

Archaeological Services & Consultancy Ltd

**ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION:
ICKNIELD SCHOOL
ARCHERS WAY
LETCHWORTH
HERTFORDSHIRE**

on behalf of Mace Ltd



Calli Rouse BA PIFA

November 2007

ASC: 954/LAW/2

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Site Data

<i>ASC project code:</i>	LAW	<i>ASC Project No:</i>	954
<i>County:</i>	Hertfordshire		
<i>Village/Town:</i>	Letchworth		
<i>Civil Parish:</i>	Letchworth		
<i>NGR (to 8 figs):</i>	TL 2089 3275		
<i>Present use:</i>	School		
<i>Planning proposal:</i>	Construction of a children's centre		
<i>Planning application ref/date:</i>	1/1140007		
<i>Local Planning Authority:</i>	North Hertfordshire District Council		
<i>Date of fieldwork:</i>	October 2007		
<i>Client:</i>	Mace Ltd. Stag House Old London Road Hertford SG13 7YY		
<i>Contact name:</i>	Mr Dylan John		

Internal Quality Check

<i>Primary Author:</i>	Calli Rouse	<i>Date:</i>	27 th November 2007
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<i>Edited/Checked By:</i>		<i>Date:</i>	

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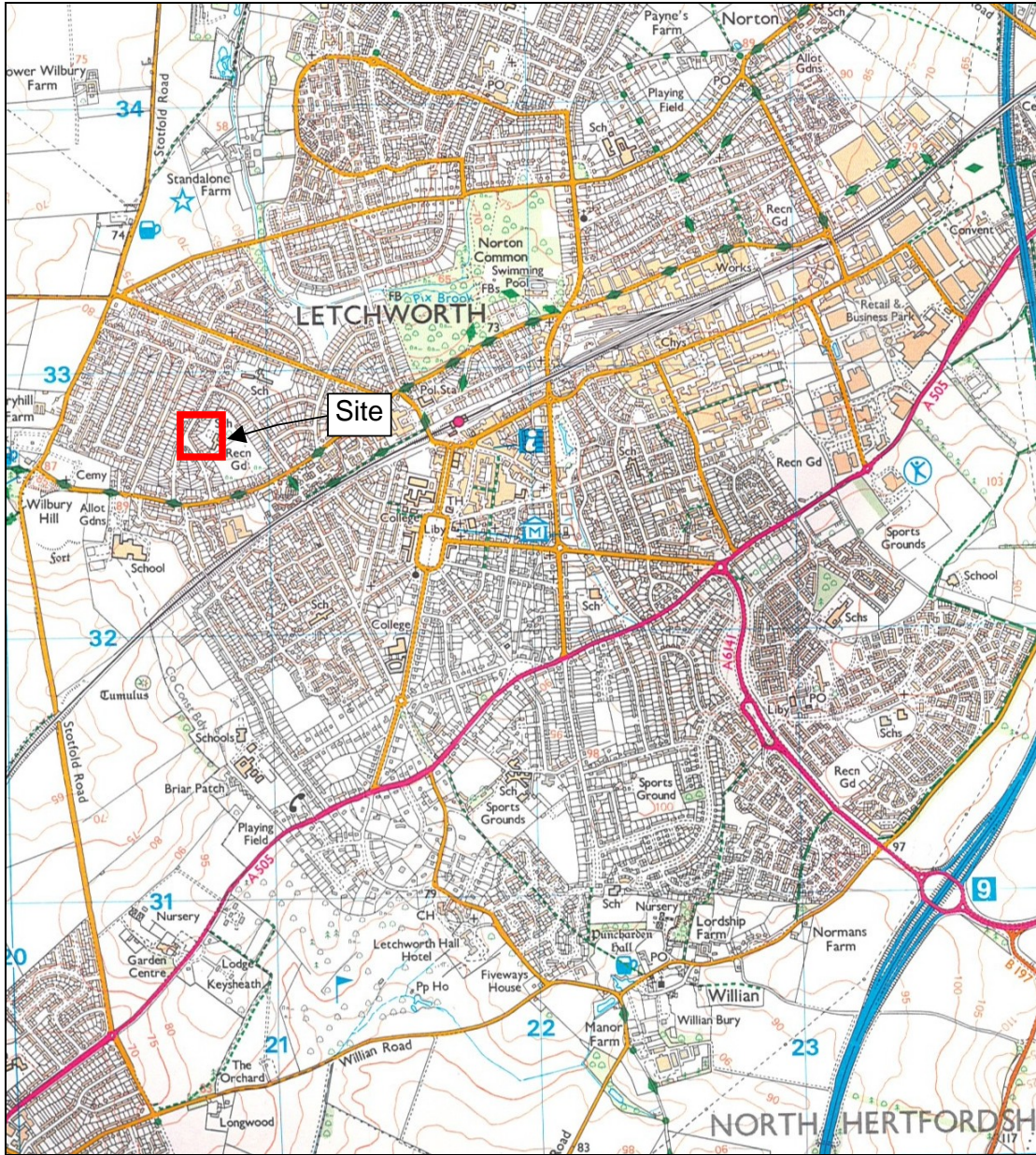


