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**ARCHAEOLOGICAL SOLUTIONS LTD**

**BETLEY QUARRY: LAND TO THE EAST OF  
FORMER RAILWAY LINE, NORFOLK**

**ARCHAEOLOGICAL MONITORING & RECORDING**

Authors: Kate Doyle BA Phil Weston MA	
NGR: TF 992 182	Report No. 1883
Parish: Hoe	Site Code:
Approved: Claire Halpin MIFA	Project No. 2152
Signed:	Date: Nov 2005

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Archaeological Solutions Ltd, 98-100 Fore Street, Hertford SG14 1AB  
Tel: 01992 558170 Fax: 01992 553359 E-mail: [info@arch-sol.co.uk](mailto:info@arch-sol.co.uk) Web: [www.arch-sol.co.uk](http://www.arch-sol.co.uk)  
Registered Number: 4702122

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## OASIS SUMMARY SHEET

<b>Project details</b>			
Project name	<i>Beetley Quarry; on land to the east of the former railway line, Norfolk</i>		
Project description (250 words)	<i>During August and December 2004, Archaeological Solutions Ltd (AS) carried out a programme of archaeological monitoring and recording at Beetley Quarry; on land to the east of the former railway line, Norfolk (NGR TF 992 182). The site is located 400m to the west of the disused Swanton Morley Airfield, and forms part of the extensive Beetley sand and gravel quarry of which c. 11.6 hectares have been subject to previous archaeological investigation. This particular programme of archaeological monitoring and recording concerns an area of farmland encompassing an area of 3.75hectares.</i>		
<i>The site lies c. 1.10km south-east of Spong Hill, which is a site of international significance, forming the largest known early Saxon cremation cemetery in England. Despite the archaeological potential of the site, and its proximity to Spong Hill and the wealth of finds recovered from other sites within Beetley Quarry, no archaeological features, deposits or finds were located during the archaeological monitoring and recording undertaken at the site.</i>			
Project dates (fieldwork)	<i>September 2005</i>		
Previous work (Y/N/?)	<i>Y</i>	Future work (Y/N/?)	<i>N</i>
P. number	<i>2152</i>	Site code	
Type of project	<i>Archaeological monitoring &amp; recording</i>		
Site status	<i>Quarry</i>		
Current land use	<i>Gravel extraction</i>		
Planned development			
Main features (+dates)			
Significant finds (+dates)			
<b>Project location</b>			
County/ District/ Parish	<i>Norfolk</i>	<i>South Norfolk</i>	<i>Hoe</i>
HER/ SMR for area			
Post code (if known)			
Area of site	<i>3.75ha</i>		
NGR	<i>TF 992 182</i>		
Height AOD (max/ min)	<i>40m AOD</i>		
<b>Project creators</b>			
Brief issued by	<i>NLA</i>		
Project supervisor/s (PO)	<i>Archaeological Solutions</i>		
Funded by	<i>Barker Bros Aggregates Ltd</i>		
<b>Full title</b>			
<i>Beetley Quarry; on land to the east of the former railway line, Norfolk; archaeological monitoring &amp; recording</i>			
<b>Authors</b>			
<i>Doyle, K and Weston, P</i>			
<b>Report no.</b>			
<i>1883</i>			
<b>Date (of report)</b>			
<i>November 2005</i>			



# BETLEY QUARRY: LAND TO THE EAST OF FORMER RAILWAY LINE, NORFOLK ARCHAEOLOGICAL MONITORING & RECORDING

## SUMMARY

*During August and December 2004, Archaeological Solutions Ltd (AS) carried out a programme of archaeological monitoring and recording at Beetley Quarry; on land to the east of the former railway line, Norfolk (NGR TF 992 182). The site is located 400m to the west of the disused Swanton Morley Airfield, and forms part of the extensive Beetley sand and gravel quarry of which c. 11.6 hectares have been subject to previous archaeological investigation. This particular programme of archaeological monitoring and recording concerns an area of farmland encompassing an area of 3.75hectares.*

