



Knights Hill, King's Lynn, Norfolk

Archaeological Trial Trenching Report

April 2022

Client: Barratt/David Wilson Homes

Issue No: 2

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Knights Hill, King's Lynn, Norfolk
Archaeological Trial Trenching Report

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Summary

Between 7th–12th February and 28th–29th March 2022 OA East carried out informative trenching work at Knights Hill, King's Lynn, Norfolk (TF 6613 2252). This work was commissioned by Barratt/David Wilson Homes and comprised the excavation of 29 trial trenches in a 4.8ha area, which was added to the north-western side of an existing 34.6ha development site. The site – excluding the current investigation area – was subject to geophysical survey and trial trenching in 2014, which identified an area of Late Iron Age–Early Roman remains. The current trenching work was carried out in conjunction with a 3.45ha excavation by OA East of these remains. The additional trial trenches revealed only two small pits in Trenches 4 and 23, neither of which produced any finds. The trial trenching has demonstrated that there are no archaeological remains present on this part of the development site.

Acknowledgements

Oxford Archaeology East would like to thank Barratt/David Wilson Homes for commissioning this project. Thanks are also extended to Steve Hickling, who monitored the work on behalf of Norfolk County Council. The project was managed for OA East by Andrew Greef. The fieldwork was directed by Kathryn Blackbourn, who was supported by Ed Cole, Steph Matthews and Ioannis Thanos. Survey was carried out by Valerio Pinna. The environmental remains were processed under the supervision of Rachel Fosberry and the archive was prepared under the supervision of Katherine Hamilton.

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Scope of work

- 1.1.1 Oxford Archaeology East (OA East) was commissioned by Barratt/David Wilson Homes to undertake informative trial trenching work in four plots of land at Knights Hill, King's Lynn, Norfolk (TF 6613 2252; Fig. 1). The 4.8ha investigation area has been added to the north-western side of a 34.6ha development of up to 600 homes together with associated amenities and infrastructure (planning ref. 16/02231/OM). The site – excluding the current investigation area – was subject to geophysical survey by Bartlett-Clark Consultancy and trial trenching by the Cambridge Archaeological Unit (CAU) in 2014, which identified an area of Late Iron Age to Early Roman remains in the northern part of the development site (ENF135054; Bartlett 2014; Wright 2015).
- 1.1.2 A brief was set by Steve Hickling of Norfolk County Council Historic Environment Service (NCC HES) in June 2021 for archaeological mitigation work relating to these remains, and this included a requirement for informative trenching in the additional four uninvestigated plots of land, to further inform the planning process. A Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI) was produced by OA East (Greef 2021) detailing the methods by which OA East proposed to meet the requirements of the brief. The additional trenching work will allow NCC HES to assess the archaeological potential of this part of the development site and identify any further mitigation requirements. This document outlines how OA East implemented the specified requirements detailed in the WSI relating to the additional trenching work.

1.2 Location, topography and geology

- 1.2.1 The development site was located approximately 3km north-east of the centre of King's Lynn on the north side of the Gaywood valley, occupying very gently sloping ground, which varied in elevation from 50m OD in the north (at the top of Knights Hill) to 10m OD at the south of the development area. The site was bounded to the north by Grimston Road and to the east by the A149. To the west of the development site lies Reffley Wood and the eastern fringe of South Wootton.
- 1.2.2 Within the northern part of the overall development site, the current investigation area encompassed four plots of land along its western edge (Fig. 1). The northernmost plot lay approximately 50m west of the concurrent mitigation excavation work (ENF152028). To its south, the remaining three plots contained wooded areas. To the west and north of the investigation area lay residential properties separated by an undeveloped plot of land. To the east and south of the investigation area lay arable fields.
- 1.2.3 The underlying bedrock geology of the site comprises Dersingham Formation - sandstone and mudstone. Superficial deposits comprise Lowestoft Formation Diamicton (www.bgs.ac.uk/discoveringGeology/geologyOfBritain/viewer.html, accessed 11th April 2022).

1.3 Archaeological and historical background

1.3.1 A full search of the Norfolk Historic Environment Record (NHER) of a 1km radius centred on the site was commissioned from NCC HES on 13th April 2022. The results are still pending at the time of writing the current report but will be included in the OA East excavation report for the ongoing mitigation work associated with the overall development site (Fig. 1, ENF152028). However, a desk-based assessment (DBA) of the development site (Mills Whipp Projects 2012) was included in the specification for the 2015 CAU trial trenching work on the site (Wright 2015). The following section is therefore a summary based on the results of the DBA which have been expanded upon with the results of the 2015 trial trenching. A map of NHER records given in the DBA is reproduced as Figure 2. This map's circled DBA gazetteer reference numbers are listed in **bold** type in the following sections, with the associated NHER number referenced before each one.

Early prehistoric (c.500,000-4000BC)

1.3.2 Evidence for Paleolithic activity in the area is provided by a stone axehead recovered from South Wootton Common (28093 (**1**)), approximately 950m north-west of the development, and by several struck flints found during the Reffley Wood barrow excavation (located within the development area).

