

# Night Owl Truck Stop Watling Street Lilbourne



**Archaeological  
Strip, Map, Sample  
and Evaluation Report**



**August 2012**

**Client: O'Brien Contractors Ltd**

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## **Night Owl Truck Stop, Watling Street, Lilbourne**

### *Archaeological Strip, Map and Sample and Evaluation Report*

#### **Table of Contents**

<b>Summary.....</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>1 Introduction.....</b>	<b>4</b>
1.1 Project background and scope of work.....	4
1.2 Location, Geology and topography.....	4
1.3 Archaeological and historical background.....	5
<b>2 Aims and Methodology.....</b>	<b>8</b>
2.1 Aims.....	8
2.2 Methodology.....	8
<b>3 Results.....</b>	<b>9</b>
3.1 Introduction and presentation of results.....	9
3.2 General soils and ground conditions.....	9
3.3 Strip, Map and Sample Area – Phase 1.....	9
3.4 Evaluation Area – Phase 2.....	9
3.5 Finds summary.....	10
<b>4 Discussion.....</b>	<b>10</b>
4.1 Evaluation objectives and results.....	10
4.2 Interpretation.....	10
<b>Appendix A. Trench Descriptions and Context Inventory.....</b>	<b>11</b>
<b>Appendix B. Bibliography and References.....</b>	<b>14</b>
<b>Appendix C. Summary of Site Details.....</b>	<b>15</b>



### List of Figures

- Fig. 1            Site location  
Fig. 2            Plan of the Site  
Fig. 3            SMS area, evaluation trenches and results

### List of Plates

- Plate 1           General view of strip, map and sample, NE side, looking SE  
Plate 2           General view of strip, map and sample, NE side, looking SE, wet conditions  
Plate 3           General view of strip, map and sample, SW side, looking SE  
Plate 4           Ditch 1006 in section, looking NW  
Plate 5           Working shot of evaluation, Trench 3, looking SE  
Plate 6           Trench 1, plan view, looking NE



### **Summary**

*In June 2012, Oxford Archaeology undertook a programme of archaeological Strip, Map and Sample (SMS) recording and evaluation on land at the Night Owl Truck Stop, on the A5 Watling Street near Lilbourne, Northamptonshire.*

*No features of archaeological significance were encountered within either area.*

*A single field boundary was recorded within the SMS area that is present on the 1st edition OS map of 1884 and remained in use until it was backfilled in the 1970s.*

*The evaluation comprised six trenches which identified the remnants of furrows and field drains.*



## 1 INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 Project background and scope of work

- 1.1.1 Oxford Archaeology (OA), was commissioned by O'Brien Contractors Ltd to undertake archaeological investigations at the Night Owl Truck Stop on the A5 (Watling Street) near Lilbourne, Northamptonshire (Fig. 1). These comprised a Strip, Map and Sample (SMS) investigation of the Phase 1 area and a trial trench evaluation of the Phase 2 area (Fig. 2). The fieldwork was completed between 11th to 18th June 2012.
- 1.1.2 The Phase 1 area refers to the expansion of lorry parking facilities at the site (Planning Application Ref: DA/2010/1043). The design included both 'cut' and 'fill' across the area to level the topography as preparation for the construction of the parking facilities. The topsoil stripping for the 'fill' area commenced in May 2012 prior to the required scheme of archaeological investigation and archaeological attendance being in place and agreed with the Archaeological Advisor to the District Council. This initial work was therefore in breach of the pre-commencement condition. Once the contractors and design team became aware of this, all ground works ceased subject to a review of the situation with the relevant authorities. A site meeting was held on 1st June 2012 between the planning authorities, the design and construction teams and the archaeological consultant (Robert Masefield of RPS) during which the ground works undertaken to that date were examined. It was evident that the stripping had remained at subsoil level and the Assistant Archaeological Advisor (Liz Mordue) confirmed that there had been no damage to any potential buried archaeological remains as a consequence of the breach.
- 1.1.3 As works were commenced prior to discharge of the Archaeological Conditions it was also agreed that a new Application should be made in order to regularise matters. Under this proposal topsoil stripping was permitted to continue under archaeological supervision and specifically for this purpose within the Phase 1 area ahead of a revised planning permission being granted.
- 1.1.4 The Phase 2 area is also included within this planning application although ground works were not being undertaken as part of this construction. Archaeological trial trench evaluation of this land parcel was also undertaken as part of this attendance.
- 1.1.5 The Local Planning Authority did not issue a site specific brief for the work. A detailed scope of work was established through discussion between Robert Masefield and Liz Mordue. A Brief was subsequently issued by RPS (RPS 2012) adhering to Northamptonshire standard requirements and approved by Liz Mordue. OA produced a Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI) outlining how it would fulfil those requirements and this document was approved by Liz Mordue prior to OA's site attendance and the recommencement of ground works.
- 1.1.6 All works were undertaken in accordance with local and national planning policies (NPPF Policy HE 12.3).

