

NORFOLK ARCHAEOLOGICAL UNIT

Report No. 961

**Land at Southgate Street, South Lynn, Kings Lynn,
Norfolk
Report on a Desk-based Assessment**

For
Anglia Housing Group
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Norwich

11 copies printed and bound 26/05/04

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May 2004

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Local Authority No. 100019340

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Location: former garage premises, Southgate Street, Kings Lynn, Norfolk
Grid Ref: TF 6215 1915

Summary

This desk-based assessment was undertaken to study the archaeological potential of a plot of land close to the South Gate, the south entrance to the medieval town of Lynn, but peripheral to the main centres of occupation and activity. The site overlooks the River Nar, part of the medieval defensive circuit, and lies on Southgate Street, the medieval route from the South Gate into the heart of Lynn.

Occupation here may have been established in the medieval period, with dwelling houses giving way to commercial premises in the early 1800s. The present premises are probably mostly post-World War 2, connected with the motor trade, although one early building survives in part.

The site is now unoccupied, with a concrete surface, service pits and evidence of major services.

The archaeological potential concerns the site in medieval times, the site lying close to the south entrance to the town, though at some distance from its centre, but close to the River Nar, which may have provided a reason and focus for activity. The existence of a seabank, or even a defensive bank along the site's south-east boundary is likely. At the west end of the site, Nar Lane, still open, may have been a passage down to the waterfront and some sort of quayside.

It is possible that buried peat and other fen deposits beneath the area also have potential for studying prehistoric activity and environmental change in this part of the Norfolk fenland.

1.0 Introduction

(Fig. 1)

The site lies close to the centre of the modern built-up area, and was, until recently, occupied by a firm of garage services (John Grose). It covered several former house plots, running back from Southgate Street to the edge of the River Nar (part of the medieval defensive circuit), and is bounded to the east by the Honest Lawyer public house, to the west by Nar Lane, a former pathway to the river (and part of the development site), and by the riverside.

In former times, the site stood in South Lynn, the south part of the town of Lynn. South Lynn was a riverside village before Lynn was established to the immediate north by the Bishop in 1100, and remained a peripheral settlement in the growth of Lynn as a port. South Lynn was a separate part of the town until 1555, and has remained a distinct part of the town into modern times.

This report was undertaken on behalf of Anglia Housing Group of Norwich. The work was designed to assist in defining the history of the site along with the character and extent of any archaeological remains that may be present within the proposed redevelopment area. The report follows the guidelines set out in *Planning and Policy Guidance 16-Archaeology and Planning* (Department of the Environment 1990).

No detailed fieldwork has been carried out in connection with this study, nor has reference been made to Listed Buildings information or other present planning constraints.

Period resource assessments for this region (Glazebrook 1997; Brown and Glazebrook 2000) indicate that the commercial activity of towns in the medieval and post-medieval periods provides considerable potential for exploration, particularly where deeply stratified and waterlogged deposits are present. The impact of towns on their hinterlands, and the possibility of increasing understanding of exchange mechanisms, both local and international through cultural and economic links should not be underestimated. The aims of this desk-based assessment may therefore be summarised as follows:

- To determine as far as possible the land-use history of the area
- To present the evidence for the presence or absence of archaeological remains within the proposed area
- To assess, without archaeological intervention, the extent, condition, character and date of any archaeological, palaeoenvironmental and historical resources occurring within the development site
- To assess the stratigraphical, artefactual and environmental potential of any archaeological deposits likely to be found within the proposed development area
- To identify and assess the effects of the proposed development on any archaeological, palaeoenvironmental and historical remains situated within the development site

2.0 Geology and Topography

(Figs 1 and 2)

General Background

King's Lynn lies close to the eastern edge of the Norfolk silt fens ('Marshland') and on the east bank of the River Great Ouse, immediately to the north of its confluence with its west-flowing tributary the Nar (which flows past the development site). Lynn and its surrounding area are underlain by a complex sequence of marine clays, sands and peats up to 10m thick. In the Iron Age and Romano-British periods the entire area would once have been marshland dissected by numerous channels and creeks as well as by the Rivers Ouse and Nar. This has been reclaimed by degrees during historic times.

The earliest reclamation of marshland in the King's Lynn area probably took place in the Middle to Late Saxon period. Reclaimed deposits seen during excavation and in boreholes beneath the modern town appear to have been soft red/brown clays, containing some laminated silts, overlying a continuous peat layer containing reeds and woody material.

The four significant west-flowing rivers and streams entering the Ouse at King's Lynn were very influential in defining and subdividing the settlement which grew up here in medieval times. The largest and most southerly of these is the River Nar, whose sinuous lower channel known as Friars' Fleet enters the Ouse within the

southernmost part of the medieval town (and is the south boundary to the site). [Further to the north the westernmost reaches of the Millfleet, the Purfleet and the Gaywood River, although now flowing within conduits, were once significant tidal channels dissecting the medieval town].

Geology and Sedimentology

Fen deposits in the King's Lynn area overlie Ampthill and Kimmeridge Clay deposits of Upper Jurassic date (British Geological Survey 1985). Surface deposits within the built-up area of King's Lynn consist of alluvial silts, which also extend across the Marshland fen basin (Silvester 1988, fig. 2; Wessex Archaeology 1996, map N&W-2). The western edge of 'upland' Norfolk lies only c. 0.5km to the east of the site.

The development site

Although the centre of South Lynn (a medieval centre possibly of greater antiquity than King's Lynn itself) and its parish church of All Saints lie 400m to the north of the site, Clarke and Carter (1977) have shown how the town of Lynn resulted from the foundation of 'Bishop's Lynn' by Bishop Herbert de Losinga of Norwich at the start of the 12th century, to the north of South Lynn (in Domesday Book: Lynn).

King's Lynn itself gained its name from its location at the northern extremity of a very large and persistent wetland area known as 'The Lenn', surrounding the confluence of the two rivers Ouse and Nar (Fig. 2). Prior to reclamation it is likely that these followed a variety of shifting courses, some of them poorly defined during periods when water levels were relatively high.

The edge of the Lenn was possibly as far as Hardwick Dam, now the main road into Lynn from the south, so that the development site once looked out over wetlands.

Traces of a number of sea defence banks testify to a series of efforts made to control and reclaim this intractable land, working from south to north, in the later Saxon and medieval periods. Even if the Lenn had been tamed to a great extent by the time of Lynn's foundation it would have remained marshy, and covered by surface water for some of the year (Higgins 1996).

The local topography and pattern of settlement in the medieval town is thus dominated by the low-lying situation amidst the coastal marshes, with drains and seabank dominating. (South) Lynn was the first settlement, with the main medieval town laid out by the bishop to the north (around Saturday market and Tuesday Market). The River Nar formed a natural south boundary, although settlement probably did not reach this far until later. Possibly the establishment of a south gate was the first step in the development of this part of South Lynn: South Lynn was focussed on the area around the church and the waterfront to the west.

The road into South Lynn and the town beyond from the south passes over a long winding causeway (Hardwick Dam), across the Nar at South Gate, and then along the winding Southgate Street to All Saints' Church and the main town to the north. To either side of this causeway was lower ground, some liable to flood. A seabank runs alongside the River Nar, possibly as far east as the South Gate itself (and in effect, the south boundary to the development site).

Whether any bank here was a flood defence or partly defensive must be uncertain.

3.0 Archaeological and Historical Background

(Figs 2 and 3)

Origins and Development of Bishop's (King's) Lynn

Much of this section of the report has been taken from *'The Waterfront at King's Lynn - Recent Excavations'*, (Bates 1998).

Before the town was established around 1100, a small settlement known as 'Lynn' stood out in the marshes, protected by seabank from the waters. Its economy included salting, as is evident from the Domesday entry:

Five sokemen, 8 acres, three bordars, 5 salterns, two ploughs.

That was South Lynn: the town of Bishop's Lynn was founded by Herbert de Losinga, Bishop of Norwich, around 1100, but, apart from South Lynn, little is known of any earlier occupation in the reclaimed marshland here. Domesday Book records numerous salt pans in the area. It is possible that an estuarine lake surrounded by a large area of saltmarsh to the south of Lynn - a vestige of 'the Lenn' around the mouth of the Nar - provided ideal conditions for salt-panning.

