

Land off Newmarket Road, Burwell Archaeological Evaluation Report

December 2021

Client: This Land

Issue No: v.1

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Land off Newmarket Road, Burwell

Archaeological Evaluation Report

Written by Matthew Edwards MA

With contributions from Martha Craven BA PCIfA and illustrations by David W Brown BA

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Summary

Between the 10th and the 15th November 2021, Oxford Archaeology East conducted an archaeological evaluation at land off Newmarket Road, Burwell (TL 59265 66543). A total of five 50m long trenches and four 30m long trenches were excavated within the development area. The trenching formed part of a larger programme of mitigation which commenced in April 2021 and revealed evidence of a large Late Bronze Age settlement site composed of numerous discrete pits and post-built structures.

Three of the trenches contained archaeological remains, with features comprising a small, undated pit in Trench 56; a small, undated pit in Trench 57; and two possible ditch terminals in Trench 59. The aim of the evaluation was to define the extent of the Late Bronze Age settlement excavated immediately to the west. The trenching demonstrated that the settlement does not extend beyond the limits of the main excavation area.



1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Scope of work

- 1.1.1 Oxford Archaeology (OA) was commissioned by This Land to undertake a trial trench evaluation on land off Newmarket Road, Burwell, ahead of the redevelopment of the land for residential dwellings and associated amenities (Fig. 1).
- 1.1.2 The work was undertaken after verbal discussion with Kasia Gdaniec from Cambridgeshire Historic Environment Team (CHET), as a result of the fact that the red line boundary for the development (marked on Fig. 1) had altered since the original evaluation work. Therefore, this part of the development area was untested in terms of its archaeological potential.

1.2 Location, topography and geology

- 1.2.1 The village of Burwell is located close to the Cambridgeshire/Essex border, around 14km north-east of Cambridge and 5km north-west of Newmarket.
- 1.2.2 The subject site is situated on the south-eastern edge of the village in arable fields, with Newmarket Road to the south-west, residential houses to the north-west, and open fields on all other sides. The site lies on a slight north-facing slope at a height of around 21m OD (to the south-west), falling to 18m OD (to the north).
- 1.2.3 Bedrock geology consists of Zig Zag formation chalk with no superficial deposits recorded (https://mapapps.bgs.ac.uk/geologyofbritain/home accessed 09/12/21).

1.3 Archaeological background

1.3.1 This section is a summary of known archaeological events and findspots within the area. Where relevant the Cambridgeshire Historic Environment Record (CHER) number is given in brackets.

Trial trench evaluation

- 1.3.2 In 2014, a 54 trench evaluation was undertaken across the proposed development area (ECB4308). This identified two areas of Late Bronze Age archaeology. In the southwest corner of the site, clusters of postholes from buildings, fencelines or other structures along with several pits and a possible well, indicative of settlement activity, were identified. A further area of activity to the north uncovered a single urned cremation as well as several pits and tree throws. The above features produced pottery and animal bone assemblages.
- 1.3.3 A number of large features considered to be naturally occurring were also recorded across the site. These varied in depth from 0.25m to 1.5m, some of which yielded pottery and animal bone.

Archaeological remains in the wider landscape

1.3.4 A considerable amount of archaeology is known from the surrounding area and the site itself has a record relating to medieval ridge and furrow (CHER 00388), and another similar record 650m to the north-east (CHER 06703). A 19th century windmill

