

**FORMER RIVERSIDE CARAVAN PARK SITE,
WITHAM TOWN, BOSTON, LINCOLNSHIRE**

**ARCHAEOLOGICAL
DESK-BASED ASSESSMENT**

NGR: TF 3212 4488
PCA job no.: 400

Report prepared for Chestnut Homes

by

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Summary

- This archaeological assessment has been prepared for Chestnut Homes Limited in support a planning application for proposed housing development on the site of the former Riverside Caravan Park, Witham Town, Boston, Lincolnshire.
- This assessment comprising documentary research, map regression and a site walkover survey has established that there are no known archaeological remains within the area of the proposed development site. The Boston Urban Baseline Surveys suggests the possibility that a former course of the River Witham may have occupied the full width of the site from the Roman to the medieval periods. However, given the limited potential impact that this development is likely to have on such deposits, (should they be here), this is not considered to be significant.
- Given the nature of the proposed development – housing – and the consequent limited potential impact that this may have, it is considered that no mitigation would be required.



Figure 1: General location map at a scale of 1:25 000. The proposed development site is shown in red. (O.S. copyright licence no. AL 515 21 A0001)

1.0 Introduction

This desk-based assessment was commissioned by Chestnut Homes Limited. Its purpose is to assess the archaeological potential of the area of land known as the former Riverside Caravan Park, Witham Town, Boston, Lincolnshire; to calculate the likely impact of a proposed development on any areas of archaeological significance, and to suggest possible strategies for the reduction or mitigation of any potential damage to archaeological remains.

2.0 Location and description (figs. 1 and 2)

The town of Boston is situated at the head of Boston Haven, a short stretch of artificially straightened and widened watercourse at the mouth of the River Witham, and above its outfall into the Wash. The town occupies the highest point reachable by sea-going ships, where they unloaded cargo to be moved inland by smaller vessels.

The assessment site is located in the north western quarter of the town, and approximately 0.8km from the town centre. The eastern portion of the assessment site is situated along part of the northern frontage of Witham Town, and is bounded to the north by a railway embankment. The remainder (and the bulk of the site) is located to the west of the western end of Witham Town. It is bounded to the south by the River Witham and to the north by railway embankments, which carry both an existing, and dismantled railway lines.

The drift geology on the site, as under most of the town of Boston, comprises Barroway Drove Beds: older marine deposits (Neolithic) and silty clay saltmarsh deposits. The underlying solid geology is formed by Ancholme Group Clays (British Geological Survey, 1995).

The National Grid Reference of the assessment site is: TF 3212 4488.

3.0 Objectives and methods

The purpose of this report is to establish the presence or absence of archaeological remains that may be vulnerable to groundworks associated with the proposed development; to assess their potential significance and the extent to which construction works are likely to affect them, and, if necessary, to suggest methods by which the site may be evaluated in advance of such works, or by which the works can be mitigated to minimise the impact to any surviving archaeological remains.

The report is based on information derived from the following sources: -

- The Lincolnshire Historic Environment Record (HER) and the Boston Urban Baseline Survey;
- The Lincolnshire Archives, Lincoln;
- The Local Studies Library at the Lincoln Central Library;

- Published and unpublished material in the archives of Pre-Construct Archaeology (Lincoln); and
- A site walkover survey.

A search of the Lincolnshire Heritage Environment Record (HER) was undertaken of an area approximately 500 metres in all directions beyond the boundaries of the assessment site (Figure 1). The results of this search are presented below as Appendix 2. Unpublished client reports generated by other archaeological contractors in this search area were also consulted at this source. Copies of both manuscript and published Ordnance Survey maps of the area of the assessment site were obtained from the Lincolnshire Archives and the Lincoln Central Library and comprise figures 3-9 in this report. Published reference sources were also consulted at the Archives and Library. A number of digital images of the assessment site were taken during the site walkover survey, some of which are reproduced in Appendix 1.

4.0 Planning background

An application for planning permission for proposed residential development at the assessment site is due to be submitted by Chestnut Homes to the local planning authority shortly. This desk based assessment study will be submitted in support of this forthcoming planning application.

5.0 General archaeological and historical background

To the immediate south-east of the assessment site, the Lincolnshire HER records the findspot of a Late Bronze Age palstave (Site No. 1, HER 12667), which was found in the garden of No. 21 Witham Bank East in 1967.

During the Romano-British period, the area around Boston was occupied by a string of islands with the sea still covering parts of the fenlands behind them. It is thought that there may have been a small settlement from the 2nd to the 4th centuries AD on the fringes of Boston, as no evidence for contemporary settlement activity has been found in the centre of the town. The town centre may have either been occupied by a channel between two islands or any such settlement may have been sealed below substantial silt deposits. For two centuries following the end of the Roman period, the sea level rose, and the area around Boston was flooded and deserted. During the 7th and 8th centuries AD, the Anglo-Saxons established villages in the area such as Frampton and Fishtoft (Wright, 1986).

