

# ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION REPORT

**Construction of an 80 Bedroom Care Home (Use Class  
C2) with Associated Access, Parking, Landscaping and  
Site Infrastructure**

**Land to the north of Bath Road, Pickwick, Corsham  
SN13 0BT**

Accession No DZSWS: 26-2020

Prepared for: Care UK

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Drawing 1: Trial Trench Layout

## 1.0 Introduction

### 1.1 Purpose of report

SLR Consulting Limited was instructed by Care UK (hereinafter referred to as the Client) to provide an Archaeological Field Evaluation in support of a planning application for a care home. The evaluation was undertaken across land ('the Site') located to the north of Bath Road within a mixed residential/ agricultural area on the north-western edge of Corsham. Approximate National Grid Reference for centre of the Site is ST 86508 70879 (co-ordinates 386508, 170879) (**Figure 1**). This report presents the results of that investigation and will be submitted as part of the planning process.

### 1.2 Planning Background

Pre-application advice (20/01144/PREAPP) has been sought for the potential development of an 80 Bedroom Care Home (Use Class C2) with Associated Access, Parking, Landscaping and Site Infrastructure on Land to the north of Bath Road, Pickwick, Corsham, SN13 0BT.

Wiltshire Council, as advised by Melanie Pomeroy-Kellinger, County Archaeologist, highlighted the site's archaeological potential and indicated the need for an archaeological evaluation (site investigation) in order to make an informed decision on any future application.

This judgment was based on a previous geophysical survey undertaken by Sumo Services in July 2020. This survey identified a number of discrete anomalies across the site of unknown date and function. The evaluation was carried out in accordance with a written scheme of investigation ('WSI'), approved by the County Archaeologist<sup>1</sup>.

This report sets out the methodology followed, which was designed to establish the presence/absence and nature of any archaeological remains in the investigated area, and assist with identifying the scope of any required mitigation of the effects of the development on buried archaeological remains.

### 1.3 Staffing and Programme

Staffing was as follows.

- Site director: Guy Kendall, Associate Archaeologist, SLR Consulting, MCIfA
- Project Manager and Quality Assurance: Tim Malim, Technical Director, SLR Consulting, MCIfA
- Site Archaeologists: Harry Towers (SLR Consulting)

The fieldwork took place between 17<sup>th</sup> Aug to 19<sup>th</sup> Aug 2020. The conditions were very dry, hot and sunny.

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<sup>1</sup> Pickwick, Corsham, Wiltshire: Written Scheme of Investigation, 2020, SLR Consulting Ltd, Report Ref: 402.40000.00001.0007

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## 1.4 Abbreviations and Terms Used in This Report

### *Abbreviations and Terms*

AOD	above Ordnance Datum (elevation values)
OS	Ordnance Survey
Planning Archaeologist	Wiltshire County Council's Archaeologist
WSI	Written Scheme of Investigation

