



5 St. Marys Lane
Tewkesbury, Gloucestershire

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Tewkesbury, Gloucestershire, GL20 5SL.

Archaeological Recording

NGR: *SO 89167 32634*

Site code: *tewk21*

OASIS ID: *110archa1-511370*

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8th December 2022

one ten archaeology

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Front cover; View of No.5 St. Mary's Lane from the west.

SUMMARY

Archaeological recording (watching brief) was carried out during April 2022 at 5 St. Marys Lane, Tewkesbury, Gloucestershire, during groundworks for a rear single-storey extension. The development lay within an area of archaeological potential, within the boundary of the medieval settlement at Tewkesbury where previous archaeological discoveries have confirmed medieval settlement activity. The footprint of the extension was stripped to the formation level of the development which was situated at about 0.45m below the existing ground level. The natural substrate was not reached, instead the surface of the stripped area comprised the same made ground already partially excavated during the excavation and it was concluded that archaeological deposits associated with the earlier occupation in this area of the town are likely if present, to lie below this deposit.

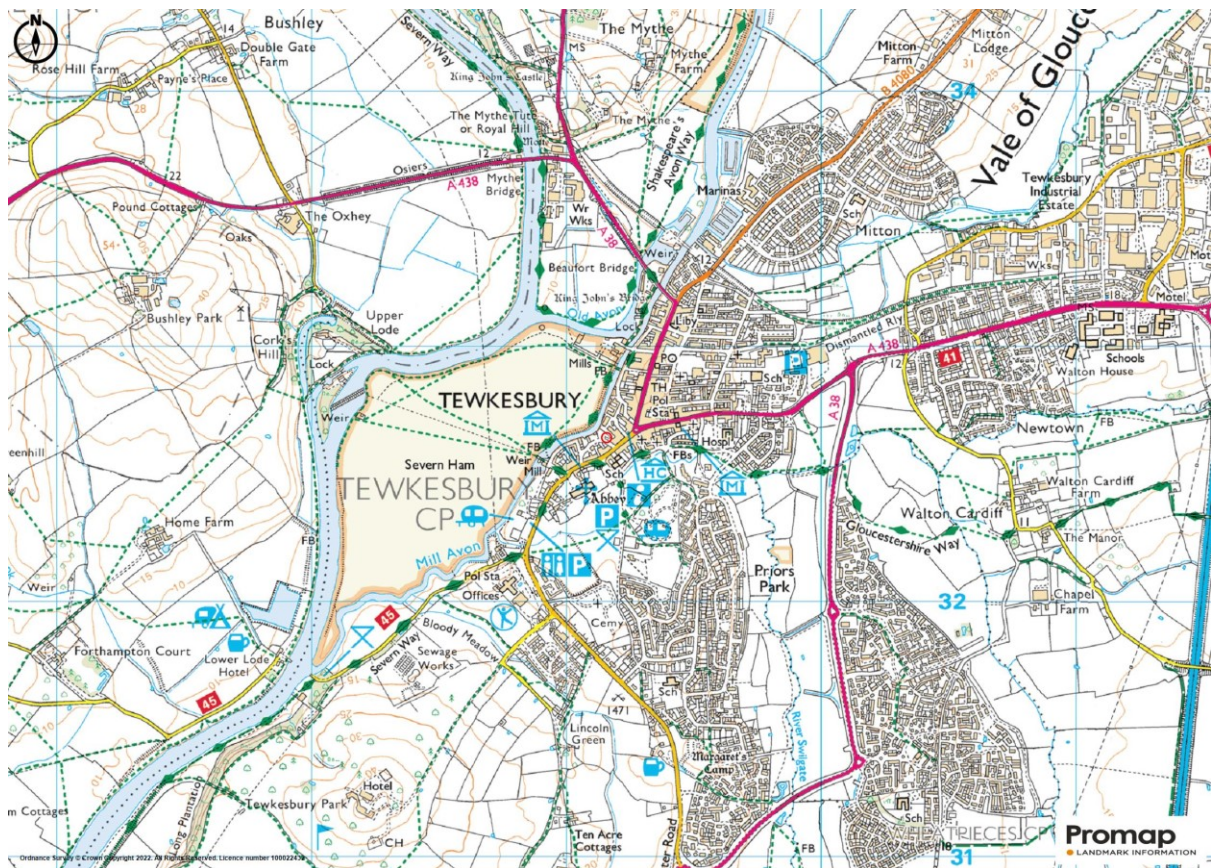


Fig. 1: Site location circled in red.

