



Co-op Site, Avonmouth, Bristol

Archaeological Watching Brief Report





**CO-OP SITE,
AVONMOUTH, BRISTOL**

Archaeological Watching Brief Report

Prepared for:
VolkerFitzpatrick Ltd.
Hertford Road
Hoddesdon
EN11 9BX.

by
Wessex Archaeology
Portway House
Old Sarum Park
SALISBURY
Wiltshire
SP4 6EB

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QUALITY ASSURANCE

SITE CODE	78641	ACCESSION CODE	
PLANNING APPLICATION REF.		NGR	353240, 180470

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**CO-OP SITE,
AVONMOUTH, BRISTOL**

Archaeological Watching Brief Report

Summary

Wessex Archaeology was commissioned by VolkerFitzpatrick Ltd to carry out an archaeological watching brief during development at the proposed Co-op site, Poplar Way West, Avonmouth, Bristol, centred on National Grid Reference 353240, 180470.

A previous evaluation had been undertaken on the site, which confirmed the location of a former Salt Rhine and the general stratigraphic sequence. The watching brief was required as a condition (condition 24) of planning consent (10/05469/F) and required an archaeologist to monitor the initial groundwork's for the construction of two industrial units on the site.

Although the majority of the construction will use a piling foundation solution, initial groundworks consisted of the mechanical excavation of two narrow drainage trenches running around the proposed industrial units. The trenches were machine excavated to a maximum depth of 1.20m (5.80 aOD) which predominantly impacted upon made ground deposits and modern backfill, as noted in the previous archaeological evaluation. In isolated areas alluvial deposits forming the upper sequence of the Upper and Middle Wentlooge formation were identified.

No archaeological features or finds were identified during the watching brief.

The field work was carried out on the 18th October.

**LAND AT POPLAR WAY WEST,
AVONMOUTH, BRISTOL****Archaeological Watching Brief Report****Acknowledgements**

This project was commissioned by VolkerFitzpatrick Ltd and Wessex Archaeology would like to thank Graham Haywood in this regard. Thanks are also due to Lee Swift for his assistance on site during the watching brief.

The fieldwork was carried out by Oliver Good who also compiled this report. The illustrations were prepared by Linda Coleman. The project was managed on behalf of Wessex Archaeology by Sue Farr.

**LAND AT POPLAR WAY WEST,
AVONMOUTH, BRISTOL****Archaeological Watching Brief Report****1 INTRODUCTION****1.1 Project Background**

- 1.1.1 Wessex Archaeology was commissioned by VolkerFitzpatrick Ltd (the Client) to undertake an archaeological watching brief during development at Poplar Way West, Avonmouth, Bristol (**Figure 1**), centred on National Grid Reference (NGR) 353240, 180470, (hereafter 'the Site').
- 1.1.2 A previous archaeological evaluation (WA 2011b) undertaken within the Site, identified large amounts of modern disturbance as well as a single post-medieval ditch. The stratigraphic sequence within the trenches showed modern made ground overlying a deep alluvial sequence.
- 1.1.3 In accordance with condition 24 attached to the planning consent, the approved *Written Scheme of Investigation: Method Statement for an Archaeological Evaluation* (Wessex Archaeology, 2011a), detailing the strategy, methodology and standards to be employed during the archaeological evaluation formed the basis for the watching brief methodology.
- 1.1.4 The watching brief was maintained during mechanical excavations associated with drainage channels on the Site.
- 1.1.5 The fieldwork was carried out on the 18th October 2011.

1.2 The Site, Location and Geology

- 1.2.1 The Site is located within the industrial zone outside Avonmouth, Bristol. It comprises approximately 13ha of hardstanding (tarmac over loose stone make-up) and is generally flat, lying at an elevation of 7m above Ordnance Datum (aOD).
- 1.2.2 The new industrial units currently under development are being built on piled foundations and ground level within the development area will be raised by up to 1 metre (Alan Stewart *pers comm.*).
- 1.2.3 The Avonmouth Levels are a geographical area of the Severn Estuary Levels, comprising flat low lying estuarine alluvial deposits laid down during the British Quaternary. The underlying geology of the Site comprises a well-documented alluvial sequence known as the Wentlooge Formation, comprising alluvium, clays and intermittent peat deposits (WA 2011a). Alluvial deposition has been caused by fluctuating sea levels or marine transgressions, between transgressive landsurfaces, characterised by peat deposits and have been preserved by subsequent layers of alluvium (Cotswold Archaeology 2010).
- 1.2.4 Buried landsurfaces of Romano-British and prehistoric date have been recorded in a number of locations across the Avonmouth Levels and have been recorded from c. 2.5m below ground level (BGL).

