

Former Oakenrod Primary School Project Design: Archaeological Excavation

October 2026

PREPARED FOR

Stonebond Properties (Manchester) Limited



Project Design

Prepared By	Graham Mottershead		
Reviewed By	Ollie Cook		
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1. Introduction

1.1. Background

1.1.1. Overview of the Site

This Project Design has been produced by Civic Heritage, on behalf of Stonebond Properties (Manchester) Limited (the client). The document has been prepared in support of an application for development at the Former Oakenrod Primary School, Spotland, Rochdale, OL11 4EU (centred on NGR SD 88739 13111; Plates 1 and 2). This document has been commissioned by Stonebond Properties (Manchester) Limited.

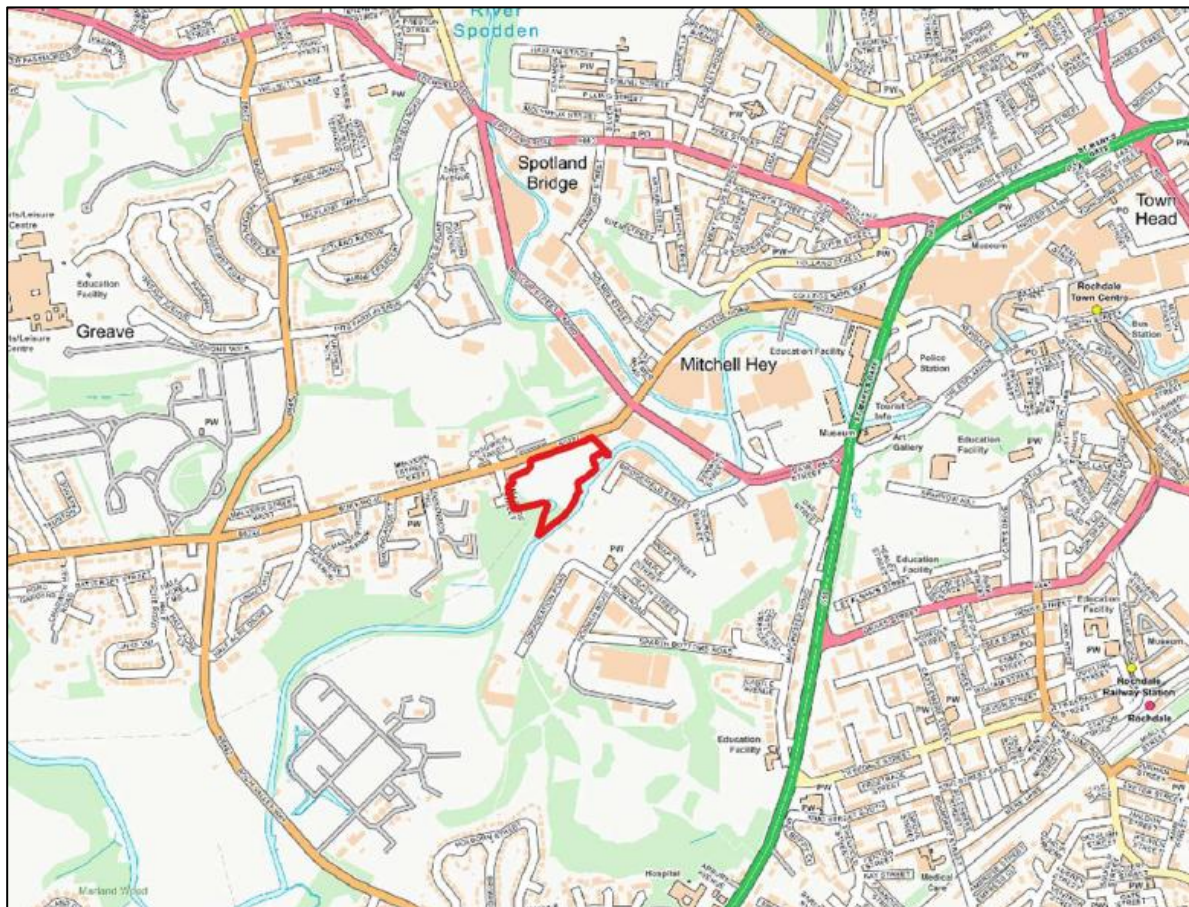


Plate 1: Site location, showing the red line development boundary



Plate 2: recent aerial image, showing the red line development boundary

1.1.2. Planning Background

Stonebond Properties (Manchester) Limited have obtained planning permission for a residential development and associated remedial works (planning reference: 02/D39735) at the site of the Former Oakenrod Primary School, Rochdale.

