

ARCHAEOLOGICAL DESK BASED ASSESSMENT

FOSSE ROAD MAINS REFURBISHMENT SCHEME

STRATTON ON THE FOSSE

SOMERSET

NGR: ST 6580 5089 (centre)

JOB N^o: BA1219BWSTF



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AUGUST 2012



Contents

| | |
|--|----|
| 1. Executive Summary | 3 |
| 2. Introduction | 4 |
| 3. Methodology | 6 |
| 4. Site Specific Analysis | 8 |
| 5. Conclusion | 15 |
| 6. Mitigation and Engineering – Considerations thereof | 16 |
| 7. Copyright | 16 |
| 8. Bibliography | 17 |
| 9. Cartography & Aerial Photography | 17 |
| 10. Appendix 1: Site Visit Illustrations | 18 |

Frontispiece: View looking NNE along Fosseway opposite Village Hall, Stratton on the Fosse

Report specification

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1. Executive Summary

This archaeological desk-based assessment of proposed water mains refurbishment works at Stratton on the Fosse has identified that the works are likely to expose Roman road surfaces of the Fosseway dating from the 1st to 4th centuries AD.

Exposure of Roman building remains and settlement evidence alongside the Fosseway is possible but markedly less likely.

The vast majority of the proposed refurbishment works lie within established roadways, where, apart from the Fosseway (see above), little of archaeological significance is likely to be observed.

One possible exception is Middlemead which may overlies Roman settlement. However, the same area has been compromised archaeologically by the building works associated with 20th century gasworks and housing development which is likely to have resulted in a high level of below-ground disturbance.

- *The potential for encountering evidence (in the sides of opened trench sections) of Roman road surfaces of the Fosseway must be considered **High**, particularly in view of the fact that evidence of the Roman road was previously identified during excavations for the laying of a water pipe along Fosseway (opposite St Benedict's Church) at an approximate depth of 0.5m below existing ground level.*
- *The potential for encountering Roman building remains or settlement evidence (in the sides of opened trench sections) must be considered as **Low**.*
- *The potential for encountering significant archaeological remains (in the sides of opened trench sections) of the medieval period must be considered as **Low** given the trench locations.*
- *Post-medieval road surfacing and associated features, although likely to be encountered, are considered to be of **low** significance in archaeological terms.*

Border Archaeology thus concludes, in common with other areas of Roman road impacted by engineering works, that archaeological observation of the open cut trenching in the Fosseway is appropriate.



2. Introduction

Border Archaeology undertook this desk-based assessment on behalf of Bristol Water to assess the archaeological implications of water mains refurbishment works at Stratton on the Fosse, Somerset including works directly on the course of the former Roman road known as the Fosseway (*fig. 1*).

The proposed refurbishment works will take place on the course of the existing main, principally on Fosseway, Middlemead, Church Lane and South Street, amounting to c.525m of trenching (*fig. 2*).

Copies of this assessment will be supplied to Bristol Water and to Stephen Membery, Senior Historic Environment Officer, Somerset County Council.

2.1 Soils and Geology

The predominant soil type identified in the vicinity of the works comprises the CREDITON series (541e) consisting of a gritty and usually well-drained loamy soil (SSEW, 1983, Sheet 5). The underlying solid geology is Dolomitic Conglomerate of the Triassic period (BGS 1985, Sheet 281).

