



Twycross House School, Leicestershire

Report on Archaeological Monitoring

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ABBREVIATIONS

ADS	Archaeological Data Service
AOD	Above Ordnance Datum
CIfA	Chartered Institute for Archaeologists
GPS	Global Positioning System
HER	Historic Environment Record
NGR	National Grid Reference
OD	Ordnance Datum
WSI	Written Scheme of Investigation
YA	York Archaeology
OS	Ordnance Survey
[]	<i>Straight Bracket denotes a cut number</i>
()	<i>Curve Bracket denotes a fill / layer number</i>

SUMMARY

- York Archaeology (Nottingham) was commissioned by Mr and Mrs S Assinder to conduct a programme of archaeological monitoring at Twycross House School, Leicestershire.
- The monitoring was conducted on the 8th of July 2024 during the excavation of footings for the construction of a single-story detached building and accompanying landscaping works.
- Archaeological features were limited to a probable tree bowl and a modern terracing layer located on the southern end of the Site. No other features or archaeological artefacts were found.

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FIGURES

Figure 01: Location Map

Figure 02: Site Plan & Section Figure 02.1

1 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1.1 York Archaeology (Nottingham) was commissioned by Mr and Mrs S Assinder (herein referred to as “the Client”) to undertake a programme of archaeological monitoring on the land at Twycross House School (SK 33706 04862), henceforth referred to as ‘the Site’ (Figure 1).
- 1.1.2 This programme of archaeological works was undertaken to fulfil a planning requirement by Hinckley and Bosworth Borough Council (ref: 23/01136/FUL) during the construction of a single-story detached building with associated landscaping.
- 1.1.3 The archaeological monitoring was conducted on the 8th July 2024 and abided by the methods described on the approved Written Scheme of Investigation for the proposed development area (Davies-Ellis 2024).

2 LOCATION, GEOLOGY AND TOPOGRAPHY

- 2.1.1 The Site is located in the southwestern part of Twycross, Leicestershire, approximately 10km east of Tamworth (Figure 01). It comprises a rectangular field behind the main school house (SK 335 049) at an elevation of approximately 120m AOD.
- 2.1.2 The Site was bounded to the north and east by the Twycross School and residential dwellings, and by urban lawned fields to the south and west.
- 2.1.3 The underlying geology of the Site comprises Gunthorpe Member Mudstone, a sedimentary bedrock formed approximately 237 to 247 million years ago in the Triassic Period. The superficial deposits are glaciofluvial deposits of sand and gravel dated to the Mid Pleistocene (BGS 2024).
- 2.1.4 The overlying soils are characterised as freely draining, slightly acidic loamy soils (Cranfield Soil and Agrifood Institute 2024).

3 ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

3.1 Sources of information

- 3.1.1 The following section derives from the detailed historical and archaeological search compiled for the WSI (Davies-Ellis 2024). The information comprises a 1km radius search from various sources including, the Leicestershire and Rutland Historic Environment Record (HER), Heritage Gateway, Historic England National Heritage List, and Archaeology Data Service (ADS).

3.2 Prehistoric (650,000 BC – AD 43)

- 3.2.1 Two quartzite tools of Palaeolithic date (MLE22599), were collected to the east of the village of Twycross. These finds are likely to have been ploughed out of the glacial gravels, and may indicate that there has been some post-glacial reworking of the deposits.
- 3.2.2 A possible late prehistoric trackway (MLE19732) is visible on aerial photographs from 2006, to the northeast of the village. Other linear and pit-like features in the vicinity may also be related to the trackway.

3.3 Roman (AD 43 – 410)

- 3.3.1 Roman activity within the vicinity of the Site is mainly represented by the presence of decontextualized artefacts. At Lea Grange Farm (MLE8640), some 700m to the northwest of the Site, a wide group of finds including a brooch, coins, a steelyard weight pottery and lead waste were found. A single pottery fragment (MLE16955) was also recovered c.250m to the southeast, and further coins (MLE3897) were collected around 300m to the south of the Site. Although none of these finds were recovered from excavated sites, there is enough artefactual evidence to suggest the presence of Roman activity, including in the form of settlement, within the immediate vicinity of the Site.

