



Birch Coppice Water Mains, Warwickshire

Archaeological Watching Brief Report





BIRCH COPPICE WATER MAIN, WARWICKSHIRE

Archaeological Watching Brief

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Report reference: 76210.03

May 2011

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QUALITY ASSURANCE

SITE CODE	76210	ACCESSION CODE		CLIENT CODE	
PLANNING APPLICATION REF.	N/A	NGR	426705 299762 TO 428642 292879		

VERSION	STATUS*	PREPARED BY	APPROVED BY	APPROVER'S SIGNATURE	DATE	FILE
1	I	GC	AB	<i>ANDREA BURGESS</i>	25-05-11	S:\SEVERN TRENT WATER PROJECTS\76210 (BIRCH COPPICE, WARKS)\REPORTS

I= INTERNAL DRAFT E= EXTERNAL DRAFT F= FINAL

BIRCH COPPICE WATER MAIN, WARWICKSHIRE

Archaeological Watching Brief

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Figure 1: Site location

Figure 2: Area 1 and 2

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Plate 1: Possible mining upcast (**805**) Area 2 field 8

Plate 2: Drain [904] view from north east Area 2 field 9
Plate 3: East facing section of trench in Area 2 field 9
Plate 4: Flint from (102)

BIRCH COPPICE WATER MAIN, WARWICKSHIRE**Archaeological Watching Brief****Summary**

Wessex Archaeology was been commissioned by Laing O Rourke Infrastructure to undertake an archaeological watching brief to mitigate the potential loss of archaeological remains during the insertion of a water main at Birch Coppice, Warwickshire (hereafter 'the Scheme') from national grid reference 426705, 299762 to 428642, 292879.

The Scheme is situated along roads and in arable land in North Warwickshire west of Atherstone. From the north the Scheme runs through the civil parishes of Baddesley Ensor, Baxterly, Bentley and Ansley.

The watching brief was undertaken between the March 9th and May 6th 2011 and comprised monitoring the removal of topsoil and the excavation of the pipe trench within all open fields and within the verge and highway of Green Lane. The only archaeological features found, relating to the mining industry, were identified in Areas 1 and 2 at the northern end of the Scheme. A flint blade was discovered in the subsoil in Area 4 however no associated features were identified.

The project archive is currently held at the offices of Wessex Archaeology in Sheffield, under the project code 76210 and will be deposited in due course with the repository museum.

BIRCH COPPICE WATER MAIN, WARWICKSHIRE**Archaeological Watching Brief****Acknowledgements**

This project was commissioned by Laing O Rourke Infrastructure. Wessex Archaeology would like to thank Laing O Rourke Infrastructure in this regard.

This report was compiled by Grace Corbett. Fieldwork was undertaken by Phil Roberts, Sam Fairhead, Mike Hartwell, Grace Corbett and Chris Swales. The illustrations were prepared by Chris Swales. The project was managed for Wessex Archaeology by Andrea Burgess.

BIRCH COPPICE WATER MAIN, WARWICKSHIRE

Archaeological Watching Brief

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Project Background

1.1.1 Wessex Archaeology was commissioned by Laing O Rourke Infrastructure to undertake an archaeological watching brief during the insertion of a water main at Birch Coppice, Warwickshire ('the Scheme'). The monitoring was undertaken in accordance with a Written Scheme of Investigation prepared by Wessex Archaeology (2011b) and submitted to the client and to Warwickshire County Council.

1.1.2 An archaeological desk-based assessment of the Scheme was prepared in January 2011 by Wessex Archaeology. The potential impact of the work on buried archaeology was assessed and areas of high, medium and low potential were identified (**Figure 1**)

1.1.3 The watching brief was undertaken between March 9th and May 6th 2011 and involved monitoring the stripping of topsoil and the excavation of the pipe trench within open fields along the length of the Scheme and within the verge and highway of Green Lane.

1.2 The Site, Location and Geology

1.2.1 The Scheme is situated along roads and in arable land in North Warwickshire west of Atherstone. From the north the Scheme runs through the civil parishes of Baddesley Ensor, Baxterly, Bentley and Ansley (**Figure 1**).

1.2.2 From NGR 426705 299762, south of Watling Street between the settlements of Dordon and Grendon, the Scheme follows Penmire Brook from the A5 to Gypsy Lane before passing southwest through arable land to the village of Baddesley Ensor. The route then continues to Baxterley and crosses arable land to the south of the village before entering a minor road. The route continues in the road and then turns south across arable land to Bentley Bar. From the village the route passes down Green Lane and Birchley Heath Road terminating at the junction with the B4114 northwest of Church End.

1.2.3 The Scheme lies on a ridge between 100m above Ordnance Datum (aOD) at its northern end and 155m aOD to the south. The geology within the area is predominately mudstone, siltstone and sandstone of The Warwickshire Group, encountering Pennine Middle Coal Measures both at the northern most point of the route and within the village of Grendon (BGS map sheet E155 & E169).

2 ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND

2.1 Introduction

2.1.1 The following background information is summarised from the desk based assessment (WA 2010a) produced for the Scheme (**Figure 2**).

2.2 Area 1

2.2.1 The northern end of the Scheme lies within arable land in the vicinity of Snibson's Farm and on the banks of Penmire Brook. No heritage assets have been identified within the farm land which has been subject to modern boundary loss and grading from modern deep ploughing.