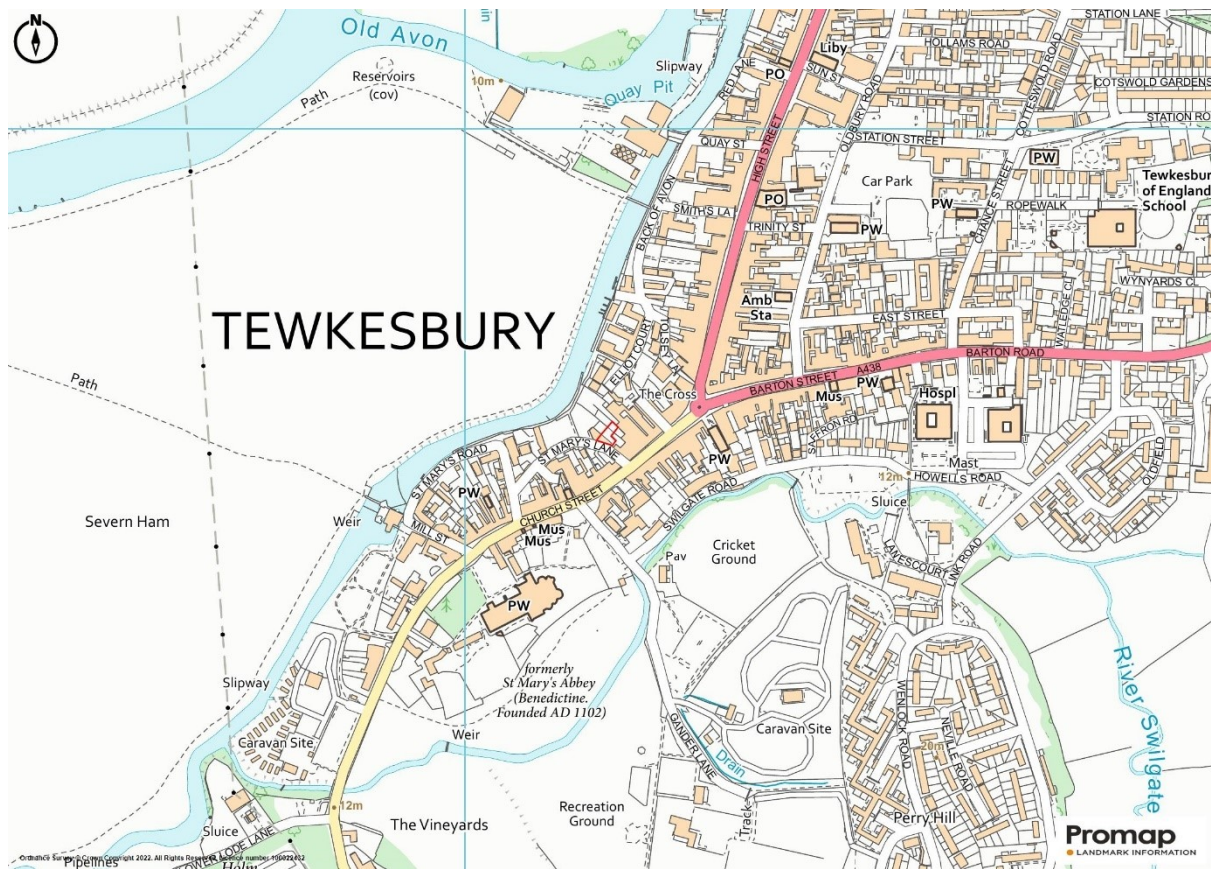


Fig. 2: Study site outlined in red.

INTRODUCTION

Location and scope of work

This document sets out the results of archaeological recording (watching brief) carried out during 5th April 2022 at 5 St. Marys Lane, Tewkesbury, Gloucestershire, GL20 5SL at the request of the owners. Planning permission had been granted (*planning Ref: 20/00517/FUL*) for the erection of a rear single-storey extension conditional on archaeological recording during groundworks in line with the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF). The development lies within an area of archaeological potential, within the boundary of the medieval settlement at Tewkesbury where previous archaeological discoveries have confirmed medieval settlement activity. Consequently, it was judged that the site had the potential to contain archaeological deposits that may be damaged or destroyed by the development and that this could be offset by a programme of archaeological monitoring and recording during the groundworks.

