ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION AT BANNERBROOK PARK, COVENTRY AND SOLIHULL

Simon Griffin (MSc) AIFA and Laura Griffin (BA Hons) AIFA

Illustrated by Simon Griffin

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Historic Environment and Archaeology Service,
Worcestershire County Council,
Woodbury,
University College Worcester,
Henwick Grove,
Worcester WR2 6AJ

Project P2615
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BBP 04

Contents

Archaeological Evaluation at Bannerbrook Park, Coventry and Solihull

Simon Griffin and Laura Griffin

Part 1 Project summary

An archaeological evaluation was undertaken at Bannerbrook Park, Coventry and Solihull (NGR 427300 279300). It was undertaken on behalf of CgMs Consulting working for Pegasus Planning Group and Persimmon Homes, who intend to develop the site which is to be the subject of a planning application. The project aimed to determine if any significant archaeological site was present and if so to indicate what its location, date and nature were.

The evaluation consisted of 11 trenches located in a car park and sports field associated with the former Massey Ferguson factory. The factory was originally constructed in the late 1930's; prior to this the land was agricultural The area under evaluation was only brought into the factory in the late 1980's. Trenching revealed that significant truncation of the site occurred during the construction of the car park. A single linear feature and post hole were recorded and have been interpreted as relating to post-medieval field boundaries. Elsewhere traces of ridge and furrow were recorded showing that the area had been the subject of agriculture since the medieval period. There was no evidence for settlement or other such archaeological potential.

Part 2 Detailed report

1. Background

1.1 Reasons for the project

An archaeological evaluation was undertaken at Bannerbrook Park, Coventry and Solihull (NGR 427300 279300), for CgMs Consulting (the consultant) on behalf of Pegasus Planning Group for Persimmon Homes (the client). The site is to be the subject of a planning application for development. The archaeological curator (Coventry City Council and Warwickshire County Council) requires an archaeological evaluation to provide further information about the nature of the deposits to supplement a Desk-based assessment (CgMs 2004).

1.2 Project parameters

The project conforms to the *Standard and guidance for archaeological field evaluation* (IFA 1999)

The project also conforms to a brief prepared by CgMs Consulting (2004) and for which a project proposal (including detailed specification) was produced (HEAS 2004).

1.3 Aims

The aims of the evaluation were to locate archaeological deposits and determine, if present, their extent, state of preservation, date, type, vulnerability and documentation. The purpose of this was to establish their significance, since this would make it possible to recommend appropriate mitigation work which may then be integrated with the proposed development programme.

More specifically the following aims have been identified:

- to clarify the presence/absence and extent of medieval deposits evidencing settlement or activity at the site;
- to identify, within the constraints of the evaluation, the date, character, condition and depth of any surviving remains within the site;
- to assess the degree of existing impacts to sub-surface horizons and to document the extent of archaeological survival of buried deposits.

2. Methods

2.1 Documentary search

A full documentary search is including in the Desk-based assessment (CgMs 2004).

2.2 Fieldwork

2.2.1 Fieldwork strategy

A detailed specification including trenching plans has been prepared by the Consultant (CgMs 2004) The Service produced a proposal (HEAS 2004) to carry out the project.

Prior to fieldwork commencing a risk assessment was undertaken along with an initial site inspection. Following consultation with the Consultant it was decided to avoid trenching in areas currently utilised as sports pitches unless surrounding trenches suggested that there was potential for archaeologically significant deposits. For the purposes of this evaluation the original trench numbering was retained and as a result there is no trench 9 as this was originally proposed within a football pitch.

Fieldwork was undertaken between 26th July 2004 and 30th July 2004. Eleven trenches, amounting to just over 500m² in area, were excavated. Trench 1 was located between two buildings on the former Massey Ferguson factory site on rough ground. Trenches 2-5 and 8 were located to the south and east of trench 1 in a large car park associated with the factory. Trenches 6 and 7 were located in areas of hardstanding within former tractor testing areas of the factory. Trenches 10-12 were located to the west of the factory and car park on a sports pitch. The location of the trenches is indicated in Figure 2.

Deposits considered not to be significant were removed using a 180º wheeled excavator, employing a toothless bucket and under archaeological supervision. Subsequent excavation was undertaken by hand. Clean surfaces were inspected and selected deposits were excavated to retrieve artefactual material and environmental samples, as well as to determine their nature. Deposits were recorded according to standard Service practice (CAS 1995). On completion of excavation, trenches were reinstated by replacing the excavated material. In the sports filed turf was re-laid and compacted by the JCB.

2.2.2 Structural analysis

All fieldwork records were checked and cross-referenced. Analysis was effected through a combination of structural, artefactual and ecofactual evidence, allied to the information derived from other sources.

2.3 Artefacts

2.3.1 Artefact recovery policy

The artefact recovery policy conformed to standard Service practice (CAS 1995; appendix 2). This in principal determines that all finds, of whatever date, must be collected. However, in this case only a sample of later material was collected from the spoil during machining. These comprised the majority of the finds recovered from the site.

2.3.2 Method of analysis

All hand retrieved finds were examined. They were identified, quantified and dated to period. There were no stratified contexts the dates were used for determining the broad date of phases defined for the site. All information was recorded on a Microsoft Access 2000 database.

