



Land south of Leadon Way, Ledbury, Herefordshire

Archaeological Evaluation Report

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Land south of Leadon Way, Ledbury, Herefordshire

Archaeological Evaluation Report

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Summary

Oxford Archaeology (OA) was commissioned by EDP Ltd on behalf of Barratt Homes to undertake an archaeological evaluation as a condition (condition 23) attached to an appeal decision of a planning application (APP/W1850/W/15/3009456) for a housing development on land to the south of Ledbury.

The evaluation was carried over the course of two days, 27th – 28th March 2017.

The evaluation consisted of four trenches targeting findspots of early to late prehistoric and Roman date recovered during a fieldwalking survey carried out as part of the Ledbury Community Enterprise Survey, which was conducted in 1983.

The evaluation did not identify any archaeological remains or recover any artefacts.

Acknowledgements

Oxford Archaeology would like to thank Matthew Morgan of EDP Ltd who commissioned this project on behalf of Barratt Homes. Thanks is also extended to Julian Cotton Archaeological Advisor, Herefordshire Archaeology, who monitored the work on behalf of Herefordshire Council, for his advice and guidance.

The project was managed for Oxford Archaeology by Tim Allen. The fieldwork was directed by Paul Murray, who was supported by Mike McClean. Survey and digitizing was carried out by Ashley Strutt. Thanks is also extended to Nicola Scott who prepared the archive.

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Scope of work

1.1.1 Oxford Archaeology (OA) was commissioned by EDP Ltd on behalf of Barratt Homes to undertake a trial trench evaluation of land south of Leadon Way, Ledbury, Herefordshire in advance of a residential development.

1.1.2 The work was undertaken as a condition of Planning Permission (planning ref. APP/W1850/W/15/3009456). A brief (b143116s2) was agreed between Julian Cotton, Archaeological Advisor, Herefordshire Archaeology and Matthew Morgan of EDP Ltd. An overall written scheme of investigation for the project was produced by EDP Ltd (EDP 2016) detailing the Local Authority's requirements for work necessary to discharge the planning condition. Following appointment OA prepared a Method Statement detailing how OA the specified requirements would be implemented (OA 2016).

1.1.3 This report describes how the work was carried out, and the results of the evaluation.

1.2 Location, topography and geology

1.2.1 Ledbury is located on rising ground to the east of the River Leadon, 250m west of the site. The site centres on NGR SO 7069036490, which is to the south of Ledbury and 1.3km from the parish church (Figure 1). The site rises from c 52m above Ordnance Datum (AOD) on its western boundary where it is closest to the river, up to 63m AOD at its eastern end.

1.2.2 The site covers an area of c 13ha, and comprises two arable fields divided by a north-south hedge. It is bounded on the north by Leadon Way (A417), and on the west by the B4216, west of which is Hazel Farm. On the east side there is another field bordering on Leadon Road, with a small area of woodland to the south abutting the south-east corner of the site. To the south is a further field crossed by an east-west track 50-60m from the site boundary. Two tertiary rivers are located nearby: one 71m to the north and the other 386m to the south-east.

1.2.3 The solid geology of the study site comprises interbedded siltstone and mudstone of the Silurian Raglan Mudstone Formation. No superficial deposits are recorded for the study site (British Geological Survey 2017), but geotechnical investigation (T & P Regeneration Ltd 2016) found alluvium in the north-west corner of the site.

1.2.4 The soils covering the study site are described as 'freely draining slightly acid but base-rich soils' (Cranfield Soil and Agrifood Institute 2017). From the geotechnical investigation topsoil appears to range from 0.2m to 0.45m deep, and the alluvium in the north-west corner of the site is silty clay with varying proportions of sand and gravel, and is from 1.6 - 2m deep (T & P Regeneration Ltd 2016, 10).

2 ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

2.1 Archaeological and historical background

2.1.1 The known historical and archaeological background to the site and its surroundings up to a distance of 1km have been considered and reported upon in the Desk-Based Assessment carried out by CGMS (CGMS 2014), and will only be summarised here.

2.1.2 No designated archaeological assets (Scheduled Ancient Monuments, Listed Buildings, Conservation Areas, Registered Parks and Gardens or Registered Battlefields) lie within the site or within 1km of it.

