

Archaeological Impact Assessment

For

JBA Consulting

On behalf of

Network Rail

Concerning

Skinner's Lock (Kintbury) Railway

Bridge

West Berkshire

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1 Executive Summary

This Archaeological Impact Assessment of proposed engineering works affecting an existing railway bridge at Skinner's Lock (near Kintbury, West Berkshire), undertaken by Border Archaeology Ltd (BAL), has reached the following conclusions regarding the potential archaeological impact:

The proposed development will have no permanent effect on any archaeological or heritage assets beyond the railway bridge itself, which will be destroyed.

The table below summarises the likely effects of the proposed engineering works upon heritage assets, as well as potential mitigation strategies:

<i>Effect of Engineering Works upon Heritage Assets & Potential Mitigation Strategies</i>				
Heritage Item	Significance	Impact	Description	Mitigation
Railway bridge	Low	Major adverse	19 th -century bridge. To be demolished	Written and photographic record

2 Introduction

This Archaeological Impact Assessment was undertaken by Border Archaeology Ltd (BAL) in response to an Instruction from JBA Consulting as part of an Environmental Statement on behalf of Network Rail regarding proposed engineering works affecting the existing railway bridge at Skinner's Lock (*fig. 1*).

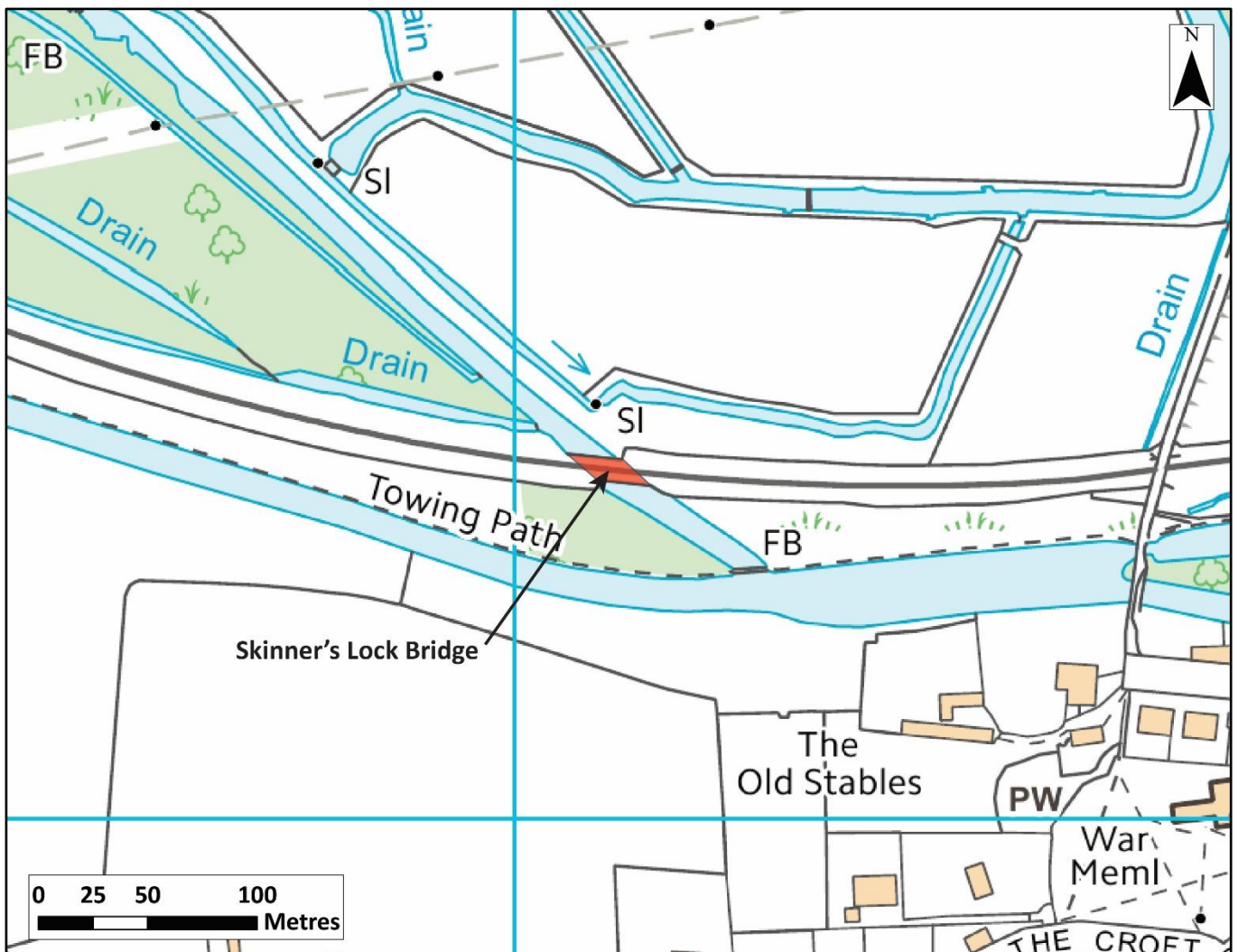


Fig. 1: Site Location Plan

The proposed engineering work involves:

- Removing Skinner's Lock railway bridge, in-filling the void and placing 3 × 1500mm pipes to take the flow through the embankment
- Creating about 500m of temporary access tracks and compound areas

2.1 Site Description

The proposed engineering works relate to the bridge named Skinner’s Lock on the Great Western Railway about 150m NW of Kintbury village (West Berkshire) at NGR: SU 38044 67159. The railway bridge overlies a canalised section of the river Kennet which flows into the Kennet & Avon Canal 30m to the south. The bridge is an unlisted 19th-century iron structure.