Figure 1: General location (Scale 1:25,000)

Summary

In October 2007, Archaeological Services and Consultancy Ltd (ASC) carried out an archaeological evaluation at Icknield School, Archers Way, Letchworth, Hertfordshire, in advance of the construction of a children's centre. A single trench was excavated within the footprint of the proposed building, revealing only modern material. Archaeological remains were not observed in the trench and it is unlikely that the proposed development will have a significant impact on archaeological remains.

1 Introduction

1.1 In October 2007 *Archaeological Services and Consultancy Ltd (ASC)* carried out an evaluation at Icknield School, Archers Way, Letchworth, Hertfordshire (NGR TL 2089 3275: Figure 1). The project was commissioned by *Mace Ltd.*, and was carried out according to a *brief* (Instone 2007) prepared on behalf of the local planning authority (LPA), *North Hertfordshire District Council*, by their archaeological advisor (AA), the *Historic Environment Unit of Hertfordshire County Council*, and a project design prepared by ASC (Barclay 2007). The relevant planning application reference is 1/1140007.

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 new children's centre.

1.3 Location and Description

The site is situated in Letchworth, in the administrative district of North Hertfordshire (Fig. 1). The site is located on the west side of Letchworth, to the west of Norton Common on Archers Way (NGR TL 2089 3275), and is within the grounds of Icknield School.

1.4 Geology & Topography

The site lies within an area which, due to urbanisation, has remained geologically unsurveyed. The natural soils survive comprise the *Hanslope Association*, which consists of "Slowly permeable calcareous soils over chalky till" (Soil Survey 1983; 411d). It lies at a height of c.87m OD, on flat ground.

