

North Car Park, Fairfax Road, Prestwich

Project Design: Excavation

SEPTEMBER 2024

PREPARED FOR

Chroma Consulting



Project Design

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Front Cover	Prestwich Fire Station from Fairfax Road (courtesy of Bob Bonner, taken in November 1975)

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1. Introduction

1.1. Background

1.1.1. Overview of the Site

The site, currently in use as a carpark lies to the east of Prestwich town centre, in Bury, Greater Manchester (Fig 1; SD 81261 04263). The site was peripheral to the historic core of Prestwich and as far as the available historic mapping suggests, the site, particularly its northern extent remained largely undeveloped throughout the post-medieval and industrial periods. The site lay within a large irregularly shaped field, which was not subject to development until the late 19th century. Residential development in the early- to mid-19th century was limited mainly to the land adjoining Bury New Road and Poppythorn Lane. The creation of the Prestwich Branch of the Lancashire and Yorkshire Railway marked a significant turning point in Prestwich's connectivity to the rest of Lancashire and its growing metropolises. By the time of the 1893 Ordnance Survey map, the land to the north and west of Poppythorn Lane and east of Bury New Road had been subject to noticeable developments. A cricket ground and collection of buildings, which included Prestwich Fire Station, were established to the west of the railway embankment.

1.1.2. Planning Background

Muse and Bury Council are preparing a planning application to support the development of the land to the north of Fairfax Road (centred on: SD 81261 04263). This forms part of a wider scheme of redevelopment centred around the site occupied by Longfield Shopping Centre.

The archaeological potential of the site was assessed in 2023, in an archaeological desk-based assessment produced by Salford Archaeology (Poundall 2023). This document outlined the chronological development of the site and identified the potential for a range of below-ground remains.

In light of the conclusions drawn from the desk-based assessment and following consultation with the Greater Manchester Archaeological Advisory Service (GMAAS), it was recommended a programme of evaluation proceed any development of the site. The first phase of evaluation within the northern part of the development site, in the carpark to the north of Fairfax Road was undertaken in July 2024 by Brogan Archaeology and comprised four trenches. The evaluation identified the presence of a relict ploughsoil and undated peat deposit, the extents of which have been well documented through geoenvironmental and geotechnical surveys. Samples of the peat – collected during the evaluation – have been earmarked for assessment, and where appropriate analytical work. The identification of a suite of well-preserved structural remains, lying close to Fairfax Road have been found to relate to Prestwich Fire Station. It was decided in consultation with GMAAS that a full and accurate record of the fire station's foundations should be made prior to the development of the site.

This Project Design for an archaeological strip, map and record excavation and concurrent sample assessment/analysis has been prepared by Oliver Cook of Civic Heritage on behalf of Chroma Consulting. Any change to the Project Design must be agreed between Chroma Consulting, GMAAS and Civic Heritage.

1.2. Setting

1.2.1. Location and Topography

The site occupies land to the north of Fairfax Road, which forms the northernmost plot of the redevelopment scheme. At the time of the evaluation, the northern plot comprised hardstanding, which sloped from north to south.



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

1.2.2. Geology and Soils

The underlying solid geology comprises sandstone of the Worsley Delft Rock Formation and is overlain by deposits of glaciofluvial, Devensian sand and gravel (BGS 2024). Geotechnical investigations undertaken prior to the works identified a large body of peat within the site.

1.3. Proposed Development

1.3.1. Planning Application

A hybrid planning application was submitted to the Local Planning Authority for consideration. The final proposals include: a community hub; a new village square; a market hall; flexible retail and leisure spaces; landscaped outdoor and green spaces; a new travel hub off Fairfax Road; and around 200 homes.

1.4. Recommended Activity and Scope

1.4.1. Recommended Activity

The proposed scheme for development works (now awaiting approval) will involve some level of 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 an archaeological mitigation, in the form of a strip, map and record excavation be undertaken to create a record of the structural remains of the fire station, which exist in the southern part of the development site.

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 200).

1.4.2. Scope

The scope of the investigation will include a c.30m x 25m C-shaped strip-map-and-record excavation. The excavation area aims to take in the firehouse and ancillary buildings, which amongst other uses would have been used for storing the hose carts and fire engines.

A separate body of assessment and analysis is proposed for the palaeoenvironmental samples of the peat, which were collected during the evaluation. This will be undertaken by external specialists and will initially assess for the potential of pollen and or macrofossils.

