LONSDALE SPECIAL SCHOOL
STEVENAGE
HERTFORDSHIRE

ARCHAEOLOGICAL
FIELD EVALUATION

Project: LSS1461

Document: 2009/82
Version 1.0

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3rd August 2009

Produced for:
Vincent and Gorbing

On behalf of:
Hertfordshire County Council

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Preface

Every effort has been made in the preparation of this document to provide as complete an assessment as possible, within the terms of the specification. All statements and opinions in this document are offered in good faith. Albion Archaeology cannot accept responsibility for errors of fact or opinion resulting from data supplied by a third party, or for any loss or other consequence arising from decisions or actions made upon the basis of facts or opinions expressed in this document.

The project was commissioned by Vincent and Gorbing on behalf of Hertfordshire County Council and was monitored on behalf of the Local Planning Authority by Andy Instone, County Planning Officer (CPA), Hertfordshire County Council.

The fieldwork was undertaken by Iain Leslie (Assistant Archaeological Supervisor) and Adam Williams (Assistant Archaeological Supervisor). This report has been prepared by James Newboult (Project Officer) and edited by Joe Abrams (Project Manager) with figures by James Newboult and Joan Lightning (CAD Technician). All Albion projects are under the overall management of Drew Shotliff (Operations Manager).

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Version History

Version	Issue date	Reason for re-issue
1.0	3rd August 2009	n/a

Structure of this Report

Section 1 serves as an introduction to the site, describing its location, archaeological background and the aims of the project. Section 2 describes the trial trenching methodology and Section 3 summarises the results. Section 4 provides a synthesis of the results and assesses their significance. Section 5 is a bibliography.

Appendix 1 contains trench summary information and detailed contextual data.

Key Terms

Throughout this document the following terms or abbreviations are used:

HCC	Hertfordshire County Council
CPA	Hertfordshire County Council's County Planning Archaeologist
Client	Vincent and Gorbing on behalf of Hertfordshire County Council
HER	Hertfordshire's Historic Environment Record
IfA	Institute for Archaeologists
LPA	Local Planning Authority
Procedures Manual	*Procedures Manual Volume 1 Fieldwork*, 2nd edn, 2001 Albion Archaeology

Non-Technical Summary

As part of the Building Schools for the Future (BSF) programme, Vincent and Gorbing (acting on behalf of Hertfordshire County Council) are preparing an outline planning application for housing development on land at Lonsdale Special School, Stevenage. This land is henceforth referred to as the Potential Development Area (PDA).

An archaeological desk-based assessment (DBA) carried out by Albion Archaeology (2008) demonstrated the need for a non-intrusive (built heritage assessment) of the school buildings within the PDA. Albion Archaeology undertook this work in January 2009 (Albion Archaeology 2009a).

The DBA also identified the potential for sub-surface archaeological remains within the PDA. It demonstrated the need for evaluation, comprising non-intrusive geophysical survey followed by intrusive trial trenching, of the area prior to submission of a planning application. These proposals were discussed (25th November 2008) with Hertfordshire County Council's County Planning Archaeologist (CPA) and an agreement was reached on the extent of the evaluation area.

Albion Archaeology prepared a written scheme of investigation (WSI) for these works (Albion Archaeology 2009b). The geophysical survey was carried out in January 2009 (Stratascan 2009) and the results used to design the layout of the trial trenches. In July 2009, Albion Archaeology carried out the trial trenching and prepared a report on the results (this document).

The evaluation has revealed the remains of part of an agricultural landscape, predating early 19th-century cartographic evidence. The remains demonstrate that land within the current PDA comprised low-density field systems and indicate the presence of a north-south aligned routeway. No evidence for sustained human occupation or settlement was revealed. These remains are considered to be of low local significance. Their identification augments knowledge of the limits / locations of historic land-use in Stevenage.

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Project Background

As part of the Building Schools for the Future (BSF) programme, Vincent and Gorbing (acting on behalf of Hertfordshire County Council) are preparing an outline planning application for housing development on land at Lonsdale Special School, Stevenage. This land is henceforth referred to as the Potential Development Area (PDA).

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1.2 Site Location and Description

The PDA comprises the whole of Lonsdale Special School and is located in the Pin Green district in the centre of modern Stevenage, centred on (NGR) TL 2475 2521 (Fig. 1). The administrative, classroom and residential buildings are all located in the centre of the PDA, while the surrounding land is open, landscaped grassland.

Topographically, the PDA lies close to a hilltop and has views of the surrounding town and countryside to the west, south and east. Land to the north rises to 140m OD (Hampson Park). Within the PDA, land slopes east-west from its peak (136m OD) on the eastern boundary to *c*. 135m OD on its western edge.

1.3 Archaeological Background

The built heritage potential of the PDA has been summarised by Albion Archaeology (2009b).

The HER records no sites of archaeological or historical significance within the PDA. However, the surrounding study area contains significant funerary remains dating to the Roman period (HER152) and it was thought possible that similar

remains, or those of contemporary settlement activity, might exist within the PDA. The site of the former post-medieval Highfield House (HER12962) is located *c.*100m to the north of the PDA and it was thought possible that its gardens once extended into the PDA.