Parker (1971) suggested that the earliest settlement at Lynn took advantage of locally raised topography caused by numerous saltern mounds in the area. It is now thought more likely, however, that early occupation, probably at South Lynn, took advantage of a series of naturally-formed sand banks around other estuarine lagoons around the eastern limit of the Great Ouse (Clarke and Carter 1977). Whatever the case, the foundation of a town in this apparently liminal position may have been intended to take advantage of access to the river at a point at which it was both sufficiently deep, for large vessels, but also relatively narrow and traversed by a ferry.

The Norman foundation

With trade established, and with its location at an important intersection for road, river and sea transport, Bishop's Lynn was well placed for growth. In the late 11th century Herbert de Losinga, the first Bishop of Norwich, founded the Priory of St Margaret and obtained rights to the local fair and to a 'sand market' (trading between high and low water in order to avoid Royal levies) which already existed on the shore between the Millfleet and Purfleet (Parker 1971, 1; Clarke and Carter 1977, 412). Thus trade was regularised and the rapid growth of Lynn as a port assured.

Initial urban development took place in the area between the Millfleet and the Purfleet and around the Priory itself.

As we have seen, however, It is possible that there had been a pre-existing settlement at South Lynn. Bishop Herbert's foundation charter of 1095 (4.0 below) refers to the 'Church of William son of Stangri on the other side of the *Sewoldsfeld* [Millfleet]' (Owen 1984, 9). This may be the extant church of All Saints' at South Lynn, which lies only 400m beyond the development site.

Within 50 years, and possibly much before, the planned town had outgrown its natural northern boundary of the Purfleet and, under Bishop William Turbe (1146-74), the 'Newland' was laid out to the north. This may have been a planned extension to the town and included the present Tuesday Market Place, a fair, and the chapel of St Nicholas.

The high medieval period

Waterborne trade became more important to King's Lynn during the 13th century, when the River Ouse became silted up at Wisbech. Changes in the courses of the Fenland rivers allowed more water to flow through Lynn and made it accessible, *via* the Great Ouse, from a more extensive area (Clarke and Carter 1977, 413).

By c. 1300 the main town plan was well established, with staithe and quays reflecting the importance of access by water. The building of staithe and quays and the use of the river were critical elements in the continuing physical expansion of the town during the medieval period. Once a staithe had been constructed building upon it soon occurred, with resultant shallowing of the water at the quayside being caused by natural silting and the disposal of rubbish into the water. Consequently landing stages were built out into the river with deliberate consolidation or infilling of the riverfront occurring (Owen 1984, 23). The use of larger ships during the 15th century also encouraged riverside expansion to provide deeper water for berthing.

Any seaborne trading at South Lynn must therefore have been increasingly focussed on the Ouse frontage or the mouth of the River Nar, and away from the south gate area.

The middle decades of the 13th century saw the establishment of four extensive friaries in King's Lynn. Only the Austin Friars occupied a site within the built-up area; the Black, Grey and White Friars instead established themselves upon the open, marginal or newly-reclaimed land which remained abundant within the defended area. The White Friars (Carmelites) chose a site in South Lynn, much of which was probably not long reclaimed.

The Town and the River

Architectural and documentary research, as well as archaeological work on several sites as part of the King's Lynn Archaeological Survey (1963-71), has enabled the line of the main medieval riverfront to be established at four different periods.

Period I (1050-1250) pre-dates the re-routing of the Ouse and the consequent increase in traffic through the town. Even during this period, however, when most of the area between the two fleets probably consisted of sandhills, construction was taking place on the main riverfront.

Period II (1250-1350), with the increased flow of water through the town, more wharves were built. A timber wharf excavated at Thoresby College in 1964 (Parker 1965) showed that the bank of the river lay 50m east of the modern waterfront during the 13th century. By the 14th century quays were also established on the fleets, which were themselves navigable for some distance eastward.

Period III (1350-1500) yet more building took place on reclaimed land on the Ouse frontage.

Period IV (post-1500) infilling at the waterfront continued with new wharves gradually extending to the west. There was some abandonment of quays on the fleets during this period, partly due to the need for deeper water for larger vessels.

Excavated evidence for activity on the waterfront at Lynn during the medieval period remains scarce, and information about construction of revetments or wharves fairly limited.

South Lynn remained a separate entity until 1555 (Parker 1971, 22) and was semi-rural, with no market and no place in the urban economy. It lay on the route south from the town across the Nar, however, and had a merchant guild and traders by the mid 15th century (Parker 1971, 22) and was home to the Whitefriars monastery.

The medieval defences

The earliest documentary evidence for the Town Wall dates to the later 13th century, with surviving grants of murage from 1266, 1294, 1300 and 1339 (Tingey 1912). The medieval fortifications extended from the Gaywood River in the north as far south as the River Nar and South Gate, and enclosed large areas of open pastureland, some of it probably marshy. They followed the sweeping line of a pre-existing bank; this had been utilised as an eastern defence for the town in the 12th and 13th centuries, and the south gate adjacent to the River Nar is known to have existed in the 13th century. The defences remained prominent on the early plans of Bell (c. 1680) and Raistrick (1725), when they still enclosed very large open areas (Richards 1990); see Cartographical Evidence (5.0) below.

The early modern period

Surveys of the mid/late 16th century indicate an enhanced importance for the Ouse waterfront at the expense of that of the fleets, maybe connected with the increased importance of deeper-draughted ships. The main public wharf was at Common Staithe and King's Staithe, just south of the Purfleet mouth. In addition to these main wharves, in 1557 there were twenty-seven smaller public wharves, mainly on the Ouse but with some still on the fleet frontages, including several others on the River Nar just west of the South Gate (Fig.3). One at the foot of Nar Lane at the west end of the site is shown on Raistrick's map of 1725. In the late 17th century, South Lynn was more like a prosperous semi-rural village, and home to some of Lynn's wealthier citizens.

One of the most important factors was the dramatic change in the road system at South Gate. Until the early 19th century, all traffic came into the South Gate and turned left up Southgate Street, London Road not existing. In 1811-13 London Road was built and traffic now went into Lynn that way, avoiding narrow Southgate Street (Higgins 1996).

In the Civil war, a drawbridge was set up at the South Gate. To the east, the defence appears to have rested on a pre-existing seabank of early date (Parker 1971, 23, 139). To the west another defensive earthwork (NHER 5486 17.2) has been suggested, nothing is now visible.

4.0 Documentary Evidence

The various documentary sources for 'the making of King's Lynn' are described and recounted in the volumes bearing this title by Parker (1971) and Owen (1984). Much of the information which these sources provide, however, illuminates the core of the historic town itself rather than the peripheral area occupied by the development site in South Lynn.

'Lynn' is mentioned in Domesday Book, but its entry (above) suggests that it was still a minor settlement with only a dozen or so households at the time of the Norman conquest. The survey also mentions the existence of several salt pans which doubtless were worked by the community, and Domesday records numerous salterns in the surrounding area.

Other sources for this early period are the grant of rights (see 'The Norman Foundation' above) over the 'sand market' (which was probably already operating on some scale in the vicinity of the present Saturday Market Place) to Bishop Herbert de Losinga in 1095, and the foundation of the Priory of St Margaret's around that date. An already-existing church at South Lynn is also mentioned in this grant.

Surviving 13th-century documents suggest that Lynn was prosperous, dynamic and turbulent, with serious differences of opinion between the borough and the Bishop and Crown regarding judicial rights and tolls. Possibly, some sort of defence existed in the 13th century; Henry III granted the citizens murage in 1266 and perhaps the town was fortified in places by drawbridges, certainly at South Gate by 1375/6 (Owen 1984, 22).

Documentary sources show that mercantile properties were increasingly concentrated in the northern part of the town in the vicinity of the Tuesday Market by the early 16th century, and that the waterfront south of the Purfleet was increasingly residential in character too. A gate is recorded in the late 13th century as the 'south gate', and this was rebuilt in 1437 in masonry (Higgins 1996).

