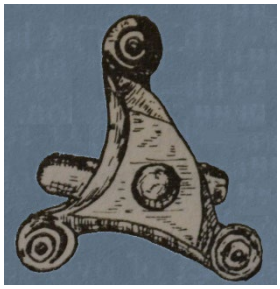

Ambrey Archaeology Ltd

Archaeological Monitoring and Recording (watching brief) at Land off Mill Street, Cannock, Staffordshire

Version 1

Ambrey Archaeology reference: AMB291

Planning reference: CH/21/0274

Date: 24th March 2025

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Summary

Archaeological monitoring was carried out by Ambrey Archaeology of land off Mill Street, Cannock, Staffordshire (NGR 398216, 310032).

It was commissioned by Krzysztof Pucula of TCL Structures (UK) Ltd., who have been granted renewal of expired planning approval for the erection of 5No. two storey units with integral residential parking at the site by Cannock Chase Council.

The site lies close to the historic core of the town of Cannock in an area of former burgage plots to the rear of properties fronting Mill Street. Following recommendations from Staffordshire County Council's Historic Environment Team, permission for the works was granted, subject to conditions, including a programme of archaeological works.

An initial stage of the works undertaken in January 2025 comprised an archaeological evaluation of the site in which two trenches were opened. In one trench within the access area to the proposed building, a row of four Medieval pits and a post medieval pit were recorded. This was interpreted as a probable boundary to one burgage plot.

Following production of a report and further correspondence with Staffordshire County Council's Historic Environment Team it was established that archaeological monitoring of groundworks associated with the development was an appropriate further stage of archaeological mitigation.

The works were carried out in March 2025. Excavation of the foundation trenches was undertaken using two mechanical excavators fitted with toothless buckets; an archaeological presence was maintained throughout.

The deposits comprised the tarmac base of the car park which overlay a considerable depth of topsoil with occasional lenses of burnt material. This in turn overlay a layer of mixed subsoil derived from the natural substrate which itself comprised orange Devensian till of sands and gravels.

No archaeologically significant artefacts or features were recorded. It is thought that, although evidence for backplot activity such as waste refuse pits or the remains of structures may survive within the site, this might be closer to the buildings fronting Mill Street. The depth of topsoil, however, is testament to the long period of time in which the plot has been in use.

Contents

1. Background

This report describes the results of archaeological monitoring, carried out by Ambrey Archaeology, of the excavation of foundation trenches at land off Mill Street, Cannock, Staffordshire (NGR 398216, 310032).

It was commissioned by Krzysztof Pucula of TCL Structures (UK) Ltd who have been granted renewal of expired planning approval (CH 16/269) for the erection of 5No. two storey units with integral residential parking at the site by Cannock Chase Council.

A desk-based assessment of the site (Allen Archaeology 2021) was prepared in support of the application, which identified a potential for the survival of buried deposits.

Permission for the works (ref. CH/21/0274) was granted, subject to conditions, including a programme of archaeological works. Correspondence with Shane Kelleher, County Archaeologist, Staffordshire County Council's Historic Environment Team, confirmed that an archaeological evaluation of the site through trial trenching (4% sample) was an appropriate initial stage of works to discharge the condition.

The evaluation was carried out in January 2025 and comprised the excavation of two trenches. In one trench excavated in the access area for the proposed building, four shallow pits or postholes were uncovered in a row, from which Medieval and post Medieval pottery was recovered (Ambrey Archaeology 2025).

A report was produced and approved by Staffordshire County Council's Historic Environment Team.

Further correspondence with Shane Kelleher established that archaeological monitoring and recording of groundworks required for the development was an appropriate further stage of archaeological works.

A Written Scheme of Investigation setting out a methodology and timescale for the required works was submitted and approved by Staffordshire County Council's Historic Environment Team.

2. Aims

The Chartered Institute for Archaeologists defines archaeological monitoring and recording (previously known as 'watching brief') as a formal programme of observation, investigation and recording conducted during works carried out for non-archaeological reasons, where there is a possibility that archaeological deposits may be disturbed or destroyed. This will be within a specified area or site on land, in an inter-tidal zone or under water (CIfA 2023, *Standard for archaeological monitoring and recording*).

Staffordshire County Council defines the objectives of archaeological monitoring and recording as:

- to allow, within the resources available, the preservation by record of archaeological deposits, the presence and nature of which could not be established (or established with sufficient accuracy) in advance of development or other potentially disruptive works;
- 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 archaeological monitoring and recording itself are not sufficient to support treatment to a satisfactory and proper standard.

