

# Archaeological Services & Consultancy Ltd

## **ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF: 6 MURRAY ROAD BERKHAMSTED HERTFORDSHIRE**

*on behalf of Shortgrove Developments Ltd*



**Jonathan Hunn BA PhD MIFA**

**SEPTEMBER 2006**

**ASC: 757/BMR/2**

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## Site Data

<i>ASC project code:</i>	BMR	<i>ASC Project No:</i>	757
<i>County:</i>	Hertfordshire		
<i>Village/Town:</i>	Berkhamsted		
<i>Civil Parish:</i>	Berkhamsted		
<i>NGR (to 8 figs):</i>	SP 9914 0853		
<i>Present use:</i>	Residential		
<i>Planning proposal:</i>	Construction of two new dwellings		
<i>Planning application ref/date:</i>	4/05/0784		
<i>Local Planning Authority:</i>	Dacorum Borough Council		
<i>Date of fieldwork:</i>	17.02.06-25.08.06		
<i>Client:</i>	Shortgrove Developments Ltd Shortgrove Manor Farm Dovehouse Lane Kensworth Beds LU6 2PQ		
<i>Contact name:</i>	Robert Sanders – Third Floor Ltd		
<i>Telephone</i>		<i>Fax:</i>	

## Internal Quality Check

<i>Primary Author:</i>	Jonathan Hunn	<i>Date:</i>	8 <sup>th</sup> September 2006
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<i>Revisions:</i>		<i>Date:</i>	
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<i>Edited/Checked By:</i>		<i>Date:</i>	
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Figure 1: General location (scale 1:25,000)



## Summary

*Between February and August 2006 Archaeological Services and Consultancy Ltd (ASC) carried out an Archaeological Watching Brief on a site at Murray Road, Berkhamsted, Hertfordshire. The project was undertaken during the excavation of foundations for two new dwellings. During the initial clearance of the site it was apparent that the area of the existing dwelling had been extensively terraced. No archaeological remains were observed during the works, and the site is considered to have little archaeological potential.*

## 1 Introduction

1.1 In August 2006 *Archaeological Services and Consultancy Ltd (ASC)* carried out a watching brief at 6 Murray Road, Berkhamsted (NGR SP 9914 0853: Fig. 1). The project was commissioned by Shortgrove Developments Ltd, and was carried out according to a project design prepared by ASC (757/BMR/1), and a brief (Smith 2005) prepared on behalf of the local planning authority (LPA), *Dacorum Borough Council*, by their archaeological advisor (AA), *Hertfordshire County Archaeology Office*. The relevant planning application reference is 4/05/0784.

### 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 two new dwellings on the site

### 1.3 *Location*

The development site is located on the north eastern side of Berkhamsted, on the southern side of Murray Road at NGR SP 9914 0853 (Fig. 1).

### 1.4 *Description*

Access to the site is from Murray Road, which forms the northernmost boundary of the site (Fig. 2). Residential buildings and their associated gardens bound the site on its remaining sides.

### 1.5 *Geology & Topography*

The soils of the area are of the Hornbeam 1 Association, and are defined as well drained and chalky drift over chalk (Soil Survey, 1983, 571m). The terrain falls away from the north to the south some 10m from the edge of Murray Road. The site lies at an elevation of c.130m AOD.



**Figure 2:** Site plan (scale 1:1250)

## **2 Aims & Methods**

### **2.1 Aims**

As described in the brief (Section 2), the aims of the watching brief were:

- The investigation and recording of the surviving archaeological remains within the application area in accordance with the requirements of the brief.

### **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:

- The archaeologically controlled strip of topsoil down to archaeological horizon and mapping of any archaeology thereby revealed
- The detailed open area archaeological excavation of the footprints of the proposed dwellings as indicated by the County Planning Archaeologist

### **2.4 Constraints**

Some of the footings had been partly obscured by concrete prior to inspection. However, the upper sections of the foundations and the excavated soil were available for inspection.

