

Land off Townsend Drive
St Albans
Hertfordshire

Watching Brief



for
Beechcroft Developments

CA Project: 660969
CA Report: 17520

September 2017



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SUMMARY

Project Name:	Land off Townsend Drive
Location:	St Albans, Hertfordshire
NGR:	514702 208407
Type:	Watching Brief
Date:	4 September 2017
Planning Reference:	St Albans District Council Ref: 5/16/1857
Location of Archive:	To be deposited with Hertfordshire Museum
Site Code:	MSC 17

A watching brief was undertaken by Cotswold Archaeology during demolition groundworks associated with the redevelopment at land off Townsend Drive, St Albans, Hertfordshire.

Principle interest in the site derives from the presence of Maryland Convent, a non-designated Victorian structure.

The remains of a cellar associated with the former Maryland Convent were recorded prior to demolition, although no evidence of any earlier building phase was identified.

Despite the archaeological potential of the site, no further features or deposits of archaeological interest were observed during the monitored groundworks, and no artefactual material pre-dating the modern period was recovered.



1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 In September 2017, Cotswold Archaeology (CA) carried out an watching brief at land off Townsend Drive, St Albans, Hertfordshire (centred on NGR: 514702 208407; Fig. 1). The watching brief was commissioned by Beechcroft Developments.
- 1.2 The watching brief was undertaken to fulfil a condition attached to a planning consent for the development of retirement properties (Planning ref: 5/16/1857). The scope of the works was agreed during discussions between CA and Simon West, St Albans District Council Archaeologist (SADA; the archaeological advisor to St Albans District Council).
- 1.3 The watching brief was carried out in accordance with a detailed *Written Scheme of Investigation* (WSI) produced by CA (2016a) and approved by Simon West. The fieldwork also followed *Standard and guidance for Archaeological watching brief* (ClfA 2014).

The site

- 1.4 The development site is approximately 1ha in size and comprises the buildings and grounds of the former Maryland Convent and care home (Fig. 2). The site is situated approximately 900m north-west of the town centre of St Albans, Hertfordshire. It is bounded to the east by Townsend Drive and surrounded on all sides by modern residential developments. The site lies at approximately 118m above Ordnance Datum (aOD), situated on a ridgeline above a valley to the north which slopes south-east towards the town centre of St Albans.
- 1.5 The underlying bedrock geology of the area is mapped as Lambeth Group clay, silt and sand of the Palaeogene Period overlain by superficial sand and gravel deposits of the Kesgrave Catchment subgroup (BGS 2017). Light brown-orange silty sand was encountered during the evaluation (CA 2016b).



2. ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND

Roman (AD43-AD410)

- 2.1 The site is c. 1.3km north-east of St Albans Roman town walls, with the projected alignment of a Roman road (Colchester Road) running from St Albans to Verulamium passing through the site. Previous excavations at Folly Lane, 200m to south-west, along the route of the road, contained a burial ground with Iron Age and Roman remains (CA 2015). An archaeological evaluation undertaken by CA did not identify any evidence for archaeological remains associated with the postulated line of the Roman road (CA 2016b).

Medieval to post-medieval (1066-1800)

- 2.2 The evaluation further recorded a substantial quarry pit, which contained a late medieval/post medieval ditch, which fits within the general alignment for the surrounding field systems as depicted on historic mapping (*ibid.*).

Modern (1801-present)

- 2.3 The First Edition Ordnance Survey map of 1878 records Townsend Farmhouse on the footprint of the current buildings. The farmhouse was constructed between 1857 and 1878, placing it within the middle Victorian period (CA 2015). Red brick walls were encountered within the northern and eastern parts of the site which correspond to the building and boundary shown on 20th-century mapping of the site (CA 2016c).

3. AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

- 3.1 The objectives of the fieldwork were:
- To record evidence of any earlier building phases encountered during the course of the development groundworks;
 - to monitor groundworks, and to identify, investigate and record all significant buried archaeological deposits revealed on the site during the course of the development groundworks;
 - at the conclusion of the project, to produce an integrated archive for the project work and a report setting out the results of the project and the archaeological conclusions that can be drawn from the recorded data.

