Archaeological Services & Consultancy Ltd

ARCHAEOLOGICAL ASSESSMENTS:
STAGE 2: PRELIMINARY TARGETED FIELD EVALUATION
OLD TOWN, HEMEL HEMPSTEAD
HERTFORDSHIRE
(LOCAL ALLOCATION 2)

NGR: TL 0554 0815

on behalf of Dacorum Borough Council

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August 2013

ASC: 1605/DHI/LA2/2r

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Site Data

ASC site code:	DHI	*Project no:*	1605
OASIS ref:	1555585	*Event/Accession no:*	n/a
County:	Hertfordshire		
Village/Town:	Hemel Hempstead		
Civil Parish:	Hemel Hempstead		
NGR (to 8 figs):	TL 0554 0815		
Extent of site:	2.8 ha (6.9 acres)		
Present use:	Green open space		
Planning proposal:	Housing development		
Local Planning Authority:	Dacorum Borough Council		
Planning application ref/date:	tba		
Date of fieldwork:	2 & 5 July 2013		
Client:	Dacorum Borough Council (DBC) Civic Centre Marlowes Hemel Hempstead Hertfordshire HP1 1HH		
Contact name:	John Chapman (DBC) Mike Evans (DBC)		

Internal Quality Check

Primary Author:	David Fell	*Date:*	25th July 2013
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Edited/Checked By:		*Date:*	25th July 2013

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Cover: General view of the site during the evaluation

