

## Archaeological Services & Consultancy Ltd

**ARCHAEOLOGICAL WORKS:  
ICKNIELD INFANTS SCHOOL  
LETCHWORTH  
HERTFORDSHIRE**

NGR: TL 21036 32940

*For Mouchel Ltd, on behalf of Hertfordshire County Council*



Martin Cuthbert BA (Hons) PIFA

June 2009

ASC: 1191/LIS/2



Letchworth House  
Chesney Wold, Bleak Hall,  
Milton Keynes MK6 1NE  
Tel: 01908 608989 Fax: 01908 605700  
Email: [office@archaeological-services.co.uk](mailto:office@archaeological-services.co.uk)  
Website: [www.archaeological-services.co.uk](http://www.archaeological-services.co.uk)



## Site Data

<i>ASC site code:</i>	LIS	<i>Project no:</i>	1191
<i>OASIS ref:</i>	archaeol2-61130	<i>Accession no:</i>	PIR: 1191 LIS
<i>County:</i>	Hertfordshire		
<i>Village/Town:</i>	Letchworth		
<i>Civil Parish:</i>	Letchworth		
<i>NGR (to 8 figs):</i>	TL 2103 3294		
<i>Extent of site:</i>	c. 50m <sup>2</sup>		
<i>Present use:</i>	School grounds		
<i>Planning proposal:</i>	Installation of a new 6-bay modular classroom unit, new footpath and 7 new car parking spaces		
<i>Planning application ref/date:</i>	09/00464/1CC		
<i>Local Planning Authority:</i>	North Hertfordshire District Council		
<i>Date of fieldwork:</i>	June 2009		
<i>Commissioned by:</i>	Mouchel Ltd Stag House Old London Road Hertford SG13 7YY		
<i>Client:</i>	Hertfordshire County Council County Hall Pegs Lane Hertford SG13 8DN		
<i>Contact name:</i>	Kevin Liles (Mouchel Ltd)		

## Internal Quality Check

<i>Primary Author:</i>	Martin Cuthbert	<i>Date:</i>	26/06/09
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<i>Revisions:</i>		<i>Date:</i>	
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<i>Edited/Checked By:</i>	Bob Zeepvat	<i>Date:</i>	26/06/09
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**Figure 1:** General location (Scale 1:25,000)

## Summary

*In June 2009 archaeological works were carried out at Icknield Infants School, Letchworth, Hertfordshire during the excavation of foundation pads and associated services, in relation to the construction of a new temporary school classroom. 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.*

### 1. Introduction

1.1 In June 2009 *Archaeological Services and Consultancy Ltd* (ASC) carried out archaeological works at Icknield Infants School, Letchworth, Hertfordshire. The project was commissioned by Mouchel Ltd on behalf of their clients Hertfordshire County Council, and was carried out according to a brief (Instone 2009) prepared on behalf of the local planning authority (LPA), *North Hertfordshire District Council*, by their archaeological advisor (AA), *Hertfordshire County Council Historic Environment Unit* (HEU), and a project design prepared by ASC (Rouse 2009). The relevant planning application reference is 09/00464/1CC.

#### 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, 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 Letchworth, in the administrative district of North Hertfordshire (Fig. 1). It is located on the west side of Letchworth, to the west of Norton Common and west of Archers Way. The site comprises a small area, c.50m<sup>2</sup>, in the west part of the grounds of Icknield School and is centred on Ordnance Survey National Grid Reference TL 2089 3275.

