

**DETAILED METHOD STATEMENT
FOR
ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF
NCP CAR PARK
DEVELOPMENT PLOT G
STATION HILL
READING
RG1
(February 2021)**

**IN ACCORDANCE WITH

WRITTEN SCHEME OF INVESTIGATION FOR
AN ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF
NCP CAR PARK
DEVELOPMENT PLOT G
STATION HILL
READING
(June 2020)**

FOR

SH Reading Master LLP

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1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Objective of this Method Statement

- 1.1.1 Pre-Construct Archaeology has been commissioned by Cast Consultancy on behalf of SH Reading Master LLP to produce a detailed Method Statement for archaeological watching brief on exposure of deposits following the demolition of the NCP multi storey car park within Plot G at Station Hill Reading, Berkshire, RG1. **Figure 1** shows the location of the Station Hill Development Plot G, **Figures 2** and **3** show the location of watching brief area (former NCP car park).
- 1.1.2 A Written Scheme of Investigation for archaeological watching brief on exposure of deposits following the demolition of the NCP car park has been approved by Berkshire Archaeology, Archaeological Advisor to Reading Borough Council. The Written Scheme of Investigation (Waterman Infrastructure & Environment Limited, 2020 'Station Hill, Reading, Written Scheme of Investigation for Archaeological Watching Brief, NCP Car park') is hereafter referred to in this Method Statement as the 'approved WSI'.
- 1.1.3 This Method Statement is consistent with the approved WSI and should be read in conjunction with that document. It provides additional details on the strategy to ensure archaeological objectives are achieved to satisfy the aims and objectives set out in the approved WSI.

1.2 Archaeological Watching Brief

- 1.2.1 The archaeological watching brief will be carried out within the area of the NCP car park (**Figures 2** and **3**). The area comprises c.0.27ha and is centred at Ordnance Survey NGR SU 71395 73727.

1.3 Requirement for the Archaeological Watching Brief

- 1.3.1 The approved WSI was prepared in response to the results of a Desk Based Assessment prepared by Foundations Archaeology (on behalf of Waterman) in 2015 and Waterman's later 2019 Historic Environment Desk Based Assessment (HEDBA) which state that the northern parcel of land at the Station Hill development site holds potential for the following archaeological remains:
- A north- south aligned ditch (Plot B).
 - A north/ north west to south/ south east aligned undated linear containing alluvial deposits potentially associated with a managed watercourse surrounding 'Friary Mead' (Plot A).
- 1.3.2 The NCP multi storey car park was still in use as a car park in January 2021; the archaeological potential of the site has therefore not been evaluated. Cast Consultancy have therefore considered that an archaeological watching brief on exposure of deposits following the demolition of the car park would be a proportionate response.

2 GEOLOGY

- 2.1.1 British Geological Survey (BGS) England and Wales (Sheet No. 268, 1:50,000, 2000) and the BGS online geology (1:50,000) shows that the underlying bedrock geology comprises the Seaford Chalk Formation and the Newhaven Chalk Formation. The superficial deposits are recorded as Alluvium (clay, silt, sand and gravel) to the north of Garrard Street in the area of the NCP car park and Taplow Gravel Member (sand and gravel) to the south of Garrard Street.

3 ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF

3.1 Aims and Objectives

3.1.1 In general, the aims of the watching brief as set out in the approved WSI are to:

- determine the presence and/or absence of archaeological remains, and if remains are present, to make a full record to current standards;
- determine the approximate extent, condition and state of preservation of any remains;
- confirm the approximate date or range of dates of the remains; and
- prepare a Watching Brief report outlining the results.

