



**Archaeological Watching Brief
Report
Willow Farm
Fenn Lanes
Fenny Drayton**



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Final Issue

Heritage Consultancy and Planning Services Ltd T/A Groundworks Archaeology

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Summary

Planning consent was granted by Hinckley and Bosworth Borough Council (Planning Ref: 21/00586/FUL) for the “creation of a new access track” at Willow Farm, Fenn Lanes, Fenny Drayton. Condition 7 required the implementation of an archaeological watching brief.

The watching brief was undertaken on the 27th of July 2023 and this report presents the results.

The archaeological monitoring revealed a simple stratigraphy of topsoil over subsoil which presumably sealed the natural clay (although this relationship was not confirmed).

No archaeological finds or features were present within the monitored area.

1. Introduction

- 1.1 Groundworks Archaeology was commissioned by Mr Chris Hunt to undertake an archaeological watching brief on the construction of a new access to Willow Farm off Fen Lane, Fenny Drayton. The site is centred on NGR SP 36939 97739 at an approximate height of 94m AOD.
- 1.2 The work was carried out in response to a planning condition and was undertaken in accordance with a Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI) which was submitted to and approved by Mr William Kelly in his capacity of advisor to the local planning authority.

2. Site Location and Description

- 2.1 A new access track is being created to provide access to Willow Farm. The track crosses a triangular shaped field which fronts onto Fenn Lanes to the south and is bounded by Willow Farm to the west and Stoke Road to the east. The road access is centered on NGR SP 36904 97702 at an approximate height of 94m AOD.
- 2.2 The British Geological Survey records the bedrock geology as the Gunthorpe Member, a siltstone dolomitic sedimentary bedrock formed between 247.1 and 237 million years ago during the Triassic period. Superficial deposits are recorded as the Thrussington Member, a diamicton sedimentary superficial deposit formed between 480 and 423 thousand years ago during the Quaternary period.

3. Planning Background

- 3.1 Planning consent was granted by Hinckley and Bosworth Borough Council (Planning Ref: 21/00586/FUL) for the “creation of a new access track” at Willow Farm, Fenn Lanes, Fenny Drayton.

- 3.2 Condition 7 stated that:

No demolition/development shall take place/commence until a written scheme of investigation (WSI) has been submitted to and approved by the local planning authority in writing. For land that is included within the WSI, no demolition/development shall take place other than in accordance with the agreed WSI, which shall include the statement of significance and research objectives and

- i. The programme and methodology of site investigation and recording and the nomination of a competent person(s) or organisation to undertake the agreed works.

- ii. The programme for post-investigation assessment and subsequent analysis, publication & dissemination and deposition of resulting material. This part of the condition shall not be discharged until these elements have been fulfilled in accordance with the programme set out in the WSI.

Reason: To ensure satisfactory archaeological investigation and recording.

4. Archaeological and Historical Background

- 4.1 An HER search was undertaken by the Leicestershire HER within a 1km radius of the site. This identified 18 archaeological activities and 21 monument records including one Registered Battlefield. There are no Scheduled Ancient Monuments, or Registered Parks and Gardens within the search area.

Prehistoric

- 4.2 A number of Prehistoric finds have been made within the study area suggesting a considerable amount of activity in this period. Six possible Palaeolithic scrapers and an unfinished hand axe (MLE6078) were found 209m north of the site. A further scatter of Palaeolithic flints (MLE8245) have been found 806m to the south-east of the site. A fieldwalking exercise (ELE10695) undertaken 330m south of the site identified 5 Late Neolithic flints (MLE24093). A metal detector survey (ELE11463) undertaken by ULAS in 2018 265m south-south-west of the site identified 2 flint thumbnail scrapers of Early Bronze Age date (MLE26020). A Bronze Age flint arrowhead (MLE6365) has been found 495m south-west of the site.

