



111 Ock Street, Abingdon, Oxfordshire

Archaeological Evaluation Report

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111 Ock Street, Abingdon, Oxfordshire

Archaeological Evaluation Report

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Summary

Oxford Archaeology was commissioned by Orion Heritage to undertake an archaeological evaluation at the site of a proposed retirement complex at 111 Ock Street, Abingdon, Oxfordshire. The work was undertaken as a condition of planning permission.

The evaluation was undertaken between the 1st and 2nd of June 2017 and comprised two 15m-long trenches.

The trenches uncovered stone walls comprising part of a malthouse shown on the 1874 Ordnance Survey town map, as well as a smaller outbuilding. A further feature, possibly a ditch, had been backfilled with roof tile that probably derived from the demolition of a 15th-17th building, but no *in situ* evidence for such a structure was found.

Acknowledgements

Oxford Archaeology would like to thank Orion Heritage for commissioning this project. Thanks are also extended to Hugh Coddington, Senior Archaeologist for Oxfordshire County Council, for his advice and guidance.

The project was managed for Oxford Archaeology by John Boothroyd. The fieldwork was directed by Robert McIntosh. Survey and digitizing was carried out by Ben Brown. Thanks are also extended to the teams of OA staff that cleaned and packaged the finds under the management of Leigh Allen and prepared the archive under the management of Nicola Scott.

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Scope of work

- 1.1.1 Oxford Archaeology (OA) was commissioned by Orion Heritage to undertake a trial trench evaluation at the site of a proposed retirement complex at 111 Ock Street, Abingdon, Oxfordshire.
- 1.1.2 The work was undertaken as a condition of planning permission (planning ref. P17/V0321/FUL). A Written Scheme of Investigation (OH 2017) was set by Orion Heritage detailing the Local Authority's requirements for work necessary to discharge the planning condition. This document outlines how OA implemented the specified requirements.

1.2 Location, topography and geology

- 1.2.1 The site lay to the north of Ock Street in the town of Abingdon, Oxfordshire, at NGR SU 49146 97009 (Fig. 1). The site adjoined the north side of Ock Street and was bounded to the north by Mullard Way, to the east by Mayott's Road and to the west by properties fronting Ock Street. The River Ock runs approximately 100m to the south of the site.
- 1.2.2 The area of the proposed development consists of a car dealership.
- 1.2.3 The geology of the area is mapped as Ampthill Clay Formation and Kimmeridge Clay Formation, Mudstone. Sedimentary Bedrock formed approximately 151 to 161 million years ago in the Jurassic period. Superficial deposits of the Wolvercote Sand and Gravel Member, formed up to 3 million years ago in the Quaternary period, are recorded as overlying the Bedrock geology (British Geological Survey online viewer).

1.3 Archaeological and historical background

- 1.3.1 The archaeological and historical background to the site has been described in detail in the Desk-Based Assessment (CgMs 2016). This short summary, derived from the DBA, is provided to place the site in context.
- 1.3.2 Although the Thames Valley was generally well populated during the prehistoric period due to both its topography and fertility, there is limited evidence of Mesolithic to Bronze Age activity within Abingdon. Several Neolithic and Bronze Age burial mounds are recorded on the Oxfordshire HER within a 1km radius of the site.
- 1.3.3 Approximately 650m to the east of the development area is the site of an Iron Age oppidum. The settlement would have been densely populated and much of the surrounding land dedicated to supplying its occupants. Previous nearby archaeological investigations have identified no Iron Age features, possibly indicating that this area was dedicated to agricultural activity.
- 1.3.4 Abingdon developed into a small Roman town with the continuation of occupation from the oppidum. However, there is no evidence to suggest that the site or its immediate surroundings were situated within the area of Roman settlement. As with the Iron Age, it is likely the area was utilized for agricultural production.

- 1.3.5 Abingdon Abbey was founded in c AD 675 approximately 550m to the south-east of the site, though later shifted further to the east. While there is some limited evidence for wider Saxon activity it is believed that the Saxon settlement did not expand beyond the town's medieval core. It is uncertain when Ock Street became an established highway, but it is likely to have been in place by the late Saxon period.
- 1.3.6 The settlement of Abingdon expanded during the medieval period. On the north side of the Ock, in the vicinity of the of the site, was Cotsetlecroft or Abingdon Field. This was an area of largely arable land cultivated in strips. By 1554 there were approximately 30 tenements recorded on the northern side of Ock Street.
- 1.3.7 Previous archaeological investigations conducted along Ock Street have recorded 11th-15th century medieval occupation and industrial activity.
- 1.3.8 By the 17th century Ock Street was densely occupied. Several Grade II listed buildings of 17th or early 18th century date lie immediately to the west of the site. Ock Street continued as a focus of industrial activity throughout the post-medieval period, with sack-weaving, leather-working, rope-making, malting and brewing all attested during the 18th and 19th centuries.
- 1.3.9 The earliest map of Abingdon showing a detailed illustration of Ock Street is Rocque's 1761 map, which clearly indicates buildings on both the north and south frontages (Fig. 6).
- 1.3.10 The site is shown in detail in the Ordnance Survey town map of 1874, when the site was occupied by two malhouses with associated ancillary buildings and service yards (Fig. 7).
- 1.3.11 By the early-mid 20th century the malhouses had been demolished and replaced by a large commercial building identified as a garage on later Ordnance Survey maps.