A post-medieval, hedged boundary is partially preserved within the PDA. It enters the north-east corner of the PDA as a N-S aligned boundary and then turns in a broadly south-westerly direction, exiting the south-west corner. This hedge represents the surviving remains of a N-S aligned field boundary and a NE-SW aligned footpath shown on the 1889 1st edition Ordnance Survey (OS) map. The former was also shown as a footpath on the 1925 edition OS map.

1.4 Project Objectives

The layout of the trenches was discussed with and approved by the CPA. The trenches were arranged to maximise their ability to test the archaeological potential of the PDA. The overall objectives of the work were to gain information on:

- the location, extent, nature and date of any archaeological features or deposits that might be present;
- the integrity and state of preservation of any archaeological features or deposits that might be present; and to
- recover artefacts to assist in the development of a type series within the region;
- recover palaeo-environmental remains to determine local environmental conditions.

2. METHODOLOGY

Trial trenching took place between 20th and 23rd July 2009. All nine of the proposed trenches were opened. Trenches 7, 8 and 9 were altered due to the presence of below ground services.

Throughout the project the standards set out in the following documents were adhered to:

- IfA's *Code of Conduct (1999a)*
- IfA's *Standards and Guidance for Field Evaluation (1999b)*
- Albion Archaeology's *Procedures Manual for Archaeological Fieldwork and the Analysis of Fieldwork Records* (2001)
- English Heritage's *Management of Archaeological Projects* (1991)

The location of the trenches was marked out on the ground in advance of machine excavation. Overburden was removed using a mechanical excavator, fitted with a toothless ditching bucket and operating under close archaeological supervision. These deposits were removed down to either the top of archaeological deposits or undisturbed geological deposits, whichever was encountered first.

The bases and sections of all trenches were cleaned by hand in order to clarify the nature of potential archaeological remains. The deposits and any potential remains were noted, cleaned, excavated by hand and recorded using Albion Archaeology's *pro forma* sheets. The trenches were subsequently drawn, and photographed as appropriate. All deposits were recorded using a unique recording number sequence commencing at 100 for Trench 1, 200 for Trench 2 *etc*.

The trenches were inspected by the CPA prior to backfilling.

3. RESULTS

3.1 Introduction

Deposits and features of archaeological interest are summarised below in chronological order. Allocated context numbers are prefixed with the trench number they were recorded from, *i.e.* contexts (100) and (101) are from Trench 1. Trenches 1, 3, 5, 8 and 9 contained no archaeological remains.

Detailed technical information on all deposits and archaeological features can be found in Appendix 1. The project archive will be deposited with North Hertfordshire District Council Museum.

3.2 Overburden and Undisturbed Geological Deposits

Overburden consisted of silty topsoil and subsoil overlying undisturbed geology comprising clay with flint and stones. In Trench 8, rubble makeup layers (801, 802) were encountered between topsoil and subsoil. These are likely to be associated with the construction of the school.

3.3 Field Systems

Trenches 2 and 4 contained the remains of two shallow gullies [203], [404] and a ditch [402]. Their subsoil-derived fills were naturally accumulated and contained no datable artefacts (Fig. 2). Because of the similarity of these deposits to the subsoil, their stratigraphic relationship with it was uncertain. They are likely to represent the remains of boundaries and drainage gullies associated with low-density field systems.

Though undated, none of these remains appear on the 1834 Tithe map (Fig. 4) or on any of the later Ordnance Survey maps. They are, therefore, considered to pre-date 1834 and may represent remains of the post-medieval and/or medieval landscape.

3.4 Wheel Ruts

Trench 6 contained two undated, parallel, broadly N-S aligned linear remains (Fig. 3). They were *c*.3.9m apart and are likely to represent wheel ruts created by the movement of horse-drawn vehicles along a trackway. As with the field systems represented by ditches [203], [404] and [402], no trackway appears on any historic maps of the area. Therefore, these remains are also thought to pre-date 1834. They may be post-medieval or earlier in date.

3.5 Undated Pit

Trench 7 contained the remains of a shallow, circular pit of indeterminate function [703]. Its fill (702) contained pieces of charcoal. No datable artefacts were recovered. The pit was sealed by the subsoil, suggesting it is not modern in date.

4. SYNTHESIS OF RESULTS

4.1 Summary

Evaluation revealed the remains of several undated ditched field boundaries in the western part of the PDA. Although undated, similarities in morphology and character between the ditches and their fills suggest that they are broadly contemporary. The absence of these remains from historic maps demonstrates that they are likely to pre-date the drawing of the Tithe map of 1834 (Fig. 4). It is possible these remains represent part of the post-medieval and/or medieval landscape.

In the northern part of the PDA, the remains of two undated, broadly N-S aligned wheel ruts were identified. A single undated pit containing charcoal was encountered in the eastern part of the PDA. These remains were sealed by subsoil suggesting that they are not modern in date. In the absence of datable artefacts or a spatial relationship with other remains in the locality, their date of use remains unknown. They did not possess any recognisable characteristics which link them with the gardens of Highfield House (HER12962) which lay to the immediate north in the post-medieval period. It had been thought (Section 1.3) these gardens may have extended into the PDA.

None of these remains could be matched with anomalies identified by the geophysical survey.