South Lynn

The grant of c. 1101 records substantial gifts of land at King's Lynn by the Bishop of Norwich to the monks of Norwich Cathedral Priory. As well as the nucleus of the medieval town between the Purfleet and the *Sewoldesfeld* (Millfleet) this included South Lynn too.

Later 13th to 14th century documents catalogued by Owen shed light on the streetscape in the southern town. A charter of 1281 indicates that the *Milngate* (north end of present-day Stonegate Street) frontage facing the Millfleet had been built up by this time (Owen 1984, 208), but little is known of the area by the South Gate.

Medieval documents dealing with either the settlement or church at South Lynn, and sources relating to the Church of All Saints are sparse. Some interesting material, however, is listed by Owen (1984, 20-1). A charter of 1280-90 records a land transaction in South Lynn between John de Wygehale, knight, and Herlewin son of Paulinus. In so doing it mentions the inhabitants of two distinct groups of dwellings south of the Millfleet. North-to-south and Millfleet bank thoroughfares are mentioned, while further now-vanished fleets discharged into the Nar.

However, the *Chamberlain's Survey* of 1557 (Parker 1971, fig. 6, Appendix I), a valuable document listing the names of 'all stretis Lanes and wharffes then in Kyngs Lenne', records six of the twenty-seven public quays in the town to the south of the Millfleet, five of them on the Nar frontage. This must indicate trade and dock facilities here.

As noted above, South Lynn remained a separate entity until 1555, with little place in the urban economy, although its location on the route south from the town may have promoted commercial activity.

5.0 Cartographic Evidence

(Figs 4, 5, 6, 7,8 and 9)

King's Lynn is not particularly well endowed with old maps, certainly by comparison with Norwich and Great Yarmouth. Comparing the earliest maps of the town with the Ordnance Survey 1st Edition mapping of 1886 frequently shows remarkably little change, however, the following survey concentrates upon how the site itself is depicted in early maps.

1588 (Fig. 4)

A small and schematic inset plan on the map of Rising Chase shows Kings Lynn from the south, with the South Gate shown prominently and the route north to the church of All Saints in South Lynn. This is shown lined with houses. What may be a seabank appears to extend west of the South Gate.

1680 (Fig. 5)

The earliest surviving plan of the whole of King's Lynn is Henry Bell's *Groundplan* of c. 1680. Bell's map shows the South Gate and the massive Civil War works outside. The route north to All Saints' Church is lined with houses, with plots running down to the river (on the development site). What is probably the alley to the west (Nar Lane) is also clearly shown.

1725 (Fig. 6)

William Raistrick's *Ichonographia* (1725) illustrates a similar situation in detail, but is more schematic. This also shows the road to All Saints' lined with houses.

1797 (Fig. 7)

William Faden's 1797 *Plan of the Town of Lynn* (Barringer 1989) is at a much smaller scale. This shows the South Gate, the alley to the water, and also shows the irregular shape of the plot at its eastern end, as is seen today, and possibly reflecting the presence of a bank.

[Of especial interest is the line of the proposed re-alignment of the Great Ouse, the Eau Brink Cut, immediately to the south-west on the town, whose projected course is shown thirteen years prior to its completion in 1821].

1826

Andrew Bryant's map of Norfolk (1826) shows little additional information, although the recently-completed Eau Brink Cut and the great loop of the Great Ouse which it supplanted are both shown as open channels.

1830 (Fig 8)

John Wood's map (1830) shows the development plot as 'Timber Yard E Elsdon Esq' (as was the next large plot to the west) and shows individual buildings and plot boundaries in some detail. Clearly, domestic dwellings had given way to industry, probably connected with boatbuilding. The buildings shown were smaller but had a similar footprint to the present buildings.

1846

Burnet's relatively schematic map of 1846 adds little to Wood's. Isolated buildings lie on either side of Friars' Fleet and a small dry dock is located on its east bank. The alley is shown as 'Nar Lane'. [Burton's map of 1868 is more accurately surveyed; to the east of Friars' Fleet the dry dock planned by Burnet is also visible; 'Friar's Field' is still largely vacant but Elsdon's Almshouses, which still stand, are shown at the junction of Friars Street and Birdcage Walk].

1886 (Fig. 9)

By 1886, the Ordnance Survey 25" plan shows that the buildings on Wood's plan had been extended to the south.

6.0 Archaeological Observations

Introduction

This section of the report is a digest of information available in the Norfolk Historic Environment Record presented in chronological order.

Prehistoric

For long periods during prehistory many low-lying areas of Marshland and the Nar valley must have been uninhabitable or only frequented seasonally. But this need not indicate a lack of interest in these tracts from prehistoric communities leading mobile lifestyles and exploiting a range of lowland and valley-side habitats.

That prehistoric sites and monuments at the western mouth of the Nar valley may now lie concealed beneath extensive marshland silt deposits of Iron Age, Romano-British or later date. Any such remains are likely to be at some depth.

Recorded prehistoric finds from King's Lynn are very few, and none is located in the immediate area. The fact that most of the surrounding area is blanketed by Marshland silts of Iron Age or later date makes this dearth unsurprising. The nearest plotted chance find is a single Bronze Age axe or palstave from the area of the present Hardwick Industrial Estate, c. 700m to the east

The English Rivers Palaeolithic Project notes a scattering of Palaeolithic finds from the western Fen edge, and a loose concentration from an area to the north of the

Nar valley. Only one finding was attributed to King's Lynn itself, however (Wessex Archaeology 1996, map N&W-2 no.17; SMR Site 5488).

Romano-British

Evidence is limited to three chance finds of metal objects, two of them coins and a third (from a location south-east of the Whitefriars precinct) a bronze key-handle.

Anglo-Saxon

Silvester (1988, 156-60) has noted the numerous difficulties involved in tracing the Saxon shoreline of the Wash in Norfolk. It is important to note that none of the sea banks recorded in the area to the south of Lynn (Fig. 2) have been positively dated by excavation. Some may have been constructed in the Late Saxon period, however, and a large area of the estuarine 'Lenn' may have been tamed, at least, by the 11th century. It seems most likely that a settlement existed at South Lynn by this time. This centre, and perhaps others nearby, may have been situated on islands of higher ground, separated by gradually-drying creeks and perhaps reached from the nearby 'upland' by causeways. Fishing and salt-winning may both have been rewarding pursuits, while the north extremity of 'the Lenn' would have been an ideal location for a ferry-crossing linking upland Norfolk with Marshland to the west of the Ouse. Thus, despite the lack of solid archaeological evidence for Anglo-Saxon activity at Lynn, it is likely that the most of the preconditions for its exceptional growth and prosperity post-1100 were already in position by the Norman Conquest.

The remains of a significant north-to-south earthwork known as the 'Greendike' lie c. 700m to the east. This feature, which may be traced at least 2.5km southwards from the area of the present Hardwick roundabout, follows the base of the 'upland' edge immediately to the east. While there are no excavation results or associated finds with which to date it, it has been suggested that it originated as a major sea defence during the (?pre-12th century) period when a large area to the south of Lynn was occupied by 'the Lenn' (Higgins 1988). Whatever its date of origin, the sea bank of which the Greendike formed a part turned at its northern end to follow the line of the present Hardwick Road; this earthwork, the Hardwick Dam, continued north-westward to meet the Nar adjacent to the South Gate.

It is possible that the route up to All Saints' Church also lay on another of these early banks.

Medieval

South Gate

As recounted above, the southern limit of the medieval town defences (Site 5486) lay at the River Nar, terminating at South Gate (Site 5486/c2), one of the two main entrances to the medieval town. The extant gate, which replaced an earlier structure, was probably erected in 1437 and further embellished in 1520 (James 1987). Outside the gate, a large mound recorded in the 1820s, probably in the general area of the present traffic roundabout, may have marked the site of a 12th-century 'bretask' or timber fortified tower, one of several which defended the town prior to erection of the wall (Taylor 1844). An earth bastion enclosed the land to

the south of the gate in the 17th century, occupying much of the present roundabout area and extending westward to the Nar bank.