*The site lies c. 1.10km south-east of Spong Hill, which is a site of international significance, forming the largest known early Saxon cremation cemetery in England. Despite the archaeological potential of the site, and its proximity to Spong Hill and the wealth of finds recovered from other sites within Beetley Quarry, no archaeological features, deposits or finds were located during the archaeological monitoring and recording undertaken at the site.*

## INTRODUCTION

1.1 During August and December 2004, Archaeological Solutions Limited (AS) carried out a programme of archaeological monitoring and recording at Beetley Quarry; on land to the east of the former railway line, Norfolk (NGR TF 992 182) (Figs.1-2). The archaeological programme of works was commissioned by Mr. Dan Eves, on behalf of Barker Bros Aggregates Ltd, in advance of proposed extension to an area of mineral extraction.

1.2 The programme of archaeological monitoring and recording was conducted in accordance with a brief issued by Norfolk Landscape Archaeology (NLA) (dated 12<sup>th</sup> November 2003), and a specification written by AS (dated 24<sup>th</sup> November 2003). Both the brief and specification provided for a programme of archaeological monitoring and recording during topsoil stripping, and in advance of gravel extraction.

1.3 The programme of archaeological monitoring and recording complied with the Gurney, D. 2003, *Standards for Field Archaeology in the East of England* EAA Occasional Paper 14. It was also conducted according to the Institute of Field Archaeologists' *Code of Conduct and Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Watching Briefs* (revised 1999). All stages of the project were also undertaken according to the guidelines of MAP2 (English Heritage 1991).

1.4 As set out in the brief, the programme of archaeological monitoring and recording was concerned with the recovery of information regarding the extent, date,



phasing, character, function, status and significance of any surviving archaeological remains on the site. The programme of works undertaken included:

- archaeological monitoring of soil stripping for the development on the site, and
- mitigation by a programme of archaeological excavation and recording, if archaeological remains were present.

## 2 SITE DESCRIPTION

2.1 The site is located 400m to the west of the disused Swanton Morley Airfield, and is situated in the Hoe parish and South Norfolk district of Norfolk. It forms part of the extensive Beetley sand and gravel quarry of which c. 11.6 hectares have been subject to previous archaeological investigation. This particular programme of archaeological monitoring and recording concerns an area of farmland encompassing an area of 3.75 hectares. The site is located directly to the east of the disused Dereham to North Elmham railway line, which runs parallel with the north to south aligned Hoe Road (Fig. 1).

2.2 The village of North Elmham lies c. 2km to the north-west of the site, and the similarly sized settlement of Beetley is situated c. 2km to the south-west. The small hamlet of Hoe lies 1.50m to the south of the site, although the immediate surroundings of the site are characterised by agricultural fields, sand and gravel pits, and quarrying. The site also lies c. 1.50km to the south-east of the early Anglo-Saxon cemetery site of Sponge Hill, which is visible to the north-west, across the valleys of two tributaries of the river Wensum, Black Water and the Whitemill Brook.

2.3 The site itself comprises a roughly rectangular strip of land aligned north to southwards along the eastern side of the disused railway. The site measures some 3.75 hectares in area, which is spread over a maximum length of 430m and a width of approximately 120m. Although the site is bounded to the west by the disused railway, the southern and eastern extents of the site are delineated only by field boundaries, whilst the northern boundary follows the route of a quarry drove-road.

2.4 Much of the surrounding area has been subject to recent archaeological investigations (Section 5). Principally, an archaeological 'strip, map and sample excavation' by AS of an area to the north and north-east (Wilkins & Wotherspoon 2002) revealed a ditched field system of an Iron Age/Romano-British settlement, and corresponding industrial activity. An evaluation undertaken by NAU (Trimble 2002a, 2002b) identified a Pagan Saxon cemetery to the north-east of the site, with three cremations and an inhumation burial, and a probable grubenhaus. A 'strip and record' programme also by AS (Wilkins and Roberts 2003) recorded a Romano-British field system, three Roman pottery kilns dating to AD 100 – 150, and a probable Roman timber structure.



