

Archaeological Services & Consultancy Ltd

ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION: 2 COPPER BEECH CLOSE BOXMOOR, HEMEL HEMPSTEAD HERTFORDSHIRE

on behalf of Mr G. Groves



Jonathan R. Hunn BA PhD MIFA

December 2005

ASC: 750/BCB/2

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Site Data

<i>ASC site code:</i>	BCB	<i>Project no:</i>	750
<i>SMR reference / Event No:</i>			
<i>County:</i>	Hertfordshire		
<i>District:</i>	Dacorum		
<i>Village/Town:</i>	Boxmoor		
<i>Parish:</i>	Hemel Hempstead		
<i>NGR:</i>	TL 03760-05810		
<i>Extent of site:</i>	c. 27m x 30m		
<i>Present land use:</i>	Dwelling and garden		
<i>Planning proposal:</i>	Construction of detached dwelling		
<i>Extent of development:</i>	8m x 11m excluding driveway		
<i>Planning application ref/date:</i>	4/2100/5		
<i>Client:</i>	Mr G. Groves C/o Victor Warwick design Consultant 59 Hillfield Road Hemel Hempstead Hertfordshire HP2 4AB		
<i>Contact name:</i>	Victor Warwick		
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Internal Quality Check

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

Summary

In early December 2005 ASC Ltd undertook an evaluation at no. 2 Copper Beech Close, Boxmoor near Hemel Hempstead (NGR TL 03760-05810). The site lay 40m west of the Scheduled area of the Boxmoor Roman villa. Due to the proximity to the villa and cremation urns the area was perceived to have some archaeological potential. The site had been developed in the late 1960's and the development proposal consisted of a detached house in the grounds of the present dwelling. A single evaluation trench was excavated which showed that the ground had been disturbed by the previous development. No artefacts or features were noted.

1 Introduction

1.1 During early December 2005 *Archaeological Services and Consultancy Ltd* (ASC) carried out an evaluation on a site at 2 Copper Beech Close, Boxmoor n (NGR TL 03760-05810: Fig. 1). The project was commissioned by Victor Warwick Design Consultant on behalf of Mr G. Groves, and was carried out according to a brief prepared on behalf of the local planning authority (LPA), *Dacorum Borough Council*, by their archaeological advisor (AA), the Archaeology Office of *Hertfordshire County Council* (Batt 2005), and a written scheme of investigation prepared by ASC (ASC: 750/BCB/1).

1.2 Reason for Work

The work was undertaken in accordance with the terms of Planning Policy Guidance Note 16 (PPG16) due to a proposed development at no. 2 Copper Beech Close (4/2100/05). The site lies within the vicinity of a Scheduled Ancient Monument (SAM 27916) and with an Area of Archaeological Significance (AAS 35).

1.3 Setting

1.3.1 The site is located almost adjacent to Box Lane to the west and to the north of Copper Beech Close (NGR TL 03760-05810). The site is set within a sub-urban setting and consists of a proposed rectangular plot approximately 90 sq. metres. The site is currently used as a garage and lawn.

1.3.2 The site (NGR TL0380-0565) is situated approximately 250 m to the south of the River Bulbourne between the 90 m and 95 m contours (above OD). The terrain is almost flat and the unmodified soils belong to the Charity Complex. They consist *'of flinty and pebbly loams, usually silty, with finer-textured, more or less gravelly subsoils which rest at variable depths either on chalky Head (Coombe-Rock), or directly on Chalk.....the complex is characterised by the following sequence of horizons. At the surface is an A horizon of dark greyish brown silt loam, less frequently loam or silty clay loam, containing angular flints with locally variable proportions of pebbles, depending on the nature of the adjacent Plateau Drift. This is followed by a brown, friable sub-*

surface (Eb) horizon of similar texture with a crumb or fine-angular blocky structure. Below 12 inches (0.3 m) there is a gradual change to a stiffer, reddish brown Bt horizon which has a more or less well defined blocky structure, and may show black manganiferous staining (Avery 1964, 84-85)'.

- 1.3.3 There is currently a garage and link structure on part of the footprint of the proposed new dwelling. Access is currently obtained from Copper Beech Close to the south.

