



Hinckley West, Leicestershire

Archaeological Evaluation Report

Phase 4

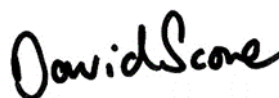
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Hinckley West, Leicestershire

Archaeological Evaluation Report

Written by Robert McIntosh

*With contributions from Caroline Souday, John Cotter and
illustrations by Charles Rousseaux.*

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Summary

In May 2023 Oxford Archaeology was commissioned by RPS on behalf of Bloor Homes to undertake a trial-trench evaluation across land proposed for residential development located northeast of Triumph Motorcycles, Hinckley, Leicestershire. The fieldwork was undertaken over the course of four days and consisted of 7 trenches across a 4.15ha site. The trenches were arranged to provide even coverage of the area taking into account modern services and site fencing.

No significant archaeological remains were found during the evaluation. Agricultural furrows were identified across many of the trenches, which also matched the alignment of a late post medieval field boundary ditch identified in Trench 5.

Acknowledgements

Oxford Archaeology would like to thank Simon Mortimer, RPS, for commissioning this project on behalf of Bloor Homes. Thanks are also extended to William Kelly who monitored the work on behalf of Leicestershire County Council.

The project was managed for Oxford Archaeology by Carl Champness. The fieldwork was directed by Bob McIntosh, who was supported by Alexandra Baranowski. Survey and digitising were carried out by Caroline Souday. Thanks are also extended to the teams of OA staff that cleaned and packaged the finds under the supervision of Rebecca Allen and prepared the archive under the supervision of Nicola Scott.

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Scope of work

- 1.1.1 Oxford Archaeology (OA) was commissioned by RPS on behalf of Bloor Homes to undertake a trial trench evaluation at the site of a proposed development of land northeast of Triumph Motorcycles, Hinckley, Leicestershire.
- 1.1.2 The work was undertaken to inform the Planning Authority in advance of a further Planning Application for the site. Although the local Planning Authority has not set a brief for the work, discussions between Simon Mortimer (RPS) and William Kelly, the Planning Archaeologist for Leicestershire County Council (LCC), have established the scope of work required. The work was undertaken in accordance with an approved WSI (OA 2023) and this report outlines the results of the evaluation.
- 1.1.3 All work was undertaken in accordance with the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists' Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Evaluation (2014) and local and national planning policies.

1.2 Location, topography and geology

- 1.2.1 The site is located to the west of Hinckley and comprises c 4.1 hectares of land centered at National Grid Reference SP 4050 9456 (Fig 1). The site is bounded by Normandy Way (A47) to the east, a property boundary surrounding Triumph Motorcycles to the south and field boundaries and outlying fields to the west and north.
- 1.2.2 The site lies on the western edge of the village of Hinckley. The Ashby de la Zouch Canal was constructed through the village and is approximately 700m west of the site. The site is relatively flat and lies at a height of c 96m AOD.
- 1.2.3 The British Geological Survey (BGS) 1:50,000 records the geology within the site as mudstone belonging to the Mercia Mudstone Formation. Superficial deposits are clay and silt from the Bosworth Clay Member Formation. (BGS online accessed 2023).

1.3 Archaeological and historical background

- 1.3.1 The archaeological and historical background of the land immediately adjacent to the site has been described in detail in desk-based assessment produced by CgMs (2015). The adjacent site has also undergone various phases of archaeological investigation, including geophysical and fieldwalking surveys (MOLA 2014a; 2014b) followed by an evaluation (MOLA 2015) and multiple separate phases of excavation (OA 2018; 2023b).
- 1.3.2 The geophysical survey of the site revealed an enclosure, trackway, boundary ditches and pits within the north-western fields of the site, which, on morphological grounds, appeared to date from the Iron Age and/or Roman periods; the fieldwalking survey recovered c.29 sherds of Roman pottery, mostly from the vicinity of the ditches and pits. These results complement earlier finds recorded on the Leicestershire and Rutland Historic Environment Record, as well as further fieldwalking surveys undertaken by Hinckley Archaeological Society.

