

NEW CLASSROOM BLOCK AND CAR PARK EXTENSION AT SAXON PRIMARY SCHOOL, BRIAR ROAD, SHEPPERTON

AN ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF



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Summary

An archaeological monitoring brief was conducted on land at Saxon Primary School, Briar Road, Shepperton between 2nd August and 9th September 2016. The site is a Scheduled Ancient Monument (monument no. SU142), as well as being located within an Area of High Archaeological Potential, associated to a Saxon/early medieval settlement and burial ground. A previous test pit evaluation revealed one deep lying archaeological feature, but no further archaeological deposits were encountered during this phase of work. 32 foundation pits were excavated within the south part of the site, with most excavated within made ground. Some produced finds, but of varying dates; both ancient and modern. The various services that were observed either did not impact deep enough or were excavated within disturbed soil. The car park extension was not excavated to depths that would impact on archaeological deposits. Many of the finds were of a post medieval date and only one sherd of Saxon pottery was found and was the only indicator of the potential of the underlying archaeology. No further archaeological work is recommended.

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1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 An archaeological watching brief was conducted between 2nd August and 9th September 2016 on land at Saxon Primary School, Briar Road, Shepperton in preparation for the construction of a double storied modular classroom, services and car park extension which will increase the school intake (see figures 1 and 2).

1.2 The site is located within a Scheduled Ancient Monument (monument no. SU142) designated by Historic England, and an Area of High Archaeological Potential (AHAP, see figure 3), designated by Spelthorne Borough Council, both associated to a Saxon/early medieval settlement and cemetery.

1.3 The form and scope of the work was in accordance with the Written Scheme of Investigation (Weller 2016).

1.3 The fieldwork was undertaken by staff of the Surrey County Archaeological Unit, on behalf of Surrey County Council.

2 GEOLOGY AND TOPOGRAPHY

2.1 The Geological Survey of Great Britain, sheet 269 at scale 1:50,000 shows the area of the excavations located on brickearth. The general stratigraphy above the archaeological horizon was variable, but generally consisted of:

100 - Topsoil: A dark, grey-brown silt, 0.08m - 0.11m deep.

101 (area dependent) - Subsoil: Variable, but where undisturbed was in general mid grey-brown clay sand.

Natural: The underlying natural consisted of brickearth and deeper lying sands and gravels, consistent with the wider area.

2.2 The site lies on a gentle gradient, from north to south. The River Ash runs fairly close to the southern border of the site. The site has been subject to recent tree felling and the removal of a paved area and canopy. To the north the car park is currently grassed, with a plastic mesh inter-woven into the topsoil. The swimming pool building denotes the southern border of the car park and further north are private residences.

3 METHODOLOGY

3.1 The watching brief was designed to allow the identification of any archaeological artefacts or features. Full details of methodology are found in the WSI (see Weller 2016).

3.2 Two areas of groundwork were subject to archaeological supervision and observation (see figure 4).

1. **Area A:** General turf strip, modular building pad foundation excavations and service trenches.
2. **Area B:** Car park extension, north of the swimming pool building.

3.3 Groundworks were monitored during the removal of all deposits by machine until the natural geology was revealed or archaeological features or layers were exposed. The machining process was carefully watched for the occurrence of any features or artefacts of archaeological interest that might relate to ancient activity in the immediate vicinity. The exposed sections of the trenches were also carefully examined, and the removed spoil scanned for any stray unstratified artefacts.

3 RESULTS

Area A

3.1 The general surface strip (fig 5) was conducted to remove turf and approximately 0.20m to 0.30m of subsoil. The subsoil here was fairly prolific for finds, with a number of fragments of calcined flint, occasional struck pieces of flint, a modern coin, a sherd of decorated green glaze white ware of medieval date and two sherds of modern pottery.

