Land at Burroughs Road, Ratby, Leicester, Leicestershire, LE6 0XZ

Archaeological Evaluation Trenching & Earthwork Survey Report

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Planning Ref.:	24/00914/OUT
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Prepared for

Lagan Homes

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Summary

PCAS Archaeology Ltd was commissioned by Lagan Homes to undertake archaeological evaluation trenching and an earthwork survey on land at Burroughs Road, Ratby. This was to inform an application for mixed-use development.

The site lies on the western periphery of Ratby, on the terraces of the River Soar where prehistoric and Romano-British remains have been found in the wider landscape. Settlement in the historic core of Ratby probably dates from the post-Roman period, with ridge and furrow earthworks surviving in many modern fields within and surrounding the site. The earthwork survey targeted three areas of these earthworks in the southern half of the site that have been identified as the best-preserved in the area.

Geophysical anomalies were accurately interpreted as the remains of ridge-and-furrow, modern field boundaries and land drains. Unidentified anomalies corresponded to either furrows or minor variations within the natural geology.

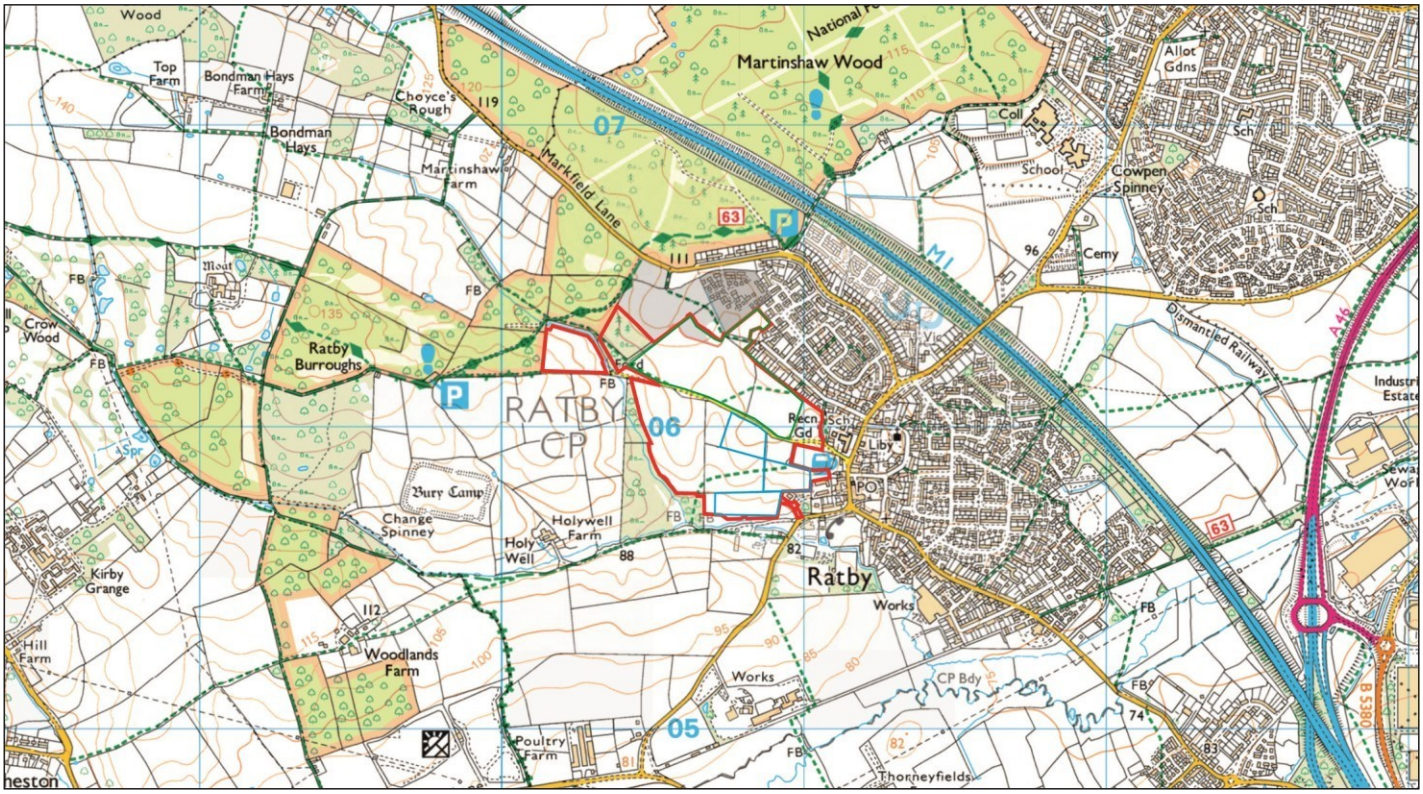


Figure 1: Location plan of the site at scale 1:25000. The application area is marked in red. OS mapping. Crown Copyright. All rights reserved. PCAS licence no. 100049278.

1.0 Introduction

PCAS Archaeology Ltd. (PCAS) was commissioned by Lagan Homes to undertake archaeological evaluation trenching and an earthwork survey on land at Burroughs Road, Ratby, where a mixed-use development is proposed.

This report details the results deriving from archaeological evaluation trenching that took place in accordance with current best practice and national guidance, including:

- National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), 2012, revised 2018, 2019, 2021 and 2023;
- Chartered Institute of Field Archaeologists (CIFA) Code of Conduct, revised 2014, 2019, 2020, 2021, 2022;
- CIFA Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Field Evaluation, revised 2014, 2020, 2023;
- Management of Research Projects in the Historic Environment (MoRPHE ver. 1.2, 2015)

2.0 Location and Description

Ratby is a village and civil parish in the Hinkley and Bosworth district of Leicestershire. It lies on the west side of the M1 just northwest of Leicester on the banks of the River Soar.

Burroughs Road extends north-westwards out of the village core and Main Street. The site straddles the road, encompassing approximately 80acres of land.

The approximate centre of the site is at SK 50760 06176.

3.0 Topography and geology

The solid geology of the area is varied. The majority of the site to the north of the road is underlain by Edwalton Member Mudstone, described as red-brown and greenish grey mudstone and siltstone, overlain by Thrussington Member Diamicton. The majority of the south of the site and the valley of the River Soar is underlain by Gunthorpe Member Mudstone, red-brown mudstone with subordinate dolomitic siltstone and fine-grained sandstone. The boundary is marked by a thin band of Cotgrave Sandstone, and there are no recorded overlying deposits on these geologies (https://www.bgs.ac.uk/map-viewers/bgs- geology-viewer/).

Ratby lies on the north bank of the River Soar, on a variable south-facing slope with levels at around 100mOD recorded in the northern half of the site.

4.0 Planning Background

An outline planning application (with all matters reserved apart from access) for a phased mixed-use development comprising of approximately 470 dwellings (use Class C3) and provision of 1FE primary school (use Class F1) and associated operations and infrastructure, including but not limited to site re-profiling works, sustainable urban drainage systems, public open space, landscaping, habitat creation, internal roads/routes and upgrades to the public highway has been submitted to Hinckley and Bosworth District Council: application ref 24/00914/OUT.

The Leicestershire County Council Senior Planning Archaeologist has alerted to the presence of ridge and furrow earthworks in several fields across the site. In the southern half of the site are three areas of earthworks, to be surveyed as part of this phase of archaeological works.

Evaluation on the north side of Burroughs Road was focused on an area where residential development alongside a primary school is proposed. The parcel of land at the eastern end of the evaluation is excluded, as this is currently a children's play area, while land to the west is a willow plantation and meadow which will be retained within the proposals and therefore any buried remains here are to be preserved *in situ*.

It is intended that further evaluation will take place on land south of Burroughs Road post-determination through planning condition and after consideration of the ridge and furrow in this area. These works will require a separate archaeological Written Scheme of Investigation.

5.0 Archaeological and Historical Background

A desk-based assessment with integral earthwork assessment (Catanzaro, 2024) and geophysical survey (Whittingham, 2024) have been prepared in association with the proposed development. These documents were available to all undertaking fieldwork and post-excavation assessment. A summary is included here as follows:

Early activity in the area is usually found along gravel terraces associated with rivers, therefore the River Soar and its tributaries are potentially a focus for such activity: low densities of flint artefacts found close to Ratby provide residual evidence for this. Evidence of activity in the Neolithic and Bronze Age is also rare in the study area, with environmental remains suggesting the riverbanks were wooded. Settlement does not appear to have been established until the Iron Age, with a univallate hillfort being recorded close to Holywell Farm, southwest of the development site. Investigations just north of the current evaluation have revealed two ditches yielding late Iron Age – Romano- British pottery, interpreted as part of a field system that likely extends into the site (Cotswold Archaeology, 2023). A single undated ditch on a NE-SW alignment was exposed during trenching of the area currently being developed beyond the northwest corner of the site (Katsifas, 2021), and trenching at Desford Lane was negative, apart from a large modern feature (Wolf, 2021)

The LHER records a potential Roman road extending through the northwest part of the site, towards the regional settlement at modern Leicester (Ratae), but no evidence of a corresponding linear feature of this type has been identified by geophysics and the exact route of this road has not been confirmed.

Settlement at Ratby likely dates from the early medieval period, based on place-name evidence which suggests that a Danish camp or settlement perhaps associated with the Roman city of Ratae existed to the southeast. The Domesday survey records a manor held by Hugh de Grandsmenil including the households of 10 villagers and 5 smallholders, with 1 slave and 1 priest, land for 6 ploughs and a mill (Williams, 2003). The Church of St. Philip and St. James in the historic core of Ratby dates from the 13th century (LB1074093). Cropmarks of a possible moated enclosure are noted on the LHER adjacent to the south side of Burroughs Road, within the development site, but the interpretation of this as a medieval manor site is in doubt, as no medieval material was recovered during fieldwalking in the vicinity, and LiDAR and geophysics have not revealed any potential features here.

