

Archaeological Services & Consultancy Ltd

WATCHING BRIEF: WITCHES HOLLOW ASHRIDGE HERTFORDSHIRE

on behalf of Goldhill Associates



David Kaye BA PIFA

January 2008

ASC: 1026/AWH/2

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Site Data

<i>ASC project code:</i>	AWH	<i>ASC Project No:</i>	1017
<i>Accession No:</i>	pending		
<i>County:</i>	Hertfordshire		
<i>Village/Town:</i>	Little Gaddesden		
<i>Civil Parish:</i>	Little Gaddesden		
<i>NGR (to 8 figs):</i>	SP 9899 1358		
<i>Present use:</i>	Garage and garden		
<i>Planning proposal:</i>	Extension and garage		
<i>Planning application ref/date:</i>	4/02372/07/FHA		
<i>Local Planning Authority:</i>	Dacorum District Council		
<i>Date of fieldwork:</i>	29 th January 2008		
<i>Client:</i>	Goldhill Associates Balcary Shootersway Berkhamsted Hertfordshire HP4 3NN		
<i>Contact name:</i>	Michael Gold		

Internal Quality Check

<i>Primary Author:</i>	David Kaye	<i>Date:</i>	29.1.08
<i>Revisions:</i>		<i>Date:</i>	
<i>Edited/Checked By:</i>		<i>Date:</i>	

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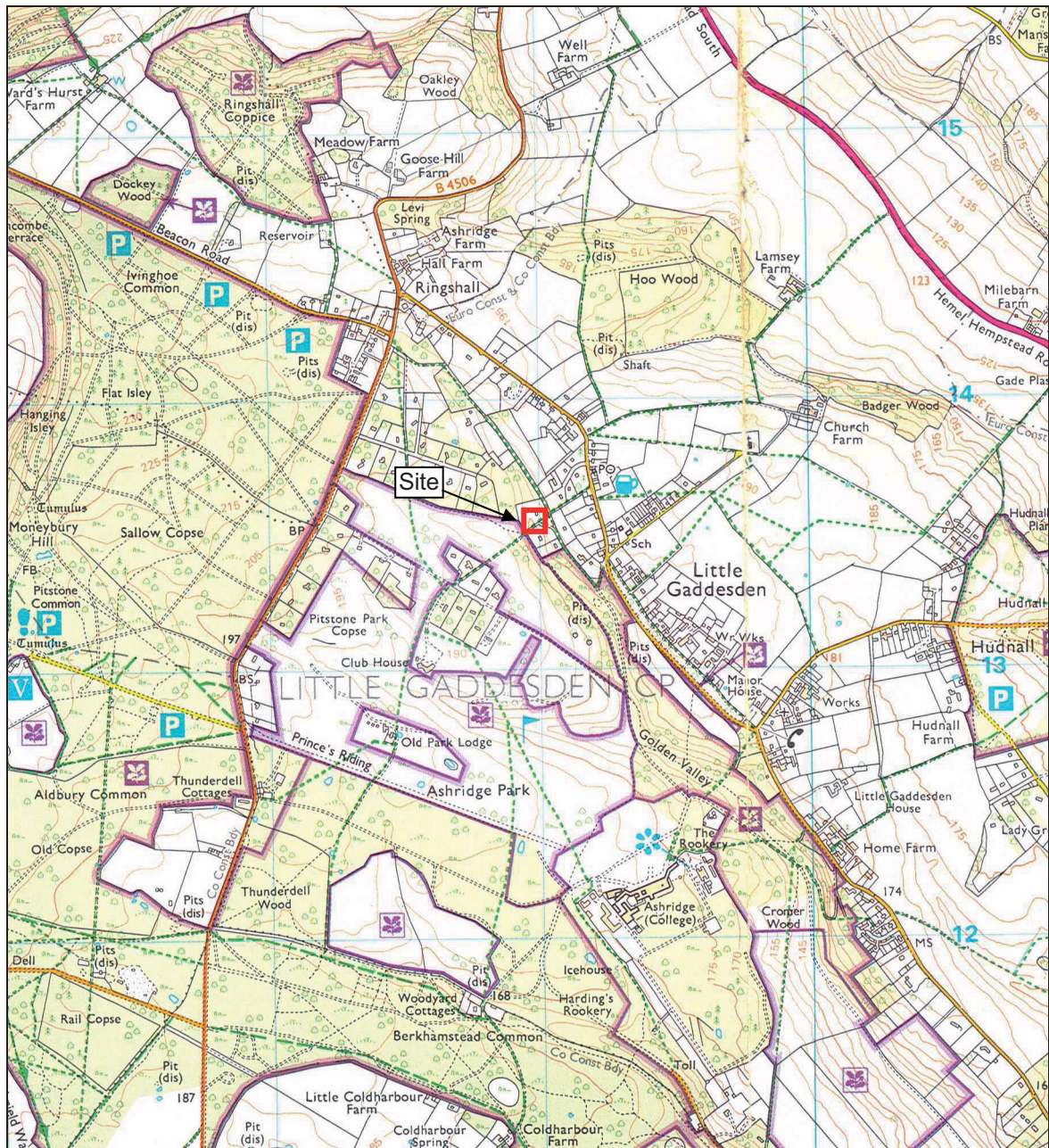