### 1.2 Location, Geology and topography

- 1.2.1 The Night Owl Truck Stop is situated to the immediate east of the A5 Watling Street, between Rugby Road to the north and Hillmorton Lane to the south, and is centred on NGR SP 55278 76397 (Fig. 1). The site is 1.5km south-west of Lilbourne, Northamptonshire and 4km east of Rugby, Warwickshire. The county boundary runs along the line of Watling Street at this point.





- 1.2.2 The combined 16ha area of the existing Truck Stop and the proposed development areas (Phases 1-3) currently consists of standing structures and accompanying parking areas with some landscaping. The south-eastern portion of the development area, beyond the current truckstop is rough grassland/scrub. The site is on relatively flat land at approximately 100m aOD.
- 1.2.3 The solid geology comprises mudstones of the Charmouth Mudstone Formation. Overlying this there are 1st and 2nd River Terrace sands and gravels with Alluvium recorded across the southern extent of the site (information from BGS [http://maps.bgs.ac.uk/geologyviewer\\_google/googleviewer.html](http://maps.bgs.ac.uk/geologyviewer_google/googleviewer.html)).

### 1.3 Archaeological and historical background

- 1.3.1 The archaeological and historical background to the site has been described in detail as part of a Desk-based Assessment (DBA) produced by Midland Archaeological Services (2010). The following is an overview that either repeats or summarises the information produce in the DBA.

#### ***Prehistoric***

- 1.3.2 There is little recorded evidence for early Prehistoric activity in the area of the site. The remains of a possible barrow situated approx 300m to the north of the site forms part of the later medieval castle's defences associated with Lilbourne village.
- 1.3.3 Later Prehistoric activity is well know from recent excavations associated with the DIRFT construction project to the south near Crick. Significant foci of settlement spanning the Iron Age have been identified that include a substantial defended enclosure and numerous round houses.

#### ***Roman***

- 1.3.4 The Roman presence in the area is clearly demonstrated by Watling Street aligned SE-NW. The contemporary A5 Trunk Road now runs along the line of Watling Street (SM 152). Built soon after the Roman conquest of 43 AD it linked the south-east of the country to the north-west. Its current name is derived from the Old English meaning a paved road, *Wæcelinga Stræt*. The line of the road currently forms the parish boundary between Northamptonshire and Warwickshire.
- 1.3.5 Although there is no occupation evidence the road formed a route through the landscape which gave access to the hinterland and the influence of Roman activity can be seen from occasional finds such as that of a coin found of the 2nd century AD.

#### ***Medieval***

- 1.3.6 The village of Lilbourne to the north-east is believed to have been settled around 500 AD by the Saxon tribe of *Lila* who came from the Sleaford area of Lincolnshire. The name of the village is thought to derive from the Old English meaning 'Stream of a man called Lilla', Old English personnel name + *burna* (Mills, 1993).
- 1.3.7 By the time of the Domesday Survey of 1086 AD the village is recorded as *Lilleburne* and had been in the possession of Earl *Albericus* prior to the Norman Conquest. The Domesday Survey notes that the village consisted of; two and a half hides, a Vigate, four Carnates and two oxgangs And there were twelve acres of meadow. (Williams, and Martin (eds.), 1992).
- 1.3.8 Standing on the east edge of a prominent ridge, approximately 1km north-east of the site and with extensive views in all directions including part of Watling Street is a Motte



and Bailey Castle, (National Monument List No 1013349: SM 13657), known as Round Hill or Reeves Hill Ground. Within the castle earthworks conjoined enclosures stretching south-west from the motte have been identified, as well as a possible smaller siege castle overlooking the main motte to the east and an associated bailey on the north-west side of the motte.

- 1.3.9 The castle consists of a motte and bailey earthworks that cover an area measuring approximately 85m x 62m. The motte lies to the south and is a flat topped round mound about 10m high. The mound is surrounded by a substantial ditch between 1.5m and 2.5m deep and in places up to 10m wide. On the north side of the motte lie the remains of a peripheral oval bailey. The edge of the bailey is defined by a slight rise in the land up to 0.5m high, and the ditch around the bailey is indicated by soil marks. The motte and bailey stands in an isolated position on high ground, looking towards Watling Street to the west. This castle lies 800m to the south west of a second motte and bailey which is located just to the north of Lilbourne village, (<http://list.english-heritage.org.uk/resultsingle.aspx?uid=1013349>).
- 1.3.10 To the north-east of the castle, a possible medieval route and hollow way are recorded. These form an earthwork aligned NW-SE, from Glebe Farm south to the Rugby Road.
- 1.3.11 The surrounding landscape provides substantial evidence for the agricultural practices undertaken, particularly arable, visible as preserved areas of ridge and furrow. They are generally well preserved and have been extensively mapped from aerial photographs and upstanding earthworks. The form and layout of numerous field systems have been recorded through aerial photography and cartographic plotting. Medieval to post-medieval open field systems are known around the village of Lilbourne.
- 1.3.12 Contributing factors such as the castle, the location of the village close to Watling Street, the establishment of a market in 1219 and the sheep trade made Lilbourne a wealthy village throughout the medieval period (British History Online, 2010). By the 16th century competition from larger markets at Lutterworth, Daventry and Rugby, had a detrimental affect on Lilbourne's market which did not persist past his time (Timmins 1998).

