

Archaeological Impact Assessment & Mitigation Proposal

For a section of all-weather access path
extending east-west immediately north of

The Old Priory Leominster Herefordshire

(Scheduled Monument No HE145)

NGR SO 498 593

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1. Non Technical Summary

This Archaeological Impact Assessment and Mitigation Proposal is based on the results of an appraisal of available documentary sources and a site inspection visit carried out by Border Archaeology in January 2010, the aims being 1) to establish the depth and location of any potential below ground archaeological features or deposits 2) to identify the presence of any visible earthwork remains 3) to assess the likelihood that any such features or deposits will be impacted by the groundworks and 4) to recommend an appropriate level of archaeological intervention to mitigate the potentially destructive outcome of any such impact.

The proposed groundworks comprise mechanical/manual excavation to a maximum depth of 0.16m and width of 2.5m along the approximately 161m length of an existing access path running roughly east/west across Pinsley Mead, an area of recreational grassland immediately to the north of Leominster Old Priory, a Scheduled Ancient Monument, and the presumed site of the medieval Priory fishtanks/ponds. These excavations will be backfilled with sub-base and resurfacing material to provide improved, all-weather public access to and from this recreational area.

Documentary and archaeological evidence indicates the existence of several large fishponds within Pinsley Mead, with one late 18th century source referring to 'three fishponds, called the Park Ponds in front of the house [meaning the Old Priory] near Kenwater river'. Evidence of one of these ponds lying to the north and northwest of the Old Priory was identified during the excavation of a gas pipe trench across a 200m section of Pinsley Mead in 1979. These excavations identified an extensive depression, approximately 195m in length and approximately 2.3-2.5m in depth. A clay retaining bank associated with the fishpond appears to survive to within 0.45m beneath existing ground level, while deposits of medieval and post-medieval date to the west of the bank range in depth from 0.5-1m. Additional evidence of deposits associated with this fishpond (and its subsequent backfilling) was revealed during excavations undertaken by Border Archaeology in 2003 along part of the line of the original gas trench (approximately 28m in length).

Further indications of features possibly associated with the monastic fishponds to the north and northwest of the Old Priory were identified during a resistivity survey undertaken in 2003. The survey also identified a spread of 'fragmented foundations' and a small area of a possible 'floor or level surface' on the line of the footpath to the northwest of the Old Priory; however, the date, depth or function of these features remains uncertain.

Based on the available documentary and archaeological evidence, it is Border Archaeology's view that the groundworks may encounter deposits associated with features of archaeological significance and that a suitable programme of archaeological observation should be implemented to record and, where deemed necessary, further investigate any such deposits or any other remains considered potentially to be of archaeological significance. Additionally, it is suggested that this programme of archaeological mitigation be supported by an appropriate sampling strategy based on advice obtained from English Heritage.

2. Introduction

- 2.1 Border Archaeology has been instructed by Tim Thompson Esq., Area Rights of Way Officer and Warden Manager, Herefordshire Council/Amey Herefordshire, (Ref PROW/TDT/ZC137) to assess the likely impact of construction groundworks relating to the surfacing of a section of all-weather access path extending E-W immediately to the N of Leominster Old Priory (Scheduled Monument No HE 145) (NGR SO 498 593) and to propose appropriate mitigation.
- 2.2 The study area comprises an area of recreational grassland known as Pinsley Mead adjoining the northern extent of the existing Priory buildings. The line of the existing path appears to have been established for some considerable period of time, as the historic map evidence shows it broadly following its current location and orientation. Gallier's 1832 map of Leominster shows the path running immediately to the N of an open stream known as the Pinsley Brook, which has subsequently been piped underground.
- 2.3 The assessment and proposed mitigation is required by English Heritage in respect of an application for Scheduled Monument Consent submitted by Mr Thompson to Tony Fleming Esq. on October 28th 2009 (Ref. S00005099).
- 2.4 The proposed groundworks comprise the excavation of a 161m length of path to a width of 2.5m and depth of 0.16m, using a combination mechanical and manual excavation, and the laying of 150mm of sub-base overlaid by 6mm of compacted red dust surfacing material. Additionally, it is proposed to replace the existing kissing gate located at approximately SO, as per the submitted location plan, although it should be noted that the position of the gate is wrongly marked (**Fig. 1**).
- 2.5 Copies of this Assessment will be supplied to Mr Thompson for submission to English Heritage.

