



WHITBREAD PLC

LAND AT SOWERBY GATEWAY

TOPCLIFFE ROAD

THIRSK

NORTH YORKSHIRE

ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF REPORT

July 2016

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DESK BASED ASSESSMENTS
ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION
ARCHAEOLOGICAL EXCAVATION
GEOPHYSICAL SURVEY
TOPOGRAPHIC AND LANDSCAPE SURVEY
HISTORIC BUILDING RECORDING
ENVIRONMENTAL SERVICES

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SUMMARY

Wardell Armstrong Archaeology (WAA) was commissioned by Whitbread PLC, to undertake an archaeological watching brief on land at Sowerby Gateway, Thirsk (NGR: SE 42280 80526). The watching brief was required as a fulfilment of a condition of planning consent for the construction of Premier Inn in part of the wider Sowerby Gateway venture. The watching brief was undertaken in accordance with a written scheme of investigation (WSI; Giecco 2015) produced as a result of consultation with Lucie Hawkins, North Yorkshire County Council's planning archaeologist, acting as archaeological advisor to Hambleton District Council.

The archaeological watching brief monitored groundworks occurring within the south-eastern part of the proposed development site the rest of the site having already been stripped of topsoil and the hedges removed. A 'not very deep' brick-lined well, had been found and removed during earlier groundworks which must have been the pump, marked on 1856 and 1895 mapping, though no longer existing in 1912. The Roman milestone thought to have once existed within one of the hedges within the development site had been removed by the time of the archaeological observation

The excavations monitored by the archaeological watching brief encountered only a mid-dark brown silt, suggesting that the previous works had stripped the entire site, and used the large amount of topsoil removed to level the ground ready for the compound and later development.

The groundworks monitored during the archaeological watching brief did not impact on any archaeological remains.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Wardell Armstrong Archaeology (WAA) thanks Helen Binns of Walsingham Planning for commissioning the project on behalf of the client, Whitbread PLC, and for all their assistance throughout the project. Also, WAA thank Lucie Hawkins, North Yorkshire County Council's planning archaeologist, for all assistance.

The watching brief was undertaken by Ed Johnson and Cat Peters. Cat Peters wrote the report. The figures were produced by Helen Phillips. The project was managed by Frank Giecco and the report was edited by Richard Newman.

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Project Circumstances and Planning Background

1.1.1 In June and July 2016, Wardell Armstrong Archaeology (WAA) undertook an archaeological watching brief on land at Sowerby Gateway, Thirsk (NGR SE 42280 80526). The archaeological watching brief was required as part of a planning condition for the construction of a three storey building for hotel and ancillary restaurant/ bar with associated car parking and access road.

1.1.2 The written scheme of investigation, approved by Lucie Hawkins, North Yorkshire County Council's planning archaeologist, acting as archaeological advisor to Hambleton District Council stated that *"the proposed development may affect below ground archaeological remains possibly associated with extensive prehistoric activity known to exist in the immediate vicinity"* (Giecco 2015, 1) found during an earlier archaeological evaluation (OSA 2012), and that *"as a result of the lack of proven archaeological activity within the current development area, it was agreed that a watching brief should provide an adequate level of archaeological mitigation"* (ibid).

1.1.3 A previous archaeological evaluation, undertaken across the wider Sowerby Gateway development area in 2012 (Bruce, Pinnock and Sotheran 2012), encountered a number of archaeological remains, but trenches in the area of the proposed development found this area to have a lower level of archaeological potential. The subsequent method statement for a proposed archaeological mitigation programme, based on the results of this evaluation (Pearson 2012) and *"agreed by North Yorkshire Historic Environment Team"* (Pearson 2012, 8), placed the area in which the development site lies, as being within an area that should be monitored by an archaeological watching brief (Pearson 2012, 9-10).

1.1.4 A watching brief is defined as a programme of 'monitoring and investigation carried out during a non-archaeological activity within a specified area of land or development where construction operations may disturb or destroy archaeological remains' (CIFA 2014a).

1.2 Project Documentation

1.2.1 The project conforms to the WSI (Giecco 2015) which was produced to provide a specific methodology for the programme of archaeological mitigation implemented via a watching brief. This was approved by Lucie Hawkins, North Yorkshire County Council's planning archaeologist, acting as archaeological advisor to Hambleton

District Council prior to groundworks taking place.

