Perryfields Road, Bromsgrove, Worcestershire

Evaluation Report (Phase 3) and Post-Excavation Assessment and Updated Project Design

November 2022

Client: EDP on behalf of Taylor Wimpey

Issue No: 2
NGR: SO 95610 72400

oxfordarchaeology

Client Name:	EDP on behalf of Taylor Wimpey
Document Title:	Perryfields Road, Bromsgrove, Worcestershire
Document Type:	Evaluation Report and Post-Excavation Assessment and Updated Project Design
Grid Reference:	SO 95610 72400
Planning Reference	16/0335
Site Code:	WSM77938
Invoice Code:	BROMPEPA
Accession/HER No.:	WSM77938
OA Document File Location:	OACloud_ProjectsWorkingFolder_OAS_BROMPE-Bromsgrove_PerryfieldsRoad
OA Graphics File Location:	OAServer_invoice-codes-a-thru-h_B-invoice-codes_BROMPEPA
Issue No:	2
Date:	November 2022
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Evaluation Report and Post-Excavation Assessment and Updated Project Design

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Summary

In January and February 2022, Oxford Archaeology undertook the third phase of evaluation, immediately followed by targeted excavation, of a site at Perryfields Road, Bromsgrove, Worcestershire. Both evaluation and excavation targeted geophysical anomalies and were informed by earlier phases of evaluation. The work was undertaken on behalf of EDP, for Taylor Wimpey. Archaeological activity was concentrated in the north-east part of the site, with the three excavation areas and one of the evaluation trenches revealing a sequence of elongate pits and short lengths of ditch, interpreted as a pit alignment running NE–SW. The excavation was notable for the notable amount of early Iron Age pottery recovered from features within two of the excavation areas. This was associated with quantities of fire-cracked stone and charred plant remains, both indicative of nearby settlement. A radiocarbon date probably belonging to the second half of the 5th century cal BC confirms this phasing, providing uncommon settlement evidence of this date in the region.

Beyond this focus for activity, archaeological features were limited, with evaluation trenches further to the south and west of the pit alignment revealing only isolated, sterile pit and ditch features within two of the trenches.

Acknowledgements

Oxford Archaeology would like to thank EDP, on behalf of Taylor Wimpey, for commissioning this project. Thanks are also extended to Emily Hathaway who monitored the work on behalf of Worcester County Council.

The project was managed for Oxford Archaeology by John Boothroyd. The evaluation fieldwork was directed by Tamsin Jones, who was supported by Jeremy Briscombe, Gary Evans, Amber Hatwell-Brixton, Ben McAndrew and Edward Tolley. Survey and digitising was carried out by Marjaana Kohtamaki and Caroline Souday. 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 Background

1.1.1 Oxford Archaeology (OA) was commissioned by the Environmental Dimension Partnership Ltd (EDP) on behalf of Taylor Wimpey to undertake the third phase of evaluation, and a targeted excavation, upon land scheduled for development off Perryfields Road, Bromsgrove. The site is located to the west of Bromsgrove, centred on National Grid Reference SO 95610 72400, and forms the north-eastern part of a wider development scheme. This wider scheme occupies land immediately to the south and south-east of the intersection between the M5 and the M42 motorways, with the southern boundary formed by the A448, and the east by the suburb of Sidemoor, and occupies *c* 70ha in total. Its location and layout are shown in Fig. 1.

1.1.2 The present archaeological baseline and requirement for the works were identified via a comprehensive Archaeological and Heritage Assessment (EDP 2012), geophysical survey (NA 2013; EDP 2019) and three prior archaeological evaluations (CA 2016; OA 2014; OA 2015).

1.1.3 Fieldwork for the third phase of evaluation was conducted in January 2022, followed by the excavation fieldwork in February 2022.

1.1.4 This assessment has been conducted in accordance with the principles identified in Historic England's guidance documents *Management of Research Projects in the Historic Environment*, specifically *The MoRPHE Project Manager's Guide (2006) and PPN3 Archaeological Excavation* (2008).

1.2 Geology and topography

1.2.1 The underlying bedrock geology comprises the Helsby Sandstone formation. Alluvial deposits associated with the Battlefield Brook are present to the west of the proposed development area (BGS, nd). The site area is occupied mainly by pasture fields with some grass leys in the south and a fruit farm to the west. Soils within the site area are mostly described as 'loamy with naturally high groundwater' (CSAI, nd).

1.3 Archaeological background

1.3.1 Prior to archaeological work associated with the current project, known prehistoric activity in the area was limited to the discovery of an early Bronze Age stone battle-axe *c* 800m to the south-west of the excavation area (HER WSM 118574) and a ring-ditch and possible enclosure known through cropmarks *c* 150–250m to the west of the site (OA 2015, 5; HER WSM 09868). Roman and Anglo-Saxon evidence in the vicinity of the site is also limited. The deserted medieval village of Fockbury survives as a series of earthworks *c* 800m to the west of the site, with the site itself probably being agricultural during the medieval and post-medieval periods, being adjacent to the Battlefield Brook.

1.3.2 A geophysical survey of *c* 60 ha was undertaken over the wider development scheme (NA 2013). This revealed a number of potential archaeological remains:

- A slightly curving line of anomalies with the appearance of elongated pits or discontinuous ditches. These features were evaluated (OA 2014; 2015) then excavated as part of the present work, and shown to be an early Iron Age pit alignment;
- A trapezoidal ditched enclosure, measuring *c* 75m from east to west, and more than 100m from north to south, of later prehistoric or Romano-British form. This was subject to evaluation (OA 2014) with dating evidence suggestive of the Iron Age or possibly Roman period;
- Short linear anomalies north of Perryfields Road, which although not certainly of archaeological interest may represent part of a small, ditched enclosure extending outside the site;
- A short curvilinear anomaly, largely obscured by the halo from an adjacent pipeline, although potentially representing the edge of a ring ditch or enclosure feature;
- A large and irregular anomaly, surrounded by a zone of weak magnetic noise, which would be consistent with a deposit of ceramic debris or burnt soil, and a surrounding low-density scatter of similar material. This may represent a feature associated with the local brick industry, for example a former kiln or a dump of waste within an old clay pit;
- An 'L-shaped' linear anomaly, and other linear anomalies which may represent former field boundaries.

1.3.3 Two previous phases of evaluation were undertaken within the northern part of the wider development site in the same area of the present works. The 2014 evaluation opened four trenches, three across the trapezoidal enclosure revealed in the geophysical survey, and one over one of the possible pit alignment features also seen in the geophysical survey (OA 2014). The enclosure was noted to have been recut within two of the trenches. Dating evidence was sparse, although a fired clay object was recovered from the infill of one of the ditches, which is likely to be of Iron Age date. The pit alignment feature was found to contain an upper fill comprising very compact fire-cracked stone cobbles, interpreted as evidence for a possible trackway surface or being deposited from adjacent activity. Iron Age pottery was recovered from the base of the upper fill.

1.3.4 The second phase of evaluation opened eight trenches, one across the potential pit alignment, revealing two pits and excavating one of these. Its single fill contained large quantities of heat-affected cobbles, also seen in the upper fill of the unexcavated pit. Charcoal, a small amount of charred glume wheat chaff and a charred grass seed were retrieved from the excavated feature. This prompted further evaluation trenching in the area of the pit alignment and mitigation excavation of the alignment itself, reported on here.

1.3.5 In addition to the two previous phases of evaluation in the northern part of the development scheme, three separate phases of evaluation have been undertaken *c* 600m to the south-west of the pit alignment, just to the south of the area subject to geophysical survey. These evaluations only identified two plough furrows and two post-medieval boundary ditches (CA 2008; 2014; 2016).

1.4 Original research aims and objectives

1.4.1 The broad aims of the fieldwork investigation, as set out in the written scheme of excavation (WSI), were:

- To evaluate the archaeological potential of land within the site which has not previously been evaluated;
- To supplement the archaeological evaluation already undertaken, specifically in order to clarify any remains associated with identified areas of archaeological interest in the area north of Fockbury Mill Lane;
- To effect the survey, excavation and recording of areas of archaeological potential within the site, as well as to disseminate the results, in order to ensure that any archaeological remains present are treated in a manner proportionate to their heritage significance.

1.4.2 The relevant research objectives underpinning these aims are set out in the West Midlands Regional Research Framework (Watt 2011). These comprise:

- Investigate the possibility for any early Bronze Age remains within the site, given the possible ring ditch or small enclosure suggested on the geophysical survey in the wider site, and the ring ditch recorded outside the site to the west of this (HER WSM 09868);
- Investigate the possible segmented boundary Iron Age date, and any related remains; as part of a wider investigation of the evidence for and origins of the different phases of land use and enclosure within the site, including any evidence for pre-Roman, Roman and medieval activity;
- Recover and assess any evidence of the agricultural economy and local industry of medieval and/or post medieval dates, particularly given the regional lack of identified sites of medieval date;
- Place the results of the investigation within the wider landscape context and contribute to an understanding of the pattern of land use; and
- Use a spectrum of environmental techniques appropriate for this aspect of investigation in an attempt to model the landscape and its transformation brought about by anthropogenic activity and due to natural events.

1.5 Fieldwork methodology

1.5.1 The fieldwork methodology is presented in detail in the WSI, which was approved by the Council's archaeological officer prior to the start of the investigations, and followed national guidelines (CIfA 2014) and OA's standard approach to excavation and recording. Key elements are summarised below.

Evaluation

1.5.2 The five evaluation trenches were each 50m in length and nominally 2m wide and were stripped for investigation, with a 30m buffer zone established around identified badger setts. Trench 1 had a perpendicular 20m by 2m extension at the north-western end of the trench.

1.5.3 Trench evaluation was completed in accordance with current Health and Safety legislation. In particular, the locations of the trenches were scanned using a Cable Avoidance Tool (CAT) and (where appropriate) Genny by a suitably qualified member of the contractor team to confirm the absence of services.

1.5.4 Trenches were laid out relative to the National Grid and opened by mechanical excavator using a toothless ditching bucket under archaeological supervision. Modern overburden/topsoil was removed by machine to the first significant archaeological horizon, or until natural geology was reached.

1.5.5 Sufficient features were sampled to fulfil the aims of the evaluation, with the objective being to define remains, rather than totally remove them. Full excavation was undertaken with the aim of revealing and recording underlying stratigraphy and archaeological features.

