CHESHIRE HISTORIC TOWNS SURVEY

Runcorn and Halton

Archaeological Strategy

2003

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Runcorn and Halton: Area of Archaeological Potential

1. Introduction

1.1 An Area of Archaeological Potential (AAP) has been identified in Runcorn and Halton, comprising five Archaeological Character Zones (ACZs). The Zones are identified by their defining archaeological or historical characteristics, or *Primary Characteristics*. For example, in Industrial Runcorn (Archaeological Character Zone 4), the defining characteristics include docks, ship building yards and alkali manufactories.

1.2 Each Archaeological Character Zone may also include sites and features, which are not defining characteristics but are nonetheless of archaeological and historical importance, and these are identified as *Secondary Characteristics*. For example, Archaeological Character Zone 4 includes the potential remains of a Saxon *Burh*, and this has therefore been identified as a secondary characteristic.

1.3 The list of characteristics is not exhaustive, and it is possible that other types of important archaeological remains and features exist within each Archaeological Character Zone. The boundaries of the AAPs and the Archaeological Character Zones, and the list of Primary and Secondary Characteristics are intended as a guide for planners and developers. They are based on current knowledge, and are therefore subject to change as new information is revealed.

2. Existing Designations (Figure 1)

Scheduled Ancient Monuments	One – Halton Castle (SAM 27611)
Listed Buildings	Grade I - none Grade II* - Halton: the Library on Castle Road, the Vicarage on Castle Road, The Castle Hotel – formerly the Castle Court House, the Old Hall on Halton Common, the Seneschal's House on Main Street. Runcorn: All Saints Church Grade II – 24
Conservation Areas	Three – Weston Village, Higher Runcorn and Halton Village.

3. The Archaeological Character Zones (Figure 2)

Zone 1: Halton Castle

Primary Characteristics	
Halton Castle	The castle was first built c 1071. All that remains of the castle is the stone curtain wall and the courthouse, which is now used as a hotel.
Medieval Chapel	A chapel is believed to have existed alongside the castle, potentially beneath the present church of St Mary, which having been demolished and rebuilt in the Civil Wars, was rebuilt again in 1851.
Settlement	The castle was the focus of medieval Halton and settlement is likely to have developed within close proximity of its walls.

Secondary Characteristics	
Early Medieval Settlement	The sandstone outcrop upon which Halton castle stands was potentially the centre of the wealthy early medieval estate of Halton, and may have provided an attractive location for settlement from a much earlier time.
Post Medieval Settlement	A number of post medieval buildings survive in this Zone, including the library and vicarage, which were built on Castle Street in 1730 and 1739 respectively.

Zone 2: Medieval Settlement

Primary Characteristics	
Medieval Borough	A number of boundaries survive in this Zone, which run at right angles to Main Street and appear to outline former long, narrow medieval burgage plots. This settlement plan is typical of medieval town planning and may indicate the location of the borough, which had been laid out at Halton by the mid-14th century.
Medieval Market Place	The characteristic widening of Main Street as it runs through this Zone, indicates the location of the medieval market place.

Secondary Characteristics	
Post Medieval Settlement	A number of buildings survive from this period, including Grade II listed buildings.

Zone 3: Later Medieval Settlement

Primary Characteristics	
Settlement	Settlement in this Zone appears to post date that further to the south in Zone 2 and may have origins in the later medieval period.

Secondary Characteristics	
Post Medieval Settlement	A number of post medieval buildings survive in this Zone including the Seneschal's House, which was built in 1598 and is listed Grade II*.

Zone 4: Industrial Runcorn

Primary Characteristics	
Industry	A number of industries developed at Runcorn, including ship building, tanning and soap manufacturing.
Canals	The development of Runcorn depended upon the construction of a number of Canals: the Bridgewater Canal, the Runcorn to Lachford Canal, the Weaver Navigation and the Manchester Ship Canal.
Docks	The Bridgwater canal encouraged the development of the port of Runcorn, and the Runcorn to Latchford Canal the development of the Old Quay docks.

Secondary Characteristics	
Early Medieval *Burh*	A *burh* (defensive stronghold) was constructed at Runcorn in AD 915 in order to protect the Mercian border from Viking invasion. This is thought to have been located in the vicinity of Castle Rock.
Medieval Church	All Saints church is known to have been built by at least the 12th century. Whether this is the site of an even earlier church is uncertain.
Runcorn Priory	Runcorn Priory was founded c 1115 and is thought to have been located in the vicinity of All Saints church, possibly using the medieval church as the Priory church. It was moved to Norton in 1133.
Medieval Ferry	A ferry is known to have crossed the Mersey from at least the medieval period.
Medieval Settlement	Settlement will have developed in the vicinity of the medieval church, Priory and ferry crossing.

