



New Technical Site at Bicester Heritage, Buckingham Road, Bicester, Oxfordshire

Archaeological Desk-Based Assessment

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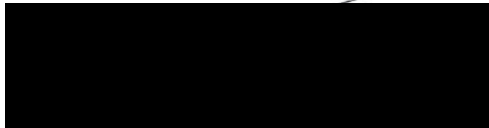
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Prepared by: Daniel Bray (Project Officer)
Checked by: Ianto Wain (Head of Heritage Management Services)
Edited by: Ianto Wain (Head of Heritage Management Services)
Approved for Issue by: Ianto Wain (Head of Heritage Management Services)
Signature: 

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OA South

Janus House
Osney Mead
Oxford
OX2 0ES

t. +44 (0)1865 263 800

OA East

15 Trafalgar Way
Bar Hill
Cambridge
CB23 8SG

t. +44 (0)1223 850 500

OA North

Mill 3
Moor Lane Mills
Moor Lane
Lancaster
LA1 1QD

t. +44 (0)1524 880 250

e. info@oxfordarch.co.uk

w. oxfordarchaeology.com

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Summary

Oxford Archaeology (OA) has been commissioned by Bicester Heritage to prepare an archaeological desk-based assessment to be submitted to Cherwell District Council for the construction of a new technical site (NTS) at Bicester Aerodrome formerly RAF Bicester situated at NGR SP 59108 24300. The site forms part of the wider Bicester Heritage development.

The site is situated at the south-western end of the Bicester Aerodrome site, on the eastern side of the A4421. The site and surrounding aerodrome appears to have remained undeveloped until 1916 -1918 it formed part of a Training Station Depot and then RAF Bicester. Three buildings associated with the TDS were present within the northern part of the site. The Training Depot Station was short lived being reverted back to agricultural use until it was chosen as a permanent bomber base in 1925. The airfield was substantially enlarged and the western side of the site developed as the technical site. New buildings associated with the new technical site, air raid shelters and a railway line were constructed within the northern part of the site.

In addition to the potential for known and as yet unknown First and Second World War remains the site is situated adjacent to the line of a Roman Road from Alchester to Towcester. Remains of a Romano-British settlement have been found directly to the south of the site and Romano-British burials are also reported to have been identified to the north within the technical site. A recent evaluation by Oxford Archaeology found a Roman ditch to the north of the technical site. There is considered to be the potential for further remains of this date to be present within the site.

The effect of the proposed scheme on potential archaeological remains will be a material consideration in determination of a submitted planning application. This study has identified no over-riding archaeological constraints which are likely to prohibit development however, due to the potential for archaeological deposits and despite a degree of later truncation an archaeological evaluation will be likely to be required.

A large part of the site is currently occupied by dense trees and a trial trench evaluation of this area is not currently feasible and it is suggested that (bearing in mind the uncertain but potentially low potential of the site and the logistical difficulties of carrying out adequate evaluation at this stage) that this programme of works could be secured as a condition of planning. The scope and timing of any further archaeological work will have to be agreed with the Oxfordshire County Archaeologist

1 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1.1 Oxford Archaeology (OA) has been commissioned by Bicester Heritage to prepare an archaeological desk-based assessment to be submitted to Cherwell District Council for the construction of a new technical site (NTS) at Bicester Aerodrome formerly RAF Bicester, henceforth known as 'the site'. The site which forms part of the wider Bicester Heritage development is centred on NGR SP 59108 24300. Its location in relation to the overall Master Plan is shown on Figure 1.
- 1.1.2 As agreed with the client this report addresses only the potential impact upon the below ground (archaeological) resource as matters concerning the above ground heritage resource will be addressed by a separate study being produced by Worlledge Associates (Worlledge Associates, 2018).
- 1.1.3 This report draws on an archaeological and historic baseline prepared for a desk-based assessment which examined the potential archaeological implications of the wider Bicester Heritage Master Plan development (Oxford Archaeology, 2018a). It has been produced in accordance with standards and guidance as published by the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists (CIfA, 2017) and a Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI) approved by the Oxfordshire County Council Archaeologist.

2 LOCATION, TOPOGRAPHY AND GEOLOGY

- 2.1.1 The site is situated on the northern edge of Bicester, 2.5 km northeast of Bicester town centre. The site is situated at the south-western end of Bicester Aerodrome now known as Bicester Heritage and formerly RAF Bicester on the eastern side of the A4421. The site is 1.59 hectares (ha) and currently comprises a small part of the current technical site to the south-west of the southernmost hangar and a densely treed area along the south-western boundary of Bicester Aerodrome. The site is bound by Skimmingdish Lane to the south-west and the A4421 to the north-west beyond which is residential houses at the edge of Bicester and Caversfield. To the north-west is the current technical site and to the south-east is grass at the edge of the flying field.
- 2.1.2 The site is flat and lies at a height of 83 m above Ordnance Datum (aOD). The underlying bedrock geology is mapped as Cornbrash Formation, a limestone bedrock formed approximately 164 to 168 million years ago in the Jurassic Period when the local area was dominated by shallow carbonate seas (BGS, 2018).

3 AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

- 3.1.1 The purpose of this report is to determine as far as reasonably possible, from existing records and observations, an understanding of the historic environment within the site and surrounding study area in order to:
- provide an assessment of the potential for archaeological remains to survive within the site;
 - assess the likely impacts of previous development on the survival of any archaeological remains;

- assess the potential for impacts from the proposed development on the surviving archaeological resource; and
- provide proposals for further evaluation, whether or not intrusive, where the nature, extent or significance is not sufficiently well defined.

4 PLANNING BACKGROUND

4.1 National Planning Policy

4.1.1 Section 12 of National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF: issued March 2012) sets out the Government’s planning policies in relation to the conservation and enhancement of the historic environment.

4.1.2 Paragraph 128 and 129 state:

“128. In determining applications, local planning authorities should require an applicant to describe the significance of any heritage assets affected, included any contribution made by their setting. The level of detail should be proportionate to the asset’s importance and no more than is sufficient to understand the potential impact of the proposal on their significance. As a minimum the relevant historic environment record should have been consulted and the heritage assets assessed using appropriate expertise where necessary. Where a site on which development is proposed includes or has the potential to include heritage assets which archaeological interest, local planning authorities should require developers to submit an appropriate desk-based assessment and, where necessary, a field evaluation.

129. Local planning authorities should identify and assess the particular significance of any heritage asset that may be affected by a proposal (including by development affecting the setting of a heritage asset) taking account of the available evidence and any necessary expertise. They should take this assessment into account when considering the impact of a proposal on a heritage asset, to avoid or minimize conflict between the heritage asset’s conservation and any aspect of the proposal.”

4.1.3 Paragraph 141 states:

“Local planning authorities should make information about the significance of the historic environment gathered as part of plan-making or development management publicly accessible. They should also require developers to record and advance understanding of the significance of any heritage assets to be lost (wholly or in part) in a manner proportionate to their importance and the impact, and to make this evidence (and any archive generated) publicly accessible. However, the ability to record evidence of our past should not be a factor in deciding whether such loss should be permitted.”

4.2 Local Planning Policy

4.2.1 Cherwell District Council has adopted the Cherwell Local Plan 2011 – 2031 (Part 1) and is in the process of drafting Part 2. Whilst Part 2 is in preparation Part 1 and the ‘Saved Policies’ from the Cherwell Local Plan 1996 set out the Councils current planning policy including the management of the historic environment. No policies in relation to

archaeology were saved in the Cherwell Local Plan 1996. Those policies in the Cherwell Local Plan 2011 – 2031 (Part 1) considered relevant are outlined below.

Policy ESD 15: The Character of the Built and Historic Environment

Successful design is founded upon an understanding and respect for an area's unique built, natural and cultural context. New development will be expected to complement and enhance the character of its context through sensitive siting, layout and high-quality design. All new development will be required to meet high design standards. Where development is in the vicinity of any of the District's distinctive natural or historic assets, delivering high quality design that complements the asset will be essential.

New development proposals should:

...

Conserve, sustain and enhance designated and non-designated 'heritage assets' (as defined in the NPPF) including buildings, features, archaeology, conservation areas and their settings, and ensure new development is sensitively sited and integrated in accordance with advice in the NPPF and NPPG. Proposals for development that affect non-designated heritage assets will be considered taking account of the scale of any harm or loss and the significance of the heritage asset as set out in the NPPF and NPPG. Regeneration proposals that make sensitive use of heritage assets, particularly where these bring redundant or under used buildings or areas, especially any on English Heritage's at Risk Register, into appropriate use will be encouraged.

Include information on heritage assets sufficient to assess the potential impact of the proposal on their significance. Where archaeological potential is identified this should include an appropriate desk based assessment and, where necessary, a field evaluation.

5 SOURCES CONSULTED

5.1.1 This report draws on an archaeological and historic baseline prepared for the Bicester Heritage Master Plan (Oxford Archaeology, 2018a). The spatial scope of the original assessment was defined by 1 km study area surrounding the master plan area, agreed in advance with the Oxfordshire County Council Archaeologist. The assessment involved the identification of designated and non-designated heritage assets and was informed through both a desk-based review and a site visit.

5.1.2 The following sources were consulted to inform the presence of heritage assets within the site and surrounding study area and form the archaeological and historic baseline:

- The National Heritage List for England (NHLE) for designated heritage assets;
- Oxfordshire Historic Environment Record (OHER) for non-designated heritage assets, archaeological events and historic aerial photographs;
- The Oxford History Centre (OHC) for historic maps and manuscripts and historic aerial photographs;
- Historic England Archives in Swindon for historic aerial photographs and National Mapping Project (NMP) data;

- Geotechnical data as held by the client and the British Geological Survey; and
- Other relevant primary and secondary sources including published and unpublished works as held by OA, the OHC and the Sackler and Bodleian Libraries, Oxford and other archives as identified.

5.1.3 For ease of reference each heritage asset identified has been allocated a unique OA number. This is included in the heritage gazetteer provided in Appendix A, referred to in the text where relevant and marked on Figures 2 and 3. A full list of sources consulted can be found in Appendix B. Historic Mapping for the site is depicted on Figures 5 – 8.