### 3 Archaeological & Historical Background

- 3.1** 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 has the potential to reveal evidence of a variety of periods, but the focus of interest is likely to lie in the Roman periods.
- 3.2** 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 Bridgewater Road, close to the site.
- 3.3** Roman pottery, dating to the 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> centuries AD has been found adjacent to the site in 1956 (Sites and Monuments Record (SMR) 6071). There is evidence for industrial activity in the form of shaft furnaces at Dellfield (SMR 4904), a pottery kiln in Bridgewater road (SMR 6083) and one other concentration of pottery further along the same road (SMR 6071), which may or may not be another kiln. The remaining evidence is all derived from random coin loss. For example, several Roman coins came from the castle (SMR 1336), a gold coin from Meadway (SMR 6070), one from Dellfield (SMR 6076), and one from Swingate Lane (SMR 6080). (Hunn & Thompson 2004, 8).
- 3.4** Berkhamsted was of considerable importance during the medieval period, notably due to the presence of the castle and medieval settlement on the south side of the river. The site is c.500m northwest of the castle, but also offers limited potential for the discovery of medieval remains. In the medieval period the site lay within the Royal Hunting Park that lay adjacent to the castle.



## 4 Results

4.1 Four visits were made to the site over the course of 7 months, while the excavation of footing trenches for two new dwellings, and the removal of the footings for the previous buildings, was monitored.

4.2 *Natural Strata*

The natural strata on the northern side of the footings for the first new dwelling consist of chalk, which dissolves into flinty clay on the east side. The southern side revealed flinty chalk. The footings for the second new dwelling revealed the same material.

4.3 *Features*

No pre-modern features were detected in the foundations, or in the footings for the new buildings. This would indicate little or no archaeological potential, at least on the downside slope of the site.

4.4 *Ground disturbances*

Observation was made more difficult due to ground disturbance, as in some areas the ground was too churned up to allow proper observation. However, there were some clear patches, and these looked free from features.

4.5 *Artefact recovery*

The soil from the newly excavated foundations was examined, and it proved to consist mainly of natural chalk and demolition material. No pre-modern artefacts were observed.



Plate 1: North west view; Commencement of work, Plot 1



Plate 2: South east view; easternmost foundations, Plot 1



Plate 3: East view; western side of Plot 1



Plate 4: South view; detail of south side, Plot 1





Plate 5: North east view; state of foundations post-concrete, Plot 2



Plate 6: North west view; north side, Plot 2

## **5 Conclusions**

### **5.1 *Conclusions***

During the course of the watching brief, no archaeological remains were observed, and no artefacts were recovered. There were no unusual disturbances to the natural strata. As a result, it seems likely that the site is outside the area of any significant archaeology, at least on the downward side, so it is unlikely that large quantities of significant archaeological features or artefacts are present in this location, and the development is unlikely to have had any major impact on any such archaeological remains.

### **5.2 *Confidence Rating***

The watching brief was undertaken in dry and generally overcast weather with sunny patches, and the conditions for the watching brief were good. Full cooperation was received from the contractors and a high confidence rating is attached to the results of the watching brief.

### **5.3 *Relevance of site and results***

As the area of the site appears to be outside of any significant archaeological activity, this helps to further delineate the areas of archaeological significance within the region.

## **6. Acknowledgements**

The writer is grateful to Robert Sanders of Third Floor Ltd. for commissioning the watching brief on behalf of Shortgrove Developments Ltd. We would also like to thank Mrs Kate Batt of the Hertfordshire County Council Archaeology Office for acting as curatorial officer.

Dr Jonathan R Hunn, BA PhD MIFA, undertook the fieldwork for ASC LTD. The report was prepared by Caroline Barclay BA and edited by Jonathan Hunn BA PhD MIFA.

## **7. Archive**

7.1 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/slides
7. CDROM with copies of all digital files.

7.2 The archive will be deposited with Dacorum Heritage Trust.



## 8. References

### *Standards & Specifications*

ALGAO 2003 *Standards for Field Archaeology in the East of England*. East Anglian Archaeology Occasional Paper 14.

