

Archaeological Services & Consultancy Ltd

ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION: JAMES COURT BATH ROAD, READING BERKSHIRE

NGR: SU 6977 7250

on behalf of Crest Nicholson (South) Ltd



Gareth Shane BSc & David Fell BA MA MIFA with contributions from P Allen & C P Green

May 2011

ASC: 1350/RJC/2



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Site Data

ASC project code:	1350		ASC project no:	RJC			
OASIS ref:	archaeol2-97922		Event/Accession no:	REDMG:2011.622			
County:		Berkshire					
Village/Town:		Reading					
Civil Parish:		Reading					
NGR (to 8 figs):		SU 6977	7250				
Extent of site:		c.4200 sc	m m				
Present use:		Recently demolished care home and grounds					
Planning proposal:		Construction of apartment block					
Planning application	ref/date:	09/01183/FUL					
Local Planning Author	ority:	Reading Borough Council					
Date of fieldwork:		March 2011					
Client:		Crest Nicholson (South) Ltd					
		Crest House					
		Pyrcroft Road					
		Chertsey					
		Surrey					
		KT16 9GN					
Contact name:		Mike Walker/ Kim Webster					

Internal Quality Check

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Revisions:		Date:	
Edited/Checked By:		Date:	

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CONTENTS

Su	ımmary	4
1.	Introduction	4
2.	Aims & Methods	7
3.	Archaeological & Historical Background	8
4.	Results.	9
5.	Conclusions	. 15
6.	Acknowledgements	. 16
7.	Archive	. 16
8.	References	. 17
Aı	ppendices:	
1.	Trench Summary Tables	.18
2.	List of Photographs	.20
3.	ASC OASIS Form	.21
Fi	gures:	
1.	General location	3
2.	Site plan	5
3.	Plan of the proposed development	6
4.	Trench Location plan	.10
5.	Sedimentary log of the west side of the geo-archaeological test-pit	.14
Pla	ates:	
Ca	over: General view of the development site	
1.	General view of the west end of Trench 1	9
2.	Profile of the west end of Trench 1	.11
3.	General view of Trench 2 looking south	.11
4.	General view of Trench 3 looking southwest	.12
5.	General view of the geo-archaeological test pit	.14

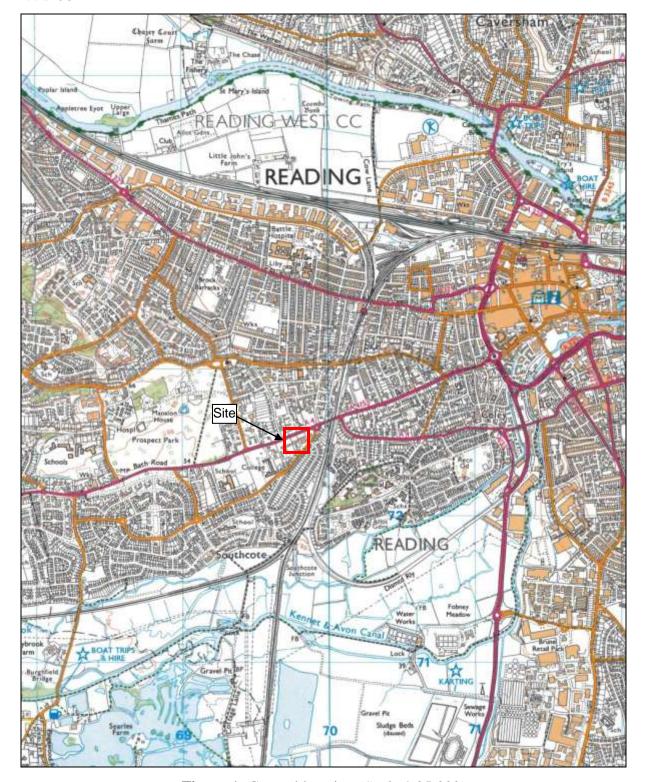


Figure 1: General location (Scale 1:25,000)

Summary

In March 2011 an archaeological evaluation was undertaken at James Court, Reading in order to inform proposals for the redevelopment of the site. Three trial trenches and one geo-archaeological test-pit were excavated. No significant archaeological features or artefacts were present in the trial trenches and the construction of the former James Court building is likely to have extensively disturbed or destroyed any late prehistoric and later features which may have been present. The results of the geo-archaeological test-pit indicate that deposits of the Lynch Hill gravel series survive on the development site and offer the potential for recovery of artefacts of the earlier prehistoric periods.