In the agricultural fields west of Ratby are several areas of earthworks of ridge and furrow, the relics of medieval farming practices. There are two areas on the north side of Burroughs Road; one being an area of rough grass on the northwest which is planned as the Phase 1&2 development compound, and the other is a willow plantation on the western side of the development that will remain as is. In the three fields in the southern half of the site, Lidar data shows well preserved ridge and furrow - the subject of the earthwork survey.

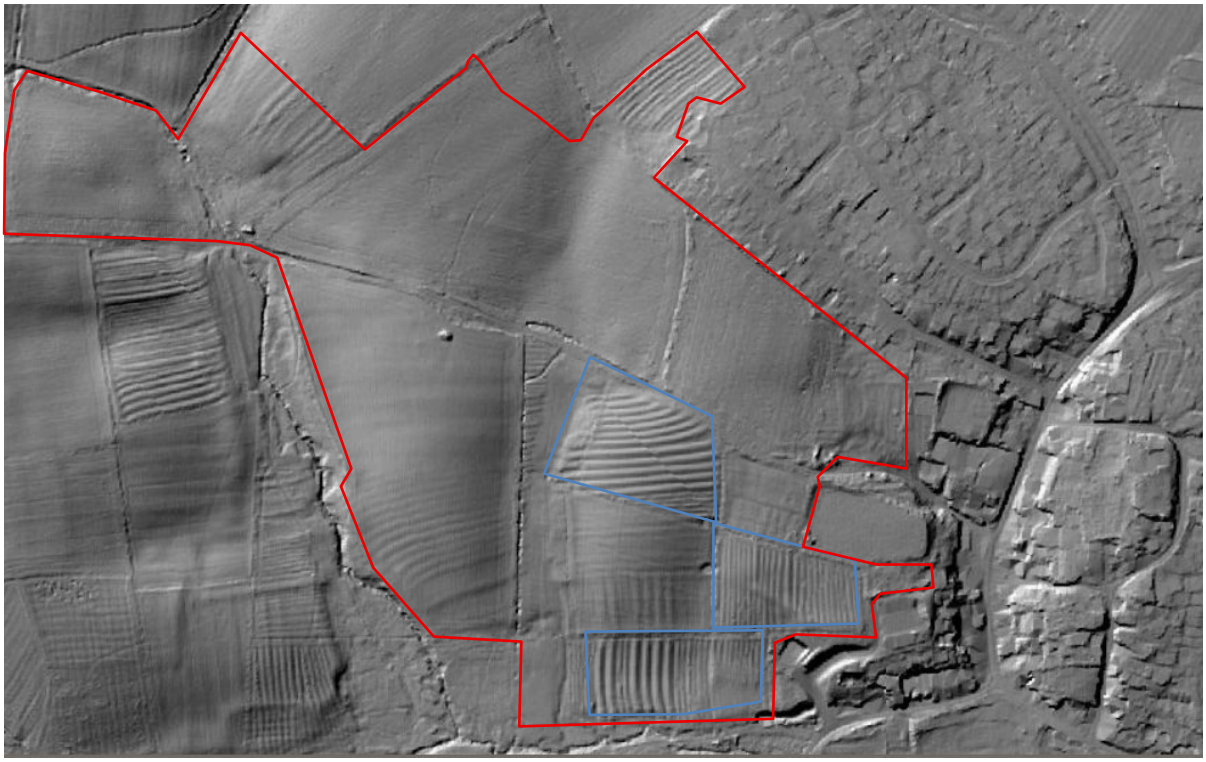


Figure 2: LiDAR survey of the west of Ratby shows the ridge and furrow earthworks in the area of the site. Site outlined in red, areas of earthwork survey in blue. Not to scale.

The Enclosure of the parish in 1773 changed the field system. The field west of Ratby was known a Burrough Field, so named on the Enclosure map, and shows a road running through the north of the site. Burroughs Road is a later addition, roughly following a field boundary. In the inter-war period, part of the north of the site was used as allotment gardens (Figure 3).

Figure 3: Historic aerial photograph of the west side of Ratby, showing the WWII allotments that occupied the site. It is likely that this activity at least partially accounts for the removal of ridge and furrow earthworks in this area. AP ref RAF 451 235 rs 4025

Geophysical Survey

The site (available areas – approximately 24.4 hectares) was subject to geophysical survey by Phase Site Investigations (Whittingham, 2024; Fig. 5&8). Ridge and furrow type responses were recorded, with other linear or curvilinear responses that did not correspond with ridge and furrow and seemingly indicating other phases of activity. Geophysics in the western field (Area 1) found a roughly N-S aligned former field boundary which divided ridge and furrow-type anomalies on perpendicular alignments, suggesting these were contemporary elements of the medieval field system. Fragmented linear responses crossing the site were on alignments differing from the ridge and furrow, and part of a rectilinear enclosure complex was identified in the southeast corner of this area, potentially reflecting palimpsest landscape remains. There were a small number of discrete responses; possibly pits or ferrous materials in the soil. In Area 2, probable pit clusters and further linear features not associated with the ridge and furrow were identified.

6.0 Methodology

The evaluation involved the investigation of sixty 30m x 1.80m trenches that were positioned to scrutinise the results of geophysical survey in Areas 1, 2 & 7. This constituted a 4% sample of these areas. Area 1 trenches numbered 1-39, and includes Trenches 29-33 which lay in the north of the site, adjacent to and part of the development compound of a neighbouring project. Area 2 trenches numbered 40-57. Area 7 trenches numbered 58-60 where cropmarks of a possible moated enclosure are recorded by the LHER, but no corresponding magnetic variation was noted on the geophysical survey. Trench 61 of the planned methodology could not be excavated due to an overhead power cable, and given these trenches targeted cropmarks repositioning them was considered to be of limited value.

The earthwork survey targeted three parcels of land (Areas 6, 9 & 10) where the LHER records ridge and furrow earthworks; described as being in good condition. Topographic surveys determine the relative locations of points on the ground surface by measuring horizontal distances, differences in elevation and directions. The survey was carried out in accordance with guidelines published by Historic England (2nd edition, 2017).

The purpose of the evaluation was to gather information in order to establish the presence or absence, extent, depth, condition, character, quality and date of any archaeological deposits.

Trenches were opened under archaeological supervision to the first archaeologically significant horizon, the maximum safe working depth, or the natural geology, whichever was encountered first. Archaeological deposits encountered were then cleaned and defined by hand.

Where identified, archaeological features were to be examined sufficiently to determine their date, character and survival condition and then recorded by measured plan and section drawings at appropriate scales (1:20), incorporating Ordnance Survey datum heights.

A written record of each significant stratigraphic horizon and archaeological feature was made using standard PCAS context recording forms. These were supplemented by a narrative account in the form of a site diary. An online record of the project data was initiated with the Archaeological Data Service (OASIS database) before fieldwork commenced, and completed at the end of the project, including an uploaded digital copy of the report.

