

Archaeological Watching Brief
at
**NOS. 17-19 HADRIAN CLOSE,
SEA MILLS, BRISTOL.**
for
Bristol City Council



Report No. 2543/2012
BHER No. 25113

By Cai Mason



Bristol and Region Archaeological Services



St. Nicholas Church, St. Nicholas Street, Bristol, BS1 1UE. Tel: (0117) 903 9010



Archaeological Watching Brief
at
**NOS. 17-19 HADRIAN CLOSE,
SEA MILLS, BRISTOL.**

Centred on
N.G.R. ST 55030 75782

Client: Bristol City Council

<i>Author:</i>	Cai Mason
<i>email:</i>	cai.mason@bristol.gov.uk
<i>Approved by:</i>	John Bryant
<i>Signature:</i>	 
<i>Date Issued:</i>	26 July 2012

CONTENTS

Summary	
List of Illustrations	
1. Introduction.....	1
2. The Site.....	2
3. Archaeological and Background.....	3
4. Aims and Methodology	4
5. Results.....	5
6. Conclusion.....	6
7. Bibliography and Sources Consulted.....	7
8. Acknowledgements.....	8

Appendix 1: Policy Statement

Illustrations and Plates

Abbreviations

AD	Anno Domini	EHA	English Heritage Archive
aOD	Above Ordnance Datum	Km	Kilometre
BaRAS	Bristol & Region Archaeological Services	m	Metre
BC	Before Christ	NGR	National Grid Reference
BHER	Bristol Historic Environment Record	OS	Ordnance Survey
c.	Circa		

NOTE

Notwithstanding that Bristol and Region Archaeological Services have taken reasonable care to produce a comprehensive summary of the known and recorded archaeological evidence, no responsibility can be accepted for any omissions of fact or opinion, however caused.

July, 2012.

COPYRIGHT NOTICE:-

Bristol and Region Archaeological Services retain copyright of this report under the *Copyrights, Designs and Patents Act*, 1988, and have granted a licence to Bristol City Council and their agents to use and reproduce the material contained within, once settlement of our account has been received.

Plans reproduced from the Ordnance Survey mapping with the permission of the Controller of Her Majesty's Stationery Office © Crown copyright. Unauthorised reproduction infringes Crown copyright and may lead to prosecution or civil proceedings. Bristol City Council, Licence Number LA090551, 2012.

SUMMARY

An archaeological watching brief was undertaken during groundworks associated with the demolition of three 1940s prefabricated houses at 17 – 19 Hadrian Close, Sea Mills, Bristol.

The archaeological work revealed that the houses had concrete foundations with a brick rubble core, built on top of the sloping pre-1940s land surface. Apart from a small number of service trenches, it appears that most of the site remains unaffected by modern disturbance.

No archaeological finds were observed during the watching brief. Given that the site is located within a known Romano-British settlement, the absence of finds suggests that any archaeological features are likely to be sealed beneath a layer of post-Roman plough soil.

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

Figures

- Figure 1 Site location plan, scale 1:2500
- Figure 2 Site plan showing plate directions, scale 1:500

Plates

- Cover General view of the site from the south
- Plate 1 Concrete foundation (102) of 1940s prefabricated house, showing brick-rubble (101) to the right and brick-rubble (104), to the left. Viewed from the south
- Plate 2 Rubble core (101) of prefabricated house foundations, viewed from the south-west

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 This report presents the results of an archaeological watching brief carried out by Bristol and Region Archaeological Services (BaRAS) on behalf of Bristol City Council during groundworks associated with the demolition of three 1940s prefabricated houses at 17 – 19 Hadrian Close, Sea Mills, Bristol (Application No. 11/02510/LC).
- 1.2 The watching brief took place between the 16th and 20th of July 2012.
- 1.3 The project archive will be deposited with Bristol City Museum & Art Gallery under the Accession Number BRSMG 2012/29 and a copy of the report will lodged at the English Heritage Archive. The project has been entered in the Bristol Historic Environment Record as BHER 25113 and in the OASIS Online Access to the Index of Archaeological Investigations as: bristola1-124236.

