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EIA AND HERITAGE CONSULTANCY



TAYLOR WIMPEY NORTH WEST

LAND AT FLAT LANE, KELSALL, CHESHIRE

ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION REPORT

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MAY 2015

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SUMMARY

Following geophysical and metal detector surveys, Wardell Armstrong Archaeology was commissioned by Taylor Wimpey North West, to undertake an archaeological evaluation of land at Flat Lane, Kelsall, Cheshire.

The work was required as a condition of planning consent as advised by the Cheshire Archaeology Planning Advisory Service.

The archaeological trial trench evaluation was undertaken over 5 days between the 27th of April and the 1st of May 2015 and involved the excavation of 10 trenches, distributed across the study area.

No archaeological features or artefacts were encountered.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Wardell Armstrong Archaeology (WAA) thanks Ian Harrison and Phil Reeves of Taylor Wimpey North West for commissioning the project and their help throughout the project. Wardell Armstrong Archaeology also thanks Julie Edwards, Senior Archaeologist, Cheshire Archaeology Planning Advisory Service for her assistance throughout the project.

The archaeological evaluation was undertaken by Richard Buckle, Megan Stoakley and Ben Moore. The report was written by Ben Moore and the drawings were produced by Adrian Bailey. The project was managed by Martin Railton, Senior Project Manager, 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 Archaeological works were required at a proposed development site at Flat lane, Kelsall as a consequence of a planning condition of the planning consent for the erection of 89 dwellings with associated open space, landscaping and infrastructure (Cheshire West planning application 14/04466/REM). The condition for archaeological works was imposed by the Planning Inspectorate following the appeal against the refusal of planning application 12/01880/OUT.

1.1.2 An archaeological desk-based assessment (Wooler 2010), had revealed that there were no designated heritage assets located on the site. Bronze Age and Iron Age archaeological remains are located within close proximity to the site and the possibility existed, therefore, for similar remains to be present within the proposed development site. The site also lies within close proximity to the Roman road Watling Street and Roman coins have been found in the vicinity of the site, indicating evidence of possible occupation or utilisation of the land around Kelsall during the Roman period.

1.1.3 In response, Julie Edwards (Senior Archaeologist, Cheshire Archaeology Planning Advisory Service) advised that a programme of archaeological investigation, be undertaken prior to the development taking place. This is in line with government advice as set out in Section 12 of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF 2012).

1.1.4 In March 2015, Wardell Armstrong Archaeology was commissioned by Taylor Wimpey North West to undertake geophysical and metal detector surveys of land at the site. The geophysical survey did not detect any distinct archaeological features. Some very ephemeral geophysical anomalies were detected, which are likely to be agricultural features (Railton & Stoakley 2015).

1.1.5 Artefacts of potentially Roman, medieval and post-medieval date were recovered during the metal-detector survey, including several musket balls possibly dating to the Civil War period (1641-1652). The recovery of potentially Roman, medieval and Civil War period artefacts is considered significant. The vast majority of the post-medieval and modern assemblage, however, comprised fittings, scrap metal and other objects representing casual loss or disposal of items by the general public, and were considered to be of low archaeological potential.

- 1.1.6 Given the uncertain archaeological potential at the site, it was decided that an archaeological evaluation by trial trenching was required in order to determine the possible presence/absence, nature, extent and significance of possible archaeological remains at the site.
- 1.1.7 The archaeological evaluation was undertaken following approved standards and guidance (ClfA 2014a), and in accordance with an agreed project design (Railton 2015), which was submitted to, and approved by Julie Edwards prior to the fieldwork taking place.
- 1.1.8 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 Written Scheme of Investigation

2.1.1 A written scheme of investigation was submitted by Wardell Armstrong Archaeology in response to a request by Taylor Wimpey North West, for an archaeological evaluation of the study area (Railton 2015). Following acceptance of the written scheme of investigation by Julie Edwards (Senior Archaeologist, Cheshire Archaeology Planning Advisory Service), 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). Julie Edwards also visited the site to inspect the trenches during the fieldwork.

