

Archaeological Services & Consultancy Ltd

**WATCHING BRIEF:
52 CASTLE HILL AVENUE
BERKHAMSTED
HERTFORDSHIRE**

on behalf of Mr C. Nichols



**By
Karin Semmelmann BA MA PIFA**

August 2005

ASC: 717/BCH/2

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Site Data

<i>ASC project code:</i>	BCH	<i>ASC Project No:</i>	71&
<i>County:</i>	Hertfordshire		
<i>Village/Town:</i>	Berkhamsted		
<i>Civil Parish:</i>	Berkhamsted		
<i>NGR (to 8 figs):</i>	SP 9907 0843		
<i>Present use:</i>	House and garden		
<i>Planning proposal:</i>	Construction of a garage		
<i>Planning application ref/date:</i>	4/00/1661		
<i>Local Planning Authority:</i>	Dacorum District Council		
<i>Date of fieldwork:</i>	July 2005		
<i>Client:</i>	Mr Chris Nichols 52 Castle Hill Avenue Berkhamsted HP4 1HJ		
<i>Contact name:</i>	Chris Nichols		
<i>Telephone</i>	01442 399079	<i>Fax:</i>	

Internal Quality Check

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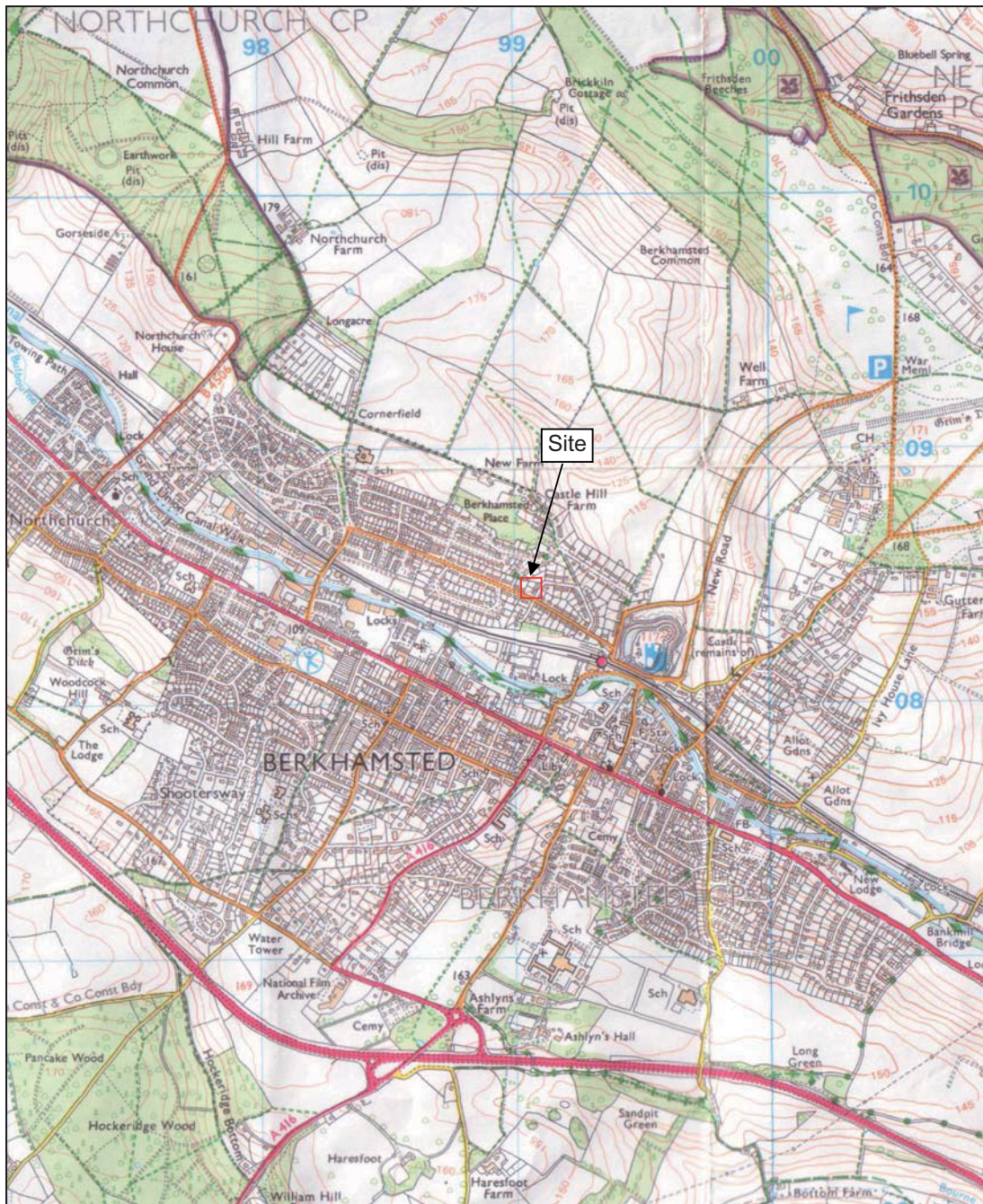


