ARCHAEOLOGICAL MITIGATION REPORT:

STRIP, MAP AND RECORD ON LAND AT WHITE HOUSE FARM, BURBAGE, LEICESTERSHIRE

Planning Reference: APP/K2420/W/22/311038, 20/01012/OUT
NGR: SP 44221 91826
AAL Site Code: BUWF26
Museum Accession Number: X.A67.2026
OASIS Reference Number: allenarc1-546573



Report prepared for Tetra Tech
on behalf of Cameron Homes

By
Allen Archaeology Ltd
Report Number AAL2026165

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Allenarchaeology

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*Cover image: Working shot of excavation of Drain **1007**, looking northwest*

Executive Summary

- Tetra Tech, on behalf of Cameron Homes, commissioned Allen Archaeology Ltd (AAL) to undertake an archaeological scheme of works on land at White House Farm, Burbage, Leicestershire, required as final mitigation for a proposed residential development.

- Previous archaeological work at the site comprised geophysical survey and trial trench evaluation. These investigations identified ridge and furrow across part of the site, a small number of undated ditches and possible pits, and recorded a concentration of horizontally laid wooden poles or branches towards the centre of the development area. The wider archaeological background includes prehistoric, Roman and medieval activity in the surrounding landscape, although the evaluation work suggested that significant remains did not extend widely across the site.

- The mitigation works comprised the machine stripping of a 20m x 20m area centred on the previously recorded wooden remains. These were shown to form part of a brushwood drain, aligned northwest to southeast, that extended beyond the limits of the excavation area in both directions. Its construction consisted of a narrow trench with bundles of unworked branches and twigs, or faggots, laid horizontally and end-to-end within the trench and then backfilled. A series of irregular features were also exposed in the mitigation area. These were investigated and determined to be tree bowls. No archaeological features, deposits or finds of significance were identified during the works beyond the brushwood drain, which may have been created during woodland clearance. Its stratigraphic position and the exceptional preservation of the wood strongly suggest that it is a relatively recent construction, dating from the post-medieval period or later.

- The investigation clarified the character of the previously identified wooden remains and demonstrated that they represented post-medieval to modern land drainage rather than earlier archaeological activity. Following a site meeting on 16th September 2026, it was agreed with the Senior Planning Archaeologist (Heritage) at Leicestershire County Council that no further work would be required on the site.

1.0 Introduction

1.1 Tetra Tech, on behalf of Cameron Homes, commissioned Allen Archaeology Ltd (AAL) to undertake an archaeological scheme of works on land at White House Farm, Burbage, Leicestershire, required as final mitigation for a proposed residential development.

1.2 The fieldwork, recording and reporting has been carried out in a manner consistent with current national guidelines, as set out in the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists '*Standard for archaeological excavation'* (CIfA 2023a), '*Universal guidance for archaeological excavation*' (CIfA 2023b) and the English Heritage document '*Management of Research Projects in the Historic Environment*' (Historic England 2015), as well as the written scheme of investigation (WSI) prepared by this company (AAL 2026).

1.3 The documentation and records generated by the evaluation will be assembled in accordance with the national guidelines in '*Archaeological Archives: A guide to best practice in creation, compilation, transfer and curation*' (AAF 2011) and regional guidelines in '*The Transfer of Archaeological Archives to Leicestershire County Council Museum Collections* (LCC 2024). The archive will be deposited with Leicester Museum under the museum accession number X.A66.2026. The digital archive will be deposited with Archaeology Data Service (ADS).

2.0 Site Location and Description

2.1 Burbage is in the administrative district of Hinckley and Bosworth, in the county of Leicestershire, *c.*18km southwest of central Leicester (Figure 1). The proposed development area is at the southeast edge of the large village, approximately 0.8km from the parish church of St Catherine, and is bounded by housing to the north, Workhouse Lane to the east and field boundaries to the south and west. The site is centred at National Grid Reference (NGR) SP 44221 91826 and rises from 110m above Ordnance Datum (aOD) at the southwest corner to 117m aOD at the north and east end of the site.

2.2 The bedrock geology comprises Mercia Mudstone Group-Mudstone, overlain in the northeast and southwest ends of the site by superficial Oadby Till Member – diamicton, with a band of Wolston Sand and Gravel through the rest of the site (https://geologyviewer.bgs.ac.uk/).

