

Archaeological Services & Consultancy Ltd

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

*on behalf of Skyview Conservatories*



Jonathan R Hunn BA PhD MIFA

**June 2007**

**ASC: 942/BCH/2**

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## Site Data

<i>ASC site code:</i>	BCH	<i>Project no:</i>	942
<i>County:</i>	Hertfordshire		
<i>Village/Town:</i>	Berkhamsted		
<i>Civil Parish:</i>	Berkhamsted		
<i>NGR (to 8 figs):</i>	SP 9934 0835		
<i>Extent of site:</i>	4.5m x 6m		
<i>Present land use:</i>	Residential		
<i>Planning proposal:</i>	Construction of extension and conservatory		
<i>Local Planning Authority:</i>	Dacorum Borough Council		
<i>Planning application ref/date:</i>	4/00609/07/FHA		
<i>Client:</i>	Skyview Conservatories The Coach House New Road Princes Risborough Buckinghamshire HP27 0JN		
<i>Contact name:</i>	Mrs Edith Moors		

## Internal Quality Check

<i>Primary Author:</i>	Jonathan R. Hunn	<i>Date:</i>	June 25 <sup>th</sup> 2007
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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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*Cover:* View of eastern side of the house at the start of construction

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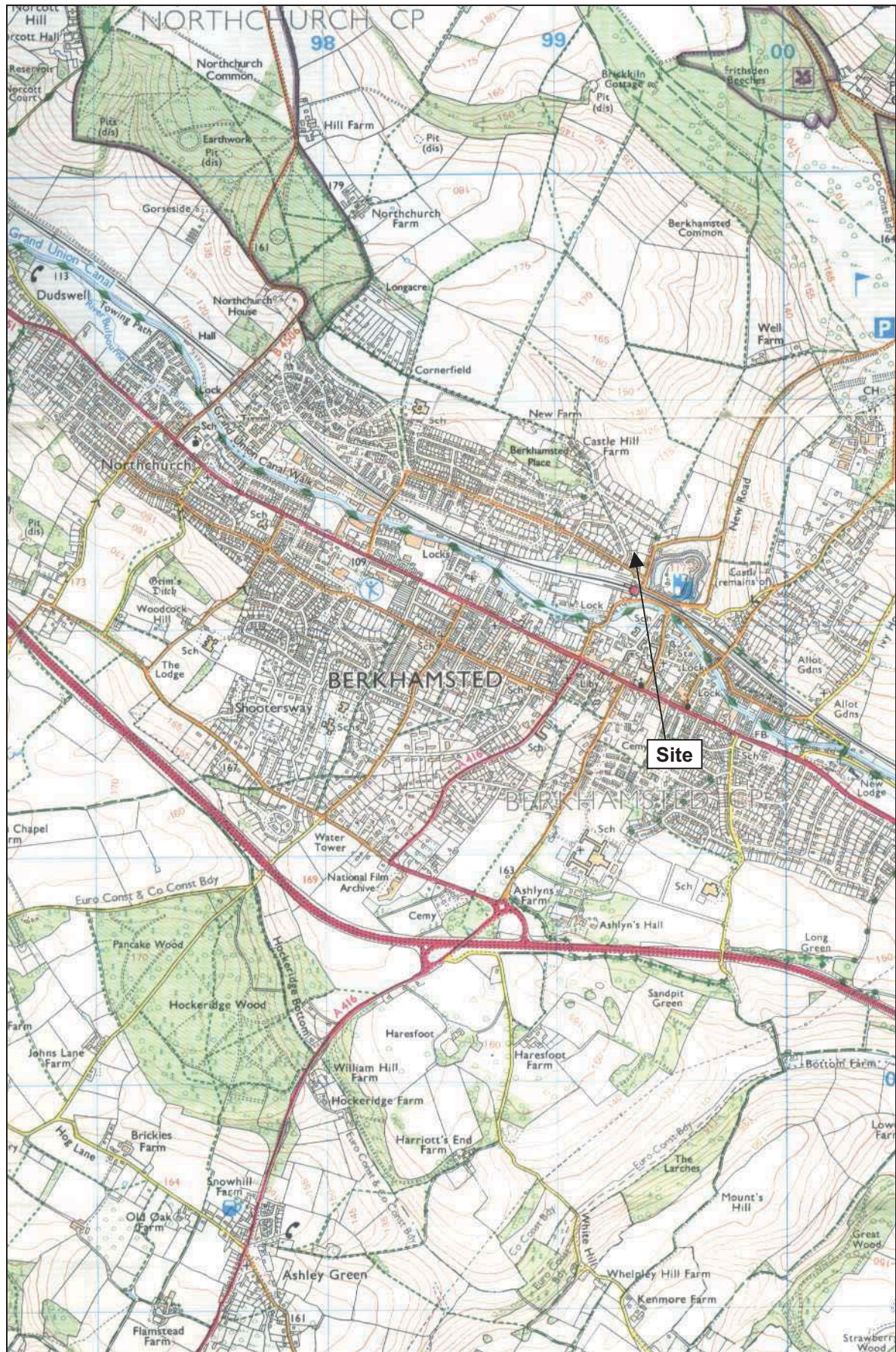


