

Archaeological Services & Consultancy Ltd

**WATCHING BRIEF:
CUBITT GARAGE, COUNTY MUSEUM
CHURCH STREET,
AYLESBURY**

on behalf of Buckinghamshire County Museum



Nicholas A Crank BSc AIFA

March 2005

ASC: 655/ACM/02

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Site Data

<i>ASC site code:</i>	ACM	<i>Project no:</i>	655
<i>County:</i>	Buckinghamshire		
<i>District:</i>	Aylesbury Vale		
<i>Village/Town:</i>	Aylesbury		
<i>Parish:</i>	St Mary's (ancient parish)		
<i>NGR:</i>	SP 8178 1384		
<i>Present land use:</i>	Museum Courtyard		
<i>Planning proposal:</i>	Construction of Garage Display Unit		
<i>Extent of development:</i>	3m x 5.5m		
<i>Planning application ref/date:</i>	04/2455		
<i>Client:</i>	Buckinghamshire County Museum Church Street Aylesbury Buckinghamshire HP20 2QP		
<i>Contact name:</i>	Brett Thorn		
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Internal Quality Check

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<i>Edited/Checked By:</i>		<i>Date:</i>	18 th March 2005
<i>Revisions:</i>		<i>Date:</i>	
<i>Edited/Checked By:</i>		<i>Date:</i>	

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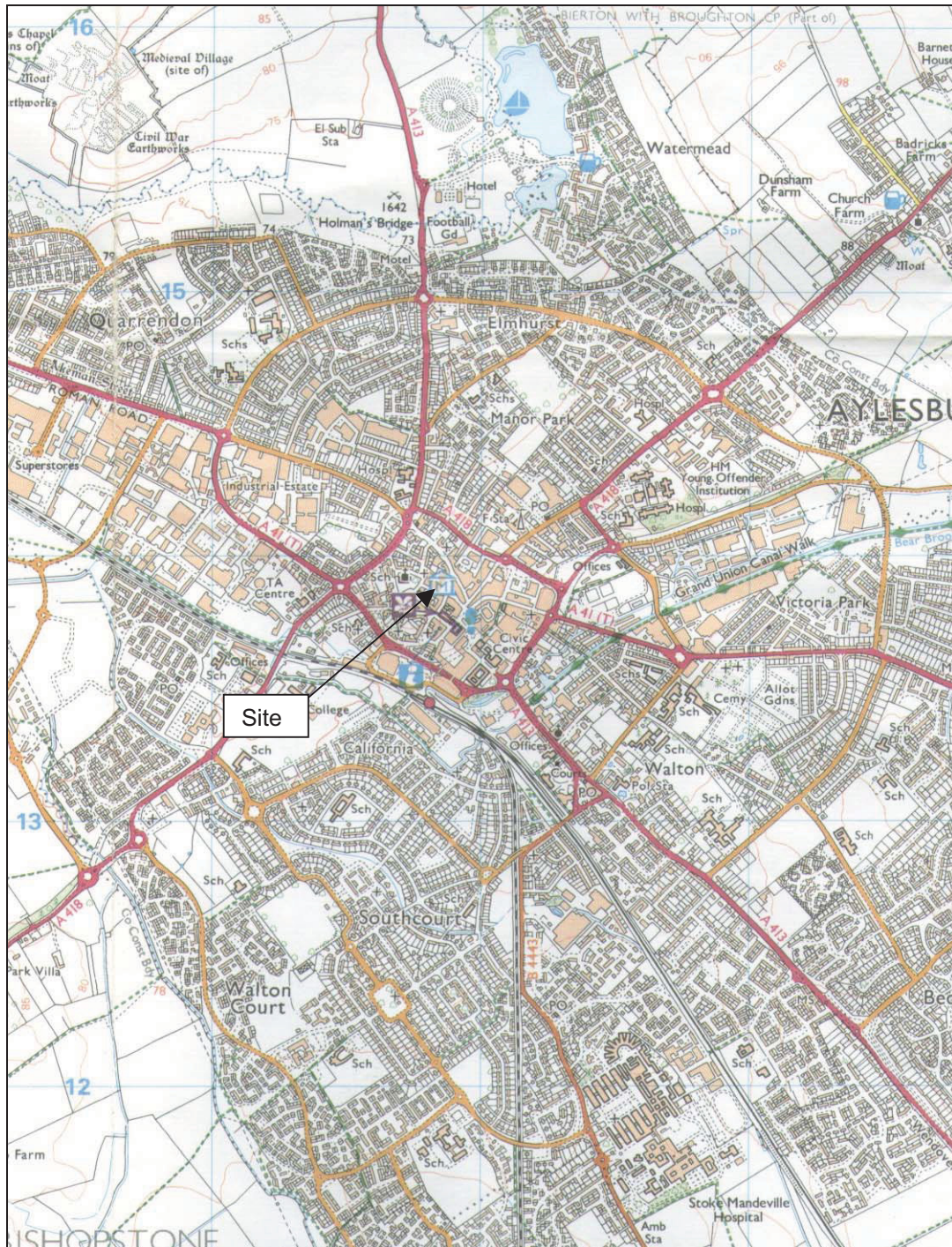


