

ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING
BRIEF OF SAINSBURY'S
SUPERMARKET,
THE SMITHFIELD,
BRIDGNORTH,
SHROPSHIRE

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Illustrations by Carolyn Hunt

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INVESTOR IN PEOPLE

Project 3195
Report 1674

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An archaeological watching brief of Sainsbury's supermarket, The Smithfield, Bridgnorth, Shropshire

Adam Lee

Part 1 Project summary

An archaeological watching brief was undertaken at Sainsbury's supermarket, The Smithfield, Bridgnorth, Shropshire (NGR SO 714 933). It was undertaken on behalf of Arthur Amos Associates, consultants for Sainsbury's Supermarkets Ltd, who intend to construct a new relief road and modify an existing car park, for which a planning application has been submitted. The project aimed to determine if any significant archaeological site was present and if so to indicate what its location, date and nature were.

The areas made available to monitor consisted of service trenches and the area of a new relief road. No significant archaeological features, layers, structures or deposits were identified in the majority of trenches observed and no finds were recovered.

Works undertaken in the northeast part of the site, next to Northgate, revealed two pits and one ditch. No dating evidence was recovered from these features and they are therefore undated. The ditch was aligned east-west at right angles to Northgate and may therefore represent a boundary off the road, associated with extra-mural roadside settlement that formed part of the Northgate suburb during the post-medieval period. Modern makeup layers were observed overlying natural deposits consisting of orange brown silty clay with bands of orange sand.

During observation of service trenches in the car park to the southeast of the site no significant archaeological deposits were identified, although the groundworks made available for monitoring were only excavated to a maximum depth of 0.30m.

Part 2 Detailed report

1. Background

1.1 Reasons for the project

An archaeological watching brief was undertaken at Sainsbury's (centred on NGR. SO 714 933), at The Smithfield, Bridgnorth, Shropshire (Fig 1), on behalf of Arthur Amos Associates, consultants for Sainsbury's Supermarkets Ltd. The client intends to construct a new relief road and modify an existing car park and has submitted a planning application to Bridgnorth District Council (ref. 04/0919), who consider that the development has the potential to affect archaeological remains within these areas.

1.2 Project parameters

The project conforms to the *Standard and guidance for an archaeological watching brief* (IfA 2008).

The project also conforms to a brief prepared by Mike Watson, Historic Environment Officer, Shropshire County Council (SCC 2008) and for which a project proposal (including detailed specification) was produced (HEAS 2008).

1.3 Aims

The aims of the watching brief were to locate archaeological deposits and determine, if present, their extent, state of preservation, date, type, vulnerability and documentation. The purpose of this was to establish their significance, since this would make it possible to recommend an appropriate treatment, which may then be integrated with the proposed development programme.

More specifically the following aims have been identified.

- To identify any surviving remains of the medieval town berm, ditch and rampart in the car park, in the southeast part of the development area (Dalwood 2007, 10, Figs 19 & 20).
- To identify any surviving remains of roadside settlement that formed part of the Northgate suburb during the post medieval period (SCC 2008). The area of interest being in the northeast part of the development area where the new relief road meets Northgate.

2. Methods

2.1 Documentary search

Prior to fieldwork commencing a search was made of the Shropshire Sites and Monuments Record (SMR). The historical background to the site is given in the desk-based assessment prepared by the Service (Dalwood 2007).

2.2 Fieldwork methodology

2.2.1 Fieldwork strategy

A detailed specification has been prepared by the Service (HEAS 2008). Fieldwork was undertaken between 28 August 2008 and 22 January 2009.

In total seven trenches were observed. Their locations are indicated in Figures 2-5. Trenches 1-6 were excavated in order to lay new services and Trench 7 was stripped prior to construction of a new road corridor.

Deposits were removed using a 360° tracked excavator, variously employing a toothless and toothed bucket.

Clean surfaces were inspected in order to identify any archaeological deposits. Deposits were recorded according to standard Service practice (CAS 1995).

2.2.2 **Structural analysis**

All fieldwork records were checked and cross-referenced. Analysis was effected through a combination of structural, artefactual and ecofactual evidence, allied to the information derived from other sources.

2.3 **Artefact methodology**

2.3.1 **Artefact recovery policy**

The artefact recovery policy conformed to standard Service practice (CAS 1995; appendix 2).

This in principal determines that all finds, of whatever date, must be collected. However, in this case only modern material was revealed. This was identified and recorded on site, and not retained for further analysis.