1.2.2 This report outlines the work undertaken on site and the results of this watching brief.

2 METHODOLOGY

2.1 Standards and Guidance

2.1.1 The archaeological watching brief was undertaken following the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists *Standard and Guidance for an archaeological watching brief* (2014a), and in accordance with the WAA fieldwork manual (2015).

2.1.2 The fieldwork programme was followed by an assessment of the data as set out in the Standard and Guidance for an archaeological watching brief (CIfA 2014a) and the Standard and Guidance for the collection, documentation, conservation and research of archaeological materials (CIfA 2014b).

2.2 The Watching Brief

2.2.1 The watching brief comprised the monitoring of all intrusive works associated with the current development, comprising the excavation of an area up to 45m in length and 5m in width.

2.2.2 The general aims of these investigations were:

- allow the monitoring archaeologist to signal that an archaeological find has been made before it is destroyed
- to provide the opportunity for appropriate resource allocation if the archaeological find cannot be dealt with under the watching brief remit
- to determine the presence or absence of buried archaeological remains within the proposed development site
- to determine the character, date, extent and distribution of any archaeological deposits and their potential significance
- determine levels of disturbance to any archaeological deposits from past land use)
- investigate and record all deposits and features of archaeological interest within the areas to be disturbed by the current development
- to determine the likely impact on archaeological deposits from the proposed development
- to disseminate the results of the fieldwork through an appropriate level of reporting.

2.2.3 Deposits considered not to be significant were removed by a mechanical excavator fitted with a toothless ditching bucket to maximise the chance for identification of archaeological remains should they be present. All intrusive groundworks were

monitored under close supervision by a suitably trained archaeologist. Where potential archaeological remains were present the groundworks were subsequently cleaned by hand. All possible features were inspected and all features were recorded according to the WAA standard procedure as set out in the Excavation Manual (WAA 2015).

- 2.2.4 No archaeological finds were recovered, nor features observed, so no environmental samples were required.
- 2.2.5 A full professional archive has been compiled in accordance with the project specification, and the Archaeological Archives Forum recommendations (Brown 2011). The archive (paper-only, no finds) will be deposited with Northallerton Record Office, with copies of the report sent to the County HER at Northallerton, available upon request. The project archive can be accessed under the unique project identifier: **SGT-A**.
- 2.2.6 Wardell Armstrong Archaeology supports the Online Access to the Index of Archaeological Investigations (OASIS) project. This project aims to provide an on-line index and access to the extensive and expanding body of grey literature, created as a result of developer-funded archaeological work. As a result, details of the results of this project will be made available by WAA as a part of this national project. The OASIS reference for the project is: **wardella2-256532**.

3 BACKGROUND

3.1 Location and Geological Context

3.1.1 The development site is located to the south-west of the market town of Thirsk, on land previously used for agricultural purposes and formerly associated with Cocked Hat Farm (at NGR SE 42280 80526). The development site is within a wider area of development, known as Sowerby Gateway, to the immediate north-west of the roundabout on Topcliffe Road, which ties in with the new spine road north-east of the buildings at Cocked Hat Croft (Figure 1).

3.1.2 The area monitored by the watching brief covered an area approximately 45m long and 5m wide, within the south-eastern part of the development site (Figure 2). At the time of the groundworks, the area was the only remaining part of the development site, not yet stripped of topsoil by the current contractors.

3.1.3 The underlying solid geology within the area of investigation is mapped as mudstone of the Mercia Mudstone Group deposited during the Triassic Period, 200 to 251 million years ago. This is overlain by superficial deposits of sand, silt and gravel of the Brighton Sand Formation, deposited up to 2 million years ago during the Quaternary Period (BGS 2016 website). The natural substrate was not reached during the watching brief monitoring of the development groundworks.

3.2 Historical and Archaeological Background

3.2.1 An archaeological desk based study was undertaken for the site by On Site Archaeology in 2008 (cited in Giecco 2005, 3). The study highlighted that the area has a rich prehistoric past with numerous finds and cropmarks in the area indicating activity from the Neolithic period through to the Iron Age. A known Roman road to the north-east of the development site indicates some activity in the area during the Romano-British period. During the medieval period there is no indication of any activity other than agricultural in the study area. A geophysical survey conformed the potential for archaeological deposits to survive in the area.

