

Archaeological investigations on the Worcester Southern Link Road, Whittington, Worcestershire



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Archaeological investigations on the Worcester Southern Link Road, Whittington, Worcestershire

Andrew Mann

With contributions by Rob Hedge

Summary

An archaeological evaluation and topographical survey was undertaken on land south of the A4440 (Crookbarrow Way), Whittington, Worcestershire (NGR 387055 252455). It was undertaken on behalf of CH2M, whose client, Worcestershire County Council, is widening the A4440.

The two evaluation trenches identified a number of furrows of probable medieval to post-medieval date aligned north-west to south-east. These were probably associated with agricultural activity at the manors of Upper and Middle Battenhall. Two further small gullies and a pit were also identified. These appeared to cut through the subsoil so are of recent date and are of lesser significance.

An earthwork survey was also undertaken on the remains of a deer park boundary that lies immediately to the south of the A4440. The survey identified two construction methods used to create the park boundary, which appears to have been punctured by a linear earthwork probably created after the park had been abandoned.

Report

1 Background

1.1 Reasons for the project

An archaeological evaluation and topographic survey was undertaken at Whittington, Worcestershire (NGR 387055 252455). It was commissioned by CH2M on behalf of Worcestershire County Council who is widening the Southern Link Road, including the construction of an attenuation pond.

The proposed development site includes a heritage asset with archaeological interest, namely a deer park boundary bank and ditch, the significance of which may be affected by the development (WCM 28896).

The project conforms to a Written Scheme of Investigation prepared by CH2M (2015).

The project also conforms to the *Standard and guidance: Archaeological field evaluation* (ClfA 2014), *Standards and guidelines for archaeological projects in Worcestershire* (WCC 2010) and *Statement of standards and practices appropriate for archaeological fieldwork in Worcester* (Worcester City Council 1999).

The event reference for this project, given by the Worcestershire HER is WSM 67398.

2 Aims

The aims of this evaluation were:

- to describe and assess the significance of the heritage asset with archaeological interest;
- to establish the nature, importance and extent of the archaeological site;
- to assess the impact of the application on the archaeological site.

The aims of the earthwork survey were:

- to make a topographic record and interpretation of earthworks visible on the surface.

3 Methods

3.1 Personnel

The project was led by Andrew Mann (BA (hons.); MSc) who joined Worcestershire Archaeology in 2004 and has been practicing archaeology since 2001, assisted by Jamie Wilkins (BA (hons.)). The project manager responsible for the quality of the project was Tom Vaughan, (BA (hons.); MA; ACIfA). Illustrations were prepared by Carolyn Hunt (BSc (hons.); PG Cert; MCIfA). Robert Hedge (MA Cantab) contributed the finds report.

3.2 Documentary research

An archaeological desk-based assessment (DBA), including map regression was undertaken by CH2M (2014) which consulted the Worcester HER and the Worcestershire HER. The DBA identified there was a low potential for archaeological remains to exist in the evaluation area.

3.3 Fieldwork strategy

A written scheme of investigation has been prepared by CH2M (2015).

Fieldwork was undertaken between 17 November 2015 and 4 March 2016. The site reference number and site code is WSM 67398.

Two trenches amounting to just over 88m² in area, were excavated over the location of the proposed attenuation pond, as per the requirements of the WSI (CH2M 2015, section 3.1.4). The location of the trenches is indicated in Figure 2.

Deposits considered not to be significant were removed under archaeological supervision using a wheeled excavator, employing a toothless bucket. 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 Worcestershire Archaeology practice (WA 2012). On completion of excavation, trenches were reinstated by replacing the excavated material.

The topographic earthwork survey was undertaken as per the WSI (CH2M 2015, section 3.1.3), and conforms to the Level 3 survey outlined by Bowden (1999). This requires the topographical survey to be accompanied by a descriptive record and illustration that also shows the physical relationships between features. The survey focused on the park boundary features and the immediate surrounding area. It was undertaken using a Leica GPS and receiver (GS08 and CS10).

An archaeological watching brief was to be undertaken of the ground reduction works on the south side of the existing carriage way (CH2M 2015, section 3.1.5). Unfortunately Worcestershire Archaeology was not notified when these were undertaken so the works were not monitored.

3.4 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.

3.5 Artefact methodology, by Rob Hedge

3.5.1 Artefact recovery policy

The finds report conforms with the relevant sections of *Standard and guidance for the collection, documentation, conservation and research of archaeological materials* (ClfA 2014b), with archive creation informed by *Archaeological archives: a guide to the best practice in the creation, compilation, transfer and curation* (AAF 2011), and museum deposition by *Selection, retention and dispersal of archaeological collections* (SMA 1993).

3.5.2 Method of analysis

All hand-retrieved finds were examined, identified, quantified and dated to period. A terminus post quem date was produced for each stratified context. The date was used for determining the broad date of phases defined for the site. All information was recorded on pro forma sheets.

The pottery and ceramic building material was examined under x20 magnification and referenced as appropriate by fabric type and form according to the fabric reference series maintained by Worcestershire Archaeology (Hurst and Rees 1992; www.worcestershireceramics.org).

3.5.3 Discard policy

The following categories/types of material will be discarded after a period of 6 months following the submission of this report, unless there is a specific request to retain them (and subject to the collection policy of the relevant depository):

- where unstratified
- post-medieval material in general, and;
- generally where material has been specifically assessed by an appropriate specialist as having no obvious grounds for retention.

3.6 Environmental archaeology methodology, by Liz Pearson

3.6.1 Sampling policy

Sampling is undertaken according to standard Worcestershire Archaeology practice (WA 2012), however no deposits were identified that were suitable for environmental sampling.

3.7 Statement of confidence in the methods and results

The methods adopted allow a high degree of confidence that the aims of the evaluation and topographical survey have been achieved. The ground reduction works along the south side of the existing road were not made available for archaeological monitoring, so it is any surviving elements of the deer park boundary would have been removed without any record during those works.

4 The application site

4.1 Topography, geology and archaeological context

The site lies to the south of the A4440, Crookbarrow Way, at a height of c 45.0m AOD to the west, at the base of a hill which rises to approximately 70.0m AOD towards the east, on which Whittington Tump/Crookbarrow Hill sits (Plate 1). The soils of the site are loamy clays with impeded drainage that overlay mudstones of the Branscombe formation.