2.3 Area 2

2.3.1 Northwest of Baddesley Ensor the Scheme crosses an area identified as a deserted medieval village. Towards the centre of the area the 1848 tithe map and 1889 Ordnance Survey map illustrate the site of the former St. Nicholas's church and graveyard. The tithe map also shows industrial activity in the area including the New Church Pit and Bye Pit to the north and south of Hill road, and a mound (possibly a spoil heap) to the east of the church. By the production of the 1899 OS an additional pit is also depicted between the church and the mound.

2.3.2 While there are no above-ground remains of the church and the named pits, the pit and mound closest to the church are still present as earthworks. The area remained largely agricultural until the land north of the church became an opencast mine between c. 1956-1969, after which ground levels were reinstated. Whilst the extent of disruption caused by the mine to the deserted medieval village is uncertain, any heritage assets within the mined area would have been removed. Walkover survey confirmed the fields to both the north and south of the church site had likely also been subjected to modern ploughing, and aerial photographs of the area taken in show cuts for an irrigation system directly north of the former church.

2.4 Area 3

2.4.1 South of Baxterley the Scheme passes through arable and pasture land. Known heritage assets identified within the area consist of the moated site of the former Bentley Manor House. In addition, the field north of the moated manor site is named on the c. 1840s tithe map as *Two Pit Close* and shown to contain two small ponds that could possibly mark the location of the pits. Although the western boundary of the field has since been lost the area of the ponds are presently preserved by two coppices, the northeast of which surrounds a hollow. Subsequent OS maps produced during the 19th and 20th centuries show no variation beyond some boundary loss creating larger fields.

2.5 Area 4.

2.5.1 To the south of Area 3 the Scheme passes through arable farm land between Crawshaws Farm and Bentley Farm and then through Bentley Bar. No archaeological remains have been identified within the farm land, although a pond towards its centre that appears on the 1899 OS, and in a discrete area of gravels, may mark the site of a disused quarry. Bentley Bar

is the site of a deserted medieval village, which was recorded in 1967 before being ploughed out.

3 METHODOLOGY

3.1 Aims and Scope

3.1.1 The principal aim of the watching brief was to identify and record any archaeological remains that were disturbed or destroyed during construction groundworks.

3.1.2 The specific aims of the project were:

- To identify any archaeological deposits along the route of the pipeline;
- To record all archaeological remains disturbed by the groundworks;
- To determine the extent, condition, character, importance and date of any archaeological deposits encountered;
- To provide information that will enable the archaeological remains to be placed within their local, regional and national contexts;
- To recover artefacts disturbed by the site works;
- To produce an accurate and comprehensive record and report of any archaeological deposits disturbed by the site works.

3.2 Watching Brief

3.2.1 The watching brief was undertaken between the March 9th and 6th May 2011. Excavation of the topsoil was undertaken by tracked 360° excavator while excavation of the pipe trench was undertaken by a trenching machine and was monitored by an archaeologist. All recording was undertaken using Wessex Archaeology's *pro forma* recording system, supported by a photographic record.

3.3 Best Practice

3.3.1 The watching brief was carried out in accordance with current industry best practice and Institute for Archaeologists (IfA 2008) and English Heritage (1991) guidelines.

4 RESULTS

4.1 Introduction

4.1.1 The monitoring was carried out within the four areas of archaeological potential identified in the desk-based assessment (WA 2011a) and the results from each area are described below. The recorded contexts are described in detail in **Appendix 1**.

4.2 Area 1

4.2.1 Area 1 was located at the northern end of the Scheme, to the east of Lower House Lane (**Figure 2**). Excavation revealed topsoil and subsoil lying directly above sandy clay natural deposits through most of this area, with

two minor exceptions - two discrete clay levelling deposits were identified at the eastern end of field 10 beneath the subsoil and a mixed dumped deposit containing coal was identified at the western end of field 10.

4.3 Area 2

4.3.1 Area 2 was located at the northern end of the Scheme, to the east of Lower House Lane and to the west and north-west of Manor Close (**Figure 2**). Again, the excavations revealed topsoil and subsoil above clay natural deposits, but sandstone bedrock was also exposed in places.

4.3.2 Evidence of former coal mines was recorded in fields 8 and 9. Two mixed clay deposits containing coal and brick/tile fragments were identified beneath the subsoil within field 8 and interpreted as the remnants of mining up-cast (**Plate 1**). In field 9 a shallow drainage channel had been cut into deposits containing black clay and coal dust. Notably no subsoil was recorded in the area of the drainage channel.

4.3.3 In addition, a 0.6m wide cut feature (context **912**) extended across the trench in the southern end of field 9 but the base of the cut was not found as excavation ceased at 1.15m (**Figure 2, Plate 3**). The feature was filled by a sequence of clay deposits and sealed by the subsoil.

4.4 Area 3

4.4.1 Area 3 was located at the centre of the Scheme, extending south from Wigston Hill to Smithy Lane (**Figure 3**). Excavation revealed topsoil above subsoil and the natural deposits in this area were clays and sands. In addition, discrete clay deposits were identified in places beneath the subsoil in field 5 and patches of clayey-sand were uncovered below the subsoil in field 6.

4.5 Area 4

4.5.1 Area 4 was located at the southern end of the Scheme, to the east of Green Lane and to the north-west of the B4116, Coleshill Road (**Figures 4 and 5**). The excavations revealed topsoil overlaying subsoil above natural sand and clay deposits. The only other recorded deposits in this area comprised re-deposited clay natural in field 3 and patches of sandy clay in field 4.

