



Shenley Park, Vale of Aylesbury

Local Plan Allocation

Cultural Heritage Impact Assessment

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Summary

Oxford Archaeology (OA) was commissioned by Buckinghamshire Council to prepare a cultural heritage impact assessment (CHIA) for Shenley Park, Milton Keynes (NGR: SP 818 330). The CHIA was produced to contribute to the preparation of a supplementary planning document (SPD), which supports the interpretation of the allocation policy for Shenley Park in the Vale of Aylesbury Local Plan (VALP).

The Shenley Park CHIA focuses on the late Iron Age and Roman settlement discovered and partially investigated recently through a geophysical survey and archaeological evaluation. The aims of the CHIA were threefold: to determine the significance of the settlement; to assess the potential impacts from development on the remains; and consider the potential for excavation of the site to contribute to regional research objectives.

Assessment of the archaeological remains at Shenley Park, supported by an inter-site comparison, has determined that the settlement is of local significance and does not warrant preservation *in situ*. However, the settlement has good potential for addressing regional research objectives and contributing to the understanding of late Iron Age and Roman settlement in the region, particularly the south-western part of Milton Keynes, for which the level of knowledge is less advanced compared to other areas of the city.

The deposit model produced as part of the CHIA has indicated that development of the site for housing and other uses for which ground works would be required will disturb the archaeological remains within the site. Should such development come forward on this part of the site allocation, it is anticipated that a programme of archaeological investigation would be necessary to mitigate the impact of the development. Should areas of highest archaeological sensitivity, including the remains of settlement in the north-east part of the site, be excluded from direct impacts, it is recommended that appropriate measures be put into place to protect those areas from non-direct impacts, such as compression and water-management schemes. The requirement and scope of all archaeological work will need to be agreed with Buckinghamshire County Archaeology Service prior to commencement.

If this part of the site allocation is preserved *in situ*, then agricultural activity, such as ploughing, will continue to have a negative impact on the archaeological remains.

1 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1.1 Oxford Archaeology (OA) was commissioned by Buckinghamshire Council to prepare a cultural heritage impact assessment (CHIA) for the southern parcel (Area 2) of the Shenley Park allocation, Milton Keynes, henceforth known as 'the site' (Fig. 1).
- 1.1.2 A brief for the CHIA was set by Buckinghamshire Council Archaeology Service and circulated in January 2023 (BCAS 2022). This report, addressing the brief, has been prepared in accordance with the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists' (CIfA) *Standards and guidance for historic environment desk-based assessments* (2020) and *Planning practice guidance – historic environment* (2021), published by the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government.

2 LOCATION, TOPOGRAPHY AND GEOLOGY

- 2.1.1 Shenley Park is situated within the parish of Whaddon, a village on the south-western edge of the unitary authority of the city of Milton Keynes, of which it forms part (Fig. 1). It was investigated by means of an archaeological evaluation in 2020 (Border Archaeology 2021) and before that a geophysical survey (Archaeological Surveys Ltd 2017). The geophysical survey extended across two parcels of land, Areas 1 and 2, with the former being north of Shenley Road and the latter being south of Shenley Road. Area 1 measured c 28ha. The southern parcel, Area 2, which covers an area of some 35.2ha and is the subject of this impact assessment, was subsequently investigated through the archaeological evaluation.
- 2.1.2 Area 2 is centred on SP 818 330. It is located between the A421, which marks the site's southern boundary, and Shenley Road, which forms the site's northern boundary. The site is bounded to the east by Swan's Way, a long-distance public footpath, which also marks the border of the city of Milton Keynes and county of Buckinghamshire. Tattenhoe Park lies immediately east of Swan Way. Woodland and open fields lie to the west of the site. Woodpond Farm and Bottlehouse Farm are located at the site's south-western and north-western corners respectively.
- 2.1.3 At its northern extent, the site lies at approximately 126m above Ordnance Datum (aOD), dropping to c 118m aOD to the south (Border Archaeology 2021). A watercourse extends on an approximate east-west alignment through the southern part of the site. The British Geological Survey records the bedrock geology as Stewartby Member – Mudstone, which formed between 166.1 and 163.5 million years ago during the Jurassic period. The superficial geology is recorded as Till, Mid Pleistocene – Diamicton, which formed between 860 and 116 thousand years ago during the Quaternary period (BGS nd).
- 2.1.4 The site is located at the southern extent of the local character area of Whaddon Chase, which was established in the medieval period as a hunting forest and today encompasses an area of mixed farming, small fields, and woodland parcels.

3 PROJECT BACKGROUND

3.1 Definition

3.1.1 The definition of an archaeological cultural heritage impact assessment ('CHIA') is laid out in the Principles of Cultural Heritage Impact Assessment in the UK, which was jointly published on 20 July 2021 by ClfA, IHBC and IEMA2.

3.1.2 Paragraphs 1.4–1.6 state:

1.4 Cultural heritage impact assessment ('CHIA') is concerned with understanding the consequences of change to cultural significance. At a fundamental level, CHIA is used to make informed decisions about the sustainable management of cultural heritage assets.

1.5 The need for CHIA is triggered whenever somebody proposes to do something which could result in change to a cultural heritage asset or assets. This might be a plan, a policy or a project (collectively referred to here as 'proposal').

1.6 This change could be at any scale, from the smallest intervention into the fabric of a historic building, to a policy for creating new towns. This need might occur under any of the planning, consenting or legislative regimes in the UK, or in an international context.

3.2 Background

3.2.1 In September 2021, the Vale of Aylesbury Local Plan (VALP) was adopted and included Shenley Park as a major site for development (D-WHA001). To ensure a comprehensive development of the site, the VALP states that a supplementary planning document (SPD) is to be prepared for the Shenley Park site and that proposals should comply with specific criteria including:

l. Archaeological assessment and evaluation shall be required to be submitted to the Council. Development must minimise impacts on the Statutory Ancient Monument of Site of Snelshall Monastery on the northern boundary of the site.

m. The scheme layout shall have regard to the findings of an archaeological investigation and preserve in situ any remains of more than local importance.

3.2.2 In 2017 and 2018, geophysical survey and archaeological trial trenching were carried out at Shenley Park. The archaeological works identified a substantial Roman settlement within the north-eastern area of the southern parcel at NGR 482018 233231. The results of the works are covered in the following reports:

- Archaeological Surveys Ltd, 2017 Shenley Park, Whaddon, Buckinghamshire: Magnetometer Survey Report
- Border Archaeology, 2021 Archaeological Field Evaluation: Shenley Park (Phase 1), Whaddon, Buckinghamshire

3.2.3 Buckinghamshire Council is currently in the process of producing the SPD and has consulted with BCAS and Historic England with regard to the substantial Roman settlement identified within the allocation site. Due to the policies surrounding the preservation *in situ* of any remains of more than local significance, it is imperative that

the significance of the Roman settlement is assessed and determined before the SPD is finalised.

3.2.4 This document has been produced to determine the significance of the Roman settlement.

4 METHODOLOGY

4.1 Scope and sources consulted

4.1.1 The Shenley Park CHIA has three key considerations:

- determine the significance of the settlement;
- assess the potential impacts from development on the significance of the remains; and
- consider the potential for excavation of the site to contribute to regional research objectives.

4.1.2 Using the information provided in the geophysical and trial trenching reports, the key aim of the CHIA is to determine the significance of the Roman settlement and address Principle A of the CHIA guidelines ('Understanding cultural heritage assets') with reference to three analytical stages to determine significance:

- describing the asset;
- ascribing cultural significance; and
- attributing importance.

4.1.3 In order to better understand the level of impact which may arise from the proposed development, a deposit model has been produced – using the results of the evaluation report – to show the depth of the archaeological horizon across the site and areas of deeper or more significant stratigraphy. The deposit model illustrates where remains are at risk of impact from different elements of the proposed development (housing, roads, landscaping, etc), and consideration has also been given to non-direct impacts, such as changes to the water table, compression or change in land use.

4.1.4 The CHIA uses the information to address Principle B of the CHIA guidelines ('Evaluating the consequences of change') with reference to three analytical stages to determine significance:

- understanding change;
- assessing impact; and
- weighting the effect.

4.1.5 In addition, the CHIA considers the research potential of the site, were it to be excavated, with reference to the Roman research agenda of the *Solent-Thames Research Framework for the Historic Environment* (Hey and Hind 2014).

4.1.6 The following sources were consulted to inform this assessment:

- the Historic Environment Records (HER) for Buckinghamshire, Milton Keynes, Northampton, Bedfordshire Central, and Bedfordshire Borough;
- the Rural Settlement of Roman Britain project;

- the resource assessment of the Solent-Thames Research Framework;
- archaeological evaluation and excavation reports published within *Records of Buckinghamshire* or monographs;
- unpublished reports available from the Archaeological Data Service or other online sources or through the HERs;
- LiDAR data held by the Environment Agency and geotechnical data held by the British Geological Survey.

4.1.7 During a meeting between OA and Buckinghamshire Council to discuss the brief, it was established that a standard search of HER data, even limited to Roman rural settlements, would result in an overwhelming amount of information, much of which would not be immediately relevant to addressing the aims set out in the brief, and that it would be more productive to contact archaeological and HER officers direct to identify key, well-understood, sites that could be more usefully compared with Shenley Park.

4.1.8 Consequently, the initial request made to the five HER areas confined the searches to unpublished late Iron Age or Roman rural settlements, including villas, where the site plan, development, interpretation, and chronology were reasonably well understood from geophysical survey and/or archaeological investigation. Records indicating very partial site plans, sites of very uncertain interpretation, and find-spots that merely indicated the presence of settlements or other Roman activity were excluded.

4.1.9 Even based on these criteria, the searches of Bedfordshire and Northamptonshire alone returned hundreds of records, and it would not have been possible to examine all of them in detail within a reasonable timeframe. While the records have been scanned for the most pertinent information, the inter-site comparison has focused on selected published and unpublished reports.

4.1.10 For the Milton Keynes and Buckinghamshire HER areas, after further consultation with the archaeological and HER officers, it was decided to focus on published reports and readily available unpublished reports and limit the search of the HER, using the above criteria, to sites investigated within the last five years, bringing the collection of data up to date.

