2020

Northumberland

Archaeological Evaluation

VINDOMORA SOLUTIONS LTD

LAND SOUTH AND SOUTHEAST OF JAMES CALVERT SPENCE COLLEGE

Acklington Road, Amble
Northumberland

NGR 425799 603500

Archaeological Evaluation

Project 291-19-EVA | May 2020

for Strutt & Parker
on behalf of Mr. Phil Farmer

Vindomora Solutions Ltd
Archaeological Practice

Prospect House
Prospect Business Park, Valley View, Leadgate
Consett, County Durham DH8 7PW

contact@vindomora.info
01207 390010
vindomorasolutions.co.uk

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Registered in England & Wales | Company Registration No. 9505415
Registered office: Prospect House, Prospect Business Park,
Valley View, Leadgate, Consett, County Durham DH8 7PW

CONTENTS

Figures

Tables

Plates

SUMMARY

Name of location:	Land south and southeast of James Calvert Spence College
Address of location:	Acklington Road, Amble, Northumberland NE65 0NG
National Grid Reference:	NGR 425799 603500
Client:	Strutt & Parker on behalf of Mr. Phil Farmer
Project Type:	Archaeological Evaluation
Local Authority Conservation Team:	Northumberland Conservation
Planning Application Reference:	16/04305/OUT
Project Site Code:	ARA-20
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Report Author:	Tony Liddell
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CONCISE SUMMARY OF REPORT

In December 2019 Vindomora Solutions Ltd were commissioned by Strutt and Parker on behalf of their client, Mr. Phil Farmer, to undertake a scheme of archaeological evaluation on land to the south and southeast of James Calvert Spence College, Acklington Road, Amble. The need for the evaluation was identified by the Local Authority as pre-determination for planning application 16/04305/OUT, in line with paragraphs 189, 190, 197 and 199 of the National Planning Policy Framework. The proposed application will see the construction of 500 residential units with associated access, public open space, landscaping and amenity space.

56 trenches were excavated totalling 3024m² or 4% of the overall evaluation area as stipulated in the agreed Written Scheme of Investigation. The trenches were excavated by a 14 tonne JCB with 1.8m wide toothless ditching bucket under constant archaeological supervision. Once excavated, the trenches were cleaned using hand tools and recorded before being backfilled.

No archaeological remains of interest were observed within the evaluation area, with artefacts (with the exception of the two sherds of background 16th century pottery) dating from the Victorian period through to the late 20th century. The potential archaeological features noted on the geophysical survey (AOC 2017) can be explained through the presence of crossing furrow systems, the field drain network and pockets of coal and ash in the overburden.

Figure 1. Location of the site, regionally.

1. SCOPE OF PROJECT

Plate 1. Aerial view of the development area (dataset © 2020 Google).

1.1 Project location

1.1.1 The evaluation area lies within land to the south and southeast of James Calvert Spence College, Acklington Road, Amble, Northumberland (centred at NGR 425799,603500).The area outlined in red does not constitute the whole of the proposed development area, but the eastern extent of the development lies over the Togston open cast mine and as such is not included in this evaluation. *Figure 1* locates the site regionally with *Figure 2* showing the site locally.

1.1.2 *Geology*: The proposed development area (PDA) lies over the Pennine Lower Coal Measures Formation, comprising interbedded sandstone and mudstone with occasional coal seams. Over this lies Diamicton till mainly composed of clay, gravel and sand (British Geological Survey, 2020).

1.1.3 The site lies at an average of 18m OD (*Ordnance Datum*, above sea level) at its northwestern extent, sloping down to 11m OD at its southeastern extent.

1.2 Circumstances of the Project

1.2.1 In December 2019 Vindomora Solutions Ltd were commissioned by Strutt and Parker on behalf of their client, Mr. Phil Farmer, to undertake a scheme of archaeological evaluation on land to the south and southeast of James Calvert Spence College, Acklington Road, Amble. The need for the evaluation was identified by the Local Authority as pre-determination for planning application 16/04305/OUT, in line with paragraphs 189, 190, 197 and 199 of the National Planning Policy

Framework (2019). The proposed application will see the construction of 500 residential units with associated access, public open space, landscaping and amenity space.

1.2.2 Archaeological and historical research objectives are built into developer funded archaeological schemes of work. This is the result of a number of English Heritage national policy frameworks: *Exploring our Past* (1991), *Frameworks for our Past* (1996), *Research Agenda* (1997) and *Policy Statement on Implementation* (1999). The research priorities proposed initially to have potential direct relevance to this project are set out in *Shared Visions: North East Regional Research Framework for the Historic Environment* (2006), in particular:

Prehistoric:	*Iii*. Settlement;
	Iiii. Landscapes;
	Iv. Material culture
Roman:	*Riv*. Native and civilian life;
	Rv. Roman material culture;
	Rix. Landscape and environment.
Medieval:	*MDi*. Settlement;
	MDii. Landscape;
	MDvii. Artefacts.

1.3 Written Scheme of Investigation

1.3.1 The Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI) for this project was produced by Tony Liddell, Principal Archaeologist for Vindomora Solutions Ltd and approved by Nick Best, Assistant County Archaeologist for Northumberland Conservation (Version 2, dated 5th March 2020).

1.4 Timetable of works

1.4.1 The fieldwork was undertaken between 17th March and the 27th March 2020.

1.4.2 The results of the inspection and survey were compiled into this report during the week commencing the 20th April 2020, with the report finalised on Monday, May 11, 2020.