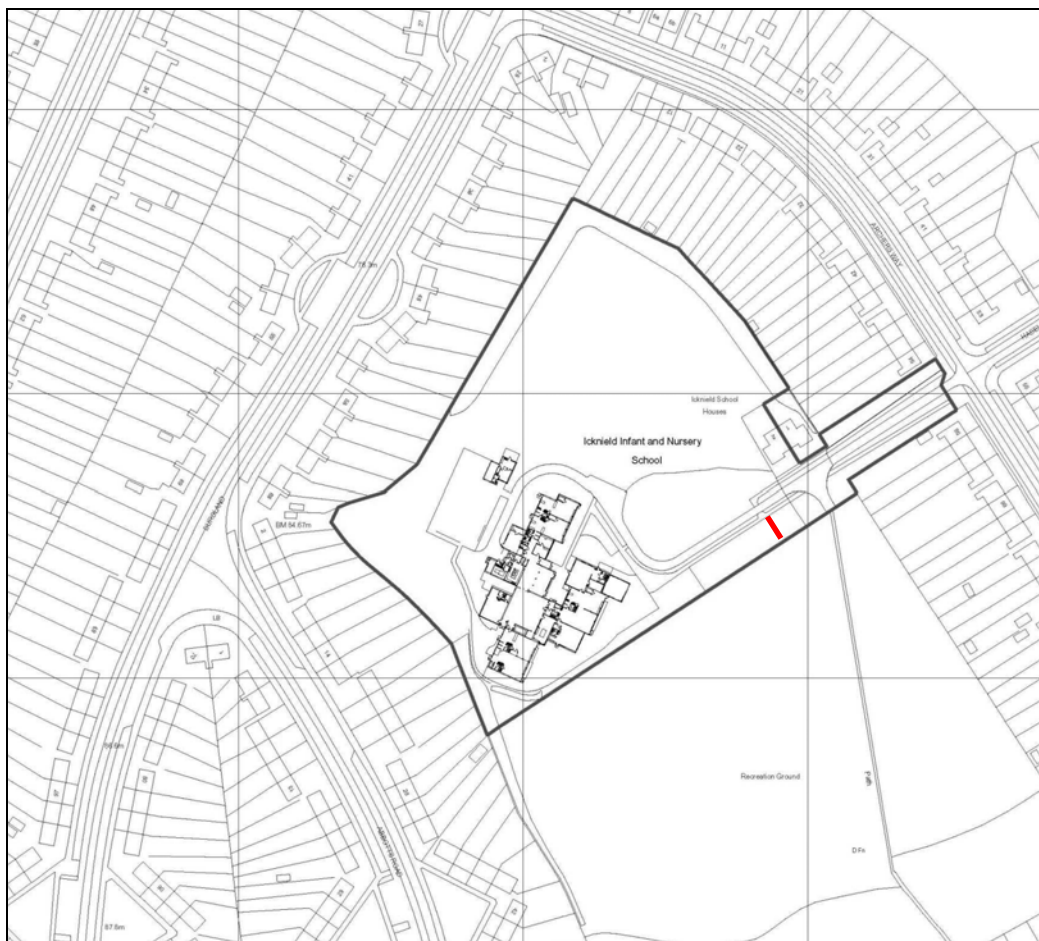


Figure 2: Site plan (Scale 1:2500)

2 Aims and Methods

2.1 Aims

As described in the *brief* (Section 3), the aims of the evaluation were:

- To determine the location, extent, date, nature, condition, significance and quality of any surviving archaeological remains observed on 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 4), which required:

- A single trial trench (c.10m) across the footprint of the proposed building.

3 Archaeological and Historical Background

3.1 Prehistoric (before 600BC)

Letchworth is an area of considerable archaeological and historical significance. The site has the potential to reveal evidence from many periods but the main focus of interest is likely to lie in the late prehistoric and Roman periods. The Chilterns have not been extensively archaeologically surveyed, but a number of Bronze Age round barrows and ring ditches have been identified along the escarpment (Holgate 1995, fig 10), and it is believed that more sites remain to be found in this zone.

3.2 Iron Age (600BC-AD43)

An important Iron Age *oppidum* (defended settlement) was situated to the north-east of the site at Baldock. During the Iron Age the area formed part of the territory of the Catuvellauni (Branigan 1987). A major prehistoric track, now known as the *Ickniel Way* crossed the region c.1km to the south of the site.

A number of Iron Age settlements have been identified in the Letchworth area, notably an important site at Blackhorse Road. The site lies c. 500m north-east of a major Iron Age hillfort known as Wilbury Hill. The latter was subject to archaeological excavations (Applebaum 1949) and is a Scheduled Ancient Monument.

3.3 Roman (AD43-c.450)

During the Roman period settlement was dominated by a small town at Baldock (Stead & Rigby 1986). Settlement from the Roman period has been identified in and around Letchworth, and the Hertfordshire Sites and Monuments Record shows a variety of sites and artefacts of this period in the region. A number of Roman villas have been identified in the area, e.g. Wymondley (Hunn 2001).

3.4 Saxon (c.450-1066)

Little is known of the area during the Saxon period, but the majority of evidence for the Saxon period in Hertfordshire comes from cemetery sites. From c.500-700 AD these sites are located on the north-west slope of the Chilterns, along the Ickniel Way, and in the river valleys of tributaries of the River Ouse (Wingfield 1995, figs 14 and 15).

3.5 Medieval (1066-1500)

The early development of the present town of Letchworth is not well understood but the settlement probably developed during the Saxon or early medieval periods. The nucleus of the medieval village is c.2km to the east of the proposed development area on the east side of Letchworth Lane. The settlement was dominated by the church of St Mary which dates from the early medieval period (Pevsner & Cherry 1977).

3.6 Post-Medieval - Modern (1500-present)

The site is situated to the north of the medieval village and probably comprised open land until the development of Letchworth Garden City by Ebenezer Howard in the early 20th century.

4 Results and Conclusions

4.1 Introduction

This section provides a summary of the results of the fieldwork. Full details of the trench, in tabular form, are provided in Appendix 1. A single trench was excavated across the site (Figure 2). It targeted the footprint of the proposed building and was 8m long and c.0.97m deep (Plate 1).

4.2 The Trial Trench (Figures 3 and 4; Plate 1)

4.2.1 The natural strata (104) was observed at a depth of c.0.86m and comprised yellow sandy gravel (Plate 2). This was overlain by a layer of red sand (103), which contained occasional pieces of modern brick. This layer was 0.36m thick and was overlain by spread of loose black asphalt (102), which was 90mm thick. Layers (102) and (103) are modern deposits and are not archaeologically significant.

