

Planning in late-Saxon Worcester

by Jeremy Haslam¹

Abstract

Recent analyses of some of the key aspects of the early development of the burh of Worcester in the late 9th century are re-examined against archaeological, topographical and historical evidence. It is possible to reinterpret this evidence, including the well-known charter of Aethelred and Aethelflaed of probably the 890s, to propose a new model for this early development, such that stages belonging to the origin of the burh from its beginnings in the early 880s as a burh of King Alfred, through an extension in the early-mid 890s, can be postulated. This has wider implications for early layout of burhs in general, and for any view about the development of urbanism in the late Saxon period.

Recent detailed work on the early development of Worcester, from archaeological, topographical and historical perspectives, has generated some important models which have attempted to characterise the processes by which the early layout of the late 9th century burh was implemented. This work has provided an exemplary and far-reaching case study in which work in these different fields has been brought together to create new syntheses.² These developmental models relating to Worcester have been utilised subsequently by Richard Holt in articulating a new model which characterises the initial stages of the formation of burhs in general, and hence of the wider development of urbanism in the late Saxon period of which these burhs are the physical manifestation.³ This has questioned a widely-held paradigm of the early development of burhs in the late 9th century in southern and Midland England, to the effect that the layout of streets, tenements and other physical aspects of these burhs should be seen as planned elements which belong to the initial stages of their development. It is the intention in this paper to critically examine a number of aspects of the model articulated by Nigel Baker and Richard Holt in their examination of the early development of Worcester, and which is developed further in Holt's analysis.

This has made it possible to put forward a new model for its early development, which has implications for any wider interpretation of the development late Saxon burhs as planned towns.

One component of this new model is the evidence from a distinct plan unit of the city centre of Worcester comprising the northern part of the High Street, which is argued as showing an early planned layout of properties or *hagae* and their boundaries on its eastern side (Fig.1). This initial layout is inferred from the existence of three continuous boundaries which ran in straight lines from the High Street to the Shambles to the east, and which are perceived to be 'primary'. These are spaced at regular intervals, and define four large plots or *hagae*, each of equal size, about three-quarters of an acre (0.3 hectares). Each of these fronted onto High Street and backed onto the Shambles, between Church Street on the north and Pump Street on the south (see Fig. 1, marked with arrows, *a-e*).⁴ From the regularity of the spacing of these boundaries it has been inferred that the *hagae* so defined were 'primary features of the planned layout, established before the area was built up'.⁵ At the time this hypothesis was first put forward, it had been concluded from topographical analysis that the eastern burh defences were likely to have run to the east of The Shambles, and that the primary boundaries would therefore have been entirely intramural.⁶

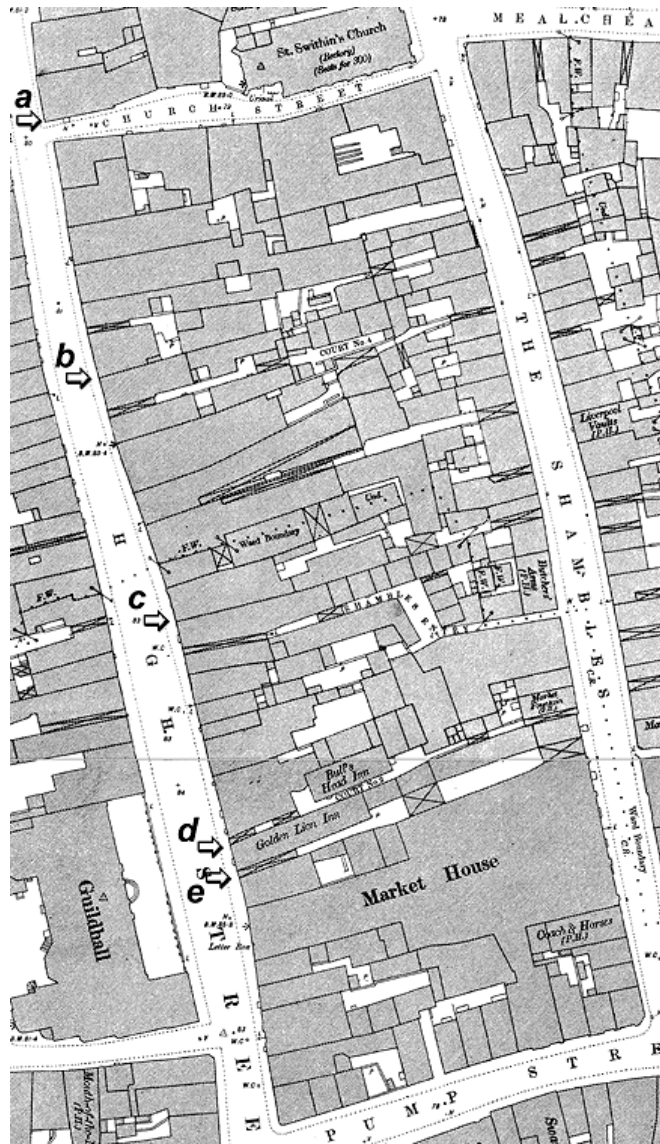


Fig. 1 here

This conclusion was, however, overtaken by the results of the excavations on the City Arcades site in 1999, which located a massive ditch which ran north-south between and parallel to the High Street and the Shambles, and which is recognised as being the eastern defensive ditch of the burh.⁷ This ditch is clearly earlier than the large *hagae* and their boundaries postulated earlier, which were now seen to have been laid over its line. In a reconsideration of the significance of these 'primary' features of the urban landscape to the east of the High Street, Baker and Holt concluded that their origin should be sought in a context in which 'the comprehensive levelling of obsolete defences was accomplished by an overall authority as a prelude to planned urban settlement', which is seen as occurring perhaps in the third quarter of the 10th century.⁸ This conclusion appears, at least in part, to be based on the

