



**Northamptonshire
County Council**

Northamptonshire Archaeology

Archaeological Watching Brief at

Harvey Reeves Road/ Sixfields

Northampton

April 2005



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June 2005

Report 05/93

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QUALITY CONTROL

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OASIS REPORT FORM

PROJECT DETAILS	
Project title	Sixfields - Harvey Reeves Road
Short description (250 words maximum)	In April 2005, a watching brief was undertaken on behalf of the HalcrowGroup Ltd acting for Northampton Borough Council for the excavation of a series of gas vent trenches on land at Harvey Reeves Road Sixfields in Northampton. The Watching Brief observed various layers of modern make-up and landfill. No archaeology was observed.
Project type	Watching Brief
Previous work (reference to organisation or SMR numbers etc)	
Future work (yes, no, unknown)	No
Monument type and period	Modern landfill
Significant finds (artefact type and period)	None
PROJECT LOCATION	
County	Northamptonshire
Site address	Harvey Reeves Road and Sixfields, St James, Northampton
Easting	4735
Northing	2601
Height OD	50 - 70m
PROJECT CREATORS	
Organisation	Northamptonshire Archaeology
Project brief originator	
Project Design originator	Northamptonshire Archaeology
Director/Supervisor	Carol Simmonds
Project Manager	Alex Thorne
Sponsor or funding body	Halcrow Group Ltd./ Northampton Borough Council
PROJECT DATE	
Start date	21/3/05
End date	30/4/05
ARCHIVES	
N. A	Content
Physical	
Paper	Plans, written records, plates
Digital	
BIBLIOGRAPHY	
Journal/monograph, published or forthcoming, or unpublished client report (NA report)	
Title	
Serial title & volume	
Author(s)	
Page numbers	
Date	

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**Archaeological Watching Brief at
Sixfields - Harvey Reeves Road**

Northampton

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Abstract

In April 2005 a watching brief was undertaken by Northamptonshire Archaeology on behalf of Halcrow Group Ltd acting for Northampton Borough Council for the excavation of vent trenches on land at Harvey Reeves Road, Sixfields in Northampton. The watching brief observed various layers of modern make-up and landfill deposits. No archaeology was observed.

1. INTRODUCTION

Northamptonshire Archaeology was commissioned by Molem on behalf of Northampton Borough Council (NBC) to undertake an archaeological watching brief on land at Sixfields, Harvey Reeves Road, St James Northampton (centred at NGR: SP 735 601, Fig 1). A condition was placed on the works by NBC who requested that a programme of archaeological works was implemented in accordance with an approved written scheme of investigation (Halcrow 2004d). The watching brief comprised the monitoring and recording of the excavation of a series of gas venting trenches around the northern perimeter of the site adjacent to the Northampton Saints RFC ground.

The area, comprising about 24 hectares, is sited to the south-west of Northampton, north of the River Nene. Most of the site falls within the 60-70m contour, with some within the 50-60m region. The northern third of the site is currently occupied by several sports pitches, which are to be retained. This is divided from the southern two-thirds, an area of un-used grass land, by a small watercourse. An embankment at the southern edge of the site divides it from the Duston Mill Reservoir (Plate 1).

Proposals for containing the existing landfill site at Harvey Reeves Road, Northampton, took place prior to redevelopment of the land (Halcrow 2004b). The redevelopment scheme comprised a wildlife area, a bus depot, car parking, a waste recycling centre and other commercial and industrial development. The proposed associated ground works include land reclamation, involving the construction of a cut off wall and reactive barrier to contain the existing land fill site, water course improvements and relining, soil improvement and the addition of gas venting trenches and stacks.

The area which was designated as requiring an archaeological watching brief is shown on Figure 2, correlated with Halcrow's areas E to C and J to O on map CBB/ADL/650/P1, which comprised a continuous watching brief during the excavation of gas vent trenches.

2. BACKGROUND

The site and its environs were previously farmland up to the late 19th century with some ironstone mining limited to the north-east area of the site. It had been extensively quarried for their sands and gravels in the mid 20th century. The former quarries were infilled with water, and used for landfill from 1962 to 1990. Duston Mill reservoir, which lies to the south of the site, was constructed in 1992 as an overflow flood defence to the River Nene.

