



Land at Reading Road and Wallingford Road, Wallingford, Oxfordshire

Archaeological Evaluation Report

November 2017

Client: Frontier Estates

Issue No: 1

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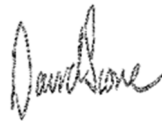
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SAFETY
SCHEMES IN
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Land at Reading Road and Wallingford Road, Wallingford, Oxfordshire

Archaeological Evaluation Report

Written by Kirsty Smith

*With contributions from Carl Champness and with
illustrations by Anne Kilgour and Magdalena Wachnik*

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Summary

During October 2017 Oxford Archaeology undertook a trial trench evaluation at Reading Road and Wallingford Road, Wallingford. The evaluation was undertaken in advance of the construction of a new retirement home.

The evaluation revealed two ditches, which were undated. Trench 1 contained a shallow-sided north-east to south-west orientated ditch and Trench 5 contained a substantial north to south-orientated ditch. No finds or archaeologically rich fills were identified. Eventhough the ditches were undated, they may potentially relate to prehistoric activity in the wider area which includes numerous examples of prehistoric ditches, enclosures and trackways. Based on the results of the evaluation the site is believed to have low archaeological potential.

Acknowledgements

Oxford Archaeology would like to thank Matthew Smith of CgMs Consulting for the opportunity to carry out this project on behalf of Frontier Estates, Mr G Snook & Mrs H Anderson. OA would also like to thank Richard Oram, County Archaeologist, for overseeing and advice during the project.

The project was managed for Oxford Archaeology by Carl Champness. The fieldwork was directed by BJ Ware with the assistance of George Gurney and Jana Smirnova. Survey and digitizing work was carried out by Anne Kilgour. Thanks is also extended to the team of OA staff who prepared the archive under the management of Nicky Scott.

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Scope of work

- 1.1.1 Oxford Archaeology (OA) was commissioned by CgMs Consulting on behalf of Frontier Estates, Mr G Snook & Mrs H Anderson to undertake a trial trench evaluation at the site of a proposed new residential development at Wallingford Road, Wallingford, Oxfordshire (hereafter referred to as the site).
- 1.1.2 The work is being undertaken to support a future planning application (P17/53564/FUL) and to assess the archaeological potential of the site. Although a brief has not been set for the work, discussions with Richard Oram, Planning Archaeologist for Oxfordshire County Council (OCC), have established the Local Authority's requirements for work necessary to inform a planning condition; this document outlines how OA implemented those requirements.
- 1.1.3 All work was undertaken in accordance with the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists *Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Excavation (2014)* and local and national planning policies.

1.2 Location, topography and geology

- 1.2.1 The site is located between Wallingford Road and Reading Road, Winterbrook, Wallingford, Oxfordshire (Fig 1). The site is situated on generally level ground at approximately 46m Above Ordnance Datum (AOD) and is centred on NGR SU 60381 88087. The course of the River Thames is located c 350m to the east of the site and the Bradford Brook is c 650m to the north. The area of proposed development currently consists of grassland and pasture and covers 0.526 hectares.
- 1.2.2 The underlying geology of the area is Glauconitic Marl Member. This sandstone, glauconitic bedrock is overlain by superficial sand and gravel deposits of the Northmoor Sand and Gravel Member (British Geological Survey Online, Geology of Britain Viewer, 2017).

1.3 Archaeological and historical background

- 1.3.1 The archaeological and historical background of the site has been described in detail in the desk-based assessment (CgMs 2017), and only the elements closest to the site will be summarised here.

Prehistoric

- 1.3.2 A high-status late Bronze Age settlement site was identified on an island in the River Thames, during archaeological works on the proposed route of the Wallingford Bypass (Cromarty *et al.* 2006). Agricultural activity was recorded in the area east of the River Thames near to this settlement site and a number of Bronze Age objects have been found in the River Thames within the area north of this settlement, including a spearhead, palstave and a socketed knife. Probable Bronze Age ring ditches are recorded by the HER in an area c 675m south of the site.

