



LINDSEY ARCHAEOLOGICAL SERVICES

**Land to the rear of the Old Post Office
Main Street, Torksey
Archaeological Desk Top Study
Site Code: TPO 97
LCNCC Museum Accn No. 106.97**

DESK TOP STUDY

commissioned by

Costall Allen Design

on behalf of

Mr S. Jackson

June 1997

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Pl. 1 Main Street, Torksey. General view looking west from the access road at the north end of the site

Pl. 2 Main Street, Torksey. General view looking west along line of mains sewer with east inspection cover in foreground

Pl. 3 Main Street, Torksey. Area to rear of showing concrete slab (former garage?) and inspection cover of sewer/drain.

Pl. 4 Main Street, Torksey. General view west showing uneven ground and ridge across centre of site to south of the sewer/drain.

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Archaeological Desk Top Study
Planning Application: 96/P/0633
NGR: SK 8379 7875
Site Code: TPO 97
LCNCC Museum Accn No. 106.97**

Summary

The proposed development site is located to the rear of the Old Post Office on the east side of Main Street. Pottery kilns producing Saxon Torksey wares were excavated adjacent to the site in the 1960s and the possibility of further kilns being present within the development area is considered to be high. However the land has been heavily disturbed in recent years, reducing the potential for archaeological remains. It may be possible to determine the degree of disturbance to archaeological deposits by carrying out limited trial trenching or geophysical survey.

Introduction

Lindsey Archaeological Services was commissioned by Costall Allen Design, on behalf of Mr S. Jackson, to undertake a Desk Top Study in accordance with the requirements of the Brief set by the Archaeology Section of Lincolnshire County Council dated December 3rd 1996.

Planning Background

The application site is identified in the Deposit Draft of the West Lindsey Local Plan for residential development.

The present application is for the renewal of outline planning permission for the erection of three dwellings. Archaeological evaluation of the site has been requested prior to determination of this application.

Scope of Work

In order to ensure that all possible archaeological constraints are identified and assessed the following sources were consulted

- Lincolnshire County Sites and Monuments Record
- Lincolnshire Archives Office
- information held at the offices of LAS

A site visit was made to verify site conditions and assess any modern disturbance to the site

The Site

The plot is located east of Main Street, to the rear of the Old Post Office, and covers an area approximately 0.35ha in extent (Figs. 1 and 2). The land is currently rough grass and has been subdivided into three plots by two north-south post-and-rail fences.

Geology and Topography

Torksey is located on the east bank of the River Trent, on the outside of a large meander, just below the point where it meets the Foss Dyke. The river is still tidal at this point and the braiding of the river course resulted in the formation of a series of islands recorded on early maps (Figs. 3-5) of which all that remains is Torksey Island. The narrower span of water between the islands may have proved attractive as a crossing point. (Newark is sited at a similar location upstream.) The parent clay of Mercia Mudstone (a red clay) is overlain by wind-blown sand of varying depth.

Archaeological Background

Torksey lies c.10km west of Lincoln adjacent to the river Trent which here forms the county boundary between Lincolnshire and Nottinghamshire, as well as the western limit of Torksey parish. The southern boundary of the parish is formed by the Foss Dyke, generally accepted as being a Roman canal in origin. Torksey village is located at the point where the Foss Dyke meets the River Trent and it thus controlled river traffic through the heart of the Midlands into the Humber Estuary and beyond to York (northwards) and the Wash to the east.

Of all the settlements in the Lindsey area of Lincolnshire Torksey must rank as the most archaeologically important after Lincoln, perhaps rivalled only by the Roman phases of settlement at Caistor and Horncastle. There was probably a large settlement at, or near, Torksey in the Roman period although its location is unknown and its present status as a small village belies its former role as a major trading centre in the Roman and Saxon periods. At the time of the Domesday Survey in 1086 Torksey was a borough, ranking third in size in the county after Stamford and Lincoln.

When the Foss Dyke began to silt up during the 13th century Gainsborough took over as the main Lincolnshire port on the Trent, and Torksey went into a decline which has continued almost to the present day.

Prehistoric

There are too few prehistoric finds from Torksey to indicate any evidence of settlement, although the wind-blown sand deposits were probably attractive to settlers. A Neolithic stone axe was dredged up from the Trent on the west side of Torksey Island (PRN 52528) and a second one was found in the scheduled area of the town (PRN 52541). A few worked flints were found during evaluation at Verity, Church Lane, south of the proposed development (Palmer-Brown 1996).

