

**48-50 High Street, Uttoxeter,  
Staffordshire:  
An Archaeological Watching  
Brief 2004**

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**48-50 High Street, Uttoxeter, Staffordshire:  
An Archaeological Watching Brief 2004**

by

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48 – 50 High Street, Uttoxeter, Staffordshire, Birmingham Archaeology 2004*

## **48-50 HIGH STREET, UTTOXETER, STAFFORDSHIRE: AN ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF 2004**

### **SUMMARY**

*Walbrook Housing Association Ltd commissioned an archaeological watching brief on land at 48 – 50 High Street, Uttoxeter, Staffordshire (centred on NGR 094 336). The watching brief was undertaken by Birmingham Archaeology in January, February and May 2004. It was informed by a brief prepared by Chris Wardle on behalf of Staffordshire County Council whose recommendations were made in part due to the findings of an archaeological evaluation on the site in 2002, which produced evidence of medieval and post-medieval activity. The watching brief produced a small number of sherds of post-medieval pottery and clay pipe from the overburden covering the site, but no other archaeological features or deposits were encountered.*

### **1.0 INTRODUCTION**

This report outlines the results of an archaeological watching brief carried out in January, February and May 2004 on land to the rear of 48 – 50 High Street, Uttoxeter, Staffordshire (centred on NGR 094 336), during trenching for the services and foundations of residential units on the site. It was made clear that footings for the new buildings and some of the related service trenches had already been excavated, and their concrete foundations poured prior to commencement of the watching brief. As a result it was only possible to observe one service trench whilst it was open. Informed that this was the case Birmingham Archaeology undertook the watching brief following recommendations made by Chris Wardle on behalf of Staffordshire County Council. The recommendations were made, in part, as a result of findings in a previous archaeological evaluation on the site, which found evidence of medieval and post-medieval activity in the backplot area of the property (Duncan, 2002).

The watching brief was undertaken according to guidelines laid out in the Institute of Field Archaeologists Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Watching Briefs (2001) and observed a methodology described in a Written Scheme of Investigations, prepared by Birmingham Archaeology (2004).

### **2.0 LOCATION**

The site lies within the historic core of Uttoxeter (centred on NGR SK 094 336, Fig 1-3), and is located on the east side of the High Street at its junction with Bradley Street, which bounds the site to the north. To the east of the site is a bus station whilst to the south a retaining wall separates the plot from retail units.

The structure of 48-50 High Street is outwardly of 19<sup>th</sup> century date, although the interior retains earlier elements (Hewitson 2004). At the time of the evaluation in 2002 several outbuildings and workshops had ranged around two sides of a small yard immediately to the rear of this structure, and an area of hard standing covered the rear

area of the plot. These features had been removed by the beginning of the watching brief in January 2004.

### **3.0 TOPOGRAPHY AND GEOLOGY**

The town of Uttoxeter is located on an island of glacial sands and gravel which overlies the solid geology of Mercia Mudstone (Bain 2002, 2). It sits on a slight escarpment overlooking the floodplain of the River Dove. The High Street itself is located on the southern aspect of the slope, which leads down to the confluence of the River Dove and the Picknal Brook to the south-east. The site lies at a height of c.91.0m AOD, sloping slightly towards the west and south (Ground Engineering, 2001). Substantial hard landscaping in the environs of the site meant that it was difficult to determine whether surrounding land has been built up or scarped down (Duncan, 2002, 2).

### **4.0 ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND HISTORICAL BACKGROUND**

The archaeological and historical background of the site has been fully detailed in the desk-based assessment, which was produced prior to the evaluation and will be briefly summarised here (Bain 2002). Local tradition suggested strongly that the name Uttoxeter indicated that the town was of Roman origin, and had a Roman road passing through it. There is no evidence, however, to suggest that either of these traditions have any basis in fact. After the Norman conquest the town was passed to the de Ferrers family, who established it firstly as a borough, and then as a market town. The first market charter was issued in 1140, and a subsequent charter, dating to 1251, granted permission for a market every Wednesday, as well as an annual three day fair (Bain 2002). The market was pivotal in the development of the town from that period onwards, and remains an important focus for the town and surrounding area to the present day.