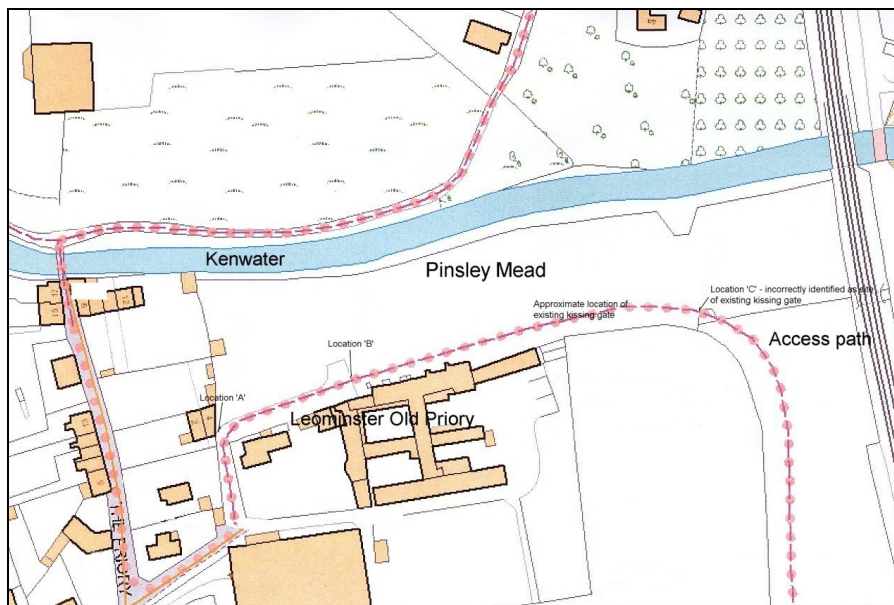


Figure 1: Location plan

3. Soils & Geology

- 3.1 The solid geology of the study area comprises Pridoli Series mudstones and siltstones, which directly relate to the Devonian Old Red Sandstone formation [massif] series. The related drift geology is reddish till overlain by typical argillic brown earths of the ESCRICK 1 series (571p). These consist of deep, well-drained, reddish, coarse loamy soils with some similar soils with slowly permeable subsoils and seasonal waterlogging. The town is fringed to the N and E by areas of riverine alluvium of the CONWAY (811b) and LUGWARDINE (561d) series (SSEW 1983). Within the priory grounds, the 571p soils lie around 1m below the existing ground level. These soils can be further described as having a clayey fraction, possibly due to subsoil percolation.

4. Methodology

4.1 Appraisal of documentary & cartographic sources

4.1.1 Research Aims

This assessment seeks to identify any known or potential archaeological resource within the study area and establish its character, extent, quality and importance.

4.1.2 Research Methods

The research carried out for this appraisal consisted of the following elements:

4.1.2.1 *Evaluation and study of archaeological databases*

The National Monuments Record Centre at Swindon and the Herefordshire Archaeology Sites & Monuments Record were both consulted and lists obtained of all known archaeological sites, listed buildings and scheduled ancient monuments in the study area.

4.1.2.2 *Evaluation and study of cartographic and other pictorial evidence*

A detailed map regression analysis of the study area was carried out, examining various historic maps and engravings of the specific study area, dating back to 1722. These maps and illustrations were obtained from the Herefordshire Record Office.

4.1.2.3 *Evaluation and study of primary written evidence*

Original medieval and post-medieval records relating to the study area were consulted at the Herefordshire Record Office.