Figure 1: General location (scale 1:25,000)

Summary

In July 2005 an archaeological watching brief was undertaken during the excavation of footing trenches for a new garage at 52 Castle Hill Avenue, Berkhamsted. Archaeological remains of the Roman and medieval periods have been recorded in the area but on this occasion no archaeological remains or artefacts were observed. The archaeological impact of the development is considered to be negligible.

1 Introduction

1.1 Background

In August 2005 *Archaeological Services and Consultancy Ltd* (ASC) carried out a watching brief at 52 Castle Hill Avenue, Berkhamsted. The project was commissioned by Mr Chris Nichols, and was carried out according to a project design prepared by ASC (Fell 2005), and a *brief* (Smith 2005) prepared on behalf of the local planning authority (LPA), *Dacorum District Council*, by their archaeological advisor (AA), the Archaeology Office of *Hertfordshire County Council*. The relevant planning application reference is 4/00/1661

1.2 Planning Background

This watching brief has been required as a planning condition under the terms of *Planning Policy Guidance Note 16* (PPG16), in response to proposals for the construction of a garage on the south side of the existing house (Fig.3)

1.3 Location

The site is in Berkhamsted, in the administrative district of Dacorum, Hertfordshire (Fig. 1). It is on the northern side of the town, on the east side of Castle Hill Avenue and is centred on Ordnance Survey National Grid Reference SP 9907 0843 (Fig. 2). It lies approximately 400m west of the castle (a scheduled ancient monument), within Archaeological Area of Significance No. 21.

1.4 Geology and topography

The soils of the area comprise the *Charity 2 Association*: namely flinty fine silty soils over chalk (Soil Survey, 1983). The site is within the valley of the river Bulbourne on the north side of the valley, and lies at an elevation of 112m OD.

1.5 Archaeological and Historical Background

1.5.1 Berkhamsted is an area of considerable archaeological and historical importance (Birtchnell 1960; HCC 2004; Page (ed), 1908) and this has been recognised by *Hertfordshire County Council* by the designation of much of the town as an *Area of Archaeological Importance*. The site had the potential to reveal evidence of a variety of periods, but the focus of interest lay in the Roman and medieval periods.

1.5.2 The present town of Berkhamsted developed in the valley bottom along the line of a Roman road, now known as *Akeman Street*. The site is away from the

main area of medieval settlement, but remains of the Iron Age and Roman period are known along Castle Hill Avenue and Bridgewater Road, close to the site.