Figure 1: General location (Scale 1:25,000)

Summary

In January 2008 ASC Ltd undertook a watching brief during the construction of an extension to Witches Hollow, Ashridge, Hertfordshire. Much of the proposed development was located within the footprint of a recently demolished lavatory and garage. The stratigraphy of the footings trenches indicated that the extension would be situated over a natural hollow that has subsequently been filled with a mixture of re-deposited natural clay and chalk, and imported modern material. No archaeological cut features or deposits were encountered, and no unstratified artefacts were recovered from the spoil.

1 Introduction

1.1 Introduction

In January 2008 *Archaeological Services and Consultancy Ltd* (ASC) carried out a watching brief at Witches Hollow, Ashridge, Little Gaddesden, Hertfordshire (NGR SP 989 135: Figure 1). The project was commissioned by *Goldhill Associates*, and was carried out according to a standard *brief* agreed on behalf of the local planning authority (LPA), *Dacorum District Council*, by their archaeological advisor (AA), *Hertfordshire County Council Historic Environment Unit*, and a project design prepared by ASC (Barclay & Fell, 2007). The relevant planning application reference is 4/02372/07/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 garage, dressing room, glazed link building with bedroom and en suite above (Figure 3).

1.3 Location

The site is located in Ashridge, in the administrative district of Dacorum, Hertfordshire (Figure 1). It is situated on the west side of Little Gaddesden, on the west side of Ringshall Drive and comprises a subrectangular area of land of c.0.9 ha centred on Ordnance Survey National Grid Reference SP 9899 1358 (Figure 2).

1.4 Description

The site is located in dense, ancient woodland with access from Ringshall Drive to the southeast (Figure 2). The house is set within a garden mainly laid to lawn.

1.5 Geology & Topography

The natural soils of the area comprise the *Batcombe Association*, namely fine silty soils (Soil Survey 1983, 582d) over Clay with Flints (BGS 1946, Sheet 238). The underlying bedrock is Upper Chalk. The site is situated within a cleared, natural hollow on the northeast side of Golden Valley, which drains down the Chiltern dip slope. It lies at an elevation of c.175m OD.

