

CPAT Report No. 1602

# 32 Upper Church Street, Oswestry, Shropshire

Archaeological Watching Brief



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CLWYD-POWYS ARCHAEOLOGICAL TRUST

Client name: Morris Property  
 CPAT Project No: 2301  
 Project Name: 32 Upper Church Street, Oswestry  
 Grid Reference: SJ 2881 2920  
 County/LPA: Shropshire  
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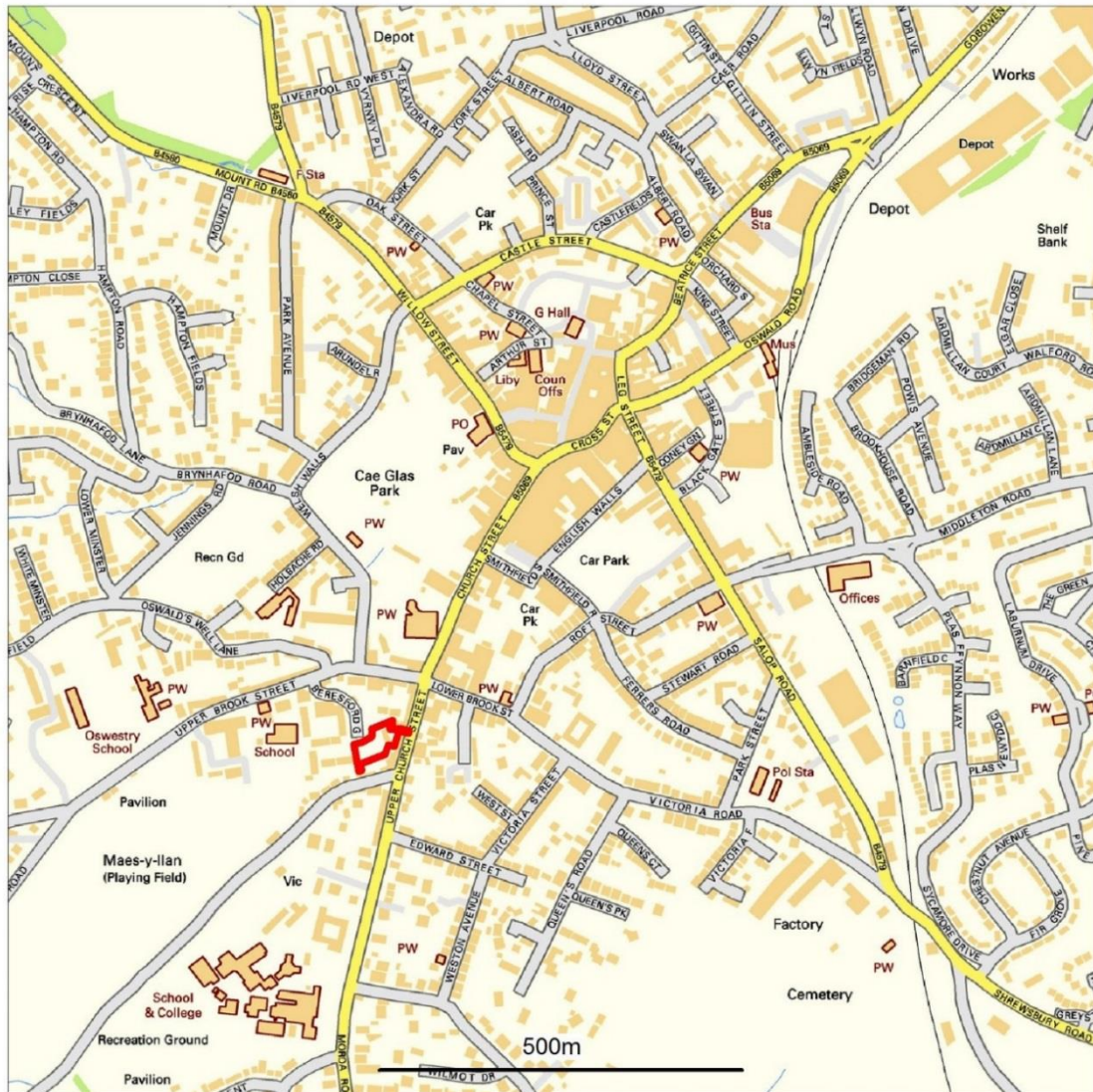
## Summary

In May and June 2018, the Clwyd Powys Archaeological Trust carried out an archaeological watching brief during groundworks for a housing development on land to the west of Upper Church Street in Oswestry. This followed earlier work which involved a desk-based assessment of the Development Area and an archaeological evaluation.