Geology and topography

Tewkesbury is a market town and civil parish in Gloucestershire, England. It stands at the confluence of the River Severn and the River Avon, and also minor tributaries the Swilgate and Carrant Brook. It gives its name to the Borough of Tewkesbury, of which the town is the second largest settlement. It lies in the far north of the county, forming part of the border with Worcestershire. The site lies to the southwest of the town along St Marys Lane which branches off Church and comprises approximately 250m² in area lying at a height of c.13m Above Ordnance Datum (AOD). The underlying geology of the site comprises sand and gravel of the Third (Main) Terrace of River Severn (BGS, 1988).

HISTORICAL & ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND

Historical background

The name Tewkesbury is thought to come from Theoc, the name of a Saxon who founded a hermitage there in the C7, and in the Old English language was called *Theocsbury*. The town was established near the confluence of the rivers Severn and Avon, located on a

navigable waterway and on a prehistoric land-route between north and south-west England; it has been suggested that it was also on a route between eastern England and Wales. The line of a postulated Roman road can be followed through the Mythe immediately north of the town and remains that were found within the town suggest occupation in the Romano-British period. Immediately before the Norman Conquest, Tewkesbury was the centre of a large agricultural estate, there is no surviving indication of an urban character at that time. During the Conquest it was laid waste, to the extent that its value fell from £100 a year to £12, and 20 years later it had still not recovered its former value. In that period, however, William the Conqueror's queen, Maud, established 13 burgesses and a market there, the earliest record of the town's function as a commercial centre. In 1102 Robert FitzHamon founded the Benedictine abbey of Tewkesbury, providing the other main feature of the town's history.

Archaeological background

An Historic Environment Record (HER) search carried out on a 250m radius centred on the site produced a series of monuments records and archaeological activities, the more significant entries are outlined below.

Roman

[HER8090](#). The Roman Road from Birmingham to Gloucester (Margary's RR180). "It seems clear that a direct road to Gloucester through Droitwich and Worcester branched from Ryknild Street to the south of Birmingham. From the old farm of Stratford (Worcestershire) to Tewkesbury, the straight alignments of the road, often well-raised by 2-3 feet, are very typical and seem designed to follow the high ground in the narrowing space between the Severn and Avon. After Tewkesbury the road is quite clearly an adapted ridgeway from much of its course, which is cleverly designed to follow a very narrow ridge of high land, and it comes into Gloucester through the site of an earlier camp at Kingsholme where it connected with the road from the east, Ermin Street. This Roman Road (Margary's RR 180) was important, since it linked the major military establishments of Gloucester and Droitwich, although its route through Tewkesbury is uncertain. The Avon crossing may have been north of Stanchard Pit although the site of King John's Bridge (HER 451) cannot be discounted. The road's route immediately south of the town is uncertain too, though the tongue of marl represented by the 50ft (15m) contour, thrusting directly towards Oldbury, can now be seen as a likely line.

Miscellaneous Roman finds, particularly pottery, have been noted over much of the urban area, specifically from Smiths Lane to the south end of Church Street (HER 8853). Roman pottery was also picked up on site of No 146 High St (HER 8043) after demolition activities and noted in an Electricity Board trench in front of Nos. 1 & 2, High Street (HER 8044; Miles & Fowler 1972-4). A Roman vase was found in Tolsey Lane before 1902 (HER 8060).

Roman activity is also confirmed just outside the search area by the discovery of Roman coins ([HER8095](#)) found during levelling of an orchard in 1830 and pottery ([HER9632](#)) comprising two sherds of Severn Valley Ware pottery found during development of Bowling Green Site (Blake & Saville, 1984).

Saxon/early medieval

Although it is documented that a Benedictine priory was founded in Tewkesbury in the C8 there is currently no archaeological evidence of Saxon or early medieval activity within the study site. Evidence of Roman and medieval activity suggests that there is likely to have been some continuation between these periods.

