

CSRH/01



# WATSON'S CAR PARK, CHURCH STREET, ROSS-ON-WYE, HEREFORDSHIRE

*Archaeological Evaluation*

*commissioned by Geoff Jones  
on behalf of Vanessa Watson*

*January 2014*



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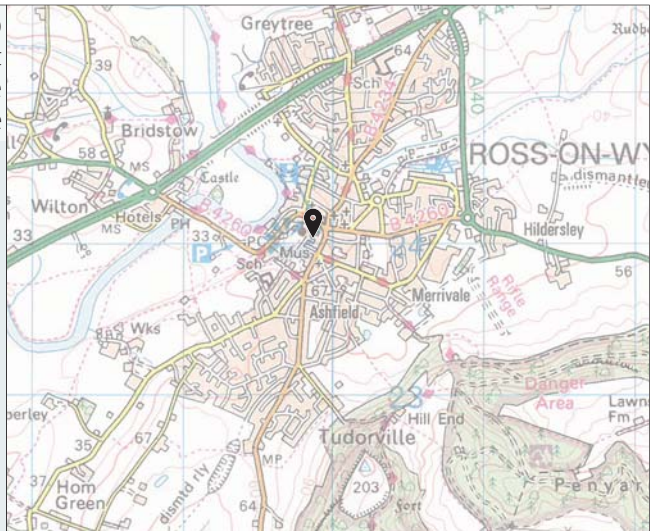
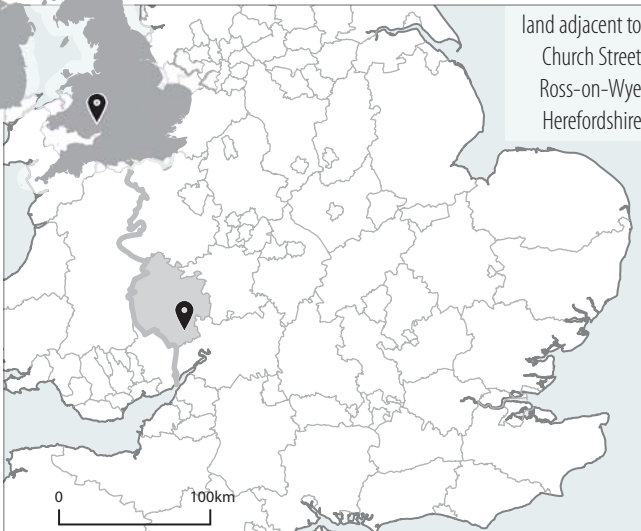


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### Illus 1

Site location



# WATSON'S CAR PARK, CHURCH STREET, ROSS-ON-WYE, HEREFORDSHIRE

## *Archaeological Evaluation*

*Headland Archaeology (UK) Ltd was commissioned to undertake an impact assessment Watsons Car Park, Church Street, Ross-on-Wye to provide further information about the archaeological resource to enable appropriate decisions to be reached regarding plans to develop the site. This assessment takes the form of documentary research and the results from a series of trial trenches excavated on the site.*

*Although the development site is in the heart of medieval Ross-on-Wye, terracing in the later post-medieval period or early modern period has resulted in the loss or truncation of surviving archaeological features.*

## 1 INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 Planning and background objectives

This document is presented by Headland Archaeology (UK) Ltd as the heritage statement for a proposed development site at Watsons Car Park, Church Street, Ross-on-Wye.

Herefordshire County Archaeology Service has advised the planning authority that it requires information on whether remains of archaeological significance survive within the proposed development area before providing advice on the likely impact of the development upon archaeological remains. Headland Archaeology (UK) Ltd has undertaken this assessment of the impact the proposed development would have upon Heritage Assets so as to provide sufficient information to allow consideration of the planning application. The Archaeological Advisor has also indicated that the results of an evaluation comprising 60 square metres of trench should be included as part of the statement.

