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**ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION
AT ROSELEA / AVONVIEW (LAND BETWEEN),
STRATFORD-SUB-CASTLE, WILTS**

SU 135 319

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**ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION AT ROSELEA / AVONVIEW
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SU139W 332

Summary: An archaeological evaluation by means of two machine-excavated trenches each 8m x 1.5m was undertaken within the proposed development site of land between Roselea and Avonview, Stratford Road, Stratford-sub-Castle (SU 135 319) in June 1999. Previous archaeological investigations in the vicinity had established the presence of the Old Sarum to Dorchester Roman road immediately to the south of the site, and associated areas of AD1st- to 4th-century settlement, parts of which are scheduled ancient monuments both east of the present site and further to the west.

Deep soils and the presence of archaeological deposits over much of the trenched areas limited the scope for investigation, and undisturbed natural (geological) levels were not reached. At the base of one of the trenches, however, a small cluster of five worked flint blades of probable early Neolithic date may represent a prehistoric horizon at this depth. Small quantities of other, probably later, worked flint were recovered dispersed through the excavated profile of the trenches.

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109

Cobbled surfaces of flint nodules or chalk rubble were recorded in both trenches. No associated structural evidence was recovered, and the nature of the metallurgy suggests these to have been external yard surfaces. On the basis of the bulk of the associated pottery these are likely to be of Roman date, although medieval pottery (including 13th-century types) were also present within these levels. Two phases of ditch and at least two small pits cut the yard surfaces; these too are considered to be of Roman date.

The Roman pottery assemblage includes both early and late diagnostic elements inter-mixed with medieval sherds. The former use of the site for allotments and the presence of root disturbance at considerable depth in parts of the trenches are likely to have contributed to the mixing of finds throughout the sequence.

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1. Introduction

- 1.1** This report sets out the results of an archaeological evaluation undertaken in June 1999 on land adjacent to Stratford Road, Stratford-sub-Castle, lying between the existing houses of Roselea and Avonview (SU 135 319). The work was undertaken on behalf of clients of Acworth and Jarvis (architects) to determine the likely archaeological impact of proposals to construct a new dwelling on the site. The need for the evaluation had been identified by Wiltshire County Council Archaeology Service whose brief (dated 4 June 1999), modified by subsequent discussion, formed the basis for the site investigation works.

