ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION OF LAND AT GODMANCHESTER ROVERS FOOTBALL CLUB BEARSCROFT LANE GODMANCHESTER CAMBRIDGESHIRE (GMBL23)

Work Undertaken For
SURFACING STANDARDS LTD

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Report Compiled by
Paolo Carbonari

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ARCHAEOLOGICAL PROJECT SERVICES

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Revision History

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V1	23/04/25	Draft		Paolo Carbonari
V		Final draft	For issue	Neil Parker
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1 SUMMARY

An archaeological evaluation was undertaken at land off Bearscroft Lane, Godmanchester, Cambridgeshire. This was to determine the archaeological implications prior to the construction of a new artificial pitch and associated infrastructure. The site is archaeologically sensitive, lying in an area where evidence of Prehistoric, Roman and Saxon occupation was recorded.

The evaluation revealed no archaeological features from the above periods but showed that the area, once sloping from southeast to northwest, was recently levelled with a sizeable amount of modern overburden.

Two of the excavated trenches (trenches 1 and 3) revealed a geological horizon buried by 1.4m of modern deposits. The third trench (trench 5) did not reach any archaeological or geological horizon deeper than 1.8m from the ground level.

The Cambridgeshire Historic Environment Team (CHET) agreed that it was not necessary excavate the full set of six trenches as the proposed development will not impact with the archaeological horizon.

2 INTRODUCTION

2.1 Definition of evaluation

An archaeological field evaluation is defined as *"a programme of non-intrusive and/or intrusive fieldwork which seeks to determine the presence or absence of archaeological features, structures, deposits, artefacts or ecofacts. It may form a single or final phase of work within a defined area or site on land, in an inter-tidal zone or underwater."* (CIfA 2023).

2.2 Planning Background

A planning application (24/01471/FUL) has been submitted to Huntingdonshire District Council for the creation of a new artificial pitch and associated infrastructure.

A programme of archaeological evaluation by trial trenching was required by the local planning authority as condition to assess the impact of the development on potential archaeological remains.

Archaeological Project Services was commissioned by Surfacing Standards Ltd to undertake this evaluation as specified in a brief provided by CHET. This work was carried out between 24th and 26th March 2025 in accordance with a Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI), submitted to and approved by the local planning authority (APS 2025).

2.3 Topography and Geology

Godmanchester is a town and civil parish in the Huntingdonshire district of Cambridgeshire. It is situated approximately 25km northwest of Cambridge and approximately 30km south of Peterborough. It is separated from Huntingdon, 2km to the north, by the valley of the River Great Ouse.

Godmanchester Football Club is situated at the southeast edge of Godmanchester on the south side of Bearscroft Lane at National Grid Reference TL 25550 69432.

Local soils are of the Evesham 3 Association, typically fine loamy over clayey calcareous soils (Hodge *et al*. 1984, 361). The site overlies a bedrock geology of Oxford Clay Formation – Mudstone with superficial deposits of Oadby Member – Diamicton (BGS 2019).

The site lies at a height of approximately 31.2m OD on land sloping gradually from southeast to northwest.

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2.4 Archaeological Setting

The archaeological data has been taken from the Cambridge Historic Environment Record (CHER) and was supplied separately to the brief upon request in GIS format. Distances given in the following section are approximately from the centre of the proposed development site.

Activity from the prehistoric period is well documented in the vicinity of the site. Some 225m to the north of the proposed development, trial trench evaluation at Bearscroft Farm (CHER MCB31740) revealed Iron Age occupation from an enclosure and scattered struck flint. It was most intense during the Late Iron Age and two separate settlement zones were identified. Zone 2 recorded a high density of pottery and animal bone whereas Zone 1 indicated a continuation of Saxon settlement from the Cardinal Park Distribution Centre (Patten 2010).

Evaluation was followed by excavation which revealed evidence of Neolithic and Saxon features, although the site was predominantly Iron Age with three possible banjo enclosures recorded, two of which contained Middle Iron Age Pottery. Further contemporary enclosures were also identified along with eight Late Iron Age enclosures with finds of quernstone and loomweights (Patten 2016). Further north at Bearscroft Farm trial trench evaluation comprising 93 trenches was undertaken (CHER MCB19606). The majority of features were concentrated along the area flanking the Roman Road, Ermine Street and dated to the Late Iron Age (Patten 2010). Excavation in the northern part of the site included Mesolithic flints and clusters of Neolithic pits. Iron Age post-built structures were recorded. Human remains were recorded comprising two cremations, five burials and disarticulated bone fragments. The Saxon remains (mentioned above) comprised three sunken featured buildings and a post-built structure. One building contained infant remains (Patten 2016).

At Roman Way, some 550m to the northwest of the Site an evaluation (CHER CB15714) revealed heavily truncated remains including ditches and at least two small prehistoric pits. Roman and possible abraided Early Saxon pottery was found in ditches on the site possibly indicating continuance of use (Bolderson and Atkins 2003). Further excavation revealed pits and a ditch dating to the Neolithic and two narrow ditches contained Bronze Age pottery. Three cremations were excavated thought to be contemporary with the ditches (Fletcher 2004). At the Cardinal Distribution Park, some 830m to the north (CHER 13001) an evaluation revealed Late Bronze Age to Early Iron Age features but these were isolated (Murray and Last 1999). The site was predominantly Saxon (see below).

Further prehistoric activity was recorded some 960m to the northwest of the football club at Wigmore Farm (CHER MCB6893). Based on the results of a geophysical survey (Elks 2005) evaluation recorded a Bronze Age struck flint and a possible Late Iron Age enclosure. Roman finds and post-medieval gravel extraction pits were also recorded (Doyle, Ginns and Grassam 2006). Subsequent excavation revealed predominantly Iron Age features comprising ditches, pits, gullies and post holes, thought to be agricultural in origin. A wide range of lithic implements were recovered, the majority of which dated to the Mesolithic, although Iron Age lithics were also recorded (Cope-Faulkner 2009).

