



HIGHWAY IMPROVEMENTS, ANGEL STREET, MANCHESTER

Archaeological Watching Brief



Oxford Archaeology North

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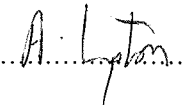
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SUMMARY

In January 2012, Manchester City Council requested that Oxford Archaeology North (OA North) submit a proposal for a programme of archaeological investigation on land flanking Angel Street, Rochdale Road and Miller Street in central Manchester. The archaeological work was required in advance of highways improvements and widening associated with the current regeneration of the area, which is focused on the Co-operative Group's new Headquarters Building.

The site is of considerable archaeological interest, as it forms one of the foci of Manchester's pioneering industrial areas. In particular, the area was occupied by various forms of workers' housing, which were established from the late eighteenth century onwards. The archaeological and historical significance of the below-ground remains of these buildings was demonstrated vividly in 2009 and 2012 during the archaeological excavations carried out as part of the enabling works for the construction of the Headquarters Building

In order to secure these interests, and following consultation with the Greater Manchester Archaeological Advisory Service (GMAAS), Manchester City Council attached a condition to planning consent for the proposed highways work. This condition required an archaeological watching brief to be maintained during construction works, in accordance with a Written Scheme of Investigation. The watching brief was intended to monitor any earth-moving works required by the proposed development, including the excavation of foundations, service trenches, and the removal of modern hard surfacing. The watching brief was carried out by Oxford Archaeology North (OA North) between March 2012 and February 2013.

The area monitored by the watching brief was almost devoid of surviving archaeological remains. Although the previous excavations uncovered considerable remains of workers' housing, the areas beneath the road and pavements had been heavily disturbed in the twentieth century by the installation of new sewers and services. The only features to survive below Angel Street was a brick-built drain, and fragmentary elements of the original stone flagged pavement. The excavations along Rochdale Road Miller Street, Corporation Street and the southern part of Dantzic Street were mostly of insufficient depth to reveal or affect any archaeological remains. However, a small pit excavated at the corner of Miller Street and Dantzic Street survived at a depth of only 250mm below the current road surface. If this is uniform within this part of the site, it could indicate little disturbance beyond the areas affected by services and, although the current excavation works were not carried out to a depth that would reveal any remains, it may be that archaeologically significant deposits survive undisturbed below this level.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Oxford Archaeology North (OA North) would like to thank Steve Mack, Highways Engineer with the Technical Services Group in Manchester City Council, and Craig Winter of Galliford Try, for logistical support.

The watching brief was maintained by Graham Mottershead, who also compiled the report. The illustrations were produced by Mark Tidmarsh, and the report was edited by Ian Miller, who was also responsible for project management.

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 CIRCUMSTANCES OF PROJECT

- 1.1.1 In January 2012, Manchester City Council requested that Oxford Archaeology North (OA North) submit a proposal for a programme of archaeological investigation on land flanking Angel Street, Rochdale Road and Miller Street in central Manchester. The archaeological work was required in advance of highways improvements and widening associated with the current regeneration of the area, which is focused on the Co-operative Group's new Headquarters Building.
- 1.1.2 The site is of considerable archaeological interest, as it forms one of the foci of Manchester's pioneering industrial areas. In particular, the area was occupied by various forms of workers' housing, which were established from the late eighteenth century onwards. The archaeological and historical significance of the below-ground remains of these buildings was demonstrated vividly in 2009 and 2012 during the archaeological excavations carried out as part of the enabling works for the construction of the Headquarters Building (OA North 2011; OA North 2013).
- 1.1.3 The proposed highways improvements would inevitably cause disturbance to existing ground levels and buried archaeological remains. In order to secure archaeological interests, Manchester City Council attached a condition to planning consent for the proposed works. Condition 15 stated:
- 'No development hereby approved shall commence until a programme of archaeological work in accordance with a written scheme of investigation for the following has been submitted to and approved in writing by the City Council as local planning authority'.
- 1.1.4 The Heritage Director with the Greater Manchester Archaeological Advisory Service (GMAAS), who provides archaeological planning advice to Manchester City Council, was consulted on the scope and extent of the required scheme of archaeological works. This allowed for an archaeological watching brief to be maintained during earth-moving works associated with the highway improvements. Following the formal approval of the written scheme of investigation, the watching brief was carried out by Oxford Archaeology North (OA North) intermittently between March 2012 and February 2013.