4.5.2 A flint flake was recovered from the subsoil in field 1 (**Figure 5, Plate 4**).

4.5.3 Excavations within the highway of Green Lane, at the southern end of Area 4 revealed the tarmac road surface over deposits of rubble hardcore and sand. Within the road-side verge topsoil and subsoil were recorded.

4.6 Finds

4.6.1 A total of 22 finds were recovered during the watching brief, including 11 sherds of pottery, 8 fragments of field drain and, most notably, a flint flake. All of the finds were recovered from topsoil, subsoil or other unstratified contexts. The finds are catalogued in detail in **Appendix 3**.

4.6.2 The flint artefact is a small blade-like flake recovered from the subsoil in Area 4 (context **102**) which is likely to date to the late Mesolithic or early

Neolithic. The artefact's lack of both diagnostic features and a stratified archaeological context means that further analysis is not warranted.

5 DISCUSSION

5.1 Archaeological Features

- 5.1.1 No archaeological features were encountered within fields 1-7, field 11 or within Green Lane.
- 5.1.2 Deposits possibly relating to the mining industry have been identified within Field 8, 9 and 10. Areas 1 and 2 remained largely agricultural with small industrial activities taking place in the form of small open cast mines. Coal has been mined in the area for centuries, the coal being gained initially from open pits or adits in the surrounding fields as early as the fifteenth century; some fields still bear such names as New Church Pit and Bye Pit. Larger pits existed in the nineteenth century and during the 20th century parts of Areas 1 and 2 became open cast mines. Evidence of this industrial activity has been identified in this area, no earlier archaeological features were identified. No dating evidence or finds were recovered from these deposits.
- 5.1.3 While a flint flake was uncovered in Area 1 no associated archaeological features were identified in its vicinity.
- 5.1.4 Portions of the Scheme lie within areas of high, moderate and low archaeological importance and potential and the negative results from this watching brief are likely to reflect the small scale of the development and disturbance from modern mining and agricultural activity rather than an absence of archaeological activity.

6 ARCHIVE

6.1 Location and Deposition

- 6.1.1 The project archive has been compiled into a stable, fully cross-referenced and indexed archive in accordance with Appendix 6 of *Management of Archaeological Projects* (2nd Edition, English Heritage 1991) and *Archaeological archives – a guide to best practice in creation, compilation, transfer and curation* (Brown, D.H. 2007). The archive is currently held at the offices of Wessex Archaeology in Sheffield, under the project code **76210**. The full list of the contents of this archive is detailed in **Appendix 2** of this report. It is proposed that the archive will be deposited in due course with the repository museum.

6.2 Copyright

- 6.2.1 This report, and the archive generally, may contain material that is non-Wessex Archaeology copyright (e.g. Ordnance Survey, British Geological Survey, Crown Copyright), or the intellectual property of third parties, which we are able to provide for limited reproduction under the terms of our own copyright licences, but for which copyright itself is non-transferrable by Wessex Archaeology. Users remain bound by the conditions of the Copyright, Designs and Patents Act 1988 with regard to multiple copying and electronic dissemination of the report

7 REFERENCES

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- Wessex Archaeology, 2011b, *Birch Coppice, Warwickshire, Written Scheme of Investigation for Archaeological Watching Brief*, WA Report 76210.02

Cartographic Sources

- 1891 Ordnance Survey 6" to the mile, Warwickshire sheet 10 SW
1904 Ordnance Survey 6" to the mile, Warwickshire sheet 10 SW
1925 Ordnance Survey 6" to the mile, Warwickshire sheet 10 SW
1955 Ordnance Survey 6" to the mile, Warwickshire sheet 10 SW
1965-1967 Ordnance Survey 6" to the mile, Warwickshire sheet 10 SW
1976-1982 Ordnance Survey 6" to the mile, Warwickshire sheet 10 SW

APPENDIX 1: CONTEXT DESCRIPTION
Area 1:

Field 10: 210m x 6m			
Thickness	Context	Description	Interpretation
0.0 - 0.21	1001	Mid brown silty clay with root inclusions and frequent flecks of charcoal throughout	Topsoil
0.21-0.35	1002	Brown silty clay with charcoal flecks and medium sized stone inclusions	Subsoil
0.35-0.65	1003	Yellowish grey clay with red brick fragments and frequent charcoal flecks throughout	Levelling?
0.65-0.87	1004	Yellow sandy clay with frequent sub-angular stone inclusions	Possible lense within natural
0.87-1.8	1005	Banded sandy clay. Orange/pink/yellow in colour with small stone inclusions towards the base	Natural
0.23-1.01	1006	Mixed greyish blue silty clay, banded throughout with frequent medium sized coal and mudstone inclusions	

Field 11: 125m x 6m			
Thickness	Context	Description	Interpretation
0.0 - 0.20	1101	Mid brown silty clay with root inclusions and rare flecks of charcoal concentrated as base of deposit	Topsoil
0.2-0.52	1102	Reddish brown sandy clay with occasional rooting and occasional small stones throughout.	Subsoil
0.52-1.1	1103	Banded clay deposit, mixture of pink, yellow and pale grey clays. Contains very occasional small stones.	Natural
0.3-1.55	1104	Med yellow-orange sandy clay with approx. 80% sandstone rubble	Natural
1.55-1.6	1105	Yellowish pink clay, no inclusions	Natural

Area 2:

Field 8: 330m x 6			
Thickness	Context	Description	Interpretation
0.0 - 0.3	801	Dar grey brown silty loam with occasional small stones	Topsoil
0.3-0.47	802	Light brown sandy silt with occasional small stones	Subsoil
0.47-1.62	803	Banded natural consisting of orange/yellow stoney clay, a pale grey clay, a yellow orange clay and a grey clay with coal dust at base.	Natural
0.4-0.8	804	Mixed yellow brown and blue grey clay with occasional coal and rare CBM	Layer of mining upcast
0.4-0.8	805	Mixed yellow brown and blue grey clay with occasional coal and CBM	Layer of mining upcast

Field 9: 340m x 6m			
Thickness	Context	Description	Interpretation
0.0 - 0.13	901	Mid brown silty clay with occasional small stones	Topsoil
0.28-0.68	902	Black clay/coal dust mix with occasional rooting and charcoal flecks throughout. Does not feature throughout the trench	Mining related deposit
0.13-0.28	903	Mid yellow sandy clay with occasional medium sized stones and frequent charcoal flecks	Mining related deposit
0.13-0.36	904	Cut of linear ditch aligned SW-NE. Cuts (903) and sealed by (901). Base is generally concave with sides varying from gentle to steep.	Ditch
0.13-0.36	905	Dark blue/grey clay with fragments of red ceramic drain pipes. Contains numerous small stones and occasional charcoal flecks	Fill of [904]
0.13-0.3	906	Yellow clay with pale grey lenses,	Secondary fill of [904]
0.8-0.21	907	Mid brown sandy clay with root activity and bioturbation. Contains frequent charcoal flecks and small stones.	Subsoil

0.21-0.54	908	Dark blue/grey sandy clay containing numerous charcoal flecks, small stones and occasional coal fragments and CBM	Mining related deposit
1.5 - 2	909	Light brown yellow sandy clay, yellow orange firm clay, yellow/brown sandy clay with sandstone, mid brown sandy clay with some occasional small stones	Banded natural clay
0.33-0.77	910	Greyish-blue clay with brown-orange flecking throughout containing moderate charcoal and charcoal flecks, numerous small stones scattered throughout	Fill of [912]
0.77-1.67	911	Bluish-grey clay with orange flecking throughout and occasional coal and charcoal inclusions	Fill of [912]
0.33-1.67	912	A diagonal cut running N-S. Very steep in section, base unknown as not fully exposed. Filled by (910) and (911)	Feature possible associated with mining
0.4-1.2	913	Sandstone bedrock natural	Natural
1.2-2	914	Firm banded blue/grey clay	Natural
1.12-2	915	Yellow sandy clay banded with a more brown sandy clay at top	Natural
0.8-0.33	916	Mid yellow sandy clay with occasional medium sized stones	Possible Redeposited natural used for levelling
1.3-2	917	Black/blue sticky clay with occasional charcoal flecks	Mining related deposit

Area 3:

Field 5: 240m x 6m			
Thickness	Context	Description	Interpretation
0.0 – 0.15	501	Mid brownish grey silty clay	Topsoil
0.15-0.25	502	Mid brown firm clay with roots and occasional small stones	Subsoil
0.25-0.47	503	Yellow sandy clay with occasional small stones and occasional charcoal flecks	
0.47-2.0	504	Dark red clay with occasional small stone inclusions	Natural

Field 6: 150m x 6m			
Thickness	Context	Description	Interpretation
0.0 - 0.2	601	Mid brown sandy clay with occasional small stones and numerous roots	Topsoil
0.2-0.25	602	Light brown/yellow sandy clay with occasional small stones and roots	Subsoil
0.25-0.5	603	Mid yellowish red clayey sand with pebbles scattered throughout	
0.5-1.2	604	Dark red clay	Natural

Field 7: 115m x 6m			
Thickness	Context	Description	Interpretation
0.0 - 0.4	701	Mid brown sandy clay with occasional small stones and roots throughout	Topsoil
0.4-1.1	702	Mid reddish-brown clayey sand	Subsoil
1.1-1.7	703	Firm mid reddish-brown sand with angular and sub-angular stones throughout	Made ground

Area 4:

Field 1: 230m x 6m			
Thickness	Context	Description	Interpretation
0.0 - 0.35	101	Mid-dark brown sandy clay with moderate small stones.	Topsoil
0.35-0.6	102	Mid reddish-brown clayey sand with frequent root damage	Subsoil
0.6-1.2	103	Mid brownish red sandy clay	Natural
0.6-1.2	104	Mid brownish red sandy clay, located in sondage excavated 10m north of southern end of field.	Natural

Field 2: 300m x 6m			
Thickness	Context	Description	Interpretation
0.0 – 0.37	201	Dark brown silty sand	Topsoil
0.37-0.95	202	Mid orangy-brown silty sand with rare small pebbles	Subsoil
0.95-1.2	203	Greyish-orange sandy clay	Natural

Field 3: 5001m x 6m			
Thickness	Context	Description	Interpretation
0.0 - 0.25	301	Mid reddish-brown sandy clay, firm and friable. Charcoal flecks scattered throughout	Topsoil
0.25-0.55	302	Red clayey sand with occasional stone inclusions and scattered charcoal flecks	Subsoil
0.55-0.8	303	Pale pinkish-red clay deposit with numerous sandstone fragments	Possibly re-deposited natural
0.8-1.65	304	Dark pink/red clay with some patches of sand running through it. Occasional sandstone inclusions	Natural

Field 4: 300m x 6m			
Thickness	Context	Description	Interpretation
0.0 - 0.15	401	Reddish brown clay with occasional small stones and charcoal flecks	Topsoil
0.15-0.3	402	Mid brown sandy clay	Subsoil
0.3-0.53	403	Mid yellow sandy clay with occasional charcoal flecks	
0.53-1.65	404	Banded pinkish/red clay with occasional stone inclusions.	Natural

