

T H A M E S V A L L E Y

ARCHAEOLOGICAL

S E R V I C E S

S O U T H

**St Margaret's School, Petersfield Road,
Midhurst, West Sussex**

Archaeological Watching Brief

by Genni Elliott

Site Code: MSM13/95

(SU 8846 2152)

**St Margaret's School, Petersfield Road,
Midhurst, West Sussex**

An Archaeological Watching Brief

For Drew Smith Group

by Genni Elliott

Thames Valley Archaeological Services Ltd

Site Code MSM 13/95

January 2014

Summary

Site name: St Margaret's School, Petersfield Road, Midhurst, West Sussex

Grid reference: SU 8846 2152

Site activity: Watching Brief

Date and duration of project: 9th October 2013 – 10th December 2013

Project manager: Steve Ford

Site supervisor: Genni Elliott

Site code: MSM 13/95

Summary of results: No features nor artefacts of archaeological interest were observed. The previous buildings on the site had extensively disturbed or truncated the archaeologically relevant horizon at the top of the natural geology on the site.

Location and reference of archive: The archive is presently held at Thames Valley Archaeological Services, Reading and will be deposited at Chichester Museum in due course, with accession code CHCDM 2012.11.

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Report edited/checked by: Steve Ford ✓ 17.01.14

St Margaret's School, Petersfield Road, Midhurst, West Sussex An Archaeological Watching Brief

by Genni Elliott

Report 13/95c

Introduction

This report documents the results of an archaeological watching brief carried out at St Margaret's School, Petersfield Road, Midhurst, West Sussex (SU 8846 2152) (Fig. 1). The work was commissioned by Mr Adrian Cator of Drew Smith Group, Drew Smith House, Mill Court, The Sawmills, Durley, Southampton, Hampshire, SO32 2EJ.

Planning permission (app no. 11/03310/FULNP) has been granted by the South Downs National Park Authority for the redevelopment of the site to provide 86 new dwellings, including car parking, open space and landscaping. This is subject to three conditions (4–6) which require building recording on the Grade II listed 'Regency House' and a programme of archaeological investigation elsewhere on the site. A single component of work was initially proposed; namely field investigation by means of machine trenching. The results of this evaluation (Elliott 2013b) resulted in a watching brief being required within the eastern area of the site. This is in accordance with the Department for Communities and Local Government's Planning Policy Statement, *Planning for the Historic Environment* (PPS5 2010), and both the South Downs National Park Authority's and Chichester District Council's policies on archaeology. It is acknowledged that in the *National Planning Policy Framework* (NPPF 2012) has superseded PPS5. The field investigation was carried out to a specification approved by Mr James Kenny, Archaeology Officer for Chichester District Council, advising the National Park Authority. The fieldwork was undertaken by Genni Elliott, James McNicoll and Steve Crabb between 9th October – 10th December 2013 and the site code is MSM13/95. The archive is presently held at Thames Valley Archaeological Services, Reading and will be deposited at Chichester Museum in due course, with accession code CHCDM 2013.11.

Location, topography and geology

The site is located at the southern edge of Midhurst town centre, close to the junction of Petersfield Road (A272) with North Street (A286). It is a former school and convent, and has a number of associated buildings across the site (Fig. 2). Open space has been used for car parking, playing fields and playgrounds. The grassed areas have

been terraced and raised planting beds are present along the street frontage. In general the site slopes from the north down to the south with a gentle slope from the west to the east. Spot heights in the south-east corner are between 31–31.50m above Ordnance Datum and rise up to 34.70m above Ordnance Datum at the far north of the site within the area of The Brackens. The underlying geology is Pulborough Sand (BGS 1996).

