

**An Archaeological Watching Brief at the Proposed Site of River Beach Primary School,
Littlehampton, West Sussex**

Planning Ref: WSCC/085/10/LU

**NGR: 50289 10246
(TQ 0289 0246)**

Kathryn Grant MSc AIFA

OASIS id: archaeol6-98768

**Project No: 4738
Site Code: RBL 11
ASE Report No. 2011078**

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Abstract

Archaeology South East (ASE) was commissioned by Willmott Dixon Construction Ltd. to carry out archaeological monitoring on land at the proposed site of River Beach Primary School, Connaught Road, Littlehampton, West Sussex (NGR: TQ 0289 0246) between the 16th February and 4th April 2011. The watching brief was carried out during redevelopment works within the school grounds. The site is roughly level at c.5.5-6.5m AOD with the underlying natural Brickearth geology, occurring c.350mm below the ground surface. A modern feature, observed cutting through the subsoil, was partially revealed during the excavation of the new build foundation trenches. No earlier features, archaeological deposits or artefacts were encountered during the excavations.

CONTENTS

- 1.0 Introduction**
- 2.0 Archaeological Background**
- 3.0 Archaeological Methodology**
- 4.0 Results**
- 5.0 The Finds**
- 6.0 Discussion**

Bibliography
Acknowledgements

SMR Summary Sheet
OASIS Form

FIGURES

- Figure 1:** Site location
- Figure 2:** Monitored groundwork areas

TABLES

- Table 1:** Quantification of site archive
- Table 2:** List of recorded contexts

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, UCL, was commissioned by Willmott Dixon Construction Ltd. to undertake an archaeological watching brief at the proposed site of River Beach Primary School, Connaught Road, Littlehampton, West Sussex (NGR TQ 0289 0246: Fig 1), hereafter referred to as 'the site'.
- 1.1.2 The monitored ground works related to a redevelopment at the school for the amalgamation of Connaught Junior School, Arun Vale Infant School and Elm Grove School to form River Beach Primary School. The groundwork included the creation of an access road, contractor's compound and the excavation of the foundation trenches for the new building.
- 1.1.3 The site is bounded by Cornwall Road to the north, Queen Street to the west, Paterson Wilson Road to the east and Franciscan Way/East Street (B2187) to the south. The redevelopment was carried out within the existing school grounds in grassed playing fields and asphalt covered playgrounds.

1.2 Geology and Topography

- 1.2.1 The site is located on the West Sussex coastal plain approximately 1.5km to the north of the shoreline and 1km to the northeast of the River Arun.
- 1.2.2 The British Geological Survey Sheet 317/332 for Chichester/Bognor (BGS 1996) shows the site lies on Aeolian Deposits (Brickearth).

1.3 Planning Background

- 1.3.1 Planning permission was granted for the redevelopment of the site (Planning ref: WSCC/085/10/LU).
- 1.3.2 Although the site lies within an archaeologically rich area for the prehistoric and Roman periods, most areas of the school were thought to have been previously disturbed. West Sussex County Council (WSCC) recommended that an archaeological watching brief be undertaken as a condition of planning consent (Ref.: WSCC/085/10/LU). Accordingly Condition 10 states:

'Prior to the commencement of development hereby approved, a programme of archaeological work will be implemented in accordance with a Written Scheme of Archaeological Investigation which is to be submitted and agreed in writing to the County Planning Authority.'

Reason: To ensure investigation and recording of archaeological Heritage Assets on the site during the course of development.'

- 1.3.3 Consequently, a Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI) for the proposed watching brief works was produced by ASE (2011a). The WSI document outlined the methods to be used during the watching brief and was compiled with reference to the *Recommended Standard Archaeological Conditions*

(WSCC 2007), issued by WSCC. The methodology was agreed and the WSI subsequently approved by WSCC prior to the commencement of work. All fieldwork undertaken during the watching brief was carried out in accordance with the WSI.

1.4 Aims and Objectives

- 1.4.1 The general aim of the archaeological work was to ensure that any features, artefacts or ecofacts of archaeological interest exposed and affected by the proposed development would be recorded and interpreted to appropriate standards.
- 1.4.2 The objective of the work was to monitor all excavations associated with the development, including, but not limited to, any topsoil removed for the creation of contractors' compounds, wheel-wash and passing places.

