LAND OFF PIPIT AVENUE, NEWTON-LE-WILLOWS, MERSEYSIDE

Archaeological Evaluation and Watching Brief

Oxford Archaeology North

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CONTENTS

SUMMARY

Oxford Archaeology North (OA North) was commissioned by Wainhomes (Northwest) Ltd to carry out an archaeological investigation of a proposed residential development on land off Pipit Avenue, Newton-le-Willows, Merseyside (centred on NGR SJ 5830 9530). The proposed development site is positioned immediately to the north of the Liverpool and Manchester railway line. The site is bounded to the north by modern residential development and is bounded to the east by allotments. The archaeological investigation revealed that the majority of the site had once been referred to as a 'Big Sand Yard' on the 1839 Tithe map.

Current Ordnance Survey mapping shows the east side of the proposed development site lies immediately to the west of the presumed course of the Wigan to Wilderspool Roman road. Previous investigations along the route of this road have shown its position to differ from the course mapped by the Ordnance Survey. Therefore, there is a possibility that the road may lie within the outlined development site. Consequently, an archaeological programme of work was requested by Merseyside Archaeological Service (MAS) in order to identify and characterise deposits or features of archaeological significance that might be impacted upon.

A programme of archaeological evaluation was undertaken in the first instance in November 2005. This consisted of a consultation of the Merseyside Sites and Monuments Record (SMR) and the excavation of two trial trenches (Trenches 1 and 2) aligned east/west across the eastern end of the development site. The trenches measured 20m by 2.4m and were positioned in an attempt to locate the remains of the Wigan to Wilderspool Roman road, should it be situated in this area.

Excavation of the trenches identified two parallel flanking ditches aligned north/south and were assumed to be part of the Wigan to Wilderspool Roman road, which would have spanned an area of more than 17.5m in total. The actual alignment of the Roman road, therefore, lies approximately 8m to the west of the assumed course plotted by the Ordnance Survey. However, the road surface was not located and it was evident that the road had been severely truncated. An amber bead found within the eastern ditch in Trench 1 could possibly be prehistoric in origin. It may have been redeposited within the fill of the ditch, most probably by the action of inwash from the surrounding surfaces, in particular the possible road surface.

Truncation of the remains of the road is most likely to have occurred in the nineteenth century, during the extraction of sand for the local glassworks. The ditches were similar in profile to those identified flanking the Roman road in Acorn Street (Philpott and Cowell 1995), Crow Lane East and Pine Avenue (Smith 1992), all of which contained similar fills. In comparison, though, the results from Pipit Avenue showed a poor level of survival of the Roman road. This led MAS to request mitigation of the groundworks for the development in the form of a watching brief.

Consequently, archaeological monitoring of the excavation of the foundation trenches for seven house plots (Plots 1-7) was undertaken over five days in February, April and May 2006. This monitoring programme did not record any archaeologically significant features or deposits in addition to the information obtained during the evaluation. The flanking ditches actually lay outside of the majority of the foundation trenches. The western ditch lay within Plot 7 but the maximum depth of the

excavations did not reach that at which the ditch was known. The footing trenches excavated for Plots 2, 3 and 4 possibly clipped the position of the western trench but these were also not excavated deep enough to intrude into the ditch deposits. On the other hand the trenches within Plot 5 were excavated to a depth beyond that at which the eastern ditch occurred but the narrow width of the trenches may have inhibited its observation.

The excavations undertaken during the watching brief did not reach the depth at which the flanking ditches had been recorded, excluding Plot 5. Therefore, the ditches are likely to remain *in situ* below the current house footings. Any further deeper excavations within Plots 1-7 should be carried out under a permanent archaeological presence.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Oxford Archaeology North (OA North) would like to thank Steven Robinson of Wainhomes (Northwest) Ltd for commissioning the project, and to Peter George also of Wainhomes (Northwest) Ltd. Thanks are also due to Ian Leigh and his team for his logistical help on site. We would also like to thank Sarah-Jane Farr and Mark Hart at the Merseyside County Sites and Monuments Record for advice and information.

The archaeological evaluation was undertaken by Andy Lane, who was assisted by Pip Howarth. The watching brief was undertaken by Jason Clarke, Steve Clarke and Chris Healey. The report was written by Andy Lane and Chris Healey, and the drawings produced by Andy Lane. The finds were assessed by Jo Dawson. Emily Mercer managed the overall project and edited the report.

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 CIRCUMSTANCES OF THE PROJECT

1.1.1 Following the proposal by Wainhomes (Northwest) Ltd for a residential development at land off Pipit Avenue, Newton-Le-Willows, Merseyside, (centred on NGR SJ 5830 9530), the Archaeological Officer for Merseyside Archaeological Service (MAS) advised the local planning authority, St Helens Borough Council, that a programme of archaeological evaluation was required as a condition to the planning consent. The east end of the proposed development lies within close proximity to the Wigan to Wilderspool Roman road, as shown on Ordnance Survey mapping. However, investigations elsewhere along the course of the road have shown its position to differ slightly.

1.1.2 The archaeological evaluation, undertaken in November 2005, comprised consultation of the Merseyside Sites and Monuments Record (SMR) and excavation of two trenches positioned to the east of the site, where the Roman Road from Wigan to Wilderspool would be most likely encountered. Further mitigation work was subsequently required following the results of the evaluation. However, the poor level of survival of archaeological deposits associated with the Roman road contrasted to the quality of the feature elsewhere along its course. As such, MAS requested that an archaeological watching brief during the groundworks at the east end of the site would be the most appropriate form of mitigation. This watching brief took place over five days in February, April and May 2006.

1.1.3 This report sets out the results of the archaeological evaluation and watching brief in the form of a short document, outlining the findings, followed by a statement of the archaeological potential and significance.

2. METHODOLOGY

2.1 PROJECT DESIGN

2.1.1 At the request of Wainhomes (Northwest) Ltd, and in accordance with a verbal brief from MAS, OA North submitted separate project designs for the evaluation (*Appendix 1*) and the watching brief (*Appendix 2*) elements of the archaeological investigation. The project designs were adhered to in full, and the work was consistent with the relevant standards and procedures of the Institute of Field Archaeologists, and generally accepted best practice.

2.2 DOCUMENTARY RESEARCH

2.2.1 In order to provide an historical and archaeological context for the fieldwork, a rapid assessment was undertaken of relevant documentary sources. An appraisal of the Merseyside County Sites and Monuments Record (SMR) was carried out, together with the archives and library at OA North, in order to establish the extent and character of sites of archaeological interest already known within the study area. The results have been presented in *Section 3.2*.

2.2.2 ***Merseyside Sites and Monuments Record (SMR), Liverpool:*** the SMR is a database of known archaeological sites and monuments within the county and is maintained by the Merseyside Archaeological Service. Each site recorded within the study area was accessed and a brief record made for incorporation into the report, where relevant.

2.2.3 ***Oxford Archaeology North:*** OA North has an extensive archive of secondary sources relevant to the study area, as well as numerous unpublished client reports on work carried out both as OA North and in its former guise of Lancaster University Archaeological Unit (LUAU). These were consulted where necessary.

2.3 EVALUATION

2.3.1 The evaluation comprised two trenches on the east side of the proposed development area (Fig 4), close to the presumed course of the Roman road. The trenches measured 20m in length by 2.4m in width. The scrub and brambles initially covering the area of investigation were removed by the client's contractor prior to excavation.

2.3.2 The topsoil was removed by machine (fitted with a toothless 2.4m wide ditching bucket), supplied by the client, under archaeological supervision to the surface of the first significant archaeological deposit. This deposit was cleaned by hand, using either hoes, shovel scraping, and/or trowels depending on the subsoil conditions, and inspected for archaeological features. All features of archaeological interest were investigated and recorded. The trenches were not excavated deeper than 1.2m to accommodate health and safety constraints.

2.3.3 Results of all field investigations were recorded on *pro forma* context sheets. The site archive included both a photographic record and accurate large scale plans and sections at an appropriate scale (1:50, 1:20 and 1:10). All artefacts and ecofacts were recorded using the same system, and were handled and stored according to standard practice (following current Institute of Field Archaeologists guidelines) in order to minimise deterioration.

2.4 WATCHING BRIEF

2.4.1 A programme of field observation accurately recorded the location, extent, and character of any surviving archaeological features and deposits within the proposed ground disturbance within the outlined area of archaeological significance at the east end of the development site (Fig 4). This work comprised observation during all groundworks, the systematic examination of any subsoil horizons exposed during the course of the groundworks, and the accurate recording of all archaeological features, horizons and artefacts identified during the observation.

2.4.2 Putative archaeological features and deposits identified by the machining process, together with the immediate vicinity of any such features, were cleaned by hand, using shovel scraping and trowels depending on the subsoil conditions.

2.4.3 During this phase of work, recording comprised a full description and preliminary classification of features or materials revealed, and their accurate location (either on plan and/or section, and as grid co-ordinates where appropriate). Features were planned accurately at appropriate scales and annotated on to a large-scale plan provided by the client. A photographic record was undertaken simultaneously.

2.5 ARCHIVE

2.5.1 A full professional archive has been compiled in accordance with the project design (*Appendices 1 and 2*), and in accordance with current IFA and English Heritage guidelines (English Heritage 1991). The paper and material archive will be deposited with Liverpool Museum on completion of the project. Copies of the report will be deposited with the Merseyside SMR in Liverpool.

3. BACKGROUND

3.1 LOCATION, TOPOGRAPHY AND GEOLOGY

3.1.1 The proposed development site lies approximately 400m to the south of Crow Lane east and immediately to the north of the Liverpool to Manchester railway line, Newton-le-Willows, Merseyside (Fig 1; NGR SJ 5830 9530). The land within the proposed development site is low-lying and relatively flat, with heights of approximately 30m aOD.

