

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY: BREATHING LIFE INTO WROXETER

Wroxeter Roman City was acquired by the Government in 1973 from Raby Estate, an enlightened move that immediately removed agricultural activity as the greatest threat to the buried remains on the site. As a consequence of the purchase, a feasibility study was drawn up by the Inspector of Ancient Monuments to recommend a long-term strategic vision for the site (P. White 1976). This called for a bold development of the Roman City as an archaeological park that would have turned Wroxeter into one of the premier Roman visitor attractions in the country. For all sorts of reasons, these ambitions were not realised.

This Conservation Plan offers a new strategic vision for Wroxeter. Unlike that first report, it is built upon a long and sustained discussion with the local community, visitors, landholders, policy makers, businesses, administrators, non-governmental bodies such as Natural England, the National Trust, the Environment Agency, academic bodies and many others as well as, crucially, English Heritage staff themselves. We hope that there will be widespread agreement that the recommendations made here will bring long term benefits to both the site and the community as a whole.

The completion of the management plan and the introduction of the Heritage Protection Review process would offer the potential for the first time in a generation to reinvigorate the management of the site. The completed plan will form the basis on which to bid for the resources needed to engage upon its strategic development into the future, perhaps turning Wroxeter into English Heritage's single most important Roman visitor attraction and educational resource. It offers new and exciting management challenges for English Heritage yet also holds out the promise of rich rewards in exploring innovative approaches to the management of archaeological sites. Imaginative management could lead to the first archaeological eco-park, for example, combining the historic and natural environment agendas and promoting green tourism in this still largely unspoilt region.

Wroxeter has been saved for the Nation. Its future is secure, protected by English Heritage from damage. It is time now for English Heritage to take up the challenge to present the site so that the significances brought out here can be communicated to all and its potential realised.



The Old Work

CHAPTER 1. THE NEED FOR A CONSERVATION PLAN

1. The aims and objectives of the Wroxeter Conservation Plan

This document has been commissioned by English Heritage (EH) to inform the long term preservation and interpretation of Wroxeter Roman city. It is also the first step in the establishment of a Heritage Partnership Agreement (HPA) for Wroxeter Roman City (WRC), Shropshire (Figure 1.1). that will enable English Heritage, as owners of a large part of the archaeological site, to develop mechanisms for its long-term management. Future management is best achieved through the mechanism of a Conservation Management Plan (CMP) for the site which will be drawn up in the light of the recommendations offered here, along with other considerations and consultations. The operation of the CMP would be as part of the future HPA for the site.

The main aim of this document is to develop an understanding of the significance of the archaeological remains at WRC and to arrive at management recommendations for future development of the site based on that understanding. The defined area studied here is a living and evolving environment and this Conservation Plan (CP) provides a strategy to manage these remains, to explore its strategic elements and to arrive at a means of broadening understanding and appreciation of the site among those who live and work there as well as those who visit it.

Establishment of a Heritage Partnership Agreement will see EH engaging with other stakeholders to actively promote the interests of the monument to the benefit of all. Decisions made by EH regarding the future of the site will use this CP as guidance in forming their own views on how the site might be managed.

The constraints of time and opportunity mean that the Conservation Plan has not been able to explore fully all options through consultation. However, the plan is not a finalised document and will always be open to revision in the light of further developments and comments from interested parties.

This document is structured to reflect the purpose of the EH Commission (Sebire 2/2/08). These were:

- To inform the management of the monument in order to continue to protect and sustain its significance;
- To inform the long term strategy for the site;
- To inform the maintenance of the site to an exemplary conservation standard;
- To inform the management of current levels of public access and enjoyment and where appropriate identify additional opportunities;
- To inform the interpretation of the site in a way that enhances the visitor experience without adversely impacting on its significance;
- To inform English Heritage on the most appropriate use of all the assets, especially the farm buildings and residential properties.

The brief further stipulated that the significance of the site be considered in light of *Conservation Principles* (English Heritage 2008) whereby the Evidential, Historical, Aesthetic and Communal aspects of the site are considered. Accordingly the aims, methods and objectives of this document can be set out thus:

Aims

- to provide a management framework for Wroxeter Roman City that will incorporate data in respect of the archaeological resource mapped in relation to the existing landscape;
- to assess the current understanding of the condition and values of the site in all its aspects; archaeological, ecological, historical, aesthetic and communal so as to arrive at an understanding of the significance of the monument at local, regional, national and international levels;
- to institute a mechanism by which English Heritage can engage with all stakeholders in the future management of the monument through a Heritage Partnership Agreement;
- to develop an understanding of the nature and importance of the archaeological resource that can be communicated to the public and form the basis of relevant management policies.