The archaeological investigation 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. Historical Background

2.1. Contextual Background

The archaeological and historical background of the site and its broader context has been assessed in a desk-based assessment produced by Salford Archaeology in 2023 (Poundall, 2023) and should be referred to for more detailed information regarding the broader development of the site.

2.2. Development of the Site

2.2.1. Prestwich Fire Station

The following historic narrative has been largely drawn from communication with Bob Bonner the curator of Fireground, who visited the site in 1975:

The protection of the Prestwich district went back and forth between both Manchester Fire Brigade and Salford Fire Brigade, on payment of annual charge throughout the 19th and 20th centuries. The buildings used for such purposes in Prestwich were certainly extant by 1893.

The increased charges levied on Prestwich by the Manchester Fire Brigade in the closing years of the 19th century, led the local district, in 1899, to consider creating its own brigade. The formation of a local brigade occurred around the turn of the century, and initially comprised accommodation for a hose cart and other equipment. Explicit references to the buildings making up the station were made in 1903, when improvements were proposed to the cart and fire cart house.

In 1938, all local authorities were required to form an Auxiliary Fire Service (whether or not they had an existing fire service); this included Prestwich. The auxiliary service would have been effective as part of the Air Raid Precautions measures adopted across Lancashire. In 1941, all existing fire brigades and Auxiliary Fire Services in the UK were nationalised into a single unit called the National Fire Service. This marked the end for Prestwich Fire Brigade and temporary hiatus of brigades such as Salford and Manchester which were only re-formed from 1948. The Fire Station on Fairfax Road was one of six temporary stations in use by the National Fire Service during the period 1941-48. Of these, only Fairfax Road was a purpose-built fire station, the others being requisitioned premises. The premises at Fairfax Road ceased to be used for these purposes after the Second World War. Its exact function in the post-war era is unclear but the buildings remained largely intact and were standing until the 1980s. A photograph of the fire station was taken in November 1975.

3. Aims and Objectives

3.1. Aims

The main aim of the archaeological strip-map-and-record excavation will be to fully expose and record the foundations and built remains of Prestwich Fire Station:

- to expose, as far as is reasonably possible, the full extent of the fire station's footprint;
- Identify the use of the structural remains through relating the built remains to archival/historical sources;
- to involve the local community (and Fireground museum) through publicising the work, and organising an open day at the end of the programme to showcase the exposed structures to the public; 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 improve our understanding of the following research questions:

- GS21: How can we expand our understanding of late Holocene peat sequences?
- Ind96: To what extent are important survivals of horse infrastructure well understood, recorded and protected?
- Ind106: To what extent have we identified and protected the most important examples of police and fire stations in the region?

4. Method Statement

4.1. Archaeological Works

4.1.1. Strip, Map and Record Excavation

The principal aim of the archaeological investigation will be to expose and record the buried remains of the fire station and, where present, create a full and accurate record of the structures to enable a more nuanced understanding of the fire station's internal layout. Where possible attempts shall be made to relate the structural remains to any archival material.

