



Lowfield Street, Dartford Kent

Archaeological Watching Brief Summary Report

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Archaeological Watching Brief Summary Report

1 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1.1 On Wednesday 20th March 2019 and 9th May 2019, Wessex Archaeology attended Lowfield Street, Dartford, Kent to undertake a watching Brief on demolition and below ground works in advance of development of the site (**Figure 1**).
- 1.1.2 The works comprise of the demolition of existing buildings, refurbishment of no. 26 Lowfield Street and the construction of new residential dwellings, retail and office units with access roads and associated landscaping works.
- 1.1.3 The watching brief is the final phase of a staged approach in determining the archaeological potential of the site and follows previous non-intrusive and intrusive archaeological investigations.
- 1.1.4 The watching brief comprised the monitoring of the excavation of seven areas located in the north, central and southern parts of the overall site (**Figure 2**).
- 1.1.5 Three trial holes following on from a previous archaeological evaluation carried out by Wessex Archaeology, were recorded as watching brief areas WB area 1, WB area 2 and WB area 3. Four additional areas were subject to monitoring on 9th May 2019 during ground removal.
- 1.1.6 WB area 1 was located immediately north of Vauxhall Place, WB area 2 was located in the remains of a partially demolished building to the northeast of Instone Road, WB area 3 was located at the northern end of the site, WB area 4 was located in the northwest corner of the site, WB area 5 was located in the northeast corner of the site and WB areas 6 and 7 were located under the remains of demolished buildings

2 RESULTS

2.1 Watching brief area 1

- 2.1.1 **WB area 1** was approximately east-west aligned and bounded on three sides by spoil heaps and on the fourth side by the site access/haul road. When excavated, an unknown service pipe precluded the length of the area exceeding 4m; however the width of the area was extended to 4m in width to account for the loss of length (**Plate 1**).
- 2.1.2 A modern concrete pad was recorded at the east edge of the area. The natural geology of Taplow gravels was present at a depth of 2-2.1m+ BGL.
- 2.1.3 These were sealed by an alluvial deposit of 1.6m thickness from 0.4m-2m BGL. The alluvial deposit was of a mid brown grey silty clay with occasional chalk flecks from 0.5m – 1.7m BGL and of a dark grey silty clay with rare roots from 1.7m – 2m BGL (**Plate 2**).
- 2.1.4 There were no archaeological features or deposits within WB area 1.



2.2 Watching brief area 2 and 7

- 2.2.1 **WB area 2** was abandoned due to the presence of a live gas main (**Plate 5**).
- 2.2.2 This area was later monitored as **WB area 7** on 9th May 2019. Excavation occurred to a maximum depth of approximately 2.5m with the stratigraphy formed of multiple layers of made ground. At 2.5m the remains of a former basement associated with the former building located in this area was identified. The basement was constructed from reinforced concrete (**Plate 9**). No archaeological features or deposits were identified.

2.3 Watching brief area 3 and 4

- 2.3.1 **WB area 3** was aligned north-south and was of 10m length by 2m width. The area was bounded to the west by an existing building, to the north by the site boundary and to the south and south east by previous and ongoing demolition works.
- 2.3.2 The natural geology of Taplow gravels was present at a depth of 1.6m BGL. A sondage was excavated to a depth of 2.2m BGL to test this was the natural horizon.
- 2.3.3 Sealing the Taplow gravels was an alluvial deposit of 0.8m thickness from 0.8m-1.6m BGL. The alluvial deposit was of a dark brown silty clay with moderate rooting and rare chalk flecks and had modern CBM towards the top. The CBM was interpreted as being intrusive from the made ground layers above.
- 2.3.4 The alluvial deposit was sealed by 0.8m thickness of made ground deposits from 0m -0.8m BGL, consisting of yellow crushed brick from 0.7m-0.8m BGL, redeposited chalk from 0.5-0.7m BGL, and concrete, brick, and yellow hardcore/demolition debris from 0m-0.5m BGL (**Plate 3**).
- 2.3.5 Adjacent to the south end of the area, a concrete slab at ground level was broken up and lifted out, which partially covered a recently demolished modern wall running west-east. The wall was constructed from red stock bricks of 0.2mx0.1mx0.07m of which 10 courses were present. The bricks were bonded by a grey cement mortar. The construction cut for the wall was of 1m depth and cut the alluvial layer. The wall was abutted by the modern made ground layers. Research suggests that the wall may be associated with the Parcel Sorting Office on the 1961 historic mapping (**Plate 4**).
- 2.3.6 Monitoring of **WB area 4** occurred on the 9th May 2019. This area had been heavily disturbed during the demolition of the buildings that previously occupied the watching brief area. As such, the initial 1.4m of ground was related to the re-deposition of made ground after the demolition of the buildings occurred to bring the area to the required ground level. These buildings had been demolished before the site visit on the 9th May 2019.
- 2.3.7 Ground reduction occurred to a maximum depth of approximately 2.5m (**Plate 10**). This area had been heavily disturbed by past use. Re-deposited chalk mixed with demolition debris consisting of crushed red and London stock brick was identified from 1.4-2m BGL. Below the made ground, alluvial deposits of similar consistency to that which was recorded in WB area 3 and were encountered to a depth of approximately 2.5m BGL. Modern CBM and brick were identified in the initial 0.25m that were interpreted as intrusive, mixed in during the demolition and re-deposition of made ground.
- 2.3.8 Taplow gravels were not identified within WB area 4 suggesting that either they were buried at some depth below the alluvial layer or that the gravels identified in WB Area 3 was a small pocket.



