



## Archaeological Services & Consultancy Ltd

**TEST PITS:  
BELTON ROAD,  
BERKHAMSTED,  
HERTFORDSHIRE**

*on behalf of Hightown Praetorian Churches Housing Association Ltd*



Jonathan R. Hunn BA PhD MIFA

**December 2004**

**ASC: 633/BBR/2**

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## Site Data

<i>ASC site code:</i>	BBR	<i>Project no:</i>	633
<i>County:</i>	Hertfordshire		
<i>District:</i>	Dacorum		
<i>Village/Town:</i>	Berkhamsted		
<i>Parish:</i>	Berkhamsted St Marys (Northchurch)		
<i>NGR:</i>	SP 9830-0839		
<i>Extent of site:</i>	c.45m x 25m		
<i>Present land use:</i>	Industrial unit and garages		
<i>Planning proposal:</i>	Erection of two story apartment block		
<i>Extent of development:</i>	As above		
<i>Planning application ref/date:</i>	Not known		
<i>Client:</i>	Hightown Praetorian Churches Housing Association Ltd White Lion House 70 Queensway Hemel Hempstead HP2 5HD		
<i>Contact name:</i>	Yvonne Mills		
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## Internal Quality Check

<i>Primary Author:</i>	Jonathan R. Hunn	<i>Date:</i>	Dec 22 <sup>nd</sup> 2004
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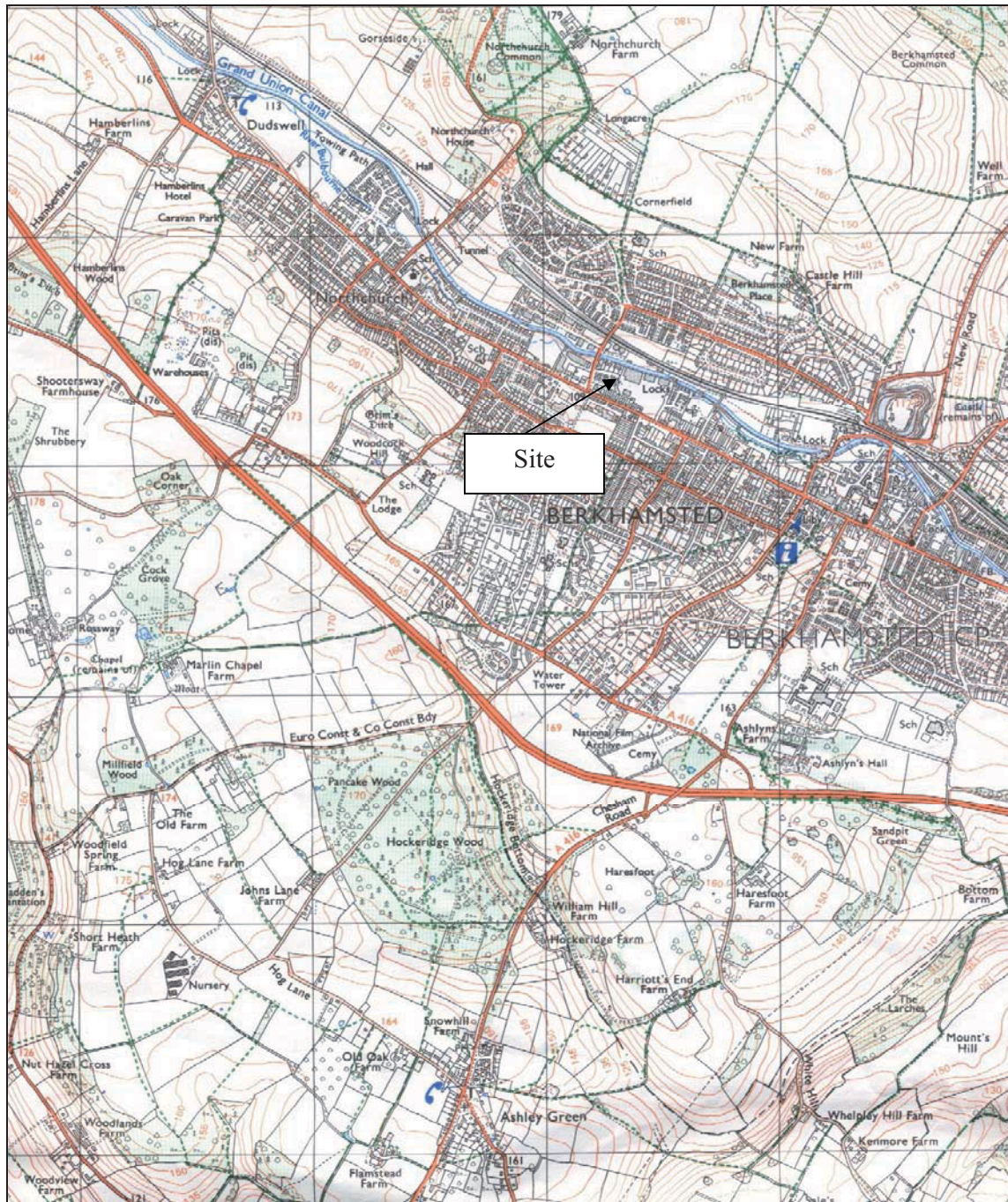
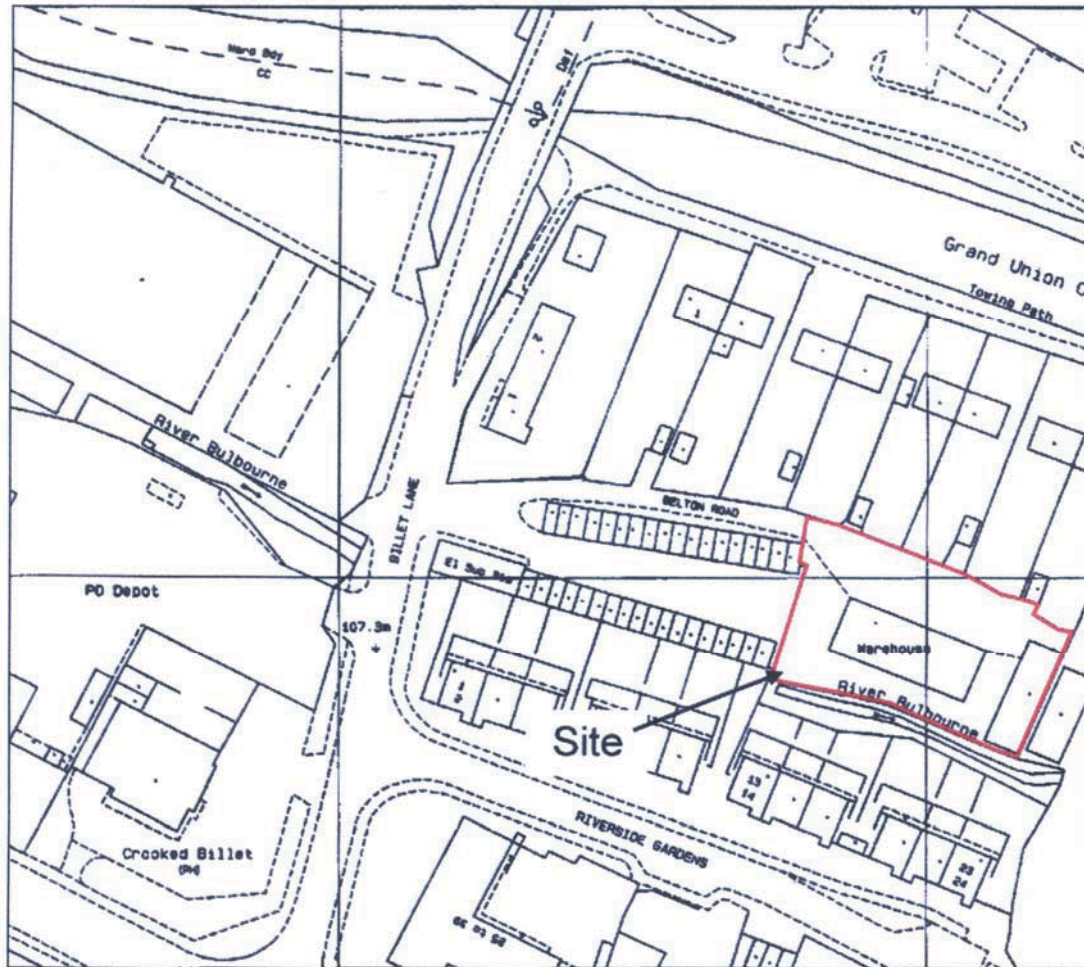


