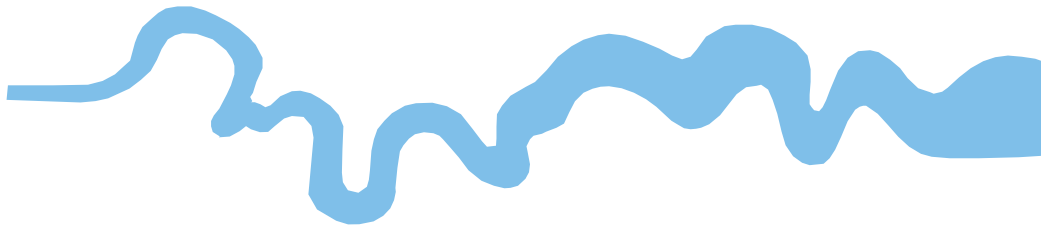


**T V A S**



**SOUTH**

**Steps House, Fletching Street,  
Mayfield, East Sussex**

**Archaeological Watching Brief**

**by Felicity Thompson**

**Site Code: SHM22/249**

**(TQ 5890 2701)**

# **Steps House, Fletching Street, Mayfield, East Sussex**

**An Archaeological Watching Brief**

**For Ms Gisele Husey**

**Planning Reference : WD/2022/0637/F**

by Felicity Thompson

Thames Valley Archaeological Services Ltd

Site Code: SHM 22/249

**May 2023**

## Summary

**Site name:** Steps House, Fletching Street, Mayfield, East Sussex

**Grid reference:** TQ 5890 2701

**Planning reference:** WD/2022/0637/F

**Site activity:** Watching Brief

**Date and duration of project:** 18th April 2023

**Project manager:** Felicity Thompson

**Site supervisor:** Felicity Thompson

**Site code:** SHM 22/249

**Summary of results:** The watching brief at Steps House, Mayfield, successfully monitored ground reduction and excavation of foundation trenches. Due to the relatively shallow nature of the groundworks the material removed consisted of a buried soil horizon, recorded beneath modern made ground throughout the site. The natural geology, the sandstones and siltstones of the Tunbridge Wells Sands Formation were not exposed anywhere. No finds or features of archaeological interest were revealed during the watching brief.

**Location and reference of archive:** The archive is presently held at TVAS South, Brighton, and will be deposited with the Archaeology Data Service in due course.

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Report edited/checked by:	Steve Ford ✓ 05.05.23
	Steve Preston ✓ 04.05.23

# Steps House, Fletching Street, Mayfield, East Sussex An Archaeological Watching Brief

by Felicity Thompson

Report 22/249

## Introduction

This report documents the results of an archaeological watching brief carried out to the east of Steps House, Fletching Steet, Mayfield, East Sussex (TQ 5890 2701) (Figs 1 and 2). The work was commissioned by the property's owner, Ms Gisele Husey.

Planning permission (WD/2022/0637/F) has been granted by Wealden District Council to construct a new garage on the site. The consent is subject to a standard planning condition (2) relating to archaeology and historic environment, which required the implementation of a programme of archaeological work, in this case a watching brief during groundworks.

This is in accordance with the *National Planning Policy Framework* (NPPF 2019), and the District Council's policies on the historic environment. The watching brief was carried out in accordance with a written scheme of investigation approved by the local planning authority, following consultation with the East Sussex County Council Archaeological Officer.

The fieldwork was undertaken by Felicity Thompson on 18th April 2023, and the site code is SHM 22/249. The archive is currently held at TVAS South, Brighton, and will be deposited with an appropriate museum in due course.