Figure 1: General location (scale 1:25,000)

Summary

During March 2005 Archaeological Services and Consultancy Ltd (ASC) carried out an Archaeological Watching Brief on a site at The County Museum, Church Street, Aylesbury, Buckinghamshire. The project was undertaken during the excavation of foundations for a display garage. No archaeological remains were observed during the works.

1 Introduction

1.1 In March 2005 *Archaeological Services and Consultancy Ltd* (ASC) carried out a watching brief at The County Museum, Aylesbury, Buckinghamshire (NGR SP 8178 1384: Fig. 1). The project was commissioned by Buckinghamshire County Museum, and was carried out according to a project design prepared by ASC (Rouse 2005) and a brief (Radford 2005) prepared on behalf of the local planning authority (LPA), Aylesbury Vale District Council, by their archaeological advisor (AA), Buckinghamshire County Archaeological Service. The relevant planning application reference is 04/2455.

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 display garage in the museum courtyard.

1.3 *Location, Description and Extent*

The site is located in the Museum courtyard within the medieval town of Aylesbury, at NGR SP 8178 1384 (see Figure 1). The Museum itself consists of three distinct but contiguous buildings that are now interconnecting: to the north, facing onto the churchyard, is the former Aylesbury Grammar School. Purchased by the Buckinghamshire Archaeological Society in 1907, it became the first permanent home for the Society's collections. In 1944, Ceely House, which already incorporated the next building to the south, was also purchased, and became fully integrated into the Museum after 1950. Up until that point the upper floor had been occupied by the vendor as the Society's tenant (Chenevix Trench & Fenley, 1991, 1).

1.4 *Geology, Topography, Elevation*

The underlying geology of the site is Ampthill Clay, Kimmeridge Clay and Corallain with superficial deposits of boulder clay and morainic drift (British Geological Survey Geoscience data index). This is described as having slowly permeable seasonally waterlogged clayey soils (Soil Survey, 1983). The site is at c.90m above ordnance datum.

1.5 *Services, Buildings, Access*

The site is situated in the Museum courtyard, and was partly covered by block paving and a planted border. A well is situated on the western side of the development area, and a manhole on the east. The main access to the site is from the east via the entrance off Church Street.

1.6 *Historical & Archaeological Background*

The earliest recorded settlement activity in Aylesbury is the middle Iron Age hillfort, although stray finds of Bronze Age date are also known (Birch, 1975, 14). The Museum site is within the hillfort, the ditch of which was recorded in nearby Kingsbury Square. Other Iron Age deposits have been identified nearby at the Prebendal and George Street. A substantial ditch was recorded at Bourbon Street, to the south east of the site, whilst residual Iron Age material has also been uncovered at the site of the King's Head, directly north of Bourbon Street (Bonner *et al*, 1996, 2).

Despite the close proximity of *Akeman Street*, there is relatively little evidence for Romano-British activity in the town. A 1st century AD Roman site is known to the west on Buckingham Street, and two Romano-British pits were noted during the redevelopment of the Hale Leys site, but other evidence relating to this period is from residual and stray finds from within the town (*ibid*).

The Iron Age hillfort was refortified in the early or middle Saxon period. Inhumations belonging to this period have been discovered at George Street, whilst other possible Saxon remains have been recorded at Pebble Lane and Temple Square. The George Street burials were dated to between the late eighth and early tenth century, and were attributed to a minster church. The cemetery was estimated to have contained up to 6,000 burials and to have covered an area of up to 2.5 ha (Allen and Dalwood, 1983, 50-53).

