



Land adjacent to Steart Village, Steart Point, Somerset, TA5 2PX

Interim Report no. 5

Prepared for:

Team van Oord
Trowse
Norwich
Norfolk
NR14 8SZ

On behalf of:

Environment Agency

Prepared by:

Wessex Archaeology
Portway House
Old Sarum Park
Salisbury
Wiltshire
SP4 6EB


www.wessexarch.co.uk

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* I = Internal Draft; E = External Draft; F = Final

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Figure 1: Area E proposed trench location plan – new pond

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1 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1.1 Wessex Archaeology (the **Contractor**) has been commissioned by Team van Oord (the **Client**) to carry out an archaeological evaluation of a c.1.5ha of land proposed for a balancing pond within the habitat creation scheme at Steart Point peninsula, near Bridgwater, Somerset (the **Site** - centred on OS NGR 327000 145000; **Figure 1**).
- 1.1.2 The archaeological works are being carried out as part of a package of measures in order to mitigate anticipated impacts associated with habitat creation works at Steart Point.

2 SCOPE OF WORKS

2.1 Introduction

- 2.1.1 This Interim Report has been prepared by the Contractor, and sets out the results of further evaluation of a proposed balancing pond construction in the east of Area E. The scope of works comprised the machine excavation of seven, 30m long evaluation trenches located within the footprint of the proposed pond; a 2.95% sample (by area) of the pond area (**Figure 1**). This area was not investigated as part of the earlier Area E evaluation (Wessex Archaeology 2012).
- 2.1.2 It is of note that the relict palaeochannel plot generated from LiDAR data, indicates that the proposed pond area is located to the immediate north of a large north-west to south-east aligned relict palaeochannel, more or less coincident with the existing South Drain Ditch.
- 2.1.3 To the west of the proposed pond area, but within Area E, two extensive areas of 2nd – 4th century AD Romano-British activity have been recorded. These activity areas, adjacent to the same large palaeochannel, are represented by numerous ditches and gullies as well as dark soil deposits containing domestic waste (pottery, animal bone, fired clay/daub, charcoal) suggesting nearby settlement and associated field systems. The proposed pond is located adjacent to the same relict palaeochannel.
- 2.1.4 After consideration of all the evidence summarised above, and in consultation with the Senior Levels and Moors Heritage Officer of Somerset County Council Heritage Service, it was agreed by all parties to undertake an evaluation of the proposed pond area to assess its archaeological potential prior to any groundworks being undertaken.

2.2 Natural deposits

- 2.2.1 The stratigraphic sequence encountered was relatively consistent and comprised c. 0.3 – 0.5m of overburden consisting of c. 0.15m of topsoil with c. 0.15 – 0.35m of subsoil below. All the recorded archaeological features were sealed below the subsoil deposits in each

trench. All the recorded features cut an underlying natural alluvium characterised by a compact, thick mid grey clay.

2.3 Archaeological remains

2.3.1 Archaeological features (ditches) were recorded in all but two evaluation trenches (**Trenches 330, 334**). The remains (**Trenches 331 – 333, 335 and 336**) primarily comprised ditches which correspond with field boundary ditches plotted from historical mapping of the site (Wessex Archaeology 2009).

2.3.2 These ditches were WNW/ESE or NE/SW aligned and of comparable widths (c. 3.2m) and depths (0.6 – 0.9m) with steep concave sides and relatively flat bases. The fill sequences represent slow infilling in waterlogged conditions with some of the upper fills containing common/abundant waterlogged wood chips of relatively recent date, buried by tertiary fills derived from disturbance of the prevailing topsoil or deliberate infilling.

2.3.3 The only ditch not correlated with earlier field boundary ditches was recorded in Trench 336 (ditch [3366]). This contained the only artefacts from the evaluation. The ditch was very truncated, only 0.11m deep and 1.34m wide with a shallow concave base and sides. The single, probably water-laid fill (3367), contained a few fragments of the distal parts of a cattle tibia.

3 DISCUSSION

3.1.1 A small number of ditches were recorded which in all cases except one, were correlated with field boundary ditches recorded from earlier historical mapping of the Site. The morphology and fill characteristics of these ditches correspond well with plotted historical field boundary ditches recorded in the earlier evaluation of Areas D and E (Wessex Archaeology 2012).

3.1.2 Although containing no directly dateable material, the ditches with undegraded wood fragments in the mid/upper parts of their fill sequences would suggest a relatively recent (post-medieval/ modern) date for their disuse/infilling, though the possibility that at least some may have originated in relation to medieval reclamation works must be considered.

3.1.3 The only ditch not correlated with earlier field boundary ditches (in Trench 336) was undated, though contained a few cattle bone fragments.