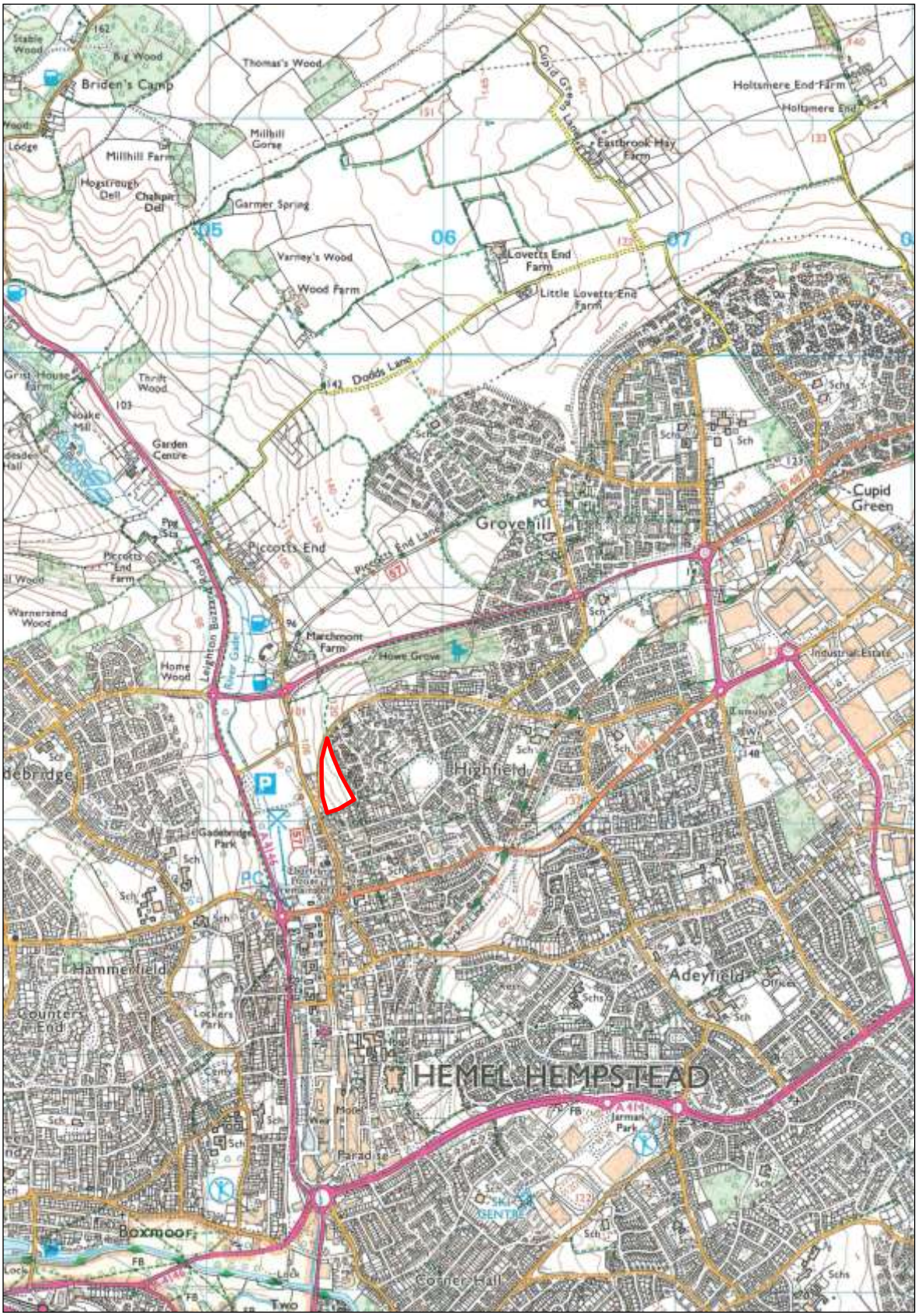

Figure 1: General location *(Scale 1:25,000)*

Summary

In July 2013 a preliminary targeted field evaluation was undertaken on land at Old Hemel Hempstead (LA2), Hertfordshire. Four trial trenches were excavated in order to test for the presence of a possible field system and a number of magnetic anomalies identified during a geophysical survey. No significant archaeological features or artefacts were observed and no features which could be related to the possible field system and the geophysical anomalies were present. The natural soil sequence across the site was recorded and undisturbed natural stratum was defined in each trench.

1. Introduction

1.1 In July 2013 *Archaeological Services and Consultancy Ltd* (ASC) undertook an archaeological evaluation of land adjacent to Fletcher Way, Hemel Hempstead, Hertfordshire. The project was commissioned by *Dacorum Borough Council*, and was carried out according to a method statement prepared by ASC (Zeepvat 2013) following compilation of an initial desk-based assessment (Hunn 2013) and geophysical survey (Stratascan 2013), and approved by *Herts CC Historic Environment Unit* (HEU), archaeological advisor (AA) to the local planning authority (LPA), *Dacorum Borough Council*.

1.2 *Planning Background*

This evaluation was required under the terms of the *National Planning Policy Framework* (NPPF) as a preliminary evaluation, in order to inform proposals for the development of the site.

1.3 *Archaeological Services & Consultancy Ltd*

ASC is an independent archaeological practice providing a full range of archaeological services including consultancy, field evaluation, mitigation and post-excavation studies, historic building recording and analysis. ASC is recognised as a *Registered Organisation* by the Institute for Archaeologists and is also accredited ISO 9001, in recognition of its high standards and working practices.

1.4 *The Site*

1.4.1 *Location & Description*

Area LA2 lies on the western periphery of Old Hemel Hempstead. It comprises a triangular area of *c.*2.8ha (NGR. TL 0554 0815: Fig. 1). Modern housing developments lie to the east and south, a minor road named Cherry Bounce forms the immediate southern boundary, and Fletcher Way defines the northwest boundary. The land slopes steeply down from east to west toward the floor of the Gade valley and is currently down to grass. A number of mature trees are present. Access is from the west, off Fletcher Way and from the south via Cherry Bounce.

1.4.2 *Geology*

Soils of the area are derived from chalky drift and chalk, belonging to the Coombe 1 Association which is described as '*well drained calcareous fine silty*

soils, deep in valley bottoms, shallow to chalk on valley sides in places. Slight risk of water erosion' (Soil Survey 1983, 511f). The solid geology is Upper Chalk (BGS, Sheet 238). The site lies between the 100m and 120m contours.

1.4.3 *Proposed Development*

The site is identified by the local planning authority as suitable for housing development comprising construction of approximately 80 new homes, associated infrastructure and services.

