



Abbey House, La Sagesse Convent Romsey, Hampshire

Archaeological Evaluation Report





**ABBNEY HOUSE, LA SAGESSE CONVENT
ROMSEY, HAMPSHIRE**

Archaeological Evaluation Report

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On behalf of:
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November 2011


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QUALITY ASSURANCE

SITE CODE	75181	ACCESSION CODE		CLIENT CODE	
PLANNING APPLICATION REF.	11/00164/FULLS	NGR		435073 121077	

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* I= INTERNAL DRAFT E= EXTERNAL DRAFT F= FINAL

**ABBHEY HOUSE, LA SAGESSE CONVENT
ROMSEY, HAMPSHIRE**

Archaeological Evaluation Report

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ABBAY HOUSE, LA SAGESSE CONVENT
ROMSEY, HAMPSHIRE**Archaeological Evaluation Report****Summary**

Wessex Archaeology was commissioned by The Daughters of Wisdom, through their agent RHA Architects Limited, to undertake a trial trench evaluation on land at Abbey House, La Sagesse Convent, Romsey, centred on National Grid Reference 435073 121077. The proposed development includes the partial demolition of the existing convent buildings and the construction of new convent buildings within a similar footprint.

The site lies on the western outskirts of Romsey, in the northern part of La Sagesse Convent and comprises extant convent buildings with a landscaped garden to the south.

Two trial trenches, measuring approximately 6m x 1.0m, were excavated in the course of the evaluation. No archaeological features or deposits were identified during the evaluation and lack of finds suggests low potential for pre-modern activity within the southern part of the site.

The natural gravel was identified in Trench 2 in the south-eastern part of the site at approximately 1.25m below ground level (c.13.71m aOD). However, these gravels appear to have been heavily disturbed by previous development. In Trench 1, made ground deposits to a minimum depth of 1.6m below the present ground surface were noted.

The results of the evaluation will be used to determine the scope, nature and extent of any archaeological mitigation that may be required following discussions with the Principal Archaeologist for Hampshire County Council.

ABBAY HOUSE, LA SAGESSE CONVENT
ROMSEY, HAMPSHIRE**Archaeological Evaluation Report****Acknowledgements**

This project was commissioned by Daughters of Wisdom through their agent RHA Architects Limited and Wessex Archaeology is grateful to Jeremy Downes and Richard Heath of RHA Architects Limited and Peter Williams of Williams Surveyors Ltd in this regard. Wessex Archaeology would also like to thank David Hopkins, the Principal Archaeological Officer of Archaeology & Historic Buildings Record Team (AHBR), who monitored the project on behalf of Hampshire County Council. The on site assistance of Karen Peters of the Wisdom Centre is also appreciated.

The project was managed for Wessex Archaeology by Andrew Manning. The fieldwork was undertaken by Julia Sulikowska, who also compiled this report. The figures were prepared by S.E. James.

**ABBAY HOUSE, LA SAGESSE CONVENT
ROMSEY, HAMPSHIRE****Archaeological Evaluation Report****1 INTRODUCTION****1.1 Project Background**

- 1.1.1 Wessex Archaeology was commissioned by The Daughters of Wisdom, through their agent RHA Architects Limited, to undertake a trial trench evaluation on land at Abbey House, La Sagesse Convent, Romsey, centred on National Grid Reference (NGR) 435073 121077 (hereafter referred to as 'the Site') (**Figure 1**).
- 1.1.2 A detailed Significance Assessment of the building was undertaken in mid 2010 (AHP 2010) and an archaeological Desk-based Assessment (DBA) was also subsequently undertaken (Wessex Archaeology 2010).
- 1.1.3 A planning application was submitted to the Test Valley Borough Council in late 2010 for development including the partial demolition of the existing convent buildings and the construction of new convent buildings within a similar footprint (**Figure 1**).
- 1.1.4 Full planning permission (11/00164/FULLS) was granted in March 2011 with an archaeological condition (Condition 3) for an appropriate programme of archaeological assessment and mitigation attached to the planning consent:

No development shall take place (including site clearance) within the application site/area indicated red, until the applicant or their agents or successors in title has submitted and had approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority a programme of archaeological work. The development shall be carried out in accordance with the approved details. The programme of archaeological work must include a written specification for a preliminary survey, appropriate archaeological mitigation (the specification for which should be drawn up in the light of the results of the preliminary survey) and include detail of appropriate dissemination of the post-excavation assessment.

