

wa-archaeology.com

DESK BASED ASSESSMENTS  
ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION  
ARCHAEOLOGICAL EXCAVATION  
GEOPHYSICAL SURVEY  
TOPOGRAPHICAL AND LANDSCAPE SURVEY  
HISTORIC BUILDING RECORDING  
EIA AND HERITAGE CONSULTANCY



**LAND AT SWITHLAND FARM, LEICESTER, LEICESTERSHIRE**

**ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION REPORT**

**APRIL 2015**

**DATE ISSUED:** April2015  
**JOB NUMBER:** CP11272  
**SITE CODE:** SWL-A  
**GRID REFERENCE:** SK 5850 0620  
**ACCESSION NUMBER:** A6.2015

**Land at Swithland Avenue, Leicester, Leicestershire**

**ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION REPORT**

**April 2015**

**PREPARED BY:**

Ric Buckle Assistant Supervisor

pp 

---

Richard Newman PX Manager



---

**APPROVED BY:**

Nick Daffern Project Manager



---

*This report has been prepared by Wardell Armstrong Archaeology with all reasonable skill, care and diligence, within the terms of the Contract with the Client. The report is confidential to the Client and Wardell Armstrong Archaeology accepts no responsibility of whatever nature to third parties to whom this report may be made known.*

*No part of this document may be reproduced without the prior written approval of Wardell Armstrong Archaeology.*



## CONTENTS

SUMMARY .....	1
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS .....	2
1 INTRODUCTION .....	3
1.1 <b>Circumstances of the Project</b> .....	3
2 METHODOLOGY .....	4
2.1 <b>Project Design</b> .....	4
2.2 <b>The Field Evaluation</b> .....	4
2.3 <b>The Archive</b> .....	5
3 BACKGROUND.....	6
3.1 <b>Location and Geological Context</b> .....	6
3.2 <b>Historical Context</b> .....	6
4 ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION RESULTS .....	8
4.1 <b>Introduction</b> .....	8
4.2 <b>Results</b> .....	8
5 Finds Assessment.....	10
5.1 <b>Introduction</b> .....	10
6 CONCLUSIONS.....	11
7 BIBLIOGRAPHY .....	12
APPENDIX 1: FIGURES .....	13

## FIGURES (APPENDIX 2)

Figure 1: Trench 1

Figure 2: Trench 2

Figure 3: Trench location

## PLATES

Plate 1: .....	8
Plate 2: .....	9
Plate 3: .....	9

## SUMMARY

Wardell Armstrong Archaeology was commissioned by Centre Estates, to undertake an archaeological evaluation on land at Swithland Avenue, Leicester. This work was undertaken prior to a planning application for the construction of a residential development.

The work was required because a previous archaeological desk-based assessment undertaken for the proposed development had determined that there was potential for archaeological remains to survive within the site and identified the site to be of archaeological interest.

The two trenches yielded very little in the way of archaeological features and no finds were retained. Several linear features were investigated but were found to be modern, with the most noteworthy linear likely to constitute the remnants of a hedge. This possible hedge was heavily truncated by modern services and as a result only a small part could be investigated, no finds were recovered in order to accurately date the feature.

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

Wardell Armstrong Archaeology (WAA) thanks for commissioning the project. Wardell Armstrong Archaeology also thanks Chris Wardle, Leicester City Archaeologist.

The archaeological evaluation was undertaken by Ric Buckle and James Hodgson. The report was written by Ric Buckle and the figures were produced by Adrian Bailey and Helen Phillips. The project was managed by Nick Daffern, and the report was edited by Richard Newman, Post-excavation Manager at Wardell Armstrong Archaeology.

## **1 INTRODUCTION**

### **1.1 Circumstances of the Project**

- 1.1.1 In February 2015, Wardell Armstrong Archaeology , on behalf of their client Centre Estates were invited to undertake an archaeological evaluation of land at Swithland Ave, Leicester prior to submission of a planning application for a proposed residential development.
- 1.1.2 The development would be likely to affect any below ground archaeological remains within the proposed development site boundary and the intention of the programme of archaeological evaluation by trial trenching is to establish the extent, distribution, date and significance of any buried archaeological remains within the site.
- 1.1.3 This report outlines the work undertaken on site, the subsequent programme of post-fieldwork analysis, and the results of this scheme of archaeological evaluation.

