



# Fremington Pill Surface Water Outfall, Fremington, Devon

Archaeological Watching Brief



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## Document Information

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Document subtitle Archaeological Watching Brief  
Document reference 209341.2


Client name Barratt David Wilson Homes  
Address Vanguard House  
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Matford Business Park  
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Site location Fremington, Nr. Barnstaple  
County Devon  
National grid reference (NGR) 251480 132900

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**Plate 4** South-east facing view of deposits exposed in section within footprint of working platform / embankment (scale: 1 x 1 m)



## Summary

Wessex Archaeology was commissioned by Barratt David Wilson Homes to undertake an archaeological watching brief during the construction of a new surface water outfall pipe to discharge surface water into the Fremington Pill, Fremington, Nr. Barnstaple, Devon, centred on NGR 251480 132900.

The watching brief was carried out as a condition of a Marine License (no. L/2018/00385/1) granted in respect of the aforementioned works by the Marine Management Organisation (MMO) on 27 September 2018, following an application made under reference MLA/2017/00515. The work entailed the monitoring of mechanical excavations within the foreshore area for the construction of the new outflow channel, and the footprint of the headwall and inspection chamber at the interface with the landward connection.

No archaeologically significant artefactual material, features or deposits were encountered during the watching brief, with only a sequence of soils and natural deposits observed to overlie the bedrock geology. The very thin covering of alluvium above the bedrock geology, and the high potential for erosion and re-working of deposits along the foreshore may have diminished the likelihood that any such remains, if once present, would have survived within the monitored area. It cannot be extrapolated, however, that there is no potential for archaeological remains to be present elsewhere along the foreshore on the basis of the watching brief results, due to modest scale of the excavations required to construct the new outfall.

## Acknowledgements

Wessex Archaeology would like to thank Barratt David Wilson Homes for commissioning the archaeological watching brief, in particular Alun Potter. Wessex Archaeology is also grateful for the advice of Stephen Reed, Senior Historic Environment Officer at Devon County Council, and to Kathryn Simpson of Barratt David Wilson Homes for their cooperation and help on site.

The fieldwork was directed by Simon Flaherty. This report was written by Tom Wells and reviewed by Simon Woodiwiss. The project was managed by Simon Woodiwiss on behalf of Wessex Archaeology.



# Fremington Pill Surface Water Outfall Fremington, Devon

## Archaeological Watching Brief

### 1 INTRODUCTION

#### 1.1 Project background

- 1.1.1 Wessex Archaeology was commissioned by Barratt David Wilson Homes (the client) to undertake an archaeological watching brief during the construction of a new surface water outfall pipe to discharge surface water into the Fremington Pill, Fremington, Nr. Barnstaple, Devon, centred on NGR 251480 132900 (**Fig. 1**).
- 1.1.2 The watching brief was carried out as a condition of the Marine License (no. L/2018/00385/1) granted in respect of the aforementioned works by the Marine Management Organisation (MMO) on 27 September 2018, following an application made under reference MLA/2017/00515.
- 1.1.3 The requirement for the new surface water outfall was instigated by the re-development of the adjacent Fremington Army Camp to provide 277 dwellings with associated infrastructure works. The re-development was granted planning approval on appeal on 2 July 2013 (ref. 53147), submitted to North Devon District Council on 16 January 2013, (application originally submitted 23 November 2011). Specifically, the new 300 mm diameter flapped surface water outfall was required to be constructed below MHWS, in order to allow surface water to discharge to the Fremington Pill from the eastern catchment of 146 dwellings forming part of the re-development site.
- 1.1.4 The watching brief was preceded by a desk-based assessment (DBA), prepared on behalf of CgMS Consulting by Wessex Archaeology (2018a) with regard to the new surface water outfall, and followed a programme of archaeological works associated with the re-development of the adjacent Fremington Army Camp (Avon Archaeological Unit 2011; AC Archaeology 2014).
- 1.1.5 The watching brief was undertaken in accordance with a scheme-specific Method Statement (Wessex Archaeology 2018b), and in general following the relevant sections of the Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI; AC Archaeology 2013) prepared with regard to the Fremington Army Camp re-development, as detailed under condition of the Marine Licence.
- 1.1.6 Stephen Reed, Senior Historic Environment Officer at Devon County Council, was informed of the proposal for the watching brief prior to the start of the fieldwork. The watching brief was undertaken between 9–12 October 2018.

