

Archaeological Services & Consultancy Ltd

**ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION:
ROMANS FIELD SCHOOL
SHENLEY ROAD
BLETCHLEY**

on behalf of Milton Keynes Council



Calli Rouse BA PIFA

June 2007

ASC: 924/BRF/2

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Site Data

<i>ASC project code:</i>	BRF	<i>ASC Project No:</i>	924
<i>Event No:</i>	1125	<i>Accession No:</i>	
<i>County:</i>	Milton Keynes Unitary Authority		
<i>Village/Town:</i>	Bletchley		
<i>Civil Parish:</i>	Bletchley		
<i>NGR (to 8 figs):</i>	SP 85202 34398		
<i>Present use:</i>	Lawn and play area		
<i>Planning proposal:</i>	Construction of temporary building and hard play area		
<i>Planning application ref/date:</i>	Pre-determination		
<i>Local Planning Authority:</i>	Milton Keynes Unitary Authority		
<i>Date of fieldwork:</i>	13 th June 2007		
<i>Client:</i>	Milton Keynes Council Civic Offices 1 Saxon Gate Milton Keynes		
<i>Contact name:</i>	Nick Warner - ArchitectsMK		

Internal Quality Check

<i>Primary Author:</i>	Calli Rouse	<i>Date:</i>	19/06/2007
<i>Revisions:</i>		<i>Date:</i>	
<i>Edited/Checked By:</i>		<i>Date:</i>	

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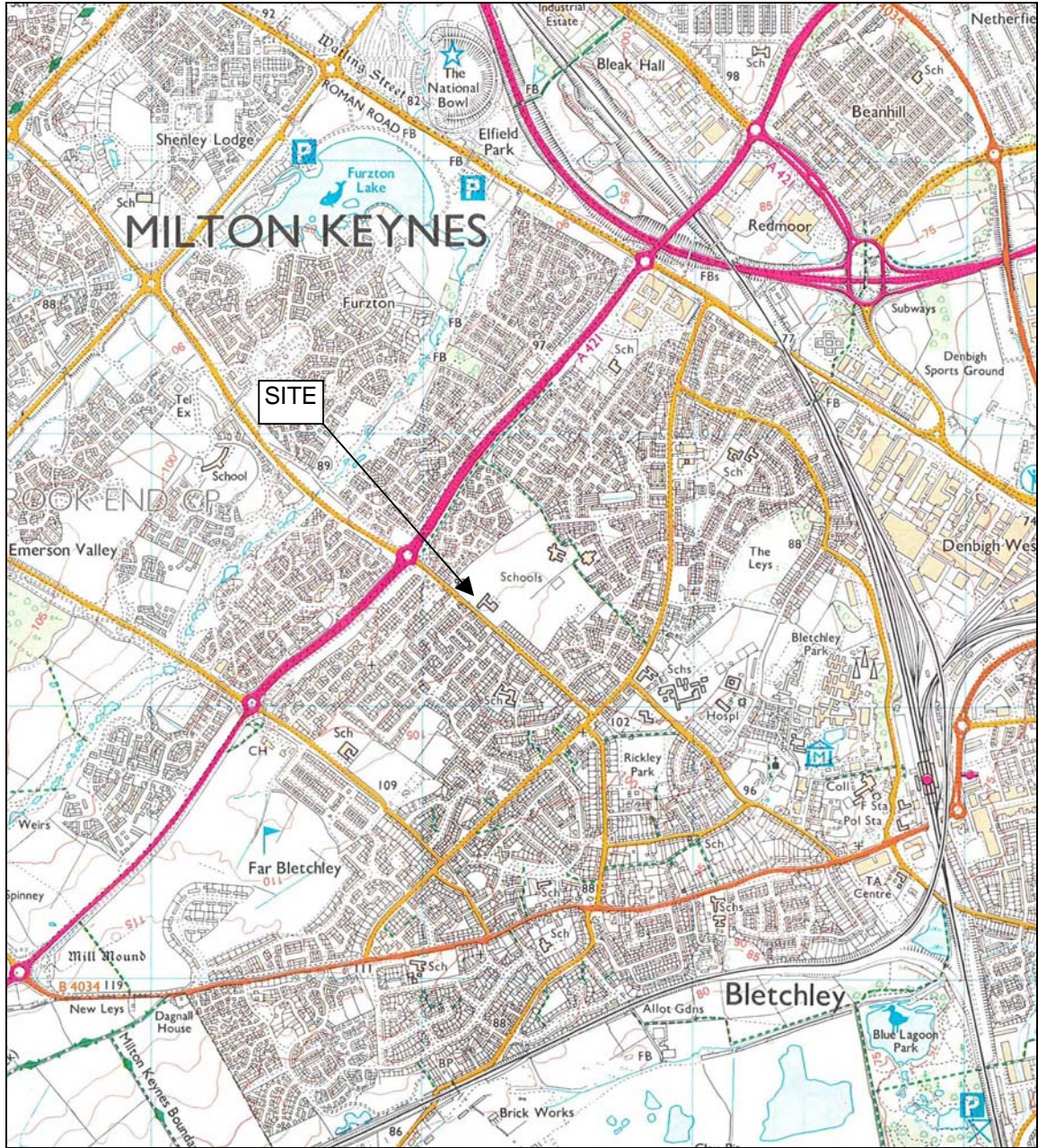


