
ARCHAEOLOGICAL SOLUTIONS LTD

**HONEYPOTS QUARRY EXTENSION,
SHROPHAM, NORFOLK
PHASE II**

**ARCHAEOLOGICAL MONITORING OF WORKS
UNDER SUPERVISION AND CONTROL**

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NGR: TM 9820 9470	Report No. 3136
District: Norfolk	Site Code: 38228.SHM
Approved: Claire Halpin MIFA	Project No. 2800
Signed:	Date: July 2008

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CONTENTS

	OASIS SUMMARY
	SUMMARY
1	INTRODUCTION
2	SITE DESCRIPTION
3	TOPOLOGY, GEOLOGY & SOILS
4	ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND
5	METHODOLOGY
6	DESCRIPTION OF RESULTS
7	CONFIDENCE RATING
8	DEPOSIT MODEL
9	DISCUSSION
	DEPOSITION OF THE ARCHIVE
	ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS
	BIBLIOGRAPHY
APPENDIX 1	CONCORDANCE OF FINDS

Project details			
Project name	<i>Honeypots Quarry Extension, Shropham, Norfolk: Monitoring of Works under Archaeological Supervision and Control.(Phase II)</i>		
Project description (250 words)			
<p><i>In June 2008, Archaeological Solutions Ltd (AS) undertook archaeological monitoring and recording of land at Honeypots Quarry, Shropham, Norfolk (NGR TM 9820 9470). The monitoring was undertaken during topsoil stripping for the extension to the quarry.</i></p> <p><i>The desk-based assessment found there to be very high potential for the site to yield Neolithic to Roman remains, likely a continuation of the ceremonial activity located during excavations of Honeypots Plantation to the immediate south of the present site (HER 36218).</i></p> <p><i>Monitoring and recording was undertaken in September 2007 in Area 1, Area 2, and Subsoil Bund 2. Forty-two archaeological features comprising pits, postholes and two linear features were encountered. Two pits produced Beaker pottery and deliberate deposits of burnt material. Several other undated pits and postholes yielded similar deposits, and thus maybe contemporary, however, the adjacent excavation identified an increase in activity during the Iron Age and it is likely some of the features here are also associated with this period of activity.</i></p> <p><i>Monitoring and recording undertaken during June 2008 revealed three pits, a tree hollow and a possible hearth. No datable material was recovered from these features.</i></p>			
Project dates (fieldwork)	<i>19th June – 26th June 2008</i>		
Previous work (Y/N/?)	<i>Y</i>	Future work (Y/N/?)	<i>Y</i>
P. number	<i>P2800</i>	Site code	<i>38228.SHM</i>
Type of project	<i>Monitoring and recording</i>		
Site status	<i>None</i>		
Current land use	<i>Low scrubland (prior to excavation)</i>		
Planned development	<i>Mineral extraction</i>		
Main features (+dates)	<i>3 pits, a possible hearth, a tree hollow (All features undated)</i>		
Significant finds (+dates)	<i>-</i>		
Project location			
County/ District/ Parish	<i>Norfolk</i>	<i>Breckland</i>	<i>Shropham</i>
HER/ SMR for area	<i>Norfolk Landscape Archaeology (NLA)</i>		
Post code (if known)			
Area of site	<i>-</i>		
NGR	<i>TM 9820 9470</i>		
Height AOD (max/ min)	<i>c. 40m AOD</i>		
Project creators			
Brief issued by	<i>Norfolk Landscape Archaeology (NLA)</i>		
Project supervisor/s (PO)	<i>Gareth Barlow</i>		
Funded by	<i>Ennstone Johnston Ltd</i>		
Full title	<i>Honeypots Quarry Extension, Shropham, Norfolk: Monitoring of Works under Archaeological Supervision and Control.(Phase II)</i>		
Authors	<i>Barlow, G. Smith, L</i>		
Report no.	<i>3136</i>		
Date (of report)	<i>July 2008</i>		

HONEYPOTS QUARRY EXTENSION, SHROPHAM, NORFOLK PHASE II

ARCHAEOLOGICAL MONITORING OF WORKS UNDER SUPERVISION AND CONTROL

SUMMARY

In June 2008, Archaeological Solutions Ltd (AS) undertook archaeological monitoring and recording of land at Honey pots Quarry, Shropham, Norfolk (NGR TM 9820 9470). The monitoring was undertaken during topsoil stripping for the extension to the quarry.

