

# **birmingham archaeology**



**THE UNIVERSITY  
OF BIRMINGHAM**  
**Land to the East of The  
Red Lion Public House,  
Cossington Lane,  
Rothley, Leicestershire**

**An Archaeological Evaluation  
2004**



**Project No. 1136**

**Land to the East of The Red Lion Public House, Cossington Lane, Rothley,  
Leicestershire  
An Archaeological Evaluation 2004**

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**Summary**

*An archaeological evaluation of land to the east of the Red Lion Public House, off Cossington Lane, Rothley, Leicestershire (centred on SK59121281) was commissioned by Fairclough Homes. The work was undertaken by Birmingham Archaeology in March 2004. Four trenches were excavated to locate and identify any archaeological remains that could be affected by the development.*

*A small collection of struck flint was recovered from the plough horizon at the southern end of the site, suggesting at least some level of prehistoric activity in the area. A possible curvilinear gully was identified in the vicinity of the flint collection.*

*The evaluation also identified a single linear feature parallel to Cossington Lane at the southern end of the site, and a series of linear features on the same alignment further to the northwest. These linear features were on the same alignment as the remnants of possible medieval strip fields previously identified in a desk-based assessment. No dating evidence, however, was recovered from any of these features, or from the earlier ploughsoil horizon identified underlying the topsoil across the whole of the site.*

**1.0 Introduction** (Figs. 1 and 2)

This report describes the results of an archaeological evaluation undertaken on land to the east of the Red Lion Public House, off Cossington Lane, Rothley, Leicestershire (centred on SK59121281). The work was carried out by Birmingham Archaeology on behalf of Fairclough Homes to provide archaeological information in advance of the erection of 25 dwellings on the site.

The archaeological work followed a Design Brief (Leicestershire County Council 2004) and a Written Scheme of Investigation prepared by Birmingham Archaeology (2004). The archaeological evaluation was conducted in accordance with the Institute of Field Archaeologists Standards and Guidance for Field Evaluation (Institute of Field Archaeologists 1999).

Subject to approval from the landowner it is intended to deposit the archive with Leicestershire County Council.

**2.0 Site location**

The development area is located on land to the east of the Red Lion Public House, off Cossington Lane, Rothley in the District of Charnwood, Leicestershire. The site is approximately 0.83ha in area.

### **3.0 Archaeological background**

An archaeological desk-based assessment was prepared on the site and its surrounding area by Birmingham Archaeology (Ramsey 2003). The report concluded that the site has the potential to contain evidence of early settlement. The study area is situated on a flat promontory surrounded by the River Soar and the Rothley Brook on the east, west and north sides. The underlying geology comprises sand and gravel. Within the general area of a c. 1km radius from the site there has been identified archaeological evidence suggesting activity from the mesolithic to the medieval periods.

### **4.0 Objectives**

The objectives of the archaeological work were to:

- Establish the presence or absence of any archaeological deposits and features within the proposed development site.
- Define the nature, extent and significance of surviving deposits and features.
- Provide information to allow the formulation of a mitigation scheme for any further work in advance of development, where appropriate.

### **5.0 Method (Fig. 3)**

The evaluation comprised four trial-trenches, totalling 120m in length (and 1.6m in width). The trenches were located to sample areas previously identified in agreement with Leicestershire County Council, and other areas of the development site where trial-trenching was not obstructed by groundworks.

The topsoil and plough horizons were mechanically removed by a JCB excavator fitted with a toothless ditching bucket, operating under direct archaeological supervision, to expose the top of archaeological deposits, or natural subsoil where no archaeological deposits were encountered. The exposed horizon was hand cleaned as necessary. A representative sample of all significant, or potentially-significant archaeological deposits was hand-excavated in order to resolve questions relating to their date, nature, extent and condition.

All stratigraphic sequences were recorded, and a comprehensive written record was maintained on pro-forma context, feature and trench record cards. Contextual information was supplemented by scale drawings, and black and white and colour slide photography. These, together with recovered artifacts, form the site archive.

