

DESK-BASED ASSESSMENT
AT
ST JOHN'S STREET CAR PARK,
MUCH PARK STREET,
COVENTRY

Tom Rogers

Illustrations by Carolyn Hunt

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Worcestershire County Council

Historic Environment and Archaeology Service,
Worcestershire County Council,
Woodbury,
University of Worcester,
Henwick Grove,
Worcester WR2 6AJ



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Desk-based assessment of St John's Street Car Park, Coventry

Tom Rogers

Part 1 Project summary

A desk-based assessment was undertaken at St John's Street Car Park, Coventry (NGR SP 3368 7867). It was undertaken on behalf of Stoford Developments Ltd and Severn Trent Water Ltd, who intend commercial redevelopment of the site with associated car parking and landscaping. 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 aims of this assessment were to summarise the character and extent of any identified features of the historic environment, indicate their significance, the impact of the proposed development and identify mitigation measures, where appropriate.

The site, currently a car park and office building, lies to the south of the city centre, on the west side of Much Park Street, which was once a principal route into Coventry from the London side. Much Park Street has benefited from several well-documented archaeological excavations, including excavations next to The Greyhound pub adjacent to the site, and the origins of the street are well known. Originally within Cheylesmore Park, held by the Earl of Chester, Much Park Street began to develop from the mid 12th Century onwards, benefiting when park restrictions were relaxed in the mid 13th century. The first activity along the street was a mix of industrial, principally non-ferrous metalworking, and domestic. The nature of this activity appears to have been transient, with frequent replacement of houses and substitution of working areas, both on and off the street frontage. In the 14th century more substantial timber buildings set on stone foundations were constructed reflecting the city's growth following widespread clearance and a brief hiatus of activity. The Stone House, almost opposite the subject site on the east side of Much Park Street, is a typical example of a prestigious stone built building of this period, with vaulted undercroft and first floor hall reflecting the area's status in this wealthy part of the city. After 1600 the houses on the street frontage seem to have undergone little replacement, but map evidence shows the increasing pressure on land to the rear, culminating in 19th Century court-style houses with multiple properties to the rear. A 1947 aerial photograph of Much Park Street shows bomb damage to the south of the subject site, but the street frontage is little affected. A similar view from 1977 however shows the street frontage removed and the character of the area radically altered following post-war reconstruction and development. It is concluded that there is considerable potential for the preservation of archaeological features on the site of medieval and post-medieval date.

Part 2 Detailed report

1. Background

1.1 Reasons for the project

A desk-based assessment was undertaken at St John's Street Car Park, Coventry (NGR SP 3368 7867). It was undertaken on behalf of Stoford Developments Ltd and Severn Trent Water Ltd, who intend commercial redevelopment of the site with associated car parking and landscaping. This is considered by Chris Patrick (Coventry City Council Planning Archaeologist), to have the potential to affect an archaeological site registered on the Coventry City Council Historic Environment Record (HER).

1.2 Project parameters

The project conforms to the *Standard and guidance for archaeological desk-based assessment* (IFA 1999), Planning Policy Guidance Notes 15 '*Planning and the Historic Environment*', and 16 '*Archaeology and Planning*' and relevant EIA guidance and Legislation.

The project also conforms to a standard brief prepared by Chris Patrick, Coventry City Council Planning Archaeologist and for which a project proposal (including detailed specification) was produced (HEAS 2007).

1.3 Aims

The aims of the desk-based assessment were to define the likely extent survival and significance of archaeological remains in the area of the proposed development, so that appropriate mitigation strategies can be devised.

More specifically the following aims have been identified.

- To collect relevant information relating to the archaeological potential of the proposed development area;
- To assess the potential significance of any archaeological remains;
- To assess the impact of the proposed development on these archaeological remains
- To recommend mitigation measures to offset detrimental effects of the development.

The project also has the potential to address issues raised in the West Midlands Regional Research Framework for Archaeology (Seminar 5: Soden 2003).