There are no known archaeological remains within the proposed scheme and the DBA indicated that there was limited potential for previously unknown archaeological remains to exist. Important archaeological remains exist in the vicinity of Middle Battenhall Park, located 500m to the north of the proposed scheme, which has origins in the Anglo-Saxon period. The original extent of this park boundary are preserved to the south of Crookbarrow Way and although small (c 0.25ha) forms the focus of the earthwork survey (WCM 28896, 28898).

4.2 Current land-use

The evaluated area is currently under arable cultivation, while the area defined by the park boundary has reverted to scrub.

5 Structural analysis

The trenches and features recorded during the evaluation are shown in Figures 3 and 4. The topographic survey is shown in Figures 5 and 6. The results of the structural analysis are presented in Appendix 1.

5.1.1 Phase 1: Natural deposits

Natural deposits were encountered in both trenches and consisted of firm and cohesive pinkish-red gritty silty clays. These were overlain by a cohesive mid-yellowish brown silty clay subsoil. The topsoil consisted of mid-light brown silty clay.

5.1.2 Phase 2: Medieval-post-medieval

The earliest archaeological features identified on site where the heavily truncated remains of furrows aligned north-west to south-east. Three of these were identified in Trench 1 and one was identified in Trench 2 (102 and 203) (Fig 3).

5.1.3 Phase 3: Post medieval

Two small linear features were identified in Trench 2 (205 and 207) that are considered to be post-medieval in date as one of them (205) cuts through the subsoil (201) and furrow (203). Both contained similar firm, greyish brown silty clays, and their profiles suggest they may have been mechanically dug, being narrow but deep.

5.1.4 Phase 4: Undated

One pit was identified (104) in Trench 1. It was sealed by the topsoil and cut through the subsoil although was otherwise undated (Figs 3 and 4; Plate 2).

5.2 Earthwork survey

The earthworks of the former deer park are shown in Figures 5 and 6. These are conjectured to be of medieval origin (CH2M 2015, 1-5). The deer park boundary formed an obtuse corner which encompassed an area of approximately 0.25ha. The western boundary consisted of an outer bank, between 3.7-5.0m wide and between 0.20-0.50m high (Plates 3 and 4). This ran for c 58m in a south-east to north-west direction before being truncated by the original cutting for the A4440. For around 33m, the internal side of the bank ran directly to the base of the internal ditch that was around 3.6m wide and 0.20m deep. At this point there was a drop of around 0.75m from the top of the bank to the base of the ditch. Towards the north-west, closer to the road cutting, the internal ditch appears to have been infilled.

The eastern side of the park was constructed differently, in that the natural topography was exploited to create a boundary. Here the steep hillside appears to have been cut away, along a c 75m length, to create a steep bank between 0.79-1.55m high (Plates 5 and 6). Along this length no external bank or internal ditch was visible.

How these two differing construction methods joined is not known as they were separated by a c 20m gap which formed an entrance through the boundary. It is not known whether this entrance was contemporary with the boundary or a later addition but a 15m wide raised linear feature was seen running through the gap. It is unclear whether this is natural or anthropogenic in origin. It could however be seen running through the field to the south and is visible as cropmarks in aerial photographs from 1999 and 2005 (Plate 7).

Through the entrance a possible small segmented section of internal ditch was seen above this linear earthwork, which would suggest that the linear anomaly pre-dates the park boundary. However as this segmented ditch section is aligned on the western bank and not the internal ditch it is more likely to be a latter addition and could possibly be an old tree throw.

Around the external side of the boundary and above the linear earthwork was another small bank around 2.50m wide and upto 0.30m high. It is possible this was a later attempt to reinstate the boundary after the linear anomaly had punctured the boundary. However it is thought more likely to have been created by repeated modern ploughing surrounding the boundary.

5.3 Artefact analysis, by Rob Hedge

The artefactual assemblage recovered is summarised in Tables 1 and 2.

The assemblage came from three stratified contexts and could be dated from the medieval period onwards (Table 1). Using pottery as an index of artefact condition, this was generally fair, with the majority of sherds displaying moderate levels of abrasion; the average sherd size, at 17.3g, was above average, reflecting the presence of robust post-medieval wares.

period	material class	object specific type	count	weight(g)
medieval/post-medieval	ceramic	brick/tile	1	3
medieval/post-medieval	ceramic	roof tile	1	121
post-medieval	ceramic	clay pipe	1	1
post-medieval	ceramic	pot	4	102
post-medieval	ceramic	roof tile	1	23
modern	ceramic	pot	3	19
Totals			11	269

Table 1: Quantification of the assemblage

broad period	fabric code	fabric common name	count	weight(g)
Post-medieval	78	Post-medieval red ware	1	24
Post-medieval	78.1	Red sandy ware	3	78
Modern	85	Modern china	1	2
Modern	101	Miscellaneous modern wares	2	17
Totals			7	121

Table 2: Quantification of the pottery by fabric

5.3.1 Summary of artefactual evidence by period

For the finds from individual features, including specific types of pottery, consult Tables 3 and 2 in that order and in combination.

Medieval/post-medieval

Several fragments of abraded building material, including a piece of roof tile, were ascribed a broad medieval to post-medieval date. A late medieval to early post-medieval date (15th to 17th century) is considered most likely for the roof tile fragment, the fabric of which was coarse with abundant sand and quartz inclusions and occasional rounded sandstone inclusions (3-5mm).

Post-medieval

Abraded fragments of post-medieval clay tobacco pipe, roof tile and typical domestic pottery were found within the topsoil (contexts 100 and 200) and furrow (203), including several sherds from a large overfired, redware (fabric 78.1) jar or jug of 17th/18th century date.

Modern

Small sherds of domestic 19th and 20th century wares were present within the topsoil.

context	material class	object specific type	count	weight(g)	start date	end date	TPQ date range
100	ceramic	pot	2	17	1850	2000	1850 - 2000
	ceramic	pot	1	2	1800	2000	
	ceramic	clay pipe	1	1	1600	1910	
	ceramic	pot	1	3	1700	1800	
	ceramic	roof tile	1	23	1600	1900	
200	ceramic	pot	1	24	1600	1800	1600 - 1800
	ceramic	roof tile	1	121	1200	1800	
	ceramic	pot	1	10	1600	1800	
	ceramic	brick/tile	1	3	1200	1800	
203	ceramic	pot	1	65	1600	1800	1600 - 1800

Table 3: Summary of context dating based on artefacts

5.3.2 Artefact synthesis

The finds comprise a background scatter of typical domestic, largely post-medieval material, probably incorporated into the site through agricultural processes such as manuring.