6 WALKOVER SURVEY

6.1.1 A walkover survey of the site was carried out as part of the original master plan assessment in June 2018 in order to assess the current character and condition of the site. All areas of the site were accessed and no new archaeological features were identified.

6.1.2 In the western part of the Bicester Aerodrome is the former technical site which retains a number of original buildings, defensive structures and hangars. Most of these buildings have been renovated or are in the process of being refurbished. The site comprises a small part of this technical site to the south-west of a large hangar currently used by the Bicester Gliding Centre. The northern part of the site comprises a small yard currently used for storing cars (Plate 3 – 4) and a small green area which includes three brick air raid shelters covered in earth (Plate 1 – 2). The ground here undulates slightly and it is possible that the earth covering the air raid shelters was excavated from the immediate vicinity. In the southern part of the site currently separated from the technical site by a concrete post and chain fence is a densely treed area through which passes a track which marks the former alignment of Skimmingdish Lane before it was straightened in the 1990s (Plate 5 – 8).

7 HISTORIC AND ARCHAEOLOGICAL BASELINE

7.1 Introduction

7.1.1 The nature of the archaeological resource within the site and the surrounding study area are discussed by period below. The location of designated and locally listed sites is marked upon Figure 2 and the location of previous archaeological events and non-designated heritage assets are shown on Figure 3. Further details of all sites is provided in Appendix A.

7.2 Designated Heritage Assets

7.2.1 The site is situated along the southern boundary of the RAF Bicester Conservation Area. The conservation area covers the entirety of the former aerodrome and is designated for its special character and appearance and its historic interest which derives from its pre-1930s layout and many surviving buildings from this period. It

represents the best-preserved bomber airfield built as part of Sir Hugh Trenchards 1920s Home Defence Expansion Scheme (Cherwell District Council, 2008).

- 7.2.2 Within the study area there are 41 further designated heritage assets comprising the Stratton Audley Conservation Area, one Grade I listed building, 37 Grade II listed buildings and two scheduled monuments. Directly north-east of the site are 14 listed buildings which are part of the former RAF technical site which is separate from the domestic site which is located to the western side of the A4412. The listed buildings within the technical site include Building 103: link trainer (**OA 20**), Buildings 108 and 113: type C hangars (**OA 21**), Buildings 146 and 147: station officers and operation block (**OA 27**), Buildings 146 and 147: type A hangars (**OA 28**), Building 87: fire party house (**OA 29**), Building 89: guard and fire party house (**OA 30**), Building 90: main stores (**OA 31**), Building 92: parachute store (**OA 32**), Building 96: lubricant store (**OA 33**), Building 99: main workshop (**OA 34**), Building 109: watch tower and office (**OA 35**), Building 123: lecture rooms and armoury (**OA 36**), Building 129, 130 and 131: motor transport sheds (**OA 37**) and Building 135: special repair bay shed (**OA 38**). These are listed for their architectural and historic interest and represent surviving elements of the best-preserved military airbase of its period. In addition, there are 11 areas within the RAF Bicester Conservation Area designated a scheduled monument (**OA 39**). These consist of the southern bomb stores located along the eastern boundary of the aerodrome and a series of airfield defence structures which are located to the north of the site.
- 7.2.3 The Stratton Audley Conservation Area is located 1.9 km northeast of the site and consists of 10 listed buildings including the Grade I listed Church of St Mary and St Edburga (**OA 1**) and a scheduled moated site southeast of the church (**OA 40**).
- 7.2.4 The nature of the designated heritage assets, and any potential effect upon their heritage significance is not discussed further in this report but has been discussed in a Heritage Impact Report prepared by Worlledge Associates (Worlledge Associates, 2018).

7.3 Previous Archaeological Investigations

- 7.3.1 An area to the north-east of the site along the north-western boundary of the aerodrome has recently been subject to an archaeological desk-based assessment (Oxford Archaeology, 2018b) and a trial trench evaluation (Oxford Archaeology, 2018c). The desk-based assessment identified that the surrounding area had produced evidence of Romano-British settlement and the aerodrome was in close proximity to the Alchester to Towester Roman road and as such had a potential for Romano-British remains to be present. In addition, examination of historic maps and aerial photos identified that below ground remains of buildings associated with the short-lived Training Depot Station (TDS) established during the First World War may survive within the area. The subsequent trial trench evaluation revealed a single ditch of Romano-British date. The ditch produced one sherd of late Iron Age/ early Roman pottery and whilst the ditch was parallel to the Roman road it appears to be set back too far from the road to be one of the roadside ditches and is more likely part of a Roman field system laid out in relation to the road. The majority of the features identified during

the evaluation were associated with the TDS and comprised poorly preserved concrete strip foundations for the buildings and service trenches.

- 7.3.2 A watching brief (**OA 44**) was undertaken in 2002 to monitor test pits and bore holes within the centre of the technical site to the north of the site. No archaeological features or finds were identified (Challis, 2002).
- 7.3.3 Within the surrounding study area there have been a total of 21 previous archaeological investigations comprising geophysical surveys (**OA 49**, **OA 51** and **OA 55**) trial trench evaluations (**OA 41 – OA 43**, **OA 46 – OA 48**, **OA 57**, **OA 59** and **OA 60**), watching briefs (**OA 44**, **OA 45**, **OA 50**, **OA 54**, and **OA 56**) and excavations (**OA 61**). Investigations considered relevant to the site are further discussed by period below.

7.4 Prehistoric Period (500,000 BP – AD 43)

- 7.4.1 The Oxfordshire HER returned eight records of prehistoric date within the study area. To the north-east of the site at the north-eastern boundary of the aerodrome lies a circular cropmark, visible on aerial photography. This may represent the remains of a one or two ring ditches (**OA 66**) although it is more likely to relate to Second World War defences. Aerial photos have also aided in identifying a possible round barrow cemetery (**OA 63**) comprising seven ring ditches in the centre of the airfield also to the north-east of the site. These were apparently destroyed by the development of the airfield during the twentieth century. Whilst circular features were identified on aerial photographs (and plotted on Figure 4) it is more likely that these relate to natural 'fairy rings' rather than archaeological features. Other possible ring ditches (**OA 62**, **OA 64**, **OA 65** and **OA 69**) have also been identified from aerial photographs. To the south-east of the site a number of possible ring ditches (**OA 62** and **OA 69**) were identified possibly indicating the presence of a Bronze Age barrow cemetery. The area has now been built over. To the north of the site a clear circular anomaly (**OA 64**) was identified close to the former taxiways of RAF Bicester. Directly south-east of Stratton Audley is another possible ring ditch (**OA 65**).
- 7.4.2 Despite the number of prehistoric records returned by the Oxfordshire HER only two records of prehistoric date have been confirmed by archaeological excavation. To the south-east of the site an evaluation (**OA 57**) identified a small number of features comprising boundaries and drainage ditches and some isolated pits (**OA 67**). A subsequent watching brief recovered a few crumbs of Iron Age pottery. More significant is an Iron Age settlement (**OA 68**) identified at Slade Farm 980 m south-west of the site. Archaeological investigation (**OA 53**) revealed an Iron Age ditch possibly relating to a droveway, pits and a palisade gully in addition to a number of ring gullies relating to houses and stock enclosures. A possible kiln of late Iron Age date and seasonal Mesolithic activity were also identified.

7.5 Romano-British Period (AD 43 – 410)

- 7.5.1 The impact of the Roman invasion within the wider area was immediate and substantial. Alchester was established as a major military base, 3.2 km south of the present town of Bicester, possibly as a fortress for legio II Augustus in AD 44. The town became the largest in the county covering an area of between 40 and 45 ha and

comprised stone buildings such as a temple, bath buildings, and houses as well as the town walls. It was situated at a strategically important junction between the north-south route from Chichester and Silchester to the midlands and the east-west route from the region to Colchester. A section of the route from Alchester to Towcester (Margery Road 160a, **OA 76**) borders the western boundary of the aerodrome in close proximity to the site and is now overlain by the A4421. These were major roads and acted as stimulus for nucleated settlements and villa sites which were subsequently established along them.

7.5.2 Three villa/ settlement sites have been identified within the study area. To the north of the aerodrome a Roman villa (**OA 71**) was discovered during the landscaping of the garden at Fringford Lodge in 1860. It was reported at the time that several remains of tessellated pavement had been identified and an underground chamber was located close by with the pavement and two or three steps leading down to it. As well as structural remains two skeletons and quantities of pottery were discovered. It is also reported that copper coins were discovered in the adjoining field. An evaluation (**OA 48**) prior to redevelopment of the driveway, turning area and garage at Fringford Lodge identified Roman remains relating to a stone structure overlying a mortar floor and external yard surfaces and ancillary timber buildings (Booth, 1994). A mitigation strategy to minimise the effect of the development was drawn up and the subsequent watching brief yielded Roman finds but no features. A quantity of material including a paved pathway and 50 coins of Roman date, lion head, brooches and rings were found 700 m south-west of the site (**OA 74**). The high-status finds are indicative of a villa site. Although the area has now been developed aerial photos taken prior to development show enclosures in the vicinity of these finds. An evaluation (**OA 42**) undertaken at a new primary school close to these remains identified significant truncation and no further Roman finds or features were identified. An archaeological evaluation (**OA 41**) directly south of the site on the southern side of Skimmingdish Lane identified a number of ditches, gullies and pits indicating the presence of a Roman settlement (**OA 75**) which appears to have extended approximately 200 – 225 m from the line of the Roman road (Pine, 2000). Subsequent test pitting (**OA 45**) failed to identify any archaeological remains.

7.5.3 The Victoria County History (VCH) mentions finds and features which have been found within the parish. It mentions skeletons (**OA 73**) found by the Roman road opposite Skimmingdish Lane (the Caversfield Road) at the north of the parish in 1813 (Salzman, 1939). The Oxfordshire HER records this record within the technical site to the north of the site although no further details are given by the VCH or the HER. Test pits (**OA 44**) within the technical site to the north of the site failed to identify any features of archaeological interest (Challis, 2002).

