

## Archaeological Field Evaluation



One YMCA  
90 Peartree Lane  
Welwyn Garden City  
AL7 3UL

On behalf of

Kori Construction

March 2024

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March 2023

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*Cover: Extract from the Ordnance Survey 6-inch map of 1899 (Hertfordshire Sheet XXVIII.SE)  
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## 1 Non-Technical Summary

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*This report details the results of a programme of Archaeological Field Evaluation undertaken between the 15<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> January 2024 in connection with the demolition of the existing hostel and the development of a four-storey 100 bed YMCA Hostel, along with up to 43 residential apartments at One YMCA, 90 Peartree Lane, Welwyn Garden City AL7 3UL (NGR: TL 24407 12598). The works were carried out on behalf of Kori Construction in response to condition 3 of the Planning Decision (Planning Ref.: 6/2019/2714/OUTLINE).*

*Five evaluation trenches, representing 5% of the development area, were set out across the Site to provide a comprehensive assessment of the Site's archaeological and palaeoenvironmental potential. These all revealed a similar sequence of manmade and naturally occurring deposits. No features or finds of archaeological significance were present and the site had been subject to extensive disturbance as a result of the later 20<sup>th</sup> century development within the Site.*

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## 2 Introduction

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Border Archaeology (BA) were instructed by Henry Barrow of Kori Construction to carry out a programme of Archaeological Field Evaluation (AFE) in connection with the demolition of the existing hostel and the development of a four storey 100 bed YMCA Hostel, along with up to 43 residential apartments at One YMCA, 90 Peartree Lane, Welwyn Garden City AL7 3UL (NGR: TL 24407 12598; Planning Ref.: 6/2019/2714/OUTLINE; *fig. 1*).

The AFE was carried out between the 15<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> January 2024. This report details the results of the programme of archaeological works and is for submission to Alison Tinniswood BA MA ACIfA, Senior Historic Environment Advisor, Hertfordshire County Council.

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## 3 Site Description

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The Site is located just under 1km to the ESE of Welwyn Garden City town centre on the transition between the residential area of Peartree to the E and the predominantly commercial/industrial area of Broadwater Road and the mainline railway to the W. The Site covers c. 7200sqm at an elevation of c. 85.80m–82.20m AOD and currently comprises a 125-bed hostel operated by One YMCA. It is bounded by Peartree Lane to the E and the residential apartments of Peartree Close to the S, while commercial and light industrial properties lie to the N and W.

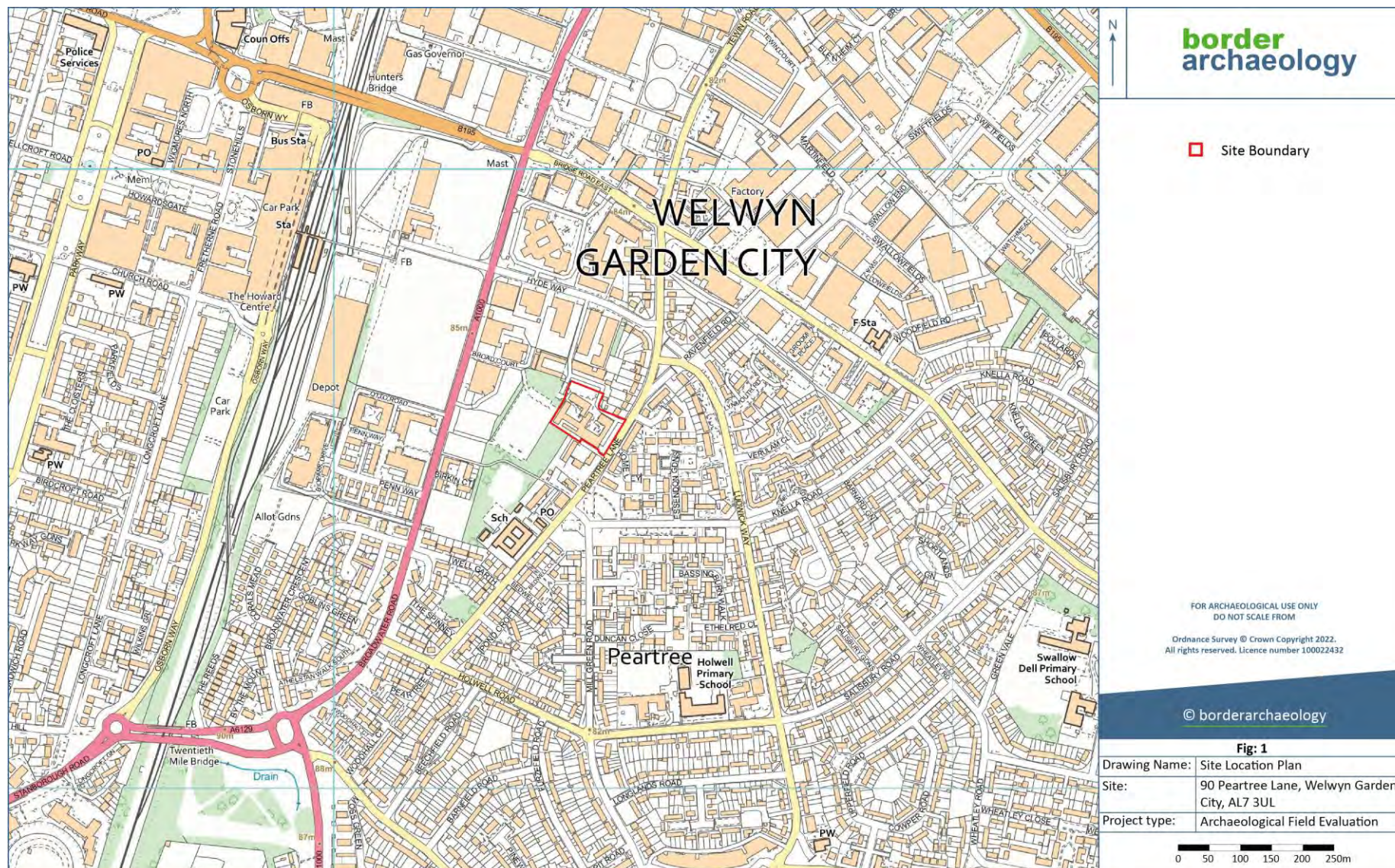
The Site is not located within a Conservation Area or Archaeological Priority Area.