4. METHODOLOGY

- 4.1 The fieldwork followed the methodology set out within the WSI (CA 2016a). An archaeologist was present during intrusive groundworks, comprising the mechanical excavation of an area measuring 10m by 6m within the footprint of the former Maryland Convent (Fig. 2).
- 4.2 Where archaeological deposits were encountered written, graphic and photographic records were compiled in accordance with CA Technical Manual 1: *Fieldwork Recording Manual*.
- 4.3 The archive from the evaluation is currently held by CA at their offices in Milton Keynes. The archive will be deposited with Hertfordshire Museum. A summary of information from this project, set out within Appendix B will be entered onto the OASIS online database of archaeological projects in Britain.

5. RESULTS (FIGS 3-5)

- 5.1 The natural geological substrate (1002), consisting of mixed yellow grey and orange sands was revealed at an average depth of 0.77m below present ground level (??m aOD; Fig. 3).
- 5.2 Cut into the natural geological substrate (1002), north-east/south-west orientated rectangular foundation cut 1003 measured 10m long by 6m wide. This was directly overlain by cellar floor 1005 (top of floor 114.25m aOD), constructed of red brick and concrete. Constructed directly from this floor surface were red-brick walls 1004, which represented the external walls of an extensive cellar (Figs 4 & 5; top of wall 115.95m aOD). This was constructed of red-bricks (L. 220mm, B. 105mm, D. 70mm), in an English bond. The walls each measured 0.73m wide, with up to 17 courses exposed (1.7m deep).
- 5.3 Butting the external face of walls 1004 was made-ground deposit 1001, which comprised a layer of mixed sand and gravel. This would have formed the bedding layer for a tarmac roadway recorded within the evaluation (CA 2016b). Overlying all these deposits was mixed silty sand and rubble demolition layer 1000.

5.4 No artefactual material pre-dating the modern period was recovered during the watching brief.

6. DISCUSSION

6.1 The archaeological works have been successful in characterising the development of the site in the late 19th to early 20th centuries, and have identified evidence of the structures depicted on 19th-century cartographic sources.

6.2 No evidence for archaeological remains associated with the postulated line of the Roman road, which is projected to pass through the site, were identified.

6.3 The 1840 Tithe map of the Parish of St Michael's shows the area as open ground, with Townsend Farm, a large rectangular farm complex recorded to the immediate north within the current site boundary.

6.4 The First Edition Ordnance Survey Map (1878) depicts a building in the location of Maryland Convent, associated with Townsend Farm. This appears to indicate that elements of the current building were constructed at this location between 1840 and 1878, although the extent to which original elements survive is uncertain.

6.5 The surviving elements of Maryland Convent relate to an undistinguished Victorian structure, and are considered to comprise a non-designated heritage asset of limited heritage significance.

6.6 Despite the archaeological potential of the application area (see archaeological background above), with the exception of the basement for the former Maryland Convent building, the watching brief identified no archaeological remains within the area of observed groundworks. The absence of archaeological deposits may indicate that structural remains associated with Maryland convent had potentially truncated any possible archaeology that might have existed within the development area, or that such deposits did not extend into the development area.

7. CA PROJECT TEAM

The fieldwork and reporting were undertaken by Anne Templeton. The illustrations were prepared by Esther Escudero. The archive has been compiled by Emily Evans,

and prepared for deposition by Hazel O'Neill. The project was managed for CA by Stuart Joyce.

8. REFERENCES

- BGS (British Geological Survey) 2017 *Geology of Britain Viewer*
<http://mapapps.bgs.ac.uk/geologyofbritain/home.html>. Accessed 5 September 2017
- CA (Cotswold Archaeology) 2015 *Land off Townsend Drive, St Albans, Hertfordshire: Archaeological Desk-Based Assessment*, CA Report No. **14502**
- CA (Cotswold Archaeology) 2016a *Land off Townsend Drive, St Albans, Hertfordshire: Written Scheme of Investigation for an Archaeological Watching Brief*
- CA (Cotswold Archaeology) 2016b *Land off Townsend Drive, St Albans, Hertfordshire: Archaeological Evaluation*, CA Report No. **16358**
- CA (Cotswold Archaeology) 2016c *Maryland Convent, Townsend Drive, St Albans, Hertfordshire. Historic Building Recording*, CA Report No. **16436**
- CIfA (Chartered Institute for Archaeologists) 2014 *Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Watching Brief*. Chartered Institute for Archaeologists (Reading)

