

**LAND AT NOS. 37 AND 39, SNELLS NOOK LANE, NANPANTAN,
LOUGHBOROUGH, LEICESTERSHIRE**

**SCHEME OF ARCHAEOLOGICAL MONITORING
AND RECORDING**

NGR:	SK 50421 17455
Planning ref.:	P/16/0033/2
PCAS Job No.:	1976
Site code:	SNLM 17
Archive acc. no.:	X.A118.2017

Report prepared for

CgMs Ltd.

by

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February 2018



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Summary

A scheme of archaeological monitoring and recording was carried out during development groundworks associated with the construction of six new dwellings on land formerly occupied by nos. 37 and 39, Snells Nook Lane, in the village of Nanpantan in the Charnwood district of Leicestershire.

The route of the Charnwood Forest Canal, constructed at the end of the 18th century but already out of use by the early 19th, runs across the east end of the development site. A targeted programme of archaeological monitoring and recording was therefore required as a condition of planning permission for the development.

The canal was identified during the first day of the monitoring programme as a broad, shallow, irregular linear depression under a deep layer of naturally accumulated topsoil: it is shown on historic mapping to have lain open as a dry earthwork feature for many years after it went out of use. An upper fill of mixed material containing modern refuse was probably deliberately infilled as ground levelling when nos. 37 and 39 were built in the mid-20th century.

The monitoring programme was discontinued after the first day, in agreement with CgMs Ltd., as its objectives had been fully achieved and no additional results were expected.

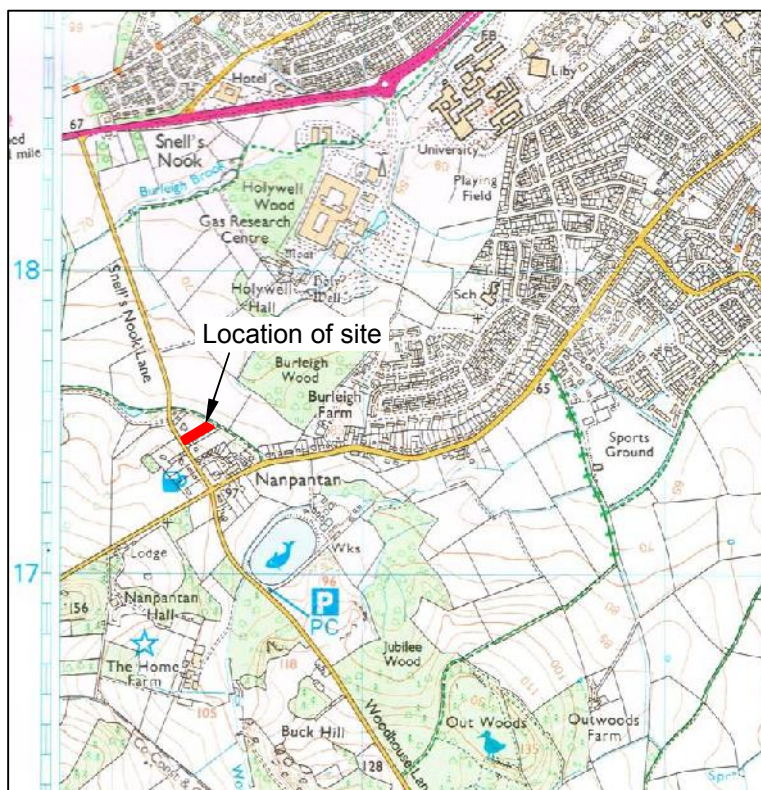


Figure 1: Location plan of the site (marked in red) at scale 1:25,000. OS mapping © Crown copyright. All rights reserved. PCAS licence no. 100049278.

1.0 Introduction

PCAS Archaeology Ltd. (PCAS) was commissioned by CgMs Ltd. to carry out a scheme of archaeological monitoring and recording during development groundworks associated with the construction of six new dwellings on land formerly occupied by nos. 37 and 39, Snells Nook Lane, in the village of Nanpantan in the Charnwood district of Leicestershire (post code LE11 3YA).