1.3.3 A small number of Mesolithic flint blades have been found near Bawsey church approximately 500m to the south (20576 (**2**)) of the development and Mesolithic settlement activity was recorded approximately 1.5km to the south at Fairstead (Beadsmoore 2005).

Later prehistoric (c.4000BC-c.AD43)

1.3.4 Along with the Late Mesolithic activity at Fairstead, a significant amount of Neolithic settlement activity was recorded with over 1700 flints recovered (Beadsmoore 2005). Locally, a leaf-shaped arrowhead was recovered 500m to the south at Bawsey (20580 (**3**)) and two Neolithic axe heads have also been found, one 100m to the west in Reffley Wood (5499 (**5**)) and another 1km to the east (3303 (**4**)). A possible axe production site was recorded 800m to the west (5548 (**8**)).

1.3.5 Reffley Wood barrow lies within the wider development area and is to be preserved *in situ*. This monument was excavated in 1937 and 1938 with Collared Urn cremations recovered from the barrow and hearths and midden layers sealed beneath (5489 (**12**)). Further barrows are recorded in the area at Grimston Warren (800m to the east), which occupy a similar position overlooking the Gaywood Valley (Cushion 2007). Additionally, barbed and tanged arrowheads have been recovered from the eastern fringe of Reffley Wood (19426 (**12**)) and 200m to the north-west near South Wootton (3336 (**13**)).

1.3.6 Iron Age finds are recorded from the area including a concentration of objects recovered near Bawsey (700m to the south of the development area). These comprised two torcs and two electrum along with numerous fragments of gold and silver alloy wire representing further torcs (3326 (**15**)). Two Iron Age coins have been discovered. One was recovered 650m to the north-east (18386 (**19**)) and a second, bearing an Icenic horse pattern, was found 900m to the east (18148 (**20**)).

Romano-British (c.AD43-410)

- 1.3.7 Widespread settlement and land use in the Roman period is attested to by large amounts of Roman material recovered from the area. The previously mentioned Iron Age site at Bawsey also produced large quantities of Roman material including pottery, coins, brooches, a stylus, a strap fitting, a pestle and a large number of roof tiles indicating evidence of some form of Roman settlement on the site (21078, 24430, 25926, 23752, 16986, 34254 (**22-27**)). Similar scatters of material in the vicinity of Warren Farm (c.800m to the east of the development area) also indicate an area of Roman occupation and potential industrial activity (21713, 21712, 3316, 18505, 3303 (**4** and **19**)). Other individual findspots include a hoard of 30 silver coins recovered 300m to the south of the development area (31200 (**28**)), a coin of Constantine 1km to the west (28387 (**29**)), a harness fitting and strap fitting found in Reffley Wood immediately to the west (5499 (**5**)) and two brooches and a quantity of metal working waste recovered 200m to the north (3302 (**21**)).

Anglo-Saxon (c.AD 410-1066)

- 1.3.8 The riverside settlement at Bawsey continued to be a focus of activity into the Anglo-Saxon period with a considerable number of Middle and Late Anglo-Saxon artefacts recovered within its vicinity. These included pottery sherds, tweezers, boxes, a girdle hanger and buckle, pins, strap ends, styli, coins and hanging bowls (12364, 21078, 24430, 25926, 23752, 34354 (**11**, **22-25** and **27**)). Two possible Late Anglo-Saxon copper alloy ingots have also been identified which would indicate a well-established settlement, possibly including a market, and or, a port (25926 (**24**)).

Medieval (c.AD1066-1500)

- 1.3.9 In the medieval period the landscape was dominated by the town of King's Lynn to the west and the mid-12th century Norman fortress of Castle Rising. Land use was predominantly agricultural, separated by areas of heathland and woodland. Land associated with Castle Rising and Reffley Wood to the north and west of the site were the locations of medieval deer parks (3345 (**41**)) and Grimston Warren was the site of a rabbit warren (Cushion 2007).
- 1.3.10 The settlement at Bawsey continued in use into the medieval period and would have been the site of a small village (12364, 24430 (**11** and **23**)). The remains of the 11/12th century church of St James's survives as the only remnant of the settlement (3328 (**35**)). Other chance finds from the landscape include two silver Henry VII groats (30253 (**47**)) and a lead shield-shaped weight recovered 100m to the north (30254 (**48**)).

Post-medieval (c.AD1500-1750)

- 1.3.11 Sand quarries and a possible WWII bomb crater have been recorded c.800m to the east of the site by the Archaeological Earthwork Rapid Identification Survey (Cushion 2007, 50442 (**57**), 50450, 50447 (**59**), 50448 (**63**)). Further industry is evidenced by the sites of two brickworks to the west (16825 (**53**)) and north (14467 (**56**)) of Reffley Wood; the northern site may have been in use as early as the 17th century.

