



# Project Norwood, Swindon Wiltshire

Archaeological Watching Brief



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On behalf of	Zurich Assurance Ltd
Address	The Grange Bishops Cleeve Cheltenham GL52 8XX
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County	Wiltshire
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## Summary

Wessex Archaeology was commissioned by SKANSKA, on behalf of Zurich Assurance Ltd to undertake an archaeological watching brief during groundworks associated with the construction of new office building(s) ('Project Norwood') in the Kimmerfields Development, adjacent to Fleming Way in central Swindon, centred on NGR 415150 184920. The watching brief was carried out as a condition of planning permission, granted by Swindon Borough Council (ref. S/11/0614/HMC).

Despite a potential for the presence of Roman, Saxon and medieval remains to be present, no archaeologically significant finds, features or deposits were uncovered within the area monitored. The site was found to have been subjected to a high level of previous modern disturbance, most likely associated with earlier construction work on the Site. The underlying natural has in places been heavily truncated and is overlain with a layer of modern made ground.

## Acknowledgements

Wessex Archaeology would like to thank SKANSKA, on behalf of Zurich Assurance Ltd ('the client'), for commissioning the archaeological watching brief, in particular Ben Yates, Chris Von Tersch and Chris Greenhough. Wessex Archaeology is also grateful for the advice of the Wiltshire County Archaeology Service, who monitored the project for Swindon Borough Council, and to Dunton Environmental for their cooperation and help on site.



# Project Norwood, Swindon, Wiltshire

## Archaeological Watching Brief

### 1 INTRODUCTION

#### 1.1 Project and planning background

1.1.1 Wessex Archaeology was commissioned by SKANSKA, on behalf of Zurich Assurance Ltd ('the client'), to undertake an archaeological watching brief during groundworks associated with the construction of new office building(s) ('Project Norwood') in the Kimmerfields Development, adjacent to Fleming Way in central Swindon. The location of the watching brief was centred on NGR 415150 184920 (**Fig. 1**).

1.1.2 The watching brief was carried out as a condition of planning permission, granted by Swindon Borough Council (SBC) on 3 May 2012 (ref. S/11/0614/HMC), subject to conditions. The following condition relates to archaeology:

Condition 38:

*Prior to the commencement of a development plot, phase or part thereof a written scheme of site archaeological investigation for the necessary watching brief shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The written scheme of investigation should include on site work and any off-site work; such as the analysis, publishing and archiving of the results. The approved written scheme of investigation shall be carried out in accordance with the approved details.*

*Reason: To enable the recording of any matters of archaeological interest  
Relevant Policies: ENV6 Swindon Borough Local Plan 2011 (2006)*

1.1.1 Reserved matters application (ref. S/RES/18/2060/HC) was approved on 16 August 2019 by SBC for the erection of an office building and associated works following outline planning permission.

1.1.2 The watching brief was undertaken in accordance with a written scheme of investigation (WSI) which detailed the aims, methodologies and standards to be employed (Wessex Archaeology 2019). The Wiltshire County Archaeological Service (WCAS) approved the WSI, on behalf of the Local Planning Authority (LPA), prior to fieldwork commencing. The watching brief was undertaken between from the 25 August to 2 September 2020.

#### 1.2 Scope of the report

1.2.1 The purpose of this report is to provide the results of the watching brief, to interpret the results within their local or regional context (or otherwise), and to assess their potential to address the aims outlined in the WSI, thereby making available information about the archaeological resource (a preservation by record).

#### 1.3 Location, topography and geology

1.3.1 The Project Norwood development site and the location of the proposed watching brief coincide with a vacant plot in the southern part of the Kimmerfields Development, adjacent





to Fleming Way in central Swindon. The site was formerly the location of the head Post Office building.

- 1.3.2 The site is relatively flat and lies at around 100 m OD. The bedrock geology is mapped by the British Geological Survey (BGS; online viewer) as Kimmeridge Clay Formation – Mudstone. No superficial deposits are recorded in this area by the BGS.

## 2 ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

### 2.1 Archaeological and historical context

#### *Prehistoric*

- 2.1.1 Little archaeological evidence of prehistoric date has been reported in the immediate vicinity of the site, although occasional findspots in the local area suggest at least a background level of activity throughout this period. Traces of Mesolithic and Neolithic activity have been revealed by archaeological investigations in the Old Town area of Swindon and on the Okus-Swindon Hill ridge, the latter of which have also produced substantial evidence of Bronze Age funerary activity (Wiltshire Council 2004).

