



Site of Close House, Elephant Lane, Sutton, St. Helen's, WA9 5EP.

June 2020 V 2.0





æon archaeology

Site of Close House, Elephant Lane, Sutton, St. Helen's, WA9 5EP.

June 2020 v2.0

Report no. 0250

Archaeological Evaluation

**Aeon Archaeology
Obsidian Offices
Chantry Court
Chester
CH1 4QN**

Written by: Richard Cooke BA MA MCIfA

Checked by: Josh Dean BA ACIfA



NEXUS
HERITAGE

Project Code: A0261.1
Date: 19/06/2020
Client: Clayton Architecture Ltd.
info@aeonarchaeology.co.uk



æon archaeology

Site of Close House, Elephant Lane, Sutton, St. Helen's, WA9 5EP.

June 2020 v2.0

Copyright Declaration:

Aeon Archaeology grants permission for the material presented within this report to be used by the archives/repository with which it is deposited, in perpetuity, although Aeon Archaeology retains the right to be identified as the author of all project documentation and reports, as specified in the Copyright, Designs and Patents Act 1988 (chapter IV, section 79). The permission will allow the repository to reproduce material, including for use by third parties, with the copyright owner suitably acknowledged.

Disclaimer:

This Report has been prepared solely for the person/party which commissioned it and for the specifically titled project or named part thereof referred to in the Report. The Report should not be relied upon or used for any other project by the commissioning person/party without first obtaining independent verification as to its suitability for such other project, and obtaining the prior written approval of Aeon Archaeology. Aeon Archaeology accepts no responsibility or liability for the consequences of this Report being relied upon or used for any purpose other than the purpose for which it was specifically commissioned. The entitlement to rely upon this Report rests solely with the person/party which commissioned it and does not extend to any other person/party. Aeon Archaeology accepts no responsibility or liability for any use of or reliance upon this Report by any person/party other than the commissioning person/party.



NEXUS
HERITAGE

Project Code: A0261.1
Date: 19/06/2020
Client: Clayton Architecture Ltd.
info@aeonarchaeology.co.uk

Figures

Figure 01: Location of proposed development site at Elephant Lane, Thatto Heath, St Helen's, WA9 5EP. Scale 1:20,000 at A4.

Figure 02: Location of proposed development site at Elephant Lane, Thatto Heath, St Helen's, WA9 5EP. Scale 1:5,000 at A4.

Figure 03: Location of proposed development site shown on the County Series Map, 1908, 1:2,500 Scale.

Figure 04: Plan showing locations of archaeological evaluation trenches at Elephant Lane, Thatto Heath, St Helen's, WA9 5EP. 1:250 Scale at A4.

Figure 05: Plan of Trench 3 showing locations of the archaeological features at 1:50 Scale at A4.

Figure 06: Plan of Trench 4 showing locations of the archaeological features at 1:50 Scale at A4.

Figure 07 : Plan showing locations of archaeological photographic plates at Elephant Lane, Thatto Heath, St Helen's, WA9 5EP.

Plates

Plate 01: Post excavation shot of Trench 1 - from the east - scale 1m

Plate 02: Post excavation shot of Trench 1 - from the west - scale 1m

Plate 03: Generic section shot of Trench 1 - from the north - scale 1m

Plate 04: North eastern section of Trench 1 - from the west - scale 1m

Plate 05: Post excavation shot of Trench 2 - from the north - scale 1m

Plate 06: Post excavation shot of Trench 2 - from the south - scale 1m

Plate 07: Generic section shot of Trench 2 - from the west - scale 1m

Plate 08: Post excavation shot of Trench 3 - from the north - scale 1m

Plate 09: Post excavation shot of Trench 3 - from the south - scale 1m

Plate 10: Brick surface (301) in Trench 3 - from the south - scale 0.50m

Plate 11: Brick Wall (302) in Trench 3 - from the south - scale 0.50m

Plate 12: Elevation shot of Brick Wall (302) in Trench 3 - from the south - scale 0.50m

Plate 13: Brick Wall (303) - from the west - scale 1m

Plate 14: Brick Wall (304) - from the south - scale 1m

Plate 15: Elevation of Brick Wall (304) - from the east - scale 0.50m

Plate 16: Oblique shot of Brick Wall (304) - from the southeast - scale 0.50m

Plate 17: Post excavation shot of Trench 4 - from the north - scale 1m

Plates (2)

Plate 18: Post excavation shot of Trench 4 - from the south - scale 1m

Plate 19: Southern elevation of Brick Wall (401) within Trench 4 - from the north - scale 1m

Plate 20: Southern elevation of Brick Wall (401) within Trench 4 - from the east - scale 1m

Plate 21: Western elevation of Brick Wall (401) within Trench 4 - from the southeast - no scale

Plate 22: Oblique shot of Cellar within Trench 4 - from the northeast - no scale

Plate 23: Oblique shot of Cellar within Trench 4 - from the southwest - no scale

Plate 24: Doorway in western elevation of wall (401) within Trench 4 - from the east - no scale

Plate 25: Doorway in western elevation of wall (401) with material removed - from the east - no scale

Plate 26: Post excavation shot of Trench 5 - from the east - scale 1m

Contents

1.0	NON-TECHNICAL SUMMARY	2
2.0	INTRODUCTION	3
3.0	SITE LOCATION	4
4.0	HISTORY OF THE SITE	5
5.0	PROJECT AIMS	6
6.0	METHODOLOGY	8
6.1	Evaluation trenches	8
6.2	Data Collection from Site Records	9
6.3	Artefact Methodology	9
6.4	Environmental Samples Methodology	9
6.5	Report and dissemination.....	9
7.0	QUANTIFICATION OF RESULTS.....	10
7.1	The Documentary Archive.....	10
7.2	Environmental Samples	10
7.3	Artefacts.....	10
8.0	RESULTS OF THE ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION TRENCHES	11
9.0	CONCLUSION	18
10.0	SOURCES	20
	APPENDIX I – ARCHAEOLOGICAL DESK-BASED ASSESSMENT AND GEOPHYSICAL SURVEY (GREENLANE ARCHAEOLOGY)	Error! Bookmark not defined.

1.0 NON-TECHNICAL SUMMARY

Aeon Archaeology in partnership with Nexus Heritage was commissioned by Clayton Architecture Ltd, hereafter the Client, to carry out a programme of archaeological evaluation as part of a development proposal for the erection of a new 18 unit apartment block, designated as social housing, along with car parking on a redundant piece of land at Elephant Lane, St Helens, Merseyside WA9 5EP.

The archaeological evaluation involved the excavation of 5 trenches targeting the footprint of the former residence known as Close House - in particular the southwest range, southeast range, and main house body.

Trenches 1 and 2 showed that the location of the former southwest range of Close House had been subjected to a complete removal of the house foundation remains in order to construct the required drains and inspection chamber associated with the now demolished chapel – thus removing any potential for preservation of Close House at the southwest end of the Site.

Trench 3 was located at the southeast end of the Site and focused on the southeast range. The archaeological evaluation revealed the foundation remains of two north-south orientated red brick walls, as well as an east-west stone rubble wall and laid, clear-glazed, blue brick floor surface. The two north-south aligned red brick walls correspond with the western external elevation of the southeast wing of the Close House. The Ordnance Survey 25 inch map of 1891 shows this wing as being a separate rectangular outbuilding to the main house, and orientated north-south. The detachment of this structure from the main house and located to the rear of the building away from the principle elevation to the north suggests that this was either a service wing or more likely a stables.

Trench 4 was located at the northern end of the Site at the location of the main house body, and uncovered the cellar of the house. The cellar itself was shown to continue into the northern, eastern, and western limits of excavation and is likely to have occupied the northern half or two-thirds of the footprint of the main house. The cellar would have been constructed at the same time as the main body of the house suggesting that it dates to the earliest part of the house in the late 18th century. As the cellar walls were constructed from red brick, and due to the presence of large amounts of red brick within the overlying demolition deposit, it can be surmised that Close House was also of red brick construction. Moreover, the observation of broken sandstone fragments within the demolition deposit would suggest that detailing such as quoins and window surrounds may have been of sandstone construction.

The cellar walls were of particularly poor preservation making access into the cellar unsafe and as such all recording had to take place from surface level with no hand cleaning of the cellar floor and walls.