2.1.3 The site has been the subject of archaeological investigation recorded in the Herefordshire HER as follows:

- EHE51960: Fieldwalking survey over wide area (Ledbury Community Enterprise Survey 1983). Recorded numerous features and finds, including flint and pottery within the study site, from prehistoric to post-medieval in date. Specific findspots of material from within the site are discussed below.
- EHE80005: Malvern Hills National Mapping Programme Project, 2000-2001. Interpretation and transcription of archaeological sites and landscapes visible on aerial photographs, throughout the Malvern Hills. Ditches and cut features interpreted and mapped from aerial photos as possibly relating to medieval settlement were recorded in the western part of the site.

2.1.4 Prehistoric activity consists of five flint implements and two pottery sherds within the western part of the site (MHE1992). Adjacent to or within the northern boundary of the site another 11 flint flakes and cores were found spread across the field surface (MHE1993). None of these are assigned to any specific prehistoric period.

2.1.5 One other group of flint implements has been recorded 700m east of the site.

2.1.6 Three sherds of Roman pottery have been found within the site, and another sherd adjacent to the northern boundary. No other Roman finds or activity are recorded within 1km.

2.1.7 No evidence for Saxon or early medieval activity is recorded on either the HER or the NMR for the site.

2.1.8 Ledbury was a borough from the late 7th century (Hillaby 1997), and a Saxon minster was founded, probably early in the 8th century. Although no remains of a Saxon church survive, the current 12th-century church (1.2km north-east of the site) may be the successor to this earlier foundation.

2.1.9 The settlement of Ledbury developed on the rising ground to the east of the River Leadon, and was focussed along the High Street. It was mentioned in Domesday Book as *Liederberge*, which means burh or fort on the Leadon, implying it was an important fortified centre in the mid to late Saxon period. At the time of the Domesday survey Ledbury was a manor (Thorn and Thorn 1983).

2.1.10 Medieval tenements have been uncovered around the original historic core to the north-east of the site. Evidence of the medieval marketplace is known to the south of the main settlement.

2.1.11 To the east of the town, the Bishop's Park was an enclosed deer park developed around a palace thought to lie to the south of the church, but with no extant trace.

2.1.12 A large area of cultivated land to the west of the medieval town (between 50m and 650m north of the study site) has been inferred from small areas mapped from aerial photographs, and possible ridge and furrow cultivation has been identified over the western part of the study site, and 50m to the south. The presence of ridge and furrow, and a scatter of medieval pottery from fieldwalking, is indicative of the use of the site as agricultural land during the medieval period.

2.1.13 The closest evidence of a farmstead is a moated site 250m north-west of the site.

2.1.14 Cropmark ditches and other features in the western part of the site have been interpreted as agricultural features of post-medieval date, while cropmarks immediately to the south have been interpreted as evidence of water meadows.

2.1.15 Hazel Farm, which lies immediately to the west of the site, is one of a series of farmsteads scattered across the landscape in the post-medieval period.

2.1.16 A Civil War mass grave was found 500m north of the site, but there is no evidence of any closer activity.

2.1.17 Historic maps indicate that the site was agricultural – mainly arable but with pasture on the north – in the 19th century, and belonged to Hazel Farm. A windmill probably stood at or just outside the north-east corner of the site.

3 EVALUATION AIMS AND METHODOLOGY

3.1 Aims

3.1.1 The project aims and objectives were as follows:

- i. To determine or confirm the approximate extent of any surviving remains.
- ii. To determine or confirm the approximate date or date range of any remains, by means of artefactual or other evidence.
- iii. To determine the condition and state of preservation of any remains.
- iv. To determine the degree of complexity of any surviving horizontal or vertical stratigraphy.
- v. To assess the associations and implications of any remains encountered with reference to the historic landscape.
- vi. To determine the potential of the site to provide palaeoenvironmental and/or economic evidence, and the forms in which such evidence may survive.
- vii. To assess the associations and implications of any remains encountered with reference to the historic landscape.
- viii. To determine the potential of the site to provide palaeoenvironmental and/or economic evidence, and the forms in which such evidence may survive.

3.2 Specific aims and objectives

3.2.1 To assess the associations and implications of any remains encountered with reference to the historic landscape.

3.2.2 To determine the potential of the site to provide palaeoenvironmental and/or economic evidence, and the forms in which such evidence may survive.

