ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF OF MONUMENT LANE SEWAGE SCHEME, LICKEY, WORCESTERSHIRE

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With a contribution by Elizabeth Plane

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Project 3017
Report 1520
WSM 36085

Contents

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Part 1 Project summary

An archaeological watching brief was undertaken of the Monument Lane Sewage Scheme, Lickey, Worcestershire (centred on NGR: SO 9900 7545). It was undertaken on behalf of Severn Trent Water Limited, who intends to excavate an easement and pipe trench in order to lay a sewer pipe, along with compounds and access tracks. The project aimed to determine if any significant archaeological deposits were present and if so to indicate what their location, date and nature were.

No layers, features, deposits or structures of archaeological significance were identified during the soil strip, nor any archaeological artefacts recovered. The only two features identified were a post-medieval ditch aligned north-south and a tree-throw at the east end of the scheme, toward the corner of Old Birmingham Road and Monument Lane. No evidence of the Roman Road that ran between Bromsgrove and Birmingham (through Lickey) was identified in the trenches located close to its projected route.

Part 2 Detailed report

1. Background

1.1 Reasons for the project

An archaeological watching brief was undertaken on the Monument Lane Sewage Scheme, Lickey, Worcestershire (Fig 1; centred on NGR SO 9900 7545), on behalf of Severn Trent Water Limited. The development involves soil stripping and trenching, by machine, associated with the laying of a new sewage pipeline. It is considered by the Planning Advisory Section of Worcestershire Historic Environment and Archaeology Service, that the project (ref. 35353) may affect a site of archaeological interest (WSM 03271).

1.2 Project parameters

The project conforms to the *Standard and guidance for an archaeological watching brief* (IFA 1999). The project also conforms to a brief prepared by Worcestershire County Council (HEAS 2006a) and for which a project proposal (including detailed specification) was produced (HEAS 2006b).

1.3 Aims

The aim of the watching brief was to locate and record any archaeological deposits and determine, if present, their extent, state of preservation, date and type, as far as reasonably possible.

2. Methods

2.1 Documentary search

Prior to fieldwork commencing a search was made of the Historic Environment Record (HER). In addition to the sources listed in the bibliography the following were also consulted:

Cartographic sources

- 1st edition Ordnance Survey, 1884, Worcestershire sheet XXXIX, scale 25":1 mile

2.2 Fieldwork methodology

2.2.1 Fieldwork strategy

A detailed specification has been prepared by the Service (HEAS 2006b).

Fieldwork was undertaken between 14th December 2006 and 4th July 2007. The site reference number and site code is WSM 36085.

Observation and recording of archaeological deposits was restricted to areas of ground disturbance associated with the development (soil stripping for the easement and compound, plus sections of the pipe trench) following the progress of the construction team. For the purposes of this project, the site was divided into 12 trenches. The location of the areas and trenches observed is indicated in Figure 1.

Deposits were removed using a 360º tracked machine, employing a toothless bucket. Topsoil was generally removed down to the top of natural deposits in order to provide a working easement. Clean surfaces were inspected and selected deposits were excavated to retrieve artefactual material and environmental samples, as well as to determine their nature. Deposits were recorded according to standard Service practice (CAS 1995).

The easement strip of Trenches 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7 and 9 was fully monitored. Trenches 8, 10, 11 and 12 consisted of only the narrow pipe trench and, due to the practical constrains of the project, only segments of these trenches were observed (Figs 2 and 3).

2.2.2 Structural analysis

All fieldwork records were checked and cross-referenced. Analysis was effected through a combination of structural, artefactual and ecofactual evidence, allied to the information derived from other sources.

2.3 Artefact methodology

2.3.1 Artefact recovery policy

The artefact recovery policy conformed to standard Service practice (CAS 1995; appendix 2).

In the event, no artefacts were recovered form the site.

2.4 Environmental archaeology methodology

2.4.1 Sampling policy

The environmental sampling strategy conformed to standard Service practice (CAS 1995; appendix 4).

In the event, no deposits or layers were identified which were considered to be suitable for environmental analysis, so no samples were taken.

2.5 The methods in retrospect

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

3. Topographical and archaeological context, by Elizabeth Pane

The development site is located on the outskirts of the village of Lickey, which lies on the Lickey Hills to the south west of Birmingham (centred on NGR: SO 9900 7545). The topography across the site varies greatly, the highest part of the site is Monument Lane, from where the land slopes away to the north east and the south west. The majority of the development area is located to the south west of Monument Lane on sloping ground and runs through housing plots and fields. The name ‘Lickey’ is thought to derive from the Old English word for a forest-enclosure *(ge)haeg*, however the forest-name has no known connections with the ‘leac’ form. The first documentary reference to Lickey is in 1255 when it was referred to as *la Lecheye, la Lekheye, la Lechay, Lekhaye* (Mawer and Stenton 1927, 342).