1.5 Professional standards

1.5.1 The work undertaken was in accordance with the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists' *Code of Conduct* (2014) and their *Standard and Guidance for an archaeological evaluation* (2014). Standards were also in accordance with the British Archaeologists' and Developers' Liaison Group's *Code of Practice* (1988).

1.6 Health and safety

1.6.1 Standard PPE was utilised for health and safety purposes throughout the fieldwork. All issues of on-site health and safety were undertaken in accordance with the Vindomora Solutions Limited *Health and Safety Manual* (updated 2018). COVID-19 restrictions were adhered to through the length of this project.

1.7 Archive

1.7.1 A full archive has been compiled in line with the specification and current UKIC and English Heritage Guidelines. The project code is **ARA-20** (**A**cklington **R**oad **A**mble 20**20**)**.** Vindomora Solutions Ltd support the **O**nline **A**cces**S** to the **I**ndex of Archaeological Investigation**S** project (OASIS). As a result, this report will be made available to the project under the unique identifier **vindomor1-393917.**

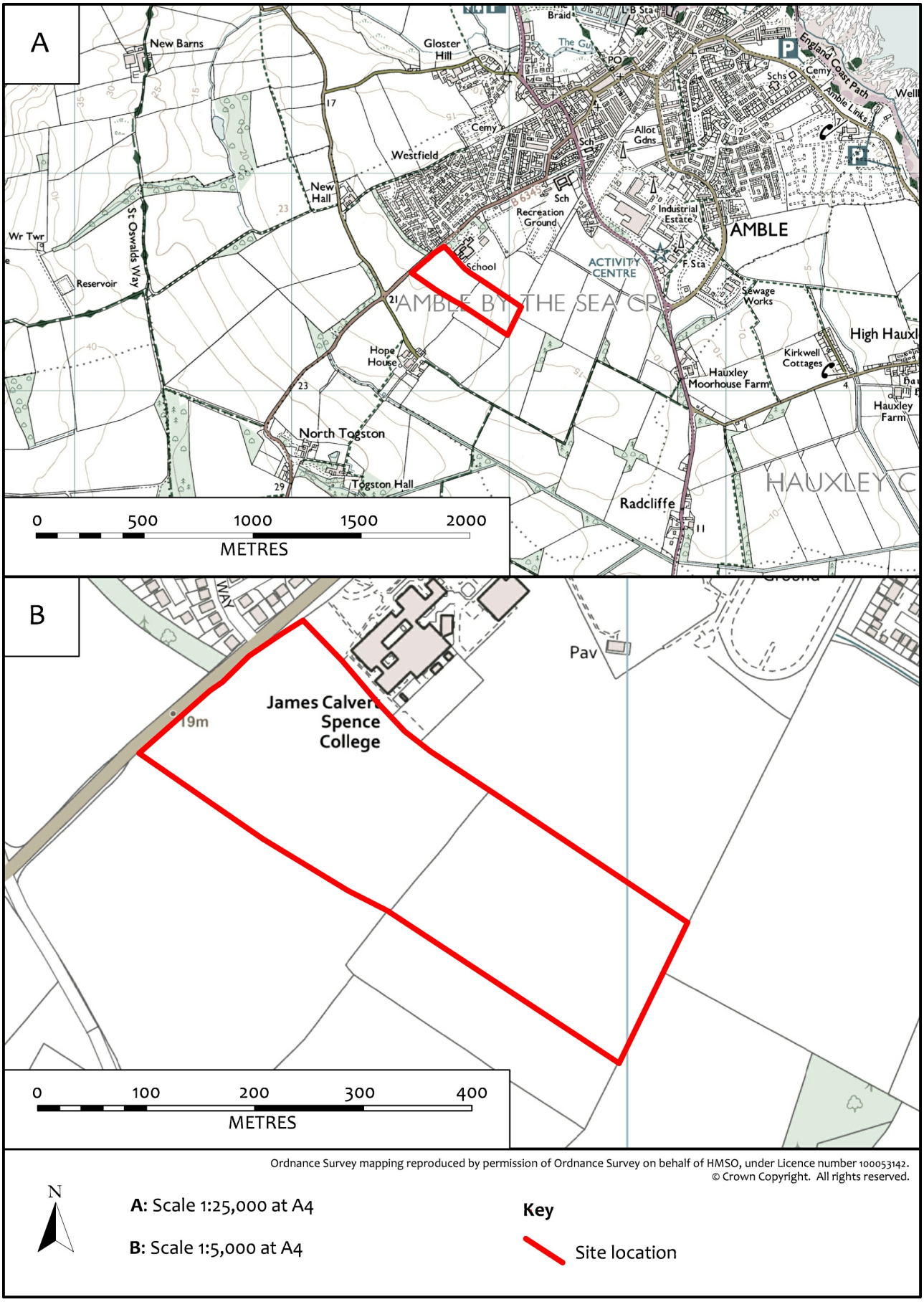

Figure 2. Location of the site, locally.

2. ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND SUMMARY

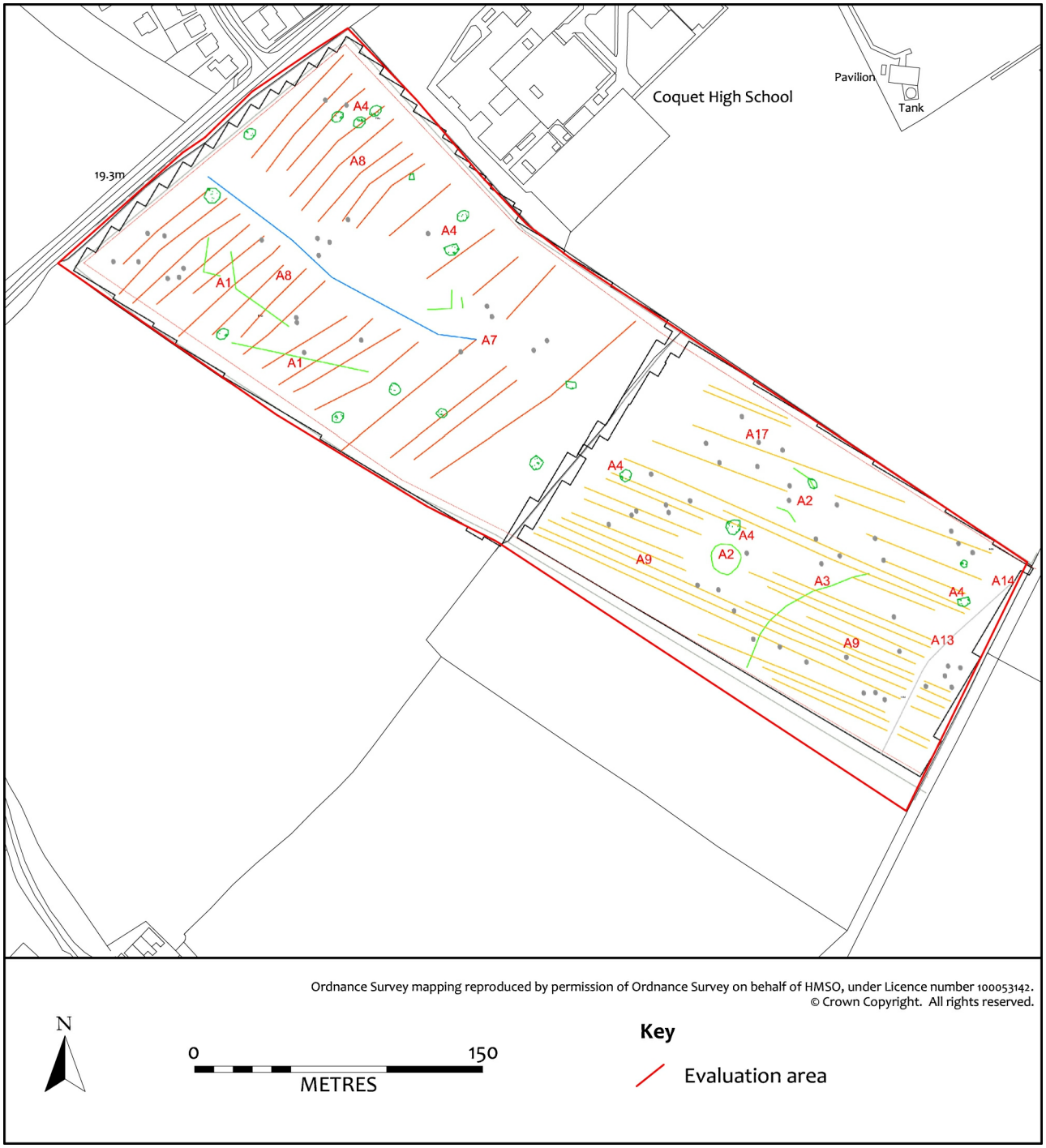

Figure 3. AOC's geophysical survey interpretation. The yellow and red linears are ridge and furrow with the green denoting potential archaeological remains and the grey dots magnetic anomalies.

2.1 Summary

2.1.1 The historical/archaeological background is based primarily upon data from the Archaeological Desk-based Assessment produced by Archaeological Services Durham University in 2016 as well as a geophysical survey undertaken by AOC Archaeology Group in 2017 and LIDAR data.

