

Archaeological Services & Consultancy Ltd

**WATCHING BRIEF:
LAND R/O 12 TORRINGTON ROAD
BERKHAMSTED
HERTFORDSHIRE**

on behalf of Regent Estates



Jonathan R. Hunn BA PhD MIFA

February 2007

ASC: 845/BTR/2

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Site Data

<i>ASC project code:</i>	BTR	<i>ASC Project No:</i>	845
<i>County:</i>	Hertfordshire		
<i>Village/Town:</i>	Berkhamsted		
<i>Civil Parish:</i>	Berkhamsted		
<i>NGR (to 8 figs):</i>	SP 9897 0778		
<i>Present use:</i>	Garages, access and open land		
<i>Planning proposal:</i>	Residential redevelopment		
<i>Planning application ref/date:</i>	4/01306/06/FUL		
<i>Local Planning Authority:</i>	Dacorum		
<i>Date of fieldwork:</i>	24-31 January 2007		
<i>Client:</i>	Regent Estates 141-143 High Street Berkhamsted Hertfordshire HP4 3HH		
<i>Contact name:</i>	Tom Leech		

Internal Quality Check

<i>Primary Author:</i>	Jonathan Hunn	<i>Date:</i>	26 th February 2007
<i>Revisions:</i>		<i>Date:</i>	
<i>Edited/Checked By:</i>		<i>Date:</i>	

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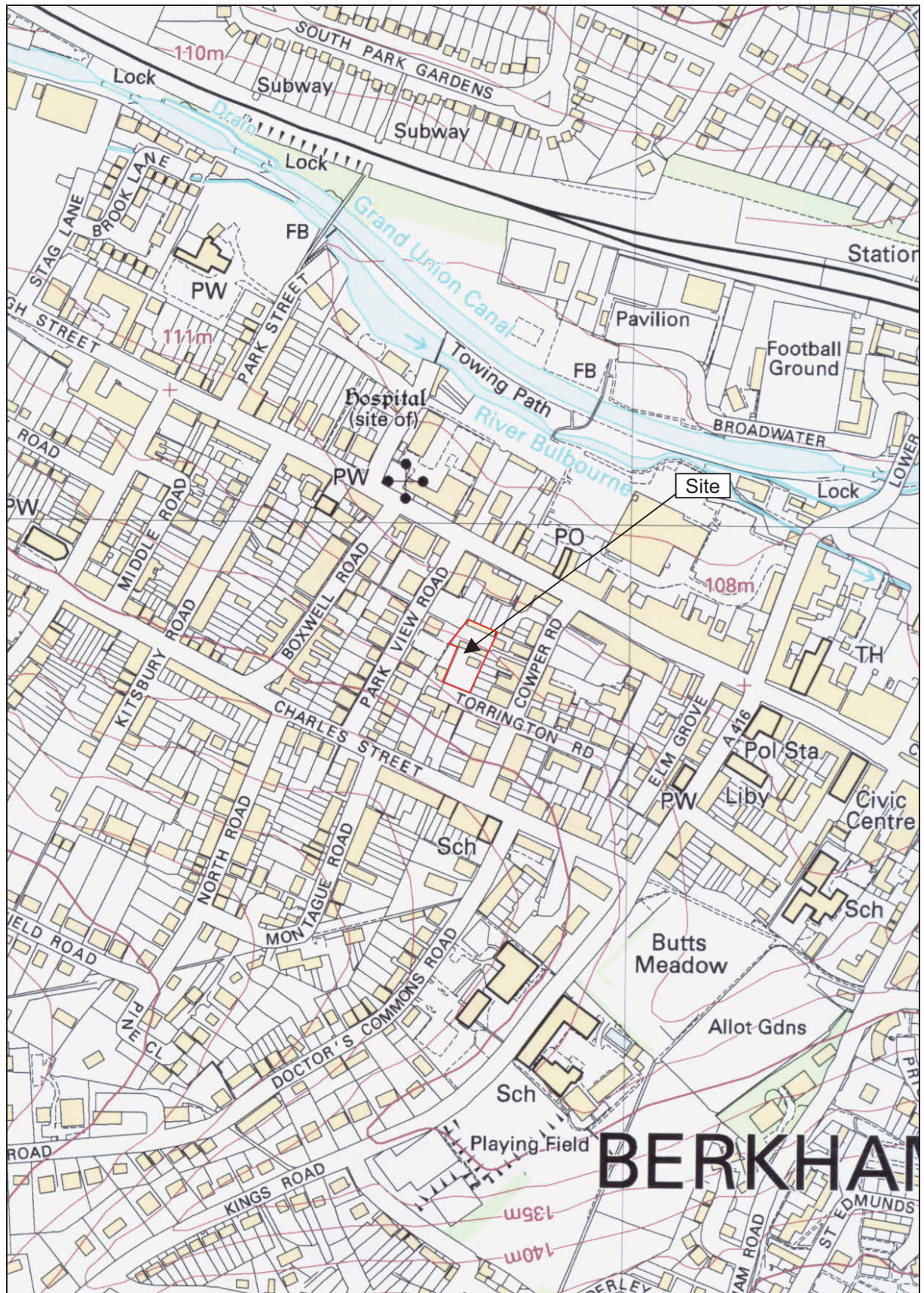


Figure 1: General location (scale 1:5,000)

Summary

In January 2007, Archaeological Services & Consultancy Ltd undertook a watching brief on land to the rear of 12 Torrington Road, Berkhamsted, Hertfordshire. The work was undertaken during redevelopment of the site for residential use. An accumulation of dark soils above natural chalk at the south end of the site suggested that area had been built up. A pit located in the centre of the site contained a single medieval sherd and a tile fragment. A small number of medieval and post-medieval sherds recovered from the dark soils suggest a low level of activity on the site during those periods.

1 Introduction

1.1 In January 2007 *Archaeological Services and Consultancy Ltd* (ASC) carried out a watching brief on a site in Torrington Road, Berkhamsted (NGR SP 9897 0778: Fig. 1). The project was commissioned by the developers, *Regent Estates*, and was carried out according to the requirements of the *Hertfordshire County Council Historic Environment Unit*, archaeological advisors (AA) to the local planning authority (LPA), *Dacorum Borough Council*, and a project design prepared by ASC (Barclay 2006). The relevant planning application reference is 4/01306/06/FUL.