#### 1.2 Scope of the report

- 1.2.1 The purpose of this report is to describe the results of the watching brief and to interpret them within their local or regional context (or otherwise), thereby making available information about the archaeological resource (a preservation by record).



### **1.3 Location, topography and geology**

- 1.3.1 The watching brief was located on the south-western bank of the Fremington Pill, approximately 350 m upstream from the confluence with the River Taw, to the north-east of the village of Fremington.
- 1.3.2 The monitored works extended from the foreshore at the edge of the estuary, moving inland to the west to cross a trackway with a raised embankment and narrow belt of trees running along its western side.
- 1.3.3 Existing ground levels gradually increased from 0.7 m above Ordnance Datum (aOD) at the extreme eastern edge of the monitored works, to approximately 3.5 m aOD along the line of the trackway. Ground levels abruptly increased in height to c.7.5 m aOD along the top of the embankment. Further to landward, beyond the area monitored during the watching brief, the land continued to slope gently upwards.
- 1.3.4 The underlying bedrock geology is mapped as Carboniferous mudstone and siltstone of the Crackington Formation, overlain by Holocene alluvium to the east, and head deposits to the west (British Geological Survey 2018).

## **2 ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND HISTORICAL BACKGROUND**

### **2.1 Introduction**

- 2.1.1 The following provides a summary of the archaeological and historical background to the watching brief area and its environs, based on the results of the preceding DBA (Wessex Archaeology 2018b).

### **2.2 Previous investigations related to the development**

#### *2013 Fremington Army Camp evaluation*

- 2.2.1 In 2013, an archaeological trial trench evaluation was carried out on land at the former Fremington Army Camp, to the south-west of the watching brief area, in advance of the then proposed re-development of the site. The evaluation comprised the mechanical excavation of 28 trenches, totalling c.500 m in length and positioned to provide a representative sample of the development area. The accompanying report on the results of the evaluation stated that:

*'Only four of the trenches contained archaeological features... and these consisted of boundary ditches and banks, as well as isolated pits and postholes all dating to the post-medieval and modern periods. The development of the Army Camp appears to have had a significant effect on the landscape with areas of truncation and as well as (sic) the deposition of made-ground horizons'* (AC Archaeology 2014, 1)

### **2.3 Archaeological and historical context**

#### *Prehistoric and Romano-British*

- 2.3.1 The DBA identified that there is currently little recorded evidence of prehistoric or Romano-British activity in the vicinity of the watching brief area.

#### *Saxon and Medieval*

- 2.3.2 By the medieval period, Fremington had become established as a small port on the River Taw with a modest pottery industry. During the 14th century, Fremington briefly obtained Borough status under the reign of Edward III.





2.3.3 Although there is currently no direct archaeological evidence to support the hypothesis, documentary references suggest that the settlement, and possibly also the port of Fremington had late Saxon origins; the name *Framintone* was mentioned in the south-western Geld Accounts in 1084 (Avon Archaeological Unit Limited 2011), and *Framintona* appeared in the Domesday survey of 1086.

2.3.4 The current Fremington Manor was built in the 19th century but, is thought to occupy the site of the previous manor house originating in the 13th century. It has been speculated that a pre-conquest manor may have stood at Fremington Pill as this would have presented a convenient location for access to the Taw Estuary (Avon Archaeological Unit 2011).

