

Archaeological Watching Brief Report for land at

WEST CHESHIRE COLLEGE

For West Cheshire College

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L~P:ARCHÆOLOGY

Archaeological Watching Brief Report for land at

WEST CHESHIRE COLLEGE

Client: West Cheshire College

Local Authority: Cheshire West and Chester Council

NGR: 340785,366075

Planning App: 11/05572/FUL

Author(s): B Poole

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Date: June 12

Site Code: CHE/ER 12

L-P:ARCHAEOLOGY

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Abstract

This document outlines the results of the archaeological monitoring on groundworks for a new construction at West Cheshire college, NGR 340750,365170. The archaeological monitoring was carried out by Blair Poole of L – P :Archaeology between 10th and 11th April 2012.

Historic research shows that the site lies in an area of activity since at least the Roman period. A substantial Roman Road runs north-south along the eastern boundary of the site and Roman burials are known around the site area. A funerary monument dating to the 1st to 3rd century was identified on the site during an archaeological evaluation in 2009. Roman plough soils have been identified being in situ across the site during previous archaeological work.

The site is thought to have been open fields from the Roman period through to the mid 20th century when an educational establishment was constructed on the site.

The archaeological monitoring examined the removal of the upper 0.3m to 0.4m of modern material from the site and the excavation of pits for foundation pads.

At a depth of approximately 0.4m below ground level a 0.2m to 0.5m thick layer of clay silt was encountered. This is thought to be the Roman agricultural soils previously identified on the site. This material was present across the excavated area and overlay the natural orange clay.

No archaeological features were exposed during groundworks.

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1. Introduction

- 1.1. This document refers to the archaeological monitoring of groundworks for a new construction at West Cheshire college (11/05572/FUL). The work was undertaken in order to satisfy a planning condition attached to the planning consent granted by Cheshire West and Chester Council.
- 1.2. The site is located at the West Cheshire College Eaton Road campus, to the south of Chester at NGR 340750,365170 (FIGURE 1).
- 1.3. Archaeological monitoring was carried out by Blair Poole of L – P : Archaeology between 10th and 11th April 2012.
- 1.4. All fieldwork adhered to an agreed written scheme of investigation (POOLE 2012). The standards laid out by English Heritage and the Institute for Archaeologists were adhered to at all times as well as all relevant local standards.
- 1.5. A site code of CHE/ER 12 was assigned to the site by the Grosvenor Museum

2. Planning Background

- 2.1. Planning consent has been granted for construction of a new college building within the existing campus of West Cheshire College. The application reference is 11/05572/FUL. The proposed development consists of the construction of a 350m² detached building within the existing campus, to the south of the main building.
- 2.2. In March 2012 the Department for Communities and Local Government issued the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) (Department for Communities and Local Government 2012). This document sets out planning policies on the conservation of the historic environment and replaces all previous Planning Policy Guidance, specifically PPS5. Section 12 of this document sets out planning policies on the conservation of the historic environment.
- 2.3. The local planning authority is Cheshire West and Chester Council who take archaeological advice from the City Archaeologist, Mike Morris.
- 2.4. In considering any planning application for development Cheshire West and Chester Council is bound by the policies provided by the NPPF.
- 2.5. Cheshire West and Chester Council is also bound by the saved policies within the local planning framework. However, as Cheshire West and Chester Council is a relatively new authority, formed in 2009, they defer to the current adopted local plans. The Local Plan in this case is the Chester District Local Plan adopted in May 2006. The relevant policies contained within the Local Plan are as follows:

POLICY ENV 32

Where development proposals affect sites of known or potential archaeological interest, the City Council will require an archaeological assessment/evaluation to be submitted as part of the planning application. Planning permission will not be granted without the adequate assessment of the nature, extent and significance of the remains and the degree to which the proposed development is likely to affect them.

POLICY ENV 33

Development proposals affecting the site or setting of a site of regional or county importance will only be permitted if the integrity of the archaeological remains has been secured.

POLICY ENV 45

Planning permission will be refused for proposals that fail to have regard to the desirability of preserving the building or its setting or any features of special architectural or historic interest

2.6. The site does not lie within an Area of Archaeological Importance or within a conservation area. The site does not contain any listed buildings or scheduled monuments.

2.7. AIMS OF WORKS

2.7.1. The aims of the archaeological watching brief were to monitor groundworks to ensure that archaeologically sensitive deposits of significance were not penetrated and to record the character, date, type, state of preservation, and extent of any archaeological remains on site exposed or disturbed during groundworks.

3. Geology & Topography

3.1.GEOLOGY

3.1.1. The British Geological Survey GeoIndex for the site records the superficial (drift) deposits as Boulder clay and sand, and the solid deposits as Triassic sandstone. The presence of boulder clay was confirmed during the groundworks on site.

3.2.TOPOGRAPHY

3.2.1. The site is located to the south of Chester city centre within the settlement of Handbridge, south of the River Dee.

