

East West Rail Phase 2

Development Stage 2B2: B2-P-17 Passing Place at Land North of Verney Road, Buckinghamshire

An Archaeological Watching Brief Report

January 2021

Rev P01

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Figure 1: Location Plan

Figure 2: Detailed Location Plan

Executive Summary

In December 2020, East West Rail Alliance (EWR) undertook a watching brief during the construction of a passing place, known as B2-P-17, at Verney Junction, Buckinghamshire (National Grid Reference (NGR): SP 74508 27549). These works were part of the East West Rail Phase 2 Project.

The archaeological watching brief recorded a made ground deposit comprising a mid-greenish grey clay containing the remains of degraded metal and wood (102) overlying the subsoil. This deposit was interpreted as the likely remains of debris from the construction of the railway used for levelling the area in the post-medieval or modern period. No further archaeological features, deposits or finds were recorded. Therefore, the investigations have shown there are no archaeological remains associated with medieval, Romano-British, or earlier, activity within the Site. Further archaeological works at the Site have limited potential to contribute to the general and specific aims detailed in Section 5.

Copies of the watching brief report will be issued by EWR for onward transmission to the archaeology advisor to the Local Planning Authority. A digital copy of the report will also be submitted to the Historic Environment Record (HER). In consultation with relevant stakeholders, including Buckinghamshire Council and the Buckinghamshire County Museum, it was agreed that no museum deposition was warranted in the case of a negative site and that dissemination of the results would be via the Archaeology Data Service (ADS). A summary of the findings and the paper and digital archive will therefore be securely copied via the ADS under OASIS ID: aocarcha1-413238.

1. Introduction

This report documents the results of an archaeological watching brief during construction of a passing place, known as B2-P-17, at Verney Junction, Buckinghamshire (NGR: SP 74508 27549; Figure 1). The Site lies within the local authority administrative area of Buckinghamshire Council (Aylesbury Vale District).

All works were undertaken by a team of professional archaeologists and were recorded using current Chartered Institute for Archaeologists (CIfA) standards. The fieldwork took place in December 2020.

2. Planning Background

The local planning authority is Buckinghamshire Council (Aylesbury Vale District). Archaeological advice to the council is provided by Phil Markham (Senior Archaeology Officer) and Lucy Lawrence (Archaeology Officer).

The Site was highlighted within the Heritage Delivery Strategy as requiring a WSI for archaeological works¹. The Site is required for a passing place. The construction of the passing place involved excavations to remove the topsoil and subsoil to the east of Verney Junction at Verney Road to a maximum depth of 0.65m prior to the area being covered with stone and tarmac. The extent of the intrusive works thus means that archaeological mitigation within the Site was required. A WSI² was prepared covering the methodology required to undertake an archaeological watching brief.

All works were carried out in accordance with the WSI and current best archaeological practice and local and national standards and guidelines³.

3. Site Location, Geology and Topography

The Site comprises a small parcel of land of approximately 0.02 ha located on a road junction in the east of Verney Junction at Verney Road (Figure 1). The Site is currently in use as a road with associated landscaping. The Site lies within the local authority administrative area of Buckinghamshire Council (Aylesbury Vale Area). Topographically, the Site is located in flat rural landscape at an elevation of approximately 88m above Ordnance Datum (aOD).

The underlying bedrock geology throughout the Site consists of the Stewartby Member– Mudstone; a sedimentary bedrock formed approximately 164 to 166 million years ago in the Jurassic Period. This is overlain by Mid Pleistocene glaciofluvial deposits. Superficial deposits of Alluvium - Clay, Silt, Sand and Gravel are present within the Site and are representative of an environment previously dominated by rivers⁴.

¹ EWR Alliance, 2019. *Network Rail (East West Rail Bicester to Bedford Improvements) Order Heritage Delivery Strategy*. Unpublished Report

² EWR Alliance, 2020. *EW2 Condition 9(b) WSI - 2B2: B2-P-17 Passing Place at Verney Junction, Buckinghamshire*

³ Historic England, 2015; Campbell, G., Moffett, L., and Straker, S., 2011; CIfA 2019; CIfA 2020a; Museum of London, 1994; MHCLG, 2019; RESCUE & ICON, 2001; United Kingdom Institute for Conservation, 1983. United Kingdom Institute for Conservation, 1990

⁴ British Geological Survey Website, 2021.

