

Birmingham University Field Archaeology Unit  
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National Forest Planting Proposal for Wychnor Park, Staffordshire.  
A Brief Archaeological Assessment 2003.

by  
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**National Forest  
Planting Proposal for  
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# **National Forest Planting Proposal for Wychnor Park, Staffordshire. A Brief Archaeological Assessment 2003.**

## **Summary**

*An archaeological assessment was carried out by Birmingham University Field Archaeology Unit (BUFAU) in April/May 2003 to advise on a proposed National Forest Forestry planting regime at Wychnor Park, Staffordshire (NGR SK 156 175). The work was carried out on behalf of Envar Ltd. in order to inform Staffordshire County Council of whether any mitigation was required. The scheme proposed a new hedgerow, new planting and wetland feature. An initial assessment was made of the Site and Monuments Records (SMR) and a walkover survey was carried out. The walkover survey revealed no visible and significant historic landscape or archaeological features. The SMR assessment revealed many features in the vicinity of the site and that the site was within a 18<sup>th</sup> Century landscaped park. However, no archaeological deposits have been identified within the site itself and the potential for the presence/survival of significant archaeological deposits is low. Although it is acknowledged that a further programme of mitigation might be considered outside the wooded area, the likely level of impact of the scheme is thought to be minimal. The nature of available funding balanced against the benefits of the scheme is a main factor in the recommendation that no further archaeological work takes place in relation to this planting proposal.*

## **Introduction**

A brief archaeological assessment was undertaken by Birmingham University Field Archaeology Unit in April 2003, for a proposed National Forest Forestry planting regime at Wychnor Park, Staffordshire. The assessment was commissioned by Envar Ltd. Staffordshire County Council asked for a brief assessment of the proposal after an initial Sites and Monuments records search revealed a considerable degree of archaeological activity within the vicinity of the site. The work was carried out in agreement with a verbal methodology outlined by Bill Klemperer, Principal Historic Environment Officer, Staffordshire County Council.

No specific brief or written scheme of investigation was prepared for this work, although all work conformed to Institute of Field Archaeologist's 1999 'Standard and Guidance for archaeological desk-based assessments'

## **Site Location (Figs. 1 & 2; Plate 1)**

The site is a 4.33ha area of land located to the north of Alrewas and southwest of Barton-under Needwood. It is located within Wychnor Park (NGR SK 156 175). It is bounded on the west, north and east by agricultural fields and the south by the River Swarbourn. The topography of the area varies in height between 60m A.O.D. approx., in the south, and 75m A.O.D. approx., in the north

## **Aims**

The aim of the brief assessment was to have a reasonably informed idea of the affect any proposed planting may have upon any archaeological or historical features upon the site. It was also to assess the likely existence/survival of unknown archaeological features.

The result of this assessment was to propose an appropriate mitigation strategy to preserve the archaeological deposit *in situ* or ‘by record’.

## **Method**

The site was visited and a walkover and initial photographic record was made.

Staffordshire Sites & Monuments Record was consulted and an assessment made of the known sites. A cropmark plot of the area was consulted. No detailed cartographic study or search of historical sources was made.

## **Sites and Monuments Record Search (Fig. 3)**

A search of the Staffordshire Sites and Monuments Record (SMR) found 15 records within a kilometre radius of the Study Area (see Figure 3.)

Cropmark enclosures are visible to the east of the site (SMR Records 01460 and 05449) and to the west (SMR Records 05540 and 03572). The Yoxhall Enclosure (SMR 05450) may be prehistoric or Roman in date from their form. The enclosure at Wychnor Park (SMR 05449) is rectangular but of no known date.

The cropmarks identified at Wychnor Park (SMR 01460) consist of an enclosure of unknown date and two linear cropmarks, one of which may be a former post-medieval parkland avenue feature. Rectangular enclosures identified at Meadow Lane (SMR 03572) associated with irregular earthworks are also of unknown date.

Roman pottery scatters (SMR records 04095, 04096 and 040970) have been discovered to the east and southeast of the site, in Wychnor park. A possible site for a Roman villa has been suggested at Blackenhall (SMR record 04094) associated with first and second century A.D. finds and enclosure cropmarks. The suggested villa site is northeast of the site.