3.0 Planning Background

3.1 A planning appeal was allowed on 21st February 2023 for the '*development of up to 40 dwellings, public open space and associated infrastructure with all matters reserved for subsequent approval other than access at land off Workhouse Lane, Burbage, Hinckley LE10 3AS in accordance with the terms of the application, Ref 20/01012/OUT, dated 28 August 2020*' *(APP/K2420/W/22/3311038).* The archaeological works reported on here are required as final mitigation prior to development of the site.

3.2 The approach adopted is consistent with the recommendations of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), with the chapter of relevance being '*Chapter 20: Conserving and enhancing the historic environment*' (Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government 2026).

4.0 Archaeological and Historical Background

4.1 An archaeological desk-based assessment has previously been prepared for the scheme (Taylor 2020), summarised below.

4.2 There is some limited evidence for prehistoric activity in the surrounding landscape, the focus being a middle Bronze Age cemetery with 21 urned and un-urned cremations immediately north of the site (Mapplethorpe 2015). Also, immediately to the north, the remains of a possible roundhouse ditch and posthole suggest Iron Age settlement activity. Several instances of worked flint artefacts are also noted, the closest being *c.*140m northwest of the site.

4.3 Again, to the north of the site, Roman occupation and field systems have been recorded during previous archaeological work. This is quite extensive, but does not appear to extend onto this site, although it may be associated with a putative Roman villa believed to have been found in the 1970s *c.*460m to the north.

4.4 There is limited evidence for early medieval activity in the surrounding area, limited to a pot sherd and square headed brooch found during metal detecting and fieldwalking *c.*150m northwest of the site.

4.5 Burbage is first mentioned in 1043 as a manor that was endowed to the Abbey of St Mary at Coventry during its founding. The location of this or the settlement is not fully known; however, it is most likely in the vicinity of the parish church of St Catherine approximately 770m to the north of the site. A possible medieval copper alloy cauldron foot was found *c.*150m to the northwest of the site during metal detecting.

4.6 Medieval ridge-and-furrow earthworks are noted in the eastern portion of the site and surrounding area, suggesting the site was peripheral to settlement at the time, and lay partially in an agricultural regime.

4.7 Archaeological investigations have previously taken place to support this development. A geophysical survey by magnetometry was undertaken across the site in November 2019 (Evans 2019). This did not identify any anomalies of archaeological significance beyond the previously known ridge and furrow noted in the east end of the site. The geophysical survey was followed by a programme of archaeological evaluation trenching, comprising 10 trenches (Parkinson 2022). The finds assemblage comprised wooden poles deposited flat in a tied bundle and a single worked flint flake. Despite it being clear that significant archaeological remains exist outside the site, the wooden poles are unlikely to be of any age if only partially waterlogged and may be the remnants of a post-medieval brushwood drain.

5.0 Aims and Objectives

5.1 The previous investigations have shown that archaeological remains of an unknown date are present, mainly a series of wooden poles found towards the centre of the site. The objectives of the project were as follows:

- To identify and record all archaeological features and artefacts exposed in advance of construction work in the agreed areas
- To determine the form and function of the archaeological features encountered
- To determine the spatial arrangement of the archaeological features encountered
- To recover dating evidence from the archaeological features wherever possible

- To establish the sequence of the archaeological remains present on the site
- To retrieve the environmental evidence relating to environment and economy of the site
- To retrieve environmental and technological evidence relating to any industrial activity on the site
- To identify any spatial distribution of activity
- To interpret the archaeological features and finds within the context of the known
- archaeology of the site and surrounding area
- To recover data that will provide information relating to the social character of the site, if
- possible, its status, function and economy and environment
- To provide data to enhance the regional chronological framework, through analysis of the
- material culture and selective scientific dating if applicable

5.2 Due to the lack of dating from the evaluation stage of archaeological work, it was not possible to identify relevant research objectives in the East Midlands Historic Environment Research Framework.

6.0 Methodology

6.1 The programme of archaeological investigation comprised machine stripping of a 20m x 20m area centred on the wooden poles encountered during the archaeological evaluation stage (Figure 2), to investigate and understand the character of this material. Further mitigation works described in the WSI and contingent upon the results of the initial investigations were not required.

