



Archaeological Services & Consultancy Ltd

**ARCHAEOLOGICAL WORKS:
WILBURY JMI SCHOOL
BEDFORD ROAD
LETCWORTH
HERTFORDSHIRE**

NGR: TL 2103 3294

For Mouchel Ltd, on behalf of Hertfordshire County Council



Martin Cuthbert BA (Hons) PIFA

July 2009

ASC: 1192/LWS/2



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Site Data

<i>ASC site code:</i>	LWS	<i>Project no:</i>	1192
<i>OASIS ref:</i>	archaeol2-61618	<i>Accession no:</i>	LET: 1192 LWS
<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.625sq m		
<i>Present land 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>	09/00619/1CC		
<i>Local Planning Authority:</i>	North Hertfordshire District Council		
<i>Date of fieldwork:</i>	July 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		

Internal Quality Check

<i>Primary Author:</i>	Martin Cuthbert	<i>Date:</i>	14/07/09
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<i>Revisions:</i>		<i>Date:</i>	
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<i>Edited/Checked By:</i>	Karin Semmelmann	<i>Date:</i>	14/07/09
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Figure 1: General location (*scale 1:25,000*)

Summary

In June and July 2009 archaeological works were carried out at Wilbury JMI School, Letchworth, Hertfordshire during the excavation of foundation pads and associated services, for a new temporary school classroom. No archaeological deposits or finds 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 and July 2009 *Archaeological Services and Consultancy Ltd* (ASC) carried out archaeological works at Wilbury JMI School, Bedford Road, 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 09/00619/1CC.

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 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 Letchworth, in the administrative district of North Hertfordshire (Fig. 1). It is located on the west side of Letchworth, to the south of Bedford Road, at the eastern end of Wilbury JMI School and is centred on Ordnance Survey National Grid Reference TL 2103 3294.

1.5.2 *Geology & Topography*

The natural soils of the area comprise the *Hanslope Association*, which consists of “*Slowly permeable calcareous soils*” (Soil Survey 1983; 411d). The

underlying geology comprises undifferentiated sand and gravel over chalky till (BGS, 221). The site is flat and lies at an elevation of c.87m OD.

