



## HANBURY ROAD, DROITWICH, WORCESTERSHIRE

Archaeological Watching Brief Report

Fieldwork Reference Number WSM47449





**HANBURY ROAD, DROITWICH, WORCESTERSHIRE**

**Archaeological Watching Brief Report**

Prepared for:  
**CgMs Consulting Ltd**

On behalf of

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PLANNING APPLICATION REF.	<b>W/11/02666/PN</b>	NGR		<b>39050 26335</b>	

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## HANBURY ROAD, DROITWICH, WORCESTERSHIRE

### Archaeological Watching Brief

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## **HANBURY ROAD, DROITWICH, WORCESTERSHIRE**

### **Archaeological Watching Brief**

#### **Summary**

Wessex Archaeology was commissioned by CgMs Consulting Ltd on behalf of Bellway Homes (hereafter 'the Client'), to undertake an archaeological watching brief at Hanbury Road, Droitwich, Worcestershire, NGR 39050 26335 (hereafter 'the Site'). The work was in advance of a new residential development (Planning Ref. W/11/02666/PN) and followed a desk-based assessment (DBA) for the Site (CgMs 2007). The DBA concluded that the Site had a moderate potential to contain remains of Roman to post-medieval date, although that potential has been greatly reduced by the construction of the Droitwich Junction Canal that was built in 1852. However, some remains relating to the canal had potential to be of archaeological interest in their own right.

The archaeological remains recorded during the work at Hanbury Road largely related to the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century Droitwich Junction Canal. This structure was evidenced by the two red brick walls, which ran east to west across the length of the Site. A possible clay bedding layer for the canal was also revealed, but excavation ceased before this was fully understood. The canal was backfilled in 1931, and this episode of backfilling was also identified.

In the northern extent of the Site the possible remains of a mill pond were recorded but, again, excavation was ceased before a full interpretation was able to be made. Modern material, such as plastic cut-offs, found in the pond demonstrate that although the feature may have been open for some time it was backfilled in relatively recent years.

No archaeological remains dating to before the 19<sup>th</sup> century were exposed during the work at Hanbury Road, and it is highly likely that if there were remains from earlier periods they were destroyed during the construction of the Droitwich Junction Canal.

The archive is currently held at the offices of Wessex Archaeology in Sheffield, under the project code 86580. The archive will be deposited with an appropriate museum under a Worcestershire HER number in due course. An OASIS form will be submitted at the time of deposition.

## **HANBURY ROAD, DROITWICH, WORCESTERSHIRE**

### **Archaeological Watching Brief**

#### **Acknowledgements**

This project was commissioned by CgMs Consulting Ltd on behalf of Bellway Homes (hereafter 'the Client'), and Wessex Archaeology is grateful to Paul Gajos in this regard. The watching brief was carried out by Sam Fairhead, James Thomson and Ashley Tuck and managed on behalf of Wessex Archaeology by Andrew Norton. This report was compiled by Alex Sotheran and the drawings were produced by Chris Breeden.

## HANBURY ROAD, DROITWICH, WORCESTERSHIRE

### Archaeological Watching Brief

#### 1 INTRODUCTION

##### 1.1 Project Background

1.1.1 Wessex Archaeology was commissioned by CgMs Consulting Ltd on behalf of Bellway Homes (hereafter 'the Client'), to undertake an archaeological watching brief at Hanbury Road, Droitwich, Worcestershire, NGR 39050 26335 (hereafter 'the Site'). The work was in advance of a new residential development (Planning Ref. W/11/02666/PN) and followed a desk-based assessment (DBA) of the Site (CgMs 2007). The DBA concluded that the Site had a moderate potential to contain remains of Roman to post-medieval date, although that potential has been greatly reduced by the construction of the Droitwich Junction Canal that was built in 1852. However, some remains relating to the canal have potential to be of archaeological interest in their own right.

