



**An Archaeological Trial Trench Evaluation  
on land at the former Danesmoor Primary School  
Ashmore Park, Wolverhampton  
October 2015**

Report No. 16/40

Author: David J Leigh

Illustrator: James Ladocha



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Illustrations	James Ladocha BA

**OASIS REPORT FORM**

<b>PROJECT DETAILS</b>		<b>OASIS: molanort1-244365 Event No: EBL939</b>	
Project name	An Archaeological Trial Trench Evaluation on land at the former Danesmoor Primary School, Ashmore Park, Wolverhampton		
Short description	An archaeological trial trench evaluation was undertaken by MOLA Northampton, on behalf Wolverhampton City Council in October 2015 on land at the former Danesmoor Primary School, Ashmore Park, Wolverhampton. No pre-modern archaeological deposits or artefacts were present, however, horizons indicative of open-cast mining were noted.		
Project type	Trial trench evaluation		
Site status	None		
Previous work	None		
Current Land use	Site of former primary school, presently occupied by scrub vegetation and an area of hard-standing		
Future work	Unknown		
Monument type/ period	-		
Significant finds	-		
<b>PROJECT LOCATION</b>			
County	West Midlands		
Site address	Danesmoor Primary School, Ashmore Park, Wolverhampton		
Study area (sq metres)			
OS Easting & Northing	SJ 9606 0205		
<b>PROJECT CREATORS</b>			
Organisation	MOLA Northampton		
Project brief originator	The Archaeology and Historic Environment Officer, Wolverhampton City Council		
Project Design originator	MOLA Northampton		
Director/Supervisor	David J Leigh		
Project Manager	Huw Sherlock supported by David J Leigh		
Sponsor or funding body	Wolverhampton City Council		
<b>PROJECT DATE</b>			
Start date	October 2015		
End date	October 2015		
<b>ARCHIVES</b>	<b>Location</b>	<b>Content (eg pottery, animal bone etc)</b>	
Physical		none	
Paper	MOLA (Northampton)	Trial trench recording forms (2) Context sheets (7) Photographic record sheets (2) Black and white photographs (24) Digital photographs (43)	
Digital		Report text and figures	
<b>BIBLIOGRAPHY</b>			
	Journal/monograph, published or forthcoming, or unpublished client report (MOLA report)		
Title	An Archaeological Trial Trench Evaluation on land at the former Danesmoor Primary School, Ashmore Park, Wolverhampton		
Serial title & volume	MOLA Northampton report 16/40		
Author	David J Leigh		
Date	February 2016		

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# **An Archaeological Trial Trench Evaluation on land at the former Danesmoor Primary School, Ashmore Park, Wolverhampton October 2015**

## *Abstract*

*An archaeological trial trench evaluation was undertaken by MOLA Northampton on behalf of Wolverhampton City Council on land at the former Danesmoor Primary School, Ashmore Park, Wolverhampton. No pre-modern deposits or artefacts were present, however horizons indicative of open-cast mining were noted.*

## **1 INTRODUCTION**

An archaeological trial trench evaluation was undertaken by MOLA Northampton in October 2015 on land at the former Danesmoor Primary School, Ashmore Park, Wolverhampton (NGR: SJ 9606 0205; Fig 1). The work was undertaken on behalf of Wolverhampton City Council, following a brief prepared by the Archaeology and Historic Environment Officer, Wolverhampton City Council (Appendix 1).

The work followed a Written Scheme of Investigation produced by MOLA (Leigh 2015) and adhered to the National Planning Policy Framework (DCLG 2012) and the procedural document MoRPHE issued by English Heritage, now Historic England (HE 2015) along with the appropriate national standards and guidelines, as recommended by the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists (CIfA 2014).

## **2 BACKGROUND**

### **2.1 Location, topography and geology**

The site lies on ground sloping slightly down from north to south at an approximate height of between 161.5m and 165.5m aOD and comprises an area of low scrub vegetation, hedges and trees (Fig 2) formerly occupied by Danesmoor Park Primary School, demolished prior to the archaeological evaluation. The former school buildings were situated in the western half of the site with the eastern half previously functioning as the school playing fields. An area of tarmac hardstanding, formerly the school playground, lies within the central area of the site (Fig 3).

