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Land at Don Street, Middleton Rochdale Borough (Area 2)

January 2023 v1.0



Archaeological Strip, Map and Record

Project Code: A0391.2

Report no. 0379

Planning Ref: 21/00744/FUL





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Archaeological Strip, Map and Record

**Aeon Archaeology
Obsidian Offices
Chantry Court
Chester
CH1 4QN**

Written by: Richard Cooke BA MA MCIfA

Checked by: Josh Dean BA ACIfA



Project Code: A0391.2
Date: 31/01/2023
Client: Kellen Homes
info@aeonarchaeology.co.uk



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1.0 NON-TECHNICAL SUMMARY

Area 2 lay to the immediate east of Don Street and was targeting the site of a former barn or outbuilding shown on the Ordnance Survey 6 inch map of 1848. This building is not shown on later maps and is presumed to have gone out of use after this date. The building was likely associated with the wider Spa Farm complex shown as a range of buildings to the northwest.

The area was stripped to 3.0m in depth without encountering any archaeological horizons or the natural glacial substrata. Immediately beneath this the water table restricted further excavation, although an exploratory sondage showed only 0.3m deep of remaining deposit above the natural substrata. No archaeological remains protruded above the remaining basal deposit and it is likely that either the building had been entirely grubbed out upon demolition or that the remains were so heavily truncated that they were confined to the remaining 0.3m depth.

No further excavation could take place due to the presence of the ground water table.

2.0 INTRODUCTION

Aeon Archaeology was commissioned by Kellen Homes, hereafter ‘the Client’, to carry out a programme of archaeological investigation at Area 2, Land at Don Street, Middleton, Nr. Rochdale, Greater Manchester, M24 2WW hereafter ‘the Site’ (centred on **NGR SD 88398 06316**), see *Figures 01-03*. This took the form of an archaeological strip, map & record and was conducted as part of a planning application for the development of a residential development.

The Client secured full planning permission (**21/00744/FUL**) from Rochdale Borough Council (hereafter ‘the Council’) with the following condition concerning archaeology being applied:

Condition 11

No development shall take place until the applicant or their agents or their successors in title has secured the implementation of a programme of archaeological works in accordance with a Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI) which has been submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority. The development shall not be occupied until the site investigation has been completed in accordance with the programme set out in the approved WSI and provision made for the completion of all elements of that programme. The WSI shall cover the following:

- 1. A phased programme and methodology of site investigation and recording to include:*
 - a) a strip-map-and-record of the site of Spa Farm and the power plant of Rex Mill ;*
 - b) pending results of a), more detailed excavation if the archaeological remains are more extensive than can be dealt with during the strip-map-and-record.*
- 2. A programme for post-investigation assessment to include:*
 - a) analysis of the site investigation records and finds;*
 - b) production of a final report on the significance of the heritage interest recorded.*
- 3. Deposition of the final report with the Greater Manchester Historic Environment Record.*
- 4. Dissemination of the results of the site investigations commensurate with their significance.*
- 5. Provision for archive deposition of the report, finds and records of the site investigation.*
- 6. Nomination of a competent person or persons/organisation to undertake the works set out within the approved WSI.*

Reason: In accordance with NPPF policy 16, paragraph 205: To record and advance understanding of the significance of any heritage assets to be lost (wholly or in part) and to make this evidence (and any archive generated) publicly accessible.

Greater Manchester Archaeological Advisory Service (GMAAS) will monitor the implementation of the recording on behalf of Rochdale Borough Council.

The use of such a condition is in line with the guidance set out in paragraph 205, Section 16 (Conserving and Enhancing the Historic Environment) of the National Planning Policy Framework (2021), published by the Department for Communities; and Local Government and Managing Significance in Decision Taking in the Historic Environment, Historic Environment Good Practice Advice in Planning: 2 (Historic England 2015).

Discussions were held between the Archaeological Consultant (Nexus Heritage) and the Heritage Management Director (HMD) (Mr. I. Miller) at GMAAS and it was agreed that the archaeological investigation should take the form of a strip, map & record.

This document reports on the details of a programme of archaeological investigation work for the Site carried out on the 10th October 2022 in response to the spirit and intent of Condition No. 11.

A written Scheme of Investigation (WSI) was undertaken by Nexus Heritage in September 2022 (Document No: 3596.R01a) which outlined the aims of the archaeological investigation and the methods by which they would be met. This formed the basis of a method statement submitted for the work. The archaeological strip, map & record was undertaken in accordance with this document. The assessment of the Site through a single large trench was deemed adequate for the purposes intended, however it was acknowledged that there may be some latitude on the positioning of the trench due to site restraints from existing utilities and health and safety issues arising from site access.

The aim of this programme of archaeological strip, map & record was to establish the archaeological significance of the Site, to assess the impact of the development proposals on surviving monuments or remains, and to help inform future decision making, design solutions and further potential mitigation strategies.

This report is offered for consideration to the HMD at GMAAS for verification with reference to the Condition applied to the planning permission and the relevant provisions in NPPF.

3.0 SITE LOCATION

The Site is situated at Don Street in Middleton, in the Borough of Rochdale, Greater Manchester and is centred approximately at National Grid Reference SD 88398 06316 (see Figures 1,2 & 3).

Prior to the archaeological investigation area 2 was predominantly level, with a surface of concrete hardstanding, having been used as a former car park to Rex Mill.

