

**An Archaeological Watching Brief at Birchwood Grove Primary School,
Burgess Hill, West Sussex**

Planning Ref: BH/3016/07

NGR: 532159 118339

**Project No: 3392
Site Code: BGB 08**

**ASE Report No: 2008134
OASIS ID: archaeol6-47527**



**By
Teresa Hawtin BA MSc AIFA**

**With contributions by
Trista Clifford**

August 2008

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Abstract

Archaeology South-East was commissioned by Longley to undertake an archaeological watching brief during the construction of new school buildings at Birchwood Grove Primary School, Burgess Hill, West Sussex during July 2008.

Several modern features were identified during the archaeological watching brief including service trenches, landscaped ground and the remains of a probable bonfire. These features are likely to relate to the site's former use as a school playing field.

Fragments of butchered animal bone and a small scatter of worked flints were retrieved from the subsoil towards the centre of the site. The latter included flakes, possible core fragments, and blades that could belong to the Mesolithic period.

No further finds, features or deposits of archaeological interest were identified on the site.

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Site Background

- 1.1.1 Archaeology South-East (ASE), the contracting division of the Centre for Applied Archaeology at the Institute of Archaeology, University College London, was commissioned by Longley to undertake an archaeological watching brief during the construction of new school buildings at Birchwood Grove Primary School, Burgess Hill, West Sussex (hereafter referred to as 'the site') (NGR: 532159 118339; Figs. 1-3).
- 1.1.2 The site is bound by Birchwood Grove Road to the north, Newick House School to the north and west, and residential properties to the east and south.
- 1.1.3 Prior to groundworks commencing for the construction of the new school buildings, the site was utilised as a school playing field.

1.2 Geology and Topography

- 1.2.1 The site is on a gentle south-facing slope, lying at c.50-55m AOD. The British Geological Survey (1:50000 series, Sheet 318/333) illustrates that the underlying geology of the site is comprised of Weald Clay, which is described as: "*Grey silty mudstones which weather to stiff fawn and grey clays. A few thin, but persistent beds of red clay, known as Marker Clays, are present. Thin beds of sand and sandstone are common ...*" (British Geological Survey 1993).

1.3 Planning Background

- 1.3.1 Planning permission was granted by West Sussex County Council (WSCC) (Planning Ref: BH/3016/07) for the development of the site, including the replacement of the school buildings with associated access, play areas and hard and soft landscaping (Fig. 2).
- 1.3.2 The Archaeologist of West Sussex County Council (WSCC) was consulted over the application and in light of the known archaeological potential of the site recommended that a programme of archaeological works be implemented in line with advice given in PPG16 (the Government's advice on *Archaeology and Planning*). Condition 7 of the planning permission states that:

'No development shall take place... until the applicant, agent or successor in title, has secured the implementation of a programme of archaeological work in accordance with a written scheme of investigation which has been submitted by the applicant and approved in writing by the County Planning Authority.'
- 1.3.3 A Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI) outlining the requirements of the Archaeological Watching Brief was prepared by ASE (ASE 2008) and submitted and duly approved by the Local Planning Authority.

1.4 Aims and Objectives

- 1.4.1 The aim of the archaeological monitoring was to ensure that any features,

deposits, artefacts or ecofacts of archaeological interest that were encountered during intrusive groundworks at the site were recorded and interpreted to appropriate standards.

1.4.2 Figure 3 illustrates the groundworks that were monitored during this project, which included:

- Topsoil stripping across most of the site in advance of excavations for foundations, services and access
- Terracing and landscaping

1.5 Scope of Report

1.5.1 The aim of this report is to present the results of the archaeological fieldwork undertaken and to put these results into a local, regional or national context as appropriate.

1.5.2 The fieldwork was undertaken by Paul Riccoboni, David Fallon and Teresa Hawtin, between 14th and 29th July 2008. The project was managed by Diccon Hart, Darryl Palmer and Neil Griffin (fieldwork) and Jim Stevenson (post-excavation).

2.0 ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND

The following information is taken from ASE's Written Scheme of Investigation (ASE 2008).

- 2.1** Little is known of the history and archaeology of Burgess Hill prior to the development of the modern town during the 19th century. Generally speaking, activity of prehistoric, Roman or medieval date in the vicinity of Burgess Hill is not considered to be intensive.

