

Archaeological Watching Brief  
at  
**CASTLE PARK PRIMARY SCHOOL,  
CHURCH ROAD, CALDICOT,  
MONMOUTHSHIRE.**  
for  
Willmott Dixon



Report No. 2410/2011

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Centred on  
N.G.R. ST 4821 8858

Client: Willmott Dixon

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### Abbreviations

AD	Anno Domini	Km	Kilometre
aOD	Above Ordnance Datum	m	Metre
BaRAS	Bristol & Region Archaeological Services	NGR	National Grid Reference
BC	Before Christ	NMR	National Monuments Record
c.	Circa	OS	Ordnance Survey
HER	Historic Environment Record		

### NOTE

Notwithstanding that Bristol and Region Archaeological Services have taken reasonable care to produce a comprehensive summary of the known and recorded archaeological evidence, no responsibility can be accepted for any omissions of fact or opinion, however caused.

February, 2011.

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## **SUMMARY**

An archaeological watching brief was carried out during groundwork associated with the construction of a new Community Learning Plaza at Castle Park Primary School in Caldicot, Monmouthshire. The new facility is to be built on a site formerly occupied by a temporary classroom, a patio and landscaped lawn.

Site monitoring took place during January 2011, when mechanical ground reduction/excavation work revealed layers of topsoil (100) and sub-soil (101) sealing the natural clay (102), beneath which was the solid sandstone geology (103).

During ground reduction work to formation level (20.490m aOD), on the footprint of the proposed Learning Plaza, it was observed that while there were areas of disturbance mostly associated with services related to the current nearby school buildings, the ground appeared generally undisturbed. Other than the shallow foundations of a 19th/20th century stone boundary wall (a surviving portion of which was extant nearby) site visits otherwise recorded nothing else of archaeological interest.

## **LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS**

### **Figures**

- Figs.1            Site location plan
- Fig. 2            Existing site plan
- Fig. 3            Proposed site plan
- Fig. 4            Proposed ground floor plan

### **Plates**

- Cover            View (taken in mid January 2011), looking north-east, across the site
- Plate 1           Looking south west at commencement of mechanical excavation work
- Plate 2           Looking west at excavation work next to existing school buildings
- Plate 3           Looking east, alongside the northern limit of the reduced dig. The tower of St Mary's Church can be seen in the background (right)
- Plate 4           View north west showing stepped 2m high section at the northern limit of the excavation

## 1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 Bristol and Region Archaeological Services (BaRAS) was commissioned by Willmott Dixon Construction Limited to undertake an archaeological watching brief during groundwork associated with the construction of a new Community Learning Plaza at Castle Park Primary School (**Fig. 1; Cover**) in the town of Caldicot, in Monmouthshire.
- 1.2 The watching brief was commissioned to comply with a condition of the planning consent (Planning Reference No. DC/2010/00777) granted by the local planning authority (Monmouthshire County Council) and in accordance with a *Written Scheme of Investigation* prepared by John Bryant (Acting Manager) of Bristol and Region Archaeological Services (Bryant 2011).
- 1.3 The planning application was submitted to Monmouthshire County Council (LPA) on 20 August 2010 by White Design Associates Limited, on behalf of the Lifelong Learning & Leisure Directorate, Monmouthshire County Council, to build a new Community Learning Plaza at Castle Park Primary School, Church Road, Caldicot, Monmouthshire NP26 4HN. The facility (**Figs. 2, 3 & 4**) is to comprise a Learning Plaza with a gross floorspace of 242.37 sq. metres (2,608.84 sq. feet), incorporating two group teaching zones, an art and science space, and a presentation space plus an outdoor Performance Space and Amphitheatre with associated landscaping. The application subsequently received planning consent with a number of planning conditions attached, one of which required an archaeological watching brief to be carried out during all site groundwork.
- 1.4 Glamorgan Gwent Archaeological Trust-Curatorial Division stated, on behalf of the Local Planning Authority (Planning Reference No. DC/2010/00777), that *'The developer shall ensure that a suitably qualified archaeologist is present during the undertaking of any ground disturbing works in the development area so that an archaeological watching brief can be conducted. The archaeological watching brief shall be undertaken to the standards of the Institute for Archaeologists. The Local Planning Authority shall be informed, in writing, at least two weeks prior to the commencement of the development of the name of the said archaeologist and no work shall begin until the Local Planning Authority has confirmed, in writing, that the proposed archaeologist is suitable. A copy of the watching brief report shall be submitted to the Local Planning Authority within two months of the fieldwork being completed by the archaeologist. Reason: To identify and record any features of archaeological interest discovered during the works, in order to mitigate the impact of the works on the archaeological resource'*.
- 1.5 The fieldwork was undertaken over a number of site visits that took place between mid and late January 2011 under the supervision of Tim Longman (Project Officer, BaRAS) who also compiled this report.
- 1.6 A copy of all project data will be supplied to the Historic Environment Record (HER) maintained by Glamorgan Gwent Archaeological Trust in Swansea. The project archive will be deposited with Caldicot Castle Museum and a copy of the report will be available to the National Monuments Record for Wales (NMRW), which is maintained by the Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Wales in Aberystwyth.

