

Archaeological Services & Consultancy Ltd

**WATCHING BRIEF:
ST JOAN OF ARC SCHOOL,
RICKMANSWORTH,
HERTFORDSHIRE**

NGR: TQ 0635 9450

on behalf of St Joan of Arc School



Martin Cuthbert BA

January 2009

ASC: 1136/RJA/2



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Site Data

<i>ASC project code:</i>	RJA	<i>ASC Project No:</i>	1136
<i>OASIS ref:</i>	archaeol2-54219	<i>Event/Accession no:</i>	N/a
<i>County:</i>	Hertfordshire		
<i>Village/Town:</i>	Rickmansworth		
<i>Civil Parish:</i>	unparished		
<i>NGR (to 8 figs):</i>	TQ 063 945		
<i>Extent of site:</i>	c.247sq.m		
<i>Present use:</i>	School		
<i>Planning proposal:</i>	Construction of new school building		
<i>Planning application ref/date:</i>	08/1446/FUL		
<i>Local Planning Authority:</i>	Three Rivers District Council		
<i>Date of fieldwork:</i>	January 2009		
<i>Client:</i>	St Joan of Arc Catholic School High Street Rickmansworth WD3 1HG		
<i>Contact name:</i>	Jacqui Ratcliffe		

Internal Quality Check

<i>Primary Author:</i>	Martin Cuthbert BA	<i>Date:</i>	29 th January 2009
<i>Revisions:</i>		<i>Date:</i>	
<i>Edited/Checked By:</i>	Bob Zeepvat	<i>Date:</i>	29 th January 2009

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

Summary

In January 2009 a watching brief was carried out during the ground works for a new music block at St Joan of Arc School, Rickmansworth. No deposits or finds of archaeological significance were revealed. However, as the ground works were limited in scope this does not preclude the presence of archaeological remains elsewhere on the site. The absence of artefactual evidence suggests that the site is located outside the eastern extents of the medieval town core. Its river valley location would suggest that it lay within meadowland until the construction of a house within its grounds in the 18th century.

1. Introduction

1.1 In January 2009 *Archaeological Services and Consultancy Ltd* (ASC) carried out a watching brief at St Joan of Arc Catholic School, Rickmansworth, Hertfordshire. The project was commissioned by St Joan of Arc Catholic School and was carried out according to a project design prepared by ASC (Rouse 2008), prepared on behalf of the local planning authority (LPA), *Three Rivers District Council*, by their archaeological advisor (AA), the *Historic Environment Unit of Hertfordshire County Council*. The relevant planning application reference is 08/1446/FUL.

1.2 *Planning Background*

This watching brief was required under the terms of *Planning Policy Guidance Note 16* (PPG16), as a condition of planning permission for the development of the site.

1.3 *Archaeological Services & Consultancy Ltd*

Archaeological Services & Consultancy Ltd (ASC) is an independent archaeological practice providing a full range of archaeological services including consultancy, field evaluation, mitigation and post-excavation studies, historic building recording and analysis. ASC is recognised as a *Registered Archaeological Organisation* by the Institute of Field Archaeologists, in recognition of its high standards and working practices.

1.4 *Management*

The project was managed by Karin Semmelmann BA MA MIFA, and was carried out under the overall direction of Bob Zeepvat BA MIFA.

1.5 *The Site*

1.5.1 *Location & Description*

The site is situated in Rickmansworth, in the administrative district of Three Rivers, Hertfordshire (Figure 1). It lies to the northeast of Rickmansworth town centre, on the east side of the High Street and is centred on Ordnance Survey national grid reference TL 063 945 (Figure 2).

1.5.2 *Geology & Topography*

The site is in an urban area, within the grounds of the St Joan of Arc School and the natural soils may not survive. Any such surviving soils will probably

comprise the *Fladbury 3 Association*, namely stoneless clayey and fine silty soils over river alluvium (Soil Survey 1983, 813d). The natural drainage of the area is dominated by the river Colne. The natural course of the river has been modified by gravel workings and the construction of the adjacent Grand Union Canal, but is situated *c.*400m south of the school site. The site lies at an elevation of *c.*45m OD.

1.5.3 *Proposed Development*

The development proposal comprises the construction of a new music block (Figure 3).

