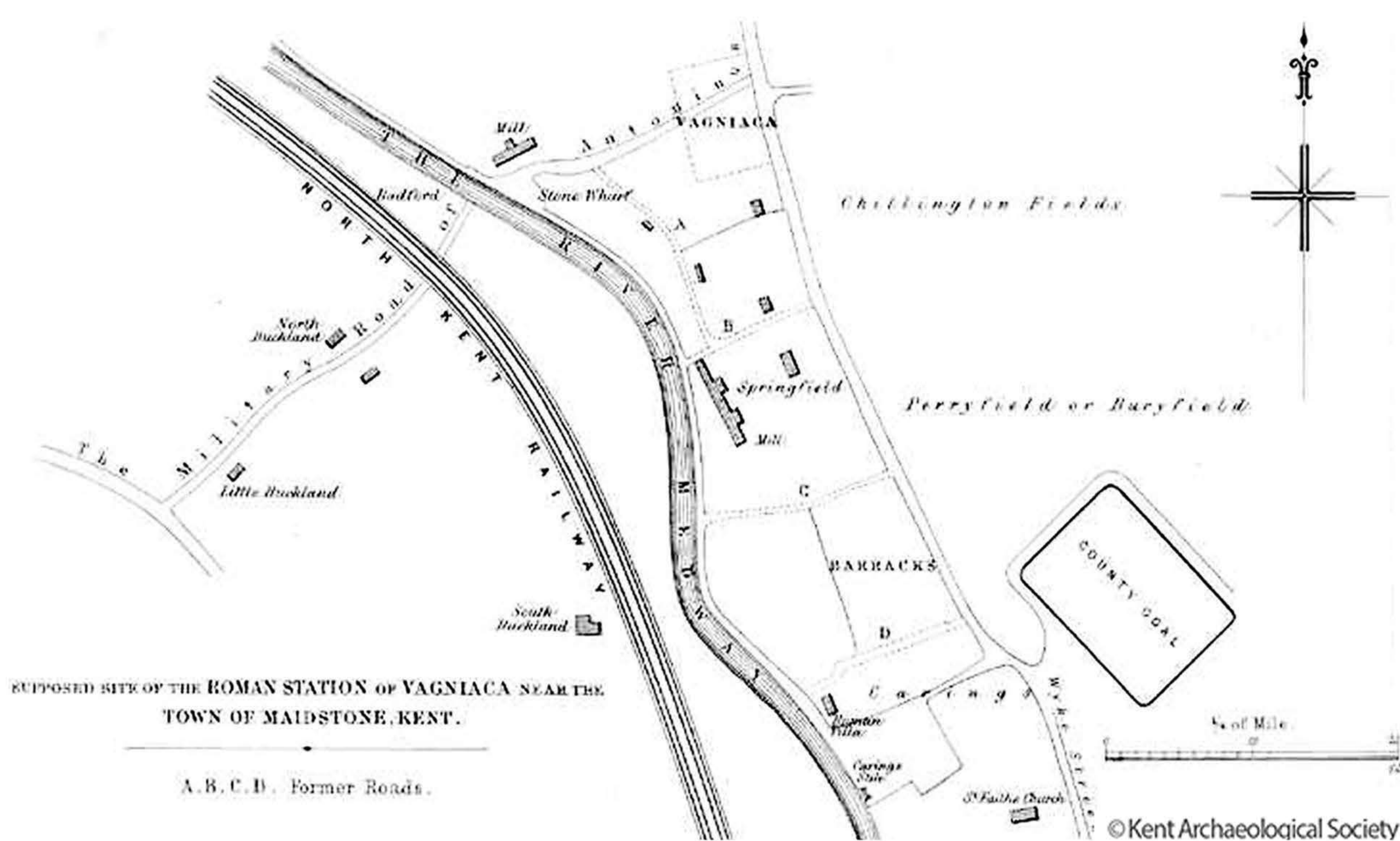


The Site of 34c, Gabriel's Hill

Week Street/Gabriel's Hill/Stone Street mark the line of the known Roman road linking Rochester with the iron-rich Weald and the coast near Hastings (and by another road diverging from it at Chart Sutton to the Roman port at Lympne (Portus Lemanis). The presence of such a road is testament to the importance the Romans placed upon Maidstone. This road would have been of great importance and used to transport goods and travellers to and from Continental Europe and would have been part of a complex and highly extensive trade route that connected Kent to the rest of Roman Britain and beyond.

