



making sense of heritage

Hucclecote Centre Churchdown Lane, Hucclecote Gloucester

Historic Building Record



Ref: 103731.01
April 2014



**Hucclecote Centre
Churchdown Lane
Hucclecote
Gloucester**

Historic Building Record

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Acknowledgements

The project was commissioned by CgMs Consulting Ltd and Wessex Archaeology is grateful to Matthew Smith in this regard. The advice and assistance of Andrew Armstrong (Gloucester City Archaeologist) is gratefully acknowledged.

The site survey and this report were undertaken by Matt Rous and the illustrations prepared by Elizabeth James. The project was managed for Wessex Archaeology by Andy King.



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Historic Building Record

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Project background

1.1.1 Wessex Archaeology was commissioned by CgMs Consulting Ltd to create a Historic Building Record (HBR) of the Hucclecote Centre (formerly Hucclecote Secondary School), Churchdown Lane, Gloucester, GL3 3QN. The work was commissioned as part of a planning application (ref: 11/00742/OUT) for the demolition of the existing buildings and erection of 53 dwellings together with associated estate roads and public open space.

1.1.2 In granting the planning permission Gloucester City Council (GCC) asked for certain conditions to be satisfied prior to the commencement of the conversion works to ensure that the former school buildings were adequately recorded, and that historic information was not destroyed as part of the development process.

1.1.3 Condition 19 of the planning permission states that:

No development shall take place within the proposed development site until the applicant, or their agents or successors in title, has secured the implementation of a programme of heritage work in accordance with a written scheme of investigation which has been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local planning Authority. The Programme will provide for archaeological recording of significant elements of the historic built environment that would be demolished as part of the development, with the provision for appropriate archiving and public dissemination of the findings.

Reason: The proposed development site includes significant elements of the historic built environment. The Council requires that these elements will be recorded in advance of any demolition and their record be made publicly available. This accords with policy BNE.9 of the Interim Adoption SPD of Gloucester City Council's 'Development affecting Sites of Historic Environment (Archaeological) Interest' (2008) and PPS5.

1.1.4 The Gloucester City Archaeologist (GCA) requested for the buildings to be recorded to Level 1 as defined in the document: *Understanding Historic Buildings: A guide to good recording practice* (English Heritage 2006). The work was undertaken in accordance with a brief which was issued by the GCA.

1.2 Site location

1.2.1 The Hucclecote Centre is located in the Severn Vale, in the Hucclecote area of Gloucester, c.5km to the east of the city centre. The Site, which is in Gloucestershire County Council ownership, covers c.2.3 hectares of level ground located on the east side of Churchdown Lane. The Site is centred on Ordnance Survey National Grid Reference 387668 217459, at a height of c.40m above Ordnance Datum.

- 1.2.2 The Hucclecote Centre comprises an irregular group of former school buildings situated on the edge of a quiet residential setting. Surrounding the buildings to the east is a former tarmac playground and tennis courts with a playing field beyond. These are bounded to the north by a road leading from Churchdown Lane to a rugby clubhouse and, on the east side, by the rugby clubhouse perimeter fence and an embankment of the M5 motorway beyond. To the north of the road leading to the clubhouse is another former school playing field, now occupied by a rugby pitch. To the south is Buscombe Gardens, a development of residential housing constructed in the 1990s.

2 METHODOLOGY

2.1 Aims and scope

- 2.1.1 The principal aim of the project, as set out in the brief was to provide a basic visual record (English Heritage *Level 1*) of these former school buildings which will be subject to demolition so they are 'preserved by record'.
- 2.1.2 The building recording exercise was carried out by a Senior Buildings Archaeologist from Wessex Archaeology on 1st April 2014.

2.2 Photographic record

- 2.2.1 Digital photography was carried out using a Canon PowerShot G10 digital camera with a 14 megapixel capability. General views, as well as details of significant features, were taken of the buildings on the Site.
- 2.2.2 A total of 92 digital images were captured during the site visit. A selection of these images has been used to illustrate this report (**Plates 1-15**).

2.3 Drawn record

- 2.3.1 No drawn record was made of the buildings, however, a client-supplied site plan has been annotated and presented within the report (**Figure 2**) showing the ground floor arrangement of the Site and the location and direction of the selected images.

2.4 Documentary research

- 2.4.1 A brief online search for historic background information revealed that the Site formerly comprised open farmland until the Hucclecote Secondary Modern School was constructed in 1960. The school is recorded as having 554 pupils on roll in 1984 (British History online), and remained open until 1988. A plaque in the Reception area indicates that on 24th January 1990 the Hucclecote Centre was opened by Councillor John Bartlett, Chairman of Gloucestershire Education Committee, providing an educational resource centre, offices and conference facilities.
- 2.4.2 Due to financial constraints caused by the unprofitability of running the Site and a maintenance backlog estimated at £2.3 million, a decision was made to close the Hucclecote Centre in March 2011.