7.6 The Medieval Period (AD 410 – 1550)

Early-Medieval Period (AD 410 – 1065)

7.6.1 A single record of early medieval date was returned by the Oxfordshire HER within the study area. It was reported in a periodical of 1823 that 13 skeletons (**OA 77**) were found during the construction of the turnpike road from Bicester to Buckingham. These were originally thought to be of Roman date but are more likely to be Saxon. The burials

were buried in an east-west line and grave goods included a sword hilt and a spur. The HER records this point to the north of the site in the former Stratton Audley Quarry however the turnpike road is to the north-west of the former quarry.

- 7.6.2 There is a paucity of early medieval finds and features within the study area however in the wider area there are known Saxon settlements at Bicester and Stratton Audley. Bainton, Caversfield and Launton are also mentioned in the Domesday survey (1086) and as such are likely to have earlier medieval origins.

Later Medieval Period (1066 – 1550)

- 7.6.3 The Oxfordshire HER returned five records of medieval date within the study area. None of these are located within the site or the aerodrome. The closest is a possible windmill mound (**OA 83**) 1.3 km south-west of the site that was recorded as early as 1279. It lies outside of the ridge and furrow remains (identified from aerial photographs and depicted on Figure 4) near to the parish boundary. To the east of the aerodrome a medieval rectangular enclosure (**OA 78**) was discovered from the air in 1975 and was later confirmed by a field investigation which also revealed a small amount of late medieval pottery.
- 7.6.4 Stratton Audley to the north of the site is first recorded in the Domesday Survey (1086) as *Stratone* and was owned by Robert d'Oilly. The place name Stratton usually means 'farmstead or village on a Roman Road' and in this case, refers to the Roman Road directly to the west of the village. Audley is a manorial affix from the de Alditheleg family who became tenants of the manor in the thirteenth century (Mills, 2011). The de Alditheleg family created the moated site (**OA 79**) in Stratton Audley. There are earthwork remains of house platforms and traces of crofts and roadways to the south-west of the church which likely represent the shrunken medieval settlement (**OA 81**) of Stratton Audley.

7.7 Post-Medieval Period (1550-1900)

- 7.7.1 The Oxfordshire HER returned three records of Post-medieval date which relate to two gold rings (**OA 82** and **OA 84**) found in fields to the east of the aerodrome and a post-medieval smithy (**OA 86**) that was located in Stratton Audley.
- 7.7.2 The site and surrounding study area were likely utilised for agricultural purposes throughout the medieval period and into the post-medieval period. The site is shown as a small part of a larger arable field on Davis' Map of 1797 (Figure 5). The area was enclosed under an act of parliament and the Launton Enclosure Map of 1814 (Figure 6) depicts the site forming a small part of two fields that are separated by Skirmmingdish Lane which passes through the centre of the site. The surrounding fields are regular in shape with straight boundaries and are inductive of parliamentary enclosure.
- 7.7.3 There was no change within the site between the publication of the Enclosure Map and the First Edition Ordnance Survey Map of 1881 (Figure 6) and the Second Edition in 1899 (not reproduced).

7.8 Modern

7.8.1 The site is situated within Bicester Aerodrome which was formerly RAF Bicester (OA 85). The history of the site and its development is covered in detail in the separate Heritage Impact Report (Worledge Associates, 2018) and is not further discussed here.

7.9 Undated

7.9.1 The Oxfordshire HER returned five records of unknown date within the study area which relate to possible features (OA 88 – OA 92) identified from aerial photographs and geophysical survey.

7.10 Aerial Photograph

7.10.1 A review of aerial photographs held at Historic England Archive in Swindon and photos held by OHER in the HER offices in Oxford was carried out as part of the baseline assessment. A total of 157 aerial photographs comprising specialist oblique records, military obliques and vertical images covering the period from the 1930s to 2010 were reviewed. A faint rectangular cropmark (Figure 4) was identified to the north-west of the site close to the location of Hungerhill Farm depicted on early Ordnance Survey maps. Other features which appear as cropmarks within the aerodrome include the outline of the First World War buildings (visible on a 1961 photograph) and two circular features (OA 66) recorded on the HER as a single round house but more likely to relate to Second World War defences. The HER suggests that the site contained a complex of seven ring ditches (OA 63) although these 'were destroyed by the development of the airfield'. The HER record suggests that the cropmarks were identified on aerial photographs taken by Fairey Aerial Surveys in 1961. Whilst copyright restriction prohibited copies of the photograph (26.48/ 13.018) being taken it was viewed at Historic England Archives and no obvious ring ditches were observed. It is likely that the circular features recorded as ring ditches are 'fairy rings' which are circular or semi circles of mushrooms. The aerial photos also reveal the extent of the dispersal tracks which extended beyond the limits of the current aerodrome and most of which have been destroyed.

7.10.2 In the wider study area beyond the aerodrome, extensive areas of ridge and furrow earthworks were visible on early aerial photographs. Due to the intensification of farming practices throughout the later twentieth century the majority of these earthwork remains have been levelled. On the western side of the A4412 an earlier field boundary is visible as a cropmark.

8 ARCHAEOLOGICAL POTENTIAL

8.1.1 There is a paucity of finds and features of prehistoric, medieval and post-medieval date within the study area. An isolated feature of Iron Age date has been found to the south-east of the site and an Iron Age settlement has been found 980 m south-west of the site. Other possible prehistoric features including a barrow cemetery have been identified from aerial photography within the centre of the aerodrome to the north-east of the site and further ring ditches in the surrounding study area. These have now mainly been destroyed and not confirmed archaeologically. It should be noted that the

barrow cemetery recorded within the aerodrome is thought to be natural rather than archaeological and the possible ring ditch identified towards the northern boundary of the aerodrome is likely a Second World War defensive feature such as a gun emplacement. Despite the uncertainty of these features the possibility of prehistoric remains being present within the site cannot be entirely dismissed.

- 8.1.2 The archaeological potential of the site stems first from its close proximity to the line of the Roman Road from Alchester to Towcester and then secondly its use as part of an RAF airbase during the First and Second World Wars. Remains of three villa/settlement sites have been identified within the study area the closest of which is directly south of the site on the southern side of Skimmingdish Lane. There is the potential that further occupation evidence associated with the remains to the south might extend into the site. Romano-British burials are reported to have been found to the north of the site in the technical site. The exact location of these is unknown and no remains were found during an earlier watching brief within the technical site and within the vicinity of the HER record. A recent evaluation undertaken by Oxford Archaeology identified a Romano-British ditch to the north of the site and north of the technical site, parallel to the Roman road (Margary Road 160a) and as such there is considered to be the potential for further remains of this date to be present within the site. The previous evaluation along the western boundary of the aerodrome did not identify remains of the Roman road. Whilst it is considered unlikely that remains of the road will be encountered within the site if remains are present they would help confirm the line of the Roman road.
- 8.1.3 The Training Depot Station (TDS) established during the First World War was short lived and the buildings were demolished in 1920. These buildings were intended to be short lived and were not substantial although below ground remains relating to the hangers and taxiways do survive as confirmed by the recent evaluation. Historic mapping indicates that three buildings were partially situated within the site and remains of these may survive below ground. If present these would increase our knowledge and understanding of the form and function of the smaller service buildings adjacent to the main TDS buildings. It should be noted that, as there are surviving extant examples of TDS's, which are of significant heritage value this may suggest that the heritage significance of any surviving below ground remains at Bicester may be lower than that of the extant above ground remains. Clarke (2008: p 38) states that remains of TDS are one of the most important archaeological airfield components in the landscape and the structural arrangement can still be recognised at a number of surviving sites. Buildings were constructed of temporary materials and only expected to last for the duration of the war. Following the war, 271 of the 301 sites that existed in 1918 had been cleared or since decayed (Historic England, 2016). Complete hangar groups survive at Calshot, Duxford, Henlow, Hooton Park, Lee-on-Solent and Old Sarum (*ibid.*).
- 8.1.4 Following the First World War the site was reverted to agricultural land but was re-established as an airbase in 1925 and a new technical site established directly north of the site. The airfield was extended, new taxiways a dispersal tracks were built, defensive structures were erected and a new train line along the southern boundary was constructed. The route of the now dismantled railway passes through the eastern part of the site on a north-south alignment. Whilst no remains of the train line were

observed within the site a small section of the track was visible towards the eastern boundary of the aerodrome and as such it is possible that remains of this line could be present within the site. Many of the buildings within the technical site still survive but there is considered to be the potential for below ground remains of earlier buildings to survive below ground. The 1996 Ordnance Survey Map (Figure 9) shows three buildings within the area of the site currently occupied by the car park. Below ground remains of these buildings and others that were not mapped and have since been lost might survive. The significance of any of these remains and the contribution they make to the setting and heritage significance of the built heritage and the conservation area is assessed in the built heritage report produced by another consultant.

- 8.1.5 Aerial photographs reveal extensive ridge and furrow earthwork remains within the study area and whilst none were identified within the site it is likely that the site was utilised for agriculture during the medieval and post-medieval period. No remains of ridge and furrow were found during the evaluation to the north of the site however it is considered that there is the potential for buried remains of ridge and furrow to be present within the site. Skimmingdish Lane which is at least post-medieval in date and possibly earlier was straightened and widened in the 1990s. A small section of the former alignment passes through the site. There is the possibility that earlier road surfaces or road side ditches could survive. To the south of the road and within the site the base of a building survives. This building is first depicted on maps in the mid twentieth century. The significance of this building is presumably assessed in the built heritage report produced by another consultant

9 PREVIOUS IMPACTS AND SURVIVAL

- 9.1.1 The site appears to have remained undeveloped through recorded history until the beginning of the twentieth century when it formed part of a Training Station Depot and then RAF Bicester. The following section which discusses the previous impacts and survival of archaeological remains discusses the site in three distinct areas. These are the yard currently used for storing cars, the grassed area which includes the three air raid shelters and the densely treed area including the former alignment of Skimmingdish Lane.
- 9.1.2 During the First World War three temporary buildings were erected to the south of the main hangars and extended into the northern part of the site currently occupied by the car storage yard. The temporary nature of these buildings means that the foundations are unlikely to have been substantial and although some truncation of the archaeological horizon is likely to have occurred the archaeological evaluation undertaken to the north of the site recently confirmed that archaeological features do survive. That said when Bicester was chosen as a permanent bomber base in 1925 the construction of the new technical site which included buildings within the current car storage yard will have impacted upon the archaeological horizon damaging or destroying any archaeological remains that might have been present including material relating to the earlier Training Depot Station. It is however anticipated that remains if present may have survived outside the footprint of any previous development.