Roman

- 4.3 During the Roman period, Leicester had become an important settlement in the area and was later to become the regional capital (*Ratae Corieltavorum*). A network of roads connected settlements throughout the province, including Mancetter Road (MLE3019) which linked Leicester to Mancetter (Manduessedum). The present day Fenn Lanes follows this route which passes immediately south of the site.
- 4.4 In 1995 the Hinckley Fieldwork Group undertook a fieldwalking exercise (ELE1008) 978m east of the site. This recovered a collection of domestic pottery indicating the presence of a settlement (MLE3257). A metal detector survey (ELE10516) undertaken in 2007 recovered 40 fragments of metalwork and further pottery spread across a large area with several possible concentrations.
- 4.5 A metal detector survey (ELE20605) undertaken in the fields immediately

east of the site recorded 4 bow brooches, a cosmetic grinder, 6 coins and 2 steelyard weights suggesting the presence of a further Roman site. The same survey also recovered a single Roman brooch (MLE20606) 759m north-east of the site.

Early Medieval and Medieval

- 4.6 Fenny Drayton is recorded in Domesday (1086) as *Draiton*. This derives from “*draeg*” to haul an object around an obstruction in a river and “*tun*”-settlement. The site lies within the village hinterland and was likely agricultural in nature.
- 4.7 The Wars of the Roses were fought from 1455 to 1487 and comprised a series of civil wars fought between two rival cadet branches of the royal house of Plantagenet, Lancaster and York for control of the English throne. The wars extinguished the male lines of the two branches, leading to the Tudor family inheriting the Lancastrian claim to the throne. Following the war, the Houses of Lancaster and York were united, creating a new royal dynasty and thereby resolving their rival claims.
- 4.8 The Battle of Bosworth in 1485 resulted in the death of Richard III who was the last Plantagenet king, and the last English king to be killed in battle. This ushered in the Tudor dynasty which reigned for the next century.
- 4.9 The site lies within the registered battlefield area, and it is along Fenn Lanes that Henry Tudor is thought to have advanced to join battle.
- 4.10 A project was carried out between 2005 and 2012 to establish the true location of the battlefield (ELE8443) which comprised of a mixture of augur survey and metal detecting.
- 4.11 A further metal detector survey in 2017 recovered 7 more pieces of round shot ranging in diameter from 23mm to 95mm. The only other find thought to be contemporary with the battle was a fragment of a cast lead alloy object, possibly a badge or mount depicting a scaled or feathered creature. All the recovered shot appears to have been fired approximately east to west, fired by Richard III's army towards the forces of Henry Tudor. The royal artillery may have been positioned on the high ground to the east of the un-named stream that cuts through the centre of the battlefield.

5. Aims and Objectives of the project

- 5.1 The general aims of the project were to undertake the detailed monitoring of all development works which had the potential to impact archaeological remains and to examine by hand, record and interpret all archaeological deposits, features, structures, artefacts and ecofacts which would have

been impacted by the development, in order to facilitate the preservation by record of archaeological remains ahead of their physical loss. The watching brief also provided an opportunity to identify remains of greater than expected significance ahead of their destruction allowing for further appropriate mitigation measures to be agreed which may have included full excavation.

5.2 The objectives of the project were:

- To establish the presence or otherwise of archaeological features within the development site;
- To mitigate the impact of the development on any identified archaeological remains;
- To record stratigraphic information (as detailed in the WSI);
- To retrieve finds including artefacts and ecofacts from stratigraphic contexts (as detailed in the WSI);
- To produce a photographic archive detailing any archaeological remains encountered;
- To produce a fully illustrated report drawing together the results and conclusions of the programme; and
- To consider the evidence within local and regional contexts, where appropriate.

Specific Research Objectives

- 5.3 Analysis of the East Midlands Historic Environment Research Framework (EMHERF) identified a number of research themes that the project may contribute to depending on its results. The most significant research theme to which it may contribute is:

Strategy 7H, Investigate the Location and Character of Medieval Battlefields

- 5.4 *Medieval battlefield sites have long remained the preserve of the local historian more concerned and more familiar with documentary evidence than the landscape. Aside from castle sites that acted as foci for military actions, the region preserves a number of important battlefield sites that would repay further investigations. These include two key battlefields of the Wars of the Roses: a period which has been identified as a key focus of archaeological interest (in particular for evidence of the introduction of gunpowder weapons in England). The first is the pivotal Battle of Bosworth*

in Leicestershire, where Henry VII's defeat of Richard III in 1485 marks the beginning of the Tudor period. The second is Stoke Field in Nottinghamshire, marginally beyond this period, where in 1487 Henry VII's forces crushed a Yorkist rebellion. At both of these sites, the evidence for the locations of battlefields would benefit from careful reviews of documentary sources and of the topographical and archaeological evidence (primarily in the form of unstratified artefact scatters and mass graves). Direct archaeological investigations of battle archaeology through metal detecting, as demonstrated at Bosworth and Towton, should be undertaken. Prospecting for mass graves through geophysical survey and excavation should also be considered.

