



making sense of heritage

# Meon Vale, Long Marston Warwickshire

Archaeological Watching Brief



Planning Ref: 14/01186/OUT  
Ref: 111260.01  
November 2015



**Meon Vale, Long Marston  
Warwickshire**

**Archaeological Watching Brief**

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**November 2015**

**111260.02**



## Quality Assurance

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<b>Planning Application Ref.</b>	14/01186/OUT	<b>Ordnance Survey (OS) national grid reference (NGR)</b>	415913, 247070		

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\* I = Internal Draft; E = External Draft; F = Final

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# Meon Vale, Long Marston Warwickshire

## Archaeological Watching Brief

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# Meon Vale, Long Marston Warwickshire

## Archaeological Watching Brief

### Summary

Wessex Archaeology was commissioned by St. Modwen Developments Ltd to carry out a programme of archaeological monitoring and recording on the excavation of geotechnical test pits on land at Meon Vale, Long Marston, Warwickshire (centred on NGR 415913, 247070) prior to a mixed-use development.

One potential ditch was exposed within the south-eastern portion of the monitored area. No dating evidence was recovered from the feature, and its archaeological provenance is doubtful.

Generally, the strata exposed within the test pits indicate that the original ground level across much of the Site has been impacted by modern truncation and construction. This is thought to relate to the development of military facilities on the Site during the Second World War, and subsequent associated useage. The area with least evidence for ground disturbance lay along the western edge of the Site, although no archaeological remains were visible in any of the geotechnical test pits hereabouts.

The narrow width and hazardous depth of the test pits hindered the close examination that probably would have been required to identify any archaeological features of diffuse or subtle appearance. However, in the absence of any artefacts or conspicuous deposits, one can be largely confident that the monitored development has not led to any impact on the archaeological resource.

In addition to the watching brief, magnetometer survey was carried out over four sample areas to ascertain the suitability of the Site for more extensive survey. High levels of magnetic interference were encountered within the sample areas, and therefore no further geophysical work was carried out.

Warwickshire Museum will be consulted over the deposition of the archive. A copy of this report will be supplied to the Warwickshire HER and uploaded to OASIS. An OASIS form, (ID number **wessexar1-229887**) has been provisionally prepared and will be completed at the time of deposition.



# **Meon Vale, Long Marston Warwickshire**

## **Archaeological Watching Brief**

### **Acknowledgements**

The archaeological watching brief was commissioned by St. Modwen Developments Ltd. The assistance of Peter Rudd is gratefully acknowledged in this regard.

The watching brief was carried out by Dan Bashford and Hannah Holbrook. The report was written by Patrick Daniel, with illustrations by Alix Sperr. The project was managed for Wessex Archaeology by Andrew Norton.



# Meon Vale, Long Marston Warwickshire

## Archaeological Watching Brief

### 1 INTRODUCTION

#### 1.1 Project background

- 1.1.1 Wessex Archaeology was commissioned by St Modwen Developments Ltd (hereafter 'the Client') to undertake an archaeological watching brief on the the excavation of geotechnical trial pits on land at Meon Vale, Long Marston, Warwickshire, centred on National Grid Reference (NGR) 415913, 247070 (hereafter 'the Site'; **Figure 1**). The work was carried out in response to a proposed mixed-use development.
- 1.1.2 The development has been granted outline planning permission (14/01186/OUT), with conditions 35 and 36 relating to archaeological investigations prior to the submission of any Reserved Matters applications. The geotechnical works were carried out in advance of development; a watching brief on that work was undertaken to prospect for, and better understand the nature of, any below ground remains, and to inform further archaeological work.
- 1.1.3 Approximately 80 geotechnical trial pits were monitored.

### 2 SITE DESCRIPTION

#### 2.1 Location, topography and geology

- 2.1.1 The Site is located approximately 1.5 km south-east of the village of Long Marston and approximately 8.1 km south-west of the town of Stratford-Upon-Avon, on the site of a former Ministry of Defence (MoD) depot.
- 2.1.2 The Site comprises large areas of short grass with some woodland, a pond and several buildings, three of which are large warehouses.
- 2.1.3 At the Site's northern edge, the ground surface lies at approximately 45 m above Ordnance Datum (aOD), rising quickly to the south to approximately 50 m aOD, before slowly dropping to approximately 48 m aOD.
- 2.1.4 The underlying geology of the Site is mapped as the Blue Lias Formation and Carmouth Mudstone Formation with no superficial geology recorded (British Geological Survey).





### **3 ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND**

#### **3.1 Introduction**

3.1.1 The following section is summarised from the ES Chapter (St. Modwen 2014).

#### **3.2 Prehistoric and Romano-British**

3.2.1 There is no evidence for prehistoric occupation within the Site or its immediate environs, although the Meon Hill Iron Age hillfort, a Scheduled Monument, lies 1.5 km to the south-east. The earliest archaeological evidence within the Site is a possible enclosure identified from aerial photographs tentatively dated to the Romano-British period.

3.2.2 Approximately 50 m north of the Site, excavations uncovered ditches and pits of Romano-British date thought to represent a farmstead, the main part of which is likely to be located nearby. Additional excavations during the laying of a gas pipeline, the results of which are currently unpublished, uncovered further evidence for Romano-British settlement suggesting an extensive area of activity during this period.

#### **3.3 Anglo-Saxon and medieval**

3.3.1 The settlement of Long Marston, which lies approximately 150 m north-west of the Site, is a shrunken medieval settlement whose origins can be traced to the Anglo-Saxon period. The settlement still has its medieval village church whilst extensive areas of ridge and furrow agriculture are also found outside the settlement area. Additionally, the shrunken medieval village of Upper Quinton is located approximately 600 m to the east of the Site.