The watching brief revealed a single feature of medieval date, located at the north-eastern end of the southern block of housing, and some evidence of later features which collectively corresponded with the evidence provided by the evaluation. These features are thought to be related to the occupation of houses located along Upper Church Street, though the area of the northern block of housing, nearest to the street frontage, was devoid of comparable features, probably owing to disturbance from the construction of a modern house that was extant in 2015 but had been demolished prior to the commencement of the watching brief.

# 1 Introduction

- 1.1. The Clwyd-Powys Archaeological Trust (CPAT) was invited by Gareth Edwards of DPA Ltd, on behalf of Morris Property, to undertake a programme of archaeological mitigation in connection with a new housing development on land at 32 Upper Church Street, Oswestry (Planning Application 14/04694/FUL; SJ 2881 2920).



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Fig. 1: Location of the development area, outlined in red

- 1.2. An archaeological evaluation to determine the potential of the development area was conducted by CPAT (Hankinson 2015) and comprised a single trench along the edge of the footprint of the southern of the two proposed buildings (see Fig. 2, 5). Towards its north-east end, this trench revealed a series of sub-surface features, including gullies and pits, which appeared to date to the late medieval or early post-medieval periods. The distribution of features was such to suggest that the activity they represent was probably concentrated towards the street frontage, with these denoting the rearmost sections of potential burgrave plots.



- 1.3. The development is located in an area into which the town expanded, perhaps during the later medieval or early post-medieval periods but certainly by 1567, when it is recorded that the area was destroyed by fire. Given that the development plot probably incorporates a number of former burgage plots, it was thought that there was a reasonable potential for additional buried archaeological remains, such as rubbish pits and wells, to survive. Until a house (now demolished) was built there in the latter part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, it seemed that much of the plot remained unoccupied and therefore undamaged by development.
- 1.4. The buried features identified in the evaluation were at a depth of approximately 1.0m below the existing ground level and it was thought possible that they may be impacted upon by the excavation of strip foundations for the new buildings and any deep excavations. Accordingly, the Historic Environment Team at Shropshire Council, in their capacity as archaeological advisors to the local authority, determined that a programme of archaeological work was required to mitigate the potential impact on the archaeological resource. Full planning consent was granted with the inclusion of Condition 3, below:

*No development approved by this permission shall commence until the applicant, or their agents or successors in title, has secured the implementation of a programme of archaeological work in accordance with a written scheme of investigation (WSI). This written scheme shall be approved in writing by the Planning Authority prior to the commencement of works.*

*Reason: The development site is known to have archaeological interest*

- 1.5. A written scheme of investigation (CPAT WSI 1686) was compiled by CPAT following discussions with the archaeological curator and adopted with their agreement. This involved a watching brief that was carried out in three phases, as described below. Close archaeological supervision of these excavations was maintained throughout.

## **2 Watching Brief**

- 2.1. The groundworks comprised an overall reduction in order to level the site, followed by excavation of foundation footings for two blocks of housing (Fig. 2, Nos 1&2) and a trench for an attenuation tank located in the angle between them (Fig. 2, No 4). The entire development area was soil stripped and levelled by 0.3m prior to the excavation of trenches.
- 2.2. The general nature of the soils in the Development Area were determined from the 2015 evaluation, together with the watching brief. The natural layers comprised a brownish gravel overlain by a deposit of orange-yellow silty clay with patches of gravel, whose upper surface sloped down gradually to the north-east. Above the silty clay and where not otherwise disturbed was a layer of mid-brown stony and silty clay between 0.17m and 0.40m thick, which contained material of medieval and post-medieval date, successively overlain by a band of dark grey-brown sandy silt, approximately 0.15m thick, and the local topsoil, a blackish-brown sandy silt, up to 0.40m thick. Any features identified were found to cut the top of the natural silty clay and were sealed by the mid-brown stony and silty clay.

