

Archaeological Services & Consultancy Ltd

**WATCHING BRIEF:
MAPLE PRIMARY SCHOOL,
ST. ALBANS,
HERTFORDSHIRE**

on behalf of Hertfordshire County Council



Jonathan R. Hunn BA PhD MIFA

August 2007

ASC: 947/SAM/2

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Site Data

<i>ASC site code:</i>	SAM	<i>Project no:</i>	947
<i>County:</i>	Hertfordshire		
<i>Village/Town:</i>	St. Albans		
<i>Civil Parish:</i>	St. Albans		
<i>NGR (to 8 figs):</i>	TL 15271 07637		
<i>Present land use:</i>	Play ground and playing field		
<i>Planning proposal:</i>	Installation of temporary mobile classroom, new netball court and four additional parking spaces		
<i>Local Planning Authority:</i>	Hertfordshire County Council		
<i>Planning application ref/date:</i>	Not known		
<i>Client:</i>	Hertfordshire County Council c/o Mouchel Parkman Stag House Old London Road Hertford SG13 7YY		
<i>Contact name:</i>	Kevin Liles		

Internal Quality Check

<i>Primary Author:</i>	Jonathan R. Hunn	<i>Date:</i>	6 th August 2007
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<i>Revisions:</i>		<i>Date:</i>	
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<i>Edited/Checked By:</i>		<i>Date:</i>	
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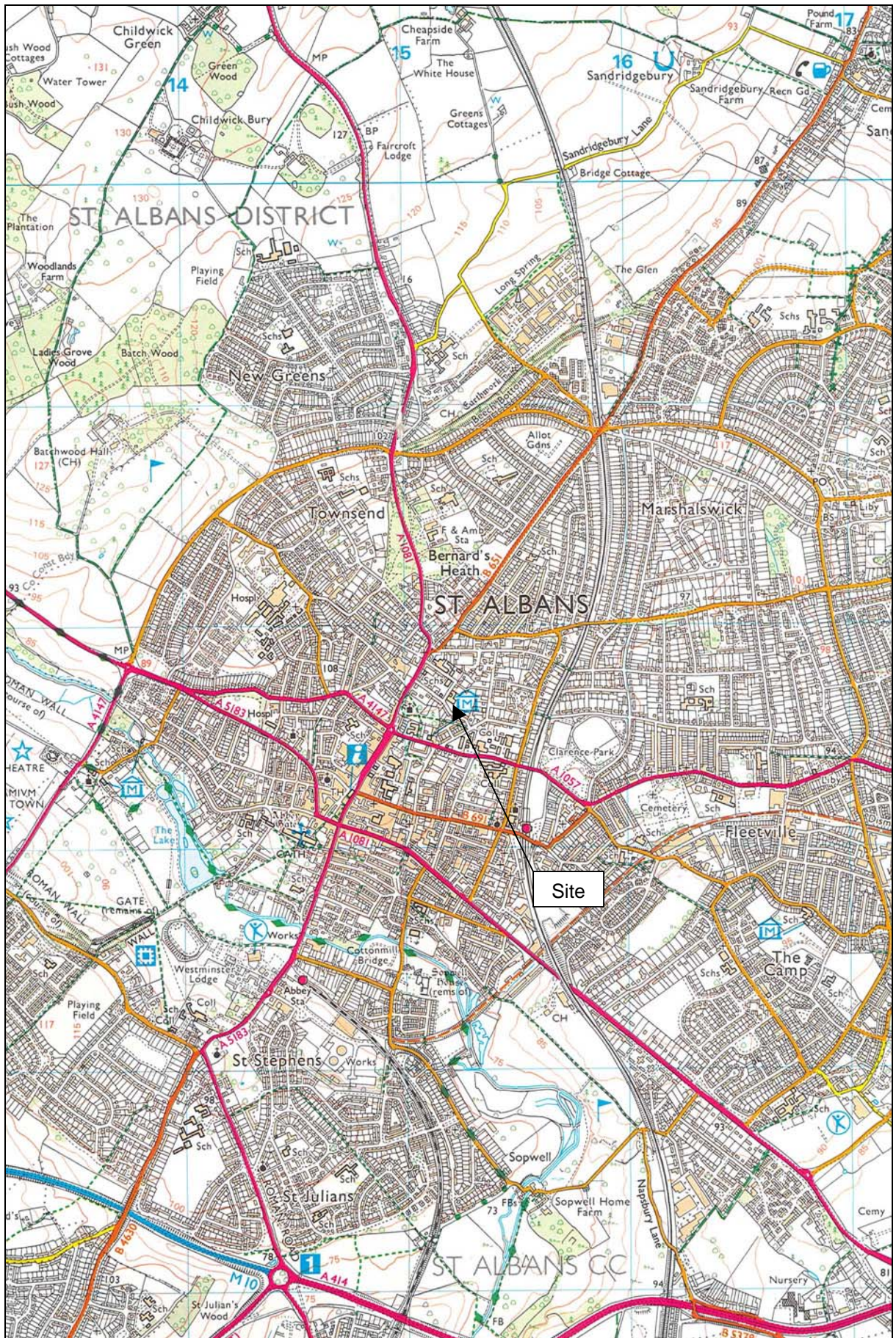


