

Colchester Roman Circus:

Draft Management Plan 2020-2025



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1. Roman Circus 200m south of Abbey House ([NHLE no. 1021426](#))

1.0 Executive Summary

- 1.1 This Management Plan provides the vision and overarching strategy for the management of Colchester's Roman Circus – a nationally significant heritage asset, a symbol of community pride, and has the potential to become an important cultural attraction. It defines the roles and responsibilities of the Council and key stakeholders involved in this work. The Plan sets out a framework for the conservation, enhancement, interpretation, presentation and celebration of the Colchester Roman Circus for the next five years.

2.0 Roman Circus Management Plan Vision

- 2.1 Colchester is one of England's major historic centres with a rich heritage that shapes the character of the modern town and its hinterland. The Colchester Roman Circus, a large arena built for the specific purpose of chariot-racing, is a unique archaeological monument in Britain – the only example of its type in the country.
- 2.2 Together with our partners, Colchester Borough Council will care for and safeguard this important heritage asset for this and future generations. The Council is committed to the conservation, enhancement, presentation, promotion and celebration of the Roman Circus, while protecting the site and its setting from the pressures of damage and commercial interest. This will allow present and future generations to explore and enjoy the monument and its setting and to realise social and economic benefits for the community.

3.0 Facts and Figures

- 3.1 The Colchester Roman Circus is a unique archaeological monument in Britain. Chariot racing was the oldest and most popular sport in the Roman world and the Colchester Circus is the only example in the country and it is one of only six locations in the northwest provinces of the Roman Empire where circuses have been securely identified.
- 3.2 The buried archaeological remains of a Roman Circus or chariot-racing track were identified during archaeological investigations in advance of the redevelopment of the former Colchester Garrison in 2004¹, although the remains were first encountered in 2000².

¹ An outline planning application was submitted at the end of 2000 and approved by the Council in 2003 (O/COL/01/0009, Colchester Garrison Urban Village). The planning permission for the development included a pre-commencement archaeology condition (condition no. 47) allowing for a full programme of archaeological work.

² The Circus was first encountered in a watching in brief in 2000. A trial-trenched evaluation in 2002 also defined robbed the Roman walls of the Circus but they were identified as the remains of a Roman building (i.e. not a circus). The remains were identified as potentially those of part of a Roman Circus during investigations in 2004, following stripping of a much larger area identified for archaeological excavation. Various further sections of the Circus were then subsequently revealed and investigated in advance of other development (Crummy 2005a).

- 3.3 The Circus is located c.450m to the south of Colchester town centre (defined by the town wall) (Figure 1). The Circus is orientated E to W, and lies between the garden of the former Officers Quarters, north of Le Cateau Road, and the grounds of Flagstaff House on Napier Road (now Nero Court, Arena Place) - between NGR TL 9938 2453 (west) and NGR TL 9977 2455 (east)(Figures 2 and 3).
- 3.4 A considerable amount of archaeological investigation has been undertaken since it was discovered and there is now a relatively detailed understanding of the Circus. All the archaeological investigation has been undertaken by Colchester Archaeological Trust (CAT) and, for the development-led work, managed by Rob Masefield of RPS Group. There have been a number of detailed reports and publications (in particular, see Crummy 2005a & b, 2008a & b and [CAT Report 412](#), 1309-1401). CAT is currently preparing a monograph publication on the archaeological investigations relating to the redevelopment of Colchester Garrison which will include a detailed presentation of the Circus.
- 3.5 The overall size of the Circus measured c.450m in length (E to W), which is within the average size range (normally 350-500m long) for Circuses across the Roman Empire. However, it was unusually narrow at c.71-74m in width (N to S).
- 3.6 The Colchester Roman Circus is a classic example of its type - an elongated arena comprising of a racing track flanked by tiered seating, known as a *cavea*, along the north and south long sides and around the curved (east) end. This would have provided perhaps as many as six tiers of seating around outside of the track. The Circus had an estimated seating capacity of c.8,000, based on the distance between the two foundations forming the *cavea*.³ This compares to a possible population of c.5,000-10,000 for the town as a whole at its peak in the mid 2nd to mid 3rd centuries AD (P. Crummy pers. comm.).
- 3.7 The building, i.e. the above-ground structure, is poorly preserved and there are no upstanding original walls or earthworks (which is the reason why the Circus was previously unknown). All that survives of its walls are foundations, and these were extensively robbed out in the medieval period; in many places, robber trenches mark the position of the wall foundations. Floors and other horizontal layers and surfaces are rare.
- 3.8 The remains of the *cavea* was defined by two parallel wall foundations (or trenches where the foundations had been robbed out), c.5.8-6.1m apart. The foundations of the outer and inner walls were 0.8-1.1m and 0.6-0.9m in width, respectively, i.e. the outer wall foundation was more substantial than the inner. The foundations would have supported outer and inner walls of the seating area, comprising tiers of raised wooden benches surrounding three sides of the arena. The outer wall was also supported by external buttresses, c.4.50m apart (centre to centre).

³ When first discovered, it was estimated to seat c.15,000 but this has now been revised as more investigation has taken place. Nevertheless, in terms of scale, the arena can be likened to a Premier League football stadium, attracting spectators from far and wide on race days.

- 3.9 The foundations of the *cavea* walls were made of lumps and chips of greensand set in mortar; the wall faces would have been constructed with dressed, ashlar blocks; part of the lowest course of the outer wall proper survived *in situ* in one area⁴ where a row of small ashlar blocks formed part of the base of one of its faces. Fragments of brick in the demolition debris indicate the walls would have had brick bonding courses, comparable to the Town Wall (although the Wall was constructed with septaria blocks).
- 3.10 The greensand, a type of Kentish ragstone, used in the construction of the Circus would have been shipped from Kent along the coast. The raw material was transported as rough stone blocks as there is much evidence for stone masons' work at the construction site (chippings during production of the finished blocks). The brick and tile used in the construction (e.g. for the brick courses within the walls) would have been produced locally. The large quantity of timber needed for the seating may have been sourced locally or shipped in from elsewhere.
- 3.11 The *cavea* was divided into separate sections, and the different sections of the stands were separated – and accessed – by entrance passages or *vomitoria*. Several examples have been discovered along the southern *cavea*⁵. There would have been a central gate at each end of the Circus for chariots.
- 3.12 There was a low barrier known as a *spina*, c.240m long running down the centre (although at a slight angle to the *cavea*) of the track for about two-thirds of its length, i.e. the west end of the *spina* was located c.150m from the starting gates. In effect, there were two straight stretches of track, each c.240m long (along each side of the *spina*), with very tight (180 degree) turns at each end of the central barrier. The racing track (excluding the *cavea*) measured between 63m wide at the east end, tapering to c.59m at the west.
- 3.13 The racing track simply utilised the bare earth, and there was evidence of erosion hollows that had been generated by repeated wear, i.e. there was no prepared (e.g. paved) hard surface; the Roman ground level was c.0.35m lower than the current ground level.
- 3.14 Turning posts, in the form of three cones or *metae*, would have been placed at either end of the *spina*. A large redeposited fragment of a cone was found at the west end and it is now on display in the Roman Circus Centre. At the central point of the *spina*, there were the remains of a substantial foundation, possibly the base for a statue.
- 3.15 The remains of a pressurised water-main was discovered at the west end of the *spina*. Two large pits located inside the end of the *spina* might have been associated with water features in the barrier. Excavation towards the east end of the *spina* revealed evidence for a possible lined water tank/cistern and associated drainage ditch.

⁴ In EX905194 (Area C2).

⁵ In EX788209 (Area J1 East) and in EX970726 (the former Arena Leisure Centre site).

- 3.16 The straight west end of the Circus contained a row of eight starting gates, the *carceras*, with a central entrance into the arena; there was no seating along the west end.⁶ There was indirect evidence, in the form of a concentration of debris, for the location of the magistrate's box above the entrance. The opposite east end of the *cavea* formed a sweeping (semi-circular) curve, c.31m in radius.
- 3.17 Dating evidence for the construction of the Circus is limited and imprecise. It would seem that construction did not start before c.AD 125, possibly slight later, and may have continued over a period of years as indicated by variations in the design of the buttresses⁷. The Circus had been abandoned by, and was being dismantled during, the late 3rd or early 4th century AD. The evidence indicates the outer wall of the *cavea* was taken down and the materials salvaged for reuse elsewhere. Other parts, including the podium wall and the central barrier, were not subjected to the same treatment and were left to decay and gradually disintegrate over time. The robber trenches for the foundation of the outer wall of the *cavea* contained a substantial amount of pottery showing that they had been partly robbed out in the medieval period, probably in the 12th or early 13th centuries.
- 3.18 The site of the Circus appears to have remained open and undeveloped until the late 19th century when the Garrison expanded across the area. However, large parts of the site remain as open areas, and were not built over. Following its discovery, the redevelopment proposals for the Garrison have sought to accommodate the site of the circus within open space as far as possible.

4.0 Purpose of the Management Plan

- 4.1 The Management Plan sets out the overarching strategy for the management of the Roman Circus and defines the roles and responsibilities of the Council and stakeholders. The Plan sets out a framework for the conservation, enhancement, interpretation, presentation and celebration of the Colchester Roman Circus for the next five years.
- 4.2 The Plan is a dynamic document and the actions may be adapted in response to changes in management context over the life of the plan. Each year an action plan will be developed that outlines the actions to be delivered over the coming year by the relevant partners. This Management Plan will be reviewed and revised in 2025 as necessary.

⁶ Only one other Circus is known to have had fewer than the customary 12 gates ([CAT Report 412](#), 1348).

⁷ There is a suggestion that there could possibly have been a 1st century AD precursor built in timber, based on the presence of an earlier ditch on the line of the southern *cavea* and also because of the lack of earlier burials within the footprint of the Circus (compared to the area around it).

5.0 Plan objectives

5.1 The management objectives have been identified in Section 13 of this plan, with the overall objectives being *to protect, enhance and promote the Circus, and enhance the public's understanding, appreciation and enjoyment of the Circus and its history*. The key objectives and actions are set out here:

- Present and interpret the Circus for public benefit and as an important heritage attraction, and also an important area of open space for public wellbeing.
- Ensure the removal of non-heritage structures and hard surfaces that visually fragment the Circus.
- Ensure the area of the Circus is publically accessible as much as possible, with the creation of a demarcated public footpath or walkaway, and seating, around the monument, along the line of, or close to the outside of, the Circus.
- Ensure there is a standardised/consistent methodology for presentation.
- Provide appropriate and consistent site interpretation around the monument, for example, installation of adequate interpretation panels and signage at strategic and publically accessible locations.
- Secure the transfer of land from private ownership to the Council as public open space, where there is agreement and with adequate commuted sums for management and maintenance, and to review how the long term management is most effectively undertaken, for example, by the Council or sub-leased to another organisation.
- Ensure the ongoing appropriate management and maintenance of different parcels of land, under private ownership.
- Investigate and deliver other forms of presentation, for example, use of public art and sculpture and/or lighting, for example, to mark the seating and/or line of the racetrack.
- Create a working group, with representatives of the key stakeholders, to support the protection, enhancement and promotion of the Circus.
- Promote positive initiatives and seek partnerships and external funding opportunities that better reveal the significance of, and create better access to, the Circus.
- Ensure the positive enhancement of those parts of the Circus in outstanding re-development zones. New development will provide appropriate landscaping, consistent with other sections, to ensure the Circus can be appreciated and interpreted as a single archaeological monument, as well as ensuring public access and long-term management.

- Ensure that all works within the area of the Roman Circus are carried out in conformity with legal requirements of Scheduled Monument Consent or other relevant consent, and to ensure that all landowners are aware of these requirements.
- Ensure all those involved in the management and maintenance of the Roman Circus use the Management Plan effectively as a working document, and to ensure all parties are clear about their roles and responsibilities.

6.0 The Strategic Context of the Management Plan

6.1 The Roman Circus Management Plan can contribute towards the Council's key priorities, as set in the Strategic Plan 2020 -23. The themes of the Strategy in which the Management Plan contributes are:

- Tackling the climate challenge and leading to sustainability
- Creating safe, healthy and active communities
- Growing a fair economy so every benefits
- Celebrating our heritage and culture

7.0 Statement of Significance

7.1 Colchester is one of the most important settlements in Roman Britain and is regarded as the first capital of Roman Britain. Colchester's Roman Circus is the only recorded example of a Roman circus from Roman Britain and Colchester is one of only six identified in the northwest provinces of the Roman Empire⁸. The discovery of the Colchester circus is arguably the most significant find of a place of public entertainment within the entire Roman Empire in recent years.

7.2 The Circus was designated as a heritage asset of national importance in 2007, and it is recorded on the National Heritage List for England (NHLE) and statutorily protected as a Scheduled Monument under the [Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Areas Act 1979](#) ([NHLE no. 1021426](#), 'Roman Circus 200m south of Abbey House')(Figure 2; Appendix 1).

7.3 There are no surviving upstanding archaeological remains (i.e. original surviving walls and/or earthworks) and the Circus survives entirely as buried remains. However, nearly the entirety of the Circus site survives and is accessible (or will become accessible following re-development), and has not been built over; only small sections have been truncated and/or destroyed by modern (late 19th century and onwards) foundations and services.

7.4 The buried archaeological remains vary in condition and extent. The foundations of some parts of the *cavea* and *spina* survive in places but elsewhere the foundations have been robbed out during the medieval period, and (where it has been robbed out) the only surviving structural evidence are the infilled robber trenches following the lines of the foundation trenches. The remains are also quite shallowly buried and the Roman surface is only c.0.35m below the current ground level.

⁸ Across the area of the Roman Empire, the remains of over 40 circuses have been recorded to varying degrees of reliability although only about half have been investigated sufficiently to produce an overall plan ([CAT Report 412](#); 1363). The others in the northwest provinces are at Arles, Saintes, Lyon and Vienne in modern France and Trier in Germany (Humphrey 1986, 388, fig. 179).