Trench 5 was located at the northern end of the Site also targeting the main body of Close House. This trench was abandoned due to the presence of a live water pipe.

2.0 INTRODUCTION

Aeon Archaeology in partnership with Nexus Heritage was commissioned by Clayton Architecture Ltd, hereafter the Client, to carry out a programme of archaeological evaluation as part of a development proposal for the erection of a new 18 unit apartment block, designated as social housing, along with car parking on a redundant piece of land at Elephant Lane, St Helens, Merseyside WA9 5EP – hereafter the Site (centred on **NGR: SJ 50293 93189**) (figures 01 and 02).

Planning consent for the scheme has been awarded and the archaeological works relate to a planning condition applied by the Development Management Archaeologist (DMA) Dr Ben Croxford of the Merseyside Environmental Advisory Service (MEAS) (**P/2019/0855/FUL**):

Condition 13

No development shall take place until the applicant has submitted a written scheme of investigation for archaeological work for approval in writing by the local planning authority. The work shall be carried out strictly in accordance with the approved scheme.

Reason

There is one non-designated heritage asset recorded on this site on the Merseyside Historic Environment Record, MME7752, an 18th century building named Close House.

The use of such a condition is in line with the guidance set out in paragraph 199, Section 6 (Conserving and Enhancing the Historic Environment) of the National Planning Policy Framework (2019), published by the Department for Communities; Local Government and Managing Significance in Decision Taking in the Historic Environment, Historic Environment Good Practice Advice in Planning: 2 (Historic England 2015); and policy CQL4 of the core strategy.

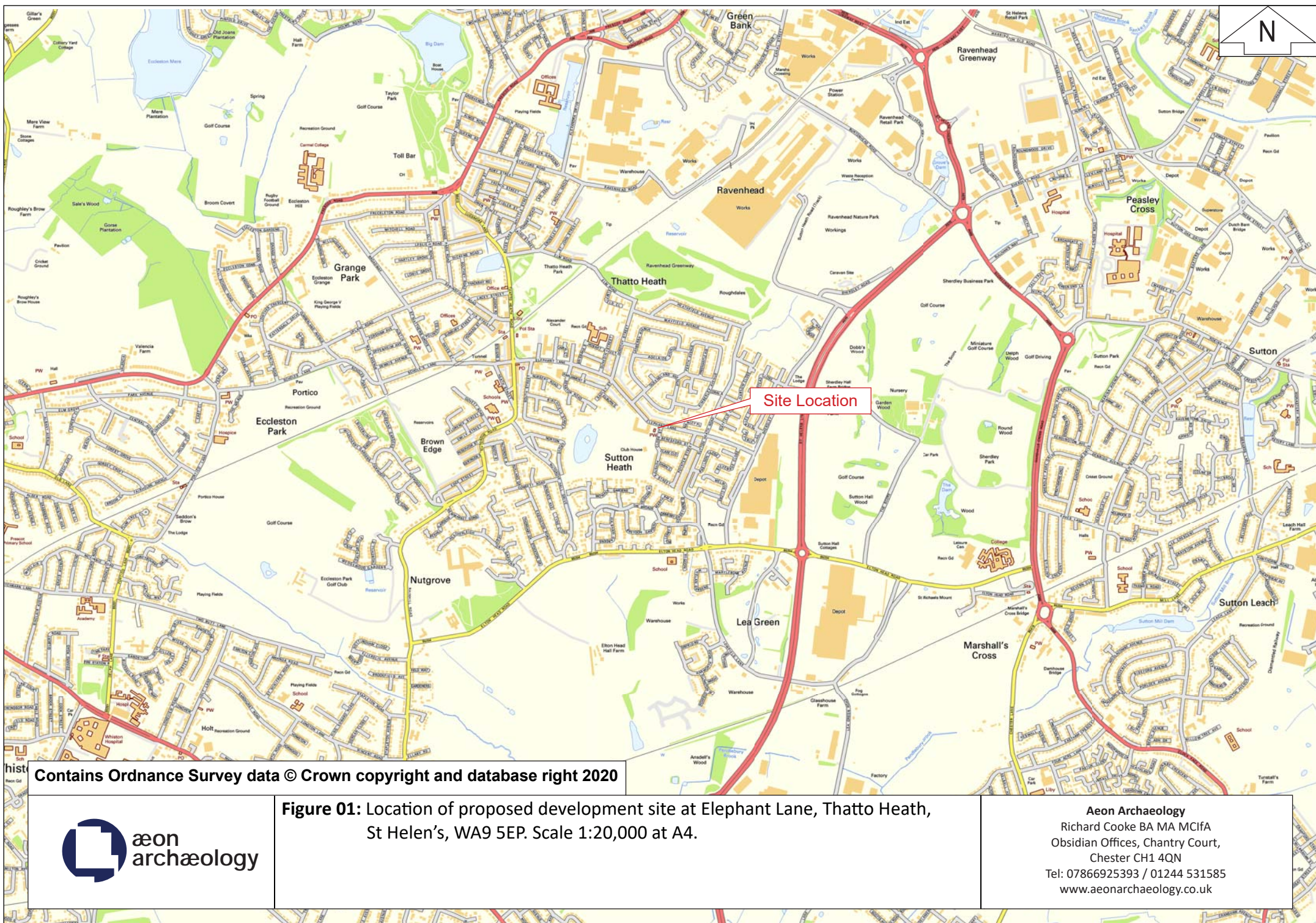
Discussions were held between Nexus Heritage and the DMA at MEAS to discuss the aims of the strategy, the methods to be employed in the archaeological works and the requirements of the qualifications/experience of the archaeological field team to be deployed.

This document reports on the details of a programme of archaeological evaluation work for the Site carried out between 15th to the 17th June 2020 in response to the spirit and intent of Condition No. 13.

A written Scheme of Investigation (WSI) was undertaken by Matrix Archaeology in May 2020 which outlined the principle aims of the evaluation and the methods by which they would be met. This formed the basis of a method statement submitted for the work. The archaeological evaluation trenching was undertaken in accordance with this document. The assessment of the site through 6 x archaeological evaluation trenches was deemed adequate for the purposes intended, however it was acknowledged that there may be some latitude on the size and positioning of each evaluation trench due to site restraints from existing utilities and mature trees along the eastern and western site limits.

The aim of this programme of archaeological evaluation was to establish the archaeological significance of the site, to assess the impact of the development proposals on surviving monuments or remains, and to help inform future decision making, design solutions and further potential mitigation strategies.

This report is offered for consideration to the DMA at MEAS for verification with reference to the Condition applied to the planning permission and the relevant provisions in NPPF.

