

Archaeological evaluation at Parcel H (north), Quedgeley Framework Plan Gloucester

Worcestershire Archaeology
For RPS Consulting on behalf of QUVL

January 2021



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PARCEL H (NORTH) QUEDGELEY FRAMEWORK PLAN GLOUCESTER

Archaeological evaluation report



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SITE INFORMATION

Site name: Parcel H (north), Quedgeley Framework Plan Gloucester

Local planning authority: Gloucester City Council

Planning reference: 13/00585

Central NGR: SO 81180 13500

Commissioning client: Neil Wright RPS Consulting

WA project number: P5962

WA report number: 2880

Oasis reference: Fieldsec1-411934

DOCUMENT CONTROL PANEL

Version	Date	Author	Details	Approved by
1	07/01/2021	G Arnold	Draft for comment	T Rogers
2	13/01/2021	G Arnold	Addressing client comments	T Rogers

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Archaeological evaluation of Parcel H (north), Quedgeley Framework Plan, Gloucester

By Graham Arnold

Illustrations by Graham Arnold

Summary

An archaeological evaluation was undertaken at Parcel H (north), Quedgeley Framework Plan, Gloucester (NGR SO 81180 13500). It was commissioned by Neil Wright of RPS Consulting on behalf of Quedgeley Urban Village Ltd (QUVL), in advance of a proposed development. Planning permission has been granted subject to a programme of archaeological works.

The site as a whole comprises an open area comprising concrete roads, areas of hardstanding and grassed areas. Until recently a community centre stood in the northern part of Parcel H but this has now been demolished.

The area was subject to evaluation in 2016, when the community centre was still extant. Following its recent demolition, two evaluation trenches, 23m and 25m in length, were opened within the area of the former community centre.

The only recorded deposits related to the recent demolition of the building, overlying the natural substrate, with associated services. No significant archaeological deposits were present. This indicates that the Iron Age and Roman activity recorded in Parcel F to the south either did not extend into this area or was heavily truncated, if not completely removed, by modern development.

Report

1 Introduction

1.1 Background to the project

An archaeological evaluation was undertaken by Worcestershire Archaeology (WA) in December 2020 in the northern part of Parcel H, Quedgeley, Gloucester (NGR SO 81180 13500).

The project was commissioned by Neil Wright of RPS Consulting on behalf of Quedgeley Urban Village Ltd, in advance of a proposed mixed-use development. Outline consent for development of the site was approved by Gloucestershire City Council in 2000 (00/00479) subject to condition 34 as follows:-

There shall be no disturbance of currently grassed areas within the former HQ site and Site 1 until such times as an archaeological field evaluation has been submitted and agreed.

A renewal of Outline Consent was submitted and approved in 2013 (13/00585) which was granted subject to the following conditions:-

Condition no.15

No development shall take place within a particular phase of development of the site until the applicant has secured the implementation of a programme of archaeological work in accordance with a written scheme of investigation which has been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority.

Condition no.16

In the event that further archaeological features are discovered in a particular phase of development of the site, their archaeological excavation shall be arranged, recording, analysis and publication of such features prior to any development being carried out within an area to be agreed with the Local Planning Authority in writing in the vicinity of any such features.

No brief was provided but a Written Scheme of Investigation was prepared by Worcestershire Archaeology (WA 2020) and approved by Andrew Armstrong, Archaeological Planning Advisor to Gloucester City Council.

The site as a whole was subject to archaeological evaluation in 2016 and significant archaeological remains were uncovered in areas of the site, some of which have since been excavated. At the time of this 2016 evaluation one part of Parcel H was occupied by a building and was not available for evaluation. Following recent demolition of the building, this evaluation addresses this gap in the evaluated area.

The evaluation conforms to the industry guidelines and standards set out by the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists in *Standard and guidance: for archaeological field evaluation* (CIfA 2014)

1.2 Site location, topography and geology

The former RAF Gloucester site is located east of the village of Quedgeley and approximately 4km south of the city of Gloucester.

The site as a whole comprises an open area comprising concrete roads, areas of hard standing and grassed areas and trees. Until recently a community centre stood in the northern part of Parcel H but this has now been demolished.