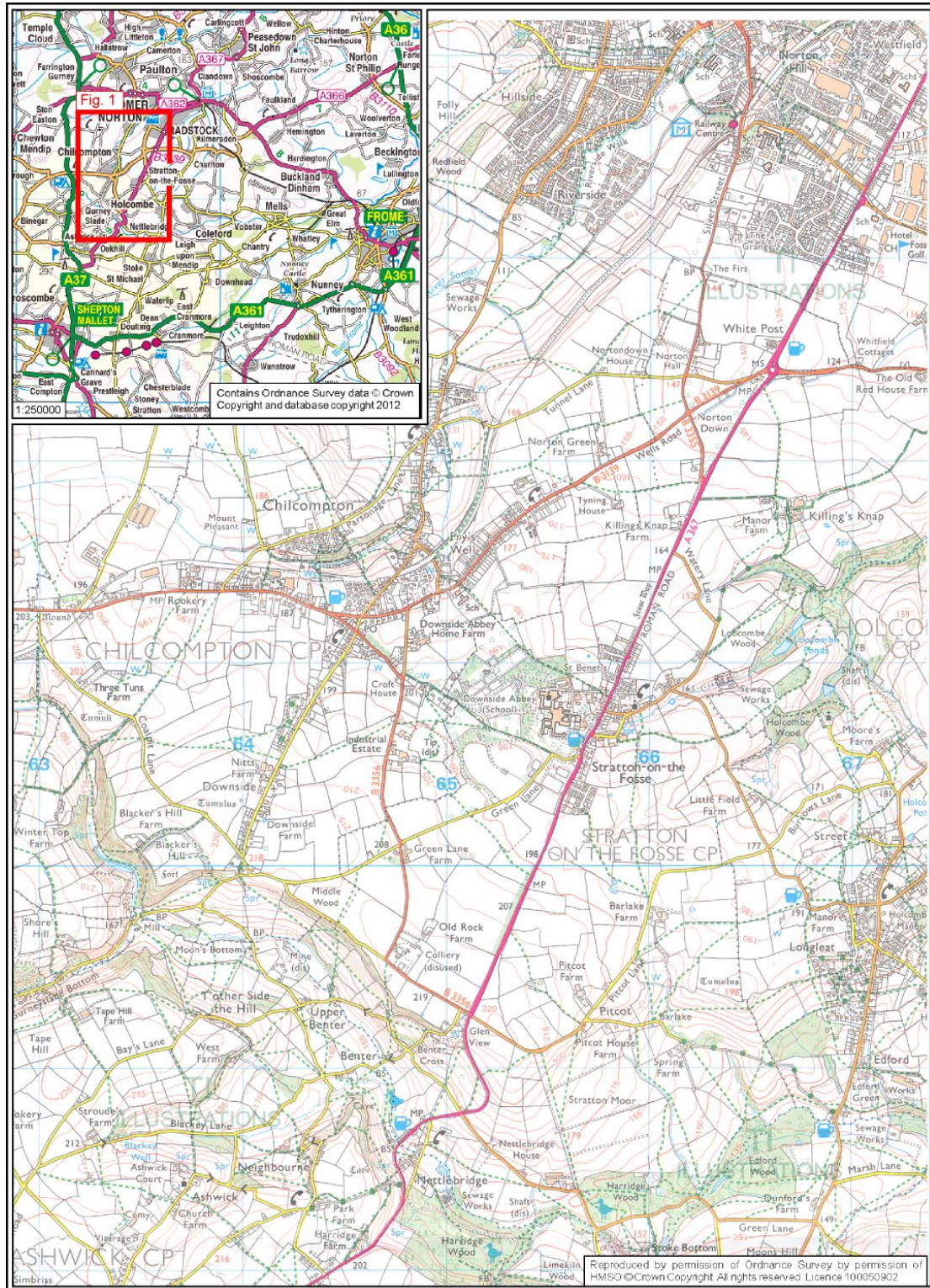


Fig. 1: Site Location Plan

3. Methodology

3.1 Archaeological Assessment

3.1.1 Research Aims

This archaeological desk-based assessment seeks to identify any known or potential archaeological resource within the study area and to establish its character, extent, quality and importance, within a local, regional and national context.

3.1.2 Research Methods

The research carried out for this archaeological desk-based assessment consisted of the following elements:

3.1.3 Evaluation and study of archaeological databases

A search was made of the National Monuments Record (English Heritage) and the Somerset County Council Historic Environment Record (SCCHER) for any sites of historic or archaeological interest in the vicinity of the proposed works.

3.1.4 Evaluation and study of primary sources

Primary documentary sources relating to the study area where deemed necessary were consulted at the Somerset Heritage Centre.

3.1.5 Evaluation and study of secondary sources

Secondary sources relating to the study area were consulted using the collections held at the Somerset Heritage Centre, Norton Fitzwarren and the Westcountry Studies Library, Exeter.

3.1.6 Evaluation and study of cartographic and other pictorial evidence

The tithe maps for Stratton on the Fosse and Midsomer Norton (1840) were consulted at the Somerset Heritage Centre. Copies of the Ordnance Survey 1st and 2nd edition 6 inch and 25 inch maps of the late 19th and early 20th centuries were obtained from the Somerset Heritage Centre. Note that the OS 2nd edition (Sheet 29.10) was not available for study. A modern OS 1:25000 map (1998) was obtained for reference purposes.

Aerial photographic records, including vertical and oblique photos, ranging from 1946 to 2005, were consulted via the SCCHER online mapping services.