analogy of the rather more certain processes of levelling of the former Roman defences at the southern end of the High Street.⁹

In his latest paper Richard Holt argues that, after the discovery of the burh ditch in 1999, 'it seemed more reasonable to suppose that both parts of the High Street were laid out in one exercise following a massive undertaking of levelling large stretches of the defences. Such work could perhaps have taken place during the peaceful 960s in connection with the building of the new cathedral . . . and perhaps extensive remodelling of the cathedral area'. In relation to the 'primary' features to the east of High Street, Holt concludes that 'The initial planning of the interior of the borough . . . had to be assigned to an entirely different context [to that of the initial formation of the burh], indeed to a period following the comprehensive and thus deliberate levelling of this stretch of the defences.' As a result of the elaboration of this model, he goes on to confidently assert that 'it is very clear that at Worcester the central zone of the borough was *not* planned in the 890s, and that town planning was a much later feature.'¹⁰

This clearly-stated model of the development of the burh of Worcester is, however, at odds with the actual evidence on the ground. There are a number of difficulties in accepting that the boundaries in question are 'primary', in the sense of representing an initial layout of large urban tenements or *hagae* and their boundaries over a hitherto unplanned and levelled area. These are of two kinds - topographical and archaeological. The topographical considerations are three-fold. Firstly, as the 1st edition of the 1:500 OS map of 18** clearly shows, the northern boundary (*b* in Fig. 1) is not in fact continuous, but is made up of two sections which do not meet in the middle. Furthermore, these two parts are not on exactly the same alignment. If extended past each other, they would form parallel lines. The notion of this 'alignment' as a unitary boundary extending at one moment in time from High Street to the Shambles to the east is therefore questionable. This in turn calls in question the apparent symmetry between the four supposedly regularly-spaced *hagae* of which these three alignments are the boundaries.

Secondly, the northern-most point selected to demonstrate the metrological regularity of this arrangement (*a* in Fig. 1) is the north-west corner of Church Street. The northern side of this street is itself by no means a straight line, and is partly defined by the south side of St Swithin's church. The evidence of the continuation of the ditch under it shows that, like the putative 'primary' boundaries which cross the ditch, it is a secondary feature.¹¹ There is no direct evidence that this street was laid

out in the same phase as these 'primary' boundaries, though it would be reasonable to suppose, as do Baker and Holt, that it was. If so, then the southern side of the street, not its northern side, would be the natural edge of the unitary *haga* which lay to its south. This would then introduce an unacceptable irregularity in the dimensions of the supposedly regular plot sizes, which is the mainstay of Baker and Holt's arguments. Furthermore, it seems highly unlikely that a valuable frontage of a street which had been newly laid out would have formed the long side of a *haga* of contemporary origin stretching along its entire length, without some primary subdivision into tenements which would have faced onto the new street. The same objection applies to the relationship of the southern *haga* to the northern side of Pump Street, which has the same topographical and therefore temporal relationship to the ditch as does Church Street.

Thirdly, although the line of the southern boundary (*e* in Fig. 1) is continuous it is far from being a straight line, nor is it aligned at right angles to the High Street. It is anyway one of a pair which represent the boundaries of a single urban burgage which (at least in the late nineteenth century) clearly extended from the High Street eastwards to the Shambles. The occupation of this single burgage by the Golden Lion Inn on the nineteenth century map suggests that the origin of this single tenement lay in the need for the inn fronting onto the High Street to acquire a rear access for carriages and stabling (features which are clearly shown on the OS map). The unequal width of this burgage from west to east suggests, therefore, that it is an amalgamation of two burgages of unequal width - one facing west onto the High Street and the other facing east onto the Shambles - at some time in probably the late medieval or early post-medieval period. The choice of the southern boundary of this burgage rather than the northern boundary (*d* in Fig. 1) as an example of a 'primary' boundary is based purely on the apparent metrological symmetry which this, rather than its pair, produces. These considerations make it difficult to accept that either of the two boundaries of this plot are primary elements of the urban landscape at this point. The boundary at the approximate centre of the block (*c* in Fig. 1) is, however, continuous from west to east, defining the long sides of somewhat irregular burgages on both its sides which face onto both streets, though it is nowhere near the halfway point from north to south of the plan unit implied in Baker and Holt's analysis.