The route of the Charnwood Forest Canal, constructed at the end of the 18th century but already out of use by the early 19th, runs across the east end of the development site. In the light of the findings of a desk-based assessment of the archaeological potential of the site, which identified little potential for archaeological remains to be present elsewhere on the site, a targeted scheme of archaeological monitoring and recording was required as a condition of the planning permission for the development.

The programme of archaeological work was carried out according to current best practice and appropriate national guidance including:

- NPPF, National Planning Policy Framework, 2012;
- CIFA Code of Conduct (2014 as revised);
- CIFA Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Watching Briefs (2014);
- Management of Research Projects in the Historic Environment (MoRPHE ver. 1.1, 2009)

2.0 Site Location and Description (figs. 1 & 2)

The village of Nanpantan is situated in the Charnwood district of the county of Leicestershire, close to the outskirts of the town of Loughborough and approximately 2km to the south-west of the town centre. It is centred on the crossroads of Snells Nook Lane/Woodhouse Lane with a minor road running westwards out of Loughborough.

The site is located on the east side of Snells Nook Lane, at the northern edge of the village (central National Grid Reference SK 50421 17455). It is roughly rectangular, aligned approximately east to west, and measures approximately 0.3 hectares. The west end of the site is bordered by Snells Nook Lane, and was previously occupied by two houses (nos. 37 and 39) on the street frontage; when the archaeological monitoring programme began, the northern house had been demolished, while the southern was vacant and being used as contractors' welfare facilities. To the north, the site adjoined the plots of recently-built houses, while to the south, a small recent housing development backed on to the full length of the site. The east end of the site had formerly been crossed by a canal, now filled in: it was bordered by an unpaved footpath, originally a towpath along the east side of the canal, divided by a sparse hedge of hawthorn and sycamore from an arable field beyond. The site previously formed the rear gardens of nos. 37 and 39, and had chiefly been under lawn turf, with a small apple tree in the garden of no. 37: turf and other vegetation had largely been removed at the start of the monitoring programme (plate 1).

3.0 Topography and Geology

Nanpantan village is situated on a north-east facing hillside above the town of Loughborough, which lies in the valley of the River Soar. The site generally slopes down from 105m above Ordnance Datum sea level at its western boundary to 95m OD at the east side (Flitcroft, 2017), but levels out at the eastern edge, with the area of the former canal being completely flat (plates 1 and 2).

The British Geological Survey records no drift geology in the vicinity. The exposed solid geology is Gunthorpe Mudstone. The soil on site is recorded by the Soil Survey of England and Wales as Wimple 3 reddish fine and coarse loamy soils with slowly permeable subsoils (Whiteley, 2016).

