
ARCHAEOLOGICAL SOLUTIONS LTD

**STAPLEFORD CHURCH OF ENGLAND
PRIMARY SCHOOL,
CHURCH LANE, STAPLEFORD,
HERTFORDSHIRE**

ARCHAEOLOGICAL MONITORING AND RECORDING

Authors: Zbigniew Pozorski MA (Fieldwork & Report) Andrew Peachey BA, AIFA (Desk-based research)	
NGR: TL 3122 1696	Report No. 3367
District: East Herts	Site Code: AS 1219
Approved: Claire Halpin MIFA	Project No. P3589
Signed:	Date: August 2009

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OASIS SUMMARY SHEET

Project details			
Project name	<i>Stapleford Church of England Primary School, Church Lane, Stapleford, Hertfordshire.</i>		
<p><i>In August 2009 Archaeological Solutions (AS) carried out a programme of archaeological monitoring and recording at Stapleford Church of England Primary School, Church Lane, Stapleford, Hertfordshire (TL 3122 1696). The monitoring was commissioned by Millbridge Building Surveying Ltd, and was undertaken in compliance with a planning condition attached to planning approval to construct a school building extension, adjacent covered play areas and a new footpath.</i></p> <p><i>The site is situated in the village of Stapleford, in the valley of the river Beane, c.4km north of Hertford, Hertfordshire. It is located within Area of Archaeological Significance No.128 and has the potential for prehistoric and medieval remains.</i></p> <p><i>In the event the monitoring revealed no archaeological features or finds.</i></p>			
Project dates (fieldwork)	<i>5th - 7th and 25th August 2009</i>		
Previous work (Y/N/?)	<i>N</i>	Future work (Y/N/?)	<i>N</i>
P. number	<i>P3589</i>	Site code	<i>AS 1219</i>
Type of project	<i>Archaeological Monitoring and Recording</i>		
Site status	<i>Within Area of Archaeological Significance No.128</i>		
Current land use	<i>Playground and garden</i>		
Planned development	<i>Extension to school building and covered play areas</i>		
Main features (+dates)	<i>None</i>		
Significant finds (+dates)	<i>None</i>		
Project location			
County/ District/ Parish	<i>Herts</i>	<i>East Herts</i>	<i>Stapleford</i>
HER/ SMR for area	<i>Hertfordshire HER</i>		
Post code (if known)	<i>SG14 3NB</i>		
Area of site	<i>c. 100 sq m</i>		
NGR	<i>TL 3122 1696</i>		
Height AOD (max/ min)	<i>c. 50m</i>		
Project creators			
Brief issued by	<i>HCC HEU</i>		
Project supervisor/s (PO)	<i>Zbigniew Pozorski</i>		
Funded by	<i>Governors of Stapleford CE Primary School</i>		
Full title	<i>Stapleford Church of England Primary School, Church Lane, Stapleford, Hertfordshire. Archaeological Monitoring and Recording</i>		
Authors	<i>Pozorski, Z.</i>		
Report no.	<i>3367</i>		
Date (of report)	<i>August 2009</i>		

STAPLEFORD CHURCH OF ENGLAND PRIMARY SCHOOL, CHURCH LANE, STAPLEFORD, HERTFORDSHIRE

ARCHAEOLOGICAL MONITORING AND RECORDING

SUMMARY

In August 2009 Archaeological Solutions (AS) carried out a programme of archaeological monitoring and recording at Stapleford Church of England Primary School, Church Lane, Stapleford, Hertfordshire (TL 3122 1696). The monitoring was commissioned by Millbridge Building Surveying Ltd, and was undertaken in compliance with a planning condition attached to planning approval to construct a school building extension, an adjacent covered play areas and a new footpath.

The site is situated in the village of Stapleford, in the valley of the river Beane, c.4km north of Hertford, Hertfordshire. It is located within Area of Archaeological Significance No.128, and has the potential for prehistoric and medieval remains.

In the event the monitoring revealed no archaeological features or finds.