Figure 1: General location (*scale 1:25,000*)

Summary

In June 2007, an archaeological evaluation was undertaken at Romans Field School, Shenley Road, Bletchley, to inform planning proposals for a temporary building with associated hard play area, located to the north west of the main school complex. Three linear trenches were excavated within the footprint of the proposed building. No archaeological finds or features were observed within any of the trenches, and it is unlikely that significant archaeological remains are present on the site.

1 Introduction

1.1 In June 2007 *Archaeological Services and Consultancy Ltd* (ASC) carried out an evaluation at Romans Field School, Shenley Road, Bletchley (NGR SP 85202 34398: Fig. 1). The project was commissioned by *ArchitectsMK* on behalf of *Milton Keynes Council*, and was carried out according to a brief (Crank 2007) prepared on behalf of the Council, by their Archaeological Officer (AA), and a project design prepared by ASC (Rouse 2007).

1.2 *Planning Background*

This evaluation was required under the terms of *Planning Policy Guidance Note 16* (PPG16), in response to proposals for the construction of a temporary building and hard play area.

1.3 *Location*

The site is located in the town of Bletchley, in the administrative district of Milton Keynes (Fig. 1). It lies c.1km northwest of Bletchley town centre, within the playing fields to the northwest of the Romans Field School (Fig. 2).

1.4 *Description*

The proposed development site lies within a rectangular area of grass located to the north west of the main school complex. Several trees are located in the centre of the area, and a play area with ornamental benches and a swing set is located at the north western end of the site.

1.5 *Geology & Topography*

The soils of the area are recorded as Unsurveyed, as the site is within an urban area. However, they are likely to be of the *Hanslope Association*, which comprises *slowly permeable calcareous clayey soils*. *Some slowly permeable non-calcareous clayey soils*. *Slight risk of water erosion*. The underlying geology is likely to comprise chalky till (Soil Survey 1983, 411d).