1. Introduction

1.1 In March 2011 Archaeological Services and Consultancy Ltd (ASC) carried out an evaluation at James Court, Reading, Berkshire. The project was commissioned by Crest Nicholson (South) Ltd following discussions with the archaeological advisor (AA), Berkshire Archaeology, acting on behalf of the local planning authority (LPA), Reading Borough Council, and was carried out to a project design prepared by ASC (Fell, 2011).

1.2 Planning Background

This evaluation was required under the terms of *Planning Policy Statement 5* (PPS5), as a condition of planning permission for the development of the site. The relevant planning application reference is 09/01183/FUL.

1.3 Archaeological Services & Consultancy Ltd

ASC is an independent archaeological practice providing a full range of archaeological services including consultancy, field evaluation, mitigation and post-excavation studies, historic building recording and analysis. ASC is recognised as a *Registered Organisation* by the Institute for Archaeologists and is also accredited ISO 9001, in recognition of its high standards and working practices.

1.4 The Site

1.4.1 Location & Description

The development site is situated in Reading, Berkshire (Fig. 1). It lies to the southwest of the town centre, close to the junction of Bath Road and Southcote Lane and is centred on Ordnance Survey National Grid Reference SU 6977 7250 (Fig. 2).

The development site comprises a rectangular plot of land of c.4200 sq m. Previously occupied by the buildings and grounds of the former James Court care home, it is currently a demolition site. Access is from the south, off Southcote Lane. The land is flat and lies at an elevation of c.57m OD.

1.4.2 Geology & Topography

The assessment site is within an urban area and the natural soil profile has been severely disturbed. The underlying geology comprises Lynch Hill Fourth Terrace Gravels (BGS, Sheet 268).

1.4.3 Proposed Development

The development proposal comprises the demolition of the existing buildings and the construction of an apartment block. The new building is to occupy approximately the same footprint as the previous building (Fig. 3).

