



The Manor, Brookers Hill, Shinfield, Berkshire

Archaeological Evaluation Report

April 2018

Client: Persimmon Homes Thames Valley

Issue No: 1

OA Reference No: SHBHEV2

NGR: SU 7310 6844

oxfordarchaeology



southsouthsouth

Client Name: Persimmon Homes Thames Valley
Document Title: The Manor, Brookers Hill, Shinfield, Berkshire
Document Type: Evaluation Report
Grid Reference: SU 7310 6844
Planning Reference: VAR/2013/0602
Site Code: SHBH15 / SHBH18
Invoice Code: SHBHEV / SHBHEV2

OA Document File Location: X:\b\Brookers Hill - Shinfield Reading\Report
OA Graphics File Location: X:\b\Brookers Hill - Shinfield Reading\010Geomatics

Issue No: 1
Date: April 2018
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The Manor, Brookers Hill, Shinfield, Berkshire

Archaeological Evaluation Report

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Summary

Oxford Archaeology was commissioned by Persimmon Homes Thames Valley to undertake a trial trench evaluation at The Manor, Brookers Hill, Shinfield in advance of the redevelopment of the site for housing. The work was undertaken in two phases; the first, in 2015, comprised the excavation of six trenches, and the second, undertaken in March 2018, a further eight trenches.

No significant archaeological features were present within the trenches and no artefactual material was recovered.

Construction of the buildings of the National Institute for Research in Dairying had caused some truncation of the southern part of the site, possibly removing any archaeological features that may have been in this area. Trenches 1, 4, 5 and 7, in the northern part of the site, uncovered plough features, of probable medieval-modern date, and a ditch and two postholes, all of which were undated.

Acknowledgements

Oxford Archaeology would like to thank Persimmon Homes Thames Valley for commissioning this project. Thanks are also extended to Ellie Leary, who monitored the work on behalf of Berkshire Archaeology, for her advice and guidance.

The project was managed for Oxford Archaeology by David Score and John Boothroyd. The fieldwork was directed by Mike Simms in 2015 and Jim Mumford in 2018, supported by Simon Batsman. Survey and digitizing was carried out by Caroline Souday. Thanks are also extended to the teams of OA staff that prepared the archive under the management of Nicola Scott.

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Scope of work

1.1.1 Oxford Archaeology (OA) was commissioned by Persimmon Homes to undertake a trial trench evaluation at the site of The Manor, Brookers Hill, Shinfield, Berkshire.

1.1.2 The work was undertaken as a condition of Planning Permission (planning ref. VAR/2013/0602. Although a brief was not issued for the works, discussion with Ellie Leary of Berkshire Archaeology established the scope of work required. A written scheme of investigation was produced by OA detailing the Local Authority's requirements for work necessary to inform the planning process (OA 2015). This document outlines how OA implemented the specified requirements.

1.2 Location, topography and geology

1.2.1 The site is situated at NGR SU 7310 6844 and lies on an area of higher ground (60-65m OD) south of the M4 motorway and north and west of the village of Shinfield, Berkshire (Fig. 1).

1.2.2 The area of the proposed development consisted of pasture or scrub land to north and west. The south-eastern part of the site was occupied by the former National Institute for Research in Dairying.

1.2.3 The geology of the area is mapped as London Clay Formation overlain by drift geology of Terrace River Gravels (British Geological Survey 2000).

1.3 Archaeological and historical background

1.3.1 The archaeological and historical background of The Manor, Shinfield, of which this current site is a part, has been described in an Archaeological Desk Based Assessment (CgMs 2010), the details of which will not be reproduced here.

1.3.2 A ditch of possible Roman date was uncovered in the northernmost part of the site by a previous evaluation (OAU 1997).

1.3.3 In 2010, OA carried out an evaluation (OA 2010) at The Manor Site, Area C, which comprised four trenches and covered the northernmost part of the site. These trenches produced redeposited Roman pottery.

