

*An Archaeological Evaluation at
98 Cartway, Bridgnorth,
Shropshire, 2011*

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**AN ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION AT
98 CARTWAY, BRIDGNORTH, SHROPSHIRE, 2011**

by

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A Report for

B.J.M.M. DEVELOPMENTS LTD

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SUMMARY

In autumn 2011 work began on the construction of a terrace of three town houses at Cartway, Bridgnorth, Shropshire. The development site lay within the core of the historic medieval and post-medieval town, and it was considered that archaeological remains relating to the occupation and development of the town might survive within the site. Because of its potential historical and archaeological significance, a programme of archaeological work was required to accompany the development. The first stage of this work was to comprise an evaluation of the site following the demolition of existing structures. The Archaeology Service carried out this evaluation in October 2011. Trial excavations on the site revealed a single undated post-hole. However, a sequence of features and deposits of medieval and post-medieval date – including a medieval cess-pit and a post-medieval cobble path - had been exposed by the demolition work in the northeast corner of the site and these were duly recorded.

It is considered that no further archaeological provision is required for the development area.

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Bridgnorth is situated in southeast Shropshire, about 28.5km southeast of Shrewsbury. The town is at a bridging point of the River Severn; the High Town on the west bank stands on a sandstone promontory overlooking the river and the Low Town on the east bank.

1.2 In autumn 2011 work began on the erection of a terrace of three town houses at 98 Cartway, Bridgnorth, Shropshire (NGR SO 716 930). The development site (the study area) had until recently largely been occupied by vacant buildings with a narrow strip of raised garden/rough ground to the rear.

1.3 The study area lies within the historic medieval and post-medieval core of the town of Bridgnorth and occupies a street frontage position along a thoroughfare that dates in origin to the Middle Ages. The study area lies within the area covered by the Central Marches Historic Towns Survey's assessment of Bridgnorth (Buteux, 1996).

1.4 It was considered that archaeological remains relating to the medieval and post-medieval occupation and development of this area of the town might survive within the development site, and that there was a possibility that archaeological remains might be encountered during the groundworks for the development. Any such below ground archaeological remains would be affected adversely by the development.

1.5 Because of the potential significance of the archaeological resource it was considered necessary that an archaeological evaluation should be carried out following the demolition of the standing structures on the site. A further programme of archaeological work based on the results of that evaluation would then be agreed in accordance with details approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority.

1.6 The Archaeology Service, Shropshire Council, was commissioned by B.J.M.M. Developments Ltd to carry out the evaluation to a scheme of investigation agreed by Shropshire Council's Historic Environment Team. This report details the results of the evaluation.

2 AIMS

2.1 The aim of the programme of archaeological work was to allow for the preservation by record of any archaeological remains that were encountered during the groundworks. The archaeological evaluation would provide information that would enable an informed and reasonable decision to be taken regarding this archaeological provision.

2.2 The objectives of the evaluation 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.

2.3 The methodology for the evaluation was based on requirements set out in a specification prepared by the Archaeology Service and agreed by the Historic Environment Team, Shropshire Council.

3 THE HISTORICAL AND ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND

3.1 Prehistoric activity and early medieval settlement

No evidence of human occupation of the prehistoric, Roman or early Saxon periods has been recorded within the study area or its immediate vicinity. However, there is a ford across the Severn at Quatford which may have been in use since prehistoric times. A Danish army over-wintered in the area around *Brycge* or *Cwatbryge* in 895-6AD, and in 912 Aethelflaeda of the Mercians established a burgh at *Bricge*. There has been a bridge (*_antbricg*) across the River Severn near Bridgnorth possibly since 910, when another Danish army crossed the Severn here. The location of *Brycge*, *Bricge*, or *Cwatbryge* has been disputed, with some authorities favouring modern Bridgnorth, others Quatford. The latest research suggests that the early bridge (possibly HER 00406) and Saxon burgh were located at Quatford (Horowitz, 2010).

