

**ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION REPORT:
TRIAL TRENCHING ON LAND OFF COMBERTON ROAD, KIDDERMINSTER, WORCESTERSHIRE**

Planning Reference: 22/0226/EIA
NGR: SO 8502 7555
AAL Site Code: KICA22
Museum Accession Number: pending
OASIS Reference Number: allenarc1-511546



Report prepared for CSA Environmental
On behalf of Taylor Wimpey UK Limited

By
Allen Archaeology Ltd
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Allenarchaeology



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Cover image: Northern field by Trench 6, looking southwest

Executive Summary

- Taylor Wimpey UK Limited commissioned Allen Archaeology Ltd (AAL), in consultation with CSA Environmental to undertake the completion of an archaeological evaluation of the site of a proposed residential development with associated infrastructure and facilities.
- There is no known prehistoric, Roman or early medieval activity within the study area. The former medieval settlement of Stone, recorded in the Domesday Book, was 200m east of the site.
- A previous desk-based assessment, geophysical survey, and archaeological evaluation have already been undertaken, with the remainder of the trenches excavated during this scheme of works not completed previously due to adverse conditions.
- 15 trenches were excavated, 13 of which measured 50m long by 1.8m wide, with the remaining two trenches measuring 25m long by 1.8m wide. All 15 trenches were devoid of archaeological features, though the trenches to the west of the site exposed a rubble layer associated with the installation of Kidderminster's ring road in the 1960s. An organic deposit was also identified in three of the trenches at the south end of the site, but this yielded nothing of archaeological interest.

1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 Taylor Wimpey UK Limited commissioned Allen Archaeology Ltd (AAL), in consultation with CSA Environmental, to undertake the completion of an archaeological evaluation of the site of a proposed residential development with associated infrastructure and facilities.
- 1.2 Oxford Archaeology previously excavated a total of 50 of 65 trenches, Trenches 1-10 and 61-65 were not excavated as it was not possible to access the field in which the trenches were located. This scheme of works entailed the excavation of these remaining trenches.
- 1.3 The fieldwork, recording and reporting was carried out in a manner consistent with current national guidelines, as set out in the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists *Standard and guidance for archaeological field evaluation* (2020a), the Historic England document *Management of Research Projects in the Historic Environment* (2015) and a written scheme of investigation prepared by Oxford Archaeology (OA 2021a).
- 1.4 The documentary archive will be created in accordance with national guidance as set out in the *Standard and guidance for the creation, compilation, transfer and deposition of archaeological archives* (CIfA 2020b) and *Archaeological Archives: A guide to best practice in creation, compilation, transfer and curation* (AAF 2011). The archive will be deposited with Museums Worcestershire within six months of the completion of the report. An accession number will be assigned to the site archive on receipt.

2.0 Site Location and Description

- 2.1 The site is located to the northeast of Comberton Road on the south-eastern edge of Kidderminster, Worcestershire. The site is centred on NGR SO 8502 7555, and comprises a total area measuring 27.01ha. The site is bounded by a school and residential properties to the west, and agricultural fields to the north, east, and south.
- 2.2 The geology is formed of a sedimentary bedrock known as Wildmoor Sandstone Member, overlain by superficial alluvium deposits along the northern edge of the site and Power House Terrace Deposits along the southern edge (<https://geologyviewer.bgs.ac.uk>).

3.0 Planning Background

- 3.1 The evaluation was undertaken as a condition of a hybrid application (22/0226/EIA) for “*up to 1450 dwellings to comprise: Outline application for up to 1,055 dwellings including affordable housing, with all matters reserved, except for access, to include a community hub, including a two-form entry primary school, community and health facilities, retail provision up to 800 sqm, new vehicular access to Husum Way and Comberton Road with link road, new pedestrian access to Tennyson Way, open space incorporating play provision, SUDS, landscaping and ecological enhancement works, and; Full planning application for demolition of no. 78 Comberton Road and agricultural buildings north of Heathy Mill Farm, to facilitate the construction of 395 dwellings including affordable housing; new vehicular access onto Comberton Road; open space and play provision and associated infrastructure, SUDS, landscaping and ground remodelling*”.
- 3.2 “*Worcestershire County Council Archive and Archaeology Service confirmed agreement of the proposed content of the Archaeology & Heritage ES Chapter, with the clarification that*

pre-determination trial trench evaluation would be required for the first phase of development, with remaining phases on condition. A WSI for trial trench evaluation was subsequently agreed with the archaeological advisor to the LPA and the on-site work was undertaken October/November 2021. Fifteen of the Sixty-One trenches proposed in the WSI were not opened due to access constraints.”

