



LAND AT MAGNA CARTA SCHOOL, STANSTED MOUNTFITCHET, ESSEX

ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION





**LAND AT MAGNA CARTA SCHOOL, STANSTED MOUNTFITCHET,
ESSEX**


ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION

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July 2017

Site Code	SMMC17	NGR	TL 51325 25136
Project No.	P1192		
Planning Ref.	CC/UTT/57/16	OASIS	britanni1- 287101
Approved By:		Date	July 2017



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Abstract

On 18th July 2017 Britannia Archaeology Ltd (BA) undertook a trial trench evaluation at Magna Carta School, Stansted Mountfitchet, Essex (TL 51325 25136 - Fig.1) on behalf of Morgan Sindall Construction & Infrastructure Ltd, (Planning Reference CC/UTT/57/16) in advance of the erection of a construction compound and subsequently an all-weather sports pitch north of proposed new school buildings. The work was undertaken in response to a design brief issued by Essex County Council Place Services (ECCPS) (Havis, R., dated 21st February 2017). The site took the form of one 30.00m x 1.80m trench running north-east to south-west and one 15.00m x 1.80m trench running north-west to south-east.

The evaluation revealed 2 phases of activity on the site. The first phase relates to 1003 which is likely a former subsoil of possible medieval date. The second phase relates to the post-medieval agricultural use of the land in the form of ridge and furrow. Excavation revealed 6 furrows on a north-south alignment. The furrows were situated consistent distances apart.

The evaluation was successful in identifying the post-medieval activity on the site, taking the form of agricultural activity. However, despite the potential for features associated with the medieval period none were encountered.



1.0 INTRODUCTION

On 18th July 2017 Britannia Archaeology Ltd (BA) undertook a trial trench evaluation at Magna Carta School, Stansted Mountfitchet, Essex (TL 51325 25136 - Fig.1) on behalf of Morgan Sindall Construction & Infrastructure Ltd, (Planning Reference CC/UTT/57/16) in advance of the erection of a construction compound and subsequently an all-weather sports pitch north of proposed new school buildings.

The work was undertaken in response to a design brief issued by Essex County Council Place Services (ECCPS) (Havis, R., dated 21st February 2017). The site took the form of one 30.00m x 1.80m trench running north-east to south-west and one 15.00m x 1.80m trench running north-west to south-east.

2.0 SITE DESCRIPTION

The site is located in the core of the large village of Stansted Mountfitchet in the Uttlesford district of Essex. The site lies to the east of St John's Road on an area of land currently utilized as a sports pitch (Fig. 1).

The bedrock geology consists of two different formations. The western bedrock geology consists of Thanet Sand Formation And Lambeth Group (undifferentiated) - Clay, Silt and Sand. This is a 56 to 66 million year old bedrock formed in shallow seas in the Palaeogene period. The eastern bedrock geology consists of Lewes and Seaford Nodular Chalk Formations, formed between 84 and 94 million years ago in warm, shallow chalk shelf seas in the Cretaceous period, (BGS, 2017).

The site's superficial deposits are described as Mid Pleistocene Glaciofluvial Deposits – Sand and Gravel. These deposits formed up to 2 million years ago in the Quaternary period, in ice age conditions, (BGS, 2017).

3.0 PLANNING POLICIES

The archaeological investigation is to be carried out on the recommendation of the local planning authority, following guidance laid down by the *National Planning and Policy Framework* (NPPF, DCLD 2012). The relevant local planning policy is the *Uttlesford Local Plan (Adopted 2005)*.



4.0 ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND (Fig. 2)

The following archaeological background utilises the Essex Historic Environment Record (HER) (500m search centred on the site), Historic England PastScape (www.pastscape.org.uk), and the Archaeological Data Service (www.ads.ahds.ac.uk) (ADS) (Fig. 2).

Prehistoric records relevant to the site are limited to the discovery of a Neolithic chisel (EHER 4632) 350m to the south-west of the school site in Woodfields.

Evidence of Roman activity has been discovered in the eastern part of Stansted Mountfitchet, in the area of Mountfitchet castle. On Lower Street, 100m to the south-east of the site area, possible Roman tile was discovered (EHER 18557), while record EHER 4552 refers to Roman pottery recovered from a gravel pit 400m to the east of the site area.

No Saxon records were returned by the HER search, although it is likely that Stansted Mountfitchet was well established by the late Saxon period.

The most significant record returned by the HER search is Mountfitchet castle, located 250m to the south-east of the site area (EHER 4551). The castle was likely erected for Robert de Gernon, Duke of Boulogne and was destroyed in 1215, falling into ruin, until its scheduling and utilization as a tourist attraction in the late 20th Century. The only surviving elements of the motte and bailey castle are the earthworks for the mound and ring. Frequent episodes of gravel pitting, especially to the east of the bailey, and illegal digging activity and nighthawking have occurred on the site prior to the site's conversion to a tourist attraction, somewhat damaging the original earthworks. Medieval activity in Stansted Mountfitchet would likely have been concentrated around the area of the castle, and the concentration of late medieval and post-medieval buildings on Lower Street (such as EHERs 36547 and 36545 16th and 17th century buildings 200m to the south-east of the site) probably indicates a continuation of this settlement even after the ruination of the castle itself.

