

Archaeological Services & Consultancy Ltd

**ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION:
SHEPHALL GREEN INFANTS SCHOOL
STEVENAGE**

on behalf of Hertfordshire County Council



Karin Semmelmann MA AIFA

April 2007

ASC: 893/SSG/2

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Site Data

<i>ASC project code:</i>	SSG	<i>ASC Project No:</i>	893
<i>County:</i>	Hertfordshire		
<i>Village/Town:</i>	Stevenage		
<i>Civil Parish:</i>	Shephall		
<i>NGR (to 8 figs):</i>	TL 25645-22665		
<i>Present use:</i>	Infant school		
<i>Planning proposal:</i>	Predetermination		
<i>Planning application ref/date:</i>	N/A		
<i>Local Planning Authority:</i>	Stevenage Borough Council		
<i>Date of fieldwork:</i>	10-11 th April 2007		
<i>Client:</i>	Hertfordshire County Council c/o Vincent and Gorbings Sterling Court, Norton Road, Stevenage Herts SG1 2JY		
<i>Contact name:</i>	Ruth Gray		

Internal Quality Check

<i>Primary Author:</i>	Karin Semmelmann	<i>Date:</i>	19 th April 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 April 2007 Archaeological Services and Consultancy Ltd (ASC) carried out an evaluation at Shephall Green Infants School, Stevenage in response to proposals for the redevelopment of the site. Despite the proximity of archaeological features and discrete finds within a 1km radius of the site, none were observed during this evaluation. This would suggest that the area was peripheral to any settlement or major activity, no doubt due to the number of springs on or near the site and the high subsequent high water table observed in Trench 4.

1 Introduction

1.1 In April 2007 *Archaeological Services and Consultancy Ltd (ASC)* carried out an evaluation at Shephall Green Infants School, Stevenage (NGR TL 25645-22665: Fig. 1). The project was commissioned by Hertfordshire County Council in response to a desk-based assessment prepared by Jonathan Hunn (2004), and was carried out according to a brief (Instone 2007) prepared on behalf of the local planning authority (LPA), Stevenage Borough Council, by their archaeological advisor (AA), *Hertfordshire County Council Archaeology Office*, 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 redevelopment of the site.

1.3 *Location*

The site, which is less than an acre in extent (0.32 ha), is located at the southern end of Shephall Green, towards the eastern side of Stevenage. The site lies 280m south of the medieval church of St Mary's in what is essentially a suburban environment.

1.4 *Description*

The main school building is an H-shaped, single storey structure with a car park to the north, a playground and grassed area to the south and a temporary classroom located on the south west corner of the site (Fig. 2).

1.5 *Geology & Topography*

The site is situated on a plateau (90-95m AOD), equidistant between two tributaries of the river Beane, the Aston End Brook 1.1 km to the east and another, which flows down Fairlands Valley 1.15 km to the west. The soils in the area, where not modified by building development, belong to the Hanslope Association and are derived from a Chalky till Soil Survey 1983). The soil association is described as follows: '*The soils are developed in chalky till on low plateaux and gently to strongly sloping valley flanks...Hanslope soils have a calcareous brownish subsurface horizon. It passes downwards into a dense mottled substrate containing many chalk stones*' (Hodge *et al* 1984, 209).

