

ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING
BRIEF
AT
45A, PARK ROAD,
BLOXWICH,
WALSALL

Elizabeth Plane

Illustrated by Carolyn Hunt and Tom Vaughan

8 February 2008

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INVESTOR IN PEOPLE

Project 3131
Report 1576
BCSMR: EBL 836

Archaeological watching brief at 45a, Park Road, Bloxwich, Walsall

Elizabeth Plane

Background information

<i>Client</i>	CgMs Consulting on behalf of NEC Homes
<i>Site address</i>	45a, Park Road, Bloxwich, Walsall
<i>National Grid Reference</i>	SJ 998 024
<i>Black Country Sites and Monuments Record ref.</i>	EBL 836
<i>Planning authority</i>	Walsall Metropolitan Borough
<i>reference</i>	n/a
<i>Specification</i>	CgMs Consulting 2007
<i>Project parameters</i>	IFA 2001

An archaeological watching brief was undertaken at 45a, Park Road, Bloxwich, Walsall (Fig 1), on behalf of CgMs Consulting, of groundworks associated with the construction of car parking to the rear of recent residential development along the frontage.

Previous archaeological work on the site

There has been no previous intrusive archaeological work undertaken on site, although a desk-based has been prepared (CgMs Consulting 2006).

Archaeological and historical background

The background to the site has been described in the desk-based assessment (ibid). The assessment identified that the site has limited archaeological potential. It is summarised as follows:

Bloxwich is sited upon superficial glacial till (boulder clay) comprising unstratified gravely clays. The glacial till deposits overlie Lower Westphalian Coal Measures.

No prehistoric finds have been recovered from within the immediate vicinity of the site. A single Roman coin of 4th century date was found 240m north of the site at Stafford Road. There were no associated artefacts or occupation remains so the nature of the Roman activity in the area is not known.

Little is known about the early medieval occupation of the town. The Domesday Survey of 1086 records woodland, suggesting there may only have been small-scale settlement within the Forest of Cannock. The growth of Bloxwich in the medieval and post-medieval period is evidence from the historic maps. By the 14th century the woodland had been cleared and medieval settlement focused along the present day High Street. The site lies to the north and at this time formed part of the encroachment onto open land.

Cottage industries developed during the 18th century, making awls, nails, needles and saddle blades. By the early 19th century Bloxwich was surrounded by canals, encouraging expansion, with 47 awl blades makers documented in 1855.

Park Road became subject to small-scale industrial development from the 18th century onwards, in line with the overall industrial expansion of Bloxwich. The tithe map of 1845 shows a number of houses and gardens occupying the site, but Park Road does not exist until the 1st edition Ordnance Survey map of 1884, by which time terraced houses had been built along the east frontage. The present day frontage occupied by the Bloxwich Woodworking Company does not appear until the Ordnance Survey map of 1902. The buildings along the eastern boundary of the site appear on the 1938 Ordnance Survey map.

Investigation of an extant terraced house along Park Road adjacent found it to contain deep cellars, from which it has been extrapolated that extensive truncation has occurred along much of the road frontage. Additionally geotechnical investigations have found a depth of made ground across the site, from 0.90-3.00m, which indicates that extensive disturbance has occurred. However, it is considered that medieval remains may be preserved below the modern surfaces (CgMs Consulting 2007, 4).

Aims

The aim of the watching brief was to observe and record archaeological deposits, and to determine their extent, state of preservation, date and type, as far as reasonably possible.

Methods

General specification for fieldwork	CAS 1995
Sources consulted	CgMs Consulting 2006
Dates of fieldwork	8 th August, 23 rd August and 3 rd October 2007.
Area of site	c 0.1 hectares
Dimensions of excavated areas observed	Trench 1 length 2.10m width 1.10m depth 1.60m
	Trench 2 length 15.40m width 0.50m depth 0.60m
	Stripped area length 18m width 14 m depth 0.10m

The areas observed concerned the shallow ground reduction strip (Stripped Area), a small soakaway (Trench 1), and a long east to west service trench (Trench 2).

