



Archaeological Strip, Map and Sample Report

Land at The Coppice

Burbage

Hinckley



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Summary

Groundworks Archaeology was commissioned by Springbourne Homes to undertake an archaeological evaluation on land at The Coppice, Burbage, Leicestershire. The work was carried out at the proposed development site between the 18th and 21st March 2024. The evaluation identified Roman features in trenches 1 and 6 located in the southern corner of the site. A second phase of investigation was required comprising of a strip, map and sample (SMS) focused on the area of identified archaeological activity. The SMS was carried out between the 9th and 16th July 2024.

The excavation revealed a large spread linking trenches 1 and 6 from the evaluation. Once exposed in plan it was clear that the spread identified in trench 1 (105) and the “pit” from trench 6 were in fact components of this larger spread (805,) which is a single feature. This single spread may be the infill of natural hollows or possibly a pond like feature latterly filled with domestic debris from nearby Roman settlement activity, presumably located to the south of the site.

1. Introduction

- 1.1 Groundworks Archaeology was commissioned by Springbourne Homes to undertake an archaeological evaluation on land at The Coppice, Burbage, Leicestershire. The work was carried out at the proposed development site between the 18th and 21st March 2024. The evaluation identified Roman features in trenches 1 and 6 located in the southern corner of the site. A second phase of investigation was required comprising of a strip, map and sample (SMS) focussed on the area of identified archaeological activity. The SMS was carried out between the 9th and 16th July 2024 and the results are presented below.
- 1.2 The work was carried out according to the requirements of an archaeological condition, which was attached to the granting of planning consent on appeal (APP/K2420/W/22/3297466). This is in accordance with the principles established in *NPPF: Planning for the Historic Environment: Historic Environment Planning Practice Guide* (Department of Culture, Media and Sport, revised 2021), and *Standard for archaeological field evaluation* (CIfA, 2023).

2. Site Location and Description

- 2.1 The site lies on the northern edge of Burbage. Entry to the site is off The Coppice. A public footpath leading off from Woodgate Road forms the south-eastern boundary which is lined with trees and an overgrown hedgerow. The site itself is laid to pasture but has been abandoned for some years. The north-western boundary is formed by the rear garden plots of dwellings fronting onto The Coppice while the south-western boundary is formed by an access road and dwellings facing the site. The north-eastern boundary is open to further fields with a small area of overgrown woodland to the east containing a pond. The site is centred on NGR SP 44069 93728 at an approximate height of 113m AOD (figure 1).

Geology

- 2.2 The British Geological Survey website identifies the bedrock geology as the Mercia Mudstone Group, a mudstone sedimentary bedrock formed between 252.2 and 201.3 million years ago during the Triassic period.
- 2.3 Superficial deposits are recorded as the Wolston Sand and Gravel, a sedimentary superficial deposit formed between 2.588 million years ago and the present during the Quaternary period. The northern corner of the site is recorded as the Bosworth Clay Member. A sedimentary superficial deposit formed between 480 and 423 thousand years ago during the Quaternary period.

3. Planning Background

3.1 A planning application (21/00556/FUL) was submitted to Hinckley and Bosworth Borough Council for “No. 8 dwellings with associated access and landscaping” on land at The Coppice, Burbage; consent was refused on the 27th October 2021. A subsequent appeal (APP/K2420/W/22/3297466) was lodged with the planning inspectorate which was granted on the 27th September 2022.

2.2 Consultee advice provided by Sophie Clarke (dated 14th June 2021) recommended a staged programme of archaeological mitigation, an initial trial trench investigation should be undertaken prior to the commencement of any permitted groundworks in order to devise an appropriate mitigation strategy.

2.3 The recommended condition wording was:

No demolition/development shall take place/commence until a staged programme of archaeological work, commencing with an initial phase of trial trenching has been undertaken. Each stage will be completed in accordance with a written scheme of investigation (WSI), which has been [submitted to and] approved by the local planning authority in writing. For land that is included within the WSI, no demolition/development shall take place other than in accordance with the agreed WSI, which shall include the statement of significance and research objectives, and

- The programme and methodology of site investigation and recording and the nomination of a competent person(s) or organisation to undertake the agreed works.
- The programme for post-investigation assessment and subsequent analysis, publication & dissemination and deposition of resulting material. This part of the condition shall not be discharged until these elements have been fulfilled in accordance with the programme set out in the WSI.

