. number	<i>3539</i>	Site code	<i>AS 1262</i>
Type of project	<i>Archaeological Monitoring and Recording</i>		
Site status	<i>Within Area of Archaeological Significance No.142</i>		
Current land use	<i>Rear yard of house</i>		
Planned development	<i>Boundary brick wall replacing railings</i>		
Main features (+dates)	<i>-</i>		
Significant finds (+dates)	<i>-</i>		
Project location			
County/ District/ Parish	<i>Hertfordshire</i>	<i>North Hertfordshire</i>	<i>Hitchin</i>
HER/ SMR for area	<i>Hertfordshire HER</i>		
Post code (if known)	<i>SG5 2DY</i>		
Area of site	<i>c. 10m²</i>		
NGR	<i>TL 18125 28990</i>		
Height AOD (max/ min)	<i>68m AOD</i>		
Project creators			
Brief issued by	<i>HCC HEU</i>		
Project supervisor/s (PO)	<i>Zbigniew Pozorski</i>		
Funded by	<i>RAK Group Ltd</i>		
Full title	<i>The Town House, 84 Tilehouse Street, Hitchin, Hertfordshire. Archaeological Monitoring and Recording</i>		
Authors	<i>Pozorski, Z.</i>		
Report no.	<i>3452</i>		
Date (of report)	<i>December 2009</i>		

THE TOWN HOUSE, 84 TILEHOUSE STREET, HITCHIN, HERTFORDSHIRE

ARCHAEOLOGICAL MONITORING AND RECORDING

SUMMARY

In December 2009 Archaeological Solutions (AS) carried out a programme of archaeological monitoring and recording at The Town House, 84 Tilehouse Street, Hitchin, Hertfordshire (NGR TL 18125 28990). The monitoring was commissioned by RAK Group Ltd, and was carried out during the groundworks for a new brick boundary wall to replace existing railings.

The site is located within historic core of Hitchin. It lies within Area of Archaeological Significance No.142, which encompasses the medieval town, and the site had an archaeological potential for Saxon, medieval and post-medieval remains.

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

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 In December 2009 Archaeological Solutions (AS) carried out a programme of archaeological monitoring and recording at The Town House, 84 Tilehouse Street, Hitchin, Hertfordshire (NGR TL 18125 28990; Figs. 1 & 2). The monitoring was commissioned by Mr Daniel Kitchener of RAK Group on behalf of Mr & Mrs Else, in compliance with a planning condition attached to planning permission (North Hertfordshire District Council Planning Ref. 09/00393/1HH). The monitoring was carried out during the groundworks for a new brick boundary wall to replace existing railings.

1.2 The monitoring was undertaken in accordance with advice from Hertfordshire County Council Historic Environment Unit (HCC HEU), and a written scheme of investigation prepared by AS (dated 15/06/2009), and approved by HCC HEU. The project conformed to the Institute for Archaeologists (IfA) *Code of Conduct and Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Watching Briefs* (revised 2001), as well as 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 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 on the northern side of Tilehouse Street, within the south-western part of town centre of Hitchin, Hertfordshire (Fig. 1). It lies c.120m to the south-east of the junction between the A602 and the A505.

2.2 The site comprises a two-storey house fronting Tilehouse Street and small yard to the rear. It is located within Area of Archaeological Significance No.142 identified on the Local Plan, which encompasses the medieval town of Hitchin. Tilehouse Street is one of the main streets within the medieval and post-medieval core of the town, with listed buildings on the street frontage of 18th century date (Nos. 83 & 84), 17th century date (Nos. 82 & 85) and 15th century date (No.81).

3 TOPOGRAPHY, GEOLOGY AND SOILS

3.1 The site is located on a land that slopes downwards to the River Hiz which flows 200m to the south-east (Fig. 1). It lies at approximately 69m AOD.

4 ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Prehistoric

4.1 Prehistoric flint artefacts dating from the Palaeolithic period onwards have been found throughout Hitchin and include a Palaeolithic flint implement found on Brand Street (HER 282). The majority of Palaeolithic finds comprise Acheulian handaxes in good condition (Oakley 1947, 250), whilst the Mesolithic is represented by finds of arrowheads (Thompson 2005). Neolithic finds are also recorded in the wider area of Hitchin, a number of which were made from non-local flint and appear to have come from much further afield (Thompson 2005).