Access to or visibility of structure/deposits

Observation of the excavated areas was undertaken during machine excavation. The exposed surfaces were sufficiently clean to observe well-differentiated archaeological deposits.

Statement of confidence

Access to, and visibility of, deposits allowed a high degree of confidence that the aims of the project have been achieved. Trench 2 provided a good section across the rear of the site. However it must be stressed that Trench 2 was dug to a maximum depth of 0.60m, while the general strip was only to 0.10m depth, neither of which exposed any pre-modern deposits.

Deposit description

Trench 1 (Plates 1 and 2)

Context	Interpretation	Description	Depth below ground level (top and bottom of deposits)
100	Demolition Layer	Very loose and friable dark brown black sandy silt. Frequent inclusions of brick and charcoal fragments.	0.0 – 0.60m
101	Buried subsoil	Moderately compact and cohesive dark brown grey sandy clay with gravels. Frequent inclusions of small to medium rounded stone.	0.69 – 1.19m
102	Natural glacial till	Compact and cohesive mid orange brown sandy gravel. Frequent inclusions of small to medium rounded stones.	1.19m+
103	Brick Floor	Seen in section only. 6 bricks in length. Not mortared. Sealed by 100. Above 101.	0.60 – 0.69m

Trench 2 (Plates 4 and 5)

Context	Interpretation	Description	Depth below ground level (top and bottom of deposits)
104	Made ground	Loose yellowish brown silty sand. Frequent inclusions of brick rubble, sub rounded gravels and modern materials; i.e. concrete metal, glass, slag, wire and tiles.	0.00 – 0.40m
105	Made ground	Friable black silty sand. Occasional inclusions of brick fragments, mortar, sub rounded gravels glass, wood and slag.	0.40m+

Discussion and conclusions

No significant archaeological features, layers, horizons, structures, or archaeological artefacts were identified during the project.

Trench 1 was dug to a depth of 1.60m below the existing ground level, through made ground. Sealed by the made ground but only observed in section on the southern edge of the trench was a possible brick floor or yard surface, 1.41m long and 0.11 m wide. The bricks, 0.09m thick, were unmortared and lay directly above the buried subsoil. The natural matrix was identified at a depth of 1.19m.

Trench 2 was generally only dug to a depth of 0.60m below the existing ground level. At this depth made ground with brick fragments was observed, along with occasional 19th/20th century debris. At this depth it is assumed that earlier levels may remain undisturbed below the observed layers.

The only finds retrieved were from context 105 and consisted of a fragment of industrial slag and a corroded iron object, which may be a fragment of a tool such as a metal working file. Both artefacts probably date from the 19th or 20th century. The finds assemblage is of no archaeological significance (pers comm Angus Crawford).

The rear of the site was also stripped, with excavation to a maximum depth of 0.10m. At this depth modern made ground with plastic, concrete and brick was observed and did not expose any areas of interest.

The majority of the site has been subject to redevelopment from the 18th century onwards. It therefore maybe surmised that such activity resulted in the disturbance of the medieval and earlier levels, if indeed they were previously present. Nevertheless, the possibility remains that archaeological deposits survive in areas of the site not disturbed by the present development.

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 at the instruction of CgMs Consulting on behalf of their client, NEC Homes, at 45a, Park Road, Bloxwich (NGR: SJ 998 024; BCSMR ref. EBM 836). No significant archaeological features, layers, horizons, structures, or archaeological artefacts were identified during the project. The area stripped toward the front of the site was only dug to a depth of 0.10m through modern made ground and revealed no earlier deposits. Trenches 1 and 2 were observed toward the rear of the site. The former identified buried subsoil levels and the natural matrix at a depth of 1.19m. Trench 2 was dug to 0.60m depth, revealing only made ground with brick fragments and occasional 19th/20th century debris. The finds consisted of a fragment of industrial slag and a corroded iron object, which may be a fragment of a tool such as a metal working file. Both artefacts probably date from the 19th or 20th century.