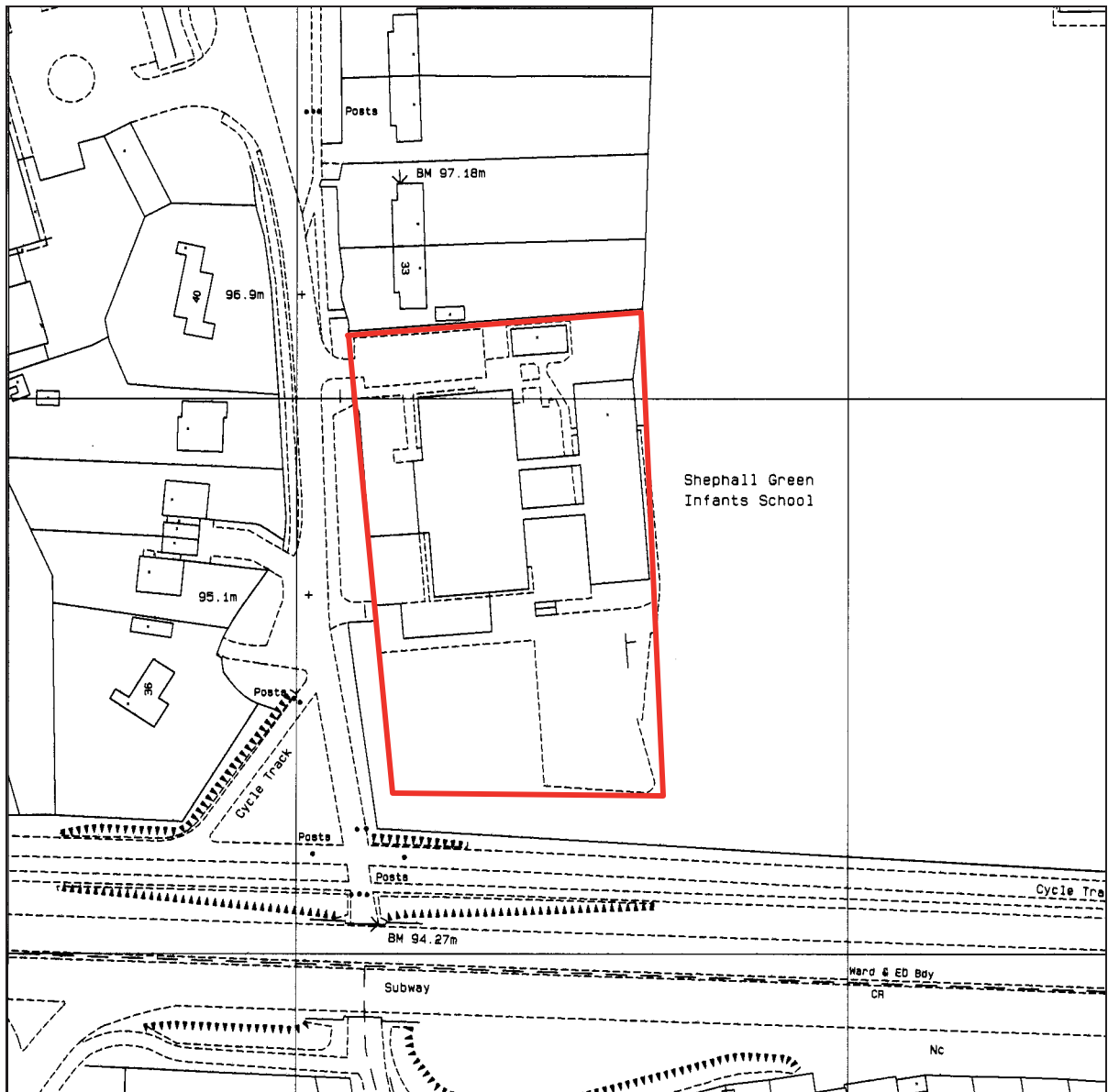


Figure 2: Site plan (scale 1: 1250)

2 Aims and Methods

2.1 Aims

As described in the brief (Section 2), the aims of the evaluation were:

- To determine the location, extent, date, character, condition, significance and quality of any surviving archaeological remains liable to be threatened by the proposed development.
- To include a comprehensive assessment of the regional context within which the archaeological evidence rests
- To highlight any research priorities relevant to any further investigation of the site with particular reference to the appropriate regional research agenda (Brown & Glazebrook 2000).

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), to the Association of Local Government Archaeological Officers East of England Region *Standards for Field Archaeology in the East of England* (ALGAO 2003), and to the relevant sections of ASC's own *Operations Manual*.

2.3 Methods

The work was carried out according to the brief (Section 2), which required:

- Mechanical excavation of 100m length of trenches (1.6m wide)
- Illustrated report
- Archive deposition

2.4 Constraints

Two trenches (3 & 4) had to be re-located. The recess to the north of the school where Trench 3 was to be excavated was inaccessible due to two parallel metal fences between the car park and the recess. As a result this trench was moved to the tarmac playground to the south of the main school buildings. Trench 4 was relocated to the same area as its intended location had a number of live services running through it and had also suffered serious flooding two weeks prior to this evaluation. This area is subject to flooding and the water company could require further access to the drains.

3 Archaeological & Historical Background

The following has been taken from the desk-based assessment prepared by Jonathan Hunn in 2004.