Roman

In the 1930s Roman pottery kilns were excavated at Little London, on the south side of the Foss Dyke, south of the medieval and modern Torksey. The kilns were producing domestic grey ware pots and dishes, similar to products from kilns which have subsequently been investigated at Lea, Knaith and Newton on Trent. Any settlement connected with the pottery production centre would have been able to control traffic from the Witham and the Trent

and the kilns were ideally located for trading. The Trent was probably a major tribal boundary and Roman Torksey would have been the first point of entry into a new territory.

Stray finds of metalwork, including coins, have been found in Fenton parish to the south of the pottery kilns which so far are the only indicators of Roman settlement in the vicinity. Nothing is known of any Roman settlement in the area now occupied by modern Torksey despite extensive fieldwalking north of the Foss Dyke. A scatter of Roman pottery was found east of the Common. A single Roman pottery sherd was found at Verity, Church Lane (Palmer-Brown 1996, 4). It should be noted, however, that nearly all important Saxon towns, especially those in royal ownership, were founded on Roman sites and Roman Torksey may yet be found.

The Saxon and Danish Periods

Fieldwalking has produced a small amount of sixth-century pottery east of the village (PRN 50789) and to the west of the main road inside the Scheduled area but there is no evidence for any associated settlement remains. The very nature of early Saxon settlement is poorly understood although it is thought that it probably took the form of dispersed farmsteads.

The *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* records that in AD 873 the Danish army camped at Torksey for the winter. Nothing is known of its location or what influence the Danes had on the development and prosperity of the Saxon settlement. It has been argued that it was the arrival of the Danes which stimulated the growth of urban centres in England; the prime example in Lincolnshire being Lincoln itself. Certainly by the tenth century Torksey was in royal ownership and had a mint. Just before the Norman Conquest the estate was held by Queen Edith, wife of Edward the Confessor. The town remained in royal hands, passing to William the Conqueror in 1066. By then Torksey was a thriving port with strong trading links with Lincoln.

Pottery production, which had been so important in the Roman period, was also an important part of the Saxon town's prosperity. Excavations carried out in the 1960s located seven late Saxon pottery kilns (PRN 52529, 52531, 50793, 52535, 52546, 52263). Two of these kilns (PRN 52535 and 52561) were found immediately south-west of the proposed development site (Fig. 6). More recently a further five kilns (PRN52263) were found during excavations on the site of Castle Farm (Palmer-Brown 1994, 7). Products range in date from c. AD800-1200.

Medieval

According to the Domesday Survey the population of Torksey was about one sixth that of Lincoln but larger than Nottingham and twice the size of Newark. The urban character of the settlement was clear; 213 burgesses were recorded as living at Torksey in 1086. The liberties and privileges of the burgesses were confirmed by royal charter of Henry II (Barley 1963, 167). The town had three parish churches and two monastic houses. The core of the Saxon and medieval settlement is poorly defined and the location of only

one of its three churches (St Peter's) is certain. Christian burials, thought to have been pre-Conquest in date, were found at the Castle Farm excavations opposite the proposed development (Palmer Brown 1994, 14-15). One of the lost churches may be close by.

The Proposed Development Site Previous Land-Use

An estate map of Torksey dated 1751 (Fig. 3) shows this part of the village as part of the main street with houses along the frontage and open ground to the rear. A much more detailed and larger-scale map of 1821 shows buildings along the frontage and to the rear which are described as Farm House, Offices & Homestead (Fig. 4). The 1843 survey is less detailed but still shows buildings along the street frontage (Fig. 5). Farm buildings, including a stable block were demolished in recent years (see below) and it is possible that they were the buildings depicted on Fig. 3. It is likely that the main buildings shown on Fig. 3 lay west of the development area but that the stable block extended into the first plot. The remainder of the site appears to have been open ground for some considerable time.

Site Description

A site visit was made on May 7th 1997 to inspect ground conditions and to ascertain extent of modern disturbance. It is covered in low vegetation including nettle and dock, which are especially dense in the south-east corner of the site (on the plot which already has planning permission). These weeds are often indicators of disturbed ground.

Stables and other farm outbuildings were demolished in recent years and the rubble spread, possibly buried, over the plot of land. Soil was dug out from the site to landscape ground around the former supermarket to the north of the proposed development which was constructed in the 1980s. Builders rubble from its construction was also spread over the site. In 1994 Mr Jackson, the present owner, had the building rubble cleared from the site using a JCB. The cleared ground was then covered with a thin layer of topsoil. This activity disturbed and damaged a drain/sewer which runs west-east across the site. It was replaced by Anglian Water Services Ltd and its alignment is marked by two inspection covers (Pls. 2 and 3). According to Mr Jackson, excavations went to a depth of 1.8m.

A marked ridge runs across the centre of the site, to the south of, and roughly parallel to the drain. It is not known whether this is an ancient feature or one created by the recent earthmoving activities. It certainly predates the post and rail fences which subdivide the site (Pl. 4).

