

**Archaeological Watching Brief
Spires Academy Bredlands Lane
Sturry, Kent**

NGR 619710 161700

**Site Code: SAC 10
ASE Project No: 4577**

**ASE Report Number: 2011163
OASIS No: 105731**

**By Kathryn Grant BA MSc AIFA
With contributions from Karine Le Hégarat
Luke Barber and Sarah Porteus**

July 2011

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Abstract

An archaeological watching brief was carried out by Archaeology South-East (ASE) at Spires Academy, Sturry (NGR 619710 161700) during the groundwork associated with the redevelopment of the site. The archaeological work was commissioned by Carillion and was carried out between 12th and 16th May 2011.

This stage of work revealed a cluster of four undated postholes. Several unstratified finds, including 13th-14th century pottery sherds, post-medieval pottery sherds, mixed brick and tile fragments from the Roman period through to the post-medieval period and a single undiagnostic flint nodule were recovered from the topsoil during the ground reduction associated with the new building foundations. The 2010 watching brief on test-pit excavations identified two archaeological features both containing single finds of Roman date. The 2011 evaluation identified pit, postholes, stake-holes and ditches, but no clear dating evidence was recovered from these features. The findings from previous stages of work on the site, in addition to the 2011 watching brief monitoring, indicate that there was some activity on the site during the Roman period with perhaps some evidence of earlier prehistoric activity and probable medieval and post-medieval surface activity/farming.

The natural geology, comprising varied brownish orange silty, gravelly clays, was encountered at approximately 36.3m AOD in the southwest of the site falling to 35.15m AOD in the southeast. All of the features were sealed by an intact layer of accumulated subsoil.

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1.0 Introduction

1.1 Site Background

1.1.1 Archaeology South-East (ASE), a division of Centre for Applied Archaeology (CAA), Institute of Archaeology (IoA), University College London (UCL) was commissioned by Carillion to undertake an archaeological watching brief at Spires Academy, Bredlands Lane, Sturry, Westbere, Canterbury, Kent (NGR 619710 161700; Figures 1 and 2), henceforth called the site.

1.2 Planning Background

1.2.1 A planning application for the erection of a new state-of-the-art educational building together with outdoor sports pitches, a new 3 court Multi-Use Games Area (MUGA), new parking provision, drop off zones, new circulatory and pedestrian access, landscaping and ancillary works has been submitted to the County Planning Authority. In response to this planning application the Heritage Conservation Group (HCG) at Kent County Council (KCC) advised that:

It is possible that significant archaeological remains may be present at the site which would be affected by the development proposals...and recommended that...provision is made in any forthcoming planning consent for an archaeological evaluation to be followed by appropriate excavation and/or preservation in situ.

1.2.2 A Specification (KCC 2011) document for the archaeological investigations in the form of a watching brief was prepared by the HCC in advance of the construction phase to be undertaken at the site.

1.3 Aims and Objectives

1.3.1 The watching brief set out to determine, as far as was reasonably possible, the location, form, extent, date, character, condition, significance and quality/degree of survival of any surviving archaeological remains, irrespective of period, liable to be threatened by the proposed development.

1.3.2 The original specification document (KCC 2011) suggested a targeted archaeological watching brief during stripping of topsoil within the footprint of the new Academy building and MUGA and monitoring of all other groundwork associated with the development. However, the mitigation for this monitoring was subsequently reduced by Ben Found, KCC and involved only partial monitoring, including the ground reduction for the new building (the eastern wing).

1.4 Scope of the Report

1.4.1 This document presents the results of the archaeological watching brief carried out at Spires Academy, between 12th and 16th May 2011. The results of a preceding watching brief on test pits in 2010 and of a 2011 archaeological evaluation at the site have been reported on previously (ASE 2010 and 2011a). The fieldwork for this stage of work was undertaken by Kathryn Grant. The project was managed by Andy Leonard (Project Manager) and Jim Stevenson (Post-excavation Manager).

2.0 ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

2.1 Site Location, Topography and Geology

- 2.1.1 The site is located to the east of Canterbury, between the villages of Westbere and Hersden.
- 2.1.2 The site is generally level at c. 35m AOD. Prior to the archaeological evaluation the site was used as playing fields for the existing Spires Academy. It was bounded to the south by Island Road (A28) and to the north and east by open fields.
- 2.1.3 The site lies on a head deposit of undifferentiated clays, silts, sands and gravels which overlie clay and silt of the London Clay Formation (BGS Map 273, 1974).