## Location, topography and geology

The site is located immediately south of Fletching Street, towards the junction of the High Street and Tunbridge Wells Road, within the historic core of Mayfield, East Sussex (Figs. 1 and 2). The new garage was to be built to the east of the property, following the removal of a Tarmac driveway. The general topography slopes away steeply from the west, from c.143m above Ordnance Datum (aOD) at the junction with the High Street and the Tunbridge Wells Road, down to c.112m OD at the eastern end of Fletching Street (Harris 2008) descending towards Coggins Mill Stream, a tributary of the River Rother. The site itself lies at a height of approximately 130m above Ordnance Datum. According to the British Geological Survey the underlying geology consists of Tunbridge Wells Sands Formation (BGS 2006). However, due to the relatively shallow groundworks in respect of the new garage, the natural geology was not observed during the watching brief,

## **Archaeological background**

The archaeological potential of the site has been gleaned from a recent search of the East Sussex Historic Environment Record.. In summary the site is located within an Archaeological Notification Area (ANA) reflecting the historic core of medieval and post-medieval Mayfield. According to local legend the parish church was established by the Archbishop of Canterbury, St Dunstan, in about AD960. The village was certainly in existence a hundred years later, as it is mentioned in Domesday Book. The original church was damaged in a fire that swept through Mayfield in 1388-9 (Gardiner 1997) and was rebuilt in the following century. The Archbishop of Canterbury built a palace a Mayfield in the 14th century, which became a convent school in 1863. The village contains a large number of buildings dating from the medieval and post-medieval periods, many of which have been subject to historic building recordings. There has also been a great deal of archaeological fieldwork carried out within the village, and finds and features dating from medieval, post-medieval and modern periods have been recorded. Steps House is not a Listed Building, although it is thought to date from the early 19th century. Fletching Street was once the main eastern thoroughfare into the village, and it is therefore possible that features relating to earlier roadside activity may be present in the area where the new garage is to be built.

## **Objectives and methodology**

The primary aim of the watching brief was to excavate and record any archaeological deposits affected by the proposed groundworks. This was to involve monitoring any areas of significant ground reduction in respect of the new garage (Fig. 2). Where archaeological deposits which may warrant preservation *in-situ* were encountered, their treatment was to be discussed in consultation with the client and the East Sussex County Council Archaeological Officer. Where it was not possible or practicable to preserve archaeological remains *in-situ* the features were to be excavated by hand and fully recorded, to ensure their preservation by record.

## **Results**

All ground reduction was carried out using a 360° type mechanical excavator, fitted with a toothless ditching bucket, under archaeological supervision. The footprint of the new garage was 5.60m square and was up to 0.40m deep (Fig. 3; Pl. 1). The groundwork mainly involved the stripping of overburden up to 0.20m deep. In general, the material removed from within the footprint of the new garage consisted of original Tarmac driveway and a bedding layer beneath it.

Following the initial ground reduction, a 0.60m wide footing trench was dug around the edge of the stripped area. This trench varied in depth from about 0.40m close to the house to approximately 0.30m at the eastern end. In general, the stratigraphy consisted of 0.09m of Tarmac, on top of 0.11m of a stone bedding layer and fabric membrane, directly above 0.10m made ground which comprised sandstone rubble (Fig. 4; Pl. 2). In the western section of the footprint where the excavation went to deeper levels to account for the slope, the stratigraphy was recorded as 0.07m of Tarmac, on 0.12m bedding layer, which lay above 0.11m of made ground, on 0.08m of buried topsoil (50) (Fig. 4; Pl. 3). This underlying deposit was observed throughout the entire western footing trench and contained no archaeological finds.

