

## Hopwood Hall College, Rochdale

### Project Design: Evaluation and Watching Brief

April 2025

PREPARED FOR

Wilmott Dixon



### Project Design

|                         |                                                                   |
|-------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------|
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| <b>Front Cover</b>      | Plan of Holland Street Mills 1940, Source: Rochdale Local Studies |

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# **1. Introduction**

## **1.1. Background**

### **1.1.1. Planning Background**

Civic Heritage have been commissioned by Willmott Dixon to produce a Project Design for an archaeological evaluation and archaeological watching brief at Hopwood Hall College, Rochdale, Greater Manchester (NGR 389301 413398; herein referred to as 'the Site').

The Project Design has been prepared in support of a planning application that comprises *'the development of a new 'Block B' to replace the existing Block B, which is in poor condition and will be demolished upon completion of the new block. The new building will provide accommodation for up to approximately 900 students across subjects including Art & Design, Catering, T-Levels (including Media, Graphic Design & Gaming), Film Design and provision for teaching Higher Education courses such as Teacher Training and Healthcare. In addition, the building will include support and social spaces, including the Student-support Hub and Learning Support spaces'*. Block A and the Gullwing building will be retained.

The archaeological potential of the Site was highlighted in an archaeological desk-based assessment that was produced by Civic Heritage in March 2025. This concluded that the Site had the potential to contain buried archaeological remains of a possible 18<sup>th</sup>-century dyeworks and early 19<sup>th</sup>-century fulling mill (Town Mill), an early to mid-19<sup>th</sup>-century woollen and cotton mill (Holland Street Mill) and workers' houses. Any such remains that exist within the Site are likely to be of low (local) significance and, potentially, medium (regional) significance.

In light of the conclusions drawn from the desk-based assessment, and following consultation with the advisory body, the Greater Manchester Archaeological Advisory Service (GMAAS), it was recommended a programme of evaluation precedes any development of the Site. A programme of archaeological monitoring in the form of a watching brief will also be required during any landscaping, ground-breaking or instructive below ground work following the demolition of 'Block B'. The purpose of the fieldwork is to better inform client and GMAAS of the archaeological potential of the site.

This Project Design for an archaeological evaluation and watching brief has been prepared by Katie Fletcher of Civic Heritage on behalf of Wilmott Dixon. Any change to the Project Design must be agreed between the client, GMAAS and Civic Heritage.

## **1.2. Setting**

### **1.2.1. Location**

The proposed development area lies within Rochdale Town Centre and is bounded by College Road to the north, St Mary's Gate to the east, Block A, landscaping and the River Roch to the south, and an access road to the west (centred on NGR 389301 413398; Plate 1; Figs 1 and 2) The Site encompasses part of Hopwood Hall College campus comprising a four-storey building referred to as 'Block B' and associated hard-standing car park to the west.



*Plate 1 Recent satellite image of the site, showing the red line development boundary*

### **1.2.2. Topography**

Topographically, Greater Manchester is bounded by the Pennine uplands to the east and to the north. Rochdale is situated on the southern side of the Rossendale uplands and within the River Roch valley, which includes the industrial settlements of Heywood, Littleborough, Middleton, Milnrow and Wardle. The River Roch, River Spodden and the Rochdale Canal are the principal watercourses in Rochdale. The course of the River Roch formerly ran through the Site, however the course of the river was diverted in the late 1950s and lies in the south and west edge of the Site. The River Spodden passes c. 300m south-west of the Site and the Site is located c. 1.4km north-west of the Rochdale Canal. The Site lies at a height of 120.7m above Ordnance Datum (aOD) and inclines slightly to the north.