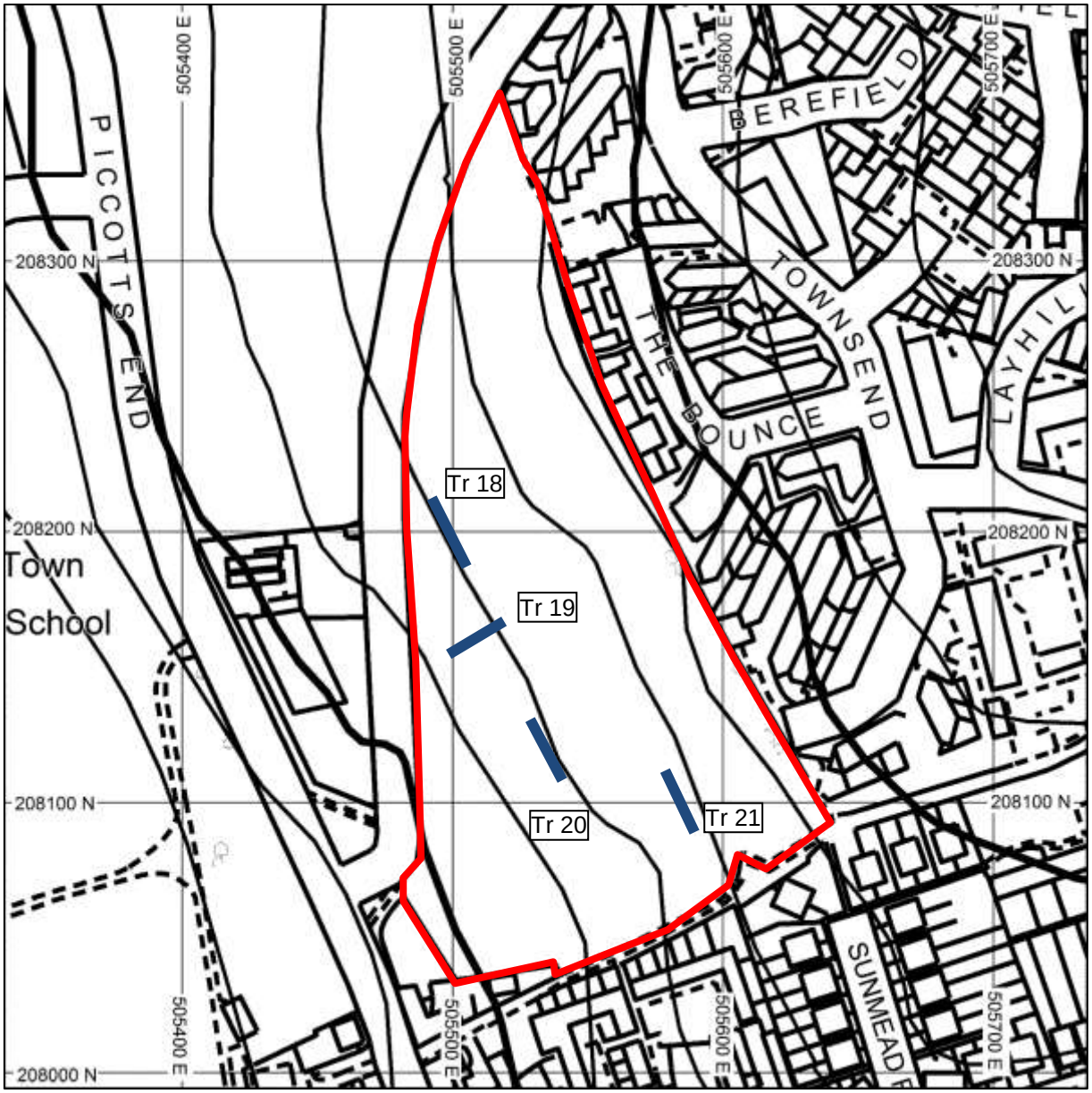

Figure 2: Site plan with trench locations *(Scale 1:2,500)*

2. Aims & Methods

2.1 *Aims*

As described in the project design, the aims of the evaluation were:

- to test the results of the geophysical survey
- to provide a baseline assessment of the type, date, quality and extent of heritage assets present on each site.

2.2 *Standards*

The work conformed to the project design, to the relevant sections of the Institute for Archaeologists' *Code of Conduct* (IFA 2010) and *Standard & Guidance Notes* (IFA 2009), to the Association of Local Government Archaeological Officers East of England Region *Standards for Field Archaeology in the East of England* (ALGAO 2003), and to the relevant sections of ASC's own *Operations Manual.*

2.3 *Methods*

The work was carried out according to the project design, which proposed:

- the excavation of trial trenches comprising a maximum 0.5% sample primarily to test geophysical anomalies, and also areas free from anomalies.