The predominant soils across the site belong to the Crediton Soil Association (541e), comprising well drained gritty reddish loamy soils over breccia, locally less stony, over parent material of Permian and Carboniferous reddish breccia (Soil Survey of England and

Wales 1983). The underlying solid geology within the development area comprises Carboniferous Keele Formation, consisting of red mudstone with subordinate sandstone, which is overlain by Permian Clent Breccias, consisting of Red-brown and purple breccias with clasts of sandstone and mudstone. This is in turn overlain by Triassic Basal conglomerate with pebbles of quartz and quartzite. The drift geology to the south west of the site consists of glacial till (Boulder Clay) (British Geological Survey 1989).

Although there are no known sites of defined prehistoric date within the vicinity of the sewage scheme, some find spots have been recorded in the wider Area. Most notable is the reported discovery from High House Drive of a flint axe head, of possible Palaeolithic date (WSM22329). Further flint flakes have been recovered from Beacon Hill to the north (WSM01882).

Possible deposits relating to the former Roman road between Bromsgrove (through the Lickey Hills) to Birmingham may also be present in a field just north of the south east end of Monument Lane. The Roman road was described in Margary's survey of the Roman road network in Britain. Whilst he felt the evidence was unclear he proposed that the road ran through Yew Tree Farm, Lickey Square and Lickey End (WSM 30529).

In a further attempt to trace the road, Whitehouse dug a series of trenches north of Monument Lane in 1959. He observed that the Roman road crossed Old Birmingham Road and gradually emerged as a broad low bank in the woodland south of Monument Lane. He further wrote that the Roman road reached its maximum elevation at Monument Lane and he placed section I-J at Rose Hill. This revealed "the west flanking ditch, 7 feet across and 18 inches deep, contained a black silt" (WSM 30301). Further sections were cut east of Monument Road where 18 ft flanking ditches were revealed at section G-H (WSM 30560). At Hazy Hill Farm Whitehouse located a buried road surface made of pebbles set in a sandy clay soil, but no dating evidence was discovered and no ditches were located at the sides of the surface. With further sections of this road found from Bromsgrove to Rednal, Whitehouse's field observations provided good evidence that the Roman road ran through Lickey Grange.

Further archaeological investigations were undertaken along the proposed route of the road in 1992, prior to the redevelopment of Lickey Grange (L.H Pontin; 1992). Two trenches were dug perpendicular to the assumed lines of the Roman road, however, neither proposed route was identified. Either the Roman road did not exist or had been subsequently destroyed. Previous ploughing or landscaping may have removed surviving traces at the points the excavations took place.

Geophysical survey and observation in fields and gardens either side of Rose Hill were carried out in 1998 in order establish the course of the Roman road and locate the aforementioned work carried out by Whitehouse. The survey established a "clear linear anomaly on a slightly different alignment" than was previously considered. The findings for Site D indicated a short length of roadside ditch in a back garden at the bottom of the hill that may be on the same alignment. Surveying in the field north of Monument Lane observed a clear line of sight through the gap in the Lickey Hills at Site A. Unfortunately no trace of the previous excavation was located, which is thought to have been lost during the road widening (Leather 1998, 132).

There is little historical and archaeological evidence for significant human activity on this site in other periods.

4. Results

4.1 Structural analysis

The trenches and features recorded are shown in Figures 2-4 and Plates 1 to 17. The results of the structural analysis are presented in Appendix 1.

4.1.1 Phase 1 Natural deposits

The natural deposits observed across the site consisted of a brown orange clay silt with frequent rounded stones which is likely to derive from the drift geology of glacial till (Boulder Clay).

4.1.2 Post-medieval deposits

A modern post-medieval ditch (203) was identified in Trench 2 running north to south (Fig 3; Plate 5). An 11m length of this feature was exposed and found to be 0.80m wide by 0.06m in depth. The ditch contained a single fill (204) comprised of fuel ash and charcoal.

A tree-throw (205) was also identified in Trench 2 (Fig 3; Plate 4). It had an irregular shape in plan and profile. It contained one fill (206) comprising dark black brown sandy silt. The feature was 4.5m in length and 2.3m in width.

The fields through which Trenches 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7 and 9 ran were under pasture and do not appear to have been heavily ploughed. The boundary between the soils and the natural deposit was generally well defined.

Trench 7 area has been deliberately raised with dumped soil deposits, 700 and 701, to level the school playing field, preserving the former ground surface, 702, below.

5. Synthesis

No layers, features, deposits or structures of archaeological significance were identified during the soil strip, nor any archaeological artefacts recovered.

The ditch identified in Trench 2 was determined to be of post-medieval date. The nature of the deposit contained within Tree-throw (205) also suggests a post-medieval date.

