

Land east of Little Paxton Cemetery, Little Paxton Cambridgeshire



Archaeological Evaluation Report



September 2016

Client: Little Paxton Parish Council

OA East Report No: 1969

OASIS No: oxfordar3-260621

NGR: TL 1787 6322

Land east of Little Paxton Cemetery, Little Paxton, Cambridgeshire

Archaeological Evaluation

By Nicholas Cox BSc

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Report Date: September 2016

Report Number: 1969
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Date of Works: August 2016
Client Name: Little Paxton Parish Council
Client Ref: N/A
Planning Ref: 15/01849/FUL
Grid Ref: TL 1787 6322
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Finance Code: PXL CEM 16
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Prepared by: Nicholas Cox
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Checked by: Matt Brudenell
Position: Project Manager
Date: September 2016
Signed:



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Summary

Between the 10th and 15th August 2016 Oxford Archaeology East carried out an archaeological evaluation on land east of Little Paxton Cemetery, Little Paxton, Cambridgeshire (centred TL 1787 6322). Five 30m long evaluation trenches were excavated within the area proposed for the expansion of the existing cemetery. These revealed five linear features comprising four ditches and a gully, together with two postholes. Three of the linear features were on a north-east to south-west alignment whilst the other two were broadly north to south aligned. Most of the features, including the two postholes, were located in the south-east corner of the site.

With the exception of two Neolithic worked flints from one of the ditches, and a fragment of post-medieval tile retrieved from the topsoil, no finds were recovered from the site. Despite this dearth of dating evidence, two of the ditches broadly align upon mapped linear cropmarks associated with an extensive cropmark complex immediately south, which is possibly Iron Age or Romano-British in origin.

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Location and scope of work

- 1.1.1 An archaeological evaluation was conducted on land east of Little Paxton Cemetery, Little Paxton, Cambridgeshire (TL 1787 6322; Fig. 1).
- 1.1.2 This archaeological trial trenching was undertaken in accordance with a Brief issued by Andy Thomas of Cambridgeshire County Council Historic Environment Team (CCC HET; Planning Application 15/01849/FUL), supplemented by a Specification prepared by OA East (Mortimer 2016).
- 1.1.3 The work was designed to assist in defining the character and extent of any archaeological remains within the proposed redevelopment area, in accordance with the guidelines set out in *National Planning Policy Framework* (Department for Communities and Local Government March 2012). The results will enable decisions to be made by CCC HET, on behalf of the Local Planning Authority, with regard to the treatment of any archaeological remains found.
- 1.1.4 The site archive is currently held by OA East and will be deposited with the appropriate county stores in due course.

1.2 Geology and topography

- 1.2.1 The site lies on third Terrace sand and gravel deposits overlying Oxford Clay Formation mudstone bedrock. The site lies at the northern tip of an island of gravels at c. 26m OD surrounded by low-lying mudstone. A small tributary stream of the River Great Ouse flows west to east and then north to south some 220m to the south-west.
- 1.2.2 The area for development is currently on agricultural land.

1.3 Archaeological and historical background

- 1.3.1 The following background is based on information obtained from the Cambridgeshire Historic Environment Record (CHER), and summarised in the Written Scheme of Investigation (Mortimer 2016).
- 1.3.2 The development area is situated at the north-western limit of a relatively dense cropmark site (CHER 04748) of probably Late Iron Age and Roman origin. The area immediately to the south of the proposed site could potentially contain features directly associated with settlement. At least three cropmark features (ditches) can be seen entering the development area (Fig. 2).
- 1.3.3 There are further extensive cropmark sites 90m to north of the development area (CHER MCB20545) and 160m to the north-west (CHER MCB20544), both of probable Iron Age/Roman origin.
- 1.3.4 At the southern tip of the gravel 'island' (c. 420m south) there are cropmarks of possible round barrows (08970), and 360m to the south-west, on the far side of the tributary stream are potential Bronze Age enclosures (CHER MCB20610).

1.4 Acknowledgements

- 1.4.1 The author would like to thank Little Paxton Parish Council who commissioned the work and Lattenbury Services who supplied the machinery. The investigation was directed by the author, who was assisted in the excavation by Matt Brooks. Matt Brudenell

managed the project for OA East. Thanks should also be extended to Andy Thomas of Cambridgeshire County Council Historic Environment Team who monitored the works.

