

Land adjoining Exeter Road Topsham, Exeter, Devon

Archaeological Evaluation

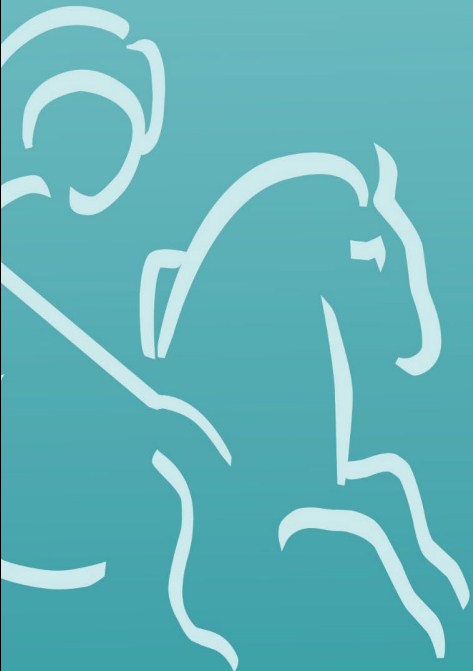


for:
Burrington Estates

CA Project: AN0501
CA Report: AN0501_1

OASIS ID: cotswold2-504056

August 2022



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Document Control Grid						
Revision	Date	Author	Checked by	Status	Reasons for revision	Approved by
A	17 August 2022	Derek Evans	–	Internal review	–	Derek Evans

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CONTENTS

SUMMARY	3
1. INTRODUCTION.....	4
2. ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND	4
3. AIMS AND OBJECTIVES	6
4. METHODOLOGY	7
5. RESULTS	8
6. THE FINDS	8
7. DISCUSSION.....	9
8. CA PROJECT TEAM	9
9. REFERENCES.....	9
APPENDIX A: CONTEXT DESCRIPTIONS	11
APPENDIX B: OASIS REPORT FORM.....	12

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

Fig. 1 Site location plan (1:25,000)

Fig. 2 Trench location plan (1:1000)

Fig. 3 Photographs

SUMMARY

Project name: Land adjoining Exeter Road
Location: Topsham, Exeter, Devon
NGR: 296161 088911
Type: Evaluation
Date: 29–31 March 2022
Planning reference: Exeter City Council 19/1465/OUT
OASIS ID: cotswold2-504056
Location of Archive: N/A
Site Code: LERT 22

In March 2022, Cotswold Archaeology carried out an archaeological evaluation of land adjoining Exeter Road, Topsham, Exeter, Devon. A total of ten trenches were excavated.

The evaluation recorded no archaeological features or deposits.

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1. In March 2022, Cotswold Archaeology (CA) carried out an archaeological evaluation of land adjoining Exeter Road, Topsham, Exeter, Devon (centred at NGR: 296161 088911; Fig. 1). This evaluation was undertaken for Burrington Estates.
- 1.2. Exeter City Council has granted outline planning permission for residential development of the site (planning ref: 19/1465/OUT). Condition 10 of this planning permission requires the implementation of a programme of archaeological work. The scope of this evaluation was defined by Owen Cambridge, Principal Project Manager (Heritage), Exeter City Council. The evaluation was carried out in accordance with a Written Scheme of Archaeological Work (WSAW) prepared by CA (2022) and approved by Owen Cambridge.
- 1.3. The evaluation was also in line with *Specification for Archaeological Field Evaluation* (Devon County Council 2020), *Standard and guidance for archaeological field evaluation* (ClfA 2014; updated October 2020), *Management of Research Projects in the Historic Environment (MoRPHE) PPN 3: Archaeological Excavation* (Historic England 2015) and *Management of Research Projects in the Historic Environment: The MoRPHE Project Managers' Guide* (Historic England 2015).

The site

- 1.4. The application site is approximately 1.2ha in extent. It lies on the north-eastern side of Exeter Road, between Topsham and the M5. The site currently comprises a narrow, rectangular plot of grassland. It is bordered to the south-west by Exeter Road, with residential plots beyond; to the north-west by a golf course; to the north-east by further grassland and residential plots; and to the south-east by new residential development.
- 1.5. The underlying bedrock geology of the site is mapped as Dawlish Sandstone Formation, which formed in the Permian Period. This is overlain by River Terrace Deposits of sand and gravel, which formed in the Quaternary Period (BGS 2022).

2. ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND

Prehistoric (pre-AD 43)

- 2.1. The river terraces in the region were attractive areas for settlement in the prehistoric period due to the abundance of natural resources. A small number of

Mesolithic/Early Neolithic ditches and pits/postholes were recorded adjacent to the Newport Mobile Home Park (c. 780m north-west of the application site; CA 2018). Neolithic pits were recorded at Topsham School (c. 450m south-east of the application site; Sage and Allan 2004) and ahead of the construction of the M5 motorway (Jarvis and Maxfield 1975). The nearby Aldi site (c. 420m north-west of the application site; Garland and Orellana 2018) yielded one of the largest assemblages of Early Neolithic pottery known from the Exeter area; this site also contained Early Bronze Age cremations.

2.2. Previous archaeological works in the plot to the immediate south-east of the application site (CA 2021) recorded an extensive natural hollow surrounded by a group of pits containing burnt stone and charcoal; these features were radiocarbon dated to the Late Neolithic period.

2.3. Evidence of Middle Bronze Age and Iron Age settlement was recorded at Seabrook Orchards (c. 780m north-west of the application site; Wessex Archaeology 2017) and at Wessex Close (c. 110m north-west of the application site; AC Archaeology 2016; Rainbird and Farnell 2019).

Roman (AD 43–AD 410)

2.4. The fortress of the Second Augustan Legion of the Roman Army was established at Exeter c. AD 55. The fortress was abandoned c. AD 75 and was superseded by a Roman town (*Isca Dumnoniorum*).

2.5. From the 1st century AD, Topsham functioned as a port and quayside supply base, from which goods and supplies were transported to Roman Exeter and the wider area. Exeter Road (which runs along the application site's south-western boundary) follows the approximate alignment of the Roman road running between Exeter and Topsham. The main area of Roman settlement is believed to have lain to the south-west of the application site, on the opposite side of the road, but Roman extra-mural development (including a number of Roman military buildings and warehouses) has been recorded previously along the line of Exeter Road.

2.6. The previous archaeological works in the plot to the immediate south-east of the application site (CA 2021) recorded a boundary ditch of early to mid-1st century AD date. A number of discontinuous ditches were also recorded, probably representing elements of a settlement enclosure. These ditches were cut by a group of seven later Roman graves.

-
- 2.7. The Aldi site had evidence of four early Roman timber buildings, representing a possible military storage complex (Garland and Orellana 2018). Nearby, excavation to the north of Wessex Close identified a series of early Roman rectangular plots and an aisled stone-founded building of 2nd–3rd-century AD date (Rainbird and Farnell 2019). Additionally, a stone-founded building of later Roman date was excavated at Yarde’s Field (c. 120m south-east of the application site) in the 1930s (Morris *et al.* 1947; Radford and Montague 1937).

Early medieval (AD 43–1066) and medieval (1066–1539)

- 2.8. The first written evidence for Topsham appears in a 10th century charter. The town is also recorded in the Domesday Book (1086).
- 2.9. Topsham continued to be an important port during the medieval period. The medieval settlement was centred to the north of the present quay and south of the Roman settlement. The application site is likely to have lain within the agricultural landscape surrounding the early medieval and medieval settlement.

Post-medieval (1540–1800) and modern (1800–present)

- 2.10. Cartographic sources from the 18th and 19th centuries indicate that the application site continued to comprise agricultural land in these periods. The application site was one of a number of long, narrow agricultural plots running north-eastwards from Exeter Road. The 1933 Ordnance Survey map depicts the site as being covered in trees, perhaps indicating that it was an orchard at that time.

Geophysical survey

- 2.11. A geophysical survey of the application site (Substrata 2021) recorded a number of curved and linear geophysical anomalies, which were interpreted as possible land division/boundary ditches of unknown date.

3. AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

- 3.1. The general objective of the evaluation was to provide further information on the likely archaeological resource within the site, including its presence/absence, character, extent, date and state of preservation. This information will enable Exeter City Council to identify and assess the particular significance of any archaeological heritage assets within the site, consider the impact of the proposed development upon that significance and, if appropriate, develop strategies to avoid or minimise

conflict between heritage asset conservation and the development proposals, in line with the *National Planning Policy Framework* (MHCLG 2021).

- 3.2. The specific objective of the evaluation was to determine if any archaeological remains associated with the known Roman activity in the immediate area extend into the application site.