### 1.2 Site location, description and setting

The proposed development site comprises 0.15ha of land located at NGR 359892, 224067 (site centre). The site lies within the medieval town of Ross-on-Wye, along a small road adjacent to the church. Roman remains have been uncovered at the Prospect nearby as well as in the church yard. Any archaeological remains present are likely to relate to Roman, medieval or later suburban occupation here.

The site is currently occupied by a private car park covered in tarmac and gravel/hardcore. Part of the centre of the car park is occupied by mature trees which are protected and cannot be disturbed.

The boundaries of the site consist of stone, brick and breeze block walls, between 1.50m and 1.80m in height with vehicular access in the north-west corner and pedestrian access to the east, north and west. The site is surrounded by residential properties to the east and west, and by shops to the north. None of these properties face on to the site as there is a considerable drop in the ground level (around 3m) to the north and visibility to the site is restricted by the buildings to the west and the walls surrounding the site.

The local geology is composed of sedimentary micaceous sandstone of the Brownstone formation.

## 2 POLICY AND GUIDANCE

### 2.1 National policy framework

National Planning Policy in England is set out in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) published in March 2012. Guidance to help practitioners implement this policy, including the legislative requirements that underpin it, is provided in '*Planning for the Historic Environment Practice Guide*' produced to support the previous Planning Policy Statement 5 (2010). Planning policy refers to '*heritage assets*' and the policies relating to designated heritage assets are intended to apply equally to all types of designation, including Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas. The policies in the NPPF are a material consideration that must be taken into account in development management decisions and in the development of Local Plans, where relevant. Therefore, the development management policies in the NPPF can be applied directly by the decision-maker when determining whether development should proceed.

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The NPPF supports a presumption in favour of sustainable development, and sets out the definitions of sustainability including protecting and enhancing the historic environment. P131 of the NPPF states that:

*'In determining planning applications, local planning authorities should take account of:*

- *The desirability of sustaining or enhancing the significance of heritage assets and putting them to viable uses consistent with their conservation;*
- *The positive contribution that conservation of heritage assets can make to sustainable communities including their economic vitality; and*
- *The desirability of new development making a positive contribution to local character and distinctiveness.'*

P132 states that '*great weight*' should be given to the conservation of the significance of designated heritage assets and that harm to this significance (either through alteration or destruction of the asset or through development within its setting) requires '*clear and convincing justification*'. The harm or loss needs to be outweighed by the public benefits of the proposed development and '*substantial harm to or loss of a grade II listed building, park or garden should be exceptional. Substantial harm to or loss of designated heritage assets of the highest significance, notably scheduled monuments, protected wreck sites, battlefields, grade I and II\* listed buildings, grade I and II\* registered parks and gardens, and world heritage sites, should be wholly exceptional*'.

## 2.2 Regional and local policy framework

The Herefordshire Unitary Development Plan (UDP) was adopted in March 2007 and guides development within the county. The UDP has the status of a Development Plan Document. It is operative as part of the Local Development Framework and most of its policies have now been '*saved*' (March 2010) until they are superseded by other emerging Development Plan Documents in the Local Development Framework.

Of the saved policies, the following are relevant to the protection of heritage assets within the proposed development area;

- **ARCH1 Archaeological Assessments and Field Evaluations**  
Prior to the determination of applications for development on sites where there is a reason to believe there are remains of archaeological importance, an archaeological field evaluation may be required. In addition where proposals are put forward within AIUA's ((Archaeologically Important Urban Areas) that may affect the integrity of the historic character of such settlements a historic landscape appraisal will be expected.
- **S7 Natural and Historic Heritage**  
The historic heritage including archaeology, buildings and areas of historic or architectural importance, will be protected, restored or enhanced.
- **HBA6 New Development within Conservation Areas**  
Where the setting of and views into and out of the conservation area, including vistas and landmarks, are

important to the character and appearance of the area they should be safeguarded.