3.2 A total of 32 foundation pits were observed over a period of 3 days (fig 6). Only five of the pits overall displayed a probable 'natural' stratigraphy; numbers 4, 8, 20, 24 and 28 (figs 7 to 11) and are the most northern group of the pits. To a lesser extent, 12 and 16 potentially show deep disturbance, but with elements of the natural geology, in this instance sands and gravels, at lower levels than the previously mentioned foundation pits. All of the remaining pits show clear made ground, and produced finds of varying dates. No archaeological features were observed, but it should be noted that the size of the observable area within the pits would have made identification of such deposits extremely difficult.

3.3 A number of service trenches were observed during excavation (fig 12), initially around two sides of the classroom foundation (Trench 1), one running north (Trench 2) adjoining the west side of the current nursery building and another (Trench 3) projecting from the east side of the new classroom and adjoining the western classroom block. Trench 1 was, for the majority, within made ground, aside from parts of the northern east to west length. No features or finds of archaeological interest were observed. Trench 2 revealed a clay-sand geology, potentially made up in part, but revealed no features or finds of archaeological interest. Trench 3 showed no natural stratigraphy, displaying made up ground generally consisting of clay, and traversed across part of the playground. All three trenches appeared not to impact to levels that would have impacted on archaeological deposits and no features or finds of archaeological interest were observed.

Area B

3.3 A narrow service trench (Trench 4) was excavated from east to west to the immediate north of the nursery building (fig 13), was approximately 0.60m deep and ran the full length, before traversing north along the western edge of the swimming pool building. This trench displayed made, or highly disturbed, ground throughout and revealed no features or finds of archaeological interest.

3.4 Along the very northern edge of the development site a trench (Trench 5) was excavated for a series of car park flood lights and was approximately 0.40m in depth. This trench revealed a relatively undisturbed stratigraphy and the subsoil here produced a couple of fragments of calcined flint and two sherds of modern garden ceramics. This trench revealed no 'natural' horizon. No other features or finds of archaeological interest were observed.

3.5 The car park extension consisted of a general strip (fig 14) west of the current car park to a general depth of 0.30m overall. The strip barely penetrated below topsoil and as a result no features or finds of archaeological interest were observed.

4 FINDS

4.1 A small assemblage of finds was recovered and is summarised in table 1 below. The finds were examined by context and quantified by count and weight for each material type.

4.2 The majority of recovered finds were burnt flint, a common material type encountered on sites of prehistoric and medieval date, this was entirely collected from the subsoil and not within discrete archaeological features.

4.3 Pottery was restricted to just 18 sherds, all of which came from subsoils (101). All ancient pot sherds were from the body of the pot. Two of the pot sherds are green glazed WW1/WW2 (see Jones 2015 for fabric codes and descriptions) and one is decorated with a chevron pattern. The other green glazed pot sherd was of a grey/brown ware type, probably OQ. All three sherds have a date range from 13th to 15th century. Only one other pot sherd of ancient type was identified and appears to be a Saxon chaff-tempered ware (GT type), possibly Early Saxon like much similar material from the nearby excavations (Poulton 2005) but a type still in use up to the 10th or 11th century.

Site Code	Context	Material	No.	Wt (g)	Comment
SSPS16	101	Burnt Flint	12	257	
SSPS16	101	Pot	3	18	1 x chevron decorated medieval green glazed white ware, 2 x modern china
SSPS16	101	Worked Flint	3	74	1 x large potential piercer, 2 x small fragments with signs of removal (BA?)
SSPS16	101	Bone	1	8	
SSPS16	101	Copper	1	2	Cu alloy. Modern penny
SSPS16	Pit 4	Worked Flint	1	31	Possible BA piercer
SSPS16	Pit 6	CBM	1	51	Indeterminate date, poss PM
SSPS16	Pit 7	Burnt Flint	1	4	
SSPS16	Pit 7	Pot	1	48	20th century Stoneware
SSPS16	Pit 8	Animal Bone	3	29	
SSPS16	Pit 9	Pot	1	4	19th or 20th century white glazed
SSPS16	Pit 10	Pot	1	24	20th century Stoneware
SSPS16	Pit 12	Worked Flint	1	27	Primary flake removal
SSPS16	Pit 14	Glass	2	99	19th or 20th century vessel glass
SSPS16	Pit 14	Pot	3	27	2 x 20th century Stoneware, 1 x Saxon chaff tempered ware
SSPS16	Pit 15	Burnt Flint	2	4	
SSPS16	Pit 15	Worked Flint	1	38	Dubious bashed flint. BA?
SSPS16	Pit 16	Fe Object	1	684	Post med or modern.
SSPS16	Pit 17	CBM	1	57	Modern ceramic floor tile (?)
SSPS16	Pit 17	Pot	1	6	Medieval green glazed white ware
SSPS16	Pit 19	Animal Bone	1	12	
SSPS16	Pit 19	Pot	1	2	Medieval green glazed grey ware
SSPS16	Pit 25	Pot	2	34	19th or 20th century china
SSPS16	Pit 30	CBM	1	89	Modern tile fragment
SSPS16	Light Gully (101)	Burnt Flint	3	73	
SSPS16	Light Gully (101)	Pot	2	129	20th century garden ceramics