2. Methods

2.1 Study area

The study area included the site, a sub-rectangular plot of land, bounded by St Johns Street, Much Park Street and Ringway St Johns. (Fig 1), although features of the historic environment were considered within 500m of the site.

2.2 Documentary search

Prior to fieldwork commencing a search was made of the Coventry City Historic Environment Record (HER) and Coventry Local Studies Library. The following sources are relevant to the study area.

Cartographic sources

- Map of Coventry by John Speed 1610
- Plan of the City of Coventry 1748-9 by Samuel Bradford
- Thomas Sharp's map of Coventry 1807
- Board of Health map 1851
- 1888 Ordnance Survey map, Town plans 1:500 series
- 1903 Edition Ordnance Survey map, scale 1:7,000; published 1906
- 1925 Edition Ordnance Survey map, scale 1:7,000; published 1925
- 1936 Edition Ordnance Survey map, scale 1:7,000; published 1937
- 1955 Edition Ordnance Survey map, scale 1:7,000
- 1972-82 edition Ordnance Survey map, scale 1:7,000

Aerial photographs

- 1946 Ordnance Survey; grid square SP 33,78 NE
- West Midlands County Council Aerial Survey 1:5,000, July 1977

Documentary sources

- British Geological Survey 1994 *Coventry. England and Wales sheet 169. Solid and drift geology*. 1:50,000 (Keyworth, Nottingham: British Geological Survey)
- Flitcroft, M 1997 *Excavations at The Greyhound, Much Park Street*, Coventry Museums and Galleries Archaeological Unit, unpublished document dated November 1997
- Lancaster, J C 1975 *Coventry in The Atlas of Historic Towns Volume II* Bristol: Cambridge: Coventry: Norwich
- McAree, D 2006 *Archaeological excavation at 68-70 Whitefriars Street, Coventry*, Northamptonshire Archaeology, unpublished document dated April 2006
- Shelton, J B 1949 *The Story of Twenty-Two Years Excavations in Coventry*.
- Soden, I 2003 *Coventry's archaeology: summary of the medieval resource* produced for Seminar 5 of the West Midlands Regional Research Framework for Archaeology http://www.arch-ant.bham.ac.uk/research/fieldwork_research_themes/projects/wmrrfa.htm
- Soden, I 2005 *Coventry: The Hidden History*, Tempus Publishing Ltd Stroud

- VCH 1969 *Victoria County History of Warwickshire*, **VIII**
- Wallwork, R 1986 *Coventry, Much park Street*, West midlands Archaeology 29, pg 70-71
- Wright, S M 1982 *Much Park Street, Coventry: the development of a medieval street. Excavations 1970-74, Transactions of the Birmingham and Warwickshire Archaeological Society*, Volume 92, 1-134

The following sources have also been cited in this assessment.

- DoE 1990 *Planning Policy Guidance Note 16: Archaeology and Planning (PPG 16)*, Department of the Environment
- DoE 1995 *Planning Policy Guidance Note 15: Archaeology and the historic Environment (PPG 15)*, Department of the Environment
- HEAS 2007 *Proposal for an archaeological desk-based assessment at St John's Street, Coventry*, Historic Environment and Archaeology Service, Worcestershire County Council, unpublished document dated 8th May 2007, **P3083**
- IFA 1999 *Standard and guidance for archaeological desk-based assessment*, Institute of Field Archaeologists
- Patrick, C 2006 *A brief for an archaeological desk-based assessment*, Coventry City Council unpublished document

2.3 Other methods

A site visit was undertaken on 5th July 2007. Consultation has been undertaken with the Chris Patrick (Coventry City Council Planning Archaeologist) to establish the key issues likely to be of importance at this stage of the planning process. A detailed specification has been prepared by the Service (HEAS 2007).

2.4 Results

Details of individual features of the historic environment are given in Appendix 1. Event records have been omitted where this would repeat information in other record types, and would not materially affect the assessment.

2.5 Impact assessment criteria

The criteria cited in Table 1 have been used.

