

Iain Brown  
Faulknerbrowns Architects  
The Beehive  
Lingfield Point  
Darlington  
DL1 1YN

Tel: 0161 306 1708

Dear Mr Brown,

### **Archaeological Consultation: Proposals for Rochdale NMO**

Thank you for your consultation on the above proposals.

The site indicated on the plan which you supplied covers an area of c.0.94ha. I have reviewed the historic information we have available for this area. Historic mapping shows how the proposed development site evolved from 1786 onwards. In the late eighteenth century the site appears to have been completely undeveloped. By the late 1840s Smith Street had been established and the 'fire engine house and police office' had been constructed in the north-west corner of the site. The subsequent 50 years saw Ink Street, Milton Street, Slack Street and Weir Street established. A range of buildings were constructed including a Primitive Methodist Chapel and hall, Weir Mill, Corn Mill and a tobacco works. In the early twentieth century some of these were replaced by or converted to warehouses. By the 1920s however a process of demolition had begun which, by the 1950s, had seen most of the industrial buildings flattened. One important feature of this site during the twentieth century has been the comparative lack of redevelopment following demolition. Today the site appears to have some standing buildings fronting onto Smith Street, but behind these the land has remained as open ground used for car parking.

From this brief review of the development history of the site I would suggest 1) it is unlikely that the site will retain any evidence for activity pre-dating the nineteenth century, and 2) that the lack of new development since the 1920s over much of the site will have left considerable blow-ground evidence surviving for the various buildings constructed on the site since the early nineteenth century. In particular, it can be anticipated that remains of Weir Mill, Corn Mill, the tobacco works and a number of warehouses will be encountered by any new development groundworks.

In June 2009 Oxford Archaeology North produced a desk-based archaeological assessment covering Rochdale Town Centre on behalf of The Rochdale Development Agency. This study specifically excluded detailed consideration of the present potential development site. GMAU recommends that, as a first step, a detailed desk-based assessment should be undertaken to draw together the available documentary (trade directories, rate valuation books, texts, mapping, images) evidence for the development site. This work

would complement the desk-based assessment already produced for the surrounding land. This study should be produced and submitted as supporting information for any planning application. GMAU would be prepared to supply a written brief for the production of the desk-based assessment.

It is likely, given the brief review undertaken here, that subsequent development would require some level of ground investigation to establish the character, condition and extent of buried archaeological remains. This would involve a programme of archaeological evaluation through a series of targeted trenches.

Depending upon the results of the evaluation, this work may then give rise to recommendations for more extensive open area excavation ahead of development. GMAU would anticipate that any such open area excavation undertaken in mitigation of the development impact could be accommodated as a condition of planning consent. GMAU would also seek to secure through condition the production of public information and a display board to commemorate the history of this part of Rochdale as revealed through the documentary research and fieldwork.

Yours faithfully

Andrew Myers

Assistant County Archaeologist.  
Greater Manchester Archaeological Unit