2 EVALUATION AIMS AND METHODOLOGY

2.1 General aims

2.1.1 The general aims and objectives of the evaluation were:

- i. To determine the presence or absence of any archaeological remains which may survive;
- ii. To determine or confirm the approximate extent of any surviving remains;
- iii. To determine the date range of any surviving remains by artefactual or other means;
- 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 assess the associations and implications of any remains encountered with reference to the historic landscape;
- vii. To determine the potential of the site to provide palaeoenvironmental and/or economic evidence, and the forms in which such evidence may survive;
- viii. To determine the implications of any remains with reference to economy, status utility and social activity;
- ix. To determine or confirm the likely range, quality and quantity of the artefactual evidence present.

2.2 Specific aims and objectives

2.2.1 The specific aims and objectives of the evaluation were:

- x. To enable an informed decision to be made on whether further archeological mitigation is required and if so the form it should take;
- xi. To investigate the possibility of Roman features in the northern part of the site.

2.3 Methodology

2.3.1 The work was undertaken in accordance with the WSI (OA 2015). Due to the presence of structures associated with the former National Institute for Research in Dairying the works were carried out in two phases. The first phase, undertaken in 2015, consisted of six trenches excavated within in the northern half of the site (Trenches 1-5 and 9), beyond the limit of the structures. Following demolition of the buildings in 2018, the remaining eight trenches were excavated within the southern half of the site (Trenches 6-8, 10-14).

2.3.2 A number of the trench positions were adjusted in the field due to the presence of obstacles, although they remained in the general proposed location (Fig. 2).

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, including dimensions and depths of all deposits, can be found in Appendix A.
- 3.1.2 Context numbers reflect the trench numbers unless otherwise stated e.g. pit 102 is a feature within Trench 1, while ditch 304 is a feature within Trench 3.

3.2 General soils and ground conditions

- 3.2.1 Ground conditions throughout the first phase of the works in 2015 were generally good, and the trenches remained dry throughout. The soil sequence in all trenches was fairly uniform; the natural geology of orange brown silty clay was overlain by a pale orangey brown silty clay with patches of gravel subsoil, which in turn was overlain by either topsoil.
- 3.2.2 The second phase carried out in 2018, after the buildings on site had been demolished and the site had been re-vegetated. The work was undertaken in severe snowy winter conditions. Due to the presence of the structures and subsequent demolition works, Trenches 6, 8 and 10-13 were excavated through a layer of demolition material.
- 3.2.3 Archaeological features, where present, were easy to identify against the underlying natural geology. All features were cut into the natural geology and sealed by the subsoil unless otherwise stated

3.3 General distribution of archaeological deposits

- 3.3.1 Archaeological features were only recorded in four trenches at the northern end of the site (Trenches 1, 4, 5 and 7), which were of low significance, and these are discussed below.
- 3.3.2 They comprised plough features, of probably medieval-modern date, and undated features.

3.4 Trench 1 (Figs 3 and 4; Plate 1)

- 3.4.1 The trench contained two furrows aligned NW-SE (102 and 105), a ditch aligned N-S (104), and a posthole (107).
- 3.4.2 The furrows (102 and 105) had shallow concave profiles and measured 2.6m wide and 0.12m deep.
- 3.4.3 The ditch (104) had sloping sides and a concave, and measured 0.35m wide and 0.12m deep. It contained a single fill of light brown silty clay (103).
- 3.4.4 Posthole 107 measured 0.38m in diameter and 0.33m deep and was filled by a deposit of grey brown silty clay (106).

3.5 Trench 4 (Figs 3 and 4)

- 3.5.1 The trench contained a posthole (405) and an E-W aligned furrow (409). Two additional features were investigated but were interpreted as root holes (403 and 407)
- 3.5.2 Posthole 405 measured 0.18m in diameter and 0.13m deep and had a grey brown silty clay fill (406).
- 3.5.3 The furrow (409) had a shallow, concave profile and measured 2m wide and 0.06m deep. The fill of the furrow was a light reddish brown silty clay (410). The furrow was truncated by root hole 407, which measured 0.15m in diameter and 0.12m deep and was filled by a deposit of grey brown silty clay (408).
- 3.5.4 The second root hole (403) was sub-circular in plan and measured 0.68m wide and 0.24m deep, with a fill of dark greyish brown silty sand (404).

3.6 Trench 5

- 3.6.1 The trench contained three furrows, all aligned E-W (505, 507 and 509). They had shallow, concave profiles and were filled by identical deposits of light orangey brown silty clay (506, 509 and 510).
- 3.6.2 In addition, two root holes were investigated (not illustrated).