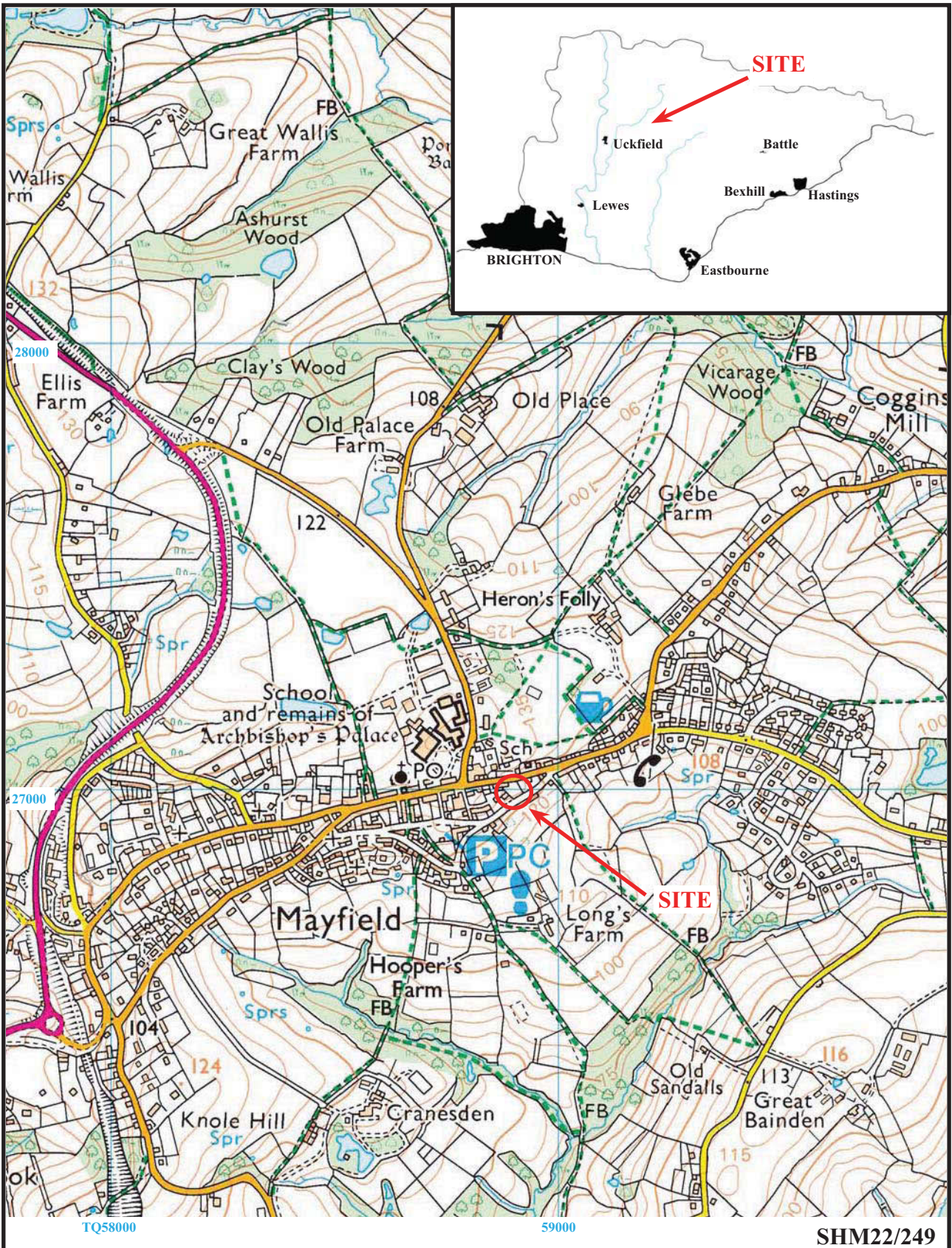
The natural geology was not exposed anywhere within the footprint and no archaeological finds or deposits were observed.

## **Conclusion**

The watching brief at Steps House, Mayfield, successfully monitored the groundworks for the construction of a new garage. Due to the relatively shallow nature of the groundworks the material removed consisted almost entirely of overburden with a buried topsoil (50) observed at deeper levels to the west of the footprint. The natural sandstone geology was not exposed anywhere and despite the archaeological potential of the surrounding area, no archaeological finds or features were observed.

## **References**

- BGS, 2006, *British Geological Survey*, 1:50,000, Sheet **303**, Bedrock and Superficial Deposits Edition, Keyworth
- Gardiner, M, 1997, 'Trade, Rural Industry and the Origins of Villages: some evidence from South-East England', in G de Boe and F Verhaeghe (eds), *Rural Settlements in Medieval Europe: Papers of the Medieval Europe Brugge 1997 Conference* 6, 64
- Harris, R B, 2008, *Mayfield Historic Character and Assessment Report. Sussex Extension Urban Survey (EUS)*, East Sussex County Council, West Sussex county Council, Brighton and Hove City Council
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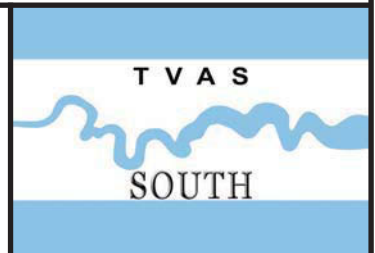