6. Methodology

- 6.1 The archaeological watching brief was undertaken on the 27th July 2023. It comprised of the monitoring of the strip for the junction of the new trackway and Fenn Lanes which measured approximately 11.5m x 6.5m with a visibility splay measuring 18m wide where it joins Fenn Lanes. The remaining trackway was constructed in a no dig method and was thus not monitored. The strip was monitored continuously by metal detector.
- 6.2 All work was carried out according to the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists (CIfA) standards and according to the agreed Written Scheme of Investigation.
- 6.3 A digital colour photographic record was maintained, some of which is reproduced in this report as plates 1-4, Appendix 1.

7. Results

- 7.1 A drainage ditch crossed the trackway entrance, the base of the ditch was cleaned out and culverted to allow its backfill to carry the new road surface. The monitored area was stripped to a depth of approximately 0.35m. The stratigraphy comprised of (101) a dark brown friable sandy silt topsoil up to 0.26m thick which overlay (102) a light brown friable sandy silt subsoil which was greater than 0.09m thick (extent unseen). Where the ditch was cleaned out to lay the new pipe for the culvert a natural stiff grey clay with red mottling (103) was identified. It was present at a depth of 0.65m and was greater than 0.07m thick. As the edges of the ditch were not exposed the stratigraphic relationship with the overlying deposits was not revealed.
- 7.2 The area was continuously scanned by metal detector; this identified a number of modern items but no archaeological material. No archaeological features were present within the monitored area.

8. Discussion and Conclusions

- 8.1 The archaeological monitoring revealed a simple stratigraphy of topsoil over subsoil which presumably sealed the natural clay (although this relationship was not confirmed).
- 8.2 The project objectives were met in full with a high confidence rating for the results. The entire stripped area was monitored, scanned by metal detector, and all of the spoil metal detected for the recovery of stray material. Only modern artefacts were recovered.

9. Archive

- 9.1 Due to the negative results of the investigation the project will be archived via the OASIS system. The report will also be deposited with the Leicestershire Historic Environment Record.

10. Acknowledgements

- 10.1 Groundworks Archaeology would like to thank Mr. Chris Hunt for commissioning this investigation. We would also like to thank the Leicestershire Historic Environment Record and Mr William Kelly for their kind assistance.

11. Bibliography

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Appendix 1: Plates



Plate 1: Monitored area for road access looking east.



Plate 2: Road access prior to stripping looking south-east.

Appendix 1: Plates



Plate 3: Road access fully stripped looking south-east.



Plate 4: Road access fully stripped looking north.

OASIS Summary for groundwo2-517851

OASIS ID (UID)	groundwo2-517851
Project Name	Watching Brief at Willow Farm, Fenn Lanes, Fenny Drayton
Sitename	Willow Farm, Fenn Lanes, Fenny Drayton
Sitecode	WFD23
Project Identifier(s)	
Activity type	Watching Brief
Planning Id	21/00586/FUL
Reason For Investigation	Planning: Post determination
Organisation Responsible for work	Groundworks Archaeology
Project Dates	27-Jul-2023 - 27-Jul-2023
Location	Willow Farm, Fenn Lanes, Fenny Drayton NGR : SP 36939 97739 LL : 52.57621984596166, -1.456346793084029 12 Fig : 436939,297739
Administrative Areas	Country : England County : Leicestershire District : Hinckley and Bosworth Parish : Witherley
Project Methodology	The archaeological watching brief comprised of the monitoring of the strip for the junction of the new trackway at Fenn Lanes which measured approximately 11.5m x 6.5m with a visibility splay measuring 18m wide where it joins Fenn Lanes. The remaining trackway was constructed in a no dig method and was thus not monitored. The strip was monitored continuously by metal detector. All work was carried out according to the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists (CIfA) standards and according to the agreed Written Scheme of Investigation. A digital colour photographic record was maintained, some of which is reproduced in the report.
Project Results	A drainage ditch crossed the trackway entrance, the base of the ditch was cleaned out and culverted to allow its backfill to carry the new road surface. The monitored area was stripped to a depth of approximately 0.35m. The stratigraphy comprised of (101) a dark brown friable sandy silt topsoil up to 0.26m thick which overlay (102) a light brown friable sandy silt subsoil which was greater than 0.09m thick (extent unseen). Where the ditch was cleaned out to lay the new pipe a natural stiff grey clay with red mottling (103) was identified. It was present at a depth of 0.65m and was greater than 0.07m thick. As the edges of the ditch were not exposed the stratigraphic relationship with the overlying deposits was not revealed. The area was continuously scanned by metal detector; this identified a number of modern items but no archaeological material. No archaeological features were present within the monitored area. The project objectives were met in full with a high confidence rating for the results.
Keywords	
Funder	Private individual
HER	Leicestershire HER - unRev - STANDARD
Person Responsible for work	James Roberts