### ***Post-medieval***

- 1.3.13 Following the medieval open field system, the area underwent Enclosure in 1663-64 (Whalley, Bridges Vol I, 1791) following a private agreement between the church, the manorial landholders and the tenants. The three common open fields known as Brook Field, Crick Path Field and Castle Field, were enclosed by hedges to form small fields present today. The enclosure was of benefit to the wealthier landowners and allowed the use of new farming methods to obtain higher yields from the land (Timmins 1998).
- 1.3.14 Each villager's land was relocated in one area, but smaller farmers and poorer people, who now had lost the use of the common land, were forced to sell their small holdings to the larger landholders. Many became cottiers (tenant farmers) or day labourers, while others migrated to find employment in the urban areas (Timmins 1998).
- 1.3.15 Large tracts of existing arable land that were converted for grazing meant fewer rural labourers were required. Cottage industries such as framework knitting and tammy weaving absorbed much labour from the 1740's onwards. Work was done largely at home with simple equipment (Timmins 1998) and produced items taken to urban centres for sale.



- 1.3.16 Lilbourne remained largely unaffected by the Industrial Revolution until 1850, when the opening of a railway line to Rugby created access to employment for people and more diverse types of work in nearby Rugby, (Timmins 1998).
- 1.3.17 Nearby Dunsmore Farm has a range of planned rectilinear enclosed field systems associated with it and a post-medieval gravel pit.
- 1.3.18 Bryant's map of 1824-26 shows the site area comprising of an irregular shaped field and with no indication of buildings or natural features. This view changes towards the late 19th century when the site area is divided into two distinct fields, an aspect which appears to remain unchanged throughout the remaining 19th, early-mid 20th centuries.

### **20th Century**

- 1.3.19 The proposed development site an interesting history in relation to its use between the two World Wars. From September 1913 it was used for British Army manoeuvres, it being the main base for their aeroplanes. During 1916-19 it was used as a grass airfield which included hangars and workshops located just to the west of Watling Street, while living and administration quarters were located to the north-east, close to the northern aspect of the site. It was also used during this period by Training and Fighter squadrons and latter by the Midland Area Flying School.
- 1.3.20 In the same period the General Post Office constructed a Wireless Telegraphy Station on the site, elements of which are still to be seen towards the south-east of the site. The telegraph station went on to play a role during WWII and as it was designated a vulnerable site a series of light anti-aircraft Bofors guns were installed to protect it from enemy action.



## 2 AIMS AND METHODOLOGY

### 2.1 Aims

#### ***General***

- 2.1.1 The aims of the archaeological investigation were to direct the Strip, Map and Sample excavation of the area for the parking extension, to map any archaeological remains, inform the relevant parties and then enact any strategy resulting from a review and discussion with those concerned / the stakeholders. It was also the aim to evaluate the archaeological potential of the Phase 2 area.

#### ***Specific aims and objectives***

- 2.1.2 The specific aims and objectives of the archaeological investigation, as set out in the Brief, were:
- (i) To determine and understand the nature, function and character of the archaeological site in its cultural and environmental setting.
  - (ii) To inform all relevant parties of the results.
  - (iii) To contribute in an appropriate manner to the East Midlands research agenda as outlined in Cooper 2006 (Chapter 12).

### 2.2 Methodology

#### ***Strip, Map and Sample Area – Phase 1***

- 2.2.1 The area of 'cut' impact was surveyed and set out by O'Brien Contractors Ltd. Within this existed an area of hard standing and the site cabins that had been set up as the compound with temporary storage. These areas were omitted from the archaeological SMS through agreement with Liz Mordue. Therefore the original 5,550 m<sup>2</sup> area of investigation was reduced to 4,340 m<sup>2</sup> (approx. 80%).
- 2.2.2 The topsoil, and subsequently the subsoil, were stripped using a 20 tonne mechanical excavator fitted with a toothless ditching bucket, under the constant supervision of an experienced archaeologist. All revealed soil marks were mapped using a Leica Global Positioning System (GPS) to an accuracy of <50mm. The revealed features of potential archaeological origin were hand excavated to fulfil the aims outlined above. On site meetings were undertaken between Robert Masefield and Liz Mordue during the course of the fieldwork to review the field results and modify the excavation strategy accordingly.