980m northwest of the Site at Sweetings Road, in a post-medieval quarry pit, a Bout Coupe hand axe, approximately 128,000 years old was recovered (CHER 11421a) and a single flint flake was recovered during an evaluation (CHER MCB19444) 990m to the north of the football club at White Hart Lane (House 2011).

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The Roman period is most notably represented by Ermine Street (CHER CB15034) which lies approximately 180m to the west of the football club. A roadside settlement (CHER CB15619) was recovered during an evaluation 760m north-northwest in advance of the construction of a new school. There was evidence for various activities along the roadside including industrial and domestic processes, particularly in a band some 25m to 30m wide along the line of the present London Road. A clay bank, constructed in 3rd century is located on the west side, although pottery from the settlement suggests it was begun in the 2nd century. The first British made wine amphora found in Cambridgeshire also came from this site. Various types of ovens and a possible furnace were recorded with metalworking slag identified in pits and ditches (Hinman 1996).

Following the evaluation, an open area was excavated defining three phases of Romano-British activity. The earliest, dating from 1st to 2nd century was represented by plot boundaries. Further boundaries of 2nd to 3rd century date contained a timber framed building, wells, pits and hearths. These were superseded in the late 3rd to 4th century when new roadside plots were created (Macaulay 1994). Some 700m northwest a collection of pottery, mostly greyware was found in the Garden of 2 Lion Close (CHER MCB16151) and at the very north end of Bearscroft Farm, the excavation mentioned earlier in the text revealed evidence for Roman enclosure and activity (CHER MCB26642). This extended north beyond the excavation (Patten 2016).

The Saxon Settlement at Cardinal Distribution Park (CHER 13011) began in the Early to Middle Saxon period. This included enclosure ditches, pits, postholes and a sunken featured building Excavations indicated a significant Early-Middle Saxon settlement that sat on the fringes of the old Roman Town. They revealed an organised landscape of enclosures, trackways and domestic structures including six sunken feature buildings and post-built structures (Murray and Last 1999). As mentioned above, this activity continued into the site at Bearscroft Farm where a further three sunken featured buildings and an infant burial were recorded. The post built structure on this site measured 14.5m x 6.3m and comprised 57 post holes (Patten 2016). Some 600m northwest of the football club, two sceattas were found on Roman Way (CHER MCB16789).

The Domesday Survey of *circa* 1086 records that in 1066 *Godmundcestre* (Godmanchester) was held by King Edward and in 1086 King William was both the Lord and Tenant in Chief. There were 80 villagers, 16 smallholders and a priest. There were 57 ploughland, 2 lord's plough teams and 24 men's plough teams. Other resources included 2 lord's lands 160acres of meadow, 50 acres of woodland, 3 mills to the value of 5 pounds and 1 church.

Medieval remains are found most frequently in the form of ridge and furrow cultivation and are numerous within the assessment area. Some of the largest mapped concentrations are to the immediate west and also 381m east by Bearscroft Bungalow and 580m northeast (CHER 02528 and 11590). Some 760m north of the football ground an archaeological evaluation (CHER CB26640) identified a single linear ditch of medieval date. The substantial feature measured some 5.3m wide (Evershed 2016).

At Sweetings Road, 825m northwest of the Site ten engineers pits were investigated (CHER Cb15290) where ridge and furrow were uncovered (Dickens 1993). Trenching confirmed the hypothesis that the ridge and furrow had more than one phase with re-arrangement of the system having been undertaken at some time. Residual artefacts

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from the prehistoric period were also recorded on the site (Oakey, 1995).

Post-medieval remains are also noted within the area. To the west of the site at Dexter's Farm (CHER MCB31719) five small ditches were interpreted as part of a field system (Chaplin 2022) and 160m west of the site a former clay pit was recorded (CHER MCB25186). Some 470m northwest of the football club, an evaluation on land at London Road (CHER 11423) revealed a series of features running parallel to the road, all of which contained 19th century ceramic field drains (Welsh, 1994). Similar features were found 680m north of the football club (CHER MCB16077) where a number of gullies of unknown function were found along with the drains (Wait 1992). Historic mapping from the Ordnance Survey shows the land as fields in the 1888 edition and in subsequent editions as allotment gardens.

Among the undated features recorded in the vicinity of the site are a series of linear and curvilinear anomalies noted during a geophysical survey (CHER MCB17522). Located some 300m southwest of the football club on the route of a watermain, the results indicated possible enclosure and ring ditches as well as ridge and furrow (Masters 2006). A rectilnear enclosure (CHER MCB20028) was identified in an air photo assessment (Palmer 2006).

There are listed buildings within the assessment area, such as the Grade II Listed 31 London Road (List entry 1309854), a 16th century timber framed structure. Porch Farm and its barn and dovecote are also listed (List entries 1128624, 1161972 and 1330688 respectively), but all of these are situated far to the north of the football club and there is no intervisibility between them.

3 AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

The aims of the archaeological evaluation was to gather sufficient information for the archaeological curator to formulate a policy for the management of the archaeological resources present on the site and:

- Establish the type of archaeological activity that may be present within the site.
- Determine the likely extent of archaeological activity present within the site.
- Determine the date and function of the archaeological features present on the site.
- Determine the state of preservation of the archaeological features present on the site.
- Determine the spatial arrangement of the archaeological features present within the site.
- Determine the extent to which the surrounding archaeological features extend into the application area.
- Establish the way in which the archaeological features identified fit into the pattern of occupation and land-use in the surrounding area.

Understanding of the geomorphological evidence at the site in order to situate the development area into its landscape context and to determine areas that may have not provided areas for occupation, as opposed to those that did.

Archaeological remains at the site may have the potential to provide data to address a number of areas of research concerning the various periods outlined in the archaeological background as defined in the published resource assessment and research agenda (Medleycott 2011).

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4 METHODS

Three trial trenches, each measuring approximately 30m by 1.8m, were opened by mechanical excavator using a toothless ditching bucket (Figure 4).

A modern topsoil and a sizeable amount of overburden formed by mixed dumped deposits were excavated. The latter contained construction material such as large blocks of concrete, bricks, plastic pipes, iron rods *etc*.