The close proximity of the site to the market suggested there may be a distinct possibility that evidence relating to the development of the town during this period could be present within the site. Cartographic evidence also suggested that the plot was sub-divided some time before the production of Lightfoote's map of the town of Uttoxeter in 1658 (Bain 2002, 3).

An archaeological evaluation undertaken on the site in 2002 revealed medieval features and a buried soil which contained 14<sup>th</sup> century pottery (Duncan 2002). An 18<sup>th</sup> century property division was also excavated, and was found to be a continuation of the sub-division of the plot noted in Lightfoote's map. Severe truncation and disturbance was noted immediately to the rear of the timber-framed structure toward the front of the plot, whilst better survival was observed in the deposits further to the rear of the backplot area. Duncan (*op. cit*) suggested this was at least partly due to the natural slope of the subsoil, which allowed a build-up of deposits at the base of the slope. The existence of this slope also meant that later episodes of levelling on the site resulted in a much thicker layer of material in this area than elsewhere. The thicker layer subsequently capped and protected the earlier deposits from disturbance.

Two sawn fragments of animal bone from post-medieval contexts pointed to potential bone-working activity on the site, although it was not possible to determine the nature and extent of this activity from the available evidence (Bevan in Duncan, *op. cit.*).

In April 2004 a programme of archaeological recording of the standing structures at 48-50 High Street, Uttoxeter was undertaken by Birmingham Archaeology. The recording and analysis revealed the building to have four main phases of construction. The earliest phase dated to the 17<sup>th</sup> century and related to remnants of two timber-framed trusses and associated elements of box-frame construction. The second phase, 18<sup>th</sup> century in date, involved the removal of the southern gable and its replacement in brick, along with alterations to the first floor. Subsequent phases relate to 19<sup>th</sup> century modifications and additions.

## 5.0 METHODOLOGY

The service trench, which was observed during the watching brief, was excavated by a JCB mechanical excavator, fitted with a 0.7m toothed bucket. The exposed stratigraphy was then recorded with notes and scale drawings as appropriate. All stratigraphic relationships were recorded on pro-forma feature and context record cards. These notes and records form the site archive, which is currently stored at the offices of Birmingham Archaeology, and will be deposited with the appropriate curatorial institution at the earliest opportunity.

## 6.0 RESULTS

As noted above the footings for the new buildings and some of the related service trenches had already been excavated and their concrete foundations poured before the commencement of the watching brief. It was only possible to observe one service trench whilst it was open. This was a trench for pipes to take foul water away from the buildings and into the existing sewer (Fig 4). It ran east-west across the majority of the length of the site, so it was possible to make something of an informed assessment of the stratigraphy across the site. Most of the trench was relatively shallow, between 0.3 and 0.5m deep, although the western end of the trench, nearest the existing sewer, was c.0.9m deep. In this trench, the natural orange subsoil (5001) was encountered at c.0.5m below the modern surface. The subsoil was overlain by modern overburden (5000), which consisted of a mixture of topsoil, brick rubble and ash, cut occasionally by earlier service pipes. This layer was present across the whole site.

Part of a possible 19<sup>th</sup> century cellar was recorded about 4.0m from the western end of the trench. It appeared that the structure had been demolished prior to the excavation of the service trench, as only a narrow section of wall, ten courses high and c.1.0m wide, and part of a possible concrete floor could be seen in the southeast facing section. A possible return of the wall was also observed as a dump of brick rubble about 5.0m to the east in the facing section. It is possible that the cellar was at some time partially backfilled with a mixture of small stones and ash, as patches of this material were observed in the backfill. To the east of these two sections of wall a

0.8m stretch of the section was also observed, which was composed of the same materials.

