#### ARCHAEOLOGICAL SOLUTIONS LTD

# TESCO STORES LTD, OLD TIFFIELD ROAD, TOWCESTER, NORTHAMPTONSHIRE

## AN ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION

Authors: Zbigniew Pozorski MA (Fieldwork & Report)			
NGR: SP 6892 4948	Report No. 3398		
District: South Northamptonshire	Site Code: AS 1241		
Approved: Claire Halpin MIFA	Project No. 3627		
Signed:	Date: October 2009		

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#### **OASIS SUMMARY SHEET**

Project details	
Project name	Tesco Stores Ltd, Old Tiffield Road, Towcester, Northamptonshire

In October 2009 Archaeological Solutions (AS) conducted an archaeological evaluation of land at the Tesco Store, Old Tiffield Road, Towcester, Northamptonshire (NGR SP 6892 4948). The evaluation was commissioned by DPP on behalf of Tesco Stores Ltd, and was conducted prior to determination of a planning application to extend the existing store.

The site is located on the north-west outskirts of Towcester, and the latter lies c.15km south-west of Northampton. The site had a potential for Roman, medieval and post-medieval remains.

The evaluation revealed a possible stone-lined well, five ditches and a pit. All the features were consistently dated to the Roman period (2<sup>nd</sup> century). A sixth ?ditch, undated, was also recorded.

The evaluation also identified that the 18<sup>th</sup> century avenue from Easton Neston House (Grade I and a registered garden) has survived as a substantial earthwork which appears to cross part of the development area (Brian Giggins per comm.)

Project dates (fieldwork)	8 <sup>th</sup> – 13 <sup>th</sup> Oc	tober 200	9		
Previous work (Y/N/?)	N		ork (Y/N/?)	Υ	
P. number	3627	Site code			1241
Type of project	An Archaeo			1	
Site status	-	- 0			
Current land use	Scrubland				
Planned development	Extension to	Tesco st	ore		
Main features (+dates)	Possible we	II, ditches,	, and a pit		
Significant finds (+dates)	2 <sup>nd</sup> century I	Roman po	ttery		
Project location		•			
County/ District/ Parish	Northampto		outh Iorthamptonsi	hire	Towcester
HER/ SMR for area	Northampto	nshire HE	R		
Post code (if known)					
Area of site	c.1500 sq m	1			
NGR	SP 6892 49	48			
Height AOD (max/ min)	c. 95m				
Project creators					
Brief issued by			ire District Co	ouncii	
Project supervisor/s (PO)	Zbigniew Po				
Funded by	Tesco Store				
Full title			Old Tiffield n Archaeologi		oad, Towcester, valuation
Authors	Pozorski, Z.		<u> </u>		
Report no.	3398				
Date (of report)	October 200	19			

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#### SUMMARY

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#### 1 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 In October 2009 Archaeological Solutions (AS) conducted an archaeological evaluation of land at the Tesco Store, Old Tiffield Road, Towcester, Northamptonshire (NGR SP 6892 4948; Figs. 1 & 2). The evaluation was commissioned by Tesco Stores Ltd and was conducted prior to determination of a planning application to extend the existing store (South Northamptonshire District Council (SNDC) Planning Ref. S/2009/0136).
- 1.2 The archaeological evaluation was undertaken in accordance with a brief issued by SNDC (dated 22/08/2009), and a written scheme of investigation (specification) prepared by AS (dated 02/09/2009). The project conformed to the Institute of Archaeologists (IfA) *Code of Conduct* and the IfA *Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Field Evaluation* (revised 2001).
- 1.3 The evaluation aimed to determine the location, extent, date, character, condition, significance and quality of any surviving archaeological remains liable to be threatened by the proposed development. It was important to identify any evidence of Roman, medieval and post-medieval activity associated with this part of Towcester.

#### Planning policy context

- 1.4 The relevant planning policies which apply to the effect of development with regard to cultural heritage are Planning Policy Guidance Note 15 'Planning and the Historic Environment' (PPG15) and Planning Policy Guidance Note 16 'Archaeology and Planning' (PPG16) (Department of the Environment).
- 1.5 PPG16 (1990) is the national Planning Policy Guidance Note which applies to archaeology. It states that there should always be a presumption in favour of preserving nationally important archaeological remains *in situ*. However, when there is no overriding case for preservation, developers are required to fund opportunities for the recording and, where necessary, the excavation of the site. This condition is widely applied by local authorities.
- 1.6 PPG15 (1994) is the national Planning Policy Guidance Note which applies to conservation of the historic environment by protecting the character and appearance of Conservation Areas and protecting listed buildings (of architectural or historical interest) from demolition and unsympathetic change and safeguarding their settings as far as is possible. This condition is also widely applied by local authorities.

#### 2 DESCRIPTION OF THE SITE

- 2.1 The site is located on the north-west outskirts of Towcester which lies c. 15km south-west of Northampton. The site lies on the western side of Old Tiffield Road, to the east of the A5 Watling Street and to the north of the course of the river Tove.
- 2.2 The site is occupied by a Tesco store, loading bay and a car park to the south and south-west, and scrubland to the north which includes trees. The site is bounded to the west by Degra and Hinkley House.