- 1.5.3 It is likely that the area of the modern Castle Hill Avenue and Bridgewater Road was occupied during the Roman period. Evidence of Roman occupation was revealed during the construction of the houses on Castle Hill Avenue during the 1930s (Sites and Monuments Record (SMR) 12193). Roman pottery, dating to the 1st and 2nd centuries AD has been found on Bridgewater Road (SMR 6071 and 6803) and it is likely that a Roman pottery kiln was situated in the area west of Castle Hill Avenue.
- 1.5.4 Berkhamsted was of considerable importance during the medieval period, notably due to the presence of the castle, the remains of which lie c.400m east of the site, and medieval settlement on the south side of the river.

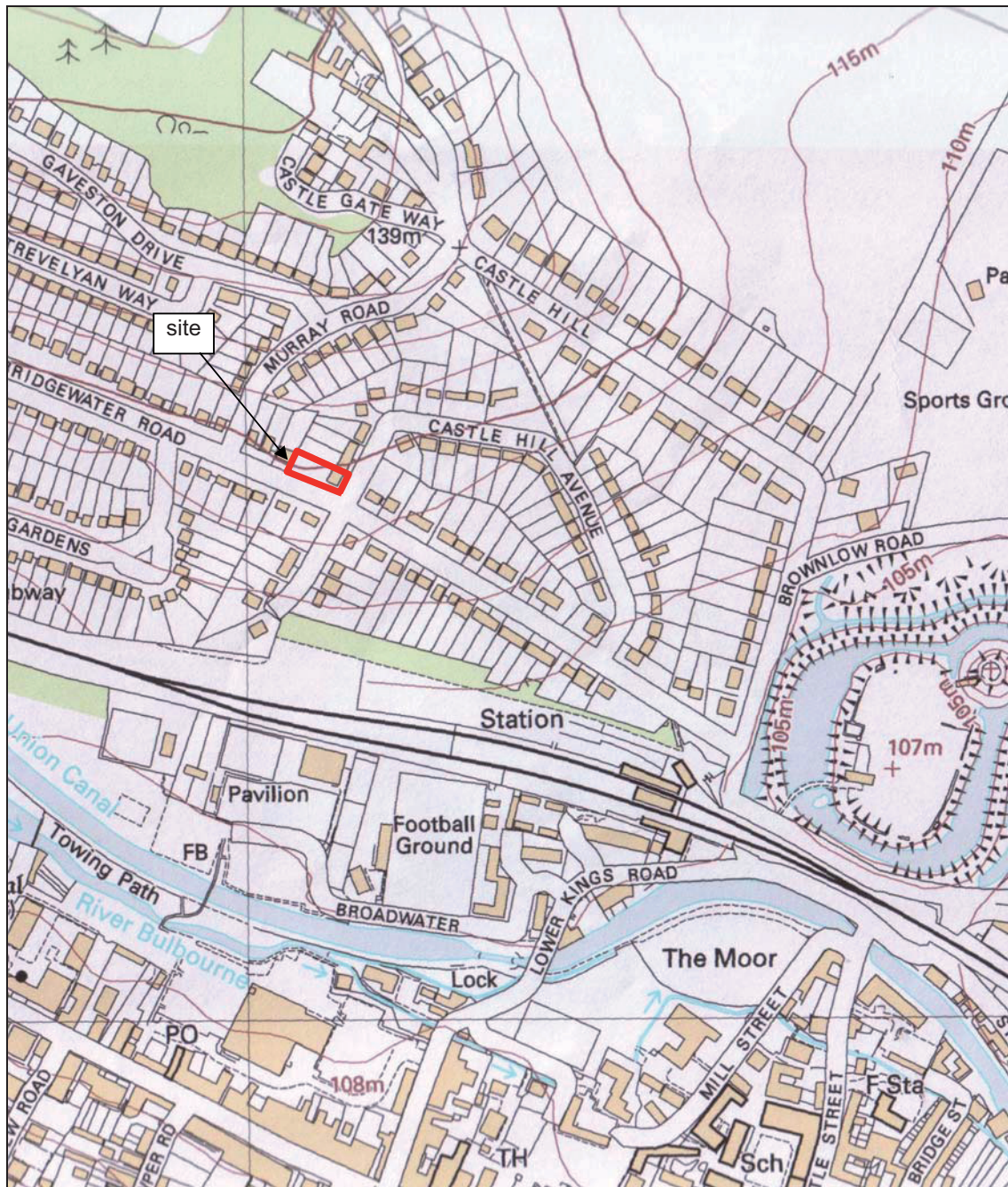


Figure 2: Site Plan (scale 1:5000)