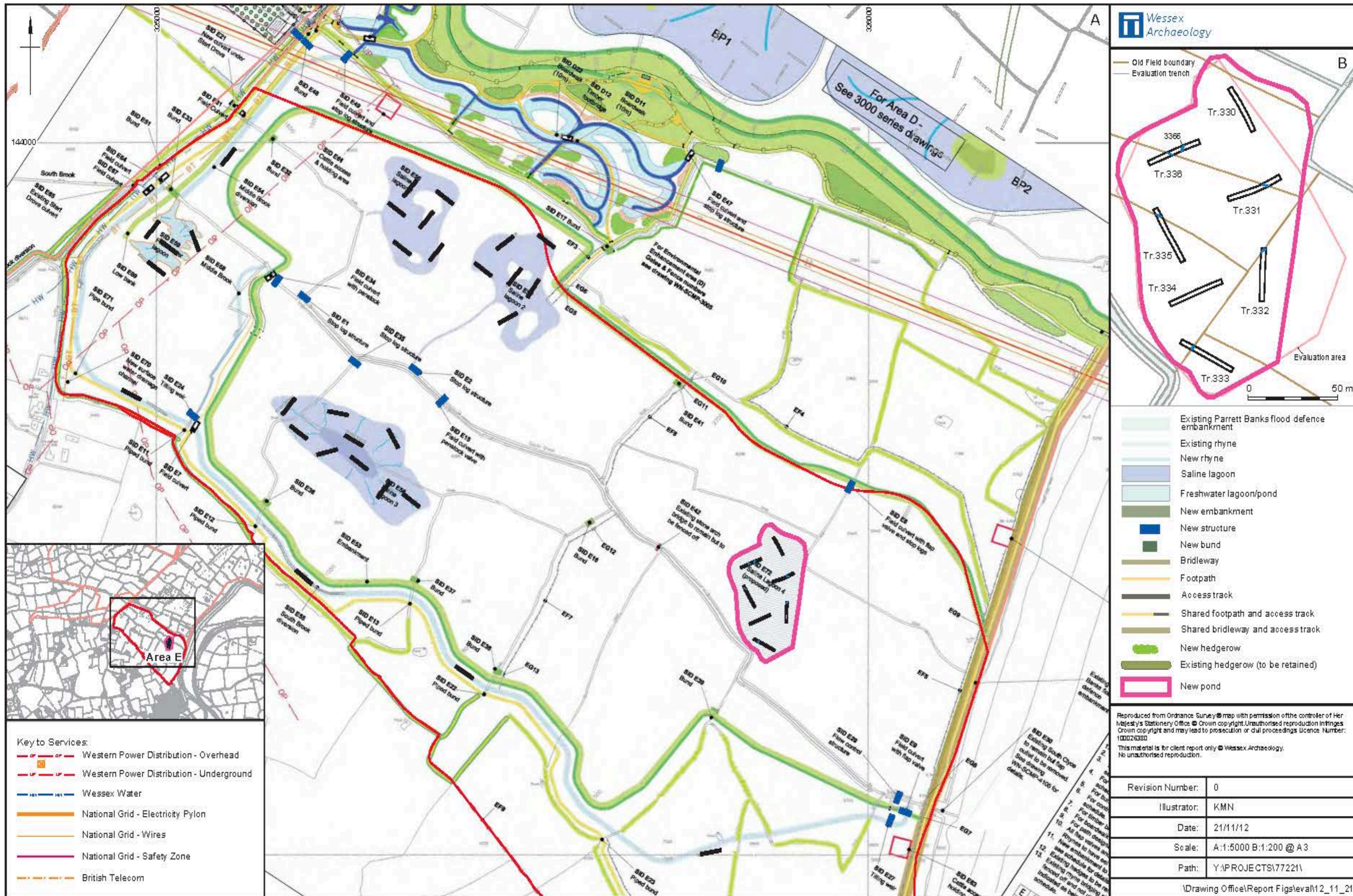
3.1.4 No artefacts were recorded from any other features or soil arisings from the evaluation, and no indications of extensive overbank flooding or gleyed alluvial deposits were recorded. This suggests the palaeochannel identified from LiDAR data possibly originally followed a course further to the south, and it was the 'canalisation' of this channel by the construction of the existing South Drain ditch that has altered the channel's course to pass closer to the evaluation area.

3.1.5 The evaluation has demonstrated, as far as reasonably practicable, that there are no significant archaeological features or deposits within the limits of the proposed pond, and therefore no further work is proposed.

4 BIBLIOGRAPHY

Wessex Archaeology, 2009, *Steart Peninsula, Extended Heritage Assessment*, unpublished client report no. 72950.01

Wessex Archaeology, 2012, *Land adjacent to Steart Village, Steart Point, Somerset, TA5 2PX: Areas D and E Fieldwork Post-excavation assessment report and updated project design*, unpublished client report no. 77221.12



Area E proposed trench location plan - new pond

Figure 1