#### **3.4 Post-medieval and modern**

3.4.1 The village of Long Marston contains buildings dating from the post-medieval period, including the Grade II Listed King's Lodging. It is reported that King Charles II stayed in the house during his escape from the Battle of Worcester in 1651. The Monarch's Way footpath also dates to this period and marks the approximate route the King used to escape across the country.

3.4.2 In the 20th century the Long Marston Estate was formed as a satellite base for the Long Marston Airfield which lies approximately 900 m north of the Site. The Ministry of Defence purchased the Site in 1940 as a facility for military operations, which later became the Central Engineers Depot. Its function was to store resources for Army engineers in large storage sheds and warehouses with the depot connected by rail via sidings off a main loop line which ran around the Site. A number of the Second World War buildings still remain along with a number of elements of railway infrastructure, including rolling stock.

#### **3.5 Previous investigations**

3.5.1 An archaeological evaluation carried out on the Site in 2011 (Cotswold Archaeology 2011) identified no archaeological remains, with the report concluding that there had been considerable truncation during the construction and demolition of previous structures in the area.

3.5.2 Prior to the installation of a water pipeline, archaeological excavations (Wessex Archaeology forthcoming) uncovered evidence of possible Iron Age/Romano-British settlement and industrial activity to the north-east of Lower Quinton.



## 4 AIMS

### 4.1 General

4.1.1 The aims of the watching brief were:

- *To record, as far as is reasonably possible, the location, extent, date, character, condition, significance and quality of any surviving archaeological remains observed;*
- *To provide sufficient information to enable an informed decision to be made about the need for additional archaeological mitigation;*
- *To make available the results of the work.*

### 4.2 Methodology

4.2.1 The fieldwork and recording was carried out in accordance with the WSI (Wessex Archaeology 2015) and national industry standards and guidelines (ClfA 2014-c).

4.2.2 Test pits were excavated using a mechanical excavator down to a level determined by the attending geotechnical engineer, and monitored by an archaeologist. The stratigraphic sequence was recorded using Wessex Archaeology pro forma recording sheets. Use was made of digital photography to record the test pits and general Site views.

4.2.3 Soil horizons exposed in plan and section were monitored for possible archaeological value/origin, and spoilheaps were scanned for artefacts. However, safety concerns regarding the narrow width and great depth (typically over 3 m deep) of the majority of the test pits prevented the hand-cleaning that would ordinarily be carried out. The hazardous nature of the test pits may therefore have precluded the detection of archaeological remains of subtle appearance.

4.2.4 The watching brief was carried out between 5th and 22nd October 2015.

## 5 ARCHAEOLOGICAL RESULTS

### 5.1 Introduction

5.1.1 Results from the watching brief are presented below. Rather than detailing the full results of the strata encountered in each of the test pits (TPs), the test pits have been grouped into eight Observation Areas (OA1-8; **Figures 1 and 2**). Within each of the Observation Areas, the same basic soil sequence was encountered, albeit it with variations regarding the thickness of deposits and the depth at which they lay below the modern ground surface.

5.1.2 Individual test pits are occasionally referred to, using the test pit numbering scheme, which was of the Client's devising.

### 5.2 Observation Area 1 North and South

5.2.1 Within these two relatively small areas, the monitored test pits showed a simple sequence of natural orangey brown sandy clay overlain by modern topsoil, with made ground up to 0.5 m thick intermittently visible. No archaeological remains were exposed.



### 5.3 Observation Area 2

- 5.3.1 OA 2 encompasses the majority of the Site. Within it, the soil sequence comprised orangey brown natural sandy clay sealed by a deposit of clinker, ash and tarmac, which was typically 0.5 m deep (Plate 2), and up to 0.9 m deep in places. The original topsoil and subsoil had apparently been removed in the past, prior to the deposition of the made ground. The natural geological horizon generally lay at around 1 m below the current ground surface. This comprised a brown clay topsoil, up to 0.6 m thick, but more typically around 0.2 m thick.
- 5.3.2 At a number of locations within OA 2 the uppermost ground surface consisted of a layer of concrete, typically 0.1 m to 0.3 m thick on the site of previously demolished structures (Figure 3; Plate 3).

### 5.4 Observation Area 3

- 5.4.1 No trial pits were excavated in this area due to the potential presence of newts.

### 5.5 Observation Area 4

- 5.5.1 Within OA 4, natural geological horizons had been heavily truncated by services and concrete foundations of former buildings belonging to the Site's military phase (Plate 4). Truncation up to 1 m below the current ground surface was recorded in this area. In places there was some evidence of the reorganisation of the Site's former layout, with railway tracks seen sealed beneath later structural remains.

### 5.6 Observation Area 5

- 5.6.1 Within OA 5, natural geological horizons had been very heavily truncated by the deep concrete foundations of former buildings.

### 5.7 Observation Area 6

- 5.7.1 The sequence within OA 6 comprised natural geology, overlain by buried subsoil and topsoil, sealed beneath a 0.2 m-0.55 m thickness of ashy made ground, with the remains of a brick and concrete structure recorded at one location: TP4b-163. A possible ditch was intercepted in two of the test pits within this part of the Site (see below).

### 5.8 Observation Area 7

- 5.8.1 Within this area the sequence comprised natural geology overlain by buried ploughsoil, sealed beneath a layer of rammed modern stone rubble, in turn sealed by modern topsoil. No archaeological remains were present. At one location (TP4b-165) a horizontal wooden post was found 1.4 m below the modern ground surface, indicating localised deeper disturbance.

### 5.9 Observation Area 8

- 5.9.1 The sequence within OA 8 generally resembled that within OA 2, but deposits of concrete rubble were present at up to 0.7 m below the current ground level within its central/eastern portion.