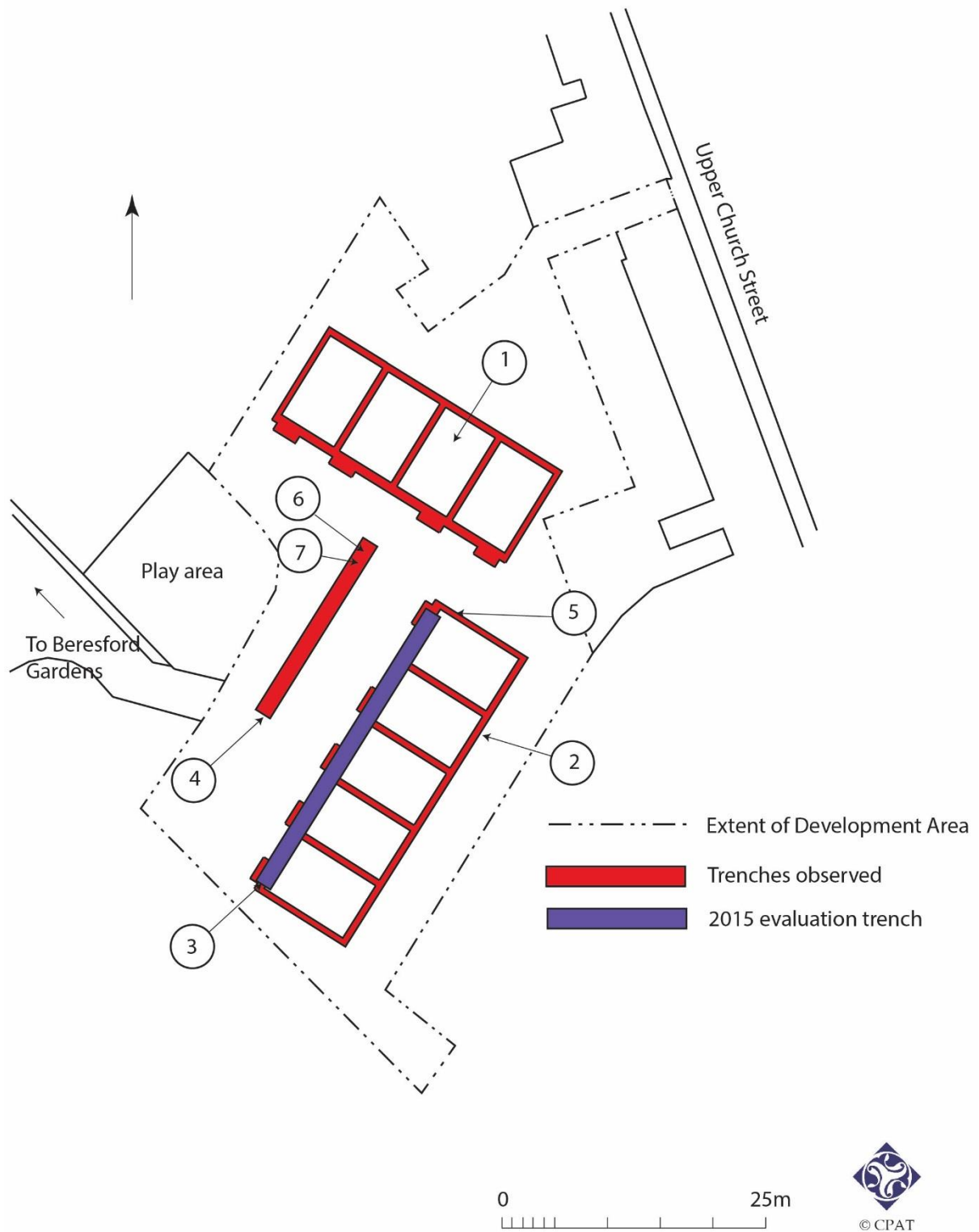


Fig. 2: Plan showing location of groundworks and archaeological features within the Development Area