Reason: The site is potentially of archaeological significance in accordance with Test Valley Borough Local plan 2006 policy ENV11.

- 1.1.5 Based on the results of the previously submitted assessments, discussions with the Principal Archaeological Officer for Hampshire County Council indicated that the following archaeological fieldwork was required:
- Limited evaluation, were possible, within the footprint of the new proposed building, where the DBA demonstrated that there had been no previous disturbance and there was the potential for the survival of significant archaeological remains; and
 - An appropriate programme of archaeological mitigation during the latter stages of the demolition of those elements of Abbey House which are to be removed and ground works associated with the excavation of new

foundations, a lift shaft and new services. At the pre-evaluation stage, this was deemed to be a watching brief during groundworks, although the results of the evaluation would be used to inform the final scope, extent and nature of the subsequent archaeological mitigation.

1.1.6 A *Written Scheme of Investigation* (WSI) for the archaeological evaluation and subsequent mitigation was prepared by Wessex Archaeology in accordance with standards and guidance for archaeological evaluation, excavation and watching brief published by the Institute for Archaeologists (IfA 2008), detailing the strategy, methodology and standards to be employed during the archaeological fieldwork (Wessex Archaeology 2011). The WSI was approved by the Principal Archaeological Officer before the commencement of archaeological fieldwork.

1.1.7 The fieldwork was carried out on the 31st October and 1st November 2011.

1.2 The Site, Location and Geology

1.2.1 The Site lies on the western outskirts of Romsey, within the grounds of La Sagesse Convent (**Figure 1**). The Convent grounds are bounded to the north by The Meads and The Abbey, by Narrow Lane to the east, residential development to the south and the River Test to the west. The Site is located in the southern area of the Convent complex and comprises extant convent buildings with a landscaped garden immediately to the south.

1.2.2 The Site is generally flat, lying on a terrace at an elevation of c.15m above Ordnance Datum (aOD). The underlying geology of the Site comprises Bagshot Beds and London Clays, which are overlain by Alluvium and Valley Gravels (BGS 1:50,000 Sheet 315).

2 ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND

2.1.1 The archaeological Desk-based Assessment undertaken for the Site (Wessex Archaeology 2010) provided a detailed assessment of the known archaeological activity within the Site and its vicinity and discussed the potential impacts of the development. A summary of the results is presented below.

2.1.2 The Site lies within an area which has a high archaeological potential to yield evidence for archaeological activity of an earlier prehistoric to medieval date. The Site lies immediately adjacent to a nationally important Upper Palaeolithic site, excavated in 2002 (Conneller and Ellis 2007) (**Figure 1**). Worked Mesolithic flint has also been found close to the Site, some during the 2002 excavations. These finds indicated the potential for significant early prehistoric activity in this area.

2.1.3 Iron Age to Saxon settlement has been inferred as existing within the area of the Site from extensive finds of domestic rubbish recovered from former stream courses, including up to 2m of deposits from the late Iron Age onwards, found in Narrow Lane, immediately to the east of the Site. In particular, material dating to these periods has been recovered from a large palaeochannel which has been identified immediately to the north of the Site. This channel appears to cross the Site and has the potential to contain similar Romano-British or earlier finds, deposits and/or significant environmental deposits.

- 2.1.4 The Site also lies within the suggested precinct of Romsey Abbey, a Saxon to medieval foundation, and may contain evidence relating to life within the foundation during these periods. The suggested area of the precinct has been designated as an Area of High Archaeological Importance by Hampshire County Council in recognition of the potential significance of these deposits.