### 1.5.2 *Geology & Topography*

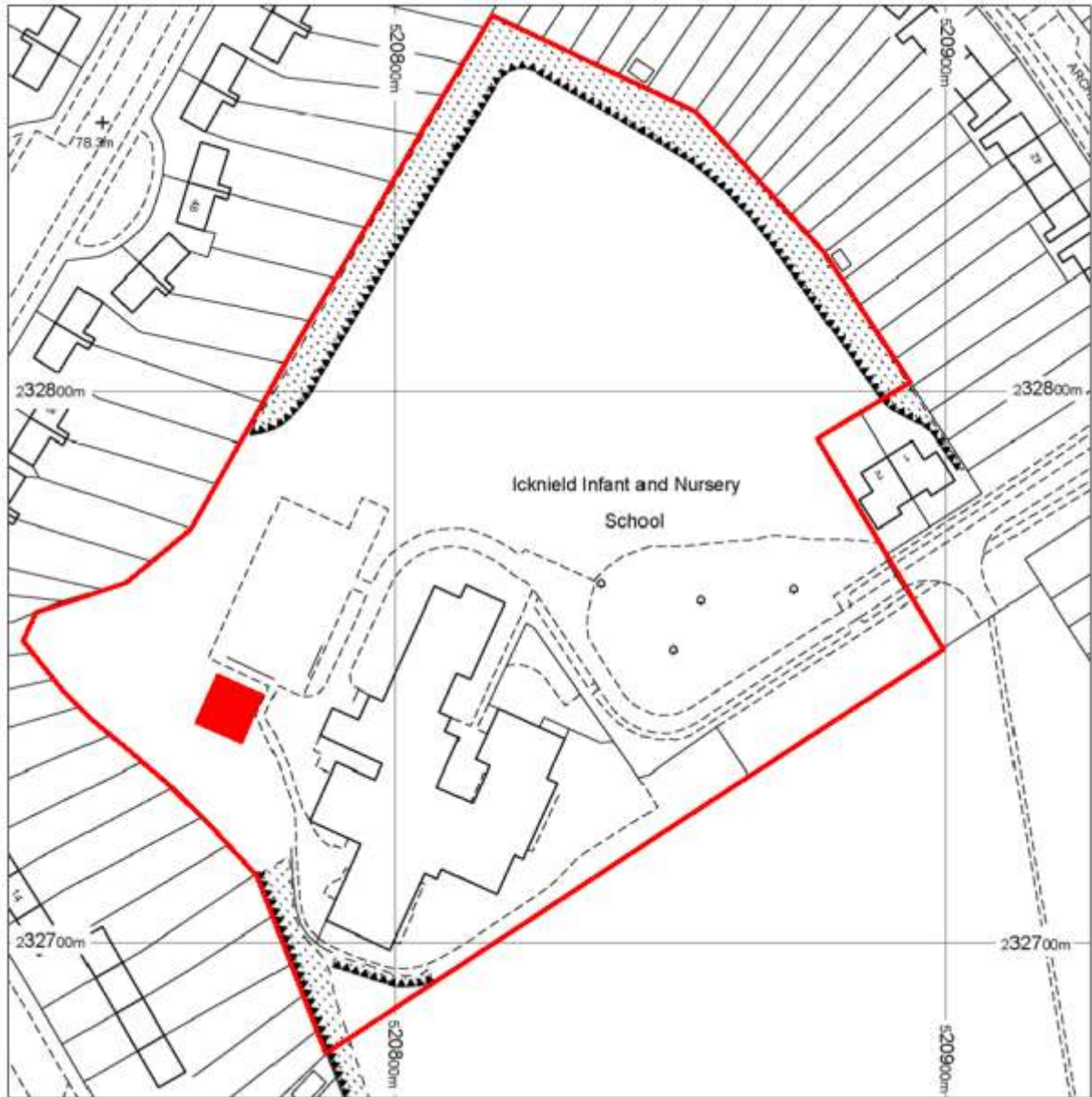
The soils of the area are of the *Hanslope Association*, which comprise *slowly permeable calcareous clayey soils*. *Some slowly permeable non-calcareous clayey soils*. *Slight risk of water erosion* (Soil Survey 1983, 411d). The underlying geology is Till, or boulder clay (BGS, Sheet 222). The site has an elevation of c.103m OD.

### 1.5.3 *Proposed Development*

The proposed development comprises the installation of a new 6-bay mobile classroom unit, retention of 2 existing modular classroom units, a new footpath and 7 new car parking spaces (Fig. 2).

## 1.6 *Previous Archaeological Work*

In October 2007, ASC carried out an archaeological evaluation at the school, in advance of the construction of a children's centre. A single trench was excavated adjacent to the school entrance but no archaeological remains were present in the trench (Rouse 2007).