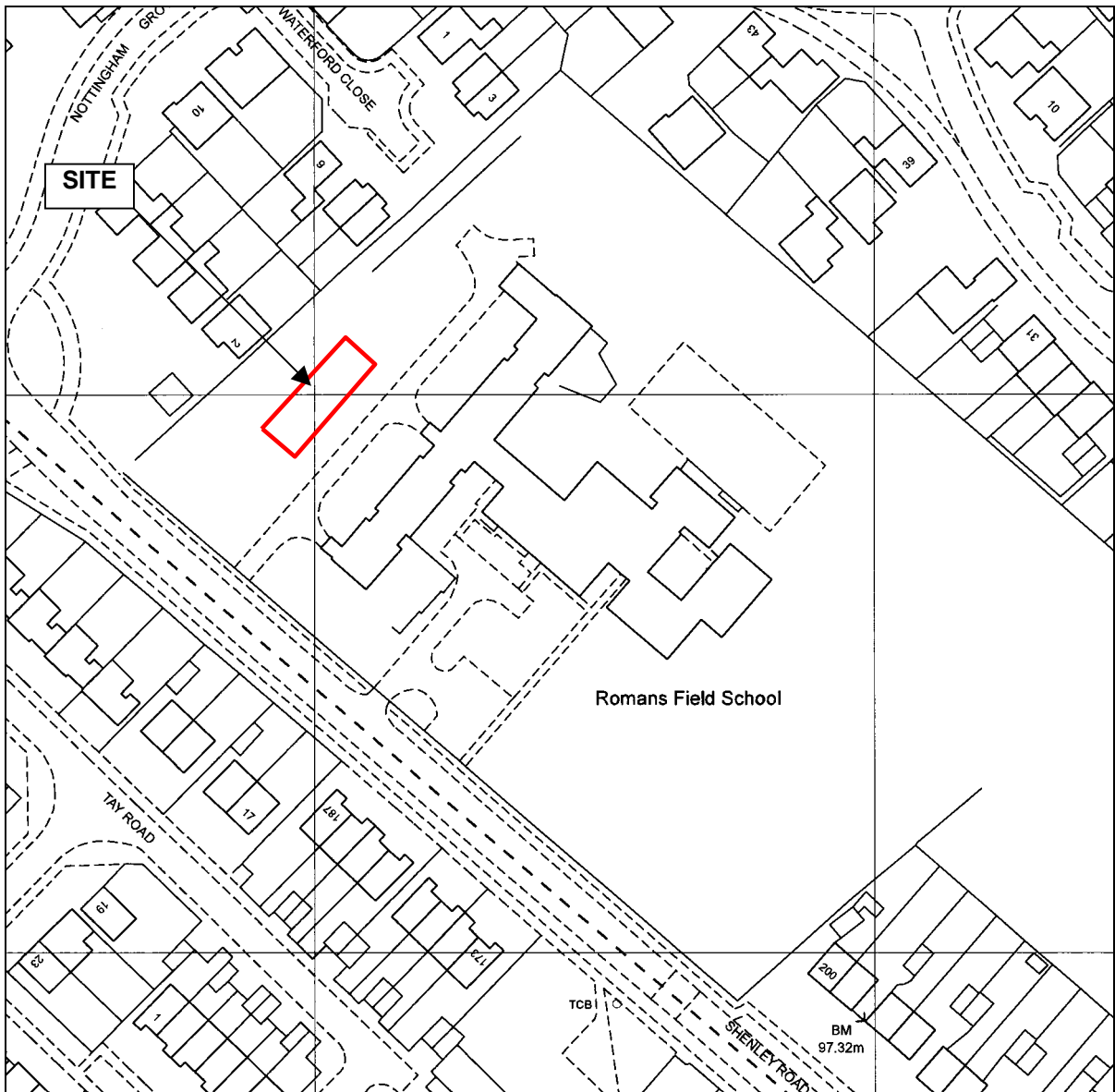


Figure 2: Site plan (scale 1:1250)