Torksey ware and other medieval pottery fragments were seen in mole hills across the site.

Excavations in the 1960s located two late Saxon pottery kilns on land immediately south-west of the proposed development (Fig. 6, PRN 52535, 52561) and the potential for further kilns is considered to be very high. The eastern boundary of the site (Within the plot which has received planning

permission) is formed by a bank which may have been a boundary of the Saxon Borough and/or the medieval town.

Discussion

Little is known of the character and extent of the medieval and earlier settlement at Torksey. The twelve pottery kilns so far identified are close to the presumed core of the settlement which is perhaps surprising given that such an industry, with the attendant risks of fire, was usually situated on the periphery of habitation. Pottery wasters and kiln furniture were recently found in the Hume Arms carpark north of the proposed development (J. Young pers. comm.) The possibility that further kilns may be present on the development site itself cannot be ruled out. Apart from the kilns a pre-Conquest cemetery has been uncovered immediately east of the Castle, opposite the proposed development site.

Under normal circumstances the site would appear to be within a highly sensitive area of the settlement with considerable archaeological potential. However, it is not clear how much disturbance to any archaeological remains may have occurred as a result of the various earthmoving activities on the site. The presence of medieval pottery on the site was noted but in view of the recent ground disturbances it could be redeposited. Archaeological horizons were protected at the Castle Farm site because of a deep deposit of wind-blown sand. It is possible that archaeological remains may still survive despite the extensive ground clearance.

A machine excavated trench(es) help to determine the degree of ground disturbance and whether archaeological deposits still survive above natural. Depending on the amount of building debris still present on the site it might be possible to carry out a rapid geophysical survey to check for the presence of pottery kilns. Other, less highly magnetic, features are unlikely to be easily identified because of previous ground disturbance and the continuing presence of building rubble.

Naomi Field
June 13th 1997

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APPENDIX 1

TORKSEY: GAZETTEER OF SITES AND FINDS

	PRN	NGR	DESCRIPTION
1	50263	SK 837 791	Site of medieval priory
2	50570	SK 8363 7823	Roman building
3	50788	SK 8440 7890	Site of Abbey earthworks (destroyed)
4	50789	SK 8400 7890	Stamped Anglo-Saxon urn, part of another
5	50791	SK 8370 7894	Parish church
6	50792	SK 8390 7894	Roman
7	50793	SK 8383 7855	Saxon pottery kiln 3
8	50794	SK 8375 7895	Presumed location of medieval marketplace
9	50795	SK 8390 7894	presumed site of church
10	52263	SK 8367 7873	Saxon kilns 8-12
11	52528	SK 8350 7910	Neolithic axe
12	52529	SK 8357 7833	Saxon pottery kiln 1
13	52531	SK 8357 7833	Saxon pottery kiln 2
14	52533	SK 8362 7855	Medieval cemetery
15	52535	SK 8375 7865	Saxon pottery kiln 4
16	52536	SK 8370 7920	Medieval pottery
17	52537	SK 8369 7880	Roman jet toggle or button
18	52538	SK 8369 7880	medieval trackway
19	52539	SK 8369 7880	Post-medieval pottery
20	52540	SK 8364 7828	Priory
21	52541	SK 8358 7844	Neolithic axe
22	52542	SK 8361 7850	site of church
23	52544	SK 8393 7915	linear boundary cropmark (CUCAP FP 30)
24	52545	SK 8370 7890	Settlement remains
25	52546	SK 8380 7850	Saxon caterpillar brooch, kilns 6 and 7
26	52548	SK 8370 7870	Pre-Conquest cemetery
27	52559	SK 8355 7915	Railway bridge
28	52561	SK 8375 7865	Saxon pottery kiln 5
29	53578	SK 8370 7880	sherd of 10-11th century pottery