2.2 Archaeological Summary

- 2.2.1 The site's archaeological potential is based on the proximity of archaeological remains presently recorded in the HER. The presence of Romano British and Anglo-Saxon remains within the surrounding landscape demonstrate that the site lies within an area of archaeological potential.
- 2.2.2 The site lies to the north of a Roman Road connecting Canterbury and the Isle of Thanet. This is the route of Island Road (A28), immediately to the south of the site (Figures 1 and 2). Recent archaeological investigations at the site associated with archaeological monitoring of geotechnical test-pitting identified archaeological remains, probably of Roman date, at the site (ASE 2010). These remains were thought to relate to roadside activity in the Romano-British Period.
- 2.2.3 Other nearby archaeological investigations (alongside the road) have found evidence for pre-Roman activity. It is therefore possible that the Roman road followed a route that had been in-use during the later prehistoric period. Such remains include Late Iron Age/Early Roman enclosures some 250m to the south-east and an important Iron Age and Roman settlement which was found further along Island Road at the Lakeview Business Park.
- 2.2.4 Later archaeological sites within the proximity of the site include an Anglo-Saxon burial ground on the opposite side of Island Road (Rady 2006; Barrett 2006). The cemetery is noted as containing cremations and inhumations with burials dating from the early sixth to seventh centuries AD.

2.3 Previous Archaeological Investigations at Spires

- 2.3.1 An archaeological watching brief on test-pit excavations carried out by ASE in 2010 identified two archaeological features containing single finds of Roman date (ASE 2010). Additionally, an archaeological evaluation comprising the excavation of eighteen trial trenches was carried out in February this year (ASE 2011). The evaluation identified pit, postholes, stake-holes and ditches, but no clear dating evidence was recovered from these features.

3.0 METHODOLOGY

3.1 Fieldwork

- 3.1.1 The archaeological watching brief was carried out in accordance with the Specification (KCC 2011) and complied with the relevant IfA standards and guidance documents (IfA 2001). A risk assessment was produced by ASE (2011b) prior to any work on site.
- 3.1.2 Machine excavation was undertaken by a 360° mechanical excavator fitted with a flat-bladed bucket to minimise damage to deposits.
- 3.1.3 During the monitored excavations, all revealed deposits were examined for archaeological features and artefacts. The removed spoil was scanned for any stray, unstratified artefacts.
- 3.1.4 All archaeological deposits, features and finds were excavated and recorded in accordance with accepted professional standards (IFA 2000 & 2001, EH 1991) using pro-forma context record sheets.
- 3.1.5 Monitored areas were marked on existing site plans and were then tied into the Ordnance Survey 1:1250 scale map of the area. These areas are shown on Figure 2. Revealed archaeological features were planned by hand and sections were drawn on permatrace.
- 3.1.6 A digital photographic record was maintained throughout the watching brief and forms part of the site archive.
- 3.1.7 Level data and any required co-ordinates were attained on site through existing plans and via the sub-contracting engineer.
- 3.1.8 Two environmental samples were collected from sealed archaeological deposits during the watching brief; the numbering for these started at 7 (following on from the evaluation sample numbering) so as not to confuse numbering from the earlier stages of works.

3.2 Archive

- 3.2.1 The project archive is presently held at Archaeology South-East offices at Portslade, East Sussex but will be deposited with a suitable local museum in due course. The contents of the project archive are tabulated below (Table 1).

Number of Contexts	11 contexts
No. of files/paper record	1 folder
Plan and sections sheets	1 sheet (4 sections/1 plan)
Bulk Samples	2
Bulk Finds	1 small box
Photographs	40 digital photographs

Table 1: Quantification of site arch

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4.0 RESULTS (Figures 2, 3 and 4)

4.1 Introduction

4.1.1 The monitored areas of groundwork were targeted on the findings of the preceding evaluation and were agreed with KCC accordingly throughout the programme of works.

4.1.2 Additionally, some other areas exposed during the groundworks were also monitored. No archaeological deposits, features or finds were observed in these.