3 AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

3.1 General aims

- 3.1.1 The general aims of the archaeological evaluation were to;
- Locate, identify and to investigate and record the presence/absence of archaeological features or deposits,
 - If significant archaeological features or deposits are located, then the fieldwork would establish, where possible, the extent, date, character, relationship, condition and significance of archaeological features, artefacts and deposits within the area impacted, and
 - To inform the scope, location and nature of any subsequent archaeological mitigation.

4 FIELDWORK METHODOLOGY

4.1 Introduction

- 4.1.1 The evaluation was conducted in compliance with the methodology set out in the *Written Scheme of Investigation* (Wessex Archaeology 2011) and standards set out in the Institute for Archaeologists' *Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Field Evaluation* (2008).

4.2 Fieldwork

- 4.2.1 After discussion with the Principal Archaeological Officer, evaluation was targeted on previously undisturbed ground within the footprint of the new building (**Figure 1**). It should be noted that a large proportion of this footprint has been disturbed, either since it lies within the original building or is on the site of former school buildings (now demolished).
- 4.2.2 It was therefore proposed to excavate a single trench, approximately 12m by 1.8m, which was to be located as close as possible to previously undisturbed ground alongside the southern edge of the existing building.
- 4.2.3 Due to on site constraints, such as proximity to the existing building and location of the trench within hard-standing, this was adapted in the field to two c.6m long trenches which were excavated to the south of the original trench location (**Figure 1**):
- **Trench 1:** east-west aligned trench excavated within the central lawn, targeted on the possible course of the palaeochannel;
 - **Trench 2:** north-south aligned trench excavated within the central lawn and within the footprint of the proposed building.

- 4.2.4 The trench locations were scanned with a Cable Avoidance Tool prior to and during excavation. All trenches were excavated using a 1.6 tonne mini-excavator fitted with a toothless bucket, under constant archaeological supervision. Topsoil and overburden were removed in discrete level spits of approximately 0.1m, down to the top of the first significant archaeological horizon or natural geology, whichever was encountered first. Spoil was stored adjacent to the trench, at a safe distance from the trench edge, with topsoil and subsoil stockpiled separately.
- 4.2.5 In **Trench 1**, a depth of 1.2m below the ground surface was reached without exposing the natural geology. Therefore, a machine excavated sondage was dug in order to investigate the deposits. However, due to unstable trench sides, the excavation ceased at 1.6m below the ground surface. The recording was undertaken from the surface and the trench was not accessed. The sondage was backfilled immediately after the recording was completed for safety reasons.
- 4.2.6 On completion of the archaeological recording, all trenches were backfilled using excavated material in accordance with best practice.

4.3 Recording

- 4.3.1 A unique number was issued for each deposit, relating to the trench in which it was found.
- 4.3.2 The trenches were recorded using Wessex Archaeology's *pro-forma* recording sheets. Representative sections of the trenches were recorded at a scale of 1:10. A photographic record, comprising monochrome prints, colour transparencies and digital photography was maintained throughout fieldwork.
- 4.3.3 The Site was surveyed using a Global Positioning System (GPS) and tied to the Ordnance Survey National Grid. Site drawings were annotated with co-ordinates and spot heights as appropriate.

4.4 Copyright

- 4.4.1 This report may contain material that is non-Wessex Archaeology copyright (e.g. Ordnance Survey, British Geological Survey, Crown Copyright), or the intellectual property of third parties, which we are able to provide for limited reproduction under the terms of our own copyright licences, but for which copyright itself is non-transferrable by Wessex Archaeology. You are reminded that you remain bound by the conditions of the Copyright, Designs and Patents Act 1988 with regard

5 RESULTS

5.1 Introduction

- 5.1.1 The following section provides a summary of the information derived from the field evaluation. Detailed descriptions of the trial trenches are included in the **Appendix 1: Trench Tables**.