During previous excavations within the area of the Museum, 18 graves were identified, and attributed to the medieval period. A change of orientation was noted between the two phases of burial, suggesting that, despite the proximity of St Mary's church, the burials were in fact orientated to respect some other feature. There is inconclusive evidence that the axis of the late Saxon settlement ran along the line of Silver Street and Temple Street (Bonner *et al*, 1996, 2).

The Domesday Survey records Aylesbury as an important royal manor, the house of which is believed to have stood at the northeast end of nearby Kingsbury Square (Gibbs, 1971, 427). The town itself was centred on the present Market Square in the medieval period.

The museum itself consists of three buildings. The former Grammar School, to the west of the development site, originally consisted of two small buildings, or a single building of two bays, created by adding a brick-built bay to an earlier timber-framed structure. This building was in existence by the 16th century. The current building was constructed on the same site, and incorporated some of the earlier buildings within its superstructure (Chenevix Trench & Fenley, 1991, 1). Ceely House, the building to the southwest of the development site, originated as the Brother House of the Fraternity of the Virgin Mary, elements of fifteenth century building are incorporated within the present building. Dendrochronology has dated the main range of the building as having most likely been built soon after 1473. The third building was already incorporated into Ceely House by the time it was purchased by Buckinghamshire Archaeological Society in 1944 (*ibid*).



Figure 2: Site plan (scale 1:1250)

2 Aims & Methods

2.1 Aims

In line with the requirements of the *Brief* (Section 6), the aims of the watching brief were:

- To identify and record any significant archaeological remains revealed by the groundworks, paying particular attention to the potential for Iron Age, medieval and post medieval deposits, including inhumation burials.
- To relate the results to the existing body of data from previous investigations.

2.2 Methods

In line with the requirements of the *Brief* (Section 8), the methods adopted for this project were:

- To undertake a comprehensive watching brief, with adequate contingency allowed for the full investigation of exposed features, including inhumation burials, and for the requirement of special protection e.g. laying terram and monitoring the reburial of sensitive features.
- To record the presence/absence of features, and to date, characterise and record those features present in accordance with the project objectives.
- To inform the County Archaeological Service and the developer as soon as possible in the event of an ‘unexpected discovery’.

2.3 Standards

The work conformed to the requirements of the *Brief*, to the relevant sections of the Institute of Archaeologists’ *Standard & Guidance Notes* (IFA 2001) and *Code of Conduct* (IFA 2000a), and to the relevant sections of ASC’s own *Operations Manual*.

3 Results

3.1 The groundworks observed comprised the cutting of a rectangular trench to receive the concrete strip foundations for the new garage (Fig. 3, Plates 2 & 3). The trench was 0.5m wide and 0.4m deep and extended to a length of c.17m.

2.3 Observation of the foundation trench revealed a general stratigraphy, summarised below:

0.00 – 0.10m	L100	Base for paving – Builders sand
0.10 – 0.30m	L101	Base for paving – Hardcore
0.30-0.40m+	L102	Modern levelling(?) – Topsoil and mixed demolition rubble

3.4 *Archaeological impact of the development*

The watching brief revealed that the area of the new display garage had been subject to some disturbance and levelling during the earlier construction of the block paving and existing planted borders. No archaeological features were observed during the watching brief and no artefacts recovered. Due to the relatively shallow nature of the groundworks the natural strata was not observed. As a result it is not possible to rule out the survival of archaeological remains within the area of the new build. However, it can be concluded that the archaeological impact of the development has been minimal.

3.5 *Confidence Rating*

Due to the favourable weather conditions and lighting combined with the full cooperation of the client and contractors a high confidence rating is attached to the results of the watching brief.