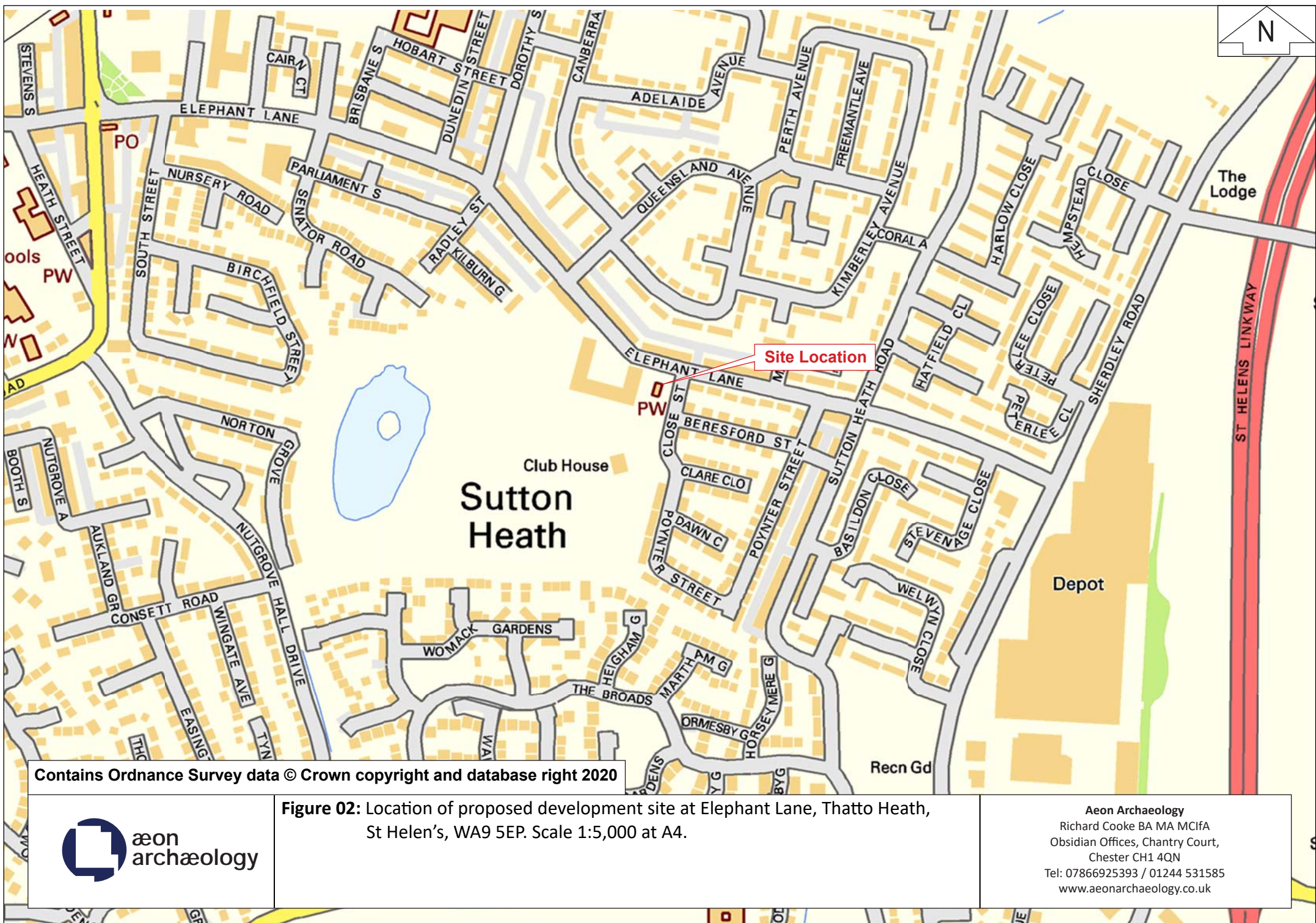


Contains Ordnance Survey data © Crown copyright and database right 2020



Figure 01: Location of proposed development site at Elephant Lane, Thatto Heath, St Helen's, WA9 5EP. Scale 1:20,000 at A4.

Aeon Archaeology
Richard Cooke BA MA MCifA
Obsidian Offices, Chantry Court,
Chester CH1 4QN
Tel: 07866925393 / 01244 531585
www.aeonarchaeology.co.uk



3.0 SITE LOCATION

The Site, which extends to over c. 0.16ha, is located on the southern side of Elephant Lane, St Helens WA9 5EP, and c.3.5km south-southwest of the town centre at grid reference SJ 50293 93189.

The Site sits at an elevation of between c. 62m and 63m AOD on land that until recently was in use for the Emmanuel Church building, but which has now been demolished. The Site is bounded to the north by Elephant Lane, to the east by Close Street, to the south by the rugby club, and to the west by a senior accommodation building.

The British Geological Survey records the underlying bedrock geology as being part of the Pennine Middle Coal Measures Formation, a mudstone, siltstone and sandstone sedimentary bedrock that formed approximately 310 to 318 million years ago in the Carboniferous Period within an environment dominated by swamps, estuaries and deltas. The superficial deposits are of Devensian – Diamicton till that formed up to 2 million years ago in the Quaternary Period within a local environment dominated by Ice Age conditions (British Geological Survey).

4.0 HISTORY OF THE SITE

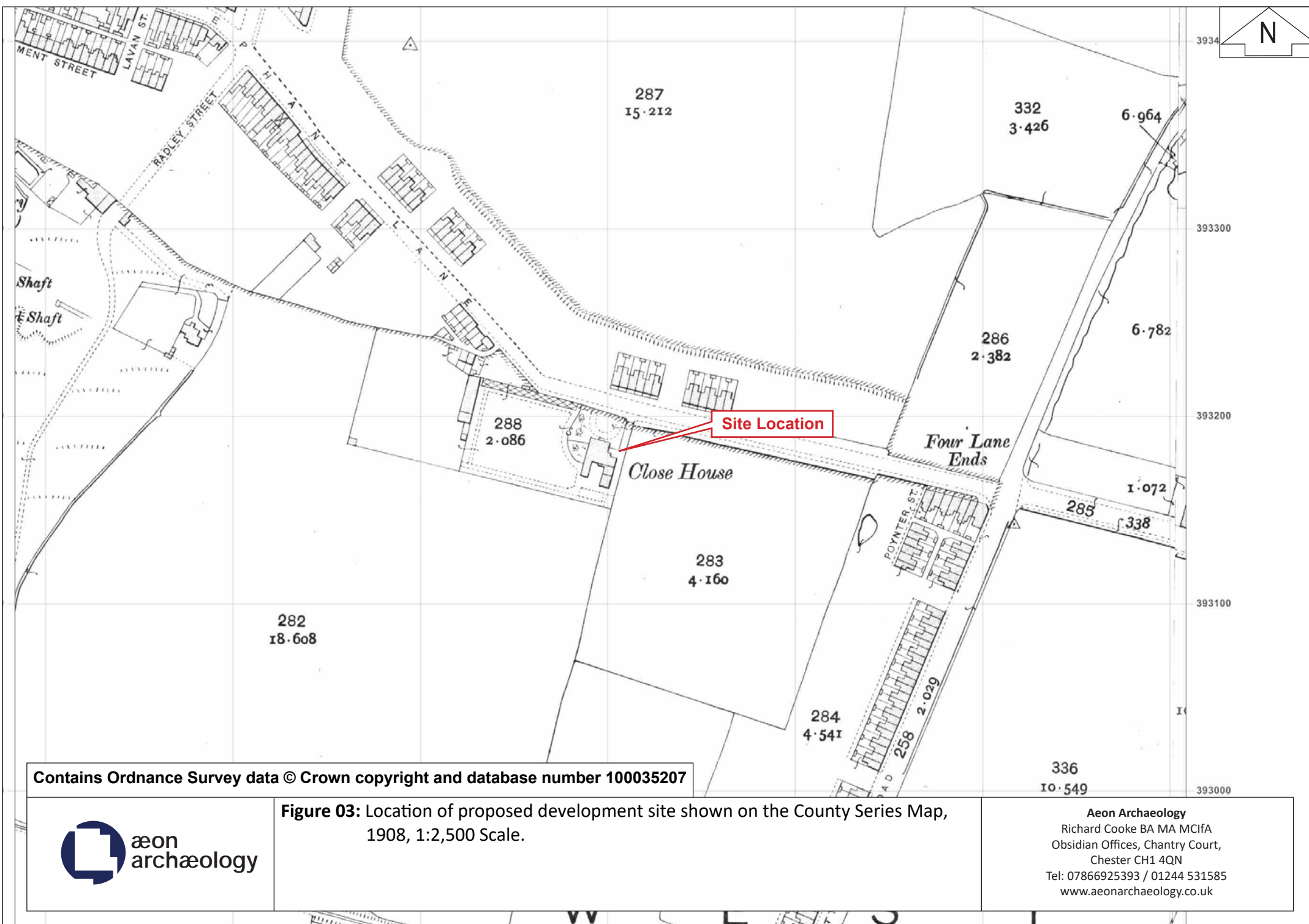
(reproduced from Matrix Archaeology WSI report 2020_06)