1.2 *Location & Description*

The site is located in the centre of Berkhamsted, in the administrative district of Dacorum, Hertfordshire. It consists of a roughly rectangular area to the north of Torrington Road, covering some 0.15ha. The site is bounded by properties fronting Cowper Road to the east, gardens to the rear of the High Street to the north, and to the rear of Park View Road to the west. Prior to development the north part of the site was occupied by two blocks of garages on either side of a courtyard, accessed from Cowper Road. The south part comprised the house and garden of 12 Torrington Road (Fig. 2).

1.3 *Geology & Topography*

The site lies on a slope rising steeply from the north to south, from 114 – 119m AOD. The soil association is Frome, with the underlying geology described as *chalky and gravelly river alluvium*. The soil and site characteristics are described as *shallow calcareous and non-calcareous loamy soils over flint gravel affected by groundwater. Small areas of peat*. (Soil Survey 1983, 812a).

1.4 *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 four houses and eight flats (Fig. 3).

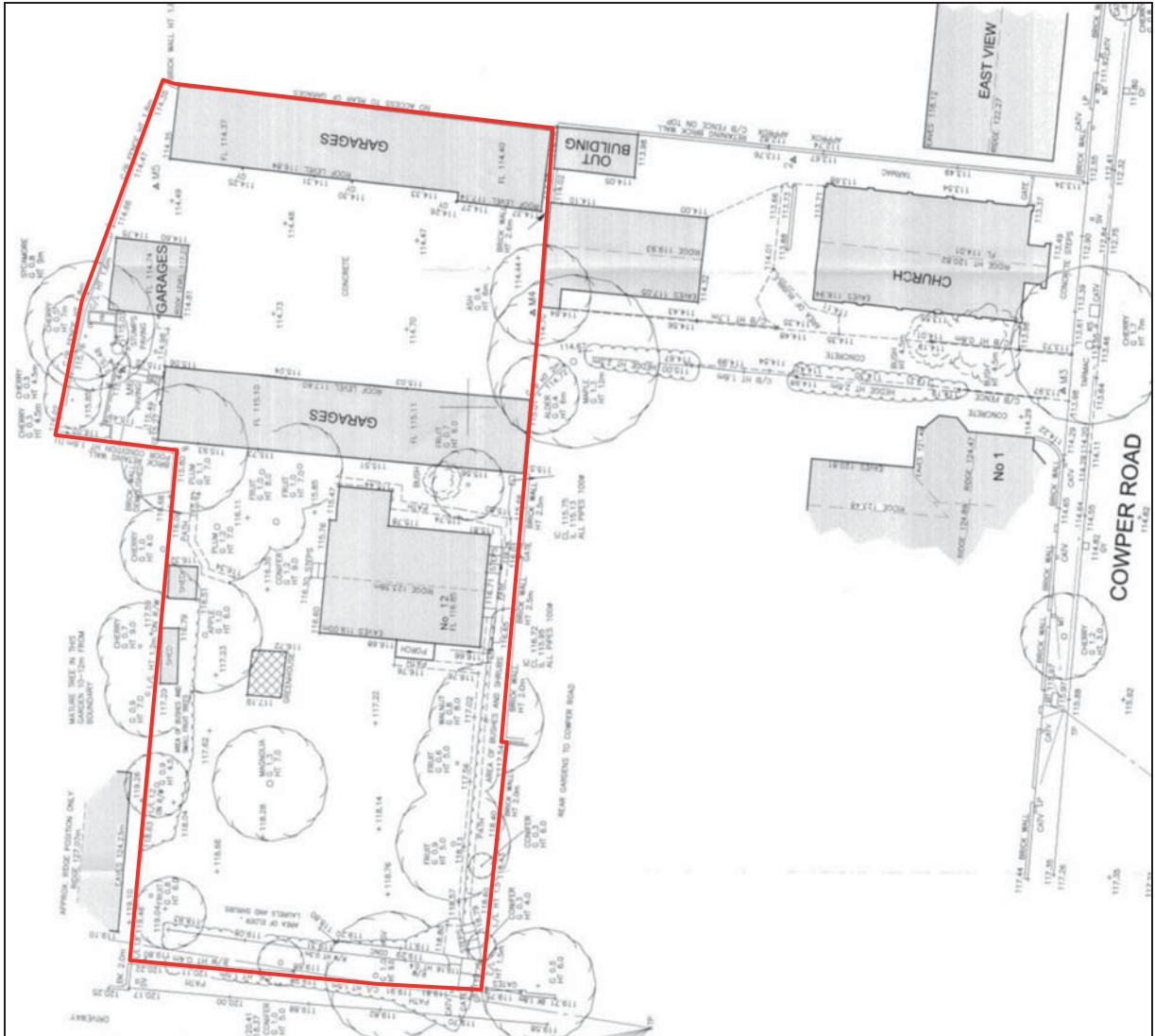


Figure 2: Site plan (Scale 1:500)