- 3.3 The approach adopted is consistent with the recommendations of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), with the particular section of relevance being Paragraphs 187 and 189 of ‘Section 16. Conserving and enhancing the historic environment’ (Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government 2021).

4.0 Archaeological and Historical Background

- 4.1 A desk-based assessment of the archaeological and historical background to the site has previously been undertaken (CSA 2018), and the following is a summary of the findings of that assessment.
- 4.2 There is no known prehistoric activity within the study area. Terrace gravels located on the southern side of the site are known to have potential for Palaeolithic material, but there is no evidence to suggest that there is Palaeolithic activity in this particular location.
- 4.3 There is no known Roman activity within the vicinity of the site.
- 4.4 There is no direct evidence for medieval activity within the site boundary, however there are several sites recorded nearby that suggest the presence of a broader medieval landscape here. The settlement of Stone, 200m to the east of this scheme of works, is recorded in the Domesday Book. In addition, there is a possible site known as Dunclent Manor which belonged to St Guthlac’s Priory located 500m to the east.
- 4.5 A number of post-medieval heritage assets are recorded within and around the site, primarily farm complexes and mill ponds. The most notable remains are those of Lord Foley’s Irrigation Scheme. The scheme comprises a 17th century water meadow system, extant components of which lie at the eastern site boundary.

5.0 Aims and Objectives

- 5.1 The purpose of the investigations was to gather sufficient information for the Planning Officer (Archaeology) to be able to make a decision regarding the management of sub-surface heritage assets at the site.
- 5.2 Evidence was gathered to establish the presence/absence, nature, date, depth, quality of survival and importance of any archaeological deposits to enable an assessment of the potential and significance of the archaeological remains, and to allow for the determination of any appropriate strategies to mitigate the effect of the proposed development upon the archaeological resource.

6.0 Methodology

- 6.1 The trial trenching methodology entailed the excavation of 15 trenches, 13 measuring 50m long and 2 measuring 25m long, and all of them measuring 1.8m wide. The fieldwork was carried out between 31st October and 8th November, and supervised by the author.
- 6.2 The trenches were located using a survey grade Leica GS08 RTK NetRover GPS which allowed centimetre accuracy, and were tied into the National Grid. In each trench a mechanical excavator fitted with a toothless ditching bucket was used to remove all topsoil, subsoil and underlying non-archaeological deposits in spits no greater than 0.1m in thickness.
- 6.3 Machine excavation was monitored at all times by an experienced archaeologist and the process was repeated until the first archaeologically significant or natural horizon was exposed. All further excavation was undertaken by hand to define the archaeological stratigraphy and the nature of the deposits.
- 6.4 A full written record of the archaeological deposits was made on standard AAL context recording sheets. Each deposit, layer or cut was allocated a three-to-four-digit unique identifier (context number) and given a written description. A summary of these is included in Appendix 6.
- 6.5 Archaeological deposits were drawn to scale, in plan and section (at 1:10, 1:20 and 1:50), with Ordnance Datum (OD) heights displayed on each section drawing. Photography formed an integral part of the recording strategy, and all photographs incorporated scales, an identification board and directional arrow, as appropriate.

7.0 Results

- 7.1 Archaeological features were not identified in any of the trenches. In general, the stratigraphic sequence comprised 0.20-0.66m of dark grey brown sand silt topsoil, below which was 0.20-0.40m of mid red brown subsoil overlying the natural deposits. The trenches towards the western edge of the site, namely 1, 2, 6, 7, 8, 9, and 10, also contained a demolition layer that was deposited over the natural geology. Trenches 61, 62, and 63 were all located in an area of low ground that exhibited signs of being a wet, marshy area, overlain by ground raising deposits, likely to represent an attempt to alleviate flooding.