Pottery fabrics are referenced to the fabric reference series maintained by the Service (Hurst 1994).

2.4 The methods in retrospect

The methods adopted allow a high degree of confidence that the aims of the project have been achieved.

3. Topographical and archaeological context

All necessary topographic and archaeological background information is included in the desk-based assessment (CgMs 2004).

4. Description

The results of the structural analysis are presented in Appendix 1, with Table 1 summarising the artefacts recovered. The trenches and features recorded are shown in Fig 2.

4.1 Phase 1 Natural deposits

Natural deposits were observed in all eleven trenches and consisted of compact reddish brown clays to light yellowish green sandy clay containing frequent sub-rounded cobbles. Towards the east of the site there was a noticeable reduction in the amount of inclusions present with natural consisting almost entirely of compact reddy brown clays. Natural deposits were encountered between 0.3m below ground surface (bgs) in trench 10 to 1.10m (bgs) in trench 1.

At the western area of the site, natural was overlain by a thin layer of topsoil with very minimal subsoil development. Where present topsoil consisted of firm dark greyish brown silty clay. Subsoil was only really apparent in trench 1 and this was poorly developed with active roots and bioturbation occurring to a depth of 0.65m (bgs).

4.2 Phase 2 Medieval

This phase is represented by remnant ridge and furrow. This was clearly visible in trenches 10, 11 and 12 on the sports field (trench 9 was not excavated) where there had been no scalping or landscaping associated with the factory or car park construction. There were residual traces of ridge and furrow in trenches 1 and 2. This suggests that the landscaping associated with the car park has removed all traces of this phase. Trench 1 was located within the southern edge of the factory complex and here a deeper sequence of deposits was recorded. Faint ridge and furrow was detected after weathering although this was not as clear as at the west end of the site.

Ridge and furrow survives as shallow (c 0.10m in depth) bands of mid grey silty clay containing an increased frequency of sub-rounded pebbles (Figure 3, 4). Within the sports field these were spaced at approximately 3m intervals with each furrow measuring approximately 1.5m wide and orientated roughly in a north-south direction. Trench 12 was orientated in a north-south direction running parallel with the ridge and furrow.

4.3 Phase 3 Undated features

This phase is represented by a single linear feature (506) recorded in trench 5 (Figure 4, Plate 3) and an undated stake or post hole in trench 8 (807). Context 807 represents a small circular post hole 0.08m in depth and is not associated with any other features, its fill is very similar to that of 506 and is probably post medieval in date.

Linear 506 was filled with a dark greenish grey clay with occasional small pebbles and charcoal flecks. The feature is ‘U’ shaped in profile with a flat base and measures approximately 0.12m deep and 0.5m wide. This has been interpreted as the base remnant of a field boundary almost certainly dating to the post-medieval period.

Numerous land drains were recorded across the site, and it is possible that linear 506 may have had a similar function, although its width and form would suggest a different origin.

Given the agricultural history of the landscape the most likely interpretation for this feature is as the base remnant of a field boundary.

4.4 Phase 4 Post Medieval and modern

This phase is dominated by the majority of deposits across the eastern and central areas of the site which primarily consisted of rubble fill and road makeup associated with the construction of the car park. In trenches 3,4,5,6,7 and 8 there was a complete absence of buried topsoil or subsoil – all having been truncated and landscaped away presumably ahead of the car park construction. Deposits consisted of hardcore building material (202, 301, 402, 502, 503, 701, 802) and in places this was interspersed with industrial debris such as foundry waste mixed within a silty sand matrix (804, 403, 504). This material along with occasional irregular dumps of rubble and bricks appears to represent a deliberate policy of waste spreading across the site ahead of the car park and as a result, much of these areas are void of any archaeological potential.

5. Artefactual Analysis

The artefactual assemblage consisted of 13 finds weighing 248g in total. All were significantly abraded and dated from the late post-medieval period onwards. All material was unstratified and appears to have been incorporated into the topsoil as a result of post-medieval agriculture and more recent development of the site.

Context	Material	Total	Weight (g)	Date/Period
100	**Flat roof tile**	2	39	Post-medieval
200	**Post-medieval pottery**	1	20	18th century
200	**Modern pottery**	3	88	19th –20th century
300	**Flat roof tile**	1	24	Post-medieval
300	**Brick**	1	5	Post-medieval/modern
700	**Flat roof tile**	2	24	Post-medieval
800	**Flat roof tile**	1	8	Post-medieval
1000	**Post-medieval pottery**	1	13	18th century
1200	**Brick**	1	16	Post-medieval/modern

Table 1: Quantification of the assemblage

Context	Fabric number	Fabric name	Total sherds	Date
200	**78**	Post-med red sandy ware	1	18th century
200	**81.4**	Misc late stoneware	2	19th – 20th century
200	**101**	Misc modern wares	1	19th –21st century
1000	**91**	Post-med buff ware	1	18th century

Table 2: Quantification of the pottery by fabric

6. Discussion

The results of the evaluation combined with the Desk-based assessment show that the historic character of the landscape was almost undoubtedly agricultural in origin. This is supported by the remnant traces of medieval ridge and furrow in conjunction with the visible remains observed in the vicinity and recorded on the SMR. However, there was no evidence for settlement on the site during the medieval period, either through deposits or artefacts.