### 5.10 Archaeological remains

- 5.10.1 A possible ditch, numbered **1565**, was encountered in two of the test pits within OA 6: TP4b-156 and TP4b-158 (Figure 3). The feature's full profile was not seen in either test pit. To judge by the visible portion, it was broad and shallow, measuring more than 2 m wide by 0.9 m deep. The possible ditch had two fills: a lower fill of orange brown clay,



overlain by a more organic mid-brown fill (0.4 m and 0.5 m thick respectively). Assuming that the two features in TP4b-156 and TP4b-158 represent different portions of the same boundary, then it would have been aligned east-west, and at least 26 m long. The feature is assumed to represent a defunct field boundary ditch.

- 5.10.2 The date of this feature is uncertain, as no datable artefacts were recovered. However, the feature was directly overlain by the ash and clinker made ground associated with the mid-20th century landscaping of the Site, indicating that it pre-dates the military facilities at Long Marston.
- 5.10.3 An alternative explanation for these features is that they represent two unrelated dips in the natural strata, with the 'fills' of the ditch comprising relict former subsoil and topsoil.
- 5.10.4 No corresponding boundaries are shown in this location on historic Ordnance Survey maps dating between the 1880s and the 1920s. During this period, field boundaries on the Site remained largely static. This might imply that the feature is non-archaeological, or, alternatively, that it pre-dates the earliest mapping.

## 6 DISCUSSION

### 6.1 General

- 6.1.1 The recorded sequence indicates that within OA 1 there was less evidence of the ground truncation and levelling associated with the construction of the military facilities at the Site. This part of the Site perhaps therefore represents the zone of greatest potential archaeological preservation, although no remains were recorded.
- 6.1.2 Within OA 2 and 8 there was evidence that the former topsoil had been removed in the past, and the resultant ground surface levelled up with deposits of ash, clinker and tarmac. Structural remains comprising layers of reinforced concrete were occasionally encountered, with concrete visible at depth in parts of OA 8. These remains are thought to be associated with the construction of the military facilities at the Site in the mid-20th century. This activity is likely to have been detrimental to any archaeological horizons in this part of the Site, although no such remains were recorded.
- 6.1.3 The strata present within the test pits within OA 4 and 5 confirm that this part of the Site was formerly occupied by buildings and associated infrastructure, including railway tracks. Significant preservation of archaeological horizons is not anticipated in this part of the Site.
- 6.1.4 The original ground surface within OA 6 and 7 showed signs of having been built up in the past, with former topsoil and subsoil preserved beneath later made ground deposits. Such a remodelling of the land surface would serve to protect any potential archaeological remains from later disturbance. A potential ditch was recorded within this part of the Site, perhaps extending for at least 26 m on an east-west alignment. No other remains were recorded, however.
- 6.1.5 Subsequent magnetometer survey was carried out on 26th-28th October 2015. Four sample areas were surveyed to ascertain the suitability of the Site for more extensive survey. High levels of magnetic interference were encountered within the sample areas (**Figures 4-6**), and therefore no further geophysical work was carried out.



- 6.1.6 The results of the previous investigations (St. Modwen 2014) indicate that the Site occupies an area of slightly enhanced archaeological potential, especially with regard to the Romano-British period. However, no remains from the period were recorded during the watching brief.
- 6.1.7 Safety considerations with the regard to the narrow and often very deep test pits prevented hand cleaning and close examination of their sides. However, with no artefacts or conspicuous deposits of archaeological origin recorded, and in light of the modern disturbance that was evident, one can be reasonably confident that the monitored development has not led to any significant impact on the archaeological resource.

## **7 ARCHIVE STORAGE AND CURATION**

### **7.1 Museum**

- 7.1.1 Warwickshire Museum will be consulted over the deposition of the archive. A copy of this report will be supplied to the Warwickshire HER and uploaded to OASIS. An OASIS form, (ID number wessexar1-229887: see Appendix 2) has been provisionally prepared and will be completed at the time of deposition.

### **7.2 Preparation of archive**

- 7.2.1 All elements of the fieldwork archive will be marked with the site code **111260**, and a full index will be prepared. The fieldwork archive (comprising paper records, drawings, photographic records and digital data), will be prepared for long term storage following nationally recommended guidelines (SMA 1995; ClfA 2014c; Brown 2011; ADS 2013) and those of the recipient museum .
- 7.2.2 The physical archive comprises the following:
- *1 A4 file of paper records*
- 7.2.3 No artefactual material was collected during the watching brief.

### **7.3 Security copy**

- 7.3.1 In line with current best practice (e.g. Brown 2011), on completion of the project a security copy of the written records will be prepared, in the form of a digital PDF/A file. PDF/A is an ISO-standardised version of the Portable Document Format (PDF) designed for the digital preservation of electronic documents through omission of features ill-suited to long-term archiving.



## 8 REFERENCES

### 8.1 Bibliography

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## 9 APPENDICES

### 9.1 Appendix 1: OASIS form

**OASIS ID: [wessexar1-229887](#)**

#### Project details

Project name	Meon Vale, Long Marston, Warwickshire
Short description of the project	Wessex Archaeology was commissioned by St. Modwen Developments Ltd to carry out a programme of archaeological monitoring and recording on the excavation of geotechnical test pits on land at Meon Vale, Long Marston, Warwickshire (centred on NGR 415913, 247070) prior to a mixed-use development. One potential ditch was exposed within the south-eastern portion of the monitored area. No dating evidence was recovered from the feature, and its archaeological provenance is doubtful. Generally, the strata exposed within the test pits indicate that the original ground level across much of the Site has been impacted by modern truncation and construction. This is thought to relate to the development of military facilities on the Site during the Second World War, and subsequent associated useage. The area with least evidence for ground disturbance lay along the western edge of the Site, although no archaeological remains were visible in any of the geotechnical test pits hereabouts. The narrow width and hazardous depth of the test pits hindered the close examination that probably would have been required to identify any archaeological features of diffuse or subtle appearance. However, in the absence of any artefacts or conspicuous deposits, one can be largely confident that the monitored development has not led to any impact on the archaeological resource.
Project dates	Start: 05-10-2015 End: 22-10-2015
Previous/future work	Yes / Yes
Any associated project reference codes	14/01186/OUT - Planning Application No.
Any associated project reference codes	111260 - Sitecode
Type of project	Recording project
Site status	None
Current Land use	Vacant Land 3 - Despoiled land (contaminated derelict and ?brownfield? sites)
Monument type	DITCH Uncertain
Significant Finds	NONE None
Investigation type	"Test-Pit Survey", "Watching Brief"
Prompt	Planning condition

