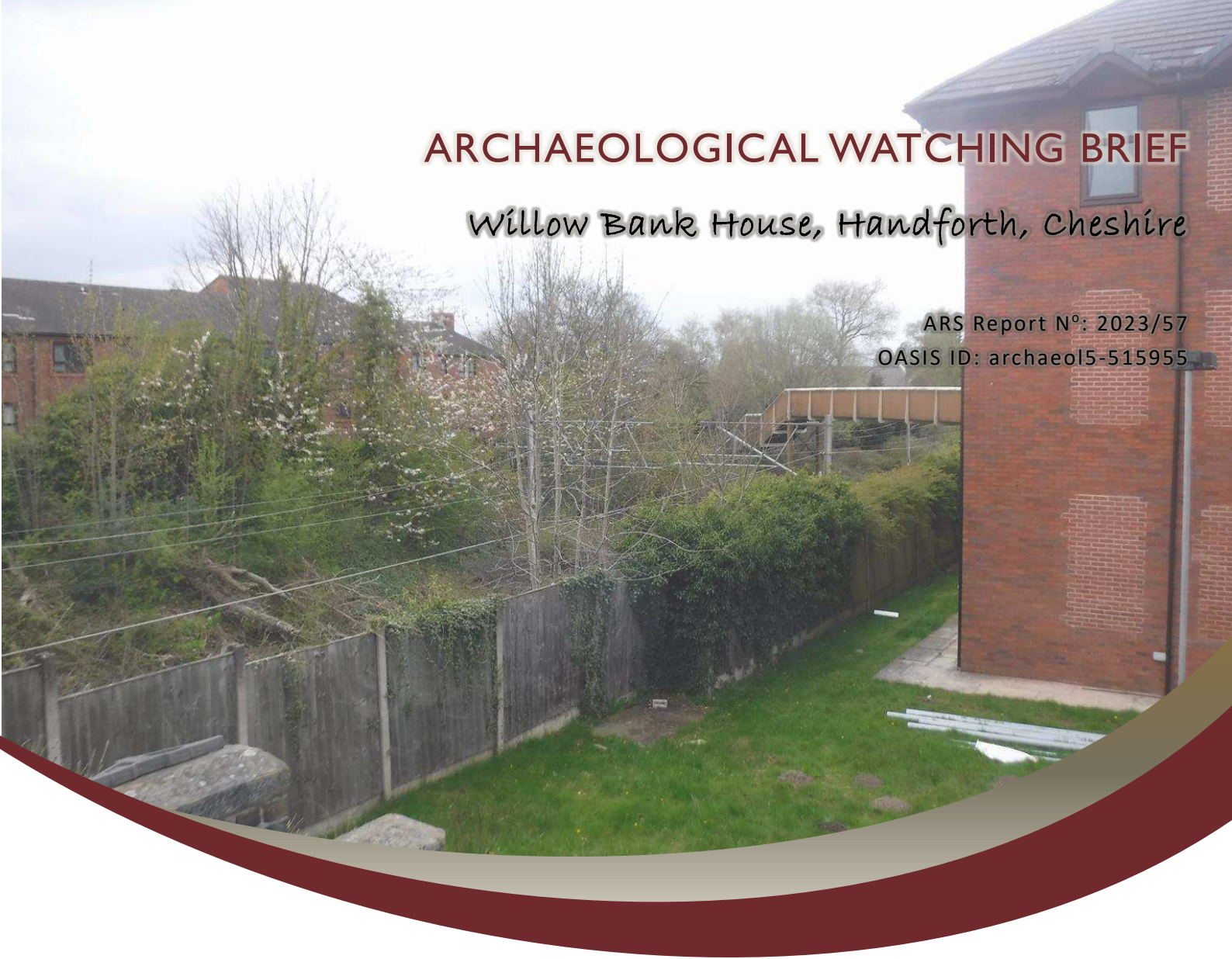


ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF

Willow Bank House, Handforth, Cheshire

ARS Report N°: 2023/57
OASIS ID: archaeol5-515955



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Prepared on behalf of: Town Square Living Ltd
Date of compilation: 01/06/23
Compiled by: Joseph Robb
Checked by: Jenny Doole
Approved for issue by: Dr Rebecca L. Trow MCIfA
Planning Reference: 22/2069M
Local Authority: Cheshire East Council
Site central NGR: SJ 85915 83373
OASIS ID: archaeol5-515955

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

| | |
|-----------------------------|--|
| Project Name: | Willow Bank House, Handforth, Cheshire |
| Site Code: | WBH23 |
| Planning Authority: | Cheshire East Council |
| Planning Reference: | 22/2069M |
| Location: | Old Road, Handforth, Cheshire, SK9 3AB |
| Parish: | Handforth |
| Hard Geology: | Wilmslow Sandstone Formation |
| Superficial Geology: | Devensian Till |
| Soil Type: | <i>Soilscape 18</i> – Slowly permeable seasonally wet slightly acid but base-rich loamy and clayey soils (Cranfield University 2023) |
| NGR: | SJ 85915 83373 |
| Date of Fieldwork: | 30/05/23-31/05/23, 31/10/23 |
| Date of Report: | November 2023 |

An archaeological watching brief was undertaken at Willow Bank House, Handforth, Cheshire by Archaeological Research Services Ltd (ARS Ltd) on 30-31 May 2023, and 31st October 2023. The purpose of the watching brief was to record any archaeological remains that survived on the site, that would have been truncated or removed during the proposed development.

Due to the proximity of the proposed development area (PDA) to the former Handforth Railway Station – opened in 1842 – there was a strong possibility of archaeological remains to be present within the site.

Overall, limited evidence of archaeological remains were observed during the watching brief, although a drain, part of a wall and possible step were 19th century in date and probably related to the station buildings as shown on historic maps.

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I. INTRODUCTION

1.1. Background and Scope of Work

- 1.1.1. A planning application 22/2069M was submitted by Town Square Living Ltd for an additional two storey dwelling to the rear of Willow Bank House
- 1.1.2. Due to the proximity of the proposed development area (PDA) to the former Handforth Railway Station – opened in 1842 – there was a strong possibility of archaeological remains to be present within the site
- 1.1.3. Planning permission was granted, subject to conditions, by Cheshire East Council. Condition 7 of the planning consent required that:

Condition 7 – No development shall take place within the site hereby approved until the applicant, or their agents or successors in title, has secured the implementation of a programme of archaeological work in accordance with a written scheme of investigation which has been submitted by the applicant and approved in writing by the local planning authority. The work shall be carried out strictly in accordance with the approved scheme. Reason: In the interests of archaeology.

- 1.1.4. Archaeological Research Services Ltd (ARS Ltd) was commissioned by Town Square Living Ltd to undertake a watching brief at Willow Bank House, Handforth, Cheshire (Figure 1). The watching brief comprised the continuous archaeological monitoring of the excavation of the foundation trenches and ground reduction within the footprint of the dwelling, as well as a drainage trench outside the building.
- 1.1.5. Works were undertaken in accordance with the Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI) (See Appendix III) and took place on 30/05/23 - 31/05/23, and 31/10/23.

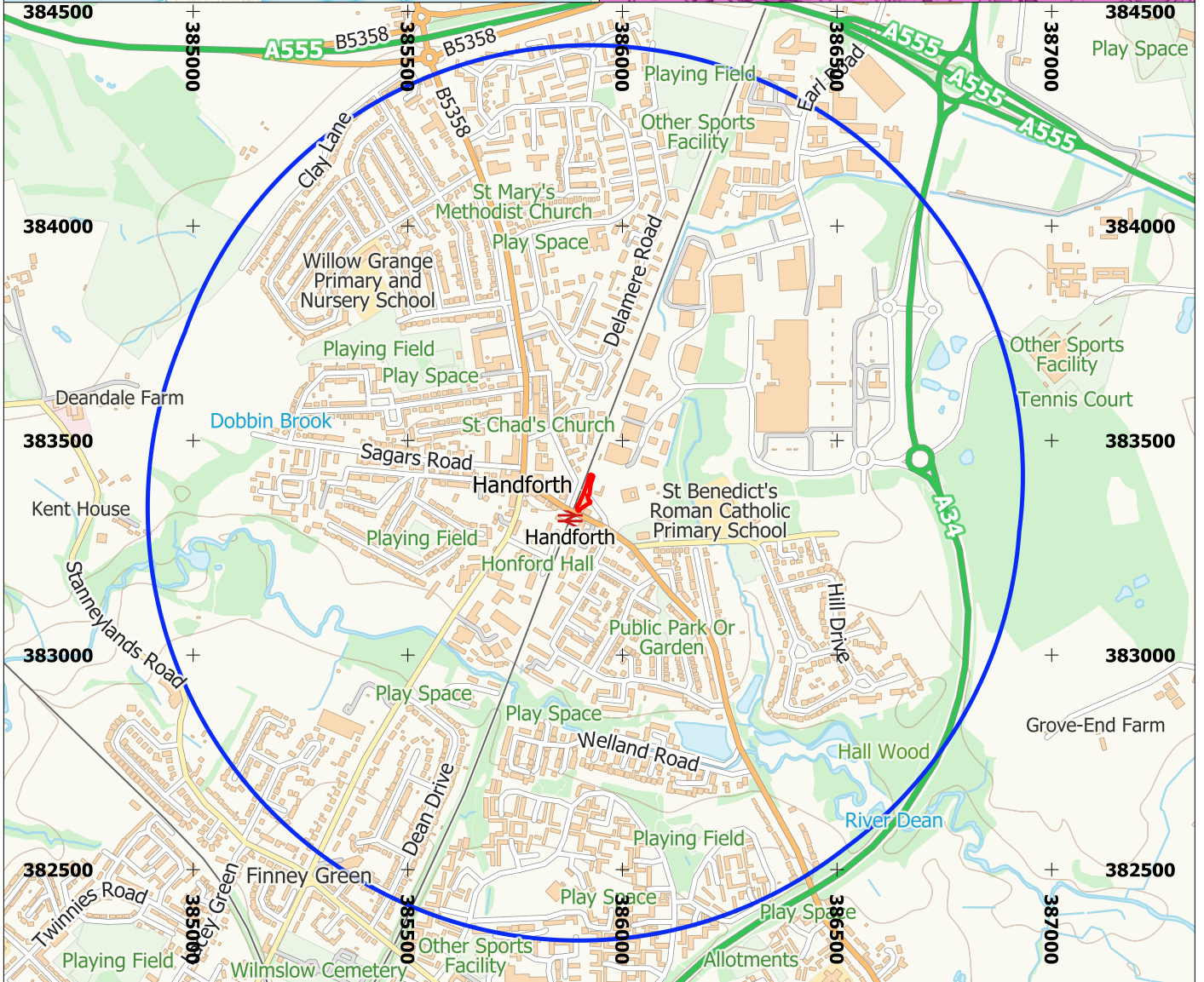
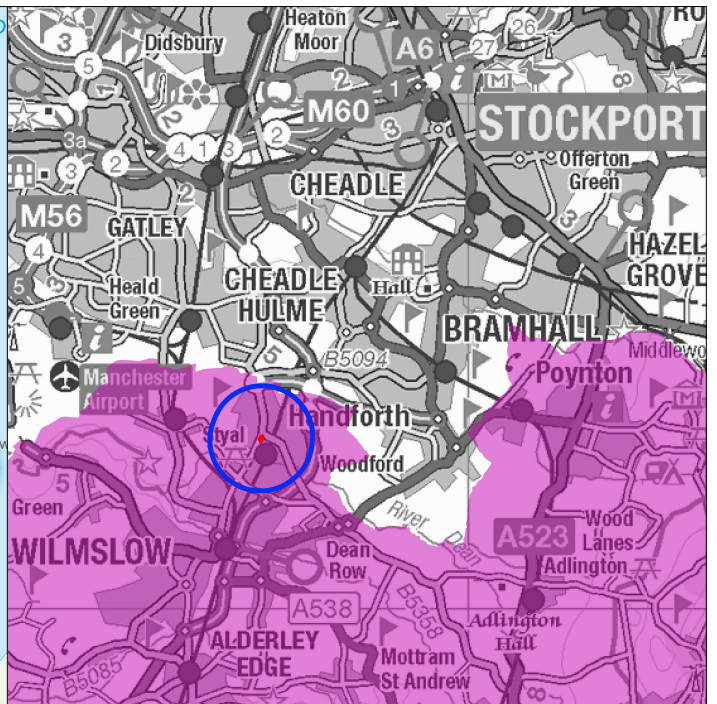
1.2. Site Location and Description