The desk-based assessment found there to be very high potential for the site to yield Neolithic to Roman remains, likely a continuation of the ceremonial activity located during excavations of Honey pots Plantation to the immediate south of the present site (HER 36218).

Monitoring and recording was undertaken in September 2007 in Area 1, Area 2, and Subsoil Bund 2. Forty-two archaeological features comprising pits, postholes and two linear features were encountered. Two pits produced Beaker period pottery and deliberate deposits of burnt material. Several other undated pits and postholes yielded similar deposits, and thus maybe contemporary, however, the adjacent excavation identified an increase in activity during the Iron Age and it is likely some of the features here are also associated with this period of activity.

Monitoring and recording undertaken during June 2008 revealed three pits, a tree hollow and a possible hearth. No datable material was recovered from these features.

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 In July 2008, Archaeological Solutions Limited (AS) carried out a programme of archaeological monitoring and recording at Honey pots Quarry, Shropham, Norfolk (NGR TM 9820 9470; Figs. 1 & 2). The work was commissioned by Ennstone Johnston Ltd to be undertaken during the stripping of topsoil prior to mineral extraction.

1.2 The archaeological monitoring and recording was conducted in accordance with a written scheme of investigation compiled by AS (dated 4th September 2006) and a brief issued by Norfolk Landscape Archaeology (NLA). It also complied with the Institute of Field Archaeologists' (IFA) *Code of Conduct and Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Watching Briefs* (1994, revised 2001), in addition to the relevant sections of the document *Standards for Field Archaeology in the East of England* (Gurney 2003).

1.3 The principal objective of the project was to recover a record of any archaeological deposits that might be damaged or removed by the development. In order to achieve this aim, the project involved:

- monitoring of topsoil and subsoil stripping (including metal detecting prior to, and during the site strip, and
- mitigation by a programme of archaeological excavation and recording, if archaeological remains were present.

2 SITE DESCRIPTION

2.1 Shropham is situated in the parish of the same name, some 5km west-southwest of Attleborough and approximately 13km northeast of Thetford. The village has evolved along the crossroads of the Watton/Hargham Road and Rocklands Road. The village centre is located on relatively flat land at a height of *c.* 40m AOD. The parish comprises mostly rural farmland with dispersed areas of woodland.

2.2 The western half of the modern parish of Shropham is located within the Breckland Environmentally Sensitive Area, as defined by the Ministry of Agriculture in 1988, and used as the basis for the Breckland Archaeological Survey (Sussams 1996). The site itself is located *c.* 2.5km east of the Breckland Environmentally Sensitive Area.

2.3 The site is an irregular rectangular plot of land, just less than 2km north of the central crossroads of the village of Shropham. A belt of woodland borders the site to the north and west. The southern area of the site is also bounded by a strip of woodland (Honeypots Plantation). The extraction on this site will be completed in a series of phases. Phase 1 comprised a large rectangular plot of land at the centre of the site. Phase 2 was irregular in shape, situated to the southwest of Phase 1 (Fig 2).

3 TOPOGRAPHY & GEOLOGY

3.1 Shropham lies on typical Anglian Pliocene sands and gravels of marine origins. Glacial and periglacial activity has affected this sequence and resulted in complex involutions and flow structures. The shallow geology is glaciofluvial drift and chalky till with soils of the Ollerton association; a deep permeable sandy and coarse loamy soil affected by groundwater, with some coarse loamy soils with slowly permeable subsoils and slight seasonal water logging. The soil is optimal for growing cereals, sugar beet, peas and beans and also some coniferous woodland.

3.2 The site occupies a hill top sloping from *c.* 32m AOD at the northern side to *c.* 45m AOD at the southern end. The hill slopes gently downwards in the south and west, and more steeply in the north and east down toward the River Thet valley. The River Thet flows past the site approximately 2km to the southeast

4 ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND

4.1 Previous work in the area

Honeypots Plantation: Excavation by the Norfolk Archaeological Unit 2001-2003 (HER 36218):

4.1.1 To the immediate west of the proposed extension areas, the Norfolk Archaeological Unit (NAU) completed a series of excavations. These revealed substantial evidence for activity and occupation on the hill dating from the Neolithic/Beaker period, Bronze Age, Iron Age and Roman periods (NAU 2005). Organic remains were poorly preserved due to the nature and conditions of the soils and many of the features had been truncated by later activity. Nevertheless, the site was noted as one of the largest open area prehistoric excavations in the county.