Trenches	Summary results
1	Rubble demolition layer and natural deposits only
2	Rubble demolition layer and natural deposits only
3	Natural deposits only
4	Natural deposits only
5	Natural deposits only
6	Rubble demolition layer and natural deposits only
7	Rubble demolition layer and natural deposits only
8	Rubble demolition layer and natural deposits only
9	Rubble demolition layer and natural deposits only
10	Rubble demolition layer and natural deposits only
61	Natural deposits only
62	Natural deposits only
63	Natural deposits only

Trenches	Summary results
64	Natural deposits only
65	Natural deposits only

Table 1: Summary of trench results by plot

Trench 1

7.2 Natural deposits were not encountered in Trench 1 as the demolition layer reached a depth in excess of 1m from the existing ground surface. The demolition layer was overlain by 0.40m of topsoil. A sondage was machine excavated at the northern end of the trench to a depth of 1.5m in an unsuccessful attempt to reach the natural geology, which was abandoned at that depth due to the instability of the trench edges.



Plate 1: General shot of Trench 1, looking north-east, 2x1m scales



Plate 2: Representative section of Trench 1, looking north-west, 2x1m scales

Trench 7

- 7.3 Natural geology was encountered in the southern half of Trench 7 at a depth of 0.50m below the existing ground level. The northern half of the trench exposed the same rubble layer as in Trenches 1, 2, 6, 8, 9, and 10. The extent of the rubble layer was able to be established here, with natural deposits exposed to the south in both Trenches 7 and 8, and to the east in Trench 10 (see Figure 2).



Plate 3: General shot of Trench 7, looking southwest, 2x1m scales



Plate 4: Representative section of Trench 7, looking southeast, 1m and 0.5m scales

Trench 62

- 7.4 Natural deposits were encountered at a depth of 1.16m from the existing ground level at the northern end of the trench. The natural was not exposed elsewhere in the trench as it was overlain by a peat-like deposit, 6202, containing frequent organic plant remains. At the northern end of the trench, heading upslope, 6202 was between 0.20m and 0.40m in thickness. A sondage excavated to 1.7m at the southern end of the trench was unsuccessful in revealing the thickness of 6202 at the base of the slope as the unstable sides and depth of the trench made it unsafe to continue. Samples of 6202 revealed frequent decomposing roots, wood fragments, and leaf litter, in addition to two animal bone fragments that were likely discarded. 6202 was overlain by 6201, a loose mid brown red silt sand of 0.10-0.20m in thickness, that appears to have been an attempt to build up the boggy ground in this area of the site.



Plate 5: General shot of Trench 62, looking south-west, 2x1m scales



Plate 6: Representative section of Trench 62, looking west, 2x1m scales

8.0 Discussion and Conclusions

- 8.1 Evaluation trenching revealed no archaeological features, but did reveal modern deposits in the western part of the site likely to be related to the installation of the A451 ring road in Kidderminster in the 1960s (WCC 2020). The remains of the demolished properties during that process were deposited here, and exposed during these evaluation works in Trenches 1, 2, 6, 7, 8, 9, and 10. The topsoil was stripped prior to the deposition of this demolition layer, as there was no topsoil layer present between the rubble layer and the natural geology. Thus, any archaeology that may have previously existed here may have been truncated during this process. The geophysics did identify the rubble layer, with that report describing it as a 'ferrous layer', and mapped its extent accurately in each of the trenches. Elsewhere the geophysics identified a few features of potential archaeological interest, but there was no sign of these during this evaluation.
- 8.2 Trenches 61, 62, and 63 were located in an area of low ground that has undergone periods of waterlogging for some time and continues to do so. The anaerobic environment of deposit 6202 allowed for good preservation of organic material of vegetation and occasional discarded animal bone, as identified in the samples. Overall, assessment of the samples yielded no material of archaeological significance. The evaluation undertaken by Oxford Archaeology revealed post-medieval ditches in the trenches nearest to this area, which correlates well to the 1888 OS map referenced in that report (OA 2021b). However, neither that map or later editions of OS mapping appear to show a wetland area where trenches 61, 62, and 63 are located. Personal communications with the tenant farmer revealed that this area floods regularly every year, however, and the brook bounding the southern edge of the field is present on OS mapping from 1883. Unsuccessful attempts have been made to raise this ground to mitigate this, as shown by the presence of the made ground deposit 6201.

