SHREWSBURY BLACKFRIARS AND NURSES' HOME:

.

ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION

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1. Introduction

The archaeological evaluation was commissioned by Arrol and Snell Ltd. (Architects) and Holt Properties (Shrewsbury) Ltd., and was carried out prior to the preparation of detailed design proposals. The purpose was to assess the archaeological constraints which might affect an extensive area of land designated for potential development within the historic core of Shrewsbury. It is the architects' intention to make positive use of the results of the archaeological evaluation in considering the various design options.

The development area (Fig. 1) is located on the east side of the medieval core of Shrewsbury, on the steep slope which here falls away from the high ground of the town centre down to the bank of the River Severn, immediately to the south of St. Mary's Water Lane. Much of the area is terraced, but there are few modern buildings, most of the flat areas now being used for car parking. A survey of the available map evidence (Burghley, c.1575; Speed, 1610-11; Rocque 1746; 1st edition 0.S., 1882) shows that much of the area has been open ground since the late 16th century, primarily occupied by terraced gardens.

In the medieval period, however, the lower part of the area was the site of Shrewsbury's Dominican Friary ('Blackfriars'), typically sited, like the friaries of the Franciscan and Austin Friars, on the fringes of the settlement, outside the town walls (Fig. 2). The friary was founded c.1230 and suppressed c.1536; its history has been documented elsewhere (Owen 1808, 305; Owen and Blakeway, 1825, ii, 444; Palmer, 1886; Forrest 1935, 31; de Saulles 1975) and need not be summarised here. It was, however, an extensive and successful establishment, being used as an occasional residence by Edward IV (his son, Richard, Duke of York, one of the 'Princes in the Tower' was born there) and visited over the years by other royalty. Through royal grants and other donations the friars' land spread along the river bank as far as the English Bridge (causing a dispute with the monks of Shrewsbury Abbey who owned vineyards on the upper slopes below the town walls), and they were granted the right to build a wall from the Water Gate to the English Bridge to enclose their land. After the Dissolution most of the buildings, including the church, were demolished: Burghley's map of 1575 shows the roofless ruins of only two, or possibly three, buildings.

Neither the plan nor the exact location of most of the friary buildings is known. Apart from a number of limited excavations which have taken place from time to time in the course of redevelopment, Burghley's pictorial map of 1575 still provides the best indication of where the buildings were located. The most extensive of these excavations took place in 1823 during levelling operations for the construction of Union Wharf, when lengths of wall were excavated and "three chambers were laid open" (Owen and Blakeway 1825, ii, 444) (see Fig. 2). More recently, excavations in 1973, between St. Mary's Water Lane and Back Lane, uncovered a number of structural remains, including what were interpreted as the foundations of the south wall of the choir, and graves (Pitman 1973, 1974). Friaries were a popular place for burial in the medieval period and, because of the importance of Shrewsbury's Dominican Friary, the cemetery is likely to be extensive.

The higher end of the development area, in the angle between St. Mary's Water Lane and Windsor Place, also has considerable archaeological potential. It is here that the major break of slope occurs, the relatively flat top of the hill, on which medieval Shrewsbury was built, giving way to a steep slope down to the river. The medieval town wall is known to have followed this break of slope (see, for example, Burghley's map of 1575) although the exact course of this stretch is not known. St. Mary's Gate, at the head of St Mary's Water Lane, provided access down to the Severn. St Mary's Water Lane was in fact itself walled on both sides, with a second gate, Waterlane Gate, at the bottom of the lane. Waterlane Gate is still a substantial structure, but all that possibly remains of St. Mary's Gate are some fragments of masonry incorporated in a brick retaining wall along the south side of the lane at the point where it is met by the first terrace wall (See Fig. 2).