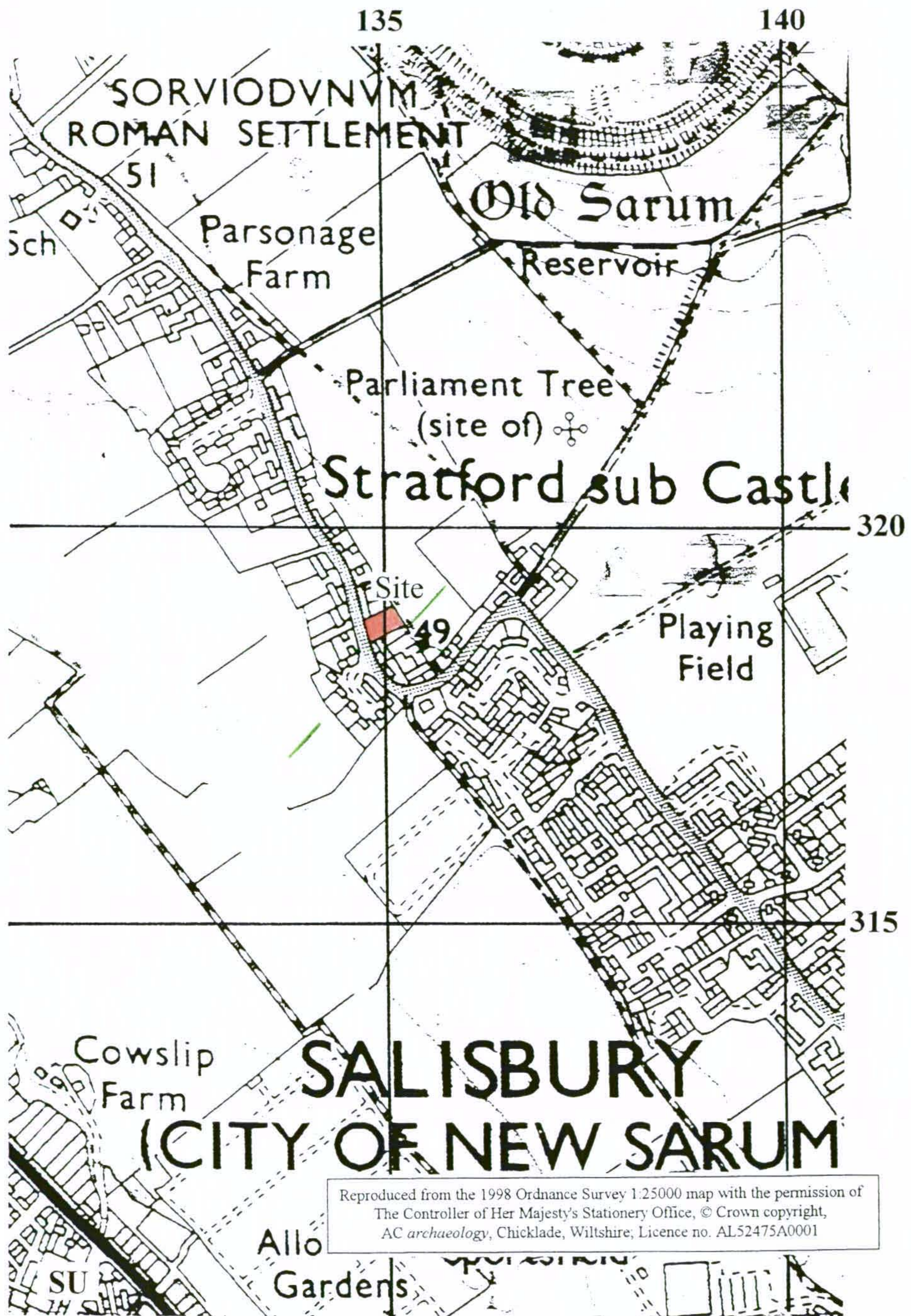


Fig. 1: Stratford-Sub-Castle Evaluation Site AC551 (Red) related to approximate course of Roman Road (Green)

- 1.2 The plot is situated on the north / east side of Stratford Road within Stratford-sub-Castle (Fig. 1). It extends to an area of some 1420m² on reasonably level ground at c50mAOD and is raised by some 1.2m above the adjacent roadway. The underlying geology is believed to be valley gravels. The site is presently overgrown, mainly grass with some mature trees, and it is understood that in the recent past it has functioned as an allotment or smallholding.

