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SUMMARY

In June 2007, Building Design Partnership (BDP) commissioned Oxford Archaeology North (OA North) to carry out an archaeological desk-based assessment of an area known as Snow Hill in Nantwich, Cheshire (centred at SJ 6496 5254). The study area lies on the fringe of the historic core of the medieval town centre, and incorporates known buried archaeological remains of considerable importance. Previous archaeological work at Snow Hill and the surrounding area has demonstrated that this part of Nantwich contains well-preserved buried remains of Roman and medieval date, representing one of the most important archaeological sites in the county outside of Cheshire.

The desk-based assessment has concluded that there are no known archaeological sites within the proposed Scheme Area that may be considered as being of National importance, which would merit preservation *in-situ*. However, it has been demonstrated that the Scheme Area has a considerable potential to contain buried archaeological remains of Regional/County significance. In particular, waterlogged remains of Roman and medieval salt-working activity may survive across the site, although these are likely to be beneath a thick deposit of made ground, providing an opportunity for their preservation *in-situ*. Any damage or destruction of these deposits as part of the proposed development would require a robust archaeological mitigation strategy and, wherever possible, engineered solutions should be designed to avoid a negative impact on areas of high archaeological potential.

It is anticipated that a limited programme of predetermination archaeological evaluation will be required to inform and support a planning application for the development of the site. The scope and specification of any such archaeological recording would be devised in consultation with the Historic Environment Planning Officer for Cheshire. The primary objectives of any such evaluation would be to establish the presence, character, date and extent of any buried archaeological remains. This would be targeted upon areas of the Scheme Area for which there is currently insufficient data to allow for a prediction of the archaeological resource.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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The desk-based assessment was undertaken by Rebecca Briscoe, with the drawings produced by Marie Rowland. The project was managed by Ian Miller, who also edited the report.

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 CIRCUMSTANCES OF PROJECT

- 1.1.1 In June 2007, Building Design Partnership (BDP) commissioned Oxford Archaeology North (OA North) to undertake an archaeological desk-based assessment of an area known as Snow Hill in Nantwich, Cheshire. The study area lies on the fringe of the historic core of the medieval town centre, and incorporates known buried archaeological remains of considerable importance. The principle aim of the assessment was to identify, as far as possible, the nature and significance of the sub-surface archaeological resource within the study area, and to establish the impact of development upon this resource.
- 1.1.2 The desk-based assessment comprised a search of both published and unpublished records held by the Cheshire Historic Environment Record (HER) and the Cheshire County Record Office in Chester, and the archives and library held at OA North. In addition, a rapid site inspection was carried out on the site of the proposed development, in order to relate the landscape and surroundings to the results of the desk-based assessment. This report sets out the results of the desk-based assessment along with a gazetteer of major sites. The report also includes a statement of the archaeological potential and significance (defined by the criteria detailed in PPG 16 (DoE 1990)), in which an assessment of the impact of the proposed development on the historic environment is taken into account.

2. METHODOLOGY

2.1 DESK-BASED ASSESSMENT

2.1.1 The assessment has focused on the site of the proposed development, referred to hereafter as the Scheme Area, although information for the immediate environs has been considered in order to provide an essential contextual background. The assessment was carried out in accordance with the guidelines provided by the Institute of Field Archaeologists (IFA 1996). The principal sources of information consulted were historical and modern maps, although published and unpublished secondary sources were also reviewed. The following repositories were visited during the data-gathering process:

- **Cheshire Historic Environment Record (HER):** the Cheshire HER holds data on the historic environment for the entire county, including Listed Buildings, all known archaeological sites, along with the location and results of previous archaeological interventions in a linked GIS and database format. The HER was consulted to establish the extent of sites of archaeological and historic interest within the study area;
- **Cheshire Record Office (CRO), Chester:** holds an extensive series of mapping for Nantwich as well as a collection of secondary sources about the town. All available Ordnance Survey maps for the study area were examined, covering the period from 1876 to 1992. In addition, a tithe map of 1846 and a detailed town plan of 1851 were also studied enabling the development of the study area to be traced over the past 150 years;
- **Cheshire County Council:** the Cheshire Historic Environment Planning Officer collates and summarises a list of archaeological interventions in the county each year that is readily available on the internet. Additionally, a themed newsletter of significant interventions, the *Cheshire Archaeology News*, is produced and distributed annually.
- **National Monument Record (NMR):** the NMR is a national resource that holds data on the historic environment from a variety of sources. Baseline data on sites and excavations can be accessed via their internet portal. The resource is complementary to the Cheshire HER and although the two databases may hold the same information for the most part, the NMR may sometimes contain additional sites, particularly those recognised from aerial photograph interpretation;
- **Oxford Archaeology North:** OA North has an extensive archive of secondary sources relevant to the study area, incorporating both published work and unpublished client reports.

2.1.2 All archaeological sites within the Scheme Area have been included in the Site Gazetteer (*Section 4, below*). The results were analysed using the Secretary of State's criteria for the scheduling of ancient monuments, outlined in Annex 4 of *Planning Policy Guidance 16: Archaeology and Planning* (DoE 1990).

2.2 ASSESSMENT METHODOLOGY

2.2.1 The results of the assessment have identified the significance of the archaeological resource of the Scheme Area. In order to assess the potential impact of any future development, consideration has been afforded to:

- assessing in detail any impact and the significance of the effects arising from any future development of the Scheme Area;
- reviewing the evidence for past impacts that may have affected the archaeological sites of interest identified during the desk-based assessment;
- outlining suitable mitigation measures, where possible at this stage, to avoid, reduce, or remedy adverse impacts.

2.2.2 Such impacts on the identified archaeological sites may be:

- positive or negative;
- short, medium or long term;
- direct or indirect;
- reversible or irreversible.

2.2.3 Key impacts have been identified as those that would potentially lead to a change to the archaeological site. Each potential impact has been determined as the predicted deviation from the baseline conditions.

2.2.4 Table 1 shows the sensitivity of the site scaled in accordance with its relative importance using the following terms for the cultural heritage and archaeology issues, with guideline recommendations for a mitigation strategy.

Importance	Examples of Site Type	Mitigation
National	Scheduled Monuments (SMs), Grade I and II* Listed Buildings	To be avoided
Regional/County	Conservation Areas, Registered Parks and Gardens (Statutory Designated Sites), Grade II Listed Buildings Sites and Monuments Record/Historic Environment Record	Avoidance recommended
Local/Borough	Sites with a local or borough archaeological value or interest Sites that are so badly damaged that too little remains to justify inclusion into a higher grade	Avoidance not envisaged
Low Local	Sites with a low local archaeological value Sites that are so badly damaged that too little remains to justify inclusion into a higher grade	Avoidance not envisaged
Negligible	Sites or features with no significant archaeological value or interest	Avoidance unnecessary

Table 1: Criteria used to determine Importance of Sites

- 2.2.5 The impact is assessed in terms of the sensitivity or importance of the site to the magnitude of change or potential scale of impact during any future redevelopment scheme. The magnitude, or scale of an impact is often difficult to define, but will be termed as substantial, moderate, slight, or negligible, as shown in Table 2.

Scale of Impact	Description
Substantial	Significant change in environmental factors; Complete destruction of the site or feature; Change to the site or feature resulting in a fundamental change in ability to understand and appreciate the resource and its cultural heritage or archaeological value/historical context and setting.
Moderate	Significant change in environmental factors; Change to the site or feature resulting in an appreciable change in ability to understand and appreciate the resource and its cultural heritage or archaeological value/historical context and setting.
Slight	Change to the site or feature resulting in a small change in our ability to understand and appreciate the resource and its cultural heritage or archaeological value/historical context and setting.
Negligible	Negligible change or no material changes to the site or feature. No real change in our ability to understand and appreciate the resource and its cultural heritage or archaeological value/historical context and setting.

Table 2: Criteria used to determine Scale of Impact

- 2.2.6 The interaction of the scale of impact (Table 2) and the importance of the archaeological site (Table 1) produce the impact significance. This may be calculated by using the matrix shown in Table 3:

Resource Value (Importance)	Scale of Impact Upon Archaeological Site			
	Substantial	Moderate	Slight	Negligible
National	Major	Major	Intermediate/Minor	Neutral
Regional/County	Major	Major/Intermediate	Minor	Neutral
Local/Borough	Intermediate	Intermediate	Minor	Neutral
Local (low)	Intermediate / Minor	Minor	Minor/Neutral	Neutral
Negligible	Neutral	Neutral	Neutral	Neutral

Table 3: Impact Significance Matrix

- 2.2.7 The impact significance category for each identified archaeological site of interest will also be qualified, and recommended mitigation measures will be provided, where possible at this stage, to impacts that are of moderate significance or above; any measures to reduce any impact will be promoted in the report. It is also normal practice to state that impacts above moderate significance are regarded as significant impacts. It is important that the residual impact assessment takes into consideration the ability of the mitigation to reduce the impact, and its likely success.

- 2.2.8 It is also considered important to attribute a level of confidence by which the predicted impact has been assessed. For the purpose of this assessment, the criteria for these definitions are set out in the table below.

Confidence in Predictions	
Confidence Level	Description
High/Certain	The predicted impact is either certain, <i>ie</i> a direct impact, or believed to be very likely to occur, based on reliable information or previous experience, and may be estimated at 95% chance or higher.
Medium/Probable	The probability can be estimated to be above 50%, but below 95%.
Low/Unlikely	The predicted impact and its levels are best estimates, generally derived from the experience of the assessor. More information may be needed to improve the level of confidence, which can be estimated using the present information at above 5% but less than 50%.
Extremely Unlikely	The probability can be estimated at less than 5%.

Table 4: Impact Prediction Confidence

- 2.2.9 It should be noted that this report is concerned specifically with the sub-surface archaeological resource within the Scheme Area. The heritage of the built environment has been assessed in a separate report (Architectural History Practice 2006), which should be consulted in conjunction with the present document.

2.3 SITE VISIT

- 2.3.1 The study area was subject of a site visit to assess the information pertaining to the baseline conditions, and to relate the past landscape and surroundings to that of the present. Additional information on the sites of significance and an understanding of the potential environmental effects has been added to the Site Gazetteer (*Section 4, below*), where appropriate.

3. BACKGROUND

3.1 LOCATION, TOPOGRAPHY AND GEOLOGY

- 3.1.1 The study area is located in the historic market town of Nantwich, Cheshire (centred at SJ 6496 5254), and lies some 30km south-east of Chester and 6km south-west of Crewe. Nantwich lies on an extensive low-lying tract of boulder clay, known as the Cheshire Plain, which separates the hills of North Wales and the Peak District of Derbyshire. The solid geology of the area comprises the Keuper marl, which is overlain by boulder clay and glacial deposits of sand and gravels (Countryside Commission 1998, 148-9). The Keuper marl contains the salt beds from which natural brine was derived (Hains and Horton 1969, 69-72). This mineral attribute was a key factor in the early development of Nantwich, with salt production from the natural brine springs providing the foundation for its economy from the Roman period through to the nineteenth century (McNeil 1983, 40-42, Connelly and Power, 2005, 34). Snow Hill itself is the source of a natural brine spring, which currently feeds the outdoor public swimming pool within the study area.
- 3.1.2 The study area is currently mostly used as parking space, with much of the riverside land demarcated in the local plan as flood plain (Crewe and Nantwich Borough Council 2005). The natural topography across part of the Scheme Area is masked by a considerable deposit of made ground, which was laid down since the late nineteenth century.
- 3.1.3 Archaeological investigations within the Scheme Area and the immediate vicinity have demonstrated that the thick layer of made ground overlies waterlogged deposits, which contain highly significant archaeological remains.

