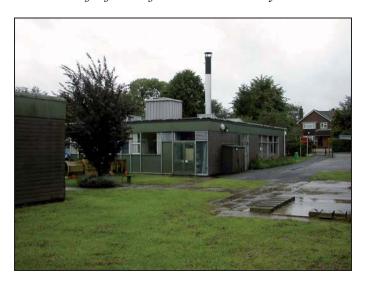


Archaeological Services & Consultancy Ltd

ARCHAEOLOGICAL DESK-BASED ASSESSMENT: SHEPHALL GREEN INFANTS SCHOOL, STEVENAGE, HERTFORDSHIRE

on behalf of Hertfordshire County Council



Jonathan R Hunn BA PhD MIFA

August 2004

ASC: 604/SSI/01

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Site Data

ASC project code: SSI	ASC Project No: 604		
County:	Hertfordshire		
Village/Town:	Stevenage		
Parish:	Shephall		
NGR:	TL 25545-22665		
Extent of site:	52m x 62m (0.32 ha; 0.8 acre)		
Present use:	Infant school		
Planning proposal:	unknown		
Planning application ref/date:	tba		
Local Planning Authority:	Stevenage Borough Council		
Date of assessment:	31/8/04		
Client:	Hertfordshire County Council c/o Vincent and Gorbing Sterling Court, Norton Roadd, Stevenage Herts, SG1 2JY		
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Internal Quality Check

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Revisions:		Date:	
Edited/Checked By:		Date:	

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CONTENTS

Sui	ımmary	4
1.	Introduction	4
2.	Setting	6
3.	Aims & Methods	7
4.	Archaeological & Historical Evidence	9
5.	Walk-Over Survey	19
6.	Statutory Constraints on Development	22
7.	Conclusions	23
8.	Acknowledgements	23
9.	Sites & Monuments Data	24
10.	. References	25
11.	. Cartographic Sources.	27
12.	. Aerial Photographs	27
Fig	gures:	
1.	General location	3
2.	Site location	5
3.	Plan of the area in 1779	13
4.	Extract from the Tithe Apportionment survey of 1846	14
5.	Plan of the area in 1881 (OS First edition 25" scale)	15
6.	Plan of the area in 1898 (OS Second edition 25" scale)	16
7.	Plan of the area in 1924 (OS Third edition 25" scale)	17
8.	Plan of the area in 1964 (OS 1:1250 scale)	18
9.	Terrain modification (Impact assessment)	21
Pla	ates:	
Со	over: Shephall Green Infants School looking south west	
1.	View south of the front of the school grounds	20
2.	View east of entrance and parking area	20
3.	View north of front of the school	20
4.	View north across playing area	20
5.	View west across playing area and temporary classroom structure	20
6	Showing slope of the terrain looking north	20

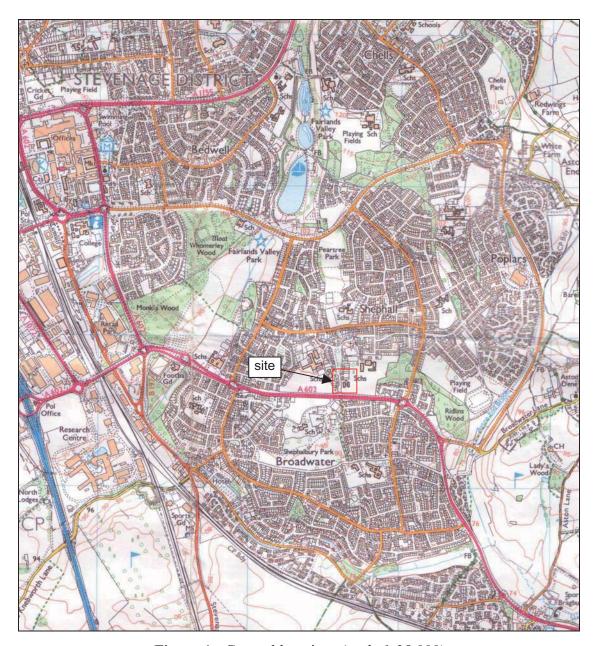


Figure 1: General location (scale 1:25,000)

Summary

In the summer of 2004, ASC Ltd undertook a desk-based assessment on an area of land at Shephall Green Infants School on behalf of Hertfordshire County Council. The project was required in response to possible land use change as part of the Local Education Authorities review of Infant School provision in the Stevenage area. No archaeological deposits are known to be present on the site, though its location and condition suggests that the site could have some potential for earlier human settlement or activity.