4.2 Preservation and Potential

The potential preservation of archaeological remains within the PDA is variable. Significant alterations were made to the PDA prior to the construction of the school buildings and associated infrastructure in the 1970s (Fig. 5). The original land surface sloped downwards toward the south-west. The flat building area for the school was cut into this slope and is likely to have removed any archaeological remains within it. The potential for finding archaeological remains within this area is therefore low.

The remainder of the PDA is relatively unaffected by landscaping. Trial trenching has demonstrated that archaeological remains are preserved, some sealed by subsoil. If additional archaeological remains exist within the PDA (to those described here), the potential for them being preserved in these relatively benign conditions is good.

4.3 Significance

The remains identified in the PDA formed part of an agricultural landscape predating early 19th-century cartographic evidence. They demonstrate that the land within the current PDA comprised low-density field systems and indicate the presence of a N-S aligned routeway. No evidence for sustained human occupation or settlement was revealed. These remains are considered to be of *low local significance*. Their identification augments knowledge of the limits / locations of historic land-use in Stevenage.

5. BIBLIOGRAPHY

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6. APPENDIX 1 – TRENCH SUMMARIES

Trench: 1

Max Dimensions: **Length: 25.00 m.** **Width: 1.60 m.** **Depth to Archaeology Min: m.** **Max: m.**

Co-ordinates: **OS Grid Ref.: TL** *(Easting: 24674: Northing: 25219)*

OS Grid Ref.: TL *(Easting: 24690: Northing: 25238)*

Reason: **To test archaeological potential of PDA**

Context:	Type:	Description:	Excavated:	Finds Present:
100	Topsoil	Loose dark grey silt frequent small-medium stones Thickness 0.36m	☑	☐
101	Subsoil	Firm mid yellow grey silty clay frequent small-medium stones Thickness 0.29m	☑	☐
102	Natural	Firm mid yellow orange clay frequent small-large stones	☐	☐

Trench: 2

Max Dimensions: **Length: 25.00 m. Width: 1.60 m. Depth to Archaeology Min: 0.32 m. Max: 0.32 m.**

Co-ordinates: **OS Grid Ref.: TL** *(Easting: 24698: Northing: 25244)*

OS Grid Ref.: TL *(Easting: 24680: Northing: 25262)*

Reason: **To test potential archaeological remains identified through non-intrusive survey**

Context:	Type:	Description:	Excavated:	Finds Present:
200	**Topsoil**	**Loose dark grey silt frequent small-medium stones Thickness 0.22m**	☑	☐
201	**Subsoil**	**Firm mid yellow grey silty clay frequent small-medium stones Thickness 0.20m**	☑	☐
203	**Gulley**	**Linear N-S profile: concave base: concave dimensions: max breadth 0.29m, max depth 0.05m, min length 0.9m**	☐	☐
202	Fill	Firm mid grey silt Thickness 0.05m	☑	☐
204	**Natural**	**Firm mid yellow orange clay frequent small-large stones**	☐	☐

Trench: 3

Max Dimensions: Length: 25.00 m. Width: 1.60 m. Depth to Archaeology Min: m. Max: m.

Co-ordinates: OS Grid Ref.: TL *(Easting: 24681: Northing: 25261)*

OS Grid Ref.: TL *(Easting: 24696: Northing: 25280)*

Reason: To test potential archaeological remains identified through non-intrusive survey

Context:	Type:	Description:	Excavated:	Finds Present:
300	Topsoil	Loose dark grey silt frequent small-medium stones Thickness 0.27m	☑	☐
301	Subsoil	Firm mid yellow grey silty clay frequent small-medium stones Thickness 0.09m	☑	☐
302	Natural	Firm mid yellow orange clay frequent small-large stones	☐	☐

Trench: 4

Max Dimensions: **Length: 25.00 m. Width: 1.60 m. Depth to Archaeology Min: 0.35 m. Max: 0.47 m.**

Co-ordinates: **OS Grid Ref.: TL** *(Easting: 24665: Northing: 25272)*

OS Grid Ref.: TL *(Easting: 24665: Northing: 25297)*

Reason: **To test archaeological potential of PDA**

Context:	Type:	Description:	Excavated:	Finds Present:
400	**Topsoil**	**Loose dark brown grey silty loam frequent small-medium stones Thickness 0.39m**	☑	☐
402	**Ditch**	**Linear NW-SE profile: concave base: v-shaped dimensions: max breadth 1.15m, max depth 0.31m, min length 1.6m**	☐	☐
401	Fill	Compact mid yellow grey sandy silt moderate small-medium stones Thickenss 0.31m	☑	☐
404	**Gulley**	**Linear NW-SE profile: 45 degrees base: v-shaped dimensions: max breadth 0.51m, max depth 0.25m, min length 1.6m**	☐	☐
403	Fill	Firm mid brown grey clay silt frequent small-medium stones Thickness 0.25m	☑	☐
405	**Natural**	**Firm mid orange silty clay frequent small-large stones**	☐	☐

Trench: 5

Max Dimensions: Length: 25.00 m. Width: 1.60 m. Depth to Archaeology Min: m. Max: m.