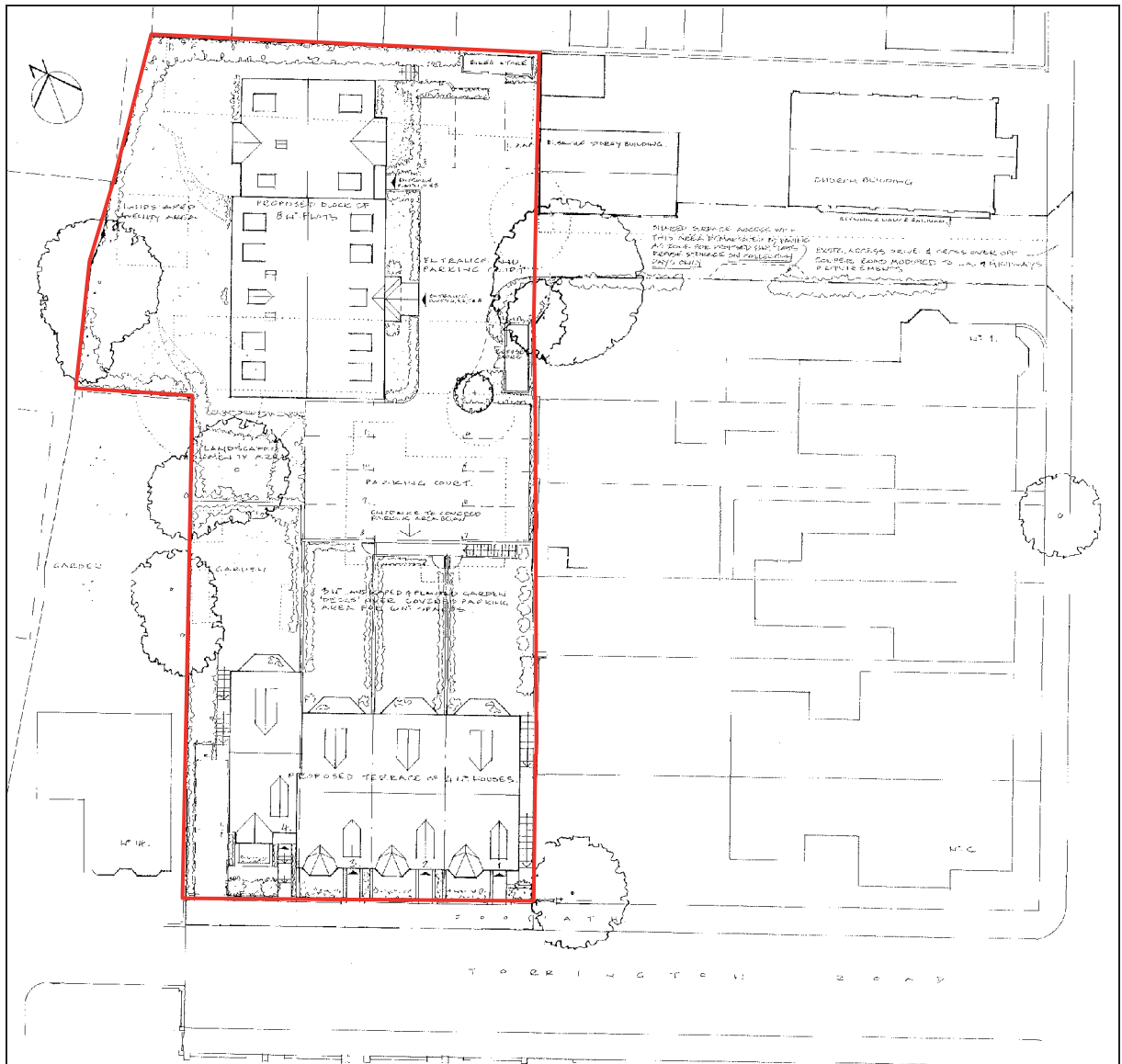


Figure 3: Proposed development (scale 1:500)

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 the requirements of the AA, as set out in the project design (section 2.3), namely:

- 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

3.2 Constraints

No constraints were encountered during this project.

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 Bulbourne valley was extensively settled during the prehistoric and Roman periods and the modern High Street follows the approximate line of a Roman road, known as *Akeman Street*, which linked *Verulamium* (St Albans) with *Corinium* (Cirencester). Roman remains have been found nearby off Stags Lane, Berkhamsted (Sites & Monuments Record [SMR] 6437) and a more extensive Roman settlement was situated 3.5km northwest of the site at Cow Roast.
- 3.3 The modern town of Berkhamsted probably developed during the late Anglo-Saxon period and the town was mentioned in a late 10th century will and in the Domesday survey (1086). Remains of the medieval and post-medieval periods are frequently found along the nearby High Street.
- 3.4 Berkhamsted was of considerable importance during the medieval period, notably due to the presence of the castle on the north side of the river, and the medieval settlement on the south side of the river. The site is c.650m south west of the castle, but also offers limited potential for the discovery of medieval remains.
- 3.5 The environs of the site have been subject to archaeological investigation in recent years, owing to their proximity to the historic core of Berkhamsted. In 1997, trial trenching of a site in Cowper Road adjacent to the Christian Science reading room revealed three post-medieval pits and a contemporary wall (Hunn 1997). In 2005, a watching brief on the construction of a disabled access to the reading room (Semmelmann 2005) failed to reveal anything of archaeological significance.

4 Results

- 4.1 Five visits were made to the site between September 2006 and January 2007. The work observed mostly comprised terracing, and ground reduction for underground parking beneath the new buildings, the footings having been piled following initial site clearance in September.
- 4.2 Following removal of the concrete garage bases and associated surfaces at the north end of the site, it was evident that most if not all of the original soils had been removed or disturbed by previous development, as makeup layers of crushed brick and building rubble lay directly above the natural chalk. In contrast, the southern part of the site adjacent to Torrington Road appeared to have been built up. Above the natural chalk at least 0.6m of dark loamy soils survived. These layers (Plate 4) were fairly disturbed, with patches of burning visible in section, and appear to have been built up artificially. A small amount of pottery was recovered from these dark soil layers (below).
- 4.3 The watching brief revealed a single feature (Plate 2), a pit cut into the natural chalk, close to the centre of the site. Its presence was not noted until it was cut during excavations into the chalk. It measured *c.* 1.9m across at the surface of the chalk, and 0.7m deep. Its fill was dark brown clayey soil, containing a single flint, one piece of pottery and one tile fragment (below).
- 4.4 *Finds*
Nine sherds of pottery (34g) were recovered from the dark soil layers at the south end of the site (Plate 5). These comprised six fragments of medieval Hertfordshire Grey ware type, one piece of brown-glazed 'red ware' and one of green-glazed sandy pink fabric. Both of the latter are of likely medieval or post-medieval date. There was also one small sherd of sandy grey ware fabric of possible Romano-British date, presumably residual.

From the pit in the upper centre of the site came one fragment (12g) of a jar rim in a sandy calcite gritted fabric, greyish brown internally and reddish grey externally. This is of likely 13th/14th-century date. A single fragment (10g) of reddish brown roofing tile, 12mm thick, was also recovered from this feature (Plate 6).