Green Lane: 300m x 6m			
Thickness	Context	Description	Interpretation
0.0 - 0.18	1201	Grey tarmac	Road surface
0.18-0.42	1202	Deposit containing frequent rounded and sub-angular pebbles and small stones mixed with	Rubble hardcore

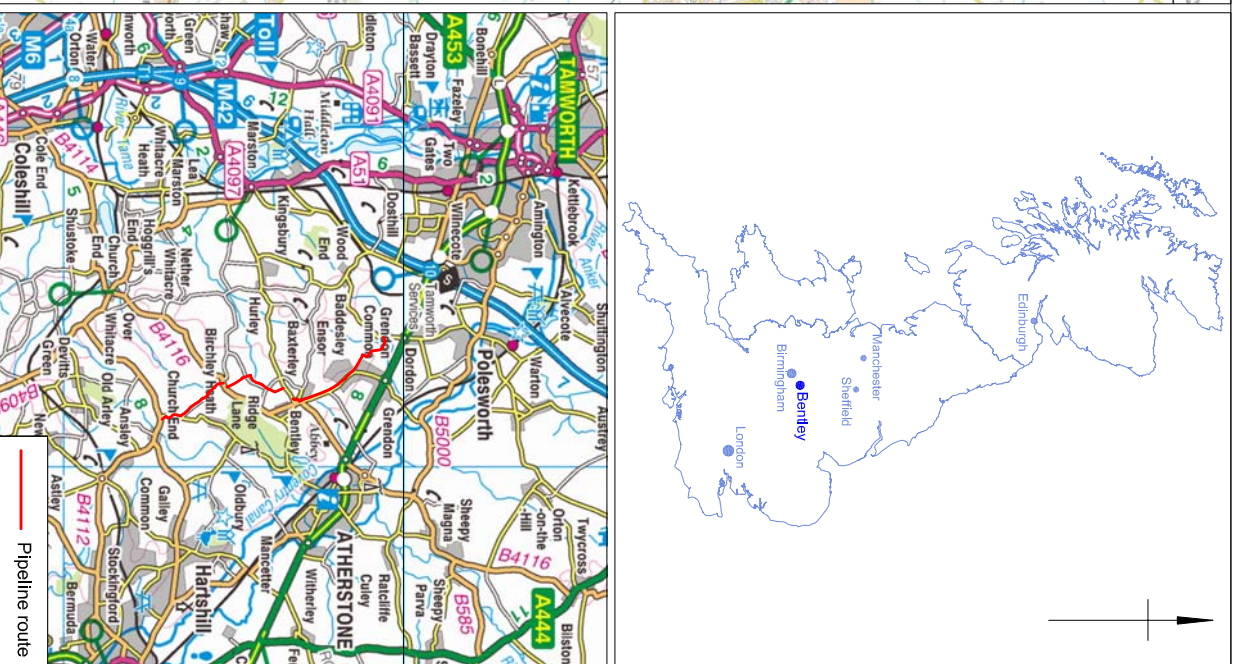
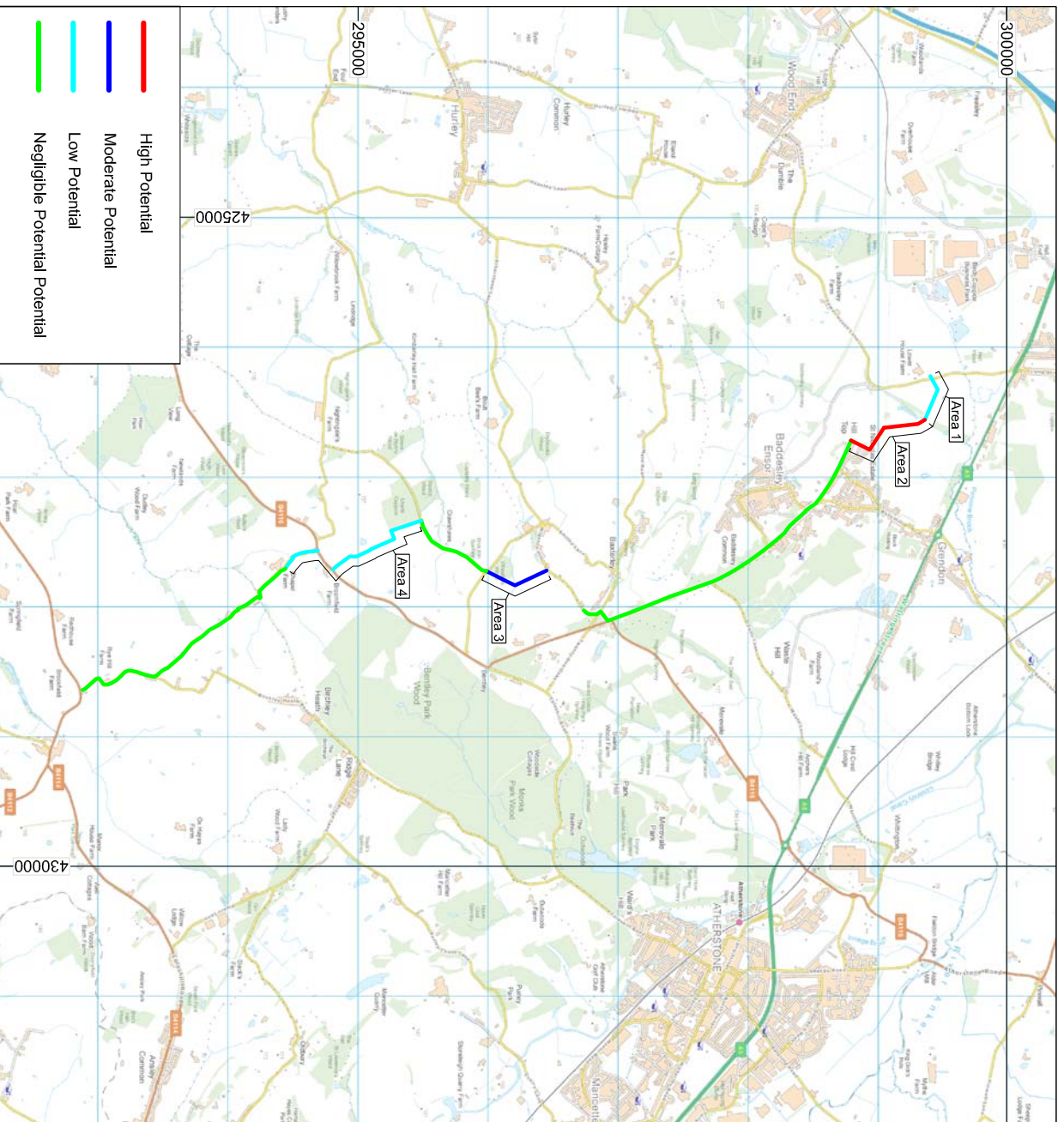
		reddish-pink sand	
0.42-1.3	1203	Very firm pinkish red sand, very granular with some sub-rounded small pebbles	
1.3-1.72	1204	Firm red clay	Natural
0.0-0.18	1205	Mid grey brown silty sand	Topsoil
0.18-0.38	1206	Mid grey silty sand	Subsoil