#### ***Evaluation Area – Phase 2***

- 2.2.3 The evaluation of the Phase 2 area comprised the excavation of six trenches representing a 4% sample by area (560m<sup>2</sup> excavated of the total 14,130m<sup>2</sup>). The evaluation trenches were arranged to cover the whole area evenly.
- 2.2.4 In the absence of any archaeological significant soil horizons, each trench was machine excavated to the surface of the underlying geology under the constant supervision of an experienced archaeologist. Where required, the surface of the natural was sufficiently cleaned to establish the presence/absence of archaeological remains. The features revealed were mapped both digitally and hand-drawn prior to hand excavation.



### 3 RESULTS

#### 3.1 Introduction and presentation of results

- 3.1.1 Summary results of the Strip, Map and Sample are presented below followed by the results of the trial trench evaluation. These are preceded by a general description of the non archaeological deposits, features and conditions encountered across the site.
- 3.1.2 Individual trench summaries and context inventories are presented in Appendix A. The trench locations and associated features/deposits are depicted on Figure 3.

#### 3.2 General soils and ground conditions

- 3.2.1 The Phase 1 area of the Strip, Map and Sample was partly destroyed by the late 20th century go-cart track that was previously on the site. The Phase 2 area had been deep ploughed and left open with tyres and debris across the area. Wet weather before and during the fieldwork resulted in poor site conditions although this did not affect initial visibility of potential archaeological features during the stripping.
- 3.2.2 A former ploughsoil (now the topsoil and turf) was encountered within both areas. This was generally 0.3 m to 0.4 m thick and overlay the remnants of a buried ploughsoil horizon that was between 0.1 m to 0.3 m thick. The underlying mudstone geology was consistently encountered across the strip, map and sample area and within each trench. It was recorded as a deposit of weathered blue grey to grey brown clay with paler orangey brown gravel patches and inclusions.

#### 3.3 Strip, Map and Sample Area – Phase 1

- 3.3.1 The area of Strip, Map and Sample revealed no features of archaeological significance. A single ditch (1013) aligned NW-SE was recorded extending over 55 m across the site and beyond the SMS limits of excavation in both directions. This was hand excavated at four locations and proved to be between 0.7 m and 1.14 m wide and 0.26 m to 0.5 m deep. The ditch had a single fill at the south-east end and two fills within the north-western end. The clayey fills contained fragments of red brick, glass, corroded iron fragments and plastic of modern origin. This ditch alignment is shown on the 1st edition OS map of 1886 and remained as an active field boundary until the 1970s when it was backfilled and replaced by the existing adjacent NW-SE aligned boundary that continues to the rear of the Truckstop.
- 3.3.2 Several ceramic field drains were also recorded on a general N-S alignment.

#### 3.4 Evaluation Area – Phase 2

- 3.4.1 Cut into the surface of the natural clay within Trenches 1 and 3 were a series of furrows aligned NW-SE. These ranged in surviving width from 0.9m to 1m and were generally 0.12m to 0.2m deep. The furrows (104 and 304) were sample excavated in both trenches to establish that these were not concealing earlier features. No such instances were encountered. Artefacts recovered from the excavated sections provided a consistent post-medieval date.
- 3.4.2 A number of field drains were revealed in Trenches 1-4 and 6. In each instance these post-dated the furrows.



### **3.5 Finds summary**

- 3.5.1 The finds assemblage from the site contained CBM, glass and iron fragments of a post-medieval to modern date. The material was derived from the topsoil and the fills of the NW-SE ditch in the strip, map and sample area. The finds were identified and noted on site but not retained due to the obvious modern origin of these.

## **4 DISCUSSION**

### **4.1 Evaluation objectives and results**

- 4.1.1 The results of the archaeological investigations fulfilled the objectives of the investigation establishing a clear absence of archaeological remains within the SMS 'cut' area and a likely similar absence of remains within the evaluation area.

### **4.2 Interpretation**

- 4.2.1 There is little to interpret or discuss further from these results.
- 4.2.2 The single ditch boundary (1013) can be reliably identified on the 1st edition OS map and existed until the late 20th century.
- 4.2.3 The results strongly suggest that no substantive remains exist within the evaluation area.