6.2 The works were undertaken between the 14th and 16th September 2026 and led by the author, Joanne Lathan of AAL. The purpose of the investigation was to further investigate and understand the character of the wood identified in the earlier phase of works. All works were undertaken following the agreed methodology proposed within the WSI (AAL 2026).

6.3 The modern overburden was removed by mechanical excavator in spits not exceeding 0.1m in thickness down to the first archaeological horizon. The machine excavation was always monitored by an experienced field archaeologist from AAL. No machinery was permitted to track across stripped areas during the archaeological works and spoil was stockpiled on site outside the excavation area.

6.4 The excavation area was photographed and planned at an appropriate scale and located using a survey grade GPS receiving RTK corrections.

6.5 The excavation area and all resulting spoil was scanned with a metal detector (set to not discriminate against iron) to aid in the recovery of finds.

6.6 Features were hand cleaned using hoes and trowels, and all exposed archaeological deposits were subject to sample excavation where they could be safely accessed. This followed the approved sampling methodology presented in the WSI.

6.7 A full written record of the archaeological deposits was made on standard AAL context recording sheets. Archaeological deposits were drawn to scale, in plan and section (at scale 1:20 or 1:50), with Ordnance Datum heights being displayed on each class of drawing. Sections were drawn to show areas of recent truncation.

6.8 Digital photography, using a camera with a minimum 12MP APS-C sensor, formed an integral part of the recording strategy. Photographs incorporated scales and a directional arrow where appropriate. Photographs showing the working conditions at the site were also taken and a full register maintained. All photographs will be archived as uncompressed TIFFs.

6.9 If encountered, all finds of all classes would have been collected, other than obviously modern finds from topsoil and subsoil contexts. Finds collected during the fieldwork would be bagged and labelled with the appropriate deposit context number, while registered finds would be 3D located and bagged individually with the deposit context number and small find number. The finds would then be submitted to relevant persons for specialist reporting. In the event, no finds were recovered beyond several fragments of post-medieval to modern ceramic building material (discarded); the only archaeological materials encountered were the unworked wood that formed the brushwood drain. Two spot samples of the unworked wood have been retained to enable future radiocarbon dating should it be required.

7.0 Results

7.1 The stratigraphic sequence was consistent across the excavation area. The uppermost deposit comprised turf and topsoil, 1000, a 0.5m thick mid reddish brown silty clay with occasional rounded stone inclusions. This sealed a 0.14m thick buried ploughsoil, 1001, comprising very dark grey organic clay and likely associated with ridge and furrow agricultural activity across the site. Deposit 1001 sealed organic layer 1002, which was also 0.14m thick. The natural geological horizon was encountered beneath 1002 at a depth of 0.78m below ground level, at approximately 112m aOD. This comprised light blue-grey clay with yellow sand and gravel, consistent with the superficial deposits mapped by the British Geological Survey.

7.2 Drain **1007** was first identified in Trench 6 of the evaluation trenching and interpreted as a bundle of poles (Parkinson 2022). During the mitigation works, the feature was exposed more fully and shown to be a northwest to southeast aligned brushwood drain (Figure 3; Plate 1) that cut through layers 1001 and 1002. It was broadly parallel to a modern land drain encountered *c.*5m to the west. The exposed section of the brushwood drain measured over 21.5m long, extending beyond the limits of the excavation in both directions It was 0.47m wide and 0.4m deep, with steep, straight sides and a concave base (Figure 4 S1; Plate 2). It contained bundles of unworked branches and twigs, or faggots, laid horizontally and end-to-end in the base of the drain (Plate 3). The drain was infilled with a basal deposit, 1008, of bluish grey clay, presumably deposited by water flowing through the drain, and yellow to bluish grey sandy clay, 1009, representing the backfill that would have sealed the wood bundles as part of its construction.



*Plate 1: Drain **1007**, looking southeast, scales 2x1m*



*Plate 2: South-facing section of Drain **1007**, scales 1m and 0.5m*



Plate 3: Detail of branches forming drain, scale 1m

7.3 Several undated pits were identified during the previous phase of evaluation (Parkinson 2022), including two from Trench 6 that were fully exposed within the mitigation area. These are interpreted as tree bowls rather than archaeological cut features. Five tree bowls were investigated during the mitigation works (Figure 3). All were irregular in plan and profile (Figure 4 S2-S6; Plate 4) and filled with a friable black peat with reddish mottling and degraded roots. Fragments of degraded wood were present throughout (Plate 5).