1.5.3 Proposed Development

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

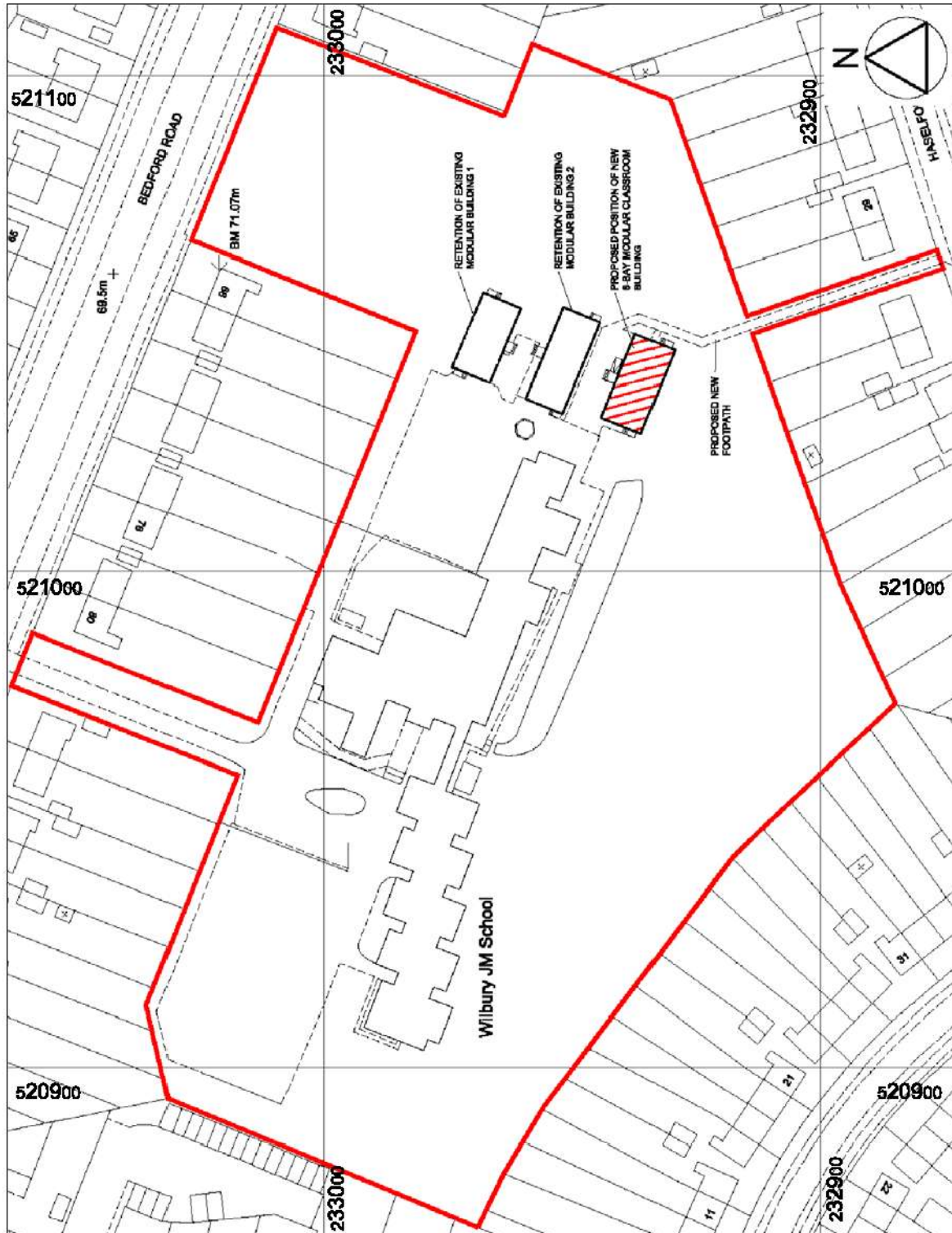


Figure 2: Site Plan (scale 1:1250)

2. Aims & Methods

2.1 Aims

In line with the requirements of the brief (Section 3), the aims of the excavation 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 the construction team's preferred methodology did not allow for an initial overall site strip of overburden and topsoil, and initial sampling revealed a severely truncated stratigraphy, an intensive watching brief programme was agreed with the AA.

A second soakaway was excavated without ASC being informed. The location of this soakaway is unknown.

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 south 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, 4).

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

North Hertfordshire largely fell within the *Catuvellauni* territory in this period. There is evidence to suggest that the defended enclosure at Wilbury Hill, c.1.0 km southwest of the site was refortified as during conflict with the neighbouring *Trinovantian* tribe (Munby 1977, 51). An *oppidum*, a defended settlement of some significance was established in Baldock and a number of other settlements have been identified in the Letchworth area. Most notable of these is the settlement at Blackhorse Road c.3km east of the development site (Moss-Eccardt 1971, 27-32).

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

During the Roman period settlement in the area was dominated by a small town at Baldock (Thompson 2002, 3). 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 earliest documented settlement in Letchworth is that held by William of Robert Gernon (Williams & Martin 2003, 381). It was at that time a 10 hide manor with a priest, and therefore possibly a church, and was worth £6.

The medieval settlement of Letchworth was situated c.2km southeast of the development site and was dominated by the church of St Mary, which dates from the 13th 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 20th century.

Wilbury Junior School opened in 1949 as one of the first post war schools built in Hertfordshire.