5.2 General stratigraphy

- 5.2.1 The natural gravels (203) were identified in only one trench (Trench 2) at a depth of approximately 1.25-1.30m below the present ground surface (13.71m aOD) with evidence of made ground deposits elsewhere to a depth of at least 1.25-1.60m below the present ground surface (13.69-13.30m aOD).
- 5.2.2 Made ground deposits in both trenches (comprising mixed garden soils with demolition rubble) formed the majority of the observed deposits in both trenches and were sealed by topsoil, approximately 0.33-35m in depth.
- 5.2.3 No archaeological features, finds or deposits were observed in either of the trenches during the course of the evaluation.

5.3 Trench 1

- 5.3.1 In **Trench 1 (Figure 2 and Plates 1, 3 and 4)** the natural gravels were not encountered within the excavated trench. Within the central area of the trench, a sondage was excavated and identified a deep sequence of mixed soils and made ground deposits (**Figure 2, Section 100B and Plate 1**) which extended to at least a depth of 1.60m below the present ground surface. This sequence comprised of a dark brown/black garden soil **106** overlaid by a 0.55m thick clay deposit with brick inclusions **105** which in turn overlaid made ground deposits of redeposited natural gravel **104** and demolition rubble **103** and a dark brown silt loam soil with modern debris **101** sealed by topsoil **100**.
- 5.3.2 The tip angle of a number of the deeper deposits (**106, 105 and 104**) suggests that these deposits are infilling either a much larger feature or are within a significantly large area of previous disturbance.
- 5.3.3 In the eastern part of the trench, excavation was undertaken to a depth of 1.20m and revealed a similar sequence of made ground deposits (**101 and 102**) overlaid by topsoil **101 (Figure 2, Section 100A)**.

5.4 Trench 2

- 5.4.1 In the middle of **Trench 2 (Figure 2 and Plates 2, 5 and 6)** the Valley Gravel natural (**203**) was encountered. The natural comprised poorly sorted sub-rounded gravels in pale yellow/off-white sandy matrix and was at a depth of 1.25m below the present ground surface (approximately 13.71m aOD).
- 5.4.2 The natural gravels were sealed by a 0.25m thick layer of broken brick and cement fragments in a modern mortar matrix (**204**), which has overlaid in turn by modern made ground deposits **201 and 202 (Figure 2, Section 200 and Plate 2)**, which were up to 0.90m in depth and which comprised dark brown/black silty clay loam garden soils mixed with modern demolition rubble, sealed by a dark greyish brown silt loam topsoil **200**.
- 5.4.3 Two modern pipe trenches cut into the top of the natural gravels were encountered at the northern and southern ends of the trench.

6 FINDS AND PALAEO-ENVIRONMENTAL SAMPLES

6.1 Finds

6.1.1 No datable finds were recovered during the course of the fieldwork.

6.2 Palaeo-environmental Samples

6.2.1 No deposits suitable for sampling were identified during the course of the fieldwork.

7 DISCUSSION

7.1.1 No archaeological features, deposits or finds were encountered in either trench. Although, the evaluation identified the top of the natural gravels in Trench 2 at approximately 1.25m below the present ground level (13.71m aOD), the fact that the natural gravels are overlain directly by modern made ground deposits, with no evidence of any surviving *in-situ* alluvial deposits or former subsoil.

7.1.2 In Trench 1, modern made ground deposits were observed to a minimum depth of 1.60m below the present ground surface (13.30m aOD). Although this trench lies within the projected line of the palaeochannel it also lies close to the corner of one of the former school buildings (**Figure 1**) and based on the large quantity of demolition material observed, it is more likely that the substantial infilling of deposits is related to modern demolition work rather than infilling of the palaeochannel.

7.1.3 Overall, the results would suggest that the area of the new proposed building has been the subject of substantial truncation into the top of the natural gravels and this is likely to have had a very heavy impact on any archaeological remains which may have been present.

7.1.4 The majority of the impacts of the new development (grubbing out and construction of new foundations and new services) are between 1-1.6m in depth, the deepest impact being from the proposed foundations. Based on the results of the evaluation, the potential for surviving archaeological features and deposits would appear to be very low.