4. METHODOLOGY

- 4.1. The evaluation fieldwork comprised the excavation of 10no. 30m x 1.8m trenches (Fig. 2). The trenches were located to test geophysical anomalies and to provide a representative sample of the remainder of the site (while avoiding an ecological “no-dig” area).
- 4.2. Trenches were set out on OS National Grid co-ordinates using Leica GPS. Overburden was stripped from the trenches by a mechanical excavator fitted with a toothless grading bucket. All machining was conducted under archaeological supervision to the top of the natural substrate.
- 4.3. Archaeological features/deposits were investigated, planned and recorded in accordance with *CA Technical Manual 1: Fieldwork Recording Manual*. Records were maintained in accordance with *CA Technical Manual 1: Fieldwork Recording Manual*.
- 4.4. Deposits were assessed for their palaeoenvironmental potential in accordance with *CA Technical Manual 2: The Taking and Processing of Environmental and Other Samples from Archaeological Sites*. No deposits were identified that required sampling.
- 4.5. Artefacts were processed in accordance with *CA Technical Manual 3: Treatment of Finds Immediately after Excavation*.
- 4.6. A summary of information from this project, as set out in Appendix B, will be entered onto the OASIS online database of archaeological projects in Britain (OASIS ID: cotswold2-504056). The OASIS entry will include an uploaded copy of this report.
- 4.7. As no significant archaeological features were identified during the archaeological evaluation, no archive will be prepared. The results of the fieldwork will be held by Owen Cambridge in the form of this evaluation report and the OASIS entry.

5. RESULTS

- 5.1. This section provides an overview of the evaluation results. Detailed summaries of the recorded contexts are given in Appendix A. Details of the artefactual material recovered from the site are given in Section 6.
- 5.2. The natural geological substrate comprised light brown-red clayey sand. It was exposed in all trenches at a depth of 0.29m–0.48m below present ground level. The natural substrate was sealed by 0.14m–0.26m of clayey sand subsoil, which was covered in turn by 0.15m–0.27m of modern topsoil.
- 5.3. No archaeological features or deposits were present.

6. THE FINDS

- 6.1. The finds recovered during the evaluation are listed in the table below:

Context		Material	Comments	Ct.	Wt.(g)	Spot date
400	Topsoil	Iron Greensand chert	Ring handle Flake	1 1	25 15	Modern Prehistoric
500	Topsoil	Flint	End-and-side scraper	1	8	Prehistoric

Table 1: Finds concordance

Lithics

- 6.2. Two worked lithics were retrieved, measuring a combined total of 23g. Both of these flints were recovered from topsoil deposits: a flake of Greensand chert from topsoil 400 (tr4) and a flint end-and-side scraper from topsoil 500 (Tr5).
- 6.3. Greensand chert outcrops in the region of the Blackdown Hills on the Devon/Somerset border. The end scraper is a distal fragment, which was made using a flake or blade blank and features steep, quite regular retouch along the distal dorsal edge and what survives of the left dorsal edge. Neither object is chronologically diagnostic and only broad prehistoric dating is possible for the lithics.

Metalwork

- 6.4. A single item of metal was recovered from topsoil 400 (Tr4). This is a modern plain iron ring (42mm diameter) which passes through a plain attachment fitting of quadrangular section with the point missing. Rings such as this had a range of uses, the larger ones being tethering rings. This one is too small for this, and it is more likely to be a handle (Crummy 1988, 42, no. 1996; Goodall 1993, 141).

7. DISCUSSION

- 7.1. Despite the archaeological potential of the application site (see *Archaeological background*, above), the evaluation recorded no archaeological features or deposits. There were no below-ground features corresponding to the possible land division/boundary ditches recorded by the geophysical survey of the application site (Substrata 2021).
- 7.2. Two non-diagnostic prehistoric worked flints were recovered from the topsoil. These provide evidence for low-level prehistoric activity in the vicinity of the site.

8. CA PROJECT TEAM

- 8.1. Fieldwork was undertaken by Majbritt Bengtson-Trimmm, assisted by Charlie Sessions and Nathan Giles. This report was written by Derek Evans. The finds report was written by Jacky Sommerville (lithics) and Alejandra Gutiérrez (metalwork). The report illustrations were prepared by Ken Lymer. The project was managed for CA by Derek Evans.