All the excavated trenches were stepped to prevent any possible collapse of the unstable overburden.

Each deposit encountered during the evaluation was allocated a unique reference number (context number) with an individual written description. A list of all contexts and their interpretations and measurements appears as Appendix 1.

A photographic record was also compiled, and representative sections of the stratigraphic sequence encountered within the trenches were drawn at a scale of 1:10.

Before trenching the site was photographed to show the condition of the site (plate 1).

The location of the excavated trenches was plotted with a survey grade differential GPS and a series of levels were taken at the top and at the bottom of the trenches (figure 4).

Recording of the encountered deposits was undertaken according to standard Archaeological Project Services practice.

After a visit from a member of the Cambridgeshire Historic Environment Team during the works, it was agreed that the three excavated trenches were adequate to evaluate the impact of the proposed development with the potential archaeological horizon. The following section describes the results of the excavated trenches numbered according to the original full set of six.

5 RESULTS (Figs 4 and 5))

Archaeological contexts are listed below and described. The numbers in brackets are the context numbers assigned in the field.

Trench 1
Trench 1 was located at the southwest corner of the site where the ground level was between 31.11m OD and 30.83m OD.

The earliest deposit encountered was the geological deposit (103) formed by a light brown plastic silty clay with frequent medium flint inclusions which was on average at 29.53m OD. This was overlain by a 0.9m thick layer (102) formed by dumped deposits of soil mixed with debris and refuse of construction material. This modern overburden was covered by (101) a 0.4m thick dark greyish brown silty sand topsoil (figure 5, section 1, plates 2-4).

Trench 3
Trench 3 was approximately at the northeast corner of the proposed development where the ground level was slightly sloping from east (30.57m OD) to west (30.3m OD).

A mid brown silty clay with frequent flint inclusions of medium size (303) was the geological substrate. Its surface was at 29.49m OD and was overlain by (304), a dark grey band of silty clay, 0.11m thick and visible across the entire trench. This deposit interpreted as possible relic of a former topsoil was covered by the 0.65m thick modern overburden (302) deposited to level the area. It contained modern construction debris mixed with dumps of soil. This overburden was covered by the modern topsoil (301), a dark greyish brown silty sand deposit 0.36m thick (figure 5,

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section 2, plates 5-7).

Trench 5
The third excavated Trench 5 was cut in the middle of the site where the ground level was sloping from southeast (30.63m OD) to northwest (30.07m OD).

The excavation of Trench 5 removed a stratigraphic sequence formed by a modern deposit of overburden (502) formed by debris from construction material mixed with dumps of soil and overall was thicker than 1.45m. This modern levelling deposit was covered by topsoil (501), a dark greyish brown silty sand, 0.30m thick.

The presence of large blocks of reinforced concrete in the middle of the trench prevented excavation of this area–below 0.7m from the ground level.

Deeper sondages were excavated at the ends of Trench 5 up to -1.83m (28.3m OD) and -1.58m (28.99m OD) from the ground level without reaching any archaeological or geological horizon (figure 5, section 3, plates 8-10).

6 DISCUSSION

Trenches 1 and 3 uncovered the geological horizon, buried by a sizeable amount of a modern overburden. The exposed natural varied a little across the site and was formed by a middle brown silty clay slightly lighter in Trench 3 mixed with frequent flint inclusions. The exposed surface of the natural was accurately examined but not possible archaeological features were noted.

All the trenches revealed that the original ground level was originally lower and characterised by a slope from southeast to northwest. The site was systematically levelled by a sizeable amount of modern deposits ranging from 0.65m (Trench 3) to more than 1.45m (Trench 5) thick. This reflects a former use of the area as a possible dump for waste material from nearby excavations and construction sites.

Before the deposition of this modern overburden the original topsoil and subsoil were probably removed up to the natural. This can probably explain why in Trench 1 and 3 the overburden directly covered the geological horizon and very little is left of the original ground level.

Trench 5 did not uncover any geological or archaeological deposits and was cut through the modern overburden.

The topsoil was uniform across the site and during the work was separated from the modern overburden and stored on one side of the trench. The spoil heaps with the topsoil were metal-detected but no metal objects were recovered.

A site visit of the Archaeological Officer from the CHET was arranged after the excavation of the described three trenches. During the meeting was ascertained that:

- Any potential archaeological horizon was buried by a sizeable volume of modern overburden

- The proposed development will impact only with the modern deposits implying very little excavations. These will involve a small portion of the southeast area and the main drains do not penetrate deeper than 0.6m.

Considering the above circumstances, it was agreed that the excavated trenches provided a satisfactory view of the stratigraphic sequence at the site and no more trenches were required.

Figure 6 of this report includes a plan and a section provided by Surfacing Standards Ltd showing the depths of the proposed

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earthworks and drains combined with the levels of the evaluation trenches.

7 CONCLUSIONS

An archaeological evaluation was undertaken in a field of the Godmanchester Rovers Football Club at Bearscroft Lane, Godmanchester, Cambridgeshire. This was to evaluate the archaeological implications prior to the construction of new artificial pitches and associated infrastructure, as the site lays within an area of potential archaeological activity.

The evaluation did not reveal archaeological evidence but showed the site was recently levelled with a sizeable amount of a modern overburden formed by dumps of soil and waste material from construction sites.

The investigation showed that the proposed development will not impact any potential archaeological horizon.

8 ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Archaeological Project Services wishes to acknowledge Surfacing standards Ltd, for commissioning the fieldwork and post-excavation analysis. The work was coordinated by Neil Parker who also edited this report along with Paul Cope-Faulkner.