HER Identifiers	
Archives	

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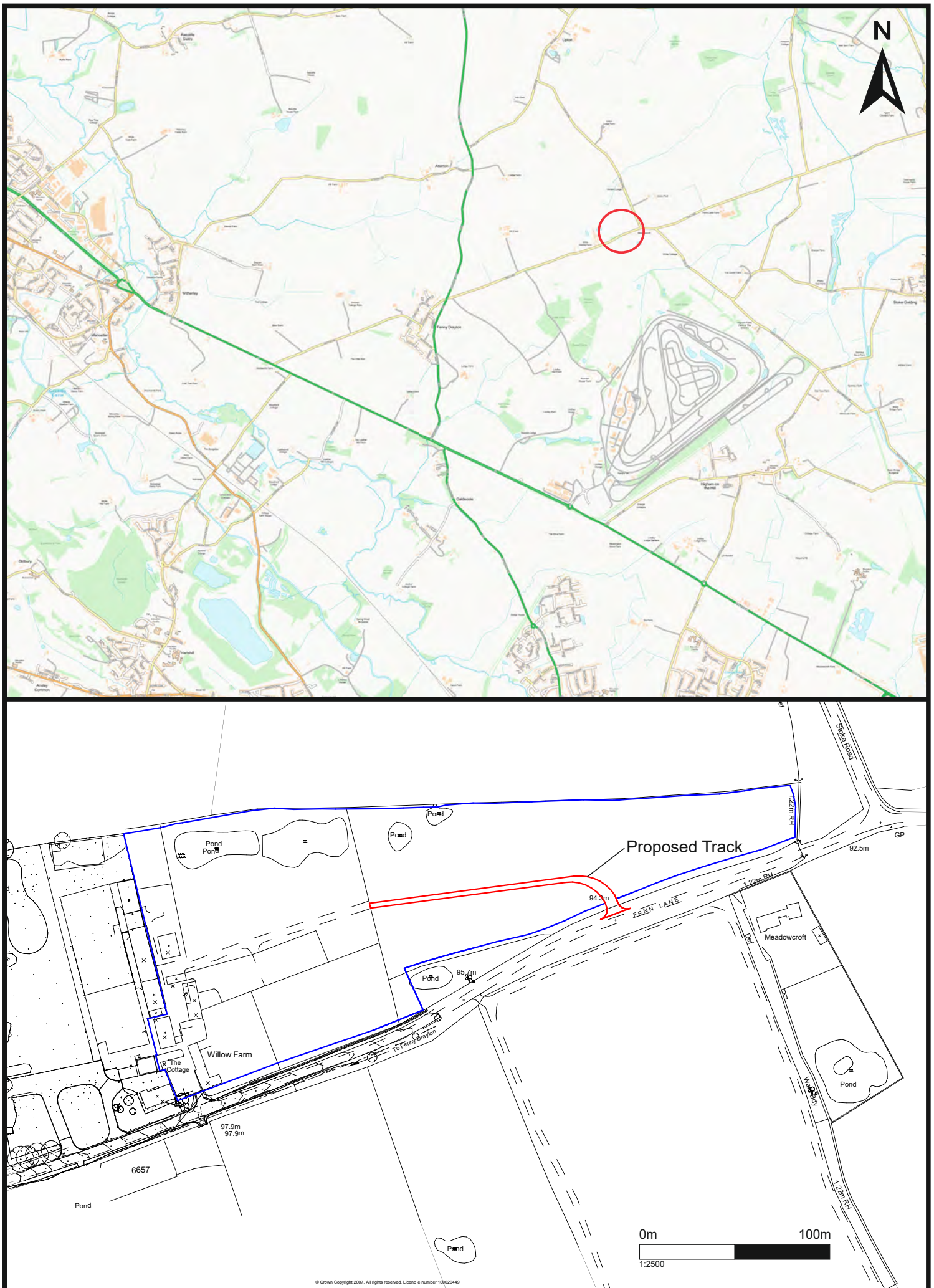
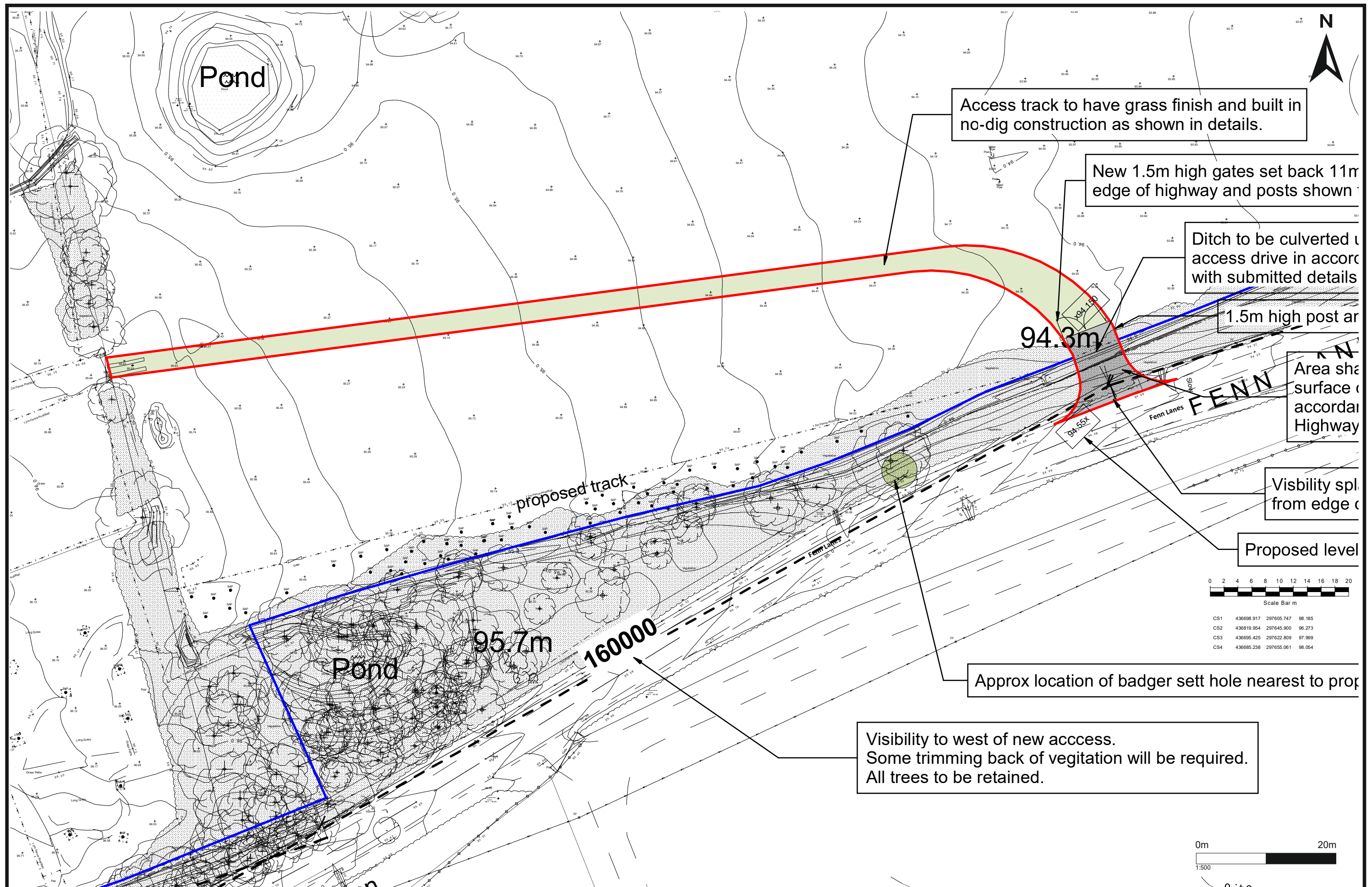