1.2 LOCATION AND GEOLOGY

- 1.2.1 The study area (centred on SJ 8433 9909) is situated on the northern fringe of the city centre (Fig 1). The site is flanked by Dantzic Street, Angel Street, Rochdale Road and Miller Street (Plate 1).
- 1.2.2 Topographically, the Manchester Conurbation as a region is within an undulating lowland basin, which is bounded by the Pennine uplands to the east and to the north. The region as a whole comprises the Mersey river valley, whilst the rivers Irwell, Medlock, and Irk represent the principal watercourses in Manchester (Countryside Commission 1998, 125).
- 1.2.3 The solid geology of the area comprises Carboniferous sedimentary material and a series of Permo-Triassic rocks, consisting mainly of New Red Sandstone. The overlying drift incorporates Pleistocene boulder clays of glacial origin, and sands, gravels, and clays of fluvial/lacustrine origin (Hall *et al* 1995, 8).



Plate 1: Recent aerial view of the study area

2. METHODOLOGY

2.1 WATCHING BRIEF

2.1.1 During the course of all earth-moving works associated with the development works, a programme of field observation recorded the location, extent, and character of all surviving archaeological features and deposits.

2.1.2 All information was recorded stratigraphically with accompanying documentation. Photography was undertaken with digital cameras. Photographic records were also maintained on special photographic *pro-forma* sheets.

2.2 FINDS

2.2.1 The Written Scheme of Investigation allowed for finds' recovery and sampling programmes to be carried out in accordance with best practice (following current Institute for Archaeologists' guidelines), and subject to expert advice in order to minimise deterioration. However, no artefacts were recovered during the watching brief.

2.3 ARCHIVE

2.3.1 The results of all archaeological work carried out will form the basis for a full archive to professional standards, in accordance with current English Heritage guidelines (*Management of Archaeological Projects*, 2nd edition, 1991). The original record archive of project will be deposited with the Museum of Science and Industry in Manchester.

2.3.2 The Arts and Humanities Data Service (AHDS) online database *Online Access to index of Archaeological Investigations* (OASIS) will be completed as part of the archiving phase of the project.

3. HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

3.1 HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

- 3.1.1 The study area lies within the area known as Angel Meadow, which was located in the vicinity of the Church of St Michael. The area was developed in the second half of the eighteenth century with a new burial ground consecrated in 1787, to the north of St Michael's Church, which was built in 1788. The church was planned originally as a 'carriage church', which wealthy Mancunians could drive to from the city. However, with the purchase of the land by the Overseers of the Poor of Manchester in 1786 for the burial ground, and the absorption of this area into the city, the church instead predominantly served the new working-class population in the area (Gregory 2006; Groundwork nd). The burial ground comprised a mass burial pit for the poor, which has been estimated to contain 40,000 unmarked inhumations. The pit was full by 1816, after which this open area became notorious for activities such as cock-fighting and gambling. In the 1820s and 1830s some areas of the former burial ground were dug up and sold as fertiliser to local farms. In the 1850s it was flagged over to prevent further illegal excavations, and the area became known subsequently as St Michael's Flags (*ibid*).
- 3.1.2 Angel Meadow had a large Irish population, as a result of the Potato Famine of 1846-51, which caused people to move from Ireland to Manchester to look for work. The mills provided employment for thousands of people and Angel Meadow, with its common lodging houses and cellar dwellings, was one of the cheapest areas to live (Gregory 2006, 14-5). However, as with other areas of cheap accommodation in Manchester, Angel Meadow was massively overcrowded with very poor provision of water, drainage and sanitation. As a result, the area was vulnerable to outbreaks of disease, which spread rapidly through this densely populated area. There were cholera epidemics in Manchester in 1832, 1849, 1854 and 1866, with Angel Meadow being particularly badly affected in 1849. There was also an outbreak of tuberculosis and typhus from 1849-51 (Nevell 2008, 161).
- 3.1.3 St Michael's Flags was provided with children's playground equipment in the 1880s in an attempt to improve the area. The playground is famously depicted in Lowry's painting 'Britain at Play' from 1943 (Gregory 2006; Groundwork nd). Angel Meadow remained one of the worst slums in Manchester throughout the nineteenth century, however, and as late as 1897, when slum clearance was underway in other areas, it was described in a report to the Manchester Statistical Society as 'a grievous blot on our municipal policy' (cited in Hartwell 2001, 289).

