

# HERITAGE NETWORK

## Stanborough School, Welwyn Garden City

HN1456 / HN1529

### Stage 2 Method Statement: Strip, Map and Sample

#### INTRODUCTION

- 1 This Method Statement represents an addendum to the Project Design for the archaeological investigation of Stanborough School, Welwyn Garden City (Turner 2018), approved as the *written scheme of investigation* required by Condition 3 of the planning consent for a new Music Block granted by Welwyn Hatfield Borough Council (WHBC) under reference 6/2017/2972/FULL, and by Condition 1 of the planning consent for a new Teaching Block granted under reference 6/2018/1956/FULL. It should be read in conjunction with the approved Project Design.
- 2 The first stage of work on the project, as defined in the Project Design, involved the excavation of trial trenches across the development area. The trial trenching provided evidence for Roman activity (Ashworth 2019) focused on Trench 5, which was positioned to investigate the footprint of the Music Block.
- 3 On this basis, the LPA's archaeological adviser has directed that Stage 2 of the project, as defined in the approved Project Design, should be implemented, and that this should take the form of the open area investigation of an area encompassed by the footprint of the Music Block, to allow for the appropriate recording of all identified archaeological features and deposits that meet the research criteria of the project.
- 4 This investigation will follow the process called *Strip, Map and Sample* (SMS) and will consider 690m<sup>2</sup> of the site in the first instance, with the option to extend the investigation area should significant archaeological features and deposits be identified or if further enhancement of the data collected in the earlier phase of investigation is still required.
- 5 It is noted that Trench 7 of the evaluation, located between the Music Block and the Teaching Block, in an area intended for use as a games area, was not investigated at that time. Depending on the nature of the findings in the course of the SMS, and on decisions by the client as to whether construction of the games area will proceed and in what form, the option to excavate Trench 7, or to extend the SMS to the north-west, is reserved.

#### PRELIMINARY RECORDING

- 6 A rectangular area will be set out to, focused on the footprint of the proposed new building. Within this defined area the overburden will be removed down to the first significant archaeological horizon under the close supervision of an archaeologist, using a mechanical excavator fitted with a toothless ditching bucket. The trial trenching indicates that the archaeological horizon is c.0.80m below the existing surface.
- 7 Sufficient cleaning by hand will be undertaken to define and clarify any exposed archaeological features and deposits.
- 8 The location and outline of all defined archaeological contexts will be recorded in relation to existing features by offset measurement, and a site plan produced at 1:50.

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- 9 Spoil will be scanned visually and using a metal detector and all finds not of modern origin will be collected and recorded as unstratified.
- 10 The results of the preliminary recording and an assessment of the significance of the identified features and deposits will be provided to the Hertfordshire *Historic Environment Team* (HET) together with recommendations for the most appropriate strategy to be adopted to mitigate the effects of the development on those remains.
- 11 Where preservation in situ is not practical or can only be partially achieved, appropriate mitigation is likely to involve a full record being made of those features and deposits that will inevitably be destroyed, in written, drawn and photographic forms, supported by appropriate sampling of associated artefacts and ecofacts.

### **PRESERVATION IN SITU**

- 12 Where identified features or deposits are considered to be of archaeological significance but will remain unaffected by the groundworks, they will be protected by a layer of geotextile membrane fixed in place by a layer of sand, ballast or similar granular make-up material.
- 13 Where structural elements are encountered, these will be left in situ wherever possible, and bridged. Where partial removal is inevitable, care will be taken to ensure that such removal does not damage or otherwise impact the integrity of the surviving elements.
- 14 Where identified features or deposits are considered to be of archaeological significance but will require partial removal, the surviving elements will be protected using a patch of geotextile membrane, cut so as to overlap the feature by a minimum of 500mm, and weighted down with 100mm depth of granular material laid by hand. Where, for structural reasons, features or deposits would normally be required to be dug out, these will be bridged and left in situ.
- 15 If human remains, artefacts falling within the terms of the Treasure Act (1996), or collections of artefacts or ecofacts which are considered to be of particular significance are uncovered in these groundworks, provision will be made for their complete recording and recovery.