1.4 Previous work

1.4.1 The previous phases of geophysical survey by Bartlett-Clark Consultancy and archaeological trial trenching by the CAU in 2014 revealed a complex of Late Iron Age–Early Roman occupation in the northern part of the site including: a small ditch complex, a possible Early Roman enclosure and evidence of metalworking (Fig. 2, ENF135054; Bartlett 2014; Wright 2015). The trial trenching also revealed a double ring ditch in the southern part of the site which was potentially the site of the Reffley Wood Barrow (excavated in the 1930s). In 2016, CAPITA provided an impact assessment of the development on potential buried archaeological resources. This study concluded the development could have adverse effects on potential below ground archaeological assets and that a programme of archaeological mitigation work was required. The mitigation work initially included excavation of the double ring ditch. However, this feature is now to be preserved *in situ* within the revised design of the development and will remain undisturbed. The current trenching work was carried out in conjunction with a 3.45ha excavation by OA East of the Late Iron Age–Early Roman remains (Fig. 1, ENF152028).

2 AIMS AND METHODOLOGY

2.1 Aims

2.1.1 The aims of the informative trenching work in the further area added to the north-western side of the development area were defined in the WSI (Greef 2021):

- i. to establish the presence or absence of archaeological remains in this area;
- ii. to characterise where they were found (location, depth and extent); and
- iii. to establish the quality of preservation of any archaeology and environmental remains.
- iv. provide – in the event that archaeological remains were found – sufficient information to construct an archaeological mitigation strategy, dealing with preservation, the recording of archaeological deposits, working practices, timetables, and orders of cost.

2.2 Methodology

2.2.1 In accordance with the WSI a total of 30 trenches (subsequently revised to 29 trenches) were proposed, measuring 30 x 1.8m, representing a 5% sample of the c.4.8ha investigation area. Trenches 1–19 were excavated between 7th–12th February and Trenches 20–29 were opened between 28th–29th March 2022.

2.2.2 During site work, five trenches (Trenches 11, 12 and 14–16) were not excavated due to the obstruction of wooded areas, while Trenches 20 and 26 moved eastwards to avoid them. Trenches 20 and 25 were shortened to 23m and 18m in length respectively due to woodland.

2.2.3 Machine excavation was carried out under constant archaeological supervision with 360° mechanical excavators using 2m-wide toothless ditching buckets.

2.2.4 The site survey was carried out using a Leica GPS GS08 with SmartNET.

2.2.5 Spoil, exposed surfaces and features were scanned with a metal detector. All metal-detected and hand-collected finds were retained for inspection, other than those which were obviously modern.

2.2.6 All archaeological features and deposits were recorded using OA's pro-forma sheets. Trench locations, plans and sections were recorded at appropriate scales and high resolution digital photographs were taken of all relevant features and deposits.

2.2.7 A single bulk soil sample (5L) was taken from an excavated deposit which was processed by flotation at OA East's environmental processing facility at Bourn.

2.2.8 Site conditions were good, with rain at times.

3 RESULTS

3.1 Introduction and presentation of results

3.1.1 Descriptions of the ground conditions encountered and features identified are given in this section. Further trench descriptions with dimensions are given in Appendix A, Table 1. Figure 3 provides an overall plan of the trial trenches in relation to the woodland constraints which obstructed the excavation of Trenches 11, 12 and 14–16. Figure 4 provides plans of the pits encountered in Trenches 4 and 23.

3.2 General soils and ground conditions

3.2.1 The underlying natural deposit (1002) was found to be consistent with the superficial Lowestoft Formation Diamicton, indicated to underlie the site on the BGS website (Section 1.2.3). It consisted of yellow clay with patches of orange sand. The geology was overlain by a 0.15–0.4m thickness of subsoil (1001) comprising mid greyish brown silty sand. The subsoil was in turn overlain by a 0.1–0.3m thick layer of dark greyish brown silty sand topsoil (1000). In Trench 18, the geology was directly overlain by a c.0.6m thick layer of topsoil, which contained modern ceramic building material (Plate 1). There was also an absence of subsoil in Trenches 5 and 17 (Plate 2) and 18.

3.2.2 Ground conditions throughout the trial trenching were good and the trenches remained dry throughout. Archaeological features, where present, were easy to identify against the underlying natural geology.

3.3 General distribution of archaeological deposits

3.3.1 The archaeological remains were confined to two small sub-circular pits (**1003** and **2000**) of similar morphology, uncovered in Trenches 4 and 23 (Plates 3 and 5). The pits measured between 0.8–1.2m in diameter and 0.1m deep with shallow U-shaped profiles (Plates 4 and 6). The fills (1004 and 2001) consisted of mid–dark orange brown sandy clay. A 5L sample taken from pit **1003** was processed and found to contain negligible charcoal with no other ecofacts or artefacts present. The fill of pit **2000** was similarly sterile.

3.3.2 Trenches 1–3, 5–10, 13, 17–22 and 24–29 were found to be devoid of archaeology (Plates 7–10).

3.4 Finds summary

3.4.1 The trial trenching did not produce any artefacts.

4 DISCUSSION

4.1 Reliability of field investigation

4.1.1 The two pits encountered by the trenches were clearly visible with their mid–dark orange brown fills contrasting strongly with the natural yellow and orange deposits. The natural geological horizon beneath the topsoil into which these features were cut was also clearly identifiable. The pits and natural deposits were free draining, with no standing water observed in any of the excavated trenches to hinder their identification. Therefore, the results of the trial trenching are considered to have a good level of reliability.