2.4 **Environmental archaeology methodology**

2.4.1 **Sampling policy**

The environmental sampling strategy conformed to standard Service practice (CAS 1995; appendix 4).

In the event no deposits were exposed that were considered suitable for environmental analysis.

2.5 **The methods in retrospect**

Only a small percentage of the groundworks within those areas of development site which were considered to be of archaeological interest, were made available for monitoring.

Therefore it can only be stated that a low degree of confidence that the aims of the project have been achieved.

3. **Topographical and archaeological context**

The background to the site has previously been presented in the desk-based assessment (Dalwood 2007). In summary:

The site lies in the High Town part of Bridgnorth. This part of the town consists of relatively level ground, sloping to the south, on the top of a sandstone promontory on the west bank of the River Severn. The ground level of the study area is *c* 67m AOD.

The underlying geology is Permian Bridgnorth Sandstone. The soils are unclassified urban soils but lie within the area of well-drained typical brown sands of the Bridgnorth Association.

There is no definitive evidence for prehistoric or Roman occupation of the site of the later town, although there is artefactual and inferential evidence. The high and defensible promontory overlooks a crossing point of the River Severn. An Iron Age coin and a number of Roman coins are recorded from the town, while it has also been conjectured that the medieval castle stands on the site of an Iron Age hillfort.

The medieval town of Bridgnorth was established *c* 1100 by Robert de Bellesme, the son of Earl Roger of Shrewsbury during his revolt against Henry I. The application area partly lies within the known area of the medieval town. The alignment of the town defences was well-known in the 19th century and are recorded on the first edition Ordnance Survey map of 1884 crossing the southern part of the site.

The character of the land-use in the application area in the 16th to early 19th century showed strong continuity from the medieval period, although the town defences were infilled and partly slighted during the Civil War in the mid 17th century. There was development from the earlier 19th century as agricultural land was developed for a number of purposes.

3.1 **Structural analysis**

The trenches and features recorded are shown in Figs 2-5 and Plates 1-9. The results of the structural analysis are presented in Appendix 1.

3.1.1 **Phase 1 Natural deposits**

The natural matrix was only observed within trenches excavated toward the northeastern corner of the site. Here it consisted of orange brown silty clay with bands of orange sand, which is likely to derive from the degradation of the underlying Permian Bridgnorth Sandstone.

3.1.2 **Phase 2 Post-medieval/modern deposits**

No deposits, features, layers or structures predating the post-medieval/modern period were identified, nor artefacts recovered.

Trenches 2, 3b and 4 revealed modern makeup layers directly overlying the natural between 0.72-1.05m in depth. Trench 3a revealed modern backfill deposits to a depth of 2.50m within the cut of an existing service trench.

Trenches 5 and 6, located in the southeast part of the site were excavated to a maximum depth of 0.30m and revealed only modern makeup layers.

3.1.3 **Phase 3 Undated deposits**

Within Trench 1 two possible pits, 104 and 106, were identified in section. The former was sealed directly below modern tarmac and hardcore, 100 and 101, and cut into subsoil 105. The latter appeared to be filled by subsoil, 105 and was cut into natural deposit, 102. Neither feature contained artefactual remains.

Within Trench 7 a ditch, 704, was identified, aligned east-west, which petered out to the west and would appear to have been truncated. It was sealed below modern makeup layer 702 and was cut into natural deposit 703. No finds were recovered from the fill.

4. **Synthesis**

No significant archaeological features, layers, structures or deposits were observed within Trenches 2, 3, 4, 5 and 6.

The pits identified in Trench 1 are of unknown date or function. The majority of the area around Trench 1 where the new relief road meets Northgate, between Trench 7 and the existing road, was not made available for monitoring. Therefore it is not possible to make a definitive statement as to the presence or absence of any further archaeological features here.

The ditch identified in Trench 7 is of unknown date, and its full extent is unknown due to truncation. Its alignment at right angles to Northgate indicates that it may represent a boundary associated with extra-mural roadside settlement that formed part of the Northgate suburb during the post-medieval period.

The southeast area of the site across the line of the former town wall was not made available for monitoring during the construction of the new car park. Although two service trenches were observed, they were not excavated to a sufficient depth to expose stratigraphy predating the modern period. It is therefore not possible to make a definitive statement as to the presence or absence of surviving archaeological remains relating to the medieval town berm, ditch and rampart in this area.

