

# Archaeological Services & Consultancy Ltd

## **ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION: STREATLEY HOUSE SHARPENHOE ROAD STREATLEY BEDFORDSHIRE**

*on behalf of Mr & Mrs R Page*



**Nigel Wilson HND AIFA**

**July 2004**

**ASC: 585/SSH/02**

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**Site Data**

<i>ASC site code:</i>	SSH	<i>Project no:</i>	585
<i>County:</i>	Bedfordshire		
<i>District:</i>	South Beds		
<i>Village/Town:</i>	Streatley		
<i>Parish:</i>	Streatley CP		
<i>NGR:</i>	TL 0706 2860		
<i>Present land use:</i>	Garden		
<i>Planning proposal:</i>	Swimming pool, patio and landscaping		
<i>Extent of development:</i>	c.140 sq. m.		
<i>Planning application ref/date:</i>	04/0311		
<i>Client:</i>	Mr & Mrs R Page Streatley House Sharpenhoe Road Streatley Beds LU3 9PS		
<i>Contact name:</i>	Michael Dale (architect)		
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**Internal Quality Check**

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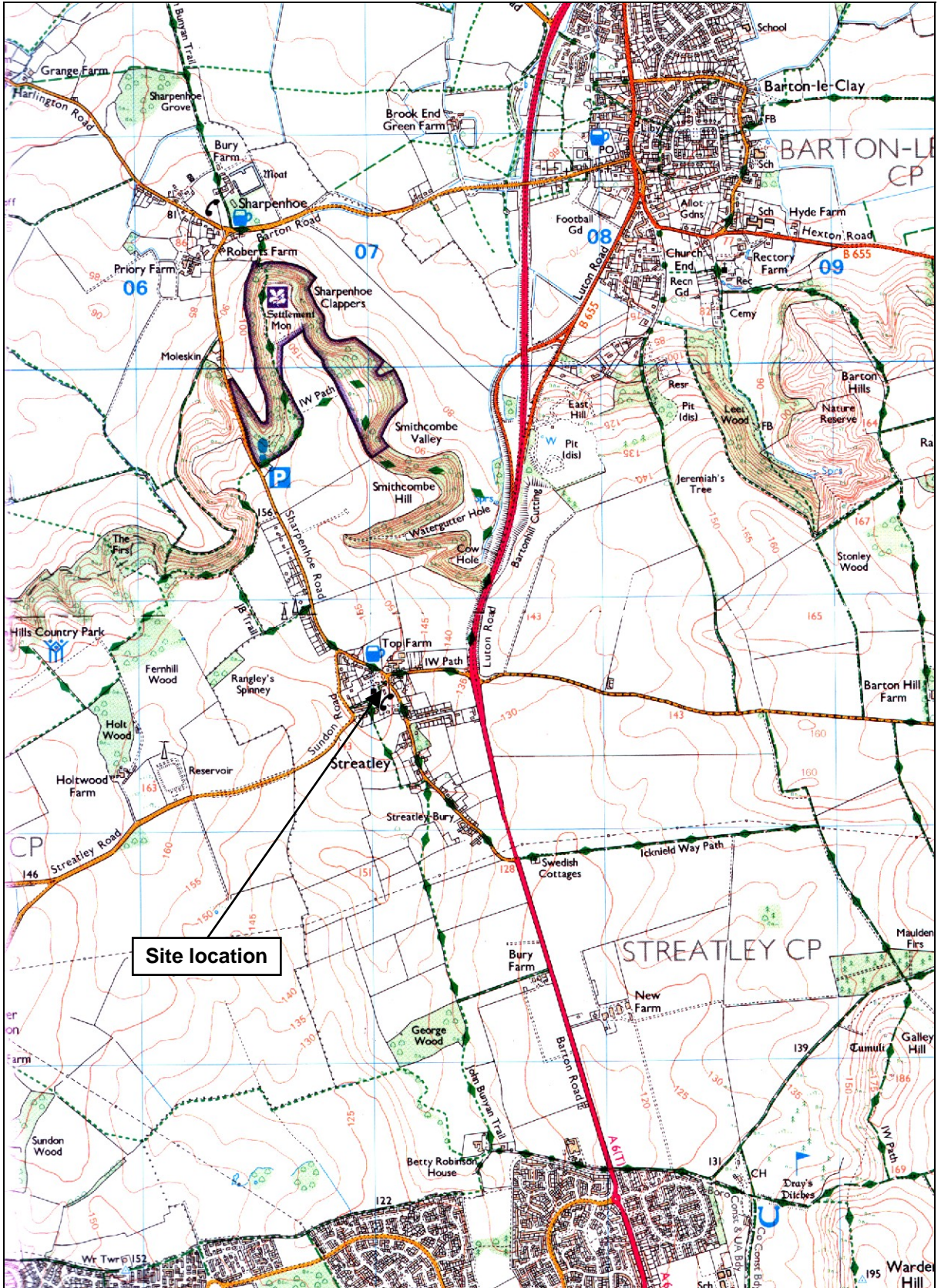