- 1.3.3 Small collections of later Neolithic/early Bronze Age worked flints were also found in the northwestern corner and along the eastern side of the site (MOLA 2014b). A possible Bronze Age whetstone was discovered during the 1980s south-west of Wykin Hall in the northern part of the site. Hinckley Archaeological Society has noted dispersed sherds of Iron Age pottery around the site, along with a concentration of Roman pottery and ceramic building material within the western part of the site (OA 2018).
- 1.3.4 Thirty-five evaluation trenches were excavated to target the geophysical anomalies and otherwise blank areas to test the archaeological potential of the fields to the north-west (MOLA 2015). Prehistoric remains were noted in the north-eastern part of the site investigated, including a possible Neolithic pit containing a scraper, and two curvilinear ditches that potentially represent a ring ditch. Much of the remains discovered, however, related to a Roman enclosure and several dispersed features in the western part of the site. Pottery from these features suggested a later first–second century AD date.
- 1.3.5 The subsequent excavations by Oxford Archaeology to the north of the site revealed evidence of a Romano-British settlement dating between the mid-first and early third century AD (OA 2018 and 2023b). The site comprised enclosures, several small buildings, and a trackway, and the focus of domestic habitation appeared to lie to the north and west (Figure 2). Environmental remains indicate that the site was primarily concerned with livestock husbandry, and limited evidence for small-scale pottery production was identified. The presence of a pit containing pyre debris and cremated human bones may be the remains of a regional cremation type or possibly a *bustum* (an *in-situ* cremation burial).

2 AIMS AND METHODOLOGY

2.1 Aims

2.1.1 The project aims and objectives were as follows:

- i. To determine or confirm the general nature of any remains present.
- ii. to determine or confirm the approximate extent of any surviving remains,
- iii. to determine or confirm the approximate date or date range of any remains, by means of artefactual or other evidence,
- iv. to determine the condition and state of preservation of any remains,
- v. to determine the degree of complexity of any surviving horizontal or vertical stratigraphy,
- vi. to determine or confirm the likely range, quality and quantity of the artefactual evidence present,
- vii. to determine the potential of the site to provide paleoenvironmental and/or economic evidence, and the forms in which such evidence may survive,
- viii. to determine the implications of any remains with reference to the economy, status, utility and social activity of or at the site,
- ix. to assess the results and reliability of the geophysical survey and whether hints of possible archaeological features and enclosures suggested by the geophysics represent areas of interest,
- x. to disseminate the results of the evaluation through the production of a fieldwork report, and
- xi. to enable the LPA Archaeological Advisor to make an informed decision as to the requirement of any further archaeological work required on site.

2.2 Methodology

- 2.2.1 The trenches were laid out as shown in Figure 3 using a GPS with sub-15mm accuracy, except adjustments to Trenches 1, 2 and 3 due to site obstructions and services.
- 2.2.2 The trenches were excavated using 13 tonne mechanical excavator fitted with a toothless bucket operated under the direct supervision of an archaeologist. Spoil was stored adjacent to, but at a safe distance from the trench edges in separate topsoil and subsoil heaps.
- 2.2.3 Machining continued in even spits down to the top of the undisturbed natural geology. Once archaeological deposits were exposed, further excavation proceeded by hand. The exposed surface was sufficiently cleaned to establish the presence or absence of archaeological remains.
- 2.2.4 Upon completion of the works and in agreement with Simon Mortimer and William Kelly (LCC), the trenches were backfilled with the arisings in reverse order of excavation.

3 RESULTS

3.1 Introduction and presentation of results

3.1.1 The results of the evaluation are presented below and include a stratigraphic description of the trenches that contained archaeological remains. The full details of all trenches with dimensions and depths of all deposits can be found in Appendix A. Finds data and spot dates are tabulated in Appendix B.

3.2 General soils and ground conditions

3.2.1 The soil sequence in the trenches was fairly uniform. The natural geology of brownish yellow clay was overlain by a silty clay subsoil, which in turn was overlain by ploughsoil.

3.2.2 Ground conditions throughout the evaluation were generally good, and the trenches remained mostly dry throughout, although the eastern edge of had a high water-table. Archaeological features, where present, were easy to identify against the underlying natural geology.

3.3 General distribution of archaeological deposits

3.3.1 Archaeological features were present in Trench 5 only. Although furrows were identified in Trenches 7, 6, 4, 3 and 2 and several modern areas of disturbance were investigated in Trenches 1, 3 and 6.

3.4 Trench 5 (Fig. 4; Plates 1 and 2)

3.4.1 Trench 5 contained a ditch (503) aligned northwest-southeast, which is believed to be post medieval in date due to the remains of pottery, fired clay, glass and tobacco pipes found within its fills. The ditch is 2.20m in width and 0.3m in depth, with gradual sloping sides and a flat base. The ditch runs parallel to the historical field boundaries and furrows, and most likely represents a former field boundary.

3.5 Trenches 3, 4, 6 and 7 (Fig 3; Plates 3 and 4)

3.5.1 A series of parallel linear furrows were investigated within Trenches 3, 4, 6 and 7, but produced no finds. The furrows were generally 2m in width and 0.10-0.20m in depth, spaced 4m apart running on a northwest to southeast alignment.