4.1.2 The earliest datable phase of activity was represented by a small concentration of Neolithic/Beaker period and Bronze Age pits, many of which contained structured and deliberate deposits. Other undated pits and features may be of a similar date. A scatter of post settings within a large enclosure may have acted as a boundary for this activity. The excavation recorded abundant evidence for Neolithic/Beaker and Bronze Age structures, although the function of these buildings and types of activities occurring at the time is not clear. The position of the site on a hilltop may point toward a more ceremonial function (NAU 2005). This supposition is supported by the discovery in 1970 of a polished Neolithic flint axe from the surface and by an imported ceremonial stone axe of probable Bronze Age date, found to the immediate northwest in 1980 (*ibid.*).

4.1.3 The presence of three mortuary structures suggests that the hilltop remained the focus of ceremonial activity during the early Iron Age. This is supported by evidence for the continued practice of ritual pitting and the placing of structured deposits. A number of undated features, including pits and postholes, have been tentatively assigned a broad Iron Age date, whilst evidence of land divisions and two- and four-post structures suggest activity increased during the middle to late Iron Age.

4.1.4 The excavations also revealed Roman remains. The latter are more limited in comparison to those dated to the prehistoric period, although they provide evidence for the continuation of similar ritual practices recorded in the earlier phases. By the later Roman period the site seems to have been predominately used for agriculture, a practice that has continued until the recent mineral extraction (NAU 2005).

Honeypots Extension, Watching Brief by AS in 2006 and 2007 (HER 38228)

4.1.5 Monitoring and recording was undertaken in Area 1, Area 2, and Subsoil Bund 2 (Hogan *et al* 2007). Forty-two archaeological features comprising pits, postholes and two linear features were encountered. Two pits produced Beaker period pottery and deliberate deposits of burnt material. Several other undated pits and postholes yielded similar deposits, and thus maybe contemporary, however, the adjacent excavation identified an increase in activity during the Iron Age and it is likely some of the features here are also associated with this period of activity.

4.2 General archaeological and historical background

Prehistoric (c. 500,000 BC – 43 AD)

4.2.1 There is considerable evidence for prehistoric activity recorded throughout the parish of Shropham. Of most relevance to the current site are those recorded during excavations at Honeypots Plantation undertaken by Norfolk Archaeological Unit in 2001-2003 and previous monitoring and recording conducted by AS at the site (see above).

4.2.2 Isolated finds of prehistoric material in the area comprise a Neolithic polished axe head, found on the hill of Honeypots Plantation in 1970 (HER 9026), Neolithic/Beaker period pottery (NMR 385829) and a flint knife (HER 20102), both discovered *c.* 1 km southeast of the site (NMR 385829), and a possible Neolithic flint awl, recorded *c.* 800m to the north-northwest (HER 39288).

4.2.3 Approximately 1 km southwest of the site, Bronze Age burnt mounds/possible hearths

were located in a field (HER 9048, 9049, 9050, 9051, 17042). Close to these, the cutting edge of a middle Bronze Age palstave was also discovered (HER 19224). Further evidence for human activity during the Bronze Age is attested by the presence of a probable Bronze Age tumulus, just over 1km south of the site (NMR 385855), and a round barrow *c.* 1km to the northeast (HER 8964). Neither of these monuments are currently visible.

4.2.4 Evidence for Iron Age stone extraction to the south of the site has been reported (NMR 1369320). This activity is possibly associated with the Iron Age activity recorded during previous excavations at Honeybots Plantation (see above).

4.2.5 An undated stone maul or battleaxe, found within 1km south of the site, is thought to date to the prehistoric era, although it is possibly of a later Roman date.

Romano-British (AD 43 – 410)

4.2.6 Romano-British pottery has been recovered from Honeybots Plantation hill (HER 9031), and further pottery scatters have been found to the south of the village centre, some 2km south of the site (NMR 870140). Other finds from this period comprise a small bronze spoon with duck-head loop, found in a field south of the site, a sestertius of Antoninus Pius (138-161 AD), discovered *c.* 900m to the northwest, and a decorated glass bead from 200m northwest of the site (HER 9024).