APPENDIX 2: ARCHIVE INDEX

Paper archive			
Folder no.	Folder type	Item(s)	No.
1	A4 ring binder	Risk Assessment	1
		Written Scheme of Investigation	1
		Day Register	1
		Day Book (copied)	24
		Test Pit/Trial Trench Record	17
		Photographic Record	4
		Colour slides	0
		Contact sheets	0
		Bound copy of final report	1


APPENDIX 3: CATALOGUE OF FINDS

Context No	Material Type	Fragment Count	Weight (g)	Notes	Discarded
102	Ceramic	2	23	1 plain whiteware sherd late 19th-20thC, 1 unglazed orange fabric.	Y
201	Ceramic	1	50	Glazed sherd	Y
201	Ceramic	1	40	Unglazed orange fabric.	Y
102	Flint	1	1	Blade	N
301	Glass	1	36	Green bottle glass base fragment. Late 19th-early 20thC	Y
402	Ceramic	1	6	Brown glazed courseware, small base sherd	Y
903	CBM	1	32	Orange fabric unglazed field drain.	Y
905	CBM	7	592	Fragments of unglazed field drain.	Y
1006	Ceramic	5	12	Small sherds blue and white transfer print sherds.	Y
Unstrat Trench 12	Ceramic	1	6	Brown glazed undecorated sherd, mid 19thC	Y
1203	Iron	1	414	Horse shoe	Y
	Total	22	1212		



- High Potential
- Moderate Potential
- Low Potential
- Negligible Potential

Date:	18/05/2011	Revision Number:	0
Scale:	Main graphic - 1:50000 @ A4	Illustrator:	CS
Path:	Y:\Projects\76210 (Birn) Coppice, Works)\Drawing Office\Report Figs\WB report\y-n-d\76210_WB_figs.dwg		