Medieval

[HER567](#) (SAM 21704) *The scheduled site of the medieval St Mary's Abbey, Church Street, Tewkesbury*

The priory was re-founded 1102 in Tewkesbury, dissolved 1540. Scheduled area includes east, west and south sides of cloister, site of Chapter House and Infirmary buildings to the east, buildings of the outer court to the west and refectory, kitchen and service buildings to the south. The ground has clear earthworks scattered through it, with much reused moulded stone in the nearby walls of the vicarage. The Abbey has played a vital part in the town's history and is well documented. However, the whereabouts of related and documented buildings such as earlier mills, a furnace house and a tan house due for demolition in 1542 and the history of the precinct and its boundary is still unclear.

On the farther side of Church Street, the abbey's buildings included the Abbey Mills and the abbey barton or barn, and perhaps near-by stood the abbey furnace-house and tan-house that in 1542 were scheduled for demolition. The location of the abbey barton is clear and there is little doubt that it was the building, at the lower end of Mill Street, of which the lower parts of the heavily buttressed walls have survived. A wall running south-west from the barton includes fragments of an ancient stone wall that may have marked the edge of both the town and abbey precincts (VCH, 1968).

HER7994; Gloucester Road, Victoria Gardens (West side) Abbey Precinct wall Late medieval; a run of approx. 100m wall from the south end of Abbey Barton, returning for approx. 30m to a pier at the Gloucester Road. An important historical remnant from the Benedictine abbey, the wall reappears in part across the road in Abbey Cottages. This may have marked the boundary of both town and Abbey precincts.

HER 9374. Medieval jug of C13-C15 date from Tolsey Lane in 1894.

HER9301. Monastic structures, floor tile of C14-C15 date, and window glass observed during development of Bowling Green site. Also, some Roman pottery and post medieval finds.

HER8095. Roman and medieval coins found the levelling of an orchard which also revealed the foundations of the monastery and gatehouse. Adjoining Abbey House in 1830.

HER8115. Possible site of watermill recorded in 1291 & 1540 on Swilgate near Gander.

HER7803. A watching brief during the groundworks associated with an extension to the existing number 10 Church Street recorded three late Medieval rubbish pits (Nichols, 1998).

HER7851. A watching brief was undertaken in 1997 in connection with an extension to the surgery. Pits containing pottery dating from the late C11 to the late Medieval period, oyster shell and animal bone were observed. These were interpreted as Medieval refuse pits. Unstratified pottery was also recovered dating from the late C11 onwards. One of the pieces was very fine it was a large remnant of a mid-C13 wine jug which had been broken down and reused as a cooking vessel (Goult, 1998).

HER7859. A watching brief to the rear of number 87 Church Street identified a late Medieval/early Post Medieval wall, probably a property boundary contemporary with the house (Goult, 1995).

HER7868. An archaeological evaluation during 1997 to the rear of number 101 Church Street, Tewkesbury. A series of four trenches were machine excavated to depths of at the most 1.5m below the current ground level, which revealed well-preserved features of the C12 or C13 medieval period and of Roman period dates within the area proposed for developments (Vallender, 1997).

HER 7898. An archaeological evaluation during 1999 in connection with a proposed garden flat to the rear of The Ancient Grudge. A deposit of possible Medieval origin overlying probable natural alluvial deposits of sand and river worn pebbles was recorded (Derham, 1999).

HER 13959. Rescue excavation in Abbey Meadow, to the south of Tewksbury Abbey in 1992 uncovered walls, floors and ditches associated with monastic activity on the site. Some sherds of Roman pottery and prehistoric flint flakes and implements were also found.

HER 9641. Skulls & human bone were found in 1966 during works outside

RESULTS:

Method and nature of the excavation

In general, the purpose of archaeological recording is to determine and understand the nature, function and character of an archaeological site in its cultural and environmental setting. This was to be achieved by obtaining an appropriate record of any archaeological deposits or finds disturbed or exposed during groundworks. The work was carried out in accordance with guidelines set out by the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists (CIfA 2014).

The main impact of the development comprised ground reduction at the rear of the property in the footprint of the new extension amounting to about 50m². Machine excavation was conducted under archaeological supervision using a toothless bucket

removing non-archaeologically significant material (modern deposits) in layers stratigraphically. Excavation ceased at the formation level of the development which coincided at the depth where solid ground was reached. Although unclear largely due to the surface disturbance at this level, it was interpreted as the probable geological horizon.