4.2 Deposit model

4.2.1 As required by the brief (BCAS 2022), data for the deposit model were extracted from the evaluation report by Border Archaeology (2021). An Excel spreadsheet was compiled with the following data categories:

- Trench number
- Feature date (where known)
- Count of trench
- National grid reference
- Location of grid reference within trench
- Height in metres of top of archaeological horizon within trench
- Height in metres of base of archaeological horizon within trench
- Thickness of topsoil in metres
- Thickness of subsoil in metres if present

- Indication on whether colluvium present
- Thickness of colluvium in metres if present
- Notes on colluvium
- Height of ground level in metres if available
- General notes

4.2.2 In addition, LiDAR data, which included surface heights, were obtained for the site. The data were used to create several plans designed to address the project's objectives (Figs 5–7).

4.3 Assumptions and limitations

- 4.3.1 Data used to compile this report consist of secondary information derived from a variety of sources. The assumption is made that these data are reasonably accurate.
- 4.3.2 The records held by the various HERs are not a record of all surviving heritage assets, but a record of the discovery of a wide range of archaeological and historical components of the historic environment. The information held within it is not complete and does not preclude the subsequent discovery of further heritage assets that are, at present, unknown.

5 WALKOVER SURVEY

- 5.1.1 Following discussions between OA and Buckinghamshire Council, a walkover survey of the site was not deemed to be necessary.

6 DESCRIPTION OF THE SITE

6.1 Stratigraphy and chronology

- 6.1.1 The magnetometer survey identified a concentration of rectilinear and curvilinear anomalies in the north-eastern part of the site south of Shenley Road (Fig. 2). The area of anomalies extended for some 280m north-south and 140m across its widest east-west axis. The features detected by the survey represent a settlement comprising enclosures of various size, some sub-divided into smaller spaces. Some of the enclosures contained curvilinear arcs denoting potential roundhouses. Smaller, discrete responses were interpreted as possible pits. Areas of burning were also noted. Discrete and linear anomalies and magnetic responses of a more dispersed character were recorded to the west and south of the concentration.
- 6.1.2 The subsequent evaluation confirmed the presence of an enclosure complex, interpreted as an arrangement of paddocks, stockades or similar spaces for livestock and crops, and domestic smallholdings. Enclosures in the southern part of the settlement concentration were interpreted as probable stock enclosures, and ancillary enclosures were identified in the northern and eastern parts of the settlement concentration. Gullies and postholes associated with possible roundhouses were recorded in trenches 149 and 154 on the western side of the central part of the complex. The presence of further structures is suggested by postholes recorded in ten trenches and beamslots in two trenches. Pits were recorded

in 13 trenches. Most of the pits and postholes were uncovered in the central and southern parts of the settlement concentration, the northern part being largely devoid of features other than enclosure and dividing ditches.

- 6.1.3 The evaluation also investigated the dispersed features to the west and south of the settlement concentration, identifying ditches and occasional discrete features, such as pits. Some of the features may relate to field systems but are at present poorly defined. Something of a concentration of features was recorded in the south-western part of the site and may represent another area of settlement. Pottery, ceramic building material, and animal bones were collected, while in places, such as trench 245, darker deposits reflected 'increased domestic activity.'
- 6.1.4 A north-south-aligned routeway defined by ditches is suggested by geophysical anomalies in the north-eastern corner of the site.
- 6.1.5 Dating evidence suggested that occupation within the settlement concentration spanned the early 1st to 3rd century AD, with the most intensive period of activity taking place between the late 1st and late 2nd century AD. Middle Iron Age settlement was recorded at Tattenhoe Park, less than 500m to the east of the settlement concentration, but activity here appears to have ceased before the settlement at Shenley Park was established (Taylor 2010).
- 6.1.6 Features of early or mid-1st century date were recorded in some 25 trenches, located mainly in the central and southern part of the settlement concentration. Activity of this date was also recorded south and south-west of the settlement concentration. Some 42 trenches contained features dated to the late 1st or 2nd century AD. The trenches were recorded across the site, including the northern part of the settlement concentration and south and south-west of the settlement concentration. Just 15 trenches contained features of 2nd- or 3rd-century date. These were recorded in the northern and central parts of the settlement concentration. The chronological distribution of trenches points to the establishment of the settlement in the early or mid-1st century AD, an intensification of settlement activity across the site, including outside the settlement concentration area, during the late 1st or 2nd century, and a contraction to a core area of the settlement concentration in the later 2nd or early 3rd century.
- 6.1.7 While occupation at Shenley Park appears to have ceased during the 3rd century, features of 2nd to 4th century date were recorded c 1km to the north-east at Portishead Drive, Tattenhoe (Abrams 2002), although quite how the two settlements relate – representing separate communities or a major relocation of a single community – is uncertain.

6.2 Artefactual and environmental evidence

- 6.2.1 The artefactual assemblage reveals something of the character of the settlement. Almost 2500 sherds of pottery were collected from the site. The assemblage was dominated by wares made locally in the vicinity of the settlement or in the wider Milton Keynes area. Regionally traded wares largely comprised pink grogged ware (Tomber and Dore 1998, fabric PNK GT), the site benefitting from its proximity to the manufacturing site in the Stowe/Buckingham area. Regionally traded wares were

otherwise poorly represented, being limited to Dorset black-burnished ware and products of the Nene Valley and Oxford industries. Samian ware from south or central Gaul was present in small quantities and limited almost exclusively to a narrow range of plainware forms. Amphorae were absent.

- 6.2.2 The condition of the pottery assemblage was mixed. Surfaces were in good condition and abrasion was limited, but the overall mean sherd weight was low – just 9g – suggesting that much of the pottery has undergone multiple episodes of disturbance and deposition. Context-groups were generally small, but some large groups were present. Trenches 112, 130, 131, 163, 173 and 179 contained assemblages weighing around 1kg, trenches 146 and 234 contained groups weighing over 2kg, while trench 129 contained a group of over 3kg. These groups, in the central and southern parts of the settlement concentration and south-west of the complex, point to areas where primary waste deposition and settlement activity are likely to have been focused.
- 6.2.3 The pottery report presented in the evaluation report concluded that the ‘assemblage is similar to many others of the same date in the area and, as such, is not especially significant, but it does provide evidence for late Iron Age to early Roman occupation or activity over quite a wide area at this location’ (Perrin 2021, 265).
- 6.2.4 Finds other than pottery were limited and generally fragmentary. The ceramic building material (CBM) consisted of brick and tile fragments in poor condition. A stone roof-tile fragment was also recovered. Much of the material could not be dated with confidence either to the Roman or post-medieval periods, although a few pieces of tegula, imbrex, and flue tile were certainly of Roman date. These hint at the presence of a building or buildings with tiled roofing and hypocaust system, perhaps associated with a villa. Such buildings need not have been located very close to the site, with the material instead potentially arriving from some distance away to be used in ovens or similar structures. In any case, the CBM, like the pottery, had undergone considerable disturbance and redeposition.
- 6.2.5 The 24 pieces of metalwork recovered were largely unidentifiable but included a coin of late 1st-century date and a Colchester derivative-type brooch of late 1st/early 2nd-century date. A fragment of glass, possibly from a bottle, was also recovered. This dated to the 1st–3rd century.
- 6.2.6 A small assemblage of animal bones was recovered. As is typical for the region (Zeepvat and Radford 2007), cattle were the principal domesticate, followed by sheep, goats, and pigs. Butchery evidence suggests that cattle were butchered and processed on-site. A notable number of red deer bones were collected. Some included evidence for carcass processing. The deer bones point to hunting for leisure as well as food.
- 6.2.7 Analysis of the charred plant remains indicated the cultivation of wheat, including spelt, and other cereal crops, notably barley. While preservation was poor, the assemblage suggested that crops were produced, processed, and consumed at the site. Snails from trenches 100, 119 and 129 suggested wooded environments close to the main area of settlement.

6.3 Burials

6.3.1 Funerary activity at the site was confined to a single cremation burial. This was undated but presumed to be of late Iron Age or Roman date. Five cremation burials were recorded at Tattenhoe Park to the east of the settlement concentration. Pottery dated two of the burials to the Iron Age, and radiocarbon dating placed another two between the 2nd to 4th centuries. A fifth burial was undated (Taylor 2010).

7 PATTERN OF ROMAN RURAL SETTLEMENT

7.1 Regional pattern

7.1.1 A targeted search of rural settlement, based on the criteria outlined in section 4.1, returned some 305 records from the Northamptonshire Historic Environment Record (HER), 113 from the Borough of Bedford HER, and 31 from the Central Bedfordshire HER (search ref. 202223/170). Fourteen records were returned for Buckinghamshire (search ref. 1407), including the south-western parts of Milton Keynes, but these were based on narrower criteria, confining as they did the search to the last five years.

7.1.2 Many of the sites presented in the HER searches provide useful parallels to Shenley Park, offering comparative information on site organisation and economy. More generally, the results highlight the wealth of data relating to rural settlement in the Roman period in the wider region.

7.1.3 Some 310 rural settlements are listed in the database of the Rural Settlement of Roman Britain project (Allen *et al.* 2018). Buckinghamshire contains some 90 sites, of which c 40 are within the Milton Keynes unitary authority area. Bedfordshire contains 91 sites, while Northamptonshire contains 129 sites.

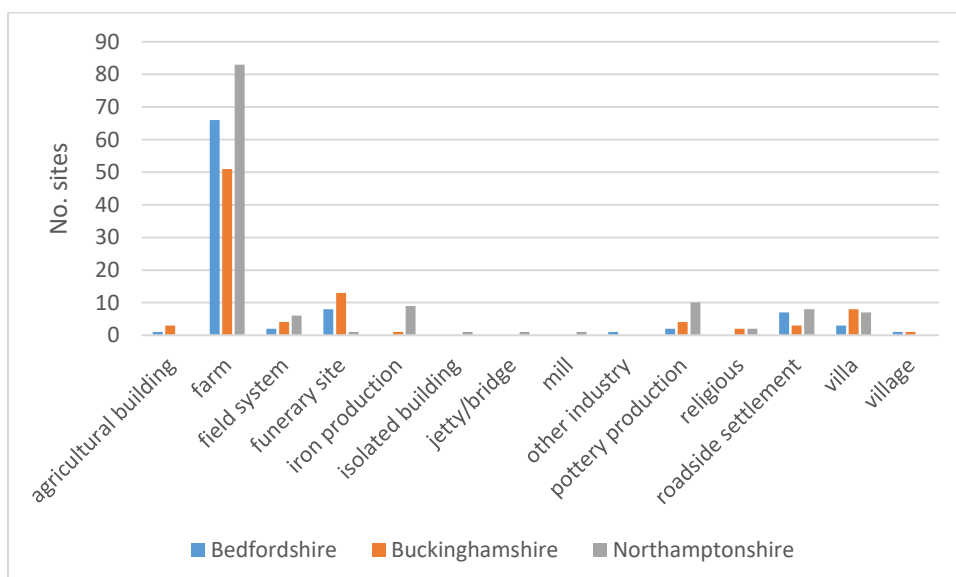


Chart 1: Number of rural settlements by county and settlement type (Data: Allen *et al.* 2018)

7.1.4 Examining the principal categories assigned to sites by the Rural Settlement of Roman Britain project, farms are by far the most numerous rural site type in the region (Chart

1). Of the three counties, Northamptonshire has the highest proportion of farms at 73% by site count. Bedfordshire is not far behind with 64%, while the percentage for Buckinghamshire is a little lower at 57%.