Figure 1: General location (scale 1:25,000)

## Summary

*During July 2004 Archaeological Services and Consultancy Ltd undertook a pre-determination evaluation in the garden of Streatley House, Streatley, Bedfordshire. A 4.3 x 1.9m trench was excavated to the west of the house, close to the churchyard wall. Within the trench the ground had been highly disturbed by root action. Despite this disturbance, it was clear that no archaeological features cut the natural subsoil. No finds other than modern were identified during the evaluation.*

## 1 Introduction

1.1 During July 2004 *Archaeological Services and Consultancy Ltd* (ASC) carried out a Evaluation on a site at Streatley House (NGR TL 0706 2860: Fig. 1). The project was commissioned by *Mr & Mrs R Page*, and was carried out according to a brief (Beds CC 2004) prepared by the Heritage and Environment Section, Bedfordshire County Council (HES), and a project design prepared by ASC (Griffiths 2004).

### 1.2 *Reason for Work*

Under current planning guidelines, specifically Planning Guidance Notes 16 (PPG16), archaeology can be a material factor in deciding planning applications. Mr and Mrs Page have submitted outline plans to South Bedfordshire District Council (SBDC) to construct a swimming pool and link room attached to the western side of Streatley House. As Streatley House is in an area of considerable archaeological potential, the HES acting as archaeological advisors to SBDC recommended that a pre-determination evaluation should be commissioned, to enable a more informed consideration to be given to the archaeological potential of the site. This advice was accepted and a condition requiring an evaluation to be commissioned was placed on the development.

### 1.3 *Setting*

1.3.1 The site lies within the extensive grounds of Streatley House, in the historic core of Streatley. The property is bounded to the east by Sharpenhoe Road, to the south and south-west by detached houses and gardens, to the northwest by the parish church of St Margaret and its churchyard, and to the north by the access road to the church. Thirty metres to the north-west is the *Chequers* public house.

#### 1.3.2 *Geology, Topography and Elevation*

The underlying geology of the site is classified as belonging to the Ashley Association, described as 'fine loamy over clayey soils with slowly permeable subsoils and slight seasonal waterlogging, associated with similar but wetter soils. Some calcareous and non-calcareous slowly permeable clayey soils' (Soil Survey 1983, 572q). The site lies at an elevation of c.150m AOD.

### *1.3.3 Services, Buildings, Access Etc*

The proposed development area currently comprises overgrown flowerbeds including several established trees, and areas of gravel pathways and grass. The site is bounded to the west by the existing churchyard wall, to the east by Streatley House, and to the north by a detached garage block. Access to the site is either through a narrow gate from the courtyard fronting (east of) the garage, or by a circuitous route around the south end of the house (Fig.2).