## **7.0 THE FINDS**

A small quantity of post-medieval finds was recovered from the overburden, which covered the site (5000). The material was fragmentary, although individual fragments appeared largely unabraded.

Five sherds of post-medieval pottery were recovered. This included one sherd of blue and white transfer-printed ware and, a plain whiteware sherd, similar to those found during the evaluation. One sherd of coarseware and a plain brown-glazed sherd were also recovered. The most striking sherd was a small piece of yellow-glazed pot with a feathered pattern, possibly a piece of Staffordshire slipware.

The remainder of the assemblage consisted of three clay pipe stems, a fragment of tile, a fragment of green bottle glass and a piece of animal bone.

## **8.0 DISCUSSION**

The small area of the site that was exposed during excavation of the service trench provided only a partial picture of some of the stratigraphy across the site. In places, however, it was excavated only through the layer of overburden, and so was not deep enough to reveal any archaeology that may have lain below. Had it been possible to observe the excavation of the footings and the other service trenches, a fuller picture of the site may have been provided, with which to complement the findings of the evaluation.

## **9.0 ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

The watching brief was commissioned by G. Bennett on behalf of Walbrook Housing Association Ltd. Thanks are due to A. Marsham of Keynote Housing Group and to Ken Booth, the site manager, for their support and co-operation. Erica Macey-Bracken and Kristina Krawiec undertook the watching brief for Birmingham Archaeology. Erica Macey-Bracken wrote this report and the illustrations were prepared by John Halsted. The project was managed by Mark Hewson, who also edited this report.

## **10.0 REFERENCES**

- Bain, K. 2002, *48-50 High Street, Uttoxeter, Staffordshire. An archaeological desk based assessment.* Birmingham Archaeology Report No. 1171
- Birmingham Archaeology 2004, *48 – 50 High Street, Uttoxeter, Staffordshire. Written Scheme of Investigation for an Archaeological Watching Brief*

48-50 HIGH STREET, UTTOXETER, STAFFS:  
AN ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF. 2004

- Duncan, M. 2002, *An Archaeological Evaluation at 48-50 High Street, Uttoxeter, Staffordshire 2002* BUFAU Report No. 899
- Ground Engineering Ltd. 2001, *Report on a Site Investigation for the Proposed Redevelopment at 48-50 High Street, Uttoxeter*
- Hewitson C. 2004, *48-50 High Street, Uttoxeter, Staffordshire: An Archaeological Building Record. 2004*, Birmingham Archaeology Report No. 1171
- Institute of Field Archaeologists 1999, *Standard and Guidance for an Archaeological Watching Brief*, Institute of Field Archaeologists. Revised 2001



THE UNIVERSITY  
OF BIRMINGHAM

**Proposed Dwellings**  
**Written Scheme of Investigation for an**  
**Archaeological Watching Brief**  
**48-50 High Street, Uttoxeter, Staffordshire**  
**Client: Walbrook Housing Association Ltd**  
**Archaeological Contractor: Birmingham Archaeology**



Birmingham Archaeology

## **1.0 Introduction**

This document outlines the programme of work required to undertake a watching brief at the above site. It forms a written scheme of investigation requested by the Development Services Department, Staffordshire County Council. Any variation in the scope of work would be agreed with Chris Wardle, Historic Environment Officer (Archaeology) for Staffordshire County Council, before implementation.

The work will be carried out during the excavation of groundworks associated with the development.

## **2.0 Aims**

The archaeological watching brief is intended to provide a record of any archaeological deposits or features which might be present below the modern ground surface, and to provide an understanding of the history and the significance of the archaeology of the site as a whole.

These aims will be achieved through a programme of archaeological monitoring visits to the site during all below-ground works.