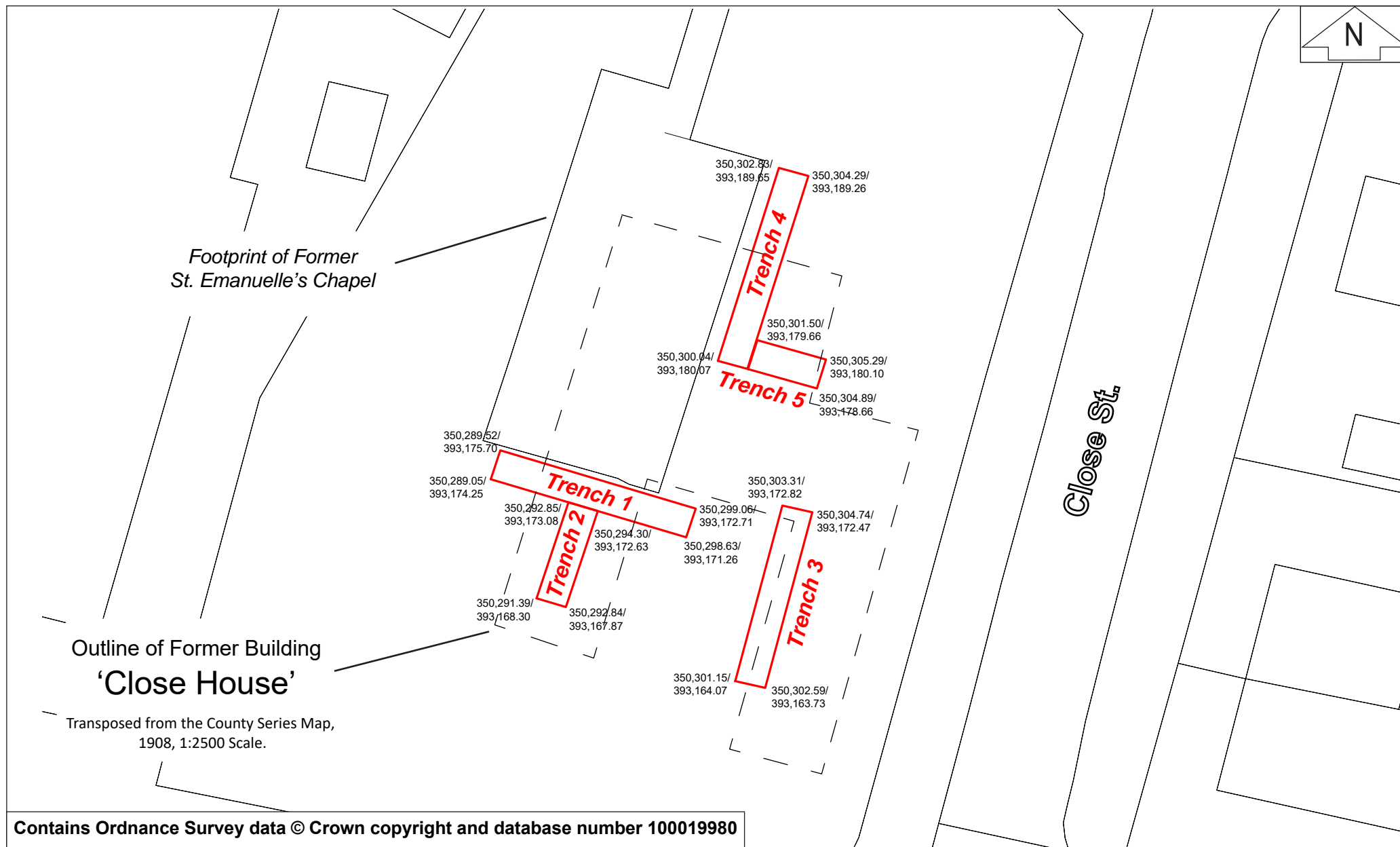
A building was first shown at this location on Yates Map of Lancashire, which was published in 1786. The Tithe plan of 1843 shows the associated garden (Plot No. 725) as owned and occupied by Robert Swaine.

The First Edition O.S. plan of 1850 (1:10,560 scale) shows the building as 'Long Close House'. The First Edition O.S. plan of 1894 (1:2,500 scale) shows the building as 'Close House'. At that time it was a large property, with a rectangular block which can be assumed to face north. There was a small service wing attached to the south-west corner, and a second, larger wing attached to the south-east corner. There was a semi-circular carriage drive to the front (north), and a large garden to the west, on the north side of which was a long glasshouse. It seems to have been a substantial residence, probably belonging to a merchant or manufacturer.

It was last shown on the O.S. plan of 1937, but had disappeared before the O.S. plan of 1956 was surveyed. Subsequently, the Emmanuel Church was erected on the site.

It is not believed than any other archaeological works have been undertaken at this site.





5.0 PROJECT AIMS

The aim of the evaluation work was to characterise the known, or potential, archaeological remains uncovered during the excavation of the archaeological evaluation trenches.

The broad aims of the archaeological evaluation trenches were:

- To determine, as far as is reasonably possible, the location, extent, date, character, condition, significance and quality of any surviving archaeological remains on the site, the integrity of which may be threatened by development at the site.
- To establish the nature and extent of existing disturbance and intrusion to sub-surface deposits and, where the data allows, assess the degree of archaeological survival of buried deposits of archaeological significance.
- To enable the client to establish a schedule for archaeological risks.
- To allow the DMA at MEAS to make an informed decision on the need for and scope of further evaluative and/or mitigatory archaeological works.

The detailed objectives of the archaeological evaluation trenches were:

- Insofar as possible within methodological constraints, to explain any temporal, spatial or functional relationships between the structures/remains identified, and any relationships between these and the archaeological and historic elements of the wider landscape.
- Where the data allows, identify the research implications of the site with reference to the regional research agenda and recent work in Merseyside.

The broad characteristics of the number, size, orientation and distribution of the trenches were considered to be appropriate and were agreed with the DMA at MEAS. The trench array was proposed as part of the WSI prepared by Matrix Archaeology and was designed to evaluate the potential of the Site for preserved buried remains, with a contingent trenching facility designed for site characterisation, the characteristics of which were insufficiently resolved within the core trenching provision. Contingent trenching was optional, upon the discovery of archaeological artefacts, deposits, features or structures the characteristics of which could only be sufficiently determined upon further spatial investigation.

The management of this project has followed the procedures laid out in the standard professional guidance *Management of Research Projects in the Historic Environment Project Manager's Guide* (English Heritage 2006; 2015), and in the *CIFA Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Evaluation* (Chartered Institute For Archaeologists, 2014). Five stages are specified:

Phase 1: project planning

Phase 2: fieldwork

Phase 3: assessment of potential for analysis and revised project design

Phase 4: analysis and report preparation

Phase 5: dissemination

The current document reports on the phase 4 analysis and states the means to be used to disseminate the results. In this instance it was not necessary to prepare a revised project design as alluded to in Phase 3; as there was a paucity of evidence recovered in Phase 2 in terms of archaeological features and artefacts, which therefore did not warrant any alteration to the initial project design.

The site is to be set in its landscape context so that its full character and importance can be understood. All the information is to be presented in a report that will be held by the Historic Environment Record and lodged with the Oasis online database so that it can be accessible to the public and future researchers. This phase of work also includes archiving the documentary records from the project.

6.0 METHODOLOGY

Before the evaluation trenching commenced an agreed programme of excavation timing, siting, duration, surface re-instatement and health and safety protection measures were agreed with the Client, and the Planning Archaeologist at the Council.

The original WSI produced by Matrix Archaeology proposed the excavation of 6 x evaluation trenches each measuring 10m long by 1.5m wide. Upon attendance at the Site it became apparent that some trenches could not be excavated due to existing utilities, mature trees, and the installation of a new attenuation tank at the southern end of the Site. As such the Site was evaluated through the excavation of the following:

Trench 1: (10m x 1.5m) – located at the southern end of the Site and targeting the southwest wing of Close House.

Trench 2: (5m x 1.5m) – located at the southern end of the Site and targeting the southwest wing of Close House.

Trench 3: (10m x 1.5m) – located at the southern end of the Site and targeting the southeast wing of Close House.

Trench 4: (10m x 1.5m) – located at the northern end of the Site and targeting the main body of Close House.

Trench 5: (3.5m x 1.5m) – located at the northern end of the Site and targeting the main body of Close House.

6.1 Evaluation trenches

The evaluation trenching array was designed to investigate areas that may contain archaeological features. There was latitude on the location of each trench and slight repositioning to take account of buried services and other constraints was acknowledged as a possibility within the WSI.

A 6-ton tracked excavator with a 1.5m wide toothless ditching bucket equipped was used to open the trenches under constant archaeological supervision. Topsoil and overburden were to be removed by machine in spits down to archaeological deposits or natural sub-soils, whichever were encountered first. All uncovered archaeological features were to be excavated by hand.