4.4 The finds assemblage indicates that there is clearly ancient activity in the wider proposal area, but add nothing to previous more formal investigations (cf Poulton 2005). The present finds do not require further study, and have been recorded to nationally recognised archive levels (ClfA 2014). The remainder of the assemblage is suitably packed for long term storage.

5 CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 As was observed during the test pitting exercise, the land within the footprint of the new classroom block is made ground. Only five of the foundation pits displayed potential natural stratigraphy, although the ground was still possibly made up, or disturbed, in part. It had been postulated that the area in question had undergone localized quarrying at some point in the recent past and the results of the watching brief appear to clarify this, due to the lack of a recognizable stratigraphy and the general mix of finds of various dates. The potential for in situ archaeological deposits north of the new classroom building should still be considered high.

5.2 The service trenches in both Area A and Area B were not deep enough to impact on any potential in situ archaeology and in general produced a distinct lack of finds. Whether deeper archaeological deposits exist at lower levels was not clarified within this phase of work and any future deep excavations would certainly require further observation, should future works exceed 0.60m.

5.3 The car park extension was the shallowest of all the groundworks conducted on site, barely breaking the full depth of the topsoil, and as mentioned above, any future works exceeding (in this instance) 0.30m, would require further observation.

5.4 It is recommended that there is no need for further archaeological involvement in relation to this development.

5.5 The statements and recommendations in 5.1-5.4 are the considered views of the Surrey County Archaeological Unit, based on the evidence presented in the earlier part of this report. It must be emphasised, however, that whether further archaeological work is required, what form it should take and when it might be scheduled are decisions to be made by the Local Planning Authority (generally acting under the advice of Surrey County Council's Heritage Conservation Team) and/or by Historic England in respect of the Scheduled Ancient Monument and any further action in response to this report should await their opinion.

6 REFERENCES

- Jones, P, 2015 *A Guide to Saxon and Medieval Pottery Type Series of Surrey*, SyAS publication
- Poulton, R, 2005 Excavations at Saxon County School, Shepperton in 1986, *Trans London Middlesex Archaeol Soc*, **56**, 45-75
- Shaikhley, N, 2016 *Saxon Primary School, Briar Road, Shepperton – Written Scheme of Investigation for the Conduct of an Archaeological Test Pit Evaluation*. SCAU unpublished report
- Weller, W, 2016 *Saxon County School, Briar Road, Shepperton. A Trial Trench Evaluation*. SCAU unpublished report.