The site is encompassed by residential housing on the west, north and eastern sides and by playing fields to the south. The site is entered from Russell Close on the western side.

The underlying geology has been mapped as Pennine Lower and Middle Coal Measures (British Geological Survey online geology viewer).

## **2.2 Archaeological and historical background**

A Desk-Based Assessment produced as part of the current application (Ramsey 2015) provides a full list of all entries held by the Historic Environment Record Office.

No prehistoric or Roman remains have been recorded in the immediate environs of the investigation area. However an undated enclosure (WoHER 8545) lies approximately 400m to the east, whilst three flat pebble mace-heads (6251) of possible mesolithic date are recorded as being found at Ashmore Lodge to the south.

To the south lies the Scheduled Monument of Ashmore Moat (2553), the only visible moated site in the City of Wolverhampton.

Lying within the boundaries of the investigation area is the site of the former Ashmore Park Colliery, which was founded in 1875 and up until its liquidation in 1954, was one of the more successful collieries in the area. During the 19th century Ashmore Park Colliery was linked to the Wryley and Essington Canal by a tramway (10808/14305; fig 1) that was still visible up until the mid-20th century. This ran north-south through the investigation area, linking Ashmore Park Colliery with the Wryley and Essington Canal.

Up to the present application, and since the demolition of the school, the site has lain overgrown, with scrub vegetation, hedges and trees covering much of the site, only the former playground of the school remains extant.