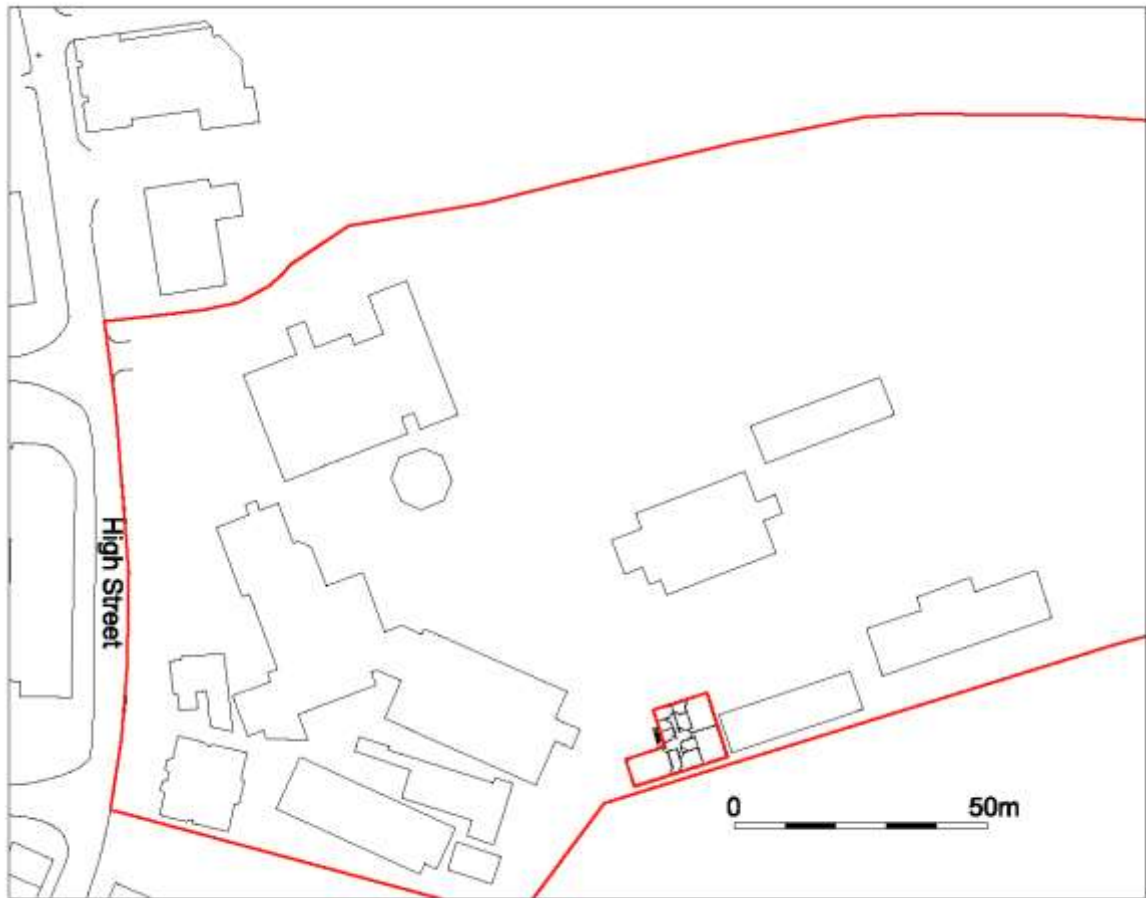


Figure 2: Site plan showing location of new music block (*scale 1:1500*)