## **2 METHODOLOGY**

### **2.1 Project Design**

2.1.1 A project design was submitted by Wardell Armstrong Archaeology in response to a request by Wardell Armstrong LLP, for an archaeological evaluation of the study area (Giecco 2015). Following acceptance of the project design by Chris Wardle, Leicester City Archaeologist, Wardell Armstrong Archaeology was commissioned by the client to undertake the work. The project design was adhered to in full, and the work was consistent with the relevant standards and procedures of the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists (CIfA).

### **2.2 The Field Evaluation**

2.2.1 The evaluation as described in the Project Design comprised the excavation of two trenches within the proposed development area.

2.2.2 The overall aim of the evaluation was to establish the nature and extent of below ground archaeological remains, the evaluation trenches being located to target both geophysical anomalies and apparently 'sterile' areas. During the course of the project, a number of areas revealed archaeological remains.

2.2.3 In summary, the main objectives of the field evaluation were:

- to establish the presence/absence, nature, extent and state of preservation of archaeological remains and to record these where they were observed;
- to establish the character of those features in terms of cuts, soil matrices and interfaces;
- to recover artefactual material, especially that useful for dating purposes;
- to recover palaeoenvironmental material where it survives in order to understand site and landscape formation processes.

2.2.4 Turf, topsoil and subsoil were removed by a tracked mechanical excavator under close archaeological supervision. The trial trenches were subsequently cleaned by hand and all features were investigated and recorded according to the Wardell Armstrong Archaeology standard procedure as set out in the Excavation Manual (Giecco 2012).

2.2.5 All finds encountered were retained, and were cleaned and packaged according to standard guidelines, and recorded under the supervision of Megan Stoakley, WAA Finds Officer.

- 2.2.6 The two evaluation trenches were backfilled following excavation and recording.
- 2.2.7 The fieldwork programme was followed by an assessment of the data as set out in the *Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Field Evaluation* (ClfA 2014a) and the *Standard and Guidance for the collection, documentation, conservation and research of archaeological materials* (ClfA 2014b).

### 2.3 The Archive

- 2.3.1 The site archive, including all project records and cultural material produced by the project, was prepared in accordance with ClfA (2014b) *Standard and Guidance for the Collection, Documentation, Conservation and Research of Archaeological Materials* and ClfA (2014c) *Standard and Guidance for the Creation, Compilation, Transfer and Deposition of Archaeological Archives*. It was also prepared in compliance with EAC's *A Standard and Guide to Best Practice for Archaeological Archiving in Europe. EAC Guidelines 1* (Perrin et al 2014). Wardell Armstrong Archaeology have arranged for the archive to be deposited with Leicester Museum under the Accession Number A6.2015.
- 2.3.2 Wardell Armstrong Archaeology supports the Online AccesS to the Index of archaeological investigationS (OASIS) project. This project aims to provide an online index and access to the extensive and expanding body of grey literature created as a result of developer-funded archaeological work. As a result, details of the results of this study will be made available by Wardell Armstrong Archaeology, as a part of this national scheme. This project has the unique identifier of **wardella2-**



### **3 BACKGROUND**

#### **3.1 Location and Geological Context**

3.1.1 The site is located at SK 5850 0620, approximately 1km North West of Leicester city centre, 200m to the West of the River Soar. It is enclosed on the North, East and West sides by Swithland Ave and to the South by Abbey Park road.

3.1.2 The site is approximately 0.49 hectares in size and is roughly square in shape. The site was until recently occupied by disused residential garages and overgrown with vegetation. It is surrounded by residential properties on all sides and lies within the city of Leicester.

3.1.3 The underlying solid geology at the site comprises mudstone of the Branscombe Mudstone Group, deposited during the Triassic Period of 200-217 million years ago (BGS 2001)

3.1.4 The site is underlain by superficial deposits of sands and gravels of the 2nd terrace of the Soar Valley formation which were laid down in the late Devensian (McMillan et al 2011, 172). Holocene alluvium deposited by the River Soar is also mapped to the North-East, East and South of the site.

#### **3.2 Historical Context**

3.2.1 A desk-based assessment (NPA 2008) was produced to summarise the historical and archaeological background of the site and immediate vicinity. This determined that there was potential for archaeological remains to survive within the site boundary and identified the site as of potential archaeological interest. The reason for this was largely its near proximity to known medieval sites associated with Leicester Abbey.