5.3.3 Discard and retention

The post-medieval material is not considered to merit further retention. Although the ceramic building material may potentially be earlier, and refinement of dating techniques such as RHX may facilitate better dating of this material in future, in this case its poor condition and lack of association with discrete archaeological features make it unlikely this assemblage would be of value in the future.

6 Synthesis

6.1 Medieval to post-medieval

The furrows and park boundary are considered likely to be of medieval origin but may be of early post-medieval date. The furrows and park boundary relate to the medieval use of the land, associated with the manors at Upper and Middle Battenhall.

6.2 Undated

Pit (104) and the linear features identified in Trench 2 remain undated but the latter are likely to be post-medieval in date and hence are of low significance as they are probably of agricultural origin. The pit is also likely to be of more recent date as it cut through the subsoil and is therefore also of limited interest. The lack of finds in any of these features also suggests they were not located in or close to any contemporary settlements.

The linear anomaly that passes through the park boundary is also undated, although it does appear to have truncated the former. At present the purpose of this feature is also unknown but three plausible alternatives include a natural geological feature, a road/trackway or a pipeline.

7 Significance

7.1 Nature of the archaeological interest in the site

The archaeological remains encountered in the evaluation trenches are mostly of agricultural origin and are dominated by the furrows of medieval or post-medieval cultivation. This is supported by the artefactual evidence which suggests the material assemblage had been introduced through manuring and is not indicative of the presence of local settlement features, although it largely pertains to post-medieval domestic activity.

The majority of the recorded earthworks are conjectured to be of medieval origin, although no artefacts were recovered to confirm this. The earthwork remains would have been part of a much larger deer park boundary, although it is not known how much of this survives outside of the development area. The park would have been associated with the manors at Upper and Middle Battenhall. Although some limited damage was caused to the earthwork during scrub clearance the remains had survived intact.

7.2 Relative importance of the archaeological interest in the site

The archaeological remains identified in the evaluation trenches are of limited importance and have limited research potential. This is also supported by the finds assemblage that represents a typical assemblage containing small quantities of domestic medieval/post-medieval to modern building material and pottery.

It is difficult to assess the importance of the earthworks as it is not known how much of the park boundary survives elsewhere, although elements of it are known to survive only as cropmarks. This suggests that at least some of the park boundary has been levelled and that the earthworks recorded may be significant as they are extant and preserve a portion of this once extensive monument.

7.3 Physical extent of the archaeological interest in the site

The archaeological features, namely furrows are likely to be present across the lower half of the field investigated on the flatter ground below Crookbarrow Hill. These remains are not deeply buried and any landscaping across the area is likely to damage them. The artefactual material appears to be confined to the topsoil and infilled furrows, rather than deriving from archaeological features.

The earthworks cover an area of approximately 0.2ha, and it is unlikely that other related features lay outside of the park boundary. The linear earthwork which crosses the boundary does however extend for a further 200m to the south.

8 Publication summary

Worcestershire Archaeology has a professional obligation to publish the results of archaeological projects within a reasonable period of time. To this end, Worcestershire Archaeology 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 and topographical survey was undertaken on behalf of CH2M of land off the A4440, Whittington, Worcestershire (NGR SO 87055 52455; HER ref WSM 67398).

The two evaluation trenches identified a number of furrows of probable medieval to post-medieval date aligned north-west to south-east. These were probably associated with agricultural activity at the manors of Upper and Middle Battenhall. Two further small gullies and a pit were also identified. These appeared to cut through the subsoil so are of recent date and are of lesser significance.

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9 Acknowledgements

Worcestershire Archaeology would like to thank the following for their kind assistance in the successful conclusion of this project, Simon Griffin (Principal Archaeologist, CH2M), Claire Brown (Project Manager, CH2M), Alison Hext (Principal Valuer, Place Partnership Ltd), Henry Berkeley (The Berkeley and Spetchley Estate), Adrian Scruby (Historic Environment Advisor, Worcestershire County Council) and James Dinn (Archaeological Officer, Worcester City Council).

