

Monitoring of Geotechnical Test Pits 71 - 77 South Street Bishop's Stortford.



Archaeological Watching Brief Report



September 2013

**Client: CGMS on behalf of
Churchill Retirement Limited**

OA East Report No: 1511
OASIS No: oxfordar3-156688
NGR: TL 48869 20901

**Monitoring of Geotechnical Test Pits,
71 - 77 South Street, Bishop's Stortford.**

Watching Brief

Site Code: XHTBSS13

HHER No. TBC

Date of Works: 06/08/13

Report No: 1511

Excavator: Pat Moan

Client: CgMs

Report Date: September 2013

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Summary

On the 6th August 2013, OA East carried out an archaeological watching brief at 71-77 South Street, Bishop's Stortford (TL 48869 20901). The monitoring was carried out during the excavation of four geotechnical test pits prior to demolition of the buildings. In three of the test pits, an alluvial layer was encountered which was found to contain post-medieval artefacts.

1 GEOLOGY AND TOPOGRAPHY

- 1.1.1 The site is located on alluvial clays associated with the River Stort, which overlies glaciofluvial sands and gravels. The bedrock geology is Lewes Nodular Chalk Formation And Seaford Chalk Formation.
- 1.1.2 The area of investigation is located within a derelict commercial estate off South Street, Bishop's Stortford and is approximately 0.3ha in size. It is bounded to the north by No. 69 South Street and properties to the rear of Station Road, to the east by the River Stort Navigation, to the south by No. 81 South Street and to the west by South Street (Dicks, S. 2012).
- 1.1.3 The site lies on the west side of the River Stort valley, with the immediate surroundings sloping gently south-east towards the river. Levels within the site fall from 61.45m AOD at the north-western corner to 56.3m AOD near the south-eastern corner of the site (Dicks, S. 2012).

2 ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND

- 2.1.1 Due to the site being located on an alluvial floodplain, it is unlikely much activity has taken place in the vicinity. Prehistoric material is very scarce in the surrounding area. Finds of this date from the general Bishop's Stortford area include the cutting end of a Neolithic polished axe recovered from the bank of the River Stort c.1880 (HER 2847 at TL 49 21), and a Bronze axe (HER 4895 at TL 49 21).
- 2.1.2 To the north-east of the site a Late Iron Age or Early Roman river channel was identified during environmental sampling at Jackson Square (HER 13285 at TL 48928 21190). The study site lies some distance to the south of the nearest Roman settlement, in Bishop's Stortford.
- 2.1.3 The site has no finds of Saxon or early medieval date nearby, and lies outside of the historical centre of late medieval Bishop's Stortford. The area was most likely meadow land during this period, and was probably seasonally flooded. It is located approximately 480m from Waytemore Castle (HHER 28), the nearest Scheduled Ancient Monument, whose age is disputed. It is most likely of Norman construction, with the masonry castle being built some time in the 12th century.
- 2.1.4 During the post-medieval period, Bishop's Stortford expanded rapidly, due to being one of the largest suppliers of Malt to London breweries. As a result, the River Stort navigation was constructed, opening in 1769. This watercourse runs along the eastern boundary of site. The site was still undeveloped during this time, and is seen on the Bishop's Stortford Tithe map of 1839 as meadow.
- 2.1.5 By the late 19th century, warehouses and granaries had been constructed along the River Stort Navigation. The 1898 OS map shows the site being occupied by a number of granary buildings, situated around a small dock, named Swan Dock (HER 18247). Two of the smaller timber clad buildings from this period still stand on the north-western part of site. Swan Dock itself fell out of use when the malt industry declined, and was backfilled at some point in the mid 20th century (Dicks, S. 2012).

3 METHODOLOGY

- 3.1.1 The objective of this watching brief was to determine as far as reasonably possible the presence/absence, location, nature, extent, date, quality, condition and significance of any surviving archaeological deposits within the development area.
- 3.1.2 The Brief required that the machine excavation of four geotechnical test pits were to be monitored. The test pits were 2m long, 0.5m wide and of varying depths. All were stopped once groundwater was encountered.
- 3.1.3 Six boreholes were being drilled at the same time as the geotechnical test pits. These were not monitored by Oxford Archaeology East as a geoarchaeologist from another company was on site to monitor and sample them.
- 3.1.4 All archaeological features and deposits were recorded using OA East's *pro-forma* sheets. Trench locations, plans and sections were recorded at appropriate scales digital photographs were taken of all relevant features and deposits.
- 3.1.5 Site conditions were were dry, with sunshine and occasional cloud. Ground conditions were dry, but with a rather high water table.

