

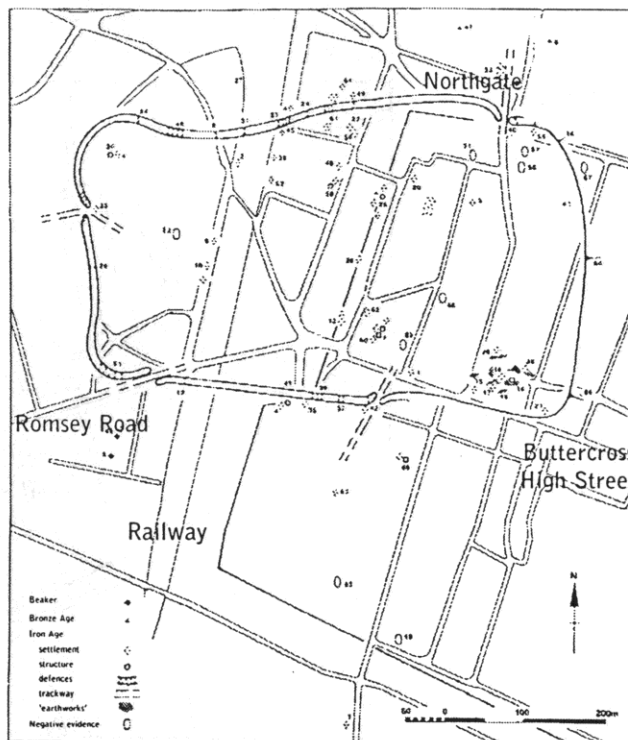
3 CONTEXT OF THE CITY OF WINCHESTER

3.1 Archaeology

The city of Winchester and its surrounding area, like other comparable cathedral cities, is rich in archaeological monuments of local, regional and national importance. A full archaeological report is attached as Appendix 1. This section briefly summarises the findings.

- 3.1.1 The character of Winchester is defined by its position in the local topography. Winchester is overlooked by the surrounding high ground of the chalk downlands, which contain most of the significant earlier prehistoric, Neolithic, Bronze Age and Iron Age remains. During those periods, focal events of the local population's lives mainly occurred on higher ground. The landscape records their burial grounds and settlements. These activities on the higher ground, however, could only have been sustained by the nearby River Itchen and the utilisation of the food and fuel found on its floodplain.
- 3.1.2 Many prehistoric monuments, settlements and field systems survive as earthworks on the downland surrounding Winchester. By the Bronze Age, most of these sites were constructed, used and abandoned in a predominantly open and cultivated landscape. Despite the large number of important Bronze Age sites there is no indication that this area was especially selected and preferred from other areas of the chalk downland for settlement, farming or burial. These features do not relate to a central place focussed on the subsequent site of Winchester unlike, for example, the prehistoric landscape around Dorchester, Dorset which was a territorial focus from the 4th millennium BC onwards.
- 3.1.3 The regional importance of the Winchester area was established in the Middle Iron Age with the construction of Oram's Arbour, a large ditched enclosure whose valley-side location commanded a major ford. The type of enclosure is unique in the region

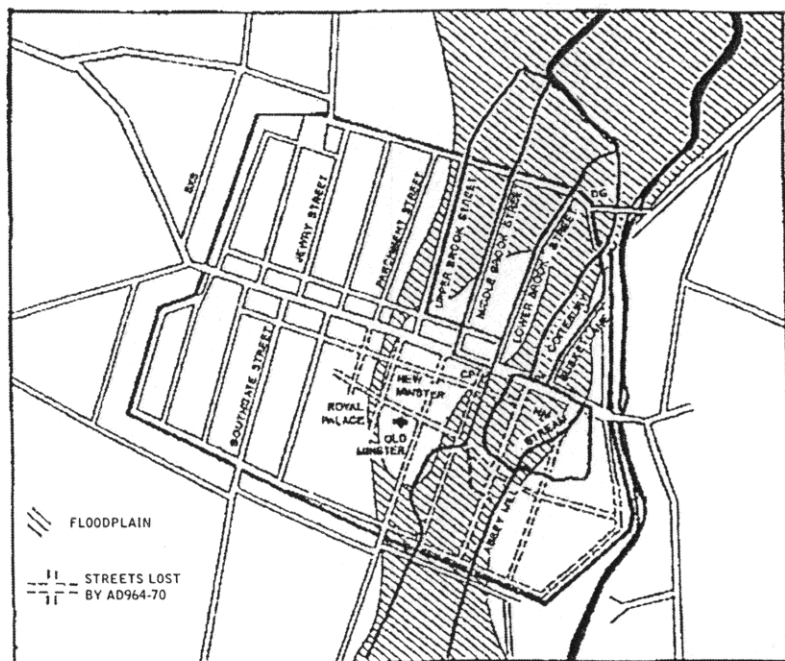
Oram's Arbour enclosure, showing location of historic sites and other discoveries. The line of the later Roman town defences is shown for reference. (Whinney)