The development of Rochdale was in no small part due to the topography of the area, and the town developed at the junction of several key trade and communication routes. Important trans-Pennine routes via Blackstone Edge led to the north-east, with routes to the north heading off across the Rossendale Fells into central Lancashire, and westwards to Bury and Bolton. The valley of the River Roch narrowed around Rochdale, providing a convenient fording point for the route southwards to Manchester, which would undoubtedly have been of importance as packhorse ways by the medieval period (Tindall, n.d., p. 1)

### **1.2.3. Geology and Soils**

The underlying solid geology of the development area comprises mudstone, siltstone and sandstone of the Pennine Lower Coal Measures Formation formed between 219 and 318 million years ago during the Carboniferous period. The superficial geology in the north of the Site comprises Devensian till formed between 116 and 11.8 thousand years ago, during the Quaternary period. Alluvium formed between 11.8 thousand years during the Quaternary period overlies the solid geology in the south of the Site (BGS, 2024).

## **1.3. Recommended Activity and Scope**

### **1.3.1. Recommended Activity**

The consented scheme for development works will involve landscaping and earthmoving activity, which have the potential to cause loss or damage to any below-ground remains surviving within the Site. To mitigate against the impact caused by the development, it is proposed that a phased programme of archaeological investigation, comprising evaluation and if necessary, mitigation to be undertaken to better inform the client and GMAAS of the site's archaeological potential. An archaeological watching brief will also be necessary following the demolition of 'Block B'.

This approach to mitigating against the loss or damage to heritage assets and potential heritage assets of archaeological interest follows the guidance of NPPF (Paragraph 207, 218).

### **1.3.2. Scope**

The scope of the evaluation will include three evaluation trenches. The trench locations and archaeological watching will target features shown on historic mapping (Figs 2-3).

The archaeological investigations shall be fully implemented in accordance with the approved Project Design (formerly referred to as a 'Written Scheme of Investigation') as stated in planning documentation (CIfA 2023).

## 2. Brief Historical Background

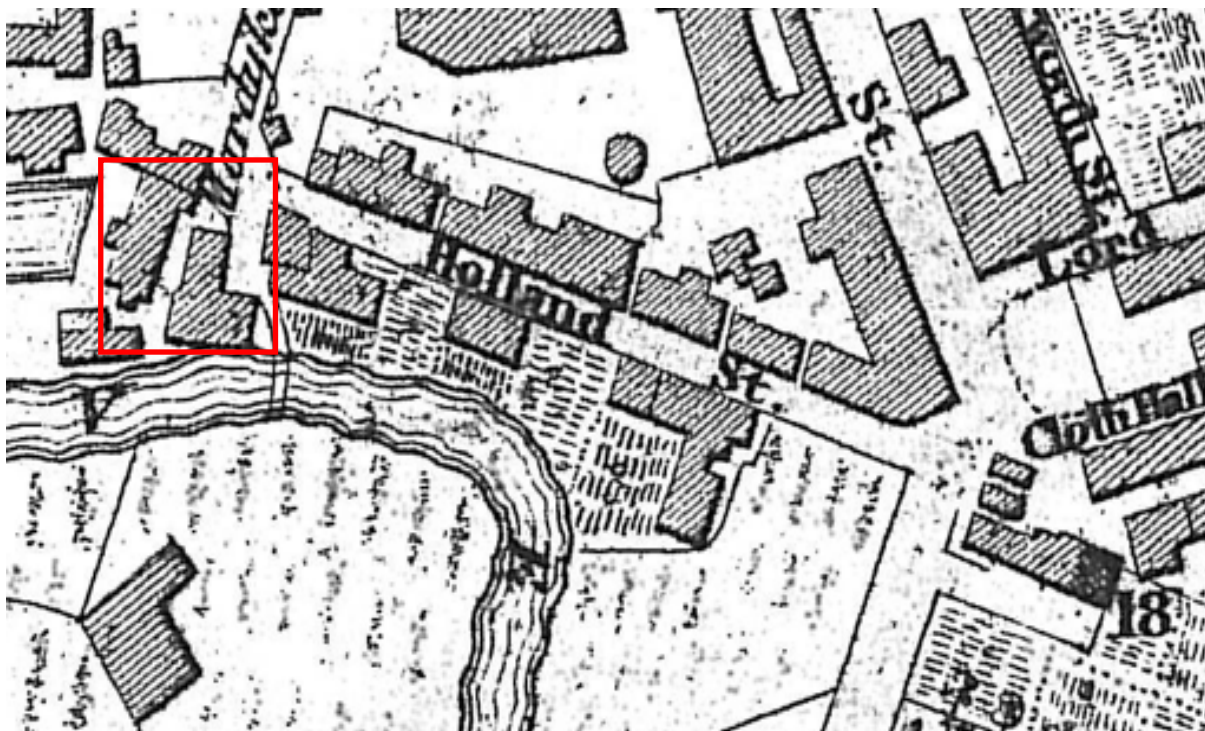
The archaeological and historical background of the Site is presented in the desk-based assessment produced by Civic Heritage in 2025 and should be referred to for more detailed information regarding the development of the site.