5. **Publication summary**

The Service has a professional obligation to publish the results of archaeological projects within a reasonable period of time. To this end, the Service intends to use this summary as the basis for publication through local or regional journals. The client is requested to consider the content of this section as being acceptable for such publication.

An archaeological watching brief was undertaken on behalf of Arthur Amos Associates, at The Smithfield, Bridgnorth, Shropshire, (centred on NGR. SO 714 933). The client intends to construct a new supermarket, involving a relief road adjacent to Northgate and modification of an existing car park within the area of the medieval town walls. The areas made available to monitor included service trenches and sections of the new relief road.

No significant archaeological features, layers, structures or deposits were identified in the majority of trenches observed and no finds were recovered.

Works undertaken in the northeast part of the site, next to Northgate, revealed two pits and one ditch. No dating evidence was recovered from these features and they are therefore undated. The ditch was aligned east-west, at right angles to Northgate, and may represent a boundary associated with extra-mural settlement that formed part of the Northgate suburb during the post-medieval period. Otherwise modern makeup layers were observed overlying natural deposits consisting of orange brown silty clay with bands of orange sand. Works undertaken in the car park to the southeast of the site revealed no significant archaeological remains, although the ground works were only excavated to a maximum depth of 0.30m.

6. **Acknowledgements**

The Service would like to thank the following for their kind assistance in the successful conclusion of this project, Rae Luckett and Pippa Riddle (Arthur Amos Associates), Will Kumar and Paul Newton (Turley Associates), Richard Hirst (EC Harris), Morgan Courtney (Birse), Dean Johnson (Denis Wilson Business Group), Trevor Tarran (Bridgnorth District Council) and Mike Watson (Historic Environment Officer, Shropshire County Council).

7. **Personnel**

The fieldwork and report preparation was led by Adam Lee. The project managers responsible for the quality of the project were Tom Vaughan and Hal Dalwood. Fieldwork was undertaken by Adam Lee, Simon Woodiwiss and Dennis Williams.