Post Medieval Settlement	Interspersed with the industrial sites are domestic and civic buildings, in particular a large number of terraced houses, which housed the workers of the local industries.

Zone 5: Weston Point

| Primary Characteristics	
Weston Point Docks	By c 1810 the Weaver Navigation had a port on the Mersey at Weston Point and was connected to Runcorn via the short Runcorn and Weston Canal. During the construction of the Manchester Ship Canal, Weston was used as a temporary port until the route through Runcorn was completed in 1894.
Industry	A number of industrial works were established at Weston Point, including a salt works and an alkali works.

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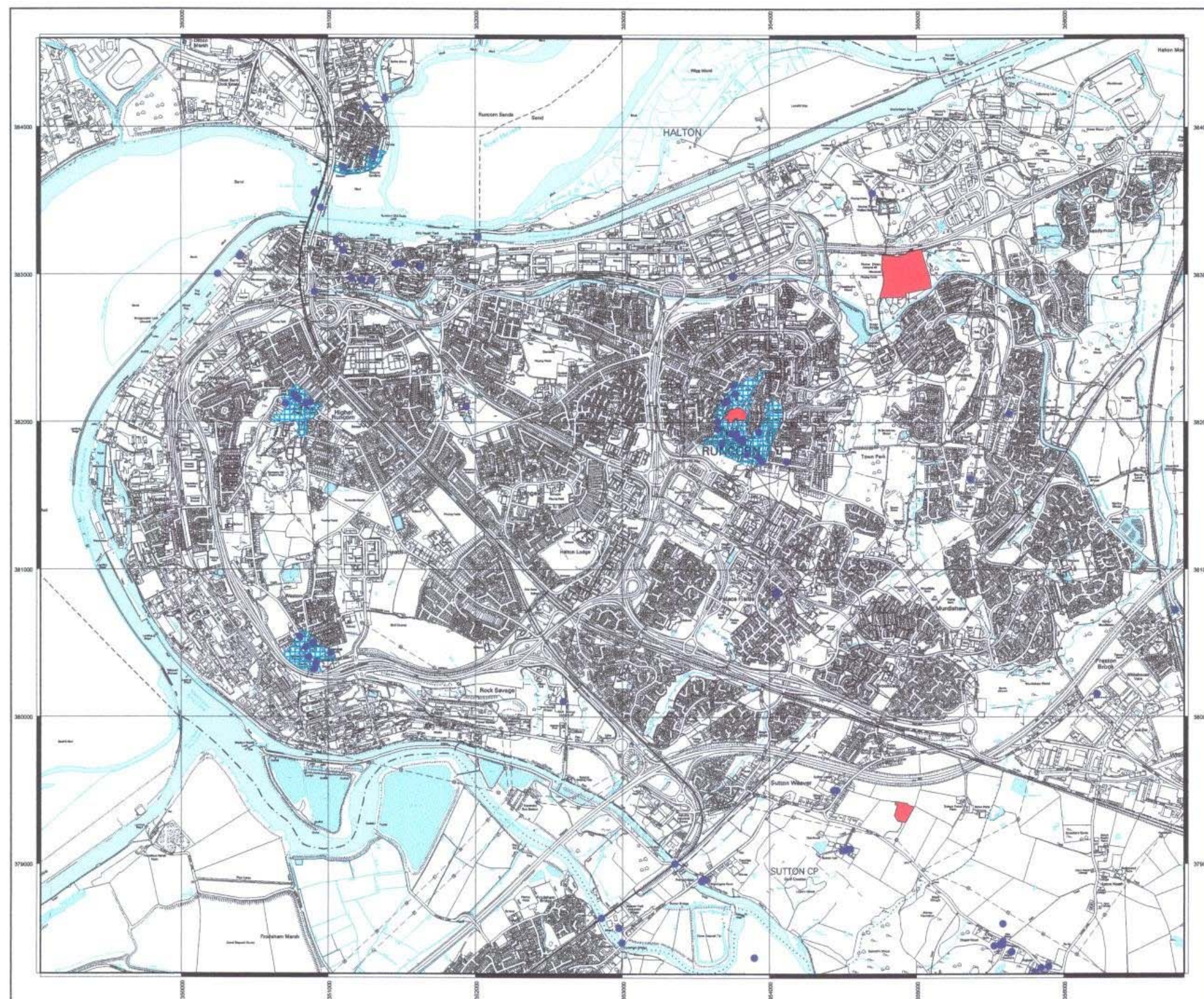
Figure 1:
Runcorn and Halton
Existing Designations