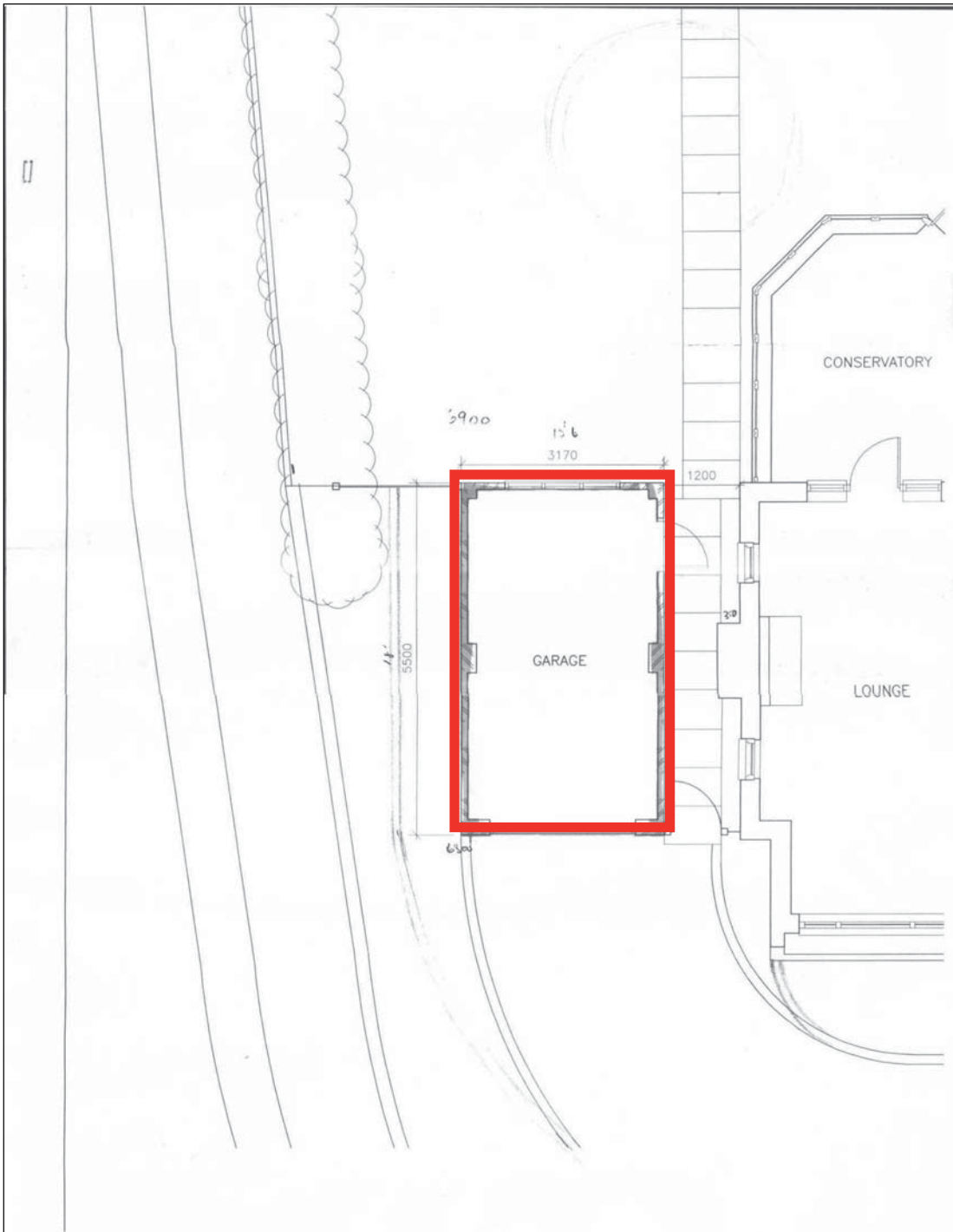


Figure 3: Plan of the development (not to scale)