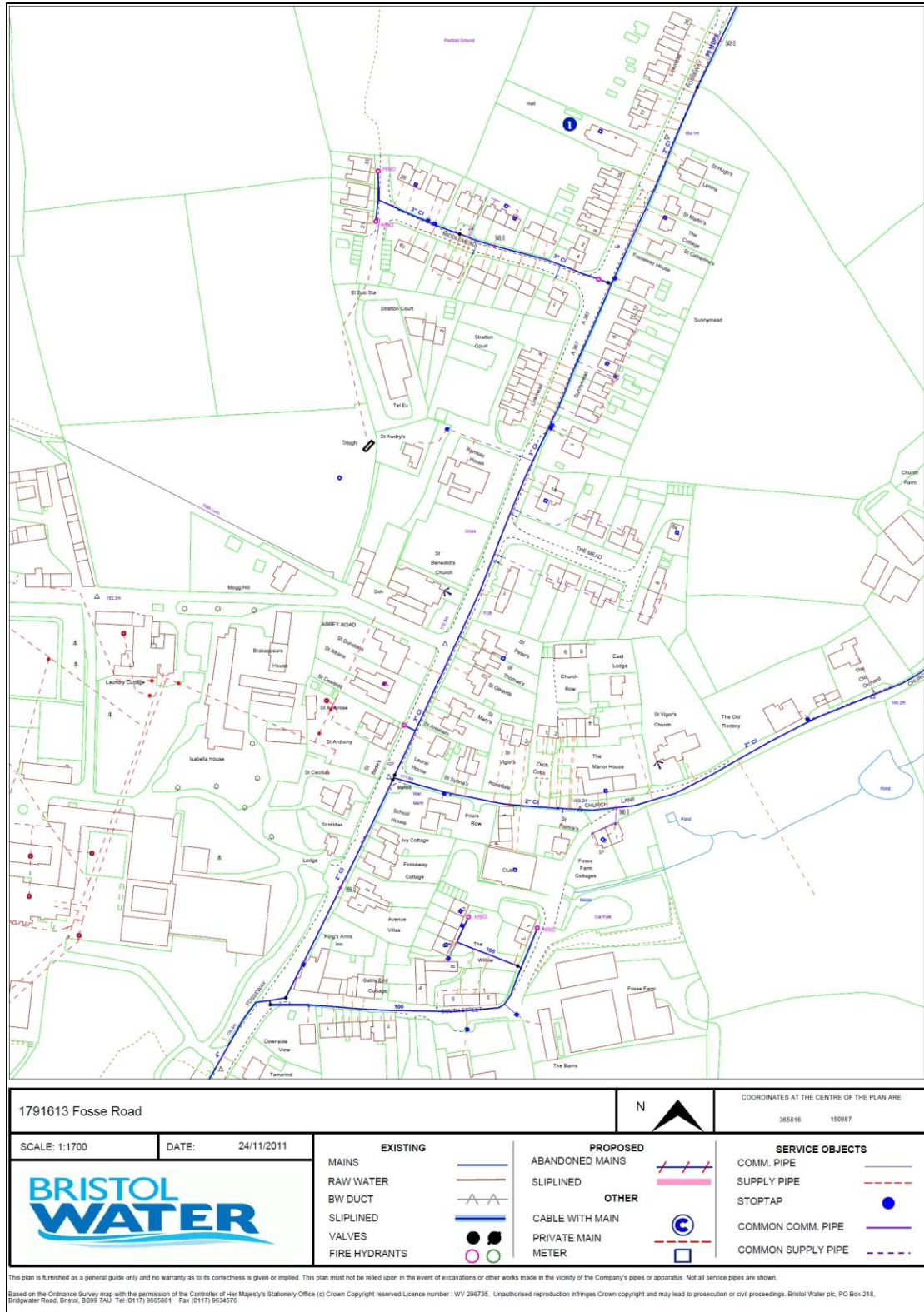


Fig. 2: Bristol Water scheme plan (Scale 1:1700) showing location of proposed mains refurbishment works at Stratton on the Fosse

4. Site Specific Analysis

The specific study area comprises an area both on and to either side of the Fosseway (A367), in the village of Stratton on the Fosse, within which some 525m of water-main refurbishment works are to be undertaken. At least half of these works are intended to take place on the course of the Fosseway itself, the former Roman road which linked the Roman towns of Exeter, Bath and Lincoln (*fig. 2*).

4.1 Consultation of Archaeological Records

This section analyses the information available from records of archaeological work carried out in the vicinity of the proposed pipeline route and discusses its implications for the nature of the archaeological resource within the study area and the likely depth and survival of significant archaeological deposits and features.

4.1.1 Conservation areas

The proposed works do not lie within any designated conservation area.

4.1.2 Historic Landscape Characterisation

The Historic Landscape Characterisation programme provides a framework for broadening our understanding of the whole landscape and contributes to decisions affecting tomorrow's landscape. Relevant historic landscape characterisation information was supplied by Somerset Historic Environment Record. The landscape at Stratton on the Fosse has been characterised as settlement with largely pre-19th settlement occurring east of the Fosseway and post-tithe map (1840) development to the west of it.

4.1.3 Scheduled Ancient Monuments & Listed Buildings

The proposed works do not run through or near any Scheduled Ancient Monuments (SAMs). A significant site, particularly for the post-medieval development of Stratton on the Fosse (see below), is Downside Abbey the 19th and 20th century Roman Catholic abbey and school complex which includes a number of Listed Buildings of various grades within its grounds, including the Grade I Abbey Church of St Gregory the Great (Som 21614) and the Grade II* Monastery of St Gregory The Great (Som 20470), although these lie well to the west of proposed works.

However, the proposed works are adjacent to the following listed buildings and these have been included, together with their HER number on Fig. 3: Church of St Vigor, Church Lane (Som 21601) Listed at Grade 1; The Manor House, Church Lane, Listed at Grade II (Som 21606); The Old Rectory, Church Lane (Som 21607) Listed at Grade II; St Benedict's RC Church, Fosseway (Som 16768) Listed at Grade II; The War Memorial, corner of Church Lane and Fosseway (Som 21613) Listed at Grade II.



4.1.4 Archaeological Sites

The Somerset Historic Environment Record (HER) was consulted to determine the nature and extent of the archaeological resource within an area deemed to be appropriate for the purposes of the assessment; the search radius was established at approximately 100m in width (50m on either side of the Fosseway). Where appropriate a wider area was then examined in order to provide some localised archaeological reference in order to aid discussion.

Those sites identified from the HER and shown on Fig. 3 include: Som 25167, the site of fishponds of post-medieval date associated with Downside Abbey and the burial ground site associated with St Benedict's Church (Som 17001), and the site of the old village gasworks (Som 29189) of early 19th century date.

Those sites identified from the HER which lie on the periphery of the route, but which nevertheless contribute to an understanding of the archaeological resource of the study area, include a flint scatter to the east of the Fosseway (Som 15723) and evidence of a Roman building (settlement) north of Stratton on the Fosse on the west side of the Fosseway (Som 44773).

- **Prehistoric and Roman**

A flint scatter (Som 15723) was identified during field-walking in an area east of Stratton on the Fosse, near Holcombe Wood (at NGR ST 663 508). This appears to be the closest known evidence for prehistoric activity within what could be termed the wider study area. It was uncertain whether the activity was of the Neolithic or Bronze Age periods.