## 6.0 Archaeological results

### Trench 1 (Figs. 3 and 4)

Aligned northwest-southeast, 30m in length.

The red silt, orange sand and gravel subsoil (1002) was exposed at a maximum depth of 0.55m below the original ground surface, and showed much evidence of natural disturbance and root activity. Cutting the subsoil, towards the centre of the trench was an southwest-northeast aligned linear feature (F100) that was parallel to Cossington Lane, situated 13m to the south. Feature F100 was approximately 1.2m wide and 0.28m deep, with sloping sides and a flat base. The fill (1003) was a dark red brown silty sand with some stones and root activity present throughout. It contained no finds or charcoal.

Further to the west a possible curvilinear feature (F101) was identified, also cutting the natural subsoil. This feature was aligned roughly north-south, and was a minimum of 0.5m wide and 0.3m deep and roughly V-shaped in profile, becoming much wider and shallower to the south (1.5m x 0.2m). The fill (1004) was a clean light grey brown silty sand with frequent stones. No artifacts were recovered from this fill.

Sealing these features and overlying the natural subsoil was a layer of light orange brown silty sand with many stones (1001), possibly representing a plough horizon. This layer was approximately 0.2m to 0.3m in depth and showed irregular undulations throughout the length of the trench. The majority of this layer was excavated by machine to expose the natural subsoil (1002). Where it was left *in-situ*, a hand-excavated sondage was excavated through it. Several fragments of struck flint of probable mesolithic date (see below) were recovered from this layer at the western end of the trench, immediately to the east of feature F101, as were two small fragments of degraded brick. Several potential features (not illustrated) were initially identified cutting this layer (1001), though these were later determined after hand-testing to be caused by root disturbance.

The plough horizon (1001) was in turn sealed by a layer of dark brown black organic silt topsoil with occasional stones (1000). This layer was approximately 0.2m to 0.25m in depth, and was again present throughout the trench length.

### Trench 2 (Fig 3)

Aligned northeast-southwest, 30m in length.

The mixed orange brown sandy silt with gravel natural subsoil (2002) was identified at a maximum depth of 0.65m below the original ground surface. Overlying the natural subsoil was an irregular layer of light orange brown sandy silt (2001) with a concentration of gravel towards its base. It is likely that this layer represents the same plough horizon identified in Trench 1 to the south (1001). In Trench 2 it measured approximately 0.4m to 0.45m in depth throughout. Sealing this layer was a dark brown organic sandy silt topsoil (2000) with occasional stones, which was approximately 0.2m to 0.25m in depth throughout the trench.

No archaeological features were identified within this trench and no finds were collected.

#### Trench 3 (Figs. 3 and 4)

Aligned roughly north-south, 52m in length.

The natural subsoil (3005) was identified at a maximum depth of 0.5m below the original ground surface. The subsoil comprised orange red sand with patches of sandy gravel and red clay.

A series of four shallow linear features were identified cutting the natural subsoil (3005) at the northern end of the trench, regularly spaced at roughly 5m or 10m intervals. These were aligned southwest-northeast, and measured between 1.3m and 2.2m wide. Sections were hand-excavated through two of these features (F300 and F301). Feature F300 was approximately 0.18m deep with a U-shaped profile and a flat base. The fill of this feature (3000) was a light brown orange sandy silt with occasional charcoal flecks and some small stones. Feature F301 was approximately 0.25m deep, and also had a U-shaped profile and a flat base. The fill of this feature (3001) was a brown sandy silt with occasional charcoal flecks and some small stones. No artifacts were recovered from either of these features.

At the southern end of Trench 3, a linear band of sterile grey and yellow silty sand was tested (F302, 3002), and was determined to be a change in the natural subsoil and not an archaeological feature.

Other potential features were tested within this trench, and were identified as root disturbance and not of archaeological origin.

