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LINDSEY ARCHAEOLOGICAL SERVICES

**New Laundry Wash House
and Loading Bay
Weir Street, Lincoln.
Archaeological Watching Brief**

LCNCC Accn N^o. : 2003.32

Sit Code: LWS03

NGR: SK96935 69540

Planning Application: 2002/0483/F and 2002/0481/CAC

Report
for

**MBA Architecture
on behalf of
Jackson's Workwear Rental Ltd Lincoln**

by

Richard Pullen MA PIFA

Conservation
Services

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Highways & Planning
Directorate

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**Proposed New Laundry Wash House
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Weir Street, Lincoln
Archaeological Watching Brief
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Summary

An archaeological watching brief was undertaken during site stripping and machine excavation for services and foundation trenches on a parcel of land off Weir Street in Lincoln. The stratigraphic make-up of the site consisted of modern industrial overburden and demolition debris directly sealing natural river silts. Two modern ditches were noted running north south across a service trench excavated from the boiler house to the existing building. With the exception of the modern ditches no archaeological features were observed and no finds were recovered. The watching brief concluded that there was no evidence for any human activity pre-dating the 19th century industrial development on the observed area of the site and that prior to this time the entire site would have been a flood plain at the junction between the River Witham and the later Sincil Dyke.

Introduction

In January 2003 Lindsey Archaeological Services were commissioned by MBA Architecture on behalf of Jackson's Workwear Rental Ltd Lincoln to undertake an archaeological watching brief in accordance with the general requirements set out in the *Standard Brief for Archaeological Projects in Lincolnshire* (Lincolnshire County Council Archaeology Section, August 1998).

Site Location and Description

The study area is located on the west side of Weir Street, to the east of the Upper Witham and south of Sincil Dyke. It is part of a complex of buildings used as a commercial laundry since 1877. The site lies at the northern end of the present laundry complex at about 5.50m A.O.D. The 19th century building that previously occupied the study area has recently been demolished and at the time of the watching brief the site could be characterised as a mix of machine trampled building debris and dark grey/brown silt soil.

Planning Background

Applications 2002/0483/F and 2002/0481/CAC were successfully entered for full planning permission regarding the demolition of part of the old laundry complex and the erection of a new wash house and loading bay off Weir Street, Lincoln. The planning permission has been conditionally granted, one of the conditions being that a recognised archaeological body should undertake a watching brief during all phases of below ground works on site.

Archaeological Background

The draft archaeological research assessment characterised the site as being valley floor deposits from the prehistoric era until the end of the Saxon period.

The site was thought to have been the part of the precinct belonging to the Gilbertine priory of St. Katherine, founded after 1148, and St. Sepulchre's Hospital (Hill, 1948, 346 and fig.23). It was possible that evidence for medieval occupation of the riverside may have been found during the groundworks phase of construction.

In 1877, the site was developed by the Lincoln Laundry Company with a new purpose-built laundry building being created on the site. In 1923 the laundry was acquired by the current owners, Jackson's Workware Rental Ltd. The laundry building created in 1877 was subject to a full building survey in January 2003, which is the subject of a separate report. Having been recorded the building was demolished immediately prior to the current watching brief.

Aims and Objectives

The aims of the watching brief were to identify, characterise and record any archaeological remains that may have been disturbed by the groundworks phase of the development, in particular any evidence for use of the site while part of St. Katherine's priory.

Method

Demolition of the laundry building was carried out in two stages. Stage 1 took place during April 2003 and centred on the area of the new car park. The first stage of work was concurrent with the installation of an underground duct leading from the Boiler House to the existing building. The remainder of the building was then demolished, followed immediately by the entire site being stripped and lowered by c.1.00m from the original ground surface. Work to lower and level the site took 6 days between the 4th and the 10th June 2003 and was undertaken using a 360^o tracked machine. The site having been lowered, concrete piles were installed. Work to excavate the foundations followed immediately after the piling operation, beginning on the 28th June and finishing on the 15th July 2003. The excavation of the footings was completed using a JCB excavator equipped with a 0.60m toothed bucket. The foundation trenches were 0.60m wide and c.0.60m in depth. All machining was monitored by a fully qualified and experienced archaeologist. A full photographic record was maintained during the work.