#### 3 TOPOGRAPHY, GEOLOGY AND SOILS

3.3 The solid geology of the area is Upper Lias Clay overlaying alluvial soils of the Fladbury 1 Association. Also soils of the Wickham 2 Association may be encountered in vicinty (Soil Survey of England and Wales, 1983).

#### 4 ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

A desk-based assessment of the site has been carried out by Birmingham Archaeology (2009). A summary of the assessment is presented below.

#### Prehistoric

4.1 There is a little evidence of prehistoric activity in vicinity of the site. Single finds of a stone axe and an Iron Age gold stater of Andoco were found to the north and north-east of the site. However, it has been suggested that the origins of Towcester lie in this period, and that it was as extensive as the later Roman settlement (Woodfield, 1995)

#### Roman

- 4.2 The site is located approximately 800 m north-east of the centre of the Roman town of Lactodurum, now occupied by Towcester. Lactodurum was likely settled in the 1<sup>st</sup> century AD, and in late 1<sup>st</sup>/early 2<sup>nd</sup> century AD Watling Street and the surrounding areas were laid out (Viatores 1964) A road following the course of Old Tiffield Road may have been constructed in this period.
- 4.3 The town expanded during this period, and a large defensive earthwork and ditch were constructed around the centre of the town towards the end of the 2<sup>nd</sup> century AD. Settlement evidence has been uncovered up to 1 km along the roads leading out of the town, which suggests that the area outside of the defences continued to thrive. Construction of the railway station in 1864 recorded many coins and ceramic vessels. Also cemeteries are known from the town surroundings. It is believed that occupation of the town and the area outside its defences continued into the 4<sup>th</sup> century AD or even into the early 5<sup>th</sup> century AD (Taylor *et al* 2002).

#### Anglo-Saxon

4.5 During the late Saxon period, Watling Street marked one of the boundaries of Danelaw, and Towcester became the centre of a royal estate, likely due to its position as the most defensible town along the boundary (Greenall 1979). Very limited archaeological evidence for this period has been recorded in the area which seems likely to have been agricultural.

#### Medieval

- 4.6 The Domesday book states that Towcester was a rural manor and likely the centre of local administration by the end of the 11th century (Morris 1979). Towcester's location on Watling Street at the junction with the Oxford to Northampton road meant that it became an important trading centre, and although a market is not recorded until 1220, it is possible that one existed here by the end of the 11th century.
- 4.7 To the south of the Tove river the Chapel of St Leonard and a leper hospital were located, first mentioned in 1200. The hospital has gone out of use and been abandoned by the mid 15<sup>th</sup> century. The lack of any of medieval finds north of the River Tove, apart from the ridge and furrow and an isolated pottery scatter, suggests that the majority of the area where the site is located was agricultural land during medieval period.

#### Post-medieval & modern

- 4.8 The introduction of the London to Birmingham Railway in 1838 adversely affected the town's economy which went into decline. In 1872 a station was opened on the Stratford and Midland Junction Railway line at Old Tiffield Road, to the north of Towcester. To the north of the railway station Hesketh Hotel was built in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century and now Degra House.
- 4.9 In the mid 20th century, the railway line was closed and Towcester Railway Station was converted into a foundry. The existing Tesco supermarket premises were erected in the early 1990s on the site of the former railway station and foundry.
- 4.10 An evaluation of the Mabey Hire depot on the eastern side of Old Tiffield Road by HAT (now AS; Murray 1998) revealed deposits of foundry waste used to raise a ground surface above the Tove floodplain. No archaeological features or finds were revealed.

#### 5 METHODOLOGY

- 5.1 Five trenches were excavated using a mechanical 180° excavator fitted with a toothless ditching bucket (Fig. 2). The specification provided for three trenches, however due to the presence of dense trees some changes to the layout of trenches were made. A final trench layout was agreed on site with the archaeological advisor to SNDC. Trench 3 was divided (labelled Trenches 3 and 4). In addition Trench 5 was excavated to examine the central part of the site.
- 5.2 Topsoil and undifferentiated overburden were mechanically excavated under close archaeological supervision. Exposed surfaces were cleaned by hand and examined for archaeological features. Deposits were recorded using *pro forma* recording sheets, drawn to scale, and photographed as appropriate. Excavated spoil was searched for finds and the trenches were scanned by a metal detector.

#### 6 DESCRIPTION OF RESULTS

Trench 1 (Figs. 2 & 3, DPs 2-6)

Sample section 13 (DP 5): E end, S facing		
0.00 = 95.37 m AOD		
0.00 - 0.24m	L1000	Topsoil. Mid to dark grey, soft and friable, sandy silt.
0.24 - 0.50m	L1001	Subsoil. Light grey, compact, sandy silt.
0.50m+	L1002	Natural. Mid to dark yellow, compact, clay with
		patches of dark orange gravel.

