
The King's School

Fence Avenue

Macclesfield, Cheshire



NOVEMBER 2021

Archaeological Watching Brief
Report EH083/02

The King's School, Fence Avenue Macclesfield, Cheshire

Archaeological Watching Brief Report For Barratt & David Wilson Homes

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Heritage Impact Assessment
Archaeological Desk-Based Assessment
Historic Landscape Survey
Written Scheme of Investigation

Geophysical Survey
Trial Trench Evaluation
Archaeological Excavation
Archaeological Watching Briefs

CONTENTS

1	Introduction.....	5
1.1	Project Circumstances.....	5
2	Methodology.....	6
2.1	Scope of the Work.....	6
2.2	Archaeological Watching Brief.....	6
2.3	Archive.....	7
3	Background.....	8
3.1	Location and Geological Context.....	8
3.2	Historic Background.....	8
4	Archaeological Watching Brief.....	10
4.1	Introduction.....	10
4.2	Results.....	11
4.3	Discussion.....	14
5	Conclusions.....	15
1.1	Interpretation.....	15
1.2	Research Potential.....	15
2	Bibliography.....	16
	APPENDIX 1: FIGURES.....	18

FIGURES

Figure 1: Site location

Figure 2: Detailed site location

Figure 3: Extracts from historic Ordnance Survey mapping (1872-1954)

Figure 4: Location of the watching brief

Figure 5: Results of the watching brief

PLATES

Front Cover: Photograph of the main building on Fence Avenue at The King’s School

Plate 1: Extract from the 1849 Tithe map

Plate 2: Area excavated for the access road to the south of the main building, looking northeast

Plate 3: Excavated area south of the main building, looking east

Plate 4: Brick layer (101) at the west side of the carpark, looking north

Plate 5: Brick and sandstone layers (101) and (102) at the west side of the carpark, looking north

Plate 6: Brick inspection chamber (104) in the southern baulk of the excavated area, looking south

Plate 7: Brick and stone drain [106]/(107) in the eastern excavated area, looking southeast

Plate 8: Carved stone from Fence House in the garden of No.24 Fence Avenue, looking southeast

SUMMARY

In 2021 Eden Heritage Ltd was commissioned to undertake an archaeological watching brief on land at The King's School, Fence Avenue, Macclesfield, Cheshire (centred on Ordnance Survey grid reference SJ 9259 7388). The archaeological work was undertaken for Barratt & David Wilson Homes and was associated with a proposed residential development at the site, for which planning permission had been granted by Cheshire East Council (Planning Reference 20/0246). The development was granted planning permission on the condition that an archaeological watching brief be undertaken, due to the recorded presence of an 18th century building, known as Fence House or The Fence, which identified the site to be of archaeological interest.

The archaeological watching brief was undertaken over two days on 8th and 9th November 2021 during the excavation of a new access road at the southwest corner of proposed development area. A drain was identified on the east side of the site which may have related to a small post-medieval building associated with Fence Cottage. This building was constructed in the late 19th century following the demolition of Fence House. All of the other structures identified during the watching brief were modern and associated with the former school.

As this archaeological watching brief was conducted as part of a recommendation to observe groundworks in association with the new development, no further work is deemed necessary. However, given the potential for further remains in the area, it is expected that any future development at the site will be subject to a similar programme of archaeological investigation, as recommended by Cheshire Archaeology Planning Advisory Service.

AKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Eden Heritage Ltd thanks James Carman, Barratt & David Wilson Homes for commissioning the project, and for all assistance throughout the work. Eden Heritage Ltd also thank Kirsty Lloyd and Mark Leah, Cheshire Archaeology Planning Advisory Service, for their assistance during the project. Eden Heritage Ltd would also like to extend thanks to all the staff at Sirius who assisted Eden Heritage Ltd with the fieldwork.

The archaeological watching brief was undertaken by Martin Railton, who also produced the report.

1 Introduction

1.1 Project Circumstances

- 1.1.1 The following document outlines the results of an archaeological watching brief on land The King's School, Fence Avenue, Macclesfield, Cheshire (centred on Ordnance Survey grid reference SJ 9259 7388; Figure 1). The archaeological work was undertaken for Barratt & David Wilson Homes (the Client) and was associated with a proposed residential development at the site, for which planning permission had been granted by Cheshire East Council (Planning Reference 20/0246).
- 1.1.2 The proposed development area lay c.900m to the east Macclesfield town centre in the Hurdsfield area of the town and encompassed the grounds of The King's School and associated land to the north and east. The property was to the east of Fence Avenue, northwest of Macclesfield Canal (Figure 2).
- 1.1.3 Cartographic sources had indicated that a property known as Fence House or The Fence was located within the western portion of the site in the 19th century. The proposed development comprised the partial change of use and partial demolition of existing buildings and structures at The King's School site to create 27 apartments, and the erection of 273 new dwellings, with associated landscaping, supporting infrastructure and access from Fence Avenue. The proposed development will involve the loss of any below-ground archaeological remains within the site boundary.
- 1.1.4 As a result, Cheshire East Council has advised that a programme of archaeological work was required at the site, which was to be undertaken accordance with a planning condition (Condition 5) of the planning permission, which stated: *'No development shall take place within the area indicated until the applicant, or their agents or successors 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 local planning authority. The work shall be carried out strictly in accordance with the approved scheme'*.
- 1.1.5 A Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI) for the archaeological watching brief was subsequently prepared by Eden Heritage and was submitted to Kirsty Lloyd, Development management Archaeologist, at Cheshire Archaeology Planning Advisory Service (APAS), for approval, prior to the commencement of the project (Eden Heritage 2020).