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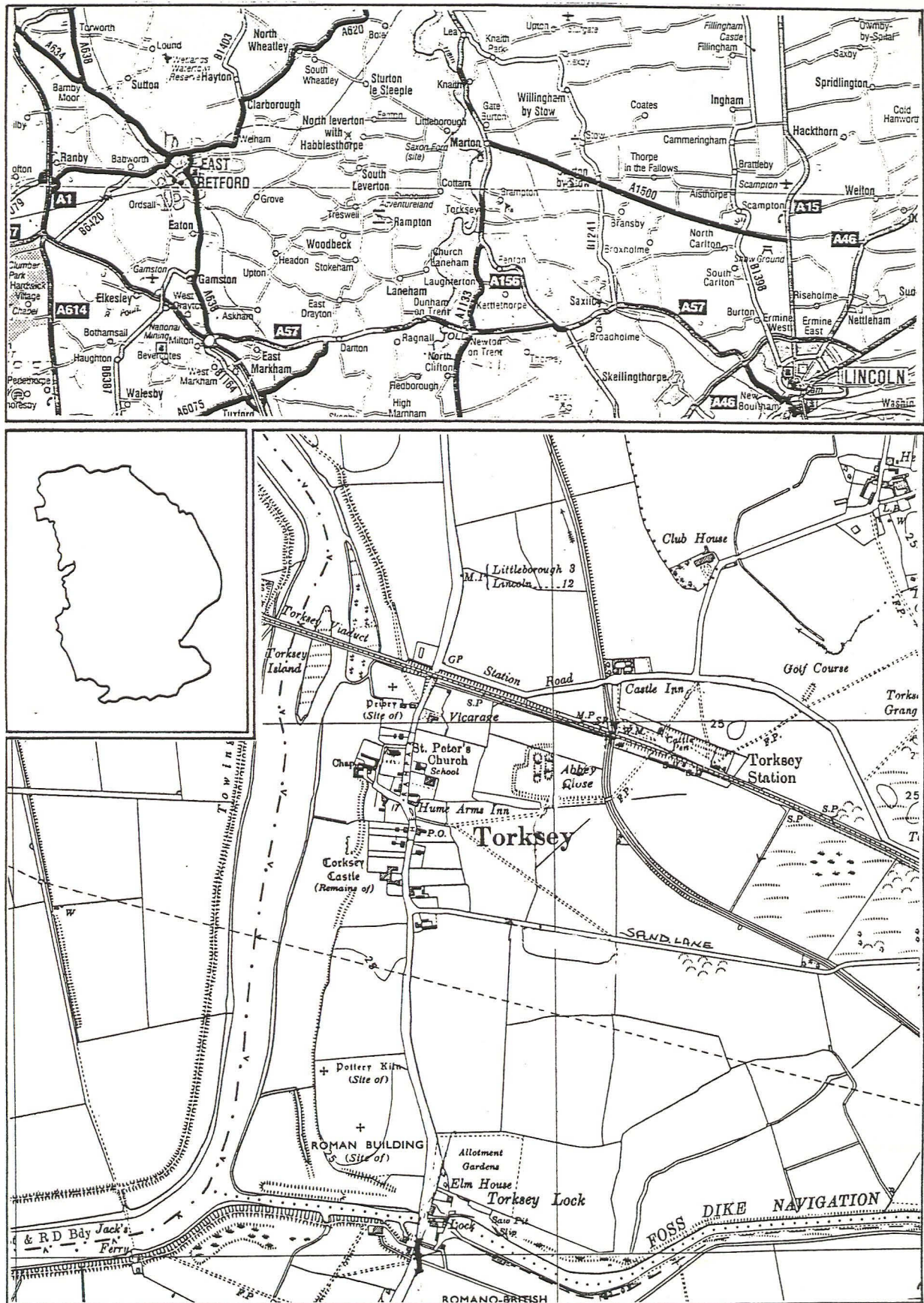


Fig. 1 Main Street, Torksey. Site location. Reproduced from the 1:10,000 O.S. map with the permission of the Controller of HMSO, © copyright. Licence No. AL50424A.

