

CHAPTER 5. MANAGEMENT RECOMMENDATIONS

The Recommendations need to reflect and sustain the identified Evidential Historical Aesthetic and Communal significances of the site (Chapter 3) in the light of the current management issues outlined in Chapter 4. The recommendations are arranged to reflect this structure. Note that there is no suggested costing, prioritisation or timetable offered here since this will be the remit of the Conservation Management Plan that will follow on from this document.

Evidential

Wroxeter Roman City has a wealth of untapped archaeological resource. Great strides have been made in mapping and investigating this resource largely using non-invasive techniques although major excavations have also been carried out in the heart of the city. Despite this there are other technologies and approaches that have yet to be tried at WRC and these recommendations aim to continue the exploration through a mixture of invasive and non-invasive technologies.

- **Characterise the archaeology of the site** across its entirety through topographic digital survey, full resistivity survey and test pitting at regular intervals. This latter technique, although invasive, will enable determination of the depth of topsoil and facilitate geochemical sampling to aid understanding of past landscape use and the impact of current farming regimes;
- **Locate and sample suitable paleo-environmental sources** that can throw light on the past environments at Wroxeter. These surveys will complete the remote sensing data collection started by the aerial surveys and the Wroxeter Hinterland Project and sustain Wroxeter's role as an archaeological laboratory. The results of this exercise will determine what approaches can be adopted in respect of future land management regimes;
- **Commission a survey and report on the current ecology of Wroxeter** with a view to assessing its quality accurately and making recommendations on how biodiversity might be improved in the future using Higher Level Stewardship Schemes or other suitable mechanisms;
- **Realise the research potential of the extensive artefact collections from Wroxeter** by housing the Wroxeter material held by both Shropshire Museums Service and English Heritage together. Wroxeter has one of the largest, and least studied, collections of artefacts from Roman Britain while its 5th and 6th century stratified artefacts are of national importance. By bringing these collections together, nationally important research can be carried out on characterising the material culture of the 'Dark Ages'.
- **Convert the Farm Buildings into an Archaeological Resource Centre** to provide space to display the wealth of high quality artefacts excavated from the site using also the unstratified artefacts to provide an opportunity to allow people to engage with real Roman material. Some of the iconic artefacts from Wroxeter will be displayed in the new Music Hall attraction in Shrewsbury to fulfil conditions in the HLF grant but a new attraction at WRC could use high quality painted replica stone items to add drama to the displays. Visitor days could see craft workers employed to demonstrate traditional ways of making artefacts based on discoveries from the site. The only competitors would be the ARC in York and the Museum of London's ARC. This would provide a much-needed resource centre for the Midlands in its premier Roman site (*see Communal recommendations*);

