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Further Archaeological Evaluation Report

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Summary

Oxford Archaeology carried out an archaeological evaluation on the site of proposed residential development north of West Road, Sawbridgeworth, Hertfordshire, in February 2021. The fieldwork was commissioned by Taylor Wimpey as a condition of planning permission.

Preceding geophysical survey of the c 5.7ha development site was undertaken in 2016 and identified a concentration of linear and curvilinear anomalies in the north-east corner of the site and two areas of several broadly NW–SE aligned anomalies in the southern half of the site. Subsequent trial trench evaluation, comprising the investigation of 19 trenches, was undertaken by Oxford Archaeology in 2018, targeted upon the geophysical survey results. The evaluation revealed a small number of ditches in the centre and south of the site, correlating with the geophysical anomalies. Although generally undated, the ditches were suggestive of a trackway and associated enclosure/field boundaries. Other ditches encountered on site correlated with post-medieval field boundaries depicted on 19th-century mapping.

Given the results of the 2018 evaluation, in conjunction with those of the 2018 investigations at nearby Chalk's Farm, which uncovered the remains of late Bronze Age–early Iron Age and early Roman settlement and agricultural activity, it was deemed necessary to undertake a further phase of evaluation at the site. Four additional trenches were excavated in the southern half of the site to further investigate the previously revealed ditches.

The continuations of the trackway ditches were revealed in the centre of the site, with remnants of a metallised surface also identified. Adjacent ditches may demonstrate the maintenance and modification of the trackway or perhaps associated enclosure/field boundaries. Artefactual dating evidence recovered from these ditches was limited and of mixed date, comprising small pottery sherds of late Bronze Age–early Iron Age date and fragments of Roman ceramic building material. It is probable that these remains provide evidence of outlying agricultural activity associated with the later prehistoric and early Roman settlement evidence at Chalk's Farm.

A further undated ditch and a parallel early Roman ditch were revealed in the south of the site, suggestive of additional land divisions, probably agricultural features.

A post-medieval field boundary ditch and modern land drains are demonstrative of agricultural use of the landscape during these periods.

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The project was managed for Oxford Archaeology by Stuart Foreman. The fieldwork was directed by Mark Dodd, who was supported by Tomasz Neyman and Alice Golton. Survey and digitising was carried out by Tomasz Neyman and Marjaana Kohtamaki. Thanks are also extended to the teams of OA staff that cleaned and packaged the finds under the supervision of Leigh Allen, processed the environmental remains under the supervision of Rebecca Nicholson and prepared the archive under the supervision of Nicky Scott.

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Scope of work

- 1.1.1 Oxford Archaeology (OA) was commissioned by Taylor Wimpey to undertake a further trial trench evaluation at the site of a proposed housing development. A total of four trenches were excavated in February 2021 in the south of the proposed development site, expanding upon the results of the preceding geophysical survey (Sabin 2016) and trial trench evaluation of the site (OA 2018).
- 1.1.2 The work was undertaken as a condition of planning permission (planning ref. 3/18/1760/FUL) forming part of a process of mitigation against the impact of the development. Although the Local Planning Authority had not set a brief for the works, discussions with Alison Tinniswood (Hertfordshire County Council Archaeological Officer) established the scope of the work required. A written scheme of investigation (WSI) was produced by OA detailing the Local Authority's requirements for work necessary to discharge the planning condition (OA 2020). This document outlines how OA implemented the specified requirements.
- 1.1.3 All work was undertaken in accordance with the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists' *Standard and Guidance for archaeological Field Evaluation* (CIfA 2014a) and local and national planning policies.

1.2 Location, topography and geology

- 1.2.1 The site lies to the north-west of the town of Sawbridgeworth, Hertfordshire, close to the border with Essex (NGR TL 47842 15448; Fig. 1). The site is located within an irregularly shaped arable field, c 5.7ha in extent, that is currently fallow.
- 1.2.2 The area of proposed development is bounded to the south by West Road and housing, to the east by Mandeville Primary School and Sawbridgeworth Town Football Club, and to the north by The Leventhorpe School playing field. To the west there is further agricultural land.
- 1.2.3 The site is located at the south-eastern edge of the Thorley Uplands Landscape Character Area, which is described as consisting of sloping arable farmland (EHD nd). The River Stort lies about 700m east of the site, where it flows southwards to the River Lea at Hoddesdon.
- 1.2.4 The site lies at around 67m above Ordnance Datum (aOD), rising gently to the north-east.
- 1.2.5 The geology of the site is mapped by the British Geological Survey (BGS) as London Clay formation, consisting of clay, silt and sand. This sedimentary bedrock was formed c 48–56 million years ago in the Palaeogene period. This is overlain by Head deposits along the lower-lying western edge of the site and Lowestoft Formation across the remainder of the site.

1.3 Archaeological and historical background

- 1.3.1 The archaeological and historic background of the site has been described in detail in a desk-based assessment (DBA; CSa Environmental Planning 2014) and will not be

reproduced here. The following overview is provided to place the current works into context, summarising the results of recent archaeological investigations both at the site and within the immediate vicinity.

- 1.3.2 The first historical record of the town of Sawbridgeworth (MHT17) dates from 1222, when Geoffrey de Say received a grant for a market to be held outside the parish church, 300m east of London Road. In the later medieval period, Sawbridgeworth parish was known for growing saffron to supply the London markets. By the 16th century, malting had taken over as a primary industry, and numerous malthouses flourished in the town during the 18th and 19th centuries, such as the one at 11–13 Station Road (MHT9422).
- 1.3.3 Prior to the recent evaluation of the site in 2018, the site was not known to contain any designated or undesignated heritage assets, though several prehistoric, Romano-British, medieval and post-medieval sites and find spots are known in the vicinity (within 1km). Four Neolithic burials that may have been part of a long barrow were located 450m to the east (MHT1387). A Neolithic flint arrowhead was discovered in a house garden on the Bullfields Estate, just over 500m to the east (MHT2784). The partial skeleton of a young person, possibly a female, was discovered during road works in 1994, c 600m to the south (MHT9074). The skeleton was tentatively dated to the Roman period by a single pottery sherd and a lava quern fragment contained within the fill.
- 1.3.4 A large sub-circular cropmark was identified on aerial photographs in 2006 within the grounds of Leventhorpe School (MHT13006). A geophysical survey (ASWYAS 2007) and a trial trench evaluation (TVAS 2009) in this area did not identify any archaeological features, though a subsequent evaluation exposed several known field boundaries, post-medieval postholes and four prehistoric struck flints (TVAS 2010).

Chalks Farm, Sawbridgeworth

- 1.3.5 An archaeological evaluation was undertaken in 2018 by Pre-Construct Archaeology Ltd at Chalk's Farm, Sawbridgeworth, 300m south-west of the West Road site (PCA 2018). This identified large parts of a later prehistoric settlement, with evidence of continuity into the Roman period. The site has not yet been extensively excavated. The following summary is provisional, based on the geophysical survey and evaluation trenching results (PCA 2018).
- 1.3.6 The site was initially settled in the later Bronze Age–early Iron Age. Two areas of activity dating to this period were identified, located on the summit and base of the hill. It is unclear whether the later prehistoric activity was continuous or, as commonly seen in Hertfordshire, there was a hiatus in the middle Iron Age. The settlement comprised large rectilinear ditched enclosures, trackways and areas of intercutting pits. The features were associated with large finds assemblages including pottery, animal bone and limited amounts of prehistoric worked flint, indicating that the contemporary settlement was likely to have been present in close proximity. By the later Iron Age, there was an expansion of the site, including the establishment of enlarged enclosures and a rectilinear double-ditched enclosure potentially associated with a 'funnel' entranceway. The quantity of finds recovered from many of the

excavated ditches provides a strong indicator that the settlement core was located on or close to the site in this period. One potential roundhouse was identified by the geophysical survey, while numerous inter-cutting pits provided further evidence of associated activity.

- 1.3.7 Occupation continued into the early Roman period, with evidence for reorganisation of the existing enclosures, the addition of further ditched enclosures, areas of inter-cutting pits and associated trackways. The majority of a ditched trackway was recorded leading out of the settlement to the south-east (downslope). These trackway ditches were associated with smaller artefact assemblages than the main settlement core. Other ditches, running parallel to the track, may indicate that an earlier (possibly late Iron Age) trackway was present. These could alternatively be boundaries of small fields laid out in relation to the trackway.
- 1.3.8 A series of inter-cutting 2nd-century AD Roman pits were identified, as well as a large, but relatively shallow, backfilled hollow. These features appear to represent the latest phases of the settlement. It is possible that the settlement core shifted elsewhere during the mid to late Roman periods, perhaps to the north-west where significant numbers of Roman metal artefacts have been found by metal detectorists.