The construction of Shrewsbury's town walls is normally dated c.1220 - 1242 (ie roughly the same time as the construction of the Dominican Friary) on

historical grounds: in 1218 Henry III commanded the citizens of Shrewsbury to enclose their town and in 1242 the Dominican Friars were given 200 cartloads of stone 'left over from the building of the walls of Shrewsbury' Upstanding, and excavated, (Ralegh Radford 1958, Barker 1961, 181). portions of the town wall are usually attributed to this period. However, the history of Shrewsbury's fortifications is potentially much more complicated. Some form of earthwork rampart might be anticipated for the defences of the Saxon burh, while a case has also been made for an 'inner' 12th-century town wall (but see Carver 1976, 251; 1983, 2). The subsequent history of the 13th-century walls is also less than straightforward. Hobbs (1954) implies that work on the walls should have been continuing beyond The excavations on Pride Hill (Carver 1983) the middle of the century. have indicated that houses were being built on the town wall from as early as the turn of the 14th and 15th centuries. Elsewhere there is evidence both for subsequent refurbishment and demolition. Carver (1976, 251) summarised the possible complexities of the situation as follows: "There is more than a suspicion that work on the building and rebuilding of the defences was liable to have been in progress at any time between the 13th century and the late 16th, when, after a short interval perhaps, it began again with the Civil War refurbishment." His own trial excavation of a portion of the 'town wall' in Wyle Cop Meadow (Carver 1976, 257) emphasised these problems. Here the wall, while superficially possessing some of the necessary medieval characteristics, proved to be of 19th-century date.

Two modern excavations on the west side of Shrewsbury have revealed the basic characteristics of the 13th-century wall. At Roushill (Barker, 1961) the ground in front of the intended line of the wall had first been scarped, and the clay subsoil thus removed piled up behind the line of wall to form a bank 9m wide and 2m high. A vertical face was cut into this clay bank and the wall built against it. The wall, 1.4m wide, was of excellent construction, with an outer face of coursed, dressed red sandstone, a rubble core, and an inner face (against the clay bank) of coursed rubble. The front face of the wall had a chamfered plinth, between 0.6m and 0.75m in height, which was stepped to conform to the slope of the hill along the length of the wall. The wall foundation, variable in its size along the excavated portion, was of mortared sandstone rubble.

bank of mixed clay and earth was piled up against the foundations to the level of the dressed stone. The portion of the wall excavated at Pride Hill Chambers (Carver 1983) conformed in its essential details, as far as can be established, with that excavated at Roushill.

2. Aims, methods and limitations

The aim of the evaluation was to provide an initial assessment of the depth, nature, quality of preservation, possible extent and potential importance of the archaeological deposits within the proposed development area. It is intended that use will be made of the results of the evaluation in order to formulate design proposals which will take full account of the archaeological resource, allowing important archaeological deposits to be preserved <u>in situ</u> and intact where possible; where not possible to allow for the formulation of a strategy of controlled excavation and recording prior to destruction.

These aims were limited and problem orientated. When the key facts depth, quality of preservation, potential importance, etc. - had been established, excavation ceased. In contrast to a rescue excavation, no attempt was made to fully excavate important archaeological deposits once they had been identified. Indeed, as well as being beyond the scope of the evaluation exercise, the excavation of small trial trenches through important archaeological remains is undesirable in itself, as the small size of the excavation often makes it difficult to adequately interpret the remains uncovered while nevertheless contributing to the destruction of those remains.

The site at Shrewsbury under consideration here presented its own particular problems. In all the areas explored the depth of modern made-up ground was considerable, and the make-up was often unstable and liable to collapse when excavated. Safety considerations therefore limited the size and depth of all the evaluation trenches. It was fortunate, however, that in most cases excavation could be carried to an adequate depth to answer the most important archaeological questions before excavation had to cease

for safety reasons. A second problem was presented by the particularly complex depositional history which applies to steeply sloping sites, where the deposits have undergone centuries of silting, dumping, levelling up, levelling down, cutting back and building up, so that the original topography of the ground has all but disappeared. In such situations it is often especially difficult to understand the sequence in a small trial trench, and the problems of extrapolating from the findings in the trench to a wider area are particularly acute.

Five trial trenches were excavated, designated A-E (Fig. 2). Trenches A and C explored the upper, eastern end of the development area, where the anticipated feature of archaeological importance was the Town Wall, although its exact line here was not known (see above). Trenches B and D explored the western, lower end of the development area, on the site of the medieval Dominican Friary. Trench E explored the intervening middle portion of the hillside. Each trench was excavated by machine (JCB) down to the level at which significant archaeological deposits were encountered. Subsequent 'cleaning up' and limited excavation of features and deposits was undertaken by hand. Pro-forma recording cards were used for the written record, and a full photographic and drawn record was maintained.