- 9.1.3 There does not appear from the examination of historical maps to have been any previous impacts upon the archaeological horizon in the grassed area in the north-eastern corner of the site until the construction of the air raid shelters and the railway line. The air raid shelters are corrugated steel with a concrete base and covered in an earthen mound. Excavation would have occurred for the concrete base and may have impacted upon the archaeological horizon damaging rather than destroying any archaeological remains that might be present. The soil for the earthen mound covering the air raid shelters likely came from the footprint of the air raid shelters but if more material was required than this would likely have come from the immediate vicinity. The excavation of this material and any groundworks associated with the construction of the railway line will have impacted upon the archaeological horizon although the degree and extent of this truncation and as such the potential for archaeological remains to survive is unknown.
- 9.1.4 The groundworks associated with the construction of the original alignment of Skimmingdish Lane will have impacted upon the archaeological horizon. It is also possible that there may have been impacts to the archaeological horizon within the site from the realignment of the road in the 1990s. It is not possible to tell from the site walkover or from historic mapping the degree or extent of any truncation. In addition it is also considered that there will have been a minor impact upon any archaeological remains from the dense trees which currently cover this part of the site. Within this area this is also the derelict remains of a building to the south of the former alignment of Skimmingdish Lane. The construction of this will also have impacted upon the archaeological horizon damaging or destroying any archaeological remains.

10 POTENTIAL IMPACTS

- 10.1.1 The proposed scheme within the site is for the extension to existing Technical Site to provide new employment units comprising flexible B1(c) light industrial, B2 (general industrial), B8 (storage or distribution) uses with ancillary offices, storage, display and sales, together with associated access, parking and landscaping (Figure 10). The detailed design plan indicates that these units will be constructed either side of the former alignment of Skimmingdish Lane which will be incorporated into the scheme and accessed via a new entrance from the south. The proposals also include grasscrete and tarmac parking areas, a bund along the southern boundary and general landscaping. The three air raid shelters will be retained.
- 10.1.2 It is anticipated that the proposed scheme will result in extensive groundworks within the site. Groundworks are likely to involve:
- Landscaping and grading of the site to create level ground to construct the new buildings. This is likely to involve reducing the level in places and building the level up in others;
 - The removal or grubbing out of these trees that currently occupy part of the site
 - The removal of topsoil and subsoil for the creation of the new access and the creation of new roads, car parks and pathways within the site; and
 - The excavation of trenches for the foundations of the new buildings, services and soakaways

10.1.3 Groundworks within the site will impact upon the archaeological horizon and will likely result in the damage or destruction of any archaeological remains that might be present.

11 POTENTIAL FOR FURTHER WORK

11.1.1 The effect of the proposed scheme on potential archaeological remains will be a material consideration in determination of a submitted planning application. This study has identified no over-riding archaeological constraints which are likely to prohibit development however it is considered that despite a degree of previous impacts there is still the potential for archaeological remains of Romano-British date and relating to the First and Second World War aerodrome to be present within the site. The following section makes recommendations as to how the archaeological potential of the site could be adequately evaluated and mitigated.

11.1.2 It is anticipated that a trial trench evaluation will be required in order to ascertain the presence (or absence) of any archaeological remains which may be damaged or destroyed as a result of the proposals. A trial trench evaluation would be used to clarify the nature, significance and survival of archaeological remains within the site and inform a suitable mitigation strategy intended to reduce or remove any potential impacts of the scheme upon the heritage resource.

11.1.3 A large part of the site is currently occupied by dense trees and a trial trench evaluation of this area is not currently feasible and it is suggested that (bearing in mind the uncertain but potentially low potential of the site and the logistical difficulties of carrying out adequate evaluation at this stage) that this programme of works could be secured as a condition of planning. The scope and timing of any further archaeological work will have to be agreed with the Oxfordshire County Archaeologist

12 CONCLUSION

12.1.1 The site is situated to the south of the technical site within Bicester Aerodrome formerly RAF Bicester that was originally a Training Depot Station during the First World War and then a bomber airbase in the Second World War. The archaeological baseline has identified that the site lies in close proximity to remains of Romano-British date. The line of a Roman road passes close to the western boundary of the site and remains of a Romano-British settlement have been found directly to the south. This assessment has identified that despite a degree of truncation within the site from the construction of First and Second World War buildings and the original construction of and realignment of Skimmingdish Lane the site still has the potential to contain archaeological deposits.

12.1.2 In accordance with paragraphs 128 and 141 of NPPF a trial trench evaluation is likely to be required to ascertain the presence, survival and potential significance of any deposits within the site and inform a suitable mitigation strategy intended to reduce or remove any potential impacts of the scheme upon the heritage resource.

12.1.3 However, a large part of the site is currently occupied by dense trees and a trial trench evaluation of this area is not currently practicable. It is therefore suggested that this programme of works could be secured as a condition of planning rather than as a pre-determination condition. The scope and timing of any further archaeological work will have to be agreed with the Oxfordshire County Archaeologist.

Oxford Archaeology
July 2018

APPENDIX A GAZETTEER OF KNOWN HERITAGE ASSETS WITHIN THE STUDY AREA

Designated Heritage Assets

| OA Number | Name | Type | Grade | Type |
|-----------|--|-----------------|-------|---------|
| 1 | Church of St Mary And St Edburga | Listed building | I | 1046404 |
| 2 | Bay Tree House | Listed building | II | 1046405 |
| 3 | The Red Lion Public House | Listed building | II | 1193291 |
| 4 | Headstone Approximately 8 Metres South of South Aisle, Church of St Mary And Edburga | Listed building | II | 1193304 |
| 5 | The Plough House | Listed building | II | 1193317 |
| 6 | Manor Farmhouse | Listed building | II | 1232878 |
| 7 | Brashfield House, Brashfield Lodge | Listed building | II | 1369746 |
| 8 | Building Number 31 (Sergeants Mess) | Listed building | II | 1391626 |
| 9 | Building No 16 (Officers' Mess and Quarters) | Listed building | II | 1391628 |
| 10 | Building No 20 (Dining Room and Institute) | Listed building | II | 1391629 |
| 11 | Building No 22 (Central Heating Plant) | Listed building | II | 1391630 |
| 12 | Building No 32 (Airmen's Institute) | Listed building | II | 1391631 |
| 13 | Headstone Approximately 3 Metres North East of North Aisle Church of St Mary and Edburga | Listed building | II | 1392244 |
| 14 | 1914-1918 War Memorial Approximately 6 Metres North of North Porch Church of St Mary And Edburga | Listed building | II | 1392245 |
| 15 | Base of Churchyard Cross Approximately 8 Metres North of Porch Church of St Mary and Edburga | Listed building | II | 1392246 |
| 16 | 1 and 2, Church Lane | Listed building | II | 1392247 |
| 17 | The Manor House | Listed building | II | 1392248 |
| 18 | Building 33 (Barrack Block) | Listed building | II | 1392759 |
| 19 | Building 50 (Decontamination Centre) | Listed building | II | 1392760 |

| | | | | |
|----|---|--------------------|-----|---------|
| 20 | Building 103 (Link Trainer) | Listed building | II | 1392761 |
| 21 | Buildings 108 And 113 (Type C Hangars) | Listed building | II | 1392762 |
| 22 | Building No 47 (Ration and Adjutant Stores) | Listed building | II | 1393028 |
| 23 | Building No 48 (Dining Room and Cookhouse) | Listed building | II | 1393029 |
| 24 | Building No 23 And 25 (Type H Barracks Block) | Listed building | II | 1393030 |
| 25 | Buildings Nos 29, 42, 35 And 36 (Type 'E' Barracks Blocks) | Listed building | II | 1393031 |
| 26 | Building Nos 43 and 46 (Station Sick Quarters and Decontamination Centre) | Listed building | II | 1393032 |
| 27 | Building Nos 146 and 147 (Station Offices and Operation Block) | Listed building | II | 1393034 |
| 28 | Buildings Nos 79 and 137 (Type 'A' Hangars) | Listed building | II | 1393035 |
| 29 | Building No 87 (Fire Party House) | Listed building | II | 1393036 |
| 30 | Building No 89 (Guard and Fire Party House) | Listed building | II | 1393037 |
| 31 | Building No 90 (Main Stores) | Listed building | II | 1393038 |
| 32 | Building No 92 (Parachute Store) | Listed building | II | 1393039 |
| 33 | Building No 96 (Lubricant Store) | Listed building | II | 1393040 |
| 34 | Building No 99 (Main Workshops) | Listed building | II | 1393041 |
| 35 | Building No 109 (Watch Tower and Office) | Listed building | II | 1393042 |
| 36 | Building No 123 (Lecture Rooms and Armoury) | Listed building | II | 1393043 |
| 37 | Building Nos 129, 130 and 131 (Motor Transport Sheds) | Listed building | II | 1393044 |
| 38 | Building No 135 | Listed building | II | 1393049 |
| 39 | RAF Bicester: World War II Airfield | Scheduled monument | n/a | 1021455 |
| 40 | Moated Site SE of Church | Scheduled monument | n/a | 1006347 |