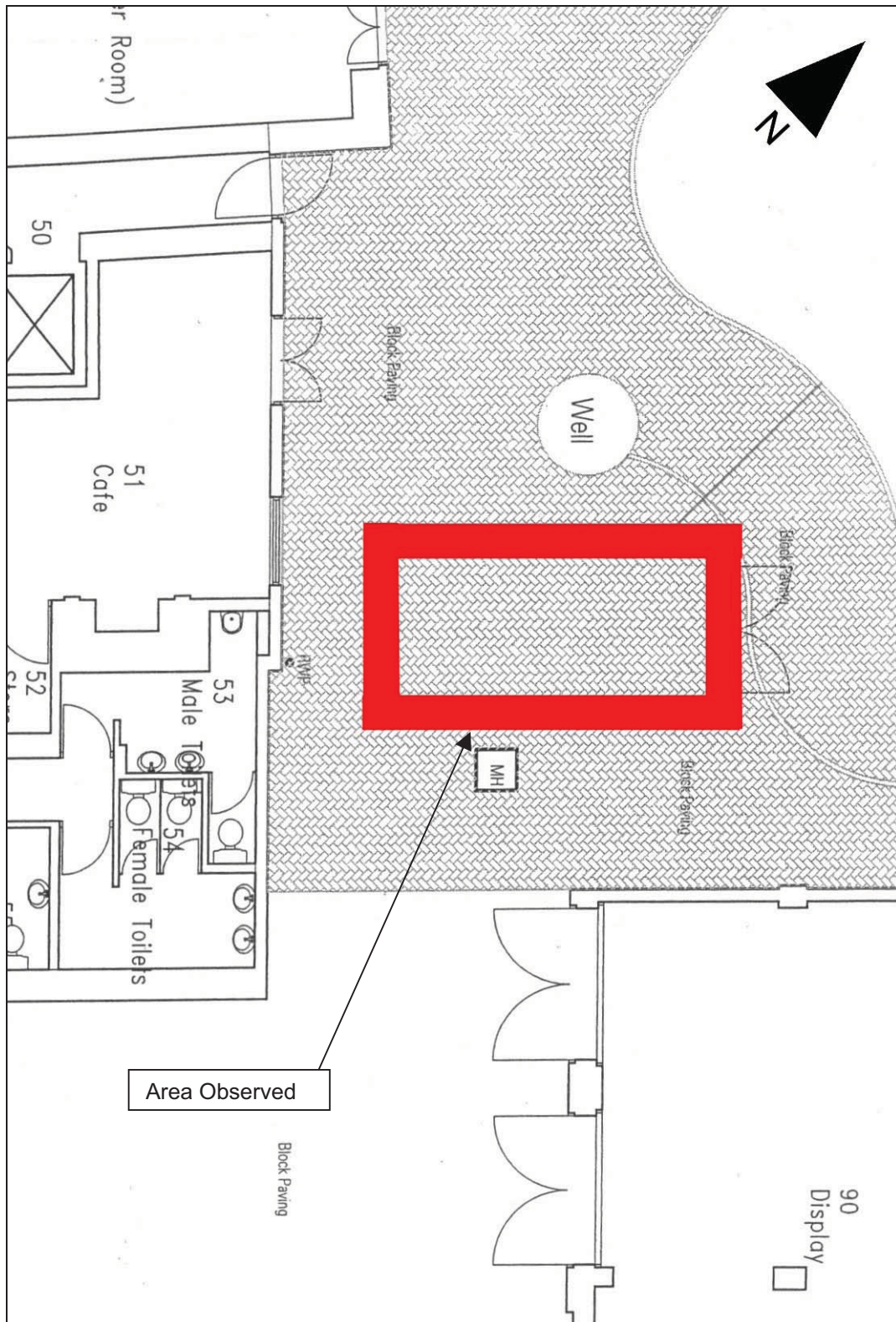


Figure 3: Area of Observation (Scale 1:100)



Plate 1: Eastern Corner of Trench Section



Plate 2: Completed Foundation Trench, looking East

4. Acknowledgements

The writer is grateful to Brett Thorn of Buckinghamshire County Museum for commissioning the watching brief. We would also like to acknowledge the co-operation of the groundwork contractors Lazer Specialist Groundworks. Thanks are also due to Mr David Radford of Buckinghamshire County Council who acted as curatorial officer.

The fieldwork was undertaken for ASC Ltd by Nicholas A Crank BSc AIFA. The report was prepared by Nicholas A Crank and edited by Bob Zeepvat BA MIFA.

