RPS Planning, Transport and Environment

INDEX DATA	RPS INFORMATION
Scheme Title A6 Rushden and Higham Ferrers Bypass	Details Archaeological Desk Top Assessment
Road Number A6	Date Oct. 1996
Contractor Northants County Council	
County Northants	
OS Reference SP 96	
Single sided ✓ Double sided – A3 O Colour O	

SMN/RHF/ARC/DT/0001

NORTHAMPTONSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

NORTHAMPTONSHIRE ARCHAEOLOGY

A6 RUSHDEN AND HIGHAM FERRERS BYPASS

ARCHAEOLOGICAL DESK TOP ASSESSMENT

October 1996

A6 RUSHDEN AND HIGHAM FERRERS BYPASS

DETAILED ARCHAEOLOGICAL DESK TOP ASSESSMENT

ABSTRACT

A desk top assessment, comprising an examination of the geology and topography, the mapping of the current land use, the extraction of data from the County Sites and Monuments Record, the examination of aerial photographs and an assessment of the historic map and field name evidence has revealed a total of four known archaeological sites within a 200m wide corridor along the published route of the A6 Rushden and Higham Ferrers bypass and a further two sites immediately outside the corridor. Further, as yet undetected, sites may be present. Recommendations are made for further work.

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 The present report comprises a desk top assessment of the archaeological sites along the published route of the A6 Rushden and Higham Ferrers bypass, a distance of around 5.4km. It forms a Detailed Desk Top Assessment as defined in the Highways Agencies' Design Manual for Roads and Bridges (DMRB 11.3.8.8.15) and has been carried out by Northamptonshire Archaeology on behalf of the Highways Agency.

1.2 For the purpose of the assessment a corridor 200m wide (ie extending 100m either side of the centre line of the published route) was chosen. It is necessary to examine this wider corridor as many archaeological sites can extend over a larger area than that indicated by a grid reference giving their central point. Known sites immediately outside this corridor have also been mapped as they may extend into the corridor and they give an indication of the type of site present in the area.

1.3 The desk top assessment was composed of:

(1) an examination of the geology and topography of the area.

(2) field inspection gathering information regarding the current land use of the area and the production of digitized maps showing the current land use for each parcel of land along the survey corridor.

(3) consultation of the Northamptonshire County Sites and Monuments Record and extraction of information regarding known sites along the route.

(4) examination of aerial photographic plots held in the County Sites and Monuments Record.

(5) examination of historic maps for evidence of constraints such as historic features and any field names which may be indicative of archaeological sites.

2. TOPOGRAPHY AND GEOLOGY

2.1 At the northern end of the road corridor, from the junction with the A605 to the Stanwick road, a distance of 0.7km, the ground rises steadily from c 40m above OD to c 55m above OD, as the route climbs up the southern slopes of the Nene valley. The superficial geology changes from Upper Lias Clays, to Northampton Sand with Ironstone, and Upper Estuarine Clays and Silts.

2.2 From the Stanwick Road to just south of the Newton Road, a distance of 2.2km, the ground rises more gently to c 75m above OD crossing an extensive area of Great Oolite Limestone, with a localised area of Great Oolite Clays immediately south of the A45, Chelveston Road.

2.3 The remaining length of the road corridor to the east and south of Rushden, a distance of c 3.5km, lies on Boulder Clay, largely over c 75m above OD although descending slightly to c 65m above OD at the southernmost end.

2.4 In general archaeological sites tend to be more common on the lighter well-drained soils which develop on strata such as the Northampton Sand and Great Oolite Limestone. Sites are less common on clayland, partly because these areas are not as conducive to the discovery of sites by aerial photography, but where they are found may be of more interest because of their comparative rarity.

3. CURRENT LAND USE (Fig 1)

3.1 The current land use along the road corridor has been established by field inspection during September 1996. It is classified according to the following criteria:
(1) Arable
(2) Pasture
(3) Recreation (playing fields etc)
(4) Set-aside or allotment gardens
(5) Woodland

3.2 A total of c 2.9km of arable land lies along the road corridor, comprising 54% of the total length. A further c 1.55km, 30% of the total, is under pasture. A length of 0.83km, 16% of the total, is either under set aside or allotment gardens. The remaining 0.1km is recreational land. No woodland is present.

3.3 A length of 0.3km of the currently arable land has been previously quarried. This quarrying can be expected to have destroyed any archaeological sites within the area.