Sample section 14 (DP 6): W end, S facing 0.00 = 95.43m AOD		
0.00 - 0.18m	L1000	Topsoil. As above.
0.48 - 0.48m	L1001	Subsoil. As above.
0.48m +	L1002	Natural. As above.

Description of features: Trench 1 contained two ditches orientated N/S.

Ditch F1003 was located along the south edge of the trench (14+  $\times$  0.60  $\times$  0.38m). It extended beyond the bounds of the trench. Its full width was only revealed at the junction of Trenches 1 and 5. It had steep / moderately sloping sides and a concave base (Fig. 3; DP 3-4). Its fill, L1004, was a dark brownish grey, compact, clayey silt with stone and flint gravel. It contained  $2^{nd}$  century Roman pottery (21 (248g)), animal bone (155g), an iron nail fragment (18g) and shell (1g). F1003 cut F1017.

F1017 was a possible linear feature (3+  $\times$  0.40+  $\times$  0.36m) located in the eastern part of the trench. It had steep / moderately sloping sides and a slightly concave base (Fig. 3; DP 3). Its fill, L1018, was an orange / light brown, compact gravel with clayey silt. No finds were present. F1017 may have been a ditch, however, it also may have been a natural feature as its fill was much compacted and contained large amounts of gravel (c. 50% of bulk size). The feature was truncated by Ditch F1003.

## Trench 2 (Fig. 2, DPs 7-9)

Sample section 15 (DP 8): N end, W facing 0.00 = 95.26m AOD		
0.00 - 0.16m	L1000	Topsoil. As above.
0.16 - 0.34m	L1001	Subsoil. As above.
0.34m +	L1002	Natural clay. As above.

Sample section 16 (DP 9): S end, W facing 0.00 = 95.31m AOD		
0.00 - 0.25m	L1000	Topsoil. As above.
0.25 - 0.37m	L1001	Subsoil. As above.
0.37m +	L1002	Natural clay. As above.

Description of results: Trench 2 contained no archaeological features or finds.

#### Trench 3 (Figs. 2 & 4, DPs 10-13)

Sample section 17 (DP 12): NE end, SE facing		
0.00 = 95.37 m AOD		
0.00 - 0.15m	L1000	Topsoil. As above.
0.15 – 0.34m	L1001	Subsoil. As above.
0.34m +	L1002	Natural clay. As above.

Sample section	Sample section 18 (DP 13): SW end, SE facing		
0.00 = 95.35 m AOD			
0.00 - 0.19m	L1000	Topsoil. As above.	
0.19 - 0.39m	L1001	Subsoil. As above.	
0.39m +	L1002	Natural clay. As above.	

Description of features: Trench 3 contained Pit F1005

Pit F1005 was circular (1 x 0.75 x 0.26m; Fig. 4, DP 11). It had near-vertical sides and a flattish base. Its fill, L1006, was a mid grey, compact sandy silty clay with gravel and chalk chunks. It contained  $2^{nd}$  century Roman pottery (3; 9g) and animal bone (44g).

### Trench 4 (Figs. 2 & 4, DPs 14-18)

Sample section 19 (DP 17): E end, S facing		
0.00 = 95.22m AOD		
0.00 - 0.20m	L1000	Topsoil. As above.
0.20 - 0.38m	L1001	Subsoil. As above.
0.38m +	L1002	Natural clay. As above.

Sample section 20 (DP 18): W end, S facing		
0.00 = 95.19m AOD		
0.00 - 0.20m	L1000	Topsoil. As above.
0.20 - 0.38m	L1001	Subsoil. As above.
0.38m +	L1002	Natural clay. As above.

Description of features: Trench 4 contained two linear ditches, F1007 and F1009, both orientated N/S and each extended beyond the trench limits.

Ditch F1007 (1+  $\times$  0.62  $\times$  0.12m) terminated within the trench. It had gently sloping sides and a concave base (Fig. 4; DP 15). Its fill, L1008, was a light yellowish grey, compact clayey silt with gravel. It contained 2<sup>nd</sup> Roman pottery (1; 24g) and shell (1; 8g).

Ditch F1009 (1.60+  $\times$  0.82  $\times$  0.23m) was parallel to F1007. It had moderately sloping sides and flattish base (Fig. 4; DP 16). Its fill, L1010, was a light yellowish grey, compact, clayey silt with gravel. It contained 2<sup>nd</sup> century Roman pottery (3; 10g) and animal bone (22g).

#### Trench 5 (Figs. 2 & 3, DPs 19 - 21)

Sample section 21: N end, E facing 0.00 = 95.32m AOD		
0.00 - 0.15m	L1000	Topsoil. As above.
0.15 – 0.28m	L1001	Subsoil. As above.
0.28m +	L1002	Natural clay. As above.

Sample section 22 (DP 22): S end, E facing					
0.00 = 95.38m  AOD					
0.00 - 0.13m	L1000	OO Topsoil. As above.			
0.13 - 0.35m	L1001	Subsoil. As above.			
0.35m +	L1002	Natural clay. As above.			

Description of results: Trench 5 contained two ditches, aligned E/W, and a possible well within one of ditches.