3.2.2 A subsequent archaeological evaluation undertaken in 2012 (Bruce, Pinnock and Sotheran 2012) confirmed the high archaeological potential of the area, with the discovery of a well preserved Iron Age barrow, a pit alignment, field boundaries and post holes. Evaluation trenches within the vicinity of the current development area encountered little in the way of archaeological features (Bruce, Pinnock and Sotheran 2012, 20), and the subsequent methodology for future archaeological mitigation

placed it within an area to be covered by a watching brief rather than the strip map and sample technique implemented in areas of higher archaeological potential (Pearson 2012, 9-10).

4 WATCHING BRIEF RESULTS

4.1 Introduction

4.1.1 A site visit occurred on the 6th June and the watching brief was undertaken on the 29th and 30th June 2016. The monitored groundworks took place within the south-eastern part of the proposed development site (Figure 2), the rest of the site having already been stripped of topsoil and the hedges removed. Prior to Sanderson's, the present construction company on-site, the development site had been used as a compound by Moody's, the construction company responsible for the neighbouring housing developments. Consequently it had already been predominantly stripped and covered with hard-standing, prior to the commencement of the present groundworks.

4.1.2 In addition, although not observed during the watching brief monitoring, one of the groundwork contractors mentioned a 'not very deep' brick-lined well, found and removed during earlier groundworks. This must have been the pump, noted from First and Second Editions of the Ordnance Survey maps (Figures 3 and 4), though no longer depicted on the Third Edition Ordnance Survey map of 1912 (Figure 5). The Roman milestone thought to have once existed within one of the hedges within the development site had been removed by the time of archaeological observation (Pearson 2012, 11). No hedges survived at the time of the archaeological monitoring in June 2016.

4.2 Results

4.2.1 The area in the south-eastern part of the development site contained a bund of spoil, retained from the previous compound phase of developments at the site. This was up to 2m in height and covered an area approximately 3m in width and 25m in length, and was removed prior to any excavations occurring.

4.2.2 The area beneath the bund was then removed, as well as a wider area, covering the distance to the southern extent of the foundations for the new building, an area of approximately 950m² (Figure 2). A total of up to 0.5m of mid-dark brown silt was removed from this area (Plates 1 and 2). All spoil was heaped in the north-western part of the site, to be reused for planting once the building was complete. No archaeological finds or features were encountered.

4.2.3 Once the area had been levelled, a deeper area was required to create a new access route and priority parking bays for accessibility (Figure 2). This required the excavation of an area of c. 495m², measuring a maximum of 13m wide and 40m long at an

additional depth of 0.6m, 0.3m deeper than the present pavement level south of the site boundary (Plate 3). The same mid-dark brown silt was encountered, the natural substrate never being reached (Plate 4).

5 CONCLUSIONS

5.1 Interpretation

5.1.1 The archaeological watching brief monitored groundworks occurring within the south-eastern part of the development site, the only area not previously affected by earlier groundwork activity within the site.

5.1.2 Only a mid-dark brown silt was observed, suggesting that the previous works had stripped the entire site, and used the large amount of topsoil removed to level the ground ready for the compound and later development. This mid-dark brown silt was also observed in the sections of the previously excavated foundation trenches, which already had concrete foundations within them (Plates 2 and 3).