4. KNOWN ARCHAEOLOGICAL SITES (Fig 2)

4.1 No Scheduled Ancient Monuments lie along the route of the proposed bypass scheme.

4.2 The following buried archaeological sites recorded on the County Sites and Monuments Record lie within the 200m wide corridor.

Site 1 SMR site number 5932, SP965693
Cropmark of uncertain date located by aerial photography. Appears to be two square or rectangular enclosures. Located on Great Oolite Limestone.

Site 2 SMR site number 3185, SP95466881
Romano-British settlement. Sunken feature and a few Romano-British pottery sherds found during a watching brief on road development. Located on Great Oolite Clays.

Site 3 SMR site number 3186, (A) SP964683, (B) SP965682, (C) SP966681
Romano-British settlement? Surface scatters of pottery recovered in field walking. Located on Boulder Clay.

SMR site number 5354, SP965681
Unclassified cropmark located by aerial photography. Probably same site as surface scatters. Located on Boulder Clay.

Site 4 SMR monument number 5931, SP967658
Linear cropmark of uncertain date located by aerial photography. Located on Boulder Clay.

4.3 The following buried archaeological sites recorded on the County Sites and Monuments Record lie close to the 200m wide corridor.

Site 5 SMR site numbers 3197, 6425 SP960698
Iron Age and Romano-British features and finds are reported from a watching brief in 1967. Subsequent fieldwalking recovered some worked flint but only small amounts of Romano-British and medieval pottery. Located on Northampton Sand and Ironstone.

Site 6 SMR site number 5374, SP96666737
Iron Age settlement? Finds recovered during building development. Located on Boulder Clay.

5. HISTORIC MAPS AND FIELD NAMES (Fig 2)

5.1 A study of field names along the route has been undertaken chiefly from a 1932 survey of the field names by parish undertaken by local schools at the request of the authors of the Place Names of Northamptonshire, which was in preparation at the time. These parish field name surveys are now kept in the Northamptonshire Record Office (NRO). They have been supplemented by data taken from earlier maps, also in NRO and published by Hall and Harding (1985).

(1) Higham Ferrers: Map showing Old Field strips 1737
NRO map 1004 (Copy 1426)

(2) Rushden Open Fields
Hall and Harding, 1985, 74-75, table 12

(3) Rushden; Field names 1798-1932
Hall and Harding 1985, 84-85

5.2 The 1932 field names survey for Higham Ferrers provides a near complete coverage for the parish, listing names at Enclosure (1839), the present names and any local names. The map of 1737 provides some supplementary information.

5.3 To the east of the Stanwick Road the road corridor crosses the Cow Pasture or Beast Pasture, as shown on both the map of 1737 and the 1932 survey. The triangular field immediately south of the Stanwick Road had the local name of "Hilly Holly" in 1932, reflecting the presence of a former quarry here (see 3.3 above).

5.4 The triangular plot at the junction of the Chelveston and Newton Roads is shown as common land in the 18th century.

5.5 Immediately south of the Newton Road the road corridor crosses two fields shown in the 18th century as Berry Closes, and more recently as Berry Hedges, forming pasture closes along the eastern side of the town. Berry or bury may indicate the former location of a fortification or fortified manor house (Field 1989, 34).

5.6 The field name information for Rushden is less comprehensive then that for Higham Ferrers. In both the 1932 field name survey and in the study of the Open Fields, the Old Inclosure, and the Field Names published by Hall and Harding (1985), there are names for only some of the fields along the proposed road corridor. None are indicative of the former presence of archaeological sites.

6. ASSESSMENT AND RECOMMENDATIONS

6.1 Four sites lie within the 200m corridor and a further two immediately outside. All may extend into the corridor of the published route. Their importance cannot be established without archaeological fieldwork.

6.2 There has been little archaeological work along the proposed road route and hence there is a potential for further unidentified sites along the route. Work further along the Nene valley in the Raunds area has indicated that a density of one Roman site per kilometre and one Saxon site per two kilometres can be expected (Parry forthcoming).

6.3 Accordingly it is recommended that a preliminary walkover survey be undertaken in line with the recommendations of in the Design Manual Roads and Bridges (DMRB 11.3.8.15).

6.4 This should initially comprise non-destructive fieldwork composed of:

(1) fieldwalking of all available arable fields

(2) scanning by geophysical survey of areas where fieldwalking is not possible (ie pasture, set-aside etc).

