

**ARCHAEOLOGICAL STRIP, MAP AND RECORD REPORT:
LAND AT THE BRITISH FILM INSTITUTE ARCHIVES, BERKHAMSTED, HERTFORDSHIRE**

Planning Reference: 4/01252/11/FUL
NGR: SP 9827 0678
AAL Site Code: BEAM 11
OASIS Reference Number: allenarc1-120508



Report prepared for the British Film Institute

By
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Contents

Executive Summary	1
1.0 Introduction	2
2.0 Site Location and Description	2
3.0 Planning Background	2
4.0 Archaeological and Historical Background	3
5.0 Methodology	3
6.0 Results	4
7.0 Discussion and Conclusions	4
8.0 Effectiveness of Methodology	4
9.0 Acknowledgements	4
10.0 References	4
List of Appendices	
Appendix 1: Colour Plates	5
Appendix 2: Context Summary List	6

List of Figures

- Figure 1:** Site location at scale 1:25,000, with site outlined in red
Figure 2: Site location at scale 1:500, with site outlined in red, showing location of section drawn
Figure 3: Representative section of main baulk at 1:10, located on Figure 2

List of Plates

- Plate 1:** General view of the site location looking north-east
Plate 2: View of the stripped area, looking north
Plate 3: South-east facing section, looking north-west. Scale is 1m

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Executive Summary

- Allen Archaeology was commissioned by the British Film Institute to carry out a strip, map and record scheme on land for the construction of a single storey plant room at the British Film Institute Archives in Berkhamsted, Hertfordshire.
- The site lies in an area of significant archaeological interest, with prehistoric activity nearby to the south and west of the site.
- The strip, map and record revealed that the site had been landscaped during the construction of the adjacent buildings which had reduced the ground level and removed any potential archaeological remains.

1.0 Introduction

- 1.0 Allen Archaeology Limited (hereafter AAL) was commissioned by the British Film Institute to undertake an archaeological strip, plan and sample exercise at the British Film Institute Archives in Berkhamsted, Hertfordshire as a condition of planning permission for a new plant room.
- 1.1 The excavation, recording and reporting conforms to current national guidelines, as set out in the Institute for Archaeologists 'Standard and guidance for archaeological field excavations' (IfA 1995, revised 2001 and 2008), English Heritage documents 'Management of Research Projects in the Historic Environment' (English Heritage 2006) and 'Management of Archaeological Projects' (English Heritage 1991), and a specification prepared by this company (AAL 2011).
- 1.2 The documentary archive will be submitted to Berkhamsted Museum within six months of the completion of the project.

2.0 Site Location and Description

- 2.1 Berkhamsted is situated in the administrative district of Dacorum Borough Council, approximately 41km north-west of central London and 6km west of Hemel Hempstead. The proposed development area is located in the grounds of the British Film Institute Archives to the south of the town, and just north of the A41 Berkhamsted bypass. The site centres on NGR SP 9827 0678 and comprises a triangular plot measuring approximately 24m north to south and 15m east to west.
- 2.2 The bedrock geology of the area consists of Lewes Nodular Chalk and Seaford Chalk Formation, with a superficial geology of clay, silt, sand and gravel (<http://www.bgs.ac.uk/opengeoscience/home.html?Accordion1=1#maps>).

3.0 Planning Background

- 3.1 Dacorum Borough Council has granted planning permission for the construction of a 'single storey plant room sited between two vaults' (Planning Reference 4/01252/11/FUL).
- 3.2 Planning permission was granted subject to conditions, including the undertaking of a programme of archaeological investigation and recording in advance of development, to fully characterise the nature and extent of the surviving archaeological resource.
- 3.3 This approach is consistent with the guidelines that are set out in *Planning Policy Statement 5* (Department for Communities and Local Government 2010).