Previous archaeological work at West Road, Sawbridgeworth

- 1.3.9 A magnetometer survey was carried out at the site in 2016, and several anomalies were identified with a concentration located towards the north-eastern corner of the site (Sabin 2016). The interpretation of these results is presented in Figure 2. Several roughly NW–SE aligned linear anomalies were identified in the southern and central parts of the site. Two of these were thought to represent field boundaries recorded on the 1839 Sawbridgeworth tithe map, which shows the site divided into three fields. These boundaries had been removed by 1879 as they were absent from the 1st edition Ordnance Survey map.
- 1.3.10 Archaeological trial trench evaluation, comprising the investigation of 19 trenches, was carried out at the site by OA in 2018 and confirmed the presence of archaeological remains in areas identified by the geophysical survey (OA 2018). Sections of a NW–SE aligned trackway of uncertain date were revealed in Trenches 1 and 2, which were proposed as potentially relating to the extensive multi-period archaeological site at Chalks Farm to the south-west. Prehistoric flint flakes were recovered from two of the ditches in Trench 1, including the ditch forming the northern side of the trackway, although it is possible that these could have been residual. An undated ditch on a similar alignment was also revealed in the south of Trench 7. All of these ditches were sealed by a subsoil/colluvial layer that was also observed in other trenches in the western part of the site. A small pottery sherd dating from the middle Bronze Age–early Iron Age was recovered from this layer in Trench 5. The evidence does not allow the date of the ditches in Trenches 1 and 2 and the southern part of Trench 7 to be conclusively determined, though it does hint that they may have been prehistoric in date.
- 1.3.11 Various post-medieval field boundaries shown on the 1839 tithe map were also detected by the geophysical survey and investigated in Trenches 5 and 7 towards the south end of the site, and in Trenches 12 and 16 in the centre of the site. Various

geophysical anomalies identified in the northern part of the site were investigated and found to be geological features.

2 AIMS AND METHODOLOGY

2.1 General

- 2.1.1 This further phase of evaluation, as stated in the WSI (OA 2020), sought to examine more closely the remains detected in the 2018 trenches (OA 2018) and establish the character, date and state of preservation of any further archaeological remains within the south of the proposed development area.
- 2.1.2 The evaluation aimed to clarify the significance of the archaeological features in the southern part of the site by recovering more secure dating evidence. In addition, the further trenches were to provide a more extensive plan view of the features and improve the likelihood of detecting discrete features such as burials, pits and posthole structures.
- 2.1.3 The work also aimed to confirm whether or not the Iron Age and Roman settlement at Chalks Farm extended into the West Road site.

2.2 Specific aims and objectives

- 2.2.1 The specific aims and objectives of the evaluation were as follows:
- i. to try and recover dating evidence for the trackway found in the trenches. Previous investigation recovered a very small amount of prehistoric pottery, insufficient to reliably date the feature;
 - ii. to determine whether the features are outlying parts of the Iron Age and Roman settlement that was identified in fields to the south-west, at Chalks Farm; and
 - iii. to provide sufficient information to assess the need for any further mitigation.
- 2.2.2 The programme of archaeological evaluation was conducted within the general research parameters and objectives defined by the following regional research frameworks relevant to this area:
- iv. Research and Archaeology Revisited: A Revised Framework for the East of England (Medlycott 2011);
 - v. Research and Archaeology: A Framework for the Eastern counties, 1: Resource Assessment (Glazebrook 1997); and
 - vi. Research and Archaeology: A Framework for the Eastern counties, 2: Research Agenda and Strategy (Brown and Glazebrook 2000).

2.3 Methodology

- 2.3.1 This investigation comprised the excavation of four trial trenches (Trenches 20–23), each measuring 25m by 5m (500m² in total). This represents a 3% sample of the 5.7ha development area, expanding upon the 3% previously investigated (Trenches 1–19; OA 2018). The trench layout in relation to the previous phase of works and geophysical survey results is shown in Figure 2.
- 2.3.2 All work was conducted in accordance with the ClfA's *Code of Conduct* (ClfA 2014b) and *Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Field Evaluation* (ClfA 2014a).

- 2.3.3 All fieldwork was undertaken in accordance with the requirements of the OA *Fieldwork Manual* (Wilkinson 1992) and the revised OA fieldwork manual (OA forthcoming). Further guidance was provided to all excavators in the form of the OA 'Fieldwork Crib Sheets' – a companion guide to the *Fieldwork Manual* (OA 1992). These were issued ahead of formal publication of the revised Fieldwork Manual (OA forthcoming).
- 2.3.4 The trenches were generally located in accordance with the WSI (OA 2020), though the location of Trench 20 was repositioned approximately 2m to the north-west due to the presence of a large topsoil heap that partially covered the trench location. However, it was still targeted on the same geophysical anomaly and did not affect the aims of the investigation.
- 2.3.5 A summary of OA's general approach to excavation and recording was detailed in the written scheme of investigation for this phase of work and shall not be repeated here. The site-specific methodology was as follows:
- i. Service plans were checked before work commenced on site and before trenching, and the footprint of each trench was scanned by a qualified and experienced operator using a CAT and Genny with a valid calibration certificate.
 - ii. All machine excavation took place under the supervision of a suitably qualified and experienced archaeologist.
 - iii. Trial trenches were excavated by a mechanical excavator 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 to excavate the trenches in spits no greater than 0.1m thick.
 - iv. Spoil was stored alongside trenches. Topsoil, subsoil and hand-excavated archaeological deposits were kept separate during excavation to allow for sequential backfilling. The trenches were backfilled once approval had been received from Alison Tinniswood.
 - v. The top of the first archaeological deposit was cleared by machine, then cleaned by hand. Exposed surfaces were cleaned by trowel and hoe, as necessary, in order to clarify revealed features and deposits.
 - vi. All features were investigated and recorded to provide an accurate evaluation of archaeological remains. All relationships between features or deposits were investigated and recorded. Excavation characterised the full archaeological sequence down to undisturbed natural deposits, and any apparently natural features (such as tree-throw holes) were investigated to establish their character.
 - vii. All excavation of archaeological deposits was carried out by hand.
 - viii. Investigation slots through all linear features were up to 2m in length, where appropriate, to maximise the recovery of artefacts.

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.

3.2 General soils and ground conditions

3.2.1 The soil sequence in the trenches was relatively uniform. The natural geology of silty clay was overlain by ploughsoil in Trenches 21 and 22, whereas in lower-lying Trenches 20 and 23 to the west of the site a shallow subsoil layer was present between the natural geology and the ploughsoil.

3.2.2 Despite persistent snowfall and freezing temperatures, ground conditions throughout the evaluation were generally good. Some groundwater was encountered in Trench 23, but this did not impact the fieldwork. Overall, the archaeological features were easy to identify against the underlying natural geology, and the changing conditions allowed features to weather-out where present.

3.3 General distribution of archaeological deposits

3.3.1 Archaeological features were present in all four of the trenches excavated. Trenches 21 and 22 revealed a probable trackway and associated ditches, and several small field boundaries were encountered in Trenches 20 and 23.

3.4 Trenches 22 and 21 (Figures 3 and 4)

3.4.1 Trench 22 revealed a series of NW–SE aligned parallel linear features (Plates 1 and 2). At the north-east end of the trench, ditch 2202 measured 1.06m wide and 0.54m deep, with slightly convex steep sides and a rounded base. It was filled with a lower fill of brown silty clay with frequent pebbles and chalk flecks (2203), overlain by deposit 2204, which comprised a similar deposit with notably fewer inclusions. Both deposits were minerogenic with just a few charcoal flecks and no finds recovered.

3.4.2 Less than 1m to the south-west was parallel ditch 2205. It was slightly smaller at 0.76m wide and 0.58m deep, with steep sides and a rounded base. It contained a single fill of brown silty clay (2206) and produced a single abraded sherd of late Roman pottery.

3.4.3 Ditch 2207 lay approximately 0.5m to the south-west of ditch 2205. It had a broad concave profile measuring 1.42m wide and up to 0.39m deep. It contained a naturally silted deposit (2208) of brown silty clay and contained no finds. Ditch 2209 had a very similar profile, measuring 1.6m wide and 0.58m deep, and contained a fill of brown silty clay (2210). The two ditches were approximately 6m apart and were separated by an undulating hollow (2211). Feature 2211 was linear in plan and aligned NW–SE. It measured 3m wide and had an undulating, although broadly concave, base up to 0.5m deep. Cut into the base of the feature were two distinct narrow channels, also aligned NW–SE, suggestive of wheel ruts. Spaced approximately 1.2m apart, they were each 0.2m wide and 0.1m deep. At the base of feature 2211 were the remnants of a deliberately laid layer of flint pebbles (2212) (Plate 3). They covered an area 2.2m wide

along the base of the feature and survived in patchy concentrations. These were sealed beneath deposit 2210, which also filled ditch 2209 and therefore suggests these features were broadly contemporary. Two small scraps of late Bronze Age–early Iron Age pottery were recovered from this deposit, above the pebble surface.