3.7 Trench 7 (Figs 3 and 4; Plate 2)

- 3.7.1 The trench contained four narrow linear features, of which one was investigated (703) and found to be a plough scar. Each feature was 0.55m wide and 703 was 0.12m deep, with a fill of dark brown silty clay with gravel inclusions (704).

3.8 Finds summary

- 3.8.1 No artefacts or ecofactual material was observed or recovered during either of the evaluation phases.

4 DISCUSSION

4.1 Reliability of field investigation

4.1.1 The evaluation provided a good coverage of the area of the site and the results can be regarded as a reliable indication of the archaeological potential of the area. Where present, features were well defined against the natural geology.

4.2 Evaluation objectives and results

4.2.2 The specific aims and objectives of the evaluation were to enable an informed decision to be made on whether further archaeological mitigation is required and, if so, the form it should take, as well as to investigate the possibility of Roman features in the northern part of the site.

4.2.3 The evaluation demonstrated that construction of the buildings of the National Institute for Research in Dairying had caused some truncation of the southern part of the site, possibly removing any archaeological features that may have been in this area. There was greater potential for the preservation of features in the northern part of the site, but only plough features, of probable medieval-modern date, and undated features were found. There were no features that could be definitely attributed to the Roman period

4.3 Interpretation

4.3.1 The furrows exposed in Trenches 1, 4 and 5 are likely to be evidence for ridge and furrow cultivation during the medieval and post-medieval periods. The narrower form and different alignment of the plough scars in Trench 7 suggests that they are of different date and are perhaps modern.

4.3.2 The small ditch in Trench 1 and the isolated postholes in Trenches 1 and 4 produced no artefactual material and their date and function are therefore unknown.

4.4 Significance

4.4.1 The features are of no significance in terms of their period, type, form and function.

APPENDIX A TRENCH DESCRIPTIONS AND CONTEXT INVENTORY

Trench 1						
General description					Orientation	E-W
Trench contained two NW-SE aligned furrows and one N-S aligned ditch and a posthole. Cut into a natural of silty clay.					Length (m)	30
					Width (m)	1.6
					Avg. depth (m)	0.40
Context No.	Type	Width (m)	Depth (m)	Description	Finds	Date
100	Layer	-	0.20	Topsoil	-	-
101	Layer	-	0.22	Furrow fill	-	-
102	Cut	2.2m	0.12m	Furrow	-	-
103	Fill	-	0.12	Fill of ditch	-	-
104	Cut	0.35m	0.12m	Ditch	-	-
105	Cut	2.6m	0.12m	Furrow	-	-
106	Fill	-	0.12	Fill of Posthole	-	-
107	Cut	0.33m	0.12m	Posthole	-	-
108	Layer	-	-	Natural	-	-
109	Fill			Fill 105		
110	Fill			Fill of 102		

Trench 2						
General description					Orientation	NE-SW
Trench devoid of archaeology. Consists of soil and subsoil overlying a natural of silty clay.					Length (m)	30
					Width (m)	1.6
					Avg. depth (m)	0.42
Context No.	Type	Width (m)	Depth (m)	Description	Finds	Date
200	Layer	-	0.22	Topsoil	-	-
201	Layer	-	0.20	Subsoil	-	-
202	Layer	-	-	Natural	-	-

Trench 3						
General description					Orientation	N-S
Trench devoid of archaeology. Consists of soil and subsoil overlying a natural of silty clay.					Length (m)	30
					Width (m)	1.6
					Avg. depth (m)	0.4
Context No.	Type	Width (m)	Depth (m)	Description	Finds	Date
300	Layer	-	0.20	Topsoil	-	-
301	Layer	-	0.20	Subsoil	-	-
302	Layer	-	-	Natural	-	-

Trench 4						
General description					Orientation	NE-SW
Trench consists of soil overlying a root hole in subsoil. This sealed a furrow and two possible postholes cutting a natural of silty clay.					Length (m)	30
					Width (m)	1.6
					Avg. depth (m)	0.42
Context No.	Type	Width (m)	Depth (m)	Description	Finds	Date
400	Layer	-	-	Natural	-	-
401	Layer	-	0.12	Subsoil	-	-
402	Layer	-	0.30	Topsoil	-	-
403	Cut	0.68	0.24	Root hole	-	-
404	Fill		0.24	Fill of root hole	-	-
405	Cut	0.18	0.13	Posthole	-	-
406	Fill		0.13	Fill of posthole	-	-
407	Cut	0.15	0.12	Post/root hole	-	-
408	Fill		0.12	Fill of post/root hole	-	-
409	Cut	2	0.06	Furrow	-	-
410	Fill		0.06	Fill of furrow	-	-