4.0 Archaeological and Historical Background

- 4.1 The site lies in an area of archaeological interest, adjacent to Dacorum Area of Archaeological Significance no.54. This pertains to prehistoric activity identified during archaeological works on the line of the A41 Berkhamsted bypass at the junction with Chesham Road to the south of the site. Three features were recorded, one of which contained Neolithic Peterborough Ware pottery (Hertfordshire Historic Environment Record (hereafter HHER) Reference 11478). Cropmarks of two ring ditches to the west of the site may represent ploughed out Bronze Age barrows (HHER Reference 17602). Evidence for Late Bronze Age to Iron Age occupation was also recorded on the line of the A41 bypass c.900m to the west-north-west, where worked flint and pottery were recovered, along with evidence for at least two roundhouses, eight four-post structures and a fence line (HHER Reference 11479). Two Iron Age bronze stater coins and a gold stater have also been found in Berkhamsted, but their exact provenance is uncertain (HHER References 114 and 4856).
- 4.2 In the Domesday Book of 1086 AD, Berkhamsted was in the ownership of the Count of Mortain. The borough had 52 burgesses, and two mills are recorded. There was also woodland for 1000 pigs in the parish, as well as pasture and vineyards (Williams and Martin 2002). The count of Mortain constructed a motte and bailey castle in Berkhamsted soon after 1066, located c.1.8km north-east of the current site (HHER Reference 39). It passed to the crown in the early 12th century and was rebuilt in stone later in the century by Thomas a Beckett. The castle was maintained and altered over the following years but was abandoned by 1495, after which time its stone was gradually robbed for reuse in the town.
- 4.3 The size of the town in the Domesday Book suggests it may have been well established prior to the Norman Conquest, although it is also likely to have developed rapidly following the construction of the castle. It had a market and fair by the 13th century, and a court is documented in 1301. The town appears to have undergone significant reorganisation during the early 13th century (HHER Reference 10). The existing church of St. Peter dates to this period, although extensively altered in the following centuries (HHER Reference 9092).
- 4.4 Historic map evidence indicates that during the later 19th and 20th century the development area remained open agricultural land on the outskirts of the town, until the site was developed as the British Film Institute archives towards the end of the 20th century.

5.0 Methodology

- 5.1 The fieldwork was carried out by a team of three experienced field archaeologists on Monday 31st October 2011. The strip, map and record methodology was applied to the footprint of the proposed new building, although a minimum clearance of 2m from the adjacent buildings was maintained (Figure 2).
- 5.2 Machine excavation was carried out using a 360° tracked excavator fitted with a 1.8m wide toothless ditching bucket. The soil was removed under close archaeological supervision until the first archaeologically significant horizon was exposed.
- 5.3 A full written record of the archaeological deposits was made on standard AAL context recording sheets. Each deposit was allocated a unique two-digit identifier (context number), and accorded a written description, a summary of these are included in Appendix 2. All plans and sections were drawn at an appropriate scale.

5.4 A photographic record was maintained throughout the fieldwork, and a selection of these images is included in Appendix 1.

6.0 Results (Figure 3)

6.1 The topsoil, 01, was a dark grey brown silty sand, approximately 0.2m thick, and containing occasional modern construction debris. It directly overlay a natural geological deposit of orange brown clay with frequent sub-rounded flint nodules. No archaeological artefacts or deposits of significance were identified.

7.0 Discussion and Conclusion

7.1 The strip, map and record revealed that the proposed development area had been heavily truncated during landscaping for the construction of the adjacent structures during the late 20th century. This could be seen by a clear terrace evident to the south of the site, indicating that a substantial area was levelled prior to the construction of the buildings, truncating any archaeology that may have been present on the site.

8.0 Effectiveness of Methodology

8.1 The archaeological scheme of works was appropriate to the scale and nature of the proposed development. It has shown that the area has already been truncated and as such the development will have no impact upon the archaeological resource of the area.

9.0 Acknowledgements

9.1 Allen Archaeology Limited would like to thank the British Film Institute for this commission and for their cooperation during the groundworks.

