


Land to the west of Southam Road, Radford Semele, Warwickshire



Archaeological Evaluation Report

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Land West of Southam Road, Radford Semele, Warwickshire

Archaeological Evaluation Report

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Summary

Oxford Archaeology Ltd undertook an archaeological evaluation of the site of a proposed housing development on land to the west of Southam Road, Radford Semele, Warwickshire on the 24th and 25th November 2016. The evaluation, which comprised seven trenches, formed a 4% sample of the 1.0ha site. The trenching followed a desk-based assessment and geophysical survey, neither of which had identified any archaeological features within the site.

The main identified potential was for medieval archaeological evidence, as the site lies in close proximity to the historic core of Radford Semele, including the medieval parish church of St Nicholas. The early 17th century manor house, Radford Hall, lies immediately east of the application site and is likely to have been the site of the medieval manor house. The traces of a shrunken medieval settlement lie to the south of the church.

No archaeological features or artefacts were recorded in any of the trenches, and the site appears to have no potential for significant archaeological discoveries.



1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Location and scope of work

- 1.1.1 Oxford Archaeology (OA) was commissioned by Orion Heritage to undertake an archaeological evaluation of the site proposed for residential development in a field to the west of Southam Road, Radford Semele, Warwickshire (NGR: SP 34040 64752; Planning Reference W/15/1761).
- 1.1.2 The trenching was informed by a desk-based assessment (Cotswold Archaeology 2015) and the results of a geophysical survey (Pre-Construct Geophysics Limited 2015). These had not identified any specific archaeological constraints within the application site, but highlighted its proximity to the historic core of Radford Semele. The surveys were designed to inform the local planning authority (LPA) in advance of submission of a planning application. Although the LPA had not set a specific brief for the work, discussions between John Robinson, Warwickshire County Council Planning Archaeologist and William Bedford of Orion Heritage, established that seven archaeological evaluation trenches would be required to test the results of the previous surveys.
- 1.1.3 All work was undertaken in accordance with relevant national and local planning policies (National Planning Policy Framework 2012, Department for Communities and Local Government). The archaeological method was detailed in a site-specific Written Scheme of Investigation (OA 2016), which complied with the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists (CIfA) standards and guidance for archaeological field evaluation (CIfA 2014).

1.2 Geology and topography

- 1.2.1 The site lies on the north-western edge of the historic village of Radford Semele and to the east of Leamington Spa, Warwickshire. The River Leam lies 250m north of the application site, and a tributary stream lies 250m to the west.
- 1.2.2 The area of proposed development currently consists of arable land, bounded to the east and south by Southam Road, to the west by fields, and to the north by a hedge and fenced boundary, beyond which lies a light industrial estate. The broad hedge also defines the southern edge of the former Rugby to Leamington branch railway (Fig. 1).
- 1.2.3 The geology of the area is mudstone of the Mercia Mudstone Formation formed during the Triassic Period. This is overlain in most areas by River Terrace Deposits 4 - sand and gravel (British Geological Survey Online, Geology of Britain Viewer, 2016).

1.3 Archaeological and historical background

- 1.3.1 The historical and archaeological background is summarised below, unless otherwise stated based on the desk-based assessment (Evans 2015) and the geophysical survey report (Pre-Construct Geophysics Ltd, 2015).

Prehistoric to Roman

- 1.3.2 There is considered to be some limited potential for re-deposited Palaeolithic artefacts to be present within the river gravels recorded within the proposed development area, and a Palaeolithic hand axe was recovered towards the eastern edge of Radford Semele (HER no. MWA1919).

- 1.3.3 The potential for prehistoric and Romano-British activity is also limited, although prehistoric worked flint (HER no. MWA10273) was found to the immediate south of the proposed development area and possible settlement activity has been identified, in the form of cropmarks (HER no. MWA19528, a curvilinear enclosure) seen in aerial photographs 20m to the east of Lythall Close, Radford Semele. However, a previous watching brief in the immediate vicinity of the application site recorded no significant archaeological remains.

Medieval to post-medieval

- 1.3.4 From the medieval period onwards the application site is likely to have been used for agricultural purposes. The DBA includes a map of recorded ridge-and-furrow in the vicinity of the site, which does not include the application site (Evans 2015). There is no indication of ridge-and-furrow on the geophysical survey plot. The site may have been used predominantly as pasture. Evidence for medieval settlement activity has been recorded in the vicinity, including the site of a shrunken medieval settlement (HER no. MWA1906) south of the Parish Church of St Nicholas, which was partially excavated in 1969.
- 1.3.5 The 17th century manor house, Radford Hall (HER no.MWA1902), was situated to the immediate east of the application site, on the eastern side of Southam Road, and is the most likely location for the medieval manor house.

Geophysical survey

- 1.3.6 A fluxgate gradiometer survey of the site of the proposed development was carried out in December 2015 by Pre-Construct Geophysics Ltd (Pre-Construct Geophysics Ltd, 2015).
- 1.3.7 The survey did not record any clearly defined geophysical evidence of potentially significant archaeological remains, and the magnetically weak anomalies recorded were likely to be indicative of natural features, with stronger variation more indicative of modern occupation.

1.4 Acknowledgements

- 1.4.1 Oxford Archaeology were appointed to undertake the evaluation by William Bedford of Orion Heritage. John Robinson, Warwickshire County Council Planning Archaeologist, monitored the work on behalf of Warwick District Council (the LPA).
- 1.4.2 The fieldwork was conducted by Guy Cockin, assisted by Aidan Farnan. The project was managed for Oxford Archaeology by Stuart Foreman.

2 EVALUATION AIMS AND METHODOLOGY

2.1 Aims

2.1.1 The aims of the evaluation were to:

- determine the presence or absence of any archaeological remains which may survive.
- determine or confirm the approximate extent of any surviving remains.
- determine the date range of any surviving remains by artefactual or other means.
- determine the condition and state of preservation of any remains.
- determine the degree of complexity of any surviving horizontal or vertical stratigraphy.
- determine the potential of the site to provide palaeoenvironmental and/or economic evidence, and the forms in which such evidence may survive.
- identify and record any significant archaeological remains that might help identify the extent of prehistoric, Roman or later activity within the village of Radford Semele.
- examine and characterise the anomalies revealed during the fluxgate gradiometer survey carried out on the area of the proposed development.
- determine where possible the nature of prehistoric and later land use, and whether any settlement activity took place on the area of the proposed development.

2.2 Methodology

- 2.2.1 The evaluation comprised the excavation of five trenches, each 30m by 1.8m in plan, and two trenches measuring 15m by 1.8m, as shown on Figure 2. The excavation and recording of the trenches was undertaken as outlined in the WSI.
- 2.2.2 The trench plan was determined in discussion with William Bedford of Orion Heritage, and represents a 4% sample of the c 1.0ha application site.
- 2.2.3 Prior to excavation each trench location was set out by an OA surveyor using GPS equipment following the approved trench plan. The trenches were numbered in a continuous sequence from 1 to 7. The two shorter trenches (6 and 7) were positioned each side of a sewer pipe, which crosses the south-eastern corner of the application site.
- 2.2.4 The topsoil and subsoil was removed by mechanical excavator fitted with a toothless bucket to expose any archaeologically significant horizons, or the surface of the natural geology, whichever was encountered first.
- 2.2.5 All deposits were issued unique context numbers relating to the individual trench (e.g. Trench 1, context 100, 101 and 102).
- 2.2.6 A site meeting was held between Warwickshire County Council, Orion Heritage and OA to review the results, confirm that the fieldwork was meeting the aims of the investigation and approve the backfilling of the completed trenches. On completion of the work and once the trenches were recorded the trenches were backfilled using the mechanical excavator.

3 RESULTS

3.1 Introduction and presentation of results

- 3.1.1 No archaeological features or deposits were observed in any of the trenches. The general soil sequence such as depths of topsoil, subsoil and natural geology are detailed in Appendix 1. Illustrative photographs of three of the trenches are included as Plates 1-3.

3.2 General soils and ground conditions

- 3.2.1 The site was located on superficial deposits comprising River Terrace Deposits 4 – sand and gravel.
- 3.2.2 The topsoil and subsoil had a typical combined thickness of c 0.35m.
- 3.2.3 The weather throughout the fieldwork was cloudy, with good visibility. The ground conditions were dry.

3.3 Distribution of archaeological deposits

- 3.3.1 No archaeological deposits were observed in any of the trenches and no artefacts were recovered.

4 DISCUSSION

4.1 Reliability of field investigation

- 4.1.1 The 4% trenching sample, in combination with the desk-based assessment and geophysical survey, provide a robust assessment of the archaeological potential of the application site.

4.2 Evaluation objectives and results

- 4.2.1 The main identified potential was for medieval archaeology, as the site lies close to the historic core of Radford Semele, including the parish church of St Nicholas (see para 1.3.4). The early 17th century manor house, Radford Hall, lies immediately east of the application site and is likely to have been the site of the medieval manor house. The traces of a shrunken medieval settlement lie to the south of the church.
- 4.2.2 However, no archaeological features or other remains were observed in any of the trenches.
- 4.2.3 There is no documentary evidence that the application site was ever covered with ridge-and-furrow, the characteristic traces of medieval and post-medieval open field cultivation, and no evidence for plough furrows was seen in the evaluation trenches. The site may have been under permanent pasture during those periods.
- 4.2.4 The complete absence of archaeological features in the geophysical survey and trenches suggests that the application site has no potential for significant archaeological discoveries.



APPENDIX A. TRENCH DESCRIPTIONS AND CONTEXT INVENTORY

| Trench 1 | | | | | | | |
|---|-------|-----------|-----------|---------|-----------------------|------|---------|
| General description This trench contained no archaeological features or artefacts. The soil sequence consists of topsoil and subsoil overlying natural sand and gravel. | | | | | Orientation | | ENE-WSW |
| | | | | | Avg. depth (m) | | 0.43 |
| | | | | | Width (m) | | 1.60 |
| | | | | | Length (m) | | 30 |
| Contexts | | | | | | | |
| Context no | Type | Width (m) | Depth (m) | Comment | Finds | Date | |
| 100 | Layer | - | 0.28 | Topsoil | - | - | |
| 101 | Layer | - | 0.13 | Subsoil | - | - | |
| 102 | Layer | - | - | Natural | - | - | |

| Trench 2 | | | | | | | |
|--|-------|-----------|-----------|---------|-----------------------|------|---------|
| General description This trench contained no archaeological features or artefacts. The soil sequence consists of topsoil and subsoil overlying natural sand and gravel. A modern wheel rut was observed. | | | | | Orientation | | ENE-WSW |
| | | | | | Avg. depth (m) | | 0.30 |
| | | | | | Width (m) | | 1.60 |
| | | | | | Length (m) | | 30 |
| Contexts | | | | | | | |
| Context no | Type | Width (m) | Depth (m) | Comment | Finds | Date | |
| 200 | Layer | - | 0.27 | Topsoil | - | - | |
| 201 | Layer | - | 0.05 | Subsoil | - | - | |
| 202 | Layer | - | - | Natural | - | - | |

| Trench 3 | | | | | | | |
|---|-------|-----------|-----------|---------|-----------------------|------|-------|
| General description This trench contained no archaeological features or artefacts. The soil sequence consists of topsoil and subsoil overlying natural sand and gravel. | | | | | Orientation | | N - S |
| | | | | | Avg. depth (m) | | 0.40 |
| | | | | | Width (m) | | 1.60 |
| | | | | | Length (m) | | 30 |
| Contexts | | | | | | | |
| Context no | Type | Width (m) | Depth (m) | Comment | Finds | Date | |
| 300 | Layer | - | 0.30 | Topsoil | - | - | |
| 301 | Layer | - | 0.05 | Subsoil | - | - | |
| 302 | Layer | - | - | Natural | - | - | |

| Trench 4 | | | | | | |
|---|--|--|--|-----------------------|--|-------|
| General description This trench contained no archaeological features or artefacts. The soil sequence consists of topsoil and subsoil overlying natural sand and gravel. | | | | Orientation | | E - W |
| | | | | Avg. depth (m) | | 0.35 |
| | | | | Width (m) | | 1.60 |
| | | | | Length (m) | | 30 |



| Trench 4 | | | | | | |
|------------|-------|-----------|-----------|---------|-------|------|
| Contexts | | | | | | |
| Context no | Type | Width (m) | Depth (m) | Comment | Finds | Date |
| 400 | Layer | - | 0.30 | Topsoil | - | - |
| 401 | Layer | - | 0.05 | Subsoil | - | - |
| 402 | Layer | - | - | Natural | - | - |

| Trench 5 | | | | | | | |
|---|-------|-----------|-----------|---------|----------------|------|---------|
| This trench contained no archaeological features or artefacts. The soil sequence consists of topsoil and subsoil overlying natural sand and gravel. | | | | | Orientation | | ENE-WSW |
| | | | | | Avg. depth (m) | | 0.30 |
| | | | | | Width (m) | | 1.60 |
| | | | | | Length (m) | | 30 |
| Contexts | | | | | | | |
| Context no | Type | Width (m) | Depth (m) | Comment | Finds | Date | |
| 500 | Layer | - | 0.25 | Topsoil | - | - | |
| 501 | Layer | - | 0.05 | Subsoil | - | - | |
| 502 | Layer | - | - | Natural | - | - | |

| Trench 6 | | | | | | | |
|---|-------|-----------|-----------|---------|----------------|------|---------|
| This trench contained no archaeological features or artefacts. The soil sequence consists of topsoil and subsoil overlying natural sand and gravel. | | | | | Orientation | | SE - NW |
| | | | | | Avg. depth (m) | | 0.35 |
| | | | | | Width (m) | | 1.60 |
| | | | | | Length (m) | | 15 |
| Contexts | | | | | | | |
| Context no | Type | Width (m) | Depth (m) | Comment | Finds | Date | |
| 600 | Layer | - | 0.35 | Topsoil | - | - | |
| 601 | Layer | - | - | Subsoil | - | - | |
| 602 | Layer | - | - | Natural | - | - | |

| Trench 7 | | | | | | | |
|---|-------|-----------|-----------|---------|----------------|------|---------|
| This trench contained no archaeological features or artefacts. The soil sequence consists of topsoil and subsoil overlying natural sand and gravel. | | | | | Orientation | | NE - SW |
| | | | | | Avg. depth (m) | | 0.35 |
| | | | | | Width (m) | | 1.60 |
| | | | | | Length (m) | | 15 |
| Contexts | | | | | | | |
| Context no | Type | Width (m) | Depth (m) | Comment | Finds | Date | |
| 700 | Layer | - | 0.30 | Topsoil | - | - | |
| 701 | Layer | - | 0.05 | Subsoil | - | - | |
| 702 | Layer | - | - | Natural | - | | |



APPENDIX B. BIBLIOGRAPHY AND REFERENCES

BGS 2016 British Geological Survey

<http://www.bgs.ac.uk/discoveringGeology/geologyOfBritain/viewer.html>

Chartered Institute for Archaeologists (CIfA). Standards and guidance for archaeological field evaluation

Evans, S, 2015 Land to the west of Southam Road, Radford Semele, Warwickshire. Archaeological and cultural heritage desk-based assessment, Cotswold Archaeology

NPPF, 2012 National Planning Policy Framework, Department for Communities and Local Government

Oxford Archaeology, 2016 Land to the west of Southam Road, Radford Semele, Warwickshire: Written scheme of investigation (WSI) for an archaeological evaluation,

Pre-Construct Geophysics Ltd, 2015 Land to the west of Southam Road, Radford Semele, Warwickshire: Archaeological Geophysical Survey,

Warwickshire Historic and Environmental Resource numbers MWA1902, MWA1906, MWA1919, MWA10273 and MWA19528.



APPENDIX C. SUMMARY OF SITE DETAILS

Site name: Land West of Southam Road, Radford Semele, Warwickshire

Site code: RASE16

Grid reference: NGR: SP 34040 64752

Type: Evaluation

Date and duration: 24th to 25th November 2016

Area of site: 1.0ha

Summary of results: Oxford Archaeology Ltd undertook an archaeological evaluation of the site of a proposed housing development on land to the west of Southam Road, Radford Semele, Leamington Spa, Warwickshire. The evaluation followed a desk-based assessment and geophysical survey, and comprised seven trenches, representing a 4% sample of the 1.0ha site.

No archaeological features or artefacts were recorded in the geophysical survey results, or in any of the trenches. In spite of its close proximity to the historic core of Radford Semele, the application site appears to have no potential for significant archaeological discoveries.

Location of archive: The archive is currently held at OA, Janus House, Osney Mead, Oxford, OX2 0ES, and will be deposited with the Warwickshire County Museum in due course.

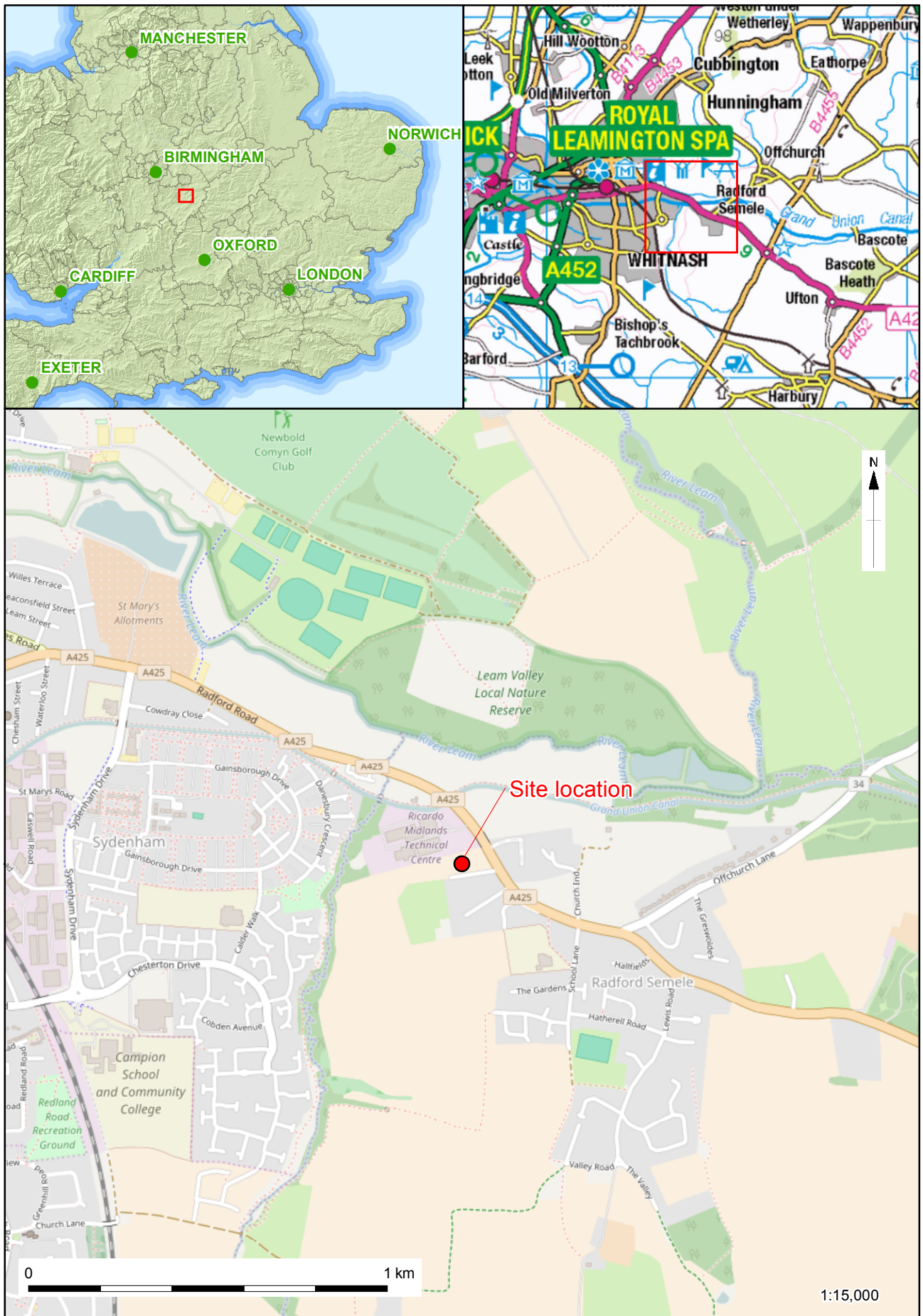


Figure 1: Site location

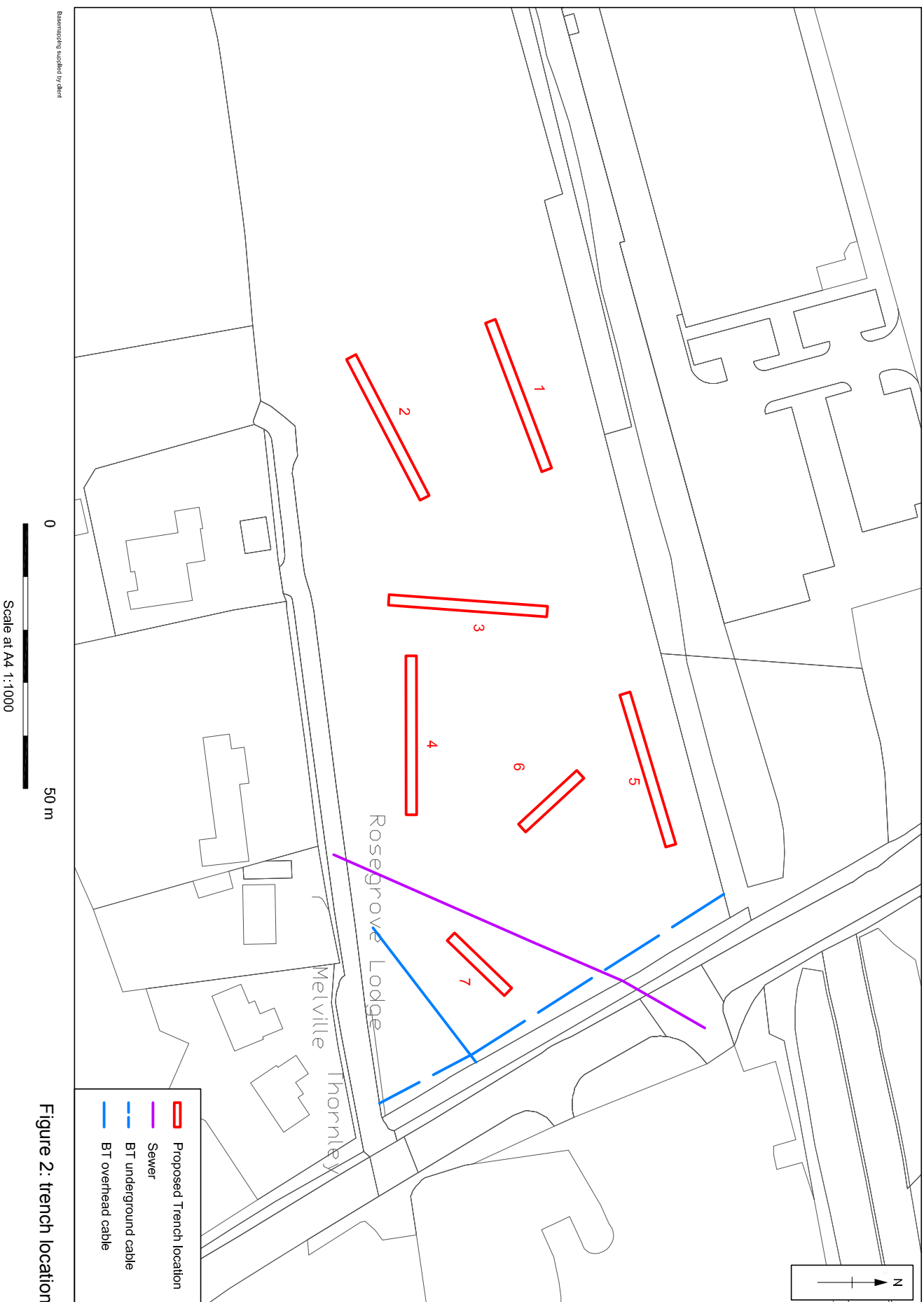




Plate 1: Trench 6, view to east



Plate 2: Trench 4, view to east



Plate 3: Trench 3, view to north



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