1 Introduction

- 1.1 In August 2004 Archaeological Services and Consultancy Ltd (ASC) carried out an archaeological desk-based assessment of a site at Shephall Green Infants School, Stevenage (NGR 25545-22665: Fig. 1). The project was commissioned by Claire McIntosh of Vincent and Gorbing on behalf of Hertfordshire County Council. The assessment was carried out according to a standard County Archaeology Office (CAO) brief.
- 1.2 The work was required as part of a review of nursery school provision in the Stevenage area.

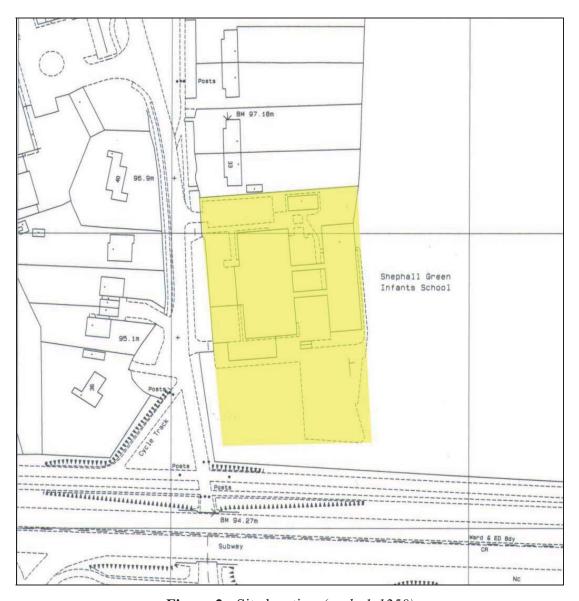


Figure 2: Site location (scale 1:1250)

2 Setting

2.1 Location & Description

The site, which is less than an acre in extent (0.32 ha) is located at the southern end of Shephall Green towards the eastern side of Stevenage. The site lies 280m south of the medieval church of St Marys in what is essentially a sub-urban environment.

2.2 Geology & Topography

The site is situated on a plateau (90-95m AOD), equidistant between two tributaries of the river Beane, the Aston End Brook 1.1 km to the east and another which flows down Fairlands Valley 1.15 km to the west. The soils in the area, where not modified by building development belong to Hanslope Association which are derived fro derived from a Chalky till Soil Survey 1983). The soil association is described as follows: 'The soils are developed in chalky till on low plateaux and gently to strongly sloping valley flanks...Hanslope soils have a calcareous brownish subsurface horizon. It passes downwards into a dense mottled substrate containing many chalk stones' (Hodge et al 1984, 209).

2.3 Existing Buildings and Access

The buildings on the site are all single storey and flat roofed and were built in the early 1960s (Fig. 2). There is also a temporary classroom located on the south west corner of the site.

3 Aims and Methods

- An archaeological desk-based assessment is an assessment of the known or potential archaeological resource within a given area, consisting of a collation of existing archaeological, historical and topographical information in order to identify the likely extent, character and quality of the known or potential archaeological resource, in order that appropriate measures might be considered.
- 3.2 The desk-based assessment was carried out according to the Institute of Field Archaeologists' Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Desk-Based Assessments (IFA 2001), Standards for Field Archaeology in the East of England (Gurney 2003) and the relevant section of ASC's own Procedures Manual.
- 3.3 The following readily available sources of information were consulted for the desk-based assessment:

3.3.1 *Archaeological Databases*

Archaeological databases represent the standard references to the known archaeology of an area. The principal source consulted was the Hertfordshire Sites & Monuments Record (SMR), Hertford. The study area employed in the SMR search includes the site itself, and a surrounding study area of approximately 1 km radius.