3.1.2 The town of Newton-le-Willows lies within the Lancashire Coal Measures, which are overlain by patches of glacial drift (Countryside Commission 1998, 128). The underlying geology of the site comprises Permian (298 to 251 million years age) and Triassic (251 to 210 million years age) New Red Sandstone (Aitkenson *et al* 2002, 77-85). The majority of the soil coverage is typical stagnogley soils of the Salop group (Ordnance Survey 1983).

3.2 HISTORICAL AND ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND

3.2.1 ***Prehistoric period:*** sites of the Mesolithic period are known in the wider area but these are rare, particularly in lowland areas (Higham 1993, 16), and during the Neolithic period there is little widespread evidence for such settlement. However, there is evidence for forest clearance and crop husbandry appearing at the beginning of the Neolithic (*ibid*), and polished axes have been found in the general area (OA North 2002, 9).

3.2.2 During the early Bronze Age, activity seems to have concentrated on the higher, more fertile ground, where there is evidently a degree of continuity from as early as the late Mesolithic period (Higham 1993, 19). Finds tend to consist of stray metal tools and hoards, and burials are typically more common than settlements (Archaeological Surveys Ltd 1971, 14). By the beginning of the Iron Age political divisions must have already existed, and '*societies throughout Britain invested heavily in weapons, in the metallurgical technologies which produced them and in defended settlements*' (Higham 1993, 22). Perhaps the most recognisable site of the Iron Age, the hillfort, is not well represented in the region, although there is evidence for the early development of the salt trade (*op cit*, 25-6).

3.2.3 ***Roman period:*** the course of the Roman road from Wigan to Wilderspool is shown on recent map coverage, passing through the land immediately to the east of the proposed development area (Ordnance Survey 1985). Traces of the road itself were still visible across the fields in the area at least until 1836 (Philpott 2000, 19). A considerable fragment of the road was still visible in the plantation on the west side of Haydock Lodge during the nineteenth century; two hundred yards in length, fourteen yards wide, and a yard thick survived, formed of earth, with a layer of rude blocks of red sandstone, overlain by a layer of gravel (Watkin 1883, 64). Sibson pointed out that where stones were scarce, and partially were the ground was marshy, the road was formed wholly

of earth and gravel (Sibson 1836, 573). Between 1985 and 2002, four sections of the road were evaluated, three to the south of Crow Lane, and one to the north (Hayes and Adams 2002, 6; Fig 2). From the results of the evaluations it was clear that the road had been flanked by ditches, and was approximately 5m wide. The details of the construction of the road and ditches varied, probably due to local differences in drainage and the availability of raw materials (Philpott 2000, 31). An account of 1916 records that vestiges of the road were found in the farmyard at Holly House Farm, (which lies to the north of the Pipit Avenue site) 'some years ago' (Lane 1916, 146), but beyond this there is little detail.

3.2.4 There is also the possibility of Roman settlement in the area (*op cit*, 184). A fort was constructed at Chester by at least the AD 70s that had an impact on the organisation of the surrounding area (Higham 1993, 36), and a large scale Roman settlement, principally concerned with industrial activity, was located at Wilderspool, Warrington (*op cit*, 47-8). The more rural hinterland was not unaffected and there is some evidence for a recognisable 'Romanisation' where sites have been excavated (Cowell and Philpott 2000, 112).

3.2.5 ***Medieval period:*** Newton-le-Willows developed into a town in the medieval period (Chitty and Lewis 2002, 181), and licences for a market and a fair were granted in 1257 (*op cit*, 184). It has a single wide market street, and is a classic linear town whose plan developed in response to its function as a market (Philpott 1988, 12). It can be assumed to have a pre-Norman origin since it is named as the head of the Hundred in Domesday Book (Chitty and Lewis 2002, 184). It appears that Newton Hundred had an extensive covering of woodland at the time that the Domesday survey was carried out (Philpott 1988, 10). Archaeological evidence for medieval activity within the town includes medieval pottery recovered from two separate sites on High Street, Newton-le-Willows (*ibid*). Small quantities of medieval pottery have also been recovered closer to Holly House Farm (*ibid*).

3.2.6 The main east/west road, Crow Lane, ran from Newton High Street in the east to the common land and the hamlet of Newton Ends in the west (Philpott 1988, 15). Newton Ends dates back to at least the fifteenth century when it was recorded in the Legh Survey of 1465 (*ibid*). This may also provide a tentative date for Crow Lane, the name of which is thought to come from the French word for cross, *croix*, and to have been so named because the Roman road crossed its path (Lane 1916, 85).

3.2.7 ***Post-medieval period:*** the 'cannel' or candle coal of Wigan, recorded in the sixteenth century, is the most famous coal field of Lancashire (Phillips and Smith 1994, 48). The South West coal fields outside Wigan contained more than half a dozen manors containing collieries, feeding the growing appetite of nearby Manchester. Mining of coal in Lancashire and Cheshire reached its peak in 1907, when production began to fall off (*op cit*, 275).

3.2.8 The lack of post-medieval development of the site can be seen through eighteenth and nineteenth century maps. Although fields, streets, and buildings are not named, Yoxall's map of 1745 illustrates a large common to the east of the site with a moderately large field enclosing it, surrounded by field systems

to the west, north and south. The field boundary to the east of the site, along with the division of land to the north seems to follow the course of the Roman road.

3.2.9 Extensive extraction of sand for the glass industry in the area around St Helens occurred in the nineteenth century (Chitty and Lewis 2002, 167). The Crown Glass Works, to the north of Crow Lane East, operated between 1832 and 1861, reopening in 1866 as a glass bottle works (Philpott 1988). Mawson's Tithe map of 1839 shows the development site known as 'Big Sand Yard' belonging to Margaret and Betty Houghton, with a large area immediately to the east owned by Legh Thomas Esq. named 'Sandy Mains' (Fig 3). This suggests that the area including the site and its immediate vicinity would have been utilised for the extraction of sand for the glass industry.

4. FIELDWORK RESULTS

4.1 ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION

4.1.1 ***Introduction:*** two trenches were excavated (Fig 4) on the eastern side of the outlined development area to assess the archaeological potential and impact of the development of the assumed course of the Roman Road. For a full list of context numbers and descriptions see *Appendix 3*.

4.1.2 ***Trench 1***: was located *c* 22m to the north of the southern boundary fence line and *c* 3m to the west of the eastern boundary fence line (Fig 4). The trench was aligned approximately east/west (Plate 1), and measured 20m by 2.4m and excavated to a maximum depth of 1.12m. Two ditches, ***105*** and ***113***, along with a gully, ***115***, were revealed (Fig 5).

4.1.3 The trench revealed a stratigraphy of 0.43m of topsoil, ***104***, overlying layers of dumped building rubble and material, ***110*** (0.43m thick) and ***103*** (0.6m thick). These in turn overlay ***102***, a compact dark grey silty-sand layer that sealed a mid-reddish-brown silty-sand levelling layer, ***101***, spread throughout the trench (Fig 5). This sealed a natural light to mid orange-brown clayey-sand, ***100***, which was observed throughout the trench (Plate 2).

4.1.4 The two ditches, ***105*** and ***113***, were both aligned north/south and running parallel with each other, at an approximate distance of 12m apart. The western ditch, ***105***, cut the natural geology, ***100***, and was excavated to a depth of 0.92m with 1.5m of its width revealed (Fig 5). The profile at the base of the ditch was 'V' shaped (Plate 3) with slightly concave sides at 45º. The western extent of the ditch was not visible as it lay under the western baulk of the trench. The bottom fill, ***106***, comprised a light grey clayey-sand, 0.14m thick with frequent pebbles and sub-rounded stones (70%), possibly deliberately laid to aid drainage or more likely to represent primary silting. This was overlain by a dark grey silty-sand 0.29m thick, ***107***, probably formed by silting action. Above this was 0.29m of mid brown silty-sand, ***108***, formed again by secondary silting action, which in turn was overlain by a 0.2m thick layer of mid-dark brown silty-sand with 20% sub-rounded stones, ***109***.

4.1.5 The eastern ditch, ***113*** (Plate 4) had similar stratigraphy and fill types to ditch ***105***, and was excavated to a depth of 1.3m. It also displayed a 'V' shaped cut at the base and similarly steep sides at 45º (Fig 5). Only 1.45m of its width was observed due to the proximity of the feature to the trench edge. The bottom fill, ***112***, was a 0.05m thick layer of mid grey-brown silty-sand with inclusions of *c* 90% small rounded pebbles. This was overlain by ***111***, a 0.12m thick layer of mid grey-brown silty-sand formed by natural silting. On top of this was ***114***, a 0.8m thick deposit of mid orangey-brown sand, which was probable formed by material washed in from the sides of the ditch. A small amber bead was found within this layer (see *4.2.3* below).

4.1.6 The upper fill, ***114***, of ditch ***113*** was cut by a shallow U-shaped gully, ***115***, measuring 0.43m wide and 0.11m deep. This was aligned north/south and was

observed for 2.4m (the width of the trench). The gully was filled by levelling layer, ***101*** and ***102***, which would indicate that the layer was laid quite rapidly.

4.1.7 ***Trench 2:*** was located *c* 24m to the south of the northernmost site boundary and *c* 4m to the west of the eastern field boundary (Fig 4). The trench measured 20m by 2.4m, and was excavated to a maximum depth of 0.6m (Plate 5, Fig 6). Aligned approximately east/west, the trench revealed two parallel ditches, ***204*** and ***210***. These appeared to be a continuation of the ditches observed in Trench 1, ***105*** and ***113***.

4.1.8 The trench revealed a stratigraphy similar to that in Trench 1, with 0.3m of topsoil, ***203*** (equivalent to layer ***104***, Trench 1), overlying a 0.05m thick lens of modern dumped sand, ***209***. This overlay a 0.22m layer of dark grey compact silty-sand, ***202*** (equivalent to ***102***, Trench 1); a possible surface. These layers sealed a 0.42m thick layer of dark reddish-brown silty-sand, ***201*** (equivalent to ***101***, Trench 1), which seems to have represented a levelling layer. A layer of light cream clayey-sand, mottled orangey-brown, ***200***, (equivalent to ***100***, Trench 1) was observed throughout the trench as natural geology.