Figure 1: General location (scale 1:25,000)





**Figure 2:** Site Location (scale 1:1250)

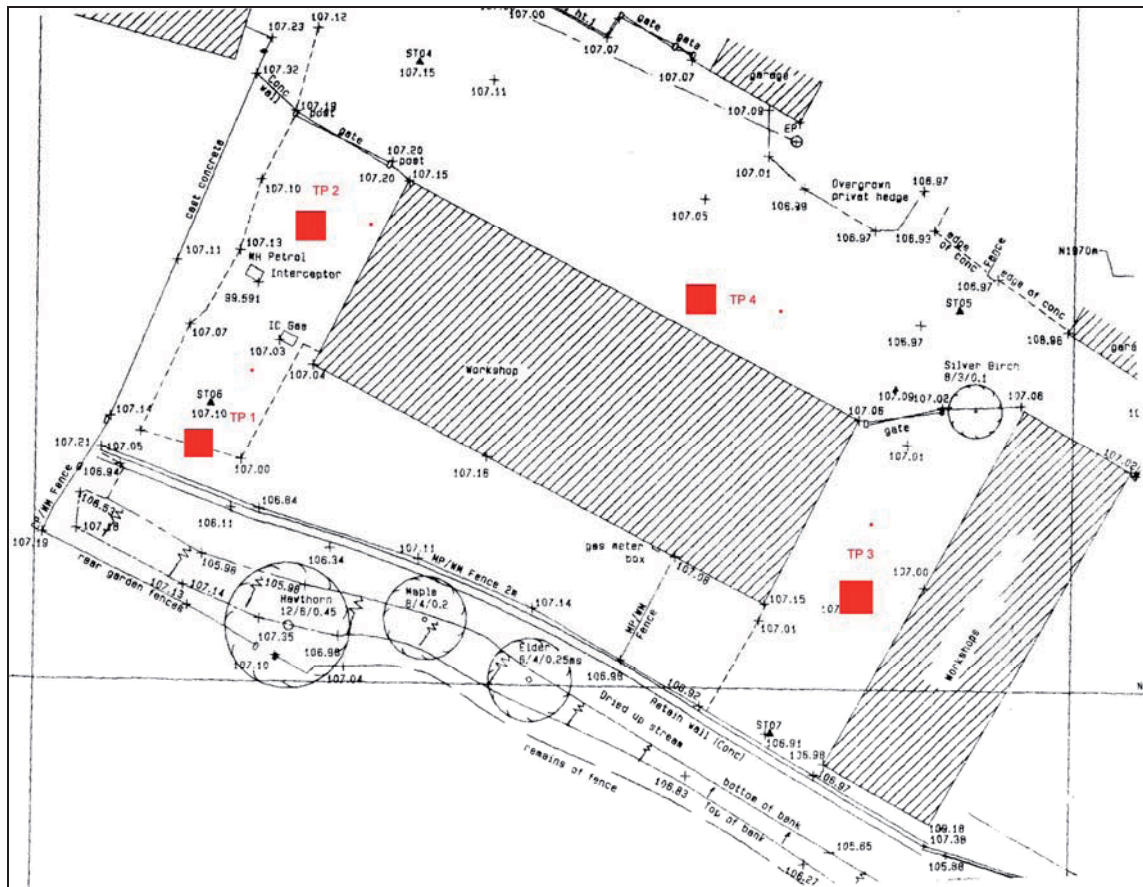


## Summary

*Four test pits were examined at the eastern end of Belton Road, Berkhamsted in mid-December 2004. These all showed that the ground had been made up in the 20<sup>th</sup> century with domestic rubbish. Beneath this deposit the ground consisted of a gravely alluvium. No peat deposits were encountered nor was any natural chalk observed.*

## 1 Introduction

- 1.1 In the middle of December 2004 *Archaeological Services and Consultancy Ltd* (ASC) carried out observations on four test pits on a site at Belton Road, Berkhamsted, Hertfordshire (NGR SP 9830-0839: Fig. 1). The project was commissioned by Yvonne Mills of Hightown Praetorian on the advice of Dr P.Wardle of the Archaeological Consultancy and was carried with the agreement of Kate Batt of the County Archaeology Office (CAO) in accordance with a project design written by Nick Crank (ASC: 66BBR/1).



**Figure 3:** Location of test pits (*not to scale*)

## 4 Results

4.1 Four test pits were observed and recorded. Each will be described in relation to Fig. 3.

### Test Pit 1

*Location:* On the south western side of the site, about 2m to the north of the river Bulbourne.

*Dimensions:* 1.7m x 0.7m

*Orientation:* North-south

*Depth:* 2.1m

*Description:* The upper 1.2m was made up of dark, loose gravely soil containing many small animal bones (Plate 1). Below this were the natural gravels of the valley bottom.

### Test Pit 2

*Location:* On the western side of the site.

*Dimensions:* 1.5m x 0.7m

*Orientation:* North-south

*Depth:* 2.15m

*Description:* The upper 1.2m of ground consisted of a series of dumped layers (Plate 2). Below this the ground consisted of natural gravels.

