

*An Archaeological Watching Brief
at*

***Kingsholm Close
Gloucester
Gloucestershire***



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Report Title: Archaeological Watching Brief at Kingsholm Close, Gloucester.

Site details

Site address: Kingsholm Close, Sandhurst Road, Gloucester, Gloucestershire
OS NGR: 383425 219585
Site type: Watching Brief
Client: Mr Aaron Mills
GSMR No: 33351
Date of fieldwork: May - September 2009.
Recipient museum: Gloucester City Museum and Art Gallery
Archived finds: Yes
Author: Nick Witchell
Date of Report: January 2011

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Summary

Gloucestershire County Council Archaeology Service (GCCAS) was commissioned to undertake a programme of archaeological monitoring at Kingsholm Close, Sandhurst Road, Gloucester, Gloucestershire (OS NGR 383425 219585). The monitoring recorded five features of Roman date consisting of a metalled surface, a deposit, a pit, and two linear features (one of late 1st century date and one dated to the 2nd century). The monitoring also recorded five undated features consisting of three possible pits and two linear features.

1 Introduction

1.1 Gloucestershire County Council Archaeology Service (GCCAS) were commissioned to undertake archaeological monitoring (referred to as a 'watching brief') during groundworks for the erection of a new building at Kingsholm Close, Sandhurst Road, Gloucester, Gloucestershire (OS NGR 383425 219585). The watching brief was carried out to fulfil a condition attached to the planning permission (07/00518/FUL) as recommended by the Historic Environment Manager of Gloucester City Council, who advises the local planning authority.

1.2 Archaeological recording on site was carried out in accordance with the standard brief issued by the Historic Environment Manager of Gloucester City Council (Smith 2009) and in accordance with the Institute for Archaeologists 'Standard and Guidance for an Archaeological Watching Brief' (IfA 2008).

1.3 Edmund Stratford (GCCAS Project Officer) undertook the monitoring on 19th May and 20th May 2009, and Nick Witchell (GCCAS Senior Archaeological Assistant) undertook the archaeological monitoring between 9th June and 12th June 2009 and between 23rd September and 25th September 2009. Paul Nichols (GCCAS Senior Project Officer) managed the project.

2 Site location (Figure 1)

The site is situated approximately 1km north of the centre of Gloucester and 75m west of the A38 Tewkesbury Road. The site lies within the Kingsholm Area of Principal Archaeological Interest as defined in the City of Gloucester Local Plan. The site is geologically situated on quaternary deposits of Cheltenham sand and gravel, overlying Blue Lias clay and mudstone of the Charmouth formation (BGS 2008).

3 Archaeological, historical and cartographic background

The following information is taken from the written scheme of investigation (Williams 2009) and draws on information provided by the staff of Gloucestershire County Council Historic Environment Record (GHER) and records held on the Gloucester Urban Archaeological Database (GUAD).

3.1 Prehistoric

There is currently little archaeological evidence of prehistoric activity within the vicinity of the site. Prehistoric flints and pottery were discovered during an evaluation at 35 Kingsholm Road, which lies 85m southeast of Kingsholm Close (GHER 14586).

3.2 Roman

3.2.1 The Roman road linking the forts at Gloucester and Droitwich (GHER 8090) lies 85m to the east of the site. The site is situated within close proximity to the known site of a 1st century legionary fortress and a later Roman cemetery.

3.2.2 Situated 15m to the south of the development area, and probably extending into the development area, is the Kingsholm vexillation fortress (GHER 11273). Most structural finds consist of short segments of foundation slots and pits recorded on watching briefs. It contains all the normal elements of a Roman fortress, including quarters for both infantry and cavalry.

3.2.3 Observations were made in foundation trenches for a rear extension and adjacent detached garage at 9 Sandhurst Road (GHER 16611, UAD 975), which is situated 30m to the north of the site, these revealed evidence of 1st century buildings and produced military finds.

3.2.4 In 1972, an excavation was carried out at Kingsholm Close, 50m southwest of the present development (GHER 14589). This revealed an early Roman timber building with painted wall plaster, the cheek piece of a 1st century helmet and a bronze working area. A late or post-Roman road surface was found, with five inhumations, one in a possible masonry mausoleum. Late Anglo-Saxon timber buildings, possibly part of the royal palace were also found.