4.1.3 Figure 2 shows all of the areas and the evaluation trenches in relation to the construction work that were monitored during the watching brief. The works monitored included:

- Topsoil strip and partial reduction of the subsoil within the new academy building footprint
- Stripping for a new path along the southern perimeter of the site
- Access/drainage routes leading into the site from the west (Bredlands Lane)
- Overhead electricity cables were also being redirected underground and as a result it was necessary to monitor part of the excavations for the new service trench
- At this time, 3 trial-holes were also excavated by the contractor to the east of the central tree-line with a view to locating the water main

4.1.4 It was agreed with Ben Found (KCC) that due to the shallow nature of the topsoil strip for the MUGA foundations, no monitoring for this was required.

4.1.5 Eleven context numbers were assigned during the archaeological watching brief.

Context Number	Context Type	Context Description	Max. Thickness (mm)	Heights m AOD
100	Layer	Topsoil	c.300	c.35.90
101	Layer	Subsoil	c.150	-
102	Cut	Posthole	-	c.35.46
103	Fill	Fill of [102]	230	-
104	Cut	Posthole	-	c.35.46
105	Fill	Fill of [104]	210	-
106	Cut	Posthole	-	c.35.46
107	Fill	Fill of [106]	150	-
108	Cut	Posthole	-	c.35.46
109	Fill	Fill of [108]	110	-
110	Layer	Natural Geology	-	c.35.46

Table 2: List of recorded contexts from the 2011 watching brief

4.2 Summary of Contexts

- 4.2.1 Where ground reduction associated with the new academy building was deep enough, natural geology [110], comprising varied orange-brown silty, gravelly clays, was encountered at approximately 35.46m AOD across the eastern and northern wings.
- 4.2.2 The only archaeological features recorded were a cluster of 4 postholes [102, 104, 106 and 108] sealed beneath an intact layer of orange-brown clayey silt sterile subsoil [101] and mid brown clayey silt topsoil [100] with a thickness of 250mm and 300mm and cutting the natural horizon [110] at c.35.46m AOD in the north-western corner of the eastern wing. The postholes measured between 430mm and 530mm in diameter with depths of between 110mm and 230mm. No datable artefacts were recovered from any of the features.
- 4.2.3 Three of the postholes [102, 104 and 106] were in a linear arrangement and [108] was positioned 2m to the south-east of [104]; however, the lack of any artefactual and environmental evidence makes further interpretation impossible.
- 4.2.4 The fills of these features [103, 105, 107 and 109] were all similar and consisted of mid grey/grey-brown loose clayey silt and contained rare to moderate amounts of charcoal and fired-clay/daub inclusions (from the environmental samples taken from postholes [102 and 104] <7> and <8>).
- 4.2.5 Following initial ground reduction in this area, a further strip was carried out around the perimeter of the eastern wing. This was about 2.5m wide and between 500mm and 700mm deep (from existing ground level at c.35.90m AOD) with a battered 45° internal edge.
- 4.2.6 The possible gully recorded in evaluation Trench 8 was observed during these excavations but was almost entirely truncated by a land-drain (also recorded in the evaluation; ASE 2011). The ditch was not revealed during the ground reduction in the southern wing because excavations here were too shallow.
- 4.2.7 Several unstratified finds, including 13th-14th century pottery sherds, post-medieval pottery sherds, mixed brick and tile fragments dating from the Roman to post-medieval periods and a single undiagnostic flint nodule were recovered from the topsoil.
- 4.2.8 No archaeological remains were observed during the excavation of the service trench for the redirection of the power cables.

5.0 THE FINDS

5.1 Introduction

5.1.1 The finds recovered from the 2011 watching brief on the groundwork at Spires Academy included flintwork, pottery sherds and fragments of ceramic building materials (CBM). The finds have been tabulated below (Table 3).

Context	Pottery	wt (g)	CBM	wt (g)	Flint	wt (g)
100	7	106	30	780	1	71

Table 3: Quantification of the finds from the 2011 watching brief

5.2 Flintwork Karine Le Hégarat

5.2.1 A single tested nodule/bashed lump weighing 71g was recovered during the Stage 2 watching brief at the site. The piece found in topsoil layer [100] was made from grey flint gravel but is otherwise undiagnostic.