5. Archive

5.1 The project archive will comprise:


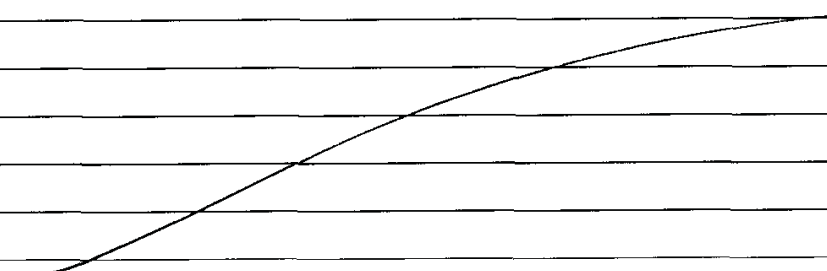
1. Brief
2. Project Design
3. Initial Report
4. Clients site plans
5. Site Monitoring Sheets
6. List of photographs/slides
7. CDROM with copies of all digital files.

5.2 The archive will be deposited with Buckinghamshire County Museum, accession number 2005.65.

6. References


- Allen D & Dalwood CH, 1983. *Iron Age Occupation, a Middle Saxon Cemetery, and Twelfth to Nineteenth Century Urban Occupation: Excavations in George Street, Aylesbury, 1981*. Records of Buckinghamshire Volume 25.
- Birch, C. 1975: *The Book of Aylesbury*. Barracuda Books Ltd (Chesham).
- Bonner, D *et al*, 1996: *Investigations at The County Museum, Aylesbury*. Records of Buckinghamshire Volume 38.
- Chenevix Trench, J and Fenley, P. 1991. *The County Museum Buildings, Church Street, Aylesbury*. Records of Buckinghamshire Volume 33.
- 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)*.
- Radford, D. 2005. *New Cubitt Garage Display for Buckinghamshire County Museum: Brief for An Archaeological Watching Brief* (dated 31/01/05)
- Rouse, C. 2005. *Cubitt Garage, County Museum, Church Street, Aylesbury: Project Design for Watching Brief* (ASC: 655/ACM/01)
- 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: CUBITT GARAGE, COUNTY MUS., AYLESBURY.		Project No/Code: 6551 ACM	Sheet: 1 of 2
		Date of visit: 16 / 3 / 05	
Client/Developer: COUNTY MUSEUM			
Contact: BRETT THORN / SARAH GRAY		Phone:	
Duration of Visit (Inc. travel):	Start: 7.20	Finish: 12.00	
Completed by: NAC			
Development Type:			
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Footings	<input type="checkbox"/> Services	<input type="checkbox"/> Roads	<input type="checkbox"/> Levelling
			<input type="checkbox"/> Quarrying
			<input type="checkbox"/> Pipelines
			<input type="checkbox"/> Other (specify):
Site & weather conditions: DRY IN MORNING, WARM, OVERCAST.			
Observations: NONE - BUILDERS DID NOT ARRIVE UNTIL 11:00 am. GAVE CONTRACTORS A CARD - THEY WILL CALL LATER TODAY TO CONFIRM NEED FOR OBSERVATION TOMORROW.			
Comments:			
			

For sketch plan, use reverse

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 A.S.C. LTD		ARCHAEOLOGICAL FIELD MONITORING RECORD	
Project: CUBITT GARAGE		Project No/Code: 6551 ACM	Sheet: 2 of 2
Client/Developer: COUNTY MUSEUM, AYLESBURY		Date of visit: 17/3/05	
Contact: BRETT THORN / SARAH GRAY			
Duration of Visit (Inc. travel):		Start: 9.30	Finish: 4.30
Completed by: NAC			
Development Type:			
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Footings	<input type="checkbox"/> Services	<input type="checkbox"/> Roads	<input type="checkbox"/> Levelling
<input type="checkbox"/> Quarrying	<input type="checkbox"/> Pipelines	<input type="checkbox"/> Other (specify):	
Site & weather conditions: V. GOOD, WARM, SUNNY.			
Observations:			
<p>c.0.5m wide trench excavated in rectangular plan in line with footprint of new GARAGE. Trench depth = 0.4m GEN SECTION</p> <p>0.00-0.1m Builders Sand 0.1-0.3m HARD CORE 0.3-0.4m+ Down Rubble / TOPSOIL - Brick, Concrete, slate etc.</p> <p>No pre 20th finds recovered, no features revealed. NAT. NOT SEEN - ALL IN ALL, JUST TOO SHALLOW TO BE OF ARCH. SIGNIFICANCE / IMPACT.</p>			
Comments:			

For sketch plan, use reverse

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