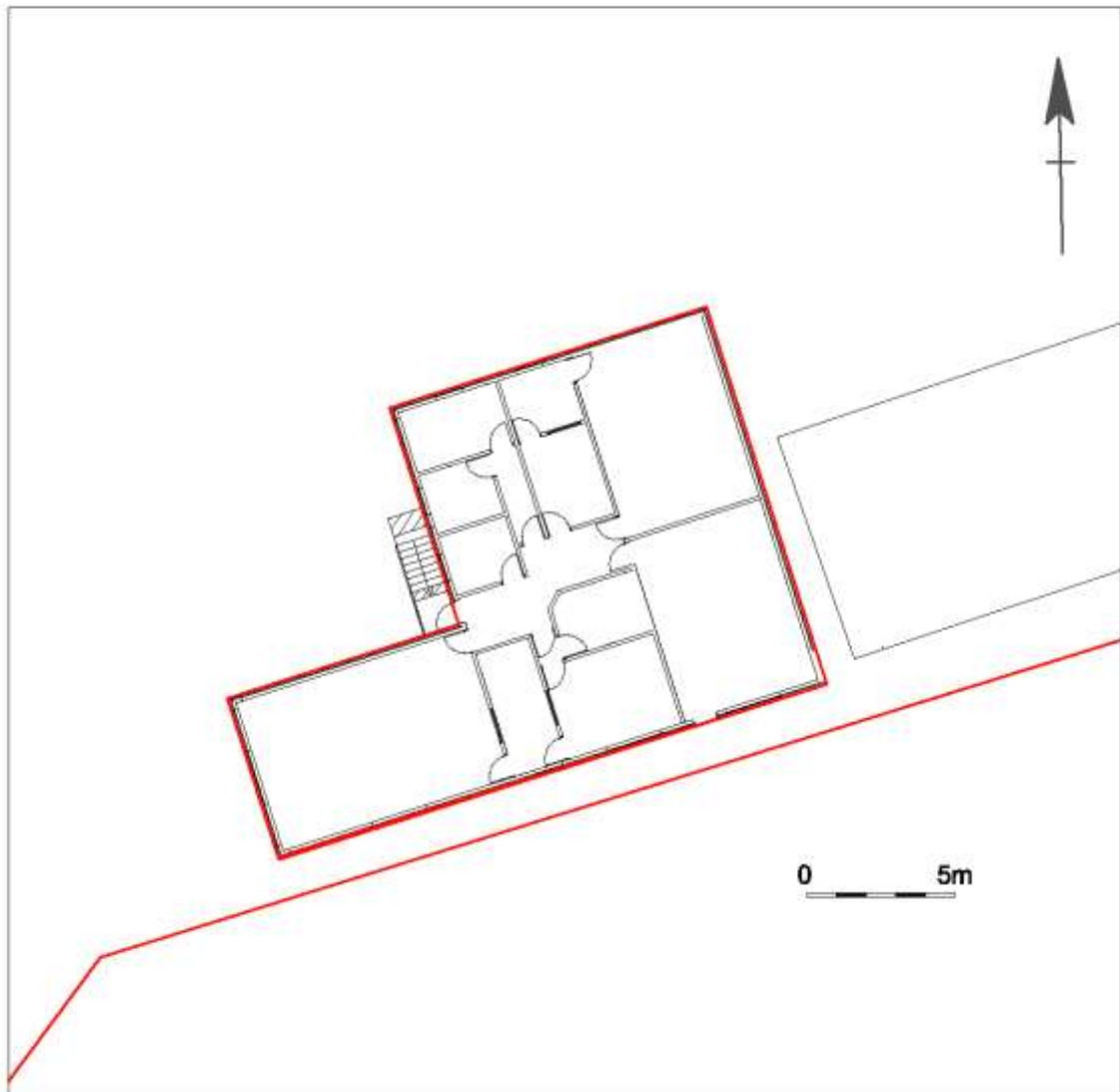


Figure 3: Proposed development (*scale 1:250*)

2. Aims & Methods

2.1 Aims

As described in the Project Design (Section 3.1) 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 programme
- To secure the analysis, conservation and long-term storage of any artefactual/ecofactual material recovered from the site.

2.2 Standards

The work conformed to the project design, to the relevant sections of the Institute for 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 project design (Section 3.3), which required:

- Soil and overburden stripping, followed by sub-soil stripping when appropriate, under archaeological supervision
- Inspection of sub-soil deposits for archaeological features
- Investigation and recording of any archaeological features/deposits
- Examination of any service and foundation trenches and recording of any exposed archaeological deposits
- Examination of spoil-heaps

2.4 Constraints

Because of the modern made up ground that covered the site, agreement was reached with the planning archaeologist that only the ring beam slots on the eastern side of the development needed to be viewed by an archaeologist.

3. Archaeological & Historical Background

3.1 The following section provides a summary of the readily available archaeological and historical background to the development site and its environs. The site lies within an area of archaeological and historical interest, and has the potential to reveal evidence of a range of periods.

