

**HANWELL FIELDS,
BANBURY, OXFORDSHIRE**

NGR: SP 437 425 & 452 425

ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF

Report No.202
January 2002



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SUMMARY

This document sets out the results of an archaeological watching brief on land at Hanwell Fields, Banbury in August and September 2001 (Figure 1). The project involved the observation of groundworks in two distinct parts of the development. Area 1 consisted of the northwestern part of the western evaluation area (2000), predominantly associated with the excavation of a pond and part of the link road (NGR: SP 437 425). Area 2 involved the stripping of the Link Road from Southam Road to Roundabout 4 and an area of playing field (NGR: SP 452 425) in and around the eastern evaluation area (2001). The work was undertaken in line with the project design prepared by Foundations Archaeology (July 2001) on behalf of Bryant Homes Ltd.

Two previous phases of archaeological evaluation undertaken by Foundations Archaeology revealed limited archaeological features. The initial phase of evaluation (2000) revealed four linear features and a pit in Area 1. These were all undated, although two of the features yielded small fragments of metal-working debris. The second phase of evaluation revealed three undated ditches and three pits in Area 2.

No archaeological features, with the exception of evidence for medieval agriculture in the form of furrow bases and drainage channels, were identified during the course of the watching brief.

GLOSSARY OF ARCHAEOLOGICAL TERMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

Archaeology

For the purpose of this project, archaeology is taken to mean the study of past human societies through their material remains from prehistoric times to the modern era. No rigid upper date limit has been set, but AD 1900 is used as a general cut-off point.

Medieval

The period between the Norman Conquest (AD 1066) and c. AD 1500.

Natural

In archaeological terms this refers to the undisturbed natural geology of a site, in this case the natural is clay and sandstone brash.

NGR

National Grid Reference from the Ordnance Survey Grid.

OD

Ordnance datum; used to express a given height above sea-level.

OS

Ordnance Survey

1 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 This document sets out the results of an archaeological watching brief on two areas of land at Hanwell Fields, Banbury. The project involved the observation of groundworks in two distinct areas of the development. Area 1 consisted of the northwestern part of the western evaluation area (2000), predominantly associated with the excavation of a pond and part of the link road (NGR: SP 437 425). Area 2 involved the stripping of the Link Road from Southam Road to Roundabout 4 and an area of playing field (NGR: SP 452 425) in and around the eastern evaluation area (2001). The evaluation areas are shown in Figure 1. The Watching brief areas are shown on Figures 2 & 3.
- 1.2 The work was undertaken in line with the project design prepared by Foundations Archaeology (July 2001) on behalf of Bryant Homes Ltd and agreed by Oxfordshire County Council.
- 1.3 The evaluation was undertaken in accordance with the *Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Evaluations* issued by the Institute of Field Archaeologists (1994). The code of conduct of the Institute of Field Archaeologists was adhered to throughout.

2 PROJECT BACKGROUND

- 2.1 The study area was disused agricultural land at the time of the watching brief. The majority of the site for the Area 2 Link Road was meadowland and was unlikely to have been utilised for settlement during the medieval or earlier periods.
- 2.2 An area of prehistoric flint has previously been uncovered, approximately 2kms east of the development, near Hardwick Farm. A Romano-British settlement is situated north-west of the site, near Hanwell village.
- 2.3 A previous evaluation to the west of the present site, revealed five archaeological features, comprising four linears and a pit. These were all undated, although two of the linears and the pit contained fragments of iron slag from metal working. Three worked flints were also recovered. A second phase of evaluation undertaken by Foundations Archaeology in July 2001 to the south of the Link Road revealed three undated ditches and three undated pits.
- 2.4 In Area 1 the proposed site of the pond would originally have impacted upon a ditch identified as being of archaeological origin during the first phase of evaluation (2000). The line of the road was also to be monitored. In the event, the groundworks for the road in this area were only excavated to a depth of 150mm from the original surface and the line of the road was subsequently

built-up with gravel and stone hardcore. The pond, which was excavated to a depth which would impact upon archaeology, was relocated approximately 50m to the south.

