

English Heritage Extensive Urban Survey

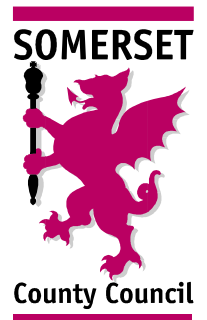
An archaeological assessment of

# Ilchester

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# SOMERSET EXTENSIVE URBAN SURVEY

## ILCHESTER

### ARCHAEOLOGICAL ASSESSMENT

by Miranda Richardson

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**SOMERSET EXTENSIVE URBAN SURVEY**

**ILCHESTER**

**ARCHAEOLOGICAL ASSESSMENT**

*Somerset County Council would like to thank all the people who assisted in the compiling or editing of this report.*

**I. INTRODUCTION**

This report forms one of a series commissioned by English Heritage and prepared by Somerset County Council with the aim of assessing urban archaeology as part of the Monuments Protection Programme. The work was carried out from 1994 to 1998 by Clare Gathercole and Miranda Richardson (from 1996), managed by Chris Webster. The reports are essentially as completed during that period but have been partially updated by Chris Webster with new archaeological information during 2002.

English Heritage has funded two programmes assess the urban archaeological resource - intensive and extensive. The former is restricted to the major historic cities, characterised by a great depth of archaeological remains, a wealth of historical documentation and in many cases, by a great deal of archaeological investigation. The extensive urban surveys cover the smaller towns and are based on information in the local Sites and Monuments Record with limited amounts of new information collected during the project. Once the information has been collected and mapped, attention is focused on the analysis of the town plan and defining topographic units within the town. This will lead to the preparation of guidance for planners, developers and others involved in the management of the town.

**II. MAJOR SOURCES**

**1. Primary documents**

No primary documents have been consulted for the preparation of this report.

**2. Local histories**

The Victoria County History has covered Ilchester (1974:179-203) and together with papers published in the Ilchester and District occasional series and two volumes of excavation reports published by Leach in 1982 and 1994, form a good record of the known archaeology and history of the town. The last includes a very useful gazetteer of archaeological interventions which have taken place in Ilchester. Where possible the site codes used in the gazetteer (IL1, IL18 etc.) have been quoted in this report and cross-referenced with the SMR numbers (NB Some of the SMR numbers listed in the gazetteer have been altered).

**3. Maps**

There are two early 18th-century maps of Ilchester, the first drawn in 1723 by William Stukeley as an illustration to his *Itinerarium Curiosum*. The second, drawn by Strachey in 1736 as an inset to his map of Somerset, is probably a copy made from Stukeley's map differing only in orientation and minor detail. In addition to the OS series the 1839 tithe map and in particular a 1834 map drawn for a sale catalogue also provide useful information.

**III. A BRIEF HISTORY OF ILCHESTER**

The town is situated in the fertile Yeo valley, at a principal crossing point of the river.

The later prehistory of the region is dominated by the archaeology of the defended hilltop sites of Ham Hill, South Cadbury and perhaps Dundon, however more recent evidence around Ilchester has shown valley floor sites masked by layers of silt alluviation. Evidence of iron age occupation has been found close to the river crossing and south of Ilchester, a large defended site, buried beneath silt has been shown to date to the late pre-Roman iron age (Leach and Thew 1985).

The Roman town appears to have been a military foundation. To the north-east of the present town a crop mark which has been interpreted as a Roman marching camp may represent the primary Roman occupation of the area, being replaced with a vexillation fort on the site of the modern town in the late first century. The Tacitean account of Vespasian's campaigns into South West England suggest Durotrigian hostility to the Roman occupation. The presence of a large fort at Ilchester during and following the initial conquest might be expected in this context. Leach suggests that the military withdrawal from the south-west may have been related to Flavian expansion of the province northwards in early 70s AD (1982a:5). Despite suburban building around the fort, the urbanisation of the site, including laying out of a formal street system did not take place until the early 2nd century and the construction of the town defences in the late 2nd century. By the late 3rd and 4th century the town was flourishing, buildings with stone foundations and a number of high quality mosaic pavements having been located through excavation, however the status of the settlement remains unsure. It has been suggested that Ilchester was the *civitas* capital for the northern half of the area previously controlled by the Durotriges (Wacher 1975:407-8). It was possibly the *Lindinis* (Little Marsh) referred to in two inscriptions found on Hadrian's wall (Stevens 1951), controlling an estimated area taking in the levels and bounded by the Mendips to the north and the Quantock and Blackdown hills to the west. However, the presence of the municipal buildings, which might be expected within a capital town, are yet to be shown conclusively.

The lack of archaeological remains within the town from the fifth century attest the rapid decline of the urban centre in the post-Roman period. However the material evidence for the late Saxon period is also slight despite there being documentary evidence for a large and prosperous market town. At Domesday Ilchester is recorded as housing a mint and over a hundred burgesses. It was part of the royal Saxon estate of Somerton held by Queen Edith in 1066. The mint was established by 973, which was perhaps moved temporarily to Cadbury in the early 11th century in the reign of Aethelred then continued to produce coins at Ilchester until c.1250. The town withstood attack from Robert Mowbray in 1087-8. In John's reign (1199-1216), the town was attacked by Peter de Mauley and Walerand de Tyeis who were able to carry off the the iron-bound gates of Ilchester to Sherborne Castle. Despite these problems the town prospered and the burgesses apparently bought themselves a charter in 1183-4 having formed a guild by 1180. From 1166 the county gaol and meetings of the shire and circuit courts were held at Ilchester bringing additional prosperity to the town. However in the 1280s the gaol and courts were moved to Somerton, which marked the demise of the town and from 1313 the town was no longer taxed as a borough. Despite the return of the courts between 1366 and 1371 Ilchester failed to regain its former prosperity and status. Ilchester maintained some aspects of its position as county town until 1832 when it was disenfranchised and electoral courts were established in Taunton and Wells. The county gaol was closed in 1843 and the county court abolished in 1846. (Dunning 1974:179-203, 224-230).

The town has seen some new prosperity due to the siting of the Yeovilton Naval Air Station to the east of the town.

## IV. THE ARCHAEOLOGY OF ILCHESTER

### **GENERAL COMMENTS**

#### **0.1 Archaeological work in the town**

There have been over 100 archaeological interventions or sightings of archaeological features in Ilchester.

### **1. PREHISTORIC**

(Map A)

#### **1.1 Archaeological work in the town/ Archaeological knowledge**

Although Ilchester is best known for its Roman heritage, many of the excavations and watching brief projects conducted in and around the town have turned up prehistoric, notably, iron age material. In more recent years the discovery of the late iron-age enclosure to the south of the Roman town has increased interest in the prehistory of the area. Although a large quantity of prehistoric material has been found, the pre-Roman archaeology of the area remains elusive and difficult to interpret as it lies buried beneath a layer of natural alluvial deposits. Despite the number of excavations delivering iron age material our knowledge of this period is still very incomplete.

## 1.2 Context

Ilchester is one of eight out of the 45 historic towns covered by this project at which there is evidence of prehistoric settlement in the town. It is also one of five in which there is evidence of a major prehistoric defended enclosure or hillfort functioning as a central place, either within or close to the later town and representing some form of predecessor to it. In the case of Ilchester, the site in question is not the major iron age (and earlier) hillfort of South Cadbury - though Ilchester did have a significant relationship with this hillfort (one of the most important in Somerset) from the iron age onwards - but the much nearer *oppidum* site, which lay fairly centrally within the territory of the Durotriges. *Oppida* - defended trading settlements - were features of the later iron age, when the influence of the Mediterranean was already strongly felt through trade connections from southern England, and arguably represent the first sign of “urbanisation” in this island. As the only identified candidate in Somerset, the oppidum at Ilchester is of particular importance.

## 1.3 Archaeological features, shown on Map A

### 1.3.a Communications

#### (a) Roads, streets and routeways

ILC/111 Gravel Causeway (SMR 56928)

During the watching brief the construction of the A37 link road to the south of the town (SMR 53068, IL 46), Leach noted a raised gravel bank, 25-30m wide which he tentatively interprets as a causeway predating the Foss Way (1982a: 57, 107).

*Taken from Leach 1982:fig. 33*

### 1.3.b Settlement

ILC/102 Oppidum (SMR 53089, SOM 512)

A large earth rampart with a stone revetment, dated to the late iron age, has been identified to the south of the town of Ilchester (Burrow *et al* 1982:69). The entire site is buried beneath a deep alluvial layer. Four sections have been excavated across the late iron age rampart; two service pipe trenches in 1982 and 1983 (SMR 56929, 56931, Burrow *et al* 1983:14) and two research excavation trenches in 1984 (SMR 56930, Leach and Thew 1985). These showed the rampart to be surrounded by a ditch approximately 10m wide and 2m deep. More recently an earthwork survey was carried out to the north of the rampart (SMR 55934, Leach and Bellavia 1994) followed by evaluation excavations outside the enclosure (SMR 55934, Watts 1995). The latter failed to reveal iron age features or quantities of iron age ceramics, however this may be due to the relatively shallow trenches which generally reached the top of the pre-Roman alluvial layer which covered the rampart ditch. The area of the rampart has been scheduled.

*Taken from SMR map.*

ILC/103 Early iron age occupation

Several excavations and watching briefs around the town have produced early iron age pottery (Manor House Gardens (SMR 52119, IL 41, Leach and Ellis 1994:57), Bos House (SMR 53038, IL70, Ellis and Scutchings 1994:75-77), Kingshams (SMR 53063, IL61, Leach 1982:19)) and a few (Little Spittlefield (SMR 53064, IL 1, Leach 1982:59-61), The Paddocks (SMR 56932, Hollinrake 1996)) have revealed features apparently dating to this period. Based on this data the sites which have produced early pottery appear to be grouped on the south side of the town. However, it has never been possible to excavate a large area at the depth of the early iron age stratigraphy thus rendering the interpretation of this evidence difficult, particularly with respect to the relationship between this settlement activity and the large enclosed site to the south of the town.

*The area shown is conjectural*

ILC/104 Middle iron age occupation

Excavations at Castle Farm in 1985 (SMR 55871, Leach and Ellis 1991:24-25) produced a different pottery collection, dated to the middle iron age. This is confirmed by the recent pipe

trench excavated across Great Yard which produced one middle iron age feature (not shown on report plan) (SMR 56902, Broomhead 1995:3).

This may represent a general shift of occupation from the south of the town area to the north.

*The area shown is conjectural*

ILC/105

Late iron age occupation

Leach reports that Cox found several instances of late iron age occupation, largely in pipe trenches (1994:18-20), which are difficult to interpret. However, a larger area of trenches excavated in the grounds of Ivel House between 1947 and 1950 (SMR 53042, IL 31, Cox 1982, 1985), produced circular timber structures dating to the 1st century AD.

*The area shown is conjectural*

ILC/106

Troubridge Park (SMR 53071)

This site is thought to be an iron age settlement; two eroded banks have been noted running N-S together with iron age pottery, iron slag and quern stones.

*Taken from SMR map.*

*1.3.c Artefact scatters*

ILC/101

Bronze age pottery from Little Spittle fields (Pill Bridge Lane) (SMR53029, IL3)

Eight bronze age sherds were found during the excavations at Spittlefield in 1985 (Leach and Ellis 1991: 52).

*Taken from SMR map.*

ILC/107

Ilchester Mead pottery scatter (SMR 53104)

Iron age pottery was found near to the Roman villa site at Ilchester Mead (Hayward 1976:7-8).

*Taken from SMR map.*

ILC/108

West of Ilchester Mead Pottery Scatter (SMR 53070)

Iron age pottery was found in 1950 to the west of Ilchester Mead.

*Taken from SMR map.*

ILC/109

Madlands Drainage Trench (SMR 53026, IL 82 )

Iron age pottery was found during the excavation of this pipe trench recorded by Cox in 1949.

*Taken from SMR map.*

ILC/110

Silver Staters (SMR 53099, IL66)

Two Durotrigian silver staters were found in Kingshams field in 1951 (Anon. 1951: 22).

*Taken from SMR map.*

## 2. ROMAN (Maps B,C,D)

### 2.1 Archaeological work in the town/ Archaeological knowledge

The Roman archaeology of the town has been the subject of a large number of excavation and watching briefs from Stukeley's notes on the Roman pavements and foundations shown on his 1723 map to the open area excavations to the south of the town caused by the construction of the Ilchester bypass and link road.