- 2.2** That is not to say, however, that such activity is not present in the wider landscape. Evidence for Mesolithic and Late Neolithic/Early Bronze Age activity has been forthcoming on the western outskirts of Burgess Hill, at sites such as Maltings Farm (Butler 1998: 193-207) and the land between Eastlands Farm and Locks Manor (Sawyer 1999: 49-58). Roman activity has also been identified in this area, as attested by excavations on the site of Edwards High Vacuum factory (ASE 1996) and Saxon pottery recovered from Maltings Farm hints to at least limited activity of this date in the vicinity (Butler 1998: 193-207). The lack of remains of these periods closer to the site perhaps reflects a lack of archaeological fieldwork in this area as much as a genuine difference in settlement patterns and associated activity.

- 2.3** The study site itself lay within the boundary of the medieval free chase of Frekebergh – a large tract of woodland belonging to the lords of the Lewes Barony (Warne 1985: 136-137). There is some evidence to suggest that piecemeal enclosure of this woodland was underway as early as the 13th-14th century - a process that was largely complete by the end of the 17th or 18th century (*ibid*).

3.0 ARCHAEOLOGICAL METHODOLOGY

- 3.1** Initially, all ground reduction was carried out under the constant supervision of an experienced archaeologist. After a large proportion of the topsoil stripping and terracing had been monitored, it was agreed with the County Archaeologist that no further monitoring would be required.
- 3.2** Wherever possible, machine excavation was undertaken using a tracked mechanical excavator equipped with a toothless ditching bucket (although the latter was not always practical). Where archaeological features or deposits were revealed, machining was stopped and excavation was continued by hand. The spoil from the machine excavations was scanned for the presence of any artefacts, both visually and using a metal detector, where it was safe to do so. The spoil from the deeper excavations was put directly into lorries and removed from site so it was not possible to inspect this.
- 3.3** All encountered archaeological deposits, features and finds were excavated and recorded in accordance with accepted professional standards (IFA 2001, EH 1991), the *Recommended Standard Conditions for Archaeological Fieldwork, Recording, and Post-Excavation Work (Development Control) in East Sussex* (2003) and the approved ASE Written Scheme of Investigation (ASE 2007), using pro-forma context record sheets. Archaeological features and deposits were planned at a scale of 1:50, with selected detail drawn at a scale of 1:20 or 1:10. Deposit colours were verified by visual inspection and not by reference to a Munsell Colour chart.
- 3.4** A photographic record of the work was kept and forms part of the site archive. The archive (quantified in Table 1), including the finds, is presently held at the Archaeology South-East offices at Portslade, and will in due course be offered to a suitable local museum.

Number of Contexts	5
No. of files/paper record	1 ring binder
Plan and sections sheets	0
Bulk Samples	0
Photographs	81 digital
Bulk finds	7 worked flints, 8 fragments of animal bone
Registered finds	0
Environmental flots/residue	0

Table 1: Quantification of site archive

4.0 RESULTS

4.1 Table 2 lists the contexts recorded during this project and Figure 3 illustrates the areas that were monitored and any features of interest encountered.

Number	Type	Description	Max. Length	Max. Width	Deposit Depth	Depth below ground level
001	Layer	Firm, mid greyish brown silty clay with occasional chalk blocks, gravel and CBM. Topsoil.	n/a	n/a	0.20m	0
002	Deposit	Firm, mixed brown and yellow silty clay. Made ground / redeposited natural.	Unknown	Unknown	1.60m	0.20m
003	Layer	Firm, mid brownish grey silty clay with occasional CBM. Subsoil.	Unknown	Unknown	0.20m	0.20m
004	Layer	Firm, mid yellowish orange clay silt. Natural stratum.	Unknown	Unknown	0.45m	0.40m
005	Layer	Firm, mottled dark orange red and light blue grey clay with occasional flint nodules. Natural stratum.	Unknown	Unknown	Unknown	0.85m

Table 2: List of recorded contexts

4.2 The topsoil (001) across the site reached a depth of up to 0.20m and consisted of a firm, mid greyish brown, silty clay with occasional chalk blocks and gravel inclusions. Frequent modern debris was present in the topsoil and particularly noticeable were numerous modern bricks.