The Fosseway is an important Roman road, the route of which may have been established at an early stage in the Roman occupation of Britain (*i.e.* from AD43). It linked two legionary fortresses (Lincoln and Exeter) and passed through both Bath to the north of Stratton on the Fosse and Ilchester to its south. In his seminal book on Roman roads, Margary (1955, 115-17) describes the route of the road (Margary 5b) from Ilchester to Bath and refers to the discovery in 1910 of a section of the Roman road opposite St Benedict's R.C. Church, where 'the old road surface was found during pipe-laying at a depth of 20 inches (approximately 0.5m), formed of cobbles laid lengthways but sometimes transversely to the road, with an average thickness of 9 inches, usually in one layer but in two if the stones were very small,' (*ibid.*, 116).

Peter Leach (2001, 65-72) has described some of the known Roman settlement which has been discovered alongside the Fosseway. The site of Fosse Lane near Shepton Mallet just to the south of Stratton on the Fosse is cited as a typical Roman roadside settlement and is compared favourably with sites such as Camerton and Stratton on Fosse itself (*ibid.*, 70-1). The evidence for Roman roadside settlement at Stratton on the Fosse is provided by excavations of the 1990s which revealed the wall foundations of a large building which appeared to have had a colonnaded entrance facing the Fosseway (Som 25527); it has been provisionally dated to the late 2nd century-mid 3rd century. The building is located just beyond and to the west of the proposed area of refurbishment works but provides an indication that further Roman roadside settlement could have occurred alongside the Fosseway within the study area. Geophysical survey undertaken in the vicinity of the building recovered evidence of an extensive field system (Som 57105 and 25527).

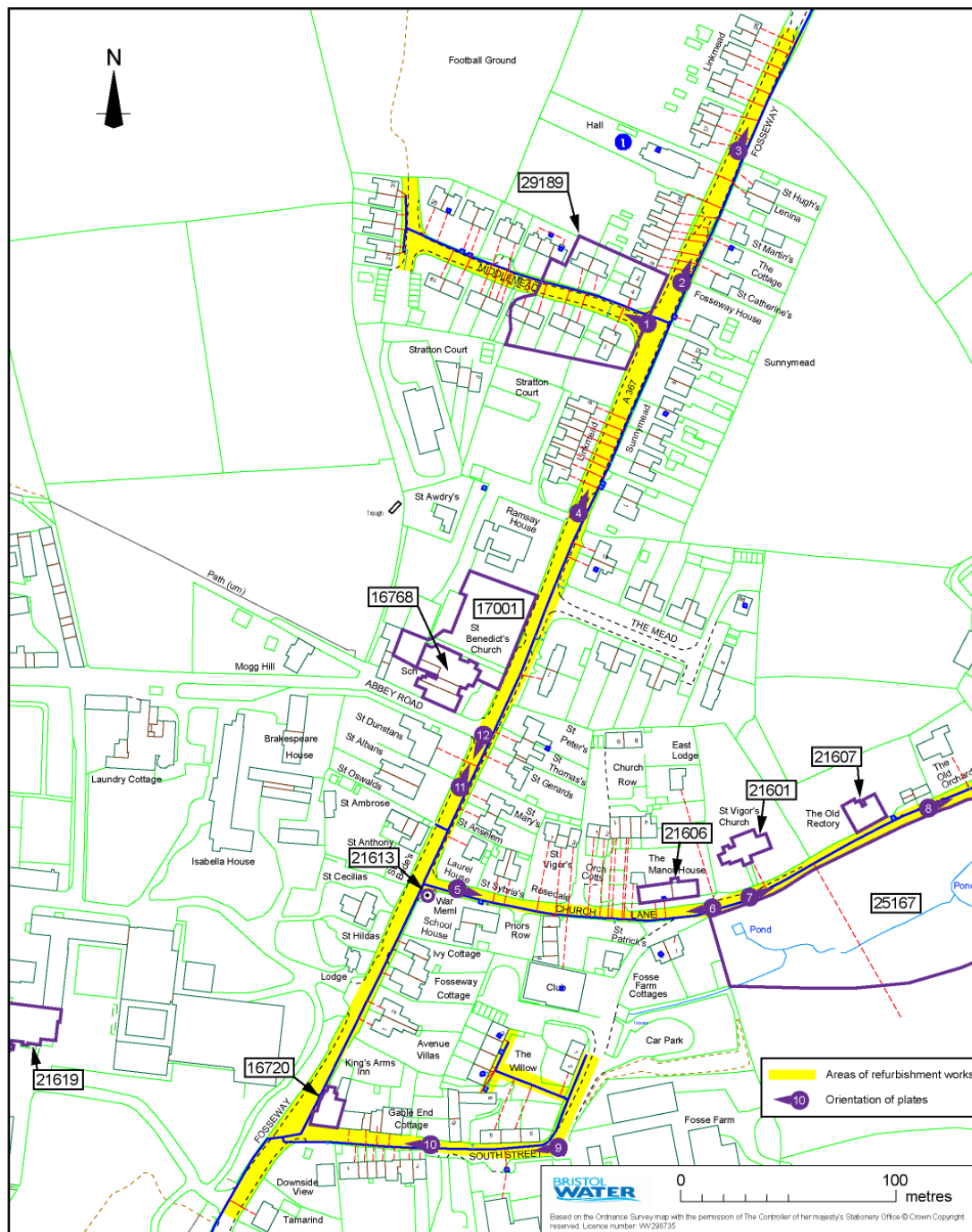


Fig. 3: Plan showing locations of archaeological sites recorded in the Somerset Historic Environment Record in the vicinity of the proposed route (highlighted in yellow)

• Medieval

Recorded evidence of medieval archaeology within the study area is extremely limited in scope. Early settlement is likely to have grown principally around the east side of the Fosseway in the area between Church Lane and South Street. The Church of St Vigor on Church Lane (Som 21601) is probably of 12th century origin.