### 2.2 Context

The Roman period was one of deliberate, strategic urbanisation. The area which is now Somerset appears to have been less affected than some other areas by this, in that few really urban sites are known, and this probably reflects its marginal position. Ilchester, however, is the main exception to this rule, being one of only three identified Roman towns within the modern county of Somerset, and by far the most important of these (though it was neither especially large nor especially important compared to other Roman towns in Britain). It was originally a military foundation near the junction of the Fosse Way, the main Roman artery into the south-west, and the road from Dorchester to Combwich, and is one of five of the 45 historic towns covered by this project associated with Roman forts. Subsequently becoming a regional centre, complete with planned street system and river port, it may have been at one stage a regional capital; its role as the major focus of Roman and Romano-British wealth in Somerset is shown by the belt of villas which surrounds it. Though it remained an important centre in the pre-Conquest and medieval periods, Ilchester has been somewhat protected from 19th and 20th century development. It retains a depth of archaeological deposits which is exceptional for Somerset and is regarded as a primary archaeological resource.

### 2.3 Standing structures and visible remains

Remains of the Roman town wall and ditch are still visible as a low bank around the town. No standing Roman buildings remain but there are records from the 17th and early 18th century suggesting that Roman remains, possibly including the South gate and suburban buildings along the Foss Way were visible at that time (Dunning 1974:179).

## 2.4 1st Century Archaeological features, shown on Map B

### 2.4.a Communications

#### (a) Roads, streets and routeways

ILC/226 Foss Way (SMR 55101, 53115)

The Foss way runs through the centre of the town, built in the middle decades of the 1st century, its relationship with the Roman fort at Ilchester is unclear. However, both appear to respect the same NNE-SSW alignment.

*Taken from the Leach 1994:16*

### 2.4.b Military sites

ILC/207 Ist Century Vexillation Fort (SMR 53052, SOM 404)

Four excavations in Ilchester have produced evidence of the 1st century defences. Cox's excavations in the grounds of Ivel House in the late 1940s showed a clay bank and ditch with a stone revetment added in a second phase, the whole dating to the first century (SMR 53042, IL 31, Cox 1982, 1985). In 1969 McDonnell and Leach excavated a trench across the southern boundary of the fort, in Manor House Field revealing a clay rampart (SMR 53113, IL42, McDonnell and Leach 1994: 34-35). In 1974 the eastern defences of this early fort were found in part of the Kingsham excavations comprising a shallow ditch with a timber and turf pallisade with a second ditch cut into the berm in a secondary phase (SMR 53062, IL64, Leach 1982a:21). In 1985 evidence of a first century ditch and bank were found in an evaluation trench excavated at Castle Farm (SMR 55871, IL 85, Leach and Ellis 1985). In each case the defences were abandoned in the first century, those on the north and east being built over during later expansion of the Roman settlement. The defences to the south which lay outside the area of the walled town, appear to have survived in some form as their alignment was found to be shadowed by a medieval ditch (McDonnell and Leach 1994: 34-35).



*Taken from Leach 1982:fig.3*

ILC/208 King Lawn Fields Marching Camp (SMR 53090)

This rectangular double ditched enclosure has been recognised on aerial photographs and is thought, due to its form, to be a Roman camp, although as yet there is no dating evidence (*Leach 1982a:5*).

*Taken from Leach 1982:fig.3*

2.4.c *Settlement (Urban)*

(a) *Suburbs*

ILC/215 1st Century Suburbs

Occupation outside of the area of the first century fort has been noted in several places around the town. The Little Spittlefield excavation (*SMR 53064, IL 1, Leach 1982a:61-65*) revealed a first century building on the west side of the Foss Way. First and second century occupation layers have been noted beneath the town defences clay rampart at Kingsham and Limington Road (*SMR 53062, IL64, Leach 1982a:21 and SMR 53021, IL58, Leach 1994:45*). No buildings of this period have been identified within the fort enclosure, much having been obliterated by later building.

*After Leach 1994:fig. 3*

**2.5 Roman Town Archaeological Features, shown on map C**

2.5.a *Communications*

(a) *Roads, streets and routeways*

ILC/201 External Roads and Main Axes

In addition to the Foss Way, three roads have been located leading to the Roman town of Ilchester; heading SSE is the Ilchester-Dorchester road (SMR 55102), another road crossed the town at 90 degrees to the Foss Way (SMR 53114) and a third road has been noted crossing Great Yard, leaving the town to the NNW (SMR 55872, Leach 1987a, SMR 56920, Broomhead 1996). To the north of the town the Somerton Road diverges from Foss Way.

*After Leach 1994:fig. 3*

ILC/202 Internal Town Plan

Leach (1982:7) has suggested a gridded town plan based on *insulae* measuring 100x140 Roman feet, with the East-West road and the Foss Way dictating the orientation. Several excavations and watching briefs on pipe trenches within the town have produced evidence of the internal town plan (*Dolphin Lane, (SMR 55426, IL96, Leach and Casey 1986), Kingshams (SMR 53062, IL 64, Leach 1982a: 21-39)*). Proven road alignments are shown on map C.

*After Leach 1994:fig. 3*

ILC/203 Extra-Mural Road (Southern Defences)

Excavations adjacent to the Roman South Gate in the Rectory Gardens in 1969 (*SMR 53113, IL 43, Leach 1994:26*) located an extra-mural road linking the South gate to the South West Gate. It is dated with the second phase of town wall construction to the late third or early fourth century.

*After Leach 1994:26*

(b) *Bridges*

ILC/204 Ford

Collinson (1791) recorded a ford to the west of Ilchester Bridge in the late 18th century, the line of the paved ford is also partially shown on Stukeley's map of 1723 and Strachey's map of 1736. It is thought that the ford may have dated to the Roman period. Its remains were removed in the

early 19th century when obstructions in the river were cleared (*Dunning 1974:179*).

*Taken from Stukeley 1723.*

(c) *Harbour and quays*

ILC/205 Ilchester Harbour on the River Yeo (SMR 53060)

Straightening of the Yeo, downstream from Ilchester, during the Roman period has encouraged the view that the town may have had a port and quays on the river, thus adding the waterways linking to the Bristol channel to Ilchester's communications network. Leach (*1994:19*), reports that in 1949 Cox recorded lias stone building wall foundations which he thought to be part of a quayside complex in the eroded river bank (SMR 53025). None of the recent projects (SMR 53060, Leach 1991, SMR 55872, Leach 1987a, SMR 55871, Leach and Ellis 1991, SMR 56902, Broomhead 1995), which have produced new evidence of the western extra-mural suburbs, have added evidence about the likelihood of the existence of the harbour. However, the road leading NE from the town, which is out of alignment with the grid pattern suggested by Leach (1982:7), could have linked harbour quays to the town.

*The area shown is Conjectural*

2.5.b *Water*

ILC/206 Water Control and the Oxbow Lake

An earthwork survey of the Great Yard area carried out by Leach in 1991 (SMR 53060), recorded the presence of an Oxbow meander and a series of leats apparently feeding water through it. The date of this system is unknown.

*Taken from Leach 1991*

2.5.c *Military sites*

ILC/209 Ilchester Roman Town Defences (SMR 53021, 53052, 53113, SM 404)

Several sets of excavations and watching briefs have produced evidence of the sequence of rampart building and repair (*South Gate/Rectory Garden (SMR 53113, IL 43, McDonnell and Leach 1994:23-36)*, *16 High Street Garden (SMR 55887, IL16, Leach 1994:37-38)*, *Kingshams (SMR 53063, IL61, Leach 1982a:40-45)* *Flood Prevention (SMR 55904, IL65, SMR 55902, IL60, Leach 1994:39-43)*, *Limington Road/Princes Pasture (SMR 53021, IL 58, Leach 1981, Leach 1994:45-55)*, and *the 1985 Manor Farm excavations (SMR 55871, IL85, Leach and Ellis 1991:11-84)*. The general pattern observed has been the construction of a clay bank and ditch, probably in the late second or early third century. The rampart was refurbished (probably in the early 4th century), with a substantial mortared stone wall being cut in the outside of the clay bank. This in turn has been to a very large extent robbed out, probably in or after the 12th century (Leach 1982a:13).

*Taken from Leach 1994 :fig. 3.*

2.5.d *Settlement (Urban)*

There have been few excavations within the town walls at Ilchester, the majority of information, particularly for the town centre, coming from watching briefs. Therefore little is known about the presence or absence of municipal buildings or other town core elements which may lay buried beneath the modern centre.

(a) *Town Plots*

ILC/216 Intra-Mural Buildings (SMR 53022, 53038, 53111, 53112, 53119)

3rd and 4th century stone buildings, within the town walls have been located in many places but due to the small scale of the archaeological interventions within the town walls (keyhole excavations and watching briefs on various utility trenches), the function, status and phasing of these buildings is difficult to ascertain. Leach (*1994:8*) suggests that two classes of private buildings existed; those which combine a domestic and commercial/industrial function and those

of a higher level of prosperity evidenced by the use of mosaic tessellated floors (*SMR 53039, 53040, 53041, 53042, 55398, 55399, Leach 1994:8, 16, Cox 1985*).

*Taken from Leach 1994:fig.3*

ILC/217

Roman Municipal Buildings

Leach (1994:8) has proposed two areas as likely to have been the sites of municipal buildings but good evidence for these is still slight; below St. Mary Major church and graveyard (suggested partly due to this later use of the site) and between the Foss Way and Dorchester Road frontages on the east-west axis.

*After Leach 1994:8*

(b) *Suburbs*

ILC/218

Extra-Mural Suburbs (*SMR 53024, SMR 53025, SMR 53027, SMR 53028, SMR 53066*)

The clearest evidence for linear suburban development along the main road axes has been found along the Foss Way to the south of the town. Buildings dating through the late first to the 4th centuries have been located during excavations at Little Spittlefield (*SMR 53064, IL1, Leach 1982:59-91*). Evidence for similar suburbs is reported along the Dorchester Road, and suspected along the Foss Way through Northover. To the east and west of the town there is no absolute evidence for extra-mural suburbs but this may be due to lack of prospection rather than a lack of extant remains. To the north-west extra-mural suburbs appear to have grown up along the road crossing Great Yard recognised in the 1987 test pits (*SMR 55872, IL100, Leach 1987*) and the 1995 pipe trench excavations (*SMR 56902, Broomhead 1995*).

*After Leach 1982:7*

2.5.e *Industrial sites*

ILC/222

Pottery Kilns (*SMR 53031*)

Cox reports having seen two pottery kilns and wasters at this site (*1950:94-95*).

*Taken from SMR map.*

ILC/223

Pottery Kilns (*SMR 53034*)

Roman pottery kilns were found c.1930 at Mill house .

*Taken from SMR map*

**2.6 Late 3rd-4th Century and Outlying Archaeological Features, shown on map D**

2.6.a *Burial sites, religious houses and places of worship*

ILC/210

Foss Way

The Little Spittlefields excavation of 1975 revealed late 4th century reuse of part of the site as a cemetery (*SMR 53064, IL1, Leach 1982a:61-92*). 42 burials were found orientated NE-SW or NW-SE.

*The area shown is conjectural.*

Pill Bridge Lane (*SMR 53029*)

Burials were found on the south side of Pill Bridge Lane by Cox in the 1930s and 40s (*SMR 55875, Leach 1977:259*). Leach's excavations on the same site also found a burial at the east end of the site (*SMR 55877, Leach and Ellis 1991:36*). It is suggested that these burials are part of the same large cemetery seen further south at the 1975 Little Spittlefield excavation.

*After SMR map.*

- ILC/211      Roman Burial (SMR 53094)  
A Roman burial is reported to have been found at the proposed site of the West gate.  
  
*Taken from SMR map.*
- ILC/212      Possible Roman Burial Ground Limington Road (SMR 53105, 53108)  
A Roman burial ground has been proposed along the road leading out of the town to the east, following the Roman tradition of extra-mural burial along road axes. No burials have as yet been found but a number of Roman artefacts have been collected from the site (SMR 53032).  
  
*Taken from SMR map.*
- ILC/213      Dorchester Road (SMR 53106, 53107, 53036, 53049, 53068)  
Leech (1977:260), reports that 20 burials in lead and stone coffins have been found on the east side of the Dorchester Road, dating to the late 4th or 5th century. These were recorded by Cox during the excavation of a field boundary ditch (Leach 1994:16). To the west of the road, further burials were reported during the by-pass construction in 1976 (Leach 1982:107-8). This supports a note made by Rev. Skinner in the early 19th century (Cox 1979), and Cox's report of coffin burials disturbed by the excavation of a water-main in 1948-50.  
  