**Figure 2:** Site plan and location of proposed development (Scale 1:1250)

## 2. Aims & Methods

### 2.1 Aims

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

- The investigation and recording of any surviving archaeological remains within the areas of development
- The analysis, conservation, and long-term storage of any artefactual/ecofactual material recovered from the site in appropriate conditions

### 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 brief (Section 4), which required:

- A strip and record excavation prior to the development of undisturbed areas
- 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
- Sub-soil stripping under archaeological supervision
- Rapid examination of spoil-heaps for archaeological material
- A programme of post-fieldwork analysis, archiving and publication

### 2.4 Constraints

Because of the large quantities of made ground that covered the entire site, it was agreed with the AA that it was not plausible to carry out the strip, map and record excavation as specified above. For this reason, an intensive watching brief was undertaken on the development. No other constraints were identified prior to the fieldwork and none were encountered during the monitoring visits.



### 3. Archaeological & Historical Background

HER = Historic Environment Record number

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 the focus of interest is likely to lie in the later prehistoric and Roman periods.

3.2 **Early Prehistoric** (before 600BC)

Little detailed large scale archaeological work has been undertaken in Letchworth but this area of the Chilterns was of considerable importance during the later prehistoric periods. Communications during the Bronze Age and later periods were probably dominated by an important track, now known as the *Icknield Way*, which passed c.1km north of the development site (eg. Holgate 1995, fig. 10) and a number of round barrows and ring ditches (burial mounds) have been recorded adjacent to the Icknield Way. A number of bowl barrows, notably the Ickleford Tumulus (HER73) and a defended enclosure known as *Wilbury Hill* (HER2389) are also situated in the area.

A variety of flint tools have been recorded in the area surrounding the development site (HER350, 352 and 357) and further examples have been noted to the west, in and around Hitchin (Thompson 2005).

3.3 **Iron Age** (600BC- 43AD)

An important Iron Age *oppidum* (defended settlement) was situated to the north-east of the development site, at Baldock. During this period the area formed part of the territory of the *Catuvellauni* (Branigan 1987). A number of Iron Age settlements have been identified in the Letchworth area, notably an important site at Blackhorse Road c. 3.5km northeast of the development site (Moss-Eccardt 1971).

3.4 **Roman** (AD43-c.450)

During the Roman period settlement in the area was dominated by a small town at Baldock (Thompson 2002). The development site is situated southwest of the town, but a number of scattered rural settlements are known in the area, notably at High Avenue (HER10782) c.1km south of the development site. Roman coins (HER1263, 1273), pottery (HER1443, 4201, 1276) and other artefacts (HER1457) have also been found in the surrounding area.

3.5 **Saxon - Medieval** (c.450-1500)

The origin of Letchworth is not well understood but the settlement was probably founded during the Saxon period as it is mentioned in the Domesday Survey of 1086 when it was assessed at 10 hides (Williams & Martin 2003, 381). The medieval settlement was situated c.2km southeast of the development site and was dominated by the church of St Mary which dates from the 13<sup>th</sup> century (Pevsner & Cherry 1977, 233-234).

The development site probably comprised open land during these periods and is likely to have formed part of the open field system of the parish of Letchworth.

3.6 ***Post-Medieval - Modern*** (1500-present)

Letchworth Garden City was developed by Ebenezer Howard in the early 20th century and is centred to the north of the medieval village. The development site is situated on the west side of the new town, in a residential area which was developed during the mid 20<sup>th</sup> century. It currently comprises part of the school grounds

## 4. Results

- 4.1 The new development covers an area of *c.*50sq m, and replaces part of the current playground and gardens (Fig. 2). In addition to the foundation pads, ground reduction was eventually carried out across the footprint of the new building, as well as the excavation of one soakaway to the west of the new building and two service trenches to the west and east of the new build (Fig. 3).
- 4.2 ***Excavated areas*** (Fig 3, Plates 1-4)
- 4.2.1 Twelve foundation pads were excavated within the footprint of the new build. They were 0.6m wide, 1.1m - 1.8m in length, and 1.0m - 1.3m deep. All were cut through 0.1m of topsoil and turf, 0.9m of modern made ground containing brick and glass, 0.1m of mid brown silty clay subsoil and then into the natural strata consisting of beige yellow chalky clay (Plates 2 & 3). There were no archaeological features observed and no pre-modern artefacts were recovered from the up-cast deposits.
- 4.2.2 The overall ground reduction took place over the whole footprint of the new build. About 0.2m of overburden was removed and the natural strata was not reached.
- 4.2.3 The soakaway was located *c.*6.0m west of the most south-westerly corner of the new building. It measured 1.5m by 2.0m and *c.*2.2m deep, and was cut through the same deposits as the foundation pads (Plate 4). No archaeology was revealed within the soakaway.
- 4.2.4 Service trenches A and B were 0.5m wide, *c.*0.5m – 0.7m deep and of differing lengths. Both were cut through 0.1m of topsoil and turf and into the modern made ground, the natural strata was not reached and no archaeology was revealed.