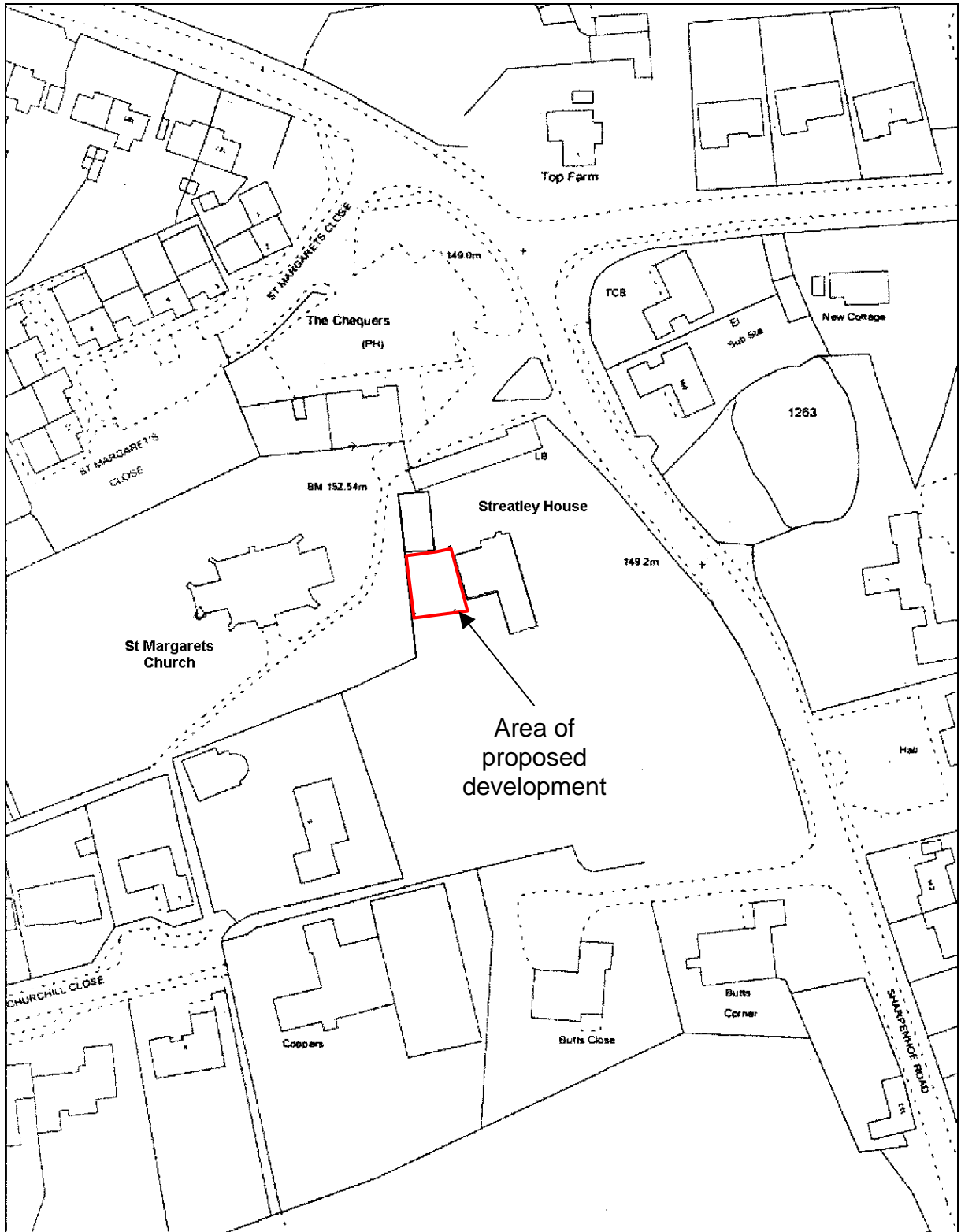


Figure 2: Site plan (scale 1:1250)



**Figure 3:** Simplified plan of the proposed development & trench location (1:200)



## **2 Aims & Methods**

### **2.1 Aims**

As described in the brief (Section 4), the aims of the evaluation were:

- to establish the date, nature and extent of activity or occupation on the development site;
- to recover artefacts to assist in the development of type series within the region;
- to recover palaeo-environmental remains to determine local environmental conditions.

