

LAND AT STOKEFIELD HOUSE, THORNBURY, SOUTH GLOUCESTERSHIRE

(Centred on NGR ST 6352 9035)

Planning Reference: South Gloucestershire Council
PT16/0982/F; Appeal APP/P0119/W/16/3155791 (Condition 5)

Results of Archaeological Monitoring and Recording

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On behalf of:
Orion Heritage Ltd

Report No: ACD1677/2/0

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archaeology

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The views and recommendations expressed in this report are those of AC archaeology and are presented in good faith on the basis of professional judgement and on information currently available.

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Summary

Archaeological monitoring and recording was undertaken by AC archaeology between September 2017 and March 2018 on land at Stokefield House, Thornbury, South Gloucestershire (NGR ST 6352 9035). The site is located close to the medieval core of Thornbury.

The archaeological works produced negative results with no evidence uncovered for archaeological features, deposits or finds. Significant truncation of the site by the construction of the previous modern buildings was considered to have removed any evidence for historic settlement on the site, particularly along the road frontage where it might have been expected.

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 Archaeological monitoring and recording on land at Stokefield House, Thornbury, South Gloucestershire (NGR ST 6352 9035) was undertaken by AC archaeology between September 2017 and March 2018. The archaeological works were required by South Gloucestershire Council as a condition of planning permission for the redevelopment of the site, following consultation with the South Gloucestershire Archaeology and Historic Environment Record Officer. The location of the site is shown on *Fig. 1*.
- 1.2 The archaeological work was commissioned by Orion Heritage Ltd on behalf of clients.
- 1.3 Stokefield House was located towards the western periphery of Thornbury and occupied a plot bounded by Castle Street to the northeast and Kington Lane to the northwest (*Plate 1*). It comprised the former premises of South Gloucestershire Council, which prior to demolition, consisted of the main office building with associated car parking and grounds. The site lies on flat land 40m above Ordnance Datum, with the underlying solid geology comprising conglomerate of the Mercia Mudstone Formation (British Geological Survey Online Viewer 2019).

2. HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

- 2.1 In 1066 it was recorded that the manor of Thornbury was held by Beorhtric, son of Aelfgar, although by Domesday it was in the hands of King William. The manor has changed hands many times during its history, being held by the Crown at intervals. In the 12th and 13th centuries, it was part of the earldom of Gloucester; the de Clare family was responsible for the foundation of the borough of Thornbury in 1243, to the south of the church and manor house. A major fire in 1236 destroyed the manor house, following which Henry III ordered that the Constable of St Briavels supply 20 oak trees from the Forest of Dean for its rebuilding. Plans were laid for the creation of an ambitious fortified house and a licence to fortify, crenellate, and embattle the manor house was granted in 1510. An elaborate palace-castle, now known as Thornbury Castle, was constructed and was apparently modelled on Richmond Palace, at that time England's most splendid royal residence. Thornbury Castle's pleasure gardens lay to the south and south-east of the castle, surrounded by a high stone wall. Adjacent to the castle is the medieval parish church of St Mary.
- 2.2 Castle Street forms the historic routeway between the castle and church and the historic settlement to the south. The east side of Castle Street is lined by houses within burgage plots (*Plate 2*). The west side including the area of the current site is less well

organised in the present day, but may previously have been arranged into similar burgage plots, potentially being part of the historic settlement, although the core of this appears to have been still further to the south and this part of Castle Street may be part of later ribbon development.

- 2.3 Historic mapping shows that prior to the construction of the council offices in the 1980s the site was occupied by a large house, known as Stokefield (later 'Clouds') and had a terrace of three houses on the Castle Street frontage. The house was built after the 1840 Thornbury tithe map and before the first edition Ordnance Survey 25-in map of 1881 and was set within gardens largely forming the footprint of the property today. Buildings on the street frontage are present in maps from 1716 onwards.
- 2.4 A desk-based assessment (Smalley 2016) and a heritage statement (Bray 2016) prepared in support of the planning application found no designated heritage assets on the site. A Cold War bunker was known to be present in the basement of the building on site. This structure was never fully installed and those internal features that were present had been removed. The potential for medieval evidence within the study site was identified due to its position within the medieval town and the presence of finds of this period in close proximity. Potential was also identified for post-medieval occupation activity within the study site. A low potential has been identified for all earlier periods. However, it was recognised that any archaeological remains that may be present within the study site were likely to have been removed or heavily truncated by the succession of development that has taken place from the 18th century onwards.