Trench 5						
General description					Orientation	NE-SW
Trench contained three E-W aligned furrows. Consists of soil and subsoil overlying the furrows and a root hole cutting a natural of silty clay.					Length (m)	30
					Width (m)	1.6
					Avg. depth (m)	0.42
Context No.	Type	Width (m)	Depth (m)	Description	Finds	Date
500	Layer	-	-	Natural	-	-
501	Layer	-	0.28	Topsoil	-	-
502	Layer	-	0.22	Subsoil	-	-
503	Cut	1.95	0.22	Root hole	-	-
504	Fill	-	0.22	Fill of root hole	-	-
505	Cut	1.6	0.10	Furrows	-	-
506	Fill	-	0.10	Fill of furrows	-	-

Trench 6						
General description					Orientation	NW-SE
Trench devoid of archaeology. Consists of demolition debris directly overlying a natural of silty clay.					Length (m)	30
					Width (m)	1.8
					Avg. depth (m)	0.55
Context No.	Type	Width (m)	Depth (m)	Description	Finds	Date
600	Layer	-	0.37	Layer - debris	-	-
601	Layer	-	-	Natural	-	-

Trench 7						
General description					Orientation	E-W
Trench contained four plough scars of which one was investigated. Consists of soil and subsoil overlying plough scars cutting a natural of silty clay.					Length (m)	30
					Width (m)	2.1
					Avg. depth (m)	0.44
Context No.	Type	Width (m)	Depth (m)	Description	Finds	Date
700	Layer	-	0.08	Topsoil	-	-
701	Layer	-	0.42	Subsoil	-	-
702	Layer	-	-	Natural	-	-
703	Cut	0.55	0.12	Plough scar	-	-
704	Fill			Fill of plough scar	-	-

Trench 8						
General description					Orientation	NE-SW
Trench devoid of archaeology. Consists of re-mediation and demolition layer infilling grubbed out old service trenches overlying a natural of silty clay.					Length (m)	30
					Width (m)	1.8
					Avg. depth (m)	0.6
Context No.	Type	Width (m)	Depth (m)	Description	Finds	Date
800	Layer	-	0.35	Layer - debris	-	-
801	Layer	-	-	Natural	-	-

Trench 9						
General description					Orientation	NE-SW
Trench devoid of archaeology. Consists of soil and subsoil overlying a natural of silty clay.					Length (m)	30
					Width (m)	1.6
					Avg. depth (m)	0.4
Context No.	Type	Width (m)	Depth (m)	Description	Finds	Date
900	Layer	-	-	Natural	-	-
901	Layer	-	0.10	Subsoil	-	-
902	Layer	-	0.30	Topsoil	-	-

Trench 10						
General description					Orientation	N-S
Trench devoid of archaeology. Consists of re-mediation and tarmac, overlying make-up that sealed the natural of silty clay.					Length (m)	30
					Width (m)	1.8
					Avg. depth (m)	0.5
Context No.	Type	Width (m)	Depth (m)	Description	Finds	Date
1000	Layer	-	0.05	Tarmac	-	-
1001	Layer	-	0.45	Make up and re-mediation	-	-
1002	Layer	-	-	Natural	-	-

Trench 11						
General description					Orientation	E-W
Trench devoid of archaeology. Consists of demolition and remediation directly overlying a natural of silty clay.					Length (m)	30
					Width (m)	1.8
					Avg. depth (m)	0.2
Context No.	Type	Width (m)	Depth (m)	Description	Finds	Date
1100	Layer	-	0.2	Layer - debris	-	-
1101	Layer	-	-	Natural	-	-