4.2 Cropmarks representative of Bronze Age ring ditches, particularly to the west of Wilbury Hill, attest to the occupation of the Hitchin area during the Bronze Age period. Bronze Age axes have also been found within the town and include an early Bronze Age arrowhead recovered from Verulam Road (HER 6452), and a founder's metalwork hoard discovered in Periwinkle Lane (HER 305). Early or middle Iron Age finds in Hitchin are sparse. Late Iron Age urns were discovered along Bancroft (HER 1204). In the late Iron Age a major *oppidum* was located at Baldock c. 8km to the north-east.

Romano-British

4.3 Romano-British finds of pottery, metalwork and coins from the historic core of Hitchin indicate small-scale Roman occupation of the town and the medieval church tower of St Mary's is known to incorporate some Roman brick. The Bancroft area has revealed finds of Roman glass vessels, a quern fragment and pottery sherds representative of possible occupation evidence (Appendix 1, below). A probable late/sub-Roman or Saxon cemetery appears to have existed in the area of Brand Street, High Street and the Bancroft junction, and human skeletons were found in 1868 (HER 13353). A possible Roman road is also thought to have traversed Hitchin and ran to the south of the Ickniel Way (HER 4605).

Anglo-Saxon

4.4 The place-name Hitchin is believed to derive from the territory of the tribe called the *Hicce* and possibly originated as a Saxon word for the River Hiz. Remains of a major middle to late Saxon settlement has been identified to the north in Queen Street, revealing several phases of building, the earliest comprising six sunken-features buildings and two probable large rectangular high status wooden buildings. A large ditch of probable later Saxon date has

been recorded in the town, to the north, indicative of an early major boundary or possible defended settlement (burh), and it is possible that further evidence of the boundary may also extend towards the current site (Thompson 2005).

Medieval

4.5 The Domesday Book reveals that the manor of Hitchin was occupied by 48 villagers, 17 small-holders, 29 cottagers and 12 slaves (Page 1912). The settlement is thought to have been created a borough in the mid 12th century, yet was not recorded as such until 1268. The medieval core of the town incorporates the 12th century St Mary's Church, a small Gilbertine religious house and Hitchin Priory of the Carmelites.

4.6 The Bancroft area has yielded late medieval occupation in the form of a 15th century timber framed buildings to the rear of No. 122 Bancroft (HER 2619), medieval activity located behind Nos. 67 - 104 Bancroft (HER 10883), pits from Nos. 36 - 40 Bancroft (HER 10891) and a medieval pottery kiln at No. 96 Bancroft (HER 12805). An area of ridge and furrow is also noted 400m to the north-east of the site (HER 13278).

Post-medieval and later

4.7 By the 16th century Hitchin was becoming renowned as a market for grain, particularly corn, and malting and brewing became important industries. A number of houses, many still extant, were also built or altered in the immediate area of the site, during the 16th and 17th centuries. During the early modern period, Hitchin became a frequent staging post for London coaches providing further custom for the inns, and later encouraged the growth of industries such as Russell's tannery, the herb distillery of Messrs. William Ransom and Sons Ltd and the Hitchin Gas Co (HERs 2706, 5713 & 110881).

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.

5.2 The principal elements monitored were the mechanically-excavated foundation trenches for a new wall and some ground reduction of the area in the backyard to the house.

6 DESCRIPTION OF RESULTS

6.1 The site was overlain by modern tarmac, L1000, which was removed prior to the construction of the wall. Below the tarmac, a layer of CBM rubble within a brown sandy silt was present (L1001; c. 0.20m thick). At c. 0.30m

below existing, an orange yellow, loose gravel was located (L1002; c. 0.25m+ thick). It may have been a levelling layer. The natural geology (or any archaeological horizons) was not exposed.

6.2 The two deposits revealed within the foundation trenches, L1001 and L1002, and were probably related to former construction activity.

6.3 No archaeological features or finds were identified, but the natural geology was not exposed and the area of investigation was very small.

7 CONFIDENCE RATING

7.1 It is not felt that any factors inhibited the recognition of archaeological features or finds during the 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 historic core of Hitchin.

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

9 DEPOSITION OF THE ARCHIVE

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

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Archaeological Solutions would like to thank Mr Daniel Kitchener of RAK Group Ltd for commissioning the works on behalf of Mr & Mrs Else.

AS is also pleased to acknowledge the input and advice of Mr Andy Instone of Hertfordshire County Council Historic Environment Unit.