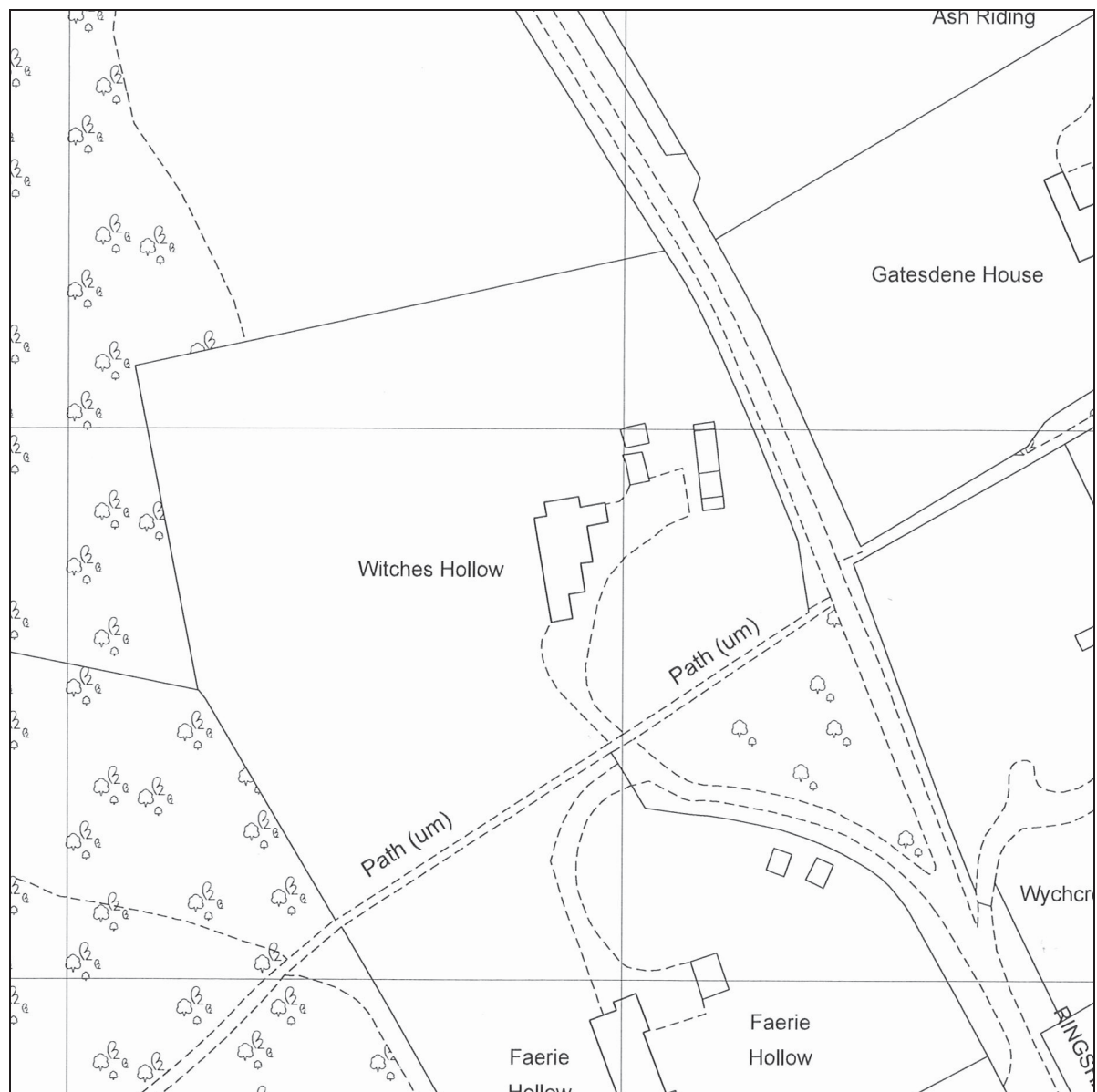


Figure 2: Site plan (Scale 1:1250)

2 Aims and Methods

2.1 Aims

As described in the standard brief, 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 standard brief, which required:

- A formal programme of observation and investigation conducted during any operations on site that may disturb or destroy archaeological deposits, resulting in the preparation of a report and ordered archive.

2.4 Constraints

There were no circumstances that resulted in any significant deviation from the proposed methods of the written scheme of investigation.

3 Archaeological and Historical Background

3.1 Introduction

The site is situated in an area of considerable archaeological and historical interest and this has been recognised by the local authority by the designation of the area as an *Area of Archaeological Significance* (number 28). Archaeological remains are not known within the development area but a number of sites, ranging from the prehistoric to the medieval periods, have been recorded in the surrounding area.

3.2 Prehistoric (before AD43)

There is little evidence for early prehistoric activity in the area but a number of round barrows and ring ditches (prehistoric burial mounds) have been recorded at the head of the Bulbourne Valley, at Ivinghoe. A hillfort, now known as *Ivinghoe Beacon* c.3km north of the site, was constructed during the Bronze Age and an important prehistoric track, referred to as the *Icknield Way* passes along the line of the scarp of the Chiltern hills, c. 2km west of the site. A number of settlements dating to the Iron Age have been recorded at Pea Lane, Crawleys Lane and Bottom House Lane, on the southwest side of the Bulbourne Valley (McDonald 1995), and at Pitstone and Ivinghoe (Bryant 1995).

3.3 Roman (AD43-c.450)

During the Roman period, the area was away from the major communication routes and urban centres but extensive areas of earthworks have been identified in Ashridge Park, probably representing field systems, settlements, and possibly a religious site. Communications in the area were dominated by a major Roman road, now known as *Akeman Street*, which followed the valley of the river Bulbourne and linked *Verulamium* (St Albans) with *Corinium* (Cirencester).

3.4 Saxon (c.450-1066)

Little is known of the study area in the centuries following the Roman period. The village of Gaddesden had developed by the early 9th century, as it appears in a Saxon charter of AD812. The area now occupied by Ashridge House and part of the Ashridge Estate lies within Little Gaddesden parish, which was formerly a part of the Saxon *Hundred of Dacorum*.

3.5 Medieval and later (1066-1500)

The manor of Ashridge was one of the principal landholdings in Little Gaddesden. It is first mentioned in 1285, when the Earl of Cornwall granted the manor to the college of Ashridge (Page 1914, 219). The manor remained in the possession of the college until the Dissolution in 1538/39, after which it became annexed to the manor of Little Gaddesden. Ashridge Park was enclosed sometime before 1285 (*ibid.*). In 1283 Edmund, Earl of Cornwall and a nephew of Henry III founded a monastery at Ashridge, in honour of a holy relic - a phial of the 'Precious Blood of Christ' - he had acquired whilst campaigning in Germany.