- 2.3. At the north-east end of the southern block and 2m from its northern corner a single shallow feature (Fig 2, No 5; Fig. 3), probably a pit, was identified. This measured 1.4m north-west/south-east and over 0.8m north-east/south-west but was only 0.1m deep. The fill of grey-brown silt with some stones contained a single sherd of medieval pottery, suggesting that this was another feature akin to the group that were identified close by in the 2015 evaluation (Fig. 2, No 3). No other features were identified within the trenches that were excavated for the foundations of this block.



Fig. 3: The probable pit at the north-east end of the southern block of housing (CPAT 4519-0008)

- 2.4. At the north-east end of the attenuation tank excavation (Fig. 2, No 4), two features were identified, both of which were probably of 19<sup>th</sup>-century date to judge from their fill. At 2.0m from the end of the trench was an irregular pit (Fig. 2, No 6; Fig. 4) measuring about 0.7m by 0.35m and 0.15m deep, with a fill of grey-brown silt in which coal fragments were evident. This might represent the base of two adjoining post-holes but it was not possible to be certain.
- 2.5. At between 2.7m and 3.7m from the end of the attenuation tank trench, it was crossed by a gully (Fig. 2, No 7; Fig. 5) with a U-shaped profile, measuring 1.0m wide and 0.3m deep. This was aligned north-west/south-east and had a fill of brown silt in which fragments of material dating to the 19<sup>th</sup> century were identified.
- 2.6. The trenches for the foundations of the northern block of housing were devoid of archaeological features, probably as a result of relatively modern disturbance.





Fig. 4: The irregular pit at the north-east end of the attenuation tank excavation (CPAT 4519-0002)



Fig. 5: The U-shaped gully crossing the north-east end of the attenuation tank excavation (CPAT 4519-0006)

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### 3 Finds

- 3.1. The watching brief recovered a number of post-medieval artefacts from poorly stratified contexts, which were not retained. A single base sherd from a medieval jug or jar was recovered from the fill of the shallow feature/pit at the north-east end of the southern block of housing. The sherd was in a red fabric with a grey core and had no internal glaze. A very small remnant of glaze adhered to the external surface of the sherd, the colour of which appeared to be brownish yellow.

### 4 Conclusions

- 4.1. A desk-based study (Jones 2015) had determined that the development site was within an area which had already been occupied by dwellings forming part of the town of Oswestry by 1567, when this part of the town was destroyed by fire. No direct evidence for a fire was observed in the course of the watching brief.
- 4.2. With the exception of the natural subsoil, the soil layers exposed during the groundworks were of post-medieval or later date, as suggested by the results of an earlier evaluation of the site (Hankinson, 2015).
- 4.3. The 2015 evaluation trench (Fig. 2, No 4) examined the north-west side of the footprint for the southernmost block of housing. A series of gullies, pits and post-holes were identified at the north-east end of the evaluation, which were dated by the material they contained to the medieval and early post-medieval periods. It seems probable that these represented the rearmost evidence of occupation relating to burgage plots fronting onto Upper Church Street.
- 4.4. The watching brief revealed a single additional feature of medieval date, located at the north-eastern end of the southern housing block (Fig. 3, see Fig. 2, No 5) and some later features at the north-east end of the attenuation tank (Figs 4 and 5, see Fig. 2, Nos 6 and 7), which collectively corresponded broadly with the evidence from the evaluation. The lack of evidence for medieval and post-medieval occupation in the area of the northern block of housing probably indicates that this area was disturbed by previous development rather than showing a lack of activity in this area; a modern house was located there as recently as 2015.

### 5 Sources

#### Published sources

Dalwood, H., 1996. *Archaeological Assessment of Oswestry, Shropshire*. Hereford and Worcester County Council Archaeology Service Report no. 333

Hankinson, R, 2015. *32 Upper Church Street, Oswestry, Shropshire: Archaeological Evaluation*, Unpublished report, CPAT Report No. 1342.