2 ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

2.1 Introduction

2.1.1 An archaeological desk-based assessment (Cotswold Archaeology 2010) has been prepared which covers, in detail, the archaeological and historical context of the Site. A subsequent archaeological evaluation (WA 2011b) has also been undertaken within the Site.

2.1.2 The results of both studies are summarised briefly below.

2.2 Prehistoric to Romano-British

2.2.1 The archaeological desk-based assessment (Cotswold Archaeology 2010) established that buried soil horizons of prehistoric and Romano-British date have been recorded in the general vicinity of the Site. The former route of the Salt Rhine, diverted in 1997, also crosses the northern part of the Site. Further prehistoric remains are possible within peat horizons which lie at depth through the Wentlooge.

2.2.2 Prehistoric soil horizons have been recorded in close vicinity to the Site at Katherine Farm and Kites Corner. At Kites Corner a sequence of soil horizons dating to the Mesolithic and Neolithic periods were recorded at c. 4.5m aOD and a Late Bronze Age occupation layer was recorded at c. 5.07m aOD (Locock 1998). The site at Katherine Farm recorded evidence for a Mesolithic stabilisation layer (4.8 – 5.1m aOD) and a late Bronze Age occupation horizon (5.07m – 5.28m OD). Finds of pottery, worked flint, imported stone and animal bone were recovered from the late Bronze Age layer (Allen *et al* 2002).

2.2.3 Similar dark organic soil horizons have been recorded at a number of locations in the Avonmouth area. The layer has often been colloquially referred to as the “BaRAS” horizon. The BaRAS horizon is known from archaeological work at Seabank Power Station (BARAS 1998) and Cabot Park (Lacock *et al* 1998) and was recorded between 4.28m and 4.56m OD.

2.3 Medieval

2.3.1 The site of Moorend Farm, which lay to the east of the Site, was evaluated by trial trenching in 1998 which confirmed the farm’s medieval origins (Lacock 1999). Further areas of ridge and furrow have been recorded within the Site’s boundaries which are also likely to be indicative of medieval activity. However, given the degree to which the Site may have been graded prior to construction of the Honda Depot, it is likely that much or all evidence for these agricultural features has been removed.

2.4 Post-medieval and modern

2.4.1 Four earthwork enclosures and an area of ridge and furrow have also been identified on the Site. The earthworks were investigated during previous field evaluation work and found to be of post-medieval date.

2.5 Archaeological evaluation

- 2.5.1 Seven trenches were machine excavated during an evaluation across the Site (WA 2011b). Two of the trenches were targeted on the course of a former Salt Rhine, which was found to have been backfilled during the construction of the Honda Depot in the late 1990s. An additional five trenches were excavated across the area to provide a sample of the underlying alluvium and stratigraphy. A shallow ditch and a possible stabilisation horizon were identified in Trench 5. No further archaeological features were recorded.
- 2.5.2 Three boreholes were also drilled using a window sampling rig. Sleeved cores were recovered from the boreholes and returned to Wessex Archaeology for further analysis by a geoarchaeologist. The sediments were found to be mineralogenic alluvia typical of the Upper and Middle Wentlooge formation, and no buried land-surfaces or *in situ* peat deposits were present. The deposits are considered to be of low palaeoenvironmental potential.
- 2.5.3 Medieval and post-medieval pottery was recovered from Trench 2 and Trench 4 and animal bone from Trench 5. The pottery was recovered from the layers immediately below the hardstanding.

