Tamworth Assembly Rooms, Tamworth, Staffordshire

Archaeological Strip, Map and Record
Interim Report

Planning Ref: 0196/2014
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November 2016

wessex archaeology

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Interim Report

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Summary

Wessex Archaeology was commissioned by Tamworth Borough Council to carry out an archaeological strip, map, record excavation and watching brief on the site of the former Assembly Room building, Corporation Street, Tamworth. The site is centred on National Grid Reference 420720, 304130. The works on the Assembly Rooms are to comprise the reformation of the internal room layout and external extensions to the building. New service runs, internal and external to the building, are also to be excavated during the programme of works. The archaeological works will fulfil the archaeological planning conditions attached to the upcoming development (Planning Ref: 0196/2014).

The archaeological works undertaken so far relate to excavations within the footprint of the external extensions to the building. Two excavation areas were stripped to the impact depth of the development (SMR 1 and SMR 2). A watching brief on the removal of the remaining live services and the installation of new service runs will be completed in due course.

Excavation area SMR 1 was traversed by several live services limiting where archaeological investigation could take place. Where excavation was possible, evidence of 12th – 14th century medieval activity was identified in the form of four waste disposal pits.

Excavation area SMR 2 was excavated to a shallower depth than SMR 1 and only identified the remains of a 20th century brick-built structure, likley to represent the remains of a Second World War air raid shelter.

A rapid assessment of the artefacts has been carried out for this interim report. The assemblage recovered from the site is dominated by animal bone and pottery, with very few other finds. From datable material, the emphasis is on the medieval period, with a smaller quantity of later material.

Eight bulk samples were taken from the fills the medieval pits and were processed for the recovery and assessment of charred plant remains and charcoal. The assemblages include remains of cereals, and a diversity of wild plants, many which could have been weeds of agricultural fields, and other wild resources, such as nuts.

A formal assessment report will be issued following the completion of all groundworks associated with the development. As part of the assessment report the pottery will be assessed by a local pottery specialist, Stephanie Ratkai, who has agreed to carry out this work. The Written Scheme of Investigation for the works had stipulated a watching brief on service trenches outside of SMR 1 and SMR 2. However, due to the significant archaeological remains identified within SMR 1, it is recommended that the isolation and removal of the remaining live services within SMR 1 and SMR 2 should also be monitored under the terms of an archaeological watching brief. It is expected that this work will take place over the summer of 2017.

The site archive will be stored at the Sheffield office of Wessex Archaeology under project code 114550. Followig the completion of all reporting the archive will be deposited at Potteries Museum, Stoke-on-Trent, with the approval of Tamworth Borough Council.

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Acknowledgements

Wessex Archaeology would like to thank Tamworth Borough Council for commissioning the work, with the assistance of Thomas Hobbs greatly appreciated.

The fieldwork was monitored by Stephen Dean, Principal Archaeologist for Staffordshire County Council, on behalf of Tamworth Borough Council.

Fieldwork was supervised for Wessex Archaeology by Martina Tenzer and undertaken by Alex Cassels, Katheryn Libby, Jack Peveral and Martina Tenzer. Fieldwork was undertaken between the 5th and 23rd September. The report was written by Phil Weston and Andy Swann. A rapid assessment of the artefacts was carried out by Lorraine Mepham. Environemtnal samples were processed by Liz Chambers and reported upon by Ines Lopez Doriga. Illustrations were produced by Alix Sperr.

The results of the excavations were made available to the public at two open days, hosted jointly by Tamworth Borough Council and Wessex Archaeology, during the course of the fieldwork. The open days were supervised by Alexandra Grassam for Wessex Archaeology with the assistance of Ashley Tuck, Emma Carter and Adam Frazer.

The project was managed for Wessex Archaeology by Chris Swales.

Tamworth Assembly Rooms, Tamworth, Staffordshire

Archaeological Strip, Map, Record Interim Report

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Project background

1.1.1 Wessex Archaeology was commissioned by Tamworth Borough Council (hereafter 'the Client') to carry out an archaeological strip, map, record excavation and watching brief on the site of the former Assembly Room building, Corporation Street, Tamworth (hereafter 'the Site'), centred on National Grid Reference (NGR) 420720, 304130 (Figure 1). The works on the Assembly Rooms are to comprise the reformation of the internal room layout and external extensions to the building. New service runs, internal and external to the building, are also to be excavated during the programme of works. The archaeological works will fulfil the archaeological planning conditions attached to the upcoming development (Planning Ref: 0196/2014).

1.1.2 The Site has previously been the subject of a desk-based assessment (DBA, Allen Archaeology 2014). The study identified the potential for the Site to contain nationally important archaeological remains relating to an Anglo-Saxon palace and/or regionally important remains relating to the development of the town in the later Saxon and medieval periods. The potential for remains of all other periods to be present was considered negligible. Based on the findings of the study, a programme of archaeological investigation was required by the Principal Archaeologist for Staffordshire County Council (Stephen Dean). The scope of the works and agreed methodologies were detailed in a Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI, Wessex Archaeology 2016), which was approved by Stephen Dean, on behalf of Tamworth Borough Council, prior to work commencing.

1.2 Scope of this report

1.2.1 The archaeological works undertaken so far relate to excavations within the footprint of the external extensions to the building. Two excavation areas where stripped to the impact depth of the development (SMR 1 and SMR 2). A watching brief on the removal of the remaining live services and the installation of new service runs will be completed in due course.

1.2.2 This report presents an interim description of the results of the excavations undertaken to date. A formal assessment report will be issued following the completion of all groundworks associated with the development.

2 SITE LOCATION AND TOPOGRAPHY

2.1 Location

2.1.1 The Site is located in the centre of Tamworth just off Corporation Street, adjacent to the Assembly Rooms and prior to excavation served as a car park (Figure 1). Some

landscaping/ greenery in the form of trees and shrubs fronts the pavement on the west. The Site is flat and stands at approximately 67m above Ordnance Datum (aOD).

2.2 Topography

2.2.1 The underlying solid geology consists of Triassic sandstone and interbedded conglomerate with mudstone of the Mercia Mudstone Group, overlaid by superficial deposits of Quaternary glacial till (BGS, 2016).

3 ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND

3.1 Introduction

3.1.1 The Site lies within Historic Urban Character Area (HUCA) 3: Aldergate; the Staffordshire Extensive Urban Survey (EUS, Shaw and Langley 2011) identifies this area as having high evidential, historical, aesthetic and communal value.

3.1.2 The Site has been subject to a DBA (Allen Archaeology 2014), which determined that there was potential for archaeological remains to survive. The following section summarises the findings of the study.