3.6 Post-medieval and modern (after 1500)

Little is known of the site prior to the construction of the existing building, but it is likely to have comprised open ground. The existing building on the site may once have been an inn and was formerly divided into two separate residences, accommodating employees of the Ashridge Estate. It is currently configured as a single detached house (Figure 3).

4 Results

- 4.1 The monitoring visit was undertaken on January 8th 2008. Strip footings for the proposed garage, dressing room and glazed link building extension were excavated to a maximum depth of 1.4m (Figure 3). The stratigraphy of the trenches consisted of 0.3m very dark brown peaty clay topsoil, overlying up to 1.1m of modern made ground (Plate 1). The natural geology consisted of 0.3m of yellowy-orange clay with frequent chalk inclusions <40mm in diameter, overlying clean chalk.
- 4.2 The site's topography and the stratigraphy of the trenches, suggested that the existing building has been constructed on a platform of re-deposited natural clay and chalk (Plates 2-4). The ground to the east of the house, where the former garage was located, has been levelled with a mixture of re-deposited natural geology and imported material containing fragments of brick, ceramic waste pipe and modern pottery.
- 4.3 The over-burden was only breeched to any significant depth in the eastern trench, cutting the natural chalk by 0.4-0.5m, into the slope of the hillside (Figure 4; Plate 5). A small patch of chalk was noted beneath the footings of the existing building, and some natural clay was observed at the northern end of the eastern trench excavated for the glazed link building (Figure 4).
- 4.4 The walls and footings for the link building were to be tied-in to those of the existing former lavatory at the eastern side of the house. However, the poor condition of the structure made it necessary for it to be demolished. The existing footings were removed and the ground reduced within the footprint of the building.
- 4.5 During this process a bricked-up aperture was exposed that formerly opened into the cellar below the adjacent room to the west (Plate 6). This probably represents a coal chute.
- 4.6 No archaeological cut features or deposits were observed in the course of the present project, and no unstratified artefacts were recovered from the spoil.