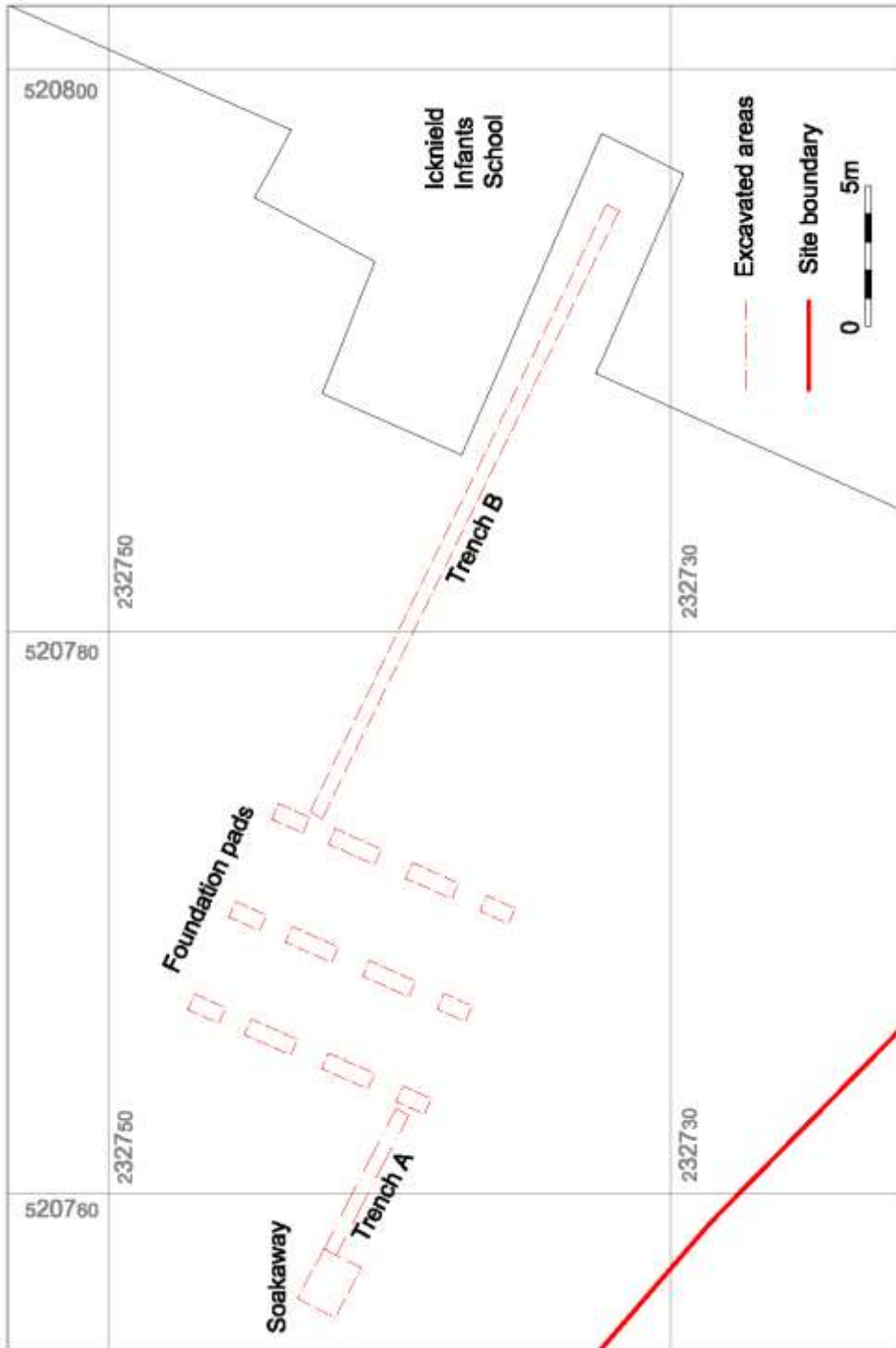


Figure 3: Excavated areas (Scale 1:250)