### **3 TOPOGRAPHY, GEOLOGY & SOILS**

3.1 The site is located on the western plateau of a low hill, which raises to a spot height of 48m AOD approximately 400m north-west of the disused Swanton Morley Airfield and 1.10m north-west of the site. The site therefore lies on a gentle incline, rising from c. 28m AOD in the north-western corner to c. 42m AOD along the south-eastern boundary. The site is located immediately west of a series of sand and gravel pits running into the Rivers Wensum and Blackwater, and lies c. 50m directly east of a small tributary of the River Wensum.

3.2 The geology of the area surrounding the site comprises areas of chalky till and glaciofluvial drift, on the terrace above the valley of the River Nar, which is situated to the west of the site. The natural drift of the site itself comprises coarse sand and gravels, which has been extensively extracted at Beetley Quarry and were deposited as a result of glaciofluvial and, more recently, alluvial activity. The exploitation of the local coarse sand and gravels is evident by the presence of extensive pits to the west of the site.

3.3 The site is situated upon soils of the Burlingham 1 association, which are described as deep coarse and fine loamy soils with slowly permeable subsoils and light seasonal waterlogging. Such soils also include some deep, well drained coarse loamy and sandy soils of which the site is an example (SSEW 1983). Soils of the Burlingham 1 association are broadly suitable in agriculture for the modern cultivation of cereals, peas, beans and sugar beet.

## **4 ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND HISTORICAL BACKGROUND**

### **4.1 Prehistoric**

4.1.1 The earliest evidence for human activity in Norfolk has been gathered from dispersed sites, but allows a generalised view of the area to be appreciated, and suggests that the area has been settled and exploited since the early prehistoric period. Although much of the evidence is ephemeral, consisting of Mesolithic and Neolithic flint scatters, it is likely that the area has sustained occupation since this time. A surface scatter of worked flints and pottery, for instance, was discovered to the east of Spong Farm (NHER 1066). Evidence of early prehistoric activity has been found at Spong Hill, c. 1.10km to the north-west of the site, dating to the Mesolithic and early Bronze Age (Rickett 1995).

4.1.2 Surveys in the wider area have also revealed a burnt mound and pot boiler site and part of the Fen Causeway. A burnt Bronze Age mound and pot boiler site has been identified by Hoe Road (SMR 2799). What appears to be part of the Fen Causeway has been recorded running roughly east-west from the Beetley area (SMR 2796). This route-way probably had prehistoric origins, running from Yarmouth and linking the east coast to the Fen waterways, and traversing an area of contemporary industry of pottery production and iron working around Peterborough (Salway 1993). Regional studies on Boulder Clay environments have shown a marked increase in the exploitation of heavier soils during the Bronze Age for pastoral and arable cultivation.



4.1.3 Cropmarks of a ring ditch, which are possibly indicative of a ploughed-out Bronze Age burial mound, are known beyond the north-western edge of the site (NHER 14676). Prehistoric activity in the larger surroundings is represented by a concentration of ring ditches, many likely former round barrows now levelled by long-term ploughing (Lawson *et al.* 1981). A likely late Iron Age or early Roman field system was also identified during the initial evaluation of part of Beetley Quarry to the north of the site (NAU 2002). This field system, orientated generally north west-south east, may be associated with the field boundaries identified at Spong Hill (Rickett 1995).

## 4.2 Roman

4.2.1 Several military forts (Swanton Morley, Threxton and Ashill) were constructed in the area surrounding the site. To the north-east is a Roman settlement at Billingford and a Roman road runs almost to the north of the site. Several military forts were constructed in the area as part of the conquest and subjugation of the indigenous tribe, particularly after the rebellion of Boudicca (AD 60), together with a network of military and civilian roads. Recent archaeological investigations to the west of Swanton Morley Airfield, also within the quarry site and to the immediate east of the site, have revealed significant Romano-British activity, including field systems and a kiln-field (Sutherland & Roberts 2003; Wilkins 2003b).