2 Aims and Methods

2.1 Aims

As described in the *brief* (Section 1), the aims of the watching brief 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
- To secure the analysis, conservation and long-term storage of any artefactual/ecofactual material recovered from the site

2.2 Standards

The work conformed to the project design, to the relevant sections of the Institute of Archaeologists' *Code of Conduct* (IFA 2000) and *Standard & Guidance Notes* (IFA 2001), to the Association of Local Government Archaeological Officers East of England Region *Standards for Field Archaeology in the East of England* (ALGAO 2003), and to the relevant sections of ASC's own *Operations Manual*.

2.3 Methods

The work was carried out according to the *brief* (Section 3), which required:

- Soil and overburden stripping under archaeological supervision
- Inspection of sub-soil for archaeological features
- Rapid investigation and recording of any archaeological features/deposits
- Subsoil-stripping under archaeological supervision
- Examination of any service and foundation trenches and subsequent recording of any exposed archaeological deposits
- Rapid examination of spoil heaps for archaeological material
- A programme of post-fieldwork analysis, archiving and publication

3 Results and Conclusions

3.1 Results

- 3.1.1 Two visits were made on 9th and 10th August 2005 when the reduction of the area for the garage as well as the excavation of footing trenches were monitored. No archaeological finds or features were observed.
- 3.1.2 The ground reduction covered an area approximately 7 x 4 x 0.15m deep. This revealed that the western two thirds of the area were covered by an earthy chalk deposit with a charcoal filled depression in the northern corner, both of recent date. The eastern third consisted of a brown (10YR 5/3) pebbly subsoil, which appeared to be more natural.
- 3.1.3 The footing trenches were generally 0.40m wide and between 0.45m and 0.90m deep. The stratigraphy of the north west section comprised an upper layer of topsoil c.0.12m deep over a layer of redeposited pebbly brown clay c.0.30m deep. Within this layer was an irregularly shaped deposit of loose dark soil. An old land surface c.0.152m deep was buried below the layer of pebbly brown clay, which lay over a pale brown chalky deposit of variable depth. Below this lay the natural chalk.

3.2 Confidence Rating

The watching brief was undertaken in dry and sunny weather and conditions for the watching brief were good. Full co-operation was received from the contractors and a high confidence rating is attached to the results of the watching brief.

3.3 Conclusions

Archaeological remains were not observed during the watching brief and it is unlikely that large quantities of significant archaeological features or artefacts are present in this location. The development took place over a limited area and is unlikely to have had a significant impact on any such archaeological remains.



Plate 1: Ground reduction looking north west



Plate 2: Footing trenches looking north west

4. Acknowledgements

The writer is grateful to Mr Chris Nichols for commissioning the watching brief and Mr Jonathan Smith of the *Hertfordshire County Council Archaeology Office* for acting as curatorial monitor.

The fieldwork was undertaken for *ASC Ltd* by Jonathan Hunn BA PhD MIFA. This report was prepared by Karin Semmelmann BA MA PIFA and edited by Bob Zeepvat BA MIFA.

5. Archive

5.1 The project archive will comprise:

1. Brief
2. Project Design
3. Initial Report
4. Clients site plans
5. Site Monitoring Sheets
6. List of photographs
7. B/W prints & negatives
8. CDROM with copies of all digital files.