##### 1.2 Planning Background

1.2.1 Because of the potential archaeological significance of the Site, consultation between Paul Gajos of CgMs Consulting and Worcestershire County Council's (WCC) Historic Environment Planning Officer, concluded that a targeted watching brief should be undertaken during groundworks associated with the development. Following these discussions a specification for an archaeological watching brief was prepared CgMs and approved by WCC (CgMs 2012).

##### 1.3 Site Location and Topography

###### *Site Location*

1.3.1 The Site is approximately 0.55ha in extent and is bounded by Hanbury Street to the south, the River Salwarpe to the north, a public house to the west and industrial land to the east.

###### *Geology*

1.3.2 The Site is underlain by Mercia Mudstone; the southwest corner of the Site is overlain with alluvium, consisting of clay, silt, sand and gravel (British Geological Survey 1976). A geological fault is present approximately 2km southwest of the Site, in an east to west orientation.

1.3.3 Geotechnical investigations of the Site were carried out in July 2001 and February 2006 mainly in the area of an old petrol station that stood on the Site. The investigation established that the former Droitwich Junction Canal ran through the centre of the Site. Made ground was identified to a depth of 2m; soft to firm silty clay was identified on mudstone down to 5m (confirming the above geology; ENSR International 2001; RSK ENSR Ltd 2006).

### **Topography**

- 1.3.4 The natural topography of the Site will have been altered by previous land use and the topographic survey shows levels do vary by c. 2m across the Site (29.27m AOD within the northwestern corner; 31.45m AOD within the eastern one-third of the Site). The Site is slightly higher than the adjacent River Salwarpe which forms the northern Site boundary, but it should be noted that a mill pool, Droitwich Junction Canal and canal basin were located within the Site. The historic maps from the 1800s onwards also demonstrate how the course of the River Salwarpe has changed over time.

## **2 ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND HISTORICAL BACKGROUND**

### **2.1 General**

- 2.1.1 The following information is repeated from the DBA (CgMS 2007).

### **2.2 Prehistoric (Pre AD 43)**

- 2.2.1 Evidence of the salt industry survives from every period since the Iron Age within Droitwich, and evidence for salt production during the middle Iron Age has been identified at Bays Meadow, c. 650m to the northwest of the Site (Buteux & Hurst 1996). Iron Age roundhouses were also found during the excavation on this Site, and the area may have been occupied and used for seasonal salt production. On the western side of Queen Street, c. 130m to the west of the Site, Scheduled multi-period salt production remains survive (SAM30097). Evidence for later Iron Age activity has been found during much of the archaeological fieldwork that has taken place in the town, including intensive salt production on the south bank of the River Salwarpe, and a multi-period site at No. 45 Friar Street to the west of the Site.

### **2.3 Romano-British (AD 43 - 410)**

- 2.3.1 Although no Roman finds have been retrieved from the Site itself the Central Marches Historic Town Survey has designated an area of Roman occupation along the eastern extents of Queen Street (a possible Roman Road), to the west of the Site. However, the highest concentration of Roman activity is located c. 600m to the west of the Site. Excavations at Hanbury Street, 60m southwest of the Site indicates that the area to the east of Queen Street was first occupied in the early Roman period, and seems to have been purely domestic/agricultural in nature. This activity may have represented a linear roadside settlement associated with the salt making area 100m to the west of the Site.
- 2.3.2 It is believed that the Chapel Bridge crossing point (situated 75m northwest of the Site) was an established bridge and fording point during the Roman period, and may represent further Roman activity in the western extent of the Site.
- 2.3.3 Substantial Roman deposits are known to survive in the wider area of Droitwich, including building foundations, surfaces, hearths and brine tanks. The first fort in the Droitwich area (SAM30095) was at Crutch Lane, c. 600m to the north of the Site, and the second was built at Dodderhill, c. 250m to the northwest of the Site (SAM30094). The administrative centre for the



Roman salt industry in the town appears to have been based at the villa complex at Bays Meadow c. 600m to the northwest of the Site (SAM30093). The salt-making area lay 170m west of the Site and evidence from excavations just south of the river, suggests that salt production was being carried out on this site in the late Iron Age tradition up until the 2<sup>nd</sup> century, when it was reorganised (Buteux & Hurst 1996) – the Bays Meadow villa complex appears to be associated with this period of reorganisation.