8. **Bibliography**

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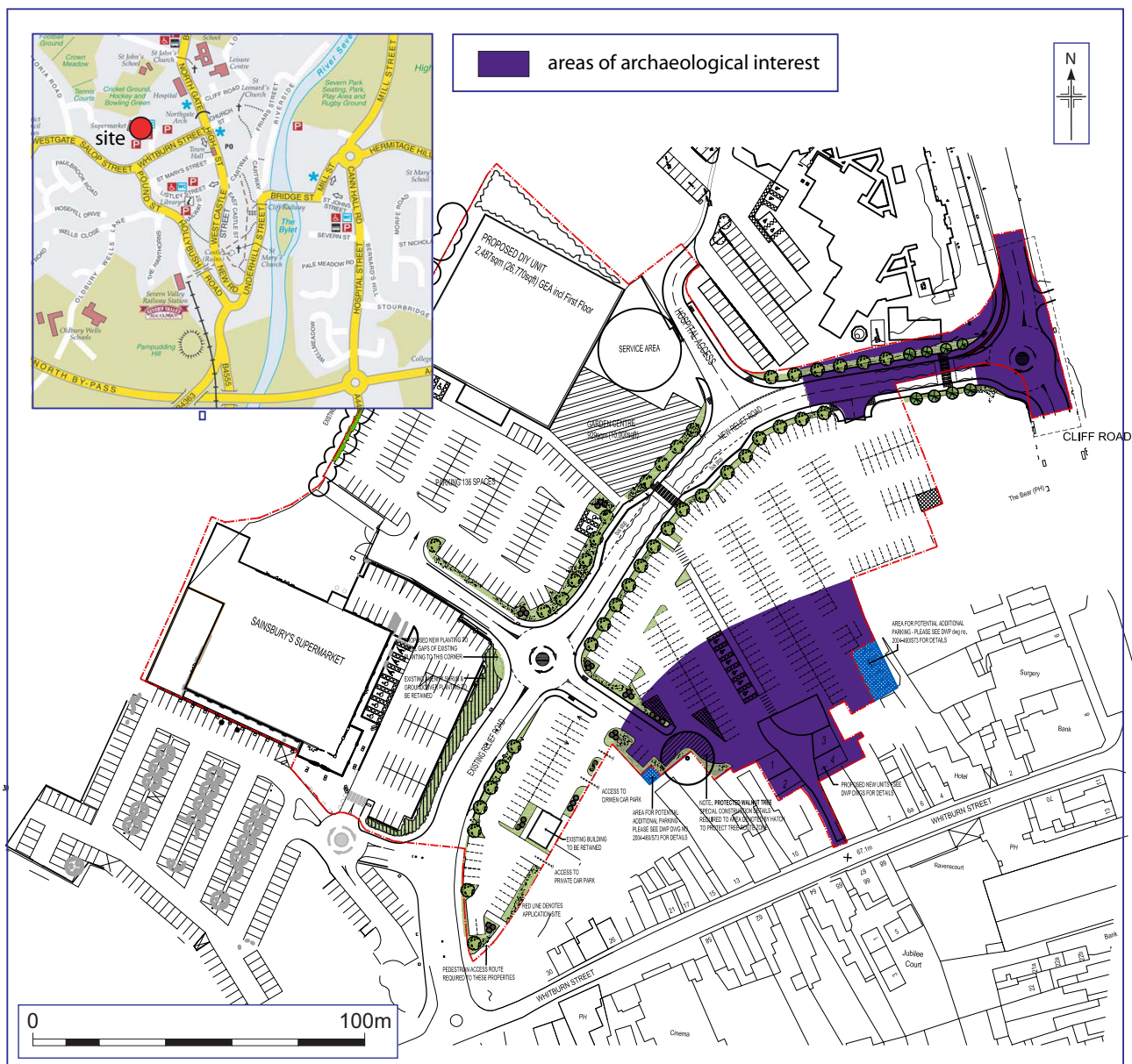
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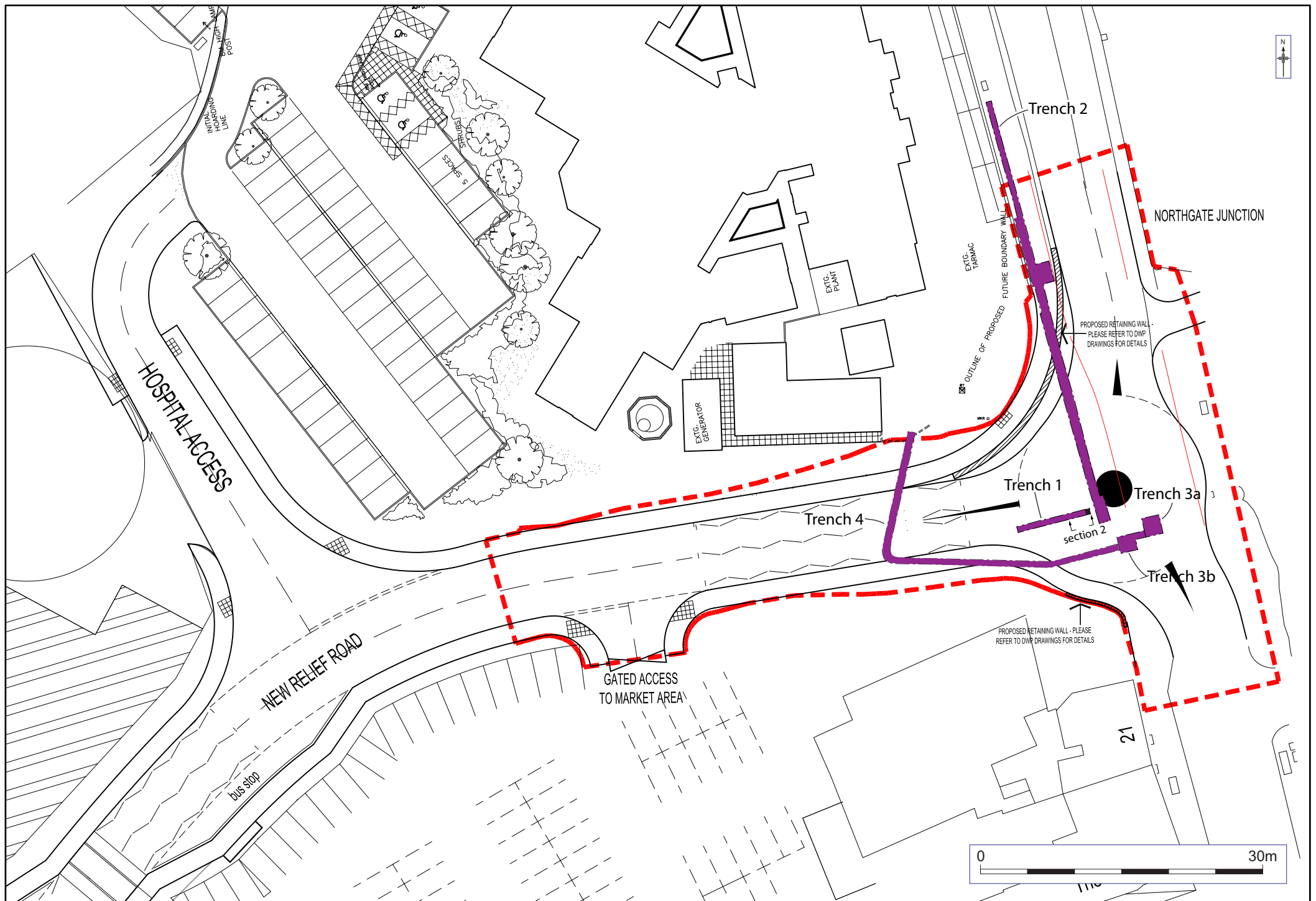
Figures



