DESK-BASED ASSESSMENT AT SALTWELLS WOOD, MERRY HILL, DUDLEY

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Project 3907 Report 1947

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Desk-based assessment at Saltwells Wood, Merry Hill, Dudley Andrew Mann

Summary

A desk-based assessment was undertaken at Saltwells Wood, Merry Hill, Dudley (NGR SO 93028 87146). It was undertaken on behalf of Selbourne Homes, who intend to construct five houses and a warden station on the site, and for which a planning application will be submitted.

This report describes and assesses the significance of the heritage assets (and potential heritage assets) that are potentially affected by the application. The setting of heritage assets is considered. The potential impact of the application is assessed.

The site may contain the nationally important remains of medieval and post-medieval mining activities. Such remains are preserved as earthworks to the west of the site in a Scheduled Ancient Monument. Most remains within the development site may, however, have been truncated by the construction of Saltwells House in the early 19th century. The foundations and cellars of this building are likely to survive below ground within the development area and are of lesser importance. It is suggested that an archaeological watching brief may be required to asses the degree of truncation and whether any significant archaeological deposits survive.

Visibility to and from the development area is restricted by the dense woodland surrounding the site and the local topography. This will limit the prominence of the development ensuring it will not significantly affect the settings of any of the surrounding heritage assets. As the development site formally contained a residential property the development would also not negatively affect the areas historic landscape character.

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Report

1. Background

1.1 Reasons for the project

A desk-based assessment was undertaken at Saltwells Wood, Merry Hill, Dudley (NGR SO 93028 87146). It was undertaken on behalf of Selbourne Homes, who intend to construct five houses and a warden station on the site, and for which a planning application will be submitted. The desk-based assessment is based upon preliminary drawings provided by Selbourne Homes which can be seen in Appendix 1.

The proposed development site is considered to have the potential to affect heritage assets (HER 12585 and 3394).

The project conforms to a brief prepared Dudley Metropolitan Borough Council (ref PRE12/00560) and for which a project proposal (including detailed specification) was produced (HEAS 2012).

The project also conforms to the Standard and guidance for archaeological desk-based assessment (IfA 2008).

1.2 Aims

The aims of this desk-based assessment are to:

- describe and assesses the significance of the heritage assets within the application site:
- establish the nature, importance and extent of the heritage assets;
- assess the impact of the application on the heritage assets;
- assess the impact the development will have upon the settings of any heritage assets within the surrounding area.

1.3 **Methods**

1.3.1 **Documentary research**

All relevant information regarding the history of the site including past land-use was collected and assessed. Records of known heritage assets were obtained from Dudley Borough Historic Environment Record (HER). Historic maps, published sources and archives were consulted at Dudley Archives and Local History Service and Wolverhampton Archives. A geotechnical report was obtained from the Selbourne Homes (Sladen Associates 2012). The details of individual heritage assets are given in Appendix 2.

1.3.2 List of sources consulted

Cartographic sources

Yates, W, 1775 'A map of the County of Staffordshire' (facsimile in Phillips 1984)

Sherriff, J, 1812 'Plan of the mines of Lord Dudley and others, situate in the parishes of Wolverhampton, Bilston, Wednesbury, Tipton, Sedgeley, Kinswinford and Rowley in the County of Stafford; Dudley and Old Swinford in the County of Worcester; and Halesowen in the County of Salop, 1812. Taken by James Sherriff' (copy on display at Dudley Archives)

Fowler, W, 1822 'A map of the parish of Kingswinford in the County of Staffordshire from a survey made in the year 1822. Dedicated to the proprietors of estates within the said parish. Published at their request by their obedient servant William Fowler' (Dudley Archives, ref. 2480C; scale 8 inches to 1 mile or 1:7920)

Ordnance Survey, 1903 Staffordshire, sheet 71.6 (1:2,500) (on microfiche at Dudley Archives)

Ordnance Survey, 1919 Staffordshire, sheet 71.6 (1:2,500) (on microfiche at Dudley Archives)

Ordnance Survey, 1938 Staffordshire, sheet 71.6 (1:2,500) (on microfiche at Dudley Archives)

Ordnance Survey, 1946-9 *Sheet SO 90/866* (1:2,500) online at (http://www.old-maps.co.uk/maps.html)

Ordnance Survey, 1955 *Sheet SO 90/866* (1:2,500) online at (<u>http://www.old-maps.co.uk/maps.html</u>)

Geological Survey of England and Wales, 1967 Dudley, sheet 167. Solid and Drift (1:50,000)

Ordnance Survey, 1967-8 *Sheet SO 90/866* (1:2,500) online at (http://www.old-maps.co.uk/maps.html)

Ordnance Survey, 1972-6 *Sheet SO 90/866* (1:2,500) online at (http://www.old-maps.co.uk/maps.html)

Ordnance Survey, 1974 Plan SO 90/86 SE (1:1250) (at Dudley Archives)

Ordnance Survey, 1980 Plan SO 90/86 SE (1:1250) (at Dudley Archives)

Ordnance Survey, 1991 Plan SO 90/86 SE (1:1250) (at Dudley Archives)

Ordnance Survey, 1997 Plan SO 90/86 SE (1:1250) (at Dudley Archives)

Also Ordnance Survey labelled 1950s, 1960s, 1970s, 1980s, 1990s, 2000, and 2000-2002 online at http://gismo.dudley.gov.uk/public/historic/Default.asp.

Aerial photographs

Aerial photographs dated 1945, 1963, 1980, 1996, 1999, 2001, 2004, 2005, 2006, 2007, and 2009, online at http://gismo.dudley.gov.uk/public/historic/Default.asp.

Documentary sources

- Mawer, A, and Stenton, F M, 1927 The place-names of Worcestershire, Cambridge University Press, London
- Sladen Associates, 2012, Geo-environmental desk study report, proposed residential development land at Saltwells, Pedmore Road, Merry Hill, West Midlands, unpublished report, Job No:12 1140
- VCH I, Page, W (ed), 1913 Victoria History of the County of Worcestershire, III

The following sources have also been cited in this assessment.

- DCLG 2012 National planning policy framework, Department for Communities and Local Government
- DCLG/DCMS/EH 2010 PPS5 Planning for the historic environment: historic environment planning practice guide, Department for Communities and Local Government/Department for Culture, Media and Sport/English Heritage
- Wolverhampton City Council, 2009, Black Country Historic Landscape Characterisation, Black Country Archaeology Service, English Heritage Project Number 3638
- English Heritage 2010 The setting of heritage assets, London; English Heritage
- Guttery, D R, 1950, Notes on Kingswinford history, Brierley Hill, Weldon Press
- Guttery, D R, nd [c1960] An historical sketch of Brierley Hill, in *Brierley Hill Official Handbook*, 15-29
- WA, 2012 Proposal for an archaeological desk-based assessment at Saltwells Wood, Brierly Hill, Worcestershire Archaeology, Archive and Archaeology Service, Worcestershire County Council, unpublished document dated 12th July 2012 P3907

- IfA 2008 Standard and guidance for archaeological desk-based assessment, Institute for Archaeologists
- Phillips, A D M, 1984 'A map of the County of Stafford by William Yates, 1775', in *Staffordshire Record Society, Fourth Series*, XII

1.4 Other methods

Site visits were undertaken on 31st August 2012 in dry sunny conditions, and on 12 March 2013 to review the proposed passing places, the vegetation was low with good visibility for any earthworks. A site meeting has taken place between Gavin Warr (Selbourne Homes) and Ian George.

1.5 Impact assessment criteria

The criteria cited in Table 1 have been used.

Severe Adverse: Loss of integrity of nationally important heritage assets including Scheduled Ancient Monuments, Grade I/II* registered parks and gardens and registered battlefields. Demolition of a Grade I/II* Listed Building. Dramatic adverse change in the setting or visual amenity of the asset.

Major Adverse: Land take resulting in the degradation of a heritage asset of national importance and/or extensive change to the setting or visual amenity of such an asset eg intrusion into the setting of a Scheduled Ancient Monument. Loss of integrity of heritage assets of regional value, or Grade II registered parks and gardens, eg a dramatic change in the setting or visual amenity of a regionally important asset such as a Conservation Area. Widespread adverse effects on the setting or structure of a Grade I/II* Listed Building. Demolition of a Grade II Listed Building.

Moderate Adverse: Land take resulting in the degradation of a heritage asset of regional importance and/or extensive change to the setting or visual amenity of such an asset. Extensive change to the setting or structure of a Grade II Listed Building. Demolition of a locally listed or other historically important building. Encroachment upon a Conservation Area, historic parkland or other historic landscapes where the quality of the setting or its amenity would be noticeably impaired. Slight change to the setting or structure of a Grade I/II* listed building. Removal of a historically important hedgerow (after the Hedgerows Regulations).

Minor Adverse: Loss of integrity of an area where heritage assets of local importance have been identified. Slight change to the setting or structure of a Grade II Listed Building. Limited encroachment upon a Conservation Area or historic parkland or other historic landscape where intrusive views are created or slight effects upon its integrity would result.

Not Significant: Landscape or ecological planting on an area where locally important heritage assets have been identified but impacts are thought to have no long term effect on the resource. Removal of common hedgerows and limited damage to important hedgerows where no replacement proposed.

Minor Beneficial: Perceptible improvement in the setting or structure of a Grade II listed building, Conservation Area or Grade II historic parkland. Improved management of locally/regionally important archaeological site.