2.2 The Field Evaluation

2.2.1 The evaluation as described in the written scheme of investigation comprised the excavation of 10 trenches across the study 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 provide a representative sample of the area and also to target areas where significant metal artefacts were recovered during the metal detector survey.

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 mechanical excavator with a toothless ditching bucket, under close archaeological supervision. The trial trenches were subsequently cleaned by hand and 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 The 10 evaluation trenches were backfilled following excavation and recording.

2.2.6 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 data archive for the geophysical survey has been created in accordance with the recommendations of the Archaeology Data Service (ADS 2001). This archive is currently held at the company offices at Carlisle, Cumbria.

2.3.2 A copy of the evaluation report will be deposited within the Cheshire Historic Environment Record, where viewing will be available upon request. The project is also registered with the **Online AccesS** to the **Index of archaeological investigations (OASIS)**, where a digital copy of the report will be made available. The unique OASIS reference number for this project is **wardella2-210651**.

2.3.3 A full professional archive will be compiled in line with current Historic England Guidelines (English Heritage 1991) and according to the Archaeological Archives Forum recommendations (Brown 2011). The site archive will be deposited in agreement with Grosvenor Museum, and can be accessed under the unique project identifier WAA/KEL-A/CP11331-15. The museum accession number is **CHEGM: 2015.2**.

3 BACKGROUND

3.1 Location and Geological Context

3.1.1 The village of Kelsall is situated approximately 11km to the east of the city of Chester, on the A54 trunk road which leads to Winsford. Kelsall is situated on the south side of the A54 and to the south of Delamere Forest Park. The west side of the village is on gently sloping land at a height of c.70 metres aOD, whilst the east side is situated on the steeper slopes of a sandstone ridge (Figures 1).

3.1.2 The proposed development area is located on the north-east side of Flat Lane within a square enclosure defined by roads (OS grid reference SJ 5220 6790). Kelsall Community School and residential areas lie to the east of the site and a public footpath defines the northern boundary. An enclosed area of former garden is located along the southern boundary of the site (aligned with Flat Lane). A pond is present towards the northwest boundary of the proposed development area (Figure 2). The proposed development area currently comprises a square parcel of arable land formerly used for maize crop production.

3.1.3 Kelsall is situated in an area defined by Natural England (online 2015) as the 'Cheshire Sandstone Ridge' which rises up from the Cheshire Plain, orientated north-south. It is a small irregular ridge, only reaching heights of 123m at Helsby and 227m at Raw Head in the Peckforton Hills to the south (*ibid*). It is, however, very prominent as it rises sharply up from the Plain. There is evidence of quarrying for sandstone and extraction of sand and gravel. Field ponds are frequent, some 25% of all the field ponds in England and Wales are found in Cheshire and most of these will be within the Cheshire Plain.

3.1.4 The Cheshire Plain is formed from Triassic sandstones and marls but these are overlain by glacial deposits, largely consisting of boulder clay, with local deposits of silt, peat and gravels (BGS 2015). The reddish-pink sandstone forms the Cheshire Sandstone Ridge, which is a discontinuous ridge of Triassic sandstone running from north to south (*ibid*).

3.2 Historical and Archaeological Background

3.3 Historical Context

3.3.1 A desk-based assessment was undertaken by North Pennines Archaeology Ltd in 2010, a summary of which is included here (Wooler 2010). The historical background

is compiled mostly from this resource and is intended only as a brief summary of historical developments specific to the study area.

- 3.3.2 The HER has three entries relating to the prehistoric period within a 1km radius of the proposed development area including the site of a Bronze Age burial located just to the north-west of the proposed development.
- 3.3.3 The HER contains entries for several findspots of Roman artefacts. Close to the proposed development area, a denarius of Titus was found on a building site at Hallowsgate and a further Roman coin was recovered in the garden of a house on Green Lane.
- 3.3.4 The place name 'Kelsall' is believed to mean 'Kells Nook' from 'halh' referring to the valley at which the village stands, with a Middle English personal name 'Kell', which also appears in the adjacent Kelsborrow Castle. Very little archaeological evidence of medieval date, however, has been recovered in Kelsall.
- 3.3.5 On the 1838 tithe map and award most of the proposed development area formed parts of plots owned by the Trustees of Chester Blue School and were occupied by James Prescott.