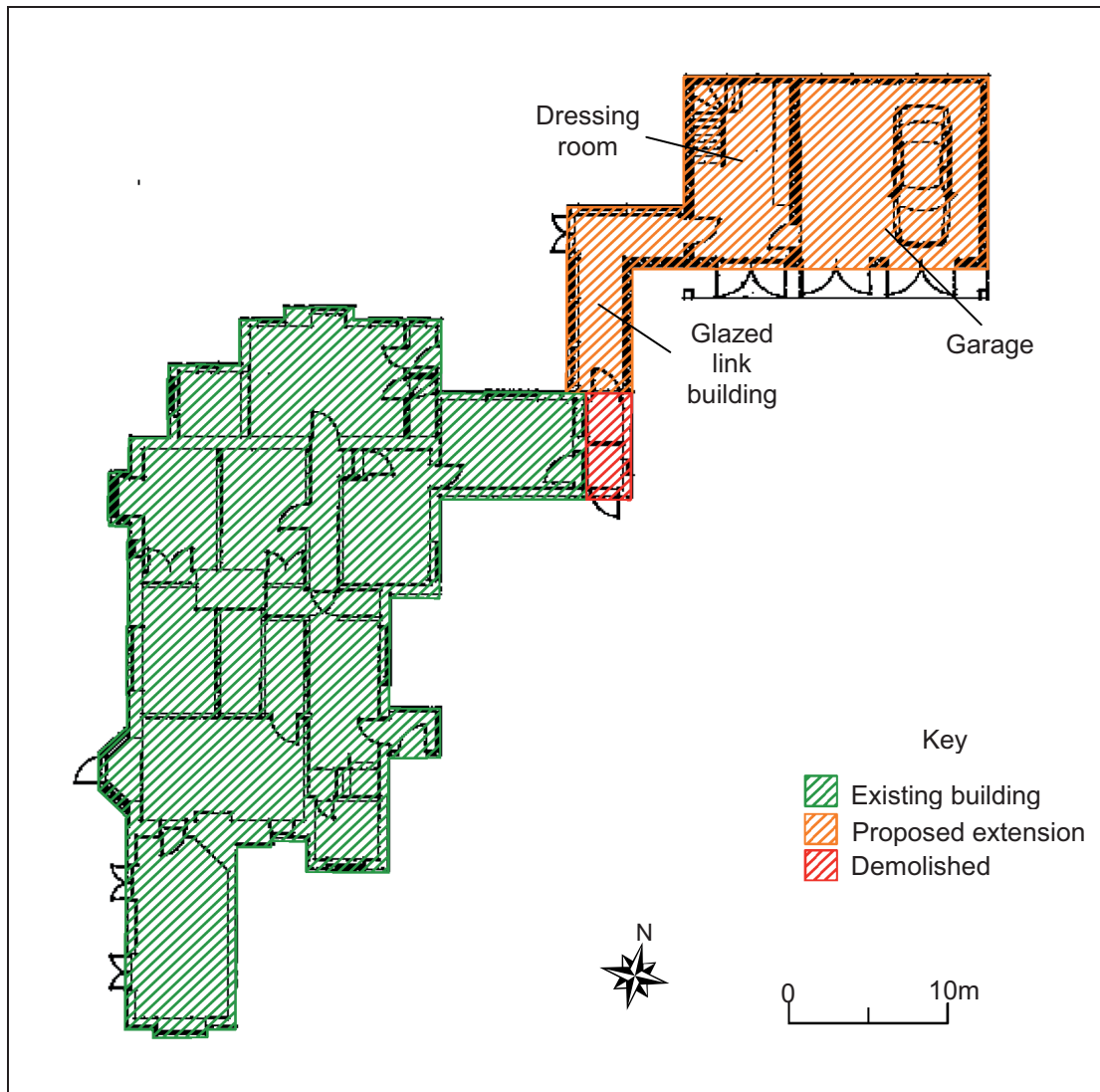


Figure 3: Plan of the proposed development (*Scale 1:500*)