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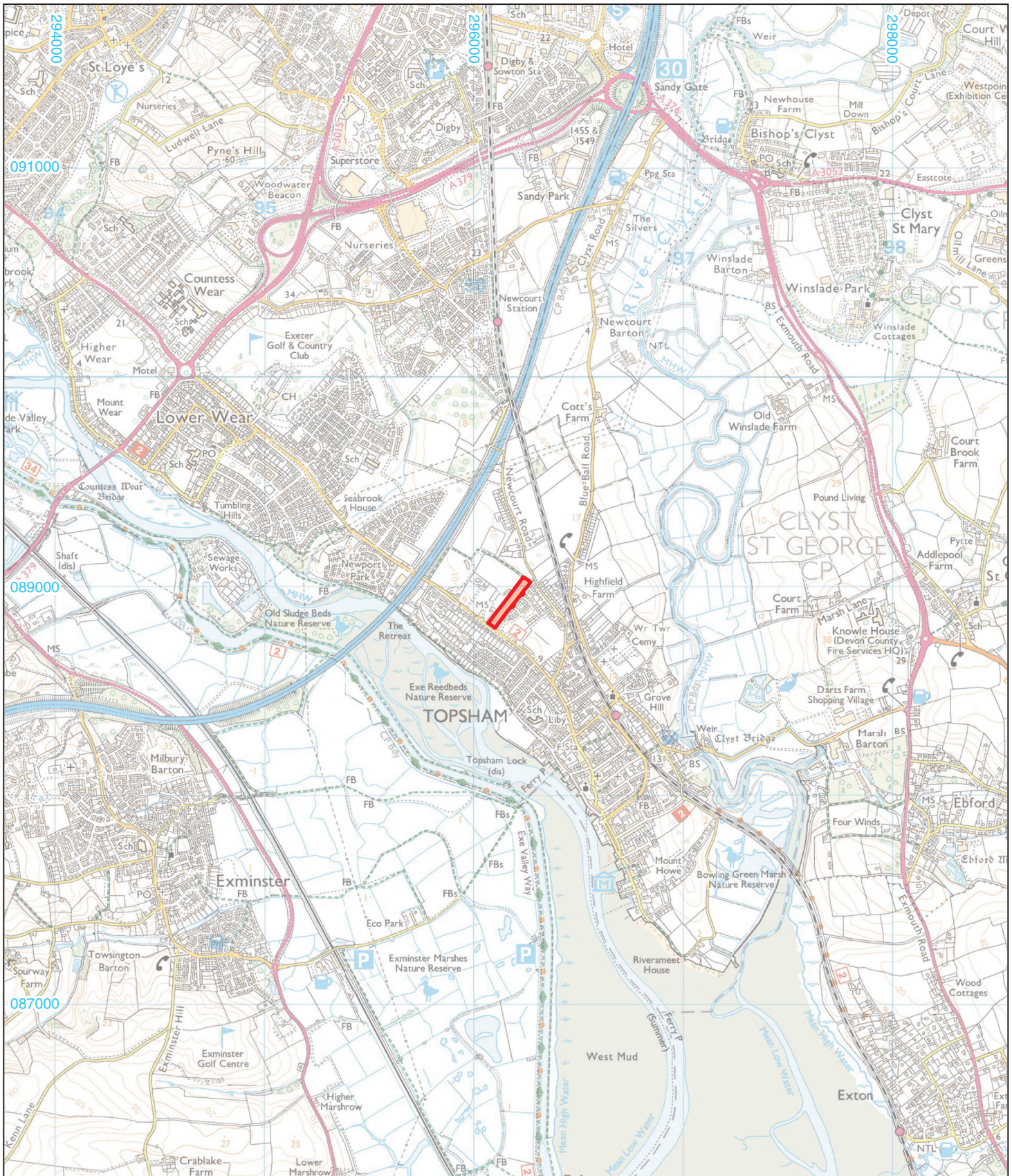
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APPENDIX A: CONTEXT DESCRIPTIONS