3.2 Prehistoric, Iron Age and Roman

3.2.1 There is little evidence for prehistoric or Romano-British activity in the vicinity of the Site.

3.3 Early medieval and medieval

3.3.1 Tamworth was once the capital of the Anglo-Saxon kingdom of Mercia and potentially dates back to before the seventh century from when we have the earliest documentary evidence of the town. As the centre of the Mercian kingdom it remained important for several centuries and was re-fortified in 913 AD to protect its inhabitants from increasing Viking raids. The town was transformed into a burgh, a fortified town, which became the military, economic and social centre for the surrounding area. Commercially, the existence of a mint from the tenth century reinforces the importance of Tamworth in the early medieval period.

3.3.2 The DBA highlights the potential for Anglo-Saxon archaeological remains at the Site, specifically that the Site may be situated in the approximate location of an Anglo-Saxon Palace. However, the bounds of the Royal enclosure during the early medieval period is not currently known in this area although it is likely, given the proximity of the Church of St. Editha which may have been at the heart of the Anglo-Saxon settlement, that the Assembly Rooms site lay within this enclosure. Following the Norman Conquest, the area appears to have been developed as a marketing centre during the later medieval period with burgage plots recorded extending across the property northwards from Church Street.

3.4 Post-medieval, 19th century and modern

3.4.1 The town is likely to have continued to function as a mercantile centre throughout the later medieval period while properties to the north along Aldergate would seem to have been developed into gardens and orchards; there is evidence suggestive of settlement contraction prior to and during the 17th century. The HUCA3 description recognises that much of the area to the south of Aldergate was either open or laid down to municipal function during the 19th and early 20th century with a garden of rest and a cemetery. The cemetery was presumably laid out as a result of the Burial Act (1857) which sought to regulate burial practices and improve public health. The civic function of this area was

enhanced with the construction of the Assembly Hall (1889), the Drill Hall (1911) and the Central Library (late 20th century).

3.5 Recent investigations in the area

3.5.1 Some archaeological investigation has taken place close to the Site which has revealed complex Anglo-Saxon archaeology. This would further suggest that the proposed area of refurbishment lies within an area of potentially significant Anglo-Saxon archaeology. A summary of the archaeological sites investigated can be found in the DBA (Allen Archaeology 2014) and in the Staffordshire HER (#01153).

4 AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

4.1 Summary

4.1.1 The aims of the archaeological works are:

- *to determine the extent, condition, character, importance and date of any archaeological deposits encountered;*
- *to provide information that will enable the archaeological remains to be placed within their local, regional and national contexts;*
- *to produce a site archive for deposition with a local museum;*
- *to provide information to the local HER to ensure the long-term survival of the data;*
- *to 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*
- *to prepare a report on the results of the archaeological investigations and watching brief.*

5 FIELDWORK METHODOLOGY

5.1 Summary

5.1.1 All works were undertaken in accordance with the methodology set out within the WSI and in compliance with national guidance (HE 2015) and with the standards outlined in the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists' (CIfA) (CIfA 2014a-d).

5.1.2 A two stage excavation was proposed by the client along the northern side of the Assembly Rooms (Figure 1):

- ***Stage 1 (SMR 1)*** *- The machine strip and excavation of an area measuring c. 110 m^2 within the footprint of the proposed extension (Rooms UG9, UG10, UG3) and to the western wall of the male WC (LG17). The excavation depth within SMR 1 was 1.5 m below the existing car park surface. The results of this work informed the approach to Stage 2.*
- ***Stage 2 (SMR 2)*** *– The results of SMR 1 required the subsequent excavation of SMR 2, the machine strip and excavation of an area measuring c. 143 m^2 within the*

footprint of the proposed extension (Room LG18). The excavation depth within SMR2 was 0.7 m below the existing car park surface.

- **Watching Brief (WB)** – *There are two areas to the propsed watching brief. One lies adjacent and to the north of SMR 2, located in the car park area where two trees and some shrubs were situated. The second is to the east of the building where there is a wall and more tarmac car parking. The reults of the excavations at SMR 1 and SMR 2 have informed the decision that a watching brief will also be required on the isolation and removal of services left in place within these excavation areas.*

5.2 Deviations from the agreed scope of works

5.2.1 A number of live services and drains were mapped by utility searches prior to breaking ground. Following the removal of the car park surface within the footprint of SMR 1 and SMR 2, it was apparent that the density of services and utilities was greater than anticipated. Following discussions with the Client and the Principal Archaeologist for Staffordshire County Council, it was agreed that the current phase of excavation woul be confined to the areas not affected by live services (Figure 2). The remaining unexcavated areas of SMR 1 and SMR 2 would be monitored by watching brief as and when the services and drains were removed from the development area.

5.3 Machine excavation

5.3.1 The excavation areas were set out by Wessex Archaeology by means of a GPS system, and tied into the OS grid.

5.3.2 The tarmac was cut through using a saw cutter and a pecker was used by the machine to enable the removal of the tarmac more efficiently.

5.3.3 Overburden was then removed using a tracked 360° mechanical excavator fitted with a toothless bucket working under continuous direct supervision by a suitably experienced archaeologist. Overburden was removed in a series of level spits down to the upper archaeological horizon, or the level of the natural geology, whichever was reached first.

5.4 Sample excavation and recording

5.4.1 Where archaeological features and deposits were encountered, excavation was carried out by hand. A sufficient sample of each layer/feature type was excavated in order to establish the date, nature, extent and condition of the archaeological remains. Archaeological features and deposits were investigated and stratigraphically excavated by hand. The percentage of any feature or group of features to be excavated was dependent on a number of factors. These included the achievement of the aims and objectives, the significance or potential of the archaeological features/deposits, the stratigraphic record, health and safety considerations, and the requirements of the local planning authority.

5.4.2 Written and drawn records were made of the stratigraphy within the areas investigated, even where no archaeological deposits had been identified. Full written and drawn records of all excavated contexts were made in accordance with best archaeological practice. Unexcavated archaeological deposits were recorded to the maximum extent possible.

5.4.3 Records included overall Site plans. All archaeological features were related to the Ordnance Survey datum.

5.4.4 All archaeological deposits were recorded using Wessex Archaeology's *pro forma* recording system. This written record was hierarchically based and centred on the context record. Each context record fully described the location, extent, composition and relationship of the subject and was cross-referenced to all other assigned records. Context numbers used in the excavation were not repeated.

5.4.5 Each excavated context appears on at least one detailed plan at 1:50 or 1:20 scale and one section at 1:10 and is co-ordinated on to the overall Site plan.

5.4.6 A full photographic record was maintained comprising of digital images taken with a suitable camera of at least 10 megapixels in addition to 35mm monochrome prints. The photographic record illustrates both the detail and the general context of the principal features.

5.5 Finds

5.5.1 Finds were treated in accordance with the relevant guidance (English Heritage 2005, 2006; CIfA 2014c) and the requirements of the receiving museum.

5.5.2 All artefacts from excavated contexts were retained, except those from features or deposits of obviously modern date. No finds were, however, discarded without the prior approval of the designated Planning Archaeologist acting on behalf of TBC.