9 PERSONNEL

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Photographic reproduction: Paolo Carbonari
CAD Illustration: Peter Tovizi, Paolo Carbonari
Post-excavation Analyst: Paolo Carbonari
Archiving: Sally Horwill

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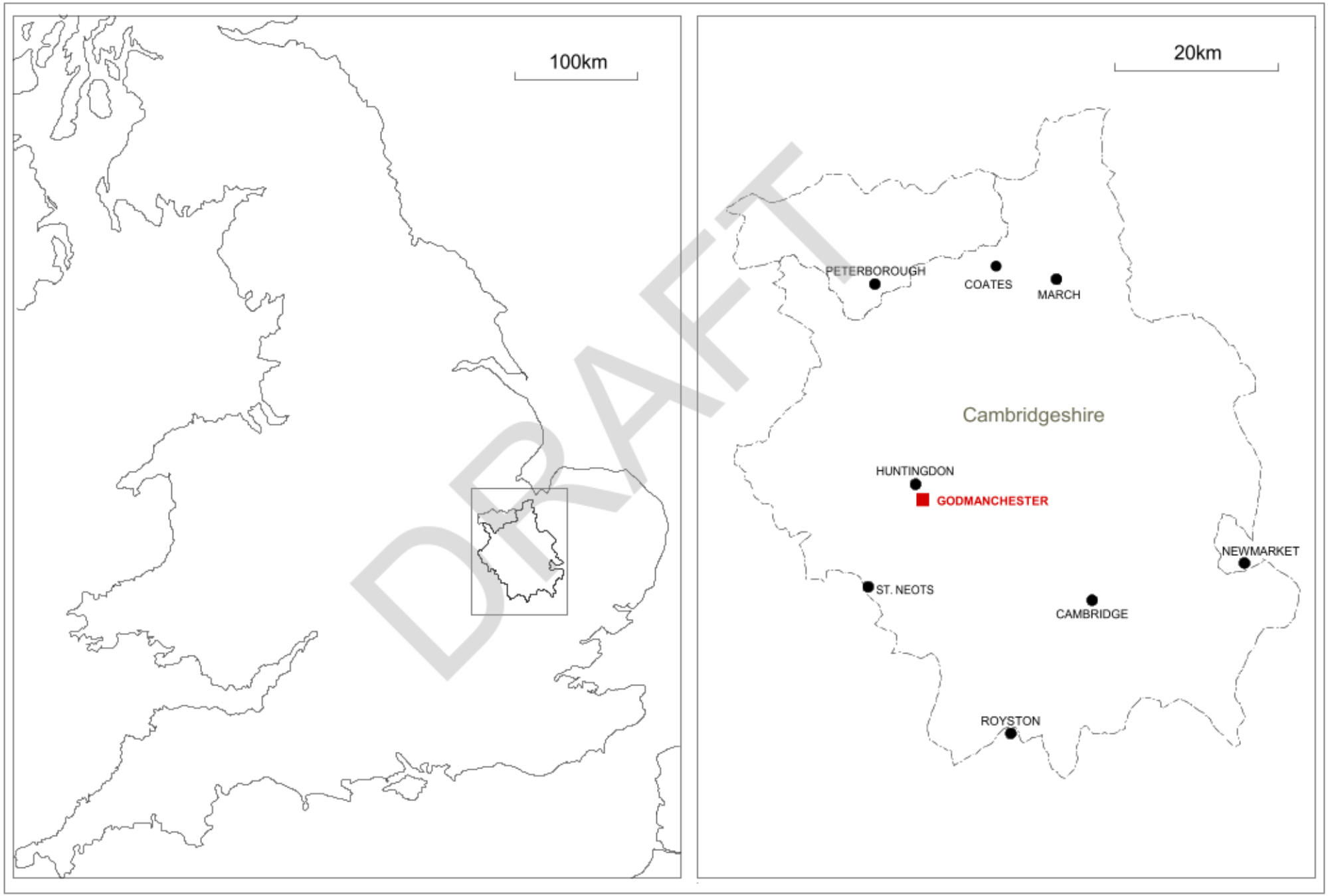
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11 ABBREVIATIONS

OD	Ordnance Datum
APS	Archaeological Project Services
BGS	British Geological Survey
CifA	Chartered Institute for Archaeologists

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Figure 1 General location map