- 3.4.4 Ditches 2202, 2207 and 2209 corresponded with the plotted geophysical anomalies targeted by the trench. Based on the corresponding geophysical anomalies and the results of the previous phase of works (as seen in Trench 1), it is likely that ditches 2205 and 2207 continued into Trench 21 as ditches 2102 and 2104, respectively (Plates 4 and 5). Ditch 2209 also appears to have continued as far as Trench 21 where it terminated within the trench and was recorded as ditch terminal 2106. All three features in Trench 21 (2102, 2104, 2106) were filled with brown silty clay deposits producing small quantities of pottery. Two small pottery sherds of late Bronze Age–early Iron Age date were recovered alongside a fragment of Roman ceramic building material (CBM) in deposit 2103 of ditch 2102, and a small piece of late Bronze Age–early Iron Age pottery was recovered from fill 2105 of ditch 2104. Ditch 2106 produced six small sherds of late Bronze Age–early Iron Age pottery from its fill (2107). Bulk soil sample 2 was also collected from this deposit and produced a further piece of late Bronze Age–early Iron Age pottery, as well as a small quantity of charcoal, a charred cereal grain fragment and a relatively large quantity of snail shells.

3.5 Trenches 23 and 20 (Figures 5 and 6)

- 3.5.1 Trench 23 revealed two broadly parallel ditches on NNE–SSW alignments (Plate 6). Ditch 2303 was 1.1m wide and 0.27m deep, with moderately steep sides and a rounded base (Plate 7). It contained a single fill of brown silt clay (2306), which produced a residual sherd of possible early Iron Age pottery amongst a larger assemblage of mid–late 1st-century AD Roman pottery (six sherds). Bulk soil sample 1, collected from this fill, yielded a few fragments of charcoal and charred cereal grains, as well as a relatively large quantity of snail shells.
- 3.5.2 Ditch 2304 was approximately 6m to the east and was 0.7m wide and 0.3m deep, with a concave profile. It contained a sterile deposit of brown silty clay (2305) from which no finds were recovered and was truncated to the south by a geotechnical investigation pit.
- 3.5.3 Trench 20 was located to the south-east of Trench 23 and revealed two ditches. Correlating with a geophysical anomaly targeted by the trench, ditch 2003 was on a NNW–SSE alignment and measured 0.46m wide and 0.1m deep (Plate 8). It contained a minerogenic silty clay deposit (2005) from which no finds were retrieved. Extrapolating the alignment of this ditch using the corresponding geophysical survey results, it is likely that this was a continuation of ditch 2304 to the north.
- 3.5.4 At the north-east end of the trench was an E–W aligned ditch (2004). It was 1.27m wide and 0.56m deep, with moderately steep sides and a rounded base. The lower fill of the ditch was a brown silty clay (2006), and this was overlain by a darker naturally silted deposit (2007). The upper fill of this ditch produced four fragments of Roman CBM, which are considered to have been residual, as the ditch corresponds with a field boundary depicted on the 1839 tithe map and its eastward continuation was

previously excavated in Trench 7 in 2018, which produced fragments of early post-medieval CBM.

- 3.5.5 A number of land drains were also revealed within Trenches 20 and 23, on NW–SE and NNW–SSE alignments correlating with geophysical anomalies.

3.6 Finds summary

- 3.6.1 A small quantity and limited range of finds were recovered during the evaluation. The majority of finds comprise pottery, much of which is broadly dated to the late Bronze Age–early Iron Age period. The remaining pottery is of Roman date, with most sherds dating to the mid–late 1st century AD; a single sherd is of late Roman date.
- 3.6.2 Five fragments of CBM were also collected, all of which are Roman in date and suggest a Roman building may have been located within the vicinity of the site.
- 3.6.3 A single worked flint flake provides very limited evidence of broadly prehistoric activity within the wider landscape.
- 3.6.4 A very small quantity of charred cereal grains was recovered from the site through environmental soil sampling, some of which are indeterminate fragments, though wheat has been identified. A few fragments of charcoal are also present within the collected bulk soil samples, together with larger quantities of snail shells.

4 DISCUSSION

4.1 Reliability of field investigation

4.1.1 Despite the adverse weather conditions, the results of this investigation remained unaffected, as the ground dried relatively quickly in the majority of the trenches and the features were easily identifiable against the light colour of the natural geology.

4.1.2 The evaluation results demonstrate the presence of archaeological remains associated with later prehistoric and Roman activity on site. There was a good correlation between the results of the geophysical survey and the features identified, and no discrete features were revealed despite the wider trenches excavated. Consequently, the combined results of the two phases of evaluation and geophysical survey can be considered together as providing a reliable indication of the archaeological remains that exist at the site.

4.2 Evaluation objectives and results

4.2.1 The trial trench evaluation is considered to have achieved its general and site-specific aims (see above). This further phase of evaluation recorded the continuations of the ditches previously revealed in the centre and south of the site during the 2018 evaluation within all four additional trenches.

4.2.2 Although small in size, the assemblages of pottery and other artefacts recovered from the features provide further evidence for dating the phases of activity at the site. As a consequence, this allows reasonable conclusions to be drawn about the relationship between these ditches and the settlement at Chalk's Farms, to the south-west of the site.

4.3 Interpretation

4.3.1 The various parallel features recorded in Trenches 21 and 22 were previously identified in the 2018 evaluation and were suggested as the remains of a ditch-defined trackway (OA 2018). The results of this investigation have further confirmed their presence and provide further information regarding their function. In particular the metallised layer within hollow 2211 provides evidence of the trackway itself, with two distinct wheel ruts being identified at the base. This was certainly contemporary with the adjacent ditch 2209, and based on the similarities in their profile, it is likely that the ditch was related to ditch 2207 and together defined the trackway route. The additional ditches located immediately to the north-east on parallel alignments may be indicative of earlier or later phases of trackway ditches or perhaps served as field boundaries alongside the trackway. The trackway metallised layer itself was not recorded in adjacent Trenches 1 and 2 from the 2018 investigation, suggesting that its presence in Trench 22 is likely to be an isolated fragment of preservation. Certainly, in Trench 21, which was located on slightly higher ground to the south-east, the shallow ploughsoil and lack of interface with the natural geology is a strong indicator that these remains had been truncated and removed by more recent agricultural activity. Nevertheless, the terminal end of ditch 2209/2106 suggests a change in the character of the trackway at this location, perhaps related to a change in direction or a deliberate break in the trackway ditch for an entranceway.

- 4.3.2 The trackway and adjacent ditches produced a small amount of late Bronze Age–early Iron Age pottery and a small quantity of Roman pottery and CBM, all of which was relatively abraded. On this basis, it could be argued that the earlier material is residual within later Roman features. However, the reality may be more complex than this and given the survival of numerous features along the same alignment, it probably indicates that the trackway and associated ditches formed a boundary that was persistent in the landscape for a long period of time, probably starting in the late Bronze Age period and potentially continuing into the early Roman period.
- 4.3.3 Ditch 2303 is confidently dated to the Roman period, and although it was not detected as an anomaly by the previous geophysical survey, it may have formed an outlying field boundary related to the nearby settlement at Chalk’s Farm.
- 4.3.4 Based on the geophysical survey results, the adjacent ditch (2304) appeared to have curved around to the south-east where its possible continuation was recorded in Trench 20 (ditch 2003). As the two ditches are undated and were relatively different in profile, it remains unclear how and if the two features were related. If related, however, the projected alignment of ditches 2304 and 2003 may also indicate that the ditches linked up with the undated ditch revealed in the southern end of Trench 7 and together formed a small enclosure.
- 4.3.5 Ditch 2004 correlates with the E–W aligned anomaly identified by the geophysical survey and is also aligned with ditch 705 from the 2018 investigation, which contained early post-medieval CBM. The two ditches correlate with a field boundary shown on the 1839 Sawbridgeworth tithe map, confirming its post-medieval date.
- 4.3.6 The NW–SE and NNW–SSE aligned linear geophysical anomalies targeted by Trenches 20 and 23 correlate with modern land drains revealed during this evaluation.
- 4.3.7 Overall, given the relatively sterile nature of the features, abraded condition of the pottery and the lack of associated settlement evidence, these features were probably peripheral to any contemporary focus of settlement activity. The multi-period site at Chalk’s Farm is the most likely candidate for the location of an associated settlement, where evidence of activity dating from the late Bronze Age–early Iron Age, early Roman and post-medieval periods has been identified (PCA 2018).

4.4 Significance

- 4.4.1 The evaluation has recorded the continuations of ditches in the centre and south of the site, expanding upon the results of the 2018 evaluation of the site. Although limited, the finds assemblages collected during this further phase of evaluation provide additional dating evidence for late Bronze Age–early Iron Age and early Roman activity at the site.
- 4.4.2 The archaeological remains are suggestive of a trackway and agricultural activity that was probably peripheral to contemporary areas of settlement recorded to the south-west at Chalk’s Farm, providing limited further insight into the activities and industries that may have taken place at the site during the later prehistoric and early Roman periods. Nevertheless, the evaluation results provide additional information about the scale of activity within the landscape during these periods and confirm that the trackway and adjacent ditches formed part of a broader field system and wider connections within the landscape. The lack of discrete features identified on site and

the limited quantity and range of finds recovered from the enclosure/field boundary and trackway ditches are also demonstrative of the largely agricultural nature of activity in this part of the landscape, suggesting that the settlement activity revealed at Chalk's Farm did not extend as far as the West Road site.