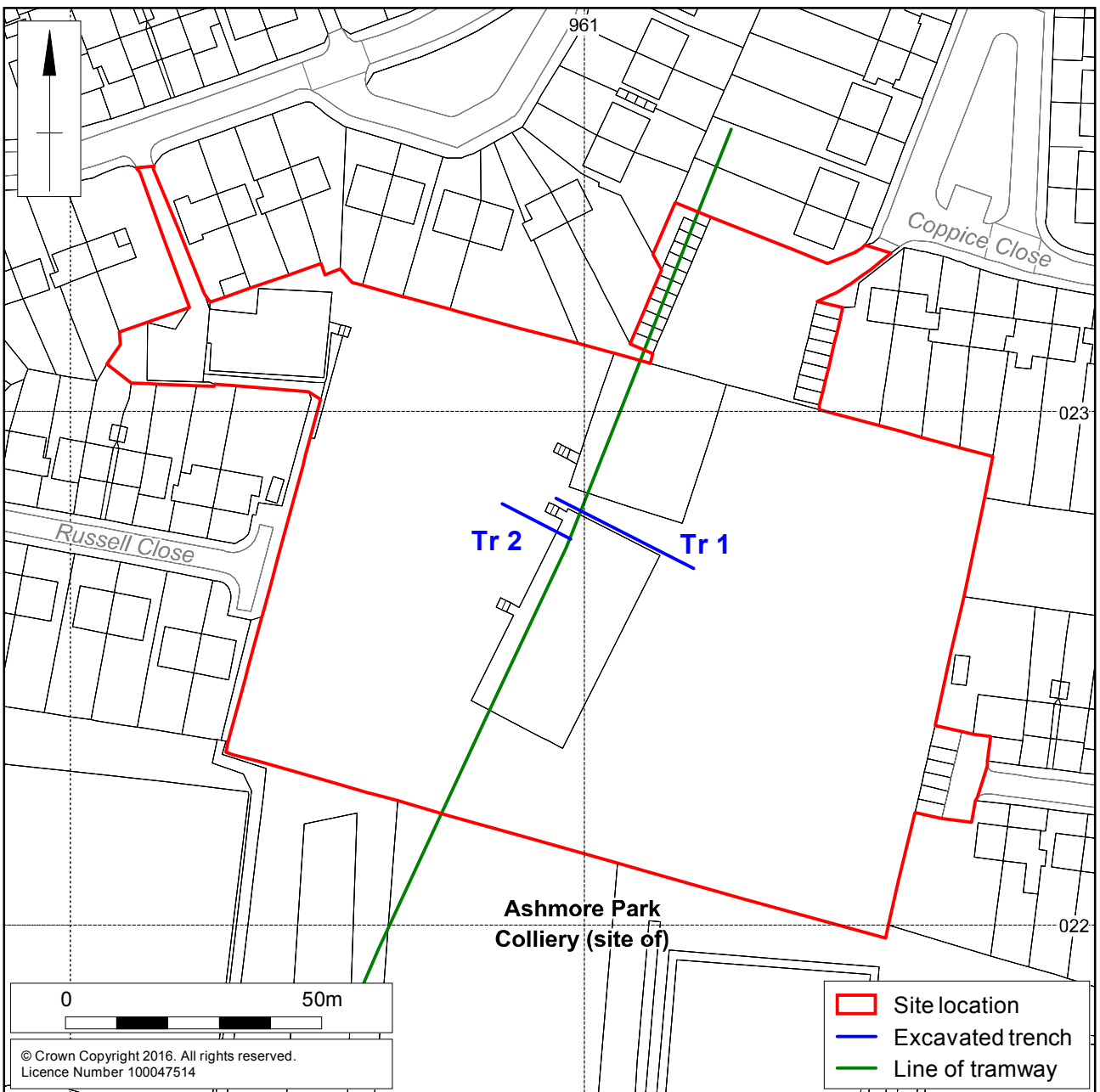
## **3 AIMS AND OBJECTIVES**

3.1 The purpose of the work is to determine and understand the nature, function and character of the archaeological site in its cultural and environmental setting.

3.2 The aims of the investigation are to:

- Establish the date, nature and extent of the activity or occupation on the development site
- Identify and record the 19th century tramway that is believed to run through the investigation area
- Recover artefacts to assist in the development of type series within the region
- Recover palaeo-environmental remains to determine past local environmental conditions

3.3 Specific research objectives will be drawn from national and regional research frameworks documents.



Scale 1:1,250

Site location and excavated trenches Fig 1





The investigation area, looking east Fig 2



The area of the former playground, looking north Fig 3

## 4 METHODOLOGY

The evaluation conformed to the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists' *Standard and guidance: Archaeological Field Evaluation* (CIfA 2014b). All stages of the project were undertaken in accordance with English Heritage, *Management of Research Projects in the Historic Environment* (MoRPHE) (EH 2006), as well as specific guidelines for this project given by the WSI prepared by MOLA (MOLA 2015).

The area of the evaluation was to comprise two trenches 1 x 50m long and the other 20m long. However, the overgrown nature of the area resulted in the shortening of Trench 1 and the shortening and repositioning of Trench 2. The trenches were excavated by a JCB 3CX machine using a flat toothless bucket down to the first archaeological remains, or where these were absent, to the upper interface of natural geological deposits.

All archaeological features were given a separate context number. Deposits were described on *pro-forma* trench sheets to include details of the context, its relationships and its interpretation (MOLA 2014). The trenches and spoil heaps were scanned with a metal detector to ensure maximum finds retrieval. Subsequent to the evaluation, the trenches were backfilled with up-cast, lightly compacted by the mechanical excavator.

Digital photographs also formed the principal photographic record for report purposes, and black and white negatives were taken for submission to the archive.



The groundworks in progress Fig 4



Trench 1 after excavation, looking east Fig 5



Trench 1, south facing section Fig 6

## **5 THE RECORDED EVIDENCE**

### **5.1 Trench 1**

Trench 1 was aligned east–west and ran along the northern edge of the former playground. Due to the proximity of a large hedge, Trench 1 was slightly shortened, measuring 30m by 1.70m wide (Figs 2 and 6). The natural substratum (1002) was encountered at a depth of 0.70m below present ground level and comprised pale orange-brown compact sandy clay.

The top of the natural surface was uneven as it was cut by a series of scoops, hollows and pits giving a pock-marked appearance. Some of the pits were over 1.20m deep. These features were filled by a single mixed layer of grey-black charcoal and ash clinker (Fig 7; 1001). The same material was used to level the site to a depth of 0.40m above the surface of the natural clay.

Sealing charcoal and clinker was a mid grey-brown sandy loam topsoil (1000), up to 0.30m thick, containing numerous irregular stones and occasional small fragments of modern ceramic building material. No pre-modern deposits or artefacts were present.

### **5.2 Trench 2**

Trench 2 was also aligned east-west and was excavated approximately 3.50m to the south of Trench 1 and extended 15m west from the edge of the former playground (Figs 2 and 8).