Results

The upper layers of the site were recorded together as modern deposits **100** and had a depth of between 0.30m and 2.20m from the present ground surface. The layers making up **100** consisted of 19th century building foundations, disused drains and general demolition debris. The modern disturbance directly overlay and in most instances cut through a 0.20m deep layer of dark yellow

brown clay silt **101** that sealed a layer of naturally deposited dark grey/brown silt clay **102**. Layer **102** had an unknown ultimate depth, but excavations in the west of the site show that it was in excess of 2.00m from the present ground surface. During the first stage of demolition, a service duct was excavated running east west from the Boiler House to the existing laundry building. The service trench cut through two north south aligned linear features, **103** and **105**. Feature **103** contained a single fill **104** of mixed natural dark grey/brown and lighter yellow/brown silt clay with modern brick and mortar inclusions. The fill of linear **105** was indistinguishable from the upper demolition layer **100**, being a dark grey/brown silt clay containing a high occurrence of modern rubble. Both **103** and **105** were of similar dimensions at c.1.90m wide and in excess of 0.70m deep. A large concrete pad, known to be the base for the former laundry chimney, was noted in the northwest of the site at the junction between the River Witham and Sincil Drain. Machine excavations around the pad showed that it had a depth in excess of 2.00m from the reduced ground surface. It was decided that removal of the pad would be unnecessary and uneconomical; it was therefore left in situ. No features or finds of an archaeological nature were observed at any time during the lowering of the site or the excavation of the foundation trenches.

Discussion

The site is at the junction between Sincil Dyke and the River Witham. Prior to development of the site in the Victorian period both Sincil Dyke, previously known as the Great Bargate Drain, and the River Witham would have been considerably wider than the current watercourses. Consequent long term silting and organic river-born build-up is likely to have been considerable. However, the main silt build-up **102** uncovered during the recent works contained no coarse inclusions in the form of riverside tree roots or shallow water reed beds, this could suggest that the clean silt represents a deep, relatively fast flowing section of water and that the current development is sited towards the middle of the former river/drain course. This evidence coupled with the lack of finds or features suggests that the focus for the known medieval activity in the area, in the form of the priory of St. Katherine's and St. Sepulchre's Hospital, occurs elsewhere, perhaps further to the west on the former banks of the River Witham, now beneath Jackson's main building and car parking area.

Conclusion

The archaeological watching brief found no evidence for any human activity pre-dating the 19th century. The only features identified during the entire watching brief contained modern brick and tile and probably relate to past building development or below ground services. Therefore, the entire stripped and trenched area can be simply characterised as natural seasonal river silting underlying industrial development in the form of 19th century laundry buildings.

Richard Pullen M A. PIFA
Lindsey Archaeological Services
12th August 2003

Reference

Hill, F. 1948. *Medieval Lincoln* (reprinted 1990).

