



Kirby Bellars Leicestershire

Archaeological Watching Brief



Accession Number: X.A22.2017
Ref: 114291.01
July 2017



**Kirby Bellars
Leicestershire**

Archaeological Watching Brief

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July 2017

114291.01



Quality Assurance

Project Code	114291	Accession Code	X.A22.2017	Client Ref.	
Planning Application Ref.		Ordnance Survey (OS) national grid reference (NGR)	471928, 317958 to 471709, 317456		

Version	Status*	Prepared by	Checked and Approved By	Approver's Signature	Date
v01	I	MT/HH	AG		26/06/17
File:	S:\PROJECTS\114291\Reports\v01				
v02	E	AWT			
File:	S:\PROJECTS\114291\Reports\v02				
File:					
File:					
File:					

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

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Kirby Bellars Leicestershire

Archaeological Watching Brief

Contents

Summary.....	iii
Acknowledgements.....	iv
1 INTRODUCTION.....	1
1.1 Project background	1
1.2 Site location and topography	1
2 ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND	2
2.1 Introduction	2
2.2 Prehistoric and Romano-British	2
2.3 Early medieval and medieval	2
2.4 Post-medieval and modern	3
3 METHODOLOGY.....	3
3.1 Aims and objectives	3
3.2 Fieldwork methodology	3
3.3 Machine excavation	4
3.4 Hand excavation	4
3.5 Recording.....	4
4 ARCHAEOLOGICAL RESULTS.....	4
4.1 Introduction	4
4.2 General stratigraphy.....	4
4.3 Archaeological features.....	5
5 ARTEFACTUAL EVIDENCE.....	5
5.1 General	5
6 DISCUSSION.....	5
6.1 Conclusions	5
6.2 Recommendations	5
7 STORAGE AND CURATION.....	6
7.1 Museum	6
7.2 Preparation of archive.....	6
7.3 Selection policy	6



7.4	Security copy	6
8	REFERENCES.....	7
8.1	Bibliography	7
9	APPENDICES.....	8
9.1	Appendix 1: Context descriptions.....	8
9.2	Appendix 2: OASIS form.....	10

Figures

Figure 1: Site location and test pit locations showing hedgerow 904 and ditch 1004

Plates

Front Cover: Working shot

Plate 1: Test pit 6 from west showing two layers of natural 603 and 604

Plate 2: Test pit 3 from east showing made ground 302

Plate 3: Hedgerow 904 from east

Plate 4: Test pit 10 from south showing ditch 1004 in deeper part of test pit on left



Kirby Bellars, Leicestershire

Archaeological Watching Brief

Summary

Wessex Archaeology has been commissioned by NMC Nomenca PLC on behalf of Severn Trent Water to undertake an archaeological watching brief during ground investigation works ahead of the installation of a new pipeline at Kirby Bellars, Leicestershire (NGR 471928 317958 to 471709 317456). The work comprised the excavation of eight test pits, positioned in the location of proposed drill pits.

The purpose of the watching brief was to establish the presence or absence of archaeological remains within the trial pit locations, and to obtain evidence on the depth of the topsoil along the route of the scheme in order to assess the suitability of the design for the scheme. The aims of the watching brief have been met.

Two archaeological features were identified, one of which correlates with a former field boundary seen on Ordnance Survey maps (eg on the 1903 map). The other feature likely represents a former hedgerow, and, although strictly not dated, a post-medieval date is also likely for this feature. The archaeological features and artefacts identified during the watching brief were of low significance.

The depth of the topsoil and overburden was shown to be generally between 0.4 m and 0.7 m, although in the case of test pit 3, where the ground level had been made up with imported material, the depth of overburden was 1.1 m.

It is recommended that any drilling undertaken should be carried out at a minimum depth of 2 m below ground level. A method statement for the works should be submitted to Historic England for approval and any other interventions that cause any ground disturbance should be monitored by a suitably experienced archaeologist.

The site archive is currently held at the offices of Wessex Archaeology in Sheffield, under the project code 114291 and will be deposited with Leicestershire County Museum under accession number X.A22.2017 in due course. An OASIS form, ID number wessexar1-278215 has been provisionally completed and will be finalised at the time of deposition.