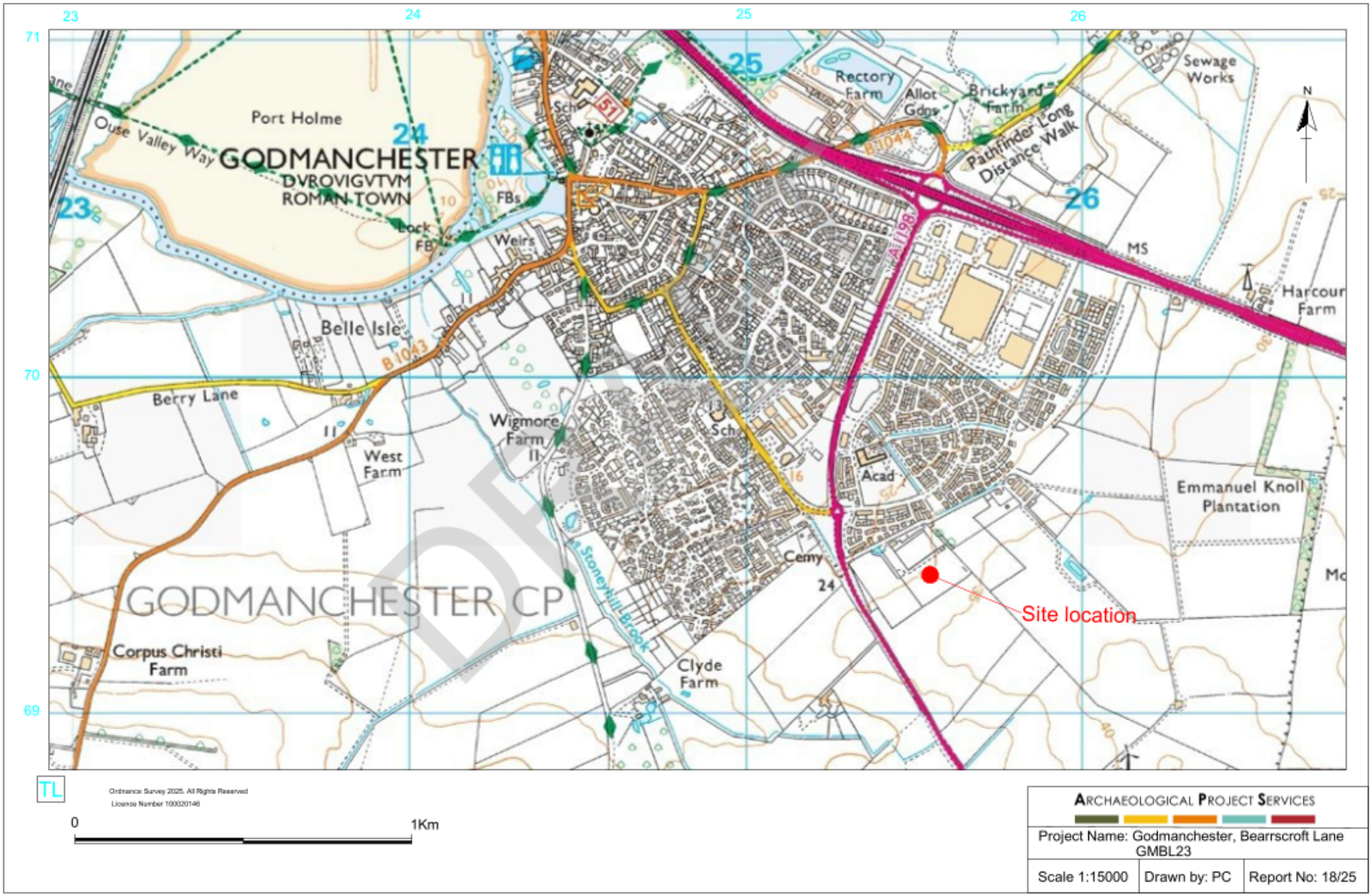


Figure 2. Site location map

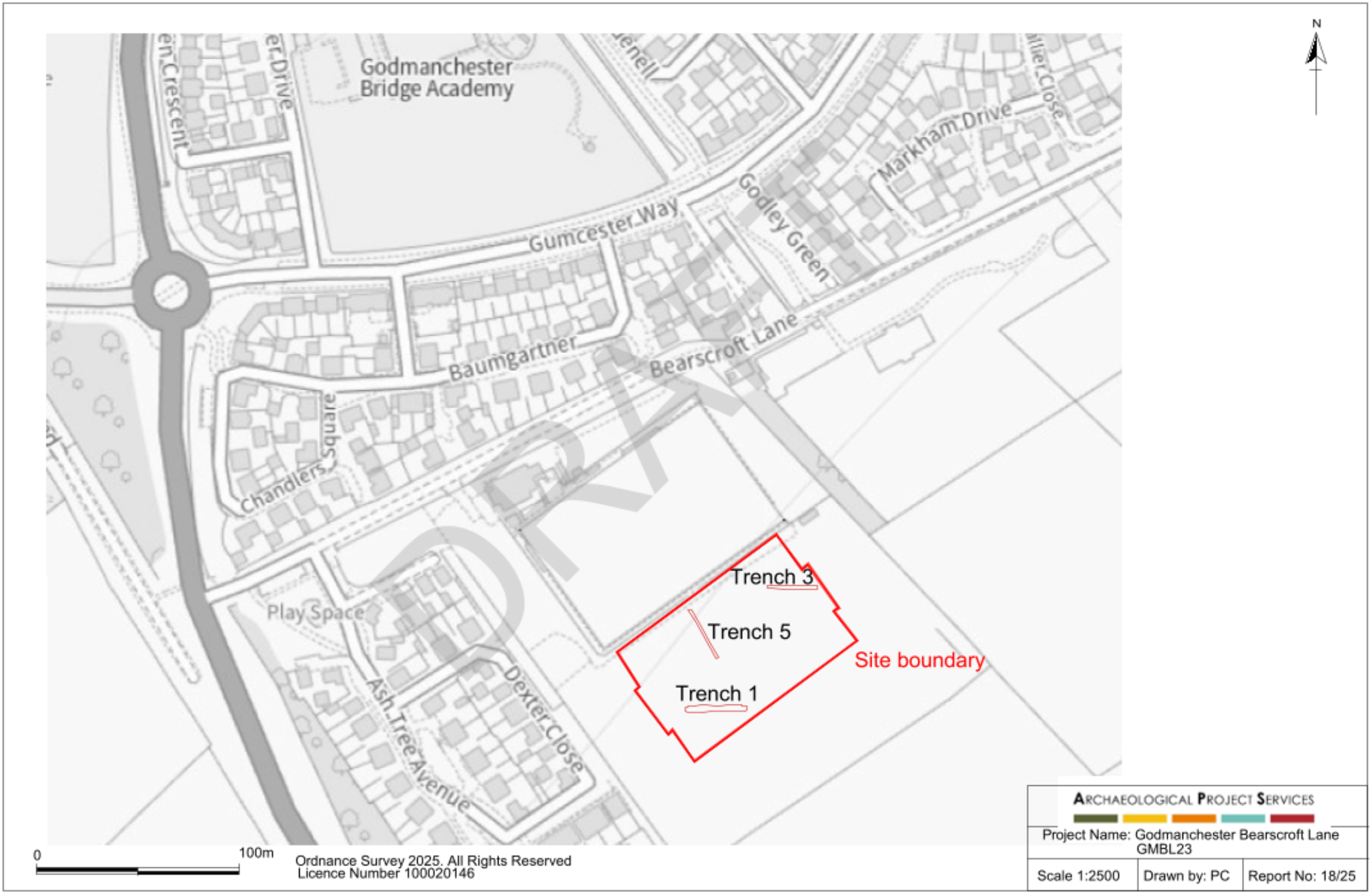


Figure 3.Trench locations

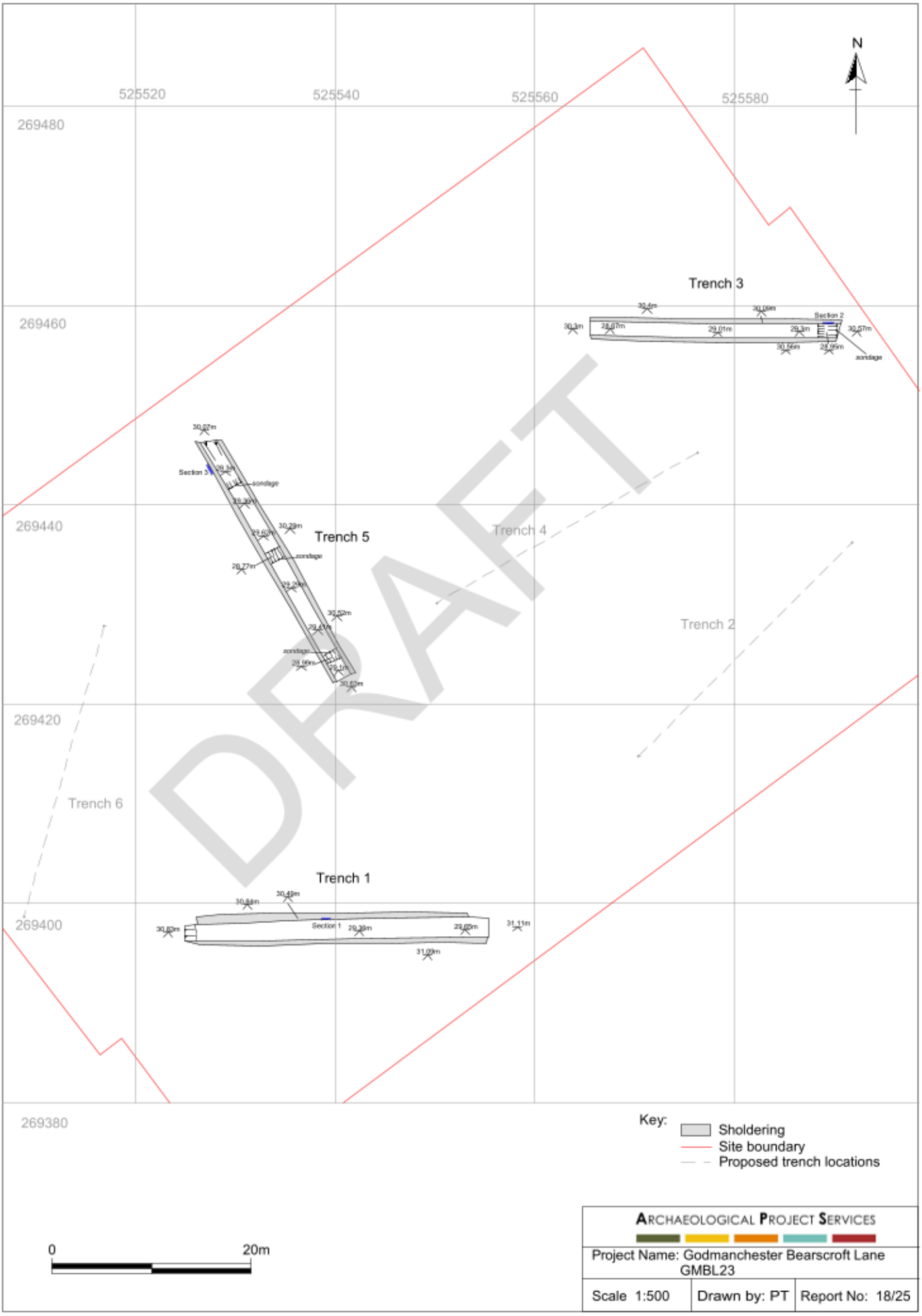


Figure 4. Plan of trenches 1, 3 and 5

