

ARCHAEOLOGICAL
INVESTIGATION
ON THE A4103,
ROMAN ROAD, HEREFORD

Tom Vaughan BA MA AIFA

Illustrated by Carolyn Hunt

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Worcestershire County Council

Historic Environment and Archaeology Service,
Worcestershire County Council,
Woodbury,
University College Worcester,
Henwick Grove,
Worcester WR2 6AJ



Project 2477
Report 1254
HSM 38193-5
& 38197

Archaeological investigation on the A4103, Roman Road, Hereford

Tom Vaughan

Background information

<i>Client</i>	Hereford Council
<i>Site address</i>	A4103, Roman Road, Hereford, Herefordshire
<i>National Grid reference</i>	SO 465 424 to SO 488 423
<i>Sites and Monuments Record reference</i>	HSM 38193-5 and 38197
<i>Planning authority</i>	Herefordshire Council
<i>reference</i>	CW2002/3558/F
<i>Brief</i>	HC 2003
<i>Project design</i>	HEAS 2004a and HEAS 2004b
<i>Project parameters</i>	IFA 1999
<i>Previous archaeological work on the site</i>	

The investigations are part of an on-going project of archaeological works in advance of the redevelopment of the A4103, Roman Road, Hereford. Earlier phases of archaeological investigation have involved geophysical survey, ground probing radar survey (Mercer 2002), trial trench evaluation (Patrick *et al* 2002; Patrick *et al* 2004) and open area excavation (Vaughan forthcoming). The investigations have revealed the survival of the metallated Roman Road surface with adjacent drainage ditches and associated activity at a number of points alongside the present road.

Archaeological background

The archaeological, historical and, geological background to the site has been fully described in the Halcrow Environment Statement (Halcrow 2002).

Aims

The aim of the investigations was to observe and record archaeological deposits, and to determine their extent, state of preservation, date and type, as far as reasonably possible.

Methods

General specification for Sources consulted	CAS 1995 SMR Sources cited by the SMR
Date(s) of fieldwork	1 st -3 rd June to 2004
Area of deposits observed	c 25.1m ² . Indicated on Fig. 2
4 archaeological test pits	c 12.7m ²
5 pits over existing water mains	c 10.64m ²
1 trench for new electrical cable	1.75m ²

Access to and visibility of test pits

Observation of the excavated areas was undertaken during and after machine excavation. The exposed surfaces were sufficiently clean to observe well-differentiated archaeological deposits, though any less clear may have not been identified. Access to deep trenches was not made for safety reasons.

Statement of confidence

Access to, and visibility of, deposits allowed a high degree of confidence that the aims of the project have been achieved.

Deposit description

Test Pit 7 Length: 2.10m Width: 1.58m Depth: 0.95m

Context	Interpretation	Description	Depth (below ground level)
7000	Road surface	Tarmac road surface, over compact fine light grey/beige gravel and dust, over compact medium/large mid blue/grey gravel and dust with occasional yellow brick fragments. Well-defined boundary.	0.00-0.83m
7001	Alluvium	Compact and cohesive mid pink/red brown sandy clay, dark sand patches. Well-defined boundaries.	0.83-0.94m
7002	Disturbed road surface	Compacted large sub/rounded cobbles, sealed by [7001].	0.87-0.93
7003	Road foundation	Densely compacted small pebbles and cobbles.	0.92m+

Test Pit 8 Length: 2m Width: 1.60m Depth: 0.65m

Context	Interpretation	Description	Depth (below ground level)
8000	Road surface	Tarmac road surface	0.00-0.19m
8001	Hardcore?	Compact irregular sub/rounded pebbles (0.02-0.17m) in light yellow beige dust. Single brick fragment.	0.17-0.33m
8002	Natural	Compact and cohesive pinkish red clay	0.23m+

Test Pit 9a Length: 1.95m Width: 1.50m Depth: 0.80m

Context	Interpretation	Description	Depth (below ground level)
9000	Road surface	Tarmac road surface, over compact mixed light grey sub/angular medium stones and pebble gravel. Diffuse boundary with [9004]. Well-defined boundary with [9001] and [9002].	0.00-0.35m
9001	Capping/dump layer	Compact and cohesive light beige yellow clay with grit/small gravel inclusions. Only on north side where slopes to greatest depth. No finds. Well-defined boundaries.	0.13-0.21m
9002	Fill	Mixed grey brown sandy loam with patches of sub-angular gravel and occasional coal fragments. Single fill of [9003].	0.19-0.66m
9003	Service trench	Linear cut aligned east/west along north side. Ill-defined gradually sloping edges at c 30° to horizontal, curving to flattish ill-defined base. Filled by [9002].	0.19-0.66m

9004	Hardcore?	Small-medium rounded pebbles (0.02-0.08m). Diffuse boundaries. Single brick fragment. South side only.	0.30-0.51m
9005	Natural	Compact and cohesive pinkish red sandy clay with occasional medium pebbles.	0.39m+

Test Pit 9b Length: 2.25m Width: 1.45m Depth: 0.70m

Context	Interpretation	Description	Depth (below ground level)
9010	Road surface	Tarmac road surface, over compact mixed light grey sub/angular medium stones and pebble gravel. Diffuse boundary with [9014]. Well-defined boundary with [9011] and [9012].	0.00-0.28m
9011	Capping/dump layer	Compact and cohesive light beige yellow clay with grit/small gravel inclusions. Only on north side where slopes to greatest depth. No finds. Well-defined boundaries.	0.16-0.29m
9012	Fill	Mixed grey brown sandy loam with patches of sub-angular gravel and occasional coal fragments. Single fill of [9013].	0.23-0.72m
9013	Service trench	Linear cut aligned east/west along north side. Ill-defined gradually sloping edges at <30° to horizontal, curving to flattish ill-defined base. Filled by [9012].	0.23-0.72m
9014	Hardcore?	Small-medium rounded pebbles (0.02-0.08m). Diffuse boundaries. Single brick/tile fragment. South side only.	0.30-0.45m
9015	Natural	Compact and cohesive pinkish red sandy clay with moderate medium pebbles.	0.35m+

