

Land adjacent to 29 School Lane Hill Ridware Staffordshire

ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION



EXPERTISE WHERE YOU NEED IT

Archaeology Warwickshire Report No 1845

JUNE 2018



*Working for
Warwickshire*

Project: School Lane Hill Ridware
Commissioned by: RJK Projects Ltd
Site Code: SHR17
Planning Reference: N/A
Planning Authority: Lichfield District Council
Planning Archaeologist: Debbie Taylor Staffordshire
National Grid Reference: SK 0839 1781
Project Manager: Caroline Rann MCIfA
Fieldwork: Edwin Pearson BSc, Dr Alexander Portch
Author: Edwin Pearson BSc
Illustrations: Candy Stevens
Checked by: Caroline Rann MCIfA
Approved by: Stuart Palmer MCIfA
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Please address enquiries to: **Stuart C Palmer MCIfA**
Principal Archaeologist & Business Manager
Archaeology Warwickshire
UNIT 9
Montague Road
Warwick
CV34 5LW
01926 412278
stuartpalmer@warwickshire.gov.uk
www.warwickshire.gov.uk/archaeology



CONTENTS

	Summary	5
1	Introduction	6
2	Site Location	7
3	Archaeological and Historical Background	9
4	Aims and Methods	10
5	Results	10
6	Conclusions	14
	Acknowledgements	15
	References	15

PHOTOGRAPHS

1	North West facing view of trench 5	12
2	South West facing view of ditch 503	12
3	North East facing view of ditch 503	13
4	South West view of gravel pit 603	13
5	East facing view of trench	14

APPENDICES

A	List of Contexts	20
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FIGURES

1	Location of application area and Historic Environment information
2	Location of excavated trenches

SUMMARY

An archaeological evaluation comprising six trenches, following a geophysical survey in June 2017, was carried out on behalf of RJK Projects Ltd in advance of housing development on land adjacent to 29 School Lane, Hill Ridware, Rugeley, Staffordshire.

The magnetometer survey had depicted evidence for a gravel pit and two linear anomalies which probably related to agricultural activity but little else of archaeological interest. The trial trenches revealed a possible former field boundary and further confirmed the presence of the gravel pit.

1 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 Planning permission is being sought from Lichfield District Council for the residential development of up to 18 affordable homes and 15 open market homes at land adjacent to 29 School Lane, Hill Ridware, Staffordshire, WS15 3QN.
- 1.2 The proposed development is situated within close proximity of significant prehistoric archaeological remains. Consequently, the applicant was required by Staffordshire County Council's Historic Environment Advisor to secure the implementation of a programme of archaeological trial trenching in accordance with a Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI) approved by the planning authority.
- 1.3 A geophysical survey of the site was commissioned from Archaeology Warwickshire as the first phase of archaeological evaluation. The gravel pit shown on the First Edition map of 1884 (Fig 2) was identified along with some traces of ploughing, possibly ridge and furrow.
- 1.4 Archaeology Warwickshire was commissioned to undertake an archaeological evaluation in order to inform the Planning Authority of the potential impact of the development on any archaeological remains. This took place between 30th May and 1st June 2018. The work was carried out in accordance with the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists Standard and guidance for field evaluation (2014) and the approved WSI. This report and its associated archive will be deposited with The Potteries Museum and Art Gallery, Stoke-on-Trent, Staffordshire (Museum Accession No. 2018.LH.49). Printed and digital copies of the report will also be held by the Staffordshire Historic Environment Record and will be submitted to OASIS.

2 SITE LOCATION

- 2.1 The application area is centred on National Grid Reference SK 0839 1781 to the north of School Lane on the eastern edge of the village of Hill Ridware in Staffordshire. The development site is 0.91ha of grassland or pasture. It lies between 65m and 70m contours sloping towards the adjacent river Trent flood plain from the western edge of site. A backfilled former gravel pit situated in the SW corner of the site is now overgrown.

- 2.2 The underlying bedrock geology of the site is Mercia mudstone with overlying superficial deposits of sand and gravel River Terrace deposits from the first terrace of the River Trent (British Geological Survey 2017).