Stansted Mountfitchet comprises of two historic cores, one to the west focused on Cambridge Road/Silver Street and one to the east around the Castle and on Lower Street. Both of these cores still contain many listed buildings from the 17th, 18th and 19th Centuries. Significant post-medieval buildings that are not in either of these cores include the 'Supreme Ballroom' (EHER 36516, 200m south-west of the site), built to house Stansted Literary Institute in 1854, and the United Reform Church, which lies adjacent to the school site, 19th Century red-brick church with a unique gothic-inspired style designed by W. D. Carbe (EHER 36601).

While the sports field lies 100m to the west of the historic core of Castle and the Lower Road, the proximity of these to the site mean that there was a moderate to high chance of encountering medieval and post-medieval archaeology relating to this settlement.



5.0 PROJECT AIMS

The ECCPS brief states that the evaluation will be undertaken to identify if archaeological deposits survive, their extent and significance. (Havis, R., Brief, Section 6).

6.0 PROJECT OBJECTIVES

Research objectives for the project are in line with those laid out in *Research and Archaeology Revisited: a revised framework for the East of England*, East Anglian Archaeology Occasional Paper 24 (Medlycott, 2011).

Specific objectives outlined in the brief state that a particular importance be placed on:

- the amount of truncation to buried deposits,
- the presence or absence of a palaeosol or 'B' horizon,
- the preservation of deposits within negative features,
- site formation processes.

An assessment of the environmental potential of the site through examination of suitable deposits must also be arranged with a suitably qualified specialist. Attention should be paid:

- to the retrieval of charred plant macrofossils and land molluscs from former dry-land palaeosols and cut features, and to soil pollen analysis;
- to the retrieval of plant macrofossils, insect, molluscs and pollen from waterlogged deposits located.
- to provision for the absolute dating of critical contacts should be made: *eg* the basal contacts of peats over former dryland surfaces; distinct land use or landmark change in urban contexts

7.0 FIELDWORK METHODOLOGY

The Essex County Council Brief required the excavation of two trial trenches, one measuring 30.00m x 1.80m and one measuring 15.00m x 1.80m.

A 360° mechanical excavator fitted with a toothless ditching bucket was used to machine down to the first archaeological horizon, thereafter all excavation work was undertaken by hand. The archaeology was recorded using pro-forma record sheets, drawn plans and section drawings and appropriate photographs were also taken.



8.0 DESCRIPTION OF RESULTS (Fig. 4, 5 & 6)

8.1 Trench 1

Trench 1 was orientated north-east to south-west and was excavated to a maximum depth of 0.77m in sample section 1. Trench 1 contained 6 furrows, 2 of which were excavated. A third furrow was investigated however it proved to be a shadow of the former orientation of the feature. Due to this no section could be taken however its full extent was planned, (Fig. 4). All the furrows were oriented on a north-south alignment.

Furrow **1005** was linear in plan with moderately sloping sides and a concave base. 1.00m of the length of the furrow was excavated, while the furrow was 0.93m wide and 0.45m deep. It contained a single fill, **1006**, a firm light yellow-brown clayey silt with frequent small-large angular flints and stones. One small piece of Post-medieval CBM weighing 5g was found in the fill (not retained).

Furrow **1007** was linear in plan with shallow sloping sides and a concave base. 1.00m of the length of the furrow was excavated, while the furrow was 0.78m wide and 0.16m deep. It contained a single fill, **1008**, a very compact light yellow-grey clayey silt with no inclusions and no finds.

Topsoil **1000** was present to a depth of 0.20m in the trench. This layer overlay **1001** an imported soil which was present from 0.20m to 0.37m. This layer overlay **1002** a buried soil (former topsoil) which was present from 0.37m to 0.55m. This layer overlay **1003** a former agricultural sub soil which was present from 0.55m to 0.77m. This layer overlay natural **1004**.

8.2 Trench 2

Trench 2 was orientated north-west to south-east and was excavated to a maximum depth of 0.72m in sample section 2. Trench 2 contained 1 furrow on a north to south alignment which was left unexcavated. No other archaeological features or finds were encountered in the trench.

Topsoil **1000** was present to a depth of 0.12m. This layer overlay **1001** an imported soil which was present from 0.12m to 0.31m. This layer overlay **1002** a buried soil (former topsoil) which was present from 0.31m to 0.43m. This layer overlay **1003** a former agricultural sub soil which was present from 0.43m to 0.72m. This layer overlay natural **1004**.