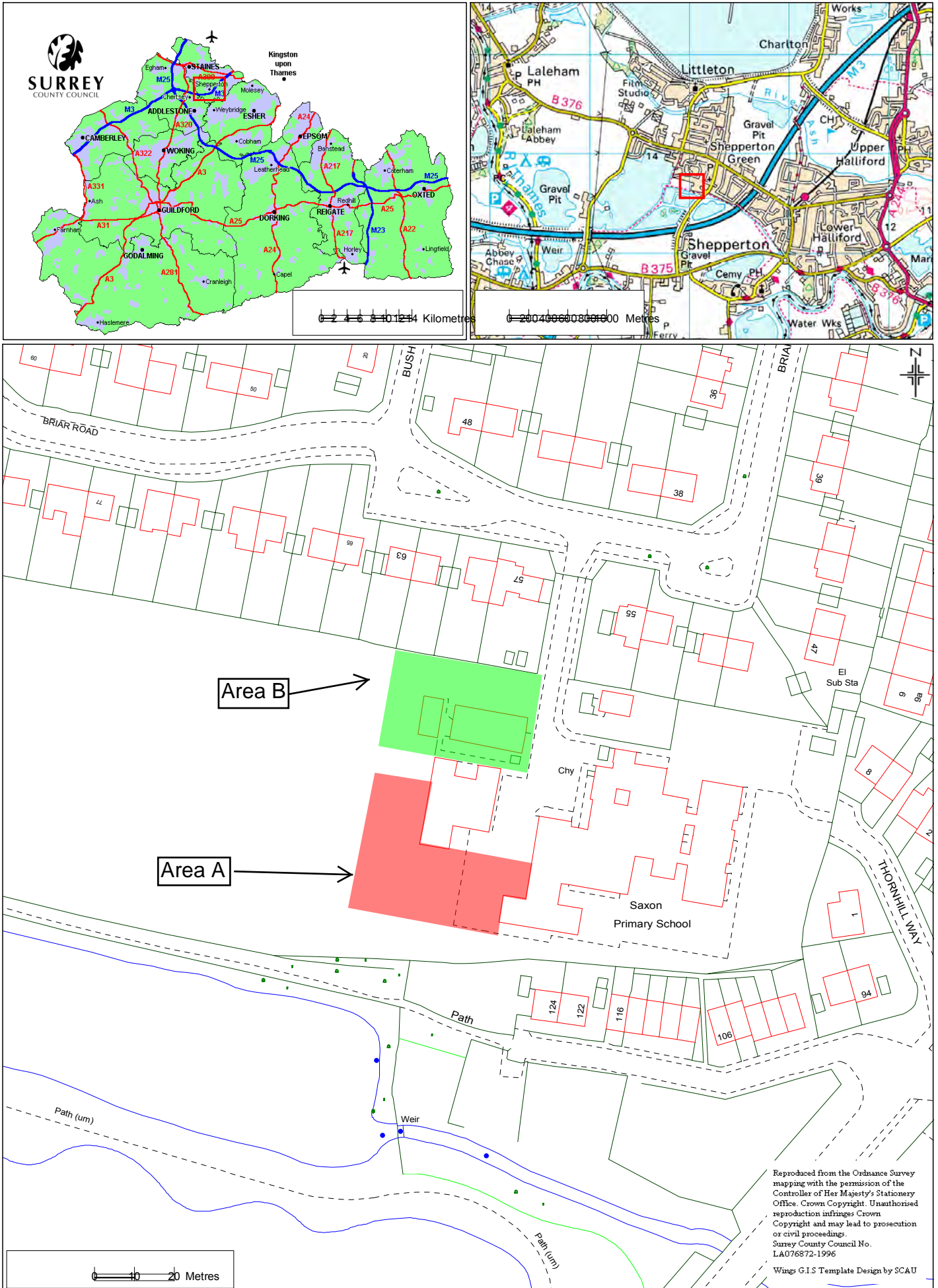
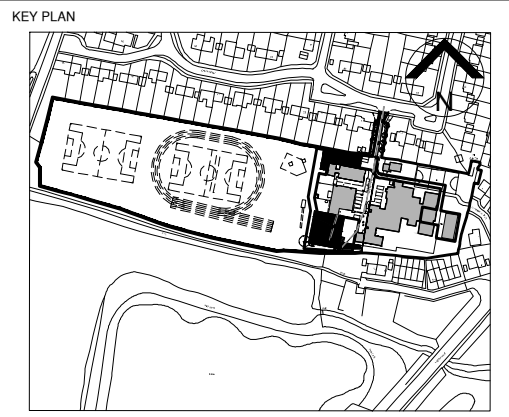