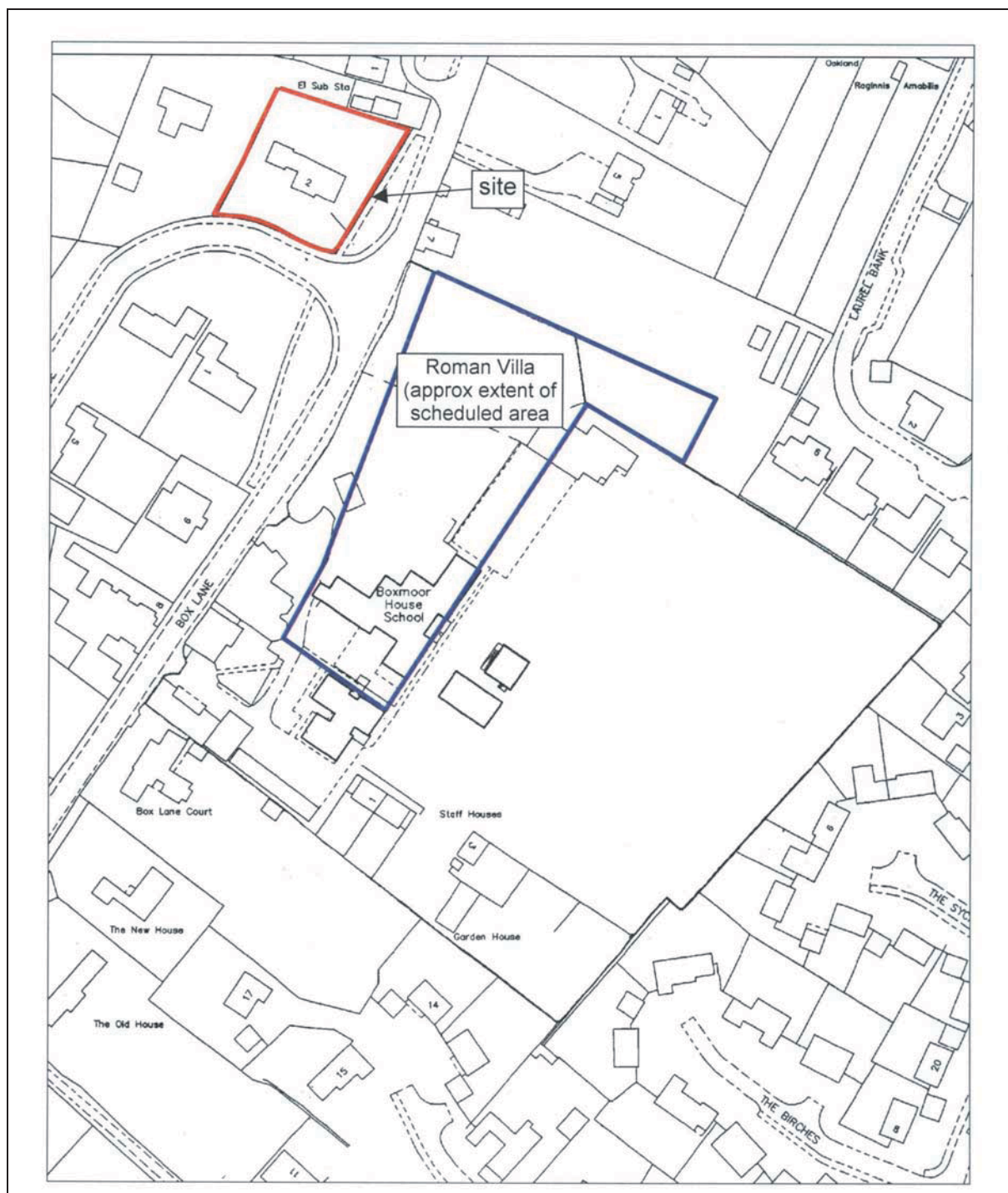


Figure 2: Site plan (scale 1: 1,250)