- 1.3.3 An evaluation at New Barn Farm located 100-800m west of the site found a crouched inhumation burial with early Bronze Age pottery and a single cremation burial. In addition, a number of middle-late Bronze Age ditches, trackways and enclosures were found (Dodd and Foreman 2016).
- 1.3.4 An evaluation in 1959 at the Bradford Brook revealed evidence of a late Bronze Age/early Iron Age settlement complex, including burials, c 700m north-west of the site (ADS 642472). A possible double concentric ring ditch has been recorded during a geophysical survey in the same area as this settlement. Ongoing archaeological work in the same area has revealed further evidence for Bronze Age activity, including further burials (Hughes 2017).
- 1.3.5 Early Iron Age enclosures were recorded north of the Bradford Brook, and c 850m north of the site, which may have been associated with the settlement to the south of the brook. Further evidence was recorded along the brook c 650m north of the site, for continued occupation of the area into the middle Iron Age. Ongoing archaeological work in the same area has revealed further evidence for the middle Iron Age settlement, including roundhouses and evidence for industrial activity and animal husbandry (Hughes, 2017 9-11).
- 1.3.6 Grim's Ditch is an extensive Iron Age linear earthwork located c 500m east of the site, traceable from Wallingford to Henley on Thames, and consisting of a high narrow bank with gaps in construction. Evidence for Iron Age agricultural activity is recorded in the area of Grim's Ditch east of the River Thames.
- 1.3.7 An evaluation in the field to the south of the site found one ditch (4/11) located 150m south-west of the site, which was 1.30m wide, and 0.35m deep within a shallow U-shaped profile. This ditch was undated but was thought to be prehistoric as it was dug into the natural orange-brown sand (4/05) and was sealed by alluvial' deposit (4/03). Deposit (4/03) was 0.20-0.50m thick and comprised a mid-orange-brown silty sand with rare small stones. As deposit 4/03 was mostly sand with 20% silt which may have been caused by a severe flood event rather than a slower event, which would produce clay alluvium (Čelovský 2015, 7-8).

Roman

- 1.3.8 A few isolated Roman burials and findspots of pottery and other objects have been recovered from Wallingford. The site is located at distance from known concentrations of recorded Roman activity.

Saxon to medieval

- 1.3.9 The Saxon town of Wallingford is located 1km to the north of the site and a number of burials associated with the town are recorded just to north at St John's School. Late Saxon occupation was recorded in the same area immediately south of the town.
- 1.3.10 The Domesday Survey of 1086 records Wallingford as a large estate consisting of 44 households (Domesday Online 2017). An evaluation at land owned by Wallingford Rowing Club identified an Anglo-Saxon 'Grubenhau' and associated artefacts, whilst Saxon features and a coin hoard were found in the same area.

- 1.3.11 The settlement at Wallingford evolved from its origins as an Anglo-Saxon burh into an important late medieval royal centre and town, made wealthy by its mercantile activity and control of the river crossing. St Lucian's Church and possible associated cemetery are recorded immediately south of the town and 1km north of the site.
- 1.3.12 A number of Deserted Medieval Villages (DMV) are located within the area, including at Mongewell c 700m east of the site, and at Nuneham Murren c 800m to the North. Earthwork remains indicate a possible medieval settlement at Cox's Farm c 920m west of the site. Various medieval ditches have been recorded within the area, possibly indicating agricultural activity. A ditch was recorded during an archaeological watching brief in the area of the Mongewell DMV c 750m east of the site, whilst further ditches have been recorded c 100m and c 950m north-west of the site.

Post-medieval

- 1.3.13 During the post-medieval period, the site was located c 800m south of the historic core of Wallingford. Rocque's map of 1761 suggests that the site was part of a large arable field during the late 18th century. The site was situated west of the Reading Road and south of a winding road to Cholsey to the south-west. Rocque's map also shows north-south linears on the site, which may indicate ridge and furrow cultivation. The 1841 Cholsey Tithe map indicates that 80 years later the site had been divided into a smaller arable triangular field with the construction of a straighter road to the west (Wallingford Road) to Cholsey. The site remained in use as an open field until the 1990s.
- 1.3.14 The LiDAR data plot shows two north-south linear features running through the site which appear to continue south of the A4130 (CgMs 2017). These features may be post-medieval drainage ditches due to their regular appearance.
- 1.3.15 During the 1990s the Wallingford By-Pass was constructed which included a two roundabouts and the A4130 to the south of the site. The site has an area of hard standing to the south-west and it therefore may have been in use during construction of the A4130.

2 AIMS AND METHODOLOGY

2.1 Aims

2.1.1 The project aims and objectives were as follows:

- i. To determine the location, extent, date, character, condition, significance and quality of any archaeological remains within the development;
- ii. To assess vulnerability/sensitivity of any exposed remains;
- iii. To determine the potential of the site to provide palaeoenvironmental and/or economic evidence;
- iv. To provide sufficient information on the archaeological potential of the site to enable the archaeological implications of any proposed developments to be assessed;
- v. To assess the impact of previous land use on the site;
- vi. To inform a strategy to avoid or mitigate impacts of any proposed development on surviving archaeological remains;
- vii. To disseminate the results through the production of a site archive for deposition with an appropriate museum and to provide information for accession to the Oxfordshire HER.

