

**Lea Hall Employment
Park, Off-Site Sewerage
Infrastructure, Rugeley,
Staffordshire: An
Archaeological Watching
Brief**

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Lea Hall Employment Park, Off-Site Sewerage Infrastructure, Rugeley,
Staffordshire: An Archaeological Watching Brief

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Summary

A programme of archaeological work was carried out between February and May 2002 by Birmingham University Field Archaeology Unit (BUFAU) on behalf of Severn Trent Water Limited. The programme of archaeological works consisted of a watching brief along the course of a new pipeline and sewage infrastructure associated with Lea Hall Colliery Employment Park, Rugeley, Staffordshire (NGR SK01 0461 1890). The work was undertaken as a condition of planning consent. The sites and monuments record recorded four sites of interest that might be affected by the development. These included medieval ridge and furrow and stretches of the Trent and Mersey canal.

The only archaeological features identified during the course of the watching brief were of post medieval date, and included a probable boundary ditch and drainage works.

1.0 Introduction

This report outlines the results of archaeological monitoring carried out during the laying of a new pipeline associated with the off-site sewerage treatment infrastructure for the Lea Hall Colliery Employment Park, Rugeley, Staffordshire. Birmingham University Field Archaeology Unit (BUFAU) was commissioned to carry out this watching brief by Severn Trent Water Limited following recommendations made by Staffordshire County Council. The monitoring was carried out between February 2002 to May 2002 in accordance with a Written Scheme of Investigation prepared by BUFAU (Cutler 2002) and with the *Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Watching Briefs* issued by the Institute of Field Archaeologists (Institute of Field Archaeologists, 1999).

2.0 Site Location (Fig. 1)

The pipeline, centring on NGR SK01 0461 1890, lies between the eastern side of the built up area of Rugeley and the western side of the course of the River Trent and is approximately 2.44km in length. The Pipeline is mainly northwest southeast aligned, running from a proposed pumping station at Lea Hall Colliery Employment Park on the southeastern side of Rugeley to Bower Lane (SK 034 194) on the northwestern edge of Rugeley.

3.0 Archaeological Background

The route of the pipeline runs along the Trent valley, across predominantly open fields between the River Trent and the Trent and Mersey Canal. A preliminary assessment carried out by Staffordshire County Council's Environmental Information Officer identified four known archaeological sites that might be affected by the development. These included a post-medieval canal aqueduct (Prn. 02882), two sections of the Trent and Mersey canal lying within a conservation area (Prn. 05231) and medieval ridge and furrow (Prn. 04280). The ridge and furrow remains are no longer visible and do not require any special monitoring. Similarly, the works associated with the Trent and Mersey canal were thought to have limited, if any, impact on archaeological remains. As a consequence the aims of monitoring were focused on the potential impact on non-recorded archaeology.

4.0 Aims and methodology

Archaeological monitoring was undertaken in the form of a watching brief carried out by qualified archaeologists. The watching brief was maintained during topsoil stripping along the pipeline corridor where appropriate and on the excavation of the pipe trench. The objective of the watching brief was to identify and record archaeological features or deposits revealed during the course of groundworks. Where material of possible archaeological significance might be encountered, excavation was carried out and a full record made of the stratigraphic sequence, supplemented by drawings. Deposits were recorded using *pro-forma* context and feature record cards. These records combined with section drawings and photographs form the site archive and are currently stored at BUFAU.

5.0 Results

For the purposes of the watching brief the course of the pipeline was divided into three sections (Fig 2). Section 1 (Plate 1), is approximately 240m in length and runs parallel to Power Station Road at the back of the Riverside Industrial Estate, between Station Road the line of the railway to the south. This ground is currently meadow land to the west of the river Trent. Section 2 measured approximately 200m in length and was aligned from the northern side of Station Road towards the River Trent in a north northwest direction. To the north of Deacons Way the route cuts west to the Trent and Mersey canal where it meets Section 3. Section 3 is a rectangular area of land, approximately 20.0m by 25.0m in size. This lay immediately to the east of the embankment for the Trent and Mersey canal, opposite the junction between Little Orchard and the Wolsley Road.