2 AIMS AND METHODOLOGY

2.1 Aims

- 2.1.1 The objective of this trial trenching was to determine as far as reasonably possible the presence/absence, location, nature, extent, date, quality, condition and significance of any surviving archaeological deposits within the development area.

2.2 Methodology

- 2.2.1 Five 30m long trenches excavated within the proposed development area (Fig. 2)
- 2.2.2 Machine excavation was carried out under constant archaeological supervision with a tracked 360-type excavator using a 1.8m wide toothless ditching bucket.
- 2.2.3 The site survey was carried out by David Brown using a Leica 2000.
- 2.2.4 Spoil, exposed surfaces and features were scanned with a metal detector. All metal-detected and hand-collected finds were retained for inspection, other than those which were obviously modern.
- 2.2.5 All archaeological features and deposits were recorded using OA East's *pro-forma* sheets. Trench locations, plans and sections were recorded at appropriate scales and colour and monochrome photographs were taken of all relevant features and deposits.
- 2.2.6 Bucket sampling (of up to 90 litres) was undertaken on the topsoils and subsoils across all trenches to characterise their artefact content. Two environmental samples also were taken from two boundary ditches to investigate the potential for ecofact survival.
- 2.2.7 Site conditions were dry, sunny and warm. The field contained stubble and the soil was baked hard.

3 RESULTS

3.1 Introduction

3.1.1 The results are presented in numerical order by trench number (Fig.3). The topsoil (1) was a dark brownish grey sandy silt and the subsoil (2) a dark greyish brown sandy silt. The natural (3) was a dark brownish red gravelly sand.

3.2 Trench 1

3.2.1 Trench 1 was located in the north west corner of the field at an average height of 26.32m OD. The trench was aligned north to south, and varied from 0.29m deep at the south end to 0.36m at its north end. The trench contained no archaeology, but had considerable modern plough scarring. The trench contained subsoil which was between 0.14m and 0.19m thick, overlain by topsoil, which was between 0.15m and 0.17m thick.

3.3 Trench 2

3.3.1 Trench 2 was located east of Trench 1 at an average height of 26.51m OD. It was aligned east to west, and varied from 0.35m in depth at its western end to 0.57m at its eastern end (Plate 1). The trench contained a single ditch (4) at its western end which was 1.2m wide and 0.45m deep with a u-shaped profile, on a south-west to north-east alignment (Fig.4 Section 1, Plate 2). Ditch 4 was filled by a dark greyish brown sandy silt (5) which contained two worked flints including a flint knife of probable Neolithic date (Appendix B). An environmental soil sample from the ditch 4 yielded small amounts of charcoal.

3.3.2 The subsoil was between 0.17m and 0.39m thick and the topsoil was 0.18m thick.

3.4 Trench 3

3.4.1 Trench 3 was located in the north-east corner of the investigation area, at an average height of 26.34mOD. It was aligned north to south, and varied from 0.35m deep at its northern end to 0.5m at its southern end. No archaeology was present, but a modern field drain ran the length of the trench. The subsoil was between 0.15m and 0.2m thick and the topsoil was between 0.2m and 0.3m thick.

3.5 Trench 4

3.5.1 Trench 4 was located in the south-west corner of the investigation area and had an average height of 26.50m OD. The trench was aligned north-east to south-west, and varied from 0.31m in depth at its south-western end to 0.41m at its north-eastern end. A shallow ditch (16) was located at the south-western end of the trench which was north to south aligned, 0.9m wide and 0.15m in depth (Fig.4 Section 6). The ditch had gentle sloping side and a concave base, and was filled by a dark greyish brown sandy silt (17) which contained no finds. The subsoil was between 0.14m and 0.21m thick, with topsoil that was between 0.17m and 0.21m in thickness.

3.6 Trench 5

3.6.1 Trench 5 was located in the south-east of the investigation area, at an average height of 26.48mOD. The trench was on a north-west to south-east alignment, and varied from 0.3m in depth at its south-eastern end to 0.4m at its north-western end (Plate 3).