Boston itself does not feature in the Domesday Survey of AD1086, which only details Skirbeck, with the Manor of Skirbeck being granted to one Alan de Creon. The church of St Botolph, which today stands in the centre of Boston, was situated within the Manor and Hundred of Skirbeck. The place name of Skirbeck was derived from the Old Norse *skirr bekkr*, 'clear stream', although the Scandinavian form may have been derived from a similar Old English name (Cameron, 1998). The origins of Witham are probably pre-Celtic, with *Withina* documented in AD1000; *Wythum*

(AD1100-1135); *Whitun* in AD1121; *Widune* in AD1147 and *Widerne* in AD1181 (Cameron, 1998).

The first certain mention of Boston or 'Botoloph's town' was in AD1114 as *Botelvestan*. Later medieval documentary references variously detail *Botulestan* (AD1130) and *Botelstane* (AD1323) (Cameron, 1998). It is likely that Boston may have been assessed at Domesday as a part of the manor of Skirbeck, but probably subsequently developed as a separate entity. The town was given its Charter in AD1204 (Lewis & Wright, 1973). With the granting of the Charter, the development of Boston as a port probably originated from the annual holding of the Boston Fair.

An archaeological watching brief carried out by Lindsey Archaeological Services in 1995 to the south-east of the assessment site at Nos. 11 and 11A Union Street found nine sherds of mid 12th to late 13th century pottery from what may have been a contemporary ground surface (Site No. 3, HER 13390). It was concluded that this probably indicated a lack of medieval settlement activity in this area. In the same area and in the garden of No. 26 Witham Place, fragments of residual medieval stonework that were probably used as ships ballast were found during the course of a further watching brief carried out by Pre-Construct Archaeology (Lincoln) in 2000 (Site No. 5, HER 13547).

Some 500 metres to the south-east of the assessment site, an archaeological evaluation undertaken by Lindsey Archaeological Services in 2000 in Central Park recovered pottery dating from the 9th century onwards as well as medieval ceramic building material (Site No. 10, HER 13863).

The Boston Urban Baseline Survey indicates that during the Roman, Anglo-Saxon and medieval periods, the River Witham may have occupied the entire width of the assessment site. The river, which flows through Boston, also originally drained into the Wash via Bicker Haven, but was deliberately diverted to Boston. Until the 19th century, the river was sluggish, shallow and difficult to navigate. The first attempt to control the flow of the River came in AD1142 with the construction of a sluice at Boston. This was intended to hold back the waters of the river to make then suitable for inland navigation, to prevent tides sweeping inland and flooding the surrounding and low-lying fenlands, and to use the impounded fresh water to flush out the silt from the Boston Haven. However, this sluice had decayed by AD1315 (Lewis & Wright, 1973).

At around AD1121, the Fossdyke, the Roman canal from Lincoln to the River Trent was scoured out and reopened. Boston thus now had a through waterway via the Witham to the Trent (Lewis & Wright, 1973). During the reign of Edward I (AD1272-1307), the River Witham was both broad and deep and could accommodate larger ships that could navigate freely from Boston to Lincoln, (Thompson, 1856).

From the early 13th century onwards, Boston became the major wool port for Lincolnshire as well as Yorkshire and as far away as Cheshire. Boston as a port traded with much of western and southern Europe to such an extent that it was booming during the 13th and 14th centuries. There was however, a sharp decline in trade from the 14th century onwards. At the beginning of the reign of Edward III (AD1327-1377), there were constant problems of flooding from the Witham. By the end of this reign,

the river had been cleaned and scoured out by Royal Patent. There was some revival of trade around 1500. At this time a further sluice, the May Hake Sluice, was constructed near Boston. It initially improved both the local drainage and the flow of the river. But by 1560, it was in a bad state of disrepair, and the Haven became badly silted up through a lack of scouring. From the 16th century onwards, the port of Boston entered a period of decay. There was a revival of trade during the 17th century with the port now serving only a limited hinterland with local coastal trading, and the Midlands trade now being served by the Thames and the Humber. The River Witham itself was in a poor condition (Thompson, 1856; Lewis & Wright, 1973).

By the mid 18th century, the port trade underwent further revival partially through the enclosure and drainage of the local fenlands, which increased the acreage under agriculture with for example, a rapid expansion in the corn trade, and partially with improvements in the navigation of the Witham. In 1752, one John Grundy, a local engineer, produced a report that proposed improvements to the navigation of the river. This included various drainage improvements and the construction of a grand sluice at Lodowick's Gowt. A subsequent and revised report of 1753 proposed a straighter course for the river with the construction of a canal between Chapel Hill and Boston. A straighter course, it was believed, would enable the river to flow faster, the river would deposit less silt, and consequently navigation of the river would be both faster and safer. By 1760, Langley Edwards, another local engineer, had endorsed the plan of 1753, with the exception of the location of the proposed Grand Sluice (Site No. 8, HER 13847). Langley Edwards and one John Smeaton produced a further joint report for navigation improvements in 1761, which incorporated both the Grundy scheme and the site for the Grand Sluice proposed by Langley Edwards. An Act of Parliament of 1762 facilitated the construction of the canal and the Grand Sluice near Boston. The foundation stone was laid down in 1764, and the Sluice was opened in 1766. The Grand Sluice is Grade II listed, and consists of four arches, each of 21 feet in width, three of which controls the drainage of the river; while the fourth was constructed with a lock. The building of the Grand Sluice was not a complete solution to the problems of the river, as the surrounding area was still vulnerable to periodic flooding (Thompson, 1856; Wright, 1986). Further alterations to the Grand Sluice were made in 1883 by John Williams, which comprised the construction of the lock and improvements to the river bank (Pevsner & Harris, 1989).