(3) detailed geophysical survey of 'hot-spots' discovered by reconnaissance survey or fieldwalking. An allowance for detailed survey of a length of 5% of the road line should be made.

(4) on completion of the preliminary walkover survey a report detailing the results of the work should be produced.

6.5 For the purpose of the preliminary walkover it is recommended that the corridor of investigation be narrowed to 100m for fieldwalking, geophysical reconnaissance and walkover of woodland areas and to 40m for detailed geophysical survey.

6.6 Depending on the results of the non-destructive work it may be necessary subsequently to carry out targeted trial trenching on some sites in order to assess their condition, importance and depth of burial.

6.6 Once completed the results of the Assessment can be used to inform a Mitigation Strategy designed where possible to preserve archaeological remains or where this is not possible to excavate those portions of any important archaeological remains within the road corridor (DMRB 10.6.5).

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Field, J, 1989 English Field Names: A Dictionary

Hall, D, and Harding, R, 1985 Rushden: A Duchy of Lancaster village

Parry, S, forthcoming Raunds Area Survey. An Archaeological Study of the landscape of Raunds, Northamptonshire

ILLUSTRATIONS

Fig 1: Proposed A6 Rushden and Higham Ferrers Bypass: Current land use

Fig 2: Proposed A6 Rushden and Higham Ferrers Bypass: Known archaeological sites and field names

Project Manager: Michael Shaw BA MIFA
Text: Andy Chapman BSc and Michael Shaw
Illustrations: Mark Holmes MA and Peter Masters BA HND PIFA

Northamptonshire Archaeology
a service of the Northamptonshire County Council
Planning and Transportation Department

