

## **Watching brief for trial holes in Broad Street, Hereford.**



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**Herefordshire Archaeology** is Herefordshire Council's county archaeology service. It advises upon the conservation of archaeological and historic landscapes, maintains the county Sites and Monument Record, and carries out conservation and investigative field projects.

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**Summary:**

*An archaeological watching brief was undertaken during the excavation of two exploratory trenches dug by Balfour Beatty in order to assess the viability of the erection of a bus shelter next to the frontage of 20 Broad Street, Hereford.*

*The trenches were excavated by hand under archaeological supervision. Whilst disturbed gravels were encountered, containing post medieval pottery, no archaeologically significant deposits were identified within the trenches.*

**Disclaimer:** It should not be assumed that land referred to in this document is accessible to the public. Location plans are indicative only. NGRs are accurate to approximately 10m. Measured dimensions are accurate to within 1m at a scale of 1:500, 0.1m at 1:50, and 0.02m at 1:20.

Figures contained within this report contain material from the Ordnance Survey. The grid in this material is the National Grid taken from the Ordnance Survey map with the permission of the Controller of Her Majesty's Stationery Office (OS Licence 100024168). This material has been reproduced in order to locate the site in its environs.

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## Introduction

This report (EHE 80010), provides an account of small scale watching brief carried out by Herefordshire Archaeology. The watching brief was required in order to provide both archaeological and structural information regarding the possibility of the survival of significant archaeological deposits prior to the erection of a bus shelter. Broad Street is located within the Hereford Area of Archaeological Importance as designated by the 1979 Scheduled Ancient Monuments Act.

The fieldwork comprised the excavation of two trenches each 1.2m long and 0.4m wide to a maximum depth of 0.4m. The trenches were located within the pavement, immediately outside the frontage of No. 20 Broad Street, and ran from the inside of the kerb to the centre of the pavement.

The aim of the archaeological fieldwork was to provide information regarding the depth, nature and survival of significant archaeological deposits associated with the pre-conquest market area as well as earlier deposits / structures. Watching briefs during the salvage recording of the Hereford water mains renewal 1999-2000 (EHE32112) revealed the presence of what appear to be Roman buildings within this part of Broad Street.