3.2 Method

- 3.2.1 The watching brief will be undertaken by an appropriately experienced and qualified member of PCA staff. As set out in the approved WSI, it will commence once the concrete ground slabs of the NCP car park have been lifted. It is anticipated that the slab will be broken using a hydraulic breaker and where possible, the slab will be pulled up using the excavator bucket. The watching brief will commence on the exposure of deposits immediately beneath the concrete slab.
- 3.2.2 The archaeologist will need to be present during the lifting of the slab and exposure of the deposits beneath. Following lifting of the slab, the surface of the deposits that are exposed will be cleaned, if necessary, using appropriate hand tools. Should significant archaeological deposits be revealed during this process, the deposits will be archaeologically sampled and recorded in accordance with the methodology for recording as described below.
- 3.2.3 If modern made ground is present and no archaeological deposits are identified, any further machine excavation required by the contractor will be supervised by the archaeologist. The mechanical excavator will use a toothless ditching bucket to remove modern overburden. Overburden will be removed in a series of controlled spits. Mechanical excavation will cease at the top of the first archaeologically significant horizon, alluvial and colluvial deposits (mixture of yellowish brown/reddish brown sandy silts with flint gravels, and light yellowish-brown sandy clays) or the level of natural geological deposits (sand and gravel deposits representing drift geology of the Taplow Gravel Member overlying chalk bedrock of the Seaford Chalk Formation and Newhaven Chalk Formation (undifferentiated).
- 3.2.4 Where appropriate, the archaeologist will have the authority to halt work for sufficient time to enable an archaeological record to be made in accordance with the guidelines contained within ClfA (2014, updated 2020) *Standard and Guidance for an Archaeological Watching Brief*.
- 3.2.5 The majority of the investigation of archaeological levels will be by hand, with cleaning, examination and recording mainly in plan and in section, where relevant.
- 3.2.6 Archaeological excavation may require work by 'pick and shovel' or occasionally by use of the machine or a mini-digger. Such techniques will be used only for the removal of homogeneous and 'low grade' layers where it can reasonably be argued that more detailed attention would not produce information of value. They will not be employed on complex stratigraphy, and the deposits to be removed must have been properly recorded first.
- 3.2.7 Archaeological structural features (including 19th century remains) will be cleaned using hand tools and recorded in plan at 1:20 using standard single context recording methods. Photographs will also be taken. A sample of other archaeological features and deposits (stratigraphical layers, cuts, fills) will be excavated using hand tools and recorded in plan at 1:20 and in section at 1:10.

- 3.2.8 As stated in the approved WSI, in the event of human remains being discovered on Site they will be left in situ, covered and protected. The Principal Contractor, Waterman and the Coroner will be informed. Waterman will in turn inform Berkshire Archaeology. No excavation of burials and removal of skeletons shall be undertaken during the watching brief without obtaining a Ministry of Justice licence to remove buried human remains (including cremated remains). A GPS location of any suspect or confirmed burials shall be taken.
- 3.2.9 All gold and silver 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 the discovery suitable security measures will be taken to protect the finds from theft.

Access and Safety

- 3.2.10 Reasonable access to archaeological areas will be arranged for representatives of Berkshire Archaeology, Archaeological Advisor to Reading Borough Council who wish to be satisfied, through site inspections, that the archaeological works are being conducted to proper professional standards and in accordance with the agreements made.
- 3.2.11 All relevant health and safety legislation, regulations and codes of practice will be respected.
- 3.2.12 Ramboll engineers Ground Investigation Report ref SHR-RAM-SB-XX-RP-G-000016 Rev C02 issued 31/01/2020 identified no significant risks. However, some asbestos was discovered in the made ground including some exceedance of generic assessment criteria for heavy-end petroleum hydrocarbons, and one sample exceeded the GAC for benzo[a]pyrene. The appropriate level of PPE (safety boots, hard hat, high visibility vest, masks, overalls, gloves etc.) will be used by PCA staff. The Principal Contractor, Midgard, shall provide protection for archaeological undertakings, such as a decontamination unit and gas monitors if required.
- 3.2.13 If the site is considered to be 'confined space' then appropriately qualified staff must be employed as must the appropriate associated equipment.
- 3.2.14 The watching brief area will be fenced by Midgard using metal Heras fencing provided. The site itself is securely hoarded by Midgard. Midgard will also provide any temporary works required to ensure the working areas are safe.
- 3.2.15 As the watching is to be carried out during a period of Covid-19 government restrictions all works shall be undertaken to the requirements set out in PCA's RAMS, which has been designed to follow those government requirements.