- 2.5 The route of the Link Road in Area 2 lies partly within a small river valley, with associated alluvial and colluvial clays at the break of slope. The western part of the site is situated on the slopes of the river terrace, with the steep valley side to the west, while part lies on the floodplain of the Hanwell Brook. This area has been meadowland throughout living memory. It was ploughed over two years in 1975 and 1976, but thereafter reverted to meadowland. The meadowland had previously been deeply harrowed in an attempt to break up severe iron panning.
- 2.6 The stripping of the playing field was also undertaken under archaeological supervision at the request of CPM, acting as archaeological advisors for Bryant Homes Ltd.

3 AIMS

- 3.1 The aims of the archaeological watching brief were to gather high quality data from the direct observation of archaeological deposits in order to provide sufficient information to establish the nature, extent, preservation and potential of any surviving archaeological remains; as well as to make recommendations for the management of the resource, including further archaeological works if necessary. In turn this would allow reasonable planning decisions to be taken regarding the archaeological provision for the areas affected by the proposed development.
- 3.2 These aims were achieved through pursuit of the following specific objectives:
- i) to define and identify the nature of archaeological deposits on site and to date these where possible;
 - ii) to attempt to characterise the nature of the archaeological sequence and recover as much information as possible about the spatial patterning of features present on the site;
 - iii) to recover a well dated stratigraphic sequence and recover coherent artefact, ecofact and environmental samples.

4 METHODOLOGY

- 4.1 All groundworks within the watching brief areas were undertaken under archaeological supervision. The areas are illustrated on Figures 2 and 3.

- 4.2 Deposits of topsoil and non-significant overburden were removed to the top of the archaeological deposits or natural, whichever was encountered first. All excavation was undertaken by a mechanical digger using a toothless grading bucket, with the exception of a small area close to the brook which was stripped using a tracked grader. Thereafter all cleaning and excavation was conducted by hand. Spoil tips were scanned for finds.
- 4.3 No suitable contexts for environmental sampling were identified during the course of the watching brief.
- 4.4 All site recording was undertaken in accordance with Foundations Archaeology *Technical Manual 3 (Excavation Manual)*. A written, drawn and photographic record of the watching brief was compiled in accordance with the specification.

5 RESULTS

- 5.1 Area 1 was stripped of topsoil under archaeological observation, but did not penetrate to the depth of the previously identified archaeological deposits, with the exception of the pond. The location of the pond was moved and no further deep excavation was undertaken in the archaeologically significant area. The excavation of the pond in its revised location was undertaken under archaeological supervision, but no features were present within this area.
- 5.2 In Area 2 the Link Road was stripped onto natural clay at an average depth of 0.45m. This was sealed by a clay subsoil averaging 0.1m thick, beneath 0.3-0.4m of topsoil. No archaeological features were present within the line of the Link Road, although three distinct areas of ridge-and-furrow earthworks were identified (Figure 3). The furrows were on differing alignments in each area (east-west, northwest-southeast and north-south) with ridges centred at 8-10m intervals and furrows averaging up to 0.40m deep. The north-south aligned 'furrows' are, however, almost certainly drainage features associated with the water meadows.
- 5.3 The playing field area was stripped under archaeological supervision. No archaeological features were present within this area.

6 CONCLUSION

- 6.1 The results of the archaeological evaluations, the watching brief and the desk-based assessment (CPM 2000) suggested a low-level of archaeological activity across the study area.

- 6.2 No archaeological features were identified during the course of the watching brief, although two distinct areas of ridge-and-furrow earthworks and an area of water meadow drainage were present within the footprint of the Link Road which were probably of medieval origin (Figure 3).
- 6.3 Unstratified finds comprised one undiagnostic bodysherd of 14th-15th century Surrey-Hampshire whiteware, twelve sherds of 17th-19th century red glazed earthenware, two sherds of 18th-19th century black-glazed ware and a single sherd of 19th century Cistercian-type ware. These finds were all recovered from the line of the Link Road and represent a typical background scatter of artefactual material.
- 6.5 The study area appears to have been meadow and arable land during the medieval and post-medieval periods.
- 6.6 Post-medieval/modern activity was restricted to drainage channels.
- 6.7 The evaluation has confirmed the results of the evaluations in that a low-level of spatially restricted archaeological activity is present within the study area. A very low background scatter of unstratified artefactual evidence of prehistoric, medieval and post-medieval origin is also present across the area.