3. Site location and topography

The proposed development site (Fig. 1) is located in Cannock, in the district of Cannock Chase, in the county of Staffordshire. The site of approximately 0.09ha lies on the east side of the town centre to the south-east of Mill Street and north-east of the A34 at NGR 398216, 310032. It is presently in use as a car park accessed from Mill Street. The parish church of St Lukes stands 110m to the north-west.

The car park which is at approximately 138m AOD slopes gently to the south-east and is therefore slightly below Mill Street. To the north-west are shops fronting Mill Street and to the south-west the rear of buildings fronting Walsall Road. To the north-east and south-east is the car park for Morrison's supermarket, which is at least a metre lower than the level of the site, presumably having been reduced and levelled when the supermarket was constructed.

Bedrock at the site comprises Pennine Middle Coal Measures Formation, with overlying tills formed during the Devensian glaciation (BGS 2025).

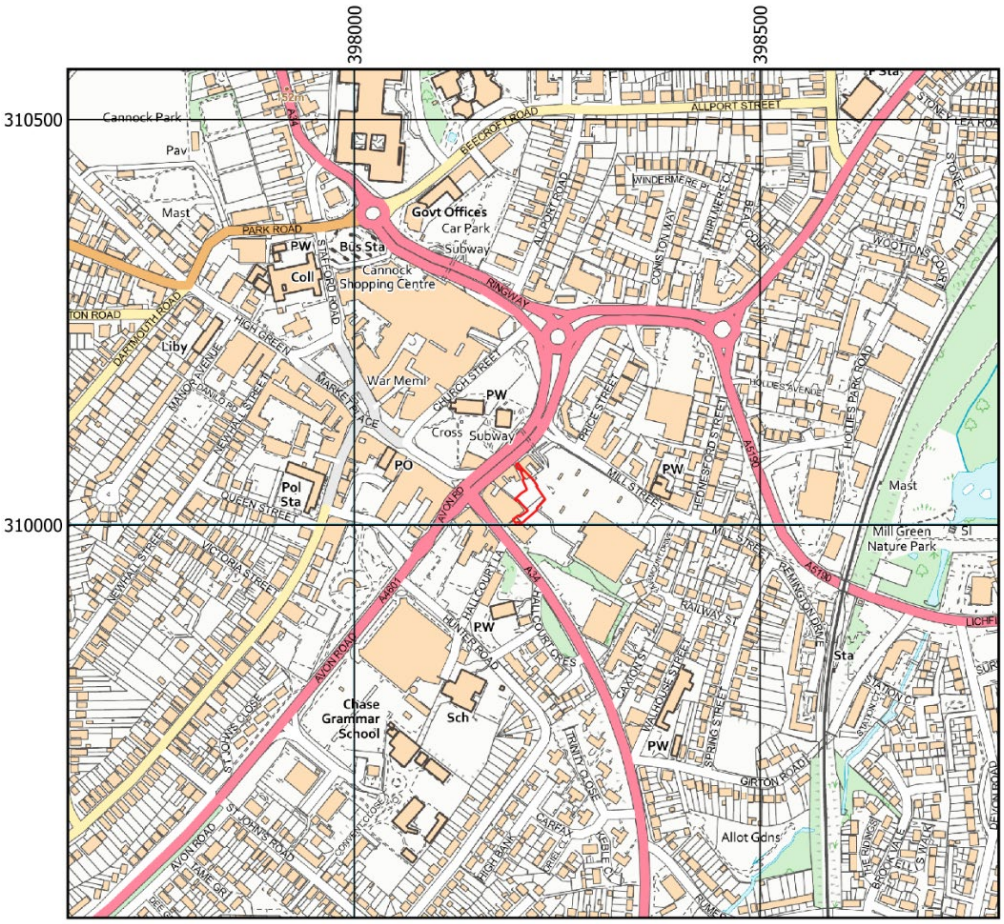

Figure 1. Site location

4. Historic and Archaeological context

A desk-based assessment of the site was prepared by Allen Archaeology (Allen Archaeology 2016), however in view of the time which has elapsed since this was prepared, an updated search of the Staffordshire Historic Environment Record with a 250m radius of the centre of the site was obtained for the evaluation stage. The desk-based assessment also considered a slightly different site boundary to that of the current application.

Cannock is first mentioned in the Domesday survey of 1086 as being a relatively small manor held by the King although freeman Aelfric also held a carucate of land there (Allen Archaeology DBA). The place-name Cannock probably derives from the Old English *cnocc* meaning 'hillock'. It was situated at the heart of the Royal Forest of Cannock from at least the end of the 11th century.

The right to hold a market in Cannock was granted in 1259. Two possible locations of market places have been identified, one of which is about 50m to the west of the development site. This is considered likely to be the site of the unofficial market prior to the granting of the charter and thus may represent an earlier focus of the settlement of Cannock. It was shown as a triangular parcel of land on the 1841 Tithe map at the point where Mill Street meets Market Place.