10.0 References

AAL, 2011, Specification for an archaeological watching brief: Grange Paddocks, Bishops Stortford, Hertfordshire, Allen Archaeology Limited, unpublished planning document

Department for Communities and Local Government, 2010, *Planning Policy Statement 5: Planning for the Historic Environment*, Department for Communities and Local Government, London

IfA, 1994 (revised 2001 and 2008), *Standard and guidance for archaeological watching briefs*. Reading, Institute for Archaeologists

Williams A. and Martin G.H., 2002, *Domesday Book: A complete translation*, Alecto Historical Editions, London

Appendix 1: Colour Plates



Plate 1: General view of the site location, looking north-east



Plate 2: View of the stripped area, looking north



Plate 3: South-east facing section, looking north-west. Scale is 1m

Appendix 2: Context Summary List

Context	Type	Description	Interpretation
01	Layer	Dark grey brown silty sand 0.2m deep containing mixed construction debris	Topsoil
02	Layer	Compact orange/brown clay with frequent sub-rounded flint nodules	Natural boulder clay

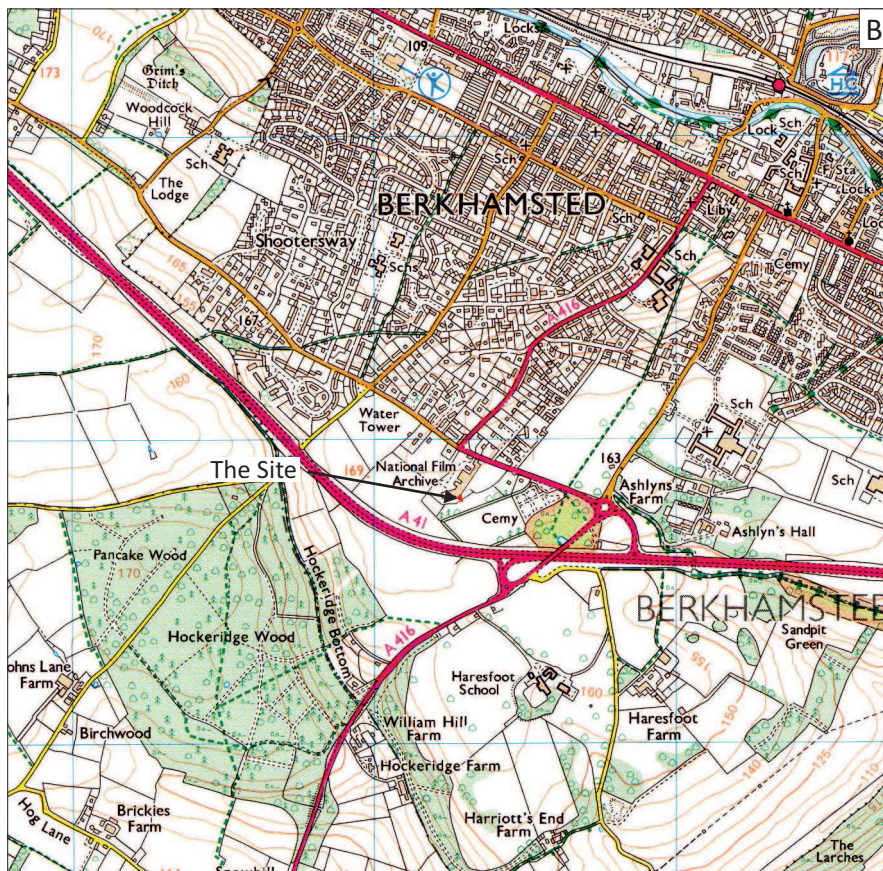
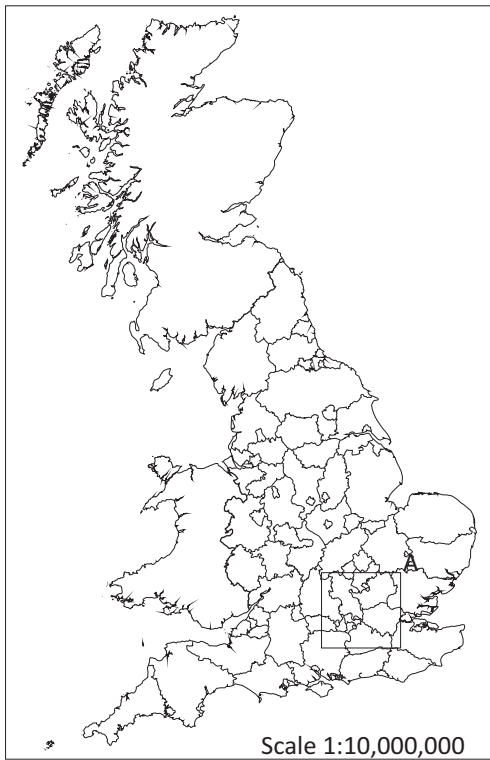


