

**AN ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF AT
RICHMOND SCHOOL, DARLINGTON ROAD,
RICHMOND, NORTH YORKSHIRE**

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PRE-CONSTRUCT ARCHAEOLOGY

**An Archaeological Watching Brief at Richmond School, Darlington Road,
Richmond, North Yorkshire**

Central National Grid Reference: NZ 1816 0145

Site Code: RMS 07

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1. NON-TECHNICAL SUMMARY

- 1.1 The first part of a programme of archaeological monitoring and recording was undertaken in association with construction groundworks for the re-development of Richmond School, North Yorkshire. The central National Grid Reference for the site is NZ 1816 0145.
- 1.2 The archaeological investigation was commissioned by Faithful+Gould and undertaken by Pre-Construct Archaeology Limited in September and December 2007. The investigation was to involve monitoring intrusive groundworks in certain areas of the site at the onset of the construction programme. However, the re-development scheme - including the archaeological element - was suspended in December 2007 due to budgetary problems so that only a small amount of archaeological work was undertaken. Further archaeological work is proposed when the scheme re-commences, following submission of new planning application.
- 1.3 The school site has potential for archaeological remains from various eras, particularly the early medieval and medieval periods, as identified by an archaeological desk-based assessment. However, because much of the site was landscaped during previous development of the school, only discrete areas of high archaeological potential remain. A programme of archaeological monitoring and recording was therefore required in association with construction groundworks in these areas. The aim was to examine and record any archaeological remains affected by those works.
- 1.4 Three periods of archaeological site attendance were undertaken, only one of these in association with groundworks in an area of high archaeological potential. No features or deposits of archaeological significance were recorded.

2. INTRODUCTION

2.1 General Background

- 2.1.1 This report describes the first part of a programme of archaeological monitoring and recording (hereafter watching brief) conducted in association with the re-development of Richmond School, North Yorkshire. The scheme was suspended in December 2007 due to budgetary problems and this report describes the archaeological element of the project up to the suspension.
- 2.1.2 A new planning application is being submitted for the re-development scheme and a report on the archaeological work undertaken so far is required as part of the planning process. It is anticipated that further archaeological work will be undertaken at the site when the re-development scheme recommences, following submission of the new planning application. At the conclusion of all archaeological work, an additional document will report on the findings of the project as whole.
- 2.1.3 The work was commissioned by Faithful+Gould and the fieldwork was undertaken in September and December 2007 by Pre-Construct Archaeology Limited (PCA).
- 2.1.4 The North Yorkshire County Council (NYCC) Heritage and Environment Section imposed the requirement for the watching brief and advised the Local Planning Authority (LPA), Richmondshire District Council, accordingly. The scope of work was set out in a Brief¹ prepared by Atkins in 2007. In accordance with the Brief, a detailed Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI)² was prepared by PCA, as the appointed archaeological contractor, and submitted to the LPA for approval.
- 2.1.5 The archaeological potential of the site was identified in a desk-based assessment (DBA)³ compiled by Atkins in 2007. The site has particular potential for early medieval activity since immediately to the east lies Scots Dyke. A Scheduled Ancient Monument, these earthwork remains probably represents land boundary consolidation during the 6th-7th centuries. In addition, there is potential for medieval activity since a bridleway - Cross Lanes (Figure 2) - crossing the site may follow the line of a route to the medieval hospital of St. Nicholas, the site of which is thought to lie immediately adjacent to the southern boundary of the school grounds. Land in this area is designated on the Richmondshire Local Plan both as a 'Registered Park and Garden of Special Historic Interest' and an 'Archaeologically Sensitive Area'.
- 2.1.6 At the time of writing, the project archive is housed at the Northern Office of PCA, at Unit N19a Turisdale Business Park, Durham. Ultimately the completed Site Archive, comprising written, drawn, and photographic records, along with any artefactual and biological material retained, will be deposited at the Richmondshire Museum, Ryders Wynd, Richmond, North Yorkshire, DL10 4JA, under the site code RMS 07.
- 2.1.7 The Online Access to the Index of Archaeological Investigations (OASIS) reference number is: preconst1-52276.

¹ Atkins 2007b.

² Pre-Construct Archaeology 2007.

³ Atkins 2007a.