#### *Romano-British*

- 2.1.2 The Romano-British town of *Durocornovium* was located some 5 km to the east of the site, at the edge of the principal Roman road known as Ermin Street.
- 2.1.3 The Wiltshire and Swindon HER contains an entry (ref. SU18NE305) relating to the recovery of Roman pottery from a V-shaped ditch somewhere immediately north of the site. However, few other details are attached to the record.
- 2.1.4 Other recorded evidence of Romano-British activity in the wider surroundings of the site includes a possible villa site, traces of quarrying, metalworking activity and an extensive pottery manufacture site. Investigations in the Old Town area have revealed evidence of Romano-British occupation (Wiltshire Council 2004), although only sporadic traces (e.g., occasional findspots) of contemporary activity have been reported in the vicinity of the site.

#### *Saxon and medieval*

- 2.1.5 Swindon, or *Swindone* is recorded in the Domesday survey of 1086 as a large, well-established land holding divided between five lords. The place name is considered to be Saxon derivation, meaning ‘swine down’ or open space (Gover *et al.* 1939). The town’s origins in this period are further attested to by archaeological evidence, including a substantial number of sunken-floored huts recorded during excavations in Old Town (Chandler 1993).
- 2.1.6 In the 13th-century Swindon was granted borough status and subsequently developed into a medium-sized market town (Crittall 1970). Several surrounding smaller settlements are known to have existed around this time, including within the area of Even Swindon, immediately to the north of the site (Wiltshire Council 2004). A further area of medieval settlement, known as Westcot, is inferred to have been located to the west of the site. Westcot was first recorded in 1289 and, at this time, consisted of a rural settlement that formed part of the manor of Nethercot in the north-west of Swindon parish (Crittall 1970). In the absence of any recorded archaeological evidence, however, the exact site of medieval Westcot remains uncertain.
- 2.1.7 Throughout the Saxon and medieval periods, the site itself is likely to have been situated in a predominantly rural landscape, peripheral to the main areas of settlement.



### *Post medieval to modern*

- 2.1.8 The significance of Swindon as a market centre increased during the 17th century, with a notable increase in population between the late 17th and early 19th centuries (Wiltshire Council 2004).
- 2.1.9 Fleming Way, immediately south of the site, coincides approximately with the route of the Wiltshire and Berkshire Canal. Opened in 1810, the canal enabled the efficient distribution of coal and other quarried material and acted as a catalyst for the development of Swindon as an industrial town. The canal underwent a decline following the opening of the Great Western Railway (GWR) line in 1840, leading to its eventual closure in 1910. Much of the canal was infilled during the twentieth century.
- 2.1.10 In the 19th and early 20th centuries, the location of the site was developed as part of the growth of the Swindon New Town with the construction of terraced housing, which was interspersed with occasional larger properties. The residential development was swept away in the mid-20th century with the construction of a large sorting office (later the Head Post Office). The construction of these buildings, and their subsequent demolition is likely to have removed or disturbed below ground archaeological deposits present within the footprints of the former buildings.

## **3 AIMS AND OBJECTIVES**

### **3.1 Aims**

- 3.1.1 The aims of the watching brief, as stated in the WSI (Wessex Archaeology 2019) and as defined in the ClfA *Standard and guidance for an archaeological watching brief* (ClfA 2014a), were to:
- allow, within the resources available, the preservation by record of archaeological deposits, the presence and nature of which could not be established (or established with sufficient accuracy) in advance of the development or other works;
  - provide an opportunity, if needed, for the watching archaeologist to signal to all interested parties, before the destruction of the material in question, that an archaeological find has been made for which the resources allocated to the watching brief itself are not sufficient to support treatment to a satisfactory and proper standard; and
  - guide, not replace, any requirement for contingent excavation or preservation of possible deposits.

### **3.2 Objectives**

- 3.2.1 In order to achieve the above aims, the objectives of the watching brief, also defined in the WSI (Wessex Archaeology 2019), were to:
- determine the presence or absence of archaeological features, deposits, structures, artefacts or ecofacts within the specified works area;
  - record and establish, within the constraints of the works, the extent, character, date, condition and quality of any surviving archaeological remains (a preservation by record);
  - place any identified archaeological remains within a wider historical and archaeological context in order to assess their significance; and



- make available information about the archaeological resource on the site by preparing a report on the results of the watching brief.