3.2 The medieval town

Bridgnorth is not listed as a separate settlement in the Domesday survey of 1086, but formed one of the 18 berewicks of the manor of *Membrefelde* (Morville). Before 1066 the manor was held by Edward the Confessor; in 1086 it was held by Earl Roger of Shrewsbury and the site of Bridgnorth may have formed part of his demesne lands in the manor (Thorn 1986, 4.1.5). Earl Roger's son, Robert de Belleme built a castle at Bridgnorth and moved the collegiate church of St Mary here from the settlement at Quatford. The castle was besieged and captured in 1102 by Henry I and again in 1155 by Henry II. From then on, the castle served as a fortress, gaol, and royal residence until the 17th century. (Buteux, 1996, p2.)

The town at Bridgnorth is thought to have grown up in the outer bailey of the castle. The settlement gradually superseded in importance both Morville and Quatford, no doubt because of its economically and militarily strategic location. The town's status as a borough was confirmed in 1157 by a charter of Henry II, which also granted a weekly market and an annual fair on St Mary Magdalene's day. Further fairs were allowed in 1226 and 1359 (Buteux, 1996, p2). The town rapidly outgrew its original boundaries, extending beyond the limits of the castle outer bailey, and between 1216 and 1223 new defences of turf and timber were built, with an external ditch as well on the north and northwest sides of the town. These turf and timber defences were later replaced in stone, probably in the 1260s. (Phillpotts, 1995, pp5-6.)

The town expanded further in the later middle ages, with a settlement in Low Town, on the east bank of the river, and some un-planned extra-mural development outside the Whitburn Gate and the North Gate on the north and west sides of the town (Phillpotts, 1995, p6; Buteux, 1996, p2).

3.3 The Post-medieval Period

During the Civil War the town and castle were an important royalist stronghold. On 31st March 1646 the town was attacked by parliamentary forces. The royalist forces retreated to the castle, firing St Leonard's Church and parts of the town. They held out for three months before the castle was taken and slighted.

Despite economic decline in the 16th century, Bridgnorth maintained its manufacturing industries. The town's economy in the 17th and early 18th centuries was heavily dependant on the river trade. In the late 18th/early 19th centuries two new industries, iron founding and carpet manufacturing, were established in Bridgnorth. The latter became

the town's most important industry in the 19th century. (Buteux, 1995, p3.)

3.4 Cartway

There has been no previous archaeological work on the development site itself. However, the study area lies within the area covered by the Central Marches Historic Towns Survey's assessment of Bridgnorth (Buteux, 1996). The study area lies at the southern end of a block of medieval and post-medieval tenement plots on the east side of High Street (HER 05640). This block forms part of an area of burgage plots fronting the main road leading to the castle. It has been suggested that it dates to the 12th century and was an expansion of the original town within the outer bailey of the Castle (HER 05630). It has also been suggested that this was a piecemeal development from south to north. (Slater, 1988 & 1990). No medieval buildings survive in this area.

Cowgate (HER 00378) one of the five gates in Bridgnorth's town walls, stood on Cartway just to the southeast of the study area. This gate controlled access onto High Street from the riverside by the bridge.

The building on the street frontage to the east of the study area, 97 Cartway (HER 11529), is an 18th/early 19th century house and shop of brick and sandstone construction, and is a Grade II Listed Building (No. 254385). The next building to the east, 95 Cartway, incorporates a rock-cut cellar or dwelling space (HER 04816), of post-medieval or possibly earlier date. The building to the west of the study area on the High Street frontage, 44 & 45 High Street (HER 11584), is a timber-framed house and shops and is also a Grade II Listed Building (No. 254443).