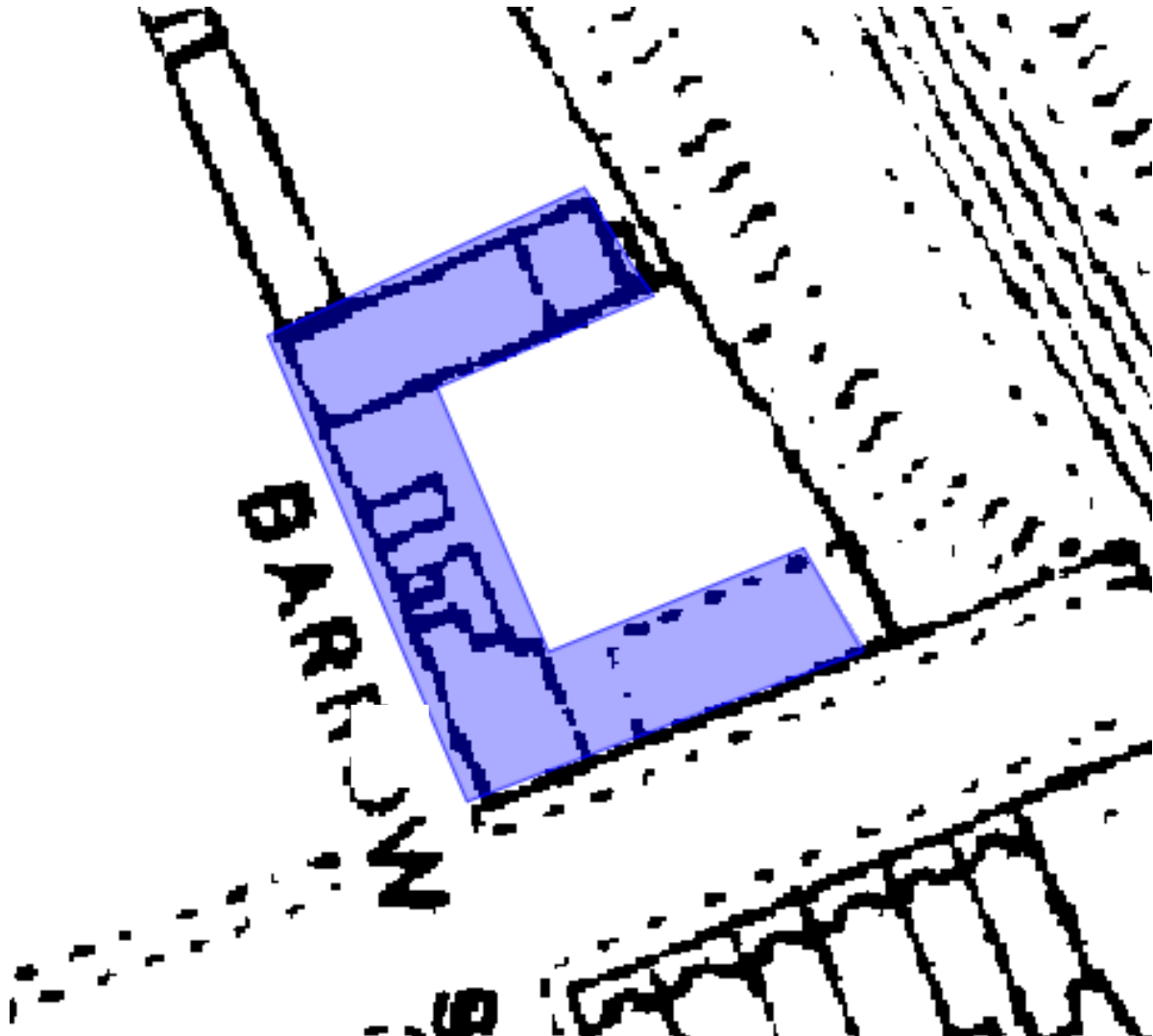


Plate 2: Proposed SMR area superimposed onto the 1893 OS map

4.1.2. Trench Rationale

The rationale for the trench:

- A (30m x 25m) located in the southern part of the site, adjacent to Fairfax Road and targeted on buildings first shown on the OS 1893 1:2500 map (Plate 2)

4.1.3. 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.

4.1.4. Methodology

General Methodology

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

The existing carpark surface will be lifted using a mechanical excavator. Any underlying bedding or subbase will be carefully stripped using a mechanical excavator fitted with a toothless ditching bucket. Thereafter the machine shall be used to remove any demonstrably modern overburden and expose the floors, walls and foundations of the buildings. 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 the 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.

Open Day

During the early stages of the project a decision will be made regarding the organisation of an open day, inviting members of the public to view the remains. This will likely be organised for a weekend at the end of the fieldwork.

4.1.5. Environmental Samples (Peat)

The samples collected from the evaluation / geotechnical investigations will be submitted for assessment. The potential for any analytical work will be assessed and will only be undertaken following consultation and agreement of the Client and GMAAS.

4.2. Report and Archive

4.2.1. Report

A draft copy of an excavation 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:

- 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;
- integration of the results of the palaeoenvironmental assessment / analysis;
- 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

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 Salford Museum & Art Gallery.

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 required 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.

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 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 (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.

4.2.4. Outreach and Public Engagement

At an early stage in the project, the decision was made to invite members of local historical and archaeological societies to participate in the first week of the evaluation. Pending the results of the evaluation and any additional fieldwork requirements, there could 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

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

Civic Heritage have notified 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 ten working days. Should extensive or well-preserved remains deemed worthy of further investigation be uncovered, these may require additional phase of works.