Co-ordinates: OS Grid Ref.: TL *(Easting: 24760: Northing: 25285)*

OS Grid Ref.: TL *(Easting: 24784: Northing: 25272)*

Reason: To test archaeological potential of PDA

Context:	Type:	Description:	Excavated:	Finds Present:
500	Topsoil	Friable mid grey silt frequent small-large stones Thickness 0.24m	☑	☐
501	Subsoil	Firm mid yellow brown silty clay frequent small-medium stones Thickness 0.23m	☑	☐
502	Natural	Firm mid yellow orange silt frequent small-large stones	☐	☐

Trench: 6

Max Dimensions: **Length: 25.00 m. Width: 1.60 m. Depth to Archaeology Min: 0.41 m. Max: 0.49 m.**

Co-ordinates: **OS Grid Ref.: TL** *(Easting: 24817: Northing: 25260)*

OS Grid Ref.: TL *(Easting: 24284: Northing: 25271)*

Reason: **To test archaeological potential of PDA**

Context:	Type:	Description:	Excavated:	Finds Present:
600	**Topsoil**	**Friable mid grey silt frequent small-medium stones Thickness 0.23m**	☑	☐
601	**Subsoil**	**Firm mid yellow brown silty clay frequent small-medium stones Thickness 0.24m**	☑	☐
603	**Wheel ruts**	**Linear N-S profile: concave base: concave dimensions: max breadth 0.5m, max depth 0.14m, min length 1.9m**	☐	☐
602	Fill	Firm mid grey clay silt Thickness 0.14m	☑	☐
605	**Wheel ruts**	**Linear N-S profile: concave base: concave dimensions: max breadth 0.2m, max depth 0.04m, min length 1.6m**	☐	☐
604	Fill	Firm mid grey clay silt Thickness 0.40m	☑	☐
606	**Natural**	**Firm mid orange clay frequent small-medium stones**	☐	☐

Trench: 7

Max Dimensions: **Length: 23.20 m. Width: 1.60 m. Depth to Archaeology Min: 0.42 m. Max: 0.42 m.**

Co-ordinates: **OS Grid Ref.: TL** *(Easting: 24862: Northing: 25232)*

OS Grid Ref.: TL *(Easting: 24875: Northing: 25252)*

Reason: **To test archaeological potential of PDA**

Context:	Type:	Description:	Excavated:	Finds Present:
700	**Topsoil**	**Friable mid grey silt frequent small-medium stones Thickness 0.22mn**	☑	☐
701	**Subsoil**	**Firm mid grey silty clay frequent small-medium stones Thickness 0.20m**	☑	☐
703	**Pit**	**Circular profile: concave base: concave dimensions: max breadth 0.58m, max diameter 0.06m**	☐	☐
702	Fill	Firm dark grey silty clay frequent small-medium charcoal Thickness 0.06m	☑	☐
704	**Natural**	**Firm mid orange clay frequent small-large stones**	☐	☐

Trench: 8

Max Dimensions: **Length: 25.00 m. Width: 1.60 m. Depth to Archaeology Min: m. Max: m.**

Co-ordinates: **OS Grid Ref.: TL** *(Easting: 24859: Northing: 25211)*

OS Grid Ref.: TL *(Easting: 24858: Northing: 25186)*

Reason: **To test archaeological potential of PDA**

Context:	Type:	Description:	Excavated:	Finds Present:
800	Topsoil	Friable mid grey silt frequent small-medium stones Thickness 0.20m	☑	☐
801	Make up layer	Firm light grey sandy silt frequent small-medium ceramic building material Thickness 0.16m	☑	☐
802	Make up layer	Firm light grey sandy rubble Thickness 0.15m	☑	☐
803	Subsoil	Firm mid yellow brown silty clay frequent small-medium stones Thickness 0.16m	☑	☐
804	Natural	Firm mid yellow orange clay frequent small-large stones	☐	☐

Trench: 9

Max Dimensions: Length: 22.50 m. Width: 1.60 m. Depth to Archaeology Min: m. Max: m.

Co-ordinates:

Reason: To test archaeological potential of PDA

Context:	Type:	Description:	Excavated:	Finds Present:
900	Topsoil	Friable mid grey silt frequent small-medium stones Thickness 0.40m	☑	☐
901	Subsoil	Firm mid yellow brown silty clay frequent small-medium stones Thickness 0.24m	☑	☐
902	Natural	Firm mid yellow orange clay frequent small-large stones	☐	☐