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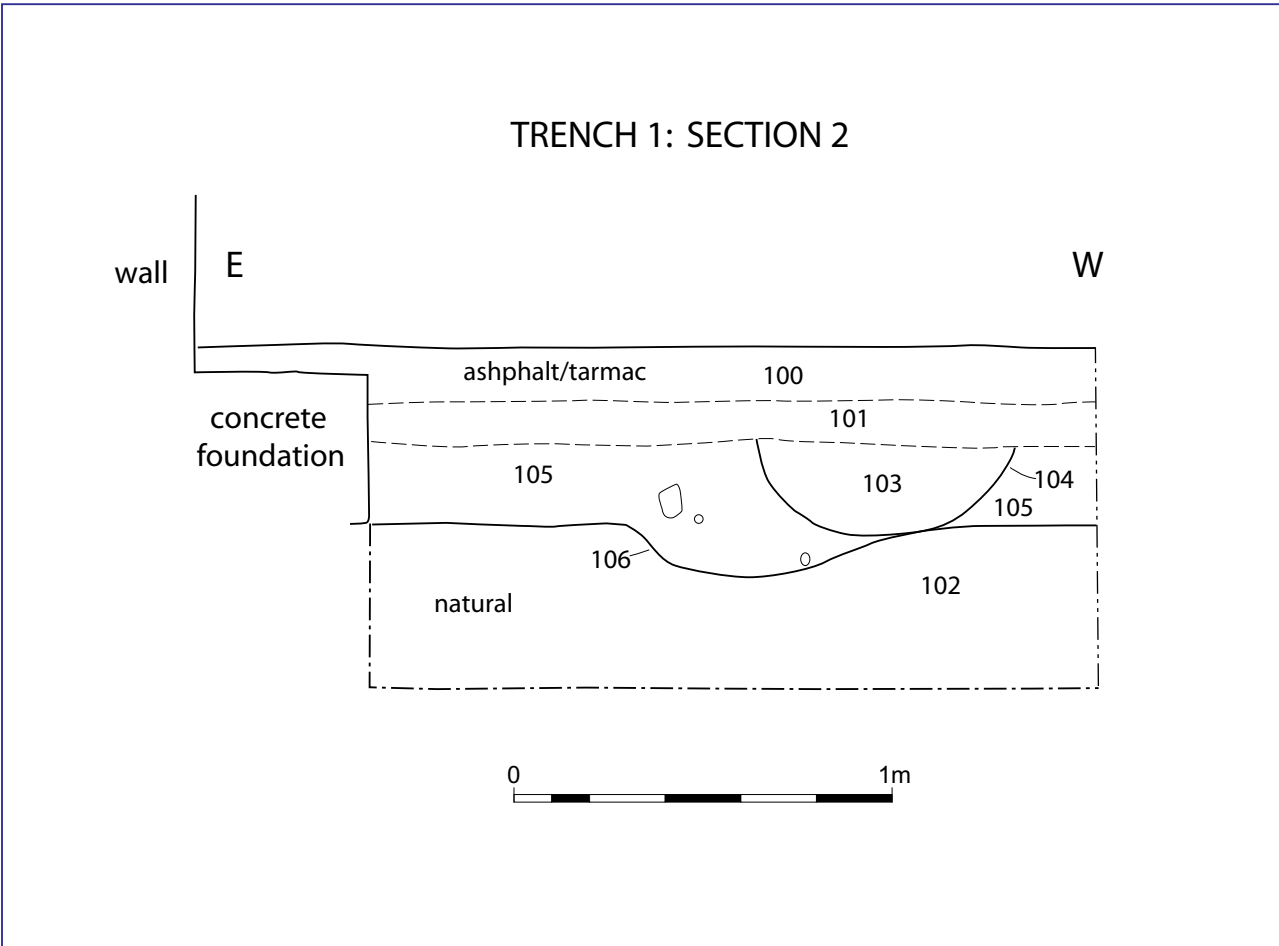
Location of the site