5.5.3 All retained artefacts were, as a minimum, washed, weighed, counted and identified. Any artefacts requiring conservation or specific storage conditions dealt with immediately in line with First Aid for Finds (Watkinson and Neal 1998). Ironwork from stratified contexts was x-rayed and stored in a stable environment along with other fragile and delicate material. Other conservation needs have been assessed by Wessex Archaeology's Conservator.

5.5.4 Animal bone recovered by hand during excavation was processed as part of the finds assemblage. Animal bone recovered from bulk samples was also retained for analysis.

5.5.5 All artefacts were recorded by context, with summary listing of artefacts by category to provide simple quantification. Artefacts were analysed and reported by specialists.

5.5.6 No artefacts were recovered which were covered or potentially covered by The Treasure Act 1996 (and amendments).

5.6 Environmental

5.6.1 A sampling procedure for the retrieval of environmental, organic and artefactual material was instituted during the investigations. Guidance on sampling is to be found in English Heritage (2011).

5.6.2 All sealed and stratified archaeological contexts were considered for standard environmental sampling. Bulk soil samples for plant macro-fossils, small animal and fish bones and other small artefacts were taken from appropriate well-sealed and dated/datable archaeological deposits. The collection and processing of environmental samples was undertaken in accordance with national guidelines (English Heritage 2011).

6 ARCHAEOLOGICAL RESULTS

6.1 Summary

6.1.1 A number of live services and drains were mapped by utility searches prior to breaking ground. Following the removal of the car park surface within the footprint of SMR 1 and SMR 2, it was apparent that the density of services and utilities was greater than anticipated (Plates 1 and 2). Following discussions with the Client and the Principal Archaeologist for Staffordshire County Council, it was agreed that the current phase of excavation woul be confined to the areas not affected by live services. The remaining unexcavated areas of SMR 1 and SMR 2 would be monitored by watching brief as and when the services and drains were removed from the development area.

6.1.2 Four areas within SMR 1 and SMR 2 (Areas 1 - 4, Figure 2,) were, however, identified where excavation was possible. An overview of the excavation results within Areas 1, 2, 3 and 4 are detailed below, with a complete list of recorded contexts presented with Appendix 1.

6.2 SMR 1: Area 1

6.2.1 Area 1 was located at the north-east corner of SMR 1 (Figure 2, Plate 3). It measured 4.65 m by 3.2 m and was excavated to a depth of 1.5 m below ground level (bgl). The excavation of Area 1 recorded a sequence of deposits consisting of tarmac (101), and disturbed ground (102-104) cutting into a weathered natural geology (105). No archaeological features or artefacts were identified. Disturbed ground 102-104 contained modern concrete and rubble fragments.

6.3 SMR 1: Area 2

6.3.1 Area 2 was located at the central portion of the strip within SMR 1 (Figure 2, Plate 4). The excavation area measured 5.07 m by 6.93 m and was excavated to a depth of 1.5 m bgl. A sequence of deposits consisting of tarmac (201), made ground (202), a buried topsoil horizon (203) and a buried subsoil (204) was identified. Modern pottery (19th/20th century) was recovered from the soil horizons. The underlying natural deposit consisted of yellow/red sand with gravel (206/207).

6.3.2 Four pits were identified, three of which (207, 211 and 213) were cut through subsoil 204 and in to the underlying natural sand; the fourth (209) was cut in to the upper fill of pit 207 (Figure 3, Plates 5-8). The pits are detailed in Table 1 below:

Table 1: Pits identified in Area 2

Feature	Dimensions	Fills	Finds (No.)	Comments
207	3.8 x 3.8 x 1.3m deep	208 (5th)	Pottery (23), A. Bone (139), metal (1)	Fill 217 was a layer of clay
		220 (4th)	Pottery (3), A. Bone (6)	
		217 (3rd)	-	
		216 (2nd)	A. Bone (16)	
		215 (1st)	-	
209	2.0 x 2.0 x 0.7m deep	210 (2nd)	Pottery (28), A. Bone (129)	Cut in to upper fill (208) of pit 207
		218 (1st)	Pottery (20), A. Bone (22)	
211	0.95 x 0.95 x 0.47m deep	212	Pottery (1)	Cuts pit 213

213	2.04 x 2.04 x 1.55m deep	214	Pottery (72), A. Bone (99), CBM (2), metal (1)	Cut by pit 211

CBM = ceramic building material

6.3.3 The pits contained a 12th to 14th century finds assemblage predominantly consisting of pottery sherds and animal bone, indicating that they had been used as rubbish pits, at least in their final phase of use. Deposits and lenses of clay were recorded in pits 207 and 213 suggesting they may have originally been used to contain liquid.

6.4 SMR 2: Area 3

6.4.1 The excavation of Area 3 measured 6.31 m by 5.06 m and was excavated to a depth of 0.7 m bgl, revealing a sequence of deposits consisting of tarmac (301), disturbed ground (302-303), and a buried subsoil horizon (304).

6.5 SMR 2: Area 4

6.5.1 The excavation of Area 4 measured 3.92 m by 7.11 m and was excavated to a depth of 0.7 m bgl, revealing a sequence of deposits consisting of tarmac (401), disturbed ground (402-403), and a buried topsoil horizon (404).

6.5.2 Three sides of a brick-built structure (405) were also identifed. The structure measured 1.9 m by 0.35 m+ and a height of 0.5 m, consisting of six visible courses; further courses likely lie beneath those revealed (Figure 4, Plate 8). The bricks were bonded with a mid-grey sandy mortar, which was unpointed indicating the structure was likely a foundation. The bricks were modern, machine made but of mixed manufacturer and colour, consisting of typically of red brick with some shiny, purplish red examples. The upper course consisted of the latter variety and were stamped with the maker's mark 'UTOPIA'. Utopia bricks were manufactured by the Aldridge Brick and Tile Company and were particularly favoured in the construction of air raid shelters due to their extreme hardness.

7 ARTEFACTUAL EVIDENCE

7.1 Introduction

7.1.1 An interim overview of the finds from the strip, map and record areas is provided here. Finds have been processed and quantified, but not yet subjected to formal assessment. The quantification of finds by material type and by context is given in Table 2. Most of these finds were recovered from Area 2 of SMR 1.

7.1.2 The assemblage is dominated by animal bone and pottery, with very few other finds. From datable material, the emphasis is on the medieval period, with a smaller quantity of later material.

7.2 Pottery

7.2.1 Of the 230 sherds recovered, 191 are medieval and 39 modern. The medieval assemblage consists almost entirely of coarsewares, with just a few glazed sherds; identifiable vessel forms consist largely of jars, with one bowl and one tripod vessel also present. Of particular interest was the recovery of an obvious 'waster' sherd from pottery manufacture from context 214. One early imported German stoneware, probably Langerwehe, was identified from the same context (late 14th/15th century), but overall the assemblage is likely to be of 12th to 14th century date.