Artefacts were rare on the site supporting the interpretation of an agricultural landscape. With all finds coming from unstratified contexts and all dating from the later post-medieval period onwards. These are likely to have become incorporated into the ground during the levelling and landscaping of the site or through manuring during ploughing.

The survival of deposits across the whole site varies. Within the car park area (trenches 2-8) considerable landscaping has removed all traces of topsoil and subsoil leaving only a faint remnant of a post-medieval field boundary. However, at the western part of the site, the deposit sequence is relatively unaffected by truncation (trenches 10,11 &12). Here topsoil and subsoil survive with natural appearing at a depth of approximately 0.3m (bgs). Ridge and furrow survives as shallow linear bands across the natural, which indicates that this area has not been subject to the same scalping of natural, that occurred in the factory/ car park site. However, the lack of clear subsoil horizons and any visible signs of ridge and furrow on the ground surface suggests that the area has been subject to extensive modern ploughing.

As the land is currently used as sports fields it is possible that some levelling may have occurred, although modern agricultural methods may also be responsible for levelling the landscape prior to the construction to the factory in the 1930's and the carpark in the late 1980's (CgMs 2004).

The topography of the area further supports the case for major truncation of the site. There is a gradual slope from the west of the site down towards Banner Lane in a west to east direction. Levels on natural revealed that an artificial plateau now exists within the car park area showing that in places considerable amounts of natural must have been removed. It is possible that this process may have removed previously undiscovered archaeological deposits, although this is extremely unlikely due to the evidence seen through the relatively undisturbed deposits in the sports field and the paucity of artefactual remains.

To the north of this area the scalping of natural appears to be reduced. In trenches 1 and 2 there are faint traces of Ridge and Furrow and perhaps more significantly topsoil and subsoil layers. Trench 1 was located at the eastern edge of the site, here natural is recorded at a depth of 127.27m AOD which compares with a level of 126.49m AOD at Banner Lane and is unlikely to have been altered by the factory construction. Borehole data suggests that the majority of the site has been affected by 'cut and fill' and it is likely that the increased overburden in this area is made ground.

The results of the evaluation support the desk based assessment in confirming that the area was historically associated with agriculture from at least the medieval period and the only major landuse change was associated with the construction of the factory and carpark.

7. Publication summary

The Service has a professional obligation to publish the results of archaeological projects within a reasonable period of time. To this end, the Service intends to use this summary as the basis for publication through local or regional journals. The client is requested to consider the content of this section as being acceptable for such publication.

An archaeological evaluation was undertaken on behalf of CgMs Consulting at Bannerbrook Park, Coventry and Solihull (NGR 427300 279300 ; SMR ref BBP04). The evaluation

revealed that the historic landscape of the area was agricultural dating from the medieval period. Ridge and furrow was recorded in the base of trenching at the western end of the site. The Massey Ferguson factory, built in the late 1930's was associated with major landscaping and truncation of the natural deposit sequence. Traces of post-medieval field boundaries were recorded in this area. There was no evidence for significant archaeological deposits or artefacts.

8. The archive

The archive consists of:

11	Trench record sheets AS41
5	Fieldwork progress records AS2
1	Photographic records AS3
3	Scale drawings
1	Box of finds
1	Computer disk

The project archive is intended to be placed at:

Herbert Art Gallery and Museum

Jordan Well

Coventry

CV1 5QP

9. Acknowledgements

The Service would like to thank the following for their kind assistance in the successful conclusion of this project, Cathy Patrick of CgMs Consulting, Chris Patrick (Coventry City Council) and Ed Wilson (Warwickshire County Council).

10. Personnel

The fieldwork was led by Darren Miller, Alvaro Mora-Ottomano, Marc Steinmetzer and Simon Griffin. Report preparation was led by Simon Griffin. The project manager responsible for the quality of the project was Simon Woodiwiss. Finds analysis by Laura Griffin and illustration by Simon Griffin.

11. Bibliography

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12. Abbreviations

SMR Sites and Monuments Record.

13. Appendix 1 Trench descriptions

Trench 1

Maximum dimensions: Length: 23.40m Width: 1.80m Depth: 1.10-1.50m

Orientation: NE-SW

Main deposit description

Context	Classification	Description	Depth below ground surface (b.g.s) – top and bottom of deposits
100	Topsoil	Dark greyish brown firm silty clay.	0.00-0.30m
101	Re-deposited natural	Mid reddish brown hard clay.	0.30-0.70m
102	Layer	Mid brown silty clay with occasional charcoal flecks and few ceramic building material fragments.	0.70-1.10m
103	Natural	Mid reddish brown hard clay to light yellowish green sandy clay with frequent sub-round cobbles and pebbles.	1.10m