3.2.2. The site is currently a college campus located off Eaton Road, with residential buildings surrounding the site (FIGURE 2)

3.2.3. The site is relatively level, lying at approximately 20m OD.

4. Archaeological & Historic Background

TIMESCALES USED IN THIS REPORT:

PERIOD	FROM	TO
PREHISTORIC		
PALAEOLITHIC	450,000	12,000 BC
MESOLITHIC	12,000	4,000 BC
NEOLITHIC	4,000	1,800 BC
BRONZE AGE	1,800	600 BC
IRON AGE	600	43 AD
HISTORIC		
ROMAN	43	410 AD
EARLY MEDIEVAL	410	1066 AD
MEDIEVAL	1066	1485 AD
POST MEDIEVAL	1485	PRESENT

Table 1 - Timescales used in this report

4.1. Examination of data from cartographic records, the Cheshire Historic Environment Record (CHER) and various published and unpublished sources shows that the site lies in an area of Roman activity, related to the nearby legionary fortress of Chester (*Deva*).

4.2. The following section gives a brief guide to the historic development of the site and is not intended as a full history of Handbridge or Chester.

4.3. PREHISTORIC

4.3.1. There is no evidence for Prehistoric activity on the site or in the immediate landscape around the site.

4.4. ROMAN

4.4.1. Recent archaeological evaluation work on the campus and at the Greenbank centre, approximately 400m to the south of the site, have revealed Roman plough soils surviving over a wide area (POOLE 2005 & 2009).

4.4.2. The site lies to the west of a known Roman road exiting Chester to the south.

The road leads to the extramural site at Heronbridge and on to industrial sites at Holt (POOLE 2009).

- 4.4.3. Approximately 500m north, in Handbridge proper, a Roman shrine to Minerva survives *in situ* at Edgar's cave in Edgar's field (CARRINGTON 1994). During the Roman period Edgar's field was utilised as a quarry to produce stone for the fort of *Deva* (LANGTREE & COMMYNS 2001).
- 4.4.4. CHER search results indicate that Watling Street (CHER 1700/1/0) runs along the line of Eaton Road, on the east boundary of the site.
- 4.4.5. As is typical of Roman settlements, burials and cremations were deposited outside the settlement boundaries, often running alongside main roads so people could pay their respects (LEWIS & THACKER 2003). A cremation cemetery is known to be located to the south of Edgar's field with an inhumation burial to the east of the Edgar's field (CARRINGTON 1994). Burials are known to extend along Eaton Road and have been identified at Netherleigh and Heronbridge (POOLE 2005). During archaeological evaluation work on the site in 2009 a sandstone structure thought to be a Roman funerary monument was identified close to the line of Eaton Road (POOLE 2009).
- 4.4.6. To the immediate northeast of the site a Roman coin find (CHER 3003/0/15) and a cremation cemetery (CHER 3002/1/5) have been identified. Other cremations (CHER 3003/0/13, 3002/1/9 & 3002/1/8) have been discovered immediately to the north and east of the site with Roman ceramics (CHER 3003/0/12).
- 4.4.7. Roman plough soils have been identified on the site, at Greenbank and between Netherleigh and Heronbridge (POOLE 2009).

4.5. SAXON AND EARLY MEDIEVAL

- 4.5.1. Recent excavation work by Chester Archaeological Society in the area of Heronbridge, 1km south of the site, has revealed a mass burial, most probably relating to the battle of Chester dating to around 613AD (POOLE 2005).
- 4.5.2. Chester is thought to have been home to a large Hiberno-Norse community which would have been involved in the Irish trade (LEWIS & THACKER 2003). The location of the Scandinavian settlement at Handbridge, 500m north of the site,

can be seen as the Domesday book utilises the *carucate* measurement, a Scandinavian system, rather than the *hide* measurement as seen in most other entries (HARDING 2002).

4.6.MEDIEVAL

- 4.6.1. Handbridge is known to be one of Chester's earliest suburbs and can easily be dated back to at least the 11th century. This is attested by the fact that Hugh Lupus was granted the suburb of Handbridge around 1077 (MORGAN & ST JOHN WILLIAMS 2004).
- 4.6.2. The Medieval village of Claverton is thought to occupy the land around 200m to the southeast of the site, and it is known to lie on the boundary of the City Liberty. City Liberties replaced the older Hundreds in the 12th and 13th centuries. The City Liberty, and remnants of the Great Ditch are still visible in the forest path opposite the entrance to the Greenbank Centre, 200m south of the site.
- 4.6.3. By the 13th century, both the manor of Handbridge is thought to be mainly represented by open fields, which extended beyond the liberties into the township of Claverton to the south (LEWIS AND THACKER 2003). The associated fields of both Handbridge and Claverton would have occupied the study site area throughout the Medieval period.

4.7.POST MEDIEVAL

- 4.7.1. On Braun & Hogenberg's plan of 1581, a substantial suburb can be seen at Handbridge, with buildings lining the road leading south out of Chester. The site area is not shown on the map, as it likely to have been agricultural land and therefore outside the developed area shown. A cartographic search of maps from the 16th century onwards suggests that the site was not developed until the mid 20th century.
- 4.7.2. The earliest detailed map of the site is the 1841 tithe map. This shows the site as open fields, named 'near star field' and 'far star field'.
- 4.7.3. The first edition Ordnance Survey map of 1873 shows the same field layout as the tithe map. This is repeated on both 1881 and 1938 Ordnance Survey maps.