7.1.5 The Rural Settlement of Roman Britain database contains 59 sites in Bedfordshire, Buckinghamshire and Northamptonshire that are categorised as complex settlements. The category is defined as a settlement with significant differentiation of space, as indicated by a system of conjoined enclosures or the presence of large enclosures with internal divisions. The settlement type emerged in the early Roman period and is most characteristic of the central belt region where Milton Keynes is located (Smith *et al.* 2016, 28–30). Buckinghamshire contained relatively few, just nine, compared with 30 in Bedfordshire and 20 in Northamptonshire. Six of the nine complex settlements identified in Buckinghamshire are in Milton Keynes, and include Bancroft, Wavendon Gate, and Broughton Manor Farm.

7.1.6 While overall numbers of other site categories are low, it can be noted that Buckinghamshire has the highest proportion of villa-related sites at 14%, compared with 9% and 1% for Bedfordshire and Northamptonshire respectively. Many other categories were recorded in very low numbers, including field systems, industrial sites, religious sites and agricultural buildings.

7.2 Local pattern

7.2.1 Shenley Park is located on the south-western edge of a zone of known Roman settlement that extends across the modern city of Milton Keynes. Figure 3 presents the distribution of a representative selection of sites, based on consultation of published sources (including monographs and Records of Buckinghamshire) and unpublished sources (including grey literature reports and the results of Historic Environment Record searches).

7.2.2 In part, the distribution of sites is an accident of the development of the city. The almost unparalleled opportunity to conduct an extensive and intensive programme of archaeological investigation that preceded the growth of the new town from the late 1960s onwards resulted in a vast number of discoveries (Zeepvat *et al.* 1987). However, other factors ensured that the region was especially attractive for settlement in the Roman period. These include the establishment of the Roman road network that extends across the city, the resources provided by the rivers Ouzel and Ouse and their tributaries, and the fine grazing and arable land. The nucleated settlement or ‘small town’ of *Magiovinium* at Fenny Stratford also exerted a pull for settlers, and the establishment of villas or villa architecture in the northern and north-western part of the modern city speaks of the wealth generated in the region by farming and trade. Villas in the Ouse valley, of which Bancroft is perhaps the best known, are generally concentrated in the northern part of Milton Keynes, although a villa or villa-like buildings are known at Holne Chase (Williams 1987a, 32), some 4km east of Shenley Park, and a villa is suspected at Shenley Brook End (Scott 1993).

7.2.3 As is clear from Figure 3, Shenley Park sits on the edge of the distribution of late Iron Age and Roman-period sites in Milton Keynes in an area that has seen relatively little development. The site therefore provides much-needed data, significantly increasing

our knowledge of the south-western part of Roman Milton Keynes and the landscape beyond.

- 7.2.4 The closest sites of late Iron Age or Roman date are located to the east of Shenley Park. Evidence for settlement spanning the late 2nd to 4th century was recorded at 34/35 Portishead Drive, Tattenhoe (Abrams 2002). That site and Shenley Park only marginally overlap chronologically, and the activity represented at Tattenhoe may point to a relocation of the community that had settled at Shenley Park. Equally, however, there may be a relationship between Roman settlement at Tattenhoe and Snelshall. An excavation at the latter revealed a 1st or 2nd-century enclosure and lean-to structure, and a cluster of pits spanning the 2nd to 4th centuries (Wessex Archaeology 2005).
- 7.2.5 Evaluation trial trenching by Cotswold Archaeology at Far Bletchley, c 2km to the south-east of Shenley Park, recorded four main areas of activity. These contained numerous enclosures and associated features and spanned the late Iron Age/Roman period to the 4th century AD. The pottery assemblage of over 1000 sherds has the same local emphasis that was seen in the Shenley Park assemblage (Evans 2013).
- 7.2.6 Corndryers and associated ditches at Windmill Hill belong to a site with an agricultural-processing function. The site has a later Roman emphasis, with activity largely post-dating the occupation at Shenley Park (Mynard 1987, 39). Occupation nearby at Shenley Road is of uncertain character, but evidence included a 'defensive' enclosure ditch and hints of a substantial building (Williams 1987b, 34).
- 7.2.7 Parallels may be noted between Shenley Park and Fenny Lock, c 6km to the east. Occupation at Fenny Lock continued into the 3rd century AD, with the laying out of small curvilinear enclosures, probably representing additional annexes, outside the principal enclosure (Fig. 4). Cremation and inhumation burials were also recorded (Ford and Taylor 2001). The annexes recall the series of square enclosures at the southern end of the Shenley Park settlement concentration, although whether these represent later additions awaits confirmation.
- 7.2.8 Excavation at Westbury, some 3km north-east of the settlement concentration at Shenley Park, revealed a Roman-period landscape of three successive field systems connected to a trackway. The enclosures forming the field systems were laid out in the 1st century AD and continued into the 2nd century. In the 3rd and 4th century, the enclosures were sub-divided into smaller units or paddocks, perhaps reflecting changes in farming practices. Pits, burials and other features set within enclosures, marked out domestic areas (Ivens 1995, 209).

7.3 Other key comparative sites

- 7.3.1 Other sites within and beyond Milton Keynes provide some useful points of comparison with Shenley Park. The villa at Bancroft appears to have developed from existing native settlement, and in the late Iron Age and later 1st century AD comprised an array of relatively small enclosures, some with internal divisions, set along a boundary ditch and connected to a large trapezoidal enclosure. The villa was established in the late 1st century AD (Williams and Zeepvat 1994).

- 7.3.2 Another well-understood complex farmstead is known at Wavendon Gate on the east side of Milton Keynes (Williams *et al.* 1996). In its earliest form, the settlement comprised a banjo-type enclosure and up to eight roundhouse gullies, most probably dating to the middle Iron Age. These were replaced during the late Iron Age by a system of rectangular enclosures or paddocks. The focus of occupation shifted south from the mid-1st century AD, the settlement comprising a substantial ditched enclosure encompassing an area of some 3ha, with many internal subdivisions. A roundhouse gully, two mid-1st-century pottery kilns, and a small cremation cemetery of 2nd-century date were recorded. There were subsequent modifications to the internal arrangements into the 3rd century. Other developments included the establishment of two corndryers, a roundhouse with an associated metalled surface and pond or waterhole, and there was evidence for iron smelting to the north of the settlement. A deep pit next to the pond contained a symbolic wooden wheel, three complete jars, a flagon and a spearhead, and a stone-lined posthole nearby contained a structured deposit. Two inhumation burials were situated on the periphery of the settlement, possibly part of a larger cemetery. Rich artefactual and ecofactual assemblages were recovered, although levels of occupation declined in the later 3rd–4th century AD.
- 7.3.3 Geophysical survey and excavation at Wavendon Lodge, some 2km east of Wavendon Gate, revealed an extensive area of settlement dating from the late Iron Age/early Roman period to the late Roman period. Excavations at the site uncovered an array of small, ditched enclosures, probably small paddocks for livestock management (Poole *et al.* forthcoming). This had replaced a late Iron Age/early Roman field ditch and was in turn replaced by more substantial ditched enclosures, an arrangement that was maintained through the middle and late Roman periods. Some of the enclosures were separated by a trackway. Other features were sparse, but included a rectangular oven, possible hearths, and several pits.
- 7.3.4 Moving further east to Broughton Manor Farm/Brooklands, extensive excavations there revealed settlement remains in three principal areas (Atkins *et al.* 2014). The settlement evidence related to separate farmsteads that spanned the late Iron Age to late Roman period. Rectilinear enclosures, trackways, field systems, structures and house enclosures, kilns and other industrial features, ritual activity, corndryers, and significant funerary evidence, including the largest group of late Iron Age/early Roman cremation burials in the region, were among the wealth of archaeological evidence encountered.
- 7.3.5 Beyond Milton Keynes, settlements that share aspects of their plans or organisation with Shenley Park (Fig. 4) include Brogborough Hill in Bedfordshire (Simmonds and Welsh 2013), Monksmoor Farm in Northamptonshire (Preece 2019), and Aston Clinton, near Aylesbury (Masefield 2008). At Crick Covert Farm in Northamptonshire, small enclosures and curvilinear gullies marking the location of structures in a middle Iron Age settlement (Hughes and Woodward 2015) resemble the small enclosures at Shenley Park, especially in the southern part of the site, which may also have contained structures, rather than being used exclusively as paddocks.

8 DEPOSIT MODEL

- 8.1.1 Figure 5 shows the topography of the site and evaluation trench locations. It highlights which trenches contained archaeological features and the presence and thickness of colluvium. The figure indicates that surface height of the site, based on LiDAR data, ranges from c 100m to 130m aOD. The lowest part of the site extends along the course of the stream, which flows from western side of the site to the south-east corner. The highest part of the site is to the north, while the south-western and central parts (north of the stream) have middling height values.
- 8.1.2 The results of the evaluation suggest that archaeological remains are concentrated along the eastern half of the site, especially in the north-eastern part, corresponding with the settlement concentration revealed by the geophysical survey. There is another, smaller concentration of archaeological remains on the relatively high ground in the south-western part of the site. Figure 5 indicates that the settlement concentration extends over the higher ground and on the east or south-east facing slope as the surface height drops. It is on this slope that colluvial deposits were observed. These range from 0.09m to 0.48m thick and generally appear to be thickest at the foot of the slope.
- 8.1.3 Sporadic archaeological remains were recorded in lowest part of the site, along the water course in the south-eastern part of the site. The smaller concentration of archaeological remains is located on slightly higher ground to the west in the south-western part of the site.
- 8.1.4 The depth of the archaeological horizon is estimated to range from 0.15m to 0.5m below ground level (Fig. 6). Across the settlement concentration, the depth of the archaeological horizon generally ranges from 0.2m to 0.4m below ground level, although the depth increases to c 0.5m below ground level at the southern part of the settlement concentration at the foot of the slope where the colluvium is thickest. This area also coincides with the more significant stratigraphy, being where archaeological features were densest and finds were concentrated.
- 8.1.5 In the southern part of the site, the archaeological horizon ranges from 0.2m to 0.5m below ground level, but largely sits at a height of between 0.2m and 0.4m below ground level. Areas where the archaeological horizon is predicted to be deeper are in the south-eastern and the western parts of the site, although the evaluation indicated that archaeological remains are sparse there.
- 8.1.6 The archaeological horizon is shallowest – up to 0.3m below ground level – in a band that curves from the north-west corner of the site to the centre, before curving again towards the south-west, although the evaluation suggested that archaeological remains are sparse here.
- 8.1.7 An east-west profile through the site, extending between trench 62 in the west to trench 141 in the east, illustrates the character of the deposits (Figs 6 and 7). The combined thickness of topsoil and subsoil across the profile is relatively constant except between trenches 152 and 153, where land rises in height and the topsoil/subsoil is correspondingly thin. Moving eastwards from trench 149, the land

falls in height and colluvial accumulation is evident. The colluvium appears to be thickest at the foot of the slope.