4.2.7 The course of a Roman road running northeast from Ickworth can be traced to the south of Shropham, and possibly at one time continued through the area and up in to *Venta Icenorum* (Caistor St Edmund) just south of Norwich. A villa, close to Attleborough, and a pottery/tile manufacturing site near Morley Hall, to the northeast of Shropham, indicate that the Roman road probably passed by these locations originally, connecting the numerous manufacturing sites close to Ickworth with the *civitas* capital at Caistor St Edmund. The Roman roads in Norfolk appear to have been specifically created to transport materials from production sites to major settlements in the eastern areas of the country.

Anglo-Saxon (AD 411 – 1065)

4.2.8 Scatters of middle and late Saxon pottery has been found south of the village, approximately 2km south of the site (HER 870140, 870141), implying that the area may have witnessed settlement or other activity. This suggestion is given weight by the existence of an early Saxon (5th-6th century) cremation cemetery found *c.* 900m east of the site (HER 9054), and to which a nearby isolated cremation (HER 9022) is probably also related. Finds from the 5th – 6th centuries, in conjunction with the Late Saxon pottery, may indicate continued occupation or activity from the Roman era in the vicinity of Shropham.

Medieval (AD 1066 – 1539)

4.2.9 Very few entries of medieval finds or features are located within a 1km radius, probably due to the distance of the site from the village centre. In fact, two of the entries included are just beyond 1km, and were incorporated to give an indication of the level of occupation in the area during this era.

4.2.10 A few stray finds dating to the medieval and post-medieval periods are recorded *c.* 600m northwest of the site (HER 39293). The Church of Sts Peter and Paul, just to the south of the village, is dated to the 13th century (NMR 870142). The proximity of the earlier Saxon pottery scatters (as well as medieval finds) to the church may suggest that development originally occurred slightly to the south of the present village, and that at some time the focus

of the village shifted northwards. Although this is speculation, there is some indication that settlements shifted in the medieval period. A medieval (probably earlier) settlement just over 1km to the southwest of the site, close to the location of Shropham Hall (a modern building), was abandoned during the reign of Edward III (1327-77). This village is thought to be the lost settlement of Breccles Parva (or Little Breckles) (Website 1), one of the three hamlets comprising the ancient parish of Shropham (Blomefield's Norfolk I: 451). The three hamlets, Shropham, Breccles Parva/Little Breckles and Broadcar/Bradcar, were separated at the Conquest, implying that settlements had existed in these areas prior to the medieval period.

Post-medieval and modern (AD 1540 – present)

4.2.11 Only one post-medieval period building was listed on the Archaeological Database Service website (Website 2). This was Whitehouse Farm (NMR 539187), dated to the 17th century. The development of the village during the post-medieval period appears to have had little impact on the site, which is situated just over 1km to the north of the village centre.

5 METHODOLOGY

5.1 The archaeological monitoring comprised the observation of all groundworks, inspection of subsoil and natural deposits for archaeological features, the examination of spoil heaps and the recording of soil profiles.

5.2 The topsoil and subsoil was mechanically excavated using a 360° tracked mechanical excavator fitted with a 1.8m wide smooth-blade bucket, under close archaeological supervision. Thereafter all excavation was undertaken by hand. The site was recorded using a single-context recording system and features and deposits were recorded using *pro-forma* recording sheets. Features and deposits were drawn to scale and photographed as appropriate. In addition, the excavated areas and spoil were checked and scanned for finds with a metal detector. The monitoring was conducted between the 19th and 16th June 2008.

6 DESCRIPTION OF RESULTS

6.1 A small number of archaeological features were identified during this phase of monitoring (Fig 3). They comprised three pits, a possible hearth and a tree hollow and are described in detail below:

6.2 Pit F2002 (Length 0.62m x Width 0.50m x Depth 0.08m) was identified near the southern extent of the site (Grid Square N3) as oval in plan with shallow sloping sides and a flat base (Figs 3 and 4; DP 1). Its fill (L2003) was a mid orange brown sandy silt with occasional angular flint and charcoal flecks. No finds were present.

