

**ARCHAEOLOGICAL MONITORING  
AND RECORDING:  
FORMER GUILDHALL, CASKGATE STREET, GAINSBOROUGH,  
LINCOLNSHIRE**

NGR: SK 8137 8988  
WLDC Planning ref.: 123840  
PCAS Job No.: 1008  
Site code: GAGM 12  
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Prepared for  
West Lindsey District Council

by

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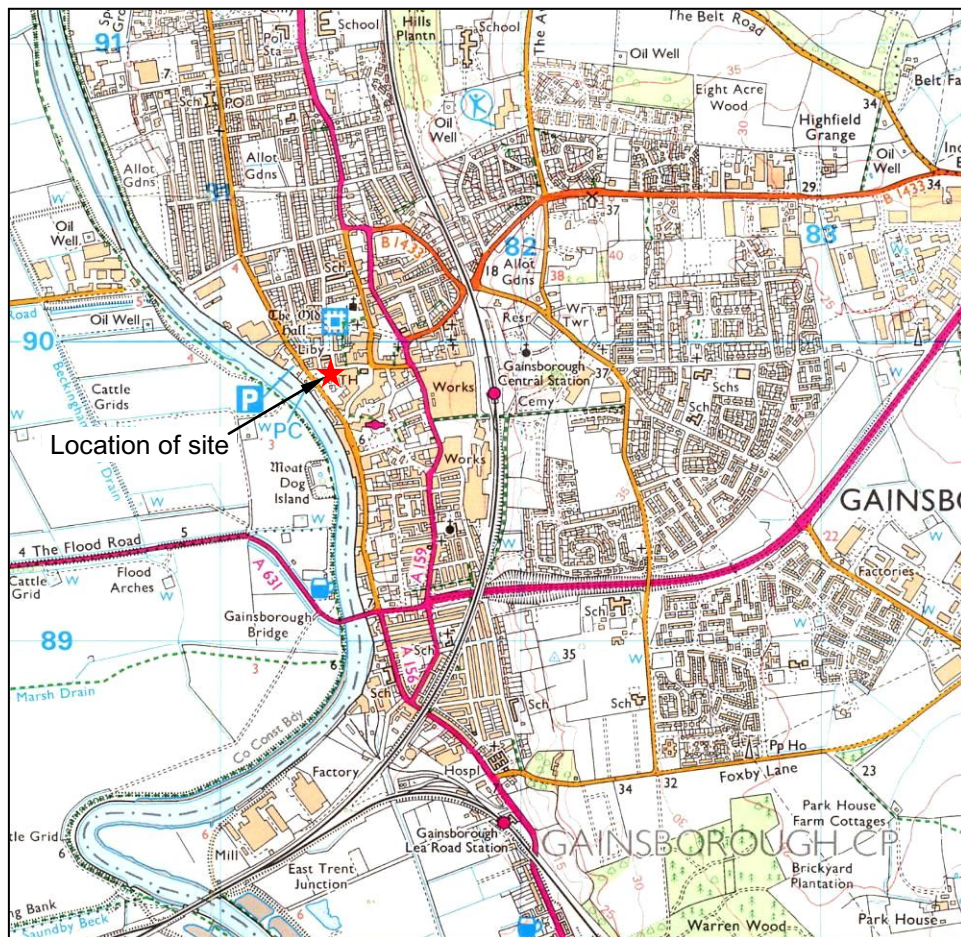
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## Summary

A scheme of archaeological monitoring and recording took place during the demolition of the former Gainsborough Guildhall buildings on Caskgate Street in Gainsborough.

The site lies within the historic core of the town, and within the Gainsborough Conservation Area. Previous archaeological work on the site encountered remains indicating domestic occupation during the medieval and post-medieval periods - heavily disturbed by later cellars.

After consultation with the Historic Environment Officer for West Lindsey, it was decided that post-demolition monitoring would not be required due to the fact that redevelopment groundworks would not impact beneath modern concrete foundations and disturbance, and thus would not encounter undisturbed archaeological remains.



**Figure 1:** Site location plan at scale 1:25,000. The site is marked in red. OS mapping © Crown copyright. All rights reserved. PCAS Licence No. 100049278.

## **1.0 Introduction**

Pre-Construct Archaeological Services Ltd (PCAS) was requested by West Lindsey District Council to undertake a scheme of archaeological monitoring and recording on the site of the former Gainsborough Guildhall, situated off Caskgate Street in Gainsborough.