### 2.1. Summary

#### 2.1.1. Town Mill dyeworks and fulling mill

Rochdale Glebe Map of 1754-7 shows that the Site appears to have been roughly within a parcel of land that lay north of the River Roch, which was labelled 'Dyehouse Holme', potentially indicating that a dyehouse (or dyeing in some capacity) had been established within the Site or its immediate vicinity by the mid-18<sup>th</sup> century.

According to a newspaper article, dated 1799, a parcel of land containing messuages, tenements, a fulling mill, dyehouses, warehouses, buildings and croft was to be sold by auction (Manchester Mercury, 30<sup>th</sup> June 1799). The newspaper mentions that the 'fulling mill was commonly known as 'Town Mill'. The article describes that the mill also had associated dyehouses, warehouses and other buildings that were standing upon and worked by the 'River Roach' (now referred to as River Roch). The mill was supplied by water from the river and was furnished with 'excellent Scouring Water'. Thronton's plan of 1824 (not included within the report) shows a collection of buildings off Holland Street adjacent to the river that likely represents the mill and dyeworks complex. Murphy's plan of 1831 shows buildings associated with the Town Mill complex (Plate 2). The buildings are captured in details on the Ordnance Survey plan of 1850 (Fig. 3).



*Plate 2 Murphy's map of 1831, red square showing approximate buildings associated with Town Mill*

### **2.1.2. Holland Street Mills**

The mill is shown in detail on the Ordnance Survey plan of 1850 (Fig. 3). The mill owners were James Pilling and Sons. In 1867 the mill was advertised for sale and contained the following description: Cotton Spinning Mills and Weaving Shed, known as Holland-Street Mills, in Rochdale... contained upwards of 9,000 square yards. The mills and other buildings comprise of one mill of six storeys and an attic, one mill of three storeys and an attic, another mill of three storeys and a warehouse: also warping house, mule and loom sheds with sizing and drying houses, two cottages and other buildings. A plan produced in 1940 confirms that the engine house lay at the south of the mill range that fronted St Mary's Gate, whilst the boiler house and economisers lay beyond the Site boundary, to the south. An engine house also lay to the south of the western mill block. By 1959, the southern half of the mill had been demolished, and the two northernmost mill buildings were converted into the technical college. They were eventually demolished and replaced with Rochdale College in the 1970s. The footprint of the building primarily lies beneath 'Block B'. 'Block B' will be demolished after the new college building has been built and will be landscaped into a green space.

### 3. Aims and Objectives

#### 3.1. Aims

The main aim of the archaeological evaluation will be to excavate and record three evaluation trenches within the Site to identify any archaeologically significant remains that may be encountered. More specific aims of the investigation will be:

- to record, as far as is reasonably possible, the location, extent, condition, significance and quality of any surviving archaeological remains observed;
- to provide sufficient information to enable an informed decision to be made about the need for any additional archaeological mitigation;
- to identify the survival of structural remains associated with the dyeworks and mill, specifically those related to the power systems / waterwheel pit and industrial processes;
- to recover any artefactual material related to the industrial processes;
- to provide sufficient information to enable an informed decision to be made about the need for any additional future archaeological work,
- to produce a report describing the findings, and;
- to make available the results of the work