3 ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

- 3.1 The site lies within the Trent Valley, an area replete with prehistoric remains. Well-known sites in the vicinity include a possible Neolithic Cursus monument (PRN 01559); a causewayed enclosure covering approximately 4 hectares, partly under a road and two houses along with probable Bronze Age Barrows (PRN 01562); and a complex of cropmarks that include a ring ditch, pit alignment, other boundaries and a possible cemetery (PRN 01561). These features strongly suggest that the area was a focus for activity throughout the prehistoric period and that there is a significant potential for other features that may not have been revealed during aerial photography.
- 3.2 Domesday records a settlement in 1086 with two slaves and one villager (PRN 02546). Medieval ridge and furrow ploughing (PRN 57202) was still visible in 2010, and a medieval moat (PRN 01761) is indicated from documentary sources. An undated well and cess pit, recorded in a Watching Brief in 2007, have been posited as medieval due to their location at Orchard farm (PRN 52030/52031). The parish church, whilst mainly 18th Century, was originally built in the 13th Century, with some original parts remaining and also has a 17th Century tower. There is also a 14th Century timber framed gatehouse.
- 3.3 There are a number of listed buildings from the 17th and 18th Centuries, including timber framed cottages, a tithe barn and a farmstead (details in table below). The Georgian period is evident in the listed red brick buildings in the search area and also a watermill dating to the 18th/19th Century (PRN 00968).
- 3.4 A geophysical survey (Sumo 2017) depicted some agricultural activity and an area of magnetic disturbance corresponding to a dark area on aerial photographs which is marked as a gravel pit on the First Edition Ordnance Survey map of 1884.

4 AIMS AND METHODS

- 4.1 The main aim of the evaluation was to determine if there are any significant archaeological remains in the area to be developed; to form an understanding of their value and their potential to shed light on the subsequent development of the area.
- 4.2 Secondary aims included placing the results in their wider local and regional contexts as appropriate.
- 4.3 The objectives were to locate, record and analyse archaeological materials and deposits and to disseminate the results in an appropriate format.
- 4.4 Six trenches 30m x 1.8m wide were excavated. Trench 1 was segmented into halves extended at 4m apart from each other in order to avoid disturbance to a borehole.

5 RESULTS

Geological Natural

- 5.1 The natural geology varied between alluvial sandy gravel and patches of dark reddish brown clay between c. 0.30m and 0.65m below the current ground level.

Deposit Sequence

- 5.2 Overlying the geological natural in all trenches was a subsoil layer described as reddish brown sandy silt ranging between 0.11m and 0.65m thick. The subsoil represents a degraded natural geology in the higher parts of the site, visible in Trenches 1, 2 and 6, and an accumulation of colluvial silt in lower lying areas as seen in Trenches 3, 4 and 5. The topsoil consisted of dark brown clay rich silt ranging between 0.8m to 0.35m deep.

Undated ditch

- 5.3 In Trench 5 the natural geology (503) was cut by N/S aligned ditch 504 measuring 1m wide and extending beyond the width of the trench. Its base was generally concave with straight sides at an angle of around 40°. The edges of the ditch were of a gradual convex break of slope. The base was significantly undulating at its most northern extent, typically evident of bioturbation activity. It contained a loose lower redeposited natural fill of light brown silty sandy gravel (505). This was in turn overlain by an upper fill comprising a natural accumulation of clay rich silty loam (506). The ditch contained no dating evidence and was overlain by a relatively deep colluvial hill wash subsoil measuring 0.40m thick which was overlain by 0.3m of topsoil described as a greyish brown silty loam.

18th century gravel pit

- 5.4 The natural geology in Trench 6 (603) was cut, 10m from the south western end of the trench, by gravel pit 604, as indicated on 19th century OS maps. The pit contained a loose very dark grey silty deliberate backfill containing early - mid-20th century bottles. This was overlain by the degraded natural interface subsoil 0.23m thick which was in turn overlain by 0.08m of topsoil described as a yellowish grey sandy loam.