4.2.2 The asphalt layer (102) was overlain by a 150mm thick layer of subsoil (101) which comprised brown sandy silt. The upper part of the trench profile comprised the topsoil and turf of the school playing field (100), which consisted of mid brown loam c.260mm deep.

4.2.3 No significant archaeological finds or features were observed in the trench.

4.3 Conclusions

4.3.1 Natural gravel deposits (104) were present at a consistent depth of c.0.86m indicating that the geological deposits are intact and had not been significantly truncated during the construction of the school.

4.3.2 The natural soils above the gravel had been truncated, probably during the laying out of the school and its grounds. The gravel was overlain by deposits of modern red sand (103) and asphalt (102), probably representing an modern road or surface and make-up material.

4.3.3 Significant archaeological features were not observed in the trench. While the existence of individual, isolated archaeological features, away from the trench cannot be entirely excluded, it is unlikely that large numbers of archaeological features or artefacts are present on the site. It is unlikely that the proposed development will have a significant impact on archaeological remains.

4.4 Confidence Rating

4.4.1 The evaluation was undertaken in generally dry, sunny conditions and full co-operation was received from all parties involved. The stratigraphy was well defined and distinct.

4.4.2 A high confidence rating is attached to the results of the evaluation.



Plate 1: General view of trench, looking south east (*Scale = 2m*)



Plate 2: Detail of south west facing section (*Scale = 1m*)