3.2 HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

- 3.2.1 The following section provides an historical context to the present study, and is considered by period as detailed in Table 5 below. Information has been compiled with particular reference to its implications for the historic environment of the Snow Hill area. Key sites are summarised in the Gazetteer of Sites with numbers given in brackets (*Section 4*) and are mapped on Figure 2. Additionally, the locations of all archaeological interventions mentioned in the text are shown on Figure 3.

Period	Date Range
Palaeolithic	30,000 – 10,000 BC
Mesolithic	10,000 – 3,500 BC
Neolithic	3,500 – 2,200 BC
Bronze Age	2,200 – 700 BC
Iron Age	700 BC – AD 43
Romano-British	AD 43 – AD 410
Early Medieval	AD 410 – AD 1066
Late Medieval	AD 1066 – AD 1540
Post-medieval	AD 1540 – c1750
Industrial Period	cAD1750 – 1901
Modern	Post-1901

Table 5: Summary of British archaeological periods and date ranges

- 3.2.2 **Prehistoric Period:** there is no known evidence for activity in Nantwich during the prehistoric period (Cheshire County Council 2003a, 3), although there is some indirect evidence for activity in the wider area. In particular, ceramic salt containers have been discovered at Beeston Castle, and other sites of late-prehistoric date in North Wales are believed to have originated in this part of Cheshire (*ibid*).
- 3.2.3 Whilst salt would presumably have been an important commodity for prehistoric communities, no evidence has yet been discovered that points to the exploitation of Nantwich's salt springs in the pre-Roman period. In particular, excavations at Kingsley Fields in 2001-2, and in Snow Hill car park in 2004, did not produce any evidence for pre-Roman activity in two key salt manufacturing areas of the town. However, these archaeological investigations may not have been deep or extensive enough to reveal any prehistoric remains. In addition, the excellent waterlogged preservation of the archaeological sites already investigated indicates that survival of remains from this period is a strong possibility.
- 3.2.4 **Roman:** the Roman period in Cheshire is relatively well documented, notably from archaeological investigations at Chester, Middlewich and Northwich, although, as with much of the North West region, the thrust of research has been generally towards the military aspects of the period (Philpott 2006, 59). However, as Philpott highlights, the presence of the Roman military is evident not only by the remains of the forts themselves, but by the network of roads, supply chains, non-military settlement, and industrial activity (*op cit*, 71).
- 3.2.5 Although the HER records several find spots of Roman material around Nantwich, archaeological evidence for Roman activity in the area was sparse until. Amongst several antiquarian coin and artefact finds, and the

identification of the Nantwich to Middlewich Roman road surviving as an earthwork (Margary 1957, 304-5), early indications of the industrial nature of Roman activity in Nantwich were provided by the discovery of two lead salt pans near Kingsley Field Farm in the 1880s. Excavations during the 1970s at the Crown Hotel in the town centre produced a large number of Roman pottery fragments (Williams 1975; McNeil 1981), indicating significant activity on the east bank of the river Weaver (Connelly and Power 2005, 33). Further evidence for Roman activity was provided in 1985 by the discovery of a timber-lined pit, perhaps intended for holding brine, in St Annes Lane (Fig 3; McNeil 1987, 287-8), and excavations in the mid-1990s revealed a second-century ditch to the south of Welsh Row (Earthworks 1997-8).

- 3.2.6 The most extensive evidence for Roman activity in Nantwich, however, was obtained from archaeological excavations carried out in 2001-2 at Kingsley Fields (Connelly and Power 2005). The remarkable levels of waterlogged preservation on the site led to the recovery of two large brine storage tanks and several wicker-lined pits, along with associated wooden artefacts including a bucket and several large spades or paddles, which firmly attested the early second-century origins of Nantwich's salt industry, and a parallel development of cattle processing and leatherworking industry in the area during the third century (Connelly and Power 2005, 38-9). It was concluded that this part of the town had formed as industrial quarter to the Roman settlement.
- 3.2.7 The Kingsley Field excavations delimited the northern and western extents of the Roman industrial area to the west of the river Weaver, although the southern and eastern extent of Roman activity in the town remains unknown. (Connelly and Power 2005, 40). It has been suggested that this industrial activity was controlled by the Roman military, raising the question of a fort in the vicinity (*ibid*). A watching brief in the Snow Hill car park during the laying of foundations for a new electricity substation in 2004 confirmed the presence and preservation of a substantial second-century Roman structure within the present Scheme Area (Reid 2004).
- 3.2.8 **Early Medieval:** interpreting the Early Medieval period in the North West region as a whole is challenging, with the combined problems of limited archaeological evidence and investigation, with a period that typically lacks the abundant material culture and 'diagnostic artefactual evidence' when compared with the Roman or Medieval periods (Higham 1986, 242-3).
- 3.2.9 The physical evidence for activity in Nantwich during the Early Medieval period is scarce, although one artefact, an eighth-century horsemount, is recorded as having been discovered in fields near the town by the HER (CSMR181). The Kingsley Fields excavations show that the industrial activity on the site was in decline by the second half of the third century. However, one could suggest that the importance of salt as a commodity might have sustained some production activity in the town during this period. Higham has suggested that the royal estate at Acton, of which Nantwich was historically a part, may have been created in the post-Roman period specifically to control the saltworkings (1993, 143-5). However, despite the documentary evidence, the location and extent of Early Medieval settlement at Nantwich remains unknown (Cheshire County Council 2003a, 4).

- 3.2.10 **Late Medieval:** the emergence of Nantwich as an urban centre during the period is closely linked with its dominance as a centre for salt production, leading to the development of a densely occupied commercial core around the market centres and High Street, incorporating Pepper Street, Beam Street, Hospital Street and Pillory Street, and a network of salt-trading routes to other towns (Cheshire County Council 2003a, 4). Evidence for the salt industry itself is clear by the time of the Domesday survey of 1087, which records eight salt houses in Nantwich (Morris 1978, 268), despite the town having been laid waste by the anti-Norman rebellion of 1069-70 (Cheshire County Council 2003a, 4). Whether the Domesday survey refers to Snow Hill itself or an area to the west of the River Weaver is a matter for debate, but it seems likely that the salt industry would have originated close to the Snow Hill brine spring (NGR SJ 4960 2430).
- 3.2.11 By the fourteenth century, the principle streets of the town had assumed their present layout, focusing on the central market place and St Mary's Church. Although the town bridge is not thought to have been built until the fourteenth century (Cheshire SMR), a recent watching brief confirmed the presence of a medieval timber trackway below Welsh Street (Mark Leah pers comm) verifying the antiquity of this route.
- 3.2.12 Some indication of the wealth of the town is given by the foundation of St Nicholas' Hospital in 1285 and a second children's hospital in 1354 (Gifford 1995). The economy of the town at this time was still largely dependent upon a thriving salt industry; 65 salt houses are recorded as being destroyed by fire in 1306 (Whatley 2004). Archaeological evidence indicates that the area around Wood Street to the west of the river Weaver was a planned industrial area during the medieval period. A series of excavations, commencing with McNeil's work in 1979-80, has revealed remarkable preservation of waterlogged organic remains relating to the industry across the area (*Section 3.4* below). Examples of excavated material from this period include two twelfth- to sixteenth-century salt houses, with associated hearths and wooden 'ships' for containing the brine during processing, but interventions such as those off second Wood Street in 2001, 2003, and 2005 have also produced a wealth of evidence for medieval domestic activity (M Leah pers comm).
- 3.2.13 Although no upstanding remains are visible today, Nantwich castle was an important defensive structure in the early part of the medieval period. Built by William Malbank for his brother Piers about 1160 to 1170, the castle served as a look-out point and a defence against Welsh attack from the west (Whatley 2004). The castle served its purpose until 1282, when the Welsh were conquered. After that it became a ruin, and the stones were reused to build a chapel dedicated to the life of John de Kyngeslegh at St Mary's Church in the mid-fifteenth century (*ibid*). Evidence for the moat of the castle has subsequently been uncovered in excavations at Bower's Row car park (Gifford 1995).
- 3.2.14 The medieval street plan within the present study area has been almost completely lost through later activity, although as McNeil (1983, 42) asserts, the main brine spring emerges on Snow Hill making it the obvious location for the original and later salt works. Despite the lack of excavated evidence, the

natural resources required for salt extraction are identically if not preferentially available within the bounds of the present study area, and it is expected that the focus of the medieval, and perhaps earlier, industry, could lie on Snow Hill between the known 'industrial suburb' and the market centre.

- 3.2.15 **Post-medieval:** although the threat of invasion from the Welsh had long since subsided, Nantwich was not spared its share of turmoil in the post-medieval period. During the English Civil War, Nantwich was the only town in Cheshire to declare for Parliament, and consequently it was besieged several times by Royalist forces. The final, six-week long, siege was lifted following the victory of the Parliamentary forces in the Battle of Nantwich on January 26, 1644 (Whatley 2004). In 1583, Nantwich was once again destroyed by a fire which began in a *wich* house off Water Load with 150 buildings razed including 30 shops and two barns according to the Wilbraham family diary (Cheshire County Council 2003a, 6).

After the civil war, industry in Nantwich continued to thrive. The salt extraction industry in Nantwich peaked in the late sixteenth century, when there was a total of 216 salt houses in the town. These were group closely along both sides of the river Weaver, with a particular concentration known the area of First, Second and Cross Wood Streets as shown on the 1624 Survey of the Walling Lands of Nantwich which defines the area of the town occupied by salt houses in the medieval period. The industry declined thereafter, due largely to the discovery and subsequent mining of rock salt at Northwich (McNeil 1983, 68). However, the last salt works in Nantwich didn't close until in 1856.

- 3.2.16 In addition to the well documented salt working, documentary and archaeological evidence has highlighted the increasing importance of cattle processing during the medieval period. It has been shown that that in 1580 there were 15 shoe-makers and 10 glove-makers in Nantwich, which had increased to 38 and 16 respectively by 1609 (Whatley 2004). At the height of the industry in the mid-nineteenth century, the census records up to one third of the working population were employed in the cattle processing trades with skilled professions including currier, fellmonger, cordwainer, skinner, tanner, clicker, closer, stabber, riveter, boot binder, harnessmaker, glovemaker, last and tree maker, leather dealer, saddler (*ibid*).
- 3.2.17 Details of this later period in Nantwich's development are abundant, but of particular relevance to the last 150 years' development of the Snow Hill area is the historic mapping, discussed in detail below. The lack of substantial growth of the town beyond it's medieval bounds is notable however, especially in comparison to other local settlements like Crewe (Cheshire County Council 2003, 18).

3.3 MAP REGRESSION ANALYSIS

3.3.1 Detailed mapping of Nantwich covers a period of 156 years, with the earliest Town Plan compiled by the Ordnance Survey in 1851. In this section the cartographical history of the town is examined with respect to its post-medieval and modern development.

3.3.2 ***Ordnance Survey Town Plan, 1851:*** despite only covering the southern part of Snow Hill, this plan is a particularly important source for examining the extent of redevelopment of the earlier salt production suburb a century after the industry began to decline. The town plan shows the southern part of Snow Hill to be an area of mixed municipal, industrial, and private land use. Adjacent to the river, a small salt works is depicted with its brine pit (later known as Old Biot) and engine house (Site 1). Immediately to the north of this are the Public Baths and Police Station (Sites 2 and 3) while the area to the south adjacent to Welsh Row (and location of the later town hall) is shown as open ground. Land to the north west of the police station is enclosed, but appears to be garden or park.

Along the street frontages of Swine Market and Cart Lane are several commercial buildings, including three public houses and a smithy (Sites 4). Properties depicted to the north of the area are set back from the main thoroughfares and have large external areas with stylistic trees indicating that these were gardens rather than yards, perhaps indicative of private, residential occupation at this time. Their layout is suggestive of burgage plots, however the only mapping early enough to confirm this (the 1624 survey) does not show this area.