Excavation results

Excavations at South Gate (James 1987, 63) revealed 0.90m of make-up above a floor, which in turn rested on 2m of 'clean mud'.

Church Street/Stonegate Street, 1998 (Sites 33517-33519). Three evaluation trenches opened within the former NCP car park site some way to the north revealed the depth and complexity of occupation and flood silt deposits in the Millfleet environs (Whitmore 1998). In *Trench 3* (Site 33519) which was located on the Stonegate Street/Millfleet frontage, evidence for a 12th to 13th century timber structure - including a substantial waterlogged timber - was recorded around 3.00m OD, c. 2m below the present street level. A series of organic-rich ?occupation deposits had built up around this timber; subsequent organic-rich medieval occupation levels were interspersed with flood silts. Work in *Trench 1* (Site 33517), immediately to the south-east of St Margaret's Church, continued to a depth of c. 3.5m. A series of mortar floors, occupation layers and pits dating to the late 12th-15th century were separated by periodic flood deposits. Clearly, this sequence is likely to be reflected elsewhere in the town.

Stonegate Street (Millfleet) (Site 40196). Recent excavations at this site, to the north of Southgate Street, revealed a medieval masonry building, previously unknown, thought to have been a merchant's premises. This stood on an early fleet waterfront, and is present only 300mm below the current ground surface. Excavation down to c.2m encountered peat deposits (inf. C. Birks).

All Saints Green (Site 39860). 400 metres to the north of the development site, trial trenches just outside the former Whitefriars precinct revealed an earlier 'creek', now silted. The earlier course of the Nar was shown to run much closer to South Lynn here, and probably ran closer to Southgate Street.

Post-medieval defences

The southern terminus of Lynn's medieval defences lay at the South Gate. Only in the 17th century was the circuit extended across the Nar, continuing westward before turning northward up the peninsula between the Ouse and the Nar. The Bell and Raistrick plans show that the south-west angle was reinforced by a large angular bastion, while a major earthen outwork was erected outside the South Gate.

By now the medieval defensive circuit by South Gate was redundant.

7.0 The Site Today

(Fig. 10; Plates 1 and 2)

The site today is an unoccupied commercial property, comprising large buildings with concrete floors and an area of tarmac yard.

By 1830 the site was effectively commercial, a timber yard, and remained so, with a variety of uses. The impact upon any archaeological deposits was probably limited, with large but shallowly-founded buildings. The 1886 map (Fig. 10) shows large buildings across much of the site (including a 'smithy', on the site of the

present reception office). The early property divisions are, to some extent, fossilised in the piecemeal development of the site and may still be traced in the present layout. The buildings recorded in 1886 are seen on the 1928/9 map. By 1966 the present buildings were effectively in place, with only one minor building remaining of the earlier buildings (and this has been reduced in length).

The site has been a motor bodyshop for some time (inf. Tim Thorpe) with buildings given over to specific functions. The only visible inspection pits appear within the building just west of the reception office. The buildings are floored in concrete, presumably heavy duty. The yard is surfaced in tarmac, except for one concreted area to the south. There is a group of inspection covers at the south end of the site, evidence of settlement tanks located here (inf. Ian Munnion).

There are two monitoring wells.

8.0 Impact Assessment and Conclusions

Archaeological issues

The historic centre of South Lynn, the Church of All Saints, lies only 400m to the north. Despite its subsidiary status to King's Lynn proper during the medieval period, South Lynn may have been an antecedent to the market town planted to the north by the Bishops of Norwich, and as such is of great significance. Domesday Book provides some insights, but much remains to be learnt about the character and extent of South Lynn in this early period, but whether there was any occupation here is presently not known.

Documentary evidence indicates the presence of various quays on the Nar frontage itself during the mid 16th century. One of these quays may be located within the development area at the foot of Nar Lane, at the western end of the development area.

The excavations at Boal Quay (Site 30724) to the north have shown how conditions exist for the preservation of substantial timber quayside structures as a result of partial or complete waterlogging. The South Gate itself, a scheduled ancient monument, lies outside the site.

Current proposals

(Fig. 11)

The current proposals are for six dwellings on the Southgate Street frontage and a block of twenty-seven on the river frontage, with open areas centrally. Those on the frontage may affect the medieval street frontage, which does not appear to have been substantially widened.

The blocks on the riverside of the site stand on the approximate line of the seabank/former defences (now invisible). Below this may be riverside build-up and reclamation, although whether this was done is not known. At the west end, the passage known as Nar Lane is left intact.

Summary of Conclusions

- 1 It is possible that buried peats and other prehistoric fen sediments survive at depth. These may contain information of great interest to*

study of the evolution of the prehistoric landscape, but no specific information about their extent, character and archaeological potential is available at present.

- 2 *There may be medieval occupation and activity at the street frontage, possibly well preserved below the present concrete floors and make-up. Whether this would have been entirely domestic or connected with traffic through the South Gate is not known.*
- 3 *The medieval waterfront: much less is known about the development of these peripheral waterfront areas than about the Ouse frontage in the heart of the town, and archaeological deposits may embody further information. The proposed main residential block lies on the waterfront area, though the depth and extent of any possible make-up may leave any early deposits at some depth. The existence or otherwise of any seabank or defensive work along this stretch to the west of South Gate is not known. The boundary of the site may represent the line of some former feature.*
- 4 *The site has been affected by 20th-century commercial development, with the existence of settlement tanks towards the river end and shallow inspection pits, within the main buildings.*

Recommendations for archaeological work stemming from the development proposals will be made by Norfolk Landscape Archaeology.

Acknowledgement

We are grateful to Peter Goodrick for commissioning this report for the Anglia Housing Group. David Dobson formatted and produced this report and Alice Lyons edited it.

Maps consulted

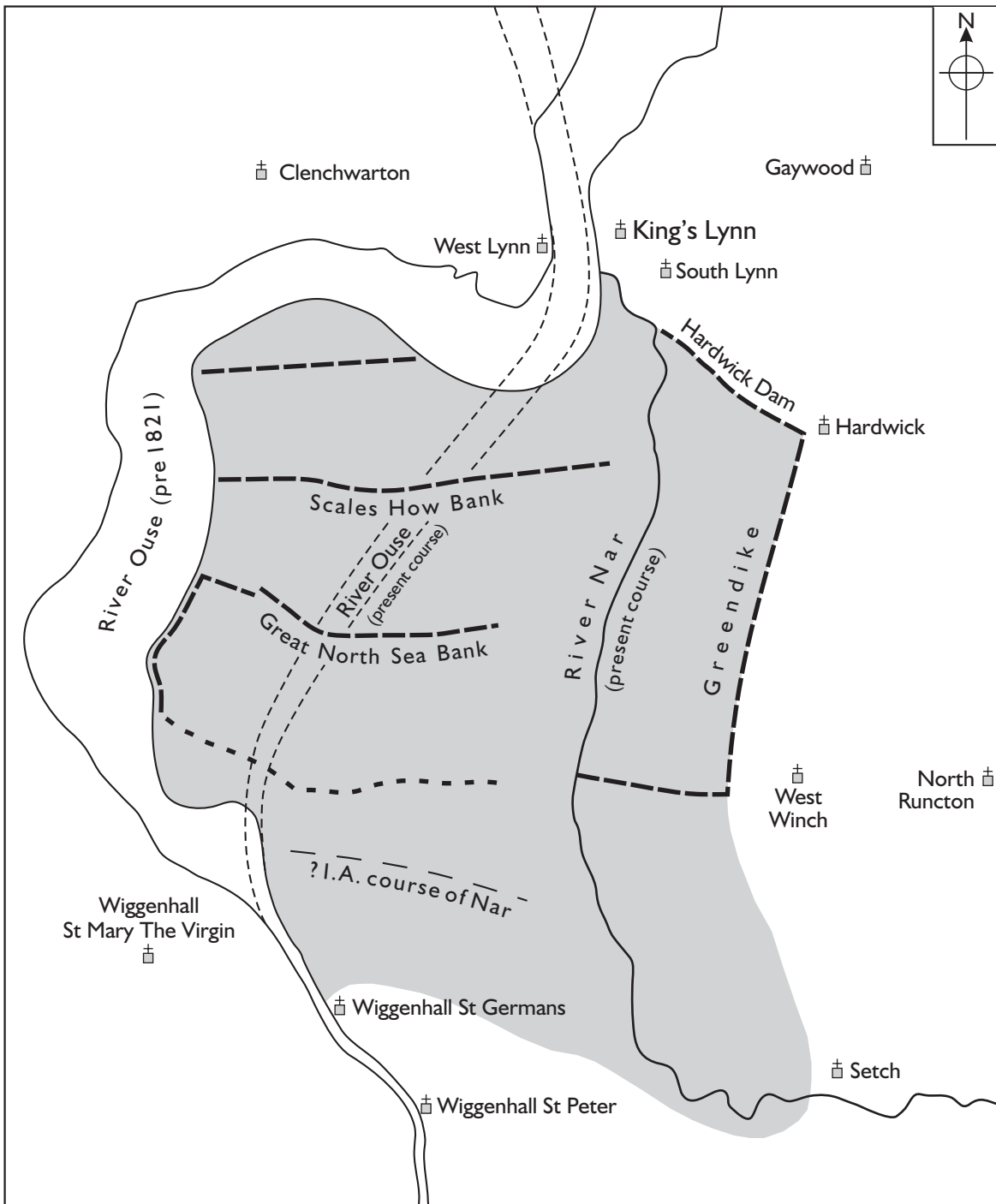
1558	<i>inset plan of Kings Lynn</i>
c1680	<i>The Ground plan of Kings Lynn</i>
1725	<i>William Raistrick's Plan of Kings Lynn</i>
1797	<i>Faden's Map of Norfolk (Barringer 1989)</i>
1826	<i>Bryant's Map of Norfolk</i>
1830	<i>John Wood's Plan of Kings Lynn</i>
1846	<i>Burnett's map of Kings Lynn</i>
1886	<i>OS 25" 1st Edition map</i>
1905	<i>OS 25" map</i>
1928/9	<i>OS 25" map</i>
1966	<i>OS 6" map</i>
2004	<i>current OS mapping</i>