- ix. To determine whether further evidence of early prehistoric activity (Mesolithic to Bronze Age) is present below ground in the western middle and/or north-western corner of the site, and if so, to provide indications of its date, duration, character and status;
- x. To determine whether activity of later prehistoric date (later Bronze Age or Iron Age) is present below ground within the western middle and/or north-western corner of the site, and if so, to provide indications of its date, duration, character and status;
- xi. To determine whether activity of Roman date is present below ground within the western middle and/or north-western corner of the site, and if so, to provide indications of its date, duration, character and status;
- xii. To clarify the extent and direction of medieval/early post-medieval cultivation indicated by cropmark evidence on the site, and if possible to date it.

3.3 Methodology

3.3.1 The evaluation consisted of four trenches, each 30m long by 2m wide, targeted upon the HER records of previous findspots (MHE1992; MHE1993).

3.3.2 The trenches were laid out according to the plan provided by EDP, which had been agreed with Julian Cotton, LPA Archaeological Advisor.

3.3.3 The trenches were excavated using a JCB fitted with a toothless bucket under close archaeological supervision. Soils were removed in spits no more than 200mm deep until the natural geology was reached.

4 RESULTS

4.1 Introduction and presentation of results

4.1.1 The results of the evaluation are presented below, and include a stratigraphic description of the trenches. The full details of all trenches with dimensions and depths of all deposits for the content of Appendix A.

4.1.2 Context numbers reflect the trench numbers unless otherwise stated e.g. pit 102 would be a feature within Trench 1, while ditch 304 would be a feature within Trench 3.

4.2 General soils and ground conditions

4.2.1 The soil sequence between all trenches was fairly uniform. The natural geology of dark reddish brown clay was overlain by a deposit of colluvium, which in turn was overlain by ploughsoil.

4.2.2 Ground conditions throughout the evaluation were good and the trenches remained generally dry throughout. The base of a sondage placed at the south-east end of Trench 1 filled with a small amount of water overnight. Archaeological features, had they been present, would have been easy to identify against the underlying natural geology.

4.2.3 No differences in the natural geology were observed between trench 4 and the other three trenches to its south-east.

4.3 General distribution of archaeological deposits

4.3.1 No archaeological features or significant deposits were identified within any of the trenches.

4.4 Trench 1 (Fig. 2)

4.4.1 The geological horizon (103) was encountered at a general depth of 0.75m (c 50.25m AOD). The geological horizon was overlain by a colluvial deposit (102), 0.36m in depth, comprising moderately compact, reddish brown clayey silt with up to 5% small gravel. The colluvial horizon (102) was overlain by a ploughsoil (100) comprising reddish brown silt with occasional stones and included degraded plastic bags and other plastic detritus. The ploughsoil was 0.4m thick.

4.5 Trench 2 (Fig. 2)

4.5.1 The geological horizon (203) was encountered at a general depth of 0.55m (c 57m AOD). The geological horizon was overlain by a colluvial deposit (201), 0.15m in depth, and comprising moderately compact, reddish brown clay silt with up to 15% small stones. The colluvial horizon (202) was overlain by a ploughsoil (200) comprising reddish brown silt with occasional stones and degraded plastic bags and other plastic detritus. The ploughsoil was 0.4m thick.

4.6 Trench 3 (Fig. 2)

4.6.1 The geological horizon (303) was encountered at a general depth of 0.55m (c 57.1m AOD). The geological horizon was overlain by a colluvial deposit (301), 0.15m in depth, and comprising moderately compact, reddish brown clay silt with up to 15% small stones. The

colluvial horizon (302) was overlain by a ploughsoil (300) comprising mid-reddish brown silt with occasional stones and degraded plastic bags and other plastic detritus. The ploughsoil was 0.4m thick.

4.7 Trench 4 (Figs 2 and 3)

4.7.1 Trench 4 was placed across a relatively slight undulation in the topography. A colluvial deposit (401) was generally 0.15m in depth, although thickened to 0.4m where it filled the base of the undulation.

4.7.2 The geological horizon (402) was encountered at a maximum depth of 0.8m (c. 57.45m AOD). The geological horizon was overlain by a colluvial deposit (401), generally 0.15m in depth and up to a maximum of 0.4m where it corresponded to a slight dip in the topography. It comprised moderately compact, reddish brown clay silt with up to 15% small stones. The colluvial horizon, 402, was overlain by a ploughsoil (400) comprising reddish brown silt with occasional stones, and degraded plastic bags and other plastic detritus. The ploughsoil was 0.4m thick (see Fig. 3).

4.8 Finds summary

4.8.1 No finds were recovered during the course of the evaluation. The immediate vicinity of the trenches was visually scanned for significant artefacts, but none was noted.