3. The Town Walls area: Trenches A and C

Trench A

This trench, measuring 15m x 3m on the surface, was excavated by machine, with its long axis aligned east-west, perpendicular to the terrace wall (Fig.2). For reasons of safety, at a depth of 1.6m below the ground surface the trench was stepped inwards by 1m on each side, so that the lower deposits were investigated in a trench only 1m wide. Again, primarily for reasons of safety, excavation ceased at an overall depth of c.3m below the present ground surface, which was also the level at which significant medieval deposits were encountered.

Probably the earliest feature encountered was a truncated sandstone wall (F1), the surviving top of which first appeared 2.7m below the present ground surface, about 5m behind (ie to the west of) the present terrace The very short length of wall uncovered (c.1m) appeared to wall (Fig.4). be aligned NNW-SSE, a markedly different orientation to that of the present terrace wall but approximating to that of Windsor Place at this point. The wall was faced on its east side with blocks of red sandstone (approx. 0.5m $x 0.5m \times 0.3m$) with a mortar-bonded rubble core behind. The later insertion of a sandstone drain (F2), on a different alignment, had obliterated the west face of the wall at this point, making it impossible to determine its original thickness. A small sondage against the east face of the wall revealed the sandstone blocks continuing down to a depth in excess of 0.5m below the top of the wall, but excavation ceased without the surviving height of the wall being established.

The nature of the deposits to the west (ie inside), and to the east (outside), of the wall differed markedly. As the contrast between these deposits continued at least 1m above the present top of the wall, it is clear that they were laid down at a time when the wall survived to a greater height than at present. However, the details of the relationships between these deposits and the wall had been destroyed by the construction trench (F3) for the drain, and by a trench cut for the purpose of robbing stones from the wall. This robber trench (F14) contained numerous fragments of sandstone and mortar. The drain itself (F2) survived in good condition, measuring about 0.5m wide by 0.2m high. The base and sides were constructed of mortar-bonded blocks of red sandstone. Its construction trench revealed that the drain was inserted at a time when the ground surface was about 1.5m below the present level.

A series of sandy deposits (contexts 1002-1011) had built up against the western (inner) face of the wall prior to the insertion of the drain and the robbing of the wall. The small quantity of domestic refuse amongst these deposits, the number of distinct horizons which could be recognised, and the gentle downward slope of the layers from west to east (which may be assumed to reflect the natural topography of the site) suggest a gradual accumulation of slope-wash against the back of the wall, rather than a

deliberate dumping operation. The two earliest layers in this accumulation (1010, 1011) contained, in addition to a quantity of animal bone and three iron nails, a handful of small, abraded potsherds, in local-type sandy fabrics generally with a lead glaze. The sherds are too undiagnostic for close identification, but are medieval in character, possibly including sherds from late-medieval jugs.

The sequence to the east of the wall is very different. At the base of the trench, at a level roughly corresponding with the top of the sandstone wall, a number of interesting features and deposits were encountered. Because these occured at the maximum depth of excavation they could not be investigated in detail. About 3m to the east of the wall traces of a second sandstone wall (F12) were observed, possibly also faced on its eastern side. To the west of this wall the top of a compacted layer of clay and pebbles was uncovered (1021), possibly representing a path and therefore indicative of a ground surface. The sondage against the east face of wall F1 produced, in addition to animal bones and iron nails, three sherds of pottery including a jug handle of 14th - 15th-century date, suggesting a terminus post quem for the ground surface.