4.1.9 The two parallel ditches, ***204*** and ***210***, were located 11.65m apart, both aligned north/south and cut into the natural geology, ***200***. Ditch ***204*** had a gently concave western side with a moderately flat base, the eastern side being obscured by the trench edge (Fig 6). The ditch was revealed to be at least 2.45m wide, and was 0.58m deep (Plate 6). The bottom fill, ***205***, was a 0.09m thick deposit of light creamy-brown sand with frequent inclusions of small to medium sized rounded stones and pebbles, presumably deposited to aid drainage. This deposit was overlain by ***206***, a deposit of light to mid-grey brown sand formed by slumping action from the trench edge and accompanying silting. This was overlain by ***207***, a 0.33m thick layer of light reddish-brown sand, formed by silting action, which lay beneath ***208***, a 0.26m thick deposit of mid brown silty-sand representing the upper fill of ditch ***204***. This was evidently formed by material washed in from the sides.

4.1.10 Ditch ***210*** was recorded as 3.6m wide and 0.42m deep, and was pursued for 2.4m (the width of Trench 2). The base was slightly rounded with shallow concave sides at 35º that gradually stepped down from the east (Plate 7). The ditch (Fig 6) contained a 0.04m thick fill at its base, a light cream sand mottled orangey-brown, with frequent inclusions of small rounded stones and pebbles, ***211***. This was overlain by ***212***, a 0.07m thick layer of dark grey-brown silty-sand, presumably formed by silting action that lay beneath ***213***, a 0.28m thick layer of light to mid brown silty-sand. This upper fill of ditch ***210*** appeared to have been formed by material washed in from the sides.

4.2 ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF

4.2.1 ***Introduction:*** informed by the results of the evaluation, a programme of archaeological watching brief was requested by MAS during all groundworks towards the eastern end of the development site. The positions of the footings for seven house plots (numbered 1-7) within the outlined area for the monitoring works are shown on Figure 4. Plot 1 was undertaken under

archaeological supervision in February 2006, plots 2 to 4 were monitored in April 2006, and plots 5 to 7 in May 2006. Trenches for concrete footings were mechanically excavated by a tracked 360º machine to a maximum depth of 1.3m. The trenches were all 0.7m wide (bucket-width).

4.2.2 All of the trenches excavated for the house plots were seen to contain dump deposits of nineteenth and twentieth century material mixed with loose silty-sand (equivalent to ***103***). Beneath this, redeposited natural (equivalent to ***101*** and ***201***) overlay the natural geology. The redeposited natural or sand levelling layer was observed in all the trenches across all the plots, at a consistent approximate depth of 0.40m in Plots 1-5, and at 0.8m deep in Plots 6 and 7. The natural geology (equivalent to ***100*** and ***200***) was seen to consist of firm orange-brown sandy-clay with occasional inclusions of poorly sorted small and medium sub-rounded stones.

4.2.3 Despite the truncated remains of the Roman road having been found in this area during the evaluation trenching, no archaeologically significant features or deposits could be seen during the watching brief. The evaluation demonstrated that the surface of the Roman road had been removed, and so the only remaining evidence was that pertaining to the flanking ditches. The course of the western ditch was overlain by Plot 7, but may have been possibly clipped by Plots 2, 3 and 4. However, the maximum depth of the trenches was just above that at which the ditches had been recorded, at approximately 1m (see *4.1*, above). In addition, the eastern ditch lay outside of the trenches excavated for the footings for all but Plot 5, but the narrow width of the trenches excavated for the footings may have inhibited the observation of the ditch in this plot.

4.2.4 ***Plots 1 and 2***: the trenches for the footings for this building were 0.8m deep at their maximum, and cut through nineteenth and twentieth century dump deposits. Redeposited natural was recorded at a depth of 0.4m.

4.2.5 ***Plot 3***: although most of the trenches were 0.7m deep, in the south-eastern corner of the plot they were excavated to a maximum depth of 1m. Redeposited natural was again recorded at a depth of 0.4m. The uppermost 0.4m in the trenches was filled with mixed modern rubbish deposits.

4.2.6 ***Plot 4***: the footing trenches were excavated to a depth of 0.7m, although in the south-western corner they were excavated to a maximum depth of 1.3m. Although the western flanking ditch would be expected at approximately 1m depth, the south-western corner of the plot was positioned immediately to the east of it. Redeposited natural was encountered at a depth of 0.4m. The uppermost 0.4m in the trenches was filled with mixed modern rubbish deposits.

4.2.7 ***Plot 5***: the trenches were excavated to a maximum depth of 1.2m due to their proximity to the edge of the development area. The eastern flanking ditch was known to be positioned within Plot 5 due to its occurrence in Trench 1. Given the maximum depth of the footing trenches associated remains should have been observed in the east/west footing trench to the south, as the northern footing was situated within Trench 1. However, no archaeological remains or deposits were noted, possibly due to the narrow nature of the trench inhibiting observation.

4.2.8 The uppermost 0.3m in the trenches was filled with mixed modern rubbish deposits and redeposited natural was encountered at a depth of 0.3m.

4.2.9 ***Plot 6***: the footings for this building were 0.8m deep, cut into nineteenth and twentieth century dump deposits. Redeposited natural was recorded at a depth of 0.8m.

4.2.10 ***Plot 7***: the footings for this building were 0.9m deep, cut into modern rubbish deposits 0.7m thick. Below this layer, redeposited natural was observed at a depth of 0.7m.

4.3 FINDS

4.3.1 Only a small assemblage was recovered in the course of the project; ten small fragments in total. Eight of these were relatively recent pottery fragments with four fragments from ***102*** and a fragment from ***202***, together with a glass fragment from ***102*** and a small amber bead from ***114***. Three pottery fragments were unstratified.

4.3.2 The pottery fragments are all relatively small, and some frost-spalled, suggesting that they had been deposited in the course of midden spreading. Although some of the fragments recovered could date to the late eighteenth century, it seems most likely that the group dates to the second half of the nineteenth century. Apart from a stoneware jug handle from deposit ***202***, the pottery is confined to white earthenwares, with a single small fragment of creamware found unstratified. Also within deposit ***202*** a fragment of a colourless glass bottle of twentieth century date was recovered, confirming the generally late date of the material from the site.

4.3.3 The small amber bead, from the fill, ***114***, of the north/south ditch in Trench 1, is made from a small, flattened, oval water-worn pebble, and has a roughly central hour-glass perforation that shows some wear. The principal source of amber in the British Isles is the east coast of England, where it is found as sea-washed pebbles. The bead is impossible to date with any precision, as amber has been a popular material since the prehistoric period, often regarded as having special properties. The simple nature of this bead suggests that it is prehistoric, and therefore residual in the layer in which it was found.

5. CONCLUSION

5.1 DISCUSSION

5.1.1 The primary objective of the archaeological assessment was to examine the potential for survival of the Roman road running from Wigan to Wilderspool, observed in archaeological interventions to the north and south of the site, and to trace any of its surviving character and alignment. This was achieved thorough an initial programme of evaluation followed by mitigation of the development by watching brief.

5.1.2 Evaluation Trenches 1 and 2 revealed that the upper stratigraphy consisted of dumped deposits from recent, probably residential, developments and possibly earlier deposits from the construction of the railway to the south of the site. Two layers of archaeological or historical interest were identified; a post-medieval surface (***102 = 202***) possibly belonging to a yard area, and a levelling layer (***101 = 201***) likely to relate to the extraction of sand in the area. The 1839 Tithe map shows the site to lie within 'Big Sand Yard', with an area known as 'Sandy Mains' immediately to the east. The levelling layers seem to have been rapidly laid, as the gully in Trench 1, ***115***, contains slumped levelling material, ***102***, with no other fills apparent that might indicate a gradual silting of the gully.

5.1.3 Also revealed during the evaluation were two parallel ditches (***113 = 204*** and ***105 = 210***), both aligned north/south and contained frequent pebbles at their base, presumably either to aid the drainage of a road surface or rapid inwash from a road surface. These were interpreted as the flanking ditches for the Roman road, which spanned a combined area of more than 17.5m. However, the road surface was not located and it was evident that the road had been severely truncated. This is most likely to have occurred in the nineteenth century, during the extraction of sand for the local glassworks. The ditches were similar in profile to those identified flanking the Roman road in Acorn Street (Philpott and Cowell 1995), Crow Lane East and Pine Avenue (Smith 1992), all of which contained similar fills. The actual alignment of the Roman road, therefore, lies approximately 8m to the west of the assumed course plotted on Ordnance Survey maps.

5.1.4 The amber bead found within ditch ***113*** in Trench 1 may possibly be prehistoric in origin, indicating that it could have derived from an earlier context to that of the Roman road. It may have been redeposited within the fill of the ditch, most probably by the action of inwash into the ditches from surrounding surfaces.

5.1.5 The watching brief, undertaken in mitigation of the development, was restricted to the limits of the eastern side of the development site, in the vicinity of the ditches. However, despite this, no features or deposits of archaeological origin were observed. The ditches lay outside of the majority of the trenches excavated for the footings. The western ditch lay within Plot 7 but the maximum depth of the excavations did not reach that at which the ditch was known. The footing trenches excavated for Plots 2, 3 and 4 possibly clipped the position of the western trench but these were also not excavated

deep enough. On the other hand the trenches within Plot 5 were excavated to a depth beyond that of the ditches but the narrow width of the trenches may have inhibited the observation of the ditch.