4. Results

- 4.1 The new development covers an area of c.625sq m, and replaces part of the current playground and playing field (Fig. 2). In addition to the foundation pads, ground reduction was eventually carried out across the footprint of the new building. A soakaway and two associated service trenches were excavated to the south of the new building (Fig. 3).
- 4.2 **Excavated areas** (Fig 3, Plates 1-6)
- 4.2.1 Twenty one foundation pads were excavated within the footprint of the new build. They were 0.6m wide, 1.1m - 2.2m in length, and 0.6m – 0.8m deep. All were cut through 0.3m of topsoil and turf, and then straight into the natural stratum consisting of mid brown-beige chalky clay (Plates 1, 2 & 3). A modern soakaway was revealed in the northwestern foundation pad containing modern brick metal and plastics. This pad was excavated to a depth of 2.2m (Plate 2). There were no archaeological features observed and no pre-modern artefacts were recovered from the up-cast deposits.
- 4.2.2 A small area of ground reduction took place in preparation for a road surface to the north of the new build. Approximately 0.2m of overburden was removed and the natural stratum was not reached (Plate 4).
- 4.2.3 The overall ground reduction took place over the whole footprint of the new build. Between 0.1m and 0.5m of topsoil was removed revealing the natural clay stratum. No archaeological features or finds were observed within this area of ground reduction (Plate 5).
- 4.2.4 The new soakaway was located c.7.0m south of the new build. It measured 1.2m by 2.7m and c.2.2m deep, and was cut through the same deposits as the foundation pads (Plate 6). No archaeology was revealed within the soakaway.
- 4.2.5 The two service trenches were 0.45m wide, c.0.6m – 1.0m deep and of differing lengths. Both were cut through 0.3m of topsoil and turf and into the natural strata. No archaeology was revealed within the service trenches.