- 4.4.3 The evidence of post-medieval/modern agricultural activities, limited to a field boundary ditch and land drains, demonstrate the agricultural use of the landscape during this time, supporting the historic mapping of the area, and is of little local significance.

APPENDIX A TRENCH DESCRIPTIONS AND CONTEXT INVENTORY

Trench 20						
General description					Orientation	NE-SW
Trench revealed two ditches. Consists of topsoil and subsoil overlying natural geology of silty clay.					Length (m)	25
					Width (m)	5
					Avg. depth (m)	0.2
Context No.	Type	Width (m)	Depth (m)	Description	Finds	Date
2000	Layer	-	0.1	Topsoil (truncated at this location)	-	-
2001	Layer	-	0.1	Subsoil	-	-
2002	Layer	-	-	Natural	-	-
2003	Cut	0.46	0.1	Ditch		
2004	Cut	1.27	0.56	Ditch		
2005	Fill	0.46	0.1	Fill of 2003	-	-
2006	Fill	-	0.16	Fill of 2004		
2007	Fill	-	0.4	Fill of 2004	Pot, CBM	Med/PM

Trench 21						
General description					Orientation	NE-SW
Trench revealed two parallel ditches and a ditch terminus. Consists of topsoil overlying natural geology of silty clay.					Length (m)	25
					Width (m)	5
					Avg. depth (m)	0.2
Context No.	Type	Width (m)	Depth (m)	Description	Finds	Date
2100	Layer	-	0.2	Topsoil	-	-
2101	Layer	-	-	Natural	-	-
2102	Cut	0.75	0.34	Ditch	-	-
2103	Fill	-	0.34	Fill of 2102	Pot, CBM	
2104	Cut	1.4	0.46	Ditch		
2105	Fill	-	0.46	Fill of 2104	Pot	LBA/EIA
2106	Cut	1.8	0.7	Ditch terminus		
2107	Fill	-	0.7	Fill of 2106	Pot	LBA/EIA

Trench 22						
General description					Orientation	NE-SW
Trench revealed four parallel ditches and a metalised trackway. Consists of topsoil overlying natural geology of silty clay.					Length (m)	25
					Width (m)	5
					Avg. depth (m)	0.2
Context No.	Type	Width (m)	Depth (m)	Description	Finds	Date
2200	Layer	-	0.2	Topsoil	-	-
2201	Layer	-	-	Natural	-	-
2202	Cut	1.06	0.54	Ditch	-	-
2203	Fill	-	0.2	Fill of 2202		
2204	Fill	-	0.34	Fill of 2202		
2205	Cut	0.76	0.38	Ditch		

2206	Fill	-	0.38	Fill of 2205	Pot	Roman
2207	Cut	1.42	0.39	Ditch		
2208	Fill	-	0.39	Fill of 2207		
2209	Cut	1.6	0.58	Ditch		
2210	Fill	-	0.5	Fill of 2209 and 2211	Pot	LBA/EIA
2211	Cut	3.1	0.5	Cut of hollow way		
2212	Layer	2.2	0.05	Pebble metaling in 2211		

Trench 23						
General description					Orientation	NE-SW
Trench revealed two ditches. Consists of topsoil and subsoil overlying natural geology of silty clay.					Length (m)	25
					Width (m)	5
					Avg. depth (m)	0.2
Context No.	Type	Width (m)	Depth (m)	Description	Findings	Date
2300	Layer	-	0.2	Topsoil	-	-
2301	Layer	-	0.1	Subsoil	-	-
2302	Layer	-	-	Natural	-	-
2303	Cut	1.1	0.27	Ditch		
2304	Cut	0.7	0.3	Ditch		
2305	Fill	-	0.3	Fill of 2304	-	-
2306	Fill	-	0.27	Fill of 2303	Pot	Roman

APPENDIX B FINDS REPORTS

B.1 Prehistoric pottery

By Alex Davies

Introduction

- B.1.1 Some 13 sherds (55g) of prehistoric date were recovered from five contexts (Table 1). The assemblage is poorly preserved, with a low mean sherd weight of 4.2g. The material in two contexts (2103 and 2306) was almost certainly residual, as Roman pottery and CBM were found in the same contexts. The material in at least some of the other three contexts producing prehistoric pottery may also be residual, as the groups were very small, and the contexts cannot be considered as securely prehistoric in date based on the pottery evidence.
- B.1.2 Most of the pottery is in a medium flint fabric. The material in this fabric comprises undiagnostic body sherds. A single rim from context 2306 is sandy rather than flint tempered. It is likely the rim is early Iron Age in date, although a late Bronze Age date is possible. The rest of the material has been spot dated broadly to the late Bronze Age or early Iron Age. There is some reservation about this date, as flint tempering was also dominant in the region (for example at Stansted: Leivers 2008) in the early and middle Neolithic, and the middle Bronze Age, with sand a minor element in this later period.

Context	Sherds	Weight (g)	Fabric	Spot date	Comment
2103	2	16	Flint, medium	LBA/EIA	Residual
2105	1	3	Flint, medium	LBA/EIA	
2107	7	28	Flint, medium	LBA/EIA	1 sherd from sample 2
2210	2	5	Flint, medium	LBA/EIA	
2306	1	3	Sand, medium	EIA, poss LBA?	Rim. Residual
TOTAL	13	55			

Table 1: Prehistoric pottery assemblage

Retention

- B.1.3 The material has future research value and should be retained.

B.2 Late Iron Age and Roman pottery

By Edward Biddulph

Introduction

- B.2.1 Seven sherds of pottery, weighing 173g, were recovered. Each context group was sorted into fabrics, which were quantified by sherd count and weight in grams. Forms were identified, by rim, to type using Going's (1987) Chelmsford-based corpus and quantified by estimated vessel equivalents (EVE). Fabrics were assigned codes from OA's pottery recording system (Booth nd). A description of the pottery is provided in

Table 2. The following fabrics were encountered (codes in brackets from Tomber and Dore 1998):

- E80 – Grog-tempered ware (SOB GT)
- O57 – Hadham oxidised ware (HAD OX)
- R20 – Sandy reduced ware
- R30 – Medium sandy reduced ware

Context	Ware	No. sherds	Weight (g)	Type	EVE	Spot date
2206	O57	1	2	Body sherd	-	AD 250–410
2306	E80	1	22	Body sherd	-	AD 43–70/100
	R30	2	55	Body sherds	-	
	R20	3	94	Jar (Going type G23)	0.17	
<i>Total</i>		7	173		0.17	

Table 2: Quantification of the Roman pottery by context

Discussion

B.2.2 The pottery from context 2306, a fill of ditch 2303, was deposited in the mid/late 1st century AD or later, given the presence of grog-tempered ware (E80) in association with Roman-period reduced wares. Just a single rim sherd, from a necked jar in a coarse reduced ware (R20), was identified. The form (G23) typically dates to the later 1st or 2nd century (Going 1987, 25). The single sherd of pottery from context 2206, a fill of ditch 2205, was identified as Hadham oxidised ware (O57), which conventionally dates to the later 3rd and 4th centuries, although fabrics consistent with Hadham oxidised ware were distributed locally from the later 1st century AD (Going 1987, 3).

B.2.3 Though small, the assemblage indicates Roman activity in the vicinity of the site dating to the earlier and later Roman periods. This may be related to an area of Roman settlement known some 300m south-west of the site (PCA 2018).

B.3 Flint

By Michael Donnelly

B.3.1 This fieldwork yielded just a single flint flake from context 2103 (Table 3). The flake is undiagnostic. The results of this evaluation suggest only very limited flint-related activity here.

Context	Type	Sub-type	Notes	Date
2103	Flake	Preparation	-	-

Table 3: Flint assemblage

B.3.2 The artefact was catalogued according to OA South's standard system of broad artefact/debitage type (Anderson-Whymark 2013; Bradley 1999), general condition was noted and dating was attempted, though a date could not be discerned. The assemblage was catalogued directly onto an Open Office spreadsheet. During the assessment, additional information on condition (rolled, abraded, fresh and degree of cortication), and state of the artefact (burnt, broken or visibly utilised) was also recorded. Where appropriate, retouched pieces were classified according to standard

morphological descriptions (eg Bamford 1985, 72–7; Healy 1988, 48–9; Bradley 1999). Technological attribute analysis was initially undertaken and included the recording of butt and termination type (Inizan *et al.* 1999), flake type (Harding 1990), hammer mode (Ohnuma and Bergman 1982), and the presence of platform edge abrasion.