10 Bibliography

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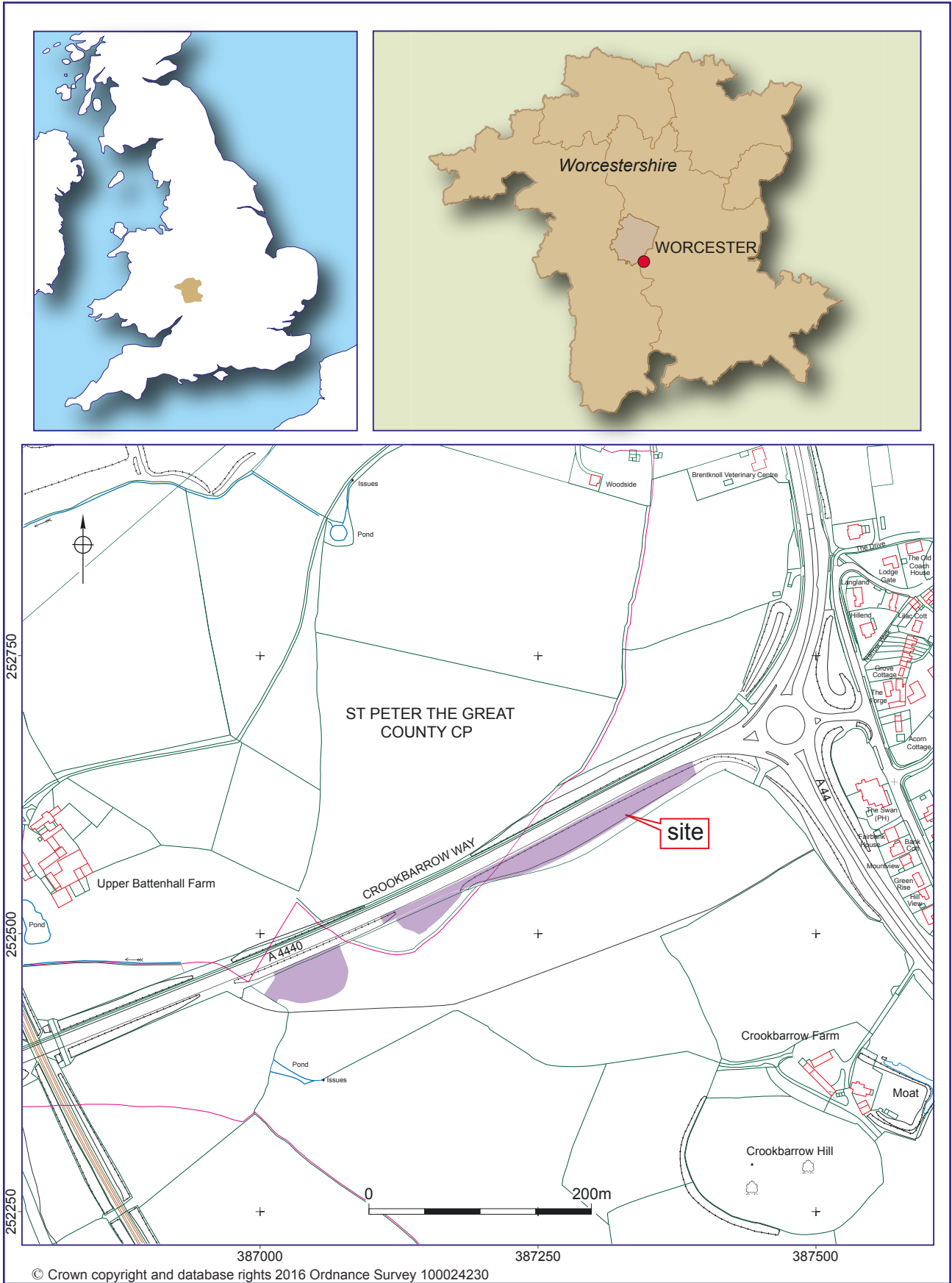
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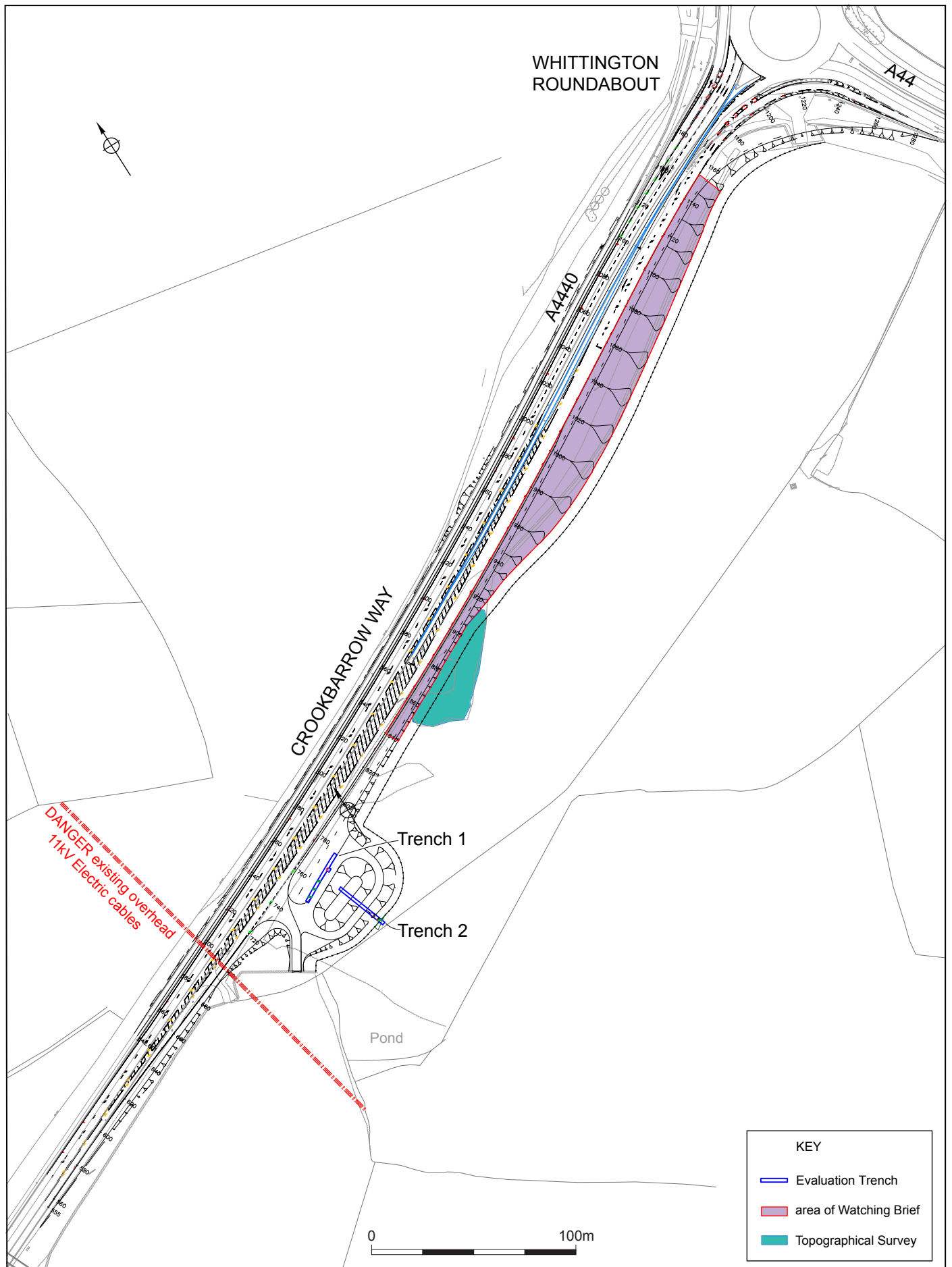
Worcester City Council 1999 *Statement of standards and practices appropriate for archaeological fieldwork in Worcester*, Appendix 3 in Supplementary Planning Guidance Number 8: Archaeology and Development, Worcester City Council, document revised June 1999