Trench 2

Maximum dimensions: Length: 25m Width: 1.80m Depth: 0.70m

Orientation: E-W

Main deposit description

Context	Classification	Description	Depth below ground surface (b.g.s) – top and bottom of deposits
201	Car park surface	Tarmac	0.00-0.10m
202	Hardcore layer	Make up for tarmac surface, consisting mainly of medium sub-angular quartzite boulders and cobbles within a hard dark greyish brown sandy clay matrix.	0.10-0.25m
203	Layer	Dark greenish brown hard sandy clay, which extends approx. 15m from the eastern end of trench towards the West.	0.25-0.55m
204	Subsoil	Mid greenish brown hard sandy clay	0.55-0.70m
205	Natural	Mid reddish brown hard clay to light yellowish green sandy clay with frequent sub-round cobbles and pebbles.	0.70m

Trench 3

Maximum dimensions: Length: 25m Width: 1.80m Depth: 0.80m

Orientation: N-S

Main deposit description

Context	Classification	Description	Depth below ground surface (b.g.s) – top and bottom of deposits
300	Car park surface	Tarmac.	0.00-0.06m
301	Layer	Road stones.	0.06-0.25m
302	Layer	Crushed tarmac.	0.25-0.40m
303	Layer	Crushed ceramic building materials.	0.40-0.65m
304	Layer	Mid to dark grey clay with occasional charcoal flecks.	0.65-0.80m
305	Natural	Mid reddish brown hard clay to light yellowish green sandy clay with frequent sub-round cobbles and pebbles.	0.80m

Trench 4

Maximum dimensions: Length: 25m Width: 1.80m Depth: 0.50m

Orientation: NW-SE

Main deposit description

Context	Classification	Description	Depth below ground surface (b.g.s) – top and bottom of deposits
401	Car park surface	Tarmac	0.00-0.12m
402	Hardcore layer	Make up for tarmac surface, consisting mainly of medium sub-angular quartzite boulders and cobbles within a hard dark greyish brown sandy clay matrix.	0.12-0.35m
403	Layer	Black crumbly ashy matrix.	0.35-0.45m
404	Layer	Greenish grey clay.	0.45-0.50m
405	Natural	Mid reddish brown hard clay to light yellowish green sandy clay with frequent sub-round cobbles and pebbles.	0.50m

Trench 5

Maximum dimensions: Length: 25m Width: 1.80m Depth: 0.60-0.70m

Orientation: W.SW-E.NE

Main deposit description

Context	Classification	Description	Depth below ground surface (b.g.s) – top and bottom of deposits
501	Car park surface	Tarmac	0.00-0.12m
502	Layer	Road stones in mid grey silty sand matrix.	0.12-0.20m
503	Layer	Road stones in mid reddish brown silty sand matrix.	0.20-0.55m
504	Layer	Industrial foundry debris, which extends 15m from eastern end towards the West.	0.35-0.45m
505	Fill	Dark greenish grey hard clay with few pebbles, occasional charcoal flecks and frequent small roots.	0.55-0.70m
506	Cut	N-S linear ditch.	0.55-0.70m
507	Subsoil	Mid brownish grey hard clay.	0.45-0.55m
508	Natural	Mid reddish brown hard clay to light yellowish green sandy clay with frequent sub-round cobbles and pebbles.	0.70m

Trench 6

Maximum dimensions: Length: 25m Width: 1.80m Depth: 0.40m

Orientation: E-W

Main deposit description

Context	Classification	Description	Depth below ground surface (b.g.s) – top and bottom of deposits
600	Car park surface	Tarmac	0.00-0.06m
601	Layer	Concrete	0.06-0.40m
602	Natural	Mid reddish brown hard clay to light yellowish green sandy clay with frequent sub-round cobbles and pebbles.	0.40m

Trench 7

Maximum dimensions: Length: 25m Width: 1.80m Depth: 0.60m

Orientation: N-S

Main deposit description

Context	Classification	Description	Depth below ground surface (b.g.s) – top and bottom of deposits
700	Car park surface	Tarmac.	0.00-0.08m
701	Layer	Road stones.	0.08-0.60m
702	Natural	Mid reddish brown hard clay to light yellowish green sandy clay with frequent sub-round cobbles and pebbles.	0.60m

Trench 8

Maximum dimensions: Length: 50m Width: 1.80m Depth: 0.70m

Orientation: W.SW-E.NE

Main deposit description

Context	Classification	Description	Depth below ground surface (b.g.s) – top and bottom of deposits
801	Car park surface	Tarmac	0.00-0.25m
802	Layer	Road stones in mid grey/light brown silty sand matrix with occasional brick fragments and concrete lumps.	0.25-0.60m
803	Layer	Industrial foundry debris within silty sand matrix.	0.50-0.60m
804	Subsoil	Mid brownish grey hard clay. Not surviving everywhere.	0.60-0.70m
805	Natural	Mid reddish brown hard clay to light yellowish green sandy clay with frequent sub-round cobbles and pebbles.	0.70m
806	Fill	Dark greyish brown hard clay with occasional sub-round pebbles.	0.70-0.78m
807	Cut	Round shallow post-hole.	0.70-0.78m