Reason: To ensure satisfactory archaeological investigation, recording, dissemination and archiving

2.4 The wording of condition 8 of the appeal decision was as follows:

“No development shall commence until an archaeological Written Scheme of Investigation has been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The scheme shall include an assessment of significance and research objectives. If indicated to be required, it shall include the programme and methodology of any necessary site investigation and

- recording, and the development shall be carried out in accordance with this approved methodology”.
- 2.5 An archaeological evaluation was subsequently commissioned which identified Roman features in the southern corner of the site. A second stage investigation was required which comprised of a strip, map and sample focussed on the area of identified archaeological activity.

4. Archaeological and Historical Background

- 4.1 A Desk-based Assessment (Martin and Smith 2013) was prepared for a previous application, the results of which are summarised below and updated with more recent discoveries.

Prehistoric

- 4.2 The scatter of Prehistoric material across the assessment area indicates that there was Prehistoric activity in the area during this period, although its nature and extent is not fully known.

Roman

- 4.3 In 1933 three Roman jars were discovered in Burbage Sandpit at the corner of Sapcote and Burbage Road, c. 160m to the south of the site (LHER: MLE2829; NGR: 441 934). The jars included a pot of grey ware and a small decorated pot of Castor Ware, and it has been speculated that they may have been cremation urns. In 1950 two possible hearths were noted in this location and a quern was found on the site. A mosaic (MLE7936) was reported as being found at Horsepool with a further site (MLE2846) located at White House Farm consisting of coins, brooches and pottery.

Early-medieval and Medieval

- 4.4 According to the LHER the establishment of Burbage as a settlement occurred in the late Anglo-Saxon period (LHER: MLE2848; NGR: 49SW). This has been deduced from historic mapping and place name evidence. According to Frank Shaw, there are two sources for the place name Burbach. The first was suggested by J. Nichols in 1787 and derives from *Burr*, a form of thistle and *Bach*, a small rivulet and the second suggestion derives from the Saxon for *Bur*, a hill and *Bach*, a spring. The latter is seen as the more credible explanation as the settlement has various springs and is situated on a hill (Shaw, 1996).
- 4.5 There have been a number of Early-medieval finds recorded from the area including Saxon pottery and a square-headed brooch (MLE20670).
- 4.6 Domesday records ‘Burbece’ which was originally part of the Sparkenhoe Hundred of Leicestershire, in Guthlaxton Wapentake and now lies in the

Borough of Hinckley and Bosworth. The land was held by Coventry Abbey and was valued at four pounds, housing 20 villagers, with two smallholders and two slaves. Prior to Domesday, the 1043 Foundation Charter of the Monastery of the Blessed Mary of Coventry records that 'Burbagh' was amongst townships given by Leofric, Earl of Mercia, to Coventry Abbey. Leofric, the Abbot of Coventry Abbey was supposedly mortally wounded in the battle against the Norman invasion at Hastings. In 1100 King William took lands away from Coventry Abbey and the manor of Burbach was given to Robert de Flamville and later passed to John de Hastings. The manor remained with the de Hastings family until 1401. In 1401, the Manor became the property of the Greys of Ruthin and remained under their ownership until 1797 (Nichols 1811).

- 4.7 To the south of the site a linear hollow way has been recorded in the playing fields of Hastings High School and it is suggested that it was probably the old course of the road from Burbage to Hinckley (LHER: MLE2831; NGR: SP 440 931). This may suggest that the current Burbage Road, adjacent to the site is not on its original alignment. At the junction of London Road and Castle Street, to the north-west of the site, there is St Mary's Well, which is recorded in the LHER as of Early-medieval origin (LHER: MLE2897; NGR: SP 432 939). According to Nichols, six gold coins of Edward III were found near the well in 1755, (LHER: MLE6792; NGR: SP 433 940).
- 4.8 Within the centre of Burbage, to the south of the site, a Medieval fishpond has been located within the Manor House grounds although it is believed to be associated with Burbage Hall, (LHER: MLE2843; NGR: SP 444 927). The Hall, which externally is an early 18th century red brick house with 17th century panelling, incorporates an earlier timber framed building which is believed to be the Earl of Gainsborough's hunting lodge, (LHER: MLE13024; NGR: SP 444 926).