Recording Systems

- 3.2.16 A unique-number site code (BNCR21) has been assigned by Pre-Construct Archaeology for the archaeological watching brief.
- 3.2.17 The recording systems adopted during the watching brief will be fully compatible with those most widely used elsewhere in Reading that is those developed out of the Department of Urban Archaeology Site Manual, most recently published by the Museum of London Archaeology Service (MoLAS 1994). No alternative recording system will be adopted without the prior agreement of Berkshire Archaeology, Archaeological Advisor to Reading Borough Council.
- 3.2.18 The site archive will be so organised as to be compatible with the other archaeological archives produced in the Local Authority area. Individual descriptions of all archaeological strata and features excavated and exposed will be entered onto prepared *pro-forma* recording sheets which include the same fields of entry as are found on the recording sheets of the Museum of London. Sample recording sheets, sample registers, finds recording sheets, accession catalogues, and the photographic registers will follow the Museum of London equivalents. This requirement for archival compatibility extends to the use of computerised databases.
- 3.2.19 A 'site location plan' indicating site north and based on the current Ordnance Survey 1:1250 map (reproduced with the permission of the Controller of HMSO) will be prepared. This will be

supplemented by a trench plan at 1:200 (or 1:100), which will show the location of the areas investigated in relation to the watching brief area and Ordnance Survey National Grid Reference. All sections will be located on plan with OS co-ordinates. GPS survey will be used to establish Ordnance Datum.

- 3.2.20 A record of the full extent in plan of all archaeological deposits as revealed during the archaeological watching brief will be made using GPS survey. The surveyed plans will be related to the site grid and able to be reproduced at a scale of 1:10 or 1:20. 'Single context planning' will be used if the deposits are deeply stratified, and the information will be processed for eventual CAD application.
- 3.2.21 Upon completion of the watching brief area, if possible at least one long section will be hand drawn or a representative part including a profile of the top of the natural deposits (extrapolated from cut features etc., if the watching brief has not been fully excavated). Other sections, including the half-sections of individual layers or features will be drawn by hand in pencil on permatrace as appropriate to 1:10 or 1:20.
- 3.2.22 The OD height of all principal strata and features will be calculated and indicated on the appropriate plans and sections.

Stratigraphic Matrix

- 3.2.23 A 'Harris Matrix' stratification diagram will be used to record stratigraphic relationships. This record will be compiled and fully checked during the course of the archaeological watching brief. Spot dating will be incorporated where applicable during the course of the watching brief.

Photographic Record

- 3.2.24 A full photographic record of the archaeological watching brief will be prepared. This will comprise high quality colour digital images taken in jpeg and RAW formats, illustrating in both detail and general context the principal features and finds discovered. The photographic record will also include 'working shots' to illustrate more generally the nature of the archaeological watching brief.

3.3 Treatment of Finds and Samples

- 3.3.1 All processing will take place at PCA's Winchester or Brockley premises.

Finds

- 3.3.2 All identified finds and artefacts will be retained according to the stated selection retention and retrieval policy appropriate to the material type and date. No finds will be discarded without the prior approval of the Berkshire Archaeology, Archaeological Advisor to Reading Borough Council.
- 3.3.3 All finds will be treated in a proper manner and to standards agreed in advance with the recipient museum. They will be exposed, lifted, cleaned, conserved, marked, bagged and boxed in accordance with the guidelines set out in the United Kingdom Institute for Conservation's 'Conservation Guidelines No.2'. All metal objects will be x-rayed and then selected for conservation (except in those cases where Berkshire Archaeology, Archaeological Advisor to Reading Borough Council agrees that this will not be necessary).
- 3.3.4 Ceramic (pottery, clay tobacco, building material fabric and brick form) reference collections, housed at Pre-Construct Archaeology Limited's office and at the Museum of London will be referred to for descriptive and analytical purposes in order to ensure that terminology is consistent.

Environmental

- 3.3.5 Consideration will be given to the recovery of specialist samples for scientific analysis, particularly samples for absolute dating, structural materials and cultural/environmental evidence. Different sampling strategies may be employed according to the perceived importance of the deposit or feature under investigation. In particular the potential for

environmental analysis to inform our understanding of the development of the local area, and the activities undertaken there, will be assessed. Close attention will be given to sampling for date, structure and environment. Sample size should be taken into account the frequency with which material is likely to occur. Bulk sieving should be employed both for recovery of environmental evidence to ensure that complete samples of artefactual evidence are collected for significant deposits.