3.4 Early Medieval – Medieval (AD 410 – 1540)

- 3.4.1 A brooch of Anglo-Saxon date (MLE8642), found with the Roman material from East Lea Farm, provides the only physical evidence for early medieval activity in the search area.
- 3.4.2 A settlement was recorded at Twycross in the 1086' Domesday survey. The name Twycross probably derived from the name 'double cross', possibly referring to a crossroad waymarker (Ekwall 1960, 483). The Site is situated just to the south of the projected area occupied by this settlement.
- 3.4.3 Amongst the ample evidence for the medieval settlement of Twycross, there is the Church of St James (List Entry Number: 1074217), a Grade I listed building erected in the 14th century, however it is likely that an earlier church existed there. In pasture fields, to the north of the church and 500m to the east of the school, are the earthwork remains of a moated manor and fishponds (MLE3271, SM1012524). Although not dated by excavation, these remains are likely to be 13th or 14th century origin.
- 3.4.4 Archaeological mitigation conducted by Allen Archaeology in 2022 on Ashby Road, 400m to the north of the Site, uncovered various pits, boundary ditches and a trackway. This evidence is representative of the activity at the edge of the medieval settlement and associated with the medieval manor (MLE3271, SM1012524) (Mcdaid 2022).

- 3.4.5 Work conducted by the University of Leicester Archaeological Services (ULAS) in 2000, uncovered two ditches, located 160m to the east of Site (Browning, 2000). These were tentatively suggested as being associated with medieval earthworks.
- 3.4.6 Further north, is the earthwork remains of 'Little Twycross' (MLE24325). Several investigations within the village have identified limited evidence for medieval activity, including some possible medieval ditches recorded during construction of the school theatre (MLE25379).

3.5 Post-Medieval (AD 1540 – 1901)

- 3.5.1 The village of Twycross has expanded relatively little in the post-medieval period, although almost all of the extant buildings are of 18th century date or later.
- 3.5.2 The school building is a Grade II listed building (List Entry Number: 1188386). It was built as a house in 1703 and belonged to the Harcourt and Clare families until the 1870's before being acquired by the Howe estate. The house was extended to the west in c.1800, and it was further extended and upgraded in the 1870s into a gentleman's residence. At this time, associated cottages were demolished and the surrounding land was submitted to landscaping. It was only in 1978 that the building was purchased for use as a school.

3.6 Previous Archaeological Work on Site

- 3.6.1 Trent & Peak Archaeology (TPA) (now York Archaeology) undertook a monitoring programme in 2013, which revealed no archaeological features. The absence of archaeological evidence was deemed to have been caused by the intrusive nature of extensive landscaping undertaken with the upgrade of the house and lands in the 1870's.
- 3.6.2 A second watching brief, also conducted by TPA, was commissioned by Twycross House School in 2017 prior to the construction of the theatre/drama school. The results suggested a moderate use of the land, including the discovery of two small field boundaries or burgage plots and several small pits and post holes. A high-level of modern disturbance, particularly in the south-eastern corner of the site, was considered to have possibly truncated earlier archaeological deposits.
- 3.6.3 The same unit was later re-commissioned, in 2021, by Twycross House School to conduct a programme of archaeological monitoring and recording during groundworks associated with the installation of an all-weather sports pitch on school grounds and associated haul road (Owen V, 2021). The strip revealed a former field boundary visible as a faint cropmark in satellite imagery which was shifted c.10m north-easterly to become parallel with the rear boundary of Twycross House School. The date of this original field boundary is unknown but it is visible in historic mapping since at least 1889.
- 3.6.4 Due to the inconsistency in the level of the strip, which did not reveal the geological substrate across the field, the monitored excavation was not able to clarify the presence of archaeological finds, features or deposits.