3.3.2 Historic Documents

Documentary research provides an overview of the history of a site and its environs, suggesting the effects of settlement and land-use patterns. The principal source consulted was the Hertfordshire Archives and Local Studies centre (HALS) and County Hall, Hertford.

3.3.3 *Cartographic & Pictorial Documents*

Old maps and illustrations are normally a very productive area of research. The principal sources consulted were those located at Hertford and are listed further on in section 11.

3.3.4 *Air Photographs*

Given favourable light and crop conditions, air photographs can reveal buried features in the form of crop and soil marks. They can also provide an overview of and more specific information about land use at a given time. The principal source consulted were examined by Zeepvat (1996). It doubtful, given the land use, that anything of significance would have been noted in the last eight years.

3.3.5 Geotechnical Information

No geotechnical information was available for this study other than that available from previous soil surveys.

3.3.6 Secondary & Statutory Sources

The principal sources consulted were the *Victoria History of the County of Hertfordshire* (Page 1908, 443-6) and *The History of Stevenage* (Trow-Smith 1958). Other sources are list further on in section 10.

4 Archaeological and Historical Evidence

The local and regional settings of archaeological sites are factors that are taken into consideration when assessing the planning implications of development proposals. The following sections provide a summary of the readily available archaeological and historical background to the development site and its environs.

The study area lies within an area of archaeological and historical interest, and the site has the potential to reveal evidence of a range of periods. The location of known archaeological and historical sites are listed in Section 9.

4.1 Archaeological & Historical Background to the Study Area

4.1.1 Prehistoric (before 600BC)

Evidence for this period is poorly represented in the Stevenage area. Only two finds, both Neolithic stone axes are known from the area. One was recovered from Barnwell School, Shephall (SMR 424) 450m south east from the site, and south of Ridlins Wood (SMR 611) less than 870m south south east of the assessment site. The only major prehistoric site identified in the area is at Bragbury End some 2km south east of Shephalbury, where fieldwalking and an evaluation revealed quantities of struck flint, Beaker and Bronze Age pottery, and gullies, pits and postholes suggesting occupation in the late Beaker and Bronze Age periods (Murray 1994). The plateau edge location of the Bragbury End site is typical of this period in Hertfordshire: contemporary sites have been examined at Blackhorse Road, Baldock (Moss-Eccardt 1988), at Cole Green near Hertford (Walker 1994) and at The Grove, near Abbots Langley (Le Quesne & Stevens 2001).

4.1.2 *Iron Age* (600BC-AD43)

Information on this period tend towards the later end of the phase and is found at specific settlement sites. The closest site is at Shephallbury Manor less than 300m south west from the assessment site (SMR 11604). This consisted of what is almost certainly part of a late Iron Age enclosure (Grant and Hounsell 2003). Further afield, at the northern edge of Stevenage an enclosure site (SMR 9222) at Lobs Hole has been excavated (Hunn 1997). To what extent there is a real lack of such Iron Age sites on the Boulder Clay areas, as suggested by Bryant (1995) remains to be seen.

4.1.3 *Roman* (AD43-c.450)

During this period, the Stevenage area formed part of the tribal canton or *civitas* of the *Catuevallauni*, the capital of which was at *Verlamium* (St Albans). The character of the area was rural and agricultural, nearly equidistant from Braughing, and about 6km north of the settlement at Welwyn. A possible Roman road linking Welwyn and Baldock (SMR 4637: Viatores 1964) is said to follow the line of the B197, passing 1.5km west of the site.