- 2.3.4 Roman deposits survive particularly well in the Salwarpe Valley, partly because heavy flooding in the 7<sup>th</sup> century laid down at least 0.5m of alluvium, thereby protecting Roman and sub-Roman deposits from damage by later activity (Buteux & Hurst 1996). Preservation of organic remains is also extremely good due to the waterlogged nature of the deposits. There is a moderate to high potential for remains of this period within the Site.

## **2.4 Post Romano-British - Saxon (AD 410 – 1066)**

- 2.4.1 Archaeological work in Droitwich since the 1970s has produced evidence for domestic and industrial activity dating from this period. There are 7<sup>th</sup>-11<sup>th</sup> century documentary references to salt production on the Salwarpe, the most important brine well in this period being that at Upwich, 300m west of the Site. It is possible that there were three settlements in this period at Upwich, Netherwich and Middlewich, focused on the main brine wells in those areas (Buteux & Hurst 1996).

- 2.4.2 Most evidence for this period comes from excavations on the north side of Friars Street (450m west of the Site), although it is fairly certain that the Roman roads (Hanbury Road) in the area continued in use during this period (Buteux & Hurst 1996). However, excavations carried out along Hanbury Street, 60m southwest of the Site, revealed no evidence of Anglo-Saxon or early Medieval occupation in this area.

- 2.4.3 Once again, it is believed that a ford, bridge or possible ferry existed within the area of Chapel Bridge (75m west of the Site). Although, as in the Roman period, these bridging points cannot be accurately located as the early course of the river has not been recorded (Buteux & Hurst 1996).

## **2.5 Medieval (AD 1066 – 1500)**

- 2.5.1 The site of Frog Mill (also known as King's Mill) is suggested to be on the site of the post-medieval Town Mill, which is situated to west of the Site.

- 2.5.2 Medieval occupation has been identified to the north of Hanbury Street. Irregular plots are visible on the 1786 map of the town and borough of Droitwich. Further areas of medieval tenements plots are seen to the north, south and west of the Site. Occupation situated close to the river may indicate the presence of industrial activities reliant on water supply, such as tanning (Buteux & Hurst 1996).

- 2.5.3 The Site appears to be located at the eastern edge of the medieval town; the main focus of activity is situated off High Street and Friars Street. The site of St Mary's Hospital (founded 1285) and the site of the former chapel (associated with Chapel Bridge) are situated 75-85m to the northwest of the Site. Early 13<sup>th</sup>-15<sup>th</sup> century occupation was uncovered in the Hanbury Street excavations to the west of the Site. No documented evidence for medieval

activity has been identified across the southern and western extent of the Site.

- 2.5.4 The Droitwich Barge Canal construction began in 1768. The canal is shown on the late 18<sup>th</sup> century map of the town (although it is clear that this map is not an accurate representation of the Site, especially in relation to the position of Hanbury Road), and comparison with the 17<sup>th</sup> century map suggests that the canal followed the line of the Salwarpe and the river was canalised and followed a course just to the north. The Droitwich Junction Canal began construction in 1852 and ran through the centre of the Site. The canal was eventually abandoned in 1931 and filled in. Long before the construction of the Barge canal, efforts had been made to make the Salwarpe navigable, but without real success. Yet these efforts resulted in the river bed being widened and deepened.