3.3.3 The map also shows development of the street frontage along the southern part of Wall Lane, but open areas to the north illustrate that the street frontage had not yet extended beyond SJ 6504 5251 on the western side of the road. The eastern frontage of Wall Street appears to have been more industrial in use at this time, with a tannery and tanning pits (Site 5) and timber yard (Site 6) on the corner with Swine Market. The island between Swine Market and Oat Market is depicted as fully covered in buildings (Site 7). Also shown is the town bridge across the river Weaver (Site 8), which was built in 1803 as a replacement to earlier crossings dating from the fourteenth century

3.3.4 To the south of Welsh Row is another larger salt works, Welsh Bridge Salt Works (Site 9), fronting onto Water Lode with its coal yard adjacent to the river. Directly opposite this, on the east bank of the river is a small area of buildings including a pub, fronting Welsh Row. Further to the south and within the bounds of the Snow Hill study area, is an area of fields bounded on the left by a gas works (Site 10), and to the south by the western arm of the river Weaver.

3.3.5 To the north, First Wood Street and Welsh Row show a similar level of street frontage development, with several public houses including the Three Pigeons, The Foresters Arms, and the Swan with Two Necks. Along the west bank of the river Weaver are a row of privies presumably associated with domestic properties fronting onto First Wood Street.

- 3.3.6 **Ordnance Survey 1st Edition, 1876:** the next available map of Nantwich, surveyed in 1876, shows some significant changes within the study area. While the extent of development along the western side of Wall Lane is similar to the 1851 map, it can be seen that the eastern side of the lane was further developed along the street frontage. A saw pit (Site **11**) marked just outside the study area, indicates a continuation of the industrial function depicted on the previous map. Some change of function in the southern part of Snow Hill is evident, with the removal of the salt works (Sites **1** and **9**) and construction of a new Town Hall (Site **12**) adjacent to Nantwich Bridge.
- 3.3.7 The biggest changes evident from this map, however, occurred within the southern part of the study area, to the west of the river. Redevelopment of the open ground to the east of the gas works (Site **10**) had taken place, with the construction of a row of terraced houses (Site **13**) backing onto the gas works. It is likely that these houses were associated with expansion of the works and the provision of more adequate housing in the area following the cholera outbreak of 1849.
- 3.3.8 **Ordnance Survey 2nd Edition, 1889:** the southern part of the study area is shown on the next edition of Ordnance Survey mapping to have continued through the intervening years with the construction of a new building associated with the gas works, fronting onto St Anne's Lane. Additionally, there has been some change to the property boundaries in the remaining open ground in the area to the east of the terrace of houses (Site **13**).
- 3.3.9 In the southern part of Snow Hill, few changes are evident beyond the infilling of plots around the Town Hall and old police station near the river. In particular, the new buildings of the brine and medicinal baths (Site **14**) built in 1883, are mapped to the north of the Town Hall. The northern part of Snow Hill remains undeveloped at this time with the Wall Lane frontages little changed from the previous editions.
- 3.3.10 **Ordnance Survey 3rd Edition, 1910:** the early twentieth-century mapping shows little change in the Snow Hill area, with street and building patterns virtually identical to the 1889 edition. In the southern part of the study area, however, significant changes have occurred in the area of the gas works. The terrace of houses erected in the mid-nineteenth century has been demolished and further industrial buildings, including a second gasometer have been erected on the site, expanding the gasworks eastward towards the river.
- 3.3.11 **Ordnance Survey, 1970:** the 1970 map shows the scale of redevelopment of the Snow Hill area in the mid-twentieth century. The earlier street pattern in the southern part of Snow Hill is obliterated along with most of the buildings, and replaced by a car park. Only a handful of buildings on the river's edge and the eastern side of Wall Lane remain.
- 3.3.12 Additionally, the northern part of Snow Hill is developed for the first time with the construction of the brine pool and associated buildings (Site **15**) and contemporary development of the Wall Lane frontage to the east. The Welsh Row / Swine Market frontage has been redeveloped with a row of commercial units.

- 3.3.13 The southern part of the study area has once again witnessed substantial change with most of the gas works buildings mapped on the 1910 edition having been removed, and the gasworks site shown as enclosed for the first time.
- 3.3.14 ***Ordnance Survey 1st Edition, 1988:*** by 1988 the gas works (Site 10) has been removed completely, leaving the southern part of the study area as open ground. A large extension to the swimming pool and contemporary access road from Welsh Row have also been constructed, while Wall Lane has been obstructed to vehicles from the south by bollards. The construction of the access road has necessitated the removal of the surviving buildings in the south-west corner of the Snow Hill area, including the Town Hall.
- 3.3.15 With the exception of the relief road along the east of the river and the change of use of the gasworks site to a car park, there have been no significant alterations to the character of the study area since the 1988 map.

3.4 ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND

- 3.4.1 A list of archaeological interventions carried out within the present Scheme Area and its environs is reproduced below, with summaries from the Cheshire HER, NMR, and Cheshire County Council's Archaeology Fieldwork Summary, prepared by Mark Leah. The location of these interventions is shown on Figure 3.
- 3.4.2 ***Geophysical Survey of Land to the North of Welsh Row, 2002:*** an area of geophysical survey was undertaken by GeoQuest between Nantwich swimming pool and the river as part of a wider survey in advance of the development of a new housing estate at Kingsley Fields. Gradiometry survey revealed an area of strongly magnetised material, interpreted as a thick deposit of rubble make up; this material extended across the present Scheme Area.
- 3.4.3 ***Trial Trenching in advance of the Construction of the Relief Road, 2003:*** four archaeological trial trenches were excavated within the present Scheme Area in advance of the construction of the relief road for the Kingsley Fields development. The trenches varied in depth from 1.8m to 3.10m deep, and uncovered evidence for a layer of modern make up used to consolidate the site in the mid-twentieth century. Although no archaeological deposits were encountered, one trench revealed evidence for 0.5m of buried soil overlaying alluvial silts, indicating some level of historic anthropological activity on the site.
- 3.4.4 ***Land at Snow Hill Car Park, 2004:*** waterlogged deposits containing worked timbers were recovered from the present Scheme Area at depths of between 0.8m and 3.75m during an archaeological watching brief in 2004. Analysis of the timbers concluded that the earliest of these were Roman in date, suggesting that remains similar to those encountered during the recent excavations at Kingsley Fields are also present in this part of the town, adding to the evidence for a major Roman settlement at Nantwich on both sides of the river (Leah 2007).

- 3.4.5 **National Westminster Bank, 1974-1976:** excavation in advance of an extension adjacent to the Crown Hotel recorded medieval and later activity (NMR summary).
- 3.4.6 **Crown Car Park, 1978:** excavation of possible castle site (NMR summary).
- 3.4.7 **First Wood Street, 1979-1980:** an excavation was undertaken in advance of redevelopment of two medieval salt or *wich* houses adjacent to the river Weaver. Evidence of a well preserved, highly organised industrial suburb was uncovered.
- 3.4.8 **Plank Tank, St Anne's Lane, 1985:** salvage recording of a probable Roman brine filtering tank discovered during foundation works (NMR).
- 3.4.9 **Bowers Row Car Park, 1994-1995:** area excavation following an evaluation in 1994 revealed features relating to both the medieval castle and a culvert forming part of the 'Lothburne', the main town sewer referred to in documents from the fourteenth to sixteenth centuries. (Leah 2007).
- 3.4.10 **Land off Second Wood Street, 2001 and 2003:** an archaeological evaluation was carried out on land either side of Second Wood Street, off Welsh Row, Nantwich. This encompassed land to the rear of The Cheshire Cat, a seventeenth-century timber-framed building and a part of the street frontage. Welsh Row originated as a medieval suburb, and was at the heart of Nantwich's medieval and post-medieval salt industry. The site was very wet and organic preservation was exceptional with timber barrels, plank-lined channels, and the remains of timber-framed buildings all recognised. The site sequence appears to extend from the medieval period through to the eighteenth century, with evidence for both domestic and industrial (salt making) activity. In 2003, further excavations were carried out in advance of redevelopment. The site proved to contain over 3m of organic deposits, all of which contained fragments of animal bone and medieval pottery. It was, however, the upper part of this deposit which contained the main archaeological remains, which included wood and other organic material due to the waterlogged conditions. These were associated with the salt-making industry and appeared to date to the later medieval and early post-medieval period. The main features included a row of six barrels in a timber channel and, from an earlier phase, a huge hollowed-out log. These were probably used as cisterns for the storage of brine, prior to evaporation. The remains of several timber buildings were also recovered, together with collections of pottery, leather, and individual items such as a wooden bowl and a pewter dish (Leah 2007).
- 3.4.11 **The Cheshire Cat, Welsh Row, 2002:** a watching brief was undertaken during the excavation of a new cellar to the rear of the timber-framed seventeenth-century building. The cellar was excavated through a deep deposit of organic material, which included a number of wooden artefacts, probably connected with the salt industry, and leather offcuts. The finds are currently being conserved (Leah 2007).
- 3.4.12 **Land at Kingsley Fields, Feb 2002:** excavation work at Kingsley Fields by the University of Manchester Archaeological Unit revealed an extensive

Roman settlement complex extending over more than 1ha. The site, which appears to have been linked to the Roman road network by a spur off the Whitchurch to Middlewich road, produced evidence of timber buildings, extensive areas of pitting, cremation burials, and areas of burning. The site was extremely wet and many of the features were waterlogged and preserved organic material, including leather, wooden off cuts, and wattle linings to the pits (Leah 2007).

- 3.4.13 ***Land at Mill Street, 2003:*** an archaeological evaluation of land off Mill Street was carried out prior to the submission of a planning application for the redevelopment of the site, which lies close to the site of Nantwich's medieval castle in an area where well-preserved waterlogged deposits have been detected during several previous investigations. A large east/west-aligned ditch was recognised immediately to the north of Mill Street, and it is suspected that this was connected with the castle defences (Leah 2007).
- 3.4.14 ***The Cottage, Kingsley Fields, 2003:*** the Cottage lies on the presumed line of the Roman road identified during the excavations at Kingsley Fields, and close to the large cistern excavated during the same project. Evaluation of the site uncovered Roman pits and gullies (Leah 2007).
- 3.4.15 ***The Lamb Hotel, Hospital Street, 2003 and 2004:*** an archaeological evaluation of this site revealed the presence of deep, organic-rich deposits across the site. These extended back to at least the medieval period as dendrochronological dates from some of the wood preserved on the site produced dates spanning the late thirteenth to early fourteenth centuries. The design of the new building was modified subsequently in order to secure the preservation *in-situ* of the bulk of the archaeological deposits. The new building had been designed to minimise the disturbance of these remains, and excavation was restricted to the ring beam of the new building and the excavation of a new lift shaft pit and the drain runs. Quantities of pottery and animal bone were recovered by the subsequent watching brief together with samples of the waterlogged deposits. Analysis of this material revealed that the accumulation consisted of burnt material and domestic refuse, which had continued to pile up in the medieval and early post-medieval town (Leah 2007).
- 3.4.16 ***Nos 1-5 Welsh Row 2004:*** deep waterlogged deposits were encountered during the construction of a rear extension at a property close to the town bridge. This work represented the first modern investigation on this side of the street, and confirmed that the eastern part of Welsh Row contains important well-preserved archaeological deposits on both its northern and southern sides (Leah 2007).
- 3.4.17 ***Land at Mill Street, 2004:*** an earlier evaluation had not detected significant archaeological deposits, apart from a substantial ditch running parallel to and extending under the northern side of Mill Street. This may be the ditch of Nantwich Castle, which would mean that the development lies within the castle bailey. Consequently, a precautionary watching brief was maintained during the excavation of the basement parking area. This did not reveal any new features, but did allow further examination of the ditch (Leah 2007).