Test Pit 10a (water main) Length: 2.15m Width: 0.95m Depth: 1.30m

Context	Interpretation	Description	Depth (below ground level)
1000	Road surface	Compact and cohesive turfed brownish orange slightly silty clay. Very diffuse boundary. Occasional brick flecks and sub/rounded pebbles.	0.00-0.22m
1001	Natural	Compact and cohesive light brownish orangey red clay with occasional sub/rounded pebbles.	0.20m+
1009	Fill	Compact and cohesive light brownish orangey red clay with occasional sub/rounded pebbles, over plastic water pipe at 1.30m. Cut undefined.	0.20-1.30m+

Test Pit 10b (water main) Length: 2.30m Width: 0.90m Depth: 1.25m

Context	Interpretation	Description	Depth (below ground level)
1002	Road surface	Compact and cohesive turfed brownish orange slightly silty clay. Very diffuse boundary. Moderate sub/rounded pebbles. Occasional brick flecks.	0.00-0.20m
1003	Natural	Compact and cohesive light brownish orangey red clay with occasional sub/rounded pebbles.	0.18m+
1010	Fill	Compact and cohesive light brownish orangey red clay with occasional sub/rounded pebbles, over plastic water pipe at 1.25m. Cut undefined.	0.20-1.25m+

Test Pit 10c (water main) Length: 1.80m Width: 1.50m Depth: 1.70m

Context	Interpretation	Description	Depth (below ground level)
1007	Road surface	Tarmac over light grey gravel and dust over dark	0.00-1.45m

		blue grey gravel and dust. Well-defined boundary.	
1008	Fill	Compact and cohesive light brownish orangey red clay with occasional sub/rounded pebbles, over plastic water pipe at 1.70m. Cut undefined.	1.45m+

Test Pit 10d (water main) Length: 1.95m Width: 1.10m Depth: 1.65m

Context	Interpretation	Description	Depth (below ground level)
1004	Road surface	Tarmac over light grey gravel and dust over dark blue grey gravel and dust. Well-defined boundary.	0.00-0.92m
1005	Natural	Compact and cohesive light brownish orangey red clay with occasional sub/rounded pebbles.	0.90m+
1006	Fill	Compact light pink sub-angular gravel over plastic water pipe at 1.65m, aligned north-south. Cut undefined, on east side.	0.92-1.65m+

Trench 11 (electricity trench) Length: 3.50m Width: 0.50m Depth: 0.75m

Context	Interpretation	Description	Depth (below ground level)
1100	Road surface	Tarmac over mid grey gravel and dust with occasional brick frags. Well-defined boundary.	0.00-0.28m
1101	Natural	Compact and cohesive pinkish red clay with very occasional pebbles.	0.28m+

Test Pit 12 (water main) Length: 1.40m Width: 1.20m Depth: 1.16m

Context	Interpretation	Description	Depth (below ground level)
1200	Road surface	Tarmac over concreted light grey gravel and dust. Well-defined boundary.	0.00-0.40m
1201	Hardcore	Compact bright orangey pink sub-angular gravel. Well-defined boundaries.	0.40-0.52m
1202	Subsoil/fill?	Mid grey brown slightly silty clay with occasional grey gravel, large sub-angular stones, rounded pebbles and red sandstone; very occasional small white tile frags.	0.52m+

Discussion

Test Pit 7 lay to the eastern end of the road scheme adjacent to The Paddocks Poultry Houses. A loose band of large cobbles lay directly over a densely compacted layer of smaller cobbles and pebbles, at c 71.78m AOD, 0.87m below the present road surface. These deposits were sealed by a thin band of alluvium, which in turn lay directly below the modern road gravel foundation. A undated small iron concretion (a probable hobnail), and a fragment of animal bone were recovered from the alluvium. The deposit is thus intrinsically undated, although by comparison with previous archaeological interventions, the cobbled surface is considered to be the Roman road.

Test pit 8, adjacent to Bovingdon Caravan Park, revealed a compacted layer of cobbles and pebbles impressed into the natural clay, directly below the modern road make-up, at a depth of 0.17m. A single abraded early post-medieval brick fragment (*pers comm* Derek Hurst) was recovered from this deposit, ruling out a Roman date. No other deposits were identified or finds recovered.

Test pits 9a and 9b were located east of Pinston House. They portrayed the same stratigraphy. Again a band of pebbles, with occasional abraded early post-medieval brick fragments (*pers comm* Derek Hurst), was identified directly below the modern road, at 0.30m depth. A sandy loam lay to the north, the fill of an undefined east-west aligned modern service trench.

Test pits 10a-d were excavated to the east of Test Pit 7. Test pits 10a and 10b were located within the grass verge to the north of the modern road, while Test Pits 10c and 10d lay within the carriageway itself. They were located to identify a modern water pipe, which was revealed in the base of each pit. However the sides of Test Pits 10a, b and d revealed the previously undisturbed stratigraphic sequence. Pits 10a and 10b contained a turfed, slightly silty clay topsoil, directly over the natural clay at a depth of 0.20-0.22m with a very diffuse boundary. Similarly Test Pit 10d revealed the natural clay directly below the modern road gravel foundation at 0.90m depth. The natural was not observed within Test Pit 10c where the modern service trench was found to be deeper and wider. No other deposits were noted.