Ditch F1011 (1.60+  $\times$  0.75  $\times$  0.18m) was located in the northern part of the trench. It had gently sloping sides and a concave base (Fig. 3; DP 20). Its fill, L1012, was a mid brownish grey, compact, clayey silt with gravel. It contained  $2^{nd}$  century Roman pottery (3; 14g) and animal bone (8g).

In the central part of the trench another linear feature, F1013, was located (0.60+ x 2.20; Fig. 3; DP 21). It was not excavated and therefore its depth and profile were not defined. It contained L1014, a dark greenish grey, compact, silty clay. It contained mid – late 2<sup>nd</sup> century Roman pottery (14; 217g), animal bone (9g) and an iron fragment (10g). F1013 may have been a ditch or a large pit. It contained masonry structure M1015.

M1015 was a circular structure (*c.* 0.90m in diameter) situated within F1013 (Fig. 3; DP 21). It comprised a circular arrangement of rough, irregular limestone blocks (*c.* 0.10/0.20 x 0.10/0.25m) without any bonding material. The blocks seemed to be laid on their flattish sides. M1015 may have a more regular structure with solid masonry work in its lower part but it was not further investigated during the evaluation. A 'group' of three stones and single stones were also present, as well as others were visible in both the eastern and western sections of the trench. The interior of the structure was filled with L1016, a mid brownish grey, soft sandy silt. It contained 2<sup>nd</sup> century Roman pottery (5; 54g). M1015 may have been a well. It remained unexcavated.

#### 7 CONFIDENCE RATING

7.1 It is not felt that any factors inhibited the recognition of archaeological features or finds.

#### 8 DEPOSIT MODEL

8.1 The stratigraphy was simple and encountered in each trench. The topsoil, L1000, comprised a mid to dark grey, soft and friable sandy silt (0.12 - 0.30m thick). Below L1000, subsoil L1001 was a light grey, compact silty sand (0.10 - 0.25m in thickness). Below L1001, the natural geology was a clay, L1002 (present at 0.25 - 0.50m below existing). It was a mid to dark yellow, compact clay with patches of dark orange gravel.

#### 9 DISCUSSION

- 9.1 The site had good potential for archaeological remains, in particular for Roman remains. The latter have been recorded locally and relate to the town of Lactodurum. The site also had the potential for medieval and post-medieval remains associated with development of Towcester.
- 9.2 In the event the evaluation revealed Roman archaeology.

Feature	Trench	Context	Date
1003	1	Ditch	Roman 2 <sup>nd</sup> C
1017	1	?Ditch	-
1005	3	Pit	Roman 2 <sup>nd</sup> C
1007	4	Ditch	Roman 2 <sup>nd</sup> C
1009	4	Ditch	Roman 2 <sup>nd</sup> C
1011	5	Ditch	Roman 2 <sup>nd</sup> C
1013	5	Ditch	Roman Mid – Late 2 <sup>nd</sup> C
1015	5	?Well	Roman 2 <sup>nd</sup> C

- 9.3 Features were located in four of five trial trenches. Trench 2, the easternmost trench contained no features or finds. Tr.1 ?Ditch F1017 may have been a natural feature, based on the character of its fill, and the lack of finds. The archaeological features were well preserved. The ditches (Tr. 1 F1003 & ?F1017, Tr.4 F1007 & F1009, Tr. 5 F1011 & F1013) were orientated N/S and E/W. The possible well, Tr.5 F1015, may also be a part of a structure extending beyond the trench limits. The archaeological features likely suggest a continuation of Roman settlement to the rear of Watling Street to the west.
- 9.4 The pottery derived from the archaeological features and unstratified is all  $2^{nd}$  century Roman. That from Tr.5 Ditch F1013 is dated to the mid late  $2^{nd}$  century. Animal bone, iron fragments (nails) and shell were also recovered.
- 9.5 A site visit during the evaluation identified that the 18<sup>th</sup> century avenue from Easton Neston House (Grade I and a registered garden) has survived as a substantial earthwork which appears to cross part of the development area (Brian Giggins *per comm*.)

#### 10 DEPOSITION OF THE ARCHIVE

10.1 Archive records, with an inventory, will be deposited with any donated finds from the site at the Northampton Museum. The archive will be quantified, ordered, indexed, cross-referenced and checked for internal consistency. In addition to the overall site summary, it will be necessary to produce a summary of the artefactual and ecofactual data.

#### **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

Archaeological Solutions would like to thank Tesco Stores Limited for their cooperation and funding of the project. AS is also grateful to DPP, their planning consultants

AS gratefully acknowledge the input and advice of Mr Brian Giggins, archaeological advisor to South Northamptonshire District Council.