The northern part of Parcel H, which was evaluated here, covers an area of 6700 square metres. It is bounded by a main road to the west, with trees and concrete access road from the RAF occupation of site to the south and an area of hardstanding to the north and east. The central part

was fairly flat, wet, waste ground, at 21.3m AOD which, has been subject to demolition and backfilling activities.

The underlying geology comprises bedrock of Charmouth Mudstone formation overlain by superficial deposits of sands and gravel (BGS 2020).

2 Archaeological and historical background

The site and surrounding area have been subject to previous desk based assessment, geophysics, evaluation and excavation phases which are summarised below.

A desk-based assessment was carried out which identified potential for the presence of archaeological remains, particularly from the Roman and Medieval periods. Following this a programme of archaeological evaluation was carried out both before and following granting of outline planning permission.

Detailed geophysical survey was completed over sample blocks within the wider site. Survey blocks were located in order to avoid areas of hardstanding, proposed open spaces and areas known to have been significantly disturbed during the twentieth century (e.g. former landfill). The survey identified a number of features thought to relate to former structures of the munitions factory, including track beds and building foundations. The survey also identified areas of apparent recent disturbance, possibly resulting from twentieth century military activity.

Earlier features were confined to evidence for ridge and furrow, underlining that the site was in agricultural use during the Medieval period.

Subsequently an archaeological evaluation was undertaken in 2016 (Walsh et al 2016). Twenty-two trenches were excavated across the site and archaeological features relating to two distinct phases of activity were identified in eleven of the trenches. The first phase of activity was represented by a number of possible enclosure type features in the western part of the site. These features yielded a moderate quantity of Roman pottery typical of rural sites in the area. The second phase of activity was represented by a series of sterile ditches in the eastern and central part of the site. These ditches appear to correlate with field boundaries visible on historic Ordnance Survey maps and are therefore interpreted as post-medieval in date. (Walsh, A et Al. 2016).

No archaeological features were uncovered in Trench 11 which lay in the northern part of Parcel H. An archaeological excavation of Parcel G was undertaken in 2017 (Walsh 2017). The investigations revealed two key phases of archaeological activity. A period of later Iron Age activity appears to be focussed in the eastern part of the site where two large pits, which may have been watering holes, and three small ditches, were identified. The two large pits yielded pottery and animal bone, a bone comb and a possible stone weight. Well preserved organic remains including a collapsed hurdle and wooden post were also identified in the pits.

A second phase of activity dating to the earlier Roman period appears to have been focused on a group of ditches which may have formed part of a drove or trackway and a ditch orientated perpendicular to the droveway. Pottery from these features dated them to the earlier Roman period. Environmental evidence from this phase of activity was limited to a small assemblage of animal bone which was dominated by the head and upper limb bones of cattle indicating that it originated as food waste. Later activity on the site, including a post-medieval to modern field boundary, and 20th century pits, were not deemed to be archaeologically significant. An archaeological excavation was undertaken in Parcel F immediately to the east of Parcel H (Wilkins 2020). Here the remains predominantly dated from the late Iron Age and Romano-British periods. Prehistoric activity pre-dating the Iron Age was represented by residual flint artefacts, though a crouched inhumation could date from this period.

Later Iron Age activity was characterised by several large pits, similar to those in Parcel G, likely functioning as waterholes. Two of the pits contained organic-rich deposits and a section of preserved wattle hurdle survived within one such deposit. Dating evidence from the pottery assemblage indicated

a later Iron Age date, which was confirmed by radiocarbon dating undertaken on the wattle hurdle. The animal bone assemblage was dominated by cattle, and environmental evidence indicated the surrounding landscape was predominantly a pastoral one.

Romano-British activity could tentatively be split into two separate phases, with some evidence of early (1st to mid-2nd century AD) land-use which continued through to the early 4th century AD. The Romano-British element appeared agrarian in character, predominantly comprising small boundary ditches, with no direct evidence of settlement identified within the site. Two inhumations and a cremation deposit, which produced a radiocarbon date of 30-210 cal AD, were located adjacent to a boundary ditch. The crouched inhumation and associated calf burial are also likely to be early Roman in date and could represent a continuation of later prehistoric funerary activity.