Despite previous disturbance, it was concluded that there was the potential for undisturbed archaeological remains at the site boundary, between the quarrying and landfill. It was thought that these were likely to comprise Roman deposits relating to Duston Roman Town, and medieval deposits relating to the lands of St James' Abbey (Halcrow 2004d).

Boreholes from previous works by Halcrow (April 2004a and April 2004b) at the site suggest that there is a *c* 8.3m deposit of made ground across the site derived from a *c* 4.4m landfill capping which was a matrix of gravely clay and sand. The embankment between the site and the Duston Mill Reservoir comprised of made ground of brown sandy clay from 0.7 to 2.7m below ground level. Below this, alluvial deposits 0.5 m to 3.7m thick occur to a maximum depth of 8.5m below ground level. The site has been mapped on the British Geological Services Map Sheet 185 Northampton, Solid and Drift Edition 1978, deposits of brown/grey clayey, gravely sand are from River Terrace Gravel deposits. The deeper stratas comprising Glacial Lacustrine deposits over 30m deep, and the underlying Upper Lias clay were not reached, but have been confirmed at Sixfields, to the west.

3. OBJECTIVES

The overall objectives of the watching brief were set out in the scheme. These were to identify, record and retrieve, as far as practicable, archaeological features and artefacts relating to Duston Roman Town or St James Abbey lands.

Specific objectives were as follows:

- ❖ To observe and record the gas vent trench excavations and the extent and nature of the construction ground works
- ❖ To record all deposits, both archaeological and archaeologically negative deposits
- ❖ To make a drawn, written and photographic record of all archaeological deposits comprising deposits, features and structures
- ❖ To retrieve environmental and artefactual evidence from all archaeological deposits affected by the construction process
- ❖ To identify any significant archaeological remains which are worthy of detailed examination under controlled archaeological conditions

4. WATCHING BRIEF METHODOLOGY

The works were designated a unique site code (SHRR 05).

Continuous archaeological observation was maintained during the removal of all deposits overlying the natural geology, i.e. topsoil, subsoil, made ground. The strategy employed by Halcrow's contractors was to first excavate a set of five test pits, followed by a series of 0.70m wide trenches with two teams of JCBs. They averaged a depth of 2.50m, although occasionally they extended down to a depth of 4m. The total trench length was *circa* 730m (Fig 3 and Plate 2).

Observations were made on standard Northamptonshire Archaeology pro-forma watching brief forms and continuation sheets. As well as the location of the ground works, the name of the observer and date of the observation, free text recorded the type, method and depth of the works (correlated with Ordnance Datum), the nature of any constraints preventing the observation of archaeological deposits (such as visibility of remains, the inability to record deposits on health and safety considerations) or the confidence in negative evidence, and a full description of the nature and state of preservation of archaeological remains. Those areas which were not affected by the construction were described for future mitigation. All deposits including modern disturbance were described, each with a unique numerical deposit or context number.

The text was accompanied by annotated sketches with measurements of depths and thicknesses of deposits, and measured sketches of all, including archaeological, deposits observed. If more detail was required in areas of complicated finer stratigraphy, the sketches were accompanied by scaled plans and sections. All observations were also annotated on an overall site plan at an appropriate scale. Annotations were made to copies of the principal contractor's proposed works plan if available.

A photographic record was maintained of the works, including pre- and post-excavation shots, views of representative stratigraphical sequences and details of individual and groups of archaeological remains. Photographs were taken in both colour slide and monochrome 35mm film formats. Each shot included a title with the relevant contexts and site code, the direction of north and a photographic scale where practicable. Record shots were also taken of the site in general and re-instated trenches (Plate 3).

5. DESCRIPTION

No archaeological features were revealed in the process of this watching brief. However, in the test pits and the ensuing excavation of vent trenches a series of modern make-up deposits were identified.

Test Pits

Five initial test-pits were excavated in advance of the gas vent trenches, located in the northern part of the Harvey Reeves area (Fig 3). They were excavated at points along the line of the proposed vent trench.

Test Pits 1 and 2 both had a depth of 3.50m and consisted of a sandy clay topsoil with a layer of modern rubble below.