#### Project location

Country	England
Site location	WARWICKSHIRE STRATFORD ON AVON LONG MARSTON Meon Vale, Long Marston, Warwickshire
Postcode	CV37 8QR



Site coordinates SP 15913 47070 52.121304426873 -1.76755160127 52 07 16 N 001 46 03 W  
Point

### Project creators

Name of Organisation Wessex Archaeology  
Project brief originator Warwickshire County Council  
Project design originator Wessex Archaeology  
Project director/manager Andrew Norton  
Project supervisor Hannah Holbrook  
Type of sponsor/funding body Developer  
Name of sponsor/funding body St. Modwen Ltd

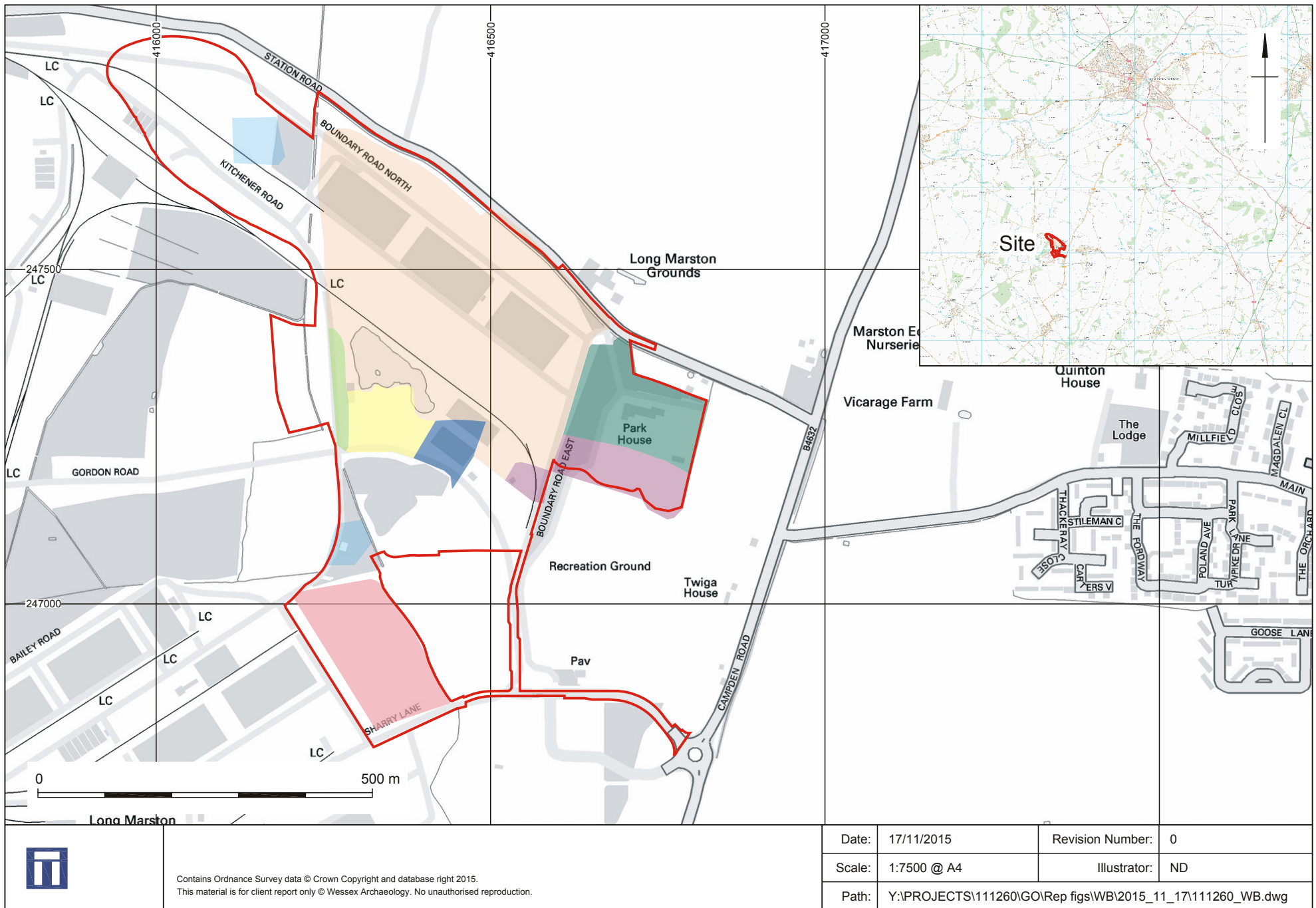
### Project archives

Physical Archive Exists? No  
Digital Archive recipient Warwickshire Museum Services  
Digital Media available "Images raster / digital photography"  
Paper Archive recipient Warwickshire Museum Services  
Paper Media available "Diary", "Section", "Unspecified Archive"