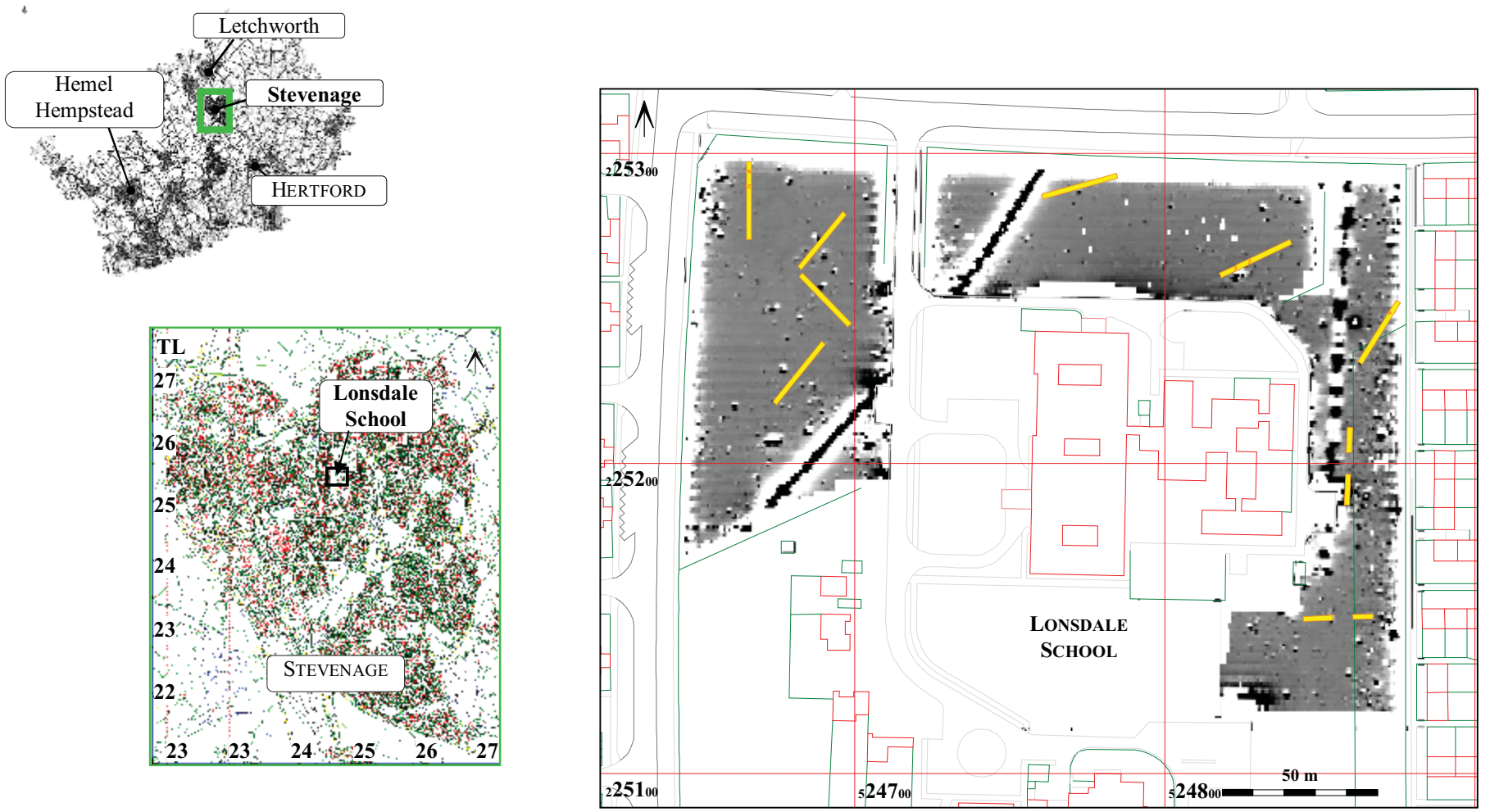
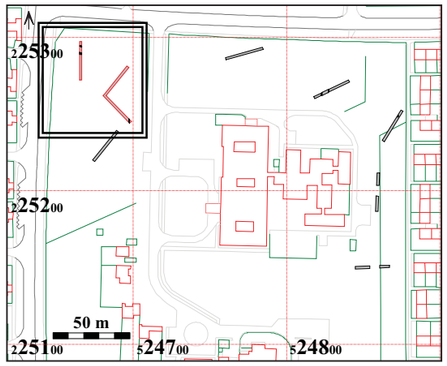
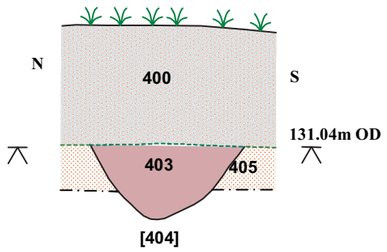


Figure 1: Site location plan, showing trenches overlaid onto geophysics plot





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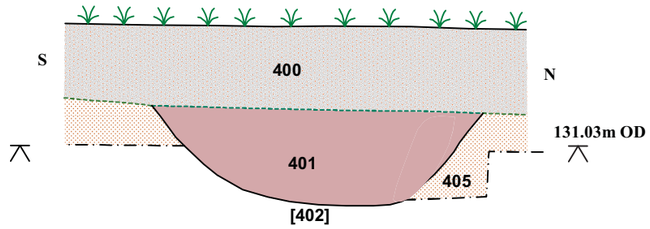

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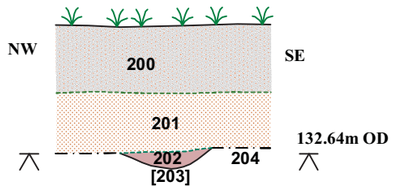

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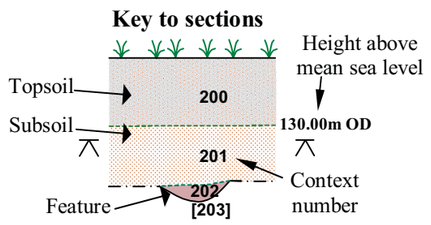