- 7.5 A second Scheduled Monument, the Benedictine Abbey of St John ([NHLE no. 1015015](#)), intersects with the east end of the Roman Circus (Figure 2). Although the area of the abbey precinct was larger than the scheduled area for it and extended further to the west across the Circus. A short section of Abbey precinct wall survives on the line of the *spina* at the south end of K Block, wagon shed, Former Garrison Artillery Barracks (locally listed heritage asset, see below). The southern part of the precinct wall lay close to the site of the central barrier of the Circus suggesting that perhaps some of the barrier survived long enough to be incorporated in the precinct wall.
- 7.6 The Circus falls within the [Garrison Conservation Area](#), designated in 2004 for the area's special architectural and historic interest relating to the historic Garrison (Figure 4). The Conservation Area was designated before the identification of the Circus, with the aim '*to conserve the best parts of the historic garrison area and to ensure that its layout and key features inform, rather than are swamped by, development*'.
- 7.7 The west end of the Circus lies within the curtilage of a Grade II Listed Building, Former Officers Quarters, Le Cateau Barracks (NHLE no. [1375580](#)) (Figure 5). This building was erected in c.1874 and formed the centrepiece of the Royal Artillery Barracks at the head of two parallel rows of three stable blocks; only two survive, on the southwest side; both are Grade II Listed (NHLE nos. [1375576](#) and [1375577](#)) and have been converted to residential and office uses. The Officers Quarters faced south-east on to a semi-circular or D-shaped lawn, with a view out on to Abbey Field, flanked on either side by gates (East Gate and South East Gate) into the Barracks from Le Cateau Road (now a footpath but previously a tree-lined avenue). The west end of the Circus, which was the location of the starting gates, lies almost entirely within the area of the D-shaped lawn.
- 7.8 The roads - Napier Road, Flagstaff Road Circular Road North, Circular Road South and Le Cateau Road - are all tree-lined and part of the original landscaping scheme associated with the construction of the Garrison in the late 19th century (Figure 6). These are an important feature of the area and they are recognised in the [Conservation Area Appraisal](#).
- 7.9 In addition to the designated heritage assets, four locally listed buildings⁹ are located within the eastern part of the Roman Circus Scheduled Monument. These are within the former Flagstaff complex on the east side of Flagstaff Road (now part of Arena Place), constructed as the administrative and supply centre to oversee the garrison:
- [DCC25867](#) Military Offices (FLG 1)
 - [DCC25865](#) Commanding officers' accommodation building (FLG 5/6)
 - [DCC25866](#) Commanding officers' accommodation building (FLG 7/8)
 - [DCC25871](#) K Block, wagon shed, Former Garrison Artillery Barracks
- All these buildings were converted to residential accommodation in 2016 by Taylor Wimpey (under planning consent 131935).

⁹ These are undesignated heritage assets that, although not suitable for designation nationally are valued by the local community and make a significant contribution to the heritage of Colchester and the surrounding villages. These have been adopted by the Council and they are recorded on the Local List: <https://colchesterheritage.co.uk/about-the-local-list-and-other-heritage-designations>

8.0 Heritage Values

8.1 In terms of Historic England's [Conservation Principles](#) for the sustainable management of the historic environment (2008), the Roman Circus can be seen to possess the full range of heritage values:

- Evidential value: the potential of a place to yield evidence about past human activity.
- Historical value: the ways in which past people, events and aspects of life can be connected through a place to the present – it tends to be illustrative or associative.
- Aesthetic value: the ways in which people draw sensory and intellectual stimulation from a place.
- Communal value: the meanings of a place for the people who relate to it, or for whom it figures in their collective experience or memory.

9.0 The Roman Circus and Planning

9.1 Heritage-related Consent Regimes

9.1.1 The remains of the Roman Circus are a designated heritage asset of national importance, recorded on the National Heritage List for England (NHLE) and statutorily protected as a Scheduled Monument under the [Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Areas Act 1979](#) (NHLE no. [1021426](#), Roman Circus 200m south of Abbey House; Appendix **)¹⁰.

9.1.2 The Scheduled Monument includes the buried remains of a Roman circus or chariot racing track and a section of the precinct wall relating to the Benedictine Abbey of Saint John; part of the precinct of The Benedictine Abbey of St John of separately Scheduled ([NHLE no. 1015015](#))¹¹ and this overlaps with the northeast part of the Roman Circus.

9.1.3 All works to a Scheduled Monument require Scheduled Monument Consent, administered by Historic England on behalf of the Secretary of State. Unauthorised work to a Scheduled Monument is a criminal offence under the 1979 Act. Alterations to the visual character of a monument are also a material consideration in the planning process.

9.1.4 The Scheduled area '*includes a 10 metre boundary around the archaeological features, considered to be essential for the monument's support and preservation*'. The Scheduled area is c.4.3ha. in area, compared to the Circus which measures c.3.2ha. in area, i.e. the Scheduled area, which includes a buffer zone, is 1.1ha. larger than the area of the Circus. However, the Scheduled area is slightly misaligned with the physical remains and in some areas (for example, along the west side), the edge of the Scheduled Area is significantly less than 10m; this is presumably because the Circus was designated before the exact alignment of the monument had been established.

9.1.5 The majority (but not all) of the Roman Circus lies within the Garrison Conservation Area. The Conservation Area was designated in 2004 before the identification of the Circus, with the aim '*to conserve the best parts of the historic garrison area and to ensure that its layout and key features inform,*

¹⁰ <https://historicengland.org.uk/listing/the-list/list-entry/1021426>

¹¹ <https://historicengland.org.uk/listing/the-list/list-entry/1015015>

rather than are swamped by, development'. Within the Conservation Area, special attention shall be paid to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of that area in accordance with [Section 72 of the Planning \(Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas\) Act 1990](#). The tree-line roads are part of the late 19th century landscaping scheme relating to the Garrison and these are also protected with Tree Preservation Orders. In terms of the Conservation Area, there is a presumption in favour of retention of the trees.

9.2 National Planning Policy Framework

9.2.1 The conservation of heritage assets is one of the core planning principles of the [National Planning Policy Framework](#) (NPPF 2019). Conservation is defined as the process of maintaining and managing change to a heritage asset in a way that sustains and, where appropriate, enhances significance.

9.2.2 Policies concerning the historic environment are outlined in Section 16 of the NPPF (Paragraphs 184 to 202). The NPPF states in paragraph 193 that, when considering the impact of a proposed development on the significance of a designated heritage asset, great weight should be given to the asset's conservation (and the more important the asset, the greater the weight should be). Paragraph 194 states:

'Any harm to, or loss of, the significance of a designated heritage asset (from its alteration or destruction, or from development within its setting), should require clear and convincing justification.'

9.2.3 Setting is defined in the Glossary of the NPPF (p.71) as *"the surroundings in which a heritage asset is experienced... elements of a setting may make a positive or negative contribution to the significance of an asset"*. Further guidance in the [Planning Practice Guidance Conserving and Enhancing the Historic Environment](#) (2018) states that local planning authorities may need to consider the implications of cumulative change when assessing any application for development that may affect the setting of a heritage asset.

9.2.4 The NPPF also outlines the importance of good design in development proposals (Section 7). Paragraph 58 of the NPPF states:

'Planning policies and decisions should ensure that developments: c) are sympathetic to local character and history, including the surrounding built environment and landscape setting, while not preventing or discouraging appropriate innovation or change (such as increased densities).'

9.2.5 The Government's [Planning Practice Guidance Conserving and Enhancing the Historic Environment](#) (2018) expands upon the core policy principles of the NPPF and this is itself underpinned by Historic England's Good Practice Advice on planning and the historic environment:

- [The Historic Environment in Local Plans. Historic Environment Good Practice Advice in Planning: 1 \(2015\).](#)
- [Managing Significance in Decision-Taking in the Historic Environment. Historic Environment Good Practice Advice in Planning: 2 \(2015\).](#)
- [The Setting of Heritage Assets. Historic Environment Good Practice Advice in Planning Note 3 \(Second Edition\) \(2017\).](#)
- [Listed Buildings and Curtilage. Historic England Advice Note 10 \(2018\).](#)

9.2.6 Historic England has a range of other relevant advice and guidance:

- [Managing Local Authority Heritage Assets. Advice for Local Government \(2017\).](#)
- [Streets for All: Advice for Highway and Public Realm Works in Historic Places \(2018\).](#)
- [Streets for All: East of England \(2018\).](#)
- [Conservation Area Designation, Appraisal and Management. Historic England Advice Note 1 \(2016\).](#)
- [Scheduled Monuments A Guide for Owners and Occupiers \(2013\).](#)

9.3 Local Plan Policy

9.3.1 The NPPF states (para 185): *'Local planning authorities should set out a positive strategy for the conservation and enjoyment of the historic environment, including heritage assets most at risk through neglect, decay or other threats.'*

9.3.2 The [Adopted Local Plan 2001-2021](#) for Colchester sets out the strategic policies to deliver conservation and enjoyment of the historic environment. Policies are designed to ensure that change is managed in the interests of today's residents and those of future generations.

9.3.3 The Local Plan takes into account:

- The desirability of putting heritage assets to viable use, sustaining and enhancing their significance;
- The contribution that the historic environment makes to wider sustainability aims;
- The desirability of new development to contribute to local character;
- The opportunities to draw on the contribution that the historic environment makes on the character of place.

9.3.4 Core Strategy UR2 relates to Built Design and Character.

9.3.5 Policy SA GAR1 relates to Development in the Garrison Area.

9.3.6 Historic Environment Development Policy DP14 relates specifically to heritage assets in the planning process at a local strategic level.

9.3.7 A number of other development control policies are also relevant to the historic environment, heritage assets and sustainable development:

- Policy DP1: Design and Amenity;
- Policy DP3: Planning Obligations and the Community Infrastructure Levy
- Policy DP5: Appropriate Employment Uses and Protection of Employment Land and Existing Businesses;
- Policy DP10: Tourism, Leisure and Culture;
- Policy DP13: Dwelling Alterations, Extensions and Replacement Dwelling.

9.3.8 The following documents are also relevant:

- [Managing Archaeology in Development](#) (2015)
- [Developing a Landscape for the Future](#) (2013)

- 9.3.9 It is anticipated that the [Emerging Local Plan 2017-2033](#) will replace the current Local Plan. Policy DM16 in the Emerging Plan relates to the Historic Environment (Appendix 2).
- 9.3.10 A Development Brief has been prepared by the Council for the ABRO site (ABRO Site Development Brief, Colchester; Colchester Borough Council 2020). It is also proposed to review the Garrison Conservation Area and to include the ABRO site within its boundaries.
- 9.3.11 The Colchester Garrison Urban Village Master Plan (2001) contains useful background information and many principles inform the new draft Development Brief.

10.0 Land use, Management and Ownership

- 10.0.1 As one of the largest and most important archaeological monuments within the Borough, the Council has worked with landowners, developers and key stakeholders, in particular Historic England, Taylor Wimpey, Colchester Archaeological Trust and RPS Group, to investigate, enhance, manage and promote the Roman Circus since it's identification in 2004 (Figures 9 and 10). Two previous draft management plans have been prepared for the Roman Circus in 2006 and 2009, although neither were adopted by the Council.
- 10.0.2 In terms of ownership and land use, the Circus is divided into separate land parcels (Figures 6, 11 - 19):
- EX905194: Abacus Land 4 Ltd; 0.16ha. (0.26ha. in total)¹²
 - EX787918: Taylor Wimpey; 0.30ha. (0.40ha.)
 - EX879758: Colchester Archaeological Trust; 0 ha. (0.04ha.)
 - EX788209: Bovis Homes Ltd; 0.37ha. (0.41ha.)
 - EX758172: Taylor Wimpey; 0.15ha. (0.20ha.)
 - EX832089: Taylor Wimpey; 0.83ha. (1.14ha.)
 - EX641744: Ministry of Defence; 0.30ha. (0.45ha.)
 - EX970726: Secretary of State for Communities and Government; 0.53ha. (0.66ha.)
 - Highways: 0.45ha. (0.60ha.)
 - EX758211 is Le Cateau Road and also the footpath along Circular Road North, which is owned by Taylor Wimpey; 0.14ha. (0.14ha)(Figure 19). This is discussed with adopted highways and footpaths.
- 10.0.3 It is anticipated that EX788209 (Bovis Homes Ltd) and also EX758172 (Taylor Wimpey) will be transferred to the Council as areas of Public Open Space (POS) (Figures 14 and 15). The S299a garrison legal agreement provides for the transfer of POS & car parks (latter leasehold) to the Council. EX787918 as a separate agreement (providing for the lease of the D shaped lawn).
- 10.0.4 There are two remaining re-development areas within the area of the Scheduled Monument, EX641744 located on the north side of Le Cateau Road and EX970726 on the south side of Circular Road North and west of Circular

¹² The figures in brackets are based on the area of the Scheduled Monument, which includes a buffer zone around the monument.

Road East (Figures 17 and 18). It is anticipated that the two outstanding re-development areas will be the subject of management (or transfer) agreements in due course, as part of any redevelopment, to ensure the maintenance of these areas as public open space.

In the following section, the current presentation and management of the Circus is described for each different area of ownership:

10.1 EX905194: Abacus Land 4 Ltd

- 10.1.1 EX905194 is the triangular-shaped area of land comprising residential flats (Pearce Court and Bradman Court), associated car parking and private garden to the south of Napier Road and east of Circular Road East (Figure 11, Photograph 1). Pearce Court and the car parks lie partially within the area of the Scheduled Monument; the car parks (although not the building) extend across the line of the southern *cavea* and into the area of the racing track.
- 10.1.2 EX905194 (Area C2) was one of the first areas to be developed (along with EX758172 or C1) following the outline planning permission granted in 2003 (O/COL/01/0009) and before the formal designation of the Circus as a Scheduled Ancient Monument. The reserved matters application (RM/COL/06/1939) was granted approval in 2007 and the Circus was scheduled in the same year (2007).
- 10.1.3 Pearce Court and Bradman Court are in private ownership and is not publically accessible. There is a white metal railing fence, with a common privet hedge around the site, fronting the roads. Within the car parks, the line of the two walls of the southern *cavea* have been marked out with sets, across the tarmac. However, the line of the *cavea* is not delineated across the grassed part the site, and there are mature trees (Lime, Beech and Horse Chestnut) scattered across the area of the Circus.

10.2 EX787918: Taylor Wimpey

- 10.2.1 EX787918 is the D-shaped lawn in front of the former Officers' Quarters, which is Grade II Listed ([NHLE no. 1375581](#)), at the west end of the Circus (Figure 12, Photographs 2 - 5). This also includes the land to the south west (and in front) of the Roman Circus House. The D-shaped lawn is demarcated by a low bank with mature trees on it, in varying conditions, and surrounded by modern black metal railings.¹³ It was originally created as part of the formal landscaping of the late 19th century, in front of the Officers' Quarters, originally planted as a tree screen. There was a path/road from Le Cateau Road that curved around the outside to a pair of gates into the Artillery Barracks - the East Gate located on the north side of the Officers' Quarters and the South East Gate located on the south side, i.e. the D-shaped lawn extended out from the boundary of the Barracks. The building, which became known as the Sergeants' Mess towards the end of the 20th century, was originally constructed as Officers' Quarters in 1874-5 for the 19th-century Artillery Barracks¹⁴, with later extensions and alterations. It is aligned NE to SW, with a SE-facing façade facing on to the lawn and Abbey Field. The building was

¹³ The current railings are modern and replaced an earlier iron paling fence, with a tree screen planted in 1876.