Figure 1. Site location
Scale 1:25,000

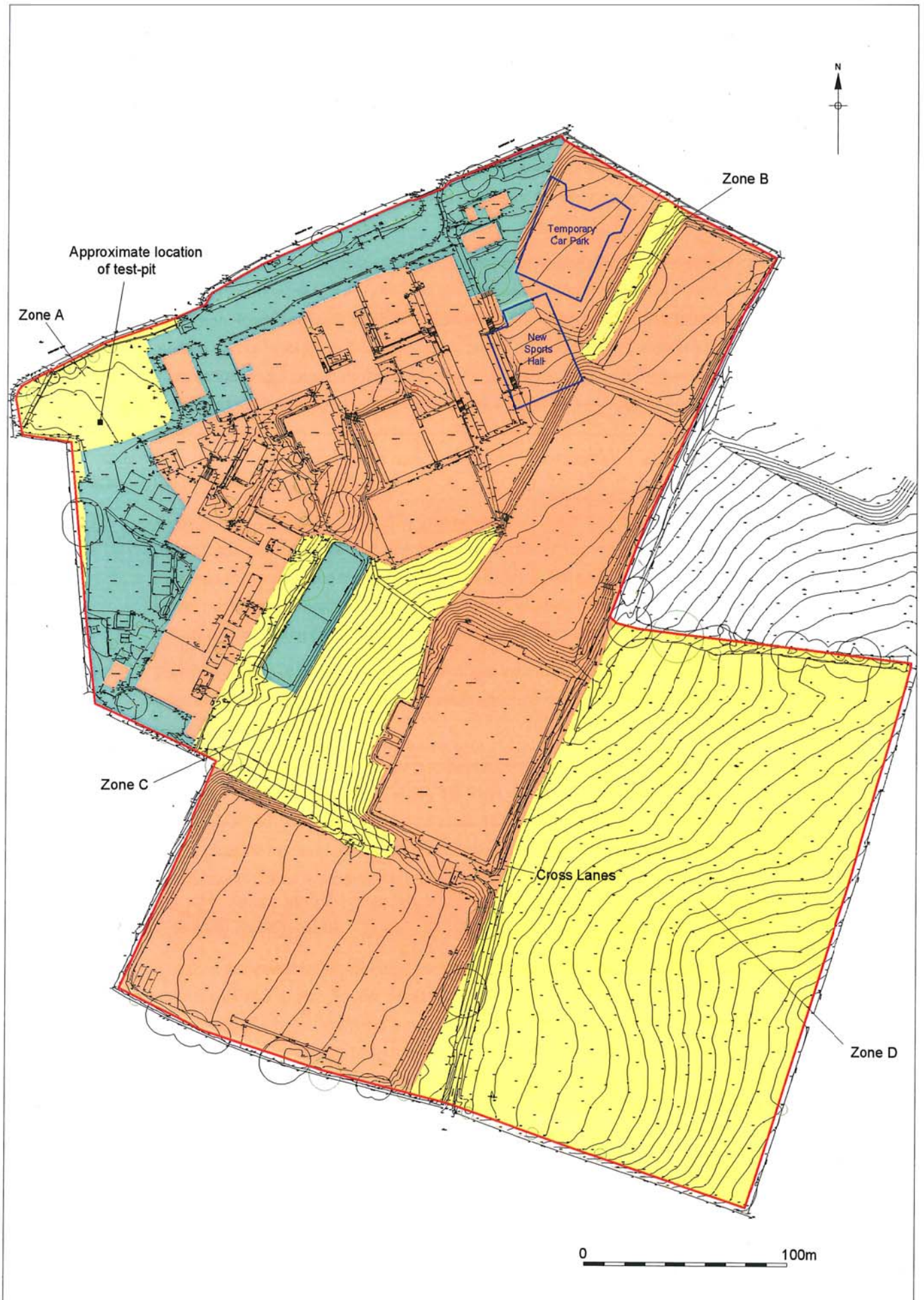


Figure 2. Areas of investigation
Scale 1:2,500

2.2 Site Location and Description

- 2.2.1 Richmond School is a post-Second World War secondary school split across two sites, with its main campus (the subject of the investigation herein described) situated in a residential area on the south side of Darlington Road, c. 1.5km to the east of the historic core of Richmond, North Yorkshire. The central National Grid Reference for the main school campus is NZ 1816 0145m (Figure 1).
- 2.2.2 Mature residential development lies to the north, east and west of the main school campus, with open countryside to the south. The site is accessed along its northern boundary from Darlington Road. The main campus comprises Middle School, based in a former secondary modern school building, and Upper School, based in the former girls high school, this a Grade II Listed Building. The site covers an area of c. 15.75 hectares, with the existing buildings and associated hardstanding covering c. 3 hectares and the remainder sports fields and other open areas (Figure 2).