Attached to the planning consent is a condition for a programme of archaeological investigation, worded as follows:

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) an archaeological evaluation through 'strip, map and record' of former workers' housing in the north-eastern part of the site;***
- b) detailed excavation of the waterwheel pits, water turbine and steam-power plant.***

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, including the installation of a permanent information panel.

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.

An archaeological evaluation had been carried out in 2006 (Oxford Archaeology North 2006) that recorded the presence of substantial structures relating to the power features of the former mill. Subsequently a supporting Desk-Based Assessment (Brogan 2022). This concluded that detailed recording of the two waterwheel pits, water turbine housing and putative steam-power plant will be required prior to development.

This Project Design for archaeological excavation has been prepared by Graham Mottershead of Civic Heritage on behalf of Stonebond Properties (Manchester) Limited. Any change to the Project Design must be agreed between the client, GMAAS and Civic Heritage.

1.2. Setting

1.2.1. Location

The site is located at Bury Road within the Bamford area of Rochdale and is bounded by Bury Road to the north, Melrose Street to the west, the River Roch to the south and a former road linking Bury Road to Bridgefield Street to the east.

1.2.2. Topography and Geology

The site comprises scrub vegetation with some tarmac and concrete hardstanding at its north side. Trees surround the site on its north, west and south sides, with a dirt track runs east/west across the centre of the site, leading in from a small car park to the east.

The site is relatively level, lying at c. 100m aOD.

The superficial geology comprises glaciofluvial sand and gravel and alluvium deposits with clay, silt, sand and gravel (BGS 2026).

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 programme of archaeological mitigation via detailed excavation should be undertaken to fully record surviving remains of the former Oakenrod Mills.

This approach to mitigating against the loss or damage to heritage assets and potential heritage assets of archaeological interest follows the guidance of NPPF (revised August 2026).

1.3.2. Scope

The investigation will comprise detailed excavation within a 4732 sqm area (marked in orange; Plates 3 and 4).



Plate 3: Location of detailed excavation (orange)

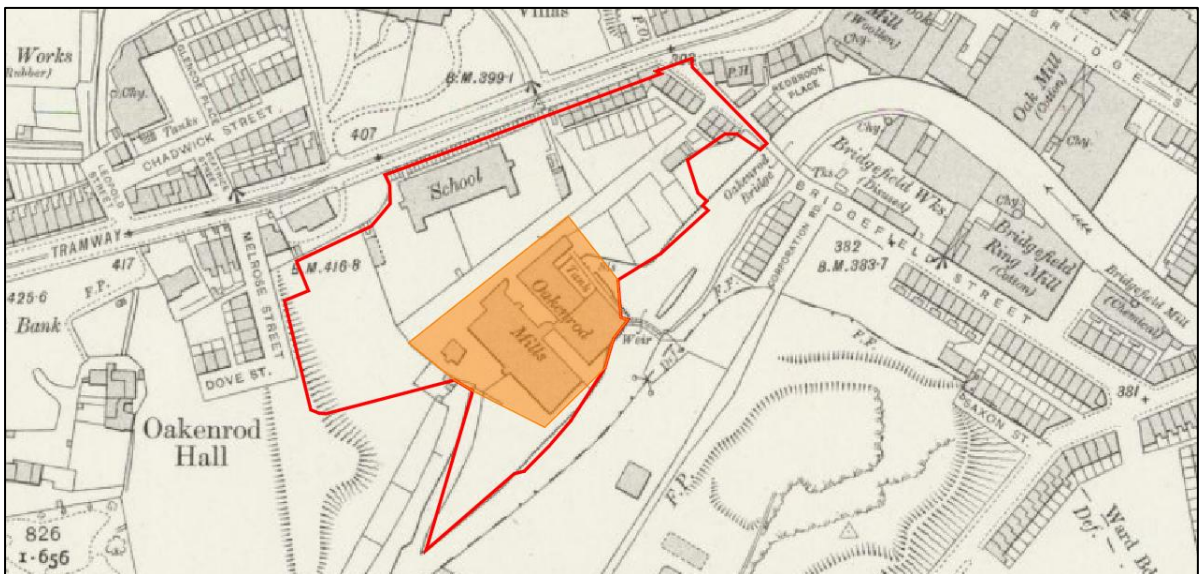


Plate 4: Location of detailed excavation (orange) and SMR excavations (green) superimposed onto OS 1910 mapping

Additionally, GMAAS have determined that there is a requirement, as part of the dissemination of information, for a historic information panel to be displayed as part of the final development. This will be designed by Civic Heritage who will produce a print ready PDF for use by the client.