3.2.5 During groundworks for the construction of an extension at 17 Sandhurst Road, 75m north of the present development, evidence of early Roman buildings and military occupation was discovered (GHER 14585).

3.2.6 In advance of construction in a garden at 35 Kingsholm Road, 85m southeast of the present development, two trial trenches were excavated (GHER 14586). First century buildings with floors and occupation levels including hearths, associated with post in trench wall alignments were discovered. The area was later overlain by gravel surfaces. A total of 23 adult and child inhumations were recorded, all supine, heads pointing west. No grave goods or personal items were recovered from the burials.

2.3.8 Within the area of the development, the Gloucester UAD has two entries:

- 316: Roman lead coffin found in 1715
- 610: Roman and British coins and other remains together with a Roman tumulus.

3.3 Anglo-Saxon

The tradition of an Anglo-Saxon and Norman palace at Kingsholm from Mercian times is probably well founded in view of the close connection of the Mercian rulers of the city and of their estates in the vicinity: However it is not until the time of Edward the Confessor and his successors that its presence can be established (GHER 431, Scheduled Monument 465). The palace was identified in the 18th century with a ruined building at Kingsholm Close on Hall and Pinnell's map of 1780. The building measured about 120ft (37m) square with walls 3 to 4ft (0.9-1.2m) thick, which were later demolished for road material.

Observations made in foundation trenches for a rear extension and adjacent detached garage 30m away at 9 Sandhurst Road (GHER 16611, UAD 975), revealed the remains of an undefined gravel metalled surface, bounding a possible timber wall slot. A sherd of Saxon pottery was found just above the gravel surface, within the accumulative dark loam layer extending across the site.

3.4 Medieval

In the late medieval/post medieval period, 8 bedding trenches around 0.60m wide, 0.45m deep and 0.5m apart extended east to west across the site at 35 Kingsholm Road (GHER 14586).

3.5 Post-medieval

The tollhouse at 43 Kingsholm Road, 80m east of the present development was built in 1822, it is the only purpose built tollhouse in the city which still retains its character (GHER 9479).

3.6 Cartographic evidence

The Hall and Pinnell map of 1796 shows the development area as a garden enclosure bordering Kingsholm Close (a field). The First Edition Ordnance Survey Map (OS 1885-6) shows the development area as open parkland. The Second Edition (OS 1902) and subsequent Ordnance Survey maps show the development area as a garden attached to 5 Sandhurst Road.

3.7 Recent archaeological work on the site

An evaluation was carried out by GCCAS within the development area in 2007 (GHER 29175). A single trench was excavated and revealed evidence of 1st century fort activity and 2nd to 4th century low level occupation. Roman surfaces, a beam slot, a pit and a ditch were recorded within the trench as well as pottery dating from the 1st to 4th centuries. The Roman deposits were encountered at a depth of as little as 0.5m below ground level, at a height of 11.99m AOD (Hickling 2007).

4 Purpose of the monitoring

In the IfA document referred to at 1.2 above:

“The definition of an archaeological watching brief is a formal programme of observation and investigation conducted during any operation carried out for non archaeological reasons. This will be within a specified area or site on land, inter-tidal zone or underwater, where there is the possibility that archaeological deposits may be disturbed or destroyed. The programme will result in the preparation of a report and ordered archive.”

“The purpose of a watching brief is to allow, within the resources available, the preservation by record of archaeological deposits, the presence and nature of which could not be established (or established with sufficient accuracy) in advance of development or other potentially disruptive works” (IfA 2008).

5 Methodology

5.1 All groundwork was archaeologically monitored (See **Figure 2**) and archaeological deposits were investigated by hand. The monitored groundworks comprised the following:

- A series of concrete foundation piles were drilled, following this the area within the footprint of the new building was graded by up to 0.45m to a standard level of 12.35m Above Ordnance Datum (AOD).
- Trench 1 - Foundation trenches totalling 42m in length were excavated within the area graded for the building footprint. External wall foundations were excavated to a width of between 0.65- 0.80m and internal walls foundations were excavated to a width of 0.65m. External footings were excavated to a depth of 0.65m (11.70m AOD) and internal footings were excavated to a depth of 0.55m (11.80m AOD).
- Trench 2 – A trench was excavated to allow for a drainage soakaway, the trench measured 2m square and was excavated to a maximum depth of 1.39m below ground level.
- Trench 3 – A series of trenches totalling 55m in length were excavated to allow for the installation of services and drainage. The trenching measured between 0.45-0.95m in width and was excavated to a maximum depth of 0.80m below ground level.