## **2.0 Site location and description (figs. 1)**

Gainsborough is in the administrative district of West Lindsey, approximately 23km north-west of Lincoln. It lies on the eastern bank of the River Trent, which forms the boundary between Lincolnshire and Nottinghamshire: the river is bridged here, but the town does not extend to the western bank. The historic core of Gainsborough occupies a narrow triangle of land between the river to the west and the railway line to the east.

The Gainsborough Guildhall buildings, formerly the central offices of West Lindsey District Council, are situated on the south side of the junction of Caskgate Street and Lord Street, within the historic core of the town. The site falls within the Gainsborough Conservation Area. The building stood at the east side of the plot, away from Caskgate Street; the plot is otherwise occupied by car parking.

National Grid Reference: SK 8137 8988.

## **3.0 Geology and topography**

The local geology of the area consists of river terrace deposits of sand and gravel, overlying solid Mercia Mudstone (British Geological Survey, 1967).

The site lies close to the east bank of the River Trent, and has an elevation of approximately 7.5m OD.

## **4.0 Planning background and heritage designations**

The former Guildhall lies within the Gainsborough Conservation Area. Planning permission for the demolition of the 1963 building and conversion of the site to a public car park was granted in September 2012. The Historic Environment Officer for West Lindsey advised that a scheme of archaeological monitoring and recording was required during groundworks associated with demolition due its location close to the historic core of the town.

The results of a programme of archaeological works prepared in accordance with a Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI), submitted to and approved by the District Planning Authority are presented in this report.

## **5.0 Archaeological and historical background**

There is documentary and place name evidence for the existence of Gainsborough in the early medieval period (see PRN 55527), but there is thus far a lack of archaeological evidence for settlement during this period. The location of any Anglo-Saxon or Danish settlement is not known, although it is suggested that it would have been in the heart of the medieval settlement area (HER ref. 55528).

The site of Gainsborough Guildhall is within the medieval town core, and lies approximately 100m to the south of the mid-15<sup>th</sup>-century Gainsborough Old Hall.

19th century maps show that the growth of the town beyond this core area did not occur until at least the mid-19th century, after which industrial and population growth prompted the expansion of the town to the south, east and north. The long, narrow building plots that line several streets in this area are typical of plots with medieval origins. The increasing population of the 18<sup>th</sup> and early 19<sup>th</sup> centuries was housed in yards – infilled back garden areas behind existing buildings. None of these now survives (HER ref. 55528).

The river Trent is approximately 80m from the development site and this area was utilised as wharves in the medieval & post-medieval periods. The Lord's Staithe was situated at the west end of Lord Street and was one of several common landing points or staithes where tolls were paid to the lord of the manor when goods were unloaded. It is mentioned in late 17th century documents, and is known to have existed prior to that. It was originally constructed in wood and later rebuilt in stone (HER ref. 55531).

A skeleton was found at the corner of Lord Street and Bright Street (or possibly Lord Street and Caskgate Street) in 1981. Many human bones were found when lowering Lord Street; it is not known exactly when this work took place, but the discovery was reported in 1856 (HER ref. 52055).

Gainsborough Guildhall was constructed in 1963 and was used as the central offices for West Lindsey District Council. An archaeological evaluation was carried out in 2003 in advance of an extension on the north side of the building. The single trench encountered the footings of a stone wall dated to the 11<sup>th</sup> or 12<sup>th</sup> century and a series of levelling and occupation horizons cut by refuse pits, indicating domestic occupation in the medieval and late medieval periods. These features and deposits survived only in the centre of the trench, having been cut away at either end by 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup>-century cellars (Savage and Palmer-Brown, 2003).

## **6.0 Aims and methodology**

A programme of archaeological monitoring and recording was required on all sub-surface demolition groundworks. These were expected to involve the removal of existing foundations, with possible levelling of areas of the site. A cellar was known to exist near the centre of the present building footprint (marked on fig. 2): this will be filled in and left in situ. At the south side of the building footprint is an area of concrete slab, representing the former position of a temporary structure (marked on fig. 2).

The specific aims of this scheme of archaeological monitoring and recording were:

- To identify and record all archaeological features and artefacts exposed by the development works;
- To determine their form and function;
- To recover stratified dating evidence;
- To establish the sequence of archaeological remains on the site;
- To interpret the archaeological remains in the context of known archaeological remains in the vicinity.

The methodology for the scheme had been fully set out in the WSI that had been approved by the West Lindsey Historic Environment Officer in advance.

## 7.0 Results

Groundworks began on site on the 10<sup>th</sup> December 2013, and were undertaken using a 46 tonne excavator fitted with a toothed bucket and a large breaker.