3.2.2 The main road through the town entered at the South Gate and passed out through the North Gate. The area beyond the town walls to the north was in existence from 'very early times.' This area contained the Hospital and Church of St. Leonard, and led to the Abbey of St. Mary in the Meadows, or Leicester Abbey. Nearby was a watermill that was used from the early medieval to post-medieval periods.

3.2.3 The early medieval Leicester Abbey was re-founded as a monastery of the Augustinian order in the earlier 12<sup>th</sup> century, when it was sited opposite bank of the River Soar to the medieval town, lying beyond its north wall (Simmons 1983). Leicester Abbey (Site 1) or St. Mary de Pratis, or de la Pre, so called because of its location on and views of the meadows was described by Nichols as being '*seated in an extraordinary rich and fertile soil, both giving and receiving a delicate prospect*

*and having all imaginable accommodations for receipt and provisions in its demesnes, granges, pastures, feeding, tithes, mills, woods, fishing, boons, rents, tenants, and c. and standing just upon the great road from London into the North, it was frequented by, and gave entertainment to, persons of all qualities, and gave great relief to the neighbourhood and the poor of the country'* (Nichols 1815). According to the report of an eye-witness, the church of the Abbey of St. Mary of the Meadows was *'140 feet in length and 30 feet wide, with a large cross aisle in the centre 100 feet long and 30 feet wide and nearly as high as Westminster Abbey.'* The Abbey may have been the wealthiest Augustinian house in England with the exception of Cirencester Abbey. However, little was ever recorded about the church. After the death of Cardinal Wolsey, the abbey was dissolved and anything of value was sold. The Abbey was left abandoned to decay (Johnson 1906). The site came into possession of the Earl of Huntingdon who built a mansion there, Cavendish House (Site 3); however this was destroyed during the Civil War (Ellis 1976).

## 4 ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION RESULTS

### 4.1 Introduction

The evaluation was undertaken between the 24th and 26<sup>th</sup> of February, with 2 trenches excavated mechanically, under archaeological supervision. The original plan of two 50 metre trenches had to be altered to 40m for logistical reasons. Both trenches comprised of a modern compacted gravel levelling layer on top of a subsoil deposit above the natural geology.

### 4.2 Results

4.2.1 The trenches were 1.8m wide and were excavated down to the natural geology by a tracked mechanical excavator with a toothless ditching bucket. They were subsequently cleaned by hand and any archaeological features encountered were photographed and recorded.

4.2.2 **Trench 1:** orientated East –West, was 40 metres in length and 1.8 metres wide and was excavated to a maximum depth of 0.90 metres. The subsoil (**100**) was a mid brown sandy silt which was 0.30m thick, beneath this was an orangey brown natural sand deposit (**101**). One linear feature [**102**] measuring 1.4 metres in width could be observed running NW-SE across the trench. On investigation this feature contained a piece of modern sponge and was subsequently interpreted as being a modern feature probably associated with the buildings that formerly stood in this location. No archaeological features or artefacts were encountered in this trench.



*Plate 1: Trench 1: Facing East*

4.2.3 **Trench 2:** measured 40 metres in length and was 1.8 metres wide and was excavated to a maximum depth of 0.80 metres. Beneath the modern levelling layer, the subsoil **(200)** was a mid brown sandy silt with modern brick and concrete inclusions. The Natural geology **(201)** comprised of a mid orangey yellow compacted sand. This trench was truncated by 3 different modern services associated with the houses on the perimeter of the study area. One possible feature that was cut by one of the services took the form of a narrow linear **[202]**, which upon investigation appeared to most likely have been the remnants of a hedgerow.



*Plate 2: Trench 2 facing West*



*Plate 3: Linear feature [202] within trench 2*

## **5 FINDS ASSESSMENT**

### **5.1 Introduction**

5.1.1 No finds of archaeological interest were encountered during the course of the evaluation and as such no finds were retained.