4.3 At the northern end of the site, where the proposed access road was stripped of topsoil, a deposit of firm, mixed brown and yellow, silty clay (002) was recorded. This reached a depth of c.1.60m and appeared to be redeposited natural clay used in landscaping the former school playing field.

4.4 Across most of the site, underlying the topsoil, was a c.20 centimetre-thick subsoil (003) consisting of firm, mid brownish grey, silty clay, which also contained occasional modern bricks and other debris.

4.5 The natural strata were seen to directly underlie the subsoil and modern made ground. The uppermost stratum consisted of a firm, mid yellowish orange, clay silt (004). In the western part of the site, where the excavations were deeper, this was seen to reach a depth of c.0.45m. Underlying this was a firm, mottled dark orange red and light blue grey clay, containing occasional flint nodule inclusions (005).

4.6 Most of the site was stripped of topsoil in advance of further excavations. Occasional patches of undisturbed natural clay were visible, but most of the area still had some subsoil remaining after the initial stripping. Figure 3

illustrates the area where the ground reduction monitored was not deep enough to demonstrate the absence of archaeological features.

- 4.7** At the northern extent of the site a modern service trench was noted. Several other modern service trenches were visible, identifiable by their pea-sized shingle backfills, but were not recorded.
- 4.8** Towards the south-eastern corner of the site a dark, burnt patch was observed (Figs. 3 & 4). This contained frequent modern nails and other debris and was therefore not recorded archaeologically. It is likely to represent the remains of a relatively recent bonfire.
- 4.9** Near the centre of the site a large, irregular area of reddish soil was visible (Figs. 3 & 5), measuring c.20m along its east-west axis and c.10m on its north-south axis. This was thought to represent an area of oxidised natural ground and was not investigated further.
- 4.10** Just north of this area a small scatter of worked flints was retrieved from the subsoil (003), along with fragments of animal bone. The excavations monitored in this area were not deep enough to identify whether any associated features were present.
- 4.11** No further features, finds or deposits of archaeological interest were observed on this site.

4.12 Summary

Where the excavations encountered undisturbed natural strata, no features or deposits of archaeological interest were identified. A small scatter of worked flints was retrieved from the subsoil towards the centre of the site, but the excavations monitored in that area were not deep enough to reveal any associated archaeological features.

5.0 THE FINDS

- 5.1** A small collection of finds was recovered from the Watching Brief at Birchwood Grove Primary School, quantified below in Table 3:

Context	Bone	Weight (g)	Flint	Weight (g)	Fire-cracked-flint	Weight (g)
003	8	22	7	58	1	6

Table 3: Quantification of finds

5.2 The Flintwork

A total of seven unstratified worked or probable worked flints were recovered from context [003], the subsoil. The assemblage consists predominantly of hard hammer-struck flakes. The only possible diagnostic elements are a blade and a snapped blade potentially of Mesolithic date. Two possible core fragments are also present. The assemblage holds some potential for further work and should be retained.

5.3 The Animal Bone

A single context [003] produced eight fragments of cattle sized long bone, identified as probable radial shaft. One fragment displayed shallow knife marks whilst another showed signs of possible working, with two shallow grooves approximately 8mm in width and 2mm in depth removed from the surface of the bone. Nothing further of significance was noted.

6.0 THE ENVIRONMENTAL SAMPLES

- 6.1** No archaeological deposits were found that were thought to warrant environmental soil sampling.

7.0 CONCLUSION

- 7.1** Several modern features were identified during the archaeological watching brief at Birchwood Grove Primary School, including service trenches, landscaped ground and the remains of a probable bonfire. These features are likely to relate to the site's former use as a school playing field.
- 7.2** Fragments of butchered animal bone and a small scatter of worked flints were retrieved from the subsoil towards the centre of the site. The latter included flakes, possible core fragments, and blades that could belong to the Mesolithic period.
- 7.3** No further finds, features or deposits of archaeological interest were identified on the site.