5 DISCUSSION

5.1 Reliability of field investigation

5.1.1 The evaluation was carried out in dry, bright conditions. The geological horizon was clearly established in all of the trenches and the overlying stratigraphy was easily defined. A sondage was excavated through the geological horizon in each of the trenches to a depth of 0.5m to confirm its geological origin.

5.2 Evaluation objectives and results

5.2.1 The three specific aims and objectives of the evaluation were as follows. The first was to determine whether further evidence of early or later prehistoric activity (Mesolithic to Iron Age) is present below ground in the western middle and/or north-west corner of the site, and if so, to provide indications of its date, duration, character and status. Another aim was to determine whether activity of Roman date is present below ground within the western middle and/or north-west corner of the site, and if so, to provide indications of its date, duration, character and status.

5.2.2 The evaluation did not identify any further evidence for prehistoric (Mesolithic to Iron Age) or Roman activity.

5.2.3 The final aim was to clarify the extent and direction of medieval/early post-medieval cultivation indicated by cropmark evidence on the site, and if possible to date it.

5.2.4 No evidence for medieval/early post-medieval cultivation was identified, although a subsoil was identified in trenches 2, 3 and 4. This was interpreted as a colluvial deposit, which may possibly have been derived from earlier agricultural activity in the wider area.

5.3 Interpretation

5.3.1 The evaluation did not establish evidence for any archaeological activity within the site. The immediate vicinity of the trenches and the upcast spoil was visually scanned for artefacts, but none were noted.

5.4 Significance

5.4.1 The results of the evaluation excavation indicate that the areas that were evaluated are of very low archaeological potential.

APPENDIX A TRENCH DESCRIPTIONS AND CONTEXT INVENTORY

Trench 1						
General description					Orientation	NW-SE
Trench devoid of archaeology. Consists of topsoil and subsoil overlying natural geology of dark reddish brown silty clay.					Length (m)	30
					Width (m)	1.5
					Avg. depth (m)	0.75
Context No.	Type	Width (m)	Depth (m)	Description	Finds	Date
100	Layer	-	0.4	Topsoil	-	-
101	Layer	-	0.36	Colluvium	-	-
102	Layer	-	-	Geology	-	-

Trench 2						
General description					Orientation	E-W
Trench devoid of archaeology. Consists of topsoil and subsoil overlying natural geology of dark reddish brown silty clay.					Length (m)	30
					Width (m)	1.5
					Avg. depth (m)	0.55
Context No.	Type	Width (m)	Depth (m)	Description	Finds	Date
200	Layer	-	0.4	Topsoil	-	-
201	Layer	-	0.15	Subsoil	-	-
202	Layer	-	-	Geology	-	-

Trench 3						
General description					Orientation	N-S
Trench devoid of archaeology. Consists of topsoil and subsoil overlying natural geology of dark reddish brown silty clay.					Length (m)	30
					Width (m)	1.5
					Avg. depth (m)	0.55
Context No.	Type	Width (m)	Depth (m)	Description	Finds	Date
300	Layer	-	0.4	Topsoil	-	-
301	Layer	-	0.15	Subsoil	-	-
302	Layer	-	-	Natural	-	-

Trench 4						
General description					Orientation	E-W
Trench devoid of archaeology. Consists of topsoil and subsoil overlying natural geology of dark reddish brown silty clay.					Length (m)	30
					Width (m)	1.5
					Avg. depth (m)	0.8
Context No.	Type	Width (m)	Depth (m)	Description	Finds	Date
400	Layer	-	0.43	Topsoil	-	-
401	Layer	-	0.40	Subsoil	-	-
402	Layer	-	-	Natural	-	-