5.3 Post-Roman Pottery by Luke Barber

5.3.1 A small assemblage of seven sherds (103g) was recovered from context [100]. The assemblage is mixed, with two periods being represented. Three sherds (28g) consist of quite heavily abraded oxidised Tyler Hill sandy ware (Canterbury fabric M1). Two are body sherds (including a green glazed example from a jug) while the third is from a jug strap handle with line of central stabbing and thumbled edges. All can be placed between c. 1225-1350 although a later 13th- century date is most likely.

5.3.2 The remaining four sherds are from post-medieval redwares (PM1) and include quite finely made body sherds and a single base. A date between c. 1675 and 1800 is probable.

5.4 Ceramic Building Material (CBM) by Sarah Porteus

5.4.1 A total of 30 fragments of ceramic building material (CBM) with a combined weight of 754g were recovered from context [100]. The assemblage contained brick and tile of Roman to post-medieval date; all of the fragments are highly abraded.

5.4.2 The assemblage has been recorded on pro-forma record sheets for archive.

6.0 ENVIRONMENTAL SAMPLES by Karine Le Hégarat

- 6.1** Two bulk soil samples were taken during the 2011 watching brief at the site to establish evidence for environmental remains such as charcoal, charred macrobotanicals, bones and shells. Both samples were retrieved from posthole contexts [102] and [104]. The samples were processed in a flotation tank and the residues and flots were retained on 500µm and 250µm meshes and air dried. The residues were passed through graded sieves (4 and 2mm) and each fraction sorted for environmental and artefact remains (Table 4, below). The flots were scanned under a stereozoom microscope at x7-45 magnifications and their contents recorded (Table 5, p.7).
- 6.2** The small flots (<2mm each) contained some modern rootlets, which suggests a small degree of modern disturbance and potential contamination of the deposits. On the whole sampling produced a small amount of environmental remains limited to infrequent charcoal fragments and a single small unburnt bone fragment. The wood charcoal fragments in the flots and residues were predominantly small (<4mm and often <2mm) with some occasional pieces >4mm in the residue from sample <7> [103]. A small amount of amorphous fragments of fired clay <12mm in size were also noticed in both samples and sample <7> contained a small amount of fire cracked flints.
- 6.3** The bulk environmental samples taken during the Stage 2 watching brief confirmed the presence of wood charcoal. However, the assemblage is too limited to confirm if it is directly associated with the postholes and the small fragments of charcoal could represent scattered detritus which had accumulated in the features.
- 6.4** The charcoal assemblage is too limited to provide information regarding the selection of wood for construction, fuel use or the vegetation environment or to provide material suitable for dating.

Sample Number	Context	Context / deposit type	Sample Volume litres	sub-Sample Volume litres	Charcoal >4mm	Weight (g)	Charcoal <4mm	Weight (g)	Bone and Teeth	Weight (g)	Other (eg ind, pot, cbm)
7	103	Fill of posthole [102]	6	6	*	<2	**	<2			Burnt clay */2g - FCF */2g
8	105	Fill of posthole [104]	6	6			*	<2	*	<2	Burnt clay */2g

Table 4: Residue quantification (* = 1-10, ** = 11-50, *** = 51-250, **** = >250) and weights in grams.

Sample Number	Context	weight g	Flot volume ml	Uncharred %	sediment %	Charcoal >4mm	Charcoal <4mm	Charcoal <2mm
7	103	<2	<2	62	23		*	**
8	105	<2	<2	70	28			**

Table 5: Flot quantification (* = 1-10, ** = 11-50, *** = 51-250, **** = >250) (+ = poor, ++ = moderate, +++ = good)