The interpretation of any of these boundaries as being 'primary' is, however, rather more fundamentally challenged by the archaeological evidence from the City Arcades site. As the excavator has stated, the stratification within the ditch shows 'a long-lived sequence of infill, slumping and levelling', including a 'range of extensive

and deep slumped deposits through the central area of the site . . .’ which consist of ‘dark loamy deposits becoming increasingly silty to base . . .’ These had accumulated by the end of the eleventh or the early twelfth century, the time at which the area was first cut into by pits. After the early twelfth century the ditch was infilled further with dark earth forming tip lines into the centre of the ditch, which ‘represent several episodes of subsidence and subsequent infill’ until the early thirteenth century (period 2, phases 3 and 4). At this time ‘the first evidence of activity encroaching onto the reclaimed land’ appears, with the development of structures along its alignment from the thirteenth century onwards. This follows a phase in which industrial activity was taking place on the eastern part of the site, associated with the development of burgages fronting onto the Shambles from the early eleventh century. The extent of this latter activity appears to have been constrained by the eastern side of the ditch, which had become only partially filled by this time.¹²

It must be concluded that there is no way in which the depositional history and the stratigraphy of the filling of the ditch, and the evidence of its gradual reclamation as usable land over two centuries or more from both its sides, can be interpreted as resulting from the ‘comprehensive and thus deliberate levelling of this stretch of the defences’ which is postulated by Holt. The evidence shows, rather, that the length of the bank and associated ditch to the east of the High Street was gradually reclaimed through natural silting and slumping, as well as by more active but piecemeal and intermittent human agency in which the majority of the mass of the bank appears to have found its way into the ditch. It is also clear that these processes took place over a period of 200 years or more after its defensive capabilities and functions were no longer needed. This is more consistent with the spasmodic, uneven and unplanned infilling and reclamation of the derelict tract of land represented by the old ditch, with the irregular backward extension of burgages fronting both the High Street and the Shambles by the taking in of waste land over the area of the former ditch by negotiation. This process of the transformation of the urban landscape has been characterised by Pat Hughes from a historical perspective as follows:

‘The first section to be developed must have bordered the High Street with plots running back as far as the edge of the ditch. As the ditch went out of use and began to be filled in, two things happened. First, little by little, inhabitants of High Street began to encroach on the lip of the ditch, taking in more ground as they needed it, thus resulting in the irregular pattern of boundaries which obtained between 90-100 feet from the High Street frontage. A second development began in the Shambles, where again land began to be taken

along the lip of the ditch, resulting in small plots, longer than they were deep, with the lengths parallel to the street. Some enterprising citizens bought land in both streets and amalgamated the plots. The effects of this can be seen in the later property pattern, in the form of a number of dog-legs and boundary irregularities in the block of land between the High Street and the Shambles'.¹³

The process of reclamation must have been encouraged by the laying out of a street on the line of the Shambles, possibly in the late tenth or early eleventh century, and the development of tenements alongside it which backed onto the ditch. With this act of urban planning can also be associated, as already suggested, the laying out of the cross streets of Church Street and Pump Street, both built over the line of the north-south ditch. The long property boundary near the centre of the High Street (c in Fig. 1) is just as likely, therefore, to have been laid out at this time or later by an 'enterprising citizen' who had acquired land in both streets, rather than representing a line imposed by a central authority as part of a grand programme of urban reclamation. The conclusion of this analysis is that the hypothesis that any long boundaries in this area represent an activity of primary urban planning over open ground, or that they initially defined large *hagae* which were subsequently subdivided, at whatever period, is not sustainable.

This conclusion impacts on and substantially undermines Holt's subsequent arguments in two ways. Firstly, it removes the evidential basis for the hypothesis that the overall urban planning which can be recognised in the central areas of Worcester would have belonged to processes initiated no earlier than the mid or late tenth century, rather than in the early stages of the formation of the burh in the late ninth. A more reasonable hypothesis would be to suggest, therefore, that burgages or *hagae*, of whatever size, would have been laid out along both sides of the High Street as an act of primary urban planning which would have been contemporary with the first layout of the defences, and that on its eastern side they would have stretched from the High Street frontage to the back of the bank. It would have been the inhabitants of these tenements who would have assisted the dismantling of the bank and ditch on its eastern side after it fell out of use, probably from the third quarter of the tenth century.¹⁴

Given the removal of the evidential constraints examined above, it might also be reasonably inferred that this act of initial planning would have included the four streets on the south-western side of the High Street (Bull Entry, Copenhagen Street, Fish Street and the former Palace Yard).¹⁵ This would imply that there was a

functional unity between the layout of the defences, the *hagae*, the High Street and these side streets on the west of the High Street. This issue is discussed further below. As Baker and Slater originally pointed out, the layout of this area would also have involved an episode of systematic infilling and obliteration of the former Roman bank and ditch defences in the area, all of which would have represented an episode of 'late-Saxon town planning which must have been reliant on higher-order decision-making'.¹⁶ This explanation is taken further by Baker and Holt, who argue that 'the defences were systematically levelled for planned urban occupation', at the same time developing the hypothesis that this had occurred at some time probably in the later tenth century, rather than the late ninth, as part of a process which involved the rebuilding of the cathedral and the reorganisation its precincts.¹⁷ The arguments presented above, however, reopen and provide some support for the original perception that this development could be more satisfactorily attributed to the context of the primary formation of the burh in the late ninth century.