## APPENDIX A. TRENCH DESCRIPTIONS AND CONTEXT INVENTORY

Trench 1						
<b>General description</b>					<b>Orientation</b>	NE-SW
Trench contained a number of probable furrows and several field drains on a general NW-SE alignment. Soils comprise topsoil and subsoil overlying a natural of mottled greyish blue clay with yellowy orange gravel patches.					<b>Avg. depth (m)</b>	0.35
					<b>Width (m)</b>	2
					<b>Length (m)</b>	56.25
Contexts						
context no	type	Width (m)	Depth (m)	comment	finds	date
101	Layer	-	0.26	Topsoil	Glass, CBM	Post-medieval and modern
102	Layer	-	0.1	Subsoil	-	-
103	Layer	-	-	Natural	-	-
104	Cut	1	0.12	Furrow	-	-
105	Fill	1	0.12	Fill of 104	pottery	post-medieval

Trench 2						
<b>General description</b>					<b>Orientation</b>	NW-SE
Trench devoid of archaeology and contained only one NNW-SSE aligned field drain. Soils comprise topsoil and subsoil overlying a natural of mottled greyish blue clay with yellowy orange gravel patches.					<b>Avg. depth (m)</b>	0.46
					<b>Width (m)</b>	2
					<b>Length (m)</b>	50.2
Contexts						
context no	type	Width (m)	Depth (m)	comment	finds	date
201	Layer	-	0.36	Topsoil	-	-
202	Layer	-	0.1	Subsoil	-	-
203	Layer	-	-	Natural	-	-

Trench 3						
<b>General description</b>					<b>Orientation</b>	NE-SW
Trench contained a number of probable furrows and several field drains on a general NW-SE alignment. Soils comprise topsoil and subsoil overlying a natural of mottled greyish blue clay with yellowy orange gravel patches.					<b>Avg. depth (m)</b>	0.36
					<b>Width (m)</b>	2
					<b>Length (m)</b>	48
Contexts						
context no	type	Width (m)	Depth (m)	comment	finds	date
301	Layer	-	0.26	Topsoil	CBM	-
302	Layer	-	0.08	Subsoil	-	-
303	Layer	-	-	Natural	-	-
304	Cut	0.9	0.2	Furrow	-	-





305	Fill	0.9	0.2	Fill of 304	-	-
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Trench 4						
<b>General description</b>  Trench devoid of archaeology and contained only one NNW-SSE aligned field drain. Soils comprise topsoil and subsoil overlying a natural of mottled bluey grey to yellow clay.					<b>Orientation</b>	NW-SE
					<b>Avg. depth (m)</b>	0.4
					<b>Width (m)</b>	2
					<b>Length (m)</b>	44.85
Contexts						
context no	type	Width (m)	Depth (m)	comment	finds	date
401	Layer	-	0.4	Topsoil	-	-
402	Layer	-	-	Natural	-	-

Trench 5						
<b>General description</b>  Trench devoid of archaeology. Soils comprise topsoil and subsoil overlying a natural of mottled greyish blue clay. A deeper sondage to a depth of 0.62m was excavated in the SE end.					<b>Orientation</b>	NW-SE
					<b>Avg. depth (m)</b>	0.2
					<b>Width (m)</b>	2.2
					<b>Length (m)</b>	25.45
Contexts						
context no	type	Width (m)	Depth (m)	comment	finds	date
501	Layer	-	0.2	Topsoil	-	-
502	Layer	-	-	Natural	-	-

Trench 6						
<b>General description</b>  Trench devoid of archaeology and contained three NW-SE aligned field drains. Soils comprise topsoil and subsoil overlying a natural of mottled bluey grey to yellow clay.					<b>Orientation</b>	NE-SW
					<b>Avg. depth (m)</b>	0.4
					<b>Width (m)</b>	2.2
					<b>Length (m)</b>	49.1
Contexts						
context no	type	Width (m)	Depth (m)	comment	finds	date
601	Layer	-	0.3	Topsoil	-	-
602	Layer	-	0.1	Subsoil	-	-
603	Layer	-	-	Natural	-	-





**Strip, Map and Sample – Phase 1 area**

context no.	type	Width (m)	Depth (m)	comments	finds	date
1000	Layer			Topsoil	Glass, CBM	Post-medieval and modern
1001	Layer			Subsoil	-	-
1002	Layer			Natural	-	-
1003	Cut			Ditch	-	-
1004	Fill			Fill of 1003	-	-
1005	Fill			Fill of 1003	CBM, iron	Post-medieval and modern
1006	Cut			Ditch	-	-
1007	Fill			Fill of 1006	-	-
1008	Fill			Fill of 1006	CBM, glass, plastic	Post-medieval and modern
1009	Cut			Ditch	-	-
1010	Fill			Fill of 1009	-	-
1011	Cut			Ditch	-	-
1012	Fill			Fill of 10011	-	-
1013	Group			Ditch = 1003, 1006, 1009 and 1011	-	-



## APPENDIX B. BIBLIOGRAPHY AND REFERENCES

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## APPENDIX C. SUMMARY OF SITE DETAILS

<b>Site name:</b>	Night Owl Truck Stop, Watling Street, Lilbourne
<b>Site code:</b>	RUGNO 12
<b>Grid reference:</b>	SP 5527 7639
<b>Type:</b>	Strip, Map and Sample and Evaluation
<b>Date and duration:</b>	11th - 18th June 2012
<b>Area of site:</b>	SMS area 4,340 m <sup>2</sup> Evaluation 14,130 m <sup>2</sup> (4% of which was evaluated)

### Summary of results:

In June 2012, Oxford Archaeology undertook a programme of archaeological Strip, Map and Sample (SMS) recording and evaluation on land at the Night Owl Truck Stop, on the A5 Watling Street near Lilbourne, Northamptonshire.