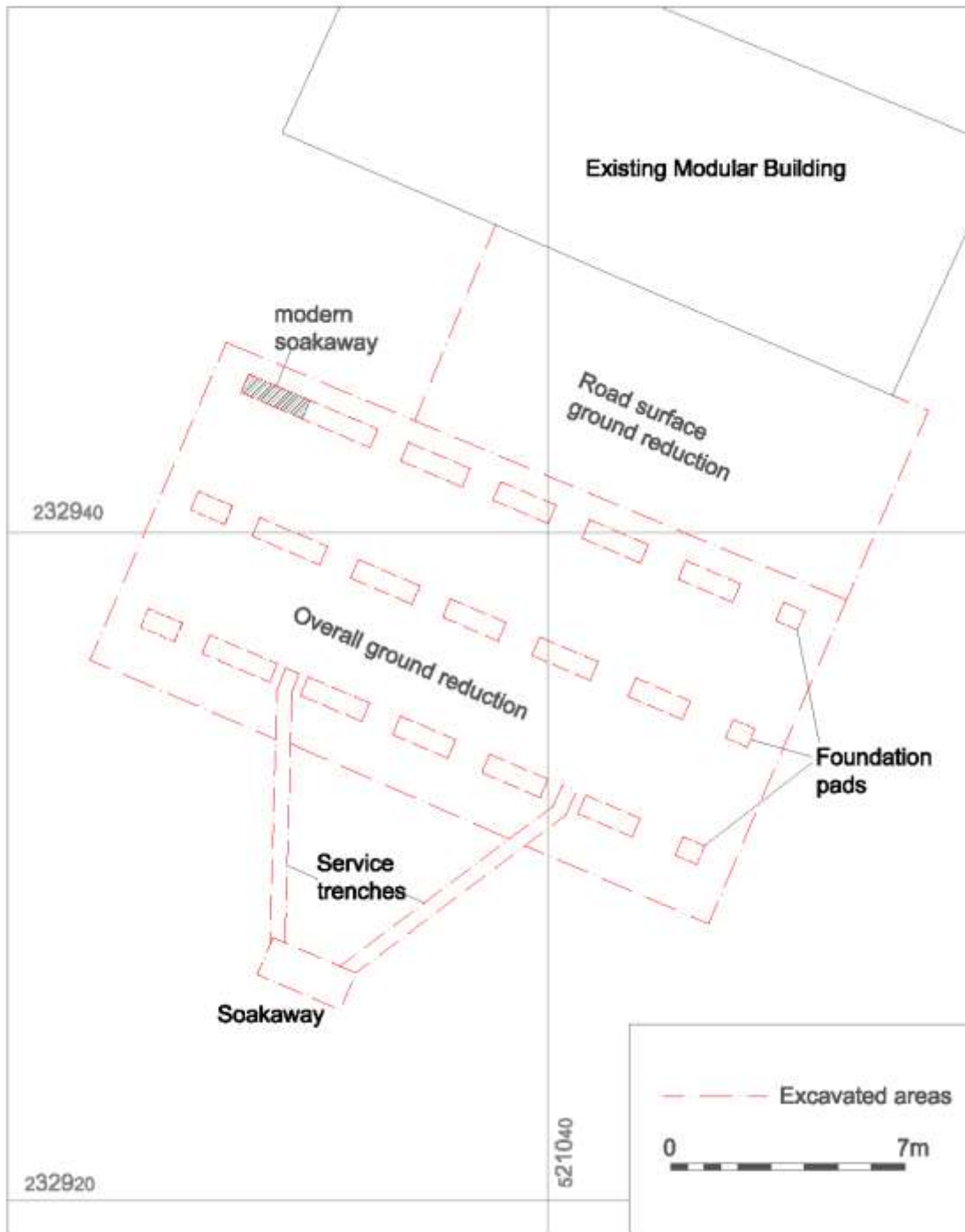


Figure 3: Excavated areas (Scale 1:200)



Plate 1: Foundation pad, looking northeast, 2x1m scale



Plate 2: General shot of modern soakaway, looking east



Plate 3: General shot, looking north



Plate 4: Road surface ground reduction, looking northeast, 2m scale



Plate 5: Overall ground reduction, looking northwest, 2m scale



Plate 6: Soakaway, looking southeast, 2m scale

5. Conclusions

- 5.1 No archaeological features were 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.
- 5.2 No natural subsoil layer was present anywhere on the site, indicating the area may have been graded during the construction of the school and school grounds.
- 5.3 ***Confidence rating***
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.

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 Karin Semmelmann.

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* (LET: 1192 LWS).

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)*.
- Instone, A. 2009 *Wilbury JMI School, Bedford Road, Letchworth: Design Brief for Archaeological Investigation via Strip, Map and Record* (HCHEU)
- Rouse, C 2009 *Project Design for Archaeological Excavation: Wilbury JMI School, Bedford Road, Letchworth, Herts* ASC Ref: 1192/LWS/1

Secondary Sources

- BGS *British Geological Survey 1:50,000 Series, Solid & Drift Geology*.
- 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.
- Munby L. M 1977 *The Hertfordshire Landscape* Hodder and Stoughton London
- 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).
- 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: w. Mary Primary School Letchworth		Project No/Code: 1192 / LWS	Sheet: 1 of	
Client/Developer		Date of visit: 30/6/09		
Contact:		Phone:		
Duration of Visit (inc. travel):	Start: 09:00	Finish: 16:30		
Completed by: M.C				
Development Type:				
Footings <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Services	Roads	Levelling	Quarrying
				Pipelines
				Other (specify):
Site & weather conditions: dry + sunny.				
Observations: oversite 21 footing pads to be dug then reduction + services. (see sketch). Site possibly truncated - no subsoil present Just 300mm of dark brown silty clay topsoil with occ pebbles onto solid mid brown-beige clay with occ chalk nodules. (natural). Pads dug to a depth of 600-800mm Varying lengths - all 600mm wide. occ grey formac spreads in topsoil. Large modern sackaway revealed in pad 15 - brick and stone rubble - plastic bucket lid. Pad 15 was extended in size (see sketch). 2m + deep.				
Comments: Due to solid nature of ground + possible truncation pads are to be dug first then the oversite reduction				



A.S.C. LTD

ARCHAEOLOGICAL FIELD MONITORING RECORD


Project: Wilbury School, Letchworth.		Project No/Code: 1192 / LWS	Sheet: 3 of 5
Client/Developer		Date of visit: 1/7/09	
Contact: Mic - Foreman		Phone:	
Duration of Visit (inc. travel):	Start: 10:00	Finish: 12:00	
Completed by: M.C			
Development Type:			
Footings <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Services	Roads	Levelling
			Quarrying
			Pipelines
			Other (specify):
Site & weather conditions: dry + sunny			
Observations: Small area of ground reduction for an area of road. 200mm of topsoil removed. Natural strata not reached (See sketch plan) no archaeology.			
Comments:			