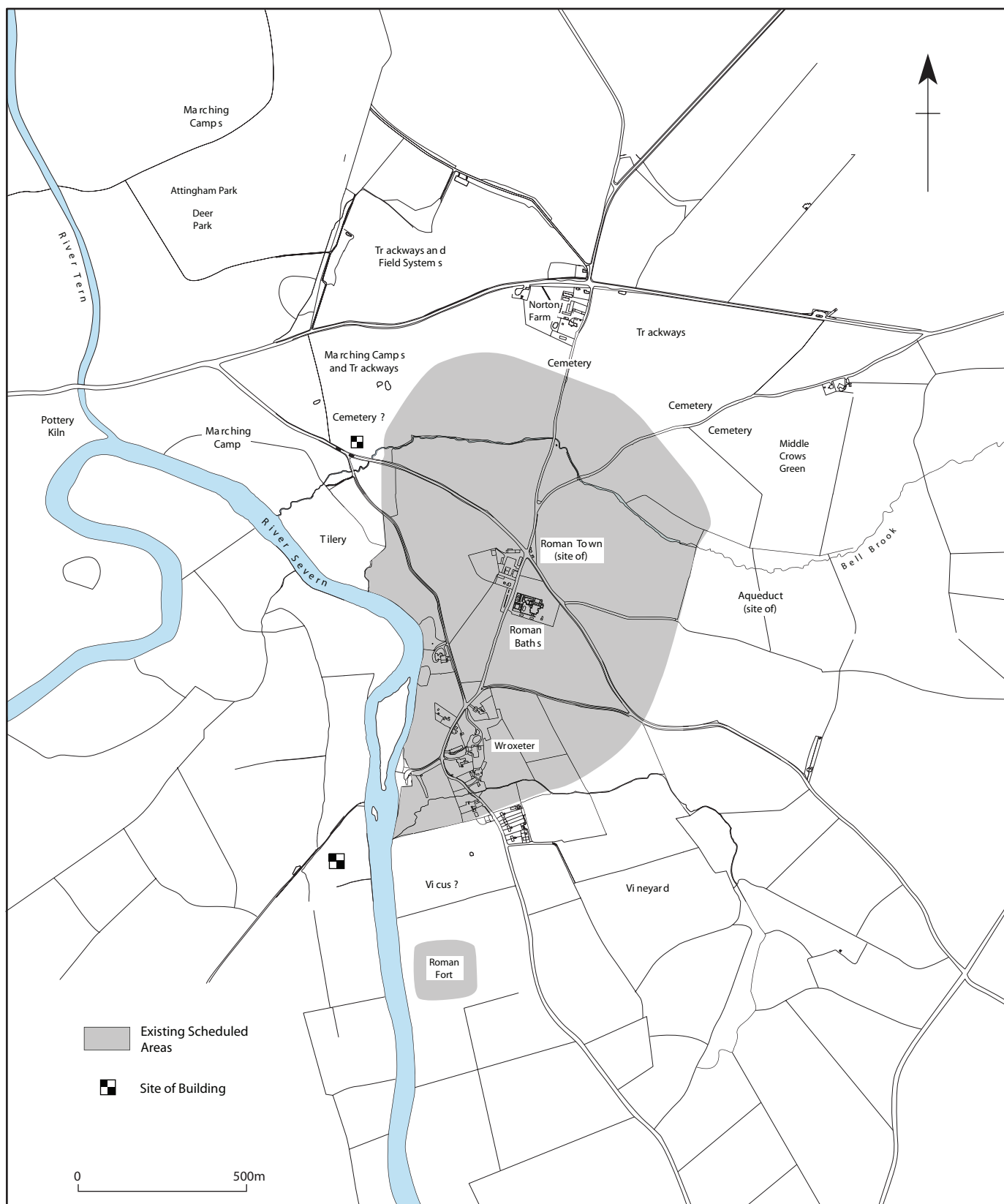




Figure 5.2: The late 5th century tombstone of Cunorix.



Figure 5.3: Wroxeter's street grid made visible in HAN207 during a drought.

- **Review the scheduled area** with a view to enhancing the protection of the assets in the immediate area around WRC that were part of its operational infrastructure (earlier military forts, cemeteries, trackways, aqueduct, tile and pottery works, extra-mural buildings) (Figure 5.1). Of particular significance is HAN556, the nationally important cropmark landscape around Norton Farm dateable to the late 1st – late 2nd century AD. Consideration should also be given to resolving the anomalies of protection within the defences where some fields remain in private hands (e.g. the former glebe lands; HAN209, 210, 211) or are outside the scheduled area though within the defences (eg HAN213, the strip of land in front of The Boathouse) ;
- **Record the field walls** in and around the village (HAN408-410) since they incorporate a great deal of Roman masonry. Some consideration needs to be given to the stripping away of ivy from these walls, since the arborealised ivy does support a considerable variety of native insect species that aid bat and bird life.

Historical

Wroxeter's historical significance offers strong potential for exploring deep questions of identity and cultural perceptions that arose from the transformation of late Roman Britain into the nation states of the Medieval period. The site also offers other perspectives on historical figures that have in more recent times been associated with the site scientifically or culturally.

- **Use the breadth of understanding about the Roman city** to explore how Roman towns developed in Britain: how typical was WRC, and what can be learnt from its ultimate failure?;
- **Exploit the nationally important 'Dark Age' remains on the site** to explore how the boundaries of England and Wales were shaped and how new national identities emerged that still resonate today;
- **Explore new interpretations based on historical people associated with the site.** For the Roman period these include Agricola and Hadrian but the tombstones and few written records offer potential for stories about the townspeople too (Figure 5.2). We know, for instance that the early soldiers came

- from northern Italy and the Low Countries while the evidence for the methods of carving stone demonstrate links with the Rhineland;
- **Make more of more recent figures associated with WRC** such as Thomas Telford. Charles Darwin, Charles Dickens, Wilfred Owen, A.E. Houseman and Mary Webb. People are interested in people and such an approach fosters greater understanding of the significances of the site and how those significances were recognised;

Aesthetic

Wroxeter requires an imaginative approach if it is ever to be appreciated by the public. This need not mean expensive development. Much can be achieved by more effective signposting and interpretation combined with wider access to the site. Such an approach will have the immediate effect of allowing people to appreciate how large the site actually is and thus gain a greater understanding of its values.

- **Make the boundary of Wroxeter more obvious** by placing road signs at the entry points that point out to the visitor / traveller that they are entering WRC. This will automatically make them aware of the actual size of the defended area (78ha /180 acres, or marginally larger than Pompeii);
- **Make the town visible** by laying out the Roman street grid. This occasionally happens naturally during droughts (Figure 5.3) but making this effect permanent will substantially enhance the understanding that visitors will gain of the geometry of WRC;
- **Allow greater access to WRC** so that visitors can see the whole site and, with appropriate interpretation (leaflets, downloadable trails), discover what else is known of the town outside of the displayed ruins.;



Figure 5.4: Attingham Park Estate, as shown on the panel in the Welcome Centre at Attingham Park. Note WRC in the bottom right-hand corner.