3.1 *Prehistoric* (before 600BC)

Evidence for this period is poorly represented in the Stevenage area. Only two finds, both Neolithic stone axes, are known from the area. One was recovered from Barnwell School, Shephall (SMR 424) 450m south east from the site, and south of Ridlins Wood (SMR 611) less than 870m south south east of the assessment site. The only major prehistoric site identified in the area is at Bragbury End some 2km south east of Shephalbury, where fieldwalking and an evaluation revealed quantities of struck flint, Beaker and Bronze Age pottery, and gullies, pits and postholes suggesting occupation in the late Beaker and Bronze Age periods (Murray 1994).

3.2 *Iron Age* (600BC-AD43)

The archaeological evidence for this period is generally of settlement sites dating from the later part of the Iron Age. The closest site is at Shephallbury Manor less than 300m south west from the assessment site (SMR 11604). This consisted of what is almost certainly part of a late Iron Age enclosure (Grant and Hounsell 2003). An enclosure site (SMR 9222) has been excavated at Lobs Hole at the northern edge of Stevenage (Hunn 1997).

3.3 *Roman* (AD43-c.450)

During this period, the Stevenage area formed part of the tribal canton or *civitas* of the *Catuevallauni*, the capital of which was at *Verlamium* (St Albans). A possible Roman road linking Welwyn and Baldock (SMR 4637: Viatores 1964) is said to follow the line of the B197, passing 1.5km west of the site.

Apart from two Roman coins (SMR 440 and 0452) the only finds of this period recorded in the SMR in the vicinity of Shephalbury consist of Roman brick and tile and a coin of Constantine, recovered from a building site at the east end of Broadwater Crescent (SMR 444).

Occupation sites are known at New Farm, 2km north of Shephalbury and at Great Collens Wood, 2km to the north east. Shephallbury Manor is also recorded as having 2nd century material (Grant and Hounsell 2003).

3.4 *Saxon* (c.450-1066)

The only site belonging to this period lay at the east end of Broadwater Crescent, where traces of Anglo-Saxon settlement (SMR 455) were recorded on the Roman site mentioned above (SMR 444). The settlement evidence consisted of a rectangular sunken-featured building, with possible post-holes placed centrally at either end. Shephall village itself (SMR 2626) is of probable Anglo-Saxon origin, since its landholdings prior to the Conquest are recorded in the Domesday survey.

3.5 *Medieval* (1066-1500)

The Domesday Survey of 1087 records that Shephall (*Escephale*) was divided into two parts. One, of three hides, was held by the abbot of St Albans as part of the abbey demesne. The other, containing two hides, was held by Anschitil Ros of Lanfranc archbishop of Canterbury (Morris 1976, section 2.3 and 10.8). Anschitil's lands had belonged to the Abbey demesne in the time of Edward the Confessor, and could not be sold or alienated from the church.

3.6 *Post-Medieval* (1500-1900)

The Abbey's tenure of Shephall was terminated during the Dissolution, when in 1542 the manor, with a pension of five shillings from the Rectory, was granted by Henry VIII to George Nodes, serjeant of the royal Buckhounds. Nodes had previously been lesee of the manor. In 1564 Nodes obtained licence to grant the manor to his nephew Charles Nodes and his heirs.

3.7 *Modern* (1900-present)

The manor of Shephall remained in the possession of various branches of the Nodes family until 1939, when it was sold to William Harrison Moss (Ballin 1967). In 1957 the estate and manorial rights were purchased by Stevenage Development Corporation and Shephall Green Infants School was built in the early 1960s.

4 Results

Five trenches measuring 1.70m in width and between 7.0 and 25m in length were excavated. All trenches showed considerable ground disturbance, due to the building up of the ground level in some areas and subsequent laying of tarmac over most areas. No features or finds were observed in any of the trenches. Detailed information regarding the trial trenches and their contents appears in Appendix 1.