7.1.5 A notable proposed impact is the new lift shaft, which is to be excavated to a depth of approximately 2.5m (12.85m aOD) within the footprint of the original building. The lift shaft is located at the edge of the projected course of the palaeochannel and does have the potential to reveal deeper potential archaeological deposits, if present.

7.1.6 In addition, works are proposed immediately to the north-west of the main building with the removal of a building above an existing culvert, which will have its modern fill removed and structure rebuilt. Although these works are largely reconstructive with no proposed widening of the culvert, these works are close to the limits of the 2002 excavation and may have the potential for further archaeological information.

8 ARCHIVE

- 8.1.1 The project archive is currently stored at Wessex Archaeology's office in Salisbury under the project code 75181. In due course, the complete project archive will be deposited with the Hampshire Museum Service.
- 8.1.2 The complete site archive, which will comprise paper records, photographic records, graphics and digital data, will be prepared in accordance with Appendix 3 of the management of Archaeological Projects (English Heritage 1991) and following the standards outlined in nationally recommended guidelines (UKIC 1990, SMA 1995) and the requirements of the Hampshire Museums Service.
- 8.1.3 On completion of the final report, Wessex Archaeology will complete an online OASIS pro forma at <http://ads.ahds.ac.uk/project/oasis/> for the works.

9 REFERENCES

Conneller, C. and Ellis, C. 2007: A Final Late Upper Palaeolithic site at La Sagesse Convent, Romsey, Hampshire, *Proceedings of the Prehistoric Society* **73**

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Wessex Archaeology 2010: *Abbey House, La Sagesse Convent, Romsey, Hampshire: Heritage Statement*, unpublished client report ref. 75180.01

Wessex Archaeology 2011: *Abbey House, La Sagesse Convent, Romsey, Hampshire: Written Scheme of Investigation for an Archaeological Evaluation and Mitigation*, unpublished client report ref. 75181.01

APPENDIX 1: TRENCH TABLES

Trench 1		Length: 6.37m	Width: 1.0m	Max Depth: 1.60m
NGR (W end)		Easting: 435078.946	Northing: 121059.846	14.86m aOD
Context	Type	Description		Depth (m)
100	Topsoil	Loose dark greyish brown/black silt loam with very rare gravel inclusions. Modern garden soil		0 – 0.33
101	Made ground	Dark brown silt loam 'garden soil' mixed with modern brick and cement demolition rubble		0.33 – 0.80
102	Made ground	Black silt loam comprising moderate small gravel and modern rubble inclusions		0.80 – 1.15+
103	Made ground	Layer comprising mostly dumps of demolition material (brick, slate and ceramic roof tiles, mortar fragments) of modern date		0.60 – 0.70
104	Made ground	Redeposited dark orangey yellow mid-sized gravel		0.70 – 1.05
105	Made ground	Thick greyish green clay with common large brick inclusions		1.05 – 1.60
106	Layer	Dark brown/black layer, similar to 102, only just exposed beneath 105		1.60 +
No archaeological components				

Trench 2		Length: 5.38m	Width: 1.0m	Max Depth: 1.30m
NGR (N end)		Easting: 435090.016	Northing: 121062.282	15.03m aOD
Context	Type	Description		Depth (m)
200	Topsoil	Loose dark greyish brown/black silt loam with very rare gravel inclusions. Modern garden soil		0 – 0.35
201	Made ground	Mixed deposit of brown/black silty clay loam garden soil and assorted modern (19 th -20 th century) demolition rubble (pot, brick, roof tile)		0.35 – 1.0
202	Made ground	Deposit comprising several lenses of modern building rubble, rich garden soil, redeposited gravel and fragmented brick and mortar – it seems to be filling an undulation in natural geology		1.0 – 1.25
203	Natural geology	Natural gravel deposit – poorly sorted (small to large) sub-rounded gravels in off-white/pale yellow sandy matrix. Sterile geological deposit		1.25 – 1.30+
204	Layer/	Modern layer of broken brick and cement fragments in a mortar matrix, exposed alongside east facing section of trench.		0.25m thick
No archaeological components				