Trench	Context No.	Type	Interpretation	Description	Depth/thickness (m)
1	100	layer	topsoil	dark grey-brown clayey sand	0.22
1	101	layer	subsoil	mid grey-brown clayey sand	0.26
1	102	layer	natural	light brown-red clayey sand	–
2	200	layer	topsoil	dark grey-brown clayey sand	0.24
2	201	layer	subsoil	mid grey-brown clayey sand	0.22
2	202	layer	natural	light brown-red clayey sand	–
3	300	layer	topsoil	dark grey-brown clayey sand	0.15
3	301	layer	subsoil	mid grey-brown clayey sand	0.14
3	302	layer	natural	light brown-red clayey sand	–
4	400	layer	topsoil	dark grey-brown clayey sand	0.21
4	401	layer	subsoil	mid grey-brown clayey sand	0.17
4	402	layer	natural	light brown-red clayey sand	–
5	500	layer	topsoil	dark grey-brown clayey sand	0.25
5	501	layer	subsoil	mid grey-brown clayey sand	0.14
5	502	layer	natural	light brown-red clayey sand	–
6	600	layer	topsoil	dark grey-brown clayey sand	0.26
6	601	layer	subsoil	mid grey-brown clayey sand	0.14
6	602	layer	natural	light brown-red clayey sand	–
7	700	layer	topsoil	dark grey-brown clayey sand	0.21
7	701	layer	subsoil	mid grey-brown clayey sand	0.19
7	702	layer	natural	light brown-red clayey sand	–
8	800	layer	topsoil	dark grey-brown clayey sand	0.24
8	801	layer	subsoil	mid grey-brown clayey sand	0.18
8	802	layer	natural	light brown-red clayey sand	–
9	900	layer	topsoil	dark grey-brown clayey sand	0.27
9	901	layer	subsoil	mid grey-brown clayey sand	0.18
9	902	layer	natural	light brown-red clayey sand	–
10	1000	layer	topsoil	dark grey-brown clayey sand	0.23
10	1001	layer	subsoil	mid grey-brown clayey sand	0.24
10	1002	layer	natural	light brown-red clayey sand	–

APPENDIX B: OASIS REPORT FORM

PROJECT DETAILS		
Project name	Land adjoining Exeter Road, Topsham, Exeter, Devon	
Short description	In March 2022, Cotswold Archaeology carried out an archaeological evaluation of land adjoining Exeter Road, Topsham, Exeter, Devon. A total of ten trenches were excavated. The evaluation recorded no archaeological features or deposits.	
Project dates	29–31 March 2022	
Project type	Field evaluation	
Previous work	Geophysical survey (Substrata 2021)	
Future work	Unknown	
PROJECT LOCATION		
Site location	Exeter Road, Topsham, Exeter, Devon	
Study area (m ² /ha)	1.2ha	
Site co-ordinates	296161 088911	
PROJECT CREATORS		
Name of organisation	Cotswold Archaeology	
Project brief originator	N/A	
Project design (WSI) originator	Cotswold Archaeology	
Project Manager	Derek Evans	
Project Supervisor	Majbritt Bengtson-Trimmm	
MONUMENT TYPE	None	
SIGNIFICANT FINDS	None	
PROJECT ARCHIVES		
	Intended final location of archive	Content
Physical	N/A	N/A
Paper	N/A	N/A
Digital	N/A	N/A
BIBLIOGRAPHY		
Cotswold Archaeology 2022 <i>Land adjoining Exeter Road, Topsham, Exeter, Devon: Archaeological Evaluation</i> CA typescript report AN0501_1		