This section has been compiled with information from readily available sources.

3.2 Rickmansworth is an area of considerable archaeological and historical interest (eg Page 1908; Seddon 1999) and this has been recognised by the local authority by the designation of much of the town centre as an *Area of Archaeological Significance*. The site has the potential to reveal evidence of a variety of periods but the focus of interest is considered to lie in the prehistoric and medieval periods.

3.3 The site is close to the rivers Colne and Chess. River valleys and their underlying deposits constitute one of the most important environmental records that survive in the British Isles. The presence of organic deposits provides a record of past environments that allows an understanding of the nature and chronology of long vanished landscapes. This is particularly true of the Colne valley in the early prehistoric periods, where excavations have revealed vegetational and archaeological changes in the late glacial/early Holocene boundary (Lewis and Wiltshire 1992, 235-47; Brown 1997, 199).

3.4 Little is known of the area during the Roman period but river valleys often attracted settlement during this period. A major Roman villa has been identified at Moor Park c.2km southeast of the site.

3.5 The early history of the town is not well understood, but the town may have originated during the Saxon period. Rickmansworth is mentioned in the Domesday Survey (1086) where it is referred to as *Prichemareworde*. The land was held by the Abbot of St Albans and was assessed at 15 hides (Williams & Martin 2003, 377).

3.6 The site is situated slightly to the east of the medieval core of the town, which was centred on the High Street and Church Street (Seddon 1999, fig. 1). There is currently no evidence for medieval occupation on the site of the school.

3.7 The original school buildings appear in the register of listed buildings and date from the 18th century. It was probably originally constructed as a private house. This is shown on the 1896 edition Ordnance Survey map and is labelled '*The Elms*'. A formal garden water feature lay to the rear.

3.8 In November and December 2007 a watching brief was carried out during groundworks for a new drama block at St Joan of Arc School. No deposits or finds of archaeological significance were revealed (Thompson 2008).

4. Results

- 4.1 Observations were made during construction of approximately a third of the ring beam foundation on the east side of the development (Fig. 4, Plate 3). Each trench was approximately 1m wide and 0.5m deep. Deposits removed on the eastern side comprised 0.5m of made up ground containing brick, tile and gravel deposits that were probably put down when the area was levelled for the construction of the school buildings. This came down onto undisturbed natural orange-grey clay (Plate 1).
- 4.2 An agreement was reached with the planning archaeologist that a test pit would be dug on the western side of the development (Fig. 4) to prove the made up ground continued across the whole site. The test pit also showed a similar stratigraphic make up to that described above. Deposits comprised 0.3m of dark organic horizon containing brick, presumed to be a modern buried soil sealed below the hardcore. The underlying deposit comprised more made up ground of brick and gravel. The natural bedrock was not reached (Plate 2). There were no archaeological features observed and no pre-modern artefacts were recovered from the up-cast deposits.

