

*An Archaeological Desk-based Assessment of*  
***4-5 Roushill Bank,***  
***Shrewsbury***

by  
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June 2011

**AN ARCHAEOLOGICAL DESK-BASED ASSESSMENT OF  
4-5 ROUSHILL BANK, SHREWSBURY**

by

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A Report for

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## SUMMARY

*There is currently a proposal to redevelop 4-5 Roushill Bank, Shrewsbury as part of an overall redevelopment of 71 Mardol. The site lies on the west side of Roushill Bank, a lane within the historic core of medieval Shrewsbury. The development site has probably been occupied since the mid 13<sup>th</sup> century at least. Because of the potential historical and archaeological significance of the site, an archaeological desk-based assessment has been carried out as part of a programme of archaeological work that it has been recommended should accompany the proposed development. This assessment suggests that archaeological features and deposits may survive on the site, and has recommended that further field evaluation in the form of trial excavation be carried out in order to assess the survival, nature, and significance of these remains.*

## **1 INTRODUCTION**

**1.1** There is a proposal to construct a garage to the rear of 4-5 Roushill Bank, Shrewsbury (the study area) (NGR SJ 4909 1258). This work is part of a proposal to refurbish no. 71 Mardol, Shrewsbury to form three self contained residential units with the formation of a single detached dwelling, common access and support areas together with a garage (planning application no. 11/01695/FUL). Roushill Bank is a lane within the medieval core of the town of Shrewsbury, Shropshire.

**1.2** The area around Roushill Bank is known to have been occupied since medieval times. The study area lies at the east edge of one of Shrewsbury's medieval tenement blocks (Historic Environment Record no. [HER] 62411, Street block SW of Roushill Bank). The study area forms the rear part of the tenement occupied by 71 Mardol, a Grade II Listed building (Listed Building No. 653-1/11/420; HER 10378). It is possible therefore that archaeological remains relating to both the medieval and post-medieval development of this part of the town may survive within the study area.

**1.3** There has been no previous archaeological work on the proposed development site itself, although the study area does lie within the area covered by the Shrewsbury Urban Archaeological Database and Assessment (Baker, 2010). Excavations were carried out on a section of the medieval town wall at the foot of Roushill Bank in 1958-9, and a number of excavations and observations have been carried out on the opposite side of Roushill Bank as a result of extensive 20<sup>th</sup>-century re-development of the land to the rear of Pride Hill (Baker, 2010).

## **2 THE PROPOSED WORK**

**2.1** It is intended to erect a single residential unit and garage on the 4-5 Roushill Bank site as part of a redevelopment of 71 Mardol. It is proposed to remove the existing yard surface and to introduce a raft or bored pile foundation for this development.

**2.2** The study area lies within the core of the historic medieval and post-medieval town (see 1.2 – 1.3 above) and there is a possibility that archaeological remains may be encountered during the groundworks for the development.

**2.3** Because of the potential significance of the archaeological resource it has been considered necessary that a programme of archaeological work be carried out prior to the determination of the planning application. This archaeological work is to comprise a desk-based assessment of the study area followed by a programme of field investigation.

**2.4** The Archaeology Service, Shropshire Council, has been commissioned by Aylmer Ltd. to carry out the desk-based assessment element of this programme of archaeological work to a scheme of investigation agreed by Shropshire Council's Historic Environment Team.

### **3 AIMS AND OBJECTIVES**

**3.1** The aim of this archaeological desk-based assessment is to provide information that will enable an informed and reasonable decision to be taken regarding the archaeological provision for the area affected by the proposed development on 4-5 Roushill Bank.

**3.2** The objectives were:

- a) To locate any known archaeological features and deposits within the study area.
- b) To assess the likely survival, quality, condition and relative significance of any archaeological features, deposits and structures.
- c) To identify and recommend options for the management of the archaeological resource, including any further archaeological provision where necessary.
- d) To recommend a strategy for further archaeological Field Evaluation, where the character and value of the resource is not sufficiently defined to permit a mitigation strategy or other response to be devised.

**3.3** The methodology for this assessment is based on requirements set out in the specification agreed by the Historic Environment Team, Shropshire Council.

**3.4** This desk-based assessment aims to examine and assess all appropriate sources. These have included: archaeological databases, historic documents (including cartographic and pictorial documents), aerial photographs, geotechnical information, and secondary and statutory sources. The assessment includes an outline history of the development and land use of the study area, supported by copies of relevant historic maps and documents.