- 1.2.1. The development area boundary is indicated in red on Figure 1. The site is located within 200m of Handforth town centre. The site comprised a standing building, Willow Bank House, surrounded by rough vegetation. To the north, the site is bounded by a small area of vegetation, to the east by a railway line, to the south by Station Road (B5358) and to the west by The Railway public house.
- 1.2.2. Ordnance Survey maps show the site to lie at 80m above Ordnance Datum. The landscape slopes from the north and northeast, gradually descending to the south towards the River Dean.




1.3. Geology and Soils

- 1.3.1. The underlying solid geology of the site consists of Wilmslow Sandstone Formation, sedimentary bedrock formed between 252.2 and 247.1 million years ago during the Triassic period (British Geological Survey 2023). The superficial geology is described as Till, Devensian, sedimentary superficial deposit formed between 116 and 11.8 thousand years ago during the Quaternary period.

1.3.2. The soils are characterised by the Cranfield Soil and Agrifood Institute as *Soilscape 18*, which is slowly permeable seasonally wet slightly acid but base-rich loamy and clayey soils (Cranfield University 2023).



Site name: Willow Bank House, Handforth
 Date: April 2023
 Drawn by: RLT
 Scale: Varies

 Site Boundary  Cheshire East Council
 1km Study Area

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Figure 1:
Site location



1.4. Archaeological and Historical Background

- 1.4.1. The following historical and archaeological background is taken from the WSI included in Appendix III.
- 1.4.2. There is no recorded evidence for the prehistoric to medieval period within the PDA or 1km study area.
- 1.4.3. Evidence for the post-medieval period is well attested for within the 1km study area and the PDA. The site of Handforth Railway Station—built for the Manchester and Birmingham Railway—is recorded by Cheshire East HER as located within the boundary of the PDA (HER 2528/1/1). Handforth Railway Station was opened in 1842, and by the early 20th century comprised the station house, platforms with shelters, signal box, and a goods yard with associated sidings. By 1960, both platforms had been relocated to the south of the original platforms, and a new ticket office was constructed above the railway tracks.
- 1.4.4. The extant route of the Manchester to Birmingham Railway is also recorded by Cheshire East HER, adjacent to PDA (HER 2528/1/0). The railway was established in stages between 1840 and 1842. The line ran from Store Street Station (now Piccadilly Station) in Manchester to Crewe via Handforth station. The route is visible on modern aerial imagery. Upon review of the first edition OS map of Handforth (1884), it is clear that there were substantial industrial structures within the PDA, which are likely to have surviving below ground remains.

2. AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

2.1. Research Aims and Objectives

2.1.1. The investigations were conducted with a view to addressing objectives suggested by the *North West Regional Research Framework* (GMAAS 2023). Research priorities that might have been relevant were those that focus upon post-medieval and industrial transport and infrastructure regional research objectives.

2.1.2. The following specific themes were expected to be relevant:

- ◆ PM44: How were transport infrastructures improved and how was this related to the developing urban and market hierarchy?
- ◆ Ind91: How were transport infrastructures improved and how was this related to the developing urban and market hierarchy during the industrial period?
- ◆ Ind92: What impact did the region's early railway development have on the world?

2.2. Watching Brief Aims and Objectives

2.2.1. The aims and objectives of the archaeological watching brief are outlined in detail in the WSI (see Appendix III) and are summarised below.

2.2.2. The objectives of the fieldwork were to:

- ◆ monitor the groundworks that may encounter archaeological remains;
- ◆ investigate and record any archaeological features/deposits encountered;
- ◆ establish a relative chronological sequence and, if possible, recover datable materials from archaeological deposits and features; and,
- ◆ establish the character, extent, form, function, and likely status of any archaeological remains found.

3. METHOD STATEMENT

3.1.1. The methodology for the watching brief is set out in detail in the Written Scheme of Investigation (Appendix III).

3.2. Professional Standards

3.2.1. The archaeological fieldwork was undertaken in accordance with the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists (CIfA) *Code of Conduct* (2021) and *Standard and Guidance for an Archaeological Watching Brief* (2020a).

3.3. Health and Safety

3.3.1. All works were undertaken in full compliance with the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974 and with the Management of Health and Safety Regulations 1992.

3.3.2. A risk assessment (RA No. 63/23/S) was produced before commencement of the work and was adhered to throughout the course of the fieldwork.

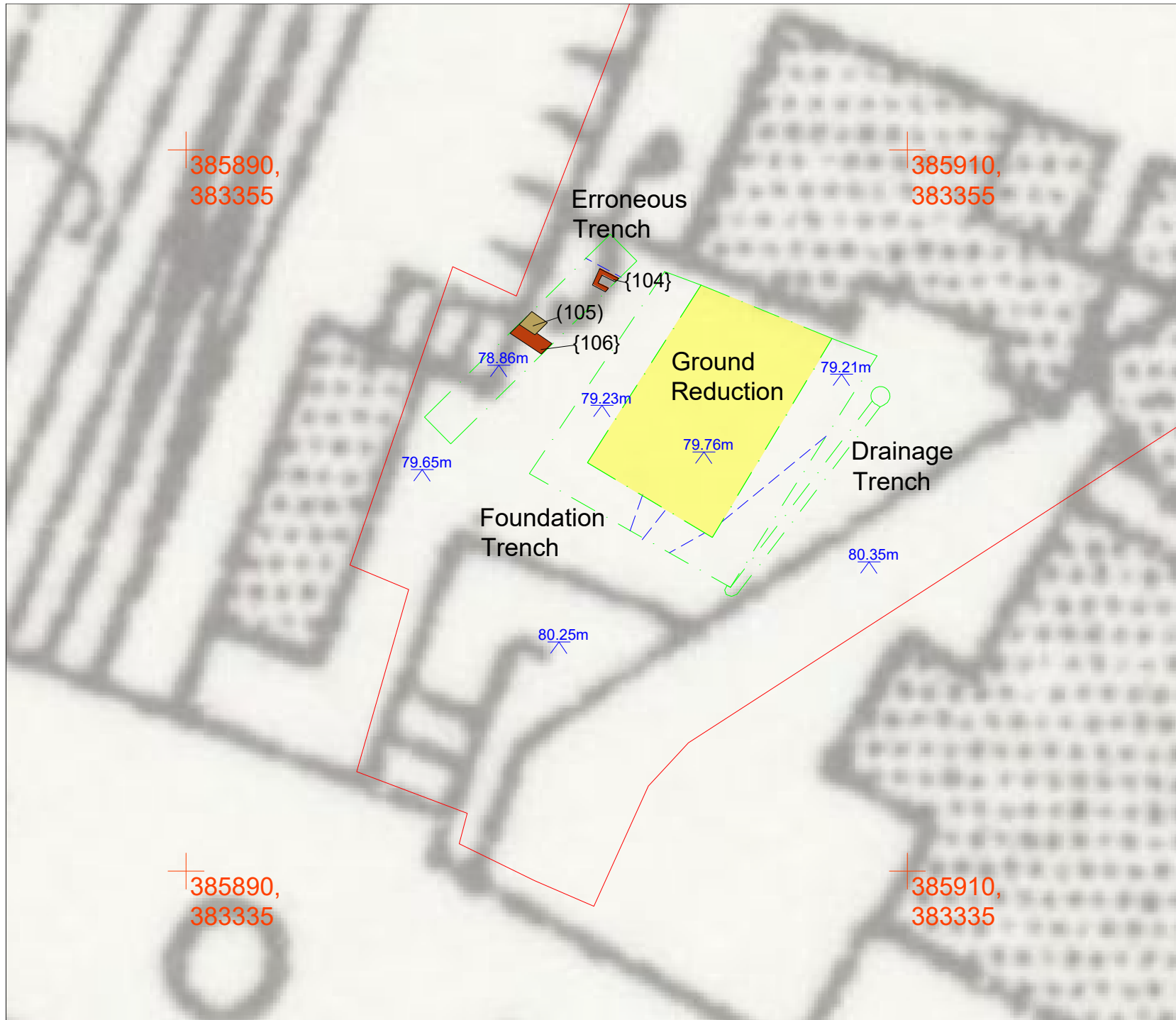
3.4. Methodology

3.4.1. All excavation was conducted under archaeological supervision, which included ground reduction and foundation trench excavation using a 3 tonne, 360° mechanical excavator, and drainage trench excavation by hand.