2. THE SITE

- 2.1 The site (centred on NGR ST 55030 75782) comprises three 1940s prefabricated house plots and their associated gardens at Nos. 17-19 Hadrian Close, in the Bristol suburb of Sea Mills, which is situated on the north bank of the River Avon approximately 4.5km to the north-west of the City Centre. The site boundaries are defined by an area of open ground to the north, Hadrian Close to the north-east, Nos. 15-16 Hadrian Close and a pathway to the south-east, and the Bristol to Avonmouth railway line to the south-west (**Fig. 1**). The site slopes gently downhill towards the confluence of the River Trym and the River Avon, which is situated approximately 100m to the north-west. The site ranges in height from approximately 12m to 16m aOD.
- 2.2 The site is in Westbury-on-Trym parish, in the Sea Mills Conservation Area. There are no designated heritage assets on the site.
- 2.3 According to the British Geological Survey (2012) the solid geology of the site comprises Triassic conglomerate and/or breccia with clasts of the Mercia Mudstone Group (marginal facies).

3. ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

- 3.1 The site lies within the area formerly occupied by the Roman town and port of *Portus Abonae*, which was founded on the south bank of a pill formed where the River Trym joins the River Avon. Port facilities would have been particularly useful for vessels crossing the River Severn, or *Sabrina*, to what is now South Wales, including the supply of the major fort at Caerleon.
- 3.2 There have been numerous archaeological investigations in and around Hadrian Close from the 1920s onwards. These include extensive but limited excavations in advance of the construction of the post-war prefabricated housing estate (Boon 1945), two evaluations and a watching brief at No. 31 (Nightingale 1954; Hart 2005; Whatley 2006), a watching brief at No. 9 (Longman 2009), and an extensive evaluation of the areas formerly occupied by Nos. 14, 20-30 and 32-31, in 2008-9 (Foundations Archaeology 2010), which produced copious evidence of occupation, primarily dating from the 1st to 2nd centuries AD.
- 3.3 The results of these investigations confirm that the site lies in the centre of a Romano-British settlement with evidence of occupation spanning the 1st to 4th centuries AD. Archaeological features include extensive midden deposits, stone and timber-built buildings, yard and road surfaces, pits, ditches and inhumation burials.
- 3.4 After the abandonment of the Roman town the area reverted to agricultural use, and the site probably remained undeveloped until the construction of a prefabricated housing estate in the 1940s.

4. AIMS AND METHODOLOGY

- 4.1 The fieldwork was carried out in accordance with the methodology set out in a *Written Scheme of Investigation* (Mason 2012), *BaRAS Site Manual* (2005) and the Institute for Archaeologists' (IfA) *Standard and Guidance for an Archaeological Watching Brief* (IfA 2008). The aim of the archaeological work was to record any archaeological features or deposits revealed during the lifting of concrete foundations and floor slabs of three 1940s prefabricated houses.
- 4.2 The groundwork was carried out using a 360° mechanical excavator fitted with toothed bucket. Demolition contractors were instructed to avoid penetrating the ground below the concrete foundations in order to avoid damaging any underlying archaeological features or deposits.
- 4.3 A visual record of the demolition work was made using digital colour photographs.

5. RESULTS

- 5.1 Lifting the concrete floor slabs and foundations revealed a simple sequence of modern deposits associated with the construction of prefabricated houses in the 1940s.
- 5.2 The earliest observed deposit was an extensive layer of reddish brown silty clay (103) that contained no finds or other inclusions. Layer 103 lay beneath the foundations of the prefabricated houses, and is probably a pre-1940s plough soil. Within the footprint of the prefabricated houses layer 103 was overlain by brick-rubble (101); to the south-east of the houses it was overlain by modern imported dark brown silty clay topsoil (100), and to the north-west it was overlain by brick rubble (104).
- 5.3 The prefabricated houses were constructed by dumping three level mounds of brick rubble 101 on the sloping pre-1940s land surface. The brick-rubble terraces were then shuttered and encased by cast-concrete foundations (102) (**Cover & Plates 1 & 2**). The foundations were approximately 0.2m high along the south-east edge of the houses, and up to c 0.8m high along the north-west edge.
- 5.4 A further dump of brick rubble 104 (**Plate 1**) was used to form level external terraces, up to approximately 1m high to the north-west of the houses. Layer 104 abutted foundations 102, and was overlain by topsoil 100.

6. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

- 6.1 The archaeological work revealed that the prefabricated houses had concrete foundations, which encased a stepped terrace of imported brick-rubble dumped on the sloping pre-1940s land surface. Apart from a few service trenches, it appears that most of the site remains unaffected by modern disturbance.
- 6.2 No archaeological finds were observed during the watching brief. Given that the site is located within a known Romano-British settlement, the absence of finds suggests that any archaeological features are probably sealed beneath a layer of post-Roman plough soil derived from further up the hill, away from the centre of the settlement.