4 RESULTS

4.1 Test Pit 1

- 4.1.1 Test Pit 1 was 2m long, 0.5m wide and 1.1m in depth. 0.5m of modern made ground overlay a dark brownish grey silty clay alluvial deposit. This deposit was observed to be at least 0.6m thick before groundwater was encountered and excavation was stopped. No finds were discovered.

4.2 Test Pit 2

- 4.2.1 Test Pit 2 was 2m long, 0.5m wide and 2.1m in depth. It was sealed by 1.1m of modern made ground, below which was a 1m thick layer of a dark brownish grey silty clay alluvium (Layer 1). A large quantity of animal bone, early post-medieval brick and tile, and two sherds of post-medieval pottery were recovered from this layer, from between approximately 1.5m and 2m below the surface.

4.3 Test Pit 3

- 4.3.1 Test Pit 3 was 2m long, 0.5m wide and 1m deep. The test pit was excavated entirely through modern made ground. As a result of the close proximity of the River Stort Navigation, ground water was encountered at 1m depth and so excavation was stopped.

4.4 Test pit 4

- 4.4.1 Test pit 4 was 2m wide, and 2.3m deep and was sealed by 1m of modern made ground. Below this layer were foundations, possibly for one of the 19th or 20th century granaries. These were two brick courses thick with 0.3m of their width exposed within the test pit. Once encountered, the geotechnical test pit was extended slightly to the west in order to minimise disturbance to the bricks. The bricks were machine made and frogged, so were not retained. The foundation trench was cut into a dark brownish grey alluvial silty clay that was observed to a depth of 1.3m, whereupon the groundwater was encountered. No finds were recorded.

5 FINDS SUMMARY

5.1 Pottery

by Carole Fletcher

- 5.1.1 In total, two sherds of early post-medieval pottery were recovered from Alluvium Layer 1 in Test Pit 2. The first is a large, fine glazed, red earthenware sherd giving an almost complete profile from a partially internally glazed shallow bowl or dish. This appears to be sooted internally and externally, including across breaks, which suggests that this might have occurred post-deposition. The second sherd is part of a rim from a jug or internally glazed jar, also in a fine glazed red earthenware. The fabrics are most likely from Essex, possibly Harlow and dating from the 16th to mid 17th century.

Context	Fabric	Vessel Form	Count	Weight (g)
1	Glazed Red Earthenware	Bowl or Dish (near complete profile 420mm in diameter)	1	121
		Jug or Jar (rim sherd 160 mm in diameter)	1	42

5.2 Animal Bone

by Chris Faine

- 5.2.1 A total of 955g of animal bone was recovered from Alluvium Layer 1 in Test Pit 2. The assemblage consisted of twenty fragments with eight identifiable to species (40%). These consisted of an adult femur, rib fragments and five portions of horncore. Although badly preserved, three of the horncores were identified (from metrical criteria) as coming from young adult females along with two juveniles.

5.3 Brick and Ceramic Building Material

- 5.3.1 In all, one brick and four fragments of Ceramic Building Material (CBM) were recovered from Alluvium Layer 1. The brick dates to the 17th century, and the CBM is likely to be contemporary with it.

Context	Material	Weight	Date	Quantity
1	Brick	1304g	17th Century	1
1	CBM	357g	17th Century	4

6 CONCLUSIONS

- 6.1.1 Given the site's close proximity to the River Stort Navigation the presence of Alluvium Layer 1, which was seen in three of the test pits, was not unexpected. However, a surprisingly large amount of archaeological material was recovered from this layer in Test Pit 2. This was probably deposited within alluvium accumulating as a result of the periodic flooding of the River Stort, or during the gradual silting of the river.