#### 3.2. Regional Research Framework

Further, more detailed research aims may be generated and developed from the results of the archaeological investigation, with specific reference to the North West Regional Research Framework (NWRRF 2024). It is envisaged that the investigation may potentially address the research questions listed in Table 1, below:

| Post-medieval and industrial period |                                                                                                                     |
|-------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Agenda No                           | Agenda Description                                                                                                  |
| PM27                                | How do industries associated with the north west evolve and develop during this period?                             |
| PM28                                | How can we identify domestic buildings adapted for the textile industry?                                            |
| Ind55                               | What is the evidence for the development of power production?                                                       |
| Ind58                               | How have industrial buildings adapted to new technology and processes?                                              |
| Ind60                               | How can we make sense of the relative significance of historic industrial processes poorly understood and recorded? |
| Ind100                              | How do we capture the process of industrialisation?                                                                 |

*Table 1 Research agendas applicable to the archaeological investigation*

## **4. Method Statement**

### **4.1. Archaeological Works**

#### **4.1.1. Evaluation**

The principal aim of the archaeological investigation will be to establish the presence or absence of any buried remains of archaeological interest and, if present, sufficiently characterise the remains present to enable an informed decision to be reached regarding the archaeological potential of the site and requirement for mitigation.

#### **4.1.2. Trench Rationale**

The rationale for the evaluation trenches is outlined below (see Figs 2-3):

- **Trench 1** c. 15 x 5m will target the potential location of the waterwheel pit and associated gearing in Town Mill;
- **Trench 2** c. 15 x 3m will target the centre of the dye works, terminating to the south at the tailrace to the mill, and;
- **Trench 3** c. 15 x 2m will target the northern part of Town Mill and the ancillary block.

#### **4.1.3. Watching Brief**

A suitably qualified archaeologist will be in attendance for the duration of any landscaping, groundbreaking or intrusive below ground works following the demolition of 'Block B'. It is expected that attendance will be coordinated with the early stages of the site remediation, enabling works and construction, when most of the intrusive works will occur.

The purpose of this work will be to create a record of the survival, thickness and characteristics of the archaeological deposits (specifically the two engine houses at Holland Street Mill; see Figs 2-3), and to establish the survival of any surviving deposits, features or structural remains.

If archaeological remains are encountered, the monitoring archaeologist will have the opportunity to halt the excavation. Adequate time will be afforded to allow cleaning and recording of any exposed archaeology. In the eventuality that significantly complex or significant remains are encountered that would incur a noticeable delay to the programme of works, Civic will immediately contact the client (Willmott Dixon) and GMAAS to agree an acceptable course of action. This will may involve discrete areas of controlled mitigation to fully record any remains present or where this is not practical, the relocation or redesign of trenching/excavations to avoid damage or loss to sensitive remains.

If it proves necessary for excavations to exceed more than 1.2m and / or if the trench sides appear to be loose or unstable at any depth, then provision may be made to widen and step the trenches to facilitate access. In instances where no archaeological remains are present, excavations exceeding 1.2m below ground level will be inspected and recorded from the trench edge.

#### **4.1.4. Pre-commencement**

Production of this Project Design has been undertaken by Civic Heritage and submitted to the advisory body (GMAAS) for approval prior to the commencement of any onsite activities. In

addition to the completion and approval of the Project Design prior to on-site commencement of activity, the nominated Project Manager will:

- Liaise with the client to ensure mutual understanding of the project deliverables, timeframes, access, health and safety, aims and resources.
- Liaise with the archaeological curator or their representative.
- Obtain background information necessary for the project
- Oversee the production of relevant documentation such as Risk Assessments and Method Statements (RAMS).
- Ensure adequate staffing and resources (e.g. plant and welfare) are programmed.