2.3.9 No archaeological features or deposits were identified in WB Area 4.

2.4 Watching brief area 5

2.4.1 WB area 5 was located in the northeast corner of the site. Monitoring was conducted during the construction of drainage runs, a conduit system and section of strip foundations (**Plate 11** and **Plate 12**) The area had previously been investigated during the 2018 archaeological evaluation (WA 2018). The same made ground deposit identified in trench 1 was found to the maximum depth of works in this area of 0.8m BGL. No archaeological features or deposits were identified. Watching brief area 6

2.4.2 WB area 6 was located on the eastern site boundary (**Plate 13**). The area had previously been investigated during the 2018 evaluation which encountered made ground to 2.05m BGL with a reinforced concrete floor 1m in thickness located at the base of the trench, which inhibited further investigation. The ground level had been raised to the required construction level using material from areas previously excavated within the site.

2.4.3 A small portion of the area was monitored on 9th May 2019. Excavation occurred to a depth of approximately 2m BGL with multiple layers of made ground were identified. These deposits of made ground are thought to relate to previous use of this area of the site which dates back to at least 1938 based on historic mapping. Following excavation, the area was raised to the required construction level using material from the site.

2.4.4 The previous evaluation also established that two distinct Quaternary sediment bodies are present. The potential for these sands and gravels to preserve Palaeolithic artefacts and associated palaeoenvironmental evidence was assessed. No Palaeolithic artefacts clearly associated with these deposits were recovered and their palaeoenvironmental potential has been assessed as low.

2.4.5 Holocene alluvial sediments associated with River Darent were recorded at the southern margin of the Site; they are absent and/or have been removed from the other areas evaluated. These deposits represent fine grained, over-bank material laid down during an unknown expanse of the Holocene; the uppermost units are of recent date. No peat was encountered. The potential for the alluvial deposits to preserve artefacts and ecofacts was assessed. No artefacts were recovered and their palaeoenvironmental potential has been assessed to be low.

2.4.6 Based on this evaluation, the geoarchaeological potential of the Quaternary deposits present at the site can be regarded as low.

3 CONCLUSIONS

3.1.1 The watching brief was successful in confirming the results of the previous intrusive works in that there is a considerable made ground present on site, and the survival of any potential archaeological remains has been compromised by the construction of former and existing buildings within the site. No evidence for archaeological remains has been found during the previous evaluations or watching brief; there is no indication of 'background' out of context finds and none have been seen at the site.



WB area 1		Length 4m	Width 4m	Depth 2.20m
Context Number	Interpretative Category	Description		Depth BGL (m)
1501	Made ground	Abundant brick, concrete, tile, stone, chalk fragments. Moderately loose compaction. yellow at top diffusing into black		0-0.4
1502	Alluvium	Mid brown grey silty clay. Occasional chalk flecks.		0.4-1.7
1503	Alluvium	Dark grey silty clay. Rare roots.		1.7-2
1504	Natural	Gravels.		2-2.2+
1505	Concrete pad	Modern.		0.1-0.4

WB area 2		Length Unknown	Width Unknown	Depth Unknown
Context Number	Interpretative Category	Description		Depth BGL (m)
		Not excavated due to live gas main/services present.		