Table 1: Significance Criteria for Cultural Heritage Issues

<p>Severe Adverse: Loss of integrity of nationally important archaeology/cultural heritage including Scheduled Ancient Monuments, Grade I/II* registered parks and gardens and registered battlefields. Demolition of a Grade I/II* Listed Building. Dramatic adverse change in the setting or visual amenity of the feature/site.</p>

<p>Major Adverse: Land take resulting in the degradation of a cultural heritage site of national importance and/or extensive change to the setting or visual amenity of such a site e.g. intrusion into the setting of a Scheduled Ancient Monument. Loss of integrity of sites of archaeological interest of regional value, or Grade II registered parks and gardens, e.g. a dramatic change in the setting or visual amenity of a regionally important site such as a Conservation Area. Widespread adverse effects on the setting or structure of a Grade I/II* Listed Building. Demolition of a Grade II Listed Building.</p>
<p>Moderate Adverse: Land take resulting in the degradation of a cultural heritage site of regional importance and/or extensive change to the setting or visual amenity of such a site. Extensive change to the setting or structure of a Grade II Listed Building. Demolition of a locally listed or other historically important building. Encroachment upon a Conservation Area, historic parkland or other historic landscapes where the quality of the setting or its amenity would be noticeably impaired. Slight change to the setting or structure of a Grade I/II* listed building. Removal of a historically important hedgerow (after the Hedgerows Regulations).</p>
<p>Minor Adverse: Loss of integrity of an area where archaeological features/areas of local importance have been identified. Slight change to the setting or structure of a Grade II Listed Building. Limited encroachment upon a Conservation Area or historic parkland or other historic landscape where intrusive views are created or slight effects upon its integrity would result.</p>
<p>Not Significant: Landscape or ecological planting on an area where locally important archaeological features have been identified but impacts are thought to have no long term effect on the resource. Removal of common hedgerows and limited damage to important hedgerows where no replacement proposed.</p>
<p>Minor Beneficial: Perceptible improvement in the setting or structure of a Grade II listed building, Conservation Area or Grade II historic parkland. Improved management of locally/regionally important archaeological site.</p>
<p>Moderate Beneficial: Perceptible improvement in the setting or structure of a Grade I/II* listed building, Conservation Area or Grade I/II* historic parkland. Improved management of nationally important archaeological site.</p>

2.6 The methods in retrospect

The methods adopted allow a high degree of confidence that the aims of the assessment have been achieved

3. Archaeological and historical context

3.1 Site description and topography

The site lies to the south of the city centre on relatively flat ground slightly inside the circuit of the inner ring road. It is a sub rectangular plot currently occupied by a surface car park (Plate 1) with an office building (Plate 2) to the south east. It is bounded to the north and west by St John's Street, to the south by the stretch of the Ring Road known as Ringway St John's and to the east by Much Park Street. The car park itself is on two levels with the southern half lying approximately 1m above the northern. A red sandstone wall approximately 0.7m wide runs parallel to the western boundary of the site (Plate 3.)

3.2 **Geology and soils**

The solid geology of the area is Upper Carboniferous red brown mudstone and sandstone with subordinate lenticular conglomerates and thin limestones of the Keresley member (British Geological Survey 1994).

3.3 **Historic environment**

3.3.1 **Prehistoric and Roman**

There is no evidence of prehistoric occupation in the city of Coventry itself, however at Canley, which now lies on the south-western edge of the city, 14 round houses (3rd century BC to 1st AD) were excavated by University of Warwick in 2002 (Soden 2005, 16).

The recent discovery of Roman features at Priory Street (Thompson, A pers. comm.) is the earliest evidence of occupation in the city. Various residual finds of Roman and prehistoric date have been recovered during city centre excavations (Patrick 2006). Several Roman finds have been recorded within the city such as a coin of Emperor Galinus [AD 253-288], and various items of toiletry reported by Shelton (1949, 10) to have been recovered at a depth of 16ft from a lake or river bed, but there is no evidence of settlement in the city, the nearest focus being Baginton about 4 miles south of the city centre, where a civilian settlement and a fort were based.