7. BIBLIOGRAPHY AND SOURCES CONSULTED

Maps and Plans

- Westbury-on-Trym tithe map 1841
- Ordnance Survey 1884 1:2500 plan (surveyed 1883)

Published material

- Boon, G.C. (1945). 'The Roman site at Sea Mills, 1945-46'. *Transactions of the Bristol and Gloucestershire Archaeological Society*, Vol. 66, 258-295
- DCLG (2012). *National Planning Policy Framework*. London: TSO
- IfA. (2008). *Standard and Guidance for an archaeological watching brief*. Reading: IfA
- Nightingale, K.R. (1954). 'Trial Excavations at Sea Mills, 1954' *Transactions of the Bristol and Gloucestershire Archaeological Society*, Vol 73, 70-72

Unpublished material

- BaRAS (2005). *Site Manual*
- Foundations Archaeology (2010). *Hadrian Close, Sea Mills, Bristol. Archaeological Evaluation; Phase 2*. Unpublished client report (no. 661). Swindon
- Hart, J. (2005). *31 Hadrian Close, Sea Mills, Bristol: Archaeological Evaluation*. Cirencester: Cotswold Archaeology
- Longman, T. (2010). *Archaeological Watching Brief at No. 9 Hadrian Close, Sea Mills, Bristol*. BaRAS Report 2177/2010
- Mason, C. (2012). *Written Scheme of Investigation for Archaeological Watching Brief at 17-19 Hadrian Close, Sea Mills, Bristol*. Bristol: BaRAS
- Whatley, S. (2006). *Archaeological Watching Brief at No. 31 Hadrian Close, Sea Mills, Bristol*. BaRAS Report 1671/2006

Internet sources

- British Geological Survey. (2012). Geology of Britain Viewer. Available: <http://www.bgs.ac.uk/discoveringGeology/geologyOfBritain/viewer.html>. Last accessed 24 July 2012.

8. ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

- 8.1 BaRAS would like to thank Bristol City Council for funding the project. We would also like to thank Ronnie Cox (CDM Coordinator, BCC) and James Hennessy (Project Manager, Wring Group Ltd.) for their assistance throughout the project, and Bob Jones (Senior Archaeological Officer, BCC) for his advice.
- 8.2 The archaeological work was managed by John Bryant (Acting Manager BaRAS). Plans, figures, and plates in this report were prepared by Ann Linge (Design and Production Officer BaRAS). The archaeological work was undertaken by Cai Mason (Project Officer BaRAS).

APPENDIX 1: Policy Statement

This report is the result of work carried out in the light of national and local authority policies.

NATIONAL PLANNING POLICY (ENGLAND)

The *National Planning Policy Framework* (NPPF) for England published by the UK Government in March 2012 states that the historic environment, which includes designated and non-designated heritage assets, is an irreplaceable resource and, as such, should be taken into account by Local Planning Authorities when considering and determining planning applications. This is taken to form part of a positive strategy set out in the respective Local Plan to ensure the conservation and enjoyment of the historic environment. The assigned significance of heritage assets will be key factor in terms of their conservation.

Given their irreplaceable nature, any harm to, or loss of, a heritage asset, or heritage assets, should be clearly and convincingly justified as part of a planning application. As part of this, applicants are required to describe the significance of any heritage assets affected by a proposal, including any contribution made by their setting. Where a heritage asset, or assets, are to be harmed or lost as the result of a proposal, the applicant will be required to record and advance the understanding of the significance of that asset or assets, to include making the evidence arising publicly accessible, but this will be in proportion to the significance of the asset/assets in question.

While the NPPF takes into account the historic environment as a whole, additional protection is afforded to designated heritage assets under current English Law. Any proposal that would result in harm or loss of a designated heritage asset is also required to be justified by the applicant in meeting strict criteria set out in the NPPF.

LOCAL POLICY

Bristol City Council Supplementary Planning Document (2006) states (policy SPD No.7, p4):

(i) There will be a presumption in favour of preserving any archaeological features or sites of national importance, whether scheduled or not.

