

# **88 Avonvale Road, Bristol.**

An Archaeological Watching Brief.



**CONTEXT ONE**  
ARCHAEOLOGICAL SERVICES LTD

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**88 Avonvale Road, Bristol**

**An Archaeological Watching Brief  
for  
Wessex Water plc**

by



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**National Grid Reference:** centred on ST 61476 73179  
**Wessex Water scheme reference:** -  
**Bristol City Museums and Art Gallery Accession Number:** 2007/30

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## **Non-technical summary**

*Context One Archaeological Services Ltd (COAS) carried out an Archaeological Watching Brief during groundworks to locate a damaged water pipe at the front of 88 Avonvale Road, Bristol (centred on NGR ST 61476, 73179), on the 19<sup>th</sup> February 2007. The project was commissioned and funded by Wessex Water plc.*

*The investigation was advised by Mr Bob Jones (City Archaeologist, Bristol City Council) following a consultation request by Dr Richard Baker (Environmental Scientist, Wessex Water plc). In an e-mail dated 23 May 2006 from Mr Jones to Dr Baker, it was stated that the area surrounding Avonvale Road was archaeologically sensitive on the basis that late-Roman burials had been previously unearthed.*

*The excavation of the pit revealed a deposit of garden soil comprising frequent angular limestone inclusions. No archaeological remains/deposits or artefacts were observed.*

## 1. Introduction

- 1.1. Context One Archaeological Services Ltd (COAS) carried out an Archaeological Watching Brief during groundworks to locate a damaged water pipe at the front of 88 Avonvale Road, Bristol (centred on NGR ST 61476, 73179) (hereafter referred to as the Site), on 19 February 2007. The project was commissioned and funded by Wessex Water plc.
- 1.2. The investigation was advised by Mr Bob Jones (City Archaeologist, Bristol City Council) following a consultation request by Dr Richard Baker (Environmental Scientist, Wessex Water plc). In an e-mail dated 23 May 2006 from Mr Jones to Dr Baker, it was stated that the area surrounding Avonvale Road was archaeologically sensitive as a number of late-Roman burials had been previously unearthed in the vicinity.
- 1.3. The Site is situated c. 2.5km east-north-east of the centre of the city of Bristol. The Bristol Sites and Monuments Record (BSMR) records four significant archaeological events within a 300m radius of the Site. These comprise three events relating to the discovery of late-Roman inhumations and one record of an earth-cut feature containing sherds of Roman pottery.
- 1.4. Given the recorded archaeological data for the environs, it was considered that archaeological remains/deposits could be present on the Site, and that these would be damaged or destroyed by the development. However, as the nature or presence of such remains/deposits had not been proven on the basis of currently available information, it was determined that a reasonable archaeological response would be to carry out a Watching Brief during all ground disturbance.
- 1.5. At the request of list Mr Jones, COAS issued a *Written Scheme of Investigation for an Archaeological Watching Brief: 88 Avonvale Road, Bristol* (February 2007) which provided a strategy for the archaeological works. This was submitted to and approved by Mr Jones prior to the commencement of the Watching Brief.
- 1.6. The request for the archaeological work follows advice given by Central Government as set out in *Planning Policy Guidance Note 1 (PPG1), General Policy and Principles*, 1997 and *Planning Policy Guidance: Note 16 (PPG16)* issued by the DoE in 1990. The recommendation also conforms to Policy 19 of the *Bath & North East Somerset, Bristol, North Somerset and South Gloucestershire Joint Replacement Structure Plan* (adopted September 2002) and Policy B22 of the *Bristol Local Plan* (adopted December 1997).
- 1.7. This report summarises the topographical, geological, archaeological and historical setting of the site, and presents the results of the Watching Brief.

## 2. Definition and objectives of a Watching Brief

- 2.1. An Archaeological Watching Brief is defined by the Institute of Field Archaeologists (IFA) as:

*“...a formal programme of observation and investigation conducted during any operation carried out for non-archaeological reasons. This will be within a specified area or site on land, inter-tidal zone or underwater, where there is a possibility that archaeological deposits*

*may be disturbed or destroyed. The programme will result in the preparation of a report and ordered archive.” (IFA rev.1999).*