5.2 The archive will be deposited with *Dacorum Heritage Trust*.

6. References


Standards & Specifications

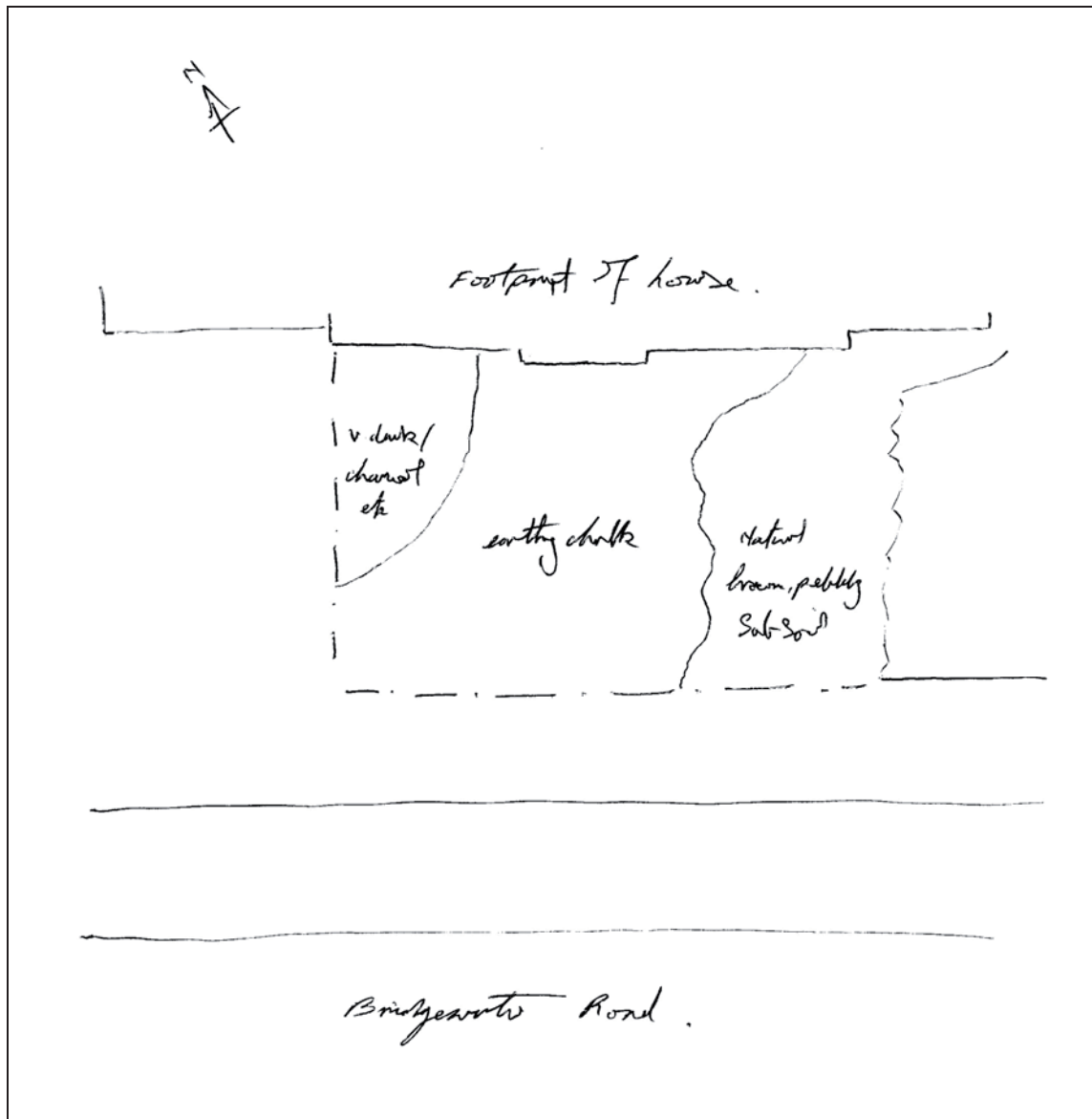
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Secondary Sources