1.5 Scope of Report

- 1.5.1 This report details the findings of the watching brief carried out over the course of three site visits between 16th February and 4th April 2011.
- 1.5.2 The fieldwork monitoring was carried out by Kathryn Grant, Giles Dawkes, Sarah Porteus and Chris Killeen. The project was managed by Andy Leonard (fieldwork) and Jim Stevenson (post-excavation).

2.0 ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND

2.1 Introduction

2.1.1 Several archaeological find-spots have been identified on the West Sussex Historic Environment Record (HER). These sites lie within a c.1km radius of the site. In 2008, a Desk Based Assessment (DBA) was prepared by LP Archaeology (2008) for the Littlehampton Academy site which is situated immediately northeast of the River Beach Primary School site. Unless otherwise cited, the information presented below is drawn from this assessment with all due acknowledgement.

2.2 Bronze Age

2.2.1 In 1946, Bronze Age artefactual evidence was uncovered during residential construction works c. 1km to the east of the site. As a result of these finds, it was concluded that a possible Bronze Age occupation site may lie in this area but no formal archaeological investigation has been undertaken to confirm this. However, two Bronze Age settlements have been identified further to the north-east during archaeological evaluation trenching. Subsequent excavation at the Horticultural Research Institute site revealed a small number of features of Middle to Late Bronze Age date, including a possible roundhouse (Dunkin *et al* in prep).

2.3 Iron Age

2.3.1 An Early Iron Age enclosure is noted at Wickbourne and Early Iron Age pottery sherds recovered from Littlehampton Roman Villa may represent a possible Iron Age settlement at the villa site. However, the majority of the evidence dates to the Middle/Late Iron Age, with activity at the former Horticultural Research International site (an *in situ* vessel, two ditches and a linear feature), Watermead Industrial Estate (a substantial Late Iron Age or Roman settlement) and the Rustington Bypass (a sub-rectangular feature containing Late Iron Age pottery).

2.4 Roman

2.4.1 The Roman period in the Sussex coastal plain is represented by significant reorganisation of Late Iron Age infrastructure. The most obvious example of continuity from the Late Iron Age to the Roman period is possibly the winged corridor villa at Littlehampton, which was occupied from 1st–3rd centuries. The Iron Age settlement at Watermead also continued into the Roman period, where a number of ditches are thought to represent the remnants of enclosures, while a series of postholes and beam-slots are indicative of a timber structure at the site. Settlement and industrial activity spanning the 1st to 3rd centuries was also uncovered during two excavations at the Horticultural Research Institute site, perhaps the most significant remains being two Roman pottery kilns (Lovell 2002; Dunkin *et al* in prep).

2.4.2 Other Roman features found in the area include rubbish pits, ditches and burials. Features, including two urned Roman cremations, were found approximately 400 metres to the south-east at the Arun Community Hospital site (*ibid*) A further Roman cremation burial was also found approximately

1km north of the site and a number of unstratified finds of pottery and coins have been noted as find-spots in the locale.

2.5 Saxon and Medieval

- 2.5.1 The economy and land-usage of the area changed dramatically in the early medieval period. Arable farming across the region ceased and, in many cases, Saxon settlements were formed over previously arable fields. It has been suggested that a *witan* (a meeting of influential and important men) was held at Lyminster although there is to date no evidence for a Saxon hall in the area, which would have been required for such an assembly. Saxon features including two possible sunken featured buildings were recorded at the Horticultural Research Institute site (Dunkin et al in prep).
- 2.5.2 In the years prior to the Norman Conquest, the lands around Littlehampton were owned by Countess Goda, daughter of Ethelred II and niece of Edward the Confessor.
- 2.5.3 At the time of the Domesday Survey in 1086, Littlehampton was held in the Poling Hundred. The village comprised one hide, one plough, two cottages and one acre of meadow worth a total value of 10 shillings. At this time the river Arun flowed to the sea on the east side of Littlehampton (whereas now it is to the west) and the village was accessed from Angmering, along East Street. A solitary find-spot of green-glazed pottery approximately 250m to the south of the site is the only archaeological evidence for medieval activity close to the site, suggesting that the land was under agricultural use as part of the lands of Lyminster.