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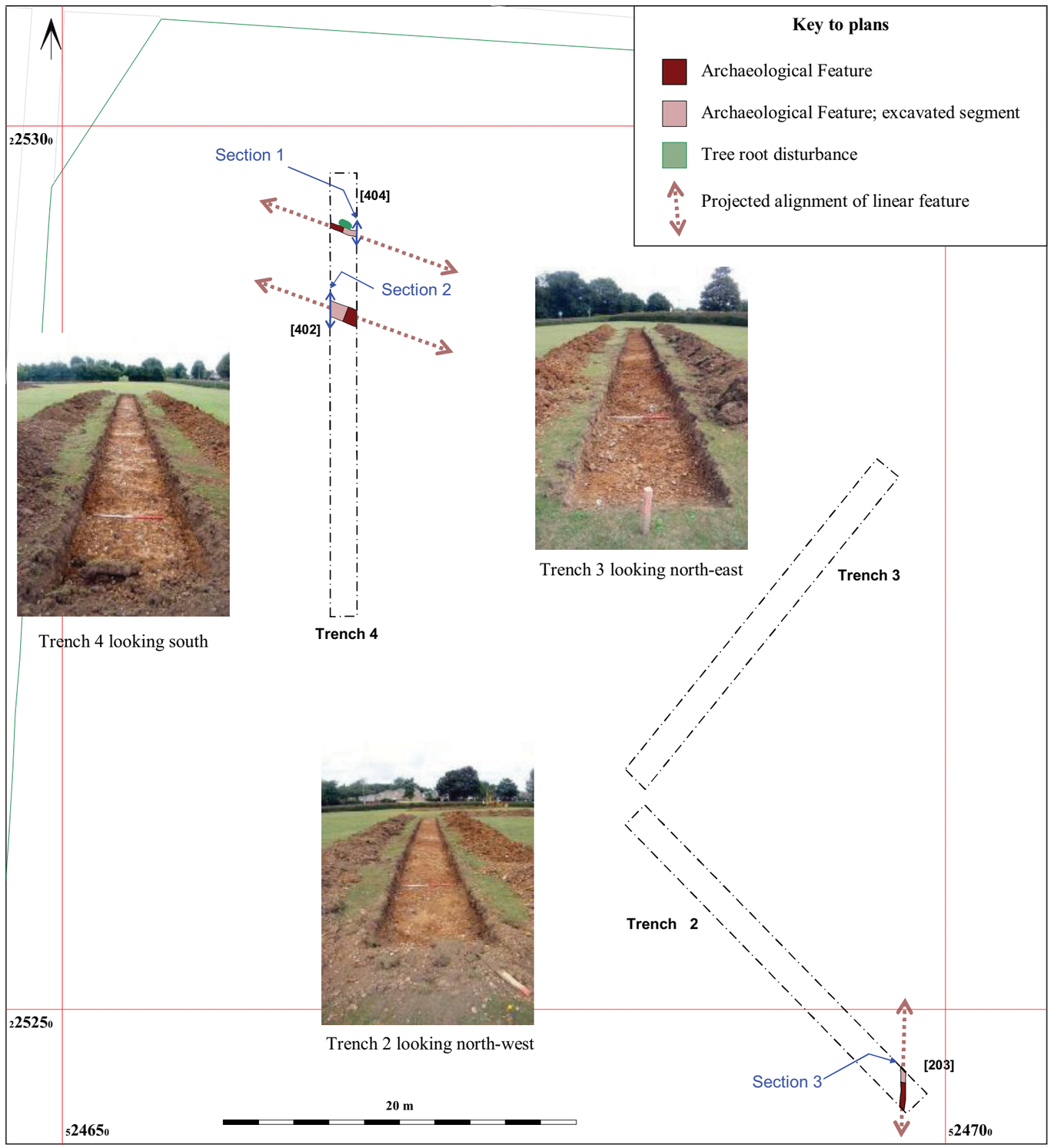
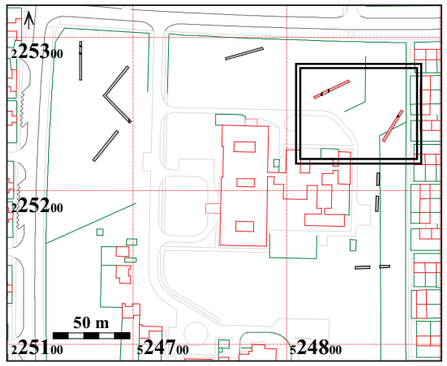


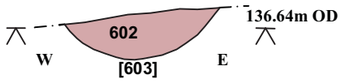
Trench 4 looking south

Trench 3 looking north-east

Trench 2 looking north-west

Figure 2: Trenches 2, 3 and 4





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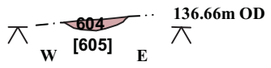

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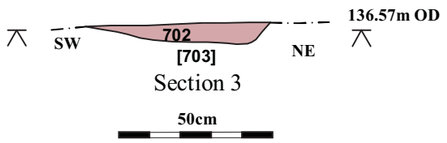

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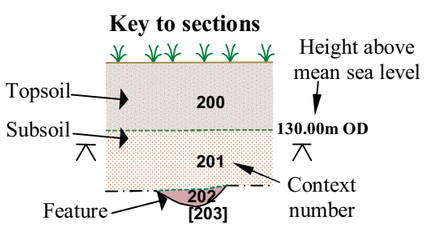