Wychnor Hall and its outbuildings (SMR Records 08649, 13199, 13122 and 13123) are to the southeast of the site and date between the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries A.D. The site itself is contained within the landscaped park associated with Wychnor Hall (SMR Record 40187) possibly originating in the sixteenth century A.D., which may have been an adaptation of a former deerpark here dating from the medieval period (SMR Record 00923). Medieval and post-medieval ridge and furrow associated with agriculture was noted to the south of the site in Alrewas (SMR Record 20195)

SMR No.	Site	Date	Description
04094	VILLA	Roman	Possible Roman Villa Site.
40187	LANDSCAPE PARK	Medieval to Post-Medieval	Landscape park associated with Wychnor Hall
20195	RIDGE & FURROW	Medieval	Medieval ploughing in Alrewas
13123	WALLED GARDEN	Medieval	Wychnor Hall Walled Garden
13122	BUILDING	Post-Medieval	Extant brick built Game Larder associated with Wychnor Hall
13119	COACH HOUSE	Post-Medieval	Wychnor Hall Coach House
08649	WYCHNOR HALL	Post-Medieval	Country House
05450	ENCLOSURE	Early Bronze Age to Roman	Cropmarked Enclosure
05449	ENCLOSURE	Unknown	Wychnor Park Enclosure
04097	POTTERY SCATTER	Roman	
04096	POTTERY SCATTER	Roman	
04095	POTTERY SCATTER	Roman	
03572	ENCLOSURE	Unknown	
01460	CROPMARKS	Unknown/ Post-Medieval	
00923	DEER PARK	Medieval	Wychnor Deer Park

### Site Visit

The site covers an area of 4.33ha with an oblong area of dense woodland running parallel to the northeastern boundary (Plate 1). The woodland is on a sloped area (Plate 2) with a plateau adjacent to the River Swarbourn. There was evidence that this area had been subjected to periodic flooding (Plate 3). At the time of the visit the site appeared to have been sown with a cereal crop that was in the early stages of growth. There was evidence of considerable disturbance in part of the wooded area due to what appeared to be badger sets (Plate 4). This disturbance revealed a subsoil derived from sandstone in this area. The wooded area was impenetrable except along a specifically designed path.

## **Discussion (Fig. 4)**

There was no evidence of any archaeological features known or unknown within the bounds of the site. There are no proposals to alter the nature of the existing boundaries, although there is a proposal for a new hedgerow to the north of the wooded area.

The area identified for '*possible location for wetland feature*' may contain archaeological deposits. Any archaeological deposits under the existing wooded area would have been heavily disturbed by the root activity. However, all the known possible archaeological sites are at some distance from this site and do not look likely to continue into this site.

In general, it is concluded that there is a very low possibility of presence of significant archaeological deposits within the site.

## **Recommendations**

It is recommended that no mitigation should take place in relation to the proposed new hedgerow/boundary or any work within the wooded area due to the low potential for archaeology and the minimal impact work would have if there were any archaeology.

The area of the possible wetland feature and planting outside the wood is more problematic. The construction of the wetland feature is unlikely to involve little more than removal of the topsoil, although any groundworks may encounter unknown archaeology. The planting at this stage would have little effect on any archaeological deposits, although growth over the years would be invasive, if such deposits existed.

As there is no known archaeology within the site, at this stage, any alteration of the planting scheme or re-location of wetland features is not recommended. A considered approach to such a scheme should be a rapid artefact collection exercise associated with a sample geophysical survey, in the area outside the wood. This may then lead to trial trenching and possible excavation. However, it is acknowledged that such planting schemes have very small resources to fund such a programme of archaeological works. A watching brief is also not thought to be an appropriate response and use of resources.

In conclusion, serious consideration should be given to carrying out no further archaeological work on the site in light of the low possibility of archaeological deposits existing within the site; the restricted impact the scheme would have upon any such deposits and the balance of funding resources for an archaeological mitigation programme weighed against the actual benefits of the scheme.