Figure 1



Location of Trenches 1, 2, 3 and 4 (based upon arthur amos associates dwg no: 603-03)

Figure 2



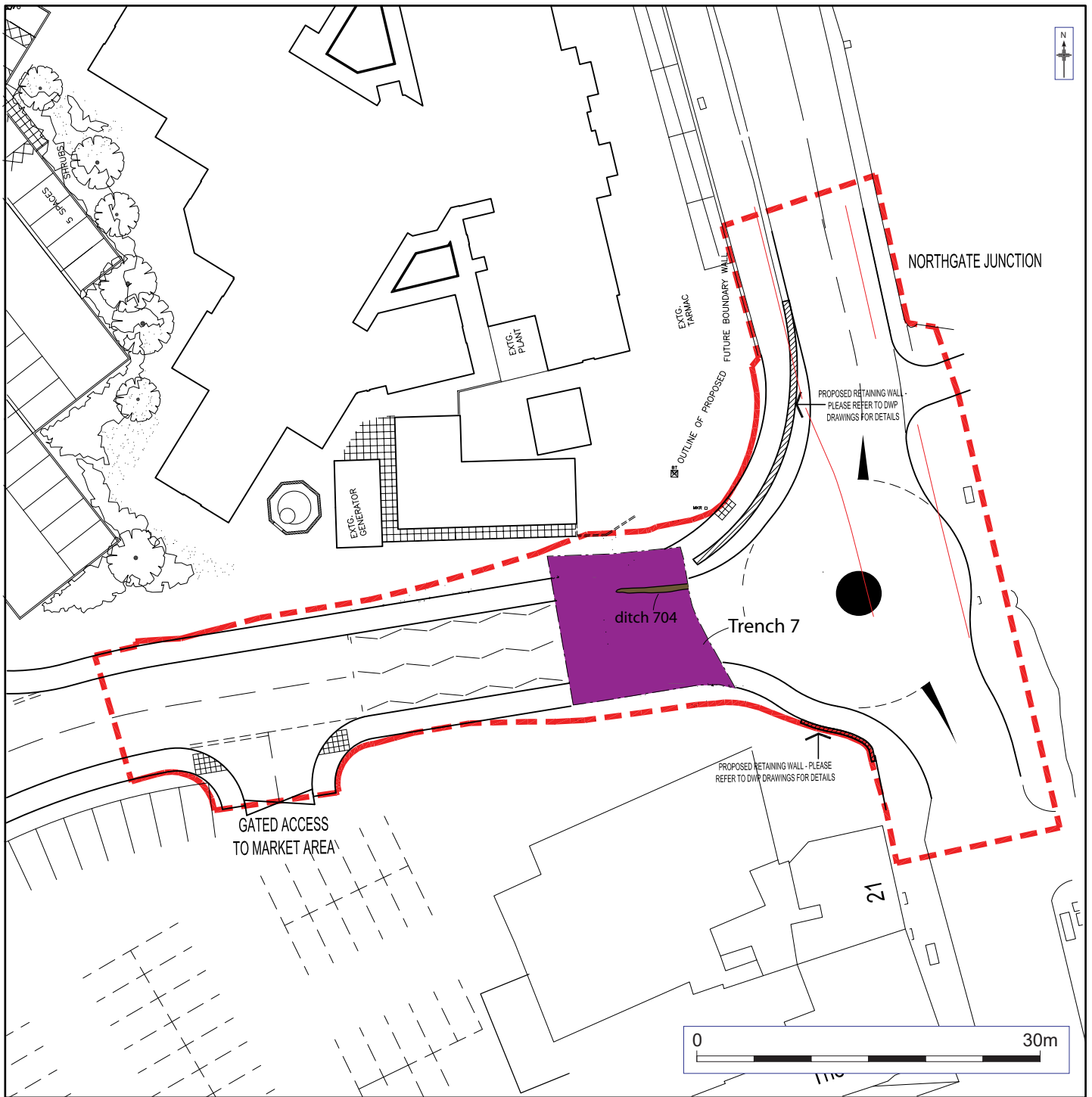
Trench 1; section 2

Figure 3



Location of Trenches 5 and 6 (based upon arthur amos associates dwg no: 603-05)