The second aspect of Nigel Baker's and Richard Holt's model of the burghal development of Worcester has led the latter to the wider conclusion that the infrastructures of urban planning such as streets and tenements or *hagae* were not a feature of the initial planning of burhs in general in the late ninth century and early tenth in Wessex and the west Midlands, but were later developments. This has, naturally, led to the articulation of the hypothesis that these burhs were not initially founded as urban places.¹⁸ In respect of the foundation of the burhs of the later ninth and early tenth centuries Holt argues that 'what happened, or rather did not happen, at Worcester undermines the assumption of a long-term urbanising policy with clear aims. . . . And in the absence of evidence for any planning of the defended area to accommodate a resident population we must conclude that there was no conscious act of town-foundation at Worcester in the 890s. This has serious implications for our perception of the whole process of borough-building as town planning . . .' He thus draws the inevitable conclusion that 'The Worcester borough [burh] of the 890s had indeed the military purpose that the foundation charter names - it was built for the protection of the people, as a fortress and a refuge for use in emergencies. There was no intention of founding a town (with all that that might entail)'.¹⁹

In undermining the evidential basis for this extended model, the evidence analysed above gives a rather different perspective both to the whole question of early burghal development, as well as to the general development of urbanism in the late Saxon period, as interpreted by Holt. Many aspects of these issues are - quite properly - the subject of contemporary debate.²⁰ But it is arguably no longer

necessary to abandon the well-established model that the streets, tenements and other morphological features of these new foundations are best seen as primary elements in the setting out of these burhs as places which were designed for permanent habitation, first systematically elaborated by Martin Biddle and David Hill forty years ago.²¹

The early development of Worcester - an alternative model

With this conclusion in mind, it is possible to come to a rather different view about the early development of Worcester than that put forward by previous commentators. If evidence which has suggested a process involving the modular planning of primary elements on the eastern side of the High in the late 10th century is no longer tenable, this calls in question the dating of other elements - in particular streets - which can be reasonably regarded as primary. As already suggested, these include, from north to south: - an intra-mural Bank Street, Bull Entry, Copenhagen Street, Fish Street, with Lich Street on the eastern side (see Fig 2). These elements are seen as having originated in a phase of regular urban planning of the later 10th century, perhaps concurrent with the rebuilding of the cathedral and the suggested reorganisation of the cathedral precinct area by bishop Oswald in the 960s. This process would have involved the removal of a good part of the former bank and ditch of the Iron-Age and Roman hillfort which had earlier defined the cathedral precinct.²²

However, as already suggested in relation to the features on the eastern side of the High Street, there are grounds for putting forward an alternative model which would place these developments at a rather earlier stage in the development of the burghal space. It could be argued on quite independent grounds that the setting out of this complex of features to the north of the early cathedral - including the initial laying out of the bank and ditch defences to the north and east - belonged to a stage of burghal formation initiated by King Alfred in c.880. This possibility is suggested by the rapid development from c.880 of a new polity which included both Wessex and western Mercia in what contemporaries referred to as the 'Kingdom of the Anglo-Saxons'.²³ I have argued elsewhere that a programme of burghal formation was initiated in western Mercia at this crucial time, immediately after Guthrum's Viking forces were persuaded to vacate southern Mercia and settle in their new autonomous state of East Anglia in late 879, and that this programme included the formation of new burhs at London and Gloucester as an extension to the system of burhs listed in the Burghal Hidage which were established in Wessex in the previous two years.²⁴

Worcester, as the centre of the other part of the earlier kingdom of the Hwicce to that centred on Gloucester, is therefore unlikely to have been ignored in the strategic programme which King Alfred initiated at this time, which was clearly designed to extend and consolidate his control over both western and south-eastern Mercia.

This developmental model is consistent with the archaeological evidence from the northern defences of Worcester, where the bank and front revetment wall has been reinterpreted by Steven Bassett as comprising a timber-revetted bank later reinforced with a stone wall.²⁵ This is paralleled by the course of development of the defences of a number of other late-ninth-century burhs in both Wessex and the west Midlands. Where investigated archaeologically, the initial timber-fronted earth and turf banks of the first phase of construction of these defences have invariably been found to have been replaced with stone walls. I have argued elsewhere that this programme of the apparently systematically-applied reinforcement of unstable or decaying banks of these burghal defences was undertaken as a strategic response to renewed Viking threats in the early or mid 890s.²⁶ This would place the documented burh-building episode of Aethelred and Aethelflaed at Worcester neatly within the latter phase as representing the secondary consolidation and reinforcement of an earlier defensive *enceinte*.²⁷

If this whole defended *enceinte* in its original layout, and as including the planned layout of internal streets, can be regarded as Alfredian in origin, it suggests an alternative developmental model to that proposed by Nigel Baker and Richard Holt.²⁸ Given the large-scale reorganisation of new burghal spaces implied in King Alfred's new programme of burghal construction in the late 870s and early 880s, which is recognised in both Wessex and western Mercia (including London),²⁹ the hypothesis of the creation of this new planned burghal space at Worcester at this time is somewhat more sustainable than the hypothesis of an origin of planned urban development in the later 10th century, in which no parallels can be recognised. If the planned town was set out at this later stage, this would leave the whole of the period from the late 9th century to the late 10th, during which new planned burhs were being created all over both greater Mercia and Wessex, as a complete blank.