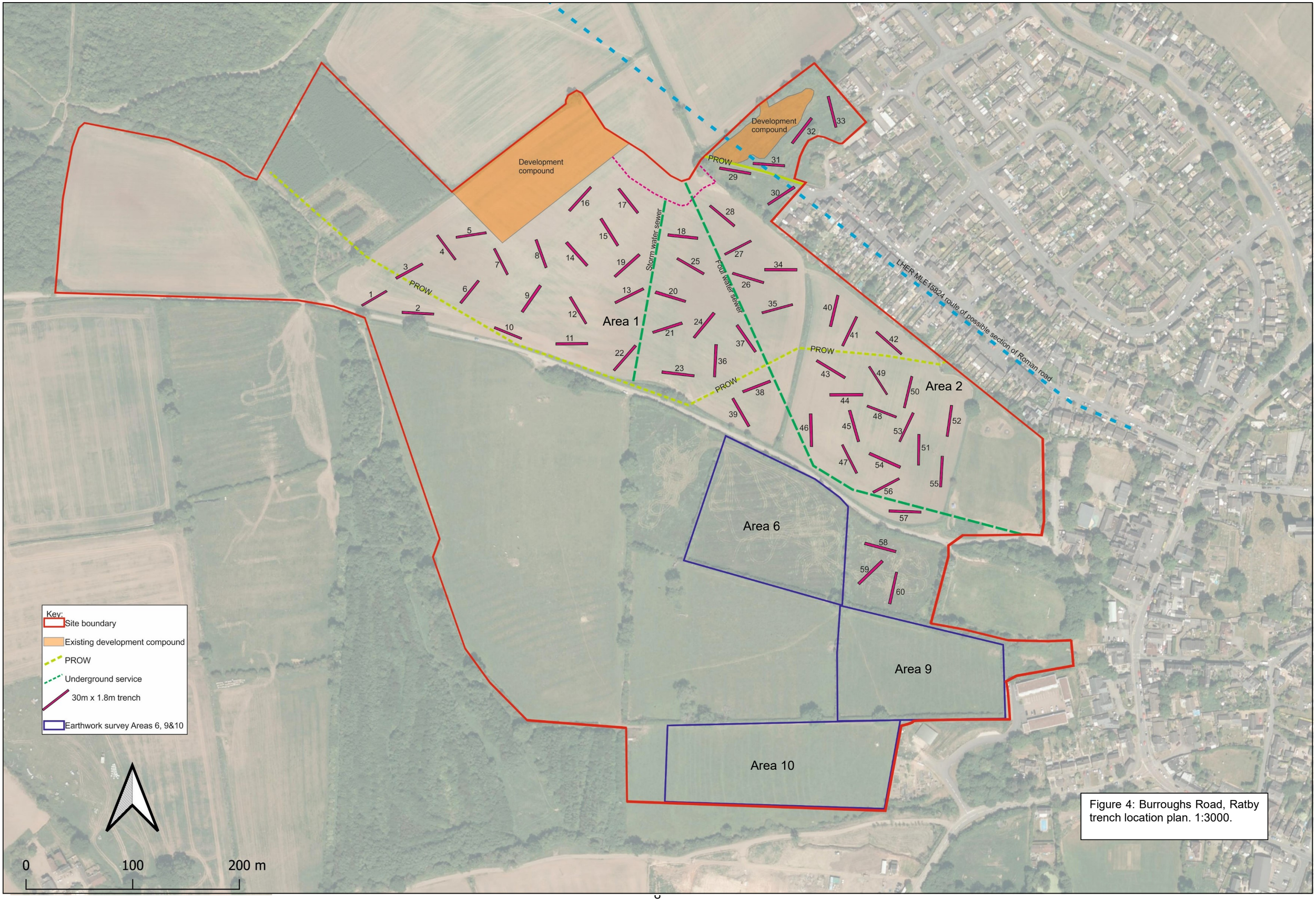


Figure 4: Burroughs Road, Ratby trench location plan. 1:3000.

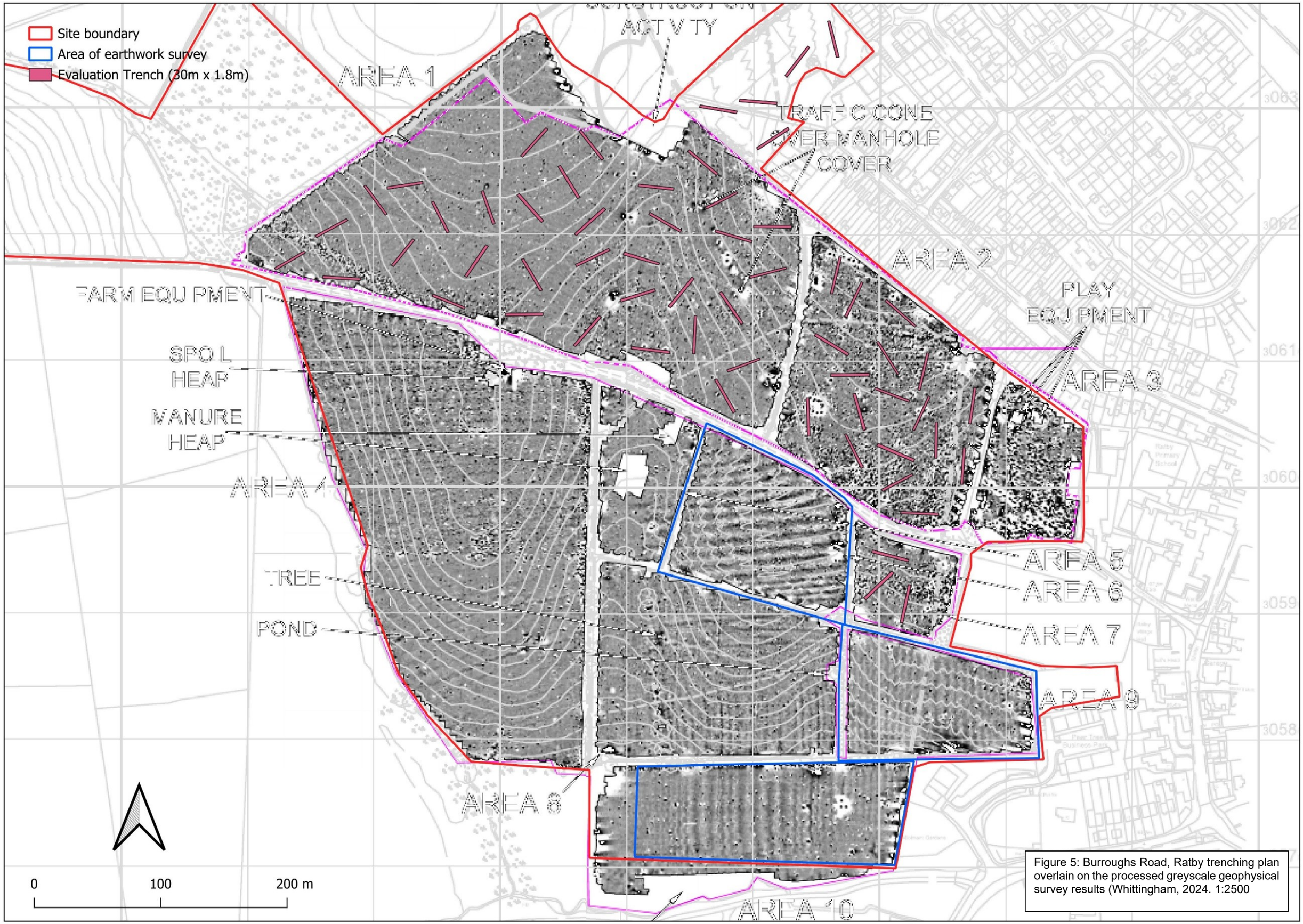


Figure 5: Burroughs Road, Ratby trenching plan overlain on the processed greyscale geophysical survey results (Whittingham, 2024. 1:2500

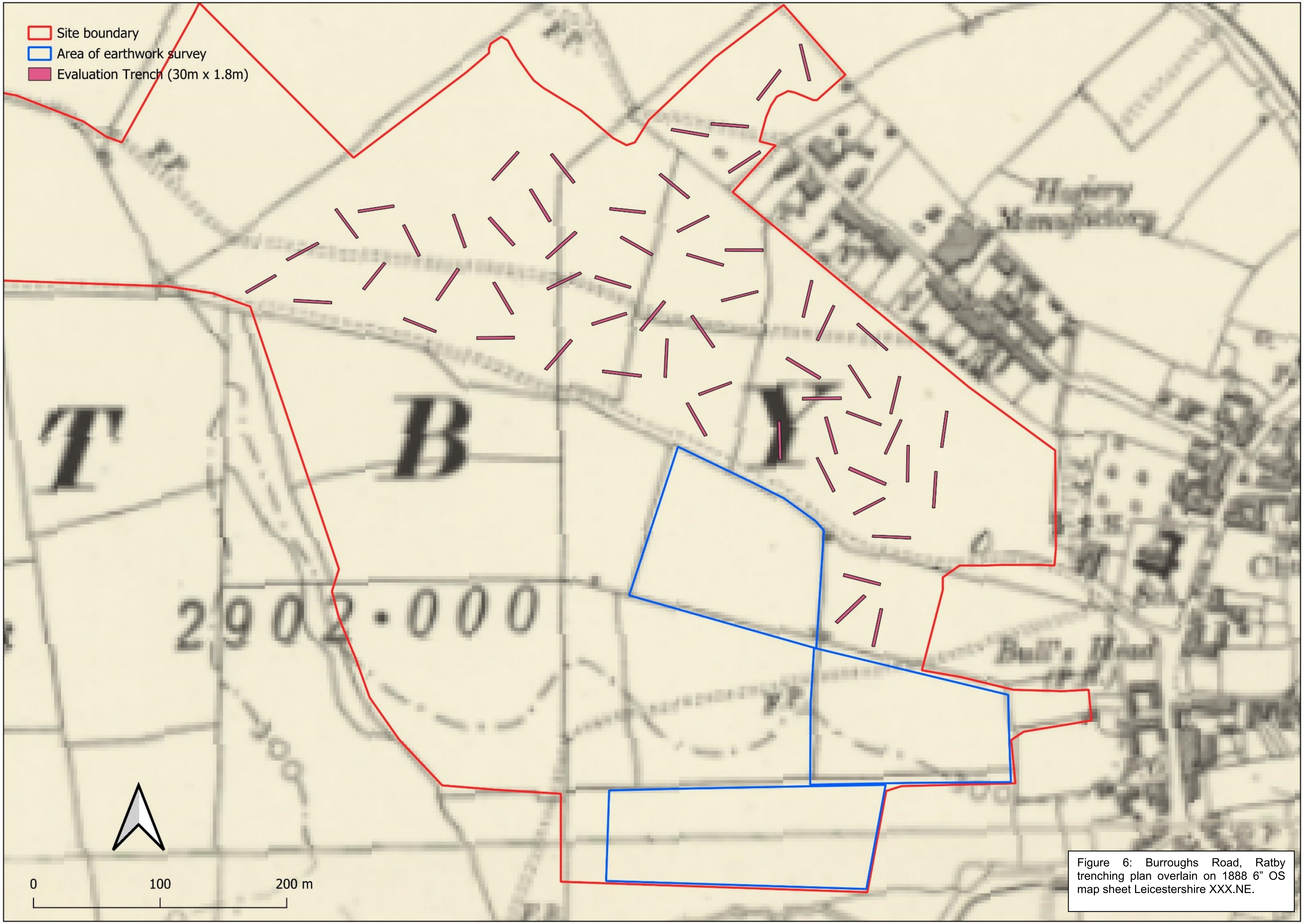


Figure 6: Burroughs Road, Ratby trenching plan overlain on 1888 6" OS map sheet Leicestershire XXX.NE.

7.0 Evaluation Results

A full context summary list appears as Appendix 1, and several photographs are included throughout the text.

The basic stratigraphic sequence recorded during the evaluation was the natural mudstone geology covered by the silty clay of the modern topsoil.