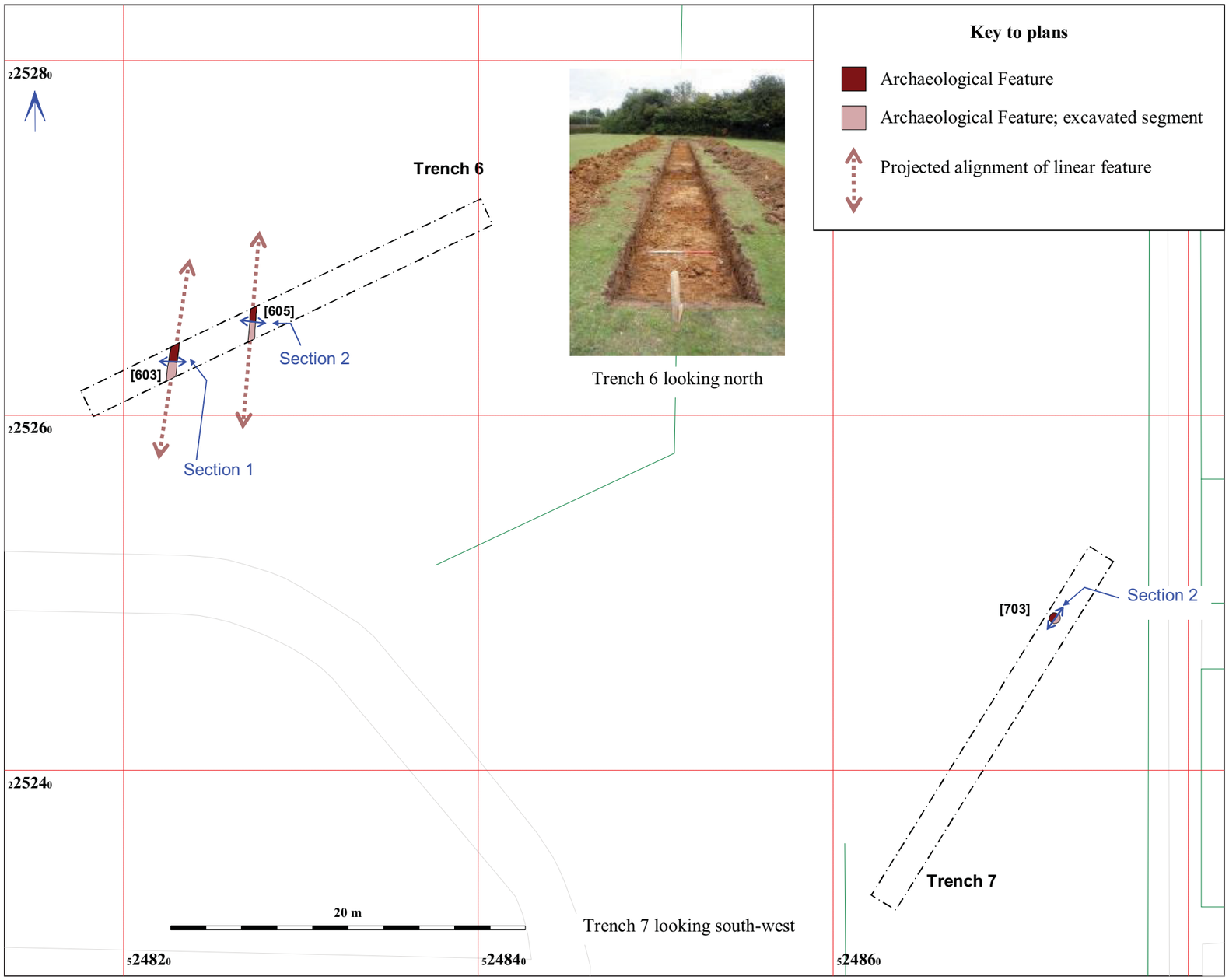

Figure 3: Trenches 6 and 7

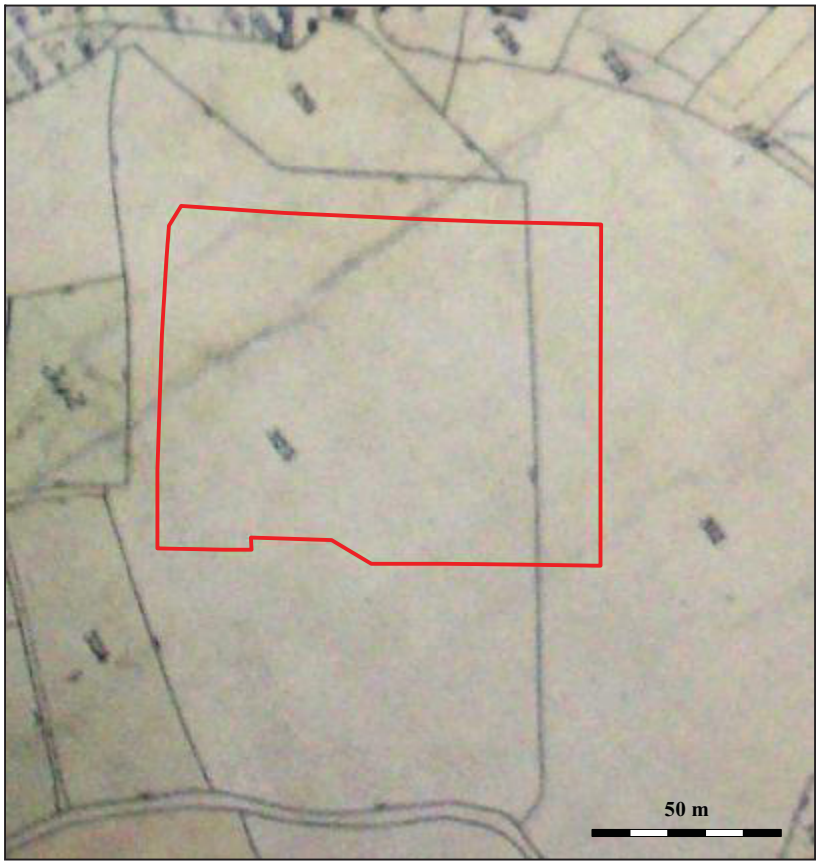

Figure 4: Potential Development