### Project bibliography 1

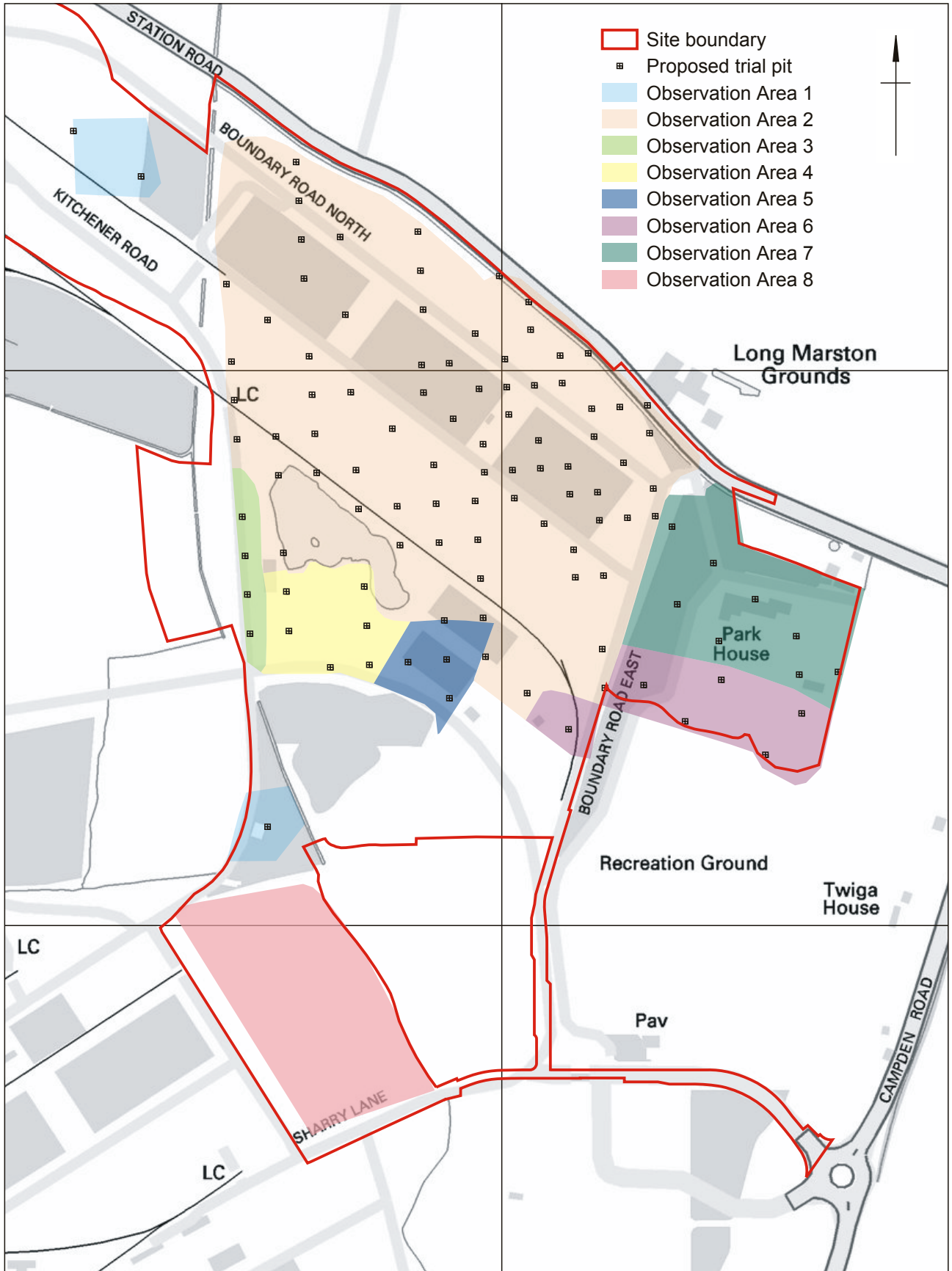
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Entered by Patrick Daniel (p.daniel@wessexarch.co.uk)  
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Site location