The trenches revealed no archaeological features pre-dating the medieval ridge-and-furrow identified across the site. A sample of the furrows were investigated across the site, with sections perpendicular to their longitudinal axis excavated. Furrows were between 1 – 1.50m wide and up to 0.10m deep, and all had a shallow concave profile that was truncated by the modern ploughsoil. The upper horizon clarity was generally diffuse due to the similarities between the furrow fills and the modern ploughsoil, with the cuts into the natural mudstone geology more apparent, with some bioturbation also noted in the mudstone. No dating was recovered from any of the features, and they were interpreted as furrows based on their profile, stratigraphy and correspondence with the magnetic linear striations that indicated the remnant of ridge and furrow. Following discussion with the Senior Planning Archaeologist during the site visit, it was determined that this sample was sufficient to inform the planning process and features were not recorded further, and the remainder of ditches revealed across the evaluation that corresponded with the furrows of the geophysical survey were noted but not investigated further. Features that did not correspond with furrow anomalies and/or confirm to the characteristics of these features were investigated and are discussed in the following text.

Trenches 1 to 7

These trenches were positioned on the western side of the evaluation area, situated on a southwest-facing slope. Evidence for an east northeast–west southwest aligned ridge-and-furrow system—curving slightly southwest to follow the natural topography —was recorded across all trenches. Natural geology was encountered at depths of 0.30–0.40 m and comprised of a grey clay, consistent with the anticipated mudstone deposits.

Geophysical anomalies were sparse in this part of the field; those present corresponded either to furrows or to minor variations in the natural geology. A strong linear response detected on the western edge of the site is likely to reflect a modern underground service.

Plate 1: View of Trench 4 (Looking NW)

Plate 2: View of Trench 5 (Looking W)

Trenches 8–17, 19 and 22

These trenches were located on an undulating plateau to the west of the evaluation area. The east northeast–west southwest orientated ridge and furrow was again evident. A single shallow modern linear feature on a north northeast-south southwest alignment containing batteries and spent shotgun cartridges was seen in Trench 13, with faint traces that turned into shallow scrapes upon investigation seen in flanking trenches. This ditch corresponds to a former field boundary extant until the later 20th century and given the dating was not recorded further.

Natural geology was reached at 0.30–0.40 m and consisted of grey clay, consistent with the expected mudstone.

Plate 3: View of Trench 17 (Looking SE)

Plate 4: Representative section of Trench 9 (Looking W)

***T**renches 18, 20, 21, 23 - 25 and 28*

These trenches were positioned along the slopes and base of a roughly N-S orientated dry valley towards the centre of Area 1. A substantial colluvial deposit was recorded at the foot of the slopes and mechanically excavated at the northern (Trench 18) and southern (Trench 23) ends of the valley, where it exceeded 1.2 m in depth. The colluvium was archaeologically sterile, containing no charcoal or artefactual material, and is assessed as being the result of ancient natural soil creep and slope wash into this natural valley.

The remaining trenches along the valley base (20, 21, 25 and 28) were excavated to a maximum depth of 0.60 m below ground level. Several land drains were encountered at this depth.

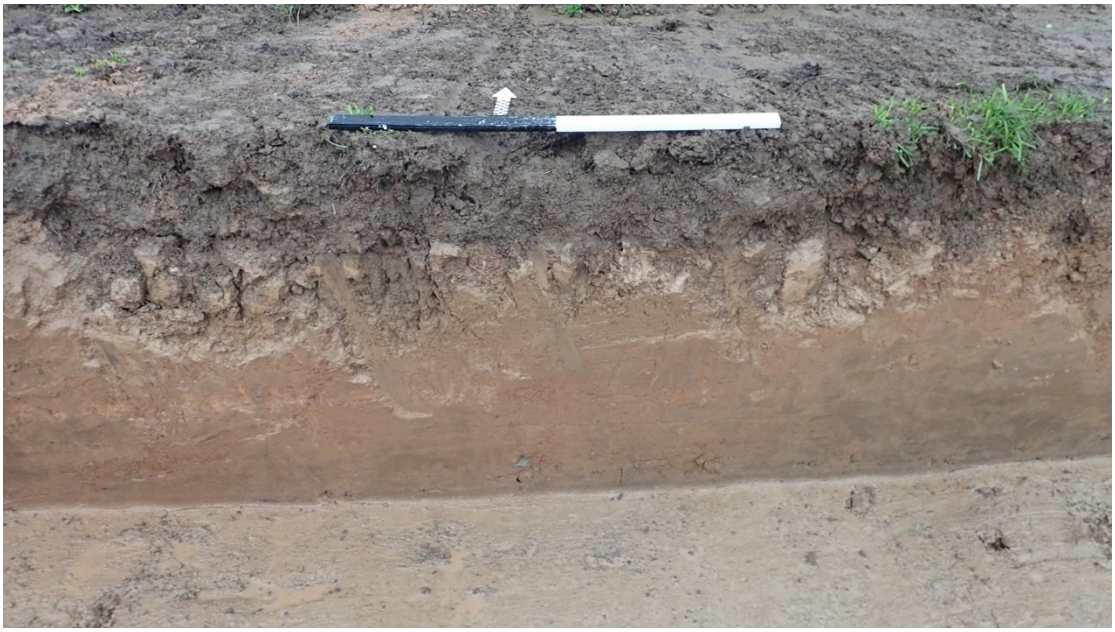


Plate 6: Representative section of Trench 18, showing deep colluvium layer (looking N)

Plate 7: View of Trench 20 (looking E)

Trenches 29–33

These trenches were located to the north of the evaluation area within rough ground characterised by dense grass and vegetation. Despite the disturbance by the modern development compound, multiple east northeast–west southwest aligned ridge-and-furrow earthworks were present, making excavation difficult due to stability issues for the JCB 3CX wheeled excavator.

In the southeast of this area, Trench 30 exposed a modern dump layer beneath the vegetation, between 0.20 and 0.40 m thick. With no discernible cuts, it appears that the deposited material—modern ceramics, metalwork, CBM, coal and other burnt waste—was placed either in a broad shallow pit or directly on the ground surface to be later covered with vegetation and an accumulation of soil.

Plate 8: View of Trench 32 (Looking S)

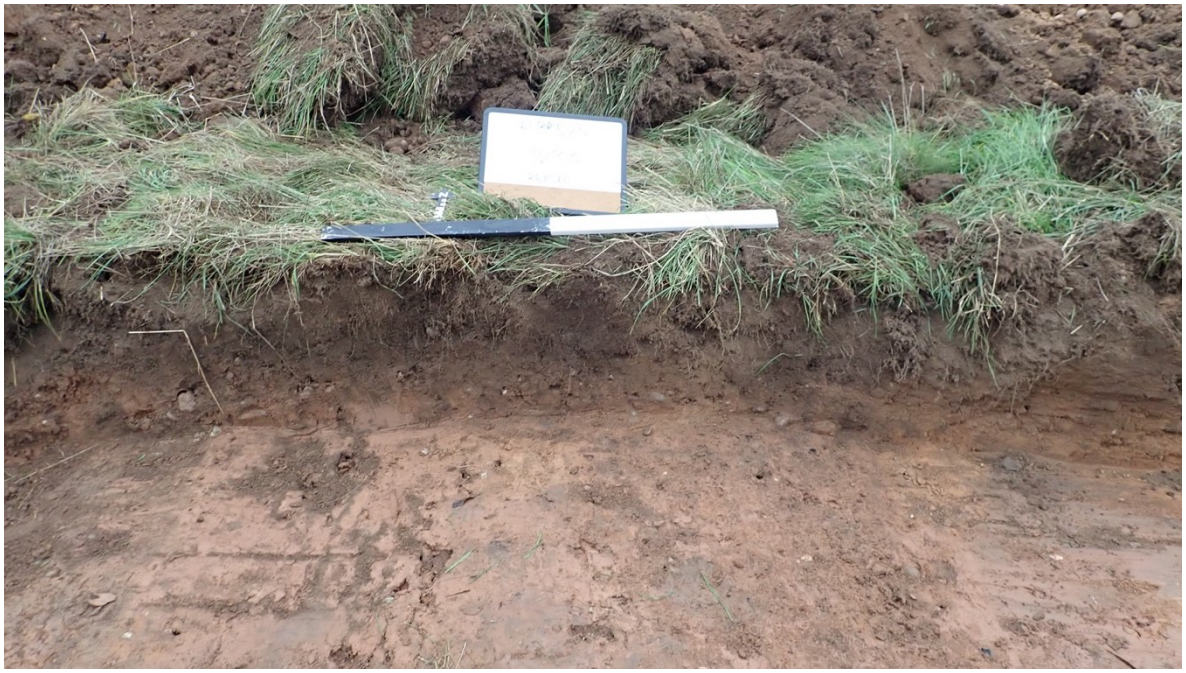


Plate 9: Representative section of Trench 33 (Looking N)

Trenches 26–27 and 34–39

These trenches were situated on the eastern side of Area 1, on the shallow slopes east of the dry valley. Furrows were again present; however, here it was aligned north northwest–south southeast, almost perpendicular to the relic furrows to the east and west suggesting that the valley formed a boundary between two separate field systems. No additional archaeological features were identified. Natural geology was exposed at depths of 0.30–0.40 m.

Plate 10: View of Trench 26 (looking SE)

Plate 11: Representative section of Trench 35 (looking NW)

Trenches 40–57

These trenches were located within Area 2. According to the landowner, the field had historically been used for the disposal of hardcore and other waste materials. This is consistent with the geophysical survey, which showed some extensive strong anomalies. Fragments of hardcore and large iron objects were visible on the surface. Furrows in this area were aligned roughly east northeast–west southwest.