9.0 Effectiveness of Methodology

- 9.1 The trial trenching was appropriate to the nature and scale of the scheme in determining the nature and extent of the archaeology present and the potential impacts of the proposed development upon the resource.

10.0 Acknowledgements

- 10.1 Allen Archaeology would like to thank Taylor Wimpey UK Limited for this commission.

11.0 References

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OA, 2021b, *Phase 1, Land at Comberton Road, Kidderminster, Worcestershire: Archaeological Evaluation Report*, Oxford Archaeology

Worcestershire City Council, *Case Study: Kidderminster*. Worcestershire County Council and Historic England

Appendix 1: Environmental Report

Bryn Leadbetter

Introduction

A single whole-earth environmental sample was collected during excavations carried out by Allen Archaeology Ltd on land at Comberton Road, Kidderminster, Worcestershire (site code: KICA22). The sample was taken for the potential recovery of charred plant remains and wood charcoal, and any further environmental evidence in order to aid an interpretation of the feature from which the sample derived and to help provide an understanding of the arable economy and local environmental conditions at the time the site was active. Any artefacts found in the sample were also collected. Following is an assessment of the sample along with proposals for any further analysis required.

Methodology

The sample was processed by flotation with the lighter, floating, material (flot) retained in a 300-micron mesh and the heavier fraction (residue) captured in a 1000-micron mesh. The flot was then air dried before being scanned under a microscope. The residue was air dried, sieved at 5mm and 2mm and sorted by eye. Any artefacts in the residue were removed and united by context with those hand-collected during excavation, whilst any additional vegetation and other environmental material was added to the flot. The remaining geology was discarded.

Results

The 18 litre sample produced a combined flot and residue volume of 650ml, comprised entirely of reduced vegetation, with frequent small roots and woody fragments, and occasional leaf litter – all blackened in colour. Modern, or fresh, weed seeds were also noted in moderate volume. Two animal bones were also collected from the residue and consisted of a near-intact left horse scapula, weighing 309g, and a fragment of left cattle mandible weighing 28g (Table 1).

Sample no.	Context no.	Context type/ Date	Sample volume (ltrs)	Flot volume (ml)	Environmental Remains	Residue volume (ml)	Residue finds
1	6202	bog/marsh deposit/date unknown	18	450	entire flot of reduced vegetation/ root/woody material	200	1 x animal scapula – 309g 1x animal jaw fragment – 28g woody/root fragments

Table 1: quantification of sample1 from KICA22

Discussion

Whilst the abundant organic nature of the flot and residue is instinctively of interest, there appears to be no material in them of archaeological significance. The sample was taken from a bog/marshy deposit which contained no dating evidence, although earlier work at the site revealed features in the same vicinity of post-medieval date. The discarding of seemingly random animal bones in such an environment is unsurprising, and the possible anaerobic conditions of a marsh or bog may explain the preservation of the deposit as a whole. Nevertheless, further analysis of the flot, residue and bones is unlikely to provide sufficient additional site information as to warrant its undertaking. It is not therefore suggested here that any further analysis of the sample is required at this stage.