3.4 Previous Archaeological Work

- 3.4.1 **Land off Flat Lane, Kelsall, 2007, L-P:Archaeology:**an archaeological watching brief was undertaken during a topsoil strip, excavation of foundation trenches, and the grading down of a new road at land off Flat Lane (NGR SJ 52227 67710). A metal detecting survey was also undertaken during the works on site, which recovered a single Roman coin, however it was badly degraded and therefore the date could not be ascertained (L-P Archaeology, 2008). No archaeological features were identified (HER Report Ref: R2770).
- 3.4.2 **Reliance Works, Chester Road, Kelsall, 2008, L-P:Archaeology:**an archaeological watching brief was undertaken during the excavation of foundation trenches for a series of new residential properties. No archaeological features were noted during the watching brief. The sequence of deposits on the site was noted to be topsoil, overlaying natural sand (HER Report Ref: R2857).
- 3.4.3 **Land at Flat Lane, Kelsall, Cheshire : Geophysical and Metal Detector Survey:** In March 2015, Wardell Armstrong Archaeology was commissioned by Taylor Wimpey North West to undertake geophysical and metal detector surveys of land at the site.

The geophysical survey did not detect any definite archaeological features (Railton & Stoakley 2015).

- 3.4.4 Artefacts of potentially Roman, medieval and post-medieval date were recovered during the metal-detector survey, including several musket balls possibly dating to the Civil War period (1641-1652).

4 ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION RESULTS

4.1 Introduction

4.1.1 The archaeological trial trench evaluation was undertaken over five days between the 27th of April and the 1st of May 2015 and involved the excavation of 10 trenches, distributed across the study area.

4.1.2 The trenches were for the most part located to investigate a representative area of the proposed development but some were located to sample both the anomalies detected during the geophysical surveys and finds recovered during the metal detector survey and also apparently 'blank' areas of the site.

4.1.3 The evaluation comprised 540m² of trenching in total, providing a broad sample of the proposed development area, but focused on the possible geophysical anomalies and find spots.

4.1.4 Trenches 1 to 3 were positioned to sample the area of metal finds of possible Roman and medieval date and nearby geophysical anomalies and Trench 4 was located to sample a series of geophysical anomalies of probable agricultural origin. Trenches 5-7 were placed to test apparently 'blank' areas in the north of the site and Trenches 8-10 to sample anomalies to the west of the proposed development area.

4.1.5 The northernmost part of the site was not investigated because of the presence of overhead power cables and a pond.

4.2 Results

4.2.1 The ten 30m long trenches were excavated through topsoil and subsoil onto the natural substrate using a JCB 3CX with a 1.8m wide toothless ditching bucket, under constant archaeological supervision. The trenches were then cleaned by hand and recorded. The spoil from all ten trenches was thoroughly metal detected before the trenches were backfilled.

4.2.2 **Trench 1:** Trench 1 was aligned north-west to south-east and positioned to cover the location of a Romano-British domestic / military Cu Alloy fitting found during the

metal detector survey. The trench was excavated through 0.24m of sandy dark greyish brown topsoil and up to 0.42m of light brown orange brown sandy silt subsoil onto mid orange brown sand natural geology. No archaeological features were recorded and no finds were recovered during metal detecting of the spoil (Plate 1).



Plate 1: Trench 1, facing north-west



Plate 2: Trench 2, facing north

- 4.2.3 **Trench 2:** Trench 2 was aligned north-south and was located towards the north-east corner of the proposed development area. The topsoil and subsoil were identical to those recorded in Trench 1 and natural geology was reached at a maximum depth of 69.13m aOD. The trench had been positioned to cover the position of a Tudor buckle found during the metal detector survey and also to investigate a series of east-west aligned geophysical anomalies but no archaeological features or artefacts were found. The geophysical anomalies are likely to be the result of gravel bands in the natural sand geology (Plate 2).
- 4.2.4 **Trench 3:** Trench 3 was aligned north-west to south-east and was located in the north-east corner of the proposed development. It was positioned to investigate two east-west aligned geophysical anomalies and also the location of a possible lead pot mend of indeterminate date found during the metal detector survey. The trench was excavated through up to 0.68m of top and subsoil onto natural geology at a maximum depth of 71.28m aOD. The geophysical anomalies are likely to have been the result of the same geological variations seen in Trench 2 (Plate 3). No further artefacts were recovered.