Moderate Beneficial: Perceptible improvement in the setting or structure of a Grade I/II* listed building, Conservation Area or Grade I/II* historic parkland. Improved management of nationally important archaeological site.

Table 1: Significance criteria for heritage assets

2. The application site

2.1 **Location**

The study area included the application site (Fig 1) and heritage assets were considered within 500m of the site in order to provide a broader understanding of the local context. The application site is in Merry Hill, around 1.3km to the west of Brierley Hill town centre. The site covers an area of 5,390m² (excluding the access road through the wood). It is located within the south-west corner of Saltwells Wood Nature Reserve and is accessed via a long private drive off Pedmore Road. The site encompasses the footprint of the former Saltwells House (HER 12585; now demolished) and is located immediately to the east of a Scheduled Ancient Monument (HER 12093, SAM 1020539; Fig 2). The site also includes an access road connecting with Pedmore Road. The site is surrounded by semi natural ancient woodland, formerly called Lady Wood (HER 3394).

2.2 Topography and geology

The site lies at it highest point 125m above Ordnance Datum and gently slopes to the south and east. The site appears to be a terraced platform created on an east facing slope of a hill aligned north-east to south-west. This terracing is most obvious to the west of the site where there is a near vertical step in the hillside approximately 1.00m high, that in places appears to have been supported by a modern retaining brick wall (Plates 1 and 2). Some terracing also appears to have occurred to the east and north east of the site, where there is a sharp drop in ground level. It is thought that the eastern half of the site may contain made ground, formed using the soil removed from the western half of the site. To the west a hill rises to a ridge (131m AOD) and beyond it falls away into a gorge. These are both covered in dense woodland and understory (Plates 3 and 4). To the east the ground drops sharply in to open pasture and woodland at approximately 115m AOD (Plate 5 and 6). To the north and south of the site the ground drops gradually away and is covered by managed woodland (Plates 7 and 8). The access road from Pedmore Road, initially runs alongside the Enterprise Trading estate to the north and a field to the south, before entering woodland.

The geology of the area is complex and contains Carboniferous coal measures, iron ore, limestone, clays and silica sand all of which provided a basis for the area's industrial history.

2.3 **Current land-use**

The site was once the location of Saltwells House and its outbuildings, which have been demolished. It is currently open and mostly covered with crushed brick rubble (Plates 9-12). All that remains of the house is the lawn to the south of the site containing ornamental trees forming part of its formal garden. A tarmac road leads to the exit on Pedmore Road and is not longer in use. Across much of the site and specifically around the edges there are numerous weeds and overgrown scrub.

The site lies within the Saltwells Nature Reserve that was created in 1981, and in 1992 was designated a reserve under UNESCO's Man and Biosphere project. It contains two sites of special scientific interest (SSSIs). The reserve is 100 hectares in size and at its centre is the 40 hectare Saltwells Wood. The woodland is mostly deciduous dominated by oak, beech and sycamore with an understory of holly, hazel and rowan.

The reserve is the largest green space in the locality, which is largely industrial, commercial and residential in nature (Wolverhampton City Council 2009). The site is located in the southwest corner of the Netherton Character Area (DY01) the southern half of which is dominated by residential properties of post-war date. To the west the Brierley Hill Character Area (DY09) is dominated by industrial and commercial infrastructure with more residential areas around its fringes. The Quarry Bank Character Area (DY10) to the south is dominated by residential properties mostly built in the last 30 years.

Within these areas there are few other large green open spaces other than St Michael's Church, Marsh Park and the canal within the Brierley Hill Character Area and Netherton and Warren's Hall parks within the Netherton Character Area.

3. Heritage assets

A list of all the heritage assets within a 500m zone around the development site recorded on the Dudley Borough HER can be seen in Appendix 2. Later development of the site can be traced in Ordnance Survey maps reproduced in Figs 3-11.

3.1 **Designated heritage assets**

There is only one designated heritage asset within 500m of the development site, a Scheduled Ancient Monument (an ancient monument scheduled under the Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Areas Act 1979; SAM 1020539; HER 12093; Fig 2). Only the southern end of the development site enters the scheduled area, though the access road passes through the monument. It is intended to retain the access road on its present alignment, but construct two new passing places within the monument area (there will also be a remodelled junction with Pedmore Road, and a new passing place outside of the scheduled area). The scheduled area contains the earthworks associated with coal and iron ore extraction from the medieval and post-medieval periods (Plate 13). The earthworks result from extraction through outcropping and bell pits, which is first recorded to have taken place on Pensnett Chase in the 13th century (Guttery 1950). The most common earthworks are sunken circular tops of bell pits, which are narrow vertical shafts dug into the coal reserves. The expansion of mining by these methods on the chase meant that by the 16th century the Court Leet ordered that the shafts and bell pits be filled after extraction for safety purposes (Guttery 1960). There is no historic map based evidence of the extent of this industrial activity and no survey is known for the earthworks relating to it. This extraction is likely to have ended in the vicinity of the proposed development area by the late 18th century, as Yates' 1775 map of Staffordshire records the presence of Brierley Hill Coppice/Level Woods and Lady Dudley's plantation (Plate 14). Fowler's 1822 map of Kingswinford (Plate 15), illustrates that by the mid 19th century Saltwells Wood, which at that time was located further south, had become fully established (Plate 15). Coal pits are recorded on Yates' 1775 map, from Brierley Hill in the west, to Old Hill in the east. However, those on the east of Black Brook are unlikely to have survived due to a later clay pit, first recorded in 1785, which was to develop into Saltwells Clay Fields.

3.2 Undesignated heritage assets

There are 27 undesignated heritage assets within 500m of the development site recorded on the Dudley Borough Historic Environment Record (HER). The majority of these sites are of post-medieval or modern date and record the development of industrial mining in the area. These include two clay pits, Old Level and Doulton's, six colliery shafts and five collieries. Bell pits recorded on Yates' 1775 map are also recorded on the HER (7799).

The records include two areas of ridge and furrow (HER 9079 and 9048) to the east of the development site under the Merry Hill shopping centre and the Enterprise Industrial Estate respectively.

Two of the HER records are related to the brine springs from where Saltwells is named. Although lost a spring and a well are recorded on the HER (12717). The earliest record of the spring is in 1689, and although a weak brine, Lord Ward unsuccessfully attempted to make salt from it in the 17th century (Guttery 1950). Later in the 19th century brine baths (HER 3967) were constructed near to the well. These lasted until 1930 when they were demolished. Built near to the spa was the Saltwells Inn, constructed in the early part of the 19th century and still existing as a pub today (HER 15081).

Apart from the Scheduled Ancient Monument (HER12093), described above, only one further asset is recorded on the HER within the development area, Saltwells House (HER 12585). The house was constructed in the mid 19th century by the Earl of Dudley and was subsequently extended to the west and to the rear (Plate 16). This was a two story brick built structure thought to have been constructed for the Earl of Dudley's mother. From the cartographic evidence it appears to have reached its full size by 1939. To the north east of the development various outbuildings, including a pump house appear on later Ordnance Survey editions. These were extensively reordered between 1954 and 1964 with some being removed and others added. To north of the development an orchard is recorded on the first edition (1884) map, but this is not shown on later maps.

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Saltwells House came into council ownership in the 1950's and was used for a variety of purposes including an education centre, before being abandoned and falling into disrepair. It was badly damaged by a fire in 2010 and was demolished later that year (Express and Star 21st December 2010).

3.3 **Potential heritage assets**

The application site may contain sites relating to the mining and extraction of the shallow coal measures similar to those within the scheduled area to the west and recorded on Yates' 1775 map. The apparent terracing of the site before the construction of Saltwells House may however have truncated some of these remains. The site will also contain the cellars and foundations of Saltwells House that may provide information regarding the construction and development of this building over time. No evidence of any pre-medieval remains was noted in this study.

4. Summary of significance

4.1 **Assessment of significance**

Nature of the archaeological interest in the site

At least part of the site is likely to contain evidence of medieval and post-medieval mining activities, especially in the form of bell pits. These are extensively preserved in the woodland to the west and are recorded on Yates' 1775 map across this area The apparent landscaping of the site prior to the construction of Saltwells House is likely to have eroded evidence for other methods of extraction, especially outcropping or any surface earthworks such as shaft mounds, adits or gin circles. The construction of Saltwells House and its various outbuildings is also likely to have damaged subsurface remains. This is likely to be more extensive beneath the main house where the cellar was constructed.

The foundations and cellars of Saltwells House and its outbuildings are also likely to survive within the development area.

Relative importance of the archaeological interest in the site

As a Scheduled Ancient Monument the industrial remains have been identified as of national importance and are a designated heritage asset. Outside of the scheduled area any remains that directly to relate to this activity, may be considered to be of equal value to the designated asset (cf NPPF section 139). They would represent a rare survival of early coal extraction and may provide evidence for the development of this industry from the medieval period into the industrial era. The bell pits are likely to preserve evidence for the tools used in extraction and the details of extraction, ventilation and drainage. They are regionally important as they are located within a historically rich industrial area, illustrating the importance coal and the local geology made to the industrialisation of the region.

There is no evidence to suggest that the remains of Saltwell House are of any great importance, and any value rests on it being part of the history of this particular place.

