

St John's Road Arlesey Bedfordshire



Archaeological Evaluation Report



November 2005

**Client: George Wimpey
South Midlands Ltd**

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George Wimpey South Midlands Ltd

**St John's Road, Arlesey,
Bedfordshire**

NGR: TL 191 359

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SUMMARY

In September 2005, Oxford Archaeology (OA) carried out a field evaluation at St John's Road, Arlesley, Bedfordshire (TL 191 359) on behalf of George Wimpey South Midlands Ltd. The evaluation revealed a series of large linear features, which are likely to represent quarrying associated with the construction of the adjacent railway. Evidence for subsequent landscaping was also recovered.

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Location and scope of work

1.1.1 In September 2005, OA carried out a field evaluation at St John's Road, Arlesley, Bedfordshire (TL 191 359) on behalf of George Wimpey South Midlands Ltd, (fig. 1) in respect of outline planning permission for a residential development (Planning Reference 03/1331). A brief was set by Martin Oake of Bedfordshire County Council. The works were carried out in accordance with an approved Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI).

1.2 Geology and topography

1.2.1 Arlesley has two main centres, a northern one around the parish church and a second c 1 km to the south linked by ribbon development along the High Street. The development site is located on the northern edge of the southern core to the west of the High Street. It is centred on TL 191 359.

1.2.2 Topographically the site lies in the valley of the River Hiz, a tributary of the River Ivel. The site is on the eastern side of the river. The site itself is level with the land rising up the valley sides to the east and west. The site lies at 45 m OD.

1.3 Archaeological and historical background

1.3.1 Arlesley and the surrounding area have not been subject to much archaeological fieldwork or research so much of the background is the result of chance find and observation.

1.3.2 The eastern part of the site contains a series of rectilinear cropmarks (HER 9089). These features are presently undated but they are on a different alignment to the present arrangement of field boundaries.

1.3.3 There are further cropmarks (both linear and curvilinear in nature) to the west of the River Hiz (HER 772, 15078 and 16811) and higher up the valley side (HER 641). While some of these cropmarks may date to the early nineteenth century enclosure acts, the curvilinear marks higher up the valley will certainly pre-date these.

- 1.3.4 Some 250 m to the south-west there have been chance finds of Roman pottery (HER 389).
- 1.3.5 Arlesey is recorded in Domesday Book, which would suggest that the settlement has its roots in at least the later Saxon period.
- 1.3.6 The settlement has two cores; a northern one, based around the medieval parish church and at least one manorial site (HER 17108), and a southern one (HER 17109).
- 1.3.7 The majority of records held by the HER for the site and its vicinity record structures and features associated with Arlesey's recent industrial past.

2 EVALUATION AIMS

- 2.1.1 To establish the presence or absence, extent, condition, nature, character, quality and date of archaeological remains within the proposal area. In particular, to establish further evidence for the date and function of the earthworks on the eastern part of the site.
- 2.1.2 To establish the ecofactual and environmental potential of archaeological deposits and features.
- 2.1.3 To attempt to establish a clear sequence of chronology for this site, lying as it does between the two distinct cores of the settlement.
- 2.1.4 To make available the results of the investigation. To place the results of the evaluation in a wider local and regional context.

3 EVALUATION METHODOLOGY

3.1 Scope of fieldwork

- 3.1.1 The field evaluation comprised the excavation of fifteen 30 m by 2 m trenches. The trial trenches were excavated using a mechanical excavator (fitted with a toothless bucket) under constant archaeological supervision, supplemented by hand excavation of archaeological deposits.
- 3.1.2 The trenches were located as shown on the accompanying plan (Fig. 2).
- 3.1.3 The evaluation was undertaken in accordance with 'Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Field Evaluations' (IFA, 2001), in accordance with the brief set by BCC.

3.2 Fieldwork methods and recording

- 3.2.1 The trenches were cleaned by hand and the revealed features were sampled to determine their extent and nature, and to retrieve finds and environmental samples. All archaeological features were planned and where excavated their sections drawn

at scales of 1:20. All features were photographed using colour slide and black and white print film. Recording followed procedures laid down in the *OAU Fieldwork Manual* (ed. D Wilkinson, 1992).

3.3 Finds

- 3.3.1 Finds were recovered by hand during the course of the excavation and bagged by context.

3.4 Palaeo-environmental evidence

- 3.4.1 No deposits suitable for environmental sampling were encountered during the evaluation.

4 RESULTS: GENERAL

- 4.1.1 All the trenches displayed evidence of large 'linear' features, predominantly on a NE-SW alignment. As these features were invariably encountered in more than one trench, the trench descriptions presented below do not detail the dimensions of the features within each individual trench. The projected extent of each feature or group of features is presented on the interpretative plan (Fig. 4). This was based on the relative alignment and spatial relationships between the features encountered within the confines of the individual trenches.
- 4.1.2 The fills of these features were relatively homogeneous - being predominantly composed of mid-light grey clays with few inclusions which probably represented re-deposited drift deposits used to backfill the features. Consequently, soil descriptions for the fills are not presented unless they differ significantly from the above description.
- 4.1.3 The majority of the features were not bottomed and are likely to have truncated any pre-existing archaeological features. Consequently, no section drawings have been illustrated although a sample of the Trench plans is presented below (Fig. 3).

5 RESULTS: DESCRIPTIONS

5.1 Description of deposits

(Fig. 4)

Trench 1

- 5.1.1 Trench 1 was aligned E-W and excavated entirely within Feature A (103). Natural geological deposits were not encountered as the base of the feature was not established within this trench. A c 0.3 m thick layer of modern topsoil (100) directly overlay the upper fills (101 and 102) of Feature A (103).

Trench 2 (Fig. 3)

- 5.1.2 Trench 2 was aligned N-S. The majority of the trench was excavated within Feature B (203), although the northern end did expose the eastern edge of Feature A (207). Natural gravel was encountered at *c* 42.25 m OD and was overlain by a 0.2 m thick deposit of friable, mid brown, sandy silt (201) which was interpreted as a buried topsoil. Deposit 201 was cut by Features A and B (207 and 203), the upper fills of which were overlain by a 0.22 m thick layer of modern topsoil (200).

Trench 3

- 5.1.3 Trench 3 was aligned E-W. Natural drift deposits were encountered at 42.82 m OD and were cut by Feature(s) C (302). The fills of this feature (303 and 304) were overlain by a 0.23 m thick layer of modern topsoil (300).

Trench 4

- 5.1.4 Trench 4 was aligned NE-SW. Natural gravel was encountered at 42.40 m OD and was overlain by a 0.1 m thick friable, mid-brown, silt (401) which was interpreted as a buried topsoil. Deposit 401 was cut by Feature A to the north (408) and Feature B to the south (404), the fills of which (407/409 and 403 respectively) were overlain by a 0.25 m thick layer of modern topsoil (400).

Trench 5

- 5.1.5 Trench 5 was aligned E-W. Natural gravel was encountered at 43 m OD and was overlain by a friable, dark-brown, silty loam (501), approximately 0.15 m thick and interpreted as a buried topsoil. The majority of the trench was excavated across Feature C (504), with a suggestion of the western edge of Feature D in the extreme eastern end of the trench. Both these features appeared to cut the buried topsoil 501. The upper fills of the features (503 and 505) were overlain by a 0.28 m thick layer of modern topsoil (500).

Trench 6

- 5.1.6 Trench 6 was aligned N-S. Natural drift geology was encountered at 42.8 m OD and was cut by three linear features. To the south of the trench, cut 606 probably represents Feature D. To the north of the trench, cuts 602 and 604 are probably both part of Feature(s) C. The fills of these features (607, 603 and 605 respectively) were overlain by a 0.25 m thick layer of modern topsoil (600).

Trench 7

- 5.1.7 Trench 7 was aligned E-W. Natural drift deposits were encountered at 42.60 m OD and were overlain by a 0.2 m thick friable, dark-brown, sandy silt interpreted as a buried topsoil (706). Deposit 706 was cut by two linear features (702 and 704) which are probably both part of Feature(s) C. The fills of 702 and 704 (703 and 705 respectively) were overlain by a 0.24 m thick layer of modern topsoil (700).

Trench 8

5.1.8 Trench 8 was aligned N-S. Natural gravel was encountered at 42.50 m OD and was overlain by a deposit of friable mid-brown silty loam (802/816) which varied in thickness within the trench but was an average of 0.3 m thick. Deposit 802/816 was cut by three features. To the south of the trench, cut 804 formed part of Feature E. To the north of the trench, cuts 809 and 806 probably represented the northern and southern *termini* of a segmented section of Feature D. A 0.2 m thick layer of modern topsoil (801) overlay the fills of these features (805 and 815; 810-814; 807 and 808 respectively). Two sherds of medieval pottery were recovered from fill 808, while a fragment of late medieval/post-medieval roof tile was recovered from fill 811.

Trench 9

5.1.9 Trench 9 was aligned N-S. Natural drift geology was encountered at 42.65 m OD and was overlain by a 0.4 m thick layer of friable, mid-brown silty loam (902) interpreted as a buried topsoil. Deposit 902 was cut by two linear features. Cut 906, to the north of the trench was the eastern edge of Feature D. Cut 904, to the south, was the southern continuation of Feature E (ref. 809/806; Trench 8). The fills of these features (907 and 905 respectively) were overlain by a 0.25 m thick deposit of modern topsoil (901).

Trench 10 (Fig. 3)

5.1.10 Trench 10 was aligned E-W. Natural drift deposits were encountered at an average of 42.25 m OD and were overlain by a 0.23 m thick deposit of friable, mid brown silty loam (1002) interpreted as a buried topsoil. Deposit 1002 was cut by two linear features. Cut 1004, to the west of the trench formed part of Feature F. Cut 1006, to the east was part of Feature G. The fills of these features (1005 and 1007 respectively) were overlain by a 0.2 m thick layer of modern topsoil (1001).

Trench 11

5.1.11 Trench 11 was aligned N-S and excavated almost exclusively within the junction of Features E and F (1104 and 1102 respectively). Natural drift geology was encountered at 42.83 m OD and was overlain by a 0.35 m thick layer of friable, dark brown, sandy silt (1106) interpreted as a buried topsoil. Both 1104 and 1102 cut this deposit. The upper fills of these features (1105 and 1107; 1103 respectively) were sealed by a 0.2 m thick layer of modern topsoil.

Trench 12

5.1.12 Trench 12 was on a NW-SE alignment. Natural drift deposits were encountered at an average of 41.75 m OD and were overlain by a buried sub/ploughsoil (1202) which was in turn overlain by a buried topsoil deposit (1201). Both of these deposits were cut by three linear features. Cuts 1208, 1206 and 1204 representing Features H, I and

J respectively. The fills of these features (1205, 1207 and 1209) were overlain by a 0.25 m thick layer of modern topsoil (1200).

Trench 13

5.1.13 Trench 13 was aligned E-W. Natural chalky gravel was encountered at an average of 42.50 m OD and was overlain by a 0.2 m thick friable, dark-brown, silty loam (1301) interpreted as buried topsoil. Deposit 1301 was cut by two linear features. Cut 1304 to the east of the trench formed part of Feature G, whilst cut 1311 to the west was the northern continuation of the eastern edge of Feature F. The fills of these features (1302 and 1306-10; 1303 respectively) were overlain by a 0.22 m thick layer of modern topsoil (1300).

Trench 14

5.1.14 Trench 14 was aligned N-S. Natural chalky gravel was encountered at 42.10 m OD and was overlain by a loose, mid-brown, silt (1402), approximately 0.28 m thick and interpreted as a buried topsoil. This was cut by three features: 1410, 1406 and 1404 which represented Features I, H and G respectively. The fills of these features (1409; 1407-8; 1405) were overlain by a 0.26 m thick layer of modern topsoil (1401).

Trench 15 (Fig. 3)

5.1.15 Trench 15 was aligned E-W. Natural chalky gravel was encountered at 42.85 m OD and was overlain by a 0.2 m thick friable, mid-yellowish-brown, sandy silt (1508) which was in turn overlain by a 0.26 m thick layer of friable, dark greyish-brown, sandy silt (1501). These were interpreted as a buried ploughsoil (1508) and topsoil (1501). Both these deposits were cut by Feature F (1506) and Feature G (1503). The fills of these features (1507; 1504-5) were overlain by a 0.22 m thick layer of modern topsoil (1500).

5.2 Finds

Pottery

Context No.	No. Sherds	Weight (g)	Fabric	Date	Notes
808	2	6	Scarborough or Brill ware	13th - 14th	Buff fabric with clear glaze
1408	1	88	Red Earthenware	17th - 18th	Rim with internal glaze
811	1	20	Roof Tile	16th - 19th	Edge fragment

5.2.1 No further work on this assemblage is recommended.

5.3 **Palaeo-environmental remains**

5.3.1 No deposits suitable for environmental sampling were encountered during the evaluation

6 **DISCUSSION AND INTERPRETATION**

6.1 **Overall interpretation**

6.1.1 The results of the evaluation suggest that a significant amount of truncation has occurred during the construction of the mainline railway to the west of the site. The large linear features are likely to represent quarrying associated with this construction, and the overlying topsoil presumably indicates that a degree of landscaping has subsequently occurred.

6.1.2 The fact that the large features appear to cut a buried topsoil and possible ploughsoil suggests that no levelling of the site has been undertaken prior to the quarrying. This would imply that archaeological features may survive where they have not been truncated during this phase of activity. However, the truncation appears to be on a large scale, and it seems likely the majority of the site has been subject to this truncation.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1 ARCHAEOLOGICAL CONTEXT INVENTORY

<i>Trench</i>	<i>Ctxt No</i>	<i>Type</i>	<i>Comment</i>	<i>Finds</i>	<i>No./wt</i>	<i>Date</i>
001						
	100	Deposit	Topsoil			
	101	Fill	Fill of Linear Feature 103			
	102	Fill	Fill of Linear Feature 103			
	103	Cut	?Linear Feature			
	1005	Layer	Natural Gravel			
002						
	200	Deposit	Topsoil			
	201	Deposit	Buried Topsoil?			
	202	Layer	Natural Gravel			
	203	Cut	?NE-SW ?Linear Feature			
	204	Fill	Fill of ?Linear 203			
	205	Fill	Fill of ?Linear 203			
	206	Fill	Fill of ?Linear 203			
	207	Cut	?NE-SW ?Linear Feature			
	208	Fill	Fill of ?Linear 207			
003						
	300	Deposit	Topsoil			
	301	Layer	Natural. Drift Deposit			
	302	Cut	?NE-SW ?Linear Feature			
	303	Fill	Fill of ?Linear 302			
	304	Fill	Fill of ?Linear 302			
004						
	400	Deposit	Topsoil			
	401	Deposit	Buried Topsoil			
	402	Layer	Natural Gravel			
	403	Fill	Fill of Linear Feature 404			
	404	Cut	Linear Feature			
	405	Fill	Fill of Linear Feature 406			

	406	Cut	Linear Feature			
	407	Fill	Fill of Linear Feature 408			
	408	Cut	Linear Feature			
	409	Fill	Fill of Linear Feature 408			
	410	Deposit	Re-deposited Natural			
005						
	500	Deposit	Topsoil			
	501	Deposit	Buried Topsoil			
	502	Layer	Natural Gravel			
	503	Fill	Fill of Linear 504			
	504	Cut	Linear Feature			
	505	Fill	Fill of Linear 504			
006						
	600	Deposit	Re-deposited Topsoil			
	601	Layer	Natural. Drift Deposit			
	602	Cut	NE-SW Linear Feature			
	603	Fill	Fill of Linear Feature 602			
	604	Cut	?NE-SW Linear Feature			
	605	Fill	Fill of Linear Feature 604			
	606	Cut	NE-SW Linear Feature			
	607	Fill	Fill of Linear Feature 606			
007						
	700	Deposit	Re-Deposited Topsoil			
	701	Layer	Natural. Drift Deposit			
	702	Cut	NE-SW Linear Feature			
	703	Fill	Fill of Linear Feature 702			
	704	Cut	NE-SW Linear Feature			
	705	Fill	Fill of Linear Feature 704			
	706	Deposit	Buried Topsoil?			
008						
	801	Deposit	Topsoil			
	802	Deposit	Buried Topsoil (s.a 816)			
	803	Layer	Natural Chalky Gravel			
	804	Cut	Linear Feature			

	805	Fill	Fill of Linear Feature 804			
	806	Cut	Linear Feature			
	807	Fill	Fill of Linear Feature 806			
	808	Fill	Fill of Linear Feature 806	Pot	2/6g	13th - 14th
	809	Cut	Linear Feature			
	810	Fill	Fill of Linear 809			
	811	Fill	Fill of Linear 809	CB M		16th - 19th
	812	Fill	Fill of Linear 809			
	813	Fill	Fill of Linear 809			
	814	Fill	Fill of Linear Feature 809			
	815	Fill	Primary Fill of Linear Feature 804			
	816	Deposit	Buried Topsoil (s.a 802)			
009						
	901	Deposit	Topsoil			
	902	Deposit	Buried Topsoil			
	903	Layer	Natural. Drift Deposit			
	904	Cut	Linear Feature			
	905	Fill	Fill of Linear Feature 904			
	906	Cut	Linear Feature			
	907	Fill	Fill of Linear Feature 906			
010						
	1001	Deposit	Topsoil			
	1002	Deposit	Buried Topsoil			
	1003	Layer	Natural. Drift Deposit			
	1004	Cut	Linear Feature			
	1005	Fill	Fill of Linear Feature 1004			
	1006	Cut	NE-SW Linear Fetaure			
	1007	Fill	Fill of Linear Feature 1006			
011						
	1100	Deposit	Topsoil			
	1101	Layer	Natural. Drift Deposit			
	1102	Cut	Linear Feature			

	1103	Fill	Fill of Linear Feature 1102			
	1104	Cut	?Linear Feature			
	1105	Fill	Fill of ?Linear Feature 1104			
	1106	Deposit	Buried Topsoil?			
	1107	Fill	Fill of Linear Feature 1104			
012						
	1200	Deposit	Topsoil			
	1201	Deposit	Buried Topsoil			
	1202	Deposit	Buried Ploughsoil			
	1203	Layer	Natural. Drift Deposit			
	1204	Cut	NE-SW Linear Feature			
	1205	Fill	Fill of Linear Feature 1204			
	1206	Cut	NE-SW Linear Feature			
	1207	Fill	Fill of Linear Feature 1206			
	1208	Cut	NE-SW Linear Feature			
	1209	Fill	Fill of Linear Feature 1208			
013						
	1300	Deposit	Topsoil			
	1301	Deposit	Buried Topsoil			
	1302	Fill	Fill of Linear feature 1304			
	1303	Fill	Fill of Linear Feature 1311			
	1304	Cut	Linear Feature			
	1305	Layer	Natural Chalky Gravel			
	1306	Fill	Fill of Linear Feature 1304			
	1307	Fill	Fill of Linear Feature 1304			
	1308	Fill	Fill of Linear Feature 1304			
	1309	Fill	Fill of Linear Feature 1304			
	1310	Fill	Fill of Linear Feature 1304			
	1311	Cut	Linear Feature			
014						
	1401	Deposit	Topsoil			
	1402	Deposit	Buried Topsoil			
	1403	Layer	Natural Chalky Gravel			

	1404	Cut	Linear Feature			
	1405	Fill	Fill of Linear Feature 1404			
	1406	Cut	Linear Feature			
	1407	Fill	Fill of Linear Feature 1406			
	1408	Fill	Fill of Linear Feature 1406	Pot	1/88g	17th - 18th
	1409	Fill	Fill of Linear Feature 1410			
	1410	Cut	Linear Feature			
015						
	1500	Deposit	Topsoil			
	1501	Deposit	Buried Topsoil			
	1502	Layer	Natural Chalky Gravel			
	1503	Cut	NE-SW Linear Feature			
	1504	Fill	Fill of Linear Feature 1503			
	1505	Fill	Fill of Linear Feature 1503			
	1506	Cut	NE-SW Linear Feature			
	1507	Fill	Fill of Linear Feature 1506			
	1508	Deposit	Buried Ploughsoil			

APPENDIX 2 BIBLIOGRAPHY AND REFERENCES

BCC, 2005 *Brief for a Programme of Archaeological Investigation of Land South of Cricketers Road, Arlesey, Bedfordshire*

IFA, 2001 *Standard and Guidance for archaeological evaluations*

OA, 2005 *St John's Road, Arlesey, Bedfordshire: a Written Scheme of Investigation for an Archaeological Evaluation*

OA, 1992 *Field Manual* (ed. D Wilkinson)

APPENDIX 3 SUMMARY OF SITE DETAILS

Site name: St John's Road, Arlesey, Bedfordshire

Site code: ARSJR'05

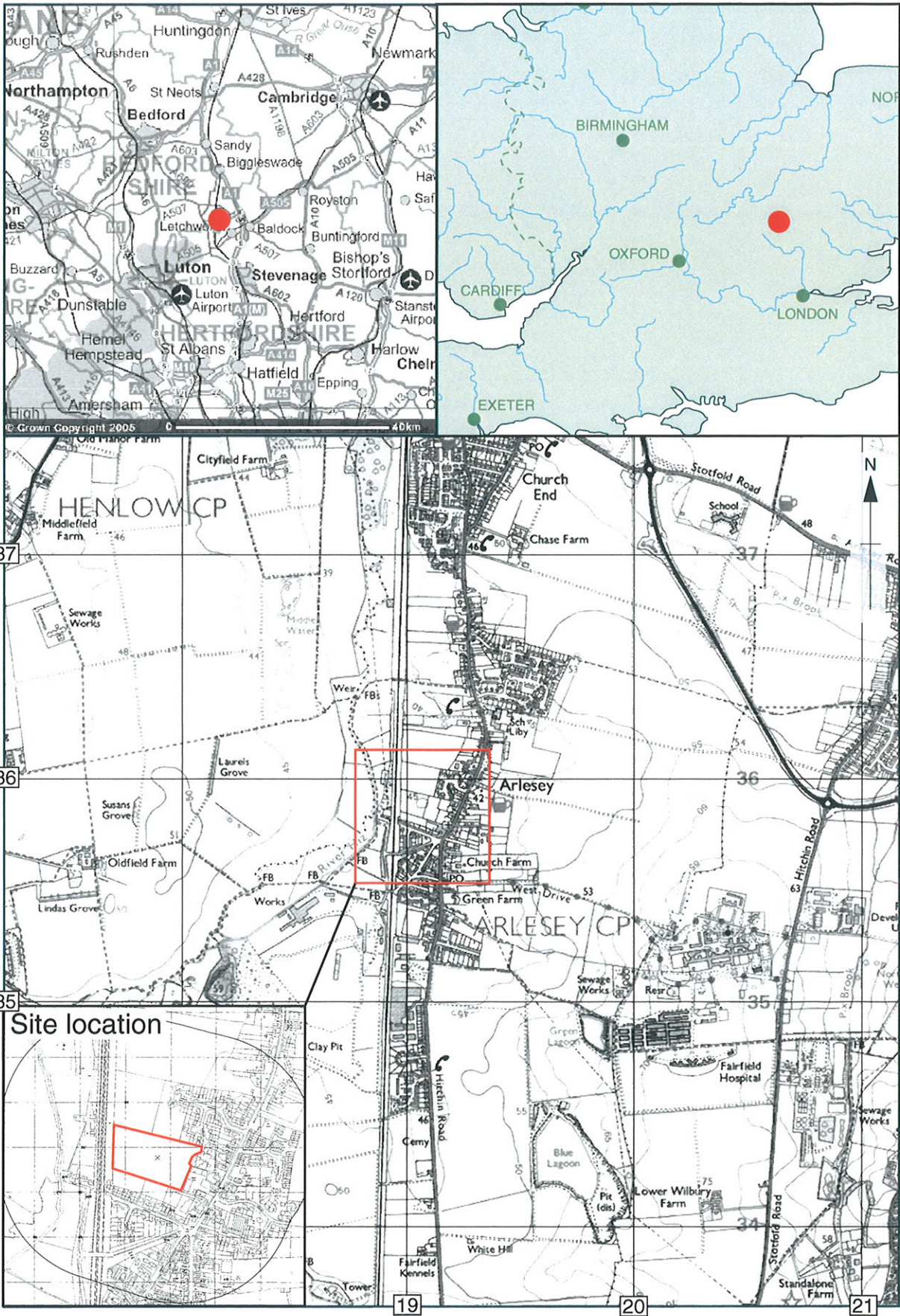
Grid reference: TL 191 359

Type of evaluation: Trenched

Date and duration of project: 05/09/05-09/09/05

Summary of results: Quarrying and subsequent landscaping associated with construction of mainline railway.

Location of archive: The archive is currently held at OA, Janus House, Osney Mead, Oxford, OX2 0ES. The archive will be deposited with the Bedford Museum under accession number BEDFM:2005.243 in due course.



Scale 1:25,000

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Figure 1: Site location

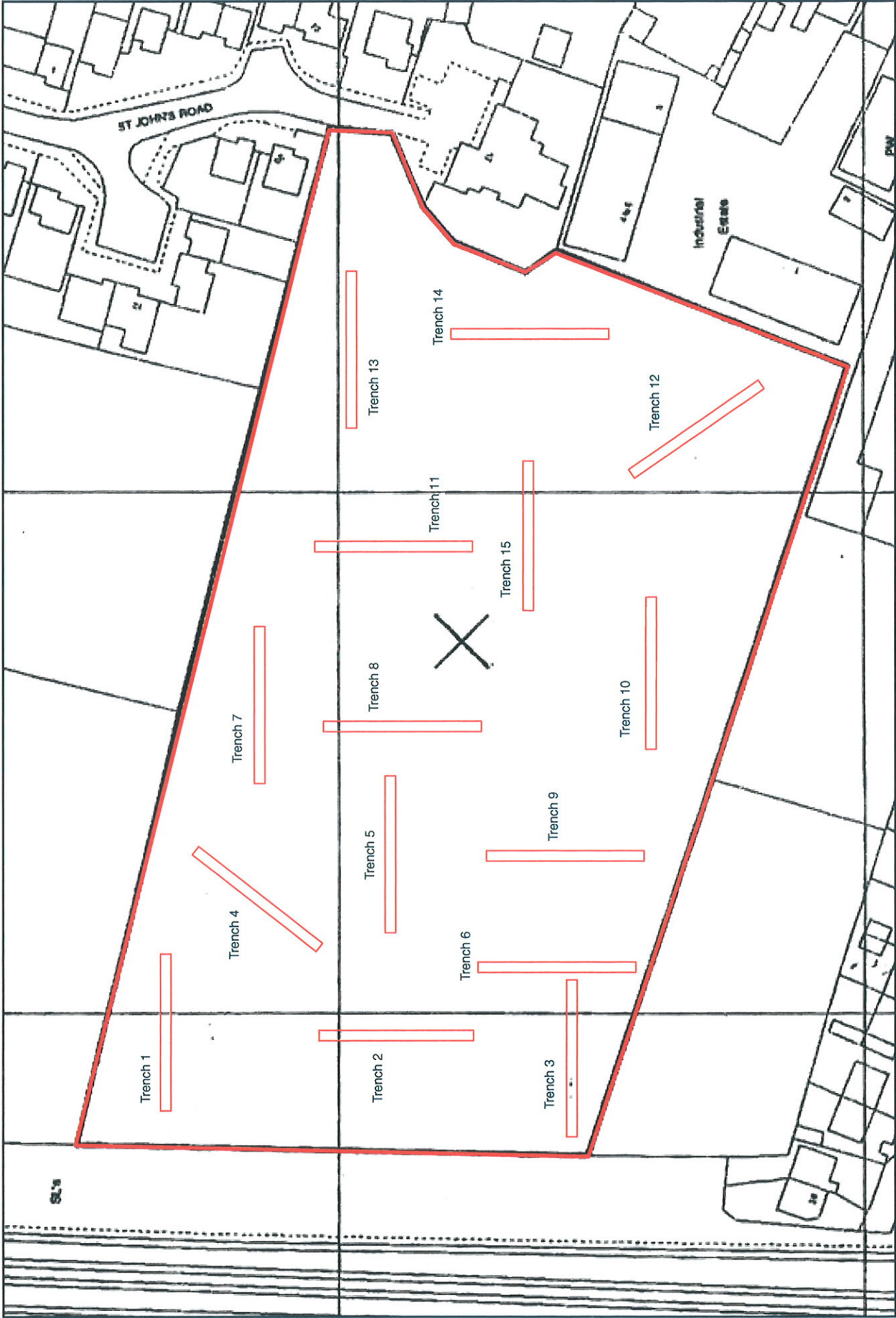
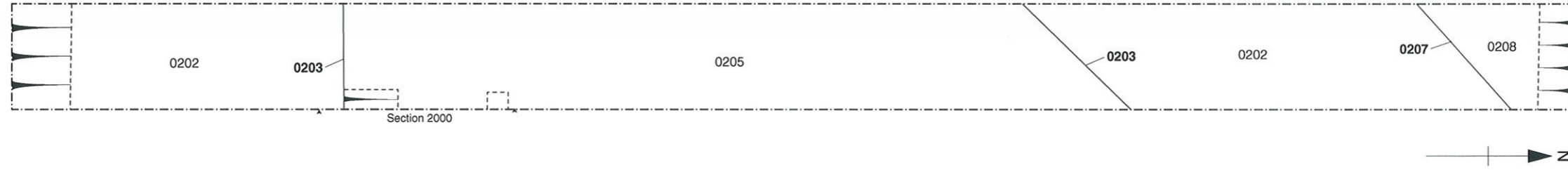


Figure 2: Trench location



Trench 2
Plan 0200



Trench 10
Plan 1000



Trench 15
Plan 1500

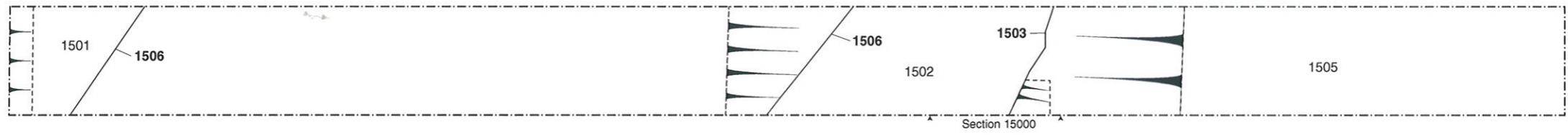


Figure 3: Plans of trenches 2, 10 and 15



Figure 4: Interpretive plan of features



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