The site lies slightly to the east of Cannock town centre 130m to the south-east of the medieval church of St Lukes (09338 - MST5204) and 75m to the west of the original marketplace formed by the junction of Mill Street and Walsall Road. It lies slightly to the east of the Conservation Area of Cannock Town Centre (DST5607).

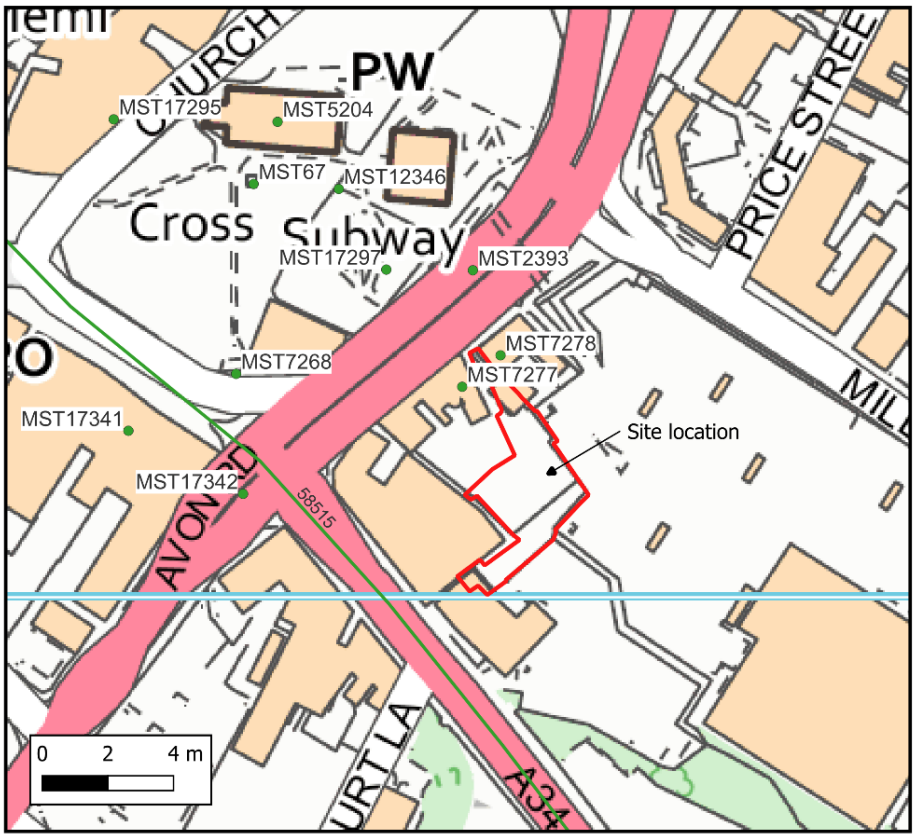

Figure 2. Monuments included on Staffordshire HER in the vicinity of the site

Nos 8 and 8a Mill Street to the immediate west of the site are a listed late 18th century House with modern shop fronts (09359 - MST7277, list entry 1060221). No 10 Mill Street immediately to the north is a Grade II listed 18th Century house of two storeys (09361 - MST7278, list entry 1344629). These buildings may stand on the site of earlier structures and archaeological evidence associated with earlier settlement in the form of domestic and/or industrial activity (e.g. waste pits, property boundaries etc) may survive within the site.

The line of the A34 to the south-west of the site is a late 18th century turnpike road connecting Stafford, Churchbridge, Uttoxeter and Newport (58515 - MST22381).

The 1775 Staffordshire County Map shows the approximate location of the site as open ground to the rear of buildings on the east side of Mill Street whilst the 1841 Cannock Tithe map shows the larger part of the site as part of a yard or garden attached to the buildings fronting Mill Street in more detail. Late 19th Century and 20th Century Ordnance Survey maps similarly show the plot as an open area.

The north-western section of the site lies withing the Historic Landscape Character Zone HST1023 which describes the historic settlement core of the town. The central part of the site lies within zone HST1024 describing redeveloped pre 1880s settlement.

The north-western part of the site lies within the Historic Urban Character Area of St Luke's Church and Mill Street, Cannock (DST6279, HUCA1) whilst the majority of the site to the south-east is within Walsall Road and Mill Street (DST6281, HUCA 2). These areas have been identified as the possible location of the earliest phase of settlement within the town, possibly forming part of the planned medieval town. They saw little development in the 20th Century and therefore have the potential to aid understanding of the development of the town which would address the question of whether Mill Street was the focus of the earliest settlement.