Plate 3: Trench 3, facing south-east

- 4.2.5 **Trench 4:** Trench 4 was located 5m north-west of Trench 3 and was positioned to investigate a curving geophysical anomaly. The trench was aligned west north-west to east north-east and was excavated through up to 0.49m of sandy top and subsoil onto orange sand natural geology with clay and gravel bands at a maximum depth of 70.34m aOD. These are likely to have been the cause of the geophysical anomaly as no archaeological features or deposits were encountered and no finds were retrieved during the metal detecting of the spoil (Plate 4).
- 4.2.6 **Trench 5:** Trench 5 was positioned to investigate a blank area in the geophysical survey results and ran north-west from the south-eastern site boundary. It was excavated through up to 0.61m of top and subsoil onto orange brown sand natural geology at a maximum depth of 67.14m aOD. No archaeological features were found and no finds retrieved during the metal detecting of the spoil (Plate 5).



Plate 4: Trench 4, facing east south-east



Plate 5: Trench 5, facing north-west

4.2.7 **Trenches 6 and 7:** Located towards the centre of the proposed development area, Trench 6 was aligned north-west to south-east and Trench 7 north-east to south-west. They were positioned to test another blank area in the geophysical survey data. They were excavated through 0.56m and 0.47m of top and subsoil respectively onto orange brown silty sand natural geology at a maximum depth of 66.85m aOD. No archaeological features were encountered and no artefacts retrieved during the metal detecting of the spoil (Plates 6 and 7).



Plate 6: Trench 6, facing south-east



Plate 7: Oblique shot of Trench 7, showing north-west facing section



Plate 8: Trench 8, facing south

- 4.2.8 **Trench 8:** Trench 8 was positioned to intersect two linear geophysical anomalies running broadly east to west across the development area. It was excavated through up to 0.68m of top and subsoil onto orange sand natural geology at a maximum depth of 66.63m aOD. No archaeological features were noted and the geophysical anomalies are likely to be the result of gravel bands in the natural geology (Plate 8). No finds were recovered during the metal detecting of the spoil.
- 4.2.9 **Trench 9:** Trench 9, located towards the north-west of the proposed development area, was positioned to investigate a north-west to south-east aligned geophysical anomaly. The trench was excavated through up to 0.4m of top and subsoil onto orange clay and sand natural geology. No archaeological deposits or features were recorded and the anomaly is likely to be the result of variations in the natural from clay to sand (Plate 9). No finds were retrieved during metal detecting.
- 4.2.10 **Trench 10:** Trench 10 was located towards the south-west corner of the area. The trench was excavated through up to 0.54m of top and subsoil onto yellow and brown mottled silty sand. A backfilled geological test pit was encountered at the north-western end of the trench, but no archaeologically significant features were noted (Plate 10).



Plate 9: Oblique section of Trench 9, facing south-east



Plate 10: Trench 10, facing north-west

4.3 Environmental and Finds Analysis

- 4.3.1 No environmental samples were taken and no archaeological finds were retained during the evaluation.

5 CONCLUSION

- 5.1.2 The archaeological evaluation was undertaken over 5 days between the 27th of April and the 1st of May 2015 and involved the excavation of 10 trenches, distributed across the study area to investigate geophysical anomalies and the sites of metal finds retrieved during a previous metal detecting survey
- 5.3.3 Although archaeological remains of both prehistoric and medieval date have been found within the vicinity of the site, no archaeological remains were observed during the present investigation and the geophysical anomalies were proved to be the result of variations in the natural geology.