### **PRESERVATION BY RECORD**

- 16 All features and deposits that will be inevitably damaged or destroyed by the development groundworks, will be fully investigated and recorded within the limits of the impact of those groundworks.
- 17 The sampling level of the archaeological remains to be excavated will be determined as the project proceeds, in accordance with considerations of accessibility and the potential for preservation in situ. It will, however, take into account the principles set out below:
  - *Structures and specific features of specialised activity* (e.g. industrial or agricultural processing; ceremonial; funerary): will be fully excavated or sufficiently sampled to fully understand their character, and all relationships recorded.
  - *Ditches and gullies and other linear features*: all significant relationships will be defined and investigated. All terminals will be excavated. Sufficient of the ditch lengths will be excavated to determine the character of each individual ditch over its entire course with consideration given to possible re-cutting of ditches which may not have taken place over the entire length. This will aim to achieve an approximate average sample of 25% of each ditch length including excavation of intersections. Should

specialised deposits (e.g. localised refuse dumping, industrial wastes) be discovered, then more extensive excavation may be carried out with the advice of the appropriate material specialist. Consideration will be given to the recovery of sufficient artefact assemblages to assist in dating stratigraphic sequences and for obtaining sufficient ceramic assemblages for comparison with other sites.

- *Pits*: all will be investigated in half section, or in the case of complex intercutting, in quadrant. Where sufficient artefactual and ecofactual evidence can be recovered in the excavated half of each feature, no further excavation will be undertaken.
- *Post and stake holes*: where practical, all will be investigated in half-section, or else will be totally excavated. Where sufficient artefactual and ecofactual evidence can be recovered in the excavated half of each feature, no further excavation will be undertaken.
- *Extensive archaeological deposits, buried soil horizons*: where such deposits are of limited extent and are intrinsically of clear archaeological significance (e.g. middens) a 50% sample will be systematically excavated employing a sampling grid and in appropriate spits to ensure spatial control of finds, and palaeo-environmental samples (see below). Where they are of a less specific nature (e.g. of topographical interest) a control area representing up to 20% of the whole will be investigated in appropriate spits or in stratigraphic layers if identifiable in order to establish the nature, depth and date of the deposit, and to achieve the aims and objectives of the project. The remaining material may be removed, by machine if appropriate, to investigate the underlying material.
- *Working hollows, quarry pits, ponds etc.*: all relationships will be ascertained and one or more hand dug sections cut of suitable width (e.g. 1.5-2.0m) to establish the character of the fill, the base of the feature, any evidence of the method of excavation, and in order to obtain dating evidence. Further investigation will be a matter for on-site judgement. The scale and method of excavation will be determined by the need to define their extent, date and function. The potentially long time span and likely character of the backfilling of such features gives a high probability of artefacts in secondary contexts being re-deposited. Unless there are specific reasons to expect special deposits or stabilised horizons with evidence of occupation activity in their backfill, a combination of machine excavation following the basic stratigraphy and hand sampling may be used for further excavation.
- *Other archaeological deposits*: excavation and sampling strategies for other types of deposit will be decided according to their nature and significance with regard to achieving the aims and objectives of the project.

**18** The physical security of all archaeological deposits, features and artefacts, both on and off the site, will be a central concern and all reasonable measures will be taken to ensure their protection before, during and after excavation.

### **Recording procedures**

**19** In order to facilitate the production of an overall project archive of consistent standard the following recording procedures will be applied as far as possible.

- The site will be assigned a unique alphanumeric code that will be used to identify all records, finds and samples relating to the project.
- A continuous unique numbering system will be operated. Context records will be compiled on individual pro-forma record cards. Each layer, fill, cut etc will be described

in terms of soil detail, stratigraphic position, dimensions, artefact content, samples and interpretation. The context system will be cross-referenced to all other records including plans and sections and may be stored in the form of a computer database. A separate set of registers will be maintained for samples, registered finds, levels and context sequence.

- Where stratified deposits are encountered a Harris Matrix will be compiled during the course of the investigation.
- Soil descriptions will be standardised, as far as possible, to conform to the use of sorting charts, roundness index, percentage of area, grain size, texture, consistency and colour.
- All plans of excavated features will be drawn on polyester film at a scale of 1:20 (or 1:10 if necessary in order to show detail). Plans of intermediate contexts may be drawn in the spaces provided on the pro-forma record cards or on polyester film, as appropriate. Any burials will be drawn at 1:10. A register of plans will be kept.
- Sections through features will normally be drawn at 1:10. If required, long sections, to demonstrate stratigraphy or sedimentary sequences, will normally be drawn at 1:50 or 1:20. A register of sections will be kept.
- All plans and section drawings will be annotated with absolute heights derived from an established TBM.
- A full photographic record in monochrome 35mm film and digital formats will be maintained illustrating in both detail and general context the principal features and finds discovered. The photographic record will also include working shots to illustrate more generally the nature of the archaeological work. A register of all photographs will be kept.