- 3.4.18 ***The Three Pigeons Inn, Welsh Row, 2005:*** the Three Pigeons site was evaluated in connection with proposals to construct a large extension to the rear of the existing building and trenching revealed the expected deep organic deposits. Medieval and post-medieval wooden structures were encountered in all three trenches. In addition, a further medieval salt ‘ship’ was encountered. In this instance, detailed discussions with the developers concerning the siting of piles and the depth of the ring beam ensured that the deposits could be preserved *in-situ*. A watching brief was maintained during construction to ensure the successful implementation of the mitigation strategy. The results of the work will be incorporated in the report that is currently being prepared for publication on the adjacent Second Wood Street site (Leah 2007).
- 3.4.19 ***The Burgess Site, St. Anne’s Lane, 2006:*** excavation of an extensive area on the south side of Welsh Row followed an earlier programme of desk-based assessment and evaluation. This had confirmed the presence of archaeological deposits on the site, particularly of Roman date, although medieval and post-medieval deposits were also present. More extensive excavation revealed an area of Roman activity on higher ground, immediately to the rear of the properties fronting the south side of Welsh Row. These overlooked a low-lying area to the south and east, which was within the flood plain of the river Weaver and contained deep accumulations of waterlogged organic material, within which were several Roman features. The most notable feature was a thick clay surface, which extended beyond the northern limits of the excavation and measured c 3m by 4m. It was set into the natural sand to a depth of c 0.4m, and contained several pronounced linear discolourations on the surface of the clay. These were not the result of burning, but may indicate a demolished superstructure. Other features of Roman date included pits, gullies, and a section of road. A precise function for the clay surface cannot be given at present but it seems certain that it represents an element of the extensive area of Roman industrial activity at Nantwich, which is now known to extend over a large area on the east and west banks of the Weaver (Leah 2007).
- 3.4.20 ***Nantwich Town Football Club, Kingsley Fields, 2006:*** monitoring of topsoil stripping and supervised metal detecting was carried out during the construction of new facilities for the football club on a greenfield site immediately to the north of Kingsley Fields. Examination of the stripped area did not reveal any features of Roman date, confirming that the previous work had accurately defined the northern limits of Roman activity. Metal detecting, however, recovered nearly 400 pieces of metal from the topsoil. These dated to all periods, but included a significant amount of lead waste, much of which may derive from lead tanks known to have been used for the boiling of brine in the Roman period. A complete example of a tank of this type was recovered from the nearby Kingsley Fields Farm in the 1980s (Leah 2007).

4. GAZETTEER OF SITES

Site Number	1
Site Name	Snow Hill Salt Works
SMR Number	4251/7/0, 4251/7/1
Site Type	SALT WORKS, BRINE PIT, INDUSTRIAL SITE
Period	Nineteenth Century
NGR	SJ 4961 2439
Description	Salt Works marked on the 1:528 Ordnance Survey Town plan of Nantwich with its engine house. In 1882 it was cleaned out to supply brine to the newly erected Medicinal Baths.
Assessment	The sub-surface remains of the salt works are likely to have been significantly damaged by the construction of an access road in the mid-20th century. However, the site lies within the scheme area and could be affected by changes to the infrastructure as part of the proposed development. Additionally, furthering our understanding of the decline of the brine industry during the post-medieval period is noted as a priority for archaeological work (Cheshire County Council, 2003, 21) therefore any remains on this site are potentially significant in achieving this aim.

Site Number	2
Site Name	Public Baths to rear of Police Station, Snow Hill
SMR Number	
Site Type	MUNICIPAL BUILDING
Period	Nineteenth Century
NGR	SJ 4960 2453 SJ 4970 2462
Description	Public Baths marked on the 1851 Ordnance Survey Town Plan of Nantwich. Presumably later superseded by the spa baths (Site 14).
Assessment	The sub-surface remains of the public baths are likely to have been significantly damaged by the construction of an access road in the mid-20th century. However, the site lies within the scheme area and could be affected by changes to the infrastructure as part of the proposed development.

Site Number	3
Site Name	Police Station, Snow Hill
SMR Number	
Site Type	MUNICIPAL BUILDING
Period	Nineteenth Century
NGR	SJ 4970 2462
Description	Police Station marked on the 1851 Ordnance Survey Town Plan of Nantwich.
Assessment	The sub-surface remains of the police station are likely to have been significantly damaged by the construction of an access road in the mid-20th century. However, the site lies within the scheme area and could be affected by changes to the infrastructure as part of the

proposed development.

Site Number	4
Site Name	Blacksmiths Workshop, Snow Hill
SMR Number	4251/32/0
Site Type	BLACKSMITHS WORKSHOP, INDUSTRIAL SITE
Period	Nineteenth Century
NGR	SJ 5029 2468
Description	Blacksmiths Workshop marked on the 1851 Ordnance Survey Town Plan of Nantwich.
Assessment	There are no upstanding remains of the smithy and it is likely that any shallow sub-surface remains have been damaged by later construction in the area. However, the site lies within the scheme area and could be affected by the proposed development.

Site Number	5
Site Name	Tannery, Wall Lane
SMR Number	4251/30/0
Site Type	TANNERY, TOWN, LEATHER WORKING SITE,
Period	Nineteenth Century
NGR	SJ 5053 2554
Description	A tannery building and 21 rectangular pits of varying sizes outside are shown on OS map of Nantwich, 1851. The building is still shown on the OS map of Cheshire, 1876 but is no longer marked as a tannery. The area is now part of Wyche County Primary School.
Assessment	There are no upstanding remains of the tannery, however parts of the site have not been extensively redeveloped in the intervening years so sub-surface remains of this industrial site may be affected by the proposed development.

Site Number	6
Site Name	Timber Yard, Wall Lane
SMR Number	4251/4/0
Site Type	TIMBER YARD, INDUSTRIAL SITE
Period	Nineteenth Century
NGR	SJ 5052 2471
Description	Timber Yard marked on the 1851 Ordnance Survey Town Plan of Nantwich.
Assessment	There are no upstanding remains of the timber yard and sub-surface remains are likely to have been disrupted by the construction of the retail unit currently occupied by Kingsley Carpets. The site lies within the scheme area but is unlikely to be affected by the proposed development.

Site Number	7
Site Name	Buildings, Oat Market
SMR Number	
Site Type	BUILDING
Period	Post-medieval
NGR	SJ 5046 2423
Description	Buildings shown on the 1851 Ordnance Survey Town Plan of Nantwich between Swine Market and Oat Market. High density construction.
Assessment	There are no upstanding remains of these building and any sub-surface remains will lie beneath the current road and are therefore unlikely to be impacted by development on Snow Hill.

Site Number	8
Site Name	Nantwich Bridge, Welsh Row
SMR Number	179/45/0
Site Type	BRIDGE, BRIDGE, TOWN
Period	Medieval - Post-medieval
NGR	SJ 4950 2390
Description	Grade II listed bridge built in 1803. This replaced a previous stone bridge of 1664, which itself replaced an earlier timber bridge. The earliest reference to the town bridge dates from AD 1398-9, when a licence was granted to hold divine service St. Anne's chapel 'on or against' the bridge, and it is mentioned again in 1438-9 when four shops are recorded 'on or against' the chapel. It was described in 1622 as a '...strong timber bridge over the stream of the Weaver which is maintained by the town, which requires no little care and cost by reason of the monstrous carriage of the wood in carts which is brought thither for the boiling of the salt'. Present structure is a single span stone arch with stone balustrade and cornice under modillions.
Assessment	The town bridge lies within the proposed scheme area and is an important landmark of considerable historic value, as reflected by its legally protected status. Additionally, it has been recognised that the importance of furthering our understanding of the origins of river crossing is a priority for archaeological work (Cheshire County Council, 2003, 21).

Site Number	9
Site Name	Welsh Bridge Salt Works
SMR Number	4251/20/0, 4251/20/1, 4251/20/2, 4251/20/3,
Site Type	PAN HOUSE, SALT WORKS, INDUSTRIAL SITE
Period	Nineteenth Century
NGR	SJ 4988 2370
Description	Salt Pan House marked on the 1:528 Ordnance Survey Town plan of Nantwich. The site contains two salt stores [CSMR: 4251/20/2 and 4251/20/4], two pan houses [CSMR: 4251/20/1 and 4251/20/3], a straw store [CSMR: 4251/20/5] and a coal yard [CSMR: 4251/20/6].
Assessment	The site lies immediately adjacent to the scheme area and therefore

should not be affected by proposed works.

Site Number	10
Site Name	Gas Works, St Anne's Lane
SMR Number	4251/3/0, 4251/3/1, 4251/3/2, 4251/3/3, 4251/3/4,
Site Type	GAS WORKS, INDUSTRIAL SITE
Period	Nineteenth Century
NGR	SJ 4856 2321
Description	Gas Works marked on the 1:528 Ordnance Survey Town plan of Nantwich. There is also a Store House, [CSMR: 4251/3/1], a Coal House [CSMR: 4251/3/2], a purifying House [CSMR: 4251/3/3], a Lime House [CSMR: 4251/3/4] and two Gasometers or Gas Holders [CSMR: 4251/3/5 and 4251/3/6] marked. There is also an unknown building marked.
Assessment	The site occupies a large portion of the southern scheme area and therefore will be affected by proposed works. Parts of the site have been decontaminated and will be of negligible archaeological interest, however large portions of the site may still have remains of structures associated with the gasworks as well as earlier activity (see Site 21 and figure 10).

Site Number	11
Site Name	Saw Pit, Wall Lane
SMR Number	4251/26/0
Site Type	SAW PIT, INDUSTRIAL SITE
Period	Nineteenth Century
NGR	SJ 5054 2591
Description	Saw Pit first shown on the OS first edition 1:2500 of 1876.
Assessment	The site lies outside the scheme area and therefore should not be affected by proposed works.

Site Number	12
Site Name	Town Hall
SMR Number	
Site Type	MUNICIPAL BUILDING
Period	Nineteenth Century
NGR	SJ 5054 2591
Description	Town Hall first shown on the OS first edition 1:2500 of 1876.
Assessment	The sub-surface remains of the town hall are likely to have been significantly damaged by the construction of an access road in the mid-20th century. However, the site lies within the scheme area and could be affected by changes to the infrastructure as part of the proposed development.

Site Number	13
Site Name	Terraced Housing

SMR Number**Site Type** DOMESTIC BUILDING**Period** Nineteenth Century**NGR** SJ 4880 2309**Description** A row of terraced houses, constructed between 1851 and 1876 to the east of the Gas Works (Site 10). Probably associated with expansion of the works and the provision of more adequate housing in the area following the cholera outbreak of 1849.**Assessment** There are no upstanding remains of the terraced housing, however the location of this site bisects the southern scheme area and therefore will be affected by proposed works. Parts of the site have been decontaminated as part of the reclamation of the gasworks and will be of negligible archaeological interest, however large portions of the sub-surface remains of the terrace may survive, particularly at its northern extent

Site Number 14**Site Name** Brine and medicinal baths, Snow Hill**SMR Number** 179/52/0**Site Type** BATH HOUSE, SPA, TOWN**Period** Late Nineteenth Century**NGR** SJ 4960 2430**Description** A brine and medicinal baths were opened on Snow Hill in 1883 in an attempt to create a spa, in imitation of Droitwich who had opened similar baths in 1876.**Assessment** The sub-surface remains of the medicinal baths are likely to have been significantly damaged by the construction of an access road in the mid-20th century. However, the site lies within the scheme area and could be affected by changes to the infrastructure as part of the proposed development.