4 RELEVANT LEGISLATION AND GUIDANCE

4.1 Planning Context

- 4.1.1 This programme of archaeological monitoring was underpinned by national legislation and local policies, as described below.

4.2 National Planning Policy Framework

- 4.2.1 Developments of this nature, and their impact upon the historic environment, are addressed by the revised 2023 National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) published by the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG), and the NPPF Planning Practice Guide Conserving and Enhancing the Historic Environment (DCLG 2014).

- 4.2.2 Section 16 of NPPF, paragraph 198 states:

- 4.2.3 *“Local planning authorities should maintain or have access to a historic environment record. This should contain up-to-date evidence about the historic environment in their area and be used to:*

- 4.2.4 *a) assess the significance of heritage assets and the contribution they make to their environment; and*

- 4.2.5 *b) predict the likelihood that currently unidentified heritage assets, particularly sites of historic and archaeological interest, will be discovered in the future.”*

- 4.2.6 In addition, paragraph 200, states that:

- 4.2.7 *“In determining applications, local planning authorities should require an applicant to describe the significance of any heritage assets affected, including any contribution made by their setting. The level of detail should be proportionate to the assets’ importance and no more than is sufficient to understand the potential impact of the proposal on their significance. As a minimum the relevant historic environment record should have been consulted and the heritage assets assessed using appropriate expertise where necessary. Where a site on which development is proposed includes, or has the potential to include, heritage assets with archaeological interest, local planning authorities should require developers to submit an appropriate desk-based assessment and, where necessary, a field evaluation.”*

- 4.2.8 Furthermore, paragraphs 205 and 211 of the NPPF state:

“When considering the impact of a proposed development on the significance of a designated heritage asset, great weight should be given to the asset’s conservation (and the more important the asset, the greater the weight should be). This is irrespective of whether any potential harm amounts to substantial harm, total loss or less than substantial harm to its significance.

- 4.2.9 *Local planning authorities should require developers to record and advance understanding of the significance of any heritage assets to be lost (wholly or in part) in a manner proportionate to their importance and the impact, and to make this evidence (and any archive generated) publicly accessible. However, the ability to record evidence of our past should not be a factor in deciding whether such loss should be permitted.”*

4.3 Local Policy

- 4.3.1 Local Planning Policy for the Site is currently provided by the Hinckley & Bosworth Borough Council. The planning consent (ref: 23/01136/FUL) followed the Site Allocations and Development Management Policies document which states as part of Development Management Plan 13 (DM13);
- 4.3.2 *“Where a proposal has the potential to impact a site of archaeological interest, developers should set out in their application an appropriate desk-based assessment and, where applicable, the results of a field evaluation detailing the significance of any affected asset.*
- 4.3.3 *Where applicable, justified and feasible the local planning authority will require remains to be preserved in situ ensuring appropriate design, layout, ground levels, foundations and site work methods to avoid any adverse impacts on the remains.*
- 4.3.4 *Where preservation of archaeological remains in situ is not feasible and/or justified the local planning authority will require full archaeological investigation and recording by an approved archaeological organisation before development commences.”*

5 SITE-SPECIFIC AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

5.1 Aims

5.1.1 The general aims of the fieldwork were as follows:

- To identify the presence of any archaeological remains that might be affected by any intrusive aspects of the development.
- To quantify any archaeological remains and where practical (within the constraints of the development) to assess their preservation, form, nature and relative date.
- To provide evidence so that the potential need for further works can be identified.
- To secure the safe recovery of any archaeological artefacts and ecofacts revealed by the development works.

5.2 Objectives

5.2.1 The objectives of the fieldwork were to:

- To ensure the recognition and recording of any archaeological remains disturbed by the development.
- To identify and document the character, condition and extent of any archaeological remains as well as to record the site lithology.
- To recover artefacts and ecofacts and to submit these to specialist assessment and interpretation with the aim of understanding of the site function and chronology.
- To produce a Site report on all the findings and a consequent interpretation of the data in relation to the pertinent research questions set out below.