### *Artefact Recovery*

**20** Artefact evidence will be collected and treated according to the following general strategy.

- All artefacts will be retained from hand excavated contexts unless they are of recent origin. In these cases sufficient of the material will usually be retained where it is important to validate the date and establish the function of the feature.
- Some categories of finds of limited intrinsic interest may be sampled and recorded on site where their retention is not considered essential to the archaeological aims and objectives of the project and they would constitute an excessive storage burden. For example, burnt stone or undifferentiated post-medieval tile fragments.
- Unstratified objects from topsoil or other modern deposits will not normally be retained except where they are of intrinsic interest either in their own right or in contributing to an understanding of the site.
- Metal detecting equipment, where its use is considered appropriate, will be operated by, or under the supervision of, archaeological staff.
- Bulk samples of industrial residues will be taken under the advice of the relevant specialists for laboratory processing and identification.
- Recovery of artefacts will normally be by hand, except where bulk samples are taken for other purposes or for special recovery of small items.

- Should human remains be encountered and removal be required, the Heritage Network will obtain a Ministry of Justice licence, and will ensure that the conditions of its issue are maintained.
- Should artefacts falling within the terms of the Treasure Act (1996) and subsequent amendments, be encountered, or collections of artefacts or ecofacts that are considered to be of particular significance are uncovered in the course of the project, provision will be made for their complete recording and recovery. Such finds would be reported to the local Finds Liaison Officer under the *Portable Antiquities Scheme* and the Coroner, as appropriate.
- All *registered* finds (excluding bulk finds) will be recorded in relation to the site grid and their height above OD. The register of these finds will form part of the archive.
- In certain circumstances where unusual or extremely fragile and delicate objects are found, their recovery will be undertaken by appropriate specialists.
- All finds and samples will be exposed, lifted, cleaned, stabilised, marked, bagged and boxed in accordance with the guidelines set out in UKIC's *Conservation Guidelines no. 2*.
- All excavated objects will be deemed to form an integral part of the site archive (that is, they will not be separated, except for display or research purposes, or for reasons of security, from the archive itself).

### **Ecofact Recovery**

**21** Ecofact evidence will be collected and treated in accordance with the guidelines set out in *Environmental Archaeology* (English Heritage 2011). In general, the following strategy will be followed.

- All macroscopic evidence will be collected and treated in the same manner as described for artefacts.
- Where a deposit appears to be rich in faunal remains it will be dry-sieved (using a 5mm mesh size) in order to maximise the range of animal species present in the context. However, this should only be undertaken where the deposit has obvious potential and can be reliably phased.
- A standard 40 litre sample will be taken from as many single, datable contexts as possible for the recovery of small animal bones, carbonised remains, molluscs etc.
- Linear features will generally be sampled at intervals commensurate with their length in order to recover a general spread of material. In the case of house gullies (eves-drips/construction slots) at least four points should be sampled (assuming that the gully is at least 80-90% complete). All ditch terminals should be sampled.
- Undisturbed *kubiena* tin or column samples of sediments will be taken for *micromorphology* of buried soils where these are likely to shed important light on the environmental development of the area.

### **Post-Fieldwork Methodology**

**22** The post-fieldwork methodology will be dependent on the nature and extent of the features and deposits identified and recorded in the course of the investigation programme. It will

follow current practice, as set out in the MoRPHE Project Managers' Guide (English Heritage 2006) and will be the subject of a separate method statement.

- 23 It is intended that the results of the investigations should be published either in the local archaeological journal, or in an appropriate specialist academic journal, depending on the nature and complexity of the information recovered. As a minimum, the results will be uploaded to the Archaeology Data Service's OASIS database together with any unpublished archive reports.

### Archive Deposition

- 24 It is intended that the archive for the present project, including the documentary records owned by the Heritage Network, and the material records owned by the client and held in the care of the Heritage Network, will be deposited with Mill Green Museum, Hatfield.

## RESOURCES AND PROGRAMMING

### Fieldwork

- 25 One member of the Heritage Network's staff will be detailed to take responsibility for the co-ordination of the fieldwork element of the present project, and will normally be available for the supervision of all machining.
- 26 Additional staff will be made available, as appropriate, to ensure the adequate recording of any archaeological remains, and to minimise any delays to the client's programme arising from unforeseen circumstances, including delays resulting from adverse weather, the presence of a higher than predicted density of features requiring to be investigated, the discovery of human remains, the discovery of unusually large, deep or complicated features, or the discovery of unusually large or complicated assemblages of artefacts or environmental deposits.