• Post-Medieval

Identified buildings of the early post-medieval period are recorded in Church Lane. These include The Manor House (Som 21606) and The Old Rectory (Som 21607); both are Listed Buildings at Grade II. The stone-built Manor House retains 17th century fabric with 18th and 20th century alterations whilst the random rubble-built Old Rectory is late 18th-early 19th century, although it may retain some medieval fabric.

The character and size of Stratton on the Fosse changed markedly during the 19th century with the arrival of the Benedictine Roman Catholic community in 1814. The community were responsible for the construction of Downside Abbey, including its Abbey Church (Som 21614), started in 1882 and completed in 1938, the monastery buildings (Som 20470) of the late 19th century and St Benedict's Church (Som 16768) of 1857. The community were also instrumental in the expansion of housing, particularly on the west side of the Fosseway but also on the east side and they were probably the creators of the fishponds off Church Lane (Som 25167).

A war memorial (Som 21613) of was erected at the corner of Church Lane and Fosseway in 1918.

| HER No | NGR | Description |
|--------|--------------|--|
| 15723 | ST 663 508 | Flint scatter of Neolithic or Bronze Age character |
| 16768 | ST 6578 5085 | St Benedict's RC Church, Fosseway (listed Grade II) |
| 17001 | ST6580 5088 | Burial Ground of St Benedict's Church, Fosseway |
| 17007 | ST 6560 5079 | Burial Ground, Downside Abbey |
| 20470 | ST 6546 5079 | Monastery of St Gregory The Great (listed Grade II*) |
| 21601 | ST 6592 5078 | Church of St .Vigor, Church Lane (listed Grade I) |
| 21602 | ST 6594 5079 | Monument to Dorothea Day in churchyard of St Vigor (listed Grade II) |
| 21603 | ST 6593 5077 | Monuments to Salmon family in churchyard of St Vigor (listed Grade II) |
| 21604 | ST 6593 5076 | Unidentified monument in churchyard of St Vigor (listed Grade II) |
| 21606 | ST 6589 5076 | The Manor House, Church Lane (listed Grade II) |
| 21607 | ST 6598 5080 | The Old Rectory, Church Lane (listed Grade II) |
| 21608 | ST 6664 5172 | Manor Farmhouse, Fosseway (listed Grade II*) |
| 21613 | ST 6577 5075 | War Memorial, Fosseway (listed Grade II) |
| 21614 | ST 6550 5084 | Abbey Church of St Gregory, Downside Abbey (listed Grade I) |
| 21619 | ST 6556 5070 | Downside School, Fosseway, (listed Grade II*) |
| 21620 | ST 6573 5065 | The King's Arms, South Street (listed Grade II) |
| 25167 | ST 660 507 | Fishponds south of Church Lane |
| 25527 | ST 659512 | Excavations on west side of Fosse Way: Roman building, settlement evidence and post-medieval farmstead |
| 44773 | ST 659 512 | Roman settlement north of Stratton on the Fosse |
| 57105 | ST 6586 5129 | Geophysical Survey north of Stratton on the Fosse |

Table 1: Gazetteer of historic environment assets within the vicinity of the study area recorded in the Somerset Historic Environment Record. Some listed buildings and sites beyond the immediate study area are included for reference and discussion purposes

4.2 Documentary Study and Map Regression

This section will consider the evidence of historic documents, maps and pictorial evidence (including drawings, paintings and photographs) relating to the area traversed by the pipeline route.

4.2.1 Medieval to c.1850

The first documentary record of settlement at Stratton on the Fosse occurs in Domesday Book (1086), where it was held by William of Monceaux from the bishop (Thorn and Thorn 1980, 5.43). Historic Landscape Characterisation (see above 4.1.2) has recognised settlement of different periods on either side of the Fosseway. However, the tithe maps of Midsomer Norton (1840) and Stratton on the Fosse (1840) give a clear picture of the landscape of the mid-19th century (*fig. 4*).