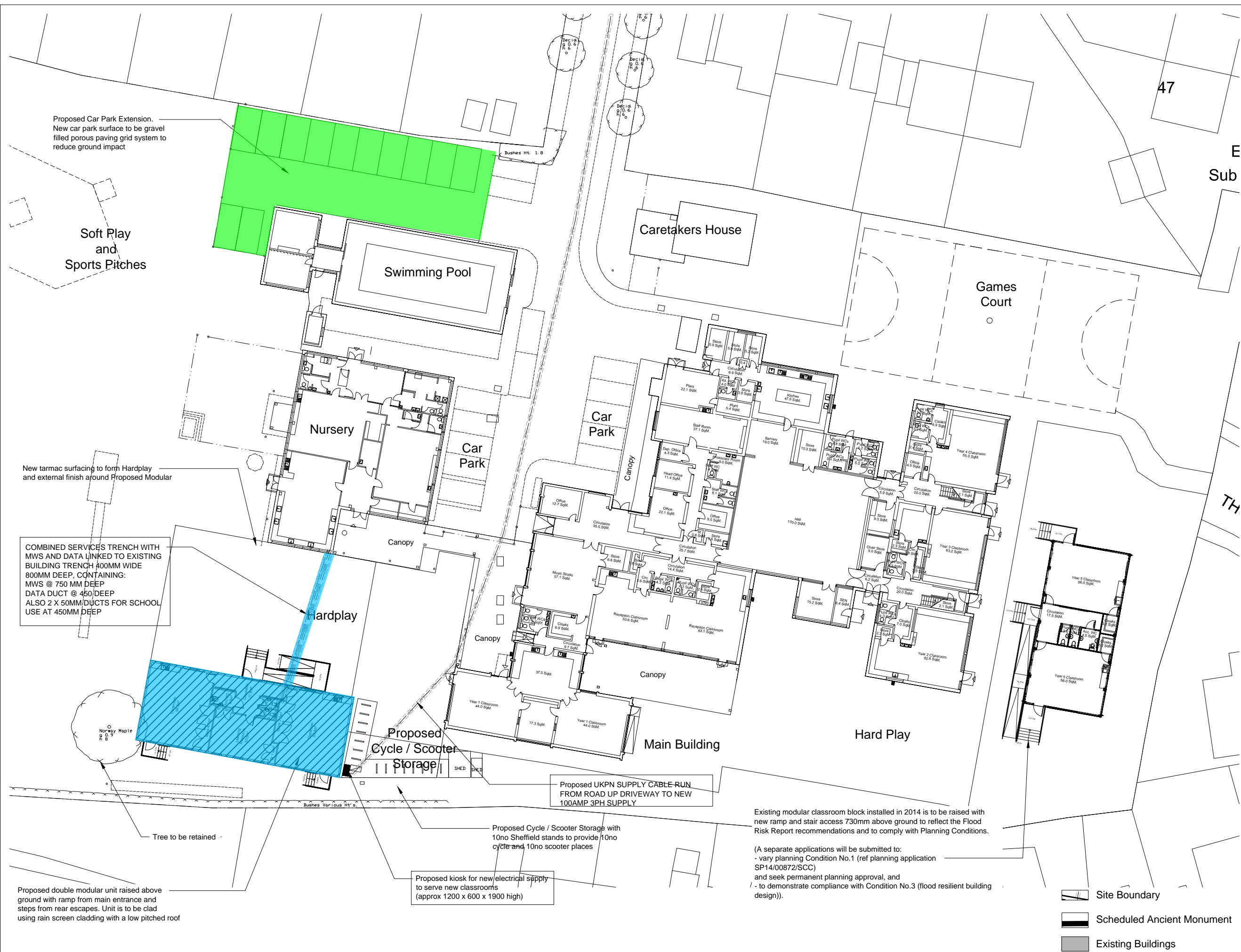
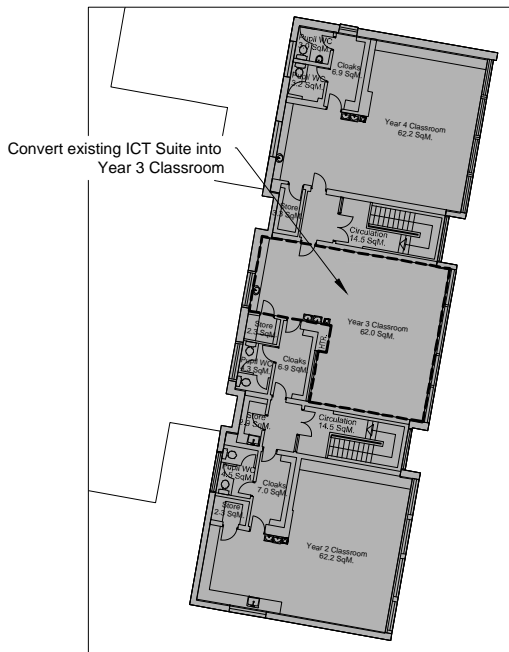