4.8.MODERN

- 4.8.1. Post 1945 public spending focussed on Health and education. St Bede's Catholic Secondary School (now Overleigh Middle School) and what was to become West Cheshire College were both built around this time. The college building was constructed at some point between 1945 and 1948.
- 4.8.2. By 1958 the Ordnance survey map shows the main footprint of the college complete. By 1970 all outbuildings had been integrated under a single construction, as seen on the 1970 Ordnance Survey map.
- 4.8.3. No development can be seen on the site outside the footprint on the 1970, 1993 or 2005 Ordnance Survey maps.
- 4.8.4. Between 2008 and 2011 part of the main building was demolished and a new campus building has been constructed on the site. The remaining original buildings are earmarked for demolition as part of the upgrading works on the site.

5. Methodology

- 5.1. The groundworks for the foundation pads of the new building and associated services were archaeologically monitored by a suitably qualified and experienced archaeologist.
- 5.2. All excavation was undertaken using appropriately sized plant, in this case a 360 degree tracked excavator with a toothless ditching bucket.
- 5.3. Examination and cleaning of all archaeological deposits was carried out by hand using appropriate tools. All archaeological deposits were examined and recorded both in plan and section.
- 5.4. All works were carried out in accordance with the agreed project design (POOLE 2012) and the Code of Approved Practice as set out by the Institute for Archaeologists (IFA 2002).

6. Results

6.1. This section will outline the results of the archaeological monitoring of groundworks on the site. Deposits are shown in (Parenthesis).

6.2. The majority of the excavation area had previously functioned as a car park (FIGURE 3). The western extent of the area had a different stratigraphy, where an access road had been constructed (PLATE 1).



Plate 1 - Excavation area, looking southeast

6.3. The uppermost deposit was a concrete surface (100) measuring 0.15 to 0.2m thick (FIGURE 4). This sealed a 0.1 to 0.15m thick layer of grey stone aggregate (101). A 0.05m thick lens of red clay and shale (102) was located at the base of stone (101). This in turn overlay a 0.1m thick layer of grey angular gravel (103).

6.4. These four deposits could be seen to form the late 20th century make up for the car park associated with the college (PLATE 2).



Plate 2 - Car Park make up, looking south. 1m scale

- 6.5. At the western end of the excavated area the tarmac access road was identified in place of the concrete car park surface. Below the 0.08m thick tarmac (110) was a 0.08m thick layer of crushed gravel (107). This in turn overlay a 0.15m thick layer of grey angular gravel (111). Below gravel (111) was a 0.2m thick layer of gravel and rubble (112).
- 6.6. It is clear that deposits (107), (111) and (112) date to the late 20th century and form the construction material for the tarmac access road. It is likely that the concrete car park and access road are contemporary.
- 6.7. A series of 18 foundation pad bases were excavated on the site. Of these 14 measured 1.5m by 1.5m in plan and four measured 1.2m by 1.2m in plan. All were excavated to a depth of 1.2m below ground level and showed the same stratigraphic sequence (FIGURE 5).
- 6.8. Below (103) was a 0.2m to 0.5m thick friable grey clay silt deposit (104). This deposit was noted in all foundation pads at a similar level, thinning out from northeast to southwest (PLATE 3).



Plate 3 - Foundation pad excavation, looking west. 1m scale

6.9.No finds were recovered from (104). However, its form and location matches a deposit identified during evaluation work carried out on the site in 2009. The evaluation produced finds dating to the 1st to 3rd century from this deposit. As such it is likely that (104) is the Roman agricultural soils identified on the site at this location and in the wider area.

6.10.Below (104) was the natural orange clay (109).

6.11.No features were identified on the site during the groundworks.

7. Summary & Conclusions

- 7.1. This document outlines the results of the archaeological monitoring on groundworks for a new construction at West Cheshire College. The work was undertaken to discharge a planning condition attached to the planning consent for the development.
- 7.2. The site is located at the West Cheshire College Eaton Road campus, to the south of Chester at NGR 340750,365170.
- 7.3. Archaeological monitoring was carried out by Blair Poole of L – P : Archaeology between 10th and 11th April 2012.
- 7.4. All fieldwork adhered to an agreed written scheme of investigation (POOLE 2012). The standards laid out by English Heritage and the Institute for Archaeologists were adhered to at all times as well as all relevant local standards.
- 7.5. Historic research shows that the site lies in an area of activity since the Roman period. A substantial Roman Road runs north-south along the eastern boundary of the site. Roman burials are known around the site area and a funerary monument dating to the 1st to 3rd century was identified on the college campus.
- 7.6. Roman plough soils have been identified being *in situ* across the site during previous archaeological work.
- 7.7. The site is thought to have functioned as agricultural fields from the Roman period through to the mid 20th century, when an educational establishment was constructed on the site.
- 7.8. The archaeological monitoring examined the removal of the upper 0.3m of modern material from the site and the excavation of pits for foundation pads.
- 7.9. At a depth of approximately 0.4m below ground level a 0.2m to 0.5m thick layer of clay silt was encountered. This is thought to be the Roman agricultural soils previously identified on the site. This material was present across the excavated area and overlay the natural orange clay.
- 7.10. No archaeological features were exposed during groundworks.