6 REGIONAL RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

- 6.1.1 This archaeological monitoring was considered to provide an opportunity to contribute to Research Themes and Objectives outlined in the East Midlands Heritage: An Updated Research Agenda and Strategy for the Historic Environment of the East Midlands (Interactive Digital Platform available at: www.researchframeworks.org/emherf).

Romano-British (AD 43 – c.410)
5H Investigate the landscape context of rural settlements
<i>Further synthetic studies are required to develop further our understanding of the Roman agrarian landscape, and in particular to investigate how landscapes and rural settlements had varied between the upland and lowland zones.</i>
High Medieval (1066 – 1485)
7E Investigate the morphology of rural settlements
<i>Concentrations of royal estates in eastern Leicestershire, northern Nottinghamshire and north-west Derbyshire, documented in Domesday Book but acquired over a period of time, are suggested to have been a springboard for the development of planned villages during the eleventh century. They particularly merit further detailed investigation by techniques such as test-pitting in gardens and open spaces in village cores, as has been undertaken at Kibworth, in Leicestershire and as part of the Whittlewood project in south Northamptonshire and north Buckinghamshire.</i>

7 METHODOLOGY

7.1 General Conditions

- 7.1.1 Archaeological monitoring was conducted in accordance with the WSI (Davies-Ellis, 2024) as approved by the Leicestershire County Council Planning Archaeologist (LCCPA) and to the professional standards and guidance described by the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists (CIfA) in *Standard and guidance for an archaeological watching brief* (CIfA 2020a), *Code of Conduct: professional ethics in archaeology* (CIfA 2022), *Standard for archaeological monitoring and recording* (CIfA 2023a) and *Universal guidance for archaeological monitoring and recording* (CIfA 2023b).

7.2 Archaeological Monitoring

- 7.2.1 All intrusive groundworks were conducted under constant archaeological supervision by a qualified archaeologist.
- 7.2.2 All machine excavation was undertaken with a toothless ditching bucket, with stripping and soil removal arranged so as to avoid any tracking across the excavated surface.
- 7.2.3 Spoil was stored at a safe distance from the excavation edge and was checked for artefacts, including the use of a metal detector.
- 7.2.4 When potential archaeological features were identified, all intrusive groundworks in the vicinity of the remains ceased until the archaeology had been fully investigated and recorded by the supervising archaeologist.

7.3 Hand Excavation

- 7.3.1 All features identified were hand-cleaned and sufficiently excavated to determine plan and form, and to recover any datable artefacts. The features' fill was removed by contextual change (the smallest usefully definable unit of stratification).

7.4 Recording

- 7.4.1 Sections were drawn on drafting film in pencil at a scale of 1:20 and shown at least: context number, all colour and textural changes, principal slopes and a level given in the form of a datum line with O.D./arbitrary value.
- 7.4.2 A plan of the excavated area and section locations was made with information from the client's surveyed plans, with sufficient information to locate the subjects in relation to OS:2500 mapping.
- 7.4.3 Digital images of each context were taken together with general views illustrating the principal features of the excavations.
- 7.4.4 Written records were maintained as laid down in the YA recording manual (York Archaeology 2015).

7.5 Post-excavation

- 7.5.1 The post-excavation works encompassed the revision and analysis of the Site records, GPS survey and the production of plans, sections and figures for this archaeological report. A revision of the available archaeological data and cartographic information was also conducted.