2 Methodology

2.1 Scope of the Work

2.1.1 The advice of Cheshire Archaeology Planning Advisory Service (APAS) was that the location of Fence House should be subject of a programme of archaeological work, along with buildings to the north as identified from cartographic sources (Eden Heritage 2020). A section was also to be placed across the township boundary on the southern edge of the proposed development area in order to record the formation of the former boundary. However, only the location of Fence House was subject to the archaeological watching brief, as the other areas of the site were left untouched as green spaces.

2.1.2 The archaeological watching brief was maintained over two days during the excavation of a new access road to the south of the main building at The King's School, which was believed to be the location of the former Fence House, based on 1872 historic mapping (see Figure 3 and Figure 4).

2.1.3 The general aim of the watching brief was to record any archaeological evidence revealed within the excavation, in order to attempt to re-construct the history and past-use of the site. This comprised close monitoring of the excavation work undertaken by the groundworks contractor, followed by the archaeological investigation and recording of any archaeological features or deposits identified.

2.2 Archaeological Watching Brief

2.2.1 An archaeological watching brief consists of a formal programme of observation and investigation conducted during any operation carried out for non-archaeological reasons, in this case during the excavation work for the new extension. All fieldwork was carried out in accordance with codes and practices outlined by the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists regarding archaeological watching briefs (CIfA 2020a).

2.2.2 In summary, the main objectives of the watching brief were:

- to establish the presence/absence, nature, and extent of archaeological remains revealed by the works and to record these where they are observed;
- to investigate and record any evidence for archaeological features or finds present;
- to establish the character of those features in terms of cuts, soil matrices and interfaces;
- to recover artefactual material, especially that useful for dating purposes;
- to recover palaeoenvironmental material (where it survives) in order to understand site and landscape formation processes;

- 2.2.3 The excavation was undertaken using a tracked excavator under close archaeological supervision. Excavation was undertaken to remove modern tarmac surfaces, topsoil and modern structures/services from the area of the new access road, to expose the natural undisturbed ground.
- 2.2.4 All potential archaeological features encountered were investigated and recorded according to standard recording procedure as set out in the Museum of London Archaeological Service Archaeological Site Manual (Museum of London 1994). All written records utilised the Eden Heritage *pro-forma* record sheets. A full photographic record in digital format was maintained.
- 2.2.5 All of the finds recovered during the watching brief were modern and were not retained. No environmental evidence was encountered during the work and therefore no samples were taken.

2.3 Archive

- 2.3.1 The project archive has been prepared in accordance with the recommendations in *Archaeological Archives: A Guide to Best Practice in Creation, Compilation, Transfer and Curation* (Brown 2011) and will be maintained by Eden Heritage Ltd. The archive can be accessed under the unique project identifier EH105, GHC/A.
- 2.3.2 Copies of the final report (in PDF/A format) will be provided to the Cheshire Historic Environment Record (HER), where viewing will be available on request.
- 2.3.3 Eden Heritage Ltd supports the **Online Access to the Index of Archaeological Investigations** (OASIS) project. This project aims to provide an online index and access to the extensive and expanding body of grey literature created as a result of developer-funded archaeological fieldwork. As a result, details of the results of this study will be made available by Eden Heritage Ltd as a part of this national project, and a copy of the report will be uploaded to OASIS. The OASIS reference is: edenheri1-434050.

3 Background

3.1 Location and Geological Context

- 3.1.1 Macclesfield is a market town and civil parish in East Cheshire, located approximately 25km south of Manchester and 52km to the east of Chester on the eastern edge of the Cheshire Plain on the River Bollin. The King's School is situated to the east of the town on the east side of Fence Avenue, with Buxton Road (A537) located to the south, and Hurdsfield Road (B547) to the north (Figure 1).
- 3.1.2 The proposed development area encompassed the buildings, sports pitches and grounds associated with The King's School, and fields to the north and east (Figure 2). The Macclesfield Canal bounded the site to the southeast. The land within the site occupied a slight northwest-facing slope with elevations of c.163 aOD (above Ordnance Datum) in the southeast and c.140 aOD in the northwest.
- 3.1.3 The geology of the site is sandstone (gravelly), known as Chester Formation. This sedimentary bedrock formed approximately 147 to 250million years ago in the Triassic Period. This is overlain by glacial deposits of Till, formed up to 2 million years ago in the Quaternary Period (BGS 2020).

3.2 Historic Background

- 3.2.1 There was no known evidence for medieval (or earlier) activity within the proposed development area. The Cheshire Tithe map of 1849 (Plate 1) shows the proposed development area as predominantly rural but with buildings to the north, south and west. A property is depicted on the southwest side of the proposed development area, the land to the north and east being listed as pasture, meadow and woodland (University of Salford 2015, 8). The township boundary is depicted crossing the south side of the proposed development area on this map.
- 3.2.2 Macclesfield was the centre of the silk industry. The manufacture of silk-covered buttons began in the 16th century but became industrialised in the mid-18th century when silk-throwing was introduced and the first silk mill was constructed. By the end of the 18th century the silk industry was flourishing and was accompanied by weaving in purpose-built mills (University of Salford 2015, 12). The completion of Macclesfield Canal in 1831 also led to a growth in industry on the east side of the town and an increase in population in the vicinity of the proposed development.
- 3.2.3 The property, known as Fence House or The Fence, was the former residence of Thomas Brocklehurst who came from a family of silk manufacturers, and may have been constructed in the mid to late 18th century (APAS 2016). This was located on the southwest side of the proposed development area in the 19th century set within parkland and gardens.