5.2 Development Impact

5.2.1 The development did not impact on any heritage features during the watching brief phase.

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1st July 2016

APPENDIX 1: PLATES



Plate 1: General view of bund removal, facing west



Plate 2: View of topsoil removal, facing south-west

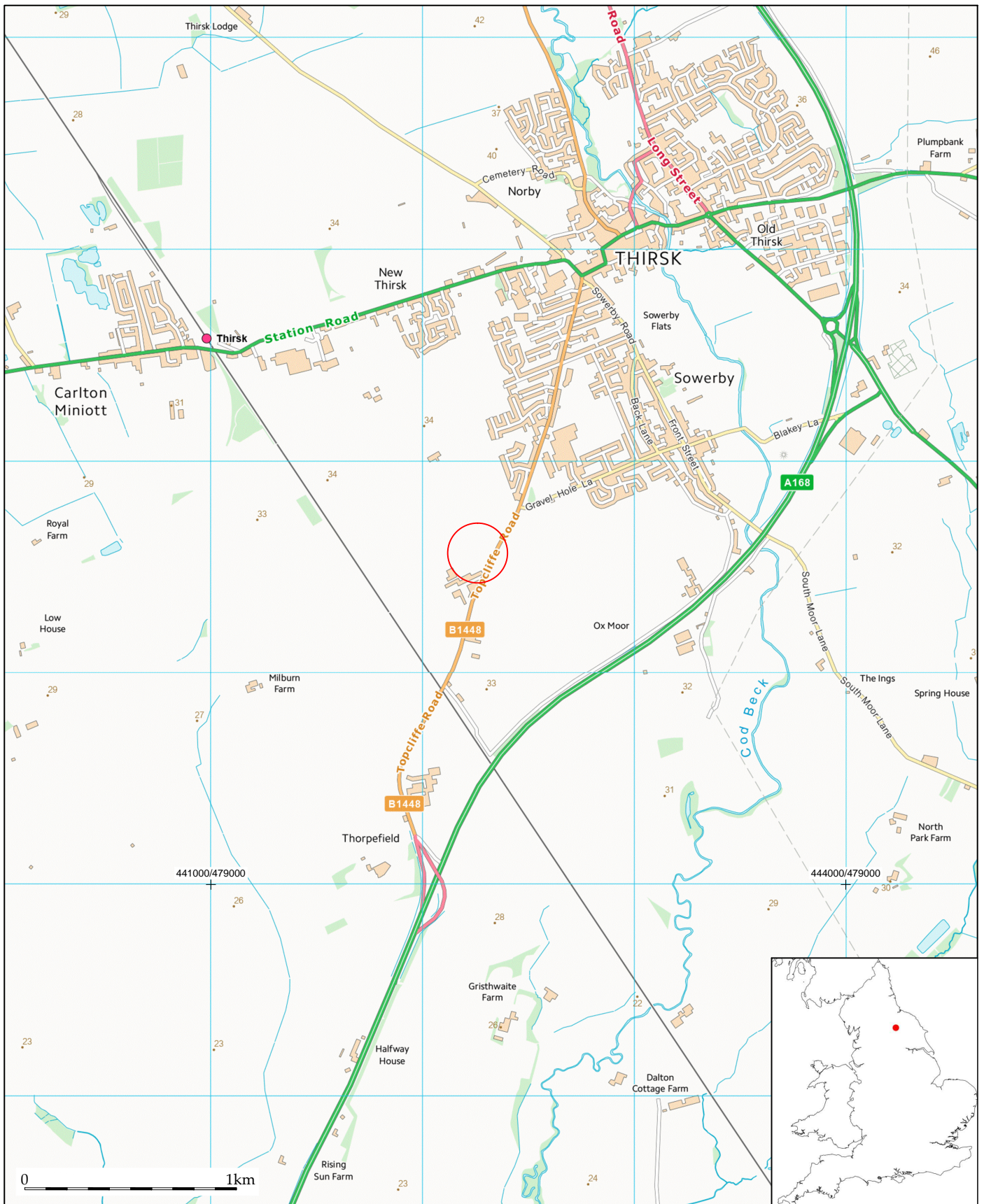


Plate 3: Excavating to final depth, facing west-north-west



Plate 4: Final depth for car parking and access route, facing west-north-west

APPENDIX 2: FIGURES






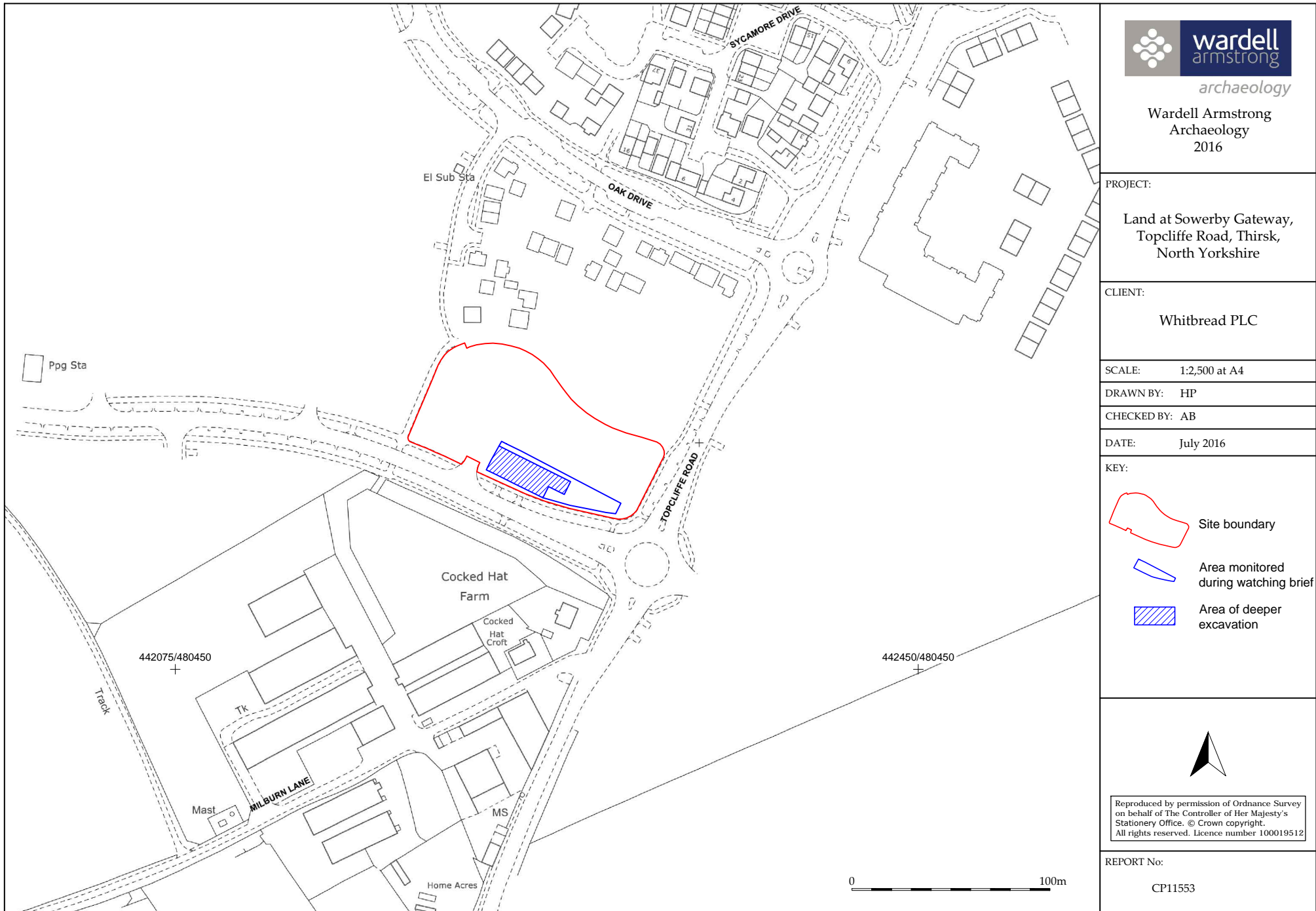
 <p>Wardell Armstrong Archaeology 2016</p>	<p>PROJECT: Land at Sowerby Gateway, Topcliffe Road, Thirsk, North Yorkshire</p> <p>SCALE: 1:25,000 at A4</p> <p>REPORT No: CP11553</p> <p>CLIENT: Whitbread PLC</p> <p>DRAWN BY: HP</p> <p>CHECKED BY: AB</p> <p>DATE: July 2016</p>	<p>KEY:</p> <p> Site Location</p>	 <p>Reproduced by permission of Ordnance Survey on behalf of The Controller of Her Majesty's Stationery Office. © Crown copyright. All rights reserved. Licence number 100019512</p>
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Figure 1: Site location.