Physical extent of the archaeological interest in the site

Given the landscaping that is thought to have taken place at the site only half of the development area is thought to be undisturbed (Fig 13). The western side of the development area appears to have been truncated while the eastern may contain made ground and areas of undisturbed land. This suggests that the eastern half of the development area of is greater archaeological potential.

5. The setting of the heritage assets

For the purposes of this study views to and from any heritage assets within 500m surrounding the development site have been considered. Views have been assessed from the publicly accessible pathways and from within the, at present unpaved, woodland and pasture zones surrounding the site.

English Heritage guidance on the setting of Heritage Assets (2012) defines setting as the surrounding in which an asset is experienced and that all heritage assets have a setting irrespective of the form in which they survive and whether they are designated or not. Elements of this setting may make a positive, negative or neutral contribution to the setting of an asset. These include

- View: the views to and from an asset will play an important role in how it is appreciated.
- Environmental factors: the noise, dust and vibration experienced while appreciating an
 asset.
- Spatial associations: the understanding of the historic relationship between historic assets.

Any changes to any of those elements of setting of a heritage asset will need to consider the implications for the public appreciation of the asset.

While the construction of the five dwellings and the wardens' offices has the most potential to affect views, any environmental effects of the development must also be considered. The site was visited on the 31st August 2012, during daylight hours, when the foliage remained on the trees and the assessment is based upon the situation during the site visit. It should be noted that during the winter month's inter-visibility is likely to be increased, as the majority of the woodland is deciduous. It is also possible that woodland management, windfall and public accessibility may change over time also altering the sites inter-visibility. The woodland surrounding the site is regarded as being permanent as the nature reserve is an important urban space. It is registered as a UNESCO Man and Biosphere site containing two SSSIs so is unlikely to be removed.

5.1 Affected sites

5.1.1 Existing Sites on the HER

The location of these can be seen on figure 12.

SMR Number 3396, Birch Wood *GRID Ref*: SO 93665 86937 *Distance From Site*: 550m

Direction to development site: north west

Description of site and existing views

This is a semi-natural ancient woodland to the south of Doulton's clay pit. It is dense mixed broad leaf woodland approximately 3ha in size. Immediately to the east and south of this area there are modern brick built housing estates and industrial buildings. To the north there are the remains of the clay pits, now wooded and to the east is Saltwells Wood. Not only does the woodland provide an important visual and secluded landscape within a heavily settled and industrial area it also has historical significance as once belonging to Pensnett Chase. It was originally a coppice used for the production of charcoal in local industrial processes. Its historical importance derives from its setting within a historically industrial area, for which it was managed and originally coppiced. The position of this woodland within a short distance of medieval and post-medieval mining remains provides further evidence for the industrial history of the region. There are no information boards informing visitors of the wood's historical significance, although it can be appreciated as an asset both from within the registered boundary of the reserve, and as a landscape feature viewed from the wider area around it

Impacts on visual amenity

This woodland is located 15m below the height of the development site and is visited by numerous walkers. Although there are no paths directly through the wood, they do enclose it. From this point the views of the development site will be screened by the dense broad leafed woodland and the topography. The appreciation of this wood and its setting should not be effected by the development.

Effect to setting: Neutral

SMR Number 3394, formerly Lady Wood

GRID Ref: SO 93588 87045 Distance From Site: 450m Direction to development site: N/A

Description of site and existing views

This is semi-natural ancient woodland, part of which covers the hill on which the development site sits. Lady Wood consisted of three units Netherton Hall Farm, Knowl Hill and Lower Hurst Farm. The latter is located around the development site to the west of Black Brook now called Saltwells Wood. Immediately to the, north, west and south of the wood there are modern housing estates and industrial buildings. To the east is the former Doulton's clay pit now part of Saltwells Nature Reserve.

The woodland was originally planted during in the mid 18th century and is recorded as Lady Dudley's Plantation on Yates' 1775 map. It is thought to have been planted here, under the direction of Lady Dudley to hide the scars of excessive coal mining and was the last coppice to be planted on Pensnett Chase to provide charcoal for local industry (Guttery 1960). Not only does the woodland provide an important visual and secluded landscape within heavily settled and industrial area it also has historical significance. The use of woodland to soften the scars of the industrial heritage of the area has been used here on two occasions, once in the 18th century under the direction of Lady Dudley and again since the abandonment of the clay and coal pits in the last 50years. Like Birch Wood, Lady Wood's (now Saltwells Wood) importance derives from its setting within an industrial area, for which it was managed and coppiced. The position of this woodland within a short distance of medieval and post-medieval mining remains provides further evidence for the industrial history of the region. This is indirectly implied within a single information board within the SAM, although it can also be appreciated as an asset both from within the registered boundary of the reserve, and as a landscape feature viewed from the wider area around it.

Impacts on visual amenity

This woodland surrounds the development site development site and is visited by walkers using the numerous footpaths that cross what is now Saltwells Nature Reserve. Development on the site is not likely to be conspicuous as views in to or within the woodland would be screened due to the density of tree cover and the understory of scrub. The size of the houses, being two storeys, also means that they will not be visible above the mature trees surrounding the development site. The houses are only likely to be seen from points close to the development; however, these views could be mostly, if not entirely, screened out by new tree and shrub planting around the site. The use of similar trees and plants to those already established within the wood would mean that this planting was not unsympathetic to the historic wood. Had it been standing today, Saltwells House would have had a similar impact in terms of scale, and as occupation of this clearing in the wood is continued a neutral impact has been ascribed.

Effect to setting: Neutral

SMR Number 7799 Sites of Coal Shafts

GRID Ref: 93062 87198 Distance From Site: 0.0m

Direction to development site: N/A

Description of site and existing views

These are thought to be the remains of medieval and post-medieval coal mining activities in the form of bell pits similar to the SAM (1020539). They are recorded on the Yates' map of Staffordshire (1775) within Lady Dudley's plantation. These appear to be located to the east and west of Black Brook, although those to the east of Black Brook will have been removed by the former clay pit. However it is likely bell pits remain between the SAM, beneath the development site and in the woodland towards the brook. Only one possible bell pit was

observed in this area during the walk over survey. Not only are these remains significant archaeological evidence for the medieval and post-medieval extraction of coal they are also located within the heart of a heavily industrialised landscape both past and present. Their setting provides not only an insight into the region's industrial history but also the overlying tree covers provides evidence of how this has been attempted to be removed from the landscape.

Impacts on visual amenity

As these mining remains are only recorded cartographically and as few remains were observed during the walk over survey to the east of the development site there is no impact upon the visibility of these potential remains by the development.

Effect to setting: Neutral

SMR Number 7482 Formerly Doulton's clay pit

GRID Ref: SO 93593 87127 Distance From Site: 478m

Direction to development site: west

These are the remains of the Saltwells clay fields, formally Doulton's clay pit. The pit was originally part of the Earl of Dudley's Saltwells estate and became part of Lady Dudley's plantation from 1785 to 1890, when extraction began. This pit was abandoned in 1930. The former pits are located within an area of dense broad leafed woodland towards the east of Saltwells Reserve. The pit is visited by numerous walkers using the various footpaths that cross the reserve. The pits are surrounded by further areas of woodland to the south and west and by housing to the north and east. Not only are these remains evidence for the postmedieval mining of the area, they are also located within the heart of a heavily industrialised landscape both past and present. Their associations with the development of this industrialisation can be seen through the development of mining locally at such sites as the SAM and as a result of the visible geology of the area visible at Brewin's cutting and within the pits themselves. Their setting provides not only an insight in to the regions industrial history but also the overlying tree covers provides evidence of how this has been attempted to be removed from the landscape. The history of the site and its associations with the underlying geology is explained within an information panel overlooking towards the eastern face of the pit.

Impacts on visual amenity

This woodland is located 15m below the height of the development site and is visited by numerous walkers. The views of the development site will be screened by the dense broad leaved woodland and the topography. The information panel and important geological sections are also viewed with ones back to the development site. Therefore the development is unlikely to affect the setting of this asset.

Effect to setting: Neutral

SMR Number 12093 Coal Mining Remains (SAM 1020539)

GRID Ref. 9304 8721 Distance From Site: 0.0m

Direction to development site: east

Description of site and existing views

These are thought to be the remains of medieval and post-medieval coal mining activities in the form of Bell Pits, outcropping earthworks and gin circles. The majority of these earthworks appear within the western half of the SAM, either side of a tarmac path where the only information panel has been erected. These remains are located within an area of dense broad leafed woodland on the west facing slope of the hill and are viewed from a north to

south aligned footpath. From here the wooded hillside rises to the east from 125m AOD to 131m AOD. The earthworks appear to be spread across the western side of the hill, although as the majority of features are shallow they are not easily visible through the woodlands understory. Not only are these remains significant archaeological evidence for medieval and post-medieval extraction of coal they are also located within the heart of a heavily industrialised landscape both past and present. Their setting provides not only an insight in to the regions industrial history but also the overlying tree covers provides evidence of how this has been attempted to be removed from the landscape and information on earlier forms of fuel.

These remains are located here due to the shallow coal reserves in the underlying geology. Therefore the remains have a strong link to their setting, both historically and through the modern era as they exist within a region of rich industrial heritage that developed here as a result of the geology of the area. Therefore the entire region forms part of the monuments setting. This link between the monument and the Black Country should be appreciated by most people, especially locals who have a greater knowledge of the regions industrial heritage.