## 4.3 Early and middle Saxon

4.3.1 The site lies in an area of archaeological potential close to a substantial early Saxon cemetery at Spong Hill, some 1.10km to the north-west of the site. Spong Hill is a site of international significance, forming the largest known early Saxon cremation cemetery in England (NHER 1012). Approximately 2300 cremations and 57 inhumations, dating to the 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> centuries, were excavated, as well as two ring ditches (McKinley 1994). The cremation urns were finely made, and the cemetery perhaps served a large territory of central Norfolk, rather than a single settlement site (Wade, in Glazebrook, 1997, 49). The settlement at Spong Hill is represented by a small number of *grubenhäuser* and timber halls.

4.3.2 An additional early/middle Saxon settlement has been partially excavated at Billingford, with evidence of iron smelting taking place on the site (Wade, in Glazebrook, 1997, 49). A smaller Saxon cremation and inhumation cemetery has been noted during archaeological evaluation at Swanton Morley, across the valley to the east, where curvilinear ditches in the proximity may also represent ring ditches or barrows associated with funerary activity (Trimble 2002a; Sutherland & Roberts 2003).

## 4.4 Late Saxon and medieval

4.4.1 The area of the site was important in the later Saxon period, with the Saxon bishopric of North Elmham existing until the 11<sup>th</sup> century, although it was abandoned for a century in the mid-9<sup>th</sup> century during the Danish occupation. The Saxon Cathedral, the seat of the Bishops of East Anglia, now survives as ruins. It is not clear when the area became important ecclesiastically, although a copper-alloy hanging censer found on the bishopric site was dated to the mid-9<sup>th</sup> century. This date fits with



a mid/late Saxon inhumation cemetery associated with the cathedral. Settlement of the site is first represented by middle Saxon buildings, boundary ditches and two timber-lined wells.

4.4.2 To the north-north-west of the proposed southern extraction area lay another surface scatter of artefacts, comprising pottery and areas of chalky burnt clay, that may represent an area of medieval settlement or other activity. The brief also notes that a moated enclosure of probable medieval date lies some 1km to the north-west of the proposed southern extraction area (NHER 2785/SAM 35063). Further moated manorial sites are present at Beetley, Hoe and Worthing (SMR 2811).

## 5 PREVIOUS ARCHAEOLOGICAL INTERVENTIONS

5.1 A series of recent archaeological interventions have revealed evidence of prehistoric, Roman and Anglo-Saxon farming, industry, settlement and funerary activity in the immediate surroundings of the site (Table 1). An extensive area of Iron Age and later Romano-British co-axial field systems has been recorded on and close to the former Swanton Morley Airfield, which also forms part of Beetley Quarry (Fig.2).

Date	Work type	Area	Results	Reference
1997	Evaluation	South of Airfield	Sparse struck flint and one probable early BA pit	Percival 1997
2002	Fieldwalking	Fields 1, 2 & 3	29 struck flints (background scatter) 2 sherds early Roman pottery	Trimble 2002a
2002	Metal detecting	Fields 1, 2 & 3	Metalwork associated with military airfield 1940+	Trimble 2002a
2002	Evaluation	Fields 1, 2 & 3 Including Area B	6 x 5 <sup>th</sup> - 6 <sup>th</sup> century cremations possible Roman ditches or barrows possible timber sill structure	Trimble 2002a
2002	Intensive metal detector survey	Field 1 TT16 Area B	Anglo-Saxon cruciform brooch	Trimble 2002a
2002	DBA & intensive W/B/ Strip & record	Fields 1 (edge), 2 & 3	2 x BA/LIA pits Roman 3 <sup>rd</sup> -4 <sup>th</sup> century field systems 2 x Roman kilns	Wilkins & Woherspoon 2002
Sep 2002	Evaluation	Field 1 (south)	3 x 5 <sup>th</sup> - 6 <sup>th</sup> century cremations 1 x furnished Saxon inhumation 1 x <i>grubenhaus</i>	Trimble 2002b
Jan 2003	Strip & record	Field 1 (interior north)	1 x 5 <sup>th</sup> - 6 <sup>th</sup> century outlying cremation Undated ring ditch Undated linear ditches	Sutherland & Roberts 2003
July 2003	Evaluation	Southern sector	1 x Roman pit, pottery 1 x undated pit undated ditches	Wilkins 2003a
Aug 2003	Strip & record	Field 1 (south) Including	2 x Roman kilns LIA/Ro field system ?Roman timber post-built building	Wilkins 2003b