v.1



- is also present within the farmyard of Melton Farm (CHER 06495), which now comprises only the mill tower base. It is now thatched and used for farm storage.
- 1.3.5 Approximately 80m to the south-west of the site, at land to the rear of Nos 36-42 Newmarket Road, an excavation was conducted in 2005 (MCB17427). The work revealed the presence of an Iron Age settlement within which were two large pits of Early to Middle Iron Age date. These notably included several semi-complete pots and a pine marten mandible, pierced to form a pendant. Smaller pits and numerous postholes were found scattered across the site. Some contained Iron Age pottery, although many remained undated. They may indicate the presence of former structures such as buildings and fences. However, this site has since been reinterpreted and now known to represent part of a Late Bronze Age settlement site.
- 1.3.6 Approximately 1km north-east of the site, two undated burials were uncovered during the excavation of a water pipeline (CHER 11314 & 10492). The lack of grave goods and the isolated nature of one of these burials has led to the suggestion of a prehistoric date (CHER 10492).
- 1.3.7 An evaluation at Reach Road in 2007 (ECB 2610) revealed a series of features of prehistoric and Romano-British date, suggested to be the remains of field systems. Lithic material was also recovered, indicating some activity in the area from the later Neolithic/Early Bronze Age. A former prehistoric water channel was also identified, on the edge of which were found the part remains of at least two individuals, indicated by radiocarbon dating to be of Late Iron Age origin. A rising water table caused abandonment of the area, probably in the later Roman period.
- 1.3.8 Iron Age and Roman settlement is well attested to the south and west of the development site, particularly to the south-west of the scheduled monument of Burwell Castle (SM29382).
- 1.3.9 Less than 300m south-west of the site a large Anglo-Saxon cemetery was discovered during the excavation of Victoria Pits on the south side of Newmarket Road in the late 19th and early 20th century (CHER 06764). This was the site of a 6th-7th century cemetery, where 127 skeletons were found in 125 graves, over half of which contained grave goods (MCB8158). During the excavation of the cemetery, evidence was also found of a potential Roman settlement on the site (CHER 06764a).
- 1.3.10 The site of the former St Andrew's church and its burial yard is believed to have been in the north-east corner of the Newmarket Road/High Street junction (MCB8106). The unfenced yard may have been destroyed by the lime works on the north side of Newmarket Road.
- 1.3.11 Other excavations within Burwell have revealed 19th century quarrying at the village college (MCB16657), 750m to the north-west of the site, at Isaacson Road 350m to the south (ECB950) and at Mandeville (ECB14124), 700m to the south-west.
- 1.3.12 An archaeological evaluation on land to the rear of 58-60 Newmarket Road (MCB18199), approximately 170m to the south of this site, revealed two postholes. The lack of dating evidence, however, meant it was not possible to date them. Several silt patches were investigated across the site but were found to be as a result of root action.



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 site;
 - ii. to assess the artefactual and environmental potential of the archaeological deposits encountered;
 - iii. to provide further information on the archaeological potential of the site to enable the archaeological implications of the proposed development to be assessed.

2.2 Methodology

- 2.2.1 A total of five trenches measuring 50m long and 2m wide and four trenches measuring 30m long and 2m wide were excavated across a portion of the development area which had not been included during previous evaluation investigations.
- 2.2.2 The trenches were set out using a Leica survey-grade GPS fitted with "smartnet" technology with an accuracy of 5mm horizontal and 10mm vertical. The footprint of each trench was metal detected prior to machining and also scanned using a CAT and Genny with a valid calibration certificate.
- 2.2.3 All trenches were excavated by a 20 tonne, 360° tracked mechanical excavator using a 2m wide toothless ditching bucket to the depth of geological horizons, or to the upper interface of archaeological features or deposits, whichever was encountered first.
- 2.2.4 Topsoil, subsoil and archaeological deposits were kept separate during excavation, to allow for sequential backfilling of excavations. The trenches were not backfilled until approved by CHET.
- 2.2.5 All machine excavation took place under constant supervision of a suitably qualified and experienced archaeologist. The top of the first archaeological deposit was exposed by machine and then investigated by hand. Any archaeological deposits present were excavated stratigraphically to the level of the geological horizon, where safe to do so. All trench and feature spoil was scanned visually and with a metal detector to aid recovery of artefacts.
- 2.2.6 A total of one bulk sample was taken and processed at OA East's processing facility at Bourn.



3 RESULTS

Introduction

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. Trench results are also illustrated on Figures 2 to 4.

General soils and ground conditions

- 3.1.2 The soil sequence across the trenches was fairly uniform. The natural geology of chalk was overlain (where present) by a mid greyish brown sandy silt subsoil (0.07-0.2m thick), which in turn was overlain by topsoil (0.3-0.35m thick).
- 3.1.3 Ground conditions throughout the evaluation were generally good, and the site remained dry throughout. Archaeological features, where present, were easy to identify against the underlying natural geology.

General distribution of archaeological deposits

3.1.4 There were nine trenches in total (Fig. 2, Trenches 55-63). Archaeological features were recorded in Trenches 56, 57 and 59, none of which yielded any artefacts. Trenches 55 (Plate 1), 58, 60, 61, 62, and 63 did not contain any archaeological features and will not be described in any further detail.

Trench 56

- 3.1.5 Within this group of trenches, Trench 56 was located to the north-west and aligned north-east to south-west (Fig. 3). It contained one pit.
- 3.1.6 Pit **9052** was situated at the north-eastern end of the trench and measured 0.81m wide and 0.72m deep with near vertical sides and a concave base (Fig. 3, Section 753; Plate 3). Its sole fill (9053) was a mid brown grey silty loam. An environmental sample taken from this fill produced charcoal and snail shell (see paragraph 3.1.12 below).