2.4 *Constraints*

No constraints were encountered and the fieldwork was undertaken as specified in the written scheme of investigation.

3. Archaeological & Historical Background

3.1 The following section provides a summary of the readily available archaeological and historical background to the development site and its environs. The site lies within an area of archaeological and historical interest, and has the potential to reveal evidence of a range of periods.

This section has been compiled with information from the initial desk-based assessment (Hunn 2013). HER = Historic Environment Record number.

3.2 There are no archaeological sites or artefacts currently known to exist within the site but the presence of a possible field system has been suggested in the southeast part of the site (HER 18267). A number of archaeological sites are known in the surrounding area, notably Roman period remains in the valley of the river Gade, to the south of the site. However, aerial photographic evidence has revealed the presence of a small field system, possibly belonging to the prehistoric period and a number of anomalies, of possible archaeological origin, were identified during the geophysical survey.

3.3 The upper slope has been artificially landscaped while the lower slopes appear too steep to have been chosen for settlement but this is unproven.

4 Results

4.1 *Introduction*:

This section provides a summary of the results of the evaluation in Local Allocation Area LA2. Trenches are labelled in sequence with other areas in the Local Assessments evaluation project and the trenches forming the subject of this report are numbered 18-21. The trenches were located in order to test anomalies detected during the geophysical survey while also providing as wide a sample as possible of the site. Full descriptions, in tabulated form, are provided in Appendix 1.

Four trenches were excavated (Fig. 2) using a mechanical excavator fitted with a 1.6m wide toothless bucket operating under continuous archaeological supervision. The turf and topsoil were separated and each trench was cleaned sufficiently to determine if archaeological remains were present. Basic trench information was recorded on pro-forma sheets and a photographic record was made. The spoil heaps were scanned with a metal detector.

4.2 *Results*

The trenches were all *c.*300mm deep. The upper part of the profile comprised turf and mid greyish brown silty clay topsoil, which was *c.*100mm thick. A clear subsoil layer was present which comprised mid greyish brown silty clay with occasional chalk fragments and was *c.*100mm thick.

The underlying natural strata was encountered at a depth of *c.*200-250mm. It varied considerably across the site and comprised chalk with occasional patches of silt and clay near the southeast corner of the site (Trench 21). The proportion of chalk decreased downslope to the north and east, notably in Trench 20 where the strata largely comprised silt and clay with a patch of chalk in the centre.

No significant archaeological features or artefacts were present in the trenches. No modern service runs were present and, within the areas of the trenches, the soils and underlying strata are undisturbed.

4.3 *Confidence Rating*

The fieldwork was undertaken in generally dry and sunny weather conditions with occasional light rain. No significant constraints were encountered and a high confidence rating is attached to the results of the fieldwork.

5 Conclusions

5.1 The natural soil sequence was similar across the site and comprised turf, topsoil and subsoil. The underlying strata was more variable and comprised chalk to the southeast (Trench 21) giving way to a more mixed deposit containing silt and clay as the land falls to the river valley to the north and west.

5.2 The trenches were positioned in order to test a number of magnetic anomalies revealed in the geophysical survey (Stratascan 2013) and traces of earthworks which appear on aerial photographs (Hunn 2013, HER 18267). No traces of earthworks or associated archaeological features were present in the trenches and the geophysical anomalies do not correspond with archaeological features or specific soil variations within the trenches.

5.3 Significant archaeological features were not observed during the fieldwork. This evaluation comprised only a sub 0.5% sample of the site and in line with the NPPF a further, more intensive phase of evaluation may be required, prior to the commencement of development.

5.4 The framework for the management of heritage issues in the planning system is currently set out in the Town & Country Planning Act and the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF). Decisions relating to archaeological matters within the area of the site are taken by the local planning authority, acting on the advice of Hertfordshire County Council Historic Environment Unit (HCC).

5.5 The Dacorum Borough Council Local Plan 1991-2011 (adopted 2004) contains the following heritage related policy:

- **Archaeology: Policy 118**: Important Archaeological Remains. This policy provides general policy guidance on archaeology and also lists the Scheduled Ancient Monuments and Areas of Archaeological Significance within the borough. Policy 118 is relevant because it refers to the settings of the defined sites, as well as the sites themselves.