## **3.0 The Site**

The site is centred on NGR SK 094 336, to the north of the market area, and is located at 48-50 High Street, Uttoxeter, Staffordshire. It is bounded on the western edge by a standing building, with a frontage of about 15m, facing onto the High Street. A brick-built wall adjacent to Bradley Street, approximately 50m west of the bus station, denotes the northern boundary. Brick walls also demarcate the eastern and southern boundaries. However, they appear to be of more recent build than the northern boundary.

## **4.0 Archaeological Watching Brief**

### 4.1: Aims

The aims of the archaeological watching brief will be

- to monitor all below-ground works
- to record the location, extent, date, character, condition, significance and quality of any surviving archaeological remains affected by the development works.
- to identify all previously unrecorded sites in order to update the SMR.
- to preserve all archaeological deposits 'by record', and conserve for long term conservation and future analysis all artefactual/ecofactual material recovered from the site.

### 4.2: Method

All ground works will be monitored and supervised by a suitably qualified archaeologist. Following the stripping of topsoil and modern overburden the sub-soil will be inspected for archaeological features and deposits. Spoil heaps will be examined and datable material recovered. Any archaeological deposits and features revealed during ground works will be excavated and recorded. All artefacts will be recovered and a programme of post-excavation analysis will be undertaken following the fieldwork.

## **5.0: Staffing**

The fieldwork will be monitored for BUFAU by Dr. Mark Hewson (Assistant Project Manager, BUFAU).

Specialist staff will be, where appropriate:

Wendy Smith - charred plant remains.

Richard Thomas - animal bone.

Dr James Greig - pollen and plant macro-fossils.

Dr David Smith - micro-fauna.

Dr Susan Limbrey - soils.

Dr Ann Woodward - Prehistoric ceramics.

Annette Hancocks - Romano-British ceramics.

Stephanie Ratkai - Medieval and Post-Medieval ceramics.

## **6.0: Report**

The results of the archaeological fieldwork will be described in an illustrated report, which will contain the following:

- (a) Description of the archaeological background.
- (b) Method.
- (c) A narrative description of the results and discussion of the evidence, set in their local and regional context, supported by appropriate plans and sections. This will include a site location plan and any other maps relevant to the fieldwork.
- (d) Summary of the finds and environmental evidence.
- (e) Specialist assessments of the finds and environmental evidence.

Two copies of the report will be submitted to the Staffordshire Sites and Monuments Record, and two to the Local Planning Authority accompanied by a completed *Activity and Source Submission Form*. A summary of the work will be offered to West Midlands Archaeology and any other appropriate journal.

### **7.0: Archive**

The site archive will be prepared according to guidelines set down in Appendix 3 of the Management of Archaeology Projects (English Heritage, 1991), the Guidelines for the Preparation of Excavation Archives for Long-term Storage (UKIC, 1990) and Standards in the Museum Care of Archaeological collections (Museum and Art Galleries Commission, 1992). It is intended that the archive will be deposited with an appropriate museum, such as the Potteries Museum and Art Gallery, Stoke-on-Trent, with the prior notification and agreement of the museum. The *Conditions for the Acceptance of Archaeological Material from Excavations and Fieldwork*, as stated by the museum, will be adhered to.

### **8.0: Health and Safety**

All current legislation, regulations and guidance will be complied with.

### **9.0: Timetable**

An archaeological watching brief will be maintained throughout below-ground works. Work is due to begin as soon as possible after 19<sup>th</sup> January 2004.