### 3.1 Soils & Geology

The British Geological Survey records underlying chalk geology of the Lewes Nodular and Seaford Chalk Formations which formed in a marine environment approximately 84 to 94 million years ago in the Cretaceous Period. Overlying sedimentary superficial deposits of the Lowestoft Formation (Diamicton) were laid down between 423 and 480,000 years ago during the Quaternary period (BGS 2024).

No records of geotechnical investigations have been identified within the Site or its immediate surrounds (BGS 2024).

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## 4 Historical & Archaeological Background

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The previously submitted WSI (BA 2022) outlined the archaeological and historical background within a 500m study area around the Site and the following is a summary of the information contained therein.

### 4.1 Prehistoric & Romano-British

The earliest activity recorded within the designated study area comprises Late Iron Age material recovered from Salisbury Gardens c. 520m to the SE of Site (HER No.: MHT2808). Late Iron Age/Romano-British transitional activity is also represented, with the recovery of 50 coarse ware vessels from Shortlands Green, located c. 505m to the ESE of Site (HER No.: MHT1576), while Roman pottery was recovered from the junction of Hyde Way and Broadwater Road, c. 245m to the NW of Site (HER No.: MHT13420).

In addition, the supposed line of a Roman road known as the 'Viatores' route 214 passes through Welwyn Garden City approximately c. 640m to the SSW of Site (HER No.: MHT4664; NGR: TL 243 119), although this is not proven by excavation.

### 4.2 Medieval

Medieval activity within the designated study area is limited to the site of an infilled sub-rectangular moat, located c. 340m to the SW of Site (HER No.: MHT2615).

A historic boundary between the parishes of Hatfield and Tewin is recorded c. 810m to the E of Site within a small patch of woodland known as Hens Wood (HER No.: MHT17711).

### 4.3 Post-medieval

The Hatfield map of 1805 depicts the Site at the western extent of an area known as 'Small Gains wood', which extended from just N of the present Woodhall Lane. Numerous properties are scattered throughout the surrounding landscape linked by a network of trackways, three of which traverse the woodland.

The tithe map of 1839 shows that, at this time, the majority of the Site was located within the large plot of land still known as 'Small Gains Woods' (Plot 506), which was owned and occupied by the Marquess of Salisbury. However, the westernmost part extended into what was Plot 512, a small tract of land called 'Bug Croft' which according to the tithe apportionment was owned by Earl Cowper and occupied by one Maria Farr.

The 1<sup>st</sup> Edition 6-inch Ordnance Survey map of 1884 depicts a much-changed landscape from that shown on the tithe map of 45 years earlier. Small Gains Wood has gone and the land has been divided into numerous agricultural field enclosures. The line of the Great Northern Railway is also shown cutting a swathe through the land to the W and a trackway is shown to run in a NE-SW direction, along the present course of Peartree Lane. This track led to

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Peartree Farm (HER No.: MHT17938) which comprised a substantial farmhouse to the W, with a group of buildings ranged around two small compartmented yards to the E; four ponds of varying size are also shown in the fields to the S of the farm.