5.2 IMPACT AND RECOMMENDATION

5.2.1 In the majority of cases the excavations undertaken during the watching brief did not reach the depth at which the flanking ditches had been recorded. Therefore, the ditches are likely to remain *in situ* below the current house footings. Should there be any further, and particularly deeper, excavations at a later date within Plots 1-7 it is recommended that a further watching brief should be undertaken.

6. BIBLIOGRAPHY

6.1 PRIMARY AND CARTOGRAPHIC SOURCES

DDHK 5/1/29, 1759 *Newton Survey Book 1759*, (Lancashire Record Office, Preston)

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7. ILLUSTRATIONS

7.1 FIGURES

7.2 PLATES

Figure 1: Site Location

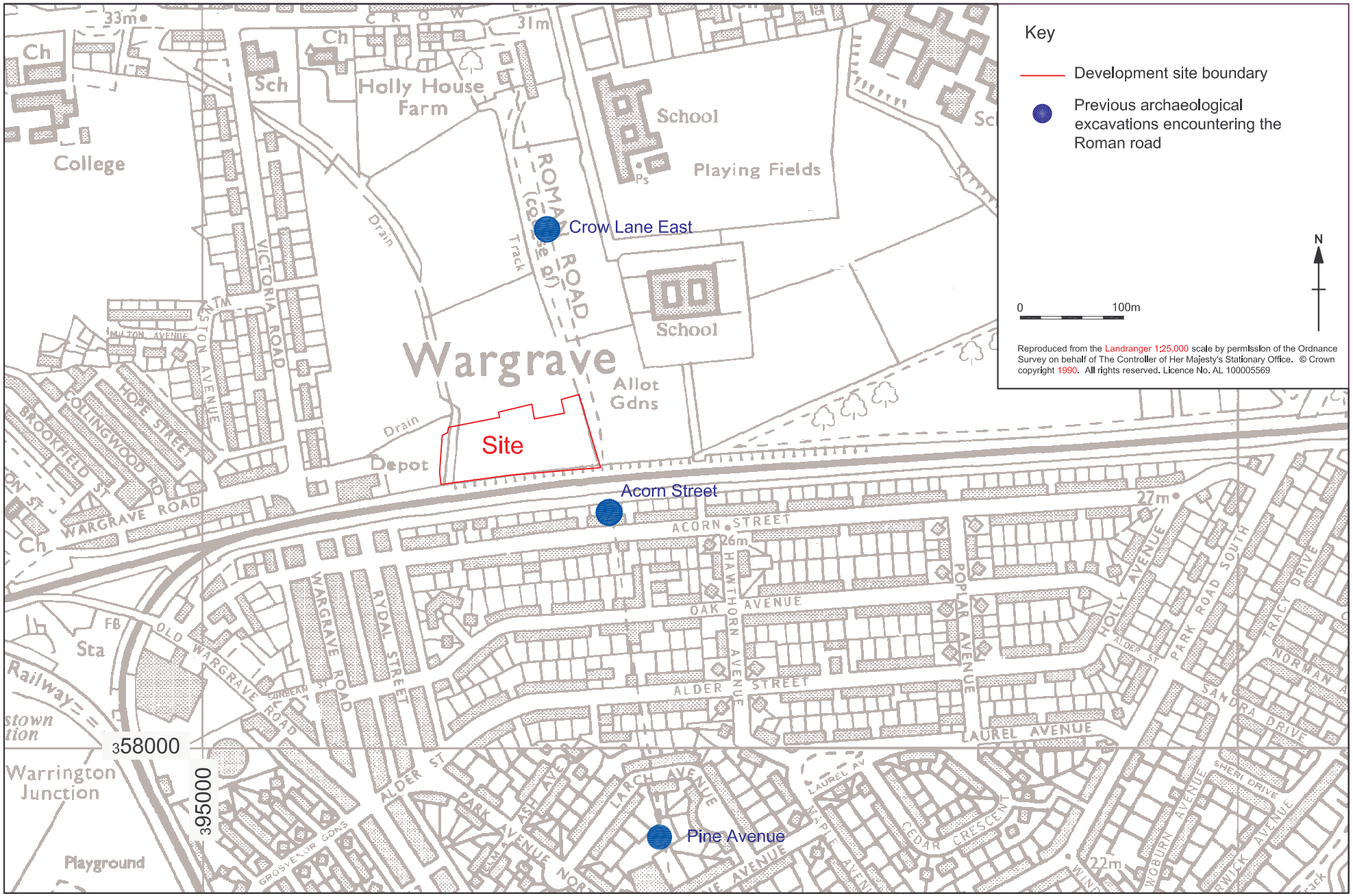
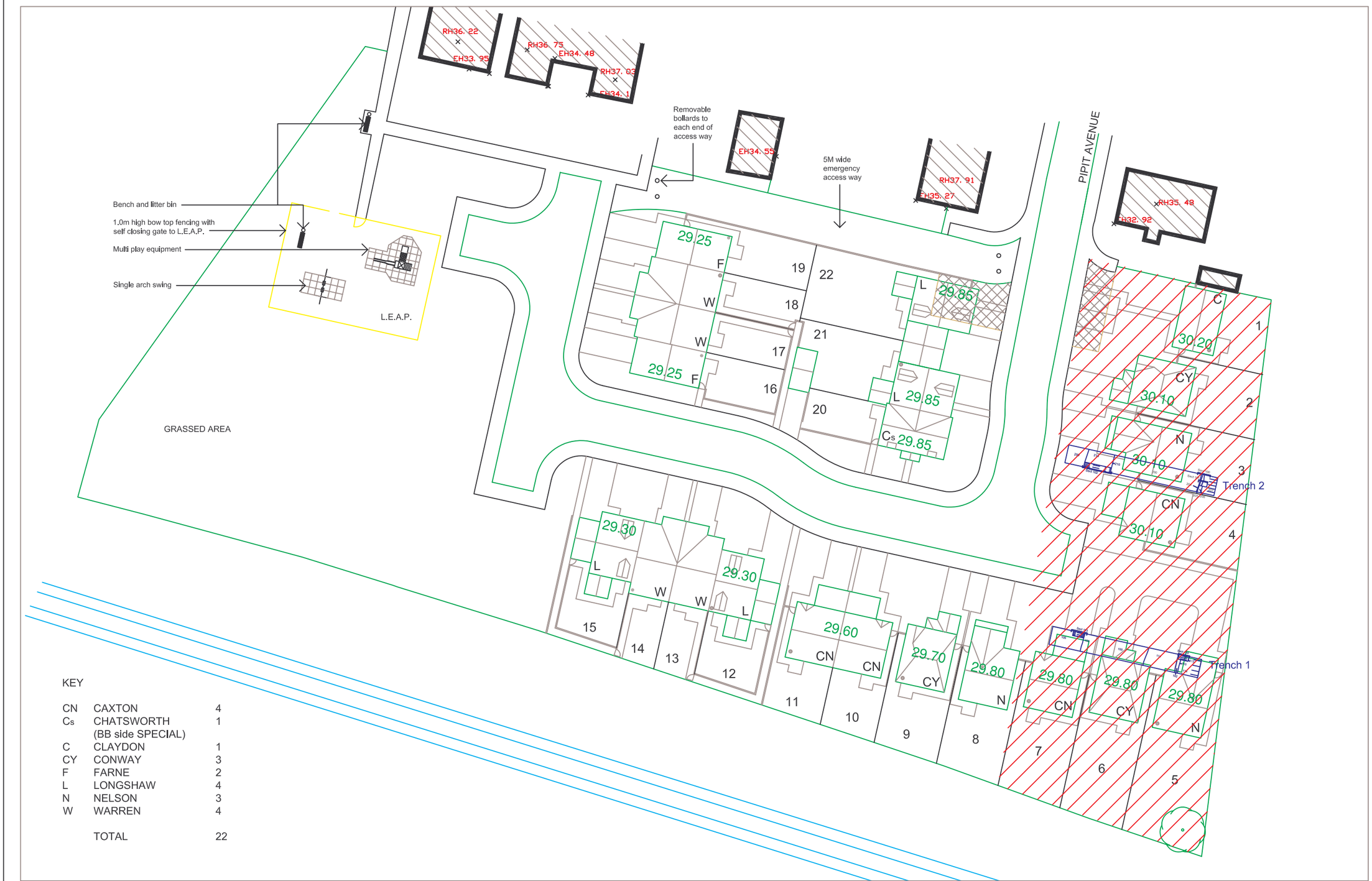


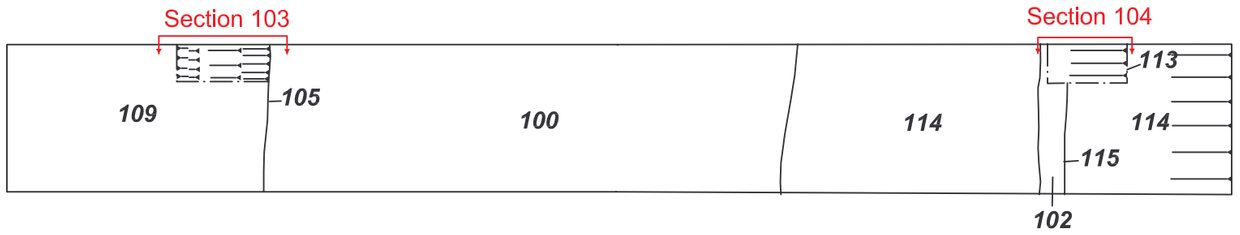
Figure 2: Location of previous excavations and the site