1.5.6 Environmental samples were taken in accordance with the objectives set out in the WSI. No human remains were encountered. Spoil heaps were scanned using a metal detector but no metal was recovered.

1.5.7 All trenches, whether containing archaeological remains or not, were recorded to an appropriate level of detail. The recording system employed followed best archaeological practice, as well as current CIfA guidance. Full written and drawn records were made of all excavated contexts, with unexcavated deposits recorded to the maximum extent possible. Archaeological plans were made recording the full extent of all features and deposits, in relation to the trench and OS grid. Section drawings showing the locations and extents of significant features and deposits, as well as relevant stratigraphic relationships, were completed.

Excavation

1.5.8 Within the areas specified for excavation, the existing topsoil was mechanically stripped under archaeological control, and underlying subsoil removed in successive spits, of appropriate depth, using a toothless ditching bucket, until either the first archaeological horizon was encountered, or the natural drift geology identified. This exposed surface and all archaeological features was then digitally planned.

1.5.9 All archaeological deposits were excavated by hand, using appropriate tools, and then subject to an appropriate level of sampling prior to being recorded. This equated to a minimum of half (50%) excavation of pits and postholes and a minimum of one-quarter (25%) excavation of linear features, as well as all intersections and terminals.

1.5.10 Following initial stripping of overburden, archaeological features were digitally mapped. Suitable contexts were subjected to environmental sampling at an appropriate scale, in a strategy conforming to applicable Historic England guidance. All artefactual, faunal and environmental remains were first collected and then both bagged and labelled.

1.5.11 The recording system comprised proforma context sheets including all relevant stratigraphic relationships. All site-based archaeological plans and sections were prepared on drawing film at a scale of 1:20 for plans, and 1:10 for sections, and

including all relevant context numbers and datum information. An appropriate photographic record of significant features and deposits was created.

1.5.12 High priority was given to remains which may provide material for dating, with all artefacts and finds retained, and consideration given to the recovery of specialist samples for absolute dating. Environmental samples were taken from suitable deposits and examined for carbonised remains, macroscopic plant remains, pollen, seeds, insects, molluscs, etc.

1.5.13 All samples and finds were treated in a proper manner to prevent deterioration.

1.6 Project scope

1.6.1 The post-excavation assessment encompasses the stratigraphic, artefactual, environmental, and chronological data generated by the excavation of Areas A, B, and C, and summarises the findings of the third phase of evaluation represented by Trenches 1–5. It does not include material from the geophysical or earlier evaluation stage investigations.

1.6.2 The updated project design revises the research aims of the project, and proposes a method for publication of the final excavation report and dissemination of the associated data, along with recommendations for retention and disposal of material, and the accessioning of both material and data archives.

2 EVALUATION RESULTS

2.1 Introduction and presentation of results

2.1.1 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.

2.2 General soils and ground conditions

2.2.1 The soil sequence in the trenches was fairly uniform, and the deposit infills generally similar. The natural geology of Helsby Sandstone was overlain by a reddish brown to pinkish brown clayey silt subsoil, fairly loose and friable, with a recorded depth of 0.38–0.5m through the excavated trenches, which in turn was overlain by topsoil.

2.2.2 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.

2.3 General distribution of archaeological deposits

2.3.1 Archaeological features were present in three of the five evaluation trenches: north-western Trench 1, located within the area subject to full excavation and lying between excavation Areas B and C, and Trenches 2 and 3, to the south-eastern edge of the area under evaluation (Figs 3 and 4). The archaeological features comprised two ditch lengths (Trenches 1 and 2), two pits (Trenches 1 and 3) and one tree-throw hole (Trench 1).

2.4 Trench 1

2.4.1 Trench 1 revealed a single NE–SW aligned ditch to the north-west end of the trench, a single tree-throw hole approximately 1m to its north-west, and a single pit *c* 7.5m to its south-east (Plate 1; Fig. 4).

2.4.2 Ditch 103 had shallow to moderately sloping sides and a shallow base, measured 1.04m wide and 0.18m deep, and was filled with a sterile deposit, similar to the subsoil and interpreted as natural secondary accumulation. No finds were recorded, although some charcoal flecking was noted. The trench was extended with a 20m by 2m area at a perpendicular angle to the main trench to reveal more of ditch 103.

2.4.3 Pit 107 was sub-oval, with moderately sloping sides and a shallowly sloping base, measuring 0.68m wide and 0.44m deep (Plate 2). It was filled by two deposits, again similar to the subsoil in colour and texture, the upper of which produced a moderate amount of charcoal. A single very small fragment of pottery which disintegrated upon excavation was found within the lower deposit.

2.4.4 Tree-throw hole 105 formed an irregular circular feature 0.80m wide and 0.24m deep, with moderately sloping sides and a flat base, and contained a sterile clayey silt interpreted as natural silting.

2.5 Trench 2

2.5.1 Trench 2 revealed a single ditch terminus within the northern end of the trench, running N–S for 2m before extending beyond the northern trench edge (Fig. 3). Ditch 203 had moderately sloping sides and a flat base, and was 1.5m wide and 0.58m deep. It was filled with a single deposit of yellowish brown clayey silt, likely formed through natural silting. No finds were recovered.

2.6 Trench 3

2.6.1 Trench 3 revealed a single pit, located to the centre of the trench and extending beneath the edge of the trench to the west (Fig. 3; Plate 3). Pit 303 had near-vertical sides and a flat base, and appeared irregular in plan due to root activity. It measured 0.70m wide and 0.88m deep, and was filled by two deposits, a friable yellowish brown clayey silt sealed by a friable pinkish brown clayey silt, both producing no finds or environmental material, and likely formed through natural silting processes.

2.7 Finds summary

2.7.1 No finds were recorded from the evaluation, save for a single very small fragment of pottery from pit 107 in Trench 1, observed on site but unable to be recovered for assessment as it disintegrated.

3 EVALUATION DISCUSSION

3.1 Reliability of field investigation

3.1.1 The excavation was undertaken during reasonable and fairly dry weather conditions. The revealed features appeared easy to identify against the underlying natural deposits. The results of the evaluation are therefore considered to be reliable.

3.2 Evaluation objectives and results

3.2.1 The successful excavation and recording of the evaluation trenches provided coverage and assessment of the survival of archaeological remains across the area as planned, producing an effective supporting dataset to the more detailed excavation at Areas A–C. The features revealed in Trench 1, located adjacent to excavation Areas B and C, may relate to the pit alignment identified within excavation Areas A, B and C, but the lack of dating evidence hinders understanding of these features.

3.3 Interpretation

3.3.1 The few features revealed by the evaluation, specifically ditches 103 and 203, and pits 107 and 303, are undated by artefactual evidence. Pit 107 lay in the line of the pit alignment and contained a fragment of pottery and charcoal, like other pits in the alignment, but lacked fire-cracked stone. Ditch 103 may also be Iron Age as it lay parallel to the pit alignment, but it was also parallel to the Battlefield Brook *c* 40m to the north-west and the post-medieval field system as seen on the 1st edition OS map, making its date very uncertain. Ditch 203 was not aligned with the post-medieval field system but lay some 200m away from the pit alignment, making this feature undated but possibly Iron Age. Pit 303 was of a similar distance to the pit alignment and is undated. These features were not associated with any anomalies on the geophysical survey.

3.4 Significance

3.4.1 The features uncovered in Trench 1 may be associated with the pit alignment explored in the present excavation undertaken at Areas A–C. However, as it remains undated alternate origins are possible. The alignment is of interest in the light of both the rich pottery and charred plant remain assemblages recovered, and given its early Iron Age date.

3.4.2 Features in Trenches 2 and 3 are poorly dated and are of minor significance.

4 FACTUAL DATA: EXCAVATION STRATIGRAPHY

4.1 General

4.1.1 The following stratigraphic records were created:

Record type	Number
Context records	61
Section register	1
Sections	11
Small finds register	1
Photo register	1
Digital photographs	110

4.1.2 Archaeological features were present across the three excavated areas, and comprised a linear, slightly undulating series of ditch segments/elongated pits, aligned NE–SW. These form a pit alignment, and although some of the individual segments are closer in appearance to ditch segments, all features belonging to the pit alignment are described as pits. Evidence from pottery and a radiocarbon date strongly suggests that these features represent early Iron Age activity.

4.1.3 It is likely that this sequence of features may relate to the ditch and pit features revealed in evaluation Trench 1, located between Areas B and C.

4.2 Iron Age features in Area A

4.2.1 Excavation in Area A revealed a sequence of five closely set elongated pits, all on a NE–SW alignment and forming a linear pit alignment which continued along the line of features identified through Areas B and C to the south (Plate 4). These were examined at terminus points within three features (pits 1003, 1028 (slot 1021), 1007) and at a midsection point within a fourth (1017) (Fig. 4; Plate 5). A fifth pit was not investigated as this was explored in a previous evaluation trench (OA 2014, Trench 4).

4.2.2 All profiles showed similar characteristics: steep sided, sharply profiled, and concave to the base, and were generally very similar in depth, ranging from 0.80–1.08m. Their width was slightly more variable, ranging from 2–2.5m wide.

4.2.3 The fill profile indicates a similar process of slow silting through the bases of the pits, with lower deposits being fine textured and containing fairly minimal charcoal and occasional pottery.

4.2.4 A feature of all the excavated slots was the presence of at least one deposit towards the top of the profile which was rich in rounded stones: the uppermost fill in features 1003, 1007, and 1021, an upper fill in feature 1011, and two upper layers within 1017 (Plate 5). Stone from fill 1006 of slot 1003 was retained, showing this was heat-affected cracked/broken quartzite cobbles. Although not all of the stone across other features was cracked in this way, the material from 1006 should be representative of much of the stone in other fills, suggesting one or more dumping events of heat-affected stone in the upper fills of the alignment.

4.2.5 A key feature of the slots excavated within the Area A pit line was the presence of concentrations of pottery. Some 328 sherds of early Iron Age pottery (1666g) were

found in pit 1017 in the centre of Area A, across its three uppermost fills, much (170 sherds; 696g) retrieved from middle fill 1018. Interestingly, these pottery-rich fills are also those with a large input of sub-angular, cracked stone (Plate 5). This association may be seen, although to a far lesser extent, in the other Area A deposits containing pottery: the next most prolific slot (1011, producing 15 sherds weighing 47g) also saw pottery concentrated in stony secondary fill 1015 and the only other pottery retrieved from Area A (2 sherds, 5g) came from the uppermost fill of northernmost slot 1003, another stone-rich deposit, from which the two burnt stones that were assessed were also recovered.