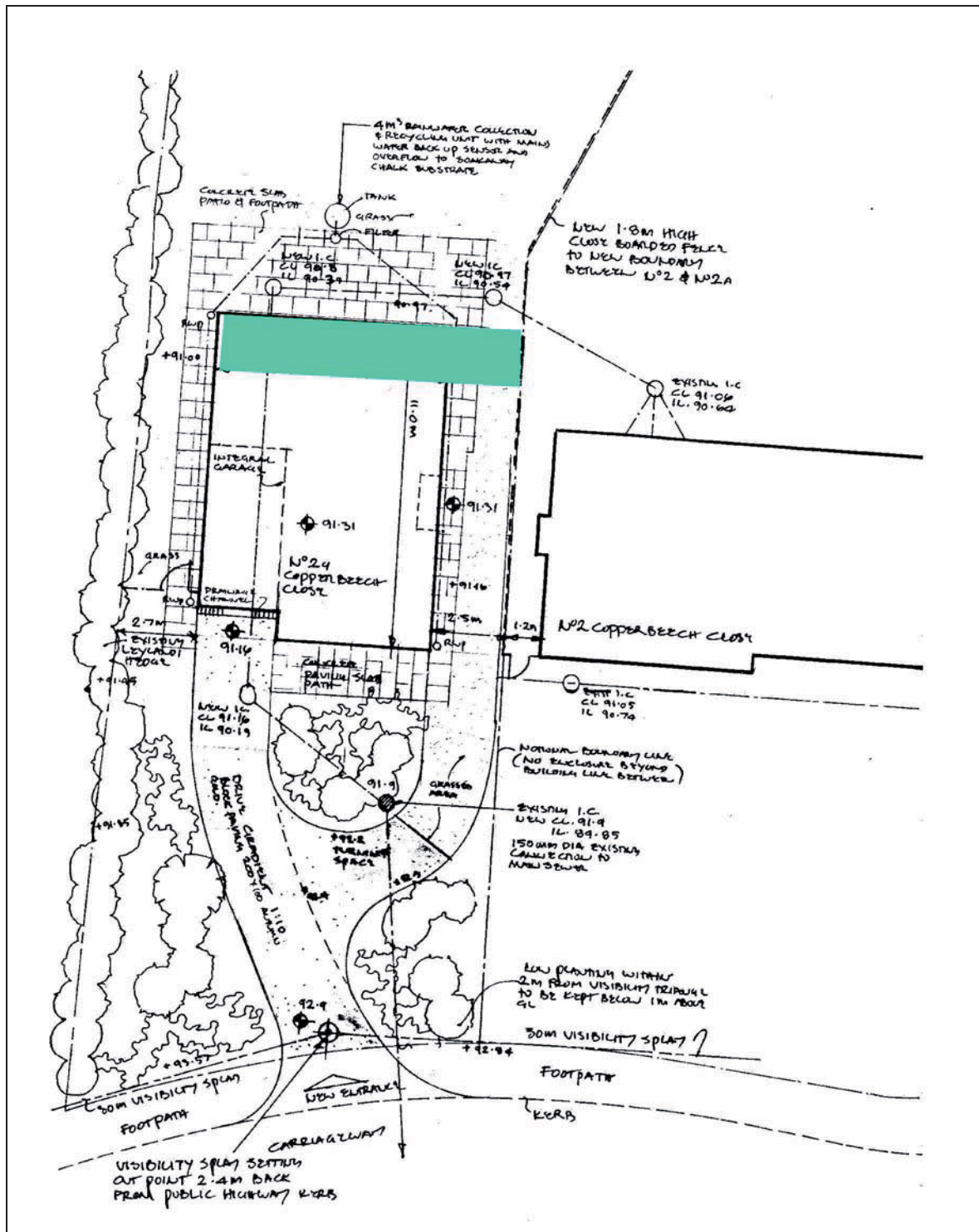


Figure 3: Trench location (shown as green) in relation to proposed development (not to scale)

2 Aims & Methods

2.1 Aims

As described in the brief (Section 3), the aims of the evaluation were:

- To determine the location, extent, date, character, condition, significance and quality of any archaeological deposits liable to be threatened by the proposed development.

2.2 Methods

The work was carried out according to the brief (Batt 2005), which required:

- Excavation of archaeological trial trenches within the proposed development area
- A minimum of 5% of the site will be sampled
- The trenches will be 1.5 to 2m wide and up to 10 in length

2.3 Standards

The work conforms to the project design (ASC: 750/BCB/1), to the relevant sections of the Institute of Archaeologists' *Standard & guidance Notes* (IFA 2001) and Code of Conduct (IFA 2000a), to the association of Local Government Archaeological Officers East of England Region *Standards for Field Archaeology in the East of England* (ALGAO 2003), to the current English Heritage guidelines (EH 1991; EH 1995), and to the relevant sections of ASC's own *Operations Manual*.

3 Archaeological & Historical Background

- 3.1 The site lies about 40m north west of a Scheduled Ancient Monument which lies in the grounds of Boxmoor House School (Fig. 2). The history of this site has been described by David Neal (1977, 55-57).
- 3.2 Following John Evans' investigation of the Roman site at Hemel Hempstead station in 1851 he then turned his attention further to the west: *'and in 1852 began work on the site of a Roman building situated in the garden of Boxmoor House, the residence of a Mr Thomas Davis, at whose expense the excavation was carried out. Evans recorded the presence of Roman remains on the property, in his first report on the station finds. The site (TL. 038-056) lay approximately 400 m. to the west of the railway station on the eastern side of Box Lane opposite the chapel grounds which produced the finds of 1837. The building which ran on an east-west alignment, was believed to have had five rooms (A-E), the second of which (B) was ornamented with an elaborate mosaic. The other rooms had plain tessellated pavements with the exception of the third room, which was decorated with an "embattled" pattern. Another room had a hypocaust, Boxmoor House remained a private dwelling until the 1950's, when it became the property of Hertfordshire County Council who eventually converted the building into a school. In 1966 the school was further enlarged by the construction of a new hall and residential block. Before construction began an excavation to locate and re-excavate the Roman building was arranged by the Hemel Hempstead Excavation Society. Further excavations were carried out during building work in 1967 and to the east of the site in 1969 and 1970'* (ibid).
- 3.2 Although there are no known archaeological deposits within or immediately adjacent to the site the area is considered to have a moderate to high potential for archaeological remains (AAS 35). The general proximity of Romano-British buildings to the north and east (Neal 1977, 1-136) indicates the possibility of further associated settlements, or indeed, cemeteries associated with those sites in the general area.
- 3.3 In more recent years excavations ahead of housing development, to the north of the Scheduled site have uncovered Romano-British occupation in the form walls, post-holes, pits etc (Saunders 2005).