Although not contemporary the remains are linked to the clay pits to the east of the reserve as they illustrate the history of the mining and exploitation of the natural reserves in the area. Due to the topography and the woodland there is no inter-visibilty between the two sites, however the footpaths within the park provide the opportunity to create these associations. Brewin's cutting within the reserve also provides an obvious visual prompt to understand the geological make up of the region. A good understanding of the development of this area requires these elements to be conceived together.

Impacts on visual amenity

The hillside on which the SAM is situated provides a natural screen to the development site from where the earthworks are observed. When walking off-path the dense tree and shrub cover also provided a screen to the development area. From the bridleway at the southern end of the development site at least three of the properties are likely to be visible, however this is a private road with no throughway. From the north the rear of the houses are likely to be partially visible as the tree cover is lesser in than area although no earthworks were observed in the SAM in that area. From the east the majority of the properties will be visible from a large pasture field within the wood, although there is no footpath in this area and it does not appear to have been used regularly. As the properties will be below the height of the tree canopy the woodland should provide a significant screen to the development from most other vantage points. Where the houses are partially visible these views could be mostly, if not entirely, screened out by new tree and shrub planting around the site. The proposed development continues the historic occupation of a clearing in the wood, and the use of its access road. The construction of the properties and proposed passing places would not dilute the historic relationship between the remains and their setting.

Effect to setting: Neutral

SMR Number 15081, Saltwells Inn GRID Ref: SO 93345 86880 Distance From Site: 330m

Direction to development site: north west

Description of site and existing views

This is a large two storey brick built, tiled roofed, public house built in the early 20th century. The front of the building faces east with views of a car park, a row of 4 modern terraced houses and a group of industrial buildings. To the rear of the property there is a garden and beyond and immediately to the south there is dense broad leave woodland of Saltwells Nature Reserve. The Inn's setting is similar to the one it would originally have had within deciduous woodland, as it was constructed after the creation of Lady Dudley's plantation and prior to the extraction at Doulton's pit. The pub is at the end of a rough, unlit lane and is flanked by dense woodland. It is located in a relatively quiet and secluded location that reflects its original location in a small rural hamlet containing Saltwells Spa. The establishment of the modern woodland within the nature reserve contributes positively to their setting and reflects its historic past.

Impacts on visual amenity

The inn is located 20m below the development site at the base of the hill on which the development site sits. The pub is visited by numerous people and is viewed from the front and the back of the property. Although the pub's relationship to its historic setting is not overtly obvious the pub provides information regarding the history of the inn to its patrons which will contribute to the public appreciation of it and its setting. The reserve also provides a tranquil area in which to enjoy its facilities. The views to the development site will be obscured from east and south by the property itself and from the rear and north by dense woodland. Therefore the appreciation of the pub and its setting should not be affected by the development.

Effect to setting: Neutral

SMR Number 15082, 1-4 Saltwells Lane

GRID Ref: **SO 93375 86876** *Distance From Site*: 340m

Direction to development site: north west

Description of site and existing views

This is a terrace of four modern houses first shown on the 1934-1948 OS map. These are two storey, rendered brick built structures with ceramic tiled roofs. They are aligned approximately east to west, with views to the north and south. The houses are located between a car park for Saltwells Inn and a car park for Saltwells Reserve. To the rear of the property there is open pasture, to the east there are industrial buildings and to the south and west there is dense woodland. The buildings would have been constructed overlooking Saltwells Clay Pit, within a small hamlet also containing Saltwells spa and the Inn.

The historic setting of these houses is still echoed in their current setting as the pub, whose outbuildings were demolished to construct these houses still exists and as the clay pit which would have been visible to the north at the time of construction is still visible within Saltwells reserve. These associations are not easily recognisable, although their location within a small hamlet at the end of a lane provides a secluded and relatively quiet location at the southern end of the reserve reflective of their historical setting.

Impacts on visual amenity

The houses are located 20m below the development site at the base of the hill and are viewed by non residents from their frontages which abut the car park. The views to the development site will be completely obscured from the front of the property by Saltwells Inn and screened from the back by dense tree cover. Given the density of the tree cover the woodland should provide a significant screen even during the winter months. The development should not have a significant effect to the public appreciation of them.

Effect to setting: Neutral

5.2 Other sites on the HER

SMR Number 3967 Saltwells Spa

GRID Ref: SO 93284 86850 Distance From Site: 303m

Direction to development site: north west

This site no longer exists so no assessment was made.

SMR Number 7322 142 Pedmore Road

GRID Ref: unknown

Distance From Site: unknown

Direction to development site: unknown

This site no longer exists so no assessment was made.

SMR Number 7454 Hurst Colliery

GRID Ref: SO 92889 87480 Distance From Site: 430m

Direction to development site: south-east

This site no longer exists so no assessment was made.

SMR Number 7455 Old Level Colliery shaft

GRID Ref: SO 93106 87463 Distance From Site: 360m

Direction to development site: south

This site no longer exists so no assessment was made.

SMR Number 7456 Hurst Colliery shaft

GRID Ref: SO 93206 87476 Distance From Site: 380m

Direction to development site: south east

This site no longer exists so no assessment was made.

SMR Number 7460 Old Level Colliery

GRID Ref: SO 92839 87284 Distance From Site: 340m

Direction to development site: south east

This site no longer exists so no assessment was made.

SMR Number 7465 Level Trough Colliery

GRID Ref: SO 92690 87038 Distance From Site: 450m

Direction to development site: east

This site no longer exists so no assessment was made.

SMR Number 7463 Wallows Colliery shaft

GRID Ref: SO 92782 87212 Distance From Site: 360m

Direction to development site: east

This site no longer exists so no assessment was made.

SMR Number 7466 Robin Hood Colliery

GRID Ref: SO 92895 86799 Distance From Site: 350m

Direction to development site: north

This site no longer exists so no assessment was made.

SMR Number 7484 Old Level Clay Pit

GRID Ref: SO 92654 87155 Distance From Site: 450m

Direction to development site: east

This site no longer exists so no assessment was made.

SMR Number 7905 Wallows Colliery

GRID Ref: SO 92806 87141 Distance From Site: 320m

Direction to development site: east

This site no longer exists so no assessment was made.

SMR Number 7946 Colliery

GRID Ref: SO 92929 86803 Distance From Site: 550m

Direction to development site: north

This site no longer exists so no assessment was made.

SMR Number 7952 Colliery

GRID Ref: SO 92914 87125 Distance From Site: 230m

Direction to development site: north east

This site no longer exists so no assessment was made.

SMR Number 9048 Hurst Hill Farm; Ridge and Furrow

GRID Ref: SO 92982 87366 Distance From Site: 300m

Direction to development site: south east

This site no longer exists so no assessment was made.

SMR Number 9049 Merry Hill Farm; Ridge and Furrow

GRID Ref: SO 92705 86797 Distance From Site: 500m

Direction to development site: north east

This site no longer exists so no assessment was made.

SMR Number 12032 Saltwells Wood Colliery

GRID Ref: SO 93628 86901 Distance From Site: 550m

Direction to development site: north west

This site no longer exists so no assessment was made.

SMR Number 12585 Saltwells House

GRID Ref: SO 93116 87102 Distance From Site: 0.0m

Direction to development site: N/A

This site no longer exists so no assessment was made.

SMR Number 12717 Site of Brine Spring

GRID Ref: unknown

Distance From Site: unknown

Direction to development site: north west

This site no longer exists so no assessment was made.

SMR Number 15083 Clinker Wall in Saltwells Lane

GRID Ref: SO 93350 86881 Distance From Site: 320m

Direction to development site: north west

This site no longer exists so no assessment was made.

6. Landscape character

The site lies at the southern end of the Netherton Character Area (DY10), with the Brierley Hill Character Area (DY09) to the immediately to the west and the Quarry Bank Character Area (DY10) immediately to the south. The Netherton Character Area is primarily residential with the southern area being of mostly post war origin. The site is located within an area characterised as pre 1880 woodland and would originally have been part of Pensnett Chase until the 18th century when it was enclosed. Presently this woodland is surrounded by commercial, residential and industrial character zones.

The location of Saltwells Wood is a substantial element in the landscape and has the feel of a rural feature. At present, views out from the wood towards the built-up area are limited and one only has an understanding of your location when approaching the boundary of the wood and because of the noise from the surrounding roads. These urban elements are not sympathetic to the historic interest of the wood, but are not easily appreciated when inside the reserve. This urban expansion has not encroached into the wood and little or no new development has seemingly taken place within since the construction of Saltwells House.

The development site is currently set within an area that has historically been residential (albeit different in detail) and is now set within semi natural ancient woodland. The woodland is likely to be from the mid 18th century, with the house constructed within the early 19th century. The construction of the houses would therefore not undermine the integrity of the woodland as the site had previously been residential.

Development on the site is not likely to be conspicuous due to the density of tree cover and the understory of scrub. The houses are only likely to be seen from points close to the development site along footpaths through the wooded area. However, these views could be mostly, if not entirely, screened out by new tree and shrub planting around the site. The use of similar trees and plants to those already established within the wood would mean that this planting was not unsympathetic to the historic wood.

The reserve represents a tranquil area within an urban landscape for which to relax and enjoy nature. However, because of its proximity to the built up area traffic noise is noticeable within parts of the wood, specifically to the south across Pedmore Road. The small increase in the amount of traffic though the wood is therefore unlikely to detract from the appreciation of the woodland.