A section of stone wall was exposed to view in spring 2007 following the demolition of part of Beaman's Abbattoir, Cartway. It had previously been noted in the 1960s by a local historian who had interpreted it as part of the Town Walls, although this is probably not the case. (HER 20754)

4 THE FIELD EVALUATION

4.1 A single trench 5m long by 1m wide was excavated by hand at right angles back from the street frontage (Figure 2). The exposed features and deposits were cleaned by hand and recorded. A thin layer of demolition deposit (Figure 3; 1) just 0.05 to 0.1m thick made up of rubble mixed with natural red sand covered the entire trench. Beneath this, on the street frontage the brick wall (4) of the frontage of the former building on the site was seen at the south end of the trench. The wall incorporated an internal drain (3). The wall and drain had been cut directly into the natural sandstone bedrock (7), which also lay immediately beneath the demolition debris (1). A single posthole (11) was cut into the bedrock in the central part of the trench. The posthole was sectioned and revealed the fill (9) of a post-pipe (the deposit created when the post was removed from the hole) which consisted of dark grey sandy loam with mortar flecks and brick fragments. The primary fill (10) around the post-pipe comprised red sand with two in-situ pebbles for packing the post. There were no finds from the post-hole to assist with dating the feature. No other archaeological features or deposits were encountered in the evaluation trench.

4.2 The demolition debris (1) was tested at three other locations around the main development site, and the natural bedrock in each case proved to lie at a depth of at most about 0.1m below the surface of the demolition layer.

4.3 The demolished building had incorporated a room in the southeastern part of the development area that had been cut into the natural bedrock at a lower level than the rest of the frontage area.

4.4.1 In the northeast corner of the development area, a section of the north wall of the former buildings had been taken down (Figure 2, x-y). This revealed the depth that the former building had been terraced into the natural bedrock, but also exposed a sequence of deposits cut into and built up from the bedrock (Figure 4).

4.4.2 The earliest feature revealed was a pit (Figure 4; 34) 1.1m wide by 0.8m deep that had been cut into the natural bedrock (7). The pit was filled with a series of yellowish-grey sandy silt lenses (27, 28, 29, 31, & 33) likely to have been cess deposits interleaved with deposits of red sand (30 & 32). The lower deposit (33) ran in a thin line vertically down the east side of the pit, suggesting that the contents of the pit had been almost completely emptied at least once. The upper fill of the pit (26) comprised a greyish brown sandy loam. No finds were visible in these deposits.

4.4.3 The foundation remains of a sandstone wall (24) were also seen cut into the natural bedrock (7). These remains consisted of two small un-bonded sandstone blocks. The wall (24) and the top of the cess-pit (34) were sealed by a layer of greyish brown sandy loam (23) up to 0.35m thick, which produced a single rim-sherd from a 12th-13th century cooking pot. On the top of this deposit were a number of fragments of stone roof tile – including one Harnage slate fragment - in a further layer of greyish brown sandy loam (22). A cobble surface (21) 0.65m wide was set into the top of this layer, and probably represented a path running north to south.

4.4.4 The path was covered by a mixed soil layer (19 & 20) of light greyish brown sandy loam with fragments of sandstone, ceramic tile, mortar, charcoal and coal, and pebbles, probably representing a demolition debris. A small pit (18) filled with greyish brown sandy loam (17) was cut into this layer. The eastern brick wall (14) of the recently demolished

building was also seen to have been cut through the demolition layer (19). A deposit of greyish brown yard soil (13) up to 0.4m thick then covered the area. This had been cut to the east by the trench (12) for a late 19th-early 20th century sewer pipe. A similar pipe trench ran immediately behind the exposed section to connect with this.

4.5 Subsequent to this evaluation, during stabilisation work in the northeast corner of the development area, two cellars were exposed cut into the natural bedrock and extending into the bedrock in a northeast direction to the rear of 97 Cartway.

5 DISCUSSION

5.1 The evaluation has demonstrated that the recent structure on the development site at 98 Cartway had been cut into the natural bedrock, and that no significant archaeological deposits survived within most of the area of the proposed new development.

5.2 However, demolition work had exposed a thin section of deposits in the northeast corner of the site, including a medieval cess-pit (34), the remains of the foundation courses of a medieval wall (24), and a post-medieval cobble path (21). Only a thin slice of these deposits had survived later 19th- and 20th-century building and drainage work.