- 3.6.2 Five features were revealed in the trench, including two ditches (**8** and **14**), a gully (**6**) and two postholes (**10** and **12**). No finds were recovered.
- 3.6.3 At the south-eastern end of the trench was a north to south aligned gully (**6**), which was 0.7m wide and 0.27m in depth. This gully was filled by a light yellowish grey sandy silt (**7**) (Fig.4 Section 2). Located 10m from the south-eastern end was a large boundary ditch (**8**), which was 1.8m wide and 0.34m deep, with a shallow u-shaped profile (Fig.4 Section 3). Ditch **8** contained a mid greyish brown sandy silt fill (**9**). An environmental soil sample from the ditch **8** yielded small amounts of charcoal and a single cereal grain (Appendix C).
- 3.6.4 At the north-western end of the trench, was an another shallow ditch (**14**), which was 1.28m wide and 0.12m deep, aligned east to west. This was filled by a mid greyish brown sandy silt (**15**). Truncating the southern edge of ditch **14** was a sub-circular posthole (**12**), which was 0.56m wide and 0.12m deep, with a mid greyish brown sandy silt fill (Fig.4 Section 5). A metre to the south east of posthole **12** was second sub-circular posthole (**10**), which is 0.45m wide and 0.12m deep (Fig.4 Section 4). Posthole **10** contained a mid greyish brown sandy silt fill (**11**).
- 3.6.5 The subsoil varied between 0.14m and 0.21m thick and the topsoil between 0.17m and 0.21m.

3.7 Finds Summary

- 3.7.1 Two struck flint flakes of likely Neolithic date were recovered from the fill of ditch **4** (Appendix B), and a fragment of post-medieval tile (**18g**) was retrieved from the topsoil (**1**) over Trench 5 during bucket sampling.

3.8 Environmental Summary

- 3.8.1 Two 20 litre bulk samples were taken from ditches **4** and **8** in Trench 2 and Trench 5 respectively. Very little environmental evidence was recovered from these samples, other than a single charred cereal grain ditch **8** (Appendix C).

4 DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

- 4.1.1 The evaluation revealed fairly sparse archaeology across the development area, with the only feature concentration occurring in Trench 5 in the south-east corner of the site. In total, five linear features and two postholes were revealed, with five of the features being recorded in Trench 5. The overlying deposits were, however, shallow across the site with significant plough scarring recorded in Trenches 1 and 4. This implies that the features may have been truncated by later agricultural activity.
- 4.1.2 The linear features were identified in Trenches 2, 4 and 5, and comprised four ditches (**4**, **8**, **14** and **16**) and a gully (**6**). Three of the linear features were on a north-east to south-west alignment (**4**, **8** and **14**) whilst the other two were broadly north to south aligned. Notably, ditch **16** in Trench 4 corresponds with a linear cropmark recorded from aerial photography (Fig.2), whilst ditches **6** and **8** fall either side a second linear cropmark (ditch **8** perhaps the most likely to be registered due to its greater size). The other features did not register as cropmarks, but were all fairly shallow.
- 4.1.3 The only finds from the ditches comprised two Neolithic worked flints from ditch **4**, Trench 2, which included a flint knife. The ditch itself is unlikely to be Neolithic in origin, but the condition of the flint knife suggests the artefact had not moved far from its original context of discard/deposition.
- 4.1.4 The two postholes (**10** and **12**) in Trench 5 suggest the presence of a possible structure on the site, though both are undated.
- 4.1.5 Overall, the paucity of features, finds and dating evidence suggests that the site lies on the edge of the cropmark complex recorded further south in the field (Fig.2), with the ditches likely to be field system boundaries extending out from this focus of occupation. This cropmark complex is suspected to be Iron Age or Romano-British in date, but the evaluation here has been unable to corroborate this interpretation.

4.2 Recommendations

- 4.2.1 Recommendations for any future work based upon this report will be made by the County Archaeology Office.