Geology

The British Geological Survey records the bedrock at the Site as Pennine Lower Coal Measures Formation - Mudstone, Siltstone and Sandstone – a sedimentary rock formed approximately 318 to 319 million years ago in the Carboniferous Period in a local environment previously dominated by swamps, estuaries and deltas. Trending across the Site there are also deposits of Pennine Lower Coal Measures Formation - Sandstone. – a sedimentary rock formed approximately 318 to 319 million years ago in the Carboniferous Period in a local environment previously dominated by swamps, estuaries and deltas (<https://mapapps.bgs.ac.uk/geologyofbritain/home.html>).

The superficial deposits along the River Irk banks are noted as Alluvium - Clay, Silt, Sand and Gravel, deposits formed up to 2 million years ago in the Quaternary Period in a local environment previously dominated by rivers. The superficial deposits for the majority of the Site are, however, described as Glaciofluvial Sheet Deposits, Devensian Sand and Gravel, deposits formed up to 2 million years ago in the Quaternary Period in a local environment previously dominated by Ice Age conditions.

Pedology

The Cranfield Soil and AgriFood Institute (CSAI) Soilsclapes Viewer (<http://www.landis.org.uk/soilsclapes/>) maps the soils cover at the Site as freely draining slightly acid sandy soils. However, given the development history of parts of the Site, any soil cover may not match this classification.

4.0 HISTORY OF THE SITE

(The following has been Reproduced from Martin, A., (2022) Residential Development Land at Don Street, Middleton, Rochdale Borough (21/00744/FUL), Written Scheme of Investigation for a Programme of Archaeological Investigation, Nexus Heritage, Report No. 3596 R01a).

The site of Spa Farm is shown on the Ordnance Survey (OS) mapping, 1:10,560 scale, Lancashire, Sheet XCVI, 1848 (figure 05). On the map, towards the centre of the Site is a complex identified as the Spa. This farmstead is clearly operational in the mid-19th century, but its original may predate this broad date. To the west of the Spa complex is an isolated building, possibly a field barn – (area 2) which is the area targeted for strip, map and sample and is the subject of this report. This possible field barn is not shown on any map post-dating 1848, but the linear Spa Farm complex is shown in detail on the OS mapping, 1:2,500 scale, Lancashire, Sheets XCVI.4 and XCVI.8, 1893 and its extent approaching the mid-20th century is shown on the OS mapping 1:2,500 scale, Lancashire, Sheets XCVI.4 and XCVI.8, 1932.

5.0 PROJECT AIMS

The Council required an archaeological investigation based on the notions and concepts of strip, map-and-record. The Chartered Institute for Archaeologists (hereafter CIfA) maintains a standard for archaeological excavation which mentions strip-map-and-record but does not define the process. Notwithstanding this, the standard for archaeological excavation is applicable and is as follows:

An archaeological excavation will examine and record the archaeological resource within a specified area using appropriate methods and practices. These will satisfy the stated aims of the project and comply with the Code of conduct and other relevant regulations of CIfA. It will result in one or more published accounts and an ordered, accessible archive.

(CIfA, 2020) The CIfA maintains a definition for archaeological excavation as follows:

...a programme of controlled, intrusive fieldwork with defined research objectives, which examines, records and interprets archaeological deposits, features and structures and, as appropriate, retrieves artefacts, ecofacts and other remains within a specified area or site on land, in an inter-tidal zone or underwater. The records made and objects gathered during fieldwork are studied and the results of that study published in detail appropriate to the project design. (CIfA 2020).

Research Framework, Aims and Objectives

The archaeological works were to be implemented with reference to a research design which reflects the ambitions of the North-West England Regional Research Agenda (2007), specifically relating the Industrial and Modern periods (McNeil and Newman 2007a and b).

In addition the Northwest Regional Research Framework (Updated Research Framework) has been developed as part of a national strategy to create a series of self-sustaining regional historic environment research frameworks for England. It builds on the original North West Region Archaeological Research Framework (Brennand 2006 and 2007). The Industrial and 20th Century Period benefits from a series of refreshed research questions (<https://researchframeworks.org/nwrf/industrial/>) focused on a number of period-related themes which the Site may be able to address.

As the presence/absence of any archaeological remains at the Site was unproven, preparation of a detailed research design was not possible during formulation of the aims and objectives, given the broad thrust of period-focussed and theme-focussed research imperatives in north-west England (<https://archaeolog.org.uk/areanorthwest.html>). Nevertheless a basic appreciation of the Site's history does allow some attempt to be made at reconciling the Site with some putative research topics. The broad aims of the archaeological investigation were therefore:

- to evaluate the Site for the presence/absence, character and state of preservation of archaeological remains
- to enhance knowledge and understanding of the historic environment of Rochdale Borough/Middleton in particular, and north-western England in general;

- to effectively and rapidly disseminate the results of the project, and to archive them, enabling the project findings to be widely and readily accessed by professional and nonprofessional audiences alike
- to ensure that professional expertise and experience is advanced by the continual improvement of archaeological method and practice

The detailed objectives of the archaeological investigation were:

- To make a full and proper record of any archaeological structures, deposits, features, artefacts and ecofacts within the relevant areas of the Site, permitting a reconstruction of the Site's history and formation processes. To recover artefact and palaeoenvironmental/palaeoindustrial samples from deposits of potential
- To analyse the generated records, artefacts and ecofacts to produce a report on the archaeology of the Site, identify the research implications of the site with reference to the regional research agenda and recent work in the Middleton area.

6.0 METHODOLOGY

(The following covers all three areas (Areas 1-3) covered during the phase of archaeological works at Don Street, Middleton – see reports 0378, 0379, 0380).