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APPENDIX 1

ARCHAEOLOGICAL DATABASE (HER)

HER	NGR TL	Description
Prehistoric (to AD 43)		
282	184 292	Palaeolithic flint implements from Brand Street
305	1865 3007	Bronze Age founders metal found on Periwinkle Lane
1192	1844 3016	Palaeolithic flint implement found on Brampton Park Road
1204	1851 2935	Late Iron Age urns discovered along Bancroft
6452	189 295	Early Bronze Age arrowhead recovered from Verulam Road
Romano-British (AD 43 - 410)		
1200	1847 2926	Roman glass vessels found along Bancroft
1203	1847 2926	Romano-British quern fragment recovered from Bancroft
1420	1845 2940	Roman pottery and other evidence of occupation found to the south-east of the Grammar school
4605	1854 2964	Supposed line of Roman road through Hitchin and just south of the Icknield Way
4864	1853 2941	Roman pottery or possible occupation evidence found at Bancroft
13353	18440 29210	Probable late/sub-Roman or Saxon cemetery appears to have existed in the area of the Brand Street-High Street-Bancroft junction, from which human skeletons were found in 1868
Medieval (AD 1066 - 1500)		
2619	1850 2923	Late medieval occupation known from behind No. 122 Bancroft included 15 th century timber framed buildings, which survived until the 1960s
4390	1851 2911	Medieval Church of St Mary built in the 12 th century but most now dating from 14 th , 15 th , 17 th & 19 th century rebuilding
10883	186 295	Medieval occupation and post-medieval tanning industry in the form of the former Russell's Tannery confirmed by an evaluation behind Nos. 67 - 104 Bancroft
10891	1849 2953	Medieval and post-medieval pits found at Nos. 36 - 40 Bancroft, which are listed as 17 th century commercial properties
12805	1857 2944	Site of medieval pottery kiln and post-medieval occupation at No. 96 Bancroft
13278	18800 29310	Area of ridge and furrow visible in the grassed field between Walsworth Road and the theatre
Post-medieval (AD 1500 – 1750)		
66	1851 2941	Nos. 26 & 27 Bancroft, comprising the Manor House Galleries, is a smart red brick town house dated to c. 1700
Early modern (AD 1750 – 1900)		
65	1849 2935	Late 18 th century red brick town house stands at No. 21 Bancroft
2706	1865 2945	Site of Russell's tannery, which was established by Russell in 1783, located on Bancroft

5713	1863 2934	Herb distillery of Messrs. William Ransom and Sons Ltd was established as a manufacturing chemist on Bancroft in 1846
10881	1859 2968	Bridewell or prison at No. 67 Bancroft comprised two wing building in an L-shape, which formed two sides of a walled courtyard constructed in 1805
11927	1876 2972	Site of Hitchin Gas Co. works built in 1834 on Starlings Bridge, Nightingale Road
Modern (AD 1901 - present)		
12588	1855 2959	Former Bancroft Dairies at No. 48 Bancroft comprises a mid 20 th century building
Undated		
12421	1805 2960	Butts Close comprises registered common land and the possible site of medieval archery butts, recorded from after 1465
12422	1804 2984	Cow Common comprises registered common land

APPENDIX 2

CONTENTS OF THE ARCHIVE

RECORDS	NUMBER
Brief	None, Advice given
Specification	15/06/09
Registers	0
Context Sheets	3
Site Drawings A1	0
Site Drawings A3	0
Site Drawings A4	0
Site Photographs B/W	0
Site Photographs Colour Slide	0
Site Photographs Digital	Shot Nos 1-14

APPENDIX 3
SITES AND MONUMENTS RECORD SUMMARY SHEET

Site name and address:	The Town House, 84 Tilehouse Street, Hitchin, Hertfordshire
County: Hertfordshire	District: North Hertfordshire
Village/Town: Hitchin	Parish: Hitchin
Planning application reference:	09/00393/1HH
Client name/address/tel:	RAK Group Ltd
Nature of application:	Boundary brick wall replacing railings
Present land use:	Boundary
Size of application area: 3,600m ²	Size of area investigated c.10 sq m
NGR (8 figures):	TL 1813 2899
Site Code:	AS1262
Site director/Organization:	Archaeological Solutions
Type of work:	Monitoring and recording
Date of work:	10/12/09
Location of finds/Curating museum:	North Herts
Related HER Nos:	Periods represented: None
Relevant previous summaries/reports:	-
Summary of fieldwork results:	<p><i>In December 2009 Archaeological Solutions (AS) carried out a programme of archaeological monitoring and recording at The Town House, 84 Tilehouse Street, Hitchin, Hertfordshire (NGR TL 18125 28990). The monitoring was carried out during the groundworks for a new brick boundary wall to replace existing railings.</i></p> <p><i>In the event no archaeological features or finds were found but the groundworks were very limited in width and depth, and the natural geology was not revealed.</i></p>
Author of summary: Zbigniew Pozorski	Date of Summary: Dec 09