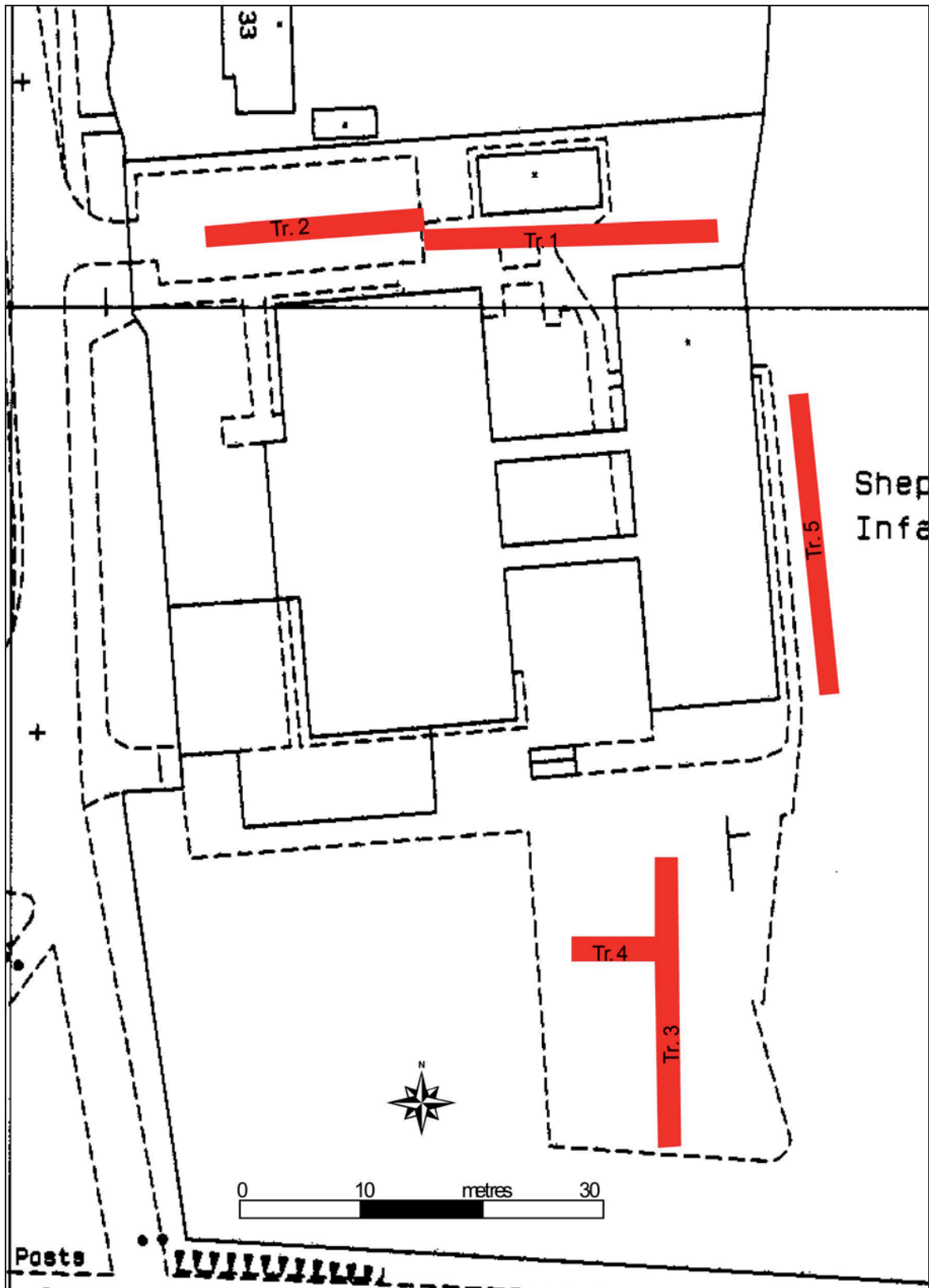


Figure 3: Trench Location Plan (scale 1:500)

5. Conclusions

Despite the proximity of archaeological features and finds within a 1km radius of the site, none were observed in the trenches excavated for this evaluation. This would suggest that the area was peripheral to any settlement or major activity. Indeed, having been advised by a local resident that there are a number of springs on or near the site and witnessed the high water table in Trench 4, the lack of evidence for archaeological activity is of little surprise.

The weather and general site conditions were excellent with the result that the confidence rating for this project is considered to be high.

6. Acknowledgements

The writer is grateful to Ruth Grey of *Vincent and Gorbing Planning Associates* for commissioning the evaluation on behalf of *Hertfordshire County Council (HCC)*. Andy Instone, Archaeological Officer of HCC acted as curatorial monitor.

The fieldwork was undertaken for *Archaeological Services and Consultancy Ltd* by Karin Semmelmann BA MA AIFA. The report was prepared by Karin Semmelmann MA AIFA and was edited by Bob Zeepvat BA MIFA.