6.3 Hearth/Pit F2004 (0.90m x 0.50m x 0.11m) was a sub oval in plan identified to the east of F2002 (Grid Square Q3; Figs 3 and 4; DP 2). In profile it had gently sloping sides and a flat base. Its fill (L2005) was a mid brownish grey sandy silt with lenses of very dark greyish brown charcoal-rich sandy silt with occasional angular flint and charcoal flecks. Burnt flint (889g) was recovered from this deposit.

6.4 Tree Hollow F2006 was sub oval in plan (1.50m x 0.80m x 0.14m; Grid Squares H11, I11) with irregular sides and a very irregular base (Figs 3 and 4). Its fill (L2007) was a dark greyish brown silty sandy with moderate angular flint and occasional charcoal flecks. Burnt flint (156g) was recovered from this deposit.

6.5 Pit F2008 (Grid Square N8; 1.10m x 0.90m x 0.16m) was sub circular in plan with gradual sloping sides and a concave base (Figs 3 and 4; DP 3). Its basal fill (L2009) was a mid greyish brown silty sand with very occasional lenses of redeposited natural sand, occasional rounded and angular flint. Its upper fill (L2010) was a dark greyish brown sandy silt with occasional angular flint and fragments of charcoal. No finds were present.

6.6 Pit F2011 (Grid Square P11) was identified as sub rectangular (1.0m x 0.60m x 0.15m) in plan. Upon excavation its profile was u shaped with steep concave sides and a flat base (Figs 3 and 4; DP 4). Its fill, L2012, consisted of a very dark greyish brown sandy silt with frequent angular burnt flint, occasional angular flint and frequent charcoal flecks. Burnt flint (3228g) was recovered from this deposit.

7 CONFIDENCE RATING

7.1 It is not felt that any factors inhibited the recognition of archaeological features or finds during the monitoring and recording.

8 DEPOSIT MODEL

8.1 The archaeological deposits were encountered after the removal of Topsoil L2000 which consisted of a mid greyish brown sandy silt with occasional rounded flint nodules and moderate angular flint. This was seen across the entire area stripped during Phase 2 and was seen up to 0.50m below the ground surface.

8.2 The natural substrate was identified as a pale mid orange brown sand with frequent angular flint and occasional rounded flint nodules. It was heavily plough scared suggesting that possible truncation or destruction of archaeological features may have occurred. The few features encountered during this investigation were cut into the natural substrate.

9 DISCUSSION

9.1 Three pits (F2002, F2008 and F2011), a tree bole (F2006) and a pit/hearth (F2004) were recorded during the monitoring of Phase 2 of topsoil stripping at Honeypots Quarry, Shropham, Norfolk. The degree of preservation of archaeological features was moderate although some truncation, possibly due to ploughing, was evident.

9.2 The NAU excavation, conducted in 2005, recorded a small number of features, consisting mostly of pits, which yielded evidence for Neolithic and Bronze Age activity. Many of the pits appear to have been dug specifically in order to hold special or structured deposits, including for the deliberate burial of burnt material (NAU 2005).

9.3 The AS monitoring and recording conducted in 2007 identified a total of 42 features. Two of the pits produced Beaker Ware pottery, and a number of pieces of worked flint which is tentatively dated to the Bronze Age (Hogan 2007). Both Phase 1 Pits (F1007 and F1017) contained a significant quantity of burnt flint and charcoal flecks mixed in with re-deposited natural, and thus appear to represent a continuation of the earlier prehistoric ritual activity observed to the south.

9.4 Given the volume of Neolithic and Bronze Age features previously recorded in the area it is possible that the features recorded during this phase of monitoring and recording are related. Indeed, the large quantities of burnt flint recovered from several of the pits (F2004, F2006 and F2011) excavated during Phase 2 may suggest that they can be tentatively attributed to the same period of activity as seen during the excavation of Phase 1 and earlier excavations conducted by NAU.