WB area 3		Length 10m	Width 2m	Depth 2.20m
Context Number	Interpretative Category	Description		Depth BGL (m)
1701	Made ground	Concrete, brick, yellow type 1 hardcore. Loosely compacted. Modern.		0-0.5
1702	Chalk	Deposit of chalk under made ground. Not natural, redeposited material. Probably modern levelling layer.		0.5-0.7
1703	Made ground	Yellow sandy crushed brick. Levelling layer. Modern.		0.7-0.8
1704	Alluvium	Dark brown black silty clay. Moderate rooting. Rare modern CBM towards top. Chalk flecks.		0.8-1.6
1705	Natural	Light brown sub rounded and sub-angular flints. Gravels		1.6-2
1706	Wall	Linear wall aligned West-East with straight sides. 10 courses. Constructed from red stock brick and bonded with grey cement mortar. Maximum height: 1.00m.		0.1-1
1707	Wall Construction cut	Linear wall construction cut with vertical, straight sides. Length: >2.00m. Width: 0.70m. Depth: 1m.		0.1-1
1708	Natural	Gravels. Bright yellow brown sub round and sub ang. flints. Brighter than 1705 above - due to being below water table? Observed in sondage.		2-2.2+

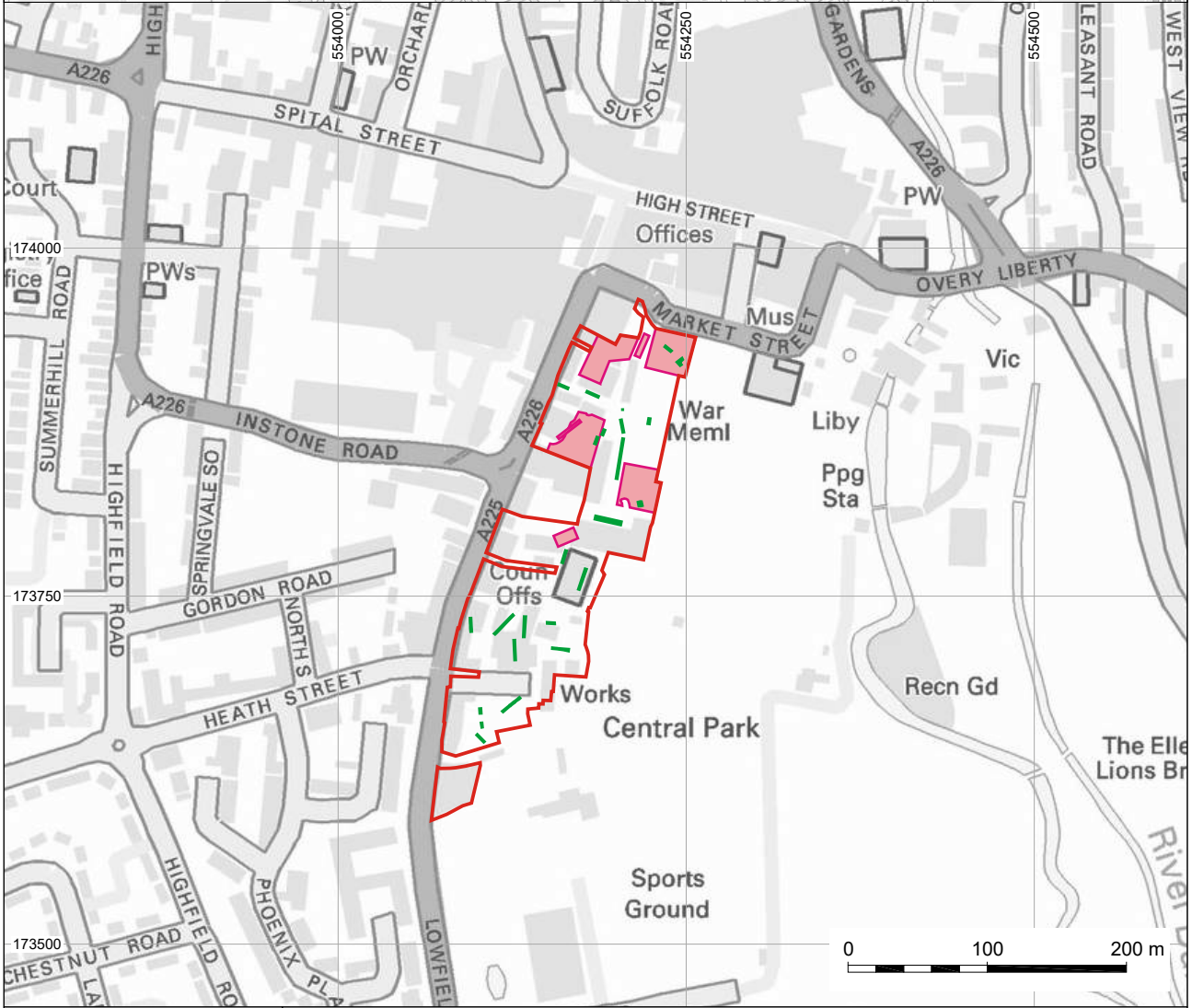
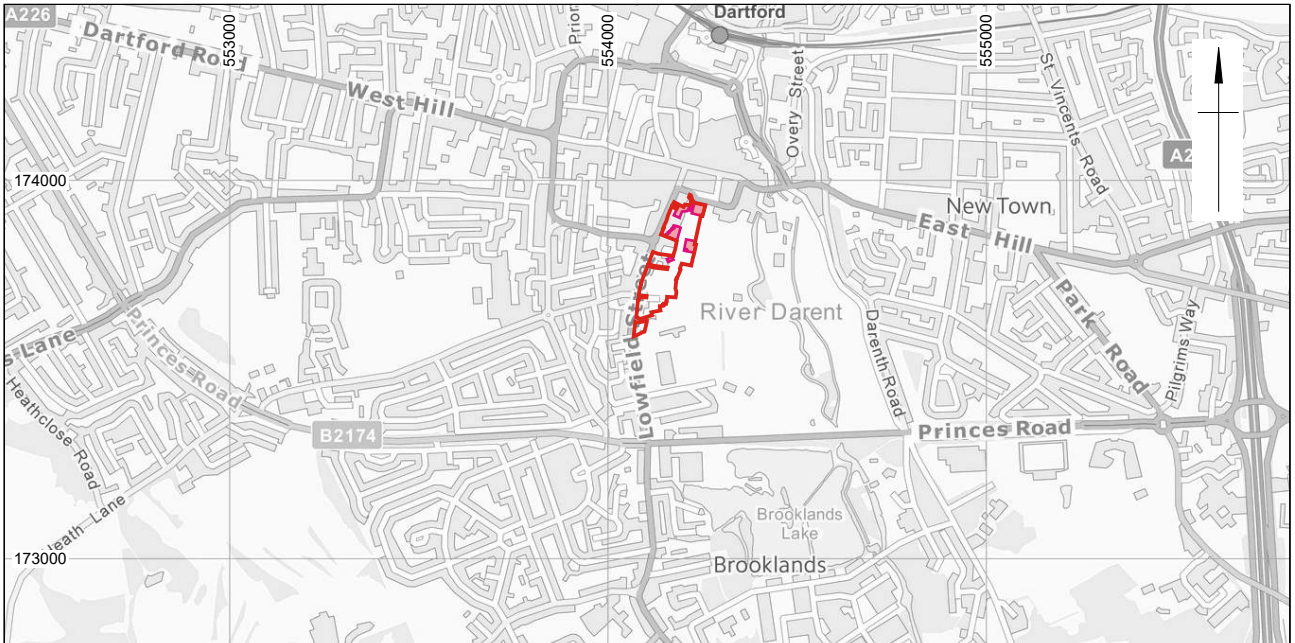