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. Oliver holds current valid CSCS 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

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)
- Animal bone (Archbiz)
- Leather Quita Mould (independent specialist)
- Conservation Karen Barker (independent specialist)

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Appendix 1 - Figures

Figure 1 Proposed SMR Excavation Area shown on Modern OS OpenMap - Local

Figure 2 Proposed SMR Excavation Area shown on the 1893 Ordnance Survey Map

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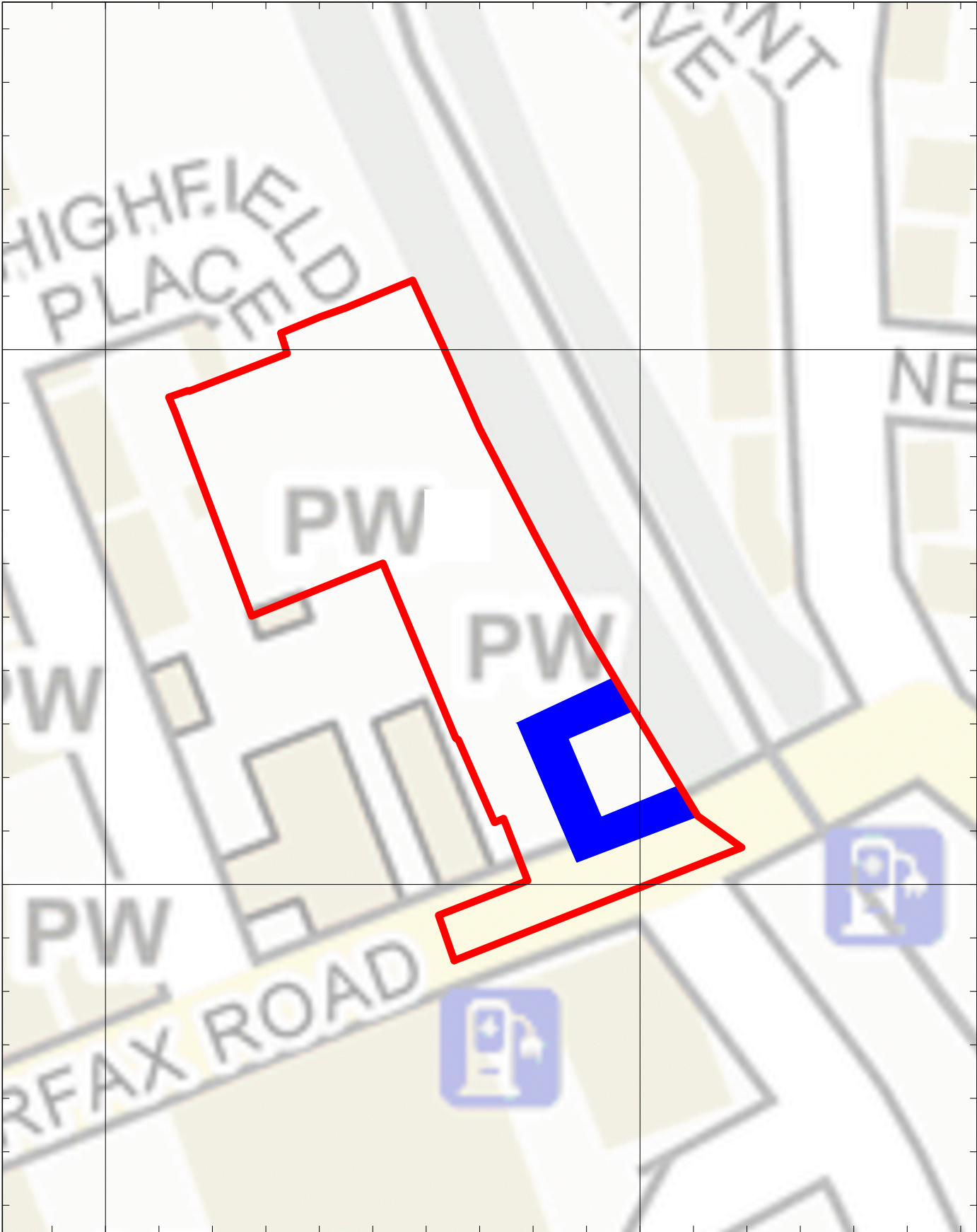
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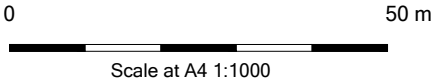