In 2006, Archaeological Project Services (APS) carried out a watching brief during refurbishment works at the Grand Sluice (Site No. 8, HER 13846). The works comprised the reinforcement of the downstream apron which involved the removal of timber planking and the formation of a new replacement concrete apron. A record was made of the exposed construction detail of the original 18th century timber apron exposed during the works, which remained preserved *in situ* (Wood, 2006).

The site of a former woad mill (Site No. 11, HER No. 13872), which was in existence until the 1840s, is now buried and thus at least partially preserved *in situ* below a dismantled railway embankment, which was subsequently constructed in the early 1850s. The site of the woad mill is situated just beyond the northern boundary of the assessment site. Woad was grown locally and was used to produce a blue dye. The Tattershall Road enters Boston from the north and passes close to the River Witham and the Grand Sluice (Site No. 8, HER 13847). Since its opening in 1766, a number of commercial and industrial premises had developed in this area, which became known

as Witham Town (Figure 3). The woad mill was situated away from these properties, on the other side of the Tattershall Road, and slightly out into the countryside. The woad mill and its ancillary buildings are shown on proposal plans of the London and York Railway of 1844, of the East Lincolnshire Railway of 1845-6 and of the Great Northern Railway of 1846 and 1848. The 1848 plan details the woad mill as a circular building with two rectangular shaped wings. To the south of the mill are a row of seven cottages to house the mill workers and their families, and to the west are probable drying sheds. The 1841 census lists 47 people living in the cottages (including woad labourers). However, by 1844, five of the cottages were vacant, which suggests that the business was already being run down even before the site was cleared and sold to the railway (Wright, 2004).

The proposal plan of 1848 shows that by that time all of the buildings on the site had been cleared and the Tattershall Road diverted across the centre of the site (of the former woad mill) as part of realignment vital to the construction of the East Lincolnshire Railway. Work on the construction of this railway at Boston had commenced in 1847 and was opened in 1848. The construction of the Great Northern Railway and the East Lincolnshire Railway in the area of Witham Town was made difficult by a dispute between them over the location of a railway bridge over the River Witham. The railway approaches to this bridge could not be constructed until its location was agreed. Eventually a new curving embankment east of the river and accommodating two lines was opened in 1850. With this embankment built, a further realignment of the Tattershall Road and the new embankment crossed the site of the former woad mill. The embankment is now marked on modern O.S. maps as a "dismantled railway". The cast iron railway bridge itself, the Grand Sluice Railway Bridge (Site No. 9, HER 13848), is Grade II listed and was built by Richard Johnson in 1884-5 for the Great Northern Railway. It was constructed to replace an earlier timber bridge of 1848 (Pevsner & Harris, 1989).

To the immediate north of the assessment site, occurs the site of a former railway crossing keeper's cottage (Site No. 6, HER 13609). The site of the Borough Ironworks (Site No. 4, HER 13481) is featured on the First Edition O.S. map of 1890 (figure 5). It was built in c.1850 following the construction of the nearby railway, and was situated between Witham Town and the river. The buildings remained in use until 1966, and were finally demolished in 1970. To the south-east of the assessment site at Nos. 4-8 Union Place, Boston, an archaeological evaluation by the Heritage Trust of Lincolnshire in 1991 identified post medieval dump deposits and early 19th century wall remains (Site No. 2, HER 13289). In close proximity to this, a further evaluation at Nos. 4-5 Witham Place, Boston in 2004 by APS located buried post medieval topsoil deposits and the remains of the original Georgian buildings on the site that were demolished in 1963 (Site No. 7, HER 13808).

Three listed buildings are situated to the immediate south-east of the assessment site, are all located on Witham Bank East, along the northern frontage of the river and within a Conservation Area. These are: Site No. 12, - No. 11 Witham Bank, a late 18th century house; Site No. 13 - No. 13 Witham Bank, an early 19th century house and Site No. 14 - a cottage and the Witham Tavern Public House, both of which also date to the early 19th century.

