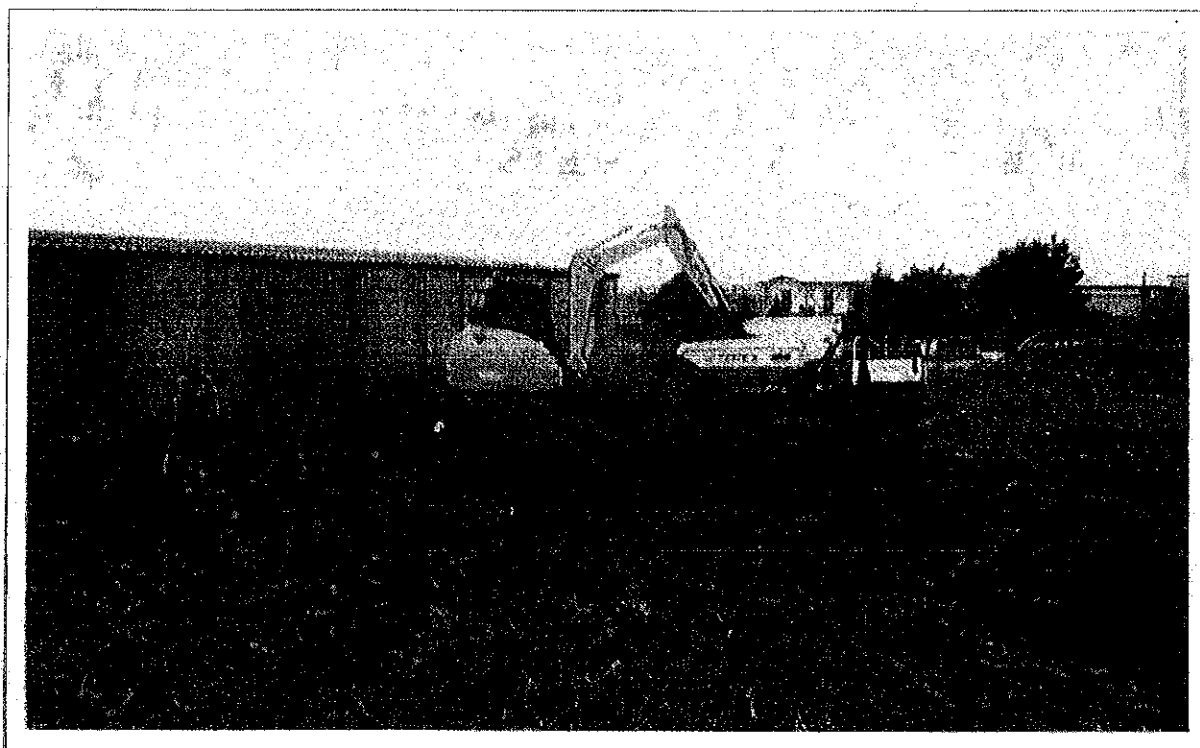




**LAND AT VICTORIA STREET/ALBERT STREET
Wednesbury
Sandwell**

Archaeological Watching Brief



July 2006

Hereford Archaeology Series 724

EXCAVATION • RESEARCH • GEOPHYSICS • ARCHITECTURAL SURVEY

This report is produced by

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Cover picture

Ground clearance on site, 10th July 2006.

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Land at Victoria Street/Albert Street WEDNESBURY Sandwell

An Archaeological Watching Brief

Site Work

S. Porter

Text & Illustrations

S. Porter and N. Oakey

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July 2006

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Land at Victoria Street/Albert Street WEDNESBURY Sandwell SO 9842 9471

1. Summary

Archaeological Investigations Ltd. was commissioned by Sandwell Primary Care Trust through their agents Terrapin Limited to undertake a programme of archaeological works on the site of a Health Centre at the junctions of Victoria Street with Albert and Stafford Streets, Wednesbury.

As a result of the archaeological monitoring it was not possible to ascertain whether archaeology was present at the Victoria Street site. The ground works did not penetrate below the level of made up ground consisting of ash, coal fragments and brick pieces. Therefore, no features or deposits of archaeological significance were disturbed during the ground works at the Victoria Street site in Wednesbury.

2. Introduction

Archaeological Investigations Ltd. was commissioned by Sandwell Primary Care Trust through their agents Terrapin Limited to undertake a programme of archaeological works on the site of a Health Centre at the junctions of Victoria Street with Albert and Stafford Streets, Wednesbury (Fig. 1). The site lies at NGR SO 9842 9471 and at a height of c.130.50 AOD. It covered an area of c. 1923m² and contained a number of mature trees and numerous saplings which covered an area of waste ground with obvious heaps of demolition-derived spoil. Underlying geology comprises Coal Measures with superficial deposits of slightly gravely clay (GIP 2006).

The development fell within an "Area of Archaeological Potential" as identified on the Sandwell MBC Sites and Monuments Record (SMR). Consequently, planning application DC/05/45252 was approved subject to conditions, including

"No development involving any ground disturbance shall take place until an archaeological investigation of the site has been carried out in accordance with a specification to be submitted to and approved by the local planning authority in writing".

A brief was issued by the Borough Archaeologist requiring archaeological evaluation (Appendix One) and a proposal designed to fulfil the brief was accepted by the Borough Archaeologist and the client (Appendix 2). However, ground investigation on behalf of the client revealed that the site was covered by 2-4m of made ground (GIP 2006). This was supported by the realisation early in the research process that previous archaeological work on site had revealed a similar picture (see below, 3).

As a result, the Borough Archaeologist and AIL agreed that the proposed evaluation strategy was neither safe nor appropriate under prevailing conditions. Also the clients and their architects revised the plans for the development so that the full depth of made ground would not be penetrated. Consequently, AIL carried out a watching brief of groundworks.

Archaeological monitoring took place on 4th and 10th July 2006.

3. Background

Archaeological work had taken place on the site in 1980 and 1988 (Sandwell SMR 5717). On each occasion watching briefs took place of geotechnical test pits and boreholes, in 1980 a general depth of 3.5m of "fill composed of brick, ash etc" was observed. One borehole penetrated 11.5m of fill. In 1988 four test-pits showed 2-3m of recent dumping lying directly on natural with modern brick features visible in the sections.

Roman coins (SMR 4261) were found in Wednesbury in 1817 on the estate of Sir H. St Paul; although the exact find spot is not known it may suggest Roman activity in the area. The coins were dated to the reigns of Nero, Vespasian and Trajan.

At the time of the Domesday Survey 'Wadnesberie' was held by the king and consisted of 3 hides. There were 16 villagers and 11 smallholders with 7 ploughs. There was also a mill,

valued at 2s and an acre of meadowland. Woodland two leagues long and one league wide was mentioned. Bloxwich was a member of the manor of Wednesbury (Morris 1976).

The historic core of medieval Wednesbury is located to the north, centred on the 14th-century church of St Bartholemew, but 'red slipped' pottery vessels, probably Cistercian ware or blackware were found some 120m to the south of the site during the construction of the railway in the 19th century (SMR 5423). The exact position of the find was not recorded. The material may have been kiln waste (particularly given the proximity of 'Potters Lane') though no kilns have so far been located.

