

HERITAGE NETWORK



38 HIGH STREET Stanstead Abbots, Herts.

HN663

Archaeological Monitoring Report



THE HERITAGE NETWORK LTD

Registered with the Institute of Field Archaeologists as an Archaeological Organisation

Archaeological Director: David Hillelson, BA MIFA

38 HIGH STREET
Stanstead Abbots, Herts.

HN663

Archaeological Monitoring Report

Prepared on behalf of Atlas Building Corporation

By

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The cover photograph shows a view of the site looking north

Acknowledgements

The fieldwork for this project was carried out by Mark Winter. The report text and illustrations were prepared by Mark Winter, and edited by David Hillelson.

The Heritage Network would like to express its thanks to the staff at Atlas Building Corporation; Tom Doig; and Alison Tinniswood, Historic Environment Unit, HCC, for their co-operation and assistance in the execution of this project.

Summary

Site name and address:	38 High Street, Stanstead Abbots, Hertfordshire		
County:	Hertfordshire	District:	East Hertfordshire
Village/town:	Stanstead Abbots	Parish:	Stanstead Abbots
Planning reference:	3/06/2282	NGR:	TL 38440 11845
Client name and address:	Atlas Building Corporation, 2 Millers Lane, Stanstead Abbots, SG12 8AF		
Nature of work:	New Housing	Former land use:	Retail unit
Site status:	AAS 185	Reason for investigation:	Direction of local planning authority (PPG 16)
Position in planning process:	After full determination (as a condition)	Project brief originator:	Local Authority
Size of affected area:	105m ²	Size of area investigated:	105m ²
Site Code:	HN 663	Other reference:	n/a
Organisation:	Heritage Network	Site Director:	David Hillelson
Project type, methods etc.:	Monitoring	Archive recipient:	Hertford Museum
Start of work	07/03/07	Finish of work	09/03/07
Related SMR Nos:	n/a	Periods represented:	Post medieval
Oasis UID	heritage1-25324	Significant finds:	Brick, tile – post medieval
Monument types:	Building – post medieval		
Physical archive:	Brick and tile		
Previous summaries/reports:	None		

Synopsis:

In response to a condition on the planning permission for the construction of new housing at 38 High Street, Stanstead Abbots, Herts, the Heritage Network was commissioned by Atlas Building Corporation to undertake the archaeological monitoring of the development groundworks.

All ground reduction and drainage trenches were monitored. The site appears to have been heavily disturbed, probably during the construction of the building which previously stood on the site. During the groundworks programme a series of buildup/levelling deposits and a Victorian brick structure were uncovered. Because of the limited impact of the groundworks no evidence of earlier activity was noted.

1. Introduction

1.1 This report has been prepared on behalf of Atlas Building Corporation, as part of the archaeological monitoring and recording of groundworks for a development site located at 38 High Street, Stanstead Abbots, Herts. The planning permission for the development (ref. 3/06/2282), granted by East Hertfordshire District Council (EHDC) was subject to a standard archaeological condition, in accordance with the provisions of the Department of the Environment's *Planning Policy Guidance Note 16* (PPG16). The scope of the required work followed the *Design Brief for Archaeological Monitoring and Recording* issued by the *County Archaeology Office* (CAO) of Hertfordshire County Council, acting as advisers to EHDC. A full specification of the work was contained in the Heritage Network's approved *Project Design*, dated March 2007.

1.2 The site is located on the southern side of Stanstead Abbots High Street immediately west of the Lord Louis public house. The study area is centred on grid reference TL 38440 11845 (Figure 1). The development involved the demolition of the current shop and construction of a new building with rear extension to form a shop and three flats (Figure 2).

1.3 The current site is located within Area of Archaeological Significance no. 185, as identified in the East Hertfordshire District Plan. This notes that Stanstead Abbots has medieval origins, which have been revealed during previous archaeological investigations in the High Street.

1.4 The aim of the present project has been to identify and record any archaeological features and deposits which might have been uncovered; and to retrieve artefactual and ecofactual elements which would allow the date, character, and significance of the site to be assessed in accordance with current regional research agenda (Brown and Glazebrook, 2000), and subject to the limitations of reasonable safety and practicality.

1.5 The present report describes the findings of the monitoring programme and is intended, together with the deposition of the site archive with Hertford Museum, Hertford, to complete the requirements of the planning condition.