and its strategic location may place it at a tribal and territorial centre for the area of central Hampshire. For these reasons the enclosure must have been a major determining factor in the subsequent location of the early Roman town in the first century AD. The only element visible today is the bank which runs parallel with Clifton Road. The bank is partly on the line of the Iron Age defences but excavations by Professor Biddle showed it to have been formed in the 19th century. While the enclosure is not a Scheduled Monument, Oram's Arbour is an exceptionally important monument in the development of Winchester. The alignment of the Roman roads to the west and north gates of the Roman town pass through two of the enclosure's entrances. Today the location of the monument is partly marked by the open space of Oram's Arbour.

- 3.1.4 The univallate hillfort of St.. Catherine's Hill, unlike Oram's Arbour, is a Scheduled Monument, survives as a prominent earthwork, is highly visible and a dominant landscape feature. Although its relevance to the development of Winchester is not as great as that of Oram's Arbour, its distinctive survival helps to inform the sequence of development of the city.
- 3.1.5 While there is currently limited evidence for the character and nature of settlement within Oram's Arbour, the foundation of the Roman town of Venta Belgarum represents the first urban settlement at Winchester. The town was a cantonal capital, regional centre and the most important Roman settlement in central southern Hampshire.
- 3.1.6 Very little of the remains of the Roman town are visible as upstanding features or monuments within the present city. The most significant legacy of the Roman town is the line of the defences and entrances which were subsequently re-used, modified and re-established within the late Saxon and medieval town and which continue to be fossilised within the current plan of the city. The principal gateways into the Roman town to the west, east, north and south have conditioned the location of the main routes into the city up to the present day. In addition, the alignment of these Roman roads are preserved within the road plan outside the area of the town's defences. In particular, the roads to the north, east and west are striking features within the hinterland of the city.

10th Century Winchester, the time of King Alfred's influence.



- 3.1.7 With the demise of the Roman town in the 5th century AD, urban occupation may not have continued into the early post-Roman period. The survival of the defences of the Roman town encouraged the church authorities to establish a bishopric at Winchester in the mid 7th century, although the nature, extent and character of occupation up to the 9th century has not yet been established.
- 3.1.8 An urban centre was re-established at Winchester in the last decades of the 9th century with the laying out of a planned street grid, the responsibility of King Alfred and possibly his older brothers, within the framework of the Roman defences. It is this street plan rather than that of the Roman town, which is preserved within the current plan of the city of Winchester. The survival of an almost entire planned street plan from the late 9th century to the present day is exceptional and its preservation is essential.

3.2 Historical Assessment

The connections between past historical processes and present environmental and heritage qualities are strong. The present city is most obviously a result of historical events, but history also underlies almost every topic explored in this study. The nature conservation value of the water meadows, for example, derives from over four centuries of water management. The remnant grassland on the Downs is the product of an even longer period of human intervention and management of sheep grazing. In such ways, historical events and processes, especially over the last thousand years, have determined the character and qualities of Winchester and its setting.

- 3.2.1 This section nominates those historical attributes that help to make sense of the form, character and qualities of the city and its setting; determine the place's unique identity and have resulted in buildings, monuments and landscapes of inherent quality. Although this assessment refers to the local area around Winchester, the city has a continuing significance at national and county levels.