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## APPENDIX 1 CONCORDANCE OF FINDS

AS1241 Tesco, Old Tiffield Road, Towcester, Northamptonshire Concordance of finds by feature

Feature	Context	Segment	Trench	Description	Spot Date	Pottery	A.Bone (g)	Other
1003	1004	Α	1	Fill of Ditch	2nd C AD	(6) 128g	82g	Shell (1) 1g
•		В	1	Fill of Ditch	2nd C AD	(15) 120g	73g	Fe Frag 18g
1005	1006		3	Fill of Pit	2nd C AD	(3) 9g	44g	
1007	1008		4	Fill of Ditch	2nd C AD	(1) 24g		Shell (1) 8g
1009	1010		4	Fill of Ditch	2nd C AD	(3) 10g	22g	
1011	1012		5	Fill of Ditch	2nd C AD	(3) 14g	8g	
1013	1014		5	Fill of Ditch	Mid - Late 2nd C AD	(14) 217g	9g	Fe Frag 10g
1015	1016		5	Fill Within Well	2nd C AD	(5) 54g		
U/S			1	Spoil Heap	2nd C AD	(9) 165g	74g	

AS1241: Tesco, Old Tiffield Road, Towcester, Nhants Concordance of Samples

Sample	Size (I)	Feature	Context	Trench	Description	Flot (ml)
1	40	1003	1004	1	Ditch Fill	25
2	40	1005	1006	3	Pit Fill	45
3	40	1009	1010	4	Ditch Fill	20
4	40	1011	1012	5	Ditch Fill	35

The flots have been sent to Alex Livarda for analysis

#### APPENDIX 2 SPECIALIST REPORTS

#### The Roman Pottery

Andrew Peachey

Evaluation excavations recovered a total of 62 sherds (709g) of Roman pottery. The assemblage is moderately to highly abraded and contains only limited diagnostic sherds, but appears to be of 2<sup>nd</sup> century AD date. The sherds are sparsely scattered in Well Ring F1015, Pit F1005, Ditches F1003, F1007, F1009, F1011 and F1013, and probably represent a scatter of domestic detritus but do not include any deliberate rubbish deposits.

The pottery was quantified by sherd count and weight (g), with fabrics examined at x20 magnification and cross-referenced to the Milton Keynes fabric series (Marney 1989) or National Roman Fabric Reference Collection (Tomber and Dore 1998). All data was entered into a Microsoft Excel spreadsheet that forms part of the archive.

The bulk of the pottery: *c*.92% by sherd count (*c*.89% by weight) is comprised of reduced and oxidised coarse fabrics that can be attributed to industries in the Upper Nene Valley/Northamptonshire region (Marney 1989: fabrics 14a, 17a and 17c) or the Towcester/Milton Keynes area (Marney 1989: fabrics 3, 9a/b, 25/30, 19/29 and 47j). These locally produced fabrics are supplemented by scarce fragments of Lower Nene Valley colour-coated ware and shell-tempered ware (probably produced at Harrold, Beds) in Ditch F1003 (L1004 Seg.A), with a further sherd of shell-tempered ware in Ditch F1011 (L1012) and a single sherd of Lezoux samian ware present as an un-stratified find.

The fabrics are typical of those in circulation in the 2<sup>nd</sup> century AD in the region, a date supported by two diagnostic fragments. Ditch F1013 (L1014) contained the rim and body of a cornice rim beaker with roulette decoration in an oxidised Upper Nene Valley fabric (Marney 1989, 110: vessel 12; fabric 17c), dating to the mid to late 2<sup>nd</sup> century AD. Well Ring F1015 (L1016) contained the rim of a lid-seated jar in a local oxidised sandy ware, possibly from the Caldecotte kilns at Milton Keynes (Marney 1989, 104: vessel 24; fabric 47j) that dates to the 2<sup>nd</sup> century AD.

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## **PHOTOGRAPHIC INDEX**



DP 1. Tesco Store site, Old Tiffield Road, Towcester, Northamptonshire. View NW.



DP 2. Trench 1. View W.



DP 3. Trench 1, F1003A and F1017. View W.



DP 4. Trench 1, F1003B. View W.



DP 5. Trench 1, E end. Sample section. View N.



DP 6. Trench 1, W end. Sample section. View N.



DP 7. Trench 2. Looking NNE.



DP 9. Trench 2, S end. Sample section. View ESE.



DP 11. Trench 3, F1005. View NE.



DP 8. Trench 2, N end. Sample section. View ESE.



DP 10. Trench 3. Looking NE.



DP 12. Trench 3, NE end. Sample section. View NW.



DP 13. Trench 3, SW end. Sample section. View NW.



DP 14. Trench 4. View W.



DP 15. Trench 4, F1007. View S.



DP 16. Trench 4, F1009. View S.



DP 17. Trench 4, E end. Sample section. View N.



DP 18. Trench 4, W end. Sample section. View N.



DP 19. Trench 5. View S.