2 EVALUATION AIMS AND METHODOLOGY

2.1 Aims

2.1.1 The project aims and objectives were as follows:

- i. To establish the presence/absence, extent and character of any archaeological features on the site and to consider the archaeological interest of these in the context of the regional archaeological framework;
- ii. To examine any available evidence for economic activity and environmental conditions;
- iii. To generate an archive which will allow future research of the evidence to be undertaken if appropriate;
- iv. To disseminate the results of the work in a format and manner proportionate to the significance of the findings.

2.2 Methodology

2.2.1 The work was undertaken in accordance with the archaeological method statement (OA 2017). Site-specific methodologies were as follows:

- The evaluation comprised two trenches, each measuring 15 x 2m.
- The trenches were laid out in accordance with the Written Scheme of Investigation (Fig. 2).
- The current ground surface, a mix of concrete and tarmac, was broken out and then removed using a toothed bucket where necessary. Upon removal of the modern ground surface all further machine excavation was undertaken using a toothless ditching bucket.
- The trenches were excavated using a JCB 3CX under the supervision of an archaeologist. Spoil was stored adjacent to the trench edges.
- Machining continued in level spits until the first archaeological horizon was encountered. Once archaeological deposits had been exposed, further excavation proceeded by hand and the appropriate use of machine.
- The exposed surface was sufficiently cleaned to establish the presence/absence of archaeological remains.
- Machine-excavated sondages were placed at the ends of both trenches to record the depth of the deposits present within the trench.
- Upon agreement with Hugh Coddington, Planning Archaeologist for Oxfordshire County, the trenches were backfilled.

3 RESULTS

3.1 Introduction and presentation of results

- 3.1.1 The results of the evaluation are presented below and include a stratigraphic description of the trenches. The full details of all trenches, with dimensions and depths of all deposits, can be found in Appendix A. Finds data and spot dates are tabulated in Appendix B.
- 3.1.2 Context numbers reflect the trench numbers unless otherwise stated, eg pit 1002 is a feature within Trench 1, while ditch 2004 is a feature within Trench 2.

3.2 General soils and ground conditions

- 3.2.1 While the deposits present within each trench varied, they represent the same sequence of events. Natural geology was observed at approximately 2m below the present ground level, and was overlain by a series of post-medieval and modern deposits.
- 3.2.2 Ground conditions throughout the evaluation were generally good, and the trenches remained dry throughout. Archaeological features, where present, were easy to identify.

3.3 General distribution of archaeological deposits

- 3.3.1 Both of the trenches contained stone walls within the built layers, numbering four in total. Trench 2 also contained a single cut feature at its northern end.

3.4 Trench 1 (Fig. 3; Plates 1-4)

- 3.4.1 The natural geology was not reached in Trench 1. The earliest deposit recorded within the trench was a mid greyish brown silty sand made ground layer (1003), which was more than 0.7m thick (Plate 2).
- 3.4.2 Cutting into the top this deposit were two stone walls (1004 and 1005), each L-shaped as exposed within the trench and forming a rectangular structure that was aligned N-S and measured 4.0 x 2.0m. The walls were 0.3m wide and were constructed of light grey stone blocks of very variable size, averaging around 0.24 x 0.28 x 0.1m, and bonded with a light greyish yellow sandy mortar (Plate 3).
- 3.4.3 A third wall (1006) was located to the south-east of the building and ran obliquely across the trench on a N-S alignment (Fig. 3; Plate 4). It was 0.4m wide and was constructed of roughly shaped light grey stone blocks of variable size, averaging 0.25 x 0.3m, with light brownish yellow sandy mortar.
- 3.4.4 The walls were overlain by a demolition layer 1002, which consisted of dark grey brown sandy silt and contained post-medieval CBM and glass (not retained). This was overlain by the modern ground surface, comprising tarmac (1000) on a cement bedding layer (1001).