**3.5** A site visit was also undertaken in order to assess possible factors such as existing or previous land use and their effect on the survival or condition of the archaeological resource.

## **4 THE HISTORICAL AND ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND**

**4.1** The historic core of the medieval town of Shrewsbury lies within a loop of the River Severn, with its “neck” to the northeast. The loop contains a low hill, with two summits occupying the northern and southern sides of the loop, comprised of sands and clay/silts of glacial deposition overlying bedrock of Keele beds sandstone. Roushill Bank, the study area, is a lane in the centre of the historic core of the town.

The study area forms part of a street block defined by Pride Hill/Mardol Head, Mardol, and Roushill Bank. Pride Hill (HER 62416) is a natural routeway along the top of the escarpment that overlooks the northern side of the river loop. The street is known from finds on both sides of the street of 9<sup>th</sup>-11<sup>th</sup> century Stafford Ware pottery to have been occupied or built up in the late Saxon period. Mardol (HER 62417) forms part of the routeway linking the medieval town’s two main river-crossings – the English and Welsh Bridges. The street was almost certainly in place before the Norman Conquest (Baker 1993 and 2004). Roushill Bank (HER 62419) runs parallel to Mardol from Pride Hill/Mardol Head to Roushill. Roushill Bank was probably inserted in c.1220-1230 at the time the town wall was built, possibly in order to maintain a means of access to the tails of those plots on the north-west side of Pride Hill that were cut off from the frontages by the building of the town wall (HER 62419; Baker, 2010, p131).

The 19<sup>th</sup> century and present plot pattern behind Pride Hill and Mardol may have originated in the pre-conquest period and developed from the arrangement of fields on the northwest side of Pride Hill which ran down the hillside towards the river Severn (Baker, 1993, p47-8 & 2010, p103). The medieval and post-medieval town wall is known to have run some 30m to the northeast of the study area (HER 62398) and is thought to have been built between 1220 and 1242. A gate, the Roushill Gate (HER 01458), lay at the bottom end of Roushill Bank. The gate, probably a postern, is shown as a tower on the Burghley map, and gave access through the town wall from Pride Hill to the extra-mural section of Roushill and Raven Meadows. The present layout of the Mardol/Roushill Bank tenement block (HER 62411) with its small plots and dense building-cover in the interior of the block is likely to post-date the early 13<sup>th</sup> century insertion of the town wall and Roushill Bank. Boundaries shown on the 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century OS maps suggest that the tenement block was subdivided into units with its focus on Mardol rather than Pride Hill (OS 1882). It has been suggested that in the medieval period, Mardol was characterized by inns and hostelries for tradesmen coming to market, with the land to the rear being used to house animals (Morris, 1928)

Roushill Bank is shown (unnamed) on Burghley’s (c1575) and Speed’s (1610) maps of Shrewsbury, and on Rocque’s plan of 1746 (see Fig. 3), when it is marked as Roushill Lane (Burghley, c1575; Speed, 1610; Rocque, 1746). The historic cartography indicates that the study area was fully developed by the early 17<sup>th</sup> century; the Burghley map shows buildings running the length of the plot from Mardol to Roushill Bank, and Speed’s map shows both sides of Roushill Bank as being developed (Burghley, c1575; Speed, 1610). John Rocque’s plan also shows the tenement block to be fully developed (Rocque, 1746). In the mid 19<sup>th</sup> century John Woods’ plan of 1838 appears to suggest that the buildings on the study area had been removed, but if so the plot was soon re-developed. The first detailed maps are the Ordnance Survey 1:500 Town Plan and 25” plan, both of 1882 (Ordnance Survey, 1882). The 1882 OS 1:500 Town Plan shows the study area was occupied by three structures which formed part of the terrace of buildings along the west side of Roushill Bank. This layout is unchanged on the 2<sup>nd</sup> (1901) and 3<sup>rd</sup> (1927) editions

of the 25" (1:2500) OS maps (see Fig. 4). The site appears to have been cleared in the late 1950s and the plot is shown vacant on the OS 1:2,500 plan 1965 edition (Shropshire Archives DA5/632/1/12; OS 1965).