7.6 Archive and Finds Deposition

- 7.6.1 The archive was fully catalogued and prepared to recognised standards (Brown 2011), and according to the Transfer of Archaeological Archives to Leicestershire County Council Museum Collections. The final archive will contain, where relevant: copies of correspondence relating to fieldwork, site notebooks/diaries, original photographic records, site drawings (plans, sections, elevations), original context records. The digital archive was maintained with reference to the Archaeological Data Service Guides to Good Practice (2024) and the ClfA Dig Digital toolkit (2019).
- 7.6.2 The Historic and Natural Environment Team Manager for Leicester County and the museum curator were notified in writing on completion of fieldwork, with a proposed timetable for deposition of the archive. Both Leicester County archaeology services and the HER will be informed in writing prior to the final deposition of the archive.
- 7.6.3 The paper and digital archive generated by York Archaeology will be safely stored until deposited with Leicestershire County Council Museum Collections under accession number X.A55.2024. The digital archive will be deposited with the Archaeological Data Service (ADS) and Oasis. A digital copy of the report will be submitted to the Leicestershire and Rutland Historic Environment Record (HER).

8 RESULTS

8.1 Overview

- 8.1.1 The general stratigraphy across the Site comprised of a natural substrate (1001) directly covered by a topsoil turfed layer (1000) (Plates 1 & 2; Figure 02). Prior to the excavation of the building footing trenches, the topsoil was removed from the majority of the area. The excavation of the foundations revealed a simple stratigraphy, with the natural substrate (1001) only being cut by a probable modern feature [1002], and with localised evidence for a levelling layer (1004) in the southern part of the Site. No finds were recovered from any of the layers or features.

8.2 Stratigraphical data

- 8.2.1 The natural substrate was composed of a mid-orange brown silty sand with occasional sub rounded stone (1001). This layer was cut by [1002], an irregular shaped feature interpreted as the probable remains of a tree bowl (Plate 3; Figure 2, Section 02.1). This feature measured 1.42m in length, c. 0.16m in width, and 0.84m in depth. It displayed steep sides and a flat base with heavy root disturbance. It was filled by a dark-grey brown silty clay deposit (1003) which produced no finds.
- 8.2.2 To the southern end of the Site, the natural substrate was steeply sloped, possibly constituting the remains of a terrace. This area had been overlain by a thick levelling layer (1004) (Plate 4) consisting of dark brown silty sand with heavy root disturbance. It measured 0.64m in depth and over 1.6m in length.
- 8.2.3 Overlying both the tree bowl [1002] and the levelling layer (1004) was the topsoil (1000) which varied in depth to a maximum of 0.53m.

9 DISCUSSION

- 9.1.1 The southern part of the Site yielded evidence for earlier ground remodelling, in the form of a probable levelling layer (1004) filling a steeply sloped area in the natural substrate (1001). This feature possibly represented the remains of a modern terrace and respective infilling.
- 9.1.2 The archaeological evidence for landscaping and terracing in the surrounding areas of the Site had been previously documented by archaeological works undertaken in the area (Collins 2017). The evidence found on Site might result from the activity related to the alteration of the Twycross House School building, removal of adjacent cottages and creation of terraced lawns and gardens in the late 19th century (TPA 2013).
- 9.1.3 Furthermore, the stratigraphic data collected in this intervention also suggested that the upper levels of the Site have been truncated throughout time, especially during the last centuries. Such actions have potentially destroyed any archaeological remains associated with earlier human activity.

10 CONCLUSION

- 10.1.1 No features of archaeological significance were encountered during the archaeological monitoring. The ground alterations undertaken in the Modern period may have removed any earlier archaeological features on the Site.
- 10.1.2 The aims and objectives established for the monitoring were fully achieved, with the archaeological potential of the Site assessed and recorded. No finds or features of archaeological significance were encountered during the programme of archaeological monitoring, limiting its contribution to the regional research questions outlined in Section 6 of this report.
- 10.1.3 Following agreement with the Leicestershire County Council Museum Collections, it is intended that this report will be deposited with OASIS only. As a sterile site, no further deposition is required and the accession number X.A55.2024 will be closed. A digital copy of the report will be submitted to the Leicestershire and Rutland Historic Environment Record (HER).