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Fig. 1 Site location. Scale 1:10,000



Possible maximum extent of 'The Lenn'
 Sea banks
 Sea banks, possible

0 5 km

Fig. 2 'The Lenn'. After Higgins, 1988. Scale 1:50 000

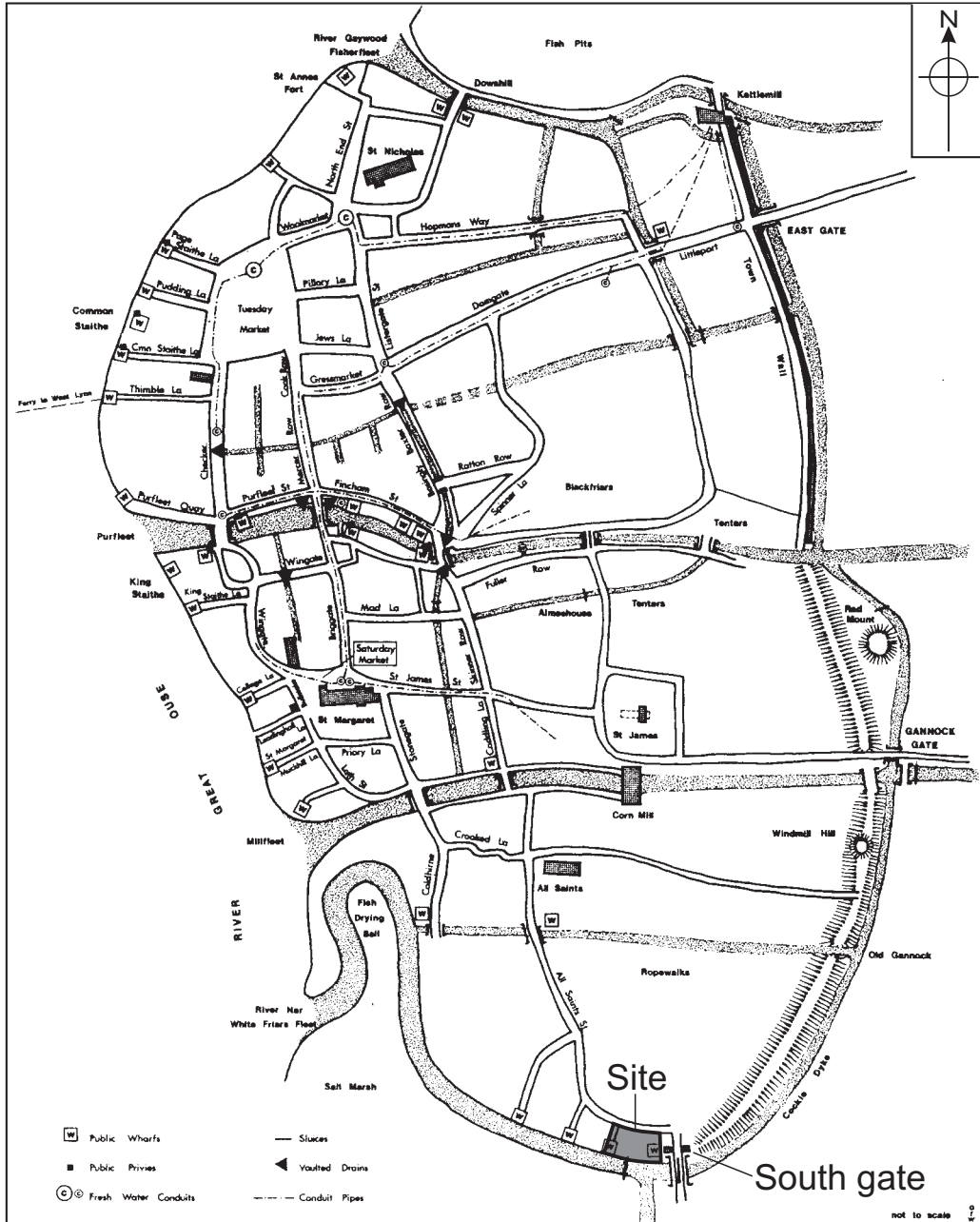


Fig. 3 King's Lynn in the mid 16th century,
(Parker 1971 fig. 6)

