LAND OFF BRASCOTE LANE, NEWBOLD VERDON

Written Scheme of Investigation for Archaeological Evaluation

Pre-Application

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Newbold Verdon TT WSI
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1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Site Location and Description

1.1.1 The proposed development site, also referred to in this WSI as the Site, is on the southern edge of Newbold Verdon, Leicestershire. It comprises c.15.3ha, centred at NGR SK 4471 0309 (Figure 1) and is bounded by hedgerows and intermittent mature trees on all sides.

1.1.2 The Site is being proposed for residential development, with new built development focused in the northern half of the Site, substantial areas of open space retained as a new Country Park in the centre of the site, with land allocated for a new burial ground at the southern end of the site.

1.1.3 As part of pre-application discussions with Leicestershire County Council's Historic & Natural Environment Team is has been agreed that further archaeological evaluation of the Site will be required to allow an informed assessment of any planning application's archaeological implications. A geophysical survey was undertaken in 2021[1] as an initial stage of evaluation. A programme of archaeological trial trenching is now proposed to provide additional information on the extent & nature of the archaeological resource within the Site.

1.2 Archaeological Background

1.2.1 The British Geological Survey 1:50,000 mapping records the solid geology of the Site as mudstone of the Gunthorpe Member. This is overlain by superficial deposits of glaciofluvial sand & gravel in the western half of the site, and diamicton in the eastern half of the site. (mapapps.bgs.ac.uk/geologyofbritain/home – *accessed 01.11.2021*).

1.2.2 The archaeological background to the Site and surrounding area has been reviewed in an archaeological desk-based assessment and Heritage Statement in 2011[2] , and further evaluated through the geophysical survey at the end of that year.

1.2.3 The Heritage Statement established that there is currently one archaeological site recorded within the Site boundary: a rectangular ditched enclosure (HER ref MLE2975) identified from aerial photos, and loosely dated to the Iron Age/Roman period on the basis of a small number of pottery sherds from fieldwalking in the same area in 1978.

1.2.4 HER data for a surrounding 1km radius search area recorded prehistoric (Bronze Age) settlement remains (HER ref MLE19856) around 100m south of the Site and a possible Bronze Age barrow (MLE19855) 130m west of these; and further Bronze Age/Iron Age pit alignments and other linear or enclosure cropmarks between 450m and 650m from the Site.

1.2.5 In contrast, there is little recorded additional Roman archaeology within the 1km search area, the only known sites being the possible enclosure within the Site, and a Roman period pottery kiln and associated remains (MLE23206) discovered around 200m south-west of the Site.

1.2.6 The HER data recorded no sites or finds of Early Saxon date within the search area. However subsequent pre-application consultation with Leicestershire County Council's Historic & Natural Environment Team in January 2022 highlighted additional early Saxon discoveries from archaeological investigation within an adjacent quarry site to the south-west – as yet not fully reported, and not included in the HER data, but understood to include settlement evidence in the form of one or more grubenhauser / sunken-featured buildings.

[1] MOLA: Archaeological Geophysical Survey on land off Brascote Lane, Newbold Verdon. November-December 2021. Ref 21/109

[2] RPS: Land off Brascote Lane, Newbold Verdon. Heritage Statement Ref 27676

1.2.7 From the later Saxon period onwards, and through the Medieval and Post-Medieval periods, the development site area lay in the agricultural hinterland around the village settlement of Newbold (Verdon), Brascote, and Naneby and is thought to have remained undeveloped cultivated land.

1.2.8 The quality of the 2021 geophysical survey of the Site was affected to some degree by 'noise' probably resulting from small metal fragments present in green waste spread across the field, but probable archaeological anomalies were not completely obscured and were detectable. The survey identified a three-sided rectilinear enclosure, open to the north-east, which lies towards the western side of the survey area. This feature, measuring 60m across, corresponds with the cropmark enclosure recorded by the HER (MLE2975). Although the suggested Iron Age / Roman date of the enclosure was noted, the survey report also highlights the feature's similarities with open-sided rectilinear enclosures of earlier, Bronze Age, date.

1.2.9 The other archaeological features identified in the geophysical survey were a scatter of possible pits and linear ditches. The ditches may represent parts of former field boundaries, although only two of them match with boundaries recorded on late 19th- and 20th-century maps of the survey area

1.2.10 The geophysical survey results are included in Figure 3, with the 19th century OS map shown in Figure 4.

1.3 Scope of Document

1.3.1 This document forms a project design of 'Written Scheme of Investigation' for a pre-application programme of archaeological trial trenching, intended to evaluate the archaeological potential of the development site.