¹⁴ The Royal Artillery Barracks (later known as Le Cateau Barracks) were erected in 1874 to the north of the Cavalry Barracks.

granted planning consent for conversion to eight dwellings in 2018 (CBC planning application 173017).

- 10.2.2 Replica stumps of the starting gates were constructed by CAT directly above the buried remains, following archaeological investigations, in 2014. In addition, the location of the *cavea* walls have been marked out on the ground surface with loose, white stone and an interpretation panel has been erected (a perspex panel with the outline of the reconstructed starting gates). It is fortuitous that the Circus remains fell in this relatively open area, ensuring the survival below-ground archaeological remains without significant disturbance from the construction of garrison (or other) buildings.
- 10.2.3 EX787918 is leased by Taylor Wimpey to the Council on a 125-year lease (dated 2 September 2013). The area is sub-leased by the Council to CAT. There is a Management Plan in the lease requiring the garden to be well-managed in perpetuity for the primary purpose of low key public recreational use and a green landscape setting / amenity area to the residential development. Under the terms of the lease agreement, the general public is permitted to access into the D-shaped lawn between the hours of 10.00 to 17.00 from 1st April to 31st October and from 10.00 to 16.00 from 1st November to 30th March, to provide access to the historic location of the entrance gates of the Roman Circus, within this area. Outside of these times, the D-shaped lawn will provide a private garden for residents of the Officer's Quarter, once converted to residential accommodation.
- 10.2.4 The line of the northern *cavea* walls are marked with concrete, painted white, at ground level in the garden front garden of the Roman Circus Centre (which actually lies within parcel EX787918) (Photograph 4). In 2013, CAT undertook an excavation on the line of *cavea* in front of Roman Circus House, to expose a section of the robbed-out foundations for permanent display, below glass, with a short section of timber walkway in between; the walkway was completed in 2015 and a steel sculpture was erected to indicate the scale of the *cavea* (Photographs 4 and 5).

10.3 EX879758: Colchester Archaeological Trust

- 10.3.1 In 2012, CAT purchased the former Army Education Centre, previously the restaurant/canteen, with the help of donations by members of the public, groups, Colchester Borough Council and Essex County Council (Figure 13). The building was renamed 'Roman Circus House' and the Roman Circus Visitor Centre was opened to the public in August 2013 (<https://www.romancircus.co.uk/>).
- 10.3.2 The building lies just to the north of the remains of the northern *cavea*, i.e. the CAT land lies outside of the Circus, although it straddles the northern edge of the Scheduled area, which is located in the grassed area in front of the building; the grassed area is sub-leased from the Borough to CAT; like the D-shaped lawn to the west, this is owned by Taylor Wimpey.
- 10.3.3 The Roman Circus Centre is open to visitors between April and September, providing displays and information about the Circus. The Council provided funding in 2016 for a small extension to the visitor car park, to the north west of the Centre, accessed by vehicle from Roman Circus Walk (off Butt Road).

10.4 EX788209: Bovis Homes Ltd

- 10.4.1 To the east of EX787918, north (west) of Circular Road North and south of Le Cateau Road, EX788209 (Area J1 East) is currently grassed open space and a low, grassed bank, c.75m long, has been created over, and to demarcate, the line of the southern *cavea* (Figure 14, Photographs 6 and 7). There is a small interpretation panel located on the east end of the bank, adjacent to the footpath on Circular Road North, and a signpost pointing towards the Roman Circus Centre.
- 10.4.2 The north side of this plot is marked by a line of mature trees (and a broken, wooden post and rail fence) along the south side of Le Cateau Road, part of the landscaping associated with the construction of the Garrison in the 19th century. Along the north side of Circular Road North (which forms the eastern boundary to this plot), the line of the *cavea* is marked out with sets where the foot/cycle path crosses it; there is a low metal rail along the side of the path, to separate the path from the grassed area. The path is separated from Circular Road North with a strip of grass, c.10m wide, and there is a further line of mature trees along the side of the road.
- 10.4.3 It is anticipated that this area, owned by Bovis Homes, will be transferred to the Council as Public Open Space.

10.5 EX758172: Taylor Wimpey

- 10.5.1 Located on the north side of Circular Road North and west of Flagstaff Road, EX758172 (Area C1) is currently an area of grassed open space (Figure 15, Photographs 8 and 9). A low, linear grassed bank, c.68m long, has been created to mark the line of the northern *cavea*. A children's play area was built just to the north of the scheduled area, c.12m north of the line of the northern *cavea*. All three sides of this triangular plot are marked with a line of mature trees, part of the original garrison landscaping scheme.
- 10.5.2 There is a small electricity substation in the west corner of this site, c.3 x 3m in area, on the line of the *cavea*.
- 10.5.3 This parcel of land also includes the public car park to south of Napier Road and east of Pearce Court (i.e. to the east of EX905194).
- 10.5.4 Along the west side (along the east side of the ABRO site, see below), aligned NE to SW, there is an unofficial footpath from Flagstaff Road, to Le Cateau Road/Circular Road North. The footpath is not surfaced, and an erosion hollow has developed where the grass has been worn away. The footpath is on or adjacent to the line of a road marked on the late 19th and early 20th century maps, which was closed off in the mid 20th century; Circular Road North originally continued north-east from its intersection with Le Cateau Road to the west entrance of the Flagstaff complex (off Flagstaff Road).
- 10.5.5 It is anticipated that this area, owned by Taylor Wimpey, will be transferred to the Council as Public Open Space.

10.6 EX832089: Taylor Wimpey

- 10.6.1 EX832089, to the north of Napier Road and east of Flagstaff Road, is within private ownership although the site of the Circus is demarcated and publically accessible (Figure 16, Photographs 10 - 12).
- 10.6.2 Between 2015 and 2017, the residential redevelopment of the Flagstaff complex (Area B1b), now Arena Place, provided the opportunity to better reveal the site of, and also to protect the surviving archaeological remains, of the Circus. Within Arena Place, the entire width of the northern *cavea* (with the exception of that part below the Former Military Offices FLG 1; HER Monument no. [MCC10139](#)), was demarcated as a walkway (partly private access road to residential car parking) with coloured sets.
- 10.6.3 The eastern extension to the Former Commanding Officers' Accommodation FLG 7/8, now Nero Court, built over the line of the *cavea*, was removed (HER Monument no. [MCC10137](#)). In addition, that part of the Former Wagon shed K Block built (in c.1897) across the *cavea* was removed during the residential conversion (HER Monument no. [MCC10135](#)).
- 10.6.4 The site of the *spina* was also demarcated by a low, linear grassed bank bounded by sets on either side; like the *cavea*, it is demarcated by coloured sets where it is crossed by (the unadopted) Emperor Road. The small, surviving part of the Abbey precinct wall, on the line of the *spina*, was also conserved as part of this work. Several timber planters (containing shrubs) have been installed in the area of the Circus, which is otherwise grassed, in front (and to the south) of Domitian Court and Nero Court (the Former Commanding Officers' Accommodation FLG 5/6 and FLG 7/8). There are also several footpaths across the grassed areas around, and leading to, the converted buildings, some bounded by a low metal rail held in timber posts.
- 10.6.5 There is a black railing fence along the footpaths on Napier and Flagstaff Roads, demarcating the edge of the area. Along Flagstaff Road, this encloses the line of mature trees planted along the roads during the later 19th century and associated with the construction of the Garrison.
- 10.6.6 There is an archaeological management plan for Arena Place (Remus Management Plan, 28 March 2017) relating to Condition 31 of planning consent 131935 (170726).

10.7 EX641744: Ministry of Defence

- 10.7.1 It is expected that EX641744 (former Army Base Repair Organisation or ABRO site) will be disposed of by the Ministry of Defence in the next few years (Figure 17, Photographs 13 and 14). The site of the Circus has been allocated as open space with the remainder of the site being for residential use in the Emerging Local Plan 2017-2033. A draft Development Brief has been prepared for this parcel of land (ABRO Site Development Brief, Colchester, Colchester Borough Council 2020) and this provides for the protection, beneficial management and presentation of the monument.
- 10.7.2 The MOD withdrew from active use of this site in 2019. Currently, there is a high, wire-meshed security fence (topped with barbed wire), with concrete posts, enclosing the ABRO site within the area of the Circus, as well as a line of mature trees (London Planes and Lime pollards); the trees are part of the

original 19th century landscaping scheme, planted along the sides of Le Cateau Road (which forms the south boundary to the ABRO site) and along the sides of North Circular Road, which originally continued across Le Cateau Road in a straight (SW to NE) line to Flagstaff Road.

10.7.3 The corners of two large 20th century workshop buildings lie across the site (i.e. projected line) of the northern *cavea*. From visual inspection (outside of the site), the buildings appear to have been cut down into the ground and, if the remains of the Circus are shallow (like the rest of the *cavea*), it is likely that any structural remains will have been destroyed in this area; however, an archaeological assessment will be required of the ABRO site in advance of the granting of planning consent (ABRO Site Development Brief, Colchester, Colchester Borough Council April 2020, 3.8-3.13). To the west of the large workshop, and east of Roman Circus House, there is another brick building, erected in c.1935 as a dining room and cook house (IC6; Ingram Consultancy 2000, 3 & 37)¹⁵ for the Royal Artillery Barracks and modified with modern extensions. This building has been also built across the line of the northern *cavea* and within the area of the racing track.

10.7.4 The draft Development Brief for this parcel of land provides the following requirements relating to the Roman Circus, based on the previous draft management plan:

- No new development or tree planting of any kind on top of the remains of the Roman circus (with the potential exception of a purpose-built cover building and associated interpretation items);
- A buffer zone of 10m from an invisible line from the edge of the monument (across the ends of circus buttresses) to ensure no new development including service trenches and vehicle movements;
- Future proposals for new development in the vicinity will be subject to requests for Section 106 agreements to enable the proper public presentation of the circus remains;
- The site of the circus and buffer zones shall be either grassed (in public or private ownership) or existing adopted roads needing to be retained: and
- A detailed interpretation scheme will be drawn up to include a cover building over part of the exposed remains, interpretation boards, and marking out of as much of the circus course as possible.

10.7.5 With the ABRO site, it is also anticipated that the current buildings, following recording, will be removed from the area of the Circus (ABRO Site Development Brief, Colchester, Colchester Borough Council April 2020).

¹⁵ Ingram Consultancy Ltd, 2000, *Colchester Garrison, Colchester. Historic Building Assessment*.

10.8 EX970726: Secretary of State for Communities and Government

- 10.8.1 The eastern half of EX970726 is within the former Arena Leisure Centre site (Figure 18, Photograph 15). The site is currently empty, and has been the subject of redevelopment proposals following the demolition of the Leisure Centre in 2017. The complex, opened in 1947, was formerly one of eight purpose-built post World War 2 NAAFI (Navy, Army and Air Force Institute) clubs. The NAAFI closed in 1961 and was reopened as the Arena Leisure Centre.
- 10.8.2 That part of the Arena within the Circus Scheduled Monument comprises a disused hard tennis court. There are also a number of trees within this area. The site is delimited by Circular Road North and Circular Road East, and there are closely spaced low concrete bollards along these sides of the site, with temporary heras metal fencing to prevent access to the disused site. In terms of redevelopment, developers will be advised that landscaping proposals will need to be agreed with the Council and Historic England, like those for EX641744 and other parts of the Circus.
- 10.8.3 The western half of EX970726 is a football pitch, in current use, and there is no public access to this part of the Monument. It is separated by a metal fence from the area of the former Arena Leisure Centre (currently still in the same ownership)(Photograph 16). There is a high, meshed security fence supported on concrete posts topped with barbed wire, along the Circular Road North frontage, with a fragmentary hedge on the south side (both within the area of the Circus).

10.9 Adopted highways and footpaths

- 10.9.1 There are four adopted highways that cross the area of the Scheduled Monument, forming a cross-roads on the line of the *spina* (Figure 6). The distance of each road across the Circus area is as follows (across the Scheduled Monument in brackets):
- Circular Road North: 183m (191m), crosses the *spina* in two places along with the southern *cavea*;
 - Circular Road East: 39m (50m), crosses the southern *cavea*.
 - Napier Road: 144m (182m), crosses the *spina* and curved eastern end (*cavea*) of the Circus.
 - Flagstaff Road: 38m (43m), crosses the northern *cavea*.
- 10.9.2 In terms of road furniture, there is a zebra crossing on Circular Road North, just to the west of the junction with Flagstaff Road and Circular Road East. There is a traffic calming feature (chicane and lane shift) to the west of the zebra crossing, on the bend in Circular Road North, where Le Cateau Road joins it.
- 10.9.3 In addition to the four roads, Le Cateau Road is an adopted footpath/cycleway (with a black tarmac surface), which crosses the Circus for 181m E to W; Le Cateau Road is owned by Taylor Wimpey (EX752211)(Figure 19, Photograph 17). At the west end of the Circus, this separates around the D-shaped lawn, crossing the southern *cavea* close to the corner with the starting gates (to the south) and northern *cavea* (to the north). The position of both the northern and southern *cavea* is marked out with sets where it intersects with this path.

- 10.9.4 All the roads have standard street lighting; Le Cateau Road, is lined with a row of heritage street lights.
- 10.9.5 With the exception of Circular Road East (which only has a footpath on the west side), all the roads have footpaths on either side and there is a combined foot/cycle path on the north side of Circular Road North; the path is set back c.10m from the road side, with a grassed strip and line of trees between. This path also has a separate row of street lights. There is also a combined foot/cycle path on the south side of Napier Road.
- 10.9.6 Along both the north and south sides of Napier Road, and on the north side of Circular Road North, the line of the *cavea* is marked out with sets where it crosses the footpaths; it is not marked on any of the roads.
- 10.9.7 Circular Road North, Flagstaff Road and Le Cateau Road are all tree-lined (outgrown high pollards), with a mixture of Lime and London Planes, as well as the D-shaped garden at the west end of the Circus. The south-east edge of the ABRO site is also tree-lined. The tree-lined frontages and avenues are contemporary with, and part of, the original design of the late 19th century Garrison. The Conservation Area appraisal (p.29) states, '*The tree-lined approach to Le Cateau/Artillery Barracks and the trees around the semicircular garden in front of the Artillery Officers' quarters are an important part of the setting of the building*'. The trees '*form an integral part*' of the setting of the buildings.