3.2 ANGEL STREET

- 3.2.1 Schole's trade directory of 1794 lists several businesses on Angel Street, such as a shuttle-maker, a baker, a butcher, a block-maker, fustian-cutters and shops. However, none can be placed within the study area with any confidence, as the listings are not numbered. The 1820s and 1830s trade directories have some listings for the streets within the study area, although precisely where these buildings were located is again not always clear.
- 3.2.2 The rate books from 1801, 1811 and 1822 (MCL/MFRB 11; MCL/MFRB 12; MCL/MFRB 13) were consulted for any information on the occupants of the study area prior to the census records. However these were found to be of limited use as they only provided the rent payer's names, not their occupations or house numbers.
- 3.2.3 The first census available is from 1841, but is of limited use as it is of fairly poor quality and house numbers were not recorded within the schedule. Also, if there were cellar dwellings at this time, they are not listed as separate entries. The census for 1851 is badly damaged and is consequently illegible in places, although house numbers are listed next to the entries. The 1861 census records several lodging houses on Angel Street.
- 3.2.4 According to an article printed in the *Manchester Guardian* in 1870, the standard price for 'accommodation' in a lodging house in this area was three pence per night (for a half-bed – bed allocations and sleeping partners were sorted out on a first come first served basis). The article states that it was common for former public houses which had lost their licence to be turned into lodging houses (*Manchester Guardian*, 16 February 1870). A subsequent article provided a description of housing conditions on Angel Street:
- 'Here too the property is in the most neglected state. We will take two adjoining houses, both of which are registered, as fair illustrations. In both of these the wet streams through their roofs, and in one we could actually see through a large whole into the open air...In the back yard the only access to the privy is by crawling over the ash pit, and when there is neither door nor seat. About four-feet from the kitchen window is a slaughter house-registered too, we presume, by the local authority...No repairs have been done for a long time, and the only notice of the complaints made has been to raise the rent. A year or two ago the weekly rent was 6s 6d; it was then raised to 7s 3d; it is now 7s 6d. This rent is not called for, but has to be taken every Saturday morning to the landlord, who, we were informed, but we hope erroneously, is a member of the Town Council' (*Manchester Guardian*, 23 February 1870).
- 3.2.5 A further report that was printed over a year later, and reported some improvements to Angel Street since the earlier articles: 'New and decent privies have been built; houses have been pulled down to make way for them; and the streets are kept in very much better condition' (*Manchester Guardian*, 6 April 1871). It is not clear if the improvements made to Angel Street were a direct result of the reports in the *Manchester Guardian*, or were a result of the 1868 the Artisans' and Labourers' Dwellings Act, which provided for the improvement or demolition of sub-standard housing (Parkinson-Bailey 2000).