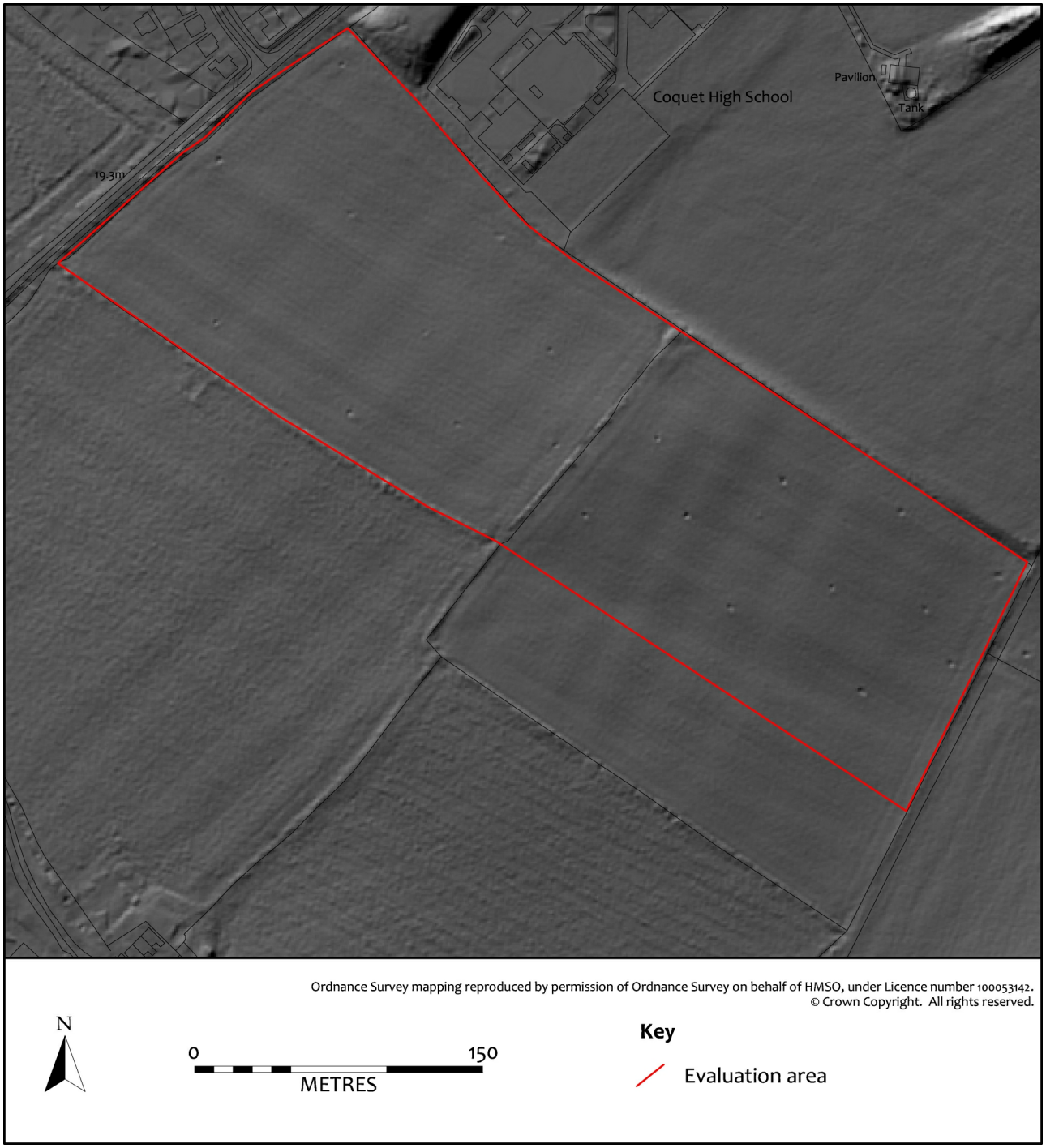

Figure 4. LIDAR imagery of the site clearly showing the location of the Togston geotech pits.

2.1.2 The desk-based assessment states that "There is no direct evidence for prehistoric or Roman activity within the proposed development area, but the presence of activity in the study area [1km radius of the site] indicates that an as yet unidentified resource has the potential to exist within the site… The proposed development area was probably agricultural land during the medieval and post-medieval periods. Evidence relating to this in the form of cultivation remains has been identified from aerial photographs and has the potential to exist on the site, but is of limited significance."

2.1.3 The geophysical survey undertaken in 2017 concluded that "The results of the survey identified no definitive archaeological anomalies within the survey area. A number of tentative discrete linear, rectilinear and curvilinear trends possibly archaeological, have been located within the

survey. Several responses of unclear origin were also recorded although these are considered most likely to be the result of geotechnical trenches and boreholes and previous open cast mining remains. A number of agricultural anomalies have been observed in the data including a former field boundary and a second possible field division, as well as ridge and furrow ploughing and more modern ploughing trends. Clear linear trends of field drainage have also been detected in a herringbone shape within the survey. Several modern services were recorded close to the herringbone drainage and could be culverts or drainage pipes. Associated manhole covers were also detected and visible on the surface in these locations. An area of magnetic disturbance, most likely the result of a former railway was also recorded, as was the edge of the former opencast boundary. Throughout the survey area isolated dipolar or ferrous (iron spikes) anomalies were also recorded; these are most likely the result of manuring and modern detritus." A plot of the geophysical results can be seen in *Figure 3*.

2.1.4 *Figure 4* shows a LIDAR plot of the evaluation area showing a southeast-northwest ploughing regime as well as clearly showing the location of the Togston geotechnical investigations.

2.2 Archaeological Potential

2.2.1 The archaeological potential of the site was unknown, though the presence of Prehistoric, Roman and medieval archaeology in the nearby vicinity suggested a moderate potential for archaeological remains relating to those periods lying within the development area. The geophysical survey undertaken in 2017 suggested the potential for linear and cut anomalies that may have represented pre-medieval activity as the anomalies appear to be beneath the remains of the medieval ridge and furrow system. The LIDAR shows little else, barring helping to resolve the location of the 20th century Togston geotechnical investigations.