*After SMR map.*
- ILC/214      Northover Cemetery (SMR 53030, SOM 510)  
Many stone and lead coffins have been found in the grounds of Northover House, dating from the late 4th century. An archaeological assessment of the site in 1982 has enabled an estimate of over 1500 burials on the site (SMR 55910, Leach 1982b, Leach 1994:91-102,197)  
  
*Taken from SMR map.*
- ILC/225      Great Yard Burials  
Burials were found adjacent to Roman property boundaries during excavation of a water pipe trench at Great Yard (SMR 56902, Broomhead 1995:4-7).  
  
*After Broomhead 1995:4-7.*
- 2.6.b *Rural settlement (villas)*
- ILC/219      Pill Bridge Lane (SMR 53103)  
Roman pottery and high quality building debris (tiles, tesserae and building stone) has been found at this location which suggest that it may be the site of a villa complex.  
  
*Taken from SMR map.*
- ILC/220      Sock Dennis Farm (SMR 53102)  
Roman pottery, tile and tesserae that have been found in the vicinity of an enclosure recognised from aerial photographs, are likely to mark the site of a villa.  
  
*Taken from SMR map.*
- ILC/221      Ilchester Mead (SMR 53104)  
The villa at Ilchester Mead has been the subject of several seasons excavation revealing three ranges of buildings arranged around a courtyard, dating from the second to the fifth centuries (Hayward 1976).  
  
*Taken from SMR map.*

2.6.c *Artefact scatters*ILC/224 Troubridge Park (SMR 53072)

Roman finds have been found at Troubridge to the north of the town and may represent a further Roman settlement site.

*Taken from SMR map.*

### 3. SAXON (Map E)

#### 3.1 *Archaeological work in the town/ Archaeological knowledge*

As with many of Britain's Roman towns rapid decline from the fifth century is inferred from the lack of material evidence found through excavation. In 1086 Ilchester was recorded as a thriving town with a mint, a large market and over a hundred burgesses. Despite this historical report, excavation has failed to reveal evidence of the Saxon town. There are several reasons for this; all of the excavations within the walls have been both small scale and brief, therefore not conducive to finding post-hole structures; secondly much of the evidence from within the towns has been produced by watching briefs, within a narrow pipe trench the hard, stone structures of the Roman town are much more likely to have been noted than the ephemeral remains of possibly wooden Saxon structures. Moreover, whatever form the transition from the Roman to the modern town took, remains of the late Saxon settlement may lie directly beneath the modern street frontages, which have as yet been little studied.

#### 3.2 *Context*

Though the Post-Roman and early Saxon periods were characterised by a return to non-urban lifestyles, the later Saxon period (from the 9th century onwards) saw the beginnings of a resurgence of trading places and towns. This was controlled, in England, by the Saxon royal families (though it was part of a wider trend), and took place in the context of a network of royal estate administration centres which was already established (in some cases long-established). The reasons for the changes were many and complex, combining defensive, administrative and ecclesiastical considerations with, increasingly, purely commercial aspirations. As one of the heartlands of the kings of Wessex, Somerset played an important part in the early re-urbanisation of the south, and there are a number of places amongst those studied for this project which can claim to have been towns before the Norman Conquest.

Ilchester is one of fifteen out of the 45 historic towns covered by this project which already had some urban functions or features before the Conquest. In fact, it is one of six boroughs recorded in the Domesday Survey, all of which were established as commercial annexes from adjacent royal estate centres. Ilchester was the largest and richest borough in the area which is now Somerset, and is one of at least three places which appear to have been defended for at least part of the Saxon period, though it does not appear in the Burghal Hidage. It is one of eleven places which may have had a mint in the 10th or 11th centuries, and one of seven towns at which the probable or possible existence of a pre-Conquest market has been noted (though this figure may be misleadingly low): in this case the value of the market (at Domesday) was more than three times its nearest rival (Milborne Port). Ilchester is also one of 22 of the towns in the survey to have been associated with a known or probable pre-Conquest minster.

#### 3.3 *Archaeological features, shown on Map E*

##### 3.3.a *Communications*

###### (a) *Roads, streets and routeways*

ILC/301 Maintenance of Roman Roads

The survival of both the Foss Way and the Dorchester Road in the modern town plan suggests that they have been continuously maintained at the core of the post-Roman settlement structure. The width of these roads may have been altered but the alignments appear to have remained.

*Taken from Stukeley's map of 1723 and Strachey's map of 1736.*

ILC/302 Roads not aligned on the Roman Town Grid

Leach (1994:17) has proposed a number of road alignments, based on Stukeley's map of 1723 and Strachey's map of 1736. As the town declined in importance from the 13th century it is likely

that these represent a minimum extent of the successful Saxon market town.

*Taken from Stukeley's map of 1723 and Strachey's map of 1736.*

### 3.3.b Defences

ILC/307

#### Saxon Defences

As a mint town (SMR 53045) it is likely that the Saxon settlement at Ilchester was defended. Leach (1982a:13) suggests that robbing of the Roman town wall did not take place until at least the 12th century (evidence from the Kingshams excavations, SMR 53063, IL 61), and that they may have been simply repaired in the late Saxon period.

*The are shown is conjectural.*

### 3.3.c Burial sites, religious houses and places of worship

ILC/303

#### St. Andrews, Northover (SMR 53069)

The church of St. Andrew's is believed to be an early Saxon minster, situated on the north bank of the river Yeo. The church's estate at one time covered the entire parish of Northover (Dunning 1974:229). There is no structural evidence for an early church on the site. Suggestion has been made that the siting of the church may be related to the Roman cemetery in Northover. Three Saxon brooches found in this area might mark a Saxon burial ground and show continuity of use from the Roman period (SMR 53009).

*Taken from 1995 Digital OS.*

ILC/304

#### St. Mary Major ( SMR 53037)

The church of St. Mary Major is thought to have had Saxon origins, although the building now dates largely to the 13th and 15th centuries (Dunning 1974:198-200, Cox 1947:1-16, Cox 1952:155-6).

*Taken from 1995 Digital OS.*

### 3.3.d Settlement (Urban)

#### (a) Commercial core

##### (i) Market place(s)

ILC/305

#### Market Places

The medieval market place shown on Stukeley's and Strachey's maps is likely to have originated in the Saxon town, which had the richest recorded market in Somerset in the Domesday book, worth £11. A second market area might be suggested at the borough green shown by both 18th century maps as an open triangular area at the end of the Limington road (Bond c1990).

*Taken from Stukeley's map of 1723 and Strachey's map of 1736.*

##### (ii) Tenement plots

ILC/306

#### Possible Burgage Plots

108 burgesses were recorded at Ilchester in the Domesday book. Both 18th century maps show very regular long thin plots on the west side of High Street. Regular width plots are also shown between High Street and Church Street, although Stukeley shows a staggered pattern of plot lengths due to the triangular shape of the area. These plots may fossilise planned Saxon burgage tenements.

*Taken from Stukeley's map of 1723 and Strachey's map of 1736.*

## 4. MEDIEVAL

(Map F)

#### 4.1 *Archaeological work in the town/ Archaeological knowledge*

Evidence for the archaeology of medieval Ilchester has been noted in several excavation watching briefs around the town, however there have been no excavations designed specifically to study this period of the town's history.

#### 4.2 *Context*

Both in Britain and on the continent, the medieval period saw the growth of town foundation and, to an extent, urban living (though the bulk of the population continued to live in villages). The reasons for this growth were many and complex. In England they included both general factors - such as the growth of mercantile trade (especially the cloth trade) - and more specific ones - such as the post-Conquest establishment of a network of (theoretically) loyal magnates and prelates with large estates and commercial privileges. The latter led to the increasing relaxation of the royal stranglehold on the profits of towns and chartered boroughs (where tenants paid cash rents and were free of feudal ties), which in turn enabled the establishment of new purpose-built commercial areas (the majority of places classed as towns in the medieval period have at least some planned elements). Of course, some boroughs were already in existence by the Conquest, and the existing pattern of Saxon urban or semi-urban centres was an important influence on the medieval one. This is evident in Somerset which, like many parts of the south and west (where the majority of the Saxon *burhs* and boroughs had been established), was peppered with small boroughs in the medieval period.

In archaeological terms, the medieval towns are characterised by evidence of partially planned, intensive occupation of restricted areas. Typical features which may occur include: regular, or semi-regular, street layouts; large market places (usually obscured by later encroachments); blocks of regular, long, narrow, plots end on to the commercial frontage; churchyards, either within the medieval layout or outside it - the latter often indicative of a deliberate shift of activity; regular or irregular suburbs or marginal areas occupied by quays, or industrial sites such as mills; and high status sites such as castles, manor sites and large religious precincts.

Ilchester is one of the fifteen places out of the 45 historic towns covered by this project which either were boroughs or at least had some urban functions before the Conquest. It was one of five out of the six pre-Domesday boroughs which retained their status in the medieval period, being one of nine of the towns at which signs of planning may date to the pre-Conquest period, and, indeed, was very important in the early medieval period: it was the county town from the mid 12th to the late 13th centuries, though it subsequently lost its position. Ilchester was also one of only three of the 45 towns with major defences in this period (though at least one other may have had some defences), and it was also one of just eleven which had a harbour or quays.

#### 4.3 *Standing structures and visible remains*

The churches of St. Mary Major and St. Andrew's, Northover and the bridge at Ilchester are the only surviving medieval structures.

#### 4.4 *Archaeological components (centre), shown on Map F*

##### 4.4.a *Communications*

##### (a) *Bridges*

##### ILC/401 Ilchester Bridge (SMR 53019)

The bridge crossing the Yeo at Ilchester dates from the late twelfth or early thirteenth century, although it was remodelled in 1797. It consists of seven arches, the most northerly of which fed a mill stream. In the 16th century the central island was the position of the county gaol and St. Leonard's chapel. (Dunning 1974:18)

*Taken from OS 1:10000.*

##### (b) *Harbour and quays*

##### ILC/402 Medieval Quays

There is record of the river being used for water transport below Ilchester and it is therefore supposed that there were medieval quays. The most likely position, as for the presumed Roman quays is along the river at Great Yard but this is yet to be shown archaeologically.

*The area shown is conjectural.*

## 4.4.b Defences

ILC/403

Medieval Town Walls (SMR 53021, 53113, SM 404)

Several excavations around the town walls have produced evidence of the robbing of the late Roman wall foundations and construction of a new town wall using the reclaimed stone, in the late 12th or early 13th century (*SMR 53021 Leach 1981, Leach 1994:45-54, SMR 53113, McDonnell and Leach 1994:23-36*). The medieval wall was apparently built on the same alignment, outside the Roman wall, cut into the silted Roman ditch. So far excavation has only revealed evidence for the foundations and subsequent robber trenches for both the Roman and medieval walls.

*After Leach 1994:fig 3.*

ILC/404

Gates (SMR 53073, 53074, 53075, 53076)

East Gate on the Limington road was first mentioned in 1242 and again in 1426. North Gate was mentioned in 1304, West Gate in 1200 and 1605, although this probably refers to the South-west gate over the Foss Lane. The South Gate, with St. Michael's chapel built over it was described by Leland in 1540. (Dunning 1974:179)

*Taken from SMR map.*

## 4.4.c Manors and estates

ILC/426

Northover Manor (SMR 53012)

Northover Manor is documented from the 13th century, the manor house stood to the north-west of the church until the early 19th century. It was an irregular stone building topped by a cupola. A large medieval barn stood to the south of the manor-house until it was burnt down in 1876. (Dunning 1974:225)

*After Stukeley's 1723 map.*

## 4.4.d Burial sites, religious houses and places of worship

The number of churches and chapels which stood in medieval Ilchester remains in question, different authors having given different numbers. Leland (1540s) referred to four parish churches of which only one was still in use. Gerard (1633) said there were at least ten whilst Stukeley (1724), put the number at sixteen Aston and Leech (1977:69). Only two medieval churches survive today (St. Mary Major and St. Andrew's), with physical remains of one other (St Mary Minor) having been located through excavation.

ILC/405

Dominican Friary (SMR 53016)

A Dominican Friary was founded by 1261, on a plot of land within the south-west corner of the walled town. The precinct was expanded in both 1285 and 1349 (Dunning 1974:197-200) and is shown by both Stukeley and Strachey in the 18th century occupying a square shaped precinct bisected by the town wall, with one large building in the outer area and two within. Collinson reported in 1792 that the north transept of the friary church still stood being used as a silk mill. Cox noted medieval burials in this area (SMR 53091, Cox 1952:150).