6 RECOMMENDATIONS

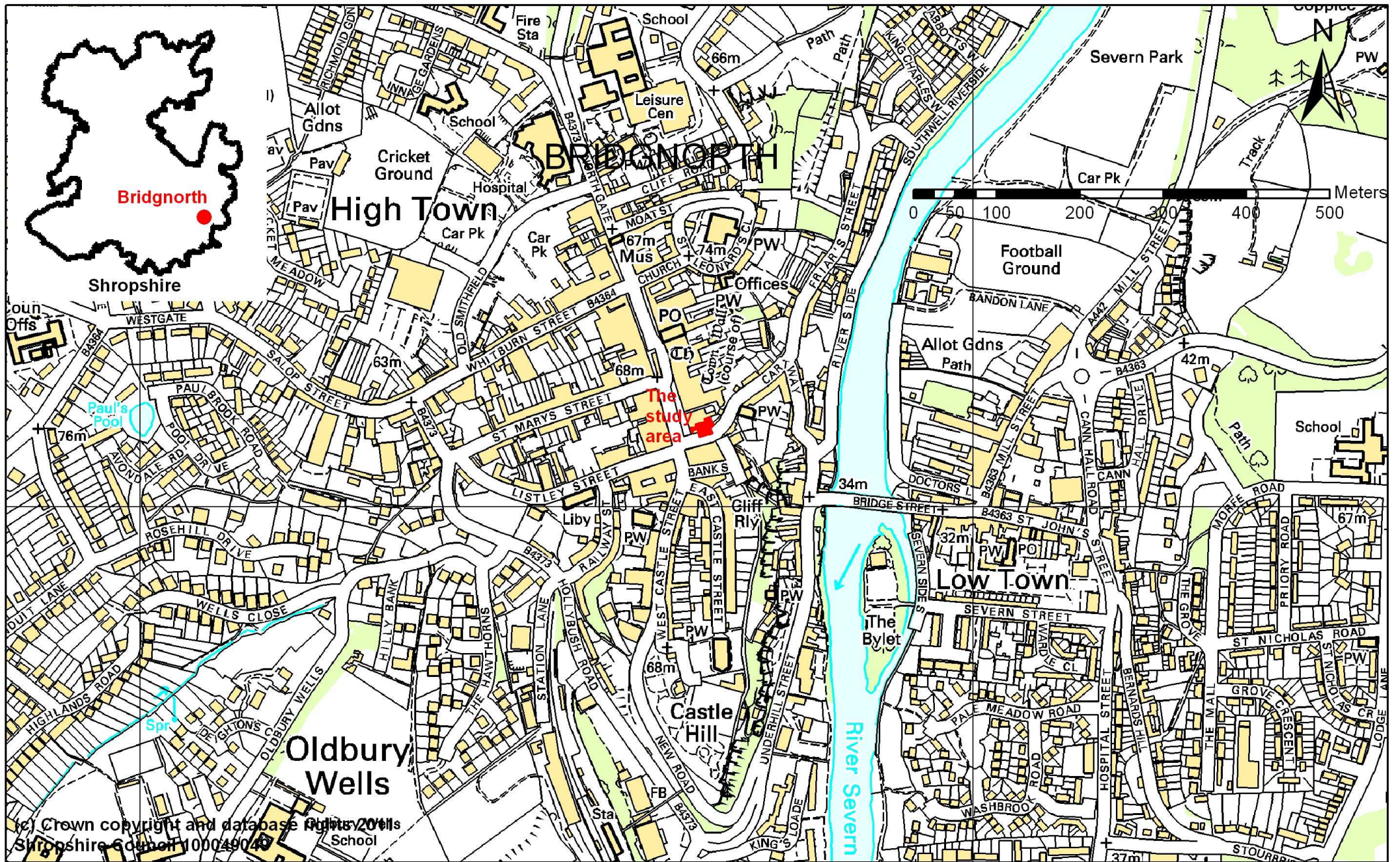
6.1 In the light of this evaluation, it is recommended that no further archaeological provision is necessary for the development at 98 Cartway. These recommendations do not include any provision that might be required for the rock-cut cellars noted in section **4.5** above.