No features of archaeological significance were encountered within either area.

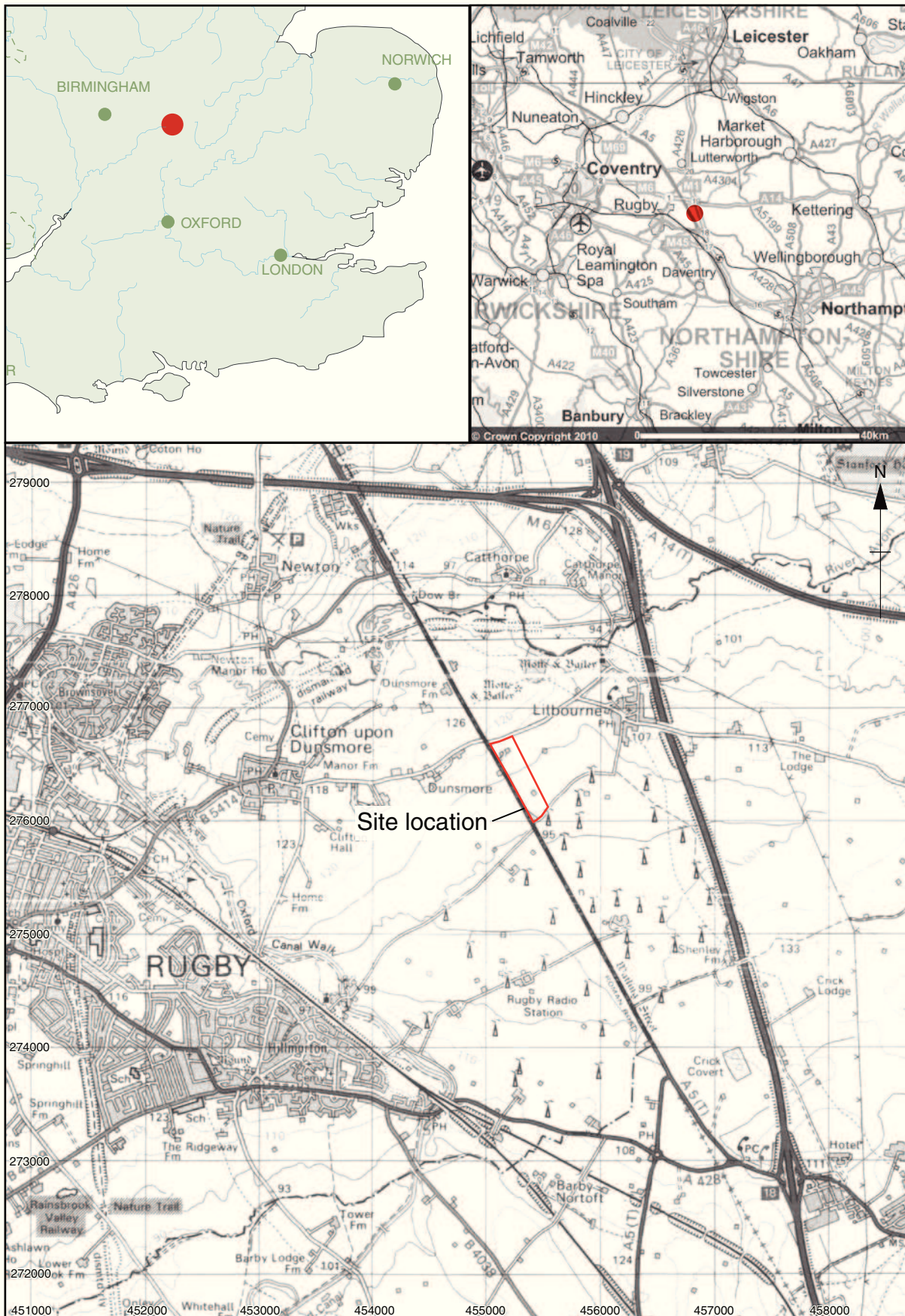
A single field boundary was recorded within the SMS area that is present on the 1st edition OS map of 1884 and remained in use until it was backfilled in the 1970s.

The evaluation comprised six trenches which identified the remnants of furrows and field drains.