Figures



Location of the site

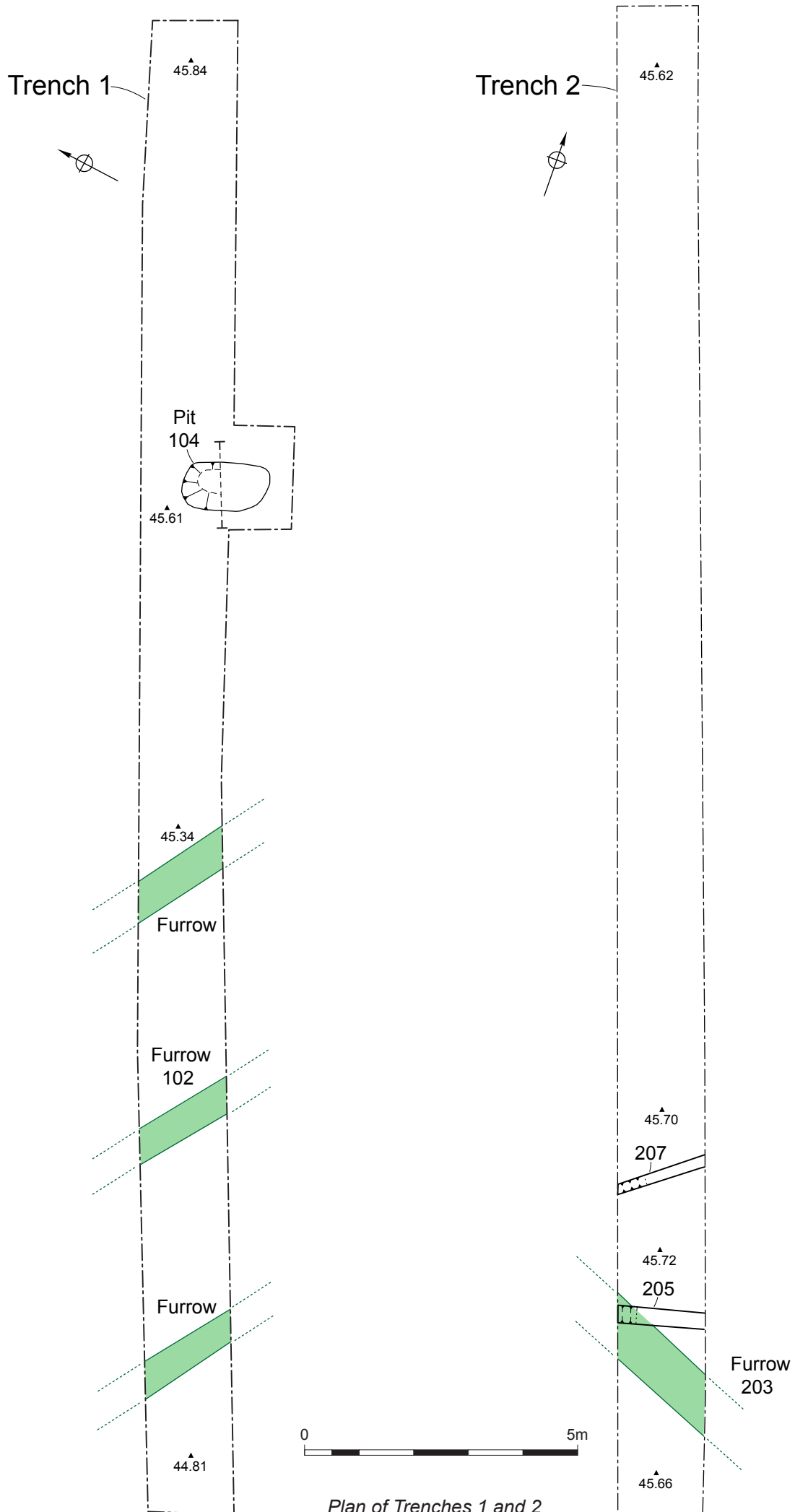
Figure 1



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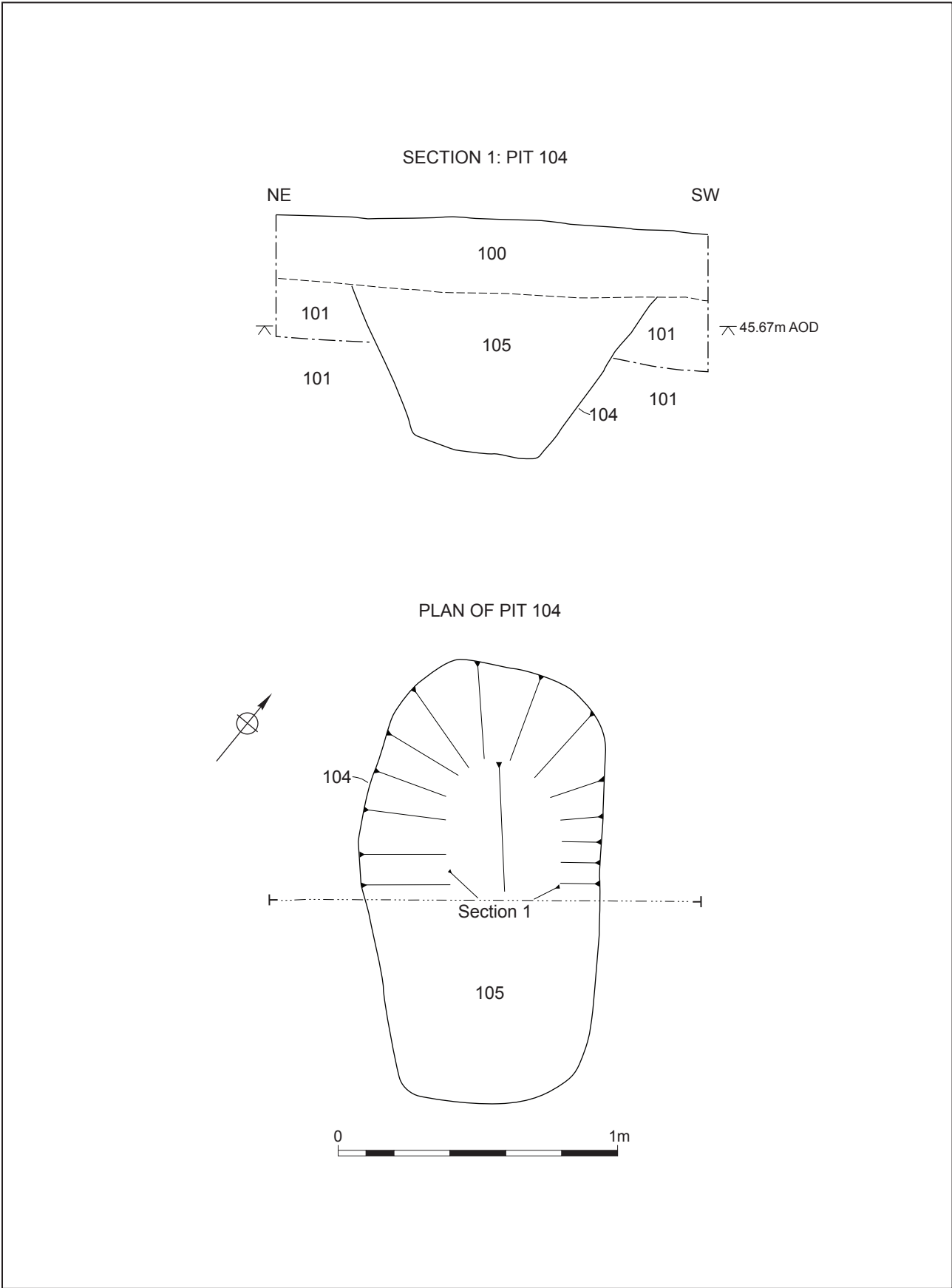
Location of site investigations (based upon CH2MHILL Dwg 02-CI-DR-0001)