APPENDIX A. TRENCH DESCRIPTIONS AND CONTEXT INVENTORY

Trench 1						
General description					Orientation	N-S
Trench devoid of archaeology. Consists of soil and subsoil overlying a natural of sandy gravel.					Avg. depth (m)	0.32
					Width (m)	1.80
					Length (m)	30.00
Contexts						
context no	type	Width (m)	Depth (m)	comment	finds	date
1	Layer	-	0.17	Topsoil	-	-
2	Layer	-	0.19	Subsoil	-	-
3	Layer	-	-	Natural	-	-
Trench 2						
General description					Orientation	E-W
Trench contained a single undated boundary ditch. Consists of soil and subsoil overlying a natural of sandy gravel.					Avg. depth (m)	0.44
					Width (m)	1.80
					Length (m)	30.00
Contexts						
context no	type	Width (m)	Depth (m)	comment	finds	date
1	Layer	-	0.18	Topsoil	-	-
2	Layer	-	0.39	Subsoil	-	-
3	Layer	-	-	Natural	-	-
4	Cut	1.20	0.45	Ditch	Flint	Neolithic
5	Fill	-	0.45	Ditch fill	-	-
Trench 3						
General description					Orientation	N-S
Trench devoid of archaeology. Consists of soil and subsoil overlying a natural of sandy gravel.					Avg. depth (m)	0.40
					Width (m)	1.80
					Length (m)	30.00
Contexts						
context no	type	Width (m)	Depth (m)	comment	finds	date
1	Layer	-	0.30	Topsoil	-	-
2	Layer	-	0.20	Subsoil	-	-
3	Layer	-	-	Natural	-	-

APPENDIX B. FINDS REPORTS

B.1 Flint

By Anthony Haskins

Introduction

- B.1.1 Two lithics were submitted for assessment (17g). This report describes the preliminary assessment of the assemblage identifying its technological traits and chronological indicators.

Assessment

- B.1.2 A Neolithic flint knife (weighing 16g) was recovered from ditch **4**, context 5. The knife was struck from a good quality dark brownish-black translucent flint which had occasional darker inclusions. A small amount of chalky cortex survives on the strike platform. The knife is formed by invasive retouch applied across the dorsal surface along right lateral edge and the distal portion of the left lateral edge. The retouch extends about half-way across the dorsal surface.
- B.1.3 A portion of small flake struck from the same raw material and in the same condition as the knife was also recovered from ditch **4**, context 5.

Conclusion

- B.1.4 The condition of the flint knife is extremely fresh suggesting it was either intentionally deposited within the feature or derives from an extremely close source and has had minimal disturbance.

APPENDIX C. ENVIRONMENTAL REPORTS

C.1 Environmental samples

By Rachel Fosberry

Introduction

- C.1.1 Two bulk samples were taken in order to assess the quality of preservation of plant remains and their potential to provide useful data as part of further archaeological investigations.

Methodology

- C.1.2 The total volume (approximately 20 litres) of each bulk sample was processed by water flotation (using a modified Siraff three-tank system) for the recovery of charred plant remains, dating evidence and any other artefactual evidence that might be present. The floating component (flot) of the samples was collected in a 0.3mm nylon mesh and the residue was washed through 10mm, 5mm, 2mm and a 0.5mm sieve. Both flot and residues were allowed to air dry. A magnet was dragged through each residue fraction prior to sorting for artefacts. Any artefacts present were noted and reintegrated with the hand-excavated finds. The dried flots were subsequently sorted using a binocular microscope at magnifications up to x 60 and an abbreviated list of the recorded remains are presented in Table 1. Identification of plant remains is with reference to the *Digital Seed Atlas of the Netherlands* (Cappers et al. 2006) and the authors' own reference

collection. Nomenclature is according to Zohary and Hopf (2000) for cereals and Stace (1997) for other plants. Carbonized seeds and grains, by the process of burning and burial, become blackened and often distort and fragment leading to difficulty in identification. Plant remains have been identified to species where possible. The identification of cereals has been based on the characteristic morphology of the grains and chaff as described by Jacomet (2006).

Results

- C.1.3 A single charred cereal grain was recovered from fill 9 of ditch 8. It is poorly preserved and cannot be identified to species.

