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Perry Barr to Barr Beacon Water Mains

Archaeological Watching Brief



Ref: 76801.01
November 2013



PERRY BARR TO BARR BEACON WATER MAINS, BIRMINGHAM AND WALSALL

Archaeological Watching Brief

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November 2013

Report ref. 76801.01



Quality Assurance

Project Code	76801	Accession Code	n/a	Client Ref.	n/a
Planning Application Ref.	n/a	Ordnance Survey (OS) national grid reference (NGR)	408359 295293 to 406136 297678		

Version	Status*	Prepared by	Checked and Approved By	Approver's Signature	Date
v01	I	KS	AB		29/11/13
File:					
File:					
File:					
File:					
File:					

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

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Summary

Wessex Archaeology was commissioned by Morgan Sindall to undertake an archaeological watching brief to mitigate the potential loss of archaeological remains during the insertion of a water pipeline to connect the reservoirs at Perry Barr, Birmingham (NGR 408359 295293) and Barr Beacon, Walsall (NGR 406136 297678).

Topsoil stripping was monitored along the length of the pipeline easement within the greenfield areas of the Scheme, with the pipe trench within George Fredrick Road also being monitored. The only features identified during the course of this fieldwork were modern in date. Artefacts that were retrieved dated to the post-medieval and modern periods and were not archaeologically significant.

The archive is currently held at the offices of Wessex Archaeology in Sheffield, under the project code **76801**. It is recommended that the project archive be offered to the Birmingham Museum and Art Gallery for long-term curation.



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Acknowledgements

The project was commissioned by Morgan Sindall on behalf of Severn Trent Water and Wessex Archaeology is grateful in this regard.

The fieldwork was carried out by Diana Swales, Chris Hirst, Sean Bell, Charles Hay and Michael Keech. The report was prepared by Kirsty Squires with illustrations by Chris Swales. Grace Corbett managed the project on behalf of Wessex Archaeology.



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Archaeological Watching Brief

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Project background

- 1.1.1 Wessex Archaeology was commissioned by Morgan Sindall to undertake an archaeological watching brief during the insertion of a water mains pipeline to connect the reservoirs at Perry Barr, Birmingham and Barr Beacon, Walsall (hereafter ‘the Scheme’) (**Figure 1**).
- 1.1.2 A Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI) (Wessex Archaeology 2011) and Method Statement (Wessex Archaeology 2013) outlined the methodology for the watching brief. In addition, desk-based research was carried out in order to inform the WSI. These reports were prepared in accordance with current industry best practice and were approved by the client, Birmingham City Council (BCC) and Walsall Council (WC).
- 1.1.3 This report details the results of the watching brief.

1.2 The Site

- 1.2.1 The Scheme runs from Perry Barr reservoir (NGR 408359, 295293) to Barr Beacon (NGR 406136 297678) (**Figure 1**). The pipeline goes from Perry Barr reservoir along Rough Road turning north on to George Fredrick Road. It then crosses Sutton Oak Road and enters King George’s Field where it continues into a sports ground. Here it leaves Birmingham City limits and enters Walsall District where it runs through a greenfield area, crossing Bridle Lane to Barr Beacon Reservoir.
- 1.2.2 Barr Beacon is an isolated north-south ridge of Bunter pebbles which rises to a height of 227m aOD. The underlying geology is Kidderminster Formation of interbedded sandstone and conglomerate (British Geological Survey online viewer). The soil at Barr Beacon can be described as a mix of slowly permeable, seasonally wet, acidic loam and clay while loamy soils with naturally high groundwater is found at Perry Barr (Soilscapes online viewer).

2 HISTORICAL AND ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND

2.1 Summary

- 2.1.1 The area surrounding the Scheme is rich in archaeological remains including prehistoric, medieval and post-medieval finds. The WSI provides an in-depth examination of the historical and archaeological background of a study area of 500m either side of the Scheme (Wessex Archaeology 2011). The following summary is drawn from that document.

- 2.1.2 The Scheme does not impact upon any Scheduled Monuments, Listed Buildings, Registered Battlefields or Conservation Areas.