#### *Post-medieval to modern*

2.3.5 The situation at Fremington seems to have changed little throughout much of the post-medieval period in terms of population, and the majority of the village's surviving historical structures can be attributed to this period.

2.3.6 The most extensive changes to the village came during World War II, when the Army Camp was established to the north of the village. This location was chosen to take advantage of the proximity to the railway line (opened in 1845), and possibly also the Chivenor Airfield on the northern side of the estuary. Opened in 1942, its purpose was to serve as a United States Military Hospital for post D-Day rehabilitation. Following the end of the war, the camp continued to be utilised by the British Army but the manor was eventually sold in 1982 and is now an NHS property. The railway line was closed in the 1960s.

### **3 AIMS AND OBJECTIVES**

#### **3.1 Aims**

3.1.1 The aims of the watching brief, as defined in the ClfA's *Standard and guidance for an archaeological watching brief* (ClfA 2014a), were:

- 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 the development or other works;
- 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 guide, not replace, any requirement for contingent excavation or preservation of possible deposits.

#### **3.2 Objectives**

3.2.1 In order to achieve the above aims, the objectives of the watching brief were:

- To determine the presence or absence of archaeological features, deposits, structures, artefacts or ecofacts within the specified works area;



- To record and establish, within the constraints of the works, the extent, character, date, condition and quality of any surviving archaeological remains (a preservation by record);
- To place any identified archaeological remains within a wider historical and archaeological context in order to assess their significance; and
- To make available information about the archaeological resource on the site by preparing a report on the results of the watching brief.

## **4 METHODS**

### **4.1 Introduction**

4.1.1 All works were undertaken in accordance with the methodologies set out within the Method Statement (Wessex Archaeology 2018b), and in general compliance with the standards outlined in ClfA guidance (ClfA 2014a) and the relevant sections of the WSI (AC Archaeology 2013; in particular the recording methodologies relating to excavation, recording, finds and sampling methodologies: para. 3.3.1 to 3.3.5). The methods employed are summarised below.

### **4.2 Fieldwork methods**

4.2.1 The watching brief entailed the monitoring of mechanical excavations within the foreshore area for the construction of the new outflow channel (PI.1-2), measuring approximately 7.1 m in length and up to 4.9 m in width, and the footprint of the headwall and inspection chamber (PI. 3) at the interface between the landward connection and the outfall channel into the Fremington Pill, coinciding with the extant trackway, as indicated on Figure 1. The watching brief did not extend to cover groundworks further inland.

4.2.2 The watching archaeologist monitored all mechanical excavations within the specified area on the foreshore. Spoil derived from both machine stripping and hand-excavation was visually scanned for the purposes of finds retrieval.

4.2.3 The opportunity was also taken to record deposits exposed with the footprint of the access ramp and working platform for the use of personnel and a 360° excavator, which were reduced in level by mechanical excavation immediately prior to the start of the fieldwork (PI. 4). The working platform area measured approximately 9 m x 7.5 m, and the access ramp some 5.4 m x 4 m.

4.2.4 All exposed deposits were recorded using Wessex Archaeology's *pro forma* recording system, as stipulated in the Method Statement. In the event, as no archaeologically significant features or deposits were encountered during the watching brief, no digital survey data was collected.

4.2.5 A photographic record was made using digital cameras equipped with an image sensor of not less than 10 megapixels. Digital images have been subject to managed quality control and curation processes, which has embedded appropriate metadata within the image and will ensure long term accessibility of the image set.

### **4.3 Artefactual and environmental strategies**

4.3.1 Appropriate strategies for the recovery, processing and assessment of artefacts and environmental samples were in line with those detailed in the Method Statement and the WSI (Wessex Archaeology 2018b; AC Archaeology 2013). The treatment of artefacts and



environmental remains was in general accordance with: *Guidance for the collection, documentation, conservation and research of archaeological materials* (ClfA 2014b) and *Environmental Archaeology: A Guide to the Theory and Practice of Methods, from Sampling and Recovery to Post-excavation* (English Heritage 2011).

