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Archaeological Investigations at MOXY Hotel Development, Dundas Street

By Becky Wilson

YAT Interim Report 2018/70 May 2018





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Abbreviations

YAT – York Archaeological Trust

CYC – City of York Council

OD – Ordnance Datum

AOD – Above Ordnance Datum

BGL – Below Ground Level

NPPF – National Planning Policy Framework

KEY PROJECT INFORMATION

Project Name	Error! Reference source not found.
YAT Project No.	6035
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1 INTRODUCTION

Between January and May 2018 York Archaeological Trust conducted a watching brief and excavation at the MOXY Hotel Development, Dundas Street, York (SE 60795 51921) (Figure 1).

The work was undertaken for Vastint Hospitality B.V. to satisfy the conditions placed on the planning application by the City of York Council (16/02801/FULM).

5. *Archaeology - Watching brief required No ground work shall commence on site until the applicant has secured the implementation of a programme of archaeological work (a watching brief on all ground works by an approved archaeological unit) in accordance with a specification supplied by the Local Planning Authority. This programme and the archaeological unit shall be approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority before development commences. Reason: The site lies within an Area of Archaeological Importance and the development will affect important archaeological deposits which must be recorded during the construction programme.*

6. *Archaeology - Foundation design required No construction shall take place until the applicant has submitted a foundation design and statement of working methods, which preserve 95% of the archaeological deposits on the site, to, and secured the approved in writing of, the Local Planning Authority. Reason: The site lies within an Area of Archaeological Importance and the development must be designed to preserve 95% of the archaeological deposits within the footprint of the building(s).*

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The monitoring and recording followed a written scheme of investigation produced by YAT and approved by the CYC Archaeologists John Oxley and Claire MacRae. The principal consideration for this site, and the reason for the requirement in Condition 6 of the planning consent for the submission of a foundation design, was that the ground works should have minimal impact on the buried archaeological remains of a 12th/13th-century stone building, assigned the identifier 'Building 1' when first discovered by YAT during an excavation undertaken in 2012 (Johnson 2013; Reeves 2016; Johnson 2016; Figure 2).

The works initially involved the monitoring of the excavation by machine of groundworks for a crane base, pile caps and ground beams. However, during the excavation of pile caps and ground beams it became clear that the proposed depth of excavations for these groundworks would negatively impact on the structure.

Consultation with the principal contractor and the City Archaeologists, John Oxley and Claire MacRae resulted in the decision to investigate, record and remove the parts of the structure and any associated archaeological deposits. This decision was taken so that a proper archaeological record could be made and the results fully analysed and published in mitigation of the destruction of a substantial proportion of the structure. Ground works continued in the southern area of site and were monitored under watching brief conditions.

Excavation revealed deposits that pre-date Building 1 including pits and probable Roman deposits. Deposits contemporary with the building were exposed including two burials from

the grave yard of All Saints in the Marsh, Peasholme. The skeletal remains are on the same alignment as burials excavated in 2012. A sequence of post-medieval deposits and structural elements related to use of the area after the demolition of Building 1.

2 TRIAL PIT

A trial pit was excavated on the 23rd of January before piling commenced. The intervention was targeted in the planned location of two piles in order to assess and establish whether the medieval stone building extended further south-west. Had part of the standing structure been found in this location it was proposed that a number of pile locations might be moved in order to prevent damage to the structure. The intervention was completed at 2.75m x 1.4m in plan, to a depth of 1.45m BGL.

No standing medieval structures were encountered due to extensive truncation by later 19th century buildings associated with the Leeds Arms. Exposed in the base was a possible robber cut backfilled with mortar and stone fragments: this cut followed the alignment of the building and suggested the building had likely continued but had subsequently been demolished in antiquity. An interim report for this intervention was completed (Wilson 2018).

3 WATCHING BRIEF

The watching brief for the MOXY Hotel development began with the excavation of the crane base on the 19th–20th March. The foundation trench was 3m x 3m in plan and was excavated to a depth of 2.2m BGL. No significant archaeological material was exposed other than an extensive layer of horticultural soil, approximately 1.5 to 2m thick, which was consistent with horticultural soil deposits encountered in Trench 2 in the 2016 evaluation.

