

DESK-BASED ASSESSMENT  
AT  
MILLFIELDS ROAD, BILSTON,  
WOLVERHAMPTON

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14<sup>th</sup> July 2005  
revised 20 July 2005  
revised 27 July 2005

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INVESTOR IN PEOPLE

Project 2767  
Report 1355



# Contents

<b>Part 1 Project summary</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Part 2 Detailed report</b>	
1. <b>Background</b> .....	<b>2</b>
1.1 Reasons for the project.....	2
1.2 Project parameters.....	2
1.3 Aims.....	2
2. <b>Methods</b> .....	<b>2</b>
2.1 Study area.....	2
2.2 Documentary search.....	2
2.3 Other methods.....	4
2.4 Results.....	4
2.5 Impact assessment criteria.....	5
2.6 The methods in retrospect.....	5
3. <b>Topography, Archaeology and historical background</b> .....	<b>5</b>
3.1 Topography.....	5
3.2 Geology.....	6
3.3 Historic environment.....	6
3.3.1 Prehistoric and Roman.....	6
3.3.2 Saxon and medieval.....	6
3.3.3 Post-medieval and modern.....	7
3.4 Statutory and other designations.....	10
4. <b>Assessment of significance and potential impacts</b> .....	<b>10</b>
5. <b>Mitigation</b> .....	<b>11</b>
6. <b>Residual effects</b> .....	<b>12</b>
7. <b>Publication summary</b> .....	<b>12</b>
8. <b>Acknowledgements</b> .....	<b>12</b>
9. <b>Personnel</b> .....	<b>13</b>
10. <b>Abbreviations</b> .....	<b>13</b>





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## **Desk-based assessment of Millfields Road, Bilston, Wolverhampton**

**Tom Vaughan**

### **Part 1 Project summary**

A desk-based assessment was undertaken at Millfields Road, Bilston, Wolverhampton (NGR: SO 934 963). It was undertaken on behalf of Pam Brown Associates Ltd, whose client intends to demolish the existing buildings and redevelop the site with new industrial/warehouse units, associated loading areas, car and lorry parks and landscaping, for which a planning application has been submitted.

The aims of this assessment were to summarise the character and extent of any identified features of the historic environment, indicate their significance, the impact of the proposed development and identify mitigation measures, where appropriate.

There is at present no evidence of activity predating the post-medieval/modern period in this area, which was formerly known as Catchems Corner. Millfields Road and Manor Road frontages were occupied by mid/late 19<sup>th</sup> century buildings of largely residential character, an early 19<sup>th</sup> century flour mill and a mid 19<sup>th</sup> century church. Colliery workings occupied the southern half of the study area. It is unclear if any of these buildings existed prior to the 19<sup>th</sup> century, although some settlement around the crossroads is recorded in the mid/late 18<sup>th</sup> century. The existing buildings date from the 1920s as part of the original John Thompson Engineering Co. Ltd, which became GKN Thompson Chasis.

The former Holy Trinity church occupied the north-eastern corner of the site between 1834 and 1961. Although no burial registers exist, or any other documentary sources identified, there is purported to have been a burial interred either below or adjacent to the north aisle.

Geotechnical survey work has revealed a great depth of industrial debris with redeposited sand and gravel over the entire site, probably the result of levelling up of the former colliery workings and the demolition of the flour mill.

It is considered that there is little potential for archaeological remains of regional or national significance likely to be disturbed by the proposed development. However, a scheme of archaeological involvement is envisaged, comprising photographic recording of the existing buildings prior to demolition and a watching brief of groundworks, particularly along the Millfields Road frontage and in the area of the former church.

## Part 2 Detailed report

### 1. Background

#### 1.1 Reasons for the project

A desk-based assessment was undertaken at Millfields Road, Bilston, Wolverhampton (NGR: SO 934 963; Fig 1). It was undertaken on behalf of Pam Brown Associates Ltd, whose client intends to demolish the existing buildings and redevelop the site with new industrial/warehouse units, associated loading areas, car and lorry parks, and landscaping. A planning application has submitted to Wolverhampton City Council (reference 05/0521/FP/M), who consider that two sites of archaeological interest may be affected (BCSMR 13097 and 13574).

#### 1.2 Project parameters

The project conforms to the *Standard and guidance for archaeological desk-based assessment* (IFA 1999), Planning Policy Guidance Notes 15 '*Planning and the Historic Environment*', and 16 '*Archaeology and Planning*' and relevant EIA guidance and Legislation.

The project also conforms to a project proposal (including detailed specification; HEAS 2005).

#### 1.3 Aims

The aims of this assessment were to summarise the character and extent of any identified features of the historic environment, indicate their significance, the impact of the proposed development and identify mitigation measures, where appropriate.

## 2. Methods

### 2.1 Study area

The study area included the site (Fig 1), though features of the historic environment within the immediate vicinity were also considered.

### 2.2 Documentary search

Prior to fieldwork commencing a search was made of the Black Country Sites and Monuments Record (BCSMR), Staffordshire County Records Office (SRO, Wolverhampton Archives and Local Studies (WA) and Dudley Archives and Local Studies Service (DA). The following sources are relevant to the study area.