3.6 Finds summary

3.6.1 The only artefactual material found on site was post medieval or modern. Post medieval pottery, glass, fired clay and tobacco pipes were found within the ditch in Trench 5. Modern ceramics were also recovered from the unexcavated feature in Trench 6, but not retained.

4 DISCUSSION

4.1 Reliability of field investigation

4.1.1 The ground conditions throughout the evaluation were good. Features and furrows were easily identifiable against the natural geology. Three of the trenches had to be moved due to site fencing obstructing their proposed positions. The evaluation was still able to achieve good coverage of the proposed development area, and the results can therefore be considered a reliable assessment of the archaeological potential of the site.

4.2 Interpretation and Results

4.2.1 Most of the trenches revealed agricultural furrows and modern disturbance. The one ditch identified in Trench 5 is similarly aligned with the furrows in Trenches 4 and 3 and is likely to represent a post medieval field boundary. The results from this phase are consistent with previous fieldwork that the significant activity is located further to the north.

4.2.2 No significant archaeological features were identified within the evaluation. Based on the evaluation results the site is considered to have no further archaeological interest.

APPENDIX A TRENCH DESCRIPTIONS AND CONTEXT INVENTORY

Trench 1							
General description					Orientation	N-S	
Trench devoid of Archaeology. Consisted of ploughsoil and subsoil overlying a natural of clay.					Length (m)	50	
					Width (m)	1.8	
					Avg. depth (m)	0.3	
Context No.	Type	Fill Of	Width (m)	Depth (m)	Description	Finds	Date
100	Layer			0.2	Topsoil. Greyish brown, silty clay		
101	Layer			0.1	Subsoil. Grey silty clay		
102	Layer				Natural. Grayish yellow clay		
Trench 2							
General description					Orientation	N-S	
Trench devoid of Archaeology. Consisted of ploughshares and subsoil overlying the natural geology of clay.					Length (m)	50	
					Width (m)	1.8	
					Avg. depth (m)	0.3	
Context No.	Type	Fill Of	Width (m)	Depth (m)	Description	Finds	Date
200	Layer			0.2	Topsoil. Dark brownish grey, silty clay.		
201	Layer			0.1	Subsoil. Grey, silty clay.		
202	Layer				Natural. Grayish yellow clay, with large pebble inclusions.		
Trench 3							
General description					Orientation	E-W	
Trench devoid of archaeology. Consists of topsoil and subsoil overlying natural geology of clay.					Length (m)	50	
					Width (m)	1.8	
					Avg. depth (m)	0.36	
Context No.	Type	Fill Of	Width (m)	Depth (m)	Description	Finds	Date
300	Layer			0.2	Topsoil. Dark greyish brown, silty clay.		
301	Layer			0.16	Subsoil. Mid yellowish brown, silty clay.		
302	Layer				Natural. Mid brownish yellow with orange areas. Silty clay.		
Trench 4							

General description						Orientation	NE-SW
Trench devoid of archaeology. Consisted of topsoil and subsoil overlying the natural geology of silty clay.						Length (m)	50
						Width (m)	1.8
						Avg. depth (m)	0.38
Context No.	Type	Fill Of	Width (m)	Depth (m)	Description	Finds	Date
400	Layer			0.2	Topsoil. Dark greyish brown, silty clay.		
401	Layer				Subsoil. Dark yellowish brown, silty clay.		
402	Layer				Natural. Mid brownish yellow with orange in areas. Silty clay and mudstone.		
Trench 5							
General description						Orientation	NW-SE
Trench revealed one ditch. Consisted of topsoil and subsoil overlying the natural geology of silty clay and mudstone.						Length (m)	50
						Width (m)	1.8
						Avg. depth (m)	0.37
Context No.	Type	Fill Of	Width (m)	Depth (m)	Description	Finds	Date
500	Layer			0.15	Topsoil. Dark brownish grey, silty clay.		
501	Layer			0.12	Subsoil. Dark greyish brown, silty clay.		
502	Layer				Natural. Light brownish yellow, silty clay and mudstone.		
503	Cut		2.20	0.30	Ditch		
504	Fill	503		0.30	Secondary Fill	Pot, glass and clay pipe	Late post-med
Trench 6							
General description						Orientation	NE-SW
Trench revealed modern pit and one furrows running N-S. Consists of topsoil and subsoil overlying natural geology of silty clay and mudstone.						Length (m)	50
						Width (m)	1.8
						Avg. depth (m)	0.35
Context No.	Type	Fill Of	Width (m)	Depth (m)	Description	Finds	Date
600	Layer			0.25	Topsoil. Dark brownish grey, silty clay.		