### Location of archive:

The archive is currently held at OA, Janus House, Osney Mead, Oxford, OX2 0ES. As specified in the RPS Brief there is no receiving museum is available to accept material from this part of the county, although the issue is being actively addressed and it is hoped that a suitable facility will be available within 3-5 years. Therefore the archive will temporarily be stored at Janus House, Osney Mead, Oxford and the written records made available at <http://library.thehumanjourney.net/> until alternative arrangements are made by the relevant responsible curatorial body.



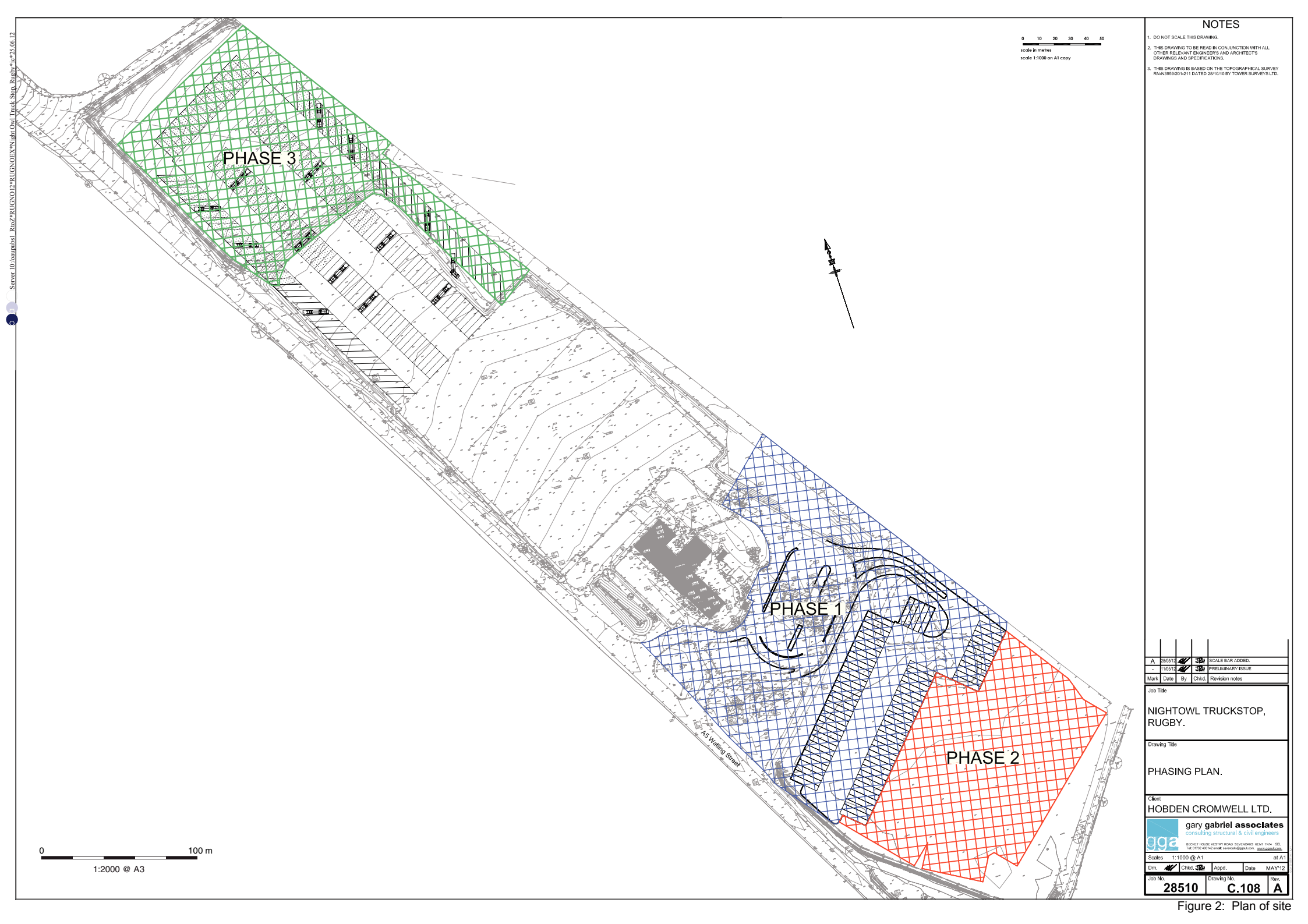


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Figure 1: Site location







NOTES

1. DO NOT SCALE THIS DRAWING.
2. THIS DRAWING TO BE READ IN CONJUNCTION WITH ALL OTHER RELEVANT ENGINEERS AND ARCHITECTS' DRAWINGS AND SPECIFICATIONS.
3. THIS DRAWING IS BASED ON THE TOPOGRAPHICAL SURVEY RHA2355/201-211 DATED 28/10/10 BY TOWER SURVEYS LTD.