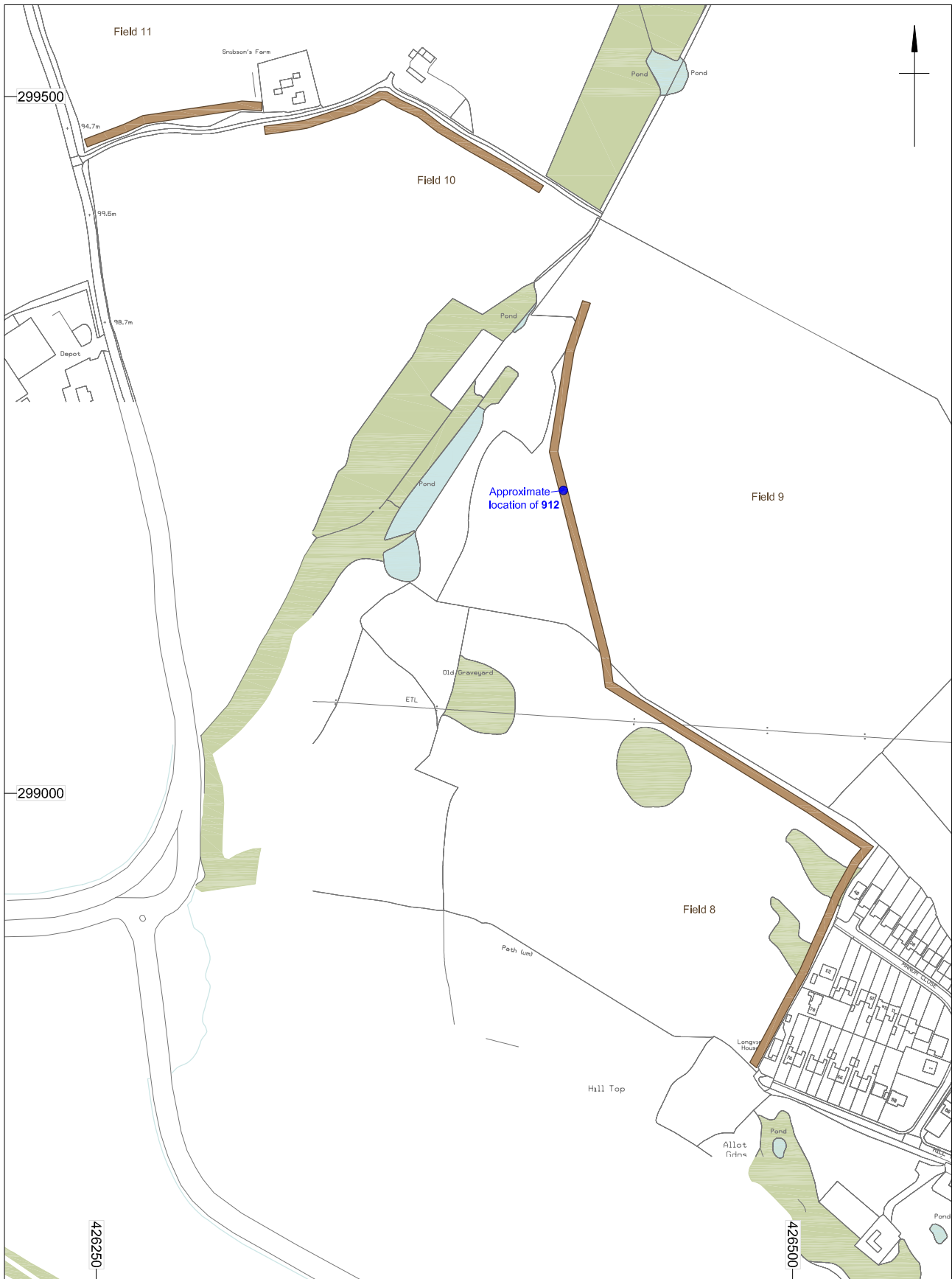


 Wessex Archaeology

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Site location

Figure 1



Approximate location of 912

Natural feature
 Watercourse
 6m wide topsoil strip and pipe trench

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Date:	20/05/2011	Revision Number:	0
Scale:	1:4000 @ A4	Illustrator:	CS
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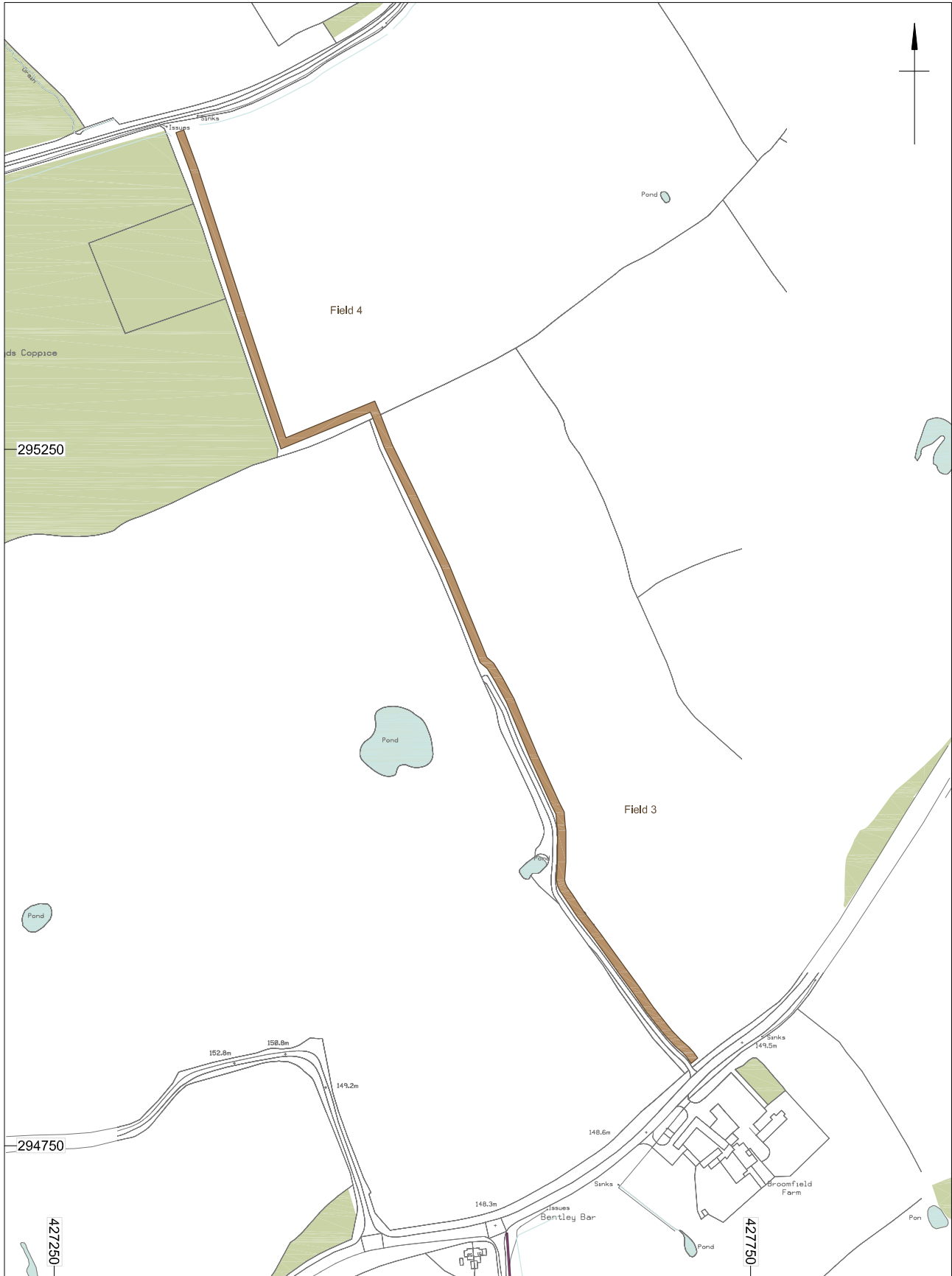