Test Pit 3 was 2.50m deep and had a orangey brown sandy topsoil overlying a redeposited grey-brown sandy clay.

Test Pit 4 was 2.50m deep, the top 0.50m of which was a orangey-brown sandy topsoil with modern machine made brick. Below this was a deposit of mixed modern rubble and rubbish including plastic containers within a sandy clay.

Test Pit 5 was 2.50m deep and consisted of a top deposit of orange brown sand with brick rubble. Below this was a mixed clay layer with modern rubbish including plastic.

No archaeology was observed in any of the Test Pits.

Excavation of Gas Vent Trenches

There were seven trenches each measuring 0.70m wide, located in the northern part of the Harvey Reeves area (Fig 3).

Trench 1

Trench 1 was 23m long and was located within the Halcrow easement area J to K. It was 4m deep and aligned south-west to north-east. Trench 1 consisted of made ground containing modern brick, stone, metal and wood. No archaeology was observed.

Trench 2

Trench 2 was 30m long and was located within the Halcrow easement area J to K. It was 4m deep and was aligned south-west to north-east. There was a brown sandy topsoil with two layers of make-up below. No archaeology was observed.

Trench 3 (Fig 4: Section 1; Plate 4)

Trench 3 was 96m long and was located within the Halcrow easement area M to N. It was 2.5m deep and was aligned south-east to north-west. There was a brown sandy topsoil with a depth of 0.07m above a sandy make-up layer with a depth of 0.10m. Below this were three layers of make-up. These included a brown silty clay with rubble and waste 0.30m deep. A black sand 0.33m deep and a mixed brownish orange sand with a depth of 0.20m. Below this was a fine orange sand which was 1.50m deep. No archaeology was observed.

Trench 4 (Fig 4: Section 2)

Trench 4 was 242m long and was located within the Halcrow easement area K to L. the trench averaged 4m deep at the western end and 3m towards the east. It was on a west to east alignment. This trench was adjacent to the private road that is around the edge of the practice sports pitches. To the top of the trench was 0.61m worth of road surface material including red hardcore. Below this was a thin make-up/sealing layer of black silty clay with a depth of 0.15m. The remainder of the trench was infilled with a dark brown silty clay with building material debris, black plastic and semi-degraded waste. No archaeology was observed.

Trench 5 (Fig 4: Section 3; Plate 5)

Trench 5 was 174m long and was located within the Halcrow easement area L to M. it had a average depth of 2.5m. It was aligned north-east to south-west and ran parallel with the private access road for the practice sports pitches. At the eastern end a soakaway and associated pipe were uncovered. This was backfilled and trench

began again 6m along from end of trench. Below the road surface the deposits were the same as in trench 3. This however, changed from 45m from the east end of trench 5 where the depth of trench averaged 3m. Below the road surface there was a dark brown silty clay with landfill waste (brick, wood, metal, glass and plastic). The water table appeared at a depth of 3m. No archaeology was observed.

Trench 6 (Plates 2 and 6)

Trench 6 was 42m long and was located within the Halcrow easement area N to N1. It averaged a depth of 1.50m. It was aligned south-east to north-west to the north of man-made Sharman Road Lake. At the top of the trench there was a topsoil to the depth of *circa* 0.10m. Below this was a re-deposited brown sandy clay. No landfill or archaeological features were observed.

Trench 7

Trench 7 was 100m long and was located within the Halcrow easement area O1 to O. it had an average depth of 2m. It was aligned south-east to north-west parallel with section B, Westbridge Brook. The upper 1m comprised of modern rubbish including rubber, leather, and glass bottles. The lower deposits comprised of undisturbed brown clayey sand over a dark grey clay. No archaeology was observed.

6. DISCUSSION

The watching brief observed no archaeological features relating to any period or any possible aspects of Duston Roman Town or St James Abbey.