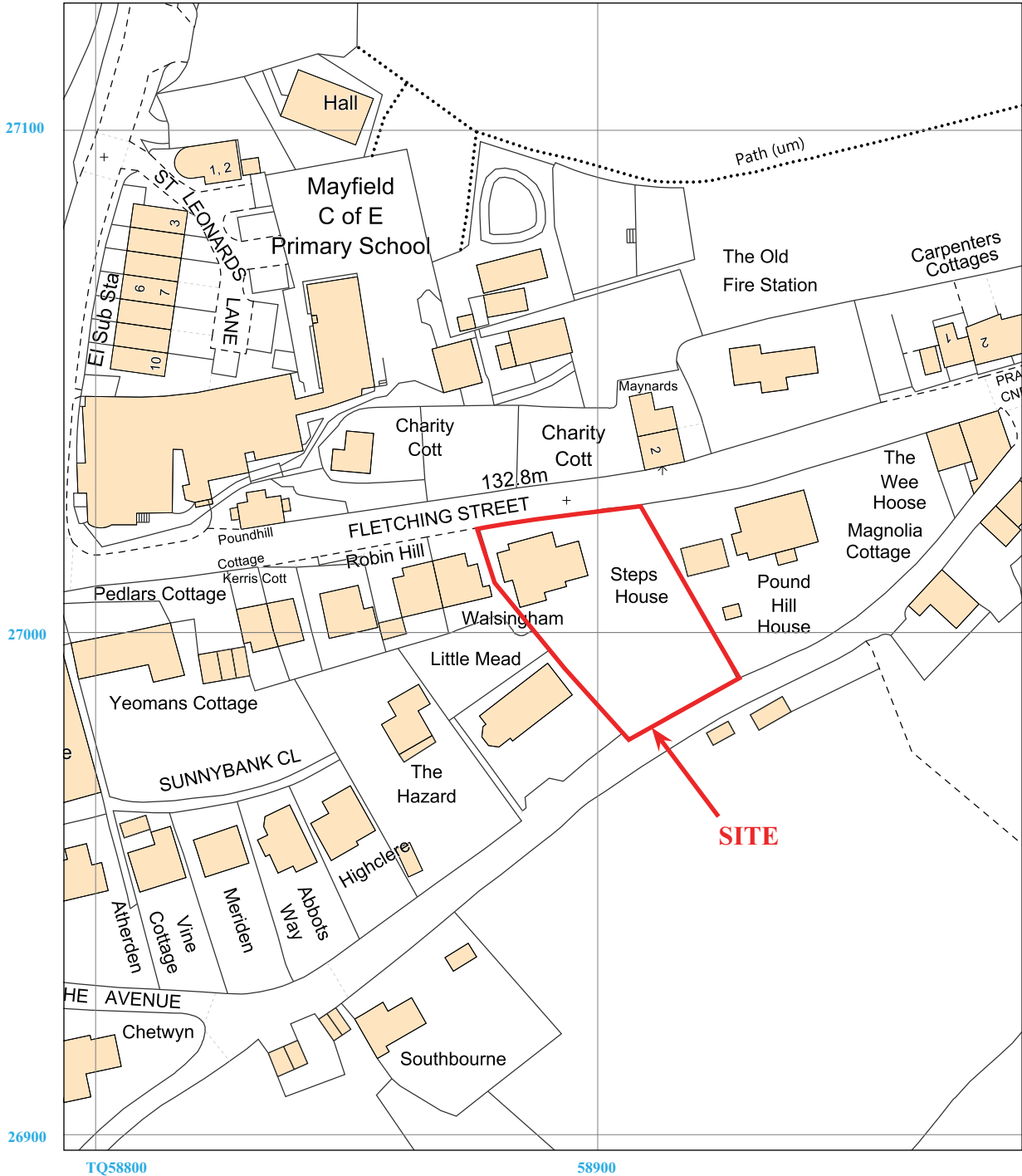
**Steps House, Fletching Street, Mayfield,  
East Sussex, 2023**

**Archaeological Watching Brief**

Figure 1. Location of site within East Mayfield and East Sussex.