3 BUILDING DESCRIPTION

3.1 Hucclecote Centre

- 3.1.1 The main building comprises a large and irregular-shaped structure which is orientated north - south along its long axis and measures approximately 120m in length and 55m in width at its greatest extent (**Figure 2, Plates 1-2**). At the heart of the complex is a central three-storey block, which is 'I'-shaped in plan (**Plate 3**) with single and two-storey rectangular extensions situated on all sides, often in a staggered arrangement (**Plate 4**).
- 3.1.2 The building is typical of many such post-war educational establishments which were developed under the Consortium of Local Authorities Special Programme (CLASP) in Nottinghamshire and Derbyshire during the late 1950s (English Heritage 2010, 75) and which were then replicated widely in the following decade. Construction comprises mass produced components including a central pin-jointed and spring-loaded light steel-frame clad with pale brick skin walls at ground floor and concrete panels or red tile above. The building is entirely covered by flat roofs and illuminated with continuous panels of mild steel frame windows, creating light and spacious classrooms, workshops and offices.
- 3.1.3 Although the school only existed for 28 years (1960-1988) and the Hucclecote Centre operated for the following 21 years (1990-2011), the interior of the main building still appears very much a school setting with the later conference, training and meeting facilities provided by the Hucclecote Centre utilising the existing spaces, with little discernable impact upon the earlier fabric of the building.
- 3.1.4 The arrangement of the former school buildings is as follows:

Ground floor

- 3.1.5 At ground floor level the central 'I'-shaped building comprises a long north-south orientated central corridor with offices and toilets situated on either side. At the north and south end of the corridor a spiral staircase leads to classrooms on the first and second floors (**Plate 5**). The main entrance into the building is situated at the northern end of the corridor on the west elevation, which leads into an 'L'-shaped Reception area (**Plate 6**). To the north of the Reception are two large joined, single-storey extensions: the dining/assembly hall (**Plate 7**), with attached kitchens (**Plate 8**) and storerooms to the west, and the former sports hall (**Plate 9**) with associated changing rooms and storerooms. At the southern end of the main building the corridor splits into two providing access into a number of workshops and offices to the west, and a large laboratory (**Plate 10**) and teaching rooms to the east.

Upper floors

- 3.1.6 The first and second floors each contain six large classrooms (**Plate 11**), some of which have later been subdivided following the change of use in the late 20th century.

Basement

- 3.1.7 A basement which houses the boiler is situated beneath part of the building but was not accessed during the site visit.

Other buildings

- 3.1.8 To the immediate south of the main building is a large, single-storey, rectangular building of pale brick measuring 40m in length and 15m in width (**Plate 12**) which, from brief examination, appears to have incorporated additional classroom facilities, although no access was available into this building during the site visit. Although constructed in similar style, historic mapping indicates that the building is a later construction, possibly during the 1970s when additional class capacity or facilities were needed. The area between the two buildings forms a narrow courtyard with covered walkways at the eastern end (**Plate 13**).
- 3.1.9 Away from the main building a small bungalow of pale brick with pitched roof is situated to the west of the kitchens, which most likely represents the caretaker's accommodation (**Plate 14**). A small number of ancillary buildings are situated to the north, including garages and storage sheds. To the north-east of the school is a large expanse of tarmac (b) (**Plate 15**) which formerly comprised a school playground and tennis courts, although latterly the area was used as a car park when the building changed use.

4 DISCUSSION

- 4.1.1 The building is typical of many such educational buildings constructed in the post-war period when rapid increase in population and the consequences of R. A. Butler's Education Act of 1944, which promised proper secondary education for all, led to a demand for relatively inexpensive secondary schools, which could be rapidly assembled from prefabricated materials. Such schools can be found the length and breadth of the country.
- 4.1.2 Like many other such buildings from this period, the former Hucclecote Secondary Modern School appears to hold little evidential, historical or aesthetic value, although in comparison to the type of school building which came before, it is spacious and light with a well-planned lay-out. Viewed from Churchdown Lane the building appears somewhat unsympathetic to the buildings which surround it and, due to its design, prefabricated nature and the materials from which it is constructed, it is showing signs of fatigue. However, such buildings are a testament to the post-war period and hold a measure of communal value conveyed by the communities which they served.