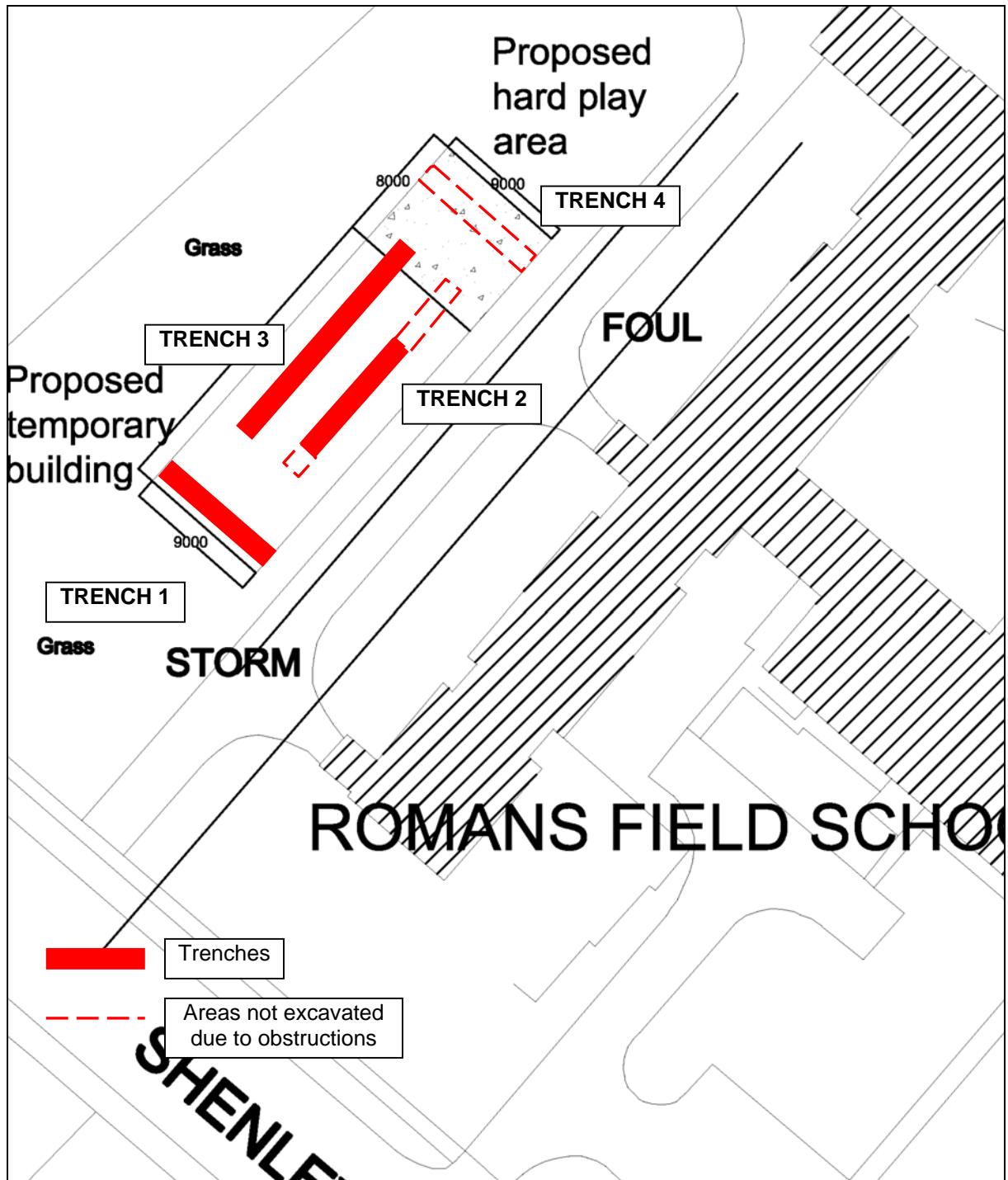


Figure 3: Proposed development Plan with indicative trench locations (scale 1:500)

2 Aims & Methods

2.1 Aims

As described in the brief (Section 5), the aims of the evaluation were:

- To obtain sufficient information to establish the extent, character, quality, date and condition of any archaeological features, structures, deposits, artefacts and ecofacts within the area affected by the proposed development.

2.2 Standards

The work conformed to the project design, to the relevant sections of the Institute of Archaeologists' *Code of Conduct* (IFA 2000) and *Standard & Guidance Notes* (IFA 2001), and to the relevant sections of ASC's own *Operations Manual*.