9.0 DEPOSIT MODEL (Fig. 4)

The deposit model was consistent across the site.

At the top of the stratigraphic sequence was topsoil **1000**, which was present to a depth of 0.20m in sample section 1. This comprised of a dark brown-black, loose sandy silt with clay.



Beneath topsoil layer 1000 was imported soil **1001** that comprised a pale grey-brown, compact clayey silt with infrequent sub angular flint inclusions. This layer was present to a depth of 0.37m in sample section 1. This layer represented a made ground of imported soil for the construction of the sports field.

Below 1001 was buried soil **1002** which was a mid yellow-brown, very compact clayey silt with frequent flint and gravel inclusions. This layer was present to a depth of 0.55m in sample section 1. This layer represents the former topsoil and ground level before post-medieval development.

Below 1002 was a former subsoil **1003** which was a dark brown-red, very compact clayey silt with frequent sub angular gravel. This layer was present to a depth of 0.77m in sample section 1. Given its place in the stratigraphic sequence it is possible that this layer represents a former subsoil, possibly medieval in date.

At the base of the stratigraphic sequence, present from a depth of 0.77m in sample section 1, was natural geology **1004**, which consisted of a mid red-orange, very compact clay and gravel with frequent gravel inclusions.

10.0 DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

The archaeological background for the site suggested that there was a moderate to high potential for medieval to post-medieval evidence on the site.

The evaluation revealed 2 phases of activity on the site. The first phase relates to **1003** which is likely a former subsoil of possible medieval date.

The second phase relates to the post-medieval agricultural use of the land in the form of ridge and furrow. Excavation revealed 6 furrows on a north-south alignment. Five furrows were present in trench 1, 2 furrows **1005** and **1007** were excavated and were of similar widths and depths. One furrow was present in trench 2 and left unexcavated. The furrows were situated consistent distances apart. A small fragment of CBM found in furrow **1005** dated the furrows as post-medieval (not retained). These features represent typical ridge and furrow ploughing. Ridge and furrow are thought to form due to the movement of soil after each crop and subsequent re-ploughing of the land. The movement of the soil would gradually build at the centre of the strip forming a ridge, leaving a dip, or "furrow" between each ridge. The ridges would offer better drainage with the furrows forming suitable drainage away from the plot.

The evaluation was successful in identifying the post-medieval activity on the site, taking the form of agricultural activity. However, despite the potential for features associated with the medieval period none were encountered.



11.0 ARCHIVE DEPOSITION

Arrangements will be made for the archive to be deposited with the relevant museum (Harlow Museum), subject to agreement with the legal landowner where finds are concerned. The digital archive will be stored with the Archaeological Data Service (ADS).

12.0 ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Britannia Archaeology would like to thank Mr Oliver Manall of Morgan Sindall Construction & Infrastructure Ltd for commissioning and funding the project.

We would also like to thank of Richard Havis from Essex County Council Place Services for his advice and assistance on the project.

The site was excavated by Martin Brook and Louisa Cunningham of Britannia Archaeology Ltd.



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Historic England PastScape www.pastscape.org.uk

Archaeological Data Service (ADS) www.ads.ahds.ac.uk



Historic England National List for England

<https://www.historicengland.org.uk/listing/the-list>

DEFRA Magic <http://magic.defra.gov.uk/website/magic>



APPENDIX 1 – DEPOSIT TABLES

Deposit Tables

TRENCH 1

Trench No	Orientation	Height AOD	Shot ID
1	NE-SW	80.16	1
Sample Section No	Location	Facing	
1	SE Side Middle of trench	NW Facing	
Context No	Depth	Deposit Description	
1000	0.00-0.20m	Topsoil: Dark brown-black, loose, sandy silt with clay.	
1001	0.20-0.37m	Imported Soil: Pale grey-brown, compact clayey silt with infrequent sub angular flint inclusions.	
1002	0.37-0.55m	Buried Soil (former top soil): Mid yellow-brown, very compact, clayey silt with frequent flint and gravel inclusions.	
1003	0.55-0.77m	Subsoil: Dark brown-red, very compact clayey silt with frequent sub angular gravel.	
1004	0.77m+	Natural: Mid red-orange, very compact, clay and gravel with frequent gravel inclusions.	

Feature Context	Feature Type & Description (m)	Layer/Fill Context	Layer/Fill Description	Spot Date	Other
1005	Furrow (L1.80m+ x W0.93m x D0.45m), Moderately sloping sides with a concave base. N-S alignment	1006	Light yellow-brown, firm clayey silt with frequent small-large flints and stones.	Post-med	
1008	Furrow (L1.80m+ x W0.78m x D0.16m), Shallow sloping sides with a concave base. N-S alignment	1008	Light yellow-grey, very compact clayey silt with no inclusions.		