The 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition 6-inch Ordnance Survey map of 1899 depicts little change affecting Peartree Farm, although a few additional buildings seem to have been added to the westernmost yard; a field boundary to the N has also been removed and a footpath now extends towards a small building on a track leading to Hunters Bridge. Part of the land located between the railway line and the farm had also been turned into a brick works known as the 'Twentieth Mile Pit' after the adjacent railway bridge (HER No.: MHT10940). A siding is visible entering the site from the railway line to the S and a number of small buildings are scattered throughout the works.

## 4.4 Modern

Following construction of Letchworth Garden City in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, the creator Ebenezer Howard sought to establish another planned town in close proximity to London that would provide both industry and pleasant living conditions for its inhabitants. The architect, Louis de Soissons, along with planner Frederic Osborn, designed Welwyn Garden City (HER No.: MHT9599) with distinct commercial, civic and industrial zones that were surrounded by housing; the design included long straight vistas, known as 'The Parkway' and 'Howardsgate', which incorporated ornamental open spaces in the middle of the town.

Construction began in 1920 and 50 properties were initially built to house the workmen and staff. The Ordnance Survey 6-inch Edition map of 1925 depicts the Workmen's Camp (HER No.: MHT10935) as comprising 12 long rectangular buildings arranged in a semicircle with a 'laundry' located to the N. These were situated in an area of wood and scrub within the loop of the railway line. To the S of the camp are the Parish Council Offices, with 'Saw Mills' (HER No.: MHT10934) and 'Brick Works' (HER No.: MHT10933) to the W.

Little change can be seen at Peartree Farm by this time but an additional outbuilding is shown to the E and a small pond-like feature to the S. The small building located to the N of the adjoining footpath (on the track to Hunters Bridge) is now identified as 'Peartree Cottages' and an 'Electric Power Station' is situated to its E.

The Ordnance Survey Provisional Edition of 1948 shows that the farmland around Peartree Farm had been engulfed by the residential street layout of Peartree; the farm itself remained extant but a youth hostel and clubhouse had been erected against its southern boundary.

## 5 Aims & Objectives

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The evaluation sought to:

- Ascertain the extent, depth below ground surface, depth of deposit, character, date, significance and condition of any archaeological remains on site.
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- Establish the extent to which previous development and/or other processes had affected archaeological deposits at the site.
- Establish the likely impact on archaeological deposits of the proposed development.

The results have been integrated into the wider historic and archaeological context of the landscape but in the absence of any archaeological finds or deposits they have no potential to address any of the relevant research aims set out in *Research and Archaeology Revisited: A revised framework for the East of England* (Medlycott 2011) and *The East of England Regional Research framework for the Historic Environment* (ALGAO 2021).

## 6 Methodology

All archaeological Site works were undertaken in accordance with BA's *Archaeological Field Recording Manual* (2023), together with accepted professional standards, including *Standard for archaeological field evaluation* (ClfA 2023a), *Universal guidance for archaeological field evaluation* (ClfA 2023b) and *Standard and guidance for the collection, documentation, conservation and research of archaeological materials* (ClfA 2020). BA adhered to the requirements of the ClfA *Code of conduct: Professional ethics in archaeology* (2022) throughout the project and was cognisant of *Management of Research Projects in the Historic Environment: The MoRPHE Project Managers' Guide* (Lee 2015).

### 6.1 Site Specific

As outlined in the WSI (Border Archaeology 2022), it was intended that five evaluation trenches of up to c. 1.8m x 30m (equating to 5% of the development area) should be excavated. However, the poorly consolidated ground necessitated widening the trenching to up c. 2.5m while Trench 003 and Trench 004 were reduced to c. 20m in length due to health and safety constraints. The trenches were laid out to provide a comprehensive assessment of the archaeological and palaeoenvironmental potential of the Site (*fig. 2*).

Trenches were opened by machine using a wide-bladed toothless ditching bucket operating under archaeological supervision. Undifferentiated overburden/made ground of recent origin was removed in level spits by the machine down to the first significant archaeological or geological horizon.

Each trench was planned at an appropriate scale. Spot levels were taken as appropriate.

### 6.2 Recording

The following reference numbers have been assigned to this fieldwork project:

- Site code: PLG22.
- OASIS ID: borderar1-511594.

Full written, graphic, and photographic records were made in accordance with BA's *Archaeological Field Recording Manual* (2023), as outlined in the WSI (BA 2022).

The progress of the works was recorded and assessed using the Company's ISO 9001 procedures.