In practice the creation of the new burh of c.880 would have involved the setting out of a new royal enclave within the new defences which would have been carved out of a wider area of the territory of the bishop.³⁰ Within this space the new population would have been subject to the king alone. This situation, though unusual, has a direct parallel in the creation of the Burghal Hidage burh at Portchester, Hants,

on a manor owned by the bishop of Winchester.³¹ This being so, there must have been some accommodation at the time between the king and the bishop as to the division of income from the market and other dues, but it could be reasonably envisaged that within the curtilage of the new burh the king would have asserted his priority of rank and have taken all, with the usual third share going to the earl. This clear demarcation of areas over which the king and bishop would have been able to exercise economic rights and privileges is also shown in the charter of 886 relating to the same bishop's holding of a *haga* at Queenhithe in London, as well as the charter of 898-9 in favour of the archbishop for an adjoining *haga*. In both these instances the trading rights and other dues were to be the king's on the public streets and the trading shore (the *ripa emtoralis*) outside the *hagae*, while these dues on trading and other activities were to go to the bishops within their respective curtilages.³² As Tony Dyson has remarked in relation to the provisions of these two charters, 'the stipulations reflect a need to define the rights of different individuals in novel circumstances, just as at Worcester the interests of the king, ealdorman and bishop were carefully distinguished' (in the charter of the 890s, discussed below).³³ A similar strict demarcation must have been established, doubtless by formal agreement, by the various parties in all cases where a burh was built within a place where an ecclesiastical presence - whether a cathedral or a minster - was already established.

It is this situation which provides a more appropriate context for the well-known charter, which has for many generations of historians been taken as recording the initial 'foundation' of the burh of Worcester by Aethelred and Aethelflaed in the 890s.³⁴ However, the prior existence of a royal burh of c.880 arguably provides a more meaningful context for some of the otherwise puzzling features of the provisions recorded in it. In the first place, "all the rights" which are being shared between their lordships (Aethelred and Aethelflaed) and the bishop are clearly regarded as having originally belonged to them rather than to the bishop.³⁵ The share which the bishop obtained is seen as being given as a "charitable gift" by their lordships to the bishop and the church.³⁶ In the second place, these rights included a number of dues which are peculiarly those which would have been levied in a burh of royal foundation (land rent; fines for fighting, theft, dishonest trading and other offences; and a tax for the repair of the burh wall). These are, furthermore, specified as having already been "laid down as regards the market place and the streets" - in other words, by the king. It is also important to note that these dues, half of which were the subject of the gift to the bishop, specifically excluded "the wagon-shilling and the load-penny [which] go to the king, just as they had always done at Droitwich". This states unequivocally that

the king was reserving to himself tolls on trade and the movement of goods (including the lucrative trade in salt) which he had already held within the burh at Worcester, as they had probably been levied at Droitwich for some time before that. This is even emphasised by the addition of the sentence “And outside the market-place [ie the burh] the bishop is to be entitled to his land and all his rights, just as our predecessors established and privileged it.”³⁷

It is necessary to emphasise these points in the face of the recent interpretation of this charter by Richard Holt, who sees it as the agreement recording a new arrangement in which Aethelred and Aethelflaed obtained dues which were originally the bishop's. This allows him to dismiss it as essentially a 'fiction, insomuch as it was the church that had historically enjoyed these rights of lordship in Worcester'.³⁸ It must be said, however, that the hypothesis that these clearly-stated provisions - of an important agreement between the highest representatives of church and state - implied something other than what are clearly stated in the charter would require considerably more supporting evidence than mere assertions to this effect. Telling against this is the fact that the charter explicitly mentions dues on trading which had been the king's alone, and which were specifically excluded from this gift to the bishop. Holt suggests that the dues described in the charter were merely the bishop's 'customary dues', and characterises this transaction as involving 'nothing more than the secular authorities establishing their claim to a share of an existing source of profit'.³⁹ If this were so, however, it would be necessary to suppose that before Aethelred's and Aethelflaed's land grab the bishop had had full control of, and jurisdiction over, a fortified burh in which controlled marketing was taking place and which had a court. In the context of developments in both Wessex and Mercia in the late 9th century, this would be unprecedented.

But the alternative view would on the contrary suggest that it is not a fiction, and that it sets out clearly and precisely what was in fact the prevailing situation - that in response to representations by the bishop after the formation of the original burh (“at the request of Bishop Waerferth their friend”), Aethelred and Aethelflaed gave him and the church an equal share of some of the dues that had been the king's alone (“half the rights which belong to their lordship”). It is therefore argued that the only way to place this charter in its proper context is to see it as an accommodation in which their lordships chose to give the bishop a share in rights and dues which before that time had been the prerogative of the king alone, and which must therefore have pertained to an already-existing burh of royal foundation.