2. Fieldwork

SITE TOPOGRAPHY

2.1 The ground across the study area is relatively level at approximately 30mOD. Formerly the site was occupied by a shop and associated yard area.

METHODOLOGY

2.2 The timetable for the fieldwork followed the client's groundwork schedule. A number of site visits were made to supervise the reduction of the site and excavation of drainage trenches.

2.3 The machining was undertaken using a mini digger fitted with a toothless ditching bucket or toothed bucket, as required.

2.4 The project has been carried out in accordance with the requirements of the Design Brief, and with the Heritage Network's approved Project Design.

MONITORING AND RECORDING

Ground Reduction

2.5 The ground level across the area of the new building was reduced by a depth of approximately 0.5m below the existing surface level (Plates 1 and 2). All drainage trenches which were of a depth considered likely to breach the overburden were monitored.

2.6 The general stratigraphy was highly disturbed across the site. A brick floor surface, context [01], measuring 0.06m in depth, was located at the northern edge of the site and probably related to the previous building. This overlay context (02), a layer of brownish yellow (10YR 6/8) sand, 0.08m in depth. Beneath this was context (03), a layer of very dark grey (7.5YR 3/1) silty sand with frequent gravel and chalk inclusions.

2.7 The largest of the drainage trenches was located at the northern end of the site. It measured 1.0m wide and extended across the front of the site, continuing 4.30m down the eastern edge. This revealed a 0.15m thick layer of white (2.5Y 8/1), soft, crumbly, redeposited chalk, context (09), beneath layer (03). Below layer (09) was a brown (10YR 4/3), very soft and malleable, sandy clay layer, context (10), which covered the white (2.5Y 8/1) chalk natural, context (11).

2.8 The sections along the eastern and western edges of the site, in the area of the demolished building, revealed concrete foundations, 0.2m in depth, for the buildings on either side, context (04), overlain by layer (09).

2.9 Feature [07] was observed cutting into layer (09) close to the south-eastern edge of the site (Figure 3, Plates 3 and 4). It was square in plan and measured 1.25m by 1.25m. A brick lining, one brick (0.10m) wide and surviving to at least 3 courses deep, was observed around the entire feature. No bonding material was seen between the bricks. It contained a very dark grey (10YR

3/1), loose, silty clay fill, context (08), with frequent tile and chalk inclusions. The cut was packed with a dark grey (10YR 4/1), loose, silty clay, context (12).

2.10 The brick lining consists of poor handmade frogged bricks, measuring 230mm in length, 105mm in width and 65mm in depth. The fabric is an overfired pale orange red in colour, with sand and occasional slag inclusions. The brick has been dated to approximately 1850-1860.

2.11 Layer (09) ended approximately 11.00m south of the northern site limit (Figure 3). To the south was a layer of black (10 YR 2/1), very loose, silty clay, topsoil containing frequent stone, up to 2 cm in diameter, and a large quantity of animal bone, 0.40m in depth. Beneath this was a 0.25m+ thick, very dark grey (10YR 3/1) very loose, silty clay subsoil containing moderate amounts of stone no greater than 2cm in diameter.

3. Discussion

3.1 The aim of the project was to identify and record any archaeological features and deposits which might be uncovered; and to retrieve artefactual and ecofactual elements which would allow the date, character, and significance of the site to be assessed in accordance with the current published regional research agenda.

3.2 The site is situated within Area of Archaeological Significance no.185 (AAS185), as designated in the EHDC District Local Plan. This notes that Stanstead Abbots has medieval origins, which have been revealed during previous archaeological investigations in the High Street.

3.3 Ground reductions to a maximum depth of 0.84m was carried out to provide for a raft foundation for the new building.

3.4 The stratigraphy observed during the groundworks shows that the site has been heavily disturbed. The natural chalk underlies layers of made ground and topsoil, probably representing landscaping and levelling of the site carried out during the construction of the shop previously occupying the site.

3.5 A small brick feature [07] represents the only archaeological remains encountered in the course of the groundworks on the site. This probably represents a small Victorian outhouse, associated with the building previously occupying the site. Examination of the brick showed that it was handmade and was of poor quality. It is likely to have been locally made between 1850 and 1860 (T. Doig, pers. comm.). As this feature lay below the impact level of the present works it was not fully excavated and remains preserved in situ.

3.6 The large quantity of butchered animal bone observed in layer (05) is probably a result of the former presence of a butchers shop on the site. These remains were assessed on site and were not recovered.

