LAND OFF COMPTON WAY, EARLS BARTON, NORTHAMPTONSHIRE

Report on Archaeological Geophysical Survey 2012

A.D.H. Bartlett

Surveyed by:

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for:

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on behalf of:

Redrow Homes South Midlands

Land off Compton Way, Earls Barton

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Introduction

This report describes a geophysical survey carried out as part of an archaeological field evaluation of a proposed development site at Earls Barton, Northamptonshire. The survey was commissioned from Bartlett Clark Consultancy, Specialists in Archaeogeophysics of Oxford, by Phoenix Consulting Archaeology Ltd on behalf of Redrow Homes South Midlands. Fieldwork was done in October 2012.

The Site

The evaluation area is a field of rough pasture covering about 2.37ha, and located immediately to the south west of Earls Barton at NGR SP 851629. The site is on a bedrock of upper Lias, and is free of drift deposits. Previous magnetometer surveys on comparable Jurassic bedrock have usually responded well to the presence of archaeological features.

The archaeological potential of the site was reviewed in an Archaeological Desk Based Assessment for the project, which was prepared and supplied to us by Phoenix Consulting Archaeology *(Document Reference PC368a; 17 June 2011).* It is mentioned in the DBA that there are no recorded archaeological sites or findings within the proposed development area, although traces of ridge and furrow are visible on the ground. Archaeological remains of most periods are, however present in the surrounding landscape, and there are cropmarks in adjacent fields about 0.6km to the south and south west. These may represent a Bronze Age barrow cemetery, or a settlement. Extensive Iron Age activity has been recorded and excavated on the line of the A45 and elsewhere in the Nene Valley to the south of the site.

Survey Procedure

Magnetometer readings were collected using Bartington 1m fluxgate gradiometers, and are plotted at 25cm intervals along transects 1m apart. The results of the survey are shown as a grey scale plot in figure 1, and as a graphical (x-y trace) plot in figure 2. Inclusion of these alternative presentations allows the detected magnetic anomalies to be examined in plan and profile respectively. An interpretation of the findings is shown superimposed on the graphical plots (so that the interpretation can be compared with the underlying readings), and is also reproduced separately to provide a summary of the findings in figure 3 (all at 1:1250 scale at A4).

The survey plots show the magnetometer readings after minimal processing which includes adjustment for irregularities in line spacing caused by variations in the instrument zero setting, and slight linear smoothing. The readings in the grey scale plot have additionally been subjected to weak 2D low pass filtering, which is applied to reduce background noise levels.

Colour coding has been used in the interpretation to distinguish different effects. Magnetic anomalies which may show possible archaeological characteristics are outlined in red. Stronger (and probably recent) disturbances are outlined in brown. Cultivation effects are in green, and ferrous objects (identifiable as narrow spikes in the graphical plots) are in blue.

The survey grid was set out and located at the required national grid co-ordinates by means of a differential GPS system. OS co-ordinates of map locations can be read from the AutoCAD (.dwg) version of the plans which can be supplied with this report.

Results

The main finding is a sequence of slightly curved north-south linear markings representing the ridge and furrow as mentioned in the DBA. These are visible in the grey scale plot, and are indicated in green in the interpretation.

Other features and disturbances detected by the survey include a broad strip of strong magnetic activity to the north and east of the site. The highly disturbed readings here (as seen in the graphical plot, figure 2) suggest a spread of modern rubble or debris, as is indicated also by bricks which are visible on the ground surface. There are similar but less concentrated disturbances in the south west corner (around A as labelled in figure 3). Stone on the ground surface here could indicate a former shed or structure. Areas in the south west corner and to the north of the field are densely overgrown with tall nettles and could not be surveyed.

The remaining findings include linear or ditch-like features, which are indicated in red in figure 3. The most clearly defined of these is a possible former ditch at B, but this together with a less distinct linear feature at C, converges on a strong disturbance at D. Features B and C could perhaps therefore be drains or channels leading to an infilled former ditch at D. A negative linear anomaly (white in the grey scale plot) north of C is indicated by a broken red line. A feature of this kind could represent a non-ferrous pipe, or a partly extant ditch or drain.