Abbreviations

BCSMR Black Country Sites and Monuments Record
BHER Birmingham Historic Environment Record

2.2 Prehistoric and Romano-British periods

- 2.2.1 Barr Beacon is a prominent local landmark; the summit of a crescent-shaped ridge is likely to have acted as a focal point since prehistoric times (Ramsey 2007). The earliest archaeological evidence within the study area is a Neolithic perforated mace-head.
- 2.2.2 There is evidence of Bronze Age activity in the area in the form of a perforated stone hammer, a second stone hammer and a naturally perforated flint which had been used as a hammer (BCSMR 2214). These artefacts were found 250m to the west of the Scheme. The Scheme runs 170m to the north of the bowl barrow at Kings Standing, which is a Scheduled Monument (BHER 02905-MBM791) and has an average diameter of 16m and a maximum height of 1.2m.
- 2.2.3 The possible site of a group of prehistoric standing stones (BCSMR 2221) is located to the west of the Scheme. These were removed in the 19th century and their prehistoric date is speculative.
- 2.2.4 Roman coins have been identified within the study area (BCSMR 2231; 3335; BHER 02234-MBM503). The route of Ryknild Street (BHER 20820-MBM2482), one of the major Roman roads in Britain runs north-south through the Scheme across George Fredrick Street. This road ran from the Fosse Way at Bourton-on-the-Water in Gloucestershire to Templeborough in South Yorkshire.

2.3 Medieval

- 2.3.1 There is evidence of ridge and furrow cultivation (BCSMR 10362; 10363; 10385) and a deer park, Sutton Chase (BHER 02930-MBM816). Medieval activity, including quarrying and clearance by charcoal burners, are also found in the wider area. A homestead moat still survives as an earthwork to the south of Sutton road (Ramsey 2007, 6). Medieval roads, such as Crook Lane, Skip Lane and Barr Lakes Lane, have been identified just outside the study area (*ibid.* 5).

2.4 Post-medieval and modern

- 2.4.1 Post-medieval evidence along the route of the Scheme is dominated by agricultural activity. Farm buildings (BCSMR 10335; 10336; BHER 20885-MBM2548) and Sutton Park Westwood Coppice (BHER 20166-MBM1805), an enclosed woodland dating to the 18th century, were identified within the study area.
- 2.4.2 The land at the southern end of the Scheme was used for agriculture at the end of the 19th century.
- 2.4.3 The 1903 Ordnance Survey (OS) map illustrates the Perry Bar reservoir. The field pattern as featured on the 1903 map is almost identical to the form of present day fields, with little or no variation along the route of the Scheme from Barr Beacon reservoir to Queslett Road East. By 1937, residential housing was built around the Perry Barr reservoir. A wood named King's Standard is featured on historical OS maps at King Georges Field, though by 1976 the wood had been removed.



3 METHODOLOGY

3.1 Aims

3.1.1 The principal aim of the watching brief was to collect and assess/analyse archaeological data that may have been impacted upon during groundworks associated with the Scheme.

3.1.2 The general aims of the project were to:

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

3.1.2 The specific aims of the project were to:

- identify and record any surviving remains of Ryknield Street;
- identify and record any prehistoric remains within Barr Beacon; and
- identify and record any archaeological remains surviving in existing open spaces.

3.2 Fieldwork

3.2.1 The watching brief was carried out in accordance with the WSI (Wessex Archaeology 2011), the Method Statement (Wessex Archaeology 2013) and industry best practice, as outlined in guidelines issued by the Institute for Archaeologists (IfA 2008a, 2008b and 2010).

3.2.2 Monitoring took place during trench excavations along George Fredrick Road along the line of, and adjacent to, Ryknield Street Roman road. The covering vegetation and topsoil within greenfield areas was removed using a mechanical excavator fitted with a toothless ditching bucket, working under the direct supervision of an archaeologist. Overburden was removed in spits down to the upper archaeological horizon or the maximum level of the foundations, whichever was reached first. Any revealed deposits were hand cleaned, excavated and recorded in accordance with Wessex Archaeology's standard guidelines.

3.3 Recording

3.3.1 All trenches and any archaeological features or deposits encountered were recorded using Wessex Archaeology's *pro forma* recording sheets and a continuous unique numbering system.

3.3.2 As no archaeological deposits were found, no archive-standard photographs were required but digital images were taken as a record of the work undertaken.



- 3.3.3 Strategies for finds environmental samples were in place but were not required during fieldwork.

4 ARCHAEOLOGICAL RESULTS

4.1 Introduction

- 4.1.1 The following is a summary of the information held in the archive. The areas monitored are shown on **Figure 1** and the complete stratigraphic sequence for each trench is summarised in **Appendix 1**.

4.2 Temporary compound

- 4.2.1 Three trenches were monitored at the temporary compound located adjacent to Kingstanding Road.