- 6.1.2 No evidence for Swan Dock was observed. The modern hardcore and made ground seen in Test Pit 3 most likely represented backfill of this dock; its maximum depth was not established due to groundwater stopping excavation. Evidence from the historic maps would suggest the dock was located underneath the current warehouse on the eastern part of site.
- 6.1.3 The foundations uncovered in Test Pit 4 were thought to be part of one of the granaries that were on the site during the 19th and 20th century. However, the historical maps do not show any building within the area at any period in the past, with the area being a yard for the duration of activity. This feature may instead represent a boundary wall related to a granary that was nearby.
- 6.1.4 The high proportion of horn cores recovered from the alluvium may indicate nearby activity related to butchery, horn-working or leather working during the post-medieval period. As the site is located on the southern periphery of the late medieval/early post-medieval core of the town, it is possible this processing of animal remains was kept within a small area close to the site, away from other industries, due to the unpleasant processes related to it.

7 ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

- 7.1.1 The author would like to thank Churchill Retirement Limited who commissioned and funded the archaeological work. The project was managed by Aileen Connor. The monitoring was requested by Sally Dicks from CgMs Consulting. Thanks also go to John Whittle at Crossfield Consulting for kindly allowing the reproduction of fig. 2 from the Ground Investigation Method Statement.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Gilfillan, L. 2013 Ground Investigation Method Statement. 71-77 South Street, Bishop's Stortford.
- Dicks, S. 2012 DBA: 71-77 and South Street, Commercial Centre, South Street, Bishop's Stortford

WEBSITES

British Geological Survey. 2012. *Geology of Britain viewer*. [Online] Available at: <<http://mapapps.bgs.ac.uk/geologyofbritain/home.html>>. date accessed: 07/08/13

APPENDIX A. OASIS REPORT FORM

All fields are required unless they are not applicable.

Project Details

OASIS Number	oxfordar3-156688			
Project Name	Monitoring of geotechnical test pits, 71 - 77 South Street, Bishop's Stortford.			
Project Dates (fieldwork)	Start	06-08-2013	Finish	06-08-2013
Previous Work (by OA East)	No		Future Work	Unknown

Project Reference Codes

Site Code	XHTBSS13	Planning App. No.	
HER No.		Related HER/OASIS No.	

Type of Project/Techniques Used

Prompt

Please select all techniques used:

<input type="checkbox"/> Field Observation (periodic visits)	<input type="checkbox"/> Part Excavation	<input type="checkbox"/> Salvage Record
<input type="checkbox"/> Full Excavation (100%)	<input type="checkbox"/> Part Survey	<input type="checkbox"/> Systematic Field Walking
<input type="checkbox"/> Full Survey	<input type="checkbox"/> Recorded Observation	<input type="checkbox"/> Systematic Metal Detector Survey
<input type="checkbox"/> Geophysical Survey	<input type="checkbox"/> Remote Operated Vehicle Survey	<input type="checkbox"/> Test Pit Survey
<input type="checkbox"/> Open-Area Excavation	<input type="checkbox"/> Salvage Excavation	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Watching Brief

Monument Types/Significant Finds & Their Periods

List feature types using the [NMR Monument Type Thesaurus](#) and significant finds using the [MDA Object type Thesaurus](#) together with their respective periods. If no features/finds were found, please state "none".

Monument	Period	Object	Period
Granary Foundations	Modern 1901 to Present	CBM	Post Medieval 1540 to 1901
Alluvium	Post Medieval 1540 to 1901	Pottery	Post Medieval 1540 to 1901
	Select period...	Animal Bone	Post Medieval 1540 to 1901

Project Location

County	Hertfordshire	Site Address (including postcode if possible)	
District	East hertfordshire	71-77 South Street Bishop's Stortford	
Parish	Bishop's Stortford		
HER	Herts Museum Services		
Study Area	0.3ha	National Grid Reference	TL 488 209

Project Originators

Organisation	OA EAST
Project Brief Originator	-
Project Design Originator	-
Project Manager	Aileen Connor
Supervisor	Pat Moan