7.2.2 Most of the modern sherds (19th/20th century) came from a single context (31 sherds from made ground 104 in Area 1, SMR 1); these comprise refined wares and stonewares. Other modern sherds (refined wares and flowerpot) came from contexts 203, 204, 214 and the subsoil.

7.3 Animal Bone

7.3.1 The animal bone assemblage is fragmentary and in relatively poor condition. A quick scan has identified the main domesticates (cattle, sheep, probably pig), with some dog and domestic fowl.

7.4 Other Finds

7.4.1 Other finds were restricted in range and quantity (see Table 2). Most of the datable finds (ceramic roof tile and brick, glass wine bottle, clay tobacco pipe) are of post-medieval/modern date, but at least one of the ceramic roof tiles is medieval, and there is one small waste flake of probable prehistoric date. X-radiography will be required to help identify one of the metal (iron) objects.

Table 2: All finds by context (number / weight in grammes)

Context	Animal Bone	Pottery	Other Finds
104	6/115	32/1011	13 glass
203	67/1150	2/43	
204	35/618	11/263	1 metal
208	139/479	23/486	1 metal
210	139/962	40/786	
212	7/18	1/22	
214	99/796	78/1466	2 CBM; 8 fired clay; 1 metal
215	6/11		
216	16/80		11 fired clay
218	22/250	20/514	
220	6/80	3/95	1 flint; 1 iron
304		1/23	
Subsoil	5/213	19/306	1 clay pipe; 1 CBM
Total	**547/4772**	**230/5015**	

CBM = ceramic building material

8 ENVIRONMENTAL EVIDENCE

8.1 Introduction

8.1.1 Eight bulk samples were taken from the fills of medieval pits and were processed for the recovery and assessment of charred plant remains and charcoal. The size of the samples varied between 40 litres land 5 litres, amounting to 195 litres. A summary of the samples taken and data recovered is given in Table 3.

Table 3: Assessment of the charred plant remains and charcoal

Feature	Context	Sample	Vol (L)	Flot (ml)	Sub-sample	Bioturbation proxies	Grain	Chaff	Cereal Notes	Charred Other	Notes for Table	Charcoal > 4/2mm	Other	Analysis	Preservation
Early Medieval Pits															
207	208	1	40	45		<1%, A*,I	A***	B	Hordeum vulgare, Secale cereale and Triticum sp. grains (some with insect holes, some within spikelets, some wrinkled) and chaff (inc. aestivum/durum), detached embryos	A*	*Poaceae (Avena sp., Avena/Bromus), Viciaeae, Asteraceae, Cyperaceae, indet seed.*	10ml/1 ml	Slag, Sab/f		Good
207	216	2	20	170		<1%, A, I,	A***	-	*Secale cereale and Triticum sp. grains (some within spikelet), Triticeae detached embryos*	A*	Poaceae (Avena, Avena/Bromus, Lolium/Festuca), Viciaeae, Polygonaceae, Asteraceae (inc. Centaurea sp.), Corylus avelana shell fragments, Cyperaceae, Chenopodiaceae, Spergula arvensis	70ml/5 ml	Moll-f, Moll-t		Good
207	215	3	20	40		<1%, A, I, E	A***	-	Secale cereale and Triticum sp. (inc. aestivum/turgidum) grains, Triticeae detached embryos	A*	Poaceae (Avena sp. grains, Avena/Bromus, Lolium/Festuca),Vicieae, Trifoliae, Cyperaceae, Polygonaceae, Corylus avelana shell fragment, Asteraceae, Raphanus raphanistrum capsule	15ml/3 ml	Slag		Good

209	210	4	40	800	25%	<1%, B, I	A***	A*	Triticum sp. (inc. aestivum/turgidum) grains and chaff (rachis, glume), Hordeum vulgare grains, Secale cereal grains and chaff, Triticeae culm	A***	Corylus avellana nutshell, Vicieae, Poaceae (Avena sp. grain with lemma, awn, Avena/Bromus grains, Lolium/Festuca, Poaceae rachis) Caryophyllaceae, Galium/Spergula, Raphanus raphanistrum, Asteraceae (Centaurea), Polygonaceae, Cyperaceae, Linum usitatissimum capsule fragment,Spergula arvensis, Chenopodiaceae, Valerianella sp., Agrostemma githago, Plantago lanceolata, indet seed.	20ml/5 ml	Slag	P	Good
211	212	5	20	60		<1%, A, I,	A***	-	*Hordeum vulgare, Triticum sp. (inc. aestivum/turgidum) and Secale cereale grains (some with insect holes and sprouts), detached embryos*	A**	Poaceae (Avena, Avena awns, Avena/Bromus, Lolium/Festuca), Raphanus raphanistrum, Asteraceae, Polygonaceae, Cyperaceae, Vicieae, Spergula arvensis, Panicoideae?, Chenopodiaceae	10ml/10ml	Slag, Moll-t, Moll-f	P	Good
213	214	6	40	250		<1%, C, I, E	A**	A	*Triticum sp.and Hordeum vulgare grains, Secale cereal grains (some sprouted) and chaff*	A*	Poaceae (Avena sp., grains and awns, Avena/Bromus, Lolium/Festuca, Poa/Phleum),Vicieae, Polygonaceae, Asteraceae, Cyperaceae, Caryophyllaceae, Plantago lanceolata	80ml/20ml	Slag	C	Good
	220	7	10	15		<1%, C, I, E	A*	-	*Secale cereale grains and chaff, Triticum sp. (inc. aestivum/turgidum) grains (some within spikelet)*	A*	Poaceae (Avena, Avena/Bromus, Lolium/Festuca), Asteraceae (inc. Centaurea sp.)	5ml/2ml	Slag, Sab/f,		Good

207	217	8	5	20		<1%, C, I, E	A***	C	*Secale cereal grains, Triticum sp. grains, (some within spikelet) and rachis, Triticeae detached embryos and culm fragments*	A*	Chenopodiaceae, Cyperaceae, Poaceae (Avena sp. grains, some with lemmas, and awns, Avena/Bromus, Lolium/Festuca, Poa/Phleum), Asteraceae (inc. Centaurea sp., Anthemis sp.), Valerianella tp. dentata, indet seeds	2ml/<1 ml	Slag		Good

Key: A*** = exceptional, A** = 100+, A* = 30-99, A = >10, B = 9-5, C = <5; Bioturbation proxies: Roots (%), Uncharred seeds (scale of abundance), F = mycorrhyzal fungi sclerotia, E = earthworm eggs, I = insects; Sab/f = small animal/fish bones/charred faecal pellets, Moll-t = terrestrial molluscs, Moll-f = aquatic molluscs; Analysis: C = charcoal, P = plant, M = molluscs, C14 = radiocarbon

8.2 Charred plant remains

8.2.1 The flots were of very variable sizes. There were low numbers of roots and modern seeds, ensuring the low probability of stratigraphic movement and contamination by later intrusive elements. Charred material was very abundant and very well preserved, allowing for the identification of a rich diversity of taxa.