Ancient Capital

- 3.2.2 As a major Roman city, as the capital of Saxon Wessex, and as one of the favourite cities of the early Plantagenet kings, Winchester has had a rich share of the

The statue of King Alfred dominates the vista along Broadway towards the wooded slopes of St. Giles's Hill.



trappings of greatness. The Roman walls were repaired into the Medieval period. Now the extent of standing city wall is just a fraction of the former structure. Westgate and Kingsgate are the only gates to survive. William the Conqueror's palace disappeared in medieval times. The medieval Royal castle has gone except for its magnificent Great Hall. The city also housed two Abbeys, four friaries, fifty parish churches, all have now gone. The below ground remains provide any remaining evidence of this strong heritage.

- 3.2.3 Fragments of the former secular greatness of Winchester are thus extremely precious by their present rarity.

Ecclesiastical Centre

- 3.2.4 The cathedral and Hospital of St. Cross are standing memorials to one of the greatest bishoprics in England. The cathedral, with its tower and huge nave, remains one of the most impressive ecclesiastical buildings in the country despite losing its Chapter House, dormitories and cloisters. The Hospital of St. Cross and the fragments of the medieval Wolvesey Palace, itself one of the greatest houses in England in its day, buttress the impression of medieval ecclesiastical splendour. The seventeenth century baroque replacement of Wolvesey Palace, was an enormous building - only the west wing survives today as the Bishop's residence. The buildings in The Close, on the other hand, suggest the more modest aspirations of bishops and their canons in recent times.

The Hospital of St. Cross, a reminder of the medieval ecclesiastical splendour that distinguishes the city.



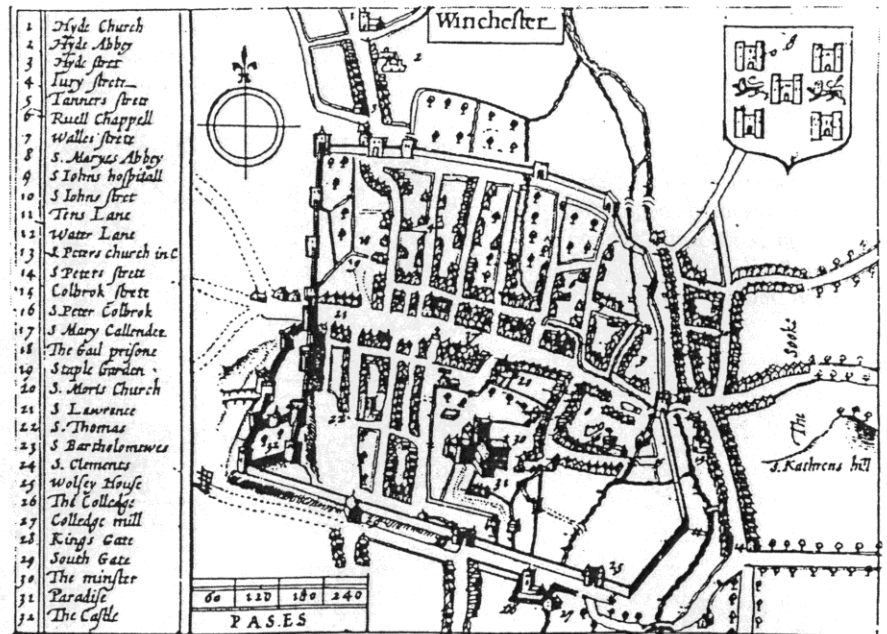
- 3.2.5 The surviving great ecclesiastical buildings are collectively of international importance, and a great asset to the country as a whole. Retaining this significance is not merely a question of preserving the fabric, but a matter of sustaining living traditions that value and respect the associated functions, rituals, libraries and settings.



The Medieval City and its Government

- 3.2.6 The pattern of villages and hamlets in the Itchen valley goes back 1,200 years at least. Winchester is the largest of a string of settlements along the river. Abbots Worthy, Kings Worthy, Abbots Barton, Shawford and Twyford are anciently small but distinct settlements. The evolution of this settlement pattern and its relation to the city are historically and economically interlinked. It is the distinctiveness of these relationships that forms part of the city's heritage.
- 3.2.7 Evidence of medieval city life, outside the Royal and ecclesiastical circles, has been considerably diluted by later development except in the street layout and the archaeological record. The ancient street pattern has survived remarkably intact, both in the early planned layout within the walls and the less planned medieval overspill development in the Soke and other suburbs. The earliest surviving standing buildings and structures begin in the late medieval period with the Market Cross and some merchant's houses. In the southern suburbs, the courts of Winchester College, built just before 1400, remain a fine testimony to the educational tradition of Winchester and continue to exert a strong influence on the city's character.
- 3.2.8 Evidence of the city's life as an important centre is thus of great value, even though it can only be seen in a few places such as surviving cellars in High Street and the Square, revealed archaeologically or seen in drawings and in museums. The College, and the few rich merchant's houses to survive within the walls and in the Soke from before 1600, may be unrepresentative of the city as a whole, but are nevertheless distinctive and precious as the only significant survivals from that date.