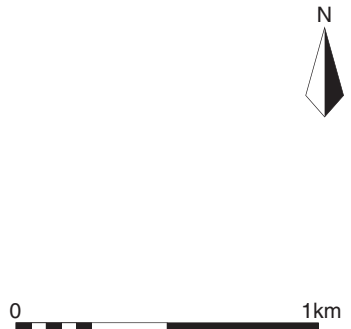
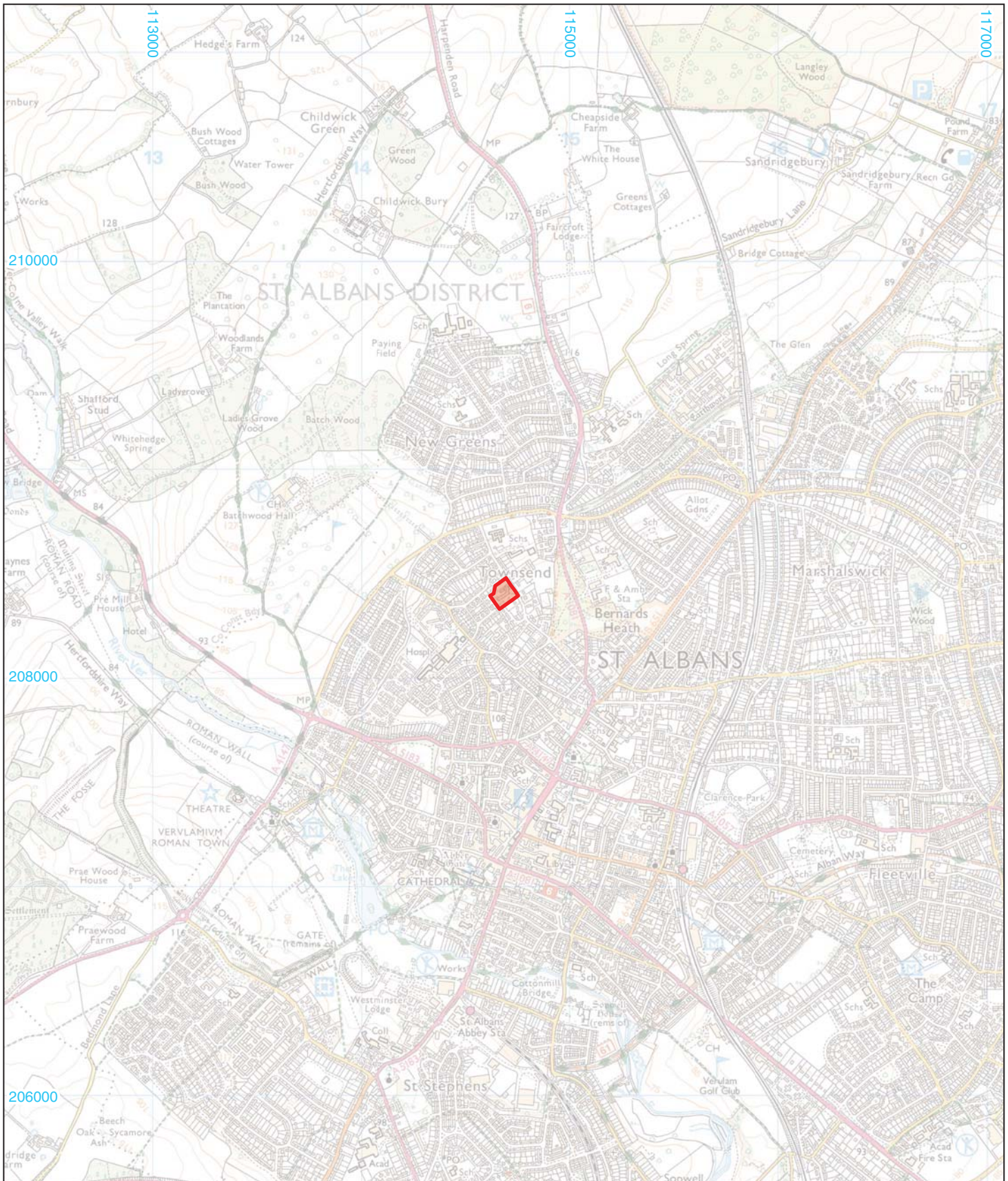