3.3.2 **Saxon**

Coventry probably began as a Saxon settlement, perhaps as a clearing in the Forest of Arden, which covered much of this area. The name Coventry refers to a wooded watery area by a hill and Lancaster (1975, 2) suggests that this describes the slight eminence on which the cathedral is built overlooking the River Sherbourne.

There are few archaeological remains in Coventry from the Saxon period. Residual human bones from a grave uncovered beneath the north arcade of the Romanesque Cathedral nave during excavations of the Priory were radiocarbon dated to the 9th Century and it has been suggested that Coventry was the centre of a large Anglo-Saxon estate (Patrick, C 2006) but evidence is scant.

Saxon place-names are common in the area and many local villages, now suburbs of the city, contain the suffix *-ley*, indicating a clearing in the forest (Soden 2005, 16).

There is a tradition that a nunnery was founded in Coventry by St Asburg, its abbess in the late 10th century, and that it was destroyed by the Danes under Edric the Traitor in 1016. A fragment of Saxon Cross shaft (MCT620), thought to be 10th century was found beneath Palmer Lane in 1930s, where it had been incorporated in earlier street paving.

The first documented event in the history of Coventry was the founding of a Benedictine House in 1043 by Leofric, Earl of Mercia and his wife Godiva, who held large estates in Mercia, including Coventry. This consisted of an abbot and 24 monks and was endowed with considerable wealth. In the Domesday Survey of 1086, Godiva's Coventry consisted of five hides, which translates to about 1000 acres (Lancaster 1975, 3).

No Saxon remains are recorded on the HER close to the subject site. The focus of Saxon Coventry probably lay around the priory but it is worth noting that the site later occupied by Much Park Street, roughly lay between here and the well established Saxon settlement at Baginton.

3.3.3 Early medieval period

At the conquest, Godiva's lands were taken by the King and after 20 years, certain of these passed to the Earl of Chester who built a castle. Within a few years Robert de Limesey, the Bishop of Chester, attracted by the wealth of the abbey, transferred his seat to Coventry and seized the abbey. The division of the town between these two institutions was critical to the development of the town although whether the town can be categorized into two parts, as the 'Earl's Half' (southern) and the Prior's Half (northern; Lancaster 1975, 3) is a matter of some debate (Wright 1982, 7). It is clear, however, that growth on the southern edge of the town was limited in this early period by the Earl's Manor, Cheylesmore Park which was surrounded by a park pale, comprising a massive ditch and bank topped by a hedge, known as the Hysum -Ditch or later, the Red Ditch (Soden 2005, 20). The subject site lay within the park, to the south of this boundary, which ran from Greyfriars Lane almost as far as Whitefriar's Street. It was only when this boundary was relaxed in the mid 13th century that Much and Little Park Streets became viable thoroughfares. Much Park Street (meaning the larger of the two Park Streets) then would have become the major route south out of the city and towards London and developed accordingly.

There has been speculation as to the manner of the development of the Much and Little Park Street area of the city, summarised in Wright (1982, 13-14). Wright, however, points out that three excavations carried out at different locations on Much Park Street show a similar pattern of development in the 12th and 13th centuries; of a suburb characterised by metalworking and non-intensive, though increasing, occupation. These three excavations, carried out by Dr Grenville Astill (at Stone House), Alan Hannon (7-10, Much Park Street) and Coventry and District Archaeological Society (122-3, Much Park Street) between 1970 and 1974 provide a valuable insight into the development of this street that are of direct relevance to the St John's Street Car Park site. The excavations at numbers 7-20 (Plate 4) and 122-3 were carried out after the wholesale removal of the medieval buildings, which stood on these plots, to Spon Street where they are now preserved. The location of these sites is shown in Figure 9 and the results are briefly summarised below.