A further broad linear feature to the south of the field at E is rather too weak and irregular to represent a ditch. It could perhaps be a cultivation headland, or minor silted hollow.

It is difficult to identify any features which could be interpreted as silted pits of the kind

commonly found at archaeological sites. Some possible examples are outlined in red at F, but are too few and isolated to be of any clear significance.

Conclusions

The survey has produced results which are consistent with the condition and potential of the site as described in the DBA. Findings include ridge and furrow, together with extensive modern disturbances. The linear features as outlined in red may represent former ditches, but are not associated with any features of clear archaeological significance, and may be drains.

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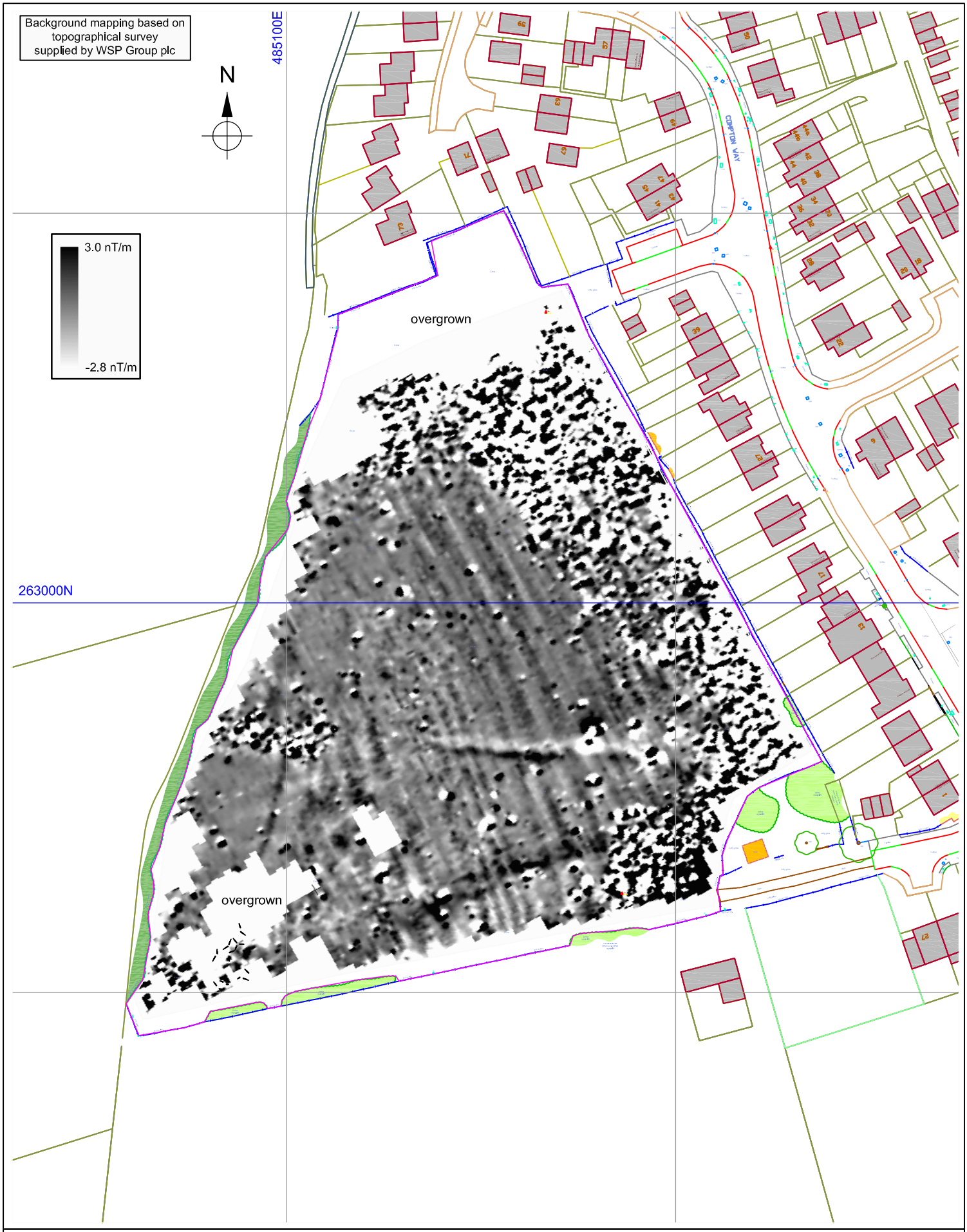
1 November 2012

The fieldwork for this survey was done by R. Ainslie and S. Ainslie.