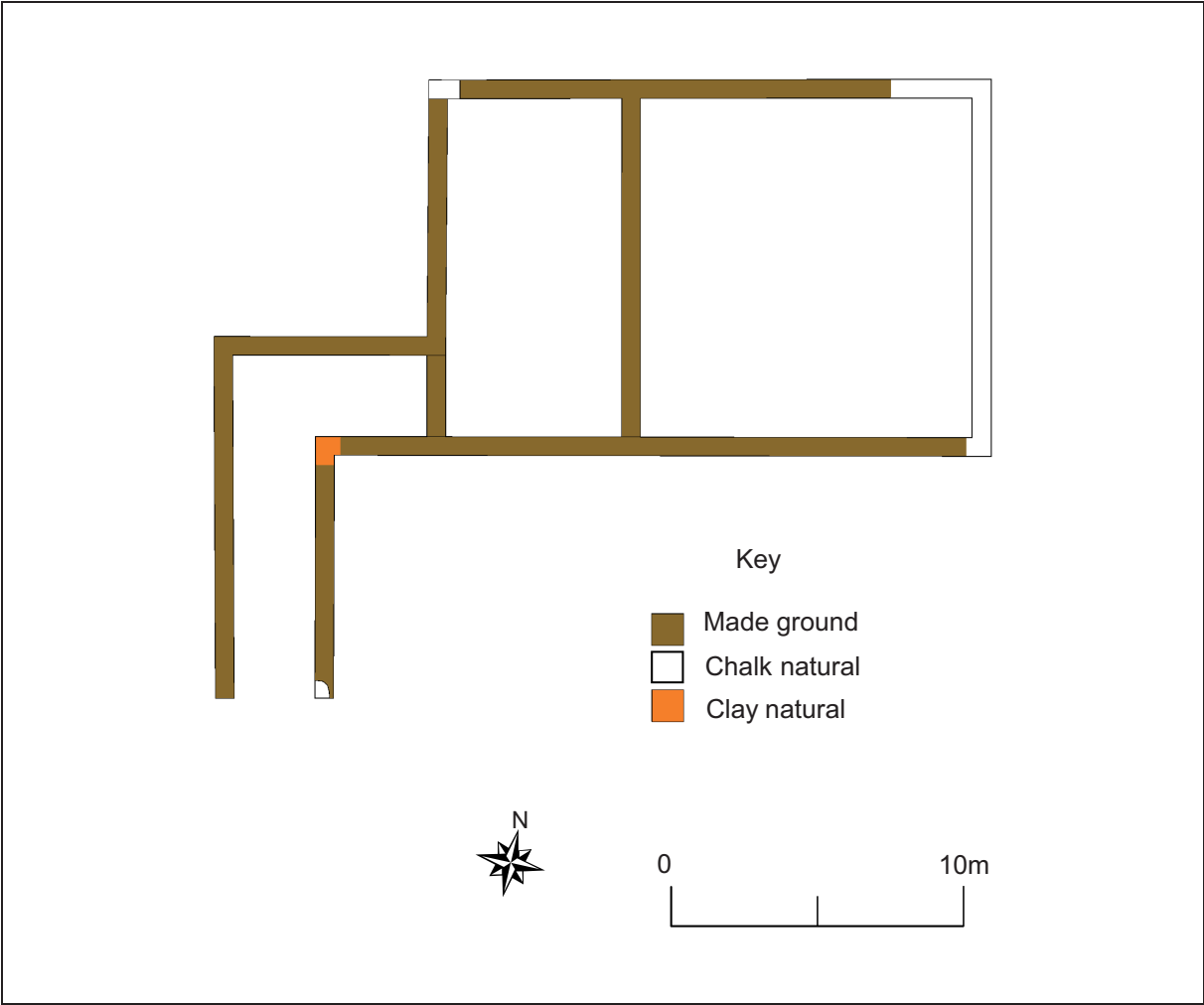


Figure 4: Geology at the base of footing trenches (Scale 1:250)

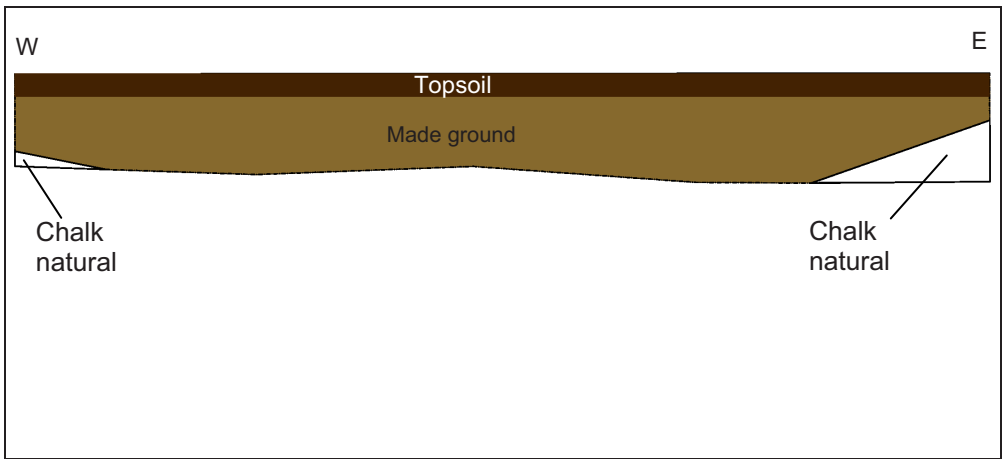


Figure 5: Stratigraphy of northern footing trench (Scale 1:100)



Plate 1: Modern made-up ground over natural clay. (*Scale = 1m*)



Plate 2: Witches Hollow, facing east



Plate 3: Witches Hollow, facing northeast



Plate 4: House footings on chalk natural. (*Scale = 1m*)



Plate 5: Section through the east footing trench. (*Scale = 1m*)



Plate 6: Coal chute. (*Scale = 1m*)

5 Conclusions

- 5.1 The stratigraphy of the northern footing trench suggests that the extension lies over the deepest part of a natural hollow that has subsequently been filled with re-deposited natural clay and chalk, and modern building debris. The natural topography was visible at the both ends of the trench, but the overlying made ground was not cut to a sufficient depth to expose the full profile of the hollow. The nature of the inclusions within the made ground suggest that the material may have been deposited in the mid 20th century, probably when the original garage was constructed.
- 5.2 The overburden was only breached in a relatively small part of the development, and any archaeological remains which may be present on the site, and could not be observed during the watching brief, have been left *in situ*.
- 5.3 No archaeological features or artefacts were observed during the watching brief and it is unlikely that the development has had a significant impact on buried archaeological remains.

6 Acknowledgements

The writer is grateful to Mr Michael Gold of *Goldhill Associates* for commissioning the project and to Mrs Kate Batt of the *Historic Environment Unit* of *Hertfordshire County Council* for acting as curatorial monitor.

The project was managed on for *ASC Ltd* by David Fell MA MIFA. The fieldwork was undertaken by David Kaye BA PIFA who also compiled the report. The report was edited by David Fell.

7 Archive

7.1 The project archive will comprise:

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

7.2 The archive will be deposited with the *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. & Fell, D. 2007 *Project Design for Archaeological Watching Brief on behalf of Goldhill Associates: Witches Hollow, Ashridge, Hertfordshire*, ASC Ltd Report 1026/AWH/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

- Bryant S.1995 'The Late Bronze Age of the North Chilterns' in Holgate R (ed.) *Chiltern Archaeology, Recent Work. A Handbook for the Next Decade*. 17-27.
- McDonald T.1995 'The A41 Project, Hertfordshire Archaeological Trust' in Holgate R (ed) 1995, 120-123.
- Morris M. & A.Wainwright 1995 'Iron Age and Romano-British settlements and economy in the Upper Bulbourne Valley, Hertfordshire' in Holgate R (ed) 1995, 68-75.
- Page W. (ed.) 1914 *The Victoria History of the County of Hertfordshire*, 2
- Soil Survey 1983 *1:250,000 Soil Map of England and Wales, and accompanying legend* (Harpenden).