Apart from some stray finds there is no real evidence of occupation previous to 1150 and in the period up to 1350 metal working is predominant, primarily copper alloy working with some iron. Property boundaries and small workshops can be identified, and finds from all three sites suggest that girdlers, making buckles and other goods were present. Archaeological evidence of this activity comprised features such as bowl hearths and quenching pits. At 122-3 there is evidence for a smithy with hearths at the front of the plot and buildings to the rear, until a stone building was founded about 1300. Soden (2005, 30) points out that the evidence from 122-3, Much Park Street is for a very fluid frontage line and suggests that initially the workmanship was designed to be on show to travellers from the direction of London, or alternatively was more accessible from the street in case of a fire, as seems to have happened at numbers 7-10.

All three sites produced evidence of timber structures in the early period, in the form of pits, post holes and slots but it was not until the 13th century that more substantial buildings with cobbled floors appeared. There was much evidence for successive phases of replacement of buildings, for example at numbers 122-3 where the first substantial building is cleared for more metalworking before being replaced by a stone founded building in about 1300. At numbers 7-10 to the north of the street on the eastern side, the rear of the plot is still agricultural in the early period with evidence for ridge and furrow.

Excavation at The Greyhound public house, at one corner of the subject site, was carried out by Coventry Museums Archaeological Unit in 1997, in advance of the construction of an extension. The site was effectively on the street frontage of Much Park Street representing numbers 120-121. Here, the pattern of development was in broad agreement with the excavations described above. The earliest evidence of activity was in the form of a hearth, a number of pits, a possible boundary ditch and widespread thin charcoal layers which may indicate industrial processes. Substantial stone buildings were erected in the north and central

parts of the site in the 13th century, including a sandstone wall of massive proportions. This, it is suggested, may have been a building of similar proportions to the Stone House almost opposite on the east side of Much Park Street (see Section 3.34 below).

By the end of the 12th century the town had developed a burgeoning wool and cloth industry and was capable of producing finished goods from the raw material, through all the processes of combing, spinning, weaving, fulling and dyeing. There was also a ceramics industry and, as above, a domestic metalworking industry.

3.3.4 Later medieval period

In the 14th century, Coventry was exporting its fine blue cloth to Europe and other industry including ceramics, glazing and metalworking and such wealth attracted further monastic institutions. In 1342 the Carmelite Friars (known as Whitefriars, from their robes) established a house to the south east of the city following a grant from a London merchant. In 1352 a further grant allowed them to establish a western entrance and a gate, which still stands opposite the subject site on Much Park Street (Soden 2005, 79).

In 1363, Coventry received the right to crenellate from Edward III and exacted a murage levy on all the occupants of the town with the exception of churchmen.. The town wall with its twelve gates and twenty towers, ran to the south of the Much Park Street, and the subject site was therefore within the defended town. Construction began with the New Gate at the head of London Road.

In Much Park Street the 14th century saw the clearance of all the existing buildings and occupation on sites and, following a brief hiatus, the establishment of the first substantial buildings: timber houses built on stone footings (Wright 1982, 33).¹ The Stone House is a remarkable survival of a 14th century building that was exposed by bomb damage in 1942, preserved amongst later brick buildings. It is of more elaborate proportions to the timber built structures with a stone first floor hall and vaulted undercroft (Plate 4), of a type not uncommon in medieval Coventry (Soden 2005, 23). The timber buildings still appear to have had a mix of domestic and industrial usage and furthermore rebuilding of the timber structures on the stone foundations continued at 7,8 and 9 as well as 122-3 (Wright 1982, 38). At no. 123 a smithy was re-established on the street frontage once more in the later 15th century.

Excavations in advance of the Law Courts at 124-5, Much Park Street, slightly north of the subject site revealed two series of industrial pits from the 13th-15th centuries (Wallwork, 1986). These had been later sealed during the construction of a well and later sandstone cellars had disturbed the street frontage. Finds, including leather, buckle moulds, pins, worked bone and textile were indicative of early small-scale industry.

3.3.5 16th-17th centuries

Economic decline in the late medieval period was widespread but Coventry seems to have suffered acutely (Soden 2005, 35). The wool and cloth trades were at a low ebb, partly due to the restrictive practices of the guilds in an attempt to maintain standards (Lancaster 1975, 8). A survey of 1522 states that there were 525 empty properties in the city. Rents across the city fell dramatically and the dissolution of the monasteries in 1539 further depressed the economy. After 1600, the buildings that stood on three sites in Much Park Street excavated in 1970-74 were still standing in the 20th century and documentary evidence suggests that this trend was fairly widespread (Wright 1982, 39).