TRENCH 2

Trench No	Orientation	Height AOD	Shot ID
1	NW-SE	80.41	5
Sample Section No	Location	Facing	
1	NE Side SE End	SW Facing	
Context No	Depth	Deposit Description	
1000	0.00-0.12m	Topsoil: Dark brown-black, loose, sandy silt with clay.	
1001	0.12-0.31m	Imported Soil: Pale grey-brown, compact clayey silt with infrequent sub angular flint inclusions.	
1002	0.31-0.43m	Buried Soil (former top soil): Mid yellow-brown, very compact, clayey silt with frequent flint and gravel inclusions.	
1003	0.43-0.72m	Subsoil: Dark brown-red, very compact clayey silt with frequent sub angular gravel.	
1004	0.72m+	Natural: Mid red-orange, very compact, clay and gravel with frequent gravel inclusions.	



APPENDIX 2 – OASIS SHEET

OASIS FORM - Print view

<http://oasis.ac.uk/form/print.cfm>

OASIS DATA COLLECTION FORM: England

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OASIS ID: britanni1-287101

Project details

Project name	Land at Magna Carta School, Stansted Mountfitchet, Essex
Short description of the project	On 18th July 2017 Britannia Archaeology Ltd (BA) undertook a trial trench evaluation at Magna Carta School, Stansted Mountfitchet, Essex (TL 51325 25136 - Fig.1) on behalf of Morgan Sindall Construction and Infrastructure Ltd, (Planning Reference CC/UTT /57/16) in advance of the erection of a construction compound and subsequently an all-weather sports pitch north of proposed new school buildings. The work was undertaken in response to a design brief issued by Essex County Council Place Services (ECCPS) (Havis, R., dated 21st February 2017). The site took the form of one 30.00m x 1.80m trench running north-east to south-west and one 15.00m x 1.80m trench running north-west to south-east. The evaluation revealed 2 phases of activity on the site. The first phase relates to 1003 which is likely a former subsoil of possible medieval date. The second phase relates to the post-medieval agricultural use of the land in the form of ridge and furrow. Excavation revealed 6 furrows on a north-south alignment. The furrows were situated consistent distances apart. The evaluation was successful in identifying the post-medieval activity on the site, taking the form of agricultural activity. However, despite the potential for features associated with the medieval period none were encountered.
Project dates	Start: 18-07-2017 End: 18-07-2017
Previous/future work	No / No
Any associated project reference codes	SMMC17 - Sitecode
Type of project	Field evaluation
Site status	None
Current Land use	Other 15 - Other
Monument type	RIDGE AND FURROW Post Medieval
Significant Finds	NONE None
Methods & techniques	""Sample Trenches""
Development type	Public building (e.g. school, church, hospital, medical centre, law courts etc.)
Prompt	National Planning Policy Framework - NPPF
Position in the planning process	After full determination (eg. As a condition)

Project location



OASIS FORM - Print view

<http://oasis.ac.uk/form/print.cfm>

Country England
Site location ESSEX UTTLESFORD STANSTED MOUNTFITCHET Land at Magna Carta School, Stansted Mountfitchet, Essex
Postcode CM24 8LA
Study area 0 Square metres
Site coordinates TL 51325 25136 51.903719190611 0.199906125557 51 54 13 N 000 11 59 E Point
Lat/Long Datum Unknown
Height OD / Depth Min: 0m Max: 0m

Project creators

Name of Organisation Britannia Archaeology Ltd
Project brief originator Local Authority Archaeologist and/or Planning Authority/advisory body
Project design originator Martin Brook
Project director/manager Martin Brook
Project supervisor Martin Brook
Type of sponsor/funding body Developer
Name of sponsor/funding body Morgan Sindall Construction and Infrastructure

Project archives

Physical Archive Exists? No
Digital Archive recipient Saffron Walden Museum
Digital Archive ID SMMC17
Digital Contents "none"
Digital Media available "GIS","Images raster / digital photography","Survey","Text"
Paper Archive recipient Saffron Walden Museum
Paper Archive ID SMMC17
Paper Contents "none"
Paper Media available "Context sheet","Correspondence","Photograph","Plan","Report","Section","Survey "

Project bibliography 1

Publication type Grey literature (unpublished document/manuscript)
Title Land at Magna Carta School, Stansted Mountfitchet, Essex
Author(s)/Editor(s) Louisa Cunningham