4. Archaeological and Historical Background

Prehistoric (500,000BC – AD43)

Within the wider landscape in Buckinghamshire the majority of Upper Palaeolithic and Mesolithic sites are found to the south of the Chilterns. North of the Chilterns, most evidence has been recovered from Milton Keynes, at sites such as Caldecotte Lake (c.16km north-east of the Site), due to the intensive archaeological investigation it has undergone in more recent years as a result of development.

Little evidence of Neolithic activity can be found within the wider environs surrounding the Site, and no evidence is present directly within the Site.

There is no evidence of Bronze Age activity in the proximity of the Site.

The Buckinghamshire landscape had been extensively cleared of woodland by the middle/late Iron Age as evidenced from sites across the county, with environmental data indicating a rise in open grassland environments⁵. Evidence for land division during this period has been clearly identified through excavations in the Milton Keynes and Aylesbury areas, although the intensity of evidence in these areas is likely biased due to the level of development here. Where recorded, the divisions appear to represent stock enclosures and droveways, and taken together with large assemblages of cattle bones, are suggestive of a strong pastoral element to the economy.

There are no recorded, known or identified Iron Age sites within the Site or in the surrounding area suggesting a Low potential for Iron Age assets within the Site.

Romano-British (AD43 – AD410)

There is sufficient evidence within Buckinghamshire to indicate a general continuity from the late Iron Age period, although with some relocation to the new road network. Although this is broadly the case, there are exceptions in Bicester, 16.8km to the south-west of the Site, for example Slade Farm, where occupation appears to have ceased at the time of the Roman occupation.

Magiovinium is the only Roman town known within Buckinghamshire located c.14km to the east of the Site. There are other moderately large settlements, including that at Fleet Marston c. 12km to the south-east of the Site. The rural pattern of settlement, of dispersed villas and farmsteads, has been intensively studied around Milton Keynes and suggests a variety of dwellings from small 'native' type farmsteads and small farms with Roman-style buildings, to more substantial villas.

The proposed alignment of the Roman Road linking Fleet Marston and Thornborough (ANA 0203400000) is located c. 10m east of the Site. This road is significant as the road links the main Roman town for Fleet Marston to the Romano-British religious site in the county.

⁵ EWR Alliance, 2018. *Network Rail (East West Rail Bicester to Bedford Improvements) Environmental Statement*. Unpublished Report

Early Medieval (AD410 – AD1066)

The Site lies to the west of Winslow which was first recorded in a royal charter of 792–793 in which it was granted by Offa of Mercia to St Albans Abbey as *Wineshauue*⁶ which means *Wine's Burial Mound*⁷.

No heritage assets dating from the early medieval period have been identified within the Site or surrounding area.

Late Medieval (AD1066 – AD1540)

The Domesday Book⁸ of 1086 records Winslow it as *Weneslai*. There are no recorded heritage assets of late medieval date present within the Site.

The Site is located close to known areas of ridge and furrow surviving in 1995-1999 with areas located c.200m to the north of the Site. Remains of ridge and furrow were recorded during trial trenching at Site Compound B2, 600m to the west of the Site.

There are no known heritage assets of late medieval date present within the Site.

Post-medieval (AD1540 – c.1750) and Industrial Period (c.1750 – 1901)

At the start of the post-medieval period the area surrounding the Site was still predominantly rural and the pattern of open-field cultivation prevailed.

Addington Manor Park (ANA 0281400000) dates to the post-medieval period and is located c.100m to the north-east of the Site. A kitchen garden (MBC21819) comprising gardens, a lawn, and trees is located c.1km to the west of the Site which has seen continued use and alterations into the modern period.

The line of the Buckinghamshire Railway from Oxford to Bletchley (MBC14931) is a non-designated heritage asset running along the northern boundary of the Site. The railway line was opened in 1850. A single line track which opened in 1868, as part of the Aylesbury and Buckingham Railway, runs along the south-western boundary of the Site. A 19th-20th century railway station, Verney Station (MBC14925) opened in 1868 and is located c.500m to the west of the southern extent of the Site with a contemporary junction (MBC14944) located approximately 770m west of the Site. The station closed in 1968.

Modern Period (Post-1901)

Maps show that there was very little change in the surrounding area from the post-medieval to the modern period, with the landscape staying rural and agricultural in nature though with a small concentration of residential and commercial properties being constructed in the vicinity of Verney Junction to the west of the Site.

There are no recorded modern heritage assets within the Site or in the surrounding area.

⁶ Electronic Sawyer Number 136a and 138

⁷ Ekwall, E 1977. *The Concise Oxford Dictionary of English Place Names*. Oxford

⁸ Domesday Book Online, 2021

Historic Landscape Character

The present character of the Site can be defined as probable pre-18th century irregular type enclosures, interrupted by the later 19th century railway line to the north and south-west. Surrounding fields are characterised in a similar way.

5. Aims of the Investigation

The archaeological watching brief aimed to:

- Establish the presence/absence of archaeological remains within the Site.
- Determine the extent, condition, nature, character, quality and date of any archaeological remains encountered.
- Record and sample excavate any archaeological remains encountered.
- Assess the eco-factual and environmental potential of any archaeological features and deposits.
- Enable the Archaeological Officer for Buckinghamshire Council to make an informed decision on any requirement for mitigation.
- Make available to interested parties the results of the investigation.

The specific aims of the investigation were defined as:

- To determine the presence, nature and extent of any Romano-British settlement, agricultural or infrastructure remains and establish how this may relate to the Roman road linking Fleet Marston and Thornborough.
- To determine the presence, nature and extent of any medieval and post-medieval agricultural activity, and to establish the nature and date of this evidence.

6. Methodology

The Heritage Delivery Strategy⁹ and WSI¹⁰ defined the site procedures for archaeological watching briefs, in agreement with the Archaeology Officer at Buckinghamshire Council. The document detailed how the watching brief would be undertaken. All work was carried out in accordance with local and national guidelines¹¹.

The archaeological watching brief involved the monitoring of topsoil and subsoil stripping within the site boundary. All excavation was carried out with an excavator fitted with a toothless ditching bucket.

A unique site code EWR20-B2P17 was assigned by AOC Archaeology.

⁹ EWR Alliance, 2019. *Network Rail (East West Rail Bicester to Bedford Improvements) Order Heritage Delivery Strategy*. Unpublished Report

¹⁰ EWR Alliance, 2020. *B2-P-17 Passing Place at Verney Junction, Buckinghamshire*

¹¹ CfA 2019, 2020a, 2020b

The watching brief was carried in December 2020 and was supervised by Ruth Duncan under the overall direction of Yvonne Roberson (Project Manager).

7. Results

Excavations took place over the verge on the north-western side of Verney Road, at a junction in the east of the village of Verney Junction (Figures 1 and 2; Plate 1). Excavations were undertaken between the 1st and 4th December 2020 and were carried out to a maximum depth of 0.65m below ground level (bgl).

The natural geology was encountered at a depth of approximately 87.40m aOD. This comprised a firm mid yellowish brown silty clay with frequent fragments of flint (104). Overlying the natural substratum was a 0.35m thick layer of subsoil of light greyish brown silty clay with inclusions of occasional gravels (103). The subsoil was overlain by a 0.15m thick layer of mid greenish grey clay containing the remains of degraded metal and wood (102); this layer is probably related with the construction of the railway and it was identified extending for 50m from the north-eastern end of the Site. The area was sealed by a 0.25m deep layer of topsoil comprising mid greyish brown silty clay with frequent rooting (101) (Plate 2).

No archaeological features or deposits were present within the stripped area and no finds were recovered.

Table of Stratigraphic Sequence

Context Number	Thickness	Height of Deposit	Interpretation
101	0.25m	88.00m aOD	Topsoil: Mid greyish brown silty clay with frequent rooting.
102	0.15m	87.75m aOD	Made ground: Mid greenish grey clay containing the remains of degraded metal and wood
103	0.35m	87.60m aOD	Subsoil: Light greyish brown silty clay. Inclusions of occasional gravels.
104	0.05m+	87.25m aOD	Natural Geology: Firm mid yellowish brown silty clay with frequent fragments of flint



Plate 1: Post-excitation view of passing place area, looking north-east



Plate 2: South facing representative section, looking north



8. Finds

There were no finds recovered from this watching brief.

9. Conclusions

The archaeological watching brief recorded a made ground deposit comprising a mid greenish grey clay containing the remains of degraded metal and wood (102) overlying the subsoil. This deposit was interpreted as the likely remains of debris from the construction of the railway used for levelling the area in the post-medieval or modern period. No further archaeological features, deposits or finds were identified. Therefore, the investigations have shown there was no medieval, Romano-British, or earlier, archaeological activity within the Site. Further archaeological works at the Site have limited potential to contribute to the general and specific aims detailed in Section 5.

10. Publication and Archive Deposition

The site archive comprises written and drawn records as well as digital photographs. In consultation with relevant stakeholders, including Buckinghamshire Council and the Buckinghamshire County Museum, it was agreed that no museum deposition was warranted in the case of a negative site and that dissemination of the results would be via the ADS. The paper and digital archive will therefore be securely copied via the ADS under OASIS ID: aocarcha1-413238 (Appendix B) as per Section 6.13 of the Heritage Delivery Strategy and in accordance with national standards and guidelines¹².

11. Bibliography

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¹² CfA 2020c

Electronic Sawyer Number 136a and 138

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Appendices



Appendix A. Context Register

Context	Description	Interp	Length	Width	Depth
101	Topsoil: Mid greyish brown silty clay with frequent rooting.	Topsoil	Across Site	Across Site	0.25m
102	Made ground: Mid greenish grey clay containing some remains of degraded metal and wood. Not present at SW end of the Site.	Layer	50m	2.50m	0.15m
103	Subsoil: Light greyish brown silty clay. Inclusions of occasional gravels.	Subsoil	Across Site	Across Site	0.35m
104	Natural Geology: Firm mid yellowish brown silty clay with frequent fragments of flint.	Natural geology	Across Site	Across Site	0.13m

Appendix B. Oasis Form

OASIS ID: aocarcha1-413238

Project details

Project name	EWR B2-P-17 Passing Place at Verney Junction, Buckinghamshire
Short description of the project	In December 2020, East West Rail Alliance (EWR) undertook a watching brief during the construction of a passing place, known as B2-P-17, at Verney Junction, Buckinghamshire. These works were part of the East West Rail Phase 2 Project. The archaeological watching brief recorded a made ground deposit comprising a mid greenish grey clay containing the remains of degraded metal and wood (102) overlying the subsoil. This deposit was interpreted as the likely remains of debris from the construction of the railway used for levelling the area in the post-medieval or modern period. No further archaeological features, deposits or finds. Therefore, the investigations have shown there are no archaeological remains associated with medieval, Romano-British, or earlier, activity within the Site. Further archaeological works at the Site have limited potential to contribute to the general and specific aims set out in the Written Scheme of Investigation.
Project dates	Start: 01-12-2020 End: 04-12-2020
Previous/future work	No / No
Type of project	Recording project
Site status	None
Current Land use	Transport and Utilities 1 - Highways and road transport
Monument type	NONE None
Significant Finds	NONE None
Investigation type	"Watching Brief"
Prompt	Planning condition

Project location

Country	England
Site location	BUCKINGHAMSHIRE AYLESBURY VALE WINSLOW B2-P-17 Passing Place at Verney Junction, Buckinghamshire
Study area	0.02 Hectares
Site coordinates	SP 74508 27549 51.941014650921 -0.915981490139 51 56 27 N 000 54 57 W Point

Project creators

Name of Organisation	AOC Archaeology
Project brief originator	Buckinghamshire County Council
Project design originator	EWR Alliance
Project director/manager	Yvonne Robertson
Project supervisor	Ruth Duncan

Project archives

Physical Archive Exists?	No
Digital Archive recipient	AOC Archaeology
Digital Media available	"Images raster / digital photography", "Text"
Paper Archive recipient	AOC Archaeology
Paper Media available	"Diary", "Photograph", "Report"

Project bibliography 1

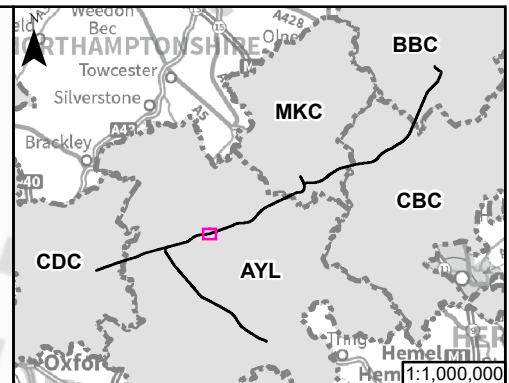
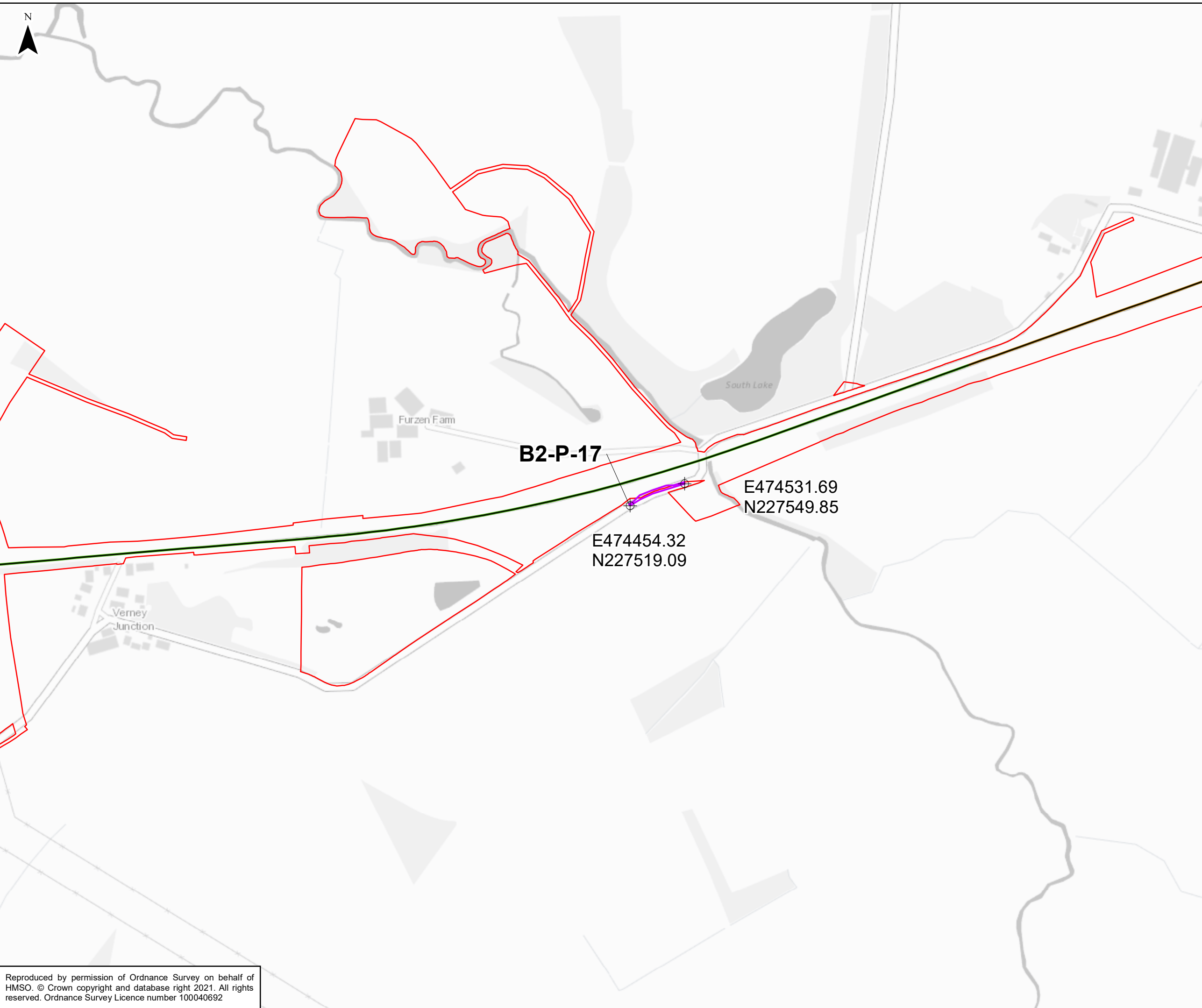
Publication type	Grey literature (unpublished document/manuscript)
Title	EWR B2-P-17 Passing Place at Verney Junction, Buckinghamshire
Author(s)/Editor(s)	Fernandez Gonzalez, C.
Date	2021
Issuer or publisher	AOC Archaeology Group
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Entered by Yvonne Robertson (yvonne.robertson@aacarchaeology.com)

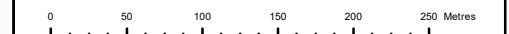
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Appendix C. Figures





- PROJECT EXTENTS
- DEVELOPMENT STAGE 2B2
- DEVELOPMENT STAGE 2B3
- SCHEME BOUNDARY
- - - LOCAL AUTHORITY BOUNDARY
- ⊕ OS COORDINATES
- SITE BOUNDARY



Rev	Date	Description of Revisions	Dsnd	Chkd	Appr
P01	18/03/21	1ST ISSUE SCHEME BOUNDARY 31/07/2018	LO	HW	
Status					Suitability
WIP - CHECK					S0



Project
THE NETWORK RAIL (EAST WEST RAIL BICESTER TO BEDFORD IMPROVEMENTS) ORDER

Drawing Title
FIGURE 1 LOCATION PLAN

Designed	Stephen Digney	Signed	<i>S. Digney</i>	Date	13/04/2021
Drawn	Stephen Digney	Signed	<i>S. Digney</i>	Date	13/04/2021
Checked	Huw Sherlock	Signed	<i>Huw Sherlock</i>	Date	13/04/2021
Approved		Signed		Date	13/04/2021

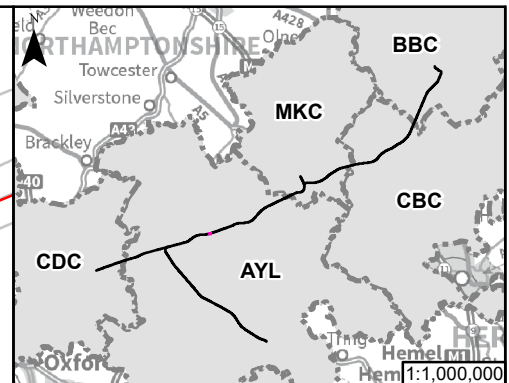
Scale(s)
1:5,000 ELR & Project Chainage
 N/A








Design Package Risk Classification
NORMAL Sheet
 1 of 1

Alternative Reference
Alternative_Ref Revision
P01

Drawing Number
133735_RW-EWR-XX-XX-DR-LH-010840

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-  PROJECT EXTENTS
-  DEVELOPMENT STAGE 2B2
-  SCHEME BOUNDARY
-  LOCAL AUTHORITY BOUNDARY
-  OS COORDINATES
-  SITE BOUNDARY
-  WORKS AREA





P01	18/03/21	1ST ISSUE SCHEME BOUNDARY 31/07/2018	LO	HW	
Rev	Date	Description of Revisions	Dsnd	Chkd	Appr
Status					Suitability
WIP - CHECK					S0



Project
THE NETWORK RAIL (EAST WEST RAIL BICESTER TO BEDFORD IMPROVEMENTS) ORDER

Drawing Title
**FIGURE 2
 DETAILED LOCATION PLAN**

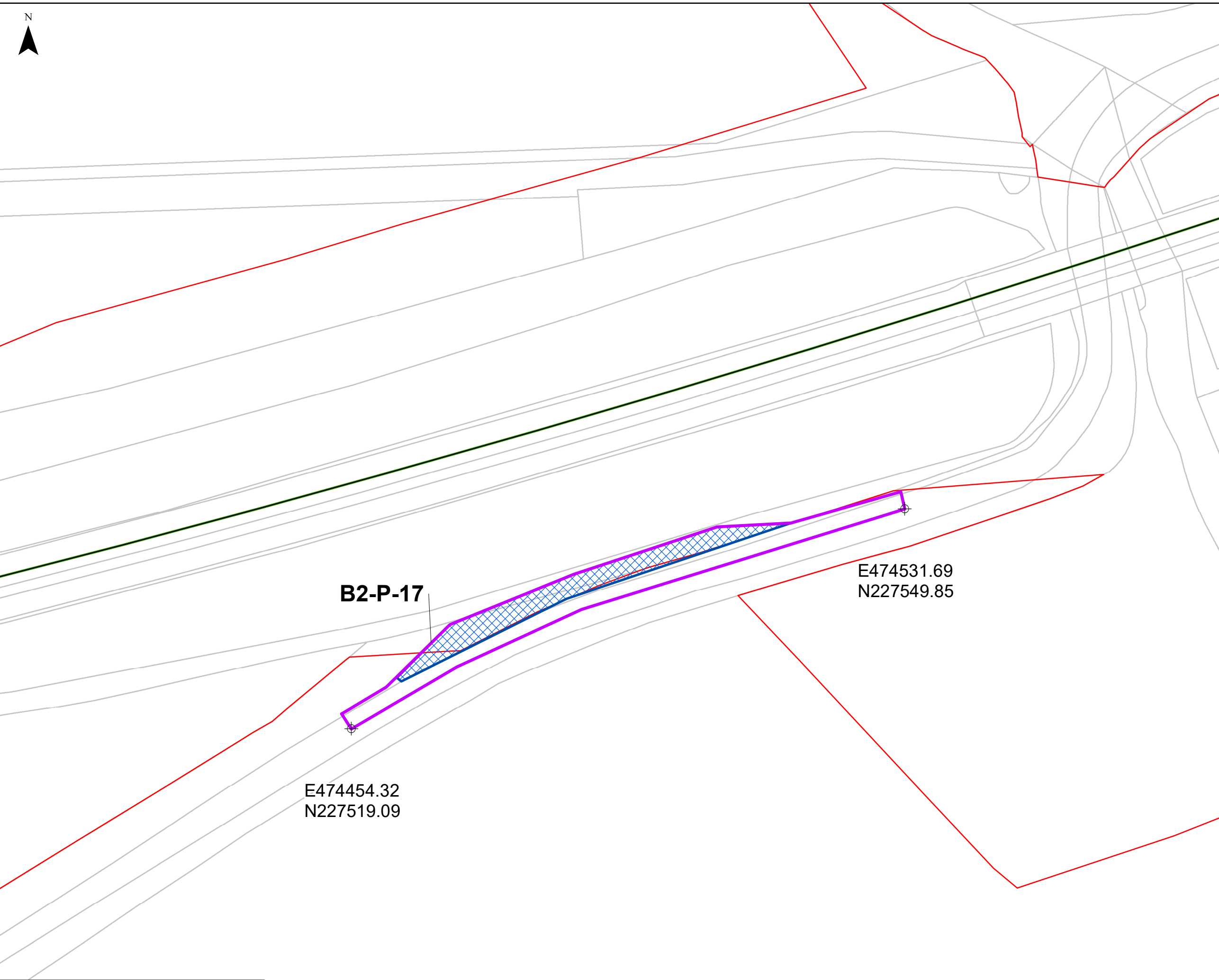
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Drawn	Stephen Digney	Signed		Date	13/04/2021
Checked	Huw Sherlock	Signed		Date	13/04/2021
Approved		Signed		Date	13/04/2021

Scale(s)
1:500 ELR & Project Chainage
 N/A

Design Package Risk Classification
NORMAL Sheet
 1 of 1

Alternative Reference
Alternative_Ref Revision
P01

Drawing Number
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