11.0 Description of the Archaeological Remains (by area of land ownership)

The significant archaeological discoveries relating to the Circus are discussed in the following section by parcel of land, although the discussion excludes some of the smaller investigations that have taken place. This information can be discovered in the detailed reports and publications produced by CAT, and in particular, see [CAT Report 412](#) for projects undertaken up to 2011; for more recent projects see [CAT Report 1142](#) and [CAT Report 1466](#).

11.1 EX905194: Abacus Land 4 Ltd

- 11.1.1 The archaeological investigation of EX905194 (Area C2) was undertaken in 2004, following the demolition of single-storey military huts and other facilities on the site ([CAT Report 412](#), 23-26). In this area, the foundation of the outer wall of the southern *cavea* was relatively well-preserved, whereas the inner foundation had been completely robbed out; the line of the *cavea* had been also destroyed by 20th century military bunkers. Excluding trial-trenches (but including investigation of the bunkers), an excavation area of c.254m² was investigated, c.16% of the Circus within this plot (this figure increases to c.26% if it is limited to the area of the *cavea* only, where there are structure remains).

11.1.2 The southern (i.e. outer) foundation had been much the more substantial of the two and, although partially robbed out, most of it survived *in situ*. It was constructed of courses of greensand stone, with some flint and septaria, set in mortar. The foundation was c.0.85m wide x 0.50m deep, and was traced for a distance of 12.5m (E to W). The wall had been strengthened by three integral buttresses, each 1.9m wide and projecting 1.4m to the south of the southern, outer wall, as on EX758172 (Area C1; see below). The buttresses were built 2.4m apart. The foundations of the buttresses and the wall were built as one and to the same depth. The remains of one of the buttresses survived to just above former ground level where its face was constructed with neatly squared-off greensand ashlar blocks; this is the only surviving example of the wall facing to have been discovered ([CAT Report 412](#), 24). The inner wall of the *cavea* had been entirely robbed out; the robber trench (CF247) was c.0.6m wide x 0.12m deep.

11.1.3 Archaeological monitoring and recording was also carried out during groundworks for the car park of the cricket club to the east, off Napier Road (Area C2, Phase 2 site)¹⁶ in 2012-13 but this work did not impact on the remains of the Circus, below the formation level of the car park (HER event no. ECC2975; [CAT Report 652](#))¹⁷.

11.2 EX787918: Taylor Wimpey

11.2.1 In 2007, CAT investigated the positions of the starting gates in the D-shaped lawn ([CAT Report 412](#), 1336-1341, 1347-1348). These were shown to be c.0.30m below the current ground level ([CAT Report 412](#), 1336). The complete remains of two of the starting gates (counting from the south, stalls five and six) were investigated, as well as the base of the north side of the central, western entrance into the arena which split the gates into two equal groups. The remains comprised a series of shallow, parallel foundations, c.0.7-1.2m wide and 0.25m deep and c.3.25m apart, made of greensand set in mortar or left as loose chippings. Based on the distance between the foundations, which provides the width of each starting gate or stall as c.3.25m, it is possible to calculate a total of eight starting gates.

11.2.2 The surface of the central entrance passage was gravelled and it was sealed by a thin layer of destruction debris; this appears to be the remains of the magistrate's box which would have been overhead. The debris included fragments of painted wall plaster and roof tile, showing that the box had been well appointed with decorated internal walls and a tiled roof.

11.3 EX788209: Bovis Homes Ltd

11.3.1 EX788209 (Area J1 East) was excavated in 2004-5 (HER event no. ECC2981; [CAT Report 412](#), 43-46 & 1311-1312). An area c.756m² was investigated, c.28% of the Circus within this parcel of land. The main feature of this area was the robbed-out remains of the two parallel foundations which supported the inner and outer walls of the southern *cavea*. The foundations included the remains of an entrance to the stands, or *vomitorium*, in the form of two short N to S aligned robber trenches (i.e. the foundations had been completely robbed out), 7m long and each c.0.8m wide, creating an entranceway c.2m wide ([CAT](#)

¹⁶ This area is part of parcel EX758172.

¹⁷ The depth of the stripping is not provided in the report.

[Report 412](#), 44). There was a gravel surface between the two trenches. The southern, outer wall foundation of the *cavea* was interrupted for the *vomitorium* whereas the inner, podium wall passed across the end of it unbroken, indicating that the entrance did not extend through and into the arena. A piece of painted *opus signinum* wall-plaster and a fragment of schist or marble veneer painted purple on one surface was recovered from the backfill of the robber trenches, providing evidence of the decorative adornment of the Circus ([CAT Report 412](#), 45).

- 11.3.2 The outer foundation of the *cavea* was the more substantial of the two, measuring c.0.9m wide x 0.6m deep and consisting of unworked lumps of greensand set in mortar. The foundation also included many greensand chips which were presumably waste left over from the working of ashlar blocks. The remains of the foundation were uncovered over a distance of 93m and continued beyond the east and west limits of the excavation area. Most of the foundation had been completely robbed out, so that only a total of about 31m survived to any degree. These parts, apart from one relatively well-preserved section, had all had been so heavily robbed that only two or three courses were left in place. The inner foundation had been almost completely robbed, but must have measured c.0.70m wide x 0.10-0.15m deep.
- 11.3.4 The south wall of the *cavea* incorporated a series of external buttresses (the remains of 21 were investigated in this parcel of land) set out on a different pattern either side of the *vomitorium* and at least three, possibly four, different patterns of buttresses are apparent in the outer wall foundation of the *cavea* ([CAT Report 412](#), 1346-1347).

11.4 EX758172: Taylor Wimpey

- 11.4.1 The area of EX758172 (Area C1) was investigated in 2004 (HER event no. ECC2979; [CAT Report 412](#), 19-22). The area included tarmac car-parking and grassed areas, and a large Garrison Civil Service Club building, built across the line of the northern *cavea*, which was demolished to ground level ahead of the archaeological investigation. The area was dominated by two parallel robber trenches, aligned E to W and 4.4m apart, representing the remains of the northern *cavea*. The trenches were excavated over a distance of 12m in the excavation area of c.291m² in size, i.e. c.20% of the Circus has been excavated in this parcel of land.
- 11.4.2 Excavation showed that the northern, outer foundation had been the wider and deeper of the two and that it had been strengthened externally by buttresses, two of which could be identified. Two post-holes appeared to be associated with the Circus, interpreted as holes for scaffolding. The robber trenches contained lumps of broken mortar along with fragments of greensand and Roman brick, presumably derived from the walls and foundations. A gravelled area lay on the immediate north side of the *cavea* and butted up against the northern wall. Two parallel, E to W, shallow grooves cut the second phase of metalling. These grooves were 1.4m apart and are possibly the remains of wheel ruts from carts which had run across the surface. The gravelled area and the grooves were sealed by a layer rich in demolition debris in the form of fragments of crushed lumps of mortar, dated to the late 2nd to late 3rd century.

11.5 EX832089: Taylor Wimpey

- 11.5.1 At the east end of the Circus, limited archaeological investigations were undertaken during the residential redevelopment of Arena Place (previously known as Area B1b and the Flagstaff Complex), between 2015 and 2017 and relating to condition 7 of planning permission 131935 granted in 2015, ([CAT Report 1466](#), 15-20); the redevelopment was designed to minimise ground disturbance, and minimise impact on the archaeological remains (established by evaluation), encountered at c.0.40m below ground level; c.8% of the Circus in this parcel of land was investigated.
- 11.5.2 An area, c.477m² in total, was investigated where the access road (Emperor Road) cut across the line of the northern *cavea* and *spina* (Areas A & B; [CAT Report 1466](#), 15-20 & Figure 5). Medieval robber trenches associated with the northern *cavea* wall foundations and *spina* were defined, with a small section of surviving *in situ* wall foundation. Excavation of the *spina* revealed evidence for a possible lined (with painted *opus signinum*¹⁸) water tank/cistern AF166 and associated drainage ditch.
- 11.5.3 The cast copper-alloy head of a vehicle linchpin (SF24), possibly from a racing chariot, was a residual find within a later medieval pit WBF217, located to the north of the Circus in this parcel of land ([CAT Report 1466](#), 92-94).

11.6 EX641744: Ministry of Defence

- 11.6.1 No archaeological assessment / investigation has been undertaken within the ABRO site.

11.7 EX970726: Secretary of State for Communities and Government

- 11.7.1 A trial-trenched evaluation was undertaken in 2017, following demolition of the buildings (located to the south of the Circus) – hard tennis courts (now disused) had been constructed over the line of the Circus (HER event no. ECC3937; [CAT Report 1142](#)). Two of the trenches (T12 and T13) were located within the area of the Circus, below the disused tennis courts. These encountered the archaeological remains at depths of 0.27-0.39m below current ground level. Trench T12 was positioned over the *spina*, and the shallow remains of a robbed-out wall foundation was identified. T13 was positioned over the southern *cavea*. The remains of the robbed-out outer *cavea* wall foundation were identified along with the robbed-out and *in situ* remains of two N to S walls/wall foundations with metalling in between them. These represent the remains of another *vomitorium*.
- 11.7.2 To the west of the former Arena Leisure Centre, the remains of the Circus lie below the area of a football pitch, within the same ownership. The lines of the two robbed wall foundations of the southern *cavea* show up clearly as linear parchmarks across the football pitch, observed by air photography, and they have been also identified by geophysical survey in 1999 and 2005 (HER event no. ECC2487; [CAT Report 54](#); [CAT Report 412](#), Fig. 6.16; Tim Dennis pers. comm.). A trial trench was excavated by Time Team in 2005 across the line of the *cavea* in this area (TTT7), which showed that the foundations have been

¹⁸ *Opus signinum* is a pink mortar containing crushed and powdered brick and tile mixed in which has special water-resistant properties.

robbed out (ECC2717; [CAT Report 412](#), 1316-1317 & Fig. 1.59). However, a watching brief further to the west, during the excavation of a narrow cable trench in 2006, identified the *in situ* remains of the outer *cavea* wall foundation, c.0.35m below the ground surface, and the robbed-out wall lines of the *spina*, c.0.55m below the ground surface (HER event no. ECC2717; [CAT Report 393](#), Fig. 4).

11.8 Remains of the Circus below the highways

- 11.8.1 In 2005, a watching brief was undertaken just to the west of the Abacus site (EX905194, Area C2), where Circular Road East intersects with the southern *cavea* (HER event no. ECC3736; WBT1; [CAT Report 412](#), 72-73 & Fig. 1.62). The line of the *cavea* was recorded, although the foundations had been almost entirely robbed out. The robber trenches indicated the positions of two parallel E to W foundations and also a N to S one; the latter incorporated a buttress and was possibly the remains of a *vomitorium*. Both E to W robber trenches were uncovered for a distance of 3m but two sections of foundation survived *in situ*.
- 11.8.2 In WBT4, investigated in 2006, where Flagstaff Road intersects with the northern *cavea*, two medieval robber trenches had completely robbed out the two E to W aligned foundations. The top of the robber trench was defined at c.0.30m in depth below current ground level ([CAT Report 412](#), 73 & Fig. 1.67). Located to the north of the northern wall-line, there was a gravelled surface which appeared to be a continuation of the metalled area observed just to the west.
- 11.8.3 WBT3 was excavated in 2006 at the junction of Flagstaff Road, Napier Road, Circular Road East and Circular Road North and it coincided with the line of the central barrier or *spina* ([CAT Report 412](#), 73 & Fig. 1.67). However, there was no sign of any foundations which might have been part of it. Instead, in the centre of the trench, in a position corresponding to the centre of the central barrier, there were the remains of a substantial Roman foundation constructed of mortared greensand, originally c.3.0 x 2.6m in area. This was interpreted as a possible base for a statue or obelisk, centrally located along the *spina* ([CAT Report 412](#), 1349).
- 11.8.4 In 2006, excavation also took place in advance of the installation of foul and storm-water drains along a 225m section of Napier Road and the replacement of the road and pavements to adoptable standards. The remains of the outer wall of the southern *cavea* foundations proved to be substantial and exceptionally well-preserved, c.0.8-1.0m wide ([CAT Report 412](#), 1051-1052). Collapsed material from the inner *cavea* wall was also found on the arena surface, although the wall foundation itself had been completely robbed, surviving as a robber trench 0.6-0.9m wide x 0.20-0.30m deep. Of particular significance was the curving nature of the foundations, indicating the east end of the Circus. A significant find was a complete enamelled lunula horse harness pendant ([CAT Report 412](#), 1056). The new storm-water drain was installed by Taylor Wimpey below the Circus foundations, using the (expensive) technique of thrust-boring to preserve the well-preserved *cavea* foundations ([CAT Report 412](#), 1051-1052).

- 11.8.5 An interesting feature of the Circus is an earlier ditch on the line of, and which seems to have been related to the Circus ([CAT Report 412](#), 25, 45-46, 1051 & 1347). Below Napier Road, the ditch lay along the inner edge of the foundation of the outer *cavea* wall (although it pre-dated the *cavea*). The ditch had a flat base and was 0.8m wide and between 0.25-0.7m deep. It was also defined to the west in Area C2 (EX905194), where it was also flat-bottomed, and in Area J East (EX788209), where the centre line roughly corresponded to the centre of the foundation of the outer *cavea* wall which it was also cut by. In that area, it had a V-shaped in profile, 1.55m wide x c.0.85m deep.
- 11.8.6 The function of the ditch, which didn't extend around the entirety of the Circus, is unclear. The ditch may have been required along the back edge of the *cavea* in places where stone sections had not been built during the initial construction phase of the Circus ([CAT Report 412](#), 1347). The ditch may simply have demarcated the rear of the stand which, where there was no stone *cavea*, was simply an unbanked strip of land alongside the track for seated or standing spectators.
- 11.8.7 A watching brief of works to the footpath along the north side of Napier Road (along the south edge of Arena Place) was carried out in 2011 and defined (probable) demolition debris from the Circus c.0.50m below the ground surface (HER event no. ECC2977; [CAT Report 652](#), 52-54).
- 11.8.8 In 2007, an excavation took place along Circular Road North, during groundworks to upgrade the road and to install foul and stormwater drains (HER event no. ECC2987; [CAT Report 412](#), 1102-1205). The excavation located the near turning post at the western end of the *spina* as well as another stretch of the robbed-out foundation of the southern outer *cavea* wall with an external buttress. At the turning post, a substantial part of one of the three cones was found, which would have formed the near turning post or *meta* (CRNF25). The surviving part, only two courses thick, was 1.25m in diameter and constructed of brick set in *opus signinum*. There were several large slabs of *opus signinum* with a curved outer face painted pink or red and these probably formed part of the coating of one of the cones ([CAT Report 412](#), 1108 & Plates 2-3). In addition, the remains of a pressurised water-main was found, evidenced by an *in situ* iron collar from a wooden water pipe, located in a shallow trench, c.0.30m deep ([CAT Report 412](#), 1106 & Plate 1). Two large pits located inside the end of the *spina* might have been associated with water features in the barrier.