B.4 Ceramic building material

By Edward Biddulph

- B.4.1 Five fragments of ceramic building material (CBM) were recovered. All belong to the Roman period. A single fragment (25g) from a flat tile was collected from context 2103, a fill of ditch 2102. The piece was in an orange fabric tempered with a fine sandy fabric and occasional clay pellets. One external surface is present. Four fragments of CBM, weighing 183g, were additionally recovered from context 2007, a fill of ditch 2004. Two pieces, both in an oxidised and fine sandy fabric and c 16mm thick, were curved and may have been imbrices. One of the fragments was sanded on the interior surface and had been trimmed, possibly to create a tapered or wedge-shaped end. The remaining pieces are of indeterminate form but in a similar fabric to the more diagnostic pieces. One, measuring 14mm thick, is flat and has both surfaces surviving.
- B.4.2 The material suggests that a Roman building with a tiled roof was situated in the vicinity of the site, although, given the size of the assemblage, the remains of any such building is unlikely to be located within the site itself. The fragments may have reached the site through secondary use in ovens or similar structures, or have been deposited incidentally through agricultural processes.

APPENDIX C ENVIRONMENTAL REPORTS

C.1 Environmental Samples

By Sharon Cook

Introduction

- C.1.1 Two samples were collected during the evaluation in order to evaluate the presence and condition of any palaeoenvironmental remains and to recover any artefacts or other datable material.
- C.1.2 Both samples were processed by water flotation (using a modified Siraf system) for the recovery of plant remains and any bones or artefacts that might be present. The flot was collected in a 0.25mm nylon mesh, and the residues were sieved to 0.5mm. The flot and residues were air dried in a heated room, and the residues were then hand sorted for the recovery of any bones and artefacts present and scanned with a magnet for the recovery of any hammer scale. These were then reintegrated with the hand-excavated finds to be reported separately.
- C.1.3 Once dried the flot was scanned under a low-power binocular microscope at magnifications between x10 and x20. Identifications of seeds and cereal chaff were made with reference to published guides (eg Jacomet 2006). Nomenclature for the plant taxa follows Stace (2010). Snail identifications are very preliminary, and snails were only assessed from the flots, although for full recovery extraction of shells from the heavy residues would be required.

Results

- C.1.4 Table 4 contains the details of the assessed samples.

Trench 21

- C.1.5 Sample 2 collected from the single fill (2107) of ditch 2106 produced a flot that is almost totally composed of fine modern roots with little charred material. A single unidentifiable fragment of glume base is present (*Triticum* sp.). The only other charred remains are small (<2mm) charcoal fragments and three charcoal fragments that are slightly larger. Modern uncharred seeds are common.
- C.1.6 Snails are common and mostly comprise *Vallonia* cf *pulchella*, although there are a few freshwater molluscs (*Anisus* sp.), as well as smaller quantities of other species, including *Pupilla* sp. and *Galba truncatula*. Occasional *Ceciliodes acicula*, a burrowing snail, are present but are excluded from the quantification, as they are likely to be intrusive.
- C.1.7 A single fragment of pottery was extracted from the residue.

Trench 23

- C.1.8 Sample 1 collected from the single fill (2306) of ditch 2303 also produced a flot containing mostly modern roots and little charred material. Two fragments of cereal grain were too incomplete to identify further, although there is a single glume base

from spelt wheat (*Triticum spelta*). Charcoal fragments are rare, and only two fragments >2mm are present.

C.1.9 As with sample 2, snails are abundant with the same species present, although in larger quantities.

C.1.10 No bones or artefacts were found in the residues.

Sample No.	Context No.	Area/Trench	Feature/Deposit	Date	Sample Vol.	Flot Vol.	Charcoal >2mm	Grain	Chaff	Weeds	Other Charred	Molluscs	Notes
1	2306	23	2303	Roman	40	20	+	+	+			++++	10YR 5/6 yellowish brown sandy clay loam, subangular and subrounded stones.
2	2107	21	2106	LBA/EIA?	32	20	+		+			+++	10YR 5/6 yellowish brown sandy clay loam, subangular and subrounded stones.

Key: + present (up to 5), ++ frequent (5-25), +++ common (25-100), ++++ abundant (100+)

Table 4: Bulk environmental samples

Discussion

C.1.11 The two samples contain almost no charred plant material, and as those fragments that are present are small and light, they are likely to represent secondary deposition, possibly windblown.

C.1.12 Snails are frequent and are represented in the main by species that are commonly associated with damp, shady areas such as may be found in ditches (Cameron 2008, 47).

C.1.13 In general, if further excavation is carried out, it is recommended that sampling should take place, ideally from a range of features across the site. This sampling should be carried out in accordance with the most recent sampling guidelines (Historic England 2011). The relative abundance of snails should be taken into consideration in the design of any future strategy.

Recommendations for retention/dispersal

C.1.14 The flots warrant retention until all works on the site are complete, although at this stage it is not expected that further work will be required on the material. It is not recommended that these flots form part of the archive and they may be discarded after completion of the works.

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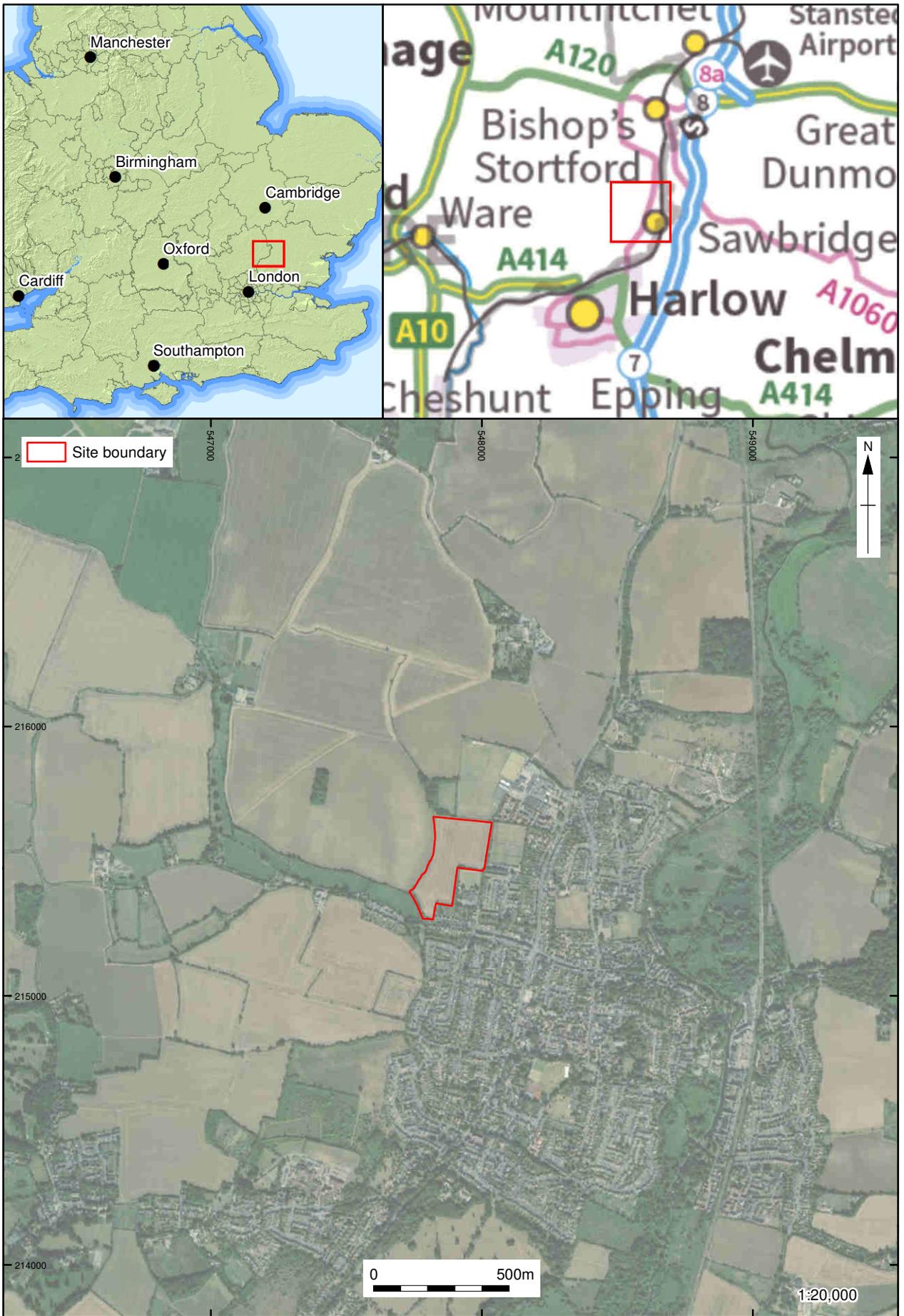
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APPENDIX E HERTFORDSHIRE HISTORIC ENVIRONMENT RECORD SUMMARY SHEET