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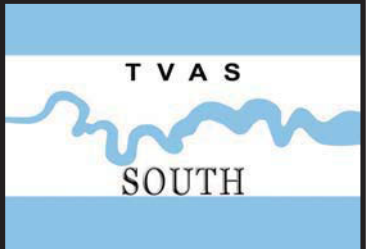


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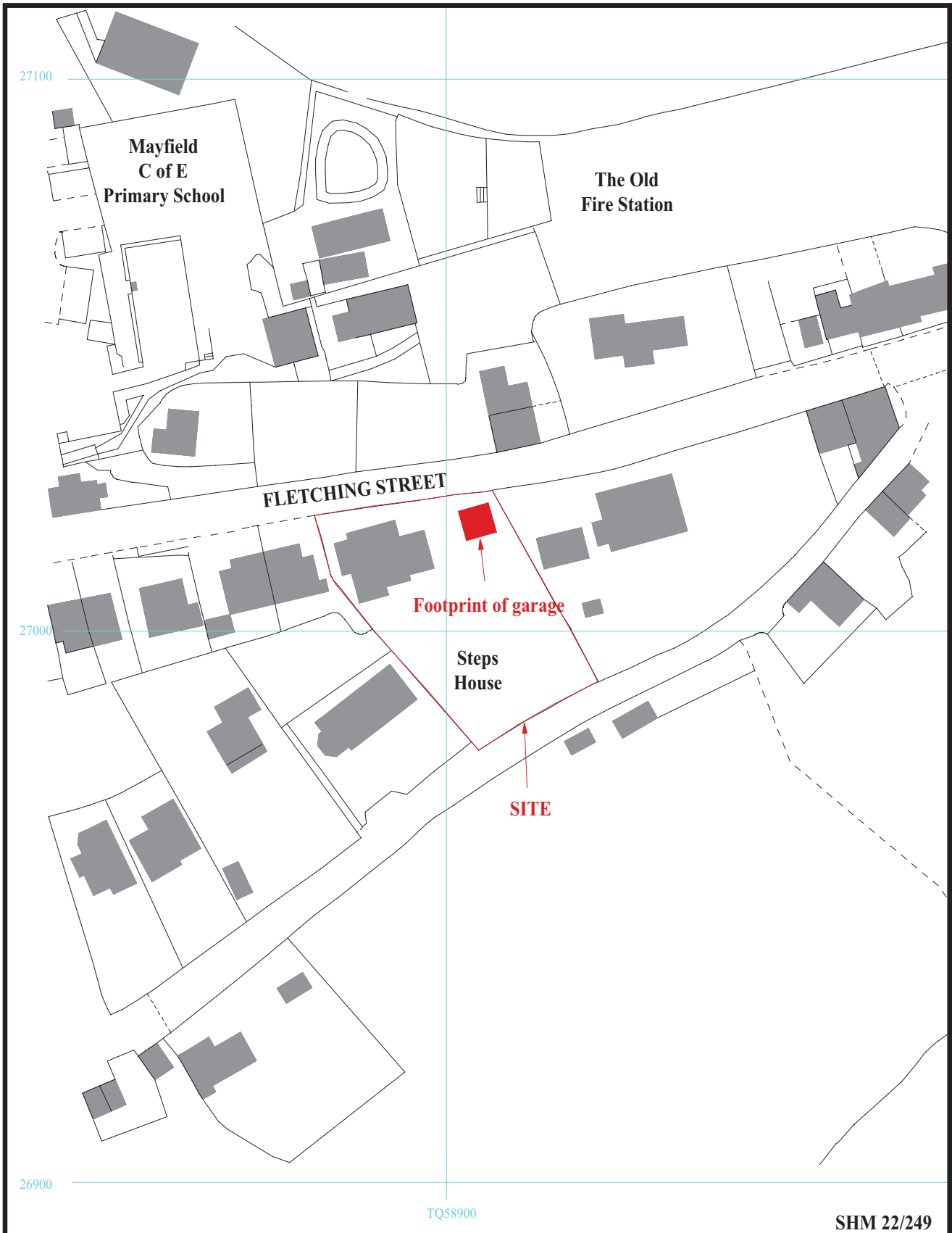


**Steps House, Fletching Street, Mayfield,  
East Sussex, 2023  
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Figure 2. Detailed site location showing the area to be monitored during the watching brief.