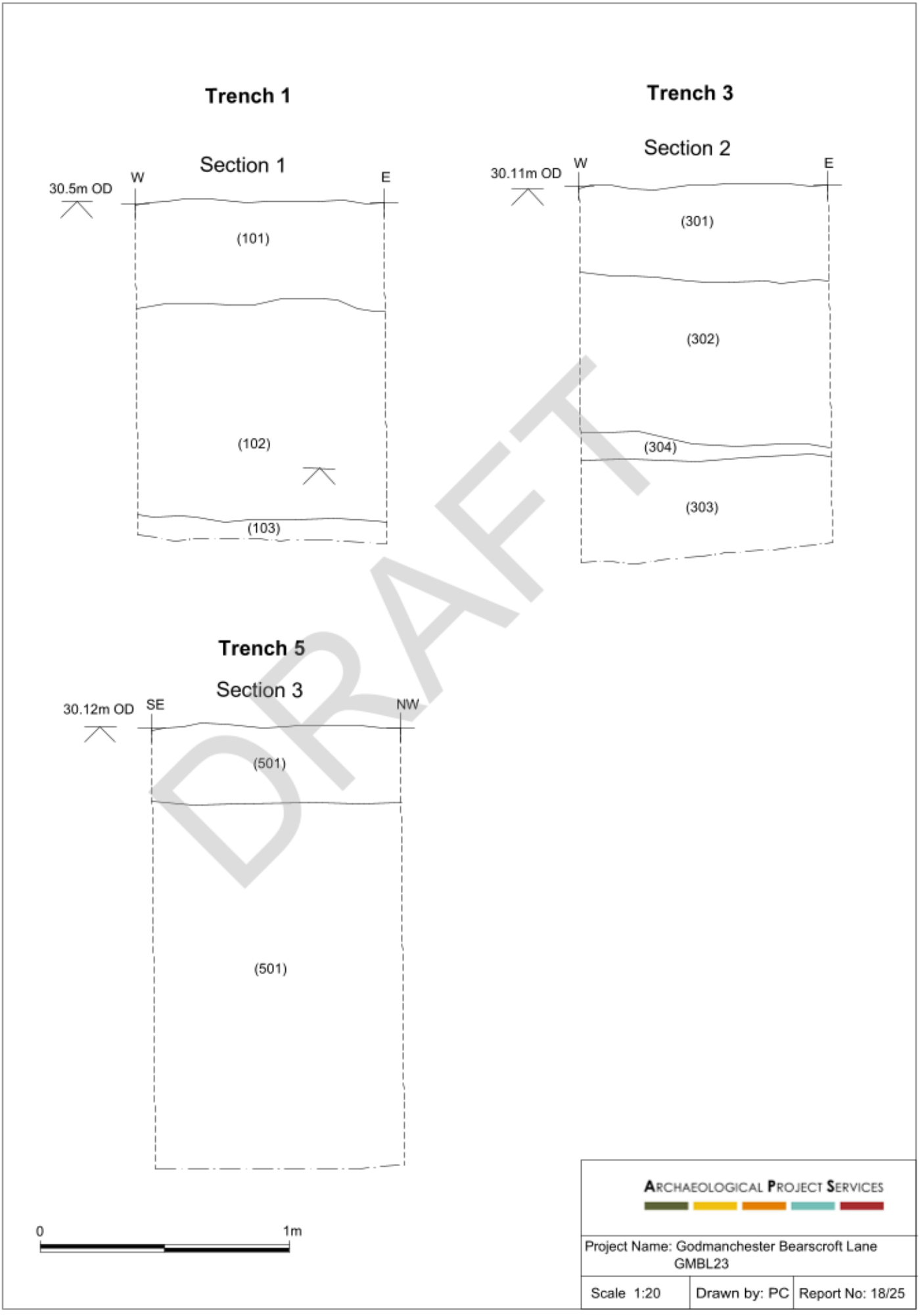
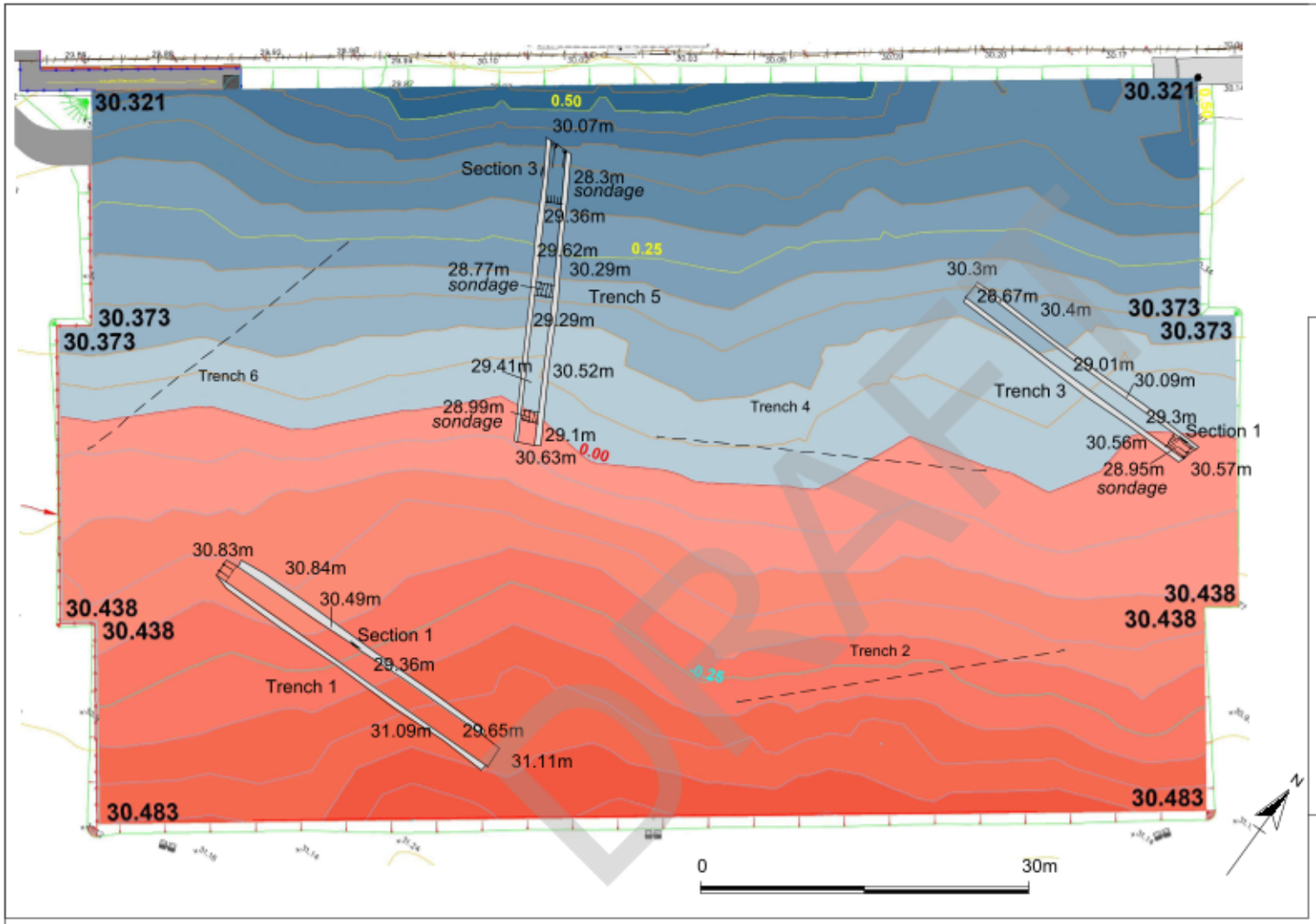
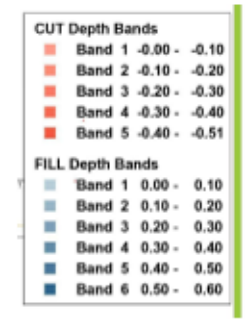


Figure 5. Trenches 1, 3 and 5. Representative sections 1-3





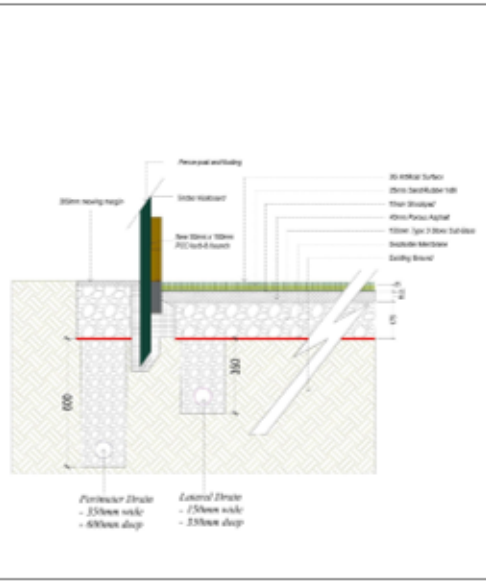


Figure 6.2. Section of the proposed drains

Figure 6.1. Plan showing depths of cut and fill for the proposed artificial pitches combined with the levels of the evaluation trenches