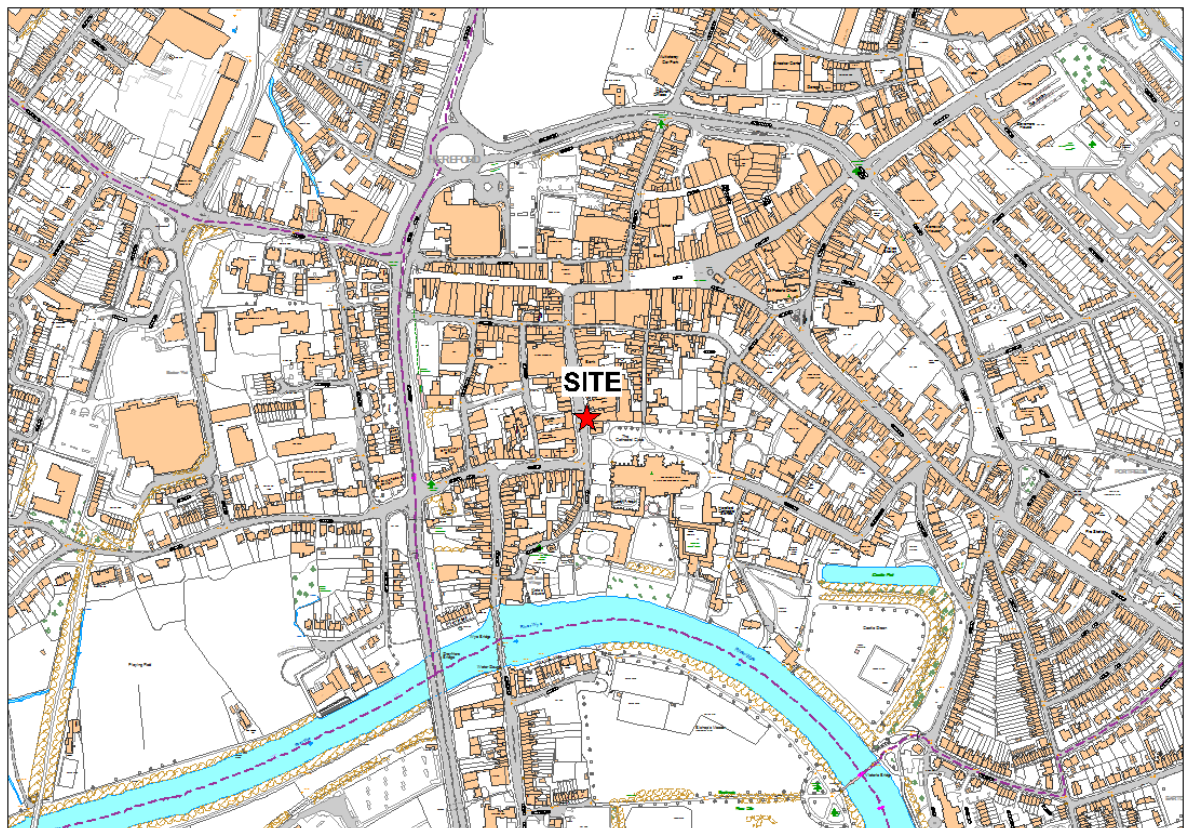


Figure 1: location of the site within the City of Hereford.

## Background history and previous archaeological work

Broad Street is a very singular element of the town plan of Hereford: a street of exceptional width flanked by uniformly wide plots running perpendicularly to it. It has long been taken to be the principal street of the pre-Conquest town, running between the North Gate (Norgate) at its north end and, it has been argued, continuing due south past the Bishop's Palace enclosure to give access to the Wye crossing of the Palace Ford. The latter point still arguably lacks authoritative proof, with no sign (for example, a relict hollow-way) of a descent of the roadway down the steep terraced gradient in the Bishop's Palace garden immediately east of the wet, low-lying, King's Ditch (see below); an alternative route might have been provided perhaps by Gwynne Street, descending into and crossing the King's Ditch lower down. Broad Street certainly appears to have continued south as far as the north side of the Bishop's Palace enclosure, as metalling excavated on the Mappa Mundi site up to 11m east of the present Cathedral Close frontage is consistent with a continuation of the eastern side of Broad Street on its alignment north of the close. At up to twenty metres wide it was clearly a street of particular status within the pre-Conquest defences, being equalled in width only by King Street, its continuation to the west. This status is also evident from the Mappa Mundi excavations, which located a pre-Conquest mortar-bonded stone cellar perpendicular to and contemporary with the street metalling, together with a stone wall footing continuing south along the street frontage, either for a further range of buildings or for a boundary wall to the precinct. Domestic stone buildings are extremely rare in pre-Conquest towns, other excavated examples being confined to a probable royal hall in Northampton and – perhaps the closest parallel to the Broad Street basement – a small stone building from middle Saxon Winchester (Lower Brook Street) associated with gold working. But Broad Street may be the location of yet another early stone building, the former North Gate. The location of the gate through the defences has long been evident from the name Norgate, shown on Isaac Taylor's map of 1757 attached to the narrow (later widened) section of the north end of Broad Street. There, in 1905, the amateur archaeologist Walter Pilley investigated two parallel walls of 'well dressed' mortared stone, exposed in roadworks, that he thought had been part of the Saxon North Gate, within the ditch (SMR 44574). It would be easy to dismiss this record as that of a much later structure (such as an undercroft) were it not for Shoemith's 1968 investigation nearby on the corner of West Street and Broad Street where some of the earliest pre-Conquest strata were found to include stone chippings (SMR 443).