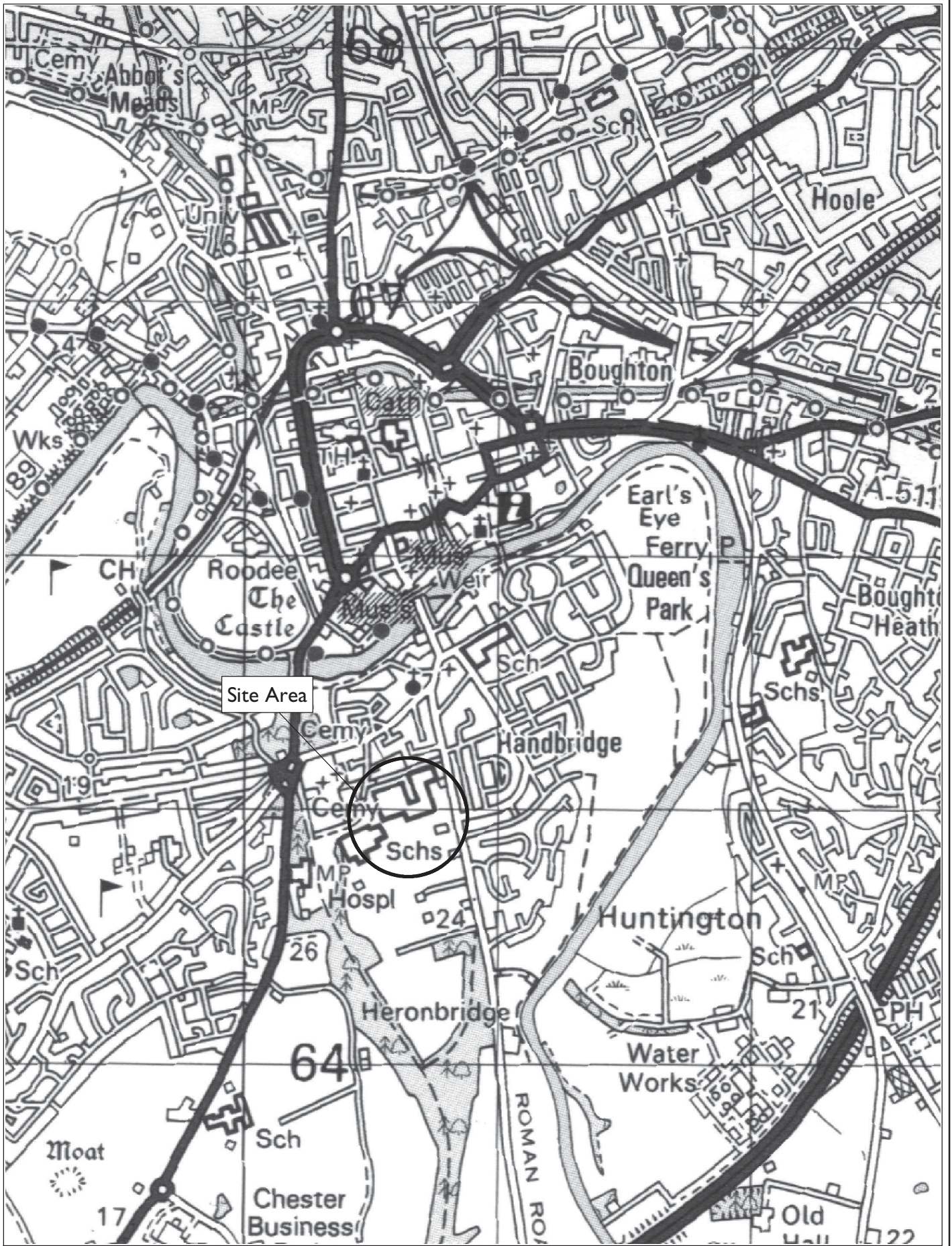
Sources Consulted

BIBLIOGRAPHIC

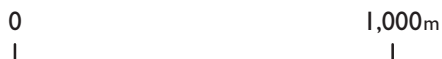
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FIGURES