The study area may in the medieval period have originally formed the end of the backplot of no. 71 Mardol. By the 18<sup>th</sup>-century 71 Mardol was occupied by the current building (HER 10378), a three-storey brick-built structure with a plain tiled roof (a 1996 observation (HER 60197) noted that the roof ridge had a number of medieval-type crested ridge tiles). However, from the post-medieval period at least it is likely that the study area was occupied separately from 71 Mardol, with premises fronting onto Roushill Bank to take advantage of the commercial opportunity of the street frontage.

The 19<sup>th</sup> century street directories indicate mixed commercial occupation for Roushill (which will have included the area outside the town wall). Businesses listed in the directories include builders and timber merchants, a blacksmith, a hop merchant, a hat maker, a pawn broker, a tailor, public houses, and a house and sign painter (Tibnam, 1828; Pigott, 1849; Kelly 1890).

## **4.2 Previous Archaeological Work**

**4.2.1** In 1909 a "Neolithic" bottle (HER 60056, Fig. 5) found in sand beneath the Lloyds bank building (on the corner of Pride Hill and Roushill Bank) was shown to a meeting of the Caradoc and Severn Valley Field Club (TCSVFC, 1910). The bottle was later re-assessed to be Roman and, later again, medieval (Chitty, 1953; HER 60057).

**4.2.2** Further work on the Lloyds Bank site in 1931 revealed a pit (HER 01507) which contained finds of medieval date. The site lay in the former Bennett's Hall yard, and was thought to be the hall's "ash pit" (Chitty, 1953; HER 60057). There was further limited excavation (HER 60055) on the Bennett's Hall site (HER 01098) in 1958 by the Ministry of Works, though the extent and results of this work are unknown (Baker, 1993, p11;).

**4.2.3** Again in 1986 excavations were undertaken behind Lloyds Bank, on the Roushill Bank frontage immediately opposite the study area. An area of c.100 square metres was excavated over a two week period (HER 60061). The deposits here were characterised by negative features cut into the natural sand/clay-silt with fragmentary pockets of vertical stratification surviving. The area had been divided into three shallow terraces. No stratified deposits survived on the westernmost of these, on the Roushill Bank frontage. On the middle terrace a shallow scoop was seen cut into the natural sand, its fill containing a medieval stone mortar. The scoop was sealed by clay deposits, and a row of irregular sandstone blocks which possibly marked the foundation remains of the rear wall of a building which had fronted onto Roushill Bank. In the eastern terrace the remains of two ditches were seen, one of which may have marked a property boundary. The limited stratified sequences produced medieval pottery of 13<sup>th</sup>- to 16<sup>th</sup>-century date. (Baker, 1993, pp19-20).

**4.2.4** In 1958-9 excavations at the Mardol/Roushill Bank junction (HER 62400) revealed a well preserved section of the medieval town wall and produced a significant assemblage of stratified medieval pottery and plant macrofossils. The wall was seen to have been built against a vertical cut in the natural sand and clay, and consisted of footings of mortared sandstone rubble supporting a face of finely jointed sandstone ashlar, with a chamfered

plinth course. On top of the clay rampart behind the wall was a cobbled surface.

**4.2.5 Deposits** The study area falls within the area covered by the Shrewsbury Urban Archaeological Database and Assessment (Baker, 2010). The study area comes within the Assessment's Zone XV (Mardol-Barker Street), which is characterized by a uniform surface topography of sloping ground between Mardol Head (c59.70m AOD) and the River Severn at the Welsh Bridge (c51.80m AOD). There is generally a lack of data for this area, but such observations as there have been suggest that at the lower end of Mardol there are archaeological deposits in excess of 1m depth with some intensive flood plain reclamation at the north end of the area. The area to the east of the study area comes within Zone VII (The Pride Hill-Castle Street escarpment). Again, this zone covers the gradient down from Pride Hill to the River Severn. Due to large-scale 20th century development it is the most intensively sampled zone in the town centre. The zone is characterized by intensive terracing, as seen in the 1986 excavations opposite the study area (section 4.2.3, above).

## **5 SITE VISIT**

**5.1** A site visit was made as part of the desk-based assessment. The study area was seen to comprise a yard area about 7.5m wide by c. 7m deep, with a surface of worn tarmac (which appears to be c. 2cms thick). The yard sloped from the north, south, and east (away from the street frontage) to a drain hole approximately 1m in from the centre of the western edge. An iron manhole in the northeast corner of the yard may mark the line of a drain run beneath the yard. The access for two fire escapes cross the study area from 71 Mardol to Roushill Bank.