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12 ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

- 12.1.1 York Archaeology would like to thank Mr and Mrs S Assinder for commissioning the archaeological investigation. Thanks are extended to William Kelly, Senior Planning Archaeologist for Leicester County Council, for overseeing the project.
- 12.1.2 The following York Archaeology staff contributed to the project: Edmund Taylor managed the project, with site work being undertaken by Helen Shenton. Post-excavation work was managed by Diana Fernandes assisted by Rosemary Hughes. Illustrations were produced by Marius Ilie.

APPENDIX 1: CONTEXT LIST

Context	Category	Description	Dimensions
1000	L - layer	Topsoil: Mid brown silty sand	Max depth 0.53m
1001	L - layer	Natural: Mid orange brown silty sand	-
1002	C - Cut	Cut of pit/ tree bowl	L 1.42m, W >0.16m, D 0.84m
1003	F - Fill	Fill of pit/ tree bowl [1002]	L 1.42m, W >0.16m, D 0.84m
1004	L - Layer	Terracing/ levelling layer: dark brown black clay sand, present in southern part of the Site, likely modern	L > 1.6m, D 0.64m

APPENDIX 2: OASIS DATA COLLECTION FORM

OASIS ID (UID)	yorkarch3-527522
Project Name	Watching Brief at Twycross School House
Sitename	Twycross School House
Sitecode	9451
Project Identifier(s)	
Activity type	Watching Brief
Planning Id	23/01136/FUL
Reason For Investigation	Planning: Post determination
Organisation Responsible for work	York Archaeology
Project Dates	08-Jul-2024 - 08-Jul-2024
Location	Twycross School House NGR : SK 33706 04862 LL : 52.640460805796565, -1.503328583091515 12 Fig : 433706,304862
Administrative Areas	Country : England County/Local Authority : Leicestershire Local Authority District : Hinckley and Bosworth Parish : Twycross
Project Methodology	Archaeological monitoring occurred during the removal of top soil. All machine excavation was done with a toothless bucket and any suspected archaeological features were hand cleaned and recorded.
Project Results	No features of archaeological significance were encountered during the archaeological monitoring. The ground alterations undertaken in the Modern period may have destroyed any earlier archaeological features on Site.
Keywords	
Funder	Private individual
HER	Leicestershire HER - unRev - STANDARD
Person Responsible for work	Edmund Taylor
HER Identifiers	
Archives	

PLATES



Plate 1: Overview of the excavated footings, looking south, 1m scale



Plate 2: Overview of the excavated footings, looking north, 1m scale



Plate 3: East facing section of pit/tree bowl [1002], 1m scale



Plate 4: Shot of southern end of building footings, showing levelling layer (1004), looking south, 1m scale