The finds assemblage suggested that the site lay within the vicinity of settlement, probably a small, rural farmstead. The presence of some high-status pottery, dating from the 1st and 2nd centuries and including an exceptional sherd of mortarium, indicated some level of wealth.

Archaeology post-dating the Roman period was confined to a large post-medieval boundary ditch and modern truncation associated with 20th century military use of the site, initially as a munitions factory, and later an RAF base. (WSI WA2020 2-3)

3 Project aims

The aims and scope of the project were to undertake sufficient fieldwork to:

- determine the presence or absence of archaeological deposits beyond reasonable doubt;
- identify their location, nature date and preservation;
- assess their significance;
- assess the likely impact of the proposed development.

4 Project methodology

A Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI) was prepared by Worcestershire Archaeology (WA 2020) which was approved by Andrew Armstrong, Archaeological Planning Advisor to Gloucester City Council. Fieldwork was undertaken between 30 November and 2 December 2020.

Two trenches, amounting to 65m² in area, were excavated over the 6700 square metre site. The area was subject to archaeological evaluation in 2016 with one blank trench located in the northern part of this current site. The location of the trenches is indicated in Figure 2.

The trenches were laid out to avoid areas of modern disturbance as much as possible. One of the trenches had to be moved from its original position in the south of the site to the western edge due to trees, waterlogging, modern services and positioned to interrogate areas not affected by the recent developments.

Deposits considered not to be significant were removed under constant archaeological supervision using a JCB 3CX type wheeled excavator, employing a toothless bucket. Subsequent excavation was undertaken by hand. Clean surfaces were inspected to determine their nature. Deposits were recorded according to standard Worcestershire Archaeology practice (WA 2012) and trench and feature locations were surveyed using a GNSS device with an accuracy limit set at <0.04m. On completion of excavation, trenches were reinstated by replacing the excavated material.

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

The project archive is currently held at the offices of Worcestershire Archaeology. Subject to the agreement of the landowner it is anticipated that it will be deposited at Gloucester Museum.

5 Archaeological results

5.1 Introduction

The features recorded in the trenches are shown in Figures 3 and Plates 1-10. The trench and context inventory is presented below.

5.2 Trench descriptions

5.2.1 Natural deposits

The natural yellow and blue Blue Lias and Charmouth mudstone clay, with Orange Cheltenham Sand and Gravels was observed from 0.70m below the ground level in both trenches. This had been truncated in the south of trench 50 and east of trench 51 by the removal of building foundations of the previous building on site and subsequent backfilling within the building footprint and existing services.

5.2.2 Trench 50

Context	Brief description	Max depth (m)	Depth from ground surface (m)	Comments
5000	Tarmac	0.15	0.00	Tarmac and hardcore from hardstanding at north end of trench.
5001	Concrete hardstanding	0.15	0.15	Concrete underlying tarmac as hardstanding at north end of trench
5002	Hardcore Layer	0.30	0.00	Yellow hardcore type 1 stone levelling demolition area of previous building
5003	Disturbed, redeposited made ground	0.40	0.30 – 0.60 in north 0.30- 1.20 south of service	Redeposited demolition and natural material from site demolition and remediation works of previous building
5004	Natural	0.40	0.63	Natural firm blue grey and yellow clay with frequent limestone. Charmouth Mudstone
5005	Cut of demolition tipping area	0.90	0.30	Area in south of trench subject to building foundation removal and backfilled by 5003
5006	Service running NE – SW across site			Drain servicing previous community centre

Trench 50 (Figure 3 and Plates 2-6) was 25m in length and orientated north – south in the centre Parcel H, avoiding the footprint of the previous building. The central part of of Trench 50 was truncated by a modern concrete drain that used to service the community centre. The area to the south had been subject to truncations following foundation removal and demolition activity to a depth of 1.20m below ground level. To the north of the drain made ground and hardstanding overlaid the natural clays with a further electrical cable which related to the RAF occupation of the site. There was no significant archaeology present in this trench.