Kirby Bellars, Leicestershire

Archaeological Watching Brief

Acknowledgements

The fieldwork was commissioned by NMC Nomenca PLC on behalf of Severn Trent Water, and Wessex Archaeology is grateful to Joe Murphy in this regard. The project was managed for Wessex Archaeology by Alexandra Grassam. Fieldwork was undertaken by Martina Tenzer and Hannah Holbrook between 28th February and 28th March 2017. This report was written by Ashley Tuck, Martina Tenzer and Hannah Holbrook. Figures and plates were prepared by Nancy Dixon.



Kirby Bellars Leicestershire

Archaeological Watching Brief

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Project background

- 1.1.1 Wessex Archaeology was commissioned by NMC Nomenca PLC on behalf of Severn Trent Water (hereafter 'the Client') to undertake an archaeological watching brief during ground investigation works ahead of the installation of a new pipeline at Kirby Bellars, Leicestershire (hereafter 'the Scheme') between National Grid Reference (NGR) 471928 317958 in the north and NGR 471709 317456 in the south (Figure 1).
- 1.1.2 A desk-based assessment (DBA) had been previously prepared by Wessex Archaeology (2016) which established the presence of archaeological remains in the area of the Scheme. Two separate areas forming part of a Scheduled Monument are situated in close proximity to the Scheme and a further Scheduled areas exist in the wider landscape. The current works did not directly impact on any Scheduled Monument.
- 1.1.3 A Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI, Wessex Archaeology 2017) was prepared detailing the design of the archaeological work and was submitted to Richard Clark, Leicestershire County Archaeological Officer, prior to the commencement of fieldwork.
- 1.1.4 The results of this work were intended to inform the design of a scheme of direct drilling to install a pipeline and to ensure that the pipeline had a minimal impact on the archaeological resource. The trial pits were situated in locations proposed for direct drilling launch pits.
- 1.1.5 The work was undertaken in two phases. The first phase comprised the excavation of five trial pits along the proposed Scheme, which ran to the west of the Scheduled Monument. Access issues required the diversion of the Scheme to the east, between two Scheduled areas. After consultation with Historic England, a second phase of trial pits were excavated along the revised route.

1.2 Site location and topography

- 1.2.1 The Scheme was located to the south-east of Kirby Bellars, Leicestershire. The initial proposed scheme ran parallel to and east of Main Street. The Scheme was approximately 560 m in length and started just south of the Midland Main Line railway, running in a general north-east to south-west direction before ending on A607/Leicester Road. The revised Scheme ran for approximately 650m and included an extension to the east of the initial Scheme, passing between two Scheduled areas (Figure 1).
- 1.2.2 The Scheme ran through six field of pasture between 70 m and 84 m above Ordnance Datum (aOD).



- 1.2.3 The underlying geology of the Scheme is mapped as Lias formation comprising of Mudstone, with Oadby Member superficial deposits (British Geological Survey 2017).

2 ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND

2.1 Introduction

- 2.1.1 The following information is a summary of the information provided in the DBA (Wessex Archaeology 2016) and WSI (Wessex Archaeology 2017).

2.2 Prehistoric and Romano-British

- 2.2.1 There is little evidence of prehistoric activity within close vicinity of the Scheme and within surrounding area of Leicestershire. Evidence primarily comprises unstratified artefacts, exemplified by the recovery of a Neolithic polished stone axe approximately 530 m south-west of the Scheme.
- 2.2.2 Evidence for occupation in the Late Neolithic and Early Bronze Age in Leicestershire is greater than that for the Early Neolithic, with 25 occupation areas suggested from lithic scatters while ceremonial areas have been identified from cropmarks visible on aerial photographs including at least 250 ring-ditches.
- 2.2.3 There is evidence for occupation in the Kirby Bellars area during the Iron Age and Romano-British period, including within close proximity of the Scheme as shown by the discovery of Romano-British pottery. A potential Iron Age/Romano-British settlement site approximately 190 m south of the Scheme was evidenced by the discovery of around 700 objects, primarily of Roman date. A Roman road, Le Strete, is located approximately 100 m south of the Scheme.