12.0 Key Achievements 2004-2020

- 12.1 Although the Council hasn't adopted a management plan for the Roman Circus, there has been some significant management achievements by key stakeholders – the Council, Historic England, developers and Colchester Archaeological Trust, working collaboratively with a similar, shared vision to conserve, better reveal, present and promote this unique monument. These achievements include:

- 12.2 Since its first identification in 2004, the area of the Circus has been the subject of significant archaeological investigation by Colchester Archaeological Trust, and there is now a relatively good understanding of the monument. CAT have produced a number of detailed publications about the Circus; knowledge of the monument has benefitted from the ongoing research by a single archaeological organisation, Colchester Archaeological Trust, which has accumulated knowledge and experience of the archaeological remains from detailed study of the monument.
- 12.3 The Circus has also benefitted from a considerable amount of national publicity, because it is the only known example of a circus in the country. In 2005, the popular Channel 4 TV *Time Team* programme produced a special episode (no. 139) about the Circus and the monument has subsequently featured on a number of other TV programmes.
- 12.4 The Roman Circus was designated as a heritage asset of national importance (Scheduled Monument) in 2007 ([NHLE no. 1021426](#)). It is exceptional for a site to be scheduled after planning permission has been granted for redevelopment.
- 12.5 Since the identification of the Circus in 2004, the development proposed under the Colchester Garrison Urban Village development (O/COL/01/0009, which received outline planning permission in 2003, before the Circus was identified) has been successfully adapted to accommodate the site of the Circus as open space as far as possible. For example, the original masterplan showed new residential development across the area of the Circus, with the exception not the D-shaped lawn at the west end, the Arena Leisure Centre (identified as a potential sports/leisure site) as well as the pre-existing athletics track.
- 12.6 Over 75% of the Circus site has been landscaped and the position of the *cavea* and *spina* have been marked out on the ground surface, with low grassed banks, stone sets, timber, loose stone and/or with concrete, as part of the Garrison redevelopment. The position of the starting gates at the west end have been marked with replica stumps and a steel sculpture has been erected on the line of the northern *cavea* to indicate the scale of the original grandstand. The majority of the landscaped site is publically accessible and it is anticipated that two of these areas will be transferred to the Council as areas of Public Open Space.
- 12.7 A draft development brief for the ABRO site, one of the two remaining development areas within the area of the Roman Circus, provides for the protection, beneficial management and presentation of the monument.
- 12.8 Presentation and promotion of the Roman Circus has benefitted from the determined efforts of Colchester Archaeological Trust. In 2013, Colchester Archaeological Trust opened the Roman Circus Centre to present and promote the monument, as well as providing a programme of events and maintaining a website: <https://www.romancircus.co.uk/>.

13.0 Management Objectives and Actions 2020-2025

The following ongoing and specific objectives and actions relating to the Roman Circus have been identified, with the overall objectives being *to protect, enhance and promote the Circus, and enhance the public's understanding, appreciation and enjoyment of the Circus and its history*.

- 13.1 Adoption of the management plan to provide a coordinated framework for the conservation, enhancement, interpretation, presentation and celebration of the Circus.
- 13.2 Present and interpret the Circus for public benefit and as an important heritage attraction, and also as an important area of open space for public wellbeing.
- 13.3 Ensure the entire (undeveloped) area of the Circus is publically accessible, with the creation of a demarcated public footpath or walkway around the monument, along the line of, or close to the outside of, the Circus.
- 13.4 Ensure there is a standardised and consistent methodology for presentation: to sensitively and consistently demarcate the line of the *cavea* and *spina* walls, including location of buttresses and entrances.
- 13.5 Ensure a careful balance between the presentation of the Circus and the Abbey Field (Colchester Garrison) Conservation Area.
- 13.6 Undertake a boundary review of the Scheduled area with revisions, if necessary, to ensure there is an appropriate 10m buffer around all sides of the archaeological remains.
- 13.7 Undertake a review of the Colchester Garrison Conservation Area, with a boundary review following the identification of the Circus (after the adoption of the Conservation Area in 2004); currently, the area of the Roman Circus extends beyond the edge of the Conservation Area.
- 13.8 Secure the transfer of land from private ownership to the Council as public open space, where there is an agreement and ensure there are adequate commuted sums for management and maintenance.
- 13.9 Review how the long-term management of the Circus is most effectively delivered, for example, by the Council or sub-leased to another organisation.
- 13.10 Ensure the ongoing appropriate management and maintenance of different parcels of land, under private ownership.
- 13.11 Provide appropriate and consistent site interpretation around the monument, for example, installation of adequate interpretation panels and signage at strategic and publically accessible locations.
- 13.12 Investigate and deliver other forms of presentation, for example, use of public art and sculpture and/or lighting, for example, to mark the seating and/or line of race track as well as improved digital presentation of the Circus.

- 13.13 Create a working group, with representatives of the key stakeholder groups, to support the protection, enhancement and promotion of the Circus as an important part of Colchester's public realm/heritage offer, and which will promote and support the ongoing development of the heritage offer by Colchester Archaeological Trust at Roman Circus Centre. The working group will promote (and also scrutinise) initiatives and seek partnerships and external funding opportunities, that enhance the local character and distinctiveness, and which better reveal the significance of, and create better access to, the Circus.
- 13.14 Ensure the positive enhancement, for public benefit, of those parts of the Circus in outstanding re-development zones (the Arena Leisure Centre and ABRO sites). This will include no new development, for example, buildings, roads or car parking, is undertaken within the area of the Circus and in the buffer zone, a minimum of 10.0m from the monument.
- 13.15 New development will have regard to local context and precedence, scale and massing, layout and design. Any new development that impacts upon the setting of the Circus will be respectful to the sense of place, will respond to the historic character of the surroundings and will enhance the significance of the Circus, best sustaining its heritage values and better reveals the significance of heritage asset.
- 13.16 New development will be informed and supported by appropriate assessments to adequately assess the significance of the Roman Circus (and adjacent heritage assets) and also to accurately identify the impact of proposals on the setting of the Wall. The use of space, scale, layout and design of new buildings will consider how the site of the Circus influences and informs the buildings and space.
- 13.17 New development will provide appropriate landscaping, consistent with other sections, to ensure that the Circus can be appreciated and interpreted as a single archaeological monument.
- 13.18 New development will secure the removal of current buildings, areas of hardstanding and access of no architectural and historic interest from the area of the Circus, as part of the re-development of the ABRO site.
- 13.19 Ensure the public access and long-term management, for public benefit, of those parts of the Circus in outstanding re-development zones (the Arena Leisure Centre and ABRO sites). This should include a management agreement that secures appropriate long-term management and public access and/or land transfer into public ownership as public open space (with an appropriate commuted sum for landscaping, presentation and interpretation, and subsequently, for ongoing maintenance).
- 13.20 Section 106 developer contributions will be secured to mitigate and offset harm from new development schemes that have an impact on the Circus and its setting. The Council will require developers to underwrite the costs of any enhancement, presentation and interpretation and ongoing maintenance of the Circus, proportionate to the development proposals.

- 13.21 Ensure all those involved in the management and maintenance of the Roman Circus use the Management Plan effectively as a working document, and to ensure all parties are clear about their roles and responsibilities.
- 13.22 Ensure that all works within the area of the Roman Circus are carried out in conformity with legal requirements of Scheduled Monument Consent or other relevant consent, and to ensure that all landowners are aware of these requirements.
- 13.23 Avoid where possible new groundworks (e.g. new services) within the area of the Circus, and to ensure that the depth of any new works are minimised and the subject of full archaeological investigation. For any groundworks, to ensure the particular significance and character of any part of the Circus is established in advance and informed by an appropriate archaeological assessment and, where required, by full recording and analysis. The results of each assessment will be used to inform the method statement/written scheme of investigation (WSI), and undertaken by appropriately qualified and experienced archaeological contractors. All works carried out will be monitored and recorded to ensure they meet agreed requirements. An archive of works within and/or affecting the Circus will be maintained by the Council.
- 13.24 A copy of each report will be deposited with, and used to enhance, the Colchester Historic Environment Record¹⁹. These will be made publically accessible. The archives (material culture and documentary records) resulting from any recording projects will be deposited with Colchester and Ipswich Museums Service, and they will be available for public consultation. Digital archives will be deposited with the Archaeology Data Service²⁰, or similar open access digital archive repository.
- 13.25 Respond promptly to the requirement for any unforeseen emergency repairs by utility companies that requirement groundworks within the area of the Circus.
- 13.26 Feasibility study for the removal of the electricity substation from the area of the Circus (EX758172).
- 13.27 Feasibility study for relocation of the current sports pitch (west half of EX970726, south of Circular Road North) off the site of the Circus, and to incorporate this into the overall presentation of the monument.
- 13.28 Investigate the potential for better public access to, and improved presentation of, the Circus on land to the north of Pearce Court (EX905194, south side of Napier Road).
- 13.29 Feasibility study for new road crossing points across Napier Road and Circular Road North) so that visitors can safely follow the line of the Circus (to provide a walkway or trail around the entire outer line (*cavea*) of the Circus and/or marking the line of the Circus across the roads.

¹⁹ The Council maintains the evidence base for the historic environment in the Colchester Historic Environment Record (HER). This is a detailed database of heritage assets recorded in the Borough. The HER is publicly accessible online at <https://colchesterheritage.co.uk/>

²⁰ The Archaeology Data Service (<http://ads.ahds.ac.uk>) is the only accredited digital repository in the UK for heritage data and for digital resources that are created as a product of archaeological research.

- 13.30 Carefully maintain the mature trees to ensure that the area of the Circus is better revealed while also ensuring the historic planting scheme is respected. The mature trees will continue to be maintained to prolong their natural life. Given the value of the archaeological asset, they will not all be replaced when they come to the end of their life; however, a careful balance will be maintained between the needs of the Garrison Conservation Area and the Scheduled Monument. When old trees need to be removed, they will be cut to ground level but root bowls will not be removed (to avoid damage to underlying archaeological remains).
- 13.31 Equipment and machinery shall not be used or operated in the area of the Circus or buffer zone in conditions or in a manner likely to result in ground disturbance, other than in accordance with a previously agreed method statement approved in writing. All vehicle operators must be advised of the significance of the monument.
- 13.32 Ensure the significance of the biodiversity (both flora and fauna) of the Circus area is informed by appropriate up-to-date biodiversity assessments, to protect important species and to minimise and mitigate the disturbance to species that make a positive contribution to the site. An archive of this work will be maintained by the Council.
- 13.33 In the D-shaped enclosed garden at the west end of the Circus (location of the reconstructed start gates), investigate the potential to open the second set of gates, to provide greater public access to this area, and increase the legibility of the monument (better facilitating a circular circus walkway or trail).
- 13.34 Investigate creative and imaginative ways of using the amenity space for events.
- 13.35 Investigate the potential for a community excavation and/or Operation Nightingale project²¹, to further understand and promote the Circus.
- 13.36 Investigate the potential for the presentation of a well-preserved section of the remains, so that they can be viewed by the public, and the creation of some sort of building or structure over them (to protect them from the elements).
- 13.37 Wayfind/mark a route from the town centre, to ensure the Circus is accessible to visitors on foot from the town centre (heritage trail).
- 13.38 Investigate the reconstruction of part of the seating area, to provide an impression of how the seating may have looked. This may not be on the site of the actual circus.

²¹ Operation Nightingale is an initiative to assist the recovery of wounded, injured and sick military personnel and veterans by getting them involved in archaeological investigations: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/operation-nightingale>

14.0 Management Responsibilities

- 14.1 The Portfolio Holder for Culture and Performance has the overall delegated responsibility for the Roman Circus.
- 14.2 The Roman Circus lies wholly within the New Town and Christ Church Ward of the Borough.
- 14.3 The senior responsible officer for the Council is the Assistant Director (Communities), and also the Development Manager for new development / planning applications affecting the Roman Circus.
- 14.4 The Colchester and Ipswich Museums Service (CIMS) Heritage Manager has responsibility for overseeing the objectives and actions in this management plan in consultation other key stakeholders – specifically the Council's Archaeological Advisor and other key Council officers, Historic England, developers (and their agents), Colchester Archaeological Trust.
- 14.5 The archaeological advisor will prepare each brief relating to specialist assessments, in agreement with Historic England, and recording and will monitor the work to ensure it meets the requirement of the brief. The Archaeological Advisor has responsibility for maintaining the archive in the Historic Environment Record.
- 14.7 The Council's arboricultural officer will provide advice and expertise about tree management within the area of the Roman Circus. Routine management of Council-maintained trees lies with the Council's tree officer.
- 14.8 The maintenance of the Roman Circus currently lies with the private landowners, although EX758172 and EX788209 are expected to be transferred to the Council as public open space; and responsibility for management and maintenance, such as grass-cutting, in these areas will be transferred to the Council. There is, however, currently no agreed timetable for the land transfer. The area at the west end of the Circus (EX787918) is sub-leased to, and managed by, CAT.
- 14.9 The Council's Neighbourhood Services is responsible for the management of Public Open Space (once areas within the Circus are transferred to the Council).

15.0 Potential Threats to the Roman Circus

The potential threats, excluding lack of routine maintenance to landscaping and/or areas of public open space:

- 15.1 Damage from emergency repairs to services and utilities.
 - 15.1.1 Every effort will be made to ensure that utility companies, as well as land owners, are made aware of the statutory protection of the Circus as well as this management plan to ensure that all works have consent and, where necessary, are carried out under archaeological supervision.
- 15.2 Indirect harm to the setting of the Circus caused by inappropriate new development.

- 15.2.1 Assessment will be required in accordance with National and Local policies to ensure that new development enhances the significance of the Circus and based on advice from Historic England and the Council's planning and historic environment specialists.
- 15.3 Different landscaping schemes for different parcels of land that make the overall coherence of the Circus presentation confusing to the public.
- 15.3.1 Every effort will be made to ensure that new landscaping schemes, within parcels of land to be redeveloped, will be the subject of agreement before development is granted.
- 15.4 Direct harm caused by ongoing root damage from the mature trees within the area of the Circus.
- 15.4.1 The trees are all now mature, part of the landscaping relating to the layout of the Garrison in the late 19th century. Consequently, any new damage from their roots will be relatively limited. The tree will be routinely managed, to ensure they are appropriately pruned and carefully removed (with appropriate risk assessment in places) when necessary.