2. Archaeological Background

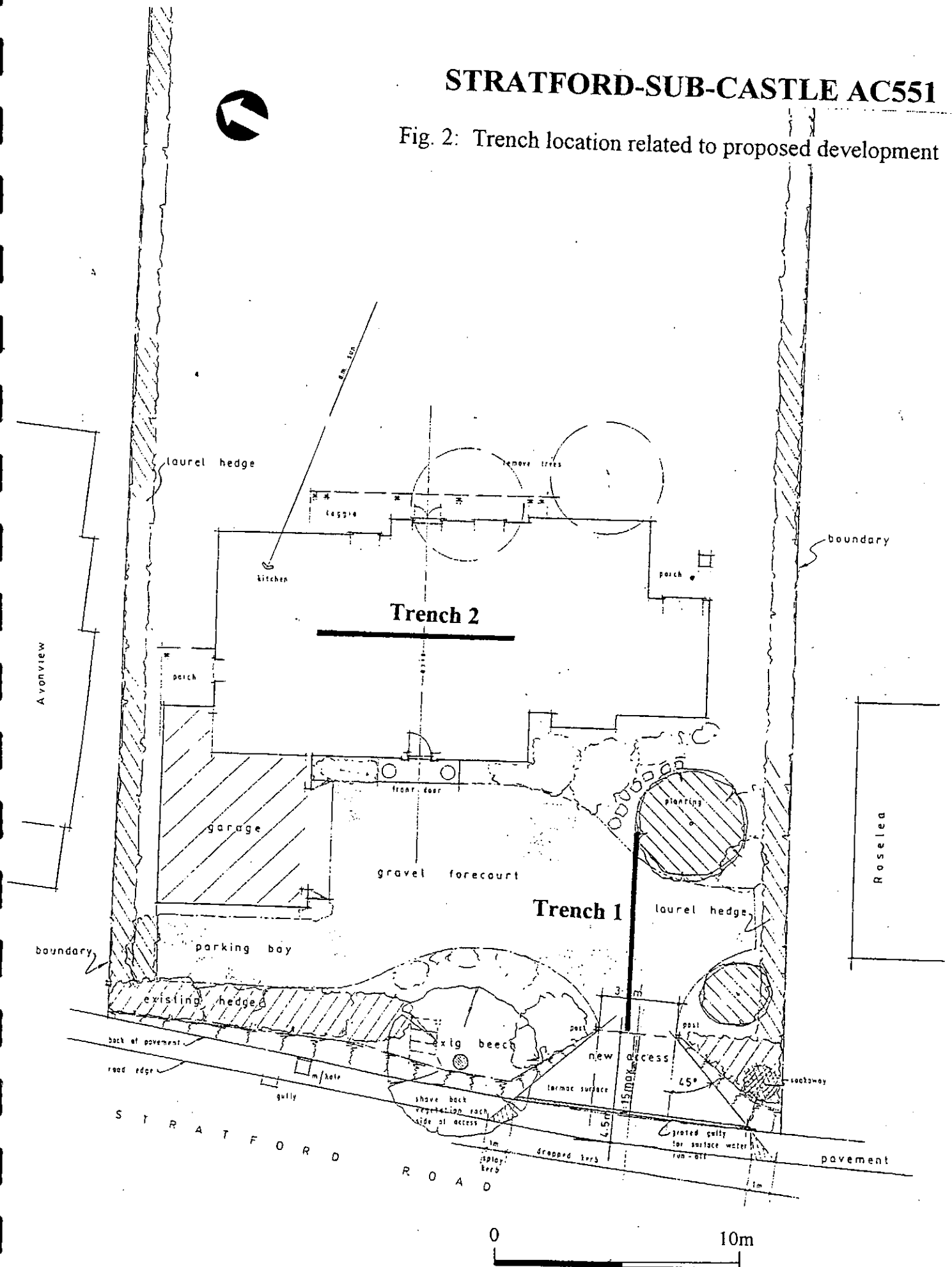
- 2.1 The archaeological background to the intended development has been summarised in a letter from the County Archaeological Service (TVR/MJU/99TVR001 dated 4 June 1999) to the Planning Department of Salisbury District Council, from which the following information is taken.
- 2.2 The site is adjacent to the Roman road from Old Sarum to Dorchester, the course of which is known from crop marks recorded on aerial photographs from 1962 subsequently confirmed by limited excavation in 1964. At its closest, the projected line of the Roman road (indicated on Fig. 1) passes immediately south of the south-east corner of the present site.
- 2.3 Associated with the road is a very extensive area of settlement ranging in date from the AD1st to 4th century. This includes chalk floors (up to four phases in some instances) belonging to both flint-built and timber structures, some with evidence for tiled roofs and plastered walls. An area of this Roman occupation adjoining the eastern boundary of the present application has been designated as a scheduled ancient monument, and there are further scheduled areas relating to the same settlement west of Stratford Road. The present understanding of the extent of the Roman activity in and around Stratford-sub-Castle lead the County Archaeology Service to conclude that there was a high probability that the proposed development at Roselea / Avonview would impact upon significant archaeological deposits.