5.2 All deposits were recorded on a pro-forma context sheet. A site location plan indicating north and based on the Ordnance Survey 1:2500 map (OS 1996) was prepared (see Figure 1). A photographic record of the investigations was completed, illustrating details and the general context of the principal features.

5.3 The site archive is presently being stored at Shire Hall, Gloucester under a unique site code (GHER 33351) issued by the Gloucestershire Historic Environment Record Officer. It is intended that it will eventually be deposited with Gloucester City Museum and Art Gallery for long-term storage.

6 Results (Figures 3,4 and 5)

The results of the monitoring are outlined below, with the deposits discussed in stratigraphic order starting with the earliest. Cut numbers are shown in square brackets [], all other context numbers are shown in rounded brackets ().

6.1 Trench 1

The natural geological deposits of orange sand and gravels (102) were revealed in the western part of the excavations at a depth of 0.50m below the reduced ground level (11.85m AOD). The sand and gravel (102) was cut by two discreet features and overlain by one deposit. Cutting deposit (102) was a probable pit [116] which measured 0.80m in length and up to 0.35m in width and contained a fill of dark grey silt sand (117). Also cutting the sand and gravel (102) was a northwest to southeast orientated linear feature [114] which measured 0.65m in length (the width of the trench) and 0.50m in width. Linear feature [114] was filled by black silty sand and water washed pebbles (115) which contained animal bone and lumps of clay; no dating evidence was observed within fill (115).

The natural sand and gravel (102) was overlain by a metalled surface (105), composed of small and medium

sized water washed pebbles, which measured up to 0.06m in depth (See plates 2 and 3). Two sherds of Roman pottery, including one sherd of Severn valley ware, were recovered when cleaning surface (105), one of these sherds came from within the makeup of the surface. Fragments of iron nails (handmade) and small degraded fragments of Cu alloy were found while cleaning the metallised surface. Surface (105) had been badly truncated in places and therefore it is difficult to be certain of its original extent, although it was visible across an area measuring 8m by 13m. An exploratory 0.20m square sondage through Roman deposit (106), further to the east, revealed further metallised surfacing at a depth of 0.20m which was interpreted as being part of surface (105).

Cutting surface (105) in the south west part of the foundations was a feature [111] which measured 0.80m in length and 0.70m in width (the width of the trench), it was unclear if this was a pit or a linear feature and was not excavated. Feature [111] was filled by an undated deposit of black silty sand (112) which contained infrequent fragments of animal bone.

Sealing parts of surface (105) was a compact and concreted layer of mottled orange and grey sand (104) which measured up to 0.04m in depth and had a layer of pea-grit at the base. Layer (104) may have formed a secondary surface overlying (105) or may be a natural accumulation.

Over much of the excavated area the natural deposits were not reached, in the central part of the foundations the earliest deposit revealed was a mixed deposit of sand, gravel and grey silty clay (113), which measured up to 0.10m in depth and may represent activity disturbing the natural deposits. Cutting deposit (113) was a sub-circular feature [118] which measured 0.85m in length and 0.35m in width and was interpreted as a pit [118]; it was filled by black silt sand (119) which contained no dating evidence or finds.

In the southern portion of Trench 1 the earliest deposit exposed was pinkish grey clay (108) which measured up to 0.22m in depth and contained frequent lumps of charcoal, patches of ash and burnt waste; six sherds of Roman pottery, including four sherds of Severn Valley ware, were recovered while cleaning deposit (108). Overlying deposit (108) was a lense of yellow sand and gravel (103), which measured up to 0.22m in depth and had no obvious inclusions. Cutting deposit (103) was a feature [109] which measured 1.10m in length, a maximum of 0.66m in width and up to 0.28m in depth and has been interpreted as a probable pit. Pit [109] was filled by dark brown silty sand (110) which contained charcoal, animal bone and two sherds of Roman pottery.