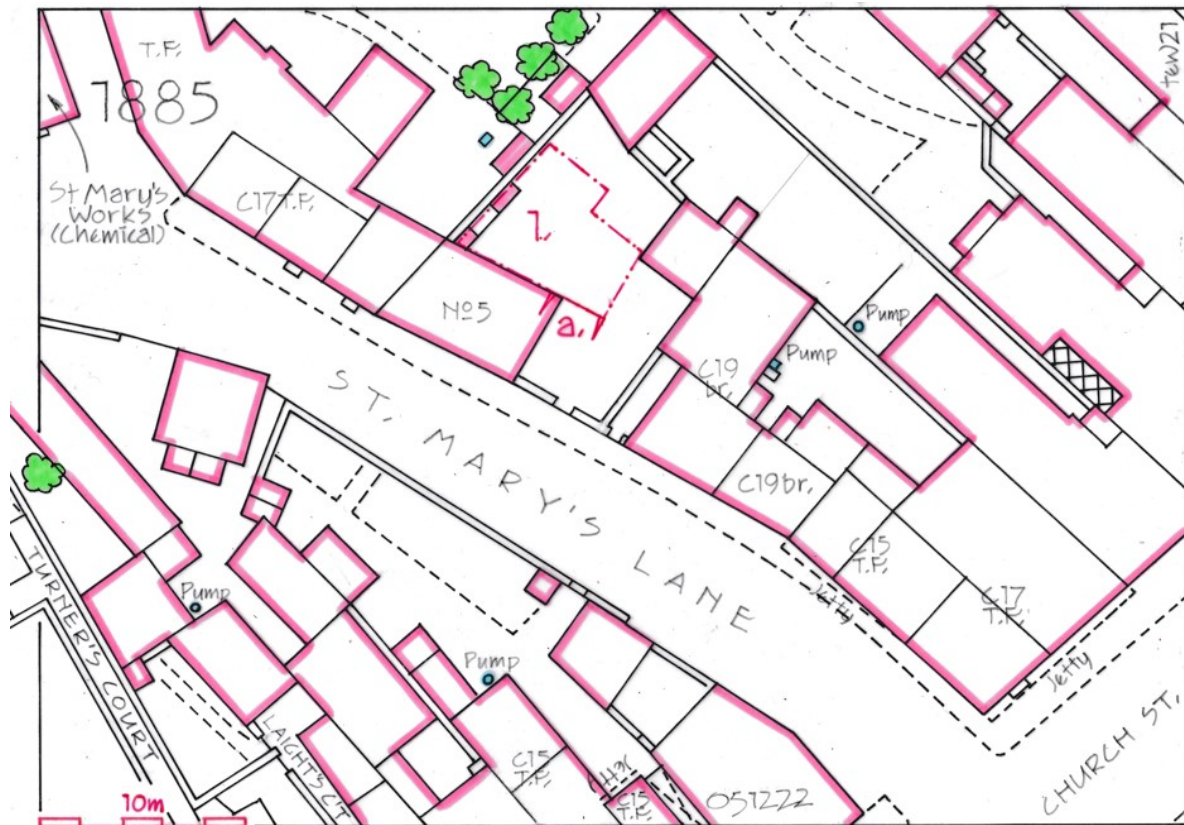


Fig. 3: Historic environment sketch plan showing location of the excavation outlined in red with hash-dots.