EH 1991 *The Management of Archaeological Projects*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition. English Heritage (London).

IFA 2000 Institute of Field Archaeologists' *Code of Conduct*.

IFA 2001 Institute of Field Archaeologists' *Standard & Guidance documents (Desk-Based Assessments, Watching Briefs, Evaluations, Excavations, Investigation and Recording of Standing Buildings, Finds)*.

### *Secondary Sources*

Birtchnell, P C 1960 *A Short History of Berkhamsted*. Clunbury Press

HCC 2004 *Berkhamsted: Extensive Urban Survey Project Assessment*. Hertfordshire County Council

Hunn, J & Thompson, A 2004 ASC: 636/BBS/1

Page, W (ed.) 1908 *The Victoria History of the County of Hertfordshire*. Dawsons of Pall Mall

Smith, J 2005 *Design Brief for Archaeological Open Area Excavation and Archaeological Monitoring and Recording at 6 Murray Road, Berkhamsted* Hertfordshire County Council Archaeology Office.

Soil Survey 1983 *1:250,000 Soil Map of England and Wales, and accompanying legend* (Harpenden).

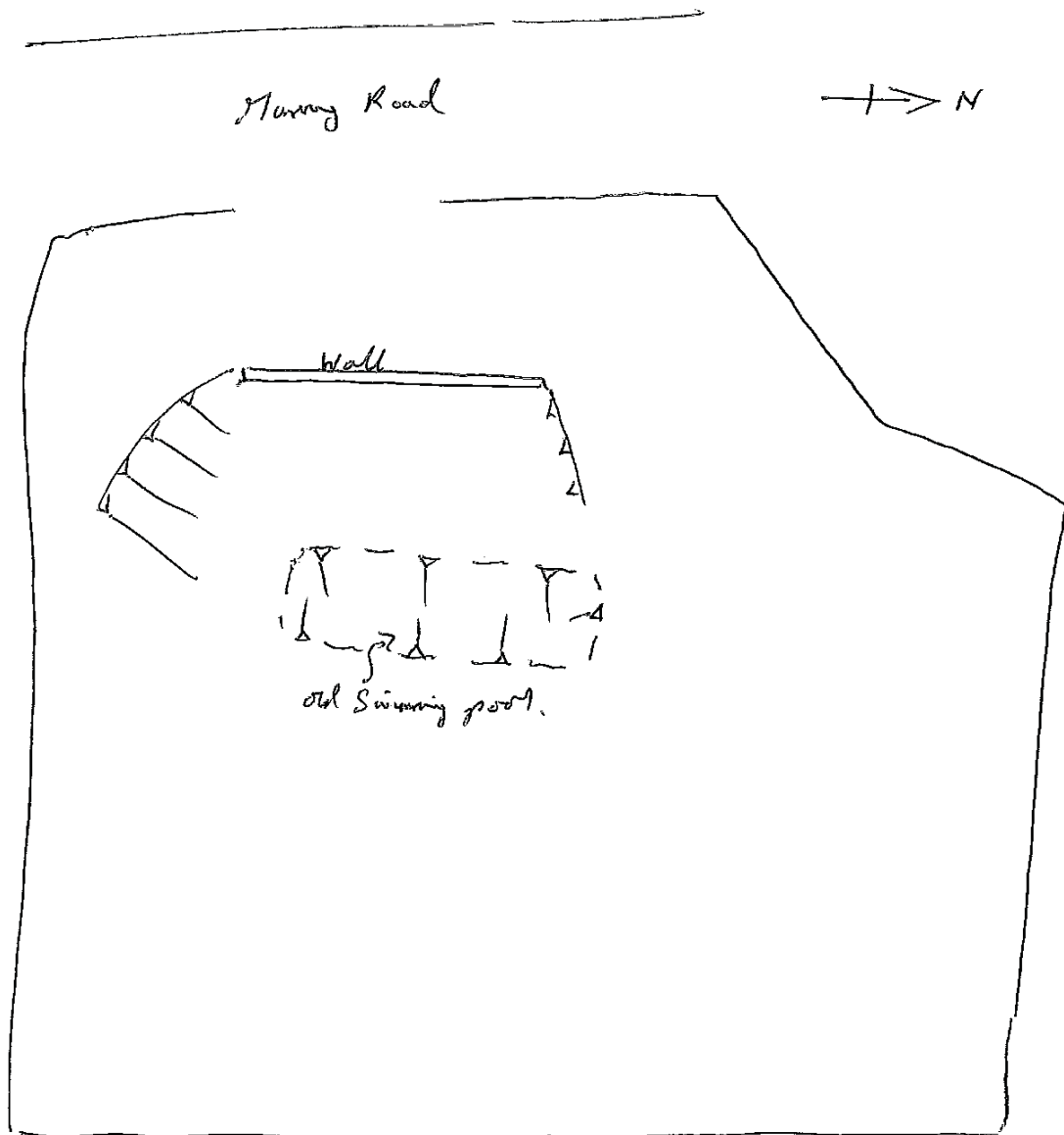
## Appendix 1: Monitoring Sheets



A.S.C. LTD

## ARCHAEOLOGICAL FIELD MONITORING RECORD

Project: 6, Murray Road Berkhamsted		Project No/Code: 757 1B MR		Sheet: 1 of 4	
Client/Developer 3rd Floor Limited		Date of visit: 17/2/06			
Contact: Robert Sanderson		Phone: 07050-604466			
Duration of Visit (inc. travel):	Start: 10.10 am	Finish: 11.45 am.			
Completed by: SRM					
Development Type:					
Footings	Services	Roads	Levelling <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Quarrying	Pipelines
Other (specify):					
Site & weather conditions: Dry, over Sun.					
Observations: The footings of the house, garage and swimming pool have been removed. One originally retaining wall remains in situ. Spreads of chalk and boulding rubble. Three levels remaining. On the northern side there is a short section of undisturbed chalk suggesting that the chalk is higher up than one might expect (i.e. 1.2m below original ground level).					
Comments: The area is too cluttered up for meaningful observation though some soil is exposed which looks relatively 'clean'.					