## 6 CONCLUSIONS

- 6.1.1 The excavation of two 40 metre trenches was deemed sufficient in order to adequately evaluate the archaeological potential of the development area. Both trenches were excavated to the top of the natural substrate in order to observe and investigate features that may be cut into it.
- 6.1.2 One shallow linear feature in trench 1 was investigated as potentially being an archaeological feature, however a piece of modern sponge and other fragments of plastic within the fill confirmed it to be modern.
- 6.1.3 Trench 2 was shallower than Trench 1 and was truncated by 3 large services, including one concrete capped electric service; all these services were running towards the perimeter properties. One narrow and shallow linear that had been truncated by one of the services was investigated and was interpreted as the remains of a hedgerow. This feature may pre-date the construction of the nearby houses although no firm date could be attributed to it due to the absence of dateable finds.
- 6.1.4 Whilst the study area had significant potential for the discovery of archaeological features and deposits, on this occasion the evaluation encountered nothing of archaeological interest. The upper deposit **(100) (200)** directly above the natural substrate had been heavily disturbed by services and earlier earthmoving activities.

## 7 BIBLIOGRAPHY

BGS 2001

Buckley, R. 1997. *Abbey Park: Leicester: an archaeological desk-based assessment and survey*. Unpublished report. ULAS.

CifA 2014a

CifA 2014b

CifA 2014c

Ellis, C.D.B. 1976. *History in Leicester 55 BC-AD 1976*. Information Bureau Recreational and Cultural Services Dept.: Leicester.

Johnson, T.F. 1906. *Glimpses of Ancient Leicester*. Clarke and Satchell: Leicester.

McMillan et al 2011

Nichols, J. 1815. *The History and Antiquities of the County of Leicester*. Vol. I, Part II. Nichols, Son, and Bentley: London.

NPA 2008

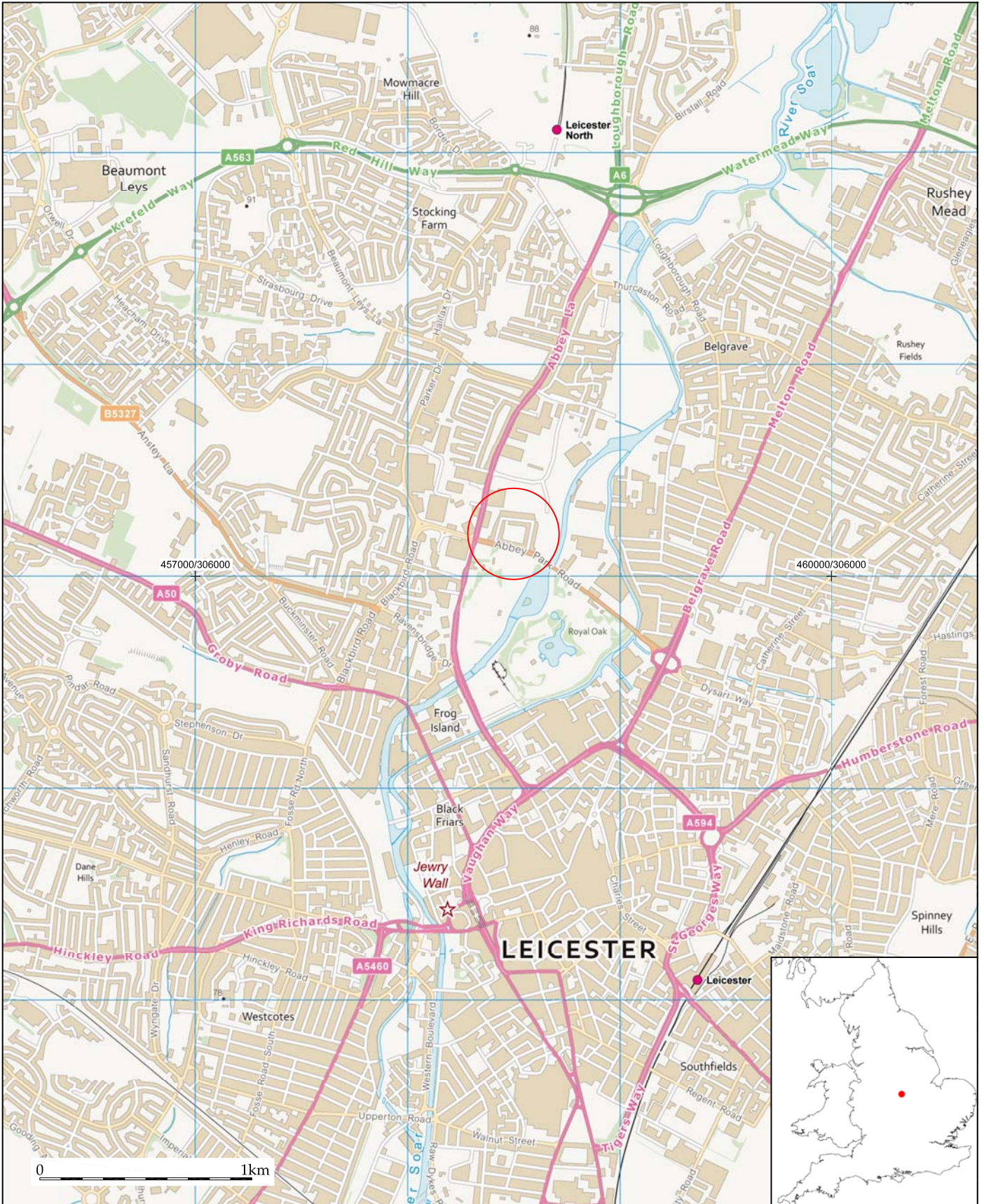
Perrin K et al 2014. *A Standard and Guide to Best Practice for Archaeological Archiving in Europe. EAC Guidelines 1*, Namur: Europae Archaeologia Consilium