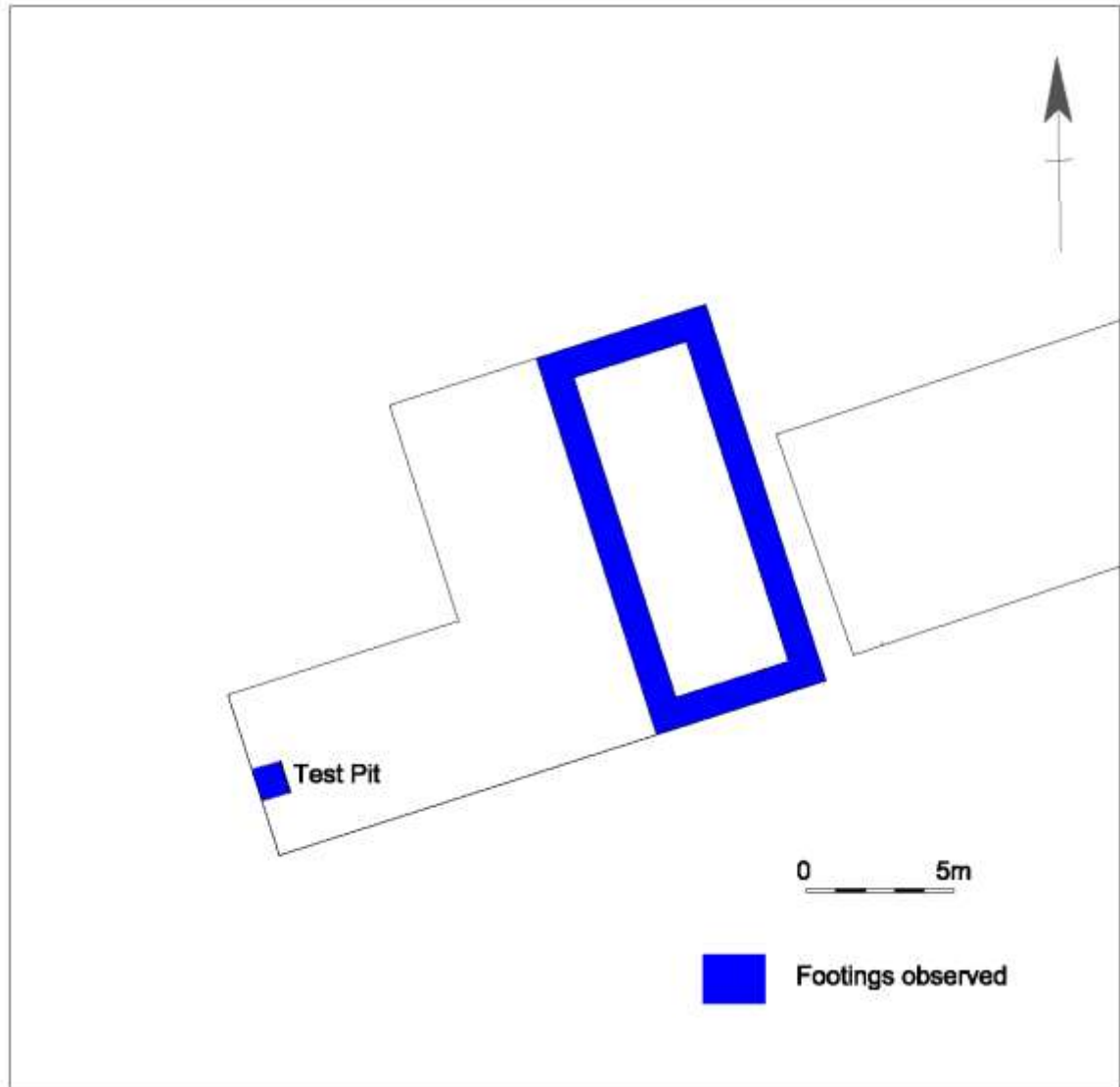


Figure 4: Footings observed (*scale 1:250*)



Plate 1: Beam slot section, eastern run, looking east



Plate 2: Test pit section, looking west



Plate 3: General shot, looking north

5. Conclusions

5.1 No archaeological deposits were observed in the very limited ground works within the footprint of the new music building. However, the shallow depth of excavation reached during the ground works does not preclude the possibility that prehistoric or medieval archaeological remains are present elsewhere on the site. The absence of pre-modern artefacts within the deposits removed reflects the location of the site to the east of and outside the core of the medieval town of Rickmansworth. As no other evidence of medieval activity has yet to be found within the school grounds it is likely that, at that time, the site lay within agricultural land on the fringes of the town. Being within the Colne valley, it would be very likely to find seasonal meadowland at this location and this perhaps explains the lack of medieval pottery finds from middening. The late development of the land and gardens in the 18th century suggests that the site was open land until the post-medieval period.

5.2 *Confidence Rating*

Although the watching brief was undertaken in wet conditions, full cooperation was received from all parties involved. As a result, a high-medium confidence rating is attached to the results of the watching brief.

6. Acknowledgements

The watching brief was commissioned by *St Joan of Arc Catholic School*. The writer is grateful to St Joan of Arc Catholic School for their assistance. The project was monitored by the Historic Environment Unit of Hertfordshire County Council on behalf of the local planning authority. Thanks are also due to GLS Construction.