Land off Compton Way, Earls Barton
Geophysical Survey 2012
Figure 1: Magnetometer survey
(grey scale plot)

1:1250

0 50m

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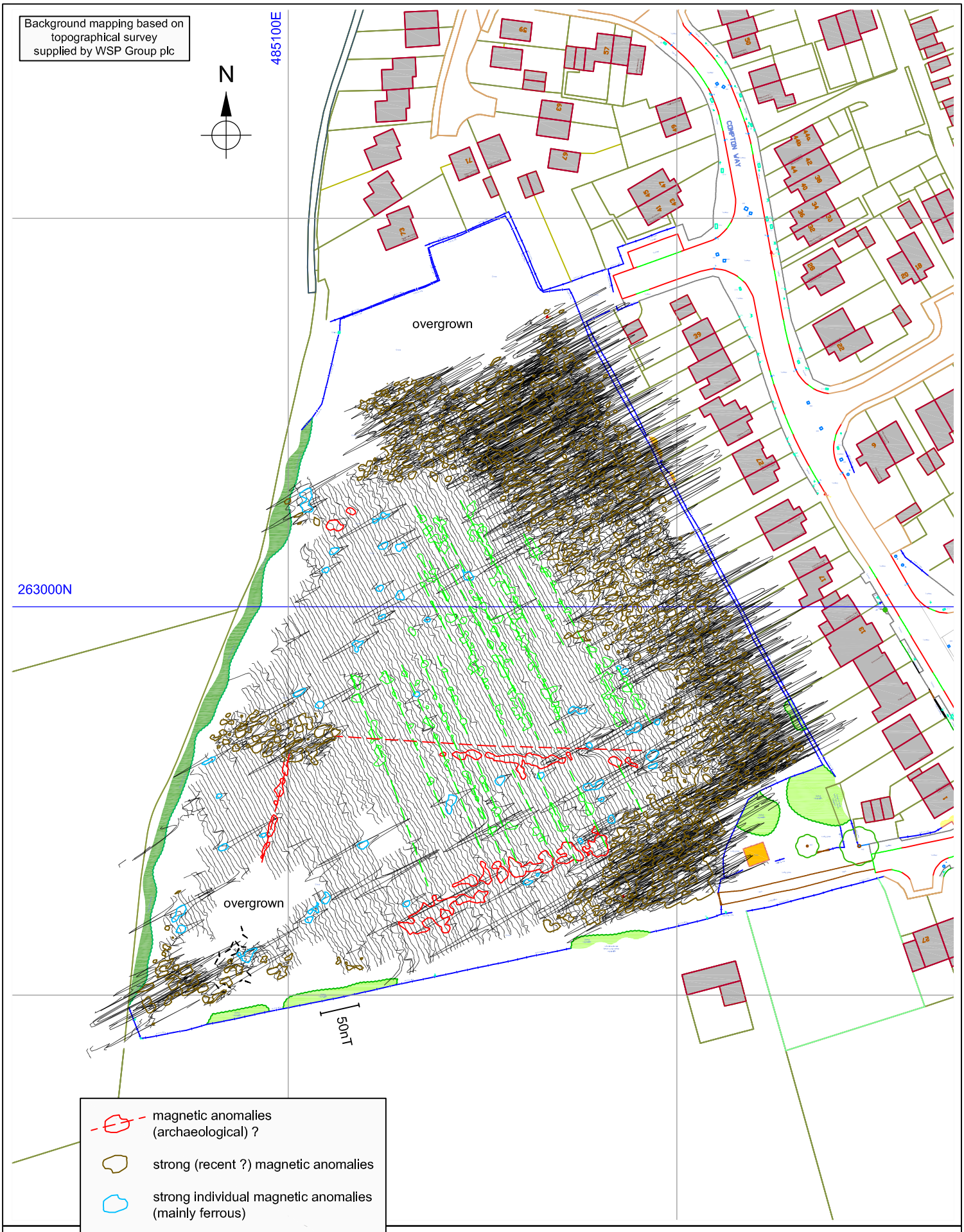