6 REFERENCES AND SOURCES CONSULTED

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ABBREVIATIONS

AOD	Above Ordnance Datum
OS	Ordnance Survey
HER	Shropshire Historic Environment Record, Shirehall, Shrewsbury
NGR	National Grid Reference
SA	Shropshire Archives, Castle Gates, Shrewsbury
TSAHS	Transactions of the Shropshire Archaeological and Historical Society
TSAS	Transactions of the Shropshire Archaeological Society



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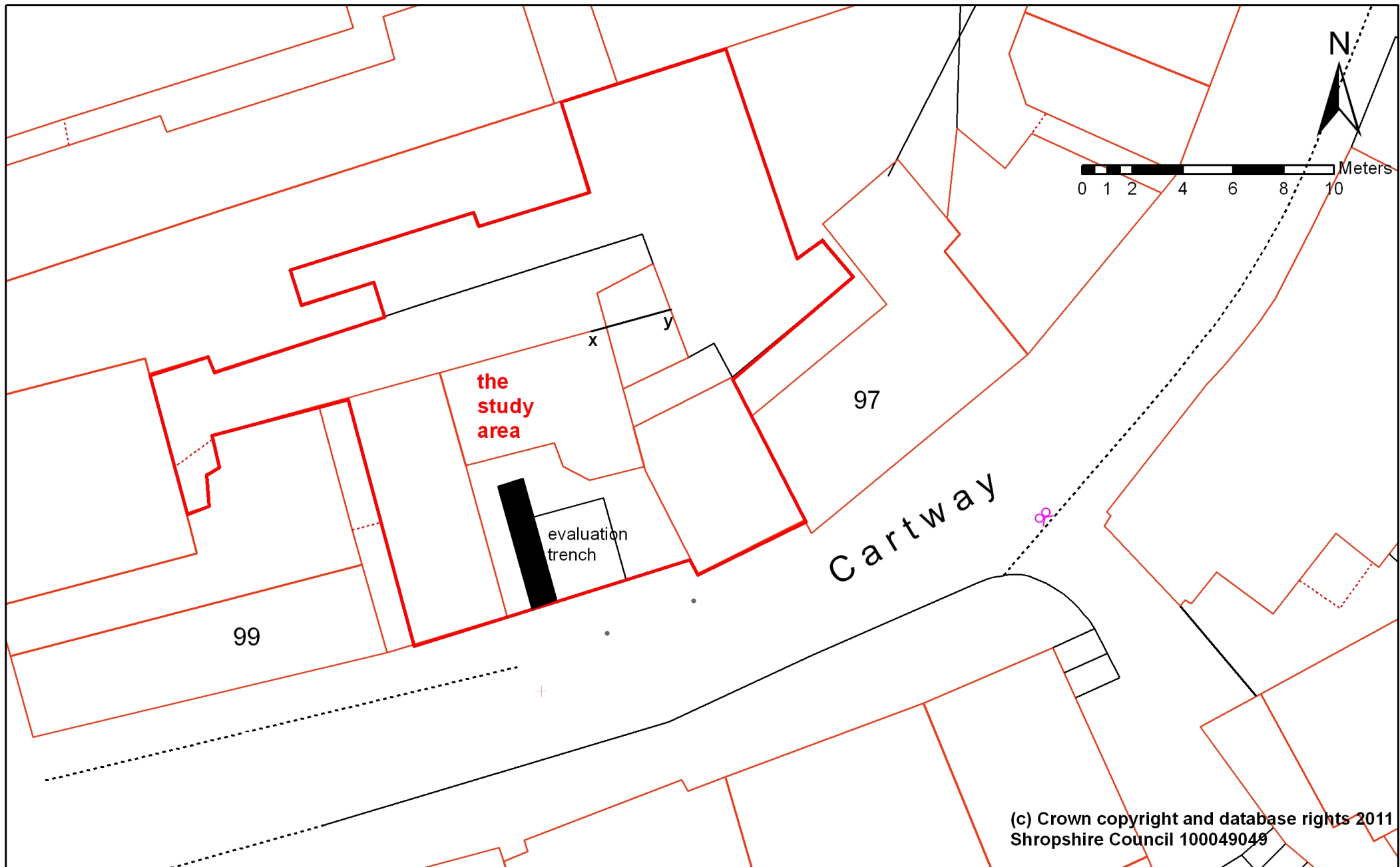
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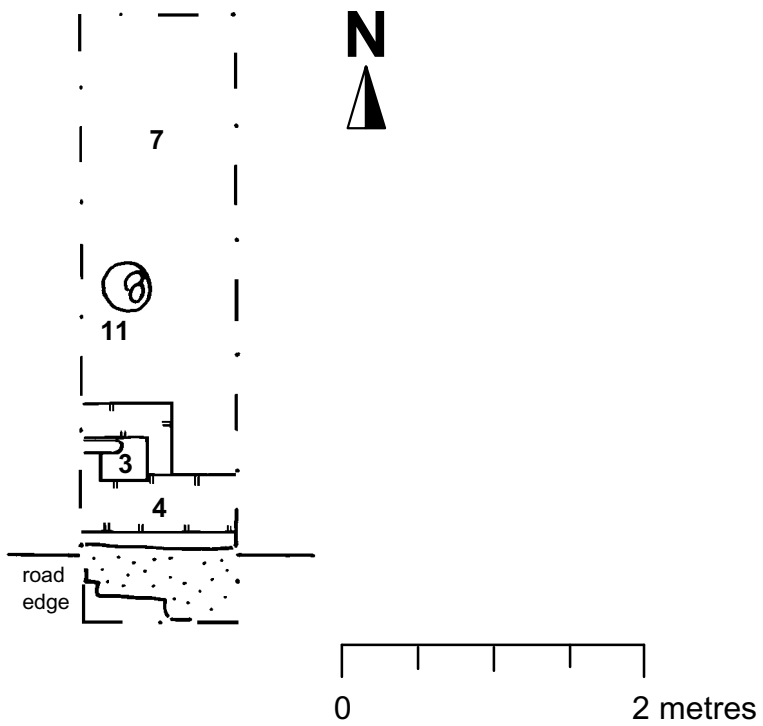
Figure 1: Location of the study area