Evaluation of the site was carried out in January 2025 by Ambrey Archaeology Ltd. Two trenches were excavated, one in the location of the proposed buildings and another in an area for access to the north. Five features were recorded in the northern trench. Four comprised shallow pits or postholes aligned north-west by south-east in a row. The features were similar in plan and fill suggesting they were contemporary with each other. Pottery recovered from two of the features was domestic in nature; one was part of a pipkin, used for cooking over a fire and the other was probably from a fine jug and they dated from the late 12th to early 14th century.

The alignment of the pits or postholes and a difference in the depth of topsoil from one side of the trench to the other suggest that they could represent the boundary of a burgage plot which would have run perpendicular to Mill Street with differing cultivation depths on either side of the fence.

A later pit with a distinctly darker fill was also recorded close to the northern end of the line of pits. Pottery and tile were recovered; the tile had a date range of 13th to 17th century and the pottery was Midlands Blackware, dated to the 17th to early 18th century.

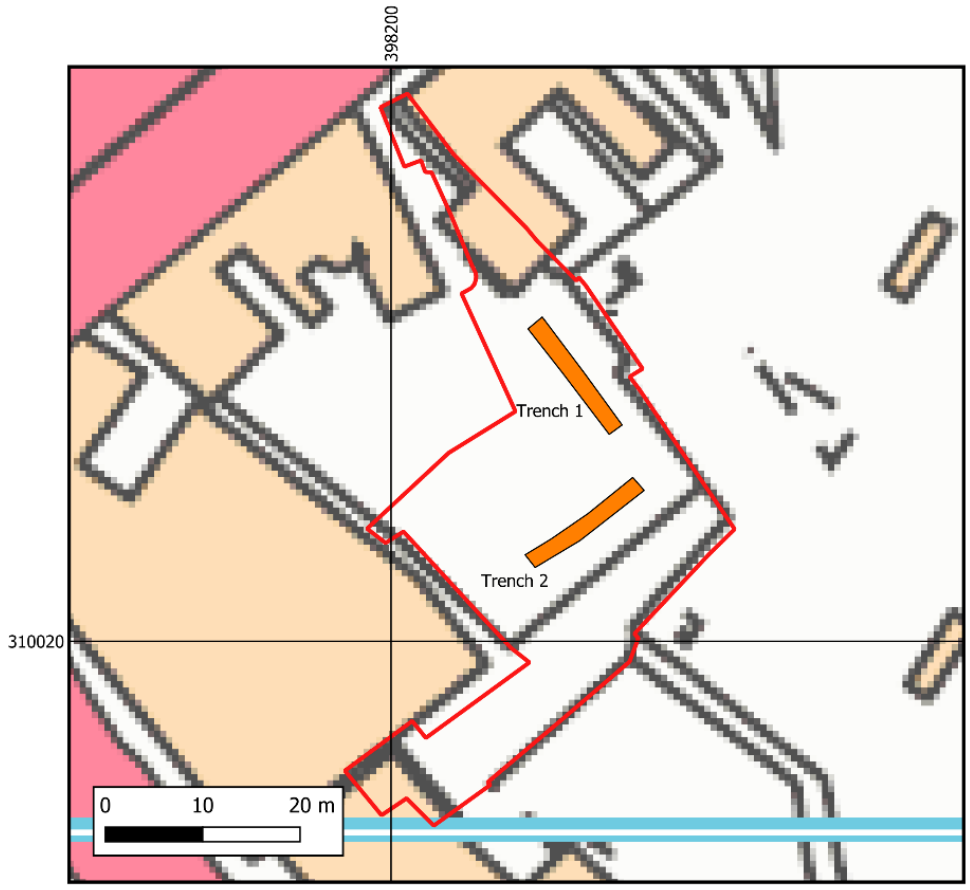

Figure 3. Locations of evaluation trenches

5. Methods

5.1 Fieldwork

Archaeological monitoring was carried out by Tom Rogers MSc, MCIfA on 12th-14th March 2025 in cold, bright weather. All works were carried out following the requirements of *Staffordshire County Council 2024 Archaeology Standard 2024 v1.0* and in particular *Staffordshire County Council 2023 Model Brief; archaeological monitoring and recording v1.0.* They also followed guidance set out in the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists 2023 *Universal guidance for archaeological monitoring and recording.*

Prior to archaeological monitoring the tarmac layer was broken and scrub vegetation removed from the southern section of the site (Plate 1). Excavation of the foundation trenches was undertaken using two mechanical excavators fitted with toothless buckets and under archaeological supervision (Plate 2) although one excavator was generally employed with storage and removal of topsoil.

An archaeological presence was maintained throughout the excavation of all foundations. It is understood from the contractor that the buildings will be supplied from services which will run at ground level and therefore require no further excavations.