3 AIMS

3.1 Archaeological Watching Brief

The aims of the watching brief were to:

- To determine the presence or absence of archaeological remains, and should remains be found to be present to ensure their preservation by record to the highest possible standard.
- To determine or confirm the approximate date or date range of the remains, by means of artefactual or other evidence.
- To determine or confirm the approximate extent of the remains.
- To determine the condition and state of preservation of the remains.
- To determine the degree of complexity of the horizontal and/or vertical stratigraphy present.
- To prepare a report on the results of the watching brief.

4 METHODOLOGY

4.1 Introduction

- 4.1.1 In accordance with condition 24 of the planning consent, the approved *Written Scheme of Investigation: Method Statement for an Archaeological Trial Trench Evaluation* (Wessex Archaeology, 2011), formed the basis for the watching brief methodology.

4.1.2 All works were carried out in accordance with the Institute for Archaeologists' *Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Watching Briefs* (IFA 2008) excepting where they are superseded by statements made below.

4.2 Fieldwork methodology

4.2.1 The fieldwork consisted of the monitoring of the initial groundworks made beneath the existing ground surfaces and comprised the mechanical excavation of two drainage ditches running around the northern, southern and eastern ends of the development plot.

4.2.2 The excavations were carried out with a large tracked 360 excavator, fitted with a 2m wide toothed bucket and a trenching box.

4.2.3 All archaeological deposits were recorded using the Wessex Archaeology's *pro forma* recording system, supported by a digital photographic record.

4.2.4 The watching brief was maintained throughout the initial excavations and although further groundworks were proposed within the Site, in consultation with the Senior Archaeological Officer at Bristol City Council the watching brief was concluded.

4.2.5 Further groundworks within the Site comprised piling for the building foundations and given the demonstrably low archaeological potential and limited opportunity during piling to identify and record archaeological deposits (should they be present) no further archaeological monitoring was undertaken.

4.3 Health and Safety

4.3.1 All work was carried in accordance with Health and Safety at Work *etc.* Act 1974 and the Management of Health and Safety regulations 1992 and all other relevant Health and Safety legislation and regulations and codes of practice in force at the time.

4.3.2 Prior to the commencement of the fieldwork a Risk Assessment was produced. Staff involved in works signed and complied with this document.

5 RESULTS

5.1.1 The stratigraphic sequence recorded during the watching brief was consistent with the results noted during the evaluation trenching and comprised modern made ground deposits overlying a deep alluvial sequence.

5.1.2 The drainage runs were excavated to the north, east and south of the proposed building and varied in depth along the length of both trenches. The maximum depth of excavation measured 1.20m (5.80 aOD) below the current ground surface.

5.1.3 The trenches predominantly cut through modern made ground deposits which consisted of well sorted reddish brown stone hardcore. There was only a limited impact on the upper layers of the alluvial clays below this level.

6 CONCLUSIONS

- 6.1.1 No archaeological features or buried soil horizons were identified during the watching brief.
- 6.1.2 Although conditions were not ideal for the recording of archaeological deposits, the depth of the excavation was generally shallower than the excavation depth of the evaluation trenches and limited to the upper layers of the alluvial sequence.
- 6.1.3 The watching brief has confirmed that the groundwork's were primarily impacting on made ground and modern backfill deposits. Although the upper alluvial layers were excavated in isolated areas, the excavation was limited in extent and based on the depths of recorded archaeology at Katherine Farm, was not deep enough to impact on archaeological soil horizons.

7 ARCHIVE

7.1 Preparation and Deposition

- 7.1.1 The archive is currently held at Wessex Archaeology's office building under the site code **78641**. The complete archaeological project archive will be prepared in accordance with Wessex Archaeology's Guidelines for Archive Preparation and in accordance with *Archaeological Archives: a guide to best practice in creation, compilation, transfer and curation* (AAF 2007).
- 7.1.2 At a later date, the archive will be deposited with Bristol Council. The archive will be prepared in accordance with the Museum's archive preparation standards.

7.2 The Archive

- 7.2.1 The project archive was prepared in accordance with the guidelines outlined in Appendix 3 of *Management of Archaeological Projects* (English Heritage 1991) and in accordance with the *Guidelines for the preparation of excavation archives for long term storage* (UKIC 1990). It comprises a ring-bound file containing a watching brief attendance form, site 'day book', trench record sheets, photographic register and *Written Scheme of Investigation*.