Trench 11 was dug across the existing road, east of Veldifer Cottages. The northern half was archaeologically monitored. The natural clay was noted at 0.28m depth, directly below modern gravel hardcore. There were no finds or archaeological horizons.

Test Pit 12 was undertaken west of Pinston House, to identify another water pipe. The natural clay was not observed at any point. A mixed redeposited silty clay with varying stone and gravel, representing the backfill of the service trench was noted to the base of the trench, directly below the modern gravel hardcore. There were no finds or other archaeological horizons.

The undisturbed natural matrix was identified within seven of the 10 test pits. It comprised a pinkish red to reddish orange clay, with variable sand and pebble gravel inclusions.

The only archaeological finds to be recovered were retrieved from the sandy clay alluvium in Test Pit 7. Unfortunately these were undated. Elsewhere the few finds were determined to be of early post-medieval origin (*pers comm* Derek Hurst).

Conclusions

One well-preserved area of the Roman road surface was identified in Test Pit 7, sealed by a thin band of alluvium at a substantial depth, to the eastern end of the road scheme, opposite The Paddocks Poultry Houses. However in Test Pits 10a-d further east there was no indication of the former road surface surviving. This may be due to disturbance from deep modern services, which cross the road at this point, or because the Roman road actually lies further to the south.

In Test Pits 8, 9a and 9b, pebble gravel layers were identified directly below the modern road matrix. The deposits lacked a cohesive surface and inclusions of early post-medieval brick indicate a late date. They are thus probably post-medieval/modern hardcore deposits for the present A4103 road. However these layers may represent a truncated area of the Roman road surface with later material impressed into the surface. The findings from these pits are therefore tentative and inconclusive.

Elsewhere modern road material was observed directly over the undisturbed natural clay, which had been cut through by modern services to great depth. Thus the deposit sequence is considered to have been substantially truncated along the length of the existing A4103 road, which has probably resulted in the destruction of much of the Roman surface. It should be stressed however that the scope of these investigations was a very small sample of the total redevelopment area.

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.

An archaeological investigation was undertaken on behalf of Hereford Council on the A4103, Roman Road, Hereford (NGR ref. SO 465 424 to SO 488 423; SMR ref HSM 38193-5 and 38917). Ten test pits were archaeologically monitored. The well-preserved Roman road surface was identified in one test pit, at the east end of the improvement scheme, sealed by a thin band of alluvium. Elsewhere the natural clay was found to lie directly below gravel hardcore layers, three of which may represent disturbed areas of the Roman road. Frequent deep service trenches were also noted, cut into the natural matrix.

Archive

Fieldwork progress records AS2	3
Photographic records AS3	1
Digital photographs	34
Drawings	1
Boxes of finds	1
Computer disks	1

The project archive is intended to be placed at:	Hereford City Museum and Art Gallery Broad Street, Hereford, HR4 9RU
telephone	01432 268121 x207/334

Acknowledgements

The Service would like to thank the following for their kind assistance in the successful conclusion of this project, Andy Teague (Senior Engineer, Owen Williams Highways), Richard Tidmarsh (Alun Griffiths) and Julian Cotton (Archaeological Advisor, Herefordshire Council).

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Plate 1: Test Pit 7, Roman Road surface, view north

Appendix 1: Recommendations for further work

It is recommended that further works be undertaken. The progress of each area and the need to open each to the full extent should be under constant review.

Area 7 (Test Pit 7)

In the light of the discovery of the Roman road in Test Pit 7, it is recommended that the 10m by 10m area excavation go ahead as planned, although shifted to south (WHEAS 2004a). Owen Williams to advise on minimum highway width required.

This should provide information on the character of the road surface and make-up, the existence of a roadside ditch with potential dating evidence and define possible activity adjacent.

The area excavation would require that the present road be reduced to one way traffic. The area is bisected by a water main along the north side of the present road.

It should be noted that the Roman surface lies at 0.87m below the present road, so will not be impinged upon by the improvement scheme which only impacts to c 0.30m at this point.

Area 8 (Test Pit 8)

It is recommended that a north/south aligned trench from the road into the bank and field to the north, plus an east/west aligned trench along the road within the confines of the originally proposed area be excavated (WHEAS 2004a). Owen Williams to advise on maximum width of excavation within the highway to maintain traffic flow, to avoid a temporary road to the north.

This would provide information to clarify the character of the pebble gravel layer, to investigate the sides of the holloway and define potential adjacent activity, such as a roadside ditch.

A water main and telecomm cable exist within the bank north of the highway.

Area 9 (Test Pits 9a & 9b)

It is recommended that the 50m by 10m area excavation be undertaken as planned (WHEAS 2004a).

This would provide information to clarify the character of the pebble gravel layer and define potential adjacent activity, such as a roadside ditch.

A gas main exists along the south side of the existing road. The road would have to be closed for the duration.