- 3.3.6 The strategy for sampling archaeological and environmental deposits and structures (which can include soils timbers, animal bone and human burials) will be developed in consultation with will be developed in consultation with PCA's environmental consultants, QUEST and the Berkshire Archaeological Officer and the Historic England Scientific Advisor for the region. Subsequent off-site work, and analysis of the processed samples and remains, will be undertaken by, or in consultation with, our environmental consultant.
- 3.3.7 A high priority will be given to the sampling of river and other anaerobic deposits (such as peat) where organic materials may be preserved.
- 3.3.8 Organic samples will be subject to appropriate specialist analysis. There may be a requirement to submit timbers to dendrochronological analysis and to process some samples to provide C14 dating. Other forms of specialist analysis may also be appropriate.

4 SITE ARCHIVE

- 4.1.1 The integrity of the site archive will be maintained. The finds and records will be available for public consultation. Appropriate guidance set out in the Museum and Galleries Commission's *'Standards in the Museum Care of Archaeological Collections'* (1992) *Towards an Accessible Archaeological Archive. The Transfer of Archaeological Archives to Museums: Guidelines for Use in England, Northern Ireland Scotland and Wales* (SMA 1995).
- 4.1.2 The minimum acceptable standard for the site archive is defined in Historic England 2015 *'Management of Research Projects in the Historic Environment: The MoRPHE Project Managers' Guide'*. It will include all materials recovered and all written, drawn, and photographic records, including a copy of all reports relating to the investigations undertaken. It will be quantified, ordered, indexed, and internally consistent before transfer to Reading Museum. It will also contain a site matrix, a site summary and brief written observations on the artefactual and environmental data.
- 4.1.3 United Kingdom Institute for Conservation *guidelines for the preparation of excavation archives for long term storage* (1990) will be followed.

5 WATCHING BRIEF REPORT

- 5.1.1 Upon completion of the watching brief, a report will be prepared setting out the results of the fieldwork and any post-excavation artefact and ecofact assessments. The report will be submitted within four weeks of the completion of the watching brief.
- 5.1.2 The report will include the following content, as appropriate:
- Non-technical summary;
 - Introductory Statement
 - Review of the aims and objectives
 - Methodology
 - Summary of the results including a description of the nature, date, extent, condition and significance of any archaeological and environmental materials uncovered with specialist opinions and parallels from other sites in the area
 - Conclusion
 - Illustrations including plans and section drawings at suitable scale and general and detailed photographs
 - Table of all artefacts recovered from the archaeological works
 - Interpretation of the results with attention given to the significance of the remains in local, regional and national terms, if appropriate.
 - References
- 5.1.3 PCA will input details of the project to the online maintained by the Online Access to the Index of Archaeological Investigations (OASIS) Project.
- 5.1.4 Minimum requirements for public dissemination is for HER report forms to be submitted to the Berkshire HER as soon as possible or within 6 months of completion of fieldwork, and the provision of a short paragraph summary of the results for publication in the *Berkshire Archaeological Journal* 'Excavation Round-Up'. Such publications will meet the minimum requirements set out in Historic England 2015 '*Management of Research Projects in the Historic Environment: The MoRPHE Project Managers' Guide*'.
- 5.1.5 If required, additional publication requirements will be agreed with Cast Consultancy (for Berkshire Archaeology's agreement) and a project design will be produced for post-excavation analysis leading to publication and deposition of the research archive.

6 RESOURCES AND PROGRAMMING

- 6.1.1 The archaeological watching brief will be undertaken by a member of staff who has experience of working in the urban environment and with an understanding of the archaeological issues associated with this site.
- 6.1.2 Accommodation, as well as welfare facilities and tool storage, will be required for the watching brief supervisor. These will be provided by the contractor, Midgard, at the site.
- 6.1.3 The site works will be inspected and monitored by Berkshire Archaeology, Archaeological Advisor to Reading Borough Council.
- 6.1.4 The Health and Safety policies of Pre-Construct Archaeology Limited will be followed and in accordance with all statutory regulations. Full acknowledgement will be made to existing site policies and procedures.