#### *Cartographic sources*

- 1775 Map of the County of Stafford from an actual survey by William Yates, engraved by John Chapman. Scale 1":1 mile, DA 1775 and 569A
- 1812 Plan of the Mines of Lord Dudley and Others, situate in the Parishes of Wolverhampton, Bilston, Wednesbury, Tipton, Sedgeley, Kingswinford and Rowley in the County of Stafford; Dudley and Old Swinford in the County of Worcester; and Halesowen, in the County of Salop, taken by James Sherriff. Scale 2.5cm:4 furlongs (1:321,868), DA

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- 1816 Ordnance Survey, Staffordshire, scale 2":1 mile (Fig 2)
  - 1834 Ordnance Survey, sheet 62 SW, Lichfield, scale 1":1 mile
  - 1843 A Plan of the Parish of Sedgley in the County of Stafford, 1843, William Fowler and Son, Surveyors, Birmingham (used as Tithe map) SRO D3729/6/17/17 (Fig 3)
  - 1867 Holy Trinity Parish Map, scale 4.25cm:10 chains, delineated by A R Payne, May 4<sup>th</sup> 1868, SRO D593/H/3/414
  - 1887 1<sup>st</sup> edition Ordnance Survey Staffordshire, sheet LXII.15, scale 25":1 mile (Fig 4)
  - 1903 Ordnance Survey, Staffordshire, sheet LXII.15, scale 25":1 mile
  - 1919, Ordnance Survey, Staffordshire, sheet LXII.15, scale 25":1 mile
  - 1938, Ordnance Survey, sheet S0 9396, scale 1:2500
  - 1964, Ordnance Survey, sheet S0 9396, scale 1:2500
  - 1974, Ordnance Survey, sheet S0 9396, scale 1:2500
  - 1989, Ordnance Survey, sheet S0 9396, scale 1:2500
  - 1999, Ordnance Survey , Wolverhampton and Dudley, Explorer sheet 219, 1:25,000
  - 2005, Webb Grey and Partners Ltd, Chartered Architects: proposed development plan, job no. 7222, drawing no. P02, March 2005 (Fig 4)
  - Map supplied to the Client by the Land Registry

*Documentary sources*

- Ettingshall Church Records, SRO D4071/D6237
- Guide to the Iron Trade of Great Britain, 1873
- Kellys Staffordshire Directory, 1901
- Kellys Staffordshire Directory, 1912
- Kellys Staffordshire Directory, 1928
- Kellys Staffordshire Directory, 1932
- Kellys Staffordshire Directory, 1940
- Survey of Sedgley Parish 1844-1845 (Tithe Apportionment), WA DX81/1
- VCH XX, Elrington, C R (ed), 1984 *Victoria History of the County of Staffordshire*, XX

*Site archives*

- Ground Investigation and Piling Ltd 2005, borehole and test pit logs (04/05)

The following sources have also been used in this assessment.

- Brewer, A (compiler), 1999 *Images of England: Ettingshall and Monmore Green*
- Cockin, T, 2000 *The Staffordshire Encyclopaedia*
- DoE, 1990 *Planning Policy Guidance Note 16: Archaeology and Planning (PPG 16)*, Department of the Environment
- DoE, 1995 *Planning Policy Guidance Note 15: Archaeology and the historic Environment (PPG 15)*, Department of the Environment
- Garratt-Frost, S, 1992 *The Law and Burial Archaeology*, Institute of Field Archaeologists Technical Paper 11
- Genge, T, 1997 *Britain in Old Photographs: Sedgley and District - a second selection*
- Greenslade, M W and Stuart, D G, 1984 *A History of Staffordshire*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition
- HEAS, 2005 *Proposal for an archaeological desk-based assessment at Millfields Road, Bilston, Wolverhampton*, Historic Environment and Archaeology Service, Worcestershire County Council, unpublished document dated 28<sup>th</sup> June 2005, **P2767**
- IFA, 1999a *Standard and guidance for archaeological desk-based assessment*, Institute of Field Archaeologists
- IFA, 1999b *Standard and guidance for an archaeological watching brief*, Institute of Field Archaeologists
- McKinley, J I, and Roberts, C, 1993 *Excavation and post-excavation treatment of cremated and inhumed human remains*, Institute of Field Archaeologists Technical Paper 13
- RCHME, 1996 *Recording historic buildings: a descriptive specification (3rd edition)*, Royal Commission on the Historical Monuments of England
- Shaw, S, 1798-1801 (1976) *The History and Antiquities of Staffordshire*

*The following sources were not considered relevant to this project:*

- Aerial photographs.

### 2.3 **Other methods**

A site visit was undertaken on 6<sup>th</sup> July 2005.

Consultation has been undertaken with Mike Shaw (Black Country Sites and Monuments Record Officer) to establish the key issues likely to be of importance in determining the planning application.

A detailed specification has been prepared by the Service (HEAS 2005).

### 2.4 **Results**

The results are mapped on Figures 1-4 and the details of individual features of the historic environment are given in Appendix 1. Event records have been omitted where this would

repeat information in other record types, and would not materially affect the assessment. SMR references have been used throughout this assessment.

## 2.5 Impact assessment criteria

The criteria cited in Table 1 have been used.

*Table 1: Significance Criteria for Cultural Heritage Issues*

<p><b>Severe Adverse:</b> Loss of integrity of nationally important archaeology/cultural heritage 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 feature/site.</p>
<p><b>Major Adverse:</b> Land take resulting in the degradation of a cultural heritage site of national importance and/or extensive change to the setting or visual amenity of such a site e.g. intrusion into the setting of a Scheduled Ancient Monument. Loss of integrity of sites of archaeological interest of regional value, or Grade II registered parks and gardens, e.g. a dramatic change in the setting or visual amenity of a regionally important site 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.</p>
<p><b>Moderate Adverse:</b> Land take resulting in the degradation of a cultural heritage site of regional importance and/or extensive change to the setting or visual amenity of such a site. 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).</p>
<p><b>Minor Adverse:</b> Loss of integrity of an area where archaeological features/areas 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.</p>
<p><b>Not Significant:</b> Landscape or ecological planting on an area where locally important archaeological features 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.</p>
<p><b>Minor Beneficial:</b> 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.</p>
<p><b>Moderate Beneficial:</b> 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.</p>

## 2.6 The methods in retrospect

The methods adopted allow a high degree of confidence that the aims of the assessment have been achieved.