- 3.2.6 An examination of the indexes to council proceedings for the years 1915-1952, held by Manchester Central Library, did not reveal an episode of slum clearance within which the study area was included. Slum clearance was taking place on a large scale across Manchester at this time however, with 8616 houses within clearance areas, and 155 individual houses demolished in the period from September 1933 to the end of 1942 (Manchester Medical Officer of Health Report Vol 1939-47). In addition, 2708 houses were demolished 'without formal action' in the same time period. Together this resulted in the clearance of 11,479 houses and the displacement of 45,352 people (*ibid*). The study area is therefore highly likely to have been effected by this, a theory supported by the fact St Michael's Church was demolished in 1935, possibly due to the lack of a congregation (Gregory 2006, 23-4).
- 3.2.7 Extensive air raids took place across Manchester on the 22 and 23 December 1940. These are thought to be the air raids which destroyed Arkwright's Mill to the south-east of the study area (Gifford, 2007, 6). The fire records for 1939-40 (MCL/MI/37) were checked in order to confirm this, although the reports do not give street by street detail of the damage. The records stated that over the course of the December air raids there were over 700 fires in Manchester, which meant that the fire crews worked constantly for two-three days. This widespread level of destruction probably explains why individual areas were not singled out for comment in the reports.
- 3.2.8 The Town and Country Planning Act of 1944 permitted Manchester Town Planning Committee to make compulsory purchases of areas it wished to redevelop. One area comprised '6.61 acres of land bounded by Miller Street, Rochdale Road, Angel Street, and Dantzic Street, of which 4.38 acres have been cleared. In addition, nearly half an acre has been cleared under the Housing Acts and only seven buildings remain on the site. The area has been zoned for general industrial development' (*Manchester Guardian*, 18 September 1946).

4. WATCHING BRIEF

4.1 INTRODUCTION

- 4.2.1 The watching brief was maintained during all excavation works required for the scheme of highway improvements (Fig 2). Much of these works necessitated only very shallow excavation shallow, and did not expose the top of *in-situ* archaeological remains across most of the areas examined (Plates 2 - 4). The deeper excavations along Angel Street, Aspin Lane and Dantzic Street, moreover, revealed that modern service trenches and sewers had destroyed most of the remains below the roads and pavements within these areas.