*Taken from Stukeley's 1723 map.*

ILC/406

Holy Trinity/Whitehall (SMR 53010, SMR 53018, SMR 53046, SMR 53053)

A hospital was founded at Ilchester in the early 13th century and became a nunnery in 1281. A chapel was probably built on the site in the mid-13th century along with the establishment of a burial ground. Burials were found in this area in 1981 (*SMR 53053, 55889, Ellis 1994:80*). The nunnery was dissolved by 1463 with Holy Trinity becoming a free chapel. It was secularized and sold by 1600 but was still known as White chapel when sketched as a distinct precinct by both Stukeley and Strachey in the 18th century. (Dunning 1974:198, Cox 1952:150)

*Taken from Stukeley's 1723 map.*



St. Andrew's

St. Andrew's, Northover, continued to be used through the medieval period.

ILC/408  
*site unsure*

St. John the Baptist (SMR 53056)

The church of St. John the Baptist is first referred to in 1207. Its precise location is not known; a reference from 1429 states that the old gaol was perhaps near both the church and the market place (Dunning 1974:185). Cox thought the church may have been located by the discovery of human remains south of the Town Hall which could have been buried in a cemetery attached to the church (Cox 1952:152-5). Two further burials associated with 13/14th century pottery were identified by R. Scutchings in 1988 during buildings works to extend the Bull Inn which are also interpreted as being within St. John's cemetery (SMR 55969, R. Scutchings *pers comm*). However, the 1st edition OS shows the site of the gaol on the west side of the market place, which may also have been the location of the church.

In 1502 St. John's was united with the churches of St. Mary Major and St. Mary Minor and is likely to have ceased to be used from this date, Leland recorded that the building stood in ruins in 1540. (Dunning 1974:196-7)

ILC/409

St. Leonard's Chapel (SMR 53057)

St. Leonard's chapel stood on Ilchester bridge in 1476, owned by the town corporation. A building called chapel stood on the central island, with the central pier of the bridge and the 17th century gaol at least until 1769 and was probably destroyed with the reconstructing of the bridge in 1797. (Dunning 1974:197)

*Taken from Stukeley's 1723 map.*

ILC/410

St. Mary Minor (SMR 53014)

Remains of the church of St. Mary Minor were found by Cox during the 1948-50 excavations in Ivel House gardens (SMR 53042, Cox 1982). The church was founded by 1228 and was still standing when Leland visited the town in the 1540s. In 1502 it was united with St. Mary Major and St. John's. (Dunning 1974:197-8, Cox 1952:156-9)

*Taken from Cox 1982.*

St. Mary Major

The present church of St Mary Major dates largely to the 13th century, with some 15th and 19th century elements. (Pevsner 1958:204)

ILC/412

St. Michael's (SMR 53020)

St. Michael's church, a hanging chapel situated over the south gate, was in existence in 1311. Leland described it in 1540. Burials noted by Cox during excavations for the renewal of water mains in 1949 (SMR 53093) are thought to be associated with this church. By 1548 the glebe land associated with St. Michael's church included a dovecote, thought to be located to the south of the gate (SMR 53123).

*After Leland's description.*

*Site unknown*

St. Olave's (SMR 53058)

Dunning (1974:198) suggests that this church may have had pre-conquest origins. It was still in existence in 1276 and its site was known in the late 16th century but has now faded from memory.

*Site unsure*

St. Peter's (SMR 53059)

The church was in existence by the late 12th century and was united with St. Mary Major in 1281. Its location is not fixed but may have been in Cheap Street (Church Street) where St. Peter's Cross stood in the early 15th century (SMR 53088) (Dunning 1974:198).

ILC/423 Plague Pits (SMR 53061)  
A mass medieval burial was located within the market place during excavations for a pipe trench in 1949. A second mass burial was found during the construction of the external fire escape on the west side of the front wall of the Town Hall. Both are believed to be a late medieval plague burials (Cox 1952:150-2, Cox 1958:150).

*From SMR maps and Cox 1958:150.*

#### 4.4.e Settlement (Urban)

##### (a) Commercial core

##### (i) Market place(s)

not mapped

##### Market Cross (SMR 53015)

A market cross was mentioned in a deed of 1427. It was apparently replaced 1795 when a bill of £35.10s3¾d to Thomas Trask by the Borough Corporation of Ilchester for the work. It was again restored in 1991 having been blown down in a storm in 1990 this time by Frack Taylor of Chilthorne Domer at a cost of £9,470. (*pers comm* R. Scutchings)

##### (ii) Other town plots

ILC/424

##### Town Core

Evidence of medieval building has been found in most excavations within the town and probably covered the area within the medieval walls.

*The area shown is conjectural.*

##### (b) Suburbs

ILC/413

##### Northover

In the medieval period Northover was a suburb, reliant on the economy of Ilchester, although by the end of the 14th century it had a higher taxable population than its neighbour (*Dunning 1974:225*). A small scale excavation on the east side of the road has produced evidence of 13th century occupation (*SMR 55914, Ellis 1994:81-84*).

*The area shown is conjectural.*

ILC/425

##### Castle Farm/Great Yard

Some medieval features were found outside the medieval town walls, in excavations at Castle Farm in 1985 (*SMR 55871, IL 84, Leach and Ellis 1991:22*).

*After Leach and Ellis 1991:22.*

#### 4.4.f Industrial sites

##### (a) Mills

ILC/414

##### Ilchester Mill (SMR 53080)

Ilchester mill was in existence by the mid-12th century and in 1212 was granted to Whitehall hospital. It probably stood close to the South-West Gate (*Dunning 1974:191*).

*From SMR maps.*

ILC/415

##### New Mill (SMR 53055)

Also granted to the hospital in the early 13th century and referred to in documents up to the early 19th century, New Mill stood to the north-east of town (*Dunning 1974:191*).

*From SMR maps.*

ILC/416

##### Northover Mill (SMR 53079)

Domesday records a mill as part of St. Andrew's estate, Northover, worth 20s in 1086. References to ownership of the mill exist into the 20th century. (*Dunning 1974:191*)

*From SMR maps.*

- ILC/417 Horse-Mill (SMR 53082)  
A horse-mill was documented in 1268 located in Almshouse Lane which was still known as Horsemill Lane in 1626.(Dunning 1974:191)

*From SMR maps.*

- ILC/418 Hainbury Mill (SMR 54798)  
Hainbury mill is thought to date to the medieval period, the earliest records date to 1392 when it is referred to as *Haynebergmylle* (Aston and Murless 1978, Dunning 1974:172).

*From SMR maps.*

#### 4.4.g Other

- ILC/419 Gaols (SMR 53013)  
Ilchester was the site of the county gaol from 1166 until the 1280's when it was moved to Somerton. The gaol was, however, returned to Ilchester between 1366 and 1371 in an attempt to aid the town's flagging economy. (Dunning 1974:185) The location of this prison was probably within the triangle formed by the Foss and Dorchester Roads, near to the market place (Aston and Leech 1977:74).

*The area shown is conjectural.*

- ILC/420 By the mid-16th century the gaol had apparently been moved as Leland described it as being built on the west side of Ilchester Bridge, sharing the central island with St. Leonard's church (SMR 55932)(Dunning 1974:185).

*Taken from SMR map.*

- ILC/421 St. Margaret's Leper Hospital (SMR 53017)  
A leper hospital was established at Ilchester by 1212 which may have occupied an area to the south-west of the town, outside of the town walls where fields were known as Little and Great Spittle. Excavations in this area prior to the construction of the Ilchester bypass (SMR 53068, Leach 1982a) did not produce evidence of medieval occupation of Little Spittlefield, no excavation has as yet taken place at Great Spittlefield.

*The area shown is conjectural.*

- ILC/422 Almshouse (SMR 53050)  
Land was left in 1426 to support an almshouse which stood at the junction of Almshouse Lane and West Street. The house was rebuilt in 1810, closed in 1915 and since 1922 has been a private dwelling. (Dunning 1974:202-3)

*Taken from SMR map.*

## 5. POST-MEDIEVAL (Map G)

### 5.1 Archaeological work in the town/ Archaeological knowledge

The post medieval period is documented by two early 18th century maps, which provide a snapshot of the form of the town at the end of this period. The two maps are similar and it seems likely that Strachey based his map on Stukeley's earlier rendition.

### 5.2 Context

The basic pattern of towns had been established by the end of the middle ages, and there were very few major changes in the post-medieval period, though the economic fortunes of particular towns rose and fell. Nearly all the Somerset towns depended on either cloth manufacture or cloth trade to some extent. Ilchester was no exception, and was one of many of the 45 historic towns covered by this project which just about held its own economically for much of this period.

### 5.3 Standing structures and visible remains

There is only one listed building in Ilchester itself dating to this period, which is evidence of the general decline the town fell into from the later medieval period. Although the gaol had been returned to the town the prosperity enjoyed in the earlier medieval period failed to accompany it. The general structure of the town probably stagnated during this period with housing contracting rather than expanding.

### 5.4 Archaeological components (centre), shown on Map G

#### 5.4.a Communications

##### (a) Roads, streets and routeways

ILC/507 Roads Marked on Stukeley's 1723 Map  
The roads drawn by Stukeley are shown on map G.

*Taken from Stukeley's 1723 map.*

#### 5.4.b Settlement (Urban)

##### (a) Commercial core

##### (i) Other town plots

ILC/501 Town Plots  
The built area within the town walls on Stukeley's and Strachey's maps is shown on map G. The main difference noted between these maps is the disappearance of housing on the south side of Back Lane between Stukeley's 1723 map and Strachey's map of 1736. Whether this was an error on the part of Strachey or a true reflection of the demolition of the row is not clear. If the latter, it could have been an effect of gerrymandering, changing the population for electoral advantage (Cox and Chandler 1995:7).  
Trial excavations on the site of the Cheese Factory on the corner of Back Lane and Free Street in 1995 showed substantial post-medieval layers in each of the three trenches but no evidence of structures (Valentin 1995).

*Taken from Stukeley's 1723 and Strachey's 1736 maps.*

##### (b) Suburbs

ILC/506 Northover  
The suburb of Northover is shown as being built up on both sides of the road as far as the church of St. Andrew's on Stukeley's 1723 map.

*Taken from Stukeley's 1723 map.*

### 5.4.c Industrial sites

#### (a) Mills

ILC/502 Silk Mill (SMR 53016)

Collinson reported in 1791 that the north transept of the friary chapel still stood and was being used as a silk mill (Aston and Leech 1977:70).

*Taken from SMR map.*

#### (b) Other industrial sites

not mapped

Brewery

A 17th century petition asserted that brewing was virtually the only activity providing employment in the town. The location of the breweries has not been established (Dunning 1974:189).

ILC/505 Great Yard/Civil War Defences (SMR 53048)

Stukeley shows a series of defences to the north-west of the medieval town wall. The King stayed in Ilchester in July 1644 during the campaign against the earl of Essex, and a royalist force remained in the town until forced out in 1645, prior to the battle of Langport (Dunning 1974:183). Survey of the site failed to produce evidence of the civil war defences as has excavation of a pipe trench across Great Yard (SMR 56902, Broomhead 1995:6). However, Leach and Ellis (1985) may have found evidence of a wall associated with these defences in the southern end of cutting C of the 1985 Castle Farm excavations (SMR 55871, IL 85).

*Taken from Stukeley's 1723 map.*

#### 5.4.d Other

ILC/504 Gaol (SMR 55933)

A new prison was built in about 1599 in Northover parish, beside the river. An extension to the building was made in 1789. It continued to be used until 1843 when it was replaced by Wilton gaol, Taunton.(Dunning 1974:185-6)

*Taken from 1808 OS Surveyor's Drawings.*

ILC/507 Session House

Stukeley shows the session house situated on the south side of the market area.

*Taken from Stukeley's 1723 map.*

## 6. INDUSTRIAL (LATE 18TH AND 19TH CENTURY) (Map H)

### 6.1 Context

The late 18th and 19th centuries saw some changes to the urban pattern, with the beginning of the emergence of larger centres (often at the expense of smaller ones), linked by vastly improved communication lines (turnpikes, railways and canals). Somerset was not characterised by the kind of large scale industrialisation and urbanisation seen in other counties - indeed, the virtual collapse of its most important industry, which was cloth, affected nearly all of the medieval and post-medieval towns - but some did take place. The changes were reflected in a series of alterations to town governance, which left the county with a total of only fifteen Municipal Boroughs and Urban Districts by the end of the 19th century.

Ilchester is one of the 22 or so places which though they did not merit Borough or Urban District status at the end of the 19th century, remained market centres and can probably still be regarded as towns (though several of them had sunk towards village status during the course of the century). Indeed, it was one of three which remained a chartered borough well into the 19th century.