Figure 1



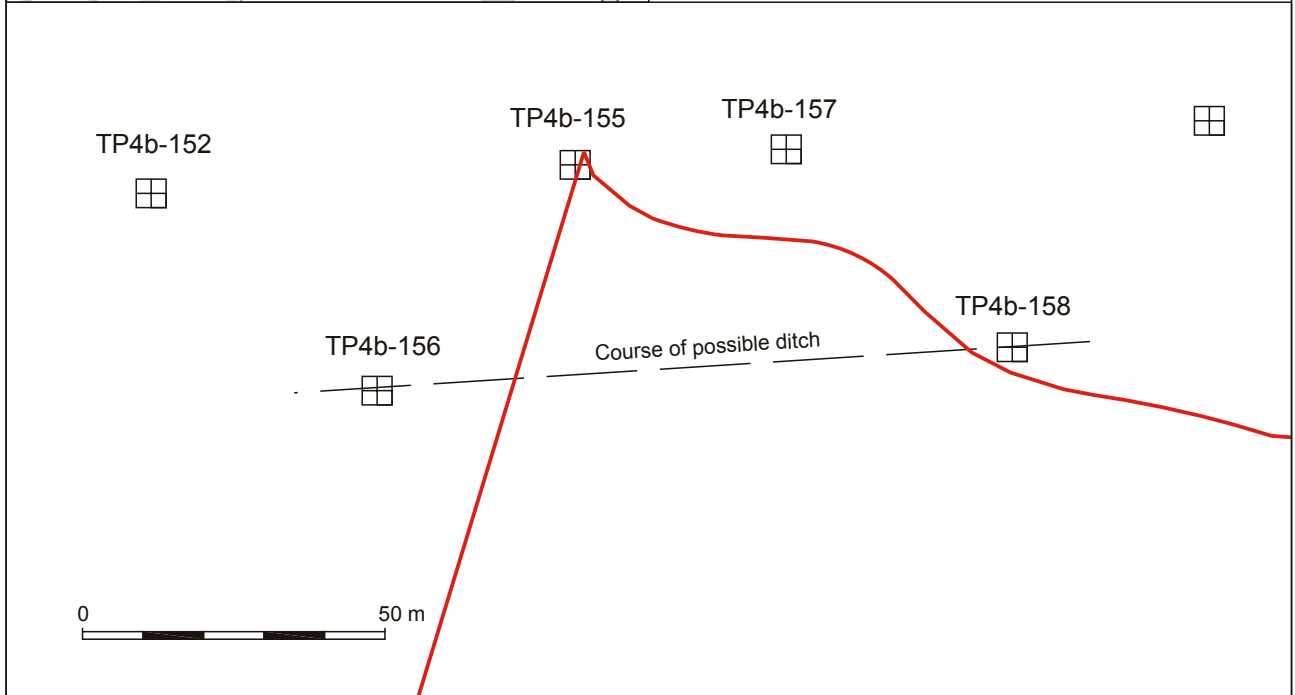
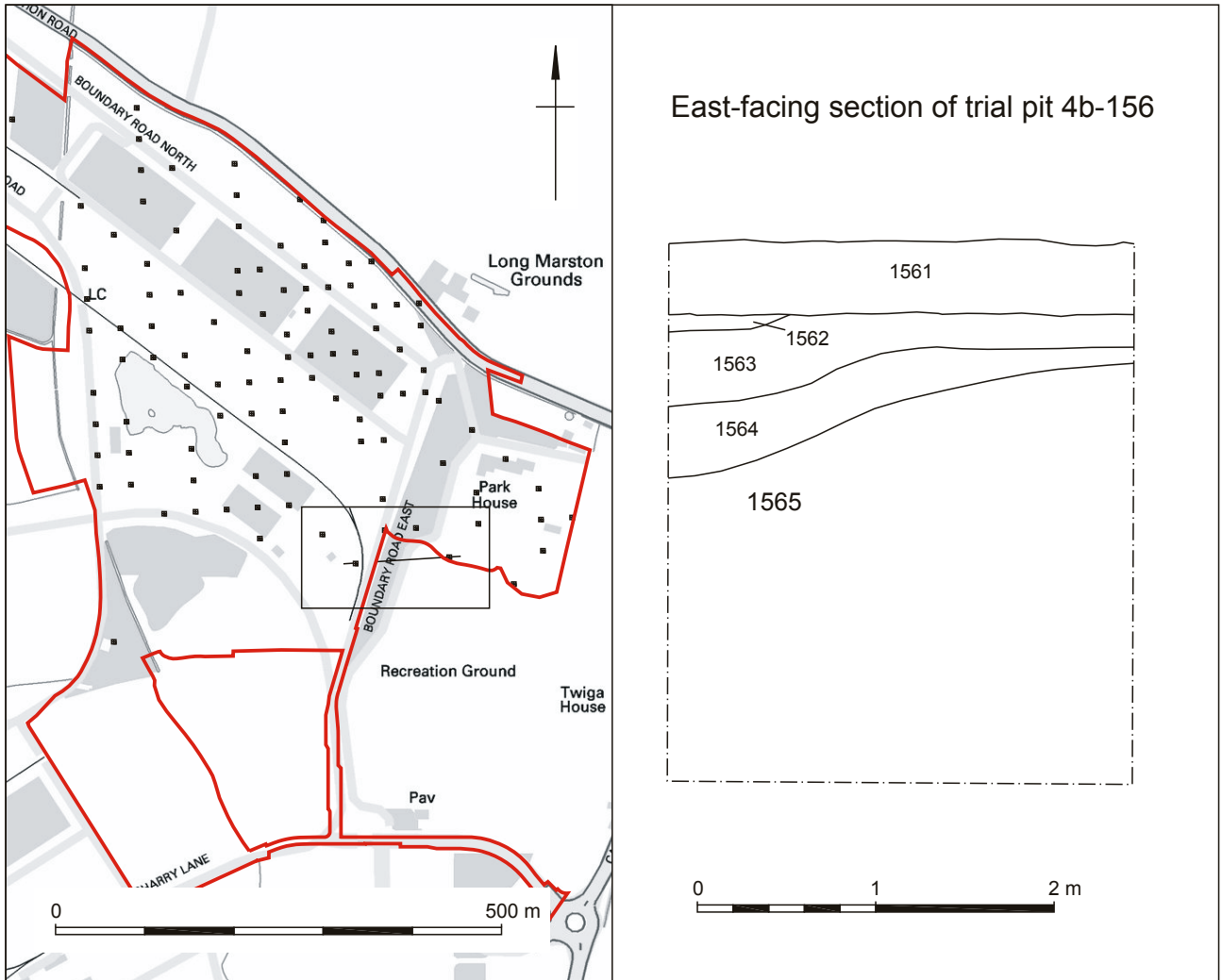
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Map of Observation Areas and trial pits