Trench 57

- 3.1.7 Trench 57 was located in the southern part of the site and aligned north-west to southeast (Fig. 4; Plate 2). It also contained one pit.
- 3.1.8 Pit **9103**, which was located centrally within the trench, measured 0.88m wide and 0.14m deep with sloped sides and a concave base. It was filled with a single mid to dark brown grey clayey silt (9104).

Trench 59

- 3.1.9 Trench 59 was located in the south-western part of the site and aligned north-west to south-east (Fig. 4). It contained two ditch terminals.
- 3.1.10 Ditch terminus **9203** was located at the south-eastern end of the trench and was aligned north-west to south-east. It measured 0.7m wide and 0.52m deep with steep



- sides and a concave base. It was filled with a light yellow brown sandy silt (9204) and a dark brown grey sandy silt (9207).
- 3.1.11 North to south aligned ditch terminus **9205** (Plate 4) was situated at the north-western end of the trench. It measured 0.60m wide and 0.24m deep with sloping sides and a concave base. It was filled with a mid grey brown sandy silt (9206) and mid brown grey sandy silt (9208).

Environmental summary

3.1.12 A single environmental sample was taken from pit **9052** in Trench 56: Sample 600 contained a moderate quantity of charcoal but did not contain any other archaeobotanical material. It was noted that the sample contained frequent relatively well-preserved molluscs, including the burrowing snail species Cecilioides acicula (Martha Craven pers. comm.).

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4 DISCUSSION

Reliability of field investigation

4.1.1 Site conditions were good, and features could be clearly observed in the natural chalk across the site. Consequently, the results of the investigation are thought to have a high level of reliability.

Interpretation

4.1.2 The aim of the evaluation was to define the extent of the Late Bronze Age settlement currently being excavated to the north-west. The trenching demonstrated that the settlement, or at least the high density of settlement features, does not extend as far as the area of this current phase of evaluation. The paucity of archaeological features and the lack of any finds suggests peripheral activity, possibly associated with the main settlement site, but it is not possible to state this with certainty in the absence of any dating.

Land off Newmarket Road, Burwell

APPENDIX A TRENCH DESCRIPTIONS AND CONTEXT INVENTORY

| Trench 55 | | | | | | | | | |
|-----------|-------------|-----------|------------|----------------------------------|----------------|-------|--|--|--|
| General o | descriptio | n | | | Orientation | NW-SE | | | |
| Trench de | evoid of a | rchaeolo | gy. Consis | sts of topsoil overlying natural | Length (m) | 30 | | | |
| geology c | of chalk. C | ontains a | probable | e natural solution hollow. | Width (m) | 2 | | | |
| | _ | _ | _ | | Avg. depth (m) | 0.37 | | | |
| Context | Type | Width | Depth | Description | Finds | Date | | | |
| No. | | (m) | (m) | | | | | | |
| 200 | Layer | - | 0.30 | Topsoil | - | - | | | |
| | Layer | - | 0.45 | Solution hollow | - | - | | | |
| 202 | Layer | - | - | Natural | - | - | | | |

| Trench 56 | | | | | | | | | |
|-----------|-------------|----------|----------|------------------------------|----------------|-------|--|--|--|
| General o | description | n | | | Orientation | NE-SW | | | |
| Trench co | ontained | one pit. | Consists | of topsoil overlying natural | Length (m) | 30 | | | |
| geology c | of chalk. | | | | Width (m) | 2 | | | |
| | _ | _ | _ | | Avg. depth (m) | 0.32 | | | |
| Context | Type | Width | Depth | Description | Finds | Date | | | |
| No. | | (m) | (m) | | | | | | |
| 9050 | Layer | - | 0.32 | Topsoil | - | - | | | |
| 9051 | Layer | - | - | Natural | - | - | | | |
| 9052 | Cut | 0.81 | 0.72 | Pit | - | - | | | |
| 9053 | Fill | - | 0.72 | Fill of pit | - | - | | | |