DEPOSITION OF THE ARCHIVE

Archive records, with an inventory, will be deposited with the finds from the site at Norwich Castle Museum. 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

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Norfolk Archaeological Unit 2005 *Excavations at Honeypots Plantation, Shropham, Norfolk 2001-2003*

APPENDIX 1 CONCORDANCE OF FINDS

Feature	Context	Description	Spot Date	Burnt Flint
2004	2005	Pit Fill		(64), 889g
2006	2007	Tree Hollow Fill		(23), 156g
2011	2012	Pit Fill		(164), 3228g

PHOTOGRAPHIC INDEX



DP 1: Pit F2002, view north



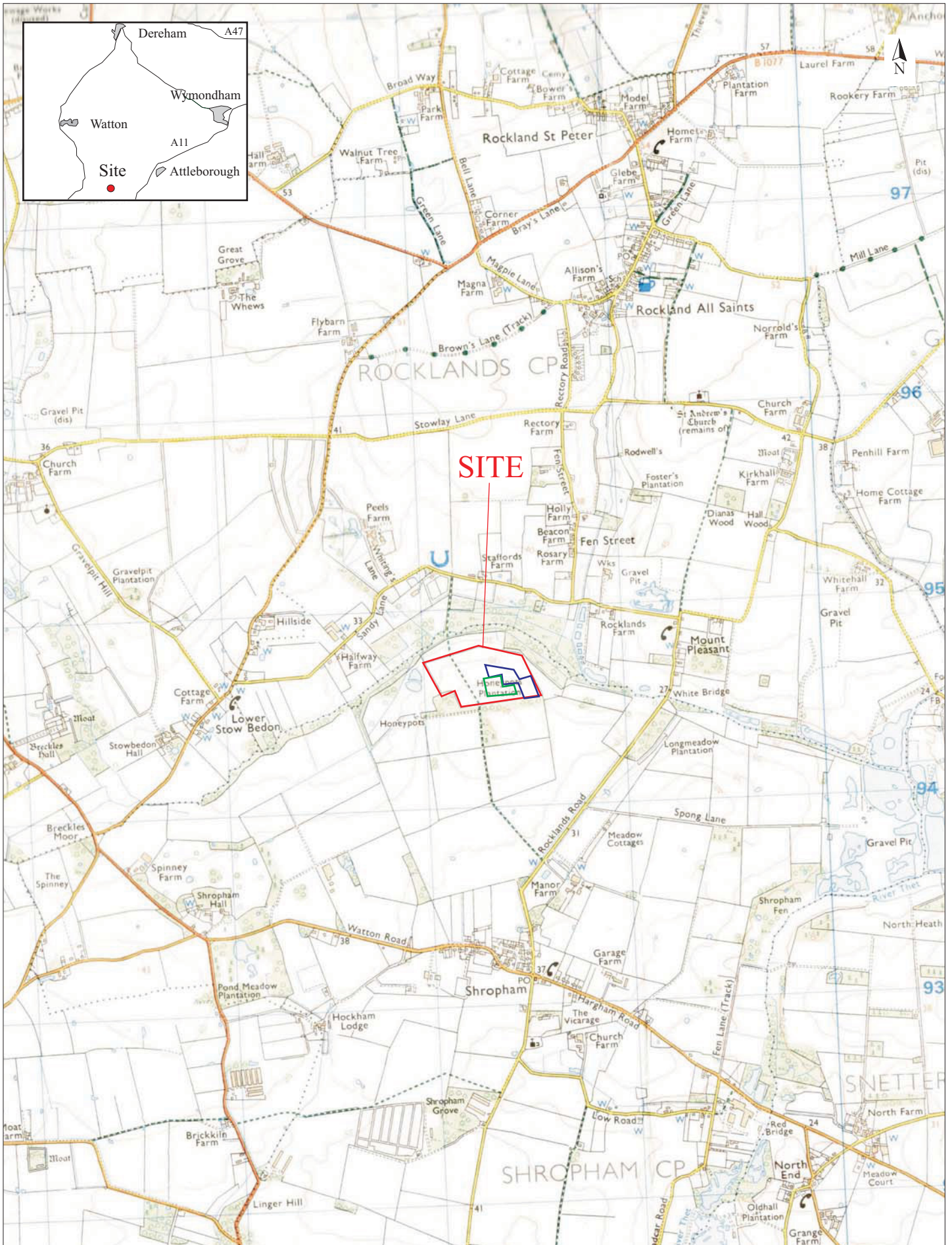
DP 2: Pit/Hearth F2004, view north



DP 3: Pit F2008, view east

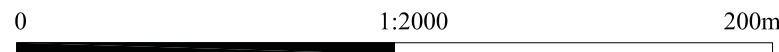
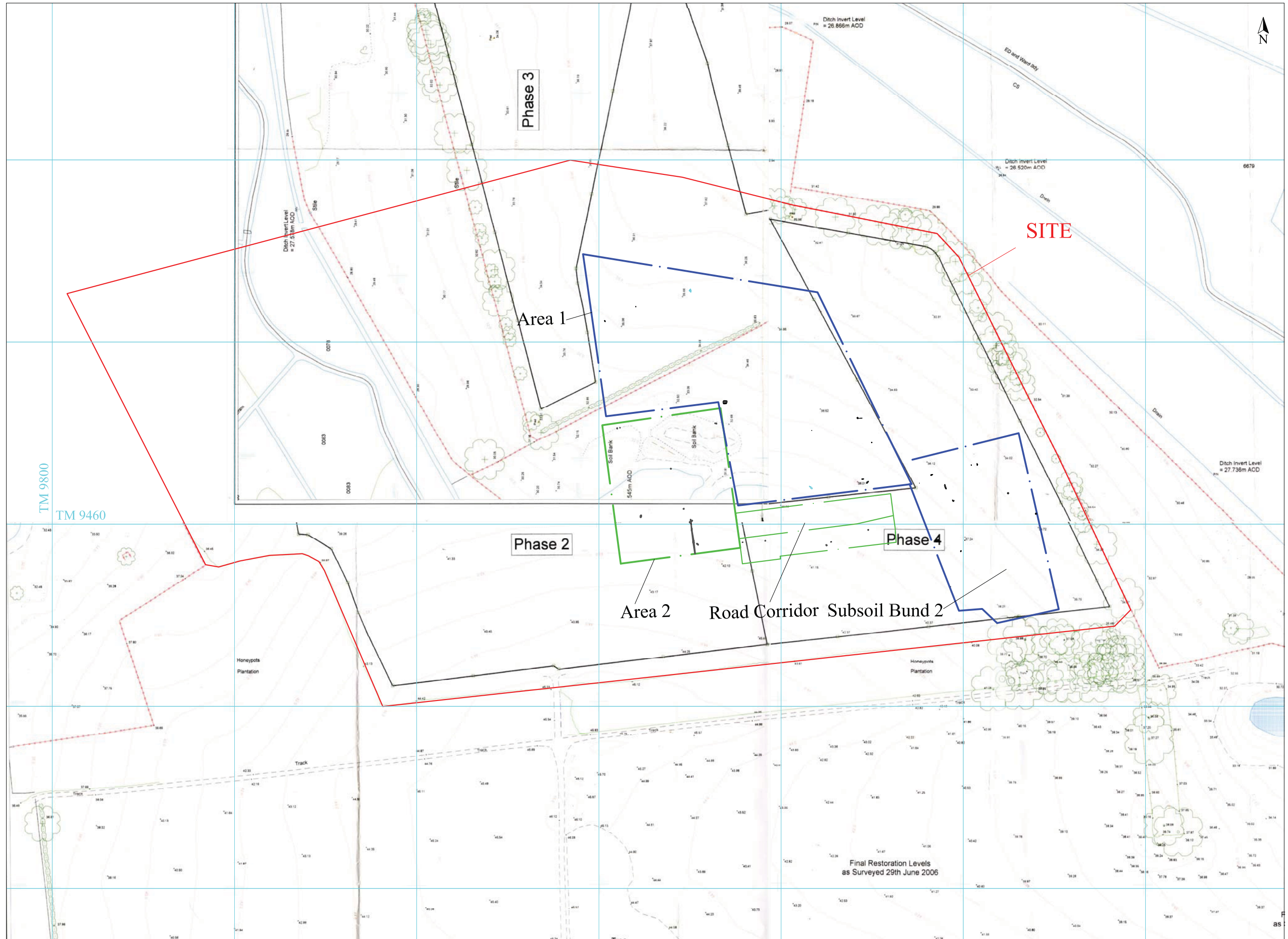


DP 4: Pit F2011, view north



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Fig. 1 Site location
 Scale 1 : 25,000 at A4



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Fig. 2 Detailed site location plan
 Scale 1:2000 at A3