4.1.2.4 *Evaluation and study of secondary (published) sources*

All published and unpublished works relating to sites and structures of archaeological and historical interest within the study area were evaluated, including relevant volumes of the *Transactions of the Woolhope Naturalists' Field Club*.

4.2 Walkover Survey & Photographic record

The study area was systematically walked by George Children MA MIFA and Stephen Priestley MA of Border Archaeology on January 27th 2010 to assess the potential for extant archaeology. A photographic record was compiled during the course of the walkover to provide a visual record showing views of the proposed groundworks area in relation to surrounding features, specifically the Old Priory buildings and the presumed location of the monastic fishtanks/ponds. A discrepancy was noted during the course of the walkover survey regarding the location of a kissing gate, which was incorrectly identified on the supplied location plan (**Fig. 1**).

5. Appraisal of documentary & cartographic sources

5.1 Brief Historical and Archaeological Background

- 5.2 The early history of the religious community at Leominster (SMR Record No 725) remains unclear; 11th-12th century chronicle sources provide conflicting evidence as to its origins, suggesting either a late 6th century Celtic monastery founded by St David or a minster church established by Merewalh, ruler of the sub-kingdom of Magonsaetan, in about 660 AD (Hillaby, 1987). A small monastic settlement probably grew around the church at this time. However, there is little or no evidence to indicate a secular settlement during the Anglo-Saxon period.
- 5.3 The religious house at Leominster appears to have suffered several attacks by the Welsh and the Danes during the 8th and 9th centuries and was subsequently re-founded as a nunnery, probably in the early 11th century. The nunnery was subsequently dissolved in 1046 following the abduction of the abbess, Eadgifu, by Sweyn Godwinson and its estates remained in the hands of the Crown until the community was re-founded as a cell of the Cluniac abbey of Reading, founded by King Henry I in 1123 (Hillaby, 1987).
- 5.4 The church itself stands off-centre within a large churchyard, which surrounds the priory building on three sides. The earliest surviving fabric consists of the impressive Norman aisled nave, probably built in the early to mid 12th century following its re-foundation by Henry I. Further remains, also dating to this period, lie below ground to the E of the existing church, consisting of the presbytery, transept and crossing.
- 5.5 The chapel at the E end of the church was eventually replaced by a long, straight-ended Lady Chapel during the 14th century and further additions to the fabric, including a S nave, aisle and porch were made during the 14th and 15th centuries. The eastern end of the church was completely demolished following the Dissolution in 1539, although its remains were partially revealed through excavations in 1853 and later in 1932 (RCHME, 1934). The majority of the conventual buildings of the Priory appear to have been gradually demolished during the early post-medieval period, the only surviving structures being the

Forbury Chapel (SMR Record No 724) and the Old Priory range (SMR Record No 721), which probably housed the infirmary and the reredorter.

5.6 Site Specific Information

- 5.7 The specific study area comprises a footpath running E-W through Pinsley Mead, an area of recreational grassland lying N of Leominster Priory Church, which was formerly a water meadow periodically flooded by overspill from the Pinsley Brook, a canalised stream now piped underground. Bordering a section of the footpath on its southern side is an extensive range of buildings known as the Old Priory, forming part of the former conventual buildings of Leominster Priory.
- 5.8 During the medieval period, Pinsley Mead formed the northern part of the extensive monastic precinct of Leominster Priory (SMR Record No 728). The precinct boundary ran S from the Kenwater, a tributary of the River Lugg that flows E-W some 80m N of the Priory church, towards the former Great West Gate in Church Street, continued along the W side of the Grange (the site of the monastic estate farm), lying to the S and SW of the church, before turning E towards the River Lugg (Hillaby, 1987).