FIGURE I // Site Location General



Scale 1:20,000 @ A4



PROJECT // LPI316C - West Cheshire College

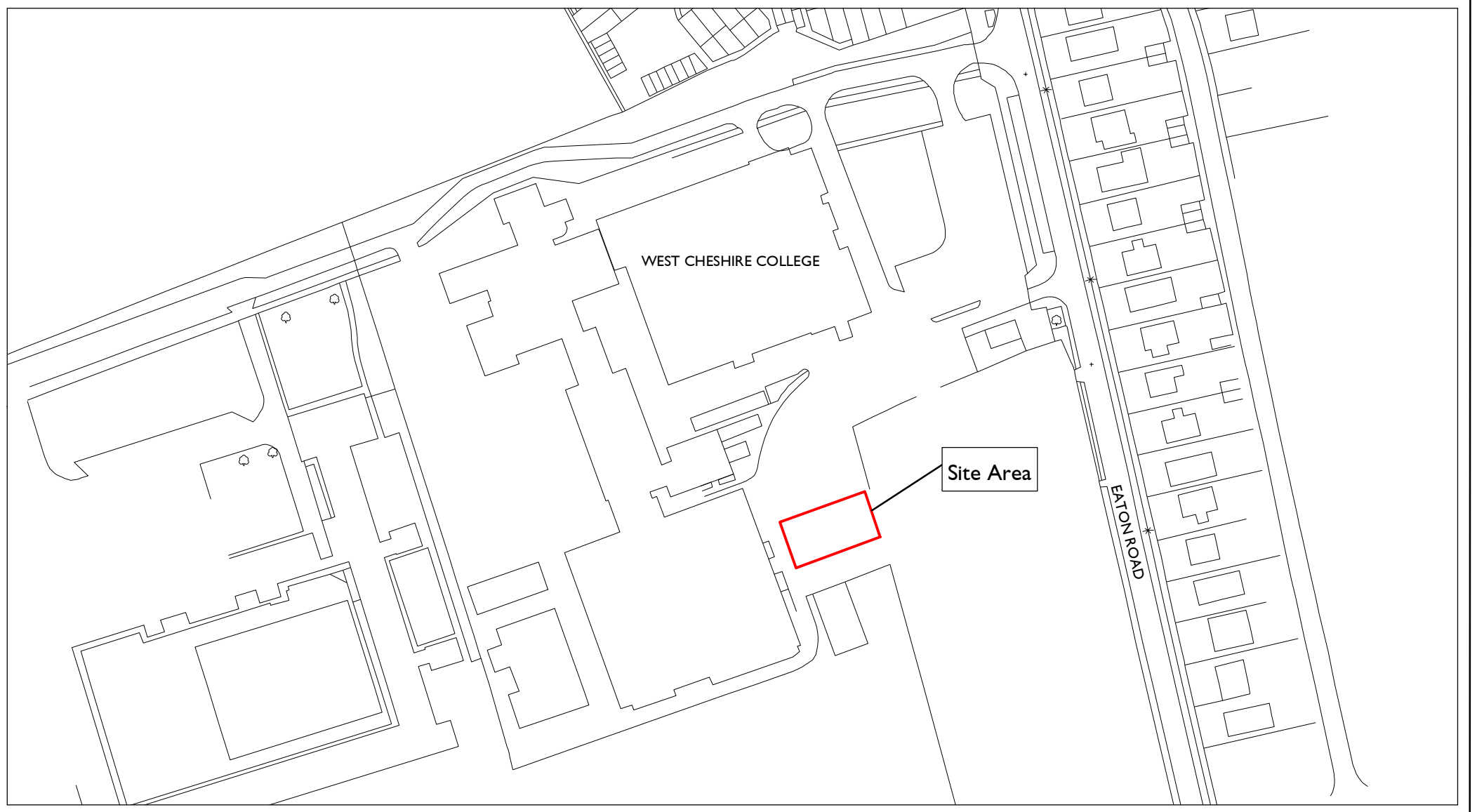
DESCRIPTION // Site Location General

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FIGURE 2 // Site Location Detail