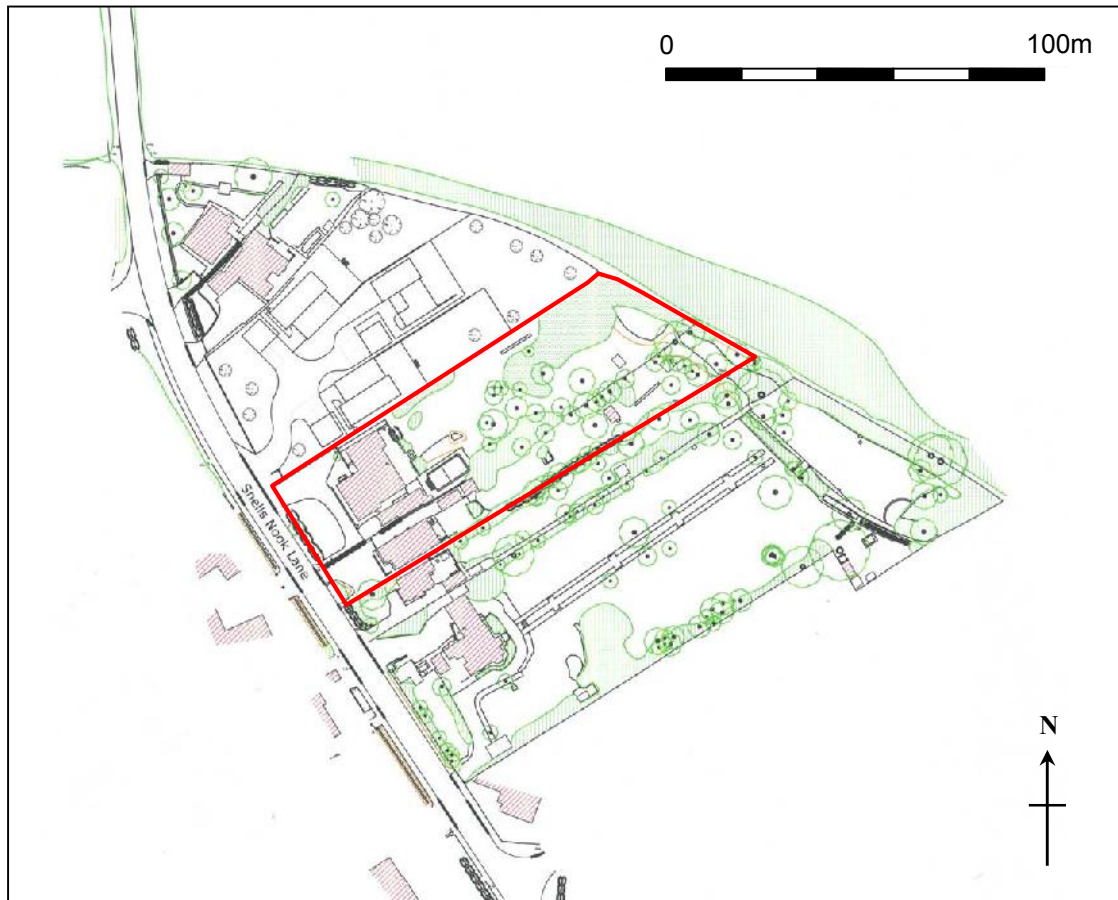


Figure 2: Location plan of the site at scale 1:2000. The application area is outlined in red. Plan supplied by developer.



Plate 1: Composite view of the site looking W and NW from its SE corner at the start of monitoring. The house at the N side of the street frontage has been demolished, leaving only a fragment of standing wall.

4.0 Planning Background

Full planning permission for the construction of six dwellings with associated car parking and hard and soft landscaping, following the demolition of dwellings, was granted, subject to conditions, by Charnwood Borough Council in November 2016 (planning application ref. P/16/0033/2).

Condition 9 of the grant of planning permission requires the implementation of a programme of archaeological work in accordance with a written scheme of investigation, submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority.

5.0 Archaeological and Historical Background

A desk-based assessment for this site was produced by CgMs Ltd. in support of the planning application for this project (Whiteley, 2016).

The DBA noted that evidence for prehistoric activity within 1km of the development site was so slight as to be negligible. Finds of Roman pottery and coins have been made in the area, chiefly by metal-detecting, but none were found closer than 600m to the site; nor were any within stratified archaeological contexts, suggesting that there was little potential for Roman archaeological remains on the site (*ibid.*).

No evidence for Saxon occupation has been recorded within the study area of the DBA. At the time of the Domesday Survey of AD 1086, there was no such village as Nanpantan: the site lay within the boundaries of the ancient parish of Loughborough (*ibid.*). Domesday Loughborough was a manor belonging to Earl Hugh but divided between five sub-tenants: 39 peasant households and two mills are recorded (Williams and Martin, 2002, p. 648).

Although there is no documentary evidence for a village named Nanpantan before the 18th century, the area was occupied and extensively exploited during the Middle Ages. The current Holywell Hall, some 550m to the north-east of the site, is believed to have originated as a grange of Garendon Abbey, while Burleigh Wood, a short distance to the north-east, was a medieval deer park and retains part of its park pale as a standing earthwork. It is likely that the site itself lay within Charnwood Forest, which, while never a royal forest, was nevertheless subject to some aspects of Forest Law: the site was, therefore, considered unlikely to contain archaeological remains from this period (Whiteley, 2016).