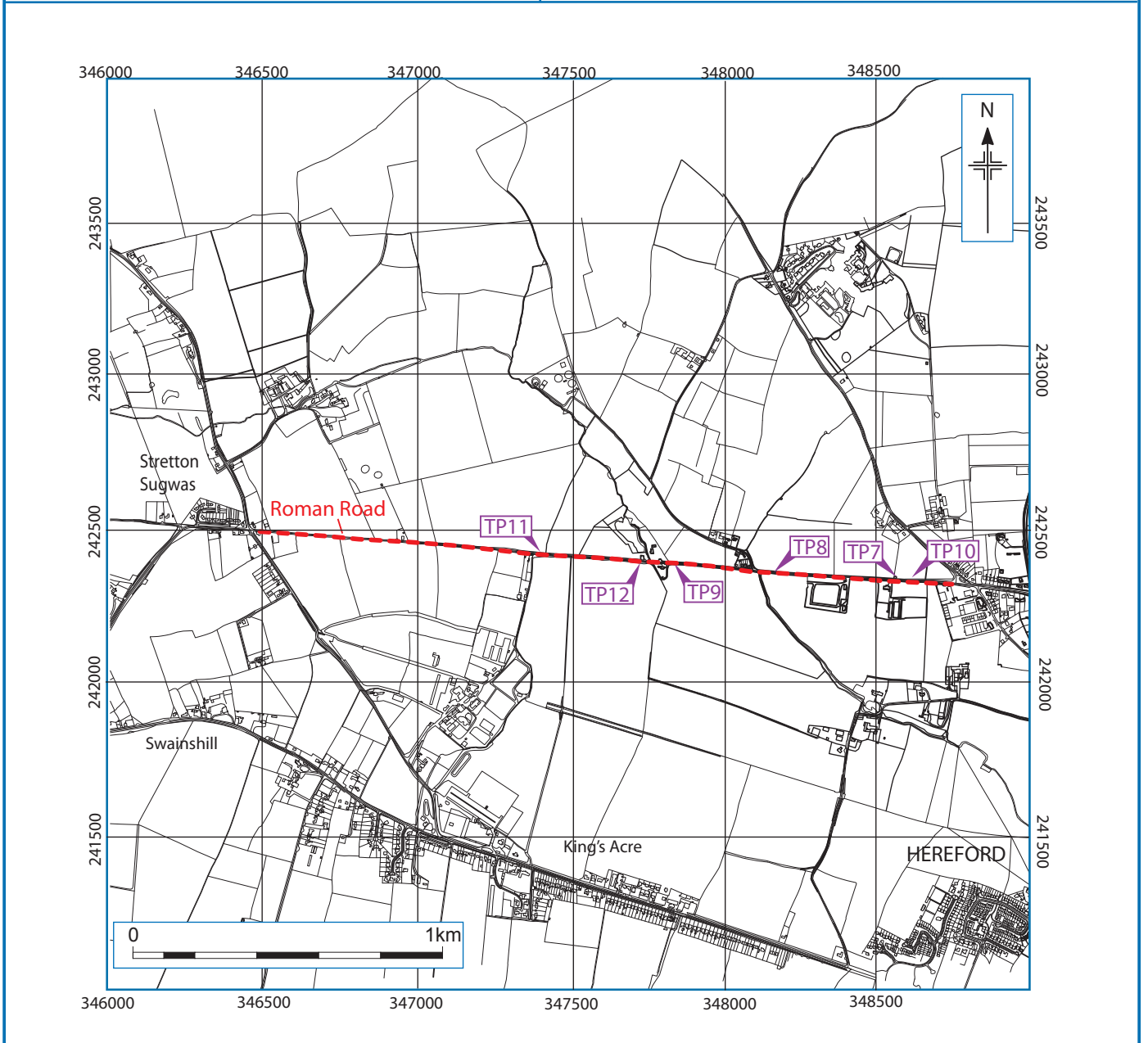
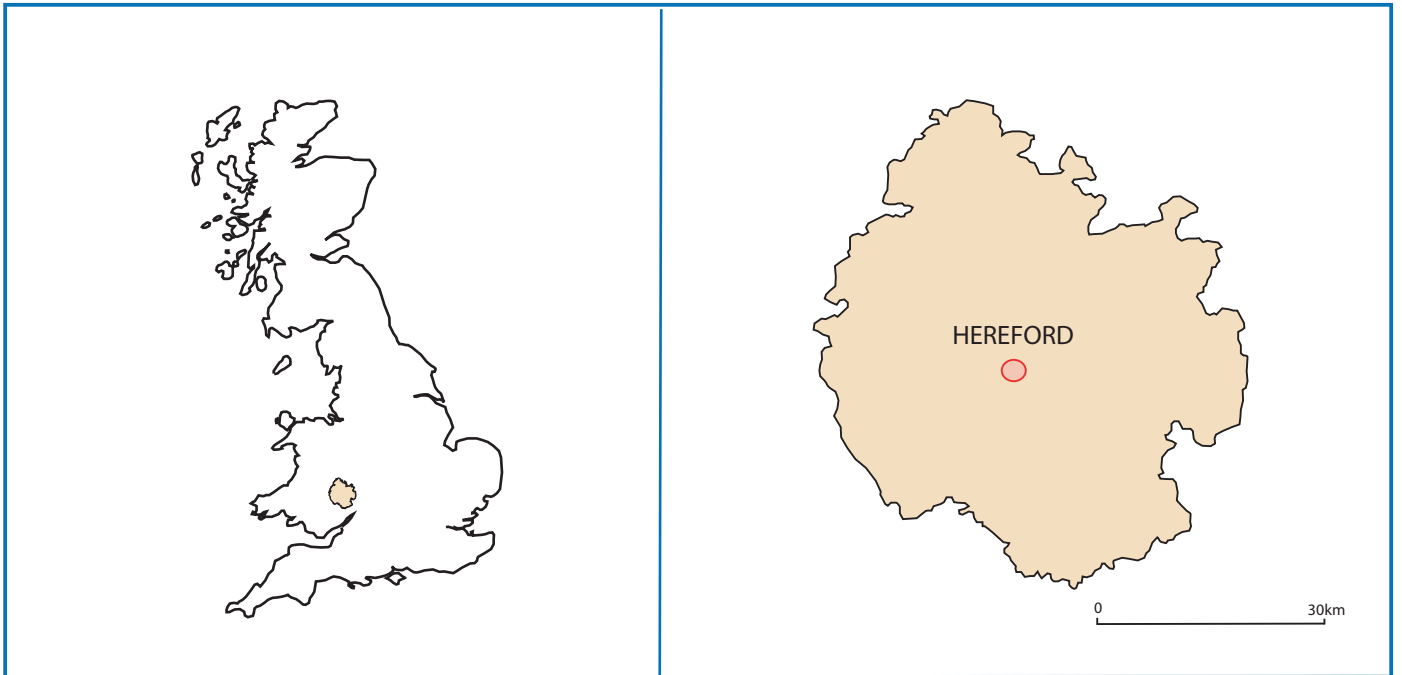
It is anticipated that this work would take 4 weeks.