Scheduled Ancient Monument
Listed Building
Conservation Area

1:25000

0   1   2 Kilometres

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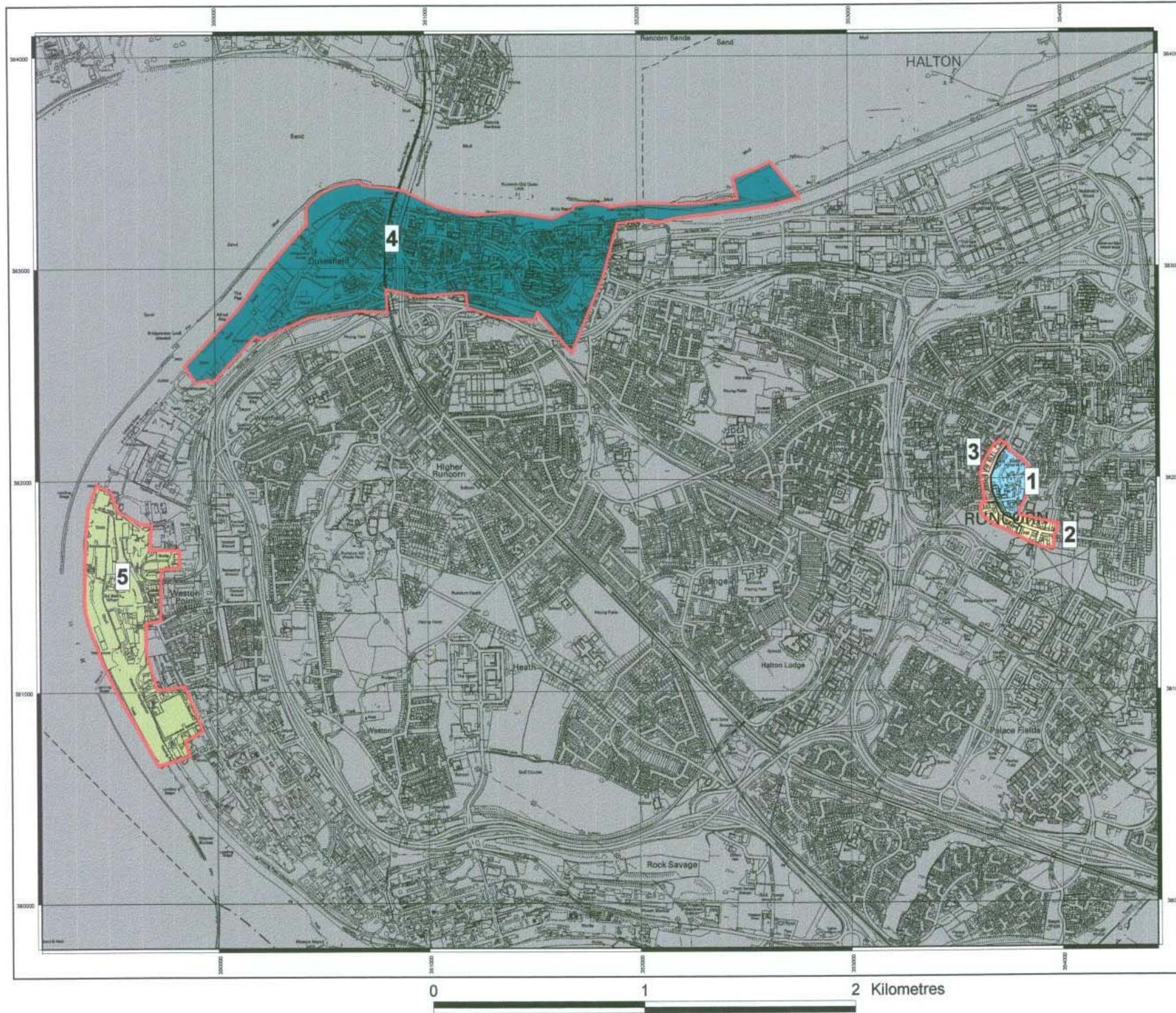*Environmental Planning LA076503. 2003

Figure 2: Runcorn & Halton Areas of Archaeological Potential and Archaeological Character Zones

Area of Archaeological Potential
ACZ1: Halton Castle
ACZ2: Medieval Settlement
ACZ3: Later Medieval Settlement
ACZ4: Industrial Runcorn
ACZ5: Weston Point
Area Outside the Historic Core

1:17000

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