2.3 Early medieval and medieval

- 2.3.1 Kirby Bellars is recorded in the Domesday Book as *Chirchebi*, which means 'village with a church' in Scandinavian, although it has been suggested the settlement may have been established during the Saxon period.
- 2.3.2 There is evidence for Saxon activity within close proximity of the proposed Scheme with a Saxon bead located just west of the middle section of Scheme. There is also the Saxon remains of St. Peter's Church approximately 370 m north-west of the Scheme, and a Saxon cemetery approximately 500 m east of the middle section of the Scheme.
- 2.3.3 There is considerable medieval activity within close proximity of the Scheme with the most notable being the Scheduled Monument Garden, moat and five fishponds at Kirby Bellars located just east of the middle section of the Scheme (NHLE 1010304). Dating from at least from the 14th century they are described as a medieval moat and fishponds which were later incorporated into a 17th century formal garden which was created for Erasmus de la Fontaine when he constructed Park Farm mansion in 1620s/1630s.
- 2.3.4 The majority of the Scheme is located within the historic settlement core of Kirby Bellars, which features a number of medieval features such as the medieval village earthworks and the medieval/post-medieval fishponds approximately 50 m east of the middle section of the Scheme.



2.4 Post-medieval and modern

2.4.1 The historic settlement core of Kirby Bellars includes designated post-medieval heritage assets such as the Grade I Listed Building church of St. Peter and Grade II Listed Buildings such as the Pigeoncote.

2.4.2 The Melton Mowbray Navigation located approximately 80 m north of the Scheme was constructed in 1797 and ran from a basin in Melton to the Leicester Navigation at Syston. The Syston to Peterborough branch of the Midland Railway passes approximately 10 m north of the Scheme.

3 METHODOLOGY

3.1 Aims and objectives

3.1.1 With due regard to ClfA guidelines (ClfA 2014b), the principle aim of an archaeological watching brief was to record the archaeological resource during development within a specified area using appropriate methods and practices.

3.1.2 In furtherance of the principle aim, the following objectives were defined:

- *to allow, within the resources available, the preservation by record of archaeological deposits, the presence and nature of which could not be established (or established with sufficient accuracy) in advance of development or other potentially disruptive works; including:*
 - *to ensure their preservation by record to the highest possible standard;*
 - *to confirm the approximate date or date range of the remains, by means of artefactual or other evidence;*
 - *to determine or confirm the approximate extent of any remains;*
 - *to determine the condition and state of preservation of the remains; and*
 - *to determine the degree of complexity of the horizontal and/or vertical stratigraphy present.*
- *to provide an opportunity, if needed, for the watching archaeologist to signal to all interested parties, before the destruction of the material in question, that an archaeological find has been made for which the resources allocated to the watching brief itself are not sufficient to support treatment to a satisfactory and proper standard; and*
- *to prepare a report on the results of the watching brief, which will include an assessment on the current scheme design and any recommendations for further mitigation where appropriate.*

3.1.3 The specific aims of the archaeological watching brief were:

- *to establish the presence or absence of archaeological remains within the trial pit locations;*
- *to determine the potential depth of topsoil and subsoil along the Scheme; and*
- *to obtain information to assess the suitability of the design for the Scheme.*

3.2 Fieldwork methodology

3.2.1 Detailed methodology for the work can be found in the Written Scheme of Investigation (Wessex Archaeology 2017). Wessex Archaeology procedures conform to industry best practice, as outlined in the Standards and Guidance documentation issued by the



Chartered Institute for Archaeologists (CIfA 2014a-c). The methodology conforms to the requirements of the National Planning Policy Framework.

3.2.2 During phase one of the watching brief, five test pits were excavated (test pits 3-7) measuring 3 m x 3 m. An additional three test pits (test pits 8-10) were excavated during phase two. The phase two test pits were slightly larger: 4 m x 3 m.