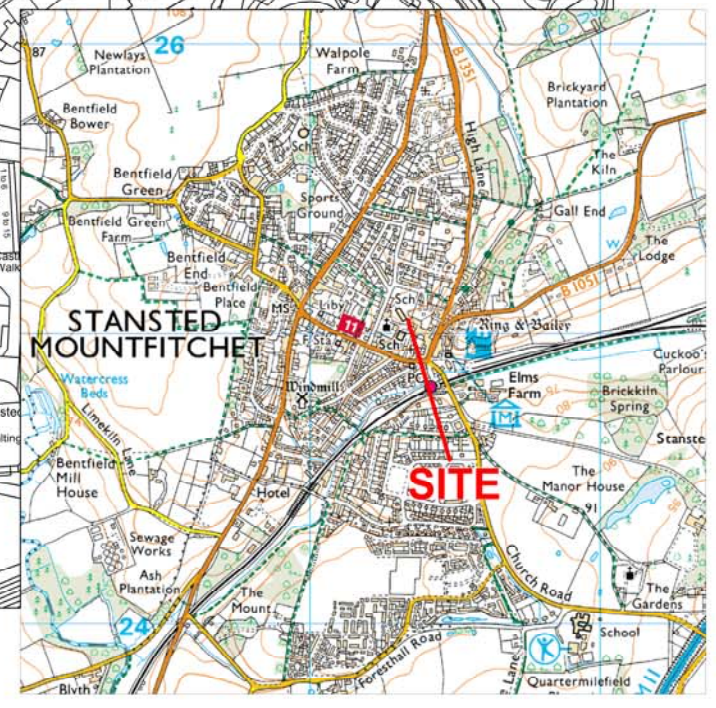
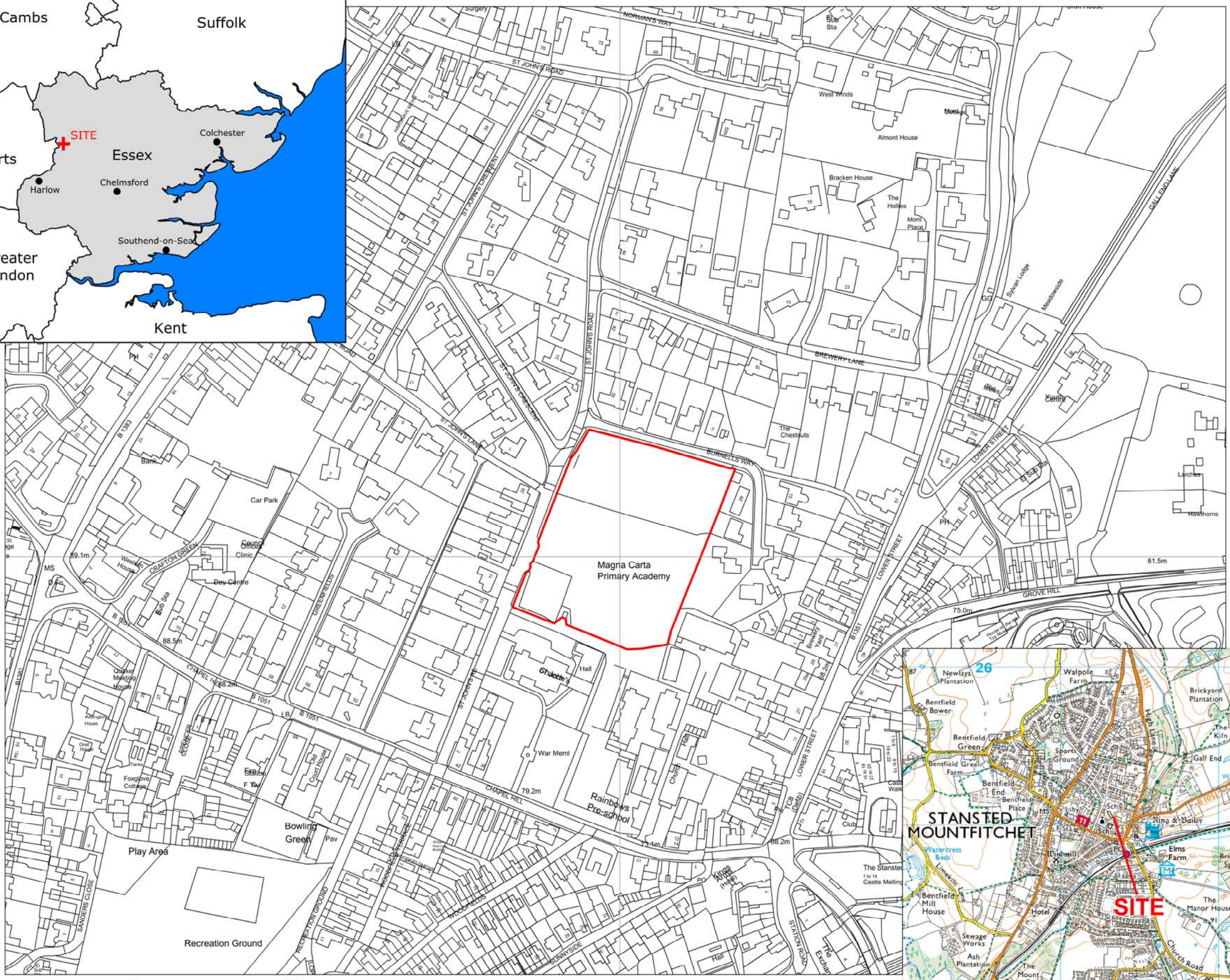
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<http://oasis.ac.uk/form/print.cfm>