## 6.2 Standing structures and visible remains

There are a number of listed buildings along the Foss Way and Dorchester Roads, showing some rebuilding within the town during this period, however the general form of the town remained largely unchanged.

## 6.3 Archaeological components (centre), shown on Map H

### 6.3.a Redevelopment in earlier settlement components

#### 6.3.b Communications

##### (a) Roads, streets and routeways

#### ILC/601 Limington Road, Almshouse Lane

All of the 19th century maps (OS surveyor's Drawings, tithe map and an 1834 land sale catalogue map) show a single road leading from Church Street (Dorchester road) to the west to Limington. Almshouse Lane was realigned between Strachey's map of 1736 and the OS surveyor's drawings of 1808.

*Taken from 1834 sale catalogue map.*

#### ILC/602 Re-orientation of north end of Dorchester Road

The Dorchester Road has been realigned where it joins with the Foss Way, probably to accommodate encroachment onto the market area.

*Taken from 1886 OS.*

### 6.3.c Settlement (Urban)

#### (a) Commercial core

#### ILC/603 Whitehall Expansion

Building over and around the Whitehall nunnery site is shown on the 1886 1st edition OS as having expanded to the west, overlying the line of both the Roman and the medieval town wall.

*Taken from 1886 OS.*

#### (i) Other town plots

#### ILC/604 Cleveland Buildings/Lower Barton, Waterloo Court (not mapped), Castle Rookery, Ilchester Mead

These terraces were constructed in the early 1800s by 'parliamentary patrons' of the borough as part of the gerrymandering tactics of the Whig, Lord Darlington (Leach Dunning and Croft 1990:25-26). The removal of terraces on the east side of Free Street prior to the first edition OS might also fall into this category.

*Taken from 1886 OS.*

#### ILC/605 Other Town Building

New building shown on the 1886 OS notably on Free Street, Almshouse Lane and Ivel House are shown on map H. Work on Ivel House in 1997 (Ellis and Leach 1998) showed that the structure originated in the late seventeenth or early eighteenth century.

*Taken from 1886 OS.*

#### (b) Suburbs

#### ILC/606 Suburban Building

Some expansion along the Foss Way and Dorchester roads and new building within the Northover suburb is shown on the 1886 OS map.

*Taken from 1886 OS.*

### 6.3.d Industrial sites

*(a) Mills*

ILC/607

Hainbury Mill (SMR 54798)

The medieval mill of Hainbury was known as Hainbury Factory in the early 18th century and was used for flax production (Aston and Murless 1978, Warren 1996:34).

*Taken from 1886 OS.*

**7. 20TH CENTURY***(Map I)***7.1 Context**

The 20th century has seen a vast physical expansion of some existing towns, and some expansion in most of the 45 historic towns covered by the project. However, there have only been limited alterations to the overall pattern of urban settlement. The County Structure Plan still contains fifteen settlements defined as Towns: this is almost identical to the late 19th century list of Municipal Boroughs and Urban Districts. Ilchester is one of 30 of the 45 historic towns covered by this project which is not classed as a town in the County Structure Plan.

**7.2 Settlement components, shown on Map I****7.2.a Communications***(a) Roads, streets and routeways*

ILC/701

Ilchester Bypass and A37 Slip Road

The Ilchester bypass was constructed in 1975 taking through traffic on a new road to the west of the town. A link road was also constructed to the south of the town from the Dorchester Road, across the Foss Way to the new road. The road also caused the construction of new bridge over the Yeo river and a further bridge taking Pill Bridge Lane over the new road.

*Taken from 1995 Digital OS.*

**7.2.b Water**

ILC/704

Flood Alleviation Scheme

The construction of flood defences around the town of Ilchester took place in 1980 and 1981, these take the form of walls and banks and drainage ditches. Watching briefs were carried out during this work (Leach 1990:81-83).

*Taken from 1995 Digital OS.*

**7.2.c Settlement (Urban)***(i) Other town plots**(a) Suburbs*

ILC/702

Northover, Limington Road/Kingshams, Lyster Road, Priory Road, The Paddocks

Large estates have been built to the north of Northover, Great Orchard, Tarranto Hill and Troubridge Park, the latter covering the iron age and Roman sites at Troubridge. New estate building within the town core itself includes Kingshams, Pillbridge Lane Estate, Lyster Road and the Paddocks.

*Taken from 1995 Digital OS.*

**7.2.d Settlement (Rural)***(a) Farms*

ILC/703

New Spittle Farm and Extensions to Spittles Farm and South Mead Farm

New farm buildings have been built on the west side of the Ilchester by-pass. Both Spittles and South Mead Farm have expanded.

*Taken from 1995 Digital OS.*

### 7.2.e Industrial sites

- ILC/705      Cheese Factory  
 A factory making beer cheese stood on the corner of Free Street and Back Lane prior to 1995. Archaeological evaluation of the site was carried out before the construction of six houses (Valentin 1995, Cox 1995).  
  
*Taken from 1995 Digital OS.*
- ILC/706      Factory Northover  
*Taken from 1995 Digital OS.*
- ILC/707      Sewage Works  
  
*Taken from 1995 Digital OS.*

## V. THE POTENTIAL OF ILCHESTER

### 1. Research interests

Ilchester obviously has exceptional potential value for the investigation of several periods and transitions. As the site of one of the few known iron age defended valley sites, the only known walled Roman settlement in Somerset, the most important Saxon market in Somerset and the medieval county town the archaeological remains are of very high interest. In addition the decline in importance and prosperity of the town after the thirteenth century has limited the destructive effect on archaeological remains by successive rebuilding.

### 2. Areas of potentially exceptional preservation

Good preservation of organic remains has been noted at several sites in Ilchester, Free Street (1993) and Kingshams both produced carbonised remains and many cut features contain partially waterlogged deposits as the water level is at times as high as 11.8m OD within the town.

### 3. Limitations

The archaeological potential of the town is limited only by successive rebuilding within the town walls. For example, Bond (c1990) noted that over three hectares have been redeveloped in recent years without archaeological investigation prior to 1989.

### 4. Extent of current protection

There are 50 listed buildings in Ilchester, and a conservation area. An Area of High Archaeological Potential has been designated to replace the *Zone of Major Archaeological Importance* (Local Plan policy C19 and C20, Yeovil area plan 1990). There are five scheduled areas covering parts of the Roman town and suburbs and the iron age site to the south of the town.

### 5. Management Proposals

See the Archaeological Guidance Document.

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**3. Maps**

1723	Stukeley's map illustrating his <i>Itinerium Curiosum</i> .	
1736	Strachey's inset to his map of Somerset.	
1792	Ilchester Meadow	(SRO DD/MC)
1808	OS Surveyor's Drawings	(fiche in SSL)
1823	Ilchester, Sock Dennis and Limington	(SRO DD/BT 1/3)
1834	Lands south of town	(SRO DD/BT 19/23)
1834	Sale Catalogue map	(SRO Q/AG 35)
1839	Tithe Map	(fiche in SSL)
1886	OS 1st Edition 25'	(fiche in SSL)
1904	OS 2nd Edition 6'	(SRO)
1984	OS 1:10 000	
1995	OS Digital Maps	

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ILC/106	A	ILC/301	E
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ILC/215	B	ILC/402	F
ILC/226	B	ILC/403	F
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ILC/202	C	ILC/406	F
ILC/203	C	ILC/408	F
ILC/204	C	ILC/409	F
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ILC/206	C	ILC/412	F
ILC/209	C	ILC/413	F
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ILC/225	D	ILC/425	F

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ILC/603	H		

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## Maps

**Map A - Prehistoric**

**Map B - 1<sup>st</sup> century Roman**

**Map C - Later Roman**

**Map D - Roman**

**Map E - Saxon**

**Map F - Medieval**

**Map G - Post-medieval**

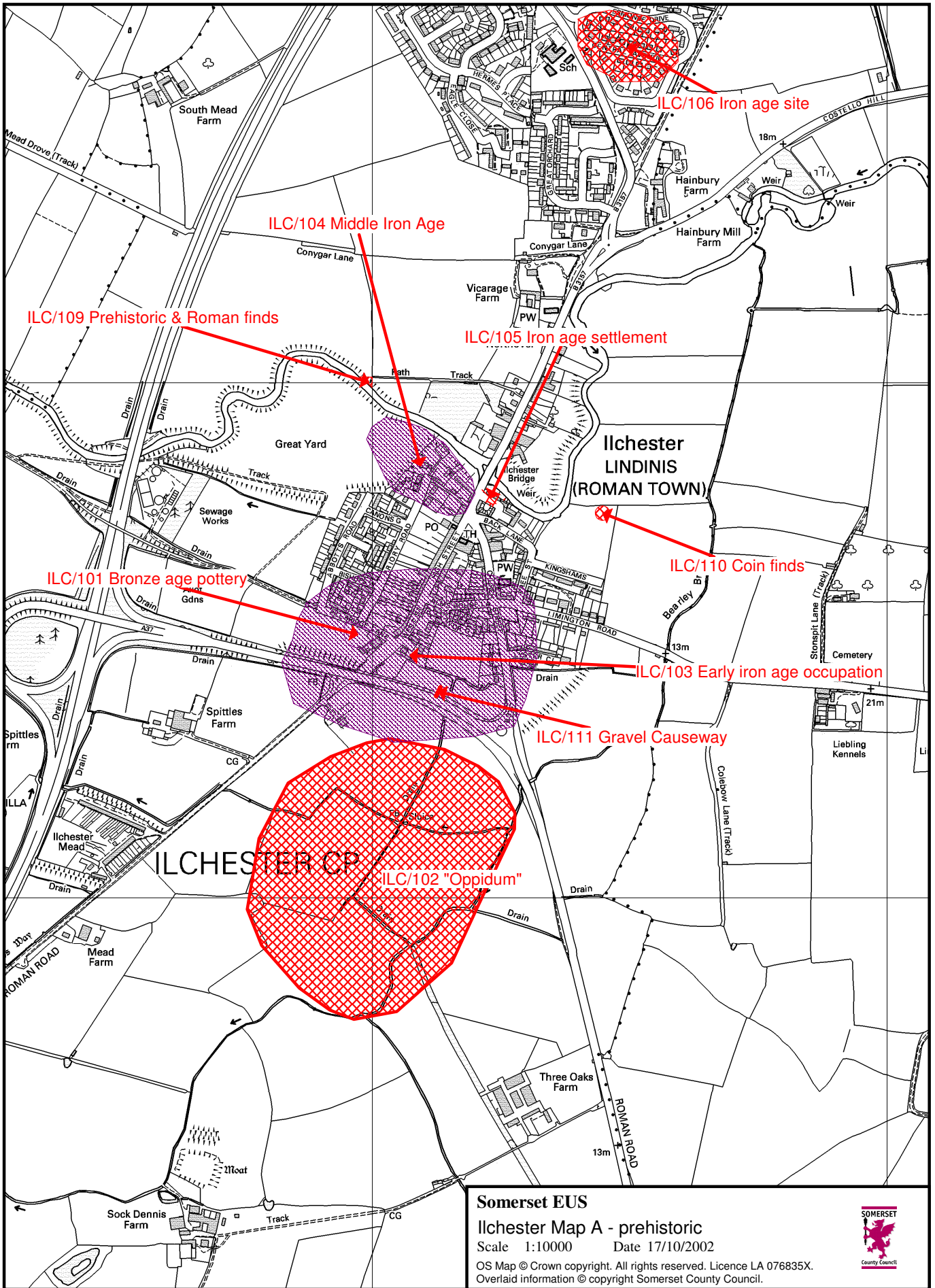
**Map H - Industrial**

**Map I - 20<sup>th</sup> century**

**Map J - Existing constraints**

Key: Scheduled Monuments (dark blue),  
Listed Buildings                      Grade I (light blue)  
    Grade II\* (light green)  
    Grade II (dark green)  
Conservation Area (light green)  
Area of High Archaeological Potential (pink)