1.3.2 The archaeological work detailed in the WSI will be undertaken by a professional archaeological contractor, who will be directed by RPS. This document presents the strategy and methodology by which the team will undertake the archaeological works.

1.4 Aims and standards

1.4.1 The aim of the programme of current archaeological trial trenching works will be to further characterise the archaeological interest within the Site, and provide information to allow an informed assessment of the likely archaeological implications of the intended future planning application for residential development of the Site.

1.4.2 The aims will be realised through the achievement of the following specific objectives:

- To test the interpretation of the cropmark enclosure and the features identifiable in the geophysical survey of the Site
- To establish the location, extent, date, character, condition, significance and quality of any other archaeological remains within the Site
- To assess the artefactual and environmental potential of any archaeological deposits encountered
- To produce a suitable written report documenting and discussing the trial trenching findings
- To produce a site archive for deposition with an appropriate museum and to provide information for accession to the Leicestershire HER

1.4.3 Assessment of the heritage significance of any identified archaeological assets will consider and contribute to the research questions and objectives outlined in the current East Midlands Regional Research Framework as appropriate.

1.4.4 This WSI has been designed in accordance with current best archaeological practice and the appropriate national and regional standards and guidelines including:

- Code of Conduct (Chartered Institute for Archaeology, updated 2020);
- Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Field Evaluation (Chartered Institute for Archaeologists, updated October 2020)

2 STRATEGY

2.1 Current Phase of Trial Works

2.1.1 In order that the investigation supplies information of the required quality, all work will be undertaken in line with the Code of Conduct, and the Standards and Guidance issued by the Chartered Institute of Field Archaeologists (CI*f*A).

2.1.2 The trial trenching programme will comprise excavation of **sixty-nine trenches** – each 40m long, intended to corroborate the earlier aerial photo and geophysical survey results, and to test other, apparently blank areas, within the development site.

2.1.3 Trenches have been positioned on a semi-regular gridded layout to coverage across proposed residential parts and other areas of the likely significant development impact (e.g. attenuation/balancing ponds, allotments, and the future burial ground), and a looser grid within the proposed country park area. The trenching strategy provides an approximate 4% sample coverage of impact areas, and a reduced sample over areas proposed for retention as undeveloped country park.

2.1.4 A layout plan illustrating the proposed locations of trial trenches is shown in Figure 2. The trenching layout is shown overlain on the geophysical survey results in Figure 3, and on the 1885 OS County Series 6" map in Figure 4.

2.1.5 The fieldwork results will be detailed in an illustrated report, to be provided to Leicestershire County Council's Historic & Natural Environment Team. Copies of the report will be issued to the Leicestershire HER and uploaded to the Archaeology Data Service's OASIS portal.

2.1.6 The trial trenching report will be reviewed with the county council Historic & Natural Environment Team and the LPA to establish the acceptability of the Site for the proposed residential development, and any archaeological constraints on the developability of the Site. The report will form part of the documentation supporting any future planning application.

2.1.7 A project archive, including finds and records, will be prepared and deposited with an appropriate local museum or archive depository.

3 METHODS STATEMENT

3.1 Pre-commencement

3.1.1 RPS will inform Leicestershire County Council's Planning Archaeologist (the 'Planning Archaeologist') at least one week in advance of the commencement of fieldwork.

3.1.2 The relevant local receiving museum will be contacted prior to the start of fieldwork and the necessary Accession Number obtained & archive deposition forms completed.

3.2 Fieldwork Methods

3.2.1 Each trial trench will be located using survey-grade GPS. Trench locations will be scanned with a Cable Avoidance Tool (CAT) prior to excavation.

3.2.2 The precise locations of the trenches may be altered to take into account local ground conditions and constraints. Where unexpected constraints (e.g. active services) are encountered minor variations to trench layout may usually be made without consulting the Planning Archaeologist. However, any substantive changes to the agreed strategy or trench plan will be agreed before implementation.

3.2.3 Topsoil and overburden will be removed by mechanical excavator using a toothless ditching bucket (minimum 1.8m wide), under continuous archaeological supervision, in spits of no more than 0.1m. The spoil generated during the trial trenching will be mounded away from the edges of each trench – topsoil and subsoil will be mounded separately on either side of the trench. Mechanical excavation will cease at either undisturbed natural deposits or the top of archaeological deposits. The nature of these deposits will be assessed by hand excavation.