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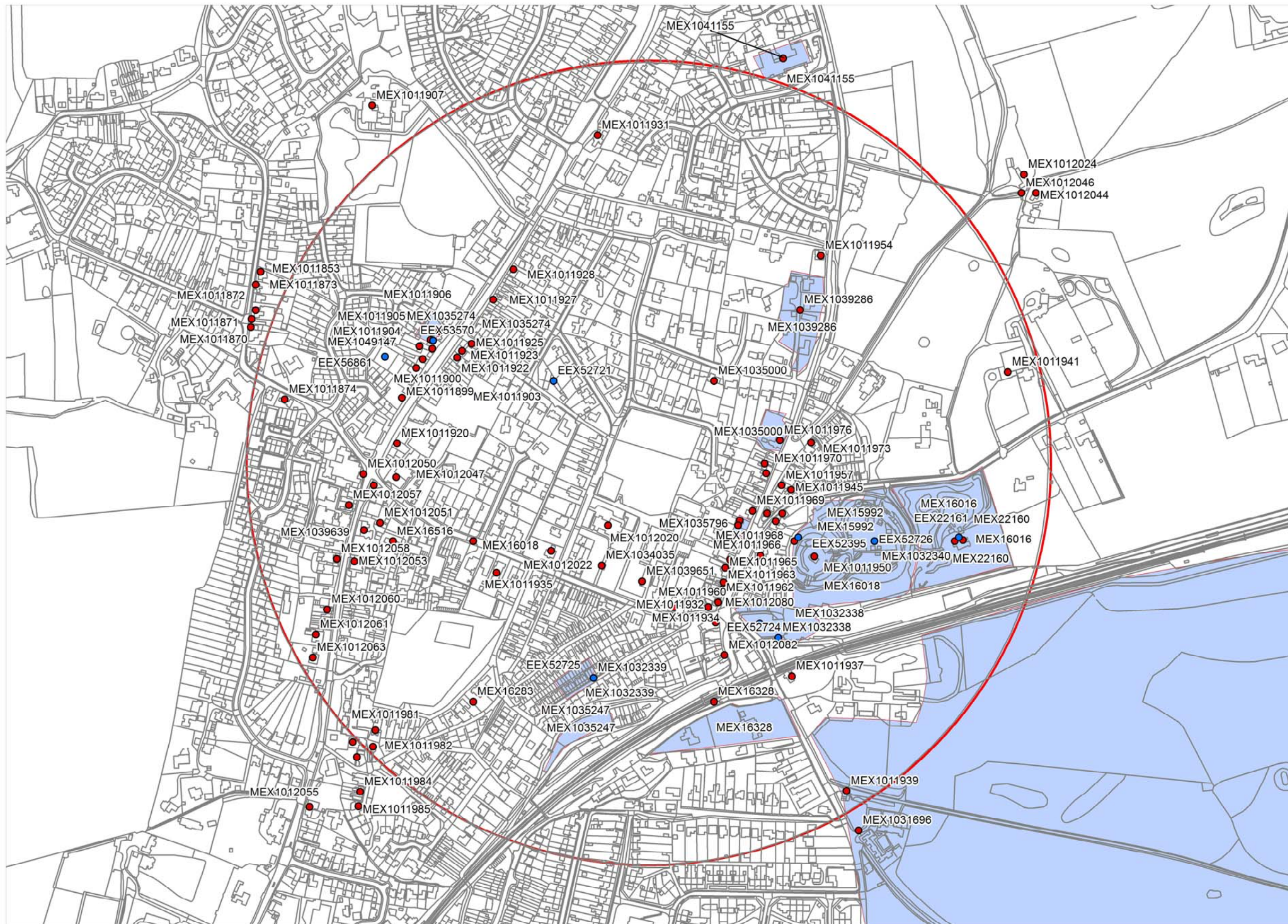
Please e-mail Historic England for OASIS help and advice
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Site Boundary

FIGR:	551314 225099	REF:	R1168
PROJECT:	LAND AT THE MAGNA CARTA SCHOOL, STANSTED MOUNTFITCHET, ESSEX		
DESCRIPTION:	GENERAL LOCATION PLAN		
CLIENT:	MORGAN SINDALL		
BRITANNIA ARCHAEOLOGY LTD			
UNIT 2 THE OLD WOOL WAREHOUSE ST ANDREWS STREET SOUTH BURY ST EDMUNDS SUFFOLK IP33 3PH T: 01449 763034 E: info@britannia-archaeology.com W: www.britannia-archaeology.com © Copyright Britannia Archaeology Ltd 2017			
DATE:	JUNE 2017	PLOT:	A3
VERSION:	1		
AUTHOR:	DPM	FIGURE:	1
APPROVED:	MB		