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Archaeology
2016

PROJECT:
Land at Sowerby Gateway,
Topcliffe Road, Thirsk,
North Yorkshire




CLIENT:
Whitbread PLC

SCALE: 1:2,500 at A4

DRAWN BY: HP

CHECKED BY: AB

DATE: July 2016

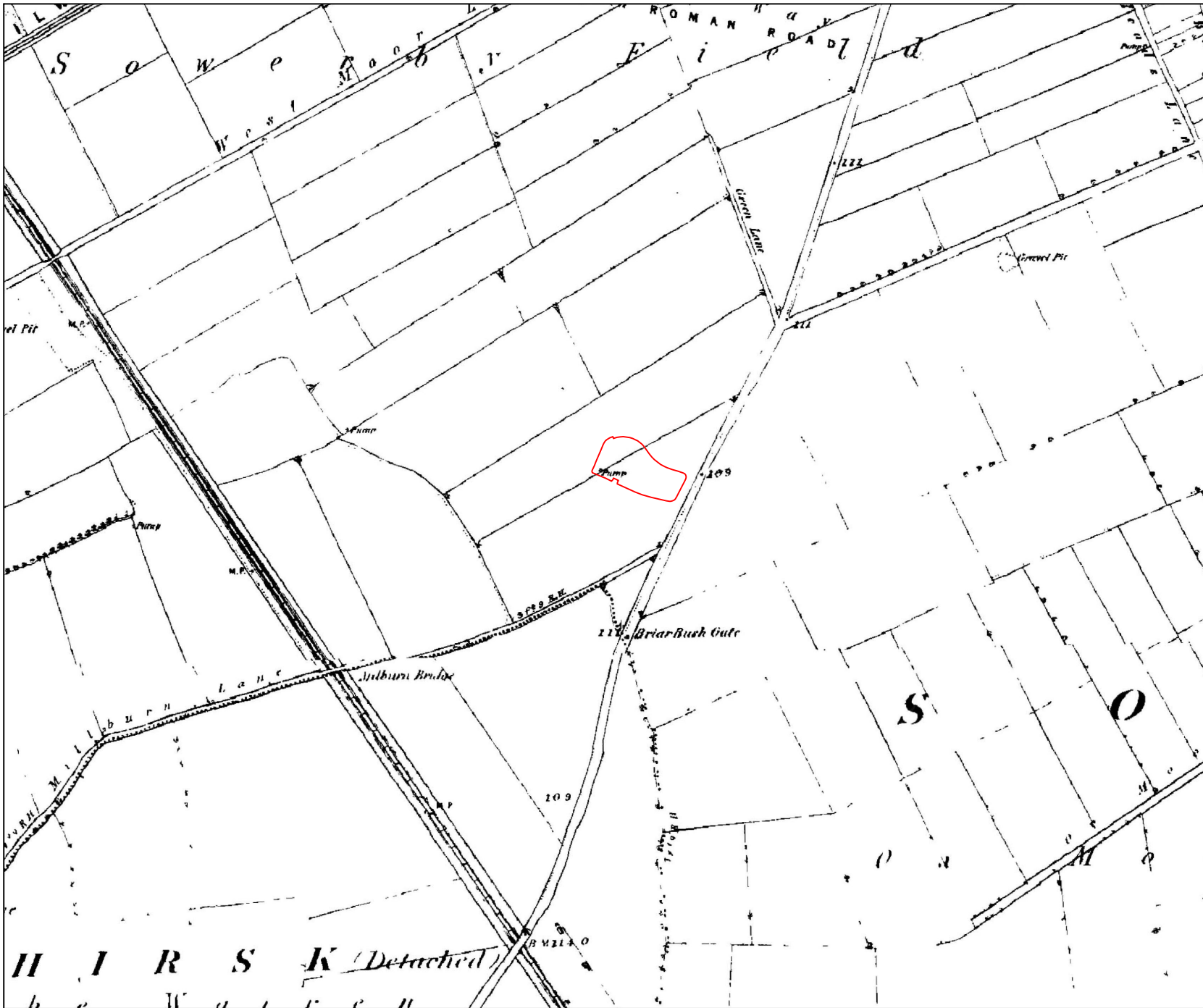
- KEY:
-  Site boundary
 -  Area monitored during watching brief
 -  Area of deeper excavation



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Figure 2: Detailed site location.