The Charnwood Forest Canal was opened in 1791 as part of an integrated transport system for moving goods and materials such as coal and quarried stone. The eastern end of the canal was at Nanpantan, and was connected by a tramway to another stretch of waterway at Loughborough Wharf. The triple-handling of loads required by this system made it uneconomic, and the canal remained in use for only a few years: the Leicester Canal Company took up the rails and sleepers of the tramway in 1820, and let the land along the canal from 1826. The land across which the canal, now a dry earthwork, had run was sold to the adjacent owners in 1848 (*ibid.*). The 1st edition 6" to the mile Ordnance Survey map of 1884 shows the route of the former canal as a narrow, sinuous strip of marshy land, with only occasional pools of water: at the time, the site lay within a triangular field defined by Snells Nook Lane, the eastward road to Forest Gate and the course of the canal (fig. 3).

Residential development extended northwards along Snells Nook Lane during the 20th century, with phases of development noted in the 1930s, the 1950s and the 1970s: nos. 37 and 39 belong to the 1950s phase, with these house plots first appearing on OS mapping in 1964 (*ibid.*).

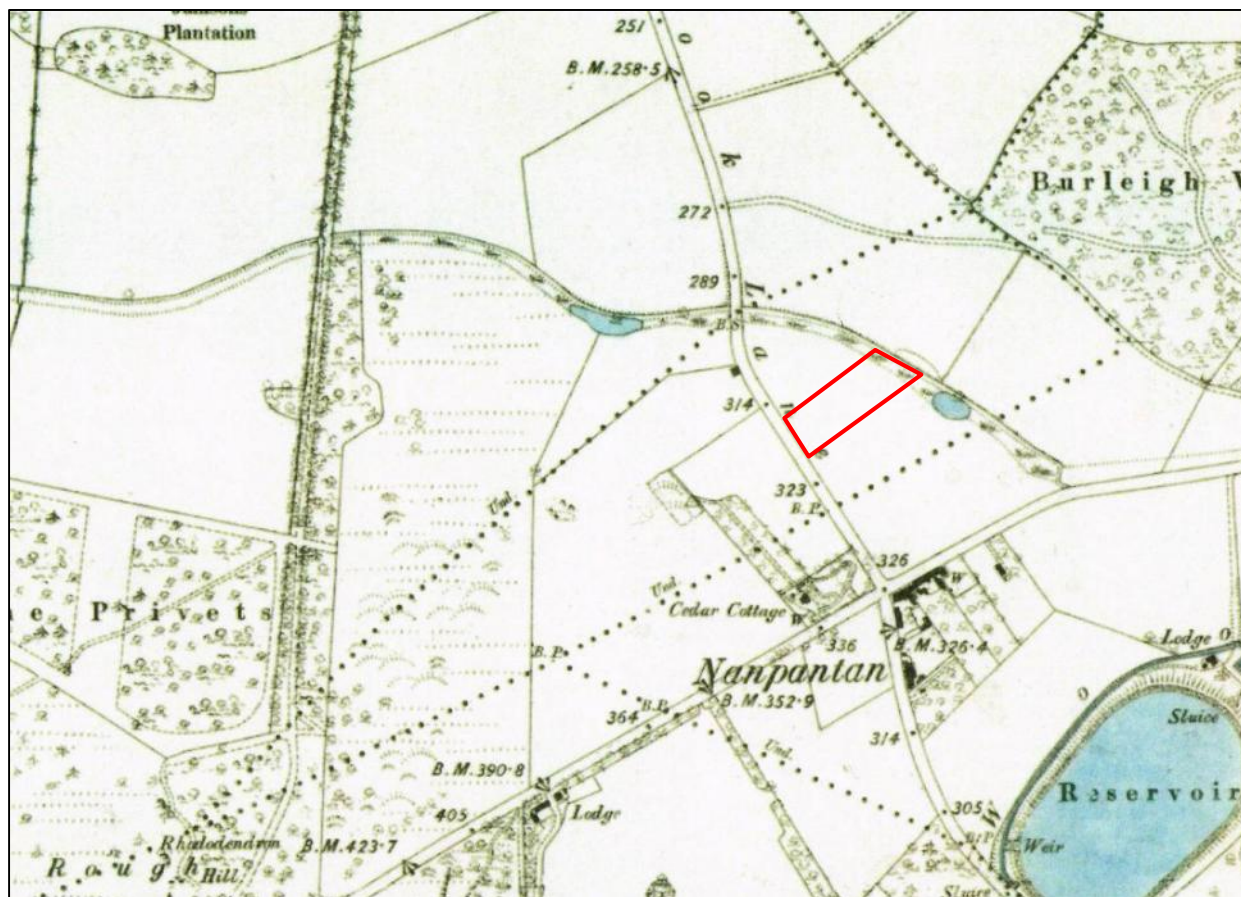


Figure 3: Extract from the 1st edition 6" to the mile Ordnance Survey map of 1884 (not reproduced to scale). The route of the Charnwood Forest Canal is marked, running west to east in a sinuous line, but it no longer holds water: the canal head can be seen adjacent to the eastward road out of Nanpantan. The approximate position of the development site, then part of a field, is marked in red.

6.0 Methodology (fig. 4)

The programme of archaeological monitoring was targeted on the archaeologically significant area: the east end of the site, where the course of the canal was expected to run. This area, hatched red on Figure 4, contained two house plots, one with an integral garage and one with a detached garage. Site logistics required groundworks to begin with the excavation of foundation trenches for the detached garage (the building lying furthest within the projected canal route). The trenches, which were 0.70m wide and up to 1.70m deep, were excavated under archaeological supervision, using a 180° back-acting 3CX mechanical excavator, fitted with a toothless bucket (plate 2).



Plate 2: General shot of the area of monitoring during machining, looking ENE, showing the topography of the lower end of the site.