Non-designated Heritage Assets

| OA Number | HER Ref | Name | Grade | Type |
|-----------|---------|------------------------------------|-------|------|
| 41 | EOX37 | Land adjacent to Skimmingdish Lane | n/a | EV |
| 42 | EOX42 | Southwold County Primary School | n/a | EV |
| 43 | EOX55 | Slade Farm II | n/a | EV |

| | | | | |
|----|----------|--|-------------------|---------------------------------------|
| 44 | EOX953 | RAF Bicester, Oxon 2002 | n/a | WB |
| 45 | EOX1310 | Skimmingdish Lane, Bicester: archaeological watching brief | n/a | WB |
| 46 | EOX1522 | Telford Road, Bicester, Oxfordshire: Archaeological Evaluation Report | n/a | EV |
| 47 | EOX1751 | Evaluation on land North-West of Launton Road Roundabout | n/a | EV |
| 48 | EOX1866 | Evaluation and Watching Brief at Fringford Lodge | n/a | EV |
| 49 | EOX2035 | Dymock's Farm | n/a | GS |
| 50 | EOX2044 | St Mary's and St Edburga's Church | n/a | WB |
| 51 | EOX2284 | Interim Note on Geophysical Survey at Fringford Lodge | n/a | GS |
| 52 | EOX2317 | MPP Scheduling proposal for Moated Site around Castle at Stratton Audley | n/a | MPP |
| 53 | EOX2524 | Slade Farm | n/a | PEA |
| 54 | EOX2930 | Land North of Fringford Lodge | n/a | WB |
| 55 | EOX3465 | Land at South Lodge Stables | n/a | GS |
| 56 | EOX5452 | Manor Farm | n/a | WB |
| 57 | EOX5575 | Land Off Skimmingdish Lane | n/a | EV |
| 58 | EOX5651 | Observations along stripped area of Bicester Perimeter Road | n/a | RO |
| 59 | EOX6199 | East West Rail Stage 2A Planning Application Sites | n/a | EV |
| 60 | EOX6200 | Land North-East of Skimmingdish Lane | n/a | EV |
| 61 | EOX6260 | Land S of Skimmingdish Lane | n/a | EX |
| 62 | MOX5623 | ? Prehistoric Round Barrow Cemetery | Prehistoric | Barrow Cemetery? |
| 63 | MOX5622 | Possible Bronze Age Round Barrow Cemetery | Bronze Age | Cemetery |
| 64 | MOX23353 | Possible ring ditch at Bicester Airfield | Bronze Age | Ring Ditch? |
| 65 | MOX4948 | Bronze Age Ring Ditch | Bronze Age | Ring Ditch |
| 66 | MOX5025 | Bronze Age Ring Ditch | Bronze Age | Ring Ditch |
| 67 | MOX26645 | Possible boundaries or drainage ditches and pits | Iron Age | Ditch, Pit |
| 68 | MOX5634 | Iron Age Settlement, Slade Farm | Iron Age | Settlement, Boundary Ditch, Pit, Oven |
| 69 | MOX5624 | Later Prehistoric Ring Ditches and Enclosure | Later Prehistoric | Ring Ditch, Enclosure |

| | | | | |
|----|----------|--|---------------------------|--|
| 70 | MOX12267 | Iron Age to Roman Pottery and Features on Bicester Perimeter Rd | Roman | Ditch, Post Hole |
| 71 | MOX4885 | Roman Possible Villa at Fringford Lodge | Roman | Villa?, Findspot, Mosaic, Inhumation |
| 72 | MOX4934 | Roman Coins | Roman | Findspot |
| 73 | MOX5590 | Roman Inhumations | Roman | Inhumation |
| 74 | MOX5612 | Roman Enclosures and finds (SW of South Farm between A41 and A421) | Roman | Findspot, Rectangular Enclosure |
| 75 | MOX6348 | ? Roman Settlement (land adj to Skimmingdish Lane) | Roman | Ditch, Post Hole, Settlement |
| 76 | MOX4783 | Roman Road | Roman | Road |
| 77 | MOX11309 | Anglo Saxon skeletons along Bicester to Buckingham turnpike | Early Medieval/Dark Age | Inhumation |
| 78 | MOX5015 | Medieval Rectangular Enclosure | Medieval | Rectangular Enclosure, Findspot |
| 79 | MOX85 | Moated Site in Stratton Audley | Medieval | Moat |
| 80 | MOX12361 | Ancient hedgerow along Jarvis Lane | Post Roman | Hedge |
| 81 | MOX4942 | Shrunken Medieval Village | Medieval to Post Medieval | Shrunken Village |
| 82 | MOX23267 | Gold Ring found by metal detecting | Post Medieval | Findspot |
| 83 | MOX5020 | Possible Medieval/Post Medieval Windmill Mound | Medieval to Post Medieval | Windmill Mound |
| 84 | MOX23268 | Gold Ring found by metal detecting | Post Medieval | Findspot |
| 85 | MOX12827 | RAF Bicester: World War II Airfield | Modern | Bomb Store, Pillbox, Air Raid Shelter, Military Airfield |
| 86 | MOX4926 | Post Medieval Smithy | Post Medieval | Blacksmiths Workshop |
| 87 | MOX26954 | 1914-1918 War memorial N of Church of St Mary and Edburga | Modern | War Memorial |
| 88 | MOX24734 | Linear features at South Lodge Stables | Undated | Linear Feature |
| 89 | MOX23344 | Possible ring ditch E of Caversfield | Unknown | Ring Ditch? |

| | | | | |
|----|----------|--|---------|-----------------------|
| 90 | MOX23354 | Small rectilinear enclosure S of Stratton Audley | Unknown | Rectilinear Enclosure |
| 91 | MOX23356 | Small curvilinear enclosure S of Stratton Audley | Unknown | D Shaped Enclosure |
| 92 | MOX23387 | Linear features and possible pits at Dymock's Farm | Unknown | Ditch?, Pit? |

APPENDIX B BIBLIOGRAPHY AND LIST OF SOURCES CONSULTED

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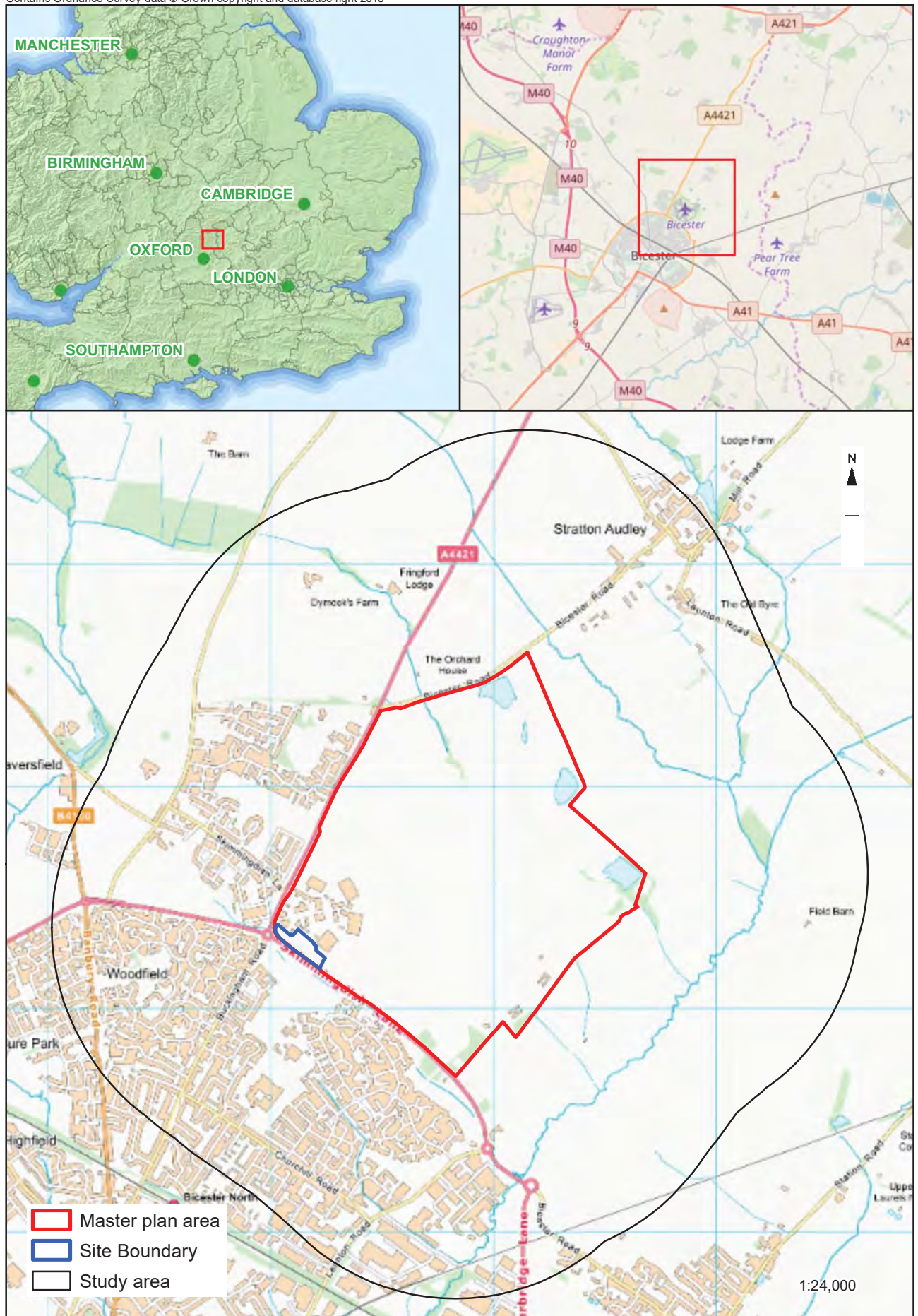