16.0 Health and Safety Overview and Risk Assessments

- 16.1 No significant health and safety issues relating specifically to the buried archaeological remains have been identified, which could potentially cause significant damage to life and limb. In terms of landscaping and management, health and safety issues can be minimised with routine maintenance of, for example, public open space and management of trees.
- 16.2 Contractors, as well as Council staff, specialists and volunteers working within the area of the Circus will be required to undertake individual risk assessments and demonstrate adequate safety precautions.

17.0 Monitoring and Review of the Plan

- 17.1 This Plan will be reviewed on a five-year basis and amended over time to take account of future developments and opportunities. A key role for the Council's responsible officer will be to implement, review and update the plan to ensure that it remains a valid document throughout its lifespan for the effective management of the Roman Circus.

List of Abbreviations

CAT	Colchester Archaeological Trust
CBC	Colchester Borough Council
CIMS	Colchester and Ipswich Museums Service
HE	Historic England
HER	Historic Environment Record

Further Information

Further information about the Council's approach to Archaeological Heritage Assets is available in the adopted planning guidance, [*Managing Archaeology in Development Colchester Local Development Framework Supplementary Planning Document*](#) (Adopted 2015).

Further information can be found in [*Conservation Principles Policies and Guidance for the Sustainable Management of the Historic Environment*](#) (English Heritage 2008).

The National Heritage List for England (NHLE) is the official and up-to-date database of all nationally designated heritage assets and contains a map and description of all designated assets. The List can be viewed at: <https://www.historicengland.org.uk/listing/thelist/> Information on Scheduled Monuments, and the different consents required for carrying out works, can be obtained from Historic England at: <https://www.historicengland.org.uk/advice/hpg/>

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Information about managing change within the setting of heritage assets can be found in [*Historic Environment Good Practice Advice in Planning Note 3. The Setting of Heritage Assets*](#) (2nd Edition), 2017.

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Figures

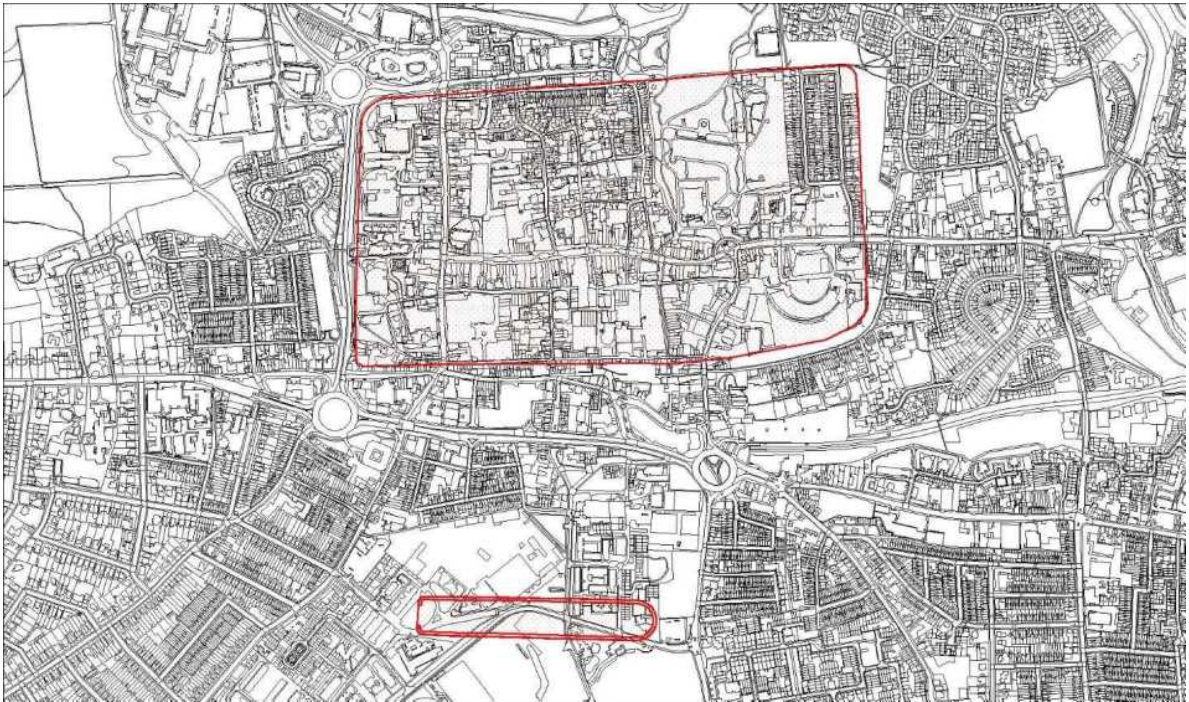


Figure 1: Location of Roman Circus in relationship to the walled town (and superimposed on the modern town).

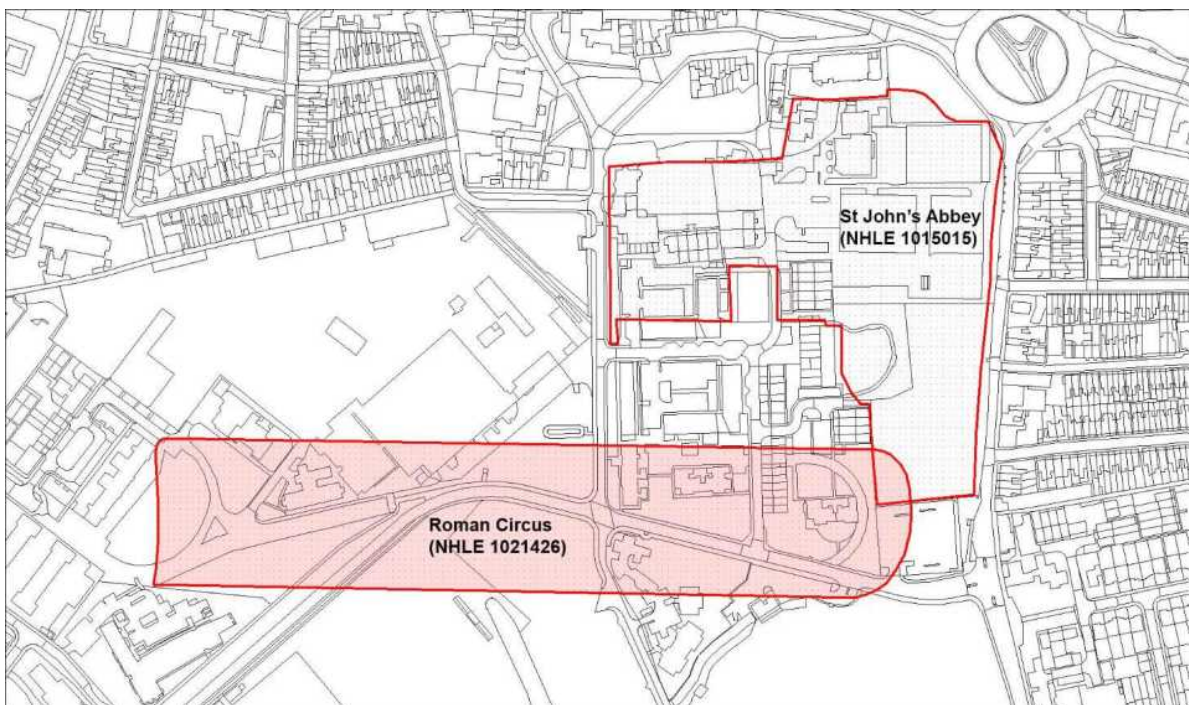


Figure 2: Scheduled Monuments, 'Roman Circus 200m south of Abbey House' ([NHLE no. 1021426](#)) and the 'Benedictine Abbey of St John' ([NHLE no. 1015015](#)).

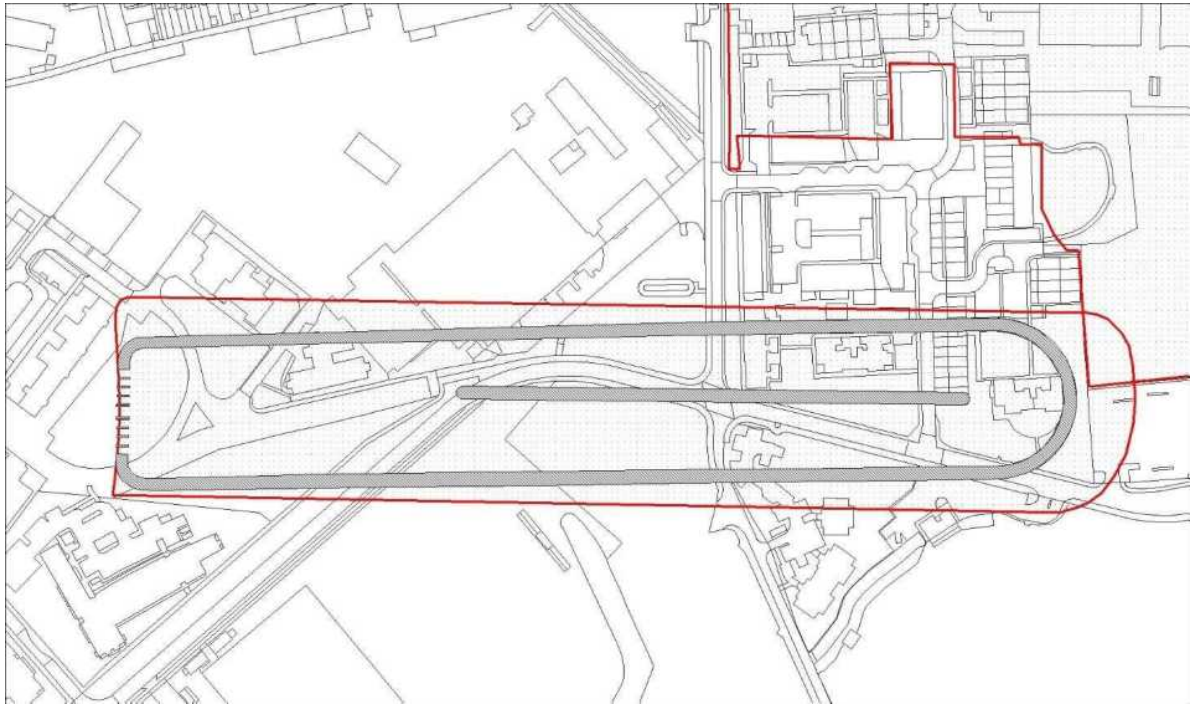


Figure 3: Roman Circus (in grey) in relationship to the Scheduled Monument, 'Roman Circus 200m south of Abbey House' ([NHLE no. 1021426](#)) (in red).

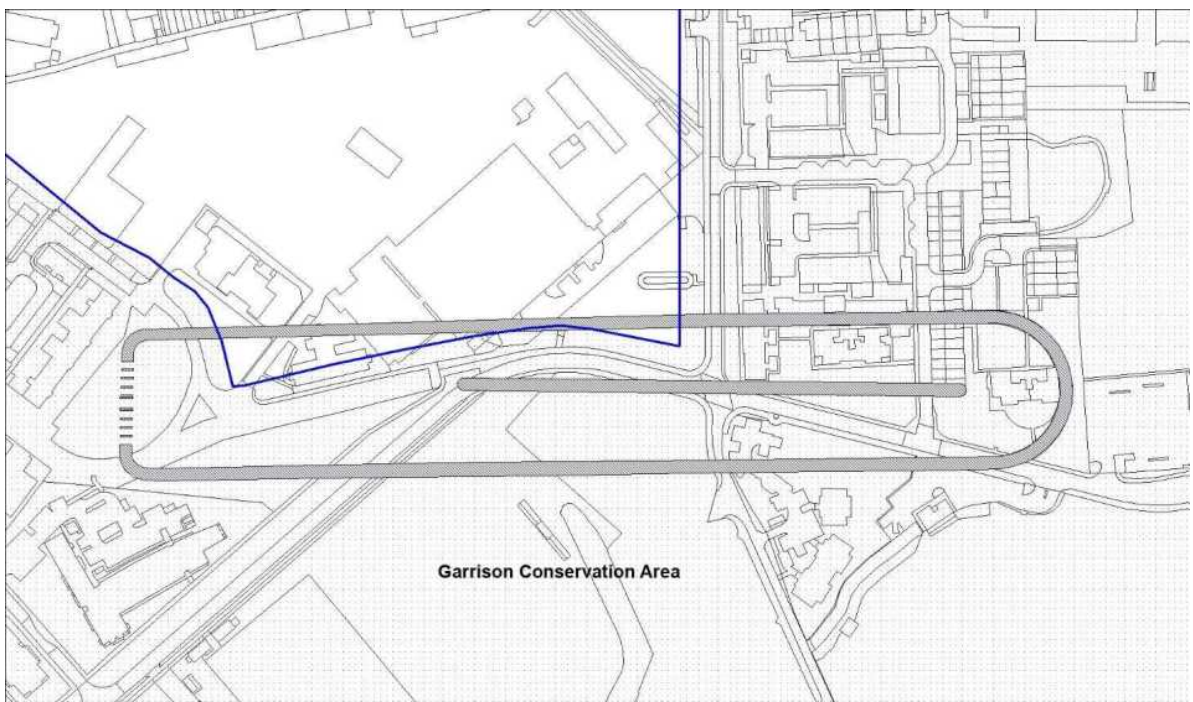


Figure 4: Roman Circus in relationship to the Garrison Conservation



Figure 5: Roman Circus in relationship to the Listed (blue) and Locally Listed (green) buildings.