A similar stratigraphy to that in Trench 1 was recorded in the eastern half of the trench. The natural substratum (2003) was encountered at a depth of 0.60m below present ground level and comprised pale orange-brown sandy clay, but was again pock-marked and pitted. Some of the pits were at least 1.25m deep. These features were filled by the same grey-black charcoal and ash clinker (2002). This material was again used to form a levelling layer 0.40m thick above the natural (Fig 9).

This layer was sealed in the eastern half of the trench by the tarmac hard-standing (2001) of the former playground, and in the western half, by mid grey-brown sandy loam topsoil (2000) up to 0.30m thick, containing numerous irregular stones and occasional small fragments of modern ceramic building material. No pre-modern deposits or artefacts were present.



Trench 2 under excavation, looking west Fig 7



Trench 2 south facing section Fig 8

## 6 THE SITE ARCHIVE

The project has generated a small archive comprising:

RECORD	NUMBER
Trial trench log sheets	2
Context sheets	7
Photographic record sheets	2
Black and white photographs	24
Digital photographs	43

The project archive will be consolidated and prepared for archival deposition by MOLA Northampton under the Event No: EBL939.

## 7 CONCLUSIONS

Due to the overgrown nature of the investigation area, Trench 1 required shortening to allow it to fit in the proposed location and Trench 2 was re-located close-by Trench 1.

No pre-modern archaeological deposits or artefacts were present in either of the trial trenches. Where exposed the natural substratum was pock-marked and undulating, which is consistent with the site's former use as an open-cast mine. A layer of charcoal and ash clinker was recorded in both trenches and the nature of this deposit is suggestive of the residue normally associated with open-cast workings. It can be surmised that this derives from spoil-heaps which has subsequently been spread across the site to level the ground prior to, or during the construction of Danesmoor Primary School.

No evidence of the 19th century tramline identified from cartographic evidence and recorded in the Wolverhampton City Historic Environment Record was present. It is possible that the tramlines, which were extant up until the middle part of the 20th century, were removed as part of the re-development of the site for the construction of Danesmoor Primary School. Following their removal the area was levelled and landscaped.

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

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MOLA Northampton

25th February 2016 (Revised 1<sup>st</sup> March 2016)

Appendix 1: Brief for archaeological work



# **Land at Danesmore Park Primary School, Wolverhampton**

## **Brief for Archaeological Evaluation**

### **1. Introduction**

- 1.1 Wolverhampton City Council is proposing to dispose of the site of the former Danesmore Park Primary School. An archaeological desk-based assessment identified a late 19<sup>th</sup> century tramway that linked the pits of the Ashmore Park Collieries with the Wyrley and Essington Canal, extant until the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century and possibly surviving as a buried structure within the site.
- 1.2 Wolverhampton City Council wishes to commission an archaeological evaluation, to confirm the presence/absence, nature, date and extent of any features, structures and deposits that may be present.

### **2. Detailed Requirements**

- 2.1 The evaluation should comprise excavation of a length of around 70m of trenching by machine (50m and 20m). Trenches should be laid out as close as possible to the positions shown in Figure 1, allowing for changes in the location if services or other obstructions are encountered. They should be excavated using a toothless ditching bucket.
- 2.2 Trenches should be carefully cleaned, features and layers defined and where necessary sample excavation undertaken. Allowance should be made for work to include opening up of trenches, cleaning, sampling, recording and backfill.
- 2.3 On completion of the trial trenching an illustrated report should be produced on the work.

### **3. General conditions**

- 3.1 The work should be undertaken by suitably qualified and experienced archaeological staff, under the supervision of a Member of the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists (MCIfA) or a Project Manager with equivalent experience.
- 3.2 The code of conduct, standards and guidance of the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists (CIfA) should be adhered to.