**Plate 1:** General working shot, looking southeast.



**Plate 2:** Foundation pad, looking east-southeast,  
1x2m 1x1m scale



**Plate 3:** Foundation pad, looking east-southeast,  
2x2m scale



**Plate 4:** Soakaway, looking northwest, 2x1m scale

## **5. Conclusions**

- 5.1 On-site conditions for the archaeological works were good and the work took place in dry weather. Reasonable co-operation was received from the contractors and a high degree of confidence is attached to the results of the archaeological works.
- 5.2 The natural subsoil layer was present at a consistent depth of c.1.0m indicating that the geological deposits are intact and had not been significantly truncated during the construction of the school. However the natural soils above the subsoil had been truncated, probably during the laying out of the school and its grounds.
- 5.3 Significant archaeological features were not observed in the excavated areas. While the existence of individual, isolated archaeological features, away from excavated areas 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.

## 6. Acknowledgements

The watching brief was commissioned by Mouchel Ltd on behalf of their clients Hertfordshire County Council. The writer is grateful to Kevin Liles of Mouchel Ltd and Jeremy Green of F J Morris for their assistance. The project was monitored by Andy Instone on behalf of the local planning authority. Thanks are also due to the construction team.

The project was managed for ASC by Karin Semmelmann MA MIFA. Fieldwork was carried out by Martin Cuthbert BA (Hons) 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. List of photographs
7. B/W prints & negatives
8. CDROM with copies of all digital files.

7.2 The archive will be deposited with *North Hertfordshire Museums Service* (PIR: 1191 LIS).

## 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*, 2<sup>nd</sup> 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)*.
- Instone, A. 2007 *Design Brief for Archaeological Monitoring: Strip, Map and Record: Ickniel Infants School, Archers way, Letchworth*. Hertfordshire County Council
- Rouse, C 2009 *Project Design for Archaeological Excavation: Ickniel Infants School, Archers way, Letchworth, Herts* ASC Ref: 1191/LIS/1

### *Secondary Sources*

- BGS *British Geological Survey 1:50,000 Series, Solid & Drift Geology*.
- Branigan, K. 1987 *Peoples of Roman Britain: The Catuvellauni*. Alan Sutton
- Holgate R. 1995 'Early Prehistoric Settlement of the Chilterns' in Holgate R (ed.) *Chiltern Archaeology: Recent Work; A Handbook for the Next Decade* Dunstable
- Moss-Eccardt, J. 1971 'An Anglo-Saxon Cemetery at Blackhorse Road, Letchworth, Hertfordshire' *Bedfordshire Archaeological Journal* **6**, 27-32.
- Pevsner N. & Cherry B. 1977 *The Buildings of England: Hertfordshire* Yale University Press London.
- Rouse C 2007, *Archaeological Evaluation: Ickniel School, Archers Way, Letchworth, Hertfordshire*. Archaeological Services and Consultancy Ltd report no. **954/LAW/2**
- Soil Survey 1983 *1:250,000 Soil Map of England and Wales, and accompanying legend* (Harpenden).
- Thompson, I. 2002 *Hertfordshire Extensive Urban Survey: Baldock* Hertfordshire County Council Historic Environment Unit.
- Thompson, I. 2005 *Hertfordshire Extensive Urban Survey: Hitchin* Hertfordshire County Council Historic Environment Unit.
- Williams, A. and Martin, G. H. 2003 *Domesday Survey: A Complete Translation* Penguin Books, London