## **Acknowledgements**

The site visit and review was carried out by Gary Coates, who also wrote this report. The illustrations and plates were prepared by Gary Coates.

Ian Thompson commissioned on behalf of Envar Ltd.

Thanks are due to Historic Environment Team at Staffordshire County Council for providing the Sites and Monuments Records for the area and for their advice and assistance.



## Figures

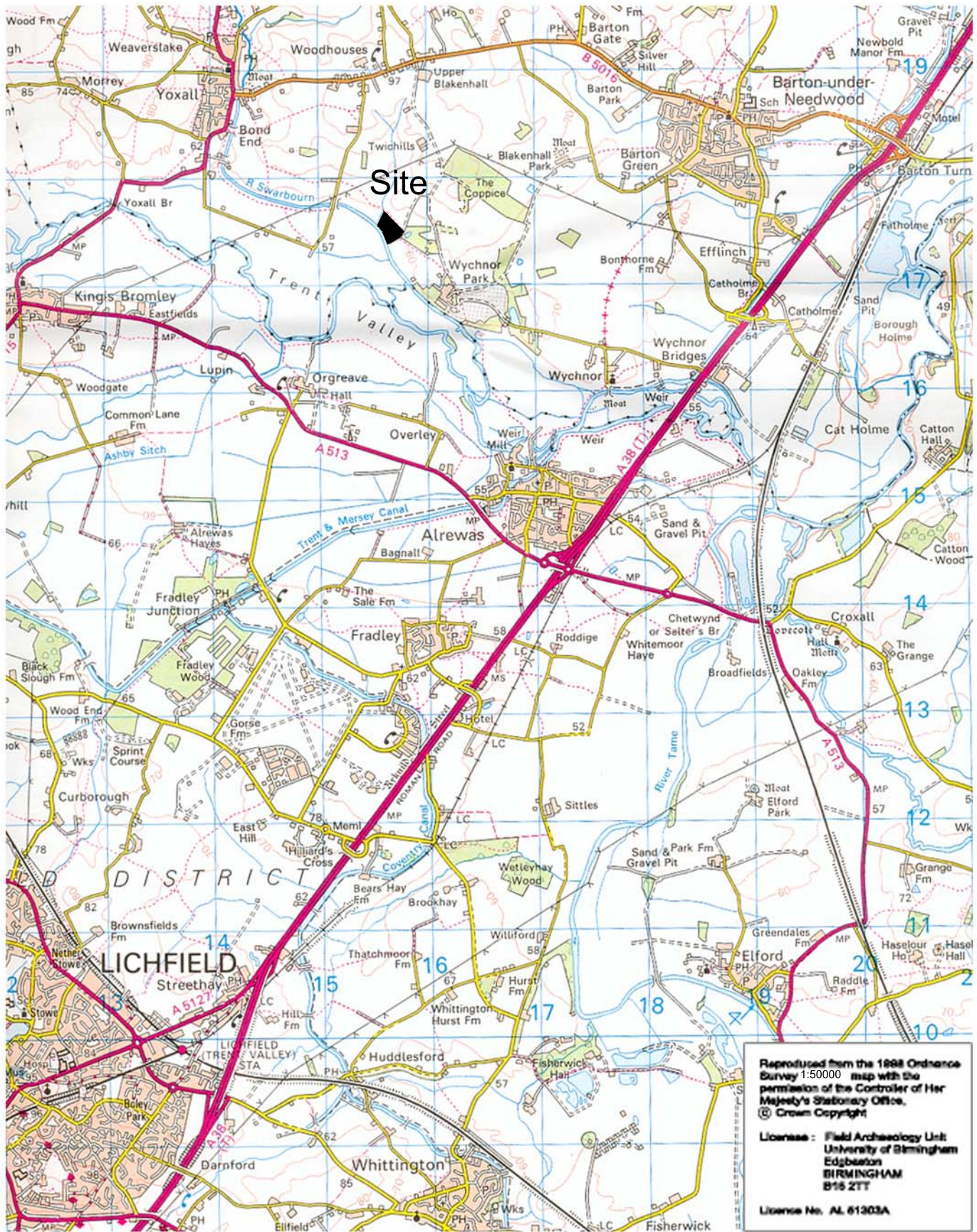