Access to the excavations was good and the natural substrate was visible immediately following excavation although particularly to the south, the layer was soon obscured by the material falling from the loose topsoil above.

Context recording was undertaken using context sheets and other pro-forma recording sheets. A photograph register and day record sheets were maintained. Photographs were taken with a Nikon D3200 SLR camera set at 12 megapixels in high resolution TIFF (uncompressed) format using 1m and 2m ranging rods for scale.

Finds comprising three fragmented glass bottles were lifted, bagged and labelled. Material such as white glazed pottery, brick fragments and metal were not retained. No deposits were uncovered which were considered suitable for environmental analysis.

5.2 Post excavation works

Following excavation, all context sheets were checked and cross referenced. Survey material was downloaded and processed using QGIS 3.34 Grenoble and AutoCAD LT 2023.

Provision will be made to upload the digital archive of the project via OASIS (project id.: ambreyar2-532118).

6. Stratigraphic results

A plan showing the location of the excavated foundations is presented in Figure 4 and a plan of the Figure 5 foundations with context information is presented in Figure 5.

In the northern half of the area of foundations, the upper layer was the tarmac surface of the car park (1001) which rested on a compact grey sand and gravel imported roadstone base (1002) to a general depth of 0.2m. Beneath this was a loose, orange-red sand and gravel (1003) interpreted as material imported to level the surface prior to laying of the car park surface (Plate 3).

Below this, and present to the surface in the southern part of the foundations beyond the limit of the car park, topsoil (1004) comprised a soft to moderately compact, dark brown to black sandy silt with frequent charcoal flecks and lumps and small pebbles. In the southern half of the foundations there were frequent roots (Plates 4-6) and the soil was looser, and drier due to recently removed vegetation in this area. To the north the layer darker (Plate 7) and firmer although to a degree this can be attributed to moisture content. The layer included white glazed pottery, brick fragments, occasionally lenses of burnt material, likely the location of former bonfires. White glazed pottery, brick fragments and waste metal objects were present within this layer and three bottles were recovered from the south-western arm of the foundations at a depth of 0.5m although not within a discernible cut.

In general, the topsoil was present to a depth of 0.75m and in the central part of the site it overlay (1005) a moderately compact, orange sand, with frequent cobbles, small pebbles and charcoal flecking. As in the evaluation (context 205) this was interpreted as a subsoil or interface layer with the natural substrate. This was deeper (up to 0.3m) in the central part of the excavations (Plate 8). In the evaluation a fragment of pipe stem was recovered from this layer. In the south-eastern arm of the foundations, a high voltage electric cable was present, and a plastic foul pipe ran the length of the north-eastern arm (Plate 9).

In the south of the site, the topsoil directly overly the natural substrate, generally at a depth of one metre. This was a firm, mid-brown to orange sand and gravel, with frequent pebbles and lenses of bright orange or red sand interpreted as the Devensian till mapped in this area by the BGS. The

foundations exceeded the depth of this layer, particularly in the north-eastern arm (Plate 10) which provided a good cross section of the layer.

A similar sequence to the rest of the site was recorded in a series of pits which will form the bases to columns on the north-east edge of the excavations (Plate 11).

Plate 12 shows the foundations fully excavated.

7. Finds analysis

Three bottles were recovered from topsoil (1004) and are shown in Plate 13. These are as follows:-

1. Half bottle of Benedictine Liqueur, invented in 1863
2. Hednesford Hills Mineral Water – early 20th century
3. Goffe and Sons Mineral Water of Sutton Coldfield – established 1837

It is not considered that these should be retained for museum accession.

8. Discussion

No features or artefacts of archaeological significance were recorded during archaeological monitoring of the foundations. Evaluation of the site identified archaeological features in the north-east part of the site, which were interpreted as representing a possible boundary to the burgage plot but no similar activity was recorded in the area of the foundations as in Trench 2 of the evaluation.

The lack of features may reflect the distance of the proposed buildings from the street frontage as it might be expected that backplot activity such as waste disposal pits, the remains of outhouses or other structures and small-scale industrial activity, might be more prevalent closer to the rear of the houses fronting Mill Street. The potential for the survival of buried features in this part of the site remains.

The use of this plot or plots, probably as a garden and for waste disposal over a number of centuries is reflected in the depth of the topsoil (1004). The layer was very mixed in places, as suggested by the depth from which early 19th and early 20th century bottles were recovered. This may have in part been a result of root action from the former area of scrub in this part of the site.

9. Acknowledgements

Ambrey Archaeology would like to thank the following for their assistance in completing this project; Krzysztof Pucula for commissioning the works and arranging access and Shane Kelleher for monitoring the project.