¹ In each of the three excavations, and at The Greyhound, the hiatus is represented by a organic, charcoal rich clay, which has not yet been characterised but may represent a brief return to cultivation (Wright 1982, 37)

The first map of Coventry is John Speed's plan of 1610 (Fig 2). This shows unoccupied areas within the city walls in place of the religious houses but also extramural suburbs on the main routes into the city. Much Park Street is built up on both sides, and in the area which roughly corresponds to the subject site, an L-shaped building occupies the backplot.

Coventry was besieged by the King's forces in the Civil War of 1642-51. Following the restoration in 1660, the city's defences were slighted by the Earl of Northampton (Patrick 2006). Some houses were destroyed by the defenders to provide sightlines from the city wall but these were consequently extramural buildings.

3.3.6 18th century

In the 18th century the population of the city rose as new industries such as silk ribbon weaving and watch making emerged (Lancaster 1975, 12). This put pressure on land outside the city and pasture was fiercely protected resulting in a growth in the use of back tenement blocks covering courtyards and alleyways. Samuel Bradford's map of 1748 (Fig 3) shows Much Park Street little changed, but gives a clearer indication of the extent of buildings as opposed to Speed's diagrammatic style. The street frontage houses are shown extending some way into the backplots but gardens and outbuildings are still prominent, perhaps reflecting the area's standing as one of the wealthier parts of the town.

3.3.7 19th century

This century saw great change across the city, with increasing industrialisation and growth as the skilled labour force which emerged in watch and silk weaving factories increasingly turned to mechanics. The consequent need for housing encouraged the construction of cheap 'court' style housing.

Sharp's map of 1807 shows little change on Much Park Street to Bradford's of 1748, although the city wall is less prominent to the south, reflecting the trend of removing gates and sections of wall to accommodate increasing traffic.

The 1851 Board of Health map (Fig 4) gives the first very detailed picture of individual buildings and holdings. On the subject site a single row of twelve individual holdings are laid out along an alleyway perpendicular to the street, while to the north, roughly ten holdings are arranged in a more random fashion. The Greyhound public house is marked. To the rear, an open area, formerly comprised of strips of individual plots, is shown as a single entity with trees and a circuit path. To the north of this and in various other parts of the city, areas are shown as laid out parks with paths weaving between shaped bushes and trees and the general impression from the map is one of prosperity. This is perhaps reflected in the lane which joins Much Park Street at its southern end, formerly Dead Lane, now appearing as St John's Street.

It is not clear from the Board of Health map, how much of the depiction of open spaces is a matter of style over fact. Certainly the 1st edition Ordnance Survey map (Fig 5) shows a very different picture less than 40 years later. Here, although the layout of the buildings is similar, the space to the rear is shown as a timber yard with workshops or sheds and the plot boundaries shown have much in common with earlier plot divisions.

3.3.8 20th Century

This century saw the apex of Coventry as an industrial city, devoted to motor manufacture as well as a myriad of other industries. The general impression of Much Park Street on the 1903 Ordnance Survey map (Fig 6) is little changed from the 1st edition but it is worth noting however that even at this time, at the beginning of the 20th Century, the lower end of Much Park Street lay just inside the old line of the city wall which, apart from two large motor

works, still forms the southern edge of the built city. The subject site was still only a matter of some 30-40m from the southern edge of Coventry.

By 1936 the rear of the buildings is largely built over and the timber yard has been replaced by a single building, a ribbon dye works. Much Park Street is now well within the city, enclosed not only by the massive Armstrong Siddely Motor Works but also a swathe of semi-detached houses. The city is characterised by diverse industry within the town centre and within a half a kilometre of Much Park Street are motor works, a cycle works, a brewery, a ribbon manufactory, a malthouse, a preserved panel works and a printing and paper works.