Sealing the natural subsoil and the linear features was an irregular layer of light brown silty sand with occasional stones (3004). This layer was similar to the fill of the linear features and is likely to represent a plough horizon similar to that identified in the other trenches. This layer (3004) was approximately 0.15m to 0.25m in depth and in turn was sealed by a 0.2m to 0.25m deep layer of dark brown black organic silt topsoil (3000) with occasional stones.

#### Trench 4 (Fig. 3)

Aligned northwest-southeast, 14.5m in length.

The natural subsoil (4002) was identified at a depth of 0.45m below the ground surface. The subsoil comprised an orange red silty sand with patches of grey and yellow sand and gravel.

A possible small linear feature (F400) was identified and tested at the western end of the trench. Due to its irregular profile and clean grey silty sand fill (4003) this was interpreted as a band in the natural subsoil and not of archaeological origin.

Sealing the natural subsoil throughout the trench was a layer of light brown silty sand with occasional stones (4001) which is likely to represent a plough horizon similar to



that identified in the other trenches. This layer was sealed by 0.1m to 0.2m of dark brown black organic silt topsoil (4000), which had been partly machined off in this part of the site.

No archaeological features were identified in this trench.

#### Finds by Erica Macey

A total of four humanly-struck flint items were recovered from layer 1001 (trench 1). The group contained two small corticated bladelets of probable mesolithic date (Alex Lang, pers. comm.) and two cores, also of probable mesolithic date. The flint is likely to be of local origin, as flint-rich glacial deposits are known to exist in this area of Leicestershire (Dr. David Keen, pers. comm.). Other flint tools of mesolithic date have also been recorded in the vicinity of the site, including examples from excavations at Wanlip, Charnwood, 1km to the south of the site (SMR LE1100).

One small piece of medieval pottery was recovered from layer 1005 in the same trench.

## **7.0 Discussion**

The desk-based assessment (Ramsey 2003) noted finds within the surrounding area dating from the mesolithic period onwards. While the potential for isolated finds dating to the Romano-British and Saxon periods was not realised during the evaluation, the recovery of several flint flakes and a flint core attest to at least some level of prehistoric activity within the area of the site. The flint core from layer 1001 in Trench 1 was associated with brick fragments, and adjoined feature F101. Elsewhere, the remains of early prehistoric activity may have been more-or-less disturbed by later ploughing.

Southwest-northeast aligned ditch F100 in Trench 1, cut parallel to Cossington Lane possibly represents the base of a truncated field boundary mapped on a plan of 1780 (Fig. 5). The series of linear features on a similar alignment identified in the northwest of the site are also likely to represent the remains of ridge and furrow. It is interesting to note that the alignment of these features respects the field boundaries possibly representing the remains of a medieval strip field system (Fig. 5) that may have continued to the north along Loughborough Road. However, these features are not presently dated.

## **8.0 Acknowledgements**

This project was commissioned by Fairclough Homes. Thanks are due to Richard Clarke, Senior Planning Archaeologist, who monitored the project on behalf of Leicestershire County Council. The evaluation was supervised by Eleanor Ramsey with the assistance of Kristina Krawiec and Philip Mann. Alex Jones managed the project for Birmingham Archaeology and edited the report. The illustrations were prepared by John Halsted.



## 9.0 References

Birmingham Archaeology 2004 *Written Scheme of Investigation for an Archaeological Evaluation; Land east of Red Lion PH, Cossington Lane, Rothley, Leicestershire.*

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Leicestershire County Council 2004 *Brief for Archaeological Evaluation of Land to the East of the Red Lion Public House, Cossington Lane, Rothley, Leicestershire.* Heritage Services, Leicestershire County Council.