	Area A		
Nov. 2004	Evaluation Southern extension	No archaeological finds or features were recovered	Doyle, O'Brian & Williamson 2003

Table 1 Previous archaeological work at Beetley Quarry

5.2 The previous archaeological work was undertaken in advance of proposed mineral extraction on the site of Beetley Quarry as part of a planning requirement by the local planning authority. Four Roman kilns were found during the previous stages of archaeological intervention, one of which produced Icenian rusticated ware dated to the late 1<sup>st</sup> or 2<sup>nd</sup> century. Possible Roman and early Anglo-Saxon timber, both post- and sill-built, structures were also excavated. Evaluation and metal detecting has similarly revealed early Anglo-Saxon cremations and one furnished inhumation, dated to the 5<sup>th</sup> to 7<sup>th</sup> century AD. Cremations were located within Area B, which lay within 10m of the north-eastern corner of the site.

5.3 Two evaluations were undertaken by Norfolk Archaeological Unit in the location later designated Areas B and B Contiguous, the latter of which was situated barely 10m north-east of the site. In general, the evaluations revealed early Anglo-Saxon settlement and cemetery remains (Trimble 2002a and 2002b). The first located a 5<sup>th</sup> or 6<sup>th</sup> century cremation cemetery and the remains of at least one timber structure. The subsequent intensive metal detector survey also located a fragment of a cruciform brooch indicating that the cemetery may extend at least 25m to the south (Trimble 2002a). Curvilinear ditches in the area may also represent ring ditches or barrows associated with funerary activity.

## 6 METHODOLOGY

6.1 As set out in the brief, the programme of archaeological monitoring and recording was to be undertaken, where appropriate, on the following

- all areas of below ground disturbance, including excavations, foundation trenches, service trenches, drains and soakaways,
- above ground remains when development affects a building of historic importance,
- pipeline and cable trenches.

6.2 Topsoil and overburden were removed mechanically using a 3-tonne tracked 360° excavator fitted with a toothless ditching bucket; thereafter all excavation was undertaken by hand, and the two areas were left open for viewing. All archaeological contexts and artefacts exposed, examined or excavated were to be fully recorded on the appropriate contexts, finds and sample sheets, drawn to scale on plans and sections and photographed as appropriate. Excavated spoil was searched for archaeological finds and the two areas were scanned by metal detector, where appropriate.



## 7 DESCRIPTION OF RESULTS

### 7.1 Area observed on 24<sup>th</sup> August 2004

Central Southern Area		
Dimensions: 60 – 80m x 100m		
0.00m – 0.50m	L1000	Agricultural Topsoil: mid-dark grey brown sandy silt loam with frequent flint gravel inclusions
0.50m +	L1002	Natural: clast supported gravel with sandy matrix & pockets of mid brownish orange sand

Table 2 Stratigraphy of Central Southern Area

*Description* A visibly modern or existing hedge-line was observed only along the eastern side of the Central Southern Area. No archaeological features were present. Nor was any artefactual evidence, not even residual material such as post-medieval ceramics

### 7.2 Area observed on 9<sup>th</sup> December 2004

Central Northern Area		
Dimensions: 60m x 80m		
0.00m – 0.35m to 0.40m	L1001	Topsoil: dark grey brown sandy clayey silt
0.50m +	L1002	Natural: mid brownish orange matrix supported flint gravel with coarse sand

Table 3 Stratigraphy of Central Northern Area

*Description* No archaeological contexts features or finds were present in the Central Northern Area of the site.

## 8 CONFIDENCE RATING

8.1 It is not felt that any factors hindered the identification of archaeological features or finds.

## 9 DEPOSIT MODEL

9.1 In the Central Southern Area, the natural sand and gravel deposit (L1002) was commonly overlain by some 0.50m of topsoil (L1000). The natural sand and gravel deposit (L1002) in the Central Northern Area, however, was commonly overlain by some 0.35m to 0.40m of topsoil (L1001), which was darker and had a more clayey consistency than L1000.



