

A CONTROLLED  
ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF  
AT  
PARKSIDE MIDDLE SCHOOL,  
STOURBRIDGE ROAD,  
BROMSGROVE,  
WORCESTERSHIRE



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Worcestershire Archaeology  
Archive and Archaeology Service  
The Hive, Sawmill Walk,  
The Butts, Worcester  
WR1 3PD

Date: 22 July 2014  
Author: Tom Vaughan [tvaughan@worcestershire.gov.uk](mailto:tvaughan@worcestershire.gov.uk)  
and Tim Cornah [tcornah@worcestershire.gov.uk](mailto:tcornah@worcestershire.gov.uk)  
Illustrator: Carolyn Hunt  
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**Contents**  
**Summary**

**1**

**Report**

<b>1 Background.....</b>	<b>2</b>
1.1 Reasons for the project .....	2
<b>2 Aims.....</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>3 Methods.....</b>	<b>2</b>
3.1 Personnel.....	2
3.2 Documentary research .....	2
3.3 List of sources consulted .....	2
3.4 Fieldwork strategy .....	3
3.5 Structural analysis .....	3
3.6 Artefact methodology .....	3
3.6.1 Artefact recovery policy.....	3
3.7 Environmental archaeology methodology.....	3
3.7.1 Sampling policy.....	3
3.8 Statement of confidence in the methods and results .....	3
<b>4 The application site .....</b>	<b>3</b>
4.1 Topography, geology and archaeological context.....	3
4.2 Current land-use .....	4
<b>5 Structural analysis.....</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>6 Synthesis .....</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>7 Publication summary .....</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>8 Acknowledgements .....</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>9 Bibliography.....</b>	<b>5</b>



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## **A controlled archaeological watching brief at Parkside Middle School, Stourbridge Road, Bromsgrove, Worcestershire**

Tom Vaughan and Tim Cornah

### **Summary**

An archaeological watching brief was undertaken at Parkside Middle School, Stourbridge Road, Bromsgrove, Worcestershire (NGR SO 96095 71142). It was undertaken on behalf of the Property Services, Worcestershire County Council, who intends to construct an extension to the existing building to create a library and Job Centre for which a planning application has been submitted.

The excavations for the footprint of the new building to the south-west of the extant main school building were observed, to a maximum depth of 1.40m. No significant archaeological deposits, structures, layers or features were identified, nor artefacts recovered.

The natural sand was only observed within a small portion of the centre of the trench, where it was directly overlain by made ground containing modern debris. An undisturbed soil profile was not identified. It is considered that the area has been heavily landscaped, possibly during construction of the health centre adjacent. Within the centre of the trench this involved excavation into the natural sand, which would have removed any archaeological deposits, if any were present. Although only a small area of natural was exposed, it is considered that there is a low likelihood for the existence of significant archaeological deposits elsewhere on the site. The site formed one of a number of agricultural fields, and was not developed during the expansion of Bromsgrove in the 18<sup>th</sup>-19<sup>th</sup> centuries, until the construction of the school in 1912.

## Report

### 1 Background

#### 1.1 Reasons for the project

A controlled archaeological watching brief was undertaken at Parkside Middle School, Stourbridge Road, Bromsgrove, Worcestershire (NGR SO 96095 71142). It was commissioned by Property Services, Worcestershire County Council, in advance of the construction of an extension to the existing building for which a planning application has been approved by Bromsgrove District Council (reference B/13/0464).

The development site is considered to include heritage assets and potential heritage assets, the significance of which may be affected by the application (WSM 29372).

The project conforms to a brief prepared by the Planning Advisory Service of Worcestershire County Council (WCC 2014) and for which a written scheme of investigation was produced (WA 2014). The project also conforms to the *Standard and guidance for an archaeological watching brief* (IfA 2008) and the *Standards and guidelines for archaeological projects in Worcestershire* (WCC 2010). The event reference for this project, given by the HER is WSM55827.

### 2 Aims

The aims of the controlled watching brief were to:

- stratigraphically record all deposits exposed by groundworks
- record the extent and depth of the groundworks
- record all recovered finds and environmental material

### 3 Methods

#### 3.1 Personnel

The fieldwork was undertaken by Tim Cornah BA who joined Worcestershire Archaeology in 2006 and has been practicing archaeology since 2003, Michael Nicholson BSc who joined Worcestershire Archaeology in 2008 and has been practicing archaeology since 2008, and Andrew Walsh BSc MSc FSA Scot AlfA who joined WA in 2013 and has been practicing archaeology since 2004. The report was prepared by Tim Cornah and Tom Vaughan BA MA AlfA, the project manager responsible for the quality of the project. Illustrations were prepared by Carolyn Hunt BSc, MlfA.