Plate 2: Depth of excavation along Angel Street, looking south-east

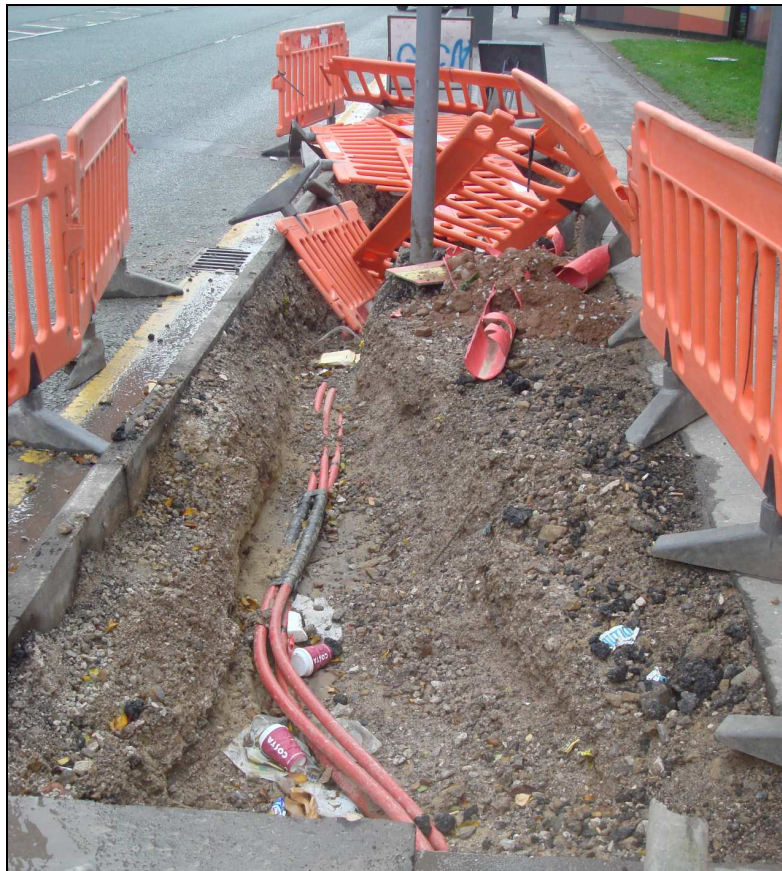


Plate 3: Exposed services along Miller Street, looking north-west



Plate 4: Exposed services along Style Street, looking south-west

- 4.2.2 Alongside Rochdale Road, from the corner of Angel Street to the corner of Miller Street, a 50m section of original road kerbing (Feature 1) was revealed. This was exposed *c* 3m into the current road from the modern kerb, and was exposed at a depth of 250mm (Plate 5). It comprised a line of 250 x 150mm sandstone sets running parallel to the modern kerb for *c* 50m. No original road surface was visible beyond the kerbing, and no original pavement remained. The size and form of the stone sets was consistent with an early to mid-nineteenth-century construction date.



Plate 5: Original kerb on Rochdale Road, looking south

- 4.2.3 A trench excavated next to the outer south-west wall of the Angel public house, situated close to the junction of Angel Street with Rochdale Road, revealed what appeared to be an original stone flag pavement surface (Feature 2), situated at a depth of 210mm below the current pavement. This comprised 50mm thick stone flags on a gravel bedding with mixed rubble and hardcore below (Plate 6).
- 4.2.4 The excavations along Angel Street uncovered a brick structure (Feature 3) cut into the natural clay geology at a depth of 1.4m below the modern ground surface. This was a 2.1m long section of 700mm wide brick culverted drain, which was aligned north-east/south-west (Plate 7). A narrower, 440mm wide stone-capped brick drain with a 440mm square brick gulley connected into the culverted drain at a point *c* 2m to the south-east. The bricks all appeared to be machine made, measured 230 x 110 x 75mm, and were bonded with a hard, dark grey mortar, indicative of a late nineteenth-century construction date.



Plate 6: The original pavement adjacent to The Angel, looking east



Plate 7: Stone-capped drain, looking north-east

5. DISCUSSION

- 5.1 The area of Angel Street and Dantzic Street was almost devoid of surviving archaeological remains. Although the previous excavations uncovered considerable remains of workers' housing, the areas beneath the road and pavements had been heavily disturbed in the twentieth century by the installation of new sewers and services. The only feature to survive below the road, a brick culverted drain, was revealed at a depth of 1.4m below the modern ground surface. The rest of the area appeared to have been excavated to below this depth previously, and was mass filled with a mixed rubble which can be assumed to come from the cellared building destroyed by the laying of these sewers and other services. The only other remains from the Angel Street area of the site was the original stone flagged pavement (Feature 2) below the current pavement. This only survived immediately against the wall of the Angel public house, a place that probably did not have services below it, but had been removed by services less than 300mm from the pub wall.
- 5.2 The excavations along Rochdale Road were mostly of insufficient depth to reveal or affect any archaeological remains. The kerbing (Feature 1) observed alongside the modern road was at a depth of only 250mm. The lack of remains of the pavement beside this kerbing may indicate that the stone flags had been removed during the initial widening of Rochdale Road.
- 5.3 The road widening works along Miller Street, Corporation Street and the southern part of Dantzic Street similarly revealed no archaeological remains. Much of the works in these areas were not of sufficient depth to reveal or affect any remains. The road sides contained a large number of services which would have destroyed any remains along their route. A small pit excavated at the corner of Miller Street and Dantzic Street showed natural clay at a depth of only 250mm below the current road surface at this point. If this is uniform within this part of the site, it could indicate little disturbance beyond the areas affected by services and, although the current excavation works were not carried out to a depth that would reveal any remains, it may be that archaeologically significant deposits survive undisturbed below this level.