## 3. Topography, Archaeology and historical background

### 3.1 Topography

The site lies 3km south-east of Wolverhampton, 5km north of Dudley and 0.75km west of Bilston. It is to the south-east of crossroads, formerly known as Catchems Corner, on the northern side of the old Sedgley estate, within the parish of Ettingshall, in the diocese of Lichfield (Fig 1).

It comprises an area of 5.36 hectares, bounded by Millfields Road to the north, Tarmac works to the east and south, the railway line and Manor Road to the west. Access is off Millfields Road to the north and Manor Road to the west.

At present the site comprises the disused GKN Thompson Chassis buildings with concrete and tarmac car parks and loading areas associated with the former engineering works. The majority of the manufactory building is a steel frame construct, with occasional single storey brick-built lean-tos on the north side. There are also two detached brick office buildings on the north side. The car park and adjacent grassed area in the north-west corner are raised approximately 2-3m higher than the rest of the site, which is generally flat, at approximately 145-146.5m AOD. Dense shrubs and trees line the Millfields Road frontage.

The recent geotechnical survey undertaken on the site indicates that there is a substantial depth of post-medieval/modern industrial debris below the present surface, from 1.70m to more than 4.50m. There is no general pattern to the depth of material over the site, probably reflecting the variable depth of the colliery workings indicated on early maps (see below). The made-ground largely comprises redeposited silty sand and gravel with variable ash, clinker, slag, burnt shale, cobbles, mudstone, quartz, occasional patches of clay, coal, glass, concrete, metal waste, tile and brick. A shallow relict soil horizon exists below in occasional patches across the site (Ground Investigation and Piling Ltd 2005).

### 3.2 **Geology**

The soils of the area have been described as a rich loam, with sand and gravel subsoil (Kellys 1912, 177).

The natural geology comprises a glacial drift of brown sandy clay with occasional patches of gravel and sand (Ground Investigation and Piling Ltd 2005).

### 3.3 **Historic environment**

#### 3.3.1 **Prehistoric and Roman**

There is at present no evidence of activity from the prehistoric or Roman periods within the vicinity.

#### 3.3.2 **Saxon and medieval**

Ettingshall lies within the Saxon Hundred of Seisdon, one of five land divisions within Staffordshire. Seisdon Hundred contained 21 parishes (VCH XX; Shaw 1798-1801, 88; Cockin 2000, xvii). There is reference to a ditch between Ettingshall and Bilston in a grant of land by Wulfrun to the church at Wolverhampton in AD 994. The exact alignment of this earthwork is unknown, although it may lie some way to the south of the present site (BCSMR 13576).

The name is thought to derive from 'Ettings + halh', meaning 'the hall of the descendent of Eatta' or 'the corner of land of the Etti's people'. The first part being the personal name *Eata* or *Eatta*, the owners of the manor of Stow Heath or Stourheath in the reign of Edward the Confessor, prior to the Norman Conquest. It may alternatively derive from *eten*, meaning grazing or pasture. The second part *halh* meaning nook or corner of land or simply from the manor house, which contained a great hall or was a defensive castle. The estate was recorded as *Etinghale* in the Domesday Survey of 1086, as *Etynggh* in 1291 and *Etensall* in 1555 (BCSMR 13576; Kellys 1912, 177; Cockin 2000, 209).

There is little documentary evidence for the area in the medieval period, although the first reference to the digging of coal in Sedgley dates from as early as 1273. By the mid 16<sup>th</sup>

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century coal from south Staffordshire was regularly transported for use in the forges and furnaces of Birmingham. Coal was readily available, often from open-caste mines, which in conjunction with the local ironstone, meant that the area was ripe to become an industrial centre (Greenslade and Stuart 1984, 15).

### 3.3.3 Post-medieval and modern

It is unknown when the area was first occupied, although it is conjectured that it may have been a squatter settlement of workers employed in the surrounding coal and iron industries (pers comm Mike Shaw; BCSMR 13574). Neither is it known when the name Catchems Corner first came into common usage. There are several suggestions: it is said to have been an evil, un-christian place; it was frequented by criminals and vagrants on the run who hid on the boundaries between districts; after a highwayman Jack Ketchum, who was reputed to have been hung here; after Jack Ketch a late 17<sup>th</sup> century public executioner; the positioning of men at this crossroads to apprehend escaped prisoners from the nearby Priestfield to the north, where they rested and received religious consolation during transportation from the north of England to Birmingham or London; or simply that a tollgate was located here which caught those who had alluded previous toll bars (BCSMR 13574; Cockin 2000, 125).

Yates' 1775 county map is the earliest to indicate Catchems Corner, within a bend of Birmingham Canal. It depicts the crossroads and the canal to the north-east. The road running east to west appears to be more substantial leading to the settlement of Goldthorn to the west and Bilston to the east. The north to south route appears to be less important. It leads to Ettingshall village to the south and joins the south-east to north-west aligned Manor Lane to Wolverhampton to the north. This northern leg is denoted as Hell Lane. A series of buildings are shown, particularly along the frontages of the north and east roads off the crossroads, and along either side of Hell Lane. It is unclear if they actually represent individual buildings or just serve to indicate the density of development along the roads. Their uniformity suggests the latter.

Sherriff's 1812 map of the Mines of Lord Dudley is at a smaller scale and is more detailed. In contrast with Yates' map it depicts Catchem's Corner crossroads as entirely built-up along the western frontage of Hell Lane and Ettingshall Lane, but no apparent buildings on the eastern side or along the Bilston road. The exception is the Flour Mill, some distance to the east. The plot to the immediate south-east of the crossroads is denoted as Smith's Colliery; four evenly spaced circles probably indicate pit-shafts.

The north to south road was turnpiked in the late 18<sup>th</sup> century with a gate placed at the crossroads (Genge 1997, 54; Cockin 2000, xx). The Birmingham to Wolverhampton canal was constructed in 1770 and curves round adjacent to the north and east (WA).