### **2.2 Methods**

The work was carried out according to the brief (Sections 3 & 4), which required:

- preparation of a project design
- a trial excavation of up to 8 square metres within the footprint of the proposed swimming pool. Excavation of an area up to 8 sq. metres, with provision for a further 2 square metres, if required;
- Analysis of the results, leading to preparation of a report (this document)

Due to the density of trees and roots the trench was rotated from the proposed layout in the project design to maximise the available trenching whilst avoiding the trees and their root systems as much as possible.

### **2.3 Standards**

The work conforms to the project design, to the relevant sections of the Institute of Archaeologists' *Code of Conduct* (IFA 2000) and *Standard & Guidance Notes* (IFA 2001), and to the relevant sections of ASC's own *Operations Manual*.

### 3 Archaeological & Historical Background

- 3.1 Streatley is an area of considerable archaeological and historical interest (Coleman 1987). The site had the potential to reveal evidence of a variety of periods, but the focus of attention lay in the Saxon and medieval periods.
- 3.2 South Bedfordshire was settled during the prehistoric and Roman periods, but little evidence for early prehistoric occupation has been found around Streatley. An undated, but potentially early ditch, visible as a cropmark, has been located close to Top Farm c.400m northeast of the site (Historic Environment Record no. [HER] 16652). Observations during drainage works for a new roundabout on the east side of the village revealed further undated ditches and also prehistoric flints and Roman pottery (HER 17722; South Midlands Archaeology **30**, 6).
- 3.3 The village of Streatley probably developed during the Saxon period. The name, which incorporates the element *stræt*, meaning paved road, may indicate that an early road existed in the area.
- 3.4 The site is in the historic core of the village (HER 16985), close to the parish church of St Margaret's, which dates from the 14<sup>th</sup> century (Pevsner 1968,150 HER 1133). Little is known of the early history of the church and manor at Streatley, but in medieval villages the church and manor were normally adjacent. Consequently, it is possible that the present Streatley House may lie on the site of the Saxon and/or early medieval manor.
- 1.5 The location of the medieval manor at Streatley has never been proved, but the church and glebe were associated with Markyate Priory. The church may have been constructed for the Gobion family, who held the medieval manor and the manor house may have been adjacent to the church.
- 3.6 The Gobion family may have transferred the land surrounding the church to Markyate Priory as rectorial land in the medieval period (Coleman 1987, 25). The post-medieval manor was situated at the site of the present Streatleybury Farm and the shift may have coincided with the transfer of the site of the original manor to the church.
- 1.7 The vicarage at Streatley was situated on the east side of Sharpenhoe Road, but was demolished during the late 18<sup>th</sup> century. (*ibid*). Streatley House was constructed during the 18<sup>th</sup> century, perhaps as a replacement. This theory has not been substantiated, but the 1840 *Tithe Map* shows the glebe surrounded by a parcel of land, including Streatley House, held by the Rev. James Hadow. The east boundary of the churchyard, currently defined as a brick wall adjacent to the extension and swimming pool site is shown on the tithe map, indicating that this is a long established boundary.
- 3.8 Streatley was a linear village during the medieval and later periods and the mid 19<sup>th</sup> century layout is shown on the tithe map. The present Sharpenhoe Road was a road of considerable importance until the route from Luton to Bedford was turnpiked c.1829-32. The modern A6 road follows the line of the 19<sup>th</sup> century turnpike, which now bypasses the village to the east.