6 CONCLUSIONS

- 6.1 The geophysical survey had recognised the gravel pit which was further confirmed in this study. Ditch 504 was recorded within an area of considerably deep soils which is likely the reason for its absence in the geophysical survey plots. Nonetheless it is in general alignment with a potential agricultural anomaly identified on the geophysics c 25m further north, where soil is potentially either shallower or the ditch is more substantial. The ditch lay parallel with the present eastern field boundary and is therefore likely to have been a former agricultural border. Siltation evidently occurs faster than other parts of the site in this location which could be the reason for potential shifting of the boundary. The evidence for bioturbation can be ascribed to tree root activity within ditch 504.
- 6.2 In conclusion the evaluation only exposed the remains of probable historic field boundaries associated with those that are present and a gravel pit in existence in 1884. The date of the material in its backfill is consistent with the disappearance of the gravel pit depicted between OS maps from dates 1938 and 1955.
- 6.3 Based on the results of this study, it seems unlikely that any significant archaeological remains will be disturbed by the proposed development.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Archaeology Warwickshire would like to thank Nick Matthews at RJK Projects Ltd for commissioning the work and for facilitating access to the site. We would also like to thank Debbie Taylor, the Historic Environment advisor on behalf of the planning authority, for monitoring the work.

REFERENCES

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1: North West facing view of Trench 5



2: South West facing view of ditch 503



3: North East facing view of ditch 503



4: South West view of gravel pit 603



5: East facing view of Trench 1

APPENDICES

A List of contexts

Trench	Context	Description	Depth (m)	Comment
1	100	Dark greyish brown clayey silt	0.28	Topsoil
1	101	Reddish borwn sandy silt.	0.11	Subsoil
1	102	Light reddish brown sand and dark reddish brown clay		Geological natural
2	200	Dark greenish brown clayey silt	0.33	Topsoil
2	201	Reddish brown sandy silt	0.25	Subsoil
2	202	Reddish brown silty sand with patches of dark reddish brown clay		Geological natural
3	300	Dark greyish brown sandy loam	0.3	Topsoil
3	301	Reddish brown sandy loam	0.63	Subsoil
3	302	Yellowish brown sand and occasional gravel		Geological natural
3	303	Natural/Animal feature		
4	400	Reddish brown sandy loam		Topsoil
4	401	Reddish brown sandy loam		Subsoil
4	402	Pale yellowish brown sand flecks and strong brown sand and manganese		Geological natural
5	501	Greyish brown sandy loam	0.30	Topsoil
5	502	Dark reddish brown sandy loam	0.30 – 0.40	Subsoil
5	503	Pale yellowish brown sand		Geological natural
5	504	NNE – SSW Linear		Ditch
5	505	Light brown silty sand		Lower fill of 504
5	506	Dark brown sandy silt		Upper fill of 504
6	600	Yellowish grey sandy loam	0.08	Topsoil
6	601	Light reddish grey sandy silt	0.23	Subsoil
6	602	Light reddish brown sandy silt		Geological natural
6	603	NNE edge of gravel pit		Cut of gravel pit
6	604	Dark grey yellowish brown sandy silt		Fill of 603

OASIS REPORT FORM

PROJECT DETAILS		OASIS No	archaeol27-320271
Project name	29 School Lane, Hill Ridware		
Short description (250 words max)	<p>An archaeological evaluation comprising six trenches, following a geophysical survey in June 2017, was carried out on behalf of RJK Projects Ltd in advance of housing development on land adjacent to 29 School Lane, Hill Ridware, Rugeley, Staffordshire.</p> <p>The magnetometer survey had depicted evidence for a gravel pit and two linear anomalies but little else of archaeological interest. The trial trenches revealed a possible former field boundary and further confirmed the presence of the gravel pit.</p>		
Project type (Eg DBA, Eval etc)	Evaluation		
Site status (None, NT, SAM etc)	None		
Previous work (HER nos etc)	None		
Current land use	Agricultural		
Future work (yes, no, unknown)	Unknown		
Monument type / period	Field boundary		
Significant finds (artefact, type, period)	None		
PROJECT LOCATION			
County	Staffordshire		
Site address (inc postcode)	29 School Lane, Hill Ridware		
Study area (sq.m or ha)			
OS Easting & Northing	SK 0839 1781		
Height OD			
PROJECT CREATORS			
Organisation	Archaeology Warwickshire		
Project originator brief	Debbie Taylor		
Project originator design	Alexander Portch		
Director/supervisor	Edwin Pearson		
Manager	Caroline Rann		
Sponsor or funding body			
PROJECT DATE			
Start date /end date			