Trench 10

Maximum dimensions: Length: 25m Width: 1.80m Depth: 0.40m

Orientation: E-W

Main deposit description

Context	Classification	Description	Depth below ground surface (b.g.s) – top and bottom of deposits
1001	Topsoil	Dark greyish brown firm silty clay.	0.00-0.40m
1002	Natural	Mid reddish brown hard clay to light yellowish green sandy clay with frequent sub-round cobbles and pebbles.	0.40m

Trench 11/12

Maximum dimensions: Length: 26.60m E-W, 11m N-S Width: 1.80m Depth: 0.30m

Orientation: E-W, N-S

Main deposit description

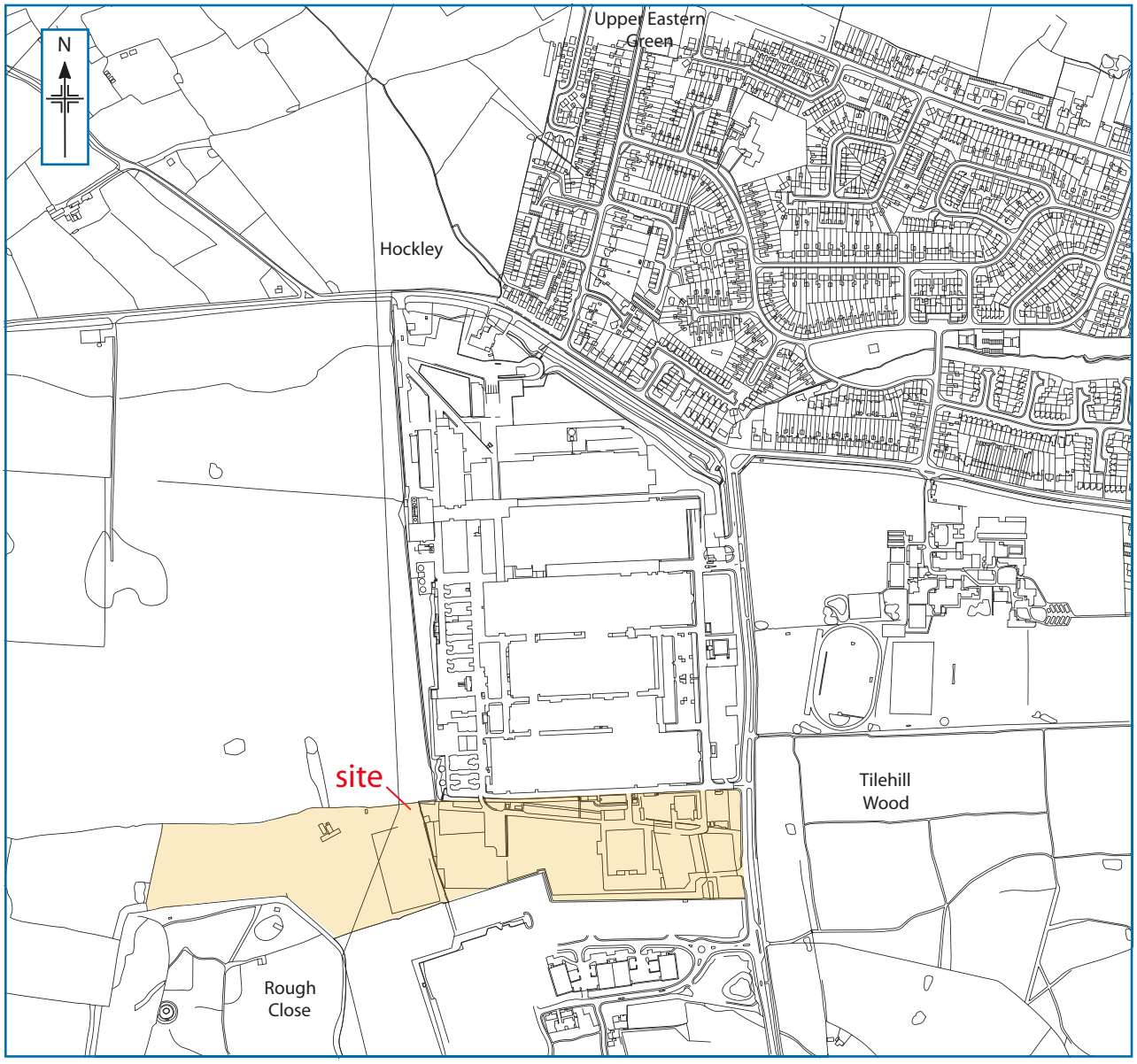
Context	Classification	Description	Depth below ground surface (b.g.s) – top and bottom of deposits
1101/1201	Topsoil	Dark greyish brown firm silty clay.	0.00-0.30m
1102/1202	Natural	Mid reddish brown hard clay to light yellowish green sandy clay with frequent sub-round cobbles and pebbles.	0.30m

