

**SHERBURN CHURCH OF ENGLAND VOLUNTARY  
CONTROLLED PRIMARY SCHOOL, SHERBURN  
NORTH YORKSHIRE**

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**INTERIM STATEMENT OF RESULTS FOR  
ARCHAEOLOGICAL TRIAL TRENCHING**



JB Archaeological Services

On behalf of

**JACOBS NORTH YORKSHIRE**

April 2012

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*Summary*

*Prior to an application for planning permission, an archaeological evaluation by trial trenching was undertaken on the site of a proposed extension to Sherburn Primary School, Sherburn, North Yorkshire (NGR SE 95864 77013). The evaluation was in the form of two trial trenches which totalled 10m<sup>2</sup>. The investigation was undertaken on behalf of Jacobs North Yorkshire between 27<sup>th</sup> March and 5<sup>th</sup> April 2012. The evaluation was undertaken in order to determine the nature, depth, extent and level of preservation of archaeological remains within the proposed development area.*

*The results of the evaluation demonstrated that there was significant survival of archaeological deposits. The earliest features recorded dated from the late Iron Age (1<sup>st</sup> century BC) and were overlain by material from the medieval period (late 12<sup>th</sup> to 15<sup>th</sup> centuries). The medieval layers were then in turn sealed by a post-medieval/modern agricultural soil. The surviving features were a number of ditches and gullies in Trench 1 at a depth of between 0.6m and 2m below ground level.*

*The presence of these features, coupled with the remains recorded in an earlier watching brief on a previous extension to the school, can be seen to indicate the presence of an Iron Age settlement which may have a continuity through to the medieval period.*

## 1.0 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 This document presents an interim statement on the results of a programme of archaeological evaluation by trial trenching on the proposed extension to Sherburn Primary School, Sherburn, North Yorkshire (NGR SE 95864 77013). The investigation was undertaken by JB Archaeological Services (JBAS) on behalf of Jacobs North Yorkshire between 27<sup>th</sup> March and 5<sup>th</sup> April 2012.

### Geology and Soils

- 1.2 The underlying geology of the site is the Corallian, Amphill and Kimmeridge clays of the Upper Jurassic (British Geological Survey, 2001). Overlying this, the quaternary geology is predominantly one of lacustrine clays, silts and sands (British Geological Survey, 1977). The soils, which have developed from these deposits, are classified as the Newport 1 association which are deep, well drained sandy and coarse loamy soils (Soil Survey of England and Wales, 1983).

### Topography and Land-use

- 1.3 The site is located on the western side of St Hilda's Road in an area of level ground at a height above sea level of c.36mOD. The proposed site currently forms part of the curtilage of the school and is primarily used as a playground. The surrounding area is mainly residential housing with open fields to the west. Sherburn lies 17km to the east of Malton and 15km south-west of Scarborough, and is in Sherburn parish.

### Archaeological Background

- 1.4 The area lies within the multi-period landscape of the Vale of Pickering which has seen human activity since at least the Upper Palaeolithic period. To the west, particularly around West Heslerton, there is evidence for extensive settlement from at least the Iron Age onwards and particularly during the 5-10<sup>th</sup> centuries. The settlement of Sherburn is first mentioned in the Domesday Book of 1086 as *Sciresburne* with the name deriving from the Old English *scir* and *burna* meaning '(place at) the bright or clear stream' (Mills, 1998, 309). The dedication of the local church to St Hilda, who died in 680AD, is normally taken to be indicative of a pre-conquest settlement which, coupled with the name deriving from Old English (in use 450-1150AD), would seem to point to an early origin for the town.

- 1.5 An archaeological watching brief on previous development works at the school in 2010 recorded significant evidence for Iron Age and later medieval activity on the site at between 0.65 and 1.1m below modern ground level. Both phases of activity were indicative of there having been some form of settlement on the site with at least one building being present in the 14<sup>th</sup> century (see Fern Archaeology, 2010, for details).