## **5 ARCHAEOLOGICAL RESULTS**

### **5.1 Introduction**

5.1.1 No archaeologically significant artefactual material, features or deposits were encountered during the watching brief, with only an undisturbed sequence of soils and natural deposits observed to overlie the bedrock geology.

### **5.2 Soil sequence and natural deposits**

5.2.1 The uppermost deposit at the foreshore of the Fremington Pill consisted of a mid–dark brown silty clay alluvium, which incorporated occasional shells. The deposit was observed to directly overlie the bedrock geology, and to attain a maximum thickness of 0.3 m within the monitored excavations for the outfall channel. The alluvium gradually thinned out to the west (on the landward side), revealing the surface of the underlying siltstone/mudstone bedrock, which was exposed at existing ground level within the footprint of the trackway. The upper surface of the bedrock geology gradually sloped down towards the channel of the Fremington Pill.

5.2.2 The sequence of deposits differed within areas of ground reduction observed on the landward side, immediately to the west of the trackway and coinciding with the embankment running alongside it. Here, the surface topsoil consisted of a 0.2 m thick dark brown, slightly clayey sandy silt. This overlaid a 1 m thick layer of mid-brown sandy silt subsoil incorporating occasional poorly sorted fragments of stone. The underlying deposit consisted of a 1 m thick yellow brown sandy layer mixed with fragments of broken and degraded bedrock, possibly representing the head deposits mapped in this area. The upper surface of the solid bedrock geology was observed at a depth of 2.4 m below ground level and, was contiguous with the level of the bedrock within the footprint of the trackway, sloping down to the foreshore.

## **6 ARTEFACTUAL EVIDENCE**

### **6.1 Introduction**

6.1.1 No archaeologically significant artefactual material was encountered during the watching brief.

## **7 ENVIRONMENTAL EVIDENCE**

### **7.1 Introduction**

7.1.1 No deposits suitable for environmental sampling were encountered during the watching brief.

## **8 CONCLUSIONS**

### **8.1 Summary**

8.1.1 No archaeologically significant artefactual material, features or deposits were encountered during the watching brief, with only a relatively undisturbed sequence of soils and natural deposits observed to overlie the bedrock geology.



## 8.2 Discussion

- 8.2.1 The results of the watching brief were consistent with expectations outlined in the DBA (Wessex Archaeology 2018a), which had indicated that there was limited potential for the presence of archaeologically significant remains within the working areas on the foreshore for the new surface water outfall. It cannot be extrapolated, however, that there is no potential for archaeological remains to exist elsewhere along the foreshore on the basis of the watching brief results, due to modest scale of the excavations required to construct the new outfall.
- 8.2.2 The absence of thickly accumulated alluvial sequences above the bedrock geology within the footprint of monitored ground works may, in part, be explained as a result of the excavations being restricted to the upper slope at the edge of the foreshore, away from the main channel of the Fremington Pill. Erosion processes and occasional reworking of alluvial material, rather than net accumulation of sediments may also have predominated within this specific part of the highly dynamic estuarine environment. In addition, erosion caused by the construction and use of the trackway along the edge of the foreshore are also likely to account for the absence of overlying deposits above the surface of the bedrock geology within this area.
- 8.2.3 Whether these factors are responsible for the lack of archaeologically significant remains observed in the watching brief area cannot be conclusively determined on the basis of the work undertaken. Nevertheless, the very thin covering of alluvium, and the high potential for erosion and re-working of deposits along the foreshore are likely to have diminished the potential for any such remains to survive within the monitored area.
- 8.2.4 The depositional sequence observed in section within the footprint of the access ramp and working platform immediately to the west of the foreshore was broadly consistent with that recorded within relatively undisturbed areas during trial trenching at the former Fremington Army Camp site in 2013 (AC Archaeology 2014). There were no clear indications that the 'embankment' running parallel to the extant trackway was formed of imported material. Instead, the abrupt reduction in height along the line of the adjacent trackway seems to have been the result of erosion caused by its establishment and use, combined with the stabilisation and gradual accumulation of material on its landward side. There were also no indications of former reinforcement of the shore to prevent erosion.