3.3 Machine excavation

3.3.1 Topsoil was removed using a mechanical excavator fitted with a toothless ditching bucket, working under the continuous direct supervision of an appropriately experienced archaeologist. Topsoil and overburden were removed in a series of level spits down to the level of the natural geology or archaeology, whichever was reached first.

3.4 Hand excavation

3.4.1 Hand excavation of potentially archaeological features was undertaken as appropriate to meet the project aims.

3.5 Recording

3.5.1 All deposits were recorded using Wessex Archaeology's *pro forma* recording sheets and a continuous unique numbering system.

3.5.2 A photographic record was maintained consisting of digital images.

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.

4.2 General stratigraphy

4.2.1 The undisturbed natural geological substrate was located in all eight test pits. Grey clay with occasional unworked flint (403, 604, 703, 903, 1003) comprised the lowest natural deposit seen. An upper layer of natural comprising yellowish brown silty loam natural (303, 503, 603, 803) was seen to overlie the grey clay in test pit 6 (Plate 1).

4.2.2 A layer of dark brown silt sand made ground with brick, concrete and plastic inclusions (302, Plate 2) was present in test pit 3, which was unusually deep as a consequence (the natural was seen from 1.1 m below ground level in test pit 3).

4.2.3 Relict ploughsoil subsoil (eg 402) was present in all test pits except for test pit 3, and comprised yellow, brown or grey material with a variety of textures. Topsoil (eg 401) was present in every test pit and was composed of mid grey brown silt sand with unworked flint or close variations.

4.2.4 The depth of soils and overburden seen in each test pit is given in Table 1 below.

Table 1: Depth of soils and overburden

Test Pit	Depth of soils and overburden (m)
3	1.1
4	0.55
5	0.55



6	0.65
7	0.4
8	0.7
9	0.5
10	0.7

4.3 Archaeological features

- 4.3.1 A shallow (0.2 m deep) ephemeral curvilinear feature (904, Plate 3) was present in test pit 9. Feature 904 is thought to represent a former hedgerow. This hedgerow does not appear on any consulted historic maps and produced no dating material.
- 4.3.2 An east-west aligned ditch (1004, Plate 4) was present in test pit 10 and was 1 m wide and filled with mid brown grey silt clay (1005). Ditch 1004 was not excavated and the test pit was moved 0.5 m south in order to avoid the feature. Ditch 1004 correlates with a former post medieval field boundary seen on, for example, the 1903 Ordnance Survey map.

5 ARTEFACTUAL EVIDENCE

5.1 General

- 5.1.1 A very small quantity of finds was recovered during the watching brief. These comprised one sherd of pottery from topsoil in test pit 8 (post-medieval black-glazed redware), and three pieces of animal bone (sheep tibia from topsoil in test pit 8, cattle humerus from subsoil in test pit 10).

6 DISCUSSION

6.1 Conclusions

- 6.1.1 The aims of the watching brief have been met.
- 6.1.2 Two archaeological features were identified, one of which correlates with a former field boundary seen on Ordnance Survey maps (eg on the 1903 map). The other feature likely represents to a former hedgerow, and, although strictly not dated, a post-medieval date is also likely for this feature. The archaeological features and artefacts identified during the watching brief were of low significance.
- 6.1.3 The depth of the topsoil and overburden was shown to be generally between 0.4 m and 0.7 m, although in the case of test pit 3, where the ground level had been made up with imported material, the depth of overburden was 1.1 m.

6.2 Recommendations

- 6.2.1 The depth of natural geology across the planned scheme ranged from 1.10 m below ground level (test pit 7) to 0.40 m below ground level (test pit 3). Due to the identification of archaeological features in the monitored area it is likely that shallow drilling could have an impact on as-yet-unidentified buried archaeology. Consequently, it is recommended that any drilling undertaken should be carried out at a minimum depth of 2 m below ground level. A method statement for the works should be submitted to Historic England for approval and any other interventions that cause any ground disturbance should be monitored by a suitably experienced archaeologist.