14. Appendix 2 Plates

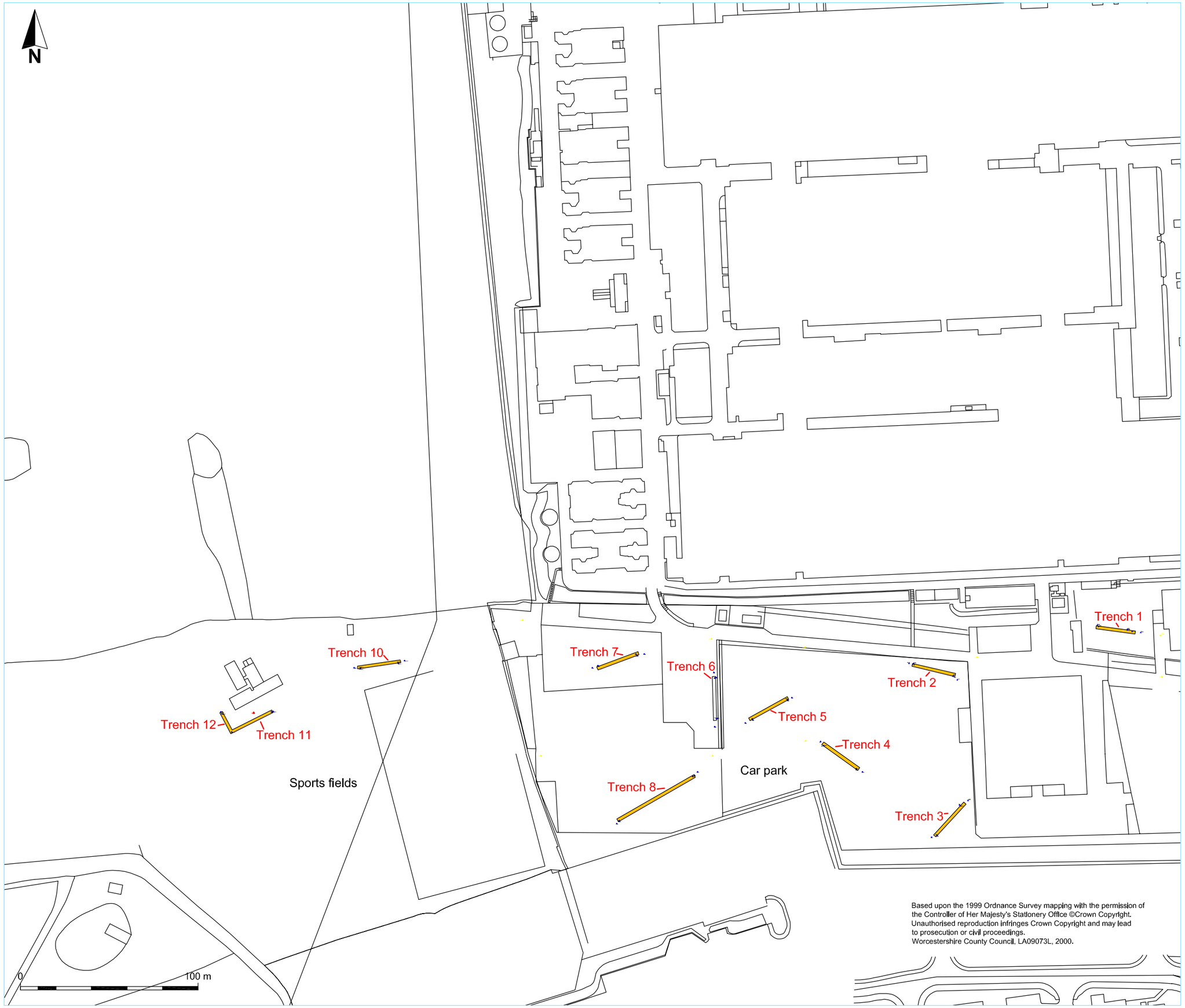
Plate 1 Trench 10 facing west showing ridge and furrow.