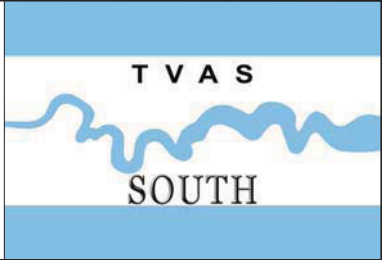


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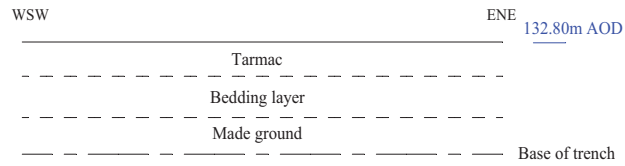


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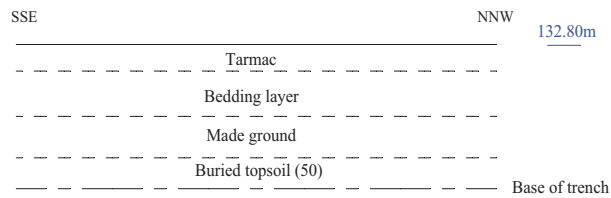
Figure 3. Plan showing the area monitored during the watching brief.



**General stratigraphy shown in northern section of the footprint**



**Stratigraphy in western section of the footprint**



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**Steps House, Fletching Street, Mayfield,  
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Figure 4. Representative sections.

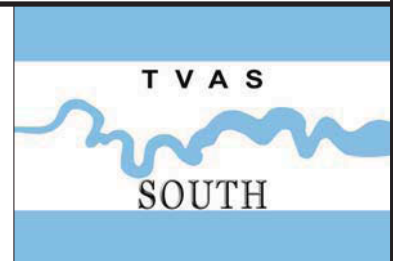




Plate 1. General view of site during ground reduction, looking north-east.



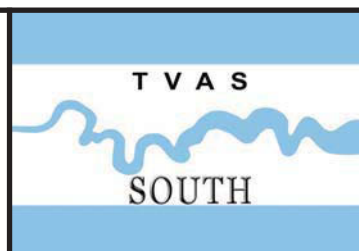
Plate 2. Representative section, looking north.  
Scales: 1m and 0.30m.



Plate 3. Representative section, looking west.  
Scales: 1m and 0.30m.

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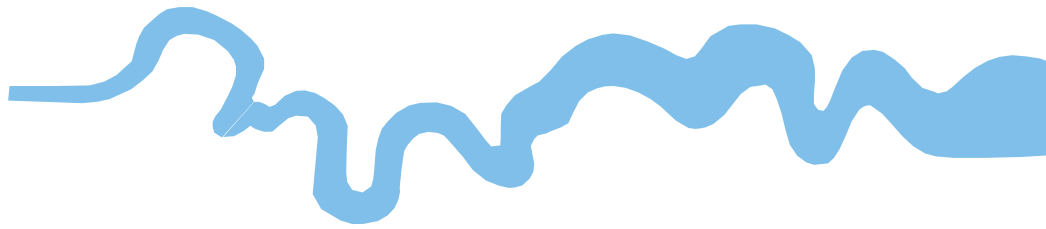
**Steps House Fletching Street, Mayfield,  
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Plates 1 to 3.**



## TIME CHART

	Calendar Years
Modern _____	AD 1901
Victorian _____	AD 1837
Post Medieval _____	AD 1500
Medieval _____	AD 1066
Saxon _____	AD 410
Roman _____	AD 43 AD 0 BC
Iron Age _____	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





**TVAS (South),  
77a Hollingdean Terrace  
Brighton, BN1 7HB**

**Tel: 01273 554198  
Email: [south@tvas.co.uk](mailto:south@tvas.co.uk)  
Web: [www.tvas.co.uk/south](http://www.tvas.co.uk/south)**

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