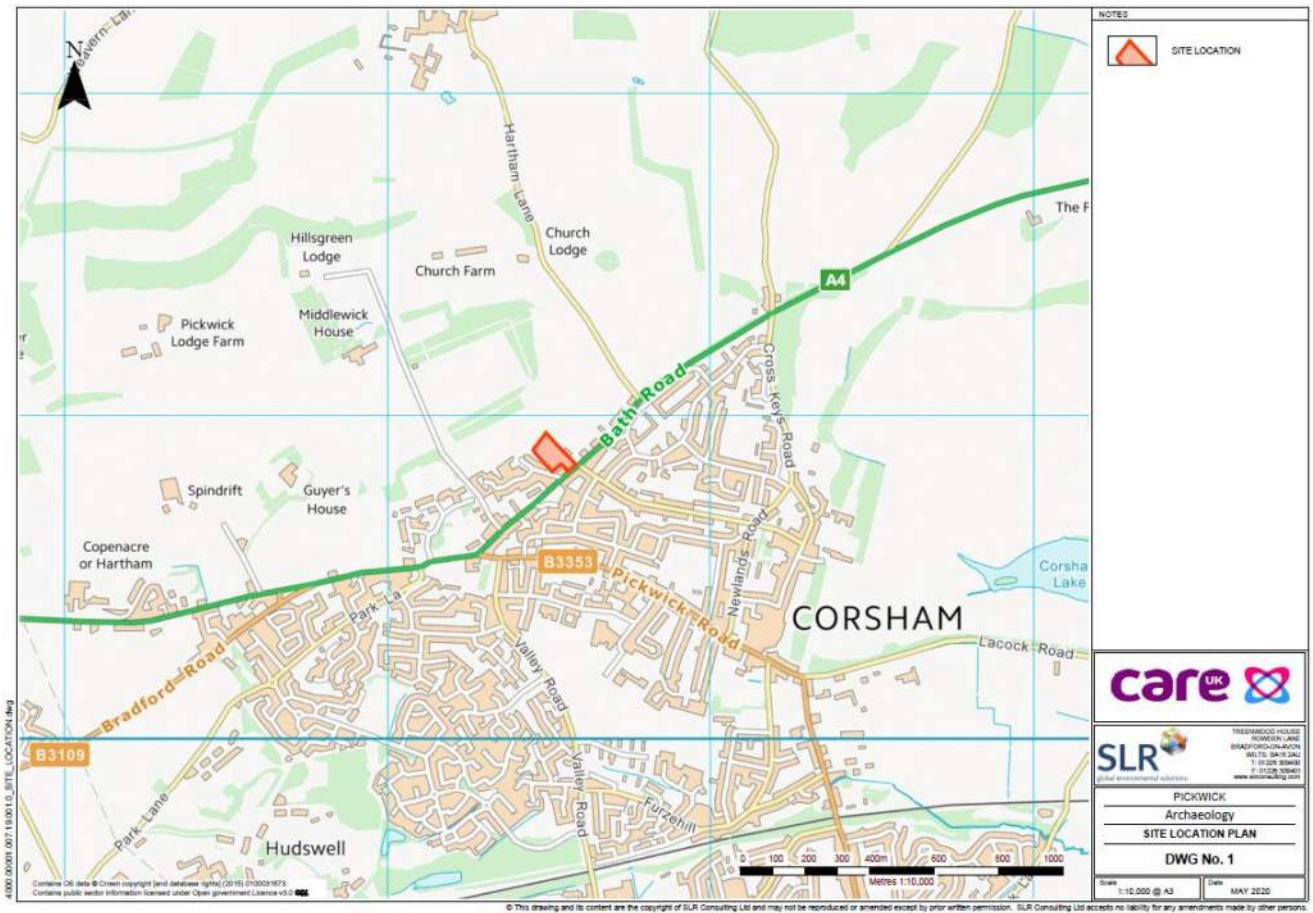
### *Terms for Archaeological Eras and Periods*

- prehistoric (pre-AD43)
- Roman (AD 43-410)
- early medieval (AD 410-c.850)
- late Saxon (c.AD 850-1066)
- high medieval (AD 1066- 1540)
- post-medieval (AD 1540-1900)
- modern (20th and 21st centuries)
- undated.

### *Terms for subdivisions of the Prehistoric Era*

- Palaeolithic (450,000-12,000 BC)
- Mesolithic (12,000-4,000 BC)
- Neolithic (4,000-2,200 BC)
- Bronze Age (2,200-750 BC)
- Iron Age (750 BC-AD 43).

Figure 1  
Site location





## 2.0 Site location and description

The site sits to the northwest of the A4 Bath Road in a mixed agricultural/ residential area. The site borders agricultural fields to the north, which back on to further agricultural land. Two residential properties and a derelict barn border the southwest corner of the site, with additional residential properties to the west. The east of the site is bordered by a narrow access road leading to two residential properties (Copperfield and The Ashes) which front towards the west (towards the site) and back onto agricultural fields. The area to the south of the site is much more developed with residential properties, schools, churches and public houses. Approximate coordinates 386508, 170879. The site is c.0.73 hectares and is approximately L-shaped, and currently comprises an undeveloped agricultural field. Solid geology is recorded as the Forest Marble Formation – Mudstone with the Cornbrash Formation - Limestone recorded as outcropping to the immediate south of the site.