| Trench 57 | | | | | | | | | |
|-----------|-------------|----------|-------------|------------------------------|----------------|------|--|--|--|
| General o | description | n | Orientation | NW-SE | | | | | |
| Trench co | ontained | one pit. | Consists | of topsoil overlying natural | Length (m) | 50 | | | |
| geology c | of chalk. | | | | Width (m) | 2 | | | |
| | | | | | Avg. depth (m) | 0.43 | | | |
| Context | Type | Width | Depth | Description | Finds | Date | | | |
| No. | | (m) | (m) | | | | | | |
| 9100 | Layer | - | 0.30 | Topsoil | - | - | | | |
| 9101 | Layer | - | 0.20 | Subsoil | - | - | | | |
| 9102 | Layer | - | - | Natural | - | - | | | |
| 9103 | Cut | 0.88 | 0.14 | Pit | - | - | | | |
| 9104 | Fill | - | 0.14 | Fill of pit | - | - | | | |

| Trench 58 | | | | | | | | |
|-----------|-------------|-----------|----------|------------------------------|----------------|-------|--|--|
| General o | description | n | | | Orientation | NE-SW | | |
| Trench d | evoid of | archaeol | ogy. Con | sists of topsoil and subsoil | Length (m) | 50 | | |
| overlying | natural ge | eology of | chalk. | | Width (m) | 2 | | |
| | | _ | _ | | Avg. depth (m) | 0.38 | | |
| Context | Туре | Width | Depth | Description | Finds | Date | | |
| No. | | (m) | (m) | | | | | |
| 200 | Layer | - | 0.35 | Topsoil | - | - | | |
| 201 | Layer | - | 0.07 | Subsoil | - | - | | |
| 202 | Layer | - | - | Natural | - | - | | |



| Trench 59 | | | | | | | | |
|-----------|-------------|-----------|-------------|-----------------------------|----------------|------|--|--|
| General o | description | n | Orientation | NW-SE | | | | |
| Trench c | ontained | two dit | ch term | inuses. Consists of topsoil | Length (m) | 50 | | |
| overlying | natural ge | eology of | chalk. | | Width (m) | 2 | | |
| | | _ | | | Avg. depth (m) | 0.40 | | |
| Context | Type | Width | Depth | Description | Finds | Date | | |
| No. | | (m) | (m) | | | | | |
| 9200 | Layer | - | - | Natural | - | - | | |
| 9201 | Layer | - | 0.20 | Subsoil | - | - | | |
| 9202 | Layer | - | 0.30 | Topsoil | - | - | | |
| 9203 | Cut | 0.70 | 0.52 | Ditch terminus | - | - | | |
| 9204 | Fill | - | 0.36 | Fill of ditch terminus 9203 | - | - | | |
| 9205 | Cut | 0.60 | 0.24 | Ditch terminus | - | - | | |
| 9206 | Fill | - | 0.10 | Fill of ditch terminus 9205 | - | - | | |
| 9207 | Fill | - | 0.52 | Fill of ditch terminus 9203 | - | - | | |
| 9208 | Fill | - | 0.16 | Fill of ditch terminus 9205 | - | - | | |

| Trench 60 | | | | | | | | |
|-----------|-------------|----------|-----------|---------------------------------|----------------|-------|--|--|
| General o | description | n | | | Orientation | NE-SW | | |
| Trench de | evoid of ar | chaeolog | y. Consis | ts of topsoil overlying natural | Length (m) | 50 | | |
| geology c | of chalk. | | | | Width (m) | 2 | | |
| | | | | | Avg. depth (m) | 0.30 | | |
| Context | Type | Width | Depth | Description | Finds | Date | | |
| No. | | (m) | (m) | | | | | |
| 200 | Layer | - | 0.30 | Topsoil | - | - | | |
| 202 | Layer | - | - | Natural | - | - | | |

| Trench 63 | Trench 61 | | | | | | | | |
|-----------|-------------|----------|-----------|---------------------------------|----------------|-------|--|--|--|
| General o | description | n | | | Orientation | NW-SE | | | |
| Trench de | evoid of ar | chaeolog | y. Consis | ts of topsoil overlying natural | Length (m) | 30 | | | |
| geology c | of chalk. | | | | Width (m) | 2 | | | |
| | | | | | Avg. depth (m) | 0.30 | | | |
| Context | Type | Width | Depth | Description | Finds | Date | | | |
| No. | | (m) | (m) | | | | | | |
| 200 | Layer | - | 0.30 | Topsoil | - | - | | | |
| 202 | Layer | - | - | Natural | - | - | | | |

| Trench 62 | | | | | | | | | |
|-----------|-------------|----------|-------------|---------------------------------|----------------|------|--|--|--|
| General o | description | n | Orientation | NW-SE | | | | | |
| Trench de | evoid of ar | chaeolog | y. Consis | ts of topsoil overlying natural | Length (m) | 30 | | | |
| geology c | of chalk. | | | | Width (m) | 2 | | | |
| | _ | _ | | | Avg. depth (m) | 0.30 | | | |
| Context | Type | Width | Depth | Description | Finds | Date | | | |
| No. | | (m) | (m) | | | | | | |
| 200 | Layer | - | 0.30 | Topsoil | - | - | | | |
| 202 | Layer | - | - | Natural | - | - | | | |