Figure 4



Location of Trench 7 (based upon arthur amos associates dwg no: 603-03)

Figure 5

Plates



Plate 1: Trench 2 during excavation; looking south



Plate 2: Trench 2, southern end; looking south



Plate 3: Trench 3, modern deposits overlying existing drain; looking east



Plate 4: Trench 4, during excavation; looking north



Plate 5: Trench 4, general shot; looking east



Plate 6: Trench 5, general shot; looking southeast



Plate 7: Trench 6, deposit 602 in the base of the trench; looking north



Plate 8: Trench 7, ditch 704; looking east



Plate 9: Trench 7, during excavation: looking southeast

Appendix 1 Trench descriptions

Trench 1

Maximum dimensions: Length: 8m Width: 0.60m Depth: 0.50-0.90m

Orientation: WSW-ENE

Main deposit description

| Context | Classification | Description | Depth below ground surface (b.g.s) – top and bottom of deposits |
|---------|----------------|--|---|
| 100 | Tarmac | Concreted Black tarmac surface. | 0-0.14m |
| 101 | Hardcore | Loose grey hardcore. | 0.14-0.26m |
| 102 | Natural | Bands of firm medium orange brown clay silt and lighter soft orange sand. | 0.46m+ |
| 103 | Fill of pit | Soft medium brown sandy silt with moderate brick, tile and stone fragments. Deposit is slightly darker than 105. No finds recovered. | 0.26-0.50m |
| 104 | Cut of pit | Feature only observed in section. Concave sides and base. Contains 103. | 0.26-0.50m |
| 105 | Subsoil | Soft medium brown sandy silt with occasional stone fragments and charcoal flecks. No finds recovered. | 0.26-0.60m |
| 106 | Cut of pit | Feature only observed in section. Concave sides and base. Feature would appear to be filled with subsoil 105. | 0.46-0.60m |

Trench 2

Maximum dimensions: Length: 46.35m Width: 2.40m max Depth: 0.60-3.60m

Orientation: NNW-SSE

Main deposit description

| Context | Classification | Description | Depth below ground surface (b.g.s) – top and bottom of deposits |
|---------|----------------|---|---|
| 200 | Tarmac | Concreted Black tarmac surface. | 0-0.12m |
| 201 | Makeup layer | Firm mid orange brown sandy silt | 0.12-0.54m |
| 202 | Makeup layer | Firm mid grey brown silty clay, occasional small fragments of mortar | 0.54-0.72m |
| 203 | Natural | Firm mid brown orange silty clay with bands of orange sand and patches of large rounded stones. | 0.72m+ |

Trench 3a

Maximum dimensions: Length: 2.30m Width: 2.10m Depth: 2.50m

Orientation: NNW-SSE

Main deposit description

| Context | Classification | Description | Depth below ground surface (b.g.s) – top and bottom of deposits |
|---------|-----------------|--|---|
| 300 | Tarmac | Concreted Black tarmac surface. | 0-0.25m |
| 301 | Hardcore | Loose grey hardcore. | 0.25-0.40m |
| 302 | Makeup Layer | Soft mid orange mixed sand. Road makeup. | 0.40-0.75m |
| 303 | Makeup Layer | Firm dark orange brown sandy silt with lumps of modern CBM and red sandstone. Frequent small-medium stones. | 0.75-1.60m |
| 304 | Modern Backfill | Mixed backfill deposit consisting of loose dark orange brown sandy silt with modern CBM, tarmac fragments, plywood and frequent small-medium stones. Deposit covers existing concrete drain. | 1.60m |

Trench 3b

Maximum dimensions: Length: 3.00m Width: 1.75m Depth: 1.32m

Orientation: ENE-WSW

Main deposit description

| Context | Classification | Description | Depth below ground surface (b.g.s) – top and bottom of deposits |
|---------|----------------|---|---|
| 305 | Tarmac | Concreted Black tarmac surface. | 0-0.06m |
| 306 | Hardcore | Loose Brick and mortar fragments with dark brown silt. Deposit appears to be makeup for the road. | 0.06-0.30m |
| 307 | Makeup Layer | Compact red brown sand and dark grey brown silt with frequent small mortar fragments. | 0.30-0.80m |
| 308 | Natural | Soft red brown silty sand. | 0.80-0.1.18m |
| 309 | Natural | Firm red brown sandy clay. | 1.18m+ |