2.1.2 The specific aims and objectives of the evaluation were:

- viii. To investigate further areas of prehistoric remains identified within the wider site area.
- ix. To investigate the two north-south linear features running through the site which appear to continue south of the A4130.

2.2 Methodology

- 2.2.1 An evaluation consisting of five trenches 30m long and 1.8m wide was originally proposed for this site, representing a 5% sample of the area. The proposed methodology was detailed in the WSI (Oxford Archaeology 2017). The trench layout needed to be altered in the field due to the existence of a buried service. Six trenches were therefore set out using a Global Positioning System (GPS), taking account of the service buffer. The location of the trenches is shown in Figure 2.
- 2.2.2 Trenches were excavated using a 360° excavator fitted with a toothless bucket under archaeological supervision. Revealed features were hand-cleaned and sampled by hand-excavation, and the resultant sections drawn at an appropriate 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.
- 3.1.2 Context numbers reflect the trench numbers unless otherwise stated, e.g. pit 102 is a feature within Trench 1, while ditch 304 is a feature within Trench 3.

3.2 General soils and ground conditions

- 3.2.1 The topsoil was 0.25-0.40m thick and had some variation across the site including a dark brown silty sand (Trench 1), a dark brown clayey silt (Trenches 2-4 and 6) and a dark brown grey silty loam in Trench 5. The topsoil contained rare stone inclusions. The subsoil was broadly uniform across the site, a mid-brown or orange-brown silty clay that was 0.30-0.42m thick. The subsoil contained occasional stone inclusions.
- 3.2.2 The natural gravel was encountered at a depth of between 0.58-0.70m below ground level. In Trenches 1-4 and 6 it comprised a loose mid light brown or yellow-brown silty sandy gravel. In Trench 2, there was also some patches of dark brown silty sandy gravel within the lighter gravel. Trench 5 to the north of the site showed a greater variation in the natural with a mid grey brown firm gravelly clay encountered at 0.70m below ground level.
- 3.2.3 The superficial geology of the site is the upper facet of the Northmoor Sand and Gravel Member. These sedimentary deposits were formed by the River Thames and have beds and lenses of coarse to fine-grained sand and gravels. The upper soil sequence of the site also contained a subsoil of orange-brown silt, representing either late glacial fluvial or windblown deposits. This silt was identified in a borehole adjacent to the site at a depth of 0.60-1.21m below ground level (British Geological Survey, SU68NW165 White Cross Farm). This variation in the superficial natural geology between silt, sand and gravel could be seen across the site.
- 3.2.4 Ground conditions throughout the evaluation were reasonable although there was light rain on one day of the fieldwork. The homogenous nature of the orange-brown silty clay subsoil meant that archaeological features were difficult to identify. Some of the features (103, 503) were only revealed when excavated down to the silty sandy gravel.

3.3 General distribution of archaeological deposits

- 3.3.1 Archaeological features were present in Trenches 1 and 5 and will be described in more detail below. Trenches 2, 3, 4 and 6 were devoid of any features and therefore will not be discussed further.
- 3.3.2 None of the features contained any finds and all are therefore undated.

3.4 Trench 1

- 3.4.1 Trench 1 was located in the south-east part of the site, and was orientated north-east to south-west (Fig. 2). It contained a north-west to south-east aligned feature, 103 (Fig. 3; Plates 1-2), possibly a boundary ditch or furrow. This had shallow sides with a slightly concave flat base. It was 1.27m wide and ran for 0.67m across the trench, but was only 0.18m deep. Its single fill was 104, which was a mid grey-brown silty sand with sub-angular stones.
- 3.4.2 Two small tree-throw holes were investigated in Trench 1 and tree-throw 105 was initially thought to be a pit. These were both ovoid in plan and tree-throw 105 was 1.7m long, 1.2m wide and 0.12m deep. Tree-throw 105 contained one fill, a very compact mid-dark grey-brown silty sand with sub-angular stone.

3.5 Trench 5

- 3.5.1 Trench 5 was located to the north-east of the site, and was orientated north-west to south-east (Fig. 2). It encountered ditch 503 and probable natural feature 505 (Fig. 4; Plate 3).
- 3.5.2 Ditch 503 was orientated north to south and was 1.83m wide and 0.54m deep, and 2m of the feature was observed within the trench. The ditch had steep sloping sides and a shallow, concave base (Plate 4). Ditch 503 contained one fill (504), a mid grey-brown silty clay with a moderate amount of small stones. Ditch 503 was observed to run parallel to a modern drainage ditch to the east.
- 3.5.3 A linear (505) was observed within Trench 5 that was initially thought to be a ditch, but is more likely to be caused by natural rooting, for instance from a hedgerow. The fill of this linear was firm, light grey-brown and full of roots.