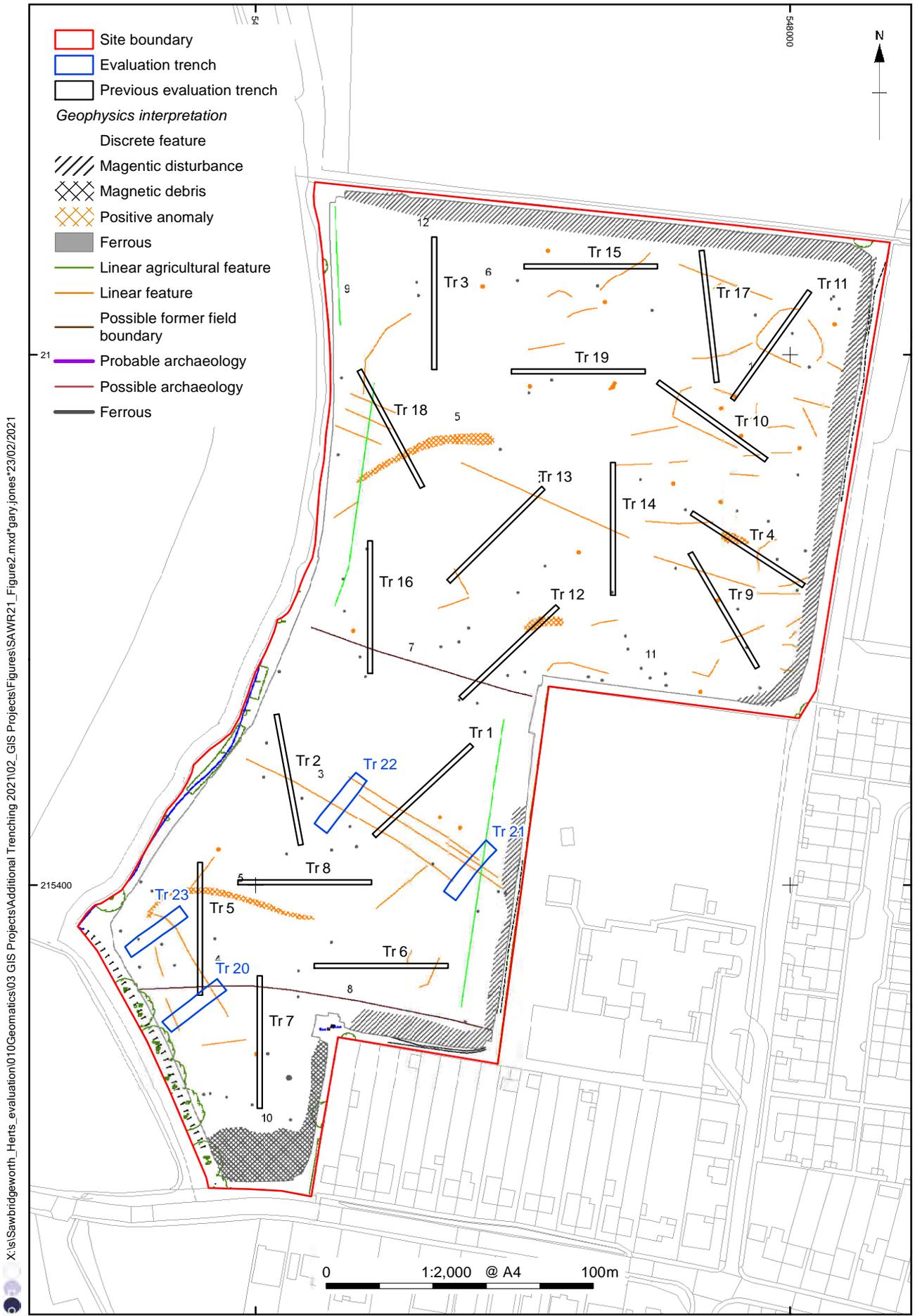
Site name and address: West Road, Sawbridgeworth		
County: Hertfordshire		District: East Hertfordshire
Village/Town: Sawbridgeworth		Parish: Sawbridgeworth
Planning application reference: 3/18/1760/FUL		
HER Enquiry reference: –		
Funding source: Taylor Wimpey		
Nature of application: Residential development		
Present land use: Arable		
Size of application area: 5.7ha		Size of area investigated: 500m ²
NGR (to 8 figures minimum): TL 47842 15448		
Site code (if applicable): SAWR21		
Site director/Organisation: Oxford Archaeology		
Type of work: Archaeological trial trench evaluation		
Date of work:	Start: 08/02/21	Finish: 12/02/21
Location of finds & site archive/Curating museum: Bishop's Stortford Museum		
Related HER Nos: –		Periods represented: late Bronze Age–early Iron Age, Roman, post-medieval–modern
Relevant previous summaries/reports: OA, 2018 West Road, Sawbridgeworth: archaeological evaluation report, unpubl Oxford Archaeology Rep		
Summary of fieldwork results: <p>Preceding geophysical survey and archaeological evaluation of the proposed development site in 2016 and 2018, respectively, identified a small number of ditches in the centre and south of the site, correlating with geophysical anomalies. Although generally undated, the ditches were suggestive of a trackway and associated enclosure/field boundaries. Other ditches encountered on site correlated with post-medieval field boundaries depicted on 19th-century mapping.</p> <p>Four additional trenches were excavated in the southern half of the site to further investigate the previously revealed ditches and their potential association with late Bronze Age–early Iron Age and early Roman occupation site revealed nearby at Chalk's Farm.</p> <p>The continuations of the trackway ditches were revealed in the centre of the site, with remnants of a metalled surface also identified. Adjacent ditches may demonstrate the maintenance and modification of the trackway or perhaps associated enclosure/field boundaries. Dating evidence from the ditches comprises small quantities of late Bronze Age–early Iron Age pottery and Roman ceramic building material. It is probable that these remains provide evidence of outlying agricultural activity associated with the later prehistoric and early Roman settlement evidence encountered at Chalk's Farm.</p> <p>A further undated ditch and a parallel early Roman ditch were revealed in the south of the site, suggestive of additional land divisions of a probable agricultural nature.</p> <p>Limited post-medieval–modern remains are demonstrative of agricultural use of the landscape during these periods.</p>		
Author of summary: Charlotte Howsam		Date of summary: 14/04/2021

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Source: Esri, Maxar, GeoEye, Earthstar Geographics, CNES/Airbus DS, USDA, USGS, AeroGRID, IGN, and the GIS User Community

Figure 1: Site location



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OS Basemap supplied by client

Figure 2: Trench layout (including previous phase of work)