## **2.6 Post-Medieval and Modern (AD 1500 – present)**

- 2.6.1 Two main activities are situated within the Site. The site of the Town Mill is present on the 1786 map of Droitwich; this may have superseded or is associated with the mill wheel seen on the 17<sup>th</sup> century town map (known as Cornmills Frogmill and the Kings Mill). The Town Mill (corn) is labelled as such until the 1938 Ordnance Survey map. The Tithe Awards show the mill standing just below the weir on the river, on the south bank immediately north of Hanbury Road. The construction of the Droitwich Junction Canal (as mentioned above) passed between the mill and the road and must have caused some modifications to the arrangements. The main part of the mill was destroyed by fire on 22<sup>nd</sup> of August 1909 and was rebuilt. The mill was auctioned in 1945 and was still at work at this time, although no water driven machinery remained.
- 2.6.2 In 1938, observations were made of wooden brine pipes situated off Hanbury Road (20m to the west of the Site), which may have been used to convey brine to Bradleys Salt works (situated to the north of the Site), or possibly associated with more ancient works on or near the same site.
- 2.6.3 The 1884 Ordnance Survey map shows the route of the Droitwich Junction Canal, the diverted River Salwarpe and Mill Pond. The Town Mill and associated buildings are situated across the north of the Site, on an island between the River and Canal. A lock and small footbridge is situated along the Canal towards the western end of the Site.
- 2.6.4 By 1927 the Salt Works to the north of the Site were removed and additional buildings were constructed along the front of Hanbury Road. By 1964 the Canal was infilled following its abandonment in 1939, and a large Works building was constructed across the western extent of the Site.

## **3 OBJECTIVES AND METHODOLOGY**

### **3.1 Objectives**

- 3.1.1 The general project cultural heritage objectives outlined in the specification (CgMs 2012) are detailed below:

- To determine the presence or otherwise of buried remains of archaeological interest within the development area;
- To preserve by record any significant archaeological remains within the development area and to attempt a reconstruction of the history and use of the Site, and assess vulnerability/sensitivity of any exposed remains;
- To place the Site in context by comparison with similar sites, both in Worcestershire and further afield.

## **3.2 Methodology**

- 3.2.1 The watching brief was undertaken between 08.08.12 and 20.08.12. Excavation of the Site was undertaken by a mechanical excavator fitted with a toothless ditching bucket. Constant archaeological supervision was maintained during the excavation of the deposits at the western end of the Site, with modern dumped deposits observed. Due to the truncated nature of the Site and following discussions between CgMs and WCC, it was agreed to carry out intermittent monitoring visits during the remainder of the work. Following the observation of similar modern made ground in the central part of the Site, which filled a mill pond that extended to the east, the eastern part of the Site was not monitored.
- 3.2.2 All archaeological remains were recorded in accordance with standard Wessex methodologies and IfA and EH best practice. This written record is hierarchically based and centred on the context record. Each context record fully describes the location, extent, composition and relationship of the subject and is cross referenced to all other assigned records. Context numbers used in recording were not repeated.
- 3.2.3 A full photographic record was maintained during the course of the works.
- 3.2.4 The finds collected by context and were treated in accordance with UKIC guidelines (UKIC 2001).

## **4 ARCHAEOLOGICAL RESULTS**

### **4.1 Introduction**

- 4.1.1 The following section provides a summary of the information held in the Site archive, with a full list of context numbers and context descriptions contained in **Appendix 1**. No finds were recovered from the work and no deposits suitable for environmental sampling were encountered.

### **4.2 Results**

- 4.2.1 The earliest deposit recorded was **1006** a light brown alluvium layer. This deposit extended below the depth of impact at 2m below the modern ground surface. Directly above and to the east of the alluvium **1006** was a dark brown sandy silt (**1005**), which survived a depth of 0.40m. These two deposits represent a possible waterborne depositional phase given the location of the Site to the River Salwarpe.