The project was managed for ASC by Karin Semmelmann BA MA MIFA. Fieldwork was carried out by Martin Cuthbert BA and Calli Rouse BA PIFA. The report was prepared by Martin Cuthbert and 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 Monitoring Sheets
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 the *Three Rivers 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).
- EH 2002 *Environmental Archaeology: A Guide to the Theory and Practice of Methods, from Sampling and Recovery to Post-Excavation*. 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

- BGS *British Geological Survey 1:50,000 Series, Solid & Drift Geology*.
- Brown, A.G. 1997: *Alluvial Geoarchaeology: Floodplain archaeology and environmental change*. Cambridge University Press (Cambridge).
- Lewis, J.S.C, Wiltshire, P.E.J., and Macphail, R. 1992: A Late Devensian/early Flandrian site at Three Ways Wharf, Uxbridge: environmental implications. Neddham, S. & Macklin, M.G (eds) *Alluvial Archaeology in Britain*. Oxbow Monograph (Oxford).
- Page, W. 1908: *The Victoria County History of Hertfordshire*. Dawsons of Pall Mall (Folkestone & London).
- Soil Survey 1983 *1:250,000 Soil Map of England and Wales, and accompanying legend* (Harpenden).
- Thompson, A 2008 *Watching Brief: Joan of Arc School, Rickmansworth, Hertfordshire* ASC/1014/RSJ/2
- Williams A & Martin G (eds) 2003 *Domesday Book. A Complete Translation*. Penguin
- Soil Survey 1983 *1:250,000 Soil Map of England and Wales, and accompanying legend* (Harpenden).