Appendix 2: SMR Cover Sheet

Report Name and Title	Archaeological investigation on the A4103, Roman Road, Hereford	
Contractors Name and Address	Worcestershire Historic Environment and Archaeology Service, Woodbury Hall, University College Worcester, Henwick grove, Worcester, WR2 6AJ.	
Site Name	Roman Road, Hereford	
Grid Reference	SO 465 424 to SO 488 423 Planning Application No. CW2002/3558/F	
SMR number/s of site	HSM 38193-5 and 38197	
Date of Field Work	1 st 3 rd June 2004	
Date of Report	** June 2004	
NUMBER AND TYPE OF FINDS		
Pottery	Period	Number of sherds
	n/a	
Other	Period	Quantity
	Early post-medieval brick and tile frags	3
	Unidentified animal bone frag	1
	Iron concretion (hobnail)	1
NUMBER AND TYPE OF SAMPLES COLLECTED		
Sieving for charred plant remains	1. No features sampled	
	2. No buckets	
C14/scientific dates	3. None	
	4. n/a	
Pollen	5. No Columns/spot samples	
	6. n/a	
Bone	7. No buckets sieved for bone	
Insect	8. No Columns/spot samples	
	9. n/a	
Other	10. n/a	
Summary of the report	Ten test pits were archaeologically monitored. The Roman Road was identified in one test pit, at the east end of the improvement scheme, sealed by a thin band of alluvium. Elsewhere the natural clay was found to lie directly below modern gravel hardcore layers, indicating that earlier deposits have been truncated. Frequent deep service trenches were also noted, cut into the natural matrix.	