A written record of the deposits and all identified features in each evaluation trench was to be completed via Aeon Archaeology pro-formas. All subsurface remains were to be recorded photographically, with detailed notations. The photographic record was completed using a digital SLR camera (Canon Eos 600D) set to maximum resolution.

Contingency provision was made for the following:

- Additional excavation of up to 100% of any given feature should the excavated sample prove to be insufficient to provide information on the character and date of the feature.
- Expansion of trench limits, to clarify the extent of features equivalent to an additional 20% of the core area.

The archaeological works were surveyed with respect to the nearest Ordnance Survey datum point and with reference to the Ordnance Survey National Grid. The trenches and any archaeological

features within them were to be accurately located on a site plan prepared at the most appropriate and largest scale.

All excavations were backfilled with the material excavated and upon departure the site was left in a safe and tidy condition.

6.2 Data Collection from Site Records

A database of the site photographs was produced to enable active long-term curation of the photographs and easy searching. The site records were checked and cross-referenced and photographs were cross-referenced to contexts. These records were used to write the site narrative and the field drawings and survey data were used to produce an outline plan of the site.

All paper field records were scanned to provide a backup digital copy. The photographs were organised and cross-referenced to the digital photographic record so that they can be archived with the National Museums Liverpool (NML).

6.3 Artefact Methodology

All artefacts were to be collected and processed including those found within spoil tips. Finds numbers would be attributed and they would be bagged and labelled as well any preliminary identification taking place on site. After processing, all artefacts would be cleaned and examined in-house at Aeon Archaeology. If required, artefacts would be sent to a relevant specialist for conservation and analysis.

The recovery policy for archaeological finds was kept under review throughout the evaluation trenching. Any changes in recovery priorities would be made under guidance from an appropriate specialist and agreed with the Client, Nexus Heritage and the DMA at MEAS. There was a presumption against the disposal of archaeological finds regardless of their apparent age or condition.

6.4 Environmental Samples Methodology

The sampling strategy and requirement for bulk soil samples was related to the perceived character, interpretational importance and chronological significance of the strata under investigation. This ensured that only significant features would be sampled. The aim of the sampling strategy was to recover carbonised macroscopic plant remains, small artefacts particularly knapping debris and evidence for metalworking.

Advice and guidance regarding environmental samples and their suitability for radiocarbon dating, as well as the analysis of macrofossils (charcoal and wood), pollen, animal bones and molluscs would be obtained from Oxford Archaeology if required.

6.5 Report and dissemination

A full archive including plans, photographs and written material resulting from the project was prepared. All plans, photographs and descriptions were labelled, and cross-referenced.

Upon approval from the Client copies of the report will be sent to the Client, Nexus Heritage, the DMA at MEAS, and the Oasis online database.

7.0 QUANTIFICATION OF RESULTS

7.1 The Documentary Archive

The following documentary records were created during the archaeological evaluation trenching:

Trench sheets	5
Context Sheets	6
Digital photographs	56

7.2 Environmental Samples

No environmental samples were taken during the archaeological evaluation as no suitable deposits were encountered.

7.3 Artefacts

A single fragment of post-medieval black-ware was recovered as well as three fragments of post-medieval white-glazed ware unstratified from trench 3. These ceramic fragments are common domestic wares of the 18th-19th centuries.

8.0 RESULTS OF THE ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION TRENCHES

The evaluation trenches were designed to evaluate and characterise the known, or potential, archaeological remains. Each trench is described and discussed separately. The location of the trenches can be found on figure 04 with the location and orientation of photographic plates shown on figure 7.

Trench 01 (Plates 1-4, figures 4)

SJ 50299.06/ 93,172.71 – SJ 50298.63/ 93171.26 – SJ 50289.05/ 93174.25 – SJ 50289.52/ 93175.70

Description

Trench 1 measured 10.0m in length west-northwest to east-southeast by 1.5m in width by a maximum depth of 0.9m, and was located at the south-western end of the Site targeting the southwest wing of the former residence known as Close House.

The trench was excavated through a 0.2m deep quite soft, light grey-brown clay-silt overburden with red brick fragments, mortar, and general demolition fragment inclusions. This lay above a 0.5m deep firm, mid black-grey clinker with frequent demolition fragments. This lay above a 0.15m deep light brown-grey clay band, which in turn lay above a >0.05m deep firm, bright-yellow natural clay substrata.

The trench was excavated through several redundant, ceramic drains orientated north-south and associated with the former Emmanuel Chapel. At the eastern end of the trench it was observed within the northern limit of excavation that a limited foundation of four, sub-rounded sandstone blocks lay beneath the red-brick and concrete foundations of the former chapel.

Discussion

The presence of numerous modern ceramic drains associated with the former chapel as well as the lack of any identifiable structural remains belonging to the former residence known as Close House, strongly suggests that all remains of the house had been grubbed out at this location as part of the construction of the Emmanuel Chapel. The thick, underlying clay substrata would make the Site liable to flooding and as such it seems that several rain water drains were added as part of the former chapel construction, thus truncating and removing any remains of the southwest wing of Close House.

The identification of four sandstone blocks within the northern limit of excavation at the eastern end of the trench may be associated with Close House; however they do not appear to be located on any particular wall as shown on the historic Ordnance Survey map of Close House. As such it seems just as likely that the sandstone blocks were utilised to increase the foundation strength for the chapel at this location.



Plate 01: Post excavation shot of Trench 1 - from the east - scale 1m



Plate 02: Post excavation shot of Trench 1 - from the west - scale 1m



Plate 03: Generic section shot of Trench 1 - from the north - scale 1m



Plate 04: North eastern section of Trench 1 - from the west - scale 1m

Trench 02 (Plates 5-7, figures -4)

SJ 50294.30/ 93172.63– SJ 50292.84/ 93167.87– SJ 50291.39/ 93168.30 – SJ 50292.85/ 93173.08

Description

Trench 2 measured 5.0m in length north-northeast to south-southwest by 1.5m in width by a maximum depth of 0.65m, and was located at the south-western end of the Site targeting the southwest wing of the former residence known as Close House.

The trench was excavated through a 0.15m deep quite soft, mid grey-brown clay-silt overburden with red brick fragments, mortar, and general demolition fragment inclusions. This lay above a 0.22m deep firm, mid black-grey clinker with frequent demolition fragments. This lay above a >0.23m deep firm, bright-yellow natural clay substrata.

At the northern end of the trench a low, red brick wall of an inspection chamber was encountered cut into the natural glacial substrata and overlain by the demolition clinker and overburden. This chamber measured >1.5m in length by 1.0m in width orientated east-west, and survived to three courses in height by two courses with and constructed in English Bond from machine made, unfrogged red brick bonded by Portland cement. The inspection chamber was fed into by ceramic drains from the north and crossing trench 1.

At the southern end of the trench a modern utility trench infilled with clinker crossed the trench from southeast to northwest.

Discussion

The presence of a red brick inspection chamber associated with the former chapel as well as the lack of any identifiable structural remains belonging to the former residence known as Close House, strongly suggests that all remains of the house had been grubbed out at this location as part of the construction of the Emmanuel Chapel. The thick, underlying clay substrata would make the Site liable to flooding and as such it seems that several rain water drains were added as part of the former chapel construction, thus truncating and removing any remains of the southwest wing of Close House.



Plate 05: Post excavation shot of Trench 2 - from the north - scale 1m



Plate 06: Post excavation shot of Trench 2 - from the south - scale 1m



Plate 07: Generic section shot of Trench 2 - from the west - scale 1m

Trench 03 (Plates 8-16, figures 4 and 5)

SJ 50304.74/ 93172.47– SJ 50302.59/ 93163.73– SJ 50301.15/ 93164.07– SJ 50303.31/ 93172.82

Description

Trench 3 measured 10.0m in length north-northeast to south-southwest by 1.5m in width by a maximum depth of 0.7m, and was located at the south-eastern end of the Site targeting the southeast wing of the former residence known as Close House.

The trench was excavated through a 0.15m deep quite soft, mid grey-brown clay-silt overburden with red brick fragments, mortar, and general demolition fragment inclusions. This lay above a 0.22m deep firm, mid black-grey clinker with frequent demolition fragments. This lay above a >0.33m deep firm, bright-yellow natural clay substrata.