3. Methodology

- 3.1 On the basis that there was no access for mechanical plant, the project brief issued by the County Archaeology Service specified the excavation by hand of four test pits, each 2m x 2m in area. Subsequent inspection of the site suggested that it would be possible to use a mini-digger, however, and following discussion with the County Archaeology Service it was decided to substitute the test pits with two machine-excavated trenches targeted in those areas where development would have a major impact on buried deposits (Fig. 2):

Trench 1: 8m x 1.5m orientated SW - NE parallel to and 6m from the southern boundary of the development site, and as close to the street frontage as was practicable given the presence of a roadside hedge. This trench was intended

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to examine the area shown on the development plan as providing driveway access onto the site.

Trench 2: 8m x 1.5m orientated on a near N - S alignment some 18m back from the street frontage. This trench was intended to examine the area shown on the development plan as being within the footprint of the main building.

- 3.2. Topsoil and overburden were removed by the digger utilising a toothless bucket and acting under constant archaeological supervision so as to reveal the uppermost surface of archaeological deposits in each trench. The approach to the investigation of the trenches was discussed with representatives of the County Archaeology Service at a site meeting; due to the presence of extensive undisturbed archaeological deposits across both trenches, only limited intrusive excavation was undertaken, comprising the removal of some subsoil layers to expose underlying archaeological features in Trench 1, and hand-dug slots excavated at either end of Trench 2 in an attempt to clarify the likely depth and nature of the stratigraphy. Spoil heaps were scanned for the presence of displaced artefacts, and an east-west profile across the front part of the site was recorded to establish the relative levels of the archaeological deposits to the existing roadway.
- 3.3 In accordance with instructions from the client's agent, the trenches were left unbackfilled on completion, with the deeper Trench 1 fenced. Sufficient spoil was replaced into the trenches to cover exposed pre-modern (probable Roman) metalled surfaces.

4. Results

4.1 Trench 1 (Fig. 3)

Removal of topsoil (context 100) and post-medieval overburden (101) exposed a metalled surface of flint cobbles (103) up to 100mm across at the east end of the trench at a depth of some 600mm from present ground surface. The cobbled surface extended the full width of the trench and for a distance of some 3m from its east end, at which point it could be seen in section to thin and disappear. Other than where this western edge was overdug, no intrusive excavation other than surface cleaning was carried out. The majority of finds of pottery from its surface and from spaces between individual stones suggest a Roman date, although some medieval material is also present.

Immediately against the east end of Trench 1 parts two pits were recorded cutting the cobbled layer (103):

Pit [104]: probably oval in plan, 800mm x 600mm, and filled with a light grey-brown silty loam with frequent chalk fragments up to 50mm across (105).

TRENCH 1

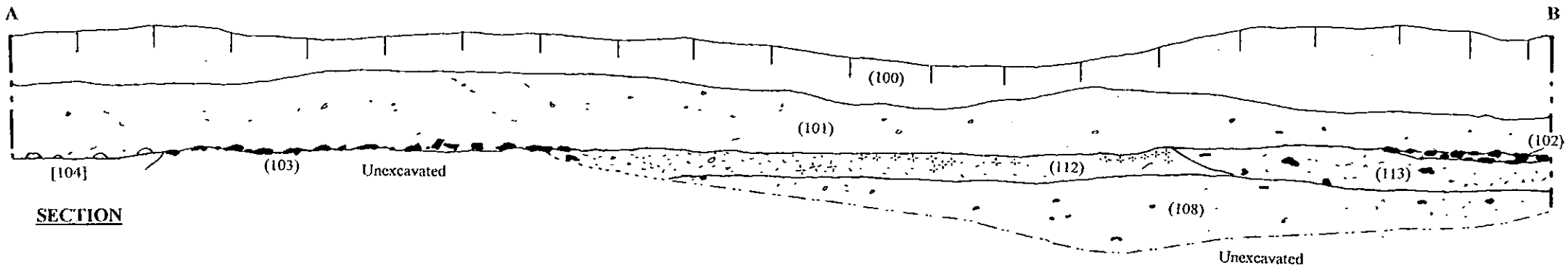


FIG. 3

The pit was not excavated, but a single pottery sherd of uncertain date (either Roman or medieval) was retrieved from its surface.