4.2 Trial Trenching aims and results

4.2.1 Only two small pits backfilled with similarly sterile deposits were encountered in Trenches 4 and 23, separated by c.250m. The purpose of these pits is unknown and cannot be attributed to a specific period due to the lack of artefacts. The small quantity of charcoal recovered from the fill of pit **1003** may be indicative of an episode of tree/scrub clearance/burning in this wooded area. The absence of subsoil in Trenches 17 and 18 and the inclusion of modern ceramic building material in Trench 18 topsoil is suggestive of recently disturbed ground. Historical Ordnance Survey maps show that a quarry lay in this part of the site as far back as at least 1888 which was backfilled after 1970. Overall, there was an absence of any archaeological remains in this part of the development site.

4.3 Significance

4.3.1 The trial trenching has demonstrated that there are no archaeological remains present in this part of the development site.

APPENDIX A TRENCH DESCRIPTIONS

Trench	Orientation	Length (m)	Topsoil depth (m)	Subsoil depth (m)	Archaeology
1	E-W	30	0.3	0.2	No
2	N-S	30	0.3	0.2	No
3	E-W	30	0.3	0.2	No
4	N-S	30	0.3	0.2	Pit 1003 . No finds
5	N-S	30	0.3	0	No
6	E-W	30	0.3	0.15	No
7	N-S	30	0.3	0.15	No
8	N-S	30	0.3	0.1	No
9	E-W	30	0.2	0.2	No
10	N-S	30	0.3	0.2	No
11	-	-	-	-	Not excavated
12	-	-	-	-	Not excavated
13	E-W	30	0.3	0.2	No
14	-	-	-	-	Not excavated
15	-	-	-	-	Not excavated
16	-	-	-	-	Not excavated
17	E-W	30	0.5	0	No
18	SSW-NNE	30	0.6	0	No
19	E-W	30	0.5	0.2	No
20	SW-NE	23	0.2	0.2	No
21	E-W	30	0.1	0.3	No
22	SSW-NNE	30	0.2	0.3	No
23	E-W	30	0.2	0.2	Pit 2000 . No finds
24	N-S	30	0.2	0.3	No
25	E-W	18	0.2	0.3	No
26	NNW-SSE	30	0.2	0.3	No
27	E-W	30	0.2	0.25	No
28	N-S	30	0.3	0.35	No
29	E-W	30	0.1	0.4	No

Table 1: Trench inventory

APPENDIX B BIBLIOGRAPHY

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- 2012 *Knight's Hill, King's Lynn, Norfolk: Written Scheme of Investigation for Archaeological Evaluation*. Mills Whipp Projects Ltd

APPENDIX C OASIS REPORT FORM

Project Details

OASIS Number	oxfordar3-503232		
Project Name	Knights Hill, King's Lynn, Norfolk		
Start of Fieldwork	07/02/22	End of Fieldwork	29/03/22
Previous Work	No	Future Work	No

Project Reference Codes

Site Code	XNFKNH22EX	Planning App. No.	16/02231/OM
HER Number	ENF152027	Related Numbers	ENF135054 & ENF152028

Prompt	NPPF
Development Type	Residential
Place in Planning Process	After full determination (eg. As a condition)

Techniques used (tick all that apply)

- | | | |
|--|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Aerial Photography – interpretation | <input type="checkbox"/> Grab-sampling | <input type="checkbox"/> Remote Operated Vehicle Survey |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Aerial Photography - new | <input type="checkbox"/> Gravity-core | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Sample Trenches |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Annotated Sketch | <input type="checkbox"/> Laser Scanning | <input type="checkbox"/> Survey/Recording of Fabric/Structure |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Augering | <input type="checkbox"/> Measured Survey | <input type="checkbox"/> Targeted Trenches |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Dendrochronological Survey | <input type="checkbox"/> Metal Detectors | <input type="checkbox"/> Test Pits |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Documentary Search | <input type="checkbox"/> Phosphate Survey | <input type="checkbox"/> Topographic Survey |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Environmental Sampling | <input type="checkbox"/> Photogrammetric Survey | <input type="checkbox"/> Vibro-core |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Fieldwalking | <input type="checkbox"/> Photographic Survey | <input type="checkbox"/> Visual Inspection (Initial Site Visit) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Geophysical Survey | <input type="checkbox"/> Rectified Photography | |

Monument	Period	Object	Period
Pit	Uncertain		Choose an item.
	Choose an item.		Choose an item.
	Choose an item.		Choose an item.

Insert more lines as appropriate.