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- Page W., 1908 *The Victoria History of the County of Berkhamsted*. Dawsons of Pall Mall
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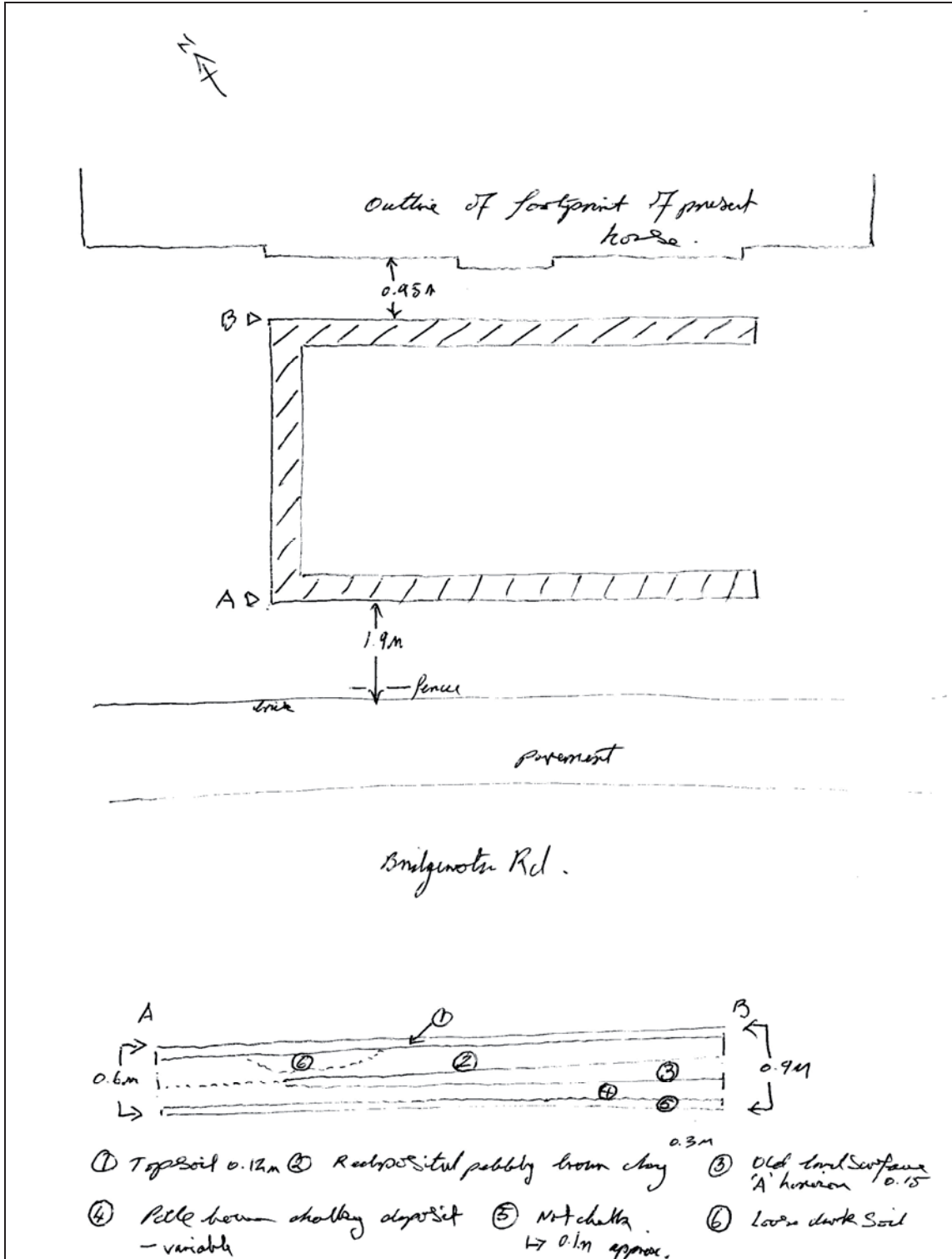
Appendix 1: Monitoring Sheets