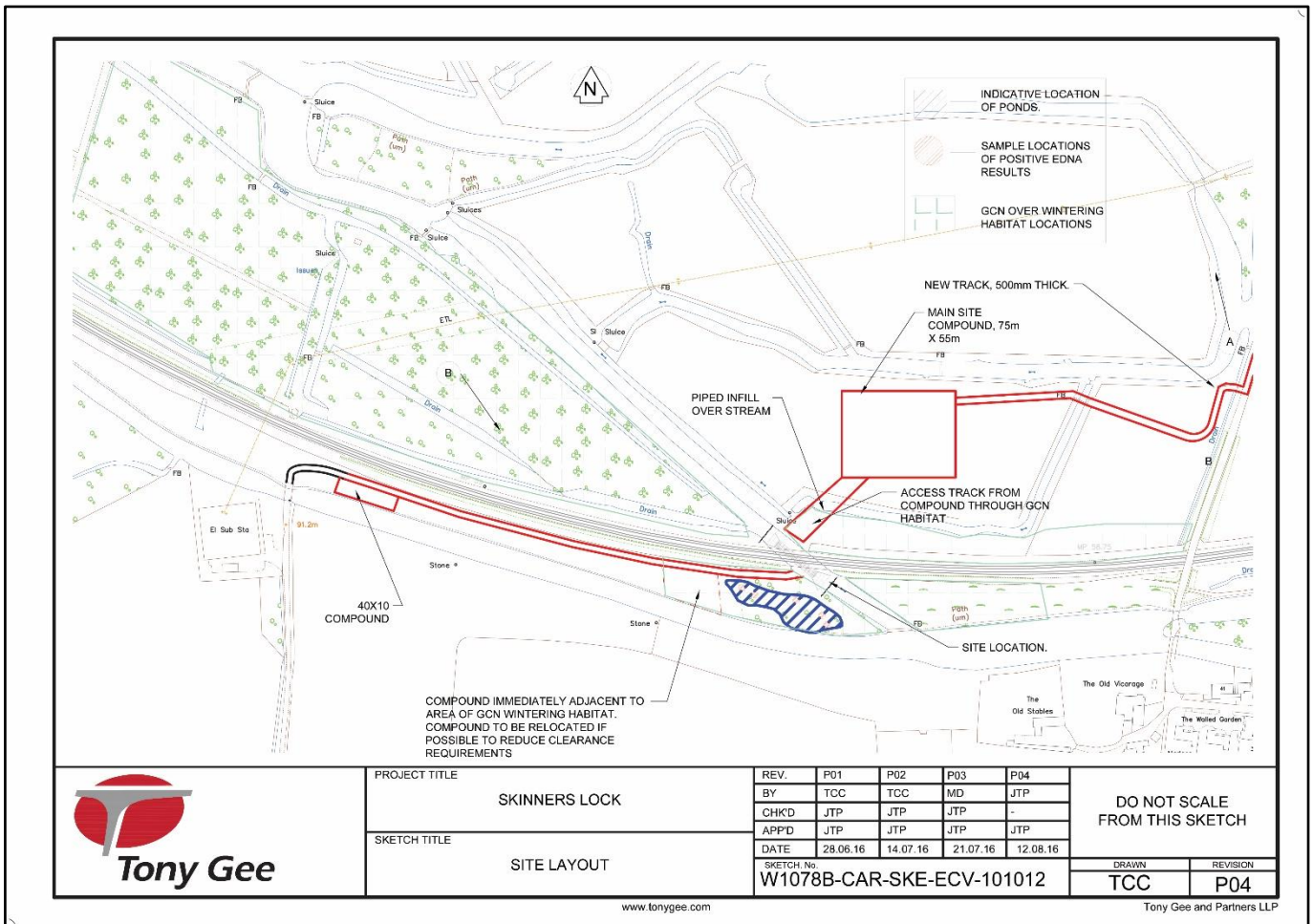


Fig. 2: Engineering Plan supplied to BAL by client

2.1.1 Soils & Geology

The site overlies chalky and gravelly river alluvium of the FROME series (812a) which consist of shallow calcareous and non-calcareous loamy soils over flint gravel, with small areas of peat (SSEW 1983).

3 Assessment Approach

3.1 Methodology

3.1.1 Assessment of Significance

The significance of the heritage assets likely to be affected by the engineering works is defined according to the following scale, which has been adapted from standard sources in the literature:

Table 1: Table for Measuring Significance of Heritage Assets	
Significance	Description
Very High	World Heritage Sites Assets of acknowledged international importance
High	Scheduled Ancient Monuments Listed buildings Registered Historic Parks and Gardens Historic Battlefield Assets that can contribute significantly to acknowledged national research objectives
Medium	Local Authority designated sites, e.g. Conservation Areas and their settings Undesignated sites of demonstrable regional importance
Low	Sites with significance to local interest groups Sites of which the significance is limited by poor preservation and poor survival of contextual associations

The effects of the Proposed Development upon heritage assets are defined according to the following matrix:

Table 2: Table for Measuring Impact of Development upon Heritage Assets	
Impact	Description
Major Adverse	Heritage feature is destroyed
Moderate Adverse	Heritage feature is partially destroyed
Minor Adverse	Heritage feature is slightly compromised
Neutral/not significant	No effect on heritage feature
Minor beneficial	Heritage feature is slightly improved
Moderate beneficial	Heritage feature is enhanced
Major beneficial	Heritage feature is greatly preserved and enhanced

3.2 Legislative & Policy Framework

3.2.1 Legislation

Archaeology is covered by parliamentary acts and planning laws; the main ones are listed below.

The Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Areas Act 1979 consolidates earlier legislation on the definition and protection of Scheduled Monuments and authorisation of works affecting Scheduled Monuments, as well as providing for rescue excavation in designated Areas of Archaeological Importance.

Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990: (England and Wales) covers the designation of Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas and the authorisation of works by local planning authorities.

No Scheduled Monuments or Listed Buildings lie within the Application Site.

3.2.2 Planning Guidance

The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF published 27 March 2012) advises Local Authorities to create a positive strategy for the historic environment in their Local Plan.

In line with the National Planning Policy Framework, local authorities should set out in their Local Plan a positive strategy for the conservation and enjoyment of the historic environment. Such a strategy should recognise that conservation is not a passive exercise. In developing their strategy, local planning authorities should identify specific opportunities within their area for the conservation and enhancement of heritage assets. This could include, where appropriate, the delivery of development within their settings that will make a positive contribution to, or better reveal the significance of, the heritage asset.