The size of the houses, being two storeys, means that they will not be visible above the mature trees surrounding the majority of the development site. They are also of a scale that is comparable to those within surrounding residential areas. The use of wood as a construction material on the houses would seem appropriate given their location and would go some way to soften and reduce their visual impact.

The scheme would not, therefore, seriously undermine the appreciation and enjoyment of the woodland and walks through it. As it is proposed within a former residential area and of a relatively small scale it is unlikely to greatly affect the character of the landscape.

7. The potential impact of the application

This desk-based assessment, and the information provided by the client, allows an assessment to be made of the potential impact of the proposed development on the archaeological interest in the site. This assessment can only be broadly drawn especially as details of the type of foundations have not been decided, as well as details for services. For the purposes of

assessing the potential impact of the development it is assumed that the Saltwells Wood, forming part of Saltwells Nature Reserve is permanent. The area is unlikely to be cleared as there it contains two Sites of Special Scientific Interest and is registered as a UNESCO's Man and the Biosphere Project.

The construction of the wardens block and residential property number 1 are likely to disturb the below ground remains of Saltwells House, while the construction of properties 2-5 have the potential to disturb remains of the outbuildings and, together with the access road's passing places, the remains of mining within the development area. Detailed documentation of the location of this former activity is, however, not available and it would have covered a far larger area. It can be anticipated that, even if the remains of the earlier industry survive within the development area only a very small proportion of the whole would be affected. Further there is also evidence of cut and fill in the formation of level areas within the site (associated with Saltwells House), and removal of buried deposits may also be anticipated over a significant area (Fig 13). The historic landscaping of the site, based upon what was visible during the site visit, cartographic evidence and a topographic survey provided by Selbourne Homes can be seen in Figure 13. This suggests that there may be better archaeological preservation towards the east of the site.

The reuse of the access road will involve ground works to the junction with Pedmore Road and the construction of three passing places (the two to the east are within the scheduled area). The passing places will have a width of 6m. There is no indication (in the form of earthworks that the junction works or the western passing place will affect any archaeological deposits. The middle passing place will involve ground works to the north and south. The ground falls away to the south and aside from removal of topsoil, the ground levels are anticipated to be made-up rather than reduced. To the north there is a slight depression and the passing place will extend close to its edge. Again should there be any direct impact this will be to the effect of making up ground levels over a very small area. It does bring the road slightly closer to a bell pit further to the north, but it is not considered to reduce the significance of the heritage asset. The eastern passing place (also 6m in width) lies just inside the property of Saltwells House, which had been landscaped. It is unlikely there will be any significant impact.

The majority of sites recorded on the HER within 500m of the site will be screened from the development by the dense broad leaved woodland and the local topography. The density of this woodland is likely to provide a significant screen throughout the winter also.

The SAM to the west of the site is also screened from the development by the density of tree and scrub cover and by the local topography. As the majority of the earthworks within the SAM are visible and appreciated from the western side of the hillside, this provides a permanent screen. As the main path and the information panels are located on the western side of the hillside the development should not impact upon the setting or the appreciation of the earthworks. The increased level of traffic along the access road may, however, detract from the appreciation and setting of these monuments as some of the best preserved earthworks and the information panel describing them are close to this road. Given the traffic on Pedmore Road can be heard from this point the impact of occasional traffic use on the private drive would be less significant.

The effects of the development on the setting and appreciation of the heritage assets in the surrounding area is therefore thought to be not significant/neutral. Given the historic character of the wood and the development site, having once contained a residential property, any glimpses of the development through the woodland would also not to be damaging to the landscape character.

8. **Recommendations**

The presence of significant buried remains has not been tested, but it is possible they exist, and they were to be associated with the same activities as those encompassed by the Scheduled Ancient Monument, they would be of national importance. There is however, good evidence that any remains have been removed through terracing as part of the construction of Saltwells House. As can be seen on Figure 13 the buildings proposed for construction in the north-western part of the development site fall within this area. There is also an area which is

Page 17

likely to be of made ground, again formed during the construction of Saltwells House. Significant deposits may exist under the made ground, and an area likely to be undisturbed. The available design details do not indicate construction levels, and the impact cannot be precisely identified, however this is a relatively small area and the level of impact is most likely to be confined to excavation for foundations etc, rather than being across the whole area. In these circumstances an appropriate condition to expect would be for a watching brief during construction groundworks. The information gained would add to the documentation for the remains of industrial activity that characterise this heritage asset.

If any ground works or services extend into or run through the neighbouring scheduled area it will also be necessary to apply for scheduled monument consent. Any limited ground works within the scheduled area, if consent is obtained, would also likely require an archaeological watching brief.

9. **Residual effects**

Implementation of the mitigation proposed above should ensure that there are no residual effects on the historic environment and archaeological resource from the proposed development. Mitigation should ensure that adverse impacts are restricted in scope to *not significant*.

The historic environment is a non-renewable resource and therefore cannot be directly replaced. However mitigation through recording and investigation also produces an important research dividend that can be used for the better understanding of the county's history and contribute to local and regional research agendas.

10. **Publication summary**

The Service has a professional obligation to publish the results of archaeological projects within a reasonable period of time. To this end, the Service intends to use this summary as the basis for publication through local or regional journals. The client is requested to consider the content of this section as being acceptable for such publication.

A desk-based assessment/ was undertaken on behalf of Selbourne Homes at Saltwells wood, Merry Hill, Dudley (NGR ref SO 93028 87146). The site may contain the remains of medieval and post-medieval mining activities. Such remains are preserved as earthworks to the west of the site in a Scheduled Ancient Monument. Most remains within the development site may, however, have been truncated by the construction of Saltwells House in the early 19th century. The foundations and cellars of this building are likely to survive below ground within the development area.

11. Acknowledgements

The Service would like to thank the following for their kind assistance in the successful conclusion of this project, Gavin Warr (Selbourne Homes) and Pete Boland (Principal Conservation Officer & Borough Archaeologist, Dudley Borough Council).

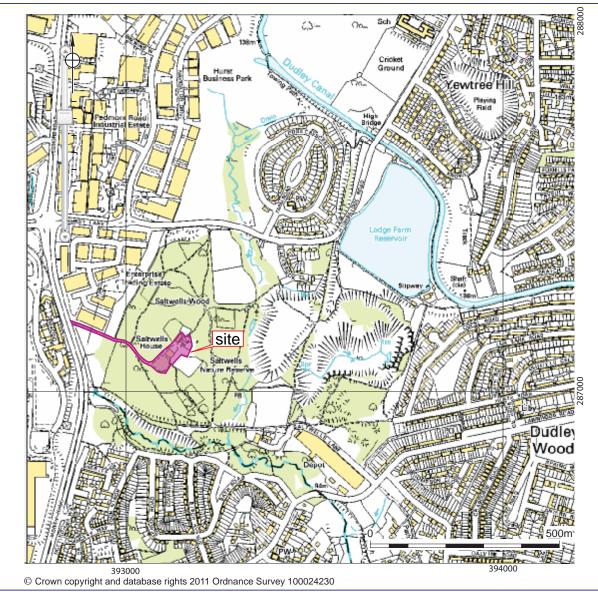
12. **Personnel**

The assessment was undertaken by Andrew Mann. The project managers responsible for the quality of the project were Tom Rogers and Simon Woodiwiss. Illustrations were prepared by Carolyn Hunt.