Above this possible ground surface was a thick layer of black loam (1019), containing numerous fragments of sandstone, tile and charcoal, and of 17thto 18th-century deposition. Finds from the layer included the handle and eight sherds of a brown glazed chamber pot or large cup of late 17th -18th-century date. This layer can, with some confidence, be interpreted as levelling material, infilling the space between wall F1 and the present terrace wall to the east (which at the corresponding level is constructed of 18th-century brick). At its eastern end this layer abutted a brickbuilt cellar which had been built up against the terrace wall. At its western end the layer was cut by the robber trench (F14) for wall F1. This layer is overlain by a series of 19th-century layers of varied character which represent the gradual raising of the ground level towards its present height. Some of these layers have the character of garden soils, and a number of garden features, including shallow pits (F7, F8, F9) and a possible path (F6) can be clearly seen in the section (Fig.4). These

layers are in turn overlain by 20th-century levelling material and hardcore underlying the modern tarmac.

Trench C

A trench, 8m long by 2m wide, was excavated by machine at the base of the retaining wall which defines the east end of Trench A, with its long axis perpendicular to the retaining wall (designated F4 in Trench C) (Fig.2). The trench was taken down to a maximum depth of 2.5m, at which point medieval deposits were contacted and excavation ceased for safety reasons.

The earliest deposit encountered was a layer of silty sand, black/green in colour, and sloping down gently from west to east (context 1003). this deposit, in addition to a quantity of animal bone, six sherds of pottery were recovered. Two of the sherds are of Malvernian cooking pot, of probable 13th-century date, and the remaining four sherds from a greenglazed decorated pitcher, probably also of 13th-century date. The terrace wall (F4) was founded on this deposit. The foundations were of irregular blocks and rubble of red sandstone, without mortar bonding, and had a height of 1.5 metres. The wall above was of faced sandstone blocks, including both red and white (Grinsill) sandstone, which continue to a height of 4.5 metres above the base of the foundations. The uppermost 2m of the wall are primarily of 18th- and 19th-century brickwork, although there are many structural complexities. The overall height of the wall is therefore 6.5m from the base of the foundations to the top of the wall (excluding the modern parapet); from the modern ground surface the wall stands 5m high.

No cut for the foundations of this wall could be discerned in the section. It is assumed that the foundations were built up against a vertical face cut into the slope, with soil dumped in front of the foundations prior to the raising of the wall. No datable material was recovered from the soil dumped up against the foundations (1001), but the soil did contain a considerable quantity of disarticulated human bone (and one or two partially articulated pieces of skeleton) which suggests that the material

was derived in part from the area of the friary cemetery, which, while its size and extent are not known, was situated nearby.

In addition to sealing the foundations of the terrace wall (F4) the dumped soil (1001) also completely overlay traces of the foundations of a second wall (F3), encountered at the very bottom of the trench, about 3m to the east of the terrace wall. This wall was possibly cut through the same layer (1003) on which the terrace wall was founded, but must have been demolished at, or before, the time when the terrace wall was constructed. The wall foundations were of red sandstone, with a compacted area of mortar uncovered at the south end of the short length exposed. Like all the other walls encountered in Areas A and C the wall appeared to have a roughly north-south alignment.

The dumped deposit (1001) against the terrace wall foundations (F4) was about 1.5m thick (ie its thickness corresponded with the height of the foundations). Its upper surface fell away gently to the east following the same slope as the layer (1003) below. A large modern pit (F2) was cut into its surface. Above, modern levelling material, containing hardcore, brick, etc, forms the present level surface.

Interpretation and Discussion

The trial excavations in this area have thus revealed three further walls in addition to the present upstanding terrace wall. Which of these is the town wall? The brief discussion of Shrewsbury's defences above (Section 1) suggests that this question might be too simplistic, the evolution of the town's defences possibly being a long and complex process. However, the excavations at Roushill and Pride Hill Chambers have enabled the character of the 13th-century wall to be reasonably clearly established, at least on the west side of the town (above, Section 1), although it should be noted that at Roushill Barker used the wall to date the pottery and not <u>vice</u> <u>versa</u>.

The lower, stone-built, portion of the upstanding terrace wall has been considered a candidate for the 13th-century town wall. In its favour, this

wall terminates at its northern end in fragmentary masonry which is assumed to be the remains of the medieval St.Mary's Gate, although these remains are now embedded in 18th/19th-century brickwork. It is founded on a deposit containing 13th-century pottery, which will admit a 13th-century date for the construction of the wall. However, the wall itself has few of the characteristics observed at Roushill and Pride Hill Chambers: its foundations are unmortared rather than mortared, the chamfered plinth is absent, the quality of construction is poor and the wall includes white (Grinsill) sandstone in addition to the red sandstone used exclusively at Roushill and Pride Hill Chambers.