5.2.3 Trench 51

Context	Brief description	Max depth (m)	Depth from ground surface (m)	Comments
5100	Made ground	0.20	0.00	Friable dark greyish brown silty clay with rooting leaf matter and frequent brick and concrete rubble from previous demolition activity
5101	Redeposited natural material levelling	0.50	0.20	Firm, yellowish orange sand and yellow and blueish grey clay dump deposits on West section of trench
5102	Made ground	0.50	0.20	Demolition rubble backfill of concrete brick and mixed soils on East section of trench
5103	Natural substrate	-	0.70	Natural firm blue grey and yellow clay with frequent limestone flecks and bands of brownish orange sand and gravels. Charmouth Mudstone and Cheltenham member sand and gravels. Truncated by modern services and demolition rubble from foundations of previous building on site. Natural rooting disturbance in south from adjacent trees.

Trench 51 (Figure 3 and Plates 7-10) was 23m in length and a maximum of 1m in depth, on a north – south alignment. It was originally located to the south of the building, orientated E-W but due to waterlogging, demolition activity, and existing services along the roadway, the trench was moved to evaluate the western limit of the development area and building footprint. The trench was placed between trees to the south and an existing substation to the north and measured 23m in length. The natural substrate, at 0.70m below the ground level, was overlaid by a series of made ground redeposited clay levelling material on the western section and demolition rubble in the eastern section. The natural ground had also got tree rooting in the southern end and was truncated by a modern drain adjacent to the community centre and foundations of the community centre building. There was no significant archaeology recorded in this trench.

6 Artefactual evidence

Recovery of artefacts was undertaken according to standard Worcestershire Archaeology practice (WA 2012). In the event, no artefacts were identified which were considered to be suitable for analysis, with all deposits relating to modern disturbance.

7 Environmental evidence

Environmental sampling was undertaken according to standard Worcestershire Archaeology practice (WA 2012). In the event, no deposits were identified which were considered to be suitable for environmental analysis.

8 Conclusions

Only modern truncations and modern deposits were observed in the evaluation trenches within Parcel H, similar to the results of the 2016 evaluation trench to the north. This demonstrates either that the Roman activity recorded in adjacent parcels did not extend into this area or was heavily truncated, if not completely removed by modern development.

The presence of the recently demolished building and low-lying wet ground required some movement of trenches. However it is considered that the final locations provide an adequate indication of the archaeological potential of undisturbed parts of the area and therefore the methods adopted allow a high degree of confidence that the aims of the project have been achieved. Conditions were suitable in all of the trenches to identify the presence or absence of archaeological features. It is considered that the nature, density and distribution of archaeological features provides an accurate characterisation of the development site as a whole.

9 Project personnel

The fieldwork was led by Graham Arnold, PCIfA, assisted by Elspeth Illiff, ACIfA.

The project was managed by Tom Rogers, MCIfA. The report was produced and collated by Graham Arnold. Specialist contributions and individual sections of the report are attributed to the relevant authors throughout the text.

10 Acknowledgements

Worcestershire Archaeology would like to thank the following for the successful conclusion of the project: Neil Wright (Associate Director, RPS Consulting), and Andrew Armstrong (Archaeological Planning Advisor to Gloucester City Council).