3.2.4 Upcast and spoil from mechanical excavation will be scanned by eye and by metal detector to aid the recovery of topsoil artefacts. Metal detecting of trenches will be carried out to identify and maximise the recovery of metal artefacts.

3.2.5 Each trench will be cleaned by hand as necessary to assist the identification and interpretation of exposed archaeological features. The nature of identified features will be examined by sample excavation sufficient to determine date, nature, extent and condition and their environmental and scientific potential. All exposed features will be investigated. Discrete pit/post-hole – type features will be half- or quarter-sectioned; as a minimum (where possible) a 1m wide section of each linear feature will be excavated by hand.

3.2.6 Trenches will characterise the full archaeological sequence down to undisturbed deposits. It is also expected that all exposed features and key relationships will be investigated in accordance with agreed sampling strategies. Selective excavation will only be permissible in agreement with the Planning Archaeologist, with professional judgement and site monitoring visits used to inform strategies.

3.2.7 Should the excavation of the trenches reach 1.2m in depth (or limit of safe working depth) without natural geology being encountered, a machine dug sondage will be excavated in order to establish the depth of natural geology.

3.2.8 All excavation by machine and hand will be undertaken with a view to avoid damaging archaeological deposits or features which appear worthy of preservation in situ or which might require more detailed investigation than feasible within the limitations of trial trenching. Where structures, features or finds appear to merit preservation in situ, they will be adequately protected from deterioration. Should any unexpected discoveries of significant or complex remains be revealed The Planning Archaeologist will be notified at the earliest opportunity.

3.2.9 The trenches will be recorded at a suitable appropriate scale (1:100, 1:50 or 1:20) by digital planning (where of resultant plans and illustrations are of a sufficient standard) or measured drawing, and photography, and will be located to the Ordnance Survey National Grid. The deposits encountered will be described fully on individual context recording sheets. The sections of excavated archaeological features will also be recorded by measured drawing at an appropriate scale (normally 1:10). Spot heights and those of individual features will be recorded relative to Ordnance Datum.

3.2.10 A photographic record utilising high resolution digital data capture will be maintained during the course of the fieldwork.
Photography will include:

- the site prior to commencement of fieldwork;
- the site during work, showing specific stages of fieldwork;
- the layout of archaeological features within each trench;
- individual features and, where appropriate, their sections;
- groups of features where their relationship is important;
- and, where appropriate, rectified digital photography.

3.2.11 All artefacts will be treated in accordance with UKIC guidelines, First Aid for Finds (1998). All finds will be bagged and labelled according to the individual deposit from which they were recovered, ready for later cleaning and analysis.

3.2.12 If finds are made that might constitute 'Treasure' under the definition of the Treasure Act (1996), these will if possible be archaeologically excavated and removed to a safe place. Such finds will also be reported immediately to the Portable Antiquities Scheme's Find Liaison Officer (FLO) and the local Coroner (within 14 days, in accordance with the Act). Should it not be possible to remove the finds that day suitable security will be arranged.

3.2.13 The environmental sampling strategy will include the sampling of deposits for the retrieval and assessment of the preservation conditions and potential for analysis of all biological remains, and will be developed in consultation with an environmental specialist and the Planning Archaeologist. The environmental specialist will conduct or commission, as appropriate, programmes of scientific investigation in conjunction with the fieldwork, the results of which will be presented in the final publication or report. All environmental work will be undertaken in accordance with current Historic England guidelines (see Environmental Archaeology: A guide to the theory and practice of methods, from sampling and recovery to post-excavation, Historic England 2011).

3.2.14 Sample sizes will normally be 20-40 litres unless the deposit is smaller in volume. Samples will be directed to a representative range of context type from each phase, and examine:

- Survival of material
- Key archaeological contexts
- Potential

3.2.15 A suitable specialist will, if necessary, make a site visit to advise on deposits suitable for environmental sampling and/or geoarchaeological assessment.

3.2.16 Animal bones will be collected and studied in accordance with Historic England 2014. Assemblages, or sub-samples of them, must be assessed by a recognised specialist. Following assessment, appropriate samples will be analysed.

3.2.17 Sampling methods for macrofossils (e.g. shells, seeds, insects) and microfossils (e.g. pollen, foraminifera) must follow the document Environmental Archaeology: A Guide to the Theory and Practice of Methods from Sampling and Recovery to Post-excavation, Second edition (Historic England 2011). Charred plant samples will be wet sieved with flotation using a 0.5mm mesh. All residues will be checked.

3.2.18 Should waterlogged deposits be encountered they will be left in situ until such time as further mitigation works are required. If this is not possible then further consultation with a suitable specialist will determine methods for recovery.