#### **4.1.5. Evaluation and Mitigation**

##### ***General Methodology***

All archaeological work shall be conducted following the Standards for Archaeological Field Evaluation (ClfA 2023a) and Guidance for Archaeological Field Evaluation (ClfA 2023b). Before commencement all interested parties will agree an acceptable method of proceeding. Prior to the commencement of any works, the location of the areas targeted for archaeological investigation will be laid out accurately with respect to the Ordnance Survey national grid.

The areas will be excavated using a 13-tonne mechanical excavator of appropriate size and power (fitted with a toothless ditching bucket); the excavator will excavate down to the first significant archaeological horizon or geological deposits, whichever is reached first. Thereafter, remains will be cleaned manually to define their extent, nature, form and, where possible, date.

If it proves necessary for trenches to be excavated deeper than 1.2m, or if the trench sides appear to be loose or unstable at any depth, then trenches may be stepped inwards.

##### ***Context Recording***

All contexts will be recorded using pro-forma sheets, allowing details to be incorporated into a Harris matrix. All written recording of survey data, contexts, photographs, artefacts and ecofacts will be cross-referenced from record sheets using sequential numbering.

##### ***Photography***

A full and detailed photographic record of individual contexts will be maintained and similarly general views from standard view points of the overall site at all stages of the excavation will be generated. Photography will be undertaken in accordance with HE guidance, Digital Image Capture and File Storage Guidelines for Best Practice (July 2015). All frames will include a visible, graduated metric scale. Photographs records will be maintained on photographic pro-forma sheets.

##### ***Planning***

The precise location of all the excavated test pits and any archaeological remains encountered therein will be surveyed using a combination of manual drawing, total station/GPS survey, 3D laser scanning, and/or aerial drone/Hi-view photogrammetry. This process will generate scaled plans within AutoCAD, which will then be subject to manual survey enhancement. The

drawings will be generated at an accuracy appropriate for 1:20 scale but can be output at any scale required. All information will be georectified to the Ordnance Survey National Grid and all levels will be tied into Ordnance Datum.

### ***Human Remains***

Human remains are not expected within the site area. If they are found they will be left in-situ covered and protected, and the Ministry of Justice, Local Planning Authority and GMAAS will be informed immediately. Removal of human remains is beyond the scope of this investigation and, should any be encountered, all works will cease until a mitigation strategy has been developed and an updated Project Design produced.

### ***Finds Policy***

Finds recovery and sampling programmes will be in accordance with best practice (following current Chartered Institute for Archaeologists' guidelines, Standard and guidance for the collection, documentation, conservation and research of archaeological materials (CIfA 2020) and subject to expert advice in order to minimise deterioration. Finds storage during fieldwork and any site archive preparation will follow professional guidelines (UKIC 1990).

Any finds falling within the definition of 'treasure' recovered during the course of the investigation will be removed to a safe place and reported to the local Coroner according to the procedures relating to the Treasure Act, 1996.

### ***Deposit Sampling***

Samples will be collected from any suitable deposits encountered during the evaluation with the aim of identifying any residual evidence of the past environment or industrial processes and potential dating. The samples should be collected, where possible, in line with the Historic England guidelines (Environmental Archaeology: A Guide to the Theory and Practice of Methods, from Sampling and Recovery to Post-Excavation, Second Edition EH 2011), appropriating 30 – 40 litres per sample, and sampled in as close to sterile conditions as feasible in external areas, although these guidelines may have to be adapted to given the small-scale nature of the investigation.

