

Vantage Data Centres Cable Route Newport Wales

Archaeological Watching Brief



for:
Atkins Heritage

CA Project: CR0808
CA Report: CR0808_1

February 2023



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Fig 2 Site location plan, showing monitored groundworks (1:3,000)

Fig 3 Photographs

SUMMARY

Project name:	Vantage Data Centres Cable Route
Location:	Newport, Wales
NGR:	328473 184514
Type:	Watching brief
Date:	22 August – 14 November 2022
Planning reference:	Newport City Council ref: 21/0976
Location of Archive:	To be deposited with National Museum Wales and the Archaeology Data Service (ADS)

Between August to November 2022, Cotswold Archaeology carried out an archaeological watching brief during groundworks associated with the excavation of a new cable route at Vantage Data Centres, Imperial Park, Newport, Wales

No features or deposits of archaeological interest were observed, and no artefactual material was recovered.

Rhwng mis Awst a mis Tachwedd 2022, cynhaliodd Cotswold Archaeology orchwyl gwylio archaeolegol yn ystod gwaith tir sy'n gysylltiedig â chloddio llwybr ceblau newydd yn Vantage Data Centers, Imperial Park, Casnewydd, Cymru.

Ni welwyd unrhyw nodweddion na darnau o ddiddordeb archaeolegol ac ni ddaethpwyd o hyd i unrhyw arteffactau.

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1. From August to November 2022, Cotswold Archaeology (CA) carried out an archaeological watching brief at Vantage Data Centres, Imperial Park, Newport, Wales (centred at NGR: 328473 184514; Fig. 1). This watching brief was undertaken for Atkins Heritage.
- 1.2. Newport City Council (NCC) has granted planning permission for a buried cable (NCC planning ref: 21/0976). Condition 5.11 of this planning permission required the implementation of a programme of archaeological work in accordance with an approved Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI).
- 1.3. The scope of this watching brief was defined by Judith Doyle, Glamorgan Gwent Archaeological Trust (GGAT) Curatorial, the archaeological advisor to NCC. The watching brief was carried out in accordance with a *Written Scheme of Investigation* (WSI) prepared by CA (2021) and approved by GGAT Curatorial.
- 1.4. The watching brief was also undertaken in line with *Standard and guidance for an archaeological watching brief* (ClfA 2014; updated October 2020).

The site

- 1.5. The site comprises a 1km route and lies to the south of the A48, on the western outskirts of Newport. The site currently comprises hard-standing surfaces and the road of South Lake Drive and follows the route of an existing buried cable previously installed by Western Power Distribution. The site lies at approximately 15m AOD with the ground level dropping away to the south to 6m AOD.
- 1.6. The underlying bedrock geology of the site is mapped as mudstone of the Mercia Group, which formed during the Triassic Period (BGS 2022). This is overlain in the majority of the site by sand and gravel River Terrace Deposits, and by clay and silt Tidal Flat Deposits in the southern part of the site: both superficial deposits were formed during the Quaternary period (ibid.). The natural geological substrate identified during the course of the watching brief consisted of orange-brown silty sand with rounded pebbles and cobbles.

2. ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND

- 2.1. The site has previously been the subject of an Archaeological Desk-Based Assessment (DBA; CA 2018). What follows is a summary of the results of this report.

Prehistoric

- 2.2. There is very little information on the prehistoric period in the vicinity of the site. Small-scale archaeological works indicate the existence of glacially deposited raised areas of ground on the valley floors and the site itself lies on the edge of the higher ground overlooking the adjacent Gwent Levels, which would have been coastal and/or saltmarsh throughout the prehistory to the medieval periods (CA 2018). This higher ground would have been an attractive location for settlement or temporary sites seeking to exploit the coastal and marshland resources.
- 2.3. A Scheduled Neolithic long barrow, known as *Gwern-y-Cleppa* (Cadw List Entry No.: MM022), is located c. 1km to the north-west of the site in Cleppa Park (CA 2018).
- 2.4. Bronze Age artefacts are recorded in the vicinity of the site, including a single late Bronze Age looped and socketed bronze axe, found c. 0.38km to the north-east of the site, and a flint scatter found at Graig y Season, c. 0.69km to the north-west of the site (CA 2018).

Roman

- 2.5. Information on the Roman occupation and use of the landscape in the vicinity of the site is scarce (CA 2018). Fragments of Roman brick and *tegula* were excavated from Orangery Garden, Tredegar House, c. 0.49km to the north of the site, which could point out the location of a possible rural settlement (ibid.).
- 2.6. A small segment of a Roman road was identified c. 0.21 km to the west of the site (CA 2018). This section of road has been interpreted as part of a lesser route running from the main Caerleon-Cardiff road towards a settlement site excavated at Great Pencarn Farm c. 1km to the south-west of the site: this site showed evidence of multiple phases of activity, including road and building construction, as well as agricultural activities (ibid.).

Medieval to modern

- 2.7. The nearby Gwent Levels underwent extensive reclamation and drainage during the medieval period with increasing enclosure of fields continuing up into the post-

medieval period and beyond (CA 2018). It is during this period that a system of drainage ditches and flood defences were established, and which have mostly remained intact up until the modern era. As the site is on higher ground above the intertidal zone it is probable that these systems of ditches and rhynes did not extend as far as the current site; However, settlement would likely have been concentrated on this higher ground at the edge of the levels (ibid.).

- 2.8. It is possible that there was once a deserted medieval settlement c. 0.39km to the west of the site named *Tre-deg-erw*, although whether the 15th-century Tredegar House and estate gained their name from this settlement or vice-versa is unclear. It is possible that it never existed (CA 2018).
- 2.9. The area was certainly well settled and farmed during the medieval period and there is record of extant 14th-century dwellings in the region which survived up until at least the 17th century. However, there is nothing to indicate that the land use on the site was anything other than farmland during this period (CA 2018).
- 2.10. The primary feature of the landscape surrounding the site during the post-medieval period would have been Tredegar House and its surrounding parkland and agricultural landscape (CA 2018). No major developments occurred within the area and there are no records for the post-medieval period within the site: it is likely that it remained agricultural land on the edge of the Gwent Levels (ibid.)
- 2.11. The site continued in use as farmland up until the construction of the Imperial Park industrial estate in 1997. As part of the construction a series of Archaeological evaluations and watching briefs were carried out by GGAT. Besides the archaeological remains mentioned above, no other historic assets were revealed during these works (CA 2018).

3. AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

- 3.1. The general objectives of the watching brief were:
- to monitor the development groundworks, and to identify, investigate and record any significant buried archaeological deposits/features thus revealed;
 - at the conclusion of the project, to produce an integrated project archive and a report setting out the watching brief results and the archaeological conclusions that can be drawn from the recorded data.

4. METHODOLOGY

- 4.1. The watching brief comprised the archaeological observation of all intrusive groundworks associated with the proposed development. These works comprised the machine excavation of a 1km long service trench for data cables (Trenches 1 and 2; Fig. 2).
- 4.2. Records were maintained in accordance with *CA Technical Manual 1: Fieldwork Recording Manual*.
- 4.3. Deposits were assessed for their palaeoenvironmental potential in accordance with *CA Technical Manual 2: The Taking and Processing of Environmental and Other Samples from Archaeological Sites*, but no deposits were identified that required sampling.
- 4.4. CA will make arrangements with the Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Wales (RCAHMW) for the deposition of the project archive. A digital archive will also be prepared and deposited with the Archaeology Data Service (ADS). The archives (museum and digital) will be prepared and deposited in accordance with *Standard and guidance for the creation, compilation, transfer and deposition of archaeological archives* (ClfA 2014; updated October 2020).
- 4.5. A summary of information for the project, as set out in Appendix B, will be entered onto the OASIS online database of archaeological projects in Britain and/or for submission to the GGAT Historic Environment Record (HER).

5. RESULTS

- 5.1. The natural substrate was identified throughout the monitored groundworks comprised of orange-brown silty sand with rounded pebbles and cobbles and was revealed at depths of between 0.5m and 0.8m below present ground level (bpgl).
- 5.2. In Trench 1, the natural substrate (102) was overlain by a layer of rubble hardcore, 101, measuring 0.65m in thickness, which was sealed by 0.15m of modern tarmac road surfacing 100.
- 5.3. In Trench 2, the natural substrate (202) was truncated by modern service cut 203, which measured 1.8m in depth and was filled by mixed sand, gravel and rubble fill, 201. This fill was sealed by 0.5m of modern bedding and surfacing layer 200.

-
- 5.4. No features or deposits of archaeological interest were observed and no artefactual material was recovered.

6. DISCUSSION

- 6.1. Despite the archaeological potential of the site (see *Archaeological Background*, above), the watching brief identified no archaeological remains within the area of observed groundworks. This likely indicates that modern disturbance, in the form of road construction and service installation, have removed any potential archaeological remains if they had been present.

7. CA PROJECT TEAM

- 7.1. Fieldwork was undertaken by Noel Boothroyd, Peter Busby, and Kinga Werner. This report was written by Noel Boothroyd. The report illustrations were prepared by Krissy Moore. The project archive has been compiled by Noel Boothroyd and prepared for deposition by Hazel O'Neil. The project was managed for CA by Monica Fombellida.

8. REFERENCES

BGS (British Geological Survey) 2023 *BGS Geology Viewer*
<https://www.bgs.ac.uk/map-viewers/bgs-geology-viewer/> Accessed 1
February 2023

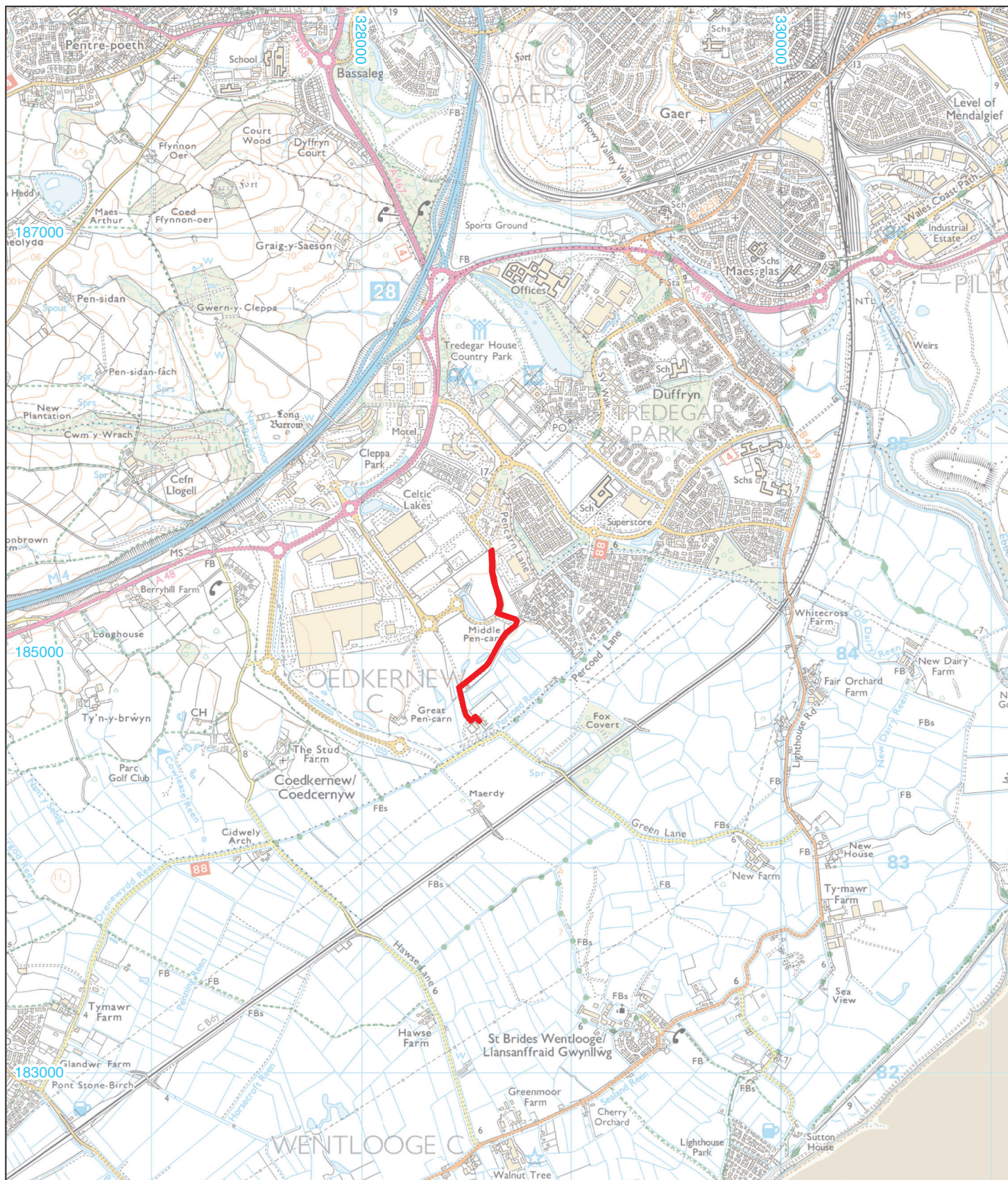
Cotswold Archaeology 2018 *Imperial Way, Duffryn, Newport: Desk Based Historic Assessment*, CA Report No.: **18120**

APPENDIX A: CONTEXT DESCRIPTIONS

Area	Context No.	Type	Fill of	Interpretation	Description	Length (m)	Width (m)	Depth/thickness (m)
1	100	Layer		Road surface	Tarmac	>1	>1.5m	0.15m
1	101	Layer		Hardcore	Concrete rubble	>1	>1.5m	0.65m
1	102	Layer		Natural substrate	Mid orange-brown silty sand with pebbles and cobbles	>1	>1.5m	n/a
2	200	Layer		Track surface	Tarmac and bedding	>1	>2.00m	0.5m
2	201	Fill	203	Sewer trench backfill	Sand and gravel with rubble.	>1	>2.00m	>1.8m
2	202	Layer		Natural substrate	Mid orange-brown silty sand with pebbles and cobbles	>1	>1	n/a
2	203	cut		Sewer trench cut	Construction cut for Sewer	n/a	n/a	n/a

APPENDIX B: OASIS/GGAT HER REPORT FORM

PROJECT DETAILS		
Project name	Vantage Data Centres Cable Route, Newport, Wales	
Short description (English)	Between August to November 2022, Cotswold Archaeology carried out an archaeological watching brief during groundworks associated with the excavation of a new cable route at Vantage Data Centres, Imperial Park, Newport, Wales No features or deposits of archaeological interest were observed, and no artefactual material was recovered.	
Short description (Welsh)	Rhwyng mis Awst a mis Tachwedd 2022, cynhaliodd Cotswold Archaeology orchwyl gwylio archaeolegol yn ystod gwaith tir sy'n gysylltiedig â chloddio llwybr ceblau newydd yn Vantage Data Centres, Imperial Park, Casnewydd, Cymru. Ni welwyd unrhyw nodweddion na darnau o ddiddordeb archaeolegol ac ni ddaethpwyd o hyd i unrhyw arteffactau.	
Project dates	22 August – 14 November 2022	
Project type	Archaeological Watching Brief	
Previous work	DBA (CA 2018)	
Future work	Unknown	
PROJECT LOCATION		
Site location	South Lake Drive, Newport, Wales	
Study area (m ² /ha)	1km	
Site co-ordinates	328473 184514	
PROJECT CREATORS		
Name of organisation	Cotswold Archaeology	
Project brief originator	N/A	
Project design (WSI) originator	Cotswold Archaeology	
Project Manager	Monica Fombellida	
Project Supervisor	Noel Boothroyd, Peter Busby, and Kinga Werner	
MONUMENT TYPE	None	
SIGNIFICANT FINDS	None	
PROJECT ARCHIVES	Intended final location of archive	Content
Paper	Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Wales (RCAHMW)	Trench sheets, etc.
Digital	RCAHMW/ADS	Digital photos, shapefiles, etc.
BIBLIOGRAPHY		
Cotswold Archaeology 2023 <i>Vantage Data Centres Cable Route, Newport, Wales: Archaeological Watching Brief</i> , CA typescript report CR0808_1		



 Site boundary

0 1km

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Ordnance Survey 0100031673



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PROJECT TITLE

Vantage Data Centres cable route,
Newport, Wales

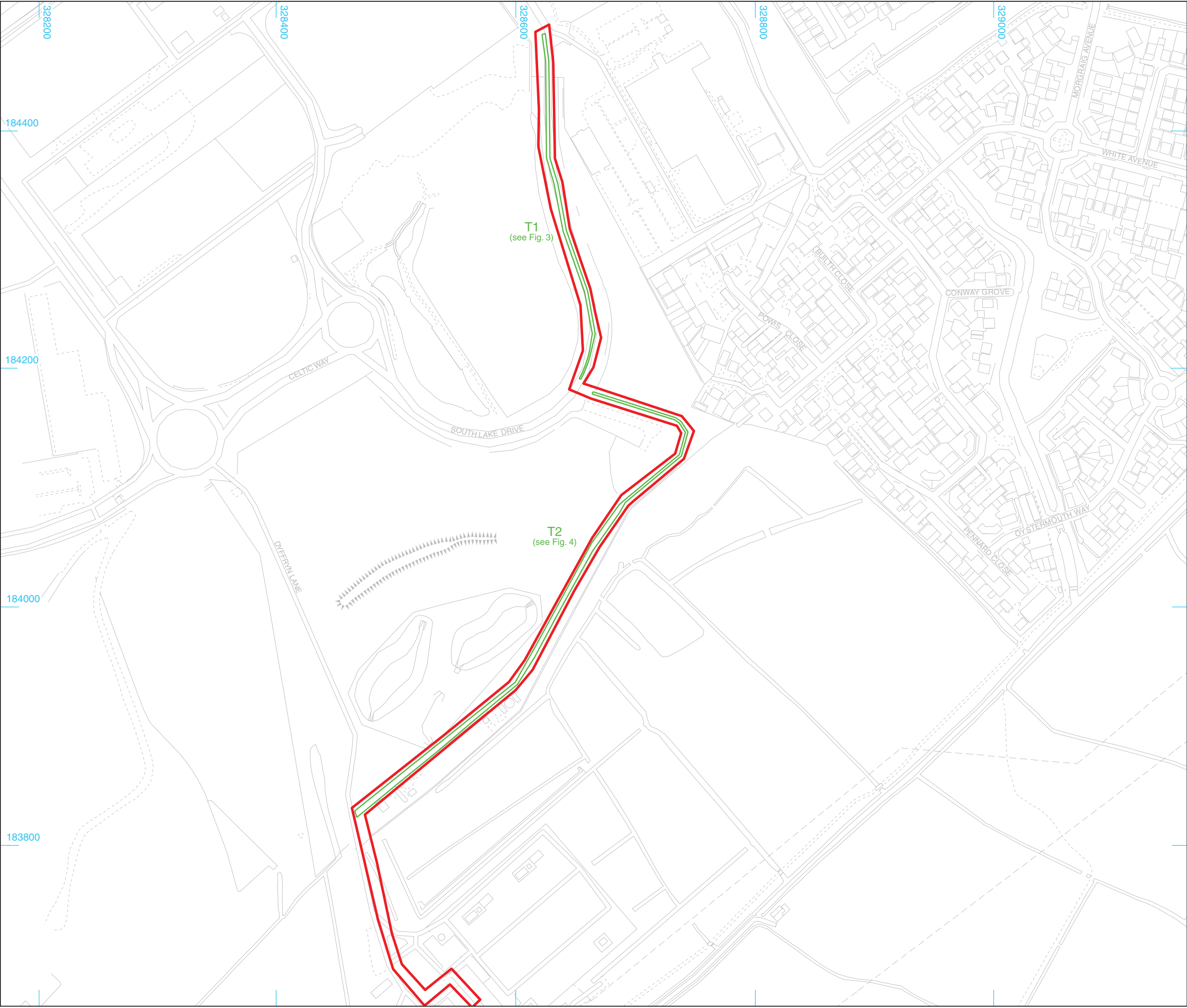
FIGURE TITLE



Site location plan

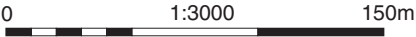
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CHECKED BY DJB
APPROVED BY MF
PROJECT NO. CR0808
DATE 31.01.2023
SCALE@A4 1:25,000

FIGURE NO.

1



-  Site boundary
-  Monitored trenches



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PROJECT TITLE
Vantage Data Centres cable route,
Newport, Wales

FIGURE TITLE
Site location plan showing monitored
groundworks

DRAWN BY KM	PROJECT NO. CR0808	FIGURE NO.
CHECKED BY DJB	DATE 31/01/2023	2
APPROVED BY MF	SCALE @A3 1:3000	



Trench 1, looking west, oblique view (0.5m scale)



Trench 2, looking south-east, oblique view (1m scale)

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