The watching brief ceased while the piling rig carried out the proposed piles because there was little archaeological value in recording the upcast from this process. The monitoring continued from the 3rd April for the excavation of ground beam trenches and digging out around the piles for the formation of pile caps. Ground beams were excavated to a width of 1.2m and depth of 0.65m; pile caps were excavated to 0.7m clearance around the pile, to give clearance for the cropping rig, and to a depth of 1.2m. During the excavation of the first ground beam, in the northern area, a previously unknown section of Building 2, a 13th–14th century extension to Building 1 was exposed (Plate 1). The wall had been truncated by 19th–20th century buildings and services to the north and south. The ground works were temporarily halted in order to record the wall. In a consultation with Simpson Ltd and John Oxley, the City Archaeologist, it was decided that the wall would be covered with a plastic membrane to prevent damage before being re-buried and it would remain in situ beneath the new hotel building.

The consultation between Simpson Ltd, YAT, and John Oxley also resulted in the decision to assess the distance between the piles and the known location of the medieval wall. Due to an error in interpretation of the OD levels for the ground works in relation to the level of the wall, it became clear that to achieve the proposed depths where there were to be ground beams would cause damage to both Building 1 and Building 2. Mitigation therefore required either alteration of the foundation design or full excavation of the structures. Machine excavation revealed that the medieval stone wall was within 100mm of the piles and 200mm BGL.

Excavation of deposits in the locations of another ground beam and pile cap exposed further standing elements of Building 1. The CYC archaeologist concluded that the extent and significance of the archaeology necessitated full archaeological excavation.

A summary of the excavation findings is given below. The watching brief continued after a period of formal excavation and concluded that there had been significant truncation to the south-eastern end of the building and because of this, and the limited scope of the excavation, it was not possible to determine the full extent of Building 1 in this area.

4 EXCAVATION

The excavation commenced on the 11th April and concluded on the 11th May. A further day of excavation occurred on the 30th May in order to excavate and retrieve the skeletal remains of two individuals found south of Building 1. The excavation occurred in two main areas of significance focused on the south-west wall of Building 1, first exposed in 2012, and a central area, devoted to newly-exposed structures which appeared to be within the building. Excavation was carried out only within routes of proposed ground beams and locations of pile caps. The south-west wall of Building 1 was on a north-west/south-east alignment (Figure 2; Plate 2).

Central Area

The central area consisted of a stratigraphic sequence dating from early medieval to 19th century. The most significant deposits were walls and footings associated with Building 1. This included a cobble foundation -a continuation of walls and deposits exposed in 2012 and 2016- as well as a robbed section of wall (Plate 3). This wall was part of a sequence of structures and deposits, including a stone-built chamber and demolition deposits, which suggest extensive alterations to the building later in the medieval period (Plate 4). Several pieces of stained glass were recovered from within the stone-built chamber.

The earliest medieval deposits hinted at substantial early medieval levelling deposits and pits. The latest archaeology included post-medieval and 19th century brick walls and floors, many of these were associated with the Leeds Arms and its outbuildings. This area was excavated to a maximum depth of 8.60m AOD.

Remains of Building 1

The second area covered the main west wall of Building 1 and a small area between the wall and the trial pit excavated in January (Plate 5). The aim of this area of excavation was to establish the relationship of the wall to the deposits built-up against its external face, the construction event itself, and to identify any archaeological material earlier than the wall.

Archaeological material pre-dating Building 1 comprised Roman levelling deposits and pits truncated by the south-west wall of Building 1. A substantial section of the south-west wall of Building 1 was carefully excavated and dismantled. Driven in to the base of the construction cut of the wall were 6 stakeholes, one of which contained a preserved timber pile. The piles evidently formed part of the foundation and the recovery of a well-preserved timber presents an opportunity for scientific dating which could help establish the construction date of the building. For the same reason, samples of charcoal were recovered from the mortar of the wall. A sequence of pits and levelling deposits built-up against the wall were interpreted as

contemporary with Building 1. From one of these pits a medieval Short Cross cut halfpenny was recovered. Two burials were excavated; these were discovered to the south of the south-west wall of Building 1 and are associated with over 700 other burials within the grave yard of All Saints in the Marsh, Peasholme which extended to the south-west of the site as far as, and possibly beneath, Dundas Street (Plate 6). The west wall area was excavated to a maximum depth of 8.65m AOD.

To the south-east of Building 1, and continuing the line of the main wall, was a smaller late-medieval or post-medieval wall. It was initially thought that this was part of the same Building, but on closer examination it became clear the earlier wall had been robbed out and the robber trench had been filled with mortary rubble upon which this later wall was subsequently built. That the robbing cut followed the alignment of the south-west wall of Building 1 suggests the building had previously extended further to the south-east and it is thought that it was this robbing event which was observed in the investigative trench undertaken in advance of the piling on 23 January 2018 (Plate 7). The cut was not fully excavated and reached a depth of 8.61 AOD.