6.1 Section 1

The sub-soil was encountered 0.15m below the surface and consisted of an orange brown sandy clay (1001). This was overlain by the top soil, a dark brown clayed sand, containing numerous small sub-rounded clasts (1000). Within the sub-soil were patches of dark charcoal rich deposits, associated with a variety of nineteenth century pottery types including white wares and willow pattern.

The sub-soil was cut by two features. The first, a c19th century clay land drain (F100) was aligned approximately north south. This was filled by a dark brown silty sand (1002). The second was identified as two parallel lines of rubble (F101), each 0.10-0.15m in width and 1.0m apart. F101 was approximately 5.0m in length and the rubble appeared to be placed on top of a layer of dark brown clay, 1003. No dating evidence was associated with this feature but it appeared to be modern in origin.

6.2 Section 2

Section 2 was stripped to a depth of 0.40m. The sub-soil, 2001, was identified as a orange brown pebbly silty sand with some clay, and was found at depths of between 0.20m to 0.40m from the surface. The sub-soil (2001) was overlain by top-soil (2000) measuring 0.20m in depth. No archaeological features were identified, although areas of post medieval disturbance containing clinker and modern china were noted.

6.3 Section 3

Section 3 was stripped to a depth of between 0.25m and 0.30m. The sub-soil was identified as a mixed, orange silty sand containing numerous small to medium sub-rounded clasts (3001). A single feature was identified within the northeastern corner of Section 3 (F300). F300 appeared to be a linear feature approximately 0.45m in width, which ran for c2.5m in a northeast-southwest alignment, before turning in a right angle into the eastern section of excavation. This was filled by a grey brown silty sand (3002). A number of post medieval pottery fragments of 19th century date were found associated with F300. This was overlain by c0.15m of top-soil (3000).

7.0 Discussion

During the course of the construction of the pipe line corridor only three features were identified. F100 was the remains of a land drain, probably no earlier in date than the start of the 19th century and probably relates to an attempt to reduce soil water levels within the fields along the Trent in order to bring them in to more permanent pasture. F101 also appears to relate to land drainage. Channels cut into the sub-soil and back filled with rubble appear to have enabled water to drain from pasture land towards the river. This is post-medieval in origin. The only other feature appears to be the remains of a small ditch (F300) which may relate to an old field boundary. The associated finds would suggest an 18th or 19th century date for this feature.

The spreads of dark charcoal rich material, associated with a variety of nineteenth century pottery types, identified in Section 1 appear to represent the remains of waste material dumped possibly as a result of small scale industrial activity. Again a 19th century date for this activity is suggested by the pottery.

8.0 Conclusions

Archaeological monitoring of the construction of this pipeline has produced limited results. No significant archaeological remains dating earlier than the post medieval period were identified, however, this may in part be due to the restricted nature of the watching brief. The low lying river terraces on which the pipe was laid are in themselves an area of archaeological interest, particularly in terms of prehistoric activity. River terraces were often a focus for early human activity due to the availability of fresh water and other related resources. Buried archaeological remains of far earlier date than those identified during the course of this watching brief may therefore survive.

9.0 Acknowledgements

Melissa Conway, Erica Macey and Andrew Rudge carried out the fieldwork. The report was written by Andrew Rudge and edited by Richard Cuttler. The illustrations were prepared by Nigel Dodds. Thanks are due to Severn Trent for commissioning the project and their consulting engineers Charles Haswell and Partners Ltd. Thanks are also due to the on-site contractors, Barhale for their co-operation throughout the project.

10.0 References

Cuttler (2001) *Sewer construction at Lea Hall, Rugeley, Staffordshire, Written Scheme of Investigation*. BUFAU.