APPENDIX A: CONTEXT DESCRIPTIONS

Context	Type	Fill of	Context Interpretation	Context Description	Length (m)	Width (m)	Depth/thickness (m)	Diameter (m)
1000	Layer		Rubble demolition layer	Mixed silty sand with 75% modern brick and CBM inclusions	n/a	n/a	0.2	n/a
1001	Layer		Made ground	Light yellowish grey sand with small rounded pebbles, 10% and CBM inclusions	n/a	n/a	0.57	n/a
1002	Layer		Natural	Mixed yellowish grey and orange sands	n/a	n/a	>0.93	n/a
1003	Cut		Cellar	Rectangular construction cut	10	6	1.7	n/a
1004	structure	1003	Cellar walls	English bond re-brick structure	6 by 10	0.73	1.7	n/a
1005	Structure	1003	Cellar floor	Cement and red-brick floor	6 by 10			

APPENDIX B: OASIS REPORT FORM

PROJECT DETAILS		
Project Name	Land off Townsend Drive, St Albans, Hertfordshire.	
Short description	<p>An archaeological watching brief was undertaken by Cotswold Archaeology during demolition groundworks associated with the redevelopment at land off Townsend Drive, St Albans, Hertfordshire.</p> <p>Principle interest in the site derives from the presence of Maryland Convent, a non-designated Victorian structure.</p> <p>The remains of a cellar associated with the former Maryland Convent were recorded prior to demolition, although no evidence of any earlier building phase was identified.</p> <p>Despite the archaeological potential of the site, no further features or deposits of archaeological interest were observed during the monitored groundworks, and no artefactual material pre-dating the modern period was recovered.</p>	
Project dates	4th September 2017	
Project type	Watching Brief	
Previous work	<p>CA (Cotswold Archaeology) 2015 <i>Land off Townsend Drive, St Albans, Hertfordshire: Archaeological Desk-Based Assessment</i>. CA Report No. 14502</p> <p>CA (Cotswold Archaeology) 2016 <i>Land off Townsend Drive, St Albans, Hertfordshire. Archaeological Evaluation</i>, CA Report No. 16358</p> <p>CA (Cotswold Archaeology) 2016 <i>Maryland Convent, Townsend Drive, St Albans, Hertfordshire. Historic Building Recording</i>, CA Report No. 16436</p>	
Future work	Unknown	
PROJECT LOCATION		
Site Location	Land off Townsend Road, St Albans	
Study area (M ² /ha)	60sqm	
Site co-ordinates	514702 208407	
PROJECT CREATORS		
Name of organisation	Cotswold Archaeology	
Project Brief originator	Cotswold Archaeology	
Project Design (WSI) originator	Cotswold Archaeology	
Project Manager	Stuart Joyce	
Project Supervisor	Anne Templeton	
MONUMENT TYPE	None	
SIGNIFICANT FINDS	None	
PROJECT ARCHIVES	Intended final location of archive	Content
Physical	n/a	None
Paper	Hertfordshire Museum	Record sheets
Digital	Hertfordshire Museum	Digital photographs, GPS survey
BIBLIOGRAPHY		
CA (Cotswold Archaeology) 2017 <i>Land off Townsend Drive, St Albans, Hertfordshire. Archaeological Watching Brief</i> CA Report No. 17520		