Trench 1

- 4.2.2 The excavation of Trench 1 revealed four deposits; a layer of grass (**100**), topsoil (**101**), subsoil (**102**) and natural (**103**). The maximum depth of this trench was 1.10m. Charcoal and modern plastic were identified in the topsoil.

Trench 2

- 4.2.3 Only the grass and topsoil (**200**) were excavated in this trench. The maximum depth of the trench measured 0.10m. No archaeological features or artefacts were identified.

Trench 3

- 4.2.4 This trench comprised topsoil (**301**), subsoil (**302**), and natural deposits (**303**). The maximum depth of this trench measured 0.40m. Clay pipes, two small animal bones, modern brick, pottery and glass were recovered from the subsoil and the surface of the natural.

4.3 Greenfield areas

- 4.3.1 Trenches 12-23 and Trenches 25-26 were monitored within the greenfield areas of the Scheme, from Barr Beacon reservoir to Kingstanding Road.

Trench 12

- 4.3.2 Only two layers, namely topsoil (**1201**) and natural (**1202**), were recorded in this trench. A modern linear construction cut (**1203**) was also identified. The top of a 20th century plastic pipe was recorded at a depth of 0.97m below ground level in the deepest area of the trench. No archaeological features or artefacts were identified.

Trench 13

- 4.3.3 The excavation of Trench 13 revealed two layers, these included topsoil (**1301**) and natural (**1302**) deposits. A sub-circular cut (**1303**) was identified on the southern edge of the trench. This feature extended beyond the edge of the trench and was filled with **1304**. The maximum depth of this trench was 0.37m. Modern materials, including paint tins, were identified in the fill of cut **1303**.



Trench 14

- 4.3.4 Topsoil (**1400**) and two natural deposits (**1401** and **1402**) were identified in this trench. The maximum trench depth measured 0.42m. No archaeological artefacts or features were identified.

Trench 15

- 4.3.5 Only two contexts were identified in this trench; topsoil (**1500**) and natural (**1501**) layers. The maximum depth of this trench measured 0.57m. Ten sherds of post-medieval pottery were recovered from the topsoil.

Trench 16

- 4.3.6 Topsoil (**1601**) and two natural deposits (**1602** and **1603**) were recorded in Trench 16. The maximum depth of this trench measured 0.62m. No archaeological artefacts or features were recovered.

Trench 17

- 4.3.7 Trench 17 contained a layer of topsoil (**1701**) and natural (**1702**). The maximum excavated depth was approximately 0.63m. No archaeological features or artefacts were recorded.

Trench 18

- 4.3.8 The trench contained topsoil (**1801**) and natural (**1802**) layers. The maximum depth of this trench measured 0.17m. No archaeological features or artefacts were identified in this trench.

Trench 19

- 4.3.9 This trench comprised topsoil (**1901**) and one natural deposit (**1902**). No archaeological features or artefacts were identified in Trench 19.

Trench 20

- 4.3.10 Trench 20 contained two deposits, namely topsoil (**2001**) and natural (**2002**) layers. The pipe trench in this area was excavated to a depth of 1.40m (**Plate 1**). Several sherds of post-medieval pottery were recovered from the topsoil.

Trench 21

- 4.3.11 Topsoil (**2101**) and natural (**2102**) deposits were recorded. The maximum excavated depth measured 0.50m. Several sherds of modern pottery and plastics were identified in the topsoil.

Trench 22

- 4.3.12 The excavation of Trench 22 revealed two deposits - topsoil (**2201**) and natural (**2202**) layers. The cut (**2204**) and fill (**2203**) of an east-west running gully was identified in the northern part of Trench 22. This gully was extremely shallow and measured 0.10m deep (**Plate 2**). The maximum depth of this trench measured 0.42m. A small amount of modern pottery was retrieved from the topsoil.

Trench 23

- 4.3.13 Only topsoil (**2301**) and natural (**2302**) layers were recorded. The maximum depth of this trench measured 0.30m. No archaeological features or artefacts were identified.



Trench 25

- 4.3.14 Topsoil (**2501**) and subsoil (**2502**) deposits were identified. The maximum depth of this trench measured 0.30m. No archaeological features or artefacts were present.

Trench 26

- 4.3.15 Topsoil (**2601**) and natural (**2602**) layers were recorded. The maximum depth of this trench measured 0.40m. No archaeological features or artefacts were present.