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Figure 2: Magnetometer survey (with interpretation)

1:1250

0 50m

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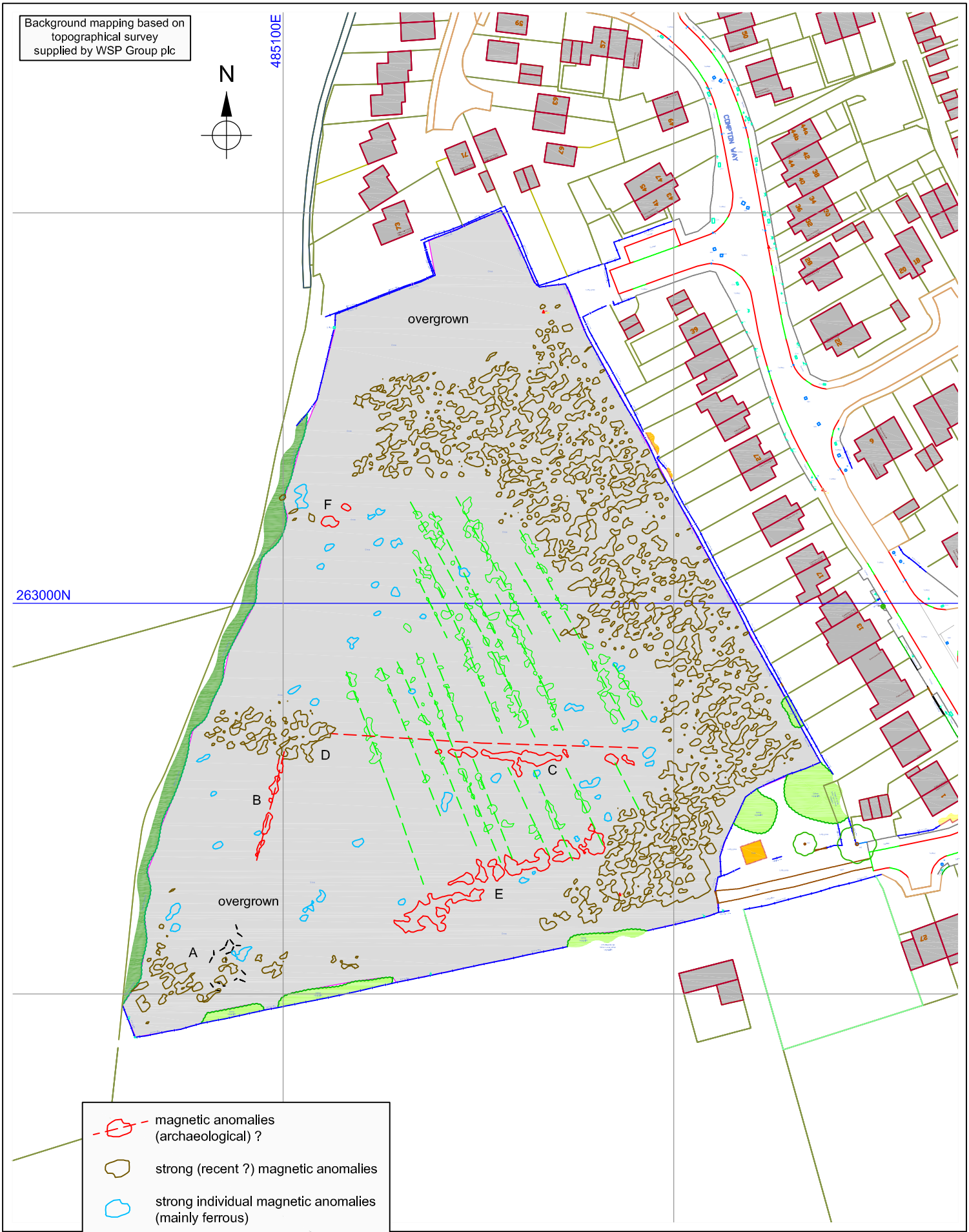

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Figure 3: Magnetometer survey (summary of findings)

1:1250

0 50m

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