Plate 2 Trench 11 facing eastwards showing ridge and furrow

Plate 3 Linear feature 506 facing north



Location of the site. *Figure 1*



Bannerbrook Park Coventry and Solihull

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Figure 2- Trench Locations

5th August 2004

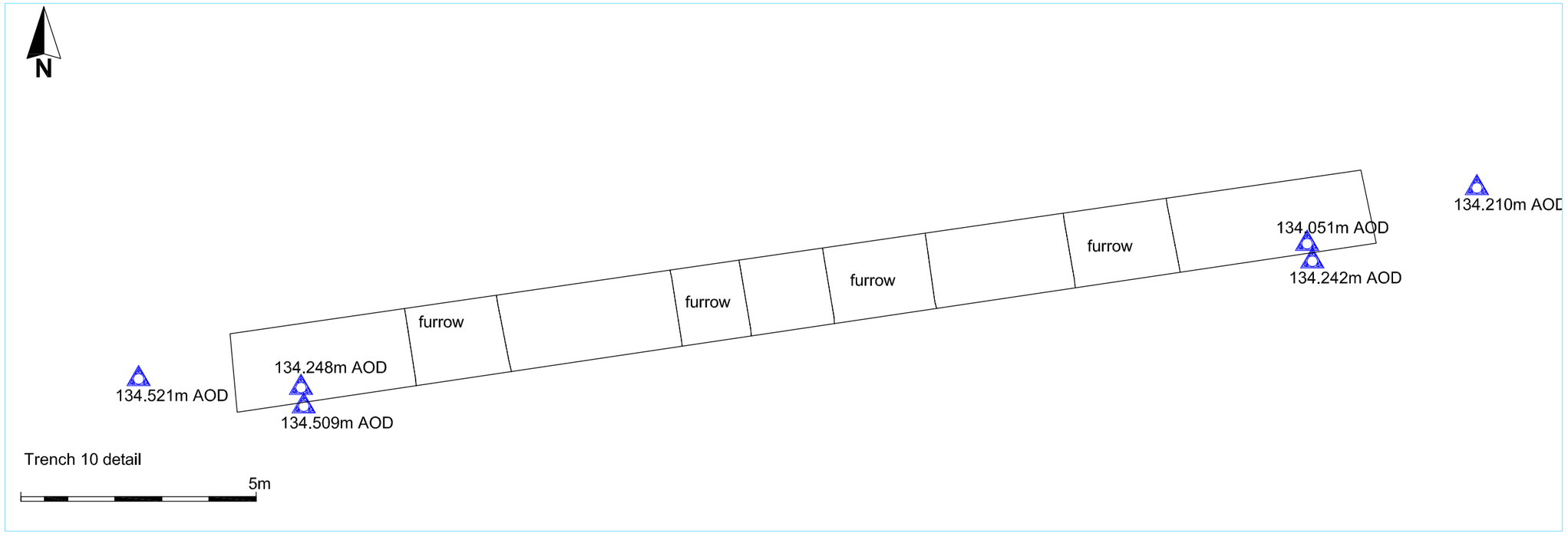
Client: CgMs Consulting

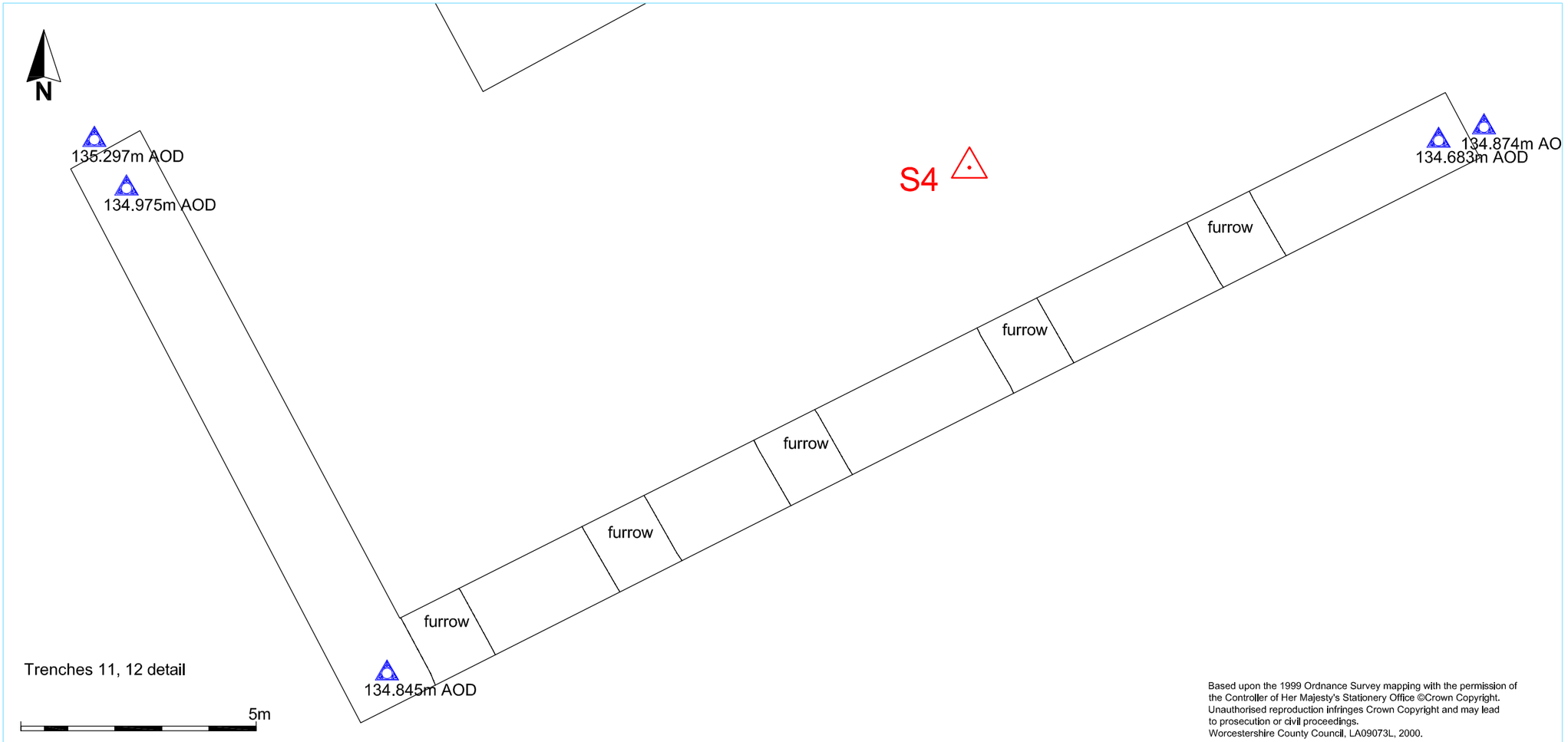
Prepared by: Simon Griffin
Total Station Survey (Leica TC 605)