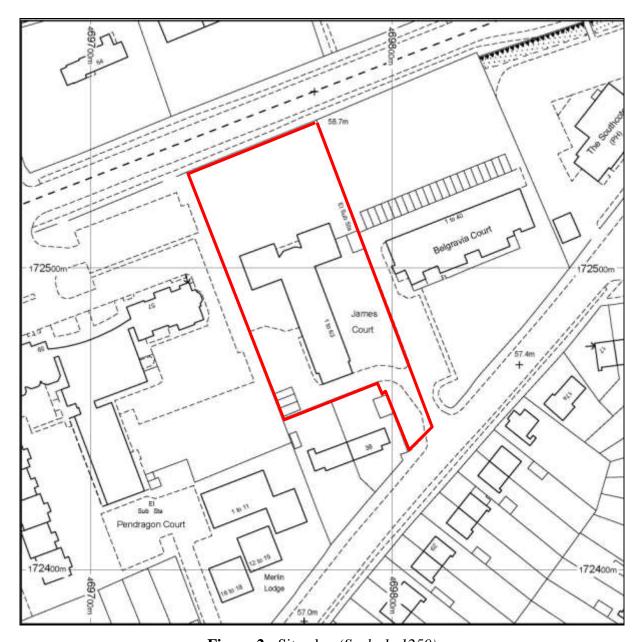
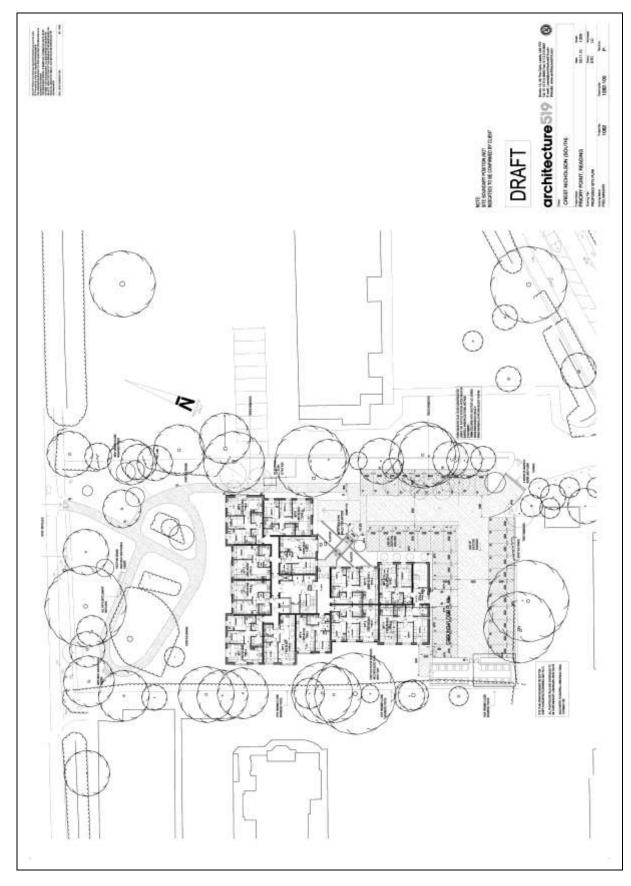


Figure 2: Site plan (*Scale 1: 1250*)



2. Aims & Methods

2.1 *Aims*

As described in the project design (Section 6.1), the aims of the evaluation were:

- To determine or confirm the general nature of any remains present
- To determine or confirm the approximate date or date range of any remains, by means of artefactual or other evidence
- To determine or confirm the approximate extent of any remains
- To determine the condition and state of preservation of any remains
- To determine the degree of complexity of the horizontal and/or vertical stratigraphy present
- To determine or confirm the likely range, quality and quantity of any artefactual evidence present.
- To determine the potential of the site to provide palaeoenvironmental and/or economic evidence and the forms in which such evidence may be present.
- Particular attention was paid to the potential for the discovery of early prehistoric artefacts and ecofacts associated with the Lynch Hill gravel.

2.2 Standards

The work conformed to the project design, to the relevant sections of the Institute for Archaeologists' *Code of Conduct* (IFA 2000) and *Standard & Guidance Notes* (IFA 2001) and *Code of Conduct* (IFA 2000a), to Berkshire Archaeology's *General Standards for Fieldwork Projects* to English Heritage guidelines (EH 1991, EH 2006), and to the relevant sections of ASC's own *Operations Manual*.

2.3 *Methods*

The work was carried out according to the project design (Section 6.3), which required:

- Excavation of a geoarchaeological test-pit through the entire depth of the gravel deposits. The test pit was situated to the north of the former building in order to expose an undisturbed sequence of gravel deposits
- A geoarchaeologist analysed a section of the test-pit to assess the potential for the survival of in-situ Palaeolithic artefacts and deposits
- Three trial trenches were excavated across the footprint of the proposed building and access route.
- All machine work was supervised by an archaeologist/geoarchaeologist.
- Spoil heaps were scanned for artefacts

2.4 Constraints

2.4.1 Due to the presence of a number of large soil heaps it was necessary to adjust the locations of the trenches. Minor adjustments were made to the locations of Trenches 1 and 2 and Trench 3 was relocated to the west and sampled both the footprint of the proposed building and part of the car park to the south (Fig. 4).