#### 3.2 Documentary research

Prior to fieldwork commencing a search was made of the Historic Environment Record (HER).

#### 3.3 List of sources consulted

##### *Cartographic sources*

- 1840 Transcription of Bromsgrove Tithe map
- 1<sup>st</sup> edition, 1889, Ordnance Survey Map, scale 6': 1 mile
- 1929, Ordnance Survey Map, scale 6': 1 mile
- 1938, Ordnance Survey Map, scale 6': 1 mile
- 1954-63, Ordnance Survey Map, scale 1:10,000

##### *Documentary sources*

Published and grey literature sources are listed in the bibliography.

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### **3.4 Fieldwork strategy**

A detailed specification has been prepared by Worcestershire Archaeology (WA 2014).

Fieldwork was undertaken between the 14 March and the 9 April 2014. The site reference number and site code is WSM 55827.

A single trench, amounting to c 1,099m<sup>2</sup> in area, was excavated over the site area of c 9,812m<sup>2</sup>, representing a sample of c 11%. It comprised the footprint of the new building. The location of the trench is indicated in Figure 2.

Deposits considered not to be significant were removed under archaeological supervision using a 360° tracked excavator, employing a toothless bucket. Subsequent excavation was undertaken by hand. Clean surfaces were inspected and selected deposits were excavated to retrieve artefactual material and environmental samples, as well as to determine their nature. Deposits were recorded according to standard Worcestershire Archaeology practice (WA 2012).

### **3.5 Structural analysis**

All fieldwork records were checked and cross-referenced. Analysis was effected through a combination of structural, artefactual and ecofactual evidence, allied to the information derived from other sources.

### **3.6 Artefact methodology**

#### **3.6.1 Artefact recovery policy**

The artefact recovery policy conformed to standard WA practice (WA 2012; appendix 2). In the event, no finds pre-dating the modern period were recovered. All finds were determined to be of modern, 20<sup>th</sup> century date and not retained.

### **3.7 Environmental archaeology methodology**

#### **3.7.1 Sampling policy**

Sampling was undertaken according to standard WA practice (WA 2012). In the event no deposits were identified which were considered to be suitable for environmental analysis.

### **3.8 Statement of confidence in the methods and results**

Trench 1 was excavated to a specific formation depth (1.40m below the present ground surface) required for the new building, rather than to the full depth of potential archaeological deposits, with the result that deposits may remain buried and unobserved, however they will also be undisturbed. Therefore the methods adopted allow a high degree of confidence that the aims of the project have been achieved.

## **4 The application site**

### **4.1 Topography, geology and archaeological context**

The site was located on ground at 91m AOD at roughly the same height as Market Street, immediately south-west of the former school building. The north-west side of the site was built up with modern material. The underlying geology of the site is mapped as Bromsgrove Sandstone Formation (BGS 2014). Superficial deposits of Holt Heath Sand and Gravel Member are mapped to the south-east of the site.

The earliest known cartographic evidence for the use of the site comes from the Tithe Map of 1840. The land parcels to the north, east and west of this site are all named in a manner suggestive of agricultural use, and a number of them are named directly as fields. The parcel in which the site is located is named as 'Park'. To the south of the site, the land parcels which make up the town of Bromsgrove are not named but clearly show the extent of the urban nature of

Bromsgrove at this time. The 1<sup>st</sup> edition Ordnance Survey map of 1889 confirms this arrangement, and indicates the fields as 'Churchfields', north of roads which are later identified as Market Street and Parkside. The 1929 Ordnance Survey map shows Parkside School for the first time with a sports ground to the south-west, off a road identified as 'Parkside', which is now the north-west alignment of Market Street.