Figure 1: General location (scale 1:25,000)

Summary

In July 2007 a watching brief was carried out during the installation of a new classroom and new netball court at Maple School, Hall Place Gardens, St Albans. The observations established that the ground level where the new classroom was located had been artificially raised by as much as one metre, possibly in the 20th century. This is likely to have occurred either during or prior to the construction of the school. No pre-modern features were identified. On the site of the new netball court the removal of the topsoil revealed an early 20th-century tennis court. No pre-modern features were identified, nor any artefacts retrieved.

1 Introduction

1.1 In July 2007 *Archaeological Services and Consultancy Ltd* (ASC) carried out a watching brief at Maple School, Hall Place Gardens, St Albans (Fig. 1). The project was commissioned by Kevin Liles of *Mouchel Parkman* on behalf of Hertfordshire County Council, and was carried out according to a brief (Instone 2007) prepared by their archaeological advisor (AA), the *HCC Historic Environment Unit*, and a project design prepared by ASC (ASC: 947/SAM/1).

1.2 *Planning Background*

This watching brief has been required as a planning condition under the terms of *Planning Policy Guidance Note 16* (PPG16), in response to proposals for the construction of a new classroom and netball court.

1.3 *Location*

The site is situated in the city of St Albans, Hertfordshire (Fig. 1). It is located in a largely residential area, north of the city centre, on the north side of Hall Place Gardens and is centred on Ordnance Survey National Grid Reference (NGR) TL 15271 07637 (Fig. 1). The site comprises the buildings and grounds of Maple Primary School (Fig. 2).

1.4 *Description*

The site is located with a suburban setting in an area that did not become developed until the late 19th or early 20th century. It is situated at the junction of Townsend Avenue with Hall Place Gardens, which border the site to the north and west. To the south and east lie mostly back gardens and a footpath.

1.5 *Geology & Topography*

The terrain is more or less flat, being situated on a plateau at an elevation of 120m AOD. The underlying geology is Plateau drift and Clay-with-flints, overlain by soils of the Batcombe Association, described as '*Fine silty over clayey and fine loamy over clayey soils with slowly permeable subsoils and slight seasonal water logging. Some well drained clayey soils over chalk. Variably flinty.*' (Soil Survey 1983, 582a). However, isolated pockets of pebbly sand may be located within this general subsoil type.