- 1.6 The results of the watching brief outlined above indicated that there is a high potential for significant prehistoric and later medieval archaeology to survive within the site. This means that any development has the potential to disturb and/or damage these remains. Therefore in order to determine the nature, depth, extent and level of preservation of archaeological remains within the

development, a programme of archaeological evaluation by trial trenching was undertaken. This allowed for a quantitative assessment to be made of the surviving any remains which will then be able to inform a mitigation strategy which will, in turn, ameliorate any potential loss of historic and archaeological remains. It will hopefully also help prevent undue delay in the construction programme.

- 1.7 In order to assess the potential for the survival of buried archaeological remains, two trial trenches are proposed within the footprint of the development. These trenches are described in detail below (see Figure 2 for locations).

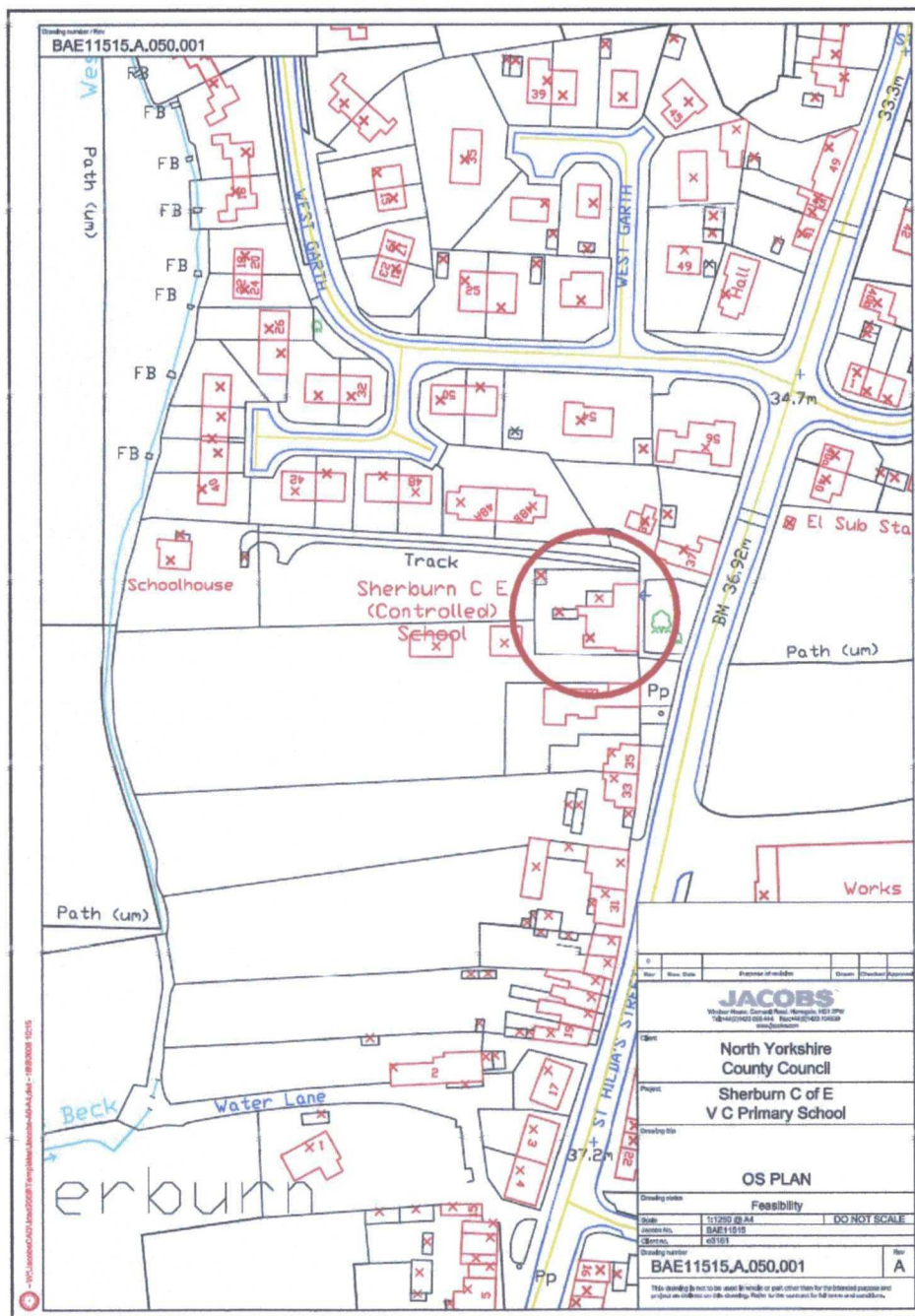


Figure 1 Site Location

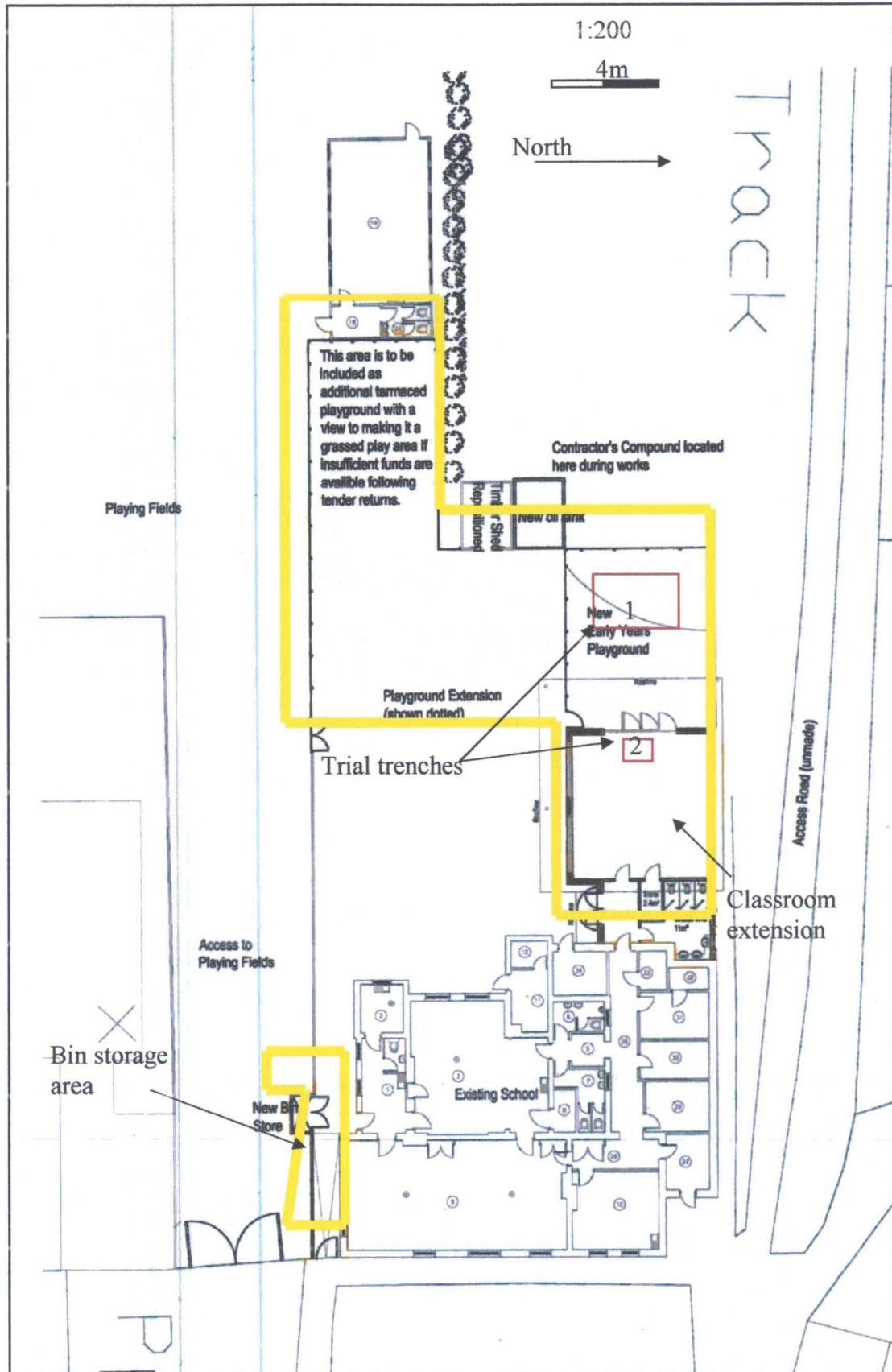


Figure 2 Indicative location of trial trenches

## 2.0 AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

2.1 The objective of the evaluation was to identify, record and sample excavate any features of archaeological interest revealed during the excavation of two trial trenches. The specific aims were to:

- archaeologically record (written, graphic, and photographic records) any archaeological features revealed by the trial trenches
- recover any archaeological artefacts and environmental material exposed by the trial trenches

2.2 All archaeological works were carried out in accordance with the Institute of Field Archaeologists Code of Conduct for an Archaeological Evaluation (1995).

## 3.0 METHODOLOGY

3.1 Each trench was hand excavated by the project archaeologist to a previously agreed Written Scheme of Investigation (Buglass, 2012). The only use of plant was for the cutting of the tarmac for Trench 2 which was located in the current playground. The size and location of the trenches were:

- *Trench 1.* This was aligned north-south and was located in an area of grass that will eventually be the new playground area. The trench measured 3x2m (6m<sup>2</sup>) in order to fit within the footprint of the area of ground reduction for the new playground.
- *Trench 2.* This was located in the existing playground and was within the footprint of the proposed new classroom. The trench measured 2x2m (4m<sup>2</sup>).

The locations are shown in Figure 1 and were chosen in order to avoid current standing structures and services. The total area of evaluation was 10m<sup>2</sup> across the two trenches located within the proposed development area.

## 4.0 RESULTS

4.1 The archaeological sequences for the various features encountered in the two trenches are described in detail below. In the text the context numbers for each archaeological deposit or feature are given in [] brackets.

### *Trench 1 (Figures 2 – 4; Plates 1 – 3)*

4.2 The earliest feature encountered in this trench was the top of a large ditch-like feature aligned east-west [13]. Unfortunately due to the depth of this feature it was not possible to undertake a detailed sample excavation of it safely. However, it could be seen that it had been cut into the underlying natural geology [15] at a depth of c. 1.96m below ground level (34.91mOD). Its southern edge was visible towards the centre of the evaluation trench, whilst its northern edge remained unexcavated under stepping of the side of the trench. What could be seen of the ditch showed that its southern side had been dug at an angle of approximately 45°. Unfortunately it was considered unsafe to attempt to

excavate to determine its profile and depth. The fill of the ditch [14] was a loosely compacted, mid to dark brown, silty soil with no obvious artefacts for biological remains. Due to safety considerations, context [14] was not sampled for environmental analysis.