The 1816 Ordnance Survey Staffordshire map depicts the individual buildings on Catchems Corner although without annotation (Fig 2). The majority of the northern frontage is built up. They appear in the main to be detached and a distinct compound to the east may represent Bilston Flour Mill. There is no indication of activity of any kind to the rear of the buildings. The 1834 map is at a larger scale and thus less detailed, although it apparently indicates fewer buildings along the frontage and a probable mine shaft to the south-east. Lancaster Colliery is noted, although it is unclear if this lies within the site or to the west of Manor Lane/Spring Vale Road.

It is commonly thought that the cholera outbreaks of 1832 were the spur to the establishment of Holy Trinity Anglican church after the vicar of Sedgley realised how large the population was in the north of the parish, particularly centred around Ettingshall New Village, also known as Ettingshall New Town. The foundation stone was laid in May 1834 and the church completed the following year. It has been suggested that this building was originally of wood, although this is unconfirmed (BCSMR 13097; Genge 1997, 54; Cockin 2000, 209).

The parish records include the register of baptisms, which commence in 1835 and the register of marriages, in 1847. There are no burial registers (SRO/WA).

The original settlement of Ettingshall lay to the south of the site, centred on Lanesfield, although with the development of Ettingshall New Village to the north it was formed into an ecclesiastical parish between 1837 and 1841, from the civil parishes of Sedgley, Wolverhampton and Bilston. The New Village is thought to have developed following the affects of subsidence from the mines around the earlier settlement (Kellys 1912, 177; Cockin 2000, 209).

The 1843 parish map (Fig 3; also known as the Fowler map after its creator) was used as the basis of the tithe award survey of 1844-5:

Plot	tenant	owner	description	size (a/r/p)
917	John Biggs	Reps of HB Lane	house & garden	- 1 28
	Ed Wallington	Reps of HB Lane	smiths shop	
918	Rich. Homer Baker	Reps HB Lane	garden	- 1 -
919	Parkfields Compny	Reps of HB Lane	old colliery	3 1 13
920	Parkfields Compny	Benj. Bickley	old colliery	3 3 29
924	Geo. Jones (publican)	LD Trust	garden ground	2 1 25
931	Geo. Jones (publican)	Benj. Bickley	pasture (?)	3 2 12
932	Rev Fred Williams	Trustees	church & churchyard, passage, school	- 2 37
933	Chas. Edge	Chas Edge etc	bakehouse, shop, yard & barn	1 1 13
	& John Chamberlain (baker)			
934	Benj. Hughes	LD Trust	house	n/d
935	Parkfield Com. Etc	LD Trust	colliery	2 - 9
936	Geo. Deakin etc	John Underhill & Co	house	n/d
937	Jos. Taylor	LD Trust	house shed & garden	n/d
	Thos. Newton	LD Trust	public house and brew house	n/d
938	Jas. Burden etc	LD Trust	house	n/d
939	Joseph Burrows	LD Trust	house & premises	n/d

According to the Tithe Apportionment, the site had very varied usage in the 1840s. Domestic housing mixed with occasional commercial premises lay along the frontage while redundant and operational mine workings lay to the rear. This is borne out in the account of an anonymous Black Country visitor who, in 1840, wrote ‘The traveller appears never to get out of an interminable village, composed of cottages and very ordinary houses... interspersed with blazing furnaces, heaps of burning coal in process of coking, piles of ironstone calcinating, forges, pit-banks and engine chimneys’ (Greenslade and Stuart 1984, 15).

The map indicates few changes since 1816, the buildings along the frontage are detached, and the mill occupies the same compound. The church and Sunday school to the east are the main additions. There is more detail in the south of the site, most notably two trackways and a number of ponds, possibly representing flooded former mine workings.

The route of the railway line is marked along the south-west side of the site, although it appears in a different ink and is thus probably a later amendment. The Birmingham-Tipton-Wolverhampton (Stour Valley) section of the London & North Western Railway line was opened in 1852 with Ettingshall Road Station located to the north of the crossroads, on Ettingshall Road (formerly Hell Lane), to cater particularly for the residents of the recently expanded Ettingshall New Village. The station was closed to the public in June 1964, and became Ettingshall and Bilston LMSR Goods Station (Brewer 1999, 103; Cockin 2000, 125 and 209).

The church was rebuilt in 1874 at a cost of £5,000 and consecrated in April of that year. It was of stone, in the early English gothic style with a chancel, nave, north aisle and transepts with seating for 620 (Kellys 1912, 177). The north transept was converted into a Lady Chapel in 1923, reducing the seating to 610 (Kellys 1940, 184).

Due to the development of Ettingshall Park Farm estate to the west, within a former medieval deer park, the decision to resite Holy Trinity church here was made and in 1961 the new



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church of the same name was dedicated on Farrington Road, close to The Beacon. The last service was held in the old church on 28<sup>th</sup> May 1961. The building was soon after demolished and the site sold off to John Thompson's (see below). The rood, organ, stained glass and pews were all retained and reused in the new church (Genge 1997, 54; Brewer 1999, 111 and 115; Cockin 2000, 209).

There is purported to be a burial immediately to the west of the present eastern site entrance, off Millfields Road, at c SO 9357 9626 (a "grave" is marked on a map supplied by the Land Registry to the Client). This would place it beneath or immediately north of the north aisle (Fig 4). A number of photographs of the church exist, depicting both the exterior and interior, in addition to its dramatic demolition. None of these contain any visible monument or grave markers; indeed the churchyard appears to have been laid to grass and flowerbeds (Brewer 1999). No other documentary evidence has been identified, as indeed no burial registers have been located for Holy Trinity (pers comm Father Alan Jacobs; WA/SRO). It is therefore unclear at this stage if any burials exist. The area is presently under tarmac with occasional patches of concrete. It should be noted that the recent geotechnical survey identified only 1.70m of industrial material overlying the natural matrix in this corner of the site.