8.2.2 All the assemblages are coherent and probably contemporaneous, and represent domestic crop processing activities. The assemblages include remains of cereals, and a diversity of wild plants, many which could have been weeds of agricultural fields, and other wild resources, such as nuts.

8.2.3 The cultivated plant remains included rye (*Secale cereale*), free-threshing wheat (*Triticum aestivum/turgidum*), barley (*Hordeum vulgare*), flax (*Linum ussitatissimum)* and possibly legumes in the vetch tribe (Vicieae). Cereal remains included both grains, detached embryos and chaff (rachises, glumes). Some of the cereal grains were enclosed in their spikelets, some showed infestation by weevils and some evidence of sprouting.

8.2.4 A variety of wild plants which might have been acting as weeds or could have also been exploited intentionally for foddering, consumption as green vegetables, medicines... They included corncockle (*Agrostemma githago*), plantain (*Plantago lanceolata*), docks (Polygonaceae), cornsalad (*Valerianella* sp.), a diversity of grasses (*Avena* sp., *Bromus* sp., *Poa/Phleum*, *Lolium/Festuca*), pinks (Caryophyllaceae), composites (Asteraceae, *Centaurea* sp., *Anthemis* sp.), goosefoot (Chenopodiaceae), wild radish (*Raphanus raphanistrum*), sedges (Cyperaceae), corn spurrey (*Spergula arvensis*), the trefoil tribe (Trifoliae), and bedstraw (*Galium/Asperula*).

8.2.5 Woodland or hedge resources such as hazel (*Corylus avellana*) were also identified.

8.3 Wood charcoal

8.3.1 Wood charcoal was noted from the flots of the bulk samples and is recorded in Table 3. Wood charcoal was also abundant and belonged to both mature and roundwood.

8.4 Discussion and potential

Charred plant remains

8.4.1 The analysis of a selection of charred plant assemblages has the potential to provide information on the nature of the settlement, the local environment, local agricultural practices and crop husbandry techniques, in addition to help establishing the function of the features: e.g. rubbish pits or storage structures.

8.4.2 The results of this analysis could provide a comparison with the data from other sites in the region, and further our knowledge about early medieval habitats and agriculture.

8.4.3 The most taxonomically diverse samples are proposed for analysis and are indicated with a “P” in the analysis column of Table 3..

Wood charcoal

8.4.4 The analysis of the wood charcoal would provide information on the species composition, management and exploitation of the local woodland resource on the site. The samples proposed for charcoal analysis are indicated with a “C” in the analysis column of Table 3.

9 DISCUSSION

9.1 Summary

9.1.1 The proposed excavation of SMR 1 and SMR 2 was limited as a consequence of live services being encountered following the removal of the tarmac and its bedding deposits. Where further excavation was possible, evidence of 12th – 14th century medieval activity (Area 2) was identified as was the remains of a 20th century structure (Area 3).

9.1.2 No evidence of Anglo-Saxon occupation was identified within the excavated areas. No Saxon material was recoverd from any of the cut features or the deposits they were cut through.

9.1.3 The medieval remains consisted of four pits that were likely used for waste disposal. However, pits 211 and 213 contained deposits and lenses of clay raising the possibility that the pits may have been used to hold liquid. They may have been used to store water for various requirements or perhaps urine for the preparation of animal skins during the tanning process.

9.1.4 The three sides of a small brick-built structure identified in Area 3 that may constitute the remains of an air raid shelter and therefore, likely to date the Second World War.

9.2 Conclusions

9.2.1 The identification of *in situ* medieval remains is of local significance and likely represents the expansion of Tamworth in the centuries following the Norman Conquest. Further remains of this period are likely to survive on Site and therefore, be at risk as the development continues. The possibility of the presences of surviving remains relating to the postulated Anglo-Saxon palace cannot be totally be discounted and particular attention must be made to the surviving deposits truncated by the known medieval features within the development area.

9.3 Recommendations

The Written Scheme of Investigation for the works had stipulated a watching brief on service trenches outside of SMR 1 and SMR 2. However, due to the significant archaeological remains identified within SMR 1, it is recommended that the isolation and removal of the remaining live services within SMR 1 and SMR 2 should also be monitored under the terms of an archaeological watching brief.

A formal assessment report will be issued following the completion of all groundworks associated with the development. As part of the assessment report the pottery will be assessed by a local pottery specialist, Stephanie Ratkai has agreed to carry out this work. Recommendations for any further anlaysis of the artefacts/ecofacts, scientific dating and for the dissemination of the fndings of the excavation will be detailed in the assessment report.

10 STORAGE AND CURATION

10.1 Museum

10.1.1 The project archive resulting from the excavation will be deposited with the Potteries Museum, Stoke-on-Trent. The Museum has agreed in principle to accept the project archive on completion of the project, under the accession code to be confirmed. Deposition of any finds with the Museum will only be carried out with the full agreement of the landowner.

10.2 Preparation of archive

10.2.1 The complete site archive, which will include paper records, photographic records, graphics, artefacts, ecofacts and digital data, will be prepared following the standard conditions for the acceptance of excavated archaeological material by the Potteries Museum, and in general following nationally recommended guidelines (SMA 1995; CIfA 2014d; Brown 2011; ADS 2013).

10.2.2 All archive elements will be marked with the accession code, and a full index will be prepared. The physical archive comprises the following:

- One cardboard box or airtight plastic boxes of artefacts & ecofacts, ordered by material type; and,
- One file/document cases of paper records & A3/A4 graphics.

10.3 Selection policy

10.3.1 Wessex Archaeology follows the guidelines set out in *Selection, Retention and Dispersal of Archaeological Collections* (Society of Museum Archaeologists 1993), which allows for the discard of selected artefact and ecofact categories which are not considered to warrant any future analysis. At this stage no selection policy has been considered.

10.3.2 The discard of environmental remains and samples follows nationally recommended guidelines (SMA 1993; 1995; English Heritage 2011).

10.4 Security copy

10.4.1 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.