Area overlaid on Tithe map 1834
Scale approximate

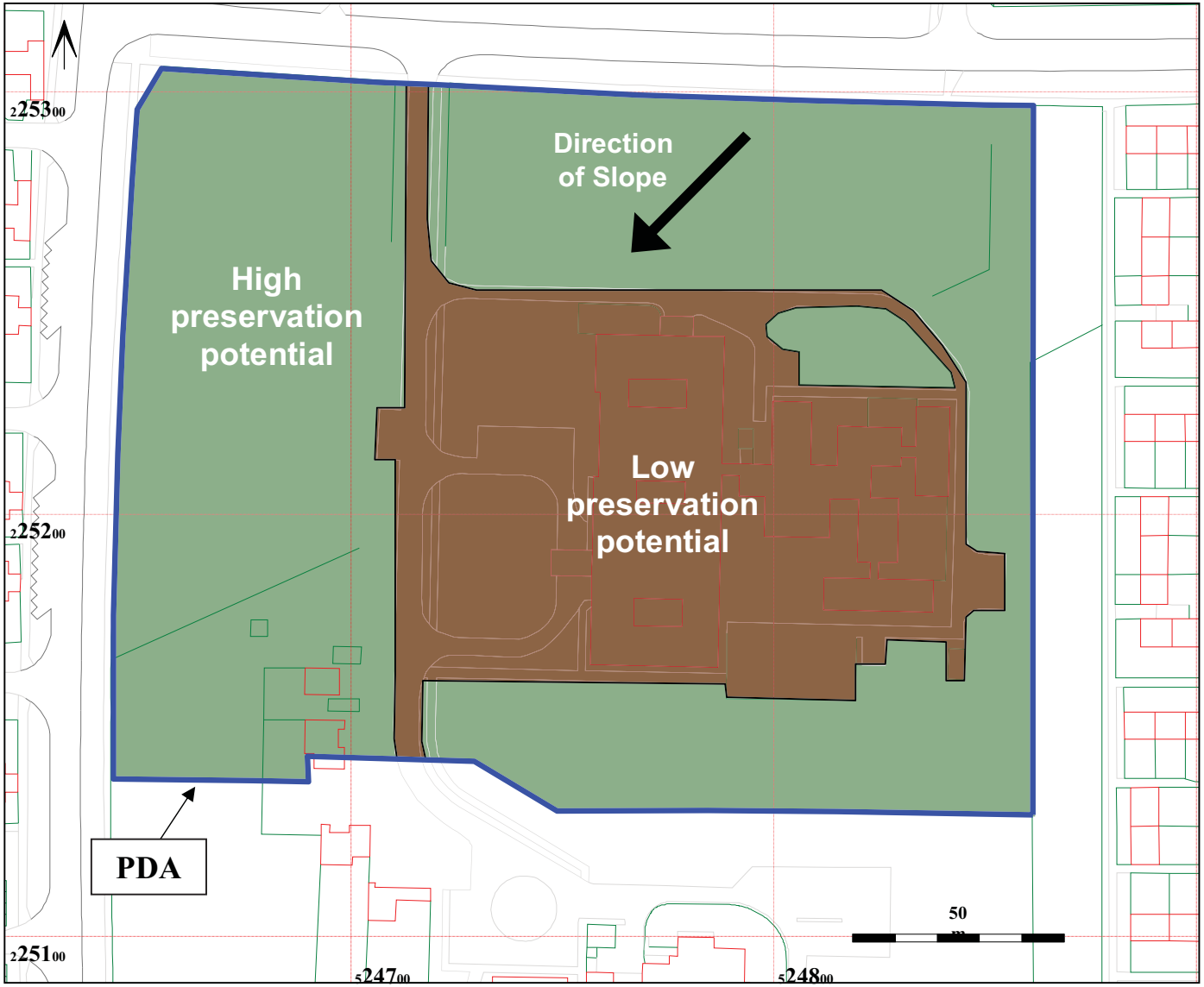

Figure 5: Variable preservation potential within PDA