John Speed's map of Winchester, 1610. The medieval castle and city walls remain, as does the street pattern, but the area they contained was sparsely populated.



Medieval Agriculture

- 3.2.9 The countryside around Winchester was laid out into communal arable fields, organised on a parish basis, roughly between 1000 and 1300. These 'open' fields survived at least until 1550 around Winchester. During the seventeenth century they were eroded until virtually all open fields had been enclosed by hedges into private fields by 1800. Most are now under housing or other development. The village common grazing lands survived a little longer, but, again, were enclosed between the

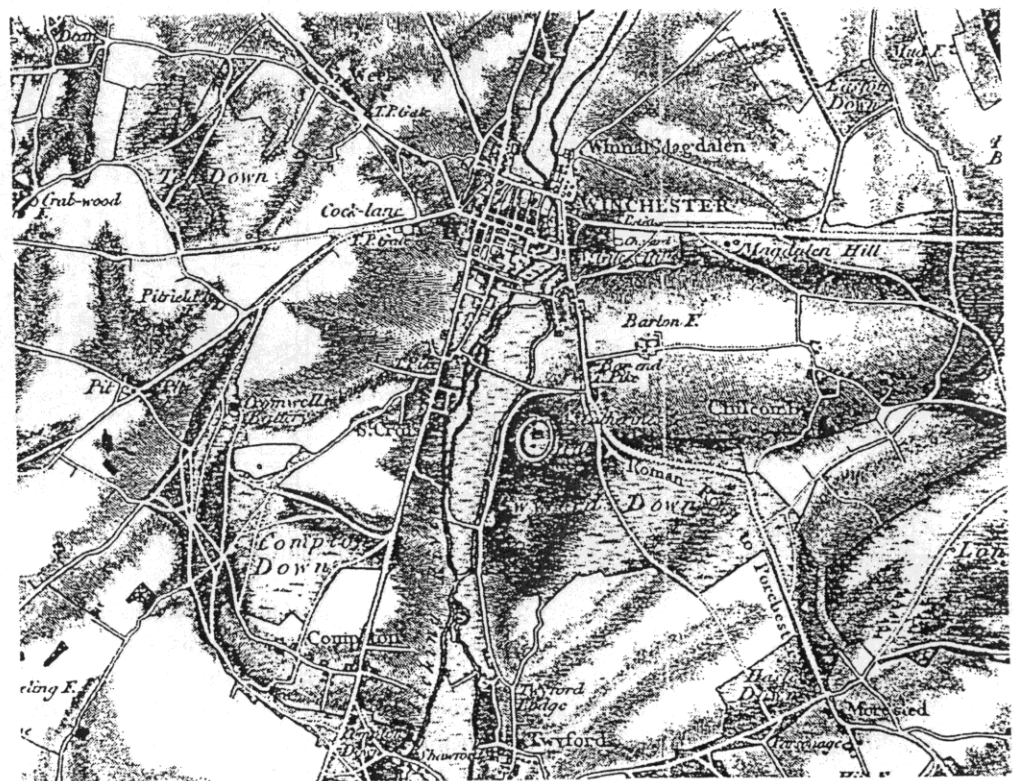
seventeenth and late nineteenth century. The only fragments of this disappeared medieval landscape are the few, that escaped this enclosure. These can be traced, particularly on the downs to the east of the city.

3.2.10 These fragments were not particularly important or distinctive in their own time, as they were a local manifestation of much wider agricultural trends, but their extreme local rarity now gives them an enhanced degree of importance. Any significance is enhanced or diminished by the form of management currently being exercised. Old or revived systems can retain the diversity of interest whereas unsympathetic management leaves merely a largely meaningless block of land.