3.6 Finds and environmental summary

- 3.6.1 No finds were recovered or features identified suitable for environmental sampling.

4 DISCUSSION

4.1 Reliability of field investigation

- 4.1.1 The evaluation was undertaken during a period of reasonable weather despite some rain, and the trenches remained mostly dry. Features were not easy to identify within the orange-brown silty clay subsoil and there was some variation in the natural gravels. Two features (103, 503) were only revealed when excavated down to the silty sandy gravel. This could mean that these features (and possibly others) have been truncated during excavation as the archaeological horizon was difficult to determine.
- 4.1.2 The lack of finds and the sterile ditch fills would indicate that this area was not significantly settled and therefore the archaeology revealed within the trenches can be seen as representing the archaeological potential of the site.

4.2 Interpretation

- 4.2.1 The two ditches found on the site had different orientations and profiles. Trench 1 contained a shallow-sided north-east to south-west orientated ditch (103) and Trench 5 contained a substantial north to south orientated ditch (503) with steep sides. The ditches contained no dating evidence and the stratigraphic relationship between the features and the subsoil above was unclear. The ditches could potentially be prehistoric as the wider area contains numerous examples of prehistoric ditches, enclosures and trackways.
- 4.2.2 The 2017 desk-based assessment (CgMs 2017) identified two north-south linears on the site using LiDAR and these can be seen on Google satellite imagery. These two linears were not identified during the excavation and may have been surface features.

4.3 Significance

- 4.3.1 The evaluation demonstrated that despite being located in a wider area of archaeological potential the site has a low potential for archaeological remains.

Appendix A TRENCH DESCRIPTIONS AND CONTEXT INVENTORY

Trench 1						
General description					Orientation	NE-SW
The trench contained a linear (103) orientated north-west to south-east and a tree throw 105 (originally thought to be a pit). Another tree throw was identified at the north-east end of the trench.					Length (m)	30
					Width (m)	1.60
					Avg. depth (m)	0.82
Context No.	Type	Width (m)	Depth (m)	Description	Finds	Date
100	Topsoil layer	-	0.40	Topsoil. Compact dark brown silty sand		
101	Subsoil layer	-	0.42	Subsoil. Compact mid brown silty clay		
102	Natural			Natural – light white brown gravel		
103	Cut of ditch	1.27	0.18	Ditch with shallow sides and a concave base orientated north-west to south-east		
104	Fill of ditch 103		0.18	Mid greyish brown silty sand		
105	Cut of tree-throw hole	1.2	0.12	Cut of tree throw		
106	Fill of tree-throw hole 105			Very compact mid- dark brown silty sand		

Trench 2						
General description					Orientation	E-W
Trench devoid of archaeology. Consists of topsoil and subsoil overlying natural geology of gravel.					Length (m)	14.8
					Width (m)	1.6
					Avg. depth (m)	0.65
Context No.	Type	Width (m)	Depth (m)	Description	Finds	Date
200	Topsoil layer	-	0.25	A dark brown grey clayey silt	-	-
201	Subsoil layer	-	0.40	A dark orange brown silty clay	-	-
202	Natural	-		Natural – loose light yellow brown with patches of dark brown silty sandy gravel	-	-

Trench 3						
General description					Orientation	NE-SW
Trench devoid of archaeology. Consists of topsoil and subsoil overlying natural geology of gravel.					Length (m)	29.5
					Width (m)	1.6
					Avg. depth (m)	0.58
Context No.	Type	Width (m)	Depth (m)	Description	Finds	Date
300	Topsoil layer	-	0.28	Dark brown clayey silt	-	-
301	Subsoil		0.30	Compact dark mid orange brown silty clay	-	-
302	Natural	-		Loose mid yellow brown sandy silty gravel	-	-

Trench 4						
General description					Orientation	E-W
Trench devoid of archaeology. Consists of topsoil and subsoil overlying natural geology of gravel.					Length (m)	28.5
					Width (m)	1.6
					Avg. depth (m)	0.60
Context No.	Type	Width (m)	Depth (m)	Description	Finds	Date
400	Topsoil layer	-	0.26	A dark brown grey clayey silt	-	-
401	Subsoil layer	-	0.34	A dark mid orange brown silty clay	-	-
402	Natural layer	-		Loose mid light brown silty sandy gravel	-	-

Trench 5						
General description					Orientation	SE-NW
The trench encountered a north-south ditch 503 and a small irregular ditch 505 which was likely a tree throw or natural formation.					Length (m)	30
					Width (m)	1.6
					Avg. depth (m)	0.7
Context No.	Type	Width (m)	Depth (m)	Description	Finds	Date
500	Topsoil layer	-		Dark brown grey silty loam	-	-
501	Natural	-		Mid grey brown firm gravelly clay	-	-
502	Subsoil			Mid grey brown soft silty clay	-	-
503	Cut of ditch	1.83	0.54	Cut of substantial ditch orientated north-south. Regular street sloping sides with a shallow concave base. 2m long observed in trench.		