601	Layer			0.1	Subsoil. Dark greyish brown, silty clay.		
602	Layer				Natural. Mid yellowish brown, silty clay and mudstone near NE end.		
603	Pit				Modern. Dark greyish brown, clayey silt.	pot	modern
Trench 7							
General description					Orientation	NW-SE	
Trench devoid of archaeology. Trench revealed four furrows running N-S. Consists of topsoil, subsoil and natural geology of silty clay and mudstone.					Length (m)	50	
					Width (m)	1.8	
					Avg. depth (m)	0.35	
Context No.	Type	Fill Of	Width (m)	Depth (m)	Description	Finds	Date
700	Layer			0.24	Topsoil. Dark brownish grey, silty clay.		
701	Layer			0.13	Subsoil. Dark greyish brown, silty clay.		
702	Layer				Natural. Mid yellowish brown, silty clay		

APPENDIX B FINDS REPORTS

By John Cotter

B.1 Pottery

Introduction

B.1.1 A total of 3 sherds of pottery weighing 58g were recovered from two contexts. Given the small quantity present, this has not been separately catalogued but is fully described below. Pottery fabric codes referred to in this report are those of the Museum of London (MoLA 2014). The pottery types present here are commonplace post-medieval Staffordshire-type wares of the sort found all-over the Midlands and further afield.

Description

B.1.2 **Context (504) Spot-date: c 1700-1800.** Description: 2 sherds (weight 46g). 1x small body sherd (2g) probably from a cylindrical tankard in Staffordshire-type mottled brown glazed ware (Fabric STMO, c 1650-1800). The tankard form in this fabric is a copy of English brown stoneware tankards, which date after c 1700. 1x large body sherd (44g) from the flat basal area of a dish/bowl or large jar in Staffordshire-type red-slipped glazed coarseware (STRSB COAR, c 1650-1850). It has a hard buff to pale brown fabric covered on the inside with a black glaze over a red-brown slip. Both sherds from this context are in fairly fresh condition.

B.1.3 **Context (603) Spot-date: c 1835-1900.** Description: 1 sherd (weight 12g). Fresh rim sherd from a small cylindrical 'preserve' jar in English stoneware with a Bristol-type glaze (ENGS BRST). The fabric is a very pale cream colour and the whole vessel is covered with a very smooth glossy clear glaze. Alternatively, it may be a very highly-fired, Staffordshire-type refined white earthenware (REFW, c 1805-1900), but the date is still probably after c 1830. Given its small size (rim diameter 50mm) it was probably used for cosmetic or medicinal ointments/salves. Larger jars of this form were commonly used for jams and preserves.

Recommendations regarding the conservation, discard and retention of material

B.1.4 The pottery here has little potential to inform research through re-analysis. As it has been adequately recorded it may be discarded, if so desired.

B.2 Fired Clay

B.2.1 A total of 4 pieces of fired clay were recovered from a single context. Given the small quantity present, this has not been separately catalogued but is fully described below.

B.2.2 Context (504) Spot-date: 16th to 19th century? Description: 4 pieces (weight 12g). All shapeless scraps in low-fired orange-brown fabrics. One scrap has a harder, coarser, sandier, purplish-brown fabric, with swirls of lighter brown clay and some very coarse rounded inclusions of white sandstone(?) or sandy clay pellets(?). It is probably from

a post-medieval brick (probably within a 16th to 19th century date range). The other 3 scraps are in a much finer, softer, orange-brown fabric containing some coarse rounded inclusions of iron-rich clay pellets or 'grog' (crushed fired clay?) and some coarse rounded inclusions of white sandstone or sandy pipeclay? It is not possible to ascribe a possible function or date to these pieces.

Recommendations regarding the conservation, discard and retention of material

- B.2.3 The FC here has very limited potential for further analysis. As it has been adequately recorded it may be discarded, if so desired.

B.3 Glass

- B.3.1 A single pieces of vessel glass was recovered. This has not been separately catalogued but is fully described below.

- B.3.2 Context (504) Spot-date: 17th to 18th century? Description: 1 piece (weight 11g). A near-complete collared rim from a hand-blown, smallish, bottle or flask in a transparent pale green glass – probably a post-medieval lead glass? Surfaces mostly very smooth and glossy. The vessel is of uneven manufacture. The lower projection (or flange) of the 'collared' rim appears to have been formed by drawing up the conical neck of the vessel, while still molten, and then pushing it back down on itself to create a fold forming the discoid flange. The loop of the flange is hollow - but only barely (visible in section where chipped). Internally there is a strong fold line at the level of the flange. The diameter of the flange is c 30-31mm. Above this the neck of the vessel continues as a plain flaring/conical rim with a diameter of 23-25mm. The surviving height of the whole piece is c 26mm and the height of the collared rim area is c 12mm. An area of the flange is badly chipped but otherwise the surviving piece is very fresh. An early post-medieval (17th to 18th century?) date is likely (especially given the post-medieval context) but a Roman date cannot be ruled-out. The vessel is similar to early post-medieval flasks used for medicinal liquids.