2.6 Post-medieval and Modern

- 2.6.1 The area of the site and its surrounding landscape was maintained for agricultural use for most of the post-medieval period. The railway to Lyminster was opened in 1846 and a spur line bringing the railway to Littlehampton was opened from Ford in 1863. During the late 19th and early 20th century a number of brickfields were established to the north and northeast of the site.
- 2.6.2 During the Second World War Littlehampton erected perimeter defences and tank traps around the core of the town. Two tanks traps have been identified approximately 400m to the southeast of the site.

3.0 ARCHAEOLOGICAL METHODOLOGY

3.1 Fieldwork

3.1.1 The archaeological work was carried out in accordance with the WSI (ASE 2011a), and complies with the Standard and Guidance of the Institute for Archaeologists, (IfA 2008), and the WSCC *Recommended Standard Archaeological Conditions* (WSCC 2007). The complete adopted methodology can be referenced in the WSI (ASE 2011a). A summary of the methodology is given below. A *Risk Assessment* of the fieldwork to be carried out was produced by ASE (2011b) prior to any work on site.

3.1.2 Machine excavation was undertaken by a 360° mechanical excavator fitted with a flat-bladed bucket to minimise damage to deposits. All excavations were examined for the presence of archaeological features or deposits and all spoil was scanned for the presence of artefacts. All of the encountered deposits were recorded according to accepted professional standards using ASE standard record sheets. A full photographic record of the area, including any associated deposits and features was kept and will form part of the site archive.

3.2 Archive

3.2.1 The project archive is presently held at Archaeology South-East offices at Portslade, East Sussex, and will, in due course, be deposited with a suitable local museum (East Grinstead). The contents of the project archive are tabulated below (Table 1).

Number of Contexts	7 contexts
No. of files/paper record	1 folder
Plan and sections sheets	1 sheet
Bulk Samples	None
Photographs	c.30 digital photographs

Table 1: Quantification of site archive

4.0 RESULTS

4.1 Introduction

- 4.1.1 Two areas were monitored during the groundwork: the access road across the school playing fields and the foundations for the new building (Fig 2)
- 4.1.2 Seven contexts were recorded during the monitored groundwork within these areas. The contexts have been tabulated below (Table 2):

Context Number	Context Type	Context Description	Deposit Thickness
001	Deposit	Topsoil	c. 100-150mm
002	Deposit	Subsoil	-
003	Cut	Modern cut	-
004	Fill	Fill of [003]	
005	Deposit	Natural Clay	-
006	Deposit	Natural Brickearth	c.1.7m
007	Deposit	Modern overburden/Make-up	260-500mm

Table 2: List of recorded contexts

- 4.1.3 The excavations were taken to varied depths of between 150mm (access road excavations) and 2.2m (foundation trenches for new building). The site falls gently downwards from south west to north from 114.96m AOD to 106.95m AOD.

4.2 The Access Road

- 4.2.1 The excavations for a 3m wide access road across the school playing fields (Figure 2) comprised a shallow topsoil strip (100-150mm). Only dark grey silty topsoil [001] and a thin subsoil interface [002], consisting of mid orange-brown silty clay were revealed during these excavations. As a result of the shallow nature of these excavations, natural geology was not uncovered within this area and subsoil was only revealed in limited patches. No archaeological artefacts were recovered from these deposits.

4.3 Foundation Trenches

- 4.3.1 Natural geology comprising stiff yellow clay, [005], overlain by Brickearth, [006], was encountered during the excavation of the foundation trenches for the new building. Clay geology was revealed at a depth of 2.00m below ground level, sealed beneath a thick layer (c.1.7m) of natural Brickearth. Subsoil [002] survived sporadically across this area, but was largely truncated during modern landscaping for the playground. A clearly modern cut, [003], was observed cutting through subsoil in the northern-most footings (not shown on plan). The feature was sealed by 260-500mm thick modern overburden, [007], (make-up and asphalt playground surface). Again, no archaeological artefacts were recovered from these deposits.

5.0 DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

5.1 Watching brief findings

- 5.1.1 A single modern feature, observed cutting through the subsoil, was encountered during the excavation of the foundation trenches for the new building.
- 5.1.2 No earlier features, archaeological deposits or artefacts were recovered during the excavations at the site.
- 5.1.3 Natural geology, consisting of Brickearth overlying clay, was encountered within the foundation trenches c.350mm below ground level.