2.3 Methods

The work was carried out according to the brief (Section 7), which required:

- Four trial trenches were to be excavated, totalling 50m of trenches. Indicative trench locations are shown on Fig. 3
- All machine excavation was carried out under the direct supervision of an archaeologist.
- An appropriate machine was used, fitted with a wide toothless ditching bucket.
- The machine was used to remove topsoil or recent overburden down to the natural subsoil.
- All spoil heaps were scanned with a metal detector.

2.4 Constraints

The presence of play equipment towards the north eastern end of the site, and several trees at the centre of the site restricted machine access, which meant that Trench 4 could not be excavated, and Trench 2 was relocated and shortened, see Figure 3 for details.

3 Archaeological & Historical Background

3.1 Prehistoric (before 600BC-AD43)

No settlement of prehistoric date is known within Bletchley parish, although some isolated Bronze Age flints have been recorded.

3.2 Roman (AD43-c.450)

The major Roman settlement of *Magiovinium* was located to the east of the development site, and the Roman road of Watling Street runs c.1km to the north east of the site. It is therefore not surprising that a number of Roman occupation sites have been found within the area, most significantly including the discovery of a T-shaped corn drier and a possible 4th century threshing floor during the construction of the Romans Field School in 1971.

Four other small farmsteads are known within the area, at Sherwood Drive, Holne Chase, Whaddon Way and Windmill Hill. The association of many of these farmsteads with grain-drying kilns such as that found at the school suggest that this was a reasonably productive arable area in the second to fourth century (Croft & Mynard 1993).

3.3 Saxon (c.450-1066)

There is little evidence for Saxon activity in the area, but it is reasonable to assume that there was settlement during this period, as we know that there was substantial occupation during the Roman period, and there is documentary evidence from the *Domesday Survey* that Water Eaton has its roots in the Saxon period.

3.4 Medieval (1066-1500)

Bletchley is not mentioned in the *Domesday Survey*, but *Etone* (Water Eaton) is referred to as being held by Geoffrey Bishop of Coutances, and is recorded as having a relatively high value with a view to the number of recorded villagers, small-holders and slaves (Williams & Martin 2003). This indicates that there were already several dispersed settlements in the area, which went on to become the three main settlements of West or Far Bletchley, Bletchley Church and Water Eaton (Croft & Mynard 1993).

3.5 Post-Medieval (1500-1900)

Bletchley became nationally famous for its brick industry, which started in the 17th century and grew substantially with the construction of the Grand Junction Canal, which opened 1800. Initially the brickworks supplied the local area, but the construction of the London to Birmingham railway in 1838 (now part of the West Coast main line), which ran through the parish allowed them to be sent further afield. The main area of brick production was to the south of the parish, on the Water Eaton-Newton Longville boundary (Croft & Mynard 1993, BCM 1980).

3.6 Modern (1900-present)

During the modern period Bletchley has been subject to a great deal of development, especially after the designation of Milton Keynes as a new town in 1964. Figure 1 shows the layout of the area surrounding the site c.1998, and shows the school surrounded by playing fields. In contrast, Figure 2 shows how much the area has been encroached on by residential development fuelled by the expansion of Milton Keynes.

4 Results

- 4.1 The following paragraphs provide a summary of the results of the trial trenches. A full description of all contexts, with illustrations of the trenches, is offered in Appendix 1.
- 4.2 Three trenches were excavated across the site. They were located within the footprint of the proposed building (Fig 3).
- 4.3 *The Trial Trenches*
- 4.3.1 The trenches were excavated using a mechanical excavator fitted with a toothless ditching blade and operating under archaeological supervision. Excavation stopped once natural strata was reached.
- 4.3.2 No archaeological features were revealed during the fieldwork. The topsoil in all three trenches comprised dark brown clayey loam and was between 0.1m and 0.15m thick. Directly below this was a mixed layer of brick, chalk and concrete rubble between 0.25m and 0.3m thick. Trench 2 was the only trench with a slight variation. The mixed layer in this trench comprised two layers of brick chalk and concrete rubble, the upper one mixed with light greyish brown silty clay soil, the lower mixed with dark greyish brown silty clay soil. No archaeological finds or features were observed within any of the trenches.
- 4.3.3 The natural subsoil was reached in all the trenches. This comprised yellowish brown clay with chalk inclusions and was reached at a depth of between 0.4m and 0.45m.