## **4.2. Report and Archive**

### **4.2.1. Report**

A draft copy of a report will be submitted for comment to the client and GMAAS within eight weeks of the completion of the final phase of investigation fieldwork. This will present the results obtained from the archaeological investigation, and will include as a minimum:

- a title page detailing site address, NGR, author/originating body, client's name and address;
- full content's listing;
- a non-technical summary of the findings of the fieldwork;
- a description of the archaeological background;
- an account of the historical development of the site;
- a description of the methodologies used during the fieldwork;
- a description of the findings of the fieldwork;
- detailed drawings (plans and relevant sections) at appropriate scales of the excavated trenches, showing the archaeological features exposed;
- Photographs with a good depth of field, appropriately lit and in clear focus of all archaeological features of potential significance;
- A catalogue and assessment of each category of artefact recovered during the investigation and biological samples, including the potential for further analysis;
- a summary, assessment, and interpretation of the results of the archaeological investigation;
- a consideration of the importance of the archaeological remains present on the site in local, regional and national terms;
- recommendations for dissemination in consultation with GMAAS

Depending on the outcome of the fieldwork, it may be necessary to produce a post-excavation assessment report. This would be an appropriate procedure in the eventuality the evaluation leads to mitigation, or the fieldwork generates a significant artefactual assemblage or material suitable for sampling or scientific analysis. The post-excavation assessment report is a standard procedure for archaeological reports under NPPF and is a report that presents all the gathered data and material, quantifies it, assesses its potential and determines whether further analysis is required to produce the final site report. It will also provide a task list, methodology and associated costs should further analysis be required.

The client will be provided with a digital copy of the report (pdf format), printed copies will be available upon request and may be subject to an additional fee.

#### **4.2.2. Archive**

##### ***Project Archive***

The results of the archaeological investigation will form the basis of a full archive to professional standards, in accordance with current Historic England guidelines, and current ClfA guidance (ClfA 2020). The project archive represents the collation and indexing of all the data and material gathered during the course of the project. The deposition of a properly ordered and indexed project archive in an appropriate repository is considered an essential and integral element of all archaeological projects by the ClfA in that organisation's code of conduct. As part of the archiving process, the on-line OASIS (On-line Access to Index of Archaeological Investigations) form will be completed. In preparation for this an OASIS number will be obtained and the initial record set up at the beginning of the investigation.

The site archive will be so organised as to be compatible with the other archaeological archives produced in the North West of England. All drawn records will be transferred to and stored in digital format, in systems which are easily accessible. The integrity of the site archive will be maintained upon completion of the archaeological works with the archive ultimately being deposited with Touchstones Rochdale, should they agree to receive it.

The archaeological archive will consist of the following:

- All original records created throughout the course of the project;
- All original drawings, whether created during fieldwork or post-investigation;
- Indexes to the drawings;
- Indexes to the photographic archive;
- All digital material;
- Digital material created from written, drawn or photographed original records;
- The final project report;
- A list of contents of the archive

It is likely that a large element of the project archive will be in digital format. It would thus may be appropriate to deposit a copy of the archive generated from the archaeological investigation with the Archaeological Data Service (ADS), through ADS-Easy should this be requested as part of the mitigation strategy. Any records that are created in hard copy during the course of the project will be scanned and added to this digital archive. The integrity of the digital and paper archive will be maintained by Civic Heritage until its deposition with an appropriate repository body.

#### **4.2.3. Dissemination**

The results of the investigation will ultimately be disseminated through deposit of the findings of the investigation in a technical report, together with some form of publication, if required.

- The project archive will be offered to Touchstones Rochdale.
- The report will be submitted to Greater Manchester HER within three months of production of the completed report.

- As a minimum a short summary note of the results obtained from the fieldwork will be sent for inclusion in the annual roundup of archaeological fieldwork published in a relevant journal (Medieval Archaeology/Post-Medieval Archaeology/Industrial Archaeology Review).
- Pending what remains are encountered it may be necessary to produce a full article for inclusion in a suitable academic journal.
- Civic Heritage will register the report with OASIS (On-line Access to Index of Archaeological Investigations).
- Civic Heritage may utilise social media to communicate the discovery of archaeological findings and any artefacts of interest at any time. Discretion will be taken not to disclose such information or make site locations anonymous if specifically asked to do so by the client.
- The Project Archive, including artefactual material will be deposited as outlined above.