6.0 Site-specific search/investigation results

6.1 Documentary information (figures 3-9)

Map evidence for the assessment site was obtained from the Lincolnshire Archives and the Local Studies Library of Lincoln Central Library. The earliest map consulted in this study was a 'Plan of the Borough and Port of Boston by Robert Hall (1741)' (Archive ref. FL Maps 24). A tracing was obtained of this map, which forms Figure 3 of this study. This shows the area of central Boston slightly further down the River Witham and to the south-east of the assessment site. Its chief interest is that it features the original wide course of the river prior to its canalisation and the construction of the Great Sluice (Site No. 8) in the 1760s.

A tracing was also made of a printed map of the Borough of Boston of 1839, which forms Figure 4. This map shows the area of the assessment site as open fields at this time, and the original line of the Tattershall Road prior to the construction of the railway and embankment only a decade later. It also depicts a number of commercial and industrial premises comprising Witham Town that were situated between Witham Town and the north bank of the river. Also of interest are the Grand Sluice (Site No. 8), and the site of the town gasworks to the south of the river.

An extract from the First Edition Ordnance Survey (O.S.) 6 inch to one mile scale map of 1890 comprises Figure 5. This map shows the assessment site as an open area, with the northern boundary formed by railway embankments, and the commercial and industrial premises sandwiched between Witham Town and the river to the south-east. These include the site of the Borough Ironworks (Site No. 4) and the nearby Grand Sluice Ironworks. This map also features the diverted Tattershall Road, the Grand Sluice (Site No. 8) and the Grand Sluice Railway Bridge (Site No. 9).

Comparison with the Second Edition 6 inch map of 1906 (Figure 6), shows that there is little change to the area of the assessment site between 1890 and 1906 with the exception of the depiction of an area of rough grassland within its boundaries, and a small rectangular shaped building of uncertain purpose. However, some change is apparent to the commercial and industrial buildings, which now show a bed factory on the site of the former Grand Sluice Ironworks and an expansion to the site of the Borough Ironworks (Site No. 4). The Provisional Edition 6 inch map of 1950 (Figure 7), shows no change to the area of the assessment or that of its environs between 1906 and 1950.

By 1974, (Figure 8), the 1:10,000 scale O.S. map shows the assessment site occupied by a caravan park with an entrance off Witham Town. Buildings remain to the south of Witham Town, but their nature and type are not differentiated. The 1985 O.S. 1:10,000 scale map (Figure 9) shows no change to this situation. The 1:25,000 scale map of 1999 (Figure 1), similarly shows no change within the area of the assessment site or its environs.

6.2 Site walkover survey

A site walkover survey was made by the author on the 28th of September 2007 of the whole area of the assessment site for the purpose of recording the present appearance

and condition of the proposed development site, and noting any surface indications that archaeological remains may have been present. A digital photographic record was also made (Appendix 1).

The eastern portion of the site occupies part of the northern frontage of Witham Town and is an open area. It is currently occupied by mature trees, rough grassland and the remains of the former caravan park comprising concrete caravan pitches. The remainder of the site to the west is fenced off by a high security fence, and was accessed via a padlocked gate at the western end of Witham Town. The caravan park itself has not been in use for approximately 4-5 months, and this was illustrated by the condition of the site, which comprised mature tree growth, rough grassland and the remains of the former caravan park. These consisted of further concrete caravan pitches, car parking bays, baths and toilet blocks and ancillary services. A concrete road extends along the central portion of the site. The southern and western boundaries of the site comprise a dense screen of trees with the River Witham further to the south. The northern boundary consists partially of a tree screen with the remainder formed by the railway embankments of both the dismantled and extant railway lines. No archaeological features were observed on the ground and no finds were made.

7.0 Assessment of archaeological potential

The Lincolnshire Heritage Environment Record (HER) does not record any known archaeological sites or findspots within the area of the assessment site. The findspot of a Late Bronze Age palstave is recorded nearby, though this is probably residual. Similarly, the former site of the Borough Ironworks is situated to the south-east and is now beneath residential housing. Both HER entries are therefore peripheral. The site of the post-medieval woad mill is also peripheral as much of it is located to the north of the site, while the southern portion is partially preserved *in situ* beneath a railway embankment, which forms the northern boundary of the site. Both the site walkover survey and the map regression did not locate any archaeological remains within the site. The Boston Urban Baseline Survey suggests the possibility that a former course of the river may have occupied the full width of the site from Roman to medieval times. As this is only a possibility, this is not considered to be significant either. The archaeological potential of the assessment site is therefore considered in turn to be **nil**.

8.0 Impact on archaeological resources

As this is a pre-planning application study, there is consequently currently a lack of knowledge concerning detailed development proposals. So a precise assessment of the potential impact of development cannot be made at this time. However, it is possible to make general considerations based on experience of other similar such development proposals. The groundwork excavations for standard strip foundations rarely exceed 1.0m in depth, while excavations for services and access roads are usually cut at shallower depths. Consequently, the potential impact would be limited, and even if the former course of the river occupied the whole width of the site, only relatively recent alluvial deposit sequences would be encountered. Should piled

foundations be required, similar considerations concerning the limitations of potential impact would still apply.