At the time of excavation it was believed that the westernmost wall encountered in Trench A (F1) was most probably the 13th-century town wall. There are a number of reasons for believing this. First, although due to the partial nature of the excavation many of the characteristics of the wall could not be established (for example the presence or absence of a chamfered plinth), those characteristics which could be established method of construction, exclusive use of red sandstone - conformed with the particulars established at Roushill and Pride Hill Chambers. Second, the wall conforms better with the natural topography and presumed layout of medieval Shrewsbury than the upstanding terrace wall. Just north of the Nurses' Home there is a marked change in alignment in the latter wall, which turns northwards from the presumed SE-NW line along the east side of the Nurses' Home. This marked change of alignment, which appears to run contrary to the natural topography, is not shown on either the Burghley Map of c.1575 nor the Speed Map of 1611. Third, logic, as well as stratigraphic evidence, would suggest that the westernmost wall in the sequence is also the earliest, with later walls downslope to the east functioning to enlarge the area of usable space on the hill top.

The only serious problem with this interpretation is that, on the basis of the short stretch exposed, the projected line of wall F1 meets St. Mary's Water Lane a considerable distance behind (ie to the west of) the supposed remains of the medieval gate. Assuming that this wall is the 13th-century town wall, there are a number of possible explanations for this anomaly. First, the fragmentary remains of the gate may not be medieval at all, but

may relate to a subsequent refurbishment of the defences, perhaps as late as the Civil War (when the lower end of St. Mary's Water Lane was fortified with two blockhouses). Second, the masonry remains may indeed mark the position of a 13th-century gate, but one located at the outside (eastern) end of a projecting gate tower (a substantial gate tower is shown at this point on the Burghley map), the town wall abutting the gate tower at its inner end. Third, as Mr. Alan Snell has suggested, the fragmentary masonry of a gate included in the brick wall may simply be an antiquarian 'reconstruction'.

However, the precise function and date of the structures and deposits uncovered in this part of the development area must remain uncertain. Detailed information of this sort cannot be expected from small, partially excavated trenches, nor was the retrieval of such information the primary aim of the evaluation.

4. The Dominican Friary Area: Trenches B and D

Trenches B and D were located in a carpark known to cover the general area of the Medieval Dominican Friary (Fig. 2). While excavations in 1801, 1823 and 1973 had revealed artefacts and structural remains relating to the friary, no coherent plan of the friary buildings can be extrapolated. The trenches could not, therefore, be located with any clear reference to known elements of the friary layout. The principal structure revealed in the 1823 excavations was uncovered 10-15m to the east of the evaluation trenches - a ruined friary building is also shown in roughly this position on Burghley's map of c.1575. A second, larger building, similarly ruined and roofless is shown by Burghley just to the south of where the evaluation trenches were located. The 1973 excavation took place some 40m to the NE, between St. Mary's Water Lane and 'Back Lane', the principal structural remains uncovered being interpreted as foundations for the south wall of Immediately east of Trench D is the site of a 20th-century the choir. warehouse, recently demolished to make way for the carpark.

Trench D, c.35m long by c.2m wide, was located in the centre of the carpark on an approximately north-south alignment (Fig. 7). It was excavated by machine to a maximum depth of 2m. Excavation had to be stopped at this depth due to the extremely unstable nature of the sides of the trench. which cut through the brick and rubble foundations of the modern warehouse. Along most of the length of the trench modern foundation deposits and levelling material accounted for the whole excavated section and continued to an unknown depth below the bottom of the trench. Only in one stretch, towards the centre of the trench, were earlier deposits encountered. Due to collapse, and danger of further collapse, the two ends of the trench were backfilled prior to full recording, leaving only this 4m-long stretch The early deposits in this central area comprised a small exposed. 'island' of the natural subsoil in which was set a small stub of wall (F22) protruding out 0.6m from the eastern side of the trench. The wall, c.1.0m wide, was built of mortared blocks of red sandstone and was set in a foundation trench. The top of the wall survived at a depth of 1.5m below the present ground surface. To the north and south of the wall modern disturbance continued below this depth, suggesting that any similar features in the immediately adjacent area have been destroyed by recent levelling and building activity.