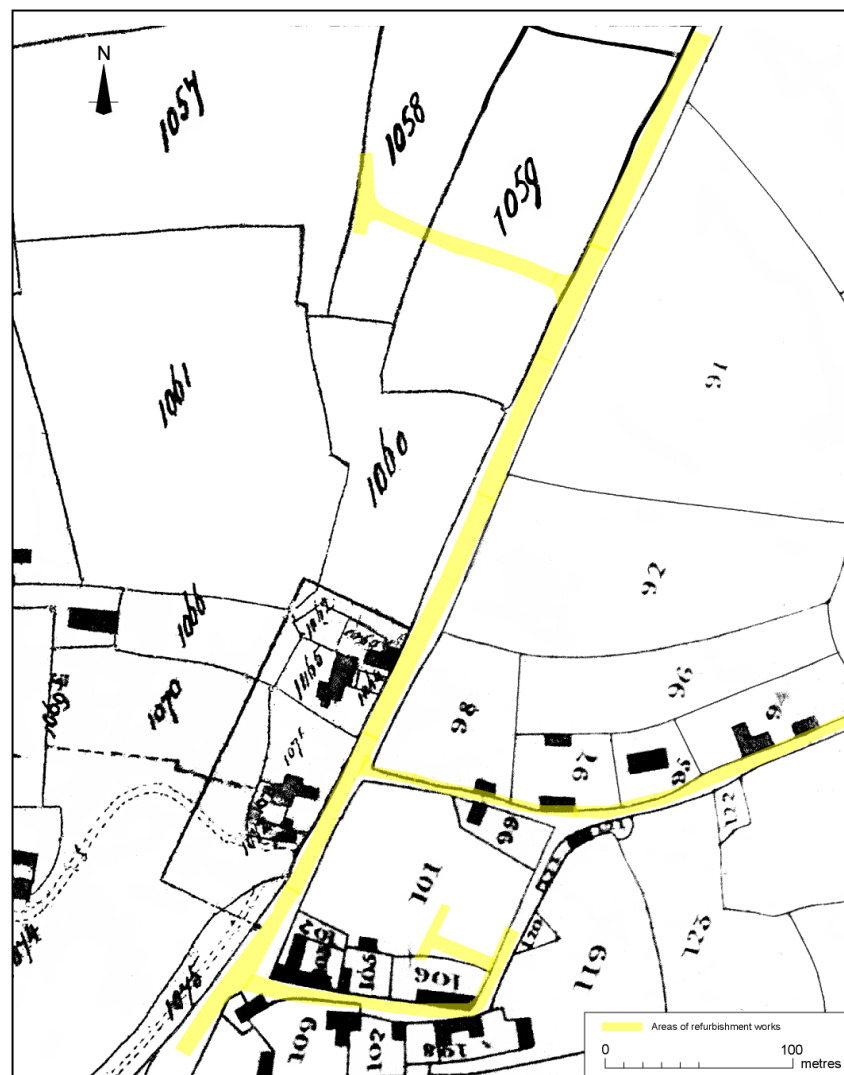


Fig. 4: Extract from the Stratton on the Fosse tithe map of 1840 and the Midsomer Norton tithe map of 1840

(Reproduced by courtesy of Somerset Heritage Centre)

Within Midsomer Norton parish, Downside House, the seat of the Benedictine Catholic community, had been constructed by 1839 along with some outbuildings and houses (including plots 1065 and 1071) on the west side of Fosseway, opposite Church Lane, whilst the land around had been enclosed and was being farmed mainly as pasture. The two fields where the later gasworks and Middlemead were to be constructed were both pasture, plot 1059, that closest to the Fosseway, being known as 'The Four Acres' and that behind it (plot 1058) as 'The Three Acres'.

On the other side of the Fosseway, within Stratton on the Fosse parish, the extent of development along South Street and Church Lane may be seen (*fig. 4*). Buildings such as the Old Rectory (plot 94), St Vigor's Church (plot 95), The Manor House (plot 97), The Malthouse (plot 106) and The Kings Arms (plot 102) are all clearly identifiable. The 'village' is surrounded by enclosed fields, which, at the time of the tithe assessment, were largely pasture. An area of pasture (plot 101) had been retained between Church Lane and South Street; this was known as 'The Willie'.