No evidence of the Roman Road that ran between Bromsgrove and Birmingham (through Lickey) was found in Trenches 2 and 3 (Fig 2; Plates 2, 3 and 6), which were close to the projected line of the Roman Road. It is possible that evidence of the Roman road still survives between Trench 2 and the Old Birmingham Road. Although Trench 3 was located on the Old Birmingham Road, it is possible that any traces of the former Roman road were destroyed during its construction.

The dumping of material identified in Trench 7 adjacent to the school, to raise and level the ground surface, is considered to have been undertaken sometime in the mid/late 20th century to improve the school playing fields.

6. 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 watching brief was undertaken on behalf of Severn Trent Water Limited on the Monument Lane Sewage Scheme, Lickey, Worcestershire (NGR ref SO 9900 7545; HER ref. WSM 36085). The development involved the excavation of an easement and pipe trench in order to lay a sewer pipe, plus compounds and access tracks. No layers, features, deposits or structures of archaeological significance were identified during the soil strip, nor any archaeological artefacts recovered. The only two features identified were a post-medieval ditch aligned north-south and a tree-throw. No evidence of the Roman road that ran between Bromsgrove and Birmingham (through Lickey) was identified in the trenches located close to its projected route.

7. Acknowledgements

The Service would like to thank the following for their kind assistance in the successful conclusion of this project, Seng Cheah & Wayne Ellis (Severn Trent Water Ltd), Ben Williams (G F Tomlinson Civil Engineering Ltd) and Mike Glyde (Worcester County Council Historic Environment Planning Advisor).

8. Personnel

The fieldwork and report preparation was led by Adam Lee. The project manager responsible for the quality of the project was Tom Vaughan. Fieldwork was undertaken by Adam Lee and Justin Hughes. Illustrations by Carolyn Hunt. With a contribution by Elizabeth Plane.

9. Bibliography

British Geological Survey, 1989 *England and Wales, Redditch, Solid and Drift Geology*, Sheet 183, scale 1:50 000

CAS, 1995 (as amended) *Manual of Service practice: fieldwork recording manual*, County Archaeological Service, Hereford and Worcester County Council, report, **399**