In the Second World War Coventry's motor and general manufacturing industry made it ideal for the production of aircraft and munitions (Patrick 2006) and a target for the Luftwaffe. The Blitz of 14th/15th November 1940 and the later Baedekker raid in April 1941 did great damage to the city, destroying much of the fabric of the city centre, including famously, the Cathedral. An Ordnance Survey aerial photograph of 1946 highlights the extent of bomb damage across the city. Much Park Street, however in common with much of the city, is little affected. Immediately south of the subject site is an open area likely to have been a victim of the blitz but the street frontage and back plots of the site itself are untouched, in common with most of the street, which maintains its medieval street line.

A West Midlands County Council aerial photograph of July 1977 shows the street radically altered as post war reconstruction and redevelopment has altered the entire street layout. The frontages are gone and replaced by freestanding buildings set back from the street and a large car park occupies much of the west side. The lower end of Much Park Street now fronts onto the inner ring road which has replaced St John's Street.

3.4 Statutory and other designations

The site lies within an archaeological constraint area (DCT889) designated by Coventry City Council. Whitefriar's Gate (DCT166, DCT326), a grade II* listed gatehouse lies on the opposite side of Much Park Street (nos. 35-37) to the east of the site. This is the 14th Century Postern gate to the Carmelite Friary, which lay some 250m to the east. The Stone House (DCT288) a late 13th or early 14th century rectangular sandstone building lies on the opposite side of Much Park Street, slightly to the north east of the site is also a listed building, grade II*. It survives as an unroofed ruin. The Greyhound Public House which lies immediately to the north east of the site is a locally listed building (DCT624).

A section of the medieval city wall (DCT 20, COVSAM 17) which lies some 150m to the south-east of the site at Parkway is designated a scheduled ancient monument.

4. Potential impacts

It is clear from previous archaeological activity within the city of Coventry and along Much Park Street in particular that there is a considerable potential for the preservation of archaeological material of medieval and later date on the subject site. Much Park Street has benefited from a notable occurrence of archaeological activity and it is from this data, combined with documentary and cartographic evidence that a detailed picture of the development of the street can be constructed.

Prior to 1600 the function of plots of land on Much Park Street was fluid, as phases of occupation, industry and even cultivation were replaced in quick succession. Furthermore in the earlier medieval period buildings were often placed behind industrial areas on the street frontage. This is a trend reflected across the city. To quote Soden (2005, 26) 'Few excavated house plots in the city can be said to reflect a purely domestic, industrial or mercantile function.' It is therefore probable that medieval features extend behind the street frontage into the back plot area which represents the majority of the subject site.

In the 14th century, the character of building changed as the more ephemeral timber buildings were replaced by timber buildings supported on stone footings and even stone buildings with vaulted undercrofts as illustrated at The Stone House and in the excavations at The Greyhound and the Crown Court, where the sandstone footings of a medieval building were recorded just outside the area of the subject site. After about 1600 the buildings tend to be altered rather than reconstructed and many of the medieval buildings in the city lasted into the 20th century either as freestanding structures or encased within later buildings.

Development at this site without archaeological mitigation, including preservation by record through archaeological excavation, should archaeological deposits be shown to survive would have a **moderately adverse** effect on the buried archaeological resource.

5. Mitigation

In order to mitigate the impacts identified above, the following actions are recommended.

- Archaeological evaluation with trial trenches across the site would ascertain the extent to which medieval deposits have survived later disturbance through the construction of later buildings and the excavation of cellars. Although later features are important and worthy of record, it is recommended that should archaeological evaluation be carried out, limited excavation should be continued to the level of medieval deposits. It is envisaged that the levels of the current car park are artificially high, probably from demolition layers.
- It is further recommended that the sandstone wall which lies to the west of the subject site should be inspected and described by a historic buildings specialist to ascertain its date and probable function.
- Any site investigation works or watching briefs required, would be concluded by production of an archaeological report (and appropriate publication) to be deposited for public consultation with the HER and a project archive to be deposited at a local museum.