3. THE EVALUATION

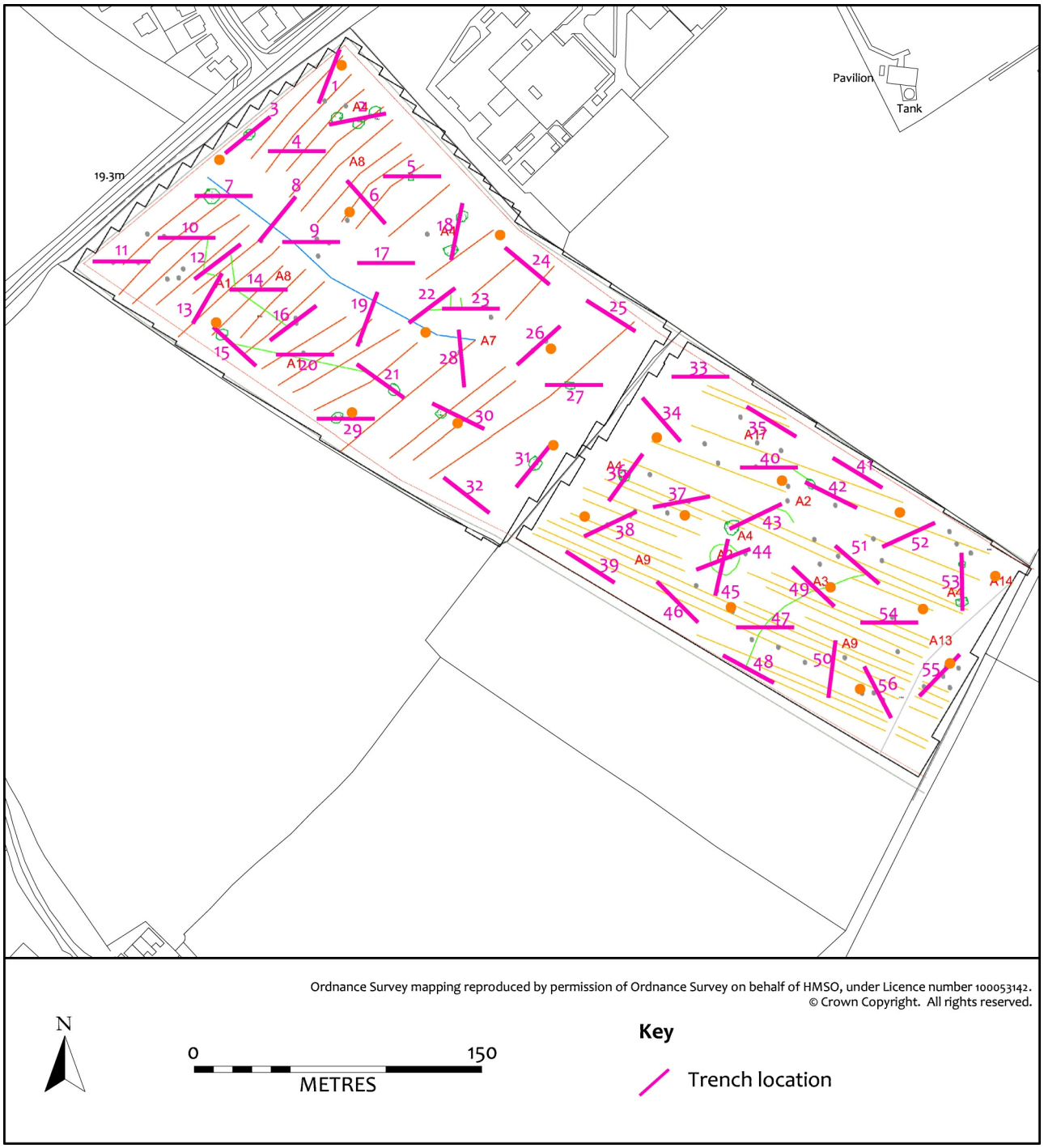

Figure 5. Trench location plan.

3.1 Introduction

3.1.1 All trenches were located via Leica GPS Rover based upon the agreed layout in the Written Scheme of Investigation. The level of accuracy recorded by the GPS system lay within 0.02m, allowing for accurate placement.

3.1.2 The trenches were excavated by a 14 tonne JCB with 1.8m wide toothless ditching bucket under constant archaeological supervision. The machine and driver were supplied by D&K Plant Hire.