Although some prehistoric material culture has been recovered within the wider parish, the first significant feature within the vicinity of the site is the Romano-British road (WSM 30529) which ran from Droitwich to Rednal through Bromsgrove. The development of the current town appears to have been to the south-east of the site, potentially from the early medieval period onwards. This is demonstrated by the suggested presence of a Saxon Minster (WSM 19680) although its exact location has never been confirmed. The right to hold a weekly market in the town was given in the year 1200 (VCH III). By the 16<sup>th</sup> century the town was beginning to take on some of its current character, as shown by the buildings at 108 and 110, High Street (WSM 02009 and WSM 02010), both of which are thought to date from this period. A number of other buildings are believed to date from the 17<sup>th</sup> century but it was during the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries that the character of the present town was established through its built heritage. This was the result of flourishing industries such as cloth and nail manufacture (VCH III). It is during this latter period that the town expanded from its medieval heart to the southern edge of the site.

An archaeological evaluation was undertaken in 2008 in advance of construction of the Health Centre to the immediate south-west of the present site (Cook 2008; WSM 40522). Two trenches were excavated across the former school sports ground, revealing a thick topsoil over natural sandy clay, which had been cut by a north-west to south-east aligned re-cut ditch and a pit, both of which date from the earlier 18<sup>th</sup> century or later, although the ditch does not appear on the 1840 Tithe map.

#### **4.2 Current land-use**

The site is within the bounds of the former Parkside School which is a Grade II listed building, opened in 1912 and closed in 2008. The proposed development will encompass the former school building as new offices for Bromsgrove District Council and the extension will include a job centre and library. Google earth (accessed April 2014) shows a building within the location of Trench 1 that is likely to relate to the use of the school.

### **5 Structural analysis**

The trenches and features recorded are shown in Figure 2. The results of the structural analysis are presented in Appendix 1.

Only three deposits were observed (Fig 3). Natural yellow/red sand (101) was observed within the deepest section of the trench within the north-west half, at a depth of about 1.05m from the present ground surface. This was directly overlain by sandy silt (100) which contained modern debris such as plastic, wood and tarmac fragments. This deposit made up a raised bund over much of the extent of Trench 1. Silty loam (102) was seen at the south-eastern end of the trench, immediately below the topsoil. This contained modern coarse building material.

### **6 Synthesis**

No significant archaeological deposits, structures, layers or features were identified, nor artefacts recovered. The natural sand was only observed within a small portion of the centre of the trench, where it was directly overlain by made ground containing modern debris. An undisturbed soil profile was not identified. It is considered that the area has been heavily landscaped, possibly during construction of the health centre adjacent. Within the centre of the trench this involved excavation into the natural sand, which would have removed any archaeological deposits, if any were present. Although only a small area of natural was exposed, it is considered that there is a low likelihood for the existence of significant archaeological deposits elsewhere on the site. The site formed one of a number of agricultural fields, and was not developed during the expansion of



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Bromsgrove in the 18<sup>th</sup>-19<sup>th</sup> centuries, until the construction of the school in 1912. Further, the evaluation adjacent (Cook 2008), whilst exposing an undisturbed soil profile, revealed only minor two features of 18<sup>th</sup>-19<sup>th</sup> century date.

## 7 Publication summary

Worcestershire Archaeology has a professional obligation to publish the results of archaeological projects within a reasonable period of time. To this end, Worcestershire Archaeology intends to use this summary as the basis for publication through local or regional journals. The client is requested to consider the content of this section as being acceptable for such publication.

*A controlled archaeological watching brief was undertaken at Parkside Middle School, Bromsgrove, Worcestershire (NGR SO 96095 71142; HER ref WSM 55827). It was commissioned by Property Services, Worcestershire County Council in advance of the construction of an extension to the existing building for which a planning application has been approved by Bromsgrove District Council.*

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## 8 Acknowledgements

Worcestershire Archaeology would like to thank the following for their kind assistance in the successful conclusion of this project, Lindsay Harris and Jean George, (Property Services, Worcestershire County Council), Kevin Zamur and Jamie Travis (Thomas Vale Construction), and Aisling Nash (Historic Environment Record Officer, Worcestershire County Council).