Pottery was only one of the industries taking place in Wednesbury in the medieval and early post-medieval periods. The last decade of the 16th century is the first record of the iron industry (Ede 1962, 123), but digging for coal is mentioned in the 14th century (Hackwood 1902, 92). The latter developed into a major extractive industry, to the extent that coal is known as "Wednesbury Dirt" in the Black Country (Cochin 2000, 639). Concentrated on the common known as Wednesbury Old Field to the south of the settlement and of the site, the coalfield had its heyday in the 18th and 19th centuries. In 1854 Bagnall quotes from Hutton's undated *History of Birmingham*, "There is also a common of vast extent called Wednesbury Old Field, in which are the vestiges of many hundreds of coal pits, long in disuse ..." (Bagnall 1854, 77). Attempts had already been made to pump water from workings in the Old Field in 1739 (Ede 1962, 120) and Yates's map of 1769 depicts "Coal Pits" and a "Forge" in this area (Fig. 2). On the same map Holyhead Road and Potter's Lane can be seen to the north and south of the site, with Dudley Road to the west. The first and third were turnpike roads, but there is no evidence for roads or settlement between the roads. This is also true of the Parish Plan of 1799 and Tithe Map of 1846 (neither reproduced), but the picture was soon to change.

The catalyst was the construction in 1850 of the South Staffordshire Railway running north-east/south-west across Wednesbury Old Field. The line was later taken over by the Great Western Railway, becoming part of the line from London to Birkenhead, and Wednesbury Station (SMR 13089) was built in 1862 (see Fig. C, bottom left). Ede states that "Victoria Street, Albert Street, Stafford Street and Great Western Street are all subsequent to the opening of this station placed originally in the middle of Wednesbury Field and surrounded by pit banks" (Ede 1962, 256). Also in 1850 the Darlastone Branch Line was constructed, running just to the north of Potters Lane and south of the site on the other side of Stafford Street (Fig. 3).

The First Edition Ordnance Survey (OS) of 1890 shows the site covered with houses fronting Victoria Street and with various outhouses in the yards or gardens to the east (Fig. 3). The northernmost building extended further east down Albert Street and on later evidence this property was a pub (see below). Further OS editions of 1903 and 1919 show only detail changes to the outhouses to the rear of the Victoria Street properties and these are all shown on the 1937 OS survey (Fig. 4). Searches of directories for the name of occupants and usages of the properties proved fruitless as Kelly's and the Post Office directories were arranged alphabetically by inhabitant rather than street by street. Later photographs show the buildings on the Victoria Street frontage as two terraces of two-storey brick houses. The more northerly terrace of two houses had architectural detailing at ground floor level, whilst the terrace to the south had stone detailing to the lintels of doors and windows. In 1968 the building on the north-western corner of the site was the "Prince Regent" public house, part of Butlers' estate (Bott 1998, 66). Wednesbury Station was demolished in 1971 (*ibid*, 105), but the houses still

stood on site in 1979 (Bott 2004, 82). They must have been demolished shortly afterwards to allow the geotechnical testing to take place in 1980.

Wednesbury lies on a rise bounded to the south and east by the River Tame (formerly Lea Brook) with ground sloping down from Holyhead Road to Potter's Lane and beyond. The site slopes slightly from north to south (0.30-0.40m) but appears to be on an artificial terrace with Albert Street and Stafford Street (there is a pronounced slope of *c.* 2.50m from Holyhead Road to Albert Street. See levels on Fig. 4). This terrace may have been created with either introduced material or the material excavated from the deep cutting housing the railway and goods shed immediately to the south. Such terracing may have helped alleviate the tendency of surface water to flow downhill and gather in the railway cutting.

4. Aims and Objectives

The objectives of the work were to:

- a. Establish the presence/absence of archaeological remains within the development area
- b. Determine the extent, condition, nature, character, quality and date of any archaeological remains encountered
- c. Provide further information on the origins and development of Wednesbury from the medieval to the present day
- d. Contribute to the existing body of academic knowledge
- e. Make available to interested parties the results of the investigation (subject to restrictions of confidentiality).

5. Method

Prior to an archaeological presence on site the trees and saplings were cut down. The initial stage of work requiring archaeological monitoring was the removal of the remaining tree roots by mechanical excavator. The resulting 'tree bowls' were observed in the expectation that they might provide insights into the underlying deposits.

During the second stage of the watching brief the area on which the new health care centre will stand was reduced to the required level.

It was intended that all archaeological features and deposits excavated were to be recorded in plan at a scale of 1:50, in section at 1:20 and photographed using B&W negative and colour film (35mm). In the event, none were encountered, but general photographic record shots were taken. Photographic registers were kept, but no finds were retained. The site was given the Sandwell MBC code WSVS05.

6. Results

During the removal of the tree roots no archaeological deposits or features were recorded. The majority of the 'tree bowls' had a depth of around 1 metre and cut dark loam containing frequent ash, coal fragments and dust, and brick pieces (Fig. 5). The largest 'tree bowl' was towards the centre of the site and had a width of 3.5 metres and a depth of around 2.5 metres. The base of this feature revealed modern brick rubble indicating that the dumped deposits had a minimum depth of 2.5 metres. Natural deposits were not reached during the removal of the tree roots.

The stripping associated with the new health care centre took place on the eastern half of the site (Fig. 6). The ground was reduced by a maximum of 1 metre, but the resulting surface was very uneven as a result of the presence of brick rubble and voids. In some places the ground had to be made up to create a flat surface for construction. As the stripping was confined to the modern fill, no deposits or features of archaeological importance were encountered.

Charlotte Lewis, Assistant Archaeologist for Sandwell MBC, paid a monitoring visit on 10th July and expressed herself satisfied that any surviving archaeological deposits would not be disturbed by the groundworks. She also stated that nothing would be gained by further maintenance of an archaeological presence on site.

7. Discussion

The ground works at Victoria Street, Wednesbury did not penetrate below the level of the made up ground of recent derivation, an undisturbed natural ground surface was not reached and no archaeological features or deposits were uncovered. Consequently it is not possible to ascertain whether significant archaeological deposits are present at a lower depth on the Victoria Street site.

Although including some demolition-derived material which can be assumed to have derived from the buildings present on the site until the 1970s, most of the bricks and other materials from these buildings seem to have been removed from the site. Material on the site included a high proportion of coal and coal dust (apparent in the colouring on Fig. 6) and this has probably been introduced from elsewhere. It may derive from heaps created by coal workings in the area, particularly to the south in Wednesbury Old Field, or from excavation through poor-quality coal deposits when creating the railway cutting to the south of Stafford Street.

8. Conclusion

No features or deposits of archaeological significance were disturbed during the ground works at the Victoria Street site in Wednesbury. The methodology finally adopted was found to be appropriate in achieving the aims of the project.