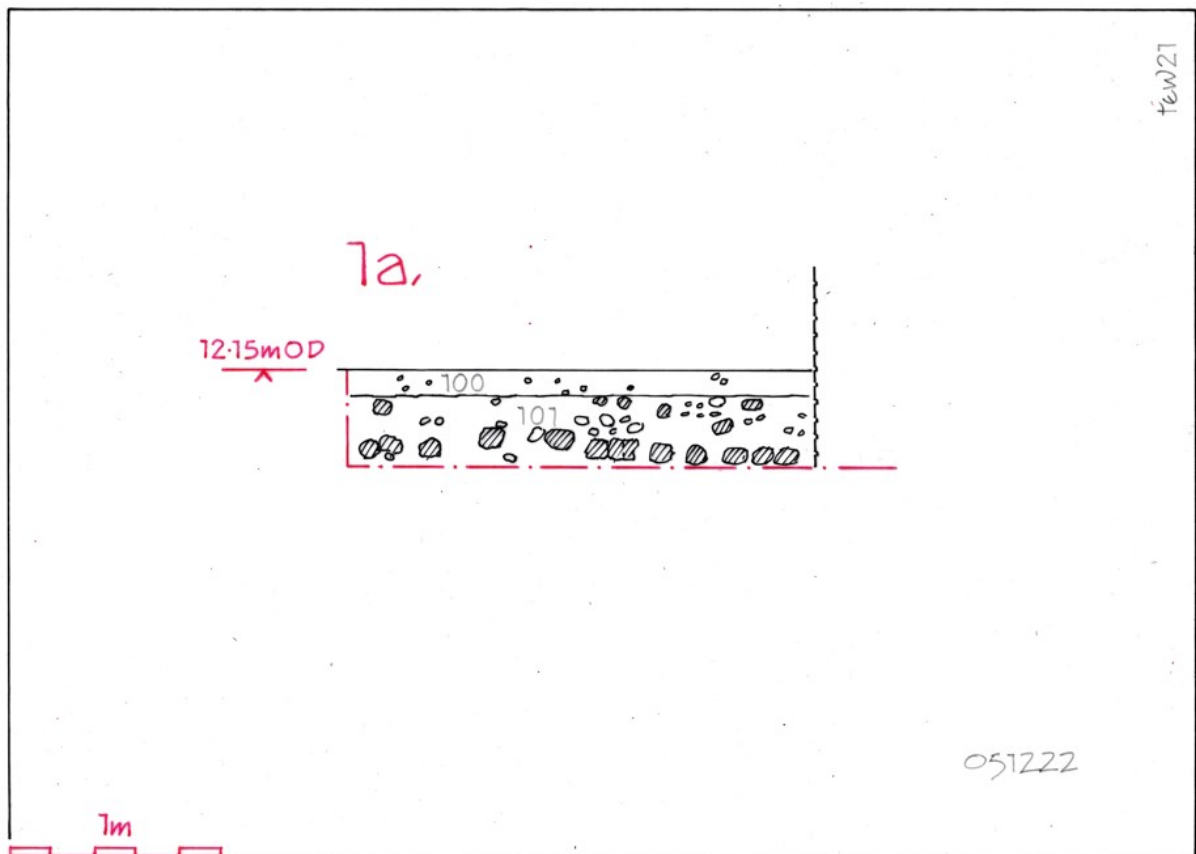


Fig. 4: section 1a

Description of deposits

The surface of the natural geological substrate was not reached with any certainty, instead truncated made ground (101) marked surface of the formation level of the development, situated at a level height of 11.65m AOD. The deposit consisted of a greyish-brown sandy-silt with lenses of gravel and a large component of brick rubble and fragments of stone throughout the deposit amounting to a total thickness 0.40m. Overlying this soil layer was a modern deposit (100) of crushed stone amounting to a depth of 0.15m. Although the surface of the truncated deposit (101) was disturbed during the practicalities of soil stripping the site, there were no archaeological deposits observed cut into or overlying this layer.

FINDS

Finds made during the excavations comprised the occasional residual fragment of red brick and modern roof tile. These were not retained.

DISCUSSION

The HER shows that the site had the potential for deposits associated with all periods, miscellaneous Roman finds, particularly pottery, have been noted over much of the urban area, specifically from Smiths Lane to the south end of Church Street where the site itself is situated. Work to the rear of 101 Church Street had recorded Prehistoric, Roman and medieval activity whilst a series of watching briefs within the search area have recorded medieval refuse pits dating from the late C11 to the late medieval period.

Archaeological recording of the new extension was small in scope, the area was stripped to the formation level of the development which was situated at about 0.45m below the existing ground level. The natural substrate was not reached, instead the surface of the excavated area comprised the same made ground (101) already partially excavated during the soil stripping of the site and sealed by a layer of modern crushed stone (100). Archaeological deposits associated with the earlier occupation in this area of the town are likely if present, to lie below these deposits.

Archive Location

The digital archive arising from the work will be deposited with the Archaeology Data Service (ADS) via the on-line portal OASIS.

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Plates



Plate 1; overall view northwest of the property



Plate 2; overall view southwest of the property



Plate 3; view southwest of the excavation area



Plate 4; view north of the excavation area



Plate 5; view southeast of the excavation area



Plate 6; detail of the site stratigraphy