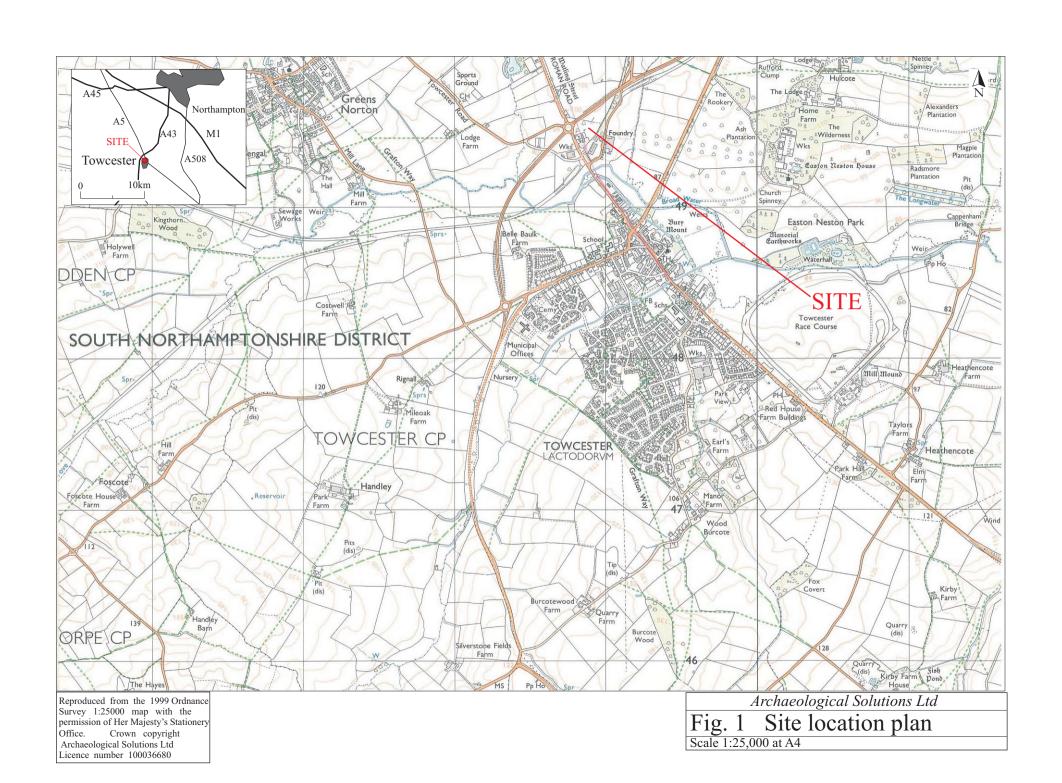
DP 21. Trench 5, F1013 and possible Well M1014. View S.