3.4.2. The excavations were tied into the National Ordnance Survey Grid using GPS equipment to record known points on drawn plans. The same equipment was used to provide spot heights.

3.4.3. All encountered deposits and features were recorded on *pro forma* recording sheets and digitally photographed.

Figure 2: Plan of watching brief areas and archaeological remains, overlaid onto 1937 OS map



- Limit of Excavation
- Site Boundary
- Modern Service
- 19th century red brick
- Stone
- Ground reduction
- 80.25m Height (aOD)
- 385910, 383335 National Grid Reference



Site name: WBH23
 Date: 2/11/23
 Drawn by: JR

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4. RESULTS

- 4.1.1. An overall plan of the watching brief area is presented in Figure 2. A context description table is contained in Appendix I and a selection of illustrative photographs are included below. Additional digital photographs are contained in the project archive.
- 4.1.2. The overburden across the area subject to watching brief was machine excavated down to the depth of development, under continuous archaeological supervision. The depth of the excavations reached 1.2m in the foundation trenches, with further ground reduction elsewhere reaching 0.3m. The drainage trench was a maximum of 0.4m deep. An initial trench was excavated to the west of the building footprint due to a miscalculation. This trench and the features within it were recorded before it was backfilled and the foundation trench excavated in the correct location.

4.2. Results

- 4.2.1. The overburden (101) comprised a light greyish brown coarse topsoil with occasional demolition material inclusions. Beneath this was a light grey, sandy, levelling deposit (102), overlying a deposit, (103), associated with the demolition of the 19th century station buildings. The demolition deposit (103) comprised moderate amounts of mixed 19th century bricks and stone fragments suspended in a mid-blackish grey silt.
- 4.2.2. The northeastern section of the initial erroneous foundation trench contained a small handmade red brick structure {104}, four courses deep and bonded with lime mortar (Figure 3). The top course was capped with stone slabs and a ceramic drain pipe was housed within the southeastern corner of the structure. This seemed to be a sump at the end of the drainage run.



Figure 3. Drainage structure, {104}, looking southeast (scale: 1x0.15m)

- 4.2.3. In the centre of the initial foundation trench a five-skin wide, handmade red brick wall, {106}, was uncovered, running northeast to southwest and abutting flagstone (105) (Figure 4). The flagstone was also underlain by handmade red bricks, bonded with the same lime mortar used to construct {106}, the flagstone possibly representing a step. This 19th century wall and possible step, appears to correspond with structures shown on the historic ordnance survey map.



Figure 4. Flagstone (105) and wall {106}, looking northeast (scale: 1x0.15m)

- 4.2.4. The foundation trench (Figure 5) was excavated in a rectangle adjacent to the standing building to a depth of 1.2m, revealing mid-yellowish brown natural clay (107) at the base in some areas. This trench yielded no evidence of surviving archaeological remains, nor did the subsequent ground reduction in the centre of the foundation trench.
- 4.2.5. The drainage trench, located to the east of the new building, also contained no archaeological remains.



Figure 5. Completed foundation trench and ground reduction, looking northeast (scale: 1x1m)

5. DISCUSSION

- 5.1.1. The initial erroneous trench observed during this archaeological watching brief yielded two archaeological features associated with the original 19th century railway station structures presented on the 1937 OS map of the PDA. These features did not continue into the corrected foundation trench or drainage trench, in keeping with what is depicted on the historic OS map.
- 5.1.2. The archaeological features recorded during this watching brief were evidence that parts of the original railway platform and associated structures do survive below ground, but found in isolation cannot advance understanding of local history in any significant way or inform the relevant research criteria. They do, however, suggest that evidence of the former platforms and station buildings may survive in the western edge of the PDA and beyond into the railway embankment, indicating that future work in those areas may shed more light on the nature of the structures encountered during this watching brief.

6. PUBLICITY, CONFIDENTIALITY AND COPYRIGHT

- 6.1.1. Any publicity will be handled by the client.
- 6.1.2. ARS Ltd will retain the copyright of all documentary, photographic and video material under the Copyright, Designs and Patent Act (1988).

7. STATEMENT OF INDEMNITY

- 7.1.1. All statements and opinions contained within this report arising from the works undertaken are offered in good faith and compiled according to professional standards. No responsibility can be accepted by the author/s of the report for any errors of fact or

opinion resulting from data supplied by any third party, or for loss or other consequence arising from decisions or actions made upon the basis of facts or opinions expressed in any such report(s), howsoever such facts and opinions may have been derived.

8. ARCHIVE

- 8.1.1. A paper and digital archive will be prepared by ARS Ltd, consisting of all primary written documents, plans, sections, photographs and electronic data, which will be deposited online with ADS.
- 8.1.2. The archive will follow the recommendations provided by ClfA's (2020b) Standard and Guidance for the creation, compilation, transfer and deposition of archaeological archives, and the Society of Museum Archaeologists' (1993) Selection, Retention and Dispersal of Archaeological Collections. Guidelines for use in England, Wales and Northern Ireland.
- 8.1.3. A set of annotated, illustrative pictures of the site, excavation and features is contained within the digital archive.
- 8.1.4. An OASIS online record <http://ads.ahds.ac.uk/project/oasis/> has been initiated and completed for this work and all parts of the OASIS online form completed for submission to the HER. This will include an uploaded pdf version of the entire report. The site has produced a paper and digital archive which will be deposited, along with this report, in digital form with Archaeological Data Service (ADS 2023). In addition, a copy of this report will be deposited with Cheshire Historic Environment Record (HER).

9. ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

- 9.1.1. ARS Ltd would like to thank Town Square Living Ltd for commissioning the work and facilitating the watching brief, and Kirsty Lloyd of CAPAS for her advice during the course of the works.

10. REFERENCES

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APPENDIX I CONTEXT DESCRIPTION TABLE

| Context Number | Type | Description | Dimensions |
|----------------|-----------|--|-------------------------|
| 101 | Deposit | Modern topsoil deposit | 0.37m (d) |
| 102 | Deposit | Sandy aggregate levelling deposit, 20 th century | 0.49m (d) |
| 103 | Deposit | Demolition material, 20 th century demolition of 19 th century station buildings | 0.41m (d) |
| 104 | Structure | Handmade red brick culvert bonded with lime mortar. | 0.37m+ x 0.50m x 0.80m+ |
| 105 | Structure | Flagstone set on top of wall 106 | 1.40m x 0.37m+ x 0.13m |
| 106 | Wall | Handmade red brick wall aligned east-west, bonded with lime mortar. | 1.00m+ x 0.40m x 0.5m+ |
| 107 | Deposit | Mid-yellowish brown clay natural | N/A |

APPENDIX II OASIS FORM

OASIS Summary for archaeol5-515955

| | |
|-----------------------------------|--|
| OASIS ID (UID) | archaeol5-515955 |
| Project Name | Watching Brief at Willow Bank House, Old Road, Handforth, Cheshire |
| Sitename | Willow Bank House, Old Road, Handforth, Cheshire |
| Sitecode | WBH23 |
| Project Identifier(s) | |
| Activity type | Watching Brief |
| Planning Id | 22/2069M |
| Reason For Investigation | Planning: Between application and determination |
| Organisation Responsible for work | Archaeological Research Services Ltd |
| Project Dates | 30-May-2023 - 31-Oct-2023 |
| Location | Willow Bank House, Old Road, Handforth, Cheshire NGR : SJ 85915 83373 LL : 53.34705895605424, -2.213035243804747 12 Fig : 385915,383373 |
| Administrative Areas | Country : England County/Local Authority : Cheshire East Local Authority District : Cheshire East Parish : Handforth |
| Project Methodology | Excavation will be conducted under archaeological supervision. The archaeologist will be given the opportunity to stop excavation to investigate potential archaeological features/deposits where they arise, and adequate time will be allowed for recording any such remains. |
| Project Results | An archaeological watching brief was undertaken at Willow Bank House, Handforth, Cheshire by Archaeological Research Services Ltd (ARS Ltd) on 30-31 May 2023, and 31st October 2023. The purpose of the watching brief was to record any archaeological remains that survived on the site, that would have been truncated or removed during the proposed development. Due to the proximity of the proposed development area (PDA) to the former Handforth Railway Station – opened in 1842 – there was a strong possibility of archaeological remains to be present within the site. Overall, limited evidence of archaeological remains were observed during the watching brief, although a drain, part of a wall and possible step were 19th century in date and probably related to the station buildings as shown on historic maps. |
| Keywords | |
| Funder | Private or public corporation Town Square Living Ltd |
| HER | Cheshire Historic Environment Record - noRev - LITE |
| Person Responsible for work | Rebecca Trow |
| HER Identifiers | |
| Archives | Digital Archive - to be deposited with Archaeology Data Service Archive; |

APPENDIX III WRITTEN SCHEME OF INVESTIGATION

WRITTEN SCHEME OF INVESTIGATION

Willow Bank House, Old Road, Handforth, Cheshire
Archaeological Watching Brief



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Written Scheme of Investigation for an archaeological watching brief at Willow Bank House, Old Road, Handforth, Cheshire

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|-------|----------------|----------------|----------------|-----------------------------|--------------------------------|
| 1 | Rachel Bissell | Lucie McCarthy | Lucie McCarthy | 28 th April 2023 | Initial draft for consultation |
| | | | | | |
| | | | | | |

Prepared on behalf of: Town Square Living Ltd
Planning Reference: 22/2069M
Local Authority: Cheshire East Council
Site central NGR: SJ 85915 83373
OASIS ID: TBC

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I INTRODUCTION

1.1 Project and Planning Background

1.1.1 This is a Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI) for an archaeological watching brief that has been prepared by Archaeological Research Services Ltd (ARS Ltd) on behalf of Town Square Living Ltd.