## **6 DISCUSSION**

**6.1** In the early medieval period the study area is likely to have formed part of the backplot of the property now occupied by 71 Mardol. At some stage in the later medieval or early post-medieval period, the Roushill Bank frontage is likely to have been developed separately to exploit the commercial opportunities of a street frontage. The site appears to have been occupied – with possibly a brief exception in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century – until the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

**6.2** Archaeological excavations in 1986 on a site immediately opposite the study area on the east side of Roushill Bank found limited stratified archaeological deposits. In the area immediately adjacent to the street frontage, no archaeological features or deposits survived. However, there have been no previous archaeological observations within the study area, and so the survival of archaeological features and deposits here is unknown. The extent of earlier development on the site, including the presence of terracing or cellarage is unknown, and is not apparent from the present topography of the site.



## **7 RECOMMENDATIONS**

**7.1** In view of the above it is considered that limited trial excavation would need to be undertaken in order to assess the survival, quality, condition and relative significance of the archaeological features and deposits within the study area.

**7.2** However, the limited size of the yard area, which is further restricted by the necessity to maintain access for two fire escapes, limits the scope for further archaeological trial excavation. If, as is suspected, there is an active drain running across the northern half of the yard, the area available for field evaluation is restricted still further.

**7.3** It is proposed that an adequate evaluation of the below ground deposits would be achieved by the excavation of a trial trench 3m long x 1m wide, located parallel to the southern boundary of the study area at a distance of 1m from both the adjoining property and the street frontage (see Fig. 6). The tarmac surface should allow for excavation of the trench by hand.

**7.4** Should this not prove feasible, then it is recommended that any ground disturbance work associated with the proposed development within the study area be carried out under archaeological supervision. Provision of time and resources should be made for the recording and sampling of any archaeological features and deposits revealed during the groundworks.

## **8 REFERENCES AND SOURCES CONSULTED**

### **8.1 Sources**

The repositories and sources consulted for the desk-based assessment included the Shropshire Historic Environment Record (HER) and Shropshire Archives (SA).

#### **Aerial Photography:**

Digital Aerial photographs provided by UK Perspectives.com held as part of Shropshire Council's GIS database

#### **HER computer files for Primary Record Numbers (PRNs):**

01098 Bennett's Hall, rear of Nos 2 & 3 Pride Hill, Shrewsbury  
01458 Roushill Gate  
01507 Medieval pit exposed at Lloyds Bank 1931  
10378 No 71 Mardol  
60053 19<sup>th</sup> century observations at Bennett's Hall  
60054 Fieldwork at Bennett's Hall  
60055 Excavations at Bennett's Hall  
60056 Find of Neolithic clay bottle at Lloyds Bank  
60057 Excavations at Lloyds Bank  
60060 BH86  
60061 BH86  
60197 Medieval roof tiles, 71 Mardol, Shrewsbury  
62352 South end of Bennett's Hall undercroft  
62398 Shrewsbury Town Wall (stretch revealed SE of Roushill)  
62400 Shrewsbury Town Wall (Stretch uncovered at junction of Roushill and Mardol)  
62411 Street block SW of Roushill Bank  
62416 Pride Hill, Corvisors Row, Altus Vicus, Waxchere, Single Butcher Row  
62417 Mardol  
62419 Roushill Bank, Roushill, Roushill Lane  
62420 Roushill, Roushill Lane

#### **Shropshire Archives:**

Among the various sources consulted at Shropshire Archives, the following proved the most productive sources of information for the particular requirements of this assessment of the study area:

Cartographic sources  
Historic maps including Ordnance Survey mapping  
OS Town Plan of Shrewsbury 1st Edition Sheet Nos. XXXIV.10.5 and XXXIV.10.10

The following documents in the Shropshire Archives catalogue were not available for study (held in out-store):