Recommendations regarding the conservation, discard and retention of material

- B.3.3 The glass vessel here has potential for further analysis and should be retained.

B.4 Clay Tobacco Pipe

Introduction

- B.4.1 A total of 2 pieces of clay pipe were recovered from a single context. Given the small quantity present, this has not been separately catalogued but is fully described below.
- B.4.2 Context (504) Spot-date: Late 18th to 19th century? Description: 2 pieces (weight 4g). 2x short pieces of pipe stem (longest length = 34mm). Both fairly slender. Both slightly weathered and with a fine white 'chalky' fabric. The shorter of the two has a stem bore diameter (SBD) of c 1.8mm suggesting a late 18th to 19th century dating. The other has an SBD of 2mm and is probably 18th century.

Recommendations regarding the conservation, discard and retention of material

- B.4.3 The pipes here are only of use for dating. As they have been adequately recorded they may be discarded, if so desired.

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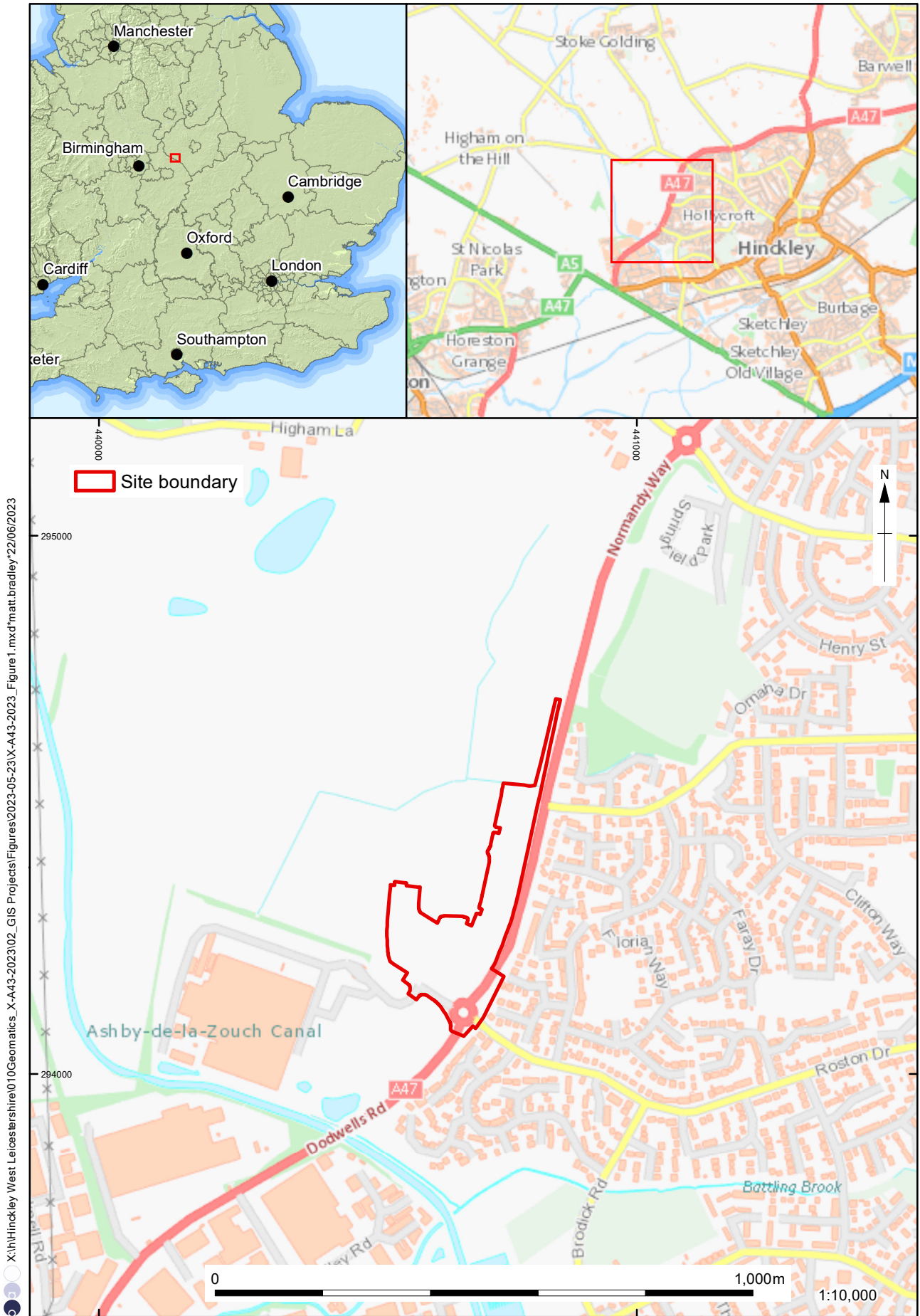
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APPENDIX D SITE SUMMARY DETAILS / OASIS REPORT FORM