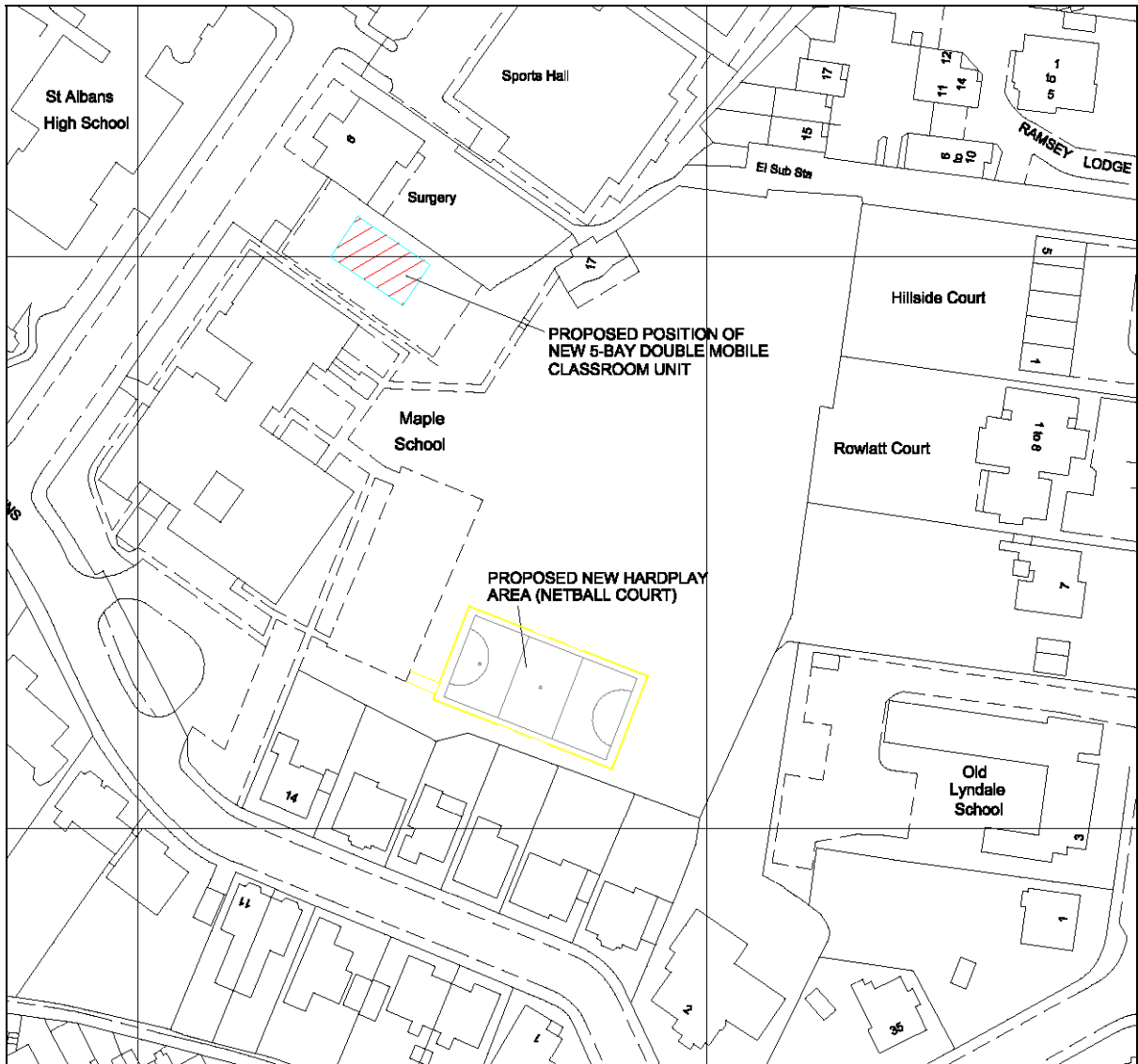


Figure 2: Proposed development (scale 1: 1250)

2 Aims & Methods

2.1 Aims

As described in the brief (Section 1), the aims of the watching brief were:

- To ensure the archaeological monitoring of all aspects of the development programme likely to affect archaeological remains.
- To secure the adequate recording of any archaeological remains revealed by the development program.
- To secure the analysis, conservation and long-term storage of any artefactual/ecofactual material recovered from site.

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 3), which required:

- Soil and overburden stripping under archaeological supervision.
- Inspection of sub-soil deposits for archaeological features.
- The rapid investigation and recording of any archaeological features/deposits.
- Subsoil stripping under archaeological supervision.
- Examination of any service and foundation trenches and the subsequent recording of and exposed archaeological deposits.

2.4 Constraints

There were no constraints apart from an initial delay to groundworks caused by problems of machine access and complaints of noise. On the basis of observations made on the first excavated foundation pads it was decided that further observations on the eastern site would be superfluous.

3 Archaeological & Historical Background

3.1 Prehistory (before AD 45)

A variety of flint artefacts have been found in the valley of the river Ver in the St Albans area. The area was of considerable importance during the late Iron Age and a number of major sites of this period are located in the area. Late Iron Age settlement was dominated by a settlement at Prae Wood, c.3km southwest of the site (Wheeler & Wheeler 1936). Settlement of this period has been found at a variety of locations in this area, for example at Gorhambury (Neal *et al* 1990). Further evidence of this period has been found north of the river, notably at Folly Lane, where an important Late Iron Age high-status burial has been recorded (Niblett 1999).

3.2 Roman (AD43-c.450)

Following the Roman conquest there was a shift in settlement and an important Roman town, known as *Verulamium*, was laid out on the south side of the river Ver. It developed into the third largest town in Roman Britain and is now a Scheduled Ancient Monument (Niblett 2001; Wheeler & Wheeler 1936). The school is located c.2km northwest of the Roman town. Communications in the area were dominated by a major Roman road, now known as *Watling Street*, which ran from *Londinium* (London) through *Verulamium* to the Midlands.

The early phase of buildings in the town was constructed of timber, and many were destroyed during Boudiccan Revolt in AD60-61 (Frere 1972). The town was subsequently rebuilt and expanded and was later encircled by gated walls (Niblett 2001). St Alban, the first British Christian martyr, was executed in AD 209 within the town walls (Niblett 2001, 137-139).

A number of cemeteries are recorded outside the town walls, notably on King Harry Lane to the south west of the town (Stead & Rigby 1989). Further burials are recorded on the east side of the town, c.400-500m southeast of the site (Anthony 1968).

St Albans began to decline after the departure of the Roman army with many of its buildings falling into disuse, and by the 5th century much of the population had relocated (Niblett 2001, 127-146).

3.3 Saxon (c.450-1066)

The focus of the settlement shifted to the north side of the river during the Saxon period, where a new site known as *Kinsbury* developed (Niblett 2001, fig 75). King Offa of Mercia founded an Abbey dedicated to the martyred Christian St Alban and the present cathedral, which lies c.700m southwest of Maple School, occupies the site of the Saxon abbey. A market was established in the town during the 10th century.

3.4 Medieval (1066-1500)

St Albans is mentioned in the Domesday Survey (1086) when the abbot was the principal landholder (Williams & Martin 2002). The town developed considerably during the medieval period, when settlement became focused around the abbey and the surrounding area. The school is situated a little to the north of the medieval heart of the city.