Apart from two Roman coins (SMR 440 and 0452) the only finds of this period recorded in the SMR in the vicinity of Shephalbury consists of Roman brick

and tile and a coin of Constantine, recovered from a building site at the east end of Broadwater Crescent (SMR 444). The presence of brick and tile *may* indicate a Roman building, though no other structural evidence or domestic refuse has been recorded from the site, which also produced Saxon material (below). At New Farm, 2km north of Shephalbury, an occupation site has been revealed by cropmarks, and at Great Collens Wood, 2km north east, another has been indicated by finds of Roman occupation material (Hunn 1993). In addition, the site at Shephallbury Manor is also recorded as having 2nd century material (Grant and Hounsell 2003). At Boxfield Farm, Chells (SMR 4506) a Romano-British farmstead enclosed by ditches was found and partly excavated between 1988-89 (Going and Hunn 1999).

Some 400m the north west of Chells lay another enclosed settlement (SMR 9222) at Lobs Hole (Hunn forthcoming). This settlement continued into the Roman period doubling in size in the mid to late 1st century. From the end of the 1st century onwards there was a continual process of boundary modification and the appearance of a variety of internal features (shallow pits, a pond, postholes and semi-circular construction gullies. This activity appears to have tailed off in the early 3rd century and would appear to have ceased altogether by the middle of the century (*ibid*.).

The different types of rural settlement are only just beginning to be identified but on present evidence there is one every 1.6 sq km, though it should noted (above) that some sites could lie less than 0.5km from one another (*ibid.*). Roman burials have been recorded elsewhere in Stevenage: two have been reported from Brox Dell (*TEHAS* 1954, 63), while a single inhumation was found at Coreys Mill in 1841 (Page 1914, 171). However, the most important burials of Roman date known from this area are the 'Six Hills', the row of *tumuli* sited alongside the Roman road, 2km west north west of the assessment site (Fowler 1891: Dunning & Jessup 1936).

4.1.4 Saxon (c.450-1066)

The only site belonging to this period lay at the east end of Broadwater Crescent, where traces of Anglo-saxon settlement (SMR 455) were recorded on the Roman site (SMR 444) described above. The settlement evidence consisted of a rectangular sunken-features building, with possible post-holes placed centrally at either end. Shephall village itself (SMR 2626) is of probable Anglo-Saxon origin, since its landholdings prior to the Conquest are recorded in the Domesday survey.

4.1.5 *Medieval* (1066-1500)

At the time of the Norman Conquest (1066), the manor of Shephall belonged to the abbots of At Albans Abbey (Page 1908, 443). It was in the Hundred of Broadwater, but was subsequently transferred by them to the Hundred of Cashio. The Domesday Survey of 1087 records that Shephall (*Escephale*) was divided into two parts: one, of three hides, was held by the abbot of St Albans as part of the abbey demesne; the other, containing two hides, was held by Anschitil Ros of Lanfranc archbishop of Canterbury (Morris 1976, section 2.3 and 10.8). Anschitil's lands had belonged to the Abbey demesne in the time of

Edward the Confessor, and could not be sold or alienated from the church. Shortly after the survey, Abbot paul obtained Anschitil's lands for the Abbey, which continued to hold them until the Dissolution. Abbot Geoffrey granted the manor to Adam the celerer, but in the mid-12th century Abbot Ralph granted it to the kitcheners. In 1331 the manor was leased to Geoffrey de Hamele, and later in the 14th century to Robert Brome for life, for a small sum of money. Brome, however, did not keep to his agreement, and did 'much waste', causing the abbot to buy back the manor at 'great cost and trouble' (Page 1908, 443).

4.1.6 *Post-Medieval* (1500-1900)

The Abbey's tenure of Shephall was terminated during the Dissolution, when in 1542 the manor, with a pension of five shillings from the Rectory, was granted by Henry VIII to George Nodes, serjeant of the royal Buckhounds. Nodes had previously been lesee of the manor. In 1564 Nodes obtained licence to grant the manor to his nephew Charles Nodes and his heirs.

4.1.7 *Modern* (1900-present)

The manor of Shephall remained in the possession of various branches of the Nodes family until 1939, when it was sold to William Harrison Moss (Ballin 1967). In 1957 the estate and manorial rights were purchased by Stevenage Development Corporation.

4.2 The Known Archaeology & History of the Site

4.2.1 Prehistoric (before 600BC)

There is no direct information relating to this period.