Figure 1: General location (scale 1:25,000)

## Summary

*In June 2007 a watching brief on was carried out at 6 Castle Hill Avenue, Berkhamsted, Hertfordshire, during the excavation of footings for a conservatory on the east side of the existing house. The foundations were about 1m deep and 0.5m wide and cut through reddish-brown subsoil down onto and partly into the underlying natural chalk. Apart from the buried foundations of a path or patio no man-made features or artefacts were observed.*

## 1 Introduction

1.1 In June 2007 *Archaeological Services and Consultancy Ltd* (ASC) carried out a watching brief at 6 Castle Hill Avenue, Berkhamsted, Hertfordshire (NGR SP 9934-0835: Fig. 1). The project was commissioned by *Skyview Conservatories*, and was carried out according to a brief (Batt 2007) prepared on behalf of the local planning authority (LPA), *Dacorum Borough Council*, by their archaeological advisor (AA), of *the Historic Environment section of Hertfordshire County Council*, and a project design prepared by ASC (Barclay 2007). The relevant planning application reference is 4/00609/07/FHA.

### 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 conservatory.

### 1.3 *Location*

The site is in Berkhamsted, in the administrative district of Dacorum, Hertfordshire (Fig. 2). 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 9934 0835.

### 1.4 *Description*

The site of the proposed conservatory lies on the centre of the east side (rear) of the existing dwelling (Fig. 3), overlooking an established lawn, flower beds and shrubberies.