4.2.6 A single notable concentration of charred remains was present, suggesting nearby crop-processing activity. This was also located within the upper fill of northernmost slot 1003, also containing pottery and burnt stone. There appears to be an association between different material potentially relating to domestic settlement.

4.3 Iron Age features in Area B

4.3.1 Excavation in Area B revealed two elongated pits on a similar NE–SW alignment to those seen in Areas A and C (Fig. 4; Plate 6). The northernmost of these (2007) was investigated at its northern terminus, and the southernmost (2016) at its southern terminal (slot 2003) and a midsection point (2011; Plates 7 and 8). Steep-sided profiles with a flat to concave base were seen throughout, and a similar fill profile: a phase or phases of initial silting, with at least one notably stonier deposit within the main fill sequence. This was particularly notable at southern terminus infill 2003, which was almost completely infilled by cobbles, many of which were cracked (Plate 8).

4.3.2 A flint flake and some potsherds were recovered from these otherwise fairly sterile deposits, the latter comprising seven sherds recovered from the base of stony ditch slot 2003 (Fig. 5, section 3; Plate 8).

4.4 Iron Age features in Area C

4.4.1 A single elongated pit (3017) was found in Area C, *c* 12m long and aligned NE–SW, in line with the features identified in Areas A and B (Fig. 4; Plate 9). This was investigated across its north-east and south-west termini, and at its midpoint, revealing moderate to steeply sloping sides and a narrow, concave base which becomes much shallower to its south-west end.

4.4.2 At the north-east end (slot 3003; Fig. 4; Plate 10), a fill sequence of three clayey silt deposits is interpreted as anthropogenic, featuring a large (107 sherds; 801g) dump of early Iron Age pottery at the base of the ditch, along with one of the two flint flakes retrieved from the excavation. All three deposits within 3003 were also particularly rich in charcoal and charred plant remains, with a visibly charcoal-rich secondary clearly seen in section (Plate 10). The charred plant assemblage contained considerable amounts of cereal grains and chaff, indicating likely crop processing activity nearby. An association between the deposition of pottery and charred plant remains, also observed in Area A, is therefore seen here. A radiocarbon sample was obtained from a grain of spelt from lower fill 3004, dating to 515–385 cal BC (95% confidence), probably 460–390 cal BC (68% confidence). This is thought to confidently date the pit alignment.

4.4.3 Mid-section slot 3009 showed a similarly clear series of seven fills, most containing small amounts of early Iron Age pottery, and with concentrations of stones indicating possible tipping from the south-east.

4.4.4 Southernmost intervention 3007 was 0.20m deep and had a single, sterile fill.

4.5 Iron Age activity: Areas A, B and C

4.5.1 The features recorded in the three excavation trenches represent a coherent and significant archaeological presence. All features belong to an early Iron Age pit alignment, with multiple pits containing significant deposits of pottery, burnt stone and charred plant remains, suggestive of nearby settlement. This corroborates the findings of the first two phases of evaluation (OA 2014, Trench 4; OA 2015, Trench 7) that also explored the pit alignment, uncovering features containing similar pottery, quantities of burnt stone mainly in the upper fills, and some charcoal and charred plant remains. Pit 107 in Trench 1 of the present evaluation may have been associated with the alignment, although this was not confirmed.

5 FACTUAL DATA: EXCAVATION ARTEFACTS

5.1 General

5.1.1 The following finds were recovered:

Material	Number	Weight (g)
Pottery	474	2558g
Flint	2	3g
Stone	2	159g
Iron	1	3g
Copper alloy (coin)	1	2g

5.2 Flint *by Michael Donnelly*

5.2.1 Two pieces of struck flint were found in the excavation areas. One fresh and uncorticated miscellaneous trimming flake was found in context 2012 from environmental sample 201 (pit 2016, lower fill of slot 2011), while a second flake in far poorer condition was recovered from context 3004 from environmental sample 302 (pit 3017, lower fill of slot 3003). Neither flake is diagnostic, and the material can only indicate a very limited phase of flint working during an unspecified prehistoric period.

Methodology

5.2.2 The artefacts were catalogued according to OA South's standard system of broad artefact/debitage type (Anderson-Whymark 2013; Bradley 1999), general condition noted and dating was attempted where possible. 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. 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 (Onhuma and Bergman 1982), and the presence of platform edge abrasion.

Context	Cut	Type	Sub-type	Notes
2012	2011	Flake	Misc trimming	Very fresh condition, from sample 201
3004	3003	Flake	Inner	Very poor condition, from sample 301

Table 1: Summary of the worked flint

5.3 Pottery *by Alex Davies*

Introduction

5.3.1 The pottery assemblage totals 474 sherds weighting 2558g, from 13 contexts (six cuts), all from the pit alignment in the excavation area. Given the number of interventions into this feature, this is a relatively large assemblage. The assemblage is important as it appears to date to the early Iron Age, and very few early Iron Age assemblages are known in the region.

Methodology and fabric

5.3.2 The pottery was rapidly assessed at context level, noting fabrics in approximate order or frequency, and commenting on form and other features. This is presented on Table 2. Fabric codes are as follows: Gr (grog), Qt (quartzite), Vo (voids, probably shell/limestone and possibly organic). The number suffix indicates the level of coarseness, with 1 being fine and 4 very coarse.

5.3.3 It is difficult to relate the fabrics to those in the Worcestershire Ceramics Online Database. The degraded nature of the Vo inclusions does not allow their close identification, although it appears similar to fabric 4.3 (fossil-shell-tempered ware). This is one of the very few fabrics in the database belonging to the early Iron Age. The other main inclusion type at Perryfields Road – coarse quartzite – is not listed among Iron Age fabrics, and is most similar to Neolithic fabric 5.8 (quartzite-tempered ware). Quartzite is also listed among Bronze Age fabrics in the database. The lack of clear concordances is due to the Perryfields Road assemblage being an uncommon example of an early Iron Age assemblage in the region.

The assemblage

5.3.4 Most of the material forms a homogenous group, and it is likely that only a small number of vessels (five or six) are represented, with sherds from the same pots probably present across multiple contexts. Most of the sherds are in a fabric comprising voids representing burnt out and/or degraded inclusions (Vo). The original inclusions are not clear, but the voids include blocks that are probably from shell or limestone, as well as finer voids that might be organic material, although many of the sherds are overfired/refired and bloated and this may have largely caused the smaller voids.

5.3.5 Sherds in fabric Vo are present in most of the contexts containing pottery, with contexts 1015, 1018, 1019, 1020 and possibly 3012 appearing to be overfired or refired at high temperatures. Sherds from 1018, 1019 and 1020 (all cut 1017) have vitrified internal charred residue, and it is very likely that these are from the same vessel, although no refitting was attempted. A slightly expanded rim is present in this material, probably from one or more ovoid jars broadly dating to the Iron Age. Some large sherds (<120mm) are present in 1019.

5.3.6 Sherds in a coarse quartzite fabric (Qt) are also present in contexts 1019 and 1020 (cut 1017). One rim in this fabric is heavily expanded with a central depression running through the middle of the rim, on an open vessel. Another rim sherds are also expanded, probably from a broadly ovoid vessel. These are probably early Iron Age.

5.3.7 Sherds from context 3004 (cut 3003) are in a void and quartzite fabric. A very heavily expanded T-shaped rim is present, mainly expanded internally but also externally, from a broadly ovoid pot. This dates to the early Iron Age.

5.3.8 A small number of possible grog-tempered sherds were found in contexts 1016 and 3013. These may be pieces of fired clay, with the possible grog perhaps being poorly mixed pieces of clay. A small amount of more certain fired clay was found in context 1006. None of these fragments are intrinsically datable.

Discussion

5.3.9 The assemblage as a whole dates to the early Iron Age. The material found in the same pit alignment in the phase 1 evaluation (OA 2014) was rapidly compared, and it is clear that very similar material was present from phase 1 evaluation (context 404) and the present excavation. In the evaluation report it was spot-dated to the middle/late Iron Age (with the proviso that further work might clarify this date). The present excavation includes a wider range of feature sherds, and the earlier evaluation material might be better considered as early Iron Age.

5.3.10 Early Iron Age pottery in Worcestershire and the West Midlands more broadly is scarce (Hancocks 2017, 119, fig 10.1; Hurst 2017a, 113). Late Bronze Age material is known in small quantities, but the ceramic record picks up in the middle Iron Age, especially with its distinctive traded material (Peacock 1969; Morris 1994, 377–82). The fabric and form range among the assemblage is regionally unusual, due to the rarity of material of this period.

5.3.11 The assemblage from Whitchurch, Warwickshire, is useful in understanding the material from Perryfields Road (Brudenell 2009). Only interim information is available, although this large assemblage has been dated predominantly to the late Bronze Age/early Iron Age transition, the earliest Iron Age and the first century of the early Iron Age, or *c* 850/800-550/500 cal BC (Brudenell 2009, 50). The fabric range is dominated by shell and quartzite, and therefore appears to be similar to Perryfields Road. The form range, however, is typified by angular bipartite and tripartite jars and bowls (Brudenell 2009, 50), and therefore quite different to the generally ovoid forms at Perryfields Road. While the lack of earliest Iron Age and early Iron Age assemblages in the region inhibits a good understanding of typological changes, comparison with areas of southern Britain suggests that angular forms (as at Whitchurch) should belong to the earliest Iron Age and the beginning of the early Iron Age (eg Potterne: Morris 2000; East Chisenbury: Raymond 2010), giving way to ovoid and more neutral forms in the later part of the early Iron Age (eg Alfreds Castle: Brown 2013; pit 3006 at Castle Hill: Edwards 2010), preceding similar forms of the middle Iron Age (Davies forthcoming). The ovoid and more neural forms suggest the Perryfields Road assemblage is later than Whitchurch. Furthermore, the often greatly expanded (T-shaped) rims as seen at Perryfields Road is a feature of the later early Iron Age elsewhere in southern Britain (the Upper Thames in particular, eg pit 3006 at Castle Hill: Edwards 2010). T-shaped rims are only a minor component of the Whitchurch assemblage (Brudenell 2009, fig. 39).