Fig 1 Saxon Primary School, Shepperton: Site Location



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Proposed First Floor Plan
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Surrey East Programme

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Expansion from a 1FE Primary to a 2FE Primary

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Fig 2 Saxon Primary School, Shepperton: Development plan

Proposed Floor Plans
 Scale 1:200 at A1 / 1:400 at A3

- Site Boundary
- Scheduled Ancient Monument
- Existing Buildings
- Proposed Modular
- Proposed External Works

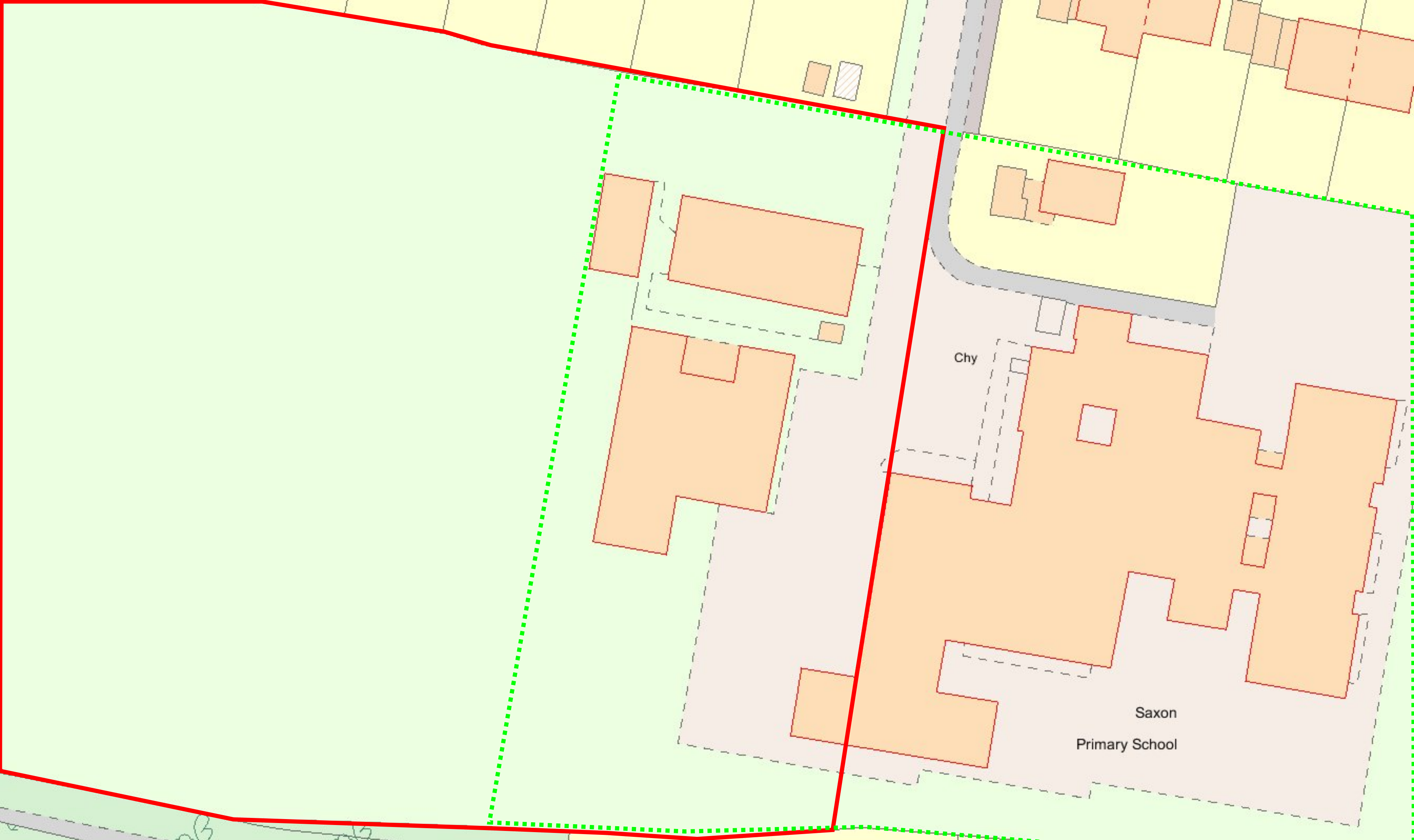