The archaeological evaluation shall be fully implemented in accordance with the approved Project Design as stated in planning documentation (CIfA 2023).

2. Historical Background

2.1. Introduction

The following summary has been taken from the desk-based assessment (Brogan 2022). This PD should be read in conjunction with both the DBA (Brogan 2022) and the earlier evaluation report (OAN 2006).

2.2. Archaeological and Historical Background

Very few prehistoric and Roman sites have been identified within the area, however, a Bronze Age stone hammer and a Roman coin hoard were found on the banks of the river in the 19th century. It is possible that Oakenrod Hall, located to the west of the site, was constructed on the site of an earlier building, however, the extent of medieval activity within the site and the surrounding area is unknown. By the late medieval period, a corn mill was located within the Oakenrod area and in the 17th-century a fulling mill was constructed near the former site of the corn mill. The site remained occupied by a fulling mill, known as the Oakenrod Mills, throughout the 18th and 19th centuries. In the early 20th century, the former fulling mill was adapted for use as a cotton waste mill. Other heritage assets identified within site include 19th-century houses, a well, and a 20th-century school.

In September 2006, an archaeological evaluation was undertaken by Oxford Archaeology North within the site. The evaluation included six trenches targeting the Oakenrod Mills and the earlier 17th-century fulling mill. Archaeological remains of the later mill were found immediately below the ground surface. The remains of the water-power system were represented by two well-preserved head-race tunnels, with an intact waterwheel pit and later turbine pit identified within the basement of the earlier 19th-century block of the mill (Plate 5).

The evaluation therefore confirmed that well-preserved remains of the mill survive in-situ within the site. The site is considered to be of historical and archaeological interest, due to the links to the woollen industry of Rochdale, which was a significant industry in the development of the town, and the confirmed the presence of remains of the Oakenrod Mills. There is also potential for remains of earlier mill structures to be identified within the site, which may be associated with the 16th and 17th century mills.