Simmons, J. 1983. *Leicester: The Ancient Borough to 1860*. Alan Sutton: Gloucester.

---

## APPENDIX 1: FIGURES








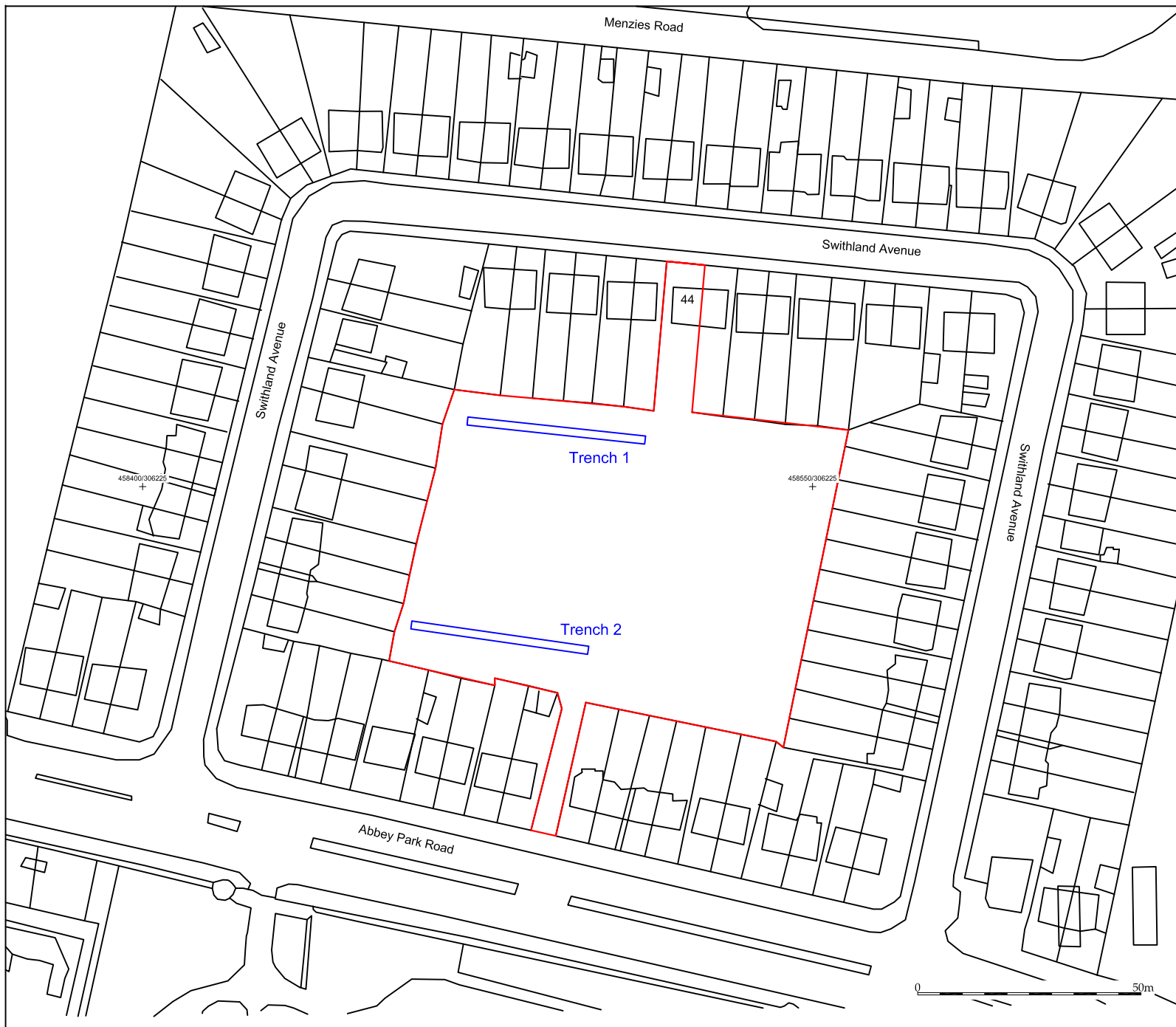
 <p>Wardell Armstrong Archaeology 2015</p>	<p>PROJECT: Land at Swithland Avenue, Leicester</p> <p>SCALE: 1:25,000 at A4</p> <p>REPORT No: CP11272</p> <p>CLIENT: Centre Estates</p> <p>DRAWN BY: AB</p> <p>DATE: March 2015</p> <p>FIGURE: 1</p>	<p>KEY:</p> <p> Site location</p>	 <p>Reproduced by permission of Ordnance Survey on behalf of The Controller of Her Majesty's Stationery Office. © Crown copyright. All rights reserved. Licence number 100019512</p>
---	---	--	---