APPENDIX 2: OASIS SUMMARY

OASIS ID: wessexar1-113985

Project details

Project name	Abbey House, Romsey, Hampshire
Short description of the project	Wessex Archaeology was commissioned by The Daughters of Wisdom, through their agent RHA Architects Limited, to undertake a trial trench evaluation on land at Abbey House, La Sagesse Convent, Romsey, centred on National Grid Reference 435073 121077. The proposed development includes the partial demolition of the existing convent buildings and the construction of new convent buildings within a similar footprint. The Site lies on the western outskirts of Romsey, in the northern part of La Sagesse Convent and comprises extant convent buildings with a landscaped garden to the south. Two trial trenches, measuring approximately 6m x 1.0m, were excavated in the course of the evaluation. No archaeological features or deposits were identified during the evaluation and lack of finds suggests low potential for pre-modern activity within the southern part of the Site. The natural gravel was identified in Trench 2 in the south-eastern part of the Site at approximately 1.25m below ground level (c.13.71m aOD). However, these gravels appear to have been heavily disturbed by previous development. In Trench 1, made ground deposits to a minimum depth of 1.6m below the present ground surface were noted. The results of the evaluation will be used to determine the scope, nature and extent of the final phase of archaeological mitigation after discussions with the Principal Archaeologist for Hampshire County Council.
Project dates	Start: 31-10-2011 End: 01-11-2011
Previous/future work	No / Yes
Any associated project reference codes	75181 - Contracting Unit No.
Type of project	Field evaluation
Site status	None
Current Land use	Residential 2 - Institutional and communal accommodation
Monument type	NONE None
Significant Finds	NONE None
Methods & techniques	'Targeted Trenches'
Development type	Urban residential (e.g. flats, houses, etc.)
Prompt	Direction from Local Planning Authority - PPS
Position in the planning process	After full determination (eg. As a condition)

Project location

Country England
 Site location HAMPSHIRE TEST VALLEY ROMSEY Abbey House
 Postcode SO51 8YB
 Study area 1.00 Hectares
 Site coordinates SU 3190 2100 50.9869744261 -1.545469833050 50 59 13 N 001
 32 43 W Point
 Height OD / Depth Min: 13.60m Max: 15.00m

Project creators

Name of Wessex Archaeology
 Organisation
 Project brief City/Nat. Park/District/Borough archaeologist
 originator
 Project design Wessex Archaeology
 originator
 Project A Manning
 director/manager
 Project supervisor J. Sulikowska
 Type of Developer
 sponsor/funding
 body
 Name of RHA
 sponsor/funding
 body