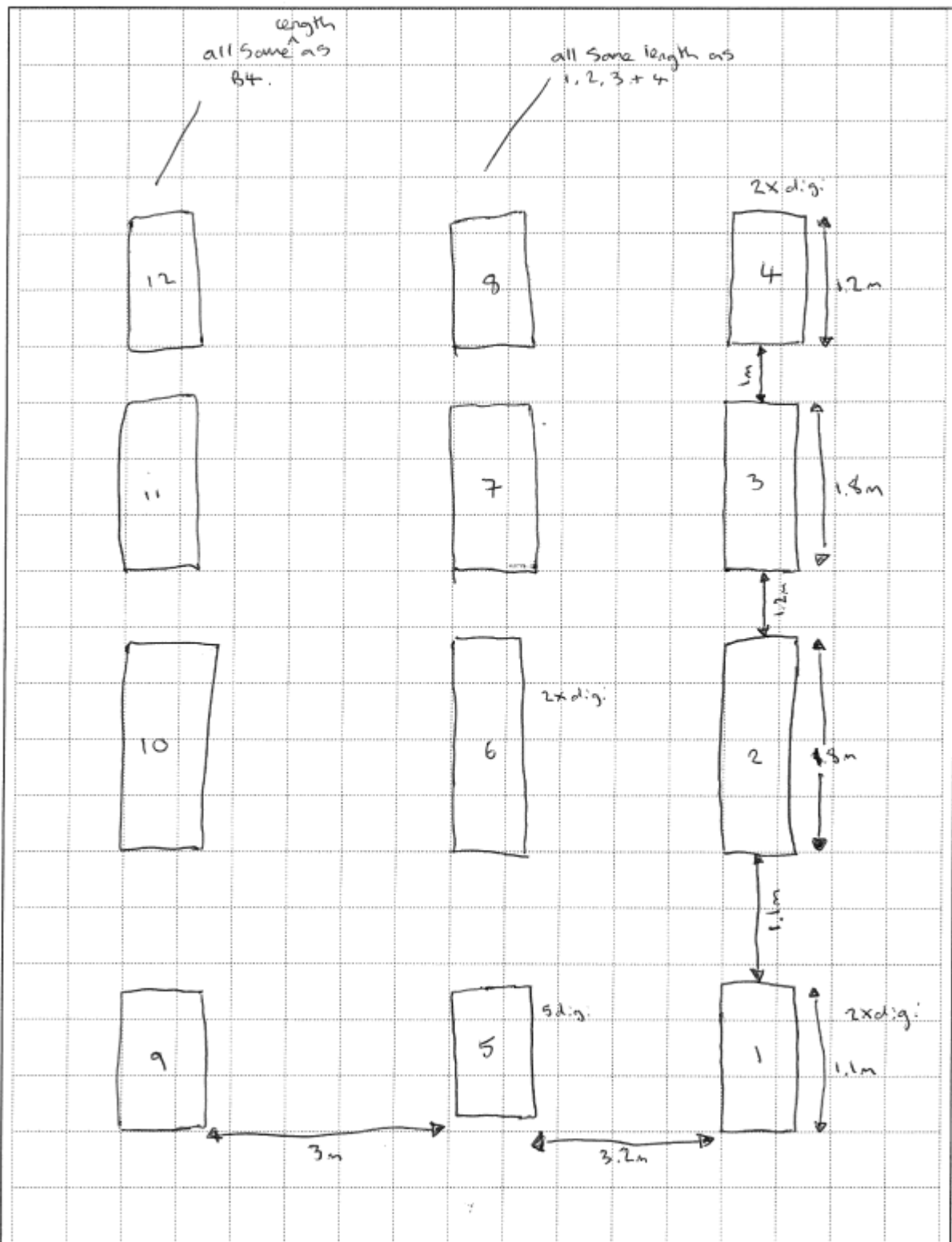
## Appendix 1: Monitoring Sheets

A.S.C. LTD		ARCHAEOLOGICAL FIELD MONITORING RECORD		
Project: Icknield Infant school		Project No/Code: 1191 / LIS	Sheet: 1 of 5.	
Letchworth		Date of visit: 17/6/09		
Client/Developer F.J. Morris Construction				
Contact: Rob Scott - Foreman.			Phone: 07887 578637	
Duration of Visit (inc. travel):	Start: 07:00	Finish: 12:30		
Completed by: M.C				
Development Type:				
Footings <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Services	Roads	Levelling	Quarrying
				Pipelines
				Other (specify):
Site & weather conditions: dry				
Observations: arrived at 8. Still setting out. no excavation took place until 9:00am				
overall ground reduction over the whole footprint isn't taking place instead 12 pads are being excavated. Spoke to the A.A. and the condition has been changed to a watching brief.				
pads - 1,2,3,4,5,6,7,8				
• 600mm wide.				
• 12m deep.				
• Varying lengths - see plan.				
• 100mm - re-deposited topsoil + turf.				
• 900mm - of made ground - containing modern brick, rubble, glass - all modern. - v. mixed and soft.				
• 100mm - mid brown - silty-clay subsoil - soft-med				
• natural - beige - yellow chalky - clay - Sand - med.				
Comments: Return tomorrow 18/6/09				