## 9 Bibliography

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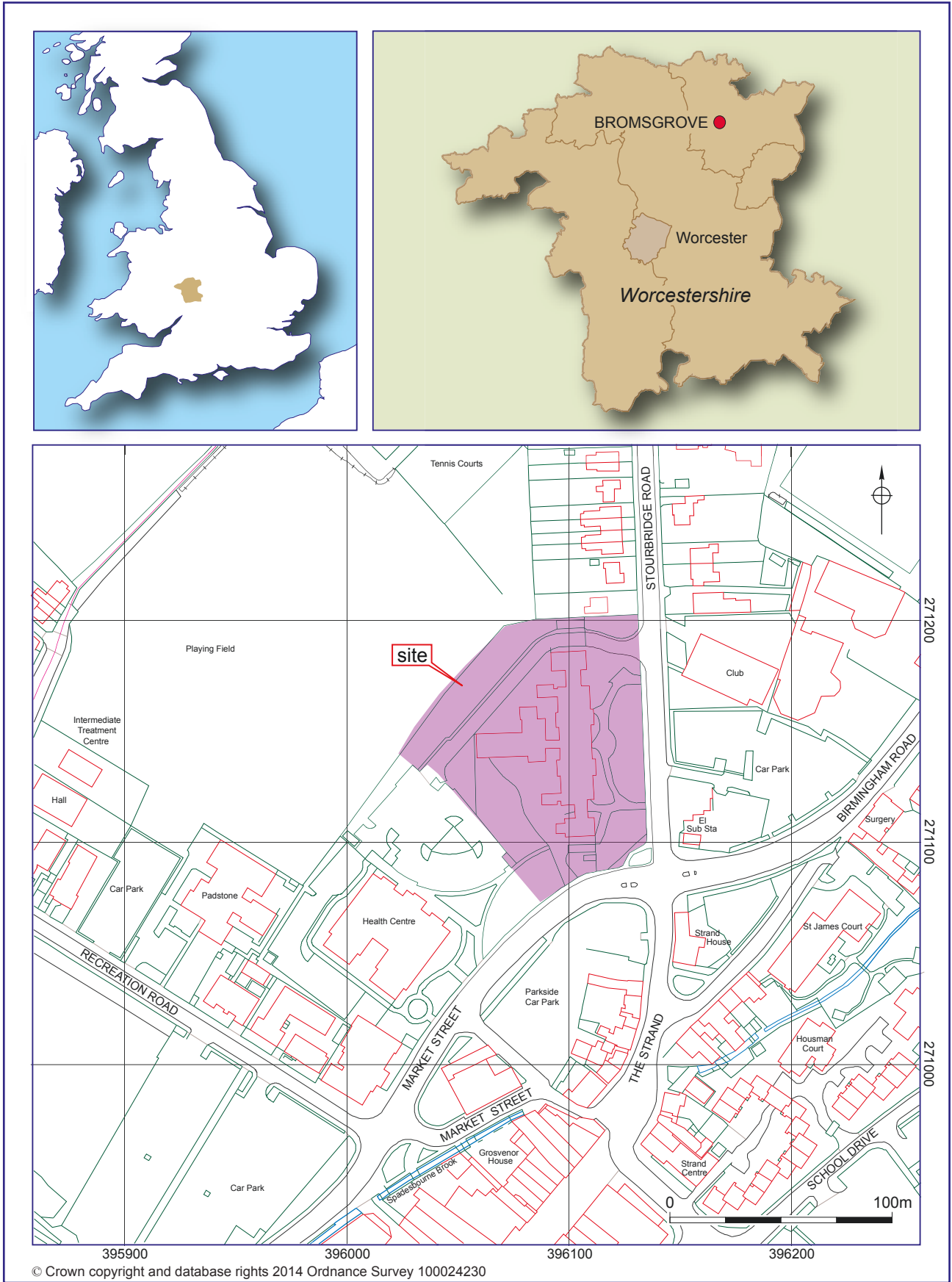
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WCC 2010 *Standards and guidelines for archaeological projects in Worcestershire*, Planning Advisory Section, Worcestershire Archive and Archaeology Service, Worcestershire County Council unpublished report **604**, amended July 2012