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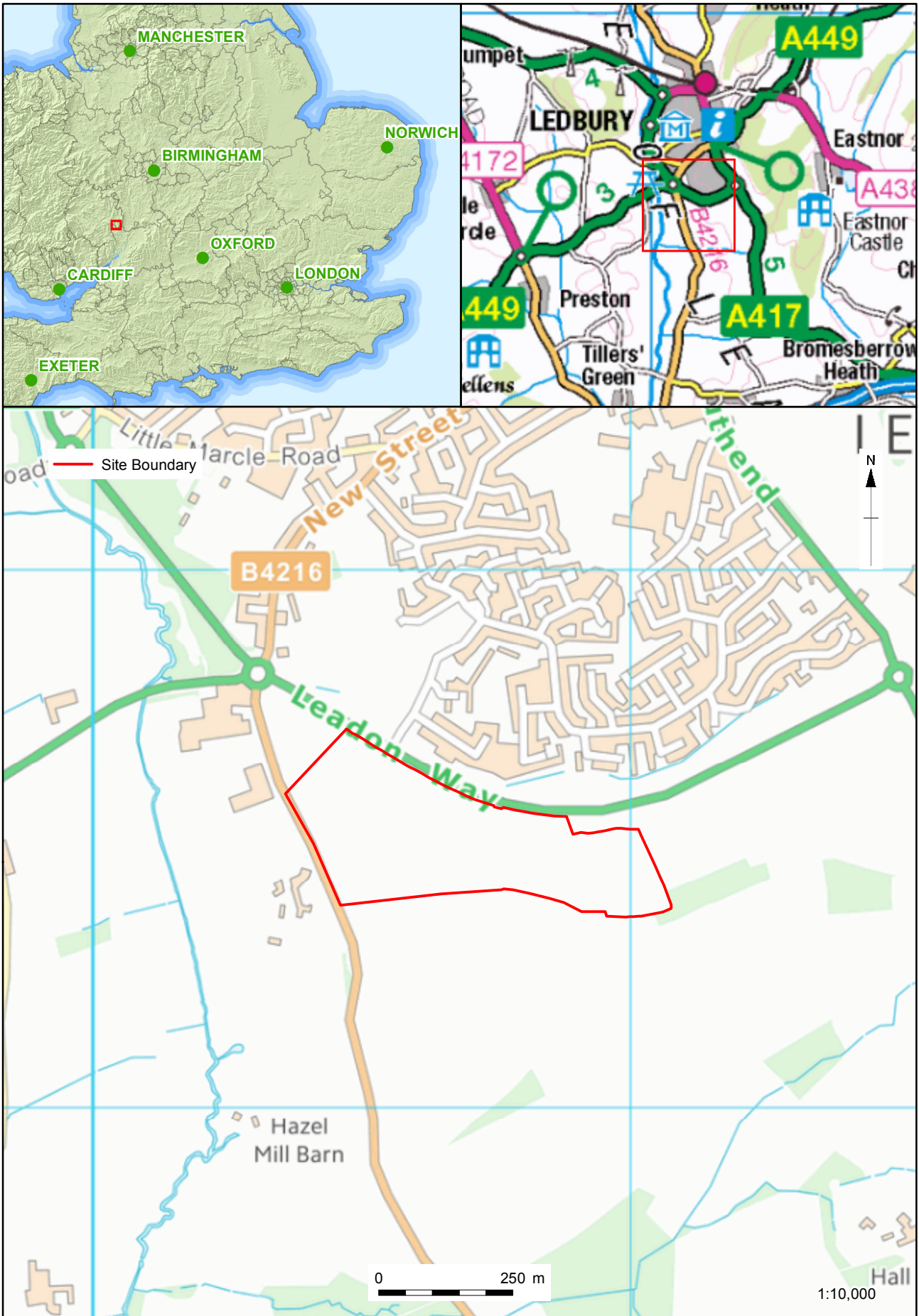
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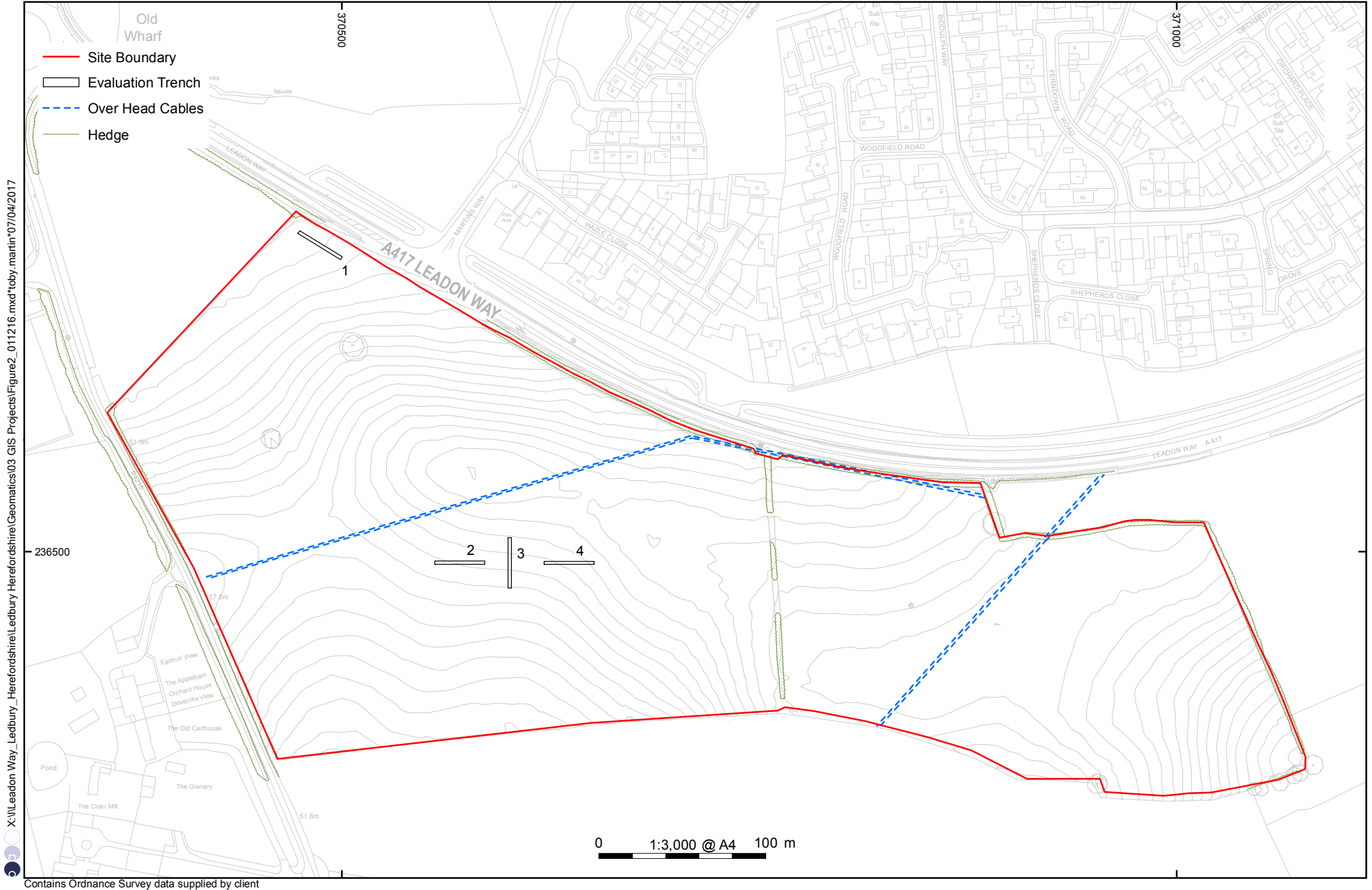
APPENDIX C**SITE SUMMARY DETAILS**