4.2.2 Iron Age (600BC-AD43)

There is no direct information relating to this period.

4.2.3 *Roman* (AD43-c.450)

There is no direct information relating to this period.

4.2.4 Saxon (c.450-1066)

There is no direct information relating to this period.

4.2.5 *Medieval* (1066-1500)

In the medieval period Shephall remained a small agrarian community with a taxable population that never exceeded seventeen in 1290 (PRO E.170 120/2); thereafter it averaged seven, excluding the year 1296, until after 1322 (Hunn forthcoming). The lane onto which the school fronts is almost certainly of medieval or earlier date. The assessment site was most probably a part of a large open, sub-divided field in the medieval period.

4.2.6 *Post-Medieval* (1500-1900)

There is a court book for the manor of Shephall dated 1650 (HALS 49151), court rolls dated to between 1619-1816 (HALS D/EHa (Add)/M6 to D/Eha (Add) M7) and a late 17th century index to a court book (HALS 49142). These were not consulted for this particular assessment.

The earliest extant cartographic representation of the Shephall area in any detail is the Dury & Andrews 1766 map of Hertfordshire (Dury & Andrews 1768). This shows Shephall (*Sheephall*) village and , to the south, Shephall Bury, the manor house, at that time in the joint possession of George, Charles and Henry Nodes. The manor is shown as a group of buildings adjacent to the road leading south from Shephall, with a formal garden to the west, and parkland to the south. The area of the assessment is shown as being in a field.

A more detailed depiction of the site is shown on an estate map of 1779 (Fig. 3). At that date the assessment site formed part of *Great Bury Mead* (no. 58) which contained 8.5 acres of meadow (HALS D/EX 947/P1). In the Tithe Apportionment survey dated 1846, the same field was shown (no. 63 Fig 4) and being described as down to grass and owned by Samuel Unwin Heathcote (HALS PC 681 / 87). The Ordnance Survey 25" scale maps for 1881 to 64 are shown below (Figs 6-8).

4.2.7 *Modern* (1900-present)

In 1910 the estate of Shephall, of which the assessment site formed a part, was in the hands of the executors of Colonel Heathcote (HALS IR1 156 no.PC 48 and IR2 68/1). The site was acquired by Stevenage Development Corporation in 1957 and Shephall Green Infants Scholl built in the early 1960s (Fig 8).

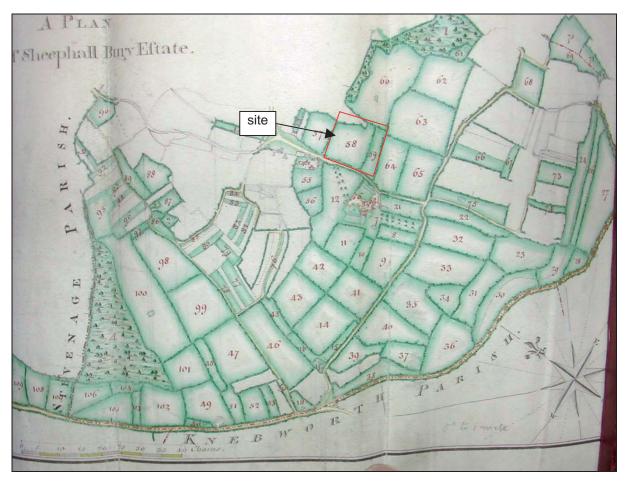


Figure 3: Plan of Shephall Green Farm in 1779 (HALS D/EX 947/P1)



Figure 4: Extract of Tithe map of 1846 (HALS PC 27)