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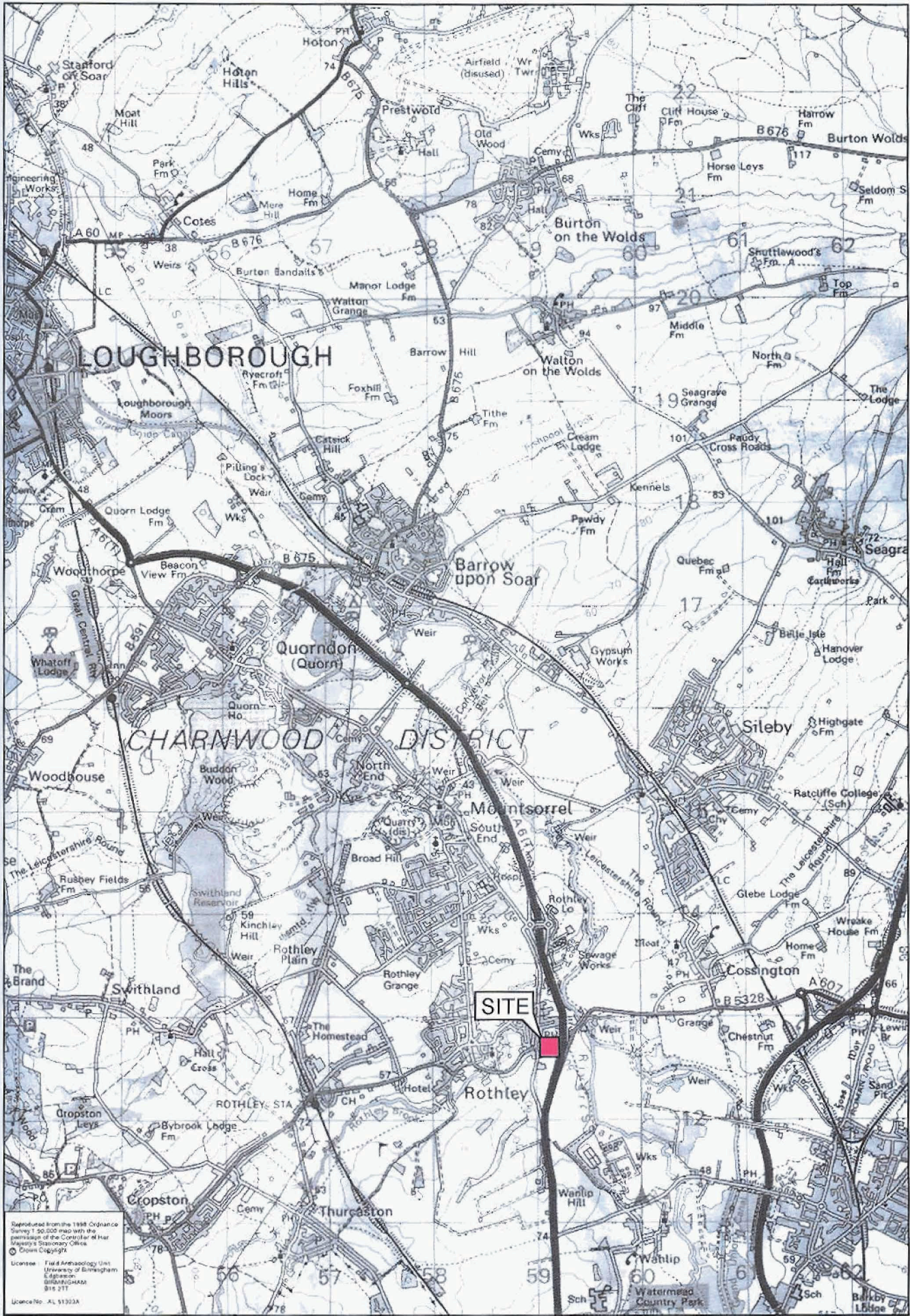
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Fig.1