Figure 1



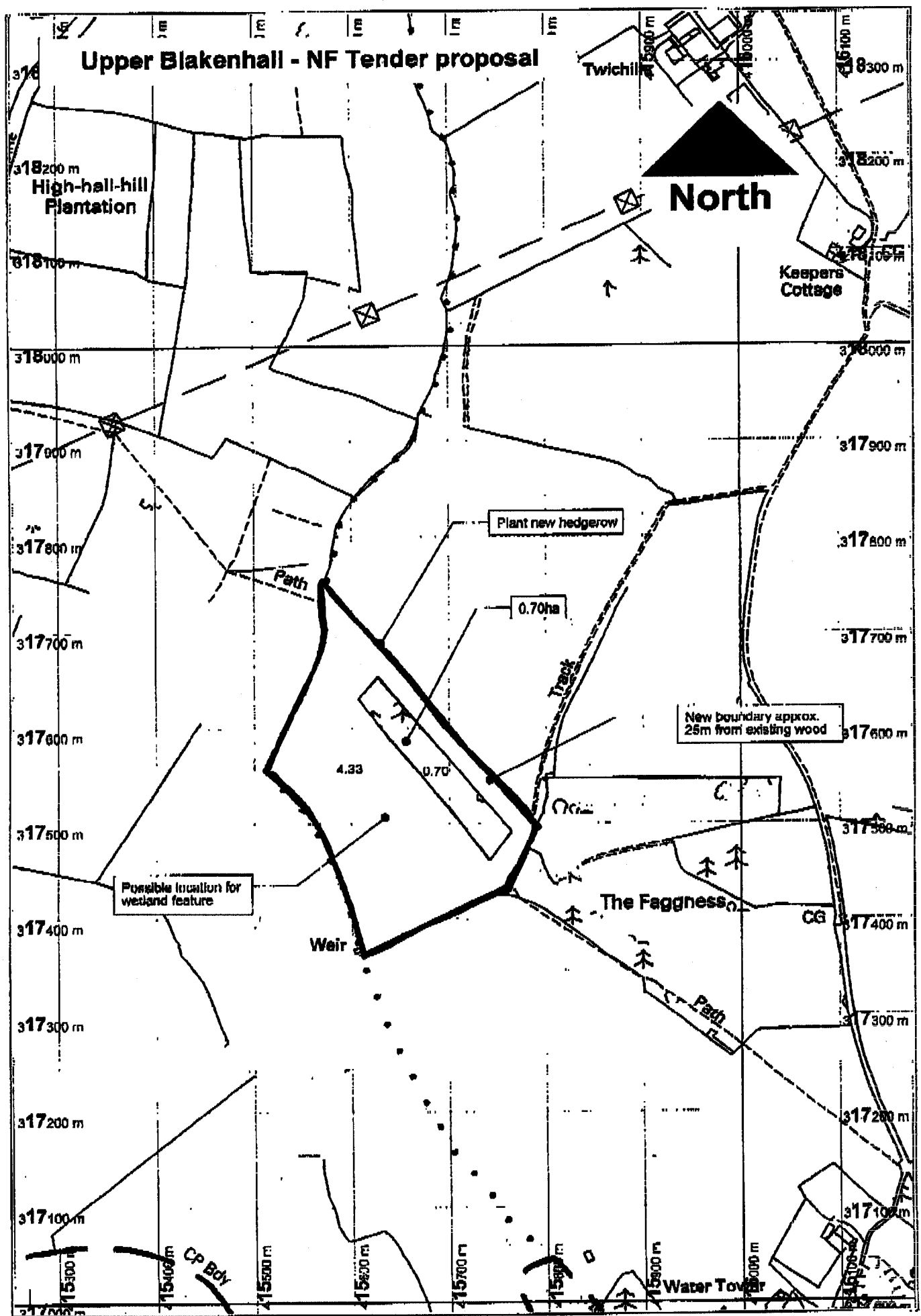


Figure 2

# Historic Environment Record:

## Wychnor Park

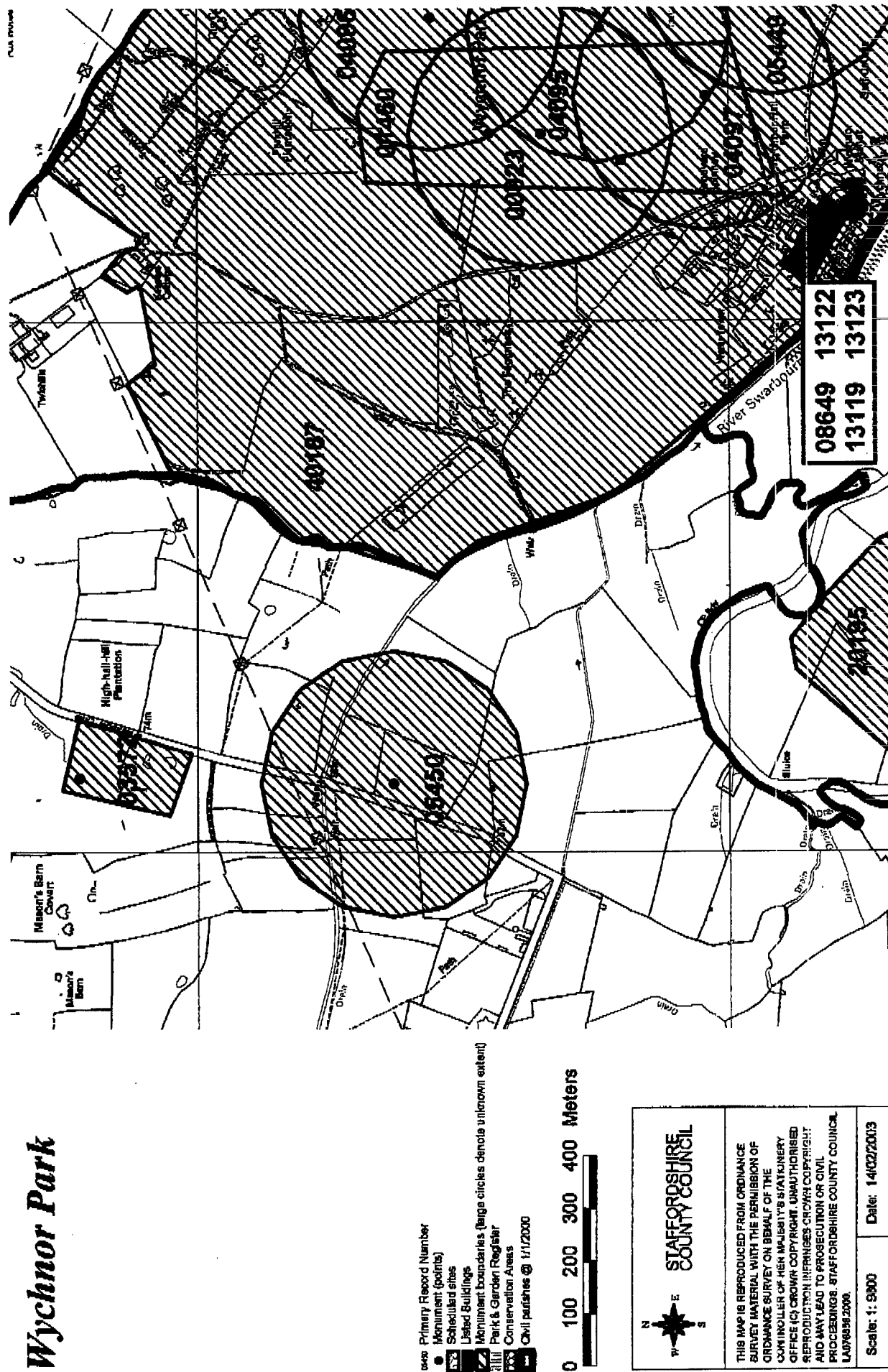


Figure 3

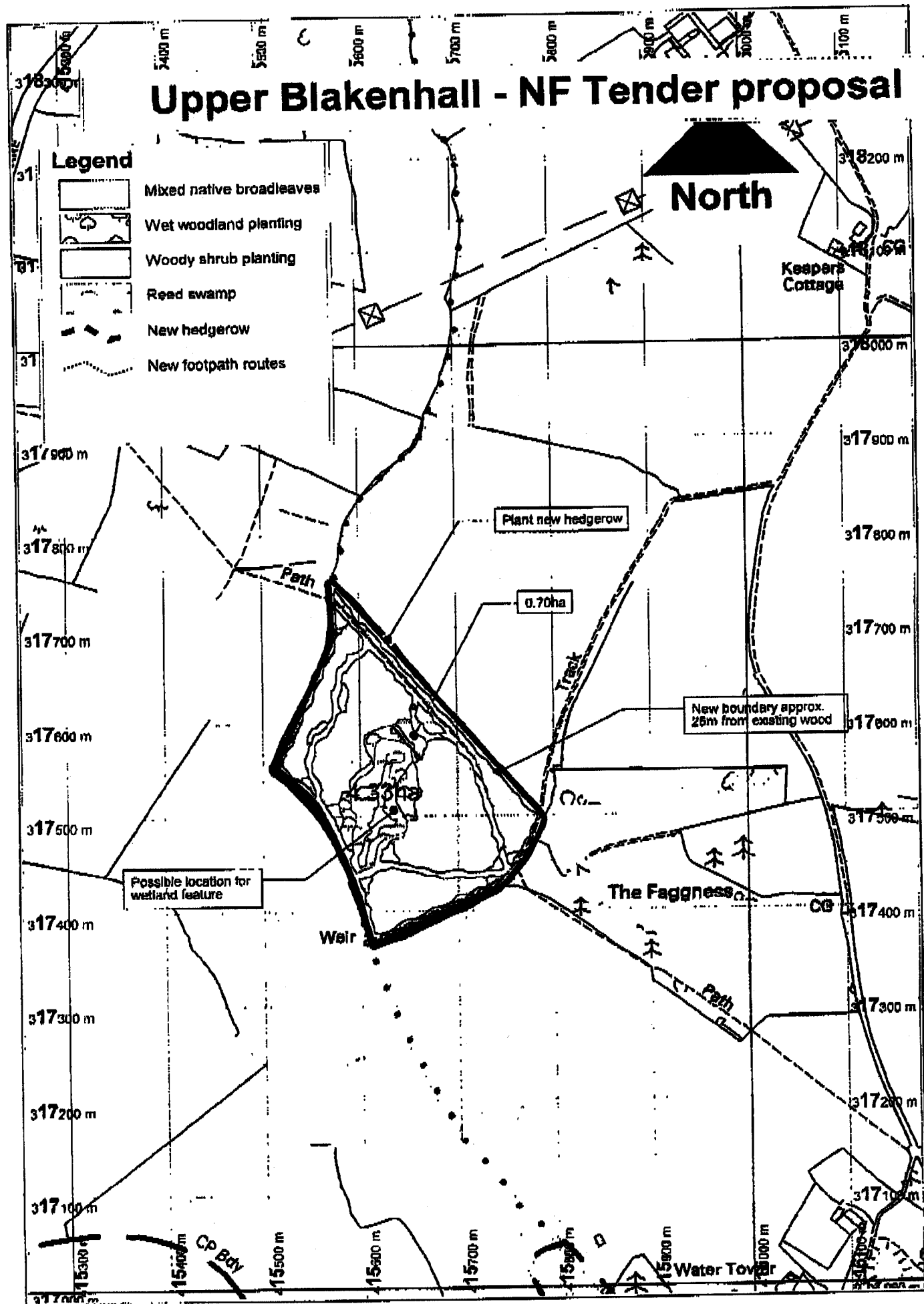


Figure 4

## **Plates**





Plate 1. General view, viewed north eastwards



Plate 2. Wooded Area, viewed northwestwards





Plate 3. Flat area, subject to flooding, viewed north westwards



Plate 4. Disturbance in wooded area, viewed southwards