### Timetable

- 27 The fieldwork programme has yet to be finalised.

## REFERENCES

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### **Websites**

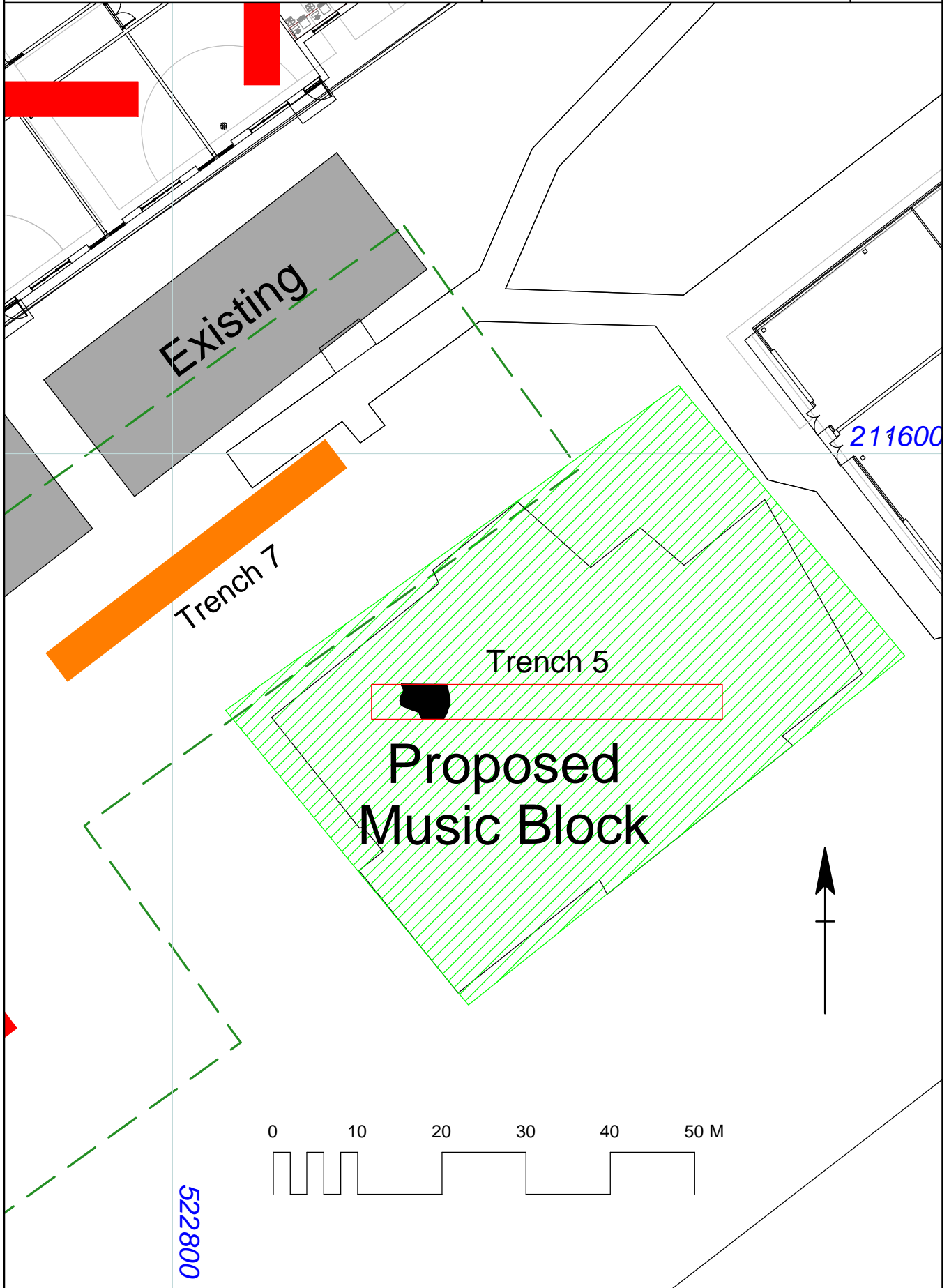
Heritage Gateway: <http://www.heritagegateway.org.uk/>.

National Library of Scotland: <https://maps.nls.uk/os/25inch-england-and-wales/>.<https://maps.nls.uk/os/25inch-england-and-wales/>

MAGIC Interactive Map. <http://www.natureonthemap.naturalengland.org.uk/>.

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Proposed layout of open area excavation.

Scale 1:300

Figure 1