The archaeological attendances were designed to respond to the impact to the archaeological resource represented by the proposed development. The rationale underpinning the archaeological works at the Site involved the recovery of archaeological information from the strip-map-and-record of a minimum of x3. The broad characteristics of the number, size, orientation and distribution of the areas were considered to be appropriate and were agreed with the HMD and were designed to investigate the power system of Rex Mill and the Spa farmstead complex. The area for the investigation of Rex Mill power plant was to be initially restricted to a zone encompassing the chimney, boiler house and potentially, the engine house. However, if no evidence of an engine house was located within the core area there was contingency to extend the strip to the east to bring in a zone at the southern end of the spinning block within the scope of the excavation, which may have included the engine house. The areas were designed to determine feature presence/absence, with a contingent facility designed for further investigative work after characterisation should features have presented, the characteristics of which will have been insufficiently resolved within the core map-and-record exercises. Contingent investigation was (as stated) to be optional, upon the discovery of archaeological artefacts, deposits, features or structures the characteristics of which might only be sufficiently determined upon further spatial investigation.

6.1 Evaluation Areas

The coordinates for the strip area corners are as follows:

Number	Easting	Northing
Area 1		
Site of Rex Mill		
1	388271.38	406328.91
2	388305.65	406343.06
3	388272.31	406306.88
4	388307.50	406313.96

^^This Site^^

Area 2		
Site of Spa Farm (Clough) Complex (southeast)		
1	388516	406318
2	388576	406356
3	388524	406305
4	388584	406343

Area 3		
Site of Spa Farm Complex (northwest)		
1	388392	406328
2	388412	406321
3	388386	406313
4	388407	406304

Table 1: Table showing co-ordinates for the trenches located at the Site

In line with the GMHER requirements, the GMHER were contacted at the onset of the project to ensure that any data arising was formatted in a manner suitable for accession to the GMHER. The

GMHER were informed of the project start date, location including grid reference, estimated timescale for the work, and further relevant information associated with the project. The GMHER will be responsible for supplying the Event Primary Reference Number (PRN) for this project and for supplying the PRNs for any new identified and recorded assets.

6.2 Data Collection from Site Records

A database of the site photographs was produced to enable active long-term curation of the photographs and easy searching. The site records were checked and cross-referenced and photographs were cross-referenced to contexts. These records were used to write the site narrative and the field drawings and survey data were used to produce an outline plan of the site.

All paper field records were scanned to provide a backup digital copy. The photographs were organised and cross-referenced to the digital photographic record so that they can be archived with the Greater Manchester HER.

6.3 Artefact Methodology

All artefacts were to be collected and processed including those found within spoil tips. Finds numbers would be attributed and they would be bagged and labelled as well any preliminary identification taking place on site. After processing, all artefacts would be cleaned and examined in-house at Aeon Archaeology. If required, artefacts would be sent to a relevant specialist for conservation and analysis.

The recovery policy for archaeological finds was kept under review throughout the evaluation trenching. Any changes in recovery priorities would be made under guidance from an appropriate specialist and agreed with the Client and the HMD at GMAAS. There was a presumption against the disposal of archaeological finds regardless of their apparent age or condition.

6.4 Environmental Samples Methodology

The sampling strategy and requirement for bulk soil samples was related to the perceived character, interpretational importance and chronological significance of the strata under investigation. This ensured that only significant features would be sampled. The aim of the sampling strategy was to recover carbonised macroscopic plant remains, small artefacts particularly knapping debris and evidence for metalworking.

Advice and guidance regarding environmental samples and their suitability for radiocarbon dating, as well as the analysis of macrofossils (charcoal and wood), pollen, animal bones and molluscs would be obtained from Oxford Archaeology if required.

6.5 Report and dissemination

A full archive including plans, photographs and written material resulting from the project was prepared. All plans, photographs and descriptions were labelled, and cross-referenced.

Upon approval from the Client copies of the report will be sent to the Client, the HMD at GMAAS, and the Oasis online database.

7.0 DIGITAL DATA MANAGEMENT PLAN

7.1 Type of study

Archaeological strip, map & record Area 2, Land at Don Street, Middleton, Nr. Rochdale, Greater Manchester, M24 2WW Site (centred on **NGR SD 88398 06316**).

7.2 Types of data

Photographs, measured plans, context sheets, context register, photographic register, trench sheets.

7.3 Format and scale of the data

Photographs taken in *RAW* format and later converted to *TIF* format for long term archiving and *JPEG* format for use in the digital report, converted using *Adobe Photoshop*. All photographs renamed using *AF5* freeware with the prefix (*project code_frame number*) and a photographic metadata created using Microsoft Excel (*.xlsx*) or Access (*.accdb*).

Written context sheets, context register, trench sheets, and measured plans scanned as *.PDF* files.

As part of the recording work the following data was created:

- 1 Trench sheets (scanned as a PDF file)
- 53 Context Sheets (scanned as a PDF file)
- 3 Context register (scanned as a PDF file)
- 240 digital photographs (TIF file)
- 1 photographic metadata file (.accdb file)
- 14 measured drawings on 13 sheets (scanned as a PDF file)

7.4 Methodologies for data collection / generation

Digital data will be collected / generated in line with recommendations made in the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists (CIfA) *Standard and Guidance for the Creation, Compilation, Transfer and Deposition of Archaeological Archives* (2020). Sections 3.3.1 and 3.3.3 are relevant:

3.3.1 Project specifications, research designs or similar documents should include a project specific Selection Strategy and a Data Management Plan.