Site Number 15**Site Name** Nantwich Brine Swimming Pool**SMR Number****Site Type** MUNICIPAL BUILDING, SWIMMING POOL**Period** Mid-Twentieth Century**NGR** SJ**Description** Brine Swimming pool built in the 1960s and developed during the 1980s.**Assessment** The site lies within the scheme area and may be significantly affected by the proposed development.

Site Number 16**Site Name** Industrial site by the river Weaver, Nantwich**SMR Number** 180/0/4,**Site Type** CHARCOAL AREA, INDUSTRIAL SITE**Period** Late Medieval

NGR	SJ 4969 2645
Description	An excavation on the west bank of the river Weaver, to rear of the garden of No.12A Welsh Row, by Mr J Ray, revealed quantities of burnt timber and charcoal believed to be associated with the salt working nearby.
Assessment	The site lies within the scheme area but has been partly removed by excavation. There is a strong possibility that the site extends beyond the limits of Ray's investigation and therefore could be affected by the proposed development.

Site Number	17
Site Name	Pits on bank of River Weaver, Nantwich
SMR Number	180/0/5, 180/0/6,
Site Type	CHARCOAL AREA, INDUSTRIAL SITE
Period	Medieval – Post-medieval
NGR	SJ 49502440
Description	Over a number of years a series of pits alongside the east bank of the Weaver were excavated. They revealed quantities of structural timber and charcoal suggesting salt-making activities and also evidence for the two fires of Nantwich. Mr J Ray excavated a series of pits alongside the east bank of the Weaver from the Nantwich Bridge to SJ 6494 5247. This revealed quantities of structural timber and charcoal suggesting salt-making activities and evidence for the two fires of Nantwich.
Assessment	The site lies within the scheme area but has been partly removed by excavation. There is a strong possibility that the site extends beyond the limits of Ray's investigation and therefore could be affected by the proposed development.

Site Number	18
Site Name	Brine Pit and Saltworking Area, Snow Hill
SMR Number	180/1
Site Type	MOAT, BRINE PIT, INDUSTRIAL SITE
Period	Medieval
NGR	SJ 4960 2430
Description	The medieval brine pit on Snow Hill lies on the east bank of the river Weaver, and was defended by a moat on its eastern side. It is first mentioned in The Domesday Book when it was associated with 8 salthouses, but it was probably exploited back to Roman times. The brine pit was the main source from the salt-making industry throughout the medieval and post-medieval period. Though it later went into decline. In 1882 it was cleaned out to supply the newly erected Medicinal Baths. It is now capped and covered by grass. The brine was distributed by channels, pipes and aqueducts, to the salthouses. The medieval brine pit on Snow Hill lies 14ft east of the bank of the river Weaver, and was defended by a moat on its eastern side. It is first mentioned in Domesday when it was associated with 8 salthouses, but it was probably exploited back to Roman times. The

brine pit was the main source from the salt-making industry throughout the medieval and post-medieval period. Went into decline from then on. In 1882, cleaned out to supply the newly erected Medicinal Baths. Now capped and covered by grass, but still supplying Municipal baths. The brine was distributed by channels, pipes and aqueducts, to the salthouses. Jackson described the pit in 1669 as 7yds deep, though this was artificially high by 6ft, because of the accumulation of salt-making debris. By 1675, the brine was pumped from the pit.

Assessment This site is of high regional and local importance and lies within the scheme area. Although its precise extent is unknown, extensive sub-surface remains of this industry are to be expected in the organic waterlogged deposits on Snow Hill.

Site Number 19

Site Name Salt 'Ships', High Street

SMR Number 180/0/8

Site Type SALTERN, INDUSTRIAL SITE

Period Medieval – Post-medieval

NGR SJ 4980 2380

Description Observation during construction of a mains sewer running across the high street revealed 'black soil' to a depth of 12 feet with no evidence of undisturbed sub soil. The trench cut through 2 - 3 hollowed out tree trunks which are probably connected with the brine working industry. They were in good condition and contained straw, scraps of leather and what appeared to be a wooden shovel blade.

Assessment The site is a part of Site **18** and lies within the scheme area. Although it has been removed by excavation, there is a strong possibility that the site extends beyond the limits of previous investigation and therefore will be affected by the proposed development

Site Number 20

Site Name Salt-Making Industry

SMR Number 180/0/0

Site Type INDUSTRIAL SITE

Period Roman - Post-medieval

NGR SJ 4990 2410

Description Nantwich was the most important of the medieval inland salt-making towns in Cheshire and probably in England. The Domesday Book gives a very accurate picture of eleventh-century industry. In 1066, it contained a brine pit, eight demesne salthouses belonging to royalty and others held by commoners. Though part of the Parish of Acton, Nantwich was an important trading centre and gave its name to the Saxon hundred. There is archaeological evidence of the twelfth century industry, which suggests the Wood Street area West of the River Weaver was laid out as a planned industrial suburb, perhaps as an addition to the area around the brine pit. A sketch plan of the 'Wallingland' shows the maximum extent of the industry in 1624.

	Detailed analysis of this survey of has enabled a map of all the salt houses and their owners to be drawn and tentatively fitted to modern topography.
Assessment	This site is of high regional and local importance and lies within the scheme area. Although its precise extent is unknown, extensive sub-surface remains of this industry are to be expected in the organic waterlogged deposits on Snow Hill. Additionally, furthering our understanding of the brine industry during the Roman and Medieval periods is noted as a priority for archaeological work (Cheshire County Council, 2003, 21) therefore any archaeological remains are potentially significant in achieving this aim.

Site Number	21
Site Name	Medieval Saltworking Remains at Nantwich Gasworks
SMR Number	180/0/1
Site Type	SALTERN, INDUSTRIAL SITE
Period	Late Medieval
NGR	SJ 4910 2330
Description	Construction trial trenching in advance of reclamation of the Nantwich Gas Works revealed pieces of wattle hurdling and structural timbers below the gasworks waste. These are typical of the remains found at medieval saltworks in Wood Street. Quantities of post-medieval pottery were also collected from the site.
Assessment	The site is a part of Site 20 and lies within the scheme area. Although it has been partly removed by excavation, there is a strong possibility that the site extends beyond the limits of previous investigation and therefore will be affected by the proposed development.

Site Number	22
Site Name	Burnt Timber, Wood Street
SMR Number	180/0/9
Site Type	CHARCOAL AREA, SALTERN, INDUSTRIAL SITE
Period	Post-medieval
NGR	SJ 4940 2410
Description	Trial pits at the back of Wood Street, and on the east bank of the river Weaver (180/0/9), revealed large quantities of burnt timber and charcoal, presumably connected with brine working and/or one of the town fires.
Assessment	The site is a part of Site 18 and lies within the scheme area. Although it has been removed by excavation, there is a strong possibility that the site extends beyond the limits of previous investigation and therefore will be affected by the proposed development

Site Number	23
Site Name	Medieval Brine Pit, Snow Hill
SMR Number	178/1
Site Type	BRINE PIT, INDUSTRIAL SITE

Period	Medieval
NGR	SJ 4960 2430
Description	The medieval brine pit probably was also the source of brine in Roman times as well as happened in Droitwich. The pit was cleaned out and capped in 1882 and the surrounding area cleared in the 1960s. The place-name Nantwich is taken as Celtic in origin implying a pre-Roman use for the brine.
Assessment	Site falls within study area, but has been extensively altered in the Post-medieval and modern period. It is likely to be affected by the proposed development.

Site Number	24
Site Name	St.Anne's Chapel
SMR Number	179/46/0
Site Type	CHAPEL, TOWN
Period	Late Medieval
NGR	SJ 4940 2390
Description	St.Anne's chapel was first mentioned in 1398-9 when a licence was granted to hold divine service 'on or against' the bridge. There is some confusion as to whether the chapel stood on, or close to the bridge (the latin term used being 'super' which can mean either 'on or against'. The chapel is mentioned again in 1438-9 when there were 'four shops...on / against the bridge with the chapel'. There are references to a St. Anne's Croft beyond the west end of Welsh row, which was presumably land belonging to the chapel.
Assessment	Site has no upstanding remains but falls within study area. It's exact location and extent is unknown but and sub-surface remains may be affected by the proposed development

Site Number	25
Site Name	Wooden Posts / Props, Snow Hill
SMR Number	180/0/7
Site Type	INDUSTRIAL SITE
Period	Medieval – Post-medieval
NGR	SJ 5050 2560
Description	The construction of a deep shaft was watched in 1982. This went to a considerable depth through grey-black crumbly soil. Quantities of wood were found in the soil, some like posts or props. No finds made. In known area of salt-making, but no direct evidence of this.
Assessment	Site falls within study area. Although it has been removed by excavation, there is a strong possibility that the site extends beyond the limits of previous investigation and therefore may be affected by the proposed development

Site Number	26
Site Name	Post-medieval net sinkers
SMR Number	179/0/40

Site Type	TOWN
Period	Post-medieval
NGR	SJ 4900 2650
Description	Nine balls of fired clay each 67mm in diameter with a 10mm diameter perforation were found in a bend of the river Weaver below the water. Thought to be net sinkers of a recent date.
Assessment	Spot find falls within study area but is unlikely to have associated features which will be affected by the proposed development.

Site Number	27
Site Name	Medieval Salt Works, Wood Street Car Park
SMR Number	180/2
Site Type	POST HOLE, HEARTH, CISTERN, DRAIN,
Period	Medieval
NGR	SJ 4900 2460
Description	Excavations in advance of sewerage works in a car park between First Wood St & River Weaver revealed well preserved remains of two twelfth-century salt or wich houses. Of similar plan, and probably belonging to a regularly planned industrial suburb, they were of different construction. The Southernmost, No.1, was a wattle building with an entrance to the street and an open end to the river. Within the house were two storage tanks and two boiling areas. To the rear and in the open were two other storage areas. No.2 wich house was supported by posts along its side walls. One of the storage tanks of 'ships' (hollowed out tree trunk) survived intact. Also found were other items of wooden equipment, including salt rakes and a wicker barrow. Dating by dendrochronology shows construction was in late twelfth century. Wich house 1 was only short-lived, but No.2 survived for at least 300 years. Large groups of medieval pottery and good survival of leather and wooden items. No satisfactory parallels for these structures were found from Western Europe.
Assessment	Site falls within study area and is of regional and local importance. Although it has been removed by excavation, there is a strong possibility that the site extends beyond the limits of previous investigation and therefore will be affected by the proposed development. Extensive sub-surface remains of this industry are to be expected in the organic waterlogged deposits on the west bank of the River Weaver.

Site Number	28
Site Name	Regent House, 14 High Street
SMR Number	179/0/8
Site Type	TOWN HOUSE, TIMBER FRAMED BUILDING,
Period	Post-medieval
NGR	SJ 5040 2390
Description	Grade II listed three storey timber framed town house, with plastered infill. Probably built following the Great Fire of 1583. It now has modern shop fronts. It is of particular interest because the programme

of rebuilding, part funded Queen Elizabeth I, is very well documented.

Assessment This site is immediately adjacent to study area and therefore should not be affected by the proposed development.

5. SIGNIFICANCE OF THE REMAINS

5.1 INTRODUCTION

- 5.1.1 In total, 28 sites of archaeological interest have been identified within the proposed Scheme Area, and an additional 169 known sites lie in the immediate environs (Figure 2). None of the archaeological sites within the proposed Scheme Area have any legal designation. The area encompasses only one listed building - the town bridge (Site 8), with a further listed building, Regent House bordering the study area (Site 18).

