
Afon Adda Refurbishment

Bangor



Archaeological Assessment

Revised Report

GAT Project No. 1876

Report No. 628

April 2006

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Prepared for The Environment Agency

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AFON ADDA REFURBISHMENT

ARCHAEOLOGICAL ASSESSMENT FOR ENVIRONMENT AGENCY (G1876)

Introduction

Gwynedd Archaeological Trust have been asked by the Environment Agency to examine the route of the existing River Adda culvert through the city of Bangor, and to record and assess any archaeology associated with the route. This assessment is to be undertaken in advance of refurbishment of the culvert and associated limited new works.

Methodology

The line of the existing culvert was provided on a series of maps by the Environment Agency. This was plotted against the earlier river course, which was taken from a combination of Speeds map of 1610, John Woods map of 1834, the tithe map of c. 1845, the first edition OS 25" county series map of 1895 and subsequent editions of 1900 and 1923. The accompanying figures show the course of the present culvert, and the earlier river line as depicted on the OS map of 1900. No significant changes were noted on the other maps. This information was then compared against the Historic Environment Record and information from other secondary sources.

Historic Background

The city of Bangor lies within a narrow valley flanked by two high stone ridges on either side. Along the bottom of the valley and through the present city flows the Afon Adda (formerly known as Afon Tarannon), now largely culverted, though prior to the 19th century it was an open river.

The history of Bangor is largely associated with the development of the early monastic church and its enclosure, which was established on the south bank of the river in the 6th century AD. Very little is known of the nature or the development of the monastic church, but it became in the 12th century the Cathedral church of the Diocese of Bangor.

John Speeds map of 1610 illustrates the layout of Bangor, showing the cathedral located at the south end of a long enclosure. The enclosure, which is still preserved today by the present street pattern, may indicate the boundaries of the earliest monastic church of the 6th century. The market cross lay south of the Cathedral at the east end of Glanrafon, where the market was formerly held. Little development is shown in the valley south of this, and the principal archaeological potential lies where the river runs below the cathedral, and between it and the Bishops Palace, now the town hall. The present building that houses the town hall is 16th century in date, but excavations on the west side of the river, in the former palace gardens, revealed timbers of 12th century date, and stone buildings of a slightly later date. The timbers may have formed part of a bridge across the river. Silts in the vicinity of the former river preserved organic wood remains, including a 12th century wooden bowl. At the junction of Glanrafon with Sackville Road a dye works and tannery is said to have existed in the early modern period.

Once beyond the limits of the medieval town, the river may have formed the boundary of the lands of the medieval Dominican friary (founded c. 1250). The Friary appears to have been located on two sites, the first close to Beach Road, under the existing bus depot, and the second further inland, perhaps following a fire in 1295. The second site became the Bangor Free Grammar School c. 1557.

The coastal strip along Beach Road developed as a maritime and industrial centre, with numerous industries represented, including a slate mill, sailmakers, foundry and saw mill. Houses were built on the land between the shore and the nucleus of the town centre within the area known as Hiracl. At the other end of the city lay the railway station served by the Chester and Holyhead Railway, constructed in the mid-1840's the station of Bangor lay between two tunnels that ran through the high rock ridges either side the valley.

Archaeological potential

The potential for archaeological remains starts by Ffordd Aion, where there may have been a medieval stone bridge. The next major section of interest is at the junction of Sackville Road with Glanrafon. Remains of the dye works and tannery may be located here, and there is good potential for the survival of medieval archaeology alongside the Cathedral and the Bishops Palace, and further down the valley alongside the Friary. Bridges are shown on Speeds map of 1610, and there may be waterlogged remains in the organic silts of the former river bed. Closer to the shore the 19th century development is of interest, and there is potential for locating the former shore line and identifying the land fill used to extend the shoreline.

Route description

In the description below MH refers to the man-holes along the route as shown on the maps accompanying the report.

MH 1-5

The culvert runs along Caernarfon Road. The earlier open course of the river formerly ran further west of the culvert up to MH 5, where the culvert rejoins the original line of the river. This section was culverted perhaps c. 1929.

Archaeology

None known.

Recommendations

None

MH 5-11

The culvert follows the former open river shown on the OS 1889 map west of Caernarfon road to MH 8, when the culvert diverts to the west. At 10A it comes back on line. There is a proposed diversion between MH 7 and 9 and between MH10 and 11 to the west of the existing culvert. This does not appear to impact on potential archaeology.

Archaeology

None known. An early 20th century description says 'above Bryn Llwyd there was a waterfall from the fields above and here it was tanked for the laundry across the road'.

Recommendations

None.

MH 11-16

The culvert follows the former open river, though at MH13 the river kinked to the west, whereas the culvert follows a straight line. In 1900 this area was open fields, though at MH15 the river joined the west (rear) boundary of the terraced houses fronting Caernarfon Road. At MH16 the river ran behind Capel Berea (Calvanistic Methodist), now demolished. To the west lay the hospital of St Davids, built in the early 20th century, and also now demolished.

Archaeology

None known.

Recommendations

None.

MH16-26

The present culvert runs in a straight line west of the former line of the river, which had several minor curves and bends. Uphill and west of MH17 was the Deansfield Slate Works. The river crosses Aion Road then is shown on the 1923 OS map as running in a straight open culvert, which the modern culvert follows, behind St David's church and over Penchwintan Road, then under the Station buildings and railway, where the map evidence suggests the present culvert follows the line of an earlier open culvert. In the vicinity of Aion Road lay a stone bridge across the river known as Pont-faen, referred to in medieval times (see Roberts, n.d.). The culvert then runs past the Railway Hotel, and behind the British Hotel and under Farrar Road. Earlier maps show several different culvert routes going round the Railway Hotel, but the present culvert lies under the building. There is a proposed by-pass between MH 24B and MH25 north of the hotel, which may cross the line of the earlier culverts shown on the OS map. Once past the Railway Hotel the river formerly emerged into the open, and was not culverted underground until the 1960's. The present culvert follows the line of the river until just after it crosses Farrar Road.

Archaeology

Medieval stone bridge at Aion Road.

Recommendations

Watching brief in vicinity of Aion Road.

MH26-27

After crossing Farrar Road the river ran through relatively open fields through a series of bends until it reached Glanrafon. The present culvert runs in a straight line east of the river, up to, and then along, Sackville Road, that was constructed c. 1900. For a few years, the river lay partly open on the east side of Sackville road, though it was culverted by 1923 (Roberts n.d.). This area was known for early industrial development in the 17th and 18th centuries, and was occupied by a dye works and a tannery.

Archaeology

Dye works and tannery, possibly on the site of the present hotel.

Recommendations

Watching brief.

MH27-31

The present culvert across the carpark at Glanrafon is on a new line, the earlier one, until the 1990's, having a slight bend in the centre. The early line of the river then ran between the Cathedral and the Bishop's Palace (Town Hall), though part of this length had been culverted through the Deanery garden by the early 19th century. It then ran between the Bishop's Palace and the Canonry, and across Ffordd Gwynedd, a new road built in the 20th century. Between Ffordd Gwynedd and Garth Road was a slight bend in the river, straightened out by the present culvert.

Archaeology

This section runs through a known area of medieval settlement associated with the Cathedral and Bishops Palace. Excavations have been undertaken on the west side of the river, and significant archaeological remains were found in the former garden of the Bishops Palace (now under the new Police Station). There is good potential for the survival of medieval water logged deposits in this area.

Recommendations

A watching brief on below ground disturbance.

MH31-40

The 1923 OS map shows a culvert along Garth Road, rejoining the earlier line after Dean Street. The present culvert disregards this, and follows a line parallel to the original river line but through the gasworks carpark, along the edge of a former street called Brook Row, now demolished. Neither the tithe map nor Woods map are accurate enough to locate the exact line of the river here. The culvert then runs across the road to St Mary's church (built 1864), and along the edge of the present playing field to Glynne Road, possibly close to the site of the former Friary.

Archaeology

The section between MH38 and MH40 skirts around the edge of the second site of the former medieval Friary.

Recommendations

A watching brief on below ground disturbance.

MH40-48

This section follows Friars Walk through to Beach Road, then across the road and to the outfall. Map evidence suggests this is the original line of the river, that formerly ran through fields along the edge of the medieval Friary lands.

Archaeology

The first site of the medieval Friary lay under the present bus depot, and it is likely the river formed the boundary to their lands. Once beyond there the coastline formerly lay further south, closer to the bus depot.

Recommendations

A watching brief on below ground disturbance both to record any medieval remains associated with the Friary, and to record the location of the former coast edge and the nature of the landfill used to extend the shoreline.

Summary

The present line of the culvert follows the earlier line of the Adda for much of its route. Occasionally, as at Glanrafon, new lengths have been culverted on a different alignment, and these are shown on the accompanying figures. The archaeological potential is related to the development of the early monastic church and later medieval Cathedral, and the medieval Friary closer to the shore. There is also potential for the recovery of archaeological information from the development of the industries both at Sackville Road and along Beach Road, at the latter evidence for the line of the former shore, and the manner in which the shoreline was extended, should also be recorded.

Sources used

Maps

John Speed Map of Bangor 1610

John Wood Map of Bangor 1834

Tithe Map of Bangor c. 1840

OS County Series 25" Caernarfon Sheet VI.12 1890, 1900 and 1923

Maps of existing culvert supplied by Environment Agency

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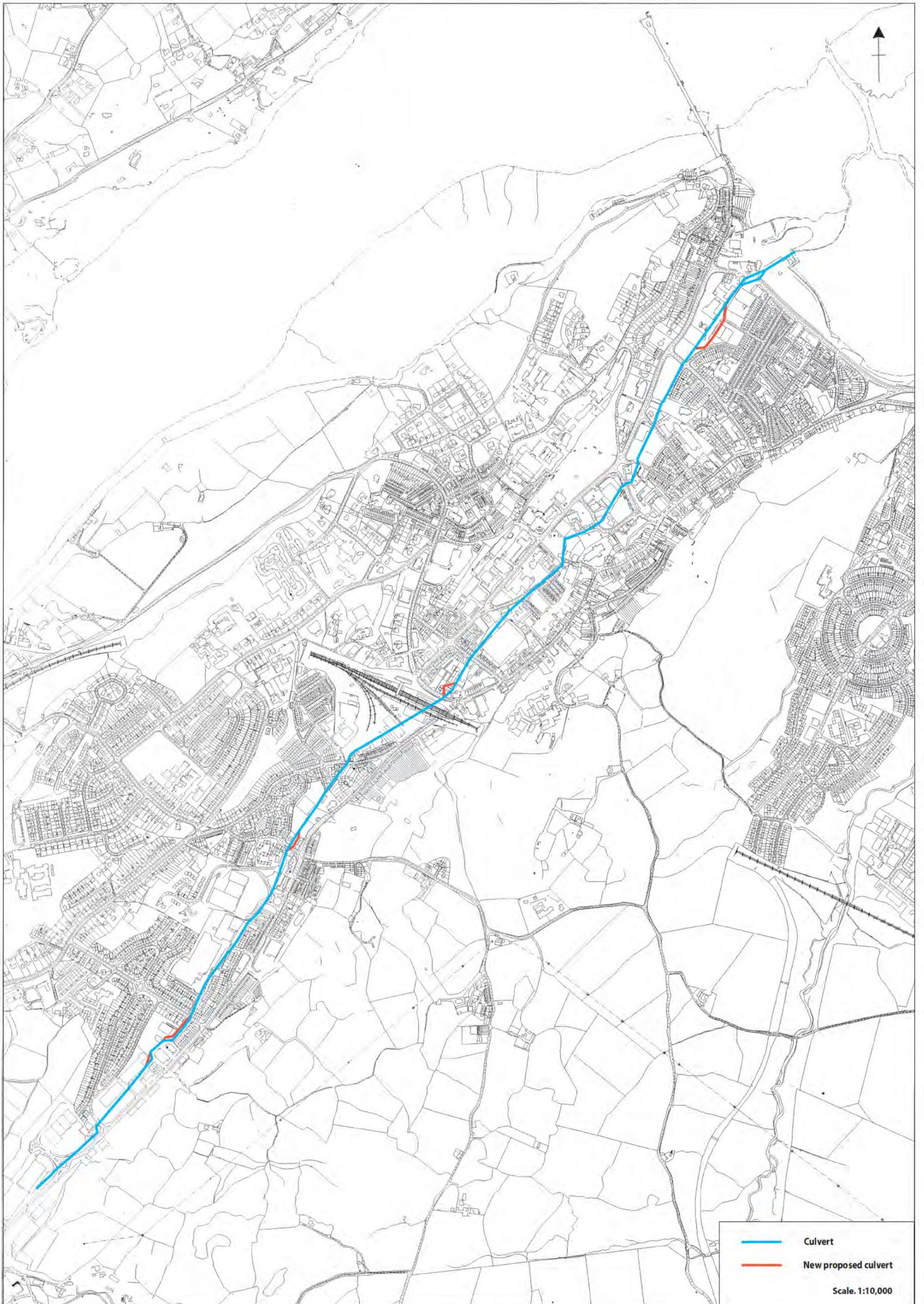


Figure 2. Afon Adda Culvert Improvements. © Crown copyright. All rights reserved. Licence number AL100026380

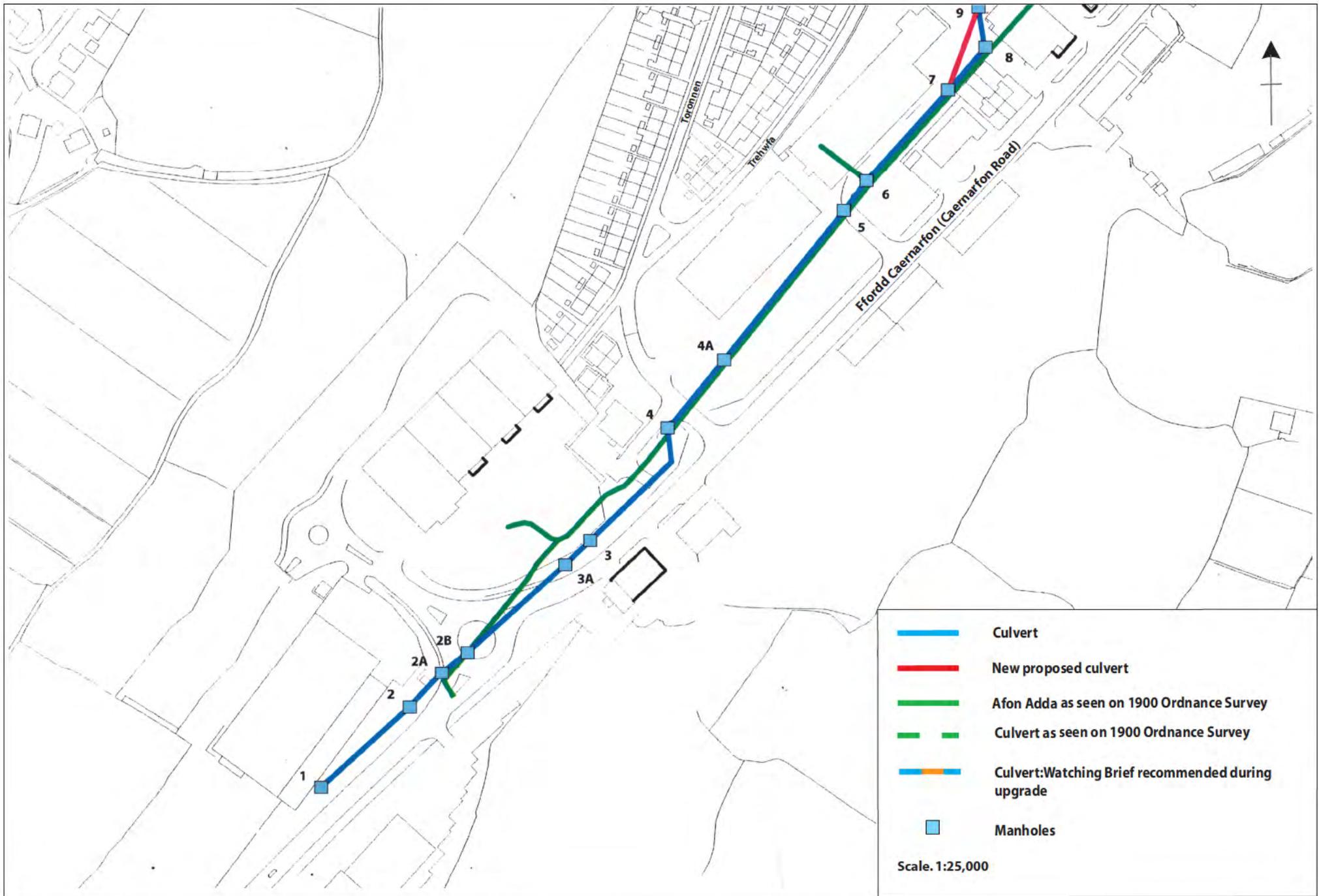


Figure 2. Afon Adda Culvert Improvements: Manholes 1-9. © Crown copyright. All rights reserved. Licence number AL100026380

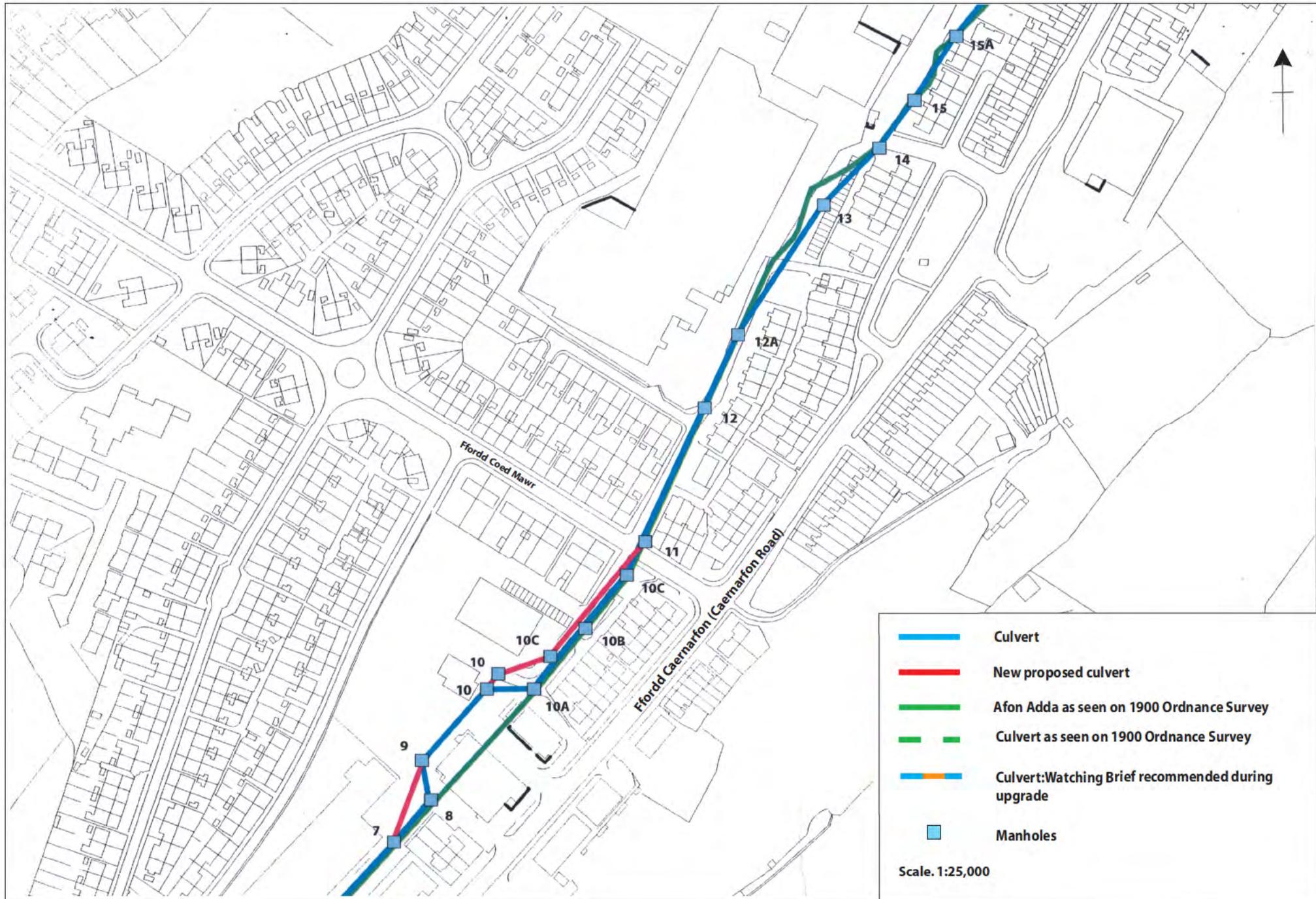


Figure 3. Afon Adda Culvert Improvements: Manholes 7-15. © Crown copyright. All rights reserved. Licence number AL100026380

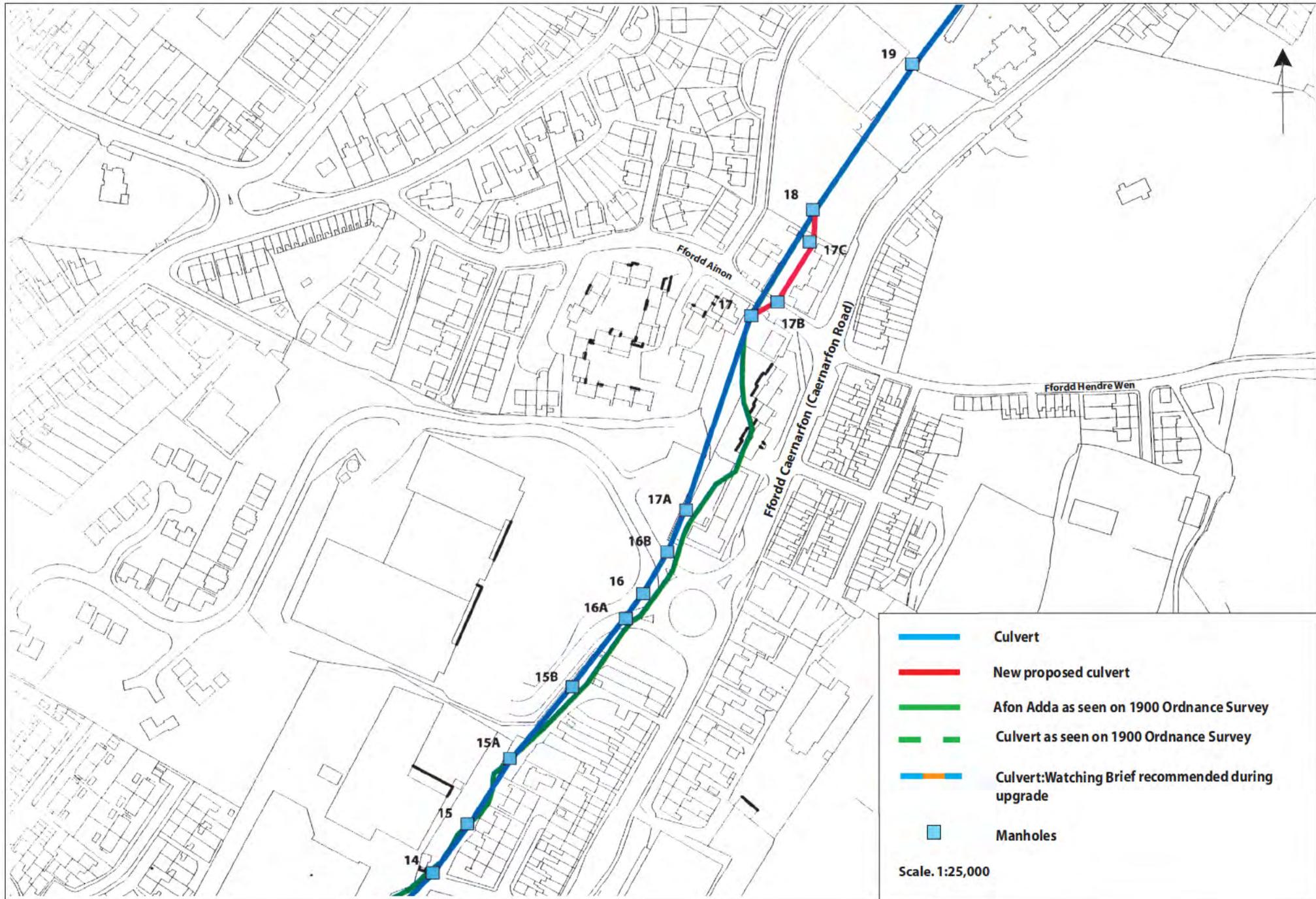


Figure 4. Afon Adda Culvert Improvements: Manholes 14-19. © Crown copyright. All rights reserved. Licence number AL100026380

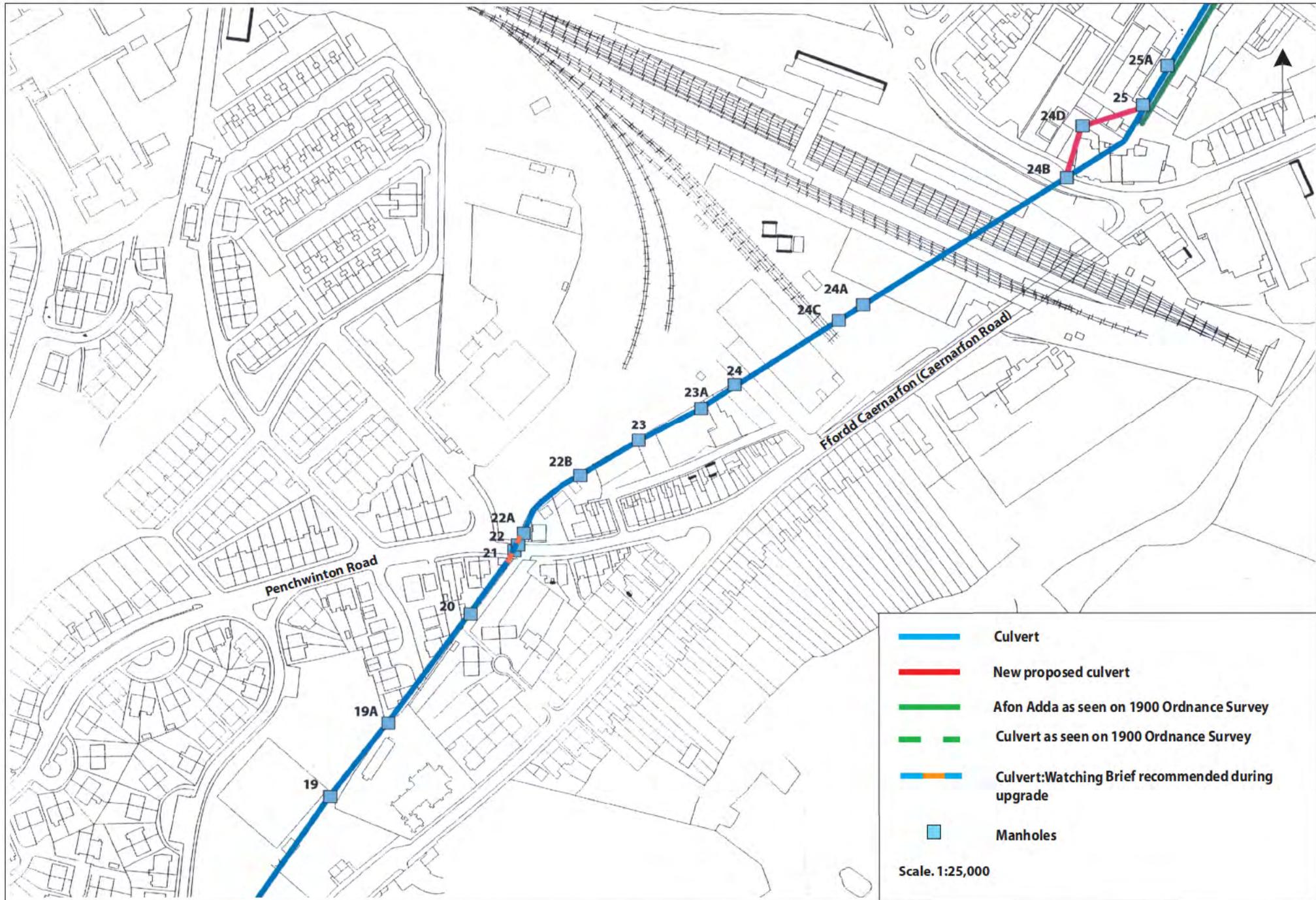


Figure 5. Afon Adda Culvert Improvements: Manholes 14-25a. © Crown copyright. All rights reserved. Licence number AL100026380

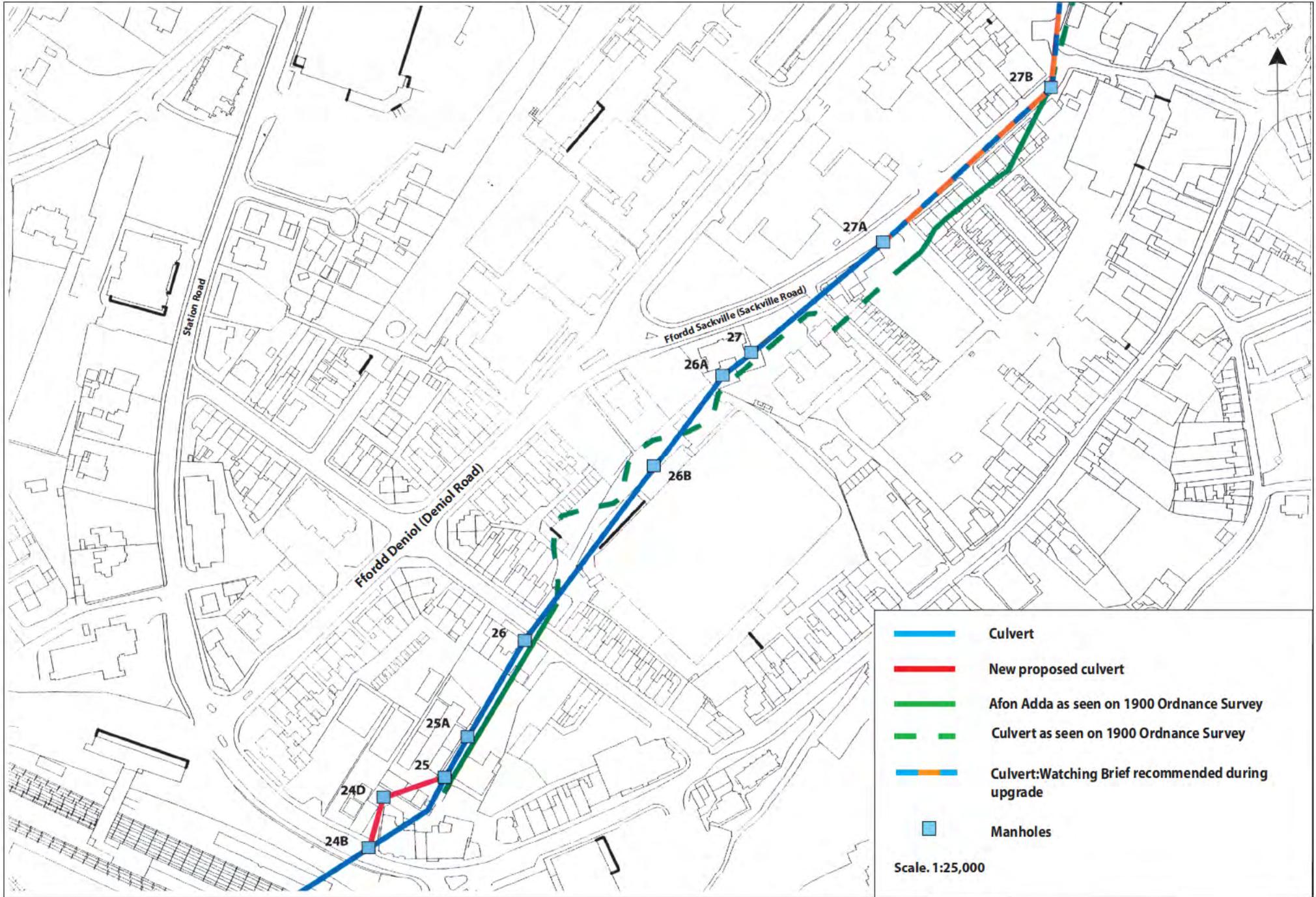


Figure 6. Afon Adda Culvert Improvements: Manholes 24b-27b. © Crown copyright. All rights reserved. Licence number AL100026380

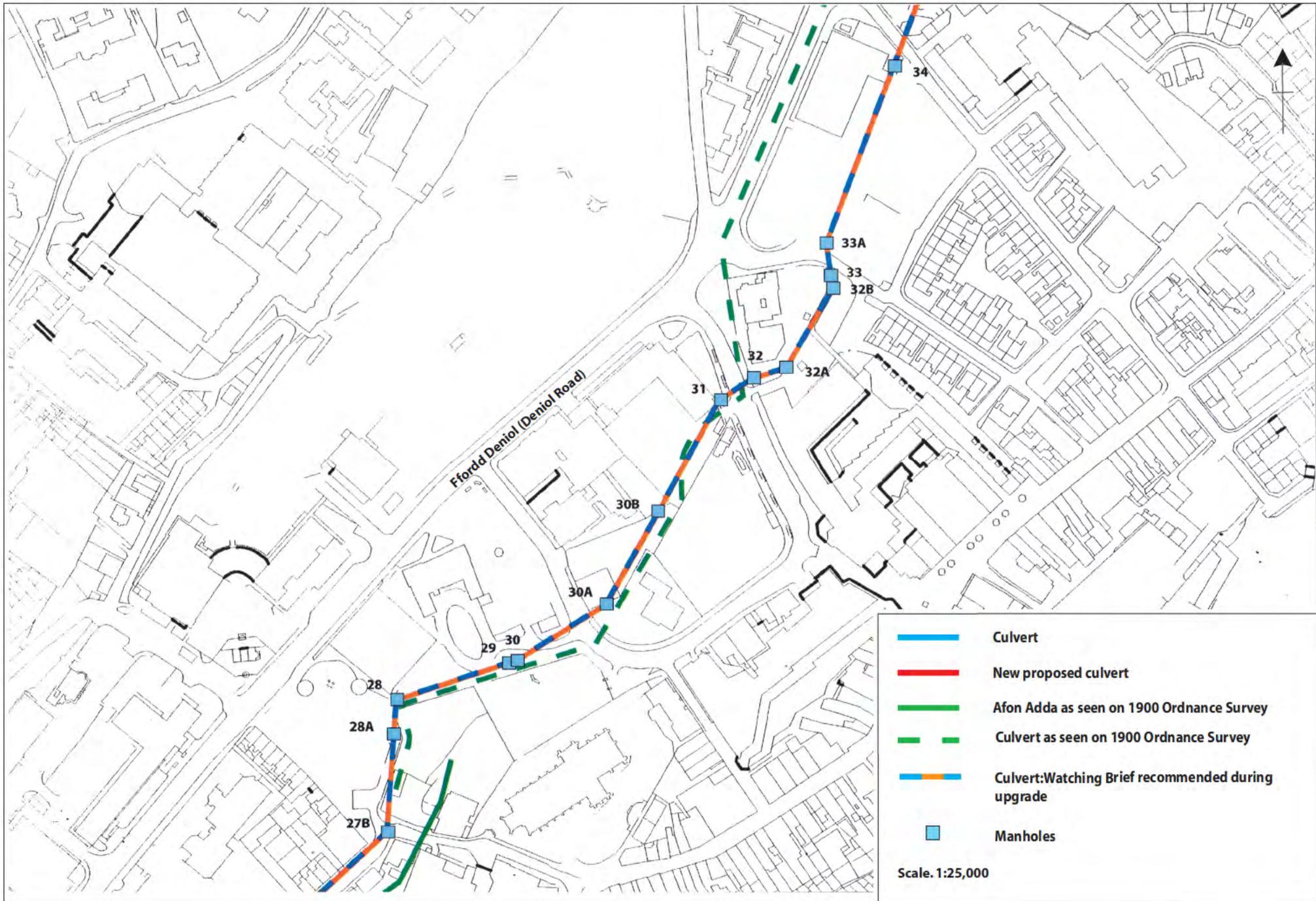


Figure 7. Afon Adda Culvert Improvements: Manholes 24b-34. © Crown copyright. All rights reserved. Licence number AL100026380

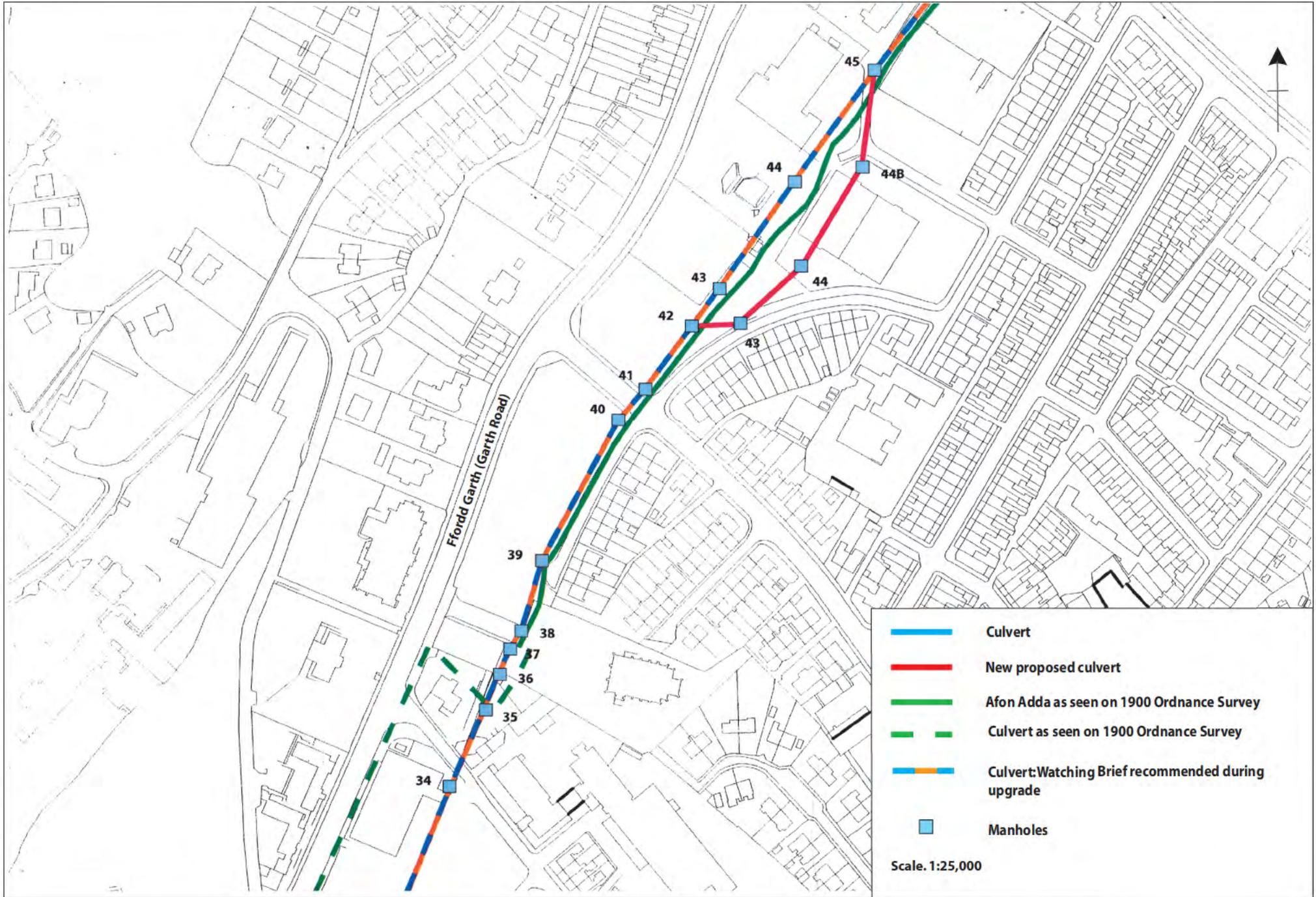


Figure 8. Afon Adda Culvert Improvements: Manholes 34-45b. © Crown copyright. All rights reserved. Licence number AL100026380

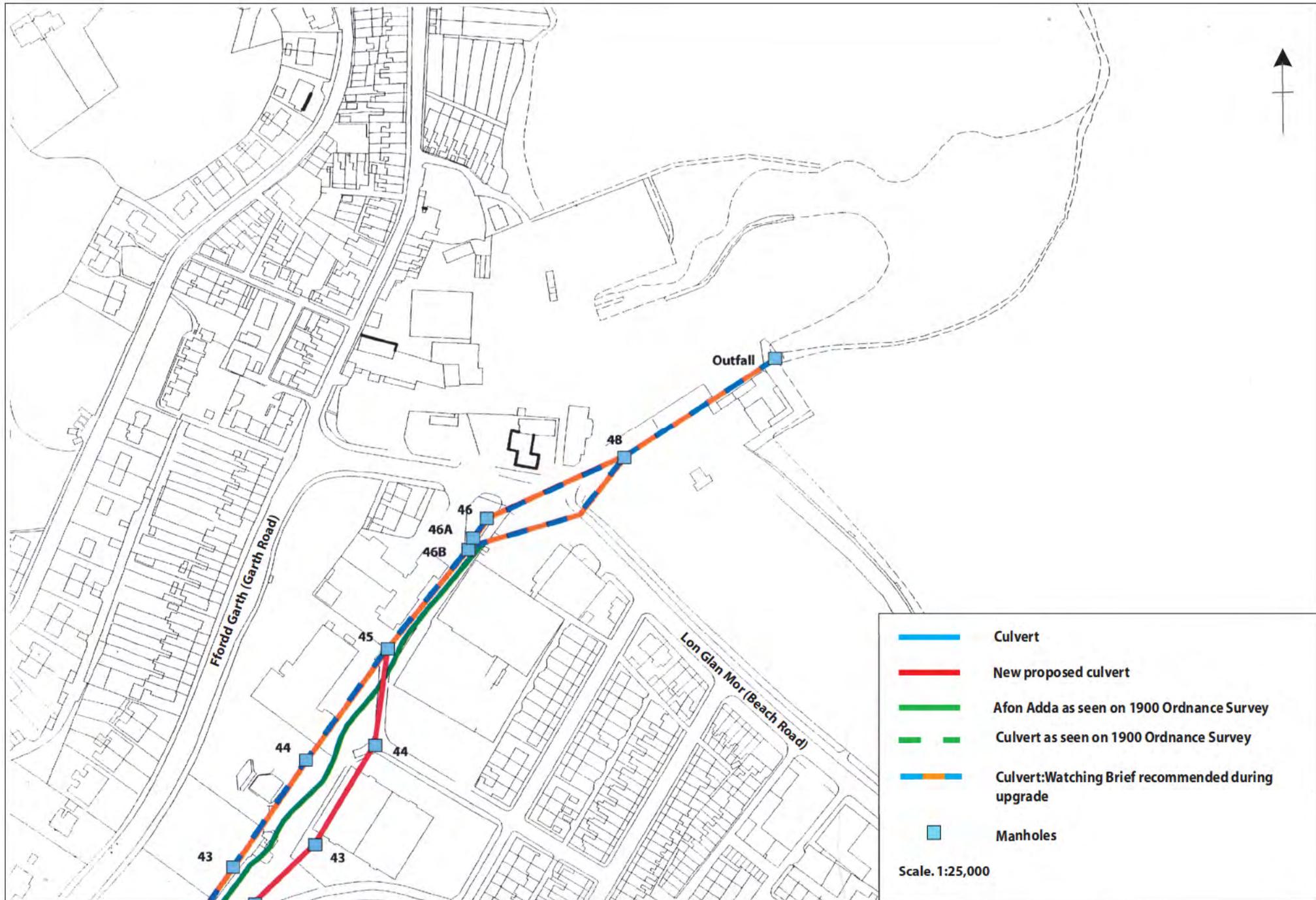


Figure 9. Afon Adda Culvert Improvements: Manholes 43-Outfall. © Crown copyright. All rights reserved. Licence number AL100026380



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