Post-medieval

- 4.9 In 1564 the diocesan returns indicate the population was still small, consisting of 57 families; the settlement remained small, and the census of 1801 recorded only 1098 inhabitants. It was not until the 20th century that the population exceeded 2000. Between 1862 and 1864 the London & North Western Railways (LNWR) opened the South Leicestershire Line. The alignment of this effectively prevented Burbage from being swallowed by the expansion of Hinckley and thus the village remained a separate entity and also perhaps contributed to some extent to its relatively slow growth. Nevertheless Burbage did effectively become a suburb of Hinckley in the 1950s with the building of Sketchley Hill housing estate, which alone added over 3000 people to the population.

- 4.10 The earliest historic mapping consulted was the Burbage Tithe map of 1838 (figure 8). This shows the site as part of an arable field named Long Close. No change was shown on the Ordnance Survey 25" map of 1901 (figure 9).

Previous Investigations

- 4.11 A geophysical survey (MLE28483) was undertaken on the site in 2013 (Parker 2013). It recorded a number of possible linear features running approximately south-west to north-east, one of which represents a probable field boundary and three further weak linear responses. Several discrete features that may represent pits were also identified (the geophysical survey interpretation from the Stratoscan report is shown on figure 2 in yellow). The consultee comments note that these anomalies may represent a continuation of the Roman features identified under HER reference MLE2829 and described in paragraph 4.3.
- 4.12 Groundworks Archaeology undertook an evaluation across the site between the 18th and 21st March 2024. This identified severe truncation in the northern portion of the site and a number of Roman features in the southern corner of the proposed development area. A spread (106) containing pottery, CBM and a single fragment of slag was identified at the south-eastern end of trench 1. This corresponded to a geophysical anomaly which had been interpreted as a potential curvilinear feature. Trench 6 contained what appeared to be a single sub oval pit [603] which contained Roman pottery contemporary with that identified in trench 1. Both features contained CBM, primarily roof tile indicative of a building in the vicinity. All of the Roman material recovered was datable to a 2nd century deposition date.

5 Aims and objectives of the project

- 5.1 The objectives of the project were:

- To establish the nature and extent of the deposits identified in the investigation;
- To mitigate the impact of the development on the identified archaeological remains via excavation;
- To record stratigraphic information (as detailed in the methodology);
- To retrieve finds including artefacts and ecofacts from stratigraphic contexts (as detailed in the methodology);
- To produce a photographic archive detailing archaeological remains encountered;

- To produce a fully illustrated report drawing together the results and conclusions of the programme; and
- To consider the evidence within local and regional contexts, where appropriate.

6. Methodology

- 6.1 The archaeological excavation was carried out between the 9th and 16th July 2024. This involved the mechanical excavation under archaeological supervision of an area measuring approximately 2025 square meters focused on the southern corner of the proposed development area.
- 6.2 Where necessary, surfaces were hand cleaned for examination and recording and deposits observed were recorded on standard pro-forma recording sheets.
- 6.3 Full context descriptions are provided in Appendix 1.
- 6.4 A digital colour photographic record was also maintained, some of which is reproduced in this report as plates 1–9 Appendix 2.
- 6.5 All work was carried out according to the agreed Written Scheme of Investigation and in accordance with the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists (CIfA) standards and guidance for archaeological evaluations.

7. Results

- 7.1 The area strip (plates 1-6) revealed a stratigraphy comparable to that seen in the evaluation with the topsoil (800) overlying the natural geology (806). A large sub oval spread (805) was present within the centre of the excavation area and measured approximately 19m long by 8.5m wide with a depth varying between 0.12m and 0.21m and containing Roman pottery of the early to mid 2nd century AD. A slot measuring 12m long by 3.80m was excavated across its width (see drawing 3, figure 3, plate 7). This spread directly overlay the natural (806) and included the spread (105) identified at the eastern end of evaluation trench 1 and the “pit” [603] identified in evaluation trench 6. Once the feature was seen in plan it was clear that both of these features identified in the evaluation trenches were actually a contiguous component of the spread (805).