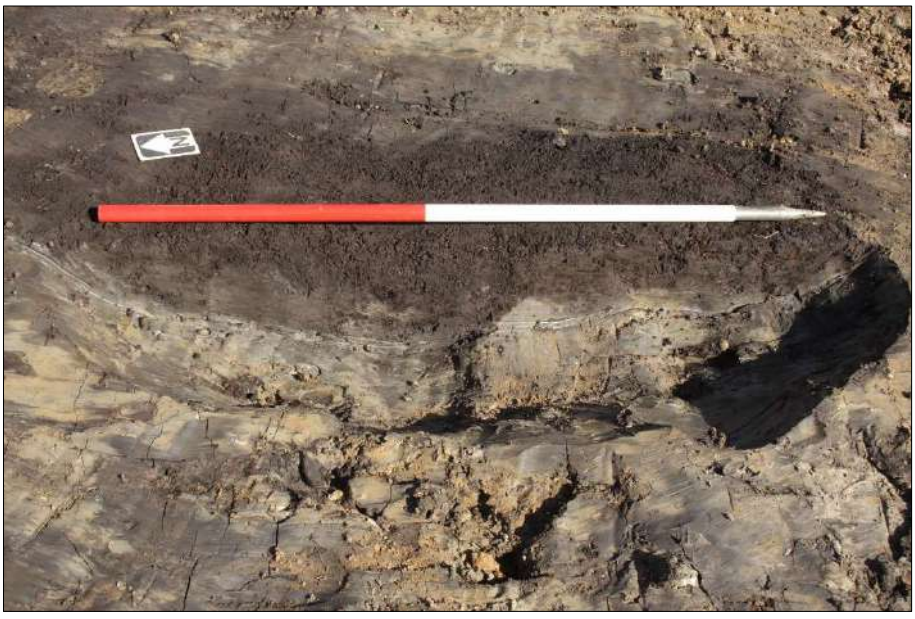

*Plate 4: West-facing section of tree bowl **1003**, scale 1m*



*Plate 5: Preserved tree stump in tree bowl **1010**, scales 2 x 1m*

8.0 Discussion and Conclusion

8.1 During the preceding evaluation works, a bundle of wooden poles was recorded in a trial trench. Further exposure during the mitigation works has revealed that this bundle forms part of a brushwood drain, aligned northwest to southeast, that extended beyond the limits of the excavation area in both directions. Its construction consisted of a narrow trench with bundles of unworked branches and twigs, or faggots, laid horizontally and end-to-end within the trench and then backfilled. A series of irregular features were also exposed in the mitigation area. These were investigated and determined to be tree bowls, and it is possible the clearing of the woodland and the creation of the drain relate to a single phase of activity. Aside from the brushwood drain, no archaeological features were recorded, and following a site meeting on 16th September 2026, it was agreed with the Senior Planning Archaeologist (Heritage) at Leicestershire County Council that no further work would be required on the site.

8.2 No dating evidence was recovered from the brushwood drain. However, its stratigraphic position cutting through relict ploughsoil and sealed by the topsoil, as well as the exceptional preservation of the wood infill, strongly suggests that it is a relatively recent construction. The use of land drains proliferated from the mid-18th century following the enclosure of common lands and efforts towards agricultural improvement, and brushwood drains were a common method prior to the introduction of clay drainage pipes during the 19th century (Robinson 1986). However, in some areas brushwood drains are known to have been used into the 20th century, for example at Yondover, Dorset (heritage.dorsetcouncil.gov.uk/Monument/MDO1475). The example at the current site is therefore likely to have been constructed sometime between the 18th century and 20th century.

8.3 In combination, the evaluation and mitigation works have demonstrated limited archaeological potential for the proposed development site. Aside from the brushwood drain and tree bowls, two undated ditched were recorded in the previous trial trenches. These offer limited research potential, and it is therefore not anticipated that further investigation will be required.

9.0 Effectiveness of Methodology

9.1 The methodology used was appropriate for the site and was successful in providing clarity to the interpretation of the previous phase of investigation.