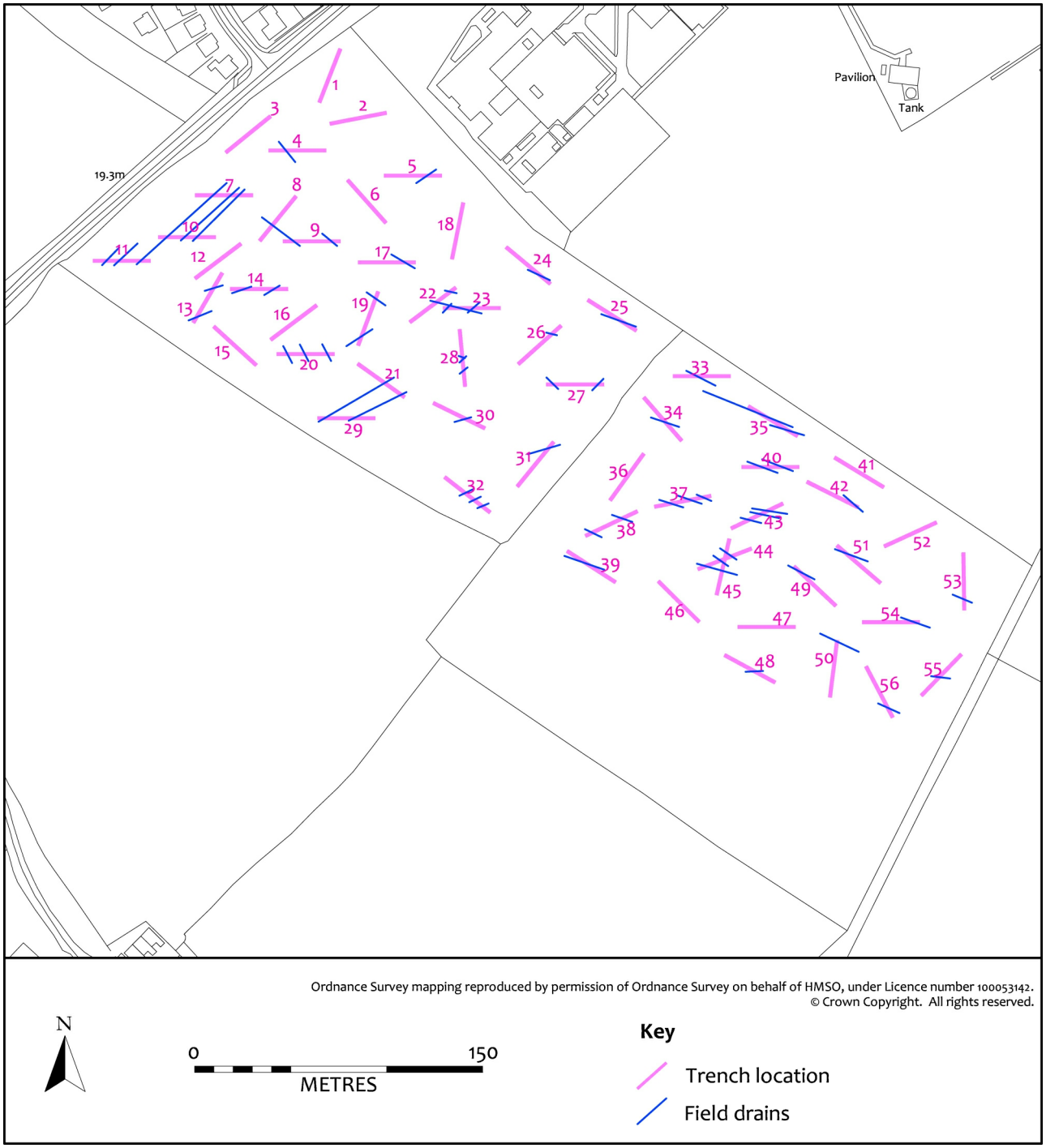

Figure 6. Location of field drain network identified in the evaluation.

3.1.3 56 trenches were excavated totalling 3024m² or 4% of the overall evaluation area as stipulated in the agreed Written Scheme of Investigation. *Figure 5* shows the trench layout.

3.1.4 *For ease of interpretation a single context system was used to record the site. Contexts (each context represents a different element or event) are identified in blue, with rounded brackets for deposits and fills, eg (#) for context identifier #1, and in squared brackets for cuts, example [#]. Geological contexts are identified in green with rounded brackets, to differentiate from archaeological contexts, eg (G#).*

Figure 7. Location of furrow alignments identified in the evaluation.

3.2 Overburden

3.2.1 The proposed development area's character was a gently sloping pastoral field system, with the evaluation area divided into two by a field boundary. The topsoil/turf was a mid-dark grey fairly firm clay loam (1). The matrix contained modern debris including ceramics, plastic, slate, nails and hinges, as well as a varying degree of coal and fly ash. There was no visible topsoil/subsoil horizon, with the material lying directly over natural geology or furrow remnants. The topsoil varied in thickness across the site, but averaged between 0.3-0.35m.

Plate 2. View of cut [3] in Trench 12, looking northeast.

3.3 Geology

3.3.1 The natural geology beneath the evaluation area was observed to be Diamicton Till (**G1**) comprising banded clay with gravel deposits. Heavy plough scarring was noted cut into the clay, as were a number of furrows from the ridge and furrow field systems identified on the geophysical survey as well as a network of field drains. The depth of the geological horizon ranged from 8.94m OD to 18.159m OD.

3.4 Drainage

3.4.1 The majority of trenches revealed the presence of a network of field drains running at various angles and directions (see *Figure 6*). These field drains correspond to and account for the presence of linear anomalies on the geophysical survey.

3.5 Archaeology

3.5.1 **Furrows**. The geophysical survey identified two separate ridge and furrow field systems, with the western field containing a northeast-southwest alignment and the eastern field containing a northwest-southeast alignment. The evaluation suggested that the alignment in the eastern field originally continued into the western field, with evidence of potentially a third alignment in the western extent of the evaluation area aligned at a sharper northwest-southeast alignment. The northeast-southwest aligned furrows in the western field appear to be the potentially early 19th century in date. The fill of the furrows was a light brown/grey lightly silty sandy clay with inclusions of small stones, coal fragments and 19th century ceramic sherds. The fill was given a general context

identifier of (2), rather than produce separate identifiers for each furrow fill. One of the furrows in Trench 6 also produced a sherd of late 16th century pottery, likely to be background material. A similar fragment was also recovered from the southeast-northwest alignment of furrows in Trench 12. With no earlier background material recovered from the evaluation, this suggests the agricultural field systems are late medieval through to 19th century in date, with the northwest-southeast alignments pre-dating the southwest-northeast alignment. The plot of the furrow alignments can be seen in *Figure 7*.

3.5.2 **Trench 12**: A single linear feature was noted in Trench 12 (see *Plate 2*). This feature ran on a northeast-southwest alignment and cut two furrows. The cut [3] was truncated with a maximum depth of 0.10m and width of 0.5m existing. It was filled by brown-grey sandy loam (4) with inclusions of small stones, fly ash and coal waste. 15m of the cut was recorded across the trench, which was noted to be on exactly the same alignment as field drains observed to the north and south: as such it can be concluded that this was likely a drain or similar system that had been ploughed out.

3.5.3 **Trenches 1-11, 13-56**: No archaeological remains of interest were noted within these trenches, barring the aforementioned furrows and field drains. A summary of the depths and numbers of furrows/drains can be seen on *Table 1*.