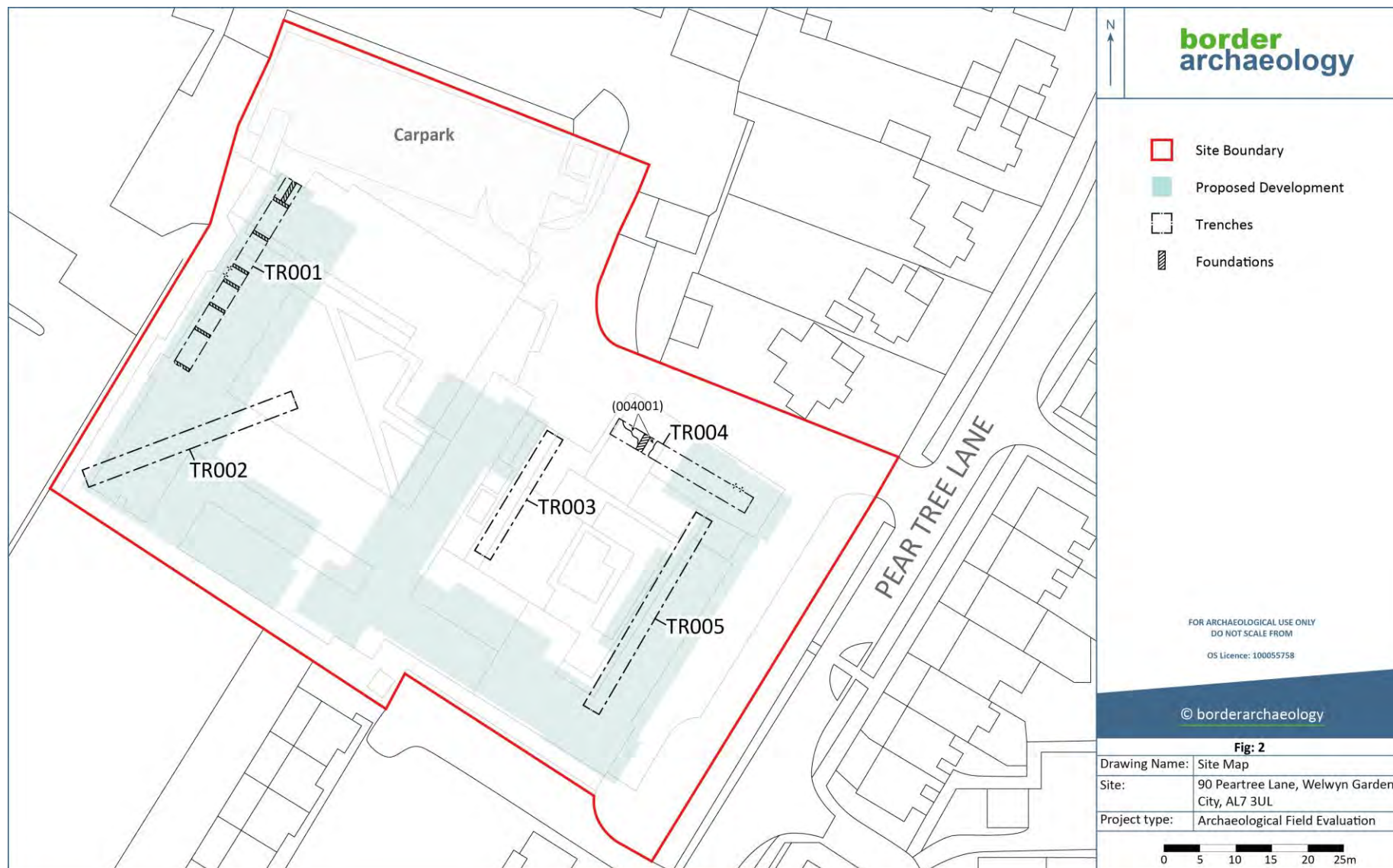
### 6.3 Palaeoenvironmental/Palaeoeconomic Sampling