17/2/06

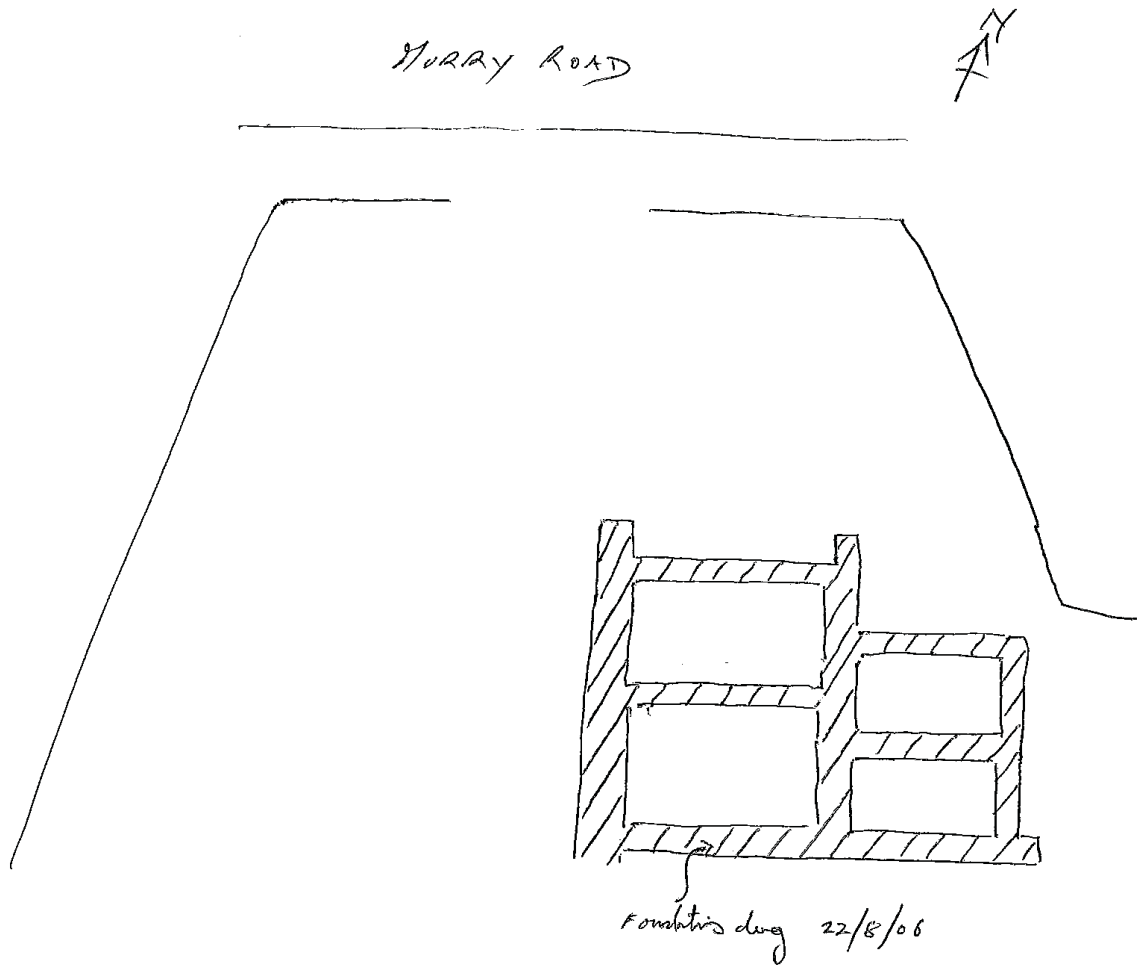




A.S.C. LTD

## ARCHAEOLOGICAL FIELD MONITORING RECORD

Project: <i>6, Tenny Rd</i>		Project No/Code: <i>757 IBM R</i>	Sheet: <i>2 of 4</i>
<i>Berkhamsted</i>		Date of visit: <i>22/8/06</i>	
Client/Developer: <i>3rd Floor Ltd</i>			
Contact: <i>Robert Sanders</i>		Phone: <i>07050-604466</i>	
Duration of Visit (inc. travel):	Start: <i>4.35pm</i>	Finish:	
Completed by: <i>SRA</i>			
Development Type:			
Footings <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Services	Roads	Levelling
			Quarrying
			Pipelines
			Other (specify):
Site & weather conditions: <i>Dry, occ Sun.</i>			
Observations:			
<p><i>Observed the first new house (east side of plot) of which about two thirds had been excavated. The footings vary between about 1m at the northern (upper slope) side of site to 1.7m x 0.90 on the lower slope. The 14-5 footings are 'stepped'. The foundations are mostly cut into natural chalk, though on the eastern side this has dissolved into a flinty clay. There is an old chisel level surface in place but this is almost certainly associated with the previous dwelling (now demolished).</i></p>			
Comments:			
<p><i>As expected there are no pre-modern footings present in the foundations. The chalk has been partly spread on the upper slope side.</i></p>			