The earliest deposit revealed at the eastern end of the site was dark brown clay sand (106) which measured up to 0.20m in depth and contained infrequent charcoal, animal bone and a single sherd of Roman pottery. Cutting deposit (106) was a north to south orientated linear feature [120] which measured 2.10m in length and 1.20m in width and was filled by light brown sandy silt (107) containing frequent charcoal fragments. Two heavily abraded fragments of Roman pottery were found within (107), although these may be residual.

Sealing the foregoing deposits was a subsoil deposit of dark grey silty clay and water washed pebbles (101) which measured up to 0.70m in depth. The lower half of subsoil deposit (101) contained infrequent residual sherds of Roman pottery, while the upper half of the deposit was slightly lighter in colour and contained post-medieval material including red brick fragments and blue and white china. Sealing deposit (101) was a dark grey topsoil deposit (100) which measured between 0.10 and 0.20m in depth.

6.2 Trench 2 (Figures 4 and 5)

The natural deposits of orange sand and gravel (204) were only revealed in the south west corner of Trench 2 and measured up to 0.05m in depth. Overlying the natural (204) was a mixed deposit of orange gravel and grey silty sand (203) which measured up to 0.20m in depth. Cutting deposit (203) was an east to west orientated linear feature [208] measuring 1.24m in length and 0.64m in width. Feature [208] was filled by mixed dark brown silty sand (209) which contained limestone fragments and patches of cream coloured clay. Ten sherds of Roman pottery were recovered from within fill (209), these included two sherds of a type 29 samian pottery vessel (dating from the mid to late 1st century). Deposit (209) was cut by a north to south orientated linear feature [205], which measured 1.80m in length and up to 0.65m in width, which has been interpreted as a ditch. An excavated section established that it was at least 0.42m in depth. Ditch [205] contained a primary fill of light orange brown clay sand (207), up to 0.02m in depth, which was overlain by a secondary fill of greyish brown clay sand (206) which measured up to 0.40m in depth. Seventeen sherds of Roman pottery were recovered from fill (206) including eight sherds of Severn Valley ware and two sherds of Dorset Black Burnish ware (dating from the 2nd century onwards). Sealing deposit (206) was a layer of dark brown silty sand and gravel (202), measuring up to 0.18m in depth, which contained limestone gravel, metal slag and fragments of iron nails. Eight pieces of pottery were recovered from deposit (202) including a sherd of amphora. Sealing deposit (202) was a subsoil deposit of dark grey silty sand (201) which measured up to

0.56m in depth and contained frequent charcoal flecks, limestone gravel and sherds of post-medieval blue and white ceramics and residual Roman pottery. Sealing subsoil (201) was a dark grey topsoil deposit (200) measuring up to 0.18m in depth.

6.3 Trench 3 (Plate 4)

The earliest deposit revealed in Trench 3 was a deposit of light brown clay sand (302) which measured up to 0.15m in depth and contained residual sherds of Roman pottery, along with modern blue and white ceramics. Overlying deposit (302) was dark grey silty sand (301) which measured up to 0.55m in depth and was in turn sealed by a black topsoil deposit (300) which measured 0.10m in depth. No significant archaeological deposits were encountered during the excavation of Trench 3.

7 Conclusions

During excavation of Trench 1 the monitoring recorded three probable pit features [109], [116] and [118], two linear features [114] and [120] and a feature of uncertain form [111]. Of these features pit [109] is of Roman date while the others could not be securely dated. The monitoring also recorded a deposit (108) which contained large amounts of Roman pottery and a truncated metallated surface (105) also of Roman date. The area of metallated surface (105) consisted of compacted pebbles and was present in small patches over much of Trench 1. Surface (105) has been dated to the Roman period from a sherd of pottery which was recovered from within the makeup of the surface. Several fragments of handmade iron nails and several heavily eroded CU alloy objects (beyond stabilisation or identification) were also recovered, and are consistent with a Roman date.