Housing clearance papers: Roushill Bank, 1956-1959 DA5/632/1/12

## 8.2 Other sources and bibliography

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- Ordnance Survey** Town Plan of Shrewsbury 1st Edition 1:500 Sheet Nos XXXIV.10.5 and XXXIV.10.10, 1882
- Ordnance Survey** 1:2500 Sheet No XXXIV.10 1<sup>st</sup> edition, 1882
- Ordnance Survey** 1:2500 Sheet No XXXIV.10 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, 1901
- Ordnance Survey** 1:2500 Sheet No XXXIV.10 3<sup>rd</sup> edition 1927
- Ordnance Survey** 1:10,560 (6") Sheet No xx 195x revision
- Ordnance Survey** 1:2500 Sheet No SJ 4812 & 4912, 1965 edition
- Pigott**, 1849: *Pigott's Directory of Shropshire*
- Rocque, J**, 1746: *Plan of Shrewsbury*
- Speed, J**, 1610: map of Shrewsbury in *Theatre of the Empire of Great Britain*
- TCSVFC** 1910, 1909-12, part 2, p169
- Thorn, F and Thorn, C (eds)**, 1986: *Domesday Book: Shropshire*, Chichester
- Tibnam**, 1828; *Tibnam's Salop Directory*
- Wood, J**, 1838 *Plan of Shrewsbury*, SA 3551/3

### ABBREVIATIONS

<b>AOD</b>	Above Ordnance Datum
<b>OS</b>	Ordnance Survey
<b>HER</b>	County Historic Environment Record, Shirehall, Shrewsbury
<b>SA</b>	Shropshire Archives, Castle Gates, Shrewsbury
<b>TCSVFC</b>	Transactions of the Caradoc and Severn Valley Field Club
<b>TSAHS</b>	Transactions of the Shropshire Archaeological and Historical Society
<b>TSAS</b>	Transactions of the Shropshire Archaeological Society



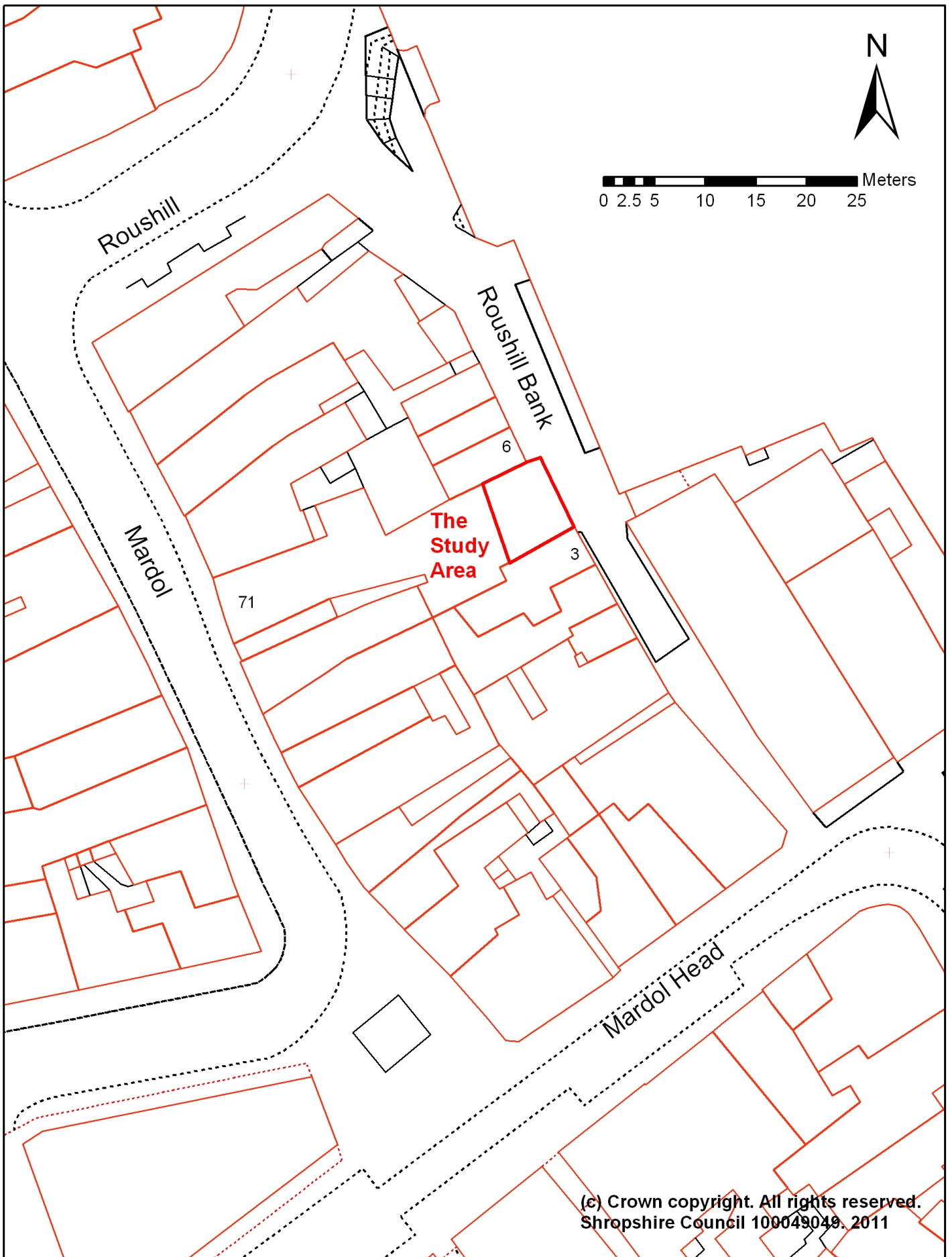
4-5 Roushill Bank, Shrewsbury 2011  
 Figure 1: Location of the study area