7 STORAGE AND CURATION

7.1 Museum

- 7.1.1 The designated receiving museum will be Leicestershire County Museum. The Curator of Archaeology has been contacted in advance of the fieldwork for an accession number/Site code and to obtain information regarding the appropriate archive preparation standards.
- 7.1.2 It is recommended that the project archive resulting from the excavation be deposited with Leicestershire County Museum. The Museum has agreed in principle to accept the project archive on completion of the project, under accession code X.A22.2017.

7.2 Preparation of archive

- 7.2.1 The complete site archive, which will include paper records, photographic records, graphics and digital data will be prepared following the standard conditions for the acceptance of excavated archaeological material by Leicester County Museum, and in general following nationally recommended guidelines (SMA 1995; ClfA 2014c; Brown 2011; ADS 2013).
- 7.2.2 Until final deposition with the museum the archive will be stored at the offices of Wessex Archaeology Northern Region in Sheffield.

7.3 Selection policy

- 7.3.1 Wessex Archaeology follows the guidelines set out in *Selection, Retention and Dispersal of Archaeological Collections* (SMA 1993), which allows for the discard of selected artefact and ecofact categories which are not considered to warrant any future analysis. In this instance, given the very small quantities of material involved, and the very low potential for further research, retention of the assemblage for long-term curation is not recommended.

7.4 Security copy

- 7.4.1 In line with current best practice (eg, Brown 2011), 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.



8 REFERENCES

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- Wessex Archaeology 2017, *Kirby Bellars Leicestershire: written scheme of investigation for archaeological watching brief*. Unpublished client report 114291.01



9 APPENDICES

9.1 Appendix 1: Context descriptions

Test Pit No. 3		Length: 3.0 m Width: 3.0 m Max. Depth: 1.20 m
Context	Description	Depth (m)
301	Topsoil, grass, dark brown silty sand	0 – 0.50
302	Made ground, landfill, dark brown silty sand with abundant fragments of brick, mortar and concrete, modern plastic rubbish.	0.50 – 1.10
303	Natural, yellowish brown silty loam, water table	1.10 +

Test Pit No. 4		Length: 3.0 m Width: 3.0 m Max. Depth: 0.60 m
Context	Description	Depth (m)
401	Topsoil, grass of paddock, mid greyish brown silty sand, occasional unworked flint	0 – 0.15
402	Subsoil, mixed mid greyish brown sandy clay	0.15 – 0.55
403	Natural, grey clay, occasional unworked flint	0.55 +

Test Pit No. 5		Length: 3.0 m Width: 3.0 m Max. Depth: 0.55 m
Context	Description	Depth (m)
501	Topsoil, grass of paddock, mid greyish brown silty sand, occasional unworked flint	0 – 0.25
502	Subsoil, mid yellowish brown sandy silty loam	0.25 – 0.55
503	Natural, light yellowish silty loam, occasional unworked flint	0.55 +

Test Pit No. 6		Length: 3.0 m Width: 3.0 m Max. Depth: 1.00 m
Context	Description	Depth (m)
601	Topsoil, grass of paddock, mid greyish brown silty sand, occasional unworked flint	0 – 0.30
602	Subsoil, mid greyish brown sandy clay, occasional small stone inclusions	0.30 – 0.65
603	Natural, light yellowish silty loam	0.65 – 0.80
604	Natural, grey clay	0.80 – 1.20

Test Pit No. 7		Length: 3.0 m Width: 3.0 m Max. Depth: 0.50 m
Context	Description	Depth (m)
701	Topsoil, grass, mid brown silty sand	0 – 0.10
702	Subsoil, yellowish brown silty sand, occasional unworked flint	0.10 – 0.40
703	Natural, grey clay	0.40 +



Test Pit No. 8		Length: 4.0 m Width: 3.0 m Max. Depth: 0.7 m
Context	Description	Depth (m)
801	Topsoil, under turf, mid grey brown coarse silt clay	0 – 0.35
802	Subsoil, light grey brown coarse silt clay	0.35 – 0.7
803	Natural, yellow clay	0.7 +

Test Pit No. 9		Length: 4.0 m Width: 3.0 m Max. Depth: 0.60 m
Context	Description	Depth (m)
901	Topsoil under turf, mid brown coarse silt clay	0 – 0.2
902	Subsoil, grey brown coarse silt sand	0.2 – 0.5
903	Natural, grey clay	0.50 +
904	Hedge line deposits	0.5 – 0.7