3.5 Post-Medieval (1500-1900)

The first large scale Ordnance Survey map was published in 1880 and shows the site as open ground, to the north and east of the urban area. The city developed considerably during the late 19th and 20th centuries and the school and buildings along Hall Place Gardens date to the later half of the 20th century (Figs 3-6). Prior to the construction of the school the site had belonged to a tennis and croquet club.



Figure 3: Extract from Ordnance Survey 6 inch scale plan of 1878



Figure 4: Extract from Ordnance Survey 2nd series maps of 1898



Figure 5: Extract from Ordnance Survey 6 inch scale plan of 1925



Figure 6: Extract from Ordnance Survey 6 inch scale plan of 1978

4 Results

- 4.1 The first area to be monitored was the site of the new classroom (Fig. 2). This covered an area of approximately $16 \times 9\text{m}$ and was positioned on eighteen pads, each measuring $1.7 \times 0.64\text{m}$ wide and 1.05m deep except those at either end, which were half the size. Those on the western side of the new building were observed (Plate 1). The upper surface (former netball court) consisted of about 0.16m of concrete and tarmac. Beneath this was a deposit of very dark grey, sandy loam some 0.85m in depth (Plate 2). This horizon was devoid of any artefacts but was certainly artificial in nature. This layer overlay a brownish yellow, mottled deposit of sand, which was almost certainly the top of the natural subsoil.
- 4.2 The area of the new netball court (Fig. 2) was approximately $24 \times 17\text{m}$ and was situated on the south-west side of the site. Only the topsoil was removed from this area and as the foundation, consisting of terram matting and rolled aggregate, was between 0.2 and 0.25m deep, this left traces of topsoil *in situ*. However, this was enough to reveal traces of asphalt and a single line of bricks. The suspicion that this had been a tennis court was confirmed by the 1925 Ordnance Survey map (Fig. 5).
- 4.3 The new car parking bays on the western side of the school were located over flinty clay, which appeared to be entirely natural in origin. However, it is not possible to be absolutely certain since redeposited clays are notoriously difficult distinguish from natural ground.



Plate 1: View NW along western side of foundations



Plate 2: Detail of 2nd foundation pad on west side



Plate 3: View north across new hard court



Plate 4: Looking south across area of new netball court



Plate 5: View south across hard court cleared of topsoil



Plate 6: View north of new parking bay to the west of school

5. Conclusions

- 5.1 The site of the school appears to have been built on a levelled platform of made ground. This was composed of a clean sandy loam with no inclusions. There was nothing to indicate its date but it looked relatively modern. This deposit was entirely absent on the western side of the site in the area of the new car parking bays. The foundations of the new netball court were too shallow to observe anything more than the traces of an old tennis court.

6. Acknowledgements

The writer is grateful to Kevin Liles of Mouchel Parkman for commissioning this report. Thanks are due to Andrew Instone of the Historic Environment Team of Hertfordshire County Council and to the Archaeological Officer for St Albans District Council, Simon West, for their advice. My thanks to my colleagues Ralph Brown for compiling the project design and to Bob Zeepvat BA MIFA for editing the report.

7. Archive

- 7.1 The project archive will comprise:
1. Brief
 2. Project Design
 3. Clients site plans
 4. Site Monitoring Sheets
 5. List of photographs
 6. Original specialist reports and supporting information
 7. CDROM with copies of all digital files.
- 7.2 The archive will be deposited with St Albans Museum

8. References

Standards & Specifications

- ALGAO 2003 *Standards for Field Archaeology in the East of England*. East Anglian Archaeology Occasional Paper **14**.
- EH 1991 *The Management of Archaeological Projects*, 2nd edition. English Heritage (London).
- IFA 2000a Institute of Field Archaeologists' *Code of Conduct*.
- IFA 2000b Institute of Field Archaeologists' *Code of Approved Practice for the Regulation of Contractual Arrangements in Field Archaeology*.
- IFA 2001 Institute of Field Archaeologists' *Standard & Guidance documents (Desk-Based Assessments, Watching Briefs, Evaluations, Excavations, Investigation and Recording of Standing Buildings, Finds)*.