Appendix 2: Context Summary List

Trench 1

Context	Type	Description	Length (m)	Width (m)	Thickness/depth (m)	Interpretation
100	Layer	Loose dark grey brown sand silt			0.4	Topsoil
101	Layer	Compact mid brown red sand silt with frequent stone, concrete, brick and other demolition rubble materials			0.7+	Modern dumping material

Trench 2

Context	Type	Description	Length (m)	Width (m)	Thickness/depth (m)	Interpretation
200	Layer	Loose dark grey brown sand silt			0.66	Topsoil
201	Layer	Loose light red yellow silt sand with occasional small stones			0.02+	Natural geology
202	Layer	Compact mid brown red sand silt with frequent stone, concrete, brick and other demolition rubble materials			0.68	Modern dumping material

Trench 3

Context	Type	Description	Length (m)	Width (m)	Thickness/depth (m)	Interpretation
300	Layer	Loose dark grey brown sand silt			0.64	Topsoil
301	Layer	Loose light red yellow silt sand with occasional small stones			0.10+	Natural geology

Trench 4

Context	Type	Description	Length (m)	Width (m)	Thickness/depth (m)	Interpretation
400	Layer	Loose dark grey brown sand silt			0.4	Topsoil
401	Layer	Loose mid yellow grey sand silt with medium small subrounded stones			0.2	Subsoil
402	Layer	Loose light red yellow silt sand with occasional small stones			0.06	Natural geology

Trench 5

Context	Type	Description	Length (m)	Width (m)	Thickness/depth (m)	Interpretation
500	Layer	Loose dark grey brown sand silt			0.35	Topsoil
501	Layer	Loose mid yellow grey sand silt with medium small subrounded stones			0.15	Subsoil
502	Layer	Loose light red yellow silt sand with occasional small stones			0.1	Natural geology

Trench 6

Context	Type	Description	Length (m)	Width (m)	Thickness/depth (m)	Interpretation
600	Layer	Loose dark grey brown sand silt			0.30	Topsoil
601	Layer	Compact mid brown red sand silt with frequent stone, concrete, brick and other demolition rubble materials			1.00+	Modern dumping material

Trench 7

Context	Type	Description	Length (m)	Width (m)	Thickness/depth (m)	Interpretation
700	Layer	Loose dark grey brown sand silt			0.50	Topsoil
701	Layer	Loose light red yellow silt sand with occasional small stones			0.35+	Natural geology
702	Layer	Compact mid brown red sand silt with frequent stone, concrete, brick and other demolition rubble materials			0.75	Modern dumping material

Trench 8

Context	Type	Description	Length (m)	Width (m)	Thickness/depth (m)	Interpretation
800	Layer	Loose dark grey brown sand silt			0.30	Topsoil
801	Layer	Loose mid brown red silt sand			0.30	Levelling material
802	Layer	Compact mid brown red sand silt with frequent stone, concrete, brick and other demolition rubble materials			0.80+	Modern dumping material
803	Layer	Loose light red yellow silt sand with occasional small stones			0.05	Natural geology

Trench 9

Context	Type	Description	Length (m)	Width (m)	Thickness/depth (m)	Interpretation
900	Layer	Loose dark grey brown sand silt			0.30	Topsoil
901	Layer	Loose mid brown red silt sand			0.40	Levelling material
902	Layer	Compact mid brown red sand silt with frequent stone, concrete, brick and other demolition rubble materials			0.20	Modern dumping material
903	Layer	Loose light red yellow silt sand with occasional small stones			0.20+	Natural geology

Trench 10

Context	Type	Description	Length (m)	Width (m)	Thickness/depth (m)	Interpretation
1000	Layer	Loose dark grey brown sand silt			0.20	Topsoil

Context	Type	Description	Length (m)	Width (m)	Thickness/depth (m)	Interpretation
1001	Layer	Loose mid brown red silt sand			0.30	Levelling material
1002	Layer	Compact mid brown red sand silt with frequent stone, concrete, brick and other demolition rubble materials			0.40	Modern dumping material
1003	Layer	Loose light red yellow silt sand with occasional small stones			0.30+	Natural geology

Trench 61

Context	Type	Description	Length (m)	Width (m)	Thickness/depth (m)	Interpretation
6100	Layer	Loose dark grey brown sand silt			0.50	Topsoil
6101	Layer	Loose light grey silt sand			0.30	Subsoil
6102	Layer	Loose mid brown red silt sand			0.10+	Natural geology