The Ground Investigation Report (Halcrow 2004a) indicated that the land had been quarried in the 19th century and subsequently infilled with waste until the late 20th century. The watching brief confirmed the presence of landfill and subsequent made ground which was used to raise the ground level. This corresponds with the results of the ground investigative survey which showed that the landfill was expected to be 5.90m thick; but the trenches having been a maximum of 4m deep meant that the base of landfill wasn't generally reached (Halcrow 2004c. Thus for most of the site no other deposits apart from made-ground and landfill were seen. The exception to this came in Trench 7, where undisturbed natural material was uncovered 1m below the current ground surface.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

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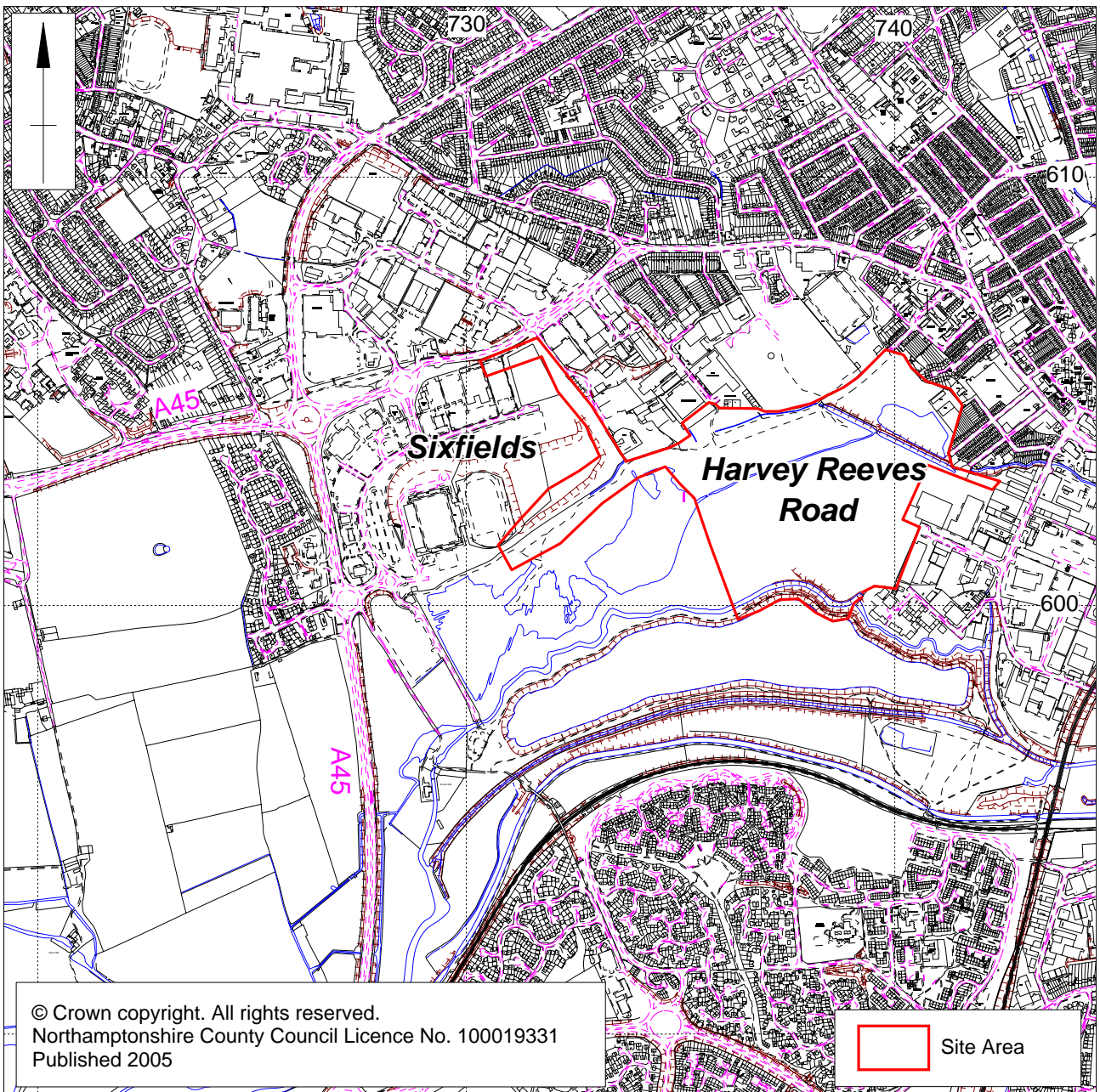
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Halcrow, April 2004b *Northampton Joint initiative Harvey Reeves Road and Sixfields: Harvey Reeves Road Ground Investigation Interpretative Report*