- 4.2.2 The original walls of the canal were also located during the watching brief (**Figure 2**). The northern canal wall (**1012**; **Plate 2**) lay approximately 7.20m from the southern wall (**1016**) and both were aligned east to west. The canal walls appear to have been built upon a dark grey clay base (**1014**), which was not fully investigated as it extended beyond the level of impact. The wall **1012** had a width of 0.48m and maximum height of 2.90m. It was built of unfrogged red brick in an English bond style with a light orange sandy mortar.
- 4.2.3 The southern wall **1016** (**Plates 3**) was built in the same style as **1012** but was only exposed to a depth of 0.63m. The canal appears to have been deliberately backfilled with **1013**, a mixed rubbly deposit with tipping layers. Only wall **1016** was revealed in the central part of the Site, but wall **1012** is assumed to have continued on the line of Saltway.
- 4.2.4 In the west of the Site lay the made ground deposit **1008**, which consisted of red brick fragments and overlay the deposit **1006**, and the canal walls **1012** and **1016**. Deposit **1008** was located 1.90m below the modern ground surface. Above **1008** was a brown gravelly sand (**1009**) which had a depth of 0.50m.
- 4.2.5 The deposits **1005**, **1008** and **1009** were truncated by the wide and shallow sided western edge of a large cut, assumed to be that of the mill pond on later OS maps (**1001**; **Figure 2** and **Plate 1**). The pond had been reclaimed in the 20<sup>th</sup> century judging by the deposits contained within it. A heavily truncated wall stub was revealed in the central part of the Site and was assumed to define the edge of the pond.
- 4.2.6 The primary fill of **1001** was **1003**, which consisted of dark silt with modern plastic inclusions and had a depth of 0.20m. Directly above **1003** was **1002**, a reddish gravelly sand layer that had a depth of 0.90m. Overlaying **1002** was **1004** a dark silty ash layer, which was only noted in the northwest corner of the stripped area. Layer **1004** had a maximum depth of 0.40m.
- 4.2.7 Modern mixed overburden (**1015**) was noted as sitting above the canal walls **1012** and **1016**. A similar layer of modern overburden (**1000**) covered the deposits in the east of the area that was investigated, and this layer consisted of mixed rubble and gravel with a depth of 0.50m. Overburden **1000** was truncated by a steep sided modern service trench (**1010**), which had a depth of 2.50m and housed a ceramic drain (**1007**). The backfill of **1010** was the mixed rubbly material **1011**.

## 5 DISCUSSION

### 5.1 Interpretation

- 5.1.1 The archaeological remains recorded during the work at Hanbury Road largely related to the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century Droitwich Junction Canal. This structure was evidenced by the two red brick walls **1012** and **1016**, which ran east to west across the length of the Site. Layer **1014** was interpreted as the possible clay bedding for the canal but excavation ceased before this was fully understood. The canal was backfilled in 1931, which was represented by deposit **1013**.

- 5.1.2 In the northern and central parts of the Site the possible remains of a mill pond were recorded as **1001** but, again, excavation was ceased before a full interpretation was able to be made. The modern material, such as plastic cut-offs, found in the deposits within **1001** demonstrate that although the feature may have been open for some time it was backfilled in relatively recent years.

## **5.2 Conclusions**

- 5.2.1 No archaeological remains dating to before the 19<sup>th</sup> century were exposed during the work at Hanbury Road, and it is highly likely that if there were remains from earlier periods they were destroyed during the construction of the Droitwich Junction Canal.

## **6 ARCHIVE AND COPYRIGHT**

### **6.1 Archive**

- 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* (2<sup>nd</sup> Edition, English Heritage 1991), and *Archaeological archives – a guide to best practice in creation, compilation, transfer and curation* (Brown 2007). The archive is currently held at the offices of Wessex Archaeology in Sheffield, under the project code 86580. The archive will be deposited with an appropriate museum under a Worcestershire HER number in due course. An OASIS form will be submitted at the time of deposition.