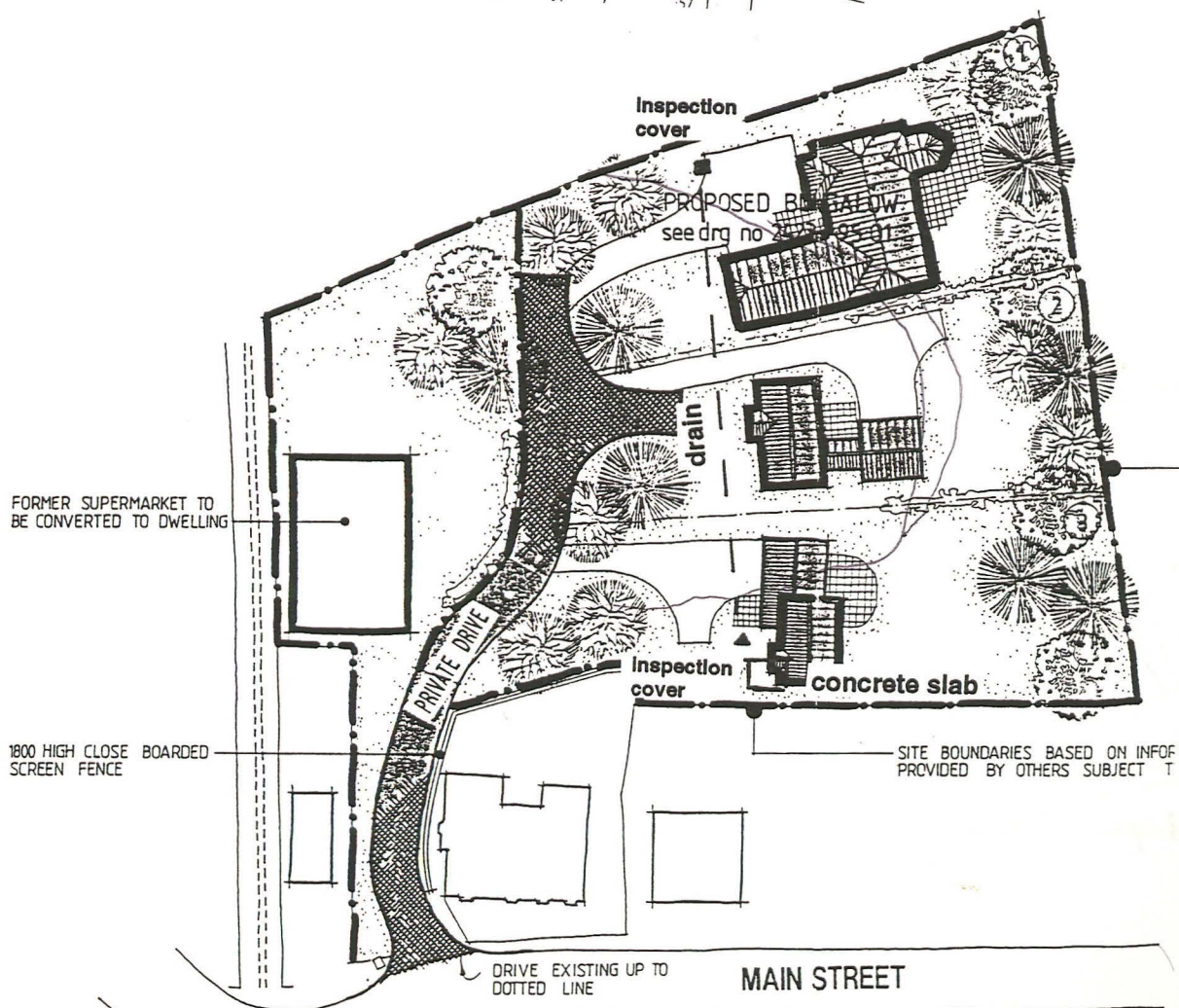
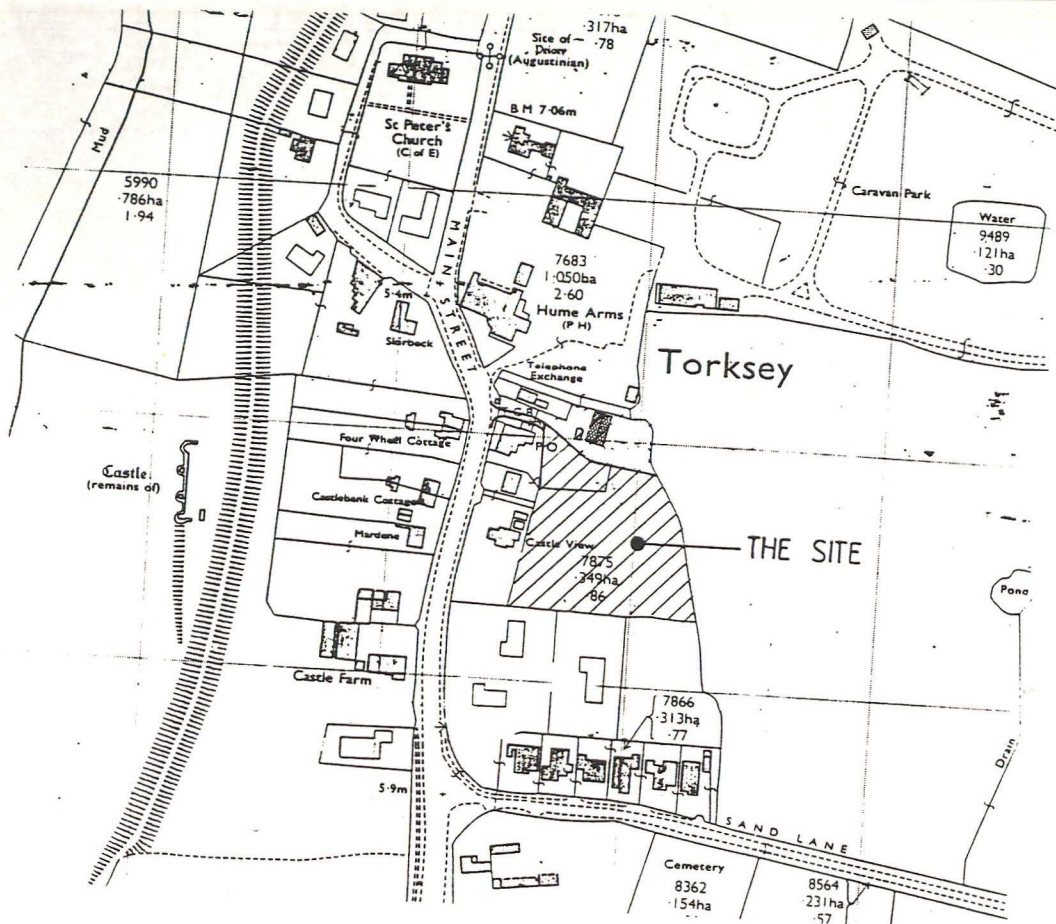