Secondary Sources

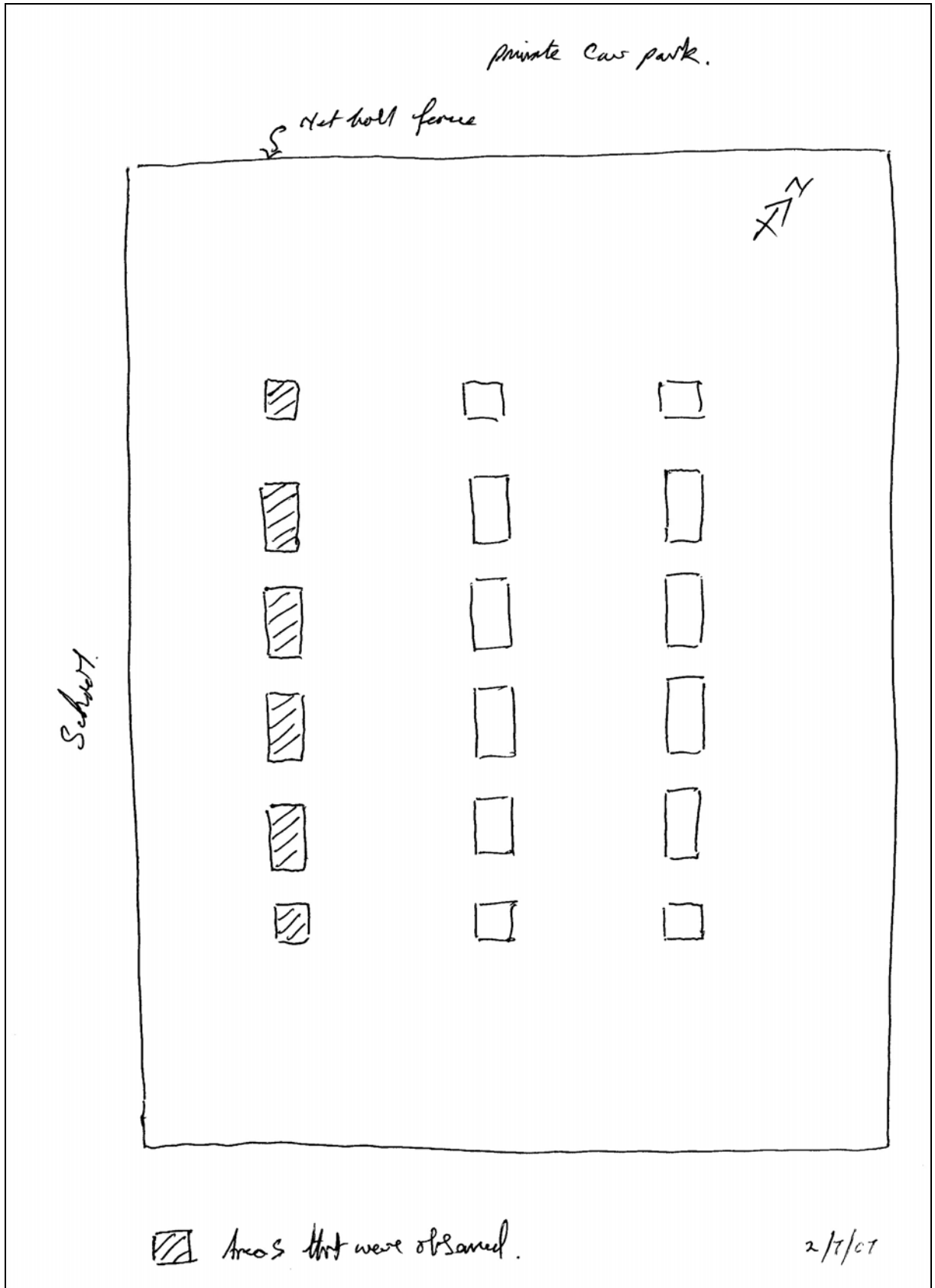
- Anthony I E 1968 'Excavations in Verulam Hills Field, St Albans 1963-4'. *Hertfordshire Archaeology*. **1**, 9-50
- Frere S 1972 *Verulamium Excavations Vol 1*. Research Report of the Society of Antiquaries of London **28**
- Neal D S, Wardle A and Hunn J 1990 *Excavation of the Iron Age, Roman and Medieval Settlement at Gorhambury, St Albans*. English Heritage Archaeological Report **14**.
- Niblett R. 1999 *The Excavation of a ceremonial Site at Folly Lane, Verulamium*. Britannia Monograph Series No: **14**.
- Niblett R 2001. *Verulamium The Roman City of St Albans*. Tempus Ltd
- Soil Survey 1983 *1:250,000 Soil Map of England and Wales, and accompanying legend* (Harpenden).
- Stead I M & Rigby V 1989 *Verulamium: The King Harry Lane site*. English Heritage Archaeological Report **12**.
- Wheeler R E M & Wheeler T V 1936 *Verulamium A Belgic and Two Roman Cities*. Reports of the Research Committee of the Society of Antiquities London.
- Williams A & Martin G H 2002 *Domesday Book, A Complete Translation*. Penguin Books.