Jones, N.W., 2015. *32 Upper Church Street, Oswestry, Shropshire: Archaeological Desk-based Assessment*. Unpublished report. CPAT Report No. 1317.

Watkin, I., 1920. *Oswestry with an Account of its Old Houses, Shops etc and some of their occupants*. London.

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**Cartographic sources**

- 1795 Plan of Oswestry Town and Liberties (see Watkin 1920, 12)
- 1833 Plan of Oswestry from Actual Survey by John Wood
- 1838 Tithe survey for Oswestry Parish (PF214/10/2)
- 1874 Ordnance Survey 1st edition 25" map, Shropshire 19.02
- 1901 Ordnance Survey 2nd edition 25" map (revised 1900), Shropshire 19.02

## 6 **Archive deposition Statement**

The project archive has been prepared according to the CPAT Archive Policy and in line with the CIfA *Standard and guidance for the creation, compilation, transfer and deposition of archaeological archives guidance* (2014). The archive will be deposited with the regional Historic Environment Record, maintained by Shropshire Council, while artefacts are to be deposited with the Shropshire Museum Service. A summary of the archive is provided in Appendix 1.

**Archive summary**

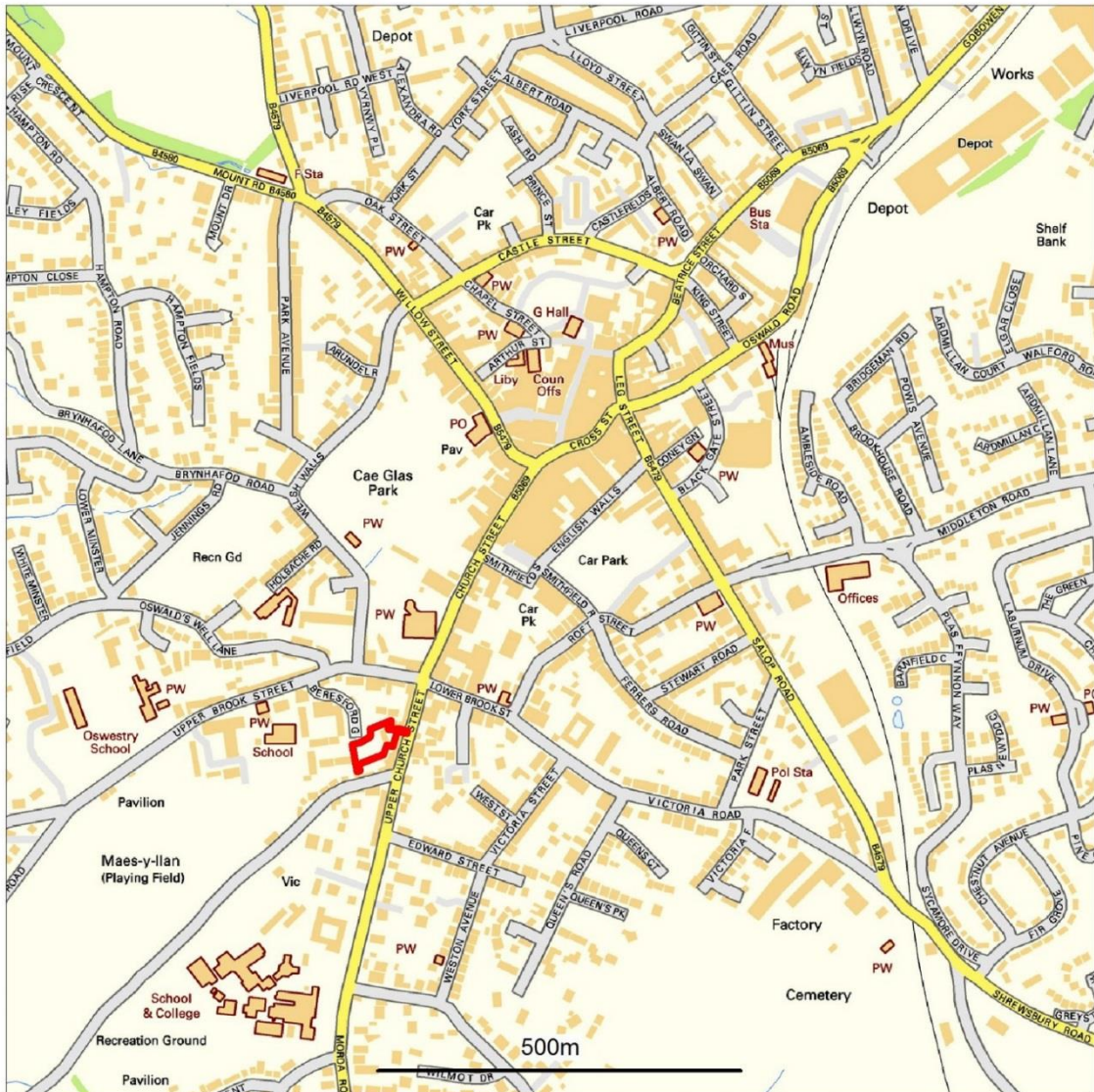
- 5 watching brief visit forms
- 13 digital photographs, CPAT Film No 4519
- 1 sherd of medieval pottery