- **HBA8 Locally Important Buildings**

Development proposals which would adversely affect the appearance or setting of locally important buildings of architectural or historic interest, or buildings that make a valuable contribution to the character and appearance of the area, will not be permitted.

## 2.3 Guidance

Guidance to help practitioners implement the NPPF, including the legislative requirements that underpin it, is provided in *Planning for the Historic Environment Practice Guide* (2010).

More recently English Heritage has issued detailed guidance on the *Setting of Heritage Assets* (2011). This guidance is based on principles and guidance already issued by English Heritage in the *Historic Environment Planning Practice Guide* (2010), *Conservation Principles: Policies and Guidance for the Sustainable Management of the Historic Environment* (2008). It provides a framework for assessing impacts based on the identification of individual asset's cultural significance and the relationship between that and its surroundings followed by assessment of the degree to which change in the surroundings affects significance. Setting is often assessed in terms of visual relationships, however other relevant factors can include noise, smell, or the way in which an asset is encountered within its surroundings.

## 3 AIMS AND OBJECTIVES OF THIS DOCUMENT

This assessment comprises a baseline survey (documentary research and field survey) followed by an initial assessment of the potential direct and indirect impacts of the proposed development on the cultural heritage resource. Desk based work has been carried out in accordance with the Institute for Archaeologists (IfA) *Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Desk-Based Assessment* (2011). Cultural heritage assets are here defined as all Scheduled Monuments, Listed Buildings, Conservation Areas, Registered Battlefields, Registered Parks & Gardens and relict man-made assets pre-dating the First Edition Ordnance Survey mapping (surveyed 1887 in this area) and selected features post-dating this, such as wartime or industrial sites.

The objective of the evaluation was to determine whether any archaeological remains were present within the area of the proposed development that might be directly impacted upon by the proposals, characterize them by date, extent, preservation and significance, produce a report and deposit the archive with a local repository.

## 4 METHOD

### 4.1 Documentary research

The assessment utilised the following study areas:

**Development area,** consisting of the land parcel within which the proposed development would be located. The potential for previously unrecorded assets to be affected by the development was considered.

**Study area,** extending 500m from the centre of the proposed development area. Designated and non-designated cultural heritage assets recorded in the Herefordshire Sites and Monuments Record (SMR) and national databases were considered to further inform the assessment of the potential for previously unrecorded cultural heritage assets to exist within the Study Area; designated assets were considered in relation to potential effects upon setting.

The desk-based study has been based on readily available and relevant documentary sources. The following sources were consulted:

- Databases of designated assets held by English Heritage;
- Herefordshire Sites and Monuments Record (SMR);
- Historic mapping and documentary information held by Hereford Records Office
- Historic mapping held by Hereford Library
- Other readily accessible published and online sources.

## 4.2 Trial trenching

The trial trenching was to comprise 60 metres square of trenches. The positioning of the trenches had to take into consideration the location of buried services, access points to the site from neighbouring properties, a preservation order on mature trees in the centre of the car park, and the continued use of the car park throughout the evaluation. Taking these factors into account it was only possible to excavate 50 metres square of trenches and all of these were to the south of the site. As a result, observations of the surrounding townscape were taken into consideration to establish how much terracing had taken place on the site, notably the changes in ground level in the surrounding properties.

Excavation was undertaken by mechanical excavator equipped with a flat-bladed bucket under constant supervision from an archaeologist. Mechanical excavation ceased at the first significant archaeological horizon or undisturbed natural deposits, excavation and recording then proceeded by hand. All recording was undertaken on pro forma record cards. 35mm colour transparencies and black-and-white prints were taken with a graduated metric scale clearly visible. Digital photographs on a 7.2mp camera were taken for illustrative purposes but do not form a part of the site archive.

## 5 RESULTS

### 5.1 Documentary research

#### 5.1.1 Prehistory

There are no known assets of prehistoric date within the proposed development area. No prehistoric assets have been identified within

the 500m study area although an Iron Age hill fort, Chase Wood Camp (Monument Number: SO 62 SW 8 ), is within 2km of the development area.