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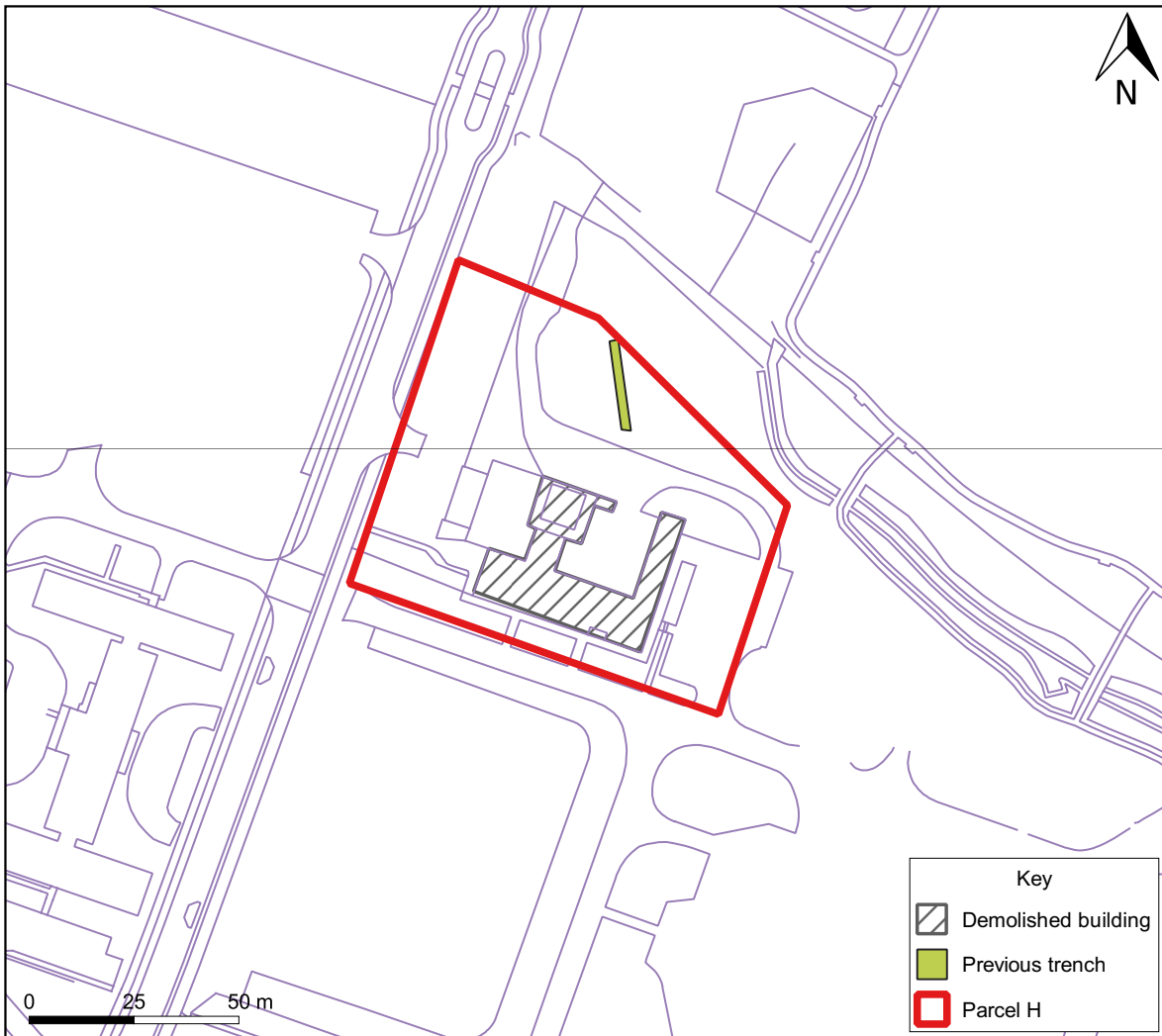
