

Exeter Royal Academy for Deaf Education Topsham Road Exeter

Archaeological Watching Brief

Summary Report



for
Castleoak Care Developments Ltd

and
RST Topsham Road (Exeter) Ltd

CA Project: 880181
CA Report: 17502

August 2017



Exeter Royal Academy for Deaf Education
 Topsham Road
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CONTENTS

1.	INTRODUCTION.....	2
2.	METHODOLOGY	2
3.	RESULTS	2
4.	DISCUSSION.....	4
5.	CA PROJECT TEAM.....	5



1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 On 3–4 August 2017 Cotswold Archaeology (CA) carried out an archaeological watching brief during ground investigation works at the Exeter Royal Academy for Deaf Education, Topsham Road, Exeter (centred on NGR: 292554 091819). This watching brief was undertaken for Castleoak Care Developments Ltd and RST Topsham Road (Exeter) Ltd.
- 1.2 This report presents a summary of the watching brief results, as required by Andrew Pye (Principal Project Manager (Heritage), Exeter City Council). The watching brief results will help to form the decision on whether any further archaeological works are required at the site.

Summary archaeological background

- 1.3 Topsham Road follows the approximate alignment of a Roman road between Exeter and the Roman fortlet and settlement at Topsham. Roman extra-mural development has been recorded previously along the line of the road, such as at Holloway Street (approx. 0.5km north-west of the Academy) and at the former St Loye's Foundation site (approx. 1.5km to the south-east of the Academy).

2. METHODOLOGY

- 2.1 An Archaeologist monitored the excavation of six test pits (TPs; see the attached plan). TP1–TP3 were 2.3m–2.8m in length, 0.5m–0.8m in width and 1.45m–2.3m in depth; TP4–TP5 were 0.3m–0.4m in length, 0.22m–0.3m in width and 0.7m–0.8m in depth. Drilling for window samples was also undertaken but it was agreed with Andrew Pye that these would not be monitored archaeologically.

3. RESULTS

Test Pit 1

- 3.1 Natural substrate 102 comprised reddish clay with bands of sand and gravel. It was exposed at a depth of 0.6m below the present ground level (bpgl). It was sealed directly by 0.46m of made ground 101, comprising yellow-brown silty sand with modern inclusions (e.g. plastic). This made ground was sealed by 0.14m of topsoil 100.

Test Pit 2

- 3.2 Natural substrate 203 comprised reddish clay with bands of sand and gravel. It was exposed at a depth of 1.2m bpgl. It was sealed by 0.4m of compact gravel/sand layer 202. Layer 202 was covered in turn by 0.42m of modern made ground 201, which comprised gravel, sand and tarmac. The TP was sealed by 0.38m of topsoil 201.

Test Pit 3

- 3.3 Natural substrate 306 comprised yellow-brown sand and was exposed at a depth of 2.1m bpgl. It was sealed by 0.4m of yellow-brown silty clay 305, which may also represent a natural deposit. Layer 305 was sealed by 0.6m of redeposited natural 304, which comprised red-brown silty clay with abundant gravel inclusions.
- 3.4 Redeposited natural 304 was sealed by 0.48m of light brown silty clay 303; this was covered in turn by 0.3m of made ground 301 and 302. The TP was sealed by 0.32m of topsoil 300.

Test Pit 4

- 3.5 This TP was excavated to a depth of 0.74m bpgl without the natural substrate being reached. Sandy clay made ground was present from 0.74m bpgl to depth; this was cut in the edge of the TP by the fragmentary remnants of modern red-brick structure 403 – possibly representing part of a wall. The structure and made ground 402 were sealed by 0.17m of sandy clay subsoil 401, which was covered in turn by 0.18m of topsoil 400.

Test Pit 5

- 3.6 This TP was excavated to a depth of 0.8m bpgl without the natural substrate being reached. Silty sand layer 502 was present from 0.7m bpgl to depth; this was covered by 0.44m of modern made ground 501, which comprised sandy clay with frequent stone inclusions. Modern artefacts/waste were recovered from layer 501. The TP was sealed by 0.26m of topsoil 500.

Test Pit 6

- 3.7 This TP was excavated to a depth of 0.7m bpgl without the natural substrate being reached. Made ground 601, comprising red-brown sand and gravel, was present from 0.2m bpgl to depth and was sealed by topsoil 600.