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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SMR Summary Form

Site Code	BGB 08					
Identification Name and Address	Birchwood Grove Primary School, Burgess Hill, West Sussex, RH15 0DP					
County, District &/or Borough	West Sussex, Burgess Hill					
OS Grid Refs.	532159 118339					
Geology	Weald Clay					
Arch. South-East Project Number	3392					
Type of Fieldwork	Eval.	Excav.	Watching Brief	Standing Structure	Survey	Other
Type of Site	Green Field	Shallow Urban	Deep Urban	Other		
Dates of Fieldwork	Eval.	Excav.	WB. 14-29 July 2008	Other		
Sponsor/Client	Longley					
Project Manager	Diccon Hart, Darryl Palmer, Neil Griffin					
Project Supervisor	Paul Riccoboni, David Fallon, Teresa Hawtin					
Period Summary	Palaeo.	Meso.	Neo.	BA	IA	RB
	AS	MED	PM	Other Modern		
<p>100 Word Summary.</p> <p><i>Archaeology South-East was commissioned by Longley to undertake an archaeological watching brief during the construction of new school buildings at Birchwood Grove Primary School, Burgess Hill, West Sussex in July 2008. Several modern features were identified including service trenches, landscaped ground and the remains of a probable bonfire. Fragments of butchered animal bone and a small scatter of worked flints were retrieved from the subsoil towards the centre of the site. The latter included flakes, possible core fragments, and blades that could belong to the Mesolithic period. No further finds, features or deposits of archaeological interest were identified on the site.</i></p>						

OASIS Form

1.1 OASIS ID: archaeol6-47527

Project details

Project name	Birchwood Grove Primary School, Burgess Hill
Short description of the project	Archaeology South-East was commissioned by Longley to undertake an archaeological watching brief during the construction of new school buildings at Birchwood Grove Primary School, Burgess Hill, West Sussex during July 2008. Several modern features were identified including service trenches, landscaped ground and the remains of a probable bonfire. Fragments of butchered animal bone and a small scatter of worked flints were retrieved from the subsoil towards the centre of the site. The latter included flakes, possible core fragments, and blades that could belong to the Mesolithic period. No further finds, features or deposits of archaeological interest were identified on the site.
Project dates	Start: 14-07-2008 End: 29-07-2008
Previous/future work	No / Not known
Any associated project reference codes	BGB 08 - Sitecode
Any associated project reference codes	3392 - Contracting Unit No.
Any associated project reference codes	BH/3016/07 - Planning Application No.
Type of project	Recording project
Site status	None
Current Land use	Other 14 - Recreational usage
Significant Finds	ANIMAL REMAINS Uncertain
Significant Finds	LITHIC IMPLEMENT Mesolithic
Significant Finds	FLAKE Uncertain
Significant Finds	CORE Uncertain
Significant Finds	BLADE Mesolithic
Investigation type	'Watching Brief'
Prompt	Direction from Local Planning Authority - PPG16

Project location

Country	England
Site location	WEST SUSSEX MID SUSSEX BURGESS HILL Birchwood Grove Primary School
Postcode	RH15 0DP
Study area	13200m ²
Site coordinates	TQ 32159 18339 50.9487543583 -0.118398207213 50 56 55 N 000 07 06 W Point

Project creators

Name of Organisation	Archaeology South-East
Project brief originator	West Sussex County Council
Project design originator	Archaeology South-East
Project director/manager	Diccon Hart
Project director/manager	Darryl Palmer
Project director/manager	Neil Griffin
Project supervisor	Teresa Hawtin
Project supervisor	Paul Riccoboni
Project supervisor	David Fallon
Type of sponsor/funding body	Client
Name of sponsor/funding body	Longley

Project archives

Physical Archive recipient	Local Museum
Physical Contents	'Animal Bones','Worked stone/lithics'
Digital Archive recipient	Local Museum
Digital Contents	'other'
Digital Media available	'Images raster / digital photography','Text'
Paper Archive recipient	Local Museum
Paper Contents	'other'
Paper Media available	'Context sheet','Photograph','Plan','Report','Unpublished Text'