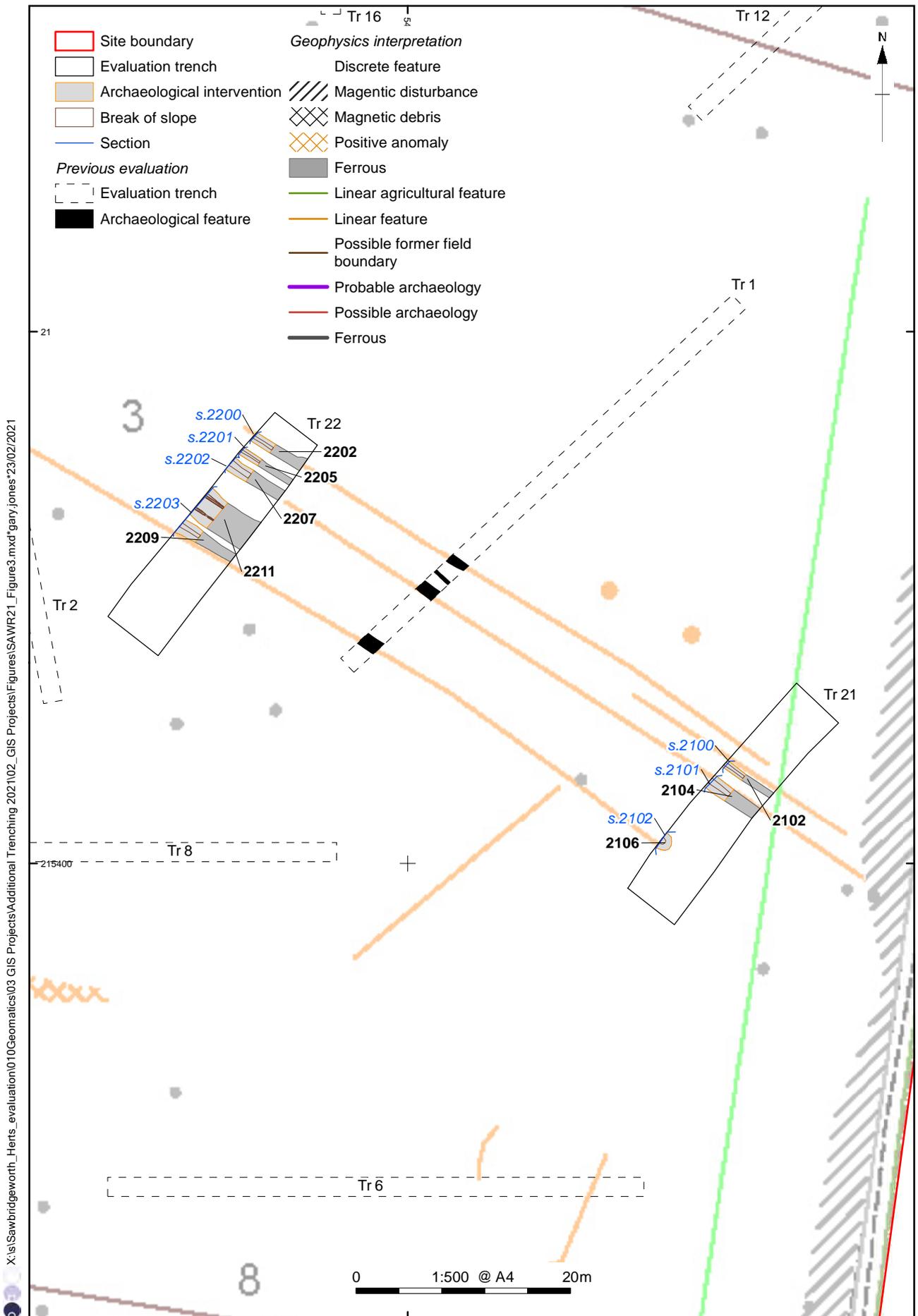


Figure 3: Detailed plan of Trenches 22 and 21

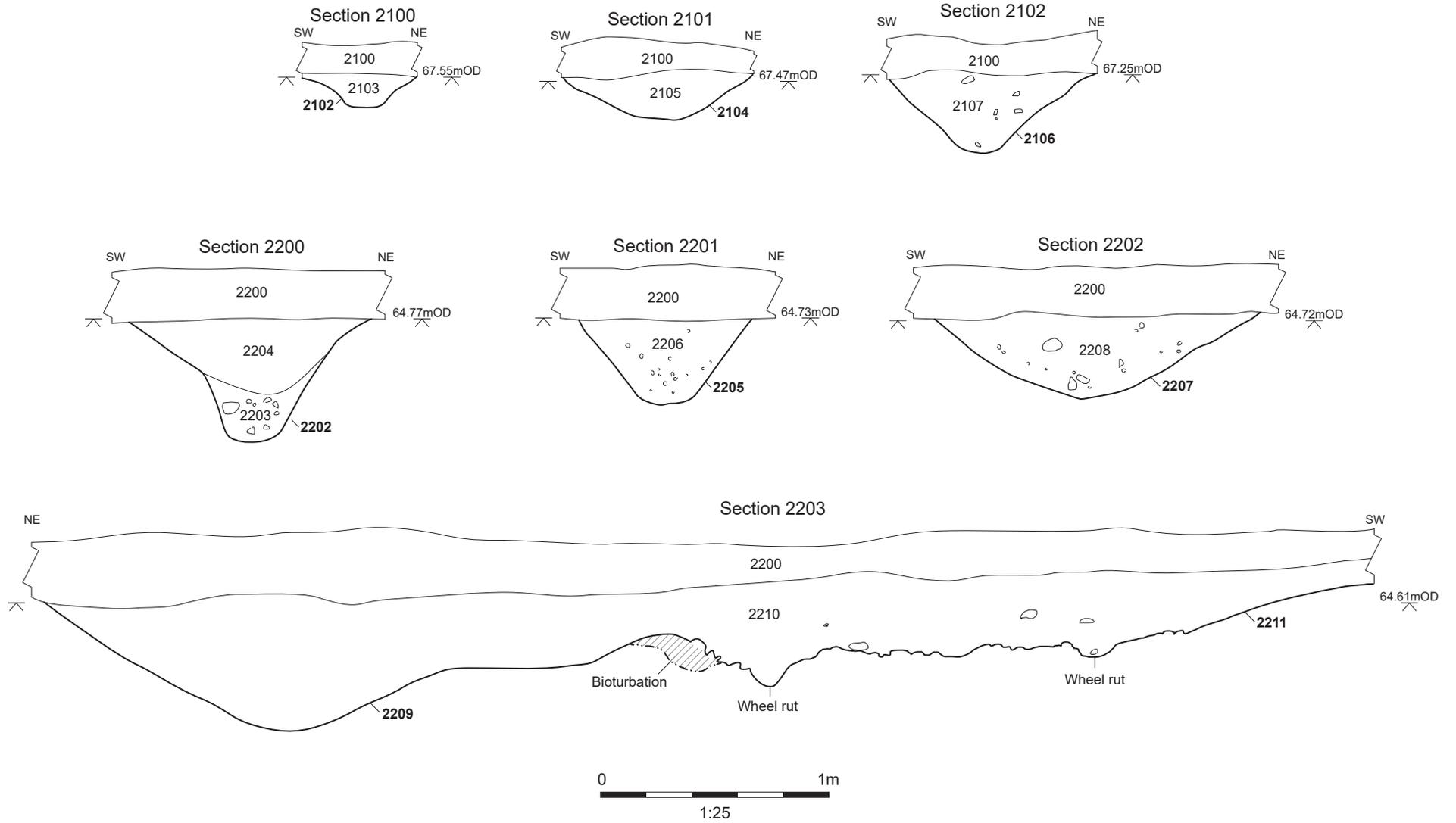


Figure 4: Sections (Trenches 22 and 21)