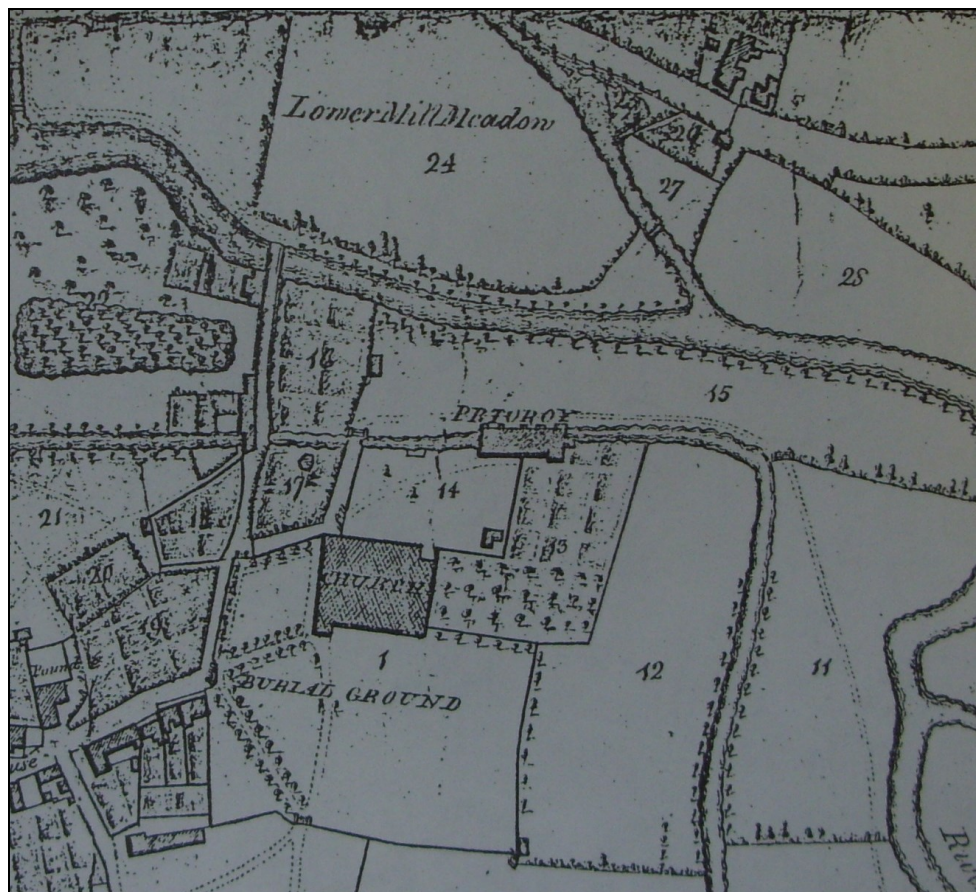


Plate 1: Extract from Gallier's map of Leominster (1832) showing the area of the former Priory Precinct, with the Old Priory range situated to the N of the Priory Church and the Pinsley Brook running E-W immediately beneath it
 (Reproduced by courtesy of Herefordshire Records Office)

- 5.9 The northernmost extent of the conventual buildings of the Priory appears to have been defined by the Pinsley Brook, the original course of which is shown on

William Gallier's map of Leominster (1832), which depicts the brook as running E-W directly beneath a large oblong structure marked as the 'Prioroy' (**Plate 1**). Gallier's map also shows a path running parallel with and immediately to the N of the Pinsley Brook and the 'Prioroy', approximately on the line of the present footpath. This footpath is also shown on the OS 1st edition 25-inch map of 1887 and subsequent OS mapping of the area.

- 5.10 This structure marked as 'Prioroy' on Gallier's map is clearly identifiable with the existing range of buildings known as the 'Old Priory' (SMR Record No 721), which was described by a local antiquarian, F.G. Blacklock, writing in the late 19th century, as a 'long massive building with immensely thick stone walls of rough rubble masonry...boldly spanning the river Pinsley, which, covered by plain rough barrel vaulting [the remains of which can still be clearly seen], runs under its centre throughout its entire length" (Blacklock 1898, 64). Engravings of the Old Priory dated 1722 and 1795 clearly show an arched culvert carrying the Pinsley Brook beneath the building (**Plate 2**).