504	Fill of ditch 503			Mid grey brown silty clay.		
505	Cut of ditch of tree throw	-		Cut of ditch probably natural/tree throw		
506	Fill of ditch or tree throw			Very firm light grey brown fill of 505, full of roots		

Trench 6						
General description					Orientation	E-W
Trench devoid of archaeology. Consists of topsoil and subsoil overlying natural geology of gravel.					Length (m)	14.5
					Width (m)	1.6
					Avg. depth (m)	0.66
Context No.	Type	Width (m)	Depth (m)	Description	Finds	Date
600	Topsoil layer	-	0.26	A dark brown grey clayey silt	-	-
601	Subsoil layer	-	0.40	A dark mid orange brown silty clay	-	-
602	Natural layer	-		Loose mid light brown silty sandy gravel	-	-

Appendix B BIBLIOGRAPHY

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Appendix C

SITE SUMMARY DETAILS

Site name:	Land at Reading Road and Wallingford Road, Wallingford, Oxfordshire
Site code:	WIWF17
Grid Reference	SU 60381 88087
Type:	Evaluation
Date and duration:	22nd-23rd October 2017
Area of Site	0.526 hectares

Summary of Results: During October 2017 Oxford Archaeology undertook a trial trench evaluation at Reading Road and Wallingford Road, Wallingford. The evaluation revealed two ditches, which were undated. Trench 1 contained a shallow-sided north-east to south-west orientated ditch and Trench 5 contained a substantial north to south-orientated ditch. No finds or archaeologically rich fills were identified. Eventhough the ditches were undated, they may potentially relate to prehistoric activity in the wider area which include numerous examples of prehistoric ditches, enclosures and trackways. Based on the results of the evaluation the site is believed to have low archaeological potential.