5.3.12 Two sites excavated during work associated with the M6 Toll provide points of comparison. The single vessel found at the Shenston Ring Ditch site (Staffordshire; Simmonds 2008) is tempered with coarse quartzite, and the form is slack-sided rather than angular (Booth 2008a). Charred residue produced a radiocarbon date of 760–420 cal BC (95% confidence; NZA-25166), but the date might fall towards the end of this range given the form of the vessel and that it was from a settlement that appears not to be intensively occupied that also produced a radiocarbon date of 400–200 cal BC (95% confidence; NZA-25057).

5.3.13 At Wishaw Hall Farm (West Midlands; Trevarthen 2008), a pit alignment produced two radiocarbon dates from the same basal fill, one from pottery residue re-calibrating to 420–350 cal BC (81% probability; NZA-25167). The sherds have no clear form but are in a coarse quartzite fabric (Booth 2008b, table 126). This radiocarbon date is better considered as belonging to the end of the early Iron Age (*contra* to the middle Iron Age date given in the report). The other radiocarbon date is from a human skull fragment, and is earlier (750–400 cal BC at 95% confidence; NZA-25080). The radiocarbon date from the pot best dates the pit alignment.

5.3.14 Despite few regional parallels, the Perryfields Road assemblage is best dated to the end of the early Iron Age, c 450–350 cal BC. This is confirmed by a radiocarbon date from context 3004, associated with the largest assemblage of pottery, probably falling in the second half of the 5th century or very early in the 4th century cal BC.

Cut	Context	Sherds	Weight (g)	Spot-date1	Spot-date2	Fabric	Comment
1003	1006	2	5	N/A	EIA	No	Fired clay
1011	1015	14	38	Prehis	EIA	Vo	Overfired. Lots of small voids, partly from overfiring. Uncertain of inclusions
1011	1016	1	9	Prehis	EIA	Gr2	Could be fired clay
1017	1018	170	696	IA	EIA	Vo3	Overfired. Base sherds. Charred internal residue that has become vitrified. Slightly externally expanded rim. All one pot.
1017	1019	94	650	EIA	EIA	Vo3; Qt4	Mostly same as 1018 - overfired, charred residue that has become vitrified, but no feature sherds from this, some large sherds. Also coarse quartzite-tempered sherds inc base, base angle, and expanded rim with depression gulley in middle from open vessel
1017	1020	64	320	IA	EIA	Vo3; Qt4	Same as 1019 - mostly overfired Vo3, also Qt4 with slightly expanded rim. 1018, 1019 and 1020 could all be from 2 pots
2003	2006	7	3	Prehis	EIA	Vo1	Crumbs
3003	3004	107	801	EIA	EIA	VoQt3	Heavily expanded rim, mainly internal but also external. Ovoid shape. One pot.
3003	3005	1	3	IA	EIA	Vo2	
3009	3010	1	8	IA	EIA	Vo2	
3009	3012	6	10	IA	EIA	Vo	Overfired?
3009	3013	4	9	Prehis	EIA	Gr2	Could be fired clay
3009	3015	3	6	IA	EIA	Vo	

Table 2: Summary of the pottery. Spot-date1 are dates based only on the context assemblage, whereas spot-date2 considers site phasing and relationships between contexts

5.4 Burnt stone *by Ruth Shaffrey*

5.4.1 A total of two pieces of stone were retained and submitted for analysis. These were scanned for signs of use or modification and weighed and counted by lithology and context. No worked stone was recovered, with the material submitted instead being heat-affected.

5.4.1 Context 1006, in Area A, contained two affected heat cracked/broken quartzite cobbles weighing 159g. The fracturing is likely to have resulted from rapid heating/cooling and the cobbles therefore probably provide evidence for domestic activity such as cooking. The stone is a sample of the much larger number of cobbles found across many fills of the pit alignment, much of which also appeared to be heat-affected.

5.5 Metalwork and coins *by Anni Byard*

5.5.1 A single copper alloy object and a fragment of iron were recovered from two contexts during the excavations. This is summarised on Table 3.

5.5.2 The fragment of iron recovered from context 3004, lower fill of slot 3003 (pit 3017) is the head and a short length of the shank of a nail. It is encrusted but the shape of the head may indicate a horseshoe nail of medieval or later date. It is in an early Iron Age context and appears to be intrusive.

5.5.3 The small copper alloy object from context 3013, middle fill of slot 3009 (pit 3017) has a concaved profile and is possibly the core of a silver-plated Iron Age minim. Measuring only 8mm diameter, no detail is evident. The findspot suggests that this would be a minim of the North Eastern (*Corieltavi*) region dating from *c* AD 10–40. The only minim this region produced was the Vepo Hawkeyes type (Cottam *et al.* 2010, ABC 1914), with only a few examples recorded. This appears to be intrusive, dating *c* 500 years after the construction of the pit alignment.

Context	Cut	SF no.	Sample no.	Material	Identification	Date
3004	3003	1		Fe	Nail	Med – Mod
3013	3009		302	Cu alloy	Coin	LIA / ER

Table 3: Summary of the metalwork and coinage

6 FACTUAL DATA: EXCAVATION ENVIRONMENTAL EVIDENCE

6.1 Radiocarbon dating

6.1.1 A radiocarbon date was obtained on a charred spelt wheat grain, from lower fill 3004 of pit 3003. This falls at an unusually steep part of the calibration curve, probably dating to the decades around *c* 400 cal BC, and more certainly in the 5th or very early 4th centuries cal BC. The date falls at 490–385 cal BC at 91.7% confidence, probably 460–390 cal BC at 68.3% confidence. This corresponds with the associated pottery and belongs to the later part of the early Iron Age. Further details are on Table 4.

6.1.2 The sample was calibrated using OxCal V4.4.4 (Bronk Ramsey 2021), with atmospheric data from Reimer *et al.* (2020).

Lab. no.	Material	Context/ Feature	$\Delta^{13}C$ ($^0/_{00}$)	Radiocarbon Age BP	Calibrated Age 95% confidence	Calibrated Age 68% confidence
SUERC-106152	Charred grain: *Triticum* cf *spelta*	3004, lower fill of pit 3003	-23.3	2359 ± 24	515-385 cal BC [515-495 cal BC (3.7% confidence) 490-385 cal BC (91.7% confidence)]	460-390 cal BC [460-440 cal BC (10.7% confidence) 420-390 cal BC (57.5% confidence)]

Table 4: Radiocarbon sample

6.2 Charred plant remains *by Sharon Cook*

Introduction

6.2.1 Seven bulk samples, of 33-40L, were taken from a series of pits in the excavation area. The samples were processed by water flotation primarily for the recovery of charred plant remains (CPR), bones and artefacts.

6.2.2 The pits have been dated to the early Iron Age and have been interpreted as part of a pit alignment. Pit alignments are linear series of pits which can cover long distances across the landscape. These are usually interpreted as boundaries although they are still poorly understood as a monument type. Charred plant remains are rarely recovered in any significant quantity from these features.

6.2.3 The assessment aims to identify the presence, abundance and condition of plant remains recovered from the samples and their potential to provide palaeo-environmental and/or palaeo-economic evidence.

Methodology

6.2.4 The bulk samples taken for the recovery of charred plant remains were processed in their entirety using a modified Siraf-type water flotation machine to 250µm (flot) and 500µm mesh (residue). The residue fractions were sorted by eye and scanned with a magnet for recovery of hammerscale. All bones and artefacts were removed and passed to the relevant specialists.

6.2.5 The flot material was scanned using a low-power (x10) binocular microscope and an abundance score was assigned for the presence of charred seeds, charcoal of

potentially identifiable condition, molluscs and nut or fruit stones. All identifications are currently provisional, but nomenclature of plant material follows Stace (2010).

6.2.6 For each sample, 100ml of the flot was scanned (or 100% if the flot was less than 100ml in volume) and the abundance of charred cereal grain, chaff, weed seeds, fruit stones and nut shell has been assigned a score based on the following scale:

* 1-5 items

** 6-24 items

*** 25-49 items

**** 50-99 items

***** 100+ items

6.2.7 Brief notes were made on the general character of the flot, including provisional identifications of the dominant plant taxa when possible and any items of particular interest (Table 5).

6.2.8 The number of charcoal fragments >2mm from the flot was also broadly quantified with a brief description of external condition and presence or absence of roundwood.

Results

6.2.9 Table 5 gives the quantifications of material types and approximate abundance. Samples have been scored as:

A – High potential on archaeobotanical grounds, i.e. rare or interesting plant taxa and range of materials, or exceptional preservation; or high potential of archaeological grounds due to scarcity of information from this type of material or deposit and period.

B – Good potential due to the quantity and range of material present and its reasonable preservation, i.e., the assemblage can provide a useful amount of information.

C – Some identifiable plant material but in low concentrations or very poorly preserved.

D – No identifiable material or so little that this is unlikely to assist in the further characterisation of the site.

Charred remains

6.2.10 The volume of charred material in the flots varies considerably from area to area with samples from Areas A and C including much greater quantities of charred material than those from Area B which include larger amounts of modern roots. The samples from Area C also contain a richer and more varied charred plant assemblage than those from the other areas with a greater quantity of cereal grains and chaff, possibly indicating that this segment is closer to areas of crop processing activity or settlement. There is currently no suggestion that these samples may originate from different phases of activity or that the pits may have had a different function.

6.2.11 All flots are dominated by charcoal, largely ring porous but with diffuse porous varieties also present. Fragments are of good size with charcoal >4mm well represented in all

samples except 201 which is much smaller and less rich for all charred materials. There is no external encrustation and while some knotty fragments are present, a suitable number of identifications should be possible.

6.2.12 The cereal grains are in a mixed condition with the majority having a clinkered appearance and fragmentation being common. Occasional wheat grains are better preserved, and these have the larger oval shape which is associated with spelt wheat (*Triticum spelta*). Occasional oat grains (*Avena* sp.) are recognizable despite being frequently broken and a few grains have the appearance of barley (*Hordeum* sp.) although these are rarer within the assemblage.

6.2.13 Fragments of glume bases are present in all samples except 201. They are generally broken and not further identifiable although occasional, more complete, fragments have the appearance of spelt rather than emmer (*T. dicoccum*) which would confirm the identification of the wheat grains. Very rare fragments of hazelnut shell (*Corylus avellana*) appear unabraded and are likely to be contemporary rather than residual. No uncultivated plant seeds were seen during the assessment, but the size of many flots, especially samples 301 and 302, does not preclude their existence since the richer flots were only part scanned.