Methods

- use of walk-over survey and desk-based research into all aspects of the site to provide a detailed consideration of the existing state of the monument, its relationship to the surrounding landscape and an assessment of the extent and quality of the underlying archaeological resource. The desk-based and other sources used to compile this report are listed in Appendix 1 while the gazetteer of heritage assets is bound as a separate annex;
- broad consultation through face-to-face stakeholder meetings with relevant groups including representatives at national, county and district levels and of stakeholder organisations and individuals (Appendix 2);
- consultation with the local community and provision of visitor statistics (Appendix 3).

Objectives

- to produce a Conservation Plan for Wroxeter Roman City that will realise its potential as a visitor attraction without compromising the archaeological and natural resource;
- to highlight the significance and values of the site to visitors and stakeholders alike;
- to make recommendations on how the monument might be managed into the future in a sustainable and coherent fashion following the formulation of a coherent strategic vision for the site;
- to understand and popularise the archaeological resource.

The limits of the Conservation Plan are the boundary of the currently Scheduled Area, which largely coincides with the late 2nd century defences of the town, encompassing ca. 78ha (Figure.1.2). Aspects of the wider landscape are discussed only in order to provide contextual background. The Plan provides recommendations for the conservation and future management of this resource and this should provide guidance for any future interventions. It also presents a coherent strategy for the long-term sustainability of the resource within the contemporary environment.

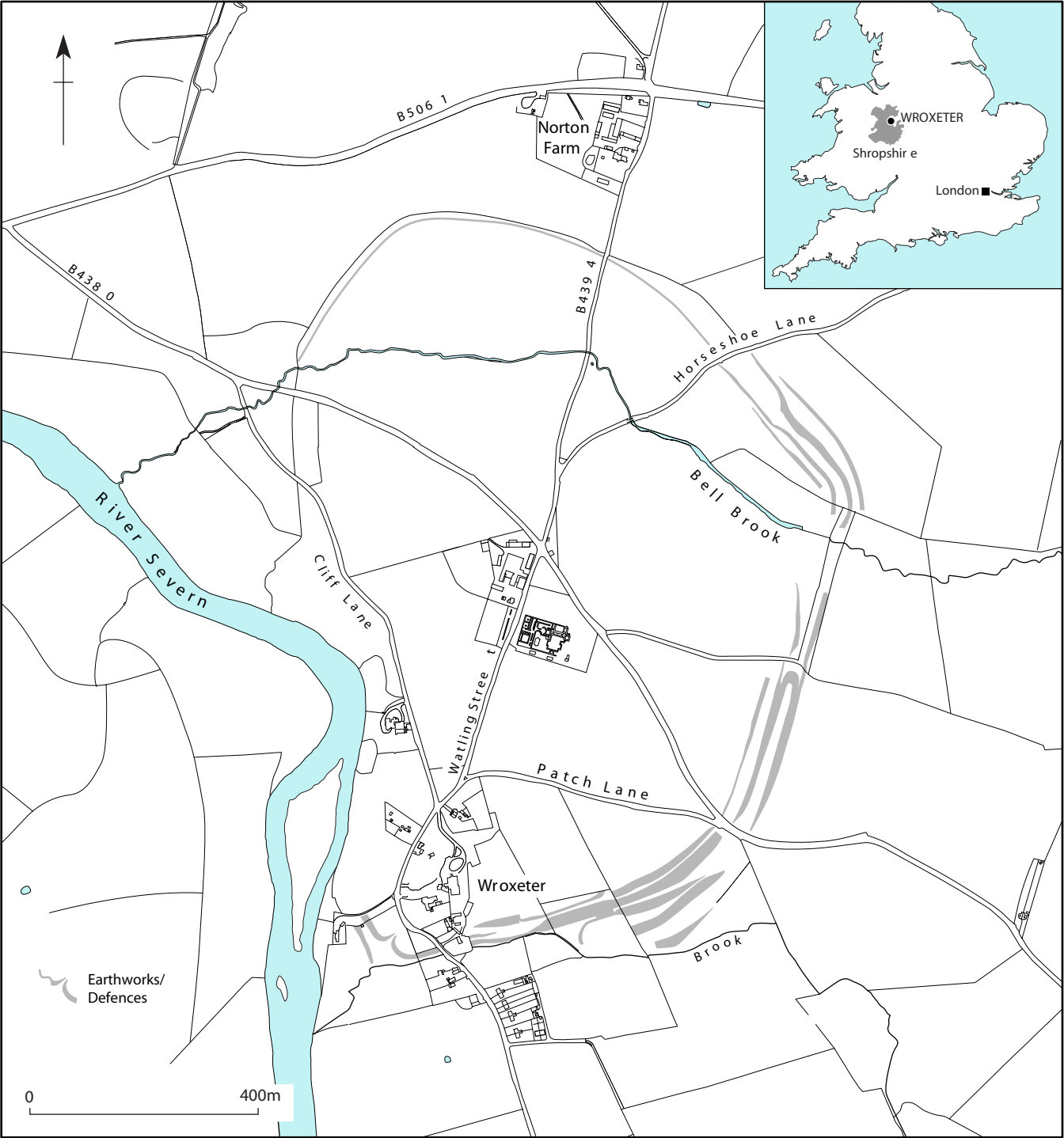


Figure 1.1 : Location of Wroxeter village and the Roman town of Viroconium Cornoviorum

