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Advice on Archaeology & Planning

Environmental Impact Assessment

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Geophysical Survey

Historic Building Recording

Site & Landscape Survey

Interpretation, Design & Display

West Street, Buckingham, Buckinghamshire Archaeological Watching Brief

Report No. MK054/16

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**West Street, Buckingham, Buckinghamshire
Archaeological Watching Brief**

Report No. MK054/16

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1. SUMMARY

This document presents the results of a watching brief undertaken by CFA Archaeology Ltd to the rear of 23 West Street, Buckingham, which lies next to the historic core of the town. Excavations for a new extension to the property in its rear yard revealed a 17th or 18th century pit or ditch, possibly an early plot boundary on the east side of the site. This was sealed by two layers of 19th century made ground into which had been cut some 19th century rubbish pits. No Saxon or medieval features were found.

2. INTRODUCTION

2.1 General

- 2.1.1 This report presents the results of an archaeological watching brief undertaken by CFA Archaeology Ltd (CFA) at 23 West Street, Buckingham between the 29th of February and 18th March 2016. The work was commissioned by Arthur's Radio Salon as part of works to demolish a single story extension in the rear yard and replacement with 2 storey structure.
- 2.1.2 The watching brief carried out in accordance with a Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI) for a programme of archaeological works dated 28th June 2015 produced by CFA and agreed with Buckinghamshire County Archaeological Service.

2.2 Project Background

- 2.2.1 The Site is located on the south side of West Street in the backyard of no 23 (NGR SP 69527, 33979) (Fig. 1). This property, an early 19th century listed building, lies in the town centre of Buckingham within a conservation area. A neighbouring property, no 25, is 18th century and also listed. The backyard lies at about 90m AOD.

The mapped local solid geology is Cornbrash and Oolitic limestone (Blisworth Series). The mapped local drift geology is glacial till (BGS 2008). The mapped local soil above the glacial till is a fine loam over clayey soil with slowly permeable subsoil and slight seasonal waterlogging (SSEW 1983, Ashley Association, 572q)

- 2.2.2 No 23 lies on the northern edge of the historic core of Buckingham. The County Town of Buckingham from the 10th century was based on two Late Saxon *burhs* built by Edward the Elder, King of Wessex, in 913 to oppose the Vikings based in Northampton. A mint was based in Buckingham by 975 and coins of Ethelread and Cnut survive; a Minster Church was established (the new church dates from the 18th century). Buckingham is mentioned in Domesday and a Castle was built by the Giffards shortly after the Norman Conquest. It was never occupied and throughout the medieval period there are records of repairs but by the 1640s it was ruinous. The new parish church was built on Castle hill in 1777-81 and removed all visible trace of the castle. By 1218 there was a rivalry with Aylesbury which was positioned more centrally within the county and the fortunes of the town waxed and waned; in the early

14th century the town was affected by famine and was empty even before the Black Death. Queen Mary granted the town status as a self-governing borough; these rights were reissued, and paid for, under Charles II and James II. It was only after the 16th century that the town regularly sent Members to sit in Parliament. In the 17th century the formation of up to 40 trades guilds indicates the prosperity of the town; a new Town Hall was built. However, the great fire of 1725 destroyed 135 out of 387 houses although the fire did not quite reach Market Hill. In 1748 Lord Chobham built the new gaol to allow Assizes to be held (in rivalry to Aylesbury which did have a jail for prisoners). The town was only connected to the canal (1801) and railway (1850) by spur lines and so economic growth largely bypassed the town in the 19th century. Like many market towns there was trade in hides and wool; there was an iron foundry. Buckingham was famous for lace and briefly for locally quarried marble.

2.2.3 West Street may preserve the line of the Saxon defences of the *burh* and West Street is a part of the later, medieval planned borough. The sinuous line of West Street may also follow the line of the defences of the 11th to 12th-century castle. West Street is shown as built up in Speed's map of 1610 and Jeffry's 1770 map. It leads westwards from the market place. Pevsner considers that the market place may have been a larger triangular space in front of the Town Hall and that islands of buildings, such as the Old Gaol have intruded into this space. As the fire of 1725 did not quite reach the market Pevsner notes many 16th- and 17th-century buildings with Georgian fronts in these streets. The Old Chantry or alternatively the Old Latin School, at the south of the site on Market Hill is a 12th-century chapel with a Norman door. The chantry chapel belonged to the Hospital of St John Acon in London hence its dedication. In 1552 during the Reformation, the building became a school under Edward VI, restored in 1857 and 1875 (latterly by Gilbert Scott) the school was used until 1907 and in 1912 was gifted to the National Trust.