### **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.

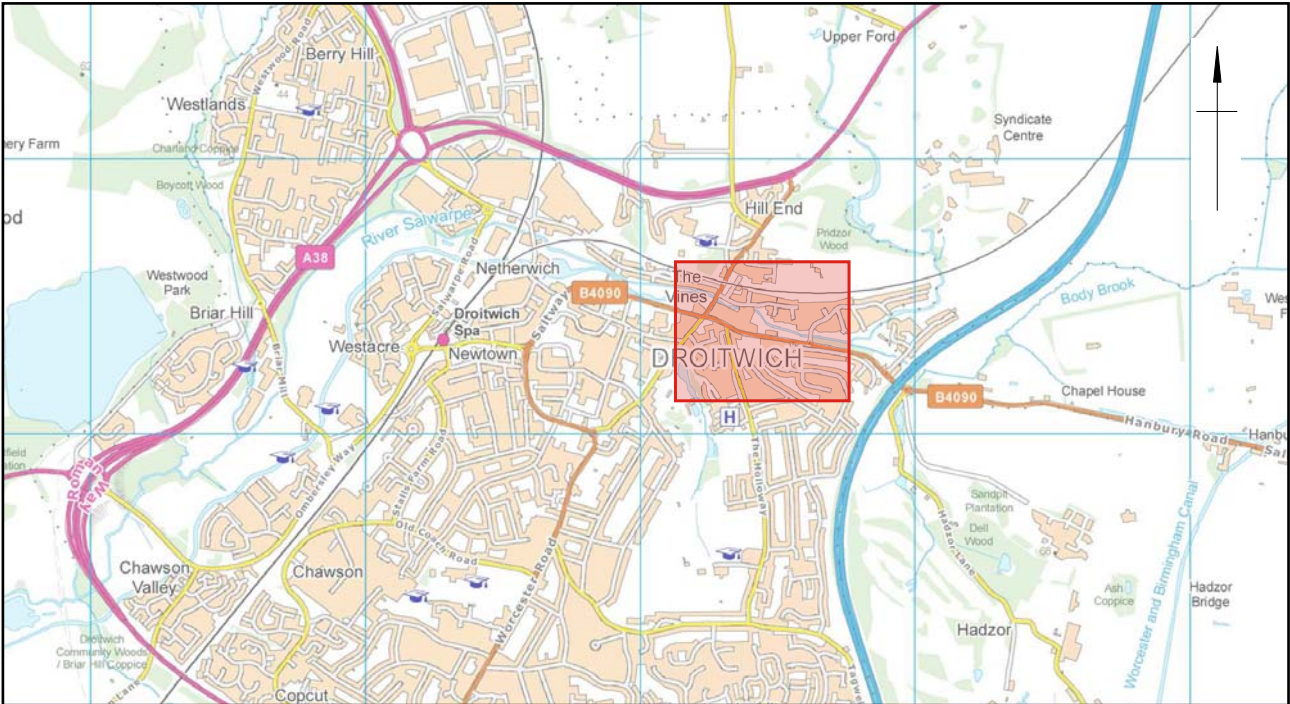
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## APPENDIX 1: CONTEXT DESCRIPTIONS

Context Number	Type	Interpretation	Depth of Deposits (m)
1000	Layer	Modern overburden	0.5
1001	Cut	Possible edge of mill pond	1.3
1002	Layer	Fill of 1001	0.9
1003	Layer	Fill of 1001	0.4
1004	Layer	Fill of 1001	0.4
1005	Layer	Dark brown sandy silt layer	0.4
1006	Layer	Light brown clayey sandy silt	
1007	Structure	Modern concrete pipe in 1010	0.7
1008	Layer	Made ground	
1009	Layer	Mid brown gravelly sand	0.5
1010	Cut	Steep sided cut for 1007	2.5
1011	Layer	Mixed fill of 1010	1.8
1012	Structure	Brick wall	2.6
1013	Layer	Mixed backfill layer	1.5
1014	Layer	Dark grey blue clay	2
1015	Layer	Overburden of structured surface deposits	0.5
1016	Structure	Red brick wall	0.4