5 ARCHIVE

- 5.1.1 Following approval of the report by the GCA, two copies will be given to the Gloucester City Historic Environment Record (HER). These will consist of one digital copy in PDF format, and one bound copy.
- 5.1.2 Gloucester City Council's HER is registered with the online Access to Index of Archaeological Investigations (OASIS) project. Following approval of the report, Wessex Archaeology will provide appropriate details relating to the project by completing the OASIS form at <http://ads.ahds.ac.uk/project/oasis>, in accordance with the guidelines provided by English Heritage and the Archaeology Data Service.

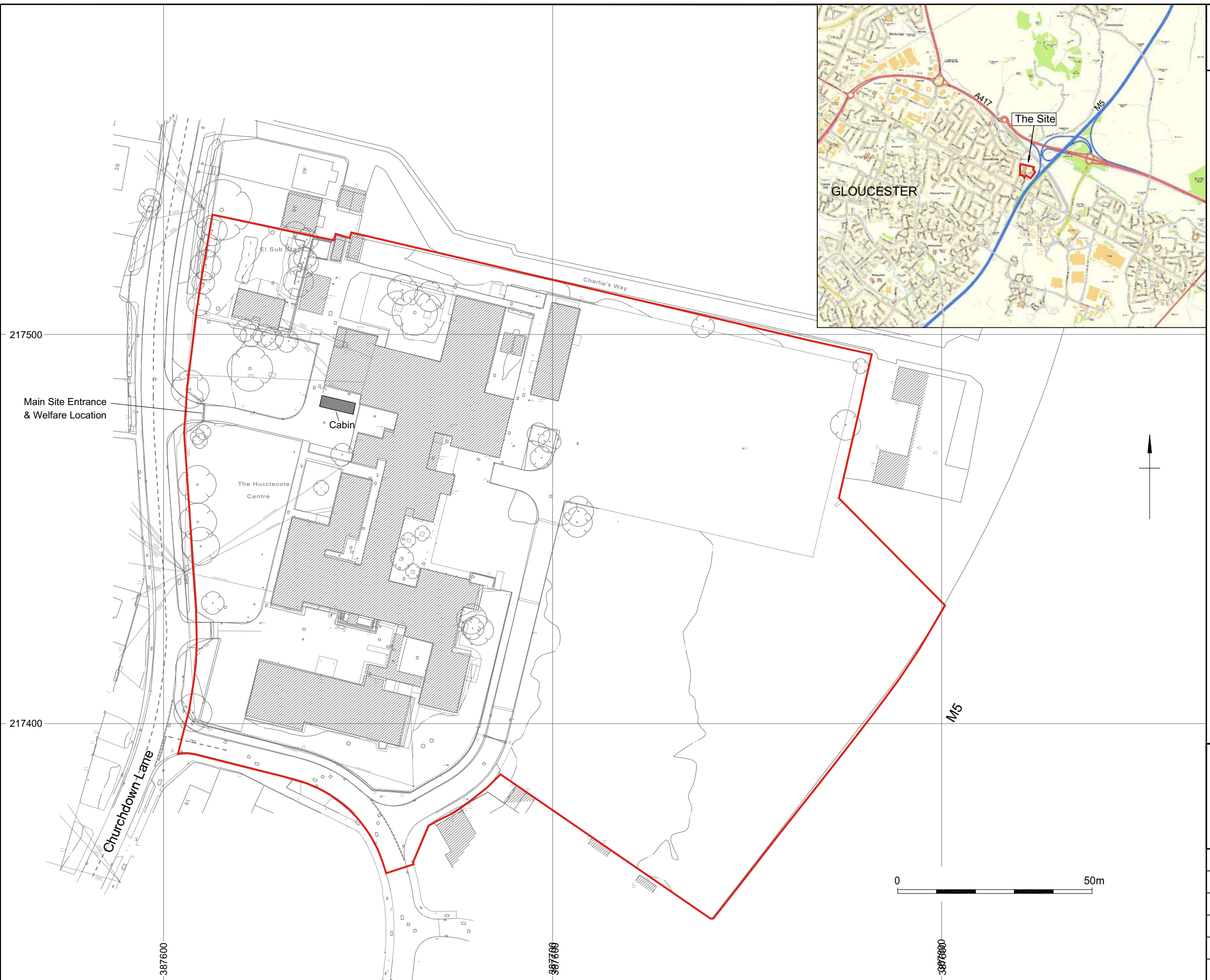


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English Heritage, 2006, *Understanding Historic Building: a guide to good recording practice*

English Heritage, 2010, *England's Schools: History, architecture and adaptation*