Plate 12: View of Trench 40 (looking N)

Plate 13: Trench 35 representative section (looking NW)

Trenches 58–60

These trenches were positioned south of Burroughs Road in Area 7, where the LHER records the potential for a moated enclosure. Any earthworks here have been previously ploughed out. Excavation revealed only remnant furrows, suggesting that the putative enclosure visible as cropmarks represents a post-medieval or early modern landscape modification that had subsequently levelled earlier earthworks.

The eastern portion of this area, containing Trench 61, could not be investigated due to the presence of overhead high-voltage cables.

Plate 14: View of Trench 58 (looking W)

Plate 15: Representative section of Trench 58 (looking N)

8.0 Earthwork Survey Results (Figure 7-11; Appendix 2 for photographs)

Predictably, the topographic survey recorded a series of well-preserved earthworks across three adjoining areas, all enclosed within modern field boundaries. The remains consisted predominantly of ridge-and-furrow cultivation earthworks, with natural topographic features including a probable palaeochannel.

Northern Area (6)

The northern Area 6 (Figure 9) is characterised by a single block of ridge-and-furrow extending across most of the enclosure. The ridges are straight to gently curving and aligned predominantly north-west to south-east, with minor variation in orientation where the cultivation adapted to the irregular field boundary. The ridges are closely spaced and relatively uniform in height and profile. No internal headlands or subdivision boundaries were picked up, indicating that the area likely functioned as a single cultivation unit.

Central Area (9)

The central Area 9 (Figure 10) contains a similarly well-preserved block of ridge-and-furrow, here aligned north–south. The earthworks are regular and consistent in spacing, though slight changes were noted where the natural slope exists.

Southern Area (10)

The southern Area 10 (Figure 11) comprises the most extensive zone of ridge-and-furrow, aligned predominantly north - south. The cultivation earthworks appear to terminate along a topographic hollow that can also be seen in LiDAR. This is interpreted as a probable palaeochannel based on the irregular plan in the western part of the field, and given the proximity to the Rothley Brook tributary that flows eastwards from Burroughs Wood (and beyond) it seems likely this hollow represents migration of the water channel to its current path close to the track giving access to Holywell Farm. The current brook lies an estimated 10-30m south of the southern end of these ridge and furrow earthworks. The earthworks respect this hollow, indicating the brook here has migrated since ridge and furrow was established as the agricultural practice of the parish in the early medieval period.

Site boundary
Tree
Vegetation
Ridge
Furrow
Break of slope
Slope
Probable palaeochannel

Figure 7:
Earthwork survey
1:1500

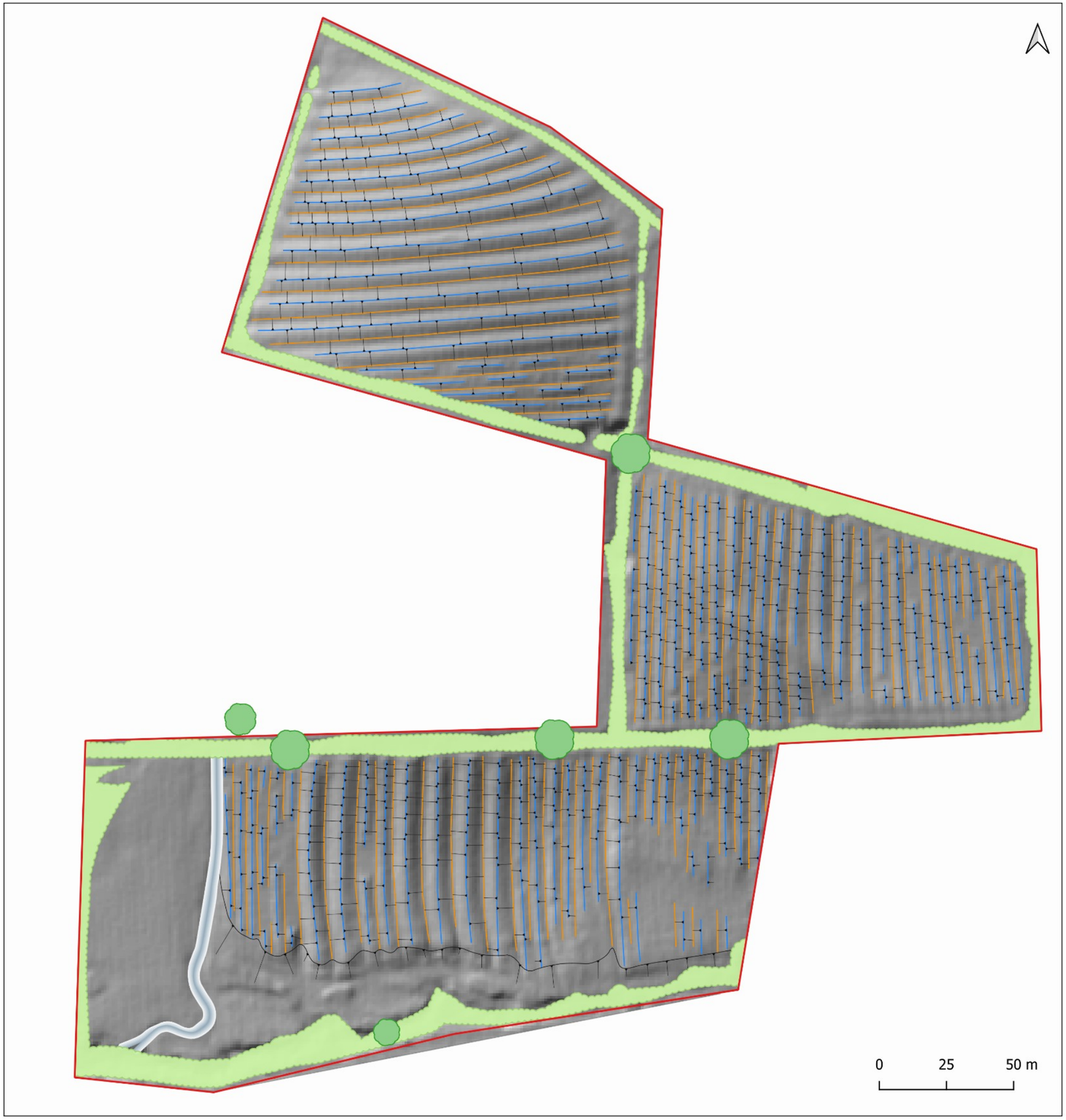
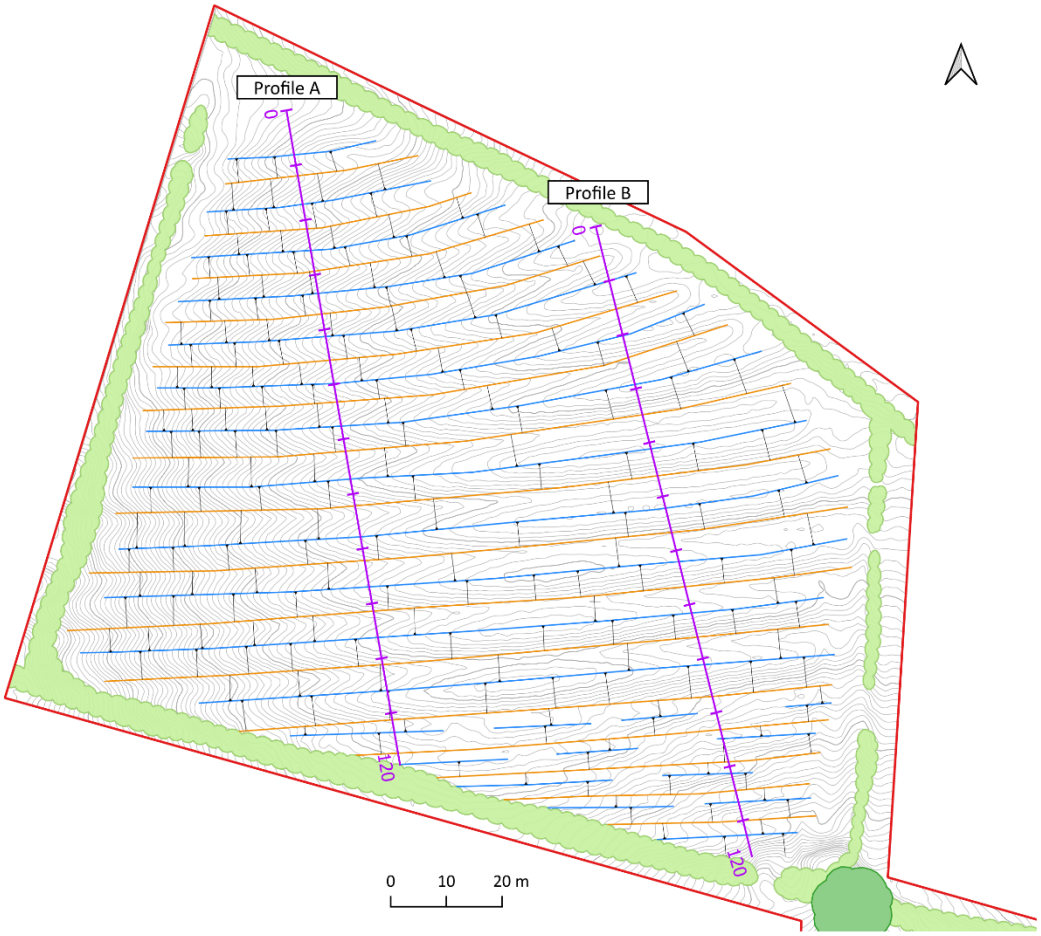