WB area 4		Length Unknown	Width Unknown	Depth Unknown
Context Number	Interpretative Category	Description		Depth BGL (m)
1801	Made ground	Re-deposited made ground from previous demolition works		0-1.4
1802	Made ground	Abundant brick, concrete, tile, stone, chalk fragments. Moderately loose compaction. yellow at top diffusing into black		1.4-2
1803	Alluvial	Mid brown grey silty clay. Occasional chalk flecks.		2+

WB area 5		Length Unknown	Width Unknown	Depth Unknown
Context Number	Interpretative Category	Description		Depth BGL (m)
1901	Made ground	Abundant brick, concrete, tile, stone, chalk fragments. Moderately loose compaction. Yellowy brown silty clay		0.0.8

WB area 6		Length Unknown	Width Unknown	Depth Unknown
Context Number	Interpretative Category	Description		Depth BGL (m)
2001	Made ground	Abundant brick, concrete, tile, stone, chalk fragments. Moderately loose compaction. Yellowy brown silty clay		0-0.6
2002	Made ground	Made ground, dark grey sandy silt clay, mixed with construction rubble and abundant pebbles.		0.6-2

WB area 7		Length Unknown	Width Unknown	Depth Unknown
Context Number	Interpretative Category	Description		Depth BGL (m)
2101	Made ground	Abundant brick, concrete, tile, stone, chalk fragments. Moderately loose compaction. Yellowy brown silty clay. Possible multile layers but difficult to interpret		0-2.5+
2102	Concrete	Concrete basement		2.5