Trench 12						
General description					Orientation	E-W
Trench devoid of archaeology. Consists of demolition and remediation directly overlying a natural of silty clay.					Length (m)	30
					Width (m)	1.8
					Avg. depth (m)	0.35
Context No.	Type	Width (m)	Depth (m)	Description	Finds	Date
1200	Layer	-	0.05 – 0.7	Layer - debris	-	-
1201	Layer	-	-	Natural	-	-

Trench 13						
General description					Orientation	NE-SW
Trench devoid of archaeology. Consists of demolition and remediation directly overlying a natural of silty clay.					Length (m)	30
					Width (m)	1.8
					Avg. depth (m)	0.4
Context No.	Type	Width (m)	Depth (m)	Description	Finds	Date
1300	Layer	-	0.40	Layer - debris	-	-
1301	Layer	-	-	Natural	-	-

Trench 14						
General description					Orientation	NE-SW
Trench devoid of archaeology. Consists of demolition and remediation overlying the old topsoil which overlay the natural silty clay.					Length (m)	30
					Width (m)	1.8
					Avg. depth (m)	0.6
Context No.	Type	Width (m)	Depth (m)	Description	Finds	Date
1400	Layer	-	0.20	Layer - debris	-	-
1401	Layer	-	0.20	Topsoil - old	-	-
1402	Layer	-	-	Natural	-	-

APPENDIX B BIBLIOGRAPHY

British Geological Survey, 2000, Sheet 268

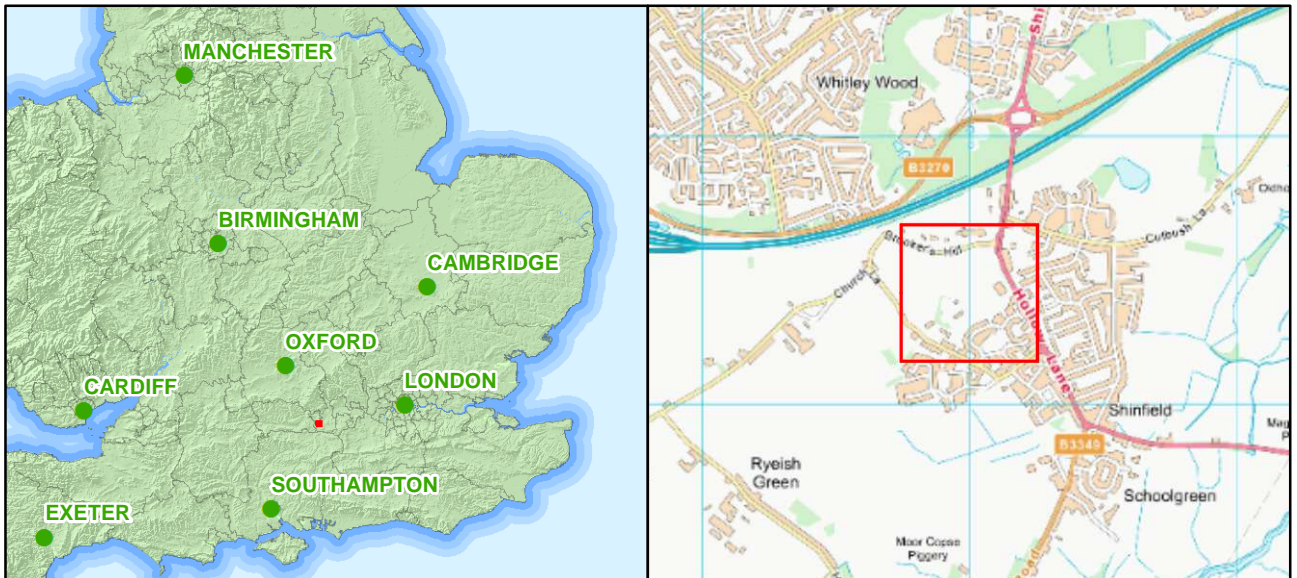
CgMs, 2010 The Manor, Shinfield: archaeological desk-based assessment, unpublished client report

Oxford Archaeology, 2010 Land at The Manor, Shinfield, Berkshire: archaeological evaluation report, unpublished client report

Oxford Archaeology, 1997 Church Lane, Shinfield, Berkshire: archaeological evaluation report, unpublished client report