Project bibliography 1

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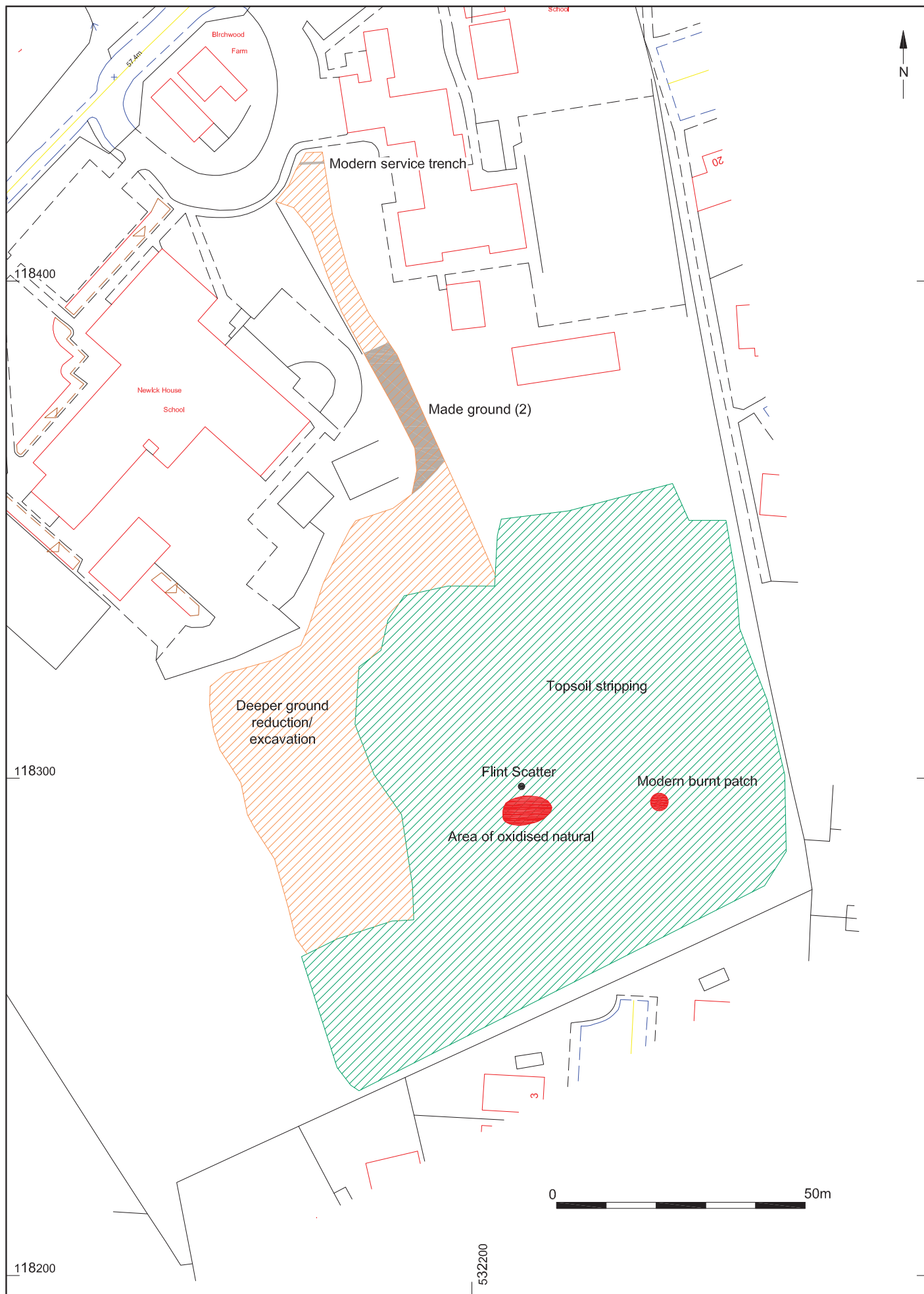
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© Archaeology South-East		Birchwood Grove Primary School, Burgess Hill	Fig. 1
Project Ref: 3392	August 2008	Site Location Plan	
Report Ref: 2008134	Drawn by: SM		

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© Archaeology South-East		Birchwood Grove Primary School, Burgess Hill	Fig. 3
Project Ref: 3392	August 2008	Areas monitored during watching brief	
Report Ref: 2008134	Drawn by: SM		



Fig. 4: North-facing shot showing burnt area



Fig. 5: North-west facing shot showing reddish patch

© Archaeology South-East		Birchwood Grove Primary School, Burgess Hill	Figs. 4 & 5
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Report Ref: 2008134	Drawn by: JLR		

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