### Test Pit 3

*Location:* On the eastern side of the site between the industrial unit and the garages.

*Dimensions:* 1.5m x 0.7m

*Orientation:* North-south

*Depth:* 2.25m

*Description:* Down to a depth of 1.5m the ground consisted of land fill that contained much 20<sup>th</sup> century domestic rubbish (Plate 3). Below this the ground consisted of natural valley deposits (flinty gravels etc).

### Test Pit 4

*Location:* On the northern side of the site in front of the industrial unit.

*Dimensions:* 1.4m x 0.7m

*Orientation:* NW-SE

*Depth:* 2.2m

*Description:* There was about 1.5m of overburden consisting of several dumps of rubbish and re-deposited clay (Plate 4). Below this the ground was made up of grey alluvium overlying mixed natural gravels.





**Plate 1:** Test pit 1 looking north



**Plate 2:** Test pit 2 looking north



**Plate 3:** Test pit 3 looking north



**Plate 4:** Test pit 4 looking north west

## 5. Conclusions

- 5.1 Up until the mid 1920's the area of Belton Road was shown as being rough pasture and marshy ground. The river, or more accurately, the chalk stream has been straightened out and the ground made up. Whether these deposits are the result of official land fill using household rubbish is not certain. To judge from the present level of the river Bulbourne, the ground seems to have been built up by at least 1.2m. This probably occurred in the 1930s since the 'road' serves as access to the rear of the dwellings that front onto the canal to the north.
- 5.2 The evidence of the test pits confirms that the area was essentially unimproved pasture up until at least the early 1930s. Sometime after this date the ground level was increased by the dumping of domestic rubbish. The area was not built on until the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.