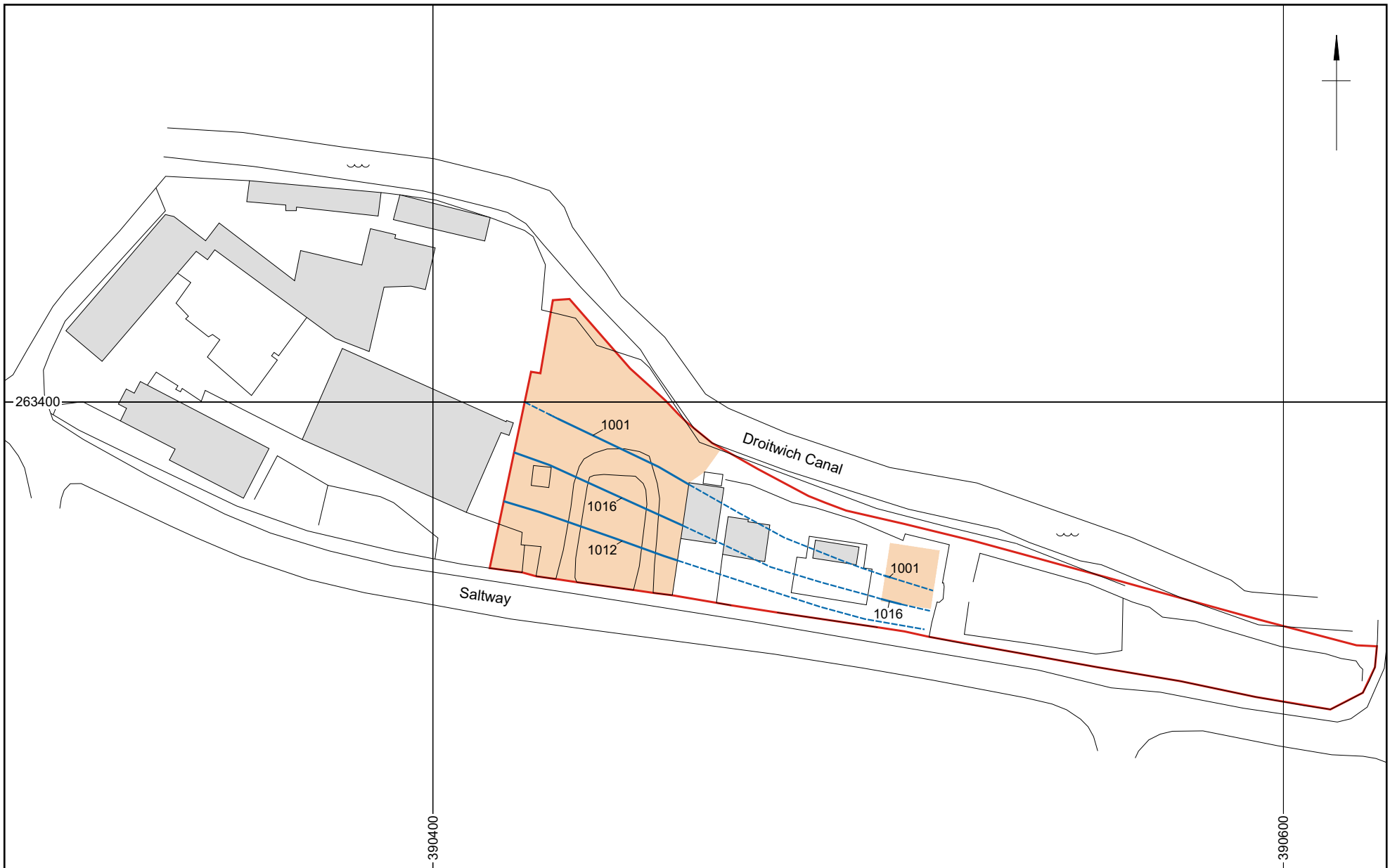


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Site location

Figure 1





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Watching brief area

Figure 2



Plate 1: Mill pond, **1001**, looking north-east



Plate 2: Canal wall, **1012**, looking south

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Plate 3: Canal wall, **1016**, looking south-east



Plate 4: Canal wall **1016** in eastern watching brief area, looking south-east

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