3.2.11 The downs, above the river valley, were some of the premier sheepwalks of the late middle ages and later. At first they were open, but in the seventeenth century they began to be enclosed as a better method of sheep rearing. At the same time, the flood plain below Winchester and at Winnall, was laid out as water meadows with managed, seasonal, flooding. Both the enclosed fields on the downs and the water meadows were managed for sheep until earlier this century when the downs began to be ploughed up for arable cropping. Remnant areas of sheep pasture are confined to steep slopes or other land unsuited to cultivation. Remarkably the meadows remain, even if not managed quite as before. This is partly due to substantial land long term ownership and management by Winchester College and their unsuitability for development because they form part of the floodplain.

3.2.12 The history of the downs around Winchester are similar to large areas of chalk downland in the south of England. With dwindling areas of sheep pasture, it becomes important for such valued remnants, to be managed including scrub clearance. Management at St. Catherine's Hill and Whiteshute Ridge are two good examples of what can be achieved. The wider question of national and European agricultural policy cannot be addressed here, but will clearly continue to have a fundamental effect on the future of the downs.

County map of 1810. This shows the still small city, set in a mainly enclosed countryside, although Teg Down, Compton Down, Twyford Down and Easton Down remained open.



County Town

3.2.13 Winchester, as the county town of Hampshire, has been the venue for assizes, held in the Great Hall, and thus lawyers; parliamentary elections, and thus politicians; and social events, and hence polite society. Its role as the county town became strongly evident in the seventeenth century and has increased ever since, most notably with the establishment of Hampshire County Council in 1888.

3.2.14 Winchester's social role within Hampshire was enhanced by its royal and historic associations and by being on the main route to the port at Southampton. By the end of the seventeenth century a number of fine town houses had been built. The city had already developed a thriving trade in catering for travellers and social events through its inns and hostels. This tradition in hostelry and catering for visitors carried forward into its tourist trade from the late nineteenth century with the coming of the railways and on to today.

3.2.15 The buildings marking Winchester as a county town include County Council offices, the Crown Court building, the recent Hampshire Record Office and the Guildhall. They are of a different scale to their more ancient neighbours with whom they mingle uneasily. These public buildings are of mixed architectural quality. Ashburton Court, for example, is a major intrusion on the streetscape and skyline of the city. The new Hampshire Records Office, on the other hand, is an example of a well designed civic building that contributes to the quality of the city's buildings.

3.2.16 Another aspect of Winchester as a county town are the Victorian institutions built on West Hill. Built outside the city, on high and healthy ground, is the prison and hospital. The hospital, designed by William Butterfield (1864-8) is situated on a high spur overlooking the west edge of the city centre. It is an important skyline feature in the city's profile when viewed from the surrounding countryside. This location was also chosen for the modern Police Headquarters building, its profile is prominent in the city's skyline, particularly when viewed from the north.

The Middle Brooks, a medieval area within the walls, painted in 1813. The brooks led from the meadows above the city through the lower end of the city and parts remain to this day.



Industry

- 3.2.17 Indicators of Winchester's long history as an industrial centre have nearly all been eradicated by more recent development. The exception is the river, which was navigable to the coast. Just by City Bridge can be found a mill, now a youth hostel, and further downstream Wharf Mill, now flats. Blackbridge Wharf was the termination of the Itchen Navigation canal which was at its height in the early eighteenth century. Possibly based upon a much earlier watercourse dating back to the twelfth/thirteenth century, the canal was never very successful commercially, and effectively became redundant with the coming of the railway.
- 3.2.18 The arrival of the railway in 1840 was marked by a deep cutting just west of the castle. A second line arrived, going east of the city, forty years later. It closed several decades ago, but the viaduct across the Itchen can still be seen at Hockley.
- 3.2.19 The railway is on an important line from London to Southampton and the South Coast, and instigated a revival in the fortunes of Winchester. However, the station nor the associated areas of brick, working-class housing retain much architectural interest as they were typical of such development at the time. Construction of the railway through deep cutting has contained intrusion on the urban fabric of the city. Frequent links across the rail line by bridge or tunnel, maintain the permeability of the city. Improvement to the line in the latter quarter of this century saw a rise in London commuter use. This has reflected in an opening up of the city to new influences as well as a marked change in the balance of the local population who are less tied to the area than previously.