- 7.2 A series of possible postholes cut into the spread (plates 5 and 6) were investigated but most were identified as rabbit burrows (some of which were still in use). Two of the possible cuts [801] and [803] (although with a similar organic and rooty fill) could not be categorically proven to be formed by a process of bioturbation. However, they contained no datable material and the loose rooty nature of their respective fills (802) and (804) would tend to suggest that they are of modern origin and likely the result of burrowing activity (see drawings 1 and 2, figure 3 for sections and plates 8 and 9).
- 7.3 No other archaeological features were present within the excavation area.

8. The Finds

8.1 Pottery Jerry Evans

- 8.1.1 Some 12 sherds of Roman pottery and 10 fragments of Roman tile were submitted for examination. The pottery weighs 0.112kg and includes just three rimsherds. The quantities of pottery from both sites (TCB24 and TCH24) are too small to say anything meaningful about supply to the site or its status.

Chronology

- 8.1.2 The excavator notes that 'the two features that we identified in the evaluation are actually either end of a spread', thus the pottery from these excavations is part of a single group with that from TCB24. This is helpful as the present collection adds limited chronological information, although it is consistent with the material previously recovered.
- 8.1.3 The fabrics represented are Warwickshire Museum fabrics O11, O16?, R01, R32 and R81. There are two jars in R01, one of which may be paralleled in the products of the Bubbenhall kiln site, and perhaps dated AD70-120. The oxidised sherds are likely to be second century Mancetter products. The greyware R32 also seems to be chiefly earlier Roman and produced a greyware tankard probably of 2nd century AD date.
- 8.1.4 The previously recovered pottery (Evans 2024) included 'two samian sherds from the site, a Central Gaulish Dr 31 base (AD140-200) and a Central Gaulish Dr37 decorated bodysherd, AD120-200'. It also included a 'Mancetter mortarium flange, from a class A or B beaded and flanged mortarium, with a stamp of die 1 of BONOX(u)S dated by Hartley AD125-155'.
- 8.1.5 Thus the spread in question would seem to date to the early-mid 2nd century AD.

Tile (Catalogue) Context (805)

- a) 4 tile fragments, Wt 290g.
- b) A thick tile fragment (floor tile or brick) Thickness 46mm. Wt 308g.
- c) A tegula fragment with flange (type B? (Brodrigg 19xxx fig 6, second drawing)), flange height 40mm+, Flange width 36mm, tile thickness 12mm, Wt 259g.
- d) A tegula fragment with flange (type B), flange height 36mm+, flange width 30mm, tile thickness unknown, Wt 86g.
- e) A tegula fragment with flange (type B), flange height 45mm, flange width 26mm, tile thickness 23mm, Wt 619g.
- f) A tegula fragment with flange (Type A (Brodrigg 19xxx, fig 6, first drawing), flange height 50mm, flange width 23mm, tile thickness 20mm, Wt 406g.
- g) A tegula fragment with flange (Type A), flange height 46mm, flange width 29mm, tile thickness 18mm, Wt 245g.

Discussion

- 8.1.6 There are 10 large CBM fragments weighing 1923g. As with previous collection (Evans 2024) the fabric seems consistent with the probably products of kilns in the Mancetter area.
- 8.1.7 Previous excavations have produced 9 tile fragments weighing 1.631kg, giving a site total of 19 fragments weighing 3.554kg. This gives the average tile fragment weight of 187g, a substantial quantity.
- 8.1.8 All are roofing tiles or floor tile/brick, with none coming from a hypocaust. It is possible they are from a nearby building although the quantity is too low for clarity. Imbrices are present in the overall collection, although not common enough to clarify that this was from a nearby roof rather than scavenged material for use as hard standing etc.