3. Archaeological and Historical Background

- 3.1 An archaeological impact assessment was prepared as part of the project design (Fell 2010, section 2). The following paragraphs provide a summary of the archaeological and historical background to the development site, taken from the project design.
- 3.2 The research undertaken indicated that no archaeological remains were known from the development site but that a variety of remains are known in the surrounding area, notably Palaeolithic implements from the Lynch Hill gravels which were recorded during gravel extraction to the west of the development site.
- 3.3 There is currently no evidence for Roman activity on the development site but a number of artefacts of this period have been recorded in the surrounding area. The Saxon and medieval settlement at Reading was situated *c*.2km east of the development site and during these periods the area probably comprised open land, part of the open field landscape on the periphery of the medieval town.
- 3.4 The development site is situated immediately south of Bath Road, which is shown on historic mapping from the 18th century. The development site probably comprised open land until the construction of a large detached house during the early 20th century. This building was probably demolished during the 1960s and replaced by the James Court care home, which was itself demolished in early 2011.

4 Results

4.1 *Introduction*:

- 4.1.1 This section provides a summary of the results of the evaluation. Full descriptions, in tabulated form, are provided in Appendix 1.
- 4.1.2 Three trial trenches and a geo-archaeological test-pit were excavated (Fig. 4) using a mechanical excavator fitted with a 2.5m wide toothless bucket operating under continuous archaeological supervision. Following excavation each trench was cleaned sufficiently to determine if archaeological remains were present. Basic trench information was recorded on pro-forma sheets and a photographic record was made. The spoil heaps were scanned for the presence of artefacts.

4.2 Results

4.2.1 *Trench 1* (Plates 1 and 2)

Trench 1 was situated in the central part of the development site and tested the footprint of a proposed basement car park. The east part of the trench lay within the footprint of the former James Court building while the west half was situated within the former garden.

The natural strata in this area comprised yellowish orange gravel (101) and in the west end of the trench, away from the footprint of the building, it was recorded at a depth of c.0.35m. Elsewhere along the length of the trench, within the footprint of the former building, a greater depth of truncation had taken place and the truncated top of the gravel was reached at a depth of 0.75m.

The natural soil profile was severely truncated but subsoil which comprised mid yellowish brown sandy silt (100) was present at the west end of the trench at a depth of c.0.2. The upper part of the trench profile comprised modern building debris (102) derived from the former James Court building. A number of modern drainage runs and concrete pads were present along the length of the trench.



Plate 1: General view of the west end of Trench 1

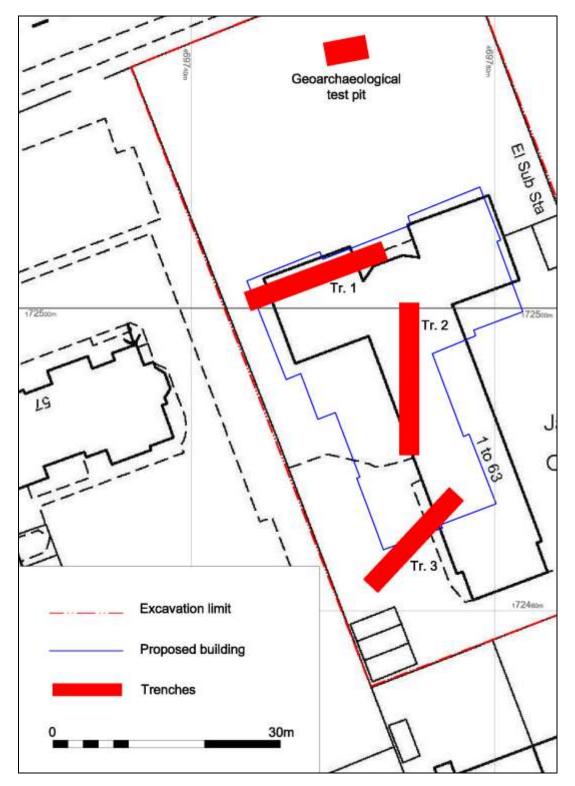


Figure 4: Trench location plan

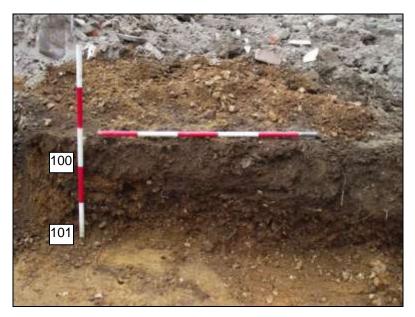


Plate 2: Profile of the west end of Trench 1

4.2.2 *Trench* 2 (Plate 3)