9.0 Mitigation

In view of the potential for limited impact and the lack of archaeological remains likely to be encountered at the site, it is recommended that no mitigation would be required.

However, should geotechnical boreholes or test pits be excavated at depth during the preliminary stages of development, the monitoring of these excavations and the extraction and analysis of environmental archaeological samples may be required if deeper and perhaps earlier prehistoric alluvial sequences are disturbed. Alternatively, should this not be required, then the earlier considerations would apply.

10.0 Acknowledgements

Pre-Construct Archaeology (Lincoln) would like to thank Chestnut Homes Ltd. for this commission.

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Ordnance Survey, 1906: Second Edition 6 inch to one mile scale map, map sheet no. Lincolnshire 109SW.

Ordnance Survey, 1950: Provisional Edition 6 inch to one mile scale map, map sheet no. Lincolnshire 109SW.

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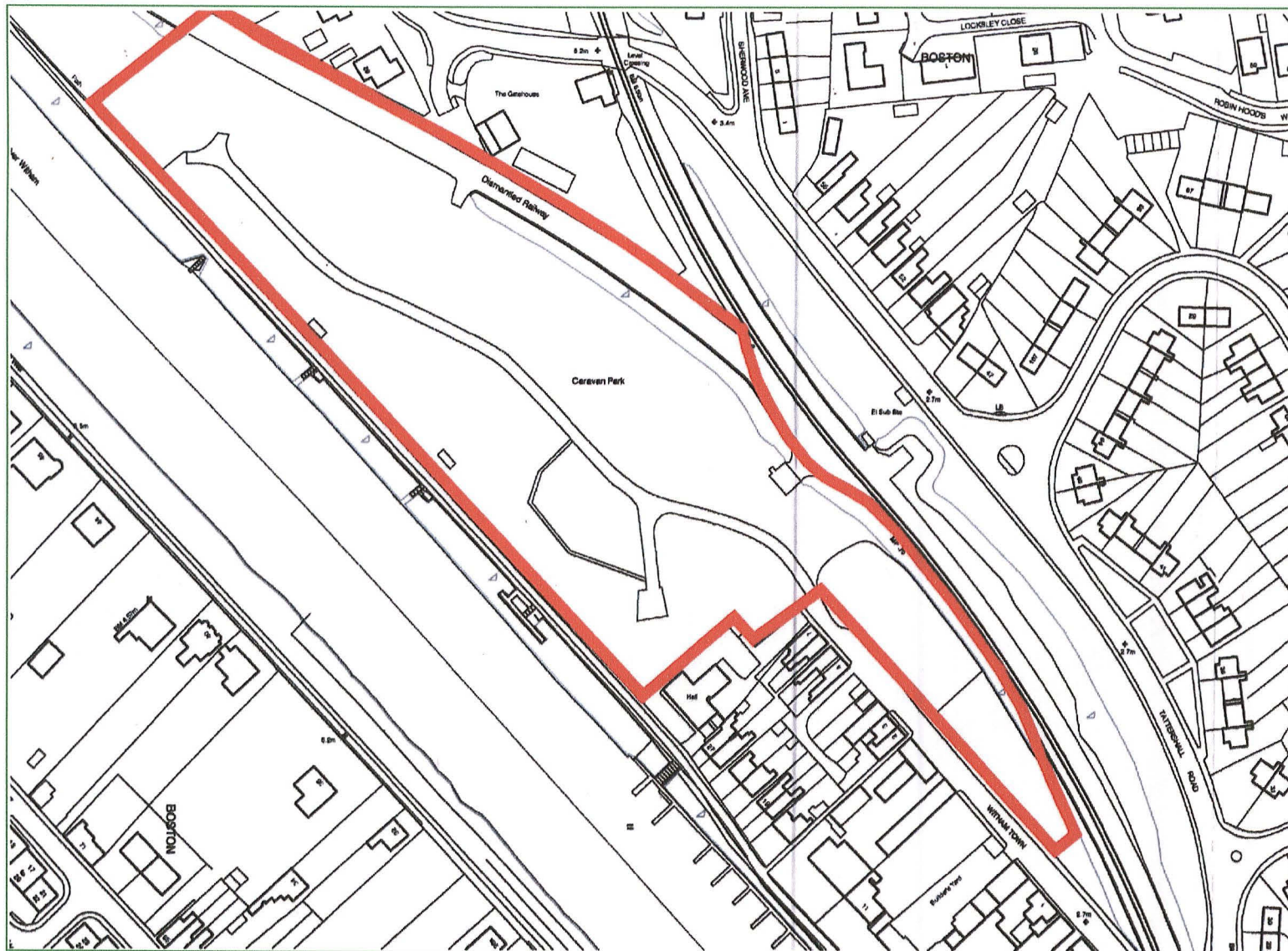


Figure 2: Developers' plan of the site, (not to scale). Plan by permission of Chestnut Homes Ltd.