Plate 1: Extract from the 1849 Tithe map (University of Salford 2015)

- 3.2.4 The First edition Ordnance Survey map of 1872 shows at the southwest corner of the proposed development area with a range of buildings to the east set around a courtyard, and gardens to the south (Figure 3a). Parkland extended to the north, south and west of the house. Albert Mills (a silk mill) is depicted to the north with a mill dam to the west. A watercourse is shown running through the northern edge of the proposed development area, apparently feeding a mill pond. Other features are depicted on this map on the northeast site boundary. Immediately to the east of the watercourse a small square building is depicted, the nature of which is uncertain. To the east is another mill dam, to the north of which is a well. The well appeared to be outside the site boundary.
- 3.2.5 By the time of the Ordnance Survey map of 1898 Fence House had been demolished, leaving a range of buildings to the east, one of which is named Fence Cottage (Figure 3b). Fence Avenue had been laid out immediately to the west of the site boundary by this time, and the former parkland had been assimilated into Victoria Park to the west. The building to the north had been extended by this time to the northeast and southwest, and another rectangular building constructed to the north. The Ordnance Survey map of 1909 shows very little change within the site boundary, apart from another possible extension is shown to the north of this building (Figure 3c).
- 3.2.6 In the late 19th century there was a growing demand for the formal education of girls. In 1879 classrooms were opened for girls in Park Green to house a girl's school, becoming Macclesfield's High School for Girls (University of Salford 2015, 13). In 1909 the school moved to a new purpose-built site within the proposed development area on the site of the former Fence House or The Fence. The school is depicted on the Ordnance Survey map of 1954, Fence Cottage and buildings having been demolished by this time (Figure 3d). Additional school buildings were added in the 1950's and 1960's.

4 Archaeological Watching Brief

4.1 Introduction

- 4.1.1 The archaeological watching brief was undertaken over two days on 8th and 9th November 2021 during the excavation of a new access road at the southwest corner of proposed development area (Figure 4). This followed the demolition of several of the modern school immediately buildings to the northeast and southeast of the excavation. The main building to the north was left standing and was to be converted into apartments. This building had a datestone above the entrance dated 1908.
- 4.1.2 This work monitored the excavation of 9.0m-wide area on the west side of the site to a depth of c.0.4m below ground level (blg) over a distance measuring approximately 18m located within a former carpark immediately to the south of the main building (Plate 2). Topsoil was also removed from an area measuring 20m by 14m immediately to the east to a depth of 0.8m blg (Plate 3). This area was previously a small green space located between the carpark and modern school buildings.



Plate 2: Area excavated for the access road to the south of the main building, looking northeast

- 4.1.3 The excavation revealed a 0.1m-deep layer of tarmac **(103)** across the west side of the site, which overlay a deposit of modern hardcore with substantial 0.2m-deep brick and stone foundations **(101)** and **(102)**. To the east a 0.3m-deep deposit of topsoil and turf **(105)** covered several modern services and brick foundations associated with the demolished modern school buildings **(109)** (see Figure 5).



Plate 3: Excavated area south of the main building, looking east

- 4.1.4 The natural orange sand and red/brown clay **(100)** was exposed over the whole of the excavated area at an average depth of approximately 0.4m blg in the western half of the site, deepening to 0.8m blg to the west, where the ground had previously risen in height forming a slight earth bank.

4.2 Results

- 4.2.1 The excavation within the former carpark revealed layer of red bricks **(101)** measuring 5.8m by 2.5m in the west end of the excavated area. The bricks were all hand-made, each measuring 230mm by 100mm by 25mm, and were bedded in yellow sand. The bricks had been stacked on their ends to form a 0.2m-deep layer overlying the natural clay **(100)** but were leaning slightly to the west creating a jagged upper surface, which was presumably due to the rising ground level (Plate 4). The bricks were evidently re-used from elsewhere as several had traces of mortar on their surfaces. Immediately to the east the brick was replaced by a similar layer of yellow sandstone pieces **(102)**, which had also been laid on their sides to form a foundation for the tarmac carpark surface **(103)**. The stone was inspected and was unshaped but could have come from an earlier building (Plate 5).
- 4.2.2 Two modern 0.6m-square postholes were seen to cut through the brick and stone surfaces **(101)** and the natural clay **(100)**. Each contained the base of a 0.1m-square timber post, and filled with modern hardcore, possibly for a fence or signs. A modern drain was also revealed in the southern baulk of the excavation, along with a brick 0.5m-wide 0.2m-deep brick manhole or inspection chamber **(104)**, associated with an electricity cable marked by a row of bricks stamped with 'electricity' (Plate 6).



Plate 4: Brick layer (101) at the west side of the carpark, looking north



Plate 5: Brick and sandstone layers (101) and (102) at the west side of the carpark, looking north

4.2.3 Several other modern services were identified crossing the east side of the excavated area, including a substantial ceramic drain which appears to have been associated with the modern school buildings immediately to the east. The trench for the drain was backfilled with brick rubble (109), containing concrete and gravel, which appears to have been associated with previously demolished buildings.