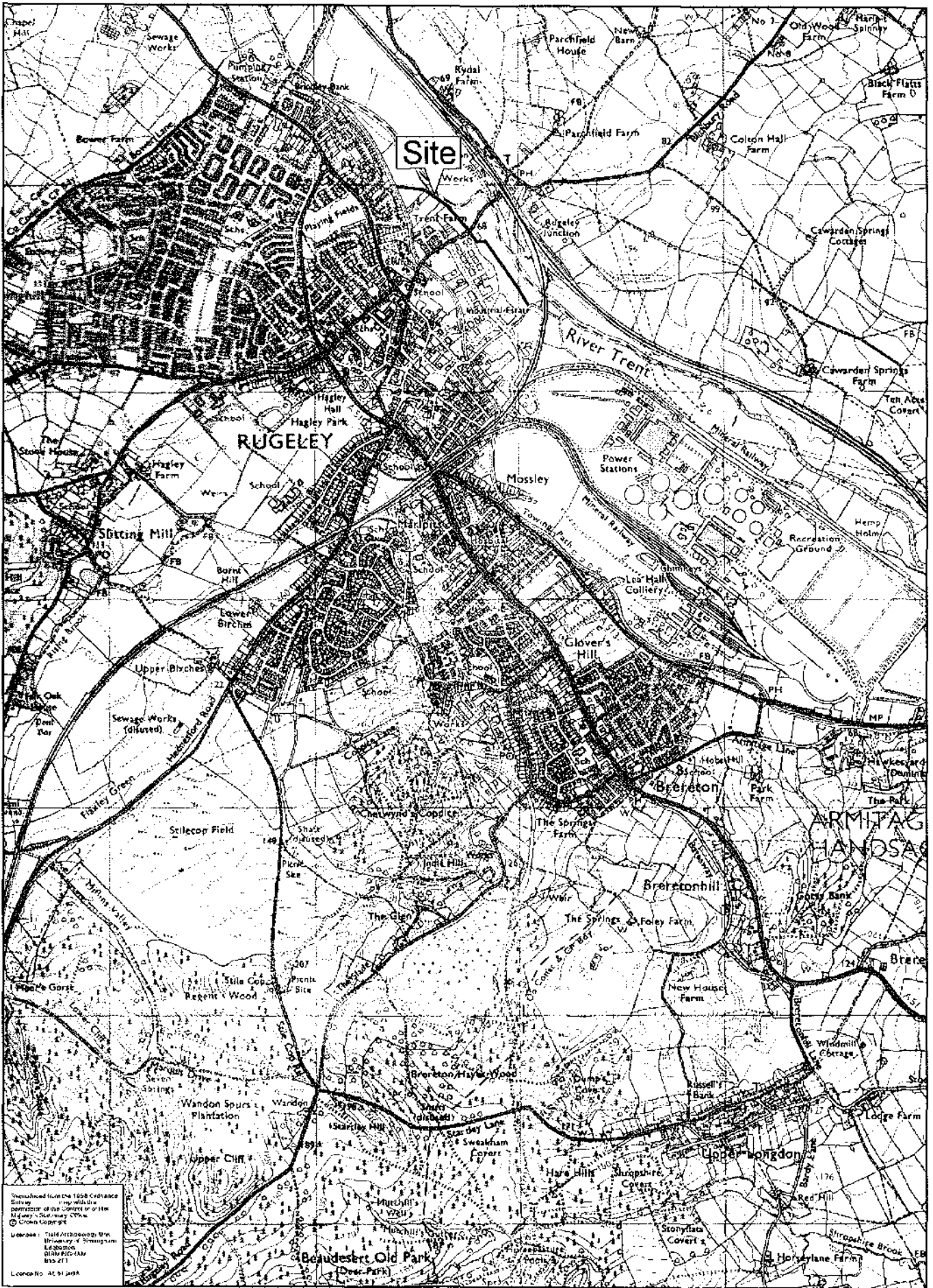


Fig.1