10.0 Acknowledgements

10.1 Allen Archaeology would like to thank Tetra Tech and their client, Cameron Homes, for commissioning these works.

11.0 References

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Appendix 1: Context Summary

Context	Type	Fill of.	Part of.	Feature	Description	Length (m)	Width (m)	Thickness/ Depth (m)	Intrepretation
1000	Layer			1000	Hard, mid reddish brown, silty clay, rare rounded stone inclusions			0.50	Topsoil
1001	Layer			1001	Firm, very dark grey, peaty clay, rare large rounded stone			0.14	Buried plough soil
1002	Layer			1002	Firm, black with reddish mottles, peat, wood fragments throughout			0.14	Peat
1003	Cut			1003	N-S orientated oval with steeply sloped concave sides and undulating base	1.40	0.70	0.18	Tree bowl
1004	Fill	1003		1003	Friable, black with reddish mottles, peat, wood fragments throughout			0.18	Rooting
1005	Cut			1005	Irregular shaped, concave profile	1.00	0.80	0.20	Tree bowl
1006	Fill	1005		1005	Fiable, black with reddish mottles, peat, wood fragments throughout			0.20	Rooting
1007	Cut			1007	Nw-Se orientated liner with steep straight sides and a concave base	21.50	0.46	0.40	Brushwood drain
1008	Fill	1007		1007	Friable, dark grey with blue hue, clay			0.08	Gradual silting
1009	Fill	1007		1007	Friable, Yellow and light blue grey, sandy clay. Wooden branch inclusions			0.26	Depiberate backfill
1010	Cut			1010	NE-SW orientsted, sub-oval, with undulating/uneven profile	3.00	1.00	0.30	Tree bowl
1011	Fill	1010		1010	Friable, black with reddish mottles, peat, wood fragments throughout			0.30	Rooting
1012	Cut			1012	Irregular shaped, steeply sloped concave sides and uneven basee	2.15	1.25	0.31	Tree bowl
1013	Fill	1012		1012	Friable, black with reddish brown mottles, silty peat, roots throughout			0.31	Rooting
1014	Cut			1014	Irregualr shaped, shallow, irregular sided and uneven base	1.70	1.27	0.26	Tree bowl
1015	Fill	1014		1014	Friable, black with reddish mottles,silty peat			0.26	Rooting
1016	Layer			1016	Light blue grey clay and yellow sands and gravel			0.05	Geological horizon