Figure 3: Extract from Tithe Map, 1839



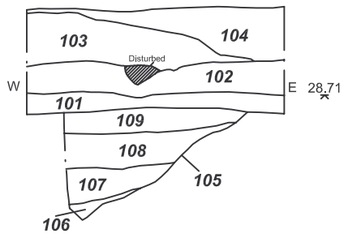
Scale 1:500 at A3

Figure 4: Location of evaluation Trenches 1 and 2 and watching brief plots 1-7



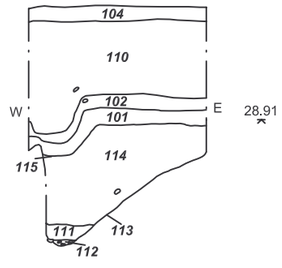
Plan of Trench 1
Scale 1:100

0 2.5m



South-facing section 103,
through ditch ***105***, Trench 1

Scale 1:50
0 1m

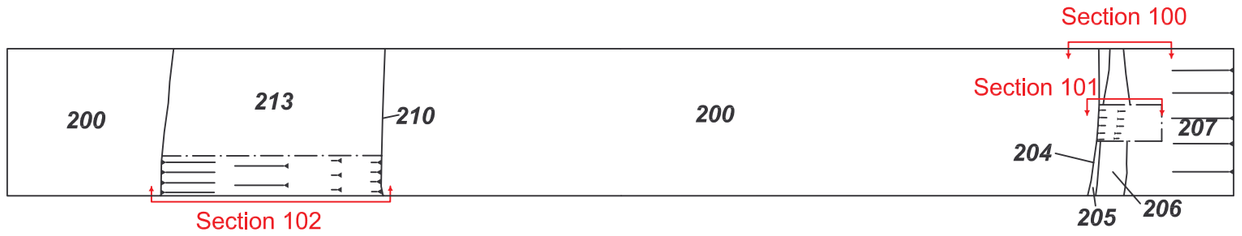


South-facing section 104, through
ditch ***113*** and gully ***115***, Trench 1

Scale 1:50
0 1m

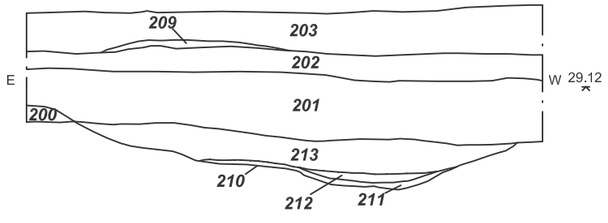
N

Figure 5: Plan and sections of Trench 1



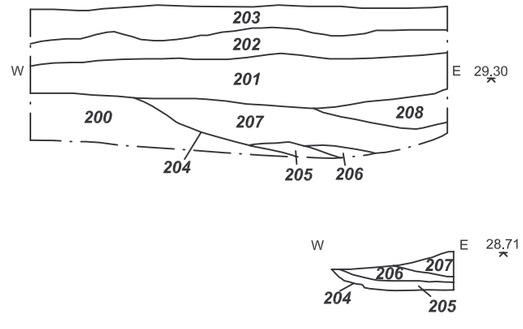
Plan of Trench 2
Scale 1:100

0 2.5m



North-facing section 102, through ditch ***210***, Trench 2

Scale 1:50
0 1m

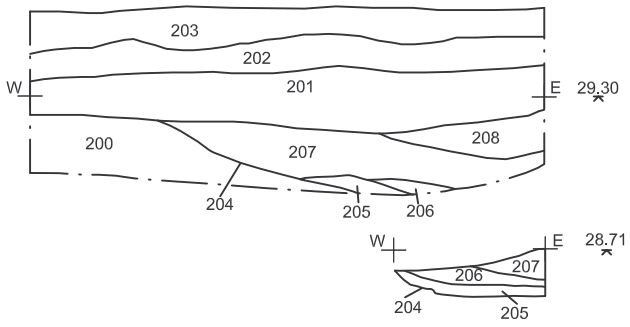


South-facing section 100, through ditch ***204*** and and section 101 (bottom), Trench 2

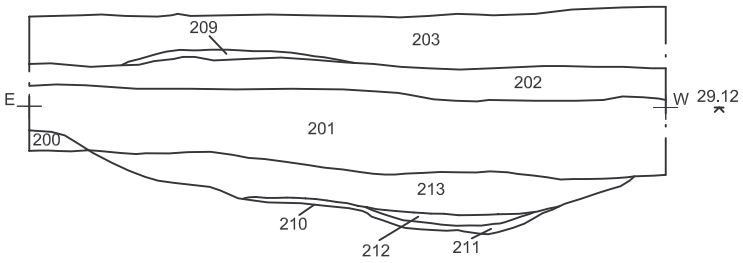
Scale 1:50
0 1m

N

Figure 6: Plan and sections of Trench 2



South-facing section of Ditch ***204***



North-facing section of Ditch ***210***

0 1m

Scale 1:50 at A4

Figure 7: Sections of Trench 2

Plate 1: General view of Trench 1 looking east

Plate 2: Sample south-facing section of Trench 1

Plate 3: South-facing section of ditch, ***105***

Plate 4: South-facing section of ditch, ***113***

Plate 5: General view of Trench 2 looking west

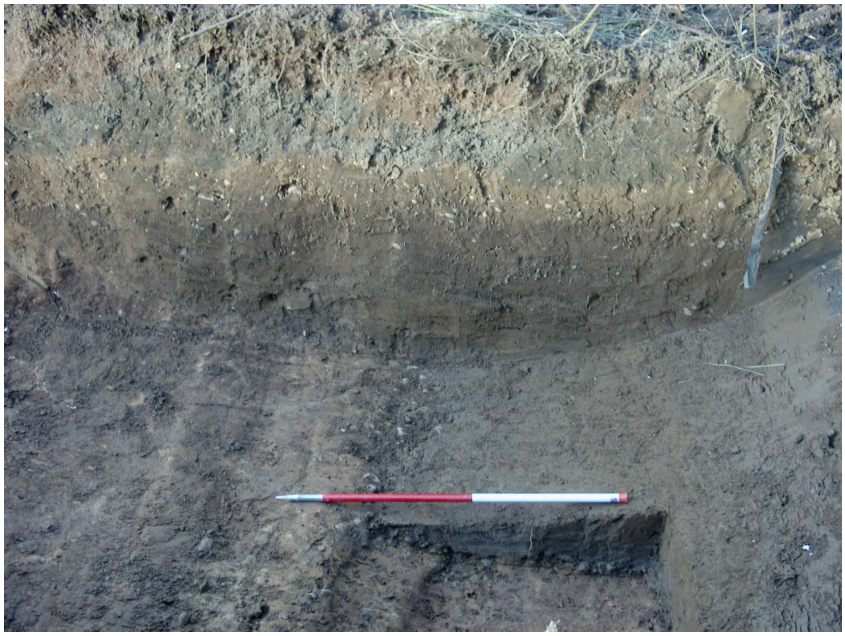


Plate 6: South-facing section of ditch, ***204***

Plate 7: South-facing section of ditch, ***210***

APPENDIX 1: EVALUATION PROJECT DESIGN

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 PROJECT BACKGROUND

1.1.1 Wainhomes (North West) Ltd (hereafter the 'client') has requested that Oxford Archaeology North (OA North) submit proposals for an archaeological investigation for an area of land off Pipit Avenue, Newton-le-Willows (NGR centred SJ 5830 9530). The land has received planning consent for residential development with a condition to undertake a programme of archaeological work due to the close proximity of the course of the Roman road running from Wigan to Wilderspool. Merseyside Archaeological Service (MAS) has recommended an evaluation of the south-east side of the proposed development area.

1.1.2 The investigation will comprise consultation and assimilation of the Merseyside Sites and Monuments Record (SMR) data as the first stage of a programme of archaeological recording, prior to further intrusive investigation in the form of trial trenching. The results are intended to provide the information regarding the requirements for any further mitigation works. Any such work will necessitate the provision of a separate project design and costings.

1.2 ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND

1.2.1 The course of the Roman road from Wigan to Wilderspool is shown on recent map coverage, passing to the east of the proposed development area, and traces of the road itself were still visible across the fields in the area at least until 1836 (Philpott 2000, 19). Between 1985 and 2002, four sections of the road were evaluated, three to the south of Crow Lane, and one to the north (*op cit*, 23; Hayes and Adams 2002, 6). From the results of the evaluations it was clear that the road had been flanked by ditches, and was approximately 5m wide. The details of the construction of the road and ditches varied, probably due to local differences in drainage and the availability of raw materials (Philpott 2000, 31).

1.2.2 An account of 1916 records that vestiges of the road were even found to the north of the proposed development at Holly House Farm (Lane 1916, 146). However, investigations in 2004 found no evidence of the Roman road (OA North 2004). In either its surface or associated ditches, and no residual Roman material was recovered. It was concluded that all remains of the road have been obliterated by the impact of Holly House Farm. However, a north/south post-medieval metalled road surface was revealed (*ibid*), which suggests that there is a possibility that its route may have been reused (Sarah-Jane Farr pers comm).

1.2.3 More recently, extensive extraction of sand for the glass industry in the area around St Helens occurred in the nineteenth century (Chitty and Lewis 2002, 167). Crown Glass Works, to the north of the proposed development site, operated between 1832 and 1861, reopening in 1866 as a glass bottle works (Philpott 1988). The Tithe map of 1839 has shown that the development site was named Big Sandy Yard and the adjacent field was Sandy Mains, suggesting sand extraction. However, the precise location of extraction is not known.

1.3 OXFORD ARCHAEOLOGY NORTH

1.3.1 OA North has extensive experience of evaluations and excavation of sites of all periods in this area, having undertaken a great number of small and large-scale projects during the past 23 years. These have taken place within the planning process, to fulfil the requirements of clients and planning authorities, to very rigorous timetables.

1.3.2 OA North has the professional expertise and resources to undertake the project detailed below to a high level of quality and efficiency. OA North is an **Institute of Field Archaeologists (IFA) registered organisation, registration number 17**, and all its members of staff operate subject to the IFA Code of Conduct.

2 OBJECTIVES

2.1 The assessment aims to provide information regarding the location, nature, extent and significance of the known archaeological resource for both above and below ground remains that may be impacted by the proposed development. The following programme has been designed to achieve these ends are as follows:

2.2 ***Consultation of the SMR:*** to collate and assess the existing information for the known archaeological resource of the site as held in the Merseyside SMR, to provide an archaeological context for the results of the trial trenching.