1.1.2 The WSI sets out a scheme of archaeological mitigation by watching brief in support of a planning application for development at Willow Bank House, Old Road, Handforth, comprising the construction of an additional two storey dwelling house to the rear of the existing Willow Bank House building (Planning application no. 22/2069M).

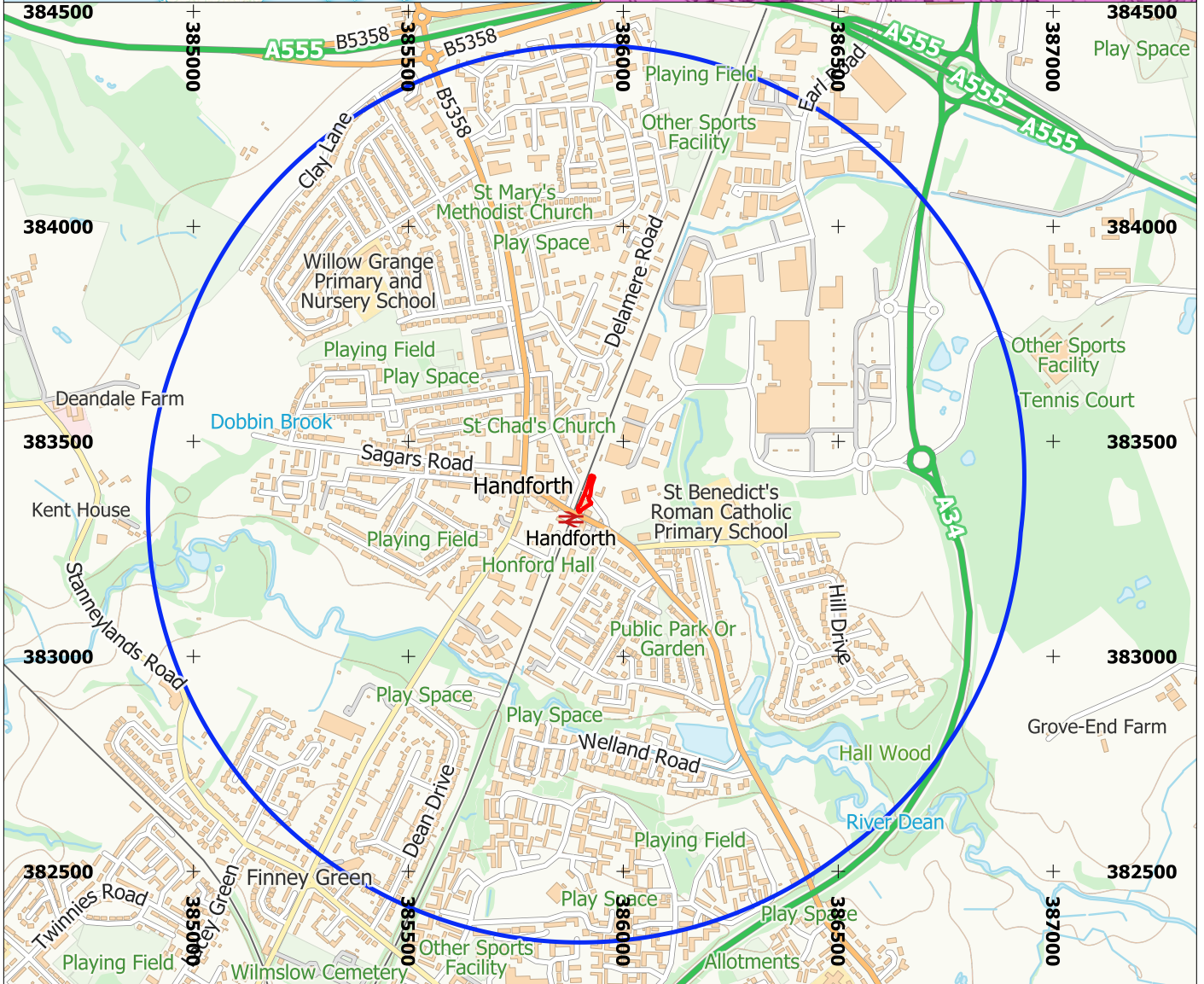
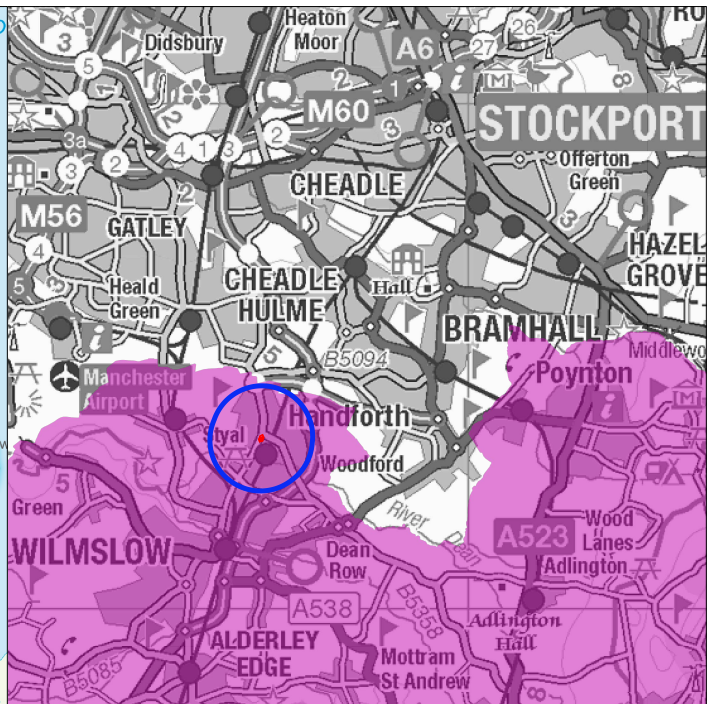
1.1.3 Evaluation of the proposed development area produced evidence of buried archaeological remains associated with mid-19th century industrial structures related to Handforth Railway Station. A scheme of archaeological mitigation is required in compliance with the *National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)* to record the archaeology in the mitigation area prior to development, and to make this information publicly accessible (MHCLG 2022, para 205).

1.1.4 On the advice of Cheshire Archaeology Planning Advisory Service as archaeological advisors to the Local Planning Authority, a condition was set on planning permission requiring implementation of a programme of archaeological work in accordance with an approved Written Scheme of Investigation (Condition 7):

- ◆ *Condition 7 – No development shall take place within the site hereby approved until the applicant, or their agents or successors in title, has secured the implementation of a programme of archaeological work in accordance with a written scheme of investigation which has been submitted by the applicant and approved in writing by the local planning authority. The work shall be carried out strictly in accordance with the approved scheme. Reason: In the interests of archaeology.*

1.1.5 The scope of this WSI is therefore to mitigate the impact of the development proposal by the archaeological monitoring of three key stages of the proposed development. These key stages are the removal of topsoils, excavations for foundations and excavations for services.

1.1.6 Any variations to this scope of works will be by agreement of the Client and the archaeological planning advisor to the Local Planning Authority (LPA). Should further mitigation requirements be deemed appropriate by the LPA that arise from discoveries during the works outside the scope of this WSI, then these will be informed to the Client and only proceed if agreed by both parties prior to implementation.



Site name: Willow Bank House, Handforth
 Date: April 2023
 Drawn by: RLT
 Scale: Varies

Site Boundary Cheshire East Council
 1km Study Area

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Figure 1:
Site location



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1.2 Site Location and Description

1.2.1 The proposed development encompasses a total area of 0.11ha and is located within 200m of the centre of Handforth, and within 14km of Manchester (Figure 1; NGR SJ 85915 83373). The site comprises an extant building, Willow House, with a 'communal garden' area within the southern extent of the site, and a car park covered by asphalt in the northern extent. To the north the site is bounded by a small area of vegetation, to the east by a railway line, to the south by Station Road (B5358) and to the west by The Railway Public House. The site is accessible from the Old Road on the northern side of Station Road (B5358).

1.2.2 Ordnance Survey maps show the site to lie at 80m above Ordnance Datum. The landscape slopes from the north and northeast, gradually descending to the south towards the River Dean.

1.3 Geology and Soils

1.3.1 The underlying solid geology of the site consists of Wilmslow Sandstone Formation, sedimentary bedrock formed between 252.2 and 247.1 million years ago during the Triassic period (British Geological Survey 2023). The superficial geology is described as Till, Devensian, sedimentary superficial deposit formed between 116 and 11.8 thousand years ago during the Quaternary period.

1.3.2 The soils are characterised by the Cranfield Soil and Agrifood Institute as *Soilscape 18*, which is slowly permeable seasonally wet slightly acid but base-rich loamy and clayey soils (Cranfield University 2023).

1.4 Archaeological and Historical Background

1.4.1 The Historic Environment Record (HER) information provided by Cheshire Archaeology Planning Advisory Service is described below, supplemented with information from previous archaeological works. A nominal search radius of 1km was applied, which produced 16 monument records for analysis. There are 8 archaeological interventions that have taken place within the search radius.

1.4.2 There are 5 Listed Buildings within 1km of the site (Table 1). There are no Scheduled Monuments, Registered Parks and Gardens or Registered Battlefields in the vicinity.