## 10 DISCUSSION

10.1 Despite the archaeological potential of the site (see Section 5) , and its proximity to Spong Hill and the wealth of finds recovered from other sites within Beetley Quarry, no archaeological features, deposits or finds were located during the archaeological monitoring and recording undertaken at the site.

### DEPOSITION OF ARCHIVE

The archive will be prepared in accordance with the UK Institute for Conservation's *Conservation Guideline No. 2*. Archive records, with inventory, are to be deposited, as well as any donated finds from the site, at the local museum and in accordance with their requirements. The archive will be quantified, ordered, indexed, cross-referenced and checked for internal consistency. In addition to the overall site summary, it will be necessary to produce a summary of the artefactual and ecofactual data.

### ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Archaeological Solutions is grateful to Mr. Dan Eves for commissioning the archaeological work and to their client, Barker Bros Aggregates Ltd, for funding the work.

AS is also pleased to acknowledge the input and advice of Messrs David Gurney and Andy Hutcheson of Norfolk Landscape Archaeology (NLA).

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**APPENDIX 1**  
**ARCHAEOLOGICAL SOLUTIONS**  
**DOCUMENTARY ARCHIVE FORM**

<b>Site Details</b>			
County:	Norfolk	Museum:	
Site Code:		AS Project Number:	2152
Site Name:	Beetley Quarry: land to the east of the former railway line, Norfolk		
NGR:	TF 992 182	Accession Number:	
Site Type:	Monitoring & Recording	Date of Work:	Aug & Dec 2004
Planning Ref:		SMR No:	
Related Work:	Beetley & Roostinghills Quarries, Swanton Morley Airfield		
Brief Description of Documentary Archive:	1 ring binder		
Brief Finds Description (Quantity & Date):			
Ownership Form Returned:		Archive Deposited:	
<b>Introduction</b>			
Brief/s		Specifications	
Date	Present	Date	Present
12/11/03	Y	24/11/03	Y

<b>A: Reports</b>			
Report Type		Report No	Present
Archaeological Investigation			Y

<b>B: Primary Site Records</b>			
Total No. of Files:	1 ring binder		
Total No. of Site Drawing Sheets:			
Location of A4 Files (Tick)		Finds Room:	Corridor:
Material	Present	Details	
Site Notes	Y		
Context Register			
Context Sheets			
Levels Sheets			
Site Drawings			
Plan/Section Register			
Plan Sheets			
Section Sheets			
Combined Plan/Section Sheets			
Other Site Drawings			
Digital Plans			
Plans			
Data			



<b>C: Finds Data</b>			
Small Finds Register			
Finds Concordance			
Finds Box List			
X-Rays			
Conservation Photo Plates			
Conservation Lab Sheets			
Other Finds Information (Give Details)			
<b>Specialist Finds Reports</b>			
Material	Report Type	Report Present	Specialist Archive Material (Give Details)

<b>D: Site Photographs</b>			
Photographic Register Present		Digital Photo Register Present	Y
<b>Black &amp; White 35mm</b>			
Film No	Negative Nos	Shot Nos	Contact Sheet Present
			Negatives Present
<b>Colour Slides</b>			
Film No	Negative Nos	Shot Nos	Present
<b>Digital Photos</b>			
Shot Nos	Files Present	Hard Copies Present	
1 - 16			

<b>E: Environmental Data</b>			
Sample Register Present:		Sample Sheets Present:	
Processing Register Present:		Sieving Sheets Present:	
Sample Concordance Present:			
<b>Specialist Environmental Reports</b>			
Material	Report Type	Report Present	Specialist Archive Material (Give Details)

<b>F: Documentary Records, Press &amp; Publicity; G: Relevant Correspondence; H: Miscellaneous</b>
F, Two sheets of archaeological monitoring & recording forms