5. Conclusions

- 5.1 The evaluation was carried out in response to planning proposals for the construction of a temporary building and associated play area located on a grass play area to the north west of Romans Field School. The discovery of a T-shaped Roman corn drier and possible 4th century threshing floor during the construction of the school in 1971 suggested the possibility that other remains of the same period were present in the vicinity.
- 5.2 Archaeological features were not identified within the trenches. While the occasional survival of individual isolated archaeological features away from the trenches cannot entirely be excluded, it is unlikely that large numbers of archaeological features or artefacts are present on the site.
- 5.3 *Confidence Rating*
The evaluation was carried out in dry, sunny conditions, and full cooperation was received from all parties involved. As a result, a high confidence rating is attached to the results of this evaluation.

6. Acknowledgements

The writer is grateful to Nick Warner of ArchitectsMK for commissioning ASC to undertake the evaluation at Romans Field School. Thanks are also due to JRS Contracting for providing the plant and driver, and to the staff of the school for their assistance. The brief was produced by Nick Crank, the Milton Keynes Council Archaeology Officer, who also monitored the fieldwork. The project was managed by Bob Zeepvat and the fieldwork was carried out by Calli Rouse, Janice McLeish and Tom Cooke.

7. Archive

7.1 The project archive will comprise:

1. Brief
2. Project Design
3. Initial Report
4. Clients site plans
5. Site records
6. List of photographs
7. B/W prints & negatives
8. CDROM with copies of all digital files.

7.2 The archive will be deposited with Buckinghamshire County Museum

8. References

Standards & Specifications

Crank N A 2007 *Brief for Archaeological Evaluation at Romans Field School, Shenley Road, Bletchley*. Milton Keynes Council.

EH 1991 *The Management of Archaeological Projects, 2nd edition*. English Heritage (London).

IFA 2000a Institute of Field Archaeologists' *Code of Conduct*.

IFA 2001 Institute of Field Archaeologists' *Standard & Guidance documents (Desk-Based Assessments, Watching Briefs, Evaluations, Excavations, Investigation and Recording of Standing Buildings, Finds)*.

Rouse, C 2007 *Project Design for Archaeological Evaluation at Romans Field School, Shenley Road, Bletchley* (ASC/924/BRF/1)

Secondary Sources


BCM 1980 *Gazetteer of Buckinghamshire brickyards 1800-1980* Buckinghamshire County Museum.


Croft, R.A & Mynard, D.C 1993 *The Changing Landscape of Milton Keynes*. Buckinghamshire Archaeological Society Monograph Series No. 5

Soil Survey 1983 *1:250,000 Soil Map of England and Wales, and accompanying legend* (Harpenden).


Williams A & Martin G H (eds) 2003 *Domesday Book. A Complete Translation*. Penguin

Appendix 1: Trench Summary Tables

Trench 1						
	Max Dimensions (m)					
	Length	9	Width	1.6	Depth	0.6
	NGR Co-ordinates					
	NW	SP 85190 34390		SE	SP 85199 34384	
	Orientation			NW-SE		
Reason for Trench			Within footprint of development			
Context	Type	Description and Interpretation	Max Width (mm)	Max Thckn (mm)	Depth BGL (mm)	
101	Topsoil	Homogenous mid brown topsoil	1600	1000	0	
102	Mixed layer	Brick, chalk & concrete rubble mixed with light yellow brown clay	1600	3000	1000	
103	Natural	Light yellow brown clay with chalk inclusions	1600	2000	4000	