At the southern end of the trench a laid surface consisting of blue bricks with a clear glaze (301) was encountered. This surface lay at 63.95m OD and was overlain by the clinker and overburden deposits. It measured >1.9m in length (14 courses) by >0.93m in width (6 courses) by 0.09m deep (1 course) orientated north-south, and continued into the northern and eastern limits of excavation. The bricks were bonded by cement with traces of a former scree on their surface, and individually measured 0.09m square.

At the western end floor surface (301) (63.95m OD) butted up against a north-south aligned red-brick wall (302) measuring >2.6m in length by 0.38m with (2 courses) by 0.24m in height (3 courses), and continuing into the southern limit of excavation. The wall was constructed from unfrogged, moulded red bricks measuring on average 0.24m in length by 0.1m in width by 0.08m in depth, and bonded by lime mortar in an English Bond.

At the northern end of wall (302) (63.89m OD) and towards the centre of the trench, the wall butted up against an east-west aligned, stone rubble wall (303). This wall measured >1.5m in length by 0.48m in width by 0.3m in height and continued into the eastern and western limits of excavation. It was constructed from dry bonded, small sub-rounded cobbles.

To the west of wall (303) and along the western limit of excavation a second red brick linear wall (304) was encountered at 63.89m OD. This wall was keyed into stone rubble wall (303) and measured 4.45m in length by 0.32m in width (2 courses) by 0.6m in height (6 courses) and bonded by lime mortar in an English Bond. The bricks were unfrogged, moulded and measured on average 0.24m in length by 0.12m in width by 0.08m in depth.

At the northern end of the trench wall (304) was vertically truncated by demolition and petered out. The trench itself was excavated to 10m in length but the northernmost 2.0m were not cleaned due to the presence of aromatic hydrocarbons.

Discussion

The two north-south aligned red brick walls (302) (304) correspond with the western external elevation of the southeast wing of the former residence known as Close House. The Ordnance Survey 25 inch map of 1891 shows this wing as being a separate rectangular outbuilding to the main house, and orientated north-south. The detachment of this structure from the main house and located to the rear of the building away from the principle elevation to the north suggests that this was either a service wing or more likely a stables. The outbuilding appears to have originally been a stand-alone structure with a stone rubble wall at its southern elevation with a keyed-in red-brick wall forming its western elevation. Prior to the production of the 1891 map the building was extended southwards via red brick wall (302) which stratigraphically butted up against and post-dated rubble wall (303).

Stratigraphically at this time the clear glazed blue-brick floor (301) was added possibly suggesting that the wing now formed a formal part of the house, or perhaps a formal tack room. By the production of the 25 inch Ordnance Survey map of 1906 (figure 3) the wing had been extended northwards to become incorporated into the main body of Close House.



Plate 08: Post excavation shot of Trench 3 - from the north - scale 1m



Plate 09: Post excavation shot of Trench 3 - from the south - scale 1m



Plate 10: Brick surface (301) in Trench 3 - from the south - scale 0.50m



Plate 11: Brick Wall (302) in Trench 3 - from the south - scale 0.50m



Plate 12: Elevation shot of Brick Wall (302) in Trench 3 - from the south - scale 0.50m



Plate 13: Brick Wall (303) - from the west - scale 1m



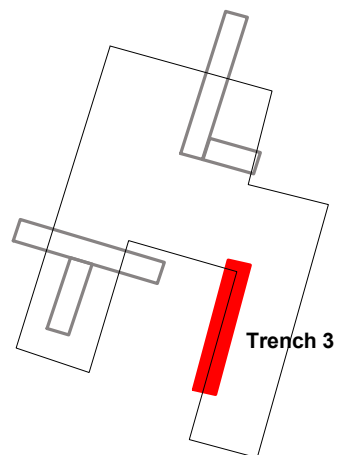
Plate 14: Brick Wall (304) - from the south - scale 1m



Plate 15: Elevation of Brick Wall (304) - from the east - scale 0.50m



Plate 16: Oblique shot of Brick Wall (304) - from the southeast - scale 0.50m

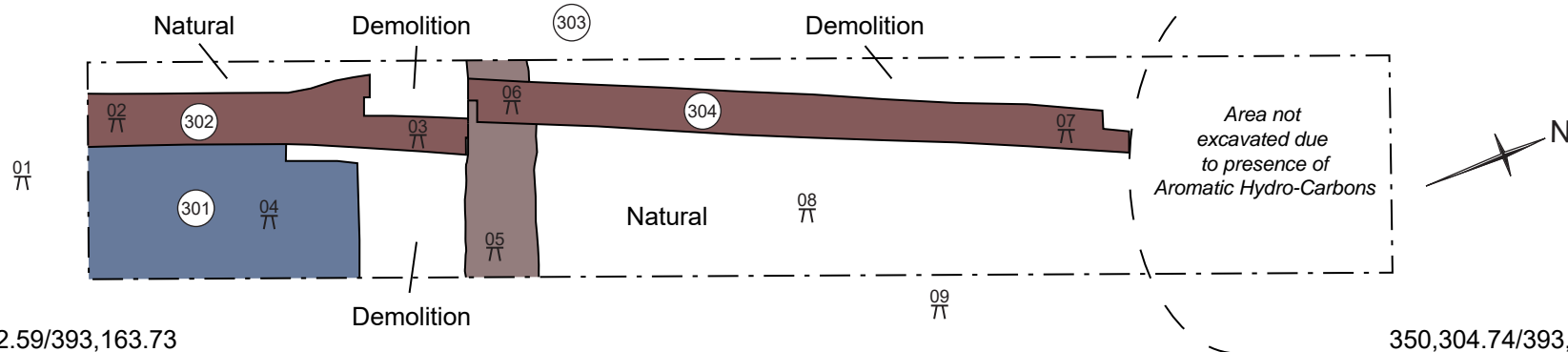


Levels OD(m)

TBM	=	63.73
IH	=	2.45
BS	=	66.18
1	=	64.45
2	=	63.95
3	=	63.84
4	=	63.95
5	=	63.89
6	=	63.99
7	=	63.90
8	=	63.36
9	=	64.58

350,301.15/393,164.07

350,303.31/393,172.82



1:50



Figure 05: Plan of Trench 3 showing locations of the archaeological features at 1:50 Scale at A4.

Aeon Archaeology
Richard Cooke BA MA MCifA
Obsidian Offices, Chantry Court,
Chester CH1 4QN
Tel: 07866925393 / 01244 531585
www.aeonarchaeology.co.uk

Trench 04 (Plates 17-25, figures 4 and 6)

SJ 50304.29/ 93189.26 – SJ 50301.50/ 93179.66 – SJ 50300.04/ 93180.07 – SJ 50302.83/ 93189.65

Description

Trench 4 measured 10.0m in length north-northeast to south-southwest by 1.5m in width by a maximum depth of 1.8m, and was located at the north-eastern end of the Site targeting the main body of the residence known as Close House.

The trench was excavated through a 0.1m deep soft, mid grey-brown clay-silt overburden with red brick fragments, mortar, and general demolition fragment inclusions. This lay above a 1.7m deep demolition deposit of red brick fragments, concrete, cinder, and sandstone fragments that infilled a former cellar (401) (402).

The trench was not excavated to its full depth limit for 5.0m at the northern end of the trench due to the presence of a live electrical cable and live water pipe. In between these services a brick-built inspection chamber was uncovered. This consisted of a 1.2m long by 1.0m wide chamber constructed from machine made, unfrosted red brick bonded by Portland cement and almost certainly associated with the former Emmanuel Chapel.

In the southern half of the trench the demolition deposit was carefully removed by tracked excavator to reveal the cellar of Close House. Due to the friable nature of the overlying demolition deposit the western limit of excavation collapsed into the evaluation trench up to the north-northeast south-southwest aligned cellar wall (401), thus extending the trench width at this location to 2.15m in width.

Wall (401) measured >4.2m in length and continued into the northern limit of excavation where the trench narrowed to its originally intended 1.5m width. It measured 0.25m in width (2 courses) by 1.7m in height (19 courses) and was constructed from moulded, unfrosted red brick averaging 0.24m in length by 0.11m in width by 0.08m in depth and bonded by lime mortar in an English Bond. The visible interior face had been clad in unpainted render which had fallen away in several places, revealing the brickwork beneath.