Plate 2: Engraving from J. Price's History of Leominster (1795) showing the N elevation of the Old Priory standing above the course of the Pinsley Brook, with Pinsley Mead in the foreground
 (Reproduced by courtesy of Herefordshire Record Office)

- 5.11 A detailed programme of excavation, building recording and documentary research was undertaken at the Old Priory in 1979-80, which identified that the W end of the range probably constituted the reredorter of the monastery (Brown & Wilson, 1994, 307-68). Excavations within the W end revealed evidence of a cobbled layer earlier than the extant structure, above which was a floor layer associated with a late 12th century arcade which presumably supported the first-floor reredorter. The eastern part of the Old Priory probably formed the infirmary range, with a ward and chapel at first-floor level, which appears to have been largely built in the early 13th century.
- 5.12 The entirety of the Old Priory range displays evidence of extensive post-medieval alterations, which reflect its several changes of use following the Dissolution; the

Leominster antiquary John Price, writing in 1795, records that the range was fitted up as a County Gaol in the late 17th century; in 1717-18 it was let out by the Mayor and Corporation of Leominster as a 'Mansion House' for the Bailiff and was subsequently converted to use as a 'House of Industry' or workhouse in 1759, a function which it continued to perform until the early 20th century (Price, 1795, 89-90; Brown and Wilson, 1994, 314-16). Substantial alterations were made to the Old Priory in 1836-7 following its sale to the Overseers of the Poor (with the construction of a new workhouse adjoining the older range) and parts of the building were subsequently altered and converted to use as a hospital in 1948. The Old Priory is at present occupied by Leominster Youth Hostel.

- 5.13 The construction of the new workhouse (SMR Record No 10562) and further alterations carried out following its conversion to a hospital appears to have resulted in extensive landscaping activity which either removed or significantly truncated archaeological features relating to the conventual buildings of the Priory, although some evidence of the cloistral range has been identified in salvage recording undertaken in 1997 and an evaluation carried out in 2006 (Cook, 1997; Watson *et al.*, 2006)
- 5.14 A topographical survey carried out of the Pinsley Mead area in 1995 identified a marked drop in ground level to the N and E of the Old Priory and the line of the Pinsley Brook towards the Kenwater, which may represent evidence of landscaping activity associated with the canalisation of the Pinsley Brook during the medieval period (Brown & Templeton, 1995).



Plate 3: Extract from the OS 1st edition 25-inch map of 1887 showing the Priory, the Old Priory House (then Leominster Union Workhouse) with Pinsley Mead to the N and the site of one of the monastic fishponds to the NW
 (Reproduced by courtesy of Herefordshire Record Office)