 Site boundary



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Ordnance Survey 0100031673

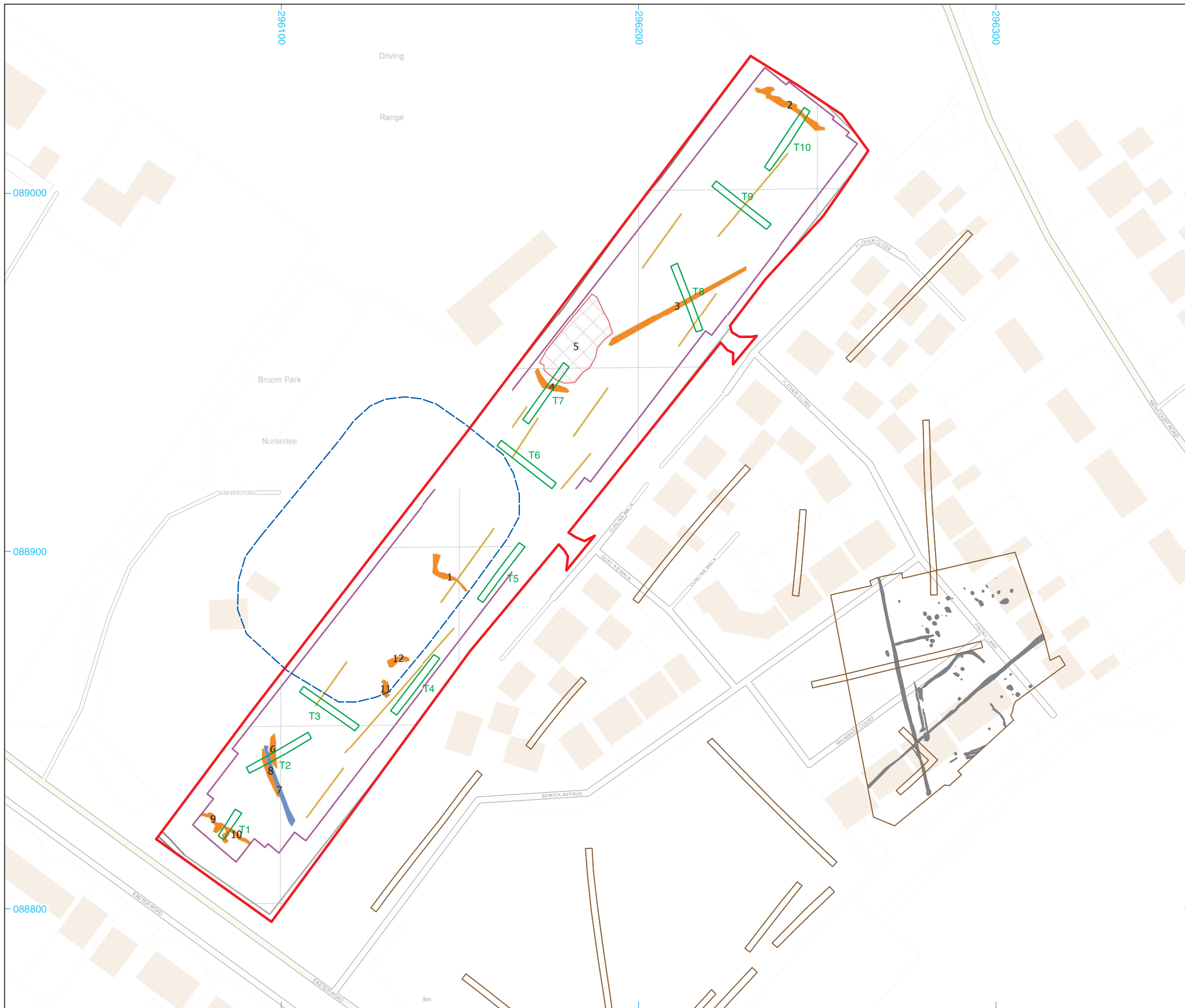


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PROJECT TITLE
Land off Exeter Road, Topsham,
Exeter, Devon

FIGURE TITLE
Site location plan

DRAWN BY	KL	PROJECT NO.	AN0501	FIGURE NO.
CHECKED BY	DB	DATE	05/04/2022	1
APPROVED BY	DE	SCALE@A4	1:25,000	



- Site boundary
- Evaluation trench
- Previous trench (CA 2021)
- Previous archaeological feature (CA 2021)
- No dig zone

Potential archaeology
 gradiometer survey
certainty, anomaly type (2)

- possible, positive
- Possible, negative
- Possible, enhanced

Potential cultivation traces
 gradiometer survey
certainty, anomaly type (2)

- Possible, cultivation traces

gradiometer survey area



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PROJECT TITLE
 Land off Exeter Road, Topsham,
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FIGURE TITLE
 Trench location plan

DRAWN BY	KL	PROJECT NO.	AN0501	FIGURE NO.
CHECKED BY	DB	DATE	05/04/2022	2
APPROVED BY	DE	SCALE@A3	1:1000	



Trench 1, looking north-east (1m scales)



Trench 4, looking south-west (1m scales)



Trench 6, looking north-west (1m scales)



Trench 9, looking north-west (1m scales)


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PROJECT TITLE
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FIGURE TITLE
Photographs

DRAWN BY	KL	PROJECT NO.	AN0501	FIGURE NO.
CHECKED BY	DB	DATE	05/04/2022	3
APPROVED BY	DE	SCALE@A3	NA	

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