At the southern end, wall (401) had a rectangular doorway opening measuring 1.0m in width and infilled with demolition rubble, after which the wall turned at a ninety degree angle and ran east-southeast for 2.15m before continuing into the eastern limit of excavation. The wall at this part of the trench stood to 17 courses and was of the same construction.

The doorway opening was without frame or door and upon further investigation via the tracked excavator was shown to be an entrance into another cellar to the immediate west rather than an access / egress stairwell, thus making the NNE-SSW aligned red brick wall (401) an internal dividing wall between the two cellar spaces.

Both the NNE-SSW and the ENE-WSW parts of the cellar wall (401) were in a particularly fragile state of preservation and threatened to collapse into the evaluation trench, restricting the cleaning and recording of this trench.

Upon careful excavation with the tracked excavator the cellar floor (402) was revealed. This consisted of a poured concrete or screed and appeared to butt up against wall (401).

Discussion

The revealed cellar is almost certainly that of the former residence of Close House. The evaluation trench has shown that it persists to 1.7m to 1.8m in depth, and as such has been vertically truncated by

demolition thus showing that the potential for the preservation of any of the overlying ground floor remains of Close House is unlikely. The cellar itself was shown to continue into the northern, eastern, and western limits of excavation and is likely to have occupied the northern half or two-thirds of the footprint of the main house. The cellar would have been constructed at the same time as the main body of the house suggesting that it dates to the earliest part of the house. As the cellar walls were constructed from red brick, and due to the presence of large amounts of red brick within the overlying demolition deposit, it can be surmised that Close House was also of red brick construction. Moreover, the observation of broken sandstone fragments within the demolition deposit would suggest that detailing such as quoins and window surrounds may have been of sandstone construction.

The cellar walls were of particularly poor preservation making access into the cellar unsafe and as such all recording had to take place from surface level and no hand cleaning of the cellar could take place.

The floor of the cellar (402) was of a poured concrete or screed which would not have been used at the time of construction but is likely to have been added in the late 19th or early 20th century, most likely to replace a stone flagged floor.



Plate 17: Post excavation shot of Trench 4 - from the north - scale 1m



Plate 18: Post excavation shot of Trench 4 - from the south - scale 1m



Plate 19: Southern elevation of Brick Wall (401) within Trench 4 - from the north - scale 1m



Plate 20: Southern elevation of Brick Wall (401) within Trench 4 - from the east - scale 1m



Plate 21: Western elevation of Brick Wall (401) within Trench 4 - from the southeast - no scale



Plate 22: Oblique shot of Cellar within Trench 4 - from the northeast - no scale



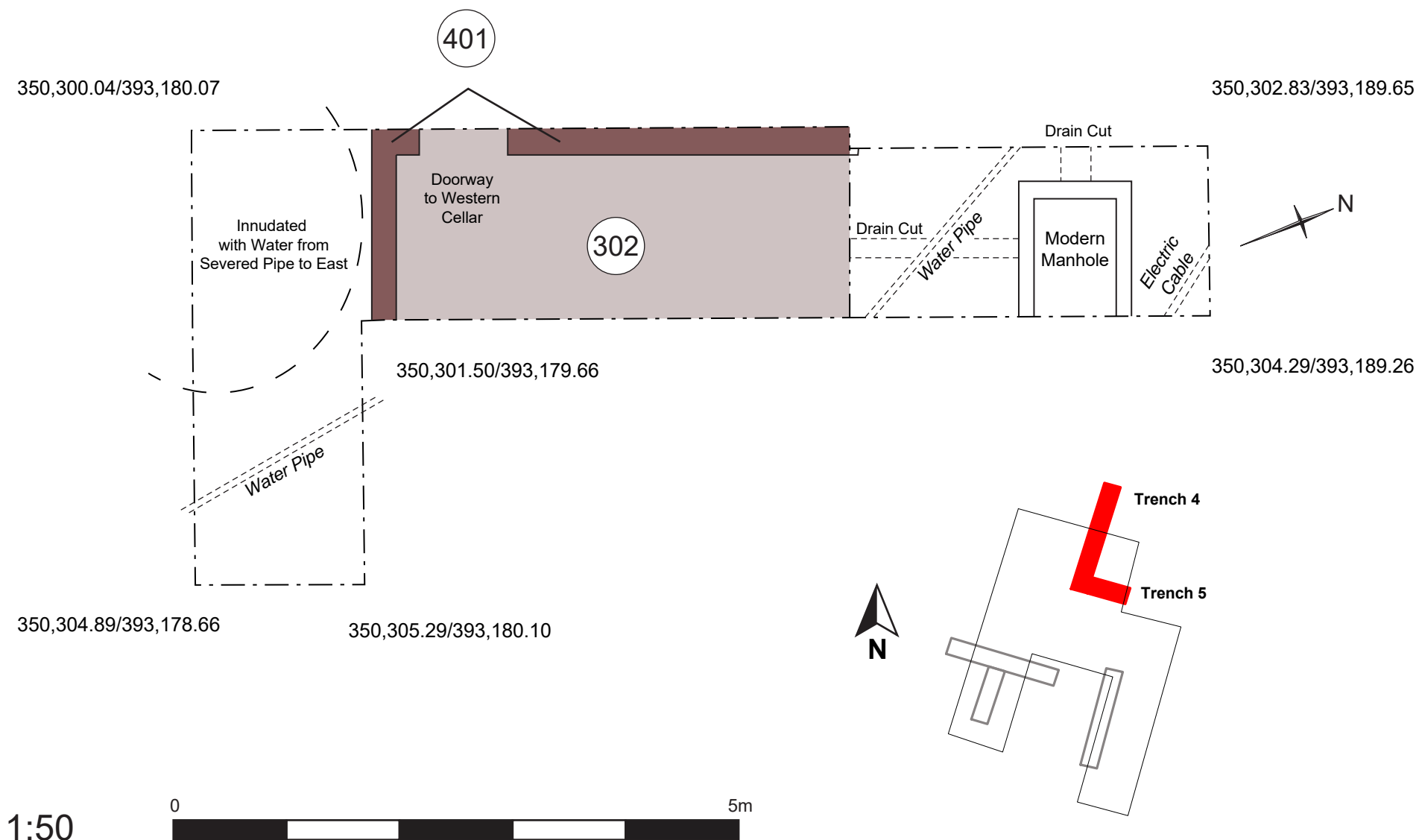
Plate 23: Oblique shot of Cellar within Trench 4 - from the southwest - no scale



Plate 24: Doorway in western elevation of wall (401) within Trench 4 - from the east - no scale



Plate 25: Doorway in western elevation of wall (401) with material removed - from the east - no scale



Trench 05 (Plates 26, figures 4)

SJ 50305.29/ 93,180.08 – SJ 50304.88/ 93178.65 - SJ 50301.51/ 93179.63 – SJ 50301.96 / 93181.09

Description

Trench 5 measured 3.5m in length west-northwest to east-southeast by 1.5m in width by a maximum depth of 0.6m, and was located at the north-eastern end of the Site targeting the main body of the residence known as Close House.

The trench was excavated through a 0.6m deep demolition deposit of red brick fragments, concrete, cinder, and sandstone fragments at which point a live water pipe was encountered running northwest to southeast across the trench. As such the trench was abandoned.

Discussion

Trench 5 could not be excavated due to the presence of a live water pipe.