2.2.5 The research objectives of the watching brief were to:

- Date the origin of any activity at West Street - late Saxon town or a planned early Norman town outside the Saxon Burh and linked to the castle?
- Investigate the evidence for and origins of the different phases of land use and enclosure within the area, including any evidence for Saxon, medieval and post-medieval activity.
- Look for any evidence of the late Saxon town.
- Seek evidence of historic commerce and industry.
- Place the results of the investigation within the wider townscape context and contribute to an understanding of the pattern of land use.
- Use a spectrum of appropriate environmental techniques to attempt to model the landscape and its transformation brought about by the settlement's inhabitants and due to natural events.

3. WORKING METHODS

3.1 General

- 3.1.1 CFA Archaeology Ltd follows the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists' Code of Conduct, Standards and Guidance.

3.2 Archaeological monitoring during the Watching Brief

- 3.2.1 Ground disturbance in the yard directly behind 23 West Street (Arthur's Radio Salon) including ground reduction, and trenching for concrete building support pad was machine excavated using a toothless ditching bucket under archaeological supervision and control.

3.3 Excavation and Recording Strategy

- 3.3.1 All archaeological remains were recorded by means of photographs, drawings and written records conforming to Cifa standards (2014) and CFA's quality manuals. All features were planned and drawn in section at an appropriate scale (1:10, 1:20 and 1:50). All plans and sections were related in height to ordnance datum and surveyed using a Trimble RTK GPS device with an accuracy of up to 8mm horizontally and 12mm vertically. The photographic record consisted of digital photographs.
- 3.3.2 All finds of pre-modern date were retained for analysis. All finds were treated in accordance with relevant guidance (UKIC 2001 and Cifa 2014).
- 3.3.3 No deposits important enough to warrant environmental sampling were identified.

3.3 Archiving

- 3.3.1 The project archive, comprising all CFA record sheets, finds, plans and reports, will be deposited at the Buckinghamshire Museum Resource Centre and will conform to current guidelines in MoRPHE guidelines (Brown 2011, MGC 1994, SMA 1995, Ferguson and Murray 1997, UKIC 1990 and EH 2006) ensuring the proper transfer of ownership. The project report shall include an index to the site archive.

4. ARCHAEOLOGICAL RESULTS

- 4.1.1 The yard behind 23 West Street was covered in concrete (**001**), 0.1m thick, set on rubble hardcore (**002**) 0.2m thick (Figs. 3 and 4). Foundation trenches for the new extension (measuring 0.6m to 1.6m wide) were cut through these deposits revealing various post-medieval and early modern pits (Fig. 2) cut into natural sands (**022**), an old subsoil (**007**) and deposits of made ground above these dating to the 19th and 20th centuries (**013**) and (**014**).
- 4.1.2 The hard dark yellow sand (**022**) devoid of artefacts was exposed at the base of most of the trenches and represented natural geology. Above this across the yard was a 0.3m thick brownish red sand (**007**), possibly an old cultivation soil or former soil developed on top of the natural sand which produced no dating evidence.
- 4.1.3 Cut into both old soil **007** and natural **022** on the east side of the site was a shallow U-shaped elongated pit 1m wide exposed to a depth of 0.2m running parallel to the eastern side of the yard (**005**) (Fig. 5). This was filled with a dark silty clay (**006**) containing sherds of Metropolitan type slipware of 17th or 18th century date. The feature extended under the wall of the property to the south.
- 4.1.4 Above old soil **007** and natural sand **022** and also sealing pit **005** was the lowest layer of made ground (**004**) extending across the west side of the site approximately 1.4m from the east wall of the yard. This layer was a light brown sandy silt with approximately 40 – 50% crushed building material and contained some residual medieval and early post-medieval tile and 19th-century bottle glass. Above this close to the eastern boundary wall was later deposit of made ground, a dark sticky brown silt of loose compaction (**003**). The layer (**003**) produced a number of finds including 19th- to 20th-century domestic pottery and a very fine 19th-century cut glass lid – possibly from a sugar bowl.
- 4.1.5 Close to the south-west corner of the foundation trenches two rectangular pits were revealed next to each other barely 5cm apart (Fig.5-6). Pit **010**, 0.4m deep and 1.4m wide was cut into made ground **004** and extended northwards into the yard. This was filled with a dark brown silty sand (**011**) and contained a large number of cattle and sheep/goat bones. Next to this was pit **008**, of a similar shape and width though 2.7m deep; this was also dug through made ground **004**. The fill was a brown sand (**009**) containing finds including 17th- to 19th-century pottery, brick fragments, a pipe bowl from the early 18th-century and an early 19th-century medicine bottle. From their position both pits appear to have been contemporary. A modern pit (**013**) measuring 3m long and 2m deep revealed in the south-west corner was found to cut both these features. This was filled with a sandy layer (**012**) containing modern glass and a fragment of coal.
- 4.1.6 In the middle of the yard the cut for a waste water drain was revealed under a brick manhole (**019**). The ceramic drain (**021**) was backfilled with made