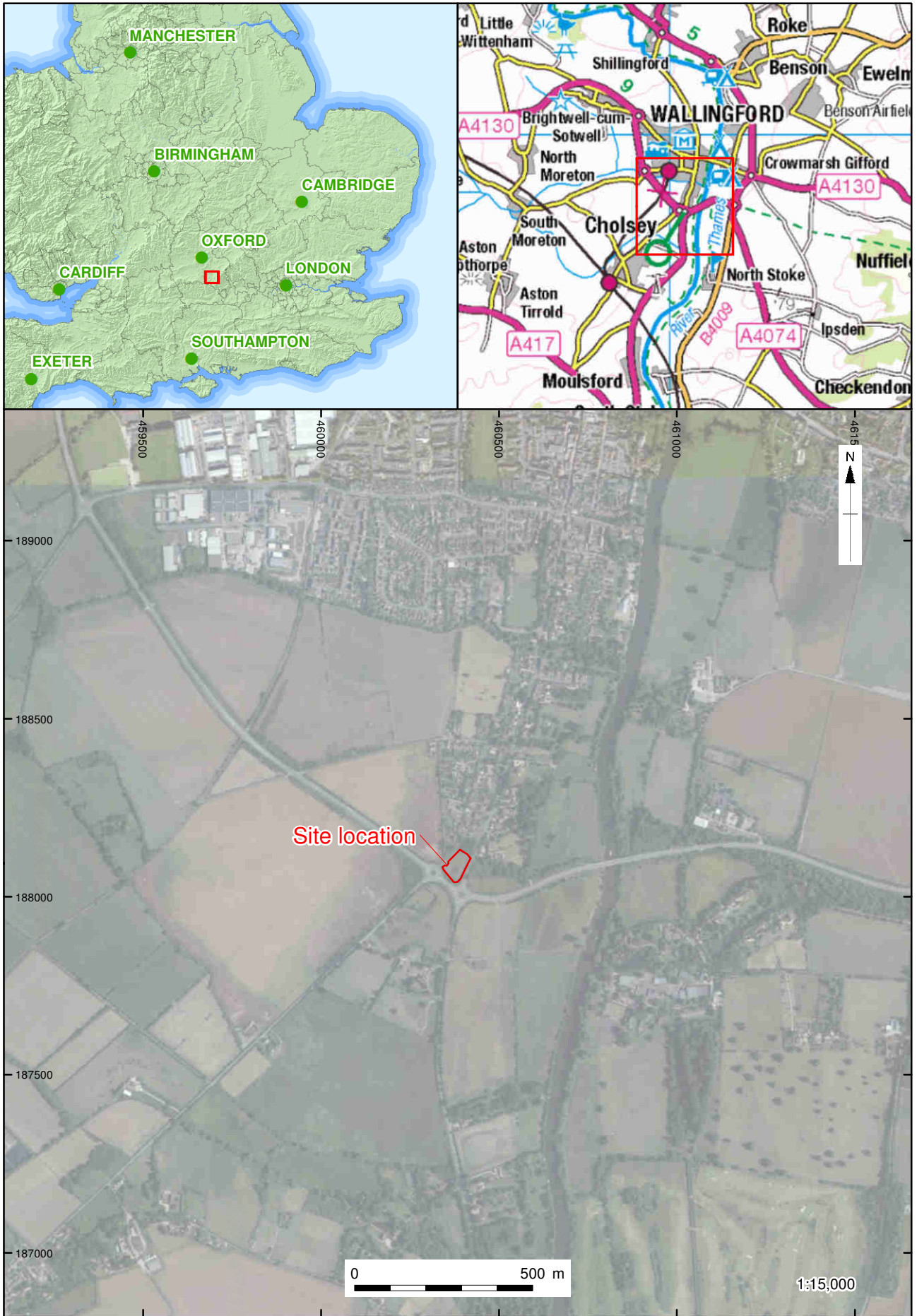


Figure 1: Site location