Scale 1:1,500 @ A4



PROJECT // 0845C - West Cheshire College

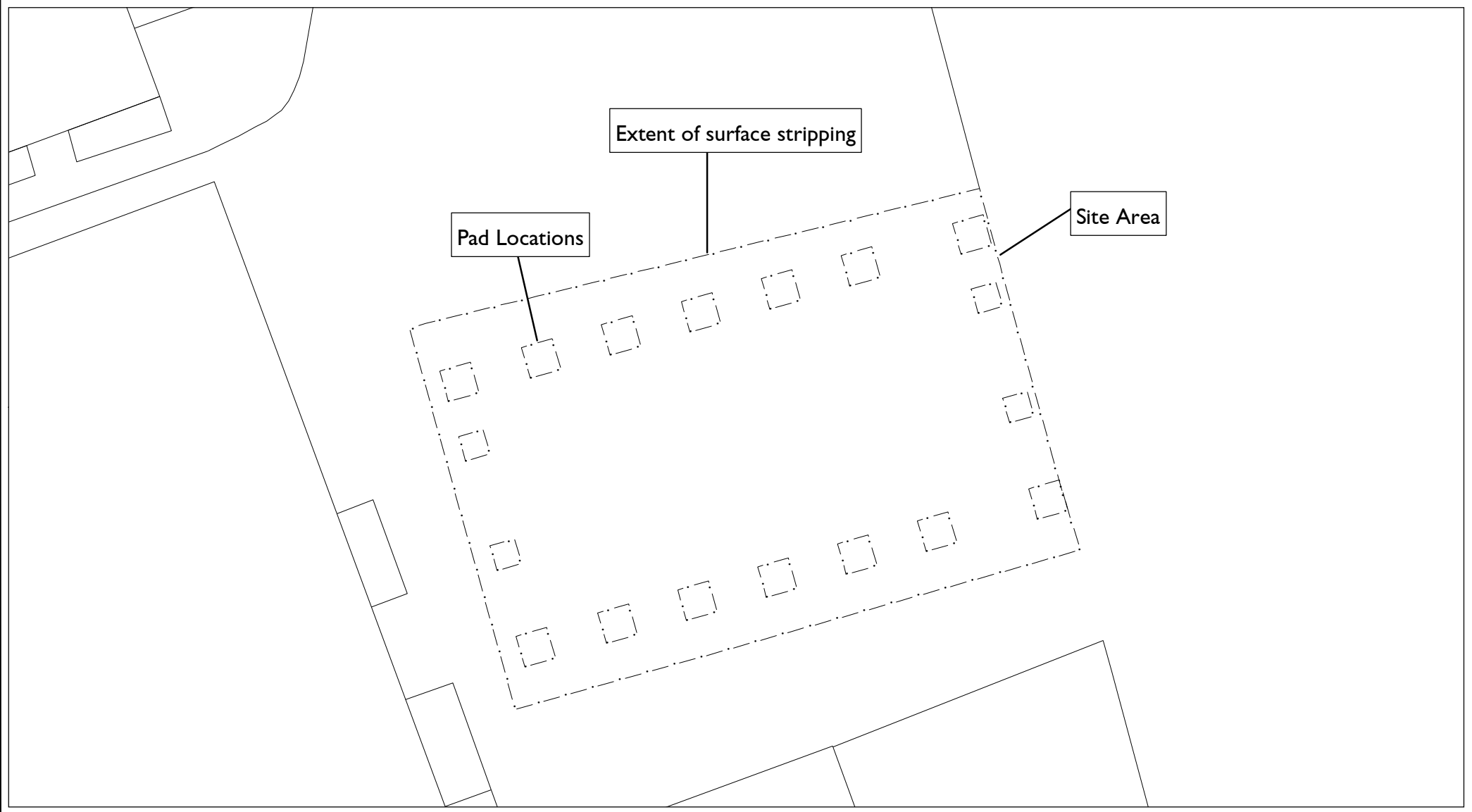
DESCRIPTION // Site Location Detail

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FIGURE 3 // Excavation Layout



Scale 1:250 @ A4

0 10m



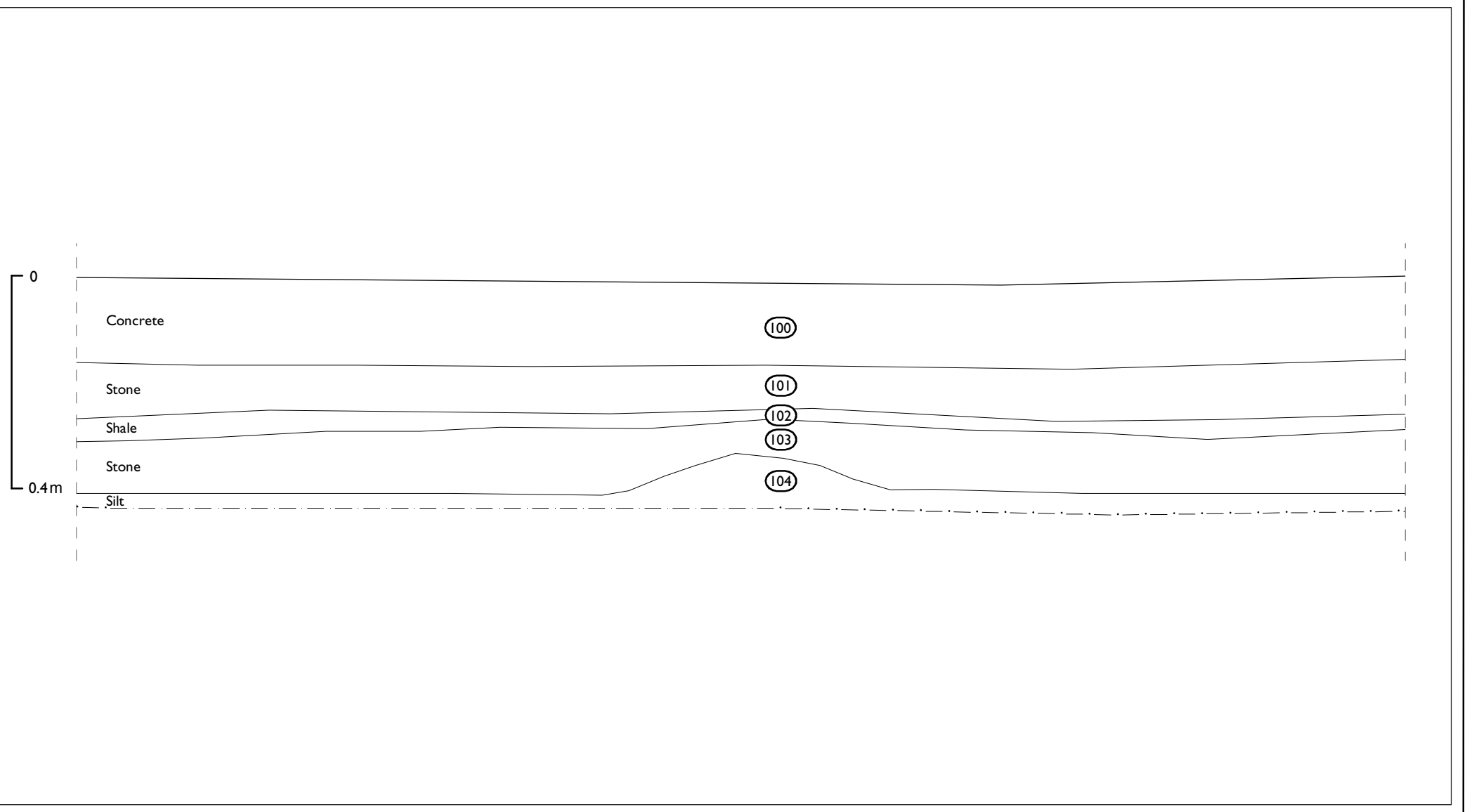
PROJECT // 0845C - West Cheshire College