Trench 2						
	Max Dimensions (m)					
	Length	11.9	Width	1.6	Depth	0.7
	NGR Co-ordinates					
	NE	SP 85209 34399		SW	SP 85202 34391	
	Orientation			NE-SW		
Reason for Trench			Within footprint of development			
Context	Type	Description and Interpretation	Max Width (mm)	Max Thckn (mm)	Depth BGL (mm)	
101	Topsoil	Homogenous mid brown topsoil	1600	1500	0	
102	Mixed layer	Brick, chalk & concrete rubble mixed with light greyish brown subsoil	1600	1500	1500	

103	Mixed layer	Brick, chalk & concrete rubble mixed with darker greyish brown subsoil	1600	1500	3000
104	Natural	Light yellow brown clay with chalk inclusions	1600	2500	4500

Trench 3						
	Max Dimensions (m)					
	Length	15.4	Width	1.6	Depth	0.65
	NGR Co-ordinates					
	NE	SP 85209 34408		SW	SP 85196 34393	
	Orientation			NE-SW		
Reason for Trench			Within footprint of development			
Context	Type	Description and Interpretation	Max Width (mm)	Max Thckn (mm)	Depth BGL (mm)	
101	Topsoil	Homogenous mid brown topsoil	1600	1500	0	
102	Mixed layer	Brick, chalk & concrete rubble mixed with light greyish brown subsoil	1600	3000	1500	
103	Natural	Light yellow brown clay with chalk inclusions	1600	2000	4500	

Appendix 2: List of Photographs

SITE NAME: Romans Field School, Shenley Road, Bletchley			SITE NO/CODE: 924/BRF
Shot	B&W	Digital	Subject
1	✓	✓	Trench 1, General view looking north west
2		✓	Trench 1, representative section
3	✓	✓	Trench 3, General view looking north east
4		✓	Trench 3, representative section
5	✓	✓	Trench 2, General view looking north east
6		✓	Trench 2, representative section
7		✓	General shot of trenches, looking west

Appendix 3: ASC OASIS Form

PROJECT DETAILS			
Project Name:	Romans Field School, Shenley Road, Bletchley		
Short Description:	<i>In June 2007, an archaeological evaluation was undertaken at Romans Field School, Shenley Road, Bletchley, to inform planning proposals for a temporary building with associated hard play area, located to the north west of the main school complex. Three linear trenches were excavated within the footprint of the proposed building. No archaeological finds or features were observed within any of the trenches, and it is unlikely that significant archaeological remains are present on the site.</i>		
Project Type: (indicate all that apply)	Trial Trenching		
Site status: (eg. none, SAM, Listed)	-	Previous work: (eg. SMR refs)	-
Current land use:	Grass play area	Future work: (yes / no / unknown)	No
Monument type:	-	Monument period:	-
Significant finds: (artefact type & period)	None		
PROJECT LOCATION			
County:	Milton Keynes Unitary Authority	OS reference: (8 figs min)	SP 85202 34398
Site address: (with postcode if known)	Romans Field School, Shenley Road, Bletchley, Milton Keynes, Buckinghamshire MK3 7AW		
Study area: (sq. m. or ha)	9m x 29m	Height OD: (metres)	c.106m AOD
PROJECT CREATORS			
Organisation:	Archaeological Services & Consultancy Ltd		
Project brief originator:	Nick Crank	Project design originator:	Calli Rouse
Project Manager:	Bob Zeepvat	Director/Supervisor:	Bob Zeepvat
Sponsor / funding body:	ArchitectsMK		
PROJECT DATE			
Start date:	13/06/2007	End date:	03/06/2007
PROJECT ARCHIVES			
	Location (Accession no.)	Content (eg. pottery, animal bone, files/sheets)	
Physical:	Buckinghamshire County Museum, Aylesbury	-	
Paper:		Brief, Project Design, Report, Site Record Sheets	
Digital:		CD	
BIBLIOGRAPHY (Journal/monograph, published or forthcoming, or unpublished client report)			
Title:	An Archaeological Evaluation at Romans Field School, Shenley Road, Bletchley		
Serial title & volume:	ASC/924/BRF/2		
Author(s):	Calli Rouse		
Page nos	1-18	Date:	19/06/2007