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2016

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Topcliffe Road, Thirsk,
North Yorkshire


CLIENT:
Whitbread PLC

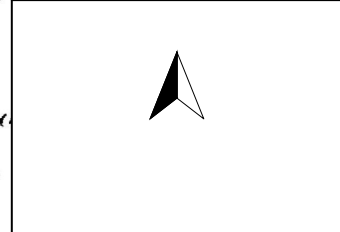
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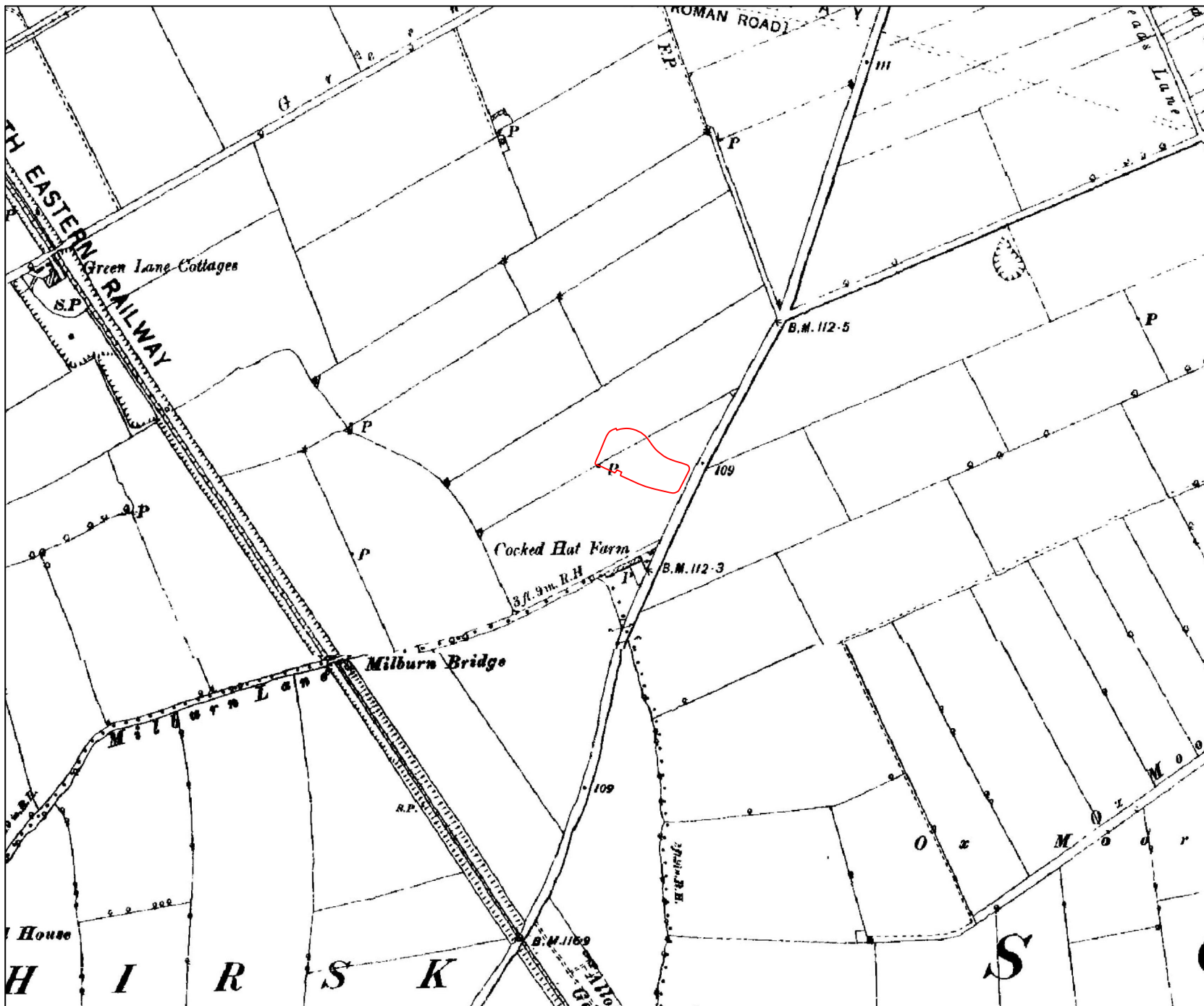
DATE: July 2016

KEY:
 Site boundary



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Figure 3: First Edition Ordnance Survey Map, 1896 (6 inches to 1 mile scale).



PROJECT:

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 Topcliffe Road, Thirsk,

 North Yorkshire

CLIENT:

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SCALE: 1:7,500 at A4

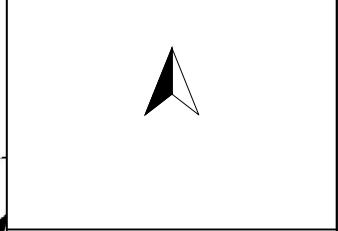
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KEY:

 Site boundary



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Figure 4: Second Edition Ordnance Survey Map, 1895 (6 inches to 1 mile scale).