Project Archives

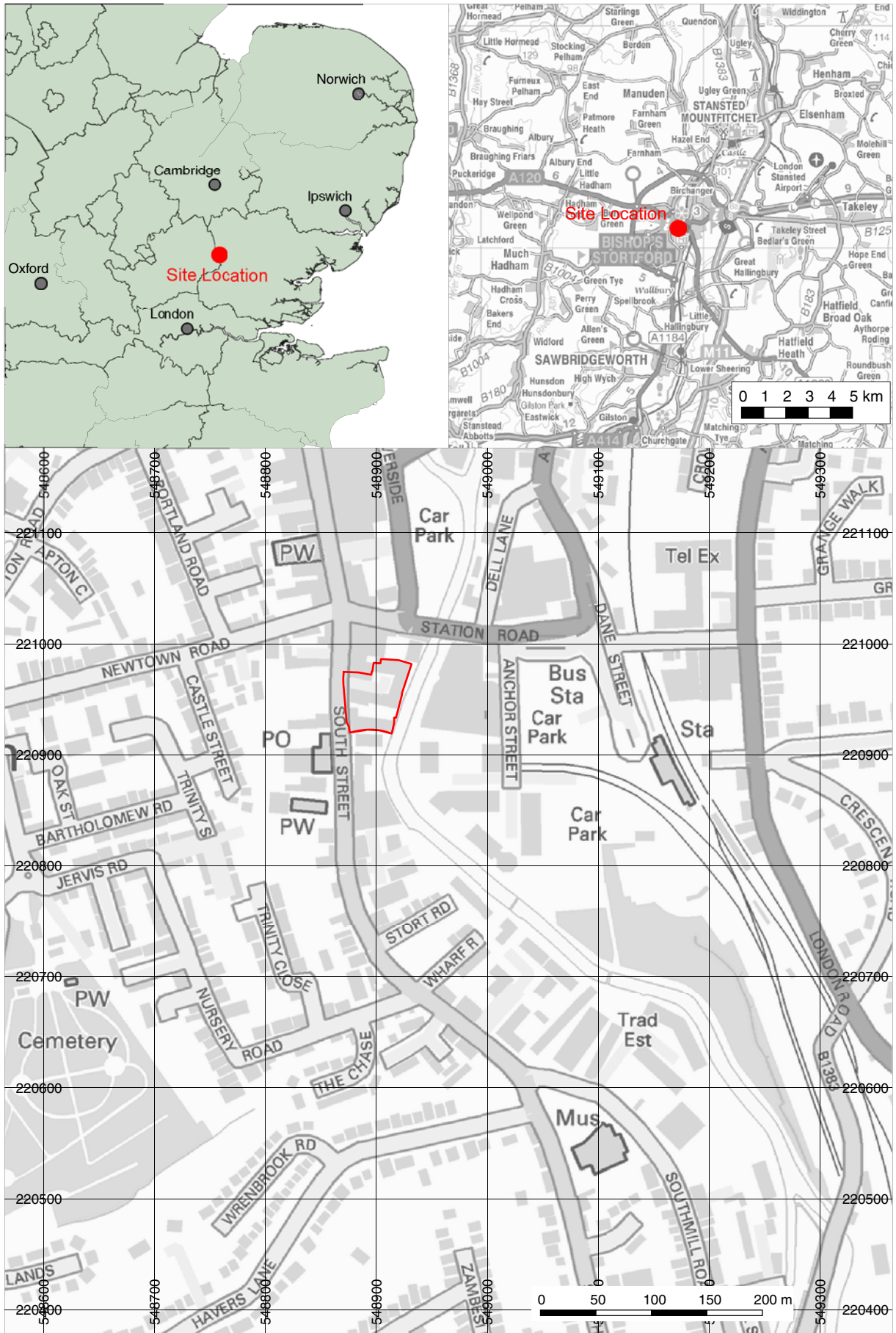
Physical Archive	Digital Archive	Paper Archive
Herts Museum Service	OA East Office, Bar Hill	Herts Museum Service
XHTBSS13	XHTBSS13	XHTBSS13