4.4 George Fredrick Road

Trench 24

- 4.4.1 Three contexts were revealed during the excavation of Trench 24 (**Plate 3**). These include layers of tarmac (**2401**), rubble (**2402**) and natural (**2403**). The maximum depth of this trench measured 1.36m. No archaeological features or artefacts were identified in the trench.

5 CONCLUSIONS

- 5.1.1 The only features identified during the watching brief were modern in date. Artefacts retrieved during excavations were dated to the post-medieval and modern periods and were not archaeologically significant. These finds were discarded on site.
- 5.1.2 It is considered that the aims of the watching brief were achieved.

6 STORAGE AND CURATION

6.1 Museum

- 6.1.1 As there is no collecting museum for this area, it is recommended that the project archive be offered to the Birmingham Museum and Art Gallery for long-term curation.

6.2 Preparation of archive

- 6.2.1 The complete site archive, which will include paper records, photographic records, graphics and digital data will be prepared following nationally recommended guidelines (SMA 1995; IfA 2009; ADS 2013). All archive elements will be marked with the site code and a full index will be prepared.

6.3 Security copy

- 6.3.1 In line with current best practice (e.g. Brown 2007), on completion of the project a security copy of the written records will be prepared, in the form of a digital PDF/A file. PDF/A is an ISO-standardised version of the Portable Document Format (PDF) designed for the digital preservation of electronic documents through omission of features ill-suited to long-term archiving.

7 COPYRIGHT

- 7.1.1 This report, and the archive generally, may contain material that is non-Wessex Archaeology copyright (e.g. Ordnance Survey, British Geological Survey, Crown



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8.2 Online sources

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National Soil Resources Institute. Soilsclapes Viewer. Accessed on 18th September 2013 at: <https://www.landis.org.uk/soilsclapes/>