### 1.5 *Geology & Topography*

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

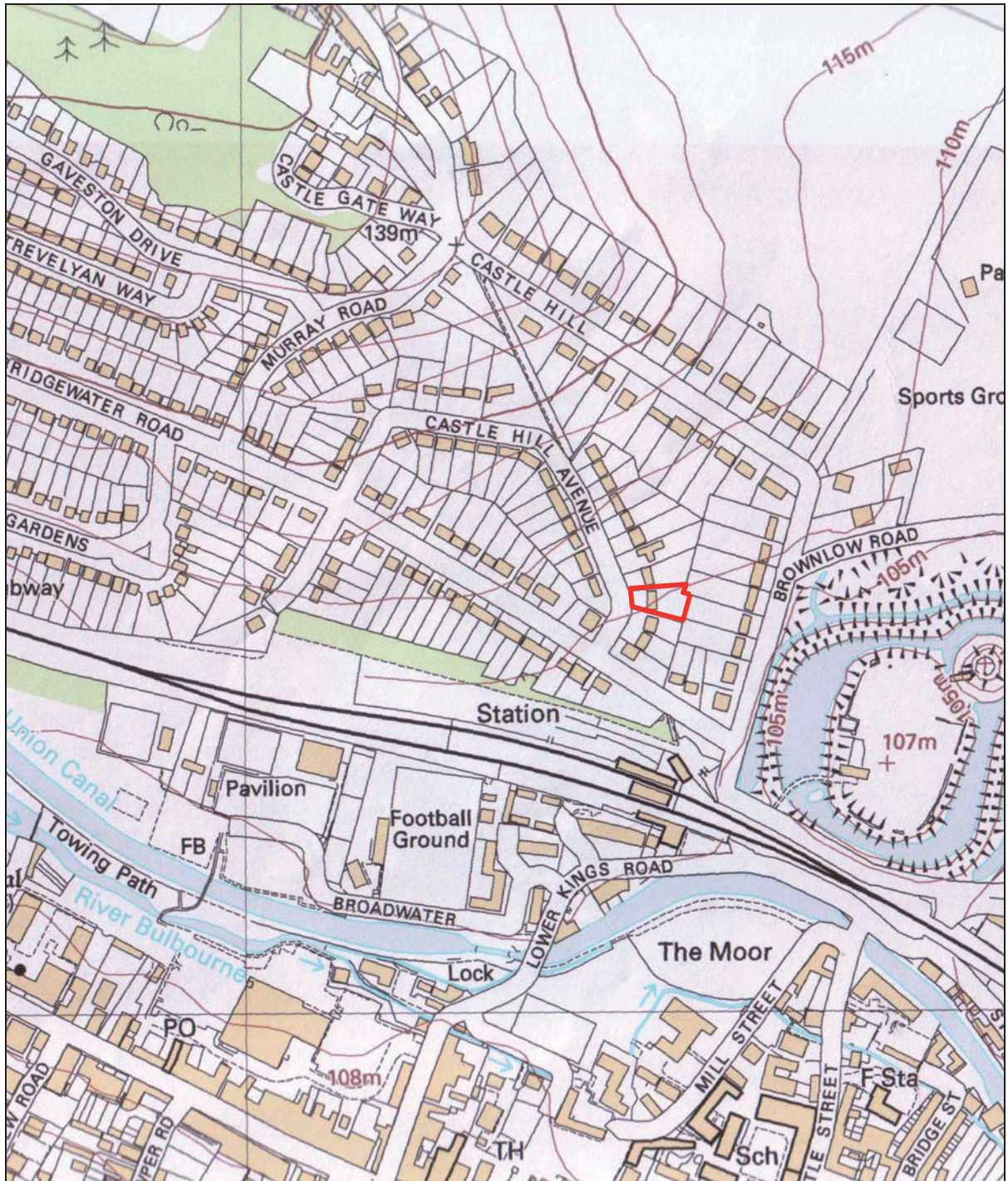


Figure 2: Site plan (scale 1:5000)

## **2 Aims & Methods**

### **2.1 Aims**

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 programme
- 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 a standard brief, which required:

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

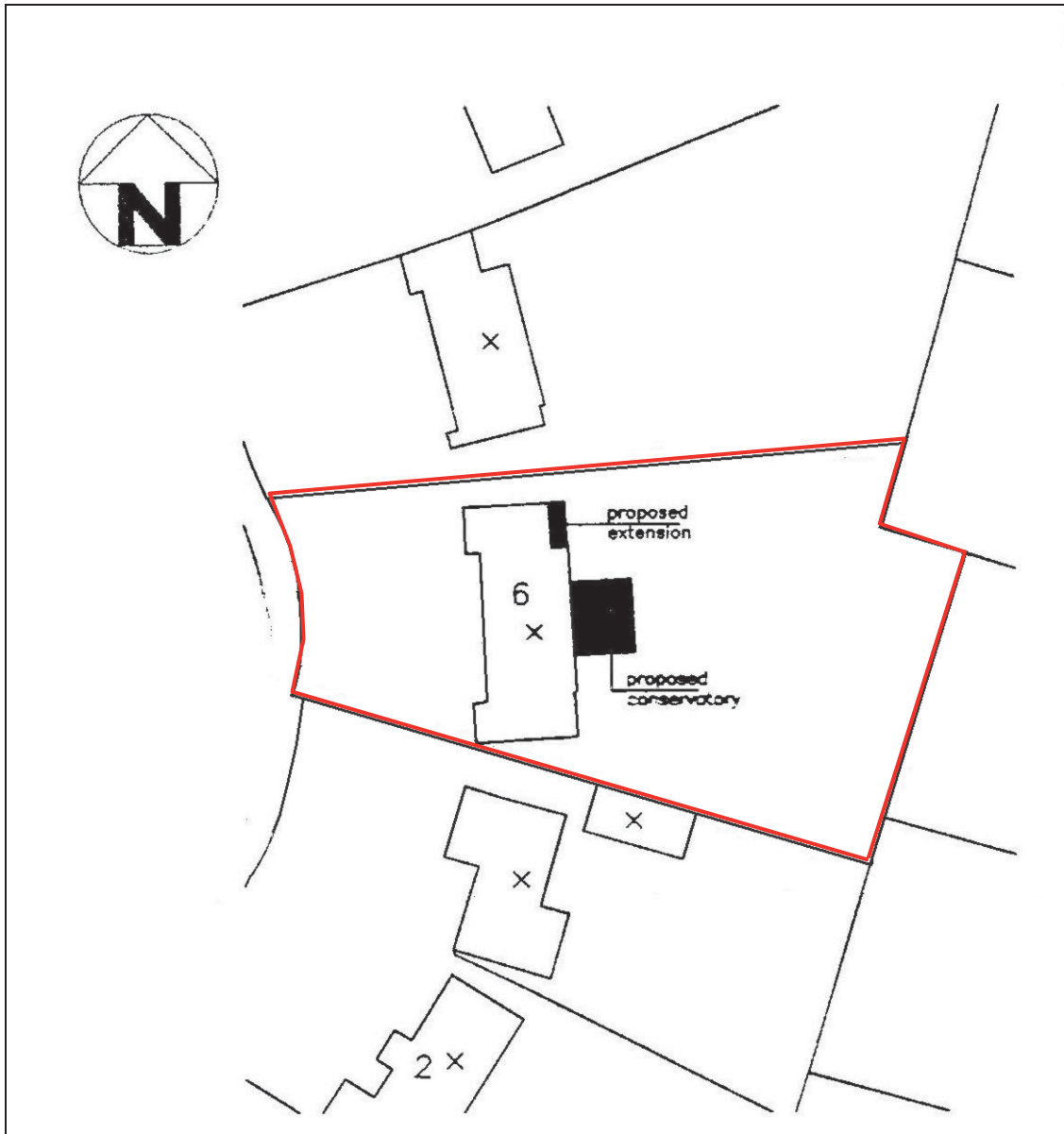
### **2.4 Constraints**

There were no constraints, other than rain, encountered on this project.

### 3 Archaeological & Historical Background

- 3.1 The area falls within an *Area of Archaeological Significance* (AAS 21), which covers the historic core of Berkhamsted. The site itself lies between Berkhamsted Castle and the Tudor mansion of '*Berkhamsted Place*'. Between the mansion and the castle a series of prehistoric, Roman and medieval artefacts have been discovered. Whether these are a result of random loss or of direct occupation is not known. Historically, the area once formed part of the medieval hunting park that belonged to the manor and honour of Berkhamsted.
- 3.2 In the medieval period the site lay in a hunting park belonging to the manor of Berkhamsted (Doggett and Hunn 1985). The origins of this park are not certain but there was no mention of it in Domesday Book (Morris 1976). The subsequent history of the castle and Honour of Berkhamsted suggests a royal creation, sometime in the 12<sup>th</sup> or 13<sup>th</sup> century. In the early years of the reign of Edward I (c.1272) there was mention of a certain park with deer (Cobb 1883, 18), and it seems that the park had been created out of the 'manorial waste'. The Reverend Cobb noted that 'the boundary fence of the castle park still exist on the common' (Cobb 1883, 19). The original extent of the hunting park was believed to extend across an area of 1,132 acres or 458 ha (Page 1908, 222). In the early 17<sup>th</sup> century there was an attempt, on the part of the Duchy of Cornwall, to enclose part of the adjoining common (the 'Frith') amounting to 300 acres. This was done for the purposes of improving income from timber (Falvey 1999). Despite local opposition this was successful but a subsequent attempt by the crown to enclose a further 400 acres failed in the face of rioting on the part of the Northchurch commoners (*ibid.*). Nevertheless, by 1627 the park had shrunk to 376 acres (Birtchnell 1960, 20) and by 1650 was 255 acres (PRO E 317 Herts 7). There are other leases of 18<sup>th</sup>-century date that mention the mansion, its park and other land amounting to 376 acres (HALs 29428). By the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century the park had shrunk to the point where it was defined by Brownlow Road to the east, by what is now Delhay Rise to the west, and extended almost to the railway line to the south and close to the adjoining messuage of Berkhamsted Place.
- 3.3 By the 18<sup>th</sup> century much of the park had almost certainly become enclosed for agricultural purpose. The park was sold by the Duchy of Cornwall to the Brownlow estate in 1862 in whose hands it remained until 1924 (Birtchnell 1960, 20).





**Figure 3:** Proposed development

## 4 Results

- 4.1 The footing trenches were dug out on three sides on the eastern side of the house (see cover). They measured approximately 0.5m wide and *c.*1m deep, enclosing an area 4.5m × 6m (Plate 4). The topsoil varied between 0.30 - 0.45m in depth the latter being where the flower beds were located. The sub-soil was reddish-brown silty clay with surprisingly few flints present. On the eastern side there was a buried concrete raft about 0.12m thick, probably the foundation for a path or patio (Plate 1). Undisturbed natural chalk was encountered at a depth of 0.9m though on the south east side it was only 0.6m below ground surface (Plates 2 & 3). There was no sign of any man-made features or artefacts present.