A	28/01/12	384	384	SCALE BAR ADDED.	
	11/05/12			PRELIMINARY ISSUE	
Mark	Date	By	Chkd.	Revision notes	
Job Title					
NIGHTOWL TRUCKSTOP, RUGBY.					
Drawing Title					
PHASING PLAN.					
Client					
HOBDEN CROMWELL LTD.					
gary gabriel associates consulting structural & civil engineers					
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Scales		1:1000 @ A1		at A1	
Drn.		Chkd.	384	Appd.	Date MAY'12
Job No.		Drawing No.		Rev.	
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Figure 2: Plan of site





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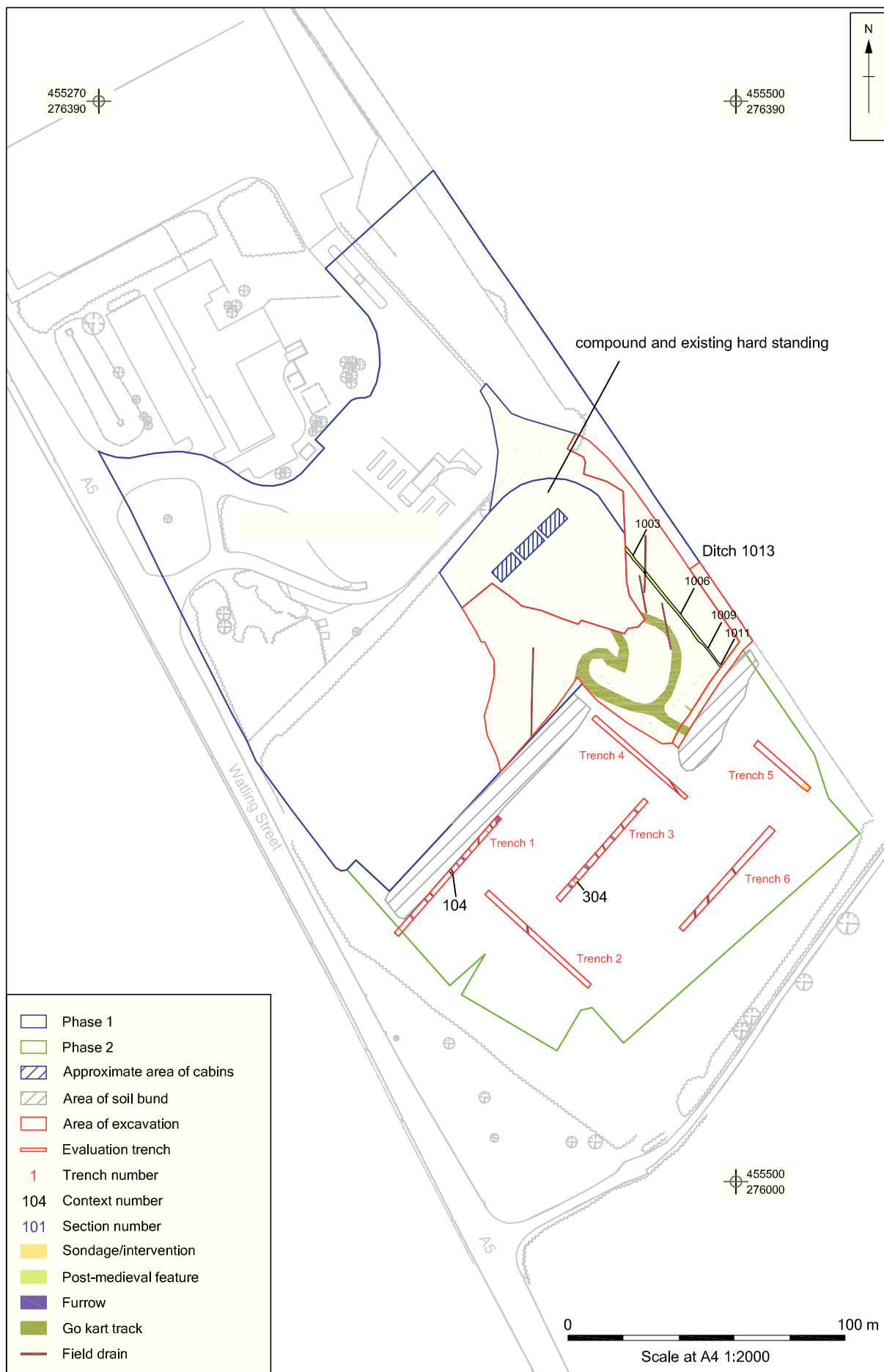


Figure 3: SMS area, evaluation trenches and results





Plate 1: General view of strip, map and sample, NE side, looking SE



Plate 2: General view of strip, map and sample, NE side, looking SE, wet conditions



Plate 3: General view of strip, map and sample, SW side, looking SE







Plate 4: Ditch 1006 in section, looking NW



Plate 5: Working shot of evaluation, Trench 3, looking SE



Plate 6: Trench 1, plan view, looking NE





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