5 SUMMARY

The investigations were largely focused in the northern half of the site where significant archaeology was known from the 2012 and 2016 YAT excavations. Watching brief monitoring in the southern half the site, including the crane base, confirmed that the slope towards the River Foss was more pronounced in antiquity and earlier deposition, as a consequence, is at a much greater depth.

Although it was the intention to preserve this important structure in situ, the investigation and removal of the majority of the best-preserved and extensive structural element of Building 1, the south-west wall, has afforded an opportunity to better understand the building and its morphology. In time, following post-excavation analysis, it should be possible to ascertain the construction date of the building from carbon dating and tree ring analysis

As well as Building 2, the probable 13th-century extension to the north of Building 1, exposed in 2012, a number of late-medieval structures and deposits point to extensive other alterations to the building, while the robber cut to the south suggests the building was demolished in stages as the larger building became unusable.

Analysis of the archaeological material recovered from this watching brief and excavation will undoubtedly contribute significantly to our understanding not only of this medieval building but also of the development of medieval stone buildings in York from the Norman period and later. This work should be carried out to fulfil the National Planning Policy Framework requirement that developers '*record and advance understanding of the significance of any heritage assets to be lost (wholly or in part) in a manner proportionate to their importance and the impact, and to make this evidence (and any archive generated) publicly accessible.*' (NPPF 2012, para. 141). The work will include scientific, documentary and archaeological analysis to ascertain a precise dating and chronology of the building. A draft proposal for analysis and publication will be produced so this can be undertaken in order to fulfil the archaeological conditions attached to planning consent for the MOXY hotel development (16/02801/FULM).

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Wilson, B. 2018. *MOXY Hotel Development, Dundas Street, York. January Interim.* YAT Report 2018/11.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

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PLATES



Plate 1 Medieval wall; part of the 13th–14th century extension, Building 2.



Plate 2 Aerial photograph of the site showing south-west wall of Building 1 nearest orange fencing and later alterations near the cluster of piles centre of photo



Plate 3 Later medieval alterations



Plate 4 Stone chamber



Plate 5 Main west wall, Building 1; first exposed in 2012.



Plate 6 Two skeletons within the grave yard of All Saints in the Marsh, Peasholme



Plate 7 Mortar fill within the robber cut exposed to the south of the main wall.

APPENDIX 1 – INDEX TO ARCHIVE

Item	Number of items
Context register and sheets	150
Levels register	20
Photographic register	n/a
Sample register and sheets	n/a
Drawing register	1
Original drawings	129
B/W photographs (films/contact sheets)	n/a
Colour slides (films)	n/a
Digital photographs	tbc
Written Scheme of Investigation	1
Report	1
Burial Licence	1
Watching Brief Day Sheets	29
Architectural Fragment recording sheets	44