Archaeological background

The archaeological potential of the site has been highlighted in a desk-based assessment (Keevill 2011). In summary the site lies on the western edge of the Midhurst Conservation Area. Little in the way of pre-medieval activity is known in the area. Two Bronze Age barrows are located on Midhurst Common and stray finds of prehistoric flintwork have been recovered in the area. The same is the case with Roman pottery and coins, which points to some residual activity from these periods being present. Midhurst as a town is first mentioned in AD1185; with the Castle and Church of St Mary Magdalene having origins in the 12th or 13th century, possibly earlier. The historic core of the town lies to the east and north of the site, and the eastern part of the site, containing ‘Regency House’ is within the Conservation Area. Further research has revealed that the 1632 town plan shows that development was already beginning to extend to the west along Petersfield Road, but that the site itself was open land. A house was built on the site between the mid 17th – 18th centuries and probably functioned as a farmhouse (Elliott 2013). The evaluation (Elliott 2013b) uncovered several features which, where dating evidence was recovered, were of later post-medieval date. Three features including a stone drain were undated. A small collection of medieval pottery was recovered from unstratified contexts.

Objectives and methodology

The purpose of the watching brief was to excavate and record any archaeological deposits affected by the groundworks within the eastern end of the site. This mainly involved the examination of foundation trenches for the new buildings within blocks B and F. The trenches were all 0.6m wide and between 0.6m and 0.78m deep dependent on the level of the natural sandy clay.

Results

Building Block B (Pl. 1)

The area of block B had been reduced to the top of the natural geology and; no features of archaeological interest were observed. Where the foundation trenches were watched the natural stratigraphy consisted of 0.40m of greyish brown sand, above 0.20m of light grey sand above reddish brown sandy clay with grey mottling.

Building Block F (Pl. 2)

Only the eastern set of foundations for building block F were observed due to extensive quantities made ground being observed across all but the easternmost end of the trenches. Where the natural was not truncated it consisted of 0.35m of greyish white sand, above 0.13m of very wet dark brown sand above more than 0.30m of mixed greyish blue and brownish yellow sandy clay with some patches of gravel.