(ii) Development which could adversely affect sites, structures, landscapes or buildings of archaeological interest and their settings will require an assessment of the archaeological resource through a desktop study, and where appropriate a field evaluation. Where there is evidence of archaeological remains, development will not be permitted except where it can be demonstrated that the archaeological features of the site will be satisfactorily preserved in situ, or a suitable strategy has been put forward to mitigate the impact of development proposals upon important archaeological remains and their settings; or, if this is not possible and the sites are not scheduled or of national importance, provision for adequately recording the site prior to destruction is made, preferably by negotiating a planning agreement to ensure that access, time and financial resources are available to allow essential recording and publication to take place. This report is the result of work carried out in the light of national and local authority policies.

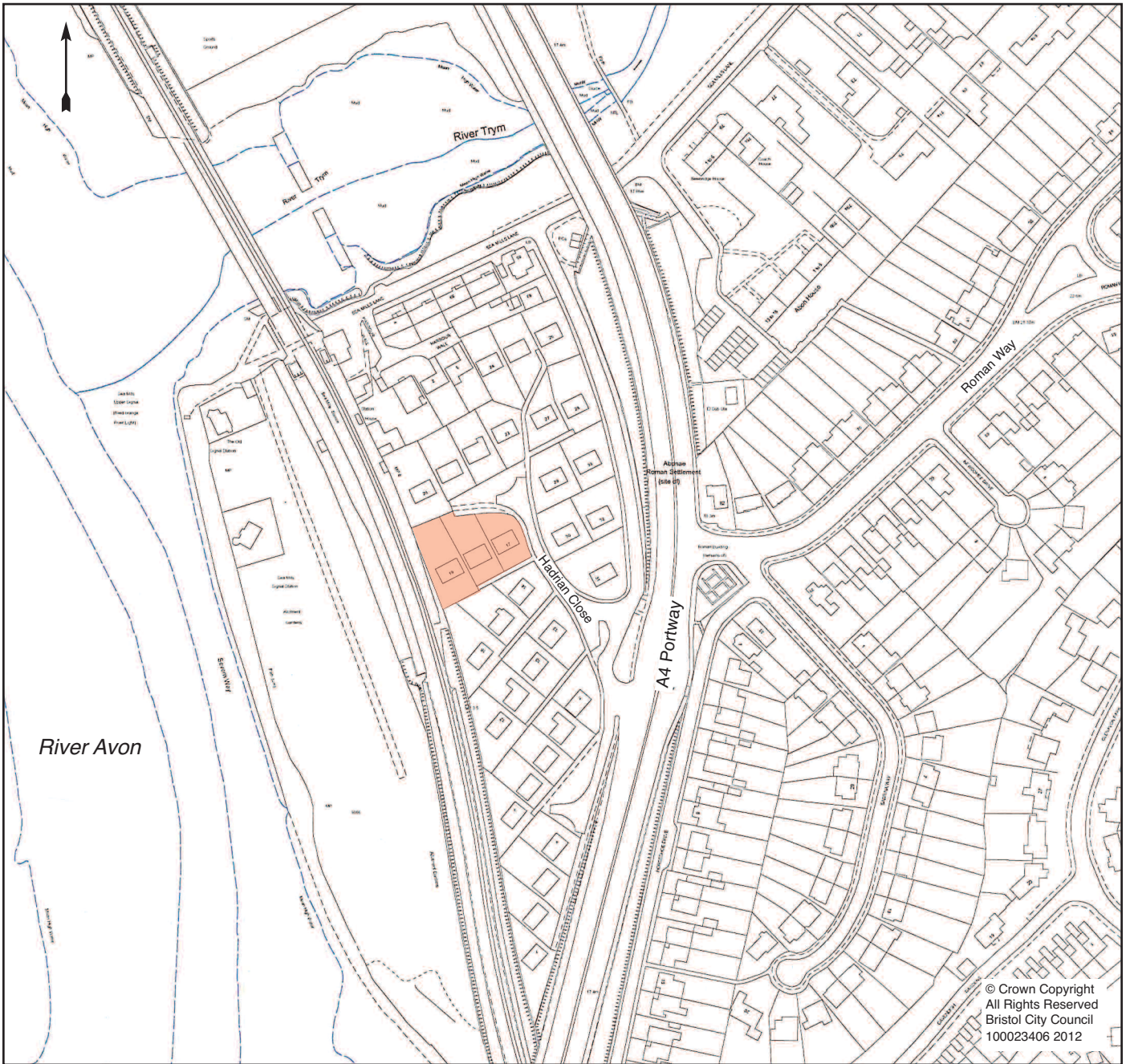


Fig.1 Site location plan, scale 1:2500

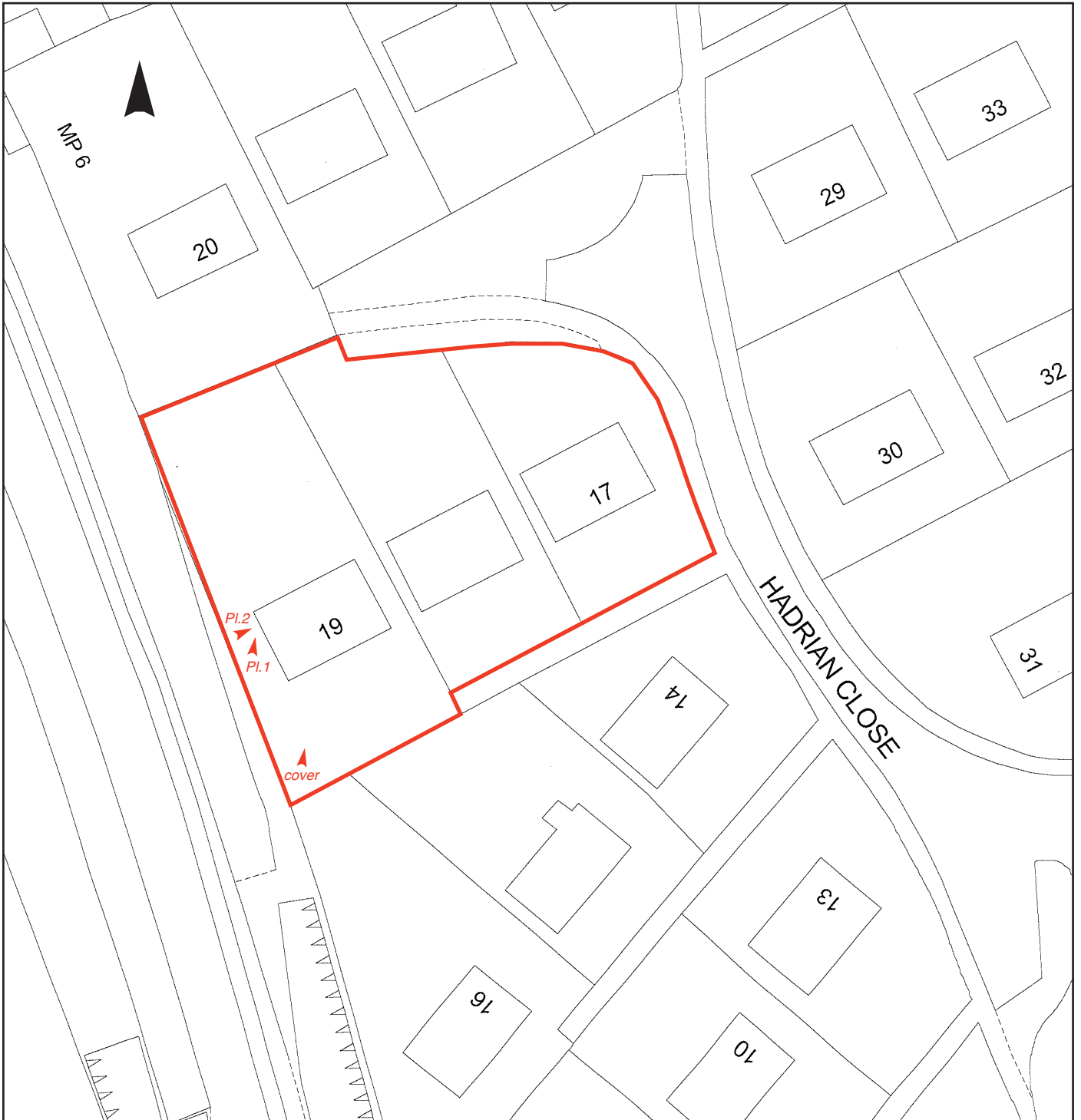


Fig.2 Site location plan, scale 1:2500



Plate 1 Concrete foundation (102) of 1940s prefabricated house, showing brick-rubble (101) to the right and brick-rubble (104), to the left. Viewed from the south



Plate 2 Rubble core (101) of prefabricated house foundations, viewed from the south-west