## 2. THE SITE

- 2.1 The site (centred at NGR ST 4821 8858) (**Figs. 1–4**) is located some 300m north-east of Caldicot town centre. Caldicot itself is situated approximately 8km (5 miles) south-west of Chepstow and 16km (10 miles) north-east of Newport, in south-east Monmouthshire. The population of Caldicot in the 2001 Census was approximately 11,250. The site is bounded by a footpath to the east (beyond which is a church hall and car park) and Llanthony Close (residential cul-de-sac) to the south-east. To the south and west are the staff car park and buildings of Castle Park School, while north is a playing field (beyond which is a housing estate). None of the site lies within a conservation area.
- 2.2 According to the British Geological Survey, the site lies on the boundary between Mercia Mudstone and Sandstone of the Triassic period.
- 2.3 Gently sloping uphill from south-east to north-west, the site comprised, prior to the commencement of groundwork, a paved patio area with the remainder largely down to grass. The site is roughly square in shape and the new Learning Plaza is to occupy the western part, while the remainder will be utilised as a Performance Space and Amphitheatre with areas of shrub planting and landscaping.

### 3. ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

- 3.1 Historically, the parish of Caldicot lies in the hundred of Caldicot in the county of Monmouthshire. The standard work on the county in the historical period is Sir Joseph Bradney's *History of Monmouthshire* (volumes originally published between 1904-33).
- 3.2 The rich soils of the nearby Caldicot Level (part of the Gwent Levels) have encouraged human occupation from the prehistoric period onwards, in particular evidence of Bronze Age and Iron Age activity has been recorded in the vicinity. Excavations near the Nedern Brook, next to the castle, found a plank from a Bronze Age boat and complex structures in the former riverbed.
- 3.3 The excavation of Roman pottery kilns in the vicinity shows that coarse pottery was being produced in the area at that time. In 1998 excavations by BaRAS at nearby Church Farm (NGR ST 4835 8892) revealed the site of a Romano-British farmstead enclosed by bank and ditch features (Insole 1998).
- 3.4 While the site lies just beyond the boundaries of the Caldicot Castle Conservation Area, which is centred on nearby Caldicot Castle and its grounds (includes St Mary's Church), the study area lies close to the centre of the historic village, with the parish church of St Mary the Virgin located just 100m to the north east.
- 3.5 The settlement is thought to have at least medieval origins, the Historic Environment Record (HER) noting that the church (then dedicated to St Bride) is first mentioned in the 9th century, though most of the present building is built in the Perpendicular style and dates from the late 14th and 15th centuries with some later work in the mid 19th century. The site also lies close to the western boundary of the Scheduled Ancient Monument defining the unoccupied area of Caldicot Castle. There was therefore thought to be the possibility of evidence of medieval occupation on the proposal site.
- 3.6 In 1074, following the Norman Conquest, the manor of Caldicot was granted to Durand, Sheriff of Gloucester. Caldicot is recorded in the Domesday Book of 1086. One of the oldest buildings in the town, Llanthony Secunda Manor was built c.1120 as a grange for monks from Llanthony Secunda Priory in Gloucester.
- 3.7 In 1158 the manor of Caldicot passed to Humphrey de Bohun, 3rd Earl of Hereford, who was responsible for building the present stone keep and curtain walls. In 1376 it (along with 70 others) passed to Thomas Woodstock (d.1391), third son of King Edward III, on his marriage to Alianore de Bohun.