- 5.15 To the N of the Old Priory, documentary and archaeological evidence indicates the existence of several large fishponds within Pinsley Mead, doubtless associated with the Priory. The precise extent of these fishponds is not entirely clear; John Price specifically refers to 'three fishponds, called the Park Ponds in front of the house (meaning the Old Priory) near Kenwater river' (Price, 1795, 79).
- 5.16 One fishpond appears to have been situated close to the site of the old gasworks; its location being marked on Gallier's map and the OS 1st edition 25 inch map (**Plate 3**) and still visible in the late 1890s (Blacklock, 1898, 75), while evidence of another fishpond lying to the N and NW of the Old Priory was identified during the excavation of a gas pipe trench across a 200m section of Pinsley Mead in 1979 (SMR Record No 8913). These excavations identified an extensive depression, approximately 195m in length and approximately 2.3-2.5m in depth, backfilled with a series of post-medieval rubbish deposits overlying a layer of silty clay; the eastern edge of the feature appeared to be delineated by a lining of red clay and an irregularly shaped clay retaining bank extending across the middle of Pinsley Mead (Rahtz, 1979; Wilson & Brown, 1994, 355-6; Brown & Templeton, 1995). The clay retaining bank associated with the fishpond appears to survive to within 0.45m beneath existing ground level, while deposits of medieval and post-medieval date to the W of the bank range in depth from 0.5-1m (Brown & Templeton, 1995, 15).
- 5.17 Additional evidence of deposits associated with this fishpond (and its subsequent backfilling) was revealed during excavations undertaken by Border Archaeology in 2003 along part of the line of the original gas trench (approximately 28m in length). At the western end of the trench, post-medieval disturbance was noted in the form of a pit containing general building debris. Elsewhere within the excavated areas the finds generally comprised a range of post-medieval pottery sherds and fragmentary CBM, with one piece of possible worked masonry. At the base of the open-cut trenching, at an approximate depth of 1m below the existing ground level, was a partially revealed layer of alluvial sedimentation, probably representing the lower stratigraphy of the priory fishponds (Border Archaeology, 2003).
- 5.18 Further indications of features which could be associated with the monastic fishponds to the N and NW of the Old Priory were identified during a resistivity survey undertaken by Stratascan in 2003 (Barker & Rarity, 2003). The survey revealed evidence of a series of lower resistance areas located in the SW corner of Pinsley Mead (immediately to the N of the existing pathway) each approximately 8m square and aligned E-W, which were provisionally interpreted as tanks associated with the fishpond (Barker & Rarity, 2003, 16). Regarding these features, it is worth noting that Stukeley's engraving of the Old Priory and Pinsley Mead dated 1722 shows a series of large banks in front of the Old Priory building, which could be associated with fish husbandry and water management, possibly constructed to retain fish stocks in the event of flooding (Wilson & Brown, 1994, 361).
- 5.19 In addition, the resistivity survey also identified a spread of 'fragmented foundations' and a small area of a possible 'floor or level surface' on the line of the footpath to the NW of the Old Priory; however the date, depth or function of these features remains uncertain.

6. Walkover Survey & Photographic Record

- 6.1 George Children MA MIfA and Stephen Priestley MA of Border Archaeology undertook a walkover survey and produced a photographic record of the specified area on January 27th 2010 in order to assess the extent and likely impact of the proposed groundworks, specifically their proximity to the existing Priory buildings and presumed location of the medieval fishponds/fishtanks.
- 6.2 The aim of the survey was also to note any earthwork features or depressions possibly indicative of below ground remains and to compile a photographic record comprising views of the proposed line of the access path and its relationship to the various structures and features within the immediate area.
- 6.3 No clearly discernible features were identified during the survey. It was noted that the ground falls away to the N and E of the former course of the Pinsley Brook and the Old Priory in the direction of the Kenwater, a canalised branch of the River Lugg (**Plates 3-6, 8**).
- 6.4 It was also noted during the walkover that the location of the kissing gate specified as forming part of the proposed works (SO 49989 59361) had been incorrectly identified on the submitted location plan (**Fig. 1; Plates 7 & 9**) and that its true position was some 60m to the W (SO 49935 59358) (**Plates 6 & 8**).
- 6.5 Photographic Record**



Plate 4: View N from SO 49831 59302 towards point A, as shown on supplied location plan, showing western end of path at its junction with School Road



Plate 5: View WSW from SO 49834 59330 towards point A as marked on supplied location plan



Plate 6: View NE from point A (SO 49828 59327) on supplied location plan showing line of existing path with Priory buildings (right) and presumed location of fishponds (left)



Plate 7: View E from point B (SO 49864 59340), as shown on supplied location plan, showing proximity of existing path to the Old Priory buildings (right)



Plate 8: View W from SO 49956 59363 showing line of existing path (grassed section, B-C) with Priory buildings (left) and presumed location of fishponds (centre & right)



Plate 9: View E showing true location of existing kissing gate



Plate 10: View SE from SO 49996 59355 showing location of kissing gate as incorrectly indicated on the supplied location plan



Plate 11: View WNW from SO 49976 59363 along section B-C, as shown on supplied location plan, towards location of existing kissing gate