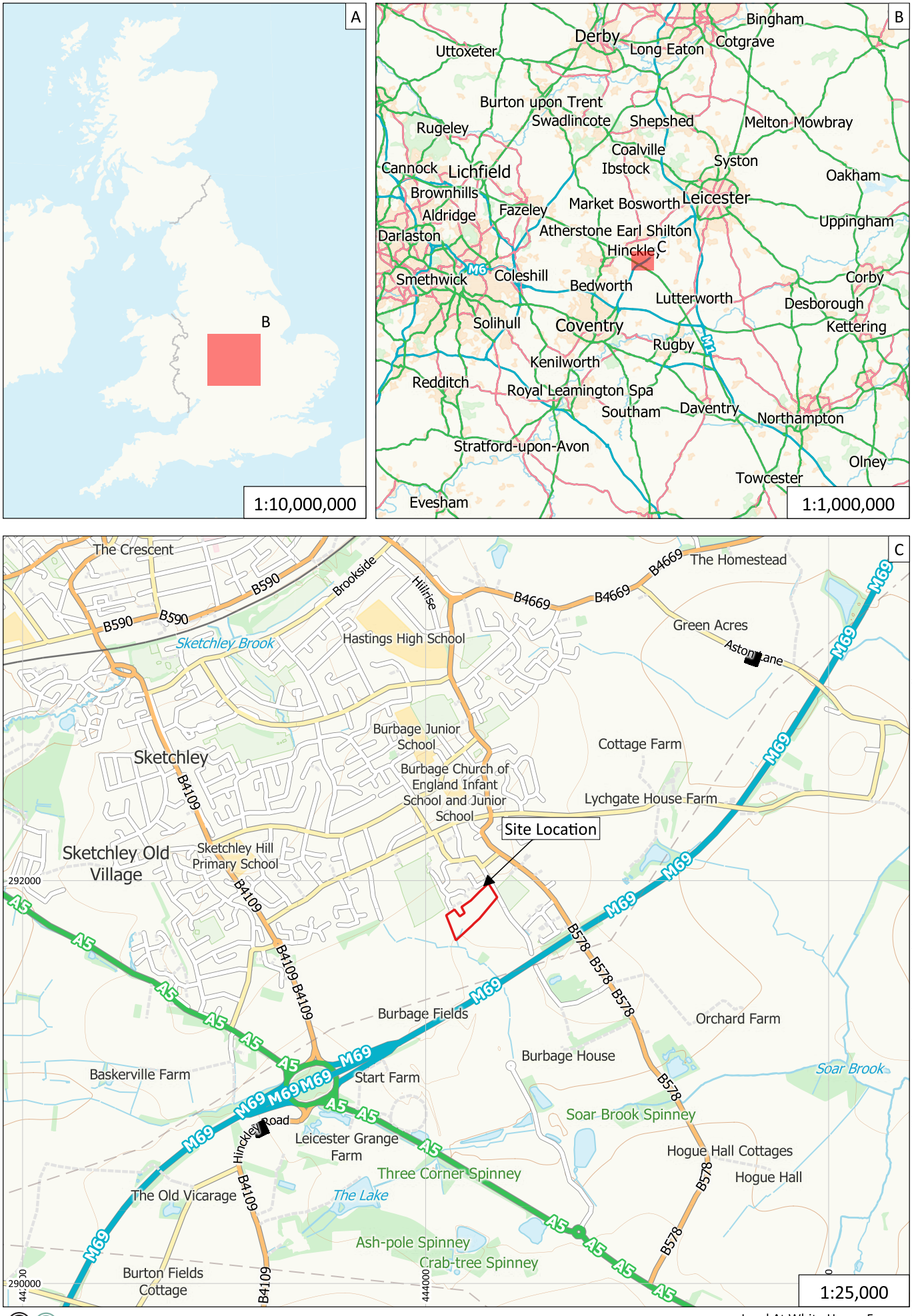

Figure 1: Site location outlined in red

Land At White House Farm,
Burbage, Leicestershire
Site Code: BUWF 26

BUWF 26 Figure 1: @ A4 Drawn by: JML Revision 1 Contains OS data © Crown copyright and database right (2024)



Figure 2: Location of mitigation area and trial trenches superimposed over geophysical survey