**Somerset EUS**

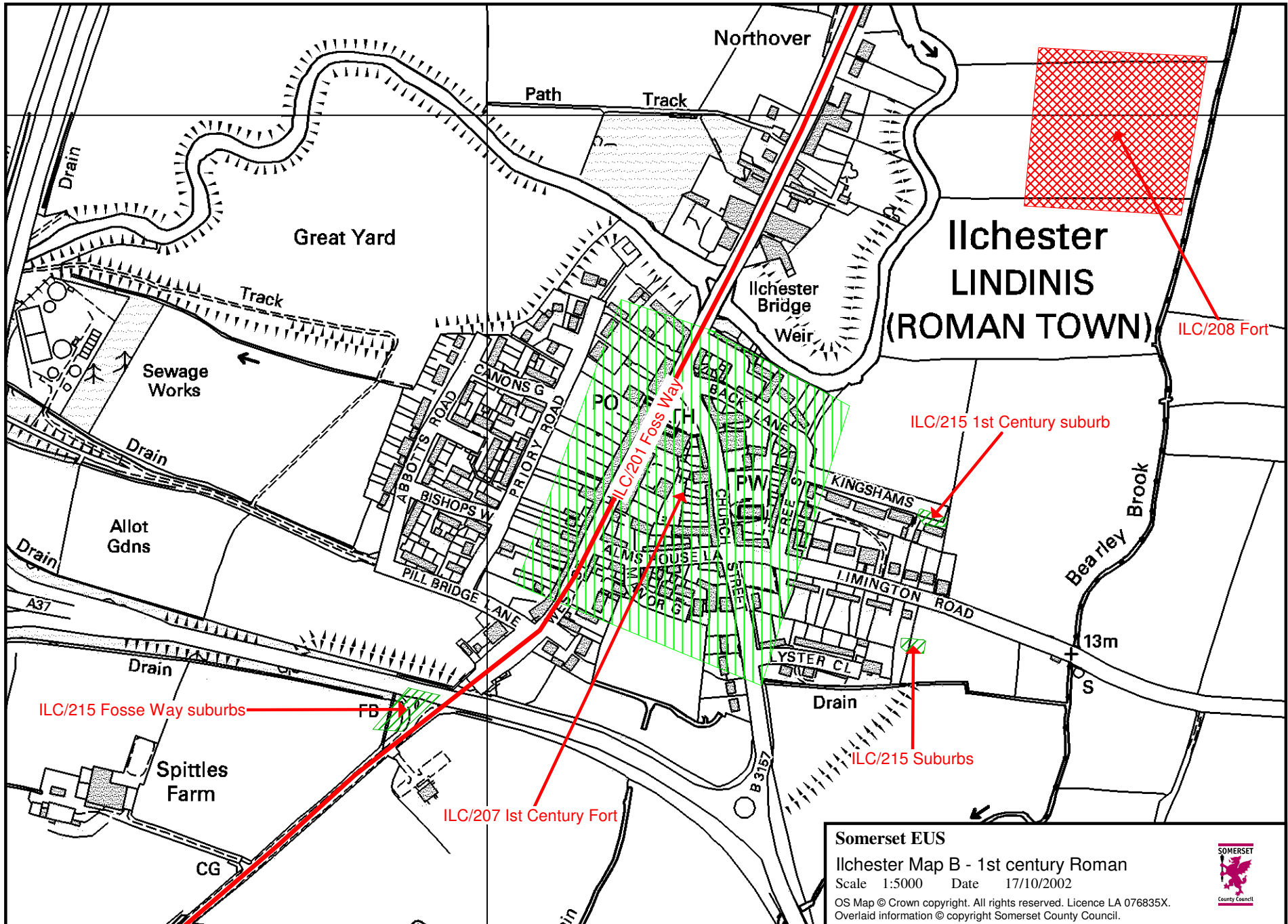
**Ilchester Map A - prehistoric**

Scale 1:10000 Date 17/10/2002

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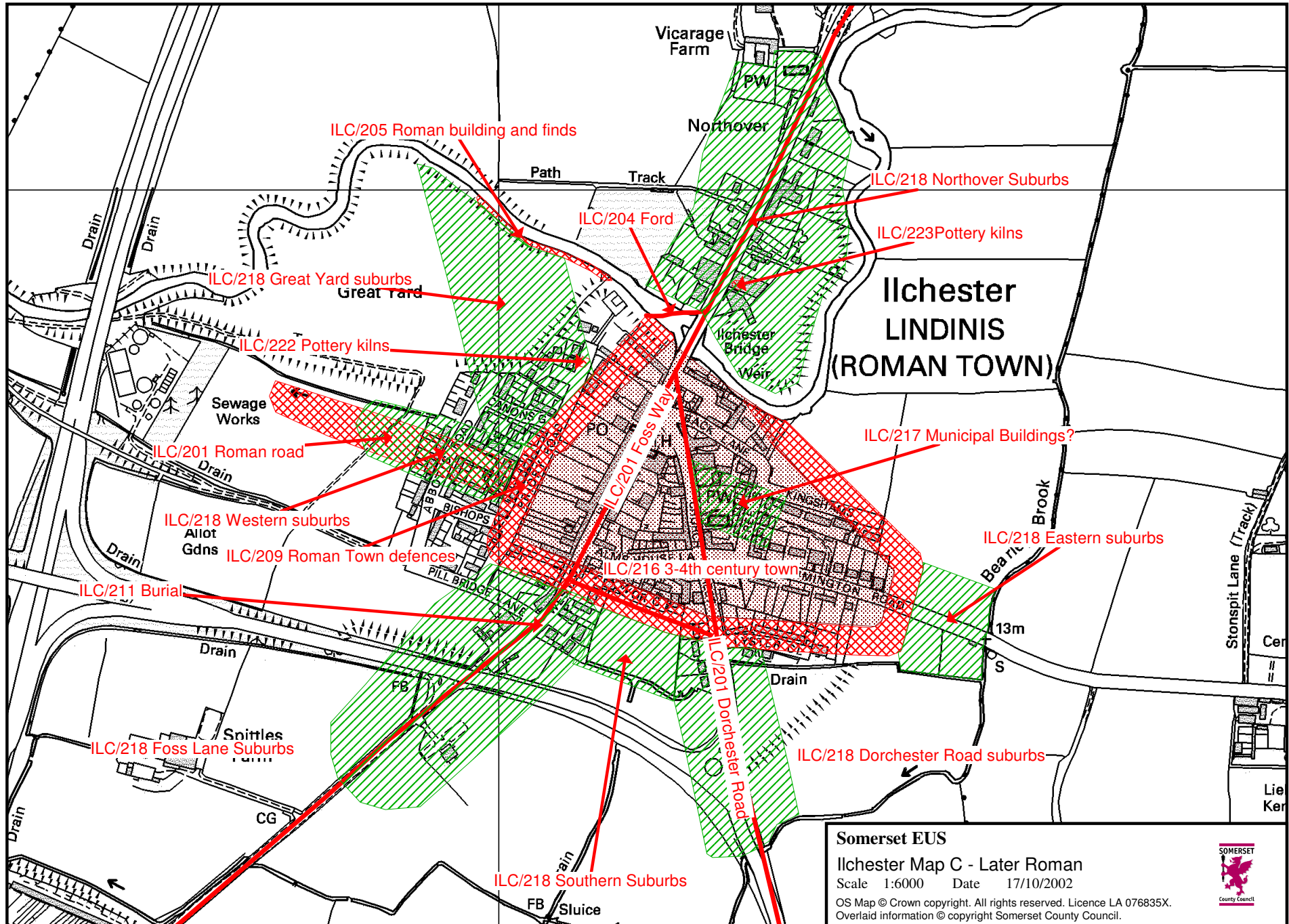
SOMERSET  
County Council



**Somerset EUS**  
 Ilchester Map B - 1st century Roman  
 Scale 1:5000 Date 17/10/2002

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ILC/205 Roman building and finds

Vicarage Farm

Northover

ILC/218 Northover Suburbs

Path

Track

ILC/204 Ford

ILC/223 Pottery kilns

ILC/218 Great Yard suburbs

Great Yard

ILC/222 Pottery kilns

Sewage Works

ILC/201 Roman road

ILC/217 Municipal Buildings?

ILC/218 Western suburbs

Allot Gdns

ILC/209 Roman Town defences

ILC/216 3-4th century town

ILC/218 Eastern suburbs

ILC/211 Burial

ILC/201 Foss Way

ILC/201 Dorchester Road

ILC/218 Foss Lane Suburbs

Snittles

ILC/218 Dorchester Road suburbs

ILC/218 Southern Suburbs

FB Sluice

Bea rill Brook

13m

Stonspit Lane (Track)