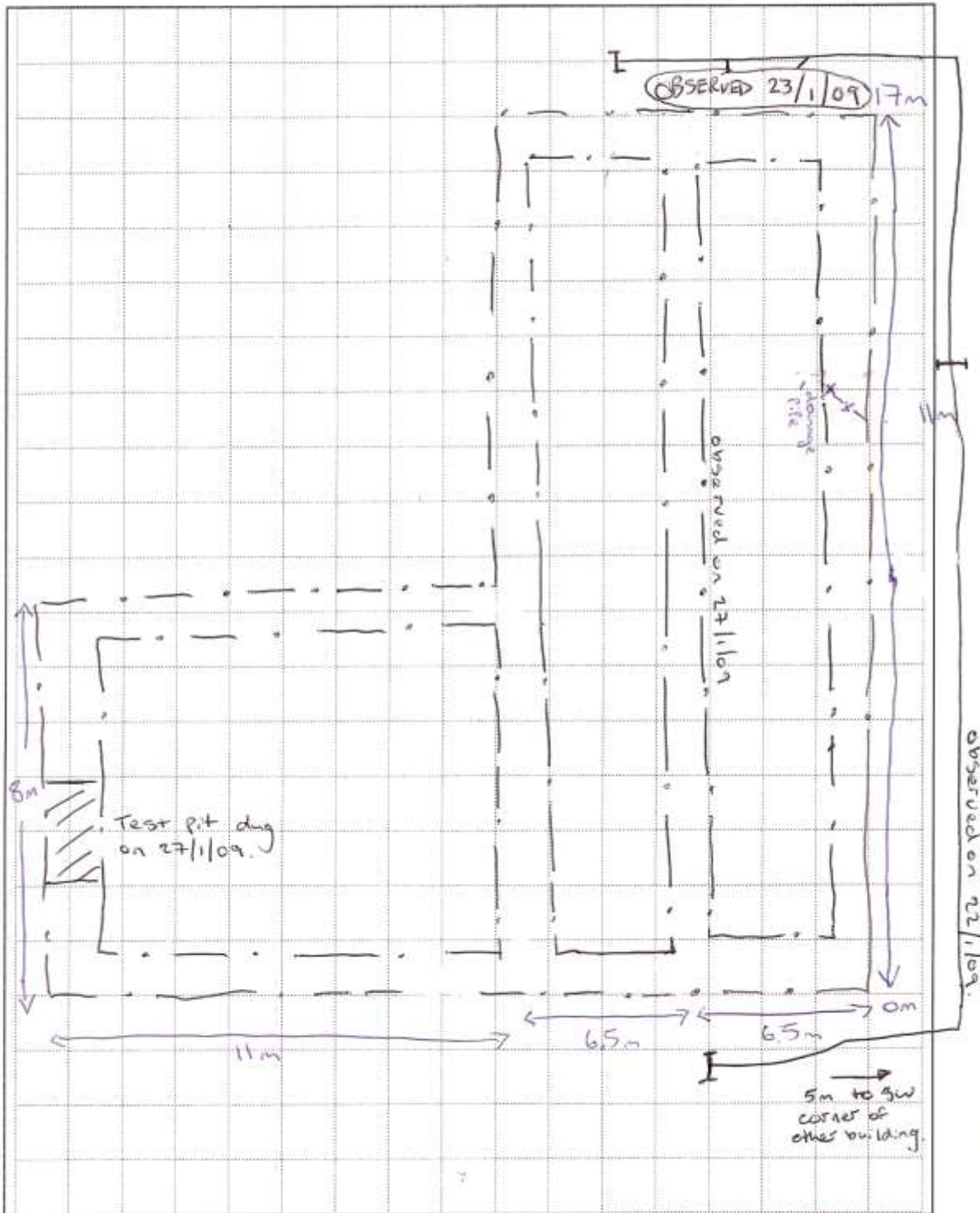
Appendix 1: Monitoring Sheets

A.S.C. LTD		ARCHAEOLOGICAL FIELD MONITORING RECORD		
Project: St Joan of Arc School		Project No/Code: 1136 1 RJA		Sheet: 1 of 2
Rickmansworth.		Date of visit: 22/1/09		
Client/Developer GML Construction				
Contact:			Phone:	
Duration of Visit (inc. travel):	Start: 11:00		Finish:	
Completed by: M.C.				
Development Type:				
Footings <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Services	Roads	Levelling	Quarrying
				Pipelines
				Other (specify):
Site & weather conditions: wet, wet, wet.				
Observations: Piles have been completed beam - slot running around and over piles in a square is now being dug. Trench = 500mm deep 1m wide down onto top of piles. 500mm of made up ground - rubble - probably put down when ground was levelled when new building 5m away was built to the East. once removed comes down into natural orange-yellow grey clay. natural isn't being disturbed by groundworks.				
Comments: one stretch of beam will be finished ^{tomorrow} (23/1/09) at 11:00am. Someone needs to be there to watch this. Then ask the builder if a test pit can be dug on the west-side. IF the strata is the same we might be able to convince Alison Finiswood to halt any more visits.				



SKETCH SHEET

Site Name: Joan of Arc School	Site Code: 1136/RJA	Orientation:
Context: Rickmansworth		



RECORDING NOTES

Recorded by: M.C	Date: 21/1/09	Digitised by:	Date:	Sheet number: 2 of 2
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A.S.C. LTD

ARCHAEOLOGICAL FIELD MONITORING RECORD

Project: <i>Joan of Arc School,</i>		Project No/Code: <i>1136 1</i>	Sheet: of
<i>Rickmansworth</i>		Date of visit: <i>23 / 1/09</i>	
Client/Developer			
Contact:		Phone:	
Duration of Visit (inc. travel):	Start: <i>10.00am</i>	Finish: <i>14.00 pm</i>	
Completed by: <i>Ch</i>			
Development Type:			
Footings <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Services	Roads	Levelling
			Quarrying
			Pipelines
			Other (specify):
Site & weather conditions: <i>Over-cast, windy, wet</i>			
Observations: <i>Observed northern end of E footing trench & half of N footing trench. Footings 0.7m deep, cut into made ground. No archaeological finds or features observed.</i>			
Comments: <i>Have agreed with contractors that a test pit will be dug at W end of sibe on Tues AM to see if made ground is across whole sibe.</i>			

A.S.C. LTD		ARCHAEOLOGICAL FIELD MONITORING RECORD		
Project: Rickmansworth Joan of Arc		Project No/Code: 1136 / RJA	Sheet: 1 of 1	
School		Date of visit: 27/1/09		
Client/Developer Sham Fleming. - 07709		411246.		
Contact:		Phone:		
Duration of Visit (inc. travel):	Start: 09:00	Finish: 12:00		
Completed by: M.C				
Development Type:				
Footings <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Services	Roads	Levelling	Quarrying
				Pipelines
				Other (specify):
Site & weather conditions: foggy, wet underfoot				
Observations:				
middle run, running N-S has been dug see sketch sheet dated 22/1/09.				
Similar make up:-				
12m wide				
500mm deep.				
made up ground - grey flint + brick rubble at northern end. to 500mm				
Southern end:- Top 300mm = made up ground				
Bottom 200mm = orange clay natural.				
Test pit to be dug on western side down to 500mm to see nature of strata:				
500mm deep = Topsoil to 300mm dark brown peaty topsoil with brick etc - redeposited				
= 200mm of made up gravel ground containing brick				
Comments:				
Test pit proves whole site has been made up with gravel deposit containing brick ^{deposit} cavelled with topsoil then dumped on top. gravel is probably from the old gravel quarry found 30m south of site.				
Hopefully won't have to visit site again but if we do have to, then all benches will be open on 3/2/09.				