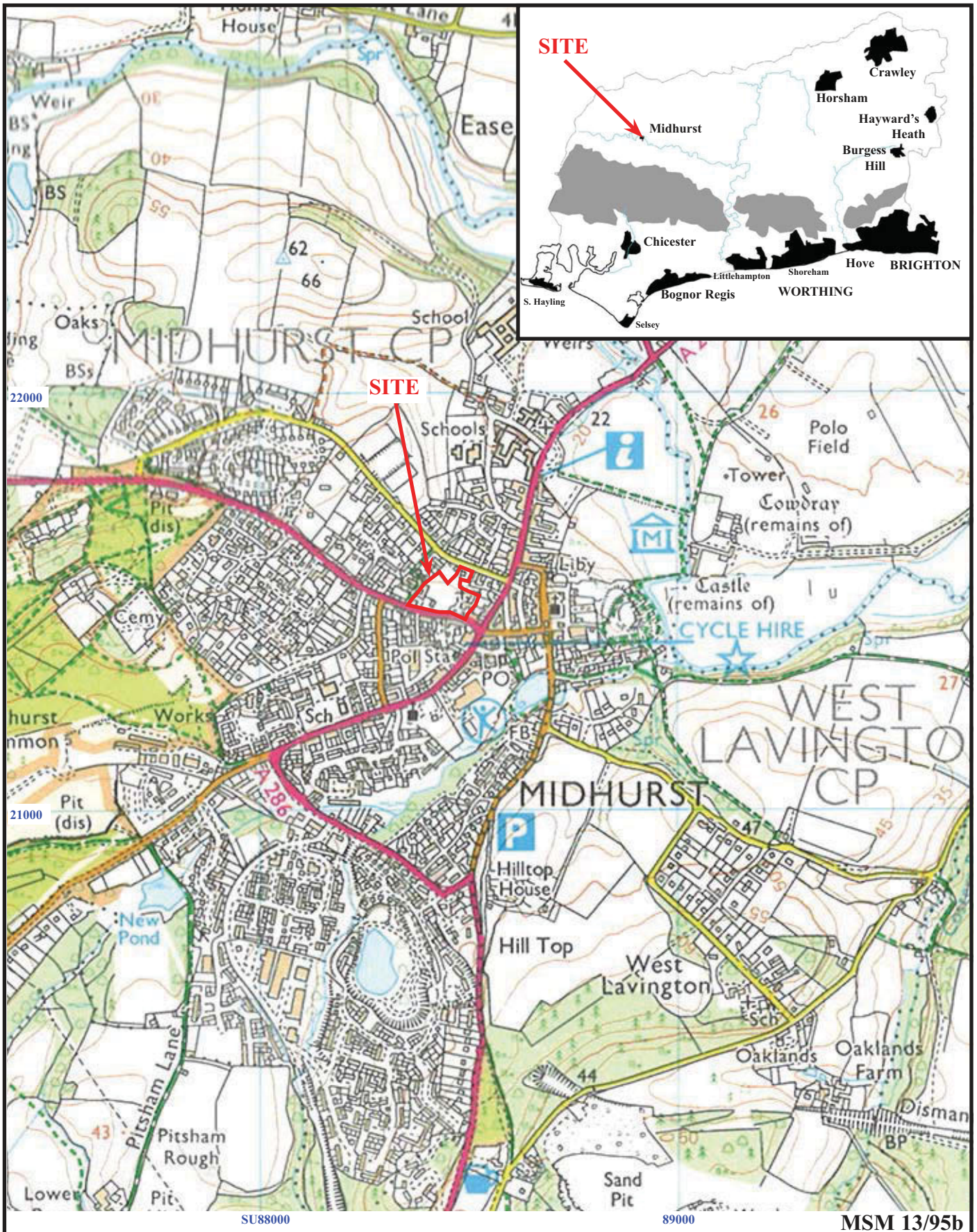
The other new blocks for construction on the eastern side of the site lay within areas that had partly or wholly been occupied by previous structures and, like Building F, the ground was substantially disturbed. The trenches in these areas were not therefore monitored in detail.

Conclusion

No features nor artefacts of archaeological interest were observed for Block B where the effects of previous development were anticipated to be relatively slight. However, observations within block F showed that the natural geology had had been highly disturbed and truncated by the previous buildings there, and which was similar for other areas with previous buildings on the site.