The character of the site remained similar through the later 19<sup>th</sup> and into the 20<sup>th</sup> century. By 1887 the largely detached houses along the frontage had been replaced by terraces. Their irregular plans suggest that this was the result of infilling rather than wholesale demolition of the existing housing stock and construction of entirely new buildings. In addition a building to the east of the church was removed and the churchyard extended over it with a well sited in the north-east corner. There appear to have been no alterations to Bilston Flour Mill, although an irregular series of plots with small buildings now exists to the west. To the south the undulating nature of the former mine workings is indicated, all of which are now apparently dry; while an 'Old Shaft' is noted toward the north-west corner.

By 1903 a terrace of houses had been constructed along the western side of the site, along Spring Vale Road (the present Manor Road), while one of the tracks first noted on the 1843 map was formalised as Barlow Street, with plots and buildings along both frontages. By 1919 the terraces along Manor Road had been extended to the south and Davis Street constructed to link with Barlow Street. They may have been named after local businesses on Millfields Road (see below). A benchmark is recorded on the north-east corner of Holy Trinity church, at 480.2 feet (146.37m AOD). The 1938 map notes a benchmark on the property at the north-west corner of Barlow Street at 476.76 feet (145.32m AOD).

In the late 19<sup>th</sup> and the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, Millfields Road was known as Mill Street. In 1901 only two domestic residents were recorded on Mill Street, one Richard Hall, and one Richard Rogers. This appears to be substantial under-recording of the true density of occupation. A William Davis was also noted, running a blacksmiths (Kellys 1901, 160-1). By 1912, the number of recorded residents was seven although again this seems to represent an underestimation, given the cartographic evidence of the actual size of the housing stock (Kelly 1912 178).

The population of Ettingshall parish has been recorded in the census returns:

1891 6,493 (Kellys 1901, 160)

1901 6,643 (Kellys 1912, 177).

1921 5,719 (Kellys 1928, 189)

1931 5,635 (Kellys 1940, 184)

In the early 20<sup>th</sup> century Ettingshall lay within the Kingswinford division of the county of Staffordshire, in the Dudley union, the Wolverhampton petty sessional division and county court district, part of the rural deanery of Wolverhampton, within the Archdeaconry of

Stafford in the diocese of Lichfield. The township lay within Coseley local board district (Kellys 1912, 177).

Economic activity within the parish centred on iron and coal, with the addition of flour mills owned by Barlow and Sons and Bilston Gasworks. Barlow and Sons ran Bilston Flour Mill, a steam powered mill and corn merchants which lay within the present site. Amongst many and varied commercial trades recorded along Millfields Road and Manor Road, it is worth noting that William Davis' blacksmiths is still mentioned. The lords of the manor were the trustees of the late John Lewis Petch esq. (Kellys 1912, 177-9).

The industrial and commercial character of Catchems Corner in 1940 is graphically indicated by the great number and variation of trades carried out. Along Millfields Road alone, are listed seven different shopkeepers, a fire brick manufacturer, boat builder, coal merchants, L M & S Railway Co. goods agent, plumbers, tractor concessionaires, boiler repairer, rolling mills, tinplate workers, furniture dealer and a farriers. All of which ensured a lively trade for the refreshment rooms and five pubs located on Millfields Road and Manor Road. The names of the pubs also serve to reinforce the sense of hustle and bustle: the Union Mill public house, the Waggon (sic) and Horses, the Forge and Hammer, the Crown Inn and the Bulls Head.

Tin plate works owned by Messrs Thompson and Hatton are first referred to in Bilston in 1873, although the factory on the present site was not established until the 1920s, first appearing on maps of 1938. By the 1940s John Thompson Engineering Co Ltd, was indeed the principal landowner within the parish. Their main offices were on the north side of Millfields Road and Motor Pressings Works were on the south side within the present site. The company produced motor pressings, boilers, water softeners, structural steel and window frames, employing upwards of 2000 staff in the 1920s (Kellys 1940, 184; Brewer 1999, 100).

Thompson's main works building occupied all but the northern third of the site. The majority of the houses along Millfields Road remained, as did Holy Trinity church, although the southern sections of Barlow and Sons' mill were demolished. The shop floor comprised a massive building to the south and south-east of Davis Street of steel frame construction. The elevation along Davis Street was of brick with wide arched windows, but elsewhere it was of plain metal sheeting. The north frontage of Davis Street was similarly occupied by brick offices. It is worth noting that two bowling greens were laid down as part of the original development, in the north-west corner of the site.

The site has subsequently undergone little alteration since the construction of Thompson's works in the 1920s. A long rectangular building originally to the north of the bowling greens has been demolished and is now part of a raised tarmac car park which has also taken in the eastern bowling green. Otherwise the footprint of the main buildings has barely changed, although the works property itself has expanded to the north with the demolition of the residential properties and church along Millfields Road frontage between 1938 and 1974.

### 3.4 **Statutory and other designations**

There are no known statutory or other designations of a historic environment nature within the development area.

Should buried human remains exist on the site, or that it was intended for human burials, it will be subject to the provisions of various acts (Burials Act 1857, the Pastoral Measure 1983 and the Disused Burial Grounds Act 1884 and 1981, together with other legislation). The situation is complex and a specifically legal opinion is recommended.

## 4. **Assessment of significance and potential impacts**

There is at present no evidence of activity predating the post-medieval/modern period either within or adjacent to the development site. Cartographic sources indicate that there was

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settlement activity at Catchems Corner by at least the late 18<sup>th</sup> century, but the minimal and variable level of detail means that the precise location, density and character cannot be ascertained. It is clear that a flour mill and other buildings existed along the frontage of Millfields Road and colliery workings to the south by the early 19<sup>th</sup> century.

The earliest defined activity can be summarised as of 19<sup>th</sup> century religious, domestic, light industrial and commercial nature within the northern half, along Millfields Road, with colliery workings broadly occupying the southern half.