Figure 1: Site location.





Wardell Armstrong  
Archaeology  
2015

PROJECT:

Land at Swithland Avenue,  
Leicester

CLIENT:

Centre Estates

SCALE: 1:1250 at A4

DRAWN BY: AB

DATE: March 2015

KEY:

- Site boundary
- Evaluation trenches



Reproduced by permission of Ordnance Survey  
on behalf of The Controller of Her Majesty's  
Stationery Office. © Crown copyright.  
All rights reserved. Licence number 100019512

REPORT No:

CP11272

FIGURE:

2

Figure 2: Detailed site location.

PROJECT:

Land at Swithland Avenue,  
Leicester

CLIENT:

Centre Estates

SCALE: 1:100 at A4

DRAWN BY: HP

DATE: March 2015

KEY:

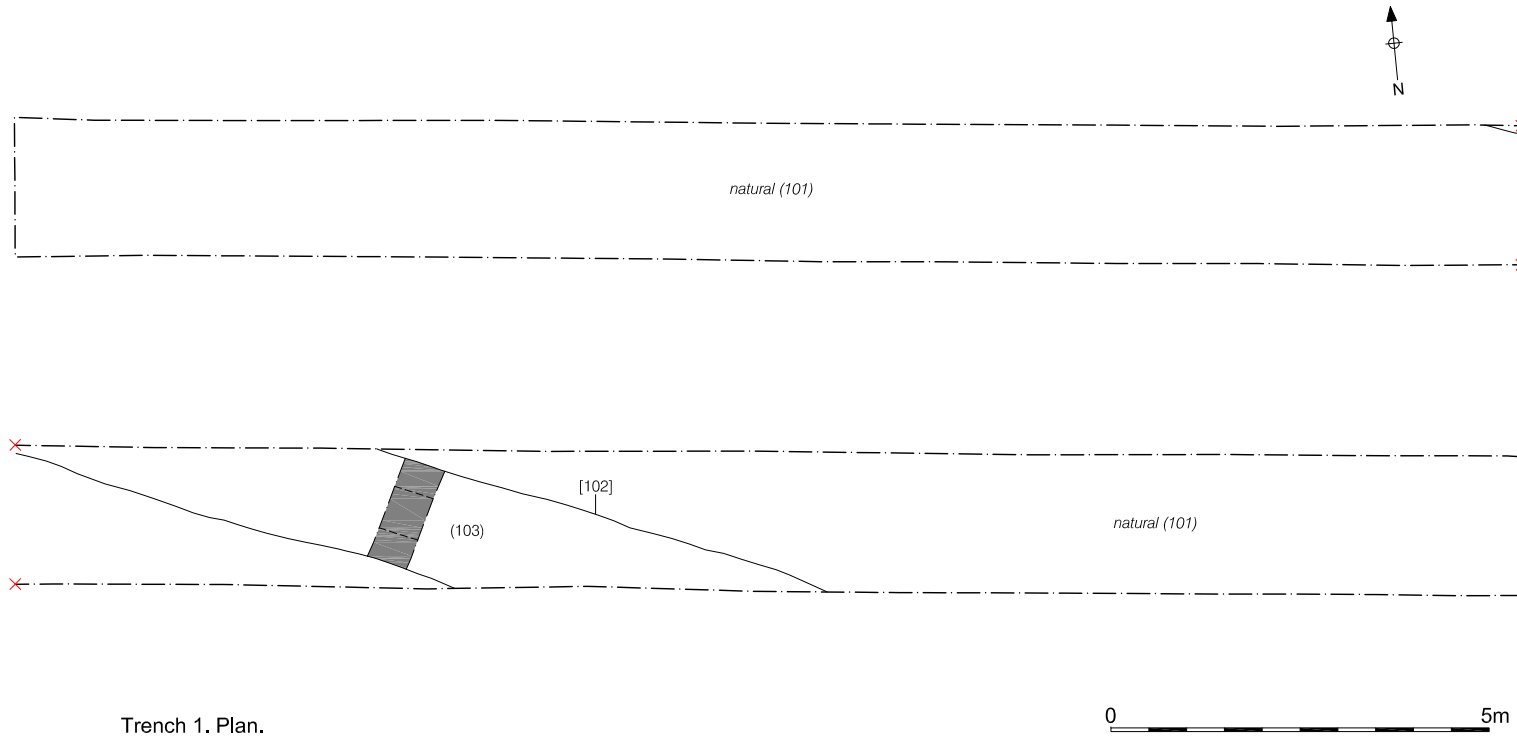
- (101) Context number
- Excavated slot
- Limit of excavation

REPORT No:

CP11272

FIGURE:

3



Trench 1. Plan.

Figure 3: Trench 1; plan.

PROJECT:

Land at Swithland Avenue,  
Leicester

CLIENT:

Centre Estates

SCALE: 1:100 at A4

DRAWN BY: HP

DATE: March 2015

KEY:

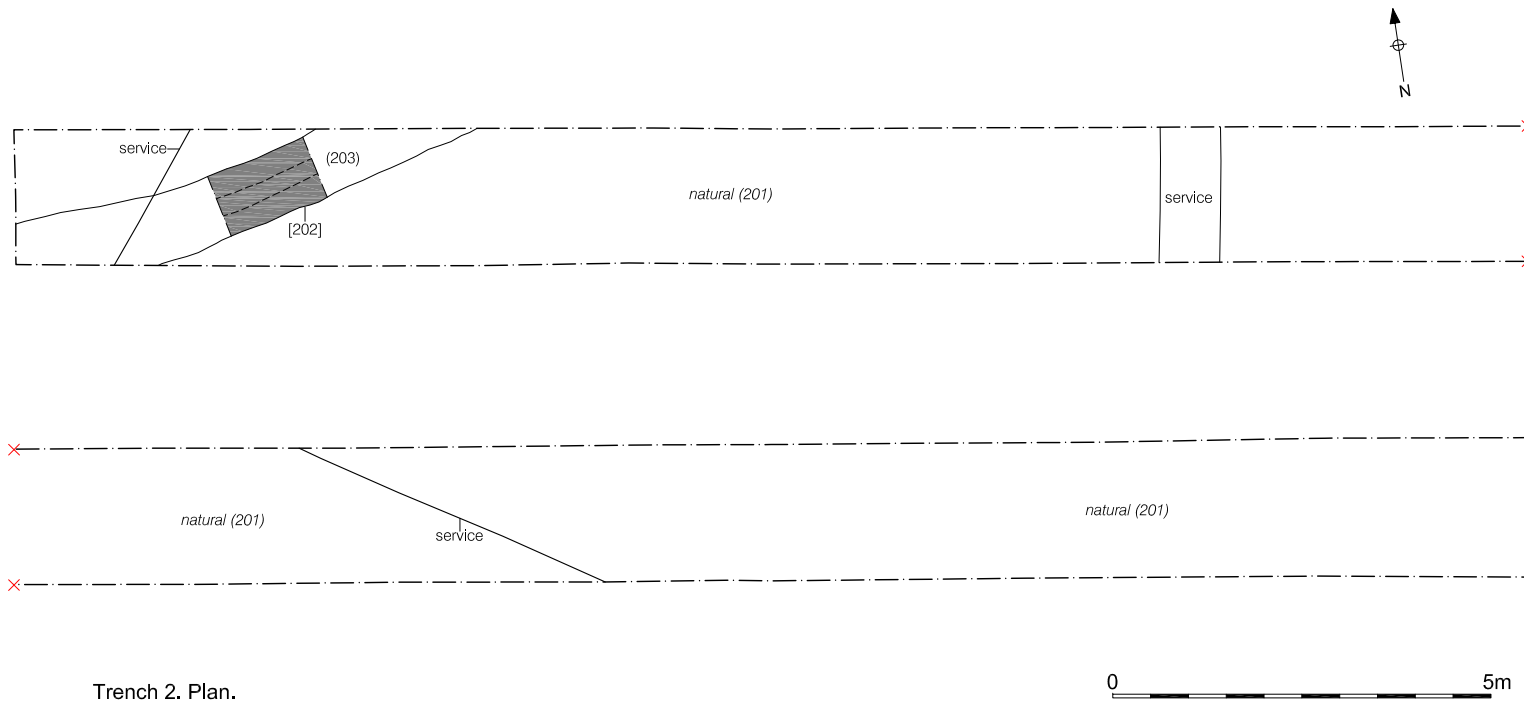
- (101) Context number
- Excavated slot
- Limit of excavation