Table 1: Historic Environment Record data

| HER Reference | Description |
|----------------------------------|--|
| Listed Buildings | |
| 1222483 | Handforth Hall |
| 1222576 | Brooke Farmhouse |
| 1237747 | Finney Green Cottage |
| 1237949 | The White House |
| 1274406 | The Southern Most House at Number 187 |
| Non-designated assets | |
| <i>Post-medieval</i> | |
| 5373 | 28-36 Church Road, Handforth |
| 5406 | 21 Woodlands Road, Handforth |
| 5408 | Freemasons Arms, Handforth |
| 5407 | Former National School, Handforth |
| 2902/2 | Handforth Print Works |
| 2528/1/1 | Handforth Railway Station - Manchester and Birmingham Railway |
| 2902/1 | Handforth Bleach Works |
| 5318/1 | St. Chad's Church, Handforth |
| 5318/2 | Chapel of Ease, Handforth |
| 15823 | Former Farmhouse at 187 Wilmslow Road, Handforth |
| 2528/1/0 | The Manchester and Birmingham Railway |
| 2528/1/2 | Embankment south of Handforth, Manchester - Birmingham Railway |
| DCH9391 | Chadsworth House, Wilmslow Road, Wilmslow SK9 3HP |
| <i>Modern</i> | |
| 5317 | Handforth Library |
| 4643/2 | Military Depot East of Handforth |
| 4643/1 | Disused railway and Military Depot |
| Events | |
| <i>Surveys/assessments</i> | |
| ECH4482 | An Archaeological Assessment of Land at Hall Road, Handforth, Cheshire |
| ECH5552 | Hall Road, Handforth: Historic Environment Desk-Based Assessment |
| ECH5577 | Styal Golf Course, Styal, Cheshire: Cultural Heritage Desk Based Assessment |
| ECH6663 | BMW Handforth: Heritage Assessment |
| ECH6666 | Heritage Statement: Land at Stanneylands Road, Wilmslow |
| ECH286 | MPP Scoring ~ Brooke Farmhouse |
| ECH3516 | The Archaeological Implications of the Proposed Route for the A34 Handforth By-Pass/Manchester Airport Eastern Link Road |
| <i>Interventions/excavations</i> | |
| ECH7029 | Hall Road, Handforth, Cheshire: Archaeological Trial Trench Evaluation |

Prehistoric to Medieval

1.4.3 There is no recorded evidence for the prehistoric to medieval period within the PDA or 1km study area.

Post-Medieval

1.4.4 Evidence for the post-medieval period is well attested for within the 1km study area and the PDA.

1.4.5 The site of Handforth Railway Station – built for the Manchester and Birmingham Railway – is recorded by Cheshire East HER as located within the boundary of the PDA (HER 2528/1/1). Handforth Railway Station was opened in 1842, and by the early-20th century, comprised the station house, platforms with shelters, signal box, and a goods yard with associated sidings. By 1960, both platforms had been relocated to the south of the original platforms, and a new ticket office was constructed above the railway tracks.

1.4.6 Additionally, the extant route of the Manchester to Birmingham Railway is recorded adjacent to PDA by Cheshire East HER (HER 2528/1/0). The railway was established in stages between 1840 and 1842. The line ran from Store Street Station (now Piccadilly Station) in Manchester to Crewe via Handforth station. The route is visible on modern aerial imagery.

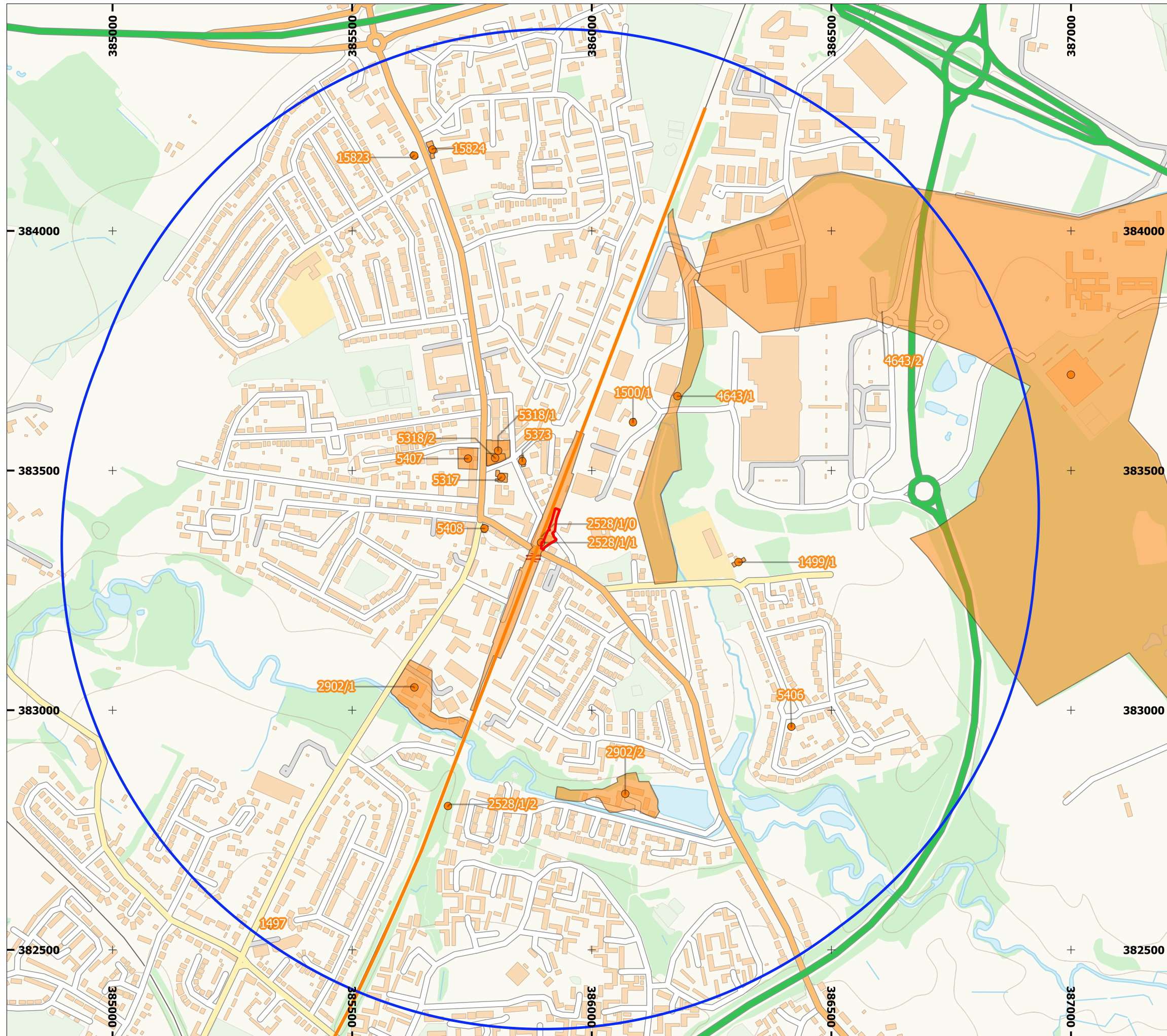
1.4.7 Upon review of the first edition OS map of Handforth (1884), it is clear that there were substantial industrial structures within the PDA, which are likely to have surviving below ground remains.

Previous Archaeological Events

1.4.8 No previous archaeological events have been undertaken within, or immediately adjacent, the PDA.

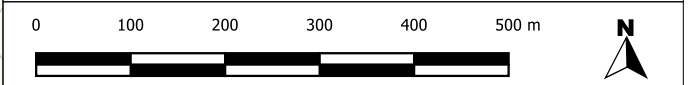
Figure 2: Cheshire HER Monument Records

- Proposed Development Area
- 1km Study Area
- Monument Record (polygon)
- Monument Record (line)
- Monument Record (point)



Information based upon Historic Environment Record Data © Cheshire Archaeological Planning Advisory Service and NHLE data © Historic England 2023. Contains Ordnance Survey data © Crown copyright and database right 2023. The Historic England GIS data contained in this material was obtained on 1.2.23.

The most publicly available up to date Historic England GIS data can be obtained from <http://www.HistoricEngland.org.uk>.



Site name: Willow Bank House, Handforth
 Date: April 2023
 Drawn by: RLT
 Scale: 1:8000 @ A3