Site Name: Fairfax Road, Longfield Shopping Centre

Project Code: 61015

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Figure 1: Proposed SMR Excavation Area shown on Modern OS OpenMap - Local (© Crown copyright and database rights Ordnance Survey 2024)

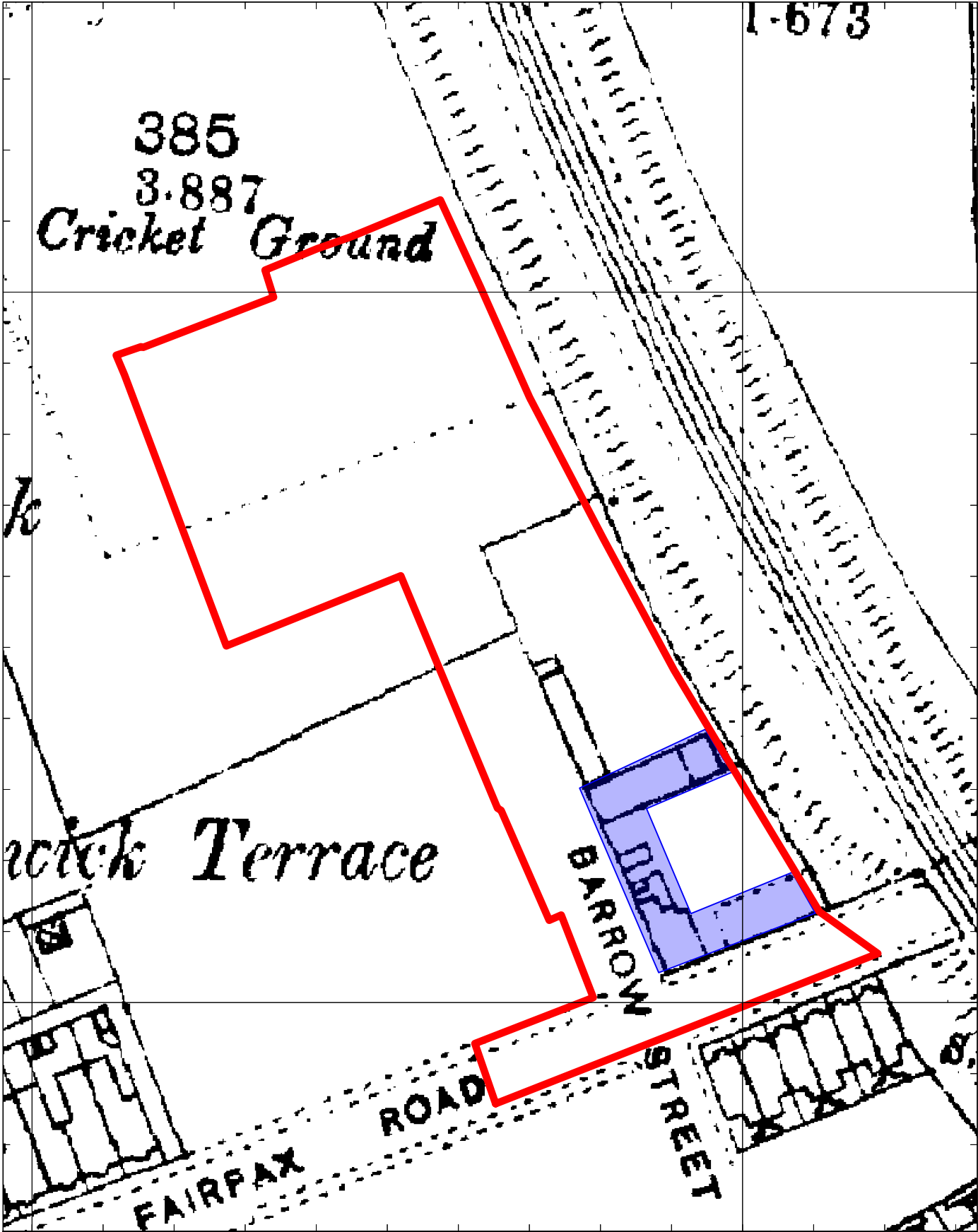


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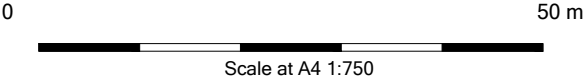


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Figure 2: Proposed SMR Excavation Area shown on the 1893 Ordnance Survey Map



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