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12 APPENDICES

12.1 Appendix 1: Context descriptions

SMR 1: Area 1			
Context	**Type**	**Description**	**Depth (m)**
101	Layer	Tarmac; surface of the car park	0.10
102	Layer	Orange red mixture of clinker and sand. Made ground	0.13
103	Layer	Dark brownish grey sandy clay with frequent ash and clinker. Made ground	0.50
104	Layer	Dark reddish brown sandy clay with frequent tile and brick fragments. Made ground	0.37
105	Layer	Mid yellowish brown sand with frequent well-rounded coarse and medium gravel. Natural	0.35
106	Natural	Mid brownish yellow medium grained sand with rare well-rounded medium gravel. Natural	-

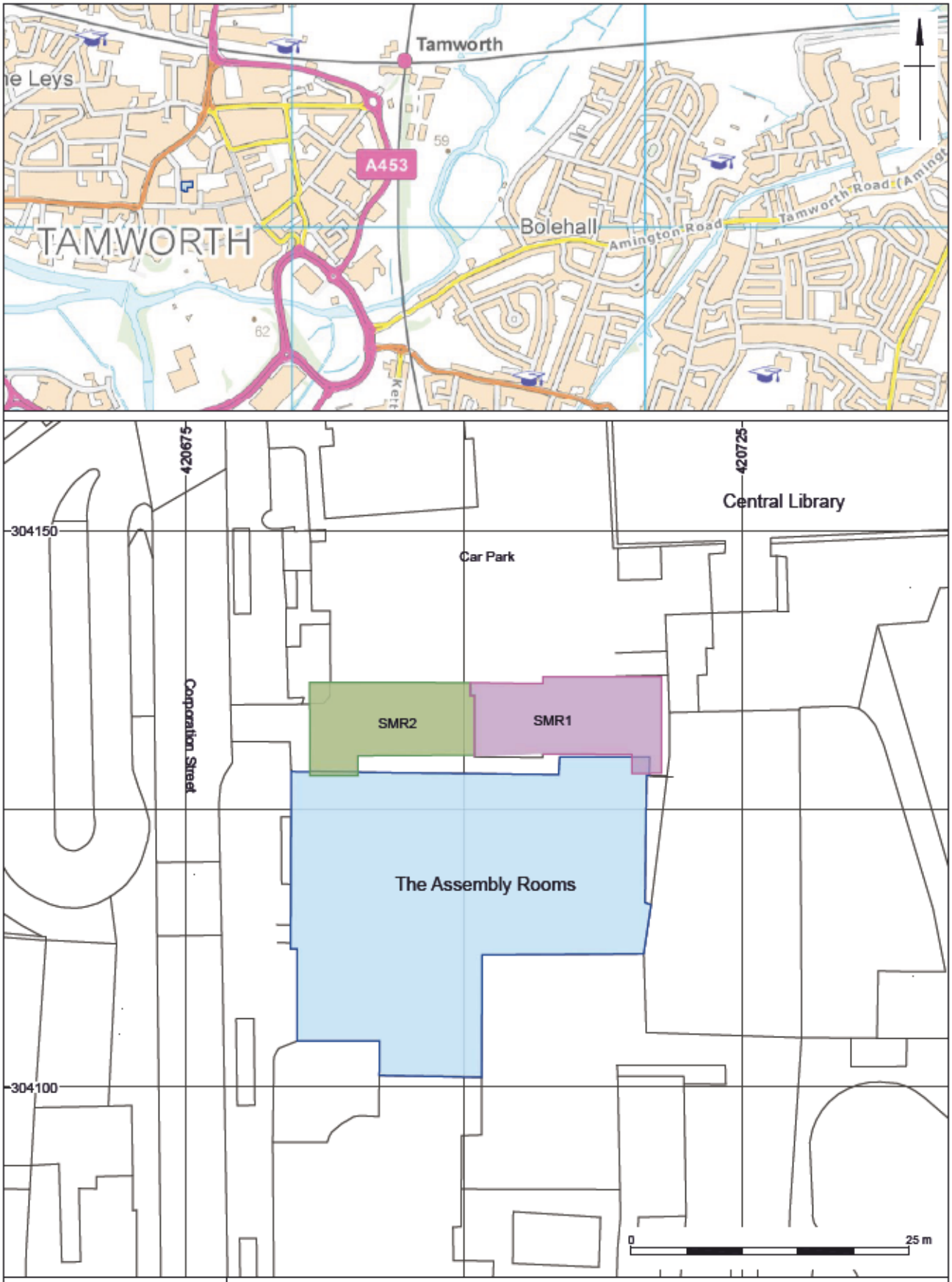
SMR 1: Area 2			
Context	**Type**	**Description**	**Depth (m)**
201	Layer	Tarmac; surface of the car park	0.15
202	Layer	Mixed clay, crushed hardcore and CBM. Made ground	0.50
203	Layer	Dark brownish grey clayey sand with occasional gravel. Possible buried topsoil horizon	0.20
204	Layer	Yellowish grey sand. Possible buried subsoil horizon	0.25
205	Natural	Yellow sand. Natural	
206	Natural	Red sand. Natural	
207	Pit	Circular pit	1.30
208	Fill	Upper fill (of five) of pit 207. Friable mid-yellowish brown silty sand with common stones	1.20
209	Pit	Sub-oval pit	0.70
210	Fill	Upper fill (of two) of pit 209. Mid greyish brown, silty sand with occasional stones and abundant charcoal	0.20
211	Pit	Pit seen in section	0.48
212	Fill	Single fill of pit 211. Light greyish brown silty sand with occasional small stones	0.58
213	Pit	Sub circular pit	1.55
214	Fill	Single fill of pit 213. Dark brown silty sand with common medium stones	1.55
215		Basal fill (of five) of pit 207. Grey sand. Likely to be discolouration of the interface with the natural sand	0.05
216	Fill	Second fill (of five) of pit 207. Dark grey-black loam.	0.05
217	Fill	Third fill (of five) of pit 207. Mid brownish red clay with occasional small stones	0.10
218	Fill	Basal fill (of two) of pit 209. Dark greyish brown silty sand with common small stones	0.50
219	Cut	Possible modern service feature	0.80
220	Layer	Dark greyish brown silty sand with occasional small/medium stones	0.40

SMR 2: Area 3			
Context	**Type**	**Description**	**Depth (m)**
301	Layer	Same as 201	0.15

302	Layer	Same as 202	0.50
303	Layer	Same as 203	0.20
304	Layer	Same as 204	0.25

SMR 2: Area 4			
Context	**Type**	**Description**	**Depth (m)**
401	Layer	Tarmac; surface of the car park	0.10
402	Layer	Orange red mixture of clinker and sand. Made ground	0.10
403	Layer	Dark brown sand clay with brick, tile glass and other waste. Made ground	0.50
404	Layer	Mid brown silty sand. Possible buried topsoil horizon	0.50 +-
405	Structure	Red brick, post-medieval wall	-