Historic Environment and Archaeology Service
Worcestershire County Council
Woodbury Hall
University College Worcester
Henwick Grove
Worcester
WR2 6AJ

Tel (01905) 855455
Fax (01905) 855035

worcestershire County Council





Bannerbrook Park
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Figure 3 Ridge and furrow detail

5th August 2004
Client: CgMs Consulting

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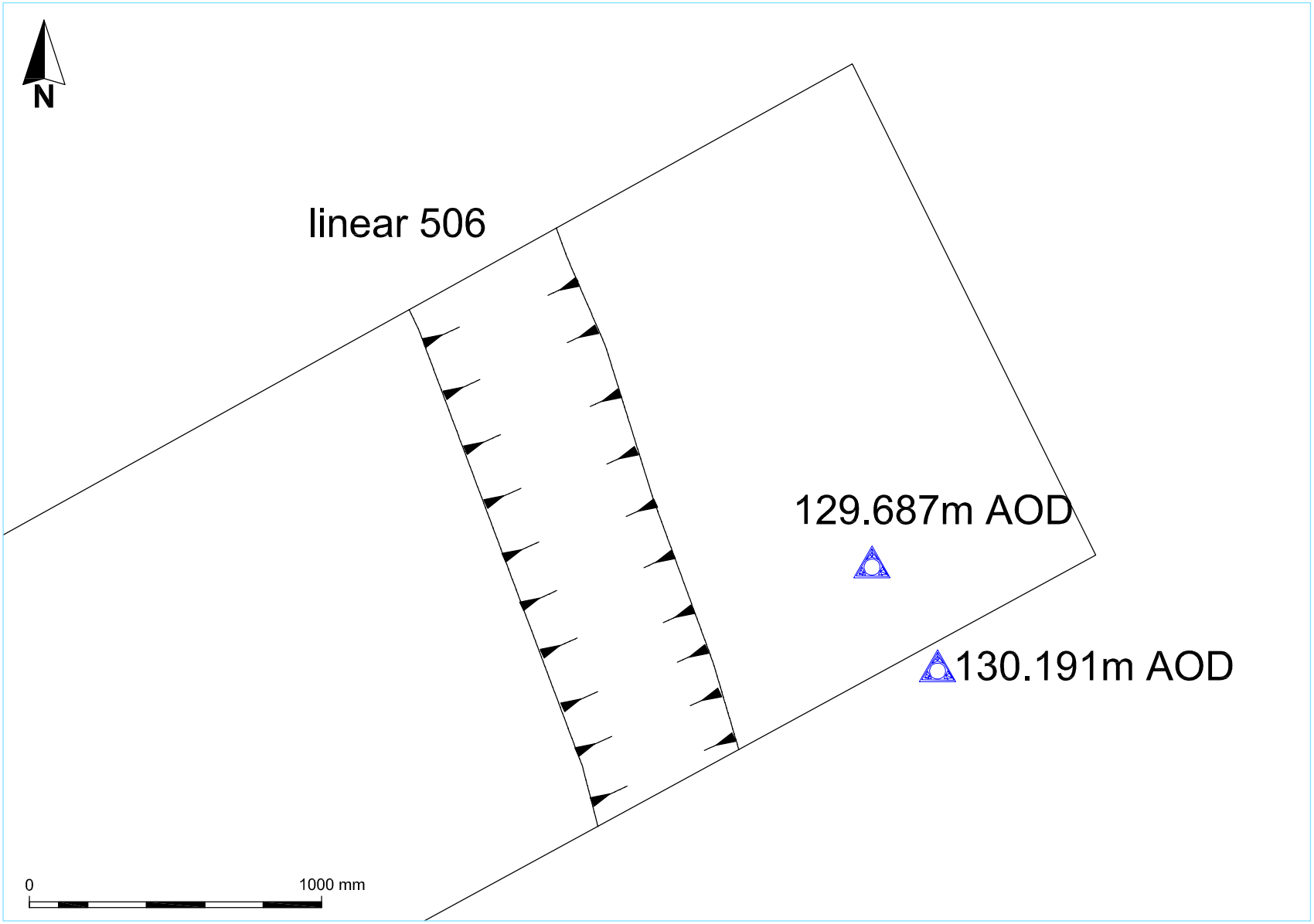
Total Station Survey (Leica TC 605)

Historic Environment and
Archaeology Service
Worcestershire County Council
Woodbury Hall
University College Worcester
Henwick Grove
Worcester
WR2 6AJ

Tel (01905) 855455
Fax (01905) 855035

worcestershire
County Council



Bannerbrook Park
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Figure 4 Trench 5 detail

5th August 2004

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Historic Environment and
Archaeology Service
Worcestershire County Council
Woodbury Hall
University College Worcester
Henwick Grove
Worcester
WR2 6AJ

Tel (01905) 855455
Fax (01905) 855035

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county council