What the charter does not mention, however, is the likelihood that, as suggested above, this whole process can best be interpreted as being part of a wider strategic response to the threat posed by the new Viking incursions into southern England in the early 890s, which was met by as wide-ranging a response as is represented by the earlier system of burhs in Wessex listed in the Burghal Hidage.⁴⁰ The new arrangement recorded in the charter would have meant that Aethelred, acting for King Alfred, would have been responsible for the strengthening of the defences of the burh, though the bishop would possibly have been made responsible for the defences around the south-east and south sides, paid for by his half of the wall tax. In return for their generosity, as the charter is at pains to record, Aethelred and Aethelflaed would have derived spiritual benefit through the prayers and intercessions of the bishop and the community.⁴¹

This model can, however, be refined even further to suggest that the early development of the burh can be characterised as having occurred in two stages: the first, a new burh initiated by King Alfred in c.880 which was laid out as a northward extension to the original ecclesiastical precinct or *vallum monasterium* within the earlier hill-fort; and secondly, an extension and enlargement of the primary (Alfredian) burghal area towards the south over the northern and north-eastern part of the cathedral precinct. With the second stage would have been associated the strengthening of the primary earth and timber defences with a stone wall, as is attested in many other places. If the earlier regular street system (represented by Bank Street, Bull Entry and Copenhagen Street, as well as the High Street) belonged to the primary phase, it would be reasonable to see the creation of Fish Street and Lich Street, together possibly with Friar Street (argued below), as a new layout which extended the earlier modular arrangement into the new part of the burh to the south. At the same time, this would have been connected to a new or possibly already-existing routeway to the south-east along Sidbury to facilitate local access to the new burh from this direction. This would also have accommodated the prior existence of the routeway between the cathedral precinct and the bridge or river crossing to the north, represented by Little Fish Street and Birdport.⁴² This two-stage process would also explain the change in alignment of the High Street from the point of its original entry into the former hillfort and precinct, noted as a particular problem by Baker and Holt, if its southern part was realigned (or created anew) in the second stage.⁴³ As Baker and Holt rightly argue (though in relation to the later period) this secondary extension would have necessarily involved a process in which the northern and

eastern parts of the Iron-Age and Roman defences 'were systematically levelled for planned urban occupation'.⁴⁴

There is, furthermore, support for this hypothesis from the position of Barker's *ditch d*.⁴⁵ As is generally recognised, the extension of the burghal space southwards to occupy part of the cathedral precinct within the primary Iron-Age and Roman *vallum monasterium* would have required the removal and infilling of the earlier ditch on its northern and north-eastern sides. However, the fact that Barker's *ditch d*, which can be reasonably taken to represent the line of the burghal defences at some stage in their evolution, is clearly aligned on this ditch demonstrates that *ditch d* and its associated bank would have been constructed at the same time as, or very soon after, the Roman ditch was filled in. It is difficult to see how the massive Roman ditch and rampart could have coexisted with the new burghal defences represented by *ditch d*, especially if the latter would have been associated with a bank on its inside. This implies, furthermore, that *ditch d* represents an enlargement of the area within the burghal defences around the eastern side of the former *vallum monasterium*, extending the new defended enclosure to the east. Though there is no evidence in the form of a stratigraphical relationship between the two lines of defence, there seems no other solution to the particular puzzle of their spatial and temporal relationships than to suggest that the construction of *ditch d* and its associated bank succeeded the infilling of the Roman ditch as part of a single process of urban expansion in order to create a new and enlarged *enceinte*. One possible purpose of this eastward extension would have been to create an organic link between the main part of the extended burh (represented by the development of the southern part of Friar Street) with a new gate on the line of a new or developing suburb of Sidbury to the south-east. This topographical hypothesis is represented in Fig. 2.