Sample No	Context	Cut	Feature	Area	Date	Sample volume (L.)	Flot volume (ml)	Charc >2mm	Grain	Chaff	Seed	Other	Molluscs	Comments	Potential (CPR)	Potential (Charcoal)
100	1006	1003	Pit	A	EIA	33	80	*****	*	**		*		Some modern roots. Charcoal abundant. Mainly ring porous but diffuse porous also represented. Fragments of *Avena* sp. Rare glume base fragments. Rare *Corylus avellana* fragments. Occasional anthracite and unidentified clinkered material.	C	B
101	1018	1017	Pit	A	EIA	40	40	****		**				Modern roots common. Charcoal mainly ring porous but diffuse porous also represented. Rare glume base fragments. Occasional anthracite and unidentified clinkered material.	C	B/C
200	2008	2007	Pit	B	EIA	40	40	****		*		*		Modern roots abundant. Charcoal mainly ring porous but diffuse porous also represented. Occasional anthracite and unidentified clinkered material. Rare small fragments of glume base. Rare *Corylus avellana* fragments.	D	B/C
201	2012	2011	Pit	B	EIA	40	15	**				*		Modern roots abundant. Little CPR. Occasional anthracite and unidentified clinkered material. Rare *Corylus avellana* fragments.	D	C
300	3006	3003	Pit	C	EIA	40	100	*****	**	**		**		Modern roots abundant. Charcoal mainly ring porous. Occasional cereal grains appear mainly *Triticum* sp. with some *Avena* sp. Occasional glume base fragments. Rare *Corylus avellana* fragments.	B/C	B

301	3005	3003	Pit	C	EIA	40	1000	*****	****	****		**		Charcoal abundant. Mainly ring porous but other types also represented. Cereal grain is generally clinkered and fragmented but includes some *Triticum* cf *spelta and Avena* sp. in good condition and probable *Hordeum* sp. Occasional *Corylus avellana* fragments.	B	B
302	3004	3003	Pit	C	EIA	40	500	*****	****	*****		*		Charcoal abundant. Mainly ring porous but other types also represented. Cereal grain is clinkered and fragmented. Includes some *Triticum* cf *spelta* in good condition and probable *Hordeum* sp. and *Avena* sp. Glume bases and fragments common. Rare *Corylus avellana* fragments. 3 x *Triticum* cf *spelta* and 1 x *Corylus avellana* fragment extracted for C14.	B	B

* 1-4, ** 5-24, *** 25-49, **** 50-99, ***** 100+

Table 5: Charred plant remains assessment data

7 STATEMENT OF POTENTIAL

7.1 Stratigraphy

7.1.1 Pit alignments are a conspicuous feature of the first millennium BC of the wider West Midlands region, but these are poorly understood with relatively few excavated, most instead being known only through aerial photography (Palmer 2017, 50; Wigley 2017, 87). They cluster around certain river valleys, mainly in Warwickshire, Shropshire, and Staffordshire (Sharples 2017, 4). The Perrryfields Road alignment runs parallel to Battlefield Brook, a tributary of the River Salwarpe, in turn draining into the Severn. Clusters of pit alignments are recorded along tributaries further up the Severn (Wigley 2017, fig 7.1).

7.1.2 Pit alignments in the West Midlands region are known to date to the late Bronze Age to the middle Iron Age, with more excavated in Warwickshire than the surrounding counties, although important sites remain unpublished, hindering understanding of these features (Ling Hall Quarry; Wasperton; Palmer 2017, 50–8). Alignments have sometimes been shown to be replaced by or incorporated into later Iron Age ditched boundaries or enclosures, and can be seen as early parts of developing landscapes (eg Wishaw Hall Farm: Simmonds 2008; Ling Hall Quarry and possibly Wasperton: Palmer 2017, 50–9). This may be apparent at Perryfields Road, where a rectilinear enclosure *c* 500m to the south-west of the excavated section of the pit alignment is known through geophysical survey and evaluation, dated to the Iron Age by a fragment of triangular 'loomweight' (OA 2014). Further planned excavation may clarify the relationship between these two features (EDP 2019, plan EDP H1).

7.1.3 The pottery assemblage from the pit alignment is notably large. Pit alignments often contain little material culture, with pottery often very fragmented and/or concentrating in upper fills, both indicating that the material is not directly related to the construction and initial use or the alignments (Davies *et al.* forthcoming; Pollard 1996; Powell *et al.* 2010, 49–50; Rylatt and Bevan 2007, 220; Simmonds 2008, 360). This pattern might be due to alignments tending to be larger boundary features rather than directly settlement-related, and it has been noted that pits only contain pottery when adjacent to settlement sites (Palmer 2017, 55). The pottery assemblage at Perryfields Road included some large sherds in primary contexts, and sherds from the same vessels across different contexts, suggesting nearby settlement or other activity that involved the use and deposition of pottery that was contemporary with the construction and initial use of the alignment. This vertical distribution of pottery also suggests that the pits were filled relatively quickly, although further analysis is needed to confirm this.

7.1.4 The likelihood of early Iron Age settlement or other forms of activity in the immediate vicinity of the pit alignment is of particular note given that this period is poorly understood in the archaeological record in the region (Hancocks 2017, 119, fig. 10.1; Hurst 2017b, 113). Settlement features of this period might be particularly ephemeral, lacking enclosure ditches for example, which may explain why the period has so far been elusive. The present evaluation and other trenching in the area (OA 2014; 2015) did not uncover clear evidence of any further activity but the implication of the pottery

assemblage in the pit alignment is that a settlement lay nearby, albeit outside of this phase of investigation. Elucidating the nature of the activity at Perryfields Road and its relationship to the pit alignment and other Iron Age features in the landscape has the potential to add to the understanding of the early Iron Age in the wider region.

7.1.5 Large amounts of fire-cracked cobbles ('pot-boilers') were found in multiple pits belonging to the alignment, both during the excavation and earlier phases of evaluation (OA 2014; 2015). While these tended to be concentrated in middle and upper fills, they were also found in single and some lower fills. Burnt stone of this type is commonly found on later prehistoric settlements, although the large quantities might suggest hot stone activity beyond domestic cooking. The possibility of this deriving from a burnt mound should not be dismissed at this stage, although a date in the 5th or early 4th century cal BC would be very late for such a feature, and the presence of relatively large amounts of pottery and charred plant remains would also be unusual from a burnt mound as characteristically these are near sterile (Barfield and Hodder 2011, 36, 39; Pollard 1996). The pit alignment does, however, run *c* 40m from a parallel stream (shown on the 2nd edition OS map in the same position near to the alignment, but having been subsequently locally rerouted), which might provide a requisite water source for a possible burnt mound. It is also possible that the stones are redeposited from a much earlier phase of burnt mound at the site, although there is no other evidence for this. Furthermore, there appears to be an association between burnt cobbles, pottery, and charred plant remains/charcoal, suggesting they all derive from the same phase of Iron Age activity. The weight of evidence at present does not suggest the stones were from a burnt mound, although the results of subsequent phases of planned investigation elsewhere in the site will be considered in this regard.

7.2 Radiocarbon dating

7.2.1 The radiocarbon date obtained during the assessment falls on a very steep part of the calibration curve meaning that a relatively precise date has been returned. The sample is from a lower fill of the pit alignment and corresponds with the early Iron Age date assigned to the pottery. The pit alignment is therefore well dated and no further radiocarbon dates are needed.

7.3 Flint

7.3.1 The flint assemblage is very small and undiagnostic and therefore has little further potential in the interpretation of the site.

7.4 Pottery

7.4.1 The pottery is a rare example of an early Iron Age group in the West Midlands. This period has remained elusive in the region, but the ceramics of the middle Iron Age are particularly significant due to the development of an exchange system that distributed pottery widely (Morris 1994, 377–82). The social conditions underpinning this exchange system are uncertain, and understanding the circumstances that the exchange system developed from in the early Iron Age are key in answering wider questions on social relationships. The pottery assemblage therefore has the potential to markedly enhance understanding of ceramic development during the Iron Age in

the region, especially if further similar material is discovered during future work at the site. A radiocarbon sample has been obtained which securely dates the assemblage. The publication of the group should include a reappraisal of early Iron Age pottery in the region.

7.5 Burnt stone

7.5.1 The burnt stone has no potential for further analysis.

7.6 Metalwork and coins

7.6.1 The coin is a rare find, and x-raying may reveal additional detail. The coin should be photographed and published along with contextual information with the site.

7.7 Charred plant remains

7.7.1 The assessment has shown that the preservation of charred plant material on the site is mixed with the charcoal being particularly well preserved and of a good size for further analysis, while the cereal grain and associated chaff is more varied with occasional well-preserved examples in an assemblage which is otherwise more fragmentary.

7.7.2 Pit alignments are generally poorly understood, in part because they frequently contain very little evidence of either material culture or of plant or animal remains. As such the abundant remains within these samples is significant, and the combination of both good quantities of pottery and charred plant remains means that multiple strands of investigation exist for the establishment of a firm chronology for this alignment.

7.7.3 The presence of such a quantity of surviving plant remains suggests that Area 3 is likely to be close to a settlement. While there is the potential for a fire to be lit in many places not directly related to settlement, for example when brush clearing for distant fields, activities that are likely to cause cereal grain to be charred are more likely to be clustered in and around the areas of production (the cultivated fields) and storage and consumption (the settlement itself). A rectangular enclosure *c* 500m to the south-west may be related to this settlement (OA 2014).

7.7.4 The transition between the Bronze Age and the Iron Age is less well defined in the West Midlands than in other more intensely excavated areas (Hurst 2011, 101) and so any opportunity to add to the data set is important.

7.7.5 The potentially early date for these remains also feeds well into larger regional and national research questions. Nationally there is much interest in tracing the spread of spelt wheat across the country and its replacement of the previously dominant emmer wheat. This appears to have taken place in the late Bronze Age in the south-east of the country but dates further to the north and west are variable. Regionally there has been interest in whether the intensification of arable farming noted elsewhere for the Iron Age also occurred in the West Midlands or if stock rearing was more widespread (Pearson 2011, 108). The apparent lack of uncultivated plant seeds within this assemblage is interesting, implying as it does a cleaned crop.