**Plate 1:** Oblique overall view of the foundations for the conservatory



**Plate 2:** Detail of ground on east side of foundations



**Plate 3:** View of foundations on north side



**Plate 4:** View of foundations on south side of conservatory

## **5. Conclusions**

- 5.1 The observations undertaken during this watching brief on the present development suggest that little or no truncation of the site has occurred. This is in contrast to other properties further up the hill, on which a certain degree of terracing has taken place in the past. The soil profile revealed in the foundations of this development appears entirely natural and there were no signs of any man-made features being present. Furthermore, there was no evidence for discarded artefacts either within or adjacent to the present site.
- 5.2 It will be noted from Figure 3 that a small extension to the north east of the corner of the house is proposed. In the light of the observations above and the fact that the area will have been considerably disturbed during previous building work, no further observations were undertaken during this project.

## **6. Acknowledgements**

*The writer is grateful to Skyview Conservatories Ltd for commissioning this project. Thanks are due to Kate Batt, of the Historic Environment Team, Herts County Council for monitoring the project. The watching brief was undertaken by the author, and background information for the report was prepared by Caroline Barclay and the report was edited by Bob Zeepvat BA MIFA.*

## **7. Archive**

7.1 The project archive will comprise:

1. Brief
2. Project Design
3. Clients site plans
4. Site Monitoring Sheets
5. List of photographs
6. CDROM with copies of all digital files.

7.2 The archive will be deposited with the Dacorum Heritage Trust. In line with DHT's policy on negative watching brief projects, only a digital copy of the report will be retained.

## 8. References

### *Standards & Specifications*

- ALGAO 2003 *Standards for Field Archaeology in the East of England*. East Anglian Archaeology Occasional Paper **14**.
- Barclay, C. 2007: *6 Castle Hill Avenue, Berkhamsted: Project Design for Archaeological Watching Brief*. ASC document, ref. ASC/942/BCH/2.
- Batt, K. 2007: *Brief for Archaeological Monitoring & Recording: 6 Castle Hill Avenue, Berkhamsted, Hertfordshire* (HCC).
- EH 1991 *The Management of Archaeological Projects*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition. English Heritage (London).
- IFA 2000a Institute of Field Archaeologists' *Code of Conduct*.
- IFA 2000b Institute of Field Archaeologists' *Code of Approved Practice for the Regulation of Contractual Arrangements in Field Archaeology*.
- IFA 2001 Institute of Field Archaeologists' *Standard & Guidance for Archaeological Watching Briefs*.