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ILLUSTRATIONS

FIGURES

Figure 1: Location map

Figure 2: Location of watching brief area superimposed on an extract from the Ordnance Survey 60": 1 mile map of 1848

Figure 3: Areas of watching brief

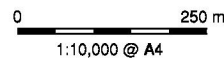
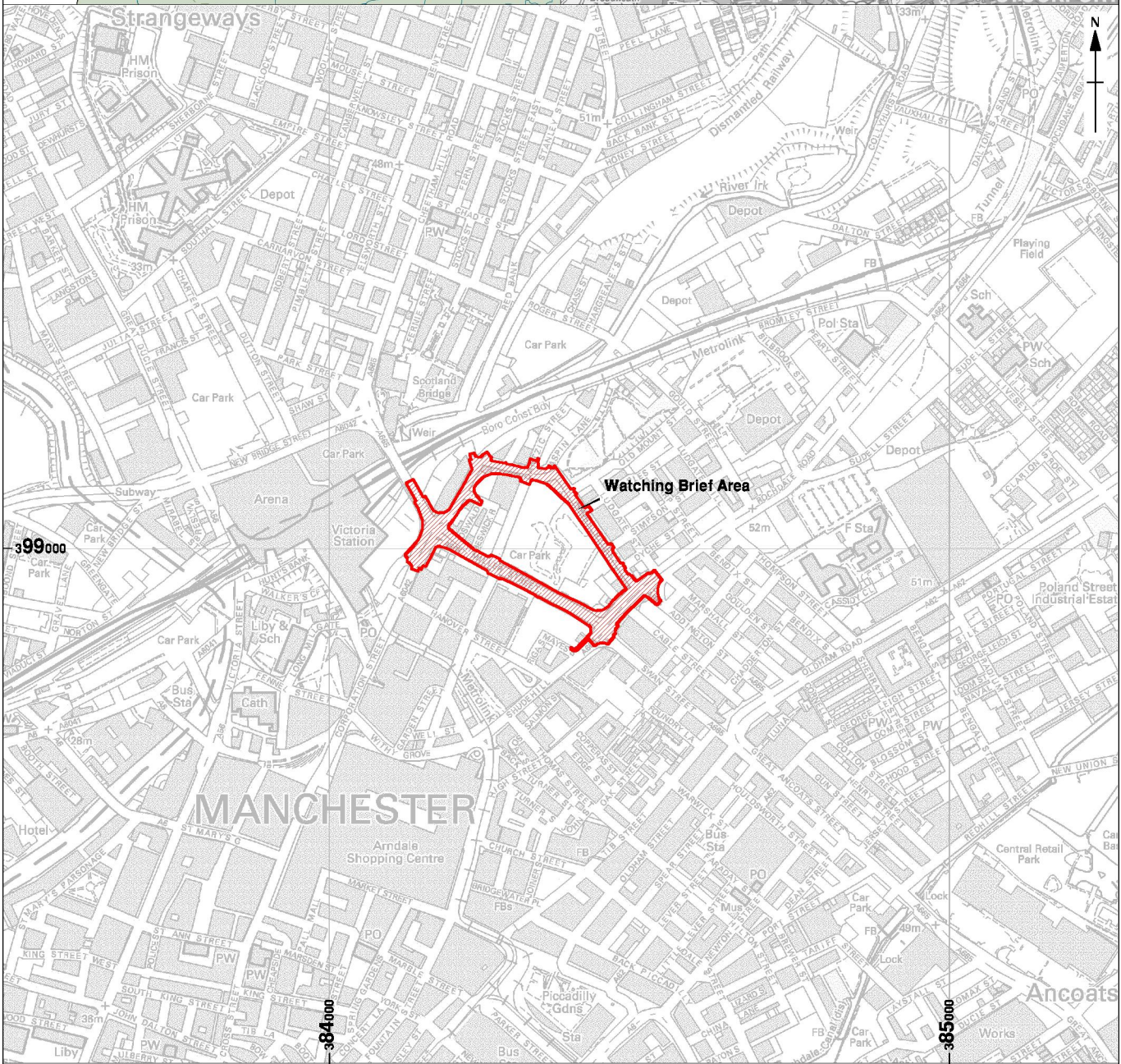
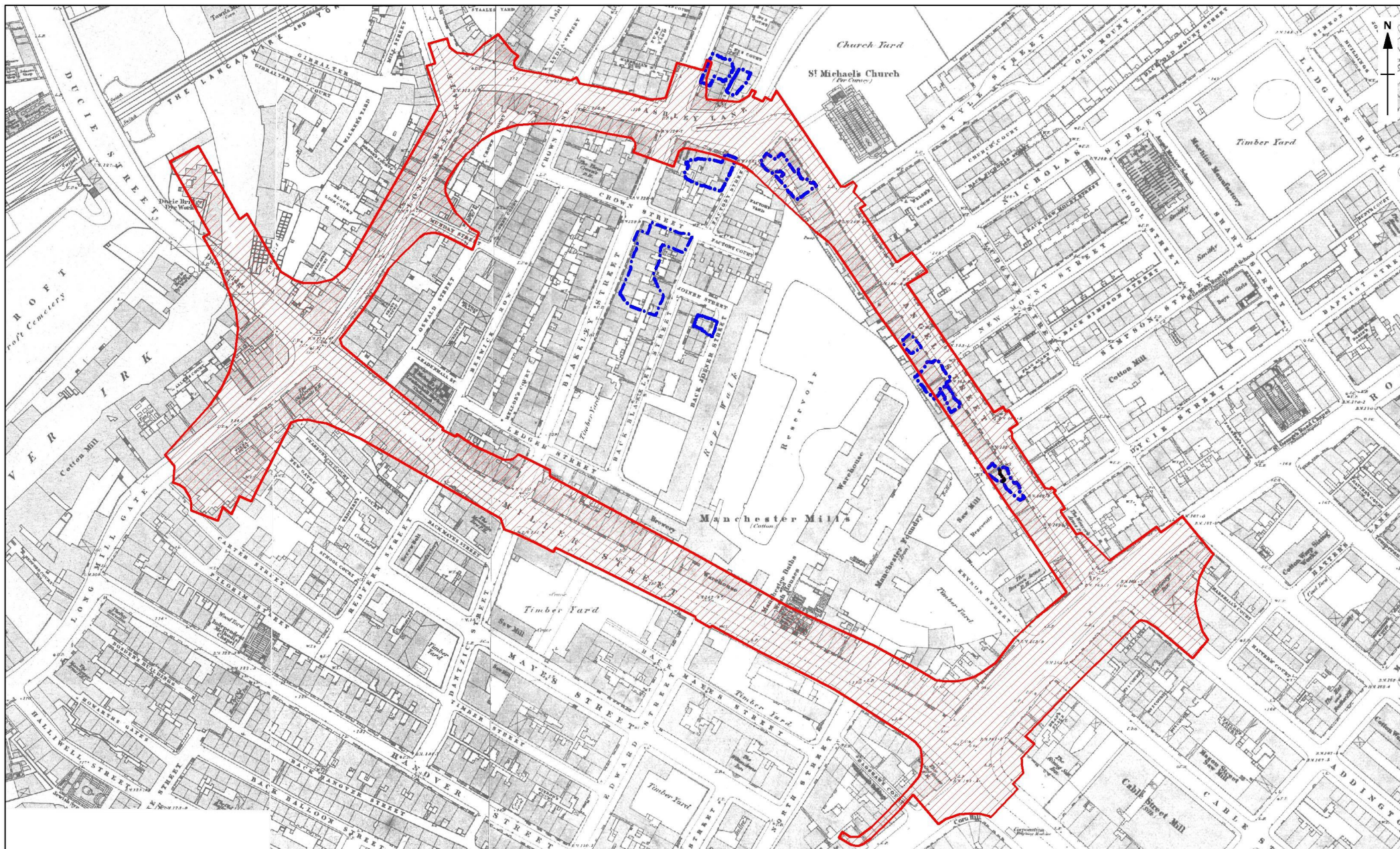