Two cobbled surfaces (2) and (3) were identified and recorded during an evaluation of the site carried out by GCCAS (Hickling 2007) prior to planning consent being granted, which had been dated to the 4th century although the makeup of surface (105) differs from those recorded during the evaluation, it is possible that surface (105) is contemporary with cobbled surfaces (2) and (3). A similar metallated surface deposit was observed during a watching brief carried out by AP Garrod in 1995 (as mentioned in **3.2.3** and **3.3**) at 9 Sandhurst Road, which, although overlain by an Anglo-Saxon dated deposit, may be contemporary.

During the excavation of Trench 2 two features were recorded, an east to west orientated linear feature [208], the fill of which contained pottery dating from the late 1st century and may relate to activity around the Kingsholm fortress, and a north to south orientated linear feature [205], which contained pottery dating from the 2nd century onwards. Excavation for service trenches and drainage (Trench 3) did not impact on any significant archaeological deposits, the earliest deposits revealed here being a subsoil deposit (302).

A series of archaeological features and deposits were encountered during groundworks at Kingsholm Close. All the dated features are from the Roman period and although there was no evidence of medieval or Anglo-Saxon activity, this cannot be entirely ruled out as several features remain undated.

Due to the depth of subsoil deposits on the site, the damage caused by the excavated building foundations (Trench 1) was somewhat minimised, in places the footings only intruded into the more significant archaeological deposits by a few centimetres. However it was clear from the observations that other modern disturbance has already caused significant damage to the archaeological remains within the area monitored.

8 References

- | | | |
|------------------------------------|------|---|
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| Hickling, S | 2007 | An Archaeological Evaluation at Kingsholm Close, Sandhurst Road, Gloucester, Gloucestershire. GCCAS typescript report. |
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| Smith, J | 2009 | Brief For Archaeological Monitoring and Recording. Kingsholm Close, Sandhurst Road, Gloucester. Gloucester City Council Historic Environment Team |
| Williams, B | 2009 | An Archaeological Watching Brief at Kingsholm Close, Sandhurst Road, Gloucester. Written Scheme of Investigation. GCCAS typescript report. |

Gloucester Records Office PC 1998. Plan of the City of Gloucester by Hall and Pinnell 1796

Plates



Plate 1: Ground level reduction within footprint of new building (Trench 1), looking south west.



Plate 2: Part of Trench 1 showing metallised surface (105) looking south west.



Plate 3: Close up of metallised pebble surface (105).

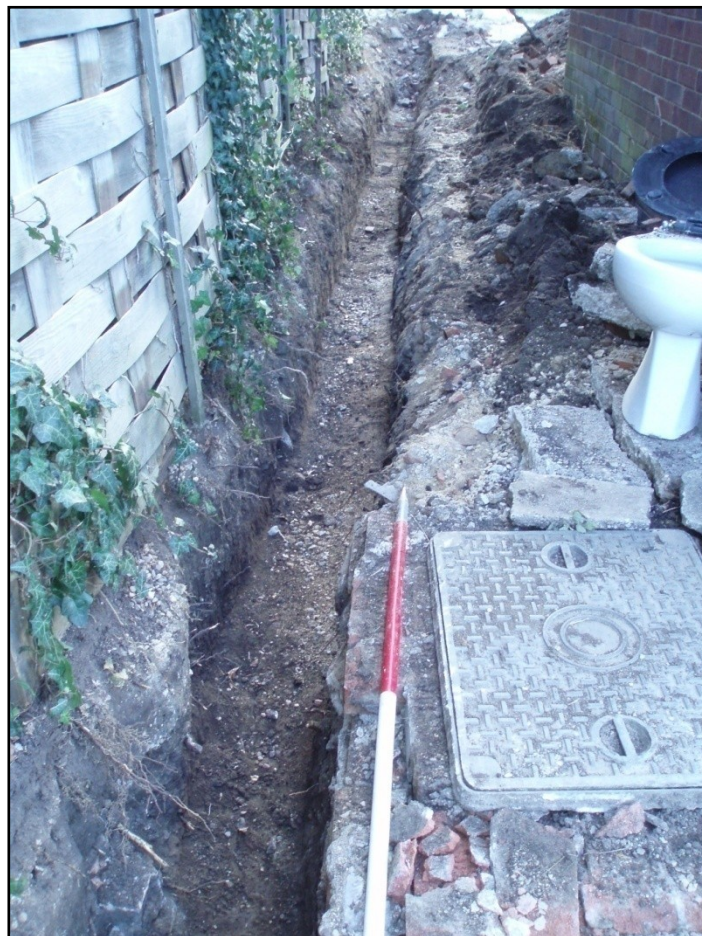


Plate 4: Services trench (Trench 3), looking east.