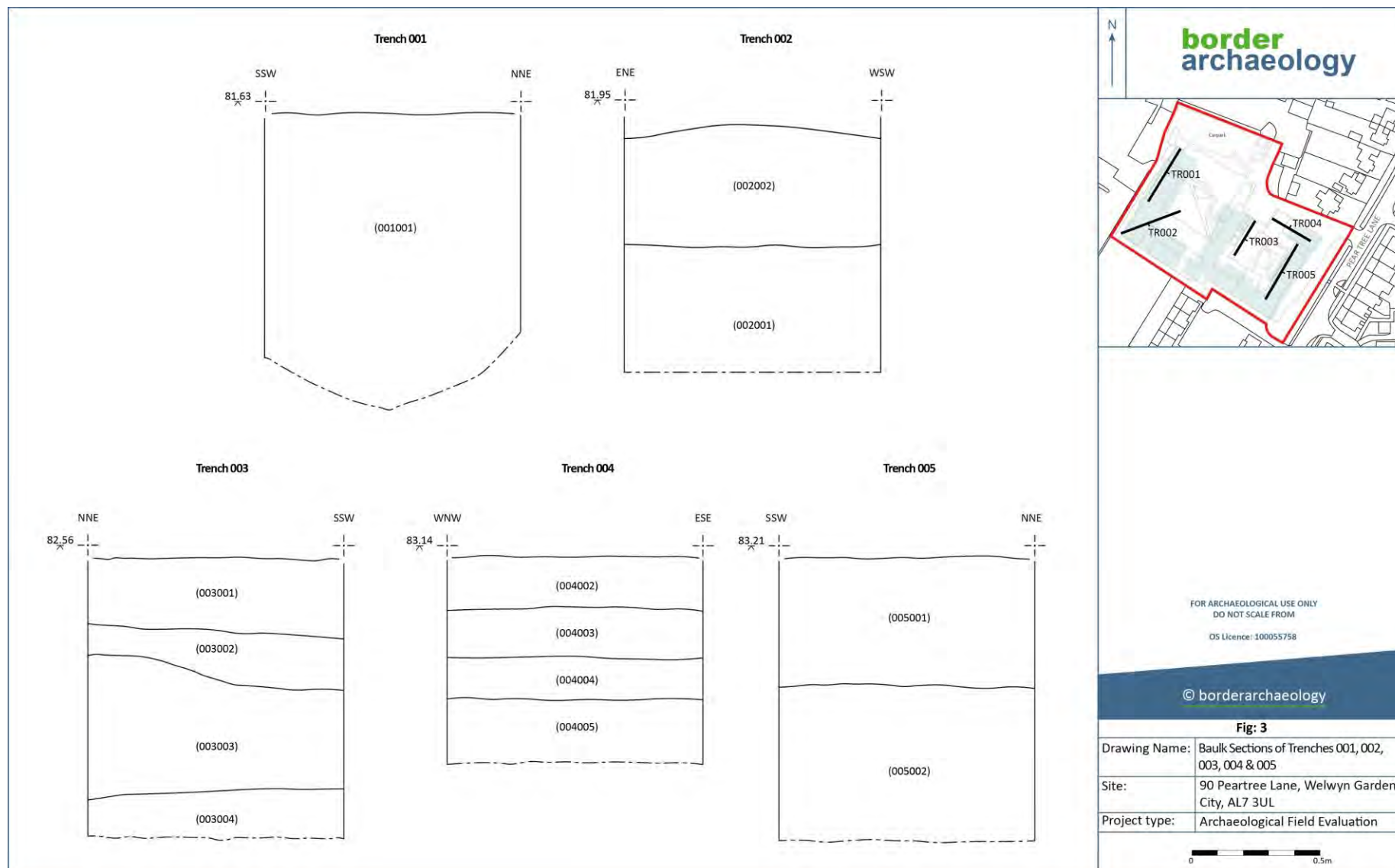
No archaeological deposits suitable for Palaeoenvironmental sampling were encountered during the course of the AFE.

### 6.4 Recovery, Processing & Curation of Artefactual Data

No artefactual material was recovered during the course of the AFE.

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## 7 Results

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### 7.1 Trenches 001-005

The deposits uncovered in all five evaluation trenches were largely identical in terms of compaction, composition and colour (see Appendix 1: Context Tabulation; Appendix 3: Photographic Record).

The natural substrate consisted of a loosely to moderately compacted dark red brown sandy clay with small to medium sized rounded and subangular stones, and was encountered at a depth of 82.59m-81.53m AOD: c. 0.40m- c. 1m below the original ground level prior to demolition. Within Trench 001 and Trench 002, the overlying deposits had been wholly truncated by the construction of the YMCA building complex and the natural substrate was sealed by 20<sup>th</sup> century made ground.

In Trench 003, Trench 004 and Trench 005, the natural substrate was sealed by a buried soil horizon of up to 0.48m thick composed of a loosely compacted grey brown silty sandy clay, with small subangular and rounded stones and fragments of 20<sup>th</sup> century CBM. This was in turn sealed by deposits of modern made ground.

## 8 Discussion & Significance of Results

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The five evaluation trenches set out across the Site all revealed a similar sequence of manmade and naturally occurring deposits. No features or finds of archaeological significance were present and the Site had been subject to extensive disturbance from the later 20<sup>th</sup> century development within the Site.

