B0405: Danesborough Reservoir to Dancing Hill, Bridgwater, Somerset.

A programme of Archaeological Monitoring and Recording

context one
ARCHAEOLOGICAL SERVICES LTD

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A programme of Archaeological Monitoring and Recording

for

Wessex Water plc.

by

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Front cover image: The Site © Context One Archaeological Services 2015

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Context One Archaeological Services (COAS) carried out a programme of archaeological monitoring and recording of a series of test pits in advance of the pipeline scheme from Danesborough Reservoir to Dancing Hill, Bridgewater, Somerset (the 'Site'), over 3 days between 24 April and 28 April 2015. The project was commissioned by Wessex Water plc, as part of a term agreement with COAS.

The monitoring programme was required in mitigation of a pipeline scheme. The Site is within an Area of High Archaeological Potential due to a number of previously un-investigated crop marks, of a form which frequently date to the late Iron Age - Romano British period.

Although the route of the pipeline was close to these previously observed crop marks, no visible archaeological features or deposits of archaeological interest were encountered during development excavations.

1. Introduction

1.1 Context One Archaeological Services Ltd (COAS) carried out a programme of archaeological monitoring and recording on a series of test pits in advance of the Danesborough Reservoir to Dancing Hill pipeline scheme (the 'Site'), over 3 days between 25 and 28 April 2015. The project was commissioned by Wessex Water Plc under a term agreement with Context One Archaeological Services.

1.2 The monitoring programme was required as mitigation in advance of a pipeline scheme. The requirement followed advice by Central Government as set out in paragraph 141 of the *National Planning Policy Framework* (DCLG 2012).

1.3 The monitoring programme was advised by Ms Tanya James (Assistant Historic Environment Officer, Somerset County Historic Environment Service (HES)) following a consultation request by Mr Ollie Williams (Environmental Scientist, Wessex Water plc) on the potential archaeological impact of the scheme. In a consultation email dated 10 February 2015, Ms James states:

> *"The northern section of the proposed scheme passes through an area where a series of previously unidentified cropmarks have recently been identified. These cropmarks appear to be late Iron Age/Romano British in form and are indicative of settlement activity. Other cropmark sites also lie in relatively close proximity along the southern stretch of the route.*
>
> *I therefore advise that the scheme is archaeologically monitored. This should initially comprise monitoring of the topsoil strip. The need for any subsequent monitoring can be determined following the preliminary results and further consultation with your appointed archaeological contractor."*

1.4 The programme of archaeological works comprised four elements: the production of a Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI) which set out the project strategy (Milby 2015); monitoring and recording during development groundworks; post-excavation and report production; and archive deposition. The WSI was approved by Ms James on 17 April 2015 prior to the commencement of any Site works.

2. Site location and topography

2.1 The Site (centred on NGR ST 26345 36977) consists of sixteen test pits of variable size, spread along a route roughly 3km in length between Danesborough Reservoir and Dancing Hill (**Figure 1**). The Site is roughly north west of Bridgewater and comprises mixed agricultural land. The Site is largely situated on level ground at an average height of *c*. 57.75m above Ordnance Datum (aOD).