Figure 1: Site location



-  Previous excavations (2009 and 2012)
-  Watching brief area

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Figure 2: Location of watching brief area superimposed on an extract from the Ordnance Survey 60" to 1 mile map of 1848

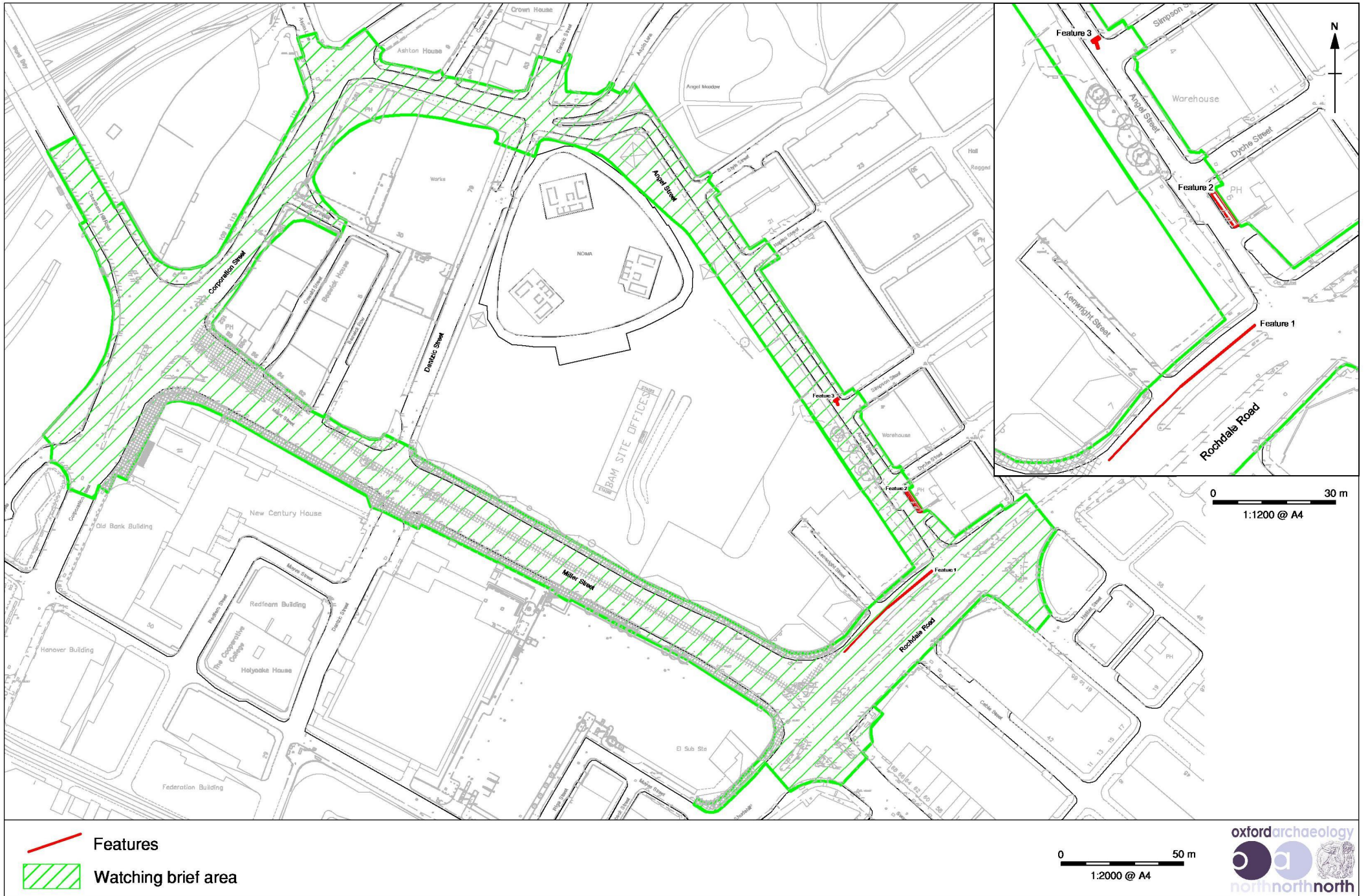


Figure 3: Areas of watching brief