Test Pit No. 10		Length: 3.0 m Width: 3.0 m Max. Depth: 0.50 m
Context	Description	Depth (m)
1001	Topsoil, under turf, black brown silt clay	0 – 0.3
1002	Subsoil, yellowish brown silty sand, occasional unworked flint	0.3 – 0.7
1003	Natural, grey clay	0.7 +
1004	Cut of E-W ditch	0.7 +
1005	Fill of ditch, light grey brown	0.7 +



9.2 Appendix 2: OASIS form

OASIS ID: wessexar1-278215

Project details

Project name	Kirby Bellars, Leicestershire
Short description of the project	Wessex Archaeology has been commissioned by NMC Nomenca PLC on behalf of Severn Trent Water to undertake an archaeological watching brief during ground investigation works ahead of the installation of a new pipeline at Kirby Bellars, Leicestershire (NGR 471928 317958 to 471709 317456). The aims of the watching brief have been met. Two archaeological features were identified, one of which correlates with a former field boundary seen on Ordnance Survey maps (eg on the 1903 map). The other feature likely represents a former hedgerow, and, although strictly not dated, a post-medieval date is also likely for this feature. The archaeological features and artefacts identified during the watching brief were of low significance. The depth of the topsoil and overburden was shown to be generally between 0.4 m and 0.7 m, although in the case of test pit 3, where the ground level had been made up with imported material, the depth of overburden was 1.1 m. It is recommended that any drilling undertaken should be carried out at a minimum depth of 2 m below ground level. A method statement for the works should be submitted to Historic England for approval and any other interventions that cause any ground disturbance should be monitored by a suitably experienced archaeologist.
Project dates	Start: 28-02-2017 End: 01-03-2017
Previous/future work	No / No
Any associated project reference codes	114291 - Contracting Unit No.
Any associated project reference codes	X.A22.2017 - Museum accession ID
Type of project	Recording project
Site status	None
Current Land use	Grassland Heathland 5 - Character undetermined
Monument type	NONE None
Significant Finds	NONE None
Investigation type	"Watching Brief"
Prompt	Water Act 1989 and subsequent code of practice

Project location

Country	England
Site location	LEICESTERSHIRE MELTON KIRBY BELLARS Kirby Bellars
Postcode	LE14 2DT
Study area	0 Kilometres
Site coordinates	SK 71709 17456 52.749619010453 -0.937493698495 52 44 58 N 000 56 14 W Point



Lat/Long Datum WGS 84 Datum
Height OD / Depth Min: 70m Max: 84m

Project creators

Name of Organisation Wessex Archaeology
Project brief originator Wessex Archaeology
Project design originator Wessex archaeology
Project director/manager Alexandra Grassam
Project supervisor Martina Tenzer
Type of sponsor/funding body Water Authority/Company
Name of sponsor/funding body NMC Nomenca

Project archives

Physical Archive Exists? No
Digital Archive recipient Leicestershire County Council Museums Service
Digital Media available "Images raster / digital photography"
Paper Archive recipient Leicestershire County Council Museums Service
Paper Media available "Context sheet", "Correspondence", "Diary", "Photograph", "Report"

Project bibliography 1

Publication type Grey literature (unpublished document/manuscript)
Title Kirby Bellars, Leicestershire: Archaeological Watching Brief
Author(s)/Editor(s) Tuck, A.
Author(s)/Editor(s) Tenzer, M.
Author(s)/Editor(s) Holbrook, H.
Other bibliographic details 114291.01
Date 2017
Issuer or publisher Wessex Archaeology
Place of issue or Sheffield