3.2.19 Samples will be taken for scientific dating (principally radiocarbon dating), where dating by artefacts is insecure and where dating is necessary for development of the subsequent mitigation strategy. Where in situ timbers are found to survive in good condition, samples will be taken for dendrochronological determination following procedures presented in the Historic England document 'Dendrochronology: guidelines on producing and interpreting dendrochronological dates'.

3.2.20 Where there is evidence for industrial activity, macroscopic technological residues (or a sample of them) should be collected by hand. Separate samples (c.10ml) should be collected for micro-slags (hammer-scale and spherical droplets). Excavation and sampling of such deposits will be in accordance with the Centre for Archaeology Guideline on Archaeometallurgy (Historic England 2001).

3.2.21 Any human remains encountered will be cleaned with minimal disturbance, recorded and left in situ and only removed if necessary. The contractor will comply with all statutory consents and licences under the Disused Burial Grounds (Amendment) Act, 1981 or other Burial Acts regarding the exhumation and interment of human remains. The archaeological contractor will comply with all reasonable requests of interested parties as to the method of removal, re-interment or disposal of the remains or associated items. Every effort will be made, at all times, not to cause offence to any interested parties. The Planning Archaeologist and the local coroner will be informed immediately if human remains are discovered.

3.2.22 The findings of the trial trenching will be reviewed with the Planning Archaeologist during meeting(s) on site.

3.2.23 Upon completion of the trial trenching, excavated trenches will be backfilled with arisings and loosely compacted. Trenches will not be backfilled without prior agreement with the Planning Archaeologist.

3.3 Reporting & Archiving

3.3.1 Both the Planning Archaeologist and the relevant museum curator will be informed in writing of the completion of fieldwork. The archaeological fieldwork contractor will also provide an estimate of the size of the archive and programme for deposition. The archive will be prepared in accordance with the museum guidelines.

3.3.2 Post excavation work will comprise the following:

- checking of drawn and written records during and on completion of fieldwork;
- production of a stratigraphic matrix of the archaeological deposits and features present on the site, if appropriate;
- cataloguing of photographic material and labelling of slides that will be mounted on appropriate hangers;
- cleaning, marking, bagging and labelling of finds according to the individual deposits from which they were recovered. Any finds requiring specialist treatment and conservation will be sent for appropriate treatment.
- Finds will be identified and assessed by appropriate specialists;

3.3.3 Unless otherwise agreed with the Planning Archaeologist, a report detailing the findings of the archaeological works will be prepared within four weeks of the completion of site works (dependant on receiving specialist reports) and will consist of:

- cover page;
- list of contents, figures, tables, etc;
- non-technical summary;
- introduction;
- planning background;
- archaeological and historical background;
- methodology;

- results;
- discussion;
- conclusion;
- OASIS cover sheet.

3.3.4 The format and contents of the report will conform to the requirements of the Planning Archaeologist and to published regional Standards.

3.3.5 The project archive will be prepared according to the recommendations in Guidelines for the Preparation of Excavation Archives for long-term storage (UKIC 1990); and the Archaeological Archives Forum's Guide to best practice in creation, compilation, transfer and curation for archaeological archives (AAF 2007).

3.3.6 The project archive will be deposited with an appropriate store in accordance with the terms and conditions which are to be agreed with the store in advance of deposition. The appointed contractor will provide evidence that they have liaised with the depository and are aware of its requirements.

3.3.7 A bound copy and a digital copy of all reports arising from the work will be deposited with Leicestershire HER. On acceptance of the final report the OASIS record will be updated.

4 TIMETABLE & PERSONNEL

4.1 Timetable

4.1.1 The trial trenching programme will start on 14 February 2022.

4.1.2 The fieldwork programme is anticipated to take approximately 15-20 days on-site.

4.1.3 Preparation of the final report will take up to 6 weeks following the completion of fieldwork.

4.1.4 Archive deposition with be within six months of fieldwork completion (subject to the archives being open and available to receive depositions.

4.1.5 Any revision to the timeframe will be agreed in writing and communicated to all stakeholders.

4.2 Personnel

4.2.1 The fieldwork, post-excavation and reporting will be undertaken by a professional archaeological team from ULAS

4.2.2 ULAS's work will be managed by Dr Gavin Speed MCI*f*A. Details of the project team composition and CVs for key team members can be provided to the Planning Archaeologist on request.