- 3.3 A written scheme of investigation for the work required should be prepared by the contractor and agreed with the local planning authority (Wolverhampton City Council) prior to the work commencing.
- 3.4 Information regarding insurance should also be submitted to the council, and a risk assessment prepared prior to the work commencing.
- 3.5 An appropriate recording strategy should be used and the method and justification for this stated in the reports.
- 3.6 On completion of the work the site archive should be deposited if possible with an appropriate museum/public archive.
- 3.7 A digital copy of the report should be submitted to the local planning authority, Wolverhampton Archives Service and Wolverhampton Historic Environment Record (WoHER). The report will normally become a publicly accessible part of the WoHER within 6 months of completion.
- 3.8 Reports should contain the following information:
- Location, aims and methodology
  - Historical and archaeological background
  - A written summary of the findings together with appropriate illustrations, which should be related to the national grid. Levels should be related to the Ordnance Datum.
  - A discussion of features and deposits
  - A copy of the brief
- 3.9 On completion of the work an OASIS record form should be completed and a summary report should be sent for publication in West Midlands Archaeology and any other appropriate local or national archaeological journal.
- 3.10 Health and Safety

It is the responsibility of the contractor to ensure that all work is carried out in accordance with relevant Health and Safety regulations.

Site procedures should be in accordance with the guidance set out in the Health and Safety Manual of the Standing Conference of Archaeological Unit Managers.

### 3.11 Access

All access to the site is to be arranged in advance with Steve Nicholls.

### 3.12 Monitoring

The work will be monitored by the Archaeology and Historic Environment Officer for Wolverhampton City Council and provisions for monitoring should be agreed with them. At least five working days' notice of commencement of any fieldwork should be given. A draft of any report should be submitted to the Archaeology and Historic Environment Officer for approval ahead of finalisation.