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-  HER Search Area
-  Archaeological Event
-  Monument Points
-  Monument Points
-  Site Boundary

NGR: 551314 225099 REF: R1168

PROJECT: LAND AT THE MAGNA CARTA SCHOOL, STANSTED MOUNTFITCHET, ESSEX

DESCRIPTION: EHER DATA PLAN

CLIENT: MORGAN SINDALL

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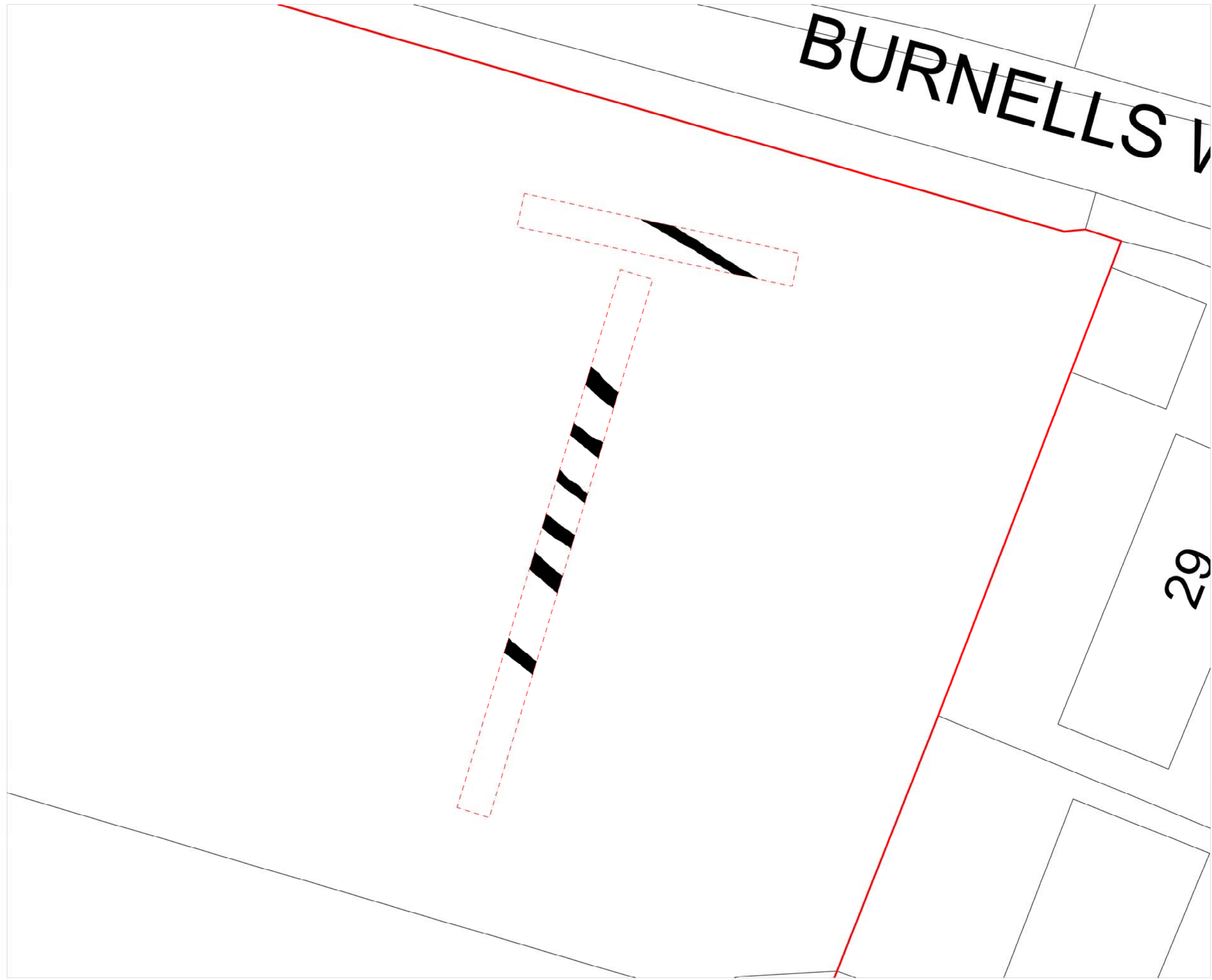
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DATE: JUNE 2017 PLOT: A3 VERSION: 1