The existing buildings date from the 1920s and form part of the original John Thompson Engineering Co. Ltd, which became GKN Thompson Chassis in its final incarnation. The proposed redevelopment involves the demolition of these buildings and the construction of industrial/warehouse units with associated loading areas, car and lorry parks and landscaping. These buildings may be viewed as of more local importance for industrial architecture and archaeology.

Geotechnical survey work has revealed a great depth of industrial debris with redeposited sand and gravel over the entire site, probably the result of levelling up of the former colliery workings during the demolition of the flour mill and prior to the construction of the engineering works.

The footprint of the proposed industrial/warehouse building is set back from the frontage of Millfields Road (which has been earmarked by Wolverhampton City Council for possible future widening as a dual-carriageway), so there is unlikely to be substantial impact on the 19<sup>th</sup> century - and possibly earlier - buildings within the current scheme. The current layout (ref 7222 P02 G) shows the location of the building to be within an area of landscaping not subject to ground reduction.

It is therefore considered that, with the exception of the existing buildings and possibly the buried remains of earlier buildings fronting the road, there is little potential for archaeological remains of regional or national significance likely to be disturbed by the proposed development and its impact is considered *not significant*. The existing buildings are of more local interest and there appears a remote possibility that buried human remains will exist on the site.

## 5. Mitigation

In order to mitigate the impacts identified above, the following actions are recommended.

- A Level 1 (photographic; RCHME 1996) historic building survey of the existing works and office buildings
- A watching brief of groundworks, particularly any landscaping of the Millfields Road frontage (IFA 1999b)

The scope and specification of mitigation works will be agreed with the planning authority (Mike Shaw, Black Country Sites and Monuments Record Officer).

A Level 1 historic building survey is essentially a visual record, supplemented by basic information, designed to document a structure's location, age and type (RCHME 1996).

Finally a watching brief would allow for the monitoring and recording of archaeological horizons, deposits or structures which have not been anticipated within the scope of this assessment (IFA 1999b) as facilitated within the opportunities presented through construction progress. The watching brief may cover the whole of the groundworks associated with construction but will focus on the street frontage (to identify any earlier buildings) and in the area of the former churchyard.

Any site investigation works or watching briefs required, would be concluded by production of an archaeological report (and appropriate publication) to be deposited for public consultation with the Black County Sites and Monuments Record and a project archive to be deposited with Wolverhampton Arts and Museum Service.

## 6. 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. It is likely that any buried remains of the flour mill, housing and other structures would remain substantially intact under the new development.

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.

## 7. 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 Pam Brown Associates Ltd, at Millfields Road, Bilston, Wolverhampton (NGR: SO 934 963; BCSMR n/a).*

*There is at present no evidence of activity predating the post-medieval/modern period in this area, which was formerly known as Catchems Corner. Millfields Road and Manor Road frontages were occupied by mid/late 19<sup>th</sup> century buildings of largely residential character, an early 19<sup>th</sup> century flour mill and a mid 19<sup>th</sup> century church. Colliery workings occupied the southern half of the study area. It is unclear if any of these buildings existed prior to the 19<sup>th</sup> century, although some settlement around the crossroads is recorded in the mid/late 18<sup>th</sup> century. The existing buildings date from the 1920s as part of the original John Thompson Engineering Co. Ltd, which became GKN Thompson Chasis.*

*The former Holy Trinity church occupied the north-eastern corner of the site between 1834 and 1961. Although no burial registers exist, or any other documentary sources identified, there is purported to have been a burial interred either below or adjacent to the north aisle.*

*Geotechnical survey work has revealed a great depth of industrial debris with redeposited sand and gravel over the entire site, probably the result of levelling up of the former colliery workings and the demolition of the flour mill.*

*It is considered that there is little potential for archaeological remains of regional or national significance likely to be disturbed by the proposed development. However a scheme of archaeological involvement is envisaged, comprising photographic recording of the existing buildings prior to demolition, and a watching brief of all groundworks, particularly along the Millfields Road frontage.*

## 8. Acknowledgements

The Service would like to thank the following for their kind assistance in the successful conclusion of this project, Pam Brown and Rachel Boyle (Pam Brown Associates Ltd), Noel Muscat and Steve Periton (Bulleys, Tettenhall Road, Wolverhampton), Chris Mahoney and