9. Bibliography

Bagnall, J.N., 1854 *A History of Wednesbury*

Bott, I.N., 1998 *Britain in Old Photographs. Wednesbury Revisited*

Bott, I.N., 2004 *Wednesbury Memories*

Cochin, T., 2000 *The Staffordshire Encyclopaedia*

Ede, J.F., 1962 *History of Wednesbury*

GIP (Ground Investigation & Piling Ltd), 2006 *Cable Percussion Borehole Log for Victoria Street, Wednesbury*

Hackwood, F.W., 1902 *Wednesbury Ancient and Modern* reprinted 2002

Morris, J. (ed.), 1976 *Domesday Book, 23 Staffordshire*

10. Site Archive

Currently held at Archaeological Investigation Ltd's office in Hereford, but shortly to be deposited at Wednesbury Museum, the site archive comprises:

This document

2 pages of photographic registers

8 colour photographs and negatives

8 B&W photographs and negatives.

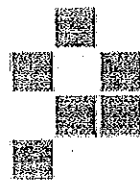
Appendix 1: Sandwell MBC brief

ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION

VICTORIA STREET, WEDNESBURY

SANDWELL MBC

NOVEMBER 2005



Sandwell
Metropolitan Borough Council

Site: Victoria Street, Wednesbury

Agent: ASTAM GBC, Steve Howells 01952 884804

Planning Officer: John Baylay 0121 569 4039

Borough Archaeologist: Graham Eyre-Morgan (0121 569 4025)

Assistant Archaeologist: Charlotte Lewis Assistant Archaeologist (0121 569 4217)

This archaeological brief is only valid for six months. After this period the Borough Archaeologist should be contacted. Any written scheme of investigation resulting from this brief shall only be considered for the same period. The contractor is strongly advised to visit the site before completing their written scheme of investigation, as there may be implications for accurately costing the project.

1. Introduction

This brief has been prepared by the Assistant Archaeologist of Sandwell Metropolitan Borough Council. The brief sets out the requirements for an archaeological evaluation by trial trenching. The purpose of evaluation is to determine the presence/absence of archaeological features within the application area so that an informed decision can be made on their preservation or otherwise. This Brief and any resulting Contractors' Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI) will ensure that the requirements of the Condition can be adequately discharged.

2. Site Location and Description

The land subject to development is on the corner of Stafford Street and Victoria Street, lying to the south of the centre of Wednesbury. The land is currently vacant and scrub and in an area of archaeological potential as defined in the council UDP.

3. Planning Background

3.1 A planning application (DC/05/45252) was submitted on the 4/10/05 for the development of vacant land on the corner of Stafford Street and Victoria Street, Wednesbury.

3.2 Based on the advice given in *Planning Policy Guidance Note 16: Archaeology and Planning* (DoE 1990, paras 21-22):

'No development involving any ground disturbance shall take place until an archaeological investigation of the site has been carried out in accordance with a specification to be submitted to and approved by the local planning authority in writing'

The evaluation is designed provide sufficient information on the presence/absence, nature, quality and extent of any below ground remains. If present, the investigation will identify any archaeological remains thereby enabling the formulation, if appropriate, of an additional programme of excavation; should the deposits be of 'national importance' there would be a presumption in favour of their in-situ preservation.

3.3 This Brief and any resulting Contractors' Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI) will ensure that the requirements of any future Condition can be adequately discharged.

4. Archaeological Background

This application forms part of DC/05/45252 lying within the confines of the historic core of the medieval town and possible Iron Age hill fort and the 14th century church of Saint Bartholomew's stands a short distance to the north. The development area is defined as an "Area of Archaeological Potential" and identified on the Sandwell Sites and Monuments Record is PRN 5847 Wednesbury settlement, PRN 5423 Excavations of a pit found Cistercian/Blackware by Mike Hodder. Report deposited at Sandwell SMR "Excavations in Wednesbury, 1988 & 1989: The Medieval and Post Medieval settlement, and the 17th C Pottery Industry".

The current application provides a fresh opportunity of examining the origins and development of the medieval town. Isolated pottery fragments are also likely to provide important information on the chronology of the town, the status of the inhabitants and their general living conditions. Other archaeological remains could also be revealed.

5. Requirement for Work

5.1 The purpose of the archaeological investigation is to locate and identify any surviving remains within the constraint area; in this particular instance this office wishes to know the extent, the date, nature and state of preservation of any archaeological deposits, which may be present under the area, proposed for development. The work must also assess the relative importance of these deposits, and the potential loss of any archaeological information by the development, therefore substantiating any need for further excavation or change in the planning consent

5.2 A **5% sample** of the development area will be investigated by trial trenching and the layout should be designed to ensure uniform coverage across the site; a trench plan must be appended to the specification.

5.3 The site-specific aims are:

- To establish the presence/absence of archaeological remains within the development area
- To determine the nature, extent, condition, character, quality and date of any archaeological remains encountered
- To provide further information on the origins and development of Wednesbury from the medieval period to the present day
- To contribute to any existing corpus of academic knowledge
- To make available to interested parties the results of the investigation subject to any confidentiality restrictions

5.4 The evaluation recommended above is only the first stage in the archaeological investigation of each of the sites recommended. The scope of any further archaeological recording on each of the sites will depend on the results of the preliminary (and second phase if appropriate) evaluation of surviving archaeological deposits.

5.5 If evaluation indicates that significant archaeological evidence survives on the site, and would be negatively impacted by the proposed redevelopment, a further stage of detailed

archaeological excavation and recording will be carried out, in accordance with a site-specific Written Scheme of Investigation approved by the Borough Archaeologist, which sets out specific aims of further recording work.

6.0 General Methodology

6.1 The evaluation shall be supported by a written scheme of investigation.

6.2 The contractor is expected to follow the Code of Conduct of the Institute of Field Archaeologists.

6.3 Details including the name, qualifications and experience, of the site director and all other project personnel (including specialist staff) shall be supplied to the Borough Archaeologist as part of the written scheme of investigation.

6.4 Notification of the supervisor/project manager's name and the members of the team shall be provided in writing to Borough Archaeologist at least one week in advance of commencement of work.

6.5 The site code for this project is WSVS05.

6.6 All the latest Health and Safety guidelines shall be followed on site.

6.7 Should the client wish to curtail the investigation for any reason at any point in advance of its completion the contractor will still be expected to produce a full report including specialist finds assessments within the timetable set out below.

6.8 The IFA's *Standards and Guidance for Archaeological Evaluations* should be used for additional guidance in the production of the written scheme of investigation, the content of the report, and the general execution of the project.

7. Evaluation Methodology

7.1 The contractor shall ensure detailed study of all mains service locations and avoid damage to these.

7.2 Prior to the commencement of on-site works the contractor must consult the Sandwell Sites and Monuments Record (Fay de Souza 0121 568 4216) and undertake a rapid map regression exercise based on the sources held at the Local Studies Section of Smethwick Library. This information will assist in on-site interpretation.

7.3 It is recommended that a minimum of 5% of the area to be developed is investigated by trial trenching. The trial trenches will be machine excavated using a toothless ditching bucket, and under the supervision and to the satisfaction of a professional archaeologist. The exposed sub-soil or archaeological horizon will be hand cleaned in all trenches and any archaeological deposits or negative features planned.

7.4 At least 50% of all contained features shall be excavated. A stated percentage of structural and linear features to be excavated shall be provided in the WSI. For those trenches where substantial nineteenth and twentieth century masonry remains are encountered hand dug test pits will be excavated within the trench in order to examine the presence/absence of earlier remains. NOTE: In some circumstances it may be necessary to use shoring to support the sides of the trench, but advice must be sought from the Borough Archaeologist before employing this methodology.