2.3 Geology and Topography

- 2.3.1 Richmond lies on the northern valley side of the River Swale one of three rivers which drain the western part of the Vale of York and Mowbray, the low lying area between the uplands of the Pennines to the west and the North Yorkshire Moors to the east. The solid geology of the higher ground to the north of Richmond is Carboniferous Limestone and Mudstone, with Millstone Grit forming the bedrock along the river corridor in the immediate vicinity of the town.
- 2.3.2 The drift geology of the general area comprises, variously, clay, till, silt and sand and gravel, often of substantial thickness, these deposits associated with the last glaciation and deglaciation of the region.
- 2.3.3 In general, the main school campus occupies a gently sloping hillside, known as Anchorage Hill, with a south-easterly aspect above the River Swale (Figures 1 and 2). Ground level on Darlington Road in the vicinity of the site is c. 157m AOD, but the ground falls away to the south, across a series of terraces that accommodate the various school buildings and sports fields, to open fields occupying the lowest point of the site at c. 131m AOD.

2.4 Planning Background

- 2.4.1 Statutory protection for archaeological remains is principally enshrined in the *Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Areas Act 1979*, as amended by the *National Heritage Act 1983* and subsequent. Nationally important sites are listed in a schedule of monuments and are accorded statutory protection as Scheduled Ancient Monuments. Details of scheduling are held on the list maintained by the Department for Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS). Planning guidance regarding the protection of archaeology is set out in *Planning Policy Guidance Note 16: Archaeology and Planning* (PPG 16).⁴

⁴ Department of the Environment 1990.

2.4.2 The *Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990* amends the *Town and Country Planning Act 1971* and provides statutory protection to Listed Buildings and a control to preserve the character and appearance of Conservation Areas. *Planning Policy Guidance Note 15: Planning and the Historic Environment* (PPG 15)⁵ details the level of protection that should be afforded to Listed Buildings, Conservation Areas, Historic Parks and Gardens, Historic Battlefields and World Heritage Sites in respect of development proposals.

2.4.3 At a local level, the *Richmondshire Local Plan 1999-2006* (adopted in 2001),⁶ contains a number of policies relevant to archaeology and cultural heritage:

- Policy 40: Sites of Archaeological Interest
- Policy 41: Archaeologically Sensitive Areas
- Policy 46: Protecting the setting of Listed Buildings
- Policy 50: Conservation Areas
- Policy 53: Protection of Historic Features
- Policy 57 Important Historic Vantage Points
- Policy 61: Parks and Gardens of Special Historic Interest

2.4.4 Richmond School is proposed for re-development as part of the UK Government's Building Schools for the Future (BSF) Single Pathfinder Scheme. In general, the school site has particular potential for archaeological remains of the early medieval and medieval eras, as identified in the DBA. However, because much of the site has been landscaped during previous development of the school, the potential is restricted to certain areas of the site, these designated as Zones A, B, C and D in the DBA (Figure 2).

2.4.5 'Condition 15' of the LPA's 'Planning Decision C1/9ZE/1864-/CM' required that an archaeological watching brief be undertaken in association with construction groundworks in the aforementioned zones. This condition was imposed on the recommendation of the NYCC Heritage and Environment Section.

2.4.6 The aforementioned Brief for the required archaeological mitigation was prepared by Atkins, in response to which the aforementioned WSI was compiled by PCA, the appointed archaeological contractor. The WSI set out the background to and the aims of the archaeological project and described the methodologies to be employed both during the fieldwork and 'post-excavation' phases of the project.

2.5 Archaeological and Historical Background

2.5.1 The aforementioned DBA examined archaeological and historical evidence within a 1km 'wider study area' centred on the main school campus, 'the study site'. The results are summarised below and the research and writing of those responsible are gratefully acknowledged.

⁵ Department of the Environment and Department of National Heritage 1994.

⁶ From 28th September 2007 some policies in the Local Plan have expired; the Local Plan is being replaced by the *Richmondshire Local Development Framework*.