#### 5.1.2 Romano-British

The present town of Ross-on-Wye lies just to the east of the Roman settlement of *Ariconium* and the area was intensively occupied in the Roman period (Buteux, 2013). Roman coins have been found in the area (HWCM 4059 and HWCM 12103). Substantial evidence for Roman occupation was unearthed during an excavation by Border Archaeology (report forthcoming) on the site of The Prospect Park and Garden, which lies within 500m of Watson's Car Park, and some unstratified Roman pottery was recovered during an excavation in St Mary's churchyard in 1991 (SMR Number: 11793).

#### 5.1.3 Medieval

At the time of the Domesday Book Ross on Wye was recorded as follows:

*'...In Ross (on Wye) 7 hides which pay tax. In lordship 1 plough; another would be possible. 18 villagers, 6 smallholders and a priest with 23 ploughs. 3 slaves; a mill at 6s8d; meadow, 16 acres. The woodland is in the Kings Enclosure. The villagers pay 18s in dues...'*

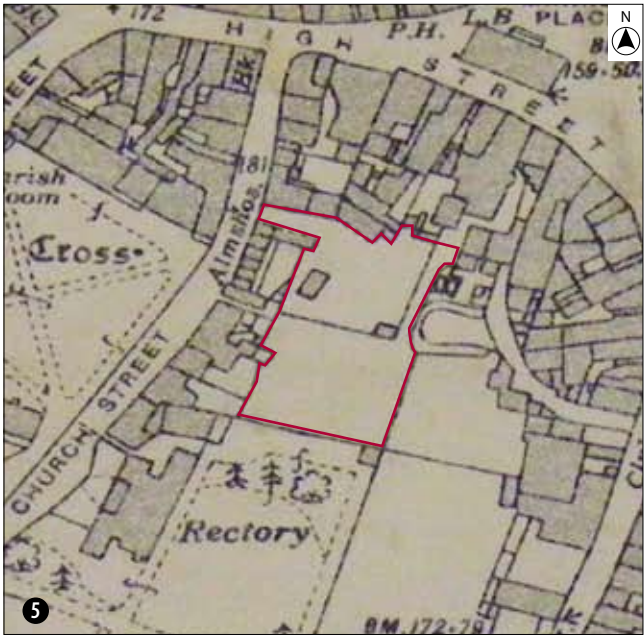
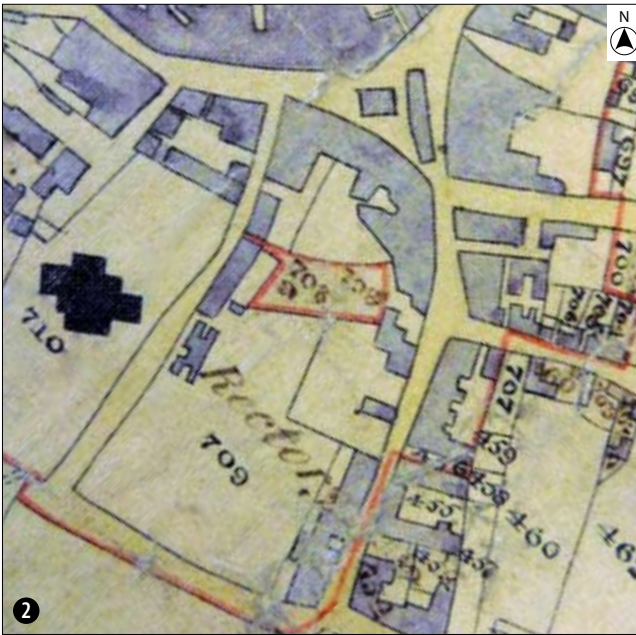
The land at this time was held by the Cannons of Hereford and they continued to hold it until 1562 when Queen Elizabeth acquired the land for the Crown (Robinson, 2001). Ross was granted borough status in 1256 by King Stephen, which was confirmed by Henry III after his succession, and sent Burgesses to Parliament until 1360 when its residents petitioned for exemption (Robinson, 2001) indicating that the town was in decline and could not afford the expense. In the later 14th century the Black Death, combined with frequent attacks across the border from Wales, led to a decline in all the towns in Herefordshire.