9 PREVIOUS IMPACTS AND SURVIVAL

- 9.1.1 The Shenley Park allocation encompasses an area of open farmland and woodland. In Area 2, farm buildings are located at the north-western edge of the site (Bottlehouse Farm) and the south-western edge of the site (Woodpond Farm). The site has been used for mixed farming since the medieval period.
- 9.1.2 The principal impact on the site has been deep ploughing. Plough scars were noted during the evaluation in several features, and ploughing is believed to have truncated features, such as a pit in trench 182.

10 ARCHAEOLOGICAL POTENTIAL AND SIGNIFICANCE

10.1 Settlement type and parallels

- 10.1.1 The settlement plan and the range and distribution of features suggest that the settlement at Shenley Park, to use the terminology of the Rural Settlement of Roman Britain project, is a complex farmstead (Smith *et al.* 2016, 28–33). Roman-period farms are very well represented in the region, with Shenley Park being one of many other farms known in the Milton Keynes area and beyond.
- 10.1.2 The development of the settlement concentration at Shenley Park is not fully understood from the evaluation results, but it is unlikely that the entire site plan indicated by the geophysical survey represents contemporaneous activity or occupation. Detailed stratigraphic and phasing information might instead indicate the use and abandonment of some enclosures and areas of domestic activity and the subsequent development of others. This makes the comparison with site plans that have a fuller understanding more challenging. Nevertheless, on a more superficial level, it is possible to detect parallels – and contrasts – between Shenley Park and other sites in the local and wider region.
- 10.1.3 As the search of HER data and the Rural Settlement of Roman Britain project data suggests, complex settlements and field systems are under-represented in Buckinghamshire, and our understanding of late Iron Age and Roman activity in the south-western part of Milton Keynes is not as comprehensive as it is for other areas, such as the eastern side of the city. Shenley Park, through further investigation, offers significant potential to address those gaps in archaeological knowledge.
- 10.1.4 Shenley Park shares with Westbury the establishment of rectilinear enclosures relating to paddocks and larger fields, and a core area of domestic activity. No development of the sort identified at Bancroft occurred at Shenley Park, and there is little to suggest from the currently available evidence, apart from a handful of CBM fragments, that the site was located within the immediate landscape of a villa, although it may have formed part of the wider landscape of a villa estate.

- 10.1.5 There are notable differences between Wavendon Gate and Shenley Park. There was no direct middle Iron Age precursor at Shenley Park, although the middle Iron Age settlement nearby at Tattenhoe Park may have retained ancestral links with the late Iron Age and Roman community at Shenley Park (as is suggested by the location among the roundhouses at Tattenhoe of five cremation burials). On current evidence, Shenley Park lacks the religious and industrial evidence seen at Wavendon Gate, although the absence of corndryers may be a product of chronology, with permanent, formal structures like those recorded at Wavendon Gate mainly being a late Roman phenomenon. The plant remains otherwise indicate processing that would require ovens of some description.
- 10.1.6 While activity at Shenley Park does not appear to have extended as late as that recorded at Wavendon Lodge, east of Wavendon Gate, the two sites are broadly similar in the use and division of space. Both sites also had a predominantly local pottery supply, a small assemblage of fragmentary CBM representing reuse of material originating elsewhere, and animal bone and charred plant assemblages that were similar in composition. The presence of germinated grains, potentially providing evidence of malting, was noted at Wavendon Lodge.
- 10.1.7 Shenley Park lacks many of the elements recorded at the Broughton Manor Farm/Brooklands, notably stone-footed structures, richly furnished cremation burials, and a diverse range of artefactual evidence. However, there are some interesting parallels, especially in the early Roman period. In Area 1 at Broughton Manor Farm (the upper area in the plan shown on Figure 4), a number of relatively small, square or sub-circular enclosures, less than c 20m wide, were interpreted as possible house enclosures. One enclosure contained posthole groups relating to internal structures (Atkins and Rees 2014, fig. 5.1). These are not dissimilar in size and shape in plan to the small, square enclosures at the southern end of the settlement concentration at Shenley Park, some of which may similarly have contained structures. A similar arrangement can be seen at Crick Covert Farm in Northamptonshire.

10.2 Significance

- 10.2.1 On current evidence, the late Iron Age and Roman site at Shenley Park is of local significance. The settlement concentration and secondary settlement area in the south-western part of the site, based on settlement morphology and artefactual assemblages, represent a farmstead or farmsteads of low status. However, there is good potential, through further investigation of the archaeological remains at the site, for increasing understanding of rural settlement in the region.
- 10.2.2 Comparing the settlement morphology at Shenley Park with those of other sites may reveal similarities and differences in site organisation, land use, and farming regimes. For instance, the rectilinear plan of Wavendon Gate has a more planned appearance than Shenley Park, which may have developed in a fairly ad hoc way with, for example, the addition of small enclosures and annexes.
- 10.2.3 No routeway that linked the settlement to the major roads that extended close to the site was detected, and therefore social and trade connections would have been limited, although a routeway in the north-eastern corner of the site is suggested by

the magnetometry results, and the presence of more informal trackways and droveways in other parts of the site can be presumed. Pottery supply at Shenley Park was largely local, the range of regional and imported wares present not being out of the ordinary for a low-status rural site in the region of 1st to 3rd-century date.

- 10.2.4 Stone and ceramic roof tiles and a flue tile fragment derived from a building or buildings of some pretention, but no such building is likely to be located within the site. The quantity of such material is too low to suggest that any building had a tiled roof or hypocaust system, and instead the material is likely to have been brought to the site from elsewhere for secondary use in ovens, hearths, or other small structures.
- 10.2.5 The paucity of coins and other Roman-period metalwork supports an interpretation of low status, although caution must be applied. At Brooklands, a single coin was recovered from an evaluation of 219 trenches (Phases 2–4; Scott 2008), with the subsequent excavation returning 34 coins (Popescu 2014, 299). More coins might therefore be expected at Shenley Park were open-area excavation and a systematic metal-detecting survey to be carried out, although the lack of late Roman activity, a period that saw a dramatic expansion of coin use in the province, would limit the number.
- 10.2.6 The economy was based on mixed farming, with pastoral and arable elements represented. The range and composition of species recorded in the animal bone and plant assemblages are typical of the region (cf Zeepvat and Radford 2010, 92). The animal bone assemblage is small and limited, while the plant remains are fragmentary. There is currently no certain evidence for industrial activity. The geophysical survey detected areas of magnetically enhanced and ferrous material, some of which may relate to metalworking debris. These were outside the settlement concentration but close to the smaller area of settlement in the south-west part of the site.
- 10.2.7 The presence of a relatively high number of red deer bones provides a rare indicator of high (or higher) status at Shenley Park. Notably, of the 22 sites from Bedfordshire, Buckinghamshire and Northamptonshire with red deer bones listed in the Rural Settlement of Roman Britain database, 11 sites were in Buckinghamshire. These include Bancroft villa, Wavendon Gate, and Fenny Lock in Milton Keynes, Aston Clinton Lower Icknield Way Bypass Site B and Coldharbour Farm in or near Aylesbury, and Latimer villa in the south of the county. The significance of the deer bones at Shenley Park is not entirely clear, but the bones illustrate a potential for higher status elements at the site, as well as pointing to the proximity of woodland, the presence of which also being suggested by snails typical of such environments. Indeed, the landscape may not have been entirely dissimilar in appearance to the medieval hunting forest of Whaddon Chase, which comprised areas of mixed farming, small fields, and woodland parcels.
- 10.2.8 A single cremation burial was recorded at Shenley Park. The burial lacked an urn or grave goods and did not appear to form part of a more extensive area of burials. The simple, isolated grave contrasts with the formal, richly adorned cemeteries of, for example, Broughton Manor Farm/Brooklands, Wavendon Gate or Bancroft (Zeepvat and Radford 2010, 99), but again caution must be applied. Simple, isolated burials are typical of 1st and 2nd-century funerary practice at the nucleated roadside settlement

at Fleet Marston/Berryfields, near Aylesbury (Biddulph *et al.* 2019), and therefore the link between burial type and status is not necessarily straightforward.

- 10.2.9 There was no hint of waterlogged deposits in the low ground along the stream, although there remains the potential that such deposits, which might contain organic objects, including material of a religious or ritual character may exist.