Archive Contents/Media

	Physical Contents	Digital Contents	Paper Contents
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Ceramics	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Environmental	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Glass	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Human Bones	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Industrial	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
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Metal	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
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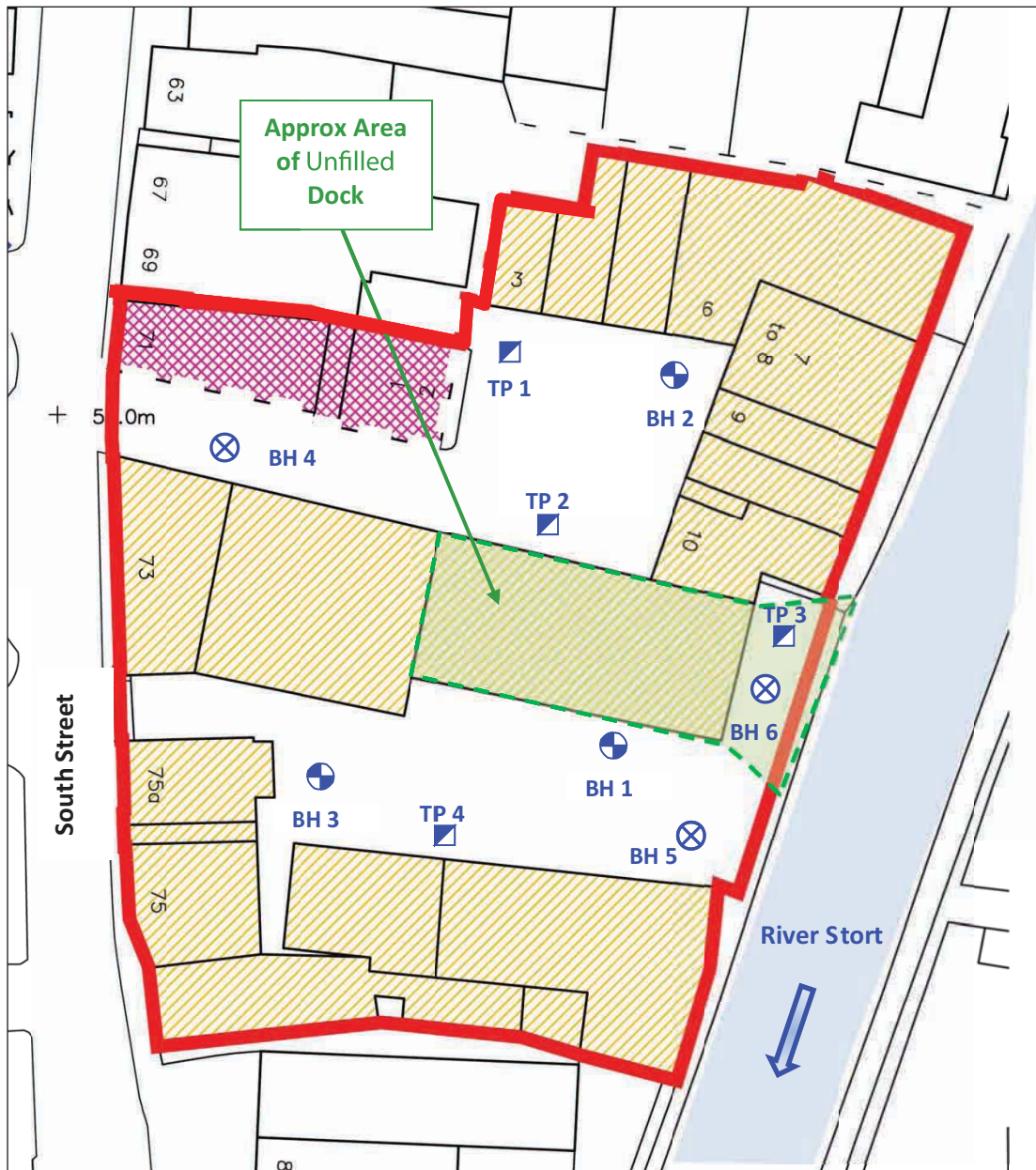
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	<input type="checkbox"/> Research/Notes
	<input type="checkbox"/> Photos
	<input type="checkbox"/> Plans
	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Report
	<input type="checkbox"/> Sections
	<input type="checkbox"/> Survey

Notes:






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Figure 1: Site location showing archaeological trenches (black) in development area (red)



LEGEND

-  **“Shallow” Borehole** within Made Ground (max depth approx. 3 m)
-  **“Deep” Borehole** – target depth 15 m to competent strata within or below Fluvio-Glacial Deposits
-  **Trial Pit** within Made Ground (will terminate on encountering water)

South Street, Bishop’s Stortford
 CCL02203
 August 2013

Figure 2: Borehole locations, data provided by Crossfield Consulting



Plate 1: Excavation of test pit 2



Plate 2: Excavation of test pit 4



Plate 3: Test pit 4, showing granary building foundations



Plate 4: Test pit 2, showing modern layers and alluvial clay



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