Period	No of sites	Sites
Prehistoric	0	
Roman	1	20
Medieval	10	8,17,19,16,18,21,23,24,25,27
Post-medieval	15	1,2,3,4,5,6,8,9,10, 14,15, 26,22,28
Unknown	0	

Table 6: Number of sites by period

5.2 CRITERIA

- 5.2.1 There are a number of different methodologies used to assess the archaeological significance of sites; that to be used here is the ‘Secretary of State’s criteria for scheduling ancient monuments’ which is included as Annex 4 of PPG 16 (DoE 1990). The sites previously listed (Section 4, above) were each considered using the criteria, with the results below.
- 5.2.2 **Period:** it is considered likely that any buried archaeological remains that survive across the Scheme Area will pertain to the Roman, medieval, and post-medieval periods. It is probable that these remains retain important evidence for industrial activity, and are significant for all periods represented.
- 5.2.3 **Rarity:** physical evidence for Roman and medieval salt-working is extremely rare, and the concentration of such remains discovered in Nantwich reflects the remarkable anaerobic soil conditions across parts of the town, including the present Scheme Area. These waterlogged remains are of national rarity.
- 5.2.4 **Documentation:** the historical development of the study area from the nineteenth century can be traced reasonably well from cartographic sources, and can be enhanced by entries in commercial directories. Further documentary research may furnish additional evidence for the later post-medieval development of the area, including more precise dating of the construction of the relevant buildings, although this is unlikely to alter the outline presented in this assessment.
- 5.2.5 **Group Value:** any remains of Roman or medieval salt-working activity would have a high group value with other known remains in the wider area. Other types of Roman remains would be of especial interest if they provided evidence for the diversity of Roman occupation.

- 5.2.6 **Survival/Condition:** previous archaeological interventions within the present Scheme Area and the immediate vicinity have demonstrated the good survival of buried remains, which have been in remarkably good condition.
- 5.2.7 **Fragility/Vulnerability:** any buried remains within the Scheme Area are likely to lie at some depth below the modern ground surface, and are not considered to be fragile.
- 5.2.8 **Diversity:** the identified sites within the Scheme Area and its environs are diverse, and have several features of significance. These relate to industrial activity and domestic usage of the site.
- 5.2.9 **Potential:** all sites have the potential to reveal specific information that is not available from other sources. This potential is applicable to the Roman, medieval, and post-medieval periods.

5.3 SIGNIFICANCE

- 5.3.1 The archaeological sites identified within the boundary of the Scheme Area are considered to be of either Regional/County (Sites **18, 19, 20, 21, and 27**) or Local/Borough importance (Sites **1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 22, 23, 24, 25, 27 and 28**).

6. ARCHAEOLOGICAL POTENTIAL AND IMPACT

6.1 POTENTIAL

- 6.1.1 In its Planning Policy Guidance *Note 16*, the Department of the Environment (DoE) advises that archaeological remains are a continually diminishing resource and 'should be seen as finite, and non-renewable resource, in many cases, highly fragile and vulnerable to destruction. Appropriate management is therefore essential to ensure that they survive in good condition. In particular, care must be taken to ensure that archaeological remains are not needlessly or thoughtlessly destroyed'. It has been the intention of this study to identify the sub-surface archaeological potential of the study area, and assess the impact of redevelopment, thus allowing the advice of the DoE to be enacted upon.
- 6.1.2 The whole of the Snow Hill Scheme area lies inside the Nantwich Area of Archaeological Potential designated in the Local Plan, indicating the high level of incidence and importance of archaeological remains based on previous excavations and documentary sources (see Section 3.4 above). The extent of any previous disturbance to buried archaeological levels is an important factor in assessing the potential impact of redevelopment. Figure 10 attempts to summarise and quantify what is known of the depth at which significant archaeological deposits might first be encountered based on evidence from previous interventions. It is clear that any archaeological deposits across a considerable part of the Scheme Area will have been protected by waterlogged conditions that are sealed beneath a thick deposit of made ground. Currently a substantial assessment of the survival of waterlogged archaeological deposits in Nantwich is being funded by Cheshire County Council. Although presently in the initial stages, it is due to be completed in early 2008 (Mark Leah pers comm). Consultation of this project at interim level or on completion will be a vital source of information and is strongly advised in advance of future development in the town.
- 6.1.3 Development of the Snow Hill site during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries is likely to have had some negative impact on the sub-surface archaeological resource, especially the construction of the swimming pools, although considerable remains are likely to survive *in-situ* at depth. In addition to the swimming pool, the most disturbed area is that of the former gasworks off St Anne's Road. The map regression has shown that this site was substantially developed during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries and this, along with reclamation works to consolidate and decontaminate the site in the 1980s, will have had a significant impact on the underlying stratigraphy.
- 6.1.4 However as figure 10 illustrates, even in the area of the gas works there remains the potential for the survival of significant archaeological remains. Only one trench, totalling less than 15% of the gasworks area, was removed to the level of the natural clay and the northern part of the site was reduced to depths between 0.5 and 1.5m (Crewe and Nantwich Borough Council 1988). As excavations to the immediate north of the gasworks site at 1-5 Welsh Row

encountered well-preserved archaeological deposits at less than 1m (Earthworks 2004), it is not unreasonable to expect this to be the case in the northern and eastern parts of the scheme area to the south of Welsh Row.

- 6.1.5 The land bordering the west bank of the River Weaver, to the rear of First Wood Street, provides the most comprehensive evidence of deposit depths in the form of McNeil's 1979-1980 excavations at the Wood Street Car Park (McNeil *et al* 1983, see figure 3 for location). Here, below 1m of overburden lay c 2m of excellently preserved waterlogged archaeological deposits. In more recent nearby excavations at the Cheshire Cat and Three Pigeons off Welsh Row (Earthworks 2001 and 2005 respectively), medieval deposits were encountered at c 0.5m to 0.7m below the modern ground surface. Such shallow levels indicate a high probability of disturbance to archaeological horizons by any proposed development.
- 6.1.6 Less can be confidently asserted about the depth of significant deposits on Snow Hill itself due to the lack of excavations in the area. Limited trenching in advance of the relief road extension (Power pers comm) revealed a buried soil horizon 0.5m deep, at a depth of 0.5m- 0.8m below the surface. Although no archaeological features were observed, it is certain the deposition of the soil itself is indicative of activity in the vicinity. This was overlain by a significant depth (1.4m-1.6m) of overburden deposited during the mid-twentieth century to level the site in advance of the extension to the swimming pool and car park. The geophysical survey conducted as part of work in advance of the Kingsley Fields development (Geoquest 2002), indicates that this overburden is densest toward to river.
- 6.1.7 The only other evidence for deposit depth in the study area is the Snow Hill Car Park watching brief in advance of the construction of a new electricity sub station (Ried). At this site upto 2.8m of organic deposits were observed from a depth of 0.7m onwards, with substantial Roman waterlogged timbers recovered from a depth of 2m-3m (*ibid*). The level of overburden at this site was less than was observed in the trenches to the north at 0.7m, indicating that this deposit varies significantly over the site and is thinner towards the southern end.
- 6.1.8 Unfortunately none of the nineteenth century maps showing buildings in the southern area of Snow Hill illustrate the location of cellars, making it difficult to gauge the extent of later destruction of archaeological deposits. A single building of the 1970s Swine Market frontage, (No. 10, currently a Woolworths Plc store) is known to have a half cellar measuring approximately 0.5-1m deep. However the Snow Hill Car Park excavations have shown that significant deposits exist below this depth and that of a full cellar (c 2m) (Ried 2004). Consequently, it cannot be assumed that areas which have previously been cellared are archaeologically sterile.
- 6.1.9 In summary the potential for encountering significant archaeological deposits within 0.5m to 2m below the current ground surface across the southern part of the Snow Hill and First Wood Street areas and the northern part of the

former gasworks area is very high. However because of the limited nature of previous intervention within the Scheme Area and the understanding that unquantified and varying levels of overburden have been used to level the site around the public swimming pool and Snow Hill car park, this can only provide a general indication of impact levels. It is strongly recommended that further intervention is undertaken to fully establish the sub-surface morphology and archaeological potential.

6.2 IMPACT ASSESSMENT

6.2.1 Following on from the above considerations, the significance of impact has been determined as substantial based on an assumption that there will be earth-moving works associated with the development. The results are summarised in Table 5.

Site Number	Importance	Impact	Significance of Impact
01	Local/Borough	May be affected	Minor
02	Local/Borough	May be affected	Minor
03	Local/Borough	May be affected	Minor
04	Local/Borough	May be affected	Minor
05	Local/Borough	May be affected	Minor
06	Local/Borough	May be affected	Minor
07	Local/Borough	Not Affected	Negligible
08	Local/Borough	May be affected	Major
09	Local/Borough	Not Affected	Negligible
10	Local/Borough	May be affected	Minor
11	Local/Borough	Not Affected	Negligible
12	Local/Borough	May be affected	Minor
13	Local/Borough	May be affected	Minor
14	Local/Borough	May be affected	Minor
15	Local/Borough	May be affected	Minor
16	Local/Borough	May be affected	Minor
17	Local/Borough	May be affected	Minor
18	Regional/County	Substantial	Major
19	Regional/County	May be affected	Minor
20	Regional/County	Substantial	Major
21	Regional/County	Substantial	Major
22	Local/Borough	May be affected	Minor
23	Local/Borough	May be affected	Major
24	Local/Borough	May be Affected	Minor
25	Local/Borough	May be Affected	Minor

Site Number	Importance	Impact	Significance of Impact
26	Local/Borough	Not Affected	Negligible
27	Regional/County	Substantial	Major
28	Local/Borough	May be Affected	Major

Table 7: Assessment of the impact significance on each site during development

7. CONCLUSION

7.1 CONCLUSION

- 7.1.1 Current legislation draws a distinction between archaeological remains of national importance and other remains considered to be of lesser significance. Those perceived to be of national importance may require preservation *in-situ*, whilst those of lesser significance may undergo preservation by record, where Local/Borough or Regional/County significance can be demonstrated. Preservation by record includes a requirement to consider the stabilisation and storage of any artefacts recovered from the site; the conservation and long-term storage of Roman and medieval waterlogged artefacts would require considerable funding.
- 7.1.2 No buried archaeological sites have been identified within the proposed Scheme Area that may be considered as being of national importance and therefore merit preservation *in-situ*. However, the desk-based assessment has demonstrated that the Scheme Area has a considerable potential to contain buried archaeological remains of Regional/County significance. In particular, waterlogged remains of Roman and medieval salt-working activity may survive across the site. Previous investigations have indicated that waterlogged timbers are buried beneath a thick deposit of made ground across some of the Scheme Area, providing an opportunity for their preservation *in-situ*. Wherever possible, engineered solutions should be designed to avoid a negative impact on areas of high archaeological potential.

7.2 MITIGATION

- 7.2.1 The scope and specification of any archaeological recording required in advance of redevelopment would be devised in consultation with the Historic Environment Planning Officer for Cheshire. However, in general terms, it may be anticipated that, in the first instance, a programme of predetermination archaeological evaluation will be required. The primary objectives of any such evaluation would be to establish the presence, character, date and extent of any buried archaeological remains. This would be targeted upon areas of the Scheme Area for which there is currently insufficient data to allow for a prediction of the archaeological resource.