11 POTENTIAL IMPACTS

- 11.1.1 The details of the proposed development are not known, but it is likely to include the provision for housing, roads and landscaping, among other elements. With no more than 0.5m between the ground surface and the archaeological horizon, the risk of disturbance to the archaeological remains from development is likely to be high. Any element of development for which foundations, piles or other direct impacts are required is likely to reach the level of the archaeological horizon and severely impact the buried stratigraphy.
- 11.1.2 Where the archaeological horizon is deepest, remains are generally sparse. The majority of archaeological remains – including many of the features associated with the settlement concentration and the smaller focus of activity in the south-western part of the site – are no more than 0.4m deep, and typically between 0.2m and 0.3m deep, and will potentially be exposed to the greatest risk of impact from development.
- 11.1.3 The archaeological horizon in the area of colluvium is mainly no more than 0.4m deep and therefore subject to an equal risk of impact as the archaeological horizon in other areas. Where colluvial deposits were noted, the level of preservation appears to be little different to that seen across the site. The mean sherd weight of pottery from trenches in which colluvial layers were recorded is 11.87g. This compares to an overall site average of 11.07g. However, some of the largest pottery groups – that is, weighing over 1kg – were recovered from evaluation trenches (nos 129, 146, 163, 173, and 179), in which colluvial deposits were exposed. It is therefore anticipated that the colluvial area of the site will be comparatively rich in artefactual evidence.
- 11.1.4 The potential impact from roads and landscaping will depend on the depth of disturbance anticipated to result from such work. If the depth of disturbance is likely to be less than 0.2m below ground level, then the risk of impact will be low, as archaeological remains are projected to be deeper. If such work is likely to extend to a depth of more than 0.2m, then the risk of impact will be higher and increase with depth.
- 11.1.5 It is anticipated that development of the site will require a programme of archaeological mitigation to reduce the impact of the development. If proposals retain the areas of greatest archaeological sensitivity as green space – the settlement concentration, the smaller settlement area in the south-western part of the site, and potentially the low-lying ground along the stream, where waterlogged deposits may survive – it is recommended that these be fenced off to prevent heavy machines accessing the area to reduce non-direct impacts, such as compression. Any flood prevention measures, such as the digging of balance ponds, should also avoid the sensitive areas of archaeology unless a programme of mitigation is carried out.

11.1.6 If this part of the site allocation were to be preserved *in situ* and retained for agricultural use, ploughing and compression from agricultural machinery will continue to have a negative impact on the archaeological remains, which will be gradually denuded over time. The archaeological remains may be preserved *in situ* without any significant impact were the site to be excluded from agricultural use and developed as open space or for green infrastructure.

12 POTENTIAL FOR FURTHER WORK

12.1 Overall potential

12.1.1 The results of the geophysical survey revealed an extensive plan of a rural Roman settlement. The subsequent evaluation identified the settlement as a low-status one, lacking as it did many of the elements seen in other settlements in the region, such as Wavendon Lodge, Bancroft and Broughton Manor Farm/Brooklands. However, the site has good potential for enhancing understanding of Roman rural settlement in the region, and further excavation may potentially reveal other evidence not so far seen at Shenley Park, such as pottery production, metalworking and other industrial or craft activity, and evidence associated with crop processing and, possibly, for malting and brewing.

12.2 Solent-Thames Research Framework

12.2.1 The results of the evaluation suggest that the archaeological remains at Shenley Park have good potential to address areas of research highlighted in the Roman research agenda of the Solent-Thames Research Framework (Fulford 2014).

12.2.2 The chronological emphasis of the site, with the results of the evaluation indicating the main period of activity spanning the early/mid-1st century AD to mid/late 2nd century AD, allows the site to contribute to research item 12.1: Inheritance:

- Sites with well-preserved deposits of both late Iron Age and Roman date should be given careful attention in order to investigate continuity of local tradition at these sites. Sampling strategies should ensure that as wide a range of contexts are sampled as possible. Radiocarbon dating should be used more widely and systematically to help understand change between the late Iron Age and early Roman period.

12.2.3 Understanding the Iron Age to Roman transition at the site will be enhanced with reference to the Iron Age settlement at Tattenhoe Park. Can a gap in activity between the site – radiocarbon dating at Tattenhoe Park suggests that some 200 years separated the two settlements – be confirmed, for example by radiocarbon dating of suitable material from Shenley Park? The apparent gap in activity notwithstanding, to what extent did cultural and economic practices continue, as may be detected through, for example, the composition of ceramic and animal bone assemblages?

12.2.4 Shenley Park also has potential to address areas of research concerning landscape and land-use, particularly with reference to *Magiovinium* and other sites in the region. Item 12.4.1 of the Solent-Thames Research Framework states:

- Studies of different types of site within a local area should be given high priority, in order to build up a picture of supply and demand eg urban sites and those in their hinterland.

12.2.5 The site has good potential to contribute to our understanding of settlement on the claylands of the Vale of Aylesbury. As item 12.6.2 of the research framework states:

- Equally important is the need to gain an understanding of settlement, its density and variability as well as economy in other environments, such as claylands and heathlands. We particularly need a much better characterisation of settlement patterns in the Vale of Aylesbury, Buckinghamshire.

12.2.6 The site similarly has potential to offer data which can contribute to the investigation of item 12.6.4, relating to patterns of development and abandonment:

- The evidence for major change in settlement occupation across the diverse landscapes of the region between the late Iron Age and the early medieval period needs to be collated.

13 CONCLUSION

13.1.1 The aims of the Shenley Park CHIA were threefold: to determine the significance of the settlement; to assess the potential impacts from development on the significance of the remains; and consider the potential for excavation of the site to contribute to regional research objectives.

13.1.2 Assessment of the archaeological remains at Shenley Park, supported by an inter-site comparison, has determined that the settlement is of local significance and does not warrant preservation *in situ*. However, the settlement has good potential for addressing regional research objectives and contributing to the understanding of late Iron Age and Roman settlement in the region, particularly the south-western part of Milton Keynes, for which the level of knowledge is less advanced compared to other areas of the city.

13.1.3 Detailed development proposals have yet to be confirmed, but the deposit model produced as part of the current assessment has indicated that development of the site for housing and other uses for which ground works would be required will disturb the archaeological remains within the site. Should such development come forward on this part of the site allocation, it is anticipated that a programme of archaeological investigation would be necessary to mitigate the impact of the development. Should areas of highest archaeological sensitivity, including the remains of settlement in the north-east part of the site, be excluded from direct impacts, it is recommended that appropriate measures be put into place to protect those areas from non-direct impacts, such as compression and water-management schemes. The requirement and scope of all archaeological work will need to be agreed with Buckinghamshire County Archaeology Service prior to commencement.

13.1.4 If this part of the site allocation were to be preserved *in situ*, then agricultural activity, such as ploughing, will continue to have a negative impact on the archaeological remains unless the site is developed as open space or for green infrastructure.

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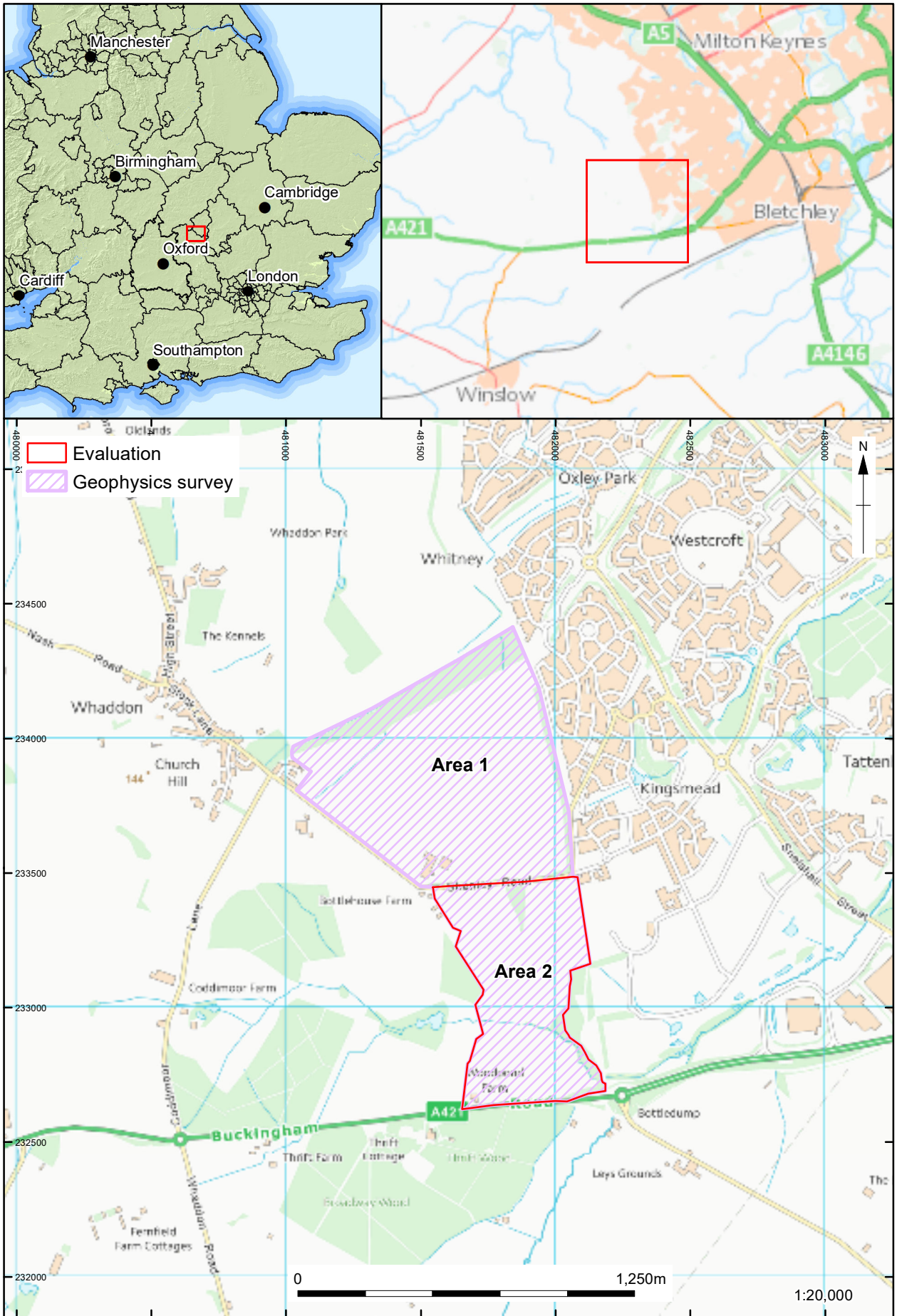
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Figure 1: Site location