28 October 1996

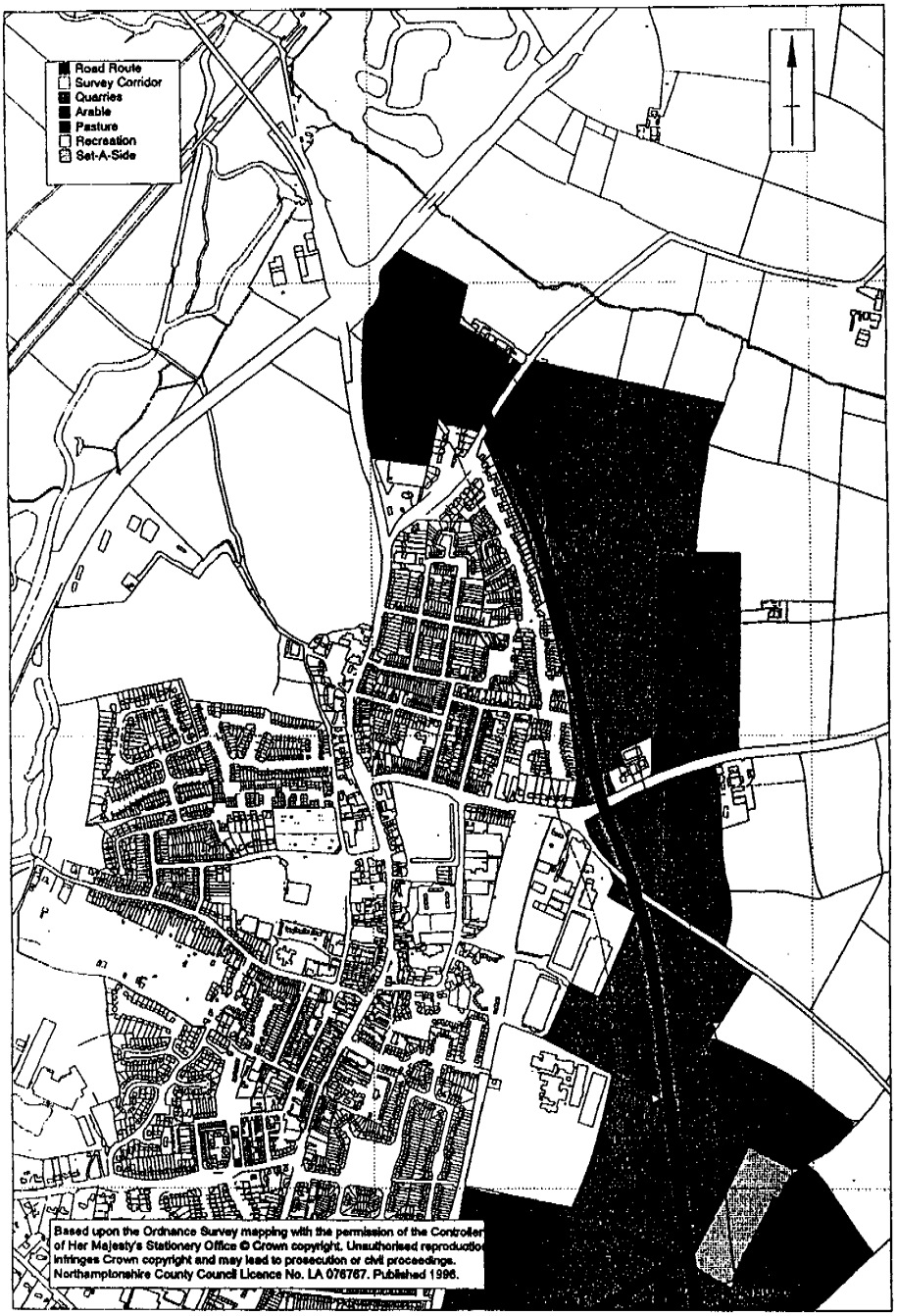


Fig 1a: Current Land Use