### **10.0: General**

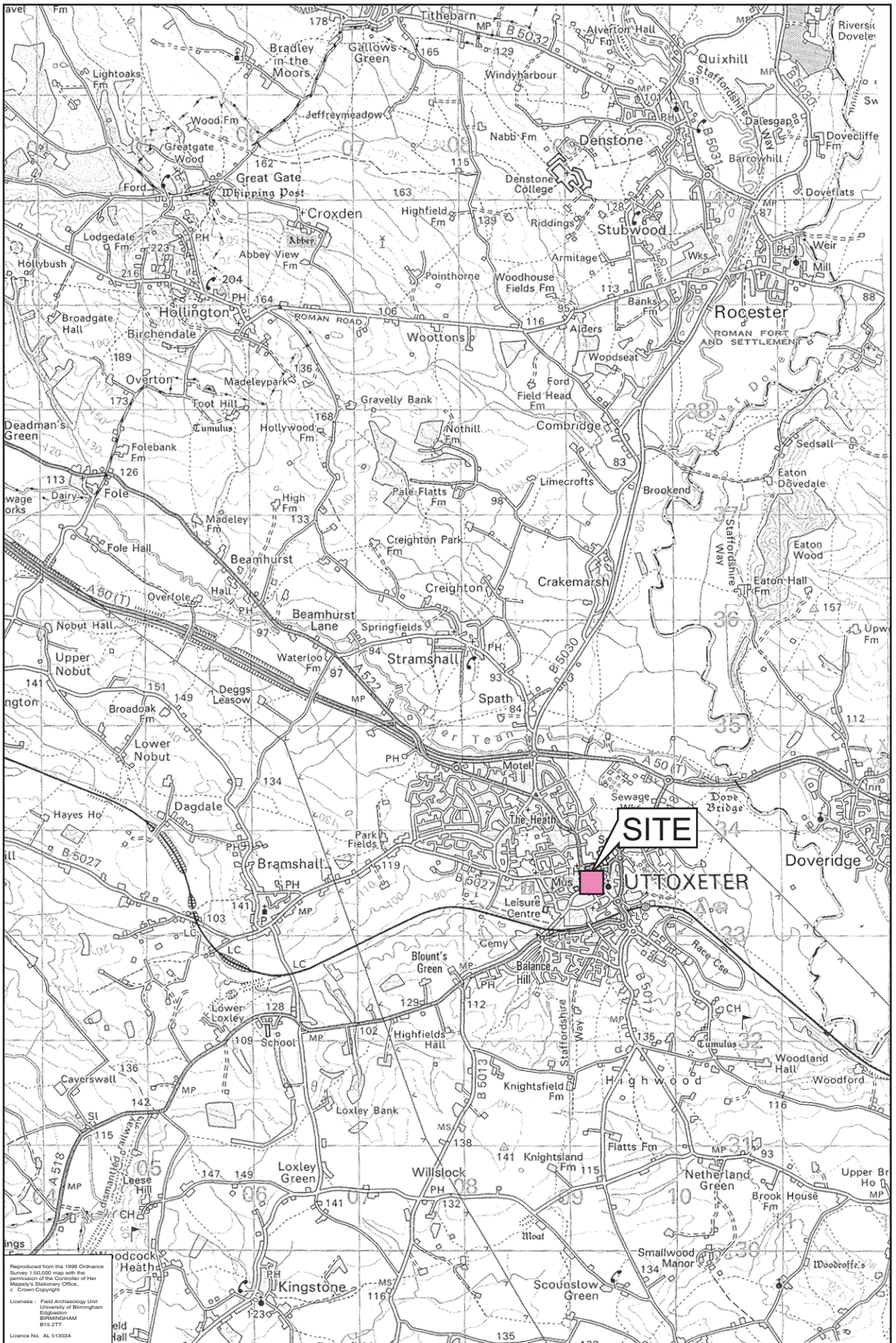
Birmingham Archaeology is a Registered Archaeological Organisation with the Institute of Field Archaeologists. All staff will adhere to the Code of Conduct of the Institute.

The project will follow the requirements set down in the Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Watching Briefs (Institute of Field Archaeologists 1994, revised 2001).

Any items suspected to be 'Treasure' will be reported in accordance with *The Treasure Act 1996*.

A Home Office licence will be requested in the unlikely event that human remains are encountered and no excavation of human remains will begin until a licence is granted.