Plate 6: Brick inspection chamber **(104)** in the southern bank of the excavated area, looking south



Plate 7: Brick and stone drain **[106]/(107)** in the eastern excavated area, looking southeast

- 4.2.4 A stone drain was revealed cutting the natural clay **(100)** at the centre of the eastern excavated area, aligned northwest to southeast (Figure 5). The cut of the drain **[106]** was 2.5m long, 0.45m wide and 0.2m deep with vertical sides and base. The base had been lined with small stones, and the sides were lined with squared stones and two rows of red bricks to form the drain **(107)**. This was capped with yellow sandstone slabs measuring up to 0.45m by 0.3m by 0.08m (Plate 7). The drain was filled with a deposit of black clay silt **(108)** which contained a sherd of modern ceramic and an iron nail.
- 4.2.5 The drain appeared to have been truncated at either end by later activity, so its full extent was uncertain. This was covered in a 0.3m-deep layer of topsoil **(105)** which also covered the eastern side of the excavation. Numerous tree roots were also present in this area from a recently removed tree.

4.3 Discussion

- 4.3.1 The drain **[106]/(107)** could have potentially been associated with a small post-medieval building, which is depicted in this location, to the west of Fence Cottage, on historic Ordnance Survey maps of 1898 and 1909 (Figure 3b and Figure 3c). This building, along with the buildings associated with Fence Cottage, were evidently demolished following the construction of King's School in 1908.
- 4.3.2 No evidence was revealed for the sub-surface remains of Fence House. All of the other structures identified during the watching brief were modern, and probably associated with the King's School buildings. This included the brick and stone foundations for the modern carpark, which could potentially have been made using re-used brick and stone from demolished buildings on site.
- 4.3.3 During the watching brief the resident of No.24 Fence Avenue exhibited a carved keystone which is believed to have come from one of the buildings associated with Fence House (Plate 8). This was the only convincing evidence identified during the project for the former presence of these buildings.



Plate 8: Carved stone from Fence House in the garden of No.24 Fence Avenue, looking southeast

5 Conclusions

1.1 Interpretation

- 1.1.1 An 18th century building, known as Fence House or The Fence, is recorded on historic mapping to have stood to the south of The King's School, Macclesfield, until it was demolished in the late 19th century. No evidence for this building was revealed during the watching brief, which suggests that this building was demolished to its foundations, possibly when the main building at The King's School was constructed in 1908, or that it lay just outside of the proposed development area to the south.
- 1.1.2 A drain was identified on the east side of the site during the archaeological watching brief. It is possible that this feature relates to a small post-medieval building associated with Fence Cottage. This building was constructed in the late 19th century following the demolition of Fence House. All of the other structures identified during the watching brief were modern associated with the school.

1.2 Research Potential

- 1.2.1 It is possible that stonework from Fence House and associated buildings has been reused in later buildings and/or is present in the surrounding landscape, as evidenced by the presence of a carved keystone in the garden of No.24 Fence Avenue, however, no evidence was revealed within the site.
- 1.2.2 A section was to be placed across the township boundary on the southern edge of the proposed development area in order to record the formation of the former boundary. However, this area was left untouched as a green space as part of the current development. It is recommended that this work should be undertaken in future, should there be any further proposals to develop in this area.

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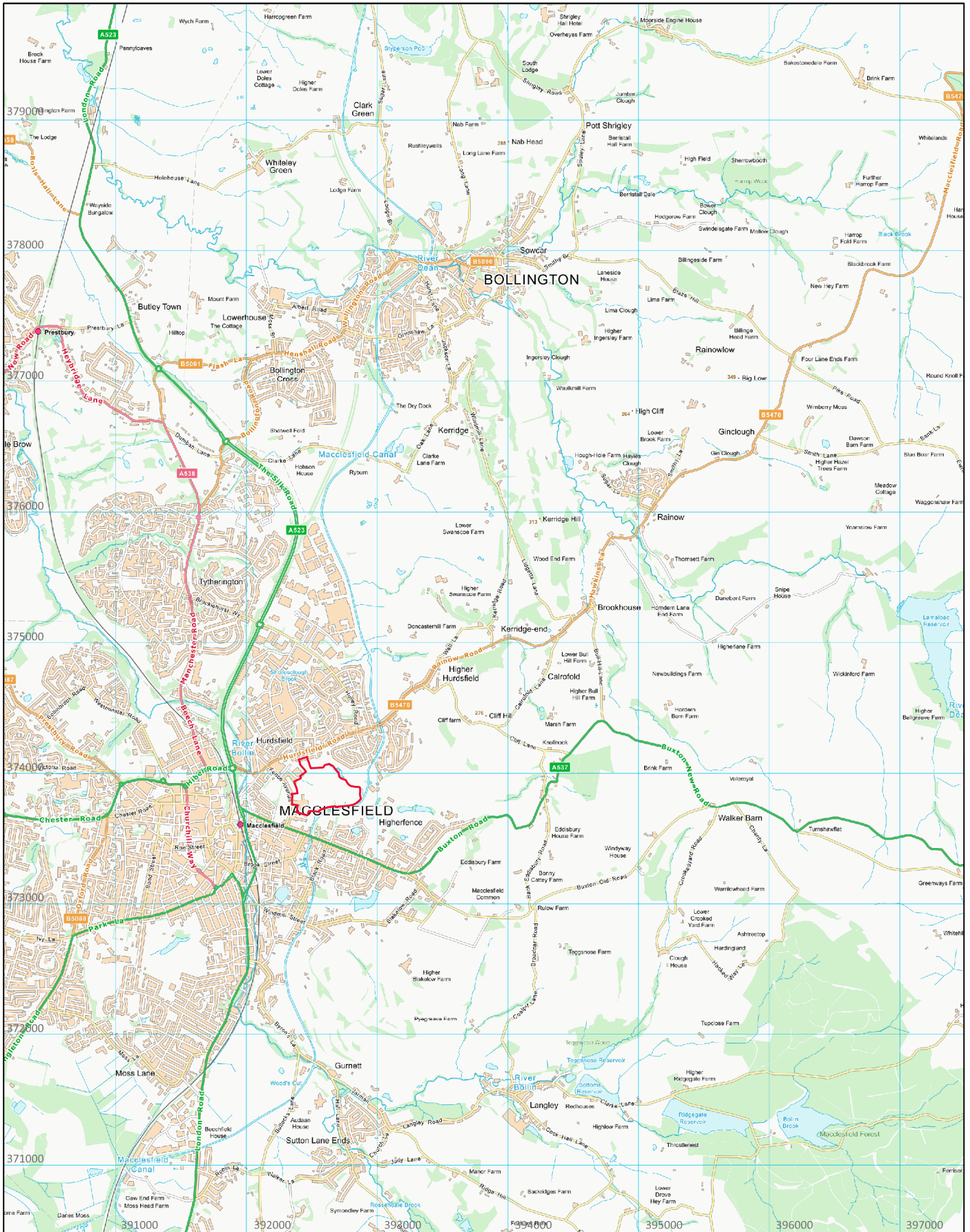
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APPENDIX 1: FIGURES