THE FIGURES

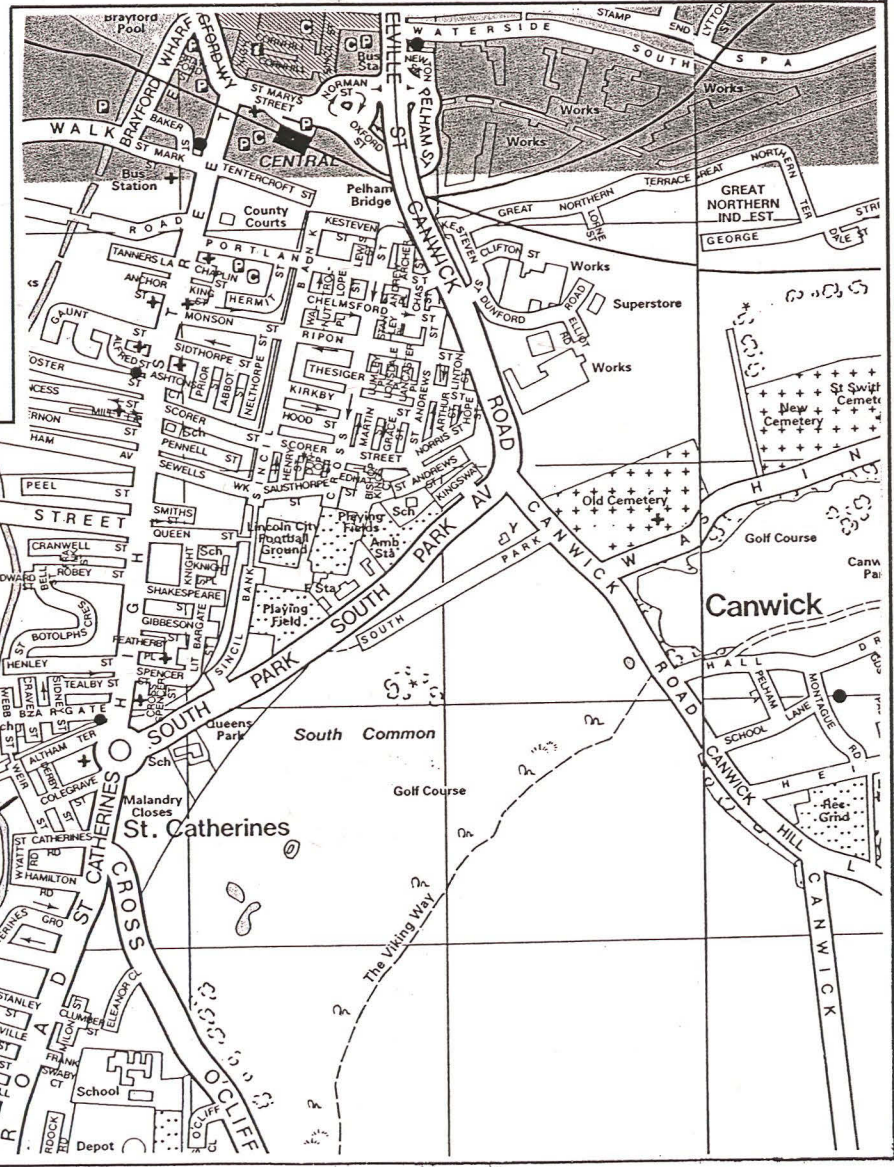
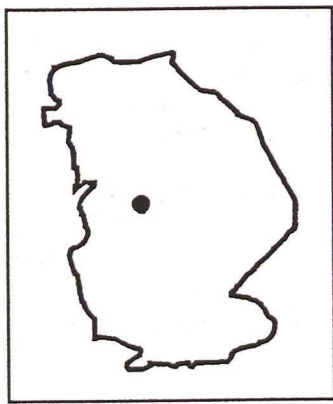
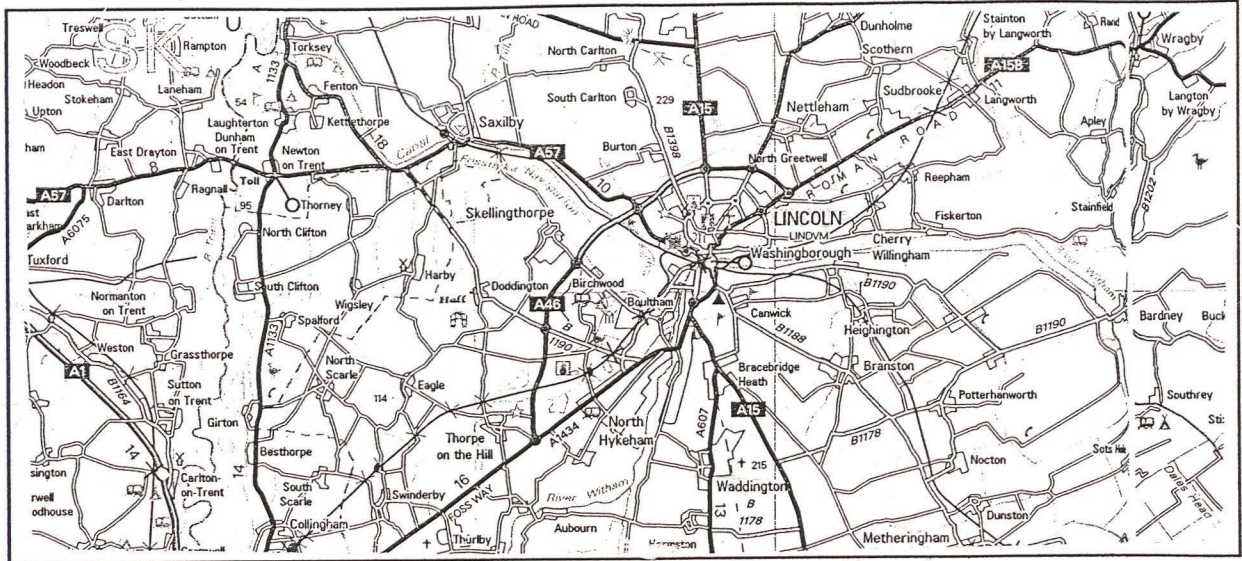