Appendix 3: Herefordshire Council Brief

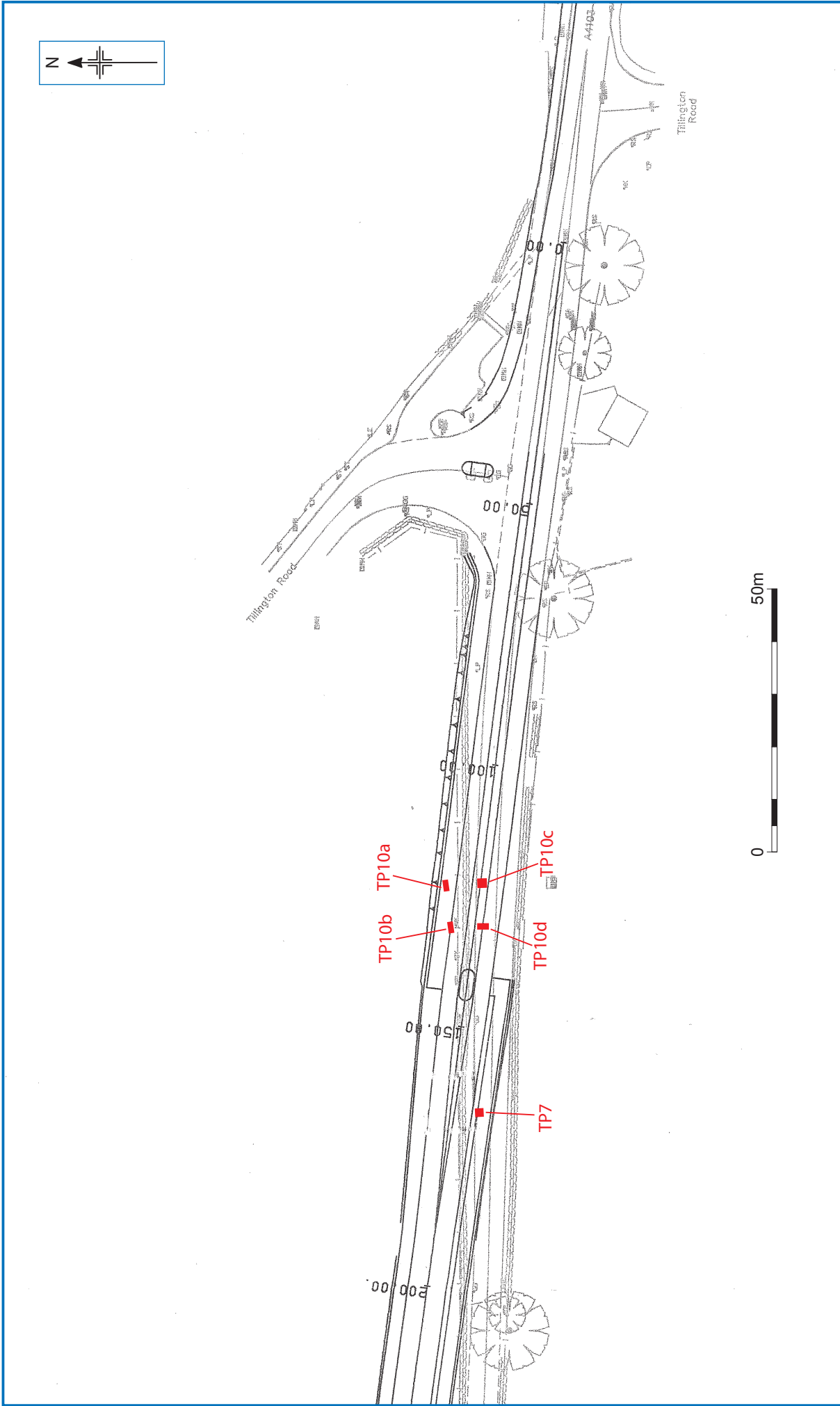
Appendix 4: WHEAS Proposal



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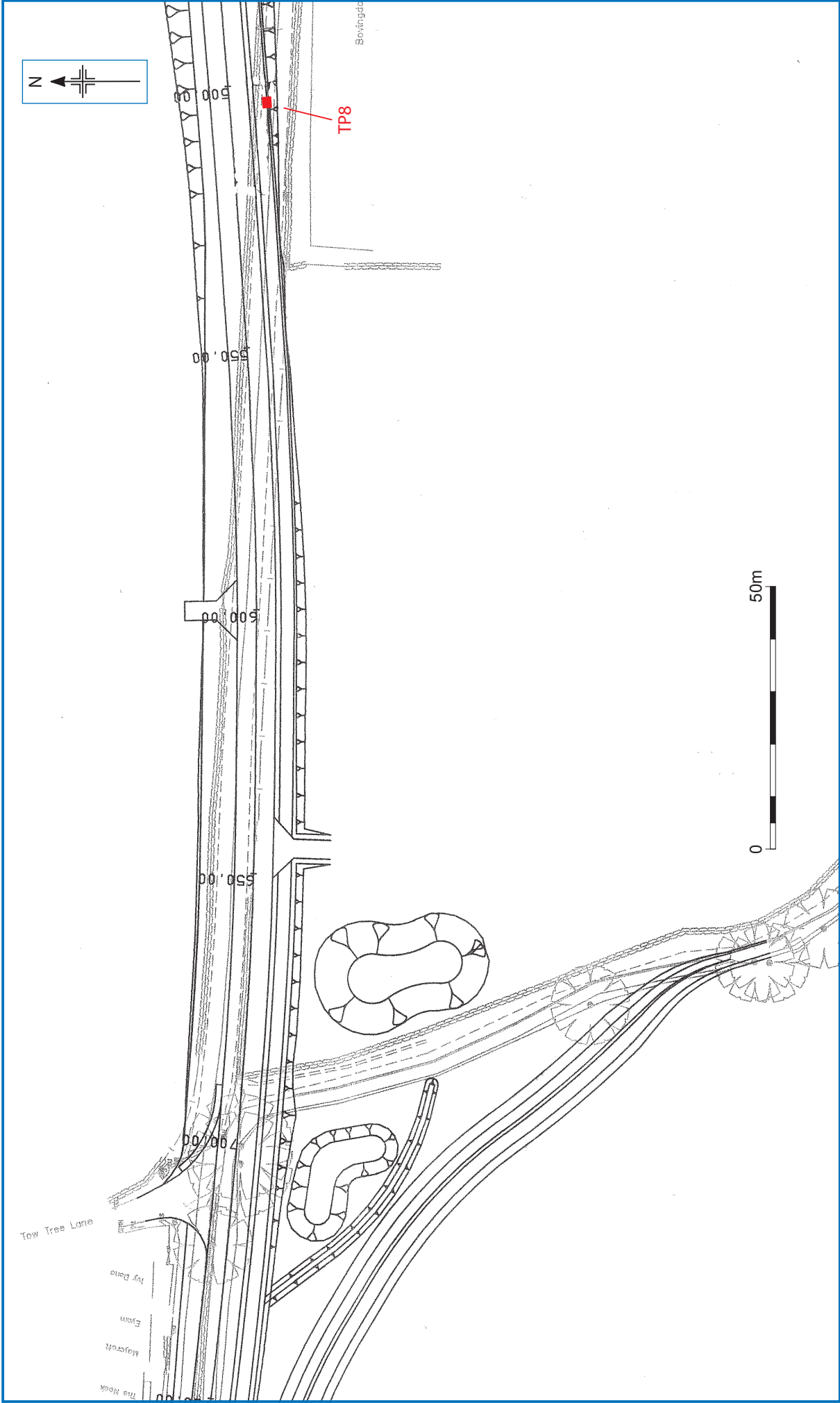
Location of Roman Road and test pits.