Confidence Rating

3.7 During the course of the fieldwork, the conditions were generally good for the identification of potential features and deposits, and for their investigation.

3.8 There are no circumstances which would lead to a confidence rating for the work which was less than High.

4. Schedule of site visits

Date	Staff	Hours	Comments
07/03/07	MW	2	Introductory meeting/Site inspection
09/03/07	MW	7	Site inspection

5. Bibliography

Winter, M, 2007 *38 High Street, Stanstead Abbots, Herts. Project Design: Archaeological Monitoring*. Heritage Network.

6. Illustrations & Plates

Figure 1 Site Location

Figure 2 Site Layout

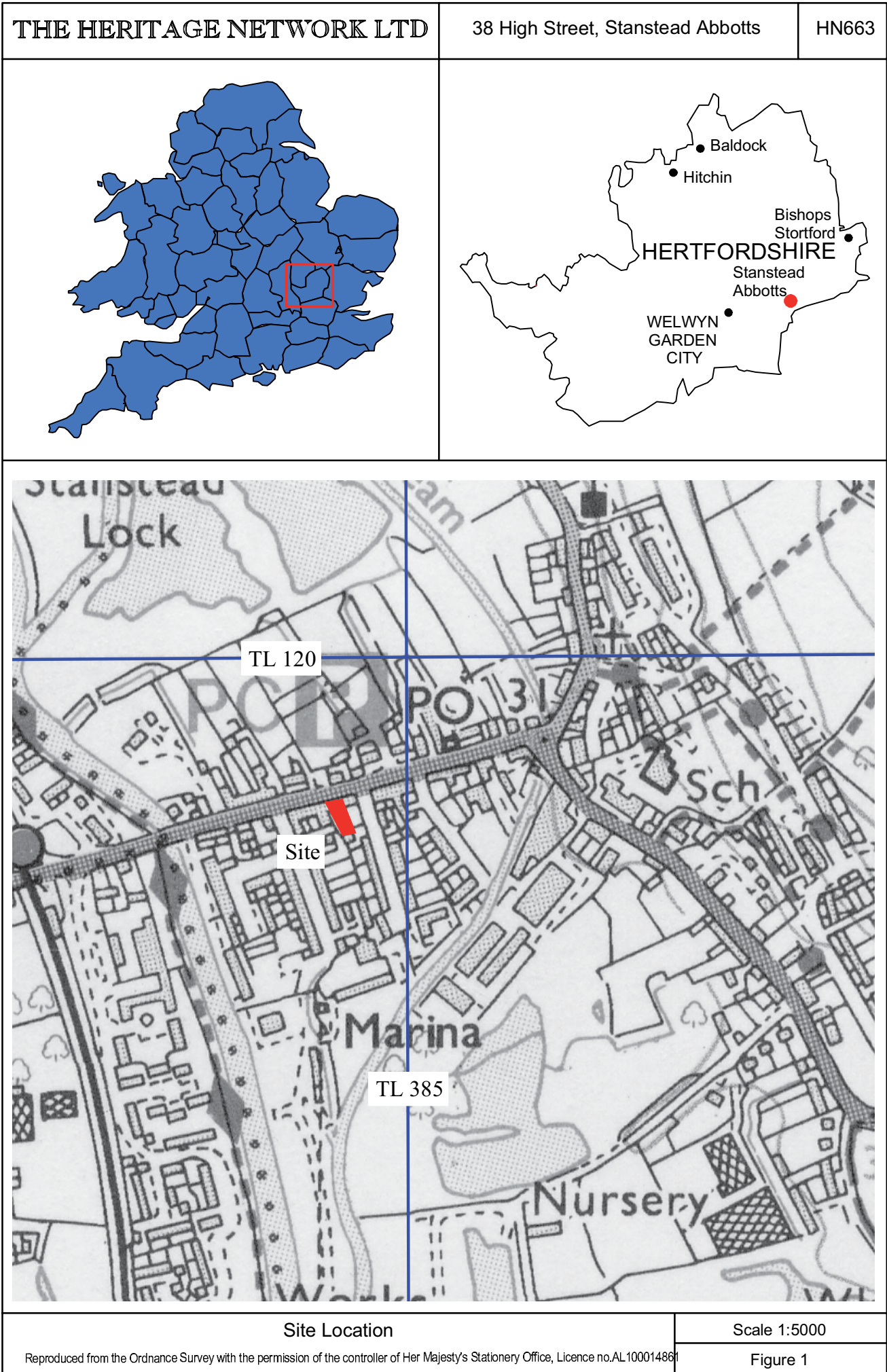
Figure 3 Feature Location

Plate 1 Northern stratigraphy

Plate 2 Southern stratigraphy

Plate 3 Brick feature [07] plan

Plate 4 Brick feature [07] section



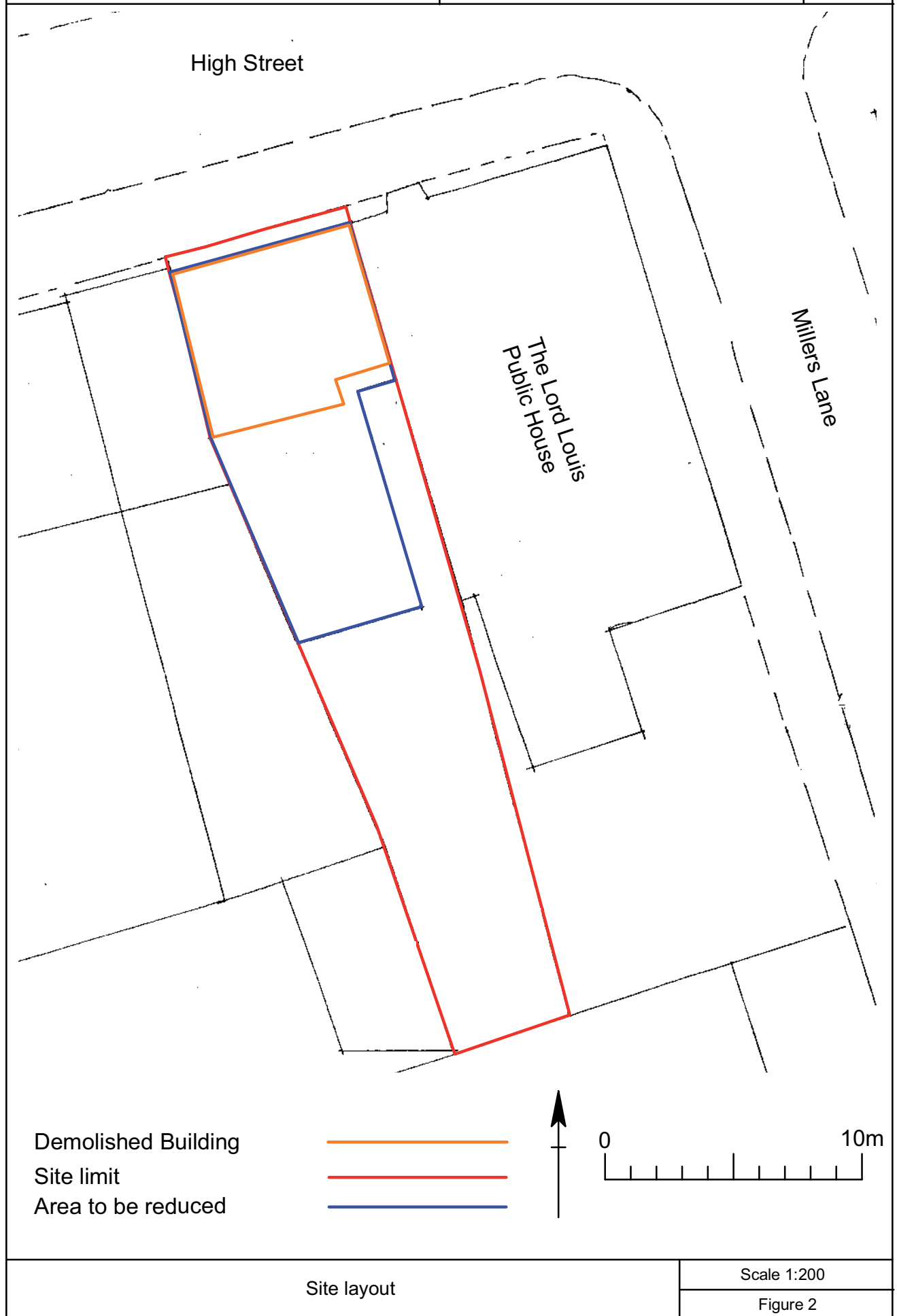






Plate 1: Stratigraphy along northern boundary of site



Plate 2: Stratigraphy along southern boundary of site



Plate 3: Brick Feature [07]



Plate 4: Brick Feature [07] detail