The earliest deposit encountered was a 20<sup>th</sup> century demolition rubble (002), which consisted of mixed silty sand with a high concentration of brick rubble, exposed to a depth of approximately 1m below existing ground level. It was into this that the concrete foundations of the modern guildhall, (001), had been cut. In one area, two courses of modern brick were noted beneath the concrete foundation, within the foundation cut (Fig. 3). Brick courses were not observed beneath any other concrete foundations.

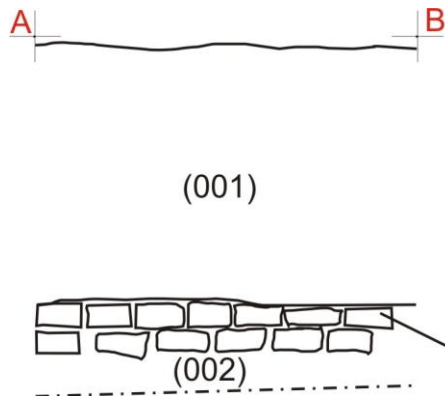


Figure 3: Representative section.  
For location see Figure 2

0 1m  
Scale 1:20

Modern brickwork seen at base of  
concrete foundations.

Areas of modern concrete rubble (003) were observed across the site. This was identified as the demolition rubble of the former modern guildhall.

Excavations in the monitored area of the northern half of the former guildhall did not exceed 1m in depth; therefore no underlying archaeological deposits had been impacted by these works. Further monitoring of the groundworks in this area was ceased following consultation with the Historic Environment Officer.

Planned works in the southern half of the former guildhall included backfilling existing basements to a depth of 0.45m below ground level, leaving the walls of the basements untouched. The concrete foundations of the remainder of the buildings were to be demolished to a depth of no more than 1m, thereby leaving the underlying 20<sup>th</sup> century demolition rubble largely in place and preserving in situ any archaeological remains that may survive beneath.

## 8.0 Discussion and conclusion

No significant archaeology was identified during the scheme of monitoring. This was due to the fact that the groundworks on the redevelopment site did not impact beneath modern horizons, and therefore would not encounter any undisturbed archaeological remains.

Early 20<sup>th</sup> century OS mapping shows this site was formerly occupied by a large building. The significant amount of CBM found in context (002) suggests this horizon was the demolition material from the building that was demolished pre-1963. Excavations did not penetrate through this layer.

It is anticipated that the basements of the 1960s guildhall would have destroyed archaeological remains. These basements were to be backfilled and left intact.

Further demolition in the southern part of former guildhall was to be consistent with that which had been previously monitored; excavations would not penetrate through modern disturbance and therefore no archaeological remains would be impacted by the works.

The areas of the demolished concrete footings were backfilled to a depth of 0.45m, onto which modern car park construction will take place.

## **9.0 Effectiveness of methodology**

The methodology employed during this project achieved its primary objective, ensuring that archaeological remains were not destroyed unrecorded, while causing the minimum of disruption to the construction process.

## **10.0 Acknowledgements**

PCAS Ltd would like to thank West Lindsey District Council for this commission.

## **11.0 Site Archive**

The project archive is currently held at the offices of PCAS Ltd. in Saxilby, Lincolnshire while being prepared for deposition, and will be deposited with the Lincoln City and County Museum ('The Collection').

## **12.0 Bibliography**

British Geological Survey, 1967, *East Retford: England and Wales 1:50,000 Series sheet 101, Solid and Drift Edition*. BGS, Keyworth, Nottingham.

Lincolnshire Historic Environment Record consulted online 18-03-2013 at [www.heritagegateway.org.uk](http://www.heritagegateway.org.uk).

Ordnance Survey, 2000, *Isle of Axholme, Scunthorpe & Gainsborough*: Explorer series no. 280, 1:25,000 edition. The Ordnance Survey, Southampton.