5.2 Conclusions

- 5.2.1 The dearth of archaeological findings at this site is perhaps surprising given the site's position within an area relatively rich in archaeological find-spots. However, the excavated areas at the site suggest some truncation of the subsoil and natural horizon during modern levelling for the playground areas, particularly within the vicinity of existing school buildings.
- 5.2.2 The archaeological watching brief monitoring has demonstrated that, since no archaeological features or deposits were encountered within the redevelopment area, the archaeological resource has not been impacted by the construction works at this time.

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

ASE would like to thank John Mills (WSCC County Archaeologist) for his advice and guidance during this project. The author would also like to thank Willmott Dixon Construction Ltd for their cooperation and assistance during the archaeological watching brief.

SMR Summary Form

Site Code	RBL 11					
Identification Name and Address	River Beach Primary School, Connaught Road, Littlehampton					
County, District &/or Borough	West Sussex					
OS Grid Refs.	NGR TQ 0289 0246					
Geology	Brickearth over clay					
Arch. South-East Project Number	4738					
Type of Fieldwork	Eval.	Excav.	Watching Brief ✓	Standing Structure	Survey	
Type of Site	Green Field	Shallow Urban	Deep Urban	Other		
Dates of Fieldwork	Eval.	Excav.	WB. 16-02-11 – 04-04-11	Other		
Sponsor/Client	Willmott Dixon Construction Ltd.					
Project Manager	Andy Leonard					
Project Supervisor	Kathryn Grant, Sarah Porteus, Giles Dawkes, Chris Killeen					
Period Summary	Palaeo.	Meso.	Neo.	BA	IA	RB
	AS	MED	PM	Other Modern		
<p>100 Word Summary.</p> <p>Archaeology South East (ASE) was commissioned by Willmott Dixon Construction Ltd. to carry out archaeological monitoring on land at the proposed site of River Beach Primary School, Connaught Road, Littlehampton, West Sussex (NGR: TQ 0289 0246) between the 16th February and 4th April 2011. The watching brief was carried out during redevelopment works within the school grounds. The site is roughly level at c.5.5-6.5m AOD with the underlying natural Brickearth geology, occurring c.350mm below the ground surface. A modern cut feature, observed cutting through the subsoil was partially revealed during the excavation of the new build foundation trenches. No earlier features, archaeological deposits or artefacts were encountered during the excavations.</p>						

OASIS Form

OASIS ID: archaeol6-98768

Project details

Project name	River Beach Primary School, Littlehampton
Short description of the project	Archaeology South East (ASE) was commissioned by Willmott Dixon Construction Ltd. to carry out archaeological monitoring on land at the proposed site of River Beach Primary School, Connaught Road, Littlehampton, West Sussex (NGR: TQ 0289 0246) between the 16th February and 4th April 2011. The watching brief was carried out during redevelopment works within the school grounds. The site is roughly level at c.5.5-6.5m AOD with the underlying natural Brickearth geology, occurring c.350mm below the ground surface. A modern cut feature, observed cutting through the subsoil was partially revealed during the excavation of the new build foundation trenches. No earlier features, archaeological deposits or artefacts were encountered during the excavations.
Project dates	Start: 16-02-2011 End: 04-04-2011
Previous/future work	No / Not known
Any associated project reference codes	RBL 11 – Site code
Type of project	Recording project
Current Land use	Other 14 - Recreational usage
Investigation type	'Watching Brief'
Prompt	Planning condition

Project location

Country	England
Site location	WEST SUSSEX ARUN LITTLEHAMPTON River Beach Primary School, Connaught Road, Littlehampton
Site coordinates	TQ 0289 0246 50.8119727321 -0.539418027996 50 48 43 N 000 32 21 W Point
Height OD / Depth	Min: 5.50m Max: 6.50m

Project creators

Name of Organisation	Archaeology South East
Project brief originator	Archaeology South East
Project design originator	west sussex county council
Project director/manager	Andy Leonard
Project supervisor	Kathryn Grant