Trench 4

Maximum dimensions: Length: 40.70m Width: 0.65-0.80m Depth: 1.20-2.00m

Orientation: E-W and NNE-SSW

Main deposit description

| Context | Classification | Description | Depth below ground surface (b.g.s) – top and bottom of deposits |
|---------|----------------|---|---|
| 400 | Tarmac | Concreted Black tarmac surface. | 0-0.15m |
| 401 | Makeup Layer | Loose dark grey hardcore and brick rubble. | 0.15-0.35m |
| 402 | Makeup Layer | Firm mid brown sandy silt with occasional large stones, CBM fragments, charcoal fuel ash flecks and mortar fragments. | 0.35-1.05m |
| 403 | Natural | Firm mid orange brown silty clay with bands of orange sand. | 1.05m+ |

Trench 5

Maximum dimensions: Length: 31.50m Width: 0.90-0.40m Depth: 0.20-0.30m

Orientation: NW-SE

Main deposit description

| Context | Classification | Description | Depth below ground surface (b.g.s) – top and bottom of deposits |
|---------|----------------|--|---|
| 500 | Tarmac | Concreted Black tarmac surface. | 0-0.08m |
| 501 | Hardcore | Loose grey hardcore. | 0.08-0.12m |
| 502 | Topsoil | Firm dark black brown sandy silt with occasional small-medium stones and frequent large fragments of modern brick and tile. Deposit appears in the SE half of the trench. | 0.12-0.20m+ |
| 503 | Makeup Layer | Mixed deposit consisting of firm dark black brown sandy silt with occasional small-medium stones, moderate large lumps of modern brick and tile and occasional small lumps fuel ash. Deposit appears in the NW half of the trench. | 0.12-0.30m+ |

Trench 6

Maximum dimensions: Length: 19.5m Width: 0.60m Depth: 0.30m

Orientation: N-S

Main deposit description

| Context | Classification | Description | Depth below ground surface (b.g.s) – top and bottom of deposits |
|---------|---------------------|---|---|
| 600 | Tarmac | Concreted Black tarmac surface. | 0-0.08m |
| 601 | Hardcore | Loose grey hardcore. | 0.08-0.14m |
| 602 | Makeup Layer | Mixed deposit consisting of firm dark brown sandy silt with frequent large fragments of brick and tile, frequent small lumps of fuel ash, frequent small lumps of mortar and patches of light yellow grey clay with occasional small-medium stones. | 0.14-0.30m+ |
| 603 | Concrete and Rubble | Concrete and rubble below tarmac 600, deposit appears in southern part of trench. | 0.08-0.30m+ |

Trench 7

Maximum dimensions: Length: 14.00m Width: 13.00m Depth: 1.40m

Orientation NNW/SSE

Main deposit description

| Context | Classification | Description | Depth below ground surface (b.g.s) – top and bottom of deposits |
|---------|----------------|--|---|
| 700 | Tarmac | Concreted Black tarmac surface. | 0-0.15m |
| 701 | Hardcore | Loose dark grey hardcore and brick rubble. | 0.15-0.35m |
| 702 | Makeup layer | Firm mid brown sandy silt with occasional large stones, CBM fragments, charcoal fuel ash flecks and mortar fragments. | 0.35-1.30m |
| 703 | Natural | Firm mid orange brown silty clay with bands of orange sand. | 1.30m+ |
| 704 | Cut of ditch | Linear ditch running E-W containing one fill 705. Unexcavated. | 1.30m+ |
| 705 | Fill of ditch | Soft mid brown sandy silt with occasional medium-large stones and occasional manganese flecks. Deposit unexcavated and no finds retrieved. | 1.30m+ |

Appendix 2 Technical information

The archive

The archive consists of:

| | |
|----|--------------------------------|
| 18 | Fieldwork progress records AS2 |
| 2 | Photographic records AS3 |
| 69 | Digital photographs |
| 1 | Drawing number catalogues AS4 |
| 8 | Trench record sheets AS41 |
| 10 | Scale drawings |

The project archive is intended to be placed at:

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