### *Secondary Sources*

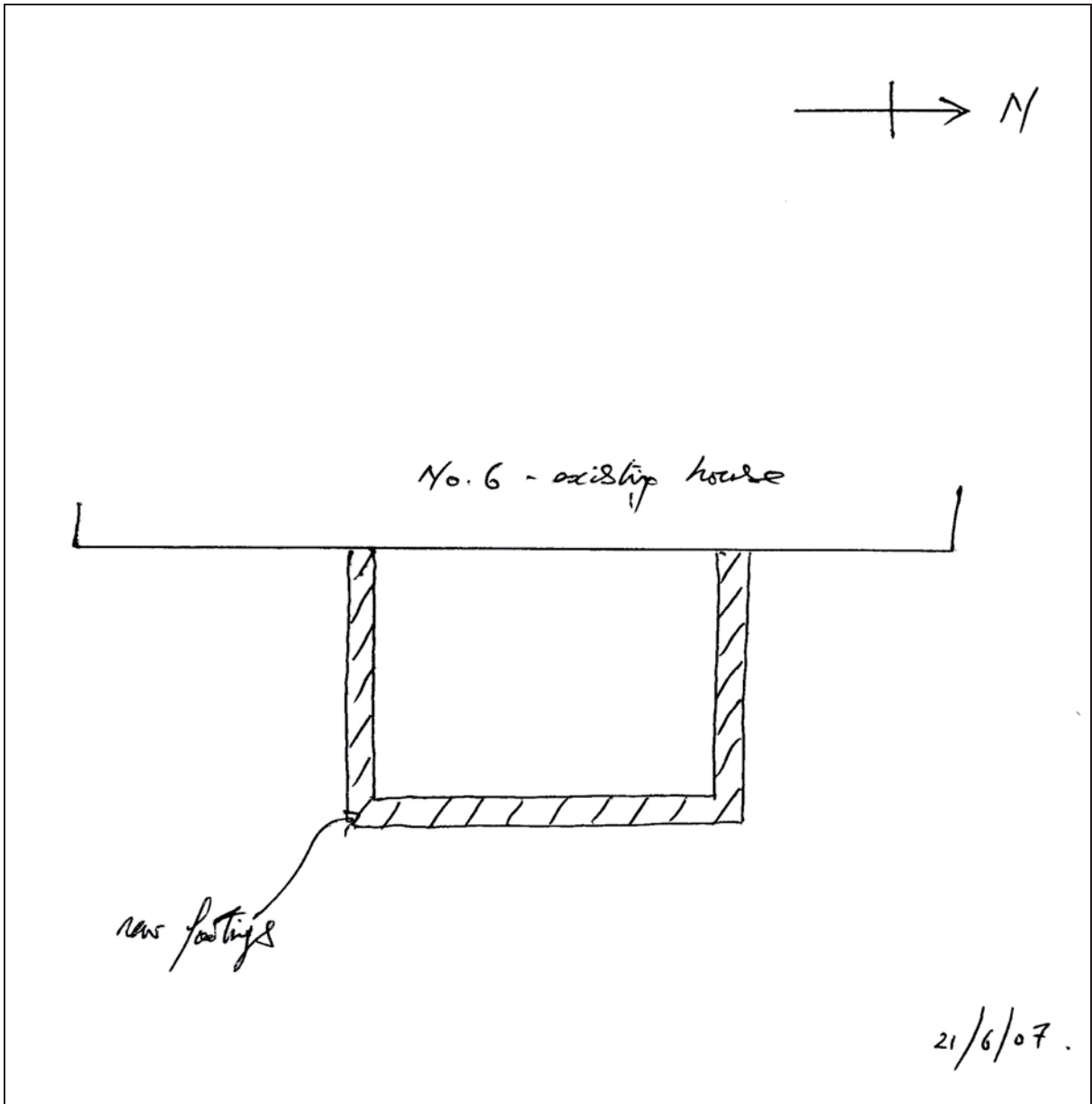
- Birtchnell P C., 1960 *A Short History of Berkhamsted*. Clunbury Press
- Cobb, J. W., 1883: *Two Lectures on the History and Antiquities of Berkhamsted*. 2<sup>nd</sup> edition. Nicholas and Sons (London)
- Doggett, N and Hunn, J. 1985: The Origins and Development of Medieval Berkhamsted, *Hertfordshire's Past* **18**, 18-36.
- Hastie, S. 1999: *Berkhamsted: An illustrated History*. Alpine Press (Kings Langley).
- Morris, J. 1976: *Domesday Book vol 12 Hertfordshire*. Phillimore (Chichester).
- HCC 2004 *Berkhamsted: Extensive Urban Survey Project Assessment*. Hertfordshire County Council.
- Page W., 1908 *The Victoria History of the County of Berkhamsted*. Dawsons of Pall Mall (London).
- 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, Castle Hill Avenue Berkhamsted		Project No/Code: 942 1 BCH		Sheet: 1 of 1		
Client/Developer Styrians Conservatory		Date of visit: 21/6/07				
Contact: Jon Brearitt		Phone: 01944-275565				
Duration of Visit (inc. travel):		Start: 9-9.30; 6.55-7.30		Finish: →		
Completed by: JRA						
Development Type:						
Footings <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Services	Roads	Levelling	Quarrying	Pipelines	Other (specify):
Site & weather conditions: Dry & Sunny am; wet in evening.						
Observations: The footings were dug out on three sides on the eastern side of the house. The foundations were approximately 4.5m x 6m and 0.5m wide and c.0.9m deep. The topsoil varied between 0.3 and 0.45m (usually where flowerbeds were). The sub-soil was a reddish brown silty clay with surprisingly few flints present. On the easternmost side there was a buried raft of concrete (founder plate?) about 0.12m thick. The semi dissolved chalk was at a depth of c.0.9m and at the SE side was about 0.6m below gravel surface. There was no sign of any man made features or artefacts.						
Comments: Apart from concrete raft the ground appeared to be entirely natural in configuration.						