Plate 12: View NW of point C, as indicated on supplied location plan

7. Proposed Archaeological Mitigation

- 7.1 The line of the existing path appears to have been established for a considerable period of time and is clearly shown on Gallier's map of Leominster (1832) on what appears to be roughly its present alignment. The path is shown immediately N of the Pinsley Brook, a canalised stream now piped underground.
- 7.2 To the N of the footpath, the available documentary, cartographic, geophysical and archaeological evidence indicates the existence of several large monastic fishponds, with one late 18th century source referring to 'three fishponds, called the Park Ponds in front of the house [the Old Priory] near Kenwater river'.
- 7.3 Evidence of one of these ponds lying to the N and NW of the Old Priory was identified during the excavation of a gas pipe trench across a 200m section of Pinsley Mead in 1979. These excavations identified an extensive depression, approximately 195m in length and approximately 2.3-2.5m in depth. A clay retaining bank associated with the fishpond appears to survive to within 0.45m beneath existing ground level, while deposits of medieval and post-medieval date to the W of the bank range in depth from 0.5-1m. Additional evidence of deposits associated with this fishpond (and its subsequent backfilling) was revealed during excavations undertaken by Border Archaeology in 2003 along part of the line of the original gas trench (approximately 28m in length).
- 7.4 Further indications of features possibly associated with the monastic fishponds to the N and NW of the Old Priory were identified during a resistivity survey undertaken in 2003. The survey also identified a spread of 'fragmented foundations' and a small area of a possible 'floor or level surface' on the line of the footpath to the NW of the Old Priory; however, the date, depth or function of these features remains uncertain.
- 7.5 It is thus clear that there is high potential for the survival of archaeological remains within the study area. Of particular relevance in terms of the proximity of potential remains to the location of the proposed groundworks are the results of the 2003 geophysical survey, which indicate the presence of features possibly associated with the monastic fishponds very close to the western section of pathway, i.e. that section extending between points A and B on the supplied location plan (**Fig. 1**).
- 7.6 The series of features described as 'fragmented foundations' and a small area of a possible 'floor or level surface' (paragraph 7.4) are also located directly on the line of the footpath, between points A and B.
- 7.7 Unfortunately, it is unclear at what depth such features are likely to be encountered, although elsewhere within the study area investigations have revealed remains at a significantly lower depth than that proposed in respect of the present programme of works, i.e. a maximum excavation depth of 0.16m.
- 7.8 In conclusion, it is the view of Border Archaeology that a programme of archaeological observation (watching brief) be implemented in respect of all ground-disturbance activity within the specified area, whether mechanical or manual, and that this should be carried out in accordance with *Standard and*



Guidance for an archaeological watching brief (IfA 2001) and Herefordshire Archaeology's *Standards for Archaeological Projects in Herefordshire (Issue 1)* (Herefordshire Council 2004), the aim of the proposed archaeological programme of work being to identify, record and, where deemed necessary, further investigate any deposits, features or structures of archaeological significance, specifically any such features/deposits relating to the medieval fish tanks/ponds and 'fragmented foundations' and a small area of a possible 'floor or level surface' identified as being on or close to the line of the existing footpath.

- 7.9 An appropriate sampling strategy should also be developed in accordance with advice obtained from Ms Lisa Moffett, English Heritage Regional Science Advisor for the West Midlands, to be implemented in the event that any potentially significant deposits/features are revealed during the course of the groundworks.

8. Copyright

- 8.1 Border Archaeology shall retain full copyright of any commissioned reports, tender documents or other project documents, under the Copyright, Designs and Patents Act 1988 with all rights reserved; excepting that it hereby provides a licence to the client and the Council for the use of the report by the client and the Council in all matters directly relating to the project as described in the Project Specification to use the documentation for their statutory functions and to provide copies of it to third parties as an incidental to such functions.

9. References

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9.2 Cartography

W. Gallier's Plan of Leominster - 1832

Leominster Parish Tithe Map & Apportionment - 1850

OS 1st edition 25 inch map Herefordshire 12.15 -1887

OS 2nd edition 25 inch map Herefordshire 12.15 -1904

OS 3rd edition 25 inch map Herefordshire 12.15 -1927



Document Control

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