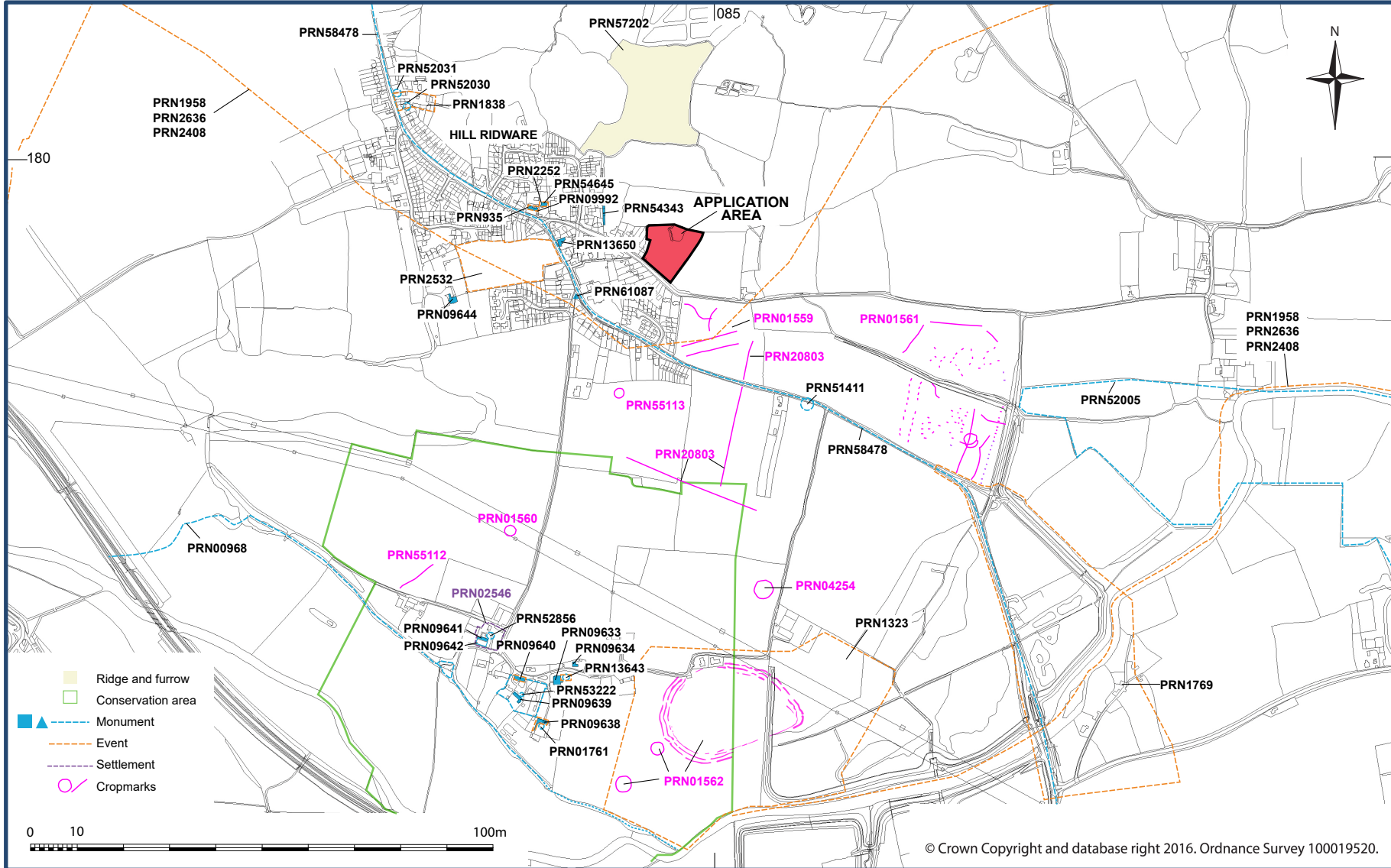


Fig 1: Location of application area and Historic Environment