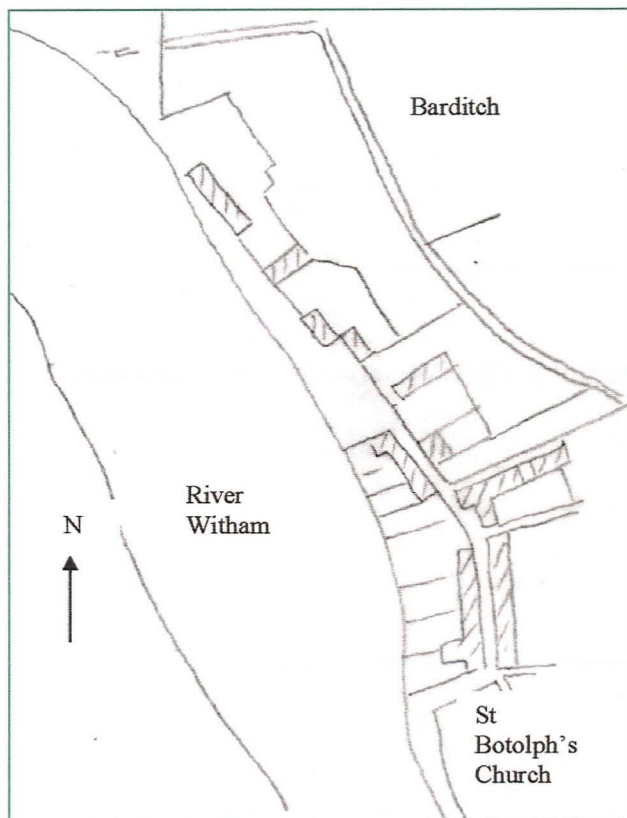


Figure 3: Tracing from a Plan of the Borough & Port of Boston by Robert Hall of 1741. The site is situated to the north-west.

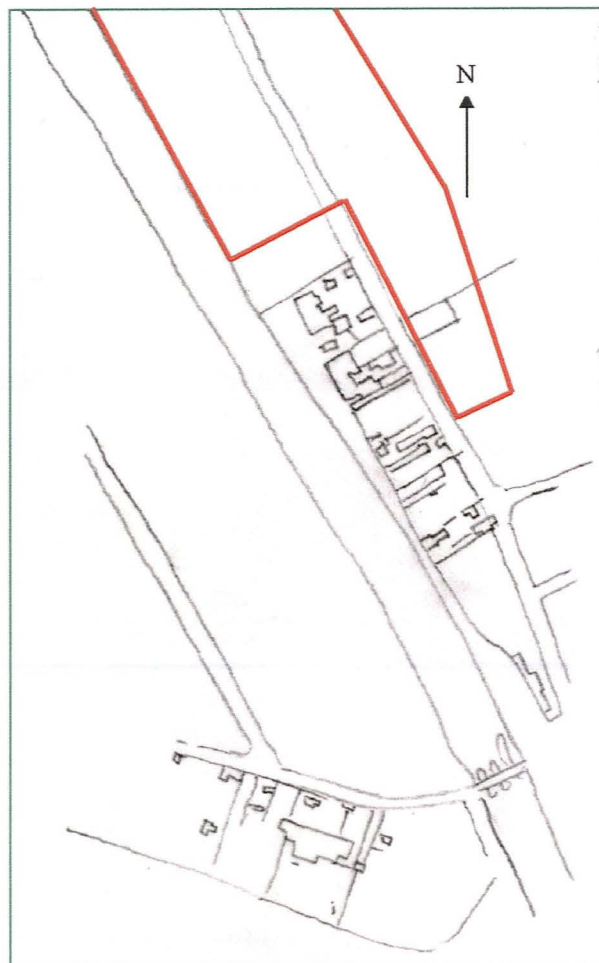


Figure 4: Extract from a Printed Map of the Borough of Boston of 1839. The approximate position of the site boundaries are outlined in red.