Figure 1: Site location

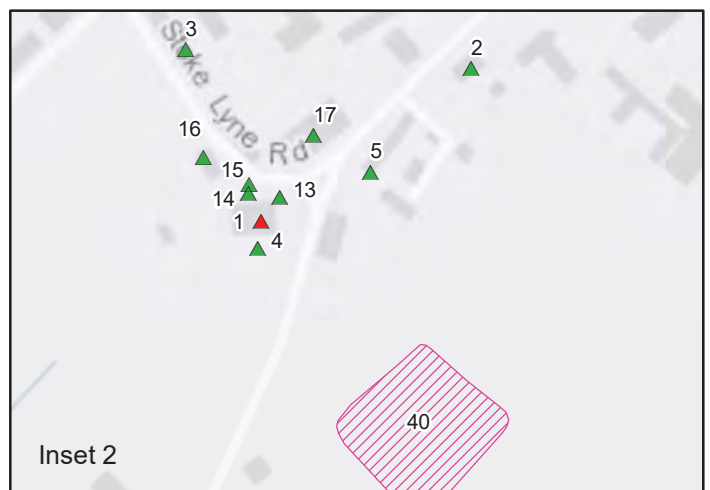
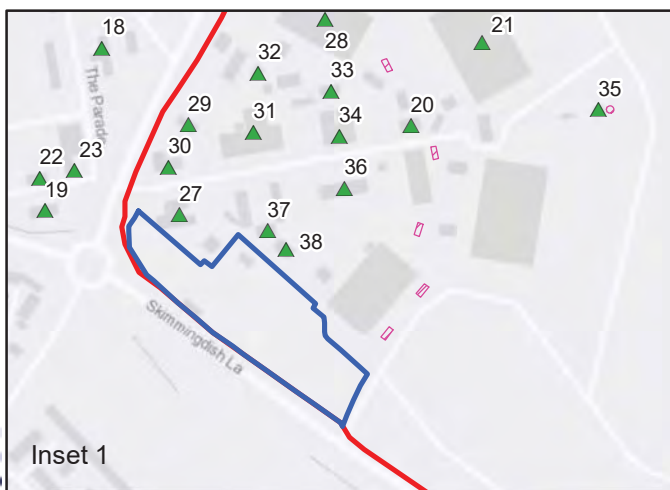
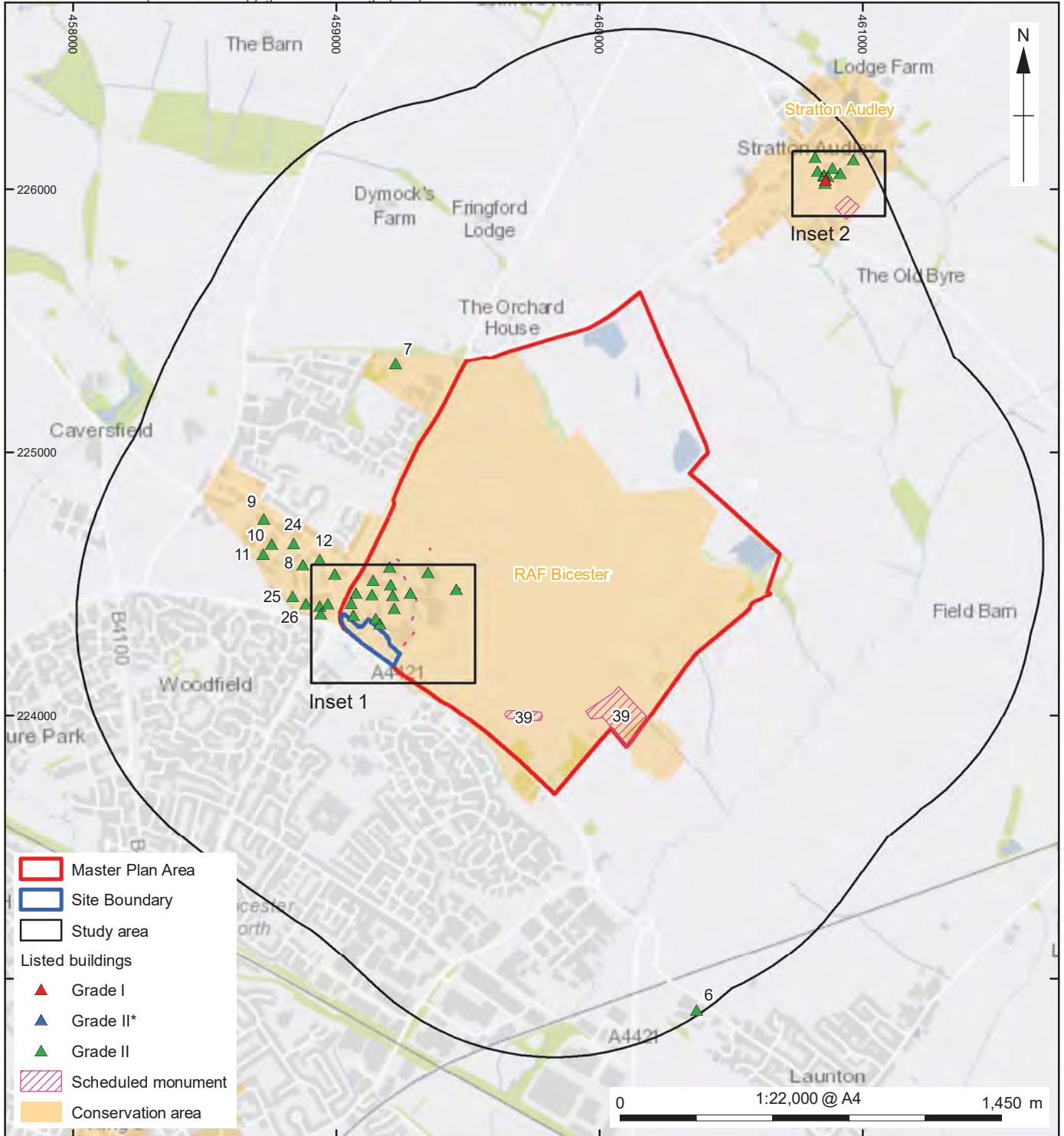


Figure 2: Designated heritage assets

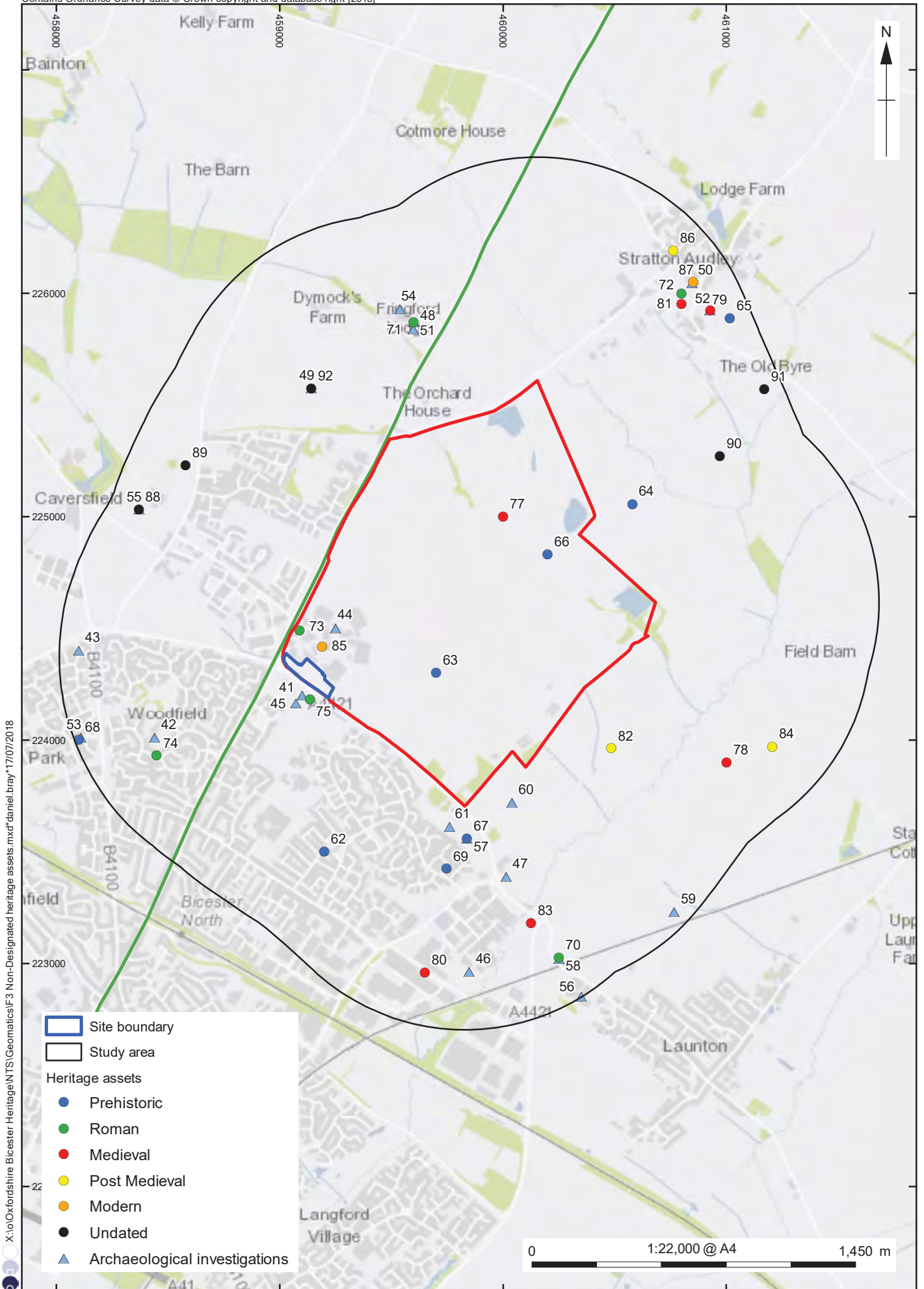
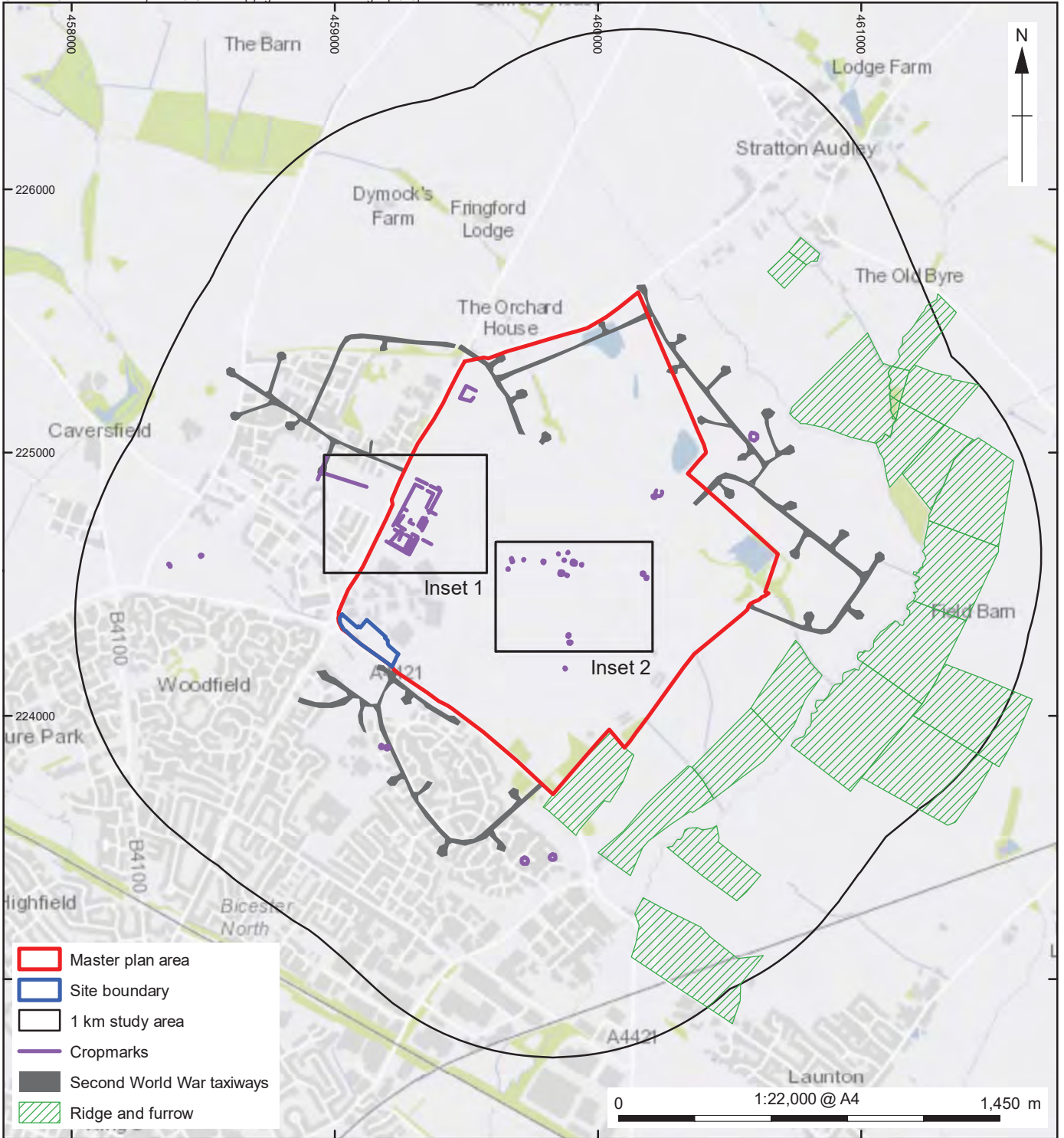