Appendix 2: List of Photographs

SITE NAME: Rickmansworth – St Joan of Arc School			SITE NO/CODE: 1136/RJA
Shot	B&W	Digital	Subject
1	✓	✓	Beam Slot eastern run, looking North
2	✓	✓	Beam Slot section – eastern run, looking West
3		✓	General shot of site, looking North
4		✓	General shot of site, looking North
5		✓	General shot of site, looking North
6		✓	Beam Slot eastern run, looking North
7		✓	Beam Slot eastern run, looking South
8		✓	Beam Slot section – eastern run, looking East
9		✓	Beam Slot section – northern run, looking South
10		✓	Working shot
11		✓	Beam Slot section – northern run, looking South
12	✓	✓	Beam Slot central run, looking South
13		✓	Beam Slot central run, looking South
14		✓	Beam Slot central run, looking South
15	✓	✓	Beam Slot section – central run, looking East
16		✓	Beam Slot section – central run, looking East
17		✓	General shot of site, looking North-east
18	✓	✓	Test Pit Section, looking West
19		✓	Test Pit Section, looking West
20	✓	✓	Test Pit Section, looking East

Appendix 3: ASC OASIS Form

PROJECT DETAILS			
Project Name:	Watching Brief: St Joan of Arc School, Highs Street, Rickmansworth, Herts		
Short Description:	<i>In January 2009 a watching brief was carried out during the ground works for a new music block at St Joan of Arc School, Rickmansworth. No deposits or finds of archaeological significance were revealed. However, as the ground works were limited in scope this does not preclude the presence of archaeological remains elsewhere on the site. The absence of artefactual evidence suggests that the site is located outside the eastern extents of the medieval town core. Its river valley location would suggest that it lay within meadowland until the construction of a house within its grounds in the 18th century</i>		
Project Type: (indicate all that apply)	Watching Brief		
Site status: (eg. none, SAM, Listed)	none	Previous work: (eg. SMR refs)	Grey works - watching brief 2007m, (Thompson 2008)
Current land use:	School	Future work: (yes / no / unknown)	no
Monument type:	N/a	Monument period:	N/a
Significant finds: (artefact type & period)	N/a		
PROJECT LOCATION			
County:	Hertfordshire	OS reference: (8 figs min)	0635 9450
District:	Rickmansworth	Parish:	Unparished
Site address: (with postcode if known)	St Joan of Arc School, High Street, Rickmansworth, WD3 1HG		
Study area: (sq. m. or ha)	30 sq m	Height OD: (metres)	c.45m OD
PROJECT CREATORS			
Organisation:	Archaeological Services & Consultancy Ltd		
Project brief originator:	N/a	Project design originator:	Archaeological Services & Consultancy Ltd
Project Manager:	Karin Semmelmann	Director/Supervisor:	Bob Zeepvat
Sponsor / funding body:			
PROJECT DATE			
Start date:	22/01/09	End date:	27/01/09
PROJECT ARCHIVES			
	Location (Accession no.)	Content (eg. pottery, animal bone, files/sheets)	
Physical:	N/a	N/a	
Paper:	Three Rivers Museum	Site records, project design, report, B&W photos and negatives	
Digital:	Three Rivers Museum	CD Rom with copies of digital files including photos	
BIBLIOGRAPHY (Journal/monograph, published or forthcoming, or unpublished client report)			
Title:	Watching Brief: St Joan of Arc School, Highs Street, Rickmansworth, Herts		
Serial title & volume:	ASC Ltd Report ref. 1136/RJA/2		
Author(s):	Martin Cuthbert BA		
Page nos	21	Date:	29/01/09