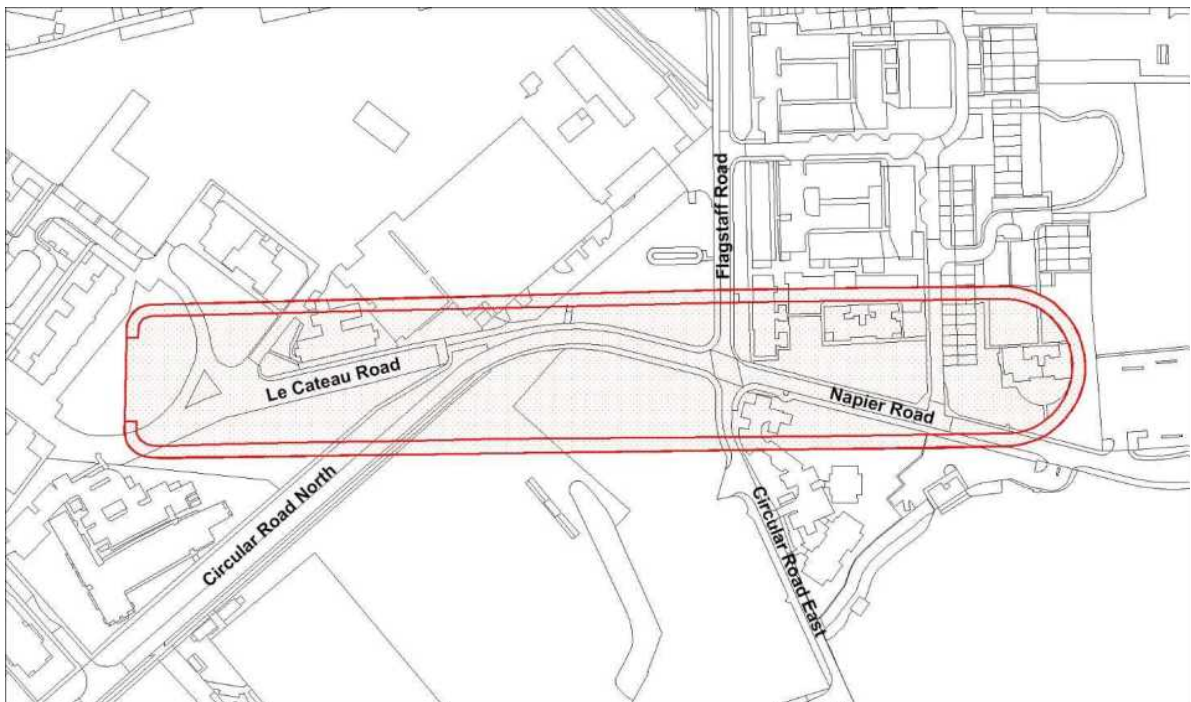


Figure 6: Roman Circus in relationship to the road

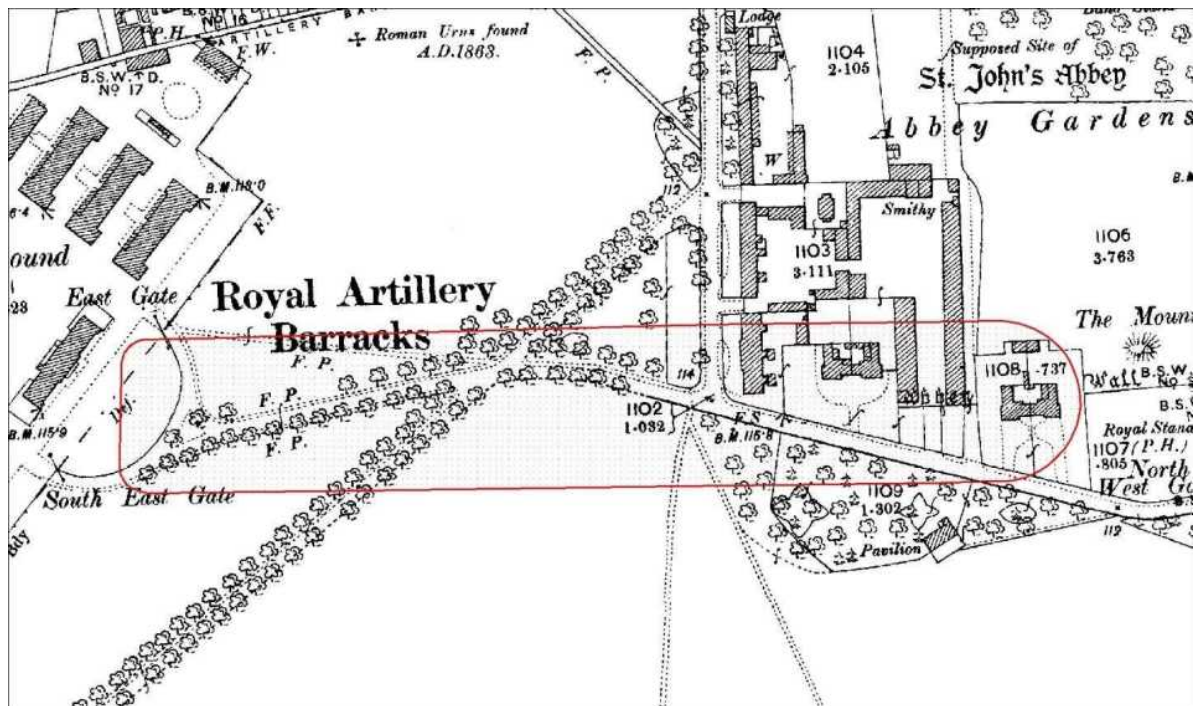


Figure 7: Roman Circus in relationship to Epoch 2 of the OS County Series 1:2500, 1897-1904.

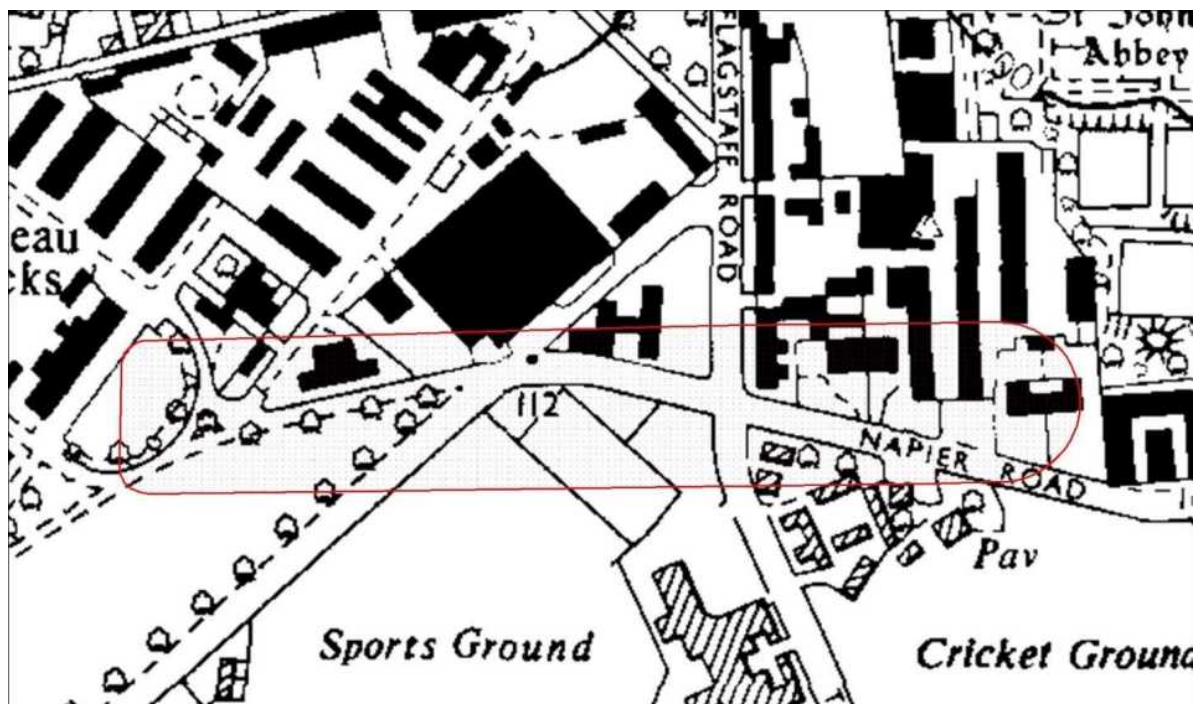


Figure 8: Roman Circus in relationship to the OS 1:10,000 map,

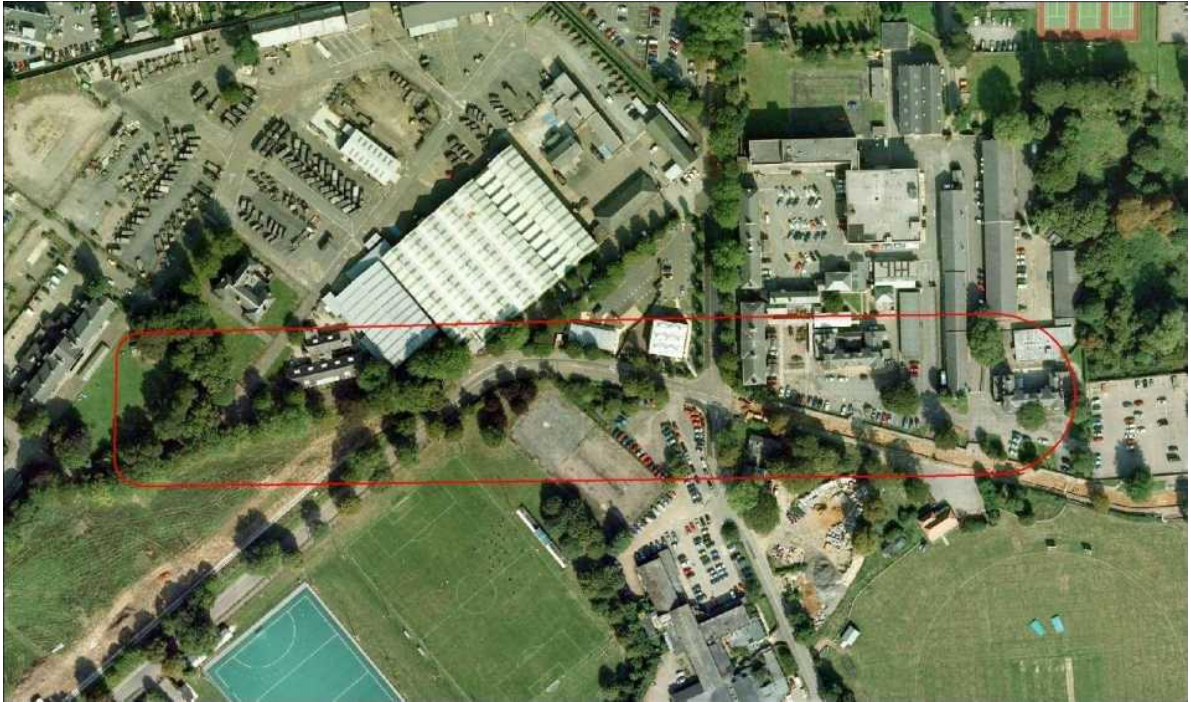


Figure 9: Roman Circus in relation to the 2006 aerial photograph, and before significant redevelopment of the area.

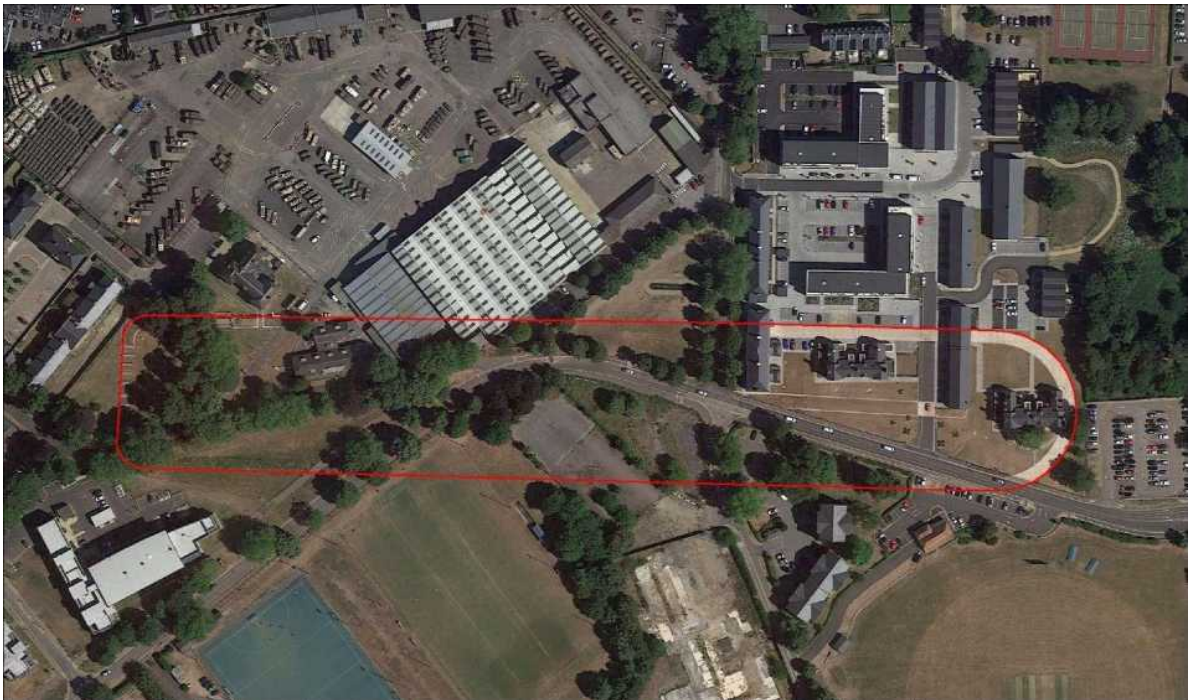


Figure 10: Roman Circus in relation to the current aerial



Figure 11: Roman Circus Scheduled Monument ownership: EX905194 (Abacus Land 4 Ltd) in red.



Figure 12: Roman Circus Scheduled Monument ownership: EX787918 (Taylor Wimpey) in red.

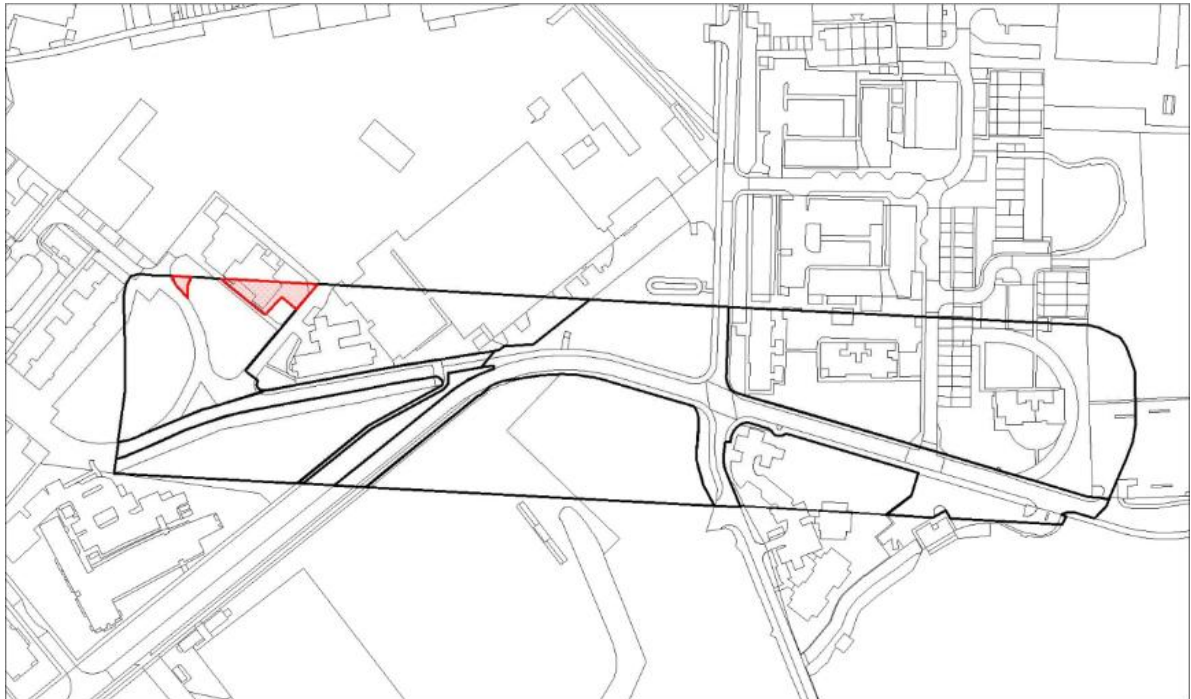


Figure 13: Roman Circus Scheduled Monument ownership: EX879758 (Colchester Archaeological Trust) in red.