ARCHAEOLOGICAL FIELD MONITORING RECORD

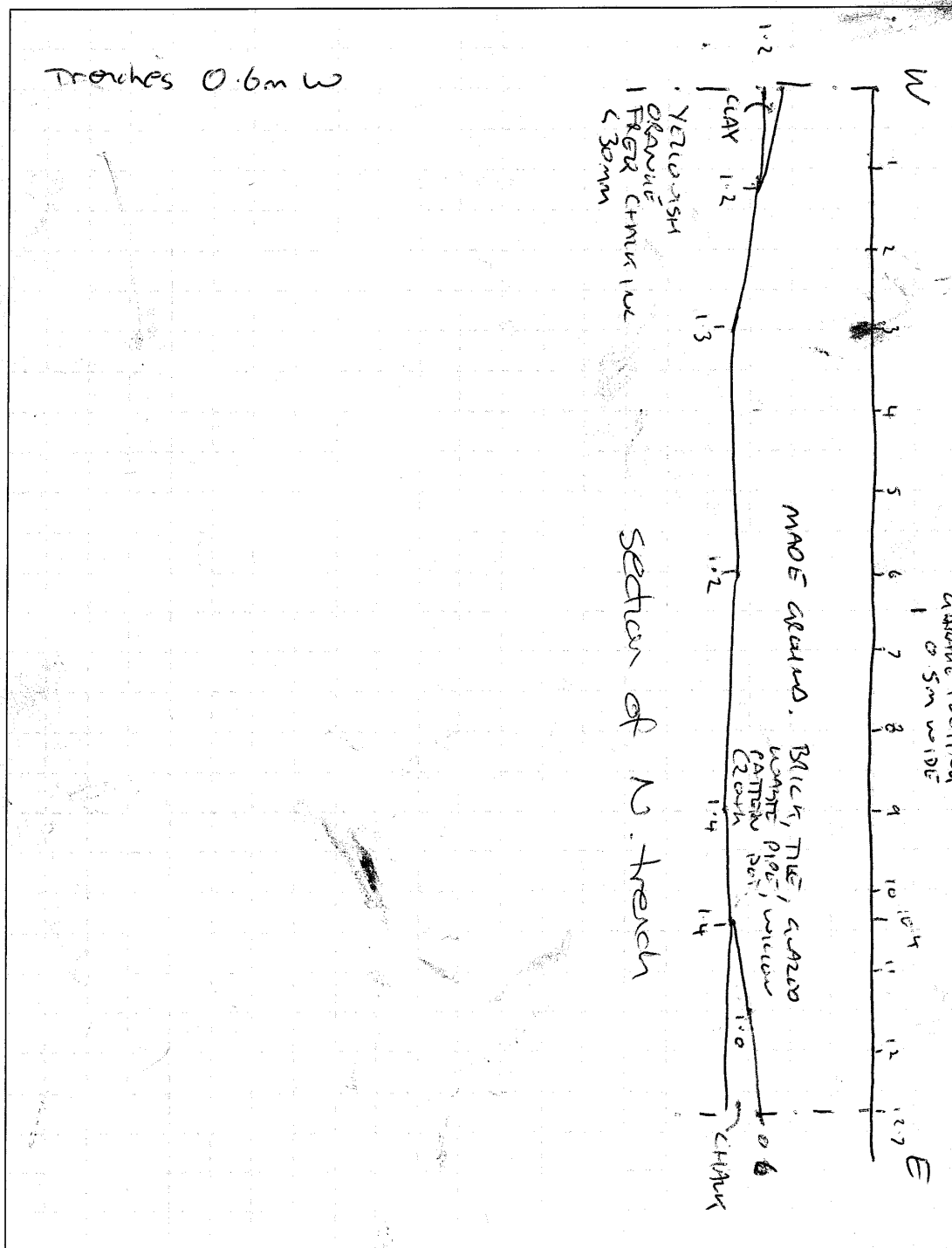
For sketch plan, use reverse

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SKETCH SHEET

Site Name: <u>Witches Hollow</u>	Site Code: <u>1017/AWH</u>	Orientation:
Context:		



RECORDING NOTES

Recorded by:	Date:	Digitised by:	Date: 8/1/08	Sheet number: 2 of 2
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Appendix 2: List of Photographs