7 **BIBLIOGRAPHY**

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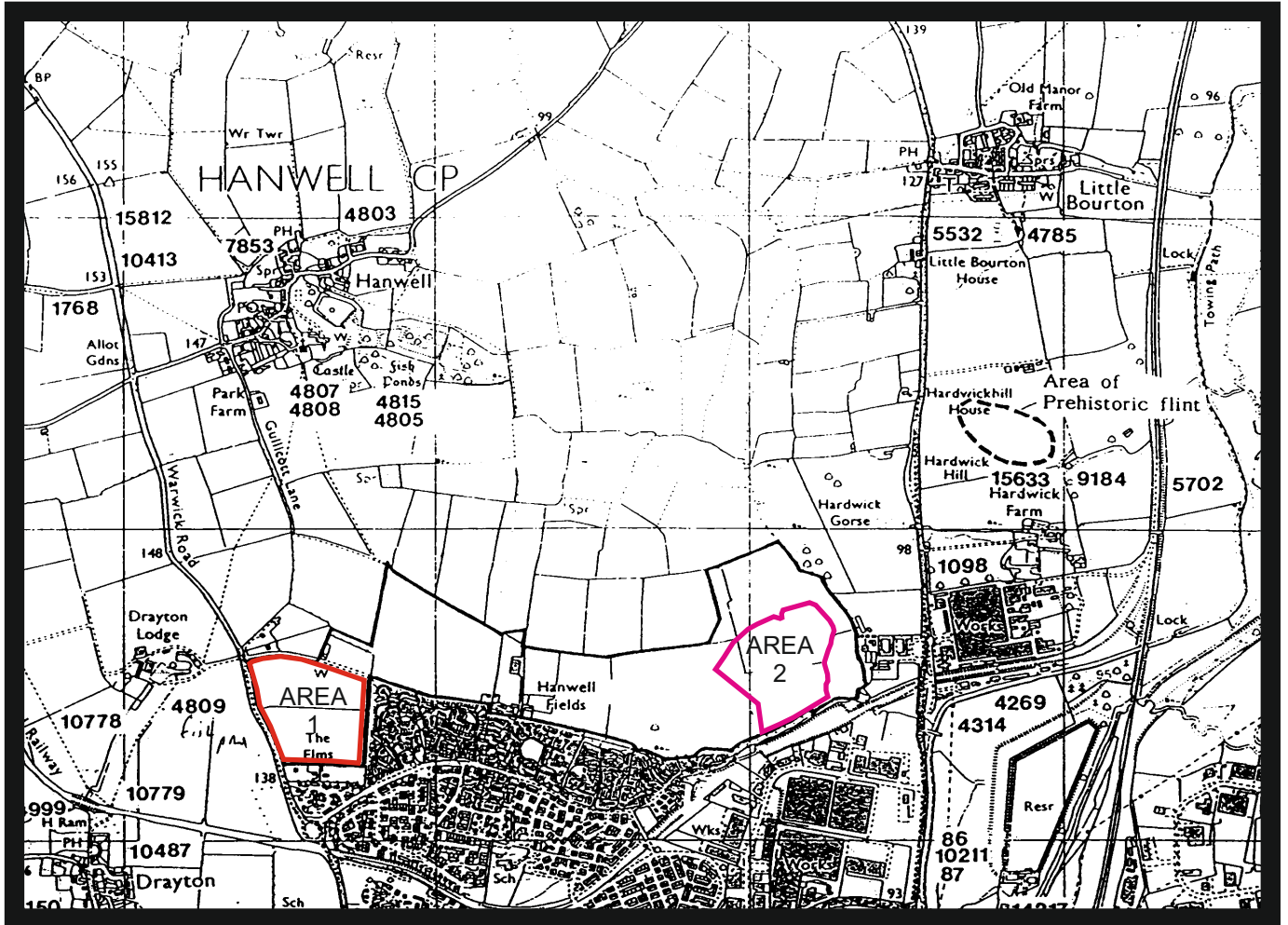
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8 **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