Pit [106]: probably oval in plan, 900mm x 700mm, and filled with a mid-brown silty loam with frequent chalk fragments up to 20mm across (107). The pit was not excavated, but Roman pottery sherds were retrieved from its surface.

In the western half of the trench, a further small area of flint cobbling (context 102; 80mm thick) was visible only within a 1m length of the north-facing trench section; although at a comparable level to context (103) it had not been noted in plan and does not appear to have been an extensive surface. One sherd each of Roman and medieval pottery was recovered from the trench section at this point.

Otherwise, the western half of Trench 1 contained a series of deep soils, grey silty loams with sparse inclusions of unworked flint and chalk. The upper levels (a thickness of 150 - 200mm) could be divided into a paler, more stoney horizon to the east (112), and a darker, more clayey deposit at the western end of the trench (113). Neither were found to contain archaeological finds, but overlay a light orange brown silt or silty sand with rare chalk and charcoal flecks (108) which contained worked flint and a copper alloy ferrule (SF1), the latter possibly intrusive. Two possible archaeological features cutting (108) were recorded but not further investigated:

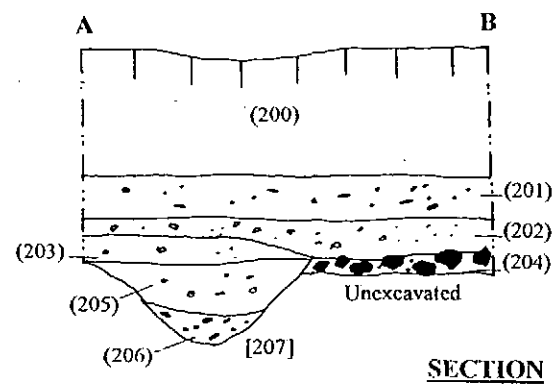
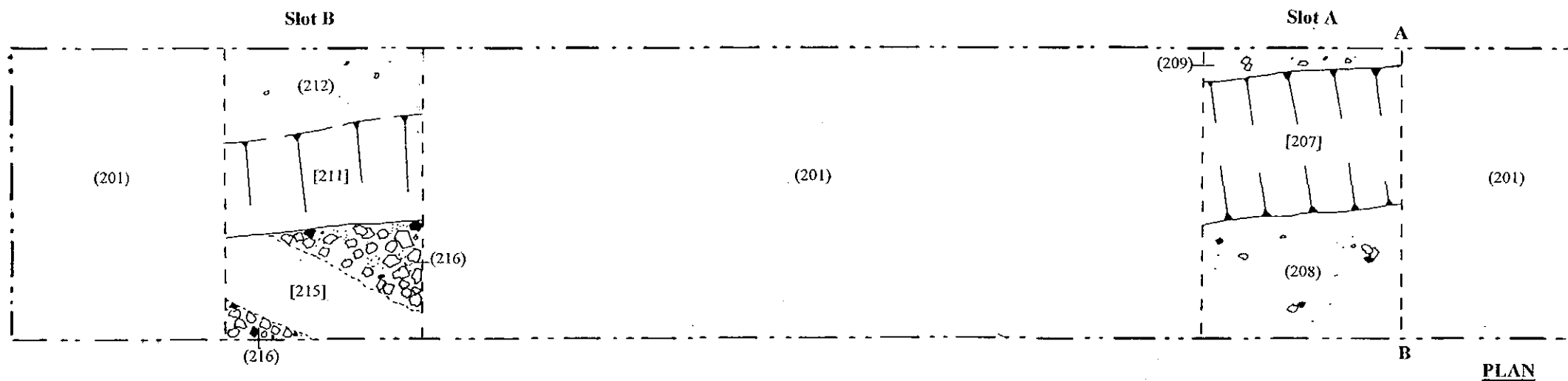
Feature [110]: sub-round or oval in plan, 250mm x 200mm, and filled with a light brown silty loam (109) containing small quantities of burnt flint and charcoal. Although considered on site to be a possible post-hole, no packing was evident. No dating evidence was obtained.