7.5 Details of how all archaeological contexts and artefacts will be excavated, surveyed, recovered and recorded shall be provided. The site grid will be tied to the national grid.

7.6 Details of the site planning policy shall be given in the WSI. The normal preferred policy for the scale of archaeological site plans is 1:20 and sections at 1:10, unless circumstances indicate that other scales would be more appropriate.

7.7 The photographic record shall consist of high quality digital colour and black and white copies. This shall include both general and feature specific photographs; a photographic scale (including north arrow) shall be included in the case of detailed photographs. A photographic register and supporting plan detailing as a minimum feature number, location, and direction of shot shall accompany the photographic record.

7.8 The contractor must arrange, through a suitably qualified specialist, the assessment of the environmental and metallurgical potential of the site through the examination of suitable deposits. Guidance should be sought from the appropriate English Heritage Regional Advisor in Archaeological Science and details of the methodology included within the WSI.

8.0 Finds

8.1 All finds, where appropriate, shall be washed and marked with both the site code and context number.

8.2 The WSI shall include an agreed list of specialist consultants who might be required to conserve and/or report on finds, and advise or report on other aspects of the investigation.

8.3 Finds work should be to accepted professional standards and adhere to the Institute of Field Archaeologists *Guidelines for Finds Work*. Details of the finds retrieval policy must be included within the WSI.

8.4 The requirements for conservation and storage shall be agreed with Wednesbury Museum prior to the start of work, and confirmed in writing with the Borough Archaeologist.

9.0 Results

9.1 The draft full report including all specialist assessments of artefact assemblages shall be submitted to the Borough Archaeologist within six weeks of completing the fieldwork for

approval. Once approved a total of **eight** copies plus a copy on CD-ROM are to be supplied to the Borough Archaeologist for general distribution.

9.2 The report must contain:

- The aims and methods adopted during the course of the evaluation.
- Detailed results including a suitable conclusion and discussion. This must be linked to the research objectives cited above and consider the sites in their local, regional and national context.
- An assessment of the local, regional national importance of the site. The latter should be based on the criteria for scheduling as set out in Annex 4 of PPG 16 (DoE 1990).
- Impact Assessment and recommended mitigation strategy will be used to assess the impact of the proposal on the surviving archaeological resource.
- The contractor is also expected to formulate a mitigation strategy and future research programme. The latter should be based on national/regional/local research frameworks and identify the aims/objectives of any future excavation.
- Although the emphasis should be on those deposits that are likely to be destroyed, the wider potential the site must also be considered
- A concise non-technical summary of the project results
- All specialist reports and assessments
- Site location plan, copies of any historical maps and a representative sample of the photographs including colour prints
- Location plan of trenches in relation to the proposed development. All corners of each trench shall be given a 10 figure grid reference
- A section/s within each trench showing the depth of deposits including the present ground level with Ordnance Datum, vertical and horizontal scale
- Sufficient plans by period and area to aid interpretation
- Artefact illustrations that would be submitted in any future publication

9.3 The following appendices should also be included:

- Location and summary of the archive contents
- Completed summary sheet (copy attached to brief)
- Photographic register

- Archaeological brief, the approved contractors' written scheme of investigation together with the completed pro-forma and site location plan which were submitted as part of the planning application

9.4 The proposed format of the report will be described within the WSI.

10.0 Archive

10.1 Before commencing any fieldwork, the Contractor must contact the Community History and Archives Service, Smethwick Library (High Street, Smethwick, West Midlands B661AB. Tel. 0121 5582561), to determine the requirements for the deposition of the archive.

10.2 The archive should include the record photographs and digital information together with a copy of the Report.

10.3 Photographic prints should be re-produced at a minimum of five by four inches and labelled on the back using indelible ink with the frame number, date, photographers name together with the site code, name and grid reference; the photographs being mounted in archival quality sleeves.

10.4 It is the responsibility of the Contractor to meet the Community History and Archives Service requirements with regard to the preparation of material for deposition.

10.5 Written notification of the commencement of fieldwork shall be given to Community History and Archives Service at the same time as the Borough Archaeologist.

10.6 A summary of the contents of the archive shall be supplied to Borough Archaeologist at the time of deposition.

11.0 Monitoring

11.1 The Borough Archaeologist will be responsible for monitoring progress and standards throughout the project and should be kept regularly informed during fieldwork, interpretation and reporting stages.

11.2 Written Notification of the start date will be given to the Borough Archaeologist at least one week before the commencement of work and once the fieldwork stage of the investigation has been completed.

12.0 Contractors Written Scheme of Investigation

12.1 Any variations to the WSI shall be agreed in writing with the Borough Archaeologist before being implemented.

12.2 This Brief has been written following a cursory examination of the site by the Borough Archaeologist, potential contractors are therefore strongly advised to carry out their own inspection before submitting a written quotation.

12.3 If on first visiting the site or at any time during the recording exercise, it appears that:

- i) part or the whole of the site is not amenable to the recording programme outlined above, and/or
- ii) an alternative approach may be more appropriate or likely to produce more informative results, and/or
- iii) any features that should be recorded as having a bearing on the interpretation of the site have been omitted,

then it is expected that the Contractor will contact the Borough Archaeologist as a matter of urgency.

For further information regarding the content of this Brief please contact the author at the address below. As part of our desire to provide a quality service, we would welcome any comments you may have on the content and presentation of this Archaeological Brief.

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Appendix 2: AIL Project Design

LAND AT VICTORIA STREET/ALBERT STREET, WEDNESBURY
Sandwell
(NGR SO 9842 9471)

Project Design for archaeological evaluation

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ARCHAEOLOGICAL INVESTIGATIONS LTD

LAND AT VICTORIA STREET/ALBERT STREET, WEDNESBURY

Sandwell

(NGR SO 9842 9471)

Project Design for archaeological evaluation

1. Background

1.1 Description of the site

1.1.1 The site lies to the south of the town centre of Wednesbury, within Sandwell Metropolitan Borough. It is bounded by Victoria Street to the north-west, by Stafford Street to the south-west, by Albert Street to the north-east and by industrial premises to the south-east.

1.1.2 The extent to which archaeology has been preserved within the area of the site under investigation is presently not known, but it is within an area defined in the council's UDP as having archaeological potential.

1.1.3 The site is located at NGR SO 9842 9471, is vacant and covered by scrub.

1.2 Previous archaeological work/knowledge

1.2.1 The nucleus of the medieval settlement of Wednesbury is Church Hill focusing on the church of St Bartholomew (c.200m to the north-west of this site), a medieval manor house and market place. Church Hill is the possible site of an Iron Age hillfort.

1.2.2 Archaeological investigation within the core of Wednesbury has recorded important buried remains, including a post-medieval pottery industry, but little is known of the southern extent and nature of activity in the medieval and later town.

1.3 Reasons for the project

1.3.1 Planning permission was granted by Sandwell MBC for development on the site subject to an archaeological condition (Application Ref. DC/05/45252).

1.3.2 The condition is based on advice within Planning Policy Guidelines Note 16 and states

“No development involving any ground disturbance shall take place until an archaeological investigation of the site has been carried out in accordance with a specification to be submitted to and approved by the local planning authority in writing.”

1.3.3 A brief has been drafted to demonstrate the archaeological methodology required to fulfil the terms of the condition and this method statement has been submitted to comply with the requirements of the brief.