Although a priest is mentioned in the Domesday Book (a possible indication of the presence of a church) the town church of St Mary's as it stands today was rebuilt in the last quarter of the 13th century and underwent extensive remodelling in the 18th century onwards (RCHME, 1931). The church is located on the opposite side of the road to the development site.

#### 5.1.4 Post-medieval

After Elizabeth acquired Ross she gave it to Sir Gelly Merrick who was tried for treason in 1601 forfeiting his lands which were eventually purchased by the Countess of Essex, the Earl of Essex's widow (Robinson, 2001). The town suffered during the plague outbreaks but continued to prosper as it was the only market town south of Hereford. The later part of the 17th century saw a change in the town instigated mostly by the famous 'Man of Ross' John Kyrle who undertook extensive work on Ross, including the laying out of the Prospect for public recreation, the provision of a piped water supply and the restoration of the causeway linking the town with Wilton Bridge (Morris, 1980). It was during this period that the Market House was constructed (1660–74) and was commissioned by Frances, widow of William Duke of Somerset. The 17th century saw the construction





**Illus 2**  
1840 Tithe map

**Illus 4**  
1904 OS map

**Illus 3**  
1887 OS map

**Illus 5**  
1937 OS map

of a number of almshouses, Pye's in the later half, Webbe's around 1613, and Rudhall's in the late 16th century (RCHME, 1931). Rudhall's Almshouses border the western edge of the development site. Most of the shops, inns and other buildings in the centre of Ross were extensively remodelled, rebuilt and erected in the 17th century, according to the RCHME (1931), with a further revamp occurring in the later part of the 18th century as a reaction to the new found tourist industry growing up in the Wye Valley (Buteux, 2013).

The railway opened in 1855 expanding the town towards the station in the east, although this was shut by 1964, and the opening of the M50 motorway in the 1960s has allowed for improved transport links to the town.



### 5.1.5 Cartographic history of the development area

The earliest map of the area analysed was the 1840 Tithe Map (Illus 2). This map clearly shows the location of the Rudhall Almshouses, which border the east of the site. The land behind them was split into two with the northern part presumably forming a courtyard, and the southern half is labelled as a garden and a garden with a bowling green. The focus of the settlement at this time was on the Market Place and along Broad Street and Brookend Street running to the north with very little development taking place to the south of the Rectory.

The first Ordnance Survey map was produced in the area in 1887 (Illus 3) and shows the site was still split into two with separate functions. The northern half was used as a courtyard and had a number of possible outbuildings or structures whilst the southern half appears to have been used as a garden or public recreational space, possibly even still as a bowling green. This type of land use stretched down to Old Maids Lane to the south and dominates the area around the churchyard and The Prospect to the west.



Very few changes appear on the 2nd edition OS map of 1904 (Illus 4) except the southern half of the development site had become a courtyard, probably associated with the buildings neighbouring the Almshouses. The buildings seen on the 1887 OS map are still extant. The surrounding area has changed very little, the only exception being the renaming of Copse Cross Street to the more sedate Copse Cross Street to the east of the site.

By the 3rd edition of 1937 (Illus 5) the outbuildings which were in the northern half of the site had been removed and replaced by two new structures, one in the south east of the courtyard and one in the west. The courtyards remained separated at this time. To the south the parkland remained intact up to Old Maids Walk but beyond had been adapted for recreational use with the addition of bowling greens, tennis courts, a putting green and a playing field. Further to the south and to the south east houses had been constructed and a new Roman Catholic church stood at the end of Copse Cross Street.