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1:7,000



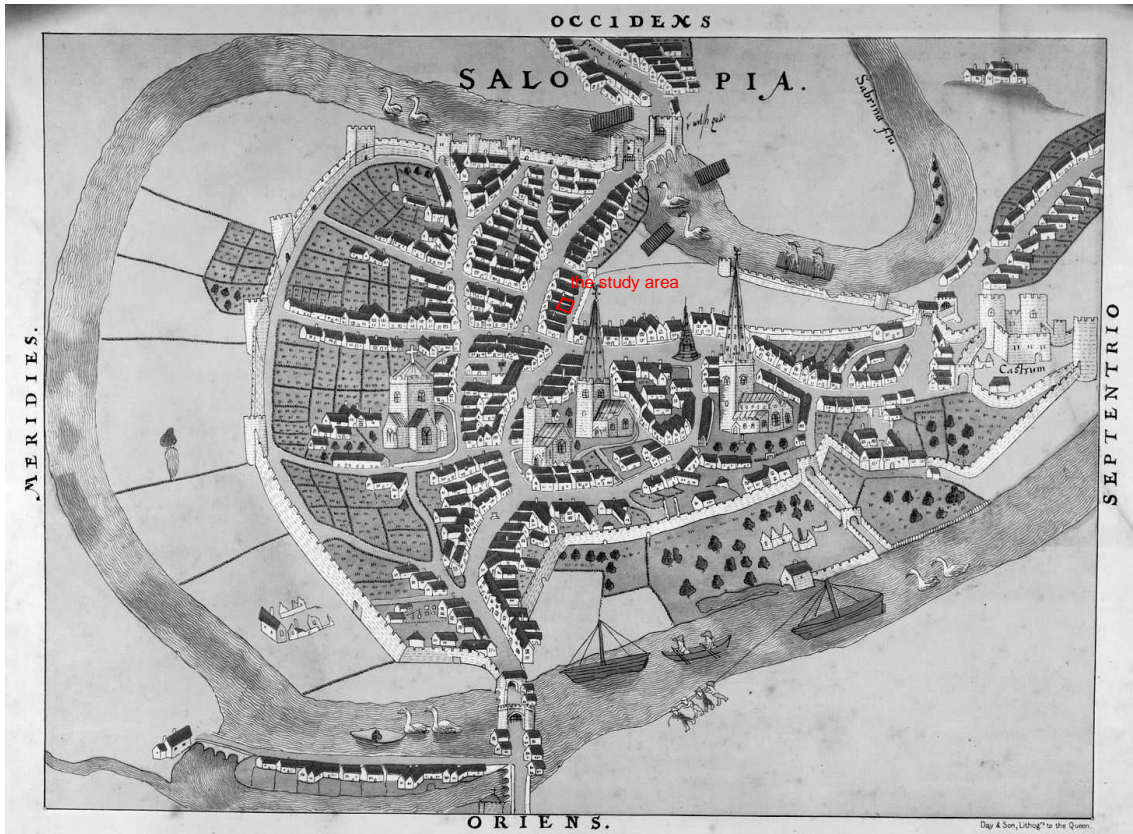


1:500



**4-5 Roushill Bank, Shrewsbury 2011**  
**Figure 2: Roushill Bank and the study area**

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a)



b)