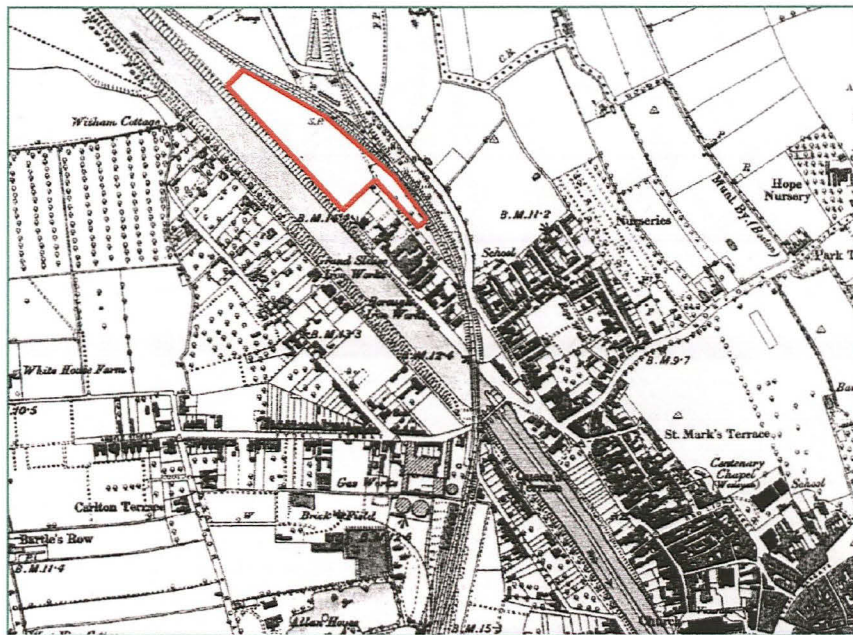


Figure 5: Extract from the First Edition 6'' - 1 mile scale O.S. map of 1890, map sheet no. Lincolnshire 109SW. The site boundaries are outlined in red.

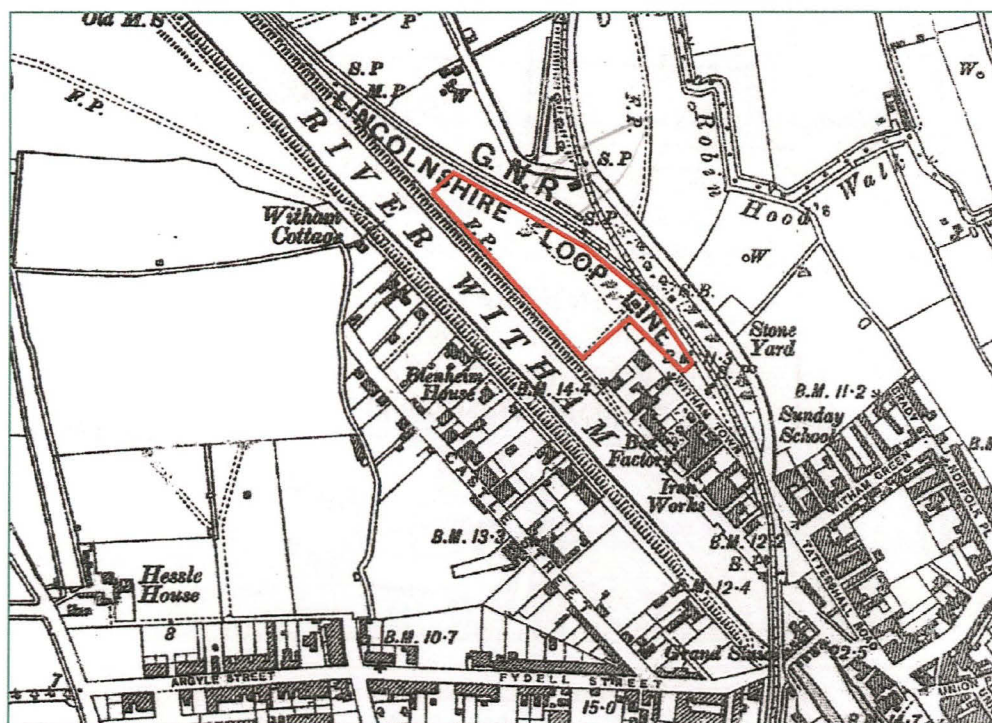


Figure 6: Extract from the Second Edition 6'' - 1 mile scale O.S. map of 1906, map sheet no. Lincolnshire 109SW. The site boundaries are outlined in red.

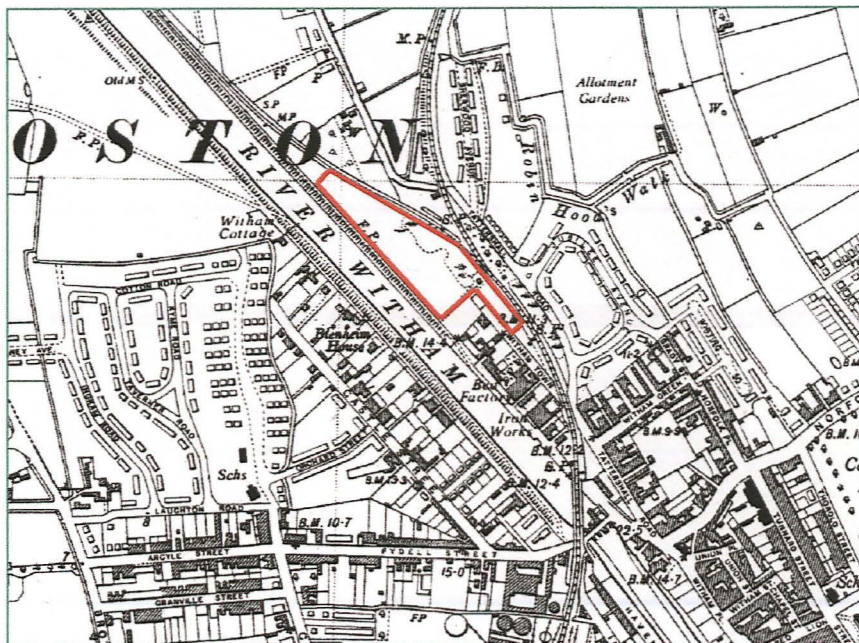


Figure 7: Extract from the Provisional Edition 6th – 1 mile scale O.S. map of 1950, map sheet no. Lincolnshire 109SW. The site boundaries are outlined in red.