All archaeological features and deposits were recorded on standard PCAS context recording sheets, and the progress of the groundworks noted on a standard site diary sheet. Two opposing sections were drawn at scale 1:20, extending the full width of the excavated plot. A digital photographic record was maintained throughout the monitored groundworks, and a selection of the images is reproduced in this report.

Two glass vessels retrieved during the groundworks were returned to PCAS, but were discarded after brief assessment.

The archaeological monitoring programme commenced on 16th October 2017 and was discontinued, in agreement with CgMs Ltd., after the first day's work. Monitoring was carried out by the author; weather conditions were overcast and windy, with wind increasing and visibility decreasing throughout the day.

7.0 Results (fig. 5)

At the base of the foundation trenches was natural solid geology 005, a compact mid-reddish-brown clay with veins of mudstone fragments and light grey silt.

The canal cut was clearly visible running across the garage plot (plate 3). Cut **004** was up to 1.40m deep where it was exposed in the foundation trench. Only parts of the west bank and the base were exposed within the 6m wide section: the edge of the cut was difficult to ascertain on the ground, as the dark layer 003 was similar in appearance to the remnants of topsoil on the site, but the total width of the cut appeared to be approximately 16m. The exposed portion of the cut was shallow and irregular in profile: the sides had presumably slumped and weathered once the canal was dry, and had been heavily disturbed by tree rooting. It is also possible that the sides of the canal had been revetted, and further disturbed by the removal of revetting structures when it went out of use.

The lowest deposit in canal cut 004 was layer 003, a dark brownish-grey organic fine-sandy silt that appeared to be a buried topsoil. Layer 003 covered the whole of the exposed portion of the canal side and base to a depth of up to 0.70m, and could indistinctly be seen on the ground surface at the edge of the cut, indicating that it covered the entire cut. This deposit seemed likely to be material that had built up on the sides and base of the disused canal bed after it had been left lying empty, eventually forming a natural topsoil. Few inclusions were observed, although a scatter of fragments of unworked stone (sample size 120mm x 120mm x 50mm) near the south-east corner of the foundation trench may bear out the suggestion that the banks were originally reinforced or revetted. Occasional artefacts were retrieved: all were industrial-period or modern, including a small electric light bulb and two machine-moulded screw-top glass jars, one of which was stamped 'Heinz'.



Plate 3: North-facing section of the garage footings, looking south-west, showing the modern infill of the canal and the dark layer of topsoil that had previously accumulated on the sides of the empty canal bed.

The canal had been infilled above topsoil-like layer 003 with mixed material 002, which was generally light pinkish-brown in colour (plate 3). This deposit was up to 1.0m deep within the

excavated area, and contained occasional CBM rubble, including whole bricks, and modern refuse such as fragments of polythene sheet and garden wire.

The whole of the site, including the canal infill, was covered by 0.20m depth of modern garden topsoil 001.

8.0 Conclusion

The course of the Charnwood Forest Canal was confidently identified, running across the east end of the development site. The canal is shown on historic mapping to have lain open as a dry earthwork feature for many years after it went out of use (Whiteley, 2016; fig. 3), and natural weathering processes, as well as the possible removal of revetting structures, have reduced it to a broad, shallow, irregular linear depression under a deep layer of naturally accumulated topsoil. The upper fill, mixed deposit 002, was probably deliberately infilled as ground levelling when nos. 37 and 39 were built in the mid-20th century and the canal bed was incorporated into their rear gardens.

As the canal had been identified and recorded during the first day's work, and nothing seemed likely to be added to the archaeological record by monitoring the remaining house plots, which intersected much smaller portions of the canal cut, the monitoring programme was discontinued at the end of the first day.

9.0 Effectiveness of Methodology

The methodology employed during this project was effective in identifying and preserving by record the remains of the Charnwood Forest Canal, while causing the minimum of disruption to the construction process.

10.0 Acknowledgements

PCAS Ltd. would like to thank CgMs Ltd. for this commission.

11.0 Site Archive

The site archive, consisting of the site recording and a printed and bound copy of this report, will be deposited with the Leicestershire Museums Service within 6 months following the acceptance of the report. The LMS archive accession number X.A118.2017 has been assigned.



Plate 4: The completed garage footings at the end of the first day, looking north-west.

12.0 Bibliography

Flitcroft, M., 2017, *Written Scheme of Investigation for a Programme of Archaeological Work: 37 & 39, Snells Nook Lane, Loughborough*. Unpublished planning document produced by CgMs Ltd.

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Whiteley, S., 2016, *Archaeological Desk-Based Assessment: Land off Snells Nook Lane, Loughborough, Leicestershire*. Unpublished client document for CgMs Ltd.

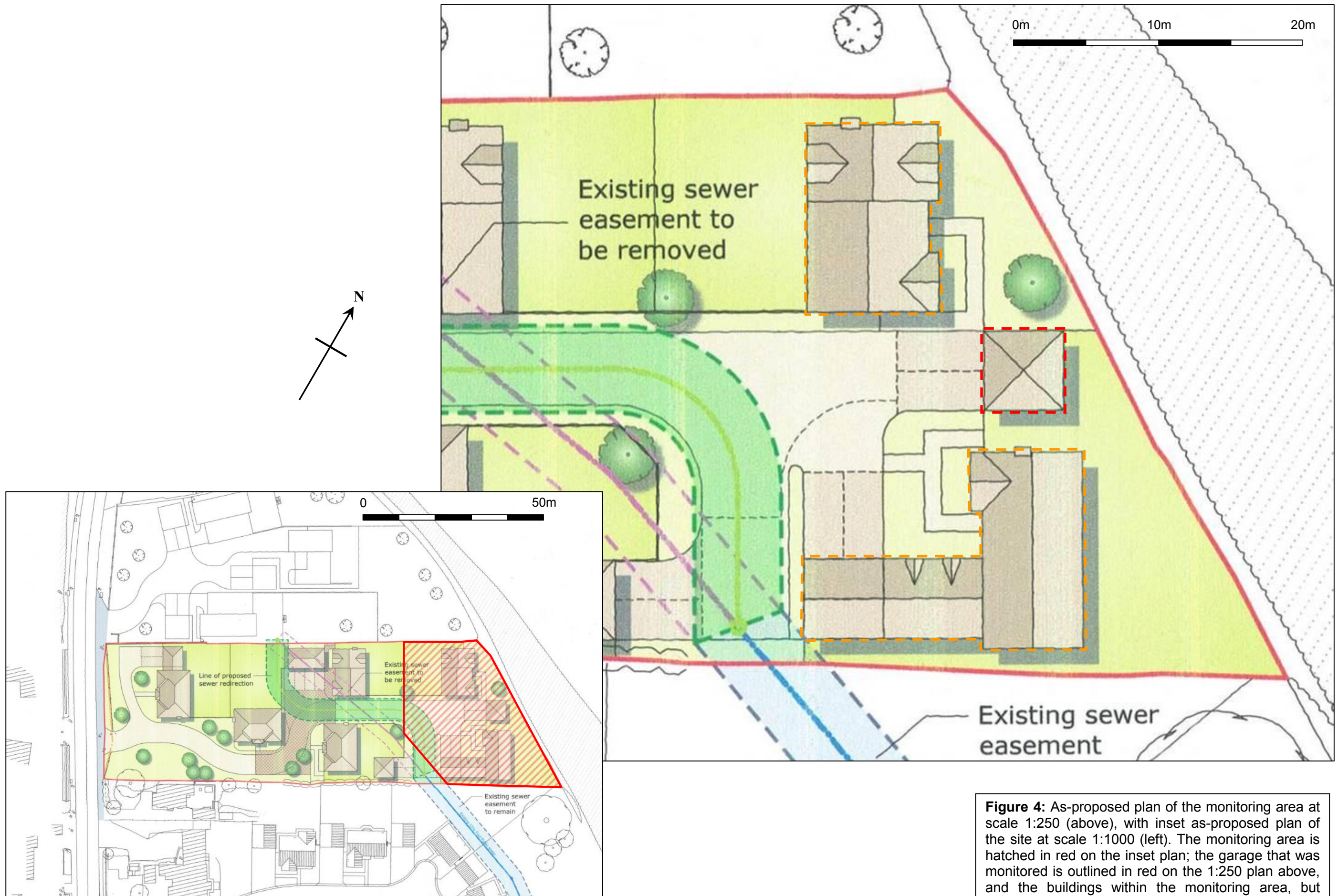


Figure 4: As-proposed plan of the monitoring area at scale 1:250 (above), with inset as-proposed plan of the site at scale 1:1000 (left). The monitoring area is hatched in red on the inset plan; the garage that was monitored is outlined in red on the 1:250 plan above, and the buildings within the monitoring area, but where no monitoring was carried out, in orange.

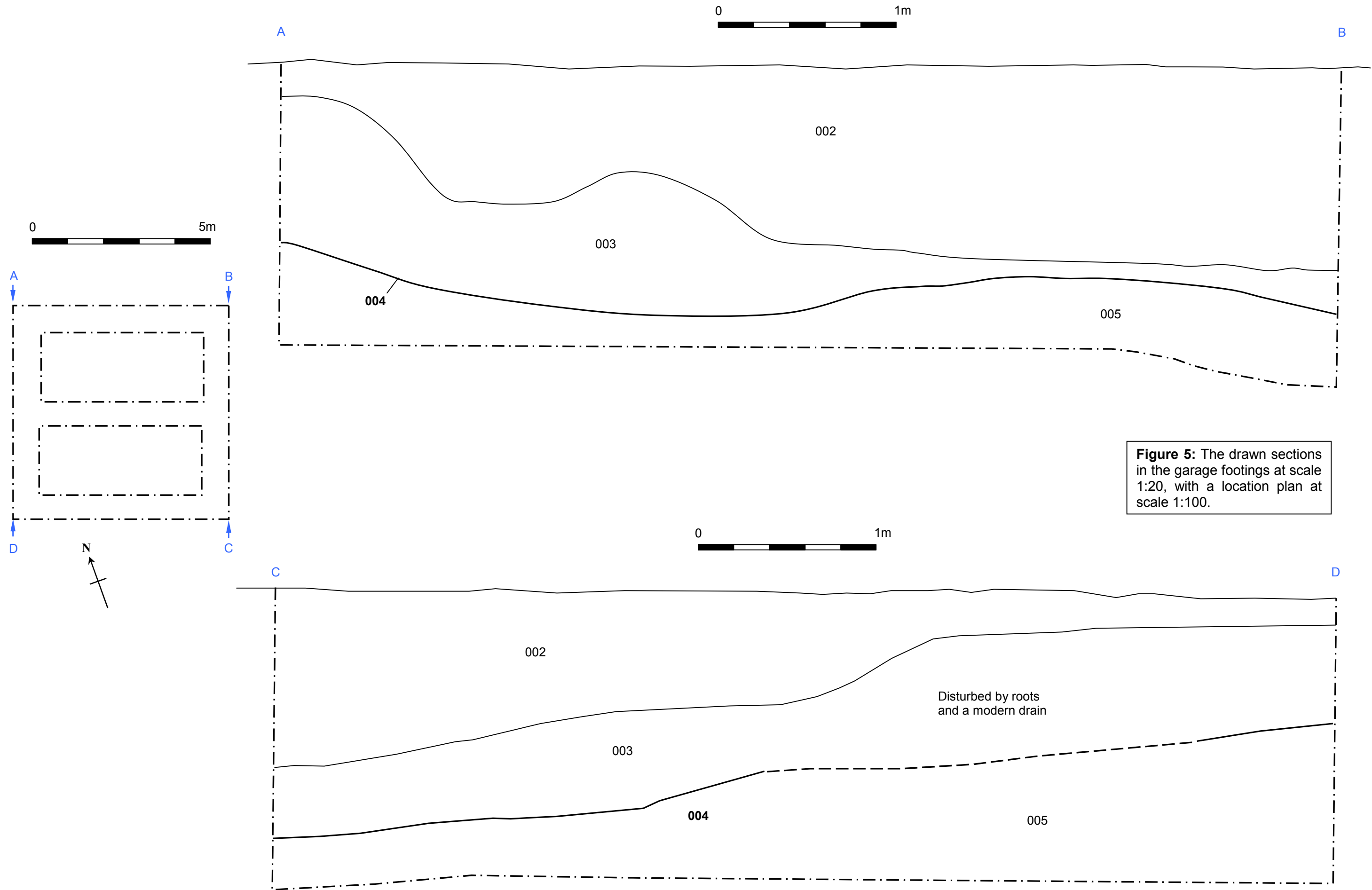


Figure 5: The drawn sections in the garage footings at scale 1:20, with a location plan at scale 1:100.

Appendix 1: Context Summary

Context No.	Type	Description
001	Layer	Dark brownish-grey friable organic silty fine sand topsoil, 0.20m deep, under grass
002	Fill	Mixed material at the east end of site below topsoil 001: modern infill of canal, up to 1.0m deep. Light reddish- to pinkish-brown with patches of light and mid-brownish-grey: mixture of plastic clays and friable clayey sands in large patches. Contains occasional CBM – up to whole bricks – and modern refuse including polythene and garden wire.
003	Fill	Deposit below 002 in canal cut 004: up to 0.70m deep. Dark brownish-grey, slightly plastic organic fine-sandy silt with heavy growth of roots but few inclusions – occasional CBM fragments and occasional fragments of unworked stone; resembles topsoil 001. Probable naturally accumulating deposit on the banks and base of the abandoned canal.
004	Cut	N-S aligned linear cut: W bank and part of base only exposed in garage footings. Exposed to 6m width and 1.40m depth: full width estimated at c. 16m.
005	Layer	Natural solid geology: compact plastic mid-reddish-brown clay with flecks and veins of hard, light grey mudstone mixed with light grey friable silt.

Appendix 2: OASIS Summary