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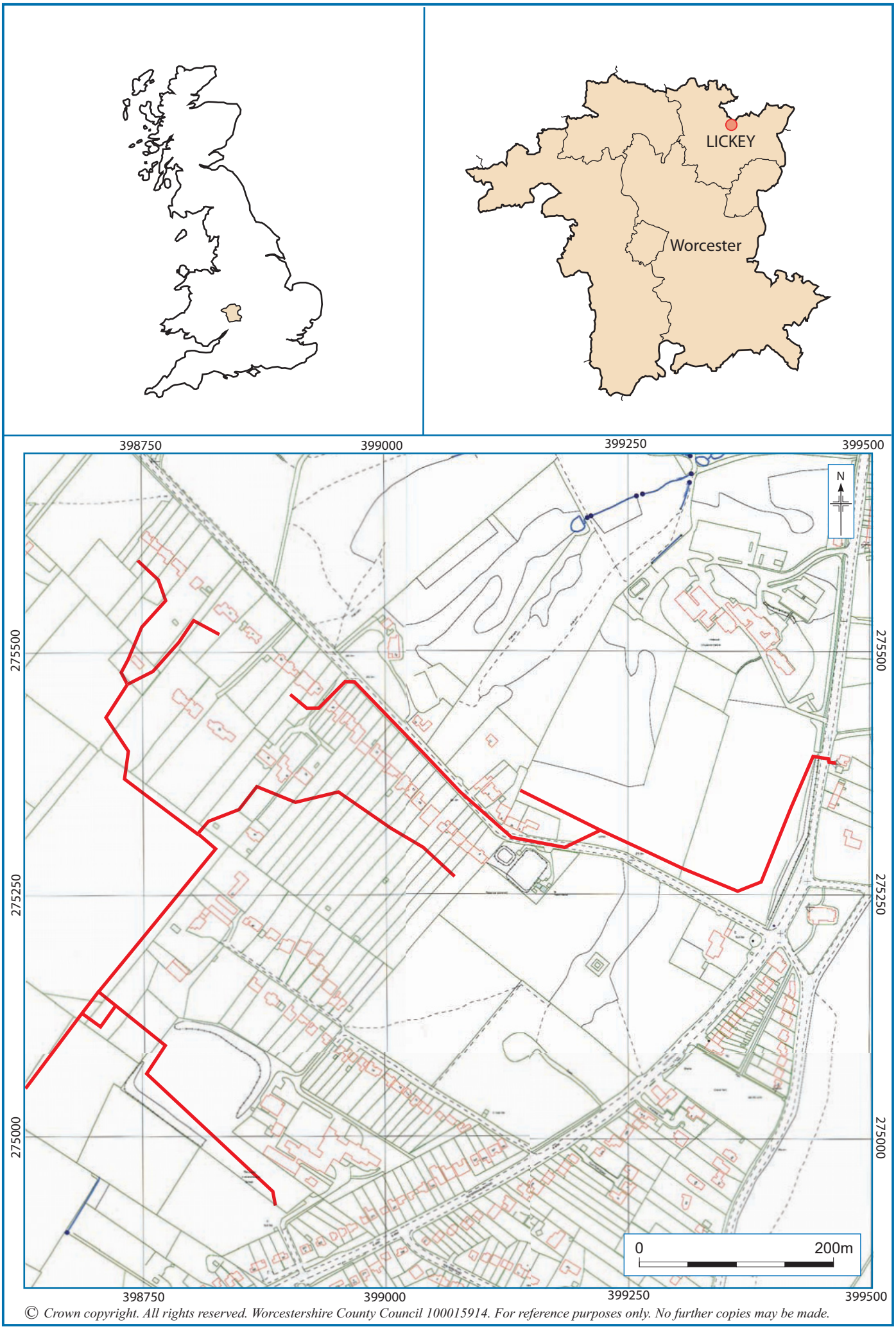
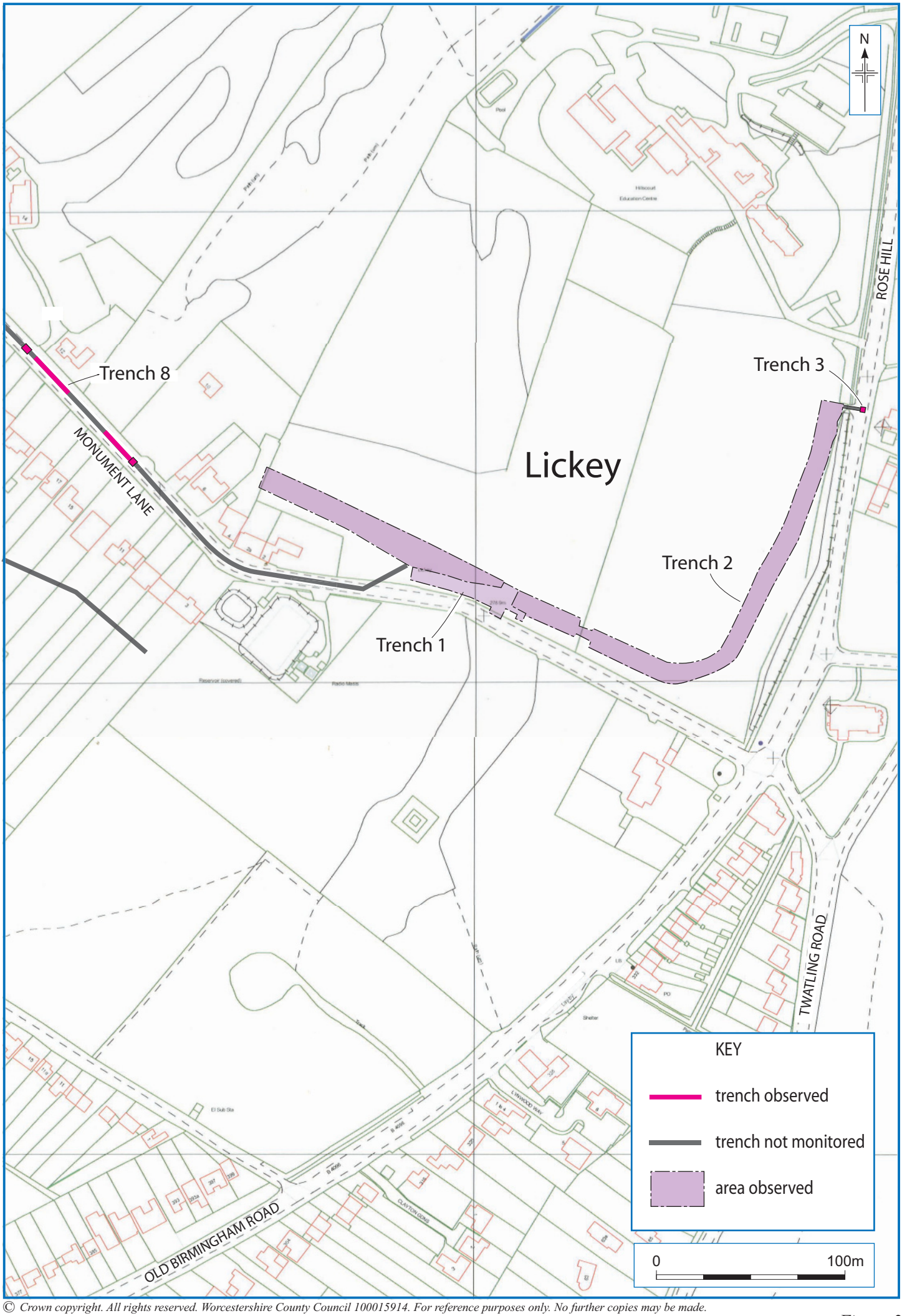
Pontin, L.H, 1992 *Lickey Grange, Bromsgrove, Worcestershire, An Archaeological Evaluation*, An unpublished report by Birmingham University Field Archaeology Unit