Project Location

County	Norfolk	Address (including Postcode) Land West of Queen Elizabeth Way (A149) South Wootton Norfolk PE30 3NJ
District	King's Lynn and West Norfolk	
Parish	South Wootton	
HER office	Norfolk	
Size of Study Area	4.8ha	
National Grid Ref	TF 6623 2252	

Project Originators

Organisation	OA East
Project Brief Originator	Steve Hickling (NCC HES)
Project Design Originator	Andrew Greef (OA East)
Project Manager	Andrew Greef (OA East)

Project Supervisor

Kathryn Blackburn (OA East)

Project Archives

	Location	ID
Physical Archive (Finds)	Not applicable	
Digital Archive	Norwich Castle Museum	NWHCM: 2021.230
Paper Archive	Norwich Castle Museum	NWHCM: 2021.230

Physical Contents

Present?

Digital files associated with Finds

Paperwork associated with Finds

Animal Bones	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Ceramics	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Environmental	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Glass	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Human Remains	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Industrial	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Leather	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Metal	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Stratigraphic		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Survey		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Textiles	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Wood	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Worked Bone	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Worked Stone/Lithic	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
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Other	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

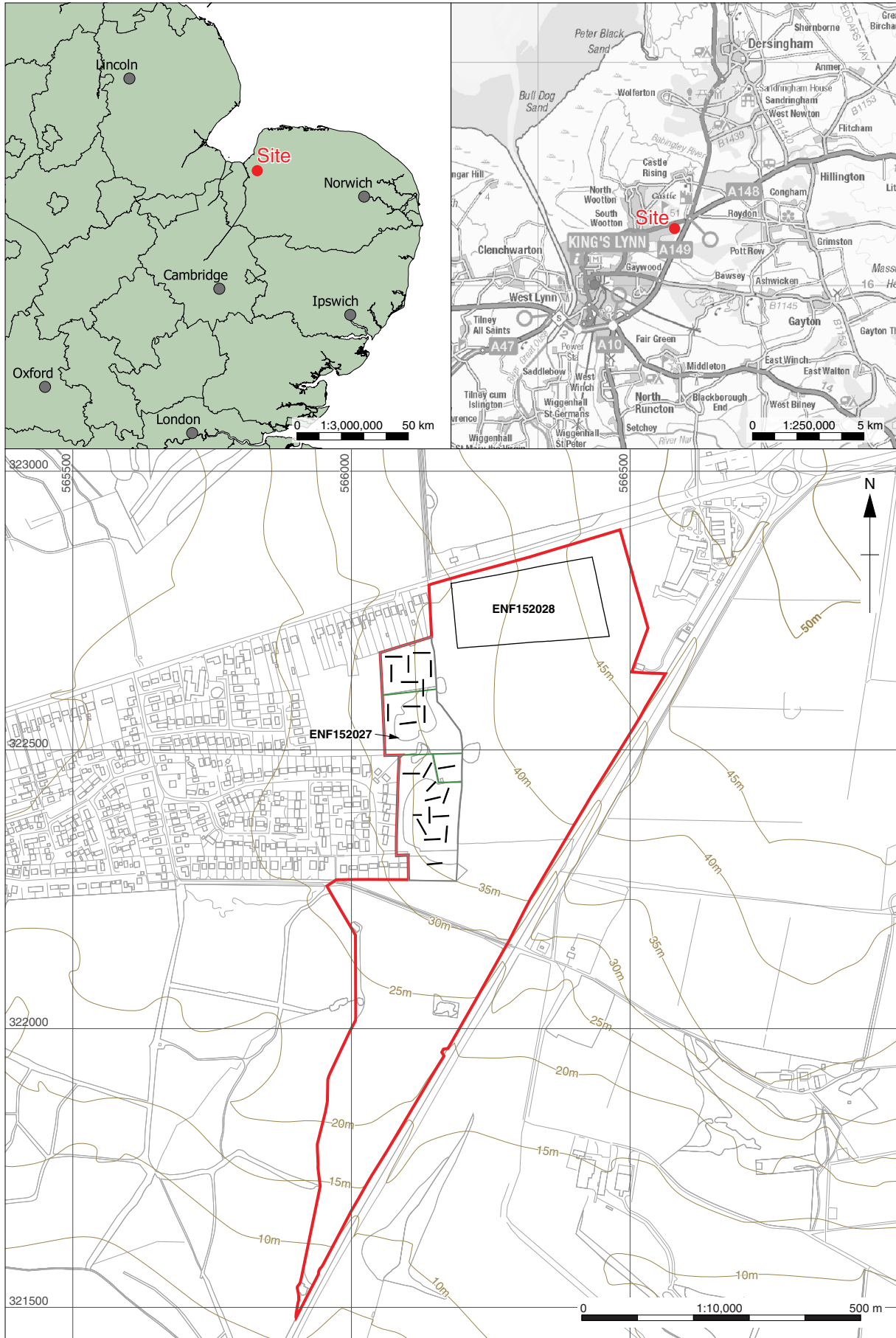
Digital Media

Database	<input type="checkbox"/>
GIS	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Geophysics	<input type="checkbox"/>
Images (Digital photos)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Illustrations (Figures/Plates)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Moving Image	<input type="checkbox"/>
Spreadsheets	<input type="checkbox"/>
Survey	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Text	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Virtual Reality	<input type="checkbox"/>