- 2.5.2 Although eight Scheduled Ancient monuments lie within the wider study area, none actually lie upon the study site. The nearest is part of the Scots Dyke monument which runs c. 150m to the east and south of the south-eastern site boundary, as described within the relevant period summary, below.
- 2.5.3 There are no recorded prehistoric sites or findspots within the study area, although the site lies within a broader landscape that saw activity during the Bronze Age and Iron Age. In summary, the potential for remains of the various prehistoric eras is considered low.
- 2.5.4 There are no recorded Roman sites or findspots within the study area, although some activity in the town has been postulated due to discoveries of Roman coins. Within the broader vicinity is the important Dere Street fort *Cataractonium*, lying to the south-east at Catterick and a lesser settlement at East Applegarth, to the west of Richmond. In summary, the potential for remains of the Roman period is considered low.
- 2.5.5 Early medieval activity at the site is a far more likely based on recorded evidence in the wider study area. Directly adjacent to (east of) the site are surviving earthworks associated with Scots Dyke, a Scheduled Ancient Monument, constructed in the post-Roman period and stretching 12km between the River Tees to south of the River Swale. It is thought that this linear earthwork was built to consolidate territorial and economic land units as a response to changing political circumstances during the 6th-7th centuries. A Saxon, probably 6th century, spearhead was found in the 1970s to the east of Scots Dyke.
- 2.5.6 Crossing the school site from south-west to north-east is Cross Lanes, believed to be an ancient bridleway running to the former medieval hospital of St. Nicholas, the site of which is thought to lie immediately adjacent to the southern boundary of the school grounds. The route of Cross Lanes appears on the earliest available and sufficiently detailed historic mapping of the area, this being a 'Plan of the Township of Richmond', dated 1801.
- 2.5.7 The hospital of St. Nicholas evidently had more than 1.5 hectares of land associated with it, and it is likely that the school site lay within this area. Today, the former hospital site comprises the Grade II 'Historic Park and Garden of St. Nicholas' and this includes 'St. Nicholas', a 17th century H-plan house, which is a Grade II Listed Building thought to be the oldest domestic house in the town.
- 2.5.8 Earthworks representing ridge and furrow ploughing of likely medieval date have been identified and recorded in the north-western portion of the school site.⁷ During the medieval period, the site lay beyond the town walls in a landscape utilised by numerous small-scale agricultural settlements, some with proto-industrial concerns, such as milling and smithing.
- 2.5.9 In summary, the potential for remains of the early medieval and medieval periods is considered moderate to high.
- 2.5.10 There are no recorded post-medieval remains within the study area, although at least part of the site almost certainly remained in agricultural use during this time, since several farmsteads lie in the vicinity. In summary, the potential for remains of the post-medieval period is considered low.

⁷York Archaeological Trust 2003.

- 2.5.11 The first school at the site was a girls' high school, constructed between 1937 and 1939, the surviving fabric of which is a Grade II Listed Building. Further development occurred in 1956, with the construction of a two-block secondary modern school. Richmond Comprehensive School was created in 1969, this involved remodelling and extending the original high school building, internal re-planning of the main block of the secondary modern school, extending the other secondary modern block and construction of three new blocks, a sports hall and external hard courts. Other buildings have been added to the school site in recent decades, including a new library, a science and technology building and, in 2006, a dance and drama studio.
- 2.5.12 The DBA concluded that the school site has been subjected to heavy disturbance in the 20th century through construction of the girls' high school and the subsequent expansion of the secondary modern and later school buildings. Associated with this there has been extensive terracing within the southern part of the site during the creation of sports fields.
- 2.5.13 The DBA concluded that only four areas of the site, designated as Zones A, B, C and D, have not been heavily disturbed and retain high archaeological potential (Figure 2). Of these, Zone A contains remnants of ridge and furrow considered to be of local importance. These remains were recorded in 2003, at which time it was concluded that they were of no primary archaeological importance. For the remaining zones (B, C and D), it was concluded that any ground disturbance could affect surviving archaeological remains.

2.6 Aims and Objectives

- 2.6.1 In broad terms, the aim of the archaeological investigation was to ensure that locally and regionally important archaeological remains are not destroyed during groundworks for the new school without having first been adequately recorded. Such remains could encompass buried structures, deposits and features and any associated artefactual and ecofactual evidence.
- 2.6.2 Archaeological monitoring was not required during all groundworks associated with the re-development scheme. A watching brief was to be maintained only in areas of high archaeological potential, Zones A, B, C and D, as identified in the aforementioned DBA.
- 2.6.3 By conducting the site investigations and subsequently reporting on the findings, the watching brief aimed to fulfil the aforementioned 'Condition 15' of 'Planning Decision C1/9ZE/1864-/CM'.

3. ARCHAEOLOGICAL METHODOLOGY

3.1 Fieldwork

3.1.1 The fieldwork was undertaken in accordance with the relevant standard and guidance document of the Institute of Field Archaeologists (IFA).⁸ PCA is an IFA-Registered Organisation (RAO 23).