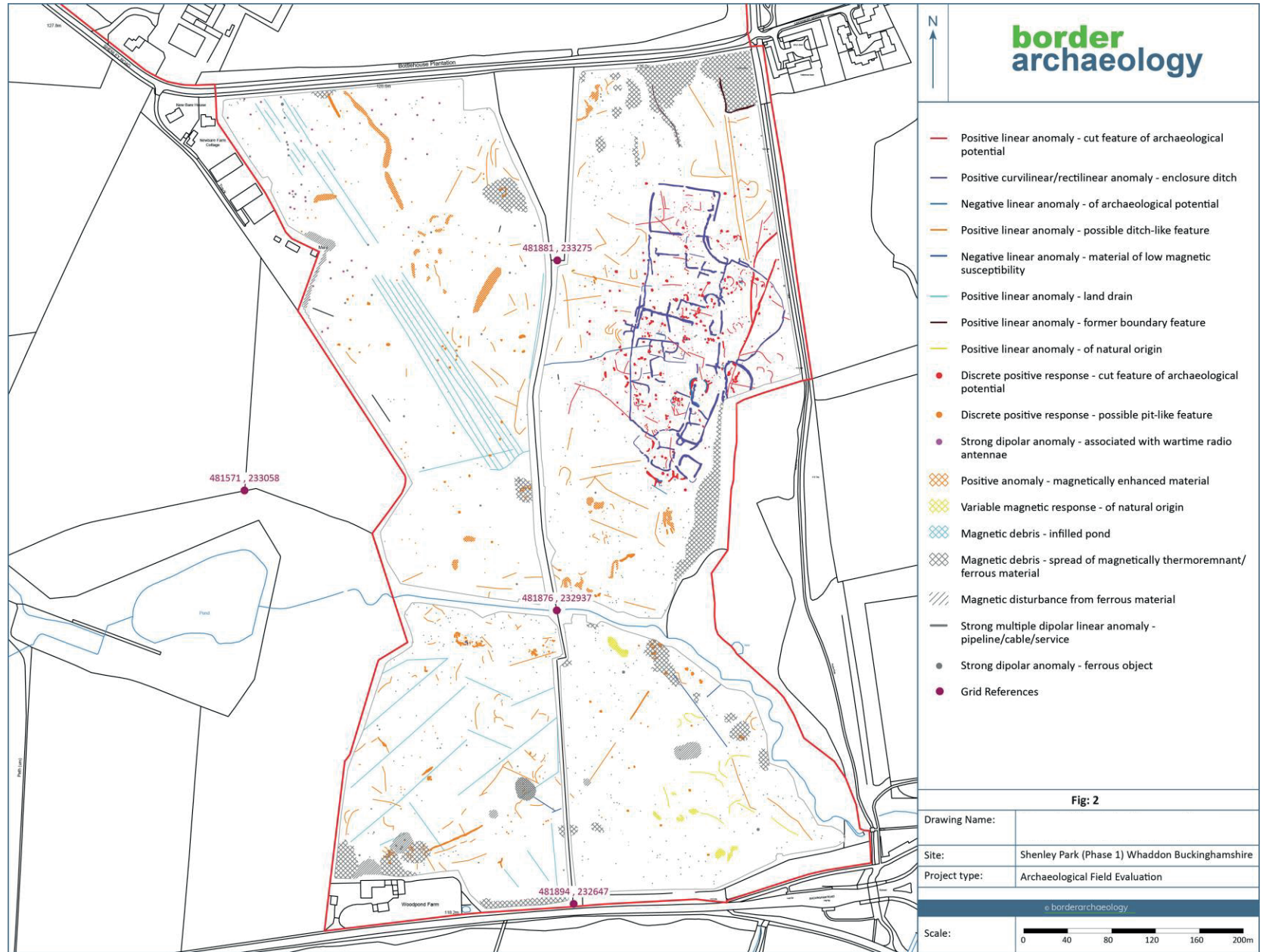
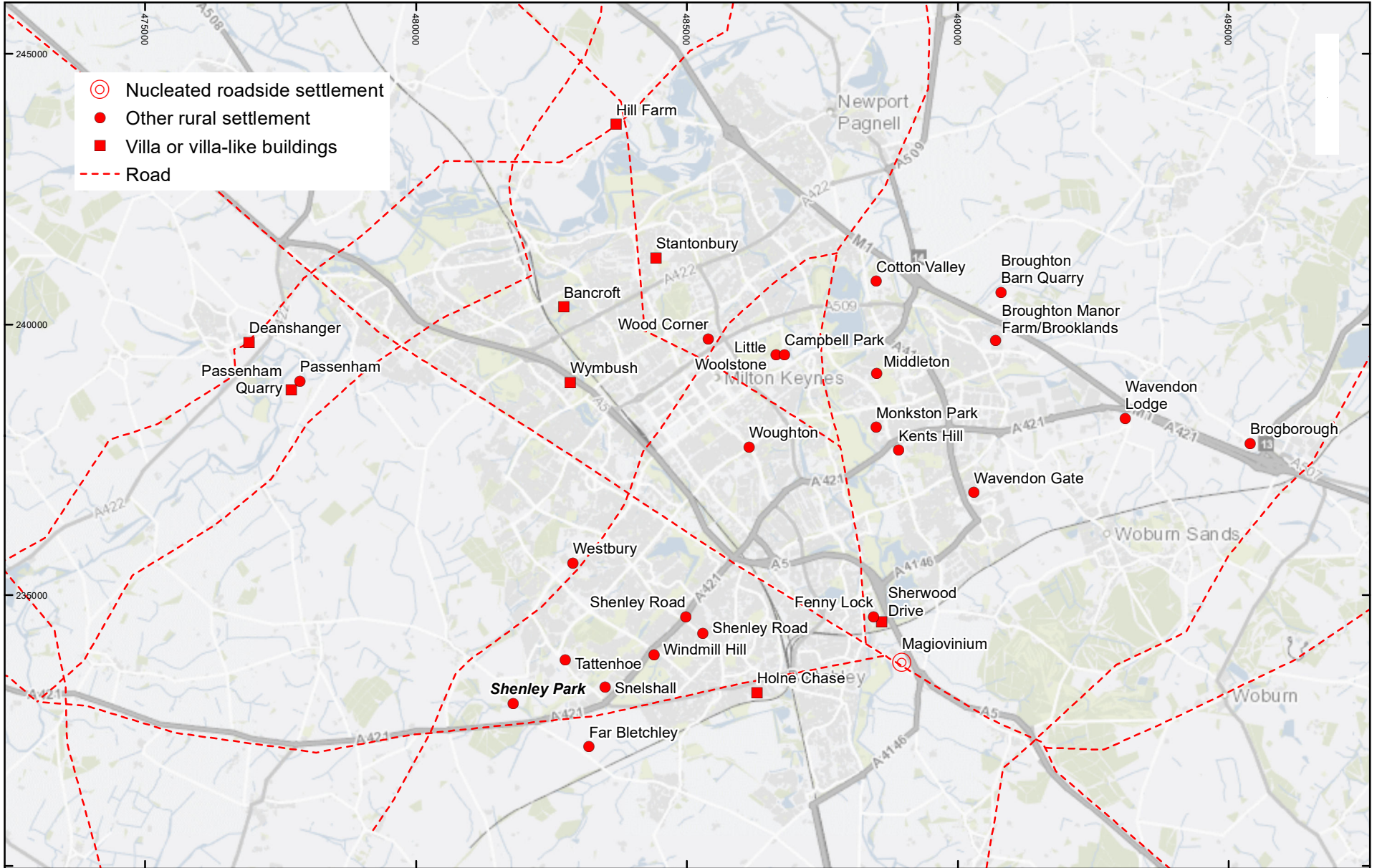


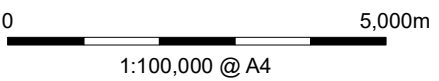
Figure 2: Results of geophysical survey by Archaeological Surveys Ltd (after Border Archaeology 2021, fig. 2)

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Figure 3: Map of selected Roman rural settlements in the Milton Keynes area