- 3.8 On the death of Thomas Woodstock his estates were seized by King Richard II. In 1399 the de Bohun family estates were restored, but on the death of Alianore the castle passed to her nephew King Henry V and so Caldicot become part of the estates of the Duchy of Lancaster. Later held by Henry's widow Katherine de Valois, Caldicot was subsequently granted into the stewardship of the Herbert family (later Dukes of Somerset) from the 15<sup>th</sup> century.
- 3.9 In 1857 the castle was sold to Charles Lewis of St Pierre. He, in turn sold it to Joseph Richard Cobb in 1885, who began its restoration turning it into his family home.
- 3.10 By the mid 19th century Caldicot was a small farming village. In 1847 St Mary's Church school opened. The opening of the South Wales Railway brought travel to Cardiff and London within relatively easy reach (via the ferry between Black Rock near Portskewett and Old Passage near Aust), though Caldicot Station itself was not opened until 1936. The railway attracted industry to the area, and in 1862 Henry Hughes of Tintern opened a wireworks (later a tinsplate works) next to the railway, becoming the village's major employer and attracting many new residents. In 1879 work began on the construction of the Severn



Tunnel, which was opened in 1886. Its construction brought hundreds of workers to Caldicot, roughly doubling its population.

- 3.11 During the first half of the 20th century Caldicot continued to develop, reaching a population of 1,770 in 1951. In the early 1950s Chepstow Rural District Council decided that the village should expand in population to around 3,000. Soon after this decision was reached the Llanwern steelworks was opened just outside Newport. Caldicot was considered a suitable home for many of the steelworkers so the development plans were revised upwards. The new steelworks opened in 1962.
- 3.12 In 1964 Lieut. Col. Geoffrey Cobb sold Caldicot castle to Chepstow Rural District Council.
- 3.13 The development of the town received a further boost with the opening of the Severn Bridge in 1966 so that by 1970 the population of Caldicot was more than 7,000. St Mary's Junior (now Primary) School opened on its present site in September 1966, replacing its nearby Victorian predecessor. It was built to serve the population of the new housing estates being built in the town.

#### 4. AIMS & METHODOLOGY

- 4.1 The watching brief started week commencing Monday 17 January 2010, under the supervision of Tim Longman (Project Officer, BaRAS). The area of proposed ground reduction/excavation (the footprint of the proposed Learning Plaza; **Fig. 4**) was located east of the other school buildings and south of the school playing field on an area of land that formerly was occupied by a temporary classroom building and areas of patio and lawn.
- 4.2 The purpose of the watching brief was to record any archaeological deposits or features revealed during the course of intrusive construction groundwork.
- 4.3 The recent programme of fieldwork complied with the methodology contained within the *Written Scheme of Investigation* (Bryant 2010). The fieldwork also followed the *Standards and Guidance for Archaeological Watching Briefs* issued by the Institute of Field Archaeologists (1999, revised 2008), and *Management of Archaeological Projects* (MAP II) issued by English Heritage (EH 1991).
- 4.4 The watching brief involved monitoring ground reduction work across the footprint of the new Learning Plaza, along with the excavation of foundation trenches. All excavations were carried out utilising an 8-ton slew fitted with a toothless ditching bucket.