DESCRIPTION // Excavation Layout

DOC REF: LPI316C-AWB-v1

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FIGURE 4 // North Facing Section



Scale 1:10 @ A4

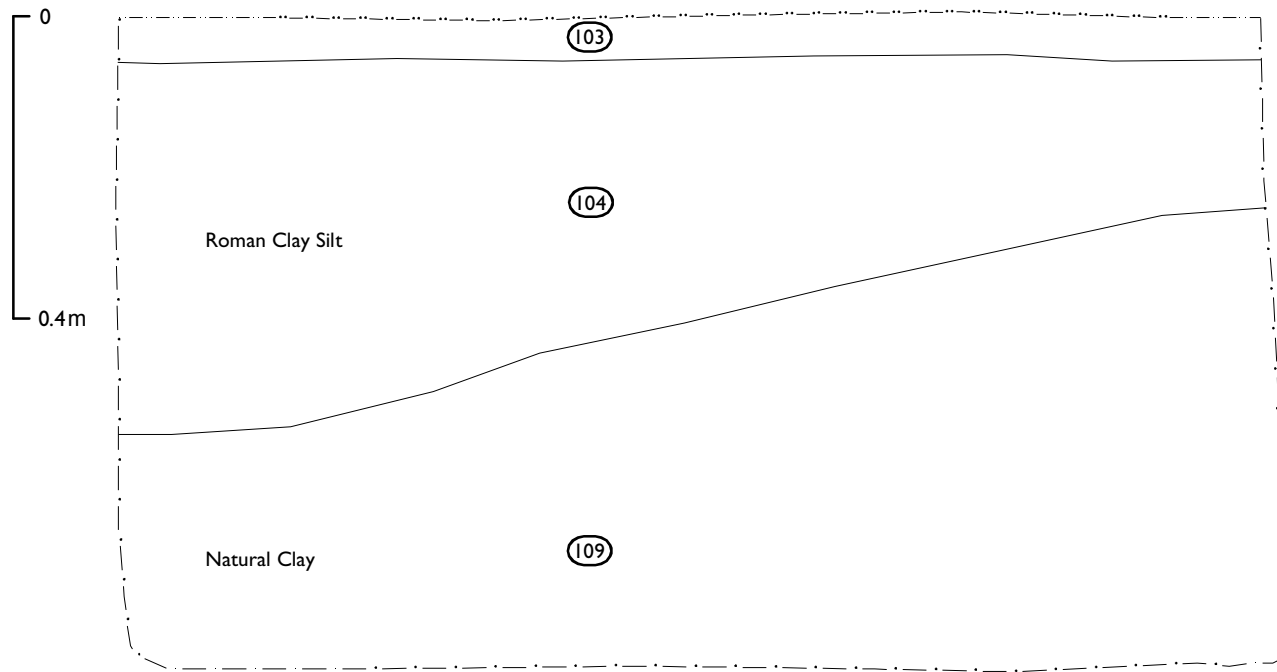
PROJECT // 0845C - West Cheshire College

DESCRIPTION // North Facing Section of Excavation Area

DOC REF: LPI316C-AWB-v1

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FIGURE 5 // West Facing Section