**Figure 2: 3D Satellite imagery, showing the Site. Google Earth 2018.**





## 3.0 Archaeological and historical context

There is evidence to suggest early occupation of the wider area during the Romano-British period and settlement evidence has been recorded to the east of Hudswell and at Pockeridge Farm, approximately 1km SW of the site. Furthermore, there is documentary and place-name evidence identifying a foci of former settlement and a deer park near Corsham by the early medieval.

The area is thought to have formed part of a royal estate in Saxon times, King Aethelred having reportedly stayed in Corsham in the 10th century and to have possessed a country palace, now occupied by the site of Corsham Court. The Church of St Bartholomew at Corsham is also considered to have been founded in the Saxon period, the narrowness of its nave and thinness of its walls indicating a Saxon work.

Pickwick, situated at the north-western end of the town of Corsham, consists mainly of cottages and the manor, dating chiefly from the 17th century. No. 51 Bath Road is late Georgian and a garden house known as the Round House lies within its boundaries.

Pickwick has developed in a linear fashion along the busy main A4, Bath Road. The street picture today presents an open form of mainly two-storey development linked with dry stone walls, incorporating some large gardens with many attractive mature trees.

The fabric is substantially stone with some tiled roofs, but the architecture varies from simple random rubble-built Cotswold cottages to the more formal Georgian dwellings in Bath stone.

Pickwick was a staging post on the London coach route and immortalised by Dickens in his 'Pickwick Papers'. Whilst Pickwick now appears as a north-western extension of Corsham, it developed as a separate village, and would have been perceived as such until the largely post-war development occurred to link them.

Whilst the village may have developed in a linear fashion along the A4, there is a focal group where Middlewick Lane joins the Bath Road. The existing Conservation Area boundary encompasses the central group, the Dairy to the east, Middlewick Lane, (essentially) Beechfield House and grounds to the north and No. 51 Bath Road to the west. Beyond this the tendency is for small groups of cottages along with individual houses in large gardens, with stone walls fronting the road.

### 3.1 Previous Archaeological Work

Archaeological monitoring by SLR of the initial ground investigation works in June 2020<sup>2</sup> (Fig.3) identified a loose distribution of finds (Fig.4) ranging from the medieval period to the post-medieval period including (possibly Ham Green Ware) of 11th to 15th century date (TP3), post-medieval red and yellow glazed earthenware, a single piece of Tin Glazed, English Delft, (TP6 & 7) 16th-18th century, a partial clay pipe stem of probable early 19th century date and the partial base of an onion bottle also likely to date from the 17th - 18th century. These finds were noted from the subsoil.

The finds (albeit limited) represent domestic activity from at least the 15th century at the site. Most of this activity may relate to the presence of 17 – 19 Pickwick (Grade II) which dates to the late 17th and early 18th century or to Corsham Dairy (Grade II), an 18th century farmstead. The material evidence from the archaeological monitoring would be contemporary with these dates. The medieval pottery, however, would suggest an earlier presence at the site.

In July 2020 Sumo Services undertook a geophysical survey<sup>3</sup> across the site to further investigate the sites archaeological potential. This survey identified a number of discrete anomalies across the site of unknown date and function.

<sup>2</sup> SLR 2020 LQRA & Outline Geotechnical Assessment: Land to the north of Bath Road, Pickwick, Corsham.

<sup>3</sup> Sumo Services, 2020, Geophysical Survey Report, Pickwick, Corsham, Wiltshire (Report No 17630)

Figure 3: Test Pit Locations LQRA & Outline Geotechnical Assessment



Figure 4: Ceramics Encountered During Test Pitting



## 4.0 Aims and Objectives

The principal aims of the trial trench evaluation were to:

- supplement (and test) the geophysical survey results of the Sumo Report of 2020;
- explore the potential for further features or artifacts associated to those identified during the SLR ground investigation of 2020;
- identify any general buried archaeological remains that might survive within the Site;
- establish the nature, extent, state of preservation and, most importantly, the significance of any such remains, as per paragraph 189 of the NPPF (January 2019);
- provide a proportionate level of information about the Site’s archaeological potential, and the significance of any known and/or potential remains within the Site, sufficient to inform the County Archaeologist who will advise whether any further archaeological site work is necessary;
- to excavate and record significant areas of remains in lieu of their destruction by the development; and
- to analyse and report on the results to a level appropriate to their importance.