Site name:	Hinkley West, Leicestershire
Site code:	X.A43.2023
Grid Reference	SP 4050 9456
Type:	Evaluation
Date and duration:	17/05/23-22/05/23
Area of Site	4.15ha
Location of archive:	The archive is currently held at OA, Janus House, and will be deposited with Leicestershire Museums in due course, under the following accession number: X.A43.2023.
Summary of Results:	<p>In May 2023 Oxford Archaeology was commissioned by RPS on behalf of Bloor Homes to undertake a trial-trench evaluation across land proposed for residential development located northeast of Triumph Motorcycles, Hinckley, Leicestershire. The fieldwork was undertaken over the course of four days and consisted of 7 trenches across a 4.15ha site. The trenches were arranged to provide even coverage of the area taking into account modern services and site fencing.</p> <p>No significant archaeological remains were found during the evaluation. Agricultural furrows were identified across many of the trenches, which also matched the alignment of a late post medieval field boundary ditch identified in Trench 5.</p>



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Figure 1: Site location

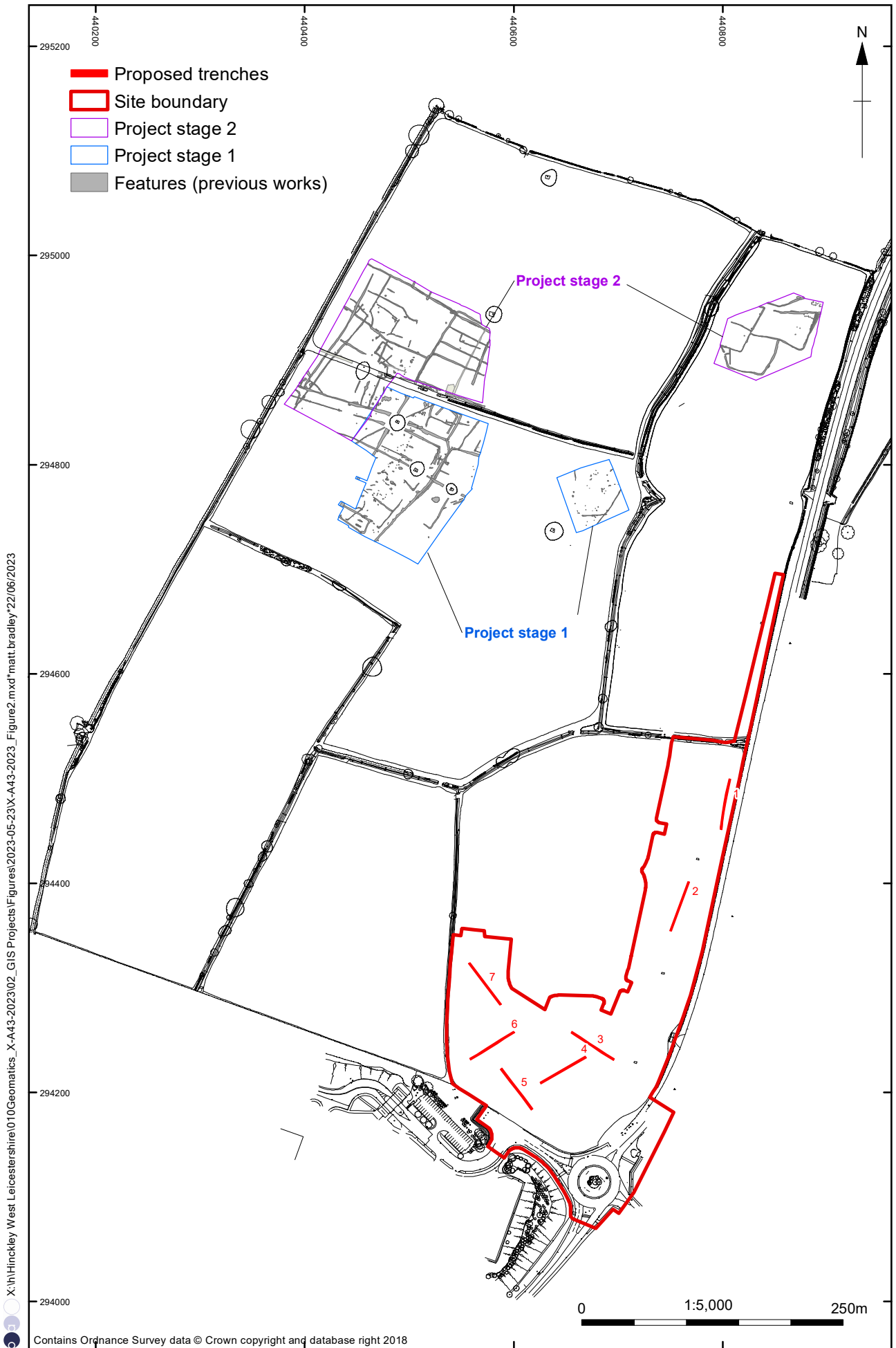
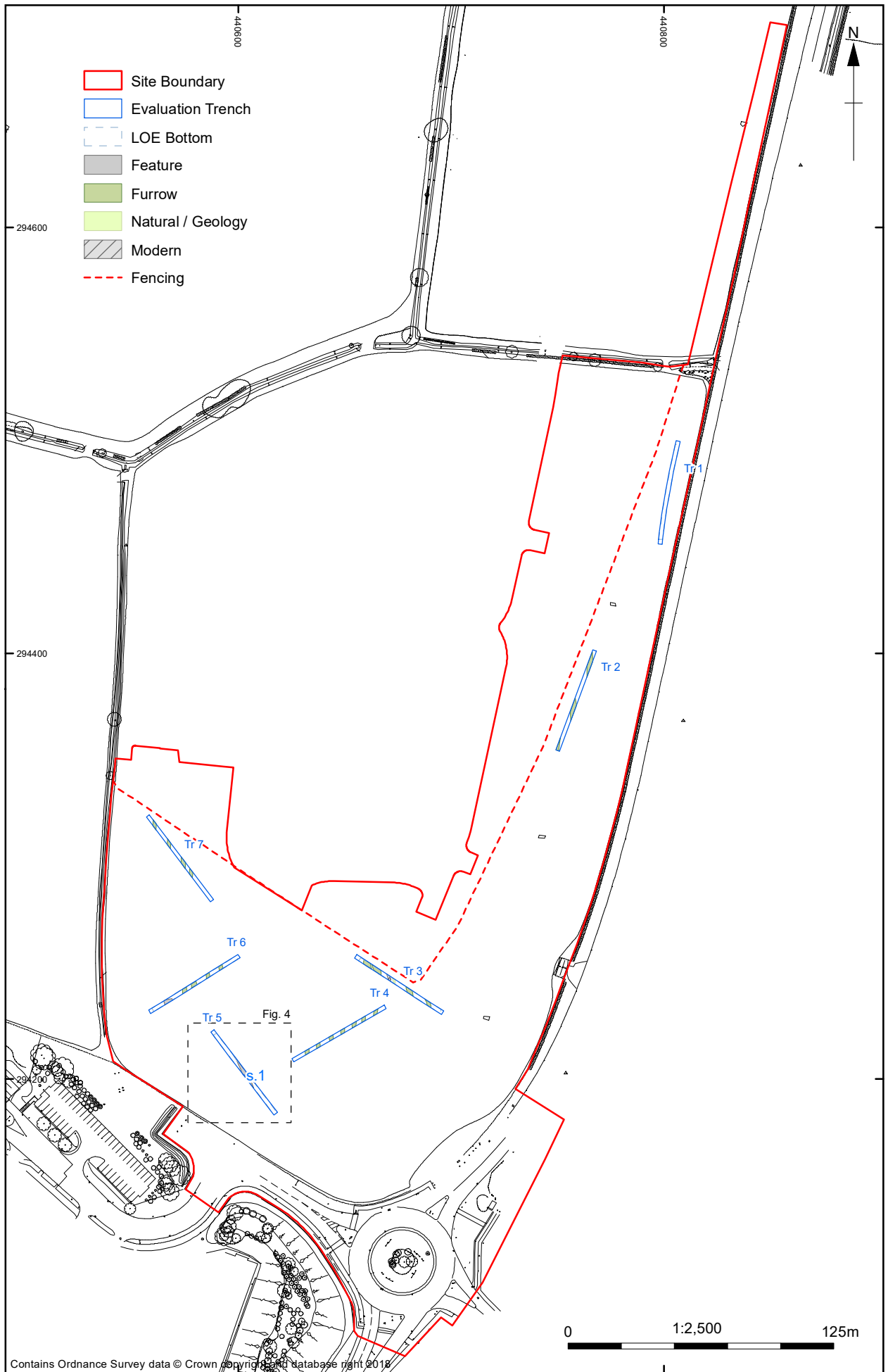