9. Discussion and Conclusions

- 9.1 The spread (805) identified within the excavation area was shown to include features (105) and [603] from evaluation trenches 1 and 6. Environmental samples were taken from these features and were shown to contain a single grain of hulled wheat (*Triticum spelta/dicoccum*) and a partial indeterminate cereal grain. Wild seeds of stinking mayweed (*Anthemis cotula*), knotweeds (*Polygonaceae* sp.), and grasses (Poaceae) with some grass chaff also noted. Charcoal of 4mm was rare but fragments of 2mm were abundant. A small amount of burnt bone was also found in the residue of this sample. Insect exoskeletal material and sclerotia were also present along with compact masses of hardened fungal mycelium.

- 9.2 Whilst the environmental samples did not contain a diverse range of species, preservation was fair. The small amount of charcoal and charred plant remains indicate low levels of settlement with related burning activity taking place in the area. The spread (805) may be the infill of natural hollows or possibly a pond like feature with domestic debris from nearby Roman settlement activity, presumably located to the south of the site and related to the activity described in paragraph 4.3.
- 9.3 Given the shallow depth of the archaeology it is likely that the site has been subject to some level of past truncation and no other features were present to aid in the interpretation of the spread.

10. Archive

- 10.1 The project will be archived with the Leicestershire Museum Service under the accession code X.A99.2024. The digital records will be lodged with the Archaeology Data Service (ADS) and final report uploaded to OASIS.

11. Acknowledgements

- 11.1 Groundworks Archaeology would like to thank Springbourne Homes for commissioning this investigation. We would also like to thank Mr William Kelly of the Leicestershire Historic and Natural Environment Team for his assistance during the course of the project.

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Appendix 1: Context Summary

Context	Type	Description	Depth
(800)	Layer	Soft, mid brown silty sand topsoil	0.26-0.40m
[801]	Cut	Cut of sub circular pit/PH	0.16m
(802)	Fill	Loose, dark brown silty sand with much rooting and organic material	0.16m
[803]	Cut	Cut of sub circular pit/PH	0.19m
(804)	Fill	Loose, dark brown silty sand with much rooting and organic material	
(805)	Layer	Soft dark orange-brown sand spread 3.20m across, (length unseen), irregular in plan containing Roman pottery, CBM and slag	0.12m
(806)	Natural	Soft light brownish-orange sand with occasional patches of brown staining	

Appendix 2: Plates



Plate.7¿Area.Strip.Looking.North_east



Plate.8¿Area.Strip.Looking.North

Appendix 2: Plates



Plate.9çArea.Strip.Looking.North_West



Plate.0çArea.Strip.Looking.South_East

Appendix 2: Plates



Plate. 1 Aerial View of Strip in Progress

Appendix 2: Plates



Plate 2. Aerial View of Spread. (66)