### 4.1 Appropriate Research Framework Objectives

South West Archaeological Research Framework Research Strategy 2012 – 2017<sup>4</sup>

- Research Aim 29: Improve understanding of non-villa Roman rural settlement.
- Theme D: Social Identity and Change – transition, identity, territories, conflict, religion, and death
- Research Aim 33: Widen understanding of the origins of villages.
- Theme B: Artefacts and the Built Environment – technologies, resources, links to trade.

Depending upon the nature, extent and level of preservation, any Roman, Medieval or Post Medieval evidence that might survive within the Site would enhance current knowledge and understanding of this part of Pickwick and regionally. The heritage significance would derive from the evidential value, with features examined under archaeological conditions would have the potential to contribute to our understanding of the evolution of Pickwick village during this period, as well as providing further evidence for contemporary population demographics.

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<sup>4</sup> [https://www.somersetheritage.org.uk/downloads/swarf/swarf\\_strat.pdf](https://www.somersetheritage.org.uk/downloads/swarf/swarf_strat.pdf)

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## 5.0 Methodology

### 5.1 Quality Assurance

SLR Consulting is a Registered Organisation with the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists ClfA. SLR's work is undertaken to audited professional standards and with reference to the ClfA's *Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Field Evaluation* (2014).

### 5.2 Fieldwork

#### 5.2.1 Monitoring

The County Archaeologist was informed of the start date of site works prior to commencement. All six of the trenches were inspected after excavation by the assistant County Archaeologist Michal Cepak, in the absence of Melanie Pomeroy-Kellinger, County Archaeologist, but with her agreement. Given the extensive negative results that had been obtained, no further archaeological work was required, and the backfilling of all trenches was agreed.

#### 5.2.2 Layout

Six 25m x 2m Trenches were located across the site. These were located to sample geophysical anomalies, identified within the Sumo geophysical survey report of 2020 and located to investigate, hitherto, un-investigated areas of the site, which would be disturbed during development. The trenches covered a 2.5% sample of the 0.73ha site area in line with the agreed WSI of July 2020.

#### 5.2.3 Excavation

Trenches were excavated to between 1.8m and 2.1m width at trench floor level using a mechanical excavator. A localised deeper test-pit was cut by machine in the first few trenches to confirm the correct identification of natural deposits and optimise the identification of archaeological features, but the correct horizon – the clay/limestone (chalk?) natural - was easy to identify and this procedure was omitted in the later trenches.

An archaeologist controlled the machine excavation of the trial trenches and recorded all archaeological features or deposits within them. The buried soil was carefully inspected during its excavation and afterward in section. The excavated soil was also investigated in order to identify any ferrous material that had been missed during excavation.

Potential features were hand cleaned and part-excavated where necessary to establish their archaeological significance.

On completion, all excavations were backfilled with the arisings.

#### 5.2.4 Recording

Trenches were set out and their basic excavated dimensions recorded using survey grade GPS (Drawing O1). Plans and sections of archaeological features were recorded in hand measurements using baselines set out with the GPS. Spot-heights were recorded on the trench floor, which was generally slightly below the top of the limestone. A length section representative of the full general deposit-sequence above natural within each trench was also recorded.

Written records of features and deposits were made in a *pro-forma* single context recording system.

A photographic record was compiled comprising high-resolution digital images (7 megapixel minimum resolution) with a supporting index, archived in accordance with ClfA guidelines for long term storage of digital media. Photos recorded each trench after excavation, the representative section, and the features during and

after excavation. Suitable bar scales were incorporated in the views. The photographs were recorded in a written catalogue detailing date, location, subject and filenames.

### **5.2.5 Environmental sampling**

No suitable context was identified for sampling due to the lack of features across the site.

### **5.2.6 Artefacts**

A limited number of finds were identified from the overburden across the site, as identified in para 3.1 and shown in Fig.4, but none from any secure feature context during any excavations at the site. In addition, no ferrous items were detected from the excavated soil for any of the trenches.