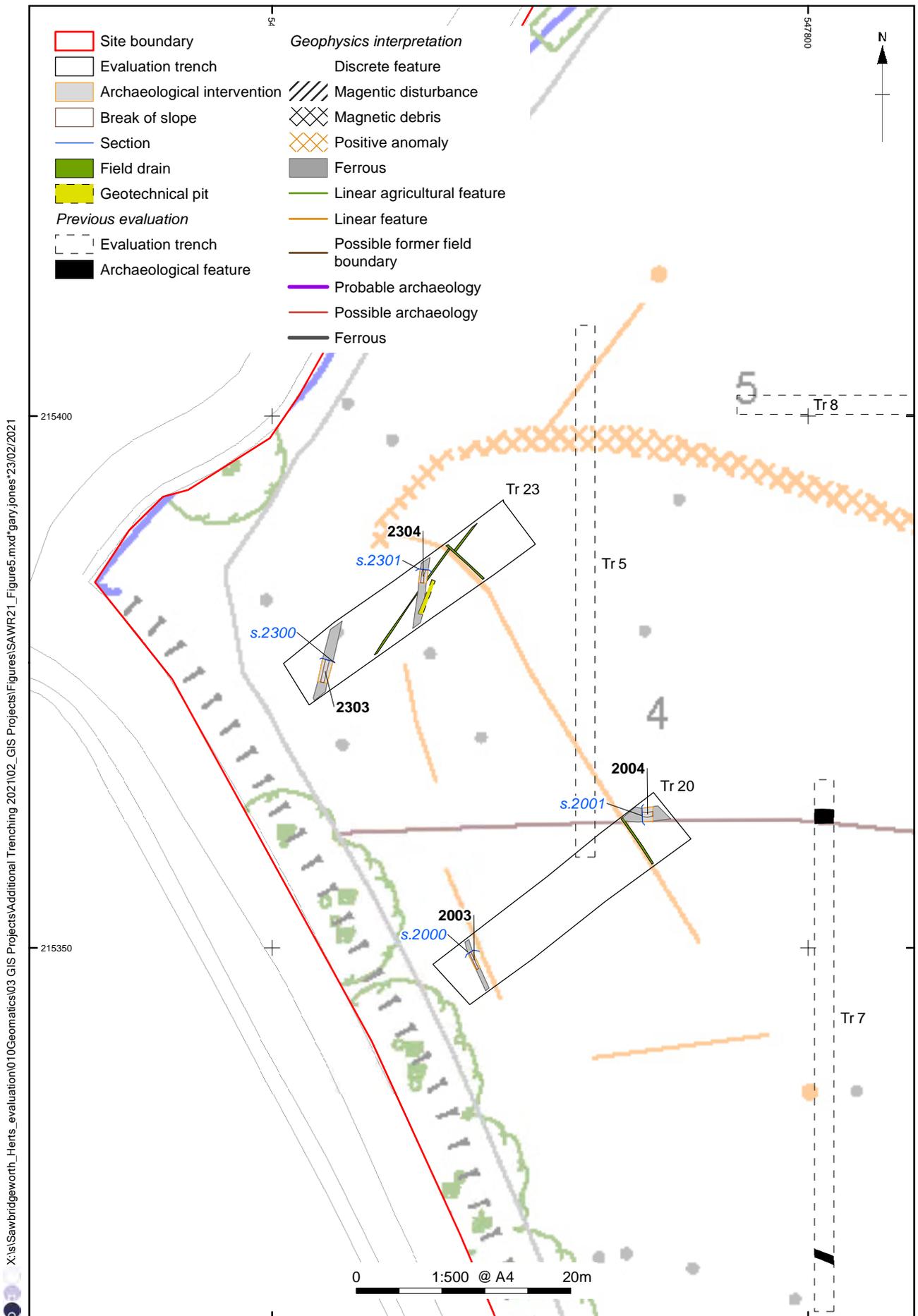


Figure 5: Detailed plan of Trenches 23 and 20

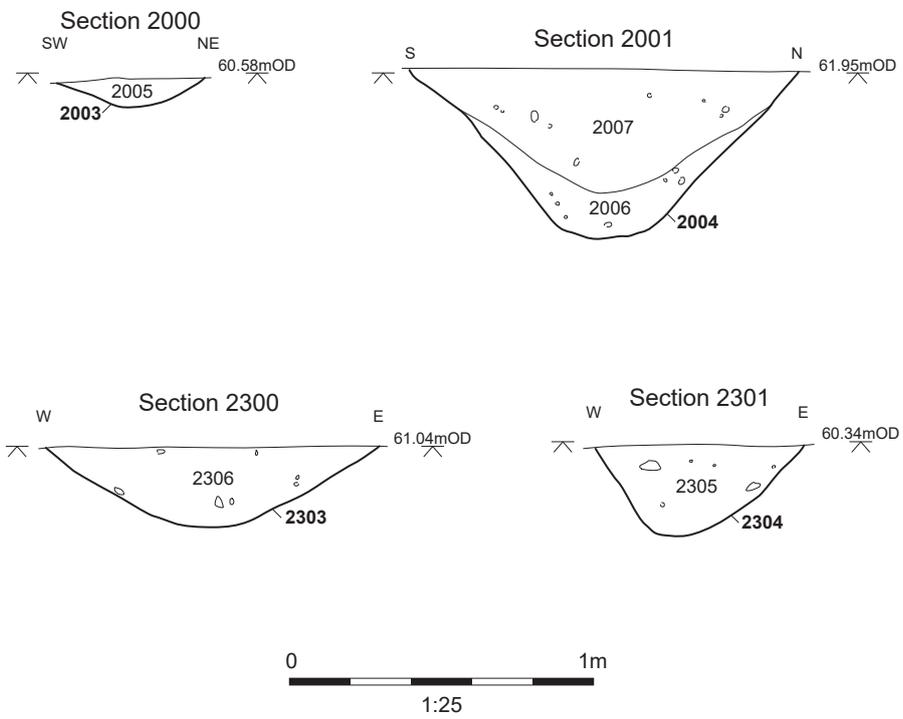


Figure 6: Sections (Trenches 23 and 20)



Plate 1: Trench 22 (view to SW)



Plate 2: Trench 22 showing all ditches and trackway (view to west)



Plate 3: Trackway 2211 and metalled surface 2212 (view to NW)



Plate 4: Trench 21 (view to NE)



Plate 5: Trench 21 showing ditches 2102, 2104 and 2106 (view to west)

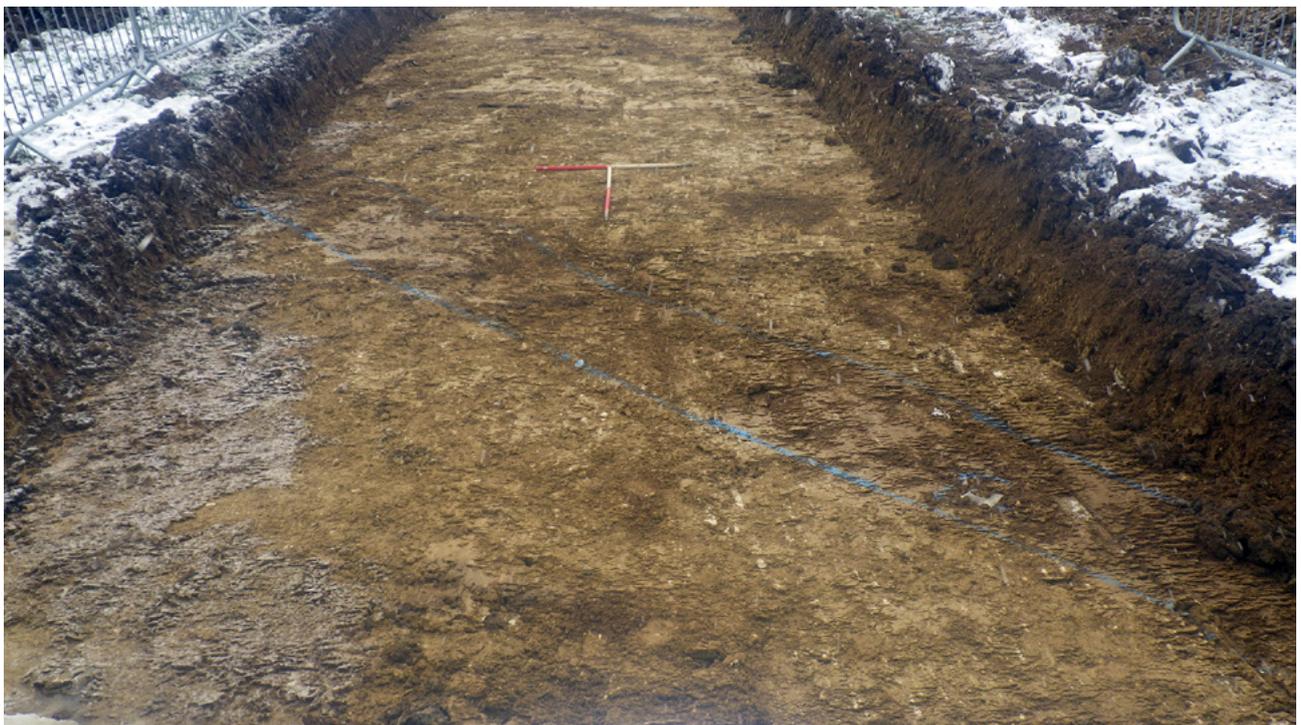


Plate 6: Trench 23 (view to NE)



Plate 7: Ditch 2303 (view to NNE)

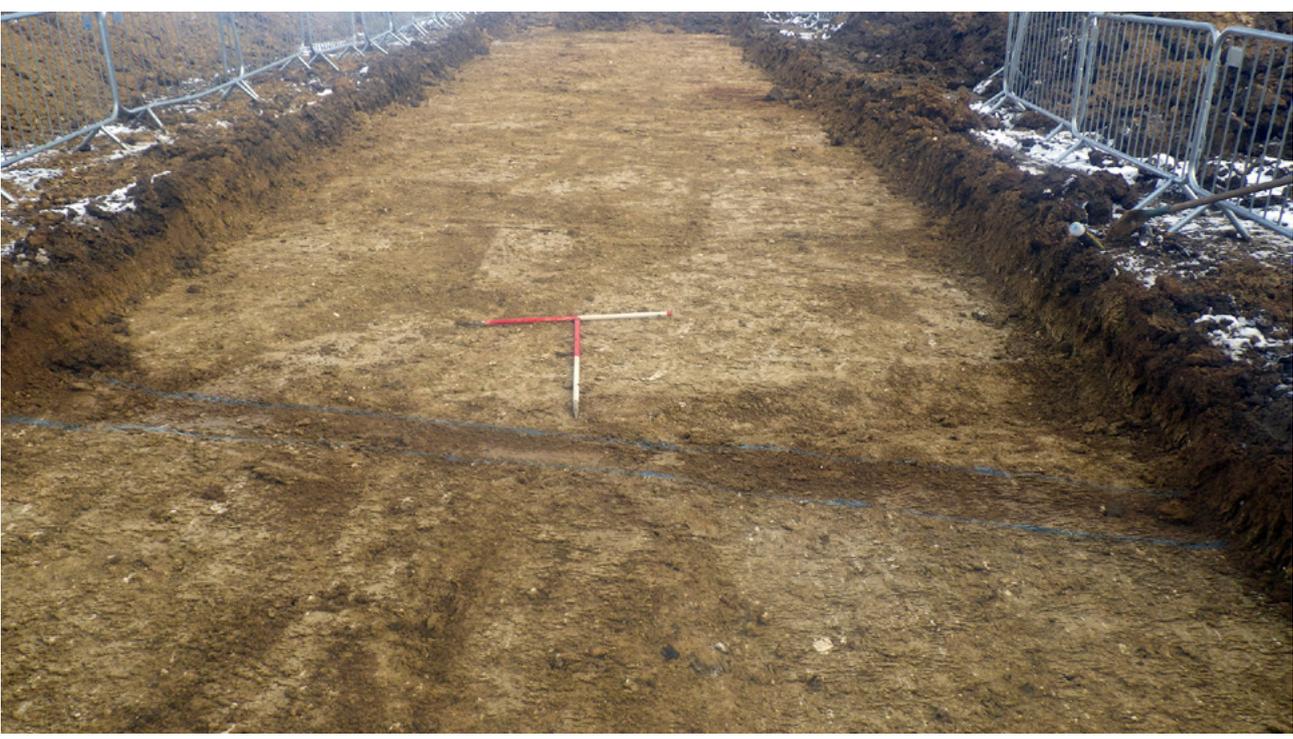


Plate 8: Trench 20 (view to NE)



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