Study area and proposed housing

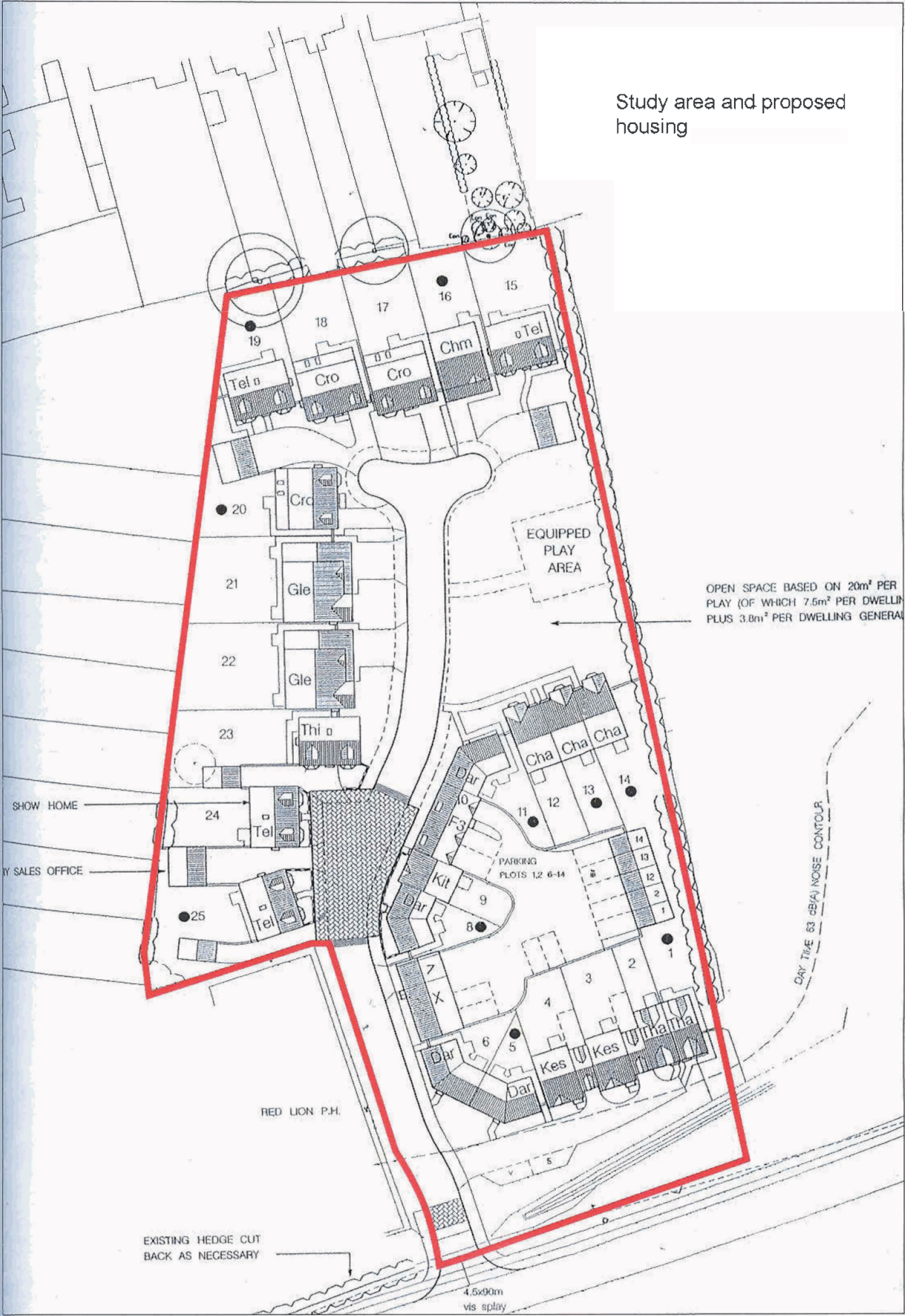