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 In August 2009 Archaeological Solutions (AS) carried out a programme of archaeological monitoring and recording at Stapleford Church of England Primary School, Church Lane, Stapleford, Hertfordshire (TL 3122 1696; Figs. 1 & 2). The monitoring was commissioned by Millbridge Building Surveying Ltd on behalf of the School Governors. It was undertaken in compliance with a planning condition attached to planning approval (Planning Ref. 3/09/0765/FP), and required by the local planning authority (Hertfordshire County Council), based on advice received from Hertfordshire County Council Historic Environment Unit (HCC HEU). The monitoring was carried out during the groundworks for the proposed extension to the school building to form new classroom, the external covered play areas and a new footpath.

1.2 The archaeological monitoring and recording was undertaken according to advice from Hertfordshire County Council Historic Environment Unit (HCC HEU), and a Written Scheme of Investigation (specification) prepared by AS (dated 03/08/2009). It conformed to the Institute of Field Archaeologists (IFA) *Code of Conduct and Standard and Guidance for*

Archaeological Watching Briefs (revised 2001), and the document *Standards for Field Archaeology in the East of England* (Gurney 2003).

1.3 The objectives of the archaeological monitoring and recording were:

- to ensure the archaeological excavation and monitoring of all aspects of the development programme likely to affect buried archaeological remains;
- to secure the adequate recording of any archaeological remains revealed by the development programme;
- to secure the full analysis and interpretation of the site archive and the appropriate publication of project results, if required; and
- to secure the analysis, long-term conservation and storage of the project archive.

Planning policy context

1.4 The relevant planning policies which apply to the effect of development with regard to cultural heritage are Planning Policy Guidance Note 15 'Planning and the Historic Environment' (PPG15) and Planning Policy Guidance Note 16 'Archaeology and Planning' (PPG16) (Department of the Environment).

1.5 PPG16 (1990) is the national Planning Policy Guidance Note which applies to archaeology. It states that there should always be a presumption in favour of preserving nationally important archaeological remains *in situ*. However, when there is no overriding case for preservation, developers are required to fund opportunities for the recording and, where necessary, the excavation of the site. This condition is widely applied by local authorities.

1.6 PPG15 (1994) is the national Planning Policy Guidance Note which applies to conservation of the historic environment by protecting the character and appearance of Conservation Areas and protecting listed buildings (of architectural or historical interest) from demolition and unsympathetic change and safeguarding their settings as far as is possible. This condition is also widely applied by local authorities.

2 DESCRIPTION OF THE SITE, GEOLOGY AND SOILS

2.1 The village of Stapleford is situated on the A119 in the valley of the river Beane (Fig. 1), c.4km north of Hertford. The village lies within Area of Archaeological Significance No.128, as designated on the Local Plan. The site is located c. 75 to the NE of the church of St. Mary the Virgin.

2.2 The village of Stapleford lies in the valley of the river Beane with land rising gradually to the east and west. The site lies at approximately 50m AOD on relatively flat land.

2.3 Stapleford is located on chalky till, which is overlain by soil of Melford association, characterised as deep well drained loamy over clayey, coarse

loamy over clayey and fine loamy soils, some with calcareous clayey subsoils. The soil is suitable for cereals, sugar beet and other arable crops (SSEW 1983). The local drift geology is terrace gravels of the river Beane.

3 ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Prehistoric

3.1 Stapleford is located in the valley on the river Beane on light, easily cultivated soils, known to attract prehistoric activity. Aerial survey has revealed round barrows on the slopes surrounding the village of Stapleford, two of which have been subject to limited archaeological investigation (SMR 4798 and 2159). The excavation revealed that both barrows had been heavily truncated by ploughing. The ring ditch of one (SMR 2159) survived to a width of 2-2.5m and a depth of between 0.5m-1m; the other (SMR 4798) was 3.5m wide and 0.35m deep. No burials or cremations were found, but a possible grave pit was left unexcavated at one barrow.

Romano-British

3.2 There is no evidence for Roman activity at Stapleford, but Roman settlements are known at other sites along the river Beane to the north of the village. While excavating the Watton-at-Stone bypass many Roman artefacts were uncovered, including over a hundred coins (HFWI 1986).