Fig. 1 Lincoln location plan

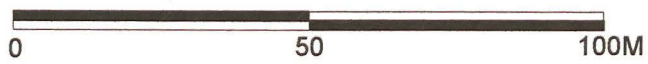
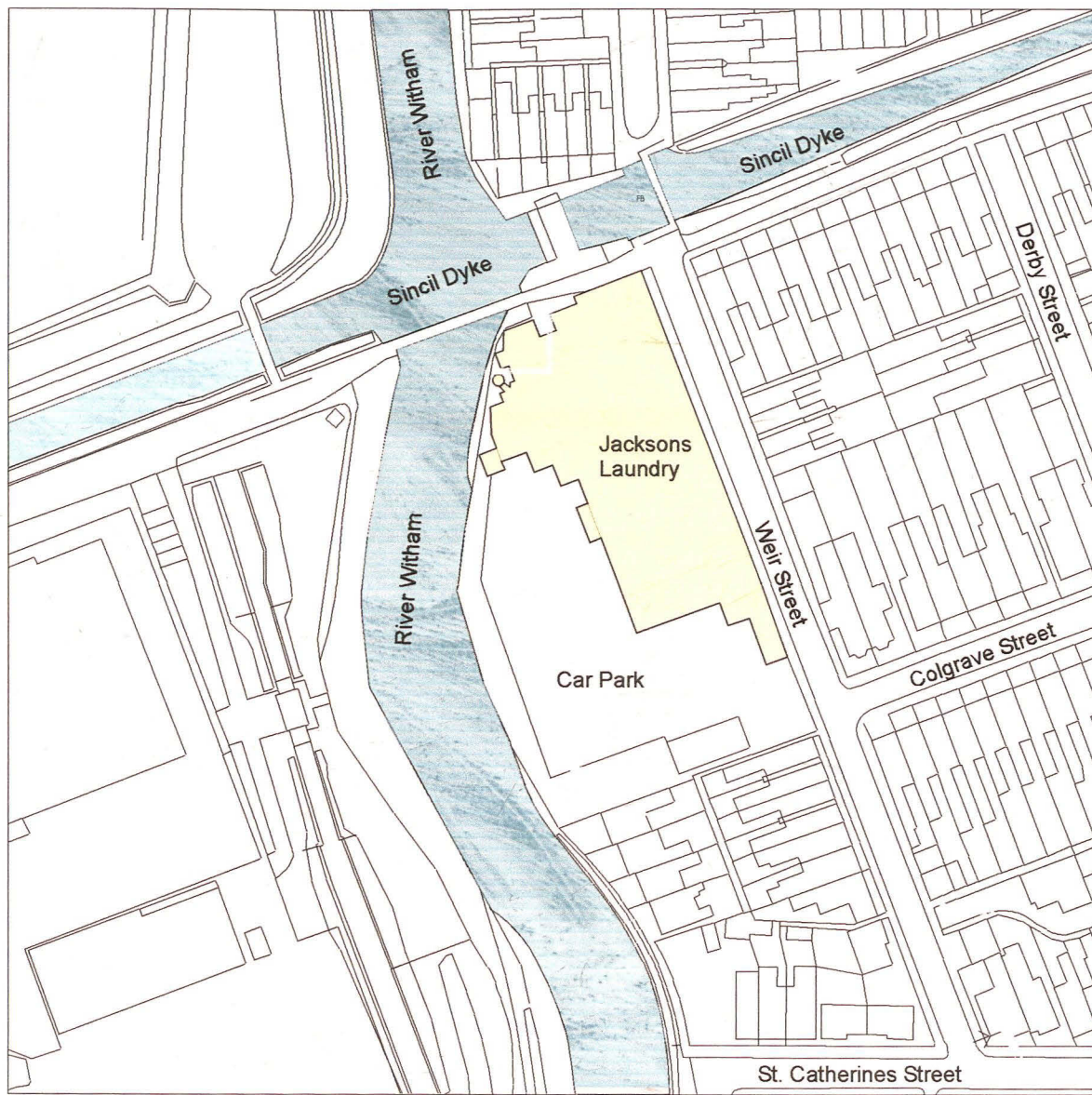