For sketch plan, use reverse

©ASC, 2003





## Appendix 2: List of Photographs

SITE NAME: No 6, castle Hill Avenue, Berkhamsted				SITE NO/CODE: 964/BCH
Shot	B&W	Slide	Digital	Subject
1			1550	Rear, east facing side of no. 6
2			1551	Nearby house undergoing demolition
3			1552	Overall view of foundations looking west
4			1553	Oblique overall view of excavated foundations
5			1554	Detail of ground on east side of conservatory
6			1555	Foundations on north side of conservatory
7			1556	Detail of ground on north side of conservatory
8			1557	Foundations on south side of conservatory
9			1558	General view of site looking north

### Appendix 3: ASC OASIS Form

PROJECT DETAILS			
Project Name:	No. 6, Castle Hill Avenue, Berkhamsted, Hertfordshire		
Short Description:	In June 2007 a watching brief on was carried out at 6 Castle Hill Avenue, Berkhamsted, Hertfordshire, during the excavation of footings for a conservatory on the east side of the existing house. The foundations were about 1m deep and 0.5m wide and cut through reddish-brown subsoil down onto and partly into the underlying natural chalk. Apart from the buried foundations of a path or patio no man-made features or artefacts were observed.		
Project Type:	Watching Brief		
Site status: (eg. none, SAM, Listed)	none	Previous work: (eg. SMR refs)	none
Current land use:	Residential property	Future work: (yes / no / unknown)	no
Monument type:	none	Monument period:	none
Significant finds: (artefact type & period)	none		
PROJECT LOCATION			
County:	Hertfordshire	OS reference: (to at least 8 figures)	SP 9934 0835
District:	Dacorum	Parish:	St Peters
Site address: (with postcode if known)	No. 6, Castle Hill Avenue, Berkhamsted, Hertfordshire		
Study area:	30 sq m	Height OD:	112m
PROJECT CREATORS			
Organisation:	Archaeological Services & Consultancy Ltd		
Project brief originator:	Batt 2007	Project design originator:	Barclay C
Project Manager:	D. Fell	Director/Supervisor:	J.R. Hunn
Sponsor / funding body:	Skyview Conservatories		
PROJECT DATE			
Start date:	June 21 <sup>st</sup> 2007	End date:	June 21 <sup>st</sup> 2007
PROJECT ARCHIVES			
	Location	Content (eg. pottery, animal bone, files/sheets)	
Physical:	None	none	
Paper:	none	none	
Digital:	yes	none	
BIBLIOGRAPHY (Journal/monograph, published or forthcoming, or unpublished client report)			
Title:	Watching Brief: 6 Castle Hill Avenue, Berkhamsted, Hertfordshire		
Author(s):	Jonathan R Hunn		
Entered by:	J.R. Hunn	Date:	25 <sup>th</sup> June 2007

## Appendix 4: SMR Summary Sheet

Site name and address: 6, Castle Hill Avenue, Berkhamsted, Herts		
County: Hertfordshire		District: Dacorum
Village/Town: Berkhamsted		Parish: St Peters
Planning application reference: 4/00609/07/FHA		
Client name, address, & tel. no: Skyview Conservatories The Coach House New Road Princes Risborough Buckinghamshire HP27 0JN		
Nature of application: conservatory		
Present land use: residential property		
Size of application area: n/a		Size of area investigated: 30 sq.m.
NGR (to 8 figures): SP 9934 0835		Site code: 942/BCH
Site director/Organization: Hunn J.R./ ASC Ltd		
Type of work: watching brief		
Date of work:	Start: June 21 <sup>st</sup> 2007	Finish: June 21 <sup>st</sup> 2007
Curating museum: Dacorum Heritage Trust (digital copy only)		
Related SMR nos: none		Periods represented: none
Relevant previous summaries/reports : none		
Summary of fieldwork results:  <i>In June 2007 a watching brief on was carried out at 6 Castle Hill Avenue, Berkhamsted, Hertfordshire, during the excavation of footings for a conservatory on the east side of the existing house. The foundations were about 1m deep and 0.5m wide and cut through reddish-brown subsoil down onto and partly into the underlying natural chalk. Apart from the buried foundations of a path or patio no man-made features or artefacts were observed.</i>		
Author: J.R. Hunn		Date: 22/6/07