Figure 3: Non-designated heritage assets



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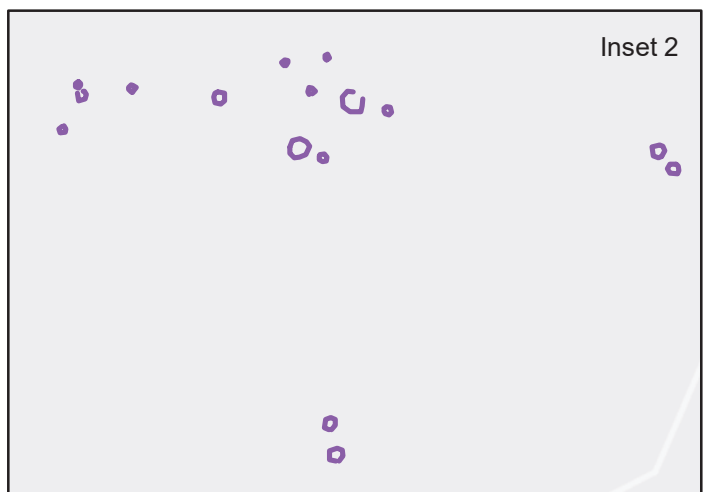
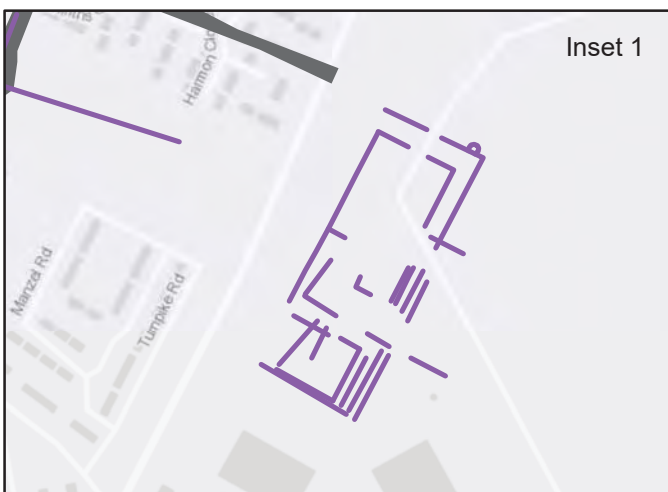
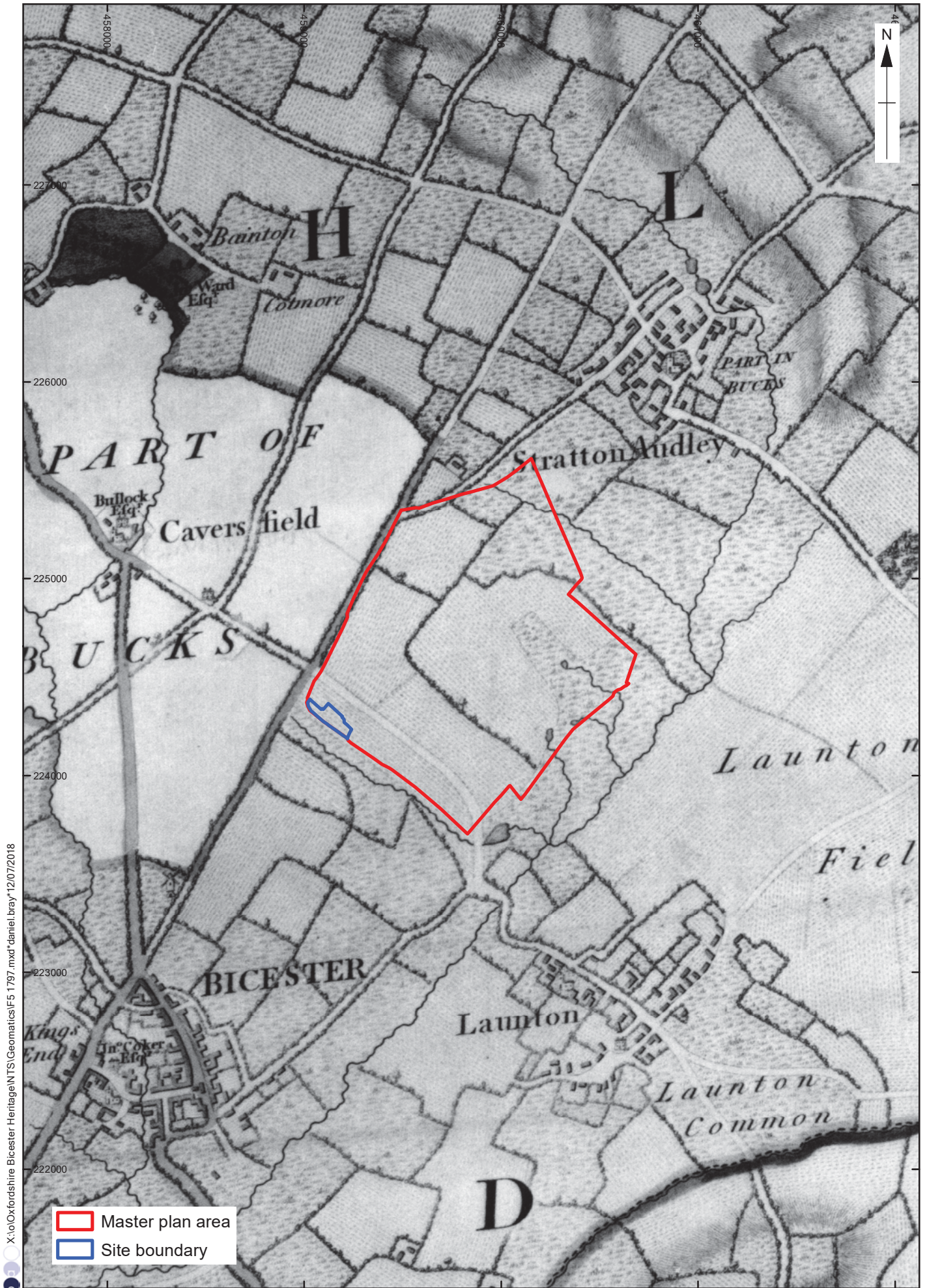
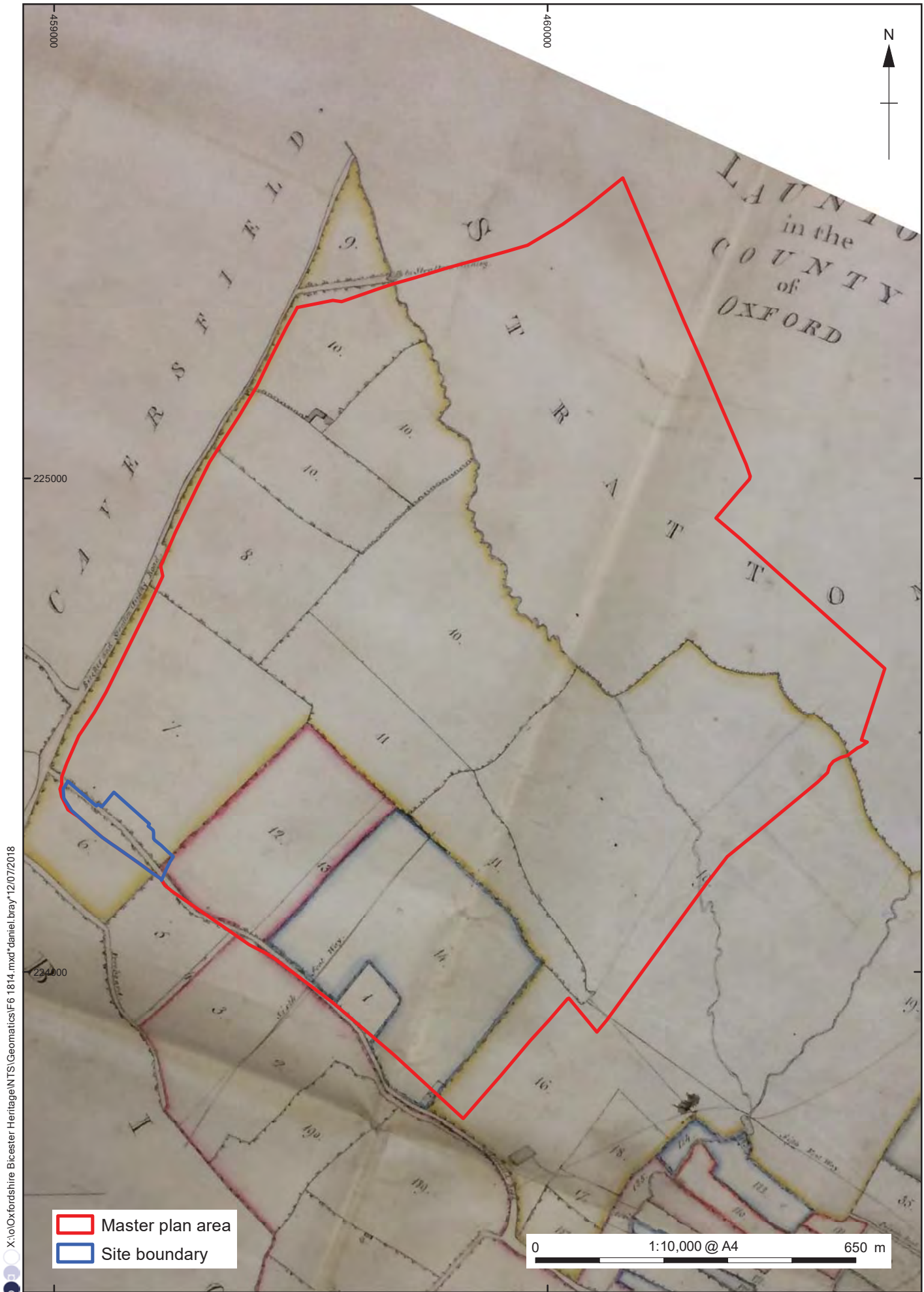