Plate 1: Location of pit looking west



Plate 2: Detail of pit looking south west



Plate 3: Manual excavation at SW end of the site



Plate 4: Detail of excavated section view SSE



Plate 5: Finds from southwest corner of site



Plate 6: Finds from pit

5. Conclusions

- 5.1 The watching brief undertaken at Torrington Road did not reveal the presence of any significant archaeological deposits on the site.
- 5.2 A single discrete feature, a pit, was noted near the centre of the site. The few finds recovered from its fill suggest that it was filled in sometime in the medieval period, or later. The function of the pit remains uncertain, though presumably it could have been related to occupation of other activity to the rear of buildings fronting the High Street to the north. The presence of medieval and post-medieval pottery in the build-up of dark soils at the south end of the site attests to a low level of activity in the area of the site throughout these periods, until the area was developed in the 19th century.
- 5.3 *Confidence Rating*
The watching brief was undertaken in generally good weather conditions, and a reasonable degree of co-operation was provided by the developers. The project is therefore assigned a reasonably high confidence rating.

6. Acknowledgements

The writer is grateful to Regent Estates for commissioning this project, and to Tom Leech of that organisation for his assistance. The project was monitored on behalf of the local planning authority by Kate Batt of the HCC Historic Environment Unit. The author undertook the watching brief, and prepared the report with assistance from Caroline Barclay. The report was edited by Bob Zeepvat BA MIFA.

7. Archive

7.1 The project archive will comprise:

1. Project Design
2. Initial Report
3. Clients site plans
4. Site Monitoring Sheets
5. Finds records
6. Finds
7. List of photographs/slides
8. B/W prints & negatives
9. 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.

Barclay C, 2006 *Cowper Road Garages & Land r/o 12 Torrington Road, Berkhamsted, Hertfordshire*. ASC document, ASC: 845/BTR/1.

EH 1991 *The Management of Archaeological Projects, 2nd 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 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.R., 1997 *Archaeological Evaluation and Watching Brief of Land in Cowper Road, (behind 245-249 High St) Berkhamsted, Hertfordshire*. ASC report, ASAC/CR/B/H97.

Morris J, 1976 *The Domesday Book*. Hertfordshire section. Phillimore.

Page W., 1908 *The Victoria History of the County of Berkhamsted*. Dawsons of Pall Mall

Semmelmann K, 2005 *Historic Building Recording & Watching Brief: Hall r/o Christian Science Church, Cowper Road, Berkhamsted, Hertfordshire*, ASC report, ASC: 664/BCR/02.

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

Appendix 1: Monitoring Sheets

A.S.C. LTD		ARCHAEOLOGICAL FIELD MONITORING RECORD				
Project: L R/o Torrington Road Berkhamsted		Project No/Code: 845/BTR		Sheet: 1 of 5		
Client/Developer Regent Estate		Date of visit: Sept 20 th 2006				
Contact: Tom Leach		Phone: 01442-877878				
Duration of Visit (inc. travel):	Start: 3.30 pm	Finish:				
Completed by: SPH						
Development Type:						
Footings	Services	Roads	Levelling	Quarrying	Pipelines	Other (specify): Site channels
Site & weather conditions: Dry, warm and sunny						
Observations: All the vegetation had been cleared and the former dwelling demolished. The debris was piled up awaiting removal. The concrete raft associated with the former garage was still in situ and also awaiting demolition/removal.						
Comments: No intrusive work has begun - another few days / next weeks possibly.						