4. DISCUSSION

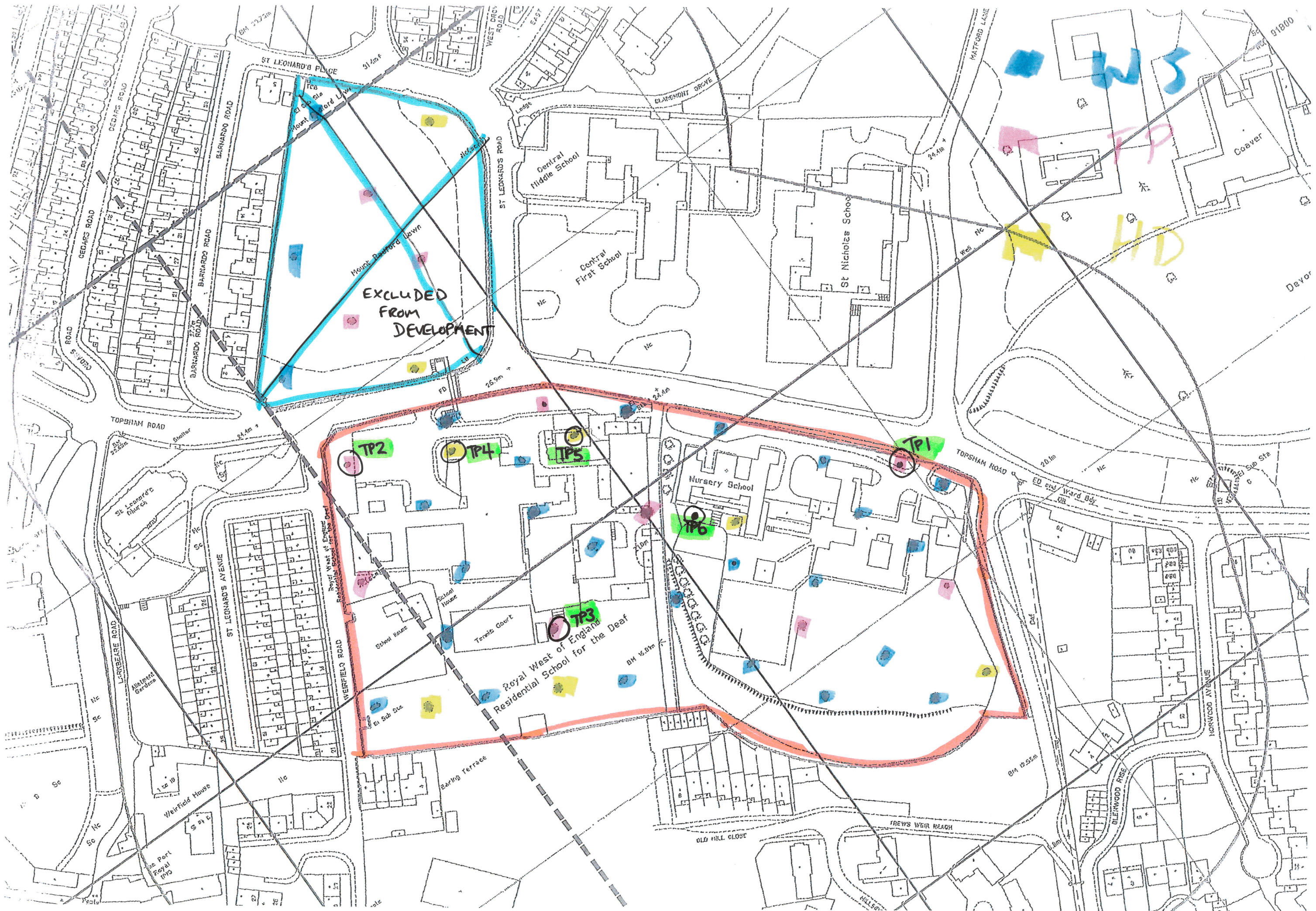
- 4.1 The watching brief has suggested that the natural substrate lies at a depth of 0.6m bpgl at the north-eastern site boundary (TP1). Here, the natural was overlain directly by modern made ground, indicating that the ground level has been truncated.
- 4.2 The three TPs in the north-western part of the site (TP2, TP4 and TP5) suggest that the natural substrate lies at a depth greater than 1m bpgl in this area. The natural substrate was not exposed at in TPs 4 and 5 (which were excavated to 0.74m and 0.8m bpgl respectively) and lay 1.2m bpgl in TP2. Where exposed, the natural substrate was sealed by made ground deposits.
- 4.3 The single TP in the south-western part of the site (TP3) indicates that the natural substrate lies at considerable depth (1.7m–2.1m bpgl), where it is sealed by redeposited natural made ground deposits.
- 4.4 The natural substrate was not exposed in the single TP in central part of the site (TP6), which was excavated to a depth of 0.7m bpgl.
- 4.5 The watching brief recorded no evidence for archaeological remains at the site. However, the monitored groundworks were extremely limited in nature. It was also difficult to date deposits revealed at depth, and it is possible that some of these may be archaeological in nature, rather than exclusively post-medieval/modern. It is also possible that these deposits may mask survival of archaeological deposits and cut features. There is also some potential for deep cuts (such as deep ditches) to survive in truncated areas.
- 4.6 A comparative example may be the former St Loye's Foundation site (approx. 1.5km to the south-east of the Academy), which is also located adjacent to the former Roman road and had a similar amount of modern truncation and fill. Archaeological excavation there demonstrated that significant Roman archaeological remains survived underneath the later fill deposits, as well as within some of the truncated areas.



5. CA PROJECT TEAM

- 5.1 The watching brief fieldwork was undertaken by Jeremy Austin. This report was written by Derek Evans. The project was managed for CA by Derek Evans.





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