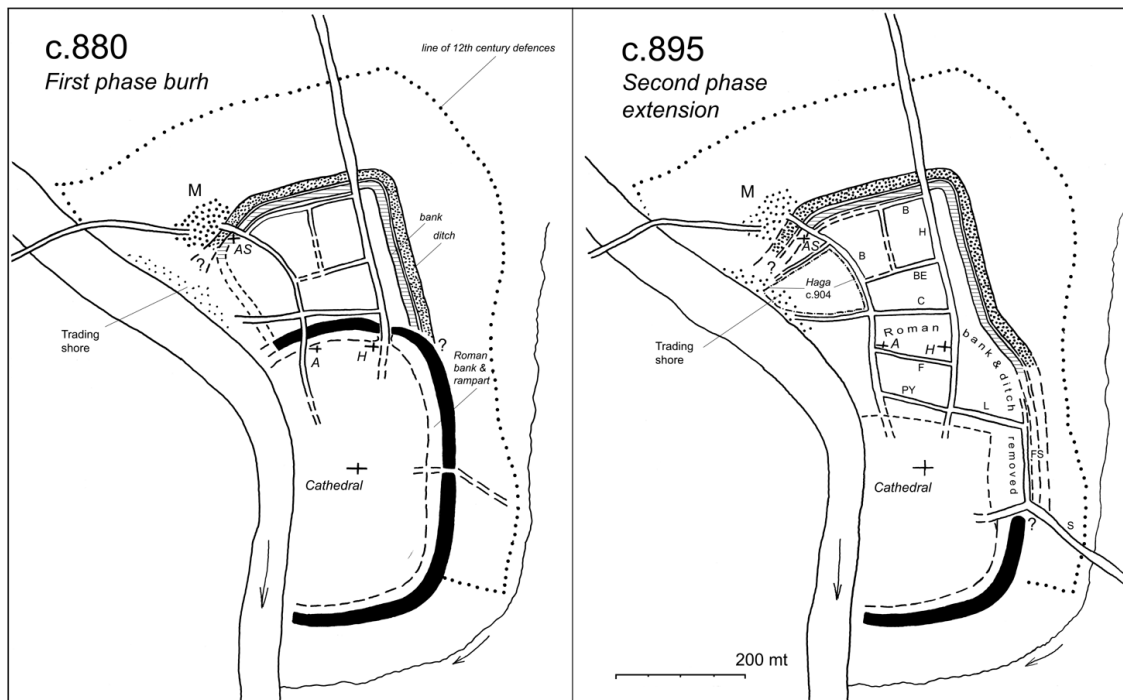


Fig. 2

This two-phase process would also place the accommodation shown in Aethelred's charter in a more credible context, in that it would seem reasonable to suggest that Aethelred would have given the bishop a general share of the assets in exchange for the extension of the burh over a good part of the original cathedral precinct. This would in effect (as indicated above) have extended the tightly-controlled area of the royal domain at the expense of that of the bishop. This process would also make sense of the explicit reference to the fact that the new phase of burghal construction was to be undertaken at the request of the bishop, if this were to be understood as an arrangement which would have gained the bishop new benefits which he did not already have. The acquisition of half of the assets of the new burh in perpetuity in exchange for the relinquishing of control of part of a probably over-large precinct around the cathedral must have been an attractive proposition for the bishop. Whether he had been a proactive agent in instigating this arrangement (as the wording of the charter suggests), or whether he had been presented by Aethelred with an option that he could not refuse, does not affect the issue.

Furthermore, the same accommodation shown by Aethelred and King Alfred towards meeting the bishop's needs in the Worcester charter of the early 890s is shown in their grant of the substantial *haga* near the waterfront in London to the bishop in 889,⁴⁶ which is arguably related both to the king's desire to favour the bishop and his need for the bishop's support (both spiritual and political) in the

foundation of the new burh at London, as well as to the king's need to facilitate the provision of salt to the new population of the burh. These processes must also provide the context for the reciprocation of favours shown in the granting of the large *haga* in Worcester by the bishop to Aethelred in 904, an outcome which can perhaps be seen as a *quid pro quo* for Aethelred's largesse in these arrangements..⁴⁷

In conclusion, therefore, it has been possible to articulate a new model for the early development of Worcester which in many ways arises out of the detailed work of previous commentators over the last 20 years. At the same time, the reassessment of this body of evidence has generated somewhat different conclusions about the early stages of burghal growth and of urbanism in general in the late Saxon period. It is argued that this new view of the early development of Worcester is essentially in accord with, and indeed provides some support for, a more general model of urban development at this time. This would recognise that many of the physical and morphological attributes of the fortified burhs of the period such as streets, as well as other aspects such as markets and (in some cases) burghal courts, are best seen as primary aspects of their spatial and social organisation as new and sustainable settlements which by the standards of the time would have been seen by contemporaries as new urban places.

Captions to Figures

FIG1

Worcester - plan unit of the area to the east of High Street. Extract from the OS 1:500 map of 1884.

FIG 2

Worcester - reconstruction of the layout of the two phases of burghal development.

M - market area. Churches: H - St Helen's, A - St Alban's, AS - All Saints. Streets: H - High Street, B - Bank Street, BE - Bull Entry, C - Copenhagen Street, F - Fish Street, Bi - Birdport Street, PY - Palace Yard; L - Lich Street, FS - Friar Street, S - Sidbury.

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Notes

1. *17 Elmhurst Estate, Batheaston, Bath BA1 7NU.*
jeremyhaslam@rocketmail.com.
2. Baker and Holt 2004. Long gone are the days when Philip Barker could reasonably say that 'The layout of the early town must remain a mystery . . .' - Barker (ed.)1969, 30.
3. Holt 2009.
4. These are examined in Baker and Slater 1992, 58-60 and Fig 3.3; Baker and Holt 1996, 132-4 and Fig. 7.
5. Baker and Holt 1996, 132.
6. As represented for instance in Baker and Holt 1996, 131 Fig.6.
7. Griffin and Jackson 2003; Griffin and Jackson 2004.
8. Baker and Holt 2004, 173.
9. Baker and Slater 1992, 63-4; Baker and Holt 2004, 183-4. This is discussed further below.
10. Holt 2009, 65.
11. Griffin and Jackson 2003, Fig.5; Griffin and Jackson 2004, 102 Fig. 21.
12. Griffin and Jackson 2003, 27-8. See also Griffin and Jackson 2004.
13. Hughes 2003, 12. See also Hughes 2004, 103.
14. Both documentary and archaeological evidence has suggested that burghal defences in both Wessex and Mercia were either decommissioned or allowed to decay for a period in the latter half of the tenth century. This is discussed by the writer elsewhere - Haslam forthcoming 2011b.
15. The layout and the development of the area is discussed in Baker and Slater 1992, 63-4 and Fig. 3.5; and in Baker and Holt 2004, 160-3, 181-3 and Fig. 6.15.
16. Baker and Slater 1992, 64.
17. Baker and Holt 2004, 160-2.
18. Holt 2009, 65-6.
19. Holt 2009, 65-6.