## 5. RESULTS

- 5.1 Site remediation and excavation works involved a reduced dig across part of the site, to a depth of between 0.5m and 2m (formation level of 20.49m aOD). Ground reduction work, on the site of the proposed Community Learning Plaza (**Plates 1-4**), was thought to be taking place in the vicinity of possible medieval occupation centred on the nearby church and castle. However, during monitoring work it became clear that no medieval archaeology was present. Site monitoring recorded layers of topsoil (100) and sub-soil (101) sealing the natural clay (102), beneath which was the solid sandstone geology (103).
- 5.2 Indeed, other than the foundations of a 0.4m wide stone boundary wall (continuation of a nearby length of extant wall), built of sandstone masonry bonded with yellowish/buff coloured, charcoal flecked mortar dating from the late 19th/20th century, no significant archaeological features or deposits were observed.

## 6. PROJECT TEAM

- 6.1 The fieldwork was undertaken by Tim Longman MifA (Project Officer, BaRAS), who also produced this report. The illustrations were prepared and the report compiled by Ann Linge (Design & Production Officer, BaRAS). The project was managed by John Bryant MifA (Acting Manager, BaRAS).

## 7. BIBLIOGRAPHY AND SOURCES CONSULTED

### Published Material

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### Unpublished Material

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Insole, P., 1998 *Archaeological Excavation of land at Church Farm, Church Road, Caldicot, Gwent* (BaRAS Report No. 454/1998; privately circulated client report)

Mordue, J., 2003 *Archaeological Watching Brief of land at Church Farm, Caldicot, Monmouthshire* (BaRAS Report No. 1165/2003, privately circulated client report)

### Maps & Plans

Castle Park Primary School, Community Learning Plaza site plans (original plans supplied by Willmott Dixon Construction Limited)

## 8. ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Bristol and Region Archaeological Services would like to thank Steve Clarke (Senior Site Manager), and other site staff from Willmott Dixon Construction Ltd, along with site staff from S. Morris Groundworks Ltd, and to the schools' Headmaster Mr R. Wilsher and his staff for their assistance and co-operation during the programme of ground works. Thanks also to Claudine Gerrard (Archaeological Planning Officer, Glamorgan Gwent Archaeological Trust – Curatorial Division) and Ann Rainsbury (Monmouthshire County Museum Service) for their advice, and to the staff of Caldicott Library for their assistance.

## **APPENDIX 1: Policy Statement**

This report is the result of work carried out in the light of national and local authority policies.

### **NATIONAL POLICIES**

Statutory protection for archaeology is enshrined in national legislation passed in the Westminster Parliament, including the Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Areas Act (1979), amended by the National Heritage Act, 1983. Nationally important sites are listed in the Schedule of Ancient Monuments (SAM). Scheduled Monument consent is required for any work that would affect a SAM.

#### **Welsh Office Circular 60/96 – Planning and the Historic Environment: Archaeology**

Paragraph 8 states that:

*Development plans should reconcile the need for development with the interests of conservation, including archaeology. They should include policies for the protection, enhancement and preservation of sites of archaeological interest and their settings.*

Paragraph 10 states that:

*The desirability of preserving an ancient monument and its setting is a material consideration in determining a planning application whether that monument is scheduled or unscheduled.*

Paragraph 18 states that:

*There will be occasions, particularly where remains of lesser significance are involved, when planning authorities may decide that the significance of the archaeological remains is not sufficient when weighed against all other material considerations, including the need for development, to justify their physical preservation in situ, and that the proposed development should proceed. Planning authorities will, in such cases, need to satisfy themselves that the developer has made appropriate and satisfactory arrangements for the excavation and recording, or other investigation, of the archaeological remains and the publication of the results.*

Paragraph 19 states:

*From the archaeological point of view excavation should be regarded as a second best option.... The preservation in situ of important archaeological remains is therefore to be preferred.*

Paragraph 20 states that:

*Archaeological investigations, such as excavation and recording, should be carried out before development commences, working to a project brief prepared by the planning authority (with reference to their archaeological advisers). Investigation can be achieved through agreements reached between the developer, the archaeologist and the planning authority. Such agreement should secure and implement an appropriate scheme of archaeological investigation, to an agreed timetable, and provide for the subsequent publication of its results.*

### **DEVOLVED POLICIES**

#### **Planning Policy Wales (2010)**

Current land use planning policy is contained in ‘Planning Policy Wales’ (Edition 3, July 2010), drawn up by the Welsh Assembly Government, which provides the strategic policy framework for the effective preparation of local planning authorities’ development plans.

Planning Policy Wales (2010, section 6.5) indicates that archaeology forms a material consideration in the planning process and states that there should be a presumption in favour of the preservation of nationally important archaeological features and sites, whether scheduled or not. Where local authorities decide that preservation *in situ* is not justified and destruction of the archaeological

remains may proceed, they must be satisfied that the developer has made appropriate provision for archaeological investigation, recording and publication (ibid, para. 6.5.3).

Paragraph 6.5.2 states that:

*The needs of archaeology and development can be reconciled, and potential conflict very much reduced, if developers discuss their proposals for development with the local planning authority at an early stage. Archaeological assessments commissioned by developers (sometimes as part of a wider Environmental Impact Assessment) can help to provide information on the archaeological sensitivity of a site before submitting a planning application. If important remains are thought to exist at a development site, the planning authority should request the prospective developer to arrange for an archaeological field evaluation to be carried out before any decision on the planning application is taken<sup>17</sup>. The results of any assessment and/or field evaluation should be provided as part of a planning application. If this information is not provided, authorities should consider whether it is appropriate to direct the applicant to supply further information, or whether to refuse permission for inadequately documented proposals.*

Paragraph 6.5.3 states that:

*Where local planning authorities decide that physical preservation in situ of archaeological remains is not justified in the circumstances of the case, and that development resulting in the destruction of the archaeological remains should proceed, before granting planning permission the authority needs to be satisfied that the developer has made appropriate and satisfactory provision for the archaeological investigation and subsequent recording of the remains and the publication of the results. Archaeological investigations should be carried out before development commences, working to a project brief prepared by the planning authority.*

## **LOCAL POLICIES**

### **Unitary Authority**

The policy of Monmouthshire County Council is as stated in the planning document *Unitary Development Plan 1996-2011, Chapter 10: Conservation of the Historic Environment* (adopted April 2005)

CH10 Proposals to develop sites where there are known archaeological remains or good reason to believe that such remains exist must incorporate appropriate measures to verify and protect the archaeological interest, including:

- the proper investigation and recording of the site; and
- a layout that, where appropriate, allows for the retention in situ of archaeological remains with adequate safeguarding of the retained features

In designated areas of special archaeological sensitivity appropriate investigations will be necessary before the principle of developing sites can be determined. Where these requirements are not complied with or serious harm to archaeological interests would occur, planning permission may be refused.

## APPENDIX 2: Context Descriptions

Context No.	Description
100	Dark reddish/brown topsoil
101	Mid reddish/brown sandy clay subsoil, containing occasional charcoal flecks plus sparse small sandstone inclusions
102	Stiff reddish/brown natural clay
103	Solid Sandstone geology