Paper Media

Aerial Photos	<input type="checkbox"/>
Context Sheets	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Correspondence	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Diary	<input type="checkbox"/>
Drawing	<input type="checkbox"/>
Manuscript	<input type="checkbox"/>
Map	<input type="checkbox"/>
Matrices	<input type="checkbox"/>
Microfiche	<input type="checkbox"/>
Miscellaneous	<input type="checkbox"/>
Research/Notes	<input type="checkbox"/>
Photos (negatives/prints/slides)	<input type="checkbox"/>
Plans	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Report	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Sections	<input type="checkbox"/>
Survey	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

Further Comments



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Figure 1: Site location map with development area (red), informative trenching area (dark grey) and trenches (Black)

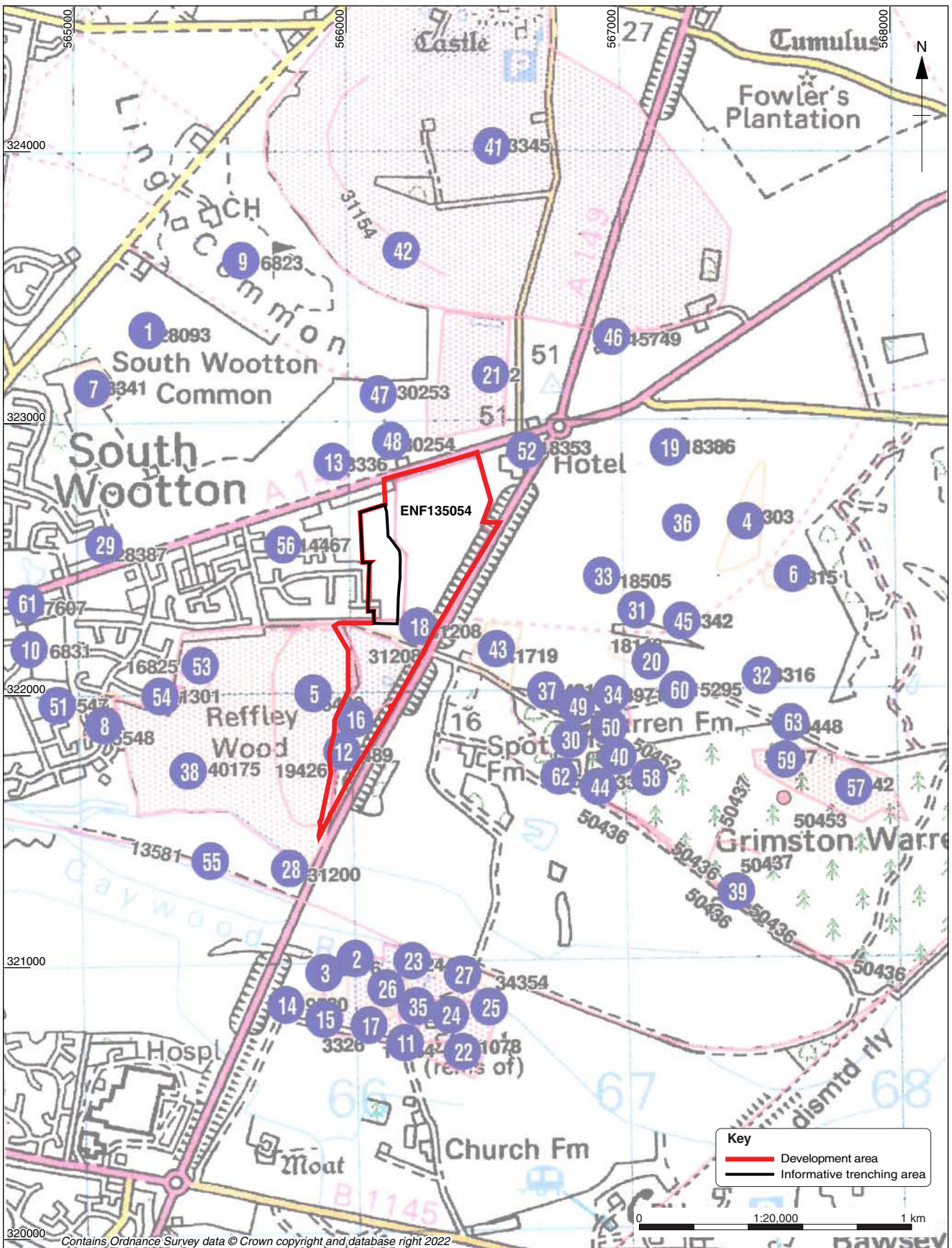


Figure 2: Map showing location of NHER monuments and events (reproduced from Mills Whipp Projects 2012, fig. 2)