1.3.4 The client must arrange for access to the site and provide information on all services.

- 1.3.5 Trenches will be backfilled on completion using the material removed from the trenches. On completion of site work **Archaeological Investigations Ltd. will not take any responsibility for the maintenance of the backfilled trenches. If special reinstatement is required then this is additional to the quote submitted.**

1.4 *Archive deposition*

- 1.4.1 It is Archaeological Investigations Ltd's policy to encourage landowners to deposit the site archive including all finds with the local museum. Archaeological Investigations Ltd will prepare the archive for transfer following discussion with the Community History and Archives Service, Smethwick Library.

2. Aims and objectives

2.1 *Research design*

- 2.1.1 The objectives of the work are to:

- a. Establish the presence/absence of archaeological remains within the development area
- b. Determine the extent, condition, nature, character, quality and date of any archaeological remains encountered
- c. Provide further information on the origins and development of Wednesbury from the medieval to the present day
- d. Contribute to the existing body of academic knowledge
- e. Make available to interested parties the results of the investigation (subject to restrictions of confidentiality).

3. Method statement

3.1 *General archaeological method*

- 3.1.1 This applies to all relevant cases below.
- 3.1.2 The trench positions and survey grid will be tied into features shown on the Ordnance Survey 1:2500 mapping. A temporary site bench mark would be set up on site using the nearest surviving Ordnance Datum (where possible).
- 3.1.3 All archaeological features will be recorded in plan at a scale of 1:20, and photographed, using B&W negative and colour slide film (35mm), following cleaning. A trench plan will be produced at 1:50. Selected sections of the trenches would be drawn at 1:10.
- 3.1.4 Trenches will be excavated by a machine with a toothless ditching bucket under continuous supervision by a qualified archaeologist. After removal of overburden and topsoil, exposed subsoils or archaeological horizons will be cleaned for planning.
- 3.1.5 At least 50% of all features totally contained within the trenches will be excavated. A sample of at least 20% will be dug of linear or large features extending beyond the bounds of the trenches and, where substantial 19th- or 20th-century masonry

foundations are encountered within trenches, test pits will be dug by hand to establish the presence/absence and condition of earlier remains.

- 3.1.6 A hand auger may also be used to establish the sequence of deposits in areas where further excavation is not being carried out. The auger has a head diameter of 100mm, which is usually sufficient for the collection of soil samples, and identification of relatively fine changes in stratigraphy.
- 3.1.7 A system of context records will be kept and numbered independently by trench. Recording will be in accordance with Archaeological Investigations Ltd's site manual. Registers will be kept for context records, photographs, drawings, small finds and samples on site.
- 3.1.8 General biological samples (c.30 litres) would be retained from archaeological deposits. Each sample would be floated to recover carbonised remains. A number of further samples which, based on assessment of the environmental remains, demonstrate good potential for environmental preservation will be assessed for plant macrofossils, insects and pollen. Specialist advice will be used to determine which samples to collect and assess.
- 3.1.9 All pottery, metal artefacts and stratified bone would be retained for further analysis. Any ceramic building material would usually be retained although if large quantities are present (>10 pieces per context) then only diagnostic pieces/or a representative sample would be retained.
- 3.1.10 The code of conduct of the Institute of Field Archaeologists will be adhered to.

3.2 *Documentary research*

The following sources will be consulted:

- Sandwell Sites and Monuments Record
- Local Studies Section, Smethwick Library
- Geology and soils maps.

3.3 *Trial trenching*

A sample by trenching of 5% of the development area is proposed for the site. This has been provided as five trenches of 10m length, each measuring 2.00m in width, at a safe distance from existing buildings. **Trench positions may vary according to the results of the documentary research and factors local to the site (e.g. service locations).** Any variations to the indicated trench locations will be agreed with the Borough Archaeologist for Sandwell MBC.

3.4 *Schedule of drawings (preliminary)*

Drawing	Scale
Trench location plans	1:500
Trench plans	1:20/1:50
Plans of archaeological features	1:20
Selected sections of trenches	1:10
Sections through archaeological features	1:10/1:20.

4. Fieldwork resources and programming

4.1 Staffing and equipment

4.1.1 The project team would comprise the following members of staff:

Project manager – Niall Oakey (26 years+ professional field experience)

Based in Hereford and responsible for the over all co-ordination of the development of the project along with determining strategies and reassessing priorities in consultation with the project supervisors, specialists, monitors and client.

Project officer - (at least three years experience in field archaeology)

Responsible for the day to day running of the site work and adherence to the agreed project design and risk assessment along with the assignment of priorities to individual project staff following consultation with the project manager.

2 Site assistants (at least 12 months experience)

Responsible for the excavation of deposits/features, collection of samples. Also responsible for the accurate production of drawn and written records.

1 Post excavation assistant - finds/environmental processing.

Due to the vagaries of our current work programme, it is impossible to nominate individual members of field staff at present.

4.1.2 Specialists

Faunal remains – Andy Hammon

Charred remains – Angela Monkton

Pollen/plant macrofossils - James Greig

Insects - David Smith (Birmingham)

Medieval pottery – Kath Crooks (AIL)

Roman Pottery – Dr Jerry Evans

Post-medieval and modern pottery – Jon Goodwin (Stoke-on-Trent Archaeology)

Industrial - Jerry McDonnell (Bradford).

4.1.3 Specialist equipment

Soil auger (2m depth/100mm head)

Floatation tank.

4.1.4 Site accommodation/security

A toilet may need to be placed on site and fencing will be required around the edges of the site.

4.2 Draft Programme

Documentary research

1 day

Trial trenching on site

up to 5 days

Report for above

4 weeks.

5. Consolidation of the site archive

5.1 Paper records

- 5.1.1 All records will be checked and catalogued. The site supervisor and staff will ensure that the site archive is complete and all registers are up to date.
- 5.1.2 On completion of the fieldwork the entire paper record will be copied and the copy held in a repository other than the building in which the post excavation work is being carried out.

5.2 Finds

- 5.2.1 Pottery
All pottery will be washed and marked with the site code and context number.
- 5.2.2 Bone
All bone will be washed and stored in labelled bags. Any bone tools will be marked and bagged separately.
- 5.2.3 Metal artefacts
All metal artefacts will be X-rayed and stored under appropriate humidity conditions.
- 5.2.4 Glass
A conservator will be contacted if any glass is recovered and they will ensure that the material is stored and adequately consolidated.
- 5.2.5 Industrial waste
The conservator's and industrial specialist's advice will be sought over the treatment and storage of industrial waste.

5.3 Inventory

An inventory of the site archive will be produced and this will be available to all members of the project team.

5.4 Report

The site report will amalgamate the results from specialist work and the excavation and research. A plan and section for each trench will be produced as well as an overall site plan showing the location of the trenches in relation to surrounding features. The site will be assessed for local, regional and national importance (on the criteria set out in Annex 4 of PPG 16) and a strategy formulated to mitigate the impact of the development on the archaeological resource.