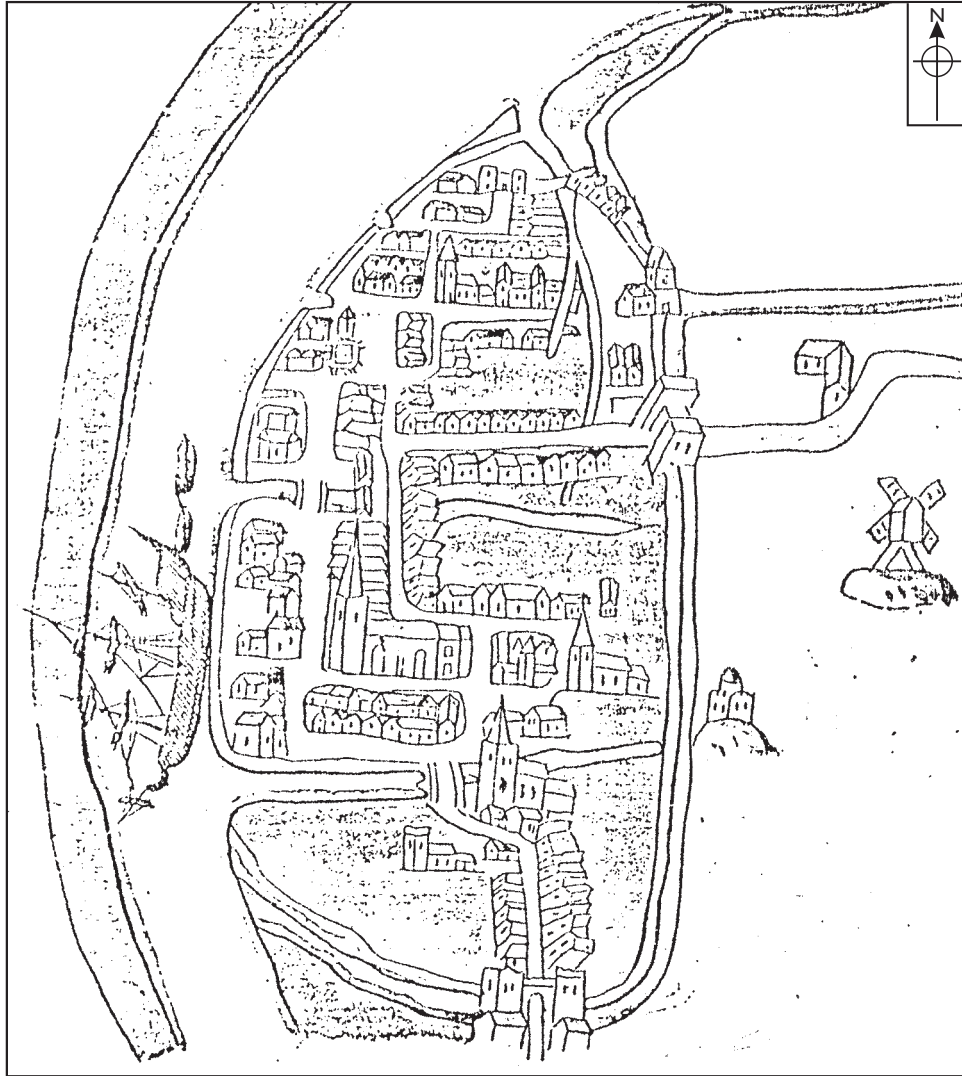


Fig. 4 Map of 1588 (inset)