Soil Survey of England and Wales, 1983 Midland and Western England, sheet 3, scale 1:250,000 + *Legend for the 1:250,000 Soil Map of England and Wales (A brief explanation of the constituent soil associations)*

Figures

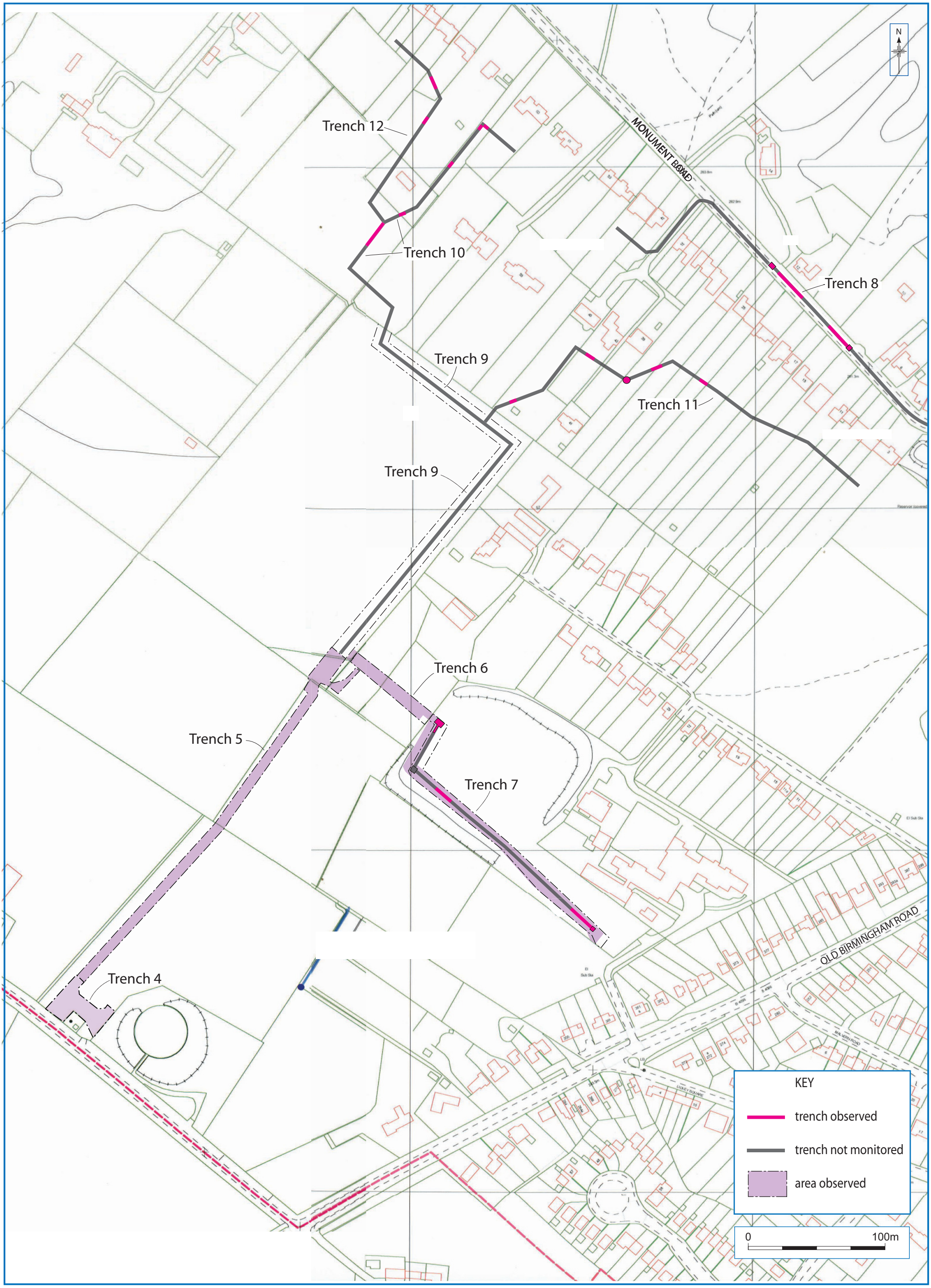


Location of the site. *Figure 1*



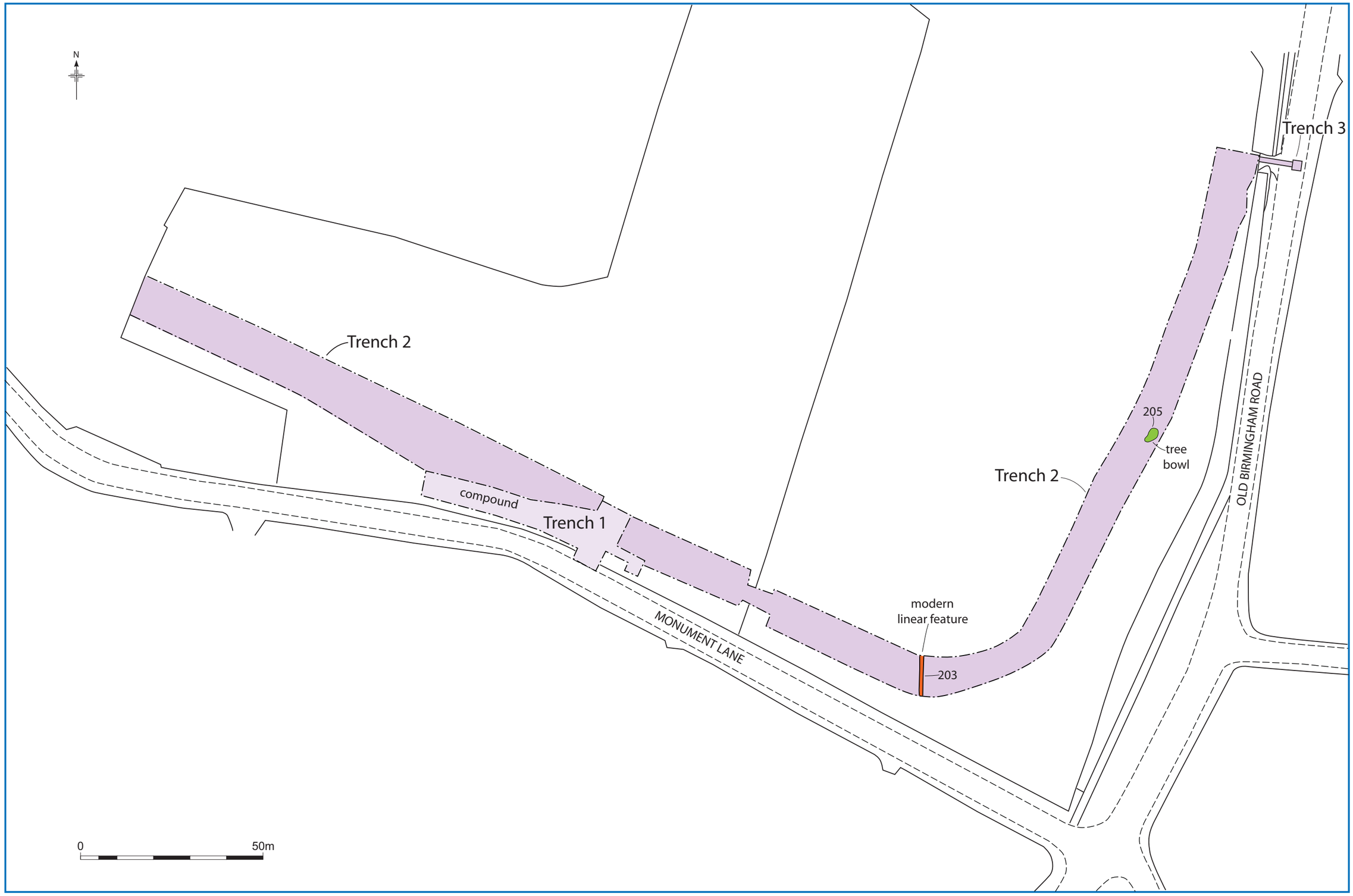
Location of trenches 1 and 2

Figure 2



Location of trenches 4 to 12

Figure 3



Plan of Trenches 1, 2 and 3

Figure 4

Plates

Plate 1: Trench 1 off Monument Lane after soil stripping, looking northwest

Plate 2: Trench 2, looking northeast

Plate 3: Trench 2, looking east southeast

Plate 4: Tree throw (205) in Trench 2, looking south southwest

Plate 5: Ditch (203) in Trench 2, looking northeast

Plate 6: Trench 3 in Old Birmingham Road, looking northeast

Plate 7: Trench 4, compound off Alvechurch Highway, looking east

Plate 8: Trench 5, access track from Trench 4 to sewage pipeline, looking southwest

Plate 9: Trench 6, looking northwest

Plate 10: Trench 7in school playing field, looking southeast

Plate 11: The excavation of the pipe trench in Trench 7, looking north northwest. The original buried dark topsoil (702) is clearly visible below made ground (701)

Plate 12: Trench 8 in Monument Lane showing deposits underneath the existing road surface

Plate 13: Trench 9 looking southwest

Plate 14: Stripping the easement in Trench 9, looking southeast

Plate 15: Excavation of the pipe trench in Trench 10 looking northeast.