6. Report specification

The interim report will contain the following elements and will not be paginated but each section is numbered for easy reference:

- Contents page
- Summary
- Introduction
- Background information
- Statement of aims and methods employed
- Description of results
- Discussion of results integrated with any other information
- Assessment of the local, regional and national importance of the site
- Assessment of the impact of the development on the surviving archaeological resource
- Formulation of a mitigation strategy, if appropriate
- Conclusion
- Appendices containing specialist reports, site archive information, archaeological brief, written scheme of investigation and summary sheet.

Eight copies will be provided for planning purposes and a copy on CD-ROM.

7. Publication

It is envisaged that the results of the work will be published in either a regional or local journal depending on the relative importance of their findings. This will be determined after the completion of the interim report.

RISK ASSESSMENT

1. Company/Location: Archaeological Investigations Ltd
Unit 1, Premier Business Park
Westfields Trading Estate
Faraday Road
Hereford HR4 9NZ

2. Date of assessment: 20/12/05

3. Activity/situation: Archaeological works at Wednesbury

4. Identification of hazards/action to note

4.1 Heavy plant

All staff to be issued with safety boots, hard hats and vis jackets and to wear these at all times on site. Visitors to be issued with hard hats/vis jackets. Access to areas where plant is working to be restricted to members of the client's agents and company staff only. Staff should note that they must keep out of the swing arc of the machine. Never approach a machine from behind. Always ensure the driver of the machine has seen you before approaching a machine.

4.2 Fall on level

Staff should be aware that soil and gravel is slippery when wet. Take extra care when working in the wet. Never run on site. Grid pegs should be clearly identifiable and safely protected.

4.3 Use of ladder/fall from height

No one is to climb the step ladder for the purpose of taking photographs without it being placed on firm level ground and another member of staff supporting the ladder all the time it is in use.

4.4 Use of hand tools

Staff using hand tools must be aware that lack of care can result in injury. Always regularly clean soil off tools. Take short rests if feeling fatigued. Ensure no one is working within 2-3m of the maximum swing distance of picks, mattocks and shovels. If you are unfamiliar with any particular item of equipment then ask a supervisor.

4.5 Deep holes

Be aware of the location of the sides of excavation trenches. All trenches should be marked 1m from their edge with bunting. Ramped access should be provided at one end of each trench. Shoring and fencing will be provided where necessary.

4.6 Underground services

A plan of known services will need to be obtained prior to work commencing from the site agent.

4.7 Lifting soil sacks/equipment

Do not lift anything that because of its size or weight is likely to cause you injury.
Remember:

Keep a straight back

Take the strain with your thigh muscles

Keep your fingers clear of edges and trapping areas

If you are lifting with someone else ensure that you both work as a team - notifying each other when to lift or lay the item to rest.

4.8 Contaminated ground

The site is not known to be contaminated but never the less staff should wash hands before eating or any other hand to mouth activity.

5. *Items assessed which present low level risk*

5.1 Bad weather

Come equipped with enough clothing and waterproofs for bad weather.

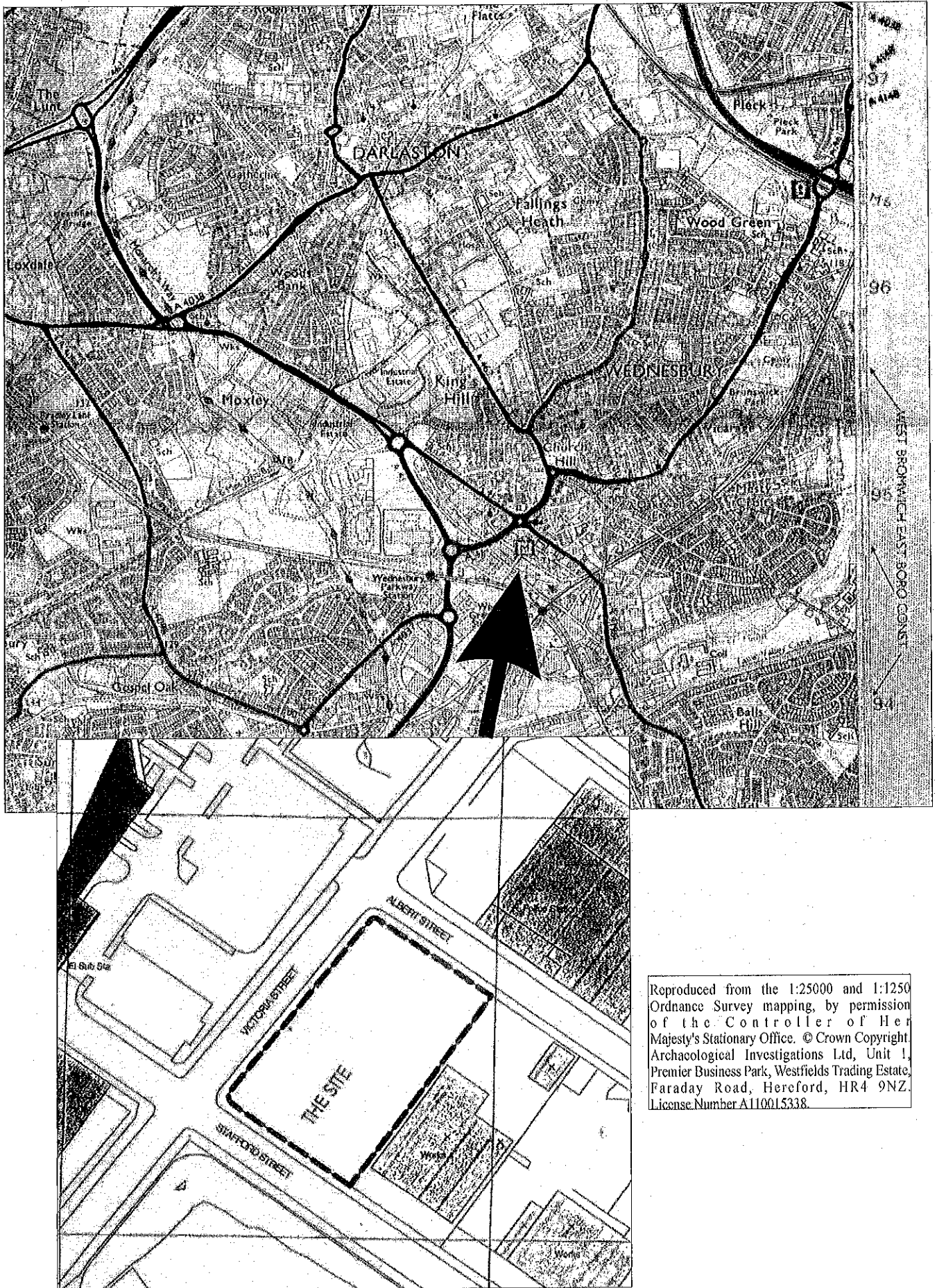
Appendix 3: Sandwell MBC SMR Summary Sheet

SANDWELL MBC SMR
SUMMARY SHEET

Site name/Address: Victoria Street, Wednesbury	
Borough: Sandwell	NGR: SO 9842 9471
Type of Work: Archaeological Watching Brief	Site Code: WSVS05
Contractor: Archaeological Investigations Ltd	Date of Work: July 2006
Location of Finds/Curating Museum: Wednesbury	
Title of Report: Land at Victoria Street/Albert Street, Wednesbury, Sandwell. An Archaeological Watching Brief (Hereford Archaeology Series 724)	
SUMMARY OF FIELDWORK RESULTS: Observations took place of the grubbing out of tree roots and other groundworks associated with the development of a health centre at the junctions of Victoria Street, Albert Street and Stafford Street, Wednesbury. All operations were restricted to introduced and dumped material. No significant Archaeological or natural deposits were encountered or were likely to be affected by the works.	
Author of Summary: N.J. Oakey	Date of Summary: 20 th July 2006

Figures

1. Site location
2. Extract from Yates's map of 1769
3. Extract from 1:2500 Ordnance Survey First Edition, 1890
4. Extract from 1:2500 Ordnance Survey, 1937
5. Root hole after removal of tree (4.7.06)
6. Clearance to formation levels for new build (10.7.06).