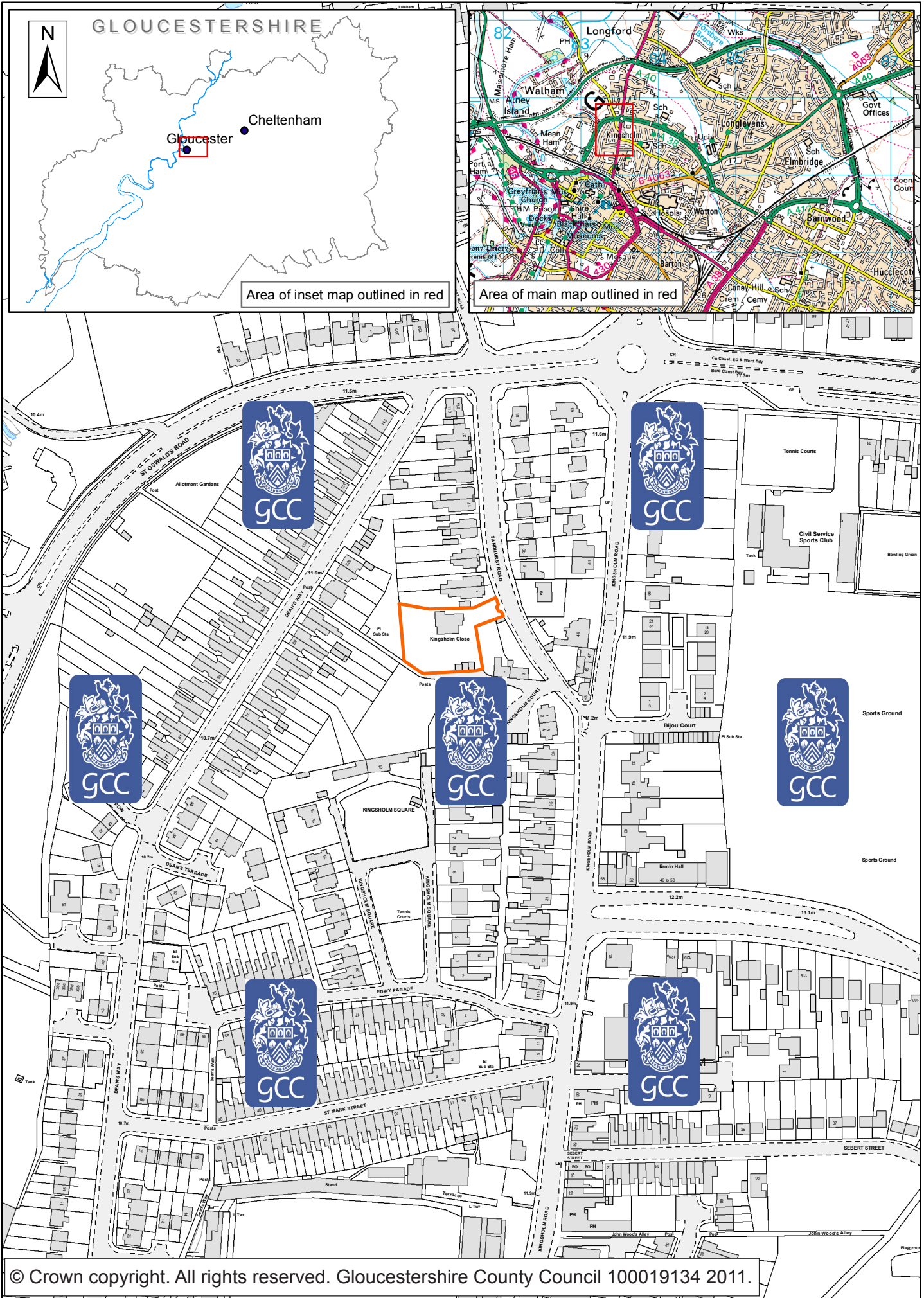


Figure 1: Kingsholm Close, Gloucester. Site location shown in orange (Scale 1:2500 @ A4).