Plate 16: Trench 11, excavation of the pipe trench in the rear gardens to the southwest of Monument Lane

Plate 17: Trench 11, excavation of the pipe trench in the rear gardens to the southwest of Monument Lane. Topsoil (1100) is clearly visible overlying natural deposits (1101).

Appendix 1 Trench context descriptions

Trench 1

Site area: Compound off Monument Lane

Maximum dimensions: Length: 64.50m Width: 17.75m Depth: 0.20-0.50m

Orientation: WNW-ESE

Main deposit description

Context	Classification	Description	Depth below ground surface (b.g.s) – top and bottom of deposits
100	Topsoil	Firm dark brown clay silt with very frequent small-large rounded stones.	0.00-0.30m
101	Subsoil	Firm mid orange brown clay silt with moderate small-large rounded stones.	0.30-0.60m
102	Natural	Firm mid brown orange clay/sandy silt with very frequent small-large rounded stones. Some areas of this deposit have a higher sand content.	0.60m +

Trench 2

Site area: Pipe easement through fields adjacent to Monument Lane

Maximum dimensions: Length: 338m Width: 16m Depth: 0.13-0.45m

Orientation: WNW-ESE and NNE-SSW

Main deposit description

Context	Classification	Description	Depth below ground surface (b.g.s) – top and bottom of deposits
200	Topsoil	Firm dark brown clay silt with very frequent small-large rounded stones.	0.00-0.30m
201	Subsoil	Firm mid orange brown clay silt with Frequent small-large rounded stones. This deposit does not appear over the whole trench.	0.30-0.50m
202	Natural	Firm mid brown orange clay/sandy silt with very frequent small-large rounded stones. Some areas of this deposit have a higher sand content and there are patches of almost pure sand.	0.50m +
203	Linear feature	Cut of very shallow modern linear feature running N-S. It appears that this feature cuts through the topsoil and is only sealed by a thin layer of turf. It is therefore very modern in date. The feature has been almost completely truncated by the machine in parts. Length 11.00m (visible in base of trench) x Width 0.80m.	0. 10-0.26m
204	Fill	Fill of linear feature [203]. Loose dark black fuel ash and charcoal. Depth approximately 0.06m. This deposit was not excavated.	0.10-0.26m
205	Tree throw	Cut of irregular shaped tree throw. This feature was partially excavated (the depth of the feature was not established) and due to its irregular shape in plan and in section it has been interpreted as a tree throw. Length 4.50m x Width 2.30m	0.20m top of feature

Context	Classification	Description	Depth below ground surface (b.g.s) – top and bottom of deposits
206	Fill	Firm mid dark black brown sandy silt with moderate small-medium rounded stones	0.20m top of deposit

Trench 3

Site area: Excavation in Old Birmingham Road to construct manhole

Maximum dimensions: Length: 2.50m Width: 2.50m Depth: 1.50m observed

Orientation: N/A

Main deposit description

Context	Classification	Description	Depth below ground surface (b.g.s) – top and bottom of deposits
300	Tarmac	Concreted dark black tarmac road surface.	0.00-0.40m
301	Subsoil	Firm mid orange brown clay silt with frequent small-very large rounded stones. Depth 0.80m	0.40-1.20m
302	Natural	Firm dark red brown clay silt	1.20m +

Trench 4

Site area: Compound off Alvechurch Highway

Maximum dimensions: Length: 40m Width: 34m Depth: 0.25-0.40m

Orientation: NW-SE

Main deposit description

Context	Classification	Description	Depth below ground surface (b.g.s) – top and bottom of deposits
400	Topsoil	Firm dark brown clay silt with very frequent small-large rounded stones.	0.00-0.40m
401	Natural	Firm mid brown orange clay/sandy silt with very frequent small-large rounded stones.	0.40m +

Trench 5

Site area: Access track through fields off Alvechurch Highway

Maximum dimensions: Length: 304m Width: 14m Depth: 0.25-0.50m

Orientation: NE-SW

Main deposit description

Context	Classification	Description	Depth below ground surface (b.g.s) – top and bottom of deposits
500	Topsoil	Firm dark brown clay silt with very frequent small-large rounded stones.	0.00-0.50m
501	Natural	Firm mid brown orange clay/sandy silt with very frequent small-large rounded stones.	0.50m +

Trench 6

Site area: Easement next to school playing field, west part of development area

Maximum dimensions: Length: 72m Width: 10m Depth: 0.50-0.55m

Orientation: NW-SE

Main deposit description

Context	Classification	Description	Depth below ground surface (b.g.s) – top and bottom of deposits
600	Topsoil	Firm dark brown clay silt with very frequent small-large rounded stones.	0.00-0.35m
601	Natural	Firm mid brown orange clay/sandy silt with very frequent small-large rounded stones.	0.35m +