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 Ordnance Survey mapping, by permission
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 Archaeological Investigations Ltd, Unit 1,
 Premier Business Park, Westfields Trading Estate,
 Faraday Road, Hereford, HR4 9NZ.
 License Number A110015338.

Figure 1. Site location.

SITE

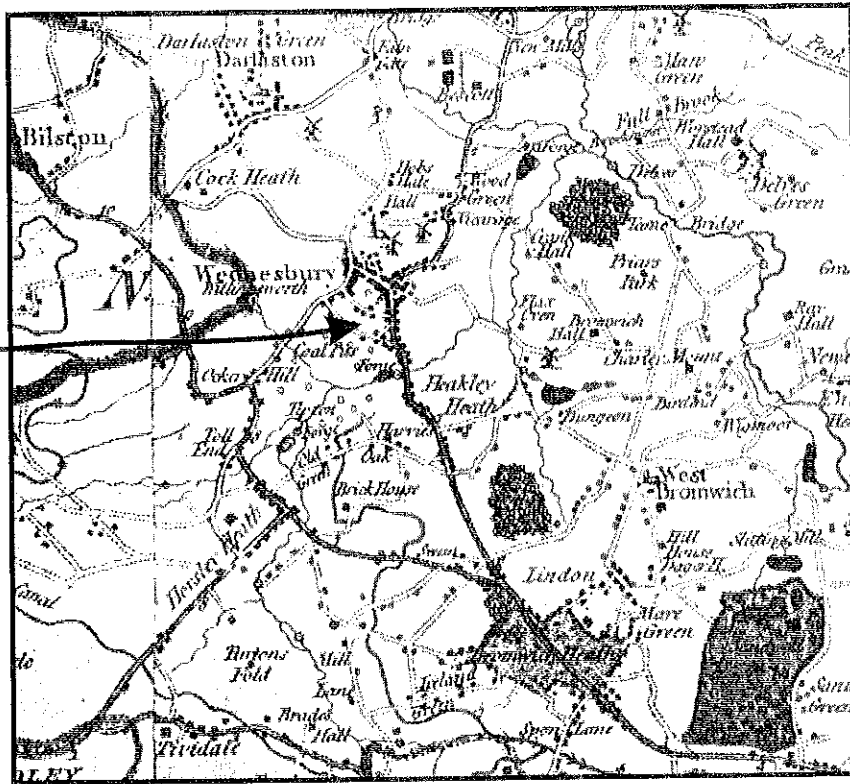


Figure 2. Extract from Yates's map of 1769.

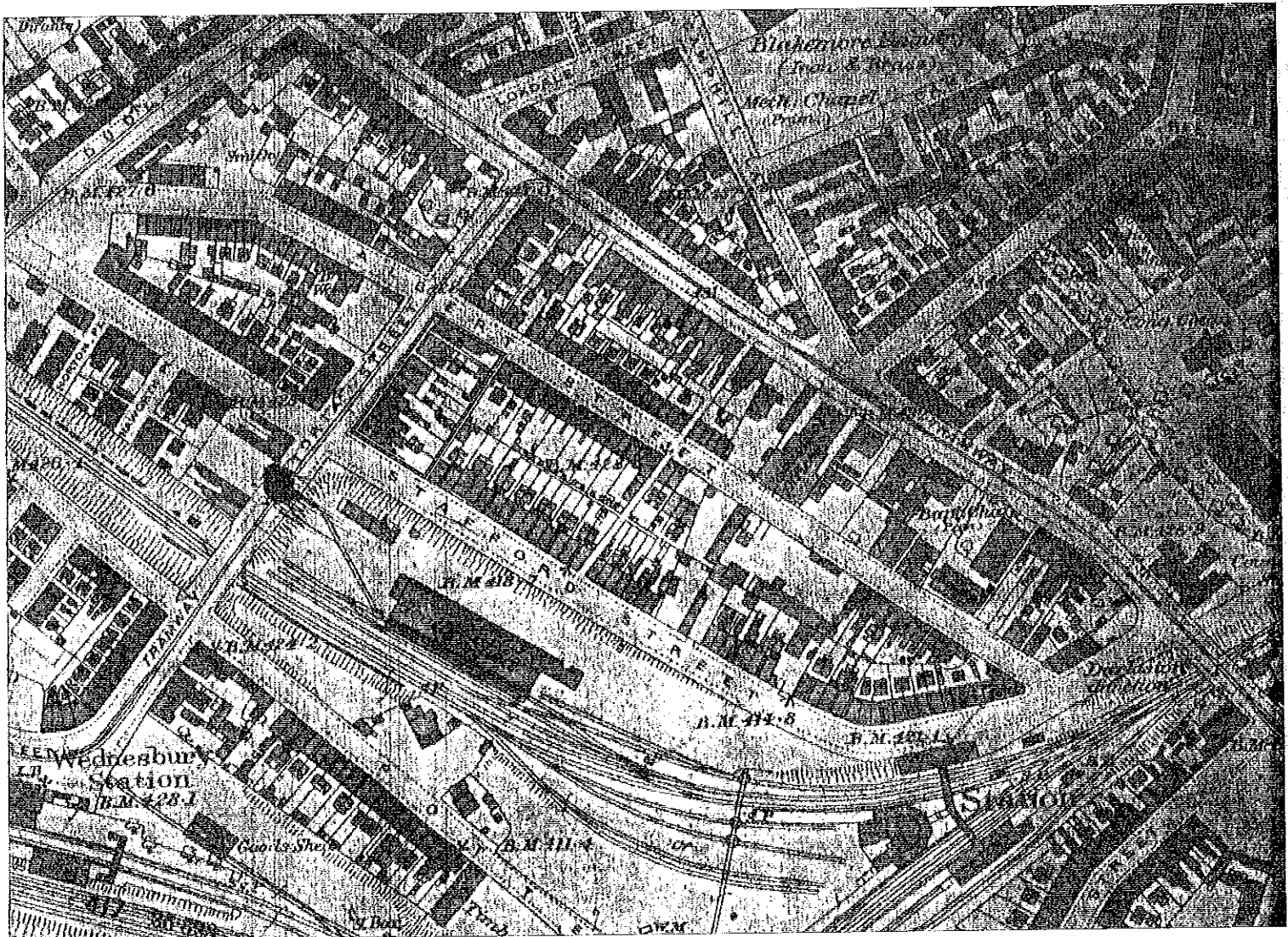


Figure 3. Extract from 1:2500 Ordnance Survey First Edition, 1890.