Land off Newmarket Road, Burwell

| Trench 63 | | | | | | | | |
|-----------|-------------|----------|----------------|-------------|-------|------|--|--|
| General c | lescription | n | Orientation | NE-SW | | | | |
| Trench de | evoid of ar | chaeolog | Length (m) | 50 | | | | |
| geology o | of chalk. | | Width (m) | 2 | | | | |
| | | | Avg. depth (m) | 0.30 | | | | |
| Context | Туре | Width | Depth | Description | Finds | Date | | |
| No. | | (m) | (m) | | | | | |
| 200 | Layer | - | 0.30 | Topsoil | - | - | | |
| 202 | Layer | - | - | Natural | - | - | | |



| APPE | NDIX B | | OA | SIS REF | POI | RT FOR | RM | | | | |
|--|-----------------------------------|----------------------------------|---|-----------------------|-------|-------------------|----------------------------------|-------------------------------|---------------------------------------|-------------------------|--|
| Projec | t Details | | | | | | | | | | |
| | Number | oxfordar3-503293 | | | | | | | | | |
| Projec | t Name | Land off Newmarket Road, Burwell | | | | | | | | | |
| Start of Fieldwork 10/11/2 | | | 012 | 012 | | | End of Fieldwork | | 10/11/2021 | | |
| Previo | ous Work | Yes | 012 | | | Futur | Future Work | | No | | |
| Projec | t Reference | Codes | | | | | | | | | |
| Project Reference Codes Site Code BURNMI | | | | | | Planning App. No. | | 15/01175/OUM | | | |
| | lumber | ECB6657 | | | | Related Numbers | | | 13/011/3/ | 00101 | |
| IILIV IV | Idilibei | | | | | Melated Numbers | | | | | |
| Promp | ot | | NPPF | | | | | | | | |
| Devel | opment Type | | Resid | lential | | | | | | | |
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| | erial Photograph Iterpretation | у — | Ш | Grab-sam _l | oling | 5 | | | Remote Opera | ited Vehicle Survey | |
| | erial Photograph | y - new | ☐ Gravity-core | | | | | | Sample Trench | nes | |
| □ A | nnotated Sketch | | | ☐ Laser Scanning | | | | | Survey/Record | _ | |
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| | ugering endrochronologi | cal Survey | ☐ Measured Survey☐ Metal Detectors | | | | | \boxtimes | Targeted Trenches Test Pits | | |
| | ocumentary Sea | | ☐ Phosphate Sui | | | _ | | Topographic Survey Vibro-core | | | |
| | Environmental Sampling | | ☐ Photogrammetr | | | | | | | | |
| | ieldwalking | , 0 | ☐ Photographic Surve | | | | | | Visual Inspecti | on (Initial Site Visit) | |
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| | | Choo | se an i | tem. | | | | | Choose a | an item. | |
| Insert n | nore lines as a | appropriat | te. | | | | | | | | |
| Proiec | t Location | | | | | | | | | | |
| County Cambridges | | | lgeshir | eshire | | | Address (including Postcode) | | | | |
| - | | | | nbridgeshire | | | Land off Newmarket Road, Burwell | | | | |
| Parish Burwell | | | | | | | | | , | | |
| HER office CCC | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Size of Study Area 2.33ha | | | | | | | | | | | |
| National Grid Ref TL 59265 66 | | | 5 6654 | 3 | | | | | | | |
| | | | | | | | | | | | |

Project Originators

Organisation Project Brief Originator Project Design Originator

| Oxford Archaeology East |
|-------------------------|
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| Louise Moan |