AUTHOR: DPM FIGURE: 2

APPROVED: MB

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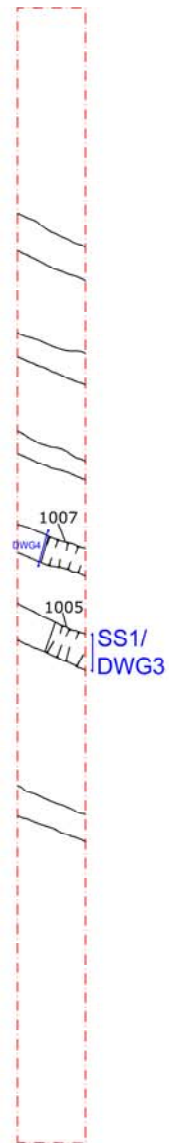
-  Ridge & Furrow
-  Trench
-  Site Boundary

NGR:	551314 225099	REF:	R1168
PROJECT:	LAND AT THE MAGNA CARTA SCHOOL, STANSTED MOUNTFITCHET, ESSEX		
DESCRIPTION:	TRENCH & FEATURE PLAN OVERVIEW		
CLIENT:	MORGAN SINDALL		
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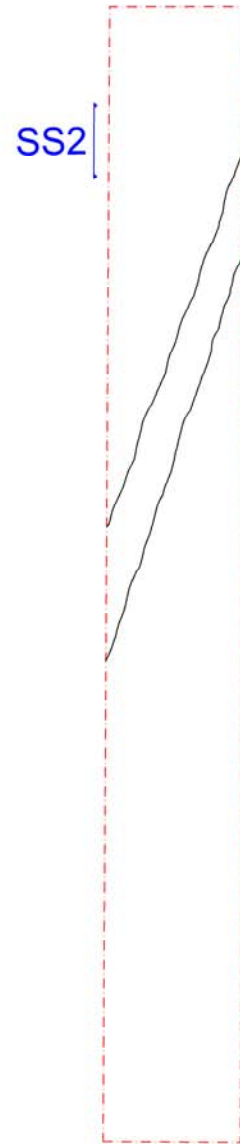


TRIAL TRENCH 1



DP3 - TT1 - VIEW NE

TRIAL TRENCH 2



DP4 - TT2 - VIEW SW

- SS2 | Sample Section
- Excavated Feature
- Trench

1:150 0 1:150 5m

1:100 0 1:100 5m

NGR: 551314 225099 REF: R1168

PROJECT: LAND AT THE MAGNA CARTA SCHOOL, STANSTED MOUNTFITCHET, ESSEX

DESCRIPTION: TRENCH & FEATURE PLAN

CLIENT: MORGAN SINDALL

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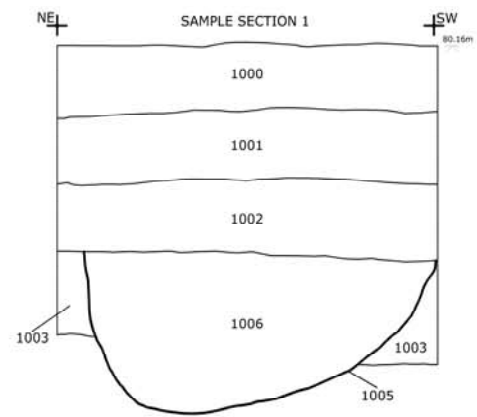
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DATE: JULY 2017 PLOT: A3 VERSION: 1

AUTHOR: DPM

APPROVED: MB

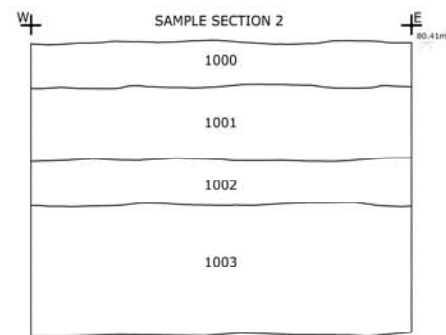
FIGURE: 5



1:20 0 1:20 1m



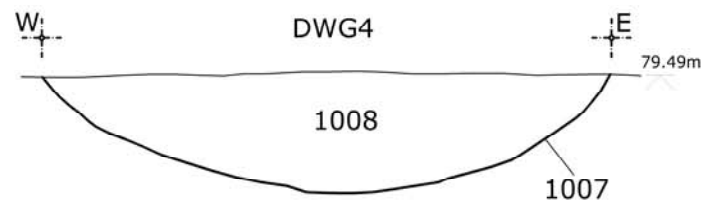
DP1 - SS1 - VIEW NW



1:20 0 1:20 1m



DP5 - SS2 - VIEW N



1:10 0 1:10 50cm



DP2 - DWG3 - VIEW N

NGR:	551314 225099	REF:	R1168
PROJECT:	LAND AT THE MAGNA CARTA SCHOOL, STANSTED MOUNTFITCHET, ESSEX		
DESCRIPTION:	SITE SECTIONS & PHOTOGRAPHS		
CLIENT:	MORGAN SINDALL		
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