FIGURES

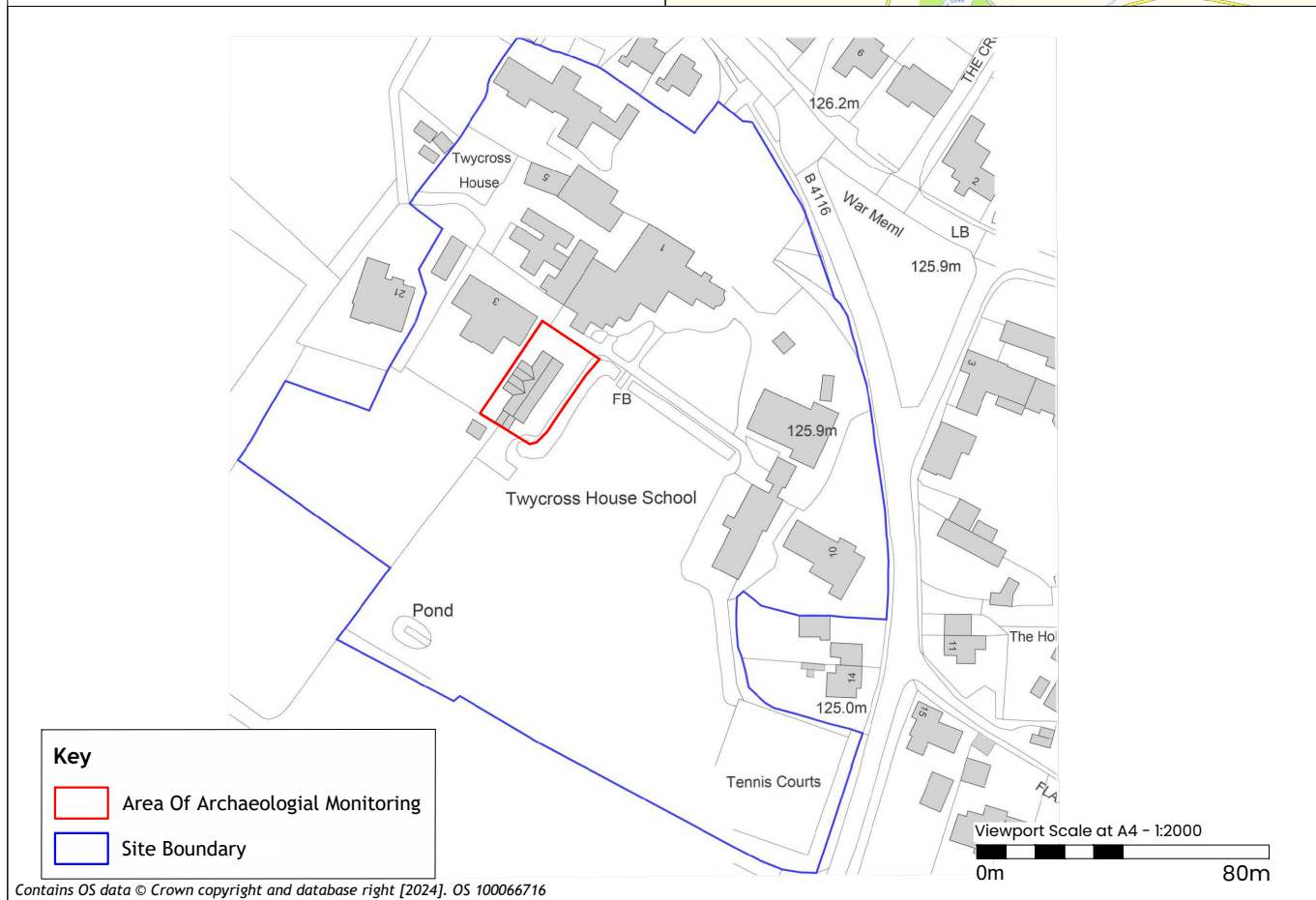
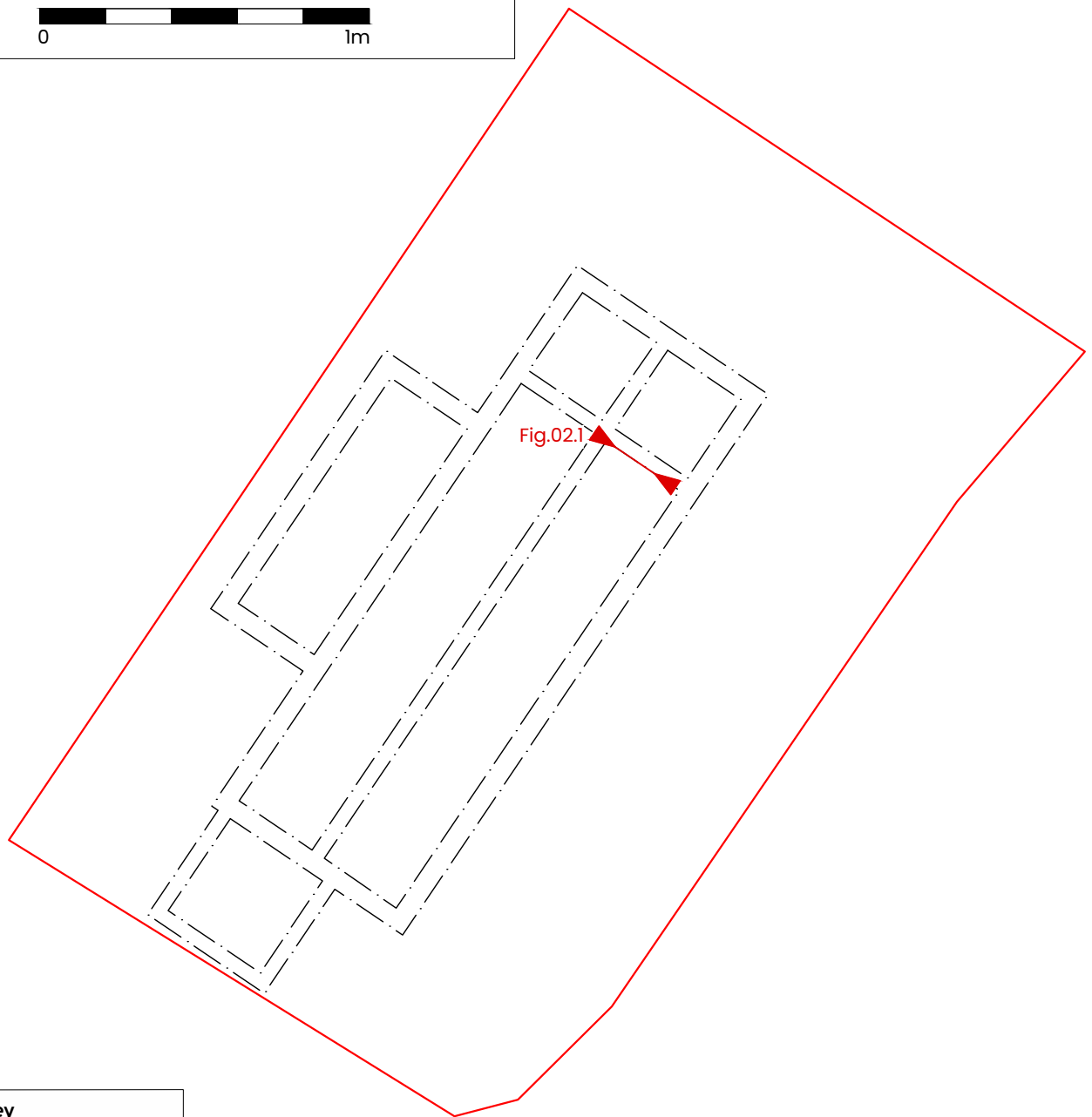
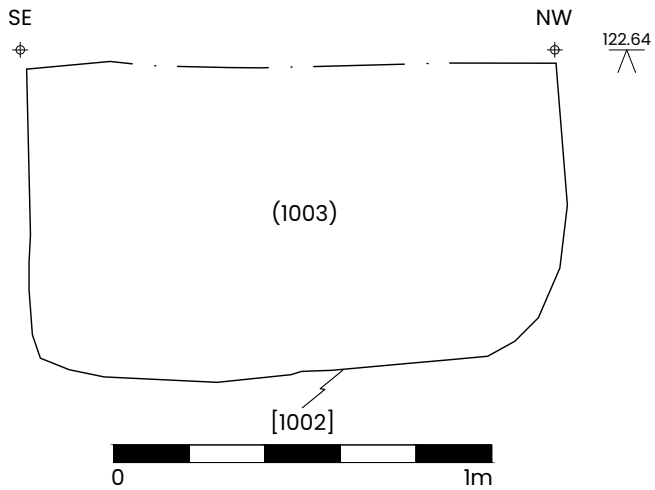


Figure 01 - Location Map
9451 - Twycross House School

Scale at A4 - varies
Drawn by MI

Fig.02.1

North East Facing Section [1002]



Key

- Site Boundary
- Building Footing



47 Aldwark
York
YO1 7BX

Unit 1 Holly Lane
Chilwell, Nottingham
NG9 4AB

54 Campo Lane
Sheffield
S1 2EG

Albex House
1 Marchfield Drive, Paisley
PA3 2RB