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. Site record drawings
7. List of photographs
8. B/W prints & negatives
9. CDROM with copies of all digital files.

7.2 The archive will be deposited with Stevenage Museum. Archive number pending

8. References

Standards & Specifications


- ALGAO 2003 *Standards for Field Archaeology in the East of England*. East Anglian Archaeology Occasional Paper **14**.
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- Walker, C. 1994: *Shephallbury Centre, Lodge Way, Stevenage*, in Hertfordshire Archaeological Trust Report **180**.


Appendix 1: Trench Summary Tables

Trench 1						
	Max Dimensions (m)					
	Length	24.20	Width	1.70	Depth	0.46
	Levels					
	Trench top west		96.87m OD			
	Trench base west		96.37m OD			
	Trench base east		96.72m OD			
	Trench top east		96.44m OD			
	NGR Co-ordinates					
	W	25634/22705	E	25658/22707		
	Orientation		East - west			
Reason for Trench		Evaluation				
Context	Type	Description and Interpretation	Max Width (cm)	Max Thckn (cm)	Depth BGL (cm)	
101	Layer	Topsoil	170	10	-	
102	Layer	Mid-brown clay subsoil	170	35	10	
103	Layer	Yellow-brown stony clay natural	170	-	45	

Trench 2						
	Max Dimensions (m)					
	Length	18.0	Width	1.70	Depth	0.53 (w)
	Levels					
	Trench base west		96.37m OD			
	Trench top west		96.87m OD			
	Trench base east		96.17m OD			
	Trench top east		96.72m OD			
	NGR Co-ordinates					
	W	25616/22706	E	25634/22707		
	Orientation		East-west			
Reason for Trench		Evaluation				
Context	Type	Description and Interpretation	Max Width (cm)	Max Thckn (cm)	Depth BGL (cm)	
201	Layer	Tarmac	170	8	-	
202	Layer	Sandy material with inclusions	170	31	8	
203	Layer	Yellow-brown clay natural with frequent gravel	170	-	39	

Trench 3						
	Max Dimensions (m)					
	Length	24.0	Width	1.80	Depth	0.50
	Levels					
	Trench base north		97.66m OD			
	Trench top north		98.03m OD			
	Trench base south		97.43m OD			
	Trench top south		98.11m OD			
	NGR Co-ordinates					
	N	25654/22655		S	25655/22631	
	Orientation			North-south		
Reason for Trench			Evaluation			
Context	Type	Description and Interpretation	Max Width (cm)	Max Thckn (cm)	Depth BGL (cm)	
301	Layer	Tarmac	180	10	-	
302	Layer	Very sandy with brick, limestone & tarmac incs	180	20	10	
303	Layer	Tarmac	180	5	30	
304	Layer	Dark olive grey-green clay natural	180	-	35	

Trench 4						
	Max Dimensions (m)					
	Length	7.0	Width	1.80	Depth	0.40
	Levels					
	Trench base east		97.64m OD			
	Trench top east		97.24m OD			
	Trench base west		97.57m OD			
	Trench top west		97.89m OD			
	NGR Co-ordinates					
	E	25564/22647		W	25646/22647	
	Orientation			East-west		
Reason for Trench			Evaluation			
Context	Type	Description and Interpretation	Max Width (cm)	Max Thckn (cm)	Depth BGL (cm)	
401	Layer	Tarmac	180	5	-	
402	Layer	Very sandy with brick and large pebble inclusions	180	20	5	
403	Layer	Tarmac	180	5	25	
404	Layer	Blue-grey-green clay natural	180	-	30	

Trench 5						
	Max Dimensions (m)					
	Length	2.05	Width	1.80	Depth	0.60
	Levels					
	Trench base north			100.81m OD		
	Trench top north			101.11m OD		
	Trench base south			100.44m OD		
	Trench top south			101.17m OD		
	NGR Co-ordinates					
	N	25666/22693		S	25668/22668	
	Orientation			North-south		
Reason for Trench			Evaluation			
Context	Type	Description and Interpretation	Max Width (cm)	Max Thckn (cm)	Depth BGL (cm)	
501	Layer	Grey-brown topsoil with occasional flint	180	15	-	
502	Layer	Orangey-clay redeposited natural with occasional flint, brick and steel inclusions	180	35	15	
503	Layer	Orangey-yellow brown clay natural with occasional flint	180	-	50	