Anglo-Saxon and medieval

3.3 There is no known record of activity in the early Saxon period, but Stapleford may have formed part of the territory of the *Beningas*, meaning the “dwellers on the river Beane”, which included Bennington (‘tun of the *Beningas*’), Bengoe (‘the spur of land of the *Beningas*’) and Watton-at-Stone. As Stapleford lies between the latter two settlements, it was probably a part of this estate. However, the evidence for the existence of this group is based purely on place name evidence (Williamson 2000, 112).

3.4 The origin of the name Stapleford is thought to refer to a ford marked by a post or staple (Gover *et al* 1970), which Cussans (1870-1881) suggests led to a market. The *Victoria County History* (Page 1912) records that the village was historically known as ‘Stapilford-by-Watton’, presumably due to its proximity to the village of Watton-at-Stone. It is possible that a track or road that led to Watton-at-Stone may have crossed the river Beane over a ford situated at Stapleford, thus giving the settlement its name. The derivation of the name river Beane is much more difficult to understand (Gover *et al* 1970), but Williamson (2000) suggests that it may refer to a ‘little goddess’.

3.5 Stapleford was situated in the Hertford Hundred and seems to have been part of Bengoe in the Domesday survey. It is recorded that Geoffrey de Bec, Peter de Valognes, Count Alan and Geoffrey de Mandeville all held land in Bengoe, and as Stapleford manor formed part of the honour of Mandeville,

it is likely that the entry for Geoffrey de Mandeville refers to Stapleford. The entry states that “[i]n Bengeo Huard holds of Geoffrey 3 hides and 1 virgate. There is land for 4 ploughs. In demesne is 1 [plough]; and there can be another plough. There are 3 villans with 2 bordars have 2 ploughs. There are 6 cottars, and 1 mill rendering 10s, meadow for 1 plough, pasture for the livestock, [and] woodland for 4 pigs. All together it is worth 45s; when received, 40s; TRE £4. Thorkil, a man Esger the staller, held this manor and could sell”.

3.6 Stapleford seems to have always been a small settlement; in 1334 it is described as a small hamlet and just nine inhabitants are recorded there in 1428. Page (1912) states that in 1905 around a half of the parish was arable land and a third was permanent grass, suggesting the area was dedicated to agricultural practice. The earliest record of the church of St. Mary the Virgin (SMR 4357), located to the east of the main village road, occurs in 1285, but the architecture suggests that it was built around a century earlier. It appears to have been enlarged in the 16th century and was extensively enlarged in the 19th century, effectively changing it from a medieval church into a Victorian one (Pevsner 1953).

Post-medieval and modern

3.7 In the post-medieval period a stone road bridge was constructed over the river Beane towards Bengeo and a possible planned farm was constructed at Patchendon. A railway line was opened in 1924 and a two-platform station constructed at Stapleford (SMR 7281). The station only ever saw a limited use and it was closed in September 1939 due to the war.

4 METHODOLOGY

4.1. The archaeological monitoring comprised the observation of all groundworks, inspection of subsoil and natural deposits for archaeological features, the examination of spoil heaps and the recording of soil profiles. Archaeological features and deposits were recorded using *pro forma* recording sheets, drawn to scale and photographed as necessary. Excavated spoil was checked for finds and the excavated area was scanned by metal detector.

4.2 The principal elements monitored were the mechanically-excavated ground reduction for the new classroom, and a trench for a new drainage run which is to serve the extension.

5 DESCRIPTION OF RESULTS Figs.3 – 4, DPs 1- 8

Deposits located within area of excavation were recorded in sample sections shown below.

Sample section 1 (DP 4)
Reduced ground area, side S, facing N
0.00 = 50.24m AOD

0.00 – 0.20m	L1000	Topsoil. Dark grey brown, soft sandy silt.
0.20 – 0.45m	L1001	Subsoil. Light brown, soft sandy silt.
0.45m+	L1003	Natural. Light to mid yellow, loose gravel with sand.
<i>Sample section 2 (DP 8)</i> <i>Drainage trench, facing N</i> <i>0.00 = 50.16m AOD</i>		
0.00 – 0.15m	L1000	Topsoil. As above.
0.15 – 0.22m	L1001	Subsoil. As above.
0.22 – 0.36m	L1004	Dark grey / black, friable silt with gravel.
0.36m+	L1003	Natural gravel. As above.