Fig. 2 Site location plan

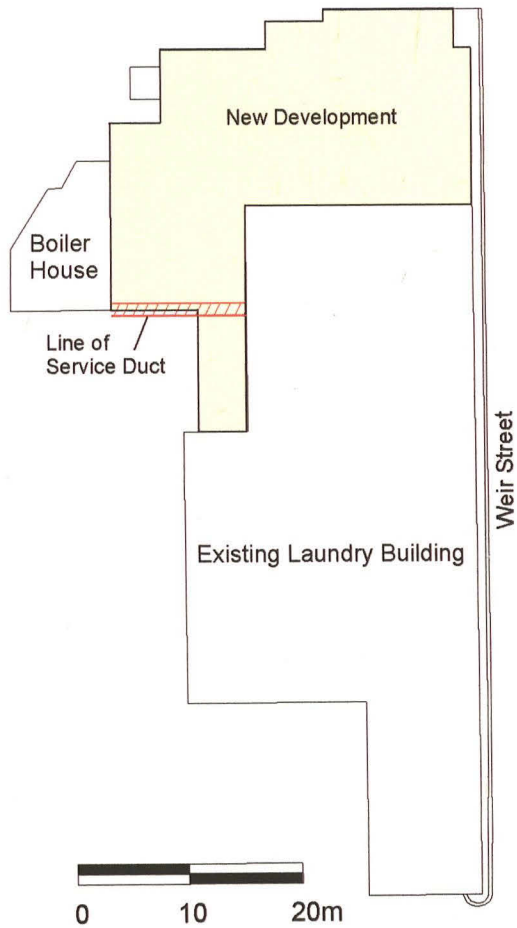
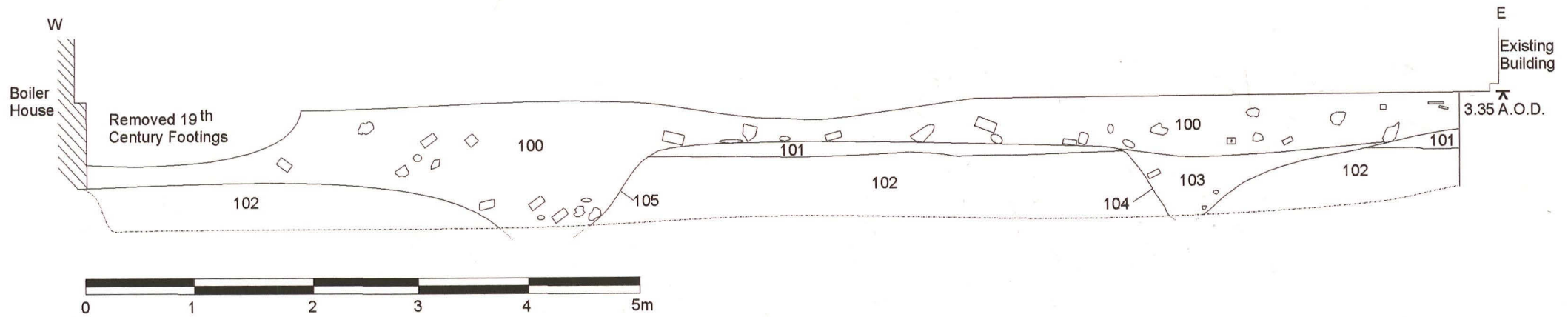
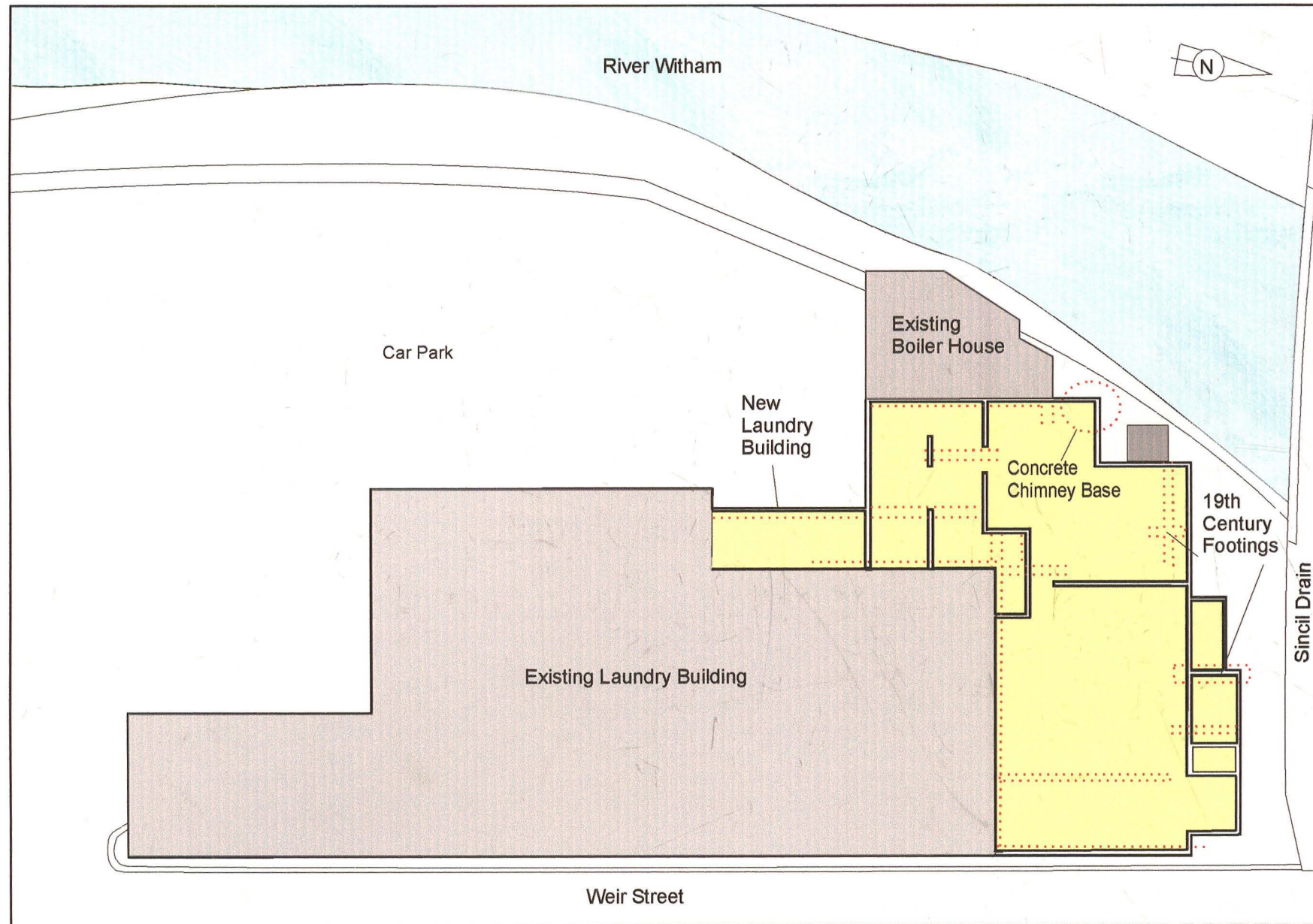


Fig. 3 Location plan and trench section for drainage duct running from the Boiler House to the existing laundry building



0 10 20m

Fig.4 Floor plan of the new Weir Street laundry complex showing the existing building, the new building and areas of disturbance identified during the watching brief

THE PLATES



Pl. 1 Looking north at feature 103 cut by service trench



Pl. 2 Looking north along ditch 105



Pl. 3 General view of the site after stripping and lowering



Pl. 4 View showing an undisturbed area of natural river silts in the eastern baulk of the lowered site



Pl. 5 Modern disturbance and 19th century foundations located immediately adjacent to Weir Street



Pl. 6 Modern brick foundations located adjacent to the boiler house.



Pl. 7 Looking south at the north facing wall of the existing laundry building showing pile caps, disturbed ground make-up and the relatively high water table



Pl. 8 Looking south west along the foundation trench immediately east of the boiler house, showing concrete piles and 19th century foundations