## 9 ARCHIVE STORAGE AND CURATION

### 9.1 Museum

- 9.1.1 The archive resulting from the watching brief is currently held at the offices of Wessex Archaeology in Salisbury. The North Devon District Museum Service has agreed in principle to accept the archive on completion of the project, under the accession code **nddms 21.2018a**. Deposition of any finds with the museum will only be carried out with the full written agreement of the landowner to transfer title of all finds to the museum.

### 9.2 Preparation of the archive

- 9.2.1 The archive, which includes paper records, graphics, artefacts, ecofacts and digital data, will be prepared following the standard conditions for the acceptance of excavated archaeological material by the North Devon District Museum Service, and in general following nationally recommended guidelines (SMA 1995; ClfA 2014c; Brown 2011; ADS 2013).



9.2.2 All archive elements are marked with the **site/accession code 209341/nddms 21.2018a**, and a full index will be prepared. The physical archive currently comprises the following:

- 1 files/document cases of paper records and A3/A4 graphics.

### 9.3 Selection policy

9.3.1 Wessex Archaeology follows national guidelines on selection and retention (SMA 1993; Brown 2011, section 4), though in this instance, as no artefacts or deposits suitable for environmental sampling were encountered, the archive consists only of paper and digital records, as well as this report.

### 9.4 Security copy

9.4.1 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.

### 9.5 OASIS

9.5.1 An OASIS online record (<http://oasis.ac.uk/pages/wiki/Main>) has been initiated, with key fields and a .pdf version of the final report to be submitted. Subject to any contractual requirements on confidentiality, copies of the OASIS record will be integrated into the relevant local and national records and published through the Archaeology Data Service ArchSearch catalogue.

## 10 COPYRIGHT

### 10.1 Archive and report copyright

10.1.1 The full copyright of the written/illustrative/digital archive relating to the project will be retained by Wessex Archaeology under the *Copyright, Designs and Patents Act 1988* with all rights reserved. The client will be licenced to use each report for the purposes that it was produced in relation to the project as described in the specification. The museum, however, will be granted an exclusive licence for the use of the archive for educational purposes, including academic research, providing that such use conforms to the *Copyright and Related Rights Regulations 2003*. In some instances, certain regional museums may require absolute transfer of copyright, rather than a licence; this should be dealt with on a case-by-case basis.

10.1.2 Information relating to the project will be deposited with the Historic Environment Record (HER) where it can be freely copied without reference to Wessex Archaeology for the purposes of archaeological research or development control within the planning process.