2.3 ***Evaluation:*** to excavate two trial trenches in the south-east side of the proposed development area.

2.4 ***Report and Archive:*** an interim report may be issued should there be any further mitigation work necessary. The final report will be produced for the client within eight weeks of completion of the fieldwork. A site archive will be produced to English Heritage guidelines (MAP 2) and in accordance with the *Guidelines for the Preparation of Excavation Archives for Long Term Storage* (UKIC 1990).

3 METHOD STATEMENT

3.1 CONSULTATION OF THE MERSEYSIDE SMR

3.1.1 An assessment of the data held at the Merseyside SMR will provide a review of all known and available resources of information relating to the site of the proposed development, and the study area consisting of 0.5km radius centred on the site. The aim of this is to give consideration not only to the application site, but also its setting in terms of historical and archaeological contexts. It will consult the range of potential sources of information, both primary and secondary and any relevant aerial photographs, referenced in the SMR, including OS 1st Edition maps (both 6" to 1 mile and 25" to 1 mile).

3.1.2 ***Physical Environment:*** a rapid desk-based compilation of geological (both solid and drift), pedological, topographical and palaeoenvironmental information will be undertaken. It will be based on published geological mapping and any local geological surveys in the possession of the client. An assessment will also be made of any geotechnical data made available by the client (eg boreholes and test pits). This will assess the condition and status of any buried deposits and identify local geological conditions. This will serve not only set the archaeological features in context but also serves to provide predictive data, that will increase the efficiency of the field inspection and results.

3.2 EVALUATION

3.2.1 The programme of trial trenching will establish the presence or absence of any previously unsuspected archaeological deposits and, if established, will then test their date, nature, depth and quality of preservation. In this way, it will adequately sample the threatened available area.

3.2.2 ***Trenches:*** the evaluation is required to examine two trenches in the south-east side of the proposed development area, close to the presumed course of the Roman road. The trenches will measure 20m in length by 2.0m in width (the width of a typical excavator bucket).

3.2.3 ***Methodology:*** the topsoil will be removed by machine (fitted with a toothless 2.0m wide ditching bucket), to be supplied by the client, under archaeological supervision to the surface of the first significant archaeological deposit. This deposit will be cleaned by hand, using either hoes, shovel scraping, and/or trowels depending on the subsoil conditions, and inspected for archaeological features. All features of archaeological interest will be investigated and recorded, unless otherwise agreed by MAS. The trenches will not be excavated deeper than 1.20m to accommodate health and safety constraints; any requirements to excavate below this depth will involve recosting.

3.2.4 It has been agreed with the client that any impeding rubble/concrete surfaces, or any scrub etc., that impedes onto the position of the trenches will be removed prior to excavation.

3.2.5 The trenches will be excavated in a stratigraphical manner, whether by machine or by hand, and will be located by use of GPS equipment which is accurate to +/- 0.25m, or by total station. Altitude information will be established with respect to Ordnance Survey Datum.

3.2.6 Any investigation of intact archaeological deposits will be exclusively manual. Selected pits and postholes will normally only be half-sectioned. Linear features will be sectioned at various intervals to no less than a 25% sample, and extensive layers will, where possible, be sampled by partial rather than complete removal. It is hoped that in terms of the vertical stratigraphy, maximum information retrieval will be achieved through the examination of

sections of cut features. All excavation, whether by machine or by hand, will be undertaken with a view to avoiding damage to any archaeological features, which appear worthy of preservation *in situ*. Such features will be adequately protected from deterioration and MAS and the client informed immediately.

3.2.7 All information identified in the course of the site works will be recorded stratigraphically, using a system, adapted from that used by Centre for Archaeology Service of English Heritage, with sufficient pictorial record (plans, sections, colour slides and monochrome contacts) to identify and illustrate individual features. Primary records will be available for inspection at all times.

3.2.8 Results of all field investigations will be recorded on *pro forma* context sheets. The site archive will include both a photographic record and accurate large scale plans and sections at an appropriate scale (1:50, 1:20 and 1:10). All artefacts and ecofacts will be recorded using the same system, and will be handled and stored according to standard practice (following current Institute of Field Archaeologists guidelines) in order to minimise deterioration.

3.2.9 ***Environmental Sampling:*** environmental samples (bulk samples of 30 litres volume, to be sub-sampled at a later stage) will be collected from stratified undisturbed deposits and will particularly target negative features (gullies, pits and ditches) where organic materials may be preserved, especially if waterlogged. An assessment of the environmental potential of the site will be undertaken through the examination of suitable deposits by the in-house palaeoecological specialist, who will examine the potential for further analysis. The assessment would include soil pollen analysis and the retrieval of charred plant macrofossils and land molluscs from former dry-land palaeosols and cut features. In addition, the samples would be assessed for plant macrofossils, insect, molluscs and pollen from waterlogged deposits. The costs for the palaeoecological assessment are defined as a contingency and will only be called into effect if good deposits are identified and will be subject to the agreement of MAS and the client.

3.2.10 Advice will also be sought as to whether a soil micromorphological study or any other analytical techniques will enhance the understanding of the site formation processes, including the amount of truncation to buried deposits and the preservation of deposits within negative features. Should this be required the costs for analysis have been provided as a contingency.

3.2.11 ***Faunal remains:*** if there is found to be the potential for discovery of bones of fish and small mammals a sieving programme will be carried out. These will be assessed as appropriate by OA north's specialist in faunal remains, and subject to the results, there may be a requirement for more detailed analysis. A contingency has been included for the assessment of such faunal remains for analysis.

3.2.12 ***Human Remains****:* any human remains uncovered will be left *in situ*, covered and protected. No further investigation will continue beyond that required to establish the date and character of the burial. MAS and the local Coroner will be informed immediately. If removal is essential the exhumation of any funerary remains will require the provision of a Home Office license, under section 25 of the Burial Act of 1857. An application will be made by OA North for the study area on discovery of any such remains and the removal will be carried out with due care and sensitivity under the environmental health regulations. Any delays caused by unforeseen and complex excavation of inhumations may be subject to a variation to the cost of the contract and will be agreed with the client.

3.2.13 ***Treatment of finds:*** all finds will be exposed, lifted, cleaned, conserved, marked, bagged and boxed in accordance with the United Kingdom Institute for Conservation (UKIC) *First Aid For Finds*, 1998 (new edition) and the recipient museum's guidelines.

3.2.14 ***Treasure:*** any gold and silver artefacts recovered during the course of the excavation will be removed to a safe place and reported to the local Coroner according to the procedures relating to the Treasure Act, 1996. Where removal cannot take place on the same working day as discovery, suitable security will be employed to protect the finds from theft.

3.2.15 All identified finds and artefacts will be retained, although certain classes of building material can sometimes be discarded after recording if an appropriate sample is retained on advice from the recipient museum's archive curator.

3.2.16 ***Contingency plan:*** in the event of significant archaeological features being encountered during the evaluation, discussions will take place with the Archaeological Officer, as to the extent of further works to be carried out, and in agreement with the Client. All further works would be subject to a variation to this project design. In addition, a contingency costing may also be employed for unseen delays caused by prolonged periods of bad weather, vandalism, discovery of unforeseen complex deposits and/or artefacts which require specialist removal, use of shoring to excavate important features close to the excavation sections etc. This has been included in the Costings document and would be in agreement with the client.

3.3 REPORT

3.3.1 ***Interim Statement:*** within one-two weeks of completion of the fieldwork, an interim statement will be forwarded to the client and to MAS in order that a decision can be agreed as to any required mitigation strategies.

3.3.2 ***Final Report:*** one bound and one unbound copy of a written synthetic report will be submitted to the client within eight weeks of completion of the study.

3.3.3 One copy of the final report will also be deposited with the Merseyside SMR **no later than six months** after completion of the project. This will be a **digital and paper copy** of the report, including its relevant accompanying AutoCAD plans. CAD drawings are to be delivered in DXF; Databases in ASCII delimited text or MS Access; Text in ASCII text. A copy of the final report/s will be deposited in the National Monuments Record, English Heritage, Swindon.

3.3.4 The report will include a copy of this project design, and indications of any agreed departure from that design. It will also include a complete bibliography of sources from which data has been derived.

3.3.5 This report will identify areas of defined archaeology, and will present, summarise, and interpret the results of the programme detailed above. An assessment and statement of the actual and potential archaeological significance of the identified archaeology within the broader context of regional and national archaeological priorities will be made. Illustrative material will include a location map, section drawings, and plans.

3.3.6 Provision will be made for a summary report to be submitted to a suitable regional or national archaeological journal within one year of completion of fieldwork, if relevant results are obtained. A summary of findings will be sent to the regional Council for British Archaeology group, CBA North West (c/o Dr M Nevell, UMAU, University of Manchester, Oxford Road, Manchester, M13 9PL who will provide a pro-forma sheet).

3.3.7 ***Confidentiality:*** all internal reports to the client are designed as documents for the specific use of the Client, for the particular purpose as defined in the project brief and project design, and should be treated as such. They are not suitable for publication as academic documents or otherwise without amendment or revision.

3.4 **ARCHIVE**

3.4.1 The results of the archaeological work consists of all written records and materials recovered, drawn and photographic records. It will be quantified, ordered, indexed and internally consistent. It will also be carried out to professional standards, in accordance with current English Heritage guidelines (*Management of Archaeological Projects*, 2nd edition, 1991) and prepared in line with UKIC Guidelines for the preparation of excavation archives for long-term storage (1990).

3.4.2 The project archive will be provided in the English Heritage Centre for Archaeology format and a synthesis will be submitted to the SMR (the index to the archive and a copy of the report). Arrangements for deposition of the full site archive will be made with Liverpool Museum, National Museums & Galleries on Merseyside. The National Museums Liverpool (NML) *'Guidelines on the Deposition of Archaeological Archives'* will be consulted.