Trench 62

Context	Type	Description	Length (m)	Width (m)	Thickness/depth (m)	Interpretation
6200	Layer	Loose dark grey brown sand silt			0.40	Topsoil
6201	Layer	Loose mid brown red silt sand			0.10	Made ground
6202	Layer	Loose dark brown sand silt with frequent organic remains			0.40	Peat/organic bog material
6203	Layer	Loose mid brown red silt sand			0.30+	Natural geology

Trench 63

Context	Type	Description	Length (m)	Width (m)	Thickness/depth (m)	Interpretation
6300	Layer	Loose dark grey brown sand silt			0.20	Topsoil
6301	Layer	Loose mid brown red silt sand			0.20	Made ground
6302	Layer	Loose dark brown sand silt with frequent organic remains			0.70	Peat/organic bog material
6303	Layer	Loose mid brown red silt sand			0.10+	Natural geology

Trench 64

Context	Type	Description	Length (m)	Width (m)	Thickness/depth (m)	Interpretation
6400	Layer	Loose dark grey brown sand silt			0.23	Topsoil
6401	Layer	Loose mid red brown silt sand			0.27	Subsoil
6402	Layer	Loose mid brown red silt sand				Natural geology

Trench 65

Context	Type	Description	Length (m)	Width (m)	Thickness/ depth (m)	Interpretation
6500	Layer	Loose dark grey brown sand silt			0.22	Topsoil
6501	Layer	Loose mid red brown silt sand			0.34	Subsoil
6502	Layer	Loose mid brown red silt sand				Natural geology