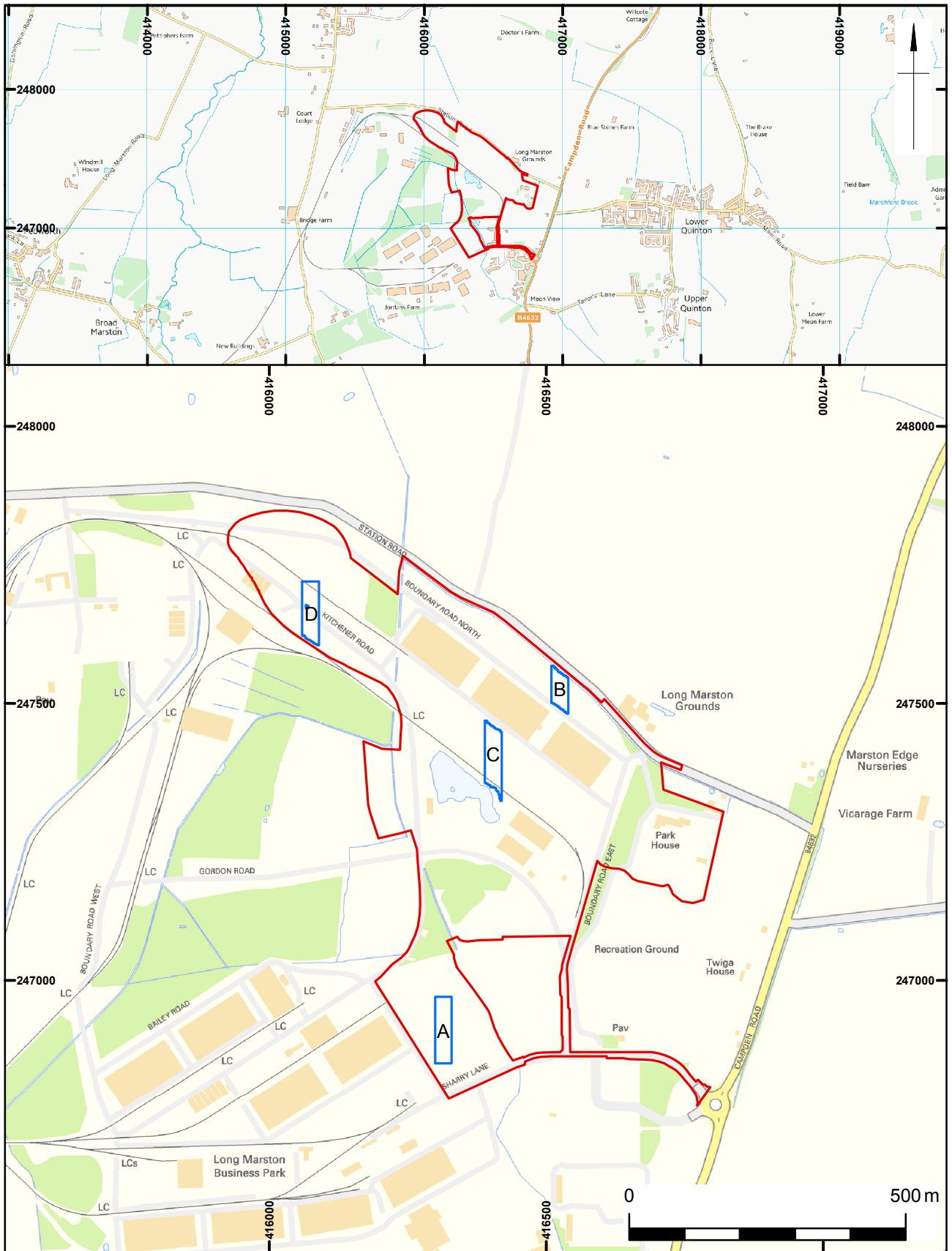
Figure 2


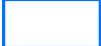



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Plan of area of ditch 1565, and east-facing section of ditch