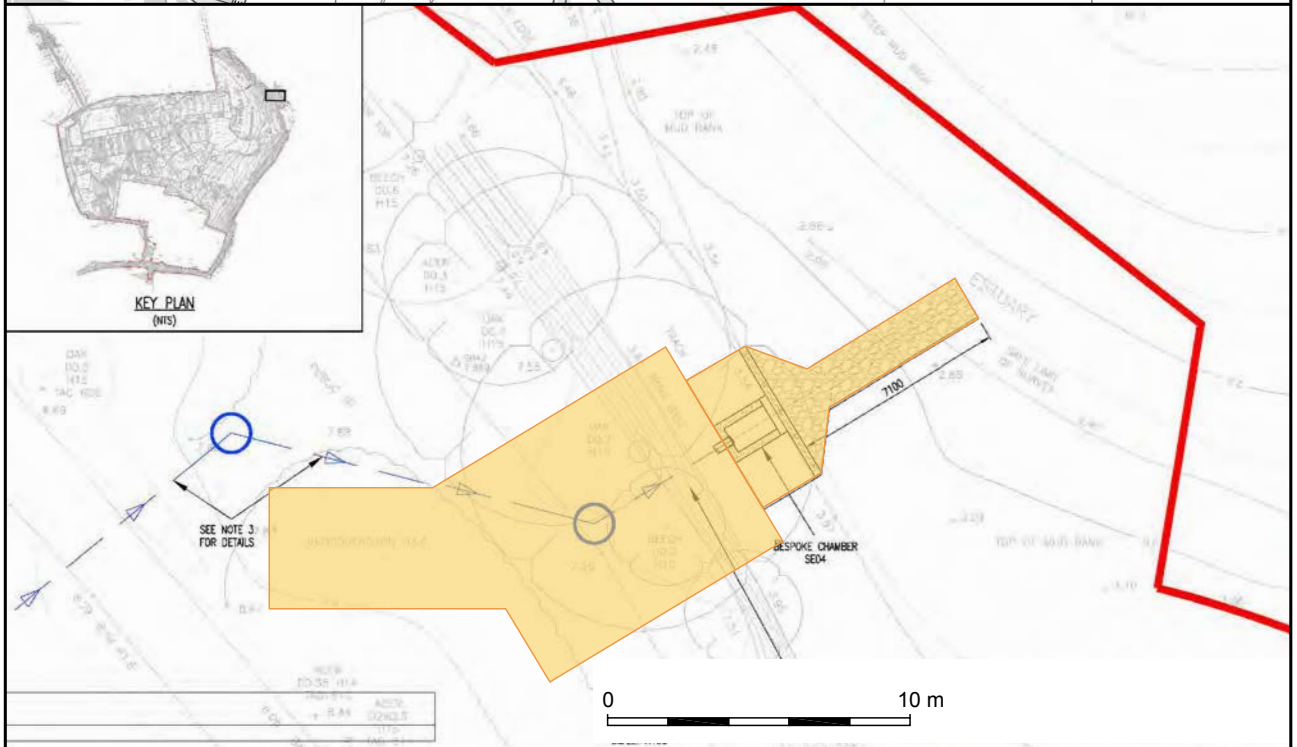
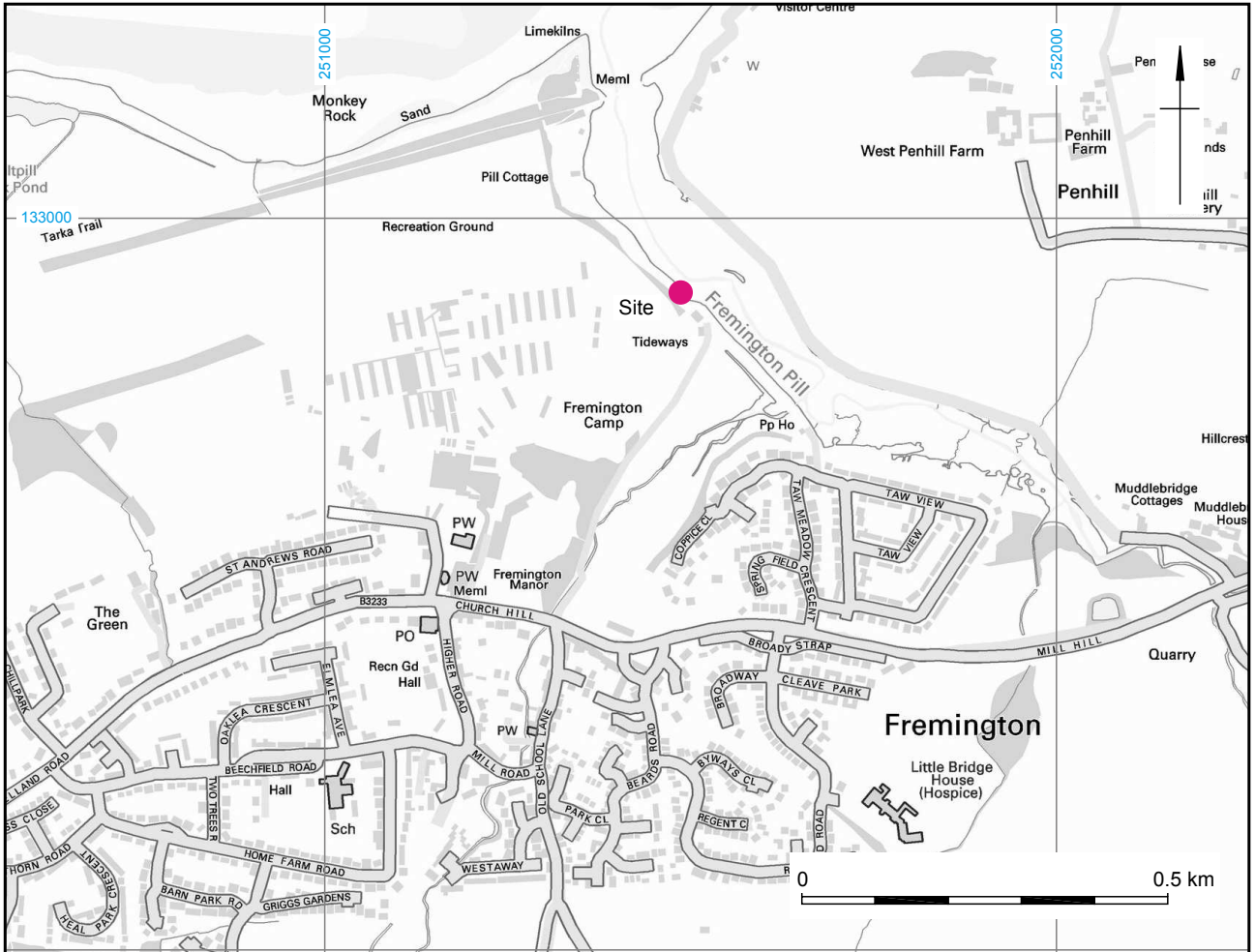
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	Date:	01/11/2018	Revision Number:	0
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Location of watching brief