3.3 Communication Pattern



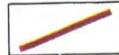

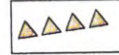
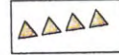




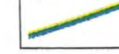
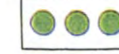

The radial network of routes to the centre of Winchester are testimony to the historic development and strategic importance that the city has continued to command throughout its development (Drawing no. 1035LP/5). Its location at an important crossing point of the River Itchen of pre-historic east-west ridgeway routes was pivotal in development of the early settlement. The locational advantage of the site was exploited by the Romans who established the primary structure of roads that, remarkably, still persist to the present day. The Roman network served a regional and military strategy, focusing on Winchester as a key settlement, with the result that the characteristic linear routes were superimposed on the surrounding undulating chalk downs.

- 3.3.1 The Roman roads approaching Winchester from several directions have provided threads of continuity over nearly 2,000 years. They are the Andover Road (B 3420), the Basingstoke Road (A 33), the Alresford Road (B 3404), the Morestead Road, the Southampton Road (A 33), and Sarum Road (probably pre-Roman). These straight highways, cutting across the undulations of the Downs originated as long distance highways between Roman Winchester and other major centres, they retain a strong sense of character.

- 3.3.2 Unlike the Roman system, in which linearity invariably took precedence over landform, routes along the Itchen Valley are 'landform led'. A number of important routes have exploited the easier gradient of the valley floor as well as the gap which the river has cut through the chalkland ridge at Winchester. A series of north-south routes have therefore developed along the Itchen Valley, notably the canal; the main line railway; the B 3047; the B 3335; the route of a now disused railway line identified by the impressive Hockley Viaduct, south of Winchester; and the Winchester Bypass. The more recently constructed M 3 Motorway, a significant





-  Boundary of study area
- Principal road infrastructure leading into or through the city and its setting
 -  Motorway
 -  Principal roads including trunk roads
 -  Secondary roads
 -  Line of Roman road network
 -  Prominent embankments and cuttings to motorway and principal roads
- Railway lines and associated features
 -  Main line railway
 -  Visually significant dismantled railway lines
 -  Prominent embankments and cuttings to operational and dismantled railway lines
 -  Prominent railway infrastructure: viaducts, tunnels, bridges
- Long distance footpaths and ancient trackways
 -  Principal footpath links into city including ancient / historic routes
 -  Line of former drove roads
 -  The Itchen Navigation (disused)

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section of which replaces the former route of the A 33 Winchester Bypass, is more akin to the Roman philosophy, it crosses the River Itchen, rather than being defined by it. The scale of this road, particularly the major cutting at Twyford Down, is a discordant note to the eastern setting of the city.

3.3.2 The River Itchen itself has also been important as a transport route. Stone for the Norman Cathedral was carried on the river to its final site. This included marble from the Isle of Purbeck, limestone from Caen, France as well as Binstead and the Isle of Wight. The Itchen Navigation provided an improved navigable waterway along the Itchen Valley in the 17th century. The channel extended from Winchester to Woodmill in Southampton but never achieved significant commercial success due partly to the lack of return cargoes from Winchester. It was, however, used for transporting timber and coal in the 18th century and played a valuable role in the management of the water meadows by providing irrigation and drainage. Nowadays, there remain few crossings of the river which limits cross-town movement for residents.

3.3.3 A well defined system of drove roads and ancient long distance footpaths cross the study area, many of which focus on Winchester. The Clarendon Way, part of the Pilgrim's Way, is an important route leading into the city and follows Whiteshute Lane down to St. Cross and along the Itchen Valley. The South Downs Way also terminates in Winchester. These other, more native routes and trackways, pre and post Roman tend to be less distinct in the landscape by following a 'line of least resistance'. There is evidence that some of the modern footpaths into the city, such as the Clarendon Way and South Downs Way are based upon historic trading routes.

3.3.4 These historic routes are less important in modern traffic terms, due to changed trading and population patterns. There are dangers with future traffic planning and maintenance that the function or character of these ancient routes will be further eroded. These historic routes and their character are under severe pressure, particularly from high volumes of commuter traffic. For example, on Sarum Road there is serious erosion of the high chalk banks pressure of vehicle numbers and construction of 'passing places'. Further changes of this kind would, ultimately, remove its sense of character and heritage. Their importance in the history of the area needs to be understood by the local highway authority and management policies framed accordingly.