Cer

Lie Ker

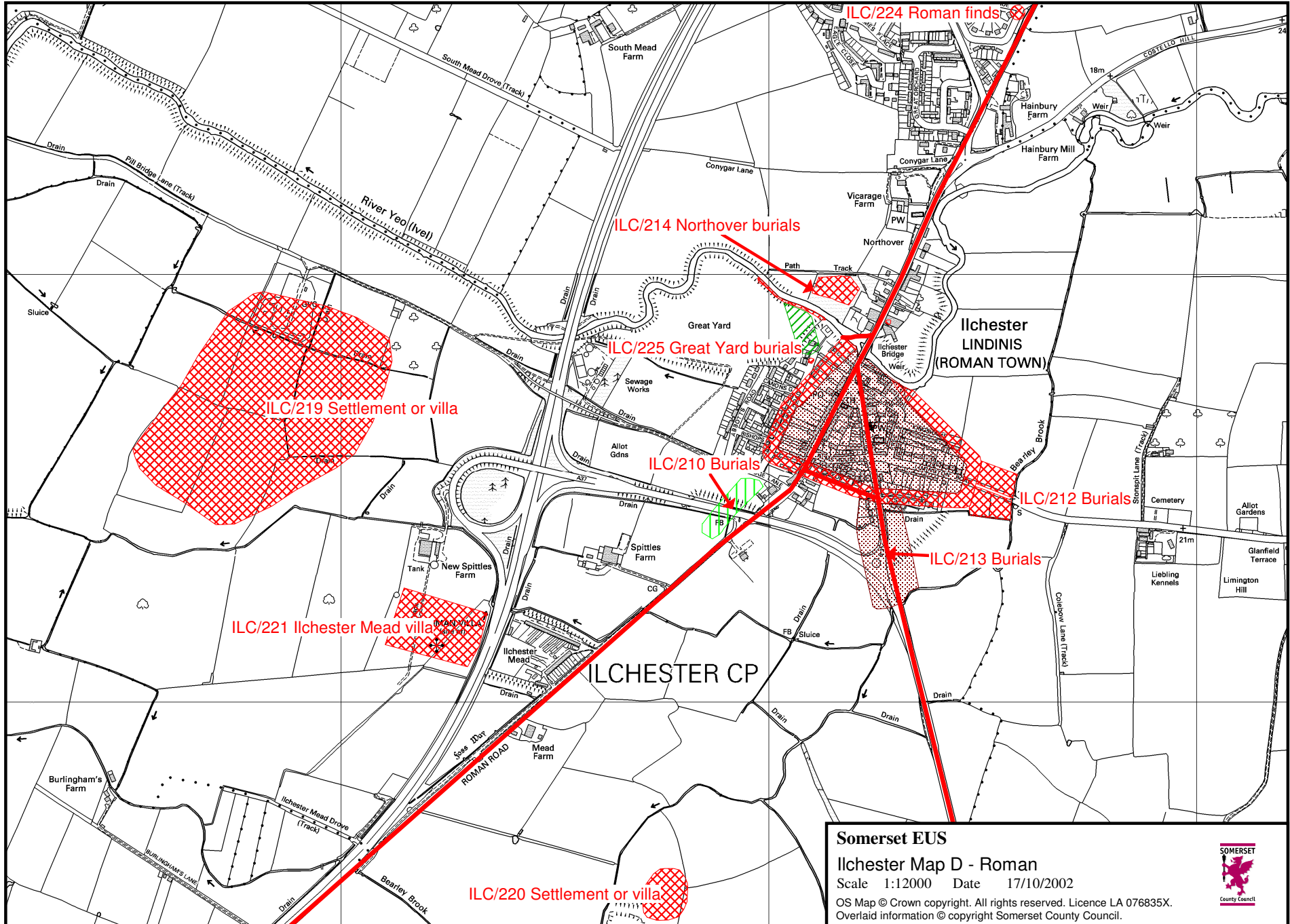
**Somerset EUS**

Ilchester Map C - Later Roman

Scale 1:6000 Date 17/10/2002

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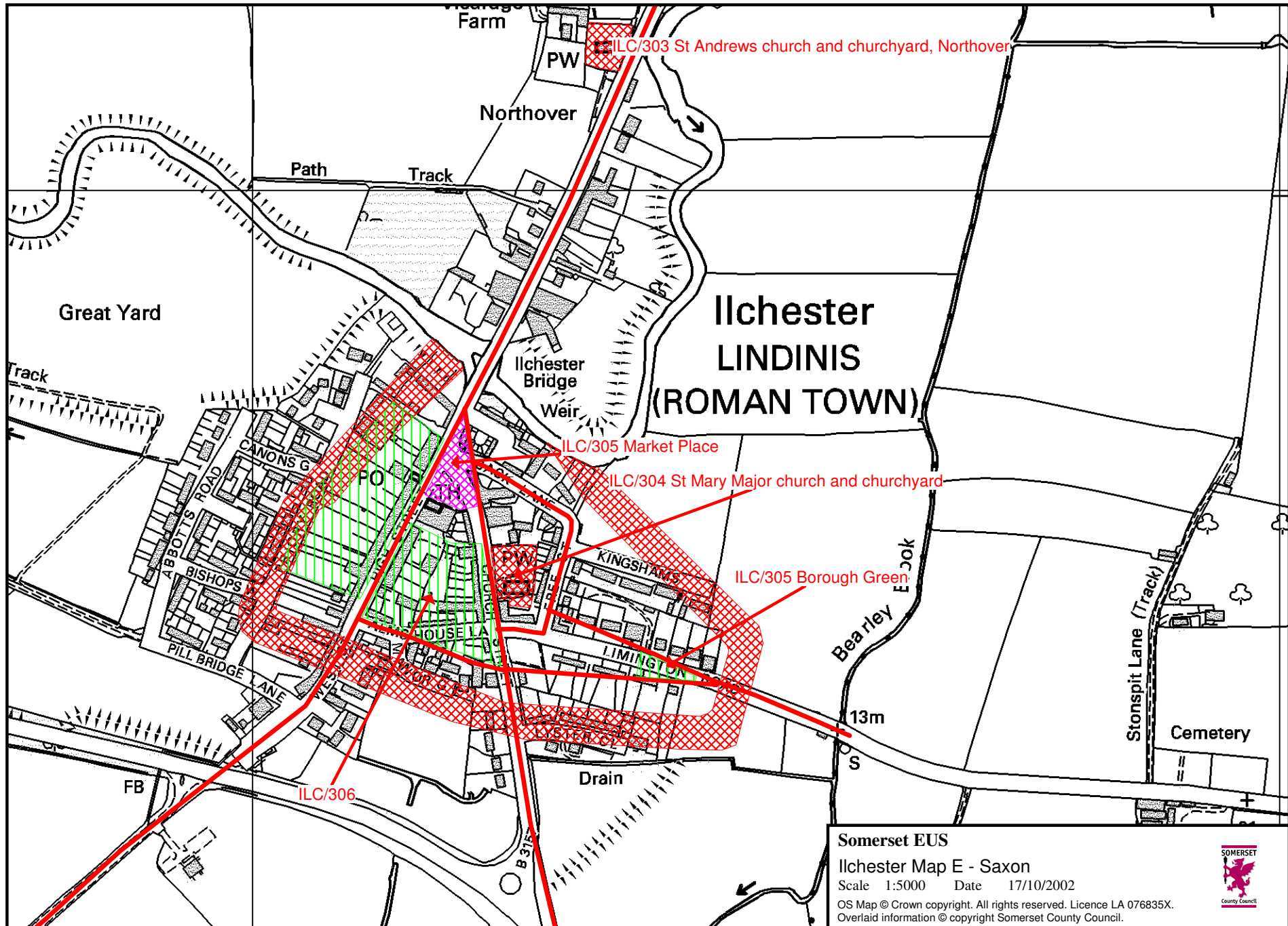




**Somerset EUS**  
**Ilchester Map D - Roman**

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ILC/303 St Andrews church and churchyard, Northover

ILC/305 Market Place

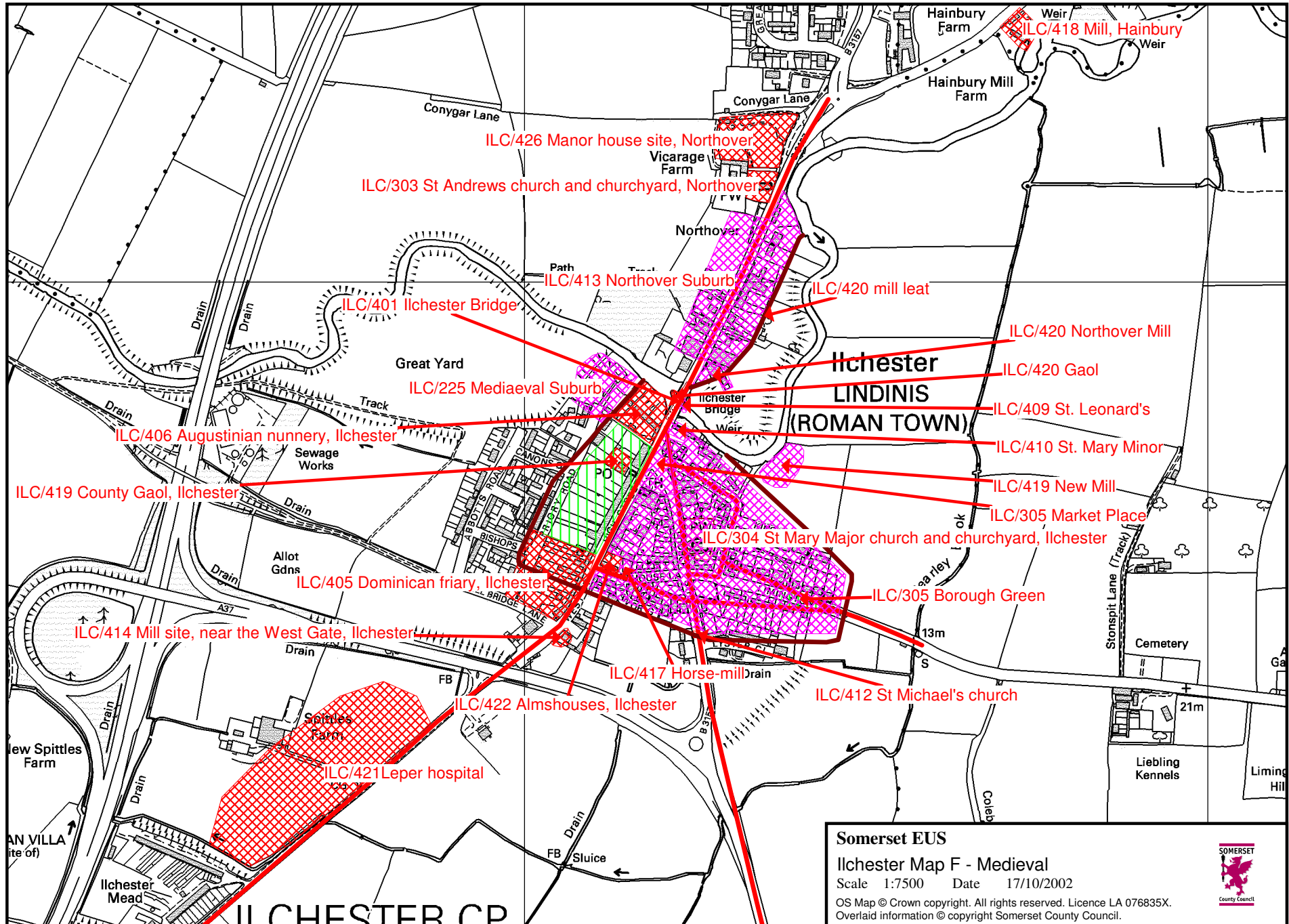
ILC/304 St Mary Major church and churchyard

ILC/305 Borough Green

ILC/306


**Somerset EUS**  
 Ilchester Map E - Saxon  
 Scale 1:5000 Date 17/10/2002  
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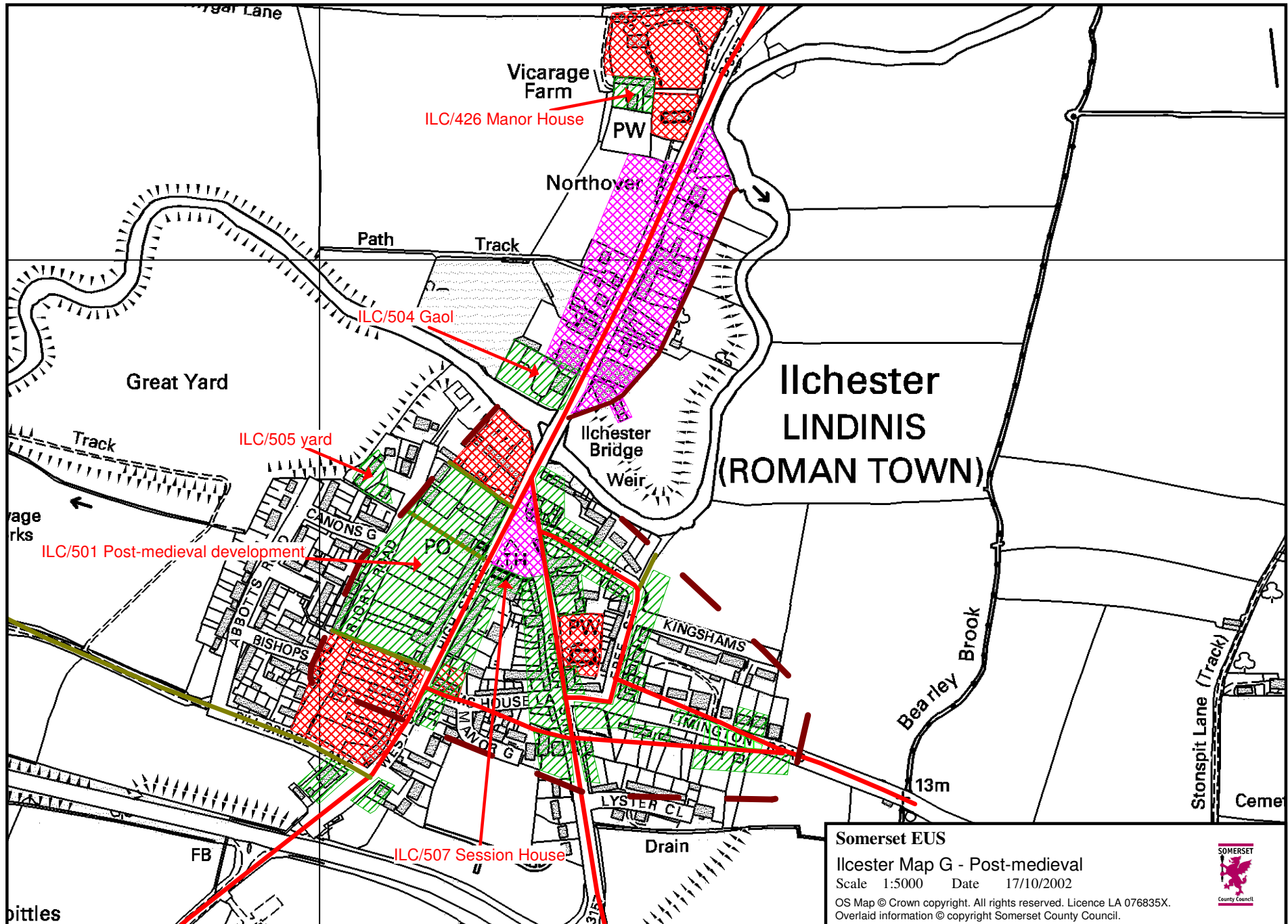




- ILC/426 Manor house site, Northover
- ILC/303 St Andrews church and churchyard, Northover
- ILC/418 Mill, Hainbury Weir
- ILC/420 mill leat
- ILC/420 Northover Mill
- ILC/420 Gaol
- ILC/409 St. Leonard's
- ILC/410 St. Mary Minor
- ILC/419 New Mill
- ILC/305 Market Place
- ILC/305 Borough Green
- ILC/417 Horse-mill
- ILC/412 St Michael's church
- ILC/422 Almshouses, Ilchester
- ILC/421 Leper hospital
- ILC/414 Mill site, near the West Gate, Ilchester
- ILC/405 Dominican friary, Ilchester
- ILC/419 County Gaol, Ilchester
- ILC/406 Augustinian nunnery, Ilchester
- ILC/225 Mediaeval Suburb
- ILC/413 Northover Suburb
- ILC/401 Ilchester Bridge

**Somerset EUS**  
**Ilchester Map F - Medieval**  
 Scale 1:7500 Date 17/10/2002  
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Vicarage Farm  
 ILC/426 Manor House  
 PW

Northover

Path Track

ILC/504 Gaol

Great Yard

Ilchester  
 LINDINIS  
 (ROMAN TOWN)