Figure 1



Plate 1: East facing view of excavation on the foreshore for construction of the new surface water outfall (scale: 1 x 1 m)



Plate 2: South-east facing view of excavation on the foreshore for construction of the new surface water outfall (scale: 1 x 1 m)


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Plate 3: South-east facing view of excavation through bedrock geology / extant trackway within footprint of headwall and inspection chamber



Plate 4: South-east facing view of deposits exposed in section within footprint of working platform / embankment (scale: 1 x 1 m)

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## APPENDICES

### Appendix 1: OASIS Form

#### 10.3 OASIS ID: wessexar1-332505

##### Project details

Project name	Fremington Pill Surface Water Outfall
Short description of the project	Watching brief on new outfall pipe, no significant results
Project dates	Start: 09-10-2018 End: 12-10-2018
Previous/future work	Yes / No
Any associated project reference codes	209341 - Contracting Unit No.
Any associated project reference codes	nddms 21.2018 - Museum accession ID
Type of project	Recording project
Site status	None
Current Land use	Community Service 2 - Leisure and recreational buildings
Monument type	NON ANTIQUITY Uncertain
Significant Finds	NONE None
Investigation type	"Watching Brief"
Prompt	Marine Licence

##### Project location

Country	England
Site location	DEVON NORTH DEVON FREMINGTON Fremington Pill
Postcode	EX31 3AU
Study area	140 Square metres

##### Project creators

Name of Organisation	Wessex Archaeology
Project brief originator	No brief
Project design originator	Wessex Archaeology
Project director/manager	Simon Woodiwiss
Project supervisor	Simon Flaherty
Type of sponsor/funding body	Developer
Name of sponsor/funding body	Barratt David Wilson Homes



Entered by  
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