Scale 1:10 @ A4

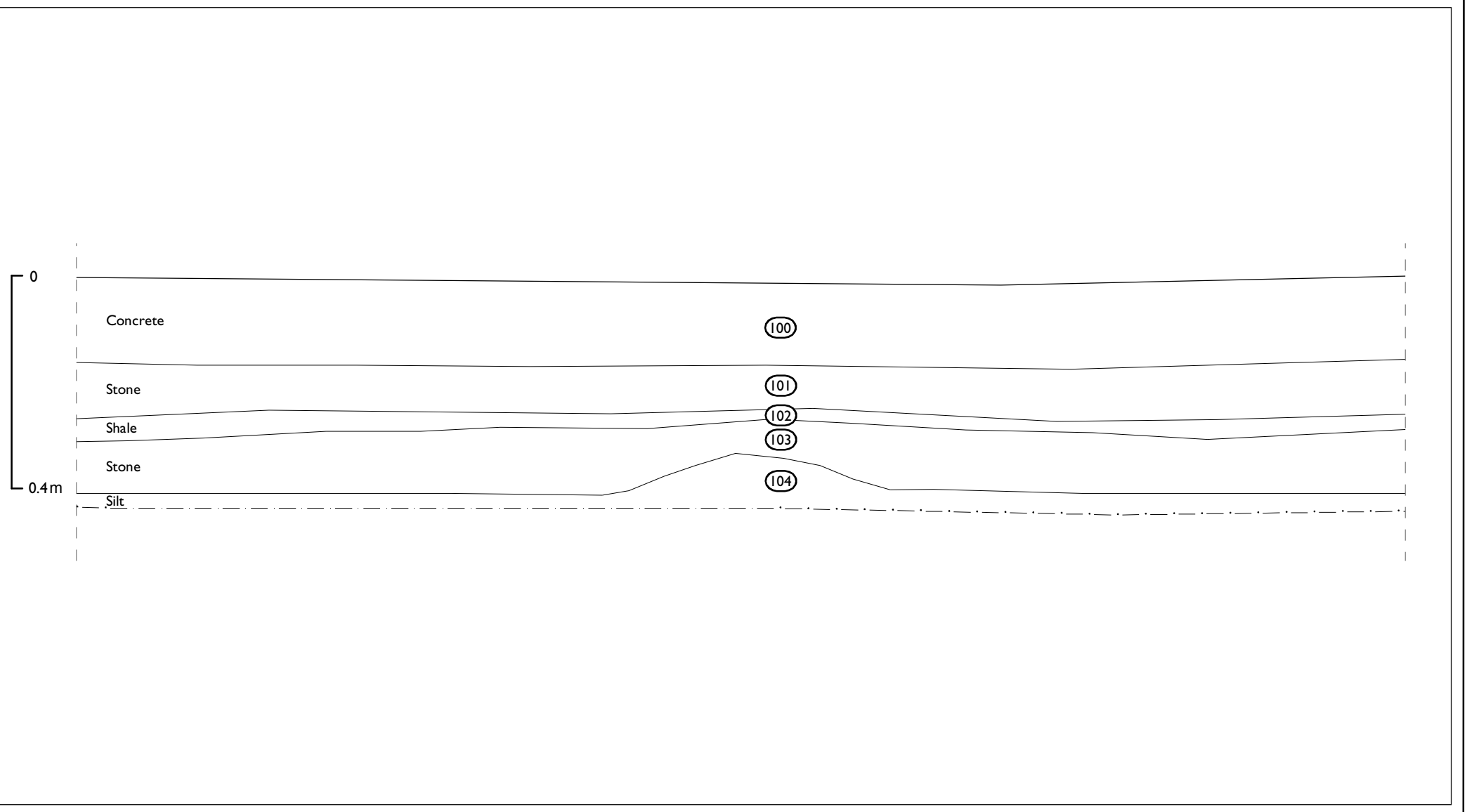
PROJECT // 0845C - West Cheshire College

DESCRIPTION // West Facing Section of Foundation Pad

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FIGURE 4 // North Facing Section



Scale 1:10 @ A4

PROJECT // 0845C - West Cheshire College

DESCRIPTION // North Facing Section of Excavation Area

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OASIS ID: Iparchae1-128053

Project details

Project name	West Cheshire College
Short description of the project	Archaeological monitoring of foundation pad excavations for a new build at West Cheshire College Eaton Road campus.
Project dates	Start: 10-04-2012 End: 08-06-2012
Previous/future work	Yes / No
Any associated project reference codes	CHE/ER12 - Sitecode
Type of project	Recording project
Current Land use	Other 3 - Built over
Monument type	NONE None
Significant Finds	NONE None
Investigation type	"Watching Brief"
Prompt	National Planning Policy Framework - NPPF

Project location

Country	England
Site location	CHESHIRE CHESTER CHESTER West Cheshire College
Postcode	CH4 7ER
Study area	350.00 Square metres
Site coordinates	SJ 340785 366075 52 -2 52 55 21 N 002 58 50 W Point
Height OD / Depth	Min: 19.00m Max: 21.00m

Project creators

Name of Organisation	L - P : Archaeology
Project brief originator	City/Nat. Park/District/Borough archaeologist
Project design originator	L - P : Archaeology
Project director/manager	Blair Poole

Project supervisor Blair Poole
Type of sponsor/funding Developer
body
Name of sponsor/funding West Cheshire College
body

Project archives

Physical Archive recipient Grosvenor Museum
Physical Archive ID CHE/ER12
Paper Contents "none"
Paper Media available "Photograph","Report"

Project bibliography 1

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