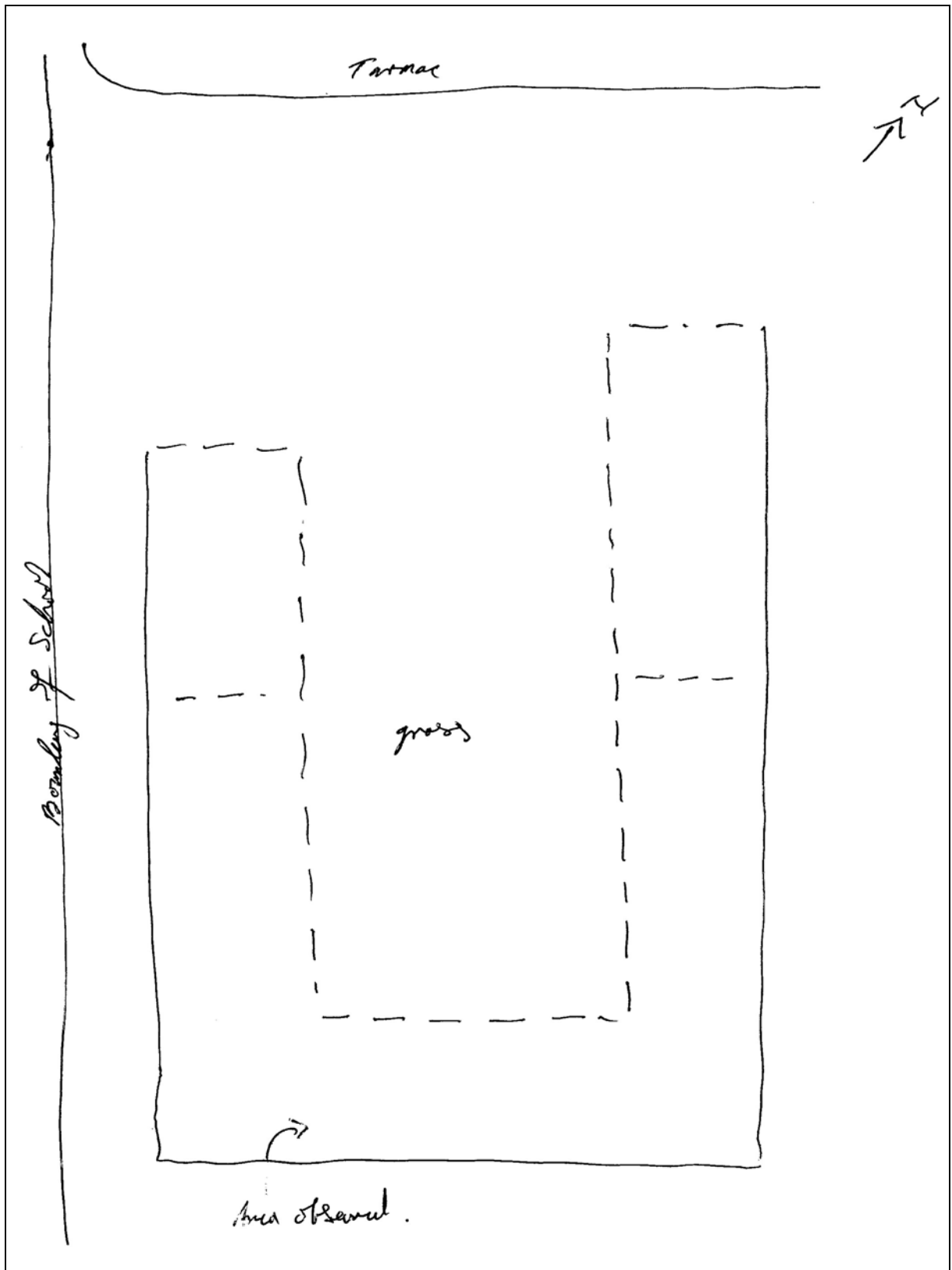
Appendix 1: Monitoring Sheets

A.S.C. LTD		ARCHAEOLOGICAL FIELD MONITORING RECORD				
Project: <i>Maple School, Hall Place Gardens</i> <i>St. Albans</i>		Project No/Code: <i>947 1SAM</i>		Sheet: <i>1</i> of <i>1</i>		
Client/Developer: <i>Mouchel Parkman</i>		Date of visit: <i>2/7/07</i>				
Contact: <i>Bonnie Russell</i>		Phone: <i>07840926463</i>				
Duration of Visit (inc. travel):	Start: <i>9.15 am</i>	Finish: <i>1.40 pm</i>				
Completed by: <i>JRH</i>						
Development Type:						
Footings <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Services	Roads	Levelling	Quarrying	Pipelines	Other (specify):
Site & weather conditions: <i>Overcast, occ showers.</i>						
Observations: <i>Observed a series of foundation pads for the new building over an area approximately 16m E-W and 9m N-S. The pads at either end were smaller in overall dimension (1.10m x 0.64m x 1.05m deep). The others were all longer being 1.70m long. The Southern E-W side were all uniform in character. The surface was composed of tarmac 0.06m thick over a layer of concrete 0.1m thick. Beneath this was a deposit of very dark grey, sandy loam about 0.85m deep. It contained occasional flecks of tile and pebbles. This layer overlies a brownish yellow (10YR 6/8) mottled deposit of sand.</i>						
Comments: <i>Originally intended to concrete today but access won't be permitted until following Saturday.</i>						