The Dacorum Core Strategy will be the principal document in the Council's Local Planning Framework. A public examination into the draft Core Strategy has taken place, the inspectors report has been received and the Council hopes to adopt the plan in September 2013.
The following Core Strategy policy is relevant.

- **Policy CS27**: Quality of the Historic Environment. This policy states that: 'Features of known or potential archaeological interest will be surveyed, recorded and wherever possible retained'.

6. Acknowledgements

The assessment was commissioned by John Chapman on behalf of Dacorum Borough Council. Thanks are due to Mike Evans for arranging the granting of the access licence. Inputs and assistance from Kate Batt, HEU Archaeological Officer, and Isobel Thompson, HEU Historic Environment Officer are gratefully acknowledged. The assistance of the staff of HALS and the English Heritage Archive is also gratefully acknowledged.

The project was managed for ASC by Bob Zeepvat BA MI*f*A. The fieldwork was undertaken by Jonathan Hunn BA PhD FSA MI*f*A and David Fell BA MA MI*f*A. The report was prepared by David Fell and edited by Bob Zeepvat.

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. Site record drawings
7. List of photographs
8. B/W prints & negatives
9. CDROM with copies of all digital files.

7.2 The archive will be deposited with the *Dacorum Heritage Trust*.

8. References

Standards & Specifications

ALGAO 2003 *Standards for Field Archaeology in the East of England.* East Anglian Archaeology Occasional Paper **14**.

EH 1991 *The Management of Archaeological Projects, 2nd edition.* English Heritage (London).

IFA 2010 Institute for Archaeologists' *Code of Conduct.*

IFA (various dates) Institute for Archaeologists' *Standard & Guidance* documents *(Desk-Based Assessments 2011, Watching Briefs 2008, Evaluations 2009, Excavations 2008, Investigation and Recording of Standing Buildings 2008, Finds 2009).*

Zeepvat R J, 2013 *Dacorum Local Allocations Development Plan: Project Design For Stage 2: Targeted Field Evaluation*. Archaeological Services and Consultancy Ltd document no. **1605/DHI/3**

Secondary Sources

BGS *British Geological Survey 1:50,000 Series, Solid & Drift Geology.*

Hunn J R, 2013 *Archaeological Assessment. Stage 1: Desk-Based Assessment: Old Town, Hemel Hempstead, Hertfordshire (Local Allocation 2).* Archaeological Services and Consultancy Ltd report no. 1605/DHI/LA2

Soil Survey 1983 *1:250,000 Soil Map of England and Wales, and accompanying legend* (Harpenden).

Stratascan 2013 *Dacorum Local Allocations. Magnetometer Surveys*. Stratascan

Appendix 1: Trench Summary Table

Trench 18

Max Dimensions (m)					
Length	20m	**Width**	1.6m	**Depth**	0.25m

Levels	
Trench top NW	110.00m OD
Trench base NW	109.75m OD
Trench top SE	110.00m OD
Trench base SE	109.75m OD

NGR Co-ordinates			
NW	TL 05492 08212	**SE**	05506 08188
Orientation		Northwest to southeast	
Reason for Trench		Testing geophysical anomaly	

Context	Type	Description and Interpretation	Width (max: mm)	Thickness (max: mm)	Depth (BGL: mm)
182	Layer	Turf over mid greyish brown silty clay. Topsoil	1.6m+	100	0
181	Layer	Mid brown silty clay with occ chalk frags. Subsoil	1.6m+	*c.*50	100
180	Layer	Abraded chalk mixed with silt & clay. Natural stratum	1.6m+	-	*c.*250

Trench 19

Max Dimensions (m)					
Length	20m	**Width**	1.6m	**Depth**	0.25m

Levels	
Trench top NE	111.00m OD
Trench base NE	110.75m OD
Trench top SW	106.00m OD
Trench base SW	105.75m OD

NGR Co-ordinates			
NE	TL 05516 08165	**SW**	05498 08156
Orientation		Northeast to southwest	
Reason for Trench		Testing geophysical anomaly	

Context	Type	Description and Interpretation	Width (max: mm)	Thickness (max: mm)	Depth (BGL: mm)
192	Layer	Turf over mid greyish brown silty clay. Topsoil	1.6m+	100	0
191	Layer	Mid brown silty clay with occ chalk frags. Subsoil	1.6m+	100	100
190	Layer	Abraded chalk mixed with silt & clay. Natural stratum	1.6m+	50+	200