Trench B was laid out on an approximately east-west alignment, connecting Trench D with the insubstantial modern terrace wall defining the west side of the carpark. It was approximately 17m in length, 2m in width and was excavated by machine to a depth of 1.5m (Fig. 5). At the west end of the trench banded natural sands and clays (1033) were contacted at a depth of only c.0.5m below the present ground surface. The modern terrace wall rested directly, and somewhat insecurely, on this natural sand without proper foundations. From the wall the natural subsoil sloped away steeply Only two features of possible early date were encountered, to the east. both at the east end of the trench near the junction with Trench D, close by, and at a similar depth to the stub of sandstone wall (F22) encountered in Trench D. These features comprised a north-south band of very compact loam and pebbles, c.O.1m thick, interpreted as a path (F2O) and, to the east of it, on a similar alignment, a straight-edged trench (F21) filled with compact gravel, interpreted as a possible foundation trench. These

features were cut into the natural sands; both they and the natural subsoil exposed along the length of the trench were cut by a series of modern pits (F16, F17, F18, F19) and a drain (F15), which were in turn sealed by modern rubble make-up for the carpark.

The only significant finds recovered were five fragments of decorated floor tiles, from the disturbed natural sands at the eastern end of the trench. Four separate designs were represented and parallels can be found with tiles from Much Wenlock Priory, Lilleshall Abbey and tiles recovered from earlier excavations on the site of the Dominican Friary at Shrewsbury. The tiles, which are of probable 15th-century date, undoubtedly derive from the friary. Interestingly, a parallel for one of the designs can be found in the mixed group of floor tiles used in a 16th - early 17th-century house at Pride Hill Chambers, Shrewsbury: it is likely that many floor tiles from the friary were reused in houses in the town after the Dissolution.

It is probable that the stub of sandstone wall (F22) and the possible foundation trench (F21) also relate to the friary complex, but beyond this nothing specific can be said.

5. Trench E (Fig. 8)

Trench E was located in an area of ground between lying between the upper terrace levels explored by Trenches A and C and the lower terrace level explored by trenches B and D. With regard to the overall profile of the eastern side of Shrewsbury from the medieval defences down to the river, this trench helps to 'fill the gap' between these upper and lower levels (Fig.2). The area available for excavation was confined by the very steep bank running down from the Nurses' Home to the west and the modern terrace wall to the east.

The trench, orientated approximately east-west, was 7.5m in length, c.2m in width and was excavated by machine to a maximum depth of 2.5m. The natural subsoil was not contacted, and to its full depth the trench cut through made-up ground of probable post-medieval origin. The lowest deposits encountered, at the eastern end of the trench, comprised layers of loose

sandstone rubble (1004, 1005) containing mortar flecks and fragments of post-medieval tile. Overlying these rubble layers was a layer of brown/black loam (1003), also containing numerous mortar flecks. This may be interpreted as a garden soil. A rectangular brick and stone drain (F2) of probable 17th/18th-century construction was cut into these soils, draining from west to east. It is probable that many of the blocks of red sandstone used in the construction of the drain derive from nearby medieval structures, either the friary or the town walls. This drain was in turn cut by a modern iron pipe (F1), bedded on concrete and following a northsouth alignment. At the western end of the trench these features were overlain by a layer of demolition rubble (1001), while at the eastern end of the trench the ground had been further made up with layers of blackbrown loams (1000, 1002) containing a high density of mortar flecks. Overlying these garden soils was a rough layer of rubble and other modern debris.

6. Implications and Recommendations

The evaluation has shown that, at no point so-far tested, do deposits of archaeological significance occur at a depth of less than c.1.25m below the present ground surface. This suggests that if on any part of the development area a design option is adopted in which ground disturbance below this depth is minimal, the threat to surviving archaeological deposits will likewise be minimal.