APPENDIX 1

Context data

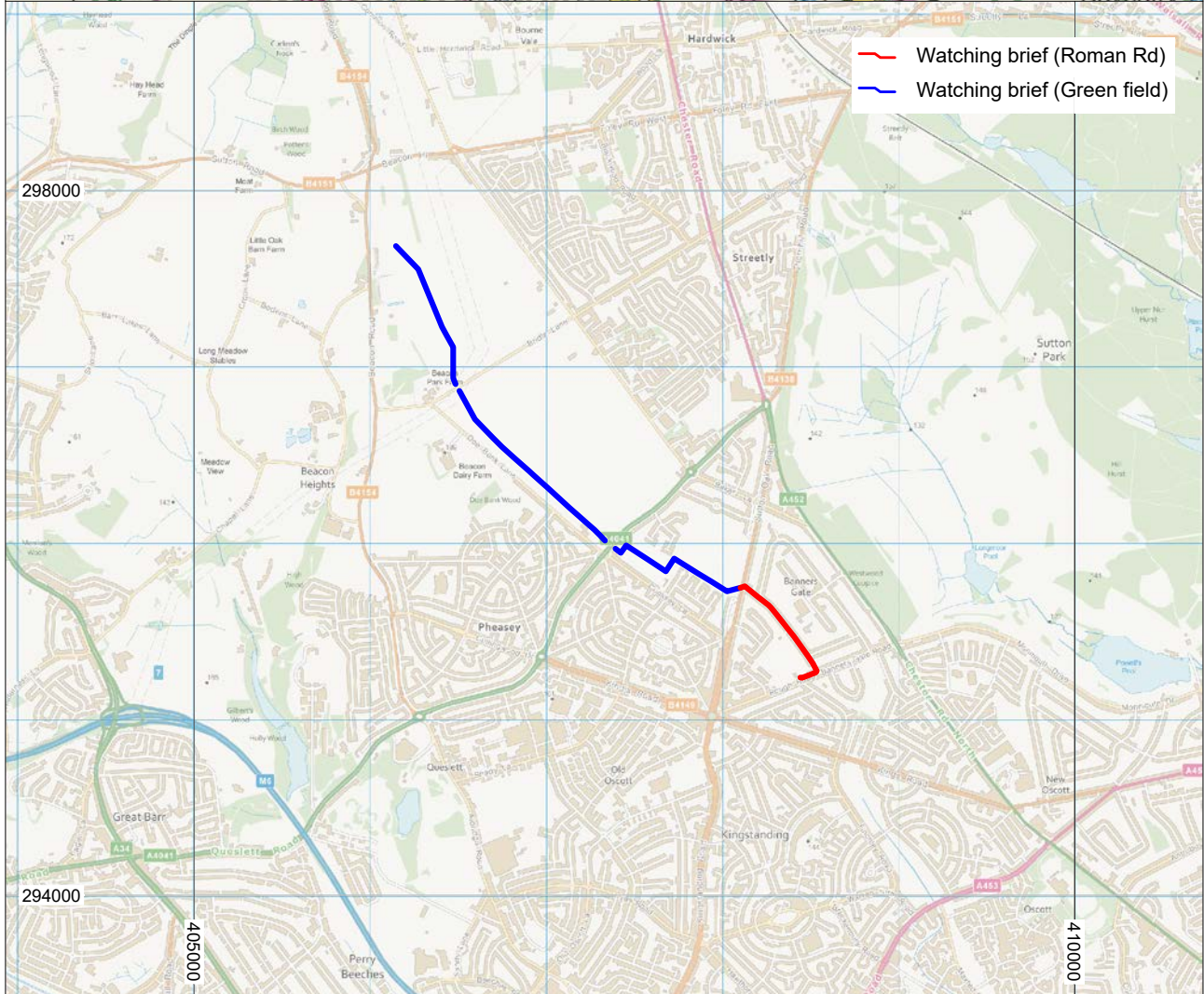
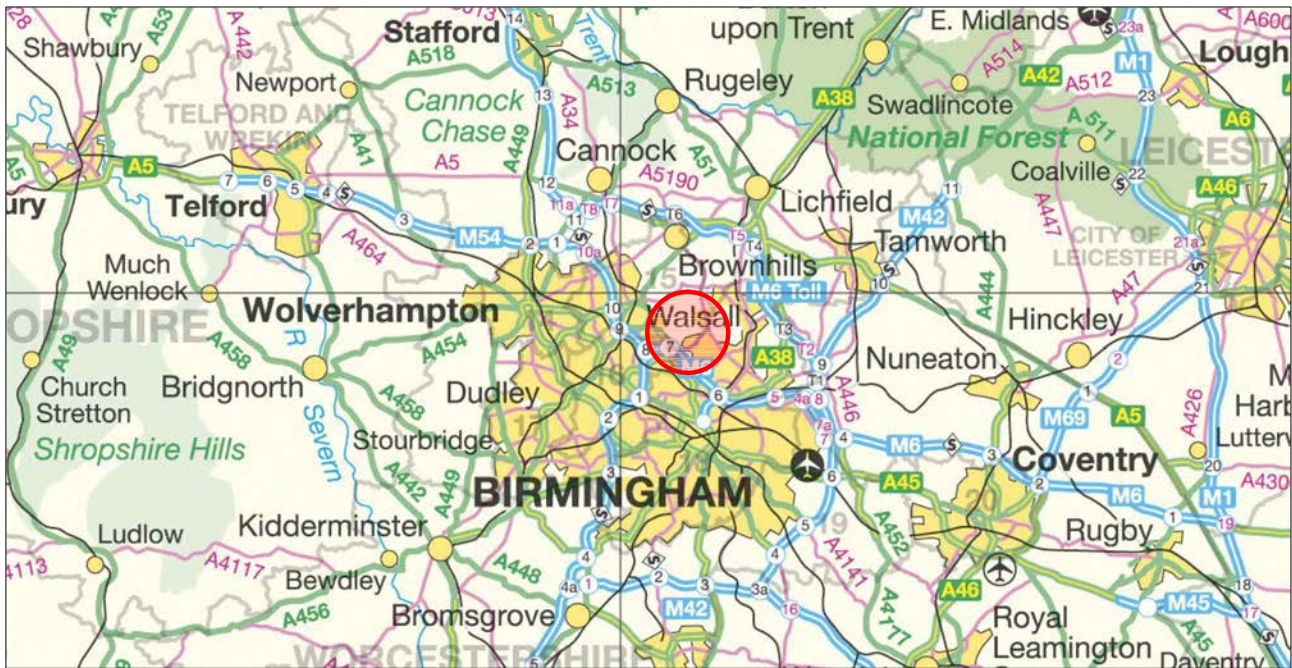
Context	Description	Depth BGL (m)
Trench 1		Max Depth: 1.10m
100	Grass: Landscaped and maintained for the playing fields.	0- 0.10m
101	Topsoil: Dark brown, silty loam with large subrounded stone and modern brick inclusions. Patches of charcoal and black plastic identified at 0.20m BGL.	0.10- 0.45m
102	Subsoil: Mid yellowish to light brown, silty sand with medium rounded stone inclusions.	0.45- 0.60m
103	Natural: Pink and red, sandy clay with patches of yellow/orange sand and frequent subrounded stone inclusions (5-15cm in size).	0.60- 1.10m
Trench 2		Max Depth: 0.10m
200	Grass and topsoil: Grass and topsoil removed.	0- 0.10m
Trench 3		Max Depth: 0.40m
301	Topsoil: Maintained layer of turf.	0- 0.08m
302	Subsoil: Dark greyish brown, silty loam with frequent subrounded pebbles (1-5cm in size) and frequent rooting. Small amounts of modern pottery and glass recovered from this context.	0.08- 0.40m
303	Natural: Light reddish brown, silty sand with frequent subrounded pebbles (1-5cm in size). Modern brick, pottery, glass, clay pipes and two small animal bones recovered from this context. These materials were possibly deposited to level the ground.	0.40m+
Trench 12		Max Depth: 0.97m
1201	Topsoil: Arable land with a crop. Dark brown, sandy loam with occasional small pebbles. Five sherds of post-medieval pottery (blue on white decoration) recovered from this context.	0- 0.32m
1202	Natural: Orangey brown, silty sand with frequent small to large pebbles. The upper edge of this context is 0.12m higher than the rest of this layer and measures 4m wide. Modern plough scars run across the trench and are visible in exposed surface.	0.35m+
1203	Cut: Linear cut for septic tank, filled with (1204). Late 20 th century in date.	0.30- 0.97m
1204	Fill: Fill of cut (1203). Red clay. This fill contains a plastic pipe, which is located 0.65m below the base of the topsoil.	0.30- 0.97m
Trench 13		Max Depth: 0.37
1301	Topsoil: Arable land. Same as (1201) and (1401).	0- 0.37m
1302	Natural: Orangy brown, silty sand with rare small pebbles. The area below the donkey grazing field has a more mottled appearance than (1202) and (1402).	0.37m+
1303	Cut: Cut of sub-circular feature on the southern edge of the trench. Filled with (1304). Truncated by southern edge of the trench.	0.30m
1304	Fill: Fill of cut (1303). Identical to topsoil (1301) with the addition of modern material, for example an old paint tin.	0.30m
Trench 14		Max Depth: 0.42m
1400	Topsoil: Arable land/meadow. Upper 0.15-0.20m of this layer contained frequent small-large pebbles and dense root material.	0- 0.42m
1401	Natural: Orangey brown, silty sand with large patches of red silty sand. Frequent small-large pebbles identified in this context. Modern plough scars are visible in the exposed surface.	0.42m+
1402	Burnt natural(?): Pale grey, silty sand with frequent pebble. Natural affected by heat?	0.42m