Figure 1



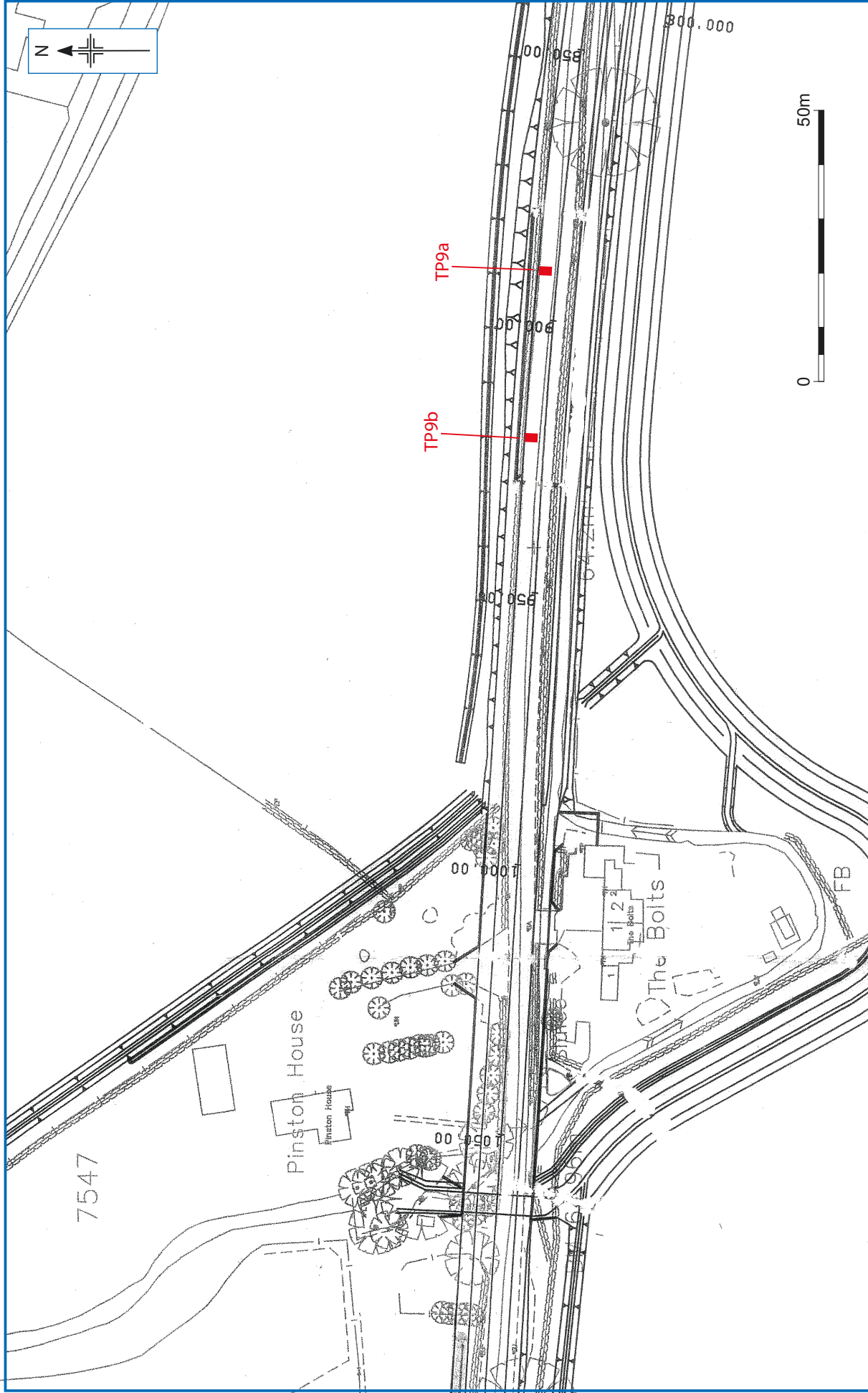
Site 7: Test Pits 7 and 10 (based upon Halcrow Group Ltd Drg.No. TH/HHRR/111).

Figure 2



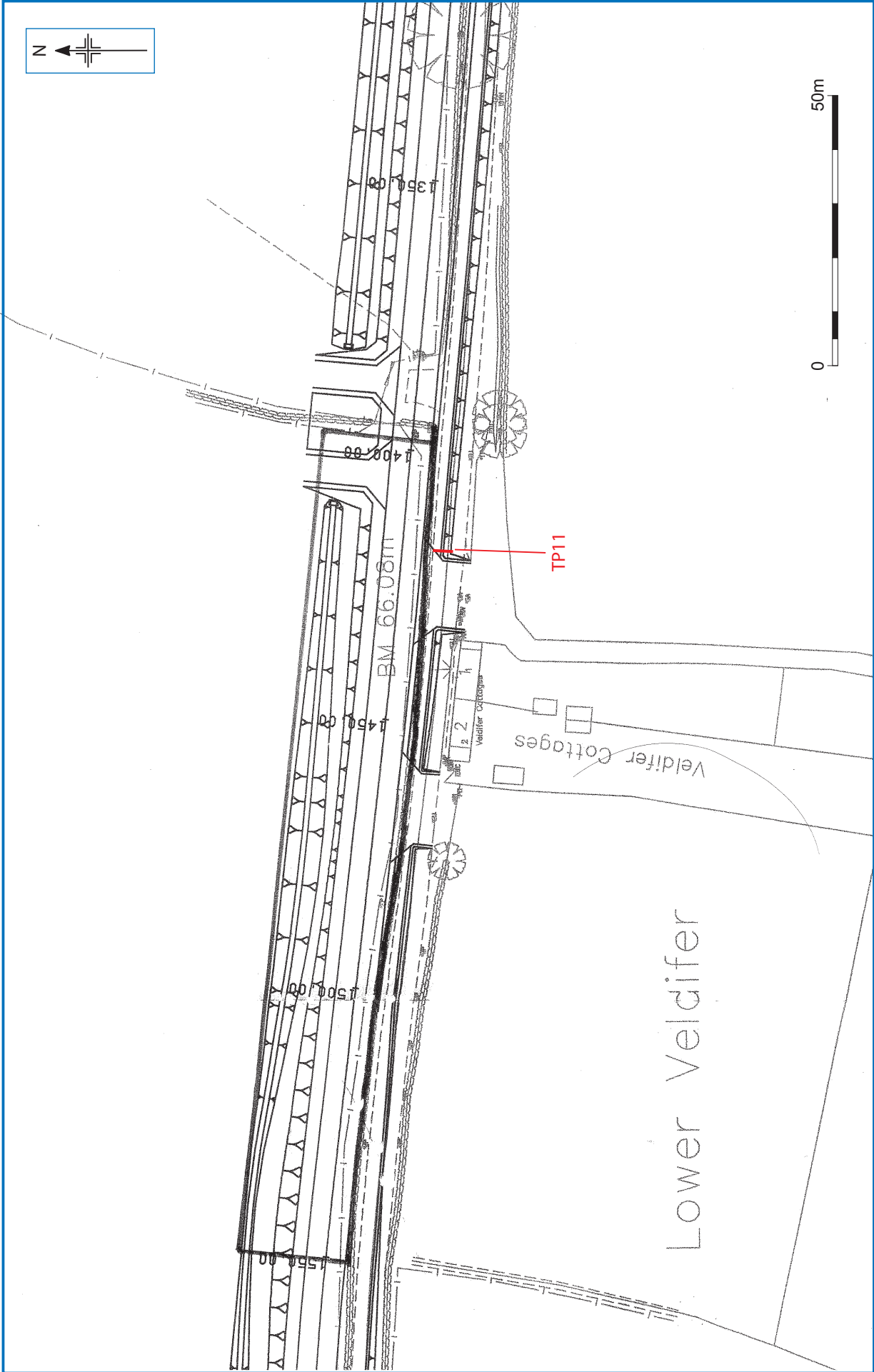
Site 8: Test Pit 8 (based upon Halcrow Group Ltd Drg.No. TH/HHRR/111).