Figure 8:
Earthwork survey over LiDAR composite DTM 1m (1:1500)



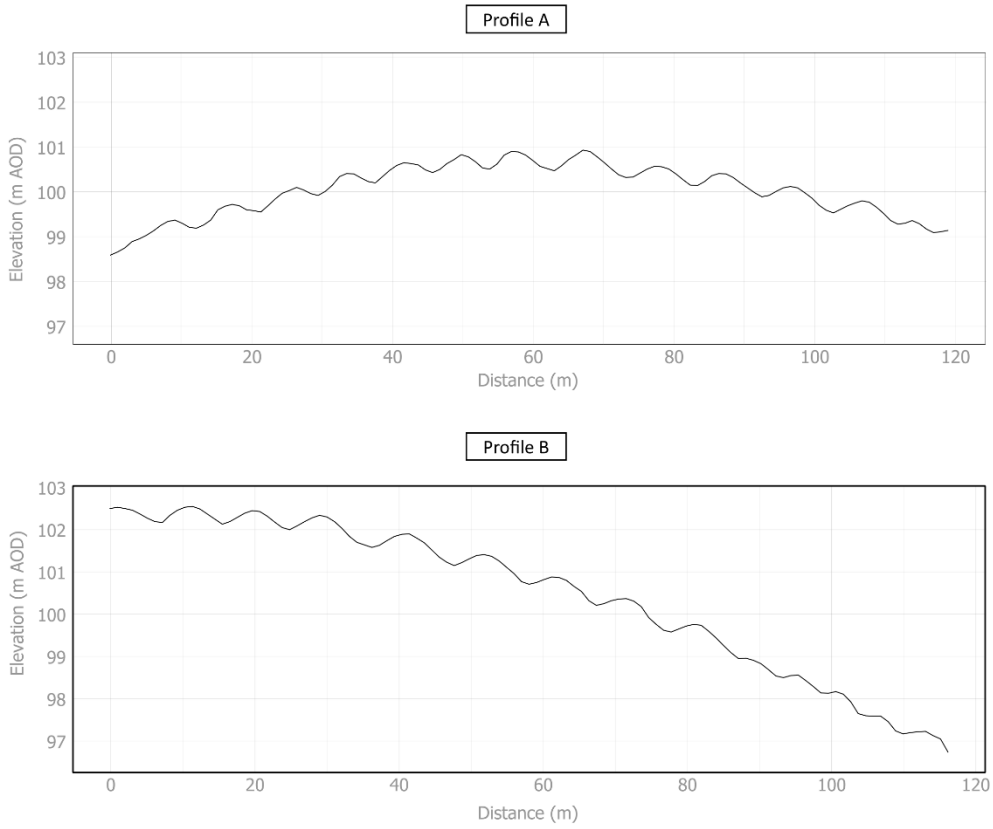
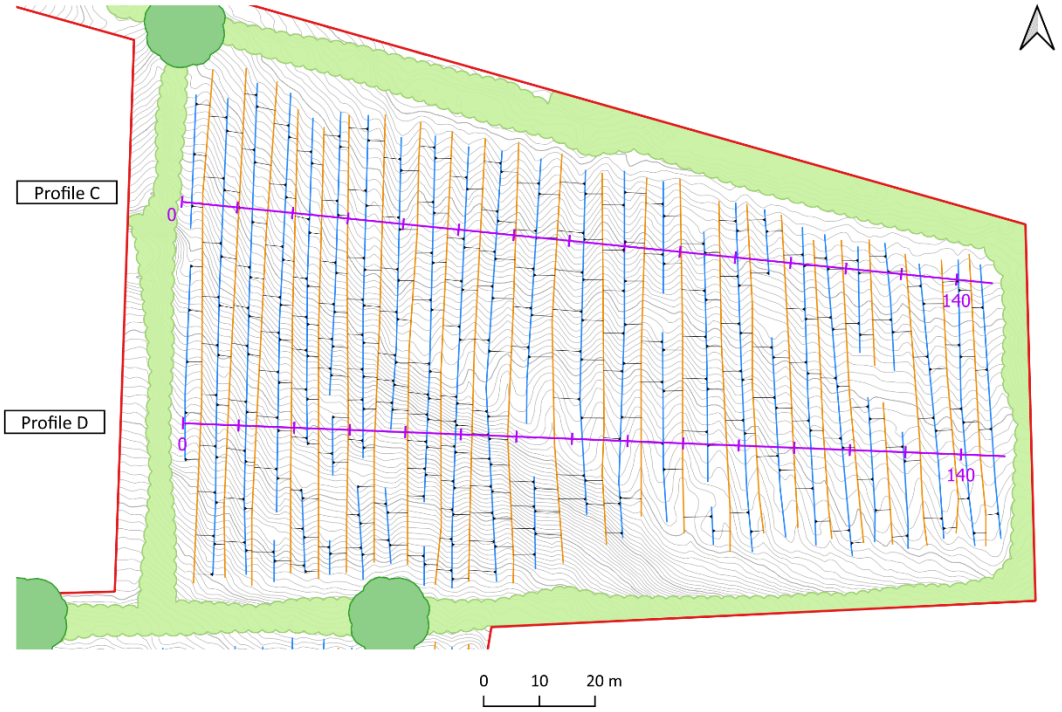


Figure 9:
Northern Area 6 detail and transects.



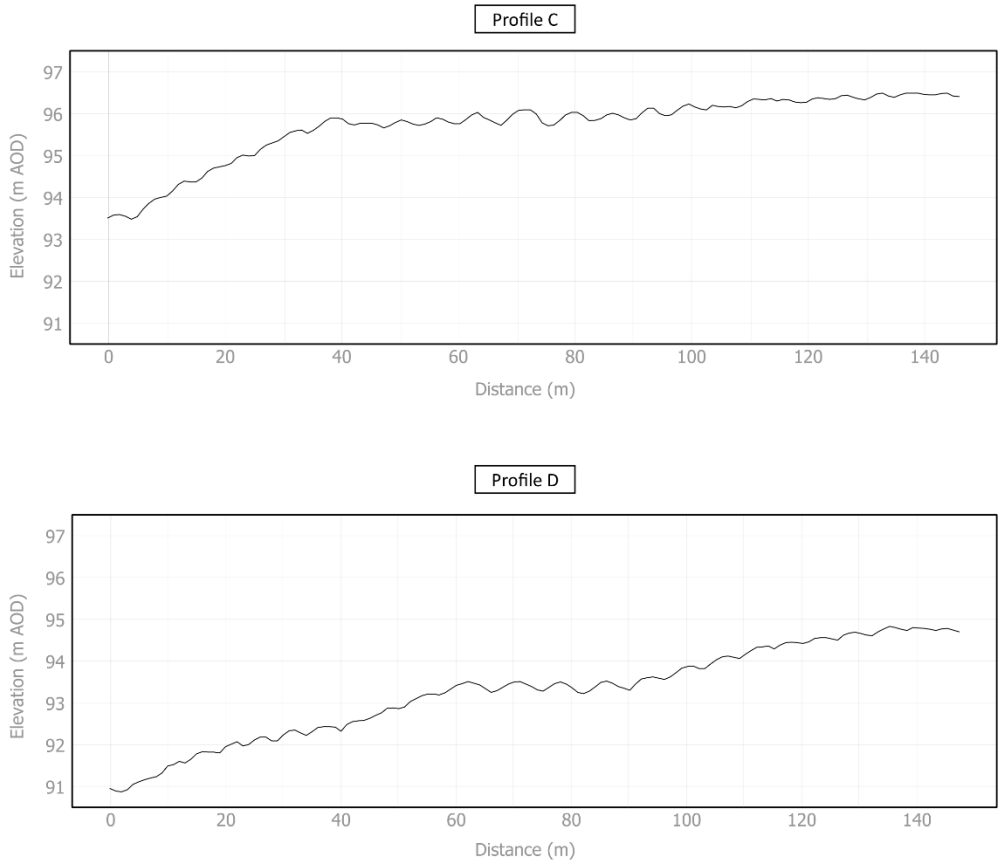
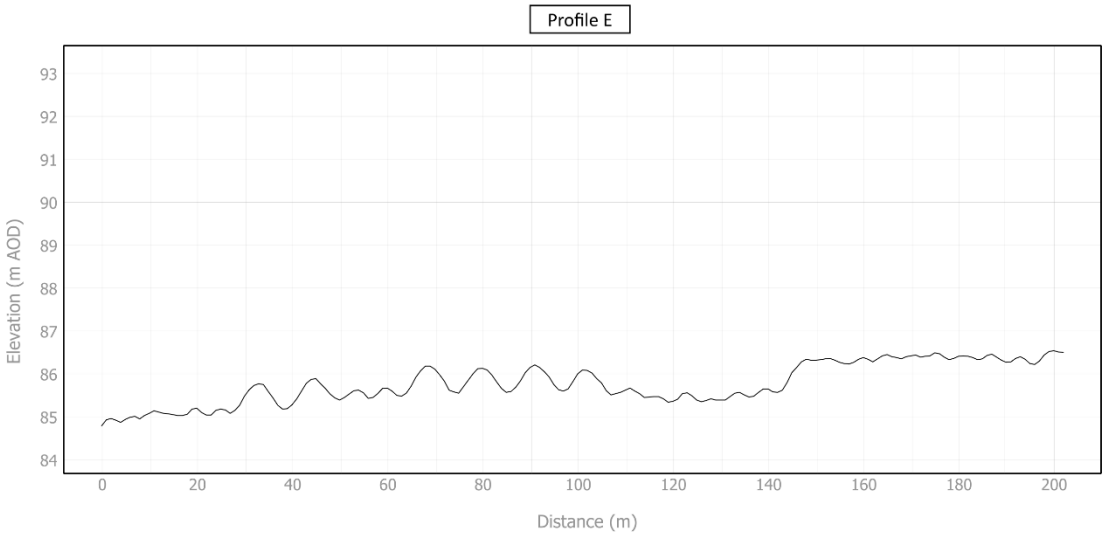


Figure 10:
Eastern Area 9 detail and transects.