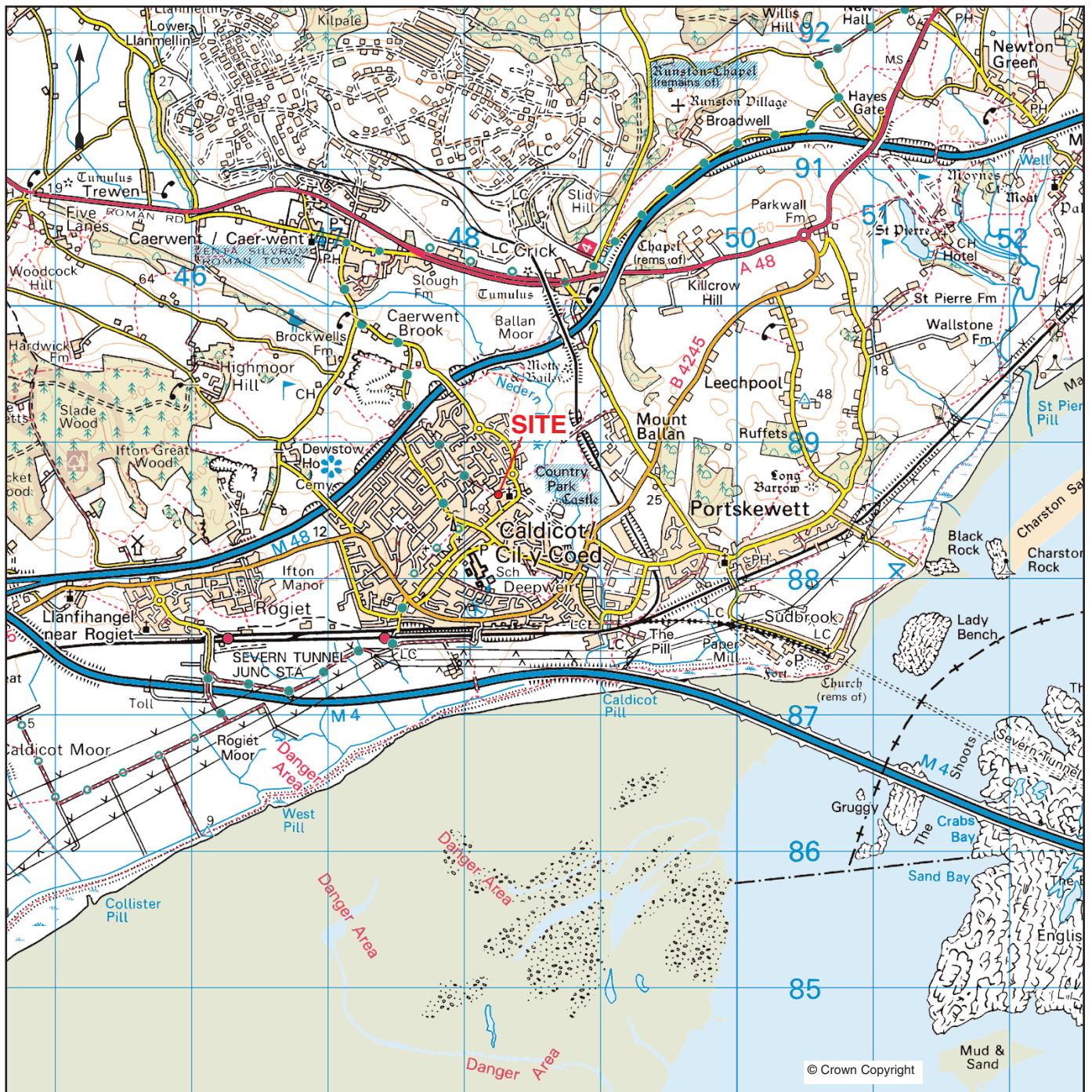


Fig.1 Site location plan





Fig.2 Existing site plans



Fig.3 Proposed site plan

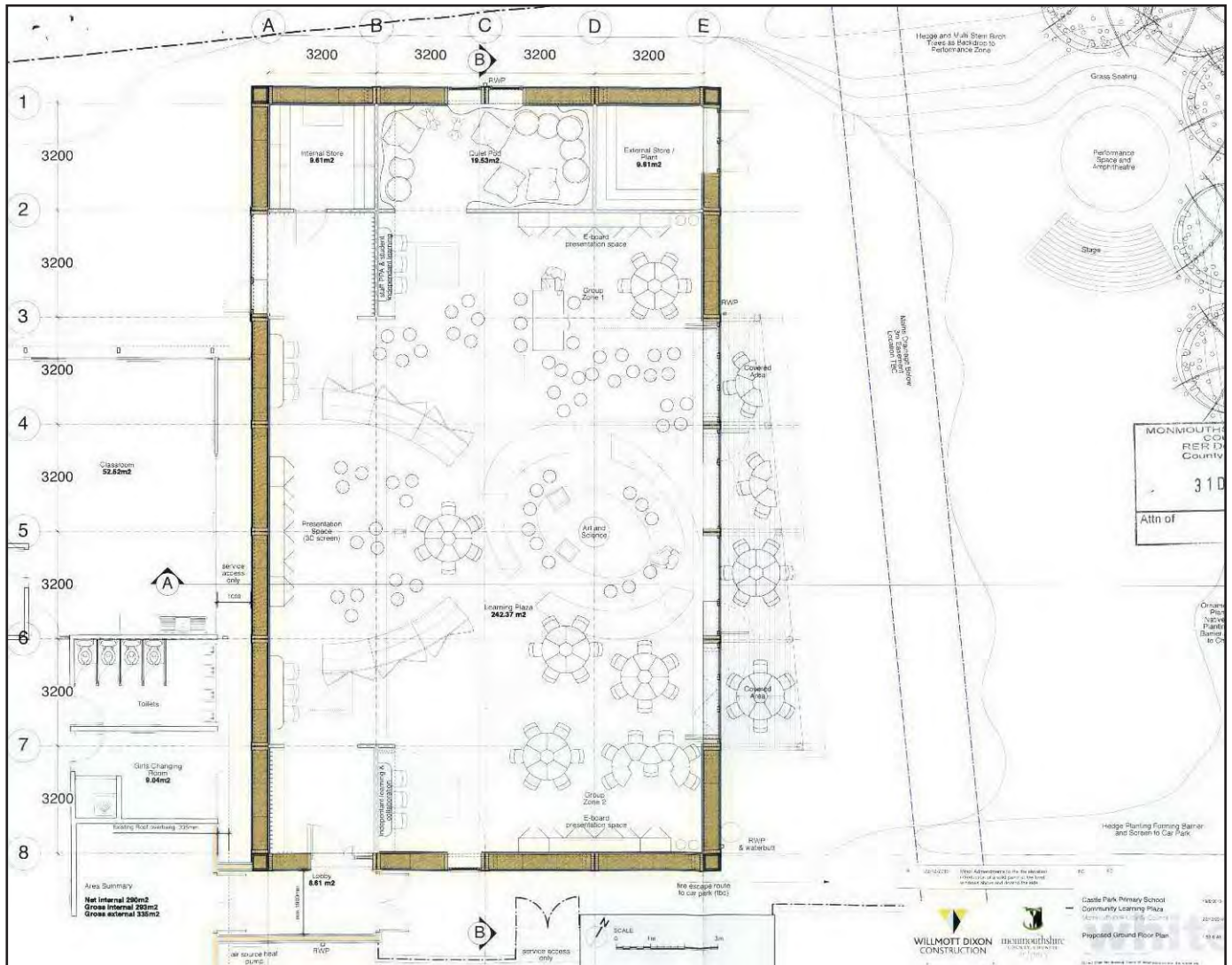


FIG.4 Proposed ground floor plan



Plate 1 Looking south west at commencement of mechanical excavation work



Plate 2 Looking west at excavation work next to existing school buildings



Plate 3 Looking east, alongside the northern limit of the reduced dig. The tower of St Mary's Church can be seen in the background (right)



Plate 4 View north west showing stepped 2m high section at the northern limit of the excavation