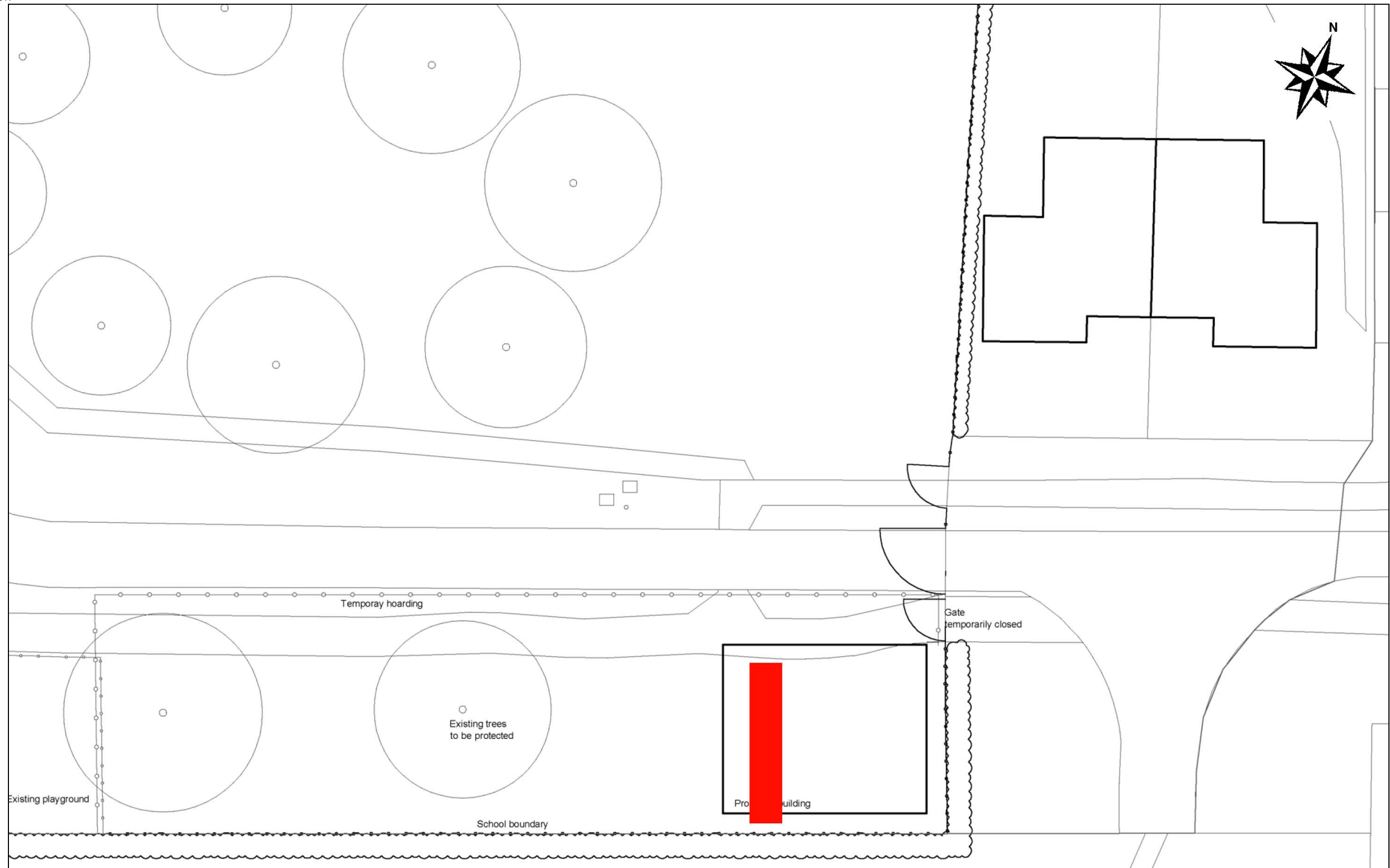


Figure 3: Trench location (Scale 1:200)

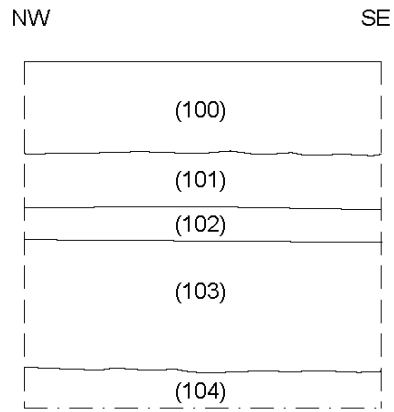


Figure 4: South west facing sample section (*Scale 1:20*)

5. Acknowledgements

The writer is grateful to Mr Dylan John of *Mace Ltd* for commissioning the project on behalf of *Hertfordshire County Council*. Andy Instone of the *Historic Environment Unit of Hertfordshire County Council* acted as curatorial monitor.

The fieldwork was led for *ASC Ltd* by Calli Rouse BA PIFA assisted by Ralph Brown BSc. The report was prepared by Calli Rouse and edited by David Fell BA MA MIFA

6. Archive

6.1 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.

6.2 The archive will be deposited with *North Hertfordshire Museum Service*.

7. References


Standards & Specifications

- ALGAO 2003 *Standards for Field Archaeology in the East of England*. East Anglian Archaeology Occasional Paper **14**.
- Barclay, C 2007 *Project Design for an Archaeological Evaluation at Icknield School, Archers Way, Letchworth, Hertfordshire* ASC/954/LAW/1
- 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)*.
- Instone A 2007 *Design Brief for Archaeological Evaluation* Historic Environment Unit. Hertfordshire County Council

Secondary Sources

- Applebaum E S 1949 'Excavations at Wilbury Hill, an Iron Age Hill-Fort near Letchworth, Hertfordshire 1933' *The Archaeological Journal* **106**, 12-44
- Branigan K 1987 *The Catuvellauni* Alan Sutton Gloucester
- Burleigh G 1985 'A Late Iron Age Oppidum at Baldock, Hertfordshire' in Holgate R (ed.) *Chiltern Archaeology: Recent Work; A Handbook for the Next Decade* Dunstable
- Holgate R 1995 'Early Prehistoric Settlement of the Chilterns' in Holgate R (ed.) *Chiltern Archaeology: Recent Work; A Handbook for the Next Decade* Dunstable
- Hunn J R 2001 *Archaeological Monitoring & Recording Along The Wymondley to Corey's Mill Cable Route, Hertfordshire* ASC WCM 01/02
- Pevsner N & Cherry B 1977 *The Buildings of England: Hertfordshire* Yale University Press London
- Soil Survey 1983 *1:250,000 Soil Map of England and Wales, and accompanying legend* Harpenden.
- Stead I M & Rigby V 1986 *Baldock: the excavation of a Roman and pre-Roman settlement: 1968-72* Britannia Monograph **7**
- Wingfield C 1995 'The Anglo-Saxon settlement of Bedfordshire and Hertfordshire: the archaeological view' in Holgate R (ed.) *Chiltern Archaeology: Recent Work; A Handbook for the Next Decade* Dunstable