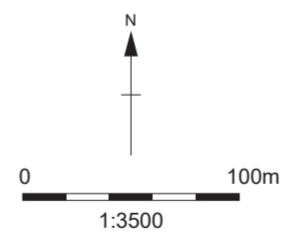
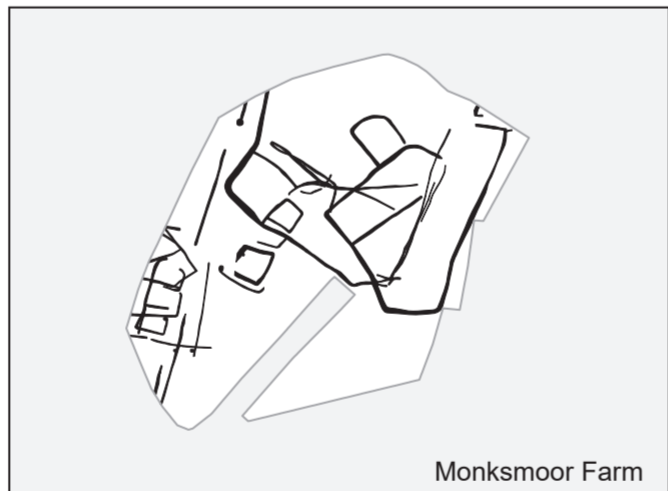
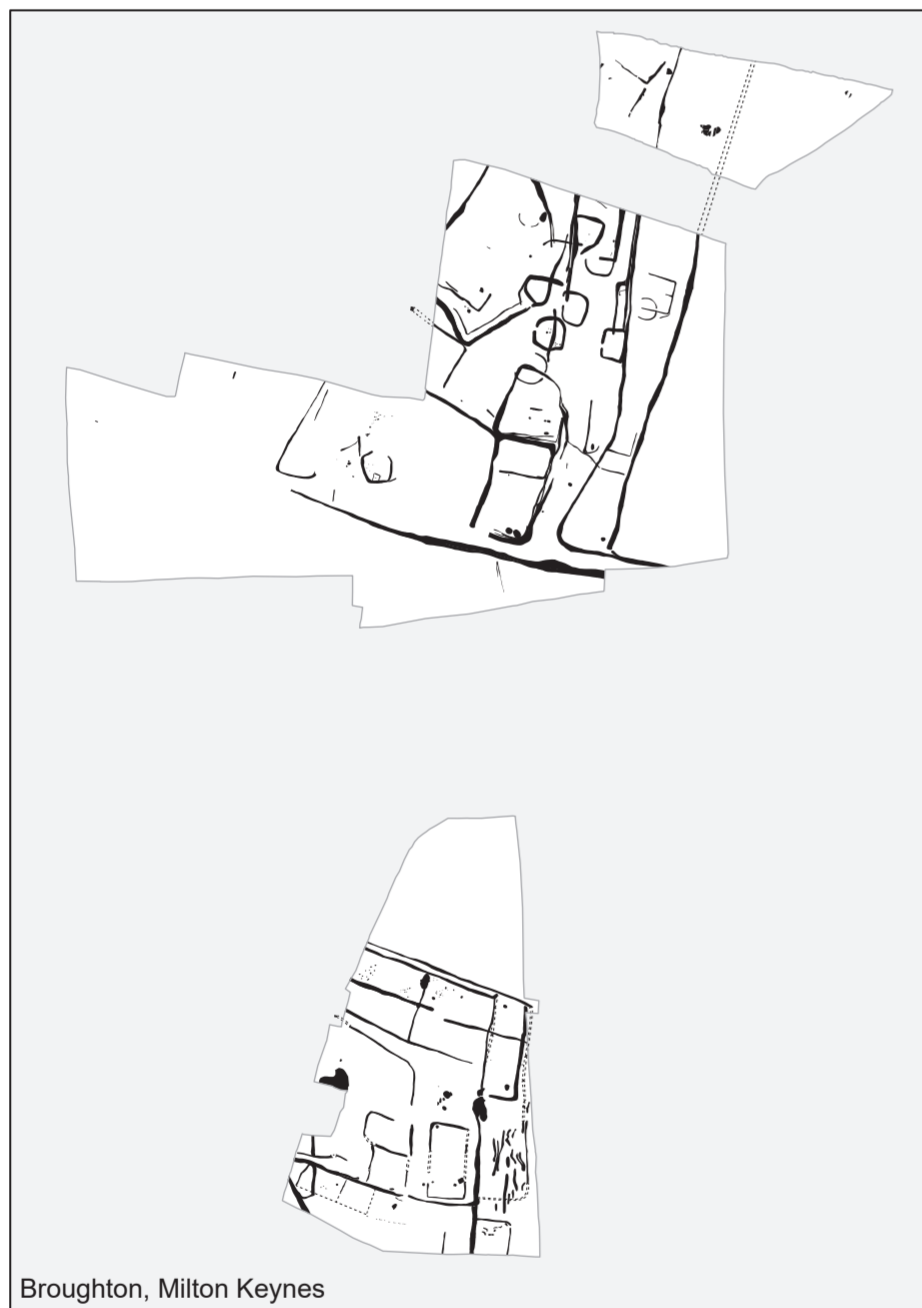
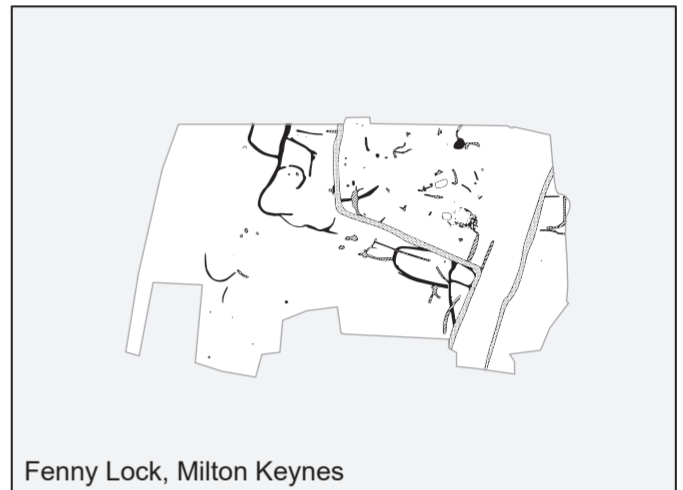
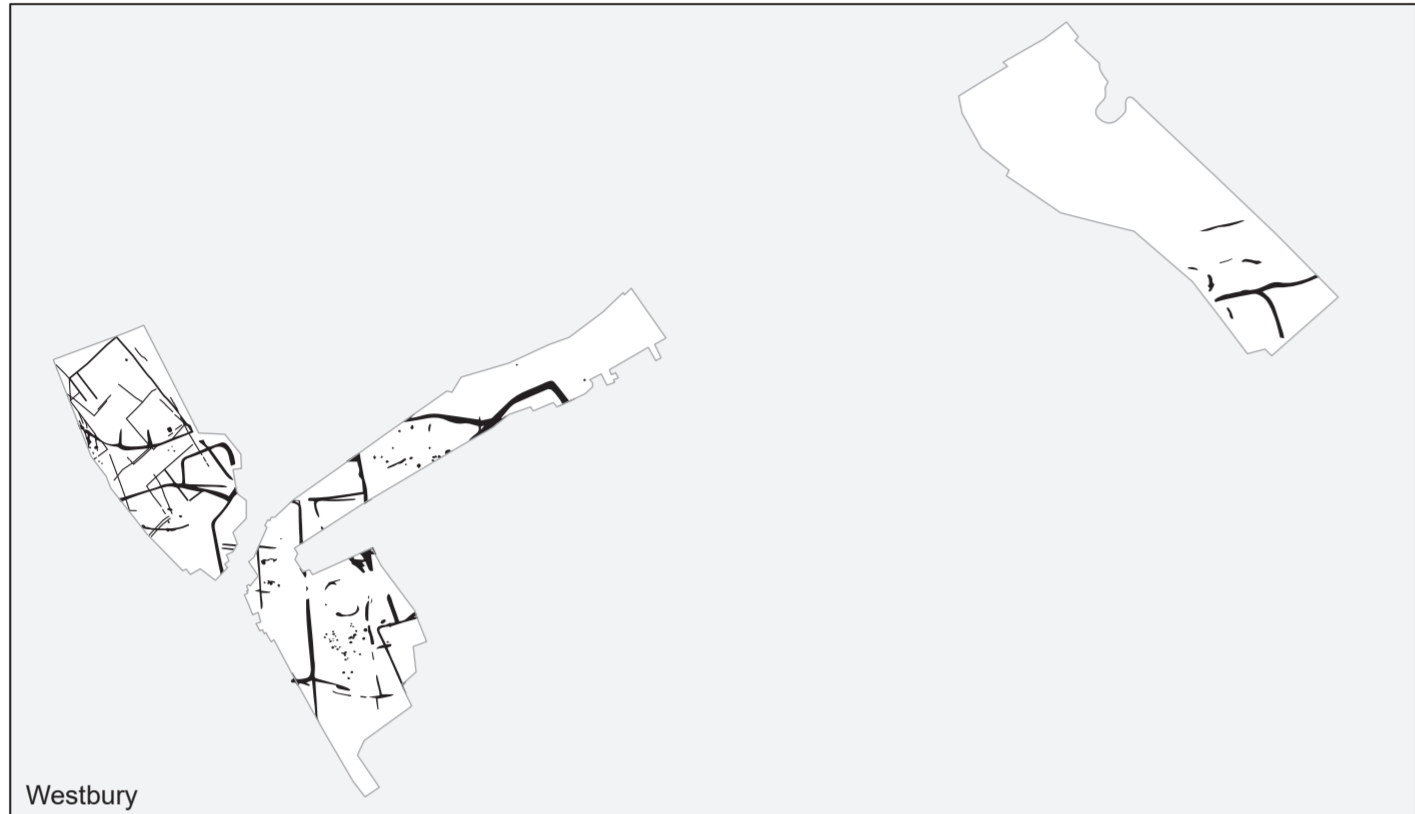
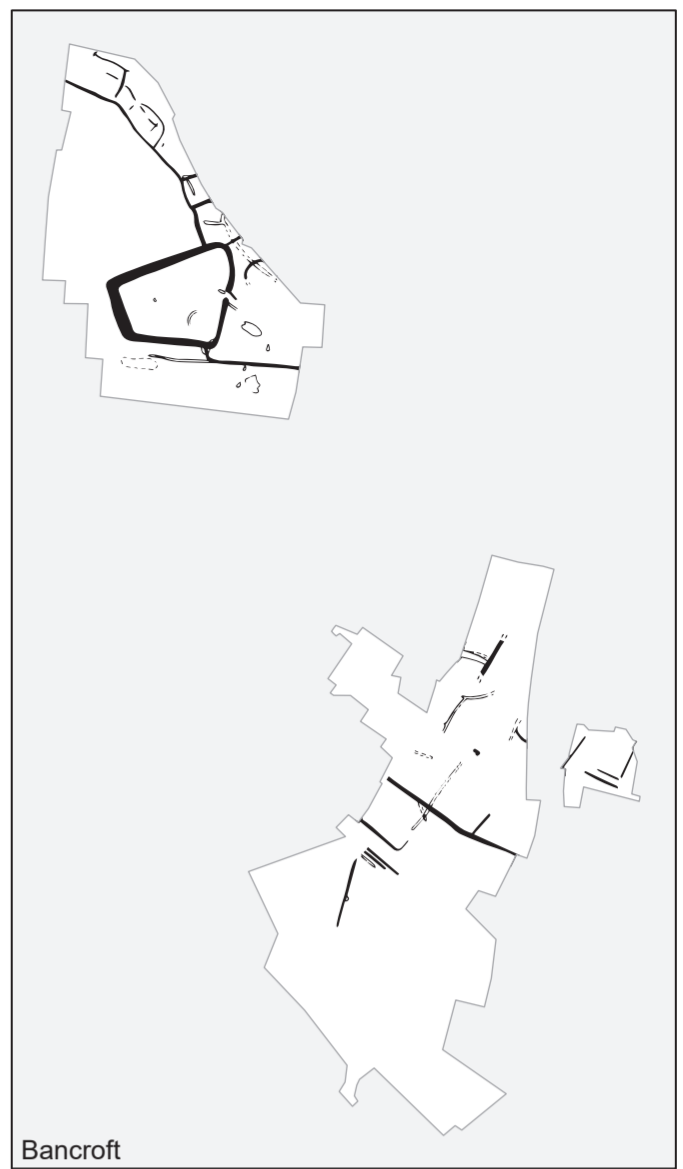