Halcrow, July 2004c, *English Partnerships and Northampton Borough Council Joint Venture, Sixfields and Harvey Reeves Road. Stage 3 Advanced Land Reclamation works Pre-Construction (Outline) Health and Safety Plan*

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Scale 1:15,000

Fig. 1

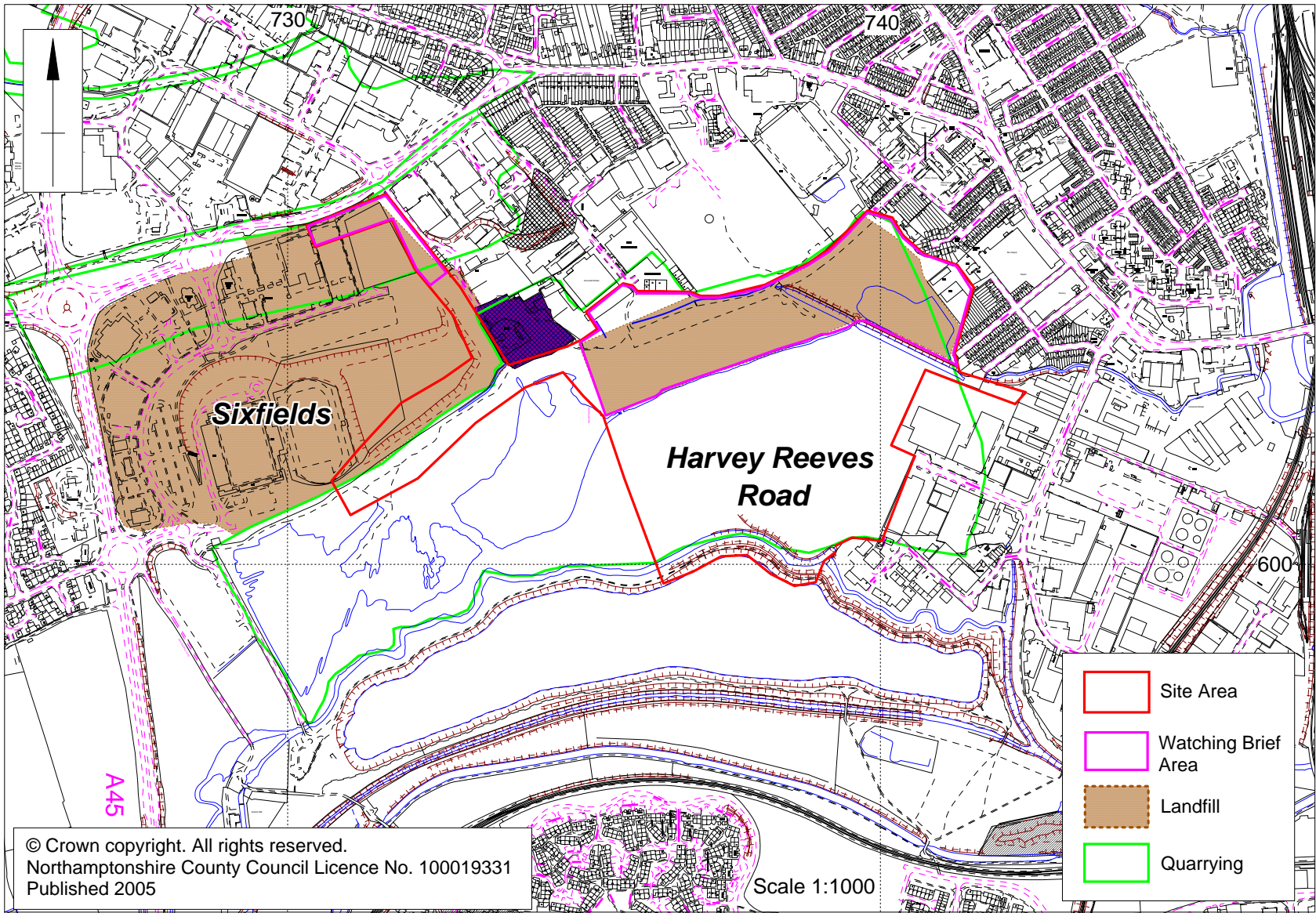


Fig. 2

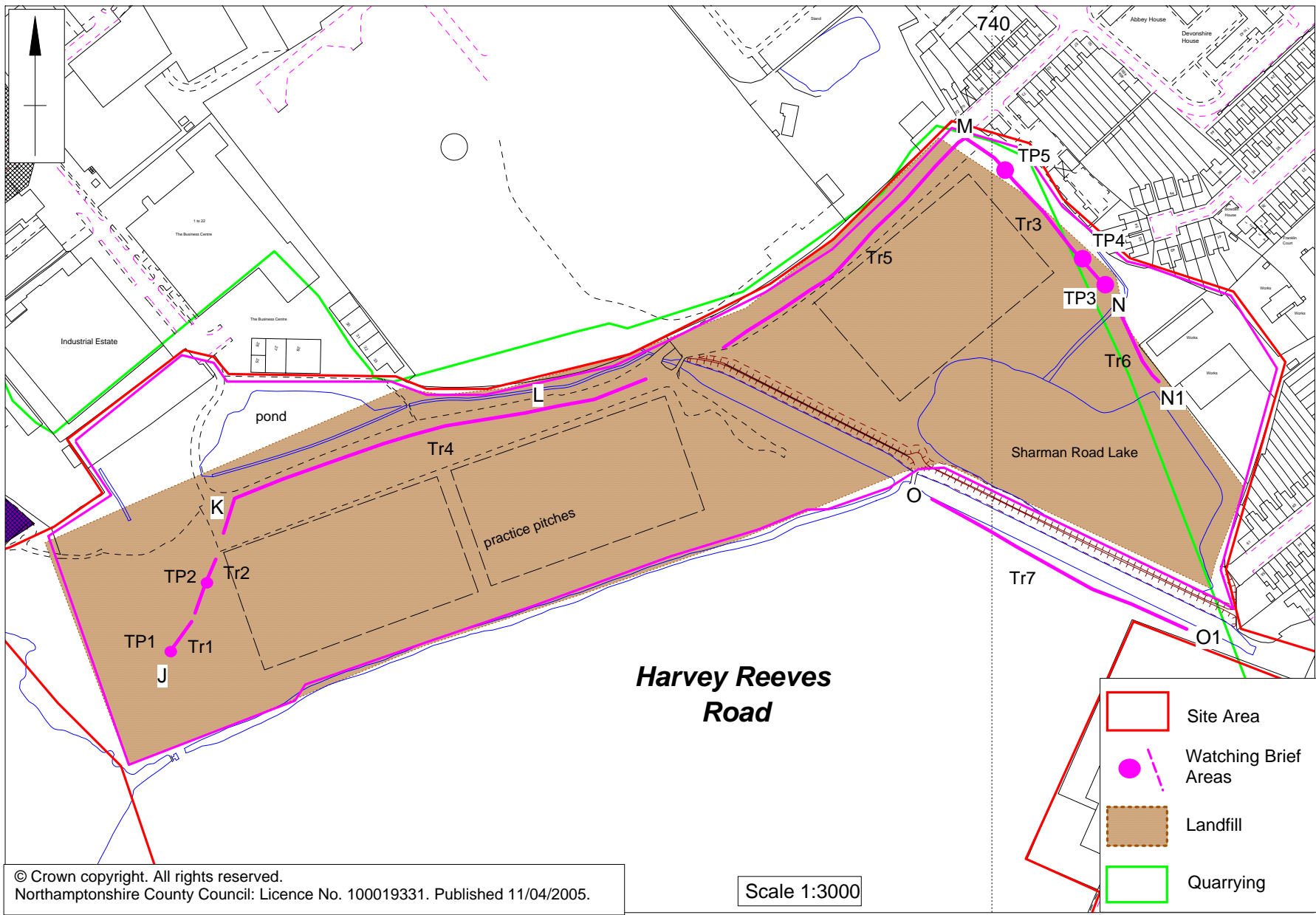
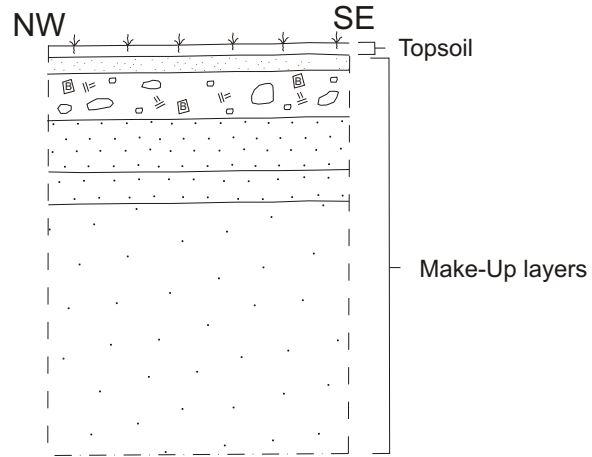