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FIGURE 1 : Site Location

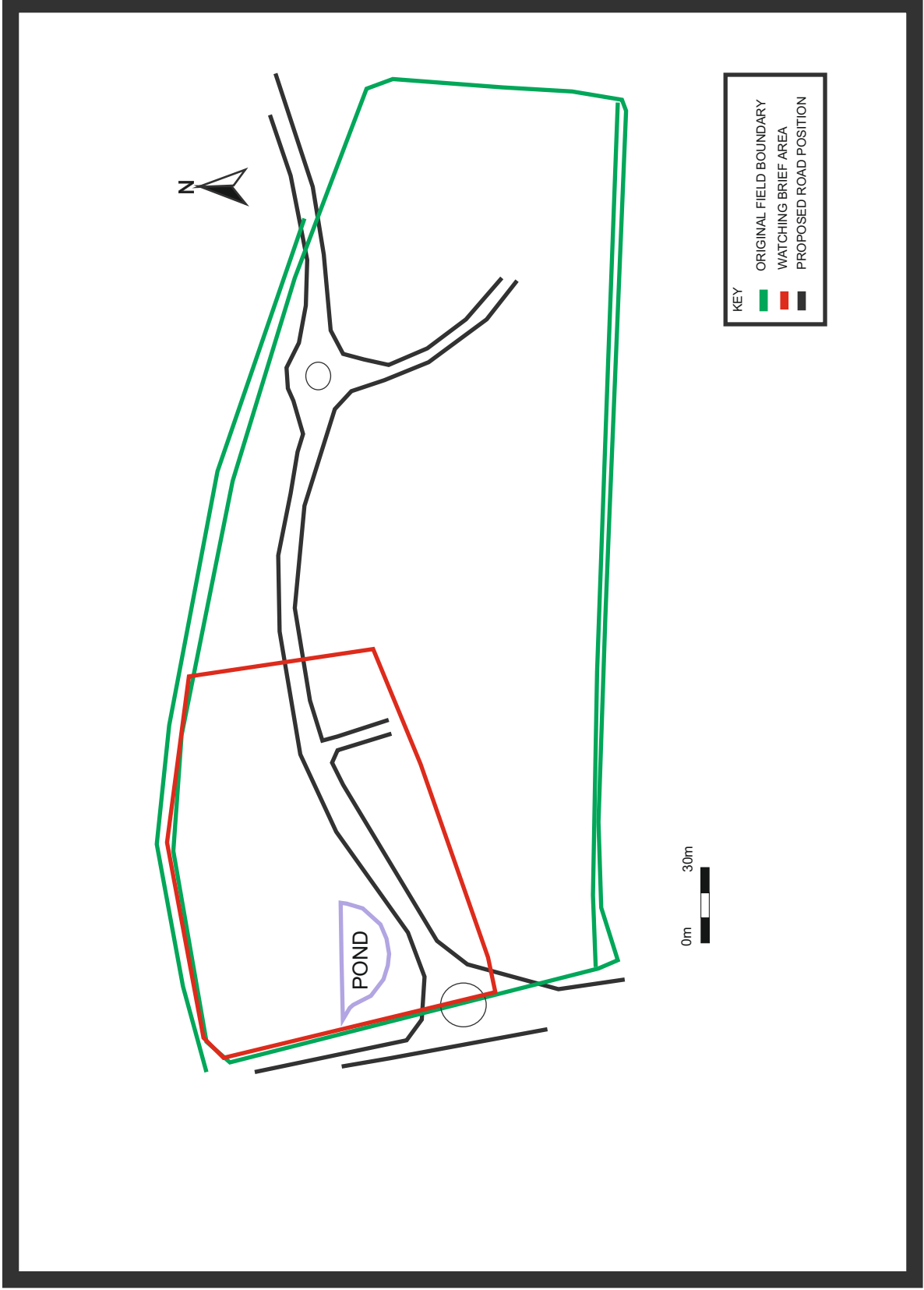







FIGURE 2 : WATCHING BRIEF IN AREA 1



KEY

-  RIDGE & FURROW