ground (020) containing 19th and 20th century window glass. A loose dark brown silty deposit (014) directly below the drainpipe contained the broken base of a hand-blown drinking vessel.

- 4.1.7 On the north side of the yard next to the stairwell of the basement was modern Pit 015 more than 4m deep cut through (003) and into (022). This modern pit was filled with a dark brown silt (016) and contained screwdriver at its base. A similar modern pit (017) was partially revealed along the eastern edge of the yard cut through layer 003 and filled with a greasy black silt (018), containing the wheel from modern vehicle.

5. FINDS

5.1 Introduction

A total of 143 finds were recovered from 7 contexts, as shown in the table below. The assemblage has been characterised and assessed for potential for further analysis in the commentary below the table.

5.2 Table of quantification

OP	Pottery		CBM		Animal bone		Glass		Spotdate
	No.	Wt/g	No.	Wt/g	No.	Wt/g			
003	13	1590	1	71.4	3	86	5	765.6	C19 th -20 th
004			4	401.7	4	129	1	279.3	CTP x4, 2.9g C19 th
006	2	53.5			1	6			C17 th -18 th
009	9	186.3	1	331.5	21	1607	1	9.7	CTP x12, 46g C18 th -19 th
011			4	1548.6	30	3428			
012			1	277.4					Coal x1, 668.2; shell x2 < 0.1g
014	3	560					1	14	C17 th -19 th
Total					59	5086			CTP x16, 48.9g Shell x2 <0.1g
	27	2389.8	11	2630.6			8	1068.6	Coal x1, 668.2g

5.3 Pottery

Post-Roman

5.3.1 A total of 27 sherds of pottery weighing 2589.8g were recovered in total from four of the seven contexts, all of which are indicative of a post-1500 date. Amongst the earliest dated material is a residual sherd of a Dutch – type internally glazed red earthenware bowl with a collared rim (*Jenning, S. 1981*) of 17th century date noted in deposit **009**. Metropolitan-type slipware dish sherds retrieved from pit/ditch deposit **006** and date from the 17th to perhaps the early 18th century. The body sherd of a further slipware vessel – probably a cup - of Staffordshire type (*Jenning, S. 1981*) with a yellow slip and dotted decoration from **009** has a late 17th or 18th century date. Products of a similar appearance have been noted in Potterspurty.

5.3.2 Also noted in **009** are sherds of mottled ware drinking vessel (17th or 18th century), undecorated tin glazed earthenware (TGE - 16th to early 19th century - *Jenning, S. 1981*), Nottingham type stoneware (18th or 19th century) and the base sherds of a creamware bowl (*Jenning, S. 1981*) and cup (18th or 19th century). Sherds of an unglazed red earthenware (UGRE) vessel (probably either a plant pot or storage vessel) from layer **014** date from the 17th to the 18th or 19th century.

5.3.3 Later dated 19th -20th century pottery was entirely retrieved from layer **003**, consisting entirely of domestic vessels including an earthenware mixing bowl, pearl ware (*Fletcher, E. 1972*) plate and a transfer bone china cup (*Fletcher, E. 1972*). A ribbed jar with Maling Newcastle is of interest as it contains a residue that suggests it may have been re-used for painting.

5.3.4 *Condition*

The condition of the sherds is generally good through, although abrasion was somewhat more apparent on the Metropolitan-type slipware.

5.4 **Glass**

5.4.1 Eight sherds of glass weighing a total of 1068.6g were recovered from 4 contexts. The broken base of a green hand blown drinking vessel from deposit **014** – presumably a form of wine or spirit glass is difficult to date accurately due to a lack of identifiable features, but most likely dates to between the 17th and the early 19th century. The upper section of a medicine bottle with a flared lip (*Fletcher, E. 1972*) from deposit **009** is of early 19th century date. A near complete two piece mould ‘torpedo’ shaped mineral water bottle from made ground **004** is probably post 1850 in date.