Fig. 2 Main Street, Torksey. Proposed development site a) Reproduced from the 1:2500 O.S. map (reduced scale) with the permission of the Controller of HMSO, © copyright. Licence No. AL50424A. b) plan supplied by Costall Allen Design (reduced scale).

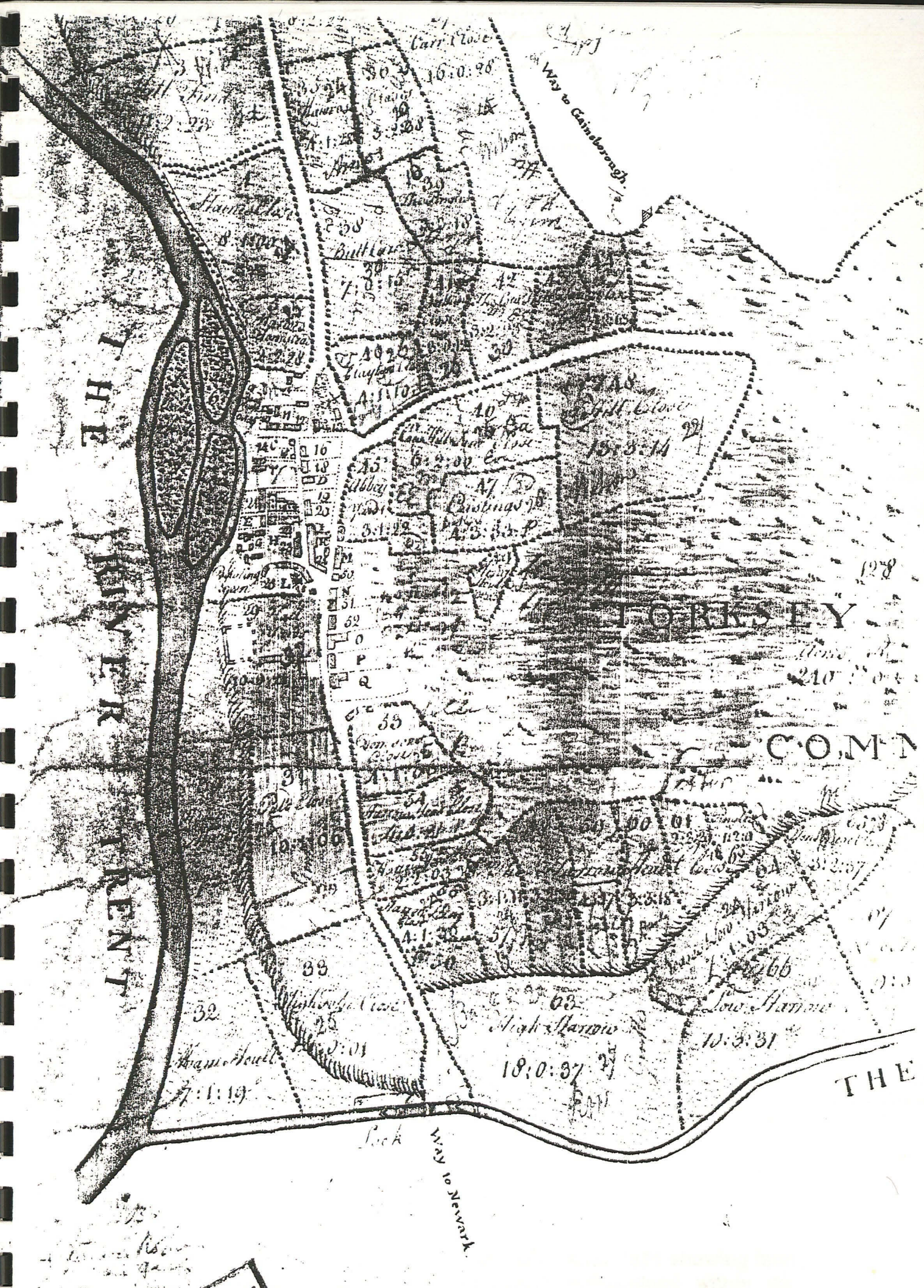


Fig. 3 Main Street, Torksey. Estate map of Torksey 1751 showing buildings along the street frontage (LAO ref. 3 BNL 13)