## 5.2 Scheduled Monuments in the study area

There are no scheduled monuments in the proposed development area.

## 5.3 Conservation areas within the study area

The proposed development site falls within the boundary of the Ross on Wye Conservation Area. Although this development may have an impact on the conservation area, there has been development here already, in the form of the car park which now occupies the site, and due care and attention must be taken with respect to the character of the conservation area.

## 5.4 Built Heritage Assets within the study area

There are no listed buildings in the proposed development area. There are a total of 140 listed buildings in the study area, with 9 of those being Grade II\*, including the Rudhall Almshouses which are adjacent to the development area. Others of note in the study area include The Market Hall, St Mary the Virgin parish church, the Man of Ross Inn, Webbe's Almshouses and Kyrle's House (Pevsner, 1963).

### 5.4.1 Rudhall's Almshouses

According to the SMR (7495) the Almshouses were established in 1575 by William Rudhall and are now addressed as 5-9 Church Street. They consisted of 5 two storey tenements (converted into 3 in 1960) with the walls made of sandstone and ashlar and the roofs are covered in tile and slate (Pevsner, 1963; RHCME, 1931). The properties are separated from the development site by brick and breeze block walls which reach a height of 1.8m. The properties add to the character and aesthetic quality of Ross, especially the area surrounding the church.

**Illus 6**

*Feature [1003]*



## 5.5 Registered Parks and Gardens within the study area

There are no registered parks or gardens within the development site, however, 5 designated parks and gardens are registered within 500m of the site:

**The Chase Hotel** The Chase was built as a villa residence in the early 19th century on the site of a re-routed road and former water mills and weirs, with shrubbery walks and park-like grounds on the site of the former water mills. It is now a hotel.

**John Kyrle's Garde** A domestic garden made by John Kyrle (1637-1724), the philanthropist celebrated as the 'Man of Ross' by Alexander Pope, behind his house, which includes a summerhouse. The garden was altered and the summerhouse rebuilt in the Gothic style around 1830.

**John Kyrle's Walk** The walk consists of a footpath extending from the viewpoint of The Prospect in Ross on Wye to the site of the former summerhouse at Lower Cleeve, providing rural views over the Wye Valley.

**Merton House** The house has a back garden overlooking the River Wye. It once contained a Folly Tower.

**The Prospect** The Prospect is a public open space formed by John Kyrle in 1700 to provide recreation for the townspeople. It is a level lawn with an ornamental gateway and trees, providing extensive views over a bend in the River Wye. The Royal Hotel was controversially built on part of the site in the early 19th century.

## 5.6 Trial trenching

All of the trenches were covered with a compacted gravel and stone layer which represented the hard standing of the car park. This sealed a made ground layer, over 1m in depth, which appeared to extend all over the northern end of the site. This deposit was a black-brown sandy clay with modern and post-medieval finds within it. The naturally formed substrate was a pink brown sand clay



**Illus 7**

Feature [1003]

**5.6.3 Trench 4**

No archaeological evidence was observed in Trench 4. The OS maps show this area as having buildings backing up against the boundary wall to the neighbouring property, but no evidence of these was visible in the trench.

**5.7 Other observations**

The ground within the development site itself slopes gently down to the north. However, property to its south has a much higher ground level, approximately 2m (Illus 10), whilst the properties to the north drop down approximately 4m (Illus 9). Church Street itself is cut into the natural geology as the ground level further south up the street is higher than the road. Trenches 3 and 4 encountered in situ natural sub-strata at 1.10m and 1m down respectively and these trenches were towards the south of the site where it might be expected that the substrate would be at a higher level.

This all suggests that the development site has been terraced in the past and then built up again with imported material to make it level. If this is the case then the northern end of the site has probably undergone the same process and is therefore likely to produce similar results to the area of the site that was trenched.

with occasional patches of sandstone bedrock coming through. No buried topsoil or subsoil was observed in any of the trenches suggesting this had been removed, possibly as a result of the site having been terraced.