For sketch plan, use reverse

©ASC, 2003



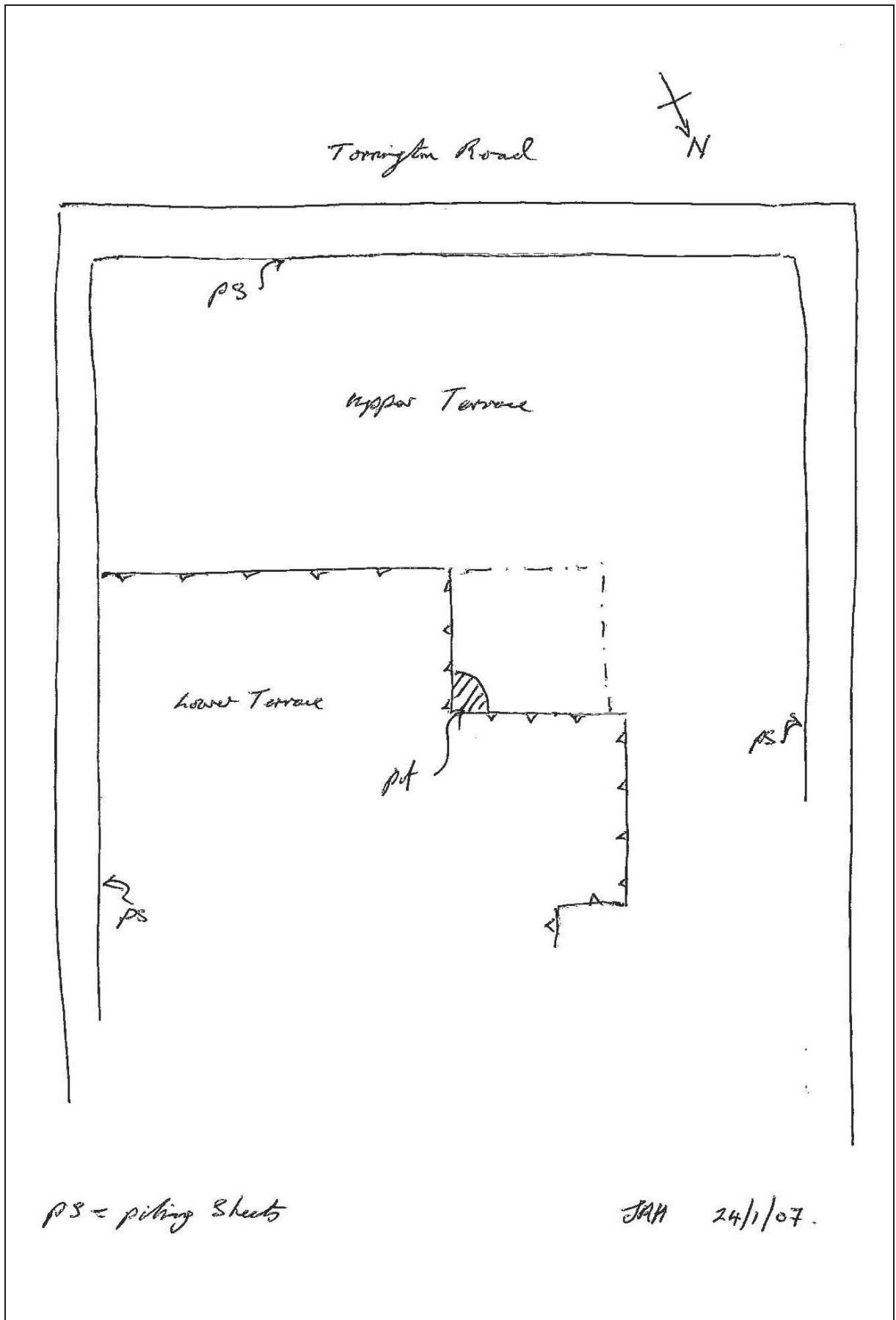
A.S.C. LTD

ARCHAEOLOGICAL FIELD MONITORING RECORD

Project: Lr R/o Torrington Road Berkhamsted		Project No/Code: 845 1 BTR	Sheet: 2 of 5
Client/Developer Regento Estates		Date of visit: 24/1/07	
Contact: Tom Leach		Phone: 01442-877875	
Duration of Visit (inc. travel):	Start: 3.15 pm	Finish: 4.45 pm	
Completed by: JRA			
Development Type:			
Footings <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Services	Roads	Levelling <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
			Quarrying
			Pipelines
			Other (specify):
Site & weather conditions: Dry & cold			
Observations: Observed the ground reduction on the Southern side of the site is Torrington Rd end. The ground has been terraced to prepare area for the underground parking in 2 steps each about 3m below original ground surface but declining with the natural slope of the terrain Southwards. The upper sides have been sheet piled. Chalk is exposed everywhere within the footprint of the new building (s). The only feature noted was a pit situated at a projecting corner of the site. Its exact dimensions is not known for certain but the section shows it was c.1.9m wide by 0.7m deep (is probably originally 1.7m deep). It was filled by a dark brown clayey loam fill with one small flint, one piece of pottery & small tile fragment. The ground level beside Torrington Rd is built up over original ground surface (0.3m of dark soil) above this was 0.66m of made up gravel to pavement level.			
Comments: Apart from one isolated pit no other archaeological features were noted.			