### **5.2.7 Treasure**

No artefacts were found which would be defined as ‘treasure’ under The Treasure Act 1996 (and as amended by the Treasure Designation Order 2002 No 2666).

### **5.2.8 Human Remains**

No human remains were identified during the fieldwork.

### **5.2.9 Field Records**

The trial trenches and archaeological deposits and features within them were recorded by text on proformas, and in suitably-scaled plan and section drawings.

The minimum record was sufficient for most trenches due to the absence of archaeological features:

- a photograph of each trench or area after stripping;
- a written description of each deposit and the general sedimentary sequence, including deposit thicknesses; and
- a sketch-plan showing the location and values of surface and trench floor levels in relation to Ordnance Survey Datum.



## 6.0 Results

### 6.1 Overview

The general deposit sequence in each trench is summarised in Table 1. Further discussion of results is provided in section 6.2.

In all six trenches were opened across the field to a depth of approximately 0.25m – 0.65m. With the exception of field drains no archaeological finds or features were encountered across the site.

The excavation was carried down through three predominant contexts. The top context was dark brown slightly sandy slightly gravelly silt. The gravel was occasional fine to medium angular to subrounded limestone with frequent rootlets with a maximum depth of approximately 0.30m. The second context was a firm friable light brown slightly gravelly slightly sandy clayey silt with an approximate depth in all trenches of 0.25m to 0.35m. The third context was represented by a firm friable light grey mottled light brown clay with occasional fine to medium angular to subrounded limestone clasts. The natural geology was recorded as a firm friable, gravelly slightly silty clay. Gravel is occasional fine to medium angular to subrounded limestone. (FOREST MARBLE FORMATION).

**Table 1**  
**General deposit sequence in each trench**

Trench Number	Plan dimensions (m)	Deposit sequence in representative section	Archaeological features present?
1	25x1.8, extended NW to SE.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>0.0 – 0.25m Topsoil</li> <li>0.25 – 0.35m Subsoil</li> <li>0.35m + Natural</li> </ul>	No
2	25x1.8, extended North to South.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>0.0 – 0.20m Topsoil</li> <li>0.20 - 0.35m Subsoil</li> <li>0.35 – 60m Clay</li> <li>0.40m + Natural</li> </ul>	No
3	25x1.8, extended WWN to EES	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>0.0 – 0.15m Topsoil</li> <li>0.15 – 0.30m Subsoil</li> <li>0.30 – 0.50m Clay</li> <li>0.50m + Natural</li> </ul>	No
4	25x1.8, extended NNW to SSE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>0.0 – 0.20m Topsoil</li> <li>0.20 – 0.35m Subsoil</li> <li>0.35 – 0.55m Clay</li> <li>0.55 + Natural</li> </ul>	No
5	25x1.8, extended North to South.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>0.0 – 0.20m Topsoil</li> <li>0.20 – 0.35m Subsoil</li> <li>0.35m – 0.65m Clay</li> <li>0.65 + Natural</li> </ul>	No
6	25x1.8, extended East to West.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>0.0 – 0.12m Topsoil</li> <li>0.12 – 0.30m Subsoil</li> <li>0.30 – 50m Clay</li> <li>0.50 + Natural</li> </ul>	No

## 6.2 Evaluation Trenches

Figure 5: Trench 1: SSE Facing (2 x 1m Scale)



Figure 6: East Facing Section Trench 1 (1m Scale)



**Figure 7: Trench 2: NNE Facing (2 x 1m Scale)**



**Figure 8: South Facing Section Trench 2 (1m Scale)**





**Figure 9: Trench 3: East Facing (2 x 1m Scale)**



**Figure 10: North Facing Section Trench 3 (1m Scale)**



**Figure 11: Trench 4: East Facing (2 x 1m Scale)**



**Figure 12: North Facing Section Trench 4 (1m Scale)**





**Figure 13: Trench 5 North Facing (2 x 1m Scale)**



**Figure 14: East Facing Section Trench5 (1m Scale)**





**Figure 15: Slabbed 19<sup>th</sup> century land drain southern end Trench 5 (1m Scale)**



**Figure 16: Trench 6: NNE Facing (2 x 1m Scale)**



Figure 17: South Facing Section Trench 6 (1m Scale)



### 6.3 Archive

The destination museum for physical archives is intended to be Wiltshire Museum, 41 Long Street, Devizes, SN10 1NS. The project archive currently consists of all original records and all documentation that relates to the archaeological works.