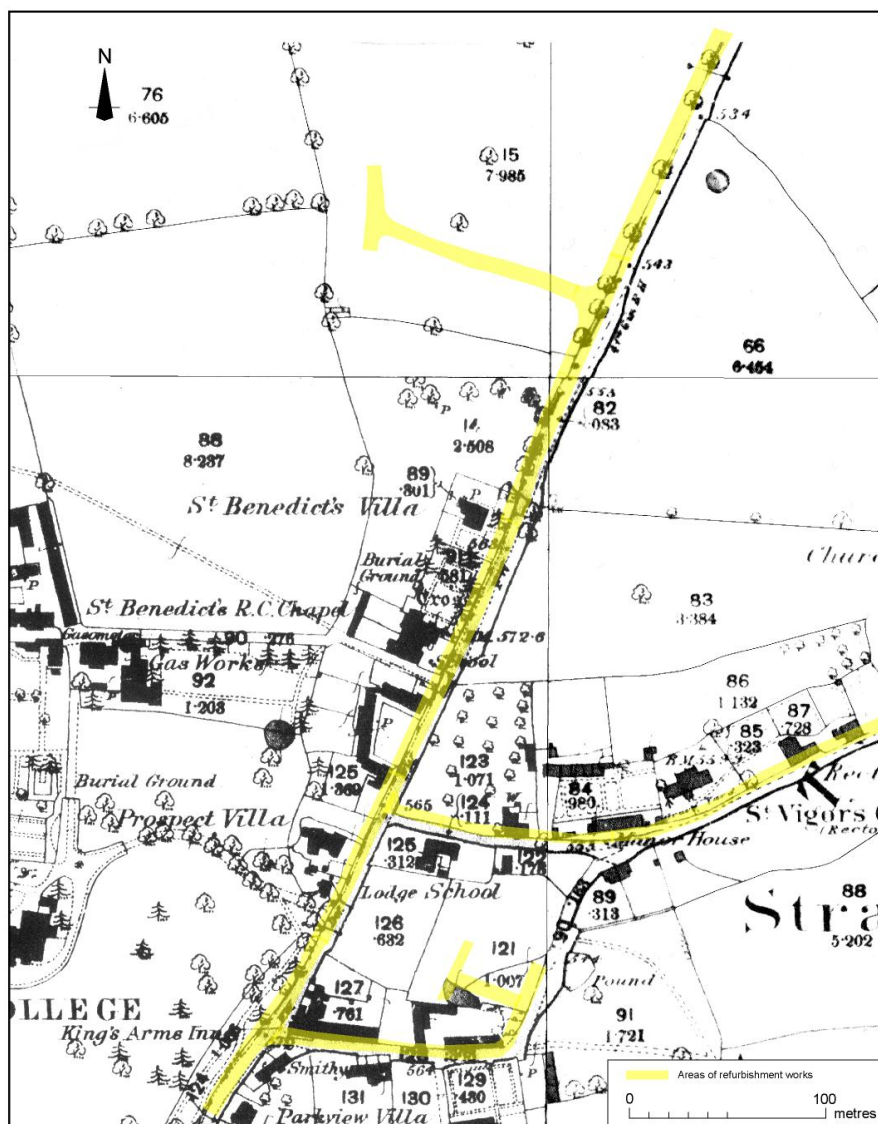


Fig. 5: Extract from the OS 1st edition 25 inch map of 1884
(Reproduced by courtesy of Somerset Heritage Centre)

4.2.2 c. 1850 – c. 1903

The expansion of Downside Abbey and its community is known to have continued throughout the latter half of the 19th century and the 1st edition OS map of around 1884 shows this, with St Benedict's Church and Villa and Prospect Villa all having been constructed by this date (*fig. 5*). The burial ground associated with St Benedict's Chapel is also shown. The area around modern Middlemead is shown as undeveloped fields.

4.2.3 c. 1903 to present

In the early part of the 20th century, further buildings associated with Downside Abbey were constructed and housing appeared on the west side of Fosseway north of St Benedict's Villa; this may be seen on the OS 2nd edition map of around 1903 (*fig. 6*). The village gasworks had also been constructed by this date. Note that part of this map (Sheet 29.10) further to the east of Stratton on the Fosse was not available for study. On the east side of Fosseway no properties are shown north of Church Lane in 1903. However, housing development there had taken place by the 1930s, when the revised OS 2nd edition map was surveyed, and the properties of Laurel House, St Anselm, St Marys, St Gerrards, St Thomas's and St Peters were all constructed by 1930.

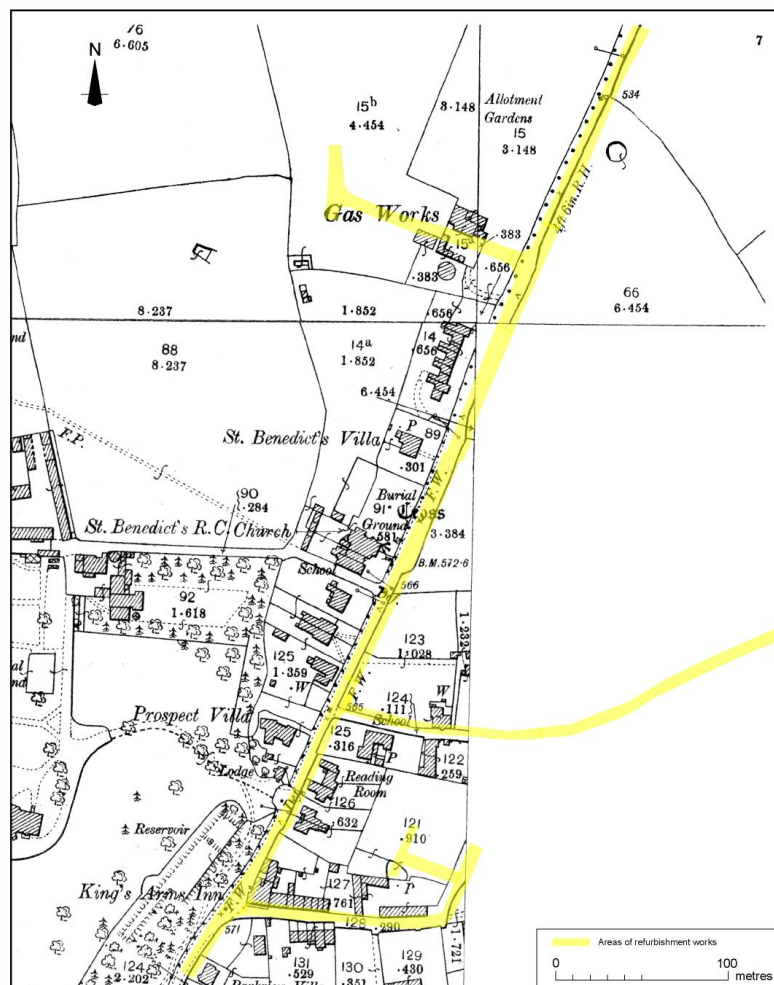


Fig. 6: Extract from the OS 2nd edition 25 inch map of 1903
(Reproduced by courtesy of Somerset Heritage Centre)



An aerial photograph of 1946 held by the Somerset County Council HER on their online services shows the village gasworks still extant at that date and before they were demolished to make way for the housing development and the street known as Middlemead. A more recent aerial photograph of 2001 (also held by SCC HER) shows the housing development in its existing form – no additional features of interest were noted in the vicinity of the route.

5. Conclusion

This archaeological desk-based assessment, based on a detailed consultation of available sources of archaeological and historical information, has concluded that the proposed refurbishment works will take place on the course of a known Roman road (The Fosseway), which was a road of great importance during the Roman period in Britain linking towns and cities virtually across the length of the Province.

Such was its importance it was retained as a route in the post-Roman and medieval periods and large stretches of it survived into the modern era. It still acts as a recognised routeway for motorised transport over much of its length, particularly in Somerset, where it provides part of the route of the A37 trunk road and the A367 where it passes through Stratton on the Fosse.