## 4 METHODS

### 4.1 Introduction

4.1.1 All works were undertaken in accordance with the detailed methodology set out within the WSI (Wessex Archaeology 2019) and in general compliance with the standards outlined in ClfA guidance (ClfA 2014a). The methods employed are summarised below.

### 4.2 Fieldwork methods

#### *General*

4.2.1 The watching archaeologist monitored all mechanical excavations within the specified area which comprised modern concrete and made ground (**Fig. 1**). At the west end of the Site and outside of the monitored areas 2 and 3 deep concrete foundations were encountered, along with a concrete culvert, which relate to the site of former 20th-century post office building. These were photographed from a distance due to bad weather and an overall depth of excavations of over 2 m bgl.

4.2.2 Where necessary, the surfaces of uncovered archaeological deposits were cleaned by hand to aid visual definition. A sample of archaeological features and deposits was hand-excavated, sufficient to address the aims of the watching brief.

4.2.3 Spoil from machine stripping and hand-excavated archaeological deposits was visually scanned for the purposes of finds retrieval. Artefacts were collected and bagged by context. All artefacts from excavated contexts were retained, although those from features of modern date (19th century or later) were recorded on site and not retained.

#### *Recording*

4.2.4 All exposed archaeological deposits and features were recorded using Wessex Archaeology's pro forma recording system. A complete record of excavated features and deposits was made, including plans and sections drawn to appropriate scales (generally 1:20 or 1:50 for plans and 1:10 for sections) and tied to the Ordnance Survey (OS) National Grid.

4.2.5 A Leica GNSS connected to Leica's SmartNet service surveyed the location of archaeological features. All survey data is recorded in OS National Grid coordinates and heights above OD (Newlyn), as defined by OSTN15 and OSGM15, with a three-dimensional accuracy of at least 50 mm.

4.2.6 A full photographic record was made using digital cameras equipped with an image sensor of not less than 10 megapixels. Digital images have been subject to managed quality control and curation processes, which has embedded appropriate metadata within the image and will ensure long term accessibility of the image set.

### 4.3 Finds and environmental strategies

4.3.1 Strategies for the recovery, processing and assessment of finds and environmental samples were in line with those detailed in the WSI (Wessex Archaeology 2019). The treatment of artefacts and environmental remains was in general accordance with: *Guidance for the collection, documentation, conservation and research of archaeological materials* (ClfA



2014b) and *Environmental Archaeology: A Guide to the Theory and Practice of Methods, from Sampling and Recovery to Post-excavation* (English Heritage 2011).

#### **4.4 Monitoring**

- 4.4.1 The WCAS monitored the watching brief on behalf of the LPA. Any variations to the WSI, if required to better address the project aims, were agreed in advance with the client and the WCAS.

### **5 ARCHAEOLOGICAL RESULTS**

#### **5.1 Introduction**

- 5.1.1 No archaeological remains of Prehistoric, Romano-British, Saxon or Medieval date were encountered during the watching brief. The monitored area was observed to have been subjected to a high level of previous modern disturbance, with the underlying natural having been truncated and overlain with a layer of modern made ground (**Plate 1**). A number of heavily disturbed and truncated modern structures were encountered.

#### **5.2 Stratigraphic sequence**

- 5.2.1 Removal of the modern tarmac (101; 0.10 m thick) that formed the existing ground surface revealed a 0.50 m thick layer of modern made ground (102) (**Plate 1**). This comprised of mixed sand and mid yellowish-brown silty clay with sparse rounded and sub-angular gravel and frequent inclusions of larger broken fragments of modern rubble, predominantly brick with occasional smaller deposits of tarmac.
- 5.2.2 Below this the natural (103) consisted of a firmly compacted mid yellowish-grey clay. Large areas of black staining were visible in the natural, most likely representing contamination and seepage from previous modern services. Remnants of these are still visible but have been heavily truncated by earlier construction work associated with made ground (102) (**Plate 2 and 3**).

#### **5.3 Archaeological features**

- 5.3.1 No archaeological features were encountered during the watching brief. However, several heavily truncated modern structures were observed within the north-western corner of the site where concrete foundations and a concrete culvert were recorded (**Plate 4**). It is believed that these remains are associated with a 20th-century Post Office which was located outside of the monitored area.
- 5.3.2 The remnants of a truncated 20th-century brick foundation wall for an unknown building were uncovered towards the centre of the area monitored. The surviving length of the wall comprising two courses of brickwork, was aligned east to west and measured 8 m (l) x 0.26 m (w) (**Plate 5**).