Ilchester  
 Bridge  
 Weir

ILC/505 yard

ILC/501 Post-medieval development

KINGSHAMS

Bearley Brook

13m

ILC/507 Session House

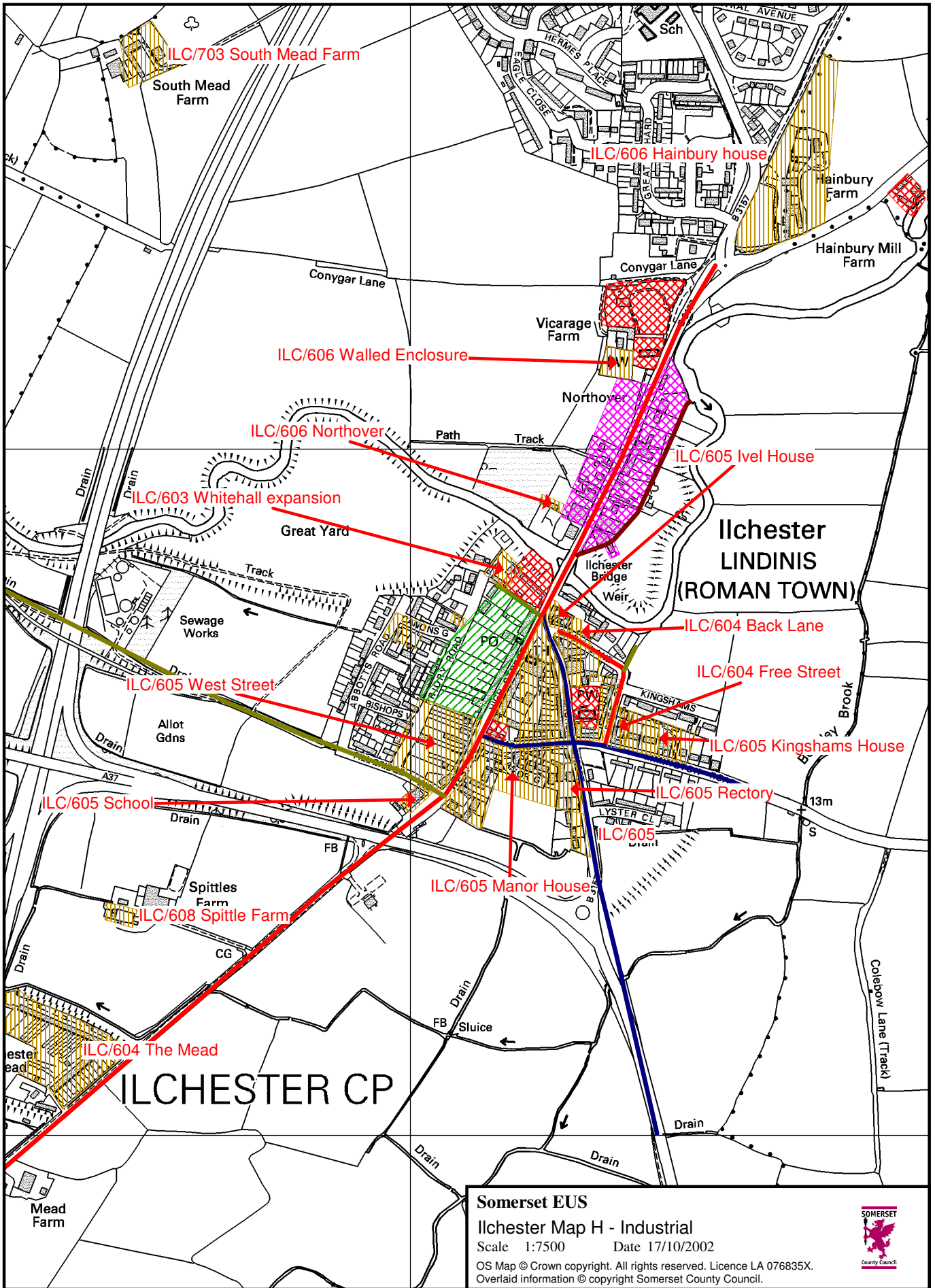
Drain

Somerset EUS  
 Ilchester Map G - Post-medieval  
 Scale 1:5000 Date 17/10/2002  
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Stonspit Lane (Track)



bittles



ILC/703 South Mead Farm

South Mead Farm

ILC/606 Hainbury house

Hainbury Farm

Hainbury Mill Farm

Conygar Lane

Vicarage Farm

ILC/606 Walled Enclosure

Northover

ILC/606 Northover

Path Track

ILC/605 Ivel House

ILC/603 Whitehall expansion

Great Yard

Ilchester  
LINDINIS  
(ROMAN TOWN)

ILC/604 Back Lane

ILC/604 Free Street

ILC/605 West Street

ILC/605 Kingshams House

ILC/605 Rectory

ILC/605 School

ILC/605

ILC/605 Manor House

ILC/608 Spittle Farm

ILC/604 The Mead

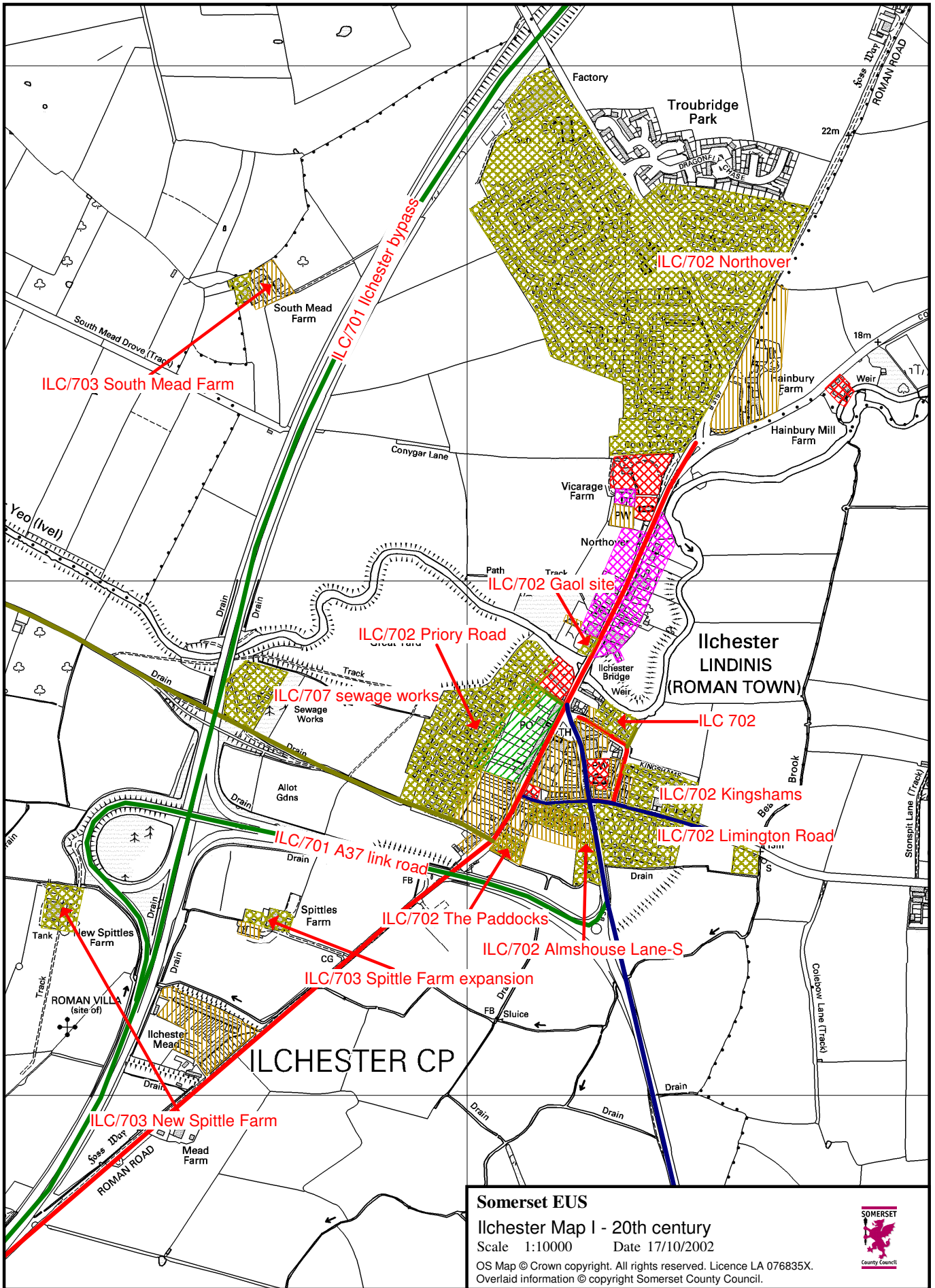
ILCHESTER CP

Somerset EUS  
Ilchester Map H - Industrial  
Scale 1:7500 Date 17/10/2002

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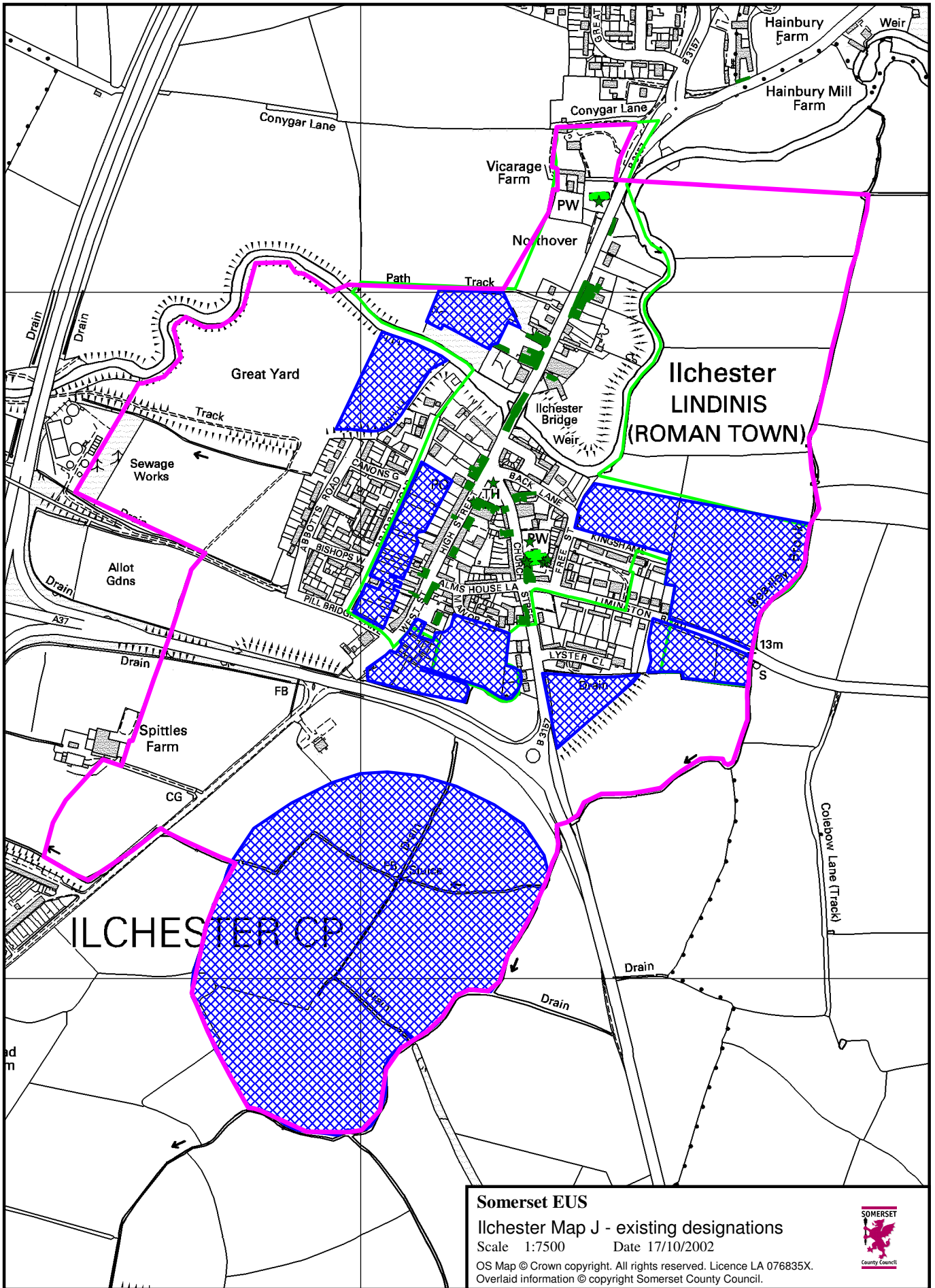




**Somerset EUS**  
**Ilchester Map I - 20th century**  
 Scale 1:10000 Date 17/10/2002

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 Ilchester Map J - existing designations  
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