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9. ILLUSTRATIONS

9.1 FIGURES

Figure 1	Site Location Map
Figure 2	Plan Of Gazetteer Sites
Figure 3	Location Of Previous Archaeological Interventions
Figure 4	Town Plan, 1851
Figure 5	Ordnance Survey 1st Edition 1": 1 mile, 1876
Figure 6	Ordnance Survey 2nd Edition 1": 1 mile, 1889
Figure 7	Ordnance Survey 3rd Edition 1": 1 mile, 1910
Figure 8	Ordnance Survey 1:25000, 1970
Figure 9	Ordnance Survey 1:25000, 1988
Figure 10	Estimated Depth of Significant Deposits

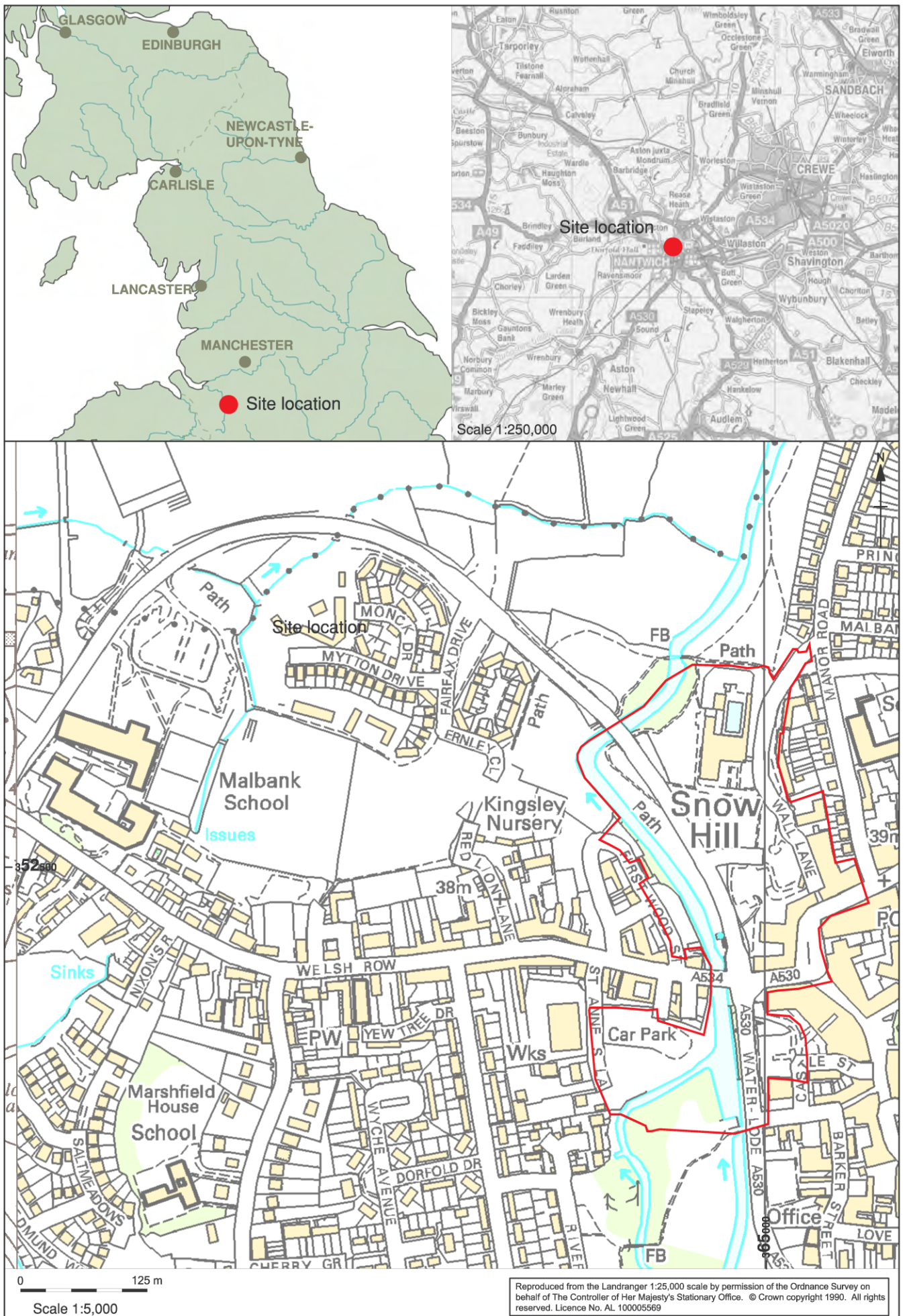


Figure 1: Site Location

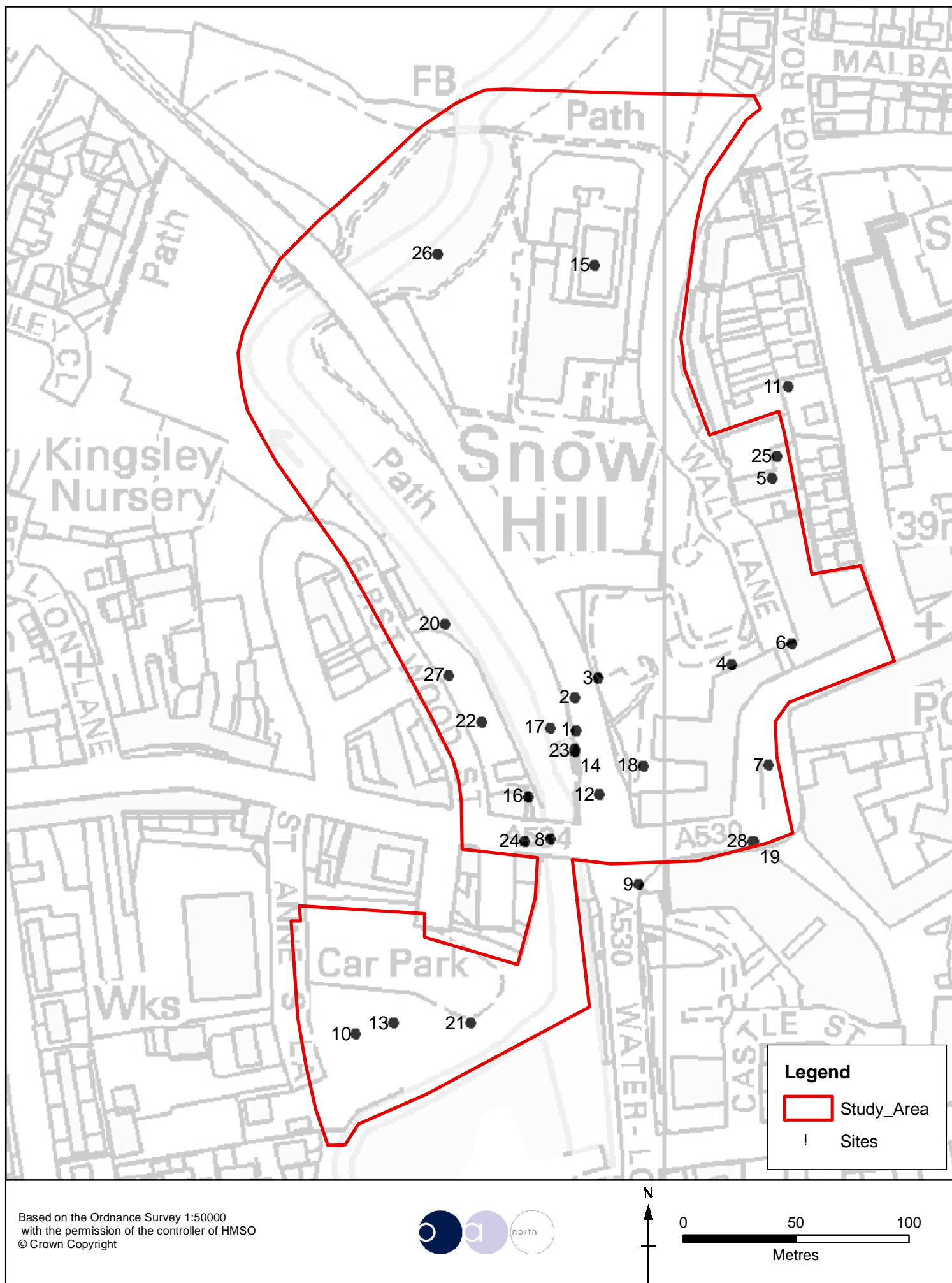
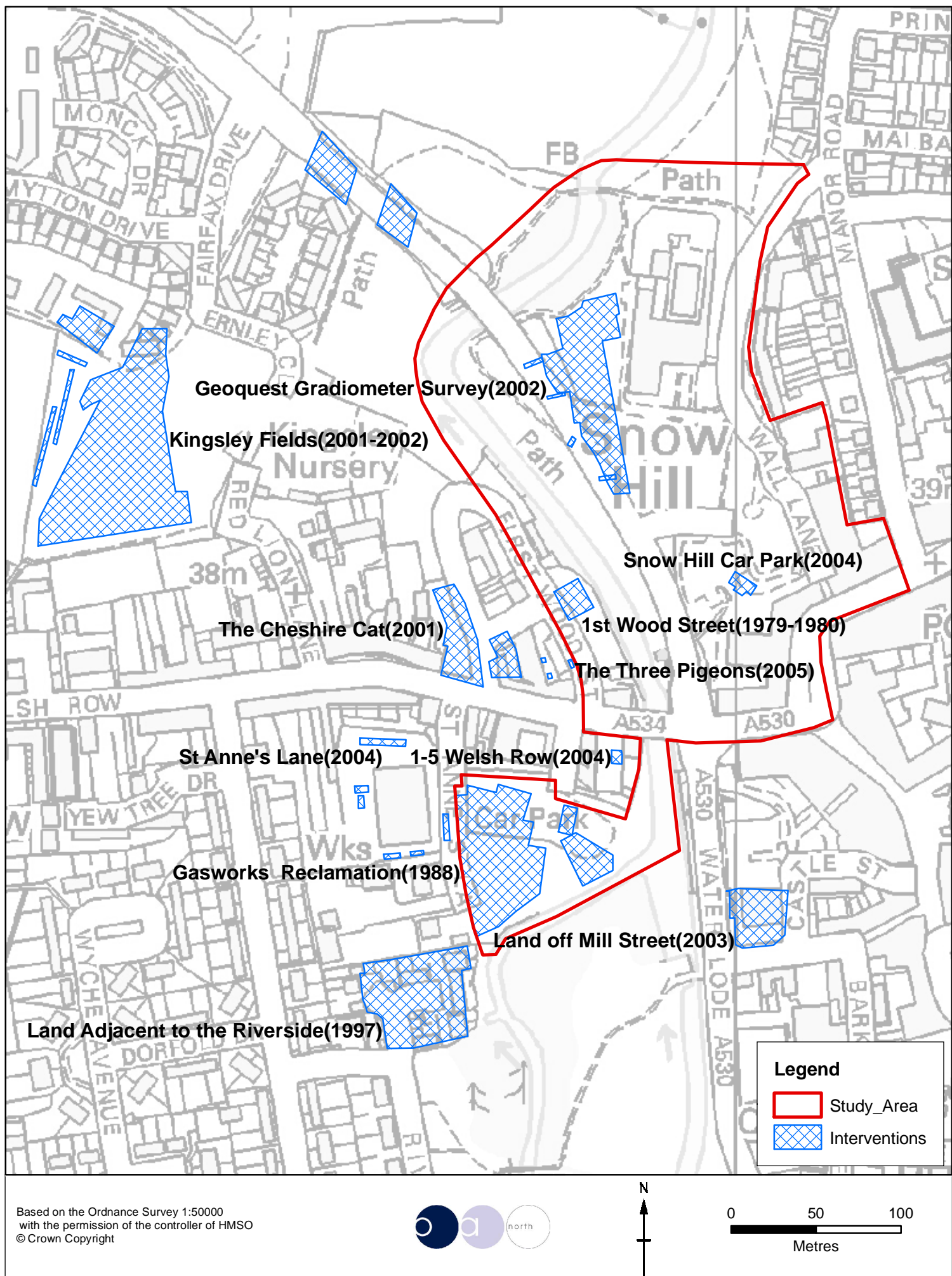