## 4. Contacts

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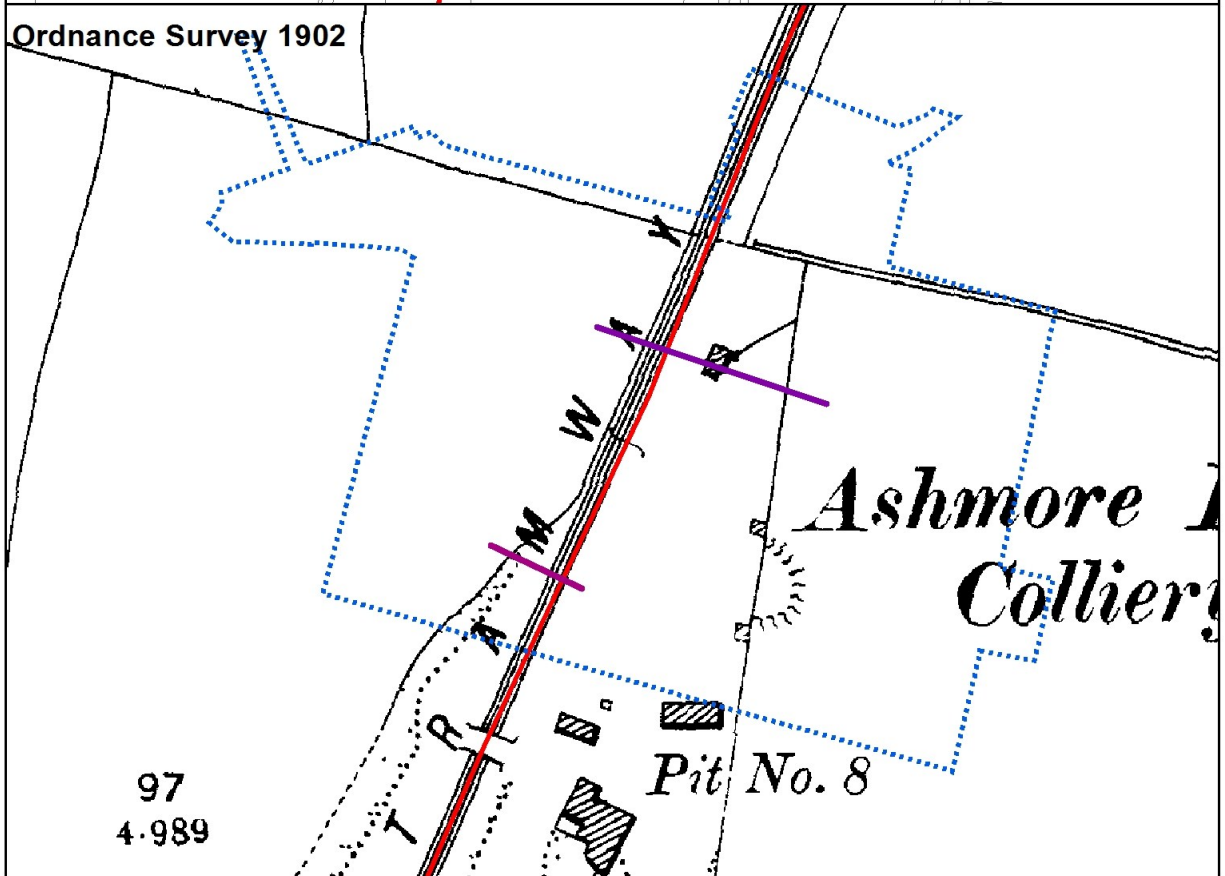
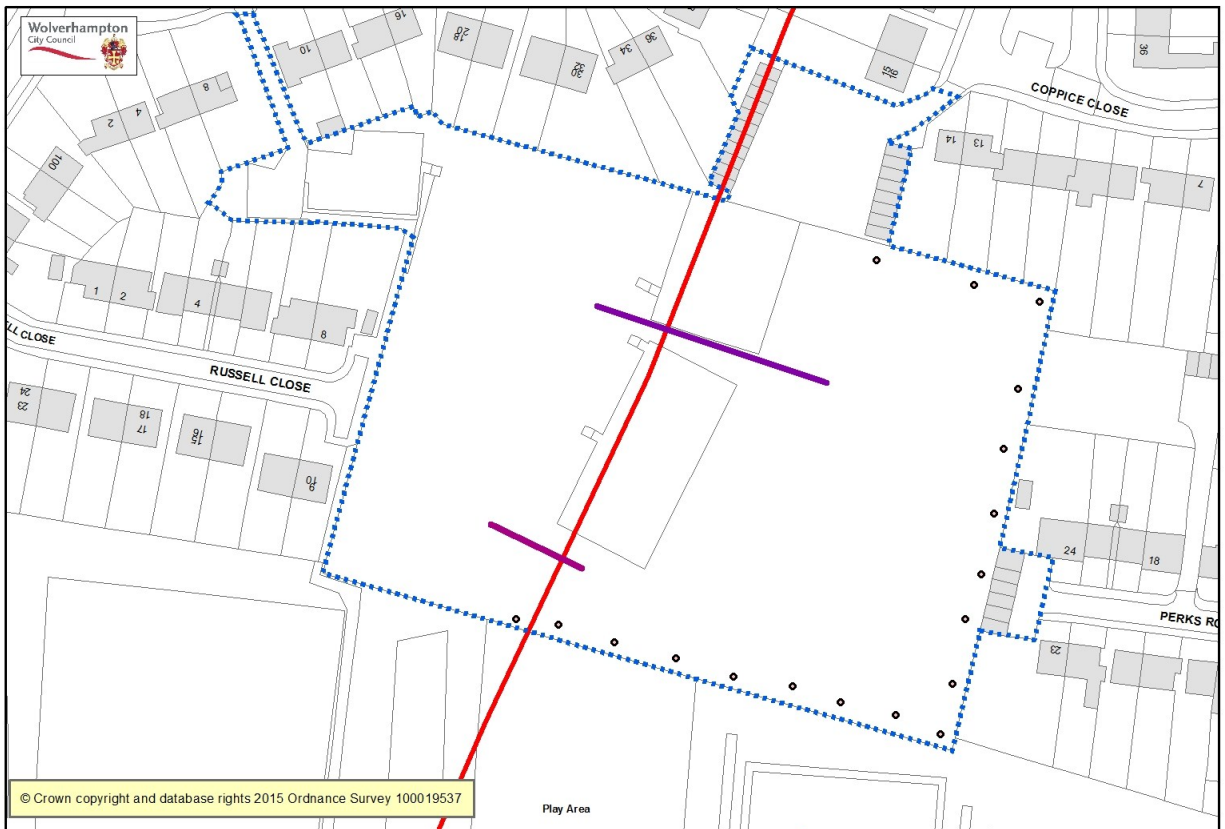
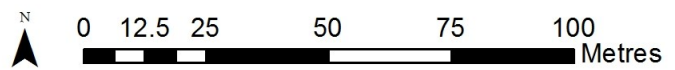


Figure 1





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