Figure 3



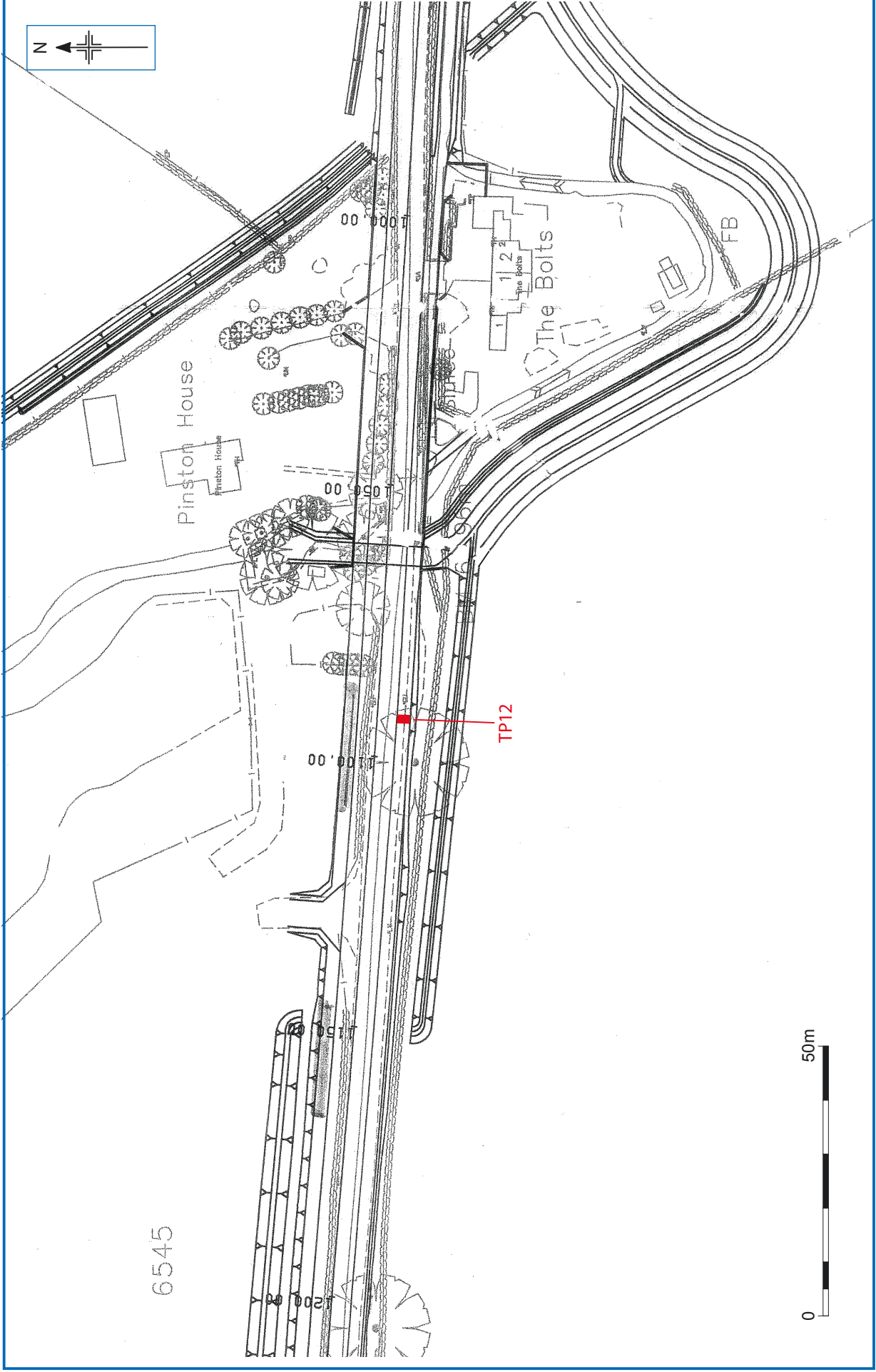
Site 9: Test Pits 9a and 9b (based upon Halcrow Group Ltd Drg.No. TH/HHRR/112).

Figure 4



Test Pit II (based upon Halcrow Group Ltd Drg.No. TH/HHRR/112).

Figure 5



Test Pit 12 (based upon Halcrow Group Ltd Drg.No. TH/HRR/112).

Figure 6