information

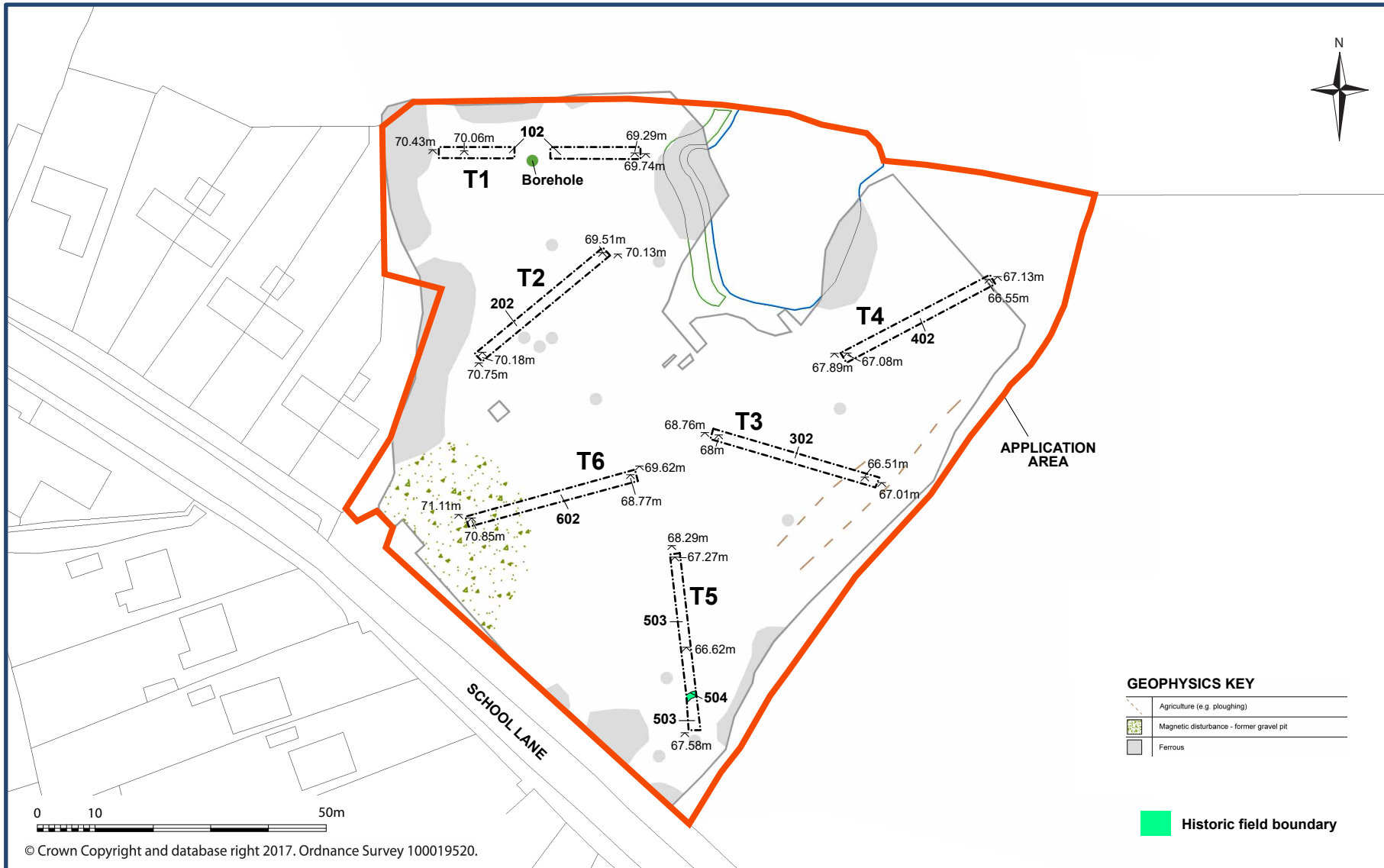


Fig 2: Location of excavated trenches