Feature [111]: an irregular oval in plan, 800mm x 700mm, and filled with a pale grey silty sand. Other than charcoal flecks on its surface, no archaeological material was visible, and it is possible that this is a natural (*ie* non-archaeological) feature.

No further investigation below a depth of c1.10m as measured from adjacent ground surface was undertaken.

4.2 Trench 2 (Fig. 4)

Removal of topsoil (200) to a depth of 350mm - 400mm revealed an homogenous soil accumulation extending the whole length of Trench 2. This deposit (context 201) comprised a dark greyish brown silty loam with sparse to moderate quantities of small flint fragments. Pottery of both Roman and medieval date, ceramic building material (principally tile) and animal bone were retrieved from this layer which, on the basis of limited excavation, proved to be some 220mm thick.



STRATFORD-SUB-CASTLE AC551
TRENCH 2

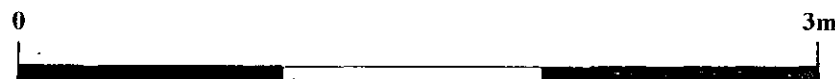


FIG. 4

Following consultations with the County Archaeology Service, it was determined that this deposit and any underlying sequence should be examined by means of hand-excavated slots across either end of the trench.

4.2.1 Slot A (South End)

A hand-excavated slot 1m wide was excavated 900mm from the southern end of the trench to expose underlying stratigraphy. This revealed a sequence of archaeological deposits (from latest to earliest, contexts 201, 202, 204, 208 and 209) with the lower part of the sequence cut by a linear ditch [207] orientated along the length of Trench 2.

Removal of (201) exposed layer (202), similar in composition but with a slightly more gravelly consistency, within which was a redeposited soil containing inclusions of yellow-brown clay (203). Both (202) and (203) contained Roman pottery, with a single sherd of medieval pottery also recovered from (202). Beneath (203) was a cobbled surface of flint and chalk lumps up to 80mm across (204). This overlay further depths of grey (208) or greyish-brown (209) silty clay, the surfaces of both of which yielded Roman finds. No excavation was undertaken below this level (some 1.15m below adjacent ground surface), and the depth at which undisturbed subsoil / geological deposits occur was not established.

The chalk and flint layer (204) and the underlying deposits were cut by a ditch [207], some 800mm wide at the top and, on excavation, proving to have a U-shaped profile and a depth of some 330mm (as measured from the level of the chalk and flint cobbles). It was orientated along the length of Trench 2; a ditch [211] investigated in Slot B at the other end of the trench may be its continuation, although its profile, dimensions and pattern of fill are all different at that point. Ditch [207] contained a primary fill (206) - a very dark grey silty clay with frequent sub-angular or rounded flint pebbles - and an upper fill (205), slightly lighter in colour and with more frequent inclusions of rounded chalk. Both layers contained quantities of Roman pottery, tile and other finds, with a single identifiable sherd of medieval pottery also present in (205).

4.2.2 Slot B (North End)

A hand-excavated slot 1m wide was excavated 1.10m from the northern end of the trench to expose underlying stratigraphy. This revealed a sequence of archaeological deposits (from latest to earliest, contexts 201, 212, 213 and 216) with the lower part of the sequence cut by a linear ditch [211] orientated along the length of Trench 2, which truncated a second linear feature, ditch [215].

The sequence of deposits beneath layer (201) was revealed only in the sides of ditch [211]. Context (212) comprised a 40mm thick layer of compacted small chalk fragments. This overlay (213), a greyish-brown, archaeologically sterile silty clay, which in turn lay on top of another chalk rubble surface (216). No excavation was

undertaken below this level (some 1.10m below adjacent ground surface), and the depth at which undisturbed subsoil / geological deposits occur was not established.