## Appendix 1: CPAT WSI 1686

### 1 Introduction

- 1.1. The Field Services Section of the Clwyd-Powys Archaeological Trust (CPAT) has been invited by Gareth Edwards of DPA Ltd, on behalf of Morris Property, to submit a proposal for undertaking a programme of archaeological mitigation in connection with a new housing development on land at 32 Upper Church Street, Oswestry (Planning Application 14/04694/FUL; SJ 2881 2920).



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Fig. 1: Location of the development area, outlined in red

- 1.2. The Historic Environment Team at Shropshire Council, in their capacity as archaeological advisors to the local authority, have determined that a programme of archaeological work is required to mitigate the potential impact on the archaeological resource. Accordingly, full planning consent was granted with the inclusion of

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Condition 3, which requires approval prior to the commencement of the development:

*No development approved by this permission shall commence until the applicant, or their agents or successors in title, has secured the implementation of a programme of archaeological work in accordance with a written scheme of investigation (VSI). This written scheme shall be approved in writing by the Planning Authority prior to the commencement of works.*

*Reason: The development site is known to have archaeological interest*

- 1.3. The development is located in an area into which the town expanded during the later medieval or early post-medieval periods, but certainly by 1567 when the area was destroyed by fire. Given that the development plot probably incorporates a number of former burgage plots, it was thought that there was a reasonable potential for buried archaeological remains, such as rubbish pits and wells, to survive. Until the existing house was built in the latter part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, it seemed that much of the plot remained unoccupied and therefore undamaged by development, so the archaeological curator considered that an evaluation of the plot should be conducted to provide evidence against which this potential for buried remains could be assessed.
- 1.4. An evaluation conducted by CPAT in 2015 revealed a series of sub-surface features including gullies and pits, which appeared to date to the late medieval or early post-medieval periods. These were only present towards the north-eastern end of the evaluation trench, so it seems that activity would have been concentrated towards the street frontage (Hankinson 2015). The buried features were at a depth of approximately 1.0m below the existing ground level and may be impacted upon by the excavation of strip foundations for the new buildings.

## 2 Objectives

- 2.1. The objectives of the mitigation works are:
  - to undertake an enhanced watching brief to record any archaeological features identified during the excavation of strip foundations;
  - to prepare a report outlining the results of the work;
  - to prepare a final publication of the results in an appropriate regional or national journal, depending on the nature and significance of any archaeology.

## 3 Methodology

- 3.1. The archaeological mitigation works will be conducted according to the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists' (CIfA) *Standard and Guidance for an Archaeological Watching Brief* (2014) and *Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Field Evaluation* (2014).
- 3.2. The strip foundations will be excavated by a machine under close archaeological supervision as part of an enhanced watching brief. The machine should be fitted with a toothless buck in order to facilitate the identification of archaeologically significant



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deposits. The watching brief will be undertaken to monitor the excavation of all foundation trenches.