It is likely that the development area lay some distance from any settlement focus and the cartographical evidence shows the Site within the large plot of land known as 'Small Gains Woods' as late as 1839 and the publication of the tithe survey.

## 9 Copyright

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## 10 References

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ALGAO, 2021, *East of England Regional Research Framework for the Historic Environment*, Association of Local Government Senior Historic Environment Advisors (East of England).

Border Archaeology, 2022, *Written Scheme of Investigation for Archaeological Field Evaluation One YMCA 90 Peartree Lane Welwyn Garden City AL7 3UL on behalf of Kori Construction*.

Border Archaeology, 2023, *Archaeological Field Recording Manual*.

British Geological Survey, 'Geology of Britain Viewer', <http://mapapps.bgs.ac.uk/geologyofbritain/home> [accessed 29/01/24].

Brown, D., 2011, *Archaeological Archives: A guide to best practice in creation, compilation, transfer and curation*.

ClfA, 2020, *Standard and guidance for the collection, documentation, conservation and research of archaeological materials*.

ClfA, 2022, *Code of conduct: Professional ethics in archaeology*.

ClfA, 2023a, *Standard for archaeological field evaluation*.

ClfA, 2023b, *Universal guidance for archaeological field evaluation*.

Lee, E., 2015, *Management of Research Projects in the Historic Environment: The MoRPHE Project Managers' Guide*, Historic England.

Medlycott, M., 2011, *Research and Archaeology Revisited: a revised framework for the East of England*, East Anglian Archaeology Occasional Papers 24, Association of Local Government Archaeological Officers. East of England.

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## 11 Appendix 1: Context Tabulation

Trench No.	Context	Type	Description	Interpretation	Finds	Provisional date
001	(001001)	Deposit	Moderately compacted dark red brown sandy clay, occasional small to medium sized rounded and subangular stone inclusions.	Natural Substrate	-	Geological
002	(002001)	Deposit	Loosely compacted dark red brown clay sand, frequent small to medium sized rounded and sub-angular stone inclusions. Overlies (002002).	Natural Substrate	-	Geological
	(002002)	Deposit	Loosely compacted dark grey brown silty clay, occasional small to medium sized stone inclusions, occasional CBM (not retained); up to 0.46m thick. Underlies (002001).	Made Ground	CBM (not retained)	20 <sup>th</sup> century
	(003001)	Deposit	Loosely compacted dark grey brown sandy clay, occasional small rounded stone inclusions; up to 0.30m thick. Overlies (003002).	Top soil	-	21 <sup>st</sup> century
003	(003002)	Deposit	Loosely compacted light-yellow brown silty sand; up to 0.20m thick. Underlies (003001). Overlies (003003).	Building sand	-	20 <sup>th</sup> century
	(003003)	Deposit	Loosely compacted mid grey brown silty clay, occasional small sized subangular stone inclusions and CBM (not retained); up to 0.48m thick. Underlies (003002). Overlies (003004).	Buried soil	CBM (not retained)	20 <sup>th</sup> century
	(003004)	Deposit	Moderately compacted light brown red sandy clay, occasional small rounded stone inclusions. Underlies (003003).	Natural Substrate	-	Geological
004	(004001)	Deposit	Concrete; up to 0.30m thick. Overlies (004002).	Concrete surface	-	20 <sup>th</sup> century
	(004002)	-	Loosely compacted mid red brown silty sand, occasional small to medium sized rounded stones; up to 0.20m thick. Underlies (004001). Overlies (004003).	Made Ground	-	20 <sup>th</sup> century
	(004003)	-	Loosely compacted mid grey brown sandy clay, occasional small to medium sized subangular stone inclusions and CBM (not retained); up to 0.18m thick. Underlies (004002). Overlies (004004).	Buried soil	CBM (not retained)	20 <sup>th</sup> century

Trench No.	Context	Type	Description	Interpretation	Finds	Provisional date
005	(004004)	-	Loosely compacted light brown red sandy clay, occasional small rounded stone inclusions; up to 0.16m thick. Underlies (004003). Overlies (004005)	Buried soil/interface with natural substate	-	Unknown
	(004005)	Deposit	Loosely compacted dark red brown clay sand, frequent small to medium sized rounded and subangular stone inclusions. Underlies (004004).	Natural Substrate	-	Geological
	(005001)	Deposit	Loosely compacted light brown grey sandy clay, occasional small rounded stone inclusions; up to 0.50m thick. Overlies (005002)	Buried soil (revealed below demolition layer)	-	20 <sup>th</sup> century
	(005002)	Deposit	Loosely compacted light brown red sandy clay, occasional small to medium sized sub-angular stone inclusions. Underlies (005001).	Natural Substrate	-	Geological