3.4.3 Arrangements for the long-term storage of any artefacts ought to be agreed with the landowner, MAS and NML. Where the landowner does not wish to transfer all, or part of the archive to NML, MAS and the Archive Curator will be consulted on an alternative course of action.

4. HEALTH AND SAFETY

4.1 OA North provides a Health and Safety Statement for all projects and maintains a Unit Safety policy. All site procedures are in accordance with the guidance set out in the Health and Safety Manual compiled by the Standing Conference of Archaeological Unit Managers (1997). A written risk assessment will be undertaken in advance of project commencement and copies will be made available on request to all interested parties.

4.2 Full regard will, of course, be given to all constraints (services etc) during the evaluation as well as to all Health and Safety considerations. As a matter of course the Unit uses a U-Scan device prior to any excavation to test for services, however, this is only an approximate location tool. **It is assumed that should the client be in possession of any information on the location of services within the site, that these will be made available prior to the fieldwork commencing.** This will ensure the risk is dealt with appropriately.

4.3 A portable toilet with hand washing facilities will be provided and located on or adjacent to the site.

4.4 Any known contamination issues or any specific health and safety requirements on site should be made known to OA North by the client to ensure all procedures can be met. Should areas of previously unknown contamination be encountered on site the works will be halted and a revision of the risk assessment carried out. Should it be necessary to supply additional PPE or other contamination avoidance equipment this will be costed as a variation.

5. OTHER MATTERS

5.1 ***Project Monitoring:*** whilst the work is undertaken for the client, the Archaeological Officer at MAS will be kept fully informed of the work. Any proposed changes to the project design will be agreed with the Archaeological Officer and the client.

5.2 ***Access:*** OA North will consult with the client regarding access to the site.

5.3 ***Reinstatement:*** the areas excavated will be backfilled with the spoil for practical and health and safety reasons. Any further reinstatement will be undertaken by the client prior to/during development.

5.4 ***Public Access:*** it is assumed that the site will be protected from public access by hoarding/fencing (erected by the client). However, should it be necessary for OA North to arrange suitable security fencing, such as heras, this will be agreed with the client and costed as a variation.

6 WORK TIMETABLE

6.1 ***Rapid desk-based assessment:*** this element is expected to take two days to complete.

6.2 ***Evaluation:*** it is anticipated that the evaluation will take approximately two days to complete. An interim statement will be issued within one week following completion of the fieldwork.

6.3 ***Report:*** the client report will be completed within approximately eight weeks following completion of the fieldwork.

7 STAFFING

7.1 The project will be under the direct management of **Emily Mercer BA (Hons) MSc AIFA** (OA North Senior Project Manager) to whom all correspondence should be addressed.

7.2 The excavation will be directed by **Andy Lane** (OA North supervisor). Andy is an experienced field archaeologist who has undertaken supervision of numerous small- and large-scale evaluation and excavation projects. Andy will be assisted by an OA North archaeological assistant.

7.3 Assessment of the finds from the evaluation will be undertaken under the auspices of OA North's in-house finds specialist **Chris Howard-Davis** (OA North project officer). Chris acts as OA North's in-house finds specialist and has extensive knowledge of all finds of all periods from archaeological sites in northern England.

7.4 The processing and analysis of any palaeoenvironmental samples will be carried out under the auspices of **Elizabeth Huckerby BA, MSc** (OA North project officer), who has extensive experience of the palaeoecology of the North West, having been one of the principal palaeoenvironmentalists in the English Heritage-funded North West Wetlands Survey.

8 INSURANCE

8.1 OA North has a professional indemnity cover to a value of £2,000,000; proof of which can be supplied as required.

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APPENDIX 2: WATCHING BRIEF PROJECT DESIGN

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 PROJECT BACKGROUND

1.1.1 Wainhomes (North West) Ltd (hereafter the 'client') commissioned Oxford Archaeology North (OA North) to undertake an archaeological investigation for an area of land off Pipit Avenue, Newton-le-Willows (NGR centred SJ 5830 9530), as a condition to the planning consent for residential. The condition requested by Merseyside Archaeological Service (MAS) was due to the potential for the remains of the Roman road, running from Wigan to Wilderspool, to be affected by the proposed scheme. Evaluation trenching, consisting of two trenches measuring 20m by 2.4m, was undertaken in November 2005 within the eastern side of the proposed development area (see attached plan).

1.1.2 Trenching revealed two layers consisting of a post-medieval surface, possibly a yard area, and a possible levelling layer from sand extraction, identifiable on the 1839 Tithe map. Beneath these were two parallel ditches, aligned north/south, believed to be those delineating the Roman road. However, the road surface was not located and it is evident that it had been truncated, most probably in the nineteenth century to the sand extraction for the local glassworks. The ditches were similar in profile to the ditches either side of the identified Roman road at Acorn Street (Philpott and Cowell 1995), Crow Lane East and Pine Avenue (Smith 1992) excavations, and contained similar fills. The alignment of the Roman road lies approximately 8m to the west of the course surveyed and identified as a single dotted line on Ordnance Survey maps, which could be explained by the fact that the road, including the ditches, spans an area of approximately 17.5m in width.

1.1.3 An amber bead was retrieved from within the deposits of a ditch, and is thought to date from between 1000BC and 500AD, indicating that it is possible that the bead derived from an earlier context to that of the Roman road. It may have been redeposited within the fill of the ditch, most probably by the action of inwash into the ditches from the surrounding surfaces, in particular the possible road surface.

1.2 ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND

1.2.1 The course of the Roman road from Wigan to Wilderspool is shown on recent map coverage, passing to the east of the proposed development area, and traces of the road itself were still visible across the fields in the area at least until 1836 (Philpott 2000, 19). Between 1985 and 2002, four sections of the road were evaluated, three to the south of Crow Lane, and one to the north (*op cit*, 23; Hayes and Adams 2002, 6). From the results of the evaluations it was clear that the road had been flanked by ditches, and was approximately 5m wide. The details of the construction of the road and ditches varied, probably due to local differences in drainage and the availability of raw materials (Philpott 2000, 31).

1.2.2 An account of 1916 records that vestiges of the road were even found to the north of the proposed development at Holly House Farm (Lane 1916, 146). However, investigations in 2004 found no evidence of the Roman road (OA North 2004). In either its surface or associated ditches, and no residual Roman material was recovered. It was concluded that all remains of the road have been obliterated by the impact of Holly House Farm. However, a north/south post-medieval metalled road surface was revealed (*ibid*), which suggests that there is a possibility that its route may have been reused (Sarah-Jane Farr pers comm).

1.2.3 More recently, extensive extraction of sand for the glass industry in the area around St Helens occurred in the nineteenth century (Chitty and Lewis 2002, 167). Crown Glass Works, to the north of the proposed development site, operated between 1832 and 1861, reopening in 1866 as a glass bottle works (Philpott 1988). The Tithe map of 1839 has shown that the development site was named Big Sandy Yard and the adjacent field was Sandy Mains, suggesting sand extraction. However, the precise location of extraction is not known.

1.3 OXFORD ARCHAEOLOGY NORTH

1.3.1 Oxford Archaeology North has considerable experience of assessment and building assessment, as well as the evaluation and excavation of sites of all periods, having undertaken a great number of small and large scale projects throughout Northern England during the past

24 years. These have taken place within the planning process, to fulfil the requirements of Clients and planning authorities, to very rigorous timetables.

1.3.2 OA North has the professional expertise and resources to undertake the project detailed below to a high level of quality and efficiency. OA North is an **Institute of Field Archaeologists (IFA) registered organisation, registration number 17**, and all its members of staff operate subject to the IFA Code of Conduct.

2. OBJECTIVES

2.1 The following programme has been designed to identify any additional information regarding the surviving archaeological deposits associated with Roman road to be directly impacted by the development. This concerns solely the eastern side of the development site (see attached plan), investigated during the evaluation phase of the archaeological enquiry. The scope of work will provide for accurate recording of any archaeological remains that are disturbed by ground works for the proposed development.

2.2 ***Watching brief:*** to maintain a permanent archaeological presence during associated ground disturbance (see attached plan), to determine the quality, extent and importance of any archaeological remains discovered that will contribute to the understanding of the Roman road remains.

2.3 ***Report and Archive:*** the results will be incorporated into the report for the earlier evaluation trenching investigation, and will be completed for the client within eight weeks of the fieldwork. A site archive will be produced to English Heritage guidelines (MAP 2).

3 METHOD STATEMENT

3.1 WATCHING BRIEF

3.1.1 A programme of field observation will accurately record the location, extent, and character of any surviving archaeological features and/or deposits associated with the Roman road during the proposed ground disturbance. These groundworks must be carried out under constant archaeological observation unless, with consultation and agreement of the Archaeological Officer (AO), it is identified that a more targeted and timetabled archaeological presence would be more appropriate. Should the watching brief timetable alter the client will be notified immediately.

3.1.2 The watching brief will cover the eastern end of the site to be disturbed by the development, including the clearing of topsoil and any overburden, the excavation of trenches for building foundations, services and other earthmoving activities. This work will comprise archaeological observation during the excavation for these works, the systematic examination of any subsoil horizons exposed during the course of the groundworks, and the accurate recording of all archaeological features and horizons, and any artefacts, identified.

3.1.3 Discovery of archaeological remains will require stoppage of the clearance/construction work to allow OA North archaeologists sufficient time to undertake adequate recording. This will be carried out as efficiently as possible in order to minimise disruption. Depending on the deposits revealed, it is anticipated that the average time for the suspension of works will be approximately 2-4 hours.

3.1.4 Putative archaeological features and/or deposits identified by the machining process, together with the immediate vicinity of any such features, will be cleaned by hand, using either hoes, shovel scraping, and/or trowels depending on the subsoil conditions, and where appropriate sections will be studied and drawn. Any such features will be sample excavated (i.e. selected pits and postholes will normally only be half-sectioned, linear features will be subject to no more than a 10% sample, and extensive layers will, where possible, be sampled by partial rather than complete removal).