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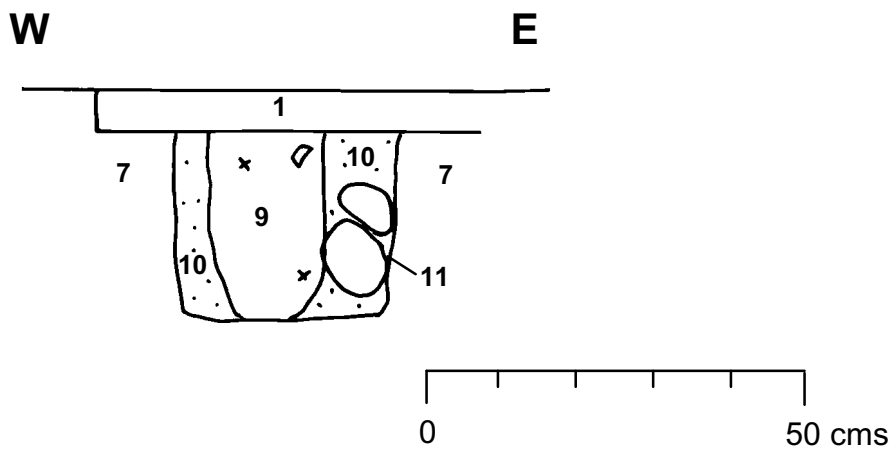
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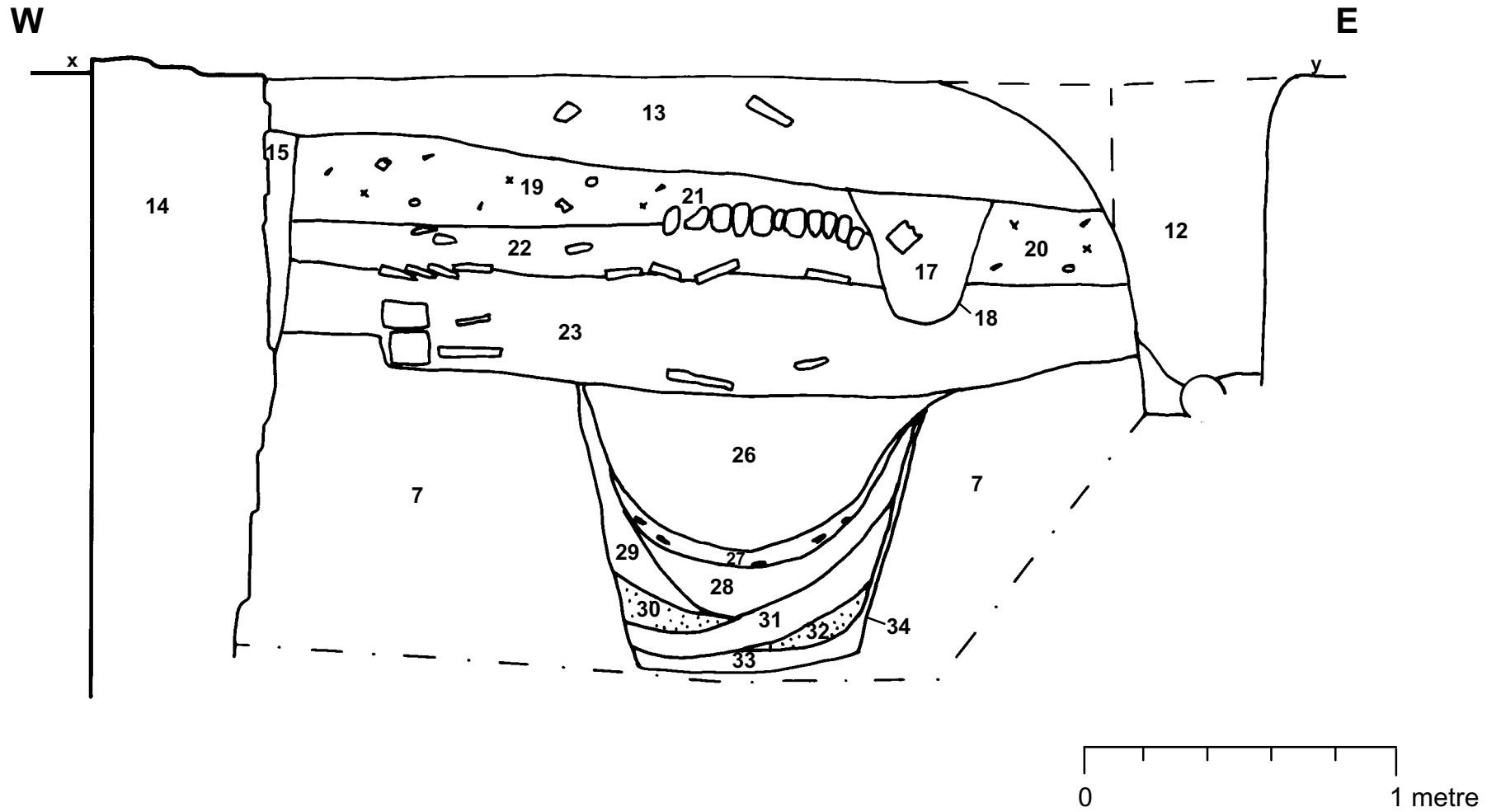
a)



b)

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Figure 3: a) The evaluation trench, plan view, scale 1:50; b) section through posthole 11, scale 1:10



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Figure 4: South-facing section through deposits in the northeast corner of the development area, scale 1:20 scale



Photo 1: The Phase 1 study area, looking northeast



Photo 2: The evaluation trench, looking northwest



Photo 3: The cess pit (34) and other features in the northeast corner, looking northeast