7.0 DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

- 7.1** Four undated postholes were recorded but the lack of artefactual material and environmental evidence from these features makes further discussion and interpretation difficult. No further postholes were recorded to the west, but due to the limits of the area of the new-build it is not possible to say whether they continued to the east.
- 7.2** Due to the shallow nature of the excavations across most of the eastern wing of the new academy building the stake-holes revealed in Trench 4 of the evaluation were not revealed and no other archaeology was recorded in the vicinity of this trench. The gully recorded in Trench 8 of the evaluation was only partially revealed during the ground work and the presence of a land-drain along the exact alignment of this feature corroborated the suggestion within the evaluation report (ASE 2011) that it is probably an earlier drainage gully.
- 7.3** Several unstratified finds, including 13th-14th century pottery sherds, post-medieval pottery sherds, mixed brick and tile fragments from the Roman through to post-medieval periods and a single undiagnostic flint nodule were recovered from the topsoil during the ground reduction associated with the new building foundations.
- 7.4** Natural geology [110], comprising varied orange-brown silty, gravelly clays, was encountered at approximately 35.46m AOD in the eastern wing of the new academy building.
- 7.5** Previous stages of work identified had two features containing single finds of Roman date (ASE 2010) and several undated postholes, stake-holes, pits and linear gullies in the south of the site (ASE 2011). In addition to the features, Roman pottery sherds (AD60-100) were recovered from topsoil deposits during the evaluation (ASE 2011) and Roman brick fragments were recovered from geotechnical test-pits (ASE 2010). Two small pottery sherds of Late Bronze Age/Early Iron Age date were also recovered from the environmental sample collected from the amorphous pit uncovered in Trench 3 during the evaluation stage (ASE 2011).
- 7.6** The findings from previous stages of work on the site, in addition to the 2011 watching brief monitoring, indicate that there was some activity on the site during the Roman period with perhaps some evidence of earlier prehistoric activity and probable medieval and post-medieval surface activity/farming.

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The author would like to thank all those involved with the project with particular thanks to Carillion for commissioning the work and to Ben Found of KCC for his guidance throughout the project.

HER Summary Form

Site Code	SAC 10					
Identification Name and Address	Spires Academy, Bredlands Lane, Sturry, Canterbury					
County, District &/or Borough	Kent					
OS Grid Refs.	NGR:619710 161700					
Geology	Head deposit of undifferentiated clays, silts and gravels over London Clay					
Arch. South-East Project Number	4577					
Type of Fieldwork	Eval.	Excav.	Watching Brief	Standing Structure	Survey	Other
Type of Site	Green Field	Shallow Urban	Deep Urban	Other		
Dates of Fieldwork	Eval.	Excav.	WB. 12th - 16th May 2011	Other		
Sponsor/Client	Carillion					
Project Manager	Andy Leonard					
Project Supervisor	Kathryn Grant					
Period Summary	Palaeo	Meso.	Neo.	BA	IA	RB CBM
	AS	MED 12th-13th century pot sherds	PM CBM/pot sherds	Undated Four Postholes		
100 Word Summary						
<p>An archaeological watching brief was carried out by Archaeology South East (ASE) at Spires Academy, Sturry (NGR 619710 161700) during the groundwork associated with the redevelopment of the site. The archaeological work was commissioned by Carillion and was carried out between 12th and 16th May 2011.</p> <p>This stage of work revealed a cluster of four undated postholes. Several unstratified finds, including 13th-14th century pottery sherds, post-medieval pottery sherds, mixed brick and tile fragments from the Roman period through to the post-medieval period and a single undiagnostic flint nodule were recovered from the topsoil during the ground reduction associated with the new building foundations. The 2010 watching brief on test-pit excavations identified two archaeological features both containing single finds of Roman date. The 2011 evaluation identified pit, postholes, stake-holes and ditches, but no clear dating evidence was recovered from these features. The findings from previous stages of work on the site, in addition to the 2011 watching brief monitoring, indicate that there was some activity on the site during the Roman period with perhaps some evidence of earlier prehistoric activity and probable medieval and post-medieval surface activity/farming.</p> <p>The natural geology, comprising varied brownish orange silty, gravelly clays, was encountered at approximately 36.3m AOD in the southwest of the site falling to 35.15m AOD in the southeast. All of the features were sealed by an intact layer of accumulated subsoil.</p>						