5.4.2 Layer **003** produced four glass items; the base from an early 19th century light green glass bottle, the neck from an 1850s green glass bottle, a complete blue glass medicine bottle of probably mid to late 19th century date and a very fine 19th century cut glass lid – probably from a sugar bowl or sweetmeat dish and suggests a relatively high status presence in the area.

5.4.2 *Condition*

The glass is generally in good condition, with little abrasion on the shards.

5.5 **Ceramic building material**

5.5.1 A total of 11 sherds of CBM were noted from 5 of the contexts and produced the earliest material from the watching brief. The earliest CBM was derived from made ground **004**, producing handmade sherds of medieval to post-medieval date; one sherd with impressed fingerprints (possibly a Potterspurry product). A wide handmade tile with some chalk tempering might either be a nib tile or a pan tile and probably produced somewhere around the Chilterns area.

5.5.2 Large pieces of brick from deposit **011** measuring 110mmx6mm are possibly indicative of the brick tax period c1784-1850 (*McComish, J. 2015*).

5.5.3 Condition

The condition of the brick and tile is generally fair to good, with little abrasion apparent on the sherds.

5.6 Animal Bone

Introduction

A total of 59 pieces of animal bone weighing a total 5086g were recovered in total from five of the seven contexts as shown in the below table. A brief assessment of the bone has been made in order to verify both the condition and the potential for further analysis.

Cxt	Species	Bone type	Right	Left	Unknown	Break	Quant	Wt (g)
003	Unidentified						3	86
004	Unidentified						4	129
006	Unidentified						1	16
009	Cattle	Metacarpal	3	2		Irregular	5	1607
009	Cattle	Metatarsal	3	1	1	Irregular	5	
009	Sheep/Goat	Metatarsal				Epiphyseal	2	
009	Sheep/Goat	Mandible		1		Broken	1	
009	Sheep/Goat	Atlas			1		1	
009	Sheep/Goat	Pelvis			1		1	
009	Unidentified						6	
011	Unidentified						9	3248
	Cattle	Metacarpals	6	1			7	
		Metatarsal	10	3			13	
		Femur		1			1	
Total			22	9			59	5086

A fairly sizeable assemblage of 59 bones was recovered from the watching brief in total. The animal bone is largely representative of domestic waste, comprising of both cattle (31 – 55 % of the assemblage) and sheep/goat (6 – 10.2 % of the assemblage). At least 23 of the fragments were unidentifiable.

Butchery was noted on a number of the bones; both layers **003** and **006** produced a number of long bones with sawn ends. Broken ribs from both a large and medium mammal were noted in made ground deposit **004**. The presence of a mandible from a sheep/goat in deposit **009** is interesting and may suggest that all parts of an animal may have been used. The large quantity of the cattle bone throughout the assemblage may be indicative of a relatively high status household in the vicinity.

Condition

The condition of the animal bone is generally good throughout the assemblage, with little sign of wear.

Conclusion

The animal bone assemblage is representative of domestic waste and has no or little potential for further analysis.

5.5.4 Other finds

A large piece of coal was collected from pit deposit **012** (possibly Welsh coal?)

5.5.5 Discussion

The finds noted from the excavation are probably largely residual within their contexts, suggesting no need for further analysis. It is recommended that the pottery and some of the CBM may be kept for reference purposes and (potentially) comparison with other material from the area. However, the small size of the assemblage together with its provenance means that it has no potential for further analysis at present.

6. SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

6.1.1 The watching brief revealed no Saxon material or evidence for the borough boundary or castle ditch.

6.1.1 There is a distinct lack of medieval pottery on the Site and the only remains from this period are fragments of residual CBM from made ground **004** which was laid down in the 19th century. The lack of medieval activity on the Site could suggest that there was no settlement in this part of the burgh until the post-medieval period, though it is more likely, given the Site's central location that made ground **004** was laid down after levelling of the Site which would have removed any medieval remains.

6.1.2 Besides the modern pits all features date to the post-medieval period with the earliest feature being pit **005** containing 17th - 18th century pottery. The two pits **008** and **010** appear to be 19th century rubbish pits dug after this event.