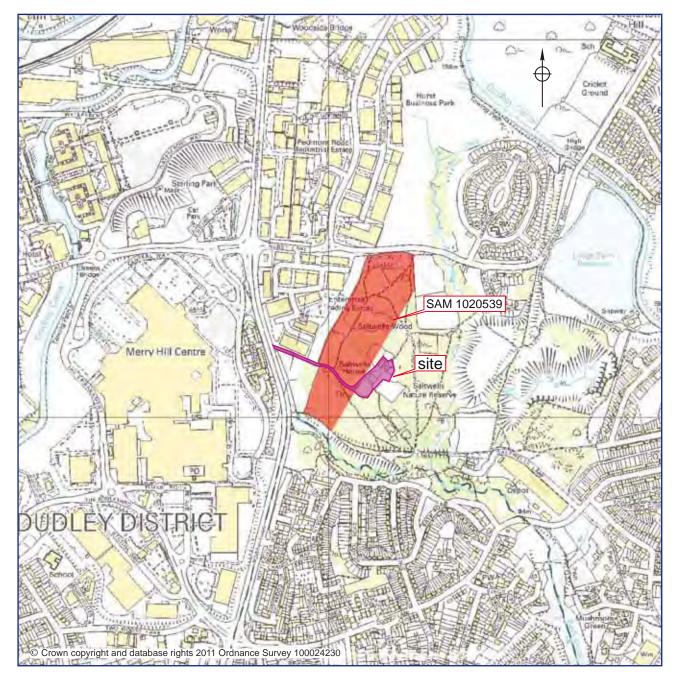
Figures



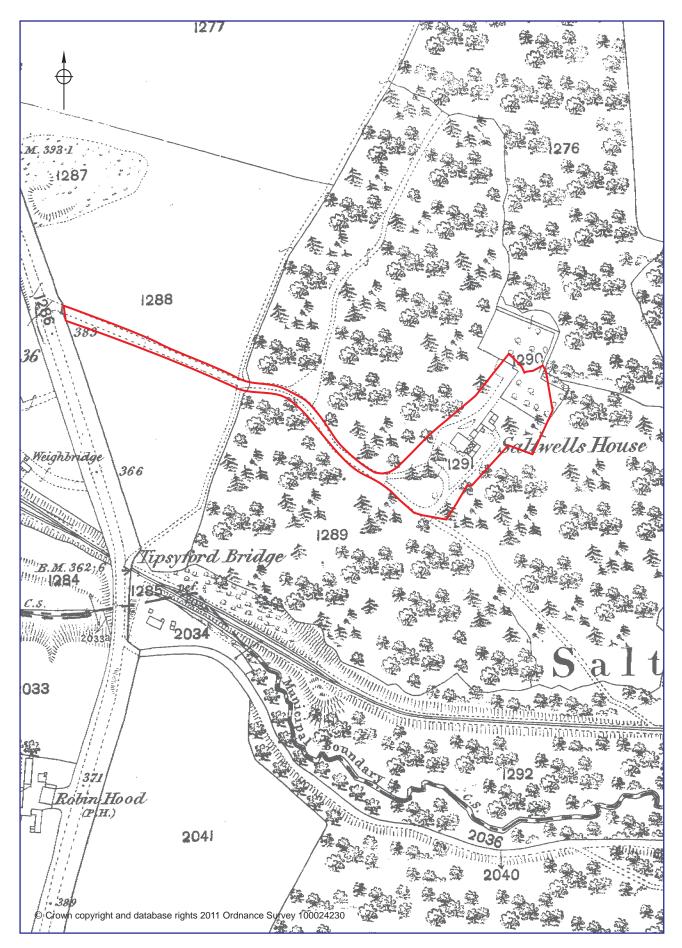




Location of the site

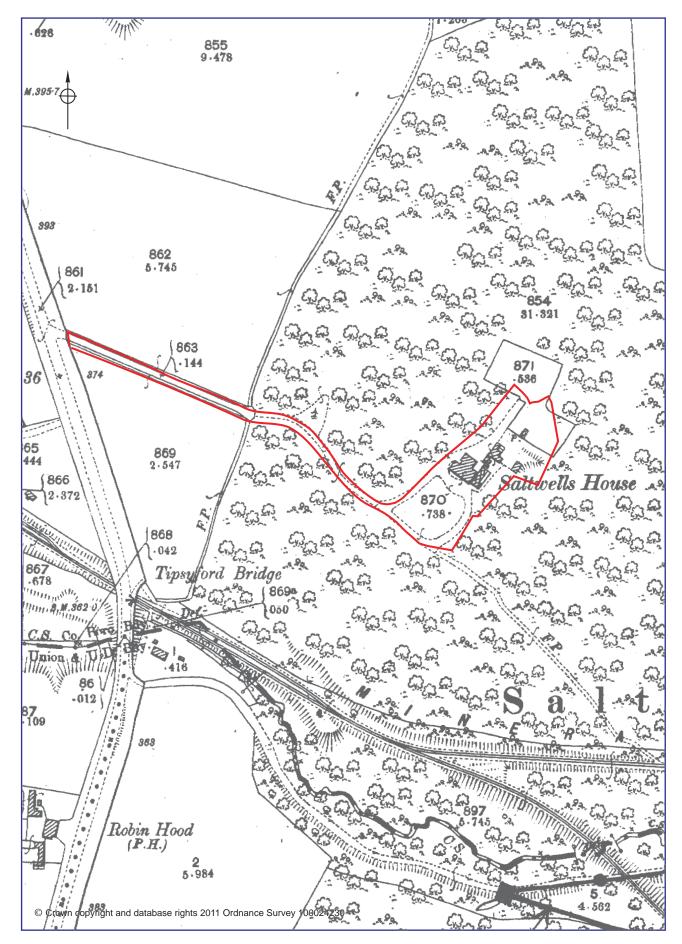


Scheduled area Figure 2



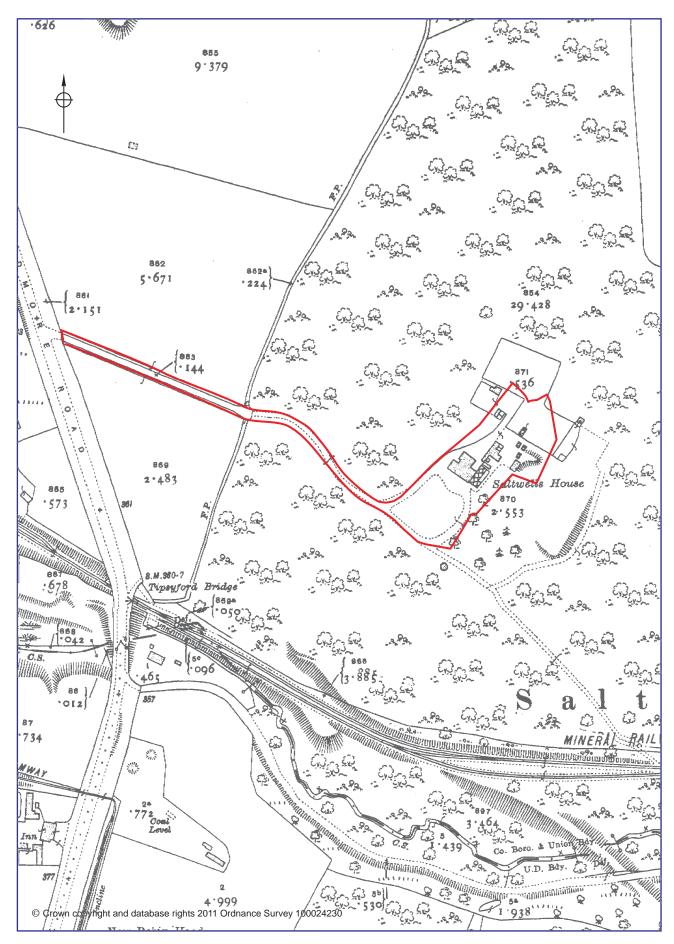
Extract from 1884 OS map

Figure 3



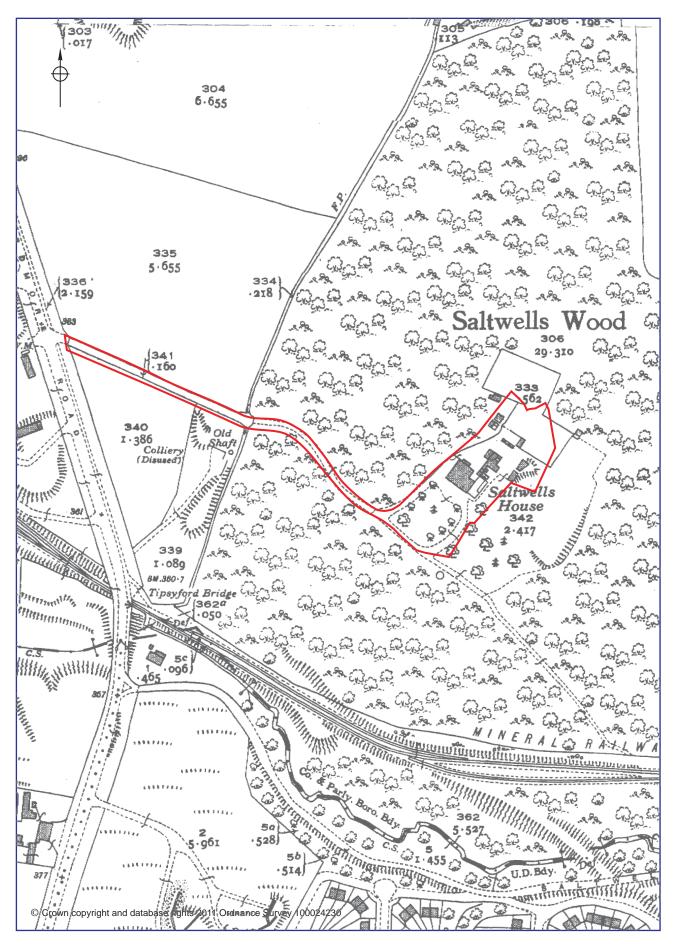
Extract from 1903 OS map

Figure 4



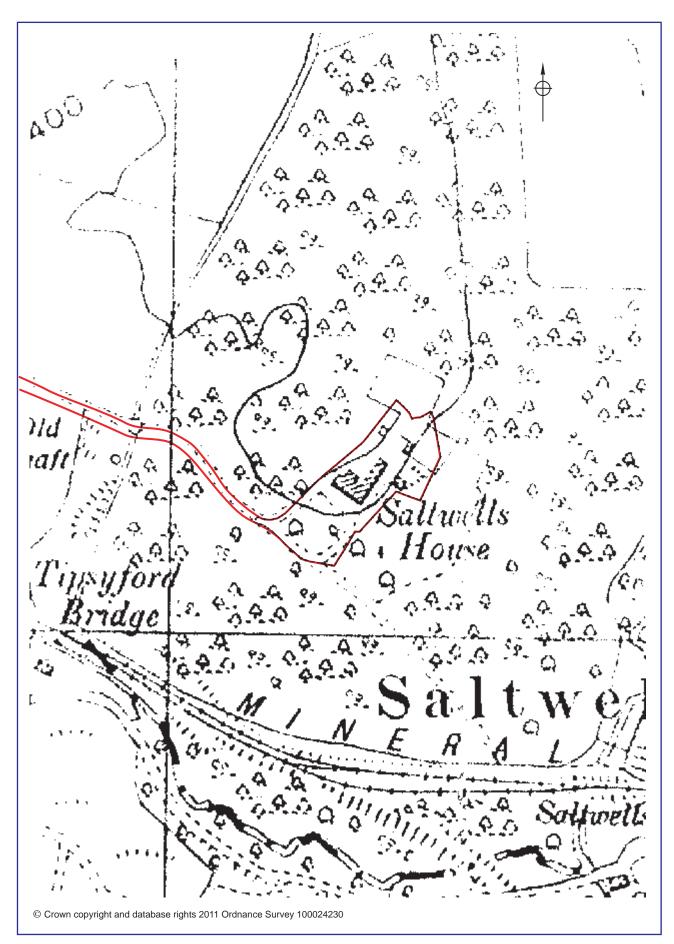
Extract from 1920 OS map

Figure 5

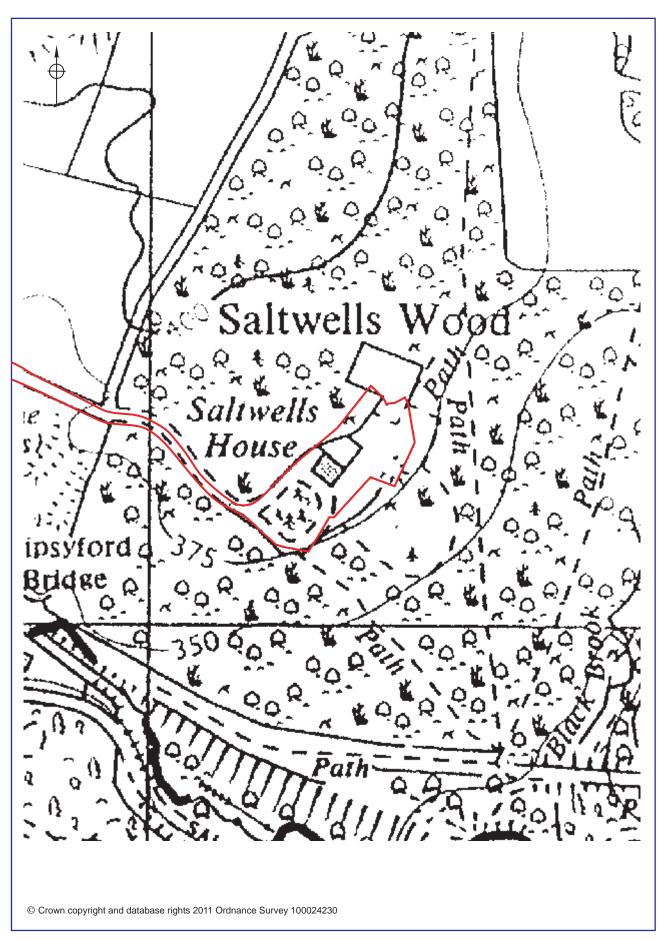


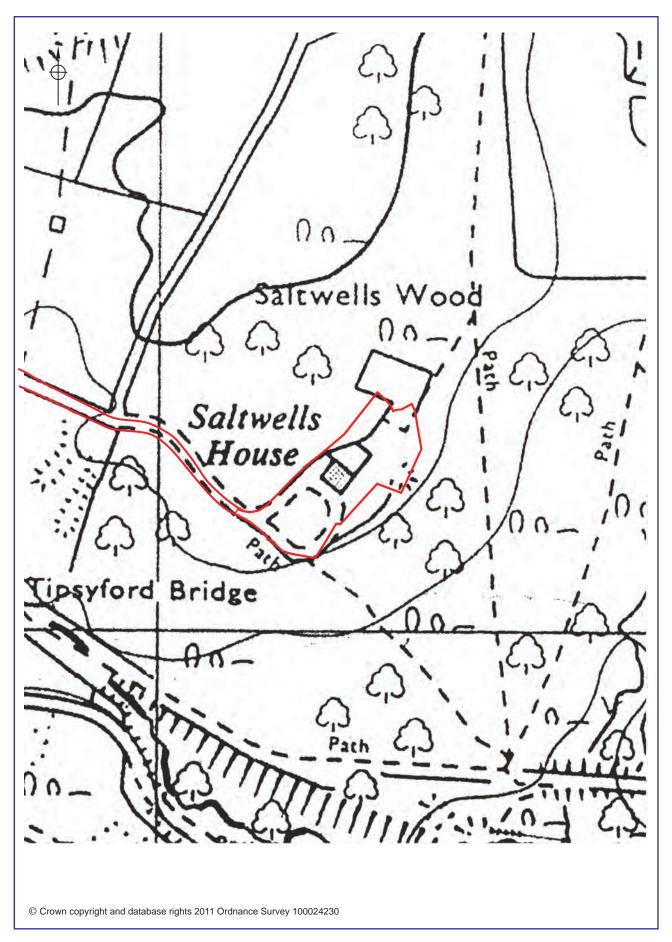
Extract from 1939 OS map

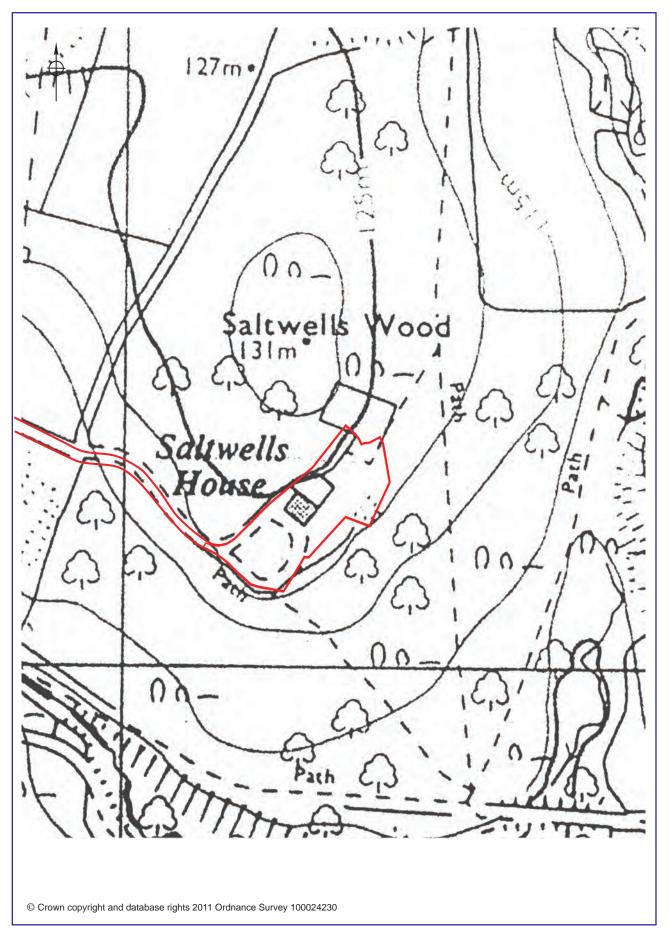
Figure 6

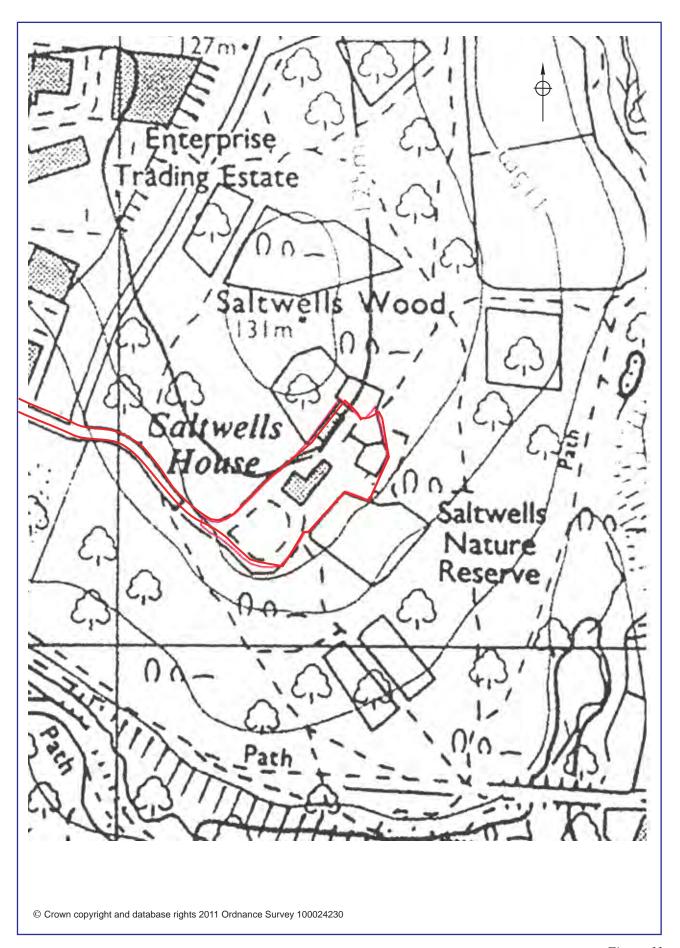


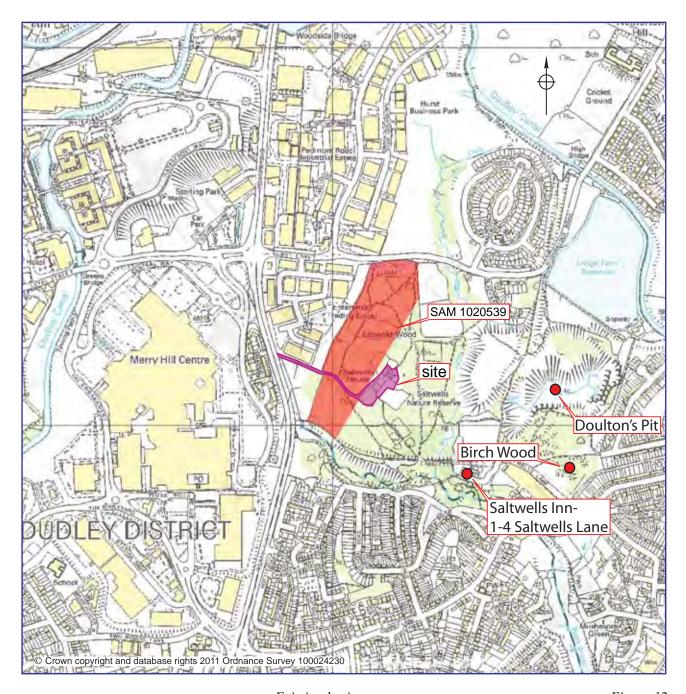
Extract from 1955 OS map





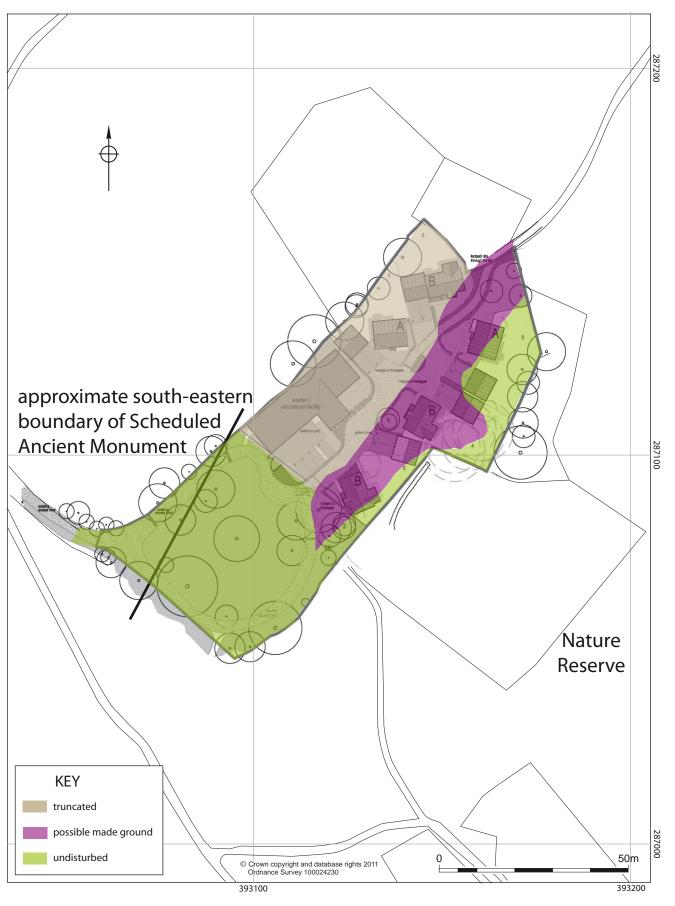






Existing heritage assets

Figure 12



Areas of truncation and proposed development (based upon Architecture & Design Dwg No 132-P-01 rev a)

Figure 13

Proposed passing places for access road

Plates



Plate 1: western side of site facing west in to the woodland covering the SAM, 1m scale



Plate 2: western edge of site facing south-west, showing the woodland covering the SAM, 1m scale



Plate 3: woodland to the west of the site, covering the SAM facing west, 1m scale



Plate 4: woodland covering the SAM, facing east into the development area

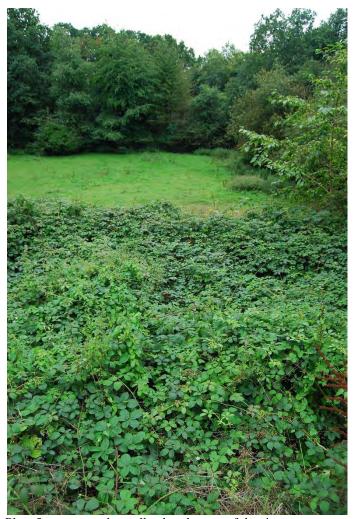


Plate 5: pasture and woodland to the east of the site



Plate 6: view facing west in to the development site from the pasture to the east



Plate 7: view of woodland to the north of the development site, facing south into the site



Plate 8: view of the woodland south of the site, facing north-west into the site



Plate 9: view of the site facing south-east



Plate 10 view of the site facing south-west



Plate 11: view of the site facing north-east