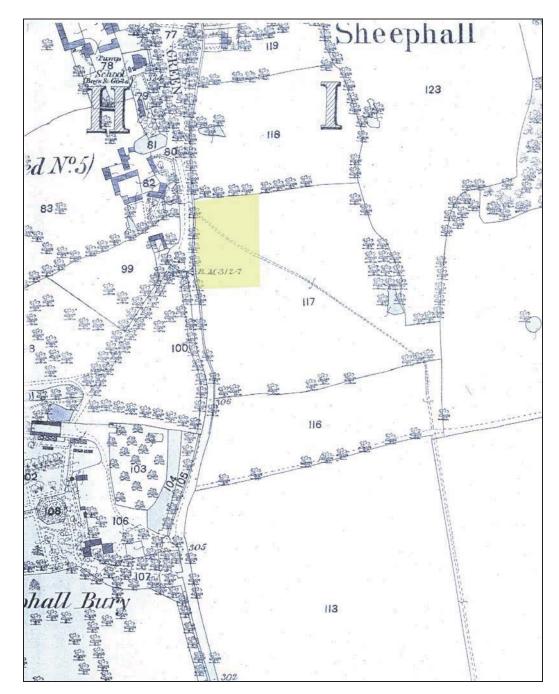


Figure 5: Extract from Ordnance Survey Plan of 1881

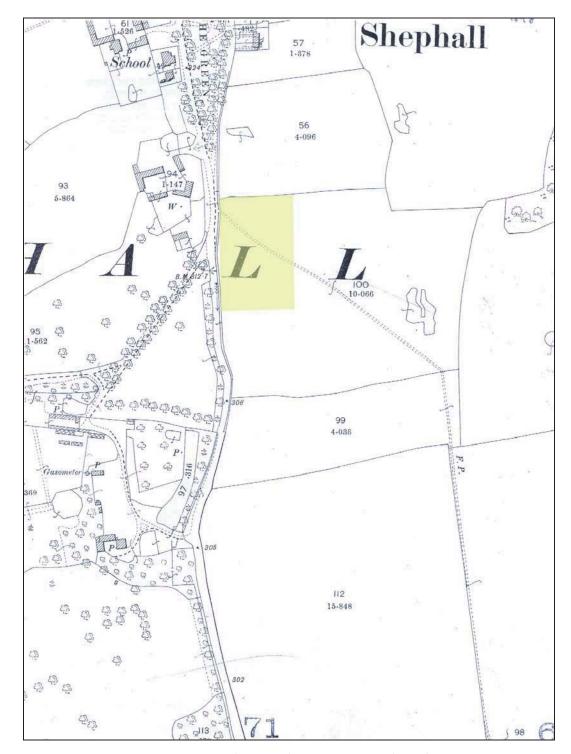


Figure 6: Extract from Ordnance Survey Plan of 1898

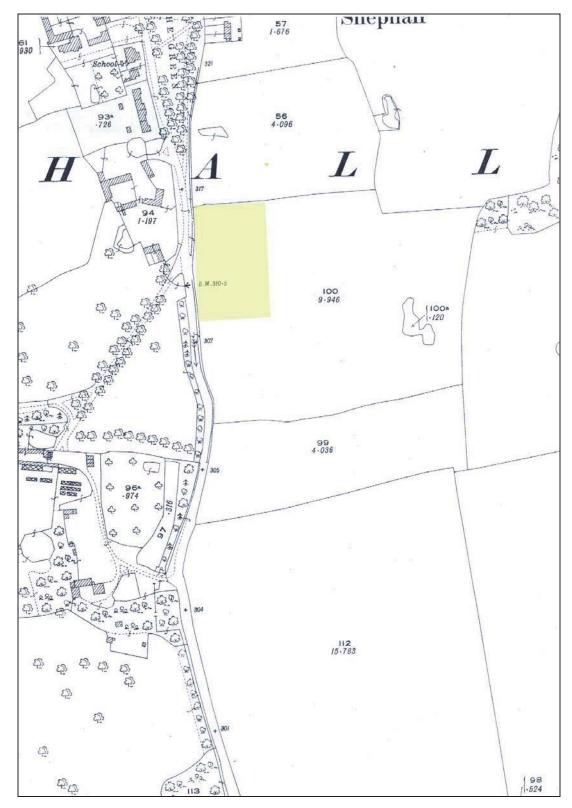


Figure 7: Extract from Ordnance Survey Plan of 1924

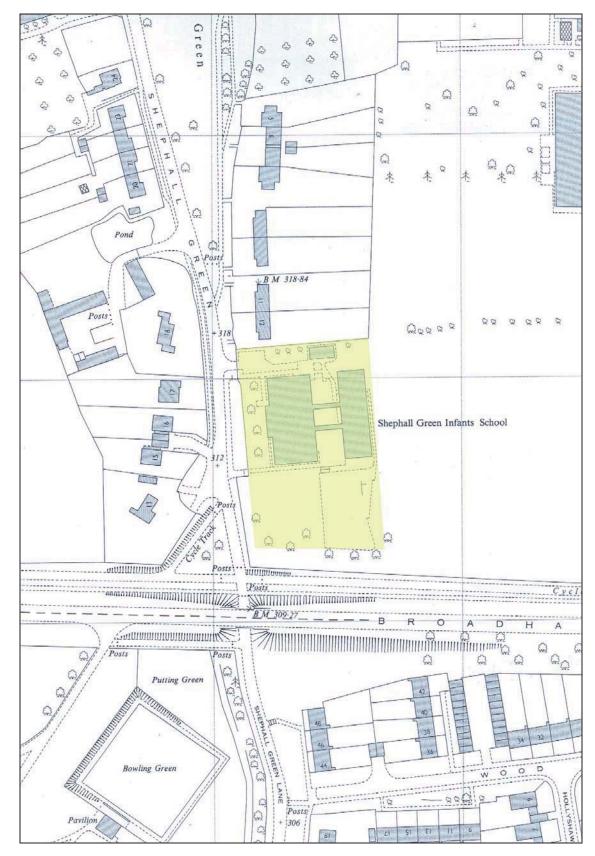


Figure 8: Extract from Ordnance Survey Plan of 1964

5 Walk-Over Survey

As part of the assessment a preliminary walk-over survey of the site was undertaken on August 26th 2004.

5.1 *Aims*

The walk-over survey was undertaken with the following aims:

- To examine any areas of archaeological potential identified during research for the assessment, in particular with a view to gauging the possible survival or condition of any remains present.
- To consider the significance of any above-ground structures, historic buildings or historic landscape features present.
- To assess the present site use and ground conditions, with a view to the appropriate deployment of fieldwork techniques, if required by the CAO.

5.2 Results

Based on the observations shown on Plates 1-6 it was possible to draw up a provisional model of the site showing the impact of previous development (Fig. 9). Assuming the foundations for the school were strip foundations