Sample No.	1	2
Context No.	5	9
Feature No	4	8
Feature type	Ditch	Ditch
Sample vol (L)	18	15
Trench	2	5
Cereals:		
cereal indet. caryopsis		1
Charcoal volume (ml)	<1	<1
Charcoal <2mm	+	+
Charcoal >2mm	+	+
Volume of flot (mls)	20	15
roots	+++	+++

Table 1: Environmental samples

Discussion

- C.1.4 The environmental samples have produced scant evidence of carbonised plant remains in the form of a single charred grain. It is not possible to be sure that this single item is contemporary with the deposit, particularly as this sample contained numerous modern rootlets and cereal fragments.

APPENDIX D. BIBLIOGRAPHY

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APPENDIX E. OASIS REPORT FORM

All fields are required unless they are not applicable.

Project Details

OASIS Number	oxfordar3-260621			
Project Name	Land east of Little Paxton Cemetery			
Project Dates (fieldwork)	Start	10-08-2016	Finish	15-08-2016
Previous Work (by OA East)	No		Future Work	Unknown

Project Reference Codes

Site Code	ECB4783	Planning App. No.	15/01849/FUL
HER No.	ECB4783	Related HER/OASIS No.	

Type of Project/Techniques Used

Prompt	Planning condition
Development Type	Other

Please select all techniques used:

<input type="checkbox"/> Aerial Photography - interpretation	<input type="checkbox"/> Grab-Sampling	<input type="checkbox"/> Remote Operated Vehicle Survey
<input type="checkbox"/> Aerial Photography - new	<input type="checkbox"/> Gravity-Core	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Sample Trenches
<input type="checkbox"/> Annotated Sketch	<input type="checkbox"/> Laser Scanning	<input type="checkbox"/> Survey/Recording Of Fabric/Structure
<input type="checkbox"/> Augering	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Measured Survey	<input type="checkbox"/> Targeted Trenches
<input type="checkbox"/> Dendrochronological Survey	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Metal Detectors	<input type="checkbox"/> Test Pits
<input type="checkbox"/> Documentary Search	<input type="checkbox"/> Phosphate Survey	<input type="checkbox"/> Topographic Survey
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Environmental Sampling	<input type="checkbox"/> Photogrammetric Survey	<input type="checkbox"/> Vibro-core
<input type="checkbox"/> Fieldwalking	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Photographic Survey	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Visual Inspection (Initial Site Visit)
<input type="checkbox"/> Geophysical Survey	<input type="checkbox"/> Rectified Photography	

Monument Types/Significant Finds & Their Periods

List feature types using the [NMR Monument Type Thesaurus](#) and significant finds using the [MDA Object type Thesaurus](#) together with their respective periods. If no features/finds were found, please state "none".

Monument	Period	Object	Period
Ditch	Uncertain	Flint	Uncertain
Posthole	Uncertain		Select period...
	Select period...		Select period...

Project Location

County	Cambridgeshire	Site Address (including postcode if possible)	
District	Huntingdonshire	Little Paxton Cemetery Hail Weston Road Little Paxton	
Parish	Little Paxton		
HER	Cambridgeshire		
Study Area	5900 sq.m	National Grid Reference	TL 1787 6322

Project Originators

Organisation	OA EAST
Project Brief Originator	Andy Thomas
Project Design Originator	Richard Mortimer
Project Manager	Matt Brudenell
Supervisor	Nicholas Cox