Areas 1 and 2

Figure 2



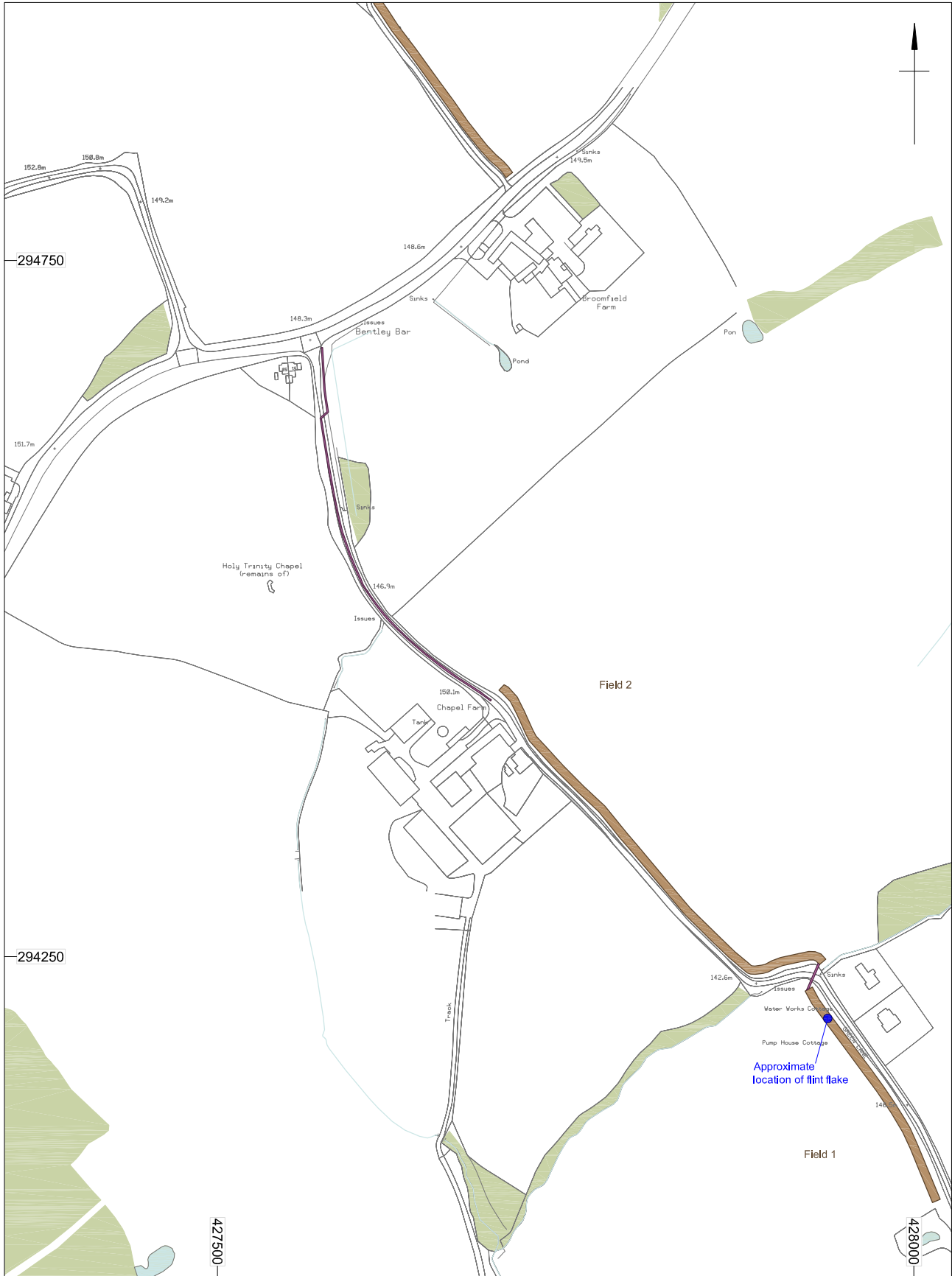
 Natural feature	 Watercourse	 6m wide topsoil strip and pipe trench	
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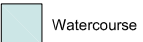
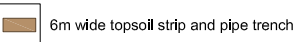
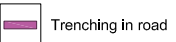


	Natural feature		Watercourse		6m wide topsoil strip and pipe trench		Trenching in road
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Area 4 (northern half)

Figure 4



	Natural feature		Watercourse		6m wide topsoil strip and pipe trench		Trenching in road
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Area 4 (southern half)

Figure 5



Plate 1: Possible mining up cast **805**.



Plate 2: View from northeast of drain **904**.



Plate 3: East facing section of trench 9.



Plate 4: Flint from 102.

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