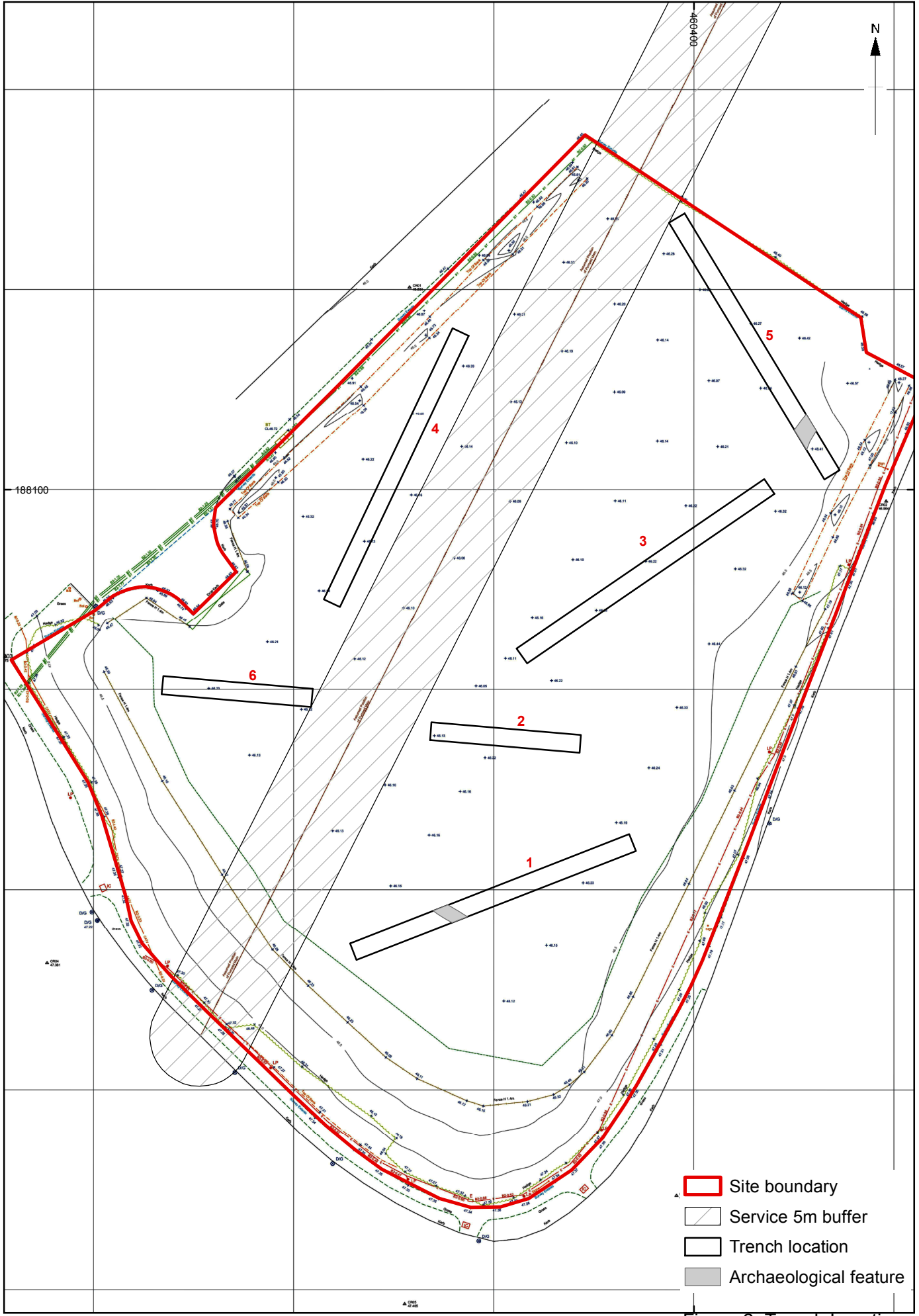
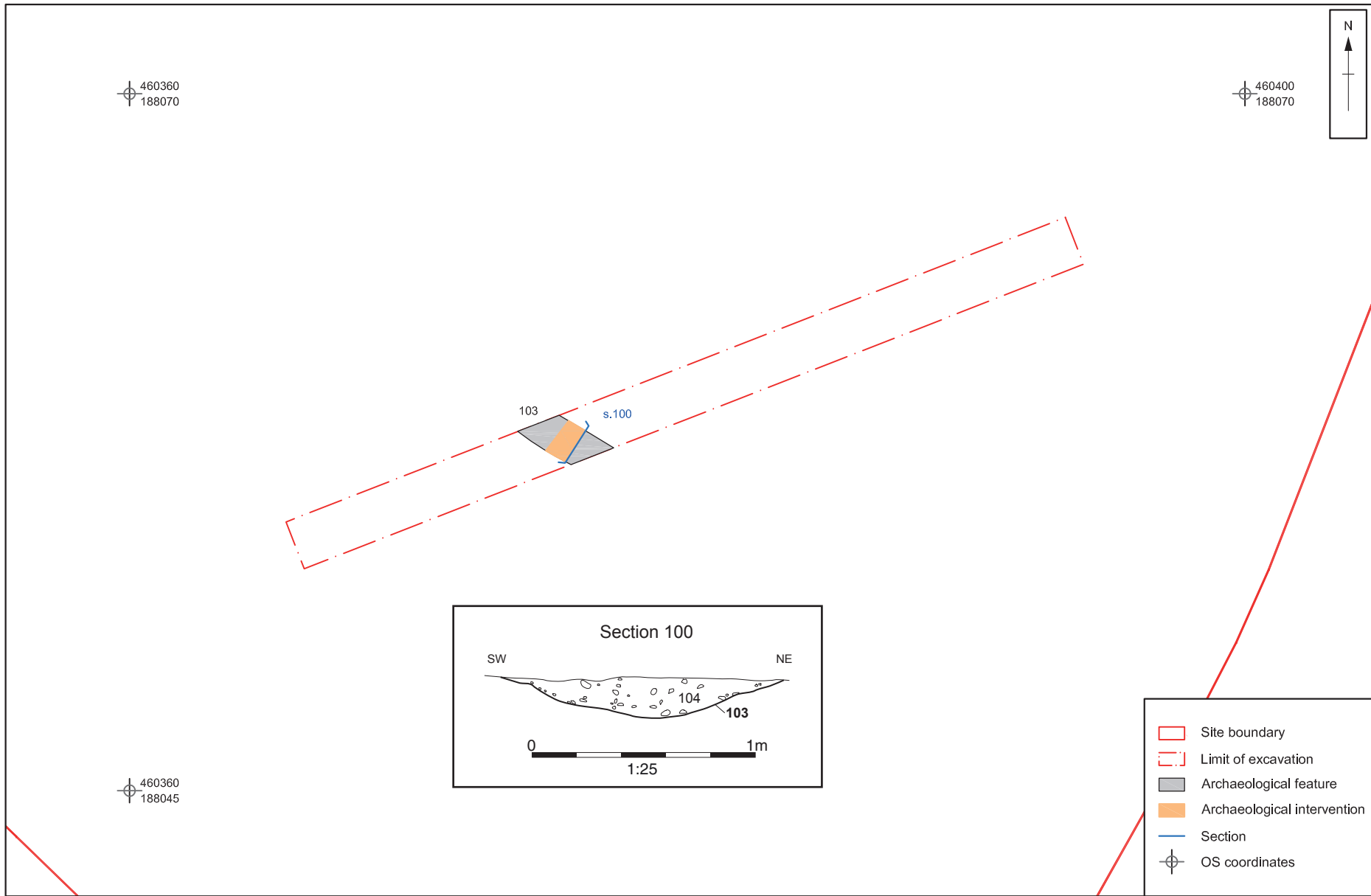