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Project Name: Godmanchester Bearscroft Lane GMBL23		
Scale 1:600	Drawn by: PC	Report No: 18/25

Figure 6. Plan and section provided by Surfacing Standards Ltd combined with the levels of the evaluation trenches



Plate 1. General view of the site before trenching



Plate 2. Trench 1, general view looking west

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Plate 3. Trench 1, general view looking east



Plate 4. Trench 1, representative section 1, facing south

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Plate 5. Trench 3, general view looking west



Plate 6. Trench 3, general view looking east

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Plate 7. Trench 3, representative section 2, facing south



Plate 8. Trench 5, general view looking northwest

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Plate 9. Trench 5, general view looking south



Plate 10. Trench 5, representative section 3, facing east

Appendix 1

Context summary

Context	Trench	Description	Interpretation	Drawings	Photos	Vertical span (m)
101	1	Colour: very dark greyish brown. Compaction: moist, malleable. Composition: medium silty sand.	Modern topsoil	1	2, 3	0.52 (avg.)
102	1	Colour: brown. Compaction: moist, malleable. Composition: silty clay.	Multiple modern levelling layers	1	2, 3	0.75 (avg.)
103	1	Colour: light brown. Compaction: moist, malleable. Composition: silty clay.	Natural	1	2, 3	>0.10 (avg.)
301	3	Colour: very dark greyish brown. Compaction: moist, friable. Composition: silty sand.	Modern topsoil	2	4	0.35 (avg.)
302	3	Colour: light grey to mid brown lower. Compaction: moist, malleable. Composition: silty clay.	Multiple modern levelling layers	2	4	0.67 (avg.)
303	3	Colour: mid brown. Compaction: moist, malleable. Composition: silty clay. Inclusions: frequent medium very angular platy flint, evenly distributed.	Natural	2	4	0.44 (avg.)
304	3	Colour: very dark greyish brown. Compaction: moist, malleable. Composition: silty clay.	Possible remains of former topsoil	2	4	0.11 (avg.)
501	5	Colour: very dark greyish brown. Compaction: moist, malleable. Composition: medium silty sand.	Modern topsoil	3		0.30 (avg.)
502	5	Colour: mid brownish grey. Compaction: moist, loose. Composition: coarse silty sand. Inclusions: frequent very large sub-angular platy waste construction material, evenly distributed.	Multiple modern levelling layers	3		1.46 (avg.)

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Appendix 2

GLOSSARY

Bronze Age	A period characterised by the introduction of bronze into the country for tools, between 2250 and 800 BC.
Context	An archaeological context represents a distinct archaeological event or process. For example, the action of digging a pit creates a context (the cut) as does the process of its subsequent backfill (the fill). Each context encountered during an archaeological investigation is allocated a unique number by the archaeologist and a record sheet detailing the description and interpretation of the context (the context sheet) is created and placed in the site archive. Context numbers are identified within the report text by brackets, e.g. [004].
Domesday Survey	A survey of property ownership in England compiled on the instruction of William I for taxation purposes in 1086 AD.
Iron Age	A period characterised by the introduction of Iron into the country for tools, between 800 BC and AD 50.
Layer	A layer is a term used to describe an accumulation of soil or other material that is not contained within a cut.
Medieval	The Middle Ages, dating from approximately AD 1066-1500.
Mesolithic	The 'Middle Stone Age' period, part of the prehistoric era, dating from approximately 11000 - 4500 BC.
Modern	The current period, dating from around 1750 to the present time.
Natural	Undisturbed deposit(s) of soil or rock which have accumulated without the influence of human activity
Neolithic	The 'New Stone Age' period, part of the prehistoric era, dating from approximately 4500 - 2250 BC.
Posthole	The hole cut to take a timber post, usually in an upright position. The hole may have been dug larger than the post and contain soil or stones to support the post. Alternatively, the posthole may have been formed through the process of driving the post into the ground.
Post-medieval	The period following the Middle Ages, dating from approximately AD 1500-1800.
Prehistoric	The period of human history prior to the introduction of writing. In Britain the prehistoric period lasts from the first evidence of human occupation about 500,000 BC, until the Roman invasion in the middle of the 1st century AD.
Ridge and Furrow	The remains of arable cultivation consisting of raised rounded strips separated by furrows. It is characteristic of open field agriculture.

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Romano-British	Pertaining to the period dating from AD 43-410 when the Romans occupied Britain.
Saxon	Pertaining to the period dating from AD 410-1066 when England was largely settled by tribes from northern Germany
Saxo-Norman	Saxo-Norman is the very end of the Anglo-Saxon period in England and the start of the Norman occupation, typically between 1060 and 1100

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Appendix 3

THE ARCHIVE

The archive consists of:

1 Context register sheet

9 Context records

3 Trench record sheets

1 Photographic record sheet

1 Section record sheet

3 Daily record sheets

2 Drawings sheets

All primary records and finds are currently kept at:

Archaeological Project Services
The Old School
Cameron Street
Heckington
Sleaford
Lincolnshire
NG34 9RW

The ultimate destination of the project archive is: Cambridgeshire County Council Archaeological Archive Stores

Event number:	ECB 7541
Archaeological Project Services Site Code:	GMBL23
OASIS Record Number:	archaeol1-531853

The discussion and comments provided in this report are based on the archaeology revealed during the site investigations. Other archaeological finds and features may exist on the development site but away from the areas exposed during the course of this fieldwork. *Archaeological Project Services* cannot confirm that those areas unexposed are free from archaeology nor that any archaeology present there is of a similar character to that revealed during the current investigation.

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