-  STREAM
-  PROPOSED ROAD POSITION
-  WATCHING BRIEF AREA
-  ORIGINAL FIELD BOUNDARIES

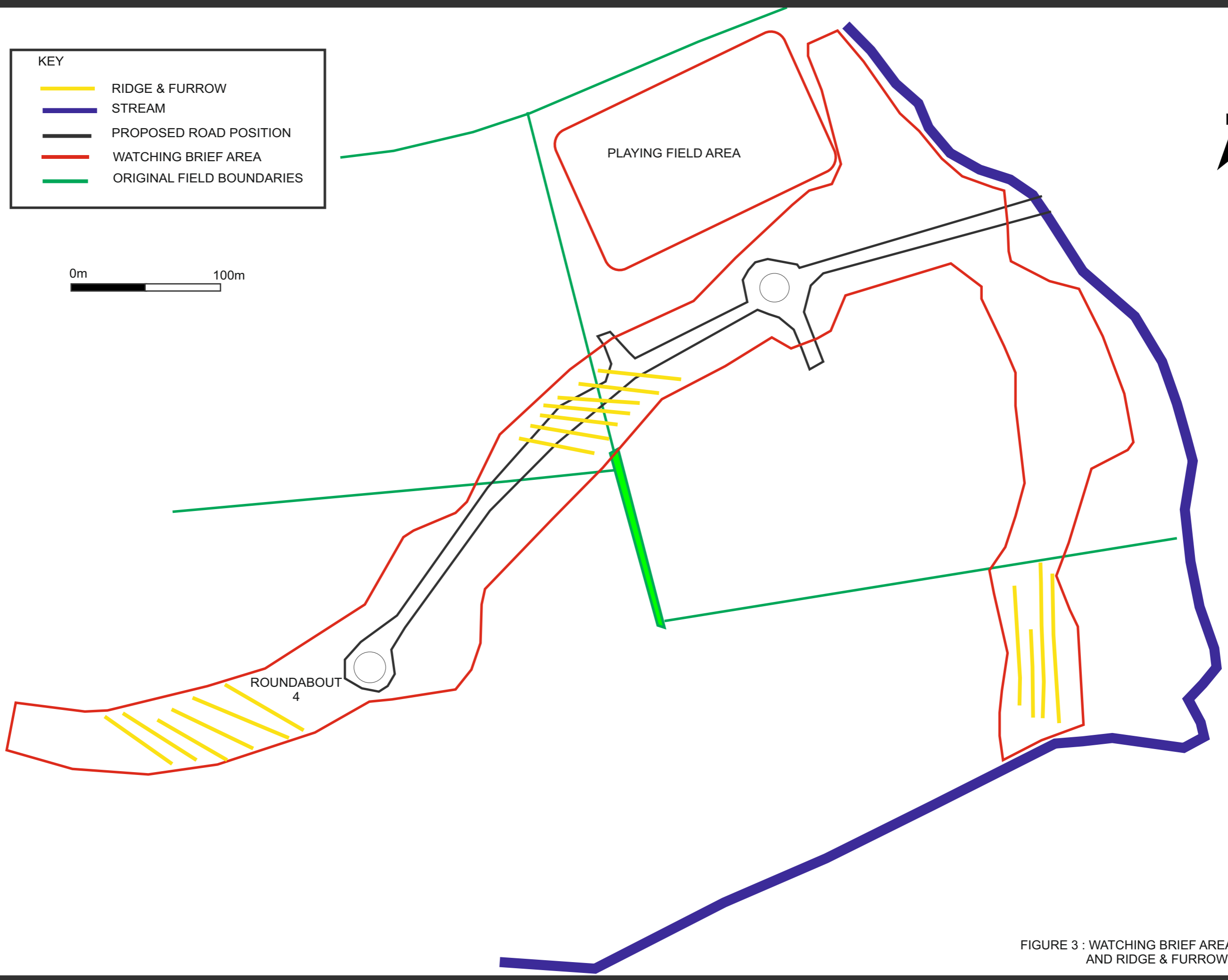


FIGURE 3 : WATCHING BRIEF AREA AND RIDGE & FURROW AREA 2