3.3.3 Project designs or schedules of works etc should outline the methodology used in recording all information, in order to demonstrate that all aspects of archive creation will ensure consistency; for instance in terminologies and the application of codes in digital data sets, highlighting relevant data standards where appropriate

7.5 Data quality and standards

Consistency and quality of data collection / generation shall be controlled and documented through the use of standardised procedure as outlined in the WSI. This will include the use of standardised data capture file formats, digital proformas, data entry validation, peer review, and use of controlled vocabularies.

7.6 Managing, storing and curating data.

All digital data will be organised into Aeon Archaeology proforma project file systems and backed up to the cloud using *Digital River's Crashplan* with additional copies made to external physical hard drive.

7.7 Metadata standards and data documentation

Digital metadata created using Microsoft Excel (.xlsx) or Access (.accdb) of all photographic plates.

Paper metadata created from Aeon Archaeology proformas for contexts, artefacts, environmental samples, watching brief day sheets, trench sheets, and basic record sheets and then scanned to create digital .PDF copies.

7.8 Data preservation strategy and standards

Long term data storage will be through the submission of digital (.PDF) reports to the regional Historic Environment Record (HER); submission of digital (.PDF) reports and a project completion form to the Oasis database; submission of the scanned (.PDF) archive, photographic plates (.TIF), and metadata (.xlsx) (.accdb) to the Archaeology Data Service (ADS); and retention of copies of all digital files at Aeon Archaeology on physical external hard drive and uploaded to the cloud.

7.9 Suitability for sharing

All digital data will be placed within the public realm (through the channels in 6.8) except for where project confidentiality restricts the sharing of data. All data sets will be selected / discriminated by the Senior Archaeologist at Aeon Archaeology and written permission will be sought from all project specific Clients prior to the sharing of data.

7.10 Discovery by potential users of the research data

Potential users of the generated digital data (outside of the organisation) will be able to source the data and identify whether it could be suitable for their research purposes through access granted via the ADS and Oasis websites. Requests can also be made for data through the regional HER's and directly to Aeon Archaeology (info@aeonarchaeology.co.uk).

7.11 Governance of access

The decision to supply research data to potential new users will be via the associated website request (ADS, Oasis, HER) or via the Senior Archaeologist when made directly to Aeon Archaeology.

7.12 The study team's exclusive use of the data

Aeon Archaeology's requirement is for timely data sharing, with the understanding that a limited, defined period of exclusive use of data for primary research is reasonable according to the nature and value of the data, and that this restriction on sharing should be based on simple, clear principles. This time period is expected to be six months from completion of the project however Aeon Archaeology reserves the right to extend this period without notice if primary data research dictates.

7.13 Restrictions or delays to sharing, with planned actions to limit such restrictions

Restriction to data sharing may be due to participant confidentiality or consent agreements. Strategies to limit restrictions will include data being anonymised or aggregated; gaining participant consent for data sharing; and gaining copyright permissions. For prospective studies, consent procedures will include provision for data sharing to maximise the value of the data for wider research use, while providing adequate safeguards for participants.

7.14 Regulation of responsibilities of users

External users of the data will be bound by data sharing agreements provided by the relevant organisation or directly through Aeon Archaeology.

7.15 Responsibilities

Responsibility for study-wide data management, metadata creation, data security and quality assurance of data will be through the Senior Archaeologist (Richard Cooke BA MA MCIfA) at Aeon Archaeology when concerning data generation and early/mid-term storage. Upon deposition with digital depositories the study-wide data management, metadata creation, data security and quality assurance of data will be the responsibility of the specific organisations' themselves.

7.16 Organisational policies on data sharing and data security

The following Aeon Archaeology policies are relevant:

- Aeon Archaeology Archive Deposition Policy 2022
- Aeon Archaeology Quality Assurance Policy 2022
- Aeon Archaeology Conflict of Interest Policy 2022
- Aeon Archaeology Outreach Policy 2022
- Aeon Archaeology Digital Management Plan 2022

8.0 QUANTIFICATION OF RESULTS

8.1 Environmental Samples

No environmental samples were taken during the archaeological investigation/strip, map & record - as no suitable deposits were encountered.

8.2 Artefacts

No artefacts or ceramic finds were recovered during the archaeological investigation/strip, map & record as none were encountered at the site.

9.0 RESULTS OF THE ARCHAEOLOGICAL STRIP, MAP AND RECORD

The archaeological strip, map & record was designed to evaluate and characterise the known, or potential, archaeological remains. Also to enhance knowledge and understanding of the historic environment of Rochdale Borough/Middleton. The excavation of Area 2, Land at Don Street, Middleton, Nr. Rochdale was carried out on the 10th October 2022. The work was carried out using a 13-tonne tracked excavator with toothless ditching bucket.

General Site Shots: *(see plates 01-06)*

Area 2 measured 23.0m in length by 16.5m in width by 3.0m in depth and was centred on NGR SD88398 06316, orientated northwest – southeast. The excavation area was targeting the former site of a possible barn or outbuilding forming part of the wider Spa Farm complex, located further to the northeast.

The trench was excavated through a 0.25m deep tarmac / hardcore deposit which overlay a >3.0m deep deposit of dark, grey-black ash clinker intermixed with a deposit of crushed red brick and light red-orange clay-sand with frequent construction building material (CBM) inclusions.

The area was excavated to a depth whereby the base of the excavation lay immediately above the water table. An exploratory machine-dug sondage showed that a further 0.3m depth of demolition deposit lay between the water table and the natural glacial substrata.