For sketch plan, use reverse

©ASC, 2003





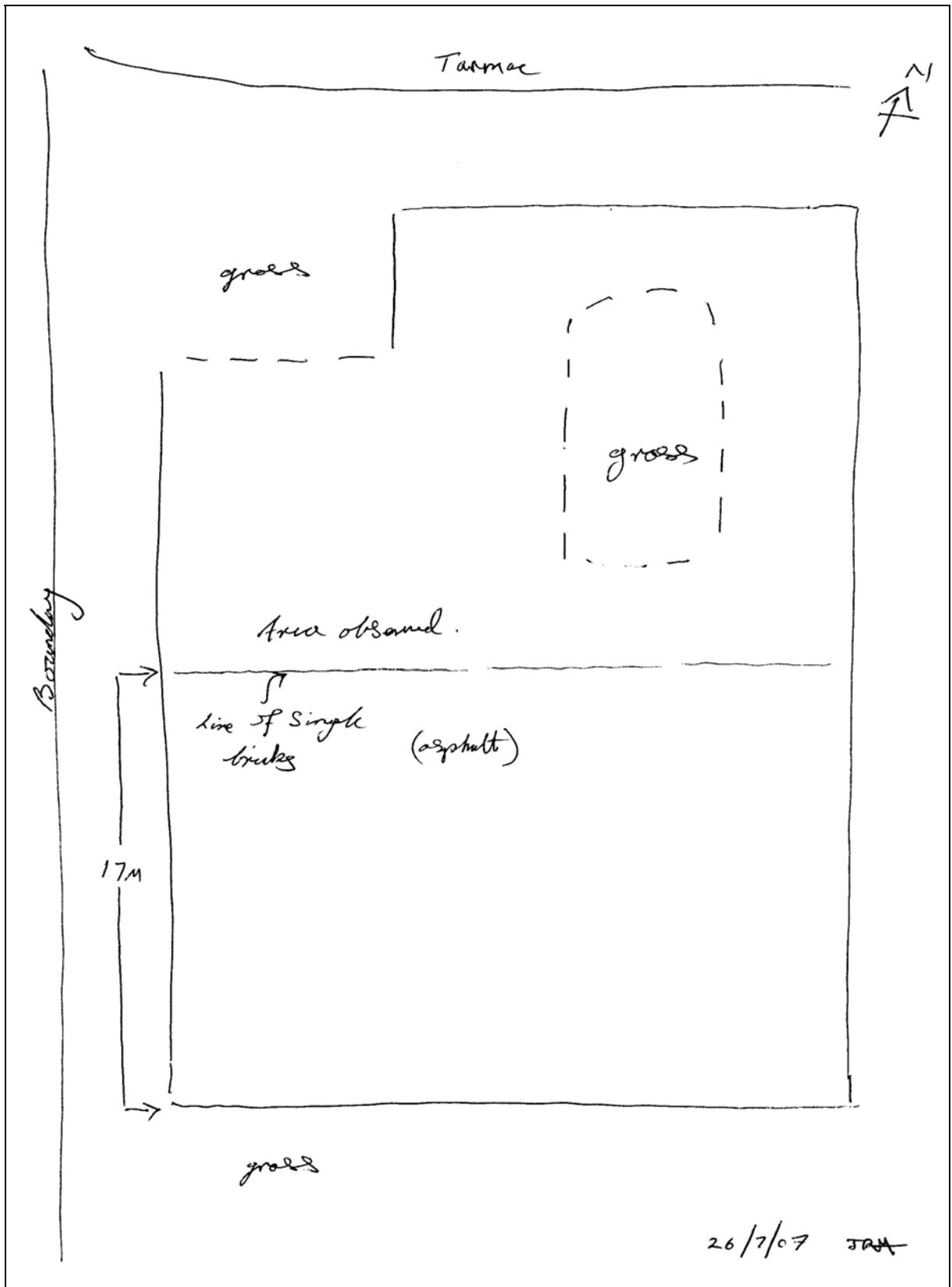


ARCHAEOLOGICAL FIELD MONITORING RECORD

Project: <i>Maple School, Hall Place Gardens St Albans</i>		Project No/Code: <i>947 1SAM</i>	Sheet: <i>3</i> of
Client/Developer <i>Touchet Parkman</i>		Date of visit: <i>26/7/07</i>	Phone: <i>07840926463</i>
Contact: <i>Bronie Russell</i>	Duration of Visit (inc. travel): <i>7am - 9am; 1pm -</i>	Start:	Finish:
Completed by: <i>JRH</i>			
Development Type:			
Footings	Services	Roads	Levelling
			Quarrying
			Pipelines
			Other (specify): <i>Sports facility</i>
Site & weather conditions: <i>Dull & drizzling</i>			
Observations: <i>Observed more of the area of the topsoil. The same as yesterday. The area was 24m x 17m approx and c.0.2 to 0.25m deep onto times of an asphalt surface. No pre-modern features observable.</i>			
<i>A further visit was made in the afternoon but not all the topsoil had been removed.</i>			
Comments: <i>Not worth making any more visits.</i>			