OASIS FORM

OASIS ID: archaeol6-105731

Project details

Project name	Spires Academy, Bredlands Lane, Sturry
Short description of the project	An archaeological watching brief was carried out by Archaeology South East (ASE) during the groundwork associated with the redevelopment of the site. This stage of work revealed a cluster of four undated postholes. Several unstratified finds, including 13th-14th century pottery sherds, post-medieval pottery sherds, mixed brick and tile fragments from the Roman period through to the post-medieval period and a single undiagnostic flint nodule were recovered from the topsoil during the ground reduction associated with the new building foundations. The 2010 watching brief on test-pit excavations identified two archaeological features both containing single finds of Roman date. The 2011 evaluation identified pit, postholes, stake-holes and ditches, but no clear dating evidence was recovered from these features. The findings from previous stages of work on the site, in addition to the 2011 watching brief monitoring, indicate that there was some activity on the site during the Roman period with perhaps some evidence of earlier prehistoric activity and probable medieval and post-medieval surface activity/farming. The natural geology, comprising varied brownish orange silty, gravelly clays, was encountered at approximately 36.3m AOD in the southwest of the site falling to 35.15m AOD in the southeast. All of the features were sealed by an intact layer of accumulated subsoil.
Project dates	Start: 12-05-2011 End: 16-05-2011
Previous/future work	Yes / No
Any associated project reference codes	SAC10 - Sitecode
Type of project	Recording project
Current Land use	Other 14 - Recreational usage
Monument type	POSTHOLES Uncertain
Monument type	CBM Roman
Significant Finds	POTTERY Medieval
Significant Finds	CBM Roman
Significant Finds	POTTERY AND CBM Post Medieval
Investigation type	'Watching Brief'

Project location

Country England
Site location KENT CANTERBURY STURRY Spires Academy, Bredlands Lane
Postcode CT2 0HD
Site coordinates TQ 619710 161700 50.9216388403 0.304750091267 50 55 17
N 000 18 17 E Point
Height OD / Depth Min: 35.15m Max: 36.30m

Project creators

Name of Organisation Archaeology South-East
Project director/manager Andy Leonard/Jim Stevenson
Project supervisor Kathryn Grant
Type of sponsor/funding body Developer
Name of sponsor/funding body Carillion

Entered by Kathryn Grant (Kathryn.Grant@ucl.ac.uk)
Entered on 25 July 2011



© Archaeology South-East		Spires Academy, Sturry		Fig. 1
Project Ref: 4577	July 2011	Site location		
Report Ref: 2011163	Drawn by: JLR			



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Archaeology South-East		Spires Academy, Sturry		Fig. 2
Project Ref: 4577	July 2011	Plan of monitored works		
Report Ref: 2011163	Drawn by: JLR			

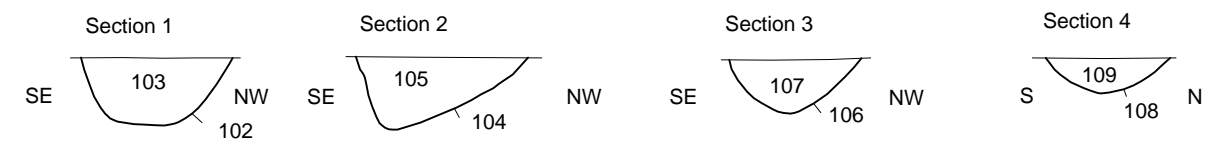
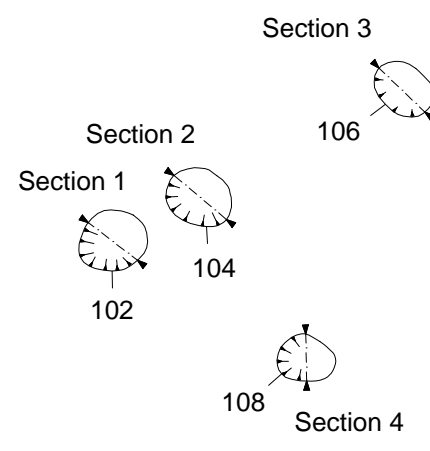
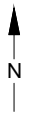


Cable trench - looking north-west

Trial hole over water main

Southern perimeter path, looking west

Archaeology South-East		Spires Academy, Sturry		Fig. 3
Project Ref: 4577	July 2011	Plan of academy building footprint		
Report Ref: 2011163	Drawn by: JLR			



Posthole 102 looking west

Posthole 104 looking west

Posthole 106 looking west

Posthole cluster 104-108 looking west

Line of postholes 102-106 looking west

Eastern wing of new academy building after reduced dig

Eastern wing of new academy building - looking west

2.5m strip around edge of eastern wing of new academy building - looking east

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