Trench 7

Site area: Easement and pipe trench in school playing field

Maximum dimensions: Length: 236m approx. Width: 10m Depth: 3.30m

Orientation: NW-SE

Main deposit description

Context	Classification	Description	Depth below ground surface (b.g.s) – top and bottom of deposits
700	Topsoil	Firm dark brown clay silt with frequent small-large rounded stones	0.00-0.30m
701	Makeup Layer	Firm mid orange brown clay silt with frequent small-large rounded stones. This deposit appears to be made ground in order to level the playing field.	0.30-0.90m
702	Old topsoil deposit	Firm Dark Black Brown clay silt with moderate small – medium rounded stones. This deposit represents the original ground surface prior to the addition of deposit 701 to level the playing field.	0.90-1.05m
703	Subsoil	Firm light clay silt with moderate small to medium rounded stones. This deposit does not appear across the whole of Trench 7.	1.05-1.45m
704	Natural	Firm mid brown orange silt clay with frequent small to very large rounded stones.	1.45m +

Trench 8

Site area: Pipe trench in Monument Lane.

Maximum dimensions: Length: 365m approx. Width: 0.90m Depth: 4m+

Orientation: NW-SE

Main deposit description

Context	Classification	Description	Depth below ground surface (b.g.s) – top and bottom of deposits
800	Tarmac Road Surface	Concreted Dark Black Tarmac	0.00-0.14m
801	Road Makeup	Firm dark black brown stony/sandy silt with frequent small to very large rounded stones.	0.14-0.44m
802	Subsoil/ Road Makeup	Firm mid yellow brown sandy silt. The top of this deposit is stained black from deposit 801.	0.44-0.64m
803	Natural	Firm mid red brown sandy/clay silt with patches of lighter mid-light brown grey material. Deposit contains frequent small – large rounded stones.	0.64m +

Trench 9

Site area: Easement in field next to House Farm, west part of development area.

Maximum dimensions: Length: 345m approx. Width: 10.5m Depth: 0.40m

Orientation: NE-SW and NW-SE

Main deposit description

Context	Classification	Description	Depth below ground surface (b.g.s) – top of deposits
900	Topsoil	Firm dark orange brown sandy silt with moderate small-large rounded stones	0.00-0.40m
901	Subsoil/ Natural	Firm mid yellow orange/brown sandy silt with frequent medium-large rounded and sub-rounded stones.	0.40-0.80m
902	Natural	Firm mid yellow orange sandy silt, in places the deposit is more yellow and in others more orange brown. Deposit contains frequent large stones.	0.80m +

Trench 10

Site area: Pipe trench, north east part of development area.

Maximum dimensions: Length: 265m approx. Width: 1.1m Depth: 2-3m

Orientation: NE-SW and NW-SE

Main deposit description

Context	Classification	Description	Depth below ground surface (b.g.s) – top and bottom of deposits
1000	Topsoil	Firm mid brown clay silt with frequent small-large rounded stones	0.00-0.30m
1001	Natural	Firm mid brown Red clay silt and orange brown clay with patches of light grey clay. Deposit contains occasional small-large rounded stones.	0.30m +
1002	Track Surface	The surface comprises Layer of concrete 0.14m thick, which is sat on a layer of hardcore 0.18m thick. This track surface appears only in the NE stretch of Trench 10.	0.00-0.30m

Trench 11

Site area: Pipe trench through rear gardens south west of Monument Lane.

Maximum dimensions: Length: 300m approx. Width: 1m Depth: 2-3m

Orientation: NW-SE and NE-SW

Main deposit description

Context	Classification	Description	Depth below ground surface (b.g.s) – top and bottom of deposits
600	Topsoil	Firm dark brown orange sandy silt with frequent small- very large rounded stones.	0.00-0.30m
601	Natural	Firm mid brown orange sandy silt with areas of orange silty clay. Deposit contained very frequent small- very large rounded stones.	0.30m +

Trench 12

Site area: Pipe trench through rear gardens off Monument Lane

Maximum dimensions: Length: 175m approx. Width: 1m Depth: 2-3m

Orientation: NE-SW and NW-SE

Main deposit description

Context	Classification	Description	Depth below ground surface (b.g.s) – top and bottom of deposits
600	Topsoil	Firm mid brown clay silt with frequent small-large rounded stones.	0.00-0.35m
601	Natural	Firm mid red brown silty clay with frequent small-large rounded stones.	0.35m +

Appendix 2 Technical information

The archive

The archive consists of:

16	Fieldwork progress records AS2
3	Photographic records AS3
162	Digital Photographs
1	Drawing number catalogues AS4
12	Trench record sheets AS41
4	Abbreviated context records AS40
4	Scale drawings

The project archive is intended to be placed at:

Worcestershire County Museum
Hartlebury Castle
Hartlebury
Near Kidderminster
Worcestershire DY11 7XZ

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