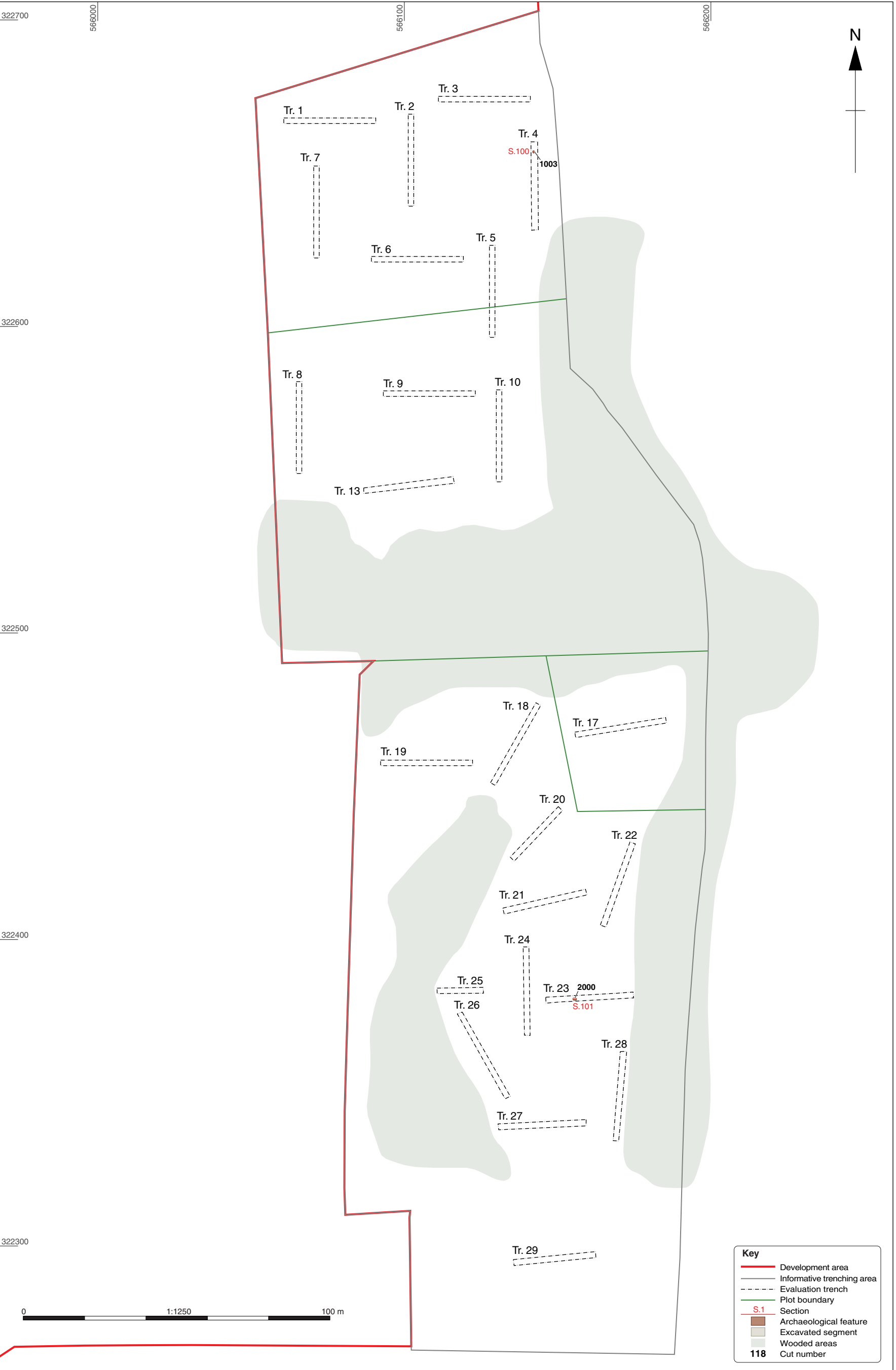


Figure 3: Trench layout and wooded areas

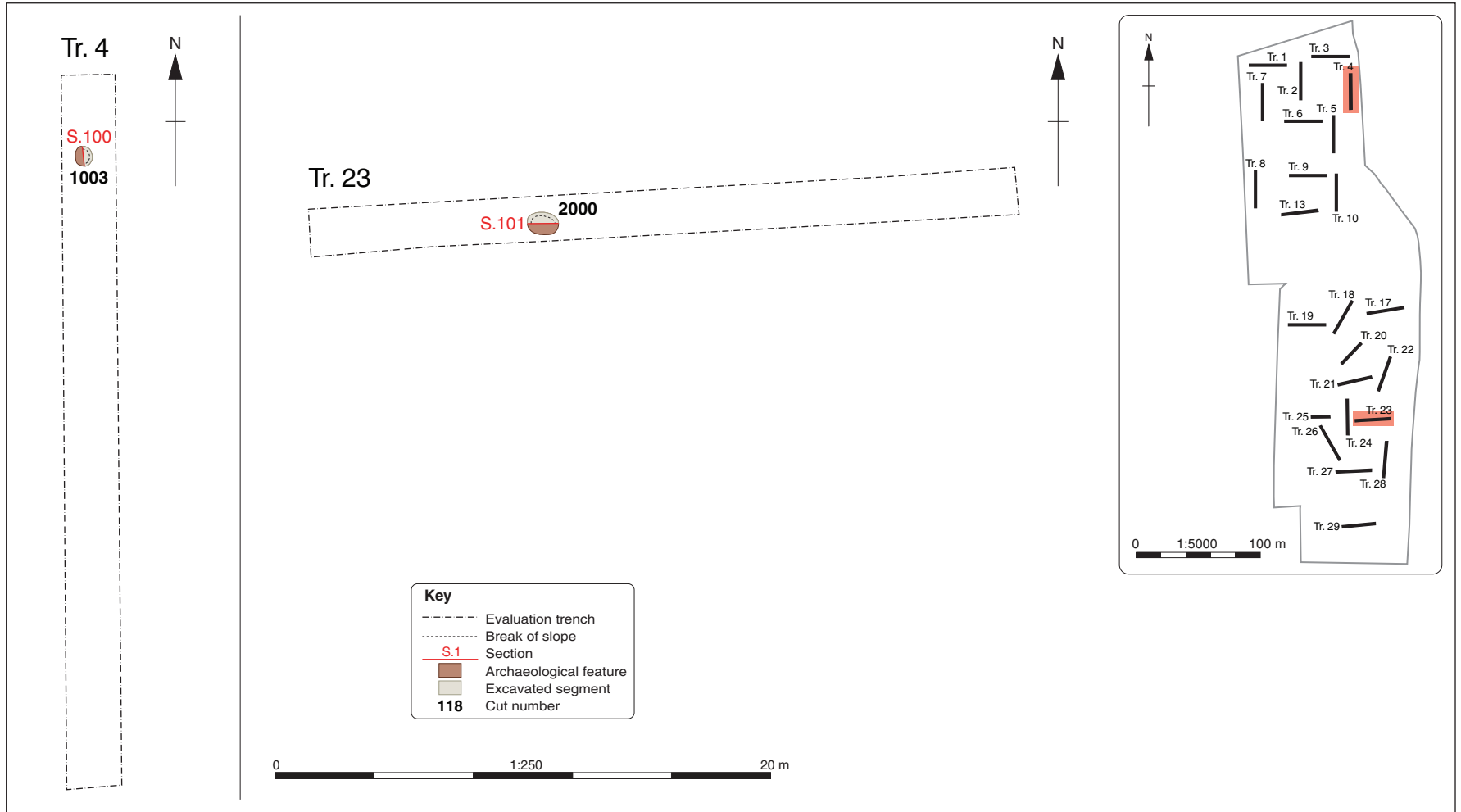


Figure 4: Plans of Trenches 4 and 23



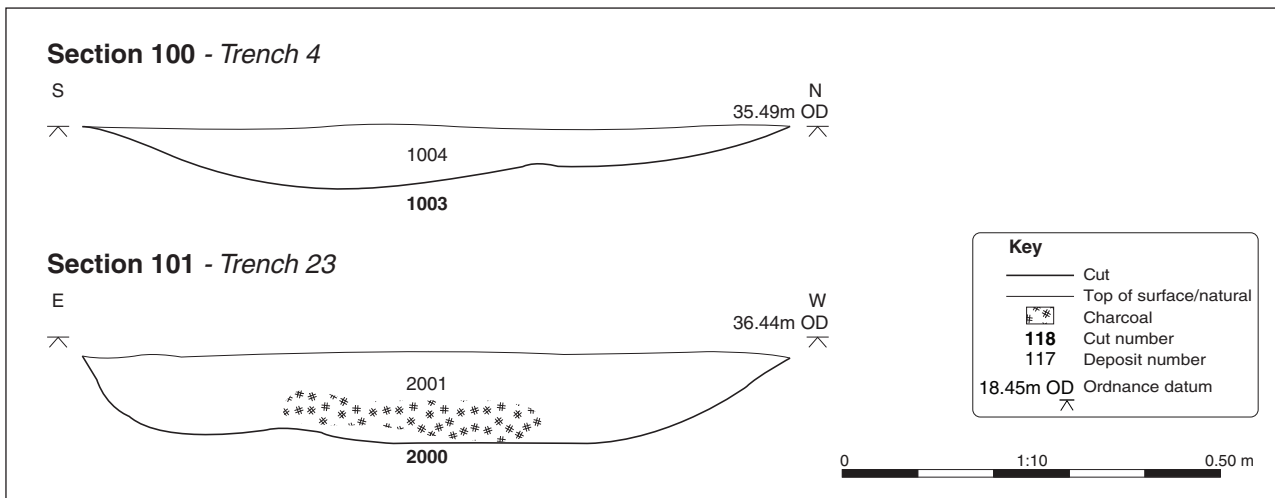


Figure 5: Selected sections



Plate 1: Trench 18, looking south-west



Plate 2: Trench 17, looking west



Plate 3: Trench 4, looking north



Plate 4: Pit 1003 in Trench 4, looking west



Plate 5: Trench 23, looking east



Plate 6: Pit 2000 in Trench 23, looking south



Plate 7: Trench 6, looking east



Plate 8: Trench 7, looking north



Plate 9: Trench 26, looking north-north-west



Plate 10: Trench 28, looking north



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