PHOTOGRAPHIC INDEX



DP 1. Tilehouse Street, Hitchin, Hertfordshire. View NW.



DP 2. Rear of No 84 Tilehouse Street. View SW.



DP 3. Foundation for a wall. View SE.



DP 4. Foundation for a wall. View NE.



DP 5. Foundation for a wall. View SE.



DP 6. The site. View WNW.

DP 7.

DP 8.

DP 9.

DP 10.

DP 11.

DP 12.

DP 13.

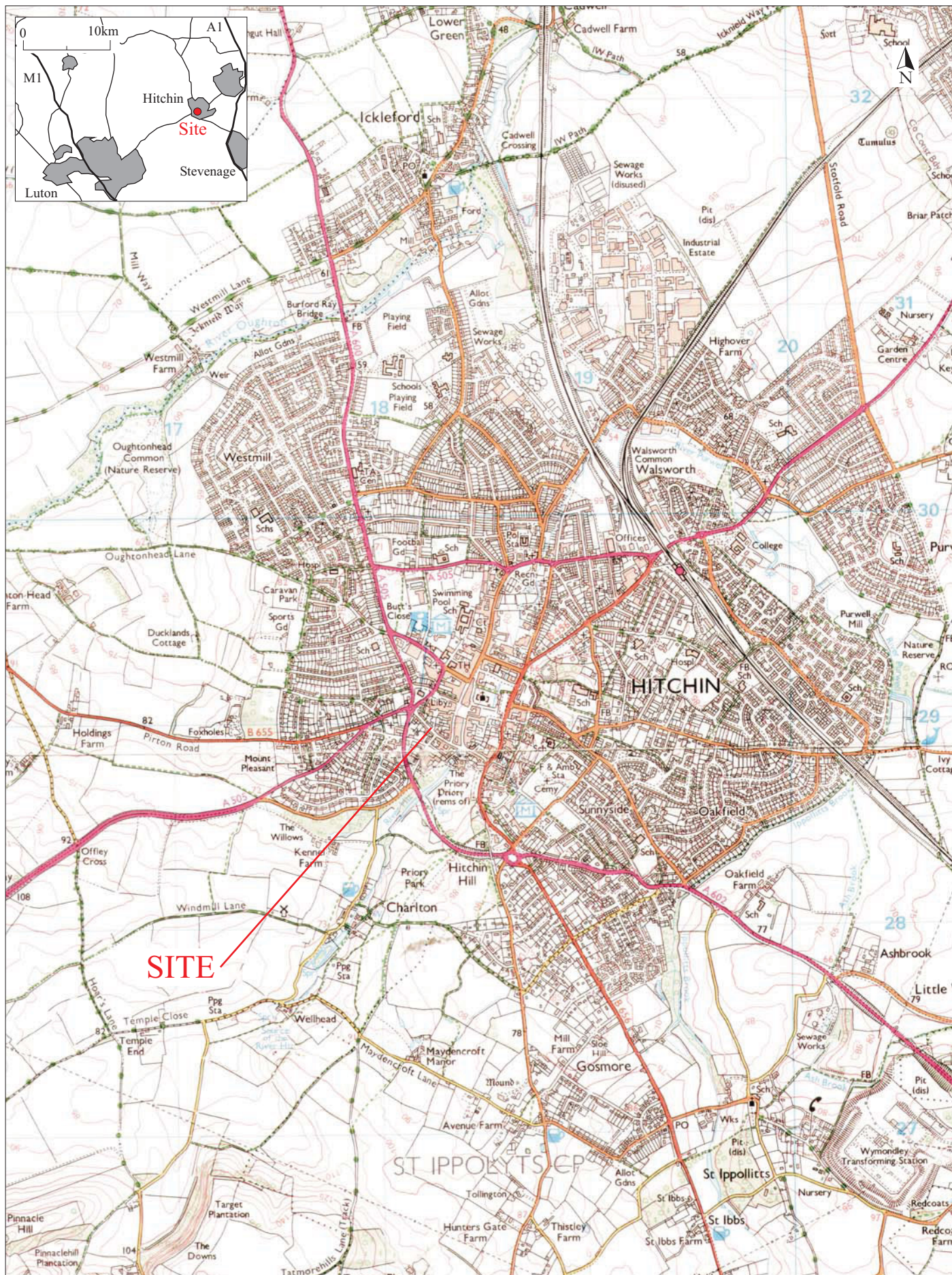
DP 14.