4 Results

- 4.1 Due to presence of an existing garage the area available for investigation was limited. Accordingly, the trial trench was swung 90° and positioned at the southern end of the proposed building (Fig.3).
- 4.2 The trench was 1.8m wide by 10m long and orientated ENE-WSW. It was excavated down to a depth that varied between 0.5 at its eastern end and 0.7m at its western end.
- 4.3 The trench went down brown chalky subsoil (Mun 10 YR 5/3) which conforms to the 'Charity complex' (Avery 1964, 84-9). Overlying this natural horizon was layer of chalk almost 0.6m deep (Plate 2). The author believes that this chalk layer is of recent date. The top-soil was very thin.
- 4.4 Archaeological features were not observed in the trench. A small area of dark soil was present on the north side of the trench (plates 1 & 2). This likely to be a pocket of garden soil of modern date and is not significant. No pre-modern features or artefacts were observed.



Plate 1: Overall view of excavated trench looking WSW



Plate 2: South facing section of the trial trench

5. Conclusions

- 5.1 The evaluation trench was devoid of any significant archaeological evidence. The character of the chalk layer (Plate 2) was most probably associated with the construction of the present house in 1968. None of the spoil heaps contained any material suggesting the presence or even proximity of pre-modern human occupation or even activity.
- 5.2 It is unlikely that significant archaeological remains are present on this site. However, the survival of discrete, isolated remains away from the trial trench cannot be entirely excluded.

6. Acknowledgements

The writer is grateful to the Kate Batt at the County Archaeology Office for her co-operation and to Victor Warwick, the architect and Gerrald Groves, the client for advising and commissioning this project. Thanks are also due to David Fell for editing the final report.

7. Archive

7.1 The project archive will comprise:

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

7.2 The archive will be deposited with the Dacorum Heritage Trust.

8. Bibliography

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- Saunders G, 2005 *Romany Rye, London Road, Boxmoor, Herts: an evaluation report*. The Heritage Network.
- Soil Survey 1983 *1:250,000 Soil Map of England and Wales, and accompanying legend* (Harpندن).

Appendix 1: SMR Summary Sheet

Site name and address: 2, Copper Beech Close Boxmoor Hemel Hempstead Herts HP2 4AB		
County: Hertfordshire		District: Dacorum
Village/Town: Boxmoor		Parish: Hemel Hempstead
Planning application reference: 4/2100/05		
Client name, address, & tel. no: Gerald Grove Esq 2, Copper Beech Close Boxmoor Hemel Hempstead Herts HP2 4AB Tel:		
Nature of application: Construction of detached dwelling (pre-determination)		
Present land use: Garage and lawn		
Size of application area:		c. 90 sq. m. Size of area investigated:
NGR (to 8 figures): TL 03760-05810		Site code: 750/BCB
Site director/Organization: Jonathan R. Hunn/ ASC Ltd		
Type of work: Evaluation		
Date of work:	Start: December 2 nd	Finish: December 2 nd
Curating museum: Dacorum Heritage Trust		
Related SMR nos: 72		Periods represented: Modern
Relevant previous summaries/reports : None		
<p>Summary of fieldwork results:</p> <p><i>In early winter 2005 ASC Ltd undertook an evaluation at no. 2 Copper Beech Close, Boxmoor near Hemel Hempstead (NGR TL 03760-05810). The site lay 40m west of the Scheduled Monument area of the Roman villa. Due to the proximity to the Boxmoor House Roman villa and glass cremation urn the area had some archaeological potential. The site had been developed in the late 1960's and the development proposal consisted of a detached house in the grounds of the present dwelling. A single evaluation trench was excavated which showed that the ground had been disturbed by the previous development. No artefacts or features were noted.</i></p>		
Author: J.R. Hunn		Date: 5/12/05