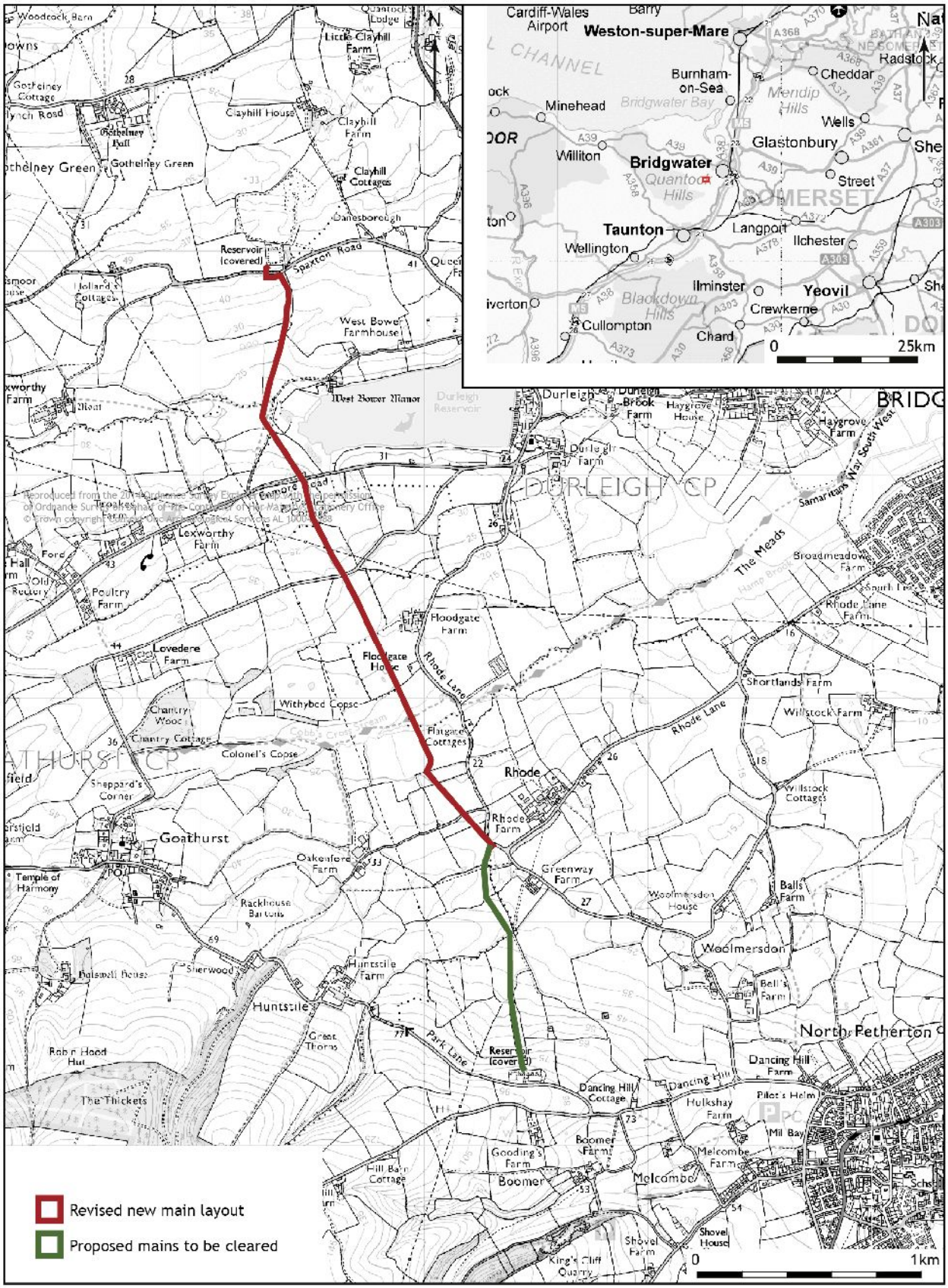

Figure 1. Site setting

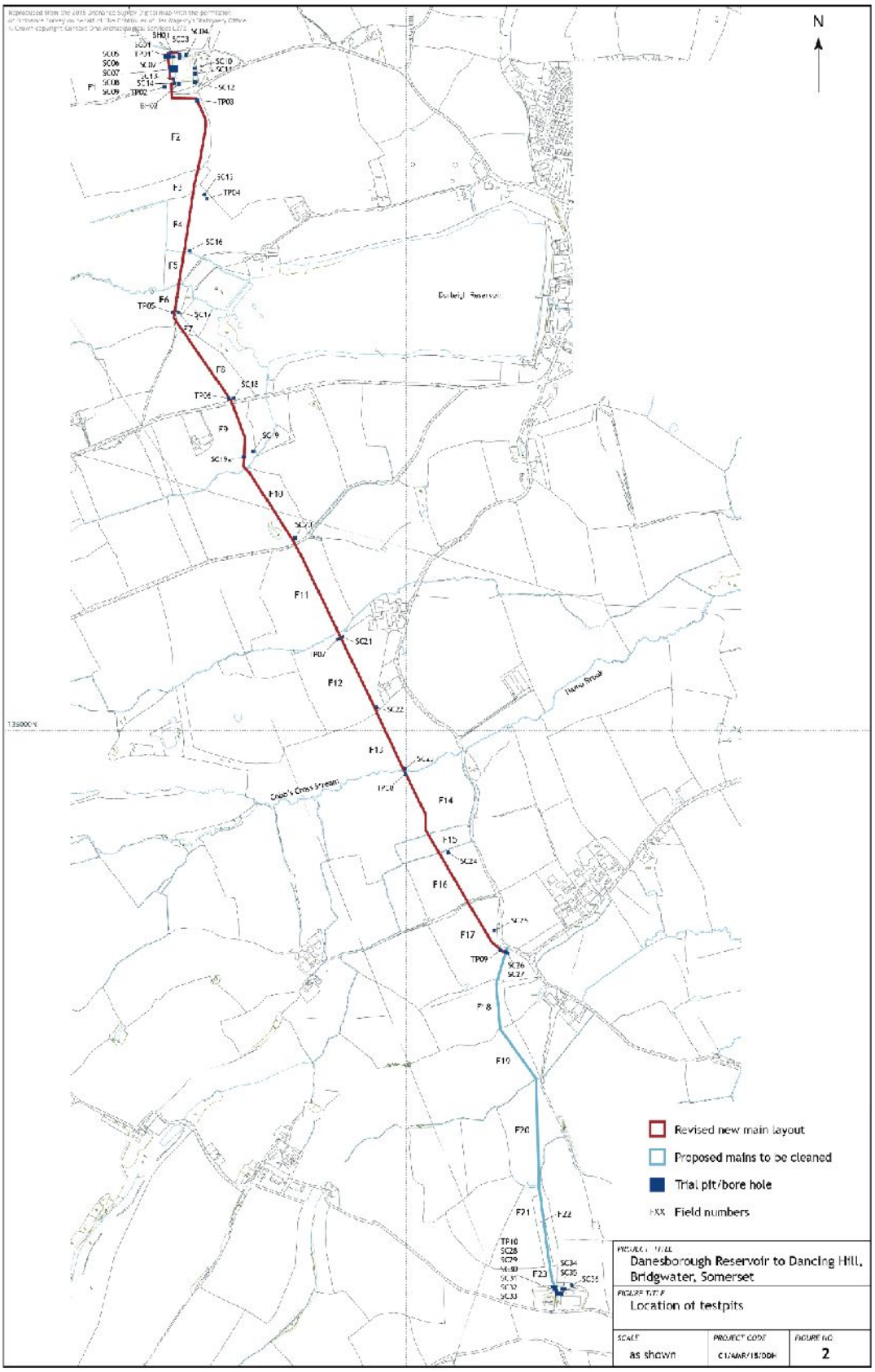

Figure 2. Test pit locations.

3. Methodology

Development groundworks methodology

3.1 Sixteen test pits were machine excavated as trial holes to locate the route of the pipeline (**Figure 2**). Eight test pits were in previously undisturbed areas (designated TP1-7, TP8), and seven were excavated to locate the existing water mains (designated SC15-18, SC20-21, SC27). These were standard geological test pits measuring roughly 1.5m long by 0.5m wide and 3m deep. A machine equipped with a 0.50m toothed/toothless bucket was used throughout.

Archaeological methodology

3.2 The programme of archaeological work was carried out in accordance with the *Heritage Service Archaeological Handbook* issued by Somerset County Council in 2011, and the codes, standards and guidelines of the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists (IfA 1985, rev. 2012; 1990, rev. 2008; 1994, rev. 2008, 2014). Current Health and Safety legislation and guidelines were followed on site.