A.S.C. LTD

ARCHAEOLOGICAL FIELD MONITORING RECORD

Project: <u>Wilbury School.</u>		Project No/Code: <u>1192 / LWS</u>	Sheet: <u>4 of 5</u>
		Date of visit: <u>2/7/09</u>	
Client/Developer			
Contact: <u>Mic - Foreman</u>		Phone: <u>07897 578651</u>	
Duration of Visit (inc. travel):	Start: <u>07:30</u>	Finish: <u>15:00</u>	
Completed by: <u>M.C</u>			
Development Type:			
Footings <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Services <input type="checkbox"/>	Roads <input type="checkbox"/>	Levelling <input type="checkbox"/>
		Quarrying <input type="checkbox"/>	Pipelines <input type="checkbox"/>
			Other (specify):
Site & weather conditions: <u>dry + sunny</u>			
Observations: <u>overall ground reduction within building footprint 100mm - 500mm</u>			
<u>Td soil removed revealing natural orange clay</u>			
<u>no archaeology revealed</u>			
<u>See sketch.</u>			
Comments: <u>Services to be dug tomorrow straight into natural - dont need to see them.</u>			
<u>Spokaway to be dug next week</u>			
<u>Ring mic 9:00am Monday to get a better idea when this will be.</u>			

 A.S.C. LTD		ARCHAEOLOGICAL FIELD MONITORING RECORD				
Project: <u>wilbury school</u> <u>letchworth</u>		Project No/Code: <u>1192 1 LWS</u>	Sheet: <u>5 of 5</u>			
		Date of visit: <u>6/7/09</u>				
Client/Developer						
Contact:			Phone:			
Duration of Visit (inc. travel):	Start:	Finish:				
	<u>12:00</u>	<u>17:00</u>				
Completed by: <u>M.C</u>						
Development Type:						
Footings	Services <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Roads	Levelling	Quarrying	Pipelines	Other (specify):
Site & weather conditions: <u>dry + Sunny</u>						
Observations: <u>excavation of a soakaway, south of the new build, (see extra sheet).</u> <u>soakaway was 2.7m x 1.2m + 2.3m deep.</u> <u>then topsoil straight into chalky clay (natural).</u> <u>no arch viewed.</u> <u>associated service trenches were 0.45m wide and 600mm-1.0m deep. -no arch.</u>						
Comments: <u>2nd soakaway to be excavated on:</u> <u>monday 13/7/09.</u>						

Appendix 2: List of Photographs

SITE NAME: Wilbury School, Letchworth, Hertfordshire			SITE NO/CODE: 1192/LWS
Shot	B&W	Digital	Subject
1		√	General shot, looking east
2		√	General shot, looking north
3		√	General shot, looking north
4		√	General shot, looking west
5		√	General shot, looking north
6	√	√	Foundation pad, looking northeast, 2x1m scale
7		√	Foundation pad, looking northeast, 2x1m scale
8		√	General shot of modern soakaway, looking east
9		√	General shot of modern soakaway, looking east
10		√	General shot of modern soakaway, looking east
11		√	General shot of modern soakaway, looking east
12		√	General shot of modern soakaway, looking east
13		√	General shot, looking north
14		√	Road surface ground reduction, looking northeast, 2m scale
15		√	Road surface ground reduction, looking northeast, 2m scale,
16		√	Overall ground reduction, looking northwest, 2m scale
17		√	Overall ground reduction, looking northwest, 2m scale
18		√	Overall ground reduction, looking northwest, 2m scale
19		√	Soakaway, looking northeast, 2m scale
20	√	√	Soakaway, looking southeast, 2m scale

Appendix 3: ASC OASIS Form

PROJECT DETAILS			
Project Name:	Wilbury JMI School, Bedford Road, Letchworth, Hertfordshire		
Short Description:	In June and July 2009 archaeological works were carried out at Wilbury JMI School, Letchworth, Hertfordshire during the excavation of foundation pads and associated services, for a new temporary school classroom. No archaeological deposits or finds 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)	N/a
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)	Wilbury JMI School, Bedford Road, Letchworth, Hertfordshire, SG6 4DU		
Study area: (sq. m. or ha)	625 sq m	Height OD: (metres)	c.87m
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:	30-06-2009	End date:	06-07-2009
PROJECT ARCHIVES			
	Location (Accession no.)	Content (eg. pottery, animal bone, files/sheets)	
Physical:	North Herts Museum Service (LET: 1192 LWS)	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: Wilbury JMI School, Bedford Road, Letchworth, Hertfordshire		
Serial title & volume:	ASC Ltd Report ref. 1192/WPS/2		
Author(s):	Martin Cuthbert BA (Hons) PIFA		
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