References

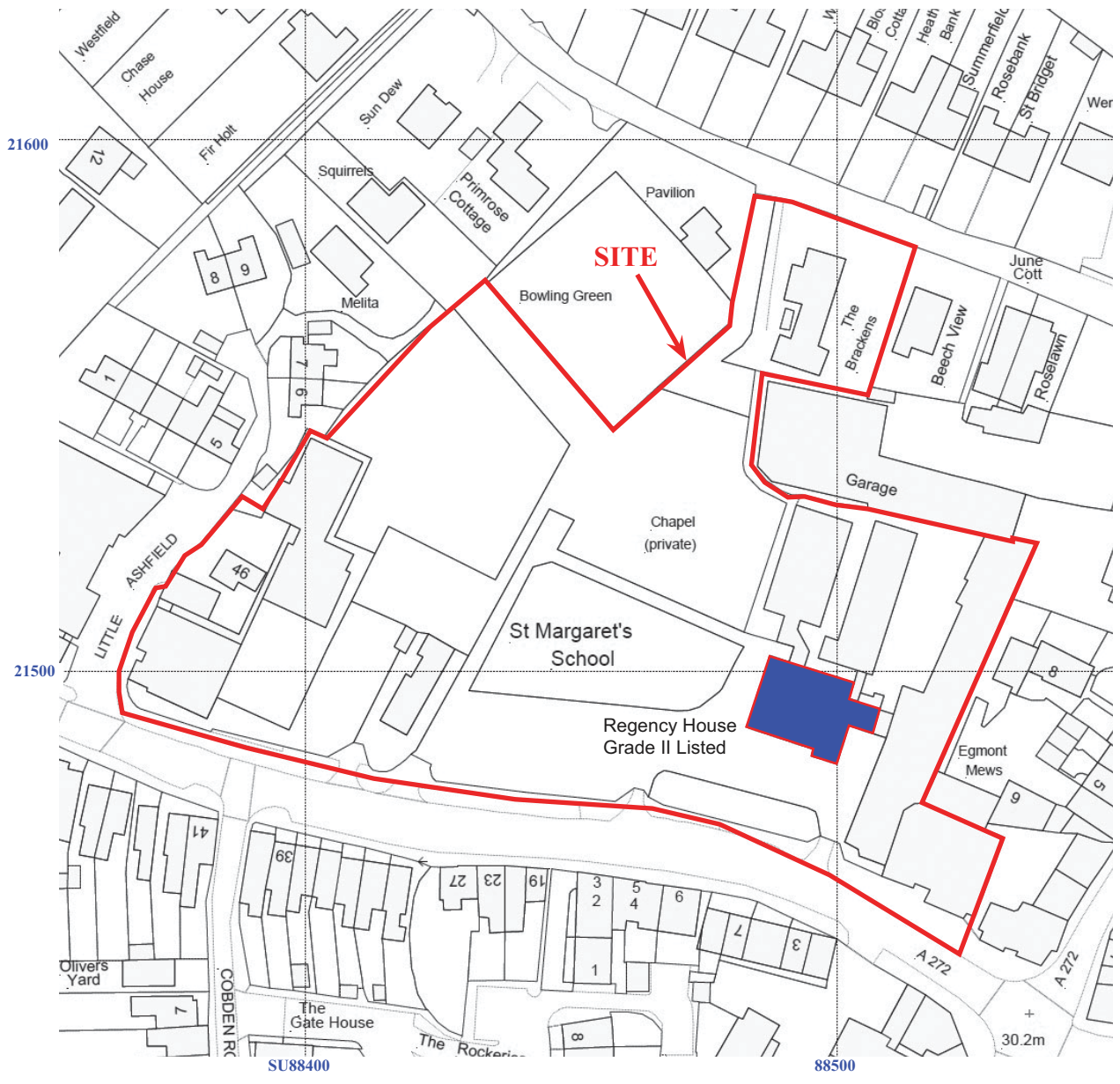
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NPPF 2012, *National Planning Policy Framework*, Department of Communities and Local Government, London (TSO)
PPS5, 2010, *Planning for the Historic Environment*, The Stationery Office, Norwich



**St Margaret's School, Petersfield Road, Midhurst,
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Archaeological watching brief
 Figure 1. Location of site within Midhurst and West Sussex.