For sketch plan, use reverse

©ASC, 2003





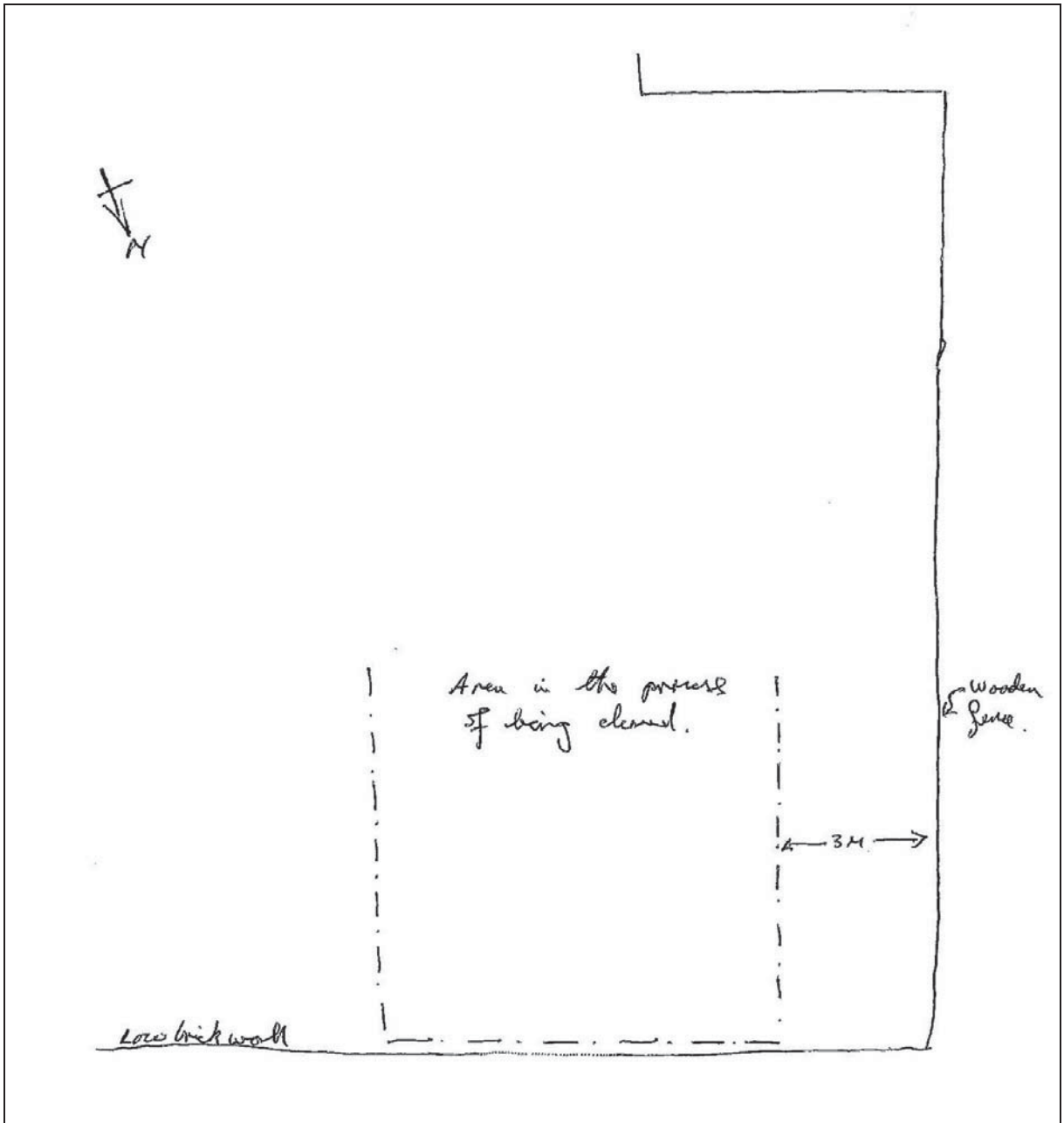
A.S.C. LTD

ARCHAEOLOGICAL FIELD MONITORING RECORD

Project: Land r/o Torrington Road Berkhamsted		Project No/Code: 845 1 BTR	Sheet: 3 of 5
Client/Developer Regent Estates		Date of visit: 26/1/07	
Contact: Tom Leach		Phone: 01442-877878	
Duration of Visit (inc. travel):	Start: 10.35; 2.25	Finish: 11.40;	
Completed by: J Holt			
Development Type:			
Footings	Services	Roads	Levelling <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
			Quarrying
			Pipelines
			Other (specify):
Site & weather conditions: Dry & chill.			
Observations: The southern part of site had more ground work done, though the previous visit established that there was nothing left here apart from a pit (now gone). Work had started on the lower part of the site (ie where the pits were going) 2nd visit: Outrigger ground reduction in the NW corner of the site. An area 8m x 7m was reduced to a depth of 1.1m. The upper 0.8m was composed of a dark loamy soil, relatively stony. Below this was the orange natural clay. Post-mechanical build up in character? goes up against the southern west boundary wall.			
Comments: No artefacts or features noted			

For sketch plan, use reverse

©ASC, 2003





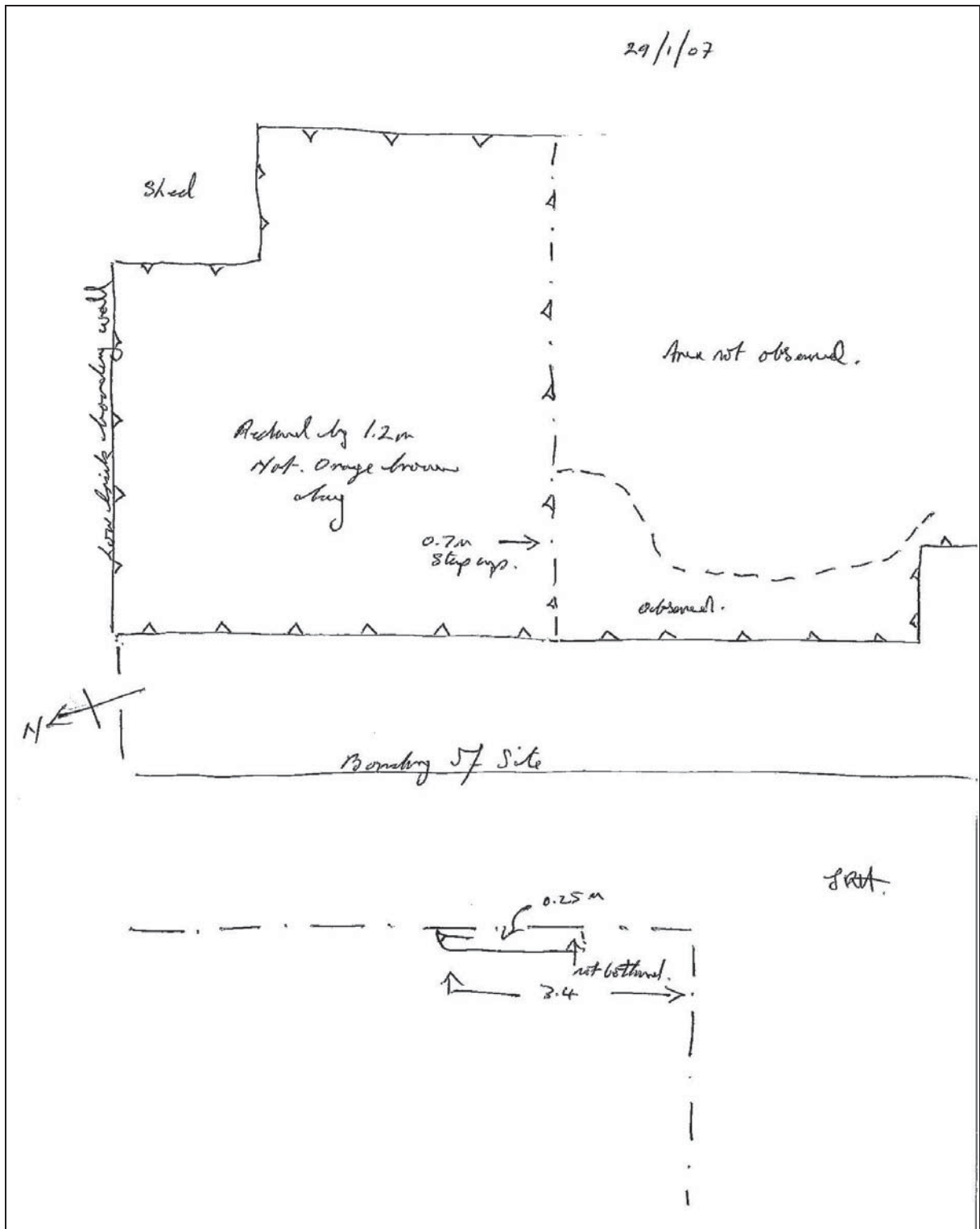
A.S.C. LTD

ARCHAEOLOGICAL FIELD MONITORING RECORD

Project: Leed R/o Torrington Rd Berkhamsted		Project No/Code: 845 1 BTR	Sheet: 4 of 5
Client/Developer Regent Estates		Date of visit: 29/1/07	
Contact: Tom Leach		Phone: 01442-877878	
Duration of Visit (inc. travel):	Start: 2.45 am	Finish:	
Completed by: JRM.			
Development Type:			
Footings	Services	Roads	Levelling
			Quarrying
			Pipelines
			Other (specify):
Site & weather conditions: Dull, mild & dry on (some rain)			
Observations: Observed more of the foundations for the block of flats on the northern, downslope end of the site. Some levels as before - about 40% taken down - see over. There seem to be at least four major horizons adj. to Torrington Rd:- (1) Tarmac and make-up c. 0.30m (2) Dark brown pebbly soil with one chalk, brick, tile in situ c. 0.32m thick (3) reddish brown pebbly clay c. 0.12m thick overlying (4) a dark brown topsoil type horizon c. 0.2 to 0.22m thick. Lying on the natural orange clay. In SW corner was an edge of a possible feature. Its eastern edge was 3.4m from N. boundary and was sealed by (4). The pit? (5) was filled by a dark brown pebbly loam. Contained 1 frog of green glass - see over for sketch 'B'.			
Comments: Alex T working in the SW corner of the site. That is the area where the ground has been built up adjacent to Torrington Rd.			