2.2. The purpose of a Watching Brief is similarly defined by the IFA and is:

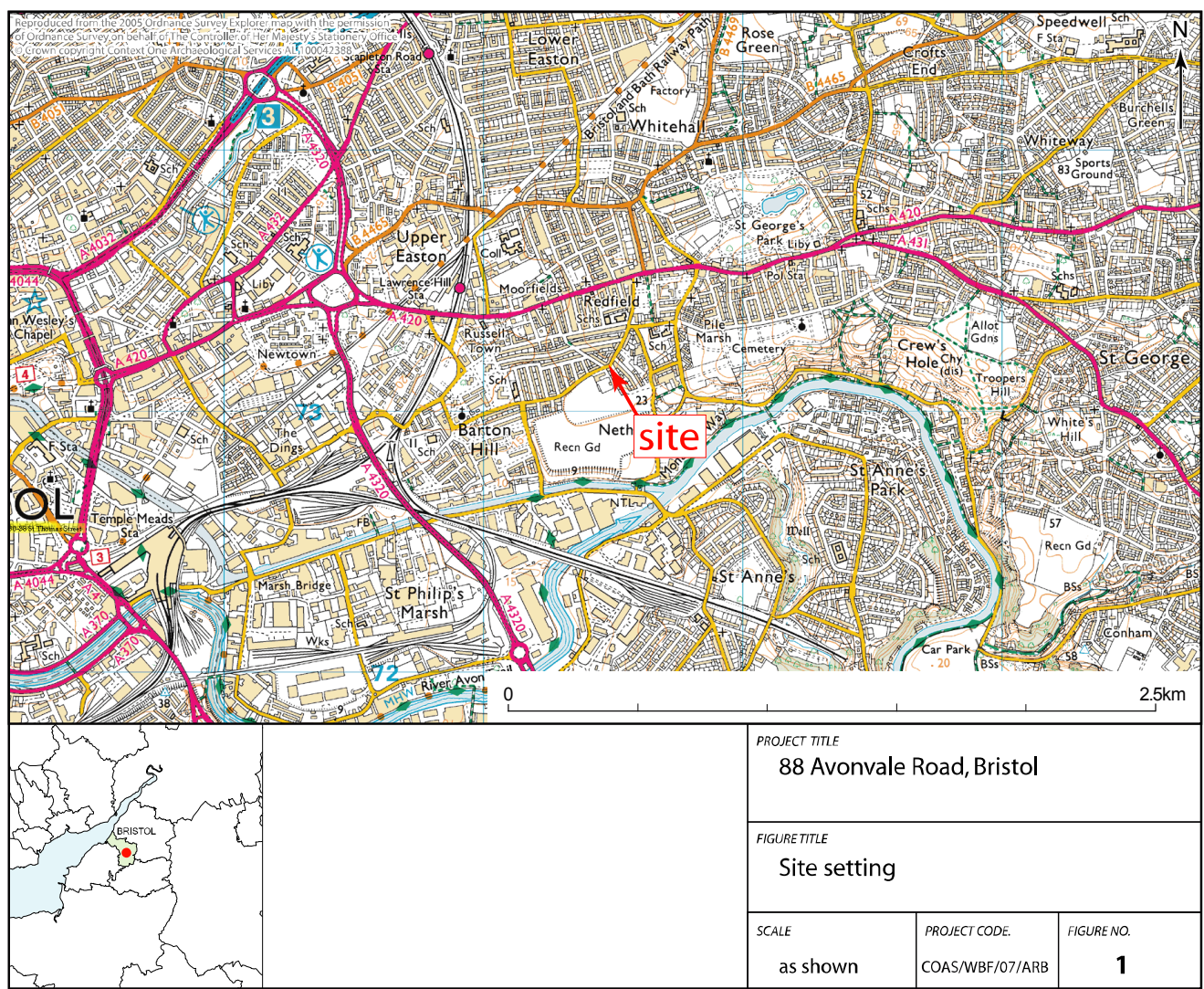
- *“To allow, within the resources available, the preservation by record of archaeological deposits, their presence and nature of which could not be established (or established with sufficient accuracy) in advance of development or other potentially disruptive works.*
- *To provide an opportunity, if needed, for the watching archaeologist to signal to all interested parties, before the destruction of the material in question, that an archaeological find has been made for which the resources allocated to the Watching Brief itself are not sufficient to support treatment to a satisfactory and proper standard.” (IFA rev.1999)*

2.3. The results of a Watching Brief are used to:

- produce a record of the location, nature and date of any archaeological remains encountered on the Site;
- add to the knowledge about the previous history of activity on the current site and its surroundings; and
- provide information to influence future planning decisions in the area.

### 3. Topography and geology

3.1. The Site (centred on NGR ST 61476 73179) is situated c. 2.5km east-north-east of Bristol city centre (**Figure 1**). The Site occupies roughly level ground c. 29m above Ordnance Datum (AOD). According to the British Geological Survey (2001), the underlying geology is of Jurassic, Lower Lias, Dinantian, Lower Carboniferous, and Devonian, Upper Old Red Sandstone. The soils in this area are characterised by freely draining slightly acid loam and slightly acid loamy and clay with impeded drainage (Multi Agency Geographic Information for the Countryside (MAGIC), 2006).