10. Bibliography

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Ambrey Archaeology 2025 *Archaeological Evaluation of land off Mill Street, Cannock, Staffordshire* ref AMB251 unpublished report

BGS 2025 GeoIndex Onshore available online at:

https://www.bgs.ac.uk/map-viewers/geoindex-onshore/ (accessed January 2025)

Chartered Institute for Archaeologists 2023, *Standard for archaeological monitoring and recording*

Chartered Institute for Archaeologists 2023, *Universal Guidance for Archaeological monitoring and recording*

Staffordshire County Council 2024 *Archaeology Standard 2024 v1.0*

Staffordshire County Council 2023 *Model Brief; archaeological field evaluation v1.0*

Figures 4 and 5

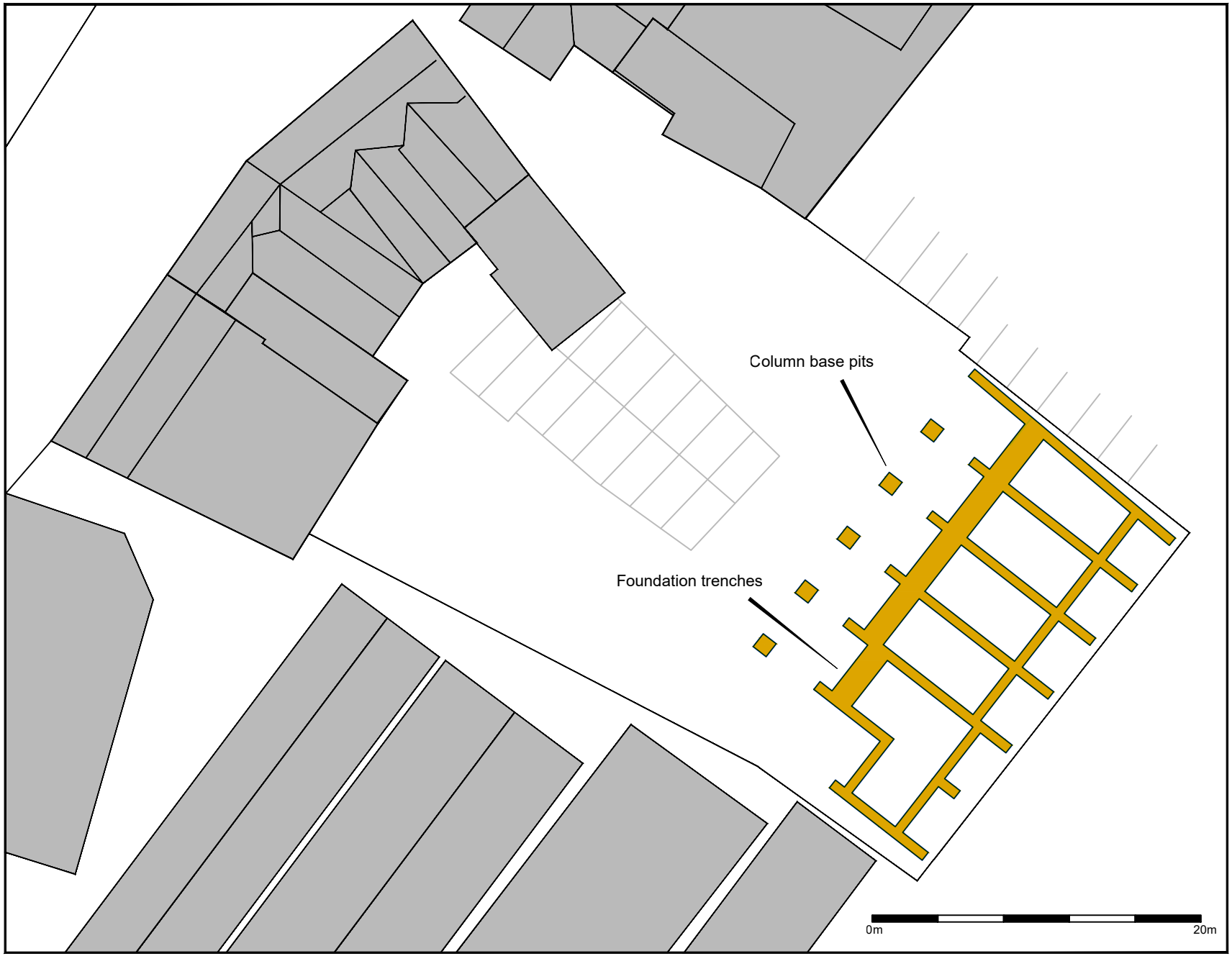

Figure 4. Location of excavations

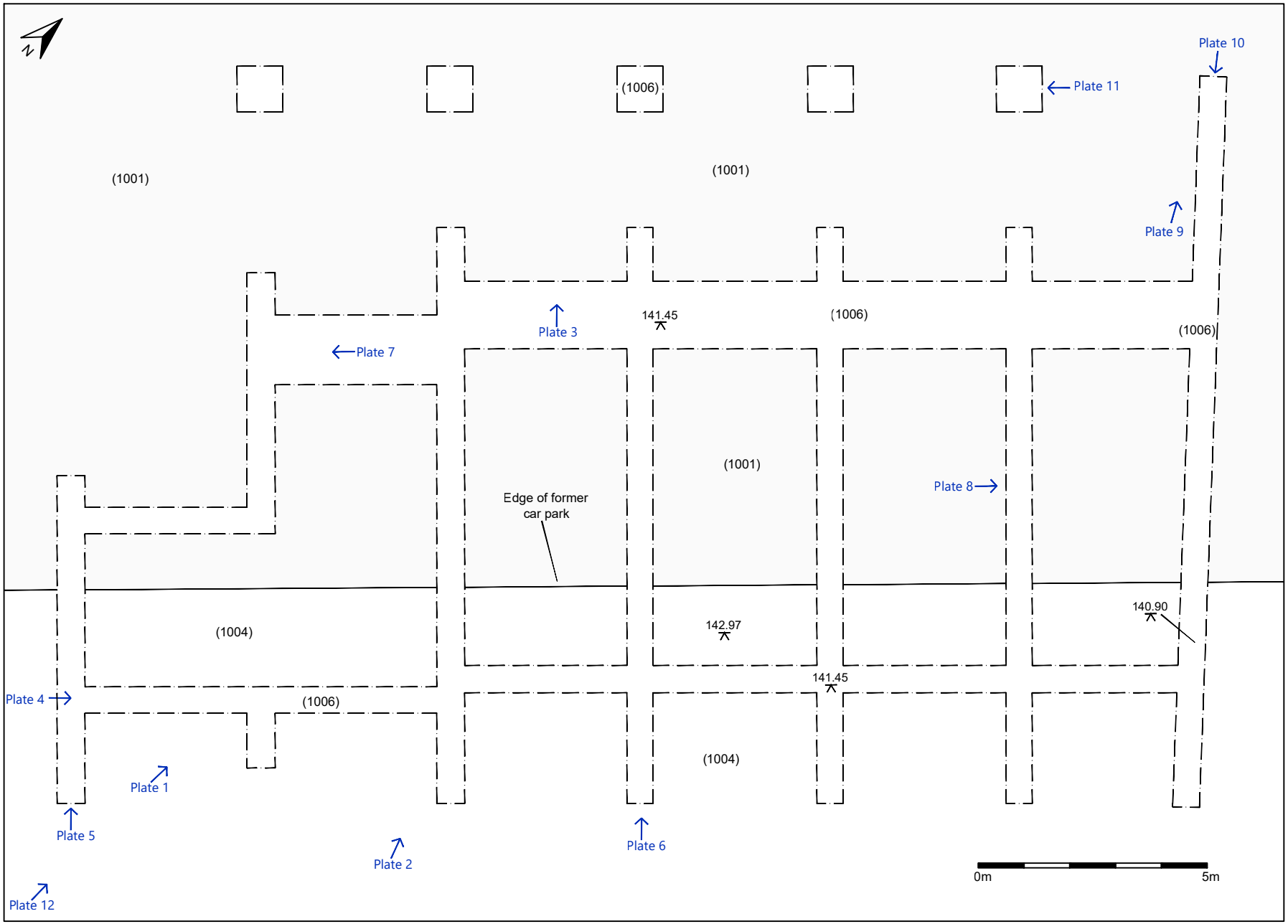

Figure 5. Plan of foundation trenches showing photograph directions

Plates

Plate 1. View north across site prior to excavations

Plate 2. Excavation of foundations in progress, view NNW

Plate 3. Section in north-western arm of foundation trenches, view north-west, scale 1m

Plate 4. View north-east along arm of foundation trench, scale 1m

Plate 5. South-western arm of foundations, view north-west, scale 1m

Plate 6. Central arm of foundation trenches, view north-west, scale 1m

Plate 7. Section of south-western edge of foundation trench, view south-west, scale 1m

Plate 8. Section in central part of foundation trenches showing thicker layer of subsoil (1006), view north-east, scale 1m

Plate 9. North-eastern arm of foundations under excavation, view north-west

Plate 10. North-eastern arm of foundations, view south-east, scale 2m

Plate 11. Line of foundation pits at north-east edge of site, view south-west, scale 2m