No archaeological remains were observed protruding from the basal deposit and it was not possible to excavate the remaining depth onto the natural substrata for fear of flooding the excavation area. It was therefore surmised that the former farm site had been entirely grubbed out upon demolition, most likely during the same phase that the >3m deep demolition deposit was laid down for the creation of the former car park for Rex Mill. If any remains of the barn existed then these would have been confined to the 0.3m remaining waterlogged deposit above the natural substrata.

10.0 DISCUSSION & CONCLUSION

Area 2 lay to the immediate east of Don Street and was targeting the site of a former barn or outbuilding shown on the Ordnance Survey 6 inch map of 1848. This building is not shown on later maps and is presumed to have gone out of use after this date. The building was likely associated with the wider Spa Farm complex shown as a range of buildings to the northwest.

The area was stripped to 3.0m in depth without encountering any archaeological horizons or the natural glacial substrata. Immediately beneath this the water table restricted further excavation, although an exploratory sondage showed only 0.3m deep of remaining deposit above the natural substrata. No archaeological remains protruded above the remaining basal deposit and it is likely that either the building had been entirely grubbed out upon demolition or that the remains were so heavily truncated that they were confined to the remaining 0.3m depth.

No further excavation could take place due to the presence of the ground water table.

11.0 SOURCES

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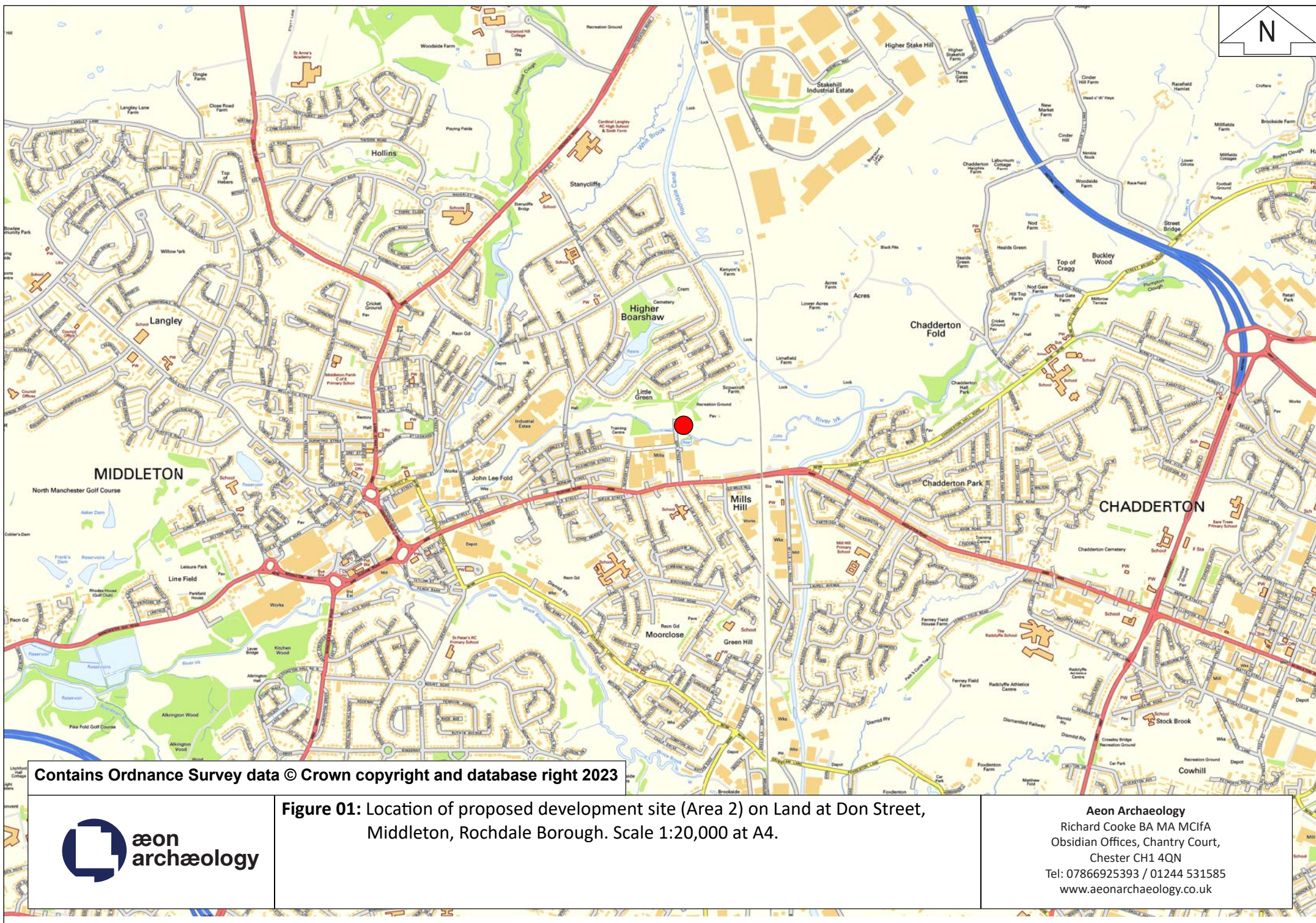
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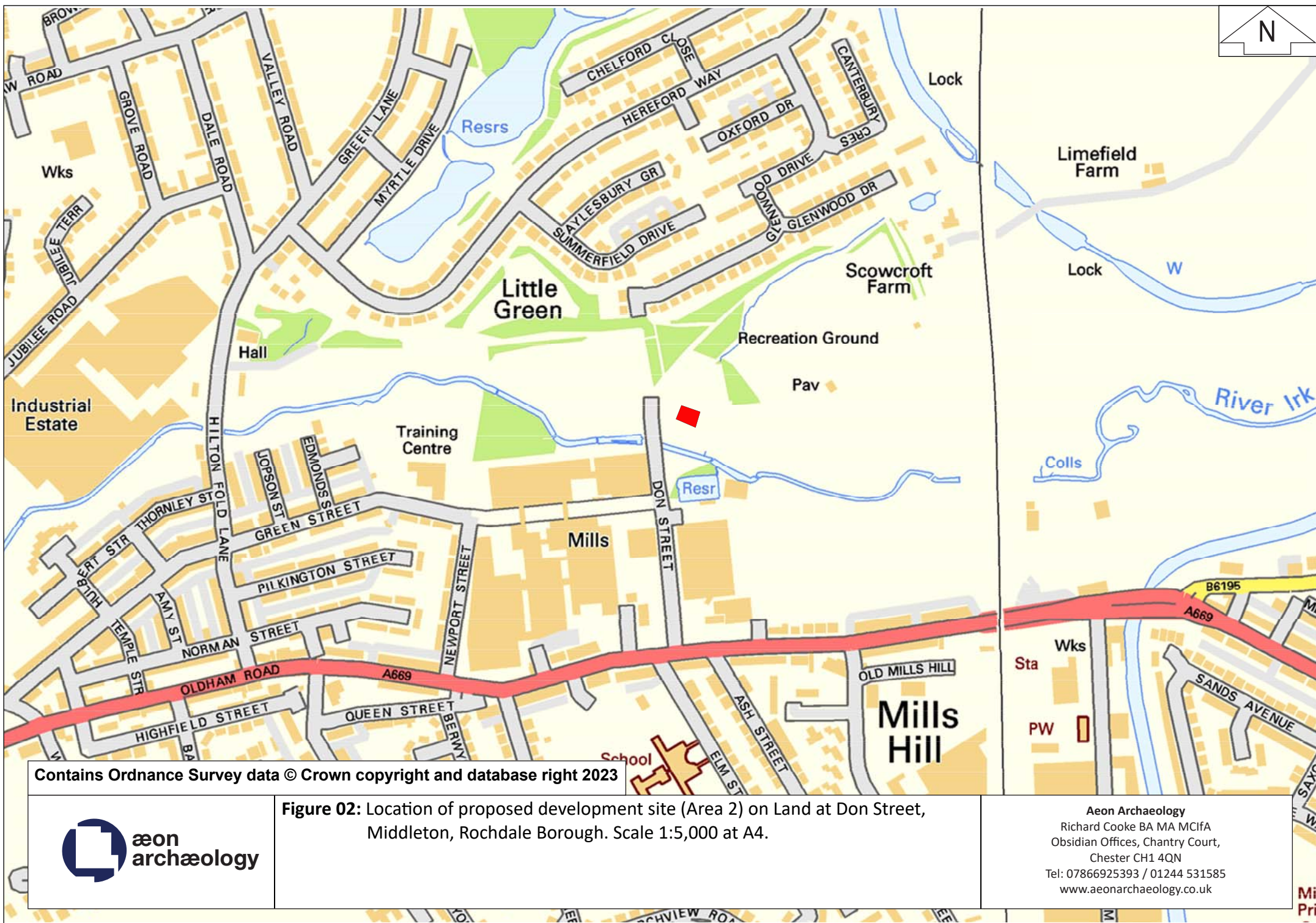
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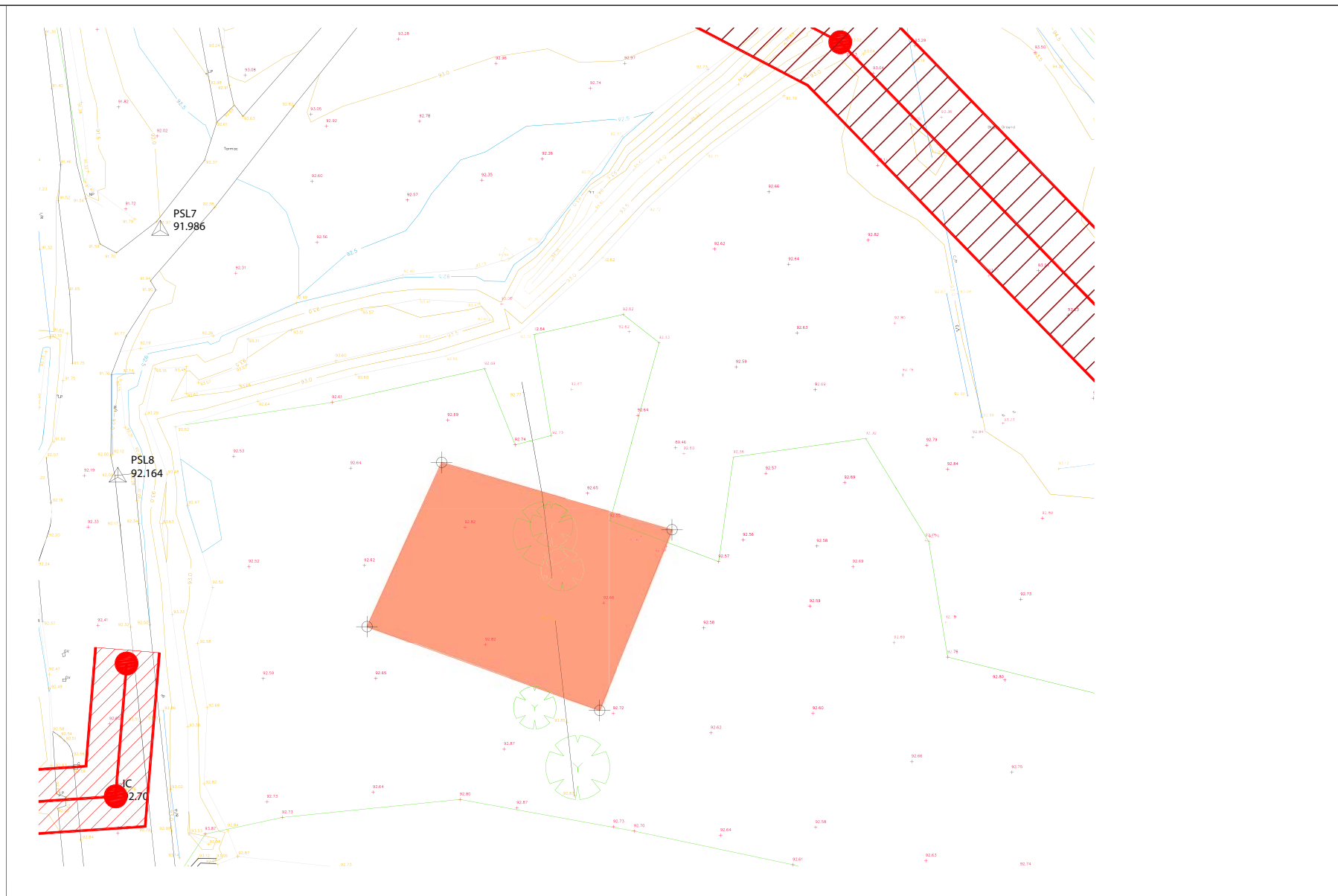
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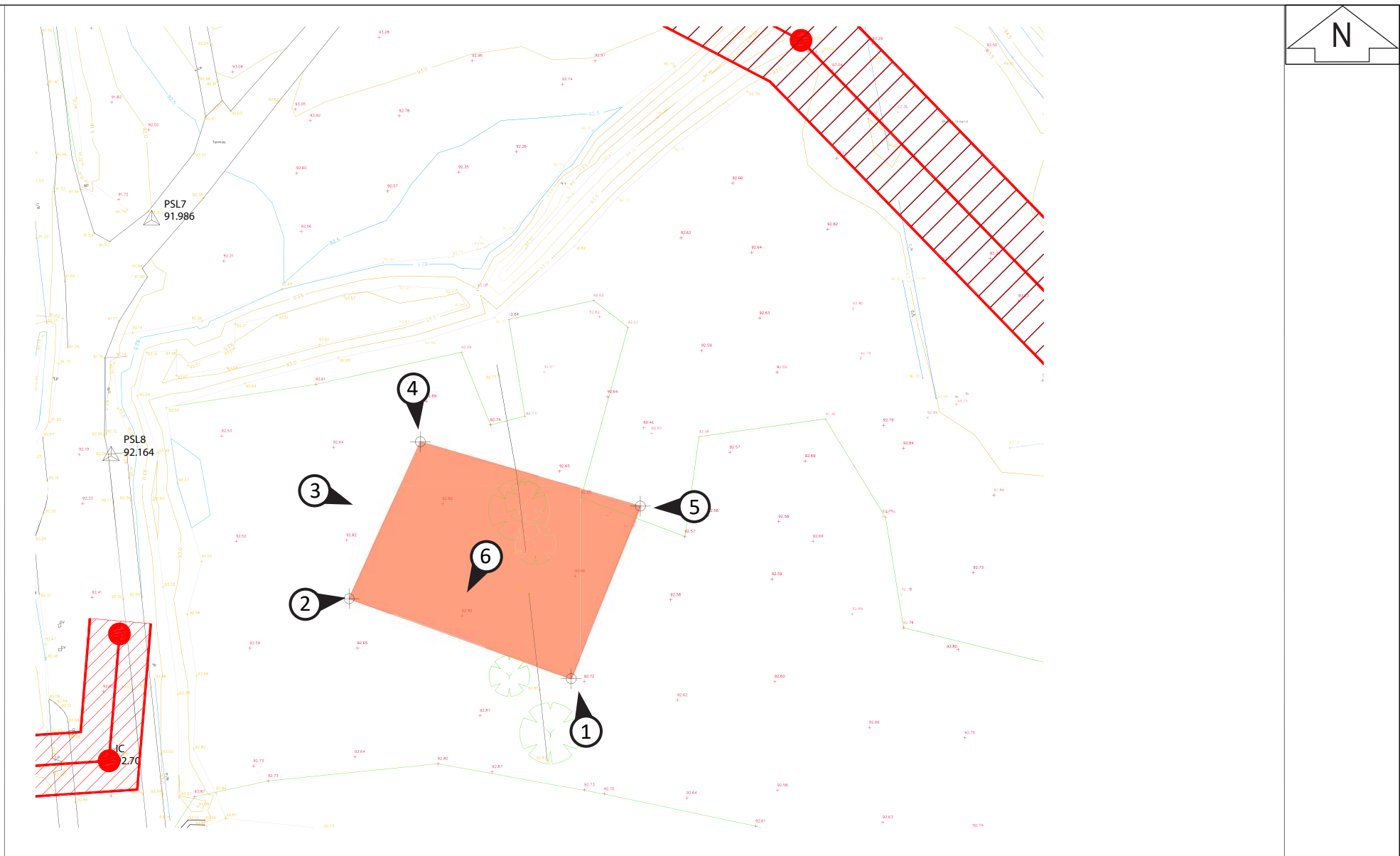