Site Boundary
 Previous Eval Trench
 WB monitored area

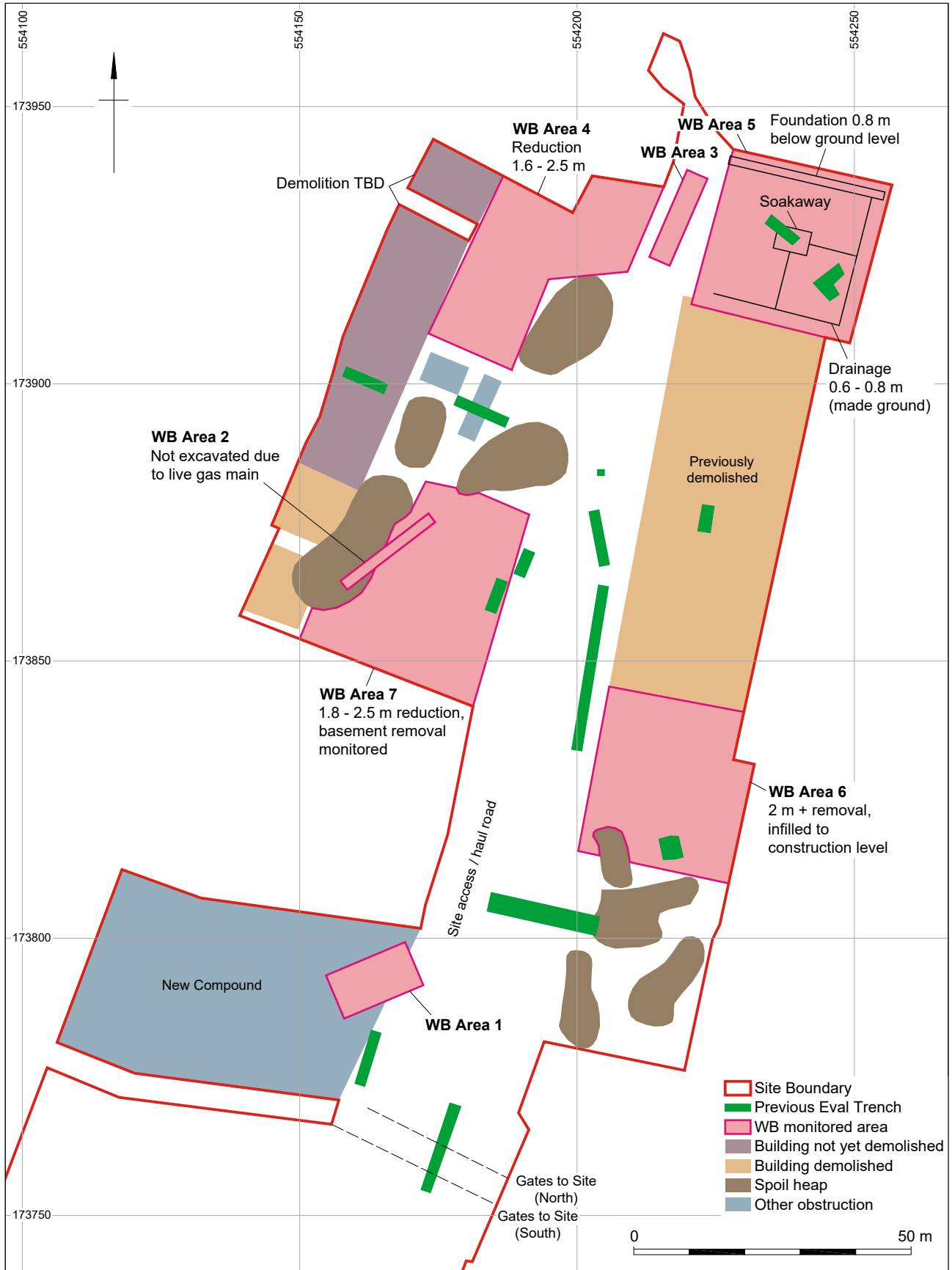
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Site location

Figure 1



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Plan of site, showing monitored areas

Figure 2



Plate 1: Working shot of WB area 1 – note access constrained by spoil heaps and access road



Plate 2: Section of WB area 1, 2m scale, looking north


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Plate 3: Section of WB area 3, 2m scale, looking northeast



Plate 4: Modern wall 1706, 1m scale, looking southeast


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Plate 5: Live gas main warning – location of WB area 2 inside partially demolished building in background



Plate 6: Partially demolished buildings in centre of site


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Plate 7: Area at north of site – madeground levelled ready for piling



Plate 8: Partially demolished buildings fronting Lowfield Street


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Plate 9: General shot of WB area 7, facing south



Plate 10: General shot of WB area 4, facing northeast


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Plate 11: View of the drainage runs in WB area 5, facing east



Plate 12: View of conduit system in WB area 5, facing north



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Plate 13: General shot of WB area 6, facing east

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