#### 4. Archaeological Background

- 4.1. The archaeological background for the Site has been drawn from secondary sources. This comprised a data search of archaeological records held by Bristol City Council as part of the Bristol Sites and Monuments Record (BSMR).
- 4.2. Four significant archaeological events are recorded within a 300m radius of the Site. Fifteen inhumations (**BSMR no 3027**), believed to be Romano-British in date, were discovered in 1894 at Roseberry Road, Redfield, located c. 90m north of the Site. More recently, in 2002, the remains of four human individuals were recovered from two archaeological watching briefs at 148 Victoria Avenue, Redfield, c. 130m north of the Site (**BSMR no 21201** and **BSMR no 21206**, ST 614477329 and ST 6144773300 respectively). The date of the remains relating to **BSMR no 21201** (ST 614477329) is unconfirmed, but is thought to be contemporary with the human remains found at Roseberry Road (**BSMR no 3027**). However one skeleton from the site at ST 61447 73300 was given a suggestive radio-carbon date of the late Romano-British or sub-Roman period. An archaeological evaluation in 2003 revealed shallow earth-cut features

containing sherds of Roman pottery (**BSMR no 21816**), supporting the suggestion of a nearby settlement contemporary with the cemetery.

## 5. Methodology

### **Wessex Water methodology**

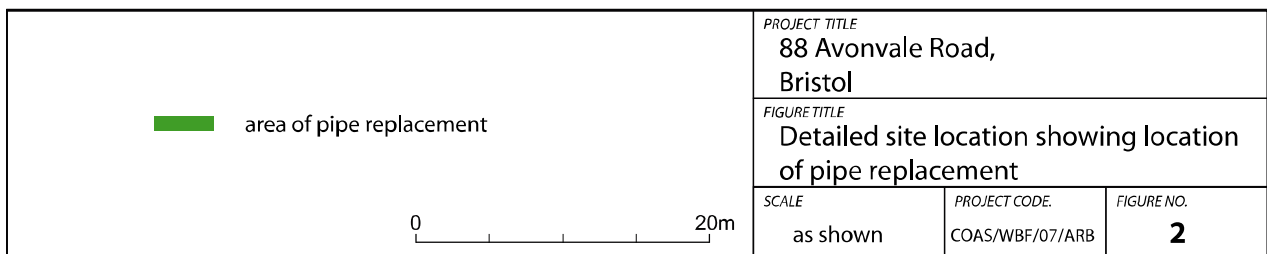
- 5.1. A pit was excavated by hand to a maximum depth of 1m, a maximum width of 2m and a maximum length of 1m to reveal the damaged water pipe.

### **Archaeological methodology**

- 5.2. The programme of archaeological work was carried out in accordance with the *Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Watching Briefs* published by the Institute of Field Archaeologists (IFA) in October, 1994 (rev. September, 1999). COAS adhered to the *Code of Conduct* issued by the IFA in October, 1997, and *Code of Approved Practice for the Regulation of Contractual Arrangements in Field Archaeology* (1990, rev. September, 2000), at all times during the course of the investigation. The current Health and Safety legislation and guidelines were followed on site.
- 5.3. A profile section of the pit was recorded using a COAS *pro-forma* profile log sheet to illustrate the principal stratigraphic and physical characteristics of the deposits encountered.
- 5.4. A photographic record of the Watching Brief was prepared involving the use of digital images. This included working shots to illustrate the general nature of the archaeological operation mounted.

## 6. Results

- 6.1. No archaeological remains/deposits or artefacts were observed in the pit.
- 6.2. A representative profile (Profile 1) was recorded within the pit (**Figure 2**). This revealed a 1m deep layer of brown (7.5YR 4/4) soft silt/clay gravel garden soil, consisting of frequent angular limestone inclusions measuring less than 0.02m in diameter.



## 7. The finds

- 7.1. No finds were observed during the course of the Watching Brief.

## 8. Discussion and conclusions

- 8.1. The excavation of the pit revealed a deposit of garden soil comprising frequent angular limestone inclusions. No archaeological remains/deposits or artefacts were observed.

## 9. Archive

- 9.1. The site archive is currently held at the offices of Context One Archaeological Services Ltd and consists of 4 digital images in .jpg format, a COAS *pro-forma* profile log sheet and a photographic register. Arrangements will be made to deposit the archive with the Bristol City Museum and Art Gallery within 12 months following the submission of this report.

- 9.2. Copies of the Watching Brief report will be deposited with:

**Wessex Water plc**  
Claverton Down Road  
Claverton Down  
Bath  
BA2 7WW

**City Centre Projects and Urban Design Team**  
Department of Environment, Transport and Leisure  
Planning Services  
Brunel House  
St George's Road  
Bristol  
BS1 5UY

- 9.3. As part of our commitment to public archaeology, an e-report will be available to view online or download as an Adobe Acrobat™ file from the COAS website at [www.contextone.co.uk/bristol.htm](http://www.contextone.co.uk/bristol.htm) following entry onto the Bristol Sites and Monuments Record (BSMR) where it will become a publicly accessible document.

## 10. COAS acknowledgements

- 10.1. Context One Archaeological Services Ltd would like to thank Dr Richard Baker (Environmental Scientist, Wessex Water plc), for his kind assistance throughout the course of the investigation, and Mr Bob Jones (City Archaeologist, Bristol City Council), for curatorial advice.

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