4-5 Roushill Bank, Shrewsbury 2011

Figure 3 a) The Burghley map c1575; b) extract from John Rocque's Plan of Shrewsbury, 1746

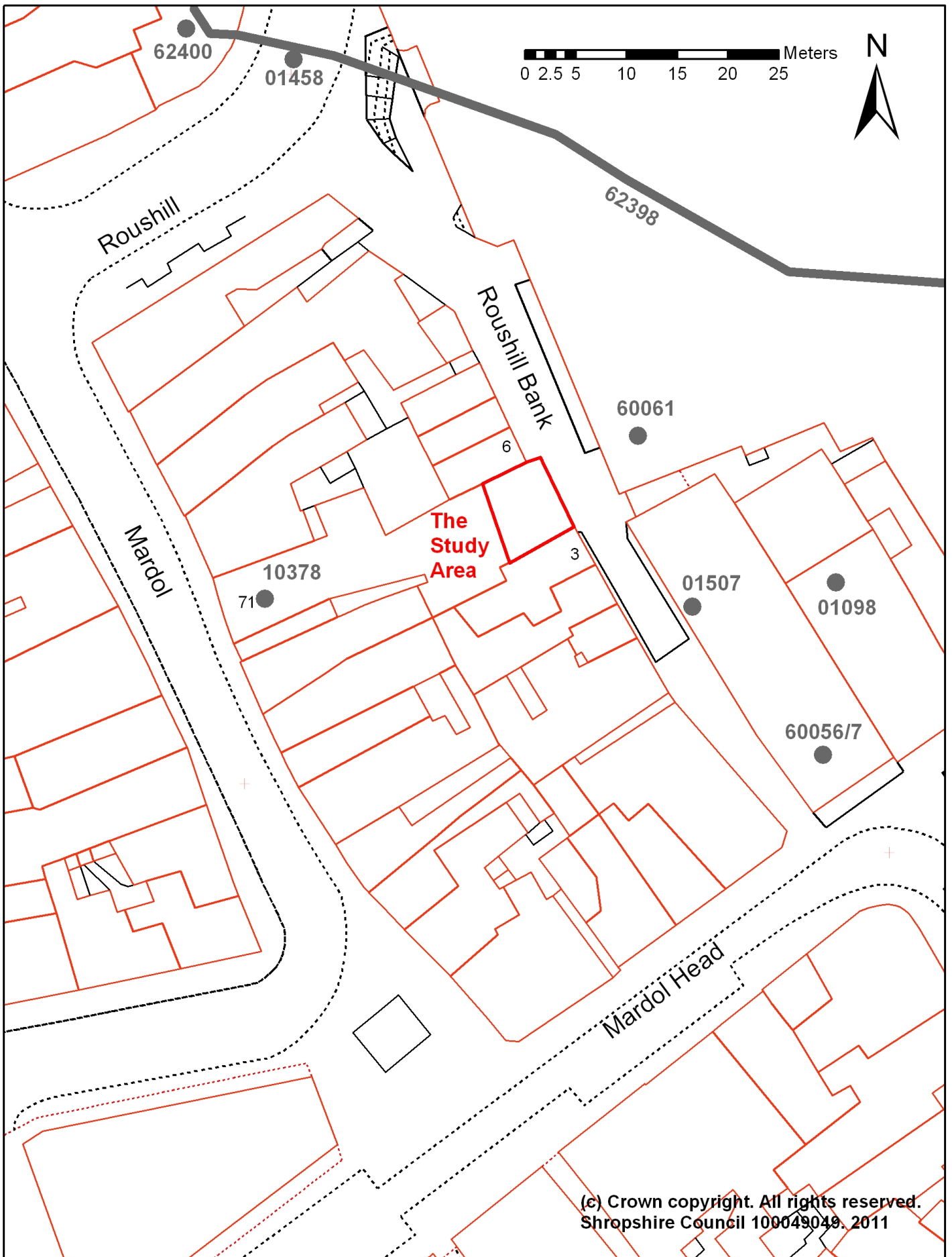


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4-5 Roushill Bank, Shrewsbury 2011 1:500  
Figure 4: Extract from the Ordnance Survey  
25" map, 2nd edition