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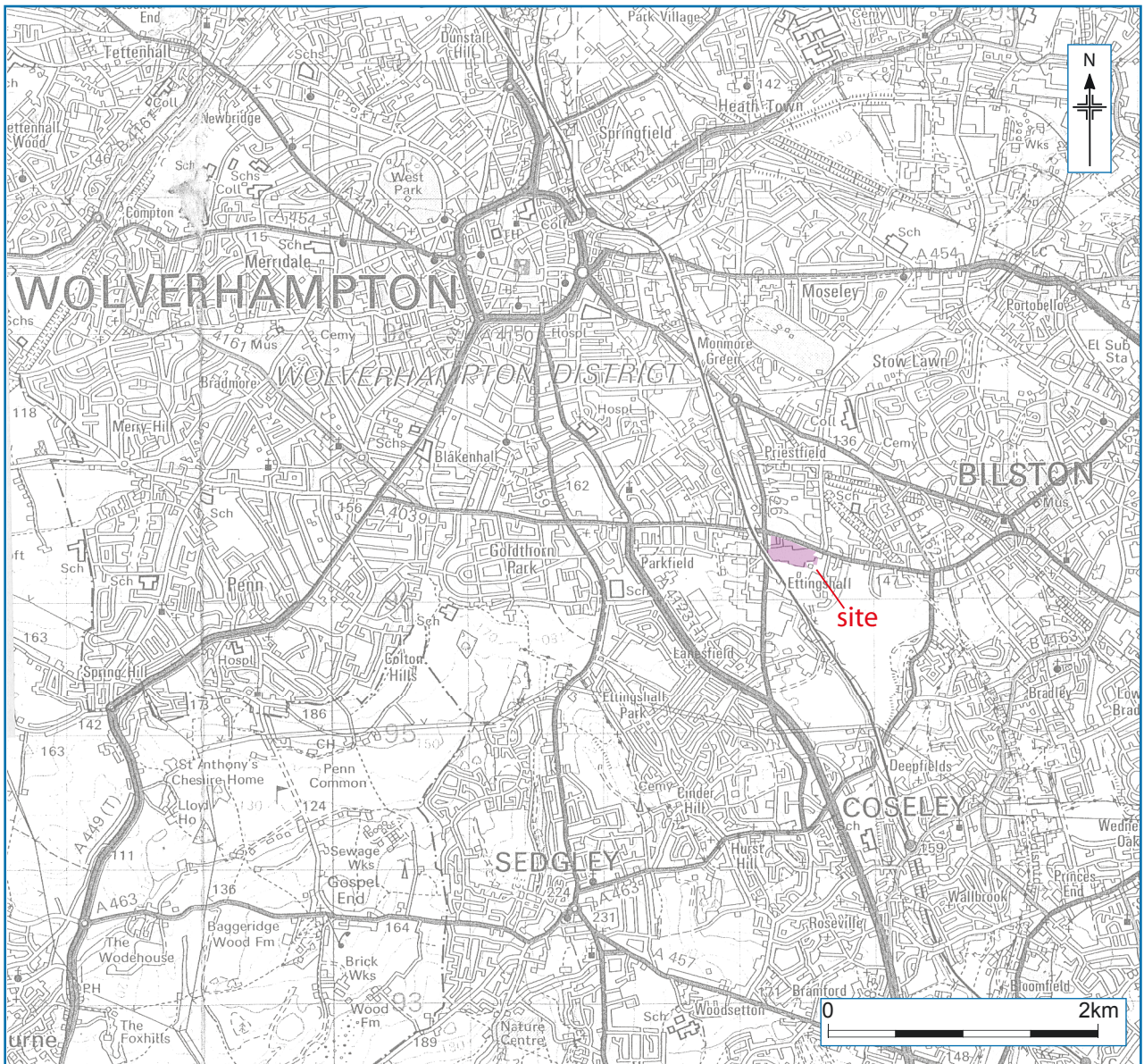
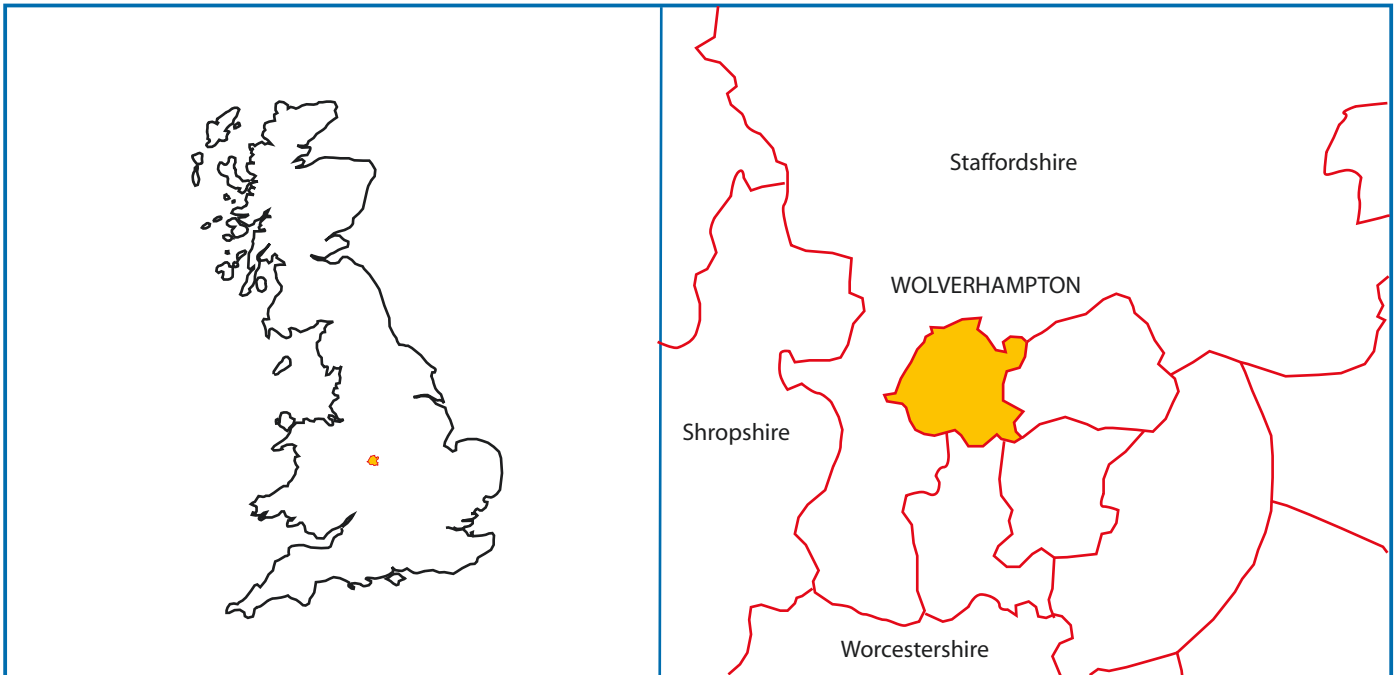
Simon Hargreaves (The Back Group), Father Alan Jones (Holy Trinity church, Ettingshall Park) and Mike Shaw (Black Country Sites and Monuments Record Officer).

9. **Personnel**

The assessment was undertaken by Tom Vaughan. The project manager responsible for the quality of the project was Simon Woodiwiss. Illustrations were prepared by Carolyn Hunt.