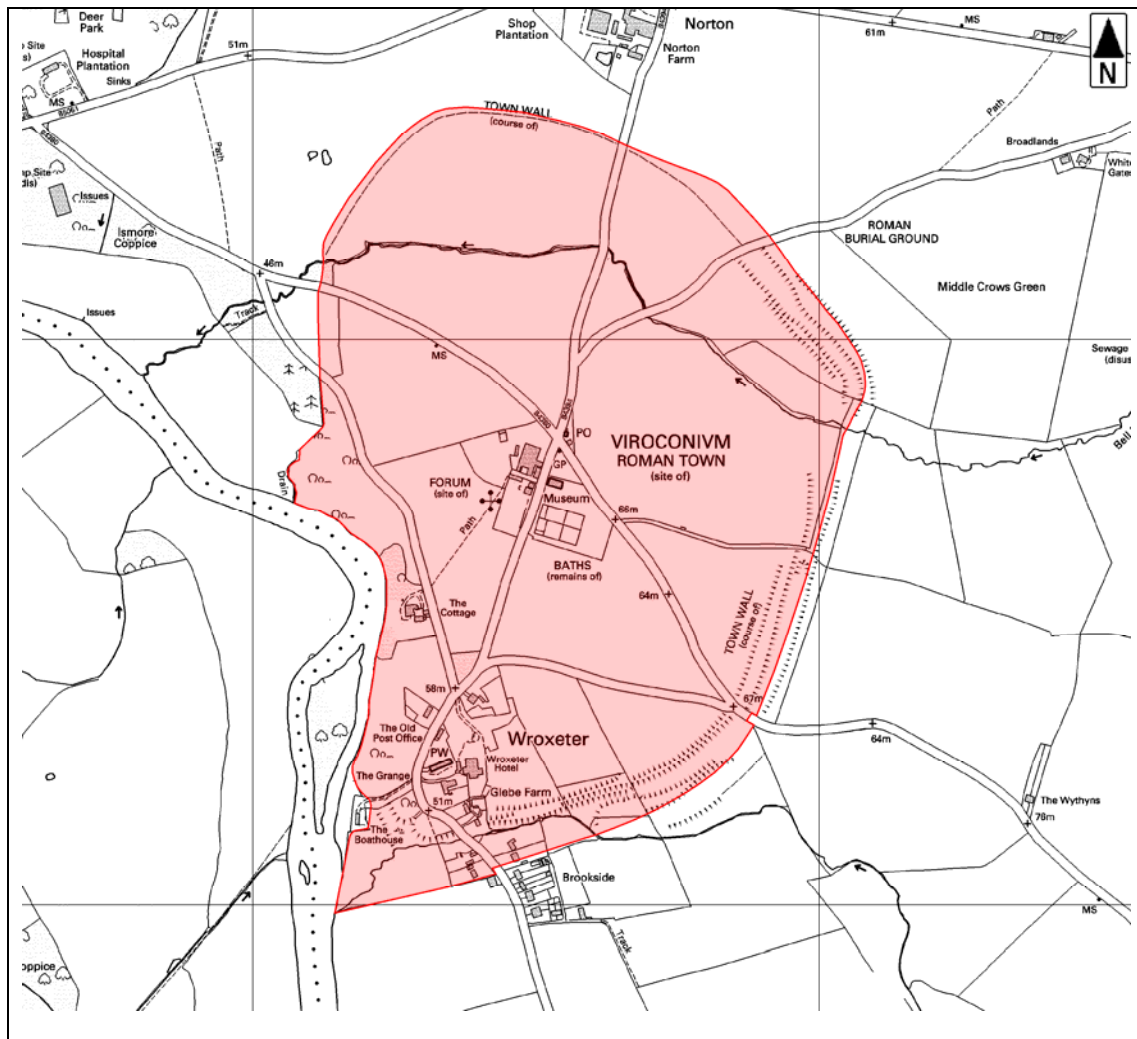


Figure 1.2: Viroconium Roman Town and the village of Wroxeter: existing scheduled area.