SKETCH SHEET

Site Name:	Site Code: 1191	Orientation: ↓
Context:		



RECORDING NOTES

Recorded by: M.C	Date: 17/6/09	Digitised by:	Date:	Sheet number: 2 of 5.
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A.S.C. LTD

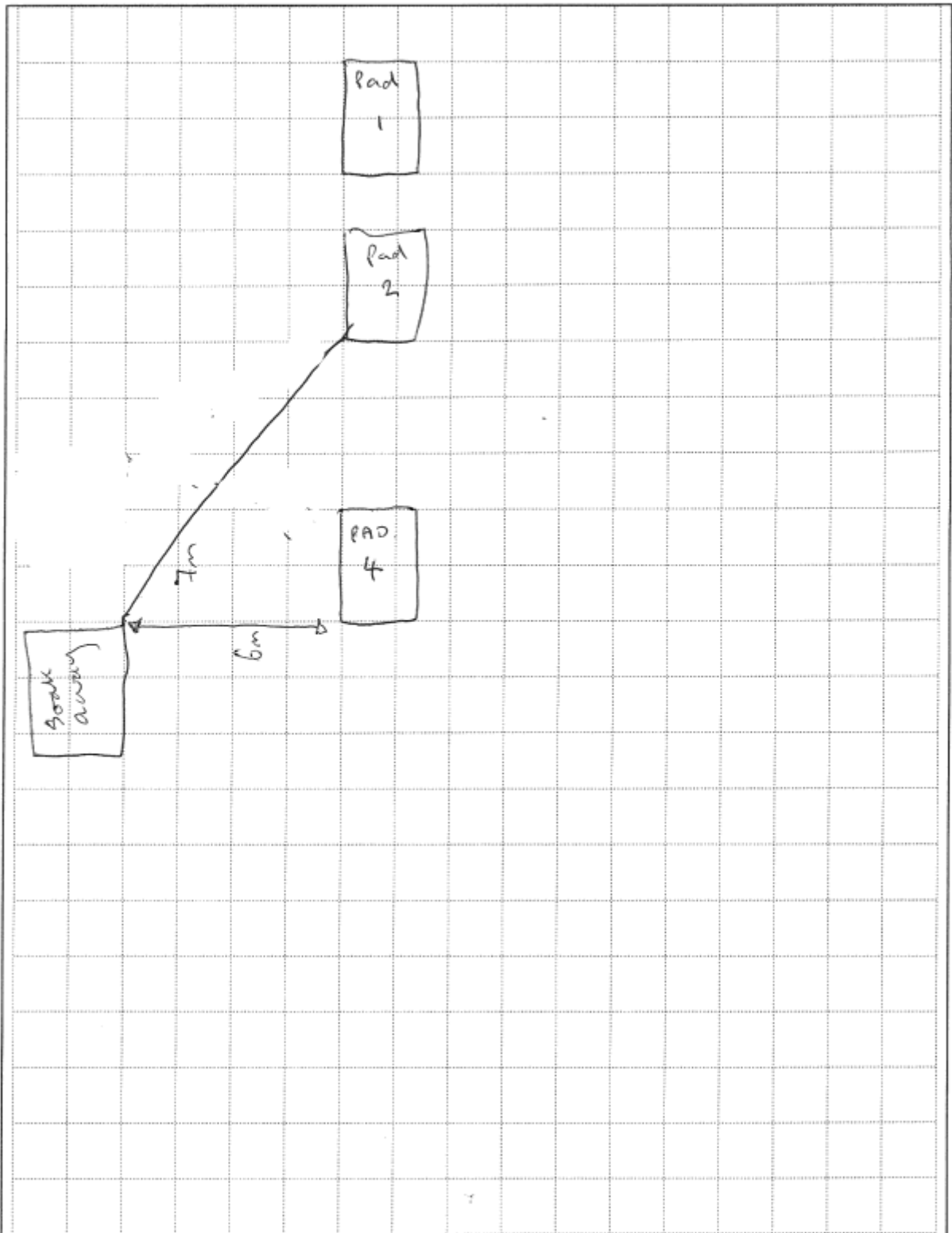
ARCHAEOLOGICAL FIELD MONITORING RECORD

Project: Icknield Infant School Letchworth.		Project No/Code: 1191 / LIS	Sheet: 3 of 5.
Client/Developer		Date of visit: 18/6/09	
Contact:		Phone:	
Duration of Visit (inc. travel):	Start: 11:30	Finish: 13:30	
Completed by: M.C			
Development Type:			
Footings	Services <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Roads	Levelling
			Quarrying
			Pipelines
			Other (specify):
Site & weather conditions: dry.			
Observations: Soakaway excavated west of new build. (see sketch.)			
1.5m wide			
2m long			
2.2 deep			
1.6m of <sup>modern</sup> made ground over natural.			
File trench from soakaway to new build excavated. 300-600mm deep all thru made ground. 500mm wide. 6m long.			
Comments: Service trench to be excavated on 23/6/09.			



SKETCH SHEET

Site Name:	Site Code: 1191 LIS	Orientation: 
Context:		



RECORDING NOTES

Recorded by: M.C	Date: 18/6/09	Digitised by:	Date:	Sheet number: 4 of 5.
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**A.S.C. LTD**

**ARCHAEOLOGICAL FIELD MONITORING RECORD**

Project: Icknield Infants School		Project No/Code: 1191 / LIS	Sheet: 5 of 5.
		Date of visit: 23/6/09	
Client/Developer FJ MORRIS construction.			
Contact:		Phone:	
Duration of Visit (inc. travel):	Start: 10:30	Finish: 12:30	
Completed by: M.C			
<b>Development Type:</b>			
Footings	Services <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Roads	Levelling
			Quarrying
			Pipelines
			Other (specify):
Site & weather conditions: dry + sunny.			
Observations: Service trenches from current school to new build. All cut through made ground. 500-700mm deep - 500mm wide. no archaeology viewed.			
Comments: no more visits required.			

## Appendix 2: List of Photographs

SITE NAME: Icknield Infants School, Letchworth			SITE NO/CODE: 1191/LIS
Shot	B&W	Digital	Subject
1		√	General working shot, looking southeast.
2		√	General working shot, looking east.