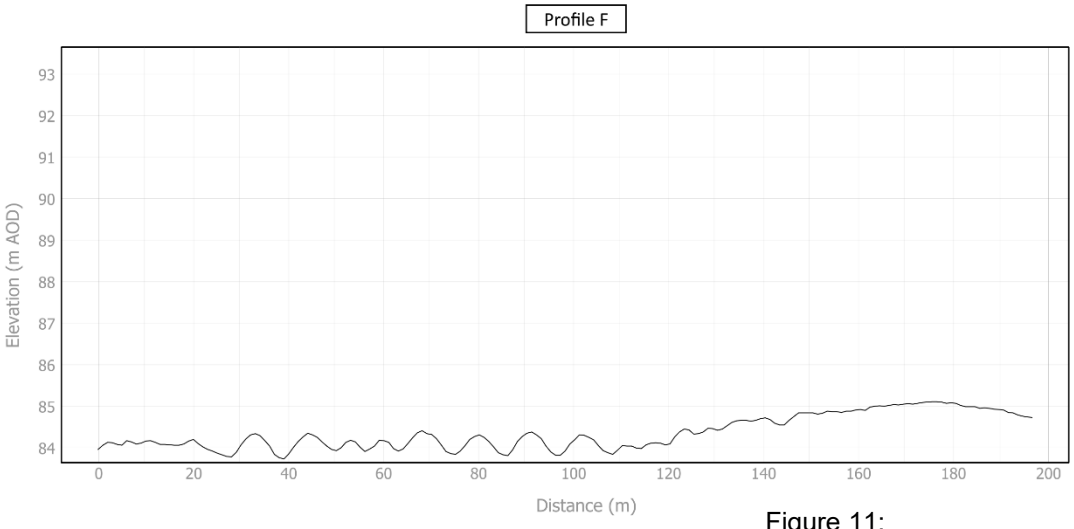


Figure 11:
Southern Area 6 detail and transects.

9.0 Conclusion

The investigations of the fields flanking Burroughs Road indicate that the site has been subject to continuous agricultural use from the medieval period onwards, with multiple areas of ridge-and-furrow cultivation identified across the landscape.

North of Burroughs Road the medieval agricultural features were initially identified as faint magnetic linear variation (Whittingham, 2024). The evaluation confirmed that in the west of Area 1 they lie on a generally west northwest – east southeast alignment, similar to that observed in Area 2 and the eastern edge of Area 1. In the centre-east of Area 1 the furrows revealed in the trenches lay on an almost perpendicular north northeast- south southwest alignment. The natural valley running north-south through the centre of Area 1 may partially define this change in orientation, and the change may represent an alternative strategy in land management in the medieval open field system. There was no overlapping or apparent phasing in the furrows revealed in the trenches north of Burroughs Road, which indicates these features are the relic of single phase of agricultural activity, with the features being reinforced by regular recutting without any significant changes to the way these fields were being managed over a prolonged period. The remaining furrows were generally shallow and relatively evenly spaced (8-10m apart), both indicative of a single phase of use. That the magnetic variation left by theses furrows is faint is likely due to their shallow depths, the similarities in the “fill” of the furrows with the modern topsoil, and the impacts of modern mechanical ploughing which has removed all traces of earthworks corresponding with these buried features in this part of the site.

Other magnetic variation observed in the geophysical survey results related to geological variation observed in the trenches. This includes the colluvium that followed a topographic valley descending roughly N-S through the middle of Area 1; this valley continues south of Burroughs Road to the brook, flattening out as it approaches the waterway suggesting it may the an ancient feature. In Area 2, the current landowner has deposited hardcore and other waste material, partially to consolidate and assist in the drainage of this clayey field, which has resulted in the strong dipolar/bipolar responses seen here. Modern hardcore and ironwork were among the debris noted on the surface of this field and around Trenches 40-57 corroborating this.

No evidence for earlier (pre-medieval) activity was identified at the site, and the substantial colluvial deposits within the valley appear to have resulted from natural slope processes rather than human occupation. The absence of artefactual material within these deposits reinforces the interpretation that this part of the landscape remained largely undeveloped outside of the medieval agricultural activity.

Modern activity including hardcore / rubbish dumping, drainage installation, and recently removed field boundaries accounted for the few non-agricultural features that were encountered. This activity may also be connected to the use of the eastern half of Area 1, the western edge of Area 2, Area 7 and the field outside of the site boundary to the east of this as allotments during and following WWII.

The earthwork survey produced similar results, showing ridge-and-furrow earthworks across all three of the surveyed areas. These are consistent with medieval – early post-medieval open-field cultivation. The consistent spacing, straight alignments, and adaptation to topography indicate a single broad phase of agricultural use. The earthworks respect each other and natural landscape features also indicating a single phase of activity, albeit probably a prolonged phase. No evidence was identified for earlier phases of land use or a reorganisation/migration of the agricultural fields in either the evaluation or the topographic survey.

Overall, the evaluation trenching and earthwork survey demonstrates that the site has low potential for significant archaeological remains pre-dating the medieval period. The landscape appears to have functioned primarily as agricultural ground. This is demonstrated through the lack of pre-furrow archaeology encountered during the evaluation, and the apparent single phase of earthworks and buried furrow features, with no evidence of adjustment / migration of features within the landscape.

These features are part of a wider agricultural landscape that can be identified through assessment of LiDAR, aerial photographs and cropmarks. LiDAR (Figure 12) shows earthworks within and around the site, including the Scheduled Ratby (Bury) Camp (List ID 1005079, outlined pink), the Iron Age hillfort between Ratby and Kirby Grange, where activity continued into the Roman period; further Roman features have been found at Holywell Farm close to the southeast corner of the hillfort, indicating the natural spring here was of significance in the later prehistoric and Roman landscape. Despite the hillfort and sparse Romano-British features revealed during investigations of land immediately north of the site (Brown, 2024), no pre-medieval remains have been found during this phase of investigations at Burroughs Road, but the possibility of Romano-British remains should not be ruled out entirely.

Figure 12: LiDAR (1m DTM) of the fields west of Ratby. Scale as indicated.

The LiDAR survey indicates the ridge and furrow in this part of the landscape was concentrated along the banks of the brook that meanders west-east to the south of the site. Ridge and furrow earthworks in the fields adjacent to the brook appear to have survived better than those further away, which might indicate the medieval field system was focused along its banks, or alternatively the risk of flooding / topography has meant these waterside fields have been reserved for grazing and seasonal activity rather than subject to modern ploughing.

Either way, it is apparent from the way the ridge and furrow respect the water channels that they were utilised to divide the medieval landscape. Within the project it has not been possible to identify any obvious headlands or lynchets, and it seems likely that natural features were being utilised to define areas within the common fields. Study of the earthworks within and around the site shows they have the slight serpentine "S" plan that is typical of medieval farming, produced when a slow curve was ploughed to assist with turning it at the end of the strip.

Worthy of note is that within the Scheduled hillfort to the west of the site there are further ridge and furrow earthworks. In the western half of the monument the parallel linear earthworks are much closer together (estimated 6m between furrows as opposed to the roughly 8-10m seen within the current project) and on a different alignment to those in the eastern half (which are also 8-10m in width); this change in spacing is indicative of different phases of this agricultural process. Narrower spacing between furrows is commonly indicative of later medieval – early post-medieval ploughing, achieved as a result of changes and evolution in agricultural machinery and methods in this period (Historic England, 2018).

Further furrows have been found in the wider landscape, including north of Markfield Road (450m north of the site; Hunt, 2020; Katsifas, 2021), where otherwise only modern activity has been identified (Richardson, 2014), and Cottage Close (700m west, Butler, 2009). Closer to the site, evaluation ahead of the Mottys Stile Way development revealed more furrows on a northeast-southwest alignment that was generally consistent with the extant furrows in the small field north of Area 1 (Trenches 29-33); as with the current site, these features were shallow and undated (Brown, 2024).

No evidence of the moated enclosure in Area 7 recorded as cropmarks on the LHER was recorded during the evaluation. No features or artefacts were found in this field to support the hypothesis of this being a medieval moated enclosure. Based on the available information, it seems likely that this squared enclosure perhaps relates to early modern activity, perhaps in connection with the use of this land as allotments during WWII and into the mid 20th century.

10.0 Effectiveness of Methodology

Intrusive evaluation was an appropriate method for gathering further information about the buried archaeological potential of the site north of Burroughs Road, allowing for assessment and testing of the geophysical survey results in this area. The evaluation has shown the geophysics is fairly reliable, with geological variation and modern disturbance accounting for anomalies outside of the furrows recorded across these fields. Based on this, the potential for archaeology other than the furrows in fields north of Burroughs Road is low.

The topographic survey has recorded the height, extent and plan of the ridge and furrow earthworks in the three targeted areas south of Burroughs Road. Earthworks here are relatively well preserved, and their relationship with natural features in the landscape has been recorded. Further earthworks and buried remains of contemporary agricultural features is anticipated across the remainder of the development area.

The body of data produced by this evaluation will be sufficient to inform the planning and development process, and will assist in the refinement of the investigative methodology for any future phases of investigation and recording at the site.