Figure 8: Extract from the 1:10,000 scale O.S. map of 1974, map sheet no. TF 34 SW. The site boundaries are outlined in red.

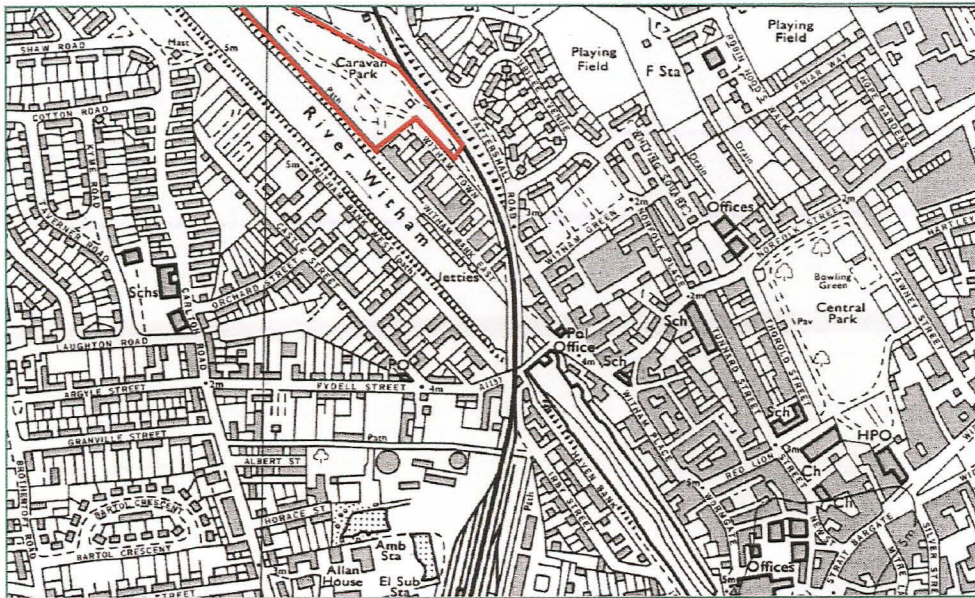


Figure 9: Extract from the 1:10,000 scale O.S. map of 1985, map sheet no. TF 34 SW. The site boundaries are outlined in red.

Appendix 1: Colour Plates



Plate 1: View of the eastern portion of the site, facing west



Plate 2: View from the eastern entrance to the site, looking west



Plate 3: View of the central area of the site, looking west



Plate 4: View of the central area of the site, looking east



Plate 5: View of the western end of the site, looking west

Appendix 2: Cultural Heritage Data from the Lincolnshire Heritage Environment Record (HER)

Site No.	HER No.	NGR (TF)	Description	Period
1	12667	3230 4460	Findspot of a palstave found at 21 Witham Bank East.	LBA
2	13289	3254 4449	Archaeological evaluation at 4-8 Union Place, Boston identified dump deposits & early 19 th century wall remains.	PM
3	13390	3258 4444	Archaeological watching brief at 11 & 11 Union Street, Boston located 12 th -13 th century pottery from a contemporary ground surface.	MD
4	13481	3230 4468	Site of Borough Ironworks.	PM
5	13547	3250 4440	Fragments of stonework found at 26 Witham Place, Boston.	MD
6	13609	3213 4498	Site of railway crossing keeper's cottage, Tattershall Road, Boston.	PM
7	13808	3256 4439	Archaeological evaluation at 4-5 Witham Place, Boston identified building remains & buried topsoil deposits.	PM
8	13847	3237 4451	Grand Sluice, Boston, constructed in 1764-6. Grade II listed.	PM
9	13848	3234 4454	Grand Sluice Railway Bridge. Built in 1884-5 for the Great Northern Railway. Grade II listed.	PM
10	13863	3274 4467	Archaeological evaluation identified pottery and ceramic building materials at Central Park, Boston.	EM/MD
11	13872	3216 4499	Site of woad mill & workers cottages, Tattershall Road, Boston.	PM
12		322 447	No. 11 Witham Bank, Boston. Grade II listed late 18 th century house, screen, gate & gate piers.	PM
13		322 447	No. 13 Witham Bank, Boston. Grade II listed early 19 th century house.	PM
14		322 447	Witham Tavern Public House, Witham Bank, Boston. Grade II listed early 19 th century cottage & public house.	PM

ABBREVIATIONS

EM – Early Medieval (Anglo-Saxon)

LBA – Late Bronze Age

MD – medieval

PM – post-medieval