Figure 2



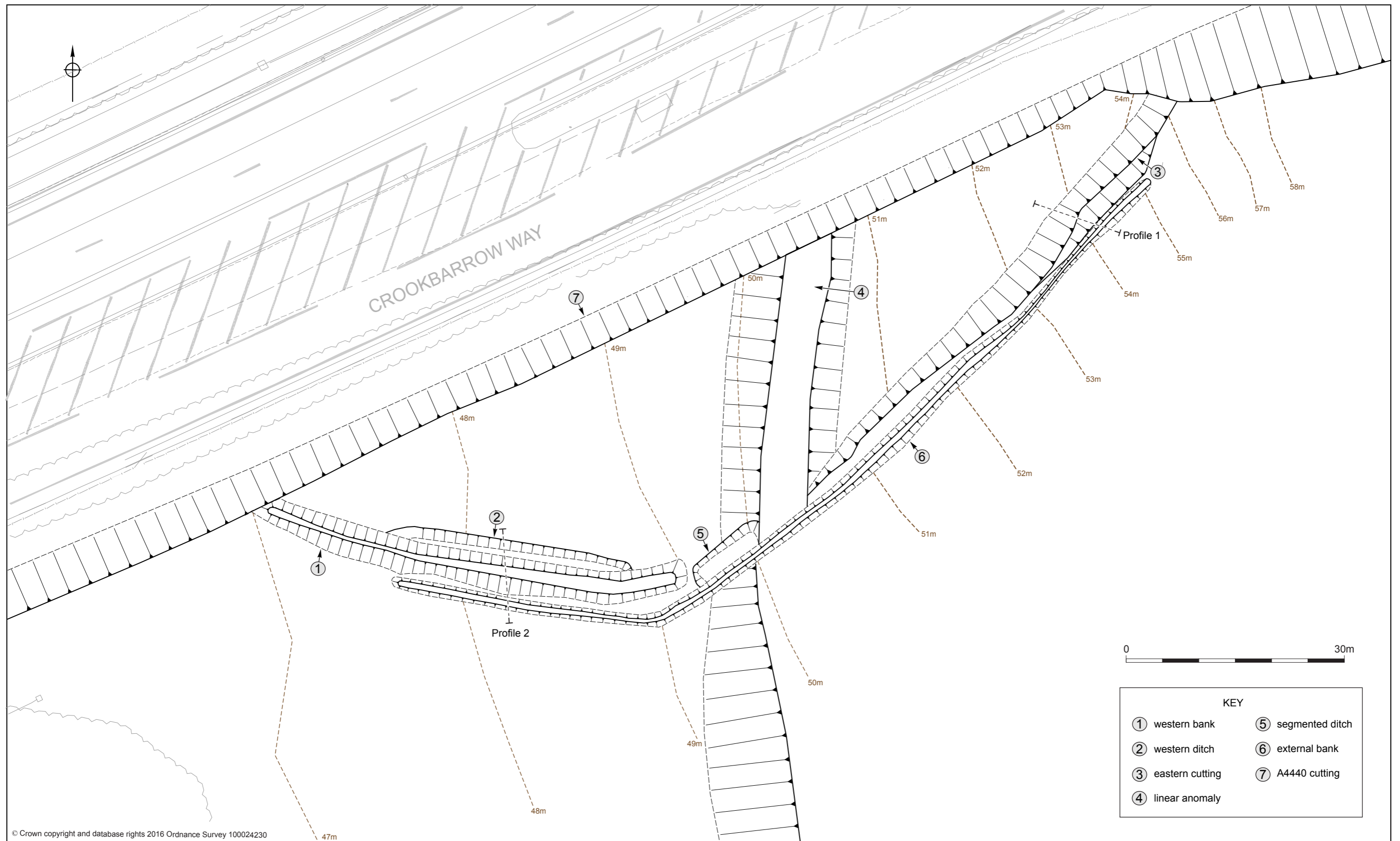
Plan of Trenches 1 and 2

Figure 3



Plan and section of Pit 104

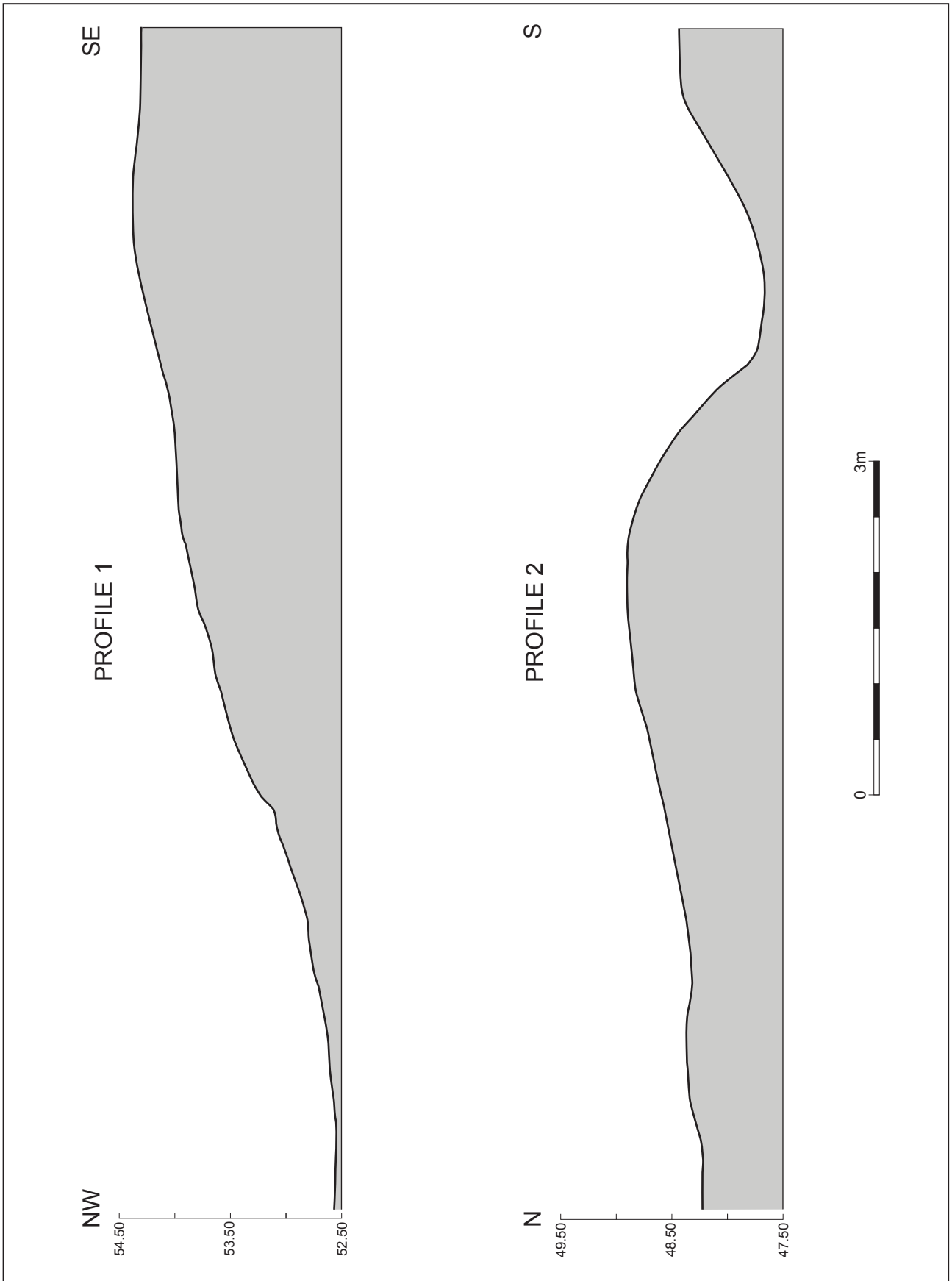
Figure 4



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Topographical survey with approximate locations of profiles (see Fig 6)

Figure 5



Profiles 1 and 2

Figure 6

Plates



Plate 1: The site looking south east to Crookbarrow Hill



Plate 2: Pit (104) facing south-south-east, 0.5m scale



Plate 3: Western, external bank, of the park boundary facing north west (1m scales)



Plate 4: Western boundary bank and internal park space facing south east (1m scales)



Plate 5: Eastern boundary bank and internal park space facing south west (1m scales)



Plate 6: Western boundary bank, facing north east (1m scales)