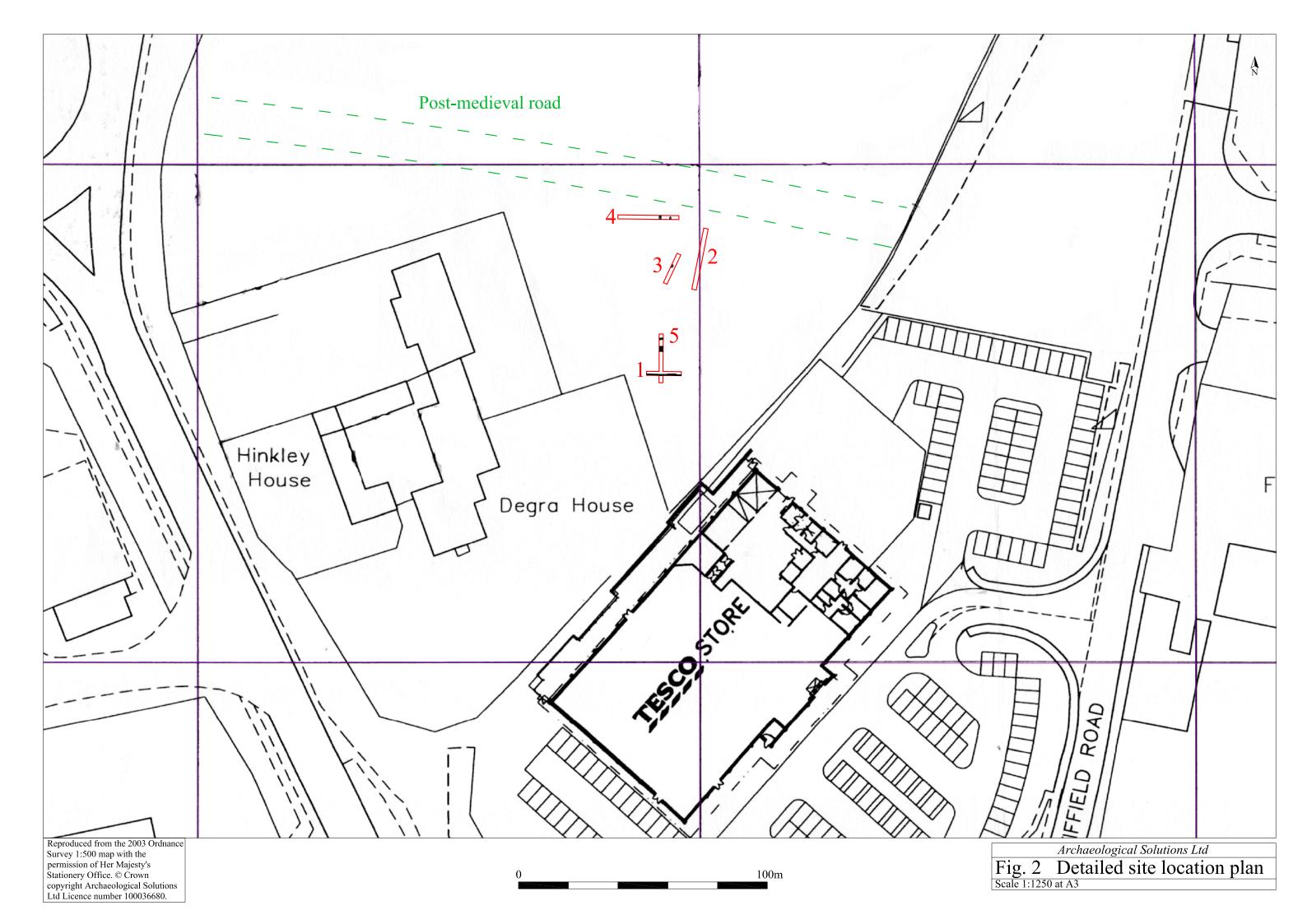


DP 20. Trench 5, F1011. View E.



DP 22. Trench 5, S end. Sample section. View W.





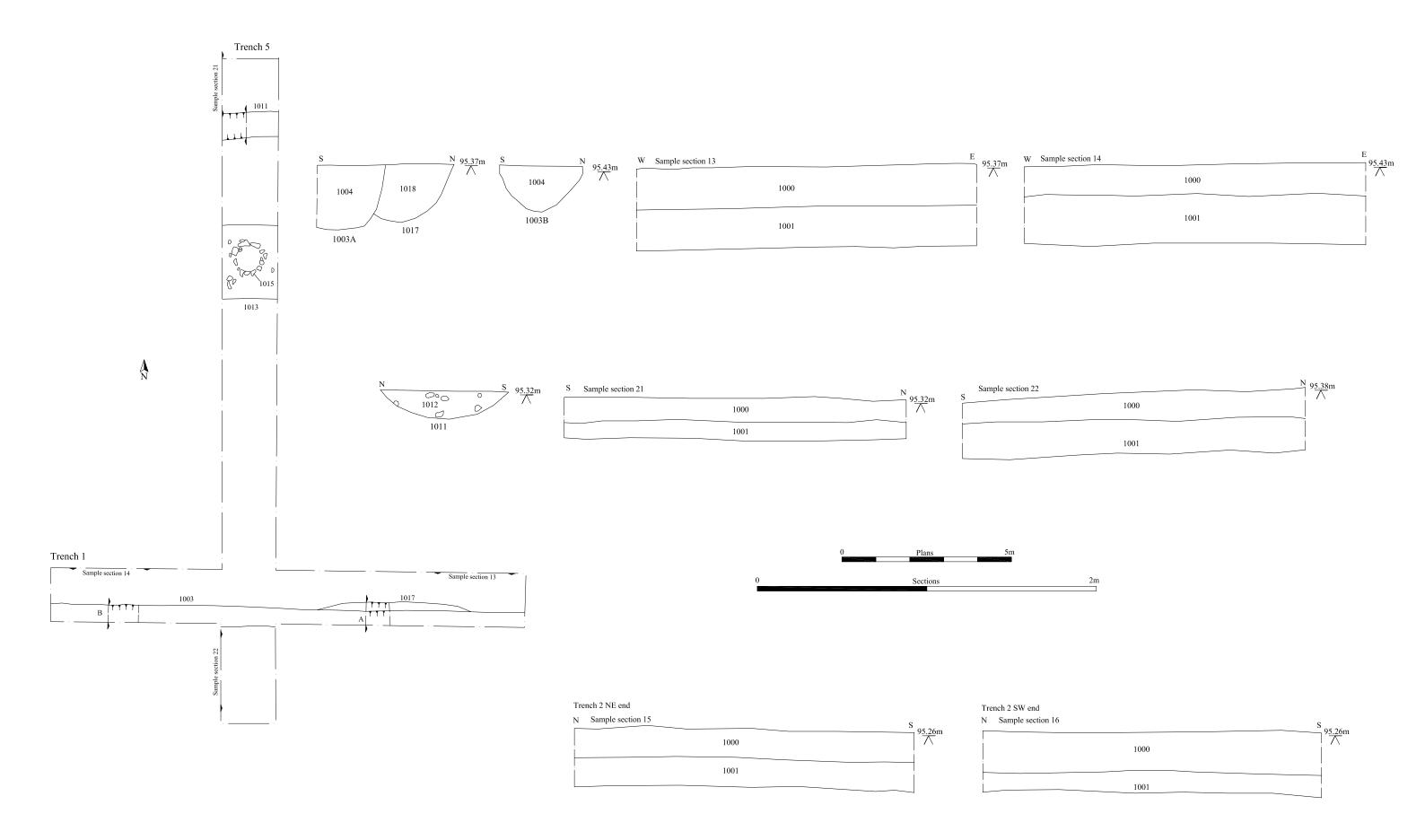
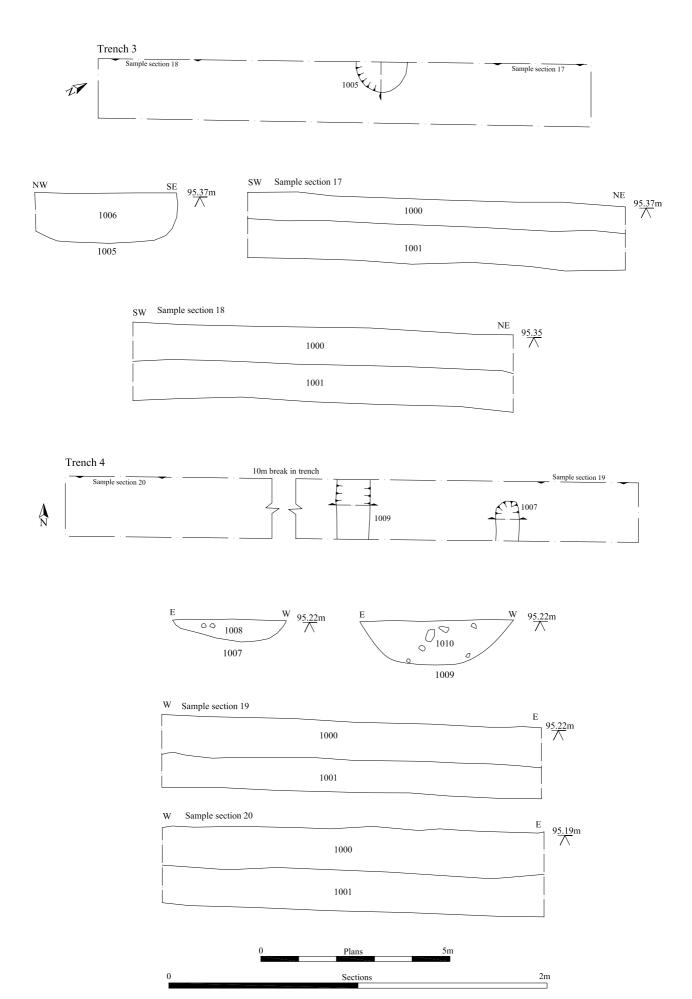