Figure 4: Features identified from aerial photographs



Not to Scale

Figure 5: Extract from Davis' Map of Oxfordshire (1797)



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Figure 6: Launton Enclosure Map (1814)

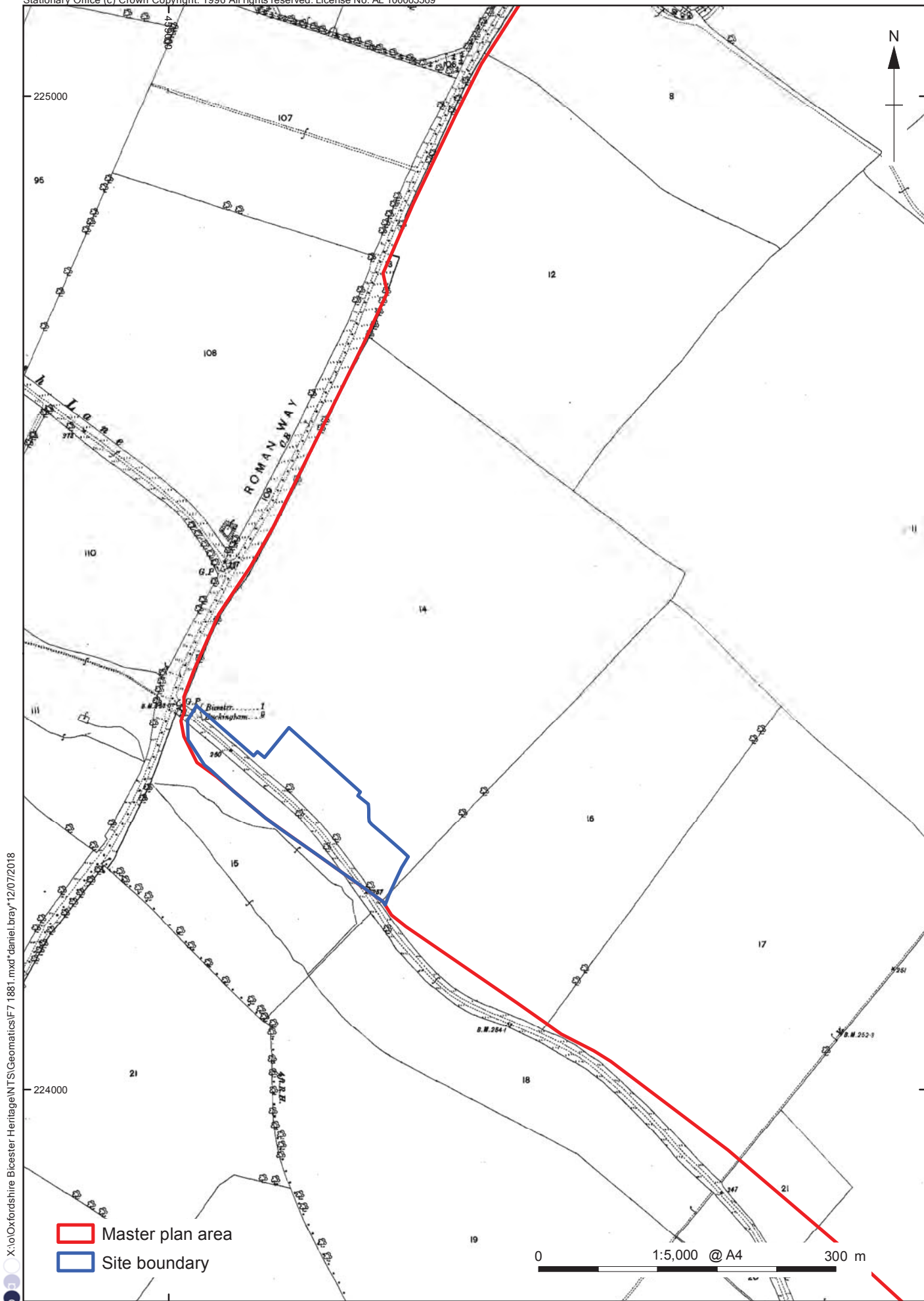


Figure 7: Ordnance Survey Map (1881)

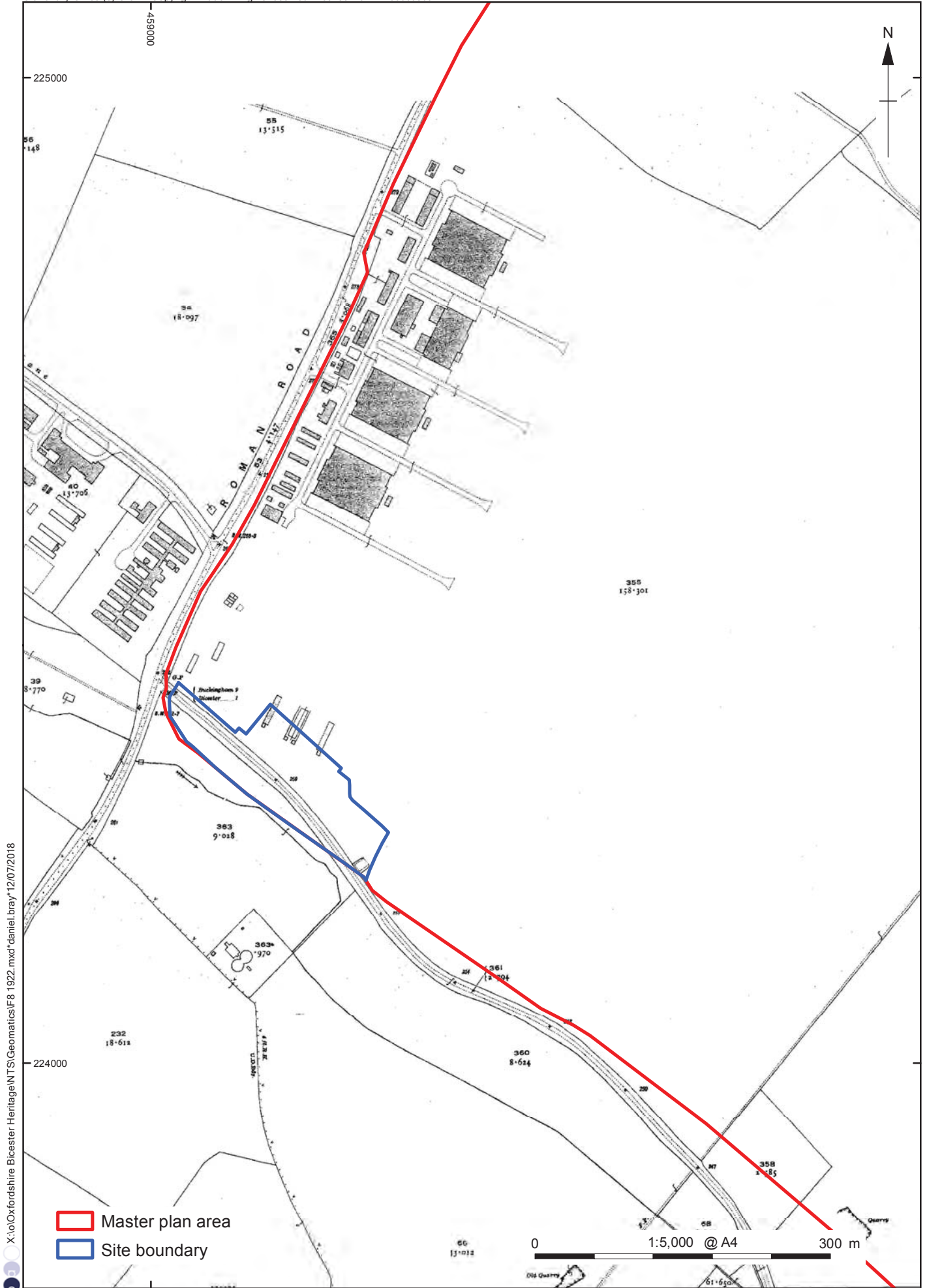


Figure 8: Ordnance Survey Map (1922)