- **Reconnect Wroxeter to its surroundings** by linking up with the Attingham Park Estate (Figure 5.4). Existing proposals within the National Trust envisage routes that will take visitors out of the parkland to explore the estate, crossing the Severn at the Atcham Old Bridge and walking thence to the Italianate villa at Cronkhill Farm and on to Brompton on the opposite bank to Wroxeter, where the Roman road comes down to the river. If a footbridge were provided at the existing ford, walkers could then cross the Severn in safety to Wroxeter to the north of The Boathouse (Figure 5.5). Measures would have to be taken however to ensure that the bridge could not be accessed at times of flooding. Return to Attingham Park would be by using the footpath beneath the Tern Bridge under the old A5 thus removing issues of road safety;



Figure 5.5: The 2009 footbridge installed by the National Trust and Natural England over the River Tern within Attingham Park.

- **Develop a consistent approach to the land management of the site** that involves the removal of inappropriate livestock from the site (e.g. cattle) as soon as is practicable;
- **Explore the potential of new partnerships to help develop more sustainable management regimes.** Through a review of the existing environmental stewardship scheme, examine ways that the landscape can be restored to ecological diversity. This might be achieved by working more closely with the National Trust, BTCV, Natural England and Shropshire Wildlife Trust with the longer term aim of gradually moving the landscape at Wroxeter towards a more ecologically diverse landscape that might ultimately become a wildlife haven and possibly even a nature reserve. This approach will produce a landscape that is far more attractive to visit through broadening the scope and diversity of interests available to visitors. Crucially, while affording ample protection to the underlying archaeology this approach will still allow archaeology to be undertaken if and when necessary since the *insulae* themselves would still be accessible. Such approaches will be a big step towards meeting the needs identified in the Green Infrastructure concepts enshrined in the Local Development Framework for Shropshire;
- **Determine a sustainable future for buildings** owned by English Heritage on the site (eg Mount Pleasant; HAN117);

- **Consider the need for a Conservation Area Appraisal for Wroxeter Village** to ensure that its boundaries (especially its stone walls), buildings and setting are protected appropriately;
- **Improve the setting of the Old Work and the Ruins (HAN118-119)** by working towards the removal of the current temporary museum (HAN105) as soon as is practicable and throughout WRC by replacing post-and-wire fencing with laid hedges that are more in keeping aesthetically with the appearance of the site.

Communal

Wroxeter has an enviable record of training and education that can benefit all in the community. It is plain that the public, visitors and residents alike, do not understand why it is not possible to excavate the site any more. Introducing a limited research dig would once again allow WRC to greatly encourage visitor numbers, enrich the visitor experience, permit the development of communal involvement with the site and facilitate the broad development of practical archaeological skills for both amateur and professional alike. If this approach were to be combined with a new visitor centre also providing active engagement for the visitors then the combination would turn WRC into one of the premier Roman sites owned by EH.

- **Sustain the educational and training role of the site** through the re-excavation of the forum as a research excavation. This would be a long-term initiative to be run in part as a community excavation but largely as an exercise in training for those wishing to become archaeologists. The forum is ideal because it is located next to the farm and is already severely compromised by previous excavations. Consideration would need to be given to what to consolidate, but in time this could provide the only forum / baths complex visible north of the Alps;
- **Investigate the potential of educational partnerships to develop the site** these could be with local schools, Higher Education institutions, the Institute for Archaeologists and the Council for British Archaeology. Such an approach may well facilitate the research excavation of the forum;
- **Enhance and upgrade the visitor facilities** including perhaps a café. As at Eden, produce could be sourced locally to showcase Shropshire's wealth of produce and link in to the wider reputation of Shropshire as a county that is serious about promoting high quality food;
- **Address the physical deterioration of the monument and its access** and sustain this on a regular basis through cyclical maintenance and by better attention to detail on steps, handrails, etc. Consideration was given to the possibility of putting up a viewing platform but this would severely affect the setting of the monument and many of the needs could be met by extending access more widely into the landscape;
- **Maintain and enhance engagement with the local community;**
- **Ensure that the site and its wider landscape setting are interpreted** through the provision of trails and links with the National Trust at Attingham Park.
- **Re-instate viewing points** in the landscape which highlight key parts of the site;
- **Purchase the remaining open fields within WRC that remain in private hands.** While not under immediate threat, these fields are inaccessible yet provide sections of the best-preserved defences in WRC. Ownership would permit public access to this important resource. These fields are also likely to have greater biodiversity as they have not been ploughed since the 18th century.



Figure 5.6: Timescope. A method for interpreting ruins.

http://www.ename974.org/Eng/pagina/archeo_concept.html

- **Improve interpretation of the baths** by providing new means of visualising ruins through digital technologies rather than through reconstruction (e.g. Timescope; Figure 5.6). Physical reconstruction is not considered viable due to the visual impact this would have on the Old Work as the iconic element of the site. Improve understanding of the main baths suite by restoring a facsimile of the hypocaust photographed in 1859 adjacent to the doorways into the main baths suite and extending a short way into the baths. Further visual clues to the correct floor level could be provided by slender stainless steel rods supporting flat plinths.