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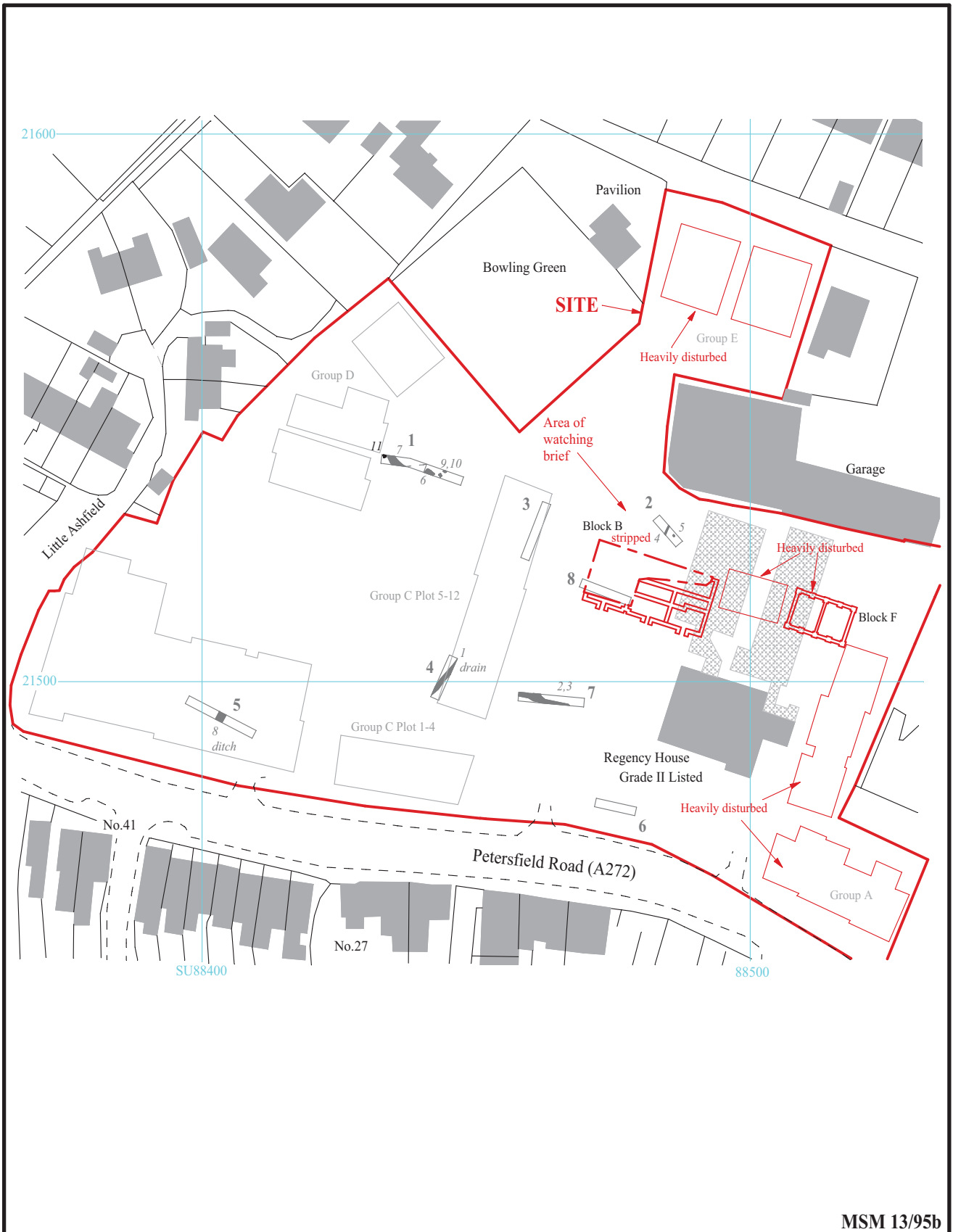
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 Figure 2. Detailed location of site off Petersfield Road,
 prior to development.

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Figure 3. Location of observed areas, in relation to previous evaluation.



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NW

SE

Greyish white sand (Disturbed)

Dark wet brown sand (Disturbed)

Grey blue and brown yellow mixed sandy clay with gravel (natural geology)

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Figure 4. Representative section.



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Plate 1. Block B, looking Northwest.



Plate 2. Block F, looking Southwest, Scales: 2m and 1m.