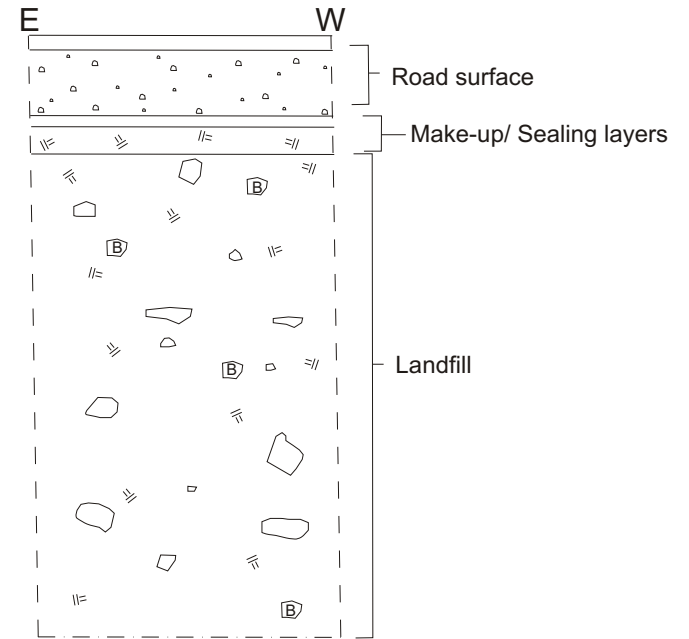
Fig. 3

Sections

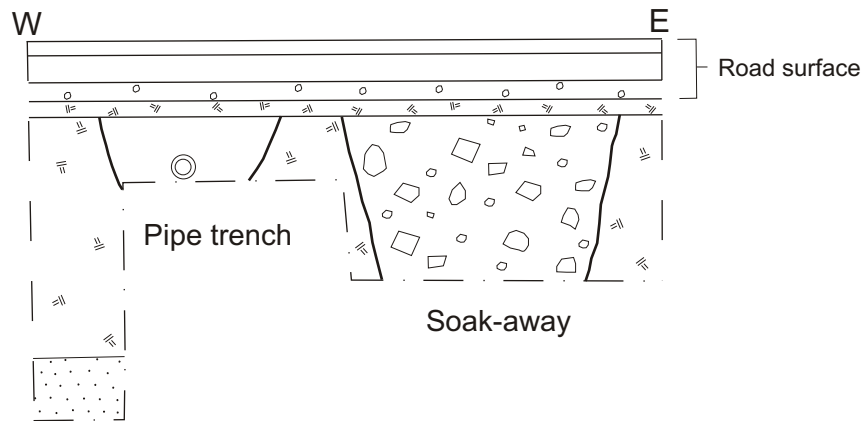
Section 1- Trench 3



Section 2- Trench 4



Section 3- Trench 5



- Clay
- Sand
- Brick



Fig 4



Plate 1: General site shot
looking towards Harvey
Reeves part of site.
Looking east

Plate 2: Working shot
in area of Trench 6



Plate 3: Trench 3 re-instated
Looking south-east



Plate 4: Trench 3. Looking north-west



Plate 5: Trench 5. Looking west



Plate 6: Trench 6