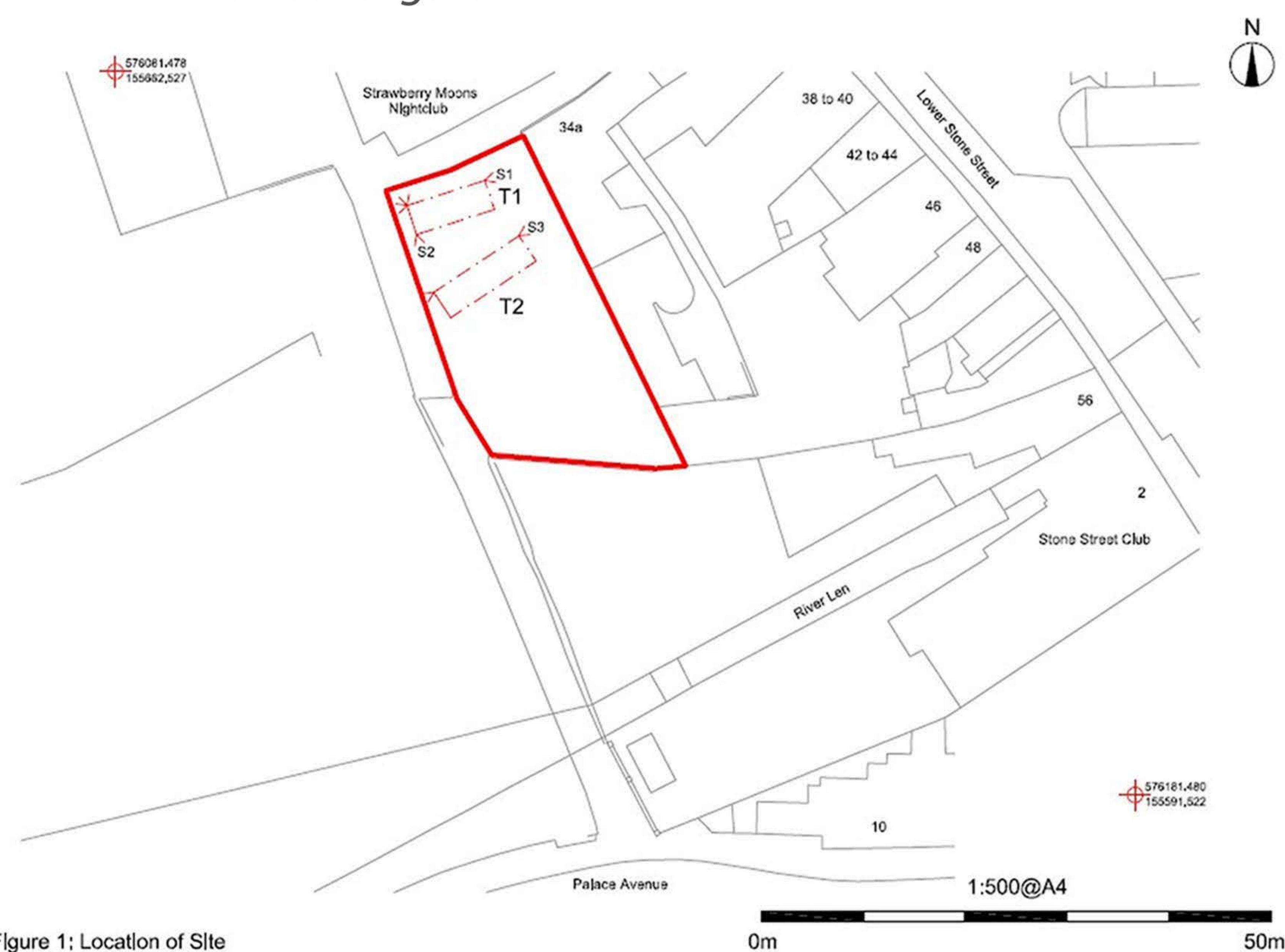


The highest-lying archaeological layer contained within it the remains of a red brick-built pavement of early modern/ or late post medieval construction. It overlay a grey clay rich in archaeological materials in the form of sherds of glass, oyster shell, pieces of leather and fragments of brick, tile, clay pipe, pottery and bone. The pottery was of mixed eighteenth- and nineteenth-century type.

The base of evaluation trench 1 exposed black peat which contained an alignment of upright wooden posts. It is interpreted with confidence as domestic detritus mixed with alluvial clay, as the riverside adjacent to the present site is recorded as the site of mills from the medieval period onwards, the nearest mill having been located on the site of the present car dealership lying immediately adjacent to the site. When the mills were developed and expanded in the early modern period it is recorded that the river was restructured through a series of river navigation acts from 1664 onwards.



In early December 2017, the building that recently stood at 34c Gabriel's Hill, Maidstone was demolished in order for the site to be redeveloped into a five-storey residential property. During the demolition Kent Archaeological Projects were instructed to undertake an evaluation on the site to determine the existence and condition of archaeological remains.



A dark grey clay deposit and the overlying levelling layer and brick pavement probably represent evidence for the raising the riverside revetment during this period, as attested to by the presence of several wooden posts. The evidence overall indicated that the area had been predominantly riverine and marshy in character during the late post-medieval period before being drained and developed as part of the early expansion of Maidstone.

It was noted that a building was recorded at 34 Gabriel's Hill in 1700 but no building remains of this date were visible. It is probable that any 17th or 18th century building standing on the site was completely demolished during the construction of the recently demolished building.

The earliest phase of activity was recorded in the south-west corner of Trench 2, where a layer of black peat was exposed. This context contained reeds and was interpreted as representing a marshy area along the original river bank. It contained a set of vertical wooden posts, with several more were protruding up through the aforementioned clay layers. These posts were interpreted as supports for the revetment of a River Len, and were probably part of a programme of riverside engineering works designed to allow development on what had been a marshy flood plain.



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Figure 1: Location of Site

Trench 1 revealed evidence for four phases of activity. A dark grey clay deposit contained much late post-medieval and early modern-period archaeological material in the form of very frequent oyster shell and cattle bones, in particular horns, the bones all being completely blackened, along with brick and tile fragments and occasional blue and white potsherds of late eighteenth and nineteenth-century type.