 <p>Eden Heritage Ltd 2021</p>	<p>PROJECT: The King's School, Fence Avenue Macclesfield, Cheshire</p> <p>CLIENT: Barratt & david Wilson Homes</p> <p>REPORT: EH083/02</p> <p>SCALE: 1:40,000 at A4</p> <p>DRAWN BY: MDR</p> <p>DATE: November 2021</p>	<p>KEY:</p>  <p>site boundary</p>	 <p>Contains OS data © Crown copyright and database right (2018)</p>
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Figure 1: Site Location.

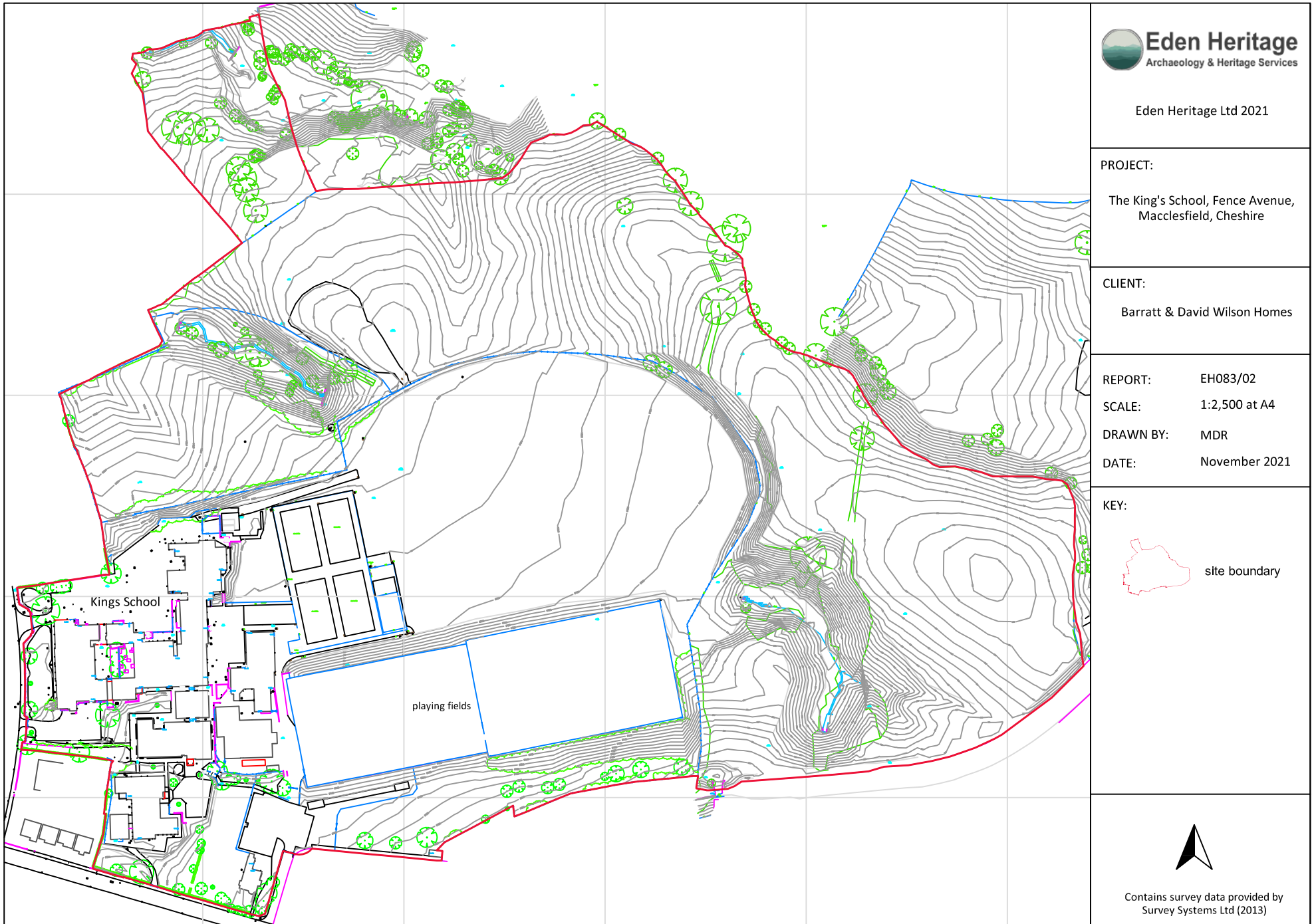


Figure 2: Detailed site location.