Trench 2 was situated in the central part of the development site and tested the footprint of the former James Court building. The material in the trench comprised a mixed deposit of mid brown silty clay and modern building debris (200). A sondage was excavated at the south end of trench in order to investigate the depth of this deposit. For health and safety reasons excavation ceased at a depth of 1.2m but the natural gravel had not been reached.

Trench 2 contained only modern debris which is not archaeologically significant.



Plate 3: General view of Trench 2 looking south

4.2.3 *Trench 3* (Plate 4)

Trench 3 was situated in the southern part of the development site. The east part of the trench was situated within the footprint of the former building and the trench tested the footprint of the former James Court building and former car park.

The natural gravel in Trench 3 comprised yellowish brown silt and gravel (301). It was only present in the west part of the trench, beyond the limit of the former building and was present at a depth of c.0.4m.

The east part of the trench lay within the footprint of the former James Court building and the natural gravel had been truncated. This part of the trench contained a mixed deposit of clay and modern building debris, similar to the modern material in Trench 2 (200). Excavation extended to a depth of c.0.4m but the natural gravel was not reached.

The upper part of the profile of the trench comprised clay and modern building debris (302), which extended across the entire length of the trench and merged with the underlying debris (300) at a depth of c.0.4m.



Plate 4: General view of Trench 3 looking southwest

4.2.4 *The Geo-Archaeological Test-Pit* (Figure 5) by P Allen & C P Green on behalf of Quaternary Scientific, University of Reading (QUEST)

Introduction

One geo-archaeological test-pit was put down at the site, sunk to $c.4.5 \mathrm{m}$ below ground surface (Fig. 4). The excavation was undertaken using a JCB. The sediments were inspected in a similar fashion for each bucket load, with occasional longer periods to check over the spoil heap more thoroughly. Inspection was for flakes, artefacts and, in the lower parts, vertebrate remains as these had been recorded in nearby pits historically. The west side of the trial pit was described using standard procedures for recording unconsolidated sediment and peat, noting the physical properties (colour), composition (gravel, sand, clay, silt and organic matter), peat humification and inclusions (e.g. artefacts) (Fig. 5).

Results and Interpretation

The following sediment sequence was observed in the excavation (Fig. 5)

Spoil

Buried modern soil

Silty clay with occasional pebbles ?Colluvium

Gravel, predominantly Lynch Hill Gravel Pleistocene

Silty sand Lambeth Group Tertiary

Particular attention was paid to the colluvium and the Lynch Hill Gravel as detailed below.

Colluvium (c. 0.60 to 1.40m below ground surface)

The amount of pebble sized material in the colluvium was limited, but could have included artefacts. Inspection of each bucket load failed to find any flakes or artefacts. The deposit was judged to be colluvial on the low gravel content and high amount of silt and clay, delivered to the site from the nearby slopes. Alluvial deposits usually contain a reasonably high content of medium as it is essentially river-borne. This was not the case here.

The Lynch Hill Gravel (c. 1.40 to 3.45m below ground surface)

The Lynch Hill Gravel was not a typical of a fluvial gravel in that the sand matrix contained more silt and clay than would be expected. This element was almost certainly derived from the clays, silts and sands of the Lambeth Group, either reworked very locally as the river passed over it or it may have been of colluvial origin moving downslope into the river. No flakes, artefacts or vertebrate remains were recorded.

The Lambeth Group comprised a fine sand with a mixture of clay.