No archaeological features or finds were identified.

6 CONFIDENCE RATING

6.1 It is not felt that any factors inhibited the recognition of archaeological features or finds during the archaeological monitoring and recording.

7 DEPOSIT MODEL

7.1 The proposed school building extension area was overlain by topsoil, L1000, and in the northern part of the site, by a concrete pavement. The topsoil appeared to have been laid when the construction of the present school building had been completed.

7.2 A layer of red gravel, L1002, was located below the topsoil in northern and western parts of the monitored area. It represented a levelling layer for the playgrounds in the area next to the school.

7.3 In area to the north of the school, within the drainage trench and below the subsoil, was a layer of black silt with gravel, L1004. It varied in thickness (0.10 - 0.30m) and was located directly above natural gravels.

7.4 Elsewhere the subsoil, L1001, overlay the natural sandy gravel, L1003. The latter was present c.0.40-0.50m below the existing ground surface.

8 DISCUSSION

8.1 Despite the potential for prehistoric and medieval remains at the site, no archaeological features or finds were found.

DEPOSITION OF THE ARCHIVE

The archive records, with an inventory, will be deposited at Hertford Museum. The archive will be quantified, ordered, indexed, cross-referenced and

checked for internal consistency. In addition to the overall site summary, it will be necessary to produce a summary of the artefactual and ecofactual data.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Archaeological Solutions would like to thank Mr Chris Day of Millbridge Building Surveying Ltd for commissioning the project, and the Governors of Stapleford Church of England Primary School for their co-operation and funding of the monitoring.

AS also would like to thank staff at the Hertfordshire County Council Historic Environment Record, for their assistance, and also the staff at the Hertford Record Office.

AS acknowledges the input and advice of Ms Alison Tinniswood of Hertfordshire County Council Historic Environment Unit.

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APPENDIX 1 CONTENTS OF ARCHIVE

RECORDS	NUMBER
Brief	N
Specification	Y
Registers	Y
Context Sheets	1000 - 1004
Site Drawings A1	-
Site Drawings A3	-
Site Drawings A4	1
Site Photographs B/W	-
Site Photographs Colour Slide	-
Site Photographs Digital	Shots – 1-32

APPENDIX 2

HISTORIC ENVIRONMENT RECORD SUMMARY SHEET

Site name and address:	Stapleford Church of England Primary School, Church Lane, Stapleford, Hertfordshire
County: Hertfordshire	District: East Herts
Village/Town:	Parish: Stapleford
Planning application reference:	3/09/0765/FP
Client name/address/tel:	Governors of Stapleford CE Primary School
Nature of application:	Extension to school building and covered play areas
Present land use:	Playground and garden
Size of application area	Size of area investigated c. 100 sq m
NGR (8 figures):	TL 3122 1696
Site Code:	AS 1219
Site director/Organization:	Archaeological Solutions Limited
Type of work:	Monitoring and recording
Date of work:	5 th – 7 th & 25 th August 2009
Location of finds/Curating museum:	Hertford
Related HER Nos:	Periods represented: none
Relevant previous summaries/reports: -	
Summary of fieldwork results:	<p><i>In August 2009 Archaeological Solutions (AS) carried out a programme of archaeological monitoring and recording at Stapleford Church of England Primary School, Church Lane, Stapleford, Hertfordshire (TL 3122 1696). The monitoring was commissioned by Millbridge Building Surveying Ltd, and was undertaken in compliance with a planning condition attached to planning approval to construct a school building extension, adjacent covered play areas and a new footpath.</i></p> <p><i>The site is situated in the village of Stapleford, in the valley of the river Beane, c.4km north of Hertford, Hertfordshire. It is located within Area of Archaeological Significance No.128 and has the potential for prehistoric and medieval remains.</i></p> <p><i>In the event the monitoring revealed no archaeological features or finds.</i></p>
Author of summary: Zbigniew Pozorski	Date of Summary: August 2009

PHOTOGRAPHIC INDEX



DP 1. Stapleford Primary School, Church Lane, Stapleford, Herts. View NE.



DP 2. The school and groundworks area. View W, from the school playground.



DP 3. Groundworks to the rear of the school. View SW.