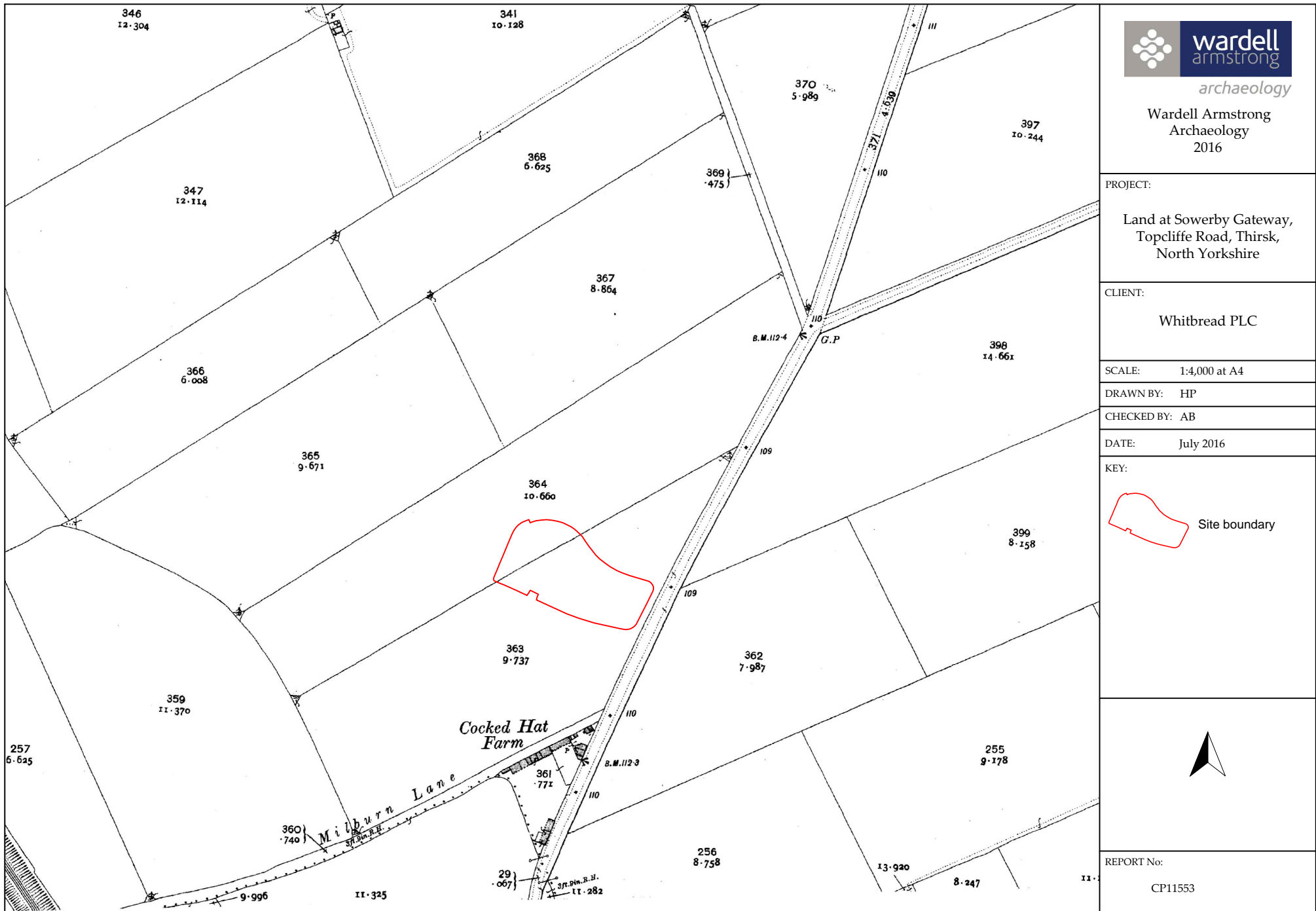


Figure 5: Third Edition Ordnance Survey Map, 1912 (25 inches to 1 mile scale).

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