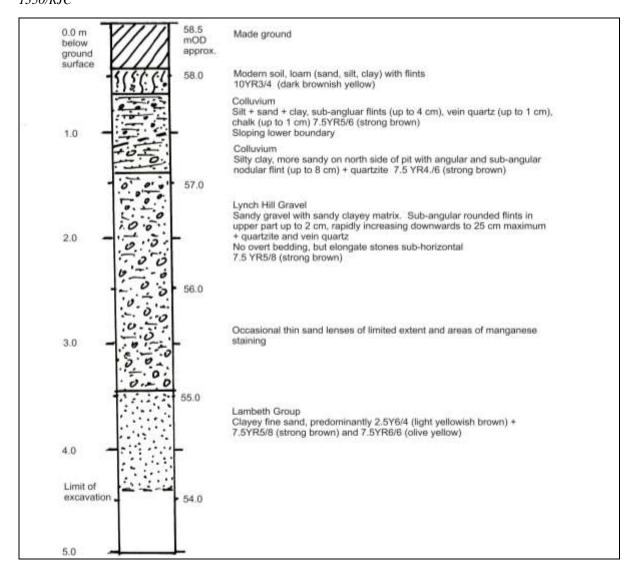


Figure 5: Sedimentary log of the west side of the geo-archaeological test-pit

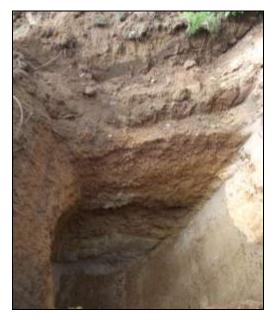


Plate 5: General view of the geo-archaeological test pit

5. Conclusions

- 5.1 Three trial trenches were excavated across the development site, targeting the footprint of the proposed building. Excavation ceased in the trial trenches when the natural gravel strata was reached and no significant archaeological features or artefacts were present in the trenches in the material overlying the natural gravel.
- 5.2 The underlying natural deposits were sampled in the geo-archaeological test-pit. There is a reasonable possibility that further monitoring will produce lithics or, in the lowest gravels, maybe vertebrate material. However, as the colluvium and Lynch Hill Gravels are mediums of transport, had any artefacts or flakes been found, they would not have been in prime context, but derived. Derived artefacts/fauna would still add to the evidence from the Lynch Hill Gravel of the Middle Thames, although a small quantity of derived materials would be unlikely to fundamentally enhance our understanding.
- 5.3 There is of course a possibility within Pleistocene fluvial sequences, for *in situ* or only minimally disturbed material within fine-grained units within the gravels. Regular (relative to the rate of progress) monitoring of the development is therefore recommended. This will include further logging of sections/trenches to see if fine-grained sediments were occurring within the gravels, combined with limited sieving/checking of samples/soil heaps. Intensive sieving of the gravel deposits is not recommended given the probable derived nature of any artefacts that might occur, and the time/cost implications of such work.
- 5.4 The development site has been extensively truncated, probably during the construction of the detached house and former James Court building during 20th century (section 3.4). Any archaeological features of the late Prehistoric and later periods which may have been present, are likely to have been destroyed or extensively disturbed during these works.
- 5.5 The natural soil profile survived only in areas outside the footprint of the former building, at the west end of Trench 1 and the south end of Trench 3. Trench 2 within the footprint of the former building was sampled to a maximum depth of 1.2m but the underlying gravel was not reached indicating that the area within the former building has been extensively truncated.
- 5.6 Significant archaeological features of the late prehistoric and later periods were not observed in the trial trenches. While the existence of individual isolated features of these periods away from the trenches cannot be specifically excluded, it is unlikely that large numbers of such features or artefacts were present on the development site.
- 5.7 The results of the excavation of the geo-archaeological test-pit indicated that there is potential for the survival of material from the earlier prehistoric periods in the underlying natural strata.

5.8 *Confidence Rating*

The work was undertaken in fine weather conditions and full co-operation was received from the client and contractor. Accordingly, a high confidence rating is attached to the results of the evaluation.