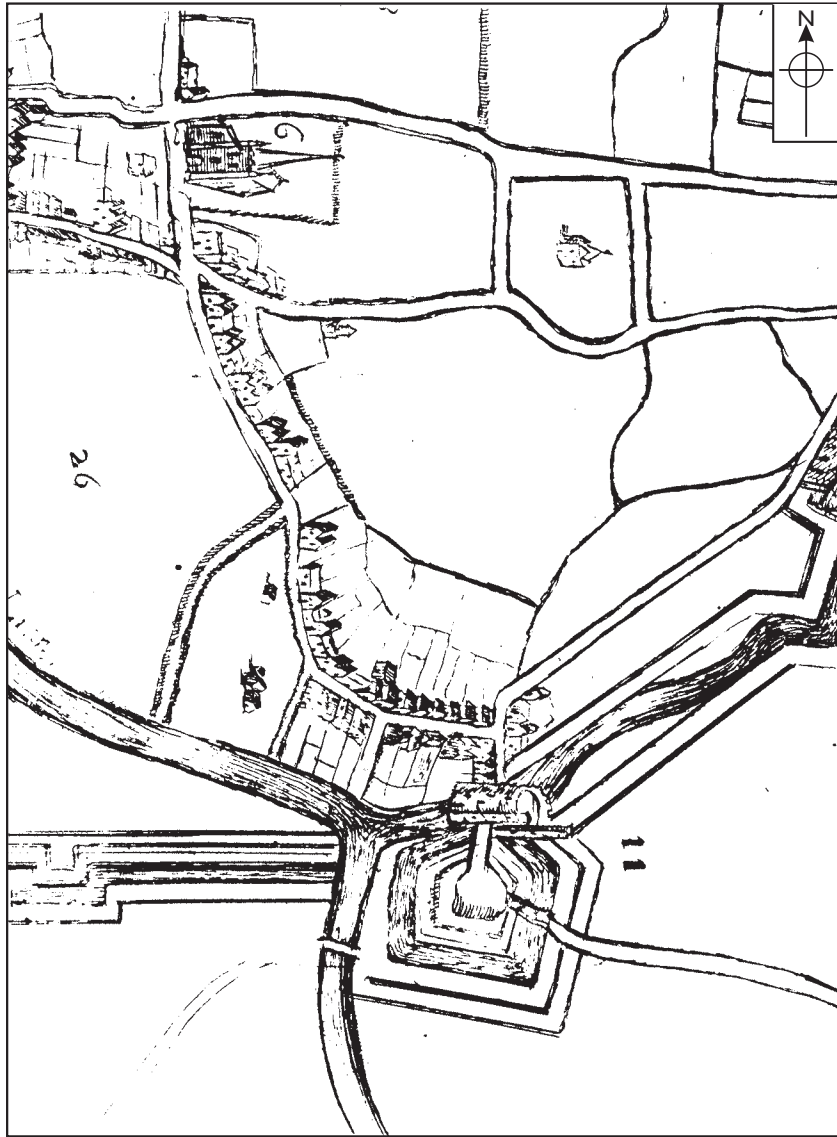


Fig. 5 Bells Groundplan of King's Lynn (detail) 1680

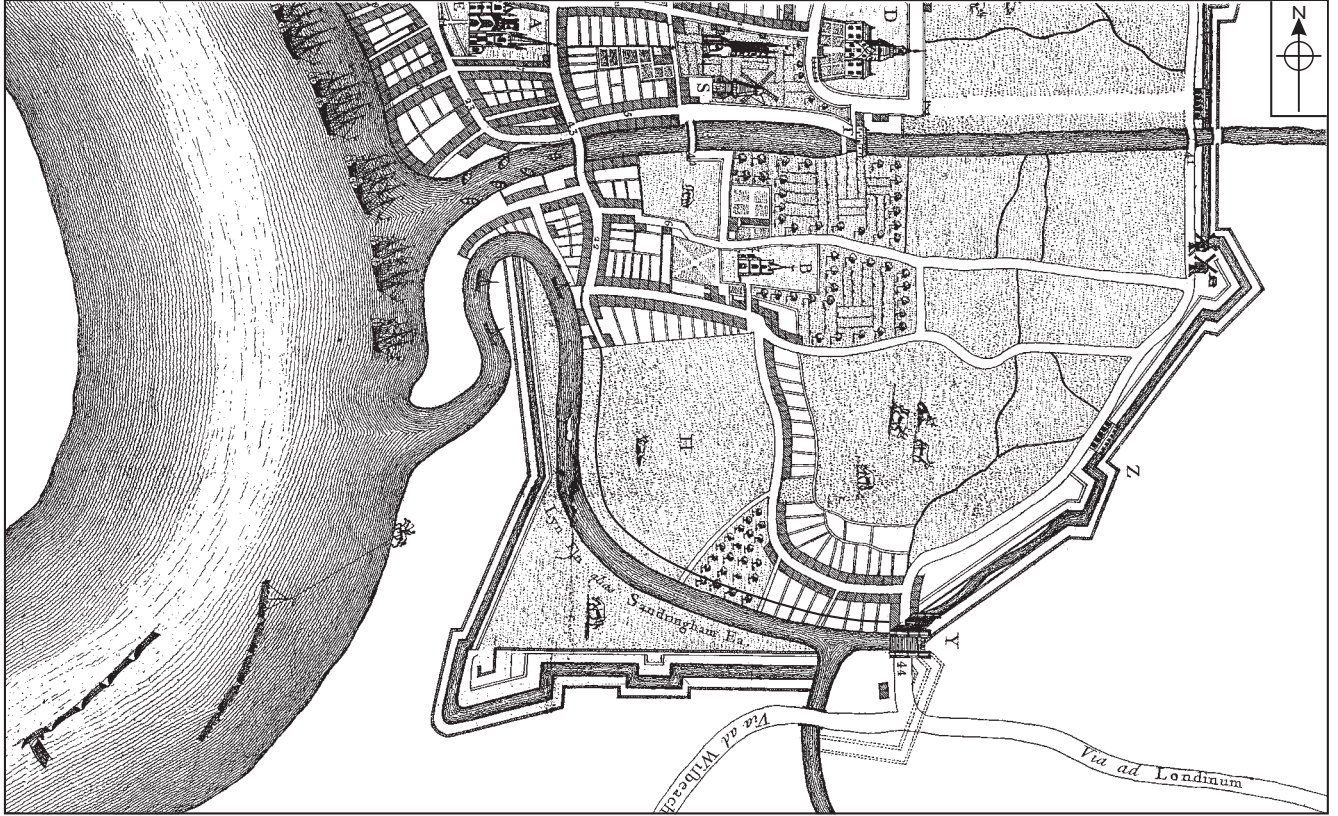


Fig. 6 Raistrick's Plan of King's Lynn (detail) 1725

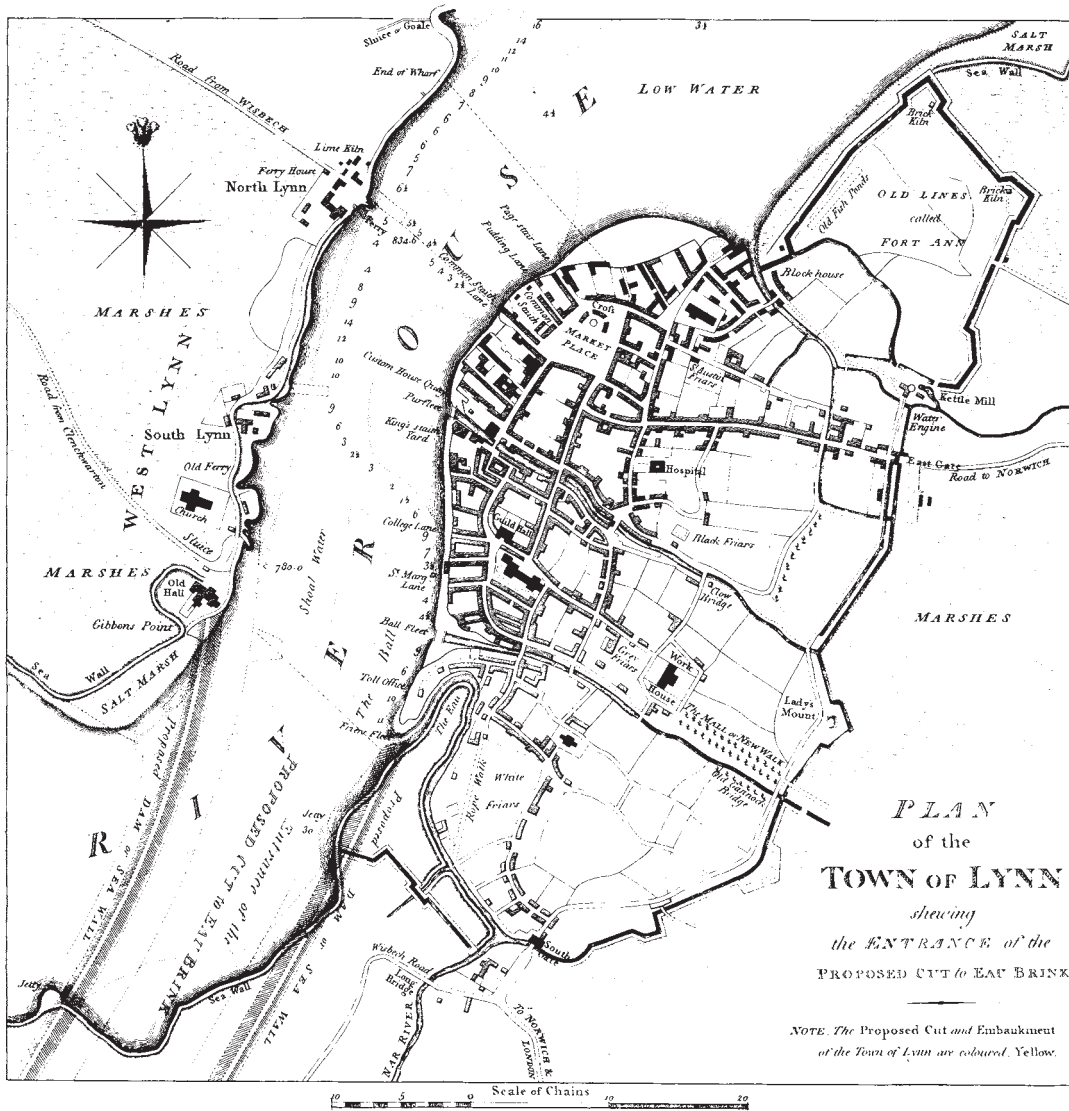


Fig. 7 Faden's Map of King's Lynn 1797

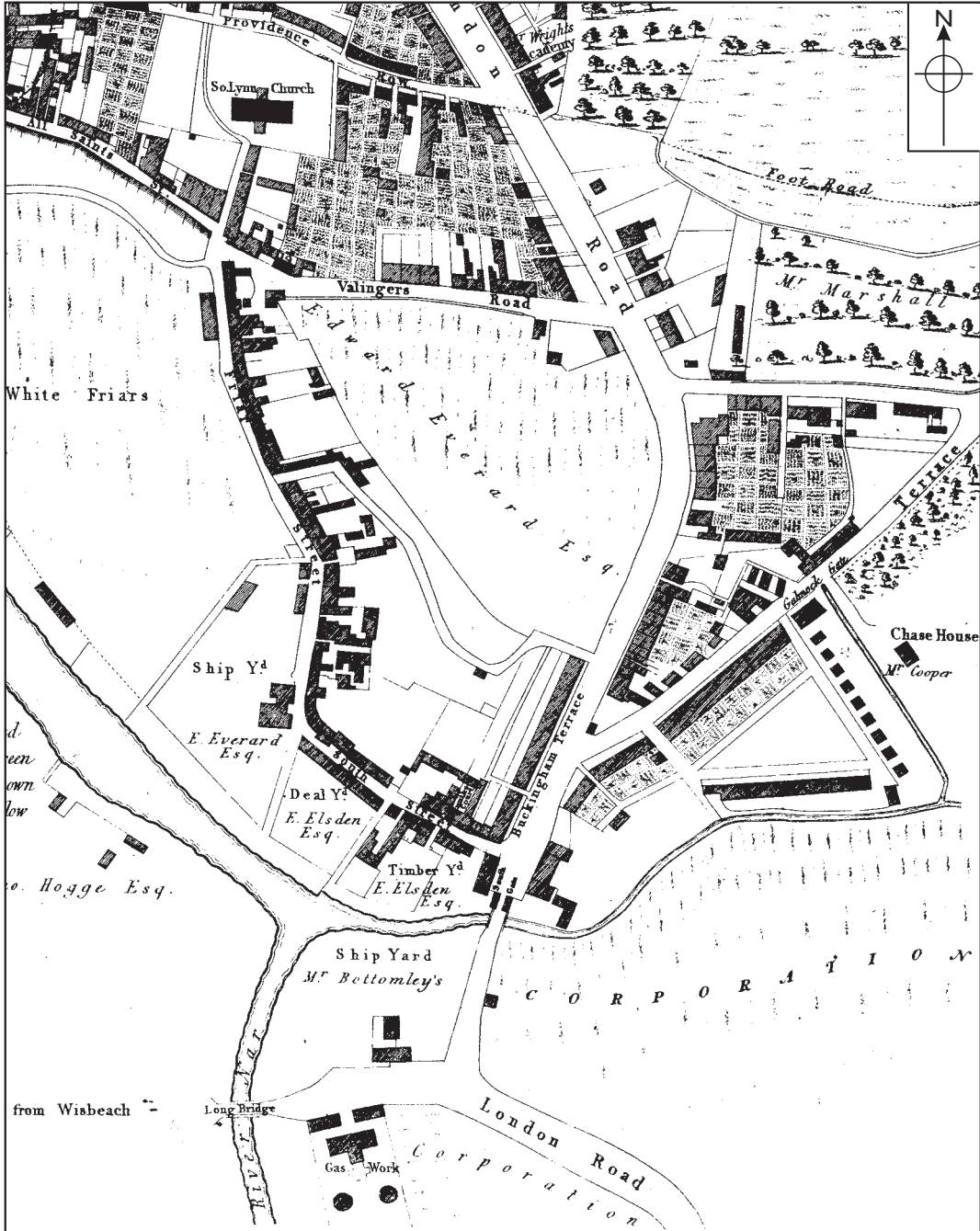


Fig. 8 Wood's Map of King's Lynn (detail)