Context	Description	Depth BGL (m)
Trench 15		Max Depth: 0.57m
1500	Topsoil: Arable land with crop of potatoes. Sandy loam with frequent small to large pebbles and rooting in the upper section of this layer.	0- 0.57m
1501	Natural: Silty sand with frequent small-large pebbles. The colour of this layer is more consistent than that of (1401). Plough scars visible in the exposed surface.	0.57m+
Trench 16		Max Depth: 0.53m
1601	Topsoil: Arable land with a crop of potatoes. Pebbles identified in this layer, these inclusions are smaller and less frequent than in (401) and (501). Root material noted in the upper section of this context.	0- 0.53m
1602	Natural: Orangey brown, loamy sand which is paler in colour than (1502) and contains frequent small to large pebbles.	0.53+
1603	Burnt natural(?): Pale grey, loamy sand. Similar to (1402) but more localised. Also seen under the northern boundary hedge.	0.53m
Trench 17		Max Depth: 0.63m
1701	Topsoil: Arable land with a crop of potatoes. Frequent small to large pebbles identified in this layer. Very similar to (1601).	0- 0.63m
1702	Natural: Orangey brown, silty sand with patches of yellow silty sand in the south-eastern part of this trench. Frequent small pebbles identified in this layer.	0.63m+
Trench 18		Max Depth: 0.17m
1801	Topsoil: Arable land with a crop of barley. Mid greyish brown, sandy loam with frequent small to large pebbles.	0- 0.17m
1802	Natural: Light orangey brown, silty sand with frequent small to large pebbles. Discrete patches of reddish, silty sand.	0.17m+
Trench 19		Max Depth: m
1901	Topsoil: Mid brownish grey, sandy silt with frequent small to medium (<50mm in size) with well-rounded pebbles.	
1902	Natural: Light orangey brown, silty sand with sparse particles of yellowish orange mottled clay and frequent subangular stones.	
Trench 20		Max Depth: 1.40m
2001	Topsoil: Light brownish grey, friable silty sand with occasional rounded pebbles, dense rooting from grasses and sparse post-medieval pottery.	0- 0.47m
2002	Natural: Mid brownish yellow, moderately compact silty sand with occasional small to medium (<50mm in size) well rounded pebbles. Dense concentration of pebble and banded red sands were seen towards the crest of the slope in Trench 20.	0.47- 1.40m
Trench 21		Max Depth: 0.50m
2101	Topsoil: Mid brownish grey, sandy silt with frequent small to medium well rounded pebbles, sparse modern pottery and plastics, and frequent grass rooting.	0- 0.50m
2102	Natural: Mixed, patchy light brown, compact sand with frequent small to medium well rounded pebbles. Some bioturbation identified at the eastern edge of the trench, which was caused by an established hedgerow.	0.50m+
Trench 22		Max Depth: 0.42m
2201	Topsoil: Mid brownish grey, silty sand with frequent well rounded pebbles, sparse modern pottery and frequent grass rooting.	0- 0.42m
2202	Natural: Light yellowish brown, moderately compact silty sand with frequent dense patches of small to medium, well rounded pebbles. There is some variation in the colour of sands with reddish brown patches seen throughout this deposit.	0.42m+
2203	Fill: Fill of gully (2204). Mid greyish brown, friable silty sand with frequent, medium (<65mm in size) rounded pebbles. No archaeological components recovered from this fill.	0.10m