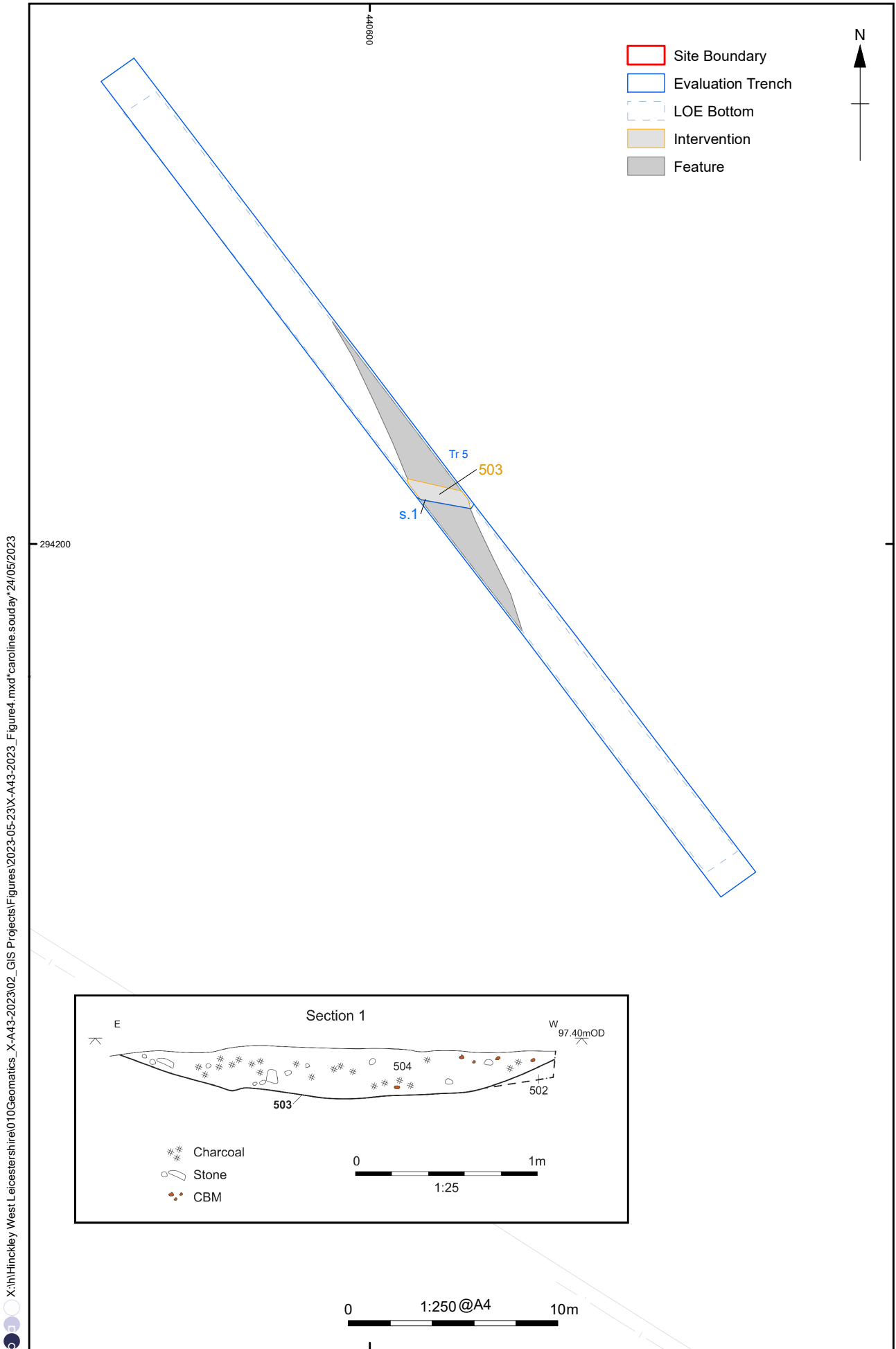
Figure 2: Evaluation area in relation to previous phases of work

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Figure 3: Trench locations



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Figure 4: Trench 5 plan and Section 1



Plate 1: Trench 5 looking Southeast (2x1m scales)



Plate 2: Plate 2 South facing section 1 through ditch 503 within Trench 5 (1x1m scale)



Plate 3 Trench 4 looking Northwest (2x1m scales)



Plate 4 Trench 7 looking Southeast (2x1m scales)



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