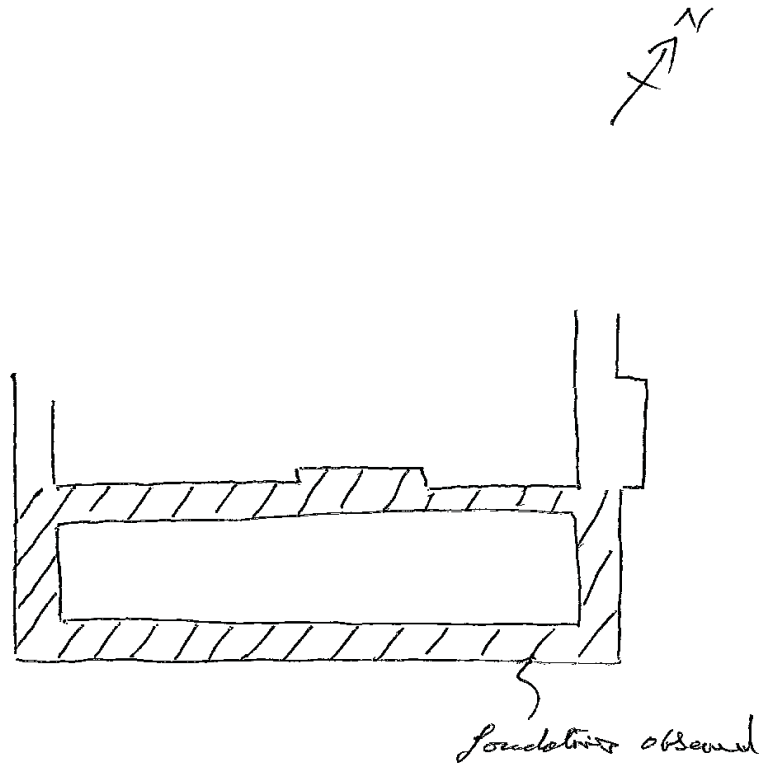


**A.S.C. LTD**

# ARCHAEOLOGICAL FIELD MONITORING RECORD

Project: 6, Myny Rd Berkland Ltd		Project No/Code: 757 1 BMR Date of visit: 23/8/06		Sheet: 3 of 4		
Client/Developer: 3rd Floor Ltd						
Contact: Robert Sanders			Phone: 07050-604466			
Duration of Visit (inc. travel):		Start: 11.15 am		Finish:		
Completed by: JRM						
Development Type:						
Footings ✓	Services	Roads	Levelling	Quarrying	Pipelines	Other (specify):
Site & weather conditions: Mainly dry & overcast - cool.						
Observations: Observed the Southern Side of the first dwelling - the bakery side. Here the footings were about 1m deep x 0.8m wide. The upper 0.2m is disturbed ground while below this the ground is all flinty chalk - all natural ground.						
Comments: First dwelling's footings completed.						