Acknowledgements

The Service would like to thank the following for their kind assistance in the successful conclusion of this project, Cathy Patrick (CgMs Consulting) and Mike Shaw (Black Country Archaeologist, Wolverhampton City Council).

Personnel

Fieldwork was undertaken by Elizabeth Plane, Andrew Mann and Simon Sworn. Report preparation was undertaken by Elizabeth Plane, finds analysis by Angus Crawford and illustration by Carolyn Hunt and Tom Vaughan. The project manager responsible for the quality of the project was Tom Vaughan.

Bibliography

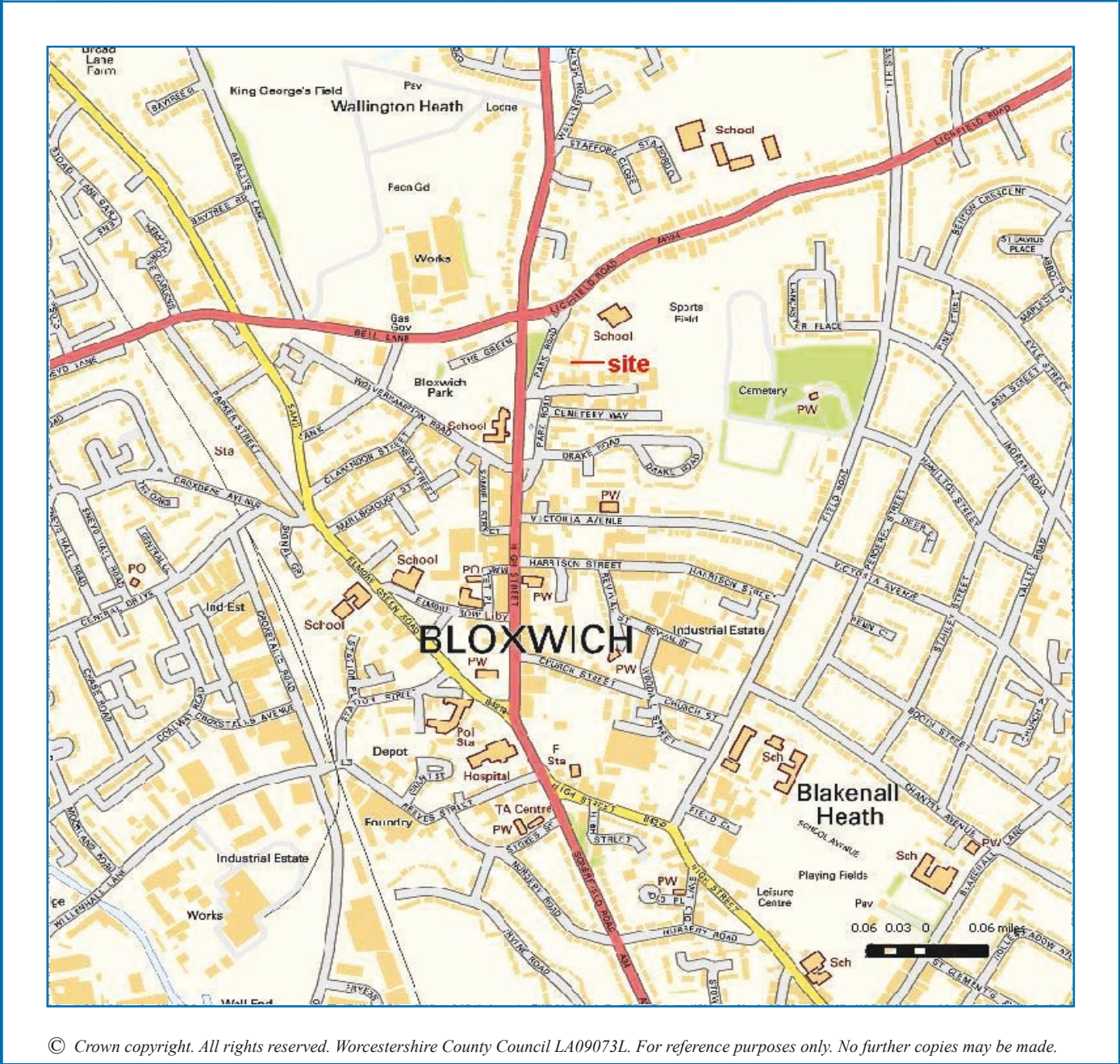
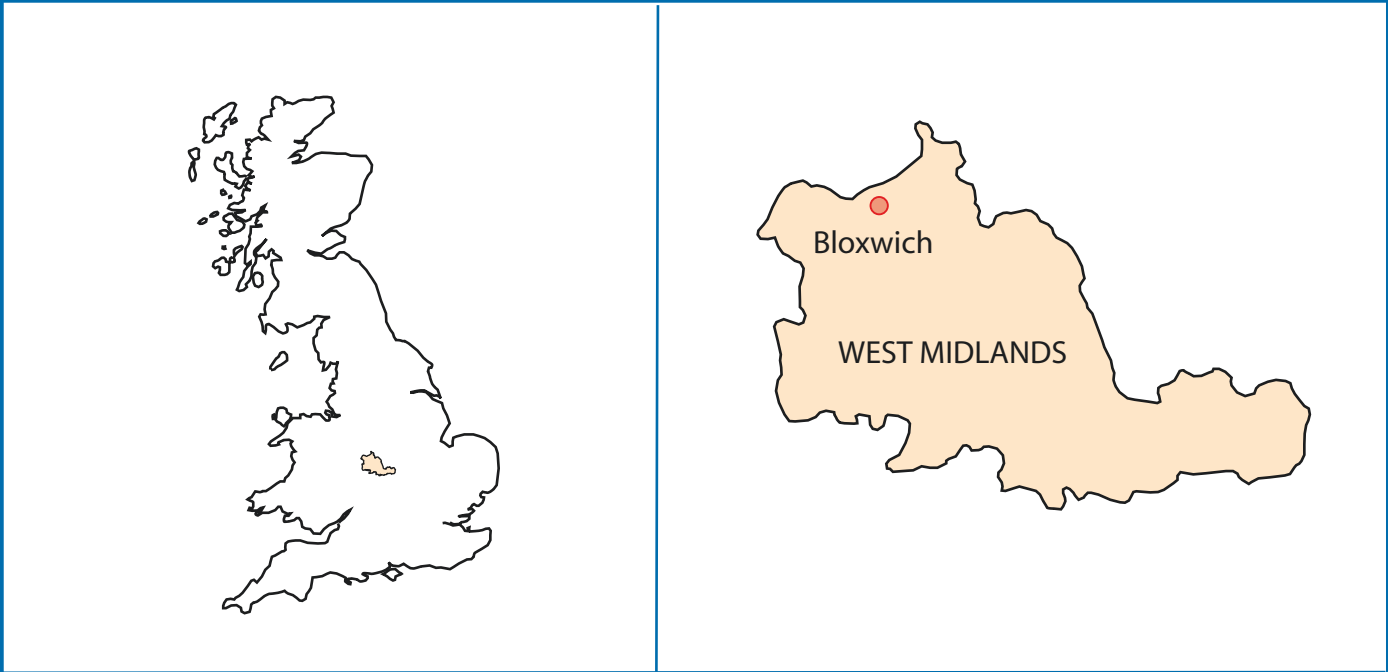
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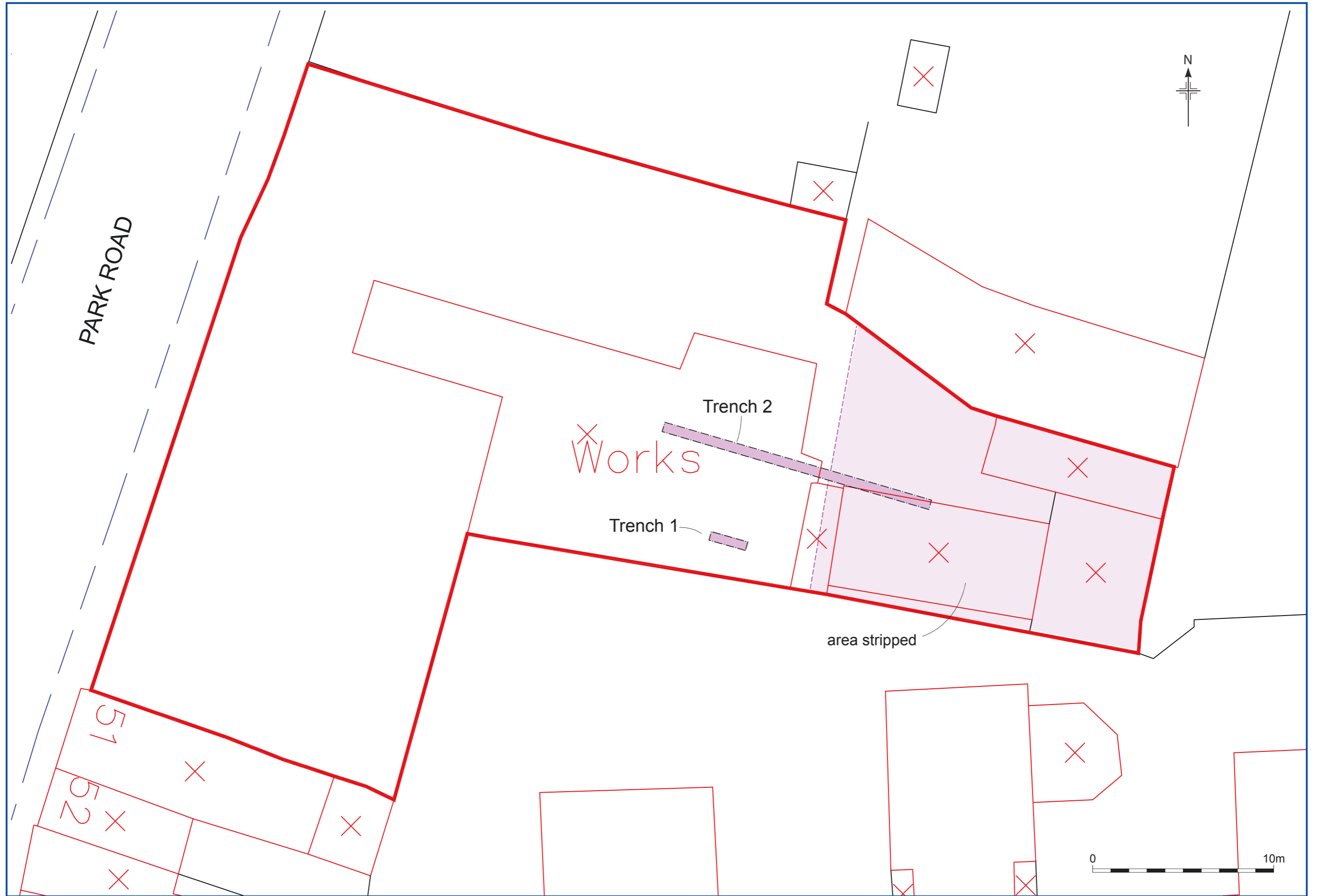
Figures



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Location of the site.

Figure 1



Trench location plan

Figure 2

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Plates



Plate 1: General view of Trench 1 in south west of site, view south



Plate 2: Detailed view of Trench 1, view south



Plate 3: General view from east end of site, view west.



Plate 4: Detailed view of Trench 2, view north.



Plate 5: General view of Trench 2 from the east of the site, view west.

Appendix 1 Technical information

The archive

The archive consists of:

2	Fieldwork progress records AS2
1	Photographic records AS3
23	Digital photographs
1	Abbreviated context records AS40
2	Trench record sheets AS41
1	Scale drawings
1	Computer disk

The project archive is intended to be placed at:

Wolverhampton Arts and Museum Service

Wolverhampton City Council

Wolverhampton Art Gallery

Lichfield Street

Wolverhampton

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