## 12 Appendix 2: Historic Environment Record Maps & Gazetteers

#	MonUID	PrefRef	Name	Period	NGR
1	MHT2808	2808	Late Iron Age Material, Salisbury Gardens, Welwyn Garden City	Late Iron Age	TL 248 122
2	MHT1576	1576	Late Iron Age/Roman Pottery, 12 Shortlands Green, Welwyn Garden City	Late Iron Age to Early Roman	TL 2491 1236
3	MHT13420	13420	Roman Pottery, Hyde Way/Broadwater Road, Welwyn Garden City	Romano-British	TL 24255 12845
4	MHT2615	2615	Site Of Moat, Near Peartree Farm, Peartree Lane, Welwyn Garden City	Medieval	TL 24195 12295
5	MHT10880	10880	Shredded Wheat Factory, Bridge Road, Welwyn Garden City	Post-medieval	TL 2419 1295
6	MHT10941	10941	Welwyn Garden City Railway Station	Post-medieval	TL 2396 1286
7	MHT10984	10984	Site Of British Instructional Film Studios, Broadwater Road, Welwyn Garden City	Post-medieval	TL 2411 1265
8	MHT17938	17938	Site Of Peartree Farm, Peartree Lane, Welwyn Garden City	Post-medieval	MHT17938

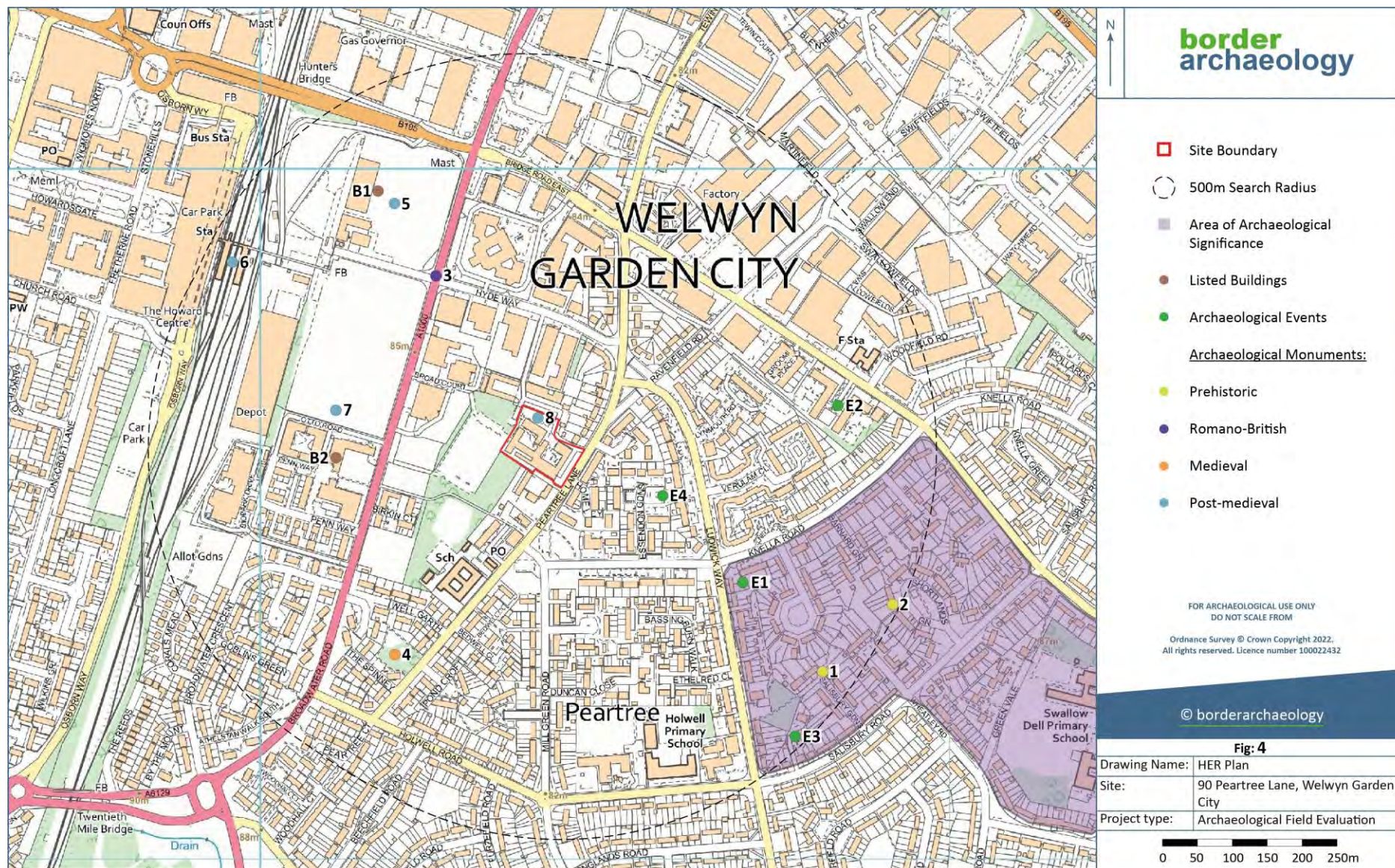
Table 1: Gazetteer of archaeological monuments recorded on the Hertfordshire HER within a 500m radius of the Site