3.1.2 This report details the findings of the watching brief only up to the suspension of the re-development scheme in December 2007. The following attendance was provided:

- Tuesday 4 September 2007. This was a preliminary visit to discuss the programme of works with personnel from Shepherd Construction. An area stripped for a new sports hall was briefly examined, although this was an area considered to be of 'high disturbance' that did not need archaeological monitoring.
- Thursday 6 September 2007. An area stripped for a temporary car park for construction vehicles was briefly examined. Again this area was considered to be one of 'high disturbance', so there was no requirement for archaeological monitoring. Shepherd Construction personnel were made aware which areas required archaeological monitoring to avoid further unnecessary site attendance.
- Thursday 6 December 2007. Having been asked to provide site attendance by Shepherd Construction, a series of test-pits being excavated in Zone A were examined.

3.2.3 It was agreed that PCA would be contacted again when any work in Zones A, B, C or D was undertaken, these being the areas designated as of 'low disturbance' and with high potential for archaeological remains.

3.2 Post-excavation

3.2.1 The stratigraphic data for the project is represented by the written and drawn record. A total of four contexts were assigned during the part of the watching brief herein described. A written summary of the archaeological findings to date has been compiled, as described below.

3.2.2 No inorganic artefactual remains or biological material was recovered from the site. The project's palaeoenvironmental sampling strategy was to recover bulk samples where appropriate, from well-dated (where possible), stratified deposits covering the main periods or phases of occupation and the range of feature types represented. To this end, no features of significance were encountered to warrant the recovery of bulk samples. No material was recovered that required specialist stabilisation or an assessment of potential for conservation research.

⁸ IFA 2001.

3.2.3 Survival of all materials from archaeological fieldwork depends upon suitable storage. At the time of writing the Site Archive comprises only written and drawn records. The final Site Archive (which will include all recovered artefactual and biological remains and all material generated electronically during post-excavation), will be packaged for long-term curation according to all guidelines documents referenced in the Archaeological Archives Forum document⁹, in particular a well-established United Kingdom Institute for Conservation (UKIC) document¹⁰ and an forthcoming IfA publication.¹¹ The depositional requirements of the receiving body, in this case the Richmondshire Museum, will be met in full.

⁹ Brown 2007.

¹⁰ Walker, UKIC 1990.

¹¹ IfA forthcoming.

4. ARCHAEOLOGICAL RESULTS

4.1 Zone A

- 4.1.1 A series of test-pits were mechanically excavated in Zone A ahead of construction of temporary classrooms and an access road (Figure 2). One test-pit, measuring up to 1.0m x 1.0m and up to 0.60m deep, was examined closely after site attendance was requested.
- 4.1.2 The earliest deposit exposed in the test-pit was a layer, [4], comprising mid orange brown clayey sandy silt, revealed at a minimum depth of 0.43m below the existing ground surface. It was at least 0.15m thick but its full thickness was not established. This material may have been a developed soil of post-medieval or earlier origin, but this is not certain given the limited degree to which it was exposed.
- 4.1.3 Layer [4] was overlain by a layer, [3], comprising a silty deposit with frequent fragmented sandstone throughout. With a maximum thickness of 0.17m, this material was interpreted as 'made ground', that is a deliberate dump for ground consolidation and levelling purposes and of modern origin. The uppermost deposit, layer [1], comprised mid to dark greyish brown sandy silt, up to 0.41m thick, this the existing topsoil.

4.2 Other Monitored Areas

- 4.2.1 The footprint of the new sports hall was examined during mechanical stripping of the existing topsoil (Figure 2). This area, however, did not lie within an area of high archaeological potential.
- 4.2.2 The existing topsoil, [1], was the same deposit as described above. The maximum depth of excavation was 0.20m, so that the full thickness of the deposit was probably never established. Furthermore, at no point was any underlying deposit clearly exposed, although in places there were suggestions of a sand and gravel sub-stratum, [2].
- 4.2.3 To the north-east of the new sports hall footprint, the area of a temporary car park for construction traffic was examined after it had been mechanically stripped of topsoil (Figure 2). The area had been 'stoned-up' prior to inspection, although, as previously described, it did not lie within an area of high archaeological potential.

5. CONCLUSIONS

- 5.1 No features, deposits or structures of archaeological significance were recorded during the site attendance herein described. No artefactual material was recovered.
- 5.2 All intrusive groundworks in designated Zones A, B, C and D should be subject to a programme of archaeological monitoring and recording when the re-development scheme resumes. A further report on the work should be prepared to detail the findings.

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7. ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS AND CREDITS

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