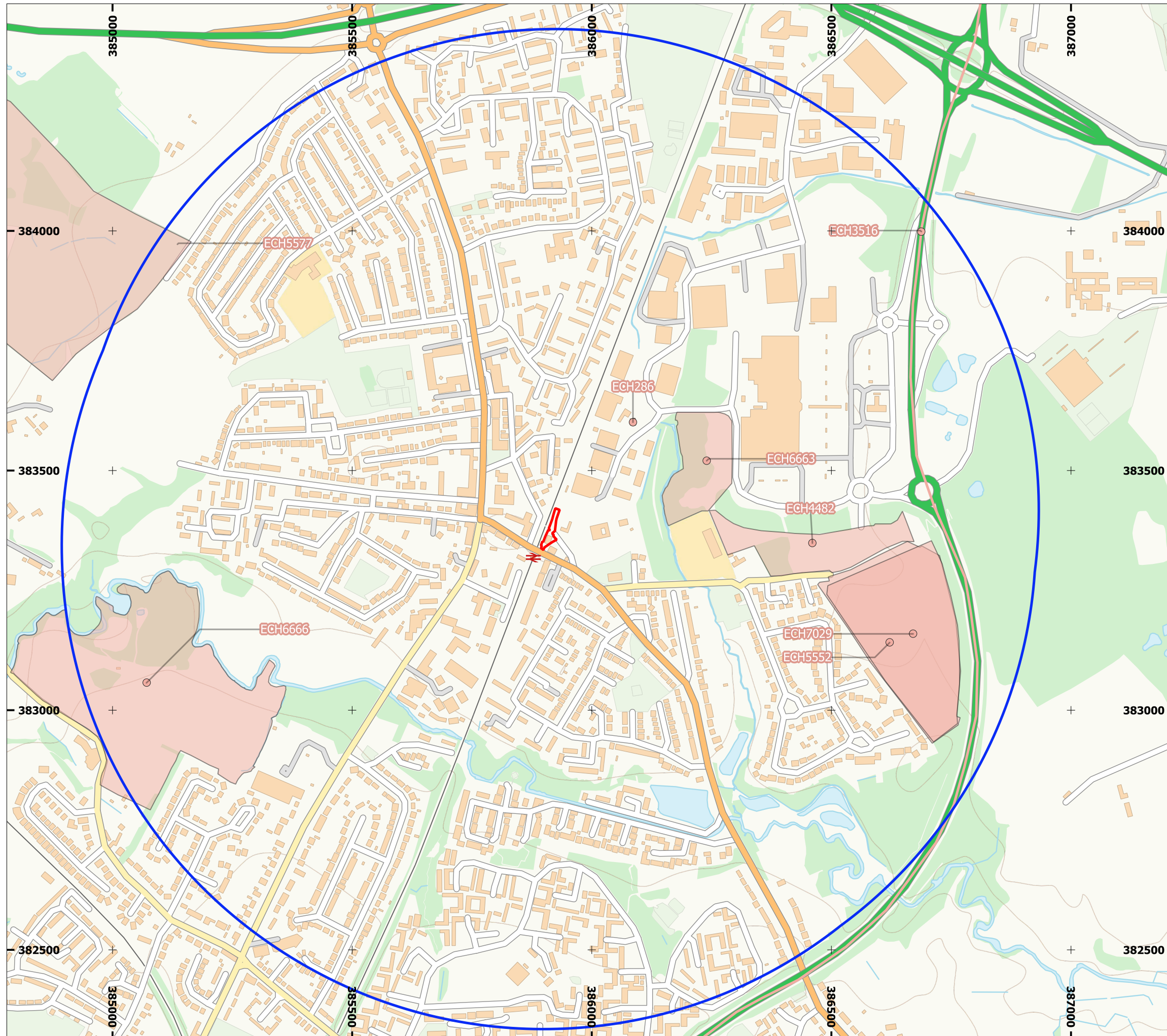
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 Cross Street
 Sale
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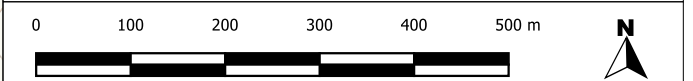
Figure 3: Cheshire HER Previous Archaeological Events



- Proposed Development Area
- 1km Study Area
- ▭ Previous Archaeological Event (polygon)
- Previous Archaeological Event (line)
- Previous Archaeological Event (point)

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2 AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

2.1 Fieldwork Aim

2.1.1 The aim of the fieldwork is to *'to record and enhance understanding of the significance of any heritage assets to be lost during the proposed development in a manner proportional to their importance, and to make this evidence (and any archive generated) publicly accessible.'* (MHCLG 2022, para 205).

2.2 Fieldwork Objectives

2.2.1 The objectives of the fieldwork are to:

- ◆ monitor the groundworks that may encounter archaeological remains and inform the archaeological planning advisor to the LPA when archaeological remains have been found;
- ◆ investigate and record any archaeological features/deposits encountered;
- ◆ establish a relative chronological sequence and, if possible, recover datable materials from archaeological deposits and features; and,
- ◆ establish the character, extent, form, function, and likely status of the archaeological remains where found.

2.3 Research Aims and Objectives

2.3.1 The investigations will be conducted with a view to addressing objectives suggested by the published research priorities set out for the North West (GMAAS 2023).

2.3.2 Research priorities that might become relevant are those that focus upon post-medieval and industrial transport and infrastructure regional research objectives.

2.3.3 The following specific themes are expected to be relevant:

- ◆ PM44: How were transport infrastructures improved and how was this related to the developing urban and market hierarchy?
- ◆ Ind91: How were transport infrastructures improved and how was this related to the developing urban and market hierarchy during the industrial period?
- ◆ Ind92: What impact did the regions early railway development have on the world?

2.3.4 Other research objectives may become relevant should any archaeological features investigated during investigations produce significant findings of regional or greater importance.

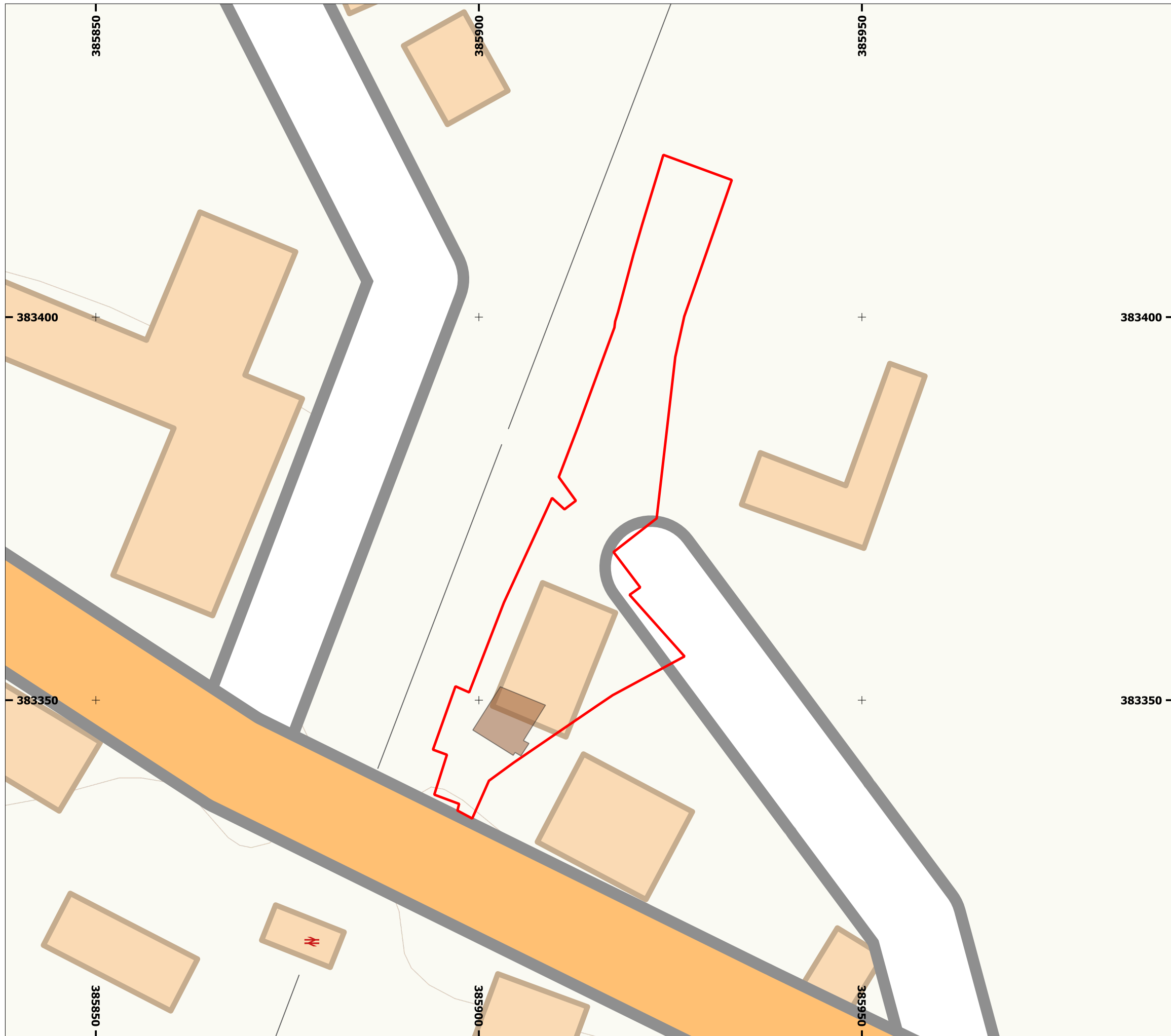
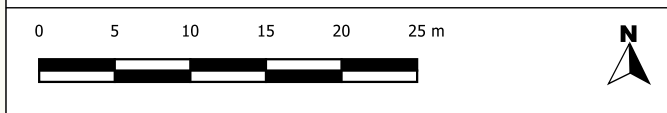


Figure 4: Extent of Area Subject to Watching Brief

- Proposed Development Area
- Extent of Area Subject to Watching Brief



Site name: Willow Bank House, Handforth
 Date: April 2023
 Drawn by: RLT
 Scale: 1:500 @ A3

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3 FIELDWORK STRATEGY

3.1 Coverage

3.1.1 The area subject to a watching brief is depicted on Figure 4.

3.1.2 The fieldwork will comprise the continuous monitoring of all groundworks within the mitigation area required to prepare the site for development (Figure 4). Key phases would include clearance, topsoil and subsoil stripping, ground reduction, excavation of foundations, inserting utilities/drains, landscaping and tree planting. Attendance will be required as appropriate to monitor the groundworks and to clean, excavate and record any archaeological remains encountered. Intermittent monitoring will not be permitted without agreement of the archaeological planning advisor to the LPA.

3.1.3 Sufficient time should be allowed for in the Clients' programme for archaeological recording to avoid impact on the overall delivery of groundworks.

3.1.4 Should human remains, structures or deposits of archaeological interest be uncovered during the fieldwork, the archaeological planning advisor to the LPA will be consulted on the acceptable course of action. It is anticipated that this will entail the archaeological investigation, recording and recovery of artefacts/samples and other remains.

3.2 Methodology

3.2.1 All excavation will be conducted under archaeological supervision. The archaeologist will be given the opportunity to stop excavation to investigate potential archaeological features/deposits where they arise, and adequate time will be allowed for recording any such remains.

3.2.2 There is to be no disturbance of archaeological remains until archaeological investigation and recording has been undertaken, and the archaeologist confirms that this has been completed.

3.2.3 As a minimum (*i.e.* where no archaeology is found) there will be an accurate site plan and photographic record. The stratigraphy of the site will be recorded even where no archaeological deposits have been identified.

3.2.4 The site will be accurately tied into the National Ordnance Survey Grid and located at a suitable scale. Survey data of features will be collected using survey grade equipment typically providing accuracy of $\pm 0.05\text{m}$ (Historic England 2016). Digital data will be surveyed with equipment using Real Time Kinematic (RTK) corrections from a Global Navigation Satellite System (GNSS) network. The same equipment will be used to record known points on drawn plans and sections and to take spot heights to supplement other available planning/survey techniques as applicable.