The chalk layer (212) and the underlying deposits were cut by a ditch [211], only the eastern half of which lay within the area of the trench. It was at least 1m wide, and on excavation proved to have a nearly flat base and a depth of 350mm (as measured from the level of the chalk flint cobbles). It was orientated along the length of Trench 2; a ditch [207] investigated in Slot A at the other end of the trench may be its continuation, although its profile, dimensions and pattern of fill are all different at that point. Ditch [211] contained only a single fill (210), a greyish-brown silty clay with sparse rounded flint pebbles containing quantities of Roman pottery.

Ditch [211] truncated a linear feature [215], this latter ditch orientated north-south and itself cutting the chalk rubble surface (216). Some 300mm wide, it was not excavated and its profile and width were not determined. No archaeological finds were present on its upper fill, a yellowish-brown silty clay with sparse flint and chalk fragments.

5. Finds

- 5.1 Finds by context are quantified in Table 1. All pre-modern finds encountered have been collected and retained, and the material has been scanned to allow the date and composition of the assemblages to be assessed. Comment is offered only on the principal find types.

5.2 Worked Flint

Nineteen items of worked flint were recovered from the investigations. The majority were evidently residual and occurred in contexts containing Roman or later pottery. Most were primary or cortical flakes with no tools or retouched pieces present; these, together with one non-systematic core, are not closely datable but are likely to be Bronze Age.

A collection of five blades from Trench 1 context (108) are of probably of early Neolithic date. From their position near the base of the sequence it is possible that they derive from an intact early prehistoric horizon, although the presence of SF1 (a copper alloy ferrule of probable post-medieval date) indicates disturbance - probably due to tree root activity, some evidence for which was noted - at considerable depth in those parts of the site where intact chalk or flint surfaces have not inhibited root penetration.

5.3 Pottery

Despite the range of fabrics represented, there are few identifiable vessel forms. Although the bulk of the pottery is of Roman date, the presence of a substantial medieval component within the assemblage is readily identifiable from the presence of scratch-marked sherds and cooking-pot forms. Early and later Roman pottery

Context	Roman Pot		Med Pot		P-Med Pot		CBM		A. Bone		Brnt Flint		Worked Flint	Other
	No.	Wt.g	No.	Wt.g	No.	Wt.g	No.	Wt.g	No.	Wt.g	No.	Wt.g		
TRENCH I														
U/S	5	78	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-		1 / 1022g quernstone
101	1	2	-	-	1	4	-	-	1	2	-	-	1 flake	1 / 1g clay pipe stem; 2 / 186g bottle glass
102	1	8	1	30	-	-	-	-	2	8	-	-		1 / 28g oyster shell;
103	6	79	3	54	-	-	2	164	1	2	1	56	3 flakes	-
105	3	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-		
107	5	51	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-		
108	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	5 blades	SF1 copper alloy ferrule (?)
109	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	8	53		
Total (TR1)	21	219	4	84	1	4	2	164	4	12	9	109	9 items	

Table 1 (continues)

Context	Roman Pot		Med Pot		P-Med Pot		CBM		A. Bone		Brnt Flint		Worked Flint	Other
	No.	Wt.g	No.	Wt.g	No.	Wt.g	No.	Wt.g	No.	Wt.g	No.	Wt.g		

TRENCH 2														
200	-	-	-	-	7	72	1	12	-	-	-	-		
201	14	117	8	78	-	-	7	166	2	48	-	-		1 / 5g slate
201 Slot A	14	138	2	14	-	-	8	116	2	28	-	-	2 flakes	
201 Slot B	22	95	11	120	-	-	9	80	2	52	-	-		1 x Fe nail
202	10	120	1	8	-	-	1	26	2	24	3	88	2 flakes	
203	14	102	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	3	-	-	1 blade	
204	1	2	-	-	-	-	2	34	4	4	7	362	1 flake	
205	16	304	1	6	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	100	1 core	1 / 82g oyster; 1 / 486g quernstone
206	9	92	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	4	22	3 flakes	
208	16	106	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-		
209	3	26	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-		
210	21	229	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	3	126		1 / 402g limestone tile
Total (Tr2)	140	1,331	23	226	7	72	28	434	13	159	18	698	10 items	

Overall Total	161	1,550	27	310	8	76	30	598	17	171	27	807	19 items	
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Table 1: Roselea / Avonview, Stratford-sub-Castle - Quantification of Finds

together with medieval sherds are present throughout much of the excavated sequences in both Trenches 1 and 2, and it is evident that those layers post-dating the chalk and flint surfaces are either of comparatively late date (medieval or later) or have been subject to post-depositional disturbance.