***Birmingham Archaeology  
January 2004***



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Fig.1



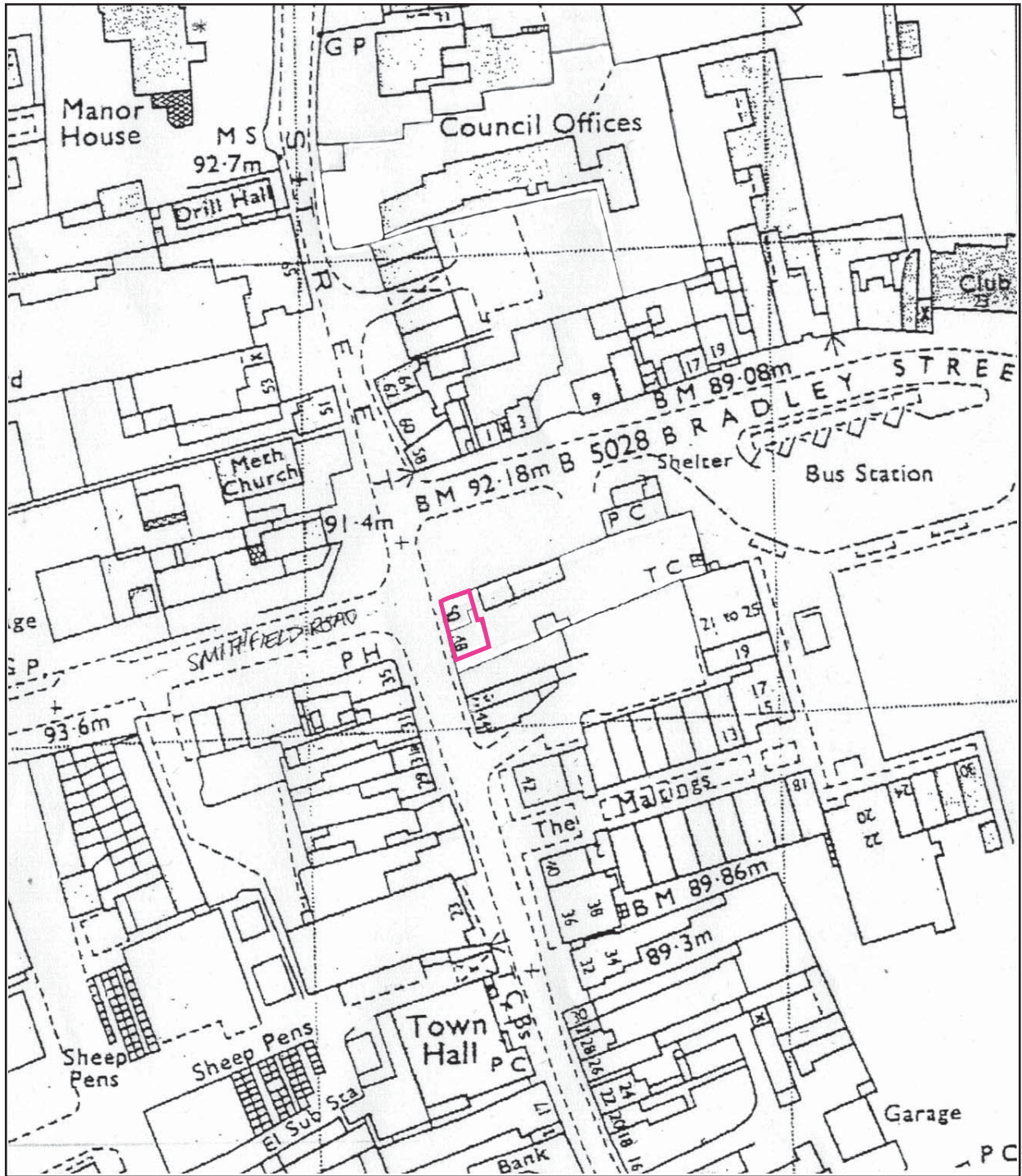


Fig.2







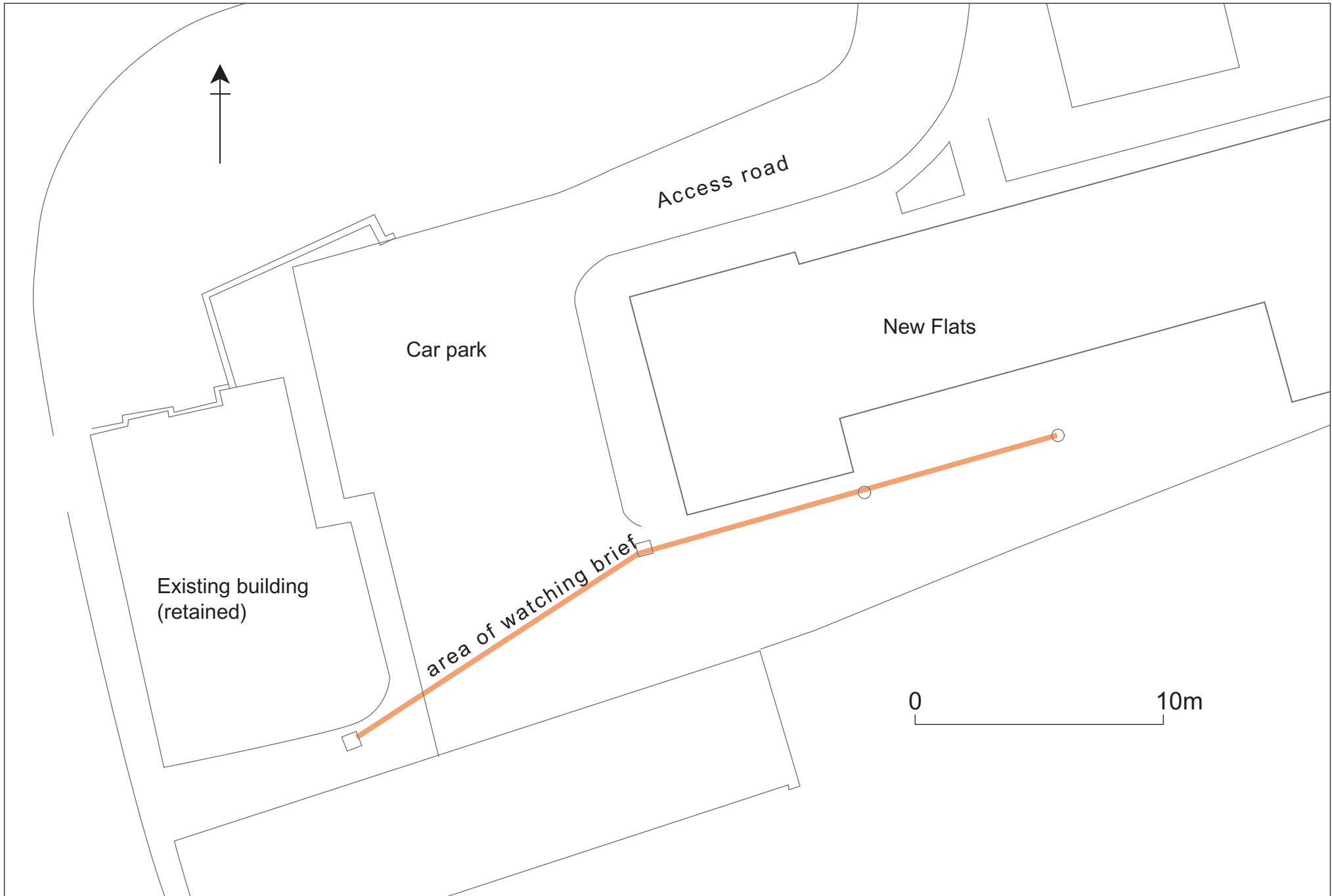


Fig.4