For sketch plan, use reverse

©ASC, 2003





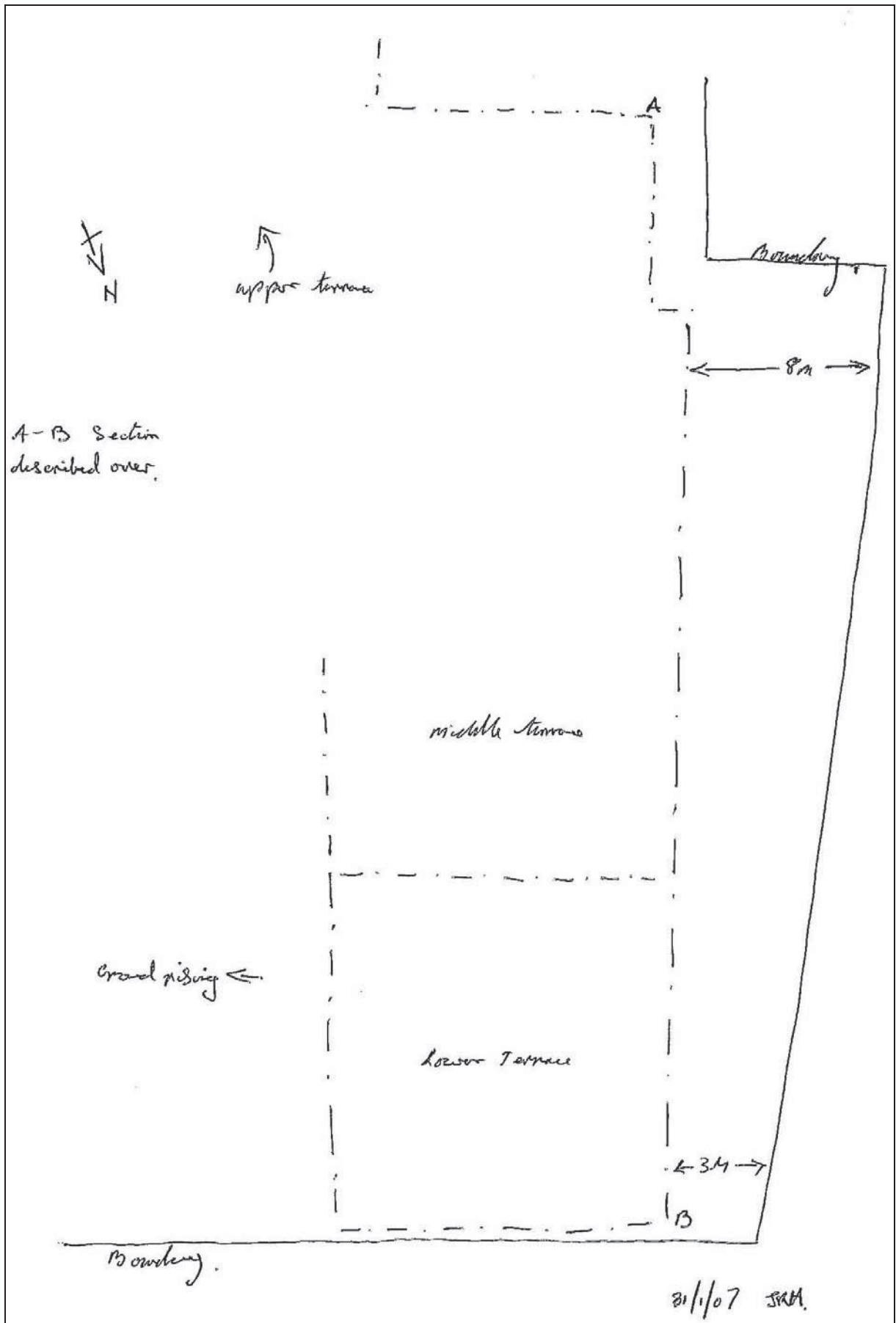
A.S.C. LTD

ARCHAEOLOGICAL FIELD MONITORING RECORD

Project: Land to r/o Torrington Rd Berkhamsted		Project No/Code: 845 1 BTR	Sheet: 5 of 5
Client/Developer Regent Estates		Date of visit: 31/1/07	
Contact: Tom Leach		Phone: 01442-87878	
Duration of Visit (inc. travel):	Start: 9.25 am	Finish: 10.35 am	
Completed by: SRAH			
Development Type:			
Footings <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Services	Roads	Levelling <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
		Quarrying	Pipelines
Other (specify):			
Site & weather conditions: Dry, frosty & sunny			
Observations: Observed the final ground reduction of the area of the new flats on the western side of the site there is a continuous profile extending down the slope for about 25m (see over for sketch). At its southern, upslope end of profile the ground is reduced by c. 1.75m of which 0.6m is dark soils above the natural orange clay looks fairly disturbed with various patches of burning in the section. Towards the northern, downslope end the dark soil overburden becomes progressively thicker - about 0.9m deep on boundary. Along the northern boundary the soil is much deeper (1.2m or so). This has been artificially built up almost Lynchet-like. No dating material observed.			
Comments: The area has been sufficiently inspected to be confident that there are not significant archaeological deposits present.			