Figure 1: Site location at scale 1:25,000, with the site in red
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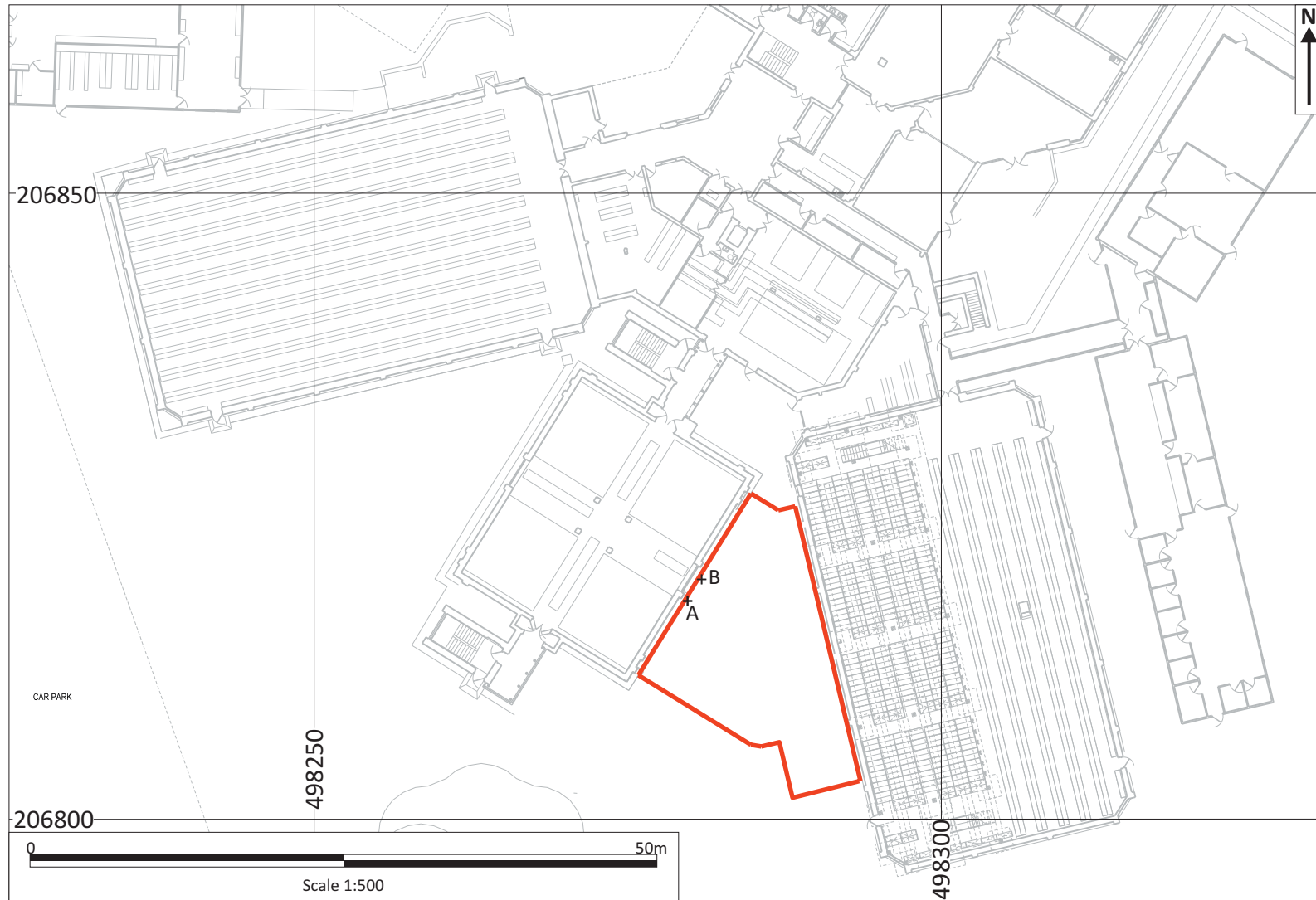