0 20 40 60 80 100 m

1:1,000

White House Farm,
Burbage, Leicestershire
Site Code: BUWF26

BUWF26 Figure 2 1:1000 @ A3 Drawn by: JML Revision 1 © OpenStreetMap

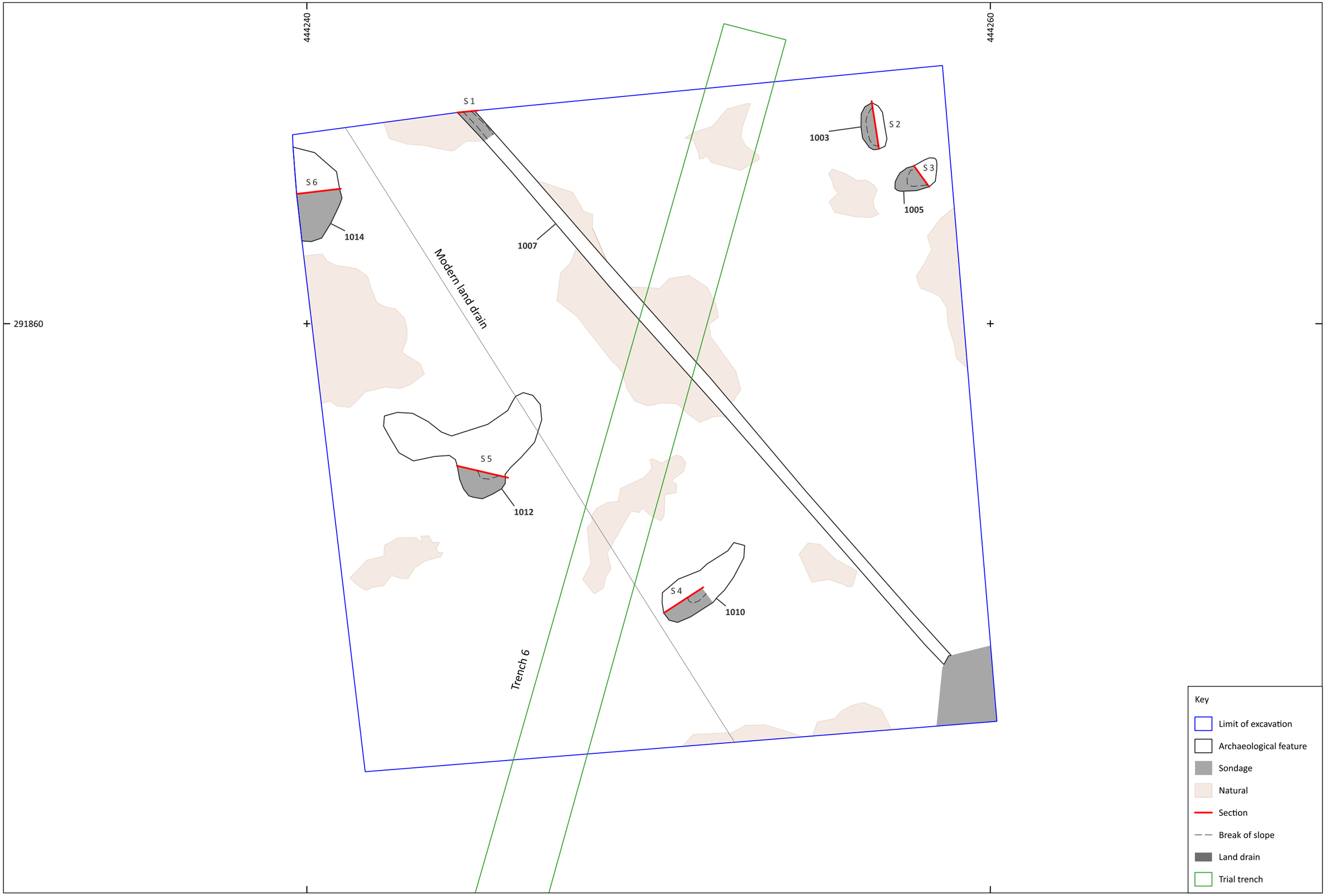

Figure 3: Plan of mitigation area

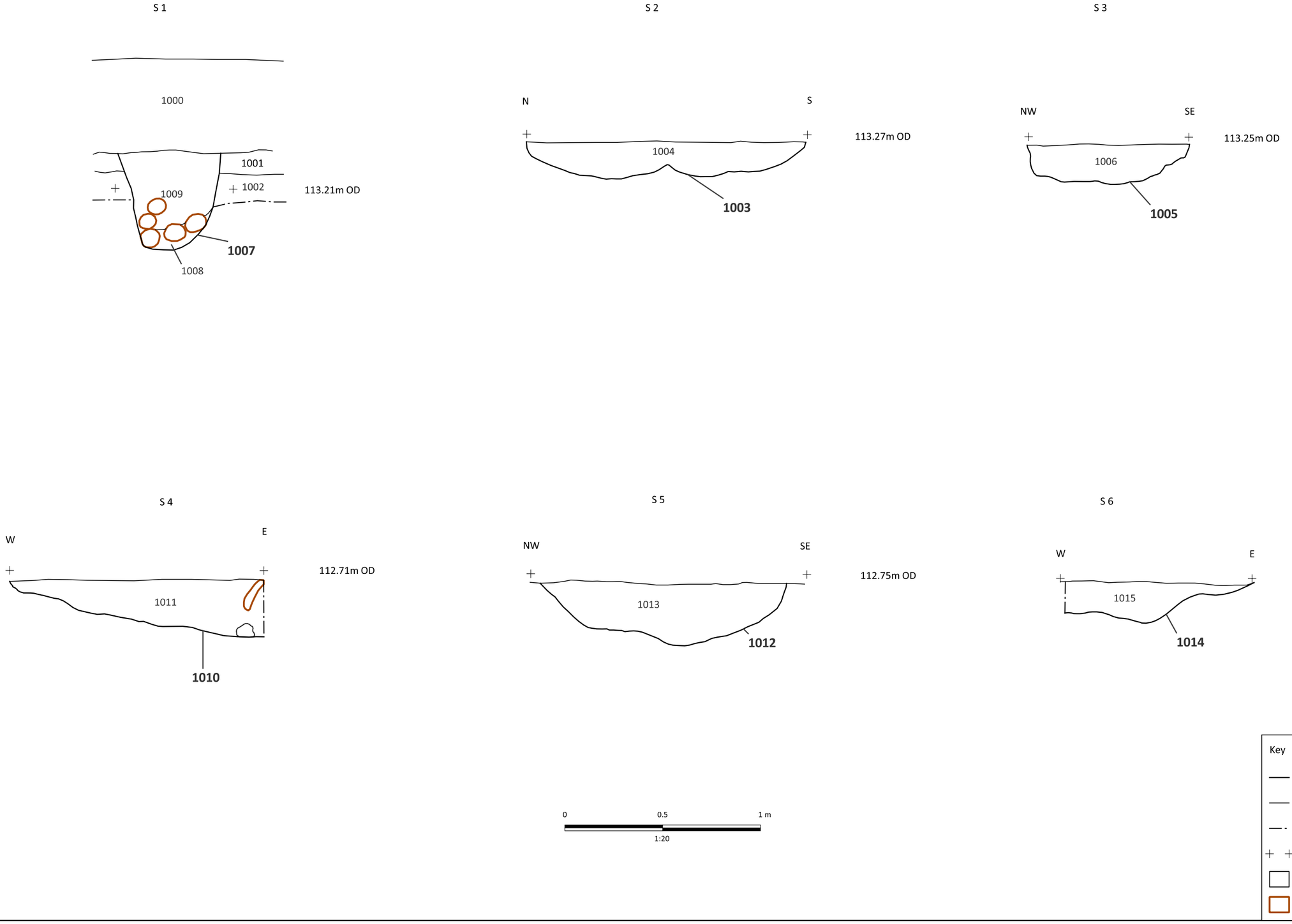

Figure 4: Sections

White House Farm,
Burbage, Leicestershire
Site Code: BUWF26

BUWF26 Figure 4 1: @ A3 Drawn by: JML Revision 1

Appendix 3: OASIS Summary

OASIS ID (UID)	allenarc1-546573
Project Name	Strip Map And Sample at Land at White House Farm, Burbage, Leicestershire
Sitename	Land at White House Farm, Burbage, Leicestershire
Sitecode	BUWF26
Project Identifier(s)	BUWF26
Activity type	Strip Map And Sample
Planning Id	APP/K2420/W/22/311038, 20/01012/OUT
Reason For Investigation	Planning: Post determination
Organisation Responsible for work	Allen Archaeology Limited
Project Dates	14-Sep-2026 - 16-Sep-2026
Location	**Land at White House Farm, Burbage, Leicestershire** NGR: SP 44221 91826 LL: 52.522524486250965, -1.349683698402539 12 Fig: 444221,291826
Administrative Areas	Country: England County/Local Authority: Leicestershire Local Authority District: Hinckley and Bosworth Parish: Burbage
Project Methodology	The programme of archaeological investigation comprised machine stripping of a 20m x 20m area centred on the wooden poles encountered during the archaeological evaluation stage (Figure 2), to investigate and understand the character of this material. Further mitigation works described in the WSI and contingent upon the results of the initial investigations were not required. The works were undertaken between the 14th and 16th September 2026 and led by the author, Joanne Lathan. The purpose of the investigation was to further investigate and understand the character of the wood

	identified in the earlier phase of works. All works were undertaken following the agreed upon methodology proposed within the WSI (AAL 2026).
Project Results	The mitigation works comprised the machine stripping of a 20m x 20m area centred on the previously recorded wooden remains. These were shown to form part of a brushwood drain, aligned northwest to southeast, that extended beyond the limits of the excavation area in both directions. Its construction consisted of a narrow trench with bundles of unworked branches and twigs, or faggots, laid horizontally and end-to-end within the trench and then backfilled. A series of irregular features were also exposed in the mitigation area. These were investigated and determined to be tree bowls. No archaeological features, deposits or finds of significance were identified during the works beyond the brushwood drain. Its stratigraphic position and the exceptional preservation of the wood strongly suggests that it is a relatively recent construction, dating from the post-medieval period or later.
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HER	Leicestershire HER - unRev - STANDARD
Person Responsible for work	Mark Allen
HER Identifiers	
Archives	Documentary Archive - to be deposited with Leicestershire County Council Museums;

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