DP 4. S side of a new classroom area. Sample section 1. View S.



DP 5. E part of the monitored area. View S.



DP 6. Extension and a new classroom area. View SW.



DP 7. Drainage trench to the N of the school building. View W.



DP 8. Drainage trench, sample section 2. View S.

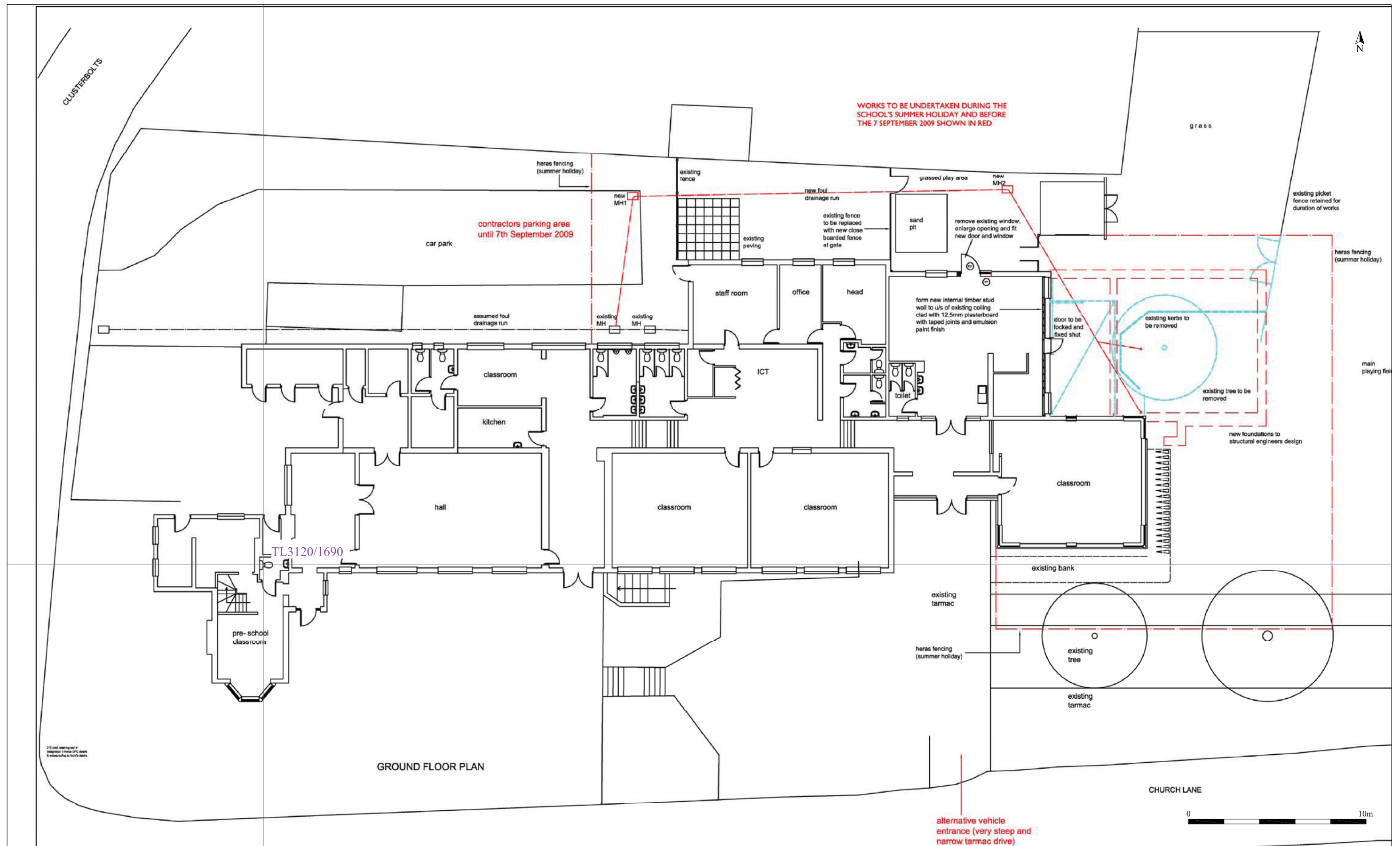