7.7.6 Previous investigations on this site (OA 2014; 2015) produced only sparse charred remains with little potential for further analysis.

7.7.7 The potential for charcoal analysis to provide useful information about the range of woods available locally is considered to be fairly high based on the quantity of potentially identifiable charcoal in at least four of the samples but this would need to be considered further once the flots have been reviewed by a charcoal specialist.

7.8 Overall potential

7.8.1 The site is rare evidence of early Iron Age activity in the region. The pottery is without clear regional parallel as so little is known from the period. Unusually for a pit alignment, the finds assemblage (pottery) is large, indicating nearby settlement. Significant quantities of burnt stone might also be from a settlement, although may have derived from more specific industrial activity. However, apart from the pit alignment itself, no further related activity in the immediate area was shown in the present evaluation or earlier phases of trenching (OA 2014; 2015). A rectilinear enclosure is known *c* 500m to the south-west that is presently dated to the Iron Age (OA 2014), and further excavation of this feature should provide evidence to understand the relationship between this enclosure and the pit alignment.

7.8.2 The site has the potential to markedly enhance our understanding of the early Iron Age in the region. There is also potential to provide information on landscape development through the Iron Age following excavation of the nearby enclosure which will further our knowledge of the function of pit alignments.

8 UPDATED PROJECT DESIGN

8.1 Revised research aims

8.1.1 This section has been prepared following consultation of the West Midlands Research Framework (Hurst 2011) and accompanying surveys (Hurst 2017a).

8.1.2 **What is the absolute chronology of the pit alignment? What is the chronological relationship between the pit alignment and the (as yet unexcavated) enclosure to the south-west?**

Radiocarbon dating Iron Age features, and those belonging to the early Iron Age in particular, is a recognised research priority (Hurst 2011, 101–2, 117–8; 2017b, 117). A radiocarbon sample has been obtained, and this is thought to accurately date the alignment. However, if further excavation in other areas of the site reveals Iron Age features, such as the enclosure to the south-west, the obtained radiocarbon date should be compared against others from the scheme.

8.1.3 **What is the absolute chronology of the pottery assemblage and how does it fit into the regional ceramic development?**

Providing absolute dating for Iron Age ceramics, and early Iron Age material in particular, is a recognised research priority (Hancocks 2017, 119, 123; Hurst 2011, 102, 110–1). The ceramic assemblage is relatively large and rare for the period, being found in a series of contemporary features, making it an ideal candidate for radiocarbon dating. No charred residues are present, but the assemblage was dated by associated charred plant remains. The results of radiocarbon dating should be integrated with a literature review of early Iron Age ceramics in the region to better understand the relationship between the material at Perryfields Road and the development of ceramics in the wider region. What is the relationship between early Iron Age ceramics and the regional ceramic exchange system of the middle Iron Age?

8.1.4 **What is the nature of the early Iron Age activity, and why are features of this date so rare in the region?**

The early Iron Age is elusive in the region, and working towards a greater understanding of the period is a recognised research priority (Dorling *et al.* 2017, 83). The size and condition of the pottery assemblage in the pit alignment implies the presence of settlement in the vicinity, although evaluation trenching has not uncovered other evidence of this. This might suggest that early Iron Age features are particularly elusive in the region. Research will be undertaken into the early Iron Age of the region to better contextualise the findings at Perryfields Road to provide a more comprehensive narrative of the period.

8.1.5 **What was the function of the pit alignment, and how can it further elucidate these features in the region? What is the functional relationship between the pit alignment and the (as yet unexcavated) enclosure to the south-west?**

Pit alignments are well represented in the region, although primarily through cropmarks as few have been excavated, and even fewer published. Their function is unclear, given that they are seemingly contradictory as they are boundaries but are permeable (Sharples 2017, 4). How are the deposits of pottery and burnt stone related

to the use of the pit alignment, and what are the implications of the results from Perryfields Road on understanding pit alignments more generally? Is there a direct functional relationship between the pit alignment and the enclosure to the south-west?

8.2 Interfaces

8.2.1 The excavation and evaluation are part of a wider series of archaeological work at the site (OA 2014; 2015). Further evaluation and excavation are planned (EDP 2019, plan EDH H1). The relationship between the pit alignment and the Iron Age enclosure to the south-west, currently only understood via geophysics and evaluation, is of particular interest should further excavation take place. It is recommended that analysis and publication of the current excavation and the planned future excavations should be carried out together as a single project (see section 9 below).

8.3 Methods statement

Stratigraphy

8.3.1 Full analysis of the context data will be undertaken to provide full stratigraphic analysis. The pit alignment will be fully described, and analysis will investigate the possible relationships between concentrations of pottery, burnt stone and charred plant remains. Analysis of the vertical distribution of these materials will provide further information on the filling of the alignment which is relevant for its interpretation. Information from the previous phases of evaluation of the pit alignment will be fully incorporated.

8.3.2 Information from further excavation at the site should be fully incorporated into the discussion of the present excavation to better contextualise the results.

Pottery

8.3.3 The assemblage will be fully recorded following national guidance (PCRG 2010; PCRG *et al.* 2016), and this should include publication of the material found in the evaluation (context 404; OA 2014). All feature sherds will be illustrated. The pottery should be considered alongside any further material excavated during future work at the site. The publication of the assemblage could be used as an opportunity to reappraise early Iron Age pottery in the region. The Worcestershire Ceramics Online Database should be updated to include the fabrics recorded at Perryfields Road.

Flint

8.3.4 No further analytical work is needed for the small assemblage of flint. The assessment report can be edited to form a note in the publication.

Stone

8.3.1 No further analytical work is needed for the burnt stone. The assessment report can be edited to form a note in the publication, incorporating information on the burnt stone discovered from the pit alignment in the earlier phases of evaluation.

Metalwork and coins

8.3.2 A short report will be prepared on the coin, which will also be photographed and should be x-rayed.

Charred plant remains

8.3.3 Two flots (samples 301 and 302) currently phased to the early Iron Age are recommended for further analysis of charred remains to augment the data gathered in previous excavations. These flots contain the richest assemblage of chaff and cereal grain and have the best potential to highlight the types and proportions of such materials.

8.3.4 The selected flots will be sorted and examined using a low-power binocular microscope at x10-x40 magnification. Flots which are particularly rich or of a very large size may be riffled (van der Veen and Fieller 1982) if appropriate. Identifications will be made by comparison to seeds held in Oxford Archaeology's reference collection and published guides (eg Cappers *et al.* 2012; Jacomet 2006). Nomenclature for the plant remains will follow Stace (2010).

8.3.5 Six samples from the excavation have the potential for good charcoal identification. Due to their presence within what is essentially a single feature it would be unnecessary to examine all these flots, but the variation in quantity from one pit to another is interesting and therefore it is recommended that one sample from each area should be examined to ascertain if there is any significant difference between the assemblages. Sample 100 from Area A, Sample 200 from Area B and either sample 301 or 302 from Area C contain the greatest potential for identification, though the charcoal specialist should make final decisions based on the suitability of the material.

8.3.6 For charcoal identification, fragments >2mm will be fractured and examined in transverse section at x10-x40 magnifications for identification of the ring porous woods. Specimens of semi and diffuse-porous taxa will be examined in three planes at higher magnifications (x50-x400) using a Brunel metallurgical microscope to obtain final identifications. Ideally 100 fragments would be identified. Identifications will be made with the aid of keys in Hather (2000) and Schweingruber (1990).

8.4 Publication and dissemination of results

8.4.1 The value of the present excavation will be enhanced by the anticipated future excavation of contemporary sites in the wider development area. It is therefore recommended that this site is analysed and published together with the future phases of excavation. The form that this combined publication takes will depend on the scale and significance of the archaeological evidence from the development area as a whole.

8.4.2 Should the evidence be very substantial in scale and significance, the results will be published as a volume of the Oxford Archaeology Monograph series.

8.4.3 Should the evidence not reach this threshold, a full report will be produced which will be disseminated via the OA Library (https://library.thehumanjourney.net/). A shorter, synthetic journal article will also be prepared for submission to the *Transactions of the Worcestershire Archaeological Society*.

8.4.4 If it becomes clear that the anticipated future excavations will not, in fact, take place in the foreseeable future, then the present site will be analysed as a standalone

project. A full report will be disseminated via the OA Library, and a shorter, synthetic journal article will be prepared for submission to the *Transactions of the Worcestershire Archaeological Society*

8.4.5 Whichever form the publication takes, specialist data will be made available via the ADS, and a copy of the report(s) will be lodged with the Worcestershire HER.

8.5 Retention and disposal of finds and environmental evidence

Pottery

8.5.1 The pottery assessed here has potential to inform future research through continued analysis, as well as in the light of future planned excavation at the site. All pottery should be retained following the advice set out in Standard for Pottery Studies in Archaeology (PCRG 2010, PCRG *et al.* 2016).

Worked flint

8.5.2 The worked flint should be retained as it may prove significant for future research, in the light of future planned excavation at the site.

Burned stone

8.5.3 This has been fully recorded and can be discarded.

Metalwork and coins

8.5.4 The putative coin is a rare find a should be retained. The fragment of iron can be discarded.

Charred plant remains

8.5.5 The assessed flots should be retained until the end of the project when a more informed decision can be made about retention in archive. Samples that have not been recommended for further work may have potential for radiocarbon dating. Any extracted and identified material should be retained in the archive. Any charred material extracted and identified from the samples should be retained in the archive. Flots that scored low for potential of both CPR and charcoal could be discarded at the end of the project.

8.6 Ownership and archive

8.6.1 The documentary archive will consist of one box. The digital archive will consist of *c* 20 files and *c* 60 photos. The finds archive will consist of one box.

8.6.2 OA will retain copyright of all reports and the documentary and digital archive produced in this project.

8.6.3 OA will maintain the archive to the standards recommended by the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists (CIfA 2014) and the Archaeological Archives Forum (Brown 2011).

8.6.4 The documentary archive has been security copied.

8.6.5 The finds and documentary archive will be deposited with Museums Worcestershire with the accession number WSM77938.