Figure 1: Site location plan showing Development Plots

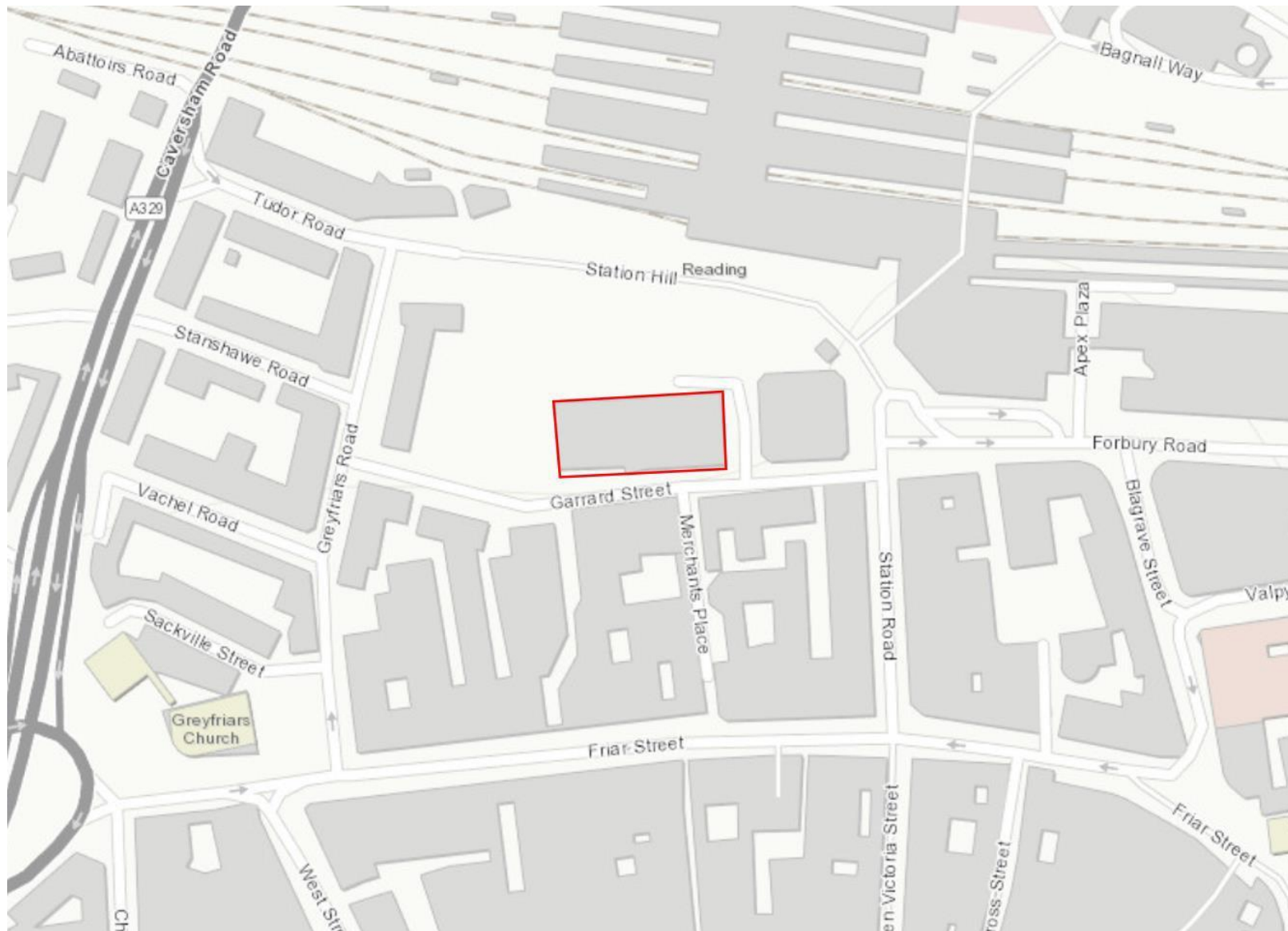


Figure 2: Plan showing location of watching brief highlighted in red.



Figure 3: Plan showing location of Watching Brief area (highlighted in blue) within Development Plot G.