DP 15.

DP 16.

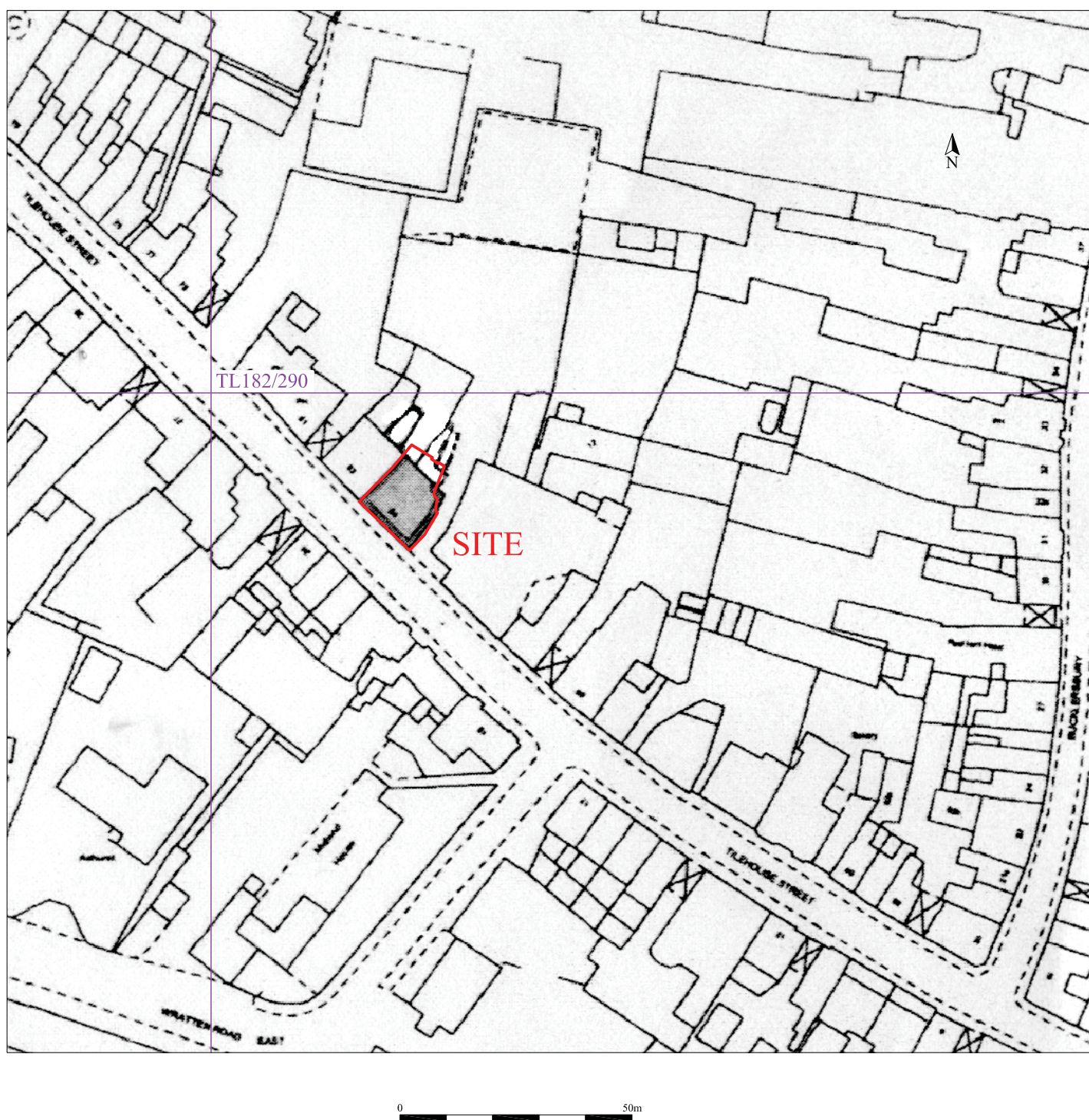
DP 17.