For sketch plan, use reverse

©ASC, 2003



Appendix 2: List of Photographs

SITE NAME:			SITE NO/CODE:
Shot	B&W	Digital	Subject
1		1604	View NW along western N-S line of foundation pads
2		1605	1 st foundation pad from the south
3		1606	2 nd foundation pad from the south
4		1607	3 rd foundation pad from the south
5		1608	View west across site of new classroom
6		1609	View south across adjacent recreation field
7		1610	View west across south end of new classroom site
8		1611	View west of adjacent field towards new hard court
9		1612	View WNW of adjacent field towards new hard court
10		1613	View north from adjoining field to site of new classroom
11		1614	View west to site of new netball court
12		1615	View SE across to site and private property
13		1845	View north across new hard court
14		1846	Ditto
15		1847	View north across eastern side of new hard court
16		1848	View south showing detail of ground conditions
17		1849	View south of hard court cleared of topsoil
18		1850	View north of area in front of existing school
19		1851	View north of detail of new parking bay
20		1852	View west to site of existing development
21		1853	View NE to new classroom
22		1854	View north showing construction work underway

Appendix 3: ASC OASIS Form

PROJECT DETAILS			
Project Name:	Maple School, Hall Place Gardens, St Albans		
Short Description:	<i>In July 2007 a watching brief was carried out during the installation of a new classroom and new netball court at Maple School, Hall Place Gardens, St Albans. The observations established that the ground level where the new classroom was located had been artificially raised by as much as one metre, possibly in the 20th century. This is likely to have occurred either during or prior to the construction of the school. No pre-modern features were identified. On the site of the new netball court the removal of the topsoil revealed an early 20th-century tennis court. No pre-modern features were identified, nor any artefacts retrieved.</i>		
Project Type: (indicate all that apply)	Watching Brief		
Site status: (eg. none, SAM, Listed)	none	Previous work: (eg. SMR refs)	none
Current land use:	School grounds	Future work: (yes / no / unknown)	unknown
Monument type:	N/a	Monument period:	N/a
Significant finds: (artefact type & period)	none		
PROJECT LOCATION			
County:	Hertfordshire	OS reference: (8 figs min)	TL 15271 07637
District:	St Albans	Parish:	St Peters
Site address: (with postcode if known)	Maple School, Hall Place Gardens, St Albans, Hertfordshire		
Study area: (sq. m. or ha)	0.2 ha	Height OD: (metres)	120m
PROJECT CREATORS			
Organisation:	Archaeological Services & Consultancy Ltd		
Project brief originator:	Instone 2007	Project design originator:	Brown 2007
Project Manager:	D. Fell	Director/Supervisor:	J.R. Hunn
Sponsor / funding body:	Mouchel Parkman		
PROJECT DATE			
Start date:	2/7/07	End date:	26/7/07
PROJECT ARCHIVES			
	Location (Accession no.)	Content (eg. pottery, animal bone, files/sheets)	
Physical:	St Albans Museum	none	
Paper:	yes		
Digital:	yes		
BIBLIOGRAPHY (Journal/monograph, published or forthcoming, or unpublished client report)			
Title:	Watching Brief: Maple Primary School, St Albans, Hertfordshire		
Serial title & volume:	ASC/947/SAM/2		
Author(s):	Jonathan R Hunn		

Appendix 4: SMR Summary Sheet

Site name and address: Maple Schools, hall Place Gardens, St Albans		
County: HERTFORDSHIRE	District: St Albans	
Village/Town: St Albans	Parish: St Albans	
Planning application reference: not known		
Client name, address, & tel. no: Mouchel Parkman Stag House, Old London Road, Hertford, Hertfordshire. SG13 7YY		
Nature of application: new classroom, netball court and parking		
Present land use:school premises		
Size of application area: n/a	Size of area investigated: n/a	
NGR (to 8 figures): TL 15271 07637	Site code: 947/SAM	
Site director/Organization: D. Fell / ASC Ltd		
Type of work: Watching Brief		
Date of work:	Start: 2/7/07	Finish:26/7/07
Curating museum:St Albans		
Related SMR nos:n/a	Periods represented:n/a	
Relevant previous summaries/reports n/a		
<p>Summary of fieldwork results:</p> <p><i>In July 2007 a watching brief on the installation of a new classroom and new netball court at Maple School, Hall Place Gardens, St Albans, was undertaken. The observations were able to establish that the ground level where the new classroom was located had been artificially raised possibly in the 20th century by as much as 1 metre. This is likely to have occurred either during or prior to the construction of the school. No pre-modern features were identified. On the site of the new netball court the removal of the topsoil revealed an early 20th century tennis court. No pre-modern features were identified or any artefacts retrieved</i></p>		
Author: J.R. Hunn	Date: 2/8/07	