then the impact of the building is likely to vary between moderate to localised severe (shown as blue on Fig 9). The terrain has been truncated beneath the playground area (Shown as red on Fig 9). However, the remainder of the site is likely to have suffered only moderate damage to its subsoils (shown as yellow) to, at worst, light damage (shown as green on Fig. 9).



Plate 1: Front of the school looking south



Plate 2: Entrance & parking area looking east



Plate 3: Front of the school looking north



Plate 4: looking north across playing area



Plate 5: Looking west across playing area and temporary classroom



Plate 6: Looking north along slope of the terrain from adjacent field

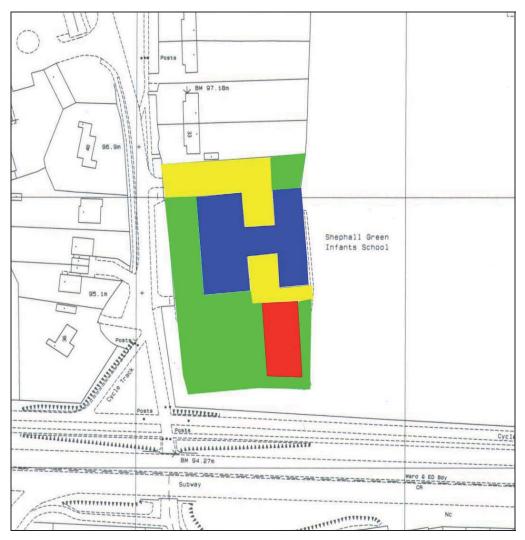


Figure 9: Terrain modification (green = light impact; yellow = moderate impact; blue = localised severe impact; red = uniform truncation impact)

6 Statutory Constraints on Development

A range of planning constraints are in place in the area of the site. These constraints relate both to the area as a whole, and to individual buildings and sites. These constraints are taken into consideration when assessing the implications of planning and other proposals made to the local authority and to other local and national bodies.