Machine Excavation

3.2.5 Excavation will be undertaken by a suitable mechanical excavator fitted with a toothless ditching bucket or by hand. Where excavation requires digging through hard standing or tarmac, a breaker will be used. No machinery will track over areas that have previously been stripped until investigation and recording has been undertaken.

3.2.6 Machine excavation will seek to avoid disturbing, breaking, or grubbing out large foundations or tree stumps that may damage the surrounding archaeological remains. Where

these are found they will be left *in situ* until recorded and then, if removal is necessary, broken up in manner to avoid disturbing any other surviving remains.

3.2.7 Excavation areas will be machined cleanly, sufficient to identify and establish the extent of any archaeological features present. Photographs will be taken during the machine works to record the process.

3.2.8 Machine operations will cease if unexpected, complex, or undated archaeological remains are encountered, the Client will be informed, and the archaeological planning advisor will be consulted to discuss and agree proportionate requirements.

Investigation and Recording

3.2.9 All archaeological features and deposits will be sample excavated to achieve the mitigation objectives where they are exposed in plan during the monitoring of groundworks:

- ◆ Isolated discrete features such as individual pits, postholes, or scattered features without clear associations, will be half sectioned.
- ◆ Where pits/postholes form structural features or are representative of industrial activities they will be fully excavated and recorded in association with each other.
- ◆ If features contain deposits of particular value or significant artefactual or environmental assemblages, these may be fully excavated and sampled.
- ◆ Archaeological linear features, such as ditches and gullies that are not of a structural nature will be sample excavated at dispersed intervals. Where possible, interventions will be a minimum of 1m in width, and incorporating a minimum of 20% of the total length. All junctions and terminal will be investigated.
- ◆ Where repetitious features occur in abundance, such as a pit alignment or stakeholes/postholes in their hundreds, then a sample of such remains will be selected for excavation in discussion with the archaeological planning advisor.

3.2.10 If the features are exposed in section only (*i.e.* they are in the side of a foundation trench), then the sectional profile of the foundation trench will be recorded and its location/extent surveyed.

3.2.11 Features requiring more specialist attention such as burials, kilns, wells, buildings, structures, floor levels and other significant industrial or domestic features or deposits will be cleaned, planned, and photographed in the first instance but will be left *in situ*, and will be protected/fenced off pending a suitable form of mitigation.

3.2.12 Deep features such as well or ponds will not be investigated by under the scope of these works. An augur may be employed to establish the anticipated full depth of a well or pond. Further excavation would be by consultation with the archaeological planning advisor and Client (as deep excavations may affect foundation designs).

3.2.13 Area deposits, such as buried soils and former land surfaces, will be investigated by hand during the process of machining. Once the deposit is understood and has been recorded, provided that it represents a non-structural layer, machine excavation will be allowed to proceed.

3.2.14 Limited representative samples of bricks from brick-built structures, and selective products of the brick working proves will be retained for specialist analysis where appropriate. For brick structures, the record will include details of brick dimensions, and type (handmade/machine made, plain/frogged), mortar (colour, composition, hardness) and the extent of structures (number of

courses, thickness in skins). Brick samples will be taken for structures likely to pre-date the mid-19th century.

3.2.15 All excavated spoil will be visually scanned to retrieve any artefacts. Artefacts will be collected by hand and retained, provided they are uncontaminated, receiving appropriate care prior to removal from site (CIfA 2020b; Walker 1990; Watkinson & Neal 2001). No contaminated finds or samples will be retained. Unstratified animal bones and modern material will not be collected. Selected examples of material that comprise a large quantity of a standard product, such as brick or tile, will be retained for assessment by a specialist.

3.2.16 Archaeological features will be recorded on an all-features plan at a scale of 1:50 or 1:100, appropriate to their complexity. Sometimes it will be possible to use the developers site plan to achieve this in relation to the foundation layout or design. Sections or profiles through features and stratigraphic sequences will normally be drawn at a scale of 1:10, or 1:20 for long sections. All levels will be related to Ordnance Datum.

3.2.17 All archaeological deposits and artefacts encountered during the investigation will be fully recorded. Recording will follow the Company's field recording practices appropriate to the archaeology under investigation (ARS Ltd 2020). All archaeological features will be given a separate context number. Deposits will be described on *pro-forma* context sheets. The information given will include details of the context, its relationships, interpretation and a checklist of associated finds and samples. Stratigraphic matrices will be compiled where archaeological sequences can be discerned.

3.2.18 Digital photographs will form the principal photographic record for report purposes and will follow the standards of Historic England where applicable (Historic England 2015a). Digital photographs will form the principal photographic record for report purposes. A photographic record will be maintained by high resolution digital photography. Overall images of the site will be taken prior to excavation. Detailed images of individual features will be recorded. All photographs, except general site images or specific images for publication, will include a north arrow and suitable photographic scale.

Soil Samples

3.2.19 Should environmental deposits be encountered that appear appropriate for sampling, the Client and archaeological planning advisor will be consulted. One or two bulk soil samples may be collected for rapid assessment by agreement of the Client. Only deposits of clear archaeological origin, with the potential to provide paleoenvironmental evidence, industrial residues, small animal/fish bones, datable charred remains and micro artefacts significant to the site will be considered.

3.2.20 Sampling methods will typically follow guidelines issued by Historic England (Campbell *et al.* 2011) and will be targeted in order to assess the quality of organic preservation that may be present.

3.2.21 Typically, bulk environmental samples will be collected from contexts that have potential for further analysis. Bulk sample sizes will be 40 litres per context or the entire excavated portion of smaller features if less than 40 litres and collected and stored in sealable buckets.

3.2.22 The application of specialist sampling techniques such as column sampling, geoarchaeological sampling, or samples for scientific dating purposes will be considered where appropriate. If such a variation is required by the LPA, advice from the Historic England Regional

Scientific Advisor (RSA) may be sought. Close attention will be paid to retrieve samples that have the potential to contribute to the proposed mitigation objectives.

Human Remains

3.2.23 If any human remains are encountered, they will be investigated sufficiently to confirm identification and then left *in situ*. They will not be exposed, disturbed, cleaned, or recorded in detail. The Client, local Coroner and the archaeological planning advisor will be informed immediately upon discovery of human remains by the Project Manager.

3.2.24 If removal is deemed necessary and appropriate on the requirement of the LPA it will be completed following the issue of the relevant Ministry of Justice license in accordance with the relevant legislation and according to the conditions set out therein. Any exhumation will be undertaken following current best practice guidelines (APABE/Historic England 2017; Mitchell and Brickley 2017).

Treasure

3.2.25 Finds coming under the definition of 'treasure' as defined by the Treasure Act 1996 will be reported to the Portable Antiquities Finds Liaison Officer within 48 hours of discovery by the Project Manager and dealt with under the procedures of the Treasure Act and Code of Practice (DCMS 2008). This includes both precious metals and base metals where they are of prehistoric date. Suitable measures will be taken to ensure their security where removal cannot take place (*e.g.* they are within a human burial).

3.2.26 The archaeological planning advisor will also be notified and, if necessary, a meeting arranged to determine if further investigation in the vicinity of the find spot is required.

4 MONITORING ARRANGEMENTS

4.1.1 Notice is given prior to commencement of the archaeological works upon submission of this WSI to the archaeological planning advisor. The proposed start date will be a minimum of 10 working days from submission unless otherwise agreed. Work will not commence until the WSI has been approved.

4.1.2 If the start date is not known, then the archaeological planning advisor will be kept informed of progress and will be notified when a start date has been set within 5 working days, assuming that the WSI has already been approved and there have been no changes to the proposal.

4.1.3 The archaeological planning advisor for the LPA is Kirsty Lloyd, Development Management Archaeologist at Cheshire Archaeology Planning Advisory Service.

4.1.4 ARS Ltd will consult with the archaeological planning advisor at regular intervals throughout the course of the work. The archaeological planning advisor is invited to attend for monitoring purposes by appointment. It is expected that archaeological monitoring will take place on a regular basis for large projects.

4.1.5 The Client will afford reasonable access to the archaeological planning advisor for the LPA or representative officers, for the purposes of monitoring the archaeological work.

5 VARIATIONS TO THE SCOPE OF WORKS

5.1.1 If an archaeological discovery is made for which the resources allocated to the project itself are not sufficient to support treatment to a satisfactory and proper standard then work in the relevant area will cease until the client and local planning authority's archaeological advisor have been consulted and appropriate resource put in place to meet the necessary disbursements. On occasion this may require a new WSI or an addendum to the approved WSI.

5.1.2 Any variations to the coverage, methodology or scope of works will be made in agreement with the Client and the archaeological planning advisor.

5.1.3 Variations prior to the commencement of works will be agreed in writing by updating and recirculating the WSI or an addendum. Variations on site will be tracked by the Project Manager as part of the course of monitoring the works.

5.1.4 Additional works that trigger contingency items or extra overs will be notified to the Client and agreed before they are implemented. Where no contingency agreement exists such works will only be implemented where they are reasonably practicable with the resources already available, or unless the Client grants further resource.

6 TIMETABLE, STAFFING AND RESOURCES

6.1.1 ARS Ltd is a Chartered Institute for Archaeologists (CIfA) Registered Organisation. Registered Organisations are regularly assessed to ensure that high standards of work, processes and training are embedded in the organisation, in line with the professional *Code of Conduct* (CIfA 2021) and the Chartered Institute's Standards and Guidance documents.

6.1.2 The fieldwork will be managed and conducted by a suitably qualified Project Manager and archaeological staff, as necessary.

6.1.3 All staff employed on the project will be suitably qualified and experienced for their respective project roles and will be briefed on the archaeological context of the area and the work required by this specification.

6.1.4 The archaeological works are scheduled to commence in May 2023 and should be completed within 1 week. It is expected that there will be a lead in period from the commencement of stripping to expose sufficient archaeology and create a safe working interface before field staff are deployed to begin archaeological investigations.