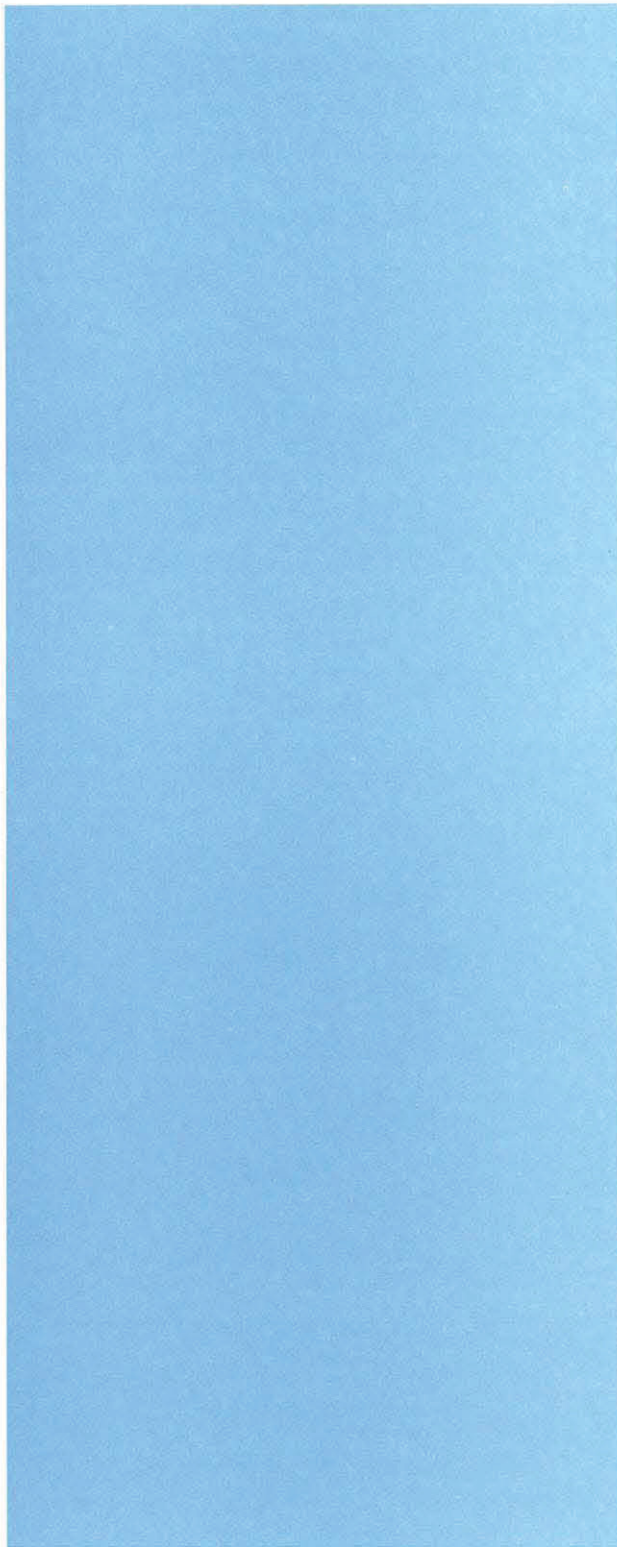
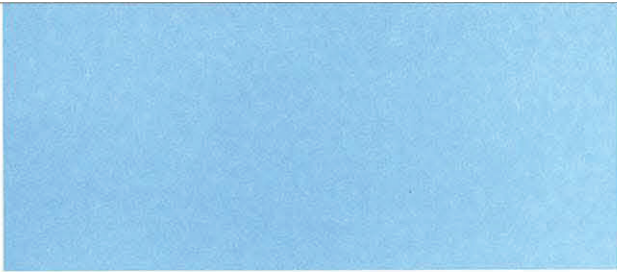
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Plates 1 - 2.

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TIME CHART

	Calendar Years
Modern _____	AD 1901
Victorian _____	AD 1837
Post Medieval _____	AD 1500
Medieval _____	AD 1066
Saxon _____	AD 410
Roman _____	AD 43
Iron Age _____	BC/AD 750 BC
Bronze Age: Late -----	1300 BC
Bronze Age: Middle -----	1700 BC
Bronze Age: Early -----	2100 BC
Neolithic: Late	3300 BC
Neolithic: Early	4300 BC
Mesolithic: Late	6000 BC
Mesolithic: Early	10000 BC
Palaeolithic: Upper	30000 BC
Palaeolithic: Middle	70000 BC
Palaeolithic: Lower	2,000,000 BC
↓	↓



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