20. Jones 1993; Astill 2000; Astill 2006; Roffe 2010.
21. Biddle and Hill 1971; see also Biddle (ed.) 1976, 273, 450. Another of Holt's arguments in favour of the later, or secondary, layout of streets in burhs in relation to the setting out of their defences is that this is demonstrated by coins found on street surfaces in various contexts. At Winchester these are cited as demonstrating 'an early-tenth-century date - or later - for the earliest dating of one of the streets'. (Holt 2009, 66) This is not so. The coins provide only a *terminus ante quem* for the date of the layout of the street: it cannot be later than the date of loss of the coin, but could well be somewhat earlier.
22. Baker and Holt 2004, 160-1, 354-6.
23. Keynes 1998, 24-6, 34-9, 43-4; 1999, 460-6; 2001, 44-8, 57-62.
24. Haslam 2005; Haslam 2010a; Haslam 2010b; Haslam forthcoming 2011a.
25. Dalwood and Edwards 2004, 55-6, 219-22; Bassett 2008, 226-30. I would agree with Bassett's reinterpretation, on the evidence both of the stratigraphical relationship between the wall, the bank and the layers on which both sit, as well as the extra information he gives about the circumstances of the excavation, which is not brought out in the report. The evidence of a layer of rubble and mortar within the fill of the ditch at the City Arcades site - though its position in the stratigraphic sequence is not recorded - shows that the fronting wall was also a component of the eastern defences (Griffin and Jackson 2004, **).
26. The initial development of the Wessex burhs of the Burghal Hidage in the period 878-9 is argued in Haslam 2005. For a discussion of the context of the later developments of the early 890s see Haslam 2009, 98-100, 103-4; Haslam 2010c, 24-5; Haslam forthcoming 2011b.
27. Sawyer 1968 no. 223, translated in Whitelock 1979, 540-1; Baker and Holt 2004, 133-4. Holt's reinterpretation of the content and purpose of this charter (Holt 2009, 59-60, 65-6) is reassessed below.
28. Baker & Holt 2004, 349-50.
29. Biddle and Hill 1971. The dating of the Wessex system to 878-9 is argued by the writer elsewhere - Haslam 2005. For a discussion of the development of London in the late 9th century, see Haslam 2010a; Haslam 2011a.
30. For the extent of the bishop's lands around Worcester, see Bassett 1989.

31. Tait 1936, 17.
32. Dyson 1978, 206; Dyson 1990.
33. Dyson 1978, 211.
34. See references in note 26 above.
35. Whitelock 1976, 540 para 1.
36. Ibid., last para.
37. Ibid., 540-1, para 3.
38. Holt 2009, 60.
39. Holt 2009, 66.
40. Haslam 2009, 98-100, 103-4.
41. Whitelock 1979, 540 para 2. In discussing this charter, John Blair makes the observation that 'both the initiative for the works and the economic benefits are associated, at least ostensibly, as much with the church as with the rulers' - Blair 2005, 233-4. The reassessment made here would suggest, however, that it was the rulers (initially king Alfred) who initiated the burghal development to facilitate his wider political and military strategies, and who essentially called the tune. The benefits which the bishop gained were shares in a micro-economic system (the burh) originally set up by the rulers, in exchange for favours received (some of them spiritual). On the other hand, the ongoing success of the institution of the burh would have been directly facilitated by the already-established trading interests of the bishop, in London and Droitwich and elsewhere. This is clearly a case of a real-life symbiosis of mutually-beneficial economic, political and religious interests pertaining to and between the two parties.
42. Baker and Holt 2004, 174.
43. Baker and Holt 2004, 160.
44. Baker and Holt 2004, 161. The wider context of the placing of the cathedral and its antecedents within an earlier hillfort are explored by John Blair - Blair 1992; Blair 2005, 196-204. Of all the instances noted by Blair, Worcester (not mentioned by him in this context), would appear to be the most strikingly archetypal.
45. Barker (ed.)1969, 51 n.131 & Fig 7. Griffin and Jackson 2004, **.

46. Sawyer 1968, 346; Dyson 1978.

47. Baker and Holt 2004, 174-6. These processes are discussed further in these terms in Haslam 2010a, 128-30, and Haslam 2011a. It is uncertain whether this *haga*, in the hands of the bishop in 904, would have been considered inside or outside the burh. It is also uncertain whether its holding would have been part of the accommodation in the earlier charter of the 890s, and if so, whether it would have comprised the “outside” portion shared by the king with the bishop in the latter charter.

48. Tait 1936, 2.