8.6.6 The digital archive will be deposited with ADS.

8.6.7 The landowner's permission to donate the finds to this repository will be sought.

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APPENDIX A EVALUATION TRENCH DESCRIPTIONS AND CONTEXT INVENTORY

Trench 1							
General description						**Orientation**	E-W
Excavated with a 13T tracked machine						**Length (m)**	50
						Width (m)	1.8
						Avg. depth (m)	0.65
Context No.	**Type**	**Fill of**	**Width (m)**	**Depth (m)**	**Description**	**Finds**	**Date**
100	Layer	-	-	0.15	Topsoil. Firm friable mid red brown clayey silt.		
101	Layer	-	-	0.50	Subsoil. Friable mid reddish brown sandy silt.		
102	Layer	-	-	-	Natural. Friable mid - light pinkish brownish red. Mixed clay sand and silty sand.		
103	Cut	-	1.04	0.18	Ditch		
104	Fill	103	1.04	0.18	Secondary Fill		
105	Cut	-	0.80	0.24	Tree Throw		
106	Fill	105	0.80	0.24	Secondary Fill		
107	Cut	-	1.50	0.44	Pit		
108	Fill	107	1.50	0.22	Secondary Fill		
109	Fill	107	1.50	0.22	Secondary Fill		

Trench 2							
General description						**Orientation**	NW-SE
Excavated with a 13T tracked machine						**Length (m)**	50
						Width (m)	1.8
						Avg. depth (m)	0.58
Context No.	**Type**	**Fill of**	**Width (m)**	**Depth (m)**	**Description**	**Finds**	**Date**
200	Layer	-	-	0.2	Topsoil. Firm friable mid brown clayey silt.		
201	Layer	-	-	0.38	Subsoil. Friable mid reddish brown sandy silt.		
202	Layer	-	-	-	Natural. Soft friable mid brownish red silty sandy mix with clayey silt.		
203	Cut	-	1.50	0.58	Ditch		
204	Fill	203	1	0.22	Secondary Fill		
205	Fill	203	1.50	0.58	Primary Fill		

Trench 3							
General description						**Orientation**	NNW-SSE
Excavated with a 13T tracked machine						**Length (m)**	50
						Width (m)	1.8
						Avg. depth (m)	0.68
Context No.	**Type**	**Fill of**	**Width (m)**	**Depth (m)**	**Description**	**Finds**	**Date**
300	Layer	-	-	0.2	Topsoil. Firm friable mid brown silty clay.		
301	Layer	-	-	0.48	Subsoil. Friable mid pinkish reddish brown sandy silt.		
302	Layer	-	-	-	Natural. Soft friable mid brownish red silty sand.		
303	Cut	-	0.70	0.88	Pit		
304	Fill	303	0.70	0.22	Secondary Fill		
305	Fill	303	0.70	0.62	Secondary Fill		

Trench 4							
General description						**Orientation**	NE-SW
Excavated with a 13T tracked machine						**Length (m)**	50
						Width (m)	1.8
						Avg. depth (m)	0.66
Context No.	**Type**	**Fill of**	**Width (m)**	**Depth (m)**	**Description**	**Finds**	**Date**
400	Layer	-	-	0.25	Topsoil. Firm friable mid brown silty clay.		
401	Layer	-	-	0.41	Subsoil. Friable mid pinkish brown sandy silt.		
402	Layer	-	-	-	Natural. Soft friable mid-light brownish red mix of clayey silt and sandy silt.		

Trench 5							
General description						**Orientation**	NE-SW
Excavated with a 13T tracked machine						**Length (m)**	50
						Width (m)	1.8
						Avg. depth (m)	0.3
Context No.	**Type**	**Fill of**	**Width (m)**	**Depth (m)**	**Description**	**Finds**	**Date**
500	Layer	-	-	0.09	Topsoil. Firm friable mid brown silty clay.		
501	Layer	-	-	0.21	Subsoil. Friable mid reddish brown sandy silt.		

502	Layer	-	-	-	Natural. Friable mid brownish red mix with light yellowish white sandy silt mix with clayey silt.		

APPENDIX B HEALTH AND SAFETY

A.1.1 All OA post-excavation work will be carried out under relevant Health and Safety legislation, including the Health and Safety at Work Act (1974). A copy of the Health and Safety Policy can be supplied. The nature of the work means that the requirements of the following legislation are particularly relevant:

- Workplace (Health, Safety and Welfare) Regulations 1992 – offices and finds processing areas
- Manual Handling Operations Regulations (1992) – transport: bulk finds and samples
- Health and Safety (Display Screen Equipment) Regulations (1992) – use of computers for word-processing and database work
- COSSH (1988) – finds conservation and environmental processing/analysis