3.3. The Historic Environment Team at Shropshire Council will be informed should any significant archaeological deposits be revealed. A 'strip, map and excavate' approach will be adopted for any significant archaeology, which will be confined to the limits of the strip foundations. The excavation of any archaeological features or deposits will be undertaken by hand using the conventional techniques for archaeological excavation:

- The presence or absence of archaeological features encountered during the ground works will be noted.
- Where features of archaeological interest are identified during the ground works they will be systematically investigated by hand with sufficient work being undertaken to determine their date, character and function, using the conventional techniques for archaeological excavation and in accordance with CifA Standard and Guidance.
- All features will be located as accurately as possible on an overall plan of the development at an appropriate scale, showing boundaries depicted on Ordnance Survey mapping.
- Contexts will be recorded on individual record forms, using a continuous numbering system, and be drawn and photographed as appropriate.
- Plans will be drawn on permatrace to a scale of 1:10, 1:20 or 1:50, as appropriate.
- All photography will be taken using a digital SLR camera with a minimum resolution of 12 mega pixels, including a metric scale in each view, with views logged in a photographic register.
- In the event of human burials being discovered the Ministry of Justice will be informed. The remains will initially be left *in situ*, and if removal is required, a MoJ licences will be applied for under the Burial Act 1857.
- In the event of finding any artefacts covered by the provisions of the Treasures Act 1996, the appropriate procedures under this legislation will be followed.

3.4. All artefacts and environmental samples will be treated in a manner appropriate to their composition and a sampling strategy will be developed as appropriate:

- All stratified finds will be collected by context, or where appropriate, individually recorded in three dimensions. Unstratified finds will only be collected where they contribute significantly to the project objectives or are of particular intrinsic interest.
- All finds and samples will be collected, processed, sorted, quantified, recorded, labelled, packed, stored, marked, assessed, analysed and conserved in a manner appropriate to their composition and in line with appropriate guidance.
- arrangements to assess and study any artefacts, assemblages and environment samples.
- Any artefacts recovered during the evaluation will be deposited with an appropriate museum, subject to the permission of the owner.

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**Report**

- 3.5. Following the on-site work an illustrated report will be prepared containing conventional sections to include:
- Non-technical summary
  - Introduction
  - Site location
  - Archaeological Background
  - Evaluation
  - Watching brief
  - Conclusions
  - References
  - appropriate appendices on archives and finds
- 3.6. The site archive will be prepared to specifications in English Heritage's Management of Research Projects in the Historic Environment (MoRPHE) system and the CIfA *Standard and Guidance for the Creation, Compilation, Transfer and Deposition of Archaeological Archives* (2014). The site archive, together with any artefacts recovered during the work will be deposited with Shropshire Museums, subject to the permission of the owner.
- 3.7. The Shropshire HER participates in the OASIS scheme, a form for which will be completed at each reporting stage.

## 4 Resources and programming

- 4.1. The archaeological works will be undertaken by skilled archaeologists under the overall supervision of Nigel Jones, a senior member of CPAT's staff who is also a member of the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists (CIfA). CPAT is also a CIfA Registered Organisation (RAO No 6) and as such agrees to abide by their *Code of Conduct* (2014) and the *Code of Approved Practice for the Regulation of Contractual Arrangements in Field Archaeology* (2014).
- 4.2. All report preparation will be completed by or with the assistance of the same field archaeologist(s) who conducted the evaluation.
- 4.3. The client is advised that should significant archaeological remains or artefacts be revealed additional services may be required for which a contingency should be allowed. The need for such contingencies, and their scope and potential cost, would be subject to discussions between CPAT, the client and the curator once the fieldwork has been completed. The following figures are therefore only for guidance and the final cost, should any of further services be required, may be more or less than the following figures which are included to provide an indication of the types of additional services and indicative costs which might be required:
- 4.4. Requirements relating to Health and Safety regulations will be adhered to by CPAT and its staff.

- 4.5. CPAT is covered by appropriate Public and Employer's Liability insurance, as well as Professional Indemnity insurance.

## **5 References**

Hankinson, R, 2015. *32 Upper Church Street, Oswestry, Shropshire: Archaeological Evaluation*, Unpublished report, CPAT Report No. 1342.

N W Jones

14 June 2016