PROJECT:

The King's School, Fence Avenue,
Macclesfield, Cheshire

CLIENT:

Barratt & David Wilson Homes

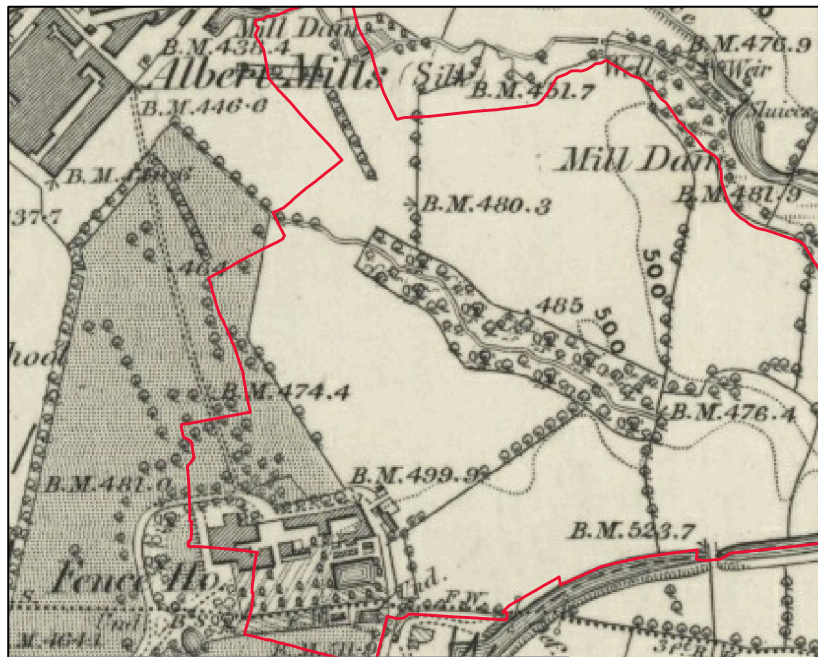
REPORT: EH083/01

SCALE: 1:5,000 at A4

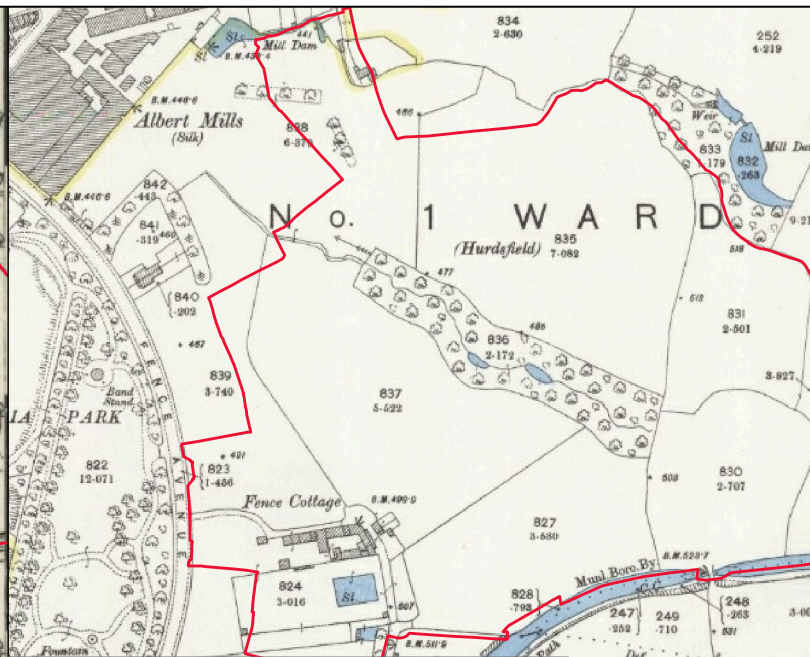
DRAWN BY: MDR

DATE: November 2021

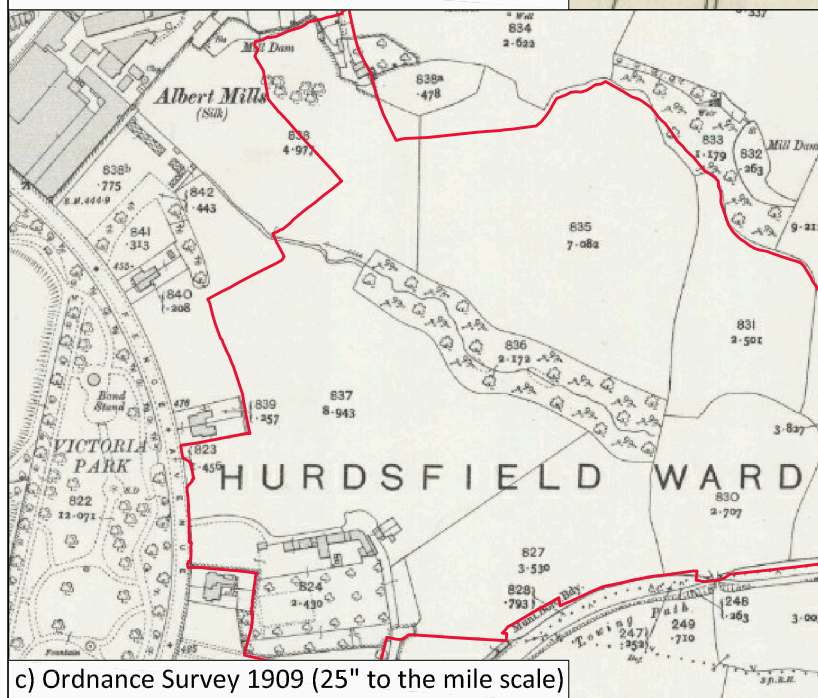