Figure 2: Site location at scale 1:500, with site outlined in red, showing location of section A-B. Section shown on Figure 3

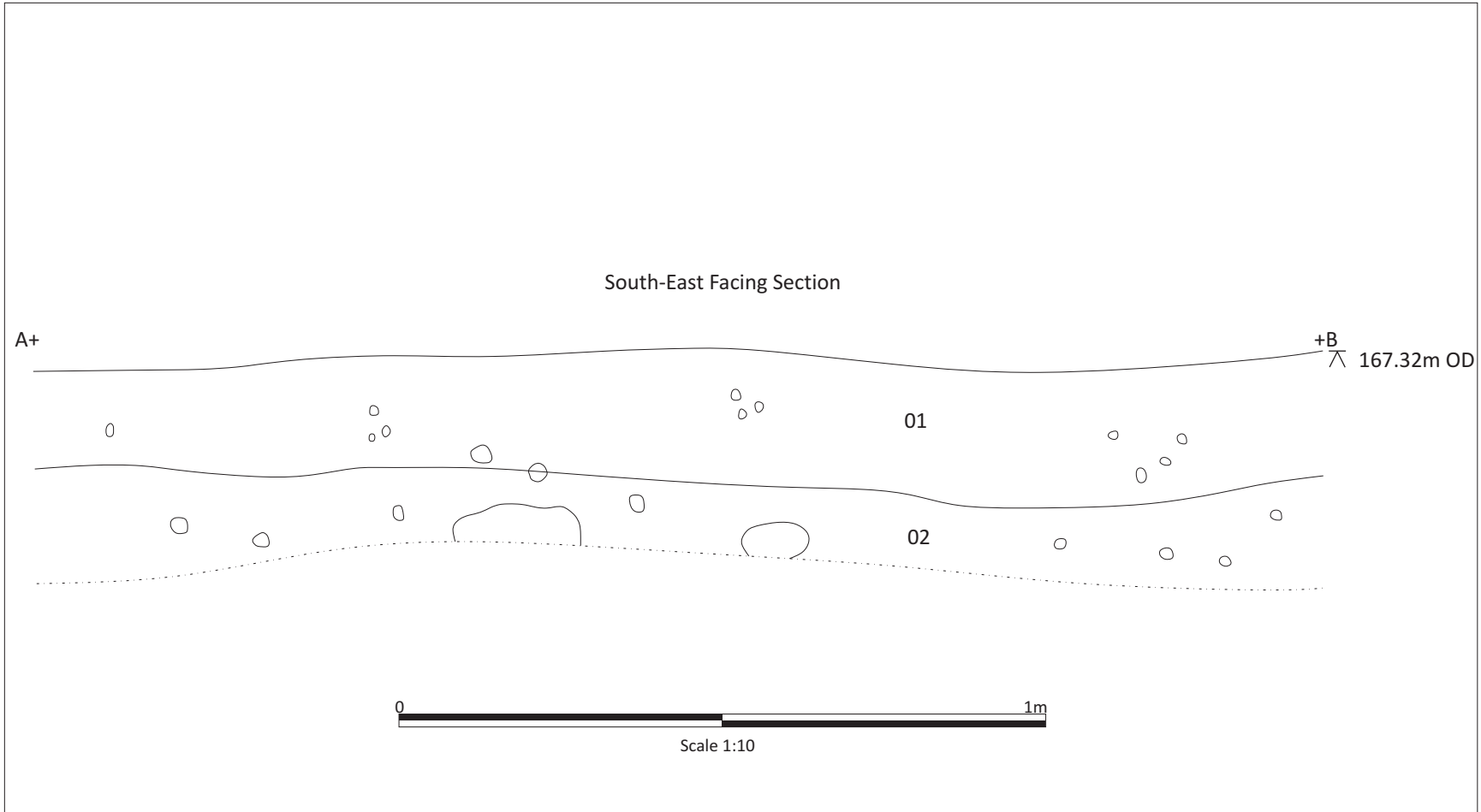


Figure 3: Representative section at scale 1:10, located on Figure 2



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