3.5 Trench 2 (Figs 4 and 5; Plates 5-7)

- 3.5.1 Natural geology, comprising yellow sand, was observed at approximately 2m below the modern ground level. The sand was overlain by a series of levelling deposits (2009, 2005 and 2004) with a combined depth of c 1.66m. The uppermost of these deposits (2009) was cut linear feature 2010 (Fig. 4; Plate 6). Due to safety restrictions, the feature was unexcavated and was recorded in plan only. The feature extended across the trench on a NW-SE alignment and measured 1.2m wide at its south-east end and 1.8m at its north-west end. Its fill consisted of broken roof tiles (2008).
- 3.5.2 Ditch 2010 was overlain by a further made ground layer (2005), which was cut by stone wall 2007 (Fig. 4; Plate 7). The wall was similar to those found in Trench 1. It was aligned N-S, parallel to the walls in Trench 1, and was 0.4m wide and 0.2m high. It was constructed of roughly shaped light grey stone blocks of varying size, averaging 0.3m by 0.2m by 0.1m, bonded by a light yellow sandy mortar. The stone blocks sat atop a single layer of CBM tiles bonded with the same mortar (Fig. 5). The remains of a possible floor surface, or bedding layer were present along the western side of the wall, indicating the interior of the structure. The deposit comprised a layer of compacted yellow sand with CBM fragments.
- 3.5.3 Wall 2007 and surface 2008 were overlain by modern deposits comprising a layer of partially crushed bricks 0.12m thick, levelling deposit 2002, concrete bedding layer 2001 and the present tarmac surface 2000.

3.6 Finds summary

- 3.6.1 Fragments of post-medieval CBM and glass were observed within all deposits, except 1003, but were not retained. A selection of CBM tile fragments were recovered from the upper fill of linear feature 2010 and have been dated to the 15th-17th century.

4 DISCUSSION

4.1 Reliability of field investigation

- 4.1.1 The trenches were excavated in dry weather and in good light conditions and archaeological features were readily identified.
- 4.1.2 The features were clearly identifiable within the layers in which they were present. The results therefore provide a reliable assessment of the strata that comprise the site.

4.2 Evaluation objectives and results

- 4.2.1 The aims and objects of the evaluation are detailed above in Section 2. The trenching successfully confirmed the presence of archaeological remains from the post-medieval period.

4.3 Interpretation

- 4.3.1 The evaluation uncovered the remains of structures associated with the post-medieval occupation of the site by malhouses. Stone walls 1006 and 2007 lie on parallel alignments 11.7m apart and correspond with the footprint of one of the malhouses seen on the 1874 Ordnance Survey town map (Fig 3). Walls 1004 and 1005 formed a much smaller building and although it cannot be matched with any of the structures shown on the 1874 map it is likely that it was an outbuilding associated with the malhouses.
- 4.3.2 Feature 2010 could not be excavated due to the depth of the trench, but may have been a boundary ditch that divided adjacent tenements fronting onto Ock Street. The tile with which it had been backfilled dated from the 15th-17th centuries and presumably derived from the demolition of a building of this date during a reorganisation of the site, perhaps when the malhouses were built.

4.4 Significance

- 4.4.1 The roof tile with which ditch 2010 was backfilled appears to derive from a 15th-17th century building, which presumably lay somewhere in the immediate vicinity although no *in situ* evidence for such a structure was found. The earliest structural evidence uncovered by the evaluation can be associated with the malhouses shown on the 1874 Ordnance Survey town map. The malhouses were demolished to ground level when the 20th century garage was constructed and are of little archaeological significance.

APPENDIX A TRENCH DESCRIPTIONS AND CONTEXT INVENTORY

Trench 1						
General description					Orientation	NW-SE
Trench contained a stone-walled building and a discrete wall, overlying made ground and in turn overlain by a demolition layer and the modern tarmac surface.					Length (m)	15
					Width (m)	1.6
					Avg. depth (m)	0.5 (max 1.24)
Context No.	Type	Width (m)	Depth (m)	Description	Finds	Date
1000	Layer	-	0.08	Tarmac	-	-
1001	Layer	-	0.16	Cement, light grey	-	-
1002	Layer	-	0.3	Dark grey brown sandy silt backfill, CBM and charcoal inclusions	-	-
1003	Layer	-	0.7	Medium greyish brown sandy silt	-	-
1004	Wall	0.3	-	Light grey stone blocks, roughly shaped, with a light greyish yellow sandy mortar	-	19th Century
1005	Wall	0.3	-	Light grey stone blocks, roughly shaped, with a light greyish yellow sandy mortar	-	19th Century
1006	Wall	0.4	-	Aligned N-S. Light grey stone blocks, roughly shaped, with a light brownish yellow sandy mortar	-	19th Century

Trench 2						
General description					Orientation	NNE-SSW
Trench contained a stone wall and a possible ditch, overlying made ground and in turn overlain by a demolition layer and the modern tarmac surface.					Length (m)	15
					Width (m)	1.6
					Avg. depth (m)	0.5m (max 2m)
Context No.	Type	Width (m)	Depth (m)	Description	Finds	Date
2000	Layer	-	0.08	Tarmac	-	-
2001	Layer	-	0.08	Light grey dry cement	-	-
2002	Layer	-	0.08	Yellow sandy, with crushed flint leveling deposit	-	-
2003	Layer	-	0.12	Mixed red bricks, not lain carefully, some frogged some not	-	-
2004	Layer	-	0.16	Grey and black silt burning layer, charcoal inclusions	-	-

2005	Layer	-	0.3	Dark brown sandy silt with increasing charcoal inclusions towards the top	-	-
2006	Layer	-	-	Medium grey brown sandy silt, with CBM and mortar inclusions	-	-
2007	Wall	0.46	-	Aligned N-S. Light grey stone blocks, roughly shaped, with light yellow sandy mortar	-	19th Century
2008	Fill of 2010	1.8	-	Fill of 2010 (unexcavated), consisted entirely of CBM roof tiles	-	-
2009	Layer	-	1.2	Medium yellow brown sandy silt	-	-
2010	Cut of ditch	1.8	-	Cut of ditch, aligned NW/SE (unexcavated).	-	-
2011	Layer	-	0.05	Single course of CBM tiles	-	-
2012	Layer	-	-	Natural, bright yellow sand	-	-

APPENDIX C FINDS REPORTS

C.1 CBM

By Identified by John Cotter

Context	Description	Date
2008	Three pieces of fairly crudely made orange-buff sandy fabric peg tiles, two with circular nail holes, in fresh condition, 462g	15th-17th century

APPENDIX D BIBLIOGRAPHY

CgMs 2016, Archaeological Desk-Based Assessment: Bellinger, 111 Ock Street, Abingdon, Oxfordshire, CgMs Consulting

OA 2017, 111 Ock Street Abingdon, Oxfordshire: archaeological method statement, Oxford Archaeology

OH 2017, Land at 111 Ock Street, Abingdon, Oxon: archaeological written scheme of investigation, Orion Heritage

APPENDIX E SITE SUMMARY DETAILS

Site name:	111 Ock Street, Abingdon
Site code:	ABOS17
Grid Reference	SU 49146 97009
Type:	Evaluation (2 trenches)
Date and duration:	1st-2nd June 2017
Area of Site	0.28 hectares
Location of archive:	The archive is currently held at OA, Janus House, Osney Mead, Oxford, OX2 0ES, and will be deposited with Oxfordshire County Museum Service in due course, under the following accession number: OXCMS: 2017.94
Summary of Results:	Walls from a 19th century malthouse were found in both trenches and small outbuilding associated with the malthouse was identified in Trench 1. Trench 2 also uncovered a ditch that had been backfilled with a dump of 15th-17th century roof tiles predating the construction of the malthouse. The structures overlay a depth of c 1.6m of made ground.

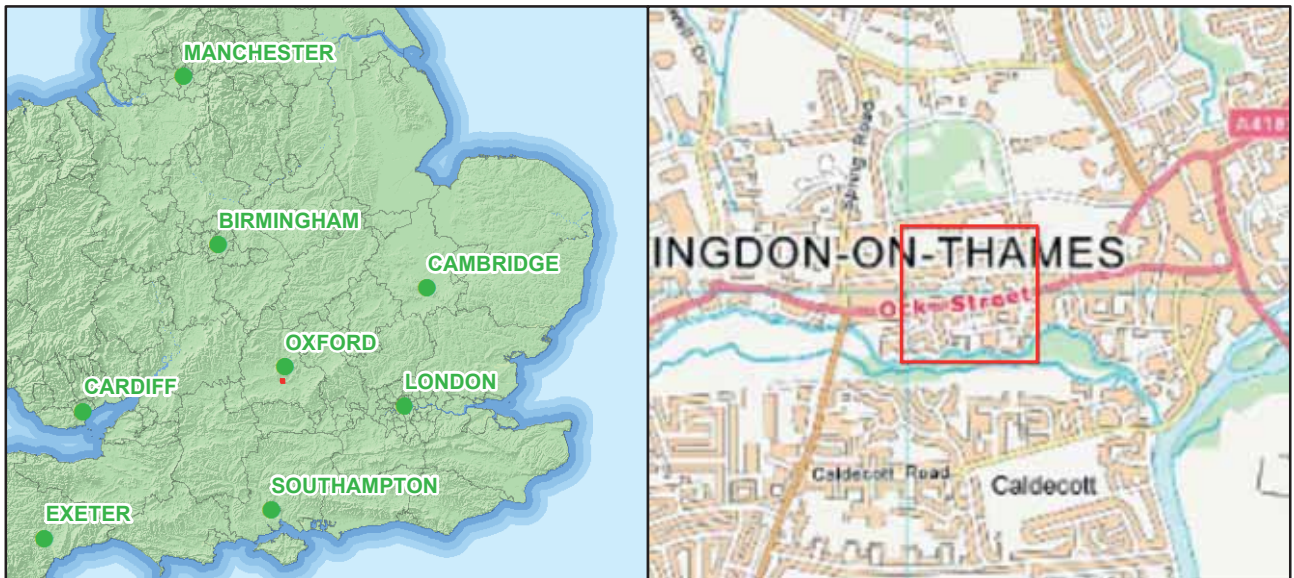


Figure 1: Site location

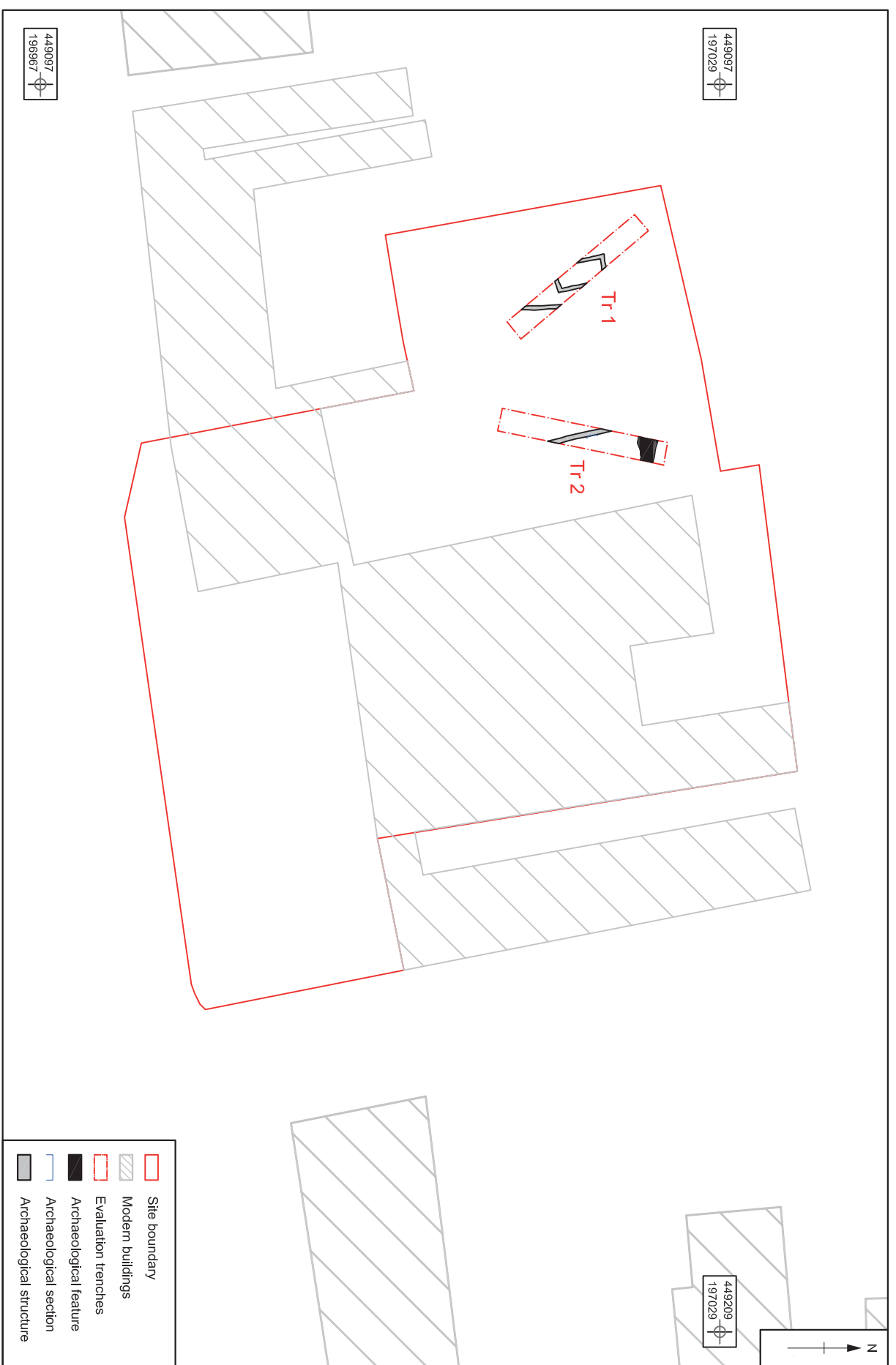
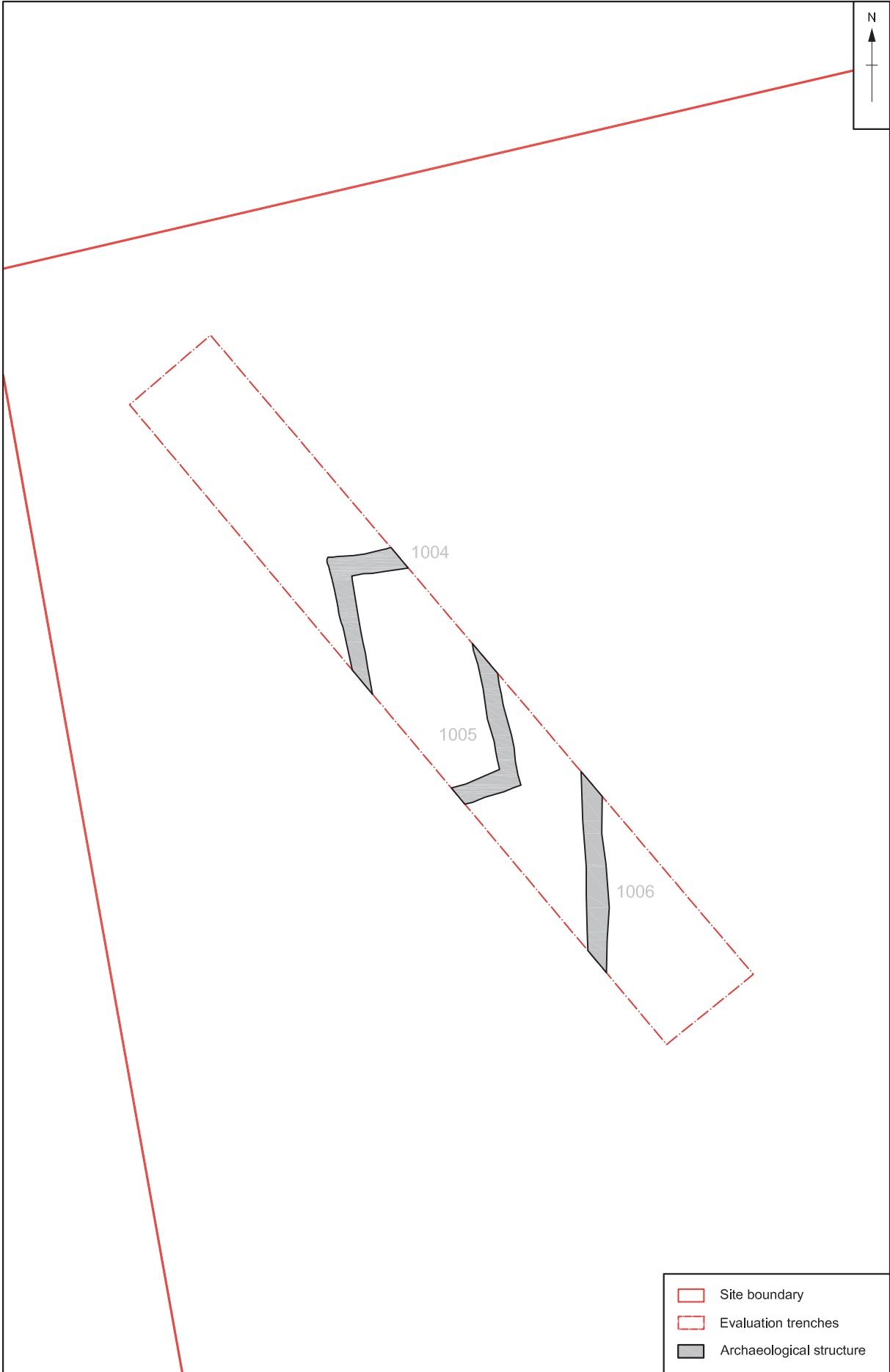


Figure 2: Location of Trenches

X:\a\Abingdon 111 Ock Street\010\geomatrics\02 CAD\ABOSEV_AbIngdon, 111 Ock Street_2017-06-06.dwg(Figure 3)***ABOSEV\berjamin.brown* 21 Jun 2017

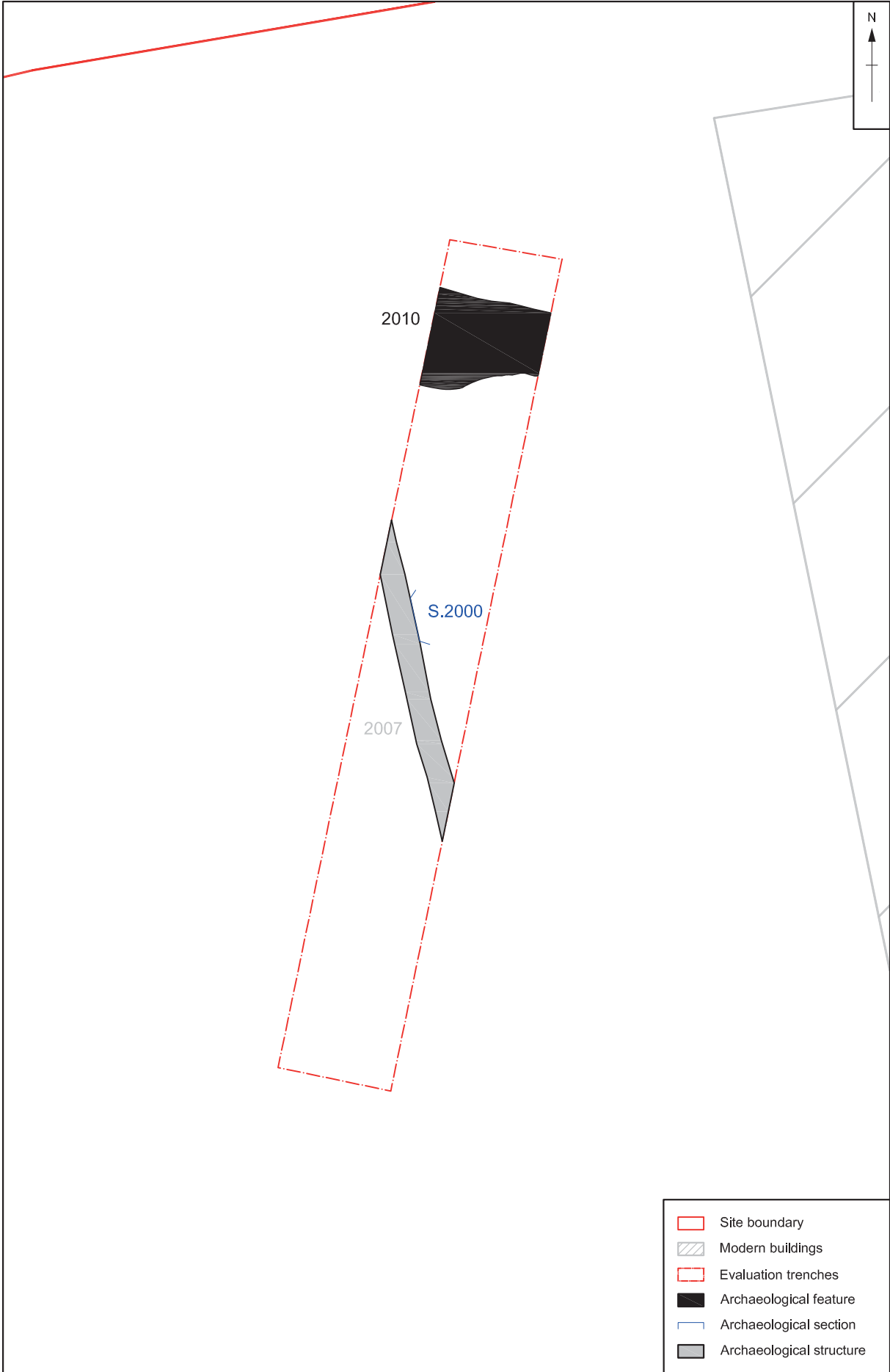


0 5 m

Scale at A4 1:100

Figure 3 - Trench 1

X:\a\Abingdon 111 Ock Street\010Geomatics\02 CAD\ABOSEV_Abingdon, 111 Ock Street_2017-06-06.dwg(Figure 4)***ABOSEV\benjamin.brown* 21 Jun 2017



0 5 m
Scale at A4 1:100

Figure 4 - Trench 2

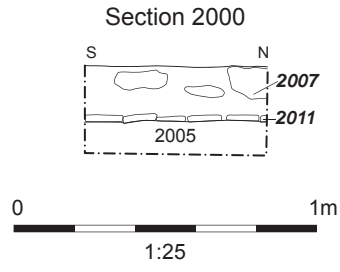


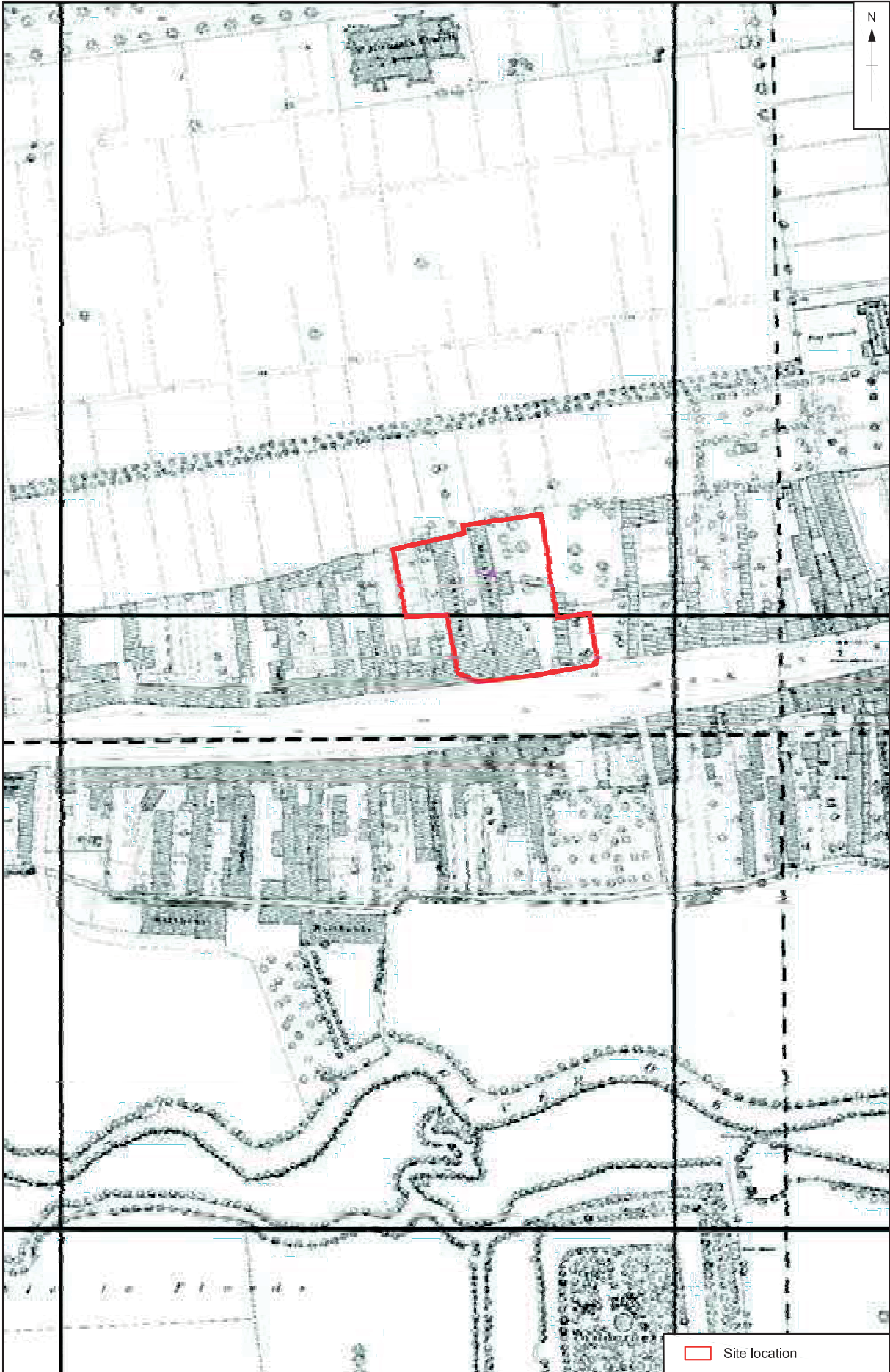
Figure 5: Section 2000



Figure 6: 1761 Rocque's Map of Berkshire

0 500 m
Scale at A4 1:12,500

X:\a\Abingdon 111 Ock Street\010Geomatics\02 CAD\ABOSEV_Abingdon, 111 Ock Street_2017-06-06.dwg(Figure 7)***ABOSEV\benjamin.brown* 06 Jun 2017



0 100 m
Scale at A4 1:2000

Figure 7 - 1874 Ordnance Survey Map



Plate 1 - Trench 1, view to NW



Plate 2 - Trench 1 - Deposit sequence, view to NE



Plate 3 - Trench 1 - Wall 1005, view to E



Plate 4 - Trench 1 - Wall 1006, view to S



Plate 5 - Trench 2, view to SW



Plate 6 - Trench 2 - Ditch 2010, view to NW



Plate 7 - Trench 2 -Wall 2007 and surface 2006, view to N



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