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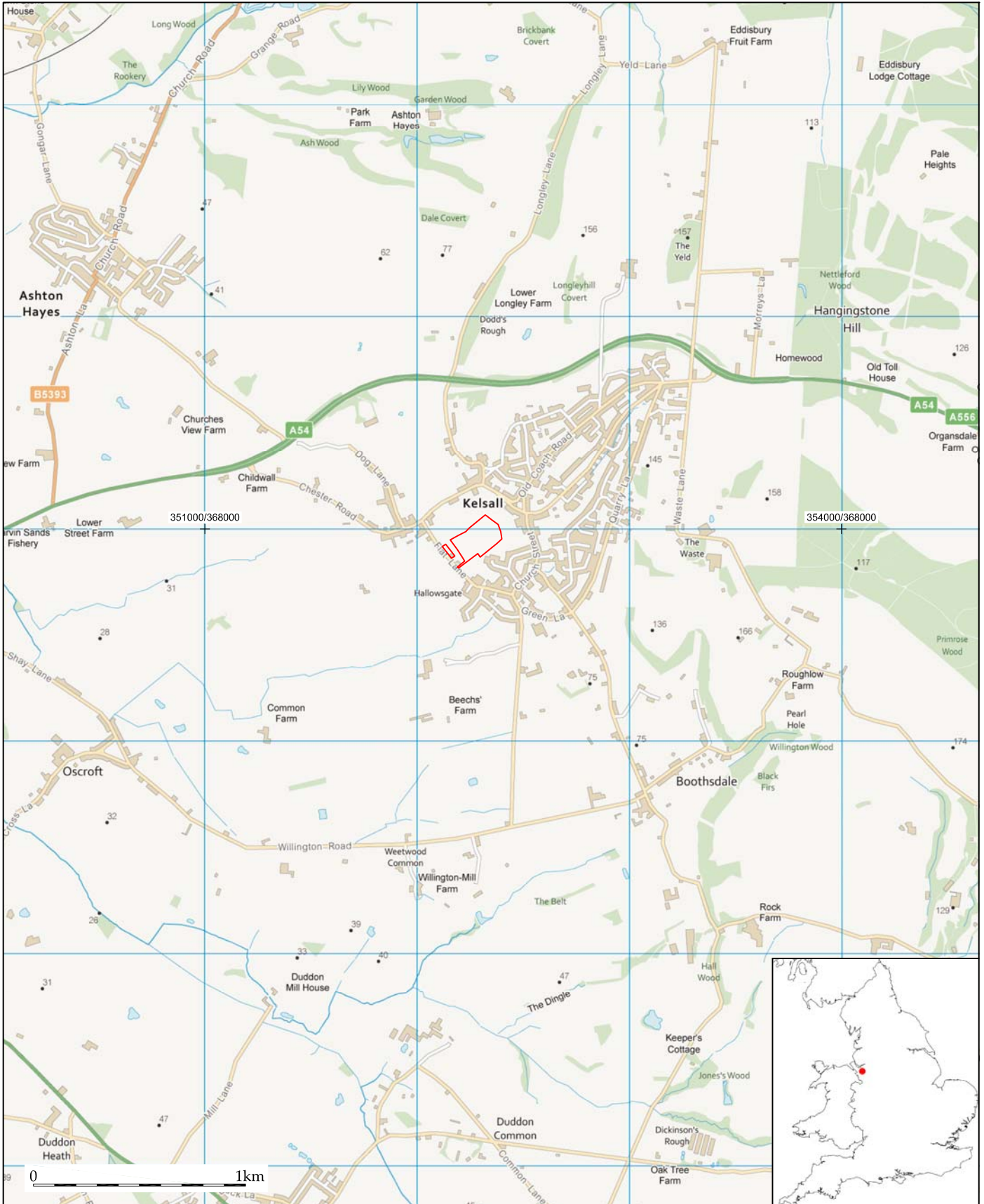
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APPENDIX 1: FIGURES






 <p>Wardell Armstrong Archaeology 2015</p>	<p>PROJECT: Land at Flat Lane, Kelsall, Cheshire</p> <p>SCALE: 1:25,000 at A4</p> <p>REPORT No: CP11331</p> <p>CLIENT: Taylor Wimpey</p> <p>DRAWN BY: AB</p> <p>DATE: May 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>
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Figure 1: Site location.