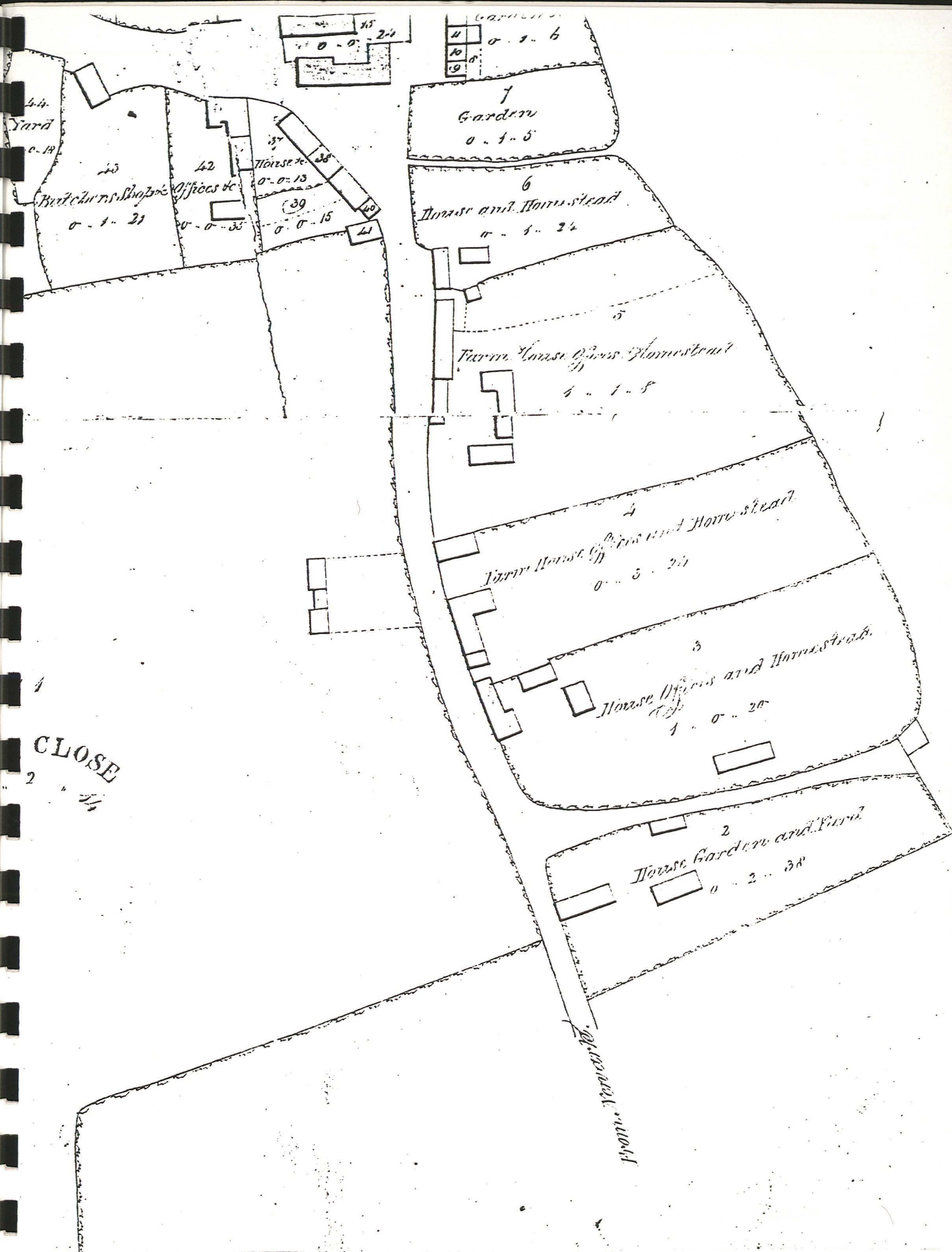


Fig. 4 Main Street, Torksey. Estate map of Torksey 1821 showing farm along the street frontage and associated outbuildings within the proposed development (LAO ref. 3 BNL 15)

- (A) Situation for a Steam Engine for Earl Brownlow.
 (B) Situation of as - as - for Brampton, Marten, &
 (C) Proposed Outlet for No 1 Report.
 (D) Proposed Outlet for No 2 Report.