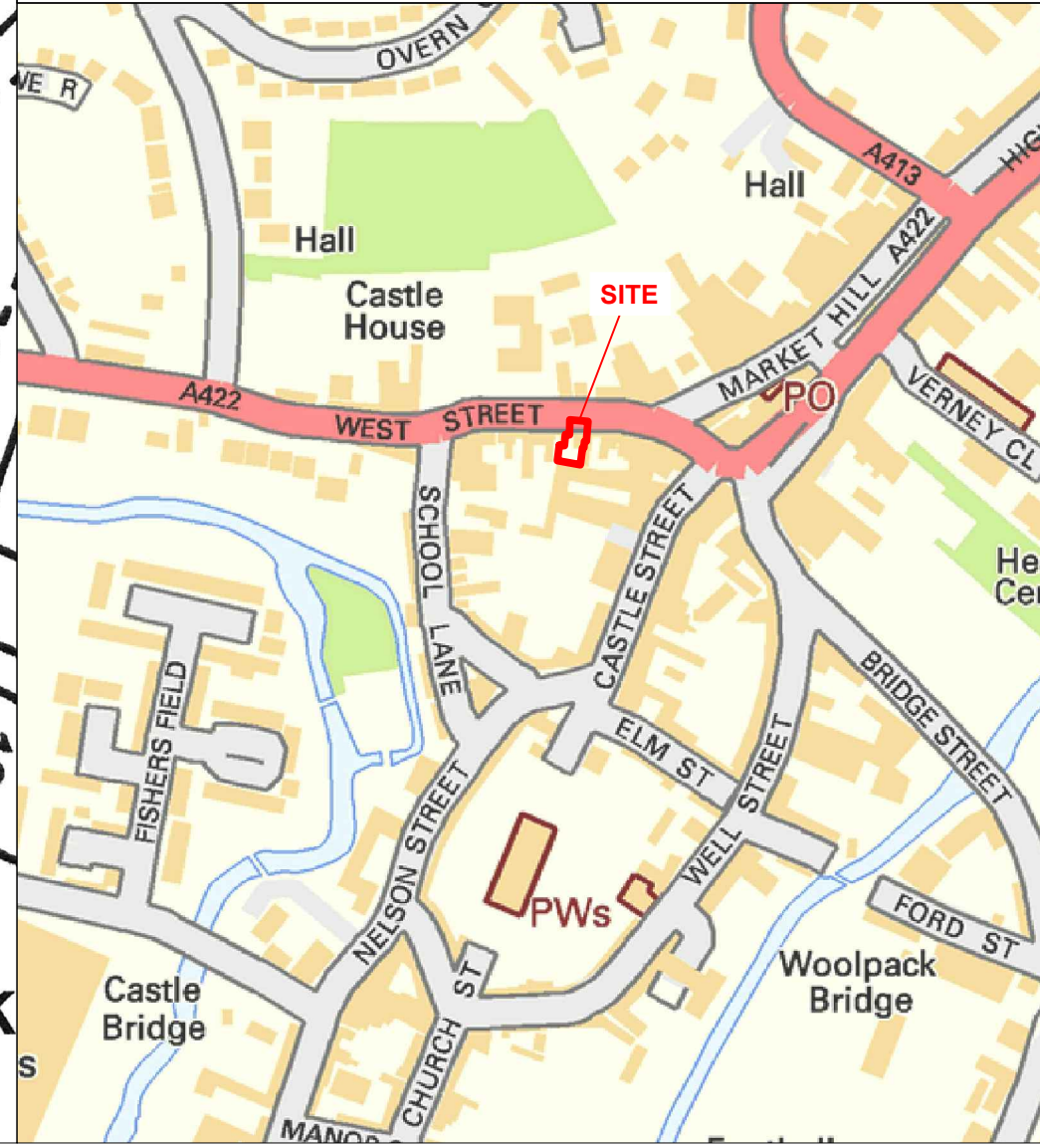
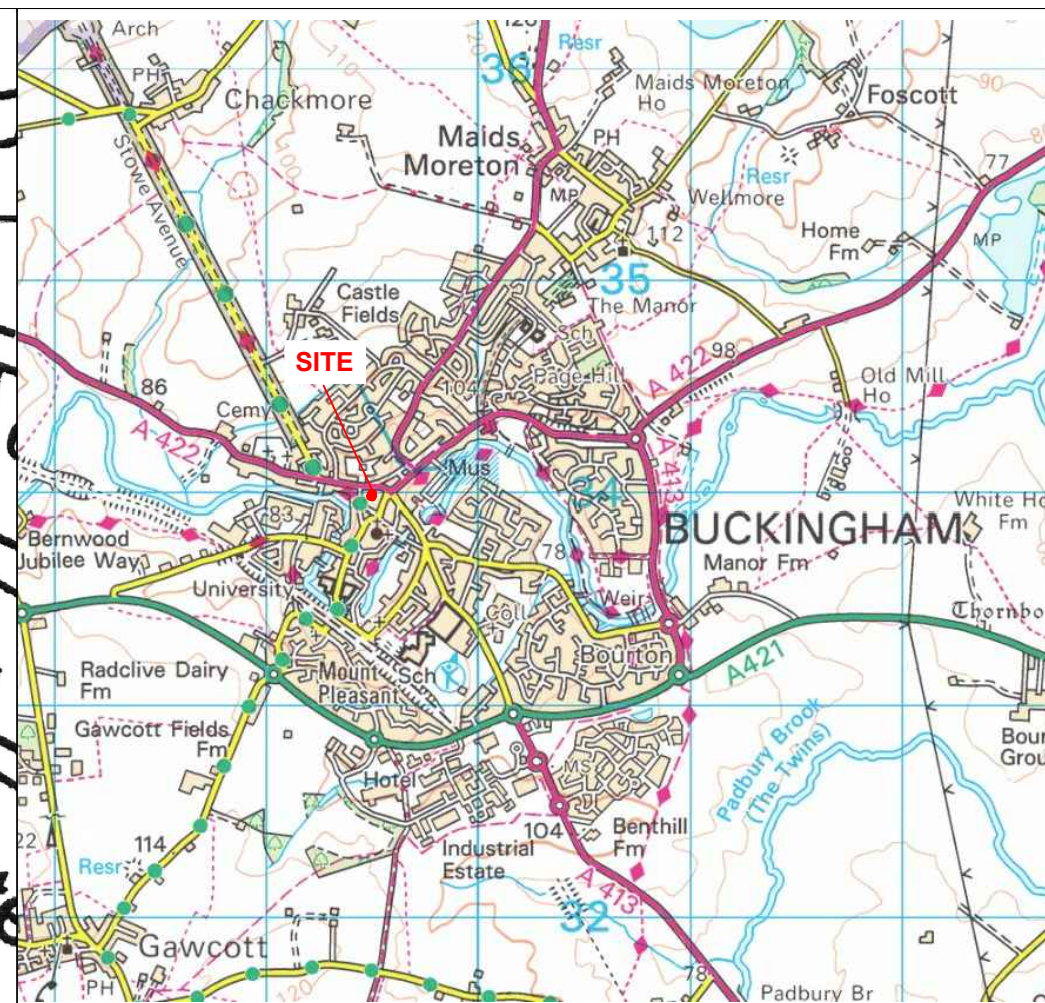
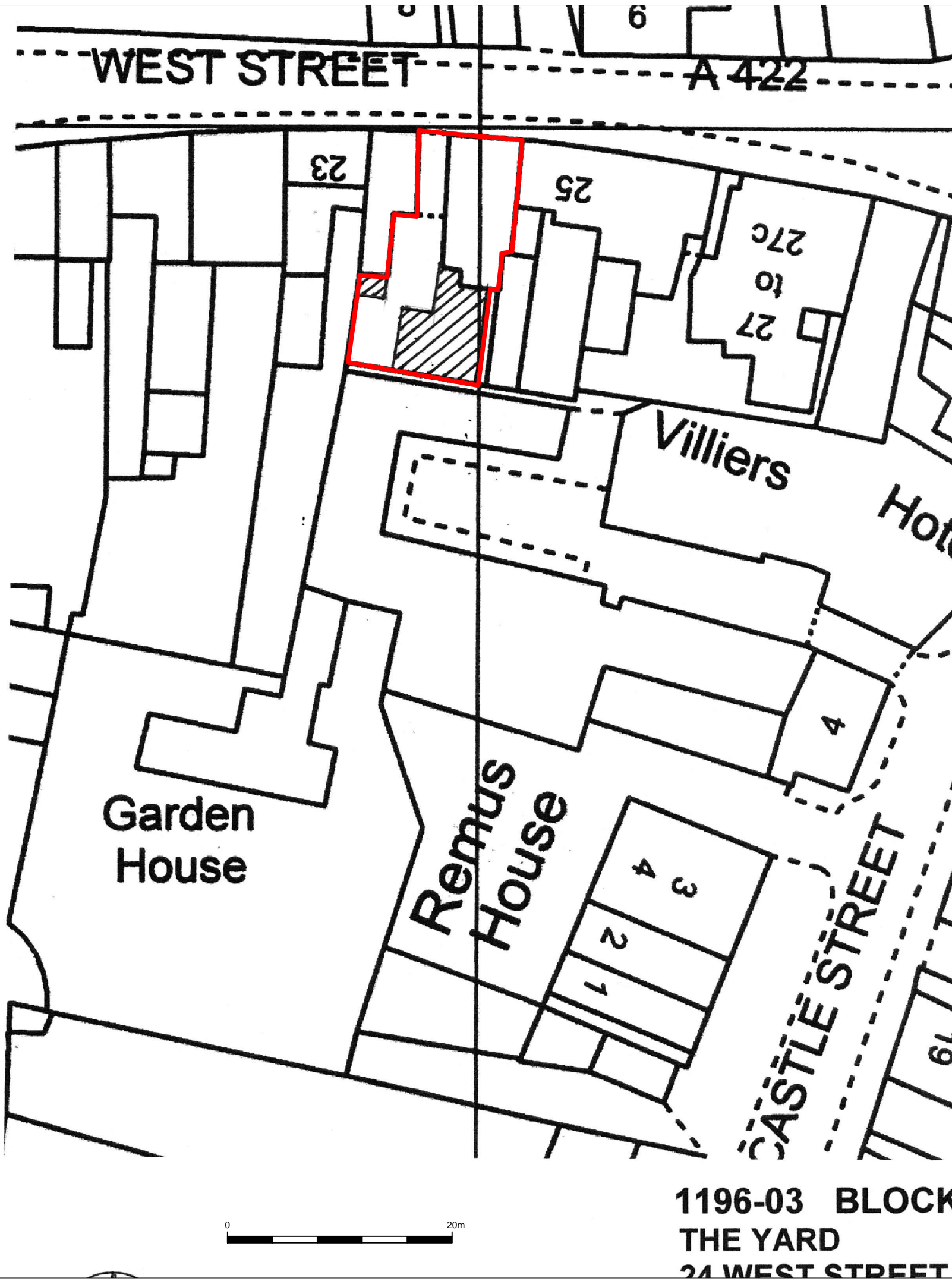
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Appendix 1 Summary of Contexts