### **6 FINDS EVIDENCE**

- 6.1.1 No archaeological finds were observed.

### **7 ENVIRONMENTAL EVIDENCE**

- 7.1.1 No deposits suitable for environmental sampling were identified.



## **8 CONCLUSIONS**

### **8.1 Summary and discussion**

- 8.1.1 Despite a potential for the presence of Roman, Saxon and medieval remains to be present, no archaeological finds, features or deposits were uncovered within the area monitored. The monitored area was observed to have been subjected to a high level of previous modern disturbance, most likely associated with earlier construction work on the Site, as evidenced by the presence of made ground and the heavy truncation and disturbance noted within the natural geology.
- 8.1.2 Such modern disturbance is believed to account for the negative results of the watching brief, with any previously surviving archaeological footprint eradicated during earlier works believed to relate to the remnants of the truncated and disused services observed during the archaeological monitoring.
- 8.1.3 Foundations relating to the known Old Post Office which stood outside of the monitored area were recorded, in addition to a 20th-century culvert and wall foundation. The culvert is thought to have been related to the Old Post Office which was also in use during the 20th century, though the relation of the wall foundation to any building remains unclear.

## **9 ARCHIVE STORAGE AND CURATION**

### **9.1 Museum**

- 9.1.1 The archive resulting from the watching brief is currently held at the offices of Wessex Archaeology in Salisbury. Swindon Museums and Art Gallery has agreed in principle to accept the archive on completion of the project, under the accession code (SWIMG:2019.161). Deposition of any finds with the museum will only be carried out with the full written agreement of the landowner to transfer title of all finds to the museum.

### **9.2 Preparation of the archive**

- 9.2.1 The archive, which includes paper records, graphics, artefacts, ecofacts and digital data, will be prepared following the standard conditions for the acceptance of excavated archaeological material by Swindon Museums and Art Gallery, and in general following nationally recommended guidelines (SMA 1995; ClfA 2014c; Brown 2011; ADS 2013).
- 9.2.2 All archive elements are marked with the accession code, and a full index will be prepared. The physical archive currently comprises the following:

- 1 files/document cases of paper records and A3/A4 graphics;

### **9.3 Selection policy**

- 9.3.1 Wessex Archaeology follows national guidelines on selection and retention (SMA 1993; Brown 2011, section 4). In accordance with these, and any specific guidance prepared by the museum, a process of selection and retention will be followed so that only those artefacts or ecofacts that are considered to have potential for future study will be retained. The selection policy will be agreed with the museum, and is fully documented in the project archive.

### **9.4 Security copy**

- 9.4.1 In line with current best practice (e.g., Brown 2011), on completion of the project a security copy of the written records will be prepared, in the form of a digital PDF/A file. PDF/A is an



ISO-standardised version of the Portable Document Format (PDF) designed for the digital preservation of electronic documents through omission of features ill-suited to long-term archiving.

## **9.5 OASIS**

- 9.5.1 An OASIS (online access to the index of archaeological investigations) record (<http://oasis.ac.uk/pages/wiki/Main>) has been initiated, with key fields completed (Appendix 1). A.pdf version of the final report will be submitted following approval by the WCAS on behalf of the LPA. Subject to any contractual requirements on confidentiality, copies of the OASIS record will be integrated into the relevant local and national records and published through the Archaeology Data Service (ADS) ArchSearch catalogue.

## **10 COPYRIGHT**

### **10.1 Archive and report copyright**

- 10.1.1 The full copyright of the written/illustrative/digital archive relating to the project will be retained by Wessex Archaeology under the *Copyright, Designs and Patents Act 1988* with all rights reserved. The client will be licenced to use each report for the purposes that it was produced in relation to the project as described in the specification. The museum, however, will be granted an exclusive licence for the use of the archive for educational purposes, including academic research, providing that such use conforms to the *Copyright and Related Rights Regulations 2003*. In some instances, certain regional museums may require absolute transfer of copyright, rather than a licence; this should be dealt with on a case-by-case basis.
- 10.1.2 Information relating to the project will be deposited with the Historic Environment Record (HER) where it can be freely copied without reference to Wessex Archaeology for the purposes of archaeological research or development control within the planning process.