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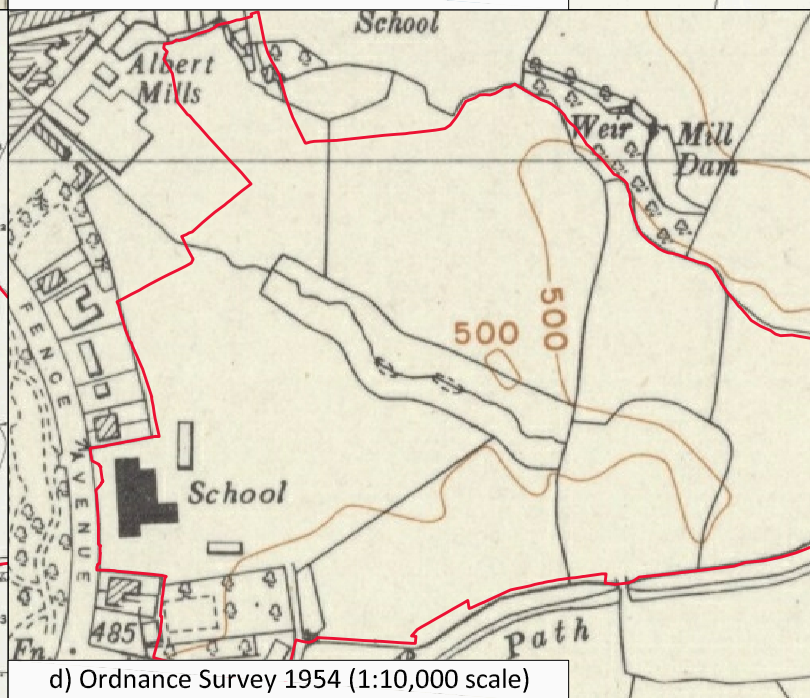
a) Ordnance Survey 1872 (6" to the mile scale)



b) Ordnance Survey 1898 (25" to the mile scale)

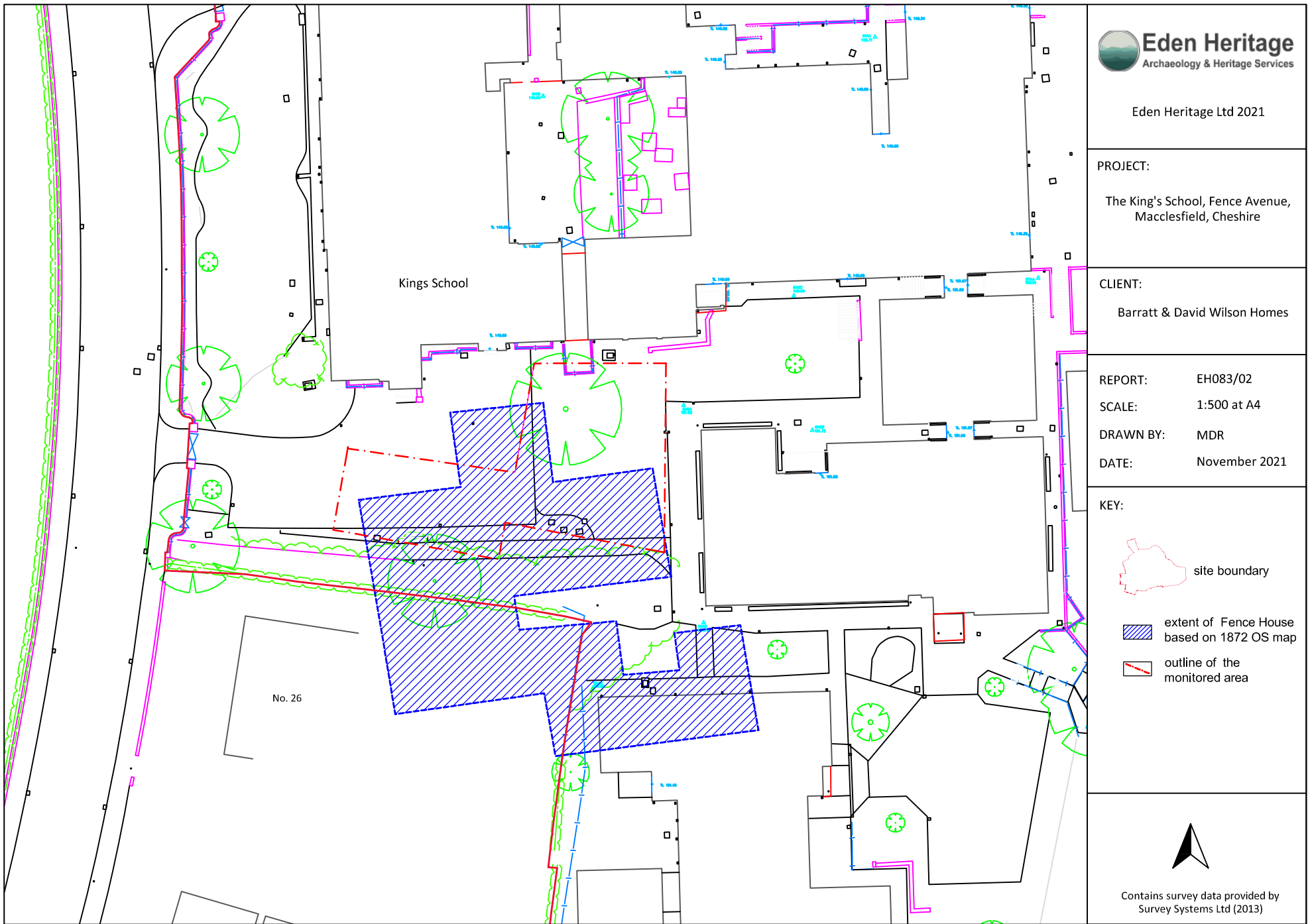


c) Ordnance Survey 1909 (25" to the mile scale)



d) Ordnance Survey 1954 (1:10,000 scale)