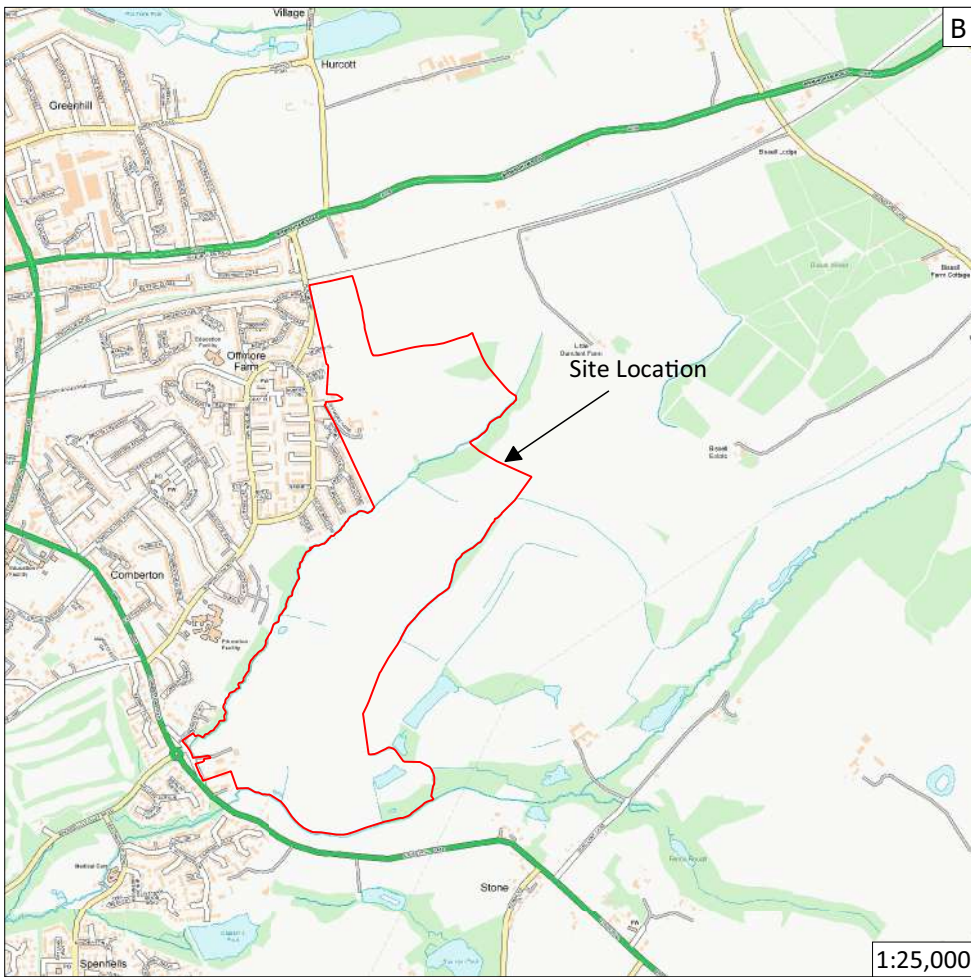
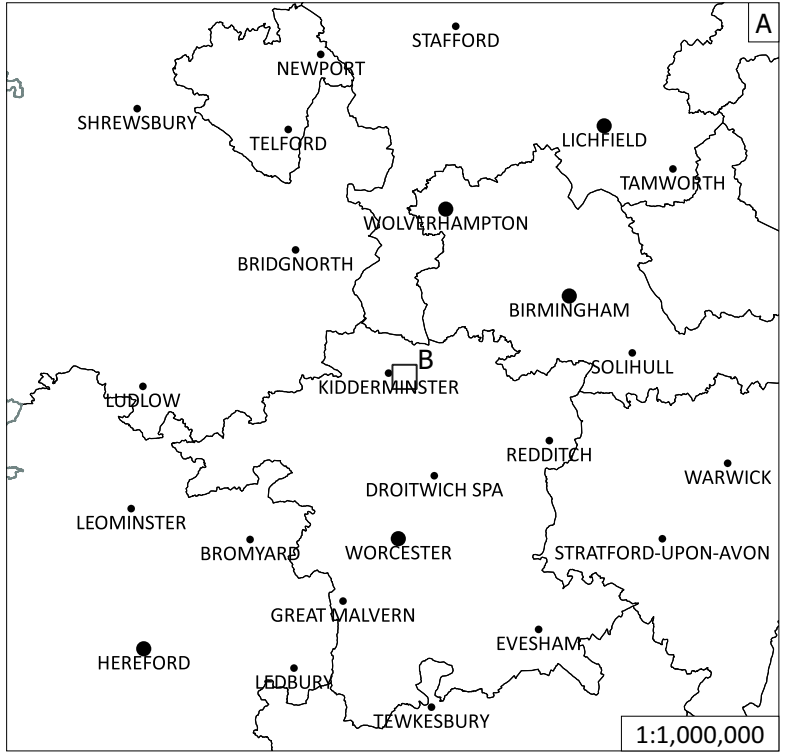
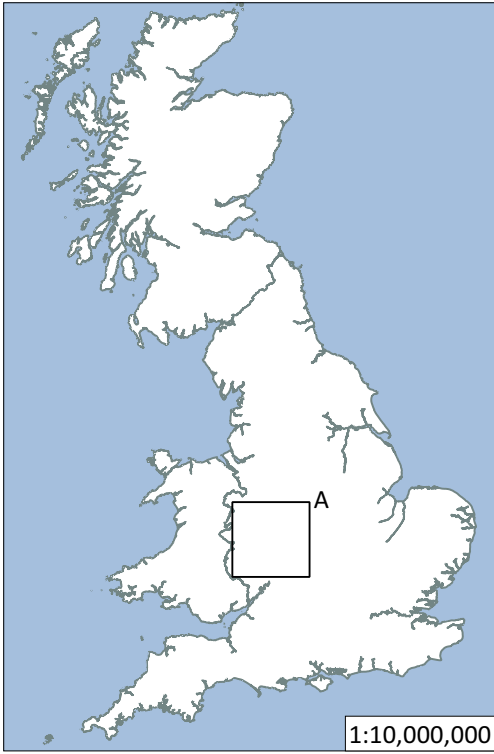