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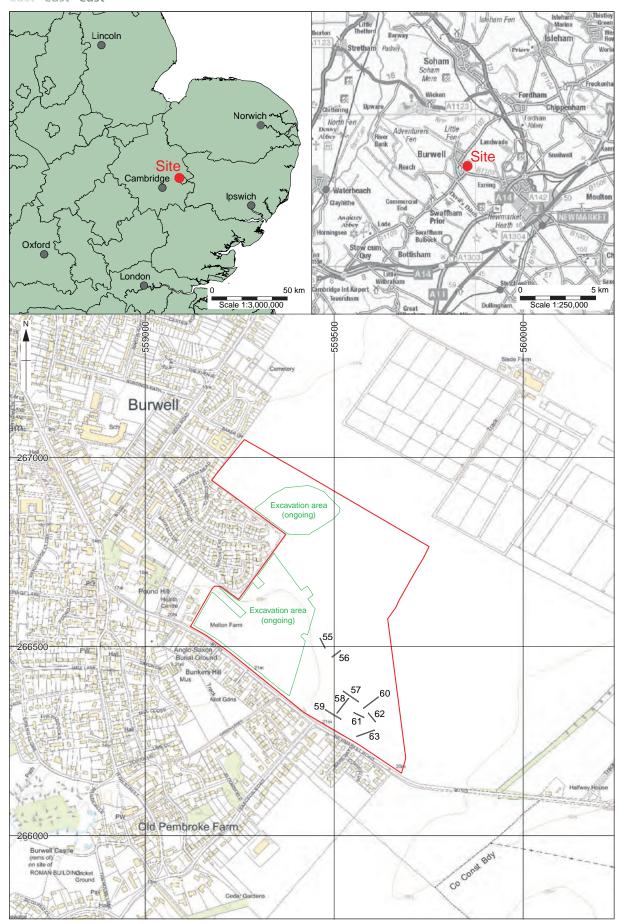
Land off Newmarket Road, Burwell

| Project Manager Project Supervisor | Louise Moan Kathryn Blackbourn | | | |
|---------------------------------------|-----------------------------------|---------|--|--|
| Project Archives | Location | ID | | |
| Physical Archive (Finds) | CCC | ECB6657 | | |
| Digital Archive | ADS | ECB6657 | | |
| Paper Archive | CCC | ECB6657 | | |

| Physical Contents | Present? | Digital files associated with Finds | Paperwork associated v | vith |
|--|----------|--|---------------------------|------|
| Animal Bones Ceramics Environmental Glass Human Remains Industrial Leather Metal Stratigraphic Survey Textiles Wood Worked Bone Worked Stone/Lithic None Other | | | | |
| Digital Media Database GIS Geophysics Images (Digital photos) Illustrations (Figures/Pla Moving Image Spreadsheets Survey Text Virtual Reality | | Paper Media Aerial Photos Context Sheets Correspondence Diary Drawing Manuscript Map Matrices Microfiche Miscellaneous Research/Notes Photos (negatives/prints) Plans Report Sections Survey | | |

Further Comments





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Figure 1: Site location, showing evaluation trenches (black) within development area (red)