Project Archives

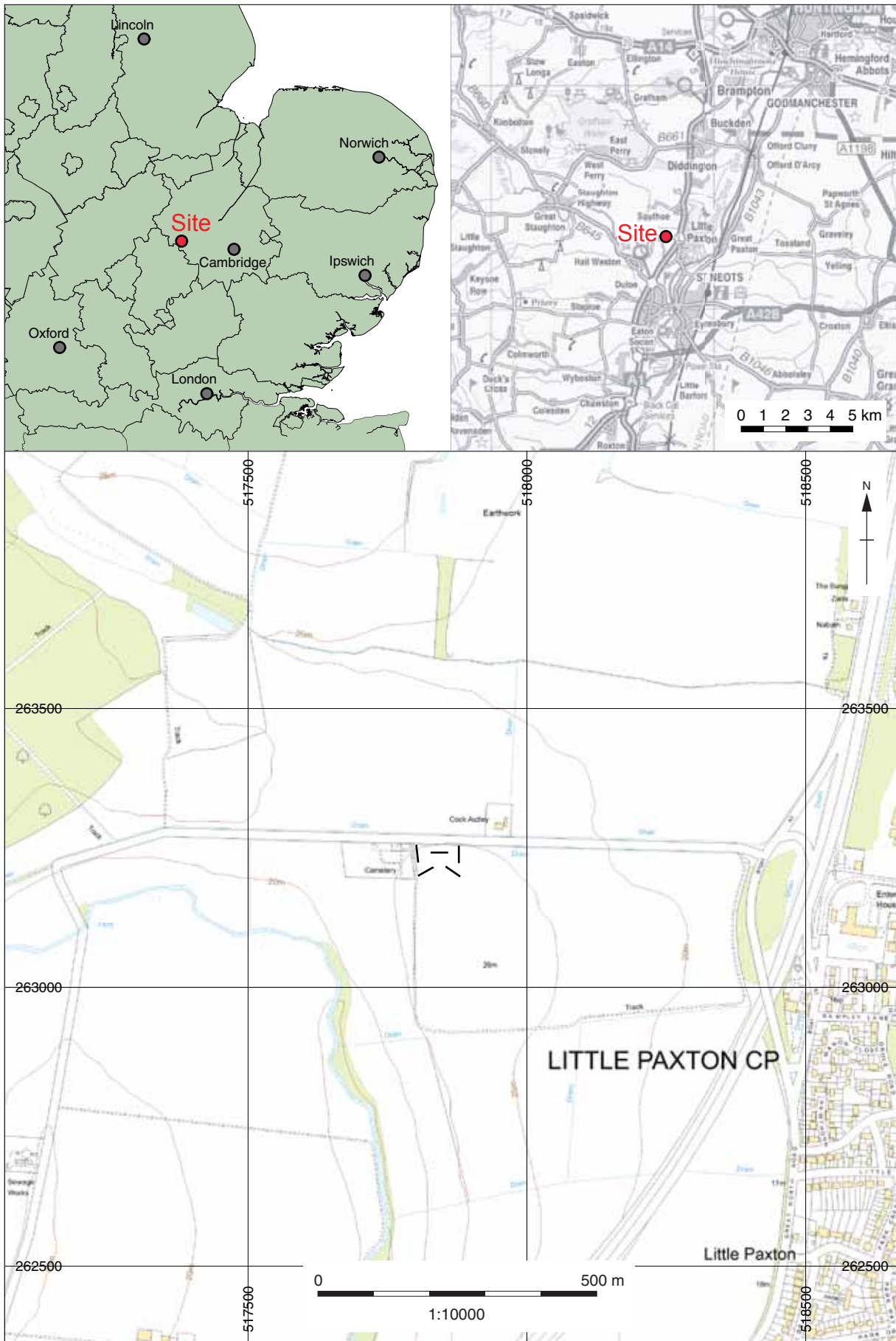
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CCC Stores	OA East	CCC Stores
ECB4783	ECB4783	ECB4783

Archive Contents/Media

	Physical Contents	Digital Contents	Paper Contents
Animal Bones	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Ceramics	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Environmental	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Glass	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Human Bones	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Industrial	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Leather	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Metal	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Stratigraphic		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Survey		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Textiles	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Wood	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Worked Bone	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Worked Stone/Lithic	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
None	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Other	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