Table 1. Trench summary

Trench #	Co-ordinates 'A'	Co-ordinates 'B'	Geology mOD 'A'	Geology mOD 'B'	Furrows	Services
1	425695.509 603660.243	425684.638 603632.216	17.251	17.291		
2	425719.591 603626.752	425690.126 603621.057	16.421	16.756		
3	425659.134 603624.984	425635.846 603606.052	16.949	18.28	1	
4	425688.178 603607.151	425658.159 603607.179	17.33	17.47	3	1x FD
5	425748.379 603593.951	425718.352 603593.995	16.259	16.635	4	1x FD
6	425699.361 603591.739	425719.260 603569.331	16.844	16.377	4	1x FD
7	425619.842 603583.787	425649.886 603583.708	17.155	16.984	3	3x FD
8	425672.441 603583.306	425653.548 603560.018	16.723	17.093	2	1x FD
9	425665.622 603559.710	425695.646 603559.663	16.713	16.574	2	2x FD
10	425630.632 603561.904	425600.613 603561.901	17.273	17.375	2	3x FD
11	425566.570 603549.499	425596.585 603549.522	17.561	17.474	3	3x FD
12	425619.819 603540.374	425643.788 603558.458	17.228	16.876	3	
13	425633.994 603543.208	425618.968 603517.295	17.939	18.159	6	2x Fd

Trench #	Co-ordinates 'A'	Co-ordinates 'B'	Geology mOD 'A'	Geology mOD 'B'	Furrows	Services
14	425638.194 603534.857	425668.170 603534.864	17.98	17.671	2	2x FD
15	425629.559 603515.286	425651.750 603495.066	17.991	18.074	2	
16	425659.262 603508.398	425683.198 603526.403	17.934	17.625	4	
17	425704.820 603548.713	425734.808 603548.687	17.011	16.402	1	1x FD
18	425759.644 603579.912	425753.765 603550.434	15.762	15.796	2	
19	425715.269 603533.531	425704.811 603505.390	16.59	16.771	4	3x FD
20	425662.488 603500.912	425692.422 603500.920	17.382	17.028	3	3x FD
21	425704.594 603495.912	425728.983 603478.431	16.594	16.286	1	3x FD
22	425731.837 603517.562	425755.780 603535.637	15.718	15.013	2	2x FD
23	425749.038 603524.838	425779.036 603524.847	15.079	14.435	1	3x FD
24	425781.977 603556.674	425805.067 603537.505	13.899	13.84	3	1x FD
25	425824.511 603529.165	425849.893 603513.156	13.124	13.11	3	1x FD
26	425810.637 603515.699	425788.311 603495.639	13.627	14.136	2	1x FD
27	425832.892 603485.145	425802.907 603485.117	13.532	13.898	3	2x FD
28	425757.731 603513.850	425760.621 603484.016	13.501	13.754	3	3x FD
29	425683.725 603467.529	425713.710 603467.408	14.616	14.485	2	2x FD
30	425741.632 603475.178	425768.564 603461.944	13.866	13.216	1	1x FD
31	425806.723 603455.095	425787.809 603431.845	12.887	12.579	3	1x FD
32	425749.916 603436.732	425773.608 603418.293	13.461	13.118	1	3x FD
33	425898.973 603489.460	425868.937 603489.432	12.659	13.088	2	2x FD
34	425853.737 603478.295	425873.450 603455.673	13.729	13.428	2	1x FD
35	425908.171 603473.622	425933.845 603458.134	13.594	12.66		2x FD
36	425836.174 603424.603	425853.685 603448.941	14.621	14.236	3	

Trench #	Co-ordinates 'A'	Co-ordinates 'B'	Geology mOD 'A'	Geology mOD 'B'	Furrows	Services
37	425888.760 603426.950	425859.295 603421.247	13.299	13.648	2	3x FD
38	425850.421 603418.937	425823.303 603406.063	14.902	15.249	2	2 x FD
39	425813.739 603398.134	425838.955 603381.877	15.532	14.705	2	1x FD
40	425904.768 603442.045	425934.721 603442.026	14.265	13.377	2	2x FD
41	425978.777 603431.414	425953.141 603446.932	11.768	12.153	1	
42	425965.512 603420.914	425938.724 603434.317	12.171	12.611	1	1x FD
43	425926.304 603423.012	425899.282 603409.935	12.894	12.775	2	3x FD
44	425881.889 603388.670	425909.885 603399.451	13.151	12.345	4	3x FD
45	425898.283 603404.492	425891.694 603375.266	12.776	12.534	4	3x FD
46	425861.333 603382.454	425882.548 603361.222	13.496	12.608	2	
47	425902.745 603358.594	425932.719 603358.580	12.516	11.901	2	
48	425895.783 603343.872	425922.210 603329.605	12.609	11.683		1x FD
49	425932.001 603390.161	425953.803 603369.562	12.094	11.308	2	1x FD
50	425950.787 603321.926	425954.483 603351.632	10.751	11.035	5	1x FD
51	425977.163 603381.480	425954.364 603401.012	10.915	11.612	1	1x FD
52	425979.031 603400.581	426006.319 603413.083	11.224	10.46	3	
53	426020.282 603397.303	426020.796 603367.301	9.862	9.343	3	1x FD
54	425967.527 603361.065	425997.547 603361.089	10.437	9.555	2	1x FD
55	426019.312 603344.324	425998.371 603322.762	8.939	8.958	3	1x FD
56	425969.58 603338.052	425983.437 603311.528	9.786	9.3	4	1x FD