3. AIMS

- 3.1 The aim of the archaeological monitoring and recording was to preserve by record any archaeological features or deposits exposed during groundworks associated with the scheme. This was with particular reference for the potential for medieval and post-medieval activity to be on the site.

4. METHODOLOGY

- 4.1 Attendance by the site archaeologist undertaking the monitoring was undertaken in accordance with the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists' *Standards and Guidance for an Archaeological Watching Brief* (published 2014) and with reference to a Written Scheme of Investigation prepared by Orion Heritage Ltd (Bedford 2017) and a method statement prepared by AC archaeology (Hughes 2017).

5. RESULTS

- 5.1 No archaeological features, deposits or finds were observed during the groundworks for the re-development (*Plates 3 and 4*).
- 5.2 The natural subsoil largely comprised brownish red loamy sandy clay, and was exposed across the entire stripped site beneath modern surfaces. Only at the western edge was a topsoil observed in an area of trees which was to remain undisturbed by the re-development.

6. COMMENTS

- 6.1 The archaeological works produced negative results with no evidence uncovered for archaeological features, deposits or finds.
- 6.2 Significant truncation of the site by the construction of the previous modern buildings was shown to have removed any evidence of historic settlement on the site, particularly along the road frontage where it might have been expected.

7. ARCHIVE AND OASIS

- 7.1 The paper and digital archive is currently held at the offices of AC archaeology Ltd, at 4 Halthaies Workshops, Bradninch, near Exeter, Devon, EX5 4LQ under the unique project code of **ACD1677**. It will be held until it is known if any further archaeological work on the site is required. If no further work is required then an online OASIS entry will be completed, using the unique identifier **359551**, which includes a digital copy of this report. This report will then represent the archive for this project.

8. SOURCES CONSULTED

Bedford, W., 2017, *Land at Stokefield House, Thornbury, South Gloucestershire: Archaeological Written Scheme of Investigation*. Unpublished Orion Heritage document ref. **PN1547**.

Bray, D., 2016, *Stokefield House, Castle Street, Thornbury – Heritage Statement and Visual Impact Assessment*. Unpublished ECUS report ref. **7317**.