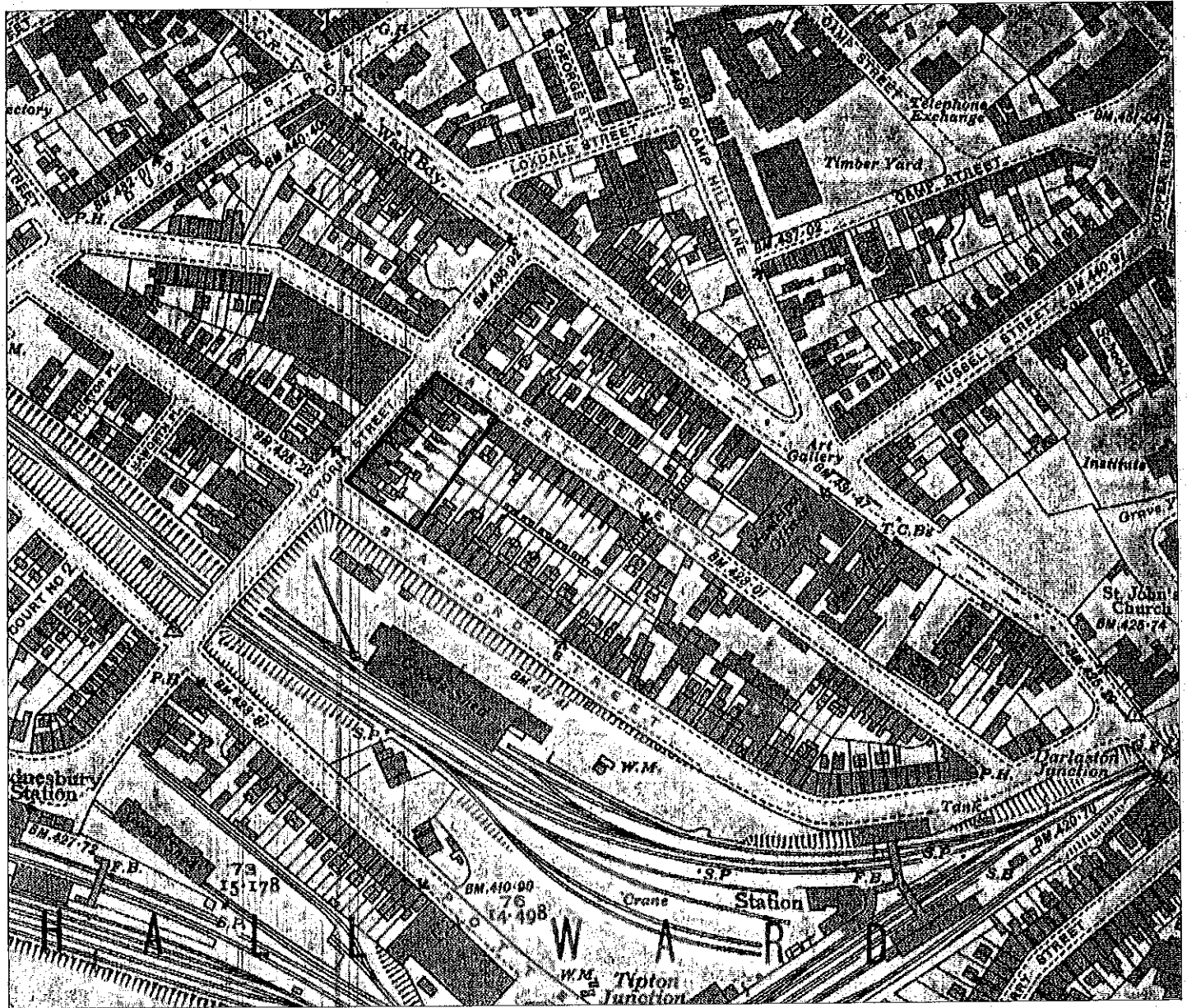


Figure 4. Extract from 1:2500 Ordnance Survey, 1937.

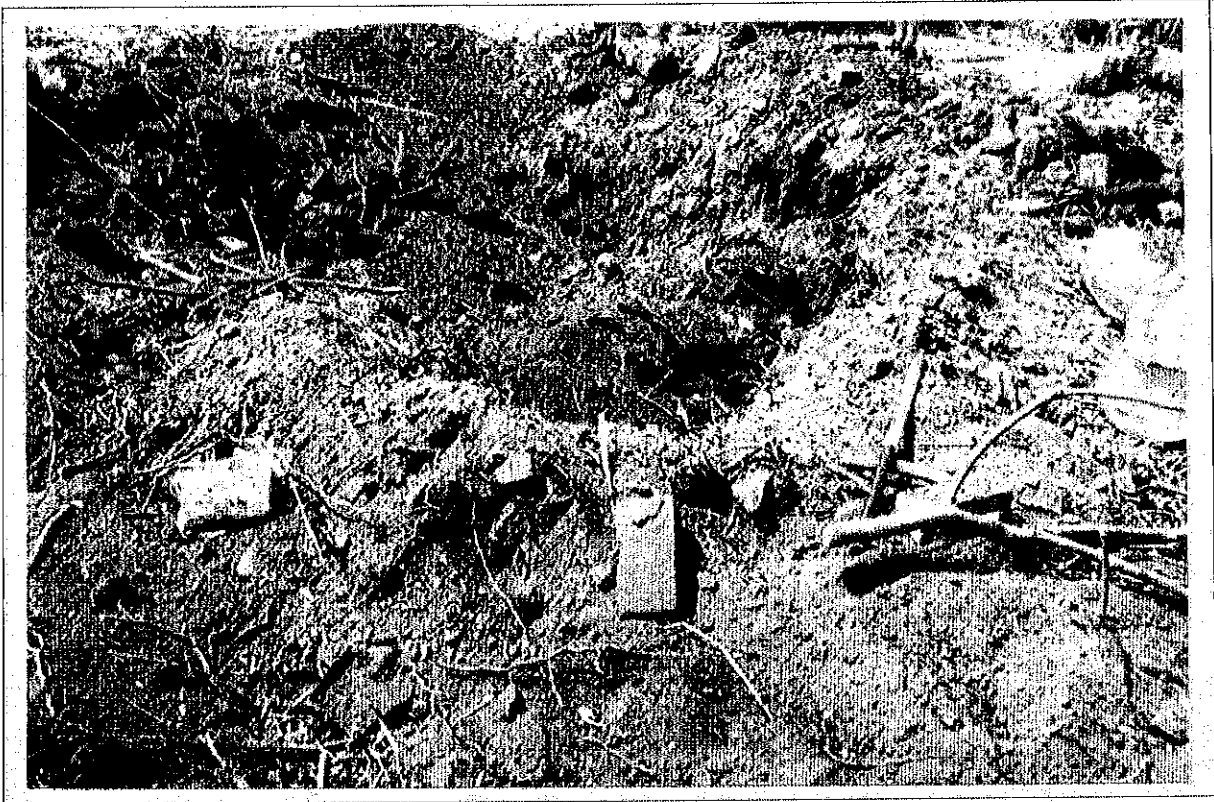


Figure 5. Root hole after removal of tree (4.7.06).



Figure 6. Clearance to formation levels for new build (10.7.06).