 A.S.C. LTD		ARCHAEOLOGICAL FIELD MONITORING RECORD	
Project: <u>52, Castle Hill Ave</u> <u>Berkhamsted</u>		Project No/Code: <u>BCH 1717</u>	Sheet: <u>1</u> of <u>2</u>
Client/Developer: <u>C. Nicholas</u>		Date of visit: <u>9/8/05</u>	
Contact: <u>ditch</u>		Phone: <u>01442-394079</u>	
Duration of Visit (inc. travel):	Start: <u>6.55</u>	Finish: <u>7.40</u>	
Completed by: <u>JRH</u>			
Development Type:			
<input type="checkbox"/> Footings	<input type="checkbox"/> Services	<input type="checkbox"/> Roads	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Levelling
		<input type="checkbox"/> Quarrying	<input type="checkbox"/> Pipelines
Other (specify):			
Site & weather conditions: <u>Dry & Sunny</u>			
Observations: <u>Observed the reduced level of the garage area which was an area of about 7m x 4m and c. 0.15m deep. This revealed that the western 2/3 was covered by an earthy chalk and former charcoal filled depression - both recent. The eastern third looks more recent and consists of a brown (Mun 1071 2/3) pebbly subsoil.</u>			
Comments: <u>Most of the ^{site} was too obscured to be certain. Foundations will need to be checked.</u>			
For sketch plan, use reverse			
©ASC, 2003			



 A.S.C. LTD		ARCHAEOLOGICAL FIELD MONITORING RECORD	
Project: 52, Castle Hill Avenue Berkhamsted		Project No/Code: BCH 1717	Sheet: 2 of 2
Client/Developer Mr. C. Nichols		Date of visit: 10/8/05	
Contact:		Phone: 01442-399079	
Duration of Visit (inc. travel):	Start: 11.40 am	Finish: 1.05 pm	
Completed by: JRA			
Development Type:			
Footings <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Services	Roads	Levelling
			Quarrying
			Pipelines
			Other (specify):
Site & weather conditions: Dry and Sunny			
Observations: Observed the gassy footings. These were 0.4m wide by between 0.45m at 0.9m (below current level surface to the north). The NW Section shows an old buried landscape below a layer of re-deposited chalky brown clay. The footings have gone down to the semi-consolidated natural chalk. Apart from modern building debris there were no artefacts observed in the soil. See over for sketch.			
Comments: No features or artefacts observed.			
For sketch plan, use reverse			

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Appendix 2: SMR Summary Sheet

Site name and address: 52 Castle Hill Avenue Berkhamsted Hertfordshire		
County: Hertfordshire		District: Berkhamsted
Village/Town: Berkhamsted		Parish: Berkhamsted
Planning application reference: 4/00/1661		
Client name, address, & tel. no: Mrs C Nichols 52 Castle Hill Avenue Berkhamsted		
Nature of application: Construction of new garage		
Present land use: House and garden		
Size of application area: n/a		Size of area investigated: n/a
NGR (to 8 figures): SP 9907 0843		Site code:
Site director/Organization: Jonathan Hunn / ASC Ltd		
Type of work: Watching Brief		
Date of work:	Start: 9 th August 2005	Finish: 10 th August 2005
Curating museum: Dacorum Heritage Trust		
Related SMR nos: None		Periods represented: None
Relevant previous summaries/reports None		
Summary of fieldwork results: In August 2005 an archaeological watching brief was undertaken during the excavation of footing trenches for a new garage at 52 Castle Hill Avenue, Berkhamsted. Archaeological remains of the Roman and medieval periods have been recorded in the area but on this occasion no archaeological remains or artefacts were observed. The archaeological impact of the development is considered to be negligible.		
Author: Karin Semmelmann BA MA PIFA		Date: 15 th August 2005