Trench 20

Max Dimensions (m)					
Length	20m	**Width**	1.6m	**Depth**	0.3m

Trench top NW	109.00m OD
Trench base NW	108.70m OD
Trench top SE	109.00m OD
Trench base SE	108.70m OD

NGR Co-ordinates			
NW	TL 05528 08130	**SE**	TL 05540 08110

Orientation	Northwest to southeast
Reason for Trench:	Testing geophysical anomaly

Context	Type		Width (max: mm)	Thickness (max: mm)	Depth (BGL: mm)
202	Layer	Turf over mid greyish brown silty clay. Topsoil	1.6m+	100	0
201	Layer	Mid brown silty clay with occ chalk frags. Subsoil	1.6m+	100	100
200	Layer	Mid greyish brown silt & clay with patch of chalk in the centre (As Tr 21). Natural stratum	1.6m+	-	300

Trench 21

Max Dimensions (m)					
Length	20m	**Width**	1.6m	**Depth**	0.2m

Levels	
Trench top NW	113.00m OD
Trench base NW	112.80m OD
Trench top SE	113.00m OD
Trench base SE	112.80m OD

NGR Co-ordinates			
NW	TL 05574 08112	**SE**	05590 08090

Orientation	Northwest to southeast
Reason for Trench	Testing geophysical anomaly

Context	Type	Description and Interpretation	Width (max: mm)	Thickness (max: mm)	Depth (BGL: mm)
212	Layer	Turf over mid brown silty clay. Topsoil	1.6m+	100	0
211	Layer	Mixed mid brown silty with occasional flint nodules. Subsoil	1.6m+	100	100
210	Layer	Chalk with occ. Patches of silt and clay and flint nodules. Natural stratum	1.6m+	-	200

Appendix 2: List of Photographs

SITE NAME: Old Town, Hemel Hempstead			**SITE NO/CODE: 1605/DHI/LA2**
Shot	B&W	Digital	Subject
1	✓	✓	Trench 21 looking southeast
2		✓	General view across the site looking southwest
3		✓	General view across the site looking northwest
4		✓	General view across the site looking northwest
5	✓	✓	Trench 20 looking southeast
6		✓	Trench 20 looking southeast
7		✓	Trench 21 after backfilling looking southeast
8		✓	Trench 20 after backfilling looking southeast
9		✓	View of Trench 19 under excavation looking northwest
10	✓	✓	View of Trench 19 looking south
11	✓	✓	View of Trench 18 looking northwest

Appendix 3: ASC OASIS Form

PROJECT DETAILS			
Project Name:	Dacorum Local Allocations LA2	OASIS reference:	1555585
Short Description:	Evaluation		
Project Type:	Evaluation		
Previous work: (eg. SMR refs)	N/A	Site status: (eg. none, SAM, listed)	none
Current land use:	Recreational	Future work: (yes/no/unknown)	unknown
Monument type:	None	Monument period:	None
Significant finds: (artefact type & period)	None		
PROJECT LOCATION			
County:	Hertfordshire	OS reference: (8 figs min)	TL 0554 0815
Site address: (+ postcode if known)	Hemel Hempstead HP2 5AB		
Study area: (sq. m. / ha)	2.8 ha	Height OD: (metres)	*c.*115m OD
PROJECT CREATORS			
Organisation:	Archaeological Services & Consultancy Ltd		
Project brief originator:	Herts C C	Project design originator:	ASC Ltd
Project Manager:	David Fell	Director/Supervisor:	J R Hunn
Sponsor / funding body:	Dacorum Borough Council		
PROJECT DATE			
Start date:	2 July 2013	End date:	5 July 2013
PROJECT ARCHIVES			
	Location (Accession no.)	Content (eg. pottery, animal bone, files/sheets)	
Physical:		Photographs	
Paper:		Site records	
Digital:		CD with all digital files	
BIBLIOGRAPHY (Journal/monograph, published or forthcoming, or unpublished client report)			
Title:	Archaeological Assessments: tage 2: Preliminary Targeted Field Evaluation Old Town, Hemel Hempstead Hertfordshire (Local Allocation 2)		
Serial title & volume:	ASC Ltd Report ref. 1605/DHI/1		
Author(s):	David Fell BA MA MIFA		
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