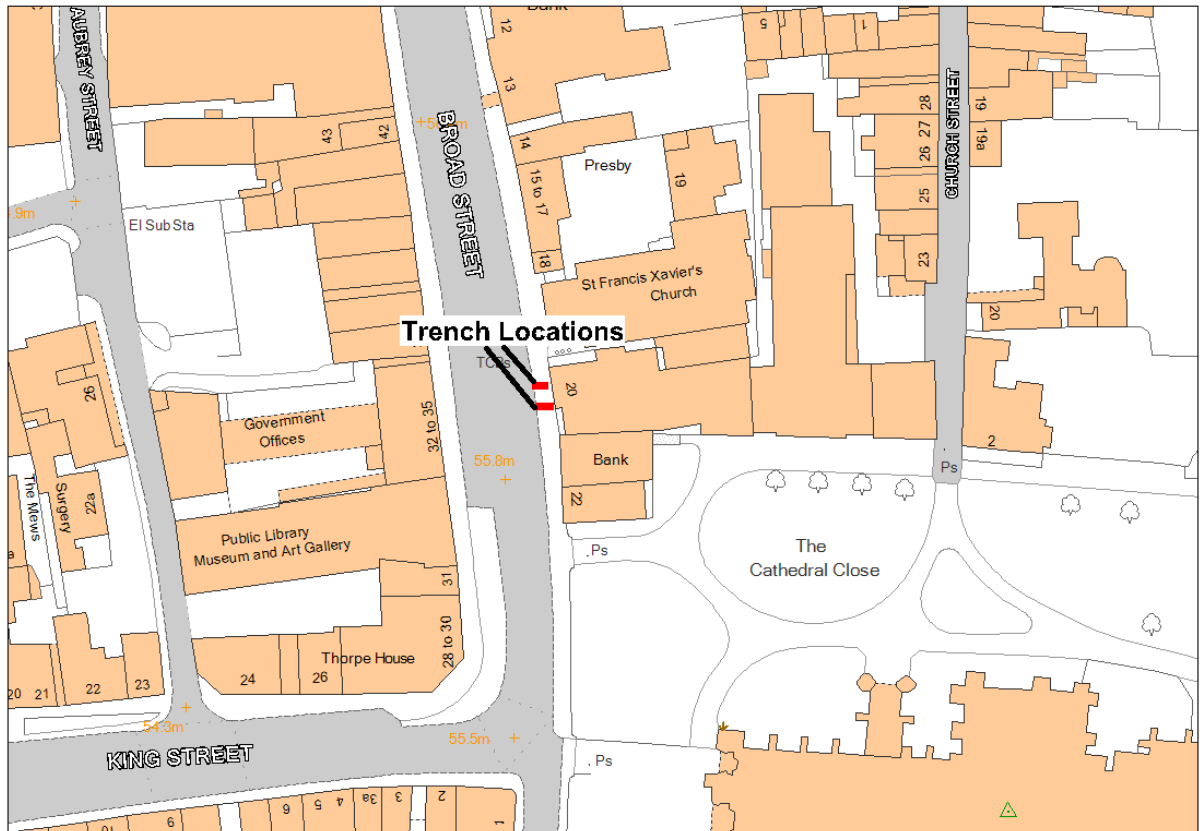


Figure 2: Plan showing locations of Trenches 1 & 2 in relation to Broad Street.

### Fieldwork in 2013

The trial trenches were excavated on Friday 6<sup>th</sup> December 2013 by Balfour Beatty, under the direction of Tristram Lee-Jones, (Civil Engineer, Design Team). The works were carried out by hand and were backfilled and made good directly after inspection and recording.

Both trenches contained the same stratigraphy.

Following the lifting of the paving setts and blinding, a 0.3m thick layer of gravel within a clay matrix was recorded. This contained 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century pottery fragments, together with fragments of brick and concrete. This immediately overlay a layer of more compacted, gravel containing occasional pottery fragments dating from the 18<sup>th</sup> century. The northern most trench included the edge if a modern concrete chamber or duct for services.

No archaeologically significant deposits were encountered.



Plate 1: Trench 1 looking north-east



Plate 2: Trench 2 Looking south

## Conclusions

The watching brief has confirmed that no archaeologically significant features or deposits survive in this location between the present ground level and 0.4m deep. The two trenches also suggest that significant modern disturbance has occurred as a result of the installation of services at this point.

## Site Archive

8 digital photographs  
1 site notebook entry  
This document

## Acknowledgements

Herefordshire Archaeology would like to thank Tristram Lee-Jones, Civil Engineer, Design Team, Balfour Beatty.

## List of Illustrations

Figure 1: location of the site within the City of Hereford.

Figure 2: Plan showing locations of Trenches 1 & 2 in relation to Broad Street.

Plate 1: Trench 1 looking north-east

Plate 2: Trench 2 looking south

## Bibliography

Baker, N, 2009, A Characterisation Of The Historic Townscape Of Central Hereford *Herefordshire Archaeology Report* 266.