#	EvUID	Name	Location	Date	NGR
E1	EHT4547	Evaluation at Knella Road, Welwyn Garden City, 1999	Knella Road, Welwyn Garden City	1999	TL 2470 1240
E2	EHT4605	Evaluation at 88-96 Bridge Road East, Welwyn Garden City, 2002	88-96 Bridge Road East, Welwyn Garden City	2002	TL 2483 1265
E3	EHT4909	Evaluation of land adjacent to 7-9 Salisbury Road, Welwyn Garden City, 2002	Land adjacent to 7-9 Salisbury Road, Welwyn Garden City	2002	TL 2477 1217
E4	EHT5103	Evaluation of land at junction of Knella Road and Ludwick Way, Peartree, Welwyn Garden City, 2002-3	Land at junction of Knella Road and Ludwick Way, Peartree, WGC	2002-2003	TL 24584 12526

Table 2: Gazetteer of archaeological events recorded on the Hertfordshire HER within a 500m radius of the Site

#	DesigUID	PrefRef	Name	Grade	NGR
B1	DHT9620	1101084	The Nabisco Shredded Wheat Factory	II	TL 2419 1295
B2	DHT9815	1348142	Office Block (Buildings 1 to 4) to Roche Products Factory	II	TL 24110 12581

Table 3: Gazetteer of listed buildings recorded on the Hertfordshire HER within a 500m radius of the Site



### 13 Appendix 3: Photographic Record



*Plate 1: Trench 001 viewed SSW (1m scales)*



*Plate 2: Trench 002 viewed ENE (1m scales)*



*Plate 3: Trench 003 viewed SSW (1m scales)*



*Plate 4: Trench 004 viewed WNW (1m scales)*



*Plate 5: Trench 005 viewed SSW*

## 14 Appendix 4: Hertfordshire Historic Environment Record Summary Sheet

Site name and address: One YMCA, 90 Peartree Lane, Welwyn Garden City, AL7 3UL.		
County: Hertfordshire		District: Welwyn Hatfield Borough Council
Village/Town: Welwyn Garden City		Parish: N/A
Planning application reference: 6/2019/2714/OUTLINE		
HER Enquiry reference: Archaeological Field Evaluation on behalf of Kori		
Construction concerning One YMCA, 90 Peartree Lane, Welwyn Garden City, AL7 3UL.		
Nature of application: Archaeological Field Evaluation		
Present land use: YMCA hostel		
Size of application area: 7200 sq. m		Size of area investigated: c.5%
NGR (to 8 figures minimum): TL 24407 12598		
Site code (if applicable): PLG22		
Contractor: Border Archaeology		
Type of work: Archaeological Field Evaluation		
Date of work: 2024	Start: 15 <sup>th</sup> January	Finish: 16 <sup>th</sup> January
Location of finds & site archive/Curating museum: N/A OASIS only		
Related HER Nos:		Periods represented: Modern
Relevant previous summaries/reports N/A		
<p>Summary of fieldwork results:</p> <p>This report details the results of a programme of Archaeological Field Evaluation undertaken between the 15th and 16th January 2024 in connection with the demolition of the existing hostel and the development of a four-storey 100 bed YMCA Hostel, along with up to 43 residential apartments at One YMCA, 90 Peartree Lane, Welwyn Garden City AL7 3UL (NGR: TL 24407 12598). The works were carried out on behalf of Kori Construction in response to condition 3 of the Planning Decision (Planning Ref.: 6/2019/2714/OUTLINE).</p> <p>Five evaluation trenches, representing 5% of the development area, were set out across the Site to provide a comprehensive assessment of the Site's archaeological and palaeoenvironmental potential. These all revealed a similar sequence of manmade and naturally occurring deposits. No features or finds of archaeological significance were present and the site had been subject to extensive disturbance as a result of the later 20th century development within the Site.</p>		
Author of summary: JF		Date of summary: 25/03/24

Document Title		Document Reference	
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Artwork	Holly Litherland BSc (Hons)		
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