Site name:	Leadon Way, Ledbury, Herefordshire
Site code:	LELE 16
Grid Reference	SO 70690 36490
Type:	Evaluation
Date and duration:	27 th – 28 th March 2017
Summary of Results:	No archaeological features or finds
Area of Site	13h
Location of archive:	The archive is currently held at OA, Janus House, Osney Mead, Oxford, OX2 0ES, and will be deposited with Hereford Museum in due course, under the following accession number: 2017-2 (HER Event reference: EHE80292).



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Figure 1: Site location



Contains Ordnance Survey data supplied by client

Figure 2: Proposed trench locations

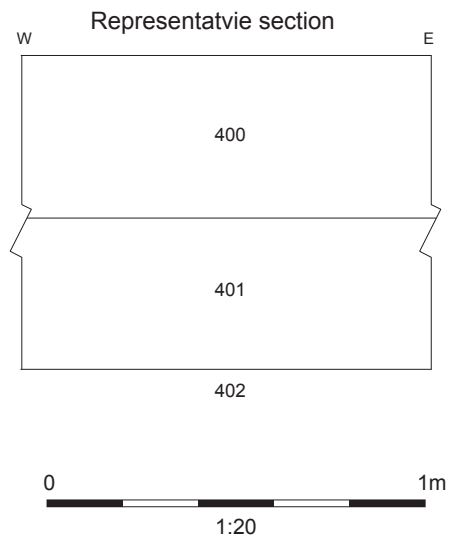


Figure 3: Representative section from trench 4



Plate 1: Trench 1



Plate 2: Trench 2



Plate 3: Trench 3



Plate 4: Trench 4



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