3.6 Trench summary

3.6.1 *An image of each Trench is included here for illustration purposes:*

Plate 3. Trench 1 looking south

Plate 4. Trench 2 looking southeast

Plate 5. Trench 3 looking southwest

Plate 6. Trench 4 looking northwest

Plate 7. Trench 5 looking southeast

Plate 8. Trench 6 looking southeast

Plate 9. Trench 7 looking southeast

Plate 10. Trench 8 looking south

Plate 11. Trench 9 looking northeast

Plate 12. Trench 10 looking northwest

Plate 13. Trench 11 looking northwest

Plate 14. Trench 12 looking northeast

Plate 15 Trench 13 looking north

Plate 16. Trench 14 looking west

Plate 17. Trench 15 looking southeast

Plate 18. Trench 16 looking northeast

Plate 19. Trench 17 looking west

Plate 20. Trench 18 looking east

Plate 21. Trench 19 looking northeast

Plate 22. Trench 20 looking northwest

Plate 23. Trench 21 looking northwest

Plate 24. Trench 22 looking east

Plate 25. Trench 33 looking northwest

Plate 26. Trench 24 looking northeast

Plate 27. Trench 25 looking north

Plate 28. Trench 26 looking east

Plate 29. Trench 27 looking northwest

Plate 30. Trench 28 looking southhwest

Plate 31. Trench 29 looking southeast

Plate 32. Trench 30 looking northwest

Plate 33. Trench 31 looking west

Plate 34. Trench 32 looking southeast

Plate 35. Trench 33 looking northwest

Plate 36. Trench 34 looking southwest

Plate 37. Trench 35 looking north

Plate 38. Trench 36 looking west

Plate 39. Trench 37 looking southeast

Plate 40. Trench 38 looking northwest

Plate 41. Trench 39 looking southeast

Plate 42. Trench 40 looking southeast

Plate 43. Trench 41 looking south

Plate 44. Trench 42 looking south

Plate 45. Trench 43 looking southeast

Plate 46. Trench 44 looking southeast

Plate 47. Trench 45 looking southwest

Plate 48. Trench 46 looking south

Plate 49. Trench 47 looking southeast

Plate 50. Trench 48 looking northeast

Plate 51. Trench 49 looking north

Plate 52. Trench 50 looking northeast

Plate 53. Trench 51 looking south

Plate 54. Trench 52 looking southeast

Plate 55. Trench 53 looking northeast

Plate 56. Trench 54 looking northwest

Plate 57. Trench 55 looking east

Plate 58. Trench 56 looking southwest

4. DISCUSSION

Plate 59. Trenching underway

4.1 Overview

4.1.1 56 trenches were excavated totalling 3024m² or 4% of the overall evaluation area as stipulated in the agreed Written Scheme of Investigation. The trenches were excavated by a 14 tonne JCB with 1.8m wide toothless ditching bucket under constant archaeological supervision. Once excavated, the trenches were cleaned using hand tools and recorded before being backfilled.

4.1.2 COVID-19 restrictions were adhered to.

4.2 Discussion

4.2.1 The proposed development area's character was a gently sloping pastoral field system, with the evaluation area divided into two by a field boundary. The topsoil/turf contained modern debris including ceramics, plastic, slate, nails and hinges, as well as a varying degree of coal and fly ash. There was no visible topsoil/subsoil horizon, with the material lying directly over natural geology or furrow remnants. The topsoil varied in thickness across the site, but averaged between 0.3-0.35m.

4.2.2 The majority of trenches revealed the presence of a network of field drains running at various angles and directions. As well as the field drains, most of the trenches contained the remains of truncated furrows. The geophysical survey had identified two separate ridge and furrow field systems, with the western field containing a northeast-southwest alignment and the eastern field containing a northwest-southeast alignment. The evaluation suggested that the alignment in the eastern field originally continued into the western field, with evidence of potentially a third alignment in the western extent of the evaluation area aligned at a sharper northwest-southeast alignment. The northeast-southwest aligned furrows in the western field appear to be the potentially early 19th century in date. The fill of the furrows contained inclusions of small stones, coal fragments and 19th century ceramic sherds. One of the furrows in Trench 6 also produced a sherd of late 16th century pottery, likely to be background material. A similar fragment was also recovered from the southeast-northwest alignment of furrows in Trench 12. With no earlier background material recovered from the evaluation, this suggests the agricultural field systems

Plate 60. Trench 19, testing field drain cut

are late medieval through to 19th century in date, with the northwest-southeast alignments pre-dating the southwest-northeast alignment.

4.2.3 The natural geology beneath the evaluation area was observed to be Diamicton Till comprising banded clay with gravel deposits. The depth of the geological horizon ranged from 8.94m OD to 18.159m OD.

4.2.4 No archaeological remains of interest were observed within the evaluation area, with artefacts (with the exception of the two sherds of background 16th century pottery) dating from the Victorian period through to the late 20th century. The potential archaeological features noted on the geophysical survey can be explained through the presence of crossing furrow systems, the field drain network and pockets of coal and ash in the overburden.

Plate 61. Trench 33, testing field drain cut

5. REPOSITORIES AND SOURCES

5.1 Repositories

Beamish Museum People's Collection. Online at http://collections.beamish.org.uk/

Britain from Above Project. Online at http://www.britainfromabove.org.uk/

British Library. Online at http://www.bl.uk/

British Geological Survey. Online at http://www.bgs.ac.uk/discoveringGeology/geologyOfBritain/viewer.html

Durham Record Office. County Hall, Durham DH1 5UL

Google Earth Pro 2019

Historic England Archive. Online at http://archive.historicengland.org.uk

Keys to the Past. Online at http://www.keystothepast.info

Newcastle City Library. Local studies section, Princess Square, Newcastle upon Tyne, NE99 1DX

PastScape Project. Online at http://www.pastscape.org.uk/default.aspx

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