Figure 2: Plan of Gazeteer Sites



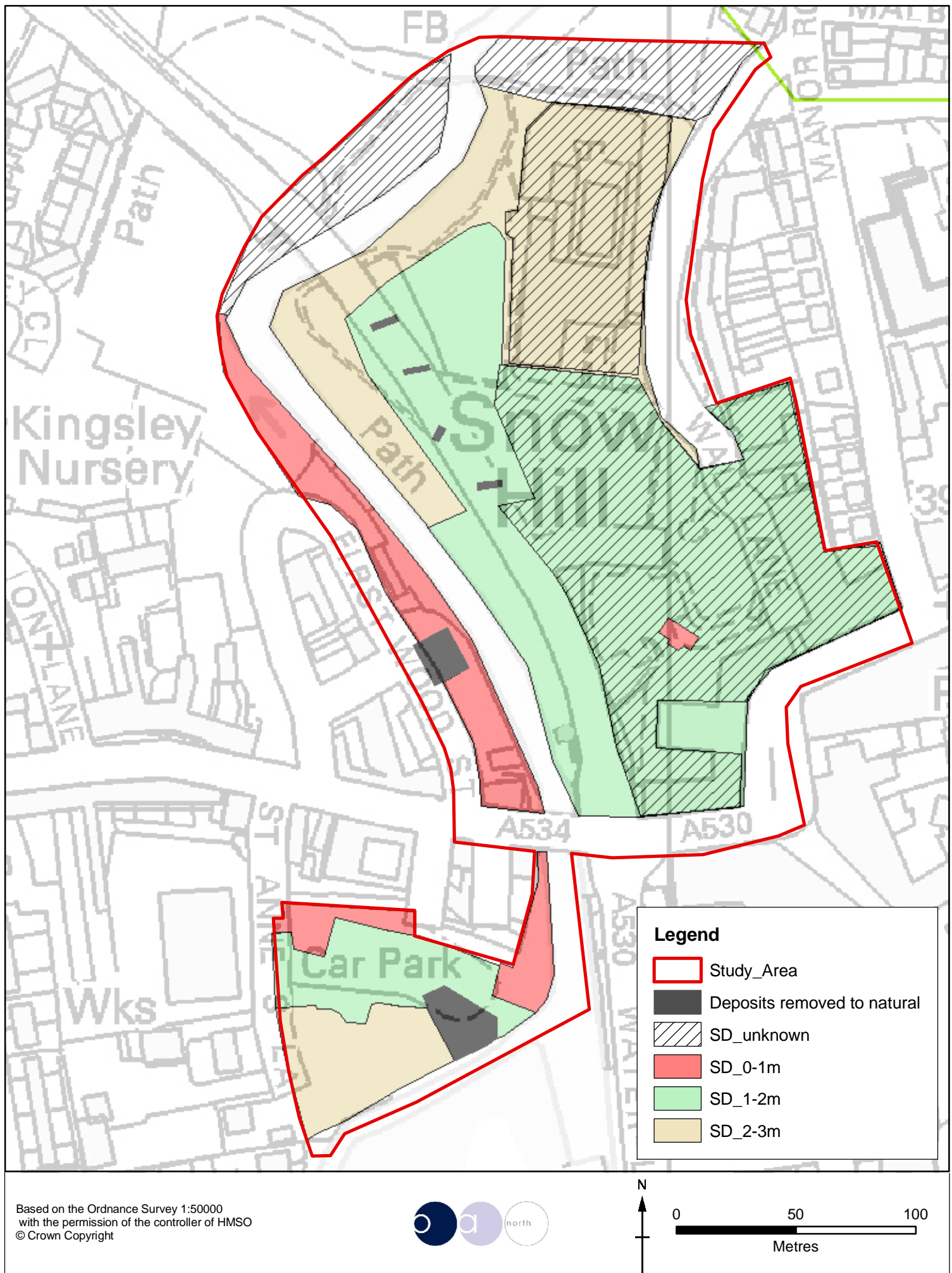


Figure 10: Estimated Depth of Significant Deposits



Figure 4: Ordnance Survey map of 1851



Figure 5a: Ordnance Survey map of 1876, 1":1 mile

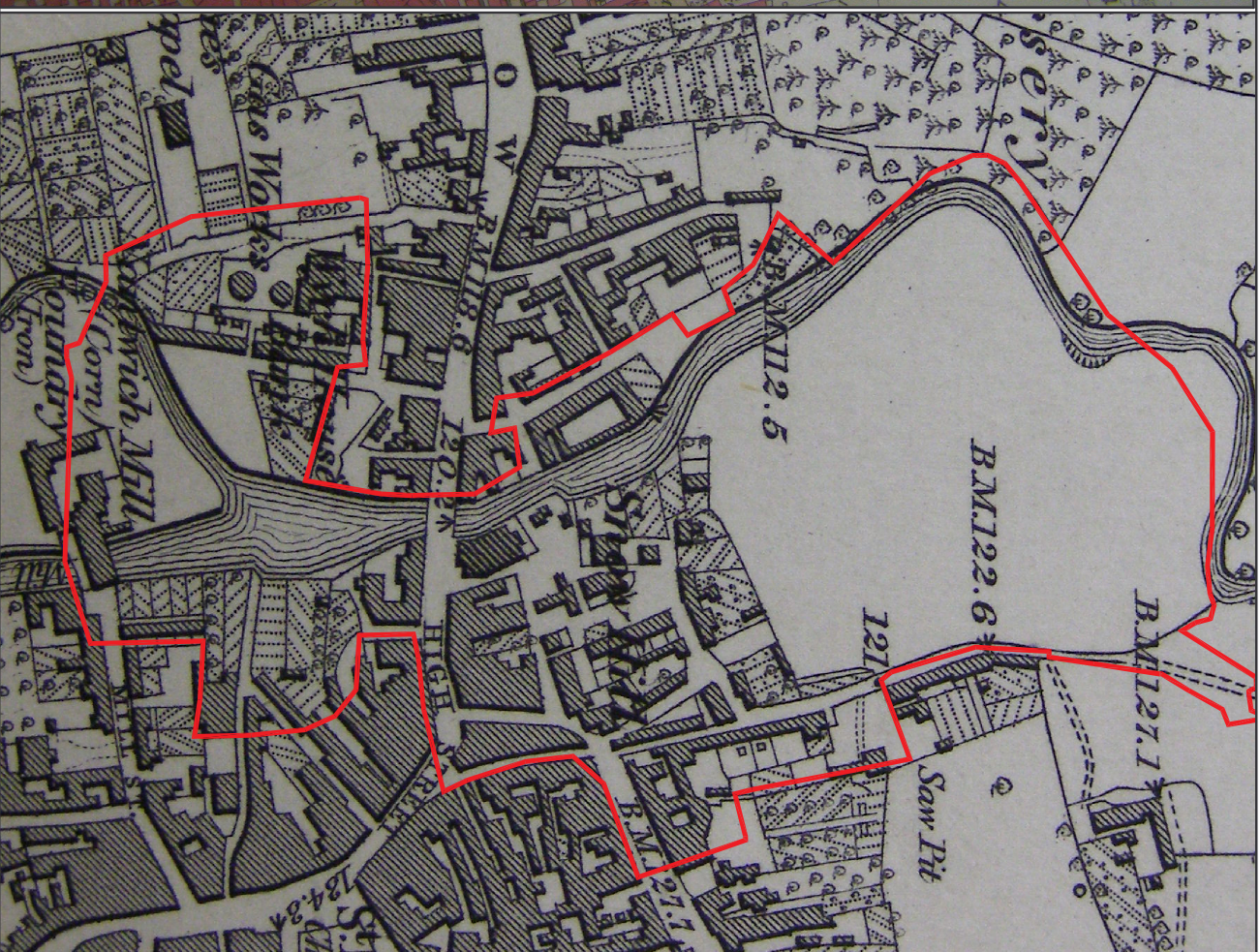


Figure 5b: Ordnance Survey map of 1881, 6":1 mile





Figure 7: Ordnance Survey map of 1910, 6":1 mile

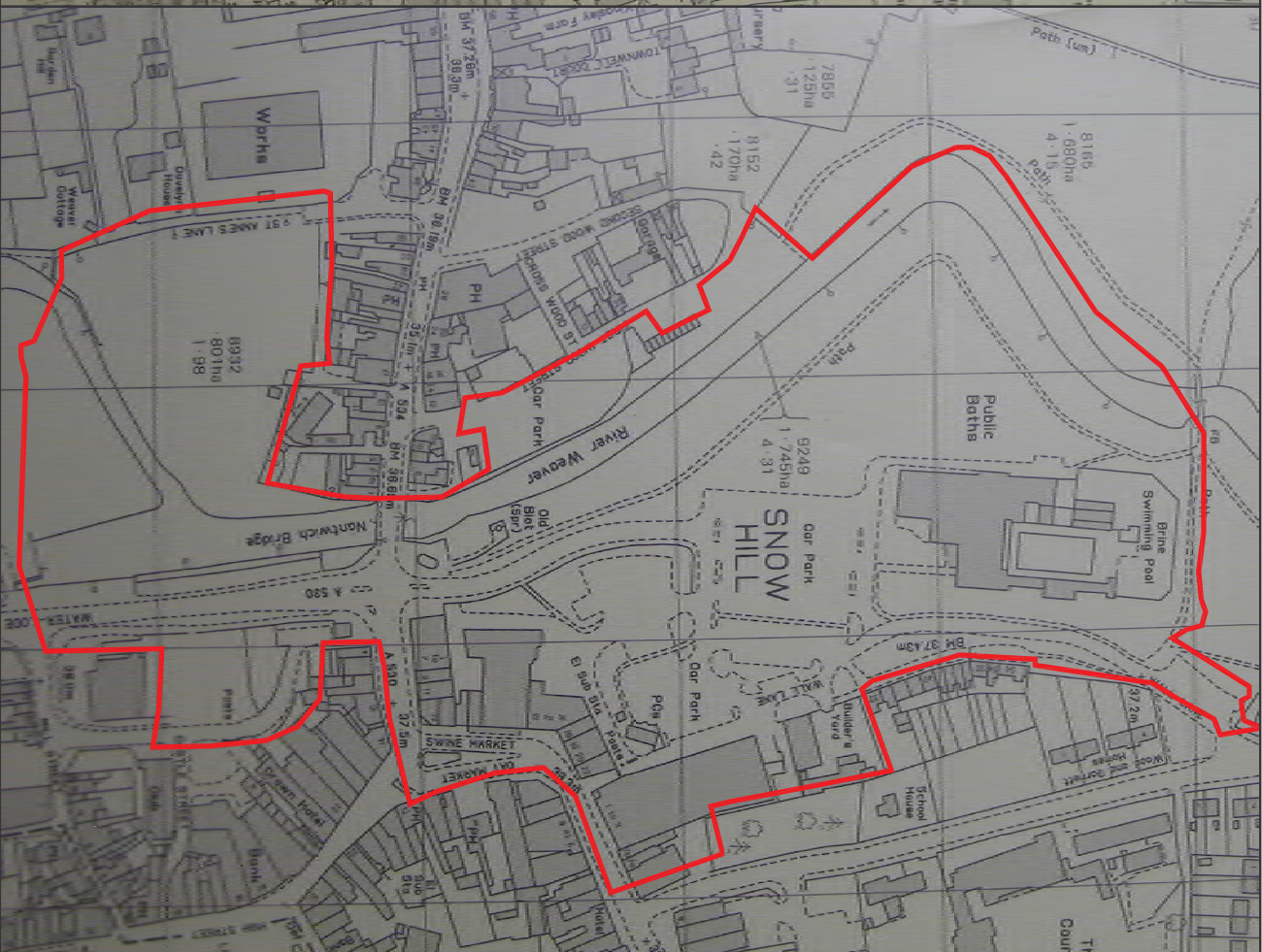


Figure 8: Ordnance Survey map of 1970

Figure 9: Ordnance Survey map of 1988