Plate 12: view of the site facing north-west



Plate 13: bell pit within the western half of the SAM, facing west, 1m scale

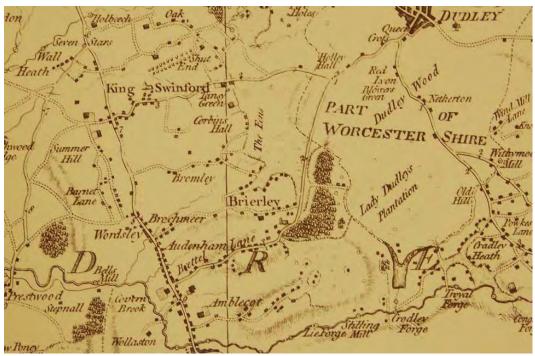


Plate 14: Yates 1775 map of the County of Staffordshire showing Lady Dudley's plantation



Plate 15: Fowler's 1822 map of the parish of Kingswinford showing Saltwells Wood



Plate 16: Saltwells House before demolition facing north



Plate 17: access road, proposed junction with Pedmore Road



Plate 18: access road proposed location of western passing place



Plate 19: access road proposed location of middle passing place



Plate 20: access road proposed location of eastern passing place

Appendix 1; Preliminary design of the proposed development



schedule of accommodation

2no. 3no. 1250 sq.ft type A 4 bedroom house type B 4 bedroom house

each dwelling to have a double garage (6m x 6m) plus 2no. car parking spaces

snld

warden / educational facility

and 4no. car parking spaces (one of which is to be to wheelchair standards with 900mm adjacent paved access)

key

existing tree retained	existing tree removed	grassed areas	hedge to frontages	shrubs	
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rev a amended to planners' comments

dec 2012

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project Land at Sandwells Wood, Merry Hill, Dudley

drawing

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Appendix 2; Heritage assets registered with the Historic Environment Record (those within the application site are indicated in bold)

HER number (and legal status)	Site name	Grid reference	Date	Description
3394	Formerly Lady Wood	SO 93588 87045	Post medieval	Semi natural ancient woodland
3396	Birch Wood	SO 93665 86937	Post medieval	Semi natural ancient woodland
3967	Saltwells Spa	SO 93284 86850	Post medieval	Saltwells brine bath buildings