Appendix 2: List of Photographs

SITE NAME: Shephall Green Infants School, Stevenage			SITE NO/CODE: 893/SSG
Shot	B&W	Digital	Subject
1	√	√	Trench 1 looking east
2	√	√	Trench 1 looking west
3	√	√	Trench 2 looking east
4	√	√	Trench 2 looking west
5	√	√	Trench 3 looking north
6	√	√	Trench 3 looking south
7	√	√	Trench 4 looking east
8	√	√	Trench 5 looking north
9	√	√	Trench 5 looking south

Appendix 3: ASC OASIS Form

PROJECT DETAILS			
Project Name:	Shephall Green Infant School, Stevenage		
Short Description:	In April 2007 Archaeological Services and Consultancy Ltd (ASC) carried out an evaluation at Shephall Green Infants School, Stevenage in response to proposals for the redevelopment of the site. Despite the proximity of archaeological features and discrete finds within a 1km radius of the site, none were observed during this evaluation. This would suggest that the area was peripheral to any settlement or major activity, no doubt due to the number of springs on or near the site and the high subsequent high water table observed in Trench 4.		
Project Type: (indicate all that apply)	Evaluation		
Site status: (eg. none, SAM, Listed)	None	Previous work: (eg. SMR refs)	None
Current land use:	School	Future work: (yes / no / unknown)	Unknown
Monument type:	-	Monument period:	-
Significant finds: (artefact type & period)	None		
PROJECT LOCATION			
County:	Hertfordshire	OS reference: (8 figs min)	TL 25645-22665
Site address: (with postcode if known)	Shephall Green Infants School, Stevenage		
Study area: (sq. m. or ha)	0.32 ha	Height OD: (metres)	90-95 mAOD
PROJECT CREATORS			
Organisation:	Archaeological Services & Consultancy Ltd		
Project brief originator:	Andy Instone	Project design originator:	Calli Rouse
Project Manager:	Jonathan Hunn	Director/Supervisor:	
Sponsor / funding body:	Hertfordshire County Council		
PROJECT DATE			
Start date:	10.04.2007	End date:	11.04.2007
PROJECT ARCHIVES			
	Location (Accession no.)	Content (eg. pottery, animal bone, files/sheets)	
Physical:	Stevenage Museum	N/A	
Paper:	Stevenage Museum	1 Box	
Digital:	Stevenage Museum	1 CD	
BIBLIOGRAPHY (Journal/monograph, published or forthcoming, or unpublished client report)			
Title:	Archaeological Evaluation: Shephall Green Infants School, Shephall, Stevenage		
Serial title & volume:			
Author(s):	Karin Semmelmann		
Page nos	21	Date:	19 th April 2007

Appendix 4: SMR Summary Sheet

Site name and address: Shephall Green Infants School Shephall Stevenage Hertfordshire		
County: Hertfordshire		District:
Village/Town: Stevenage		Parish: Shephall
Planning application reference: N/A		
Client name, address, & tel. no: Hertfordshire County Council c/o Vincent and Goring Sterling Court, Norton Road, Stevenage SG1 2JY		
Nature of application: Predetermination		
Present land use: School		
Size of application area: 0.32 ha		Size of area investigated: 154m ²
NGR (to 8 figures): TL 25545-22665		Site code: SSG
Site director/Organization: Jonathan Hunn / ASC Ltd		
Type of work: evaluation		
Date of work:	Start: 10.04.2007	Finish: 11.04.2007
Curating museum: Stevenage Museum		
Related SMR nos: N/A		Periods represented: N/A
Relevant previous summaries/reports Hunn, J.R. 2004 <i>Archaeological Desk-Based Assessment: Shephall Green Infants School, Stevenage, Hertfordshire</i> ASC Report 604		
Summary of fieldwork results: In April 2007 Archaeological Services and Consultancy Ltd (ASC) carried out an evaluation at Shephall Green Infants School, Stevenage in response to proposals for the redevelopment of the site. Despite the proximity of archaeological features and discrete finds within a 1km radius of the site, none were observed during this evaluation. This would suggest that the area was peripheral to any settlement or major activity, no doubt due to the number of springs on or near the site and the high subsequent high water table observed in Trench 4.		
Author: Karin Semmelmann		Date: 19 th April 2007