Table 1 Index to archive

FIGURES

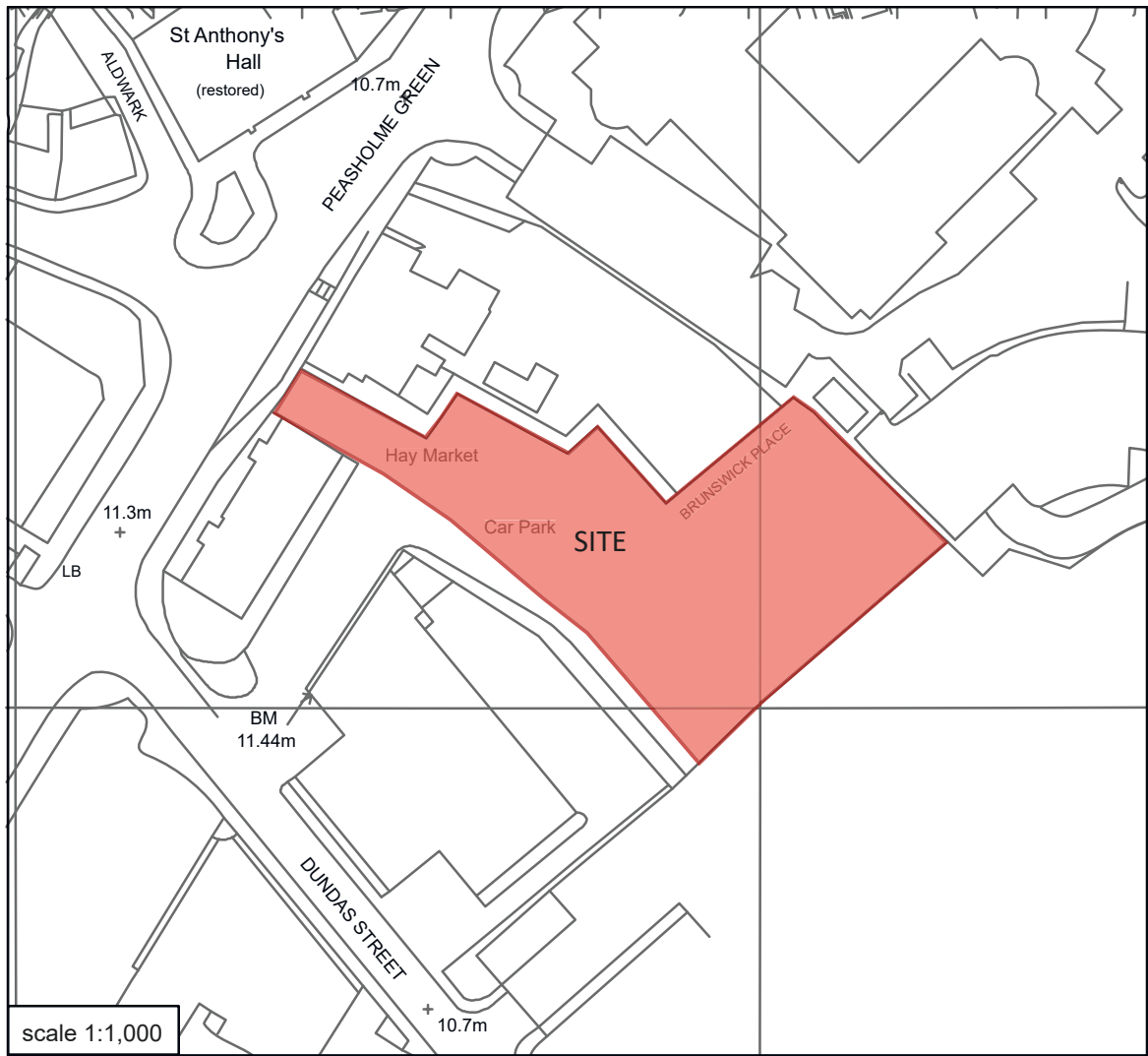
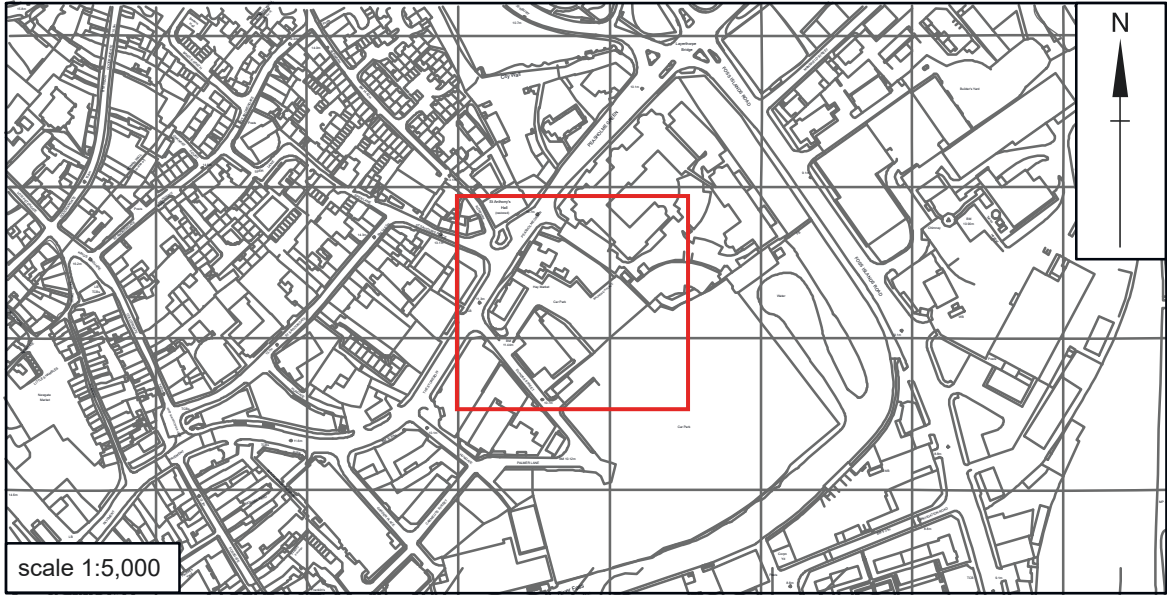