The archive would be compliant with:

- United Kingdom Institute for Conservation (Archaeology Section) (1990): *Guidelines for the Preparation of Excavation Archives for Long-Term Storage*.
- Archaeological Archives Forum 2007 (revised 2011): *Archaeological Archives: A guide to best practice in creation, compilation, transfer and curation*;
- The Society of Museum Archaeologists 1995: *Towards An Accessible Archive*; and
- Museums Sheffield (March 2016) *Procedures for the Deposition of Archaeological Archives from Derbyshire at Museums Sheffield*.

Although a small assemblage of unstratified ceramic material and two fragments of animal bone were recovered, the negative results from the investigation makes the heritage significance of the finds very low. The demands on curation and storage in museum space makes it unlikely that there would be sufficient value in deposition of a negative archive with the county museum. Although the archive will be offered to the museum, it may be rejected as of insufficient heritage significance and useful content to justify its long-term storage and curation.

### 6.4 Reports

Due to negative results of the evaluation this document forms the Full Archive report with no intermediate Assessment Report, as proposed in the WSI.

On approval from the County Archaeologist, bound paper copies of the Full Archive Report and digital copies in PDF format, including all illustrations, will be provided to the Client, the Planning Archaeologist and the HER.

Upon completion of the work, SLR Consulting will make the work accessible to the wider research community by submitting copies of reports online to OASIS (<http://ads.ahds.ac.uk/project/oasis/>).

It is not recommended that there should be any publication such as a note in a suitable level of detail offered to the Wiltshire Archaeological and Natural History Society Magazine (WANHM).

## 6.5 Copyright

SLR will retain full copyright of any commissioned reports, tender documents or other project documents, under the Copyright, Designs and Patents Act of 1988 with all rights reserved; the contractor will provide an exclusive licence to the Client for the use of such documents by the Client in all matters directly relating to the project as described in this Method Statement.

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## 7.0 Summary and conclusions

### 7.1.1 Context

The evaluation showed that despite the finds identified during the SLR ground investigation of June 2020, which comprised a loose distribution of ceramics ranging from the medieval period to the post-medieval period no further, significant, pottery was identified. In addition, the potential features highlighted across the site by the geophysical survey, and subsequently examined by the trial trenching, failed to reveal any archaeological remains with the exception of modern field drains. The field drains were modern 225mm red ceramic oval pipes with the exception of one found to the southern end of Trench 5. This land drain was likely 19<sup>th</sup> century and was filled with red brick and Cornbrash clasts with a slab top (Fig.15).

### 7.1.2 Geophysics Vs Trial Trenching

The Sumo geophysics report of July 2020 revealed a number of anomalies across the site. However, none of the trial trenches encountered any of the geophysical anomalies with the exception of modern land drains. It is suggested that the majority of anomalies identified by the geophysical survey were geological or agricultural in nature rather than archaeological features. The open trenches revealed a varied pattern of chalk and varied clay laminations including concentrated patches and spreads of chalk clasts with equal distribution of gravels and silts.

This geological variation would suggest that within the area of the site geophysical survey is not the most effective method of assessing archaeological risk and that the use of trial trenching, in this instance, was the most effective tool for evaluating the site.

### 7.1.3 Conclusions

The results of the trial trenching suggest that archaeological features are absent from the site and that the ceramics recorded during the ground investigation were distributed by ploughing. The ceramics are likely associated to activity further east of the site and related, possibly, to the presence of 17 – 19 Pickwick (Grade II) which dates to the late 17th and early 18th century or to Corsham Dairy (Grade II), an 18th century farmstead. The “site” was likely ploughed or worked historically as part of the wider grounds of these properties.