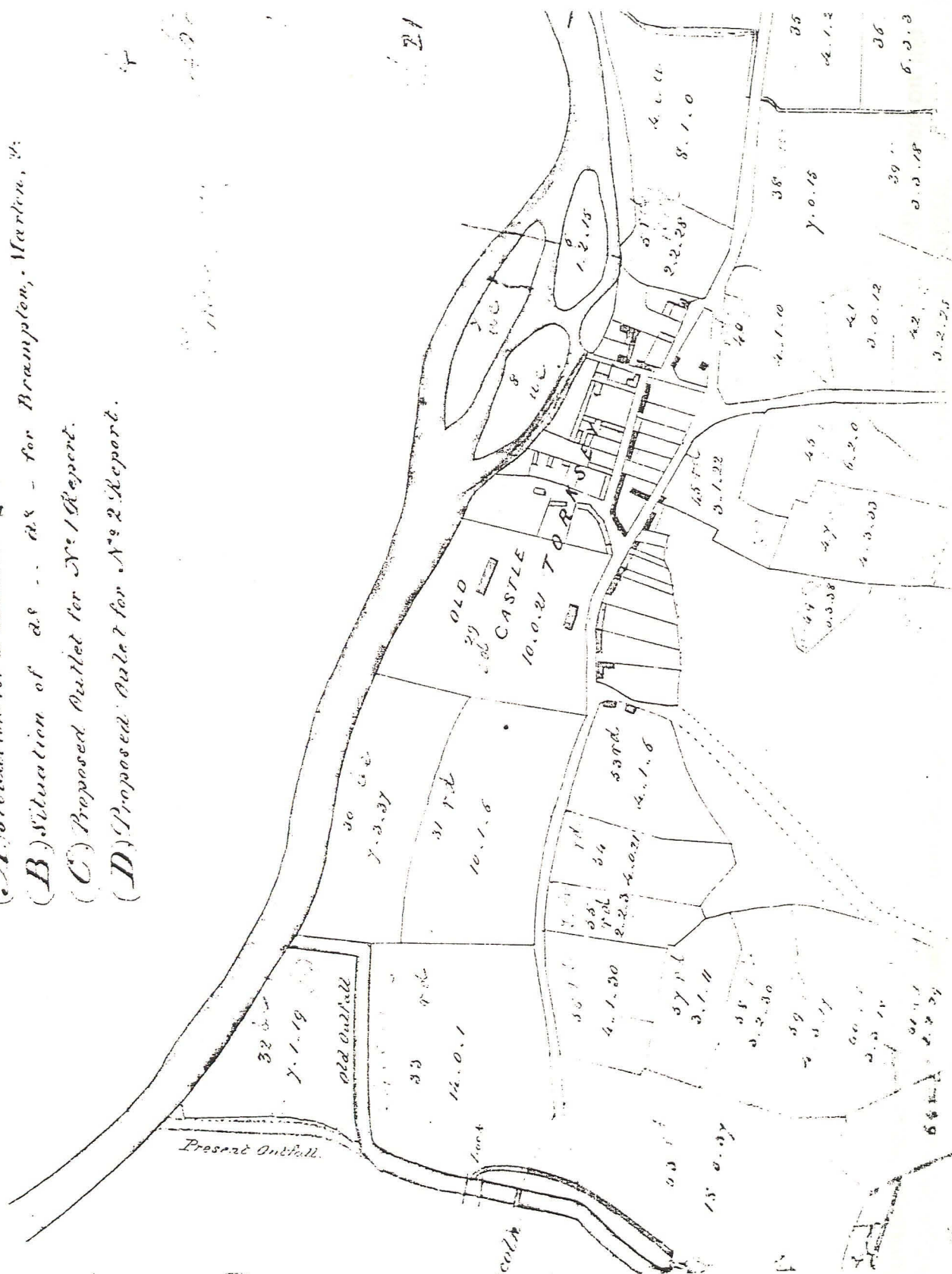


Fig. 5 Main Street, Torksey. Map of Torksey 1843 showing buildings along the street frontage (LAO ref. 3 BNL 17).



Pl. 1 Main Street, Torksey. General view looking west from the access road at the north end of the site

Pl. 2 Main Street, Torksey. General view looking west along line of mains sewer with east inspection cover in foreground





Pl. 3 Main Street, Torksey. Area to rear of showing concrete slab (former garage?) and inspection cover of sewer/drain.

Pl. 4 Main Street, Torksey. General view west showing uneven ground and ridge across centre of site to south of the sewer/drain.