7465	Level Trough colliery	SO 92690 87038	Modern	Colliery pit
7322	142 Pedmore Road	SO 92832 87420	Post medieval	Squat two storey cottage
7454	Hurts colliery	SO 92889 87480	Modern	Site of colliery Shaft
7952	Site of colliery	SO 92914 87125	Modern	Colliery pit
7455	Old Level colliery	SO 93106 87463	Modern	Site of colliery
7456	Hurst Colliery	SO 93206 87476	Unknown	Site of colliery shaft
7460	Old Level colliery	SO 92839 87284	Modern	Site of colliery
7463	Wallows colliery	SO 92782 87212	Modern	Site of colliery shaft
7466	Robin Hood colliery	SO 92895 86799	Modern	Site of colliery
7482	Formerly Doulton's clay pit	SO 93593 87127	Post medieval	Clay pit
7484	Old Level clay Pit	SO 92654 87155	Post medieval	Site of clay pit
7799	Site of coal shafts	SO 93062 87198	Post medieval	Bell pits on Yates map of 1775
7905	Site of Wallows colliery, Pit	SO 92806	Post medieval	Colliery pit

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	36	87141		
7946	Site of colliery	SO 92929 86803	Modern	Modern Colliery
9049	Merry Hill farm; ridge and Furrow	SO 92705 86797	Unknown	Agricultural earthworks
9048	Ridge and Furrow	SO 92982 87366	Unknown	Agricultural earthworks
12032	Saltwells Wood colliery	SO 93628 86901	Post medieval	Colliery pit
12093	Coal mining remains	SO 9304	Medieval and post	Earthworks of
SAM 1020539		8721	medieval	former mining pits
12585	Saltwells House	SO 9311 8710	Post medieval	Country house in middle of Saltwells Wood
12717	Brine Spring	Unknown	Natural feature, capped in the post medieval period	Brine spring and well from where the region gets its name
15081	The Saltwells Inn	SO 93345 86880	Post medieval	Public House
15082	1-4 Saltwells Lane	SO 93375 86878	Modern	Row of four modern terraced houses
15083	Clinker Wall	SO 93350 86881	Post medieval	Clinker wall on south of Saltwells Inn