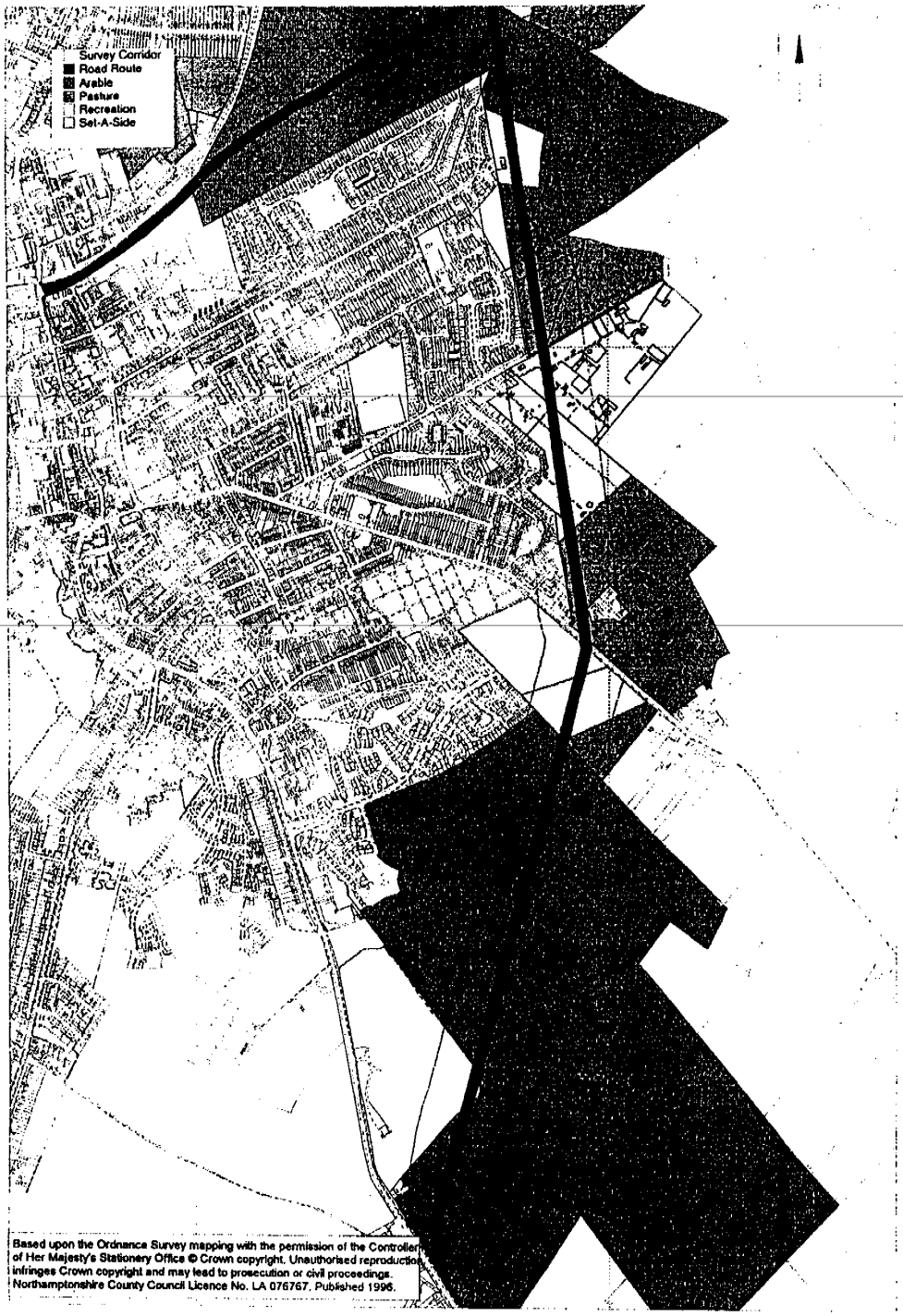
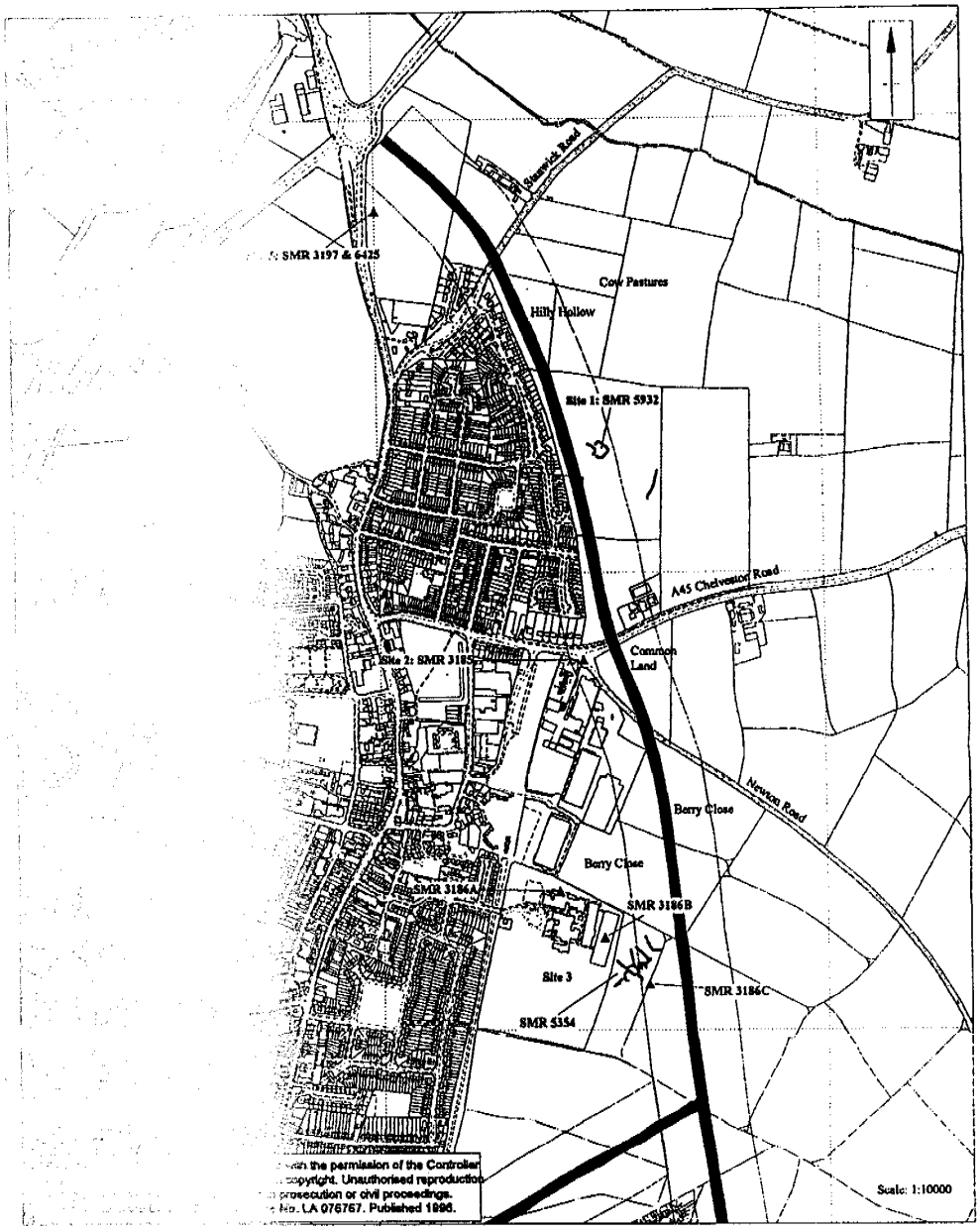