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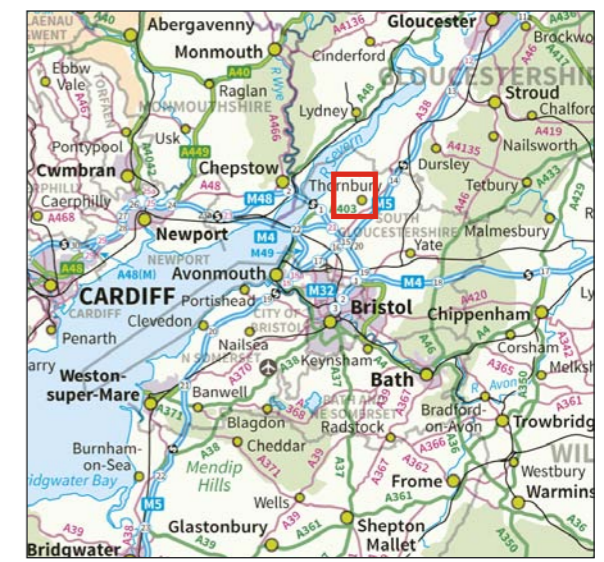
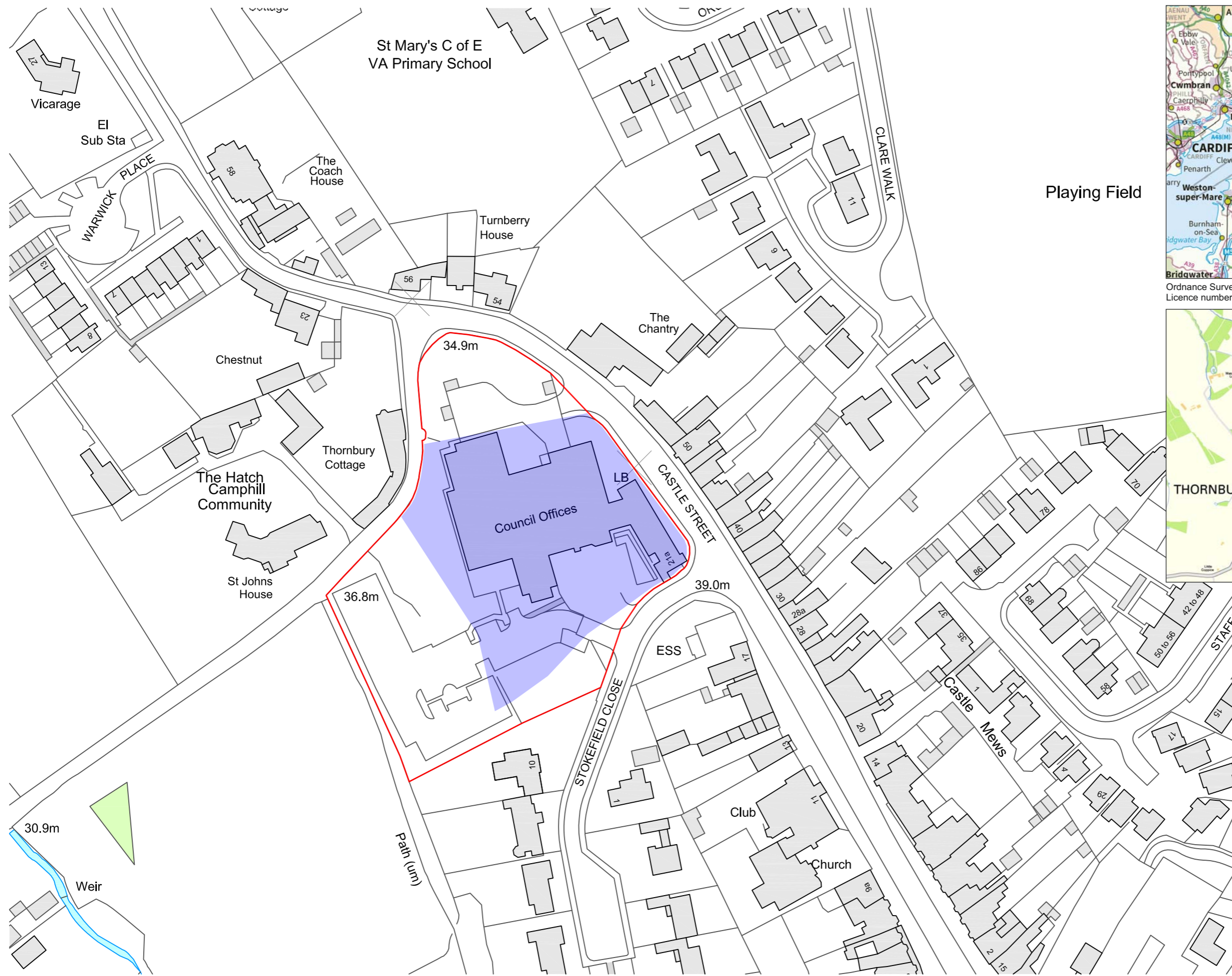
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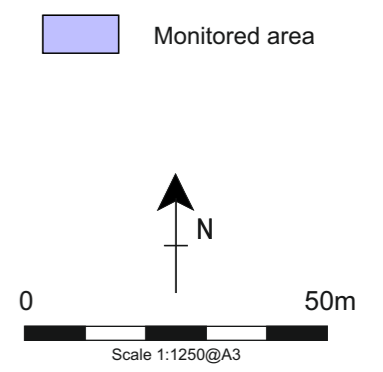
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<http://maps.bristol.gov.uk/kyp/?edition=southglos>

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PROJECT
Land at Stokefield House,
Thornbury, South Gloucestershire

Fig. 1: Location of site and area monitored

Based on drawing prepared by Churchill Retirement Living





Plate 1: General view of the site, looking north towards the tower of St Mary's Parish Church



Plate 2: The levelled site, looking east towards terraced houses on the east side of Castle Street (1m and 1m scales)



Plate 3: The levelled site, looking northeast (1m and 1m scales)



Plate 4: General view of construction in progress, looking northwest

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