Project archives

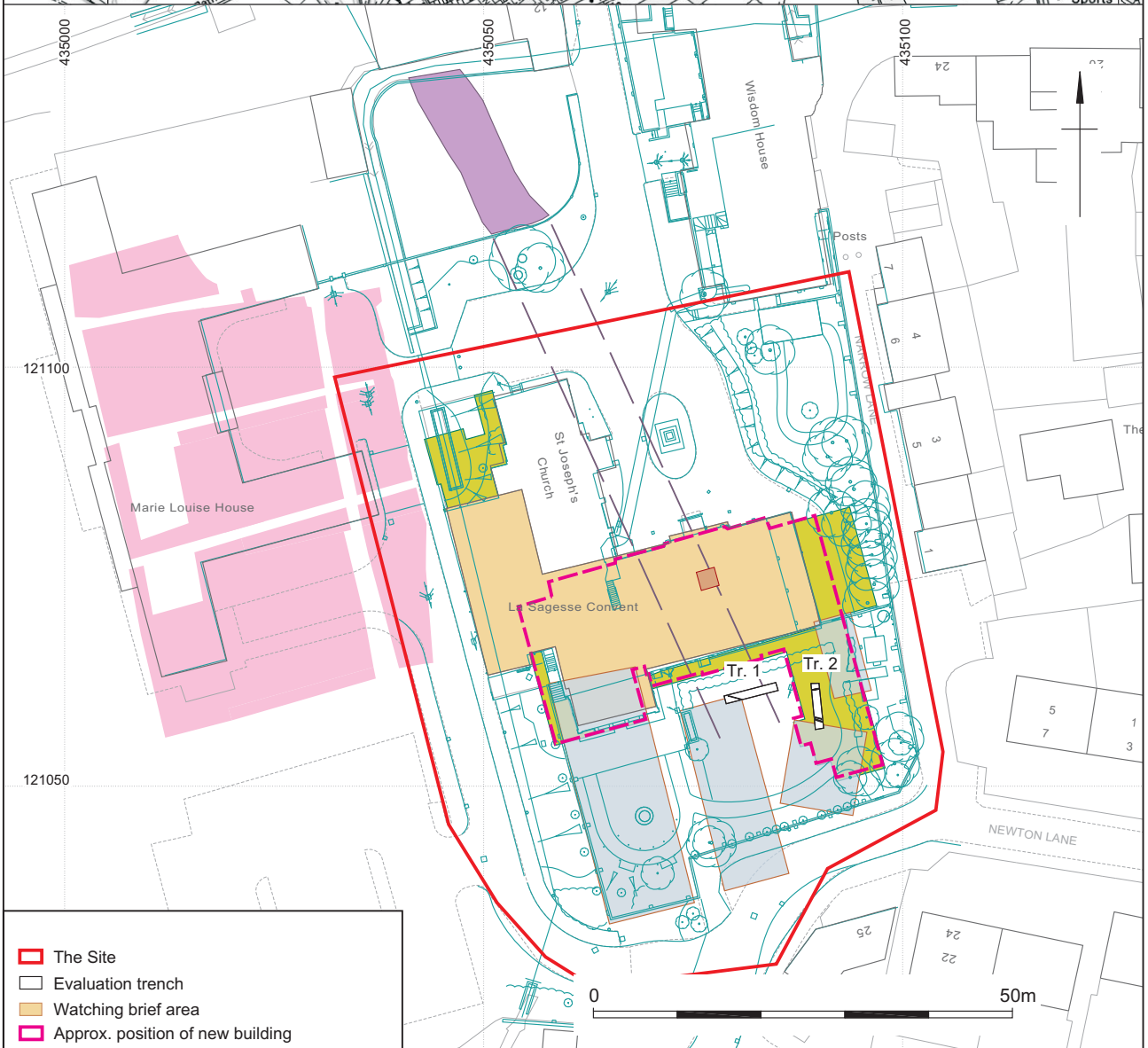
Physical Archive No
 Exists?
 Digital Archive Hampshire County Museums Service
 recipient
 Digital Media 'Images raster / digital photography','Survey'
 available
 Paper Archive Hampshire County Museums Service
 recipient
 Paper Media 'Context sheet','Drawing','Notebook - Excavation',' Research',
 available General Notes','Report','Section'

Project bibliography 1

Publication type Grey literature (unpublished document/manuscript)
 Title Abbey House, La Sagesse Convent, Romsey, Hampshire
 Author(s)/Editor(s) Sulikowska, J
 Other bibliographic 75181
 details

Date 2011
Issuer or publisher Wessex Archaeology
Place of issue or Salisbury
publication
Description Standard hard copy

Entered by Andrew Manning (a.manning@wessexarch.co.uk)
Entered on 16 November 2011



- The Site
- Evaluation trench
- Watching brief area
- Approx. position of new building
- New Impacts (additional watching brief area)
- New lift shaft
- Area of 2002 excavation
- Former School buildings
- Palaeochannel