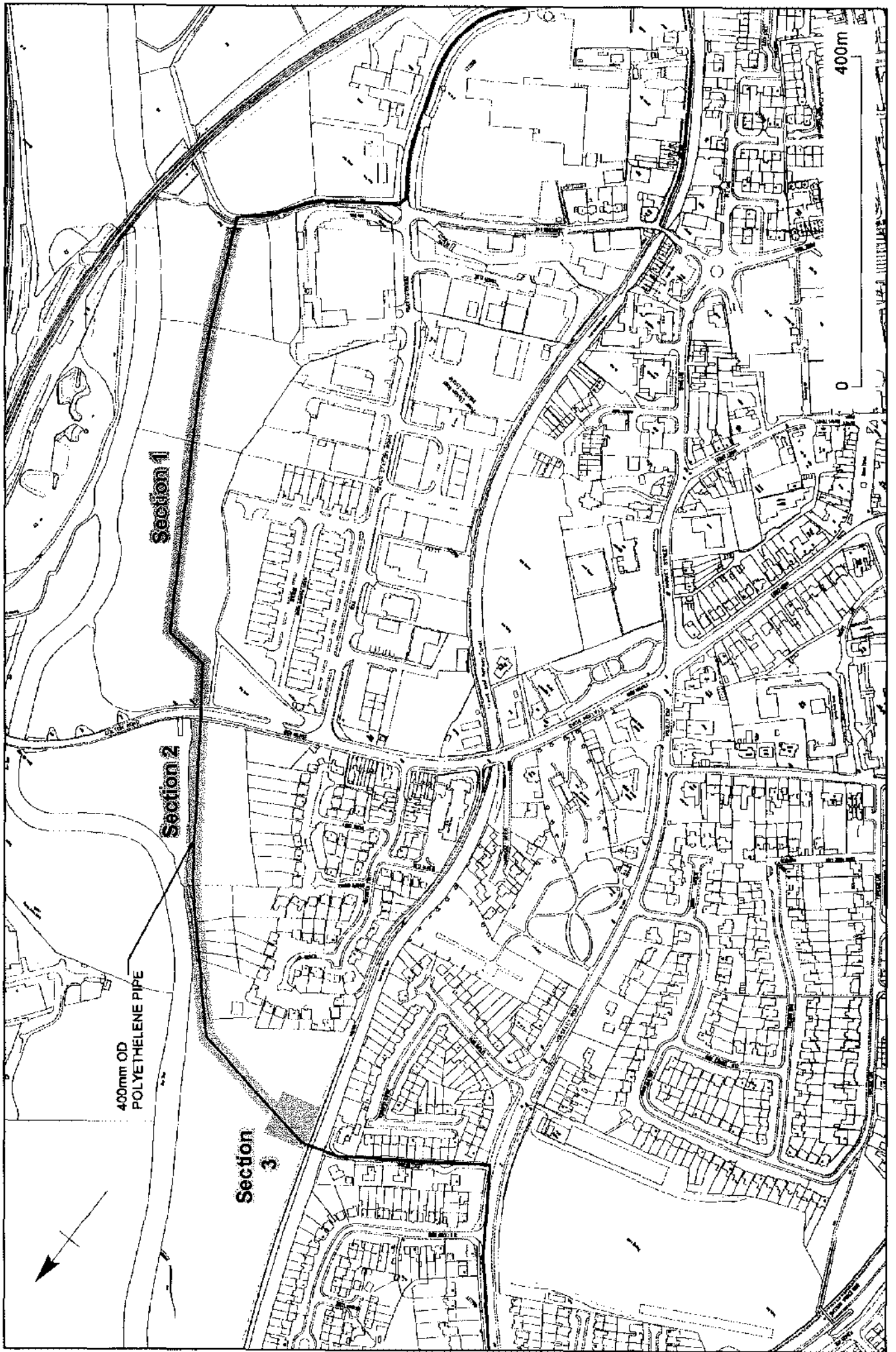


Fig.2



Plate 1