Fig 1b: Current Land Use



d Field Names

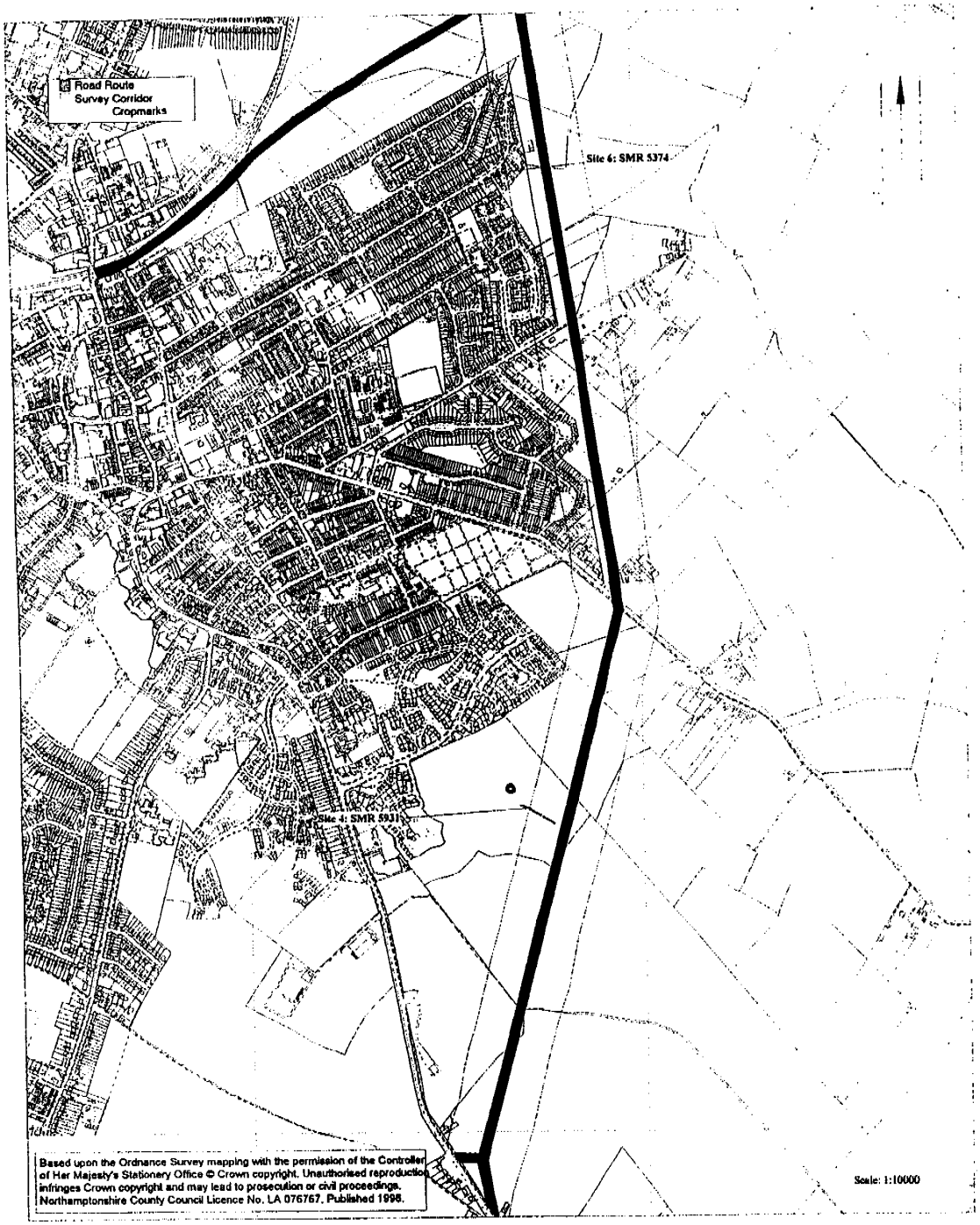


Fig 2b: Known Archaeological Sites and Field Names