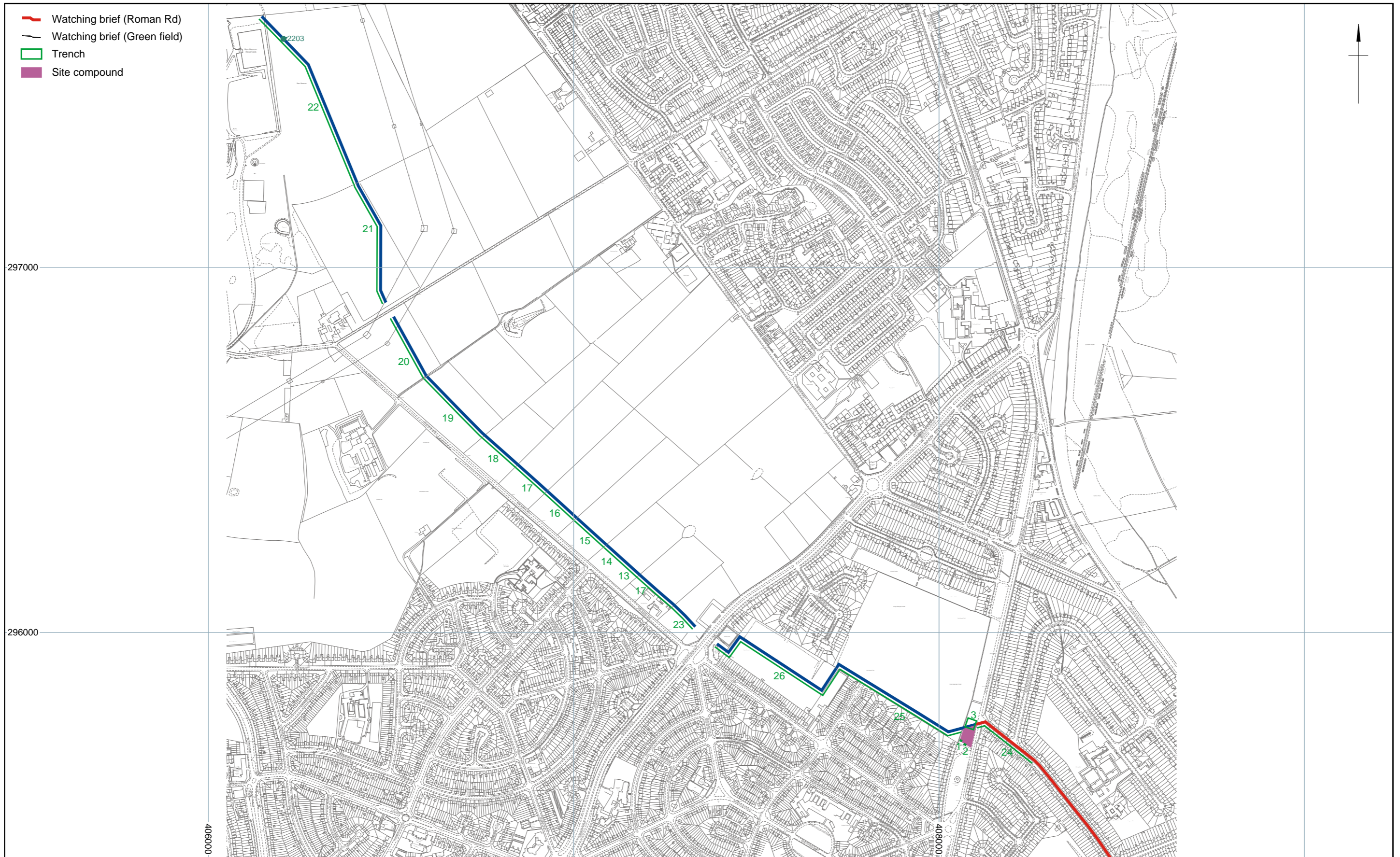
Context	Description	Depth BGL (m)
2204	Cut: Cut of E-W running gully, filled with (2203). Located at the northern end of the trench. Linear gully with a concave base and shallow side slopes. Length = 0.90m, width = 1.0m, depth = 0.1m.	0.10m
Trench 23		Max Depth: 0.30m
2301	Topsoil: Dark brown, sandy silt loam with common, small to medium, subrounded stones.	0- 0.30m
2302	Subsoil: Mid brown, sandy soil with common, small to medium, subrounded stones. Patches of dark brown sandy soil noted in this layer. Concrete in the ground provides evidence for modern disturbance.	0.30m+
Trench 24		Max Depth: 1.36m
2401	Tarmac	
2402	Rubble: Rocky rubble provides the base of the road and is located immediately under the tarmac.	
2403	Natural: Yellowish brown sand, homogenous in nature. Runs under the entire road.	1.36m+
Trench 25		Max Depth: 0.30m
2501	Topsoil/turf layer	0- 0.20m
2502	Subsoil: Yellowish brown to dark brown, sandy loam with common, small (5mm in size), subrounded stones.	0.20- 0.30m
Trench 26		Max Depth: 0.40m
2601	Topsoil/turf layer: Dense loam.	
2602	Subsoil: Dark brown, sandy loam with common small, angular gravel.	