6.1.5 All artefact and sample processing will be undertaken swiftly following the completion of fieldwork whilst archive consolidation and post-excavation analysis of the plans and records are brought together.

6.1.6 Information will be provided to specialists by context and site location, appropriate to the relevant assemblages.

6.1.7 Specialist analysis will be undertaken by the following individuals where needed, subject to availability, and other specialists will be found as appropriate:

Worked flint and prehistoric pottery: Dr Robin Holgate

| | |
|---|---|
| Iron Age/Roman pottery: | Dr Phil Mills, Ian Rowlandson, or Dr Jane Timby |
| Medieval and post-medieval pottery: | Paul Blinkhorn or Dr Chris Cumberpatch |
| Ceramic Building Materials: | Dr Phil Mills |
| Faunal remains: | Milena Grzybowska |
| Plant macros, charred wood, and pollen: | Maryne Baylet |

6.1.8 Sufficient time will be given for adequate specialist assessment of the materials recovered, and the production of the accompanying specialist reports.

Timetable

| Task | Est. Duration | Est. Start date | Est. End date |
|--------------------------------------|---------------|---|---------------|
| Archaeological watching brief | 1 week | 11 th May 2023 | TBC |
| Post-excavation works and assessment | TBC | Following completion of watching brief | TBC |
| Reporting | TBC | Following completion of post-excavation works and assessment, within 6 months | TBC |
| Archiving | TBC | Following completion of reporting | TBC |

7 FINDS AND SAMPLE PROCESSING

7.1.1 All finds processing, conservation work and storage of finds will be conducted in accordance with the *Standard and guidance for the collection, documentation, conservation, and research of archaeological materials* (CIfA 2020b) and the *Guidelines for the preparation of archives for long-term storage* (Walker 1990).

7.1.2 Artefact collection and discard policies will be appropriate to the contextual and stratigraphic circumstances of the material identified, its quality as a resource and the practicality of retention (*e.g.* stone gate posts would be photogrammetrically recorded and not retrieved).

7.1.3 Bulk finds worthy of retention will be washed and marked. Bone will only be marked where required by the receiving repository. Marking and labelling will be indelible and irremovable by abrasion. Bulk finds will be appropriately bagged, boxed, and recorded.

7.1.4 All small finds will be recorded and appropriately packaged according to context (*e.g.* lithics in self-sealing plastic bags, ceramic in acid-free tissue paper *etc.*). Vulnerable objects will be specially packaged and textile, painted glass and coins stored in appropriate specialist systems. Ceramics will be bagged by context, whereas small finds such as chipped lithics, coins *etc.* will be recorded as individual finds by context.

7.1.5 Bulk soil samples taken for environmental purposes will be sieved and scanned during processing by ARS Ltd using the flotation technique to retrieve botanical macrofossils, charcoal and mollusc remains. All the resultant residues will then be hand sorted to retrieve any other items such as bone, flint, and other finds.

7.1.6 During and after the fieldwork, all objects will be stored in appropriate materials and storage conditions to ensure minimal deterioration and loss of information. ARS Ltd undertake controlled storage, correct packaging, regular monitoring, and immediate selection for conservation of vulnerable material as part of the archive process. All storage will have appropriate security provision.

7.1.7 All retained artefacts and ecofacts will be cleaned and packaged in accordance with the requirements of the Congleton Museum (Congleton Museum 2023).

8 REPORTING

8.1.1 Following completion of the fieldwork, ARS Ltd will produce a report that will comprise:

- ◆ Non-technical summary
- ◆ Introductory statement
- ◆ Aims and objectives
- ◆ Method statement
- ◆ A location plan showing all excavated areas and any archaeological features with respect to nearby fixed structures and roads
- ◆ An objective summary statement of results
- ◆ Illustrations of all archaeological features with appropriately scaled plans and sections
- ◆ Specialists' assessments of artefacts and samples, where found
- ◆ Discussion outlining conclusions
- ◆ Supporting data – tabulated or in appendices to include
 - Context information
 - Any stratigraphic information
- ◆ Index to archive and details of archive location
- ◆ Bibliography
- ◆ Confirmation of archive transfer arrangements
- ◆ A copy of the OASIS form

8.1.2 A draft report will be submitted to the archaeological planning advisor for agreement and comment before being issued as a planning document to the client.

8.1.3 One bound copy of the final report (if required) and a digital copy of the report in PDF/A format will be deposited with the Historic Environment Record (HER). A copy of the report will be uploaded as part of the OASIS record, and a hardcopy will be included in the physical archive.

8.2 Provisions for publication

8.2.1 Any publication requirements contained within the archaeological planning brief will be reviewed between the Project Manager, Client, and archaeological planning advisor prior to preparation of the final archive report. A suitable form of publication will be agreed, should publication be deemed necessary, so as to fulfill the needs of the *NPPF* by making the significant knowledge and understanding gained accessible to the public.

8.2.2 The form of any publication will be agreed with the permission of the Client. Forms of publication could include making the report available on-line, an article in an academic journal, popular articles for magazines or web-based outlets, or potentially a monograph (digital or print) or popular booklet.

8.2.3 As a minimum publication would be as a c.300-word summary of the project with, if appropriate, selected illustration for inclusion in the annual round-up of fieldwork within the region. More significant sites may warrant a light article in a relevant county or period journal with, if appropriate, selected illustrations and photographs.

9 PROJECT ARCHIVE

9.1 Archive Selection Strategy

9.1.1 Selection of the working project archive will be guided by the aims and objectives of the project, as set out in this Written Scheme of Investigation.

9.2 Documentary Archive

9.2.1 All original documentary material created and collected during the archaeological works will be selected according to the ARS Ltd Retentions and Discard Policy for inclusion in the final archive. Any duplicates (including photocopies) of original documents will not be included in the final archive.

9.3 Digital Archive

9.3.1 All digital data created over the course of this project will be collected, stored, and selected for final deposition in line with the project's Data Management Plan.

9.3.2 The key types of digital data produced will include:

| Type | Data |
|------------|--|
| Text | Digital copies of the WSI and final report |
| Images | Site photographs, scans of site drawings, report illustrations, digital drawings |
| Finds data | Finds reports and tables, conservation records, images |

9.3.3 Only the final copies of any digital data will be selected and deposited in the final project archive.

9.3.4 Digital data to be included in the final archive will be reviewed during the post-excavation and archiving phase of works. Digital photographs will be assessed and selected in line with Historic England guidelines (Cole and Backhouse 2015). Any data to be excluded from the archive will be removed in accordance with ARS Ltd retention and discard policy.

9.4 Material Archive

9.4.1 The selection of material finds for final deposition in the archaeological archive will be decided in line with the ARS Ltd Retention and Discard Policy during the post-excavation phase. This policy draws on guidance provided by the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists (CIfA 2019). Any items for deselection and disposal will be based on specialist advice and with agreement of the archaeological planning advisor.

9.4.2 In general, all digital and paper records, drawings, photographs and surveys will be retained together with their background supporting documentation. Artefacts and samples collected in the field will be from secure contexts able to inform the archaeological development of the site. No artefact assemblages will be discarded without following specialist assessment and recommendation to do so. Sieved residues will be discarded following acceptance of the report.

9.4.3 The planned deposition of artefacts will be agreed with the legal owner prior to the works taking place. All finds except treasure trove are the property of the landowner.

9.4.4 No material will be discarded without processing and recording. Deselected material may be retained as part of a handling or teaching collection, returned to the landowner, or discarded.

9.5 Archive Deposition

9.5.1 The archaeological archive will be deposited with Congleton Museum (Congleton Museum 2023). Should the archaeological works produce no archaeologically significant finds, then it is not deemed necessary to deposit an archive with the repository museum. ARS Ltd will contact the museum and the archaeological planning advisor following the quantification and assessment of the archive to confirm and finalise archiving requirements.

9.5.2 Archaeologically significant finds and project archives will be prepared for deposition by ARS Ltd. The archive will comprise the primary record and synthetic works arising from the project, including documents, plans, sections, photographs, and electronic data and an accompanying metadata statement.

9.5.3 High resolution digital photographs will typically be submitted to the Archaeological Data Service (ADS) digital archive repository with the associated photographic registers and metadata. The digital archive will be prepared in line with current best practice (ADS/Digital Antiquity 2011; Archaeological Data Service 2022).

9.5.4 The archive will be deposited in line with industry standards and best practice guidelines (SMA 1993; Brown 2011; ClfA 2020b). In addition, the recommendations of the receiving repository will be adhered to. The archive will be deposited at the next available opportunity agreed with the museum after completion of the report.

9.5.5 All projects have an Online Access to the Index of Archaeological Investigations (OASIS III) registration form within the report. All parts of the OASIS online form will be completed for submission to the Historic Environment Record (HER). This will include an uploaded PDF/A version of the entire report. Upon final completion of the project, a final copy of the report will be deposited with the county HER in an agreed format.

10 PUBLICITY, ENGAGEMENT AND COPYRIGHT

10.1.1 The Client will manage media publicity. ARS Ltd will not undertake media engagement except where approved and directed by the Client.

10.1.2 Any form of public community engagement, presentations, exhibitions or otherwise lie outside the scope of this WSI. Any such opportunities will be by separate agreement of the Client.

10.1.3 ARS Ltd will retain the copyright of all documentary, photographic and video material under the Copyright, Designs and Patent Act (1988).

11 PROFESSIONAL STANDARDS

11.1.1 The project will be managed according to the Historic England guidance for research projects (Historic England 2015b).

11.1.2 As a Registered Organisation Archaeological Research Services Ltd follows the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists (CIfA) *Code of conduct* (2021). All archaeological works will follow the CIfA *Standard and guidance for an archaeological watching brief* (2020a).

I 2 HEALTH AND SAFETY

12.1.1 All works will be undertaken in full compliance with the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974 and with the Management of Health and Safety Regulations 1992.

12.1.2 A risk assessment will be produced before commencement of the work that will be updated and adhered to throughout the course of the project.

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