Appendix 1: Trench Summary Tables

Trench 1						
	Max Dimensions (m)					
	Length	8	Width	1.6	Depth	0.97
	Levels					
	Trench base north			m OD		
	Trench top north			m OD		
	Trench base south			m OD		
	Trench top south			m OD		
	NGR Co-ordinates					
	NW	TL 20888 32756		SE	TL 20892 32751	
	Orientation			NW-SE		
Reason for Trench			Testing proposed development footprint			
Context	Type	Description and Interpretation	Max Width (mm)	Max Thckn (mm)	Depth BGL (mm)	
100	Layer	Mid brown loam – Topsoil	-	260	-	
101	Layer	Brown sandy silt - Subsoil	-	150	260	
102	Layer	Loose black asphalt – Modern surface	-	90	410	
103	Layer	Red sand with occasional brick – Modern made up ground	-	360	500	
104	Layer	Yellow sandy gravel – Natural strata	-	110+	860	

Appendix 2: List of Photographs

SITE NAME: Icknield School, Archers Way, Letchworth, Herts			SITE NO/CODE: 954/LAW	
Shot	B&W	Digital	Subject	
1		✓	Detail of south west facing section, 2m scale	
2	✓	✓	General view of trench, looking south east, 2m scale	
3	✓	✓	Detail of south west facing section, 1m scale	
4		✓	General view of trench, looking east, 1m scale	
5		✓	General view of site, looking south west	

Appendix 3: ASC OASIS Form

PROJECT DETAILS			
Project Name:	Icknield School, Archers Way, Letchworth, Hertfordshire		
Short Description:	In October 2007, Archaeological Services and Consultancy Ltd (ASC) carried out an archaeological evaluation at Icknield School, Archers Way, Letchworth, Hertfordshire, in advance of the construction of a children's centre. A single trench was excavated within the footprint of the proposed building, revealing only modern material. Archaeological remains were not observed in the trench and it is unlikely that the proposed development will have a significant impact on archaeological remains.		
Project Type: (indicate all that apply)	Trial Trenching		
Site status: (eg. none, SAM, Listed)	None	Previous work: (eg. SMR refs)	-
Current land use:	School grounds	Future work: (yes / no / unknown)	No
Monument type:	-	Monument period:	-
Significant finds: (artefact type & period)	-		
PROJECT LOCATION			
County:	Hertfordshire	OS reference: (8 figs min)	TL 2089 3275
Site address: (with postcode if known)	Icknield School, Archers Way, Letchworth, Hertfordshire		
Study area: (sq. m. or ha)	c.10 x c.10	Height OD: (metres)	c.87
PROJECT CREATORS			
Organisation:	Archaeological Services & Consultancy Ltd		
Project brief originator:	A. Instone	Project design originator:	C. Barclay
Project Manager:	D. Fell	Director/Supervisor:	D. Fell
Sponsor / funding body:	Mace Ltd		
PROJECT DATE			
Start date:	15/10/2007	End date:	15/10/2007
PROJECT ARCHIVES			
	Location (Accession no.)	Content (eg. pottery, animal bone, files/sheets)	
Physical:	North Herts Museum Service	-	
Paper:		Archive box	
Digital:		CD	
BIBLIOGRAPHY (Journal/monograph, published or forthcoming, or unpublished client report)			
Title:	An Archaeological Evaluation at Icknield School, Archers Way, Letchworth, Hertfordshire		
Serial title & volume:	ASC/954/LAW/2		
Author(s):	Calli Rouse BA PIFA		
Page nos	17	Date:	

Appendix 4: SMR Summary Sheet

Site name and address: Icknield School, Archers Way, Letchworth, Hertfordshire		
County: HERTFORDSHIRE		District: North Hertfordshire
Village/Town: Letchworth		Parish: Letchworth
Planning application reference: 1/1140007		
Client name, address, & tel. no: Mace Ltd		
Nature of application: Construction of children's centre		
Present land use: School grounds		
Size of application area: 10mx10m		Size of area investigated: 8mx1.6m
NGR (to 8 figures): TL 2089 3275		Site code: 954/LAW
Site director/Organization: David Fell / ASC Ltd		
Type of work: Evaluation		
Date of work:	Start: 15/10/07	Finish: 15/10/07
Curating museum: North Herts Museum Service		
Related SMR nos: -		Periods represented: -
Relevant previous summaries/reports -		
<p>Summary of fieldwork results:</p> <p>In October 2007, Archaeological Services and Consultancy Ltd (ASC) carried out an archaeological evaluation at Icknield School, Archers Way, Letchworth, Hertfordshire, in advance of the construction of a children's centre. A single trench was excavated within the footprint of the proposed building, revealing only modern material. Archaeological remains were not observed in the trench and it is unlikely that the proposed development will have a significant impact on archaeological remains.</p>		
Author: C. Rouse		Date: 23/11/07