**PHOTOGRAPHIC INDEX**



*DP 1*

*Central northern area general site shot.*



*DP 2*

*Central southern area general site shot.*



*DP 3*

*General site shot.*



*DP 4*

*General site shot.*



*DP 5*

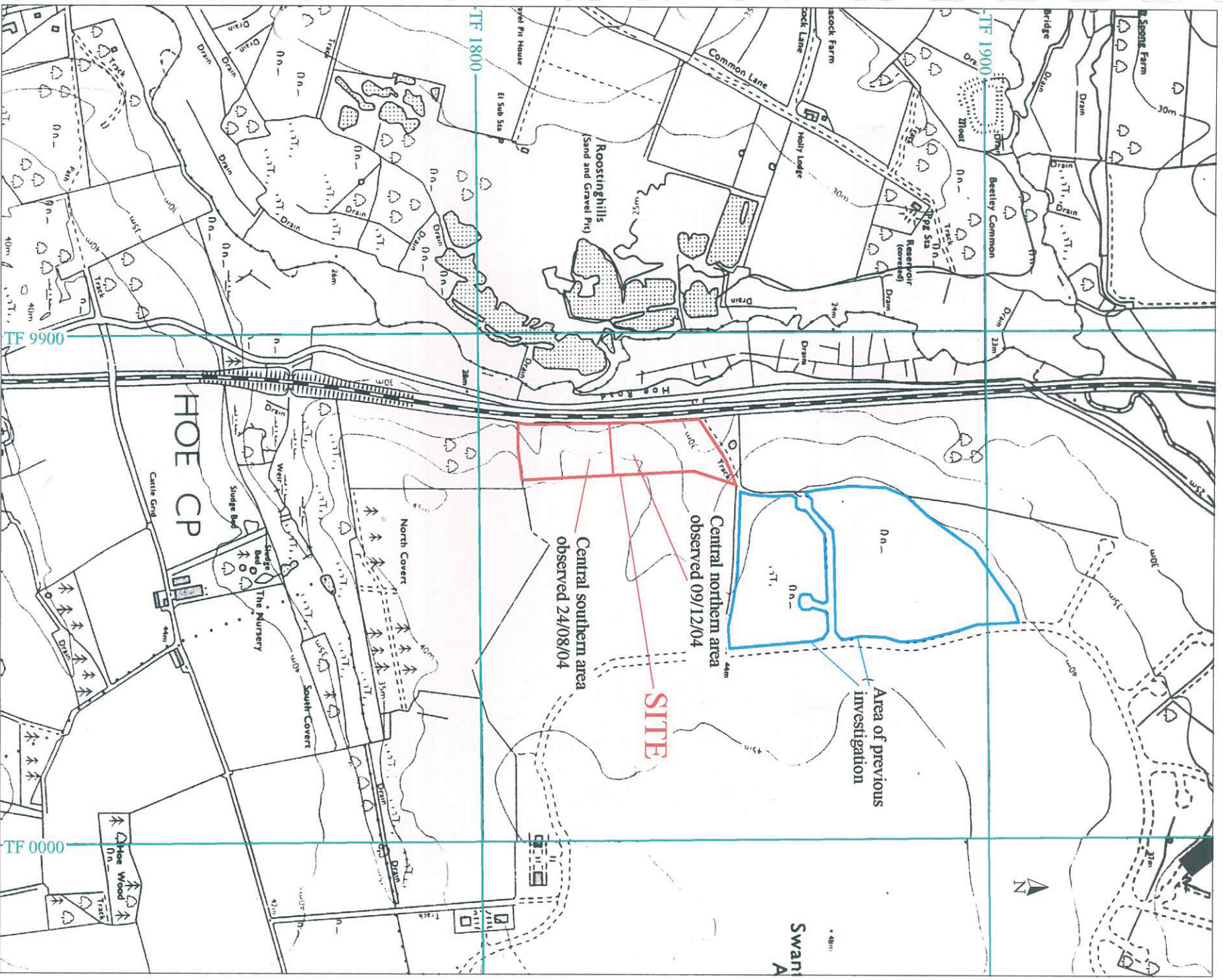
*General site shot.*



*DP 6*