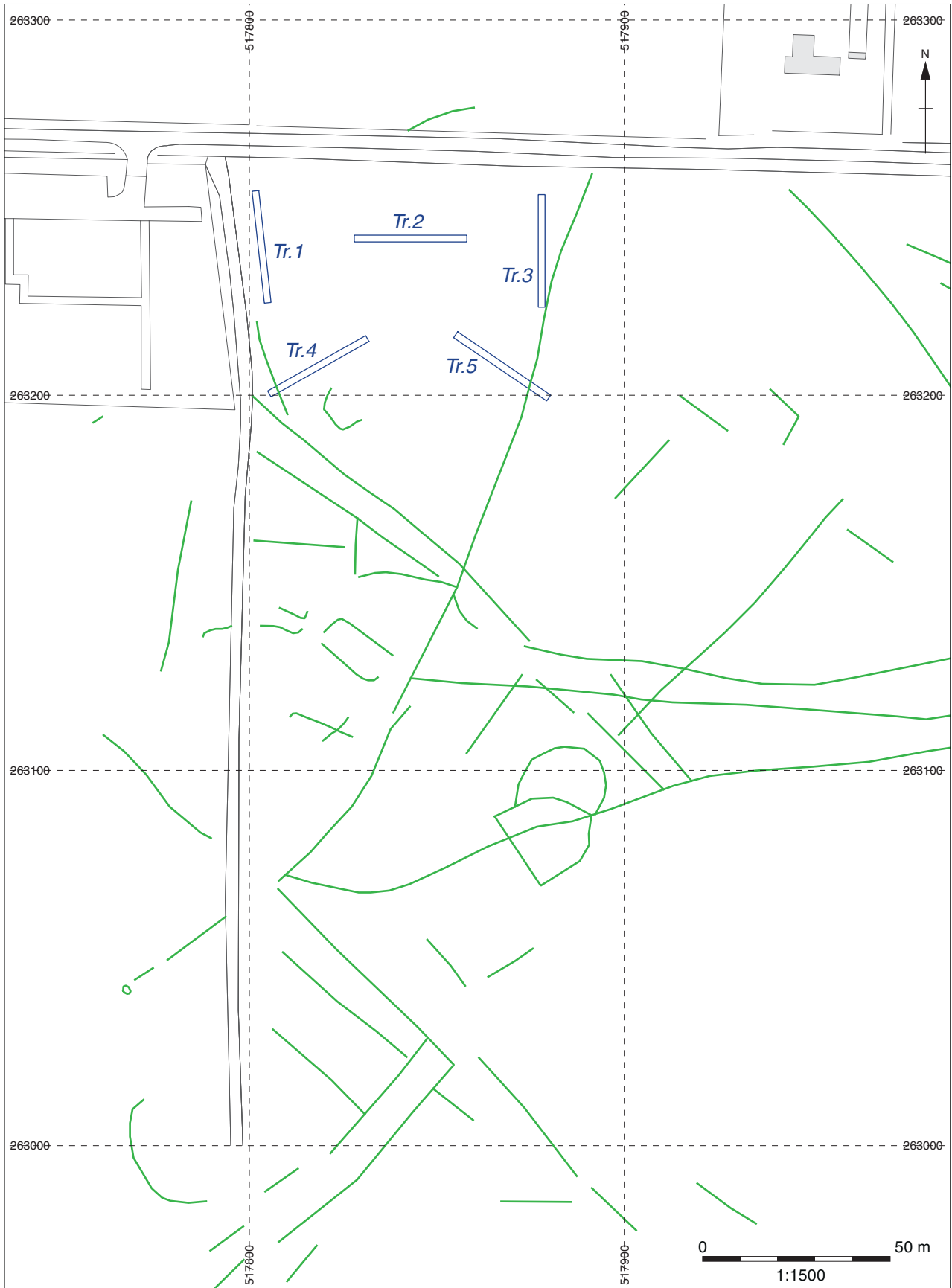
Digital Media	Paper Media
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Database	<input type="checkbox"/> Aerial Photos
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> GIS	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Context Sheet
<input type="checkbox"/> Geophysics	<input type="checkbox"/> Correspondence
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Images	<input type="checkbox"/> Diary
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Illustrations	<input type="checkbox"/> Drawing
<input type="checkbox"/> Moving Image	<input type="checkbox"/> Manuscript
<input type="checkbox"/> Spreadsheets	<input type="checkbox"/> Map
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Survey	<input type="checkbox"/> Matrices
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Text	<input type="checkbox"/> Microfilm
<input type="checkbox"/> Virtual Reality	<input type="checkbox"/> Misc.
	<input type="checkbox"/> Research/Notes
	<input type="checkbox"/> Photos
	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Plans
	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Report
	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Sections
	<input type="checkbox"/> Survey

Notes:



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Figure 1: Site location showing archaeological trenches (black)



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Figure 2: Detailed site location showing evaluation trenches (blue) and location of cropmarks (green)

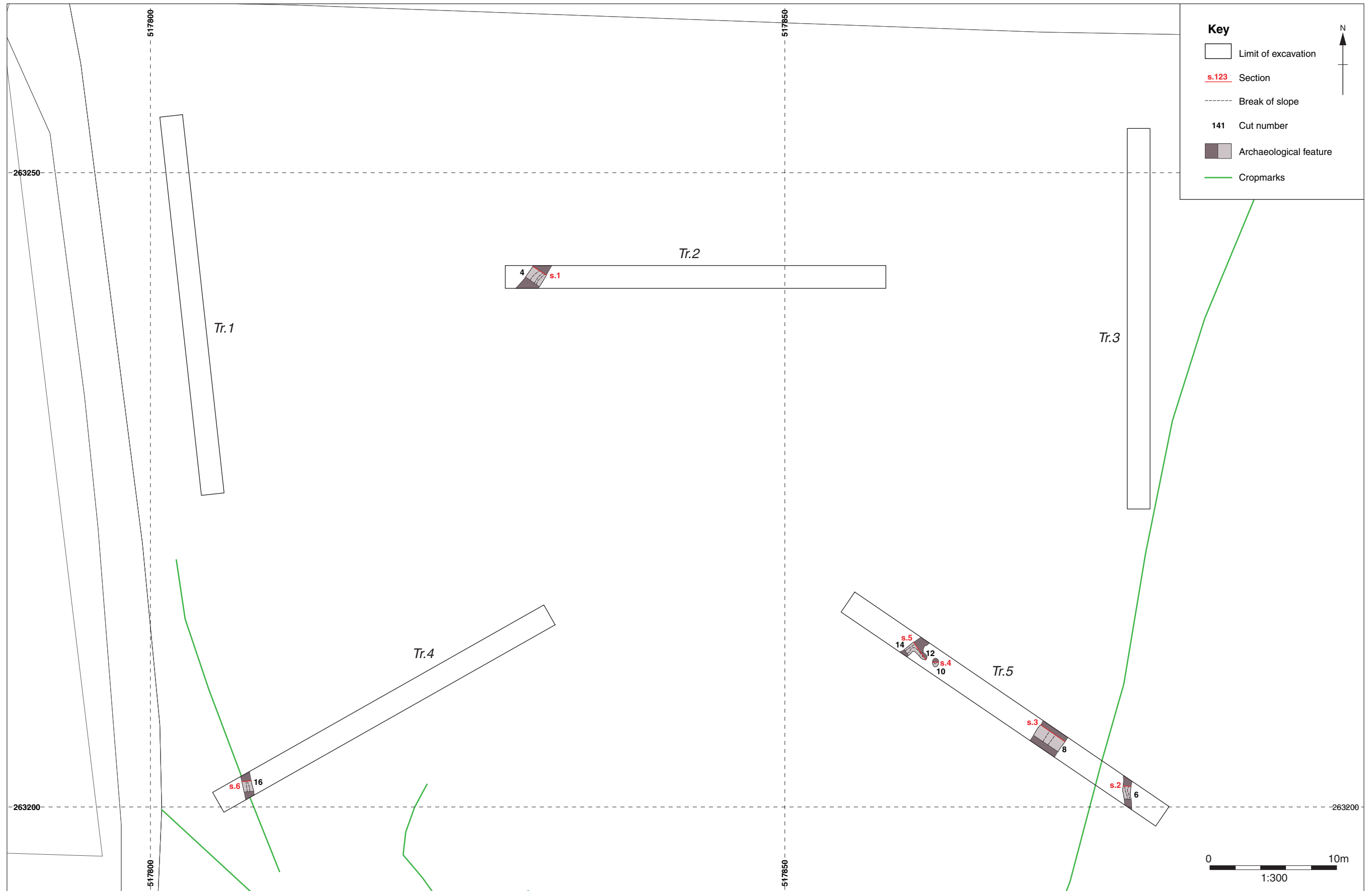


Figure 3: Plan of evaluation trenches