Fig.2



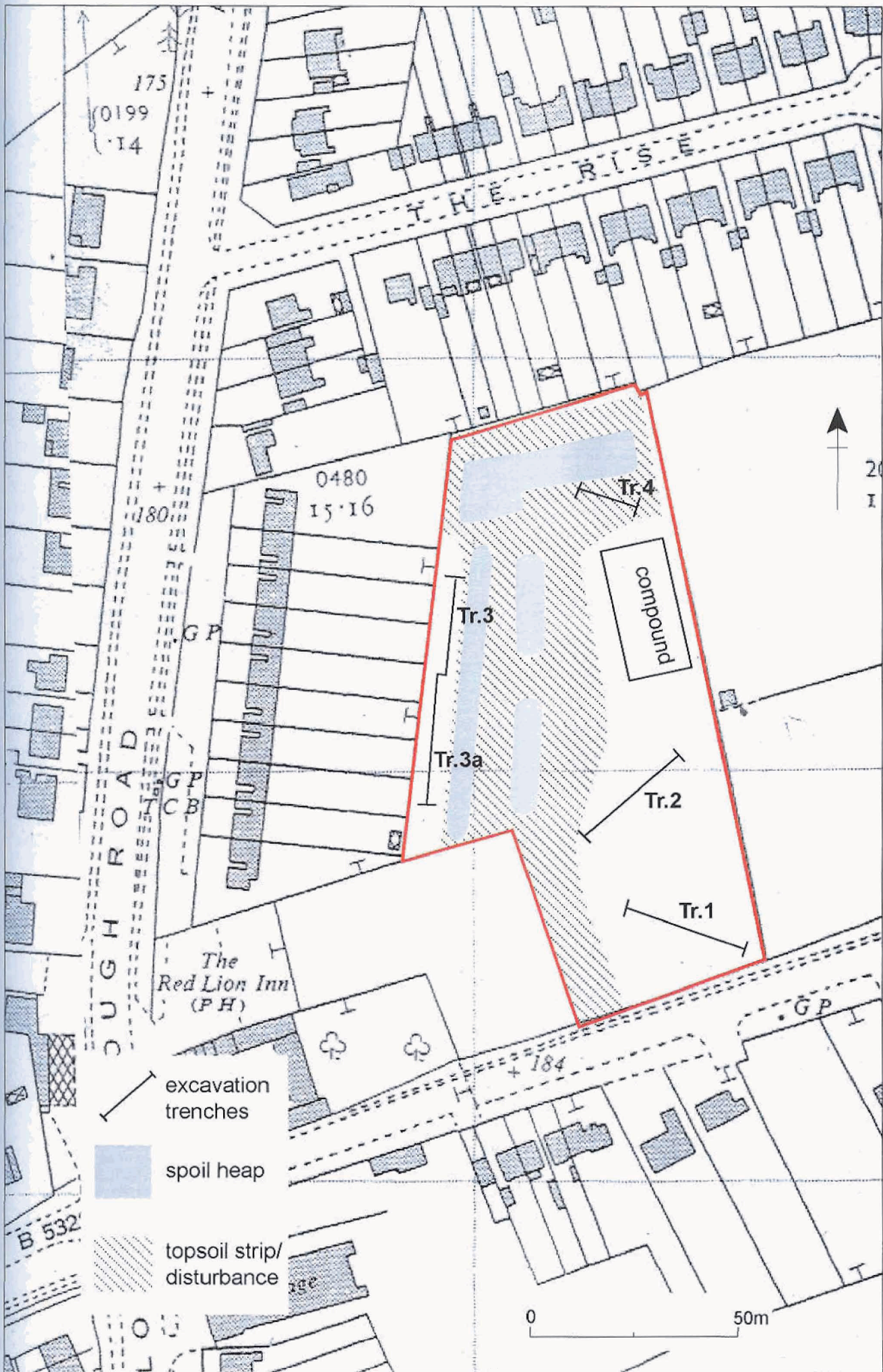


Fig.3