Figure 3: Extracts from historic Ordnance Survey mapping (1872-1954).




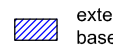
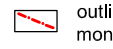
Eden Heritage Ltd 2021

PROJECT:
The King's School, Fence Avenue,
Macclesfield, Cheshire

CLIENT:
Barratt & David Wilson Homes

REPORT: EH083/02
SCALE: 1:500 at A4
DRAWN BY: MDR
DATE: November 2021

KEY:

-  site boundary
-  extent of Fence House based on 1872 OS map
-  outline of the monitored area



Contains survey data provided by
Survey Systems Ltd (2013)

Figure 4: Location of the watching brief.

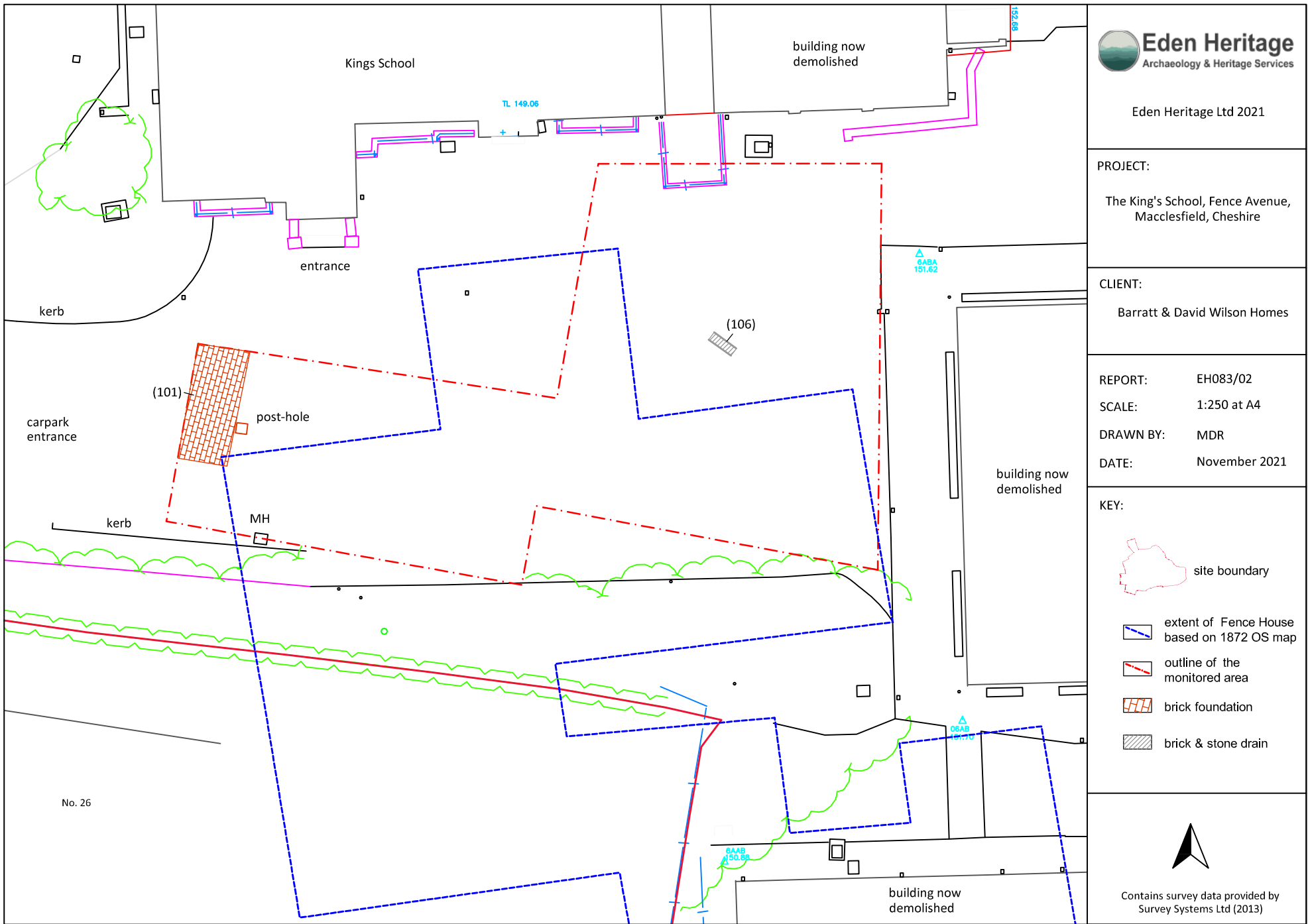


Figure 5: Results of the watching brief.

Heritage Impact Assessment
Archaeological Desk-Based Assessment
Historic Landscape Survey
Written Scheme of Investigation

Geophysical Survey
Trial Trench Evaluation
Archaeological Excavation
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