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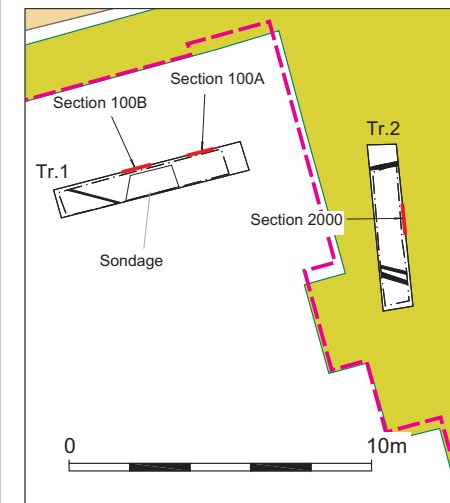
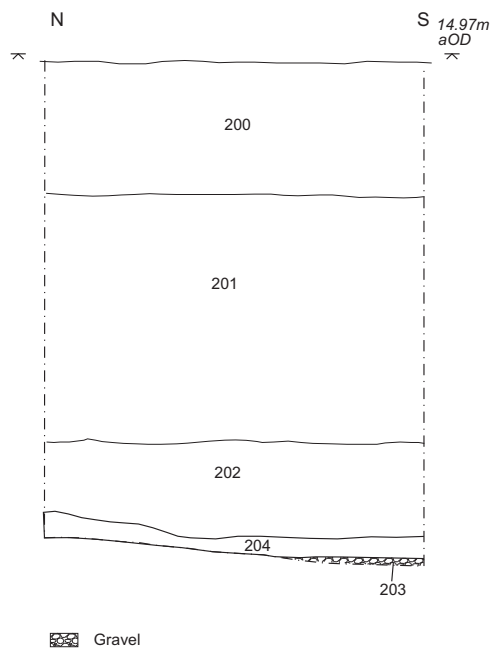
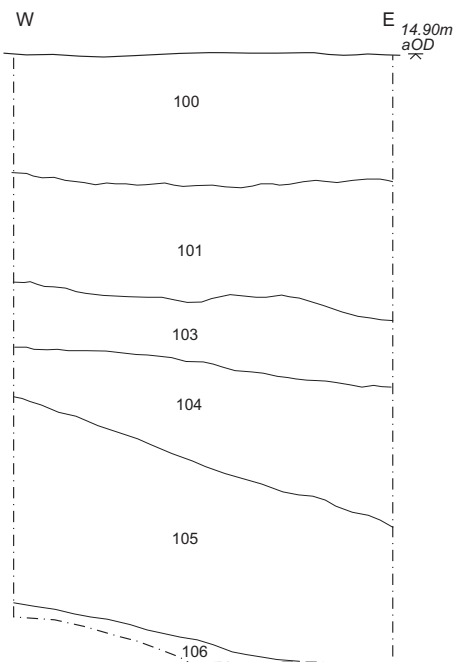
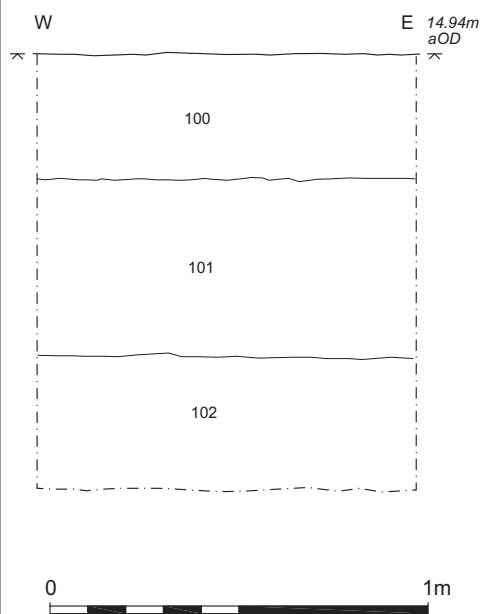
Site location showing evaluation trenches and watching brief areas

Figure 1

Section 100A

Section 100B

Section 200



 Evaluation trench
 Modern disturbance



Plate 1: South facing representative section (100B) of Trench 1



Plate 2: West facing representative section (200) of Trench 2

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Plate 3: Location view of Trench 1



Plate 5: Location view of Trench 2



Plate 4: Oblique view of south facing section of Trench 1



Plate 6: General post-excitation view of Trench 2



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