Appendix 2: Plates



Plate. 3. Oblique View of Slot Through. (661) North West Facing Section

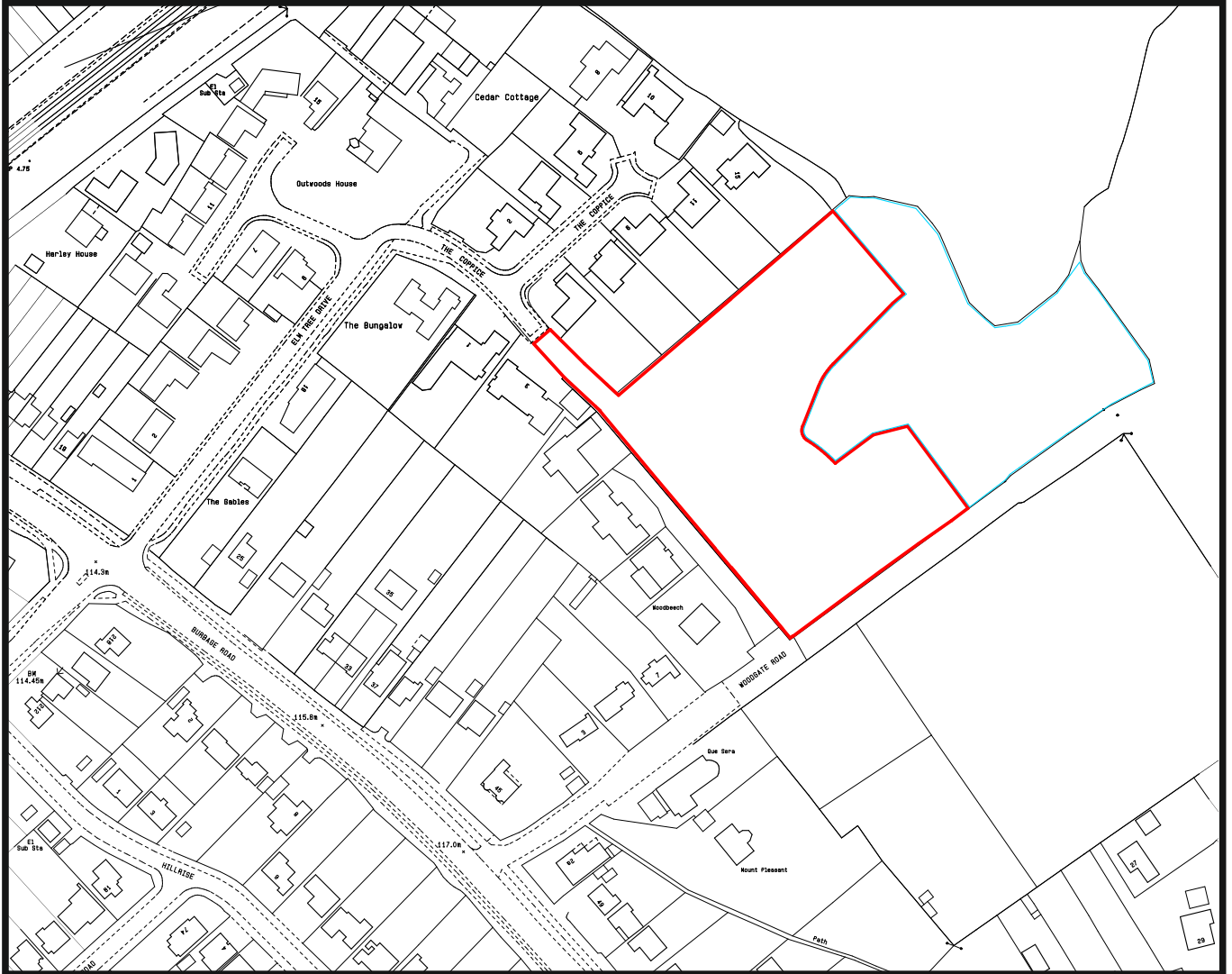
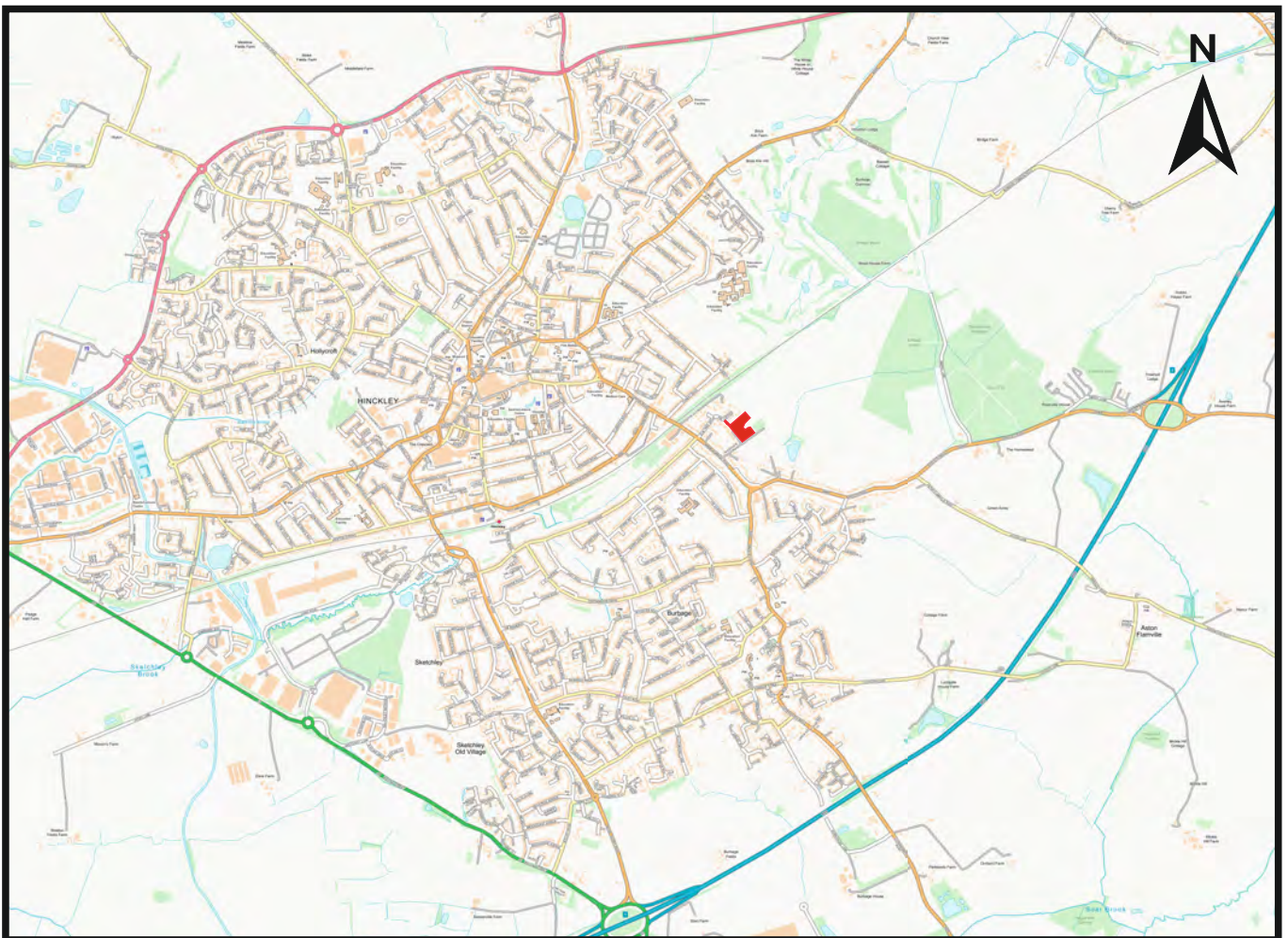