Given the comments made previously in 1910 (see section 4.1.4 above) with regard to observations of the Fosseway Roman road fabric at a depth of 20 inches (51cm) and its thickness of 9 inches (23cm), it would seem likely that similar observations of the road and its depth below current ground level, might be expected within the sides of the proposed refurbishment trenches, which are expected to reach a depth of between 0.9-1m.

Elsewhere, a Roman building has been established by excavation on the west side of Fosseway, just north of and outside the scope of works; it has been suggested that settlement evidence associated with this building might extend down the Fosseway to Middlemead and beyond. However, such evidence, if it does exist, is likely to have been significantly disturbed and perhaps largely destroyed, first by the construction of the village gasworks in the 20th century and, second, by the construction of post-Second World War housing on the same site, following demolition of the gasworks.

Nothing has emerged during the course of this assessment which would suggest that significant archaeological evidence of periods other than the Roman might be encountered. Although post-medieval road surfaces might be seen, these features may be determined as being only of local significance.



6. Mitigation and Engineering – Considerations thereof

The mains refurbishment scheme entails the replacement of 525m of 3inch water main, principally along Fosseway, Middlemead, Church Lane and South Street.

This methodology will require open-cut trenching as pipe-bursting is deemed impracticable, although this may be subject to revision following the excavation of test-holes.

The proposed open-cut trenching will be 500mm wide and the likely depth reached during the course of the works to refurbish old mains pipes is 0.9-1.0m.

Due to the nature and locations of the engineering works (with particular reference to the Fosseway, where evidence of the Roman road was previously identified at a depth of 0.5m below existing ground level) it would seem apposite that archaeological observation would be the most realistic mitigation strategy. Border Archaeology will consult Stephen Membury (Senior Historic Environment Officer, Somerset County Council) for confirmation thereof.

6.1 Site Visit

The proposed mains refurbishment works occur on and to either side of Fosseway, Stratton on the Fosse.

All of the proposed locations for works were visited during the course of the site visit on June 26th 2012 and a photographic record was made of all roads and streets where works are to take place (see Plates 1-12 below).

The nature of the Fosseway as a Roman road is unmistakeable and this is seen to effect in Plates 3 and 12.

7. Copyright

Border Archaeology shall retain full copyright of any commissioned reports, tender documents or other project documents, under the Copyright, Designs & Patents Act 1988 with all rights reserved; excepting that it hereby provides an exclusive licence to the client for the use of the report by the client in all matters directly relating to the project as described in the Project Specification.

8. Bibliography

Primary Sources

Somerset Archives

D\D\Rt/A/246 - Tithe apportionment for Stratton on the Fosse parish - 1840

D\D\Rt/A/286 - Tithe apportionment for Midsomer Norton parish - 1839

Secondary Sources

Somerset Historic Environment Record – HER Printout and Backup Files (inc. Historic Landscape Characterisation)

National Monuments Record – NMR Printout and Backup Files

Leach, P. 2001, *Roman Somerset*

Margary, I., 1955, *Roman roads in Britain: Volume 1*

Thorn, C. & Thorn F. (eds), 1980, *Somerset Domesday*

9. Cartography & Aerial Photography

D\D\Rt/M/246 - Tithe map for Stratton on the Fosse parish - 1840

D\D\Rt/M/286 - Tithe map for Midsomer Norton parish - 1840

OS 1st edition 25 inch Map (Somerset 29.5; 29.6; 29.9; 29.10) - c.1884

OS 2nd Edition 6-inch Map (Somerset 29.5; 29.6; 29.9) – c.1903

OS 1:25000 Explorer map 142, 1998

OS Roman Britain: Historical Map, South Sheet, 5th edition, 2001

BGS (British Geological Survey of Great Britain) 1985, Sheet 281.

Soil Survey of England & Wales 1:250,000 map of Soils of South West England, 1983

Aerial photograph 1946 - on-line Somerset CC HER:

<http://webapp1.somerset.gov.uk/her/map.asp?mapx=365467&mapy=150790>

Aerial photograph - 2005 - on-line Somerset CC HER:

<http://webapp1.somerset.gov.uk/her/map.asp?mapx=365467&mapy=150790>

10. Appendix 1: Site Visit Illustrations



Plate 1. Middlemead: view looking WNW from junction with Fosseway



Plate 2. Fosseway: view looking NNE from opposite Fosseway House.



Plate 3. Fosseway: view looking NNE from opposite Village Hall.



Plate 4. Fosseway: view looking NNE from Ramsey House.



Plate 5. Church Lane: view looking east from Fosseway.



Plate 6. Church Lane: view looking west from junction with South Street.



Plate 7. Church Lane: view looking NE outside St Vigor's Church.



Plate 8. Church Lane: view looking NE from outside The Old Orchard.



Plate 9. South Street: view looking west from The Barns.



Plate 10. South Street: view looking west from outside Gable End Cottages.



Plate 11. Fosseway: view looking NE from outside St Albans.



Plate 12. Fosseway: view looking SW from outside St Dunstons.



Document Control

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|--------------------------|--|---------------|--------------------------------------|
| Job title | Archaeological Desk Based Assessment: Fosse Road Mains Refurbishment Scheme, Stratton on the Fosse | Job No | BA1219BWSTF |
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| Issue No | Status | Date | Approved for issue |
| 1 | Final | August 2012 | <i>Neil Shurety Dip M.GM Inst. M</i> |