Fig. 1 Site Location

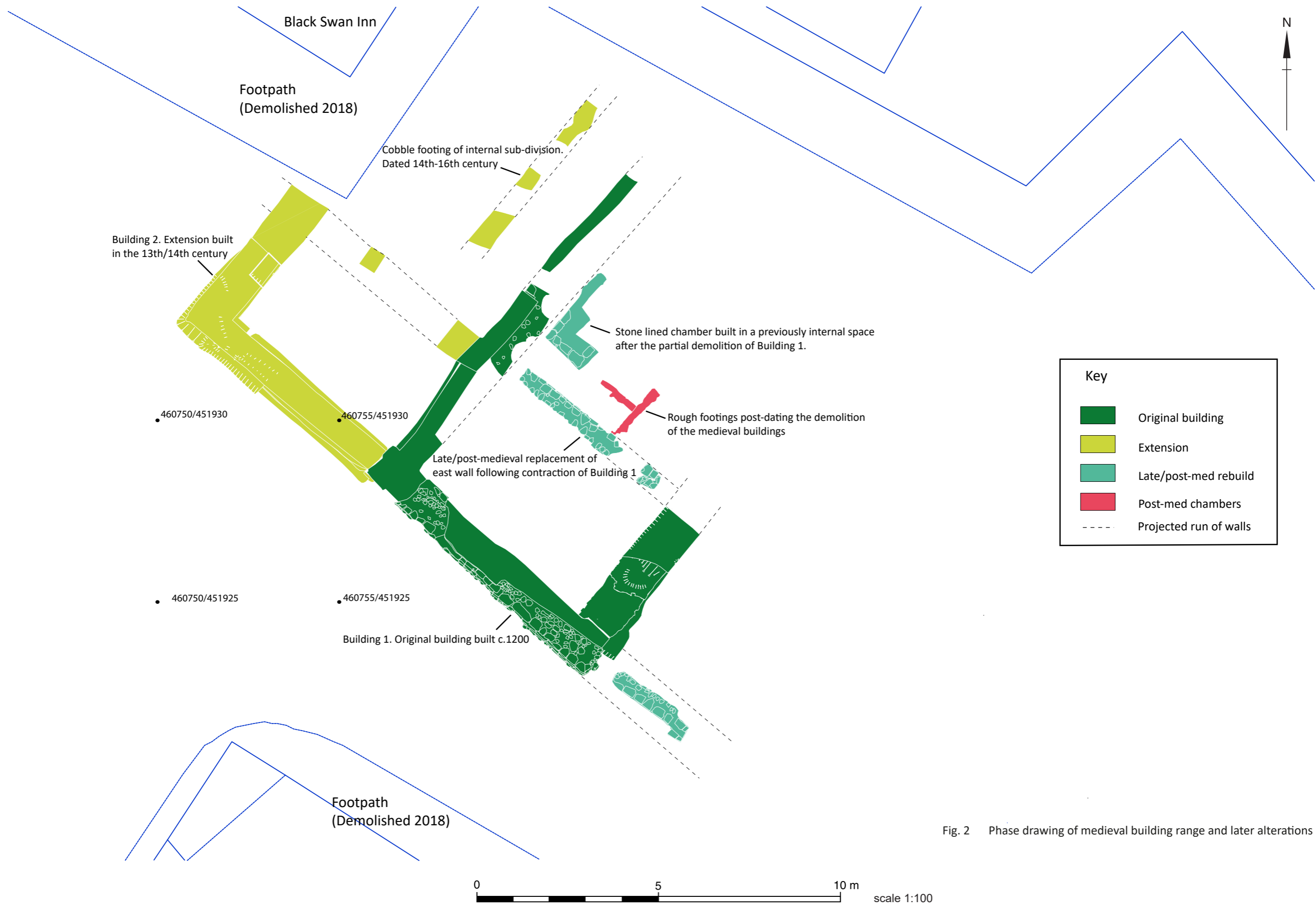


Fig. 2 Phase drawing of medieval building range and later alterations



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