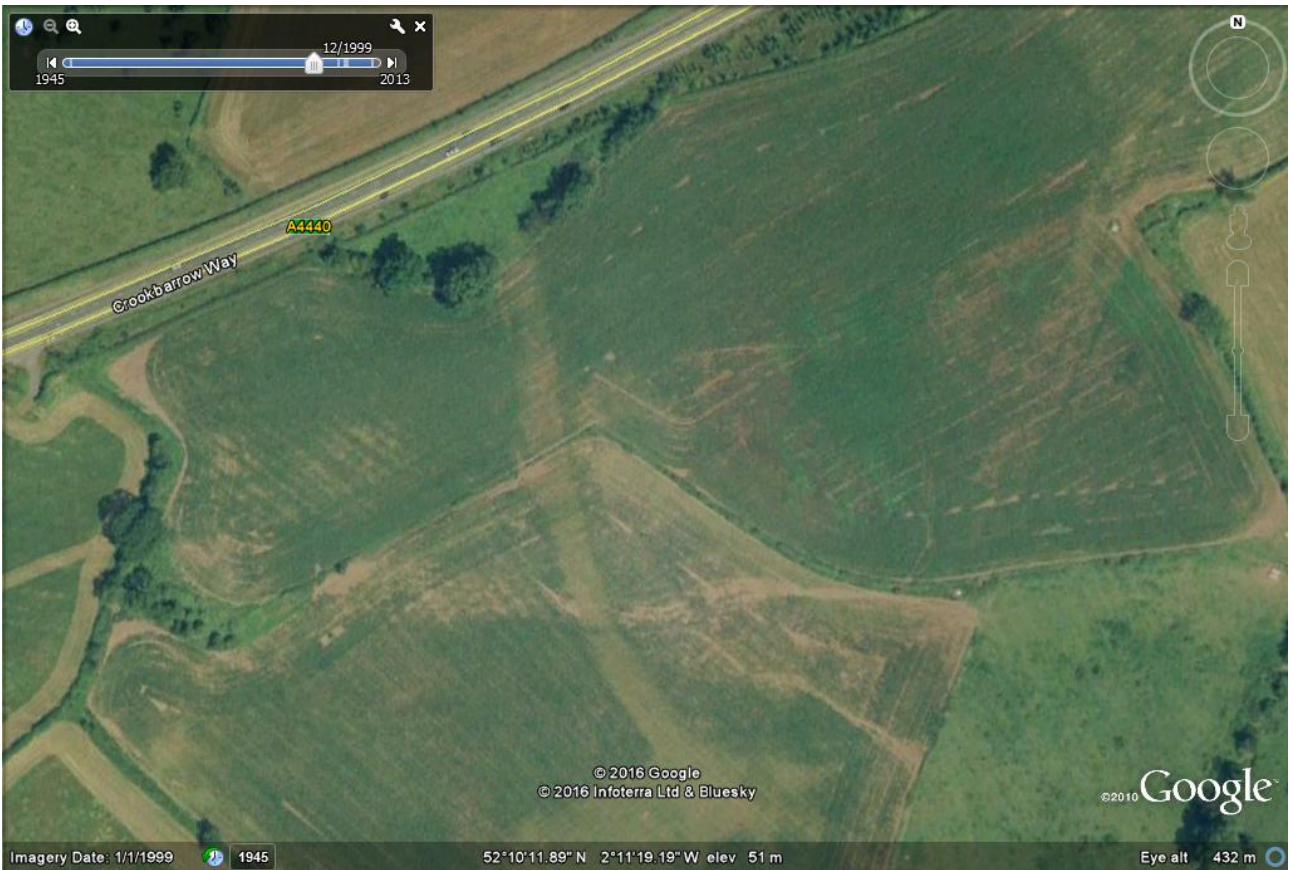


Plate 7: Aerial photograph showing the linear anomaly passing through the park boundary (accessed from Google Earth 6 December 2016)

Appendix 1 Trench descriptions

Trench 1

Maximum dimensions: Length: 27.5m Width: 1.60m Depth: 0.25m

Orientation: ENE-WSW

Main deposit description

Context	Classification	Description	Depth below ground surface (b.g.s) – top and bottom of deposits
100	Topsoil	Medium-light brown silty clay. Moderately compact and cohesive with frequent roots and occasional small rounded stones and charcoal flecks.	0.00-0.25m
101	Natural	Pinkish-red gritty silty clay firm and cohesive.	0.25m+
102	Furrow	Heavily truncated furrow aligned NW-SE. Only slight concave base survives 3.5cm thick. 0.60m wide and 1.90m long.	0.25-0.28m
103	Fill	Fill of furrow (102). Light yellowish brown silty clay, moderately compact and cohesive. Contains occasional charcoal flecks and occasional CBM.	0.25-0.28m
104	Pit	Sub-oval pit aligned N-S with steep, flat sides breaking sharply to a flat base. 1.55m long, 0.91m wide and 0.63m.	0.25-0.88m
105	Fill	Fill of pit (104). Mid yellowish brown, firm and cohesive silty clay. Very sterile.	0.25-0.88m

Trench 2

Maximum dimensions: Length: 27.5m Width: 1.60m Depth: 0.48m

Orientation: ENE-WSW

Main deposit description

Context	Classification	Description	Depth below ground surface (b.g.s) – top and bottom of deposits
200	Topsoil	Medium-light brown silty clay. Moderately compact and cohesive with frequent roots and occasional small rounded stones and charcoal flecks.	0.00-0.30m
201	Subsoil	Light yellowish brown silty clay, moderately compact and cohesive.	0.30-0.48m
202	Natural	Pinkish-red gritty silty clay firm and cohesive.	0.48m+
203	Furrow	Heavily truncated furrow aligned NW-SE. Only slight concave base survives 3.0cm thick, 0.74m wide and 2.00m long.	0.48-0.51m
204	Fill	Fill of furrow (203). Light yellowish brown silty clay, moderately compact and cohesive. Contains occasional charcoal flecks and occasional CBM.	0.48-0.51m
205	Linear	Linear feature aligned E-W. Vertical sides and concave base. 0.22m wide, 0.37m deep and 1.60m long. Cuts through subsoil (201) and furrow fill (204).	0.30-0.67m