Plate. 4. West Facing Section. [667]

Appendix 2: Plates



Plate. 6. West.Facing.Section.[469]



0m 100m
1:2500

Figure 1: Site Location

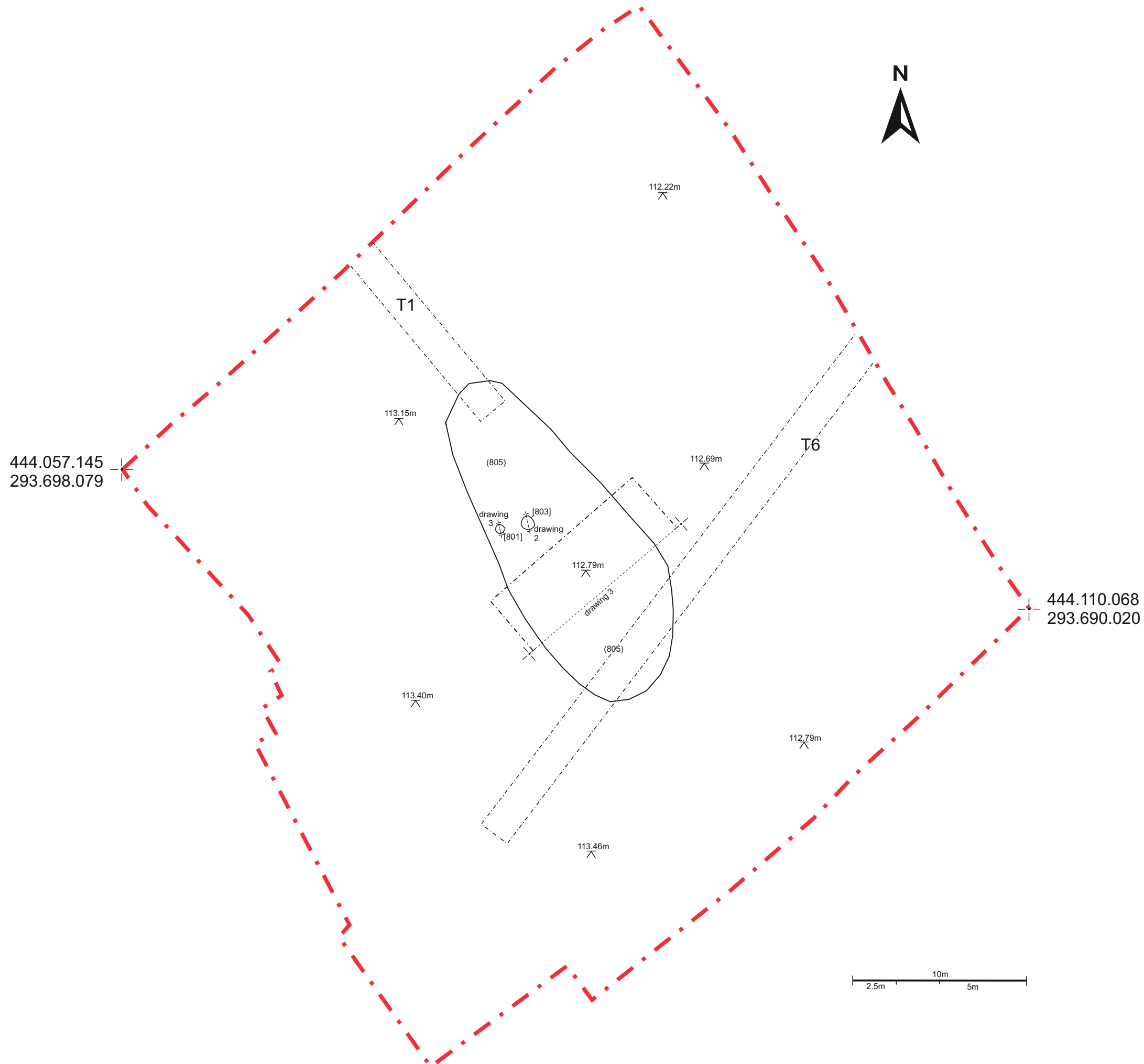


Figure 2 : Excavation Area Plan

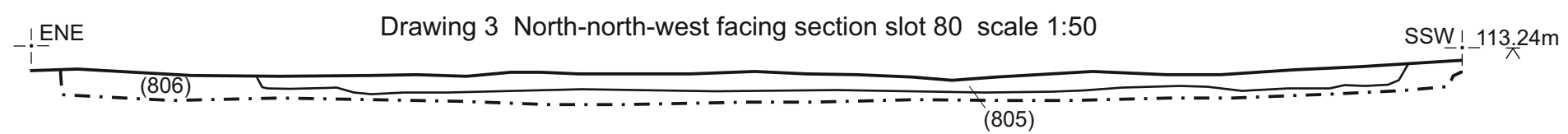
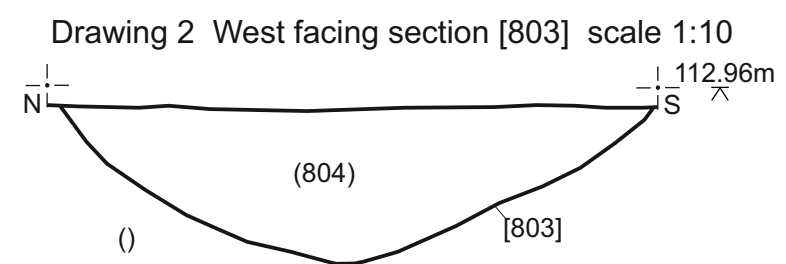
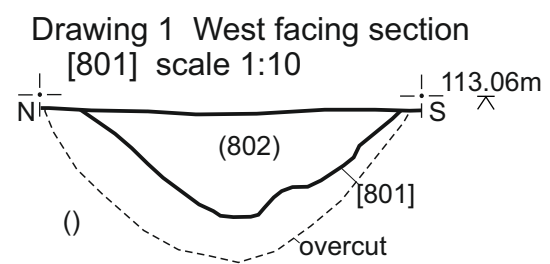


Figure 3: Section Drawings