10. **Abbreviations**

BCSMR	Black Country Sites and Monuments Record
DA	Dudley Archives and Local Studies Service
SRO	Staffordshire County Records Office
WA	Wolverhampton Archives and Local Studies
WSL	William Salt Library, Stafford



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Location of the site.

Figure 1





Ordnance Survey drawing (original 2":1mile), 1816

Figure 2

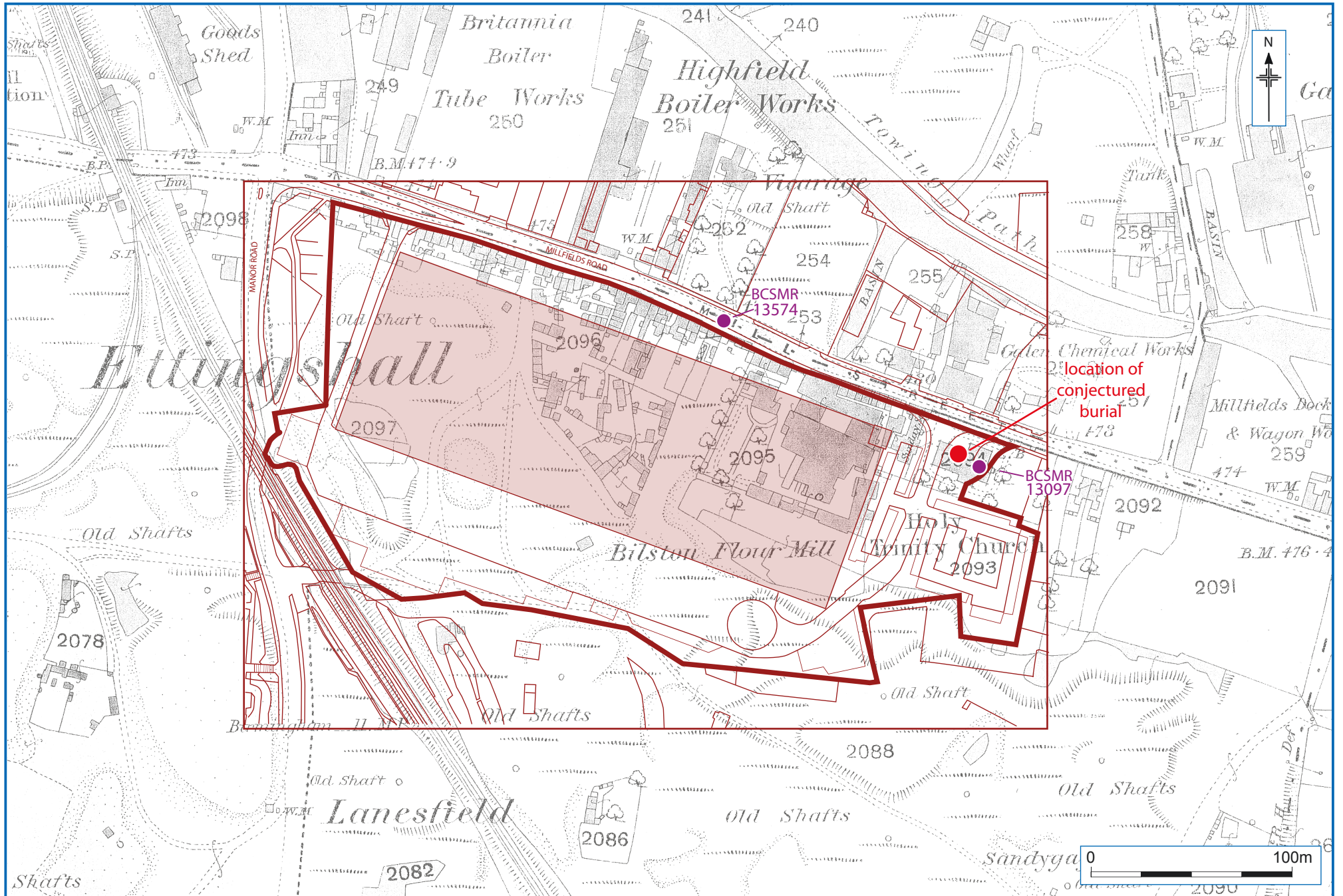




*A Plan of the Parish of Sedgley in the County of Stafford, 1843. William Fowler & Son (Tithe Map)*

*Figure 3*





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Extract from 1st Edition Ordnance Survey, sheet LXII.15 1887, with projected development (based upon Webb Gray Dwg No.P02G)

Figure 4

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## Appendix 1 Features of the historic environment registered with the BCSMR (those within the site are indicated in bold)

Reference	Site name	Grid reference	Record type	Date	Description
5333	Highfield Boilerworks, Millfields Road	SO 9338 9656	Monument	Post-medieval	2 storey offices & detached shops for boiler works
10658	Brittannia Boiler Tube Works, Millfields Road	SO 9318 9650	Monument	Post-medieval	Site of engineering works on 1 <sup>st</sup> edition OS
13097	Holy Trinity Church, Ettingshall	SO 93573 96347	Monument	Post-medieval / modern	Site of church est in 1834 and demolished in 1961
13574	Settlement: Catchems Corner	SO 93435 96421	Monument	Post-medieval	Settlement at crossroads of Parkfields Road, Millfields Road, Ettingshall Road and Manor Road; now part of Ettingshall
13576	Settlement: Ettingshall	SO 93487 94340	Monument	medieval / post-medieval	Ditch referred to in document of AD994 between Ettingshall and Bilston; settlement referred to in Domesday Survey 1086

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## Appendix 2 Plates



Plate 1: West entrance off Millfields Road, view south



Plate 2: East entrance off Millfields Road, view north-east





Plate 3: General view of site, south-east



Plate 4: General view of site, south-west



Plate 5: Office building on north side of Davis Street, view north-west



Plate 6: East end of works, view west