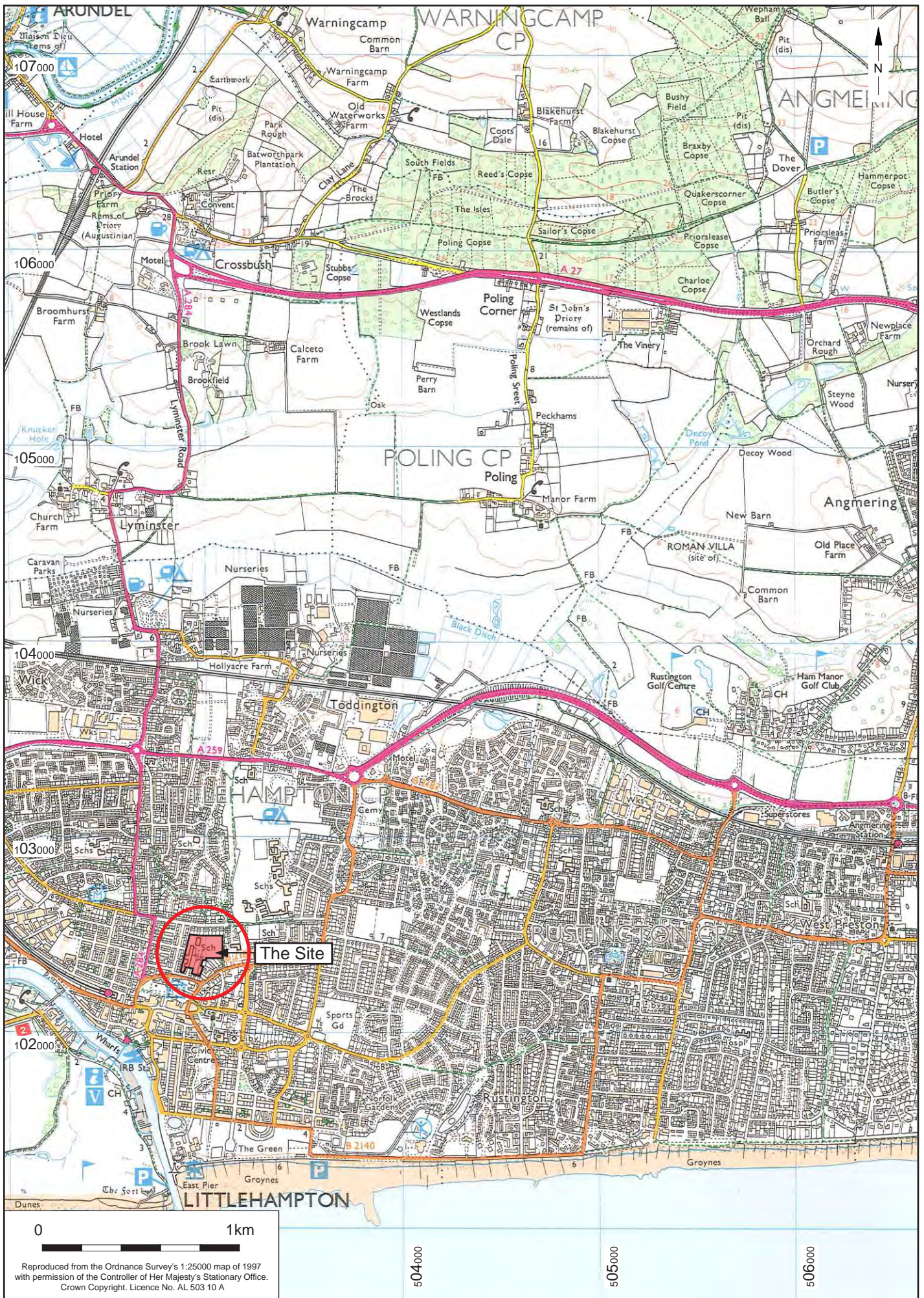
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Entered on 8 April 2011

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© Archaeology South-East		River Beach Primary School, Littlehampton		Fig. 1
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Fig. 2.1: Sample section in footings trench



Fig. 2.2: Sample section in footings trench



Fig. 2.3: Haul road

Archaeology South-East		River Beach Primary School, Littlehampton		Fig. 2
Project Ref: 4738	April 2011	Monitored groundwork areas		
Report Ref: 2011078	Drawn by: LD			

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