 Area of the site

Fig. 9 OS 25" plan of King's Lynn (detail)

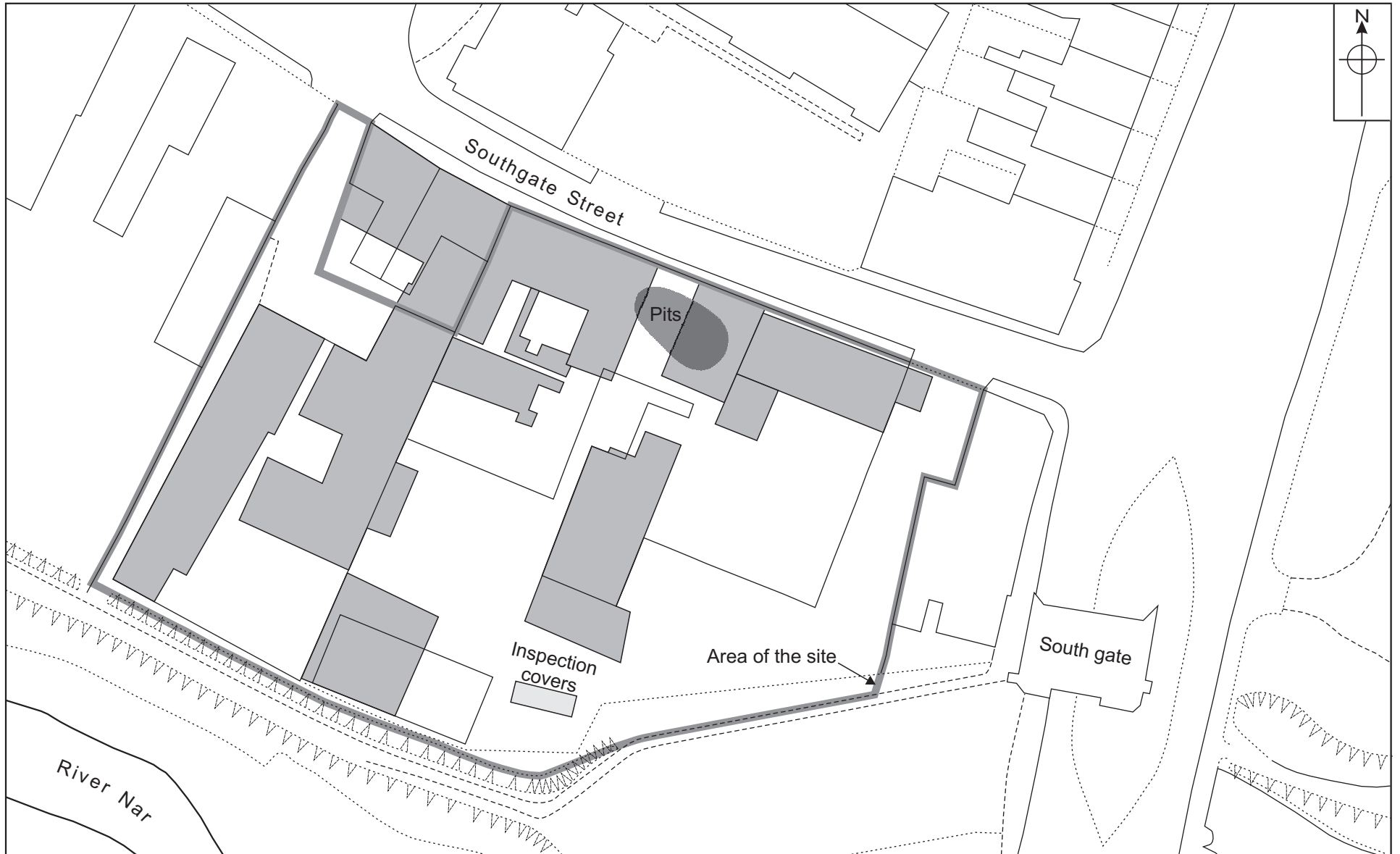


Fig. 10 The site with buildings of 1886 superimposed. Scale 1:500

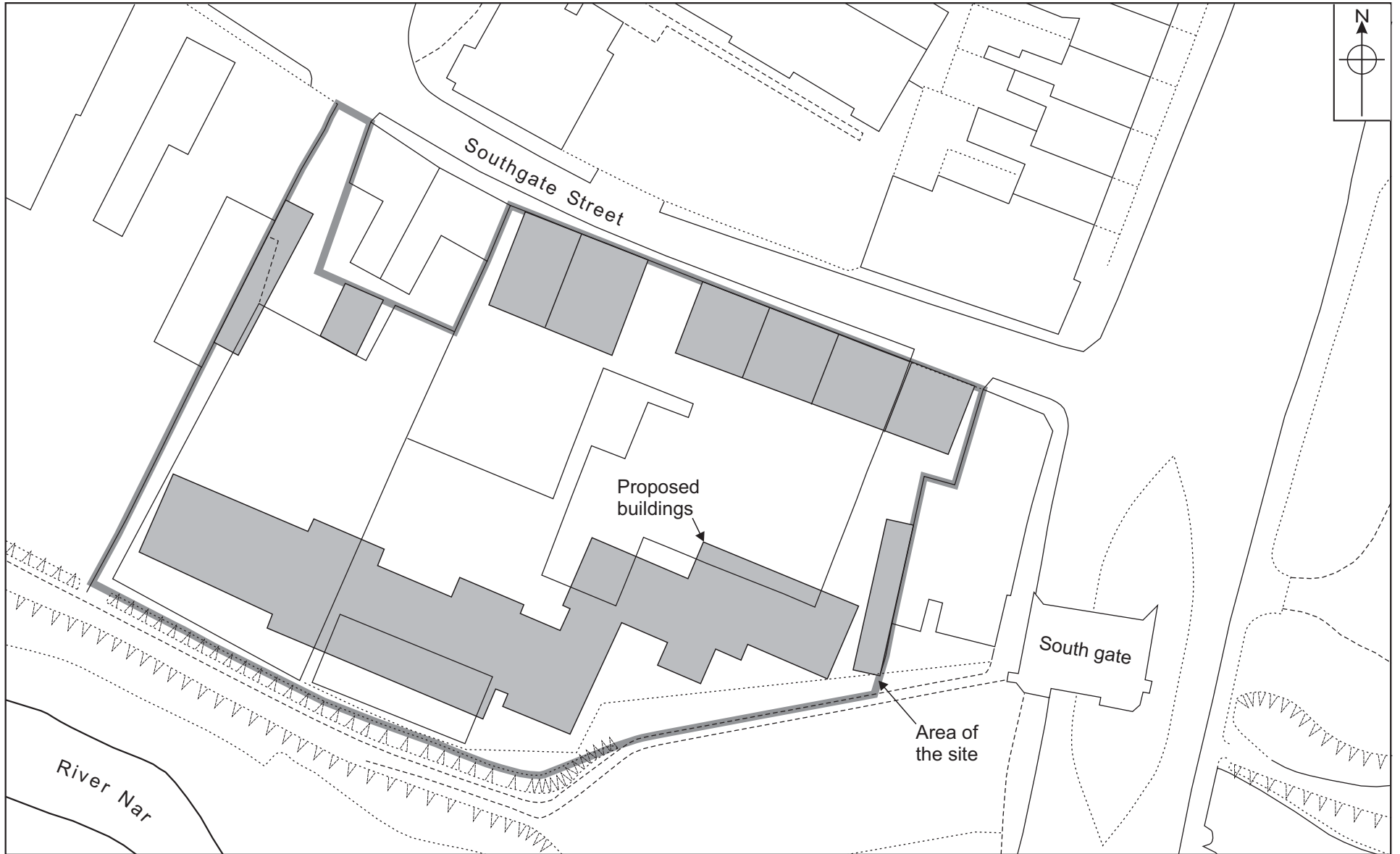


Fig. 11 The site with current proposals superimposed. Scale 1:500



Plate 1 Buildings, interior



Plate 2 Yard, looking east to South gate