4.2.3 Myk Flitcroft MCI*f*A of RPS, will manage implementation of the programme of works on behalf of the developers.

4.2.4 Both ULAS and RPS are Registered Organisations with the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists.

5 MONITORING

5.1 Aims

5.1.1 The aims of monitoring are to ensure that the archaeological works are undertaken within the limits set by the project design and to the satisfaction of the Planning Archaeology (on behalf of the Local Planning Authority) and the developer client.

5.2 Monitoring on behalf of the LPA

5.2.1 The Planning Archaeologist will be given at least 1 week's notice of the date of commencement of the archaeological programme, and will be free to visit at any reasonable time to monitor the implementation of the works on behalf of the local planning authority.

5.2.2 The Planning Archaeologist will also be responsible for considering any changes to the specification of works; any such alterations should be agreed in writing with the relevant parties prior to commencement of on-site works or at the earliest available opportunity.

5.3 Monitoring on behalf of the developers

5.3.1 The archaeological aspects of the project will be managed on behalf of the developers by Myk Flitcroft with assistance from other RPS staff as required.

6 INSURANCE & HEALTH AND SAFETY

6.1 Insurance

6.1.1 The archaeological contractor will produce evidence of Public Liability Insurance to the minimum value of £5m and Professional Indemnity Insurance to the minimum of £2m.

6.2 Health and Safety

6.2.1 All works will be in compliance with the Health and Safety at Work Act (1974) and all applicable regulations and Codes of Practice.

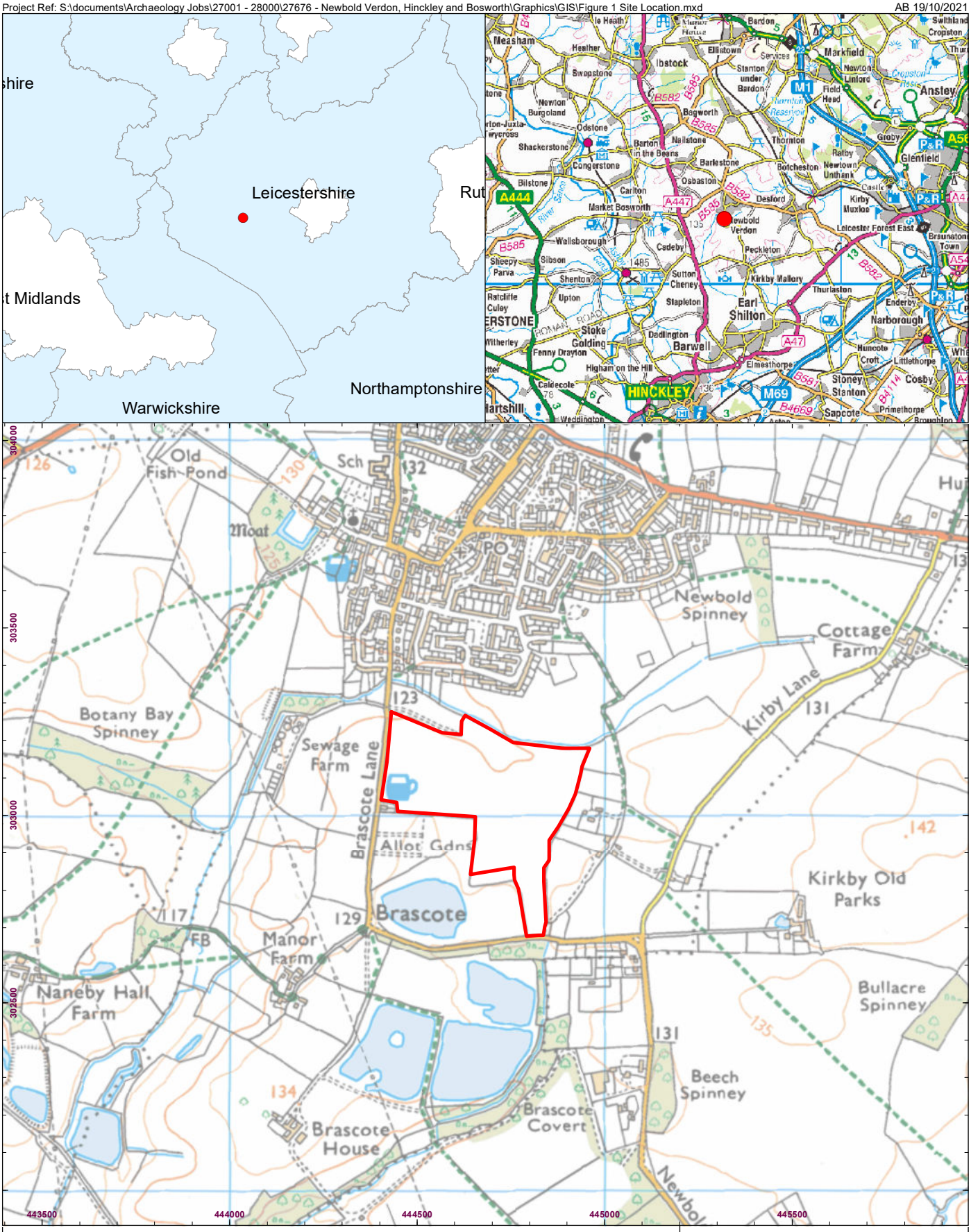
6.2.2 All archaeological staff will undertake their operations in accordance with safe working practices.