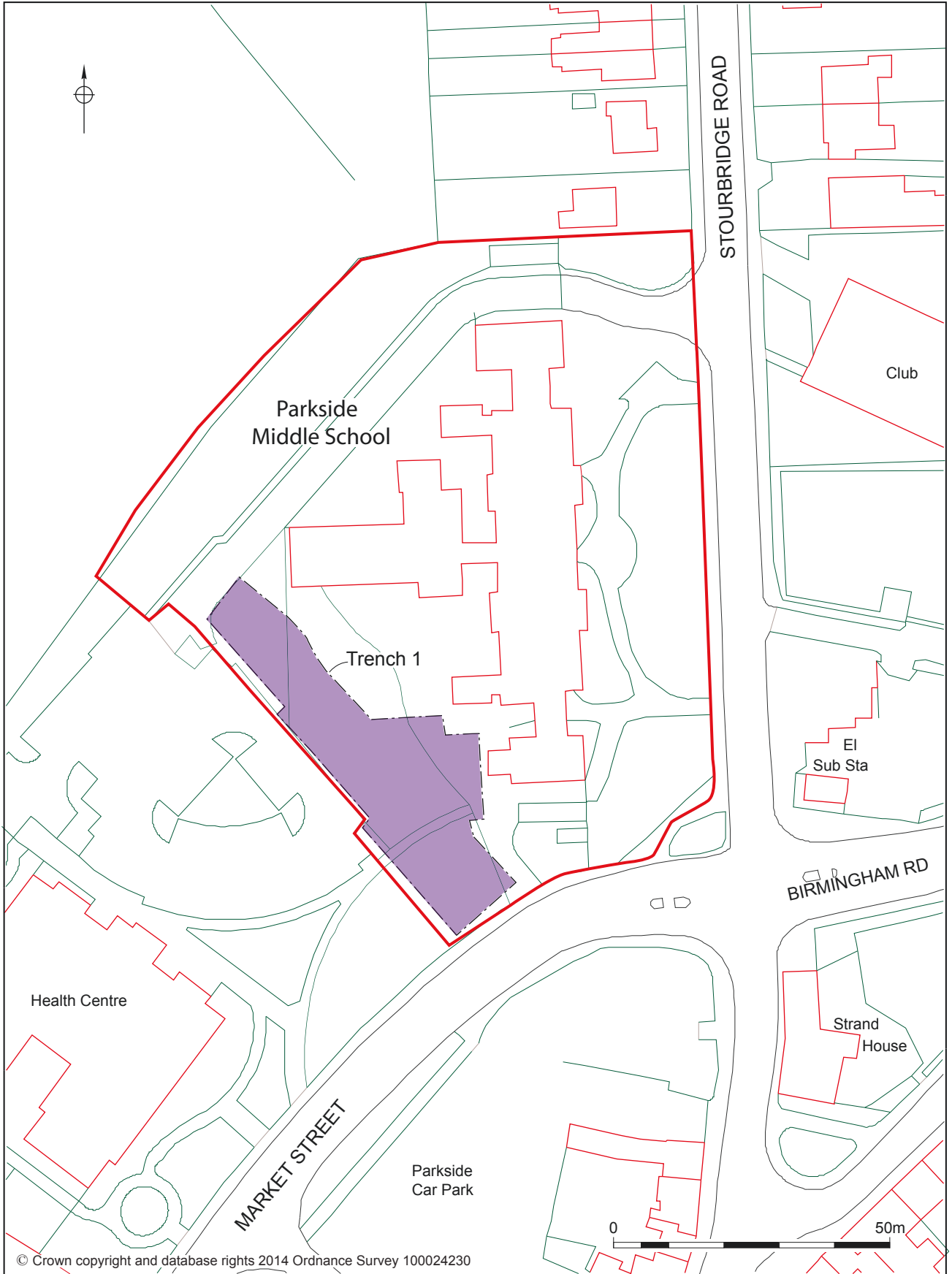
WCC 2014 *Requirements for a programme of archaeological work at the former Parkside Middle School, Bromsgrove, Worcestershire*, Planning Advisory Section, Worcestershire Archive and Archaeology Service, Worcestershire County Council, unpublished document dated 13 January 2014