Figure 14: Roman Circus Scheduled Monument ownership: EX788209 (Bovis Homes Ltd) in red.



Figure 15: Roman Circus Scheduled Monument ownership: EX758172 (Taylor Wimpey) in red.



Figure 16: Roman Circus Scheduled Monument ownership: EX832089 (Taylor Wimpey) in red.



Figure 17: Roman Circus Scheduled Monument ownership: EX641744 (Ministry of Defence) in red.

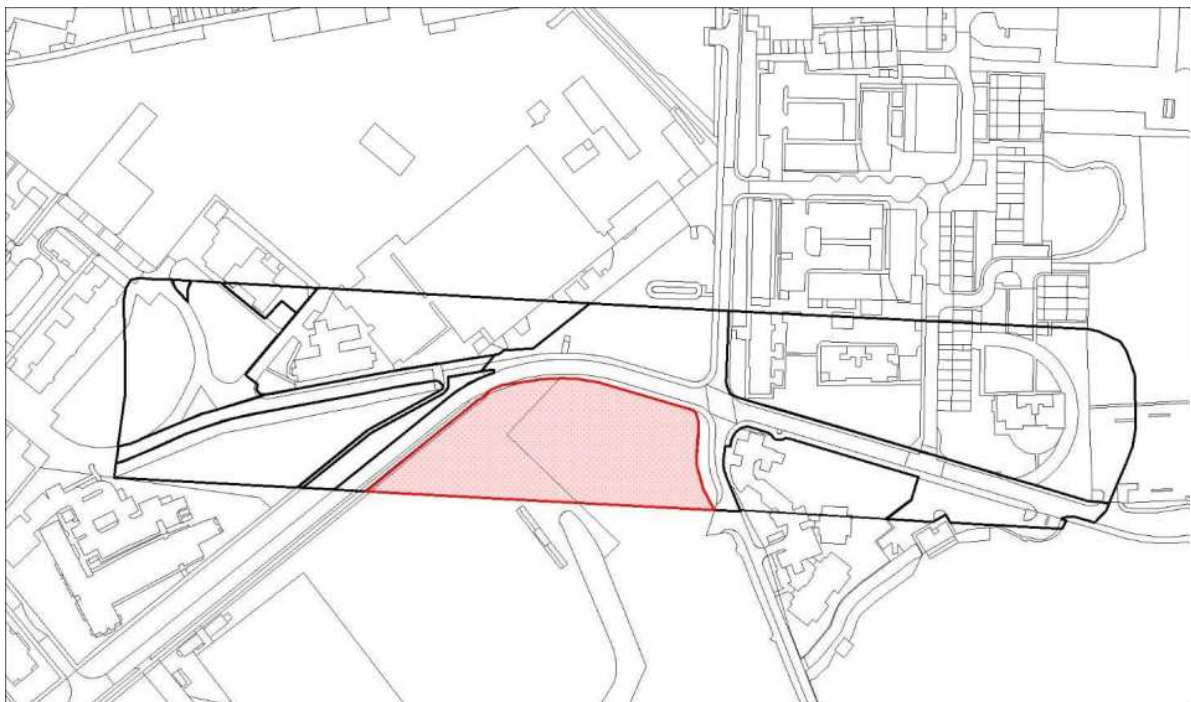


Figure 18: Roman Circus Scheduled Monument ownership: EX970726 (Secretary of State for Communities and Government) in red.



Figure 19: Roman Circus Scheduled Monument ownership: EX758211 (Taylor Wimpey) in red.

Photographs



Photograph 1: View (looking west) along the line of the southern cavea (not demarcated) in EX905194 (Abacus Land 4 Ltd), June 2020. Pearce Court and Bradman Court are located on the left (south) behind the mature trees.



Photograph 2: View (looking west) of the D-shaped lawn EX787918 (Taylor Wimpey), January 2019. The low bank is immediately behind the railings. The reconstructed stumps of the starting gates are located in front of the blue hoarding and the Former Officers' Quarters (NHLE no. 1375581) is behind it.



Photograph 3: View (looking north-west towards Roman Circus House) around the outside of the D-shaped lawn EX787918 (Taylor Wimpey), June 2020. Le Cateau Road is to the right (east).



Photograph 4: View (looking west) along the line of the northern cavea (marked in concrete) in EX787918 (Taylor Wimpey), in front of Roman Circus Horse, January 2019. The Former Officers' Quarters (NHLE no. 1375581) is behind the trees.



Photograph 5: View (looking west) along the line of the northern cavea in EX787918 (Taylor Wimpey), in front of Roman Circus Horse, January 2019. The foundations of the cavea have been exposed, on public display, below glass (and enclosed by the railings).



Photograph 6: View (looking west) along the line of the southern cavea, presented as a low grass bank, in EX788209 (Bovis Homes Ltd), June 2020. Whitworth House is located to the left (south).



Photograph 7: View (looking west) along the line of the cavea, marked as a low grass bank, in EX788209 (Bovis Homes Ltd), January 2019. The line of the cavea is presented with coloured sets where it crosses the footpath on the west side of Circular Road North. Whitworth House is located to the left (south) and the Former Officers' Quarters (NHLE no. 1375581), beyond the west end of the Circus, is visible through the trees.



Photograph 8: View (looking west) from Flagstaff Road across the line of the northern cavea, presented as a low grass bank, in EX758172 (Taylor Wimpey), January 2019. The large warehouse-type building is within the ABRO site (EX641744).



Photograph 9: View (looking north-west) across the line of the northern cavea in EX758172 (Taylor Wimpey), January 2019. The electricity substation in the foreground lies within the area of the Circus. The eroded path cuts along the side of the ABRO site (EX641744), between Le Cateau and Flagstaff Roads. Arena Place is visible in the background.



Photograph 10: View looking west from Emperor Road towards Domitian Court, the Former Commanding Officers' Accommodation FLG 5/6, EX832089 (Taylor Wimpey), June 2020. The line of spina is presented as a low grass bank edged with sets and with coloured sets where the road crosses it.



Photograph 11: View looking north-east along the line of the curving east end of the cavea, presented with coloured sets as a walkway, EX832089 (Taylor Wimpey), January 2019. The eastern extension to the Former Commanding Officers' Accommodation FLG 7/8, now Nero Court, was removed during the re-development of the Flagstaff complex (now Arena Place).



Photograph 12: View looking west along the line of the northern cavea, marked out with coloured sets as a walkway, EX832089 (Taylor Wimpey), June 2020. That part of the locally listed Former Wagon shed K Block built across the cavea was removed during the residential conversion.



Photograph 13: View north-west along Le Cateau Road, with the former dining room and cook house erected in EX641744 (former Army Base Repair Organisation or ABRO site), January 2019.



Photograph 14: View north-east along Le Cateau Road, with workshops in EX641744 (former Army Base Repair Organisation or ABRO site), January 2019.



Photograph 15: View west from Circular Road East, along the line of the southern cavea, into the east part of EX970726 (Secretary of State for Communities and Government), the former Arena Leisure Centre site, June 2020.



Photograph 16: View south-west across Circular Road North into the west part of EX970726 (Secretary of State for Communities and Government), currently used as a sports pitch, June 2020.



Photograph 17: View east along Le Cateau Road, June 2020.

Appendix 1: Roman Circus 200m south of Abbey House

Overview

Heritage Category: Scheduled Monument

List Entry Number: 1021426

Date first listed: 13-Nov-2007

Location

County: Essex

District: Colchester (District Authority)

National Grid Reference: TL 99618

24534

Reasons for Designation

The Colchester Roman Circus is a unique archaeological monument in Britain. It is the only place in the country where there is excavated and convincing evidence for a circus and is one of only six locations in the north west provinces of the Roman empire where circuses have been securely identified. The area excavations and numerous trenches investigated highlight the archaeological potential of the site and the scope for improving the knowledge and understanding of such buildings not only nationally but in an international context. The Roman circus must be considered in conjunction with other monumental buildings or structures surviving from Roman Colchester. It provides further evidence of the importance of Colchester as one of the principle urban centres of Roman Britain.

Details

The monument includes the buried remains of a Roman circus or chariot racing track and a section of the precinct wall relating to the Benedictine Abbey of Saint John. The monument is orientated east to west and is situated to the south of Colchester town centre on the crest of a prominent ridge. The classic Roman circus is an elongated oval track flanked by cavea (tiers of seating) along two sides and around the curved end. A low barrier known as a spina runs down the centre to prevent collisions. Turning posts known as metae were placed at either end of the spina and at the open, non curved, end was a row of starting bays known as the carceras. Circuses were used originally for chariot racing and boxing but athletics and wrestling also became popular. The Colchester circus is orientated east to west and measures 448.2 meters in length and between 71.1 and 74.2 meters in width. The area of protection also includes a ten metre buffer zone around the circus which is considered necessary for the support and preservation of the monument. Three area excavations and a number of evaluation trenches have been investigated and all contribute to our understanding of the form and fabric of the circus.

Most recent excavations (2007) by the Colchester Archaeological Trust have exposed a section of the spina at the junction between Napier Road and Circular Road North. All the evidence helps to illustrate and confirm the archaeological potential of the monument. It has been calculated that the circus had a seating capacity of around 8,000 - 15,000. The starting gates are thought to have been situated at the western end of the structure with the semi circular end to the east. The stand or cavea at Colchester varied between 5.8m and 6.0m in total width. It was built of earth but was retained by stone or timber walls, a similar method of construction to that found in theatres and amphitheatres in Britain and elsewhere. At Colchester it is thought the inner cavea was built of stone. The large exterior buttresses with parallel, less substantial walls 5m inside imply the outer cavea wall was of stone and has been estimated to be at least 2m in height. These may have supported blind arcading enhanced with pilasters much like examples on the continent. Finds from robber trenches certainly confirm the presence of Romanised decorative architecture such as tile coursing, opus signinum facing mortar (fine Roman concrete), and a piece each of column and incised marble facing (possibly Purbeck). The stone used in the foundations of the cavea is greensand which is rare elsewhere in Colchester probably because it had to be bought in from Kent. On the whole dating evidence from the circus is limited but based on the dated contexts of the stone elsewhere in the area the use of Kent greensand implies it was built in the second century AD. The sheer scale of the building was so great that it is believed that the emperor must have paid for its construction. Hadrian's visit to Britain in AD122 is associated with a revival of public buildings in towns and it is thought that he may have been responsible for the construction of the circus at Colchester. A number of glass and pottery finds discovered in Colchester in the past depict images of chariot races. Given the discovery of the circus it is now thought that some of these may be souvenirs of actual events. New finds associated with the sport include a piece of horse furniture which was recovered from the robber trench of the inner wall. A coin from a grave dated to the early first century AD features a four horse chariot and rider and is a rare find in Britain. A silver coin found in a rare hoard dated to between 150BC and AD117 also depicts a four horse chariot. It is unclear when the circus came out of use but analysis suggests the circus was probably levelled in the late Roman period, whilst the footings were subsequently robbed in the medieval period. Early medieval pottery from a trench dug to extract building material suggests that some material may have been dismantled and used in the abbey construction. The abbey precinct wall exhibits some odd bends in the south west corner and implies that its alignment may have been, at least in part, determined by elements of the surviving circus. A section of the precinct wall lies approximately 60m west from the eastern end of the monument. It stands to almost 2.5m high and although there is evidence of dressed facing stone it survives mainly as a randomly coursed stone core. This section of walling is included in the scheduling. Excavation also confirmed that the circus was surrounded by a contemporary cemetery. A total of 516 burials have been excavated and recorded. The known areas of the cemetery have been fully excavated and preserved by record and are not therefore included in the scheduling. All buildings, with the exception of the upstanding precinct wall are excluded from the

scheduling as are all road and path surfaces, fences, signage and tennis courts. However, the ground beneath all these features is included.

MAP EXTRACT The site of the monument is shown on the attached map extract. It includes a 10 metre boundary around the archaeological features, considered to be essential for the monument's support and preservation.

Legacy

The contents of this record have been generated from a legacy data system. Legacy System number: 35614

Legacy System: RSM

Sources

Books and journals

Crummy, P, 'Journal of Roman Archaeology' in The circus at Colchester, , Vol. 18, (2005), 267-277

Crummy, P, 'Colchester Archaeologist' in Circus Revealed, , Vol. 19, (2006), 2-8

Masefield, R, 'British Archaeology' in When the Circus came to Colchester, , Vol. 81, (2005), 14-15

Other

Colchester Borough Council, Colchester Roman Circus management plan, 2006, JUNE

Legal

This monument is scheduled under the Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Areas Act

1979 as amended as it appears to the Secretary of State to be of national importance. This entry is a copy, the original is held by the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport.

End of official listing

1021426

County: Essex District:

Colchester Parish: Non

Civil Parish

Each official record of a scheduled monument contains a map. New entries on the schedule from 1988 onwards include a digitally created map which forms part of the official record. For entries created in the years up to and including 1987 a hand-drawn map forms part of the official record. The map here has been translated from the official map and that process may have introduced inaccuracies. Copies of maps that form part of the official record can be obtained from Historic England.

This map was delivered electronically and when printed may not be to scale and may be subject to distortions. All maps and grid references are for identification purposes only and must be read in conjunction with other information in the record.

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List Entry NGR: TL 99618 24534

This is an A4 sized map and should be printed full size at A4 with no page scaling set.

Name:
Roman Circus 200m south of Abbey House

Map Scale: 1:10000
Print Date: 8 September 2020