Plate 12. The site with foundation trenches completed, view north

Plate 13. Bottles recovered from Context 1004, scale 0.2m

Appendix 1 Context descriptions

Context	Depth	Description	Interpretation
1001	0.0 – 0.10m	Tarmac	Car park surface
1001	0.10-0.20m	Compact grey sand and gravel, sterile and uniform (type 2 roadstone)	Levelling compound for tarmac surface
1003	0.20 – 0.3m	Loose, orange-red sand and gravel, sterile in nature, as (102)	Levelling compound, part of car park construction
1004	0.0 – 0.75m (northern sections of foundations) 0.3 – 0.75m (southern section of foundations)	Soft to moderately compact, dark-brown to black sandy silt with frequent charcoal flecks and lumps, small pebbles and rooting particularly to the south. Contains white glazed pottery, brick fragments, waste metal, glass bottles and occasional lenses of ash and charcoal.	Garden soil
1005	0.75 – 1m	Moderately compact, orange sand, with frequent cobbles, small pebbles and charcoal flecking	Subsoil
1006	1m +	Firm, mid-brown to orange sand and gravel, poorly sorted. Contains pebbles, cobbles and small boulders with lenses of bright orange sand	Natural substrate

Appendix 2. Data management plan

Section 1: Project Administration

Project ID / OASIS ID
Ambrey Archaeology ref: AMB291 Oasis id: ambreyar2-532118
Project Name
Archaeological monitoring and recording of land off Mill Street, Cannock, Staffordshire
Project Description
Archaeological monitoring of the groundworks required for the erection of 5No. two storey units with integral residential parking at land off Mill Street, Cannock. Permission for the works (ref. CH/21/0274) was granted, subject to conditions including a programme of archaeological works. A previous archaeological evaluation established the presence of archaeological deposits of medieval and post medieval date. Correspondence with Staffordshire County Council's Historic Environment Team established the requirement for archaeological monitoring and recording of groundworks. The monitoring works were carried out in March 2025
Project Funder / Grant reference
Funds obtained from the property owners confirmed by signed agreement.
Project Manager
Tom Rogers
Principal Investigator / Researcher
Tom Rogers
Data Contact Person
Tom Rogers
Date DMP created
5th March 2025
Date DMP last updated

21st March 2025
Version
2
Related data management policies
CifA 2020 *Standard and Guidance for the creation, compilation, transfer and deposition of archaeological archives* Historic England, Chartered Institute for Archaeologists and DigVentures 2019 *Dig Digital; A guide to managing digital data generated from archaeological investigations*

Section 2: Data Collection

What data was collected
Completed pro forma recording sheets including sketches – comprising trench sheets, context sheets, day record sheets Digital photographs at 12mp quality Drawings on permatrace film at 1:10, 1:20 or 1:50 scale Information collected comprised 3 x day record sheets 4 x Trench Record Sheets 1 x photographic register 1 x Permatrace scale plan @ 1:100 scale 1 x .dxf file 31 digital photographs

How was the data collected or created?
Pro forma recording sheets were completed on site Photographs were taken with a Nikon 32000 SLR camera Drawings were completed on permatrace film.

Section 3: Documentation and metadata

What documentation and metadata will accompany the data?
The following registers were maintained:- - Photograph register

Section 4: Ethics and legal compliance

How will you manage any ethical, copyright and Intellectual Property Rights (IPR) issues?
An agreement confirming intellectual rights and copyright has been obtained. Copyright is addressed in Section 10 of the Written Scheme of Investigation.

Section 5: Data Security: Storage and Backup

How has the data been stored, accessed and backed up during the research?
Scanned paper records, drawings and photographs have been stored on a Network Attached Storage system on return to the office and backed up on a cloud data service.

Section 6: Selection and Preservation

Which data should be retained, shared, and/or preserved?
Scanned pro-forma recording sheets, drawings and photographs
What is the long-term preservation plan for the dataset?
The paper and digital archive will be deposited with the Potteries Museum and Art Gallery, Stoke on Trent including a copy of the final report. This archive will include all written, drawn, survey and photographic records relating directly to the investigations undertaken. A copy of the digital archive only will also be lodged with the Staffordshire Historic Environment Record.
Have you contacted the data repository?
A project initiation form has been completed and sent to Potteries Museum and Art Gallery, Stoke on Trent.
Have the costs of archiving been fully considered?
Yes, they are included in the project funding

Section 7: Data Sharing

How will you share the data and make it accessible?
The digital archive will be placed with the Archaeological Data Service.
Are any restrictions on data sharing required?
No

Section 8: Responsibilities

Who will be responsible for implementing the data management plan?
Tom Rogers