Context	Type	Description
001	Concrete	A 0.1-0.15m thick layer of concrete over the site, which covers the surface of the yard.
002	Rubble	A 0.2m thick layer of rubble, directly under the concrete.
003	Deposit	A 0.4-0.5m spread of dark brown silt with a greasy feel overlying the natural, containing CBM. This had a medium compaction.
004	Made Ground	A 0.5m deep, compact light brown sandy-silt layer of made ground containing modern material.
005	Cut of Pit	A steep sided pit with a curved base, a 0.9m wide 0.2m deep.
006	Fill of Pit 005	A friable brownish black sandy silt. The deposit produced two sherds of 17 th -18 th century Metropolitan type slipware.
007	Subsoil	A mid-brownish-red sand 0.3m thick, an old agricultural soil above natural 022.
008	Cut	Cut of pit 2.7m deep, and 1.5m long.
009	Fill	Fill of 008, a dark brown sandy-silt.
010	Cut	Cut of pit, 0.4m deep with a flat base and very steep sides
011	Fill	Fill of 010, a dark brown silty sand with a medium compaction containing animal bone and slipped post-medieval pottery.
012	Fill	Fill of 013, a sandy silt brownish-black colour, contained modern glass.
013	Cut	Cut of pit, 2m deep, 3m long.
014	Deposit	Deposit beneath the drain 021. Dark brown silty sand, with a loose compaction. Void
015	Cut	Cut of modern pit, 0.8m wide, 0.6m long and more than 4m deep
016	Fill	Fill of 015, a dark brown sandy silt
017	Cut	Cut of modern pit
018	Fill	Fill of 017, a greasy black silt, which contained the wheel of a modern vehicle.
019	Cut	Cut for the drain
020	Deposit	Fill of drain, a dark brown silty clayey sand, with a medium compaction.
021	Deposit	Drain pipe
022	Natural	A layer of yellow sand beneath 007, and has a hard compaction.