## **4 Results**

- 4.1 A single 4.3 x 1.9m NW to SE trench was hand excavated over part of the footprint of the new swimming pool, avoiding the existing trees as much as possible. The surface deposit over the northern 3.75m of the trench comprised c.0.25m of very dark loamy garden soil, whilst the southern end had been scraped and dressed with fine gravel to form a garden path. Tree roots were widespread throughout the topsoil layer. Below the topsoil the undisturbed yellowish brown silty clay was exposed. Throughout the subsoil small fragments of chalk were seen.
  
- 4.2 No evidence was identified to suggest that the area of the evaluation trench had ever been used for any purpose other than garden.



**Plate 1:** General view of the trench looking NW

## **5. Conclusions**

- 5.1 The evaluation at Streatley House was required by SBDC to enable the implications of any archaeological discoveries made to be addressed before the development started.
- 5.2 Lying at the historic core of Streatley, there was the possibility that medieval remains could have been found during the evaluation. The potential of the site was considered particularly high as the site lay adjacent to the existing churchyard wall, and it was possible that archaeological remains associated with an earlier larger churchyard could have been discovered. The fact that no burials or other evidence associated with an earlier churchyard were discovered probably indicates that the existing wall line is an ancient feature marking the easternmost limit of the churchyard. As the site of Streatley Manor is not known it was also considered possible that Streatley House might stand on the site of the manorial complex being ideally located beside the church.
- 5.3 Though negative, the evaluation seems to have confirmed that the churchyard has never extended further eastwards than its present boundary. Whilst no evidence for the manor house was found in the trench it is still possible that Streatley House was built on the site of the medieval manor house.

## **6. Acknowledgements**

The writer is grateful to Mr and Mrs Page for commissioning and funding the evaluation. A special thank you goes to Michael Dale the Pages' architect who provided invaluable assistance during the evaluation. Lesley-Ann Mather of the HES prepared the brief and monitored the fieldwork. David Fell researched the historical background with assistance from S Colman at the Bedfordshire Historic Environment Record. Nigel Wilson and David Fell carried out the fieldwork.

## **7. Archive**

7.1 The project archive will comprise:


1. Brief
2. Project Design
3. Initial Report
4. Clients site plans
5. Site records
6. List of photographs/slides
7. Colour slides
8. B/W prints & negatives
9. CDROM with copies of all digital files.

7.2 The archive will be deposited with Luton Museum.

## **8. Bibliography**

- BCC 2004 *Brief for a programme of Archaeological Investigation of Land at Streatley House, Sharpenhoe Road, Streatley, Bedfordshire.* Beds County Council (Unpublished)
- Coleman S 1987 *Streatley with Sharpenhoe. Historic Landscape and Archaeology.* Bedfordshire Parish Survey 7. Bedfordshire County Council
- EH 1991 *The Management of Archaeological Projects, 2<sup>nd</sup> 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).
- Griffiths C. 2004 *Streatley House, Sharpenhoe Road, Streatley, Bedfordshire Project Design for Archaeological Evaluation.* ASC (unpublished document Ref ASC: 585/SSH/01)
- 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).*
- Pevsner N. 1968 *The Buildings of England: Bedfordshire, Huntingdon and Peterborough* Penguin (London)
- Soil Survey 1983 *1:250,000 Soil Map of England and Wales, and accompanying legend* (Harpenden).

## Appendix 1: Trench Summary Table

<b>Trench 1</b>				
	<b>Max Dimensions</b>			
	<b>Width</b>	1.9	<b>Depth</b>	2.3
	<b>Levels</b>			
	Top NW		152.70m OD	
	Base NW		152.29m OD	
	Top S		152.45m OD	
Base S		152.28m OD		
<b>NGR Co-ordinates</b>				
0507046		0228600		
0507048		0228601		
0507044		0228604		
0507046		0228605		
<b>Orientation</b>				
<b>Reason for Trench</b>				
<b>Context</b>	<b>Type</b>	<b>Description and Interpretation</b>	<b>Max Thickness (mm)</b>	<b>Depth BGL (mm)</b>
1	Layer	Dark greyish to black top soil	250	0-250
2	Layer	Natural silty clay some chalk fragments		>250