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Figure 03: Location of proposed development site (Area 2) on Land at Don Street, Middleton, Rochdale Borough. Scale 1:500 at A4.

Aeon Archaeology
 Richard Cooke BA MA MCifA
 Obsidian Offices, Chantry Court,
 Chester CH1 4QN
 Tel: 07866925393 / 01244 531585
www.aeonarchaeology.co.uk

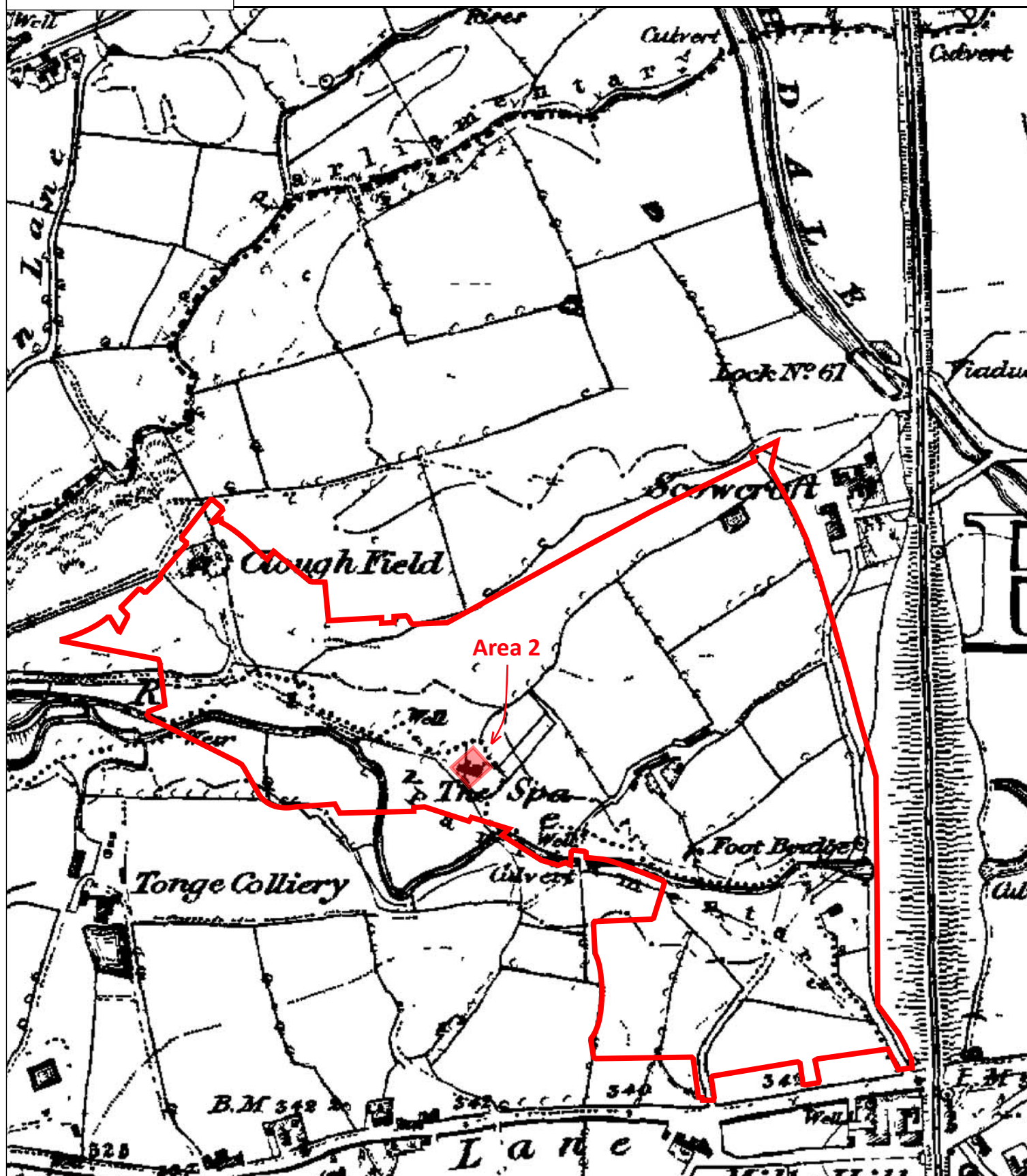


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Figure 04: Location and orientation of photographic plates.

Aeon Archaeology
 Richard Cooke BA MA MCifA
 Obsidian Offices, Chantry Court,
 Chester CH1 4QN
 Tel: 07866925393 / 01244 531585
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Figure 05: Ordnance Survey Map of Lancashire, 6 inch, 1848. Showing site boundary and Area 2 (in red) Land at Don Street, Middleton, Rochdale.



Plate 01: Area 2 post excavation, from the south. Scale 2.0m.



Plate 02: Area 2 post excavation, from the west. Scale 2.0m.



Plate 03: Area 2 post excavation, from the northwest. Scale 2.0m.



Plate 04: Area 2 post excavation, from the north. Scale 2.0m.



Plate 05: Area 2 post excavation, from the east. Scale 2.0m.



Plate 06: NE facing section of Area 2, from the northeast. Scale 2.0m.