Key:

 24 West Street

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Title:
 Site location map

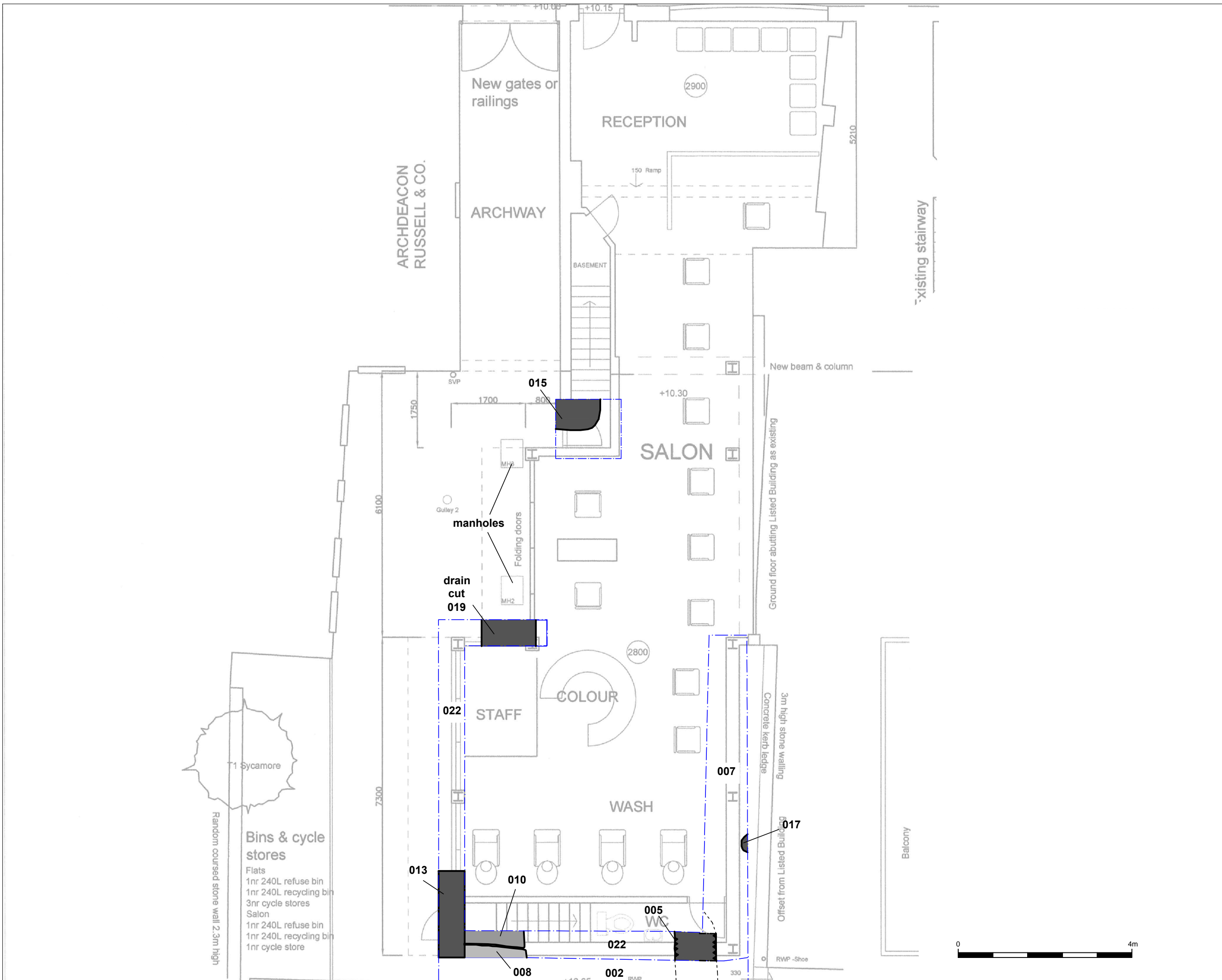
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Client:
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Scale at A3:
 Main map, 1:400

Drawn by: TB	Checked: MR	Date: 14/07/2016
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Report No: MK054/16	Fig. No: 1
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Key:

- areas monitored
- archaeological features
- Pit 010
- Pit 008



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Title:
Detailed plan of site showing archaeological features

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Scale at A3:
1:80

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Fig. 3 - General shot of Site, taken from the S



Fig. 4 - General shot of Site, taken from the N

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Fig. 5 - Ditch 005, from the SW



Fig. 6 - Photo of pits 008 and 010, taken from the E

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Fig. 7 - Photo of pit 010, taken from the SE

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