6.2.3 A site-specific risk assessment will be undertaken and recorded prior to the commencement of work on site.

6.2.4 A continuous process of dynamic risk assessment will be undertaken and if significant hazards are identified a specific risk assessment will be undertaken and recorded. Control measures will be implemented as required in response to specific hazards.

6.2.5 Safe working will take priority over the desire to record archaeological features or remains, and where it is considered that recording is dangerous, any such features or remains will be recorded by photography, at a safe distance.

FIGURES



Site Boundary

N

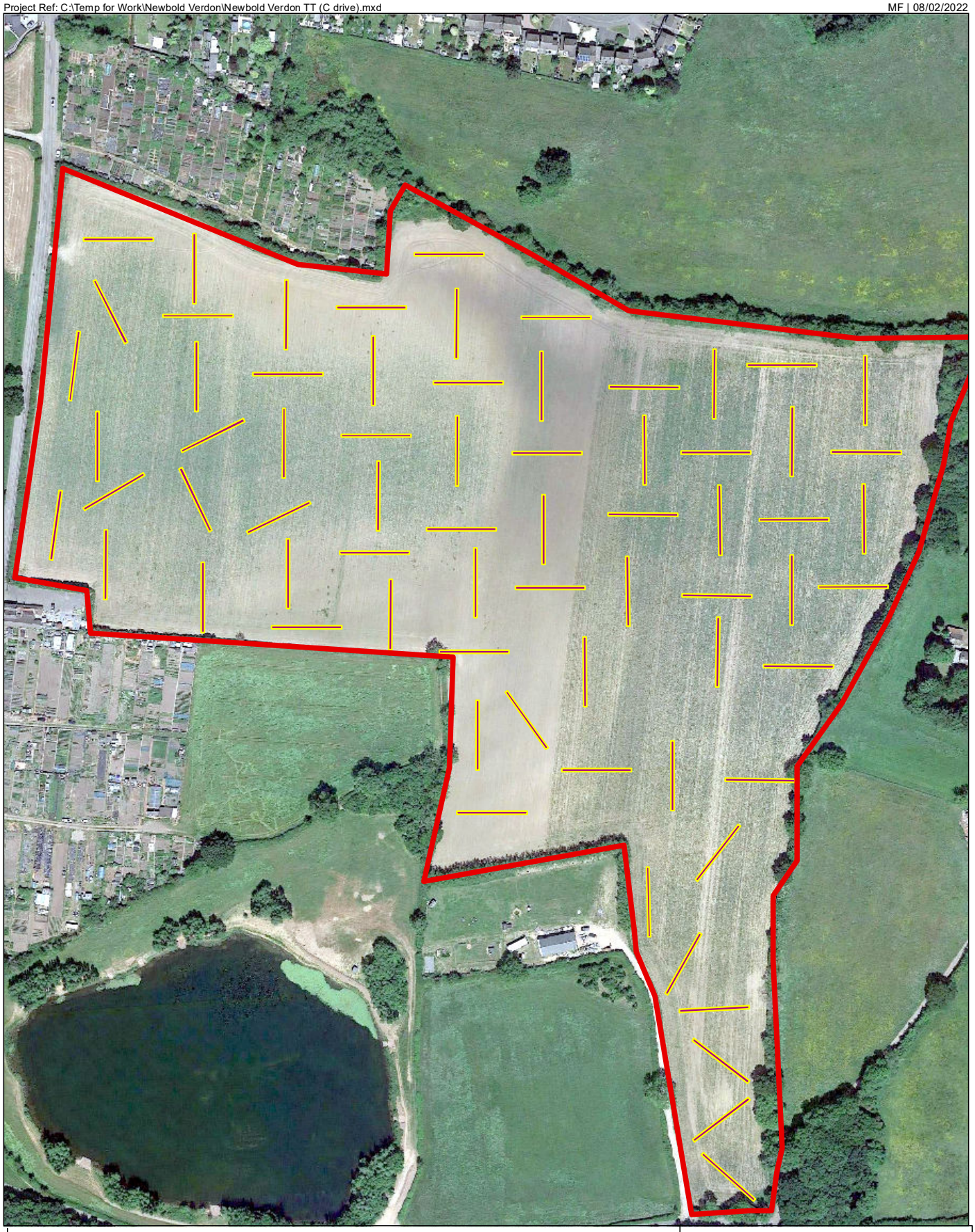
0 140 280 420m

Scale at A4: 1:14,000

MAKING COMPLEX EASY

Figure 1

Site Location



Site

40m Trench

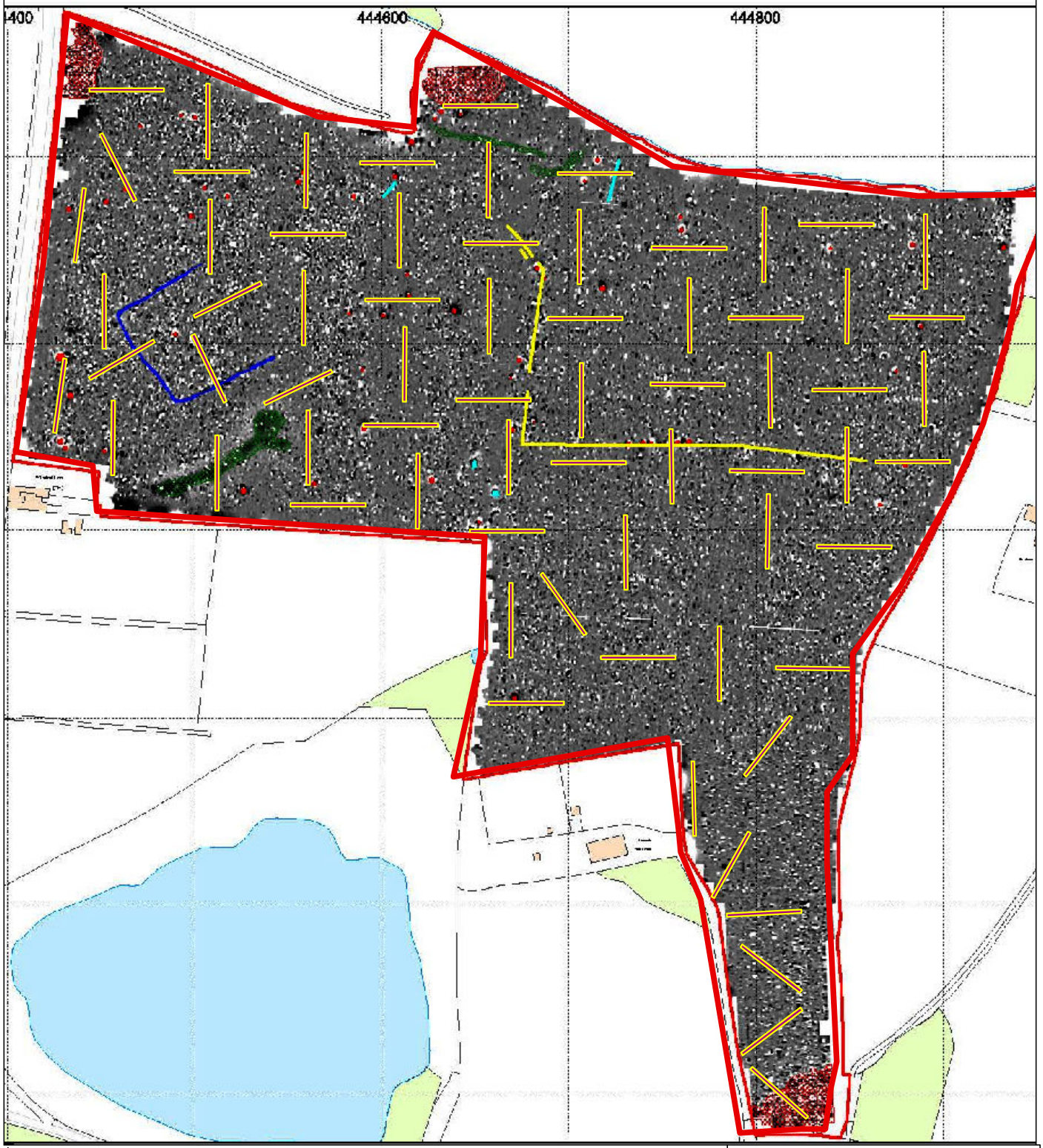
N

0 30 60 90 m

Scale at A4: 1:3,000

MAKING COMPLEX EASY

Figure 2:
Trial Trench layout



Site

40m Trench

N

0 30 60 90 m

Scale at A4: 1:3,000

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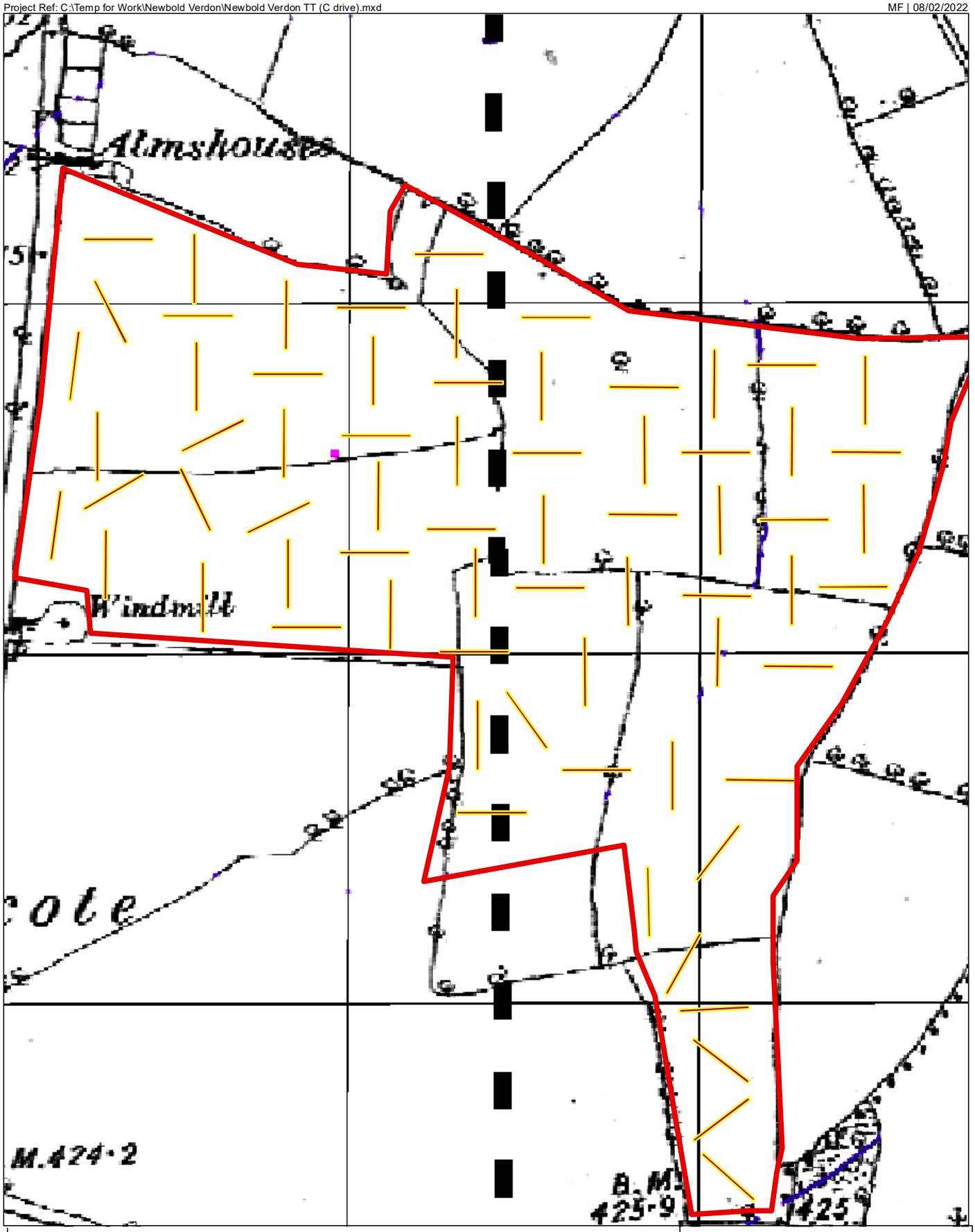
Figure 3:
Trial Trench layout
overlain on geophysics results



Site

40m Trench

N

0 30 60 90 m

Scale at A4: 1:3,000

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Figure 4:
Trial Trench layout
overlain on 1885 OS

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