12.2 Appendix 2: OASIS form



The Assembly Rooms
SMR1/SMR2

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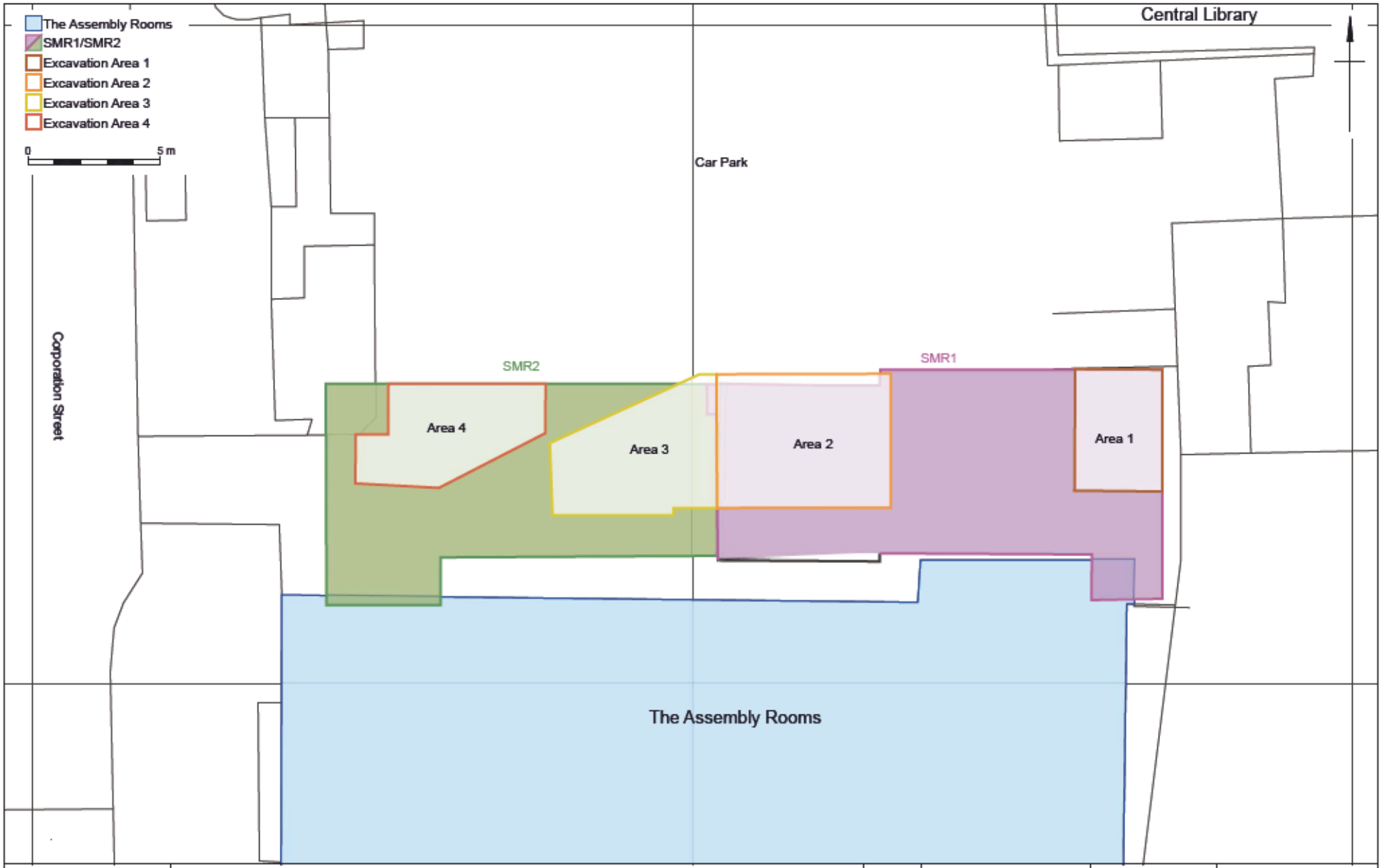
Site location

Figure 1



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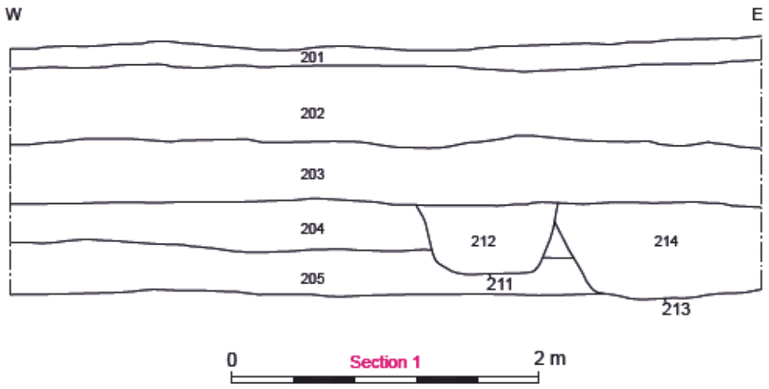
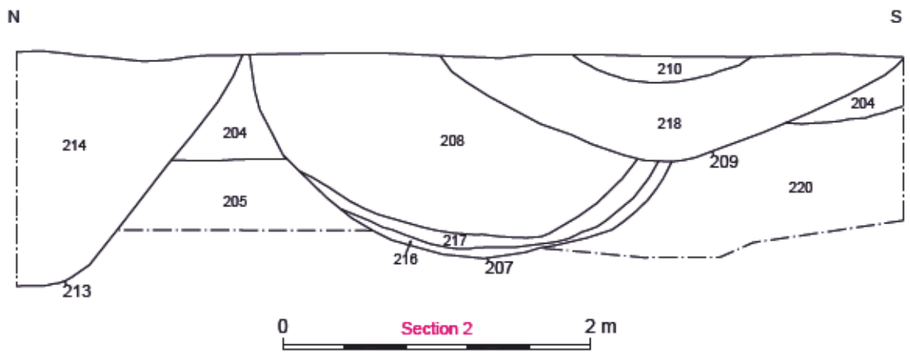
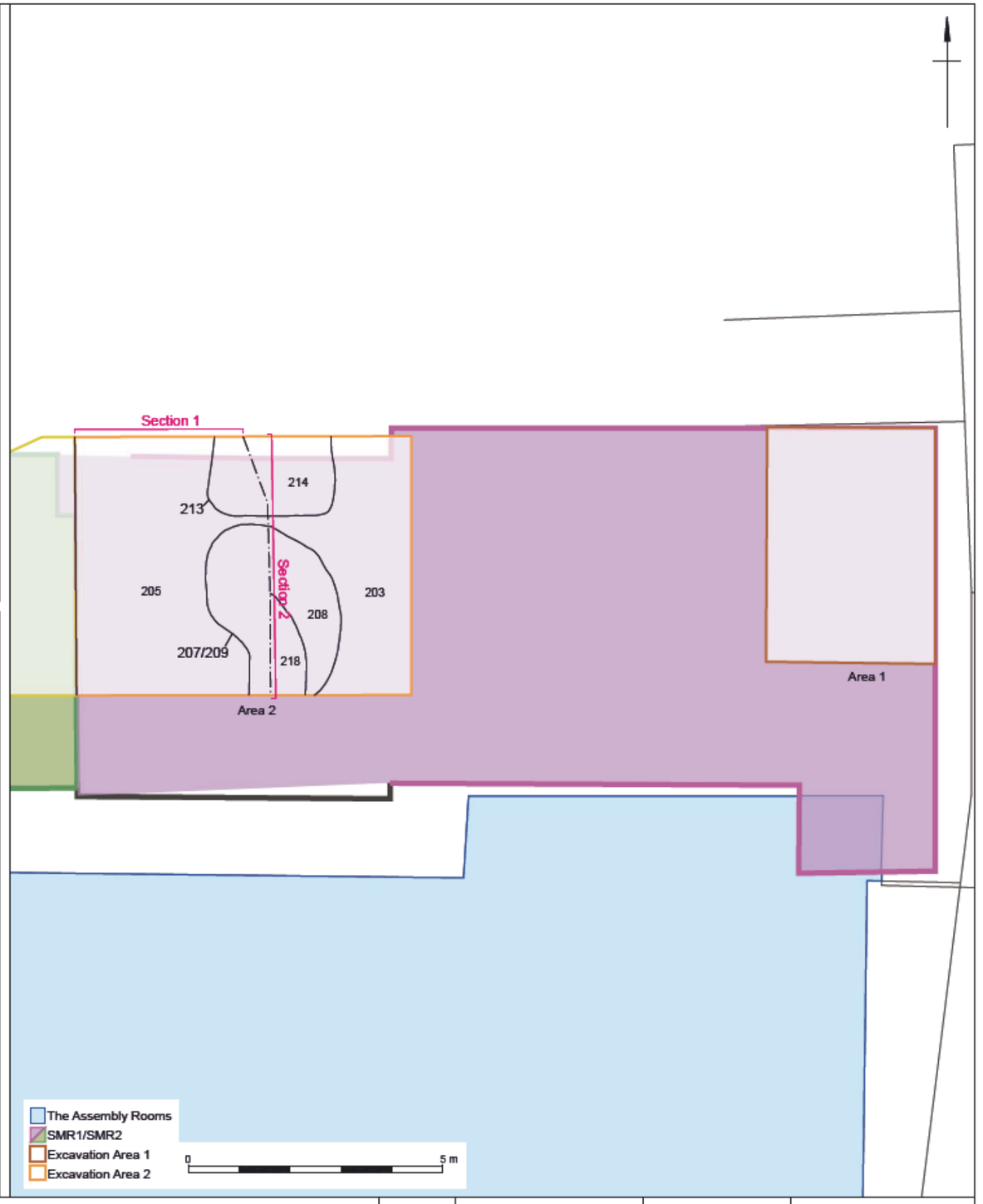
Plan showing location of excavation areas