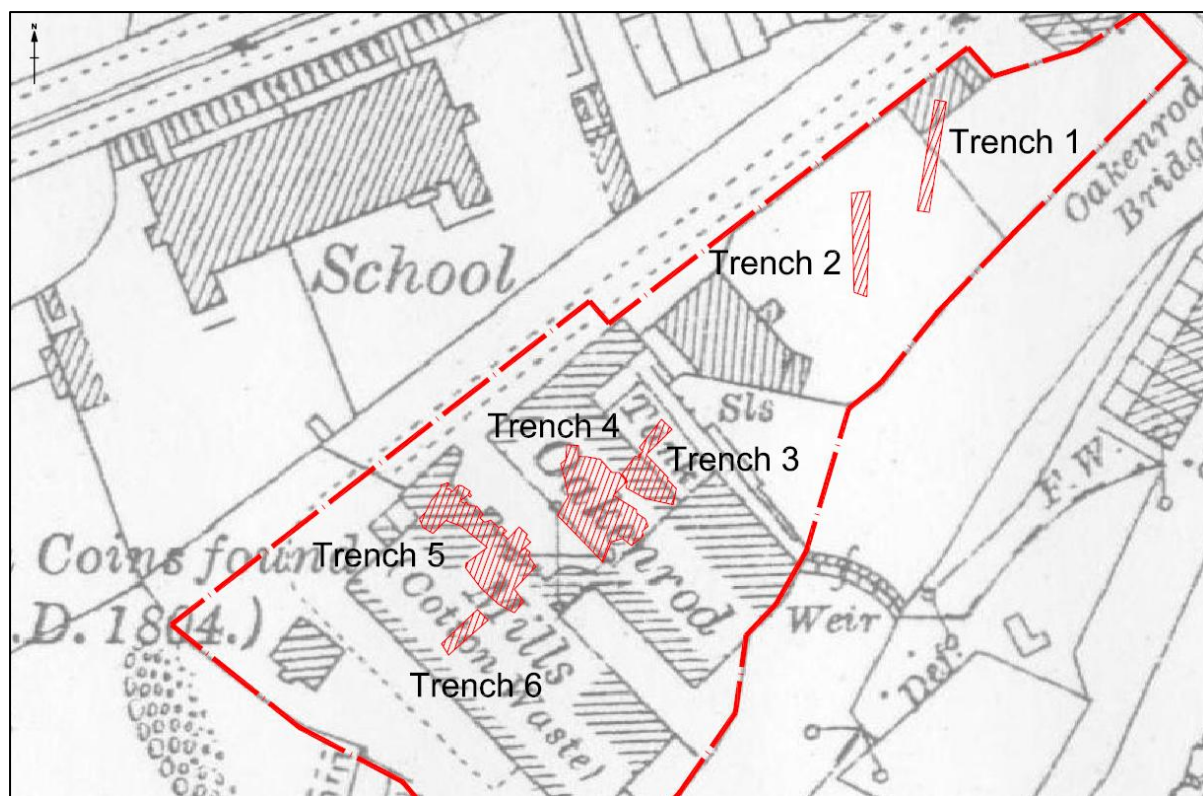


Plate 5: Location of 2006 evaluation trenches – taken from OAN 2006

3. Aims and Objectives

3.1. Aims

The main aim of the archaeological work will be to fully excavate and record any archaeologically significant remains survive within the site. This will be achieved through the excavation of a 4732 sqm area (marked in orange on Plates 3 and 4).

The specific aims of the investigation will be:

- to fully record all remains associated with Oakenrod Mills;
- to fully record any remains of earlier industrial features/structures;
- to produce a full excavation report;
- to design a historic information panel to be displayed within the final development; and
- to disseminate the results of the work in a format and manner proportionate to the significance of the findings.

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). The specific research agendas set out within the NWRRF will be taken into account at all stages of the evaluation/mitigation.

4. Method Statement

4.1. Archaeological Works

4.1.1. Overview

The excavation will comprise the stripping and recording of a 4732 sqm area (marked in orange on Plates 3 and 4).

4.1.2. 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.

4.1.3. Excavation Methodology

The main detailed excavation area will be mechanically stripped to the level of the archaeological remains, which will then be manually cleaned, excavated and recorded.

General Methodology

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

The excavation areas will be excavated using a 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 excavation areas to be excavated deeper than 1.2m, or if the excavation 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 digital photographic record of individual contexts and groups 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. Photograph records will be maintained on photographic pro-forma sheets.

Planning

The precise location of all the excavated areas 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

Although not expected, should human remains be 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, a Ministry of Justice licence obtained, 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 twelve 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 ecofactual 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.

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. Historic Information Panel

Civic Heritage will design the panel at A1 size and produce a print ready PDF. Manufacture and mounting of the panel will be the responsibility of the client. The location of the panel in the final development will require discussion with GMAAS.

4.2.3. 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 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 Touchstones Rochdale.

4.2.4. 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 report will be submitted to the relevant 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.
- Pending what remains are encountered it may be determined that a further level of publication is necessary, in consultation with GMAAS.
- 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.

4.3 Outreach and Public Engagement

Due to the nature of the site and the work to be carried out it is not felt that public engagement would be appropriate during the evaluation. Pending discussion between the client and GMAAS there may be scope to hold an open-day or give a public talk / seminar on the results of the investigation.

5. Programme

5.1. Timetable

5.1.1. Fieldwork

No date has yet been established for commencement of the excavation. It is anticipated that the works will be carried out over a period of three working weeks.

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.

5.1.2. Report

A draft report will be submitted to GMAAS and the client for comment within twelve weeks of completion of the final phase of fieldwork. The project archive will be deposited with Touchstones Rochdale 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 GMAAS, in their role as advisors to the local planning authority.

6. Staff Proposals

6.1. Team Structure

6.1.1. Responsibilities

The project will be overseen and managed by Graham Mottershead (Associate Director, Civic Heritage). Graham is an experienced field archaeologist with over 36 years' experience and has undertaken many archaeological investigations across the UK. Graham holds current valid SMSTS and PRINCE2 certification.

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

The evaluation trenching will be directed on site by Steve Tamburello (Project Officer, Civic Heritage). Steve is a highly experienced field archaeologist with over 25 years' experience. Steve holds current valid First Aid, Cable Avoidance and drone pilot certification

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, who will be working for Civic Heritage.

6.1.3. External Specialists

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

- *Ceramics* Jeremy Bradley (independent specialist)
- *CBM* Jeremy Bradley (Civic Heritage)
- *Pipeclay* Jeremy Bradley (Civic Heritage)
- *Lithics* Dr Andrew Myers (independent specialist)
- *Glass* David Dungworth (independent specialist)
- *Metal* David Dungworth (independent specialist)
- *Industrial residues* David Dungworth (independent specialist)
- *Animal Bone* Hannah Russ (Archaeology.Biz)
- *Leather* Quita Mould (independent specialist)
- *Conservation* Karen Barker (independent specialist)
- *Palaeoenvironmental/geoarchaeological remains* Joseph Foster (Civic Earth)
- *Palaeoenvironmental/geoarchaeological remains* Prof Simon Hutchinson (University of Salford)

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