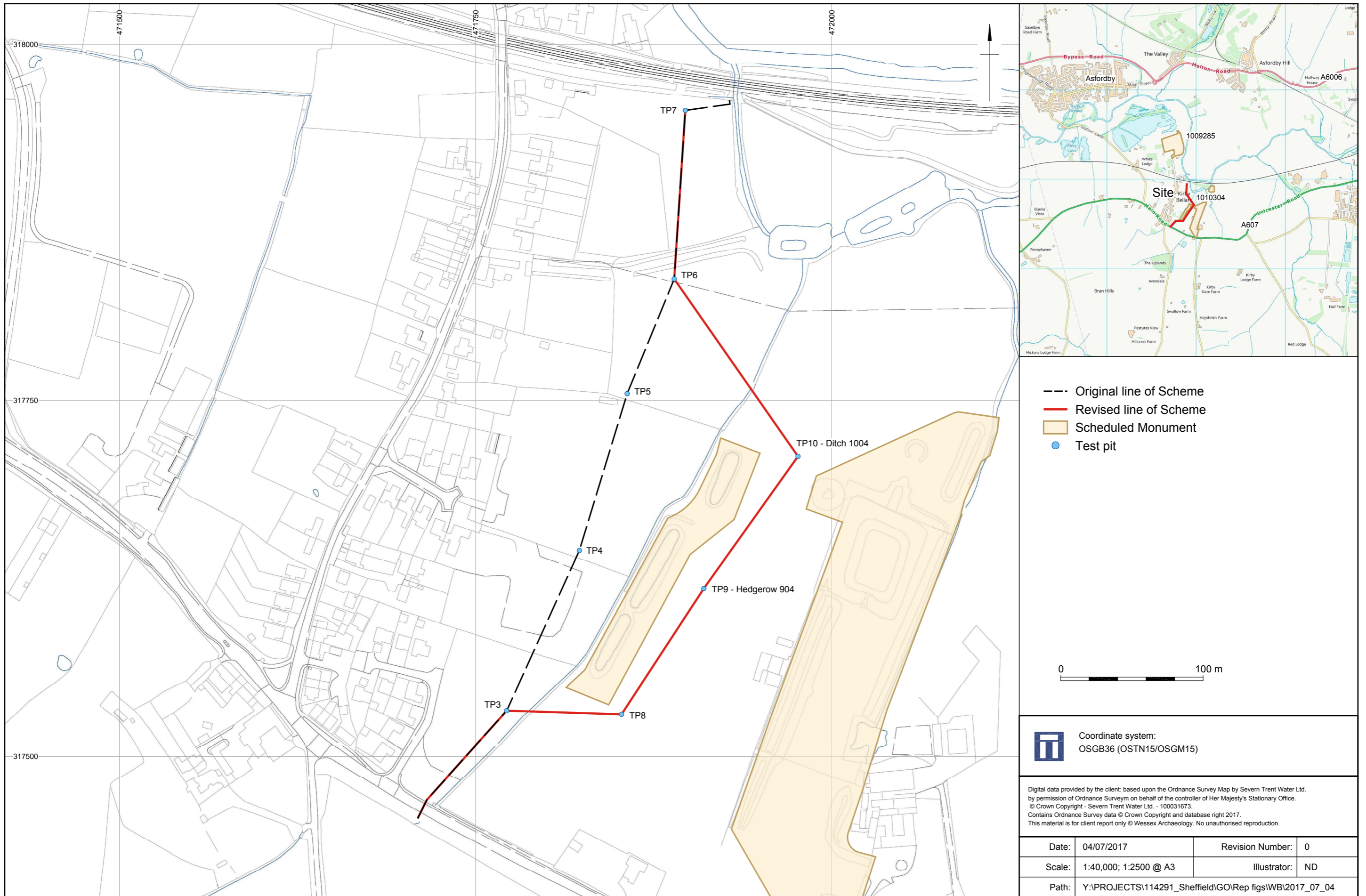


publication

Description A4 comb bound laser printed report

Entered by Ashley Tuck (a.tuck@wessexarch.co.uk)

Entered on 29 June 2017



Site location and test pit locations showing hedgerow 904 and ditch 1004

Figure 1



Plate 1: Test pit 6 from west showing two layers of natural 603 and 604



Plate 2: Test pit 3 from east showing made ground 302



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Plate 3: Hedgerow 904 from east



Plate 4: Test pit 10 from south showing ditch 1004 in deeper part of test pit on left

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