**Figures**



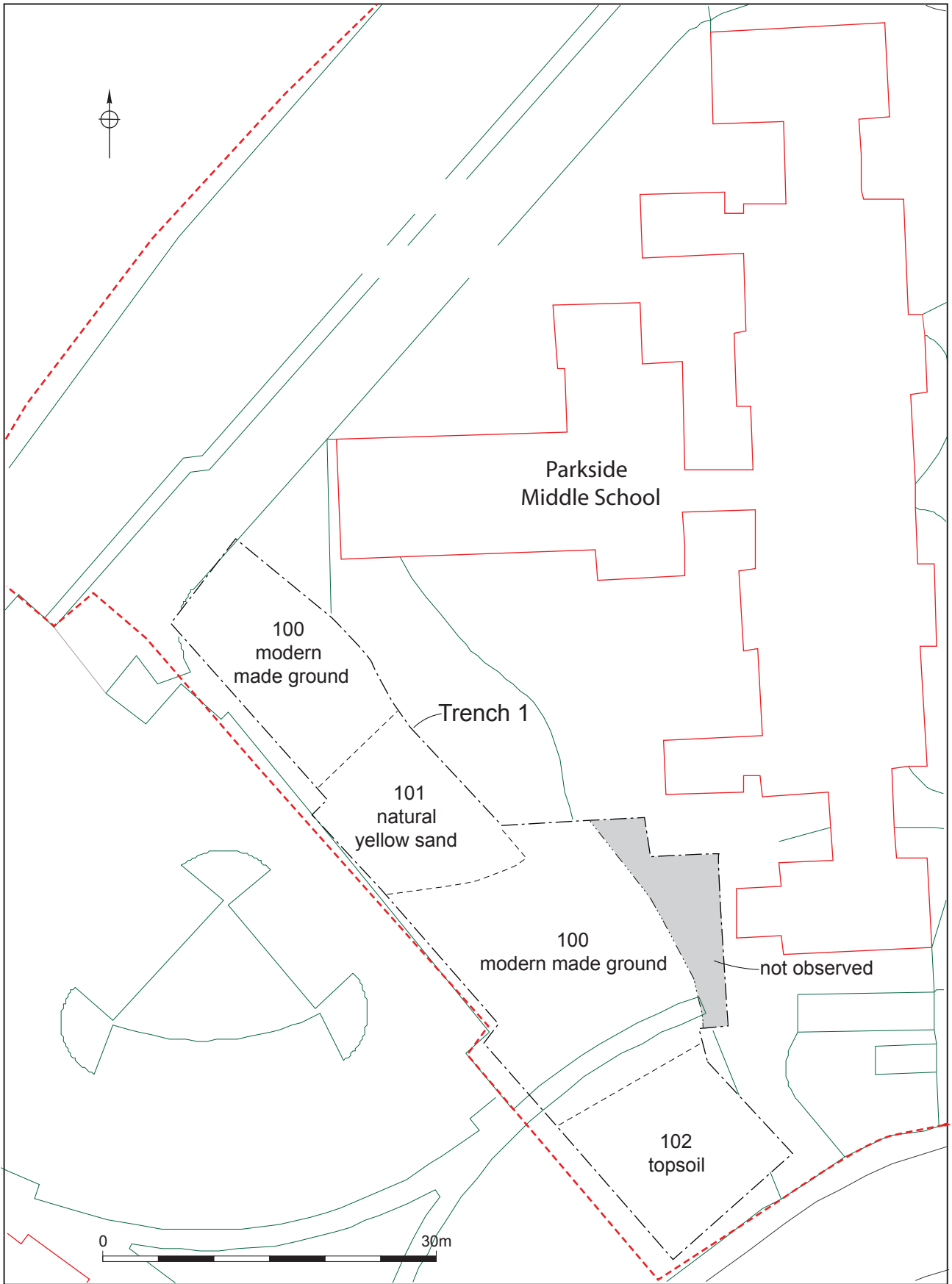
Location of the site

Figure 1



Trench location plan

Figure 2



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Trench plan

Figure 3



## Plates



*Plate 1 The deepest area of Trench 1, excavated to natural sand (101), view south-east*



*Plate 2 Deposit (102), view north-west*

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*Plate 3 Deposit (100), view north-west*

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## Appendix 1 Trench descriptions

### Trench 1

Maximum dimensions: Length: 73.5m Width: 13m Depth: 0.10-1.40m

Orientation: north-west to south-east

Main deposit description

Context	Classification	Description	Depth below ground surface (b.g.s) – top and bottom of deposits
100	Topsoil / modern made ground	Mixed grey black brown sandy silt with frequent inclusions of tarmac, plastic, wood and other modern coarse building material	0.00-1.05m
101	Natural	Soft light orangey yellow sand with some manganese patching	1.05-1.40m+
102	Topsoil / modern made ground	Light grey brown silty loam with frequent rooting and modern coarse building material	0.08m-1.40m+

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## **Appendix 2 Technical information**

### **The archive (site code: WSM 55827)**

The archive consists of:

- 3 Field progress reports AS2
- 59 Digital photographs
- 1 Photograph record sheet
- 1 Trench plan
- 1 Trench record sheets AS41
- 1 Copy of this report (bound hard copy)

The project archive is intended to be placed at:

Worcestershire County Museum  
Museums Worcestershire  
Hartlebury Castle  
Hartlebury  
Near Kidderminster  
Worcestershire DY11 7XZ  
Tel Hartlebury (01299) 250416

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