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Site location

Figure 1



Additional digital mapping from Client
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Trench locations

Figure 2



Plate 1: Trench 20, pipe trench

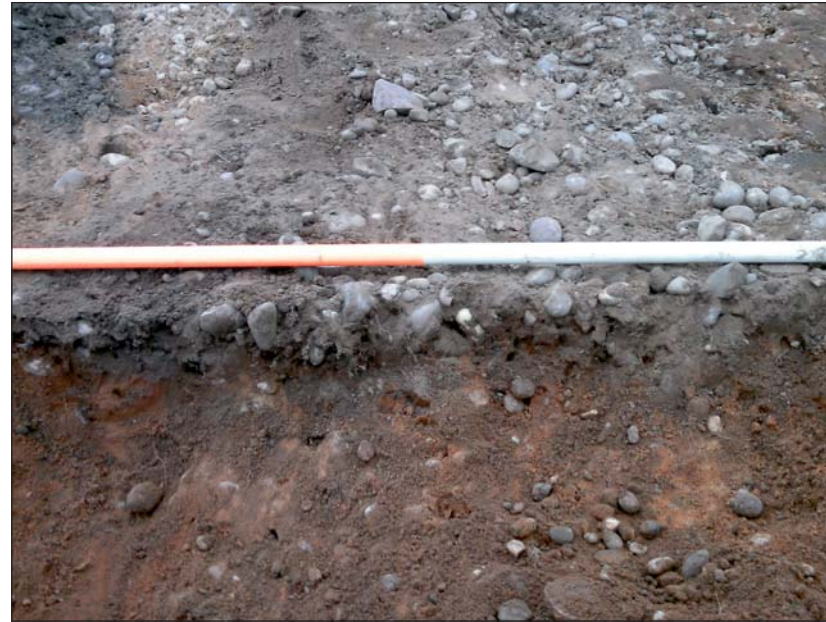


Plate 2: Shallow gully, Trench 22



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Plate 3: Representative section, Trench 24, George Fredrick Road

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