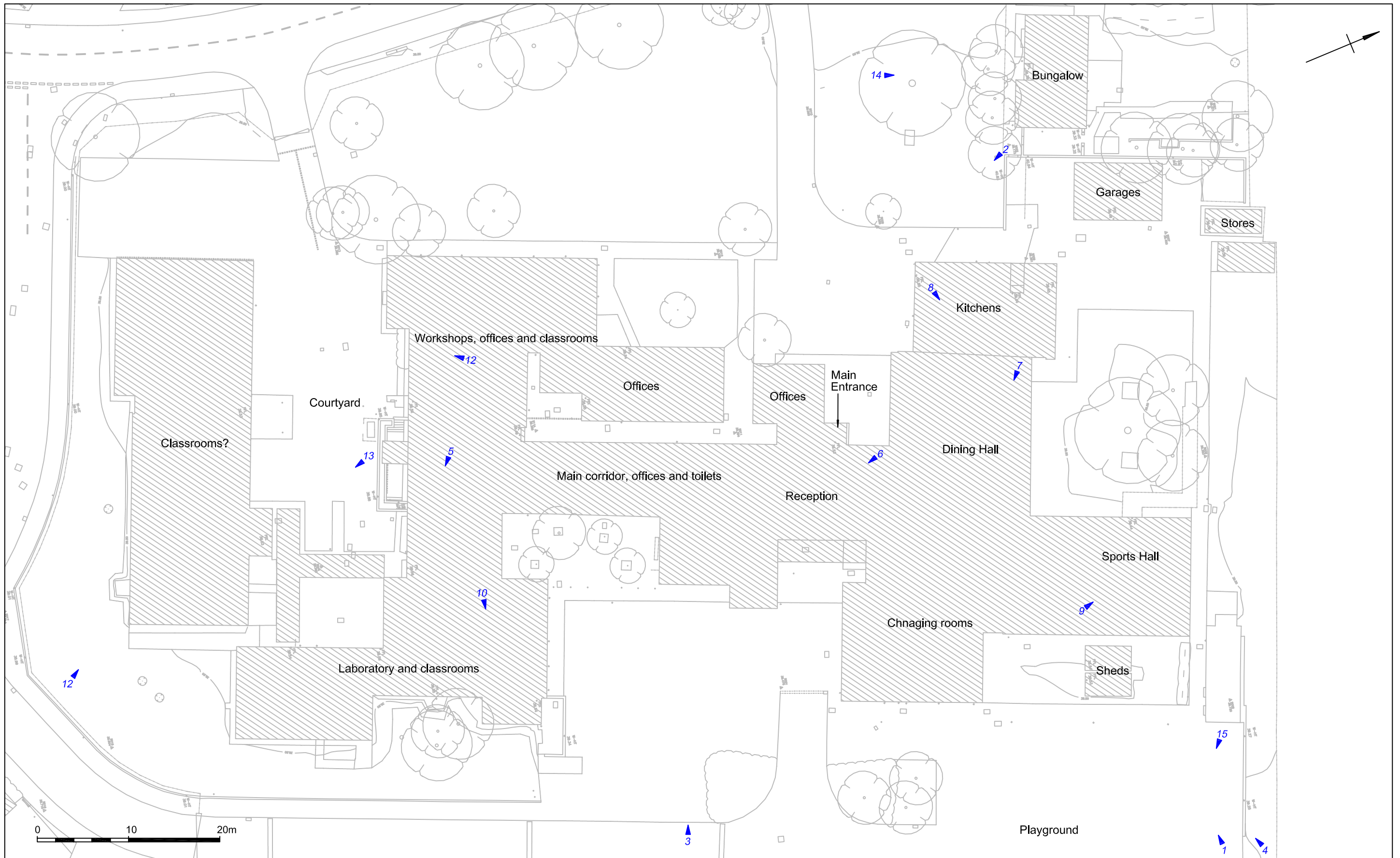
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Site location

Figure 1



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Ground floor plan of Hucclecote Centre

Figure 2



Plate 1: Hucclecote Centre viewed from the north-east



Plate 2: Hucclecote Centre viewed from the north-west


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Plate 3: Central block of Hucclecote Centre viewed from the east



Plate 4: Hucclecote Centre viewed from the north-east


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Plate 5: Spiral staircase



Plate 6: Reception


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Plate 7: Dining/Assembly Hall



Plate 8: Kitchens


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Plate 9: Former Sports Hall



Plate 10: Former Laboratory


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Plate 11: Typical large classroom latterly used as office space



Plate 12: Large detached building to the south


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Plate 13: Courtyard with covered walkways



Plate 14: Caretaker's bungalow



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Plate 15: Area of hardstanding to the east - formerly a school playground and tennis courts

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