### **10.2 Third party data copyright**

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## APPENDICES

### Appendix 1 OASIS record

OASIS ID: wessexar1-403130

#### Project details

Project name	Project Norwood, Swindon, Wiltshire
Short description of the project	Wessex Archaeology was commissioned by Turner and Townsend, on behalf of Zurich Assurance Ltd to undertake an archaeological watching brief during groundworks associated with the construction of new office building(s) ('Project Norwood') in the Kimmerfields Development, adjacent to Fleming Way in central Swindon. The watching brief monitored 5 areas within the Site and despite a potential for the presence of Roman, Saxon and medieval remains to be present, no archaeologically significant finds, features or deposits were uncovered. The monitored areas were all observed to have been subjected to a high level of previous modern disturbance, most likely associated with earlier construction work on the Site.
Project dates	Start: 25-08-2020 End: 02-09-2020
Previous/future work	No / No
Any associated project reference codes	218950 - Contracting Unit No.
Any associated project reference codes	SWIMG:2019.161 - Museum accession ID
Type of project	Recording project
Site status	None
Current Land use	Vacant Land 1 - Vacant land previously developed
Monument type	FOUNDATION WALL Modern
Significant Finds	NONE None
Investigation type	""Watching Brief""
Prompt	National Planning Policy Framework - NPPF

#### Project location

Country	England
Site location	WILTSHIRE SWINDON SWINDON Kimmerfields Development, adjacent to Fleming Way
Postcode	SN1 1EA
Study area	2512 Square metres
Site coordinates	SU 415150 184920 50.963806984239 -1.408762962412 50 57 49 N 001 24 31 W Point
Height OD / Depth	Min: 100m Max: 100m



### Project creators

Name of Organisation	Wessex Archaeology
Project brief originator	Local Planning Authority (with/without advice from County/District Archaeologist)
Project design originator	Wessex Archaeology
Project director/manager	Gareth Chaffey
Project supervisor	Eva Estella

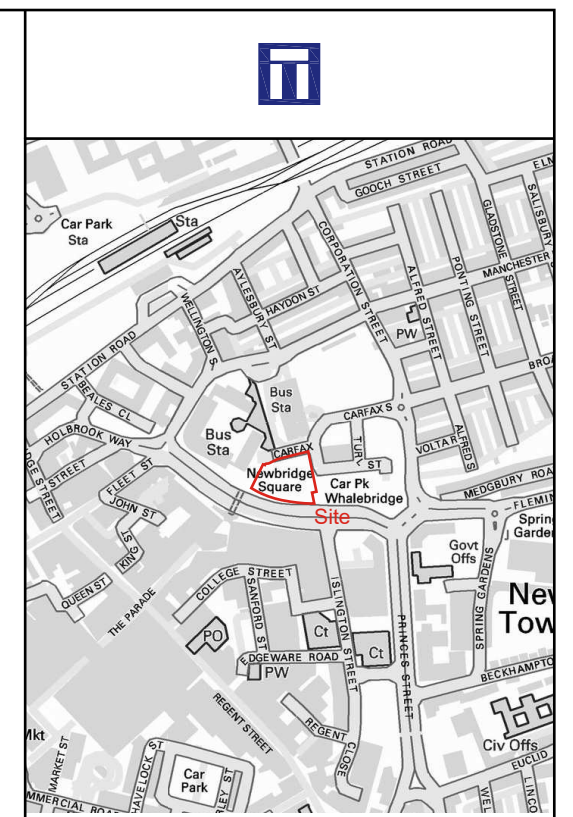
### Project archives

Physical Archive Exists?	No
Digital Archive recipient	Swindon Museum and Art Gallery
Digital Archive ID	SWIMG:2019.161
Digital Contents	"other"
Digital Media available	"Images raster / digital photography","Text"
Paper Archive recipient	Swindon Museum and Art Gallery
Paper Contents	"other"
Paper Media available	"Report"

### Project bibliography 1

Publication type	Grey literature (unpublished document/manuscript)
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Other bibliographic details	report number 218950.3
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Entered by	Steven Froud (s.froud@wessexarch.co.uk)
Entered on	9 September 2020



- Site boundary
- Watching brief areas monitored
- 20th century wall footing

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Site location plan and area monitored

Figure 1





Plate 1: North-west facing representative section of southern extent of works. Scale 1 m



Plate 2: General view of northern extent of strip, view from the north-east. Scale 1 m


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Plate 3: Remnants of possible modern soak-away, view from the north-west. Scale 2 m



Plate 4: Post excavation view of area of Old Post Office foundations and culvert, view from the north-east.



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Plate 5: North facing section of wall foundation. Scale 1 m

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