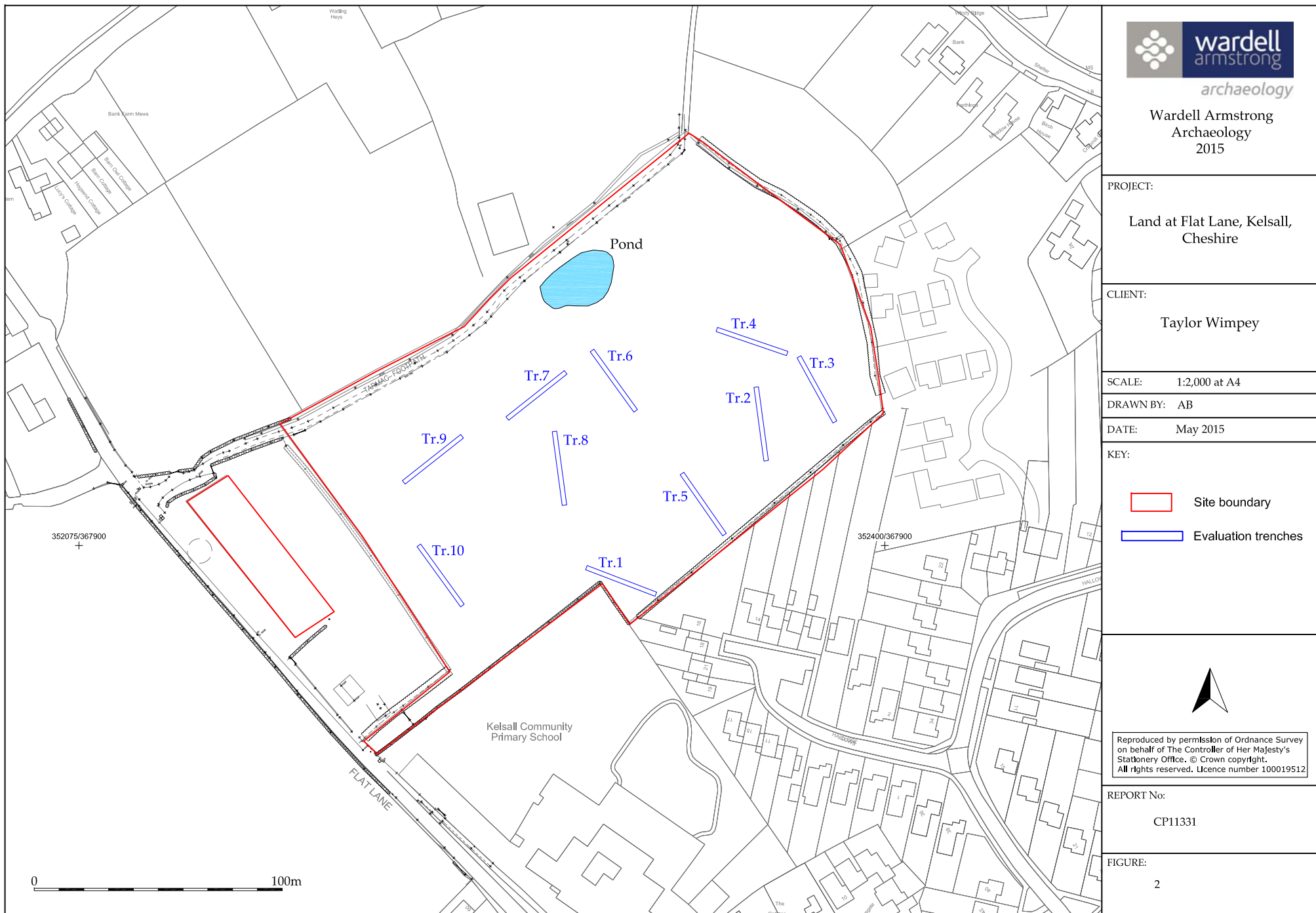


Figure 2: Trench location plan.

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