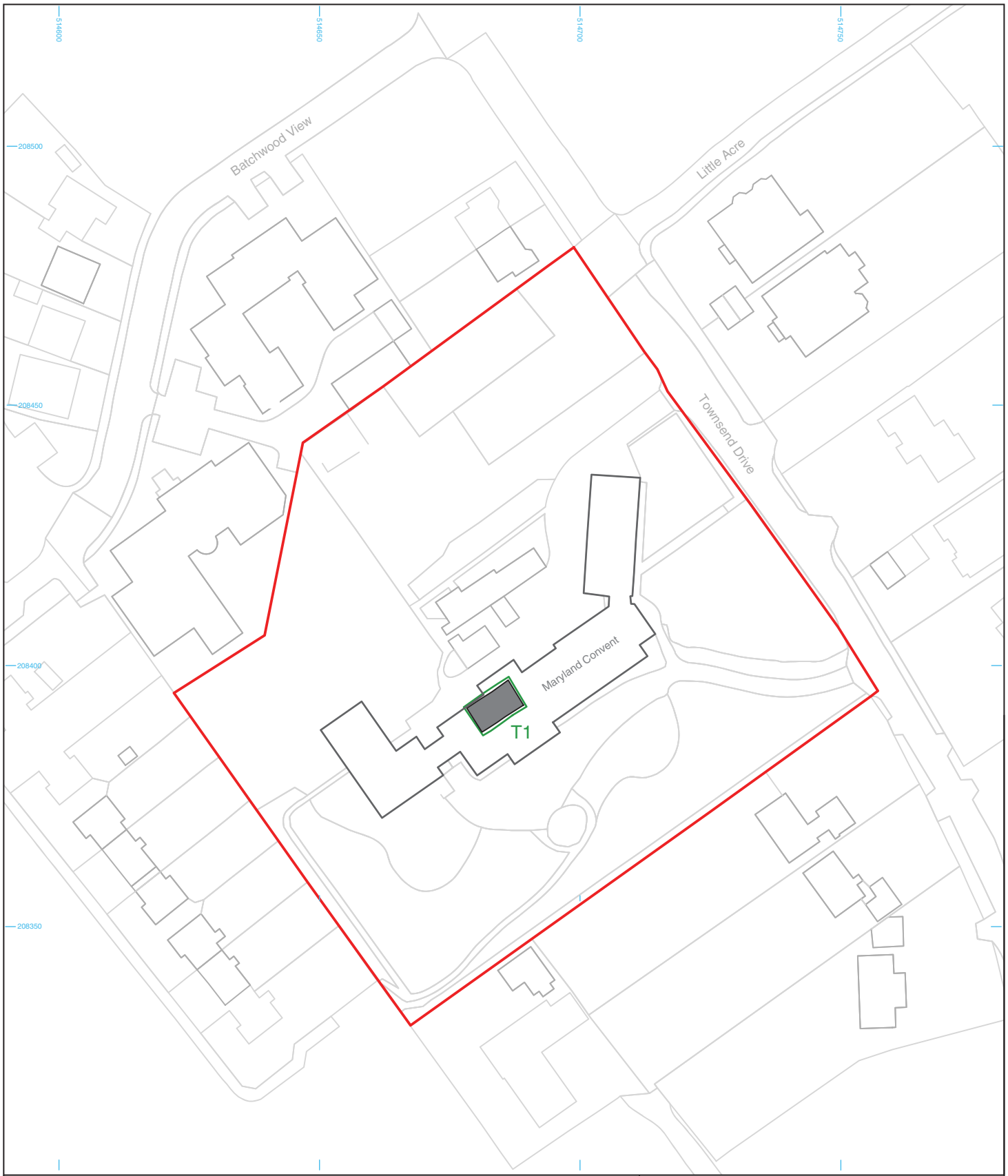
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PROJECT TITLE
 Land off Townsend Drive, St Albans
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FIGURE TITLE
 Site location plan

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DRAWN BY EE	PROJECT NO. 660969	FIGURE NO.
CHECKED BY DJB	DATE 11/09/2017	
APPROVED BY SJ	SCALE@A4 1:25,000	1



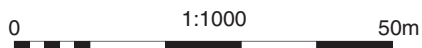
- Site boundary
- Observed groundworks
- Floor surface



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PROJECT TITLE
 Land off Townsend Drive, St Albans
 Hertfordshire

FIGURE TITLE
 The site, showing area of groundworks





3

Site, looking south-east



4

Site, looking north-west



5

Site, looking east


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PROJECT TITLE
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FIGURE TITLE
 Photographs

DRAWN BY	EE	PROJECT NO.	660969	FIGURE NO.
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APPROVED BY	SJ	SCALE@A3	NA	

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