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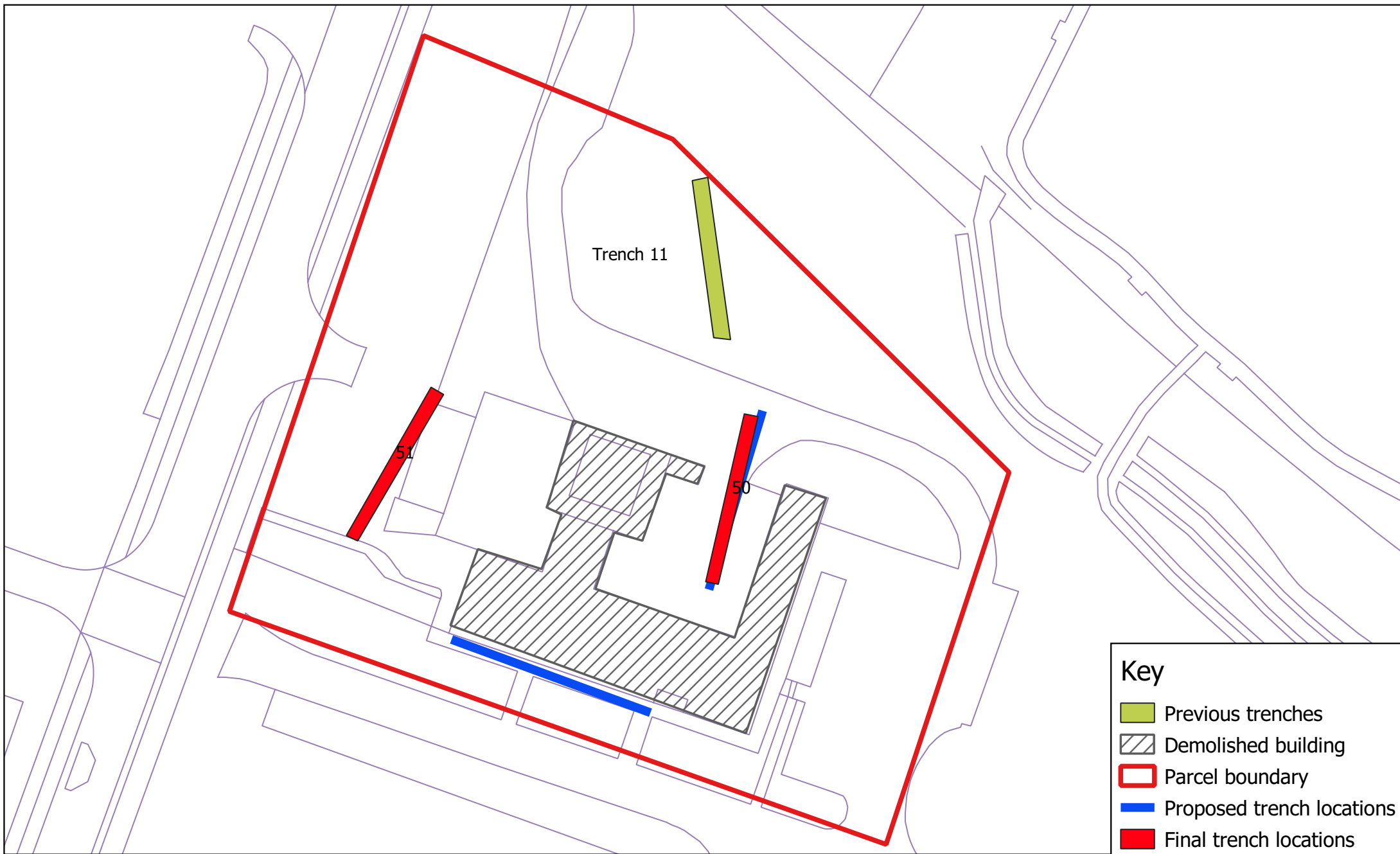
Figures