Material of early Roman date (late AD1st to 2nd century) includes single sherds of Samian from Trench 1 contexts (101), (102), (103) and (107) and from Trench 2 contexts (201) and (204). An unidentified amphora body sherd was also present in context (205). Diagnostically later material (AD3rd century onwards) includes colour-coated fabrics such as New Forest and non-micaceous orange sandy wares from Trench 1 contexts (103) and (107) and Trench 2 contexts (201), (203), (205), (208) and (210). The majority of the remaining pottery comprises miscellaneous grey or orange sandy wares, although Black Burnished Ware type sherds are present in smaller quantities and include an everted rim bowl of probable AD2nd- to early 3rd-century date from context (205).

Medieval pottery is also present at depth in the trenches, with certain examples present from amongst the stone matrix of Trench 1 flint and chalk surfaces (102) and (103), and the upper fill of ditch [211] (context 205) in Trench 2. A lack of diagnostic forms makes dating difficult, although a scratch-marked cooking pot showing the scar of a strap handle (broken) and with a lid-seated rim is a probable 13th-century type.

5.4 Other Finds

Two quernstone fragments were recovered: sandstone from Trench 1 topsoil and greensand from Trench 2 context (205). Neither was sufficiently complete to allow their form to be reconstructed.

Metal finds comprised SF1, a copper alloy ferrule from Trench 1 context (108), probably of post-medieval date and intrusive in context, and a round-headed nail, possibly Roman from Trench 2 Slot B context (201).

6. Discussion

- 6.1 Due to the presence of intact stratigraphy at the upper levels and the overall depth of the trenches, it was not possible to establish a depth at which only non-archaeological (natural) deposits would be encountered, although context (108) at the base of Trench 1 may be at or close to such a level. The presence of five worked flint blades may indicate an early (Neolithic) phase of activity on this surface, although the appearance of one later, metal item and the penetration of tree roots at this depth make it impossible to consider this to be a sealed horizon. Two possible archaeological features cut from this level - feature [110] probable, feature [111] dubious - are undated.
- 6.2 Small quantities of other, probably later, prehistoric worked flint were recovered throughout the excavated profiles of both trenches.

- 6.3 Evidence was obtained from both trenches for the presence of cobbled or metalled surfaces, those in Trench 1 principally of flint and that in Trench 2 largely composed of compacted chalk rubble. Although any interpretation is based on an extremely small area, the coarseness of the components and the absence of any evidence for structures in the form of wall lines or post-holes suggests that these were external yard surfaces rather than building interiors. Although there is substantial inter-mixing of pottery of early and late Roman date with medieval pottery at this level, in view of the date range AD1st - 4th century established for the settlement activity both to the east of the site and further to the west of Stratford Road it is probable that these surfaces belong to the Roman period.
- 6.4 Pits [104] and [106], and ditches [207], [211] and [215] are all cut through the cobbled surfaces. The fills (where excavated) or surfaces of these features include proportionally less medieval pottery mixed with the Roman material than do the cobbled yards, and a Roman date would appear appropriate for this phase of activity also. The associated artefact assemblage is too restricted to allow any interpretation of function of the site at this time, and the presence of elements diagnostic of both early and late phases within the Roman period disallows any more detailed consideration of the chronology.
- 6.5 It is understood that, in recent years, the site has been used as an allotment. Horticultural digging and the penetration of tree roots to depths in excess of 1m in some areas is likely to have contributed to the inter-mixing of finds through the soil profile.