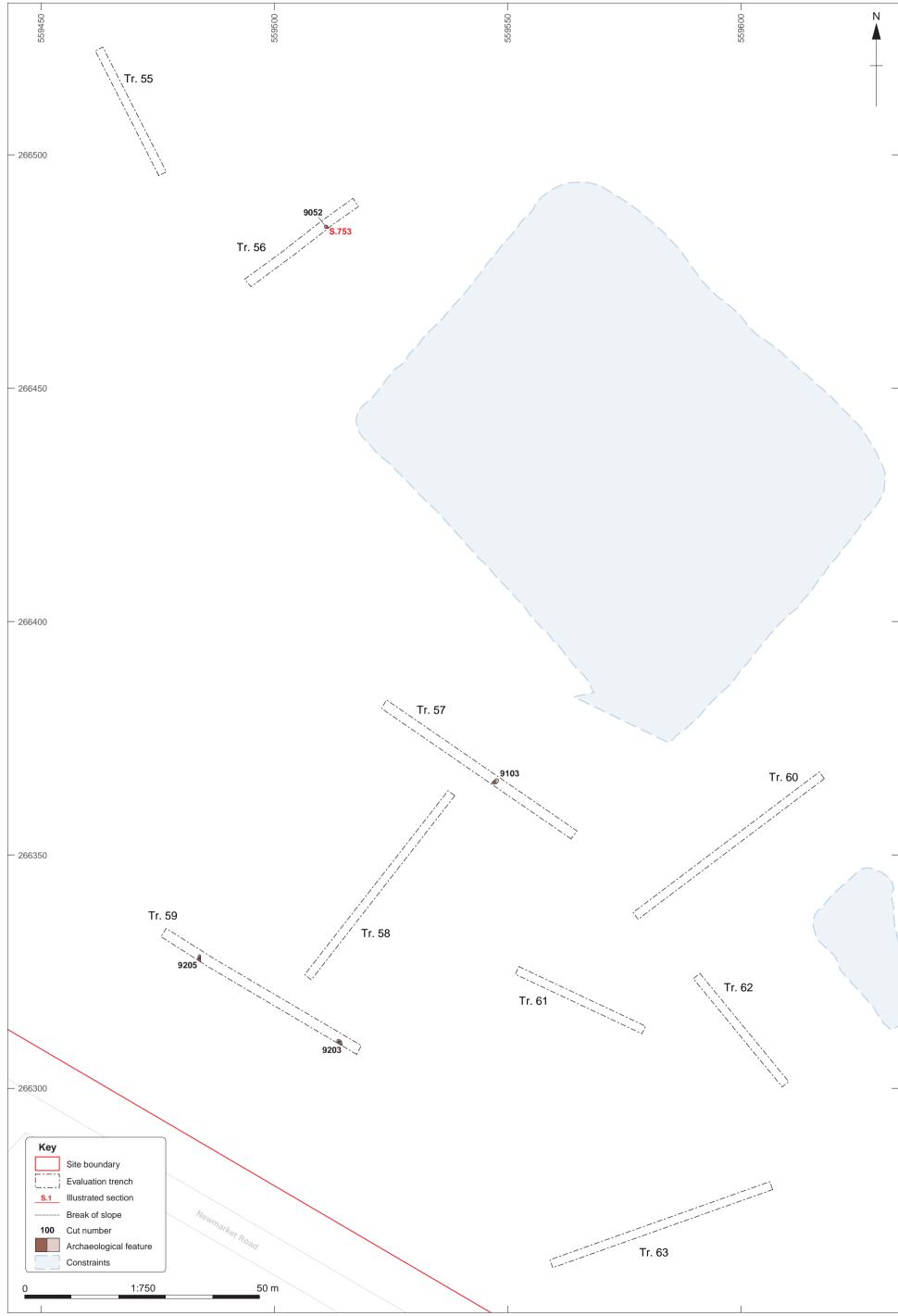


Figure 2: Trench plan



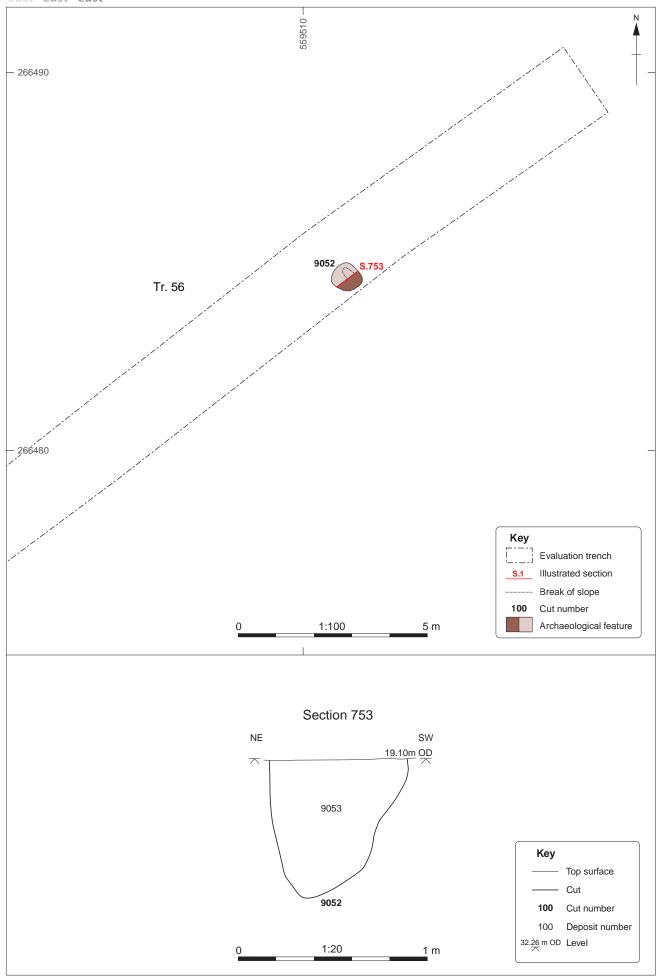


Figure 3: Trench 56 detailed plan, with selected section



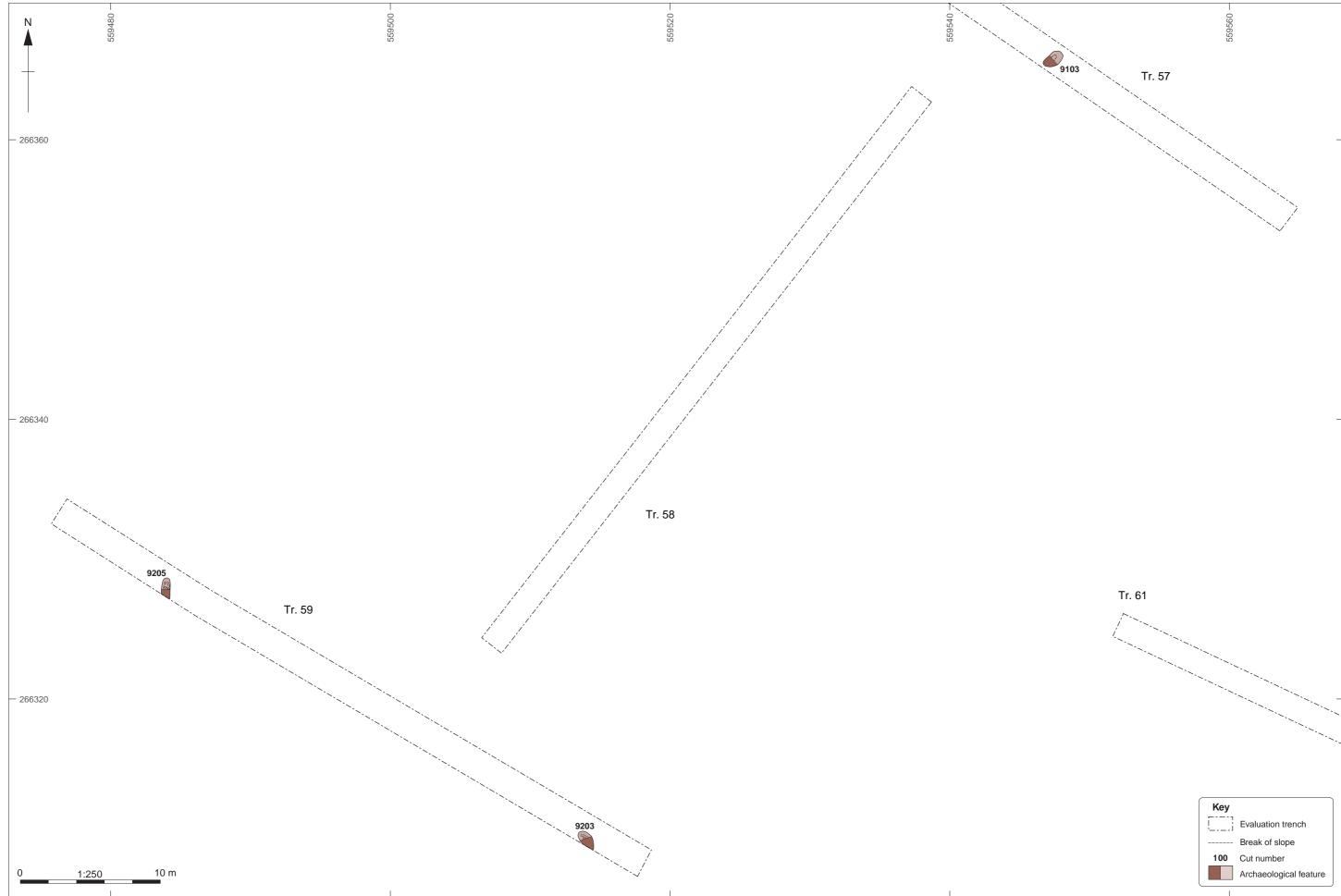






Plate 1: Trench 55, from the south



Plate 2: Trench 57, from the north west

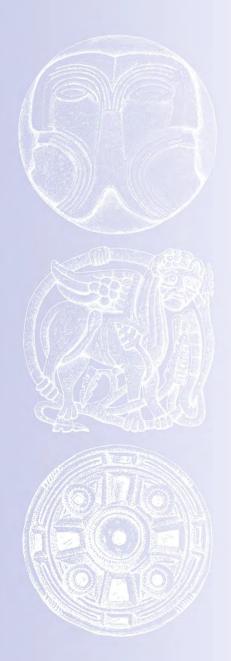




Plate 3: Pit 9052, Trench 56, from the north west



Plate 4: Ditch Terminus 9205, Trench 59, from the north





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