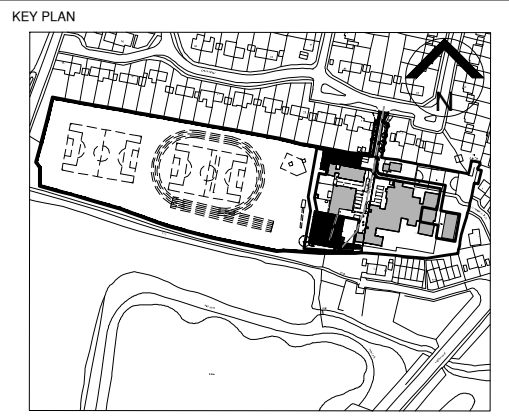
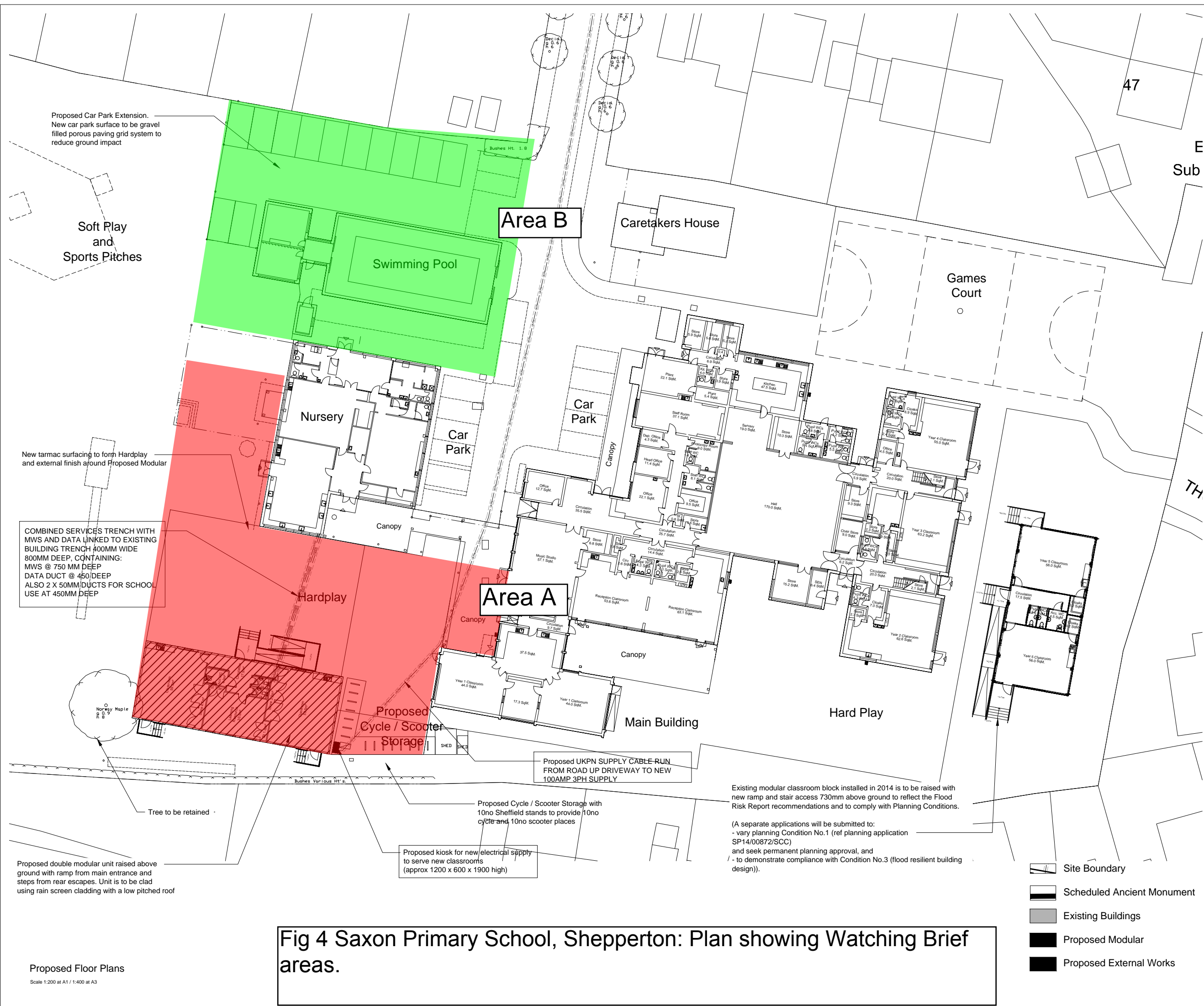
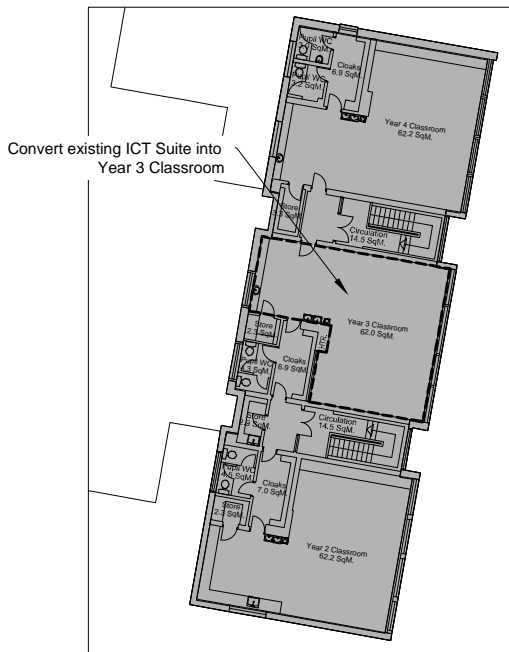


Fig 3 Saxon County School, Shepperton. Plan showing location of SAM (red), AHAP (green)



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Fig 4 Saxon Primary School, Shepperton: Plan showing Watching Brief areas.

Proposed Floor Plans
Scale 1:200 at A1 / 1:400 at A3

- Site Boundary
- Scheduled Ancient Monument
- Existing Buildings
- Proposed Modular
- Proposed External Works



Fig 5: Saxon Primary School, Shepperton. Initial turf strip – new classroom building



Fig 6: Saxon Primary School, Shepperton. Excavated foundation pits



Fig 7: Saxon Primary School, Shepperton. Foundation pit 4



Fig 8: Saxon Primary School, Shepperton. Foundation pit 8



Fig 9: Saxon Primary School, Shepperton. Foundation pit 20



Fig 10: Saxon Primary School, Shepperton. Foundation pit 24



Fig 11: Saxon Primary School, Shepperton. Foundation pit 28



Fig 13: Saxon Primary School, Shepperton. Trench 4 (North of the nursery) looking east



Fig 14: Saxon Primary School, Shepperton. Car park extension strip looking southeast

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