Figure 2: Trench Locations



0 10 m
Scale at A4 1:200

Figure 3. Plan and section of ditch 103

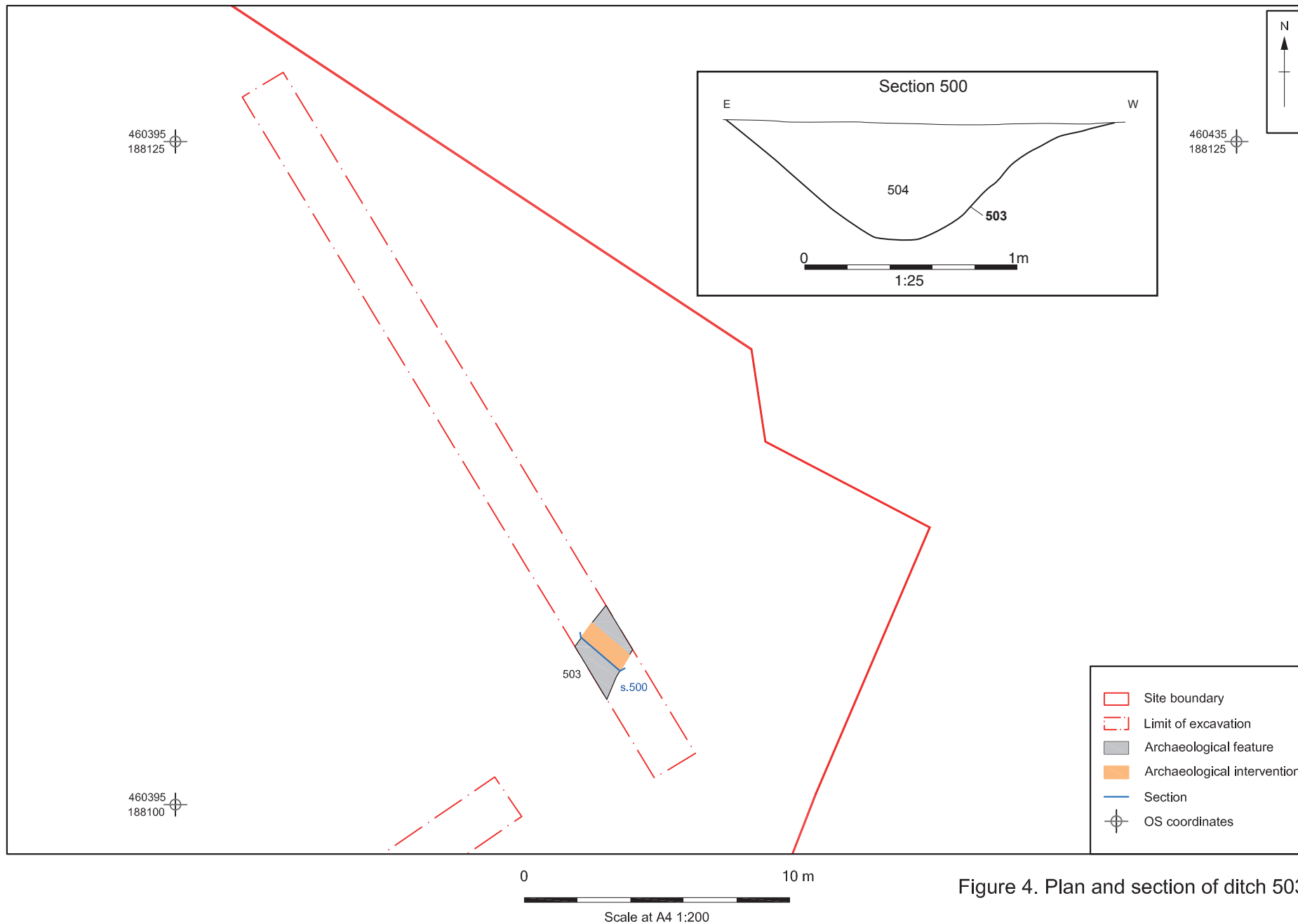


Figure 4. Plan and section of ditch 503



Plate 1: View of Trench 1 facing south-west



Plate 2: Section of feature 103 within Trench 1 facing north-west



Plate 3: View of Trench 5 facing north-west



Plate 4: Section of feature 503 in Trench 5 facing south



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