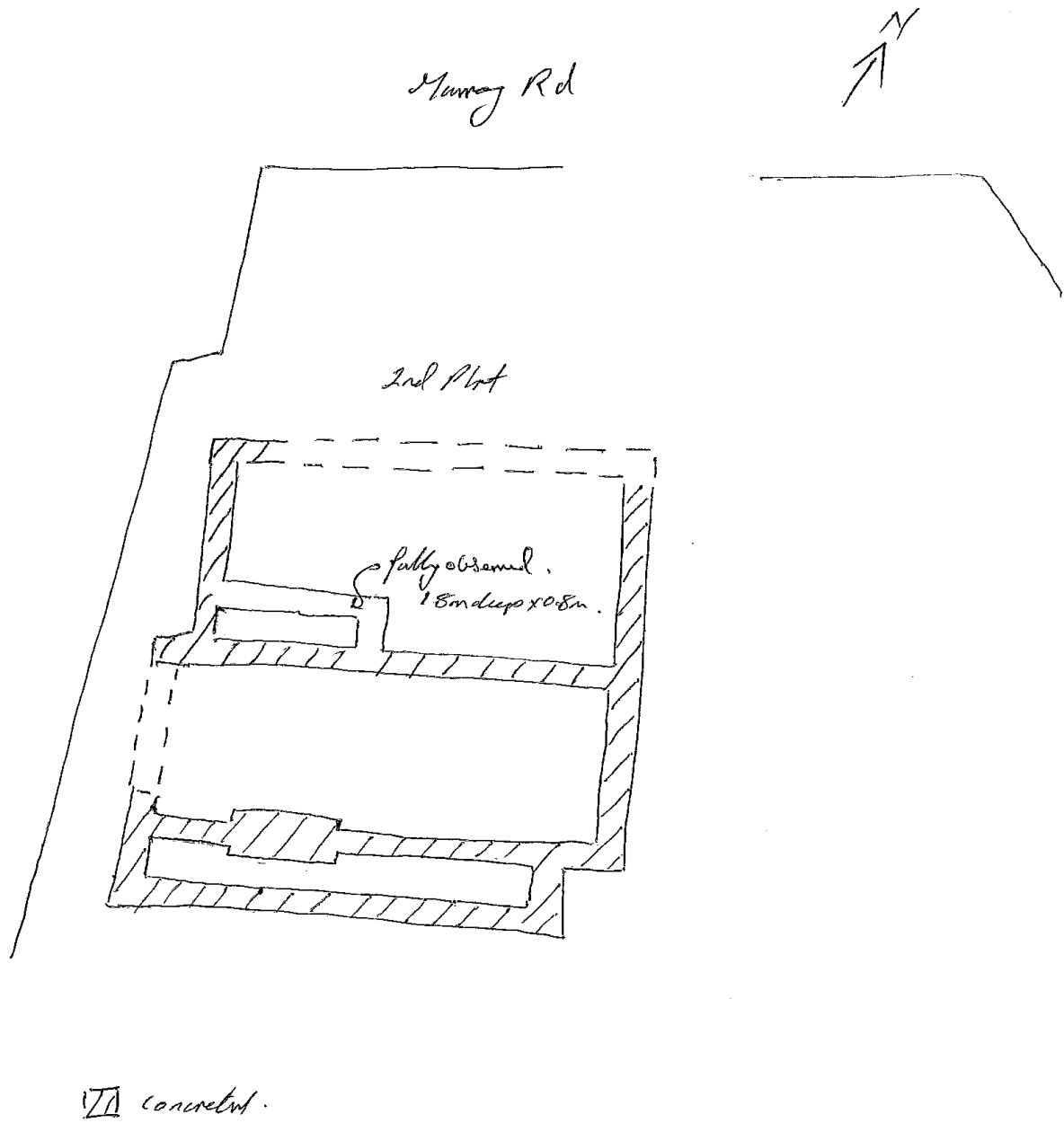
BAH 23/8/06



A.S.C. LTD

## ARCHAEOLOGICAL FIELD MONITORING RECORD

Project: <i>6, Mary Road</i>		Project No/Code: <i>757 1 BMR</i>	Sheet: <i>4 of 4</i>
<i>Berkhamsted</i>		Date of visit: <i>07050-604466</i>	
Client/Developer: <i>3rd Floor Ltd</i>			
Contact: <i>Robert Sanders</i>		Phone: <i>07050-604466</i>	
Duration of Visit (inc. travel):	Start: <i>2.40 pm</i>	Finish: <i>4.45 pm.</i>	
Completed by: <i>JRH</i>			
Development Type:			
Footings <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Services	Roads	Levelling
			Quarrying
			Pipelines
			Other (specify):
Site & weather conditions: <i>Dry &amp; Sunny</i>			
Observations:			
<p><i>Arrived when about two thirds of the footprint of the second dwelling, on the western side of the site, had been excavated. Unfortunately, they had been partly filled with concrete prior to inspection. However, some 0.8m of the upper sides of the trenches were partly visible. Where visible, the make up of the ground was similar to that in plot 1 (east side). That is, re-deposited building material. Fortunately, the soil from the foundation trenches was exposed on the down slopes and allowed for close inspection - some 90% of the material consisted of chalk &amp; flint; the remainder was topsoil and building material. No pre-modern material noted.</i></p> <p><i>One further footing was observed as it was dug (see over) and this confirmed the character of the ground in this area.</i></p>			
Comments:			
<p><i>While it is clear the observation support the proposition that the site has little or no archaeological potential at least on the down slope side of the site.</i></p> <p><i>No further visits proposed.</i></p>			