Figure 2







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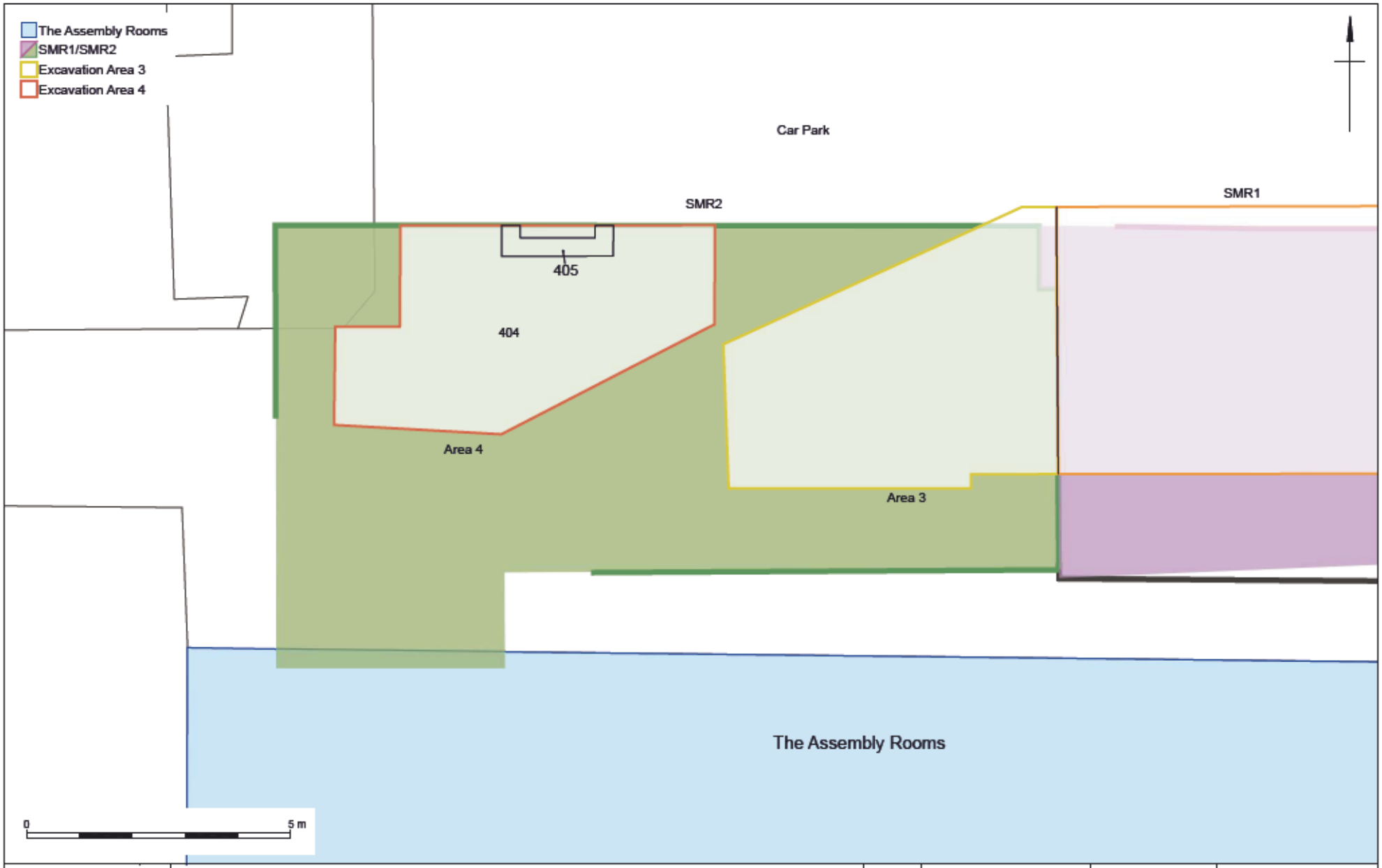
Plan and sections within SMR1: Area 2

Figure 3



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Plan of SMR2: Area 4

Figure 4

Plate 1: General shot of SMR 1 following machine strip, showing extent of services

Plate 2: General shot of SMR 2 following machine strip, showing extent of services

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Plate 3: General shot of SMR 1: Area 1 following excavation. Photograph facing east

Plate 4: General shot of SMR 1: Area 2, following excavation. Photograph facing northeast

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Plate 5: General shot of SMR 1: Area 2, following excavation. Photograph facing east

Plate 6: Detail shot of pit 207 within Area 2

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Plate 7: Detail shot of pits 207, 209 and 213. Photograph facing northeast

Plate 8: General shot of SMR 2: Area 4 following excavation. Photograph facing west

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