*General site shot.*

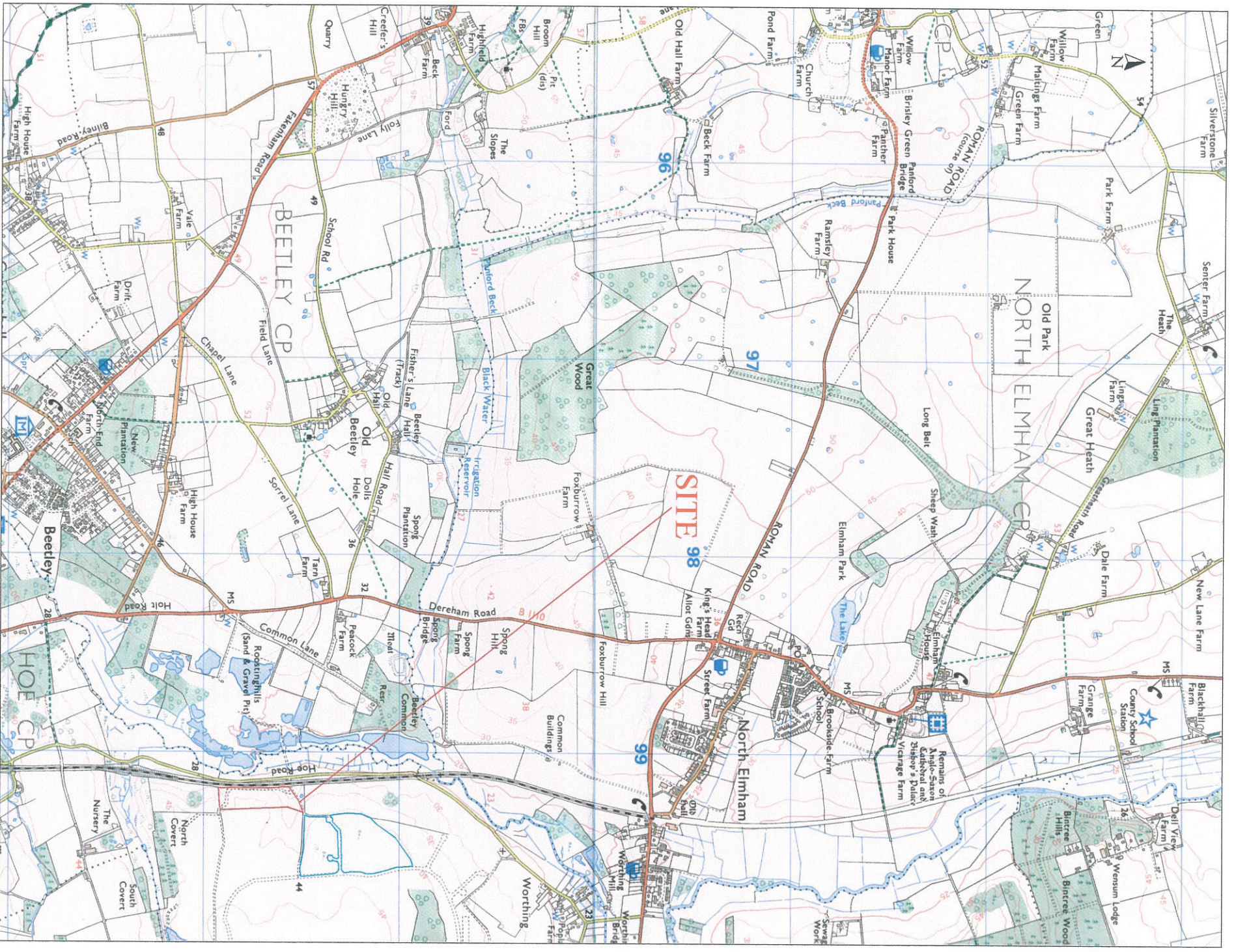




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**Fig. 2 Detailed site location plan**  
 Scale 1:1000





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**Fig. 1 Site location plan**  
 Scale 1:25,000