SITE NAME: Witches Hollow, Ashridge, Hertfordshire			SITE NO/CODE: 1026/AWH
Shot	B&W	Digital	Subject
1		√	Witches Hollow, facing east
2		√	Witches Hollow, facing northeast
3		√	General view, facing north
4		√	Trench stratigraphy, facing north
5		√	Trench stratigraphy, facing east
6		√	House footings, facing southwest
7		√	Coal chute, facing west
8		√	Coal chute, facing west
9		√	Coal chute, facing west
10	√		Trench stratigraphy, facing north
11	√		Trench stratigraphy, facing north
12	√		Trench stratigraphy, facing east
13	√		Trench stratigraphy, facing east
14	√		House footings, facing southwest
15	√		House footings, facing southwest
16	√		Coal chute, facing west
17	√		Coal chute, facing west

Appendix 3: ASC OASIS Form

PROJECT DETAILS			
Project Name:	Witches Hollow, Ashridge, Hertfordshire		
Short Description:	In January 2008 ASC undertook a watching brief on the construction of an extension to Witches Hollow, Ashridge, Hertfordshire. The stratigraphy of the footings trenches indicated that the extension would be situated over a natural hollow that has been levelled with a mixture of re-deposited natural clay and chalk, and imported modern material. No archaeological features or deposits were encountered, and no artefacts were recovered.		
Project Type: (indicate all that apply)	Watching Brief		
Site status: (eg. none, SAM, Listed)	Grade II listed building in AAS	Previous work: (eg. SMR refs)	None
Current land use:	Garage and garden	Future work: (yes / no / unknown)	Unknown
Monument type:	None	Monument period:	N/A
Significant finds:	None		
PROJECT LOCATION			
County:	Hertfordshire	OS reference: (8 figs min)	SP 989 135
District:	Dacorum	Parish:	Little Gaddesden
Site address: (with postcode if known)	Witches Hollow, Ringshall Drive, Ashridge, Hertfordshire		
Study area: (sq. m. or ha)	c.318m ²	Height OD: (metres)	c.175m OD
PROJECT CREATORS			
Organisation:	Archaeological Services & Consultancy Ltd		
Project brief originator:	Hertfordshire County Council	Project design originator:	Caroline Barclay
Project Manager:	David Fell	Director/Supervisor:	David Kaye
Sponsor / funding body:	Goldhill Associates		
PROJECT DATE			
Start date:	8.1.08	End date:	8.1.08
PROJECT ARCHIVES			
	Location (Accession no.)	Content (eg. pottery, animal bone, files/sheets)	
Physical:	None	N/A	
Paper:	Dacorum Heritage Trust	1 box	
Digital:	Dacorum Heritage Trust	1 CD	
BIBLIOGRAPHY (Journal/monograph, published or forthcoming, or unpublished client report)			
Title:	Archaeological Watching Brief: Witches Hollow, Ashridge, Hertfordshire		
Serial title & volume:	ASC Client Report 1026/AWH		
Author(s):	D Kaye BA PIFA		
Page nos	21	Date:	16.1.08

Appendix 4: SMR Summary Sheet

Site name and address: Witches Hollow Ringwood Drive Ashridge Hertfordshire		
County: Hertfordshire		District: Dacorum
Village/Town: Little Gaddesden		Parish: Little Gaddesden
Planning application reference: 4/02372/07/FHA		
Client name, address, & tel. no: Goldhill Associates Balcarly Shootersway Berkhamsted Hertfordshire HP4 3NN		
Nature of application: Construction of domestic extension		
Present land use: Garage and gardens		
Size of application area: c.318m ²		Size of area investigated: c.63.5m ²
NGR (to 8 figures): SP 989 135		Site code: 1026/AWH
Site director/Organization: David Fell / ASC Ltd		
Type of work: Watching Brief		
Date of work:	Start: 8.1.08	Finish: 8.1.08
Curating museum: Dacorum Heritage Trust		
Related SMR nos: None		Periods represented: Modern
Relevant previous summaries/reports: None		
<p>Summary of fieldwork results:</p> <p>In January 2008 ASC Ltd undertook a watching brief during the construction of an extension to Witches Hollow, Ashridge, Hertfordshire. Much of the proposed development was located within the footprint of a recently demolished lavatory and garage. The stratigraphy of the footings trenches indicated that the proposed extension would be situated over a natural hollow that has subsequently been filled with a mixture of re-deposited natural clay and chalk, and imported modern material. No archaeological cut features or deposits were encountered, and no unstratified artefacts were recovered from the spoil.</p>		
Author: David Kaye PIFA		Date: 29.1.08