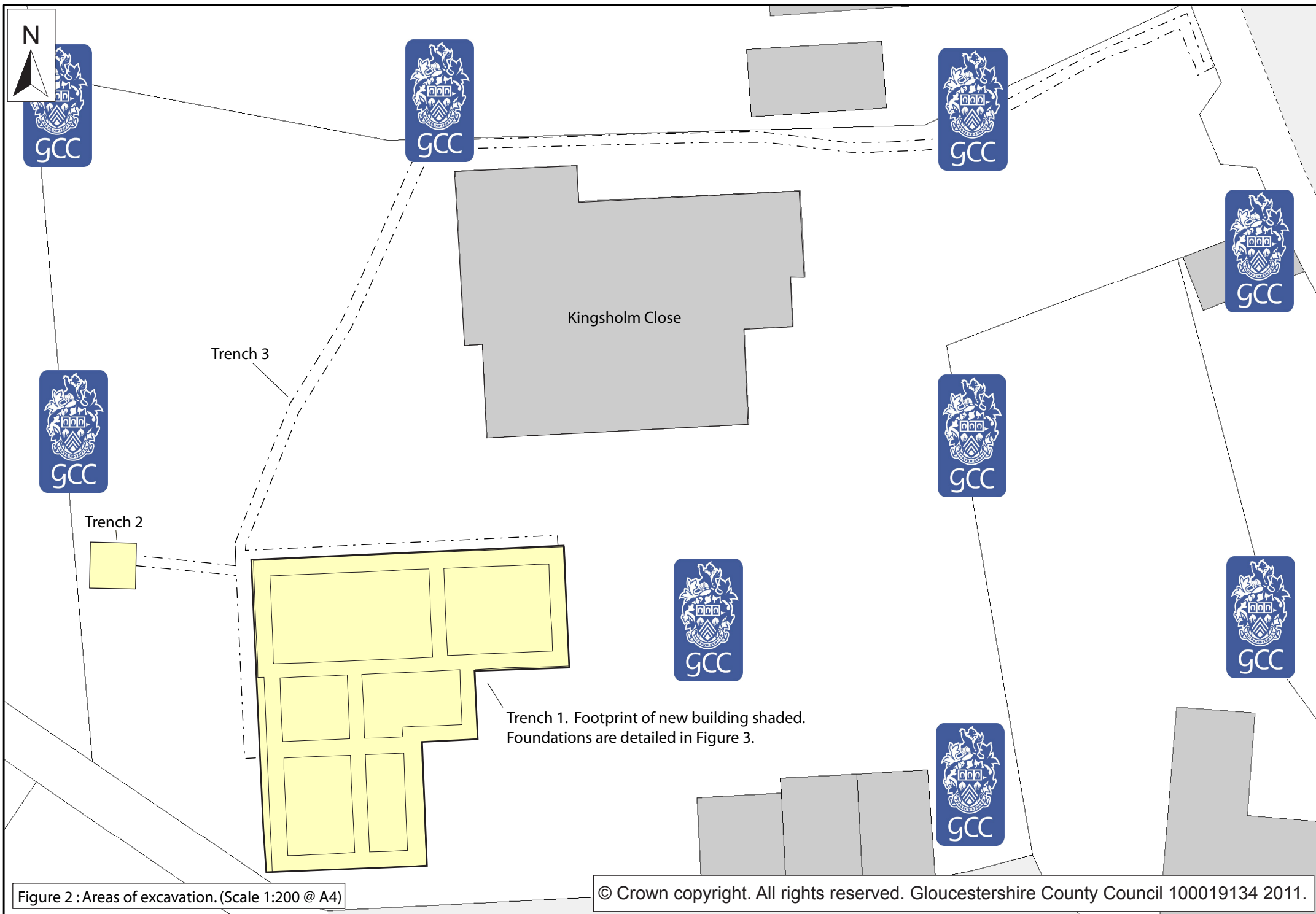
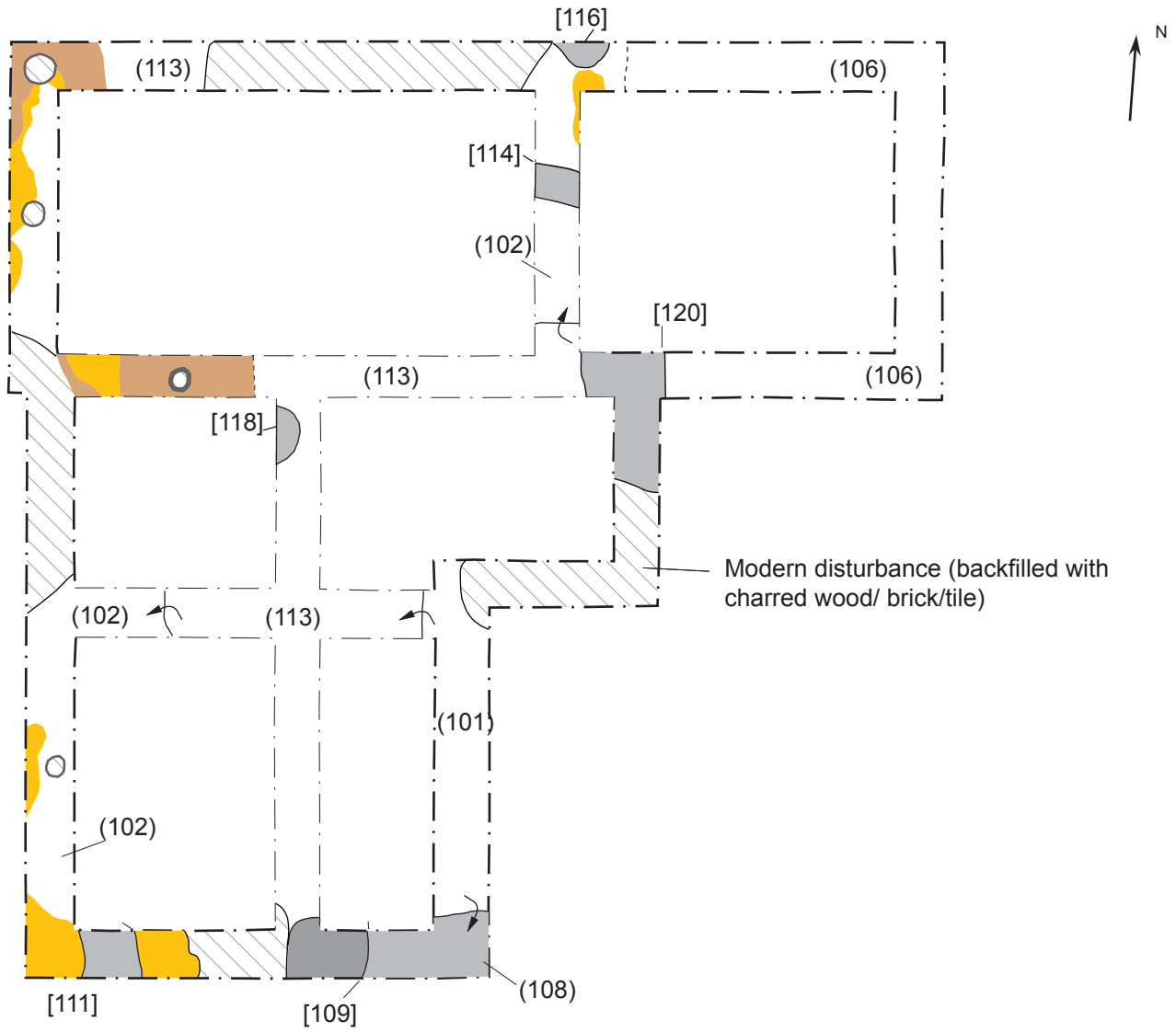


Figure 2 : Areas of excavation. (Scale 1:200 @ A4)



Key

- Foundations excavated to 11.70m AOD
- Foundations excavated to 11.80m AOD
- Modern Disturbance
- Surface (105)
- Deposit (104)
sealing surface (105)

Figure 3: Post excavation plan of Trench 1 (Scale 1:100 @ A4)