For sketch plan, use reverse

©ASC, 2003



Appendix 2: List of Photographs

SITE NO/CODE: 845/BTR			
Shot	B&W	Digital	Subject
1		7827	200906 – site demolition view west
2		7828	200906 – site demolition view north
3		7829	200906 – site clearance view NNE
4		7830	200906 – site clearance view N
5		7831	200906 – Torrington Rd Sept 20 th 2006
6	01	0001	240107 – ground reduction view NNW
7	02	0002	240107 – ground reduction view west (landscape)
8		0003	240107 - ground reduction view west (portrait)
9		0005	240107 - ground reduction view south
10		0006	240107 – location of pit looking west
11		0007	240107 – detail of pit looking west
12		0008	240107 – detail of pit looking south west
13		0009	240107 – NW corner of the site
14		0010	240107 – detail of soils at southern end of the site
15		0011	240107 – edge of former pavement along Torrington Rd
16		0012	240107 – ground reduction looking NNE
17		0013	240107 - ground reduction looking N
18		0001	260107 – further ground reduction in southern half of the site - west
19		0002	260107 – further ground reduction view south
20		0003	260107 – further ground reduction view west
21		0004	260107 – machining at northern end of the site looking west
22		0005	260107 – location of ground reduction at north end of site – west
23		0006	260107 - location of ground reduction at north end of site – east
24		0007	260107 – machining underway view south
25		0008	260107 –ground reduction view west
26		0010	260107 –further ground reduction view east
27		0012	260107 - further ground reduction view N
28		0013	260107 - further ground reduction view SE
29		9104	290107 – ground reduction in southern half of the site view west
30		9106	290107 –ground reduction detail looking east
31		9108	290107 – manual excavation at SW end of the site
32		9109	290107 – detail of ditto
33		9110	290107 –detail of excavated section view SSE
34		9111	290107 - detail of excavated section view SSW
35		9133	3101007 – exposed upper section on west side of site
36		9134	3101007 – exposed lower section on west side of site
37		9135	3101007 -exposed lower section on west side of site (detail)
38		9136	3101007 – exposed northernmost section
39		9137	3101007 - detail of northernmost section
40		9139	3101007 –Access route from Cowper Rd view east
41		9142	3101007 – View from entrance of site long NE
42		9143	3101007 – view of converted church at entrance to site
43		0002	Finds from pit
44		9157	Finds from southwest corner of site

Appendix 3: ASC OASIS Form

PROJECT DETAILS			
Project Name:	Cowper Road Garages and land r/o 12 Torrington Road, Berkhamsted, Herts		
Short Description:	In January 2007, Archaeological Services & Consultancy Ltd undertook a watching brief on land to the rear of 12 Torrington Road, Berkhamsted, Hertfordshire. The work was undertaken during redevelopment of the site for residential use. An accumulation of dark soils above natural chalk at the south end of the site suggested that area had been built up. A pit located in the centre of the site contained a single medieval sherd and a tile fragment. A small number of medieval and post-medieval sherds recovered from the dark soils suggest a low level of activity on the site during those periods.		
Project Type:	WB		
Site status: (eg. none, SAM, Listed)	none	Previous work: (eg. SMR refs)	none
Current land use:	Garages, access, house & garden	Future work: (yes / no / unknown)	no
Monument type:	N/a	Monument period:	Medieval onwards
Significant finds: (artefact type & period)	none		
PROJECT LOCATION			
County:	Hertfordshire	OS reference: (8 figs min)	SP 9897 0778
District:	Dacorum	Parish:	Berkhamsted
Site address: (with postcode if known)	Cowper Road Garages and land r/o 12 Torrington Road, Berkhamsted, Herts		
Study area: (sq. m. or ha)	0.15ha	Height OD: (metres)	114m
PROJECT CREATORS			
Organisation:	Archaeological Services & Consultancy Ltd		
Project brief originator:	-	Project design originator:	C Barclay
Project Manager:	J.R. Hunn	Director/Supervisor:	J.R. Hunn
Sponsor / funding body:	Regent Estates		
PROJECT DATE			
Start date:	20/09/2006	End date:	27/02/2007
PROJECT ARCHIVES			
	Location (Accession no.)	Content (eg. pottery, animal bone, files/sheets)	
Physical:	Dacorum Heritage Trust	Bag finds (in archive box)	
Paper:	Ditto	Archive box	
Digital:	Ditto	CD in archive box	
BIBLIOGRAPHY (Journal/monograph, published or forthcoming, or unpublished client report)			
Title:	Watching Brief: Land r/o 12 Torrington Road, Berkhamsted, Hertfordshire		
Author(s):	J.R. Hunn		
Page nos		Date:	27 th Feb 2007

Appendix 4: SMR Summary Sheet

Site name and address: Cowper Road Garages and land r/o 12 Torrington Road Berkhamsted Herts		
County: Hertfordshire		District: Dacorum
Village/Town: Berkhamsted		Parish: Berkhamsted
Planning application reference: 4/01306/06/FUL		
Client name, address, & tel. no: Regent Estates 141-143 High Street Berkhamsted Herts HP4 3HH		
Nature of application: Residential redevelopment		
Present land use: Garages, access, house and garden		
Size of application area: 0.15ha		Size of area investigated: n/a
NGR (to 8 figures): SP 9897 0778		Site code: 845/BTR
Site director/Organization: Jonathan Hunn / ASC Ltd		
Type of work: Watching Brief		
Date of work:	Start: 20/09/06	Finish: 27/02/07
Curating museum: Dacorum Heritage Trust		
Related SMR nos:		Periods represented: Medieval onwards
Relevant previous summaries/reports		
Summary of fieldwork results: In January 2007, Archaeological Services & Consultancy Ltd undertook a watching brief on land to the rear of 12 Torrington Road, Berkhamsted, Hertfordshire. The work was undertaken during redevelopment of the site for residential use. An accumulation of dark soils above natural chalk at the south end of the site suggested that area had been built up. A pit located in the centre of the site contained a single medieval sherd and a tile fragment. A small number of medieval and post-medieval sherds recovered from the dark soils suggest a low level of activity on the site during those periods.		
Author: J.R. Hunn		Date: 27 th February 2007