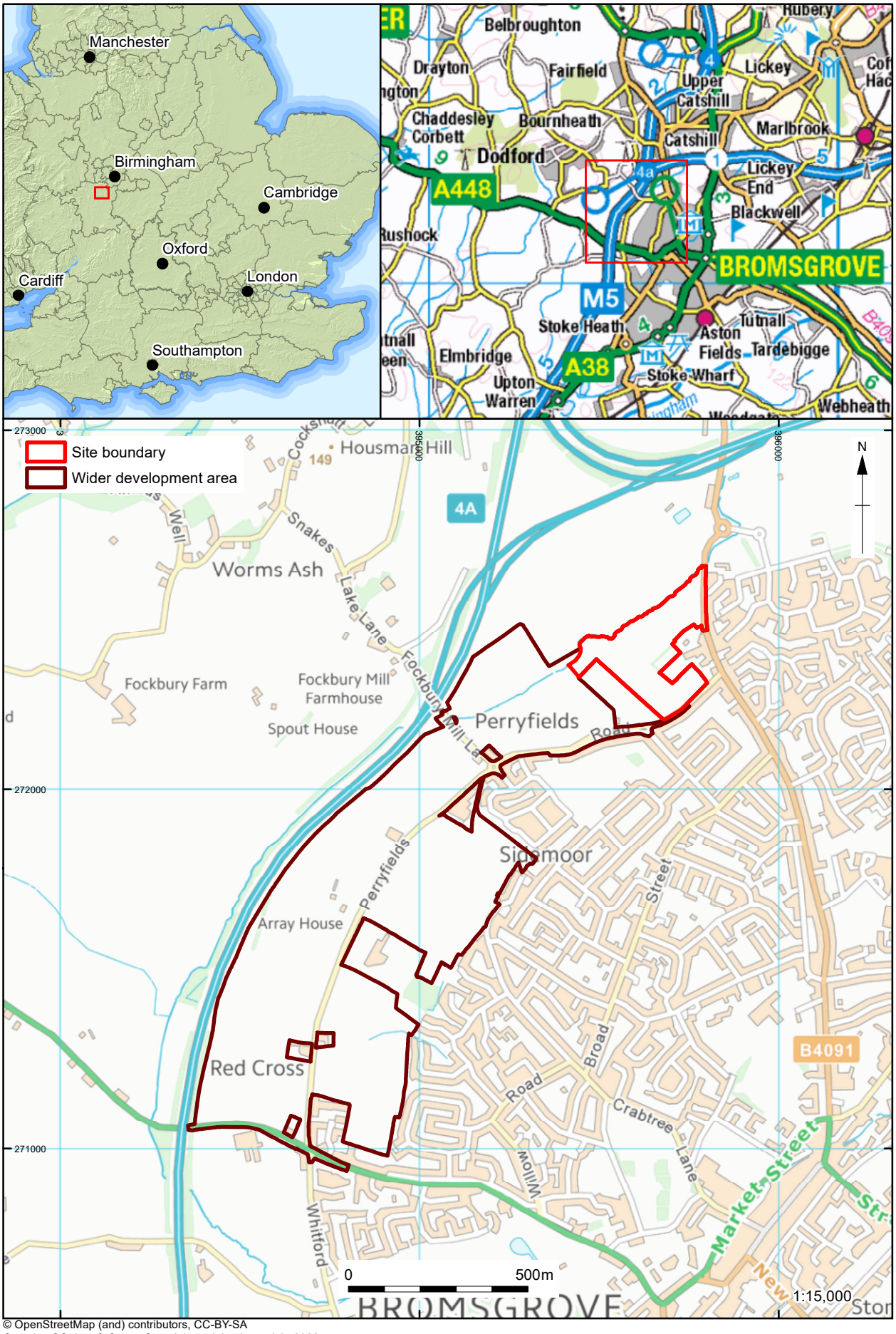

Figure 1: Site location

Figure 2. Evaluation trenches, excavation plan and geophysics

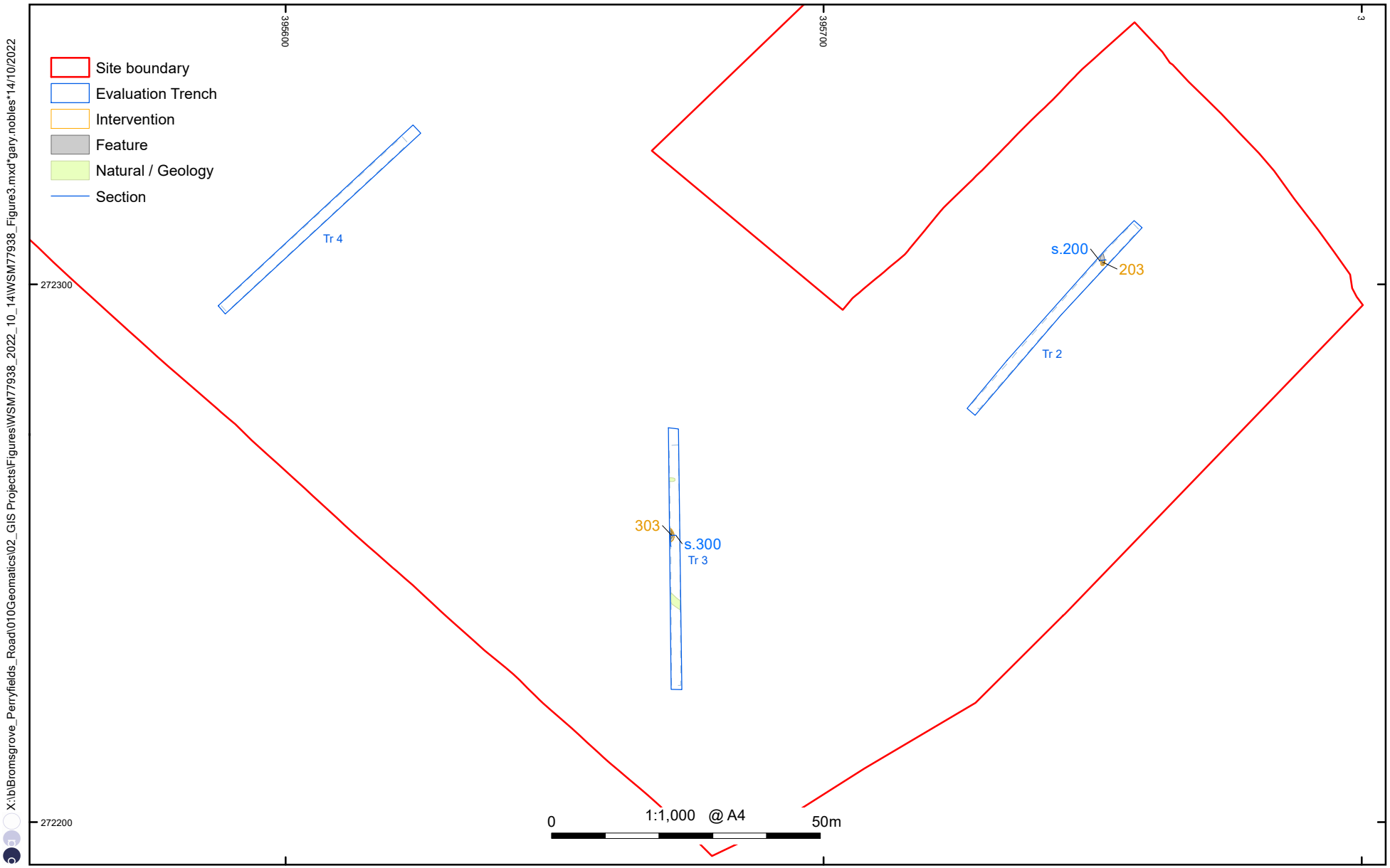

Figure 3. Plan of trenches 2-4

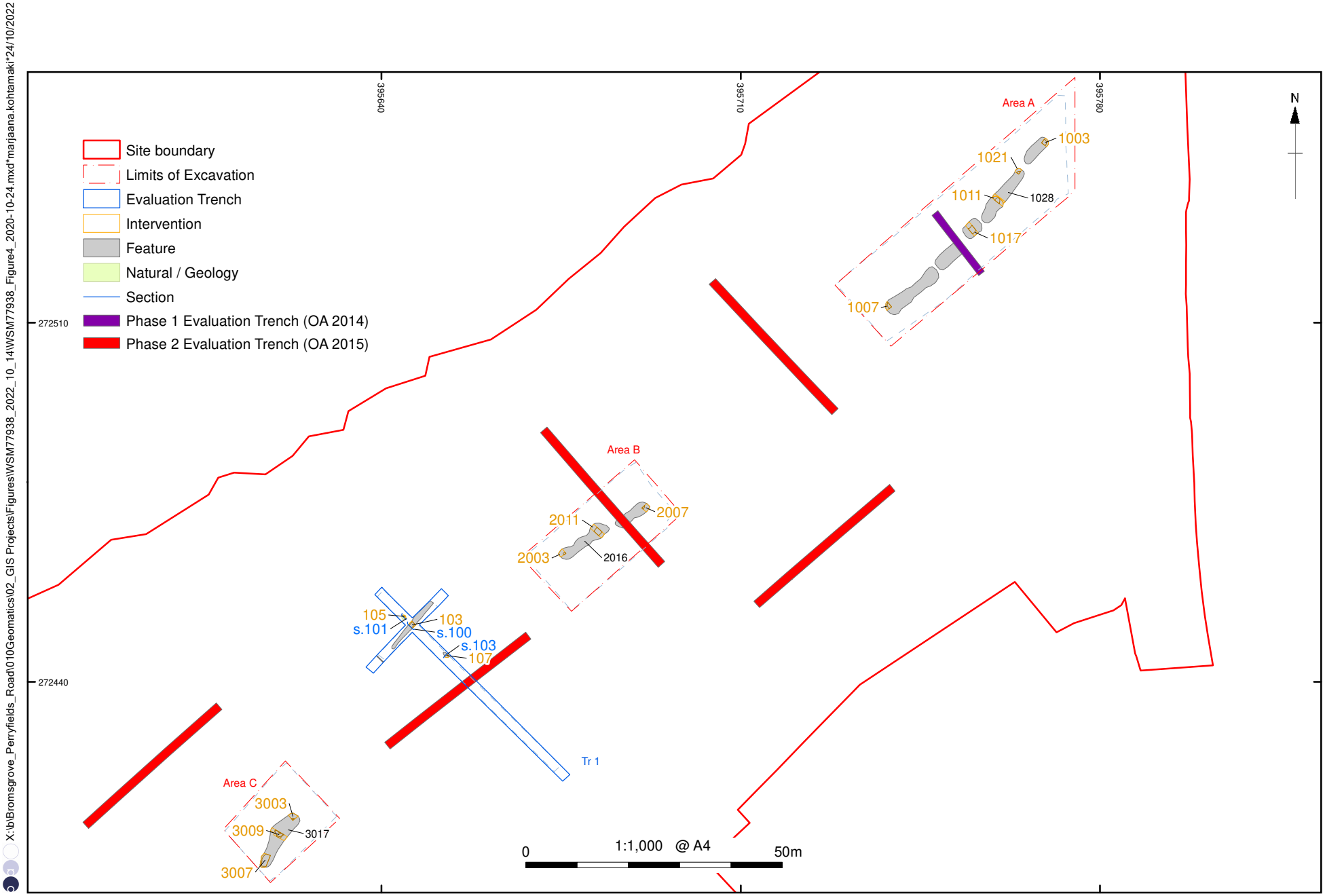

Figure 4. Plan of trench 1 and excavation areas

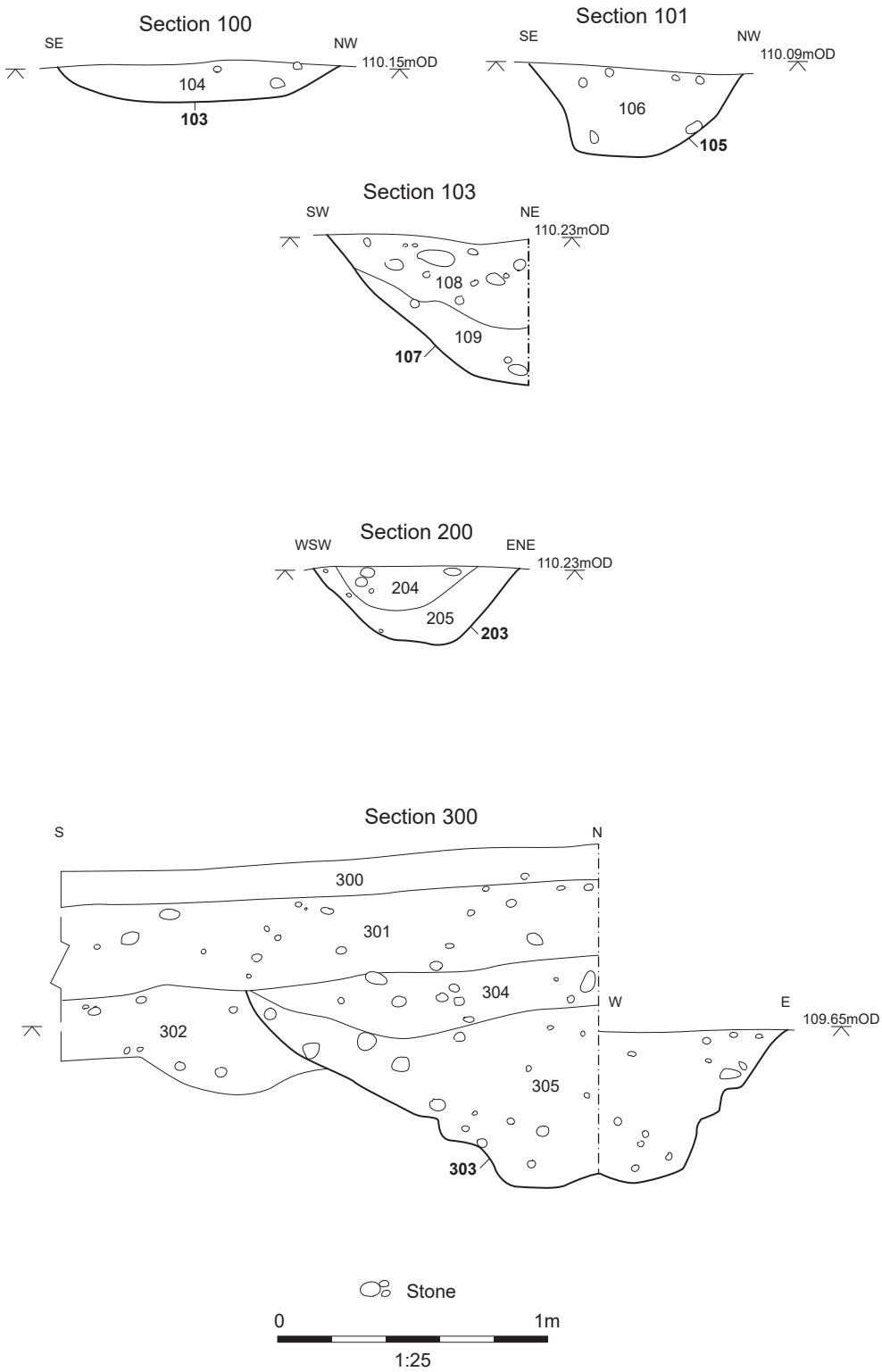

Figure 5: Sections from the evaluation

Plate 1: Trench 1 prior to extension. View to north-west, scales 1m and 2m

Plate 2: Pit 107. View to north-west, scale 1m

Plate 3: Trench 3. View to south-south-west, scales 1m and 2m

Plate 4: Pit alignment in Area A, pre-excavation. View to north

Plate 5: Area A: section through pit 1017. View to north-east, scale 2m

Plate 6: Area B: excavated features showing line of pit alignment. View to south-west, scales 1m and 2m

Plate 7: Area B: section through pit 2007. View to north-west, scale 1m

Plate 8: Area B: section through slot 2003, showing dense cobble infill. View to south-east, scale 1m

Plate 9: Area C: excavated features showing line of pit alignment. View to south, scales 1m and 2m

Plate 10: Area C: section through slot 3003 showing charcoal-rich horizon. View to south-west, scale 2m

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