The delivery of the strategy may require the development of specific policies, for example, in relation to use of buildings and design of new development and infrastructure. Local planning authorities should consider the relationship and impact of other policies on the delivery of the strategy for conservation (Paragraph 004 NPPF).

The NPPF states that appropriate conservation of heritage assets forms one of the Core Planning Principles that underpin the planning system.

Paragraph 040 (Ref ID 18a-040-20140306) of the NPPF categorises heritage assets into those that are nationally important and are treated under legislation, and those (the much larger category) that are less important. This latter group is still subject to the conservation objective within the NPPF.

Decision-taking regarding such assets requires a proportionate response by local planning authorities. Where an initial assessment indicates that the site on which development is proposed includes or has potential to include heritage assets with archaeological interest, applicants should be required to submit an appropriate desk-based assessment and, where necessary, a field evaluation. However, it is estimated following an initial assessment of archaeological interest only a small proportion – around 3 per cent – of all planning applications justify a requirement for detailed assessment (Para 039).

The National Planning Policy Framework broadly incorporates principles published in earlier Planning Policy Guidances (PPGs) issued in the 1990s. Those relevant to archaeology are given below.

PPG 12, 1992: (England) Covers the preparation of development plans by local authorities including the role of environmental assessments in plan preparation.

PPG 15, 1994: (England) Explains the role of the planning system in the protection of historic buildings, conservation areas and other elements of the historic environment.

PPG 16, 1990: (England) Advises on assessing the archaeological implications of development and early consultation with HERs (Heritage Environment Records) in assessing the impact of planning applications on archaeology.

3.2.3 Scoping Criteria

In 2015 BAL undertook an Archaeological Desk-Based Assessment (DBA) in order to investigate the potential effects of the engineering works upon the archaeology of the site at Skinners Lock Railway Bridge (Border Archaeology 2015). The DBA found that the proposed engineering works will have minimal impact on the archaeology or heritage assets in the area.

4 Assessment

4.1 Baseline Conditions

The proposed development at Skinner's Lock involves:

- The existing railway bridge to be demolished
- The void to be infilled and 3 × 1500mm pipes inserted to carry the flow through the embankment
- Creating temporary access tracks and compound areas

4.1.1 Archaeological Background

The work will involve little or no below ground disturbance and as such will not affect known or potential archaeology or heritage features except for the railway bridge itself.

The Railway Bridge is an unlisted 19th -century railway bridge spanning a tributary of the River Kennet (HER MWB20246). The bridge forms part of the Great Western Railway (GWR) branch line between Reading and Hungerford, opened as the Berks & Hants Line in 1847 (HER MWB6063). This line remains in use as part of the Reading-to-Taunton line.

The bridge is unlisted, but recorded on the West Berkshire HER, its significance as a heritage asset is therefore assessed as **Low**. The proposed engineering works will involve the destruction of the bridge, the impact upon the asset is therefore assessed as **Major Adverse**.

4.2 Assessment of Likely Significant Effects

The table below gives the significance of the features and the effect on them of the development:

<i>Table 3: Effect of the Proposed Engineering Works upon Heritage Assets</i>			
Heritage Item	Significance	Impact	Description
Railway bridge	Low	Major adverse	19 th -century railway bridge. To be demolished
Kennet & Avon Canal	High	Neutral	Although the canal is close to the site of railway bridge, the proposed engineering works will not affect the fabric of the waterway

5 Mitigation & Enhancement

5.1.1 Mitigation by Design

Restoration of access tracks and holding bays to present day conditions.

5.1.2 Additional Mitigation

Mitigation by Record

<i>Table 4: Mitigation</i>		
Feature	Impact	Mitigation
19 th -century railway bridge	Destruction of feature	Written and photographic record

The proposed development does not otherwise impact on the archaeological resource

5.1.3 Enhancements

None

5.1.4 Cumulative & In-Combination Effects

None

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7 Bibliography

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