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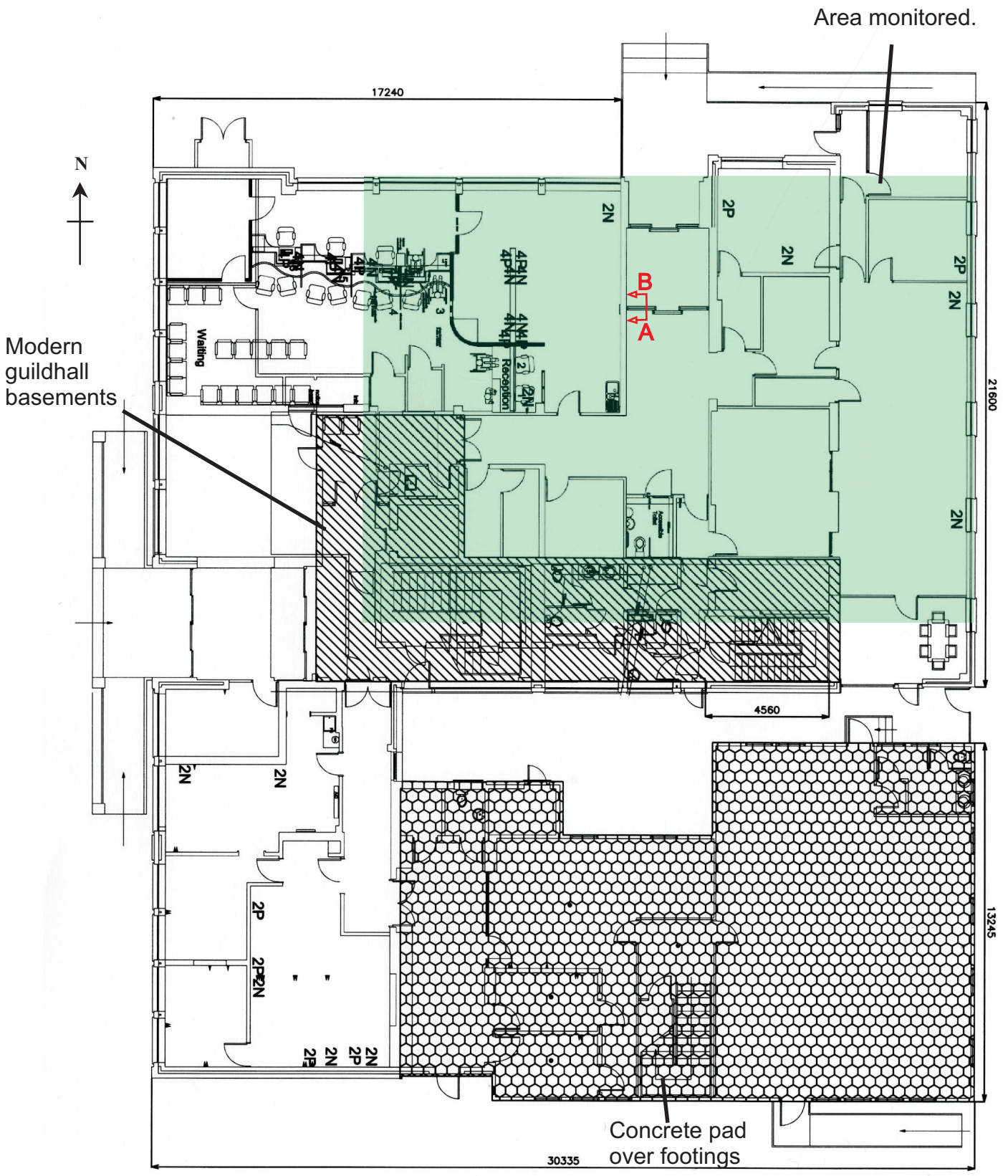
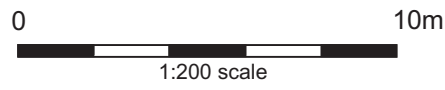


Figure 2: Site development plan (1:200). Green shading indicates monitored area and location of Figure 3.





## Appendix 1



Plate 1: Site on arrival. Concrete foundations just visible beneath rubble of demolished buildings. Looking SW



Plate 2: Monitored area. Looking SW



Plate 3: Modern cellar to be backfilled. Looking E



Plate 4: Modern concrete foundations and brickwork overlying 20<sup>th</sup> century demolition material. Looking W



Plate 5: Area that had yet to be excavated.  
Looking SE



Plate 6: Working shot. Excavated context (002) in foreground. Looking W



Plate 7: General working shot. Looking SW.

## Appendix 2 – Context summary

Context No.	Type	Description	Finds
001	Structure	Modern concrete foundations of 1963 guildhall, with thick steel cables as support running through concrete. Occasional courses of brick at base. Only seen in one section. See Fig.3.	
002	Layer	Mid brown silty sand. Loose but with a lot of brick rubble. Most likely demolition material from 20 <sup>th</sup> century building. Earliest layer recorded.	
003	Layer	Mixed CBM, concrete, plastics, wood in loose silty sand matrix. Modern rubble related to the demolition of the 1960s guildhall. Located in patches across site, some several metres high.	



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