3.1.5 During this phase of work, recording will comprise a full description and preliminary classification of features or materials revealed, and their accurate location (either on plan and/or section, and as grid co-ordinates where appropriate). Features will be planned accurately at appropriate scales and annotated on to the large-scale digital plan provided by the client. A photographic record will be undertaken simultaneously.

3.1.6 A plan will be produced of the areas of groundworks showing the location and extent of the ground disturbance and one or more dimensioned sections will be produced.

3.1.7 ***Contingency plan:*** in the event of significant archaeological features being encountered during the watching brief, discussions will take place with the Archaeological Officer at MAS or a representative, as to the extent of further works to be carried out. All further works would be subject to a variation to this project design.

3.1.8 In addition, should environmental/organic deposits be present on site, it would be necessary to discuss and agree a programme of palaeoenvironmental sampling and or dating with Archaeological Officer at MAS.

3.1.9 ***Treatment of finds:*** all finds will be exposed, lifted, cleaned, conserved, marked, bagged and boxed in accordance with the United Kingdom Institute for Conservation (UKIC) *First Aid For Finds*, 1998 (new edition) and the recipient museum's guidelines.

3.1.10 All identified finds and artefacts will be retained, although certain classes of building material can sometimes be discarded after recording if an appropriate sample is retained on advice from the recipient museum's archive curator.

3.1.11 ***Treasure:*** any gold and silver artefacts recovered during the course of the excavation will be removed to a safe place and reported to the local Coroner according to the procedures relating to the Treasure Act, 1996. Where removal cannot take place on the same working day as discovery, suitable security will be employed to protect the finds from theft.

3.1.12 ***Human Remains****:* any human remains uncovered will be left *in situ*, covered and protected. No further investigation will continue beyond that required to establish the date and character of the burial. MAS Archaeological Officer and the local Coroner will be informed immediately. If removal is essential the exhumation of any funerary remains will require the provision of a Home Office license, under section 25 of the Burial Act of 1857. An application will be made by OA North for the study area on discovery of any such remains and the removal will be carried out with due care and sensitivity under the environmental health regulations. The cost of removal or treatment will be agreed with the client and costed as a variation.

3.2 REPORT

3.2.1 The results will be incorporated into the report for the evaluation trenching undertaken in November 2005. One bound and one unbound copy of the report will be submitted to the client, and a further bound copy and digital copy, supplied as pdf files, will be submitted to the Merseyside HER within eight weeks of completion of the fieldwork.

3.2.2 ***Confidentiality:*** all internal reports to the client are designed as documents for the specific use of the Client, for the particular purpose as defined in the project brief and project design, and should be treated as such. They are not suitable for publication as academic documents or otherwise without amendment or revision.

3.3 ARCHIVE

3.3.1 The project archive represents the collation and indexing of all the data and material gathered during the course of the project. The results of the 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). This archive will be provided in the English Heritage Centre for Archaeology format. Arrangements will be made for the deposition of the full archive with Liverpool Museum, National Museums and Galleries on Merseyside ('Resource' registered repository).

3.3.2 Arrangements for the long-term storage of any artefacts ought to be agreed with the landowner, the MAS Archaeological Officer, and the National Museums Liverpool (NML) before commencement of the works. Where the landowner does not wish to transfer all, or part of the archive to NML, the MAS Archaeological Officer and Archive Curator will advise on an alternative course of action.

4 OTHER MATTERS

4.1 HEALTH AND SAFETY

4.1.1 OA North provides a Health and Safety Statement for all projects and maintains a Unit Safety policy. All site procedures are in accordance with the guidance set out in the Health and Safety Manual compiled by the Standing Conference of Archaeological Unit Managers (1997). OA North will liase with the client to ensure all health and safety regulations are met. A risk assessment will be completed in advance of any on-site works and supplied to MAS Archaeological Officer and the client if requested. It is assumed that any information regarding health and safety issues on site will be made available by the client to OA North prior to the work commencing on site.

4.2 PROJECT MONITORING

4.2.1 Monitoring of this project will be undertaken through the auspices of the MAS Archaeological Officer, on behalf of the Local Planning Authority, who will be informed of the start and end dates of the work. One week's notice is required by the Archaeological Officer.

4.3 WORK TIMETABLE

4.3.1 OA North can execute projects at very short notice once a formal written agreement has been received from the client, allowing sufficient time to provide MAS with notice of works.

4.3.2 ***Watching Brief:*** the duration of the archaeological presence for the watching brief is as yet unknown, being dictated by the client's schedule of works.

4.3.3 ***Report:*** the client report will be completed within approximately eight weeks following completion of the fieldwork.

4.4 STAFFING

4.4.1 The project will be under the direct management of **Emily Mercer BA (Hons) MSc AIFA** (OA North Senior Project Manager) to whom all correspondence should be addressed.

4.4.2 All elements of the fieldwork will be undertaken by either an OA North project officer or supervisor experienced in this type of project. All OA North project officers and supervisors are experienced field archaeologists capable of carrying out projects of all sizes. Due to scheduling requirements it is not possible to provide these details at the present time. However, once the timetable of constructions works is made available details of staff can be provided.

4.4.3 Assessment of the finds from the evaluation will be undertaken under the auspices of OA North's in-house finds specialist **Christine Howard-Davis** (OA North project officer). Christine has extensive knowledge of finds from many periods.

4.4.4 Assessment of any palaeoenvironmental samples will be undertaken by or under the auspices of **Elizabeth Huckerby MSc** (OA North environmental manager). Elizabeth has extensive knowledge of the palaeoecology of the North West through her work on the English Heritage-funded North West Wetlands Survey.

4.5 INSURANCE

4.5.1 OA North has a professional indemnity cover to a value of £2,000,000; proof of which can be supplied as required.

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APPENDIX 3: CONTEXT INDEX

Context	Trench	Description	Max. Depth
100	1	Light to mid-orange brown firm clay 30%-sand 70% - natural	
101	1	Mid-reddish-brown firm silty 20%-sand 80% sand – levelling layer	0.16m
102	1	Dark grey compact silty 40%-sand 60% - possible surface	0.28m
103	1	Mid-orangy-red loose sand – modern dumping layer	0.43m
104	1	Dark grey brown friable silty 45%-sand 55% - topsoil	0.43m
105	1	Cut of north/south ditch	0.92m
106	1	Light grey compact clayey-sand with frequent subrounded stones and pebbles 70% - fill of ***105***	0.14m
107	1	Dark grey soft to firm silty 30%-sand 70% - fill of ***105***	0.29m
108	1	Mid-brown soft silty 20%-sand 80% - fill of ***105***	0.29m
109	1	Mid-dark brown firm silty 45%-sand 55% - fill of ***105***	0.2m
110	1	Mid-reddish-brown loose silty-sand – demolition layer	0.6m
111	1	Mid-grey brown soft silty-sand – fill of ***113***	0.12m
112	1	Mid-grey brown soft silty-sand with frequent small rounded pebbles 90% - fill of ***113***	0.05m
113	1	Cut of north/south ditch	1.3m
114	1	Mid-orangy-brown soft to loose sand – fill of ***113***	0.8m
115	1	Cut of north/south gully	0.11m
200	1	Light cream mottled orange brown firm clay-sand with sand banding – natural	
201	2	Dark reddish-brown compact silty 5%-sand 95% - levelling layer	0.42m
202	2	Dark grey compact silty 20%-sand 80% - possible surface	0.22m
203	2	Mid-reddish-brown friable silty 15%-sand 85% - topsoil	0.3m
204	2	Cut of north/south ditch	0.58m
205	2	Light creamy-brown compact sand with frequent small to medium sized rounded stones and pebbles– fill of ***204***	0.09m
206	2	Light to mid-grey brown soft to firm sand – fill of ***204***	0.12m

207	2	Light reddish-brown loose to soft sand – fill of ***204***	0.33m
208	2	Mid-brown moderately loose silty 10%-sand 90% - fill of ***204***	0.26m
209	2	Mid-orange brown soft sand – dumped layer	0.05m
210	2	Cut of north/south ditch	0.26m
211	2	Light creamy-orange brown moderately compact sand with frequent small rounded stones and pebbles 65% - fill of ***210***	0.04m
212	2	Dark grey brown firm silty 20%-sand 80% - fill of ***210***	0.07m
213	2	Light to mid-brown soft silty 25%-sand 75% - fill of ***210***	0.28m

APPENDIX 4: FINDS CATALOGUE

Tr	Ctxt	Material	Category	Qty	Description	Date
1	***102***	Ceramic	Vessel	3	Small fragments of blue and white transfer-printed white earthenware; none of which measure more than 20mm by 10mm	Nineteenth century onwards
1	***102***	Ceramic	Vessel	1	Small fragment creamware	Late eighteenth to early nineteenth century
1	***102***	Glass	Vessel	1	Small wall fragment, etched colourless glass	Modern
1	***114***	Stone	Amber	1	Small irregular bead made from dark reddish-brown amber. Slight recent damage to one edge. The bead appears to be a water-worn pebble with an approximately central hour-glass perforation, *c* 2.5mm diameter. Bead *c* 12mm by *c* 8mm	Possibly prehistoric
1	U/S	Ceramic	Vessel	1	Fragment blue and white transfer-printed earthenware. Small and spalled	Nineteenth century onwards
1	U/S	Ceramic	Vessel	1	Rim fragment. Creamware. Small and spalled	Late eighteenth to early nineteenth century
1	U/S	Ceramic	Vessel	1	Body fragment, late industrial slipware bowl. Small and spalled	Nineteenth century onwards
2	***202***	Ceramic	Vessel	1	Late brown stoneware jug handle	Late nineteenth century onwards