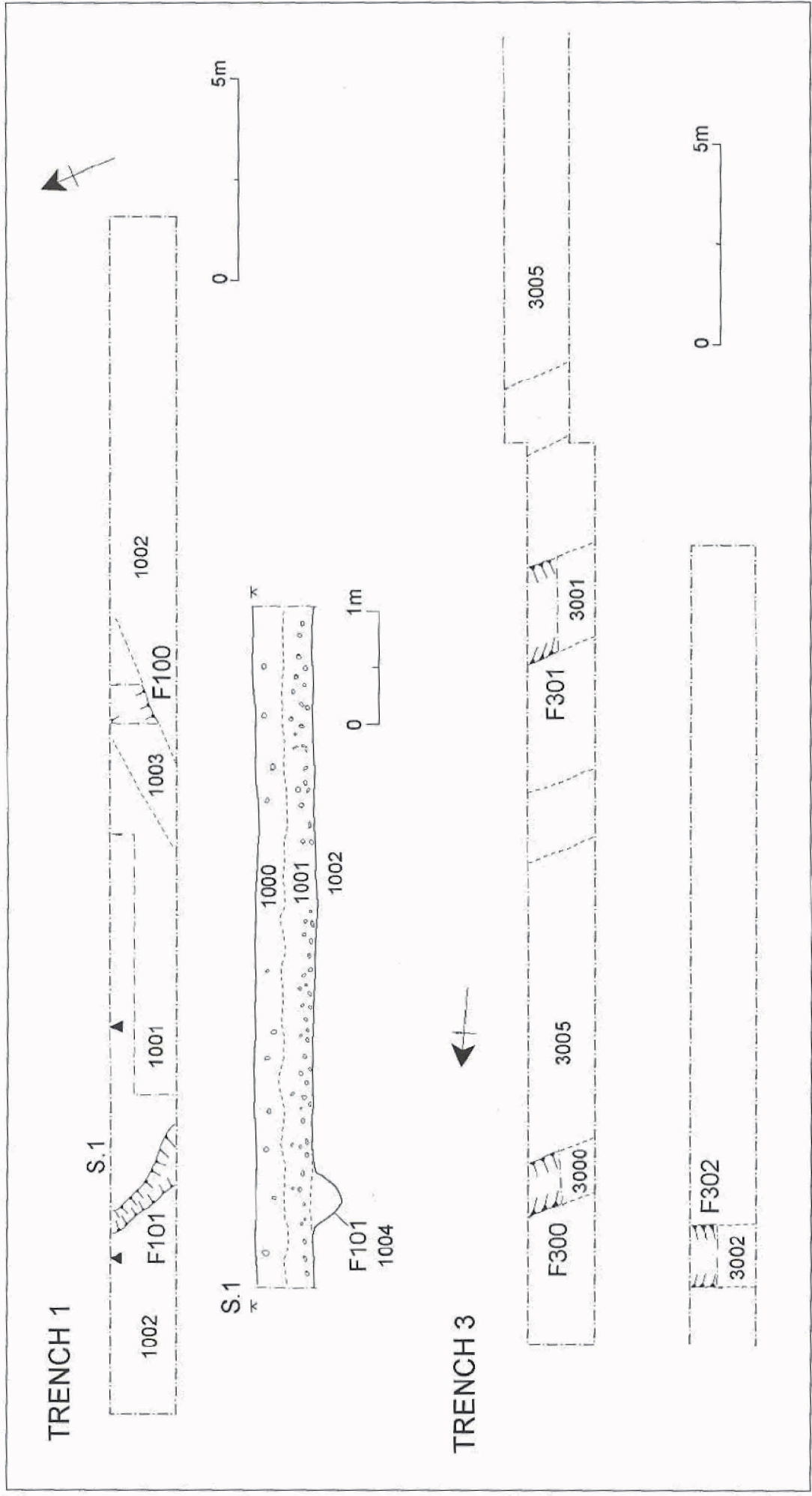


Fig.4



1780



Fig.5