3		√	General working shot, looking east.
4	√	√	Foundation pad 5, looking east-southeast, 1x2m 1x1m scale
5	√	√	Foundation pad 1, looking east-southeast, 1x2m scale
6		√	Foundation pad 7, looking south-southeast, 1x2m scale
7		√	Foundation pad 11, looking east-southeast, 2x2m scale
8		√	General working shot, looking east.
9	√	√	Soakaway, looking northwest, 2x1m scale

## Appendix 3: ASC OASIS Form

PROJECT DETAILS			
Project Name:	Archaeological works: Icknield Infants School, Letchworth		
Short Description:	In June 2009 archaeological works were carried out at Icknield Infants School, Letchworth, Hertfordshire during the excavation of foundation pads and associated services, in relation to the construction of a new temporary school classroom. 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.		
Project Type: (indicate all that apply)	Watching Brief		
Site status: (eg. none, SAM, Listed)	none	Previous work: (eg. SMR refs)	Yes. ASC Evaluation, Ref: 954/LAW
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 2103 3294
District:	North Hertfordshire	Parish:	Letchworth
Site address: (with postcode if known)	Icknield Infant School, Archers Way, LETCHWORTH GARDEN CITY, SG6 4UN		
Study area: (sq. m. or ha)	50 sq m	Height OD: (metres)	c. 80m
PROJECT CREATORS			
Organisation:	Archaeological Services & Consultancy Ltd		
Project brief originator:	Andy Instone	Project design originator:	Calli Rouse
Project Manager:	Karin Semmelmann	Director/Supervisor:	Martin Cuthbert
Sponsor / funding body:	Herts C C		
PROJECT DATE			
Start date:	17-06-2009	End date:	23-06-2009
PROJECT ARCHIVES			
	Location (Accession no.)	Content (eg. pottery, animal bone, files/sheets)	
Physical:	North Herts museum service (PIR: 1191 LIS)	none	
Paper:		Site records, report, photographs	
Digital:		CD-ROM with copies of all digital files	
BIBLIOGRAPHY (Journal/monograph, published or forthcoming, or unpublished client report)			
Title:	ARCHAEOLOGICAL WORKS: ICKNIELD INFANTS SCHOOL, LETCHWORTH, HERTFORDSHIRE		
Serial title & volume:	ASC Ltd Report ref. 1191/LIS/2		
Author(s):	Martin Cuthbert BA (Hons) PIFA		
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