At the lower, eastern, end of the site, in the area of the Dominican Friary (Trenches B and D), it is understood that flood levels will prohibit building below the present ground surface in any case. If raft type foundations are used here damage to surviving archaeological remains will be minimised. Furthermore, the evaluation has suggested that much of the archaeological remains in this area have already been destroyed by building activity in the 19th and 20th centuries. Nevertheless, even if a suitable non-destructive design option is adopted, it is recommended that an archaeological watching brief is maintained.

No buildings of archaeological interest are known to have occupied the middle of the slope (Trench E), and excavation to a depth of 2.5m failed to contact deposits of archaeological significance, the entire trench being cut through made-up ground of post-medieval origin. On the basis of the limited information available, there would appear to be no archaeological constraints on development in this area. Again, however, it is recommended that ground works are monitored archaeologically.

The the position at the upper end of the development area (Trenches A and C) is rather more complex. Trench A showed that in the upper carpark deposits to a depth of c.1.25m below the surface (67.58m AOD) were of recent origin and of no archaeological significance. Below this depth, however, the situation differs to the east and west of the probable 13thcentury town wall (F1 in Trench A) (Fig 4). To the west of the wall a series of deposits (1002-1011) were encountered at this depth, which appeared to have built up behind the wall before it was demolished to its present height. These deposits are of late-medieval and early-postmedieval date, and were excavated to a depth of c.3.0m below the present ground surface (66.00m AOD). To the east of the wall post-medieval and modern dumped deposits, garden soils, etc., are found to a depth of c.3m below the present ground surface (66.00m AOD).

Below 66.00m AOD (the maximum depth of the trial excavation) the sequence of deposits is not known. However, it was at this level that medieval deposits were first contacted. It is predicted that the sequence will again be different to the east and west of the wall. To the west of the wall (ie inside it) it is possible that a sequence of stratified deposits survive which represent the accumulation of deposits behind the town wall in the medieval period. If this is the case, these deposits will be of great archaeological importance as such sequences are extremely rare in Shrewsbury. Furthermore there is the possibility that deposits relating to the Late Saxon occupation of the town, including possible burh defences, may survive intact below these deposits. If so, these would be of very great archaeological interest. It must be stressed, however, that these are only possibilities. Where the town wall has been excavated elsewhere its construction has been shown to have entailed extensive earth moving,

which has resulted in the destruction of early deposits and the creation of mixed dumped deposits. These are of lesser archaeological significance.

To the east of the wall (F1), a sequence of later-medieval accumulations and dumps is anticipated between this wall and the wall (F12) immediately to the east of it, representing the first stage in the eastwards extension of the upper terraced area. The depth to which these deposits survive and what underlies them is unknown.

Given the many uncertainties, it is suggested that if a design option is adopted which involves lowering the ground surface in the top carpark to below the 66.00m AOD level, a 'phased' approach is adopted, whereby the ground level is lowered in stages and an appropriate archaeological response determined at each stage. An initial phase would involve machine stripping the 1.25m of post-medieval made-up ground to the west of the probable town wall (F1) and the 3.00m of post-medieval made-up ground to the east of the wall. After this initial phase of stripping, which should be carried out under archaeological supervision, an opportunity should be given to the archaeologists to 'clean up' the resulting surfaces and carry out appropriate recording, which may include the hand excavation of features and deposits, either in full or as samples. On the basis of the results of this archaeological recording the depth of a further phase of machine excavtion could then be determined, again followed by appropriate At each stage progress should be archaeological recording, and so on. reviewed with archaeological officers from the County County and English Heritage, who will determine whether the archaeological investigations have revealed features and stratified deposits sufficient importance to merit preservation in situ. Where extant retaining walls have to be lowered in tandem with the adjacent ground level these should also be subjected to appropriate archaeological recording. A sufficiently extended timetable should be allowed to take account of most archaeological eventualities.

The strength of this approach lies in its flexibility, allowing a balance to be achieved between the requirements of the development and those of archaeology, and minimizing the risk of delays during the construction

phase or the destruction of important archaeological remains without adequate record.

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Abbreviation: TSAS - Transactions of the Shropshire Archaeological Society

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