REPORT No:

CP11272

FIGURE:

4



Trench 2. Plan.

Figure 4: Trench 2; plan.

wardell-armstrong.com

STOKE-ON-TRENT  
Sir Henry Doulton House  
Forge Lane  
Etruria  
Stoke-on-Trent  
ST1 5BD  
Tel: +44 (0)845 111 7777

CARDIFF  
22 Windsor Place  
Cardiff  
CF10 3BY  
Tel: +44 (0)29 2072 9191

EDINBURGH  
Suite 2/3, Great Michael House  
14 Links Place  
Edinburgh  
EH6 7EZ  
Tel: +44 (0)131 555 3311

GREATER MANCHESTER  
2 The Avenue  
Leigh  
Greater Manchester  
WN7 1ES  
Tel: +44 (0)1942 260101

LONDON  
Third Floor  
46 Chancery Lane  
London  
WC2A 1JE  
Tel: +44 (0)20 7242 3243

NEWCASTLE UPON TYNE  
City Quadrant  
11 Waterloo Square  
Newcastle upon Tyne  
NE1 4DP  
Tel: +44 (0)191 232 0943

PENRYN  
Tremough Innovation Centre  
Tremough Campus  
Penryn  
Cornwall  
TR10 9TA  
Tel: +44 (0)1872 560738

SHEFFIELD  
Unit 5  
Newton Business Centre  
Newton Chambers Road  
Thorncliffe Park  
Chapelton  
Sheffield  
S35 2PH  
Tel: +44 (0)114 245 6244

TRURO  
Wheal Jane  
Baldhu  
Truro  
Cornwall  
TR3 6EH  
Tel: +44 (0)1872 560738

WEST BROMWICH  
Thynne Court  
Thynne Street  
West Bromwich  
West Midlands  
B70 6PH  
Tel: +44 (0)121 580 0909

International offices:

ALMATY  
29/6 Satpaev Avenue  
Rakhat Palace Hotel  
Office Tower, 7th Floor  
Almaty  
050040  
Kazakhstan  
Tel : +7-727-3341310

MOSCOW  
Suite 2, Block 10,  
Letnikovskaya St.  
Moscow, Russia  
115114  
Tel: +7(495) 980 07 67

Wardell Armstrong Archaeology:

CUMBRIA  
Cocklakes Yard  
Carlisle  
Cumbria  
CA4 0BQ  
Tel: +44 (0)1228 564820

*your earth our world*



wardell  
armstrong