Figure 1: Site Location



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Figure 2: Overall Site Plan

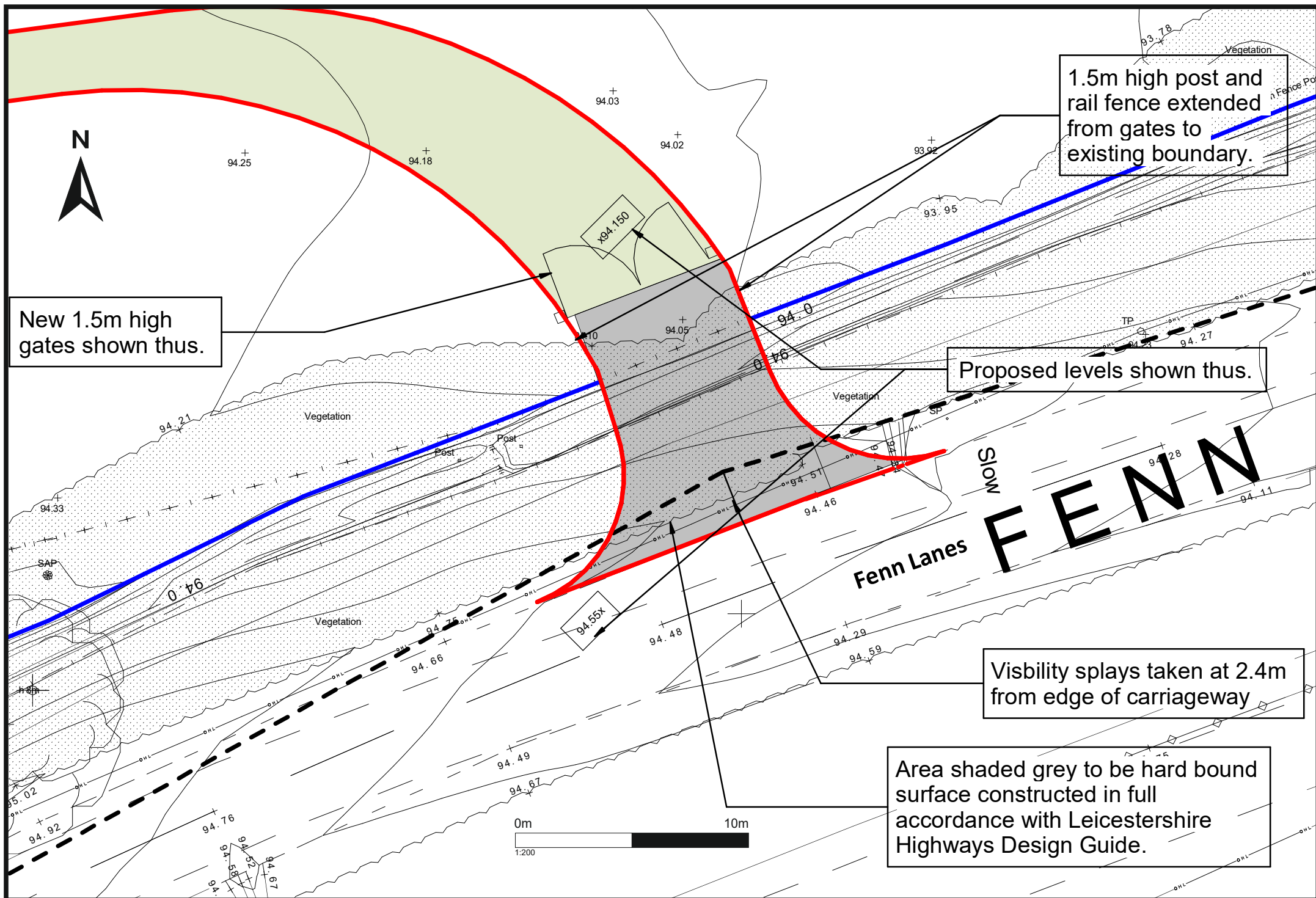


Figure 3: Detailed Site Plan of Monitored Area