APPENDIX C**SITE SUMMARY DETAILS**

Site name:	The Manor, Brookers Hill, Shinfield
Site code:	SHBH15 and SHBH18
Grid Reference	SU 7310 6844
Type:	Evaluation
Date and duration:	December 2015 (4 days) and March 2018 (4 days)
Area of Site	14 trenches (30 x 1.8m) 756m ²
Location of archive:	The archive is currently held at OA, Janus House, Osney Mead, Oxford, OX2 0ES.
Summary of Results:	The evaluation demonstrated that construction of the buildings of the National Institute for Research in Dairying had caused some truncation of the southern part of the site, possibly removing any archaeological features that may have been in this area. Trenches 1, 4, 5 and 7, in the northern part of the site, exposed plough furrows of probable medieval-modern date and a ditch and two postholes that were undated.



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Figure 1: Site location

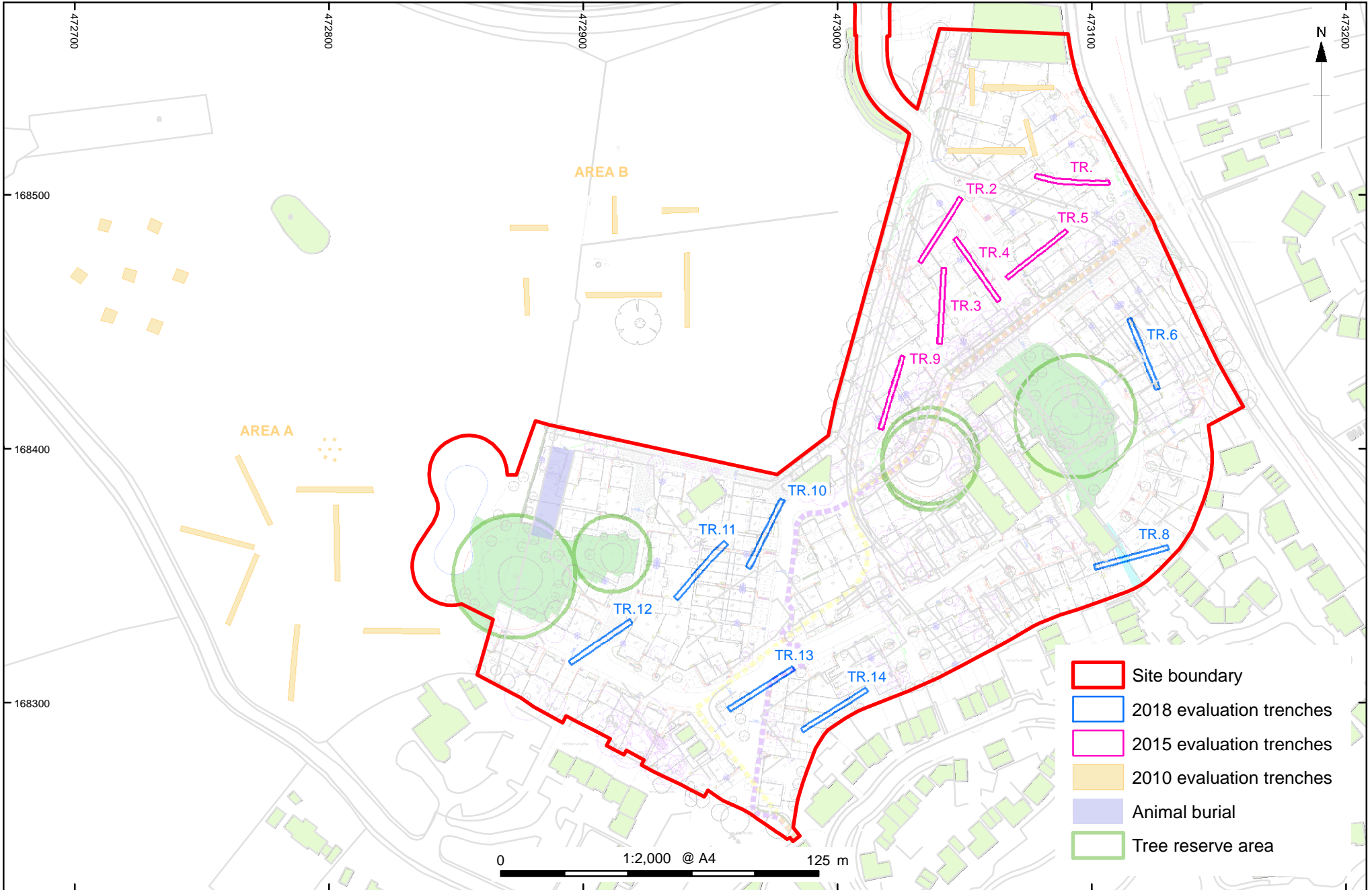


Figure 2: Trench layout

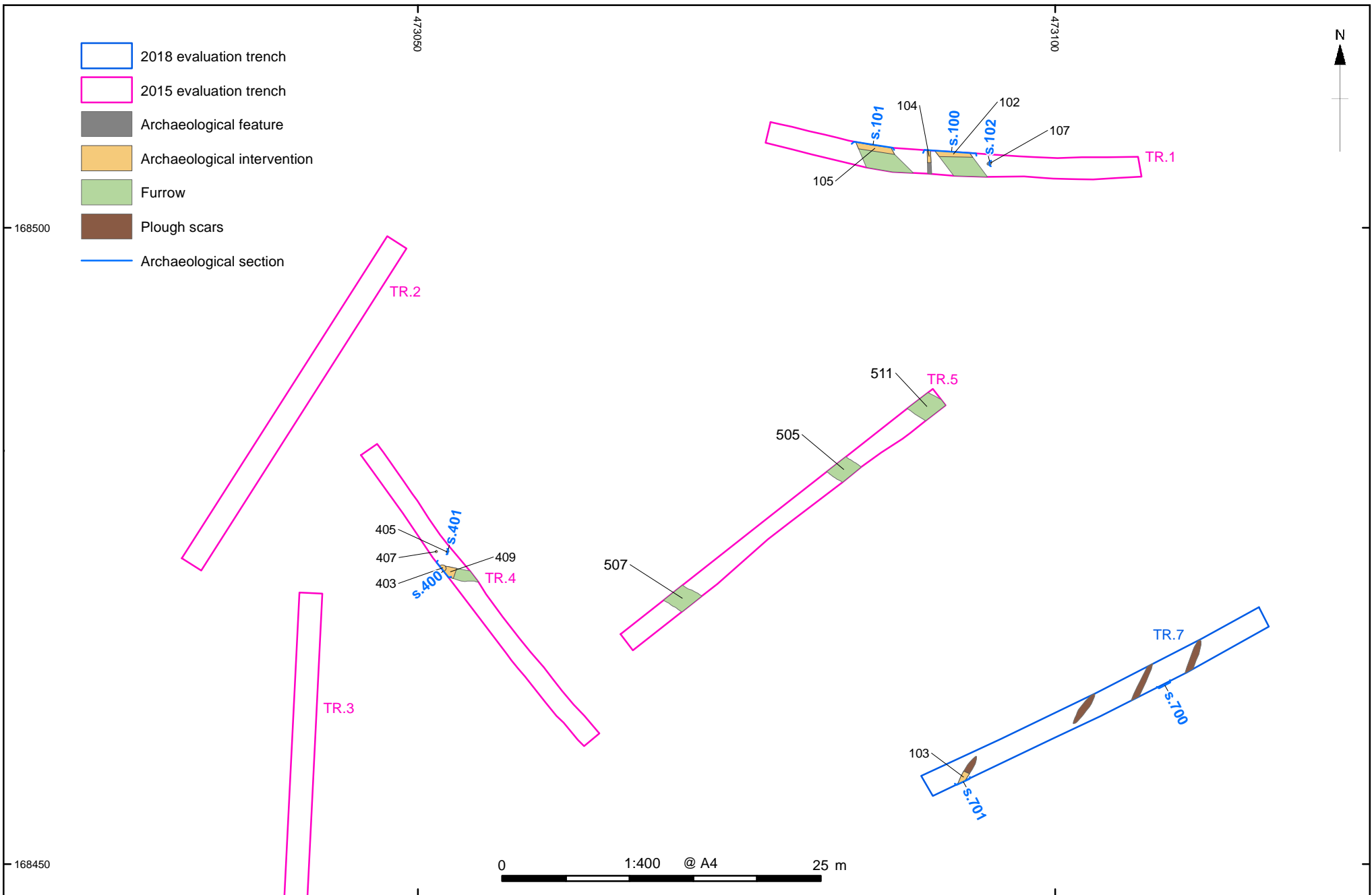


Figure 3: Trenches 1, 4, 5 and 7

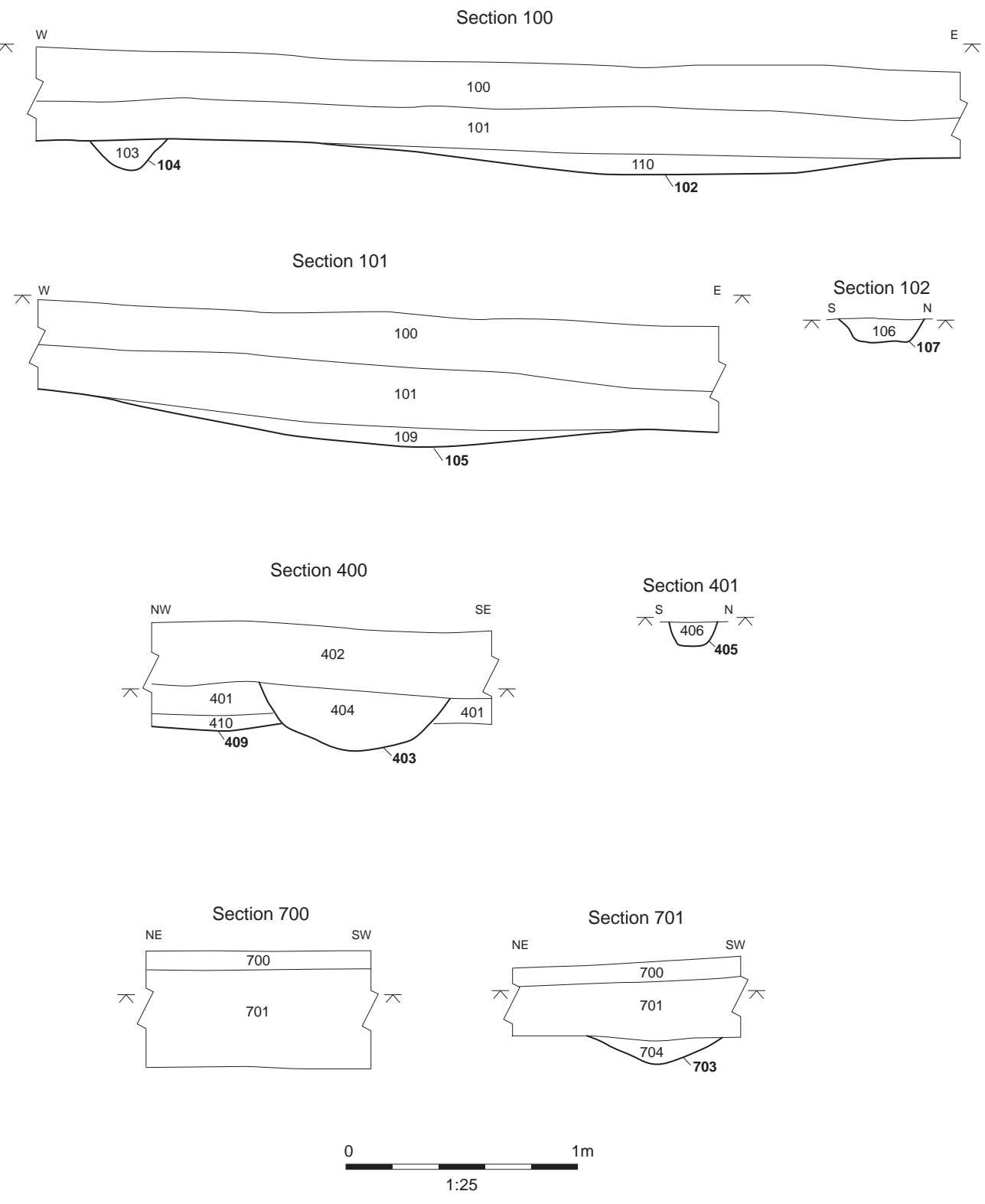


Figure 4: Sections - Trenches 1, 4, 7.



Plate 1: Trench 1, looking west (2015)



Plate 2: Trench 7, looking north-east (2018)



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