6.2 Areas of Archaeological Significance

The site is not situated within an area of Archaeological Significance.

6.3 Scheduled Ancient Monuments

The site is not situated within a Scheduled Ancient Monument.

6.4 Conservation Areas

The assessment site does not lie within a Conservation Area.

6.5 Listed Buildings

There are no listed buildings on the site.

7 Conclusions

7.1 There is no known evidence for pre-modern activity or settlement on the site. Nothing was reported to have been found on the site during the building of the school in the early 1960s. However, given the character of the building foundations and building ethos of the period this is not surprising.

7.2 Archaeological Potential of the Site

The lack of positive evidence from the assessment site precludes any certainty concerning potential archaeological deposits. Nevertheless, given the comparatively light development, its location on flat terrain and being equidistant from two water sources it is by no means improbable that there might be archaeological deposits present on the site. If this were so then preservation couldd range from average to good for a site that has experienced episodic cultivation from the post-Roman period to the mid-20th century.

7.3 The framework for the management of archaeological issues in the planning system is currently set out in the document PPG16 *Archaeology and Planning*. Decisions relating to archaeological matters within the area of the site are taken by the local authority (Stevenage District Council), acting on the advice of the Historic Environment Advisor at the County Archaeology Office (Hertford).

8 Acknowledgements

The writer is grateful to Claire McIntosh of *Vincent and Gorbing* on behalf of *Hertfordshire County Council* for commissioning and funding this assessment. Thanks are also due to Alison Tinniswood of the Hertfordshire County Council's *Sites & Monuments Record* for providing access to the SMR data. The assistance of the staff of the Hertfordshire Local Studies Library is also gratefully acknowledged.

The research for the assessment, and the walk-over survey, were undertaken for *ASC Ltd* by Jonathan Hunn BA PhD MIFA. The report was prepared by Jonathan Hunn and edited by David Fell BA MA MIFA.

9 Sites and Monuments Data

Sites listed below are those within the study area, i.e. within a 1km radius. Listed by period

SMR No	NGR	Period	Type	Description
424	TL 2585-2285	neolithic	Stone axe	Found at New Barnwell School
611	TL 2641-2210	neolithic	Dolerite axe	Found south of Ridlins wood in peat
11604	TL 2542-2239	Iron Age	enclosure	Shephalbury manor
440	TL 2478-2219	Roman	coin	Roebuck gate/Broadwater Crescent
452	TL 2522-2352	Roman	coin	191, Valley Way
736	TL 2568-2297	medieval	church	Shephall
2626	TL 257-228	medieval	village	Shephall
2918	TL 2544-2296	medieval	pottery	Broadhall Community Centre
10225	TL 2546-2242	medieval	Manor house	Shephall Bury

10 References

- The following references were consulted in the course of this assessment:
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- Zeepvat, R. J. 1996: *Shephalbury Centre, Lodge Way, Stevenage. A desk-based archaeological assessment,* in Hertfordshire Archaeological Trust Report **197**. [R227].

11 Cartographic Sources

The following maps and plans were consulted in the course of this assessment:

Date	Reference	Description
1766	Dury & Andrews	A Topographical map of Hartford-shire (HCC 1980)
1779	HALS D/EX 947/P1	Manor of Shephallbury
1846	HALS PC 681 / 87	Tithe map & Award
1881	OS First ed. 25" scale	Ordnance Survey
1898	OS Second ed. 25"	Ordnance Survey
	scale	
1910	HALS IR1 156	+ Award IR2 68/1 Land Tax of 1910
1924	OS Third ed. 25" scale	Ordnance Survey
1964	OS 1:1250 scale	Ordnance Survey
2003	OS 1:1250 scale	Ordnance Survey

12 Air Photographs

No aerial photographs were examined in the course of this assessment: