



Land south of Sandy Road, Willington, Bedfordshire

Archaeological Evaluation Report

November 2020

Client: Hollins Strategic Land

Issue No: 1

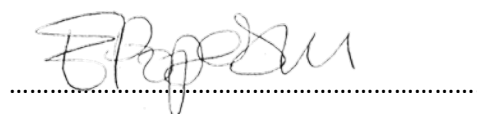
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Land south of Sandy Road, Willington, Bedfordshire

Archaeological Evaluation Report

Written by Stuart Ladd BA MA PCIfA

*With contributions from Lawrence Billington MA PhD and
illustrations by Stuart Ladd BA MA PCIfA*

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Summary

Between 16th and 25th November 2020, Oxford Archaeology undertook an archaeological evaluation at Sandy Road, Willington, Bedfordshire (TL 11747 49545). Eleven trenches (Trenches 1-10 and 12), totalling 350 linear metres, and two machine excavated test pits (Test Pits 11a and 11b) were excavated, which equated to just over a 3% sample of the proposed development area.

One undated ditch and an undated possible posthole were excavated. Three smaller features excavated were potentially natural in origin. Shallow medieval plough furrows were also identified across the site.

Acknowledgements

Oxford Archaeology would like to thank Hollins Strategic Land for commissioning this project. Thanks are also extended to Geoff Saunders who monitored the work on behalf of Bedford Borough Council Historic Environment (Archaeology) Team.

The project was managed for Oxford Archaeology by Pat Moan. The fieldwork was directed by Stuart Ladd. Survey and digitising were carried out by Tom Houghton.

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Scope of work

- 1.1.1 Oxford Archaeology (OA) was commissioned by Hollins Strategic Land to undertake a trial trench evaluation at Land south of Sandy Road, Willington. The site encompasses a proposed residential development area of 1.9ha, with a further 1ha of woodland.
- 1.1.2 The proposed development is for up to 50 dwellings with open space and new vehicular access (planning application 20/02151/MAO). The Bedford Borough Historic Environment Officer required a phase of pre-determination trial trenching to take place on site to aid in identifying whether any heritage assets of archaeological interest are present within the proposed development area. A Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI) was produced by OA (Moan 2020) detailing the Local Authority's requirements for work necessary to inform the planning process. This document outlines how OA implemented the specified requirements.

1.2 Location, topography and geology

- 1.2.1 The site lies on the south-eastern edge of Willington, south of Sandy Road, on flat land lying at approximately 26m OD. The nearest watercourse is the River Great Ouse, 750m north of the site.
- 1.2.2 The evaluation area is approximately 2.9ha in size, of which 1.9ha was easily accessible for trial trenching. The remaining hectare of land is woodland proposed for some minor landscaping and an attenuation pond, which was test pitted as part of this evaluation.
- 1.2.3 The British Geology Survey identified the solid geology of the site as Peterborough Mudstone, overlain with superficial deposits of river terrace sands and gravels. (<http://www.bgs.ac.uk/discoveringGeology/geologyOfBritain/viewer.html>, accessed November 2020). The majority of the site is currently laid to arable farmland with the southern third of the site consisting of woodland.

1.3 Archaeological and historical background

- 1.3.1 A full archaeological background, with assessment of significance was presented in a Desk Based Assessment (DBA) by RPS (RPS 2020) in advance of the fieldwork program. This considered all archaeological work and heritage assets held on the Bedford Borough Historic Environment Record (HER) within 1km of the site, as well as providing a map regression. The relevant parts of this background study are summarised below, and the closest records are located on Figure 1. Overall, the DBA identified the site is situated within a landscape rich in known archaeological remains. A geophysical survey was undertaken prior to evaluation, however, no anomalies of potential archaeological origin were highlighted (SUMO 2020).

Palaeolithic

- 1.3.2 A group of palaeolithic flint implements, including 25 hand axes (MBD674), were found at an unknown location in Willington. An additional palaeolithic flint flake was found at a gravel pit c.950m north of the site (MBD794, not illustrated; RPS 2020, 8).

Neolithic and Bronze Age

- 1.3.3 Neolithic to Bronze Age human remains, as well as a bead, pestle and mace head, have been found at Willington c.700m north-east of the site (MBD10700; RPS 2020, 8). A probable Bronze Age round barrow (MBD22159) lies 325m north-east of the site and a possible ring ditch (MBD22160, not illustrated) is located approximately 830m northeast of the site, while a further barrow (MBD22161) is located approximately 420m north-east of the site (RPS 2020, 8).

Iron Age and Romano-British

- 1.3.4 Nineteen records of cropmark anomalies are listed in the vicinity of the site. Based on their morphology, they most probably represent Iron Age to Romano-British settlement (e.g MBDs 770, 1860, 13392, 22157-8; RPS 2020, 9). These are particularly clear in the fields to the immediate south and south-east (MBD22155, MBD22156, MBD7204), with anomalies visible within 60m of the site and settlement features approximately 250m to the southwest (MBD22156). The route of a Roman road between Bedford and Wimpole, identified in aerial photos, passes approximately 800m south of the site (MBD738, not illustrated), just south of Hill Farm. Metal detecting has contributed to 112 finds of Roman coins within the study area, although none were found within the development area.

Medieval

- 1.3.5 The historic core of Willington is likely to lie close to Church Street/Station Road c.600m to the north-west of the site. The church of St Lawrence is a 16th century or later construction (Page 1912), lying c.900m to the north-west. The village was recorded in Domesday as *Welitone* (Open Domesday) and the name derives from Old English meaning Willow-tree (*wilign*) Farm/Settlement (*tun*) (Mawer and Stenton 1926, 99).

Post-medieval

- 1.3.6 A full map regression was undertaken for the DBA (RPS 2020, 11; figs 4-9) which demonstrated that the study area had lain within agricultural land throughout the post-medieval period, although it spanned a boundary between plots on the 1840 tithe map which was removed by 1884. This boundary is visible in crop marks as a double-ditched trackway in fields to the south-east although not within the development area. A similar double ditched crop mark c.300m to the north of the site (MBD985, see Fig. 1) could be extrapolated to the eastern corner of the development area and appears to deviate from a nearby boundary on the 1840 tithe map, which suggests it could potentially be of earlier date.

2 AIMS AND METHODOLOGY

2.1 Aims

2.1.1 The project aims and objectives, as set out in the WSI (Moan 2020) were as follows:

- ground truth geophysical results, by testing a range of anomalies of likely archaeological origin, and areas where no anomalies registered
- establish the presence or absence of archaeological remains on the site, characterise where they are found (location, depth and extent), and establish the quality of preservation of any archaeology and environmental remains
- provide sufficient coverage to establish the character, condition, date and purpose of any archaeological deposits
- provide sufficient coverage to evaluate the likely impact of past land uses, and the possible presence of masking deposits
- provide – in the event that archaeological remains are found – sufficient information to construct an archaeological mitigation strategy, dealing with preservation, the recording of archaeological deposits, working practices, timetables, and orders of cost.

2.2 Methodology

Excavation methods

2.2.1 Ten of the original trenches (Trenches 1-10) measuring 30m x 2m were excavated (Fig. 2); approximately 3% of the development area. In place of Trench 11, located over the proposed attenuation pond at the southern limit of the site, two test pits were mechanically excavated in the evidently disturbed ground, confirming that no undisturbed archaeological deposits survived at that location. Following the monitoring meeting on-site, a twelfth trench (Trench 12; 30m x 2m) was opened in the north-eastern corner of the development area to check for the presence of a possible trackway, identified in crop marks to the north of the site.

2.2.2 All machine excavation took place under the supervision of a suitably qualified and experienced archaeologist. Excavation was performed by a 360^o-type mechanical excavator removing soil to the depth of geological horizons, or to the upper interface of archaeological features or deposits, whichever was encountered first. A toothless ditching bucket with a minimum bucket width of 1.8m was used.

2.2.3 All deposits and spoilheaps were scanned with a metal detector but no non-modern material was recovered. All potential archaeological features were excavated by hand. Where multiple plough furrows were encountered, one per trench was excavated to confirm its nature.

Recording of archaeological deposits and features

2.2.4 Records comprised survey, drawn, written, and photographic data. All features were recorded using OA's Digital Recording System, RTK GPS survey and *pro-forma* context sheets. Section drawings were recorded by hand at 1:20 scale.

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 that contained archaeological remains. The full details of all trenches with dimensions and depths of all deposits can be found in Appendix A. An artefact report is included as Appendix B. Figure 2 provides a plan of the results of the evaluation. Selected sections are presented as Figure 3.

3.2 General soils and ground conditions

3.2.1 The soil sequence in the trenches was fairly uniform. The natural geology of river terrace gravels and sand was overlain by a thin (typically 0.1m thick) mid brown clay-silt subsoil, which in turn was overlain by topsoil, typically 0.3m thick. The only exceptions to this were at the locations of Test Pits 11a and 11b into disturbed ground.

3.2.2 Ground conditions throughout the evaluation were generally good, and the site remained dry throughout. Archaeological features and furrows, where present, were easy to identify against the underlying natural geology.

3.3 General distribution of archaeological deposits

3.3.1 A ditch was found in Trench 10 in the eastern half of the site. Features that may have been postholes were found in Trenches 1 and 9. Agricultural plough furrows were visible in Trenches 1, 2, 3, 5, 9 and 10. Trenches 4, 6, 7 and 8 contained no features. Finds were recovered from furrows in Trenches 1 and 2. Test pits 11a and 11b (replacing Trench 11) were in an area of deep modern ground disturbance. The features are shown in Fig. 2.

3.3.2 Furrows were the most common feature encountered within the trenches. Where present, one was excavated within each trench, numbered and recorded in detail. All were following the same south-east to north-west alignment, where surviving within the trenches. Those excavated furrows had shallow sides and very gradual or imperceptible breaks of slope to concave bases. They were up to 1.8m wide and 0.22m deep, but typically shallower.

3.4 Trench 1

3.4.1 A possible posthole (**103**) was excavated near the northern end of the trench (Plate 1; Fig. 3, Section 2). This was 0.3m in diameter, 0.25m deep, with asymmetric steep to vertical sides and a concave base. The fill (104) was soft mid-grey brown silty sand with occasional gravel. No finds or charcoal were present.

3.4.2 Three furrows crossed the trench on a south-east to north-west alignment. Of these, the southern-most was excavated (**101**; Fig. 3, Section 1). This was 1.8m wide and 0.22m deep. Its fill (102) was a mid to dark reddish brown sandy silt with moderate gravel inclusions. This produced a small, abraded sherd of early medieval pottery, a fragment of roof tile and a fragment of poorly preserved bone.

3.5 Trench 2

- 3.5.1 Two furrows crossed either end of the trench at an oblique angle. The easternmost furrow (**201**) was excavated. This was probably a continuation of furrow **101** in Trench 1 and measured 1.1m wide by 0.07m deep. Its fill (**202**) was mid to dark brown sandy silt with occasional gravel inclusions. It contained a residual Neolithic or Bronze Age struck flint flake.

3.6 Trench 3

- 3.6.1 Three furrows crossed the southern half of the trench. The middle of the three furrows (**301**) was excavated but measured at most 0.05m in depth, with a width of 1.5m. Its fill (**302**) was mid-brown silt.

3.7 Trench 4

- 3.7.1 Trench 4 contained no archaeology (Plate 4).

3.8 Trench 5

- 3.8.1 A single furrow (**501**) obliquely crossed the western end of the trench. This was 1.6m wide by 0.14m deep and was filled (**502**) with mid-brown silt with occasional gravel inclusions.

3.9 Trenches 6, 7 and 8

- 3.9.1 Trenches 6, 7 and 8 contained no archaeology.

3.10 Trench 9

- 3.10.1 Three possible features were present in the eastern half of the trench. These have been recorded as possible pits or postholes but could be natural in origin (Plate 2).
- 3.10.2 Pit **901** was sub-oval in plan was 0.7m long, although part of it lay beyond the northern edge of the trench. It was 0.4m wide and 0.12m deep with an asymmetric, shallow u-shaped profile (Fig. 3, Section 6).
- 3.10.3 Pit **903** was 0.8m long, 0.6m wide and 0.12m deep with a sub-circular shape in plan. Its profile was closer to a v-shape, with very shallow sides (Section 7).
- 3.10.4 Possible posthole **905** measured 0.45m long and 0.28m wide by 0.09m deep with a rounded v-shaped profile (Fig. 3, Section 8).
- 3.10.5 All three features had similar fills (**902**, **904**, **906** respectively) consisting of mid brown silt with occasional gravel inclusions. None of these fills produced any finds or appeared to contain any charcoal.

3.11 Trench 10

- 3.11.1 A small ditch terminus (**1001**) lay within the centre of Trench 10, approaching from the east (Plate 3). This was linear in plan with a rounded terminus. It was 0.55m wide with shallow sides breaking gently to a concave base at a depth of 0.13m (Fig. 3, Section 9). Its fill (**1002**) was mid brown silt with occasional rounded gravel inclusions.

3.11.2 Four furrows crossed the trench. The southern-most furrow (**1003**) was excavated, which measured 1.1m wide and 0.1m deep. It was filled with mid-light brown sandy silt with occasional gravel inclusions (1004).

3.12 Test pits 11a and 11b

3.12.1 Trench 11 was abandoned in favour of two smaller test pits into evidently disturbed ground. The entire area was disturbed to a depth in excess of 1m and was evidently backfilled with concrete and brick rubble as well as other modern material.

3.13 Trench 12

3.13.1 Trench 12 contained no archaeological features (Plate 5).

3.14 Finds summary

3.14.1 One sherd of medieval pottery, one struck flint, one fragment of roof tile and one fragment of bone were recovered from agricultural plough furrows in the western part of the site.

4 DISCUSSION

4.1 Evaluation objectives and results

4.1.1 The evaluation confirmed the lack of archaeological remains as suggested by the geophysical survey (SUMO 2020).

4.2 Interpretation

4.2.1 The plough furrows all align (south-east to north-west) with Wood Lane to the south-west. This alignment is shared by the trackway visible on aerial images to the south-east, probably representing the pre-1840 boundary visible on the tithe map (see Section 1.3.6).

4.2.2 The post hole in Trench 1 was undated and could not be placed in its broader context. The possible features in Trench 9 did not represent convincing evidence of nearby activity. The ditch (**1001**) within Trench 10 may be related to the extensive cropmarks to the south and south-east with the lack of any further features suggesting that the site lies mainly beyond the periphery of these probable areas of Iron Age and Roman activity (see Section 1.3.4).

4.2.3 Trench 12 was positioned to capture the extrapolated line of a trackway visible as crop marks to the north of the site (MBD985, see Fig. 1). However, this trench did not detect any features. It is possible this trackway passed to the east of the development area or stopped short of it.

4.3 Significance

4.3.1 No features of any significance were exposed on the site. The finds are probably residual items and the overall paucity of finds tallies with the site's peripheral location to known settlement from the medieval period onwards.

APPENDIX A TRENCH DESCRIPTIONS AND CONTEXT INVENTORY

Trench	Topsoil (m)	Subsoil (m)	Geology	Features
1	0.3	0.15	Gravel	101 Posthole? 103 Furrow Unexcavated furrows x2
2	0.25	0.1	Gravel & silt	201 Furrow Unexcavated furrows x1
3	0.25	0.12	Clayey silt	301 Furrow Unexcavated furrows x2
4	0.3	0.1	Gravel & silt	None
5	0.35	0.1	Gravel & silt	501 Furrow
6	0.25	0.13	Gravel	None
7	0.3	<0.05	Gravel	None
8	0.25	0.1	Gravel & silt	None
9	0.3	0.1	Gravel & silt	901 Pit? 903 Pit? 905 Posthole?
10	0.3	0.18	Clayey silt & gravel	1001 Ditch 1003 Furrow Unexcavated furrows x2
11	-	-	Not encountered	Modern disturbance
12	0.3	-	Gravel & silt	None

Table 1: Trench descriptions

Trench	Context	Width (m)	Depth (m)	Type	Fill of	Function
1	101	1.2	0.1	cut		Plough Furrow
1	102			fill	101	Fill
1	103			cut		Posthole
1	104			fill	103	Fill
2	201	1	0.1	cut		Plough Furrow
2	202			fill	201	Fill
3	300			cut		Plough Furrow
3	301			cut		Plough Furrow
3	302			fill	301	Fill
5	501			cut		Plough Furrow
5	502			fill		Fill
9	901			cut		Pit
9	902			fill	901	Fill
9	903			cut		Pit
9	904			fill	903	Fill
9	905			cut		Posthole
9	906			fill	905	Fill
10	1001			cut		Ditch
10	1002			fill	1001	Fill
10	1003			cut		Plough Furrow
10	1004			fill	1003	Fill

Table 2: Context inventory

APPENDIX B FINDS REPORTS

B.1 Pottery

B.1.1 A single sherd of early medieval pottery weighing 3g was recovered from a plough furrow in Trench 1. This is of fabric CO3: Fine sandy reduced wear (Baker *et al.* 1979).

B.2 Ceramic building material

B.2.1 A single piece of medieval roof tile weighing 34g was recovered from a plough furrow in Trench 1. It displayed an orange surface with grey core, 11mm thick. Its narrow form suggests it may be medieval in date (Carole Fletcher, pers. comm.).

B.3 Flint

By Lawrence Billington

B.3.1 A single flint flake was recovered from a plough furrow in Trench 2.

B.3.2 A small well-struck tertiary flake, with the scars of previous regular removals on its dorsal surface. Not chronologically diagnostic but probably Neolithic or Early Bronze Age in origin.

B.4 Animal Bone

B.4.1 A single fragment of unidentifiable animal bone (2g) was recovered from a furrow in Trench 1.

B.5 Recommendations

B.5.1 The ceramics (pot sherd, tile and animal bone) may be dispersed. The flint may be dispersed to a teaching collection.

APPENDIX C BIBLIOGRAPHY

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RPS 2020 *Historic Environment Desk-Based Assessment: Land off Sandy Road, Willington, Bedfordshire*, Report JAC25532

SUMO 2020, Geophysical survey of Land south of Sandy Road, Willington

APPENDIX D OASIS REPORT FORM

Project Details

OASIS Number	oxfordar3-407261		
Project Name	Sandy Road, Willington		
Start of Fieldwork	16/11/202	End of Fieldwork	25/11/2020
Previous Work		Future Work	unknown

Project Reference Codes

Site Code	XBDSRW20	Planning App. No.	20/02151/MAO
HER Number	BEDFM2020.74	Related Numbers	

Prompt	Development
Development Type	Residential
Place in Planning Process	Between deposition of an application and determination

Techniques used (tick all that apply)

- | | | |
|--|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Aerial Photography – interpretation | <input type="checkbox"/> Grab-sampling | <input type="checkbox"/> Remote Operated Vehicle Survey |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Aerial Photography - new | <input type="checkbox"/> Gravity-core | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Sample Trenches |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Annotated Sketch | <input type="checkbox"/> Laser Scanning | <input type="checkbox"/> Survey/Recording of Fabric/Structure |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Augering | <input type="checkbox"/> Measured Survey | <input type="checkbox"/> Targeted Trenches |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Dendrochronological Survey | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Metal Detectors | <input type="checkbox"/> Test Pits |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Documentary Search | <input type="checkbox"/> Phosphate Survey | <input type="checkbox"/> Topographic Survey |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Environmental Sampling | <input type="checkbox"/> Photogrammetric Survey | <input type="checkbox"/> Vibro-core |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Fieldwalking | <input type="checkbox"/> Photographic Survey | <input type="checkbox"/> Visual Inspection (Initial Site Visit) |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Geophysical Survey | <input type="checkbox"/> Rectified Photography | |

Monument	Period
Plough furrow	Medieval (1066 to 1540)
Ditch	Uncertain
	Choose an item.

Object	Period
Pottery	Medieval (1066 to 1540)
Flint	Neolithic (- 4000 to - 2200)
Tile	Post Medieval (1540 to 1901)
Bone	Uncertain

Project Location

County	Bedfordshire	Address (including Postcode) Land south of Sandy Road, Willington, MK44 3QP
District	Bedford Borough	
Parish	Willington	
HER office	Bedford Borough	
Size of Study Area	2.9ha	
National Grid Ref	TL 11747 49545	

Project Originators

Organisation	Oxford Archaeology East
Project Brief Originator	Geoff Saunders (Bedford Borough Historic Environment)
Project Design Originator	Pat Moan (OA East)
Project Manager	Pat Moan (OA East)
Project Supervisor	Stuart Ladd (OA East)

Project Archives

	Location	ID
Physical Archive (Finds)	OA East	BEDFM2020.74
Digital Archive	OA East	BEDFM2020.74
Paper Archive	OA East	BEDFM2020.74

Physical Contents	Present?	Digital files associated with Finds	Paperwork associated with Finds
Animal Bones	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Ceramics	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Environmental	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Glass	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Human Remains	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Industrial	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Leather	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Metal	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Stratigraphic		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Survey		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Textiles	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Wood	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Worked Bone	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Worked Stone/Lithic	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
None	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
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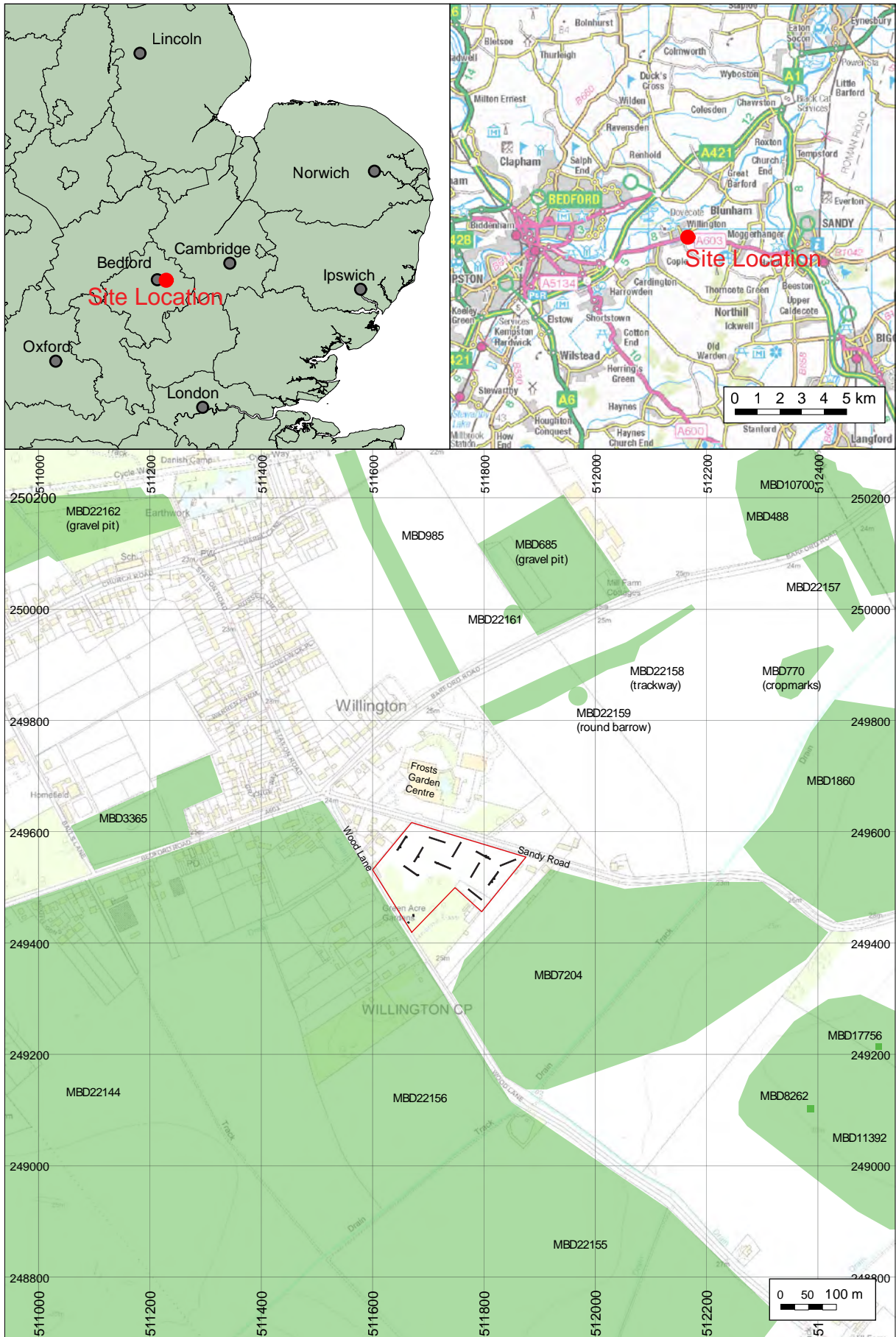
Digital Media

Database	<input type="checkbox"/>
GIS	<input type="checkbox"/>
Geophysics	<input type="checkbox"/>
Images (Digital photos)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Illustrations (Figures/Plates)	<input type="checkbox"/>
Moving Image	<input type="checkbox"/>
Spreadsheets	<input type="checkbox"/>
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Text	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Virtual Reality	<input type="checkbox"/>

Paper Media

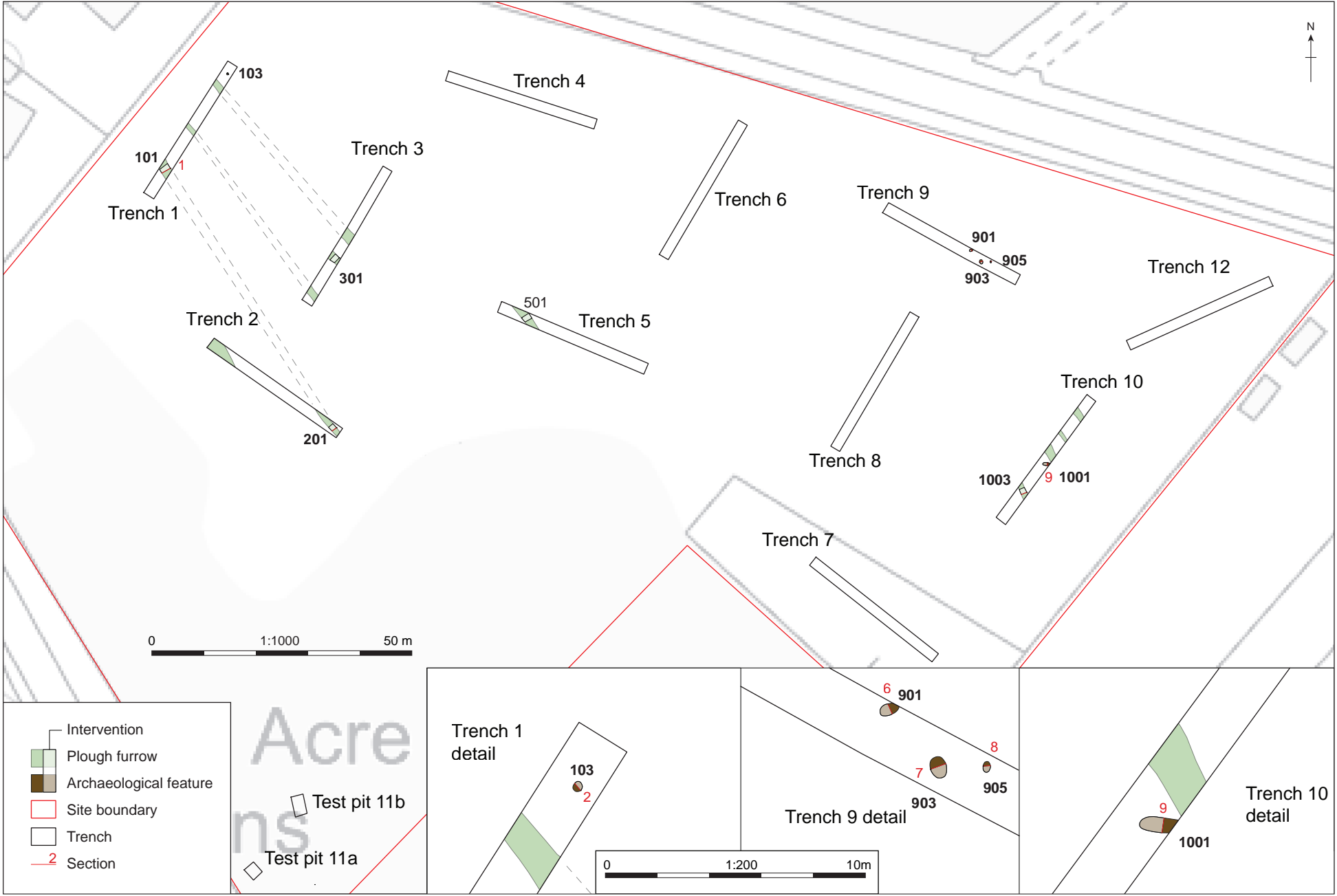
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Context Sheets	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Correspondence	<input type="checkbox"/>
Diary	<input type="checkbox"/>
Drawing	<input type="checkbox"/>
Manuscript	<input type="checkbox"/>
Map	<input type="checkbox"/>
Matrices	<input type="checkbox"/>
Microfiche	<input type="checkbox"/>
Miscellaneous	<input type="checkbox"/>
Research/Notes	<input type="checkbox"/>
Photos (negatives/prints/slides)	<input type="checkbox"/>
Plans	<input type="checkbox"/>
Report	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Sections	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Survey	<input type="checkbox"/>

Further Comments



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Figure 1: Site location showing archaeological trenches (black) in development area (red) and select HER records (green; after RPS 2020, fig. 3).



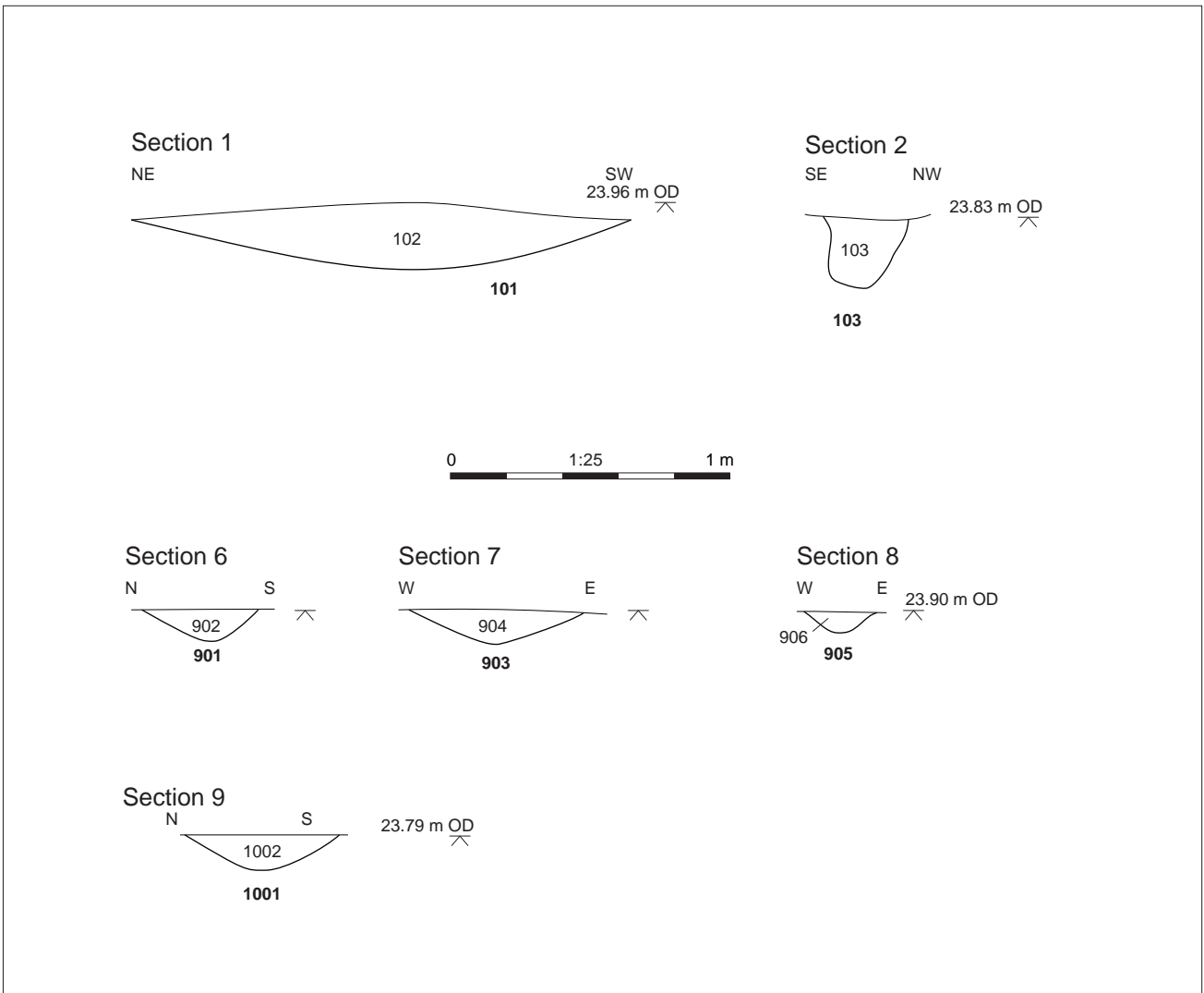


Figure 3: Selected section drawings



Plate 1: Posthole **103**, looking south-west.



Plate 2: Features **901** (top left), **903** (left) and **905** (right), looking north.



Plate 3: Ditch 1001, looking east.



Plate 4: Trench 4 (no archaeology), looking south-east.



Plate 5: Trench 12 (no archaeology), looking north-east.



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