206	Fill	Fill of linear (205). Mid greyish brown, firm silty clay. Contains frequent charcoal flecks.	0.30-0.67m
207	Linear	Linear feature aligned NE-SW. V-shaped in profile 0.19m wide, 0.17m deep and 1.60m long.	0.48-0.65m
208	Fill	Fill of linear (207). Mid greyish brown, firm silty clay. Contains frequent charcoal flecks.	0.48-0.65m

Appendix 2 Technical information

The archive (site code: WSM 67398)

The archive consists of:

10	Context records AS1
1	Field progress reports AS2
1	Photographic records AS3
83	Digital photographs
1	Drawing number catalogues AS4
3	Scale drawings
2	Trench record sheets AS41
1	DXF survey
1	CD-Rom/DVDs
1	Copy of this report (bound hard copy)

The project archive is intended to be placed at:

Worcestershire County Museum,
Museums Worcestershire,
Hartlebury Castle,
Hartlebury,
Near Kidderminster,
Worcestershire DY11 7XZ
Tel Hartlebury (01299) 250416

Summary of data for Worcestershire HER

WSM 67398 (event HER number)

P4690

period - note 1	material class	object specific type	start date	end date	count	weight(g)	specialist report? (note 2)	key assemblage? (note 3)
medieval/post-medieval	ceramic	brick/tile	1200	1800	1	3	Y	N
medieval/post-medieval	ceramic	roof tile	1200	1800	1	121	Y	N
post-medieval	ceramic	clay pipe	1600	1910	1	1	Y	N
post-medieval	ceramic	pot	1600	1800	3	99	Y	N
post-medieval	ceramic	pot	1700	1800	1	3	Y	N
post-medieval	ceramic	roof tile	1600	1900	1	23	Y	N
modern	ceramic	pot	1800	2000	1	2	Y	N
modern	ceramic	pot	1850	2000	2	17	Y	N

Artefacts

Notes

- 1) In some cases the date will be "Undated". In most cases, especially if there is not a specialist report, the information entered in the Date field will be a general period such as Neolithic, Roman, medieval etc (see below for a list of periods used in the Worcestershire HER). Very broad date ranges such as late Medieval to Post-medieval are acceptable for artefacts which can be hard to date for example roof tiles. If you have more specific dates, such as 13th to 14th century, please use these instead. Specific date ranges which cross general period boundaries can also be used, for example 15th to 17th century.