Figure 4: Comparative plans of selected Roman rural settlements

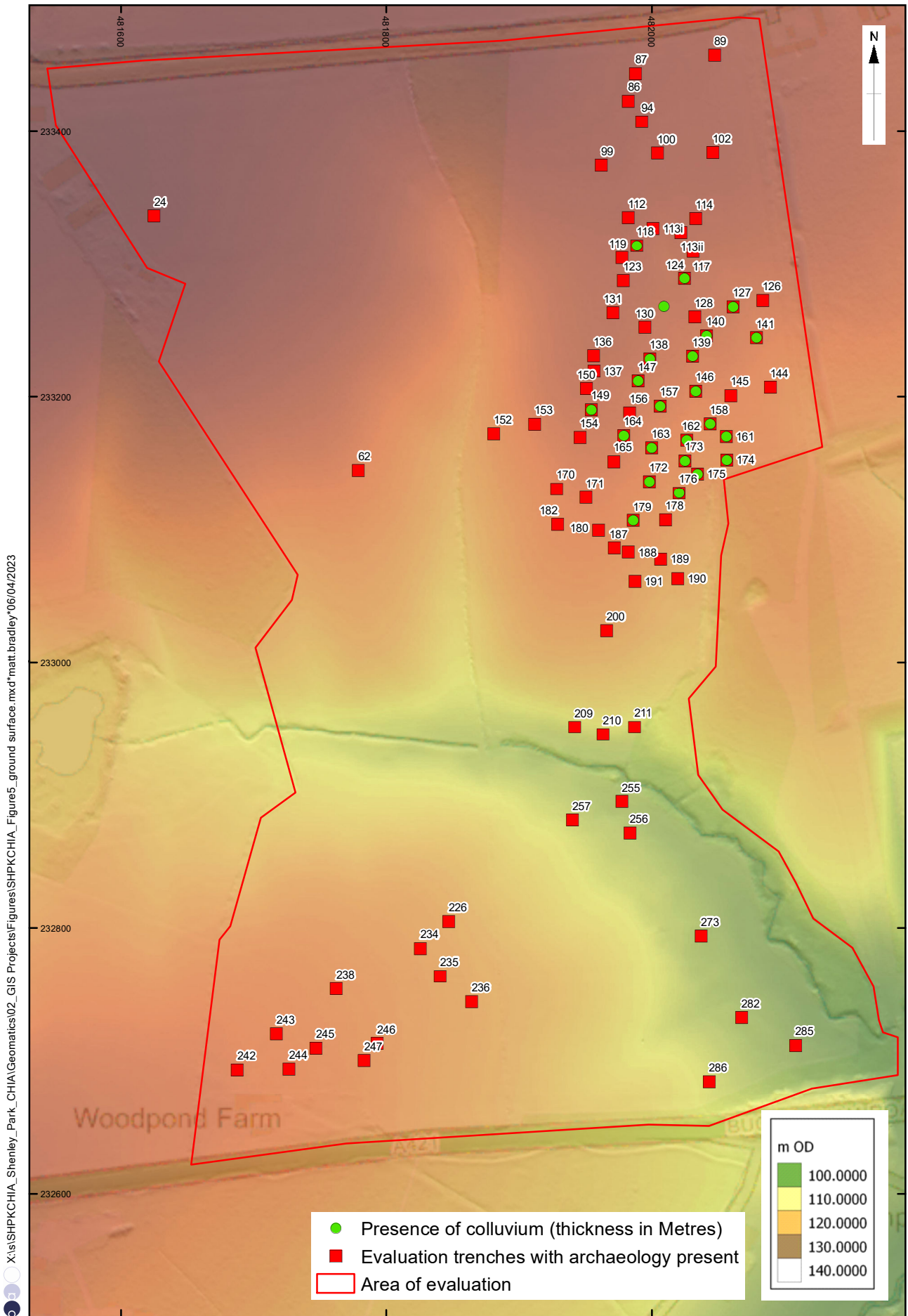


Figure 5: Plan showing heights of ground surface and location of colluvium and trenches with archaeology present

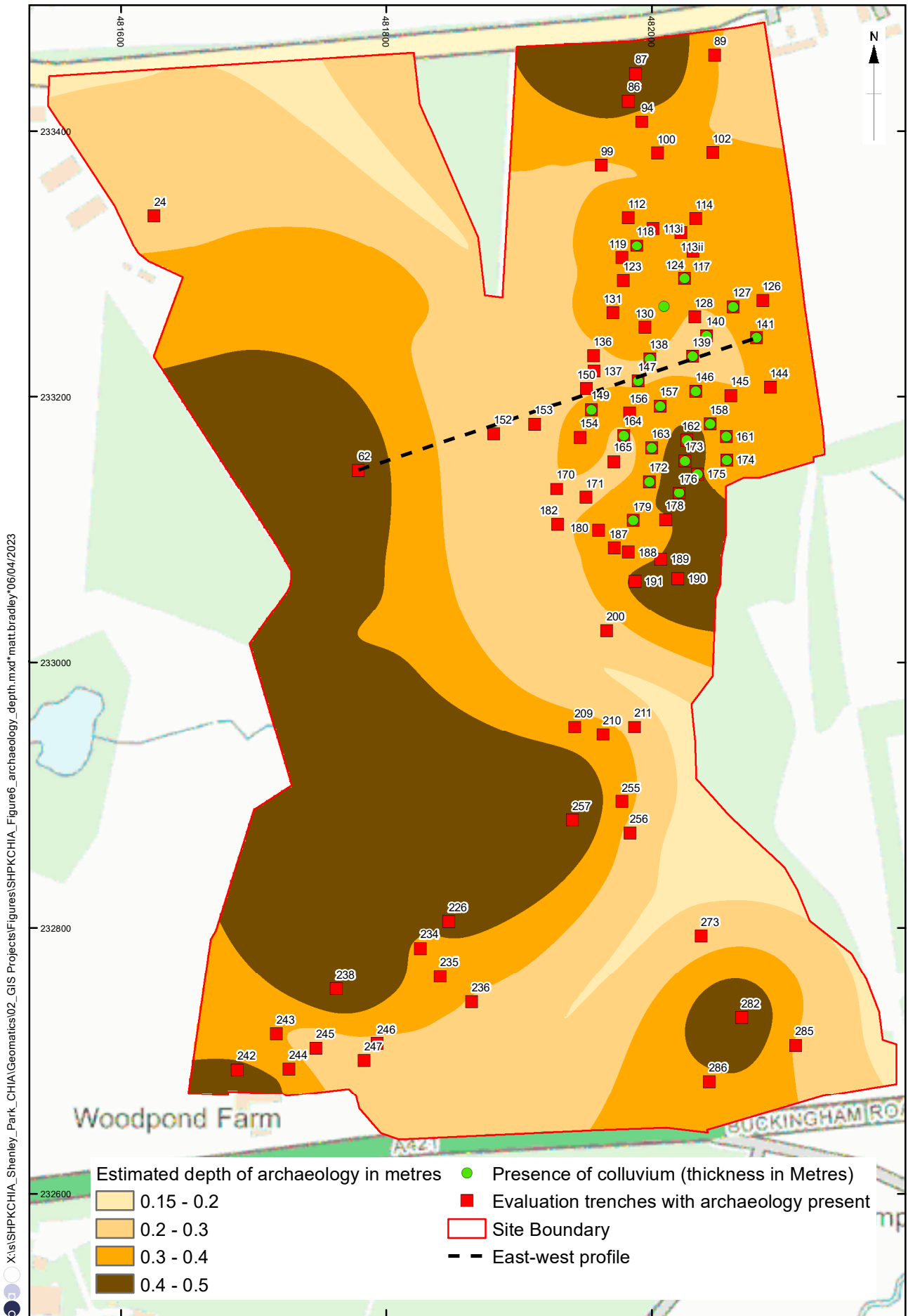


Figure 6: Plan showing depth of archaeology and location of colluvium and trenches with archaeology present

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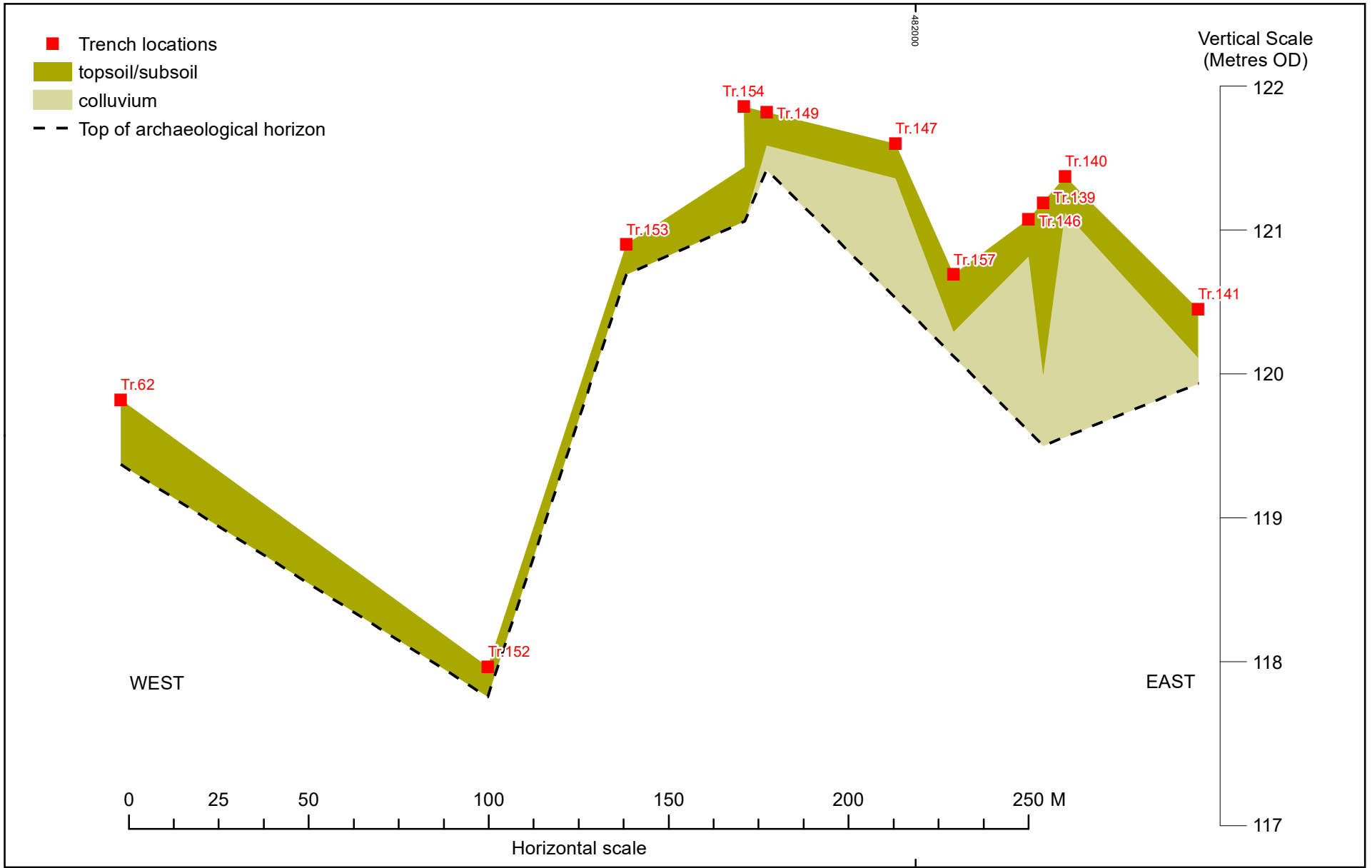


Figure 7: Deposit model: east-west profile between trenches 62 and 141



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