Plate 26: Post excavation shot of Trench 5 - from the east - scale 1m

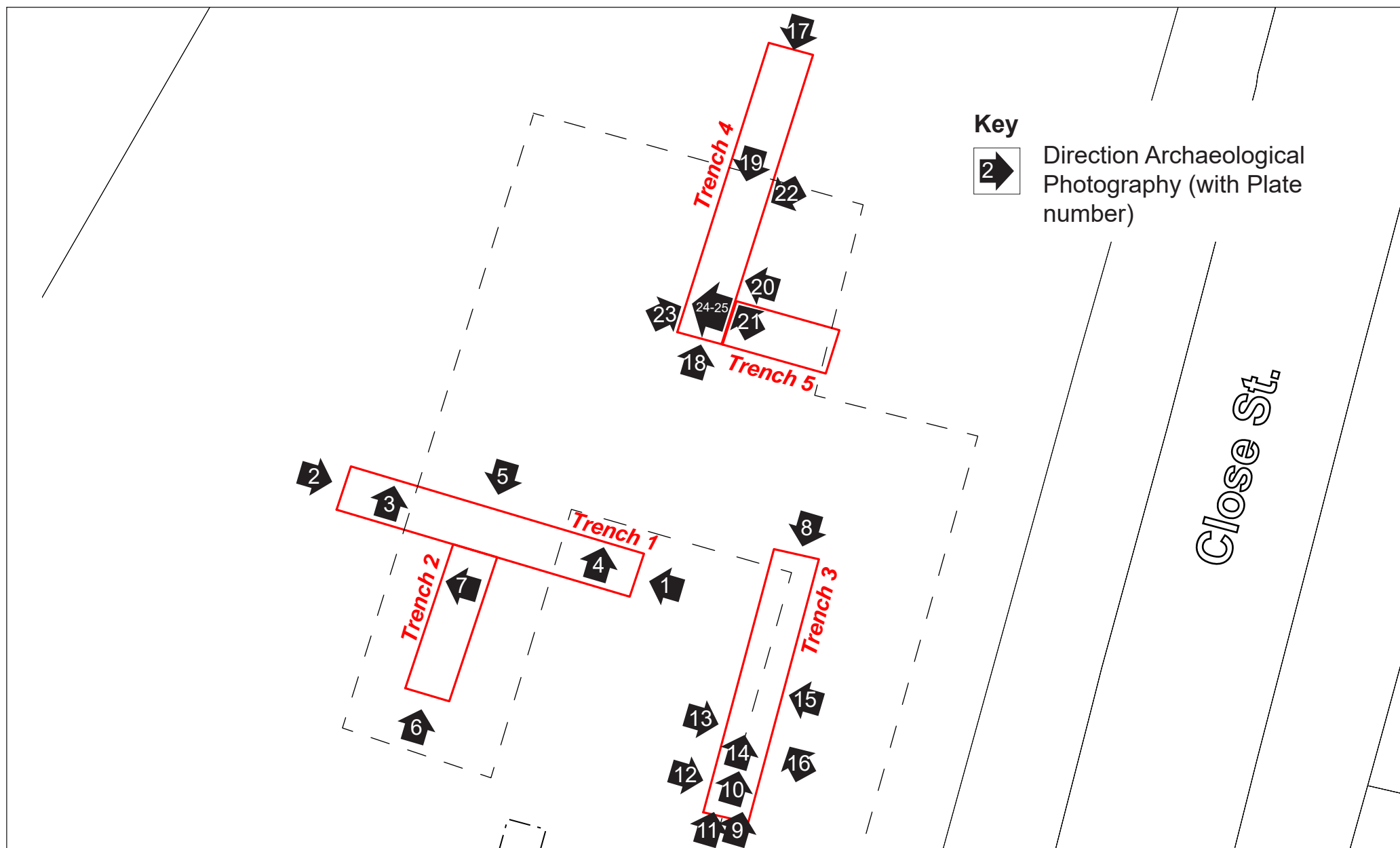


Figure 07 : Plan showing locations of archaeological photographic plates at Elephant Lane, Thatto Heath, St Helen's, WA9 5EP.

9.0 CONCLUSION

The archaeological evaluation at Elephant Lane, St Helens involved the excavation of 5 trenches targeting the footprint of the former residence known as Close House - in particular the southwest range, southeast range, and main house body.

Trenches 1 and 2 showed that to the immediate south of the now demolished Emmanuel Chapel and at the location of the former southwest range of Close House, the area had been subjected to a complete removal of the house foundation remains in order to construct the required drains and inspection chamber associated with the chapel – thus removing any potential for preservation of Close House at the southwest end of the Site.

Trench 3 was located at the southeast end of the Site and focused on the southeast range. The archaeological evaluation revealed the foundation remains of two north-south orientated red brick walls, as well as an east-west stone rubble wall and laid, clear-glazed, blue brick floor surface. The two north-south aligned red brick walls correspond with the western external elevation of the southeast wing of the Close House. The Ordnance Survey 25 inch map of 1891 shows this wing as being a separate rectangular outbuilding to the main house, and orientated north-south. The detachment of this structure from the main house and located to the rear of the building away from the principle elevation to the north suggests that this was either a service wing or more likely a stables. The outbuilding appears to have originally been a stand-alone structure with a stone rubble wall at its southern elevation with a keyed-in red-brick wall forming its western elevation. Prior to the production of the 1891 map the building was extended southwards via a red brick wall which stratigraphically butted up against and post-dated the E-W rubble wall. Stratigraphically at this time the clear glazed blue-brick floor was added, possibly suggesting that the wing now formed a formal part of the house, or perhaps a formal tack room. By the production of the 25 inch Ordnance Survey map of 1906 the wing had been extended northwards to become incorporated into the main body of Close House.

Trench 4 was located at the northern end of the Site at the location of the main house body, and uncovered the cellar of the house. The revealed cellar is almost certainly that of the former residence of Close House. The evaluation trench has shown that it persists to 1.7m to 1.8m in depth, and as such has been vertically truncated by demolition thus showing that the potential for the preservation of any of the overlying ground floor remains of Close House is unlikely. The cellar itself was shown to continue into the northern, eastern, and western limits of excavation and is likely to have occupied the northern half or two-thirds of the footprint of the main house. The cellar would have been constructed at the same time as the main body of the house suggesting that it dates to the earliest part of the house in the late 18th century. As the cellar walls were constructed from red brick, and due to the presence of large amounts of red brick within the overlying demolition deposit, it can be surmised that Close House was also of red brick construction. Moreover, the observation of broken sandstone fragments within the demolition deposit would suggest that detailing such as quoins and window surrounds may have been of sandstone construction.

The cellar walls were of particularly poor preservation making access into the cellar unsafe and as such all recording had to take place from surface level with no hand cleaning of the cellar floor and walls.

The floor of the cellar was of a poured concrete or screed which would not have been used at the time of construction but is likely to have been added in the late 19th or early 20th century, most likely to replace a stone flagged floor.

Trench 5 was located at the northern end of the Site also targeting the main body of Close House. This trench was abandoned due to the presence of a live water pipe.

This evaluation enables an informed, sustainable and responsible approach to the development of land at Elephant Lane, St Helens. The information provided meets the expectations of legislation in that the applicant has evaluated the presence of archaeological assets that may be affected by proposed development at the Site. It is considered that the level of detail provided is proportionate to the assets' importance and provides sufficient information to understand the potential impact of the proposal on the significance of archaeological remains. Due to the limited capacity for full excavation of the Close House cellar because of the instability of the cellar walls, it is recommended that there is little potential for further knowledge to be gained through a programme of mitigation, and as such it is recommended that the archaeological condition now be discharged.

10.0 SOURCES

Brown D. H., 2007. Archaeological Archives: A guide to best practice in creation, compilation, transfer and curation. Archaeological Archives Forum

British Geological Survey website. www.bgs.ac.uk

English Heritage, 1991. Management of Archaeological Projects (MAP2)

English Heritage, 2006. Management of Research Projects in the Historic Environment (MORPHE)

Laing L. 2014. *Pottery in Britain: 4000BC to AD1900*, Greenlight Publishing, Witham, Essex.

Richards, J. & Robinson, D., 2000. Digital Archives from Excavation and *Fieldwork: Guide to Good Practice* (Second Edition). The Archaeology Data Service Guide to Good Practice: Oxbow Books

The Chartered Institute for Archaeologists, 2014. *Code of Conduct*

The Chartered Institute for Archaeologists, 2014. *Code of Approved Practice for the Regulation of Contractual Arrangements in Field Archaeology*

The Chartered Institute for Archaeologists, 2014. *Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Field Evaluation*

The Chartered Institute for Archaeologists, 2014. *Standard and Guidance for the Collection, Documentation, Conservation and Research of Archaeological Materials*

The Chartered Institute for Archaeologists, 2014. *Standard and Guidance for the Creation, Compilation, Transfer and Deposition of Archaeological Archives*