Shot	Digital	Subject
1		General view, post-demolition; looking north
2		General view, post-demolition; looking north west
3		General view, post-demolition; looking north west; close-up
4		Detail of original basement wall in demolished building
5		Entrance to site; looking south
6		Commencement of work, Plot 1; looking north west
7		Footings, easternmost foundation, Plot 1; looking north west
8		Close-up of easternmost foundation, Plot 1; looking north west
9		Close-up of easternmost foundation, Plot 1; looking south east
10		Western side, Plot 1; looking east
11		North east foundations, Plot 1
12		Detail of north east foundations, Plot 1
13		Detail of south side, Plot 1; looking south
14		Detail of south side, Plot 1; looking north east
15		Detail of south side, Plot 1, close-up; looking north east
16		General view of Plot 1; looking north
17		Plot 2
18		State of foundation, post-concrete; looking north east
19		North side, Plot 2; looking north west
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## Appendix 2: ASC OASIS Form

PROJECT DETAILS						
Project Name:	6 Murray Road, Berkhamsted, Hertfordshire					
Short Description:	<i>Between February and August 2006 Archaeological Services and Consultancy Ltd (ASC) carried out an Archaeological Watching Brief on a site at Murray Road, Berkhamsted, Hertfordshire. The project was undertaken during the excavation of foundations for two new dwellings. No archaeological remains were observed during the works, and the site is considered to have little archaeological potential</i>					
Project Type: (indicate all that apply)	DBA	FW	Geophys	Survey	Bldg Rec	Post-Exc
	<u>WB</u>	Strip&Rec	Trenching	Test pits	Exc	Other
Site status: (eg. none, SAM, Listed)	None		Previous work: (eg. SMR refs)		None	
Current land use:	Residential		Future work: (yes / no / unknown)		No	
Monument type:	-		Monument period:		-	
Significant finds: (artefact type & period)	-					
PROJECT LOCATION						
County:	Hertfordshire		OS reference: (to at least 8 figures)		SP 9914 0853	
District:	Dacorum		Parish:		Berkhamsted	
Site address: (with postcode if known)	6 Murray Road, Berkhamsted, Hertfordshire					
Study area: (sq. m. or ha)	500m x 400m		Height OD: (metres)		138m	
PROJECT CREATORS						
Organisation:	Archaeological Services & Consultancy Ltd					
Project brief originator:	Kate Batt		Project design originator:		Calli Rouse	
Project Manager:	David Fell		Director/Supervisor:		Jonathan Hunn	
Sponsor / funding body:	Shortgrove Developments Ltd.					
PROJECT DATE						
Start date:	17/02/06		End date:		28/08/06	
PROJECT ARCHIVES						
	Location (Accession no.)		Content (eg. pottery, animal bone, files/sheets)			
Physical:						
Paper:						
Digital:						
BIBLIOGRAPHY (Journal/monograph, published or forthcoming, or unpublished client report)						
Title:						
Serial title & volume:						
Author(s):						
Page nos			Date:			



### Appendix 3: SMR Summary Sheet

Site name and address: 6 Murray Road Berkhamsted Hertfordshire		
County: Hertfordshire		District: Dacorum
Village/Town: Berkhamsted		Parish: Berkhamsted
Planning application reference: 4/05/0784		
Client name, address, & tel. no: Shortgrove Developments Ltd. Shortgrove Manor Farm Dovehouse Lane Kensworth, Beds., LU6 2PQ		
Nature of application: Construction		
Present land use: Residential		
Size of application area: n/a		Size of area investigated: n/a
NGR (to 8 figures): SP 9914 0853		Site code: BMR/757
Site director/Organization: Jonathan Hunn / ASC Ltd		
Type of work: Watching Brief		
Date of work:	Start: 17/02/06	Finish: 28/08/06
Curating museum: Dacorum Heritage Trust		
Related SMR nos: -		Periods represented: -
Relevant previous summaries/reports -		
<p>Summary of fieldwork results:</p> <p>Between February and August 2006 Archaeological Services and Consultancy Ltd (ASC) carried out an Archaeological Watching Brief on a site at Murray Road, Berkhamsted, Hertfordshire. The project was undertaken during the excavation of foundations for two new dwellings. During the initial clearance of the site it was apparent that the area of the existing dwelling had been extensively terraced. No archaeological remains were observed during the works, and the site is considered to have little archaeological potential.</p>		
Author: Jonathan Hunn		Date: 08/09/06