**5.6.1 Trench 1**

The foundations of a structure, [1003], were uncovered in the north-west end of the trench (Illus 6). They appeared to cut through the modern/late Post-medieval levelling deposit. The 1937 OS map (Illus 5) clearly showed a structure in the area which may relate to these foundations. No previous maps show evidence of buildings in this part of the site and it is likely to represent an out building, possibly relating to the almshouses.

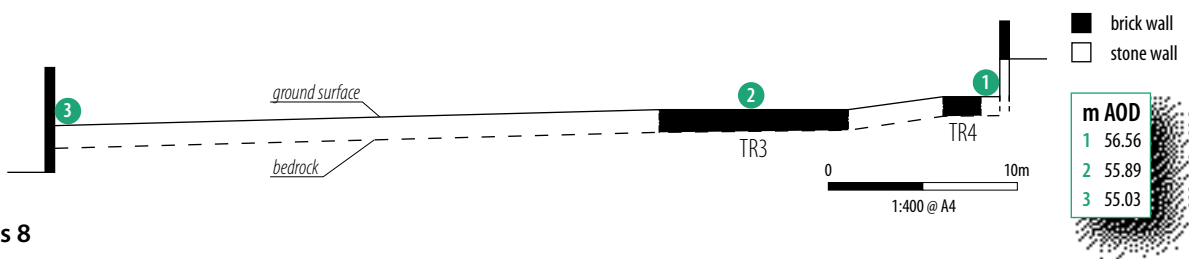
**5.6.2 Trench 3**

Trench 3 contained multiple layers of built up ground, with a total depth of 1.10m, all of which produced post-medieval detritus. Two linear features crossed the trench at the north end and in the centre. Both were cut through the later made-up ground layers had vertical edges and flat bases, and were filled with orange/yellow brown gravel and stone. They are likely to be modern disposal features probably relating to the construction of the car park.

**6 DISCUSSION**

The proposed development area is located in the centre of Ross on Wye within the medieval core of the town. The town is situated on a hill and as such terracing has been undertaken in some areas to provide level ground for building. The results of the evaluation indicate that the ground on the proposed development site has been terraced with the topsoil, subsoil and some bedrock removed and then built up with imported material, producing an overburden of around 1m covering the south end of the site. Any archaeological remains which had been present on this site are likely to have been severely truncated during the terracing.

As the north end of the site was not excavated due to extenuating circumstances it is difficult to say for certain whether any archaeology was either present or likely to survive through direct observation. If the entire site was terraced then it is likely that any archaeology



**Illus 8**

Section through site



**Illus 9**

*View to N of site*

**Illus 10**

*View of site looking S*

would have been seriously truncated. However, the natural bedrock would have been at a lower level here, and there may have been no need to terrace down to this level so there may be a chance that there are archaeological remains buried beneath the made ground (Illus 8). If the development were to go ahead a watching brief on the northern end of the site would be able to confirm this.

**7 SUMMARY OF POTENTIAL IMPACTS**

**7.1 Known Heritage Assets**

There is a potential impact on one known heritage asset (HA):

Description of HA	Significance of HA
SMR:7495 Rudhall's Almshouses	Medium

**7.2 Potential Heritage Assets**

There is a low possibility of remains dating to the prehistoric period or Romano-British periods within the development area. Archaeology from the medieval period was expected but not encountered during the evaluation, the location of the trenches might have been a factor as they were away from the medieval buildings. Remains dating from the post-medieval and modern periods have a high possibility of recovery and that was certainly the case in the evaluation. It would appear that the site has been terraced with the removal of the topsoil, subsoil and some of the bedrock before being made level with imported material. As such any heritage assets are likely to have been truncated or completely lost. Therefore the likely value of any unknown heritage assets within the site is going to be low.



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