7.3 Copyright

- 7.3.1 This report may contain material that is non-Wessex Archaeology copyright (e.g. Ordnance Survey, British Geological Survey), or the intellectual property of third parties, which we are able to provide for limited reproduction under the terms of our own copyright licences, but for which copyright itself is non-transferrable by Wessex Archaeology. You are reminded that you remain bound by the conditions of the Copyright, Designs and Patents Act 1988 with regard to multiple copying and electronic dissemination of the report.

8 REFERENCES

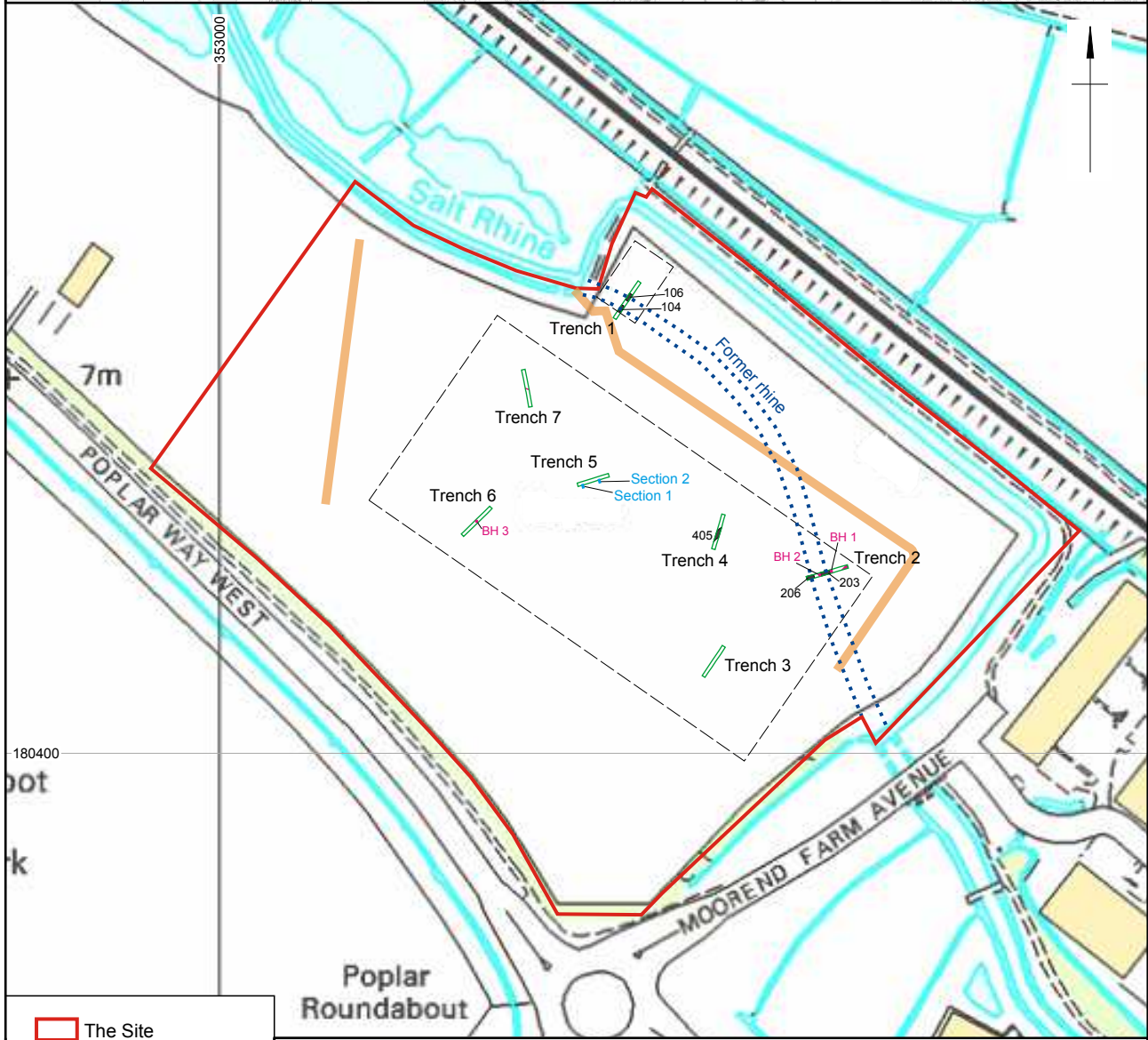
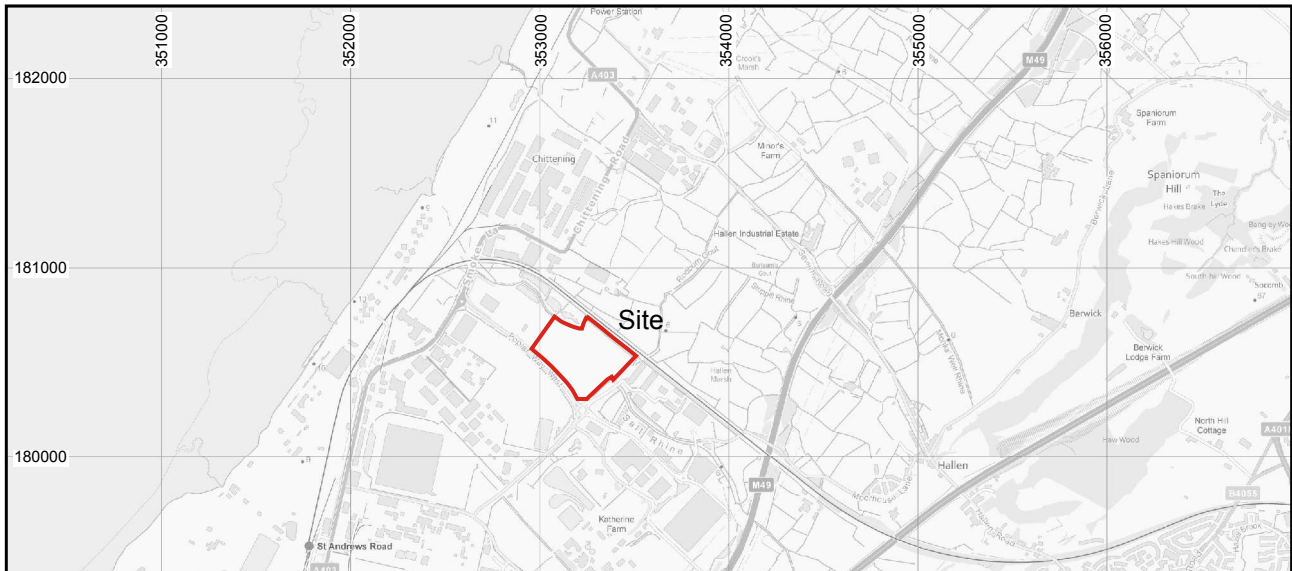
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APPENDIX 1: OASIS RECORD FORM

OASIS ID - wessexar1-114557

Versions					
View	Version	Completed by	Email	Date	
View 1	1	Sue Farr	s.farr@wessexarch.co.uk	24	November 2011
Completed sections in current version					
Details	Location	Creators	Archive	Publications	
Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	1/1	
Validated sections in current version					
Details	Location	Creators	Archive	Publications	
No	No	No	No	0/1	
File submission and form progress					
Grey literature report submitted?	No	Grey literature report filename/s			
Images submitted?	No	Image filename/s			



- The Site
- Watching Brief area
- Evaluation trench
- Archaeology
- Modern disturbance
- Proposed building

Wessex
Archaeology

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Site location plan

Figure 1



WESSEX ARCHAEOLOGY LIMITED.

Registered Head Office: Portway House, Old Sarum Park, Salisbury, Wiltshire SP4 6EB.

Tel: 01722 326867 Fax: 01722 337562 info@wessexarch.co.uk

Regional offices in **Edinburgh, Rochester and Sheffield**

For more information visit www.wessexarch.co.uk