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**4-5 Roushill Bank, Shrewsbury 2011**  
**Figure 5: Archaeological features noted**  
**in the text**

1:500

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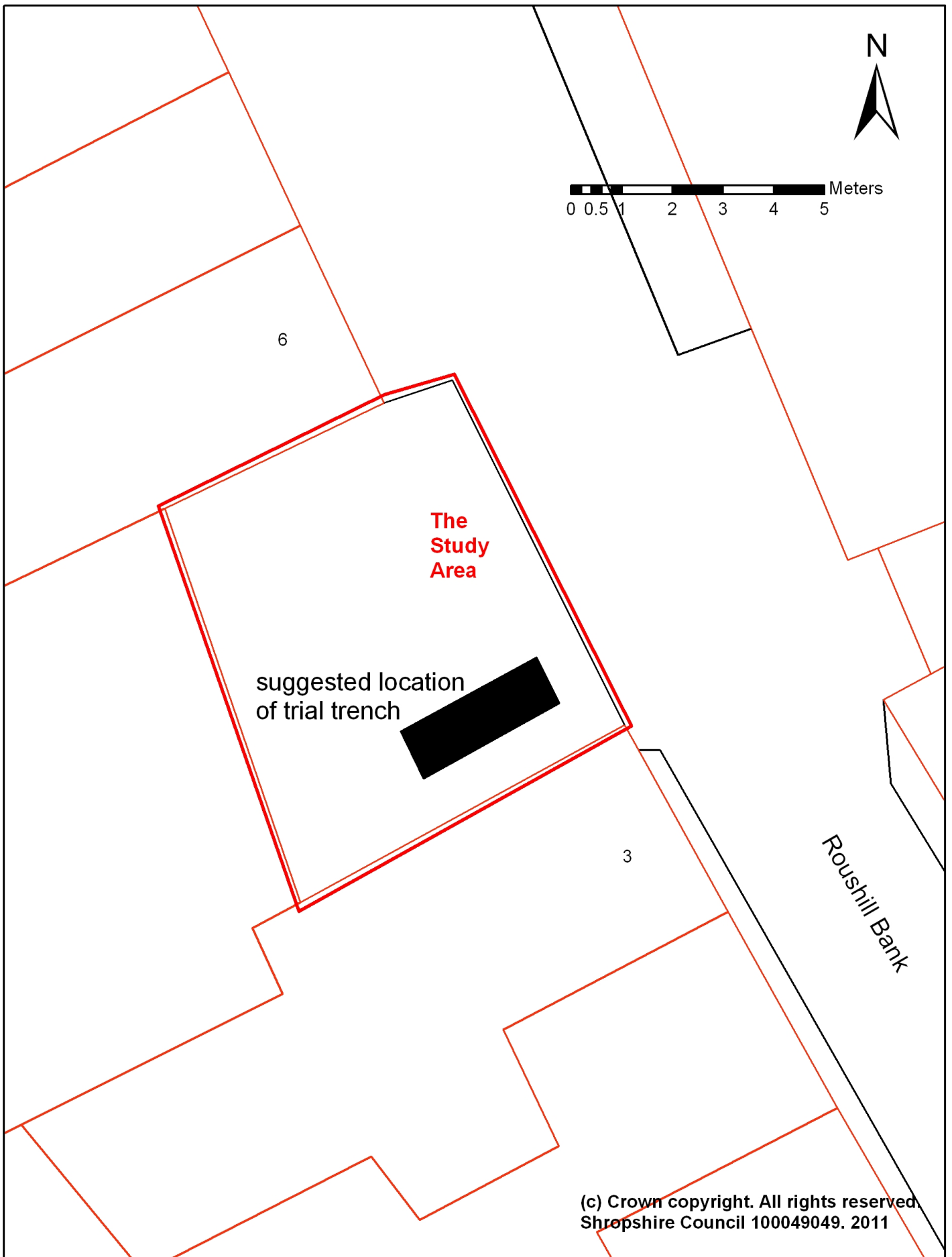




Photo 1: The study area, looking northwest



Photo 2: The study area, looking southwest

4-5 Roushill Bank, Shrewsbury 2011