Figure 1: Site location outlined in red

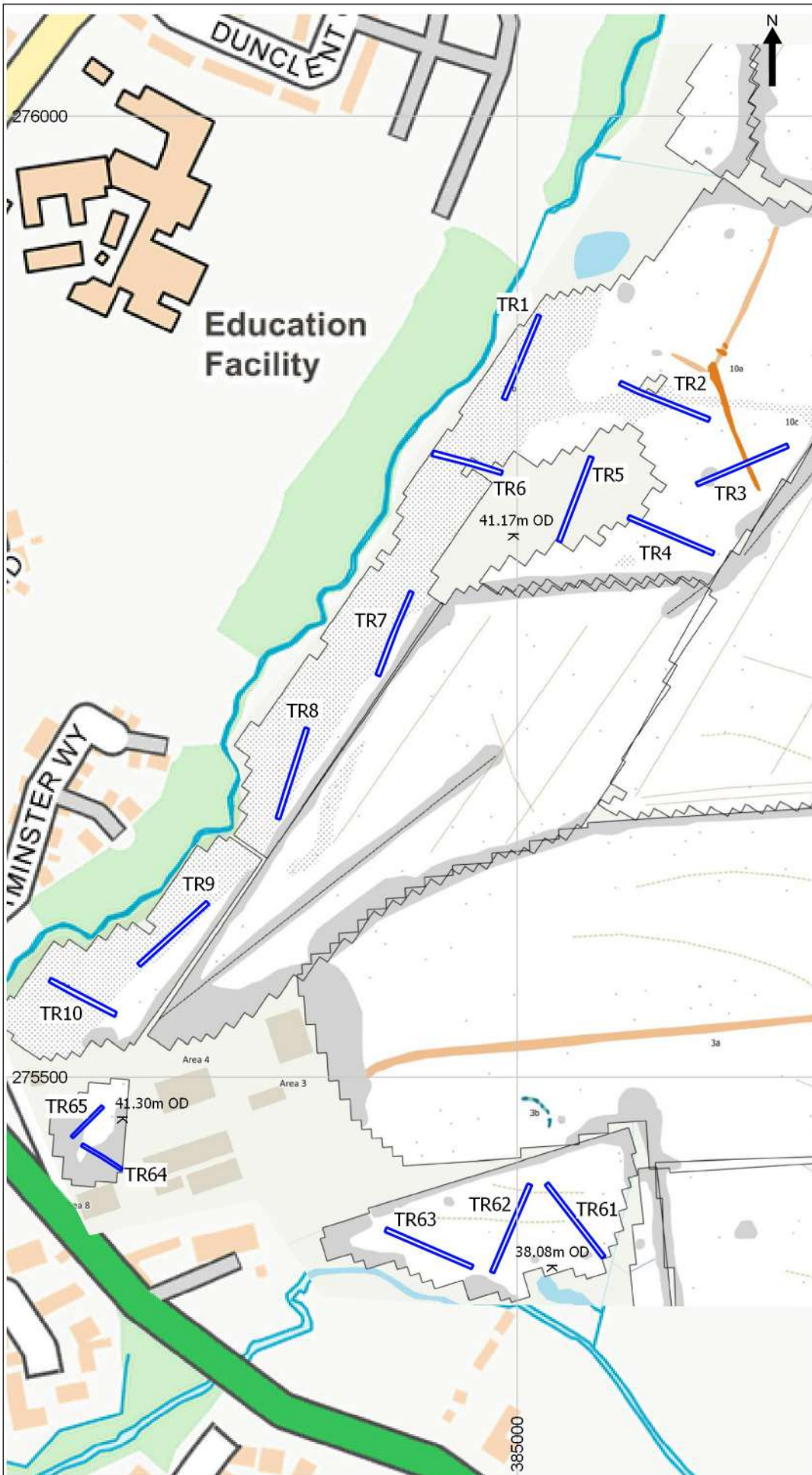
© Crown copyright 2000. All rights reserved. Licence Number 100047330

Site Code	KICA22
Scale	1:10,000,000 1:1,000,000 1:25,000 @ A4
Drawn by	J.Milton
Date	05/12/2022

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Key

- Site boundary
- Limit of excavation

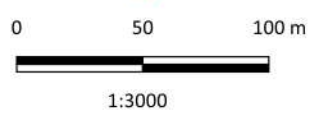
Site Code	KICA22
Scale	1:3000 @A4
Drawn By	J.Milton
Date	09/12/2022

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Figure 2: Trench location plan overlaying geophysics





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