DP 18

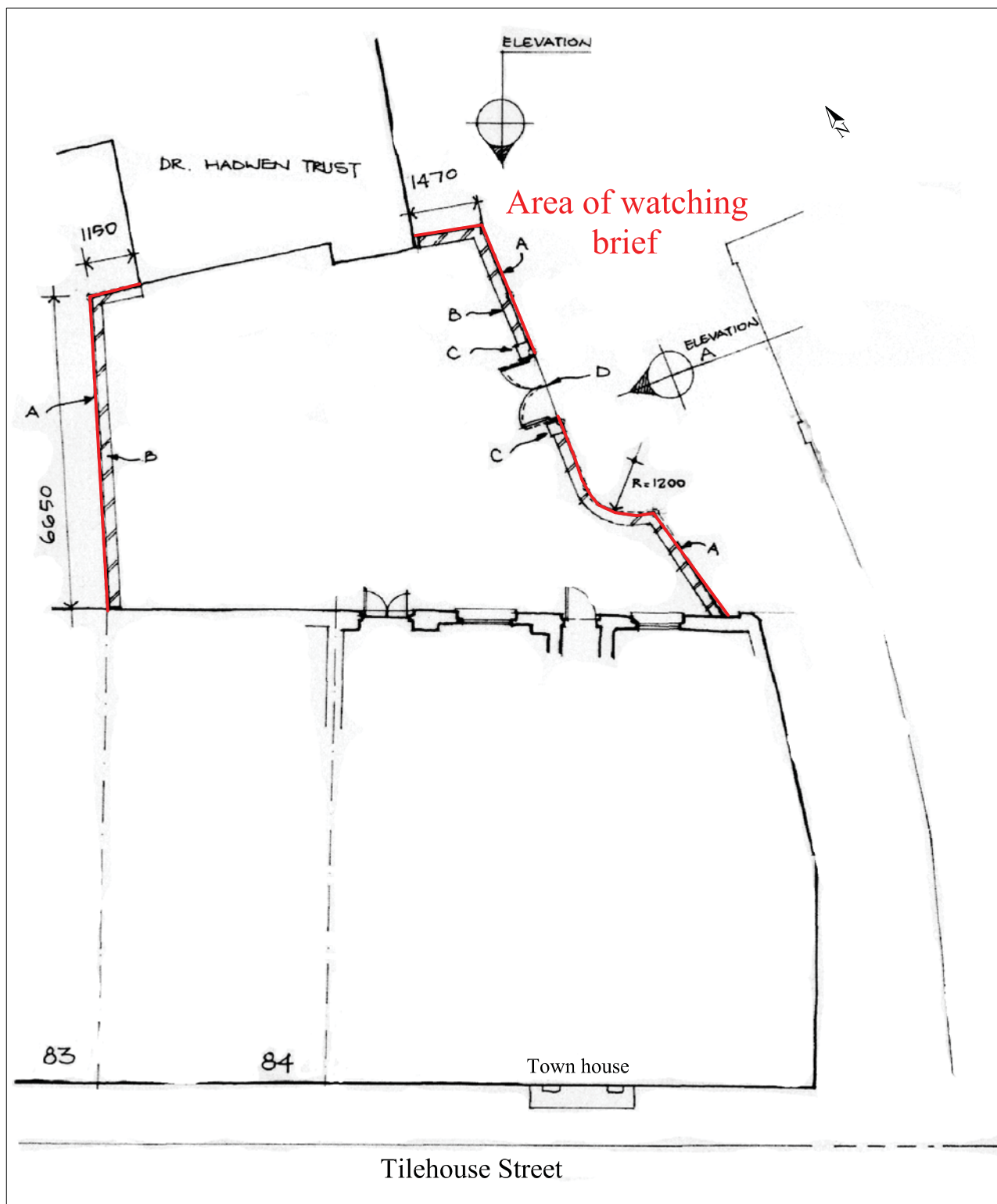


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Fig. 1 Site location plan
 Scale 1:25,000 at A4



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



0 5m

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Fig. 3 Area of watching brief
Scale 1:125 at A4