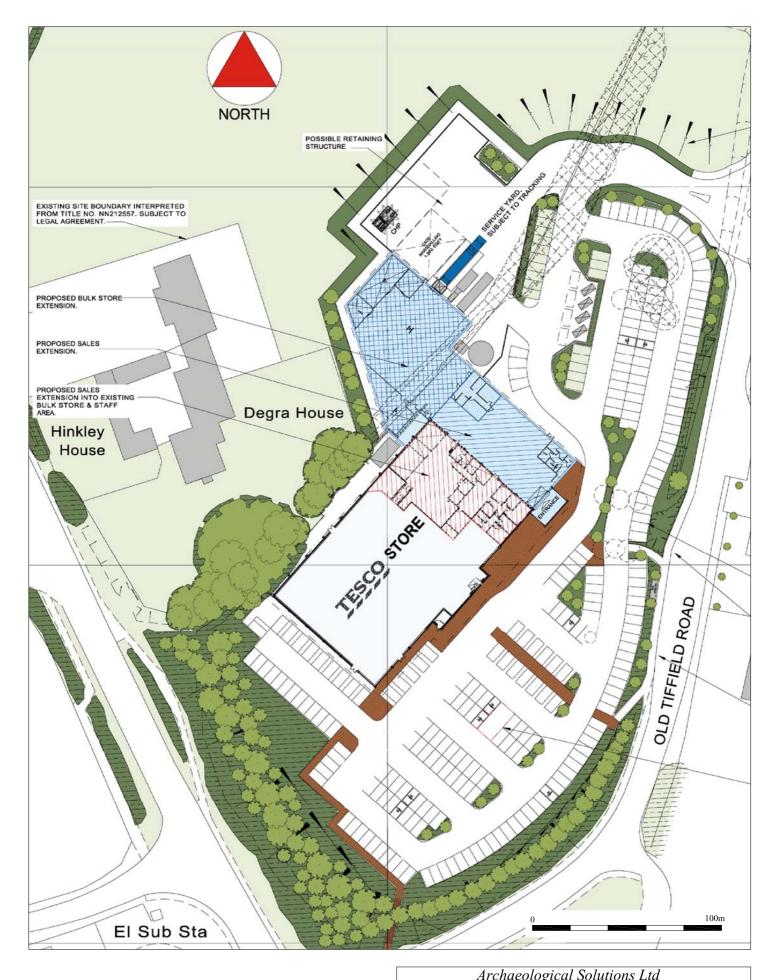
Fig. 3 Trench plans and sections
Scale 1:100 and 1:20 at A3



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Fig. 4 Trench plans and sections

Scale 1:100 and 1:20 at A4



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Fig. 5 Proposed development plan

Scale 1:2000 at A4