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Location of the site

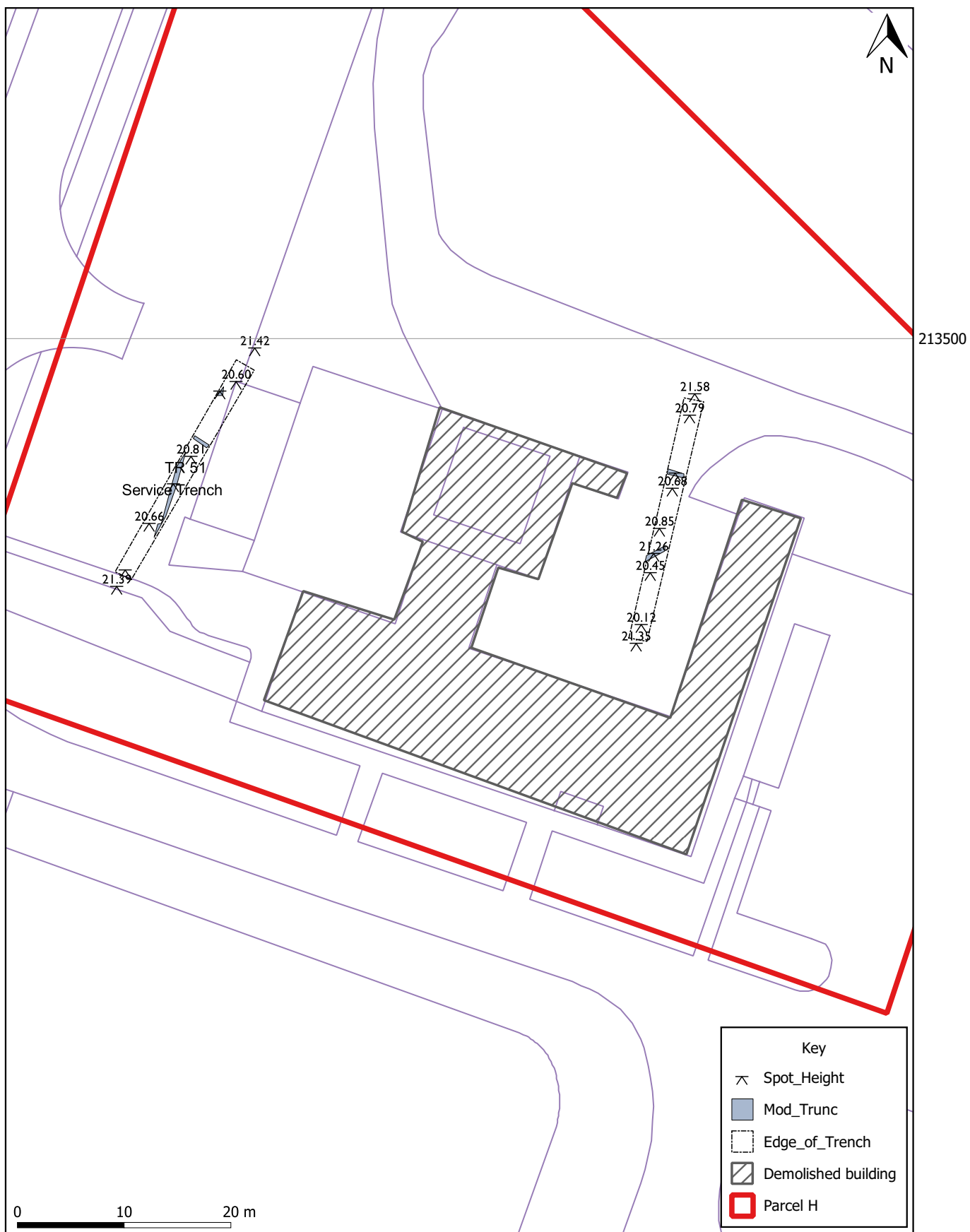
Figure 1



0 10 20 30 40 m



Proposed and final trench locations



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Parcel H Trench 50 and 51 plans showing modern truncations

Figure 3

Plates



Plate 1: Parcel H north prior to excavation, view northwest, no scales



Plate 2: Tr 50, view northeast, no scales



Plate 3: Tr 50, south end of trench showing modern demolition backfill view northeast, with 1m scale



Plate 4: Tr 50, view north, 1m scales with concrete drain at centre of trench



Plate 5: North end of trench 50, view northeast with 1m scales



Plate 6: Tr 50, view south, 1m scales



Plate 7: Tr 51, view south, 1m scales



Plate 8: Tr 51, view north, 1m scales



Plate 9: Tr 51, view northwest, 1m scales showing line of modern drain and levelling in western section of trench



Plate 10: Tr 51, view southeast, 1m scales showing modern truncations and demolition rubble



Plate 11: Tr 51, view north, no scales after backfilling with wet area to east



Plate 12: Tr 50 backfilled, view north, no scales

Appendix 1: Summary of project archive

TYPE	DETAILS*
Artefacts and Environmental	None
Paper	Context sheet, Diary (Field progress form),
Digital	GIS, Images raster/digital photography, Survey, Text

**OASIS terminology*

The project archive is currently held at the offices of Worcestershire Archaeology. Subject to the agreement of the landowner it is anticipated that it will be deposited at Gloucester City Museum.

Appendix 2: Summary of data for HER

No finds or environment evidence from the site