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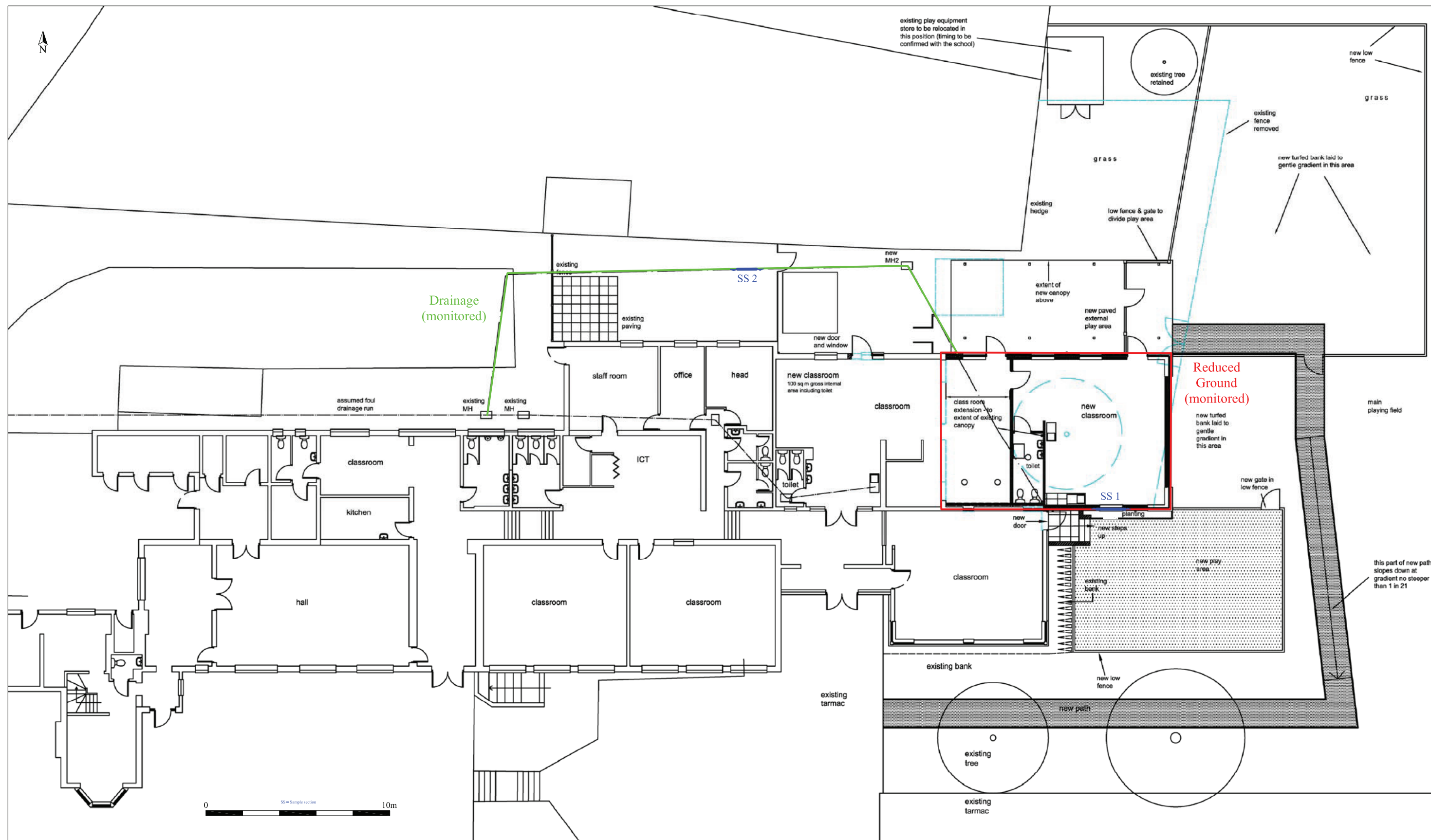
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Fig. 1 Site location plan

Scale 1:25,000 at A4



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Fig. 2 Detailed site location plan
 Scale 1:200 at A3



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Fig. 3 Area of watching brief
Scale 1:200 at A3