3.3.5 The regional communication network provides a fascinating record of the progressive development of the city, and the effect of landform or strategic and commercial links on the alignment of these routes. Within the city itself, however, the pattern of roads tells an equally interesting story. In the historic core of the city the overlaying of successive street patterns provides evidence of the different layers of development, with a well defined Saxon road network contained within the former structure of the walls of the Roman Settlement of Venta Belgarum. During the subsequent periods of the city's development the road pattern has evolved in response to the functional requirements of each phase of the city's development but contained within the broader framework of the regional routes that link into the city. More recently the construction of the M3 motorway has necessitated a significant realignment of some of the roads linking into the city including the removal of the former route of the A33 Winchester bypass. As a result, St. Catherine's Hill has been returned to the city and the valley of the River Itchen, reinforcing its functional and symbolic role for the city and its setting.

3.3.6 Winchester has very good access to the countryside. Historic routes, described above, together with other rights of way and routes along the river Itchen, give quick



and easy access to high quality countryside. This is much valued by Winchester's residents and contributes to the appreciation of their city and its landscape. Good physical access is complemented by strong visual interconnections. Residents enjoy wide ranging views over and across the city which reinforce the sense of belonging to this landscape.

3.4 Geology

The geological range within the city of Winchester and the surrounding area is confined to the Upper, Middle and Lower Chalk of the Cretaceous period. Although the majority of the study area is underlain by Upper Chalk, there is a significant exposure of Middle and Lower Chalk at Chilcomb, east of Winchester. Major folding that commenced in the Tertiary period resulted in the formation of a series of anticlinal and synclinal structures which are part of the broader Wealden pericline.

3.4.1 The Winchester anticline is the most significant local structure with its east-west axis extending approximately through the village of Chilcomb. Erosion of this former domed structure has resulted in a distinctive example of 'inverted relief' as a result of the progressive exposure of the underlying Middle and Lower Chalk. The resultant landforms define the bowl within which Winchester is set. The relatively harder Middle Chalk forms the prominent inward, south and north facing escarpments of Magdalen Hill Down and Deacon Hill respectively. These enclose a broad basin of Lower Chalk to form the 'Vale of Chilcomb'. Further evidence of steep slopes and escarpments of Middle Chalk associated with the Winchester anticline structure are the west facing slopes of St. Giles's Hill, an extension of Magdalen Hill Down; the north west facing slopes leading down to Plague Pit adjacent to St. Catherine's Hill and now detached from the Deacon Hill escarpment by the M 3 Cutting; the north and east facing slopes within Sleepers Hill on the west side of the Itchen Valley and the north and east facing slopes of Bushfield and Whiteshute Ridge. St. Catherine's Hill, with its capping of Upper Chalk, is a prominent 'outlier'.

3.4.2 The solid geology is masked in some areas by superficial deposits. The most notable occur within the Itchen Valley where there are extensive deposits of alluvium. There is also a linear terrace of valley gravels above the floodplain on which part of the historic core of the city has developed, including the Cathedral and St. Cross Hospital. On the more elevated sections of the Upper Chalk there are intermittent deposits of clay-with-flints. This material, which is a product of the decay of the Chalk and the disintegration of the overlying Eocene deposits, has a localised effect on the soil and drainage characteristics.