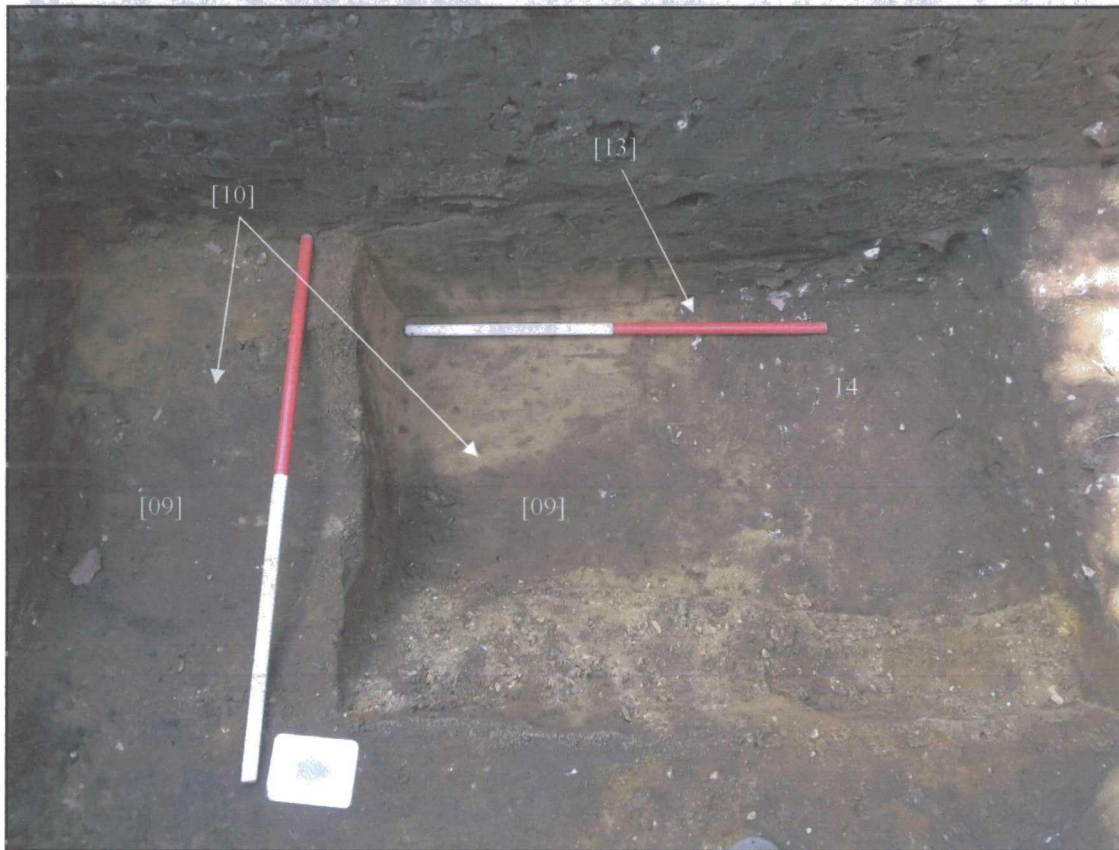


Plate 1. Ditch [13] and gully [10], scales 1m, looking west

- 4.3 Running on a north-south alignment and probably cutting across the top of [13] was a small gully-like feature [10]. The visible southern part of this feature had been cut into the underlying natural geology at a depth of *c.* 1.53m (35.34mOD), whilst the northern part appeared to cut across the top of [13]. This gully had a somewhat rounded profile due to the very sandy nature of the underlying natural which prevented steeper sides being cut. The recorded section was 0.8m long, 0.3m wide at the top and 0.3m deep. It was filled with a loosely compacted, light to mid brown silty, sandy soil [09], very similar in nature to the fill of ditch [13] below. The fill contained small amounts of late Iron Age pottery and animal bone (cow, pig, sheep/goat and possible horse) along with fragments of naturally occurring chalk and flint.





Plate 2. Gully [10] cut into natural [15], scales 1m, looking south

- 4.4 On the extreme eastern side of the trench and apparently aligned parallel to [10] was what appeared to be a second small gully [11] and as with [10] it had been cut from around 1.54m below ground level (35.33mOD). Only a 1.3m long, 0.12m wide section of the western side of the feature was visible. This meant that only a very limited investigation could be undertaken. This showed that the western side of the feature had been cut at an angle of 45° but, due to its location, it was not possible to determine the depth of the feature. The fill of [11] was a loosely compacted mid to light brown silty soil [12] with a small amount of animal bone (currently unidentified).
- 4.5 Lying directly over the northern edge of ditch [13] there was a 0.5m diameter patch of loosely compacted chalk rubble [07] with a small, thin spread of the same material extending to the south-west [08]. Both of these contexts contained small amounts of Iron Age/Romano-British pottery and cattle and sheep bones. Although this feature had an appearance of being a possible post pad, its poorly compacted nature and insubstantial nature (0.10m thick) and the fact that stratigraphically it was located within context [04] would seem to suggest that it probably was not and was simply a coincidental concentration of material in the layer [04].
- 4.6 Lying directly over and sealing the gullies [10] and [11] and ditch [13] was a 0.55m deep (base at 35.35mOD, top at 35.91mOD) layer of what appears to be agricultural soil [04]. This layer was very uniform in its composition and extremely similar to layer [03] above. Both were a loosely compacted, mid to light brown