6. Acknowledgements

The writer is grateful to Mike Walker for commissioning the evaluation on behalf of *Crest Nicholson (South) Ltd.* The assistance of Steve Binding and Kim Webster is also gratefully acknowledged. The project was monitored by Mary Neale BA MA MIFA (formerly O'Donoghue) of *Berkshire Archaeology* on behalf of the local planning authority.

The project was managed for *ASC Ltd* by David Fell BA MA MIFA. Fieldwork was led by Martin Cuthbert BA PIFA assisted by Gareth Shane BSc. Geo-archaeological advice was provided by the staff of QUEST, notably Rob Batchelor PhD, Bob Horsfield PhD and P Allen, who also undertook the excavation of the test-pit. The report was prepared by Gareth Shane and David Fell 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 records
 - 5. Site record drawings
 - 6. List of photographs
 - 7. B/W prints & negatives
 - 8. Original specialist reports and supporting information
 - 9. CDROM with copies of all digital files.
- 7.2 The archive will be deposited with *Reading Museum*.

8. References

Standards & Specifications

- EH 1991 *The Management of Archaeological Projects, 2nd edition.* English Heritage (London).
- EH 2002 Environmental Archaeology: A Guide to the Theory and Practice of Methods, from Sampling and Recovery to Post-Excavation. English Heritage (London).
- EH 2006 Management of Research Projects in the Historic Environment. English Heritage (London).
- Fell D. 2010 Project Design for Archaeological Evaluation on behalf of Crest Nicholson South. Archaeological services and Consultancy Ltd document no. 1350/RJC/1
- IFA 2000a Institute for Archaeologists' Code of Conduct.
- IFA 2000b Institute for Archaeologists' Code of Approved Practice for the Regulation of Contractual Arrangements in Field Archaeology.
- IFA 2001 Institute for Archaeologists' Standard & Guidance documents (Desk-Based Assessments, Watching Briefs, Evaluations, Excavations, Investigation and Recording of Standing Buildings, Finds).

Secondary Sources

BGS British Geological Survey 1:50,000 Series, Solid & Drift Geology.

Appendix 1: Trench Summary Tables

			Tı	rench 1					
	40				Max Di	mensio	ns (m	1)	
		Harris Co.	Length	19.2	Width	2.	5	Depth	0.7
The same of the sa			Trench top	W				58.0m OD	
			Trench bas	se W				57.4m OD	
	对 的特色		Trench top	E				58.0m OD	
			Trench base E			57.3m OD			
10 10	The second secon			NGR Co-ordinates					
	PART IN	1000	SW SU 6972 7250			NE SU 6976 7252			
77	STREET, ST	the second	Orientation:			SW to NE			
Reason f	or Trench	ո։	Evaluation	of footprint	of basem	ent car	park		
Context	Context Type Description and Interpretation			Wid (max:		Thickness (max: mm)	Depth (BGL: mm)		
102 Layer Mixed modern building debris. Remains of modern building					2.5	m+	350	0	
100	Layer	Soft mid yellow brown the trench. Buried nat		2.5	m+	350	c.200		
101	Layer	Loose yellow orange	silt, sand and	gravel. Natu	ral strata	2.5	m+	250+	350

	Trench 2								
A COLUMN					Max Di	imensions (m	1)		
		The same	Length	20m	Width	2.5m	Depth	400mm	
			Trench top	N	1		58.0m OD		
THE STATE OF	对中国			e N			57.6m OD		
7		A PARTY	Trench top S			58.0m OD			
	200 AS		Trench base S			57.6m OD			
7.74			NGR Co-ordinates						
		Committee of the Commit	N SU 6977 7250			S SU 6977 7245			
2000		The state of the s	Orientation:			N to S			
Reason fo	r Trench	n:	Evaluation of footprint of new building						
Context Type Description and Inte			erpretation		Width (max: mm)	Thickness (max: mm)	Depth (BGL: mm)		
200	Layer	Mixed mid brown silt	ty clay with modern building debris.			2.5m+	1.2m+	0	
		Sump excavated at	south end. Modern building debris er James Court building						