## **5. Programme**

### **5.1. Timetable**

#### **5.1.1. Fieldwork**

The project will commence on a date mutually agreed between the Client and Civic Heritage.

Civic Heritage will notify GMAAS one week prior to commencement of the onsite activities, allowing them to schedule monitoring visits during the course of the evaluation.

It is anticipated that the evaluation will be completed on-site within five working days. Should extensive or well-preserved remains deemed worthy of further investigation be uncovered, these may require additional phase of works.

The archaeological watching brief will take place during any landscaping, groundbreaking or intrusive below ground works following the demolition of 'Block B'. It is expected that attendance will be coordinated with the early stages of the site remediation, enabling works and construction, when most of the intrusive works will occur.

#### **5.1.2. Report**

A draft report will be submitted to GMAAS and the Client for comment within eight weeks of completion of the final phase of fieldwork. The project archive will be deposited with the receiving museum (where applicable) within six months of completion of the fieldwork.

#### **5.1.3. Project Monitoring**

Civic Heritage will notify GMAAS of any discoveries of archaeological significance so that site visits can be made, as necessary. Any changes to this agreed PD will only be made in consultation with the Heritage Management Director (at GMAAS) acting on behalf of the local planning authority.

## **6. Staff Proposals**

### **6.1. Team Structure**

#### **6.1.1. Responsibilities**

The project will be overseen and managed by Oliver Cook (Director, Civic Heritage). Oliver is an experienced field archaeologist with over 11 years' experience and has undertaken many investigations and excavations across the country.

His role will be to ensure that the Project Design is implemented within the framework of the Project Objectives and will be responsible for all aspects of staff and resource logistics, ensuring the smooth running of the project programme.

#### **6.1.2. Fieldwork Staff**

It is not possible to provide details of specific archaeologists that will be involved with the fieldwork at this stage, but all shall be suitably qualified archaeologists with proven relevant experience

#### **6.1.3. External Specialists**

The following list of internal and external specialists can be called if required:

- Post-med pottery Jeremy Bradley (independent specialist)
- CBM Jeremy Bradley (independent specialist)
- Phil Mills (independent specialist)
- Clay tobacco pipes Jeremy Bradley (independent specialist)
- Glass David Dungworth (independent specialist)
- Iron/Steel objects David Dungworth (independent specialist)
- Industrial residues Gerry McDonnell (independent specialist)
- Hannah Russ (Archaeology.Biz)
- Leather Quita Mould (independent specialist)
- Conservation Karen Barker (independent specialist)

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Ordnance Survey Town Plan, 1851

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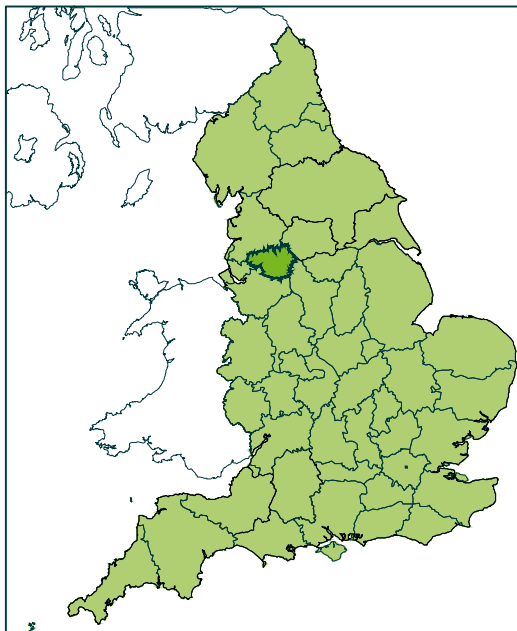
## **Appendix 1 - Figures**

**Figure 1** Site Location

**Figure 2** Trench and watching brief location plan and superimposed onto modern mapping

**Figure 3** Trench and watching brief location plan superimposed onto the 1850 Ordnance Survey Town Plan

# CIVIC



Hopwood Hall College, Rochdale  
Project Code: 61082  
Figure 1: site location