## 8.0 References

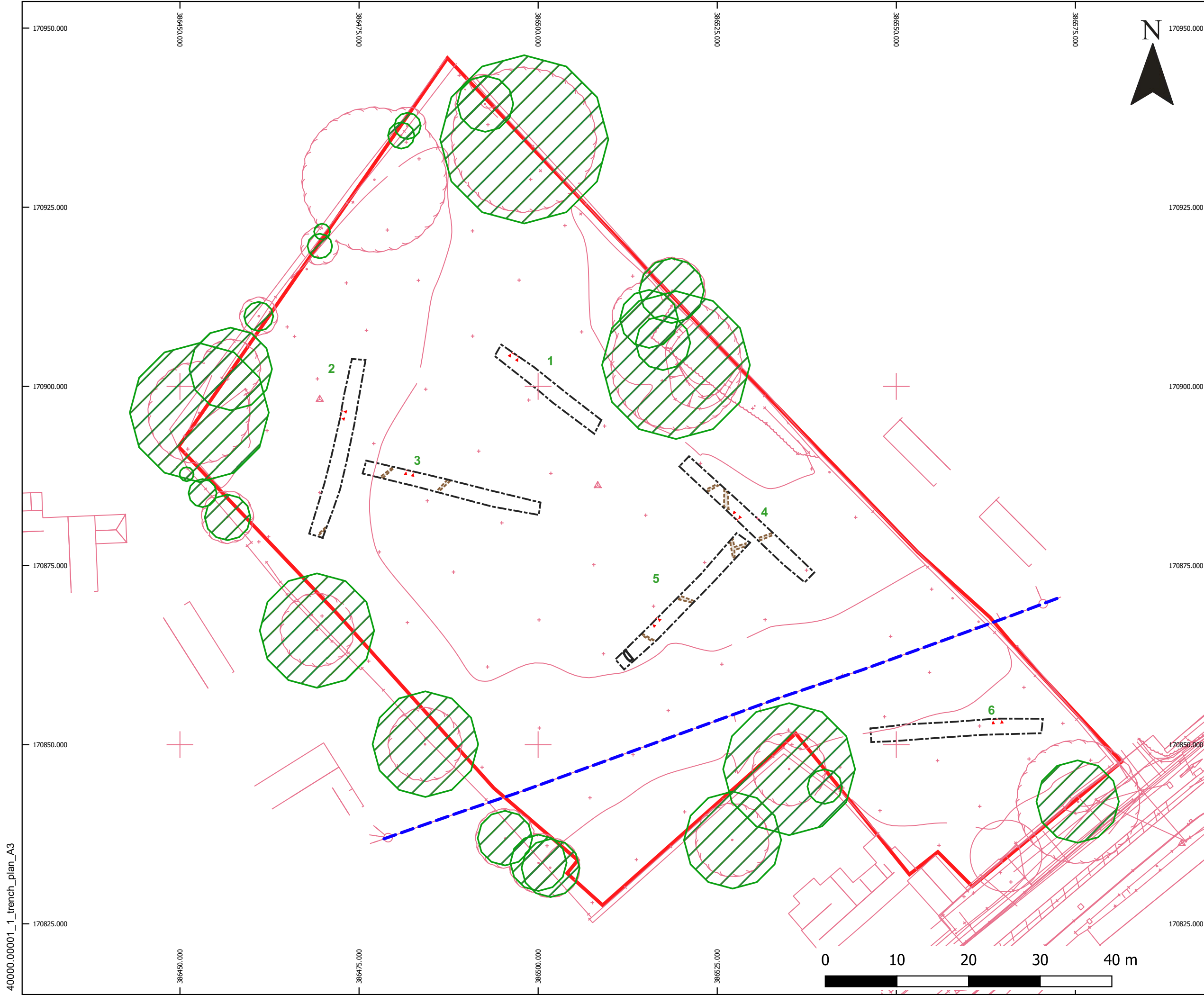
English Heritage (2011). *Environmental Archaeology, a Guide to the Theory and Practice of Methods, from Sampling and Recovery to Post-excavation* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed).

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Shackley, M. 1981, *Environmental Archaeology*, George, Allen & Unwin Ltd.





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**TRENCH LAYOUT**

**DRAWING 01**

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