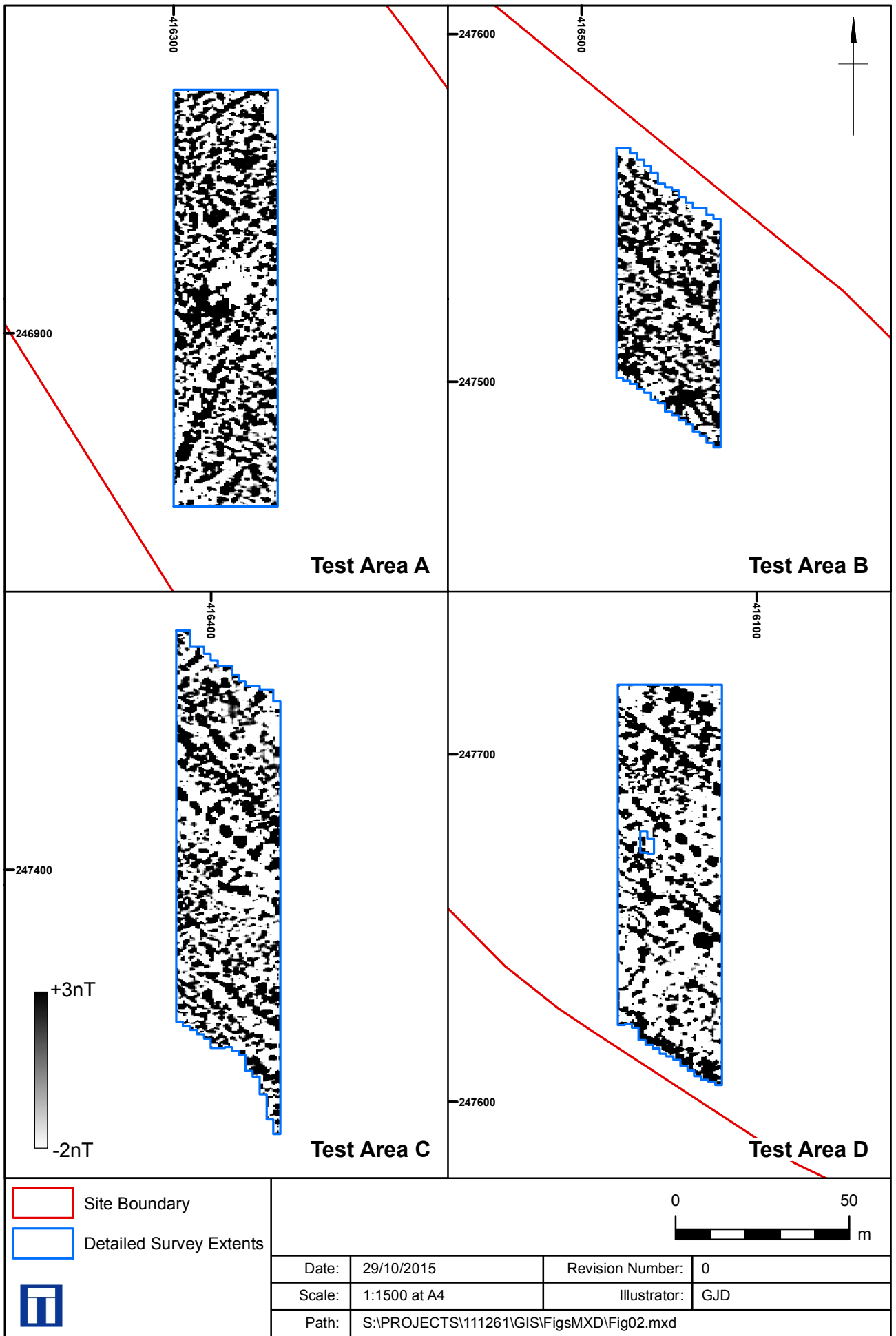
Figure 3



 Site Boundary  Detailed Survey Extents 	Digital data reproduced from Ordnance Survey data © Crown Copyright 2015. This material is for client report only © Wessex Archaeology. No unauthorised reproduction.			
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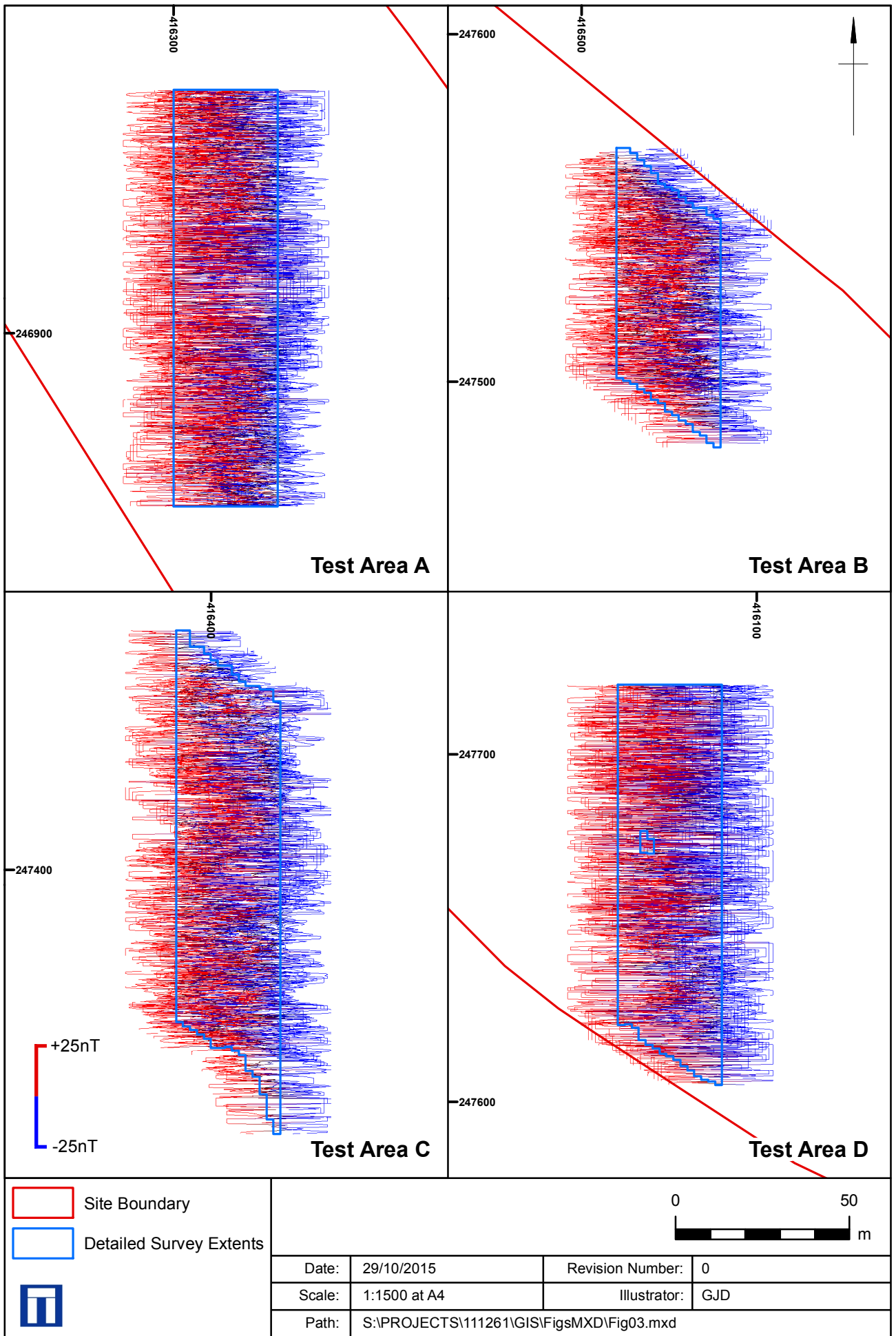
Site location and survey extents

Figure 4



Greyscale Plot

Figure 5



XY Trace Plot

Figure 6



Plate 1: Northern edge of OA 2, camera facing south-east



Plate 2: Typical deposits in OA 2 (west-facing section of deposits in TP4a-20)



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Plate 3: Modern deposits in OA 2 (TP4a-13)



Plate 4: Rails exposed in TP4b-138

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