T	re	n	cl	1	3



Max Dimensions (m)							
Length	16.5	Width	2.	5	Depth	0.5	
Trench top NE			58.0m OD				
Trench bas	e NE		57.5m OD				
Trench top	SW		58.0m OD				
Trench bas	e SW		57.5m OD				
		NGR (Co-ord	inates			
SW	SU 6976 72	241	NE SU 6978 7244				
Orientation	SW to NE						

Reason for Trench:

Evaluation of footprint of new building

Context	Туре	Description and Interpretation	Width (max: mm)	Thickness (max: mm)	Depth (BGL: mm)
302	Layer	Dark grey friable clay, with modern building debris. Modern building debris derived from the former James Court building.	2.5+	c.400	-
300	Layer	Dark grey friable clay, with modern building debris. Confined to the NE 1/3rd of trench. Modern building debris derived from the former James Court building	2.5+	100+	c. 400
301	Layer	Mid yellowish brown silt and gravel. Confined to the west part of the trench. Natural strata.	2.5+	Un-exc.	400

Appendix 2: List of Photographs

SITE NAME: James Court, Bath Road, Reading		h Road, F	Reading SITE NO/CODE: 1350 RJC Acc n.o:			
Shot	Film/Neg	B&W	Digital	Subject		
1	1/9	✓	✓	Trench 1 general shot from wsw end		
2	1/8	✓	✓	Trench 1 general shot from wsw end		
3	1/7	✓	✓	Trench 1 stratigraphy		
4	1/6	✓	✓	Trench 3 general shot from ne end		
5	1/5	√	√	Trench 2 general shot from n end		

Appendix 3 ASC OASIS Form

PROJECT DETAILS								
Project Name:	James Court, Bath Road, Reading	g	OASIS reference:	archaeol2-97922				
Short Description:	to inform proposals for the redevelopment of the site. Three trial trenches and one geo- archaeological test-pit were excavated. No significant archaeological features or artefacts were present in the trial trenches and the construction of the former James Court building is likely to have extensively disturbed or destroyed any late prehistoric and later features which may have been present. The results of the geo-archaeological test-pit indicate that deposits of the Lynch Hill gravel series survive on the development site and offer the potential for recovery of artefacts of the earlier prehistoric periods.							
Project Type:	Evaluation							
Previous work: (eg. SMR refs)	None		Site status: (eg. none, SAM, listed)	None				
Current land use:	Former care home		Future work: (yes/no/unknown)	Unknown				
Monument type:	N/a		Monument period:	N/a				
Significant finds: (artefact type & period)	None		I					
	PROJECT	LOCATIO	N					
County:	Berkshire	OS reference: (8 figs min) SU 6977 7250						
Site address: (+ postcode if known)	James Court, Bath Road, Reading	g						
Study area: (sq. m. / ha)	4200 Sq M	Height (DD: (metres)	c.57 m OD				
	PROJECT (CREATO	RS					
Organisation:	Archaeological Services & Consu	Itancy Ltd						
Project brief originator:	-	Project	design originator:	David Fell				
Project Manager:	David Fell	Director	/Supervisor:	Gareth Shane				
Sponsor / funding body:	Crest Nicholson South							
		CT DATE						
Start date:	March 2011	End dat	e:	March 2011				
	PROJECT							
	Location (Accession no.)		(eg. pottery, animal	bone, files/sheets)				
Physical:	Reading Museum	N/a						
Paper:	Project design, project report, clients plans etc							
Digital:	Digital: CD with all digital files							
	APHY (Journal/monograph, publish		•	' '				
Title:	Archaeological Evaluation: James	Court, B	ath Road, Reading, Be	erkshire				
Serial title & volume:	ASC: 1350/RJC/2							
Author(s):	Gareth Shane BSc and David Fel	I MA MIFA	\					
Page nos	21	Date:		23/05/11				