11.0 Acknowledgements

PCAS Archaeology Ltd would like to thank Lagan Homes for this commission.

12.0 References

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Appendix 1: Context Summary

Trench	***Context No.***	***Context Type***	***Description***
1	(100)	Topsoil	Mid brown-grey silty clay. Friable and relatively loose.
1	(101)	Natural	Firm grey-brown clay mudstone
2	(200)	Topsoil	Same as (100)
2	(201)	Natural	Same as (101)
3	(300)	Topsoil	Same as (100)
3	(301)	Natural	Same as (101)
4	(400)	Topsoil	Same as (100)
4	(401)	Natural	Same as (101)
5	(500)	Topsoil	Same as (100)
5	(501)	Natural	Same as (101)
6	(600)	Topsoil	Same as (100)
6	(601)	Natural	Same as (101)
7	(700)	Topsoil	Same as (100)
7	(701)	Natural	Same as (101)
8	(800)	Topsoil	Same as (100)
8	(801)	Natural	Same as (101)
9	(900)	Topsoil	Same as (100)
9	(901)	Natural	Same as (101)
10	(1000)	Topsoil	Same as (100)
10	(1001)	Natural	Same as (101)
11	(1100)	Topsoil	Same as (100)
11	(1101)	Natural	Same as (101)
12	(1200)	Topsoil	Same as (100)
12	(1201)	Natural	Same as (101)
13	(1300)	Topsoil	Same as (100)
13	(1301)	Natural	Same as (101)
14	(1400)	Topsoil	Same as (100)

14	(1401)	Natural	Same as (101)
15	(1500)	Topsoil	Same as (100)
15	(1501)	Natural	Same as (101)
16	(1600)	Topsoil	Same as (100)
16	(1601)	Natural	Same as (101)
17	(1700)	Topsoil	Same as (100)
17	(1701)	Natural	Same as (101)
18	(1800)	Topsoil	Same as (100)
18	(1801)	Colluvium	Mid red-brown silt colluvial deposit. Identified at the base of the valley.
18	(1802)	Natural	Same as (101)
19	(1900)	Topsoil	Same as (100)
19	(1901)	Natural	Same as (101)
20	(2000)	Topsoil	Same as (100)
20	(2001)	Colluvium	Same as (1801)
20	(2002)	Natural	Same as (101)
21	(2100)	Topsoil	Same as (100)
21	(2101)	Colluvium	Same as (1801)
21	(2102)	Natural	Same as (101)
22	(2200)	Topsoil	Same as (100)
22	(2201)	Natural	Same as (101)
23	(2300)	Topsoil	Same as (100)
23	(2301)	Colluvium	Same as (1801)
23	(2302)	Natural	Same as (101)
24	(2400)	Topsoil	Same as (100)
24	(2401)	Colluvium	Same as (1801)
24	(2402)	Natural	Same as (101)
25	(2500)	Topsoil	Same as (100)
25	(2501)	Colluvium	Same as (1801)
25	(2502)	Natural	Same as (101)
26	(2600)	Topsoil	Same as (100)

26	(2601)	Natural	Same as (101)
27	(2700)	Topsoil	Same as (100)
27	(2701)	Natural	Same as (101)
28	(2800)	Topsoil	Same as (100)
28	(2801)	Colluvium	Same as (1801)
28	(2802)	Natural	Same as (101)
29	(2900)	Topsoil	Same as (100)
29	(2901)	Natural	Same as (101)
30	(3000)	Topsoil	Same as (100)
30	(3001)	Natural	Same as (101)
31	(3100)	Topsoil	Same as (100)
31	(3101)	Natural	Same as (101)
32	(3200)	Topsoil	Same as (100)
32	(3201)	Natural	Same as (101)
33	(3300)	Topsoil	Same as (100)
33	(3301)	Natural	Same as (101)
34	(3400)	Topsoil	Same as (100)
34	(3401)	Natural	Same as (101)
35	(3500)	Topsoil	Same as (100)
35	(3501)	Natural	Same as (101)
36	(3600)	Topsoil	Same as (100)
36	(3601)	Natural	Same as (101)
37	(3700)	Topsoil	Same as (100)
37	(3701)	Natural	Same as (101)
38	(3800)	Topsoil	Same as (100)
38	(3801)	Natural	Same as (101)
39	(3900)	Topsoil	Same as (100)
39	(3901)	Natural	Same as (101)
40	(4000)	Topsoil	Same as (100)
40	(4001)	Natural	Same as (101)

41	(4100)	Topsoil	Same as (100)
41	(4101)	Natural	Same as (101)
42	(4200)	Topsoil	Same as (100)
42	(4201)	Natural	Same as (101)
43	(4300)	Topsoil	Same as (100)
43	(4301)	Natural	Same as (101)
44	(4400)	Topsoil	Same as (100)
44	(4401)	Natural	Same as (101)
45	(4500)	Topsoil	Same as (100)
45	(4501)	Natural	Same as (101)
46	(4600)	Topsoil	Same as (100)
46	(4601)	Natural	Same as (101)
47	(4700)	Topsoil	Same as (100)
47	(4701)	Natural	Same as (101)
48	(4800)	Topsoil	Same as (100)
48	(4801)	Natural	Same as (101)
49	(4900)	Topsoil	Same as (100)
49	(4901)	Natural	Same as (101)
50	(5000)	Topsoil	Same as (100)
50	(5001)	Natural	Same as (101)
51	(5100)	Topsoil	Same as (100)
51	(5101)	Natural	Same as (101)
52	(5200)	Topsoil	Same as (100)
52	(5201)	Natural	Same as (101)
53	(5300)	Topsoil	Same as (100)
53	(5301)	Natural	Same as (101)
54	(5400)	Topsoil	Same as (100)
54	(5401)	Natural	Same as (101)
55	(5500)	Topsoil	Same as (100)
55	(5501)	Natural	Same as (101)

56	(5600)	Topsoil	Same as (100)
56	(5601)	Natural	Same as (101)
57	(5700)	Topsoil	Same as (100)
57	(5701)	Natural	Same as (101)
58	(5800)	Topsoil	Same as (100)
58	(5801)	Natural	Same as (101)
59	(5900)	Topsoil	Same as (100)
59	(5901)	Natural	Same as (101)
60	(6000)	Topsoil	Same as (100)
60	(6001)	Natural	Same as (101)

Appendix 2: Ridge and furrow photographs

These images are a selection of the photographs taken of the earthworks surveyed in Areas 6, 9 & 10 on the south side of Burroughs Road

Plate 16: Area 6 looking southeast

Plate 17: Area 6 looking east

Plate 18: Area 6 looking northeast. Note the tower of Ratby's Church of St. Philip & St. James on the right

Plate 19: Area 6 looking northwest

Plate 20: Area 9 looking east

Plate 21: Area 10 looking southwest

Plate 22: Area 10 looking southeast. The brook lies just beyond the hedge boundary on the right

Appendix 3: OASIS

OASIS ID (UID): preconst3-539433

Project Name: Evaluation, Analytical Earthwork Survey at Burroughs Road, Ratby

Activity type: Evaluation, Analytical Earthwork Survey

Sitecode(s): RBRE 25

Project Identifier(s): Land at Burroughs Road, Ratby, Leicester, Leicestershire, LE6 0XZ

Planning Id: 24/00914/OUT

Reason for Investigation: Planning: Between application and determination

Organisation Responsible for work: PCAS Archaeology Ltd

Project Dates: 03-Nov-2025 - 21-Nov-2025

HER: Leicestershire HER

HER Identifiers: [no data]

Project Methodology: The evaluation involved the investigation of sixty-one 30m x 1.80m trenches that were positioned to scrutinise the results of geophysical survey in Areas 1 & 2. This constituted a 4% sample of these areas. The earthwork survey targeted three parcels of land where the LHER records ridge and furrow earthworks; identified as being in good condition. Topographic surveys determine the relative locations of points on the ground surface by measuring horizontal distances, differences in elevation and directions. The survey was carried out in accordance with guidelines published by Historic England (2nd edition, 2017).

Project Results: The evaluation results indicate that the site has been subject to continuous agricultural use from the medieval period onwards, with multiple phases of ridge-and-furrow cultivation identified across the landscape. The differing orientations of this - east–west in the west and north–south in the east - suggest that the dry valley formed a long-standing boundary between at least two historic field systems. A third alignment recorded in Area 2 further evidences a complex agricultural history, with field divisions shifting over time in response to changing land-use practices. No evidence for earlier (pre-medieval) activity was identified at the site, and the substantial colluvial deposits within the valley appear to have resulted from natural slope processes rather than human occupation. The absence of artefactual material within these deposits reinforces the interpretation that this part of the landscape remained largely undeveloped. Modern activity, including dumping, drainage installation, and recent field boundaries, accounted for the few non-agricultural features that were encountered. The earthwork survey produced similar results, showing ridge-and-furrow earthworks across all three areas. These are consistent with late medieval or post-medieval open-field cultivation. The consistent spacing, straight alignments, and adaptation to topography indicate a single broad phase of agricultural use. No evidence was identified for earlier phases of land use. Overall, the evaluation trenching and earthwork survey demonstrates that the site has low potential for significant archaeological remains pre-dating the medieval period. The landscape appears to have functioned primarily as agricultural ground.

Keywords:

Archive:

Documentary Archive, Digital Archive - to be deposited with Leicestershire County Council Museums;

Reports in OASIS:

Bell, T., (2025). Evaluation, Analytical Earthwork Survey at Burroughs Road, Ratby. Saxilby: PCAS Archaeology Ltd.