6. Residual effects

Implementation of the mitigation proposed above should ensure that there are no residual effects on the historic environment and archaeological resource from the proposed development. Mitigation should ensure that adverse impacts are restricted in scope to *not significant*.

The historic environment is a non-renewable resource and therefore cannot be directly replaced. However mitigation through recording and investigation also produces an important research dividend that can be used for the better understanding of the county's history and contribute to local and regional research agendas.

7. 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.

A desk-based assessment was undertaken on behalf of Stoford Developments Ltd and Severn Trent Water Ltd at St John's Street Car Park, Coventry (NGR SP 3368 7867). The site, currently a car park and office building lies to the south of the city centre, on the west side of Much Park Street, once a principal route into Coventry from the London side of the city.

Much Park Street has benefited from several well-documented archaeological excavations, including excavations next to The Greyhound pub adjacent to the site, and the origins of the street are well known. Originally within Cheylesmore Park, held by the Earl of Chester, Much Park Street began to develop from the mid 12th century onwards, benefiting when park restrictions were relaxed in the mid 13th century. The first activity along the street was a mix of industrial, principally non-ferrous metalworking, and domestic occupation. The nature of this activity appears to have been transient with frequent replacement of houses and substitution of working areas, both on and off the street frontage. In the 14th century more substantial timber buildings set on stone foundations were constructed reflecting the city's growth and following widespread clearance and a brief hiatus of activity. The Stone House, almost opposite the subject site on the east side of Much Park Street, is an example of a prestigious stone built building of this period with vaulted undercroft and first floor hall reflecting the area's status as a wealthy part of the city. After 1600 the houses on the street frontage seem to have undergone little replacement but map evidence shows the increasing pressure on land to the rear culminating in 19th century court style houses with multiple properties to the rear. A 1947 aerial photograph of Much Park Street shows bomb damage to the south of the subject site, but the street frontage is little altered. A similar view from 1977 however shows the street frontage removed and the character of the area radically altered following post-war reconstruction and development. It is concluded that there is considerable potential for the preservation of archaeological features on the site of medieval and post medieval date.

8. **Acknowledgements**

The Service would like to thank the following for their kind assistance in the successful conclusion of this project, James Brechtmann of EC Harris LLP, Chris Patrick, Coventry City Council Planning Archaeologist, and Alex Thompson HER Officer, Coventry City Council.

9. **Personnel**

The assessment was undertaken by Tom Rogers. The project manager responsible for the quality of the project was Hal Dalwood. Illustrations were prepared by Carolyn Hunt.

Figures

Plates



Plate 1. St. Johns Street car park looking south-west



Plate 2. The office building at the south east of the subject site looking west.



Plate 3. Sandstone wall at the west of the site looking south-east



Plate 4. A medieval house in Spon Street, formerly no. 7, Much Park Street



Plate 5. Medieval House in Spon Street, formerly no. 8, Much Park Street



Plate 6. The Stone House, Much Park Street



Plate 7. The Greyhound pub, Much Park Street. The 1997 excavation took place ahead of the new extension in the foreground.

Appendix 1 Features of the historic environment registered with the HER (those within the site are indicated in bold)

Reference number	Site name	Grid reference	Date	Description
MCT 2038	The Earls Park /Cheylesmore Park	SP 3371 7771	(Earlier Medieval - 1154 AD)	Medieval Deer Park. First mentioned between 1154 and 1157.
MCT890	Carmelite Friary gateway	SP 3377 7866	Medieval - 1066 AD to 1539 AD)	C14 postern gatehouse of Carmelite Friary,
MCT200	The Red Ditch	SP 3360 7870	(Medieval - 1066 AD to 1539 AD)	Former park pale of Cheylesmore Park
DCT288	The Stone House	SP337 57872	1267 to 1332	Late C13 or early C14 rectangular building of sandstone.
DCT 624	The Greyhound Pub	SP 3373 7868	Post medieval	118 - The Greyhound P.H., Much Park Street
MCT2424	Tenement	SP 3375 7859	(Elizabethan - 1581 AD)	Tenement mentioned in a survey of corporation housing in 1581