3.5 Topography and Drainage

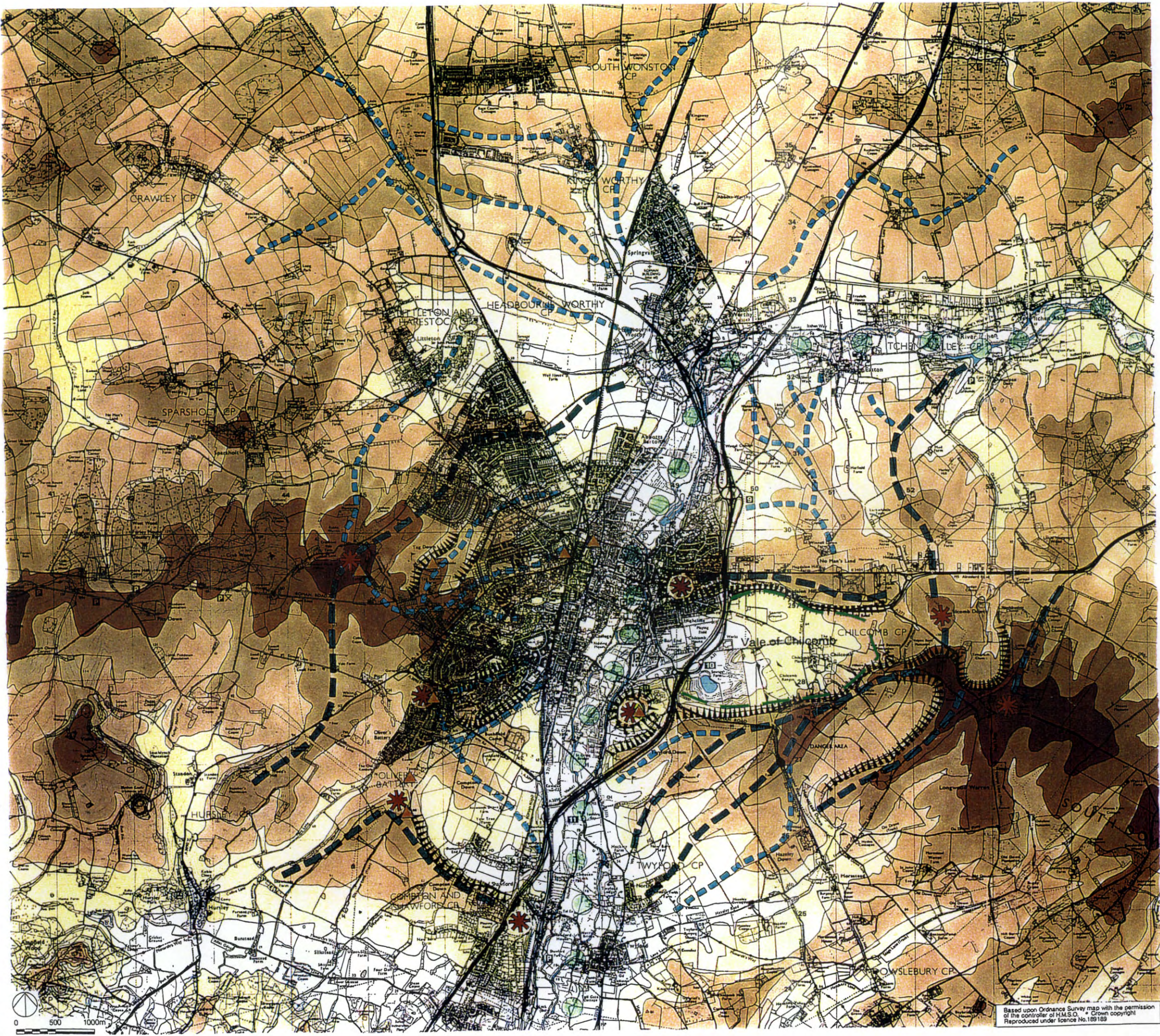
The landform setting of the city of Winchester is distinctive and imposing (Drawing No 1035LP/3). Prominent ridgelines and steep valley slopes contain the broad valley of the River Itchen which follows an east-west alignment at Kings Worthy before assuming a north-south course through the city. The Itchen has breached the Winchester anticline at St. Cross and in the central part of the city. The latter formed the principal crossing point of the river and thus the focus for the city's growth.

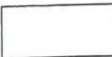










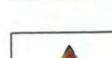
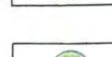
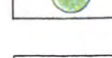
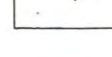
3.5.1 Development initially sited on the shallow west bank of the river. Steeper slopes such as St. Giles's and Sleepers Hills were not extensively developed until the city had occupied the 'easier' ground. The wide floodplain of the River Itchen ensured that much of the lower lying land beside the river remained undeveloped, although such restrictions have less influence on modern development.



Winchester City and its Setting

Landform and Drainage



-  Land 50m and below AOD
-  50-75m AOD
-  75-100m AOD
-  100-125m AOD
-  125-150m AOD
-  Land 150m and above AOD
-  Major ridgelines
-  Minor ridgelines and spurs
-  Steep slopes and escarpments
-  Prominent isolated hills and summit areas
-  Earthworks of archaeological or historical significance within the city and its setting
-  Principal valley
-  Course of River Itchen and navigation channel
-  Significant waterbodies
-  Distinctive enclosed vale

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