3.3 In the absence of archaeological remains, profile sections of the deposit sequence across the Site were recorded using standard COAS *pro forma* profile sheets to illustrate the soil morphology. Each profile was recorded as a graphical representation accompanied by a brief description and depth measurements. A photograph, including a suitable scale, was also taken and the location recorded. Each test pit was scrutinised for dateable material.

3.4 All deposits were recorded as individual contexts and ascribed a unique number. Contexts referenced in the archive are presented in standard terms, e.g. (100), (203).

3.5 A photographic record of the fieldwork comprised digital images in .jpg format and monochrome prints. As a minimum, the record included photographs of each profile section, the site setting and development works.

4. Results

4.1 Despite the proximity of the course of the pipeline to crop marks which might have been indicative of prehistoric or later land division, no features or deposits of archaeological interest were encountered during the programme of archaeological monitoring.

4.2 Each of the sixteen test pits were excavated to *c.*3m deep and demonstrated a similar depositional sequence across the Site. Each sequence consisted of a grey-brown sandy clay topsoil of variable depth, which overlay a deep subsoil of reddish-brown clay. This in turn lay over a heavy, dark reddish-brown coloured, natural clay deposit with few or no stone inclusions (Plates 1-4).

Plate 1. Profile Test Pit 2 (from N; 1m scales)

Plate 2. Profile SC16 (from N; 1m scales)

Plate 3. Profile Test Pit 7 (from S; 1m scales)

Plate 4. Profile SC27 (from N; 1m scales)

5. The finds

5.1 No archaeological finds were recovered from any of the deposits in the sixteen excavated test pits.

6. Discussion

6.1 Despite the potential for significant late Iron Age or Romano-British remains anticipated due to proximity to previously unexplored crop marks, no finds features or deposits of archaeological origin were identified during the works. The depositional sequence was very similar in all of the test pits along the length of the pipeline route, and comprised sandy clay topsoil over clay subsoil and clay natural.

6.2 Whilst no archaeological remains were noted, this may not negate the likelihood of archaeological deposits being encountered in future pipe laying works. It should be noted that the excavation of sixteen test pits spread along a 3km route is a very small sample of the total area. The crop marks noted in the area are potentially indicative of field systems, where the archaeology is mostly encountered in the field boundaries. If any boundaries extend into the area traversed by the pipeline, it is likely that the test pits were just not in the position needed to intercept narrow linear features. However, it must be acknowledged that no buried soils or cultivation horizons were noted.

6.3 Consequently, whilst no evidence of archaeological features or material was encountered in the test pits, there is still potential for the pipeline to intersect with any field systems in the area. This is more likely to be observable in the creation of the easement strip in advance of the pipeline trenching. Archaeological monitoring of this phase of the work may provide further information as to the archaeological potential of the Site.

7. Archive

7.1 An ordered and integrated site archive has been prepared to comply with guidelines set out in *First Aid for Finds* (Watkinson and Neal 2001) and *Standards in the Museums Care of Archaeological Collections* (Museum and Galleries Commission 1992) / *Management of Archaeological Projects in the Historic Environment* (English Heritage 2006).

7.2 The project archive is currently held by COAS and consists of the following:

Item	Number	Format
Profile record sheets	5	Paper
Digital images	77	.JPG

7.3 The paper archive has been scanned as a single file in .PDF format and will form part of the Site archive to be deposited with Somerset County Museum.

7.4 Copies of this report will be deposited with the client/agent and included as part of the Somerset Historic Environment Record. A digital copy of the report will also be deposited with the Archaeology Data Service, via OASIS (On-line Access to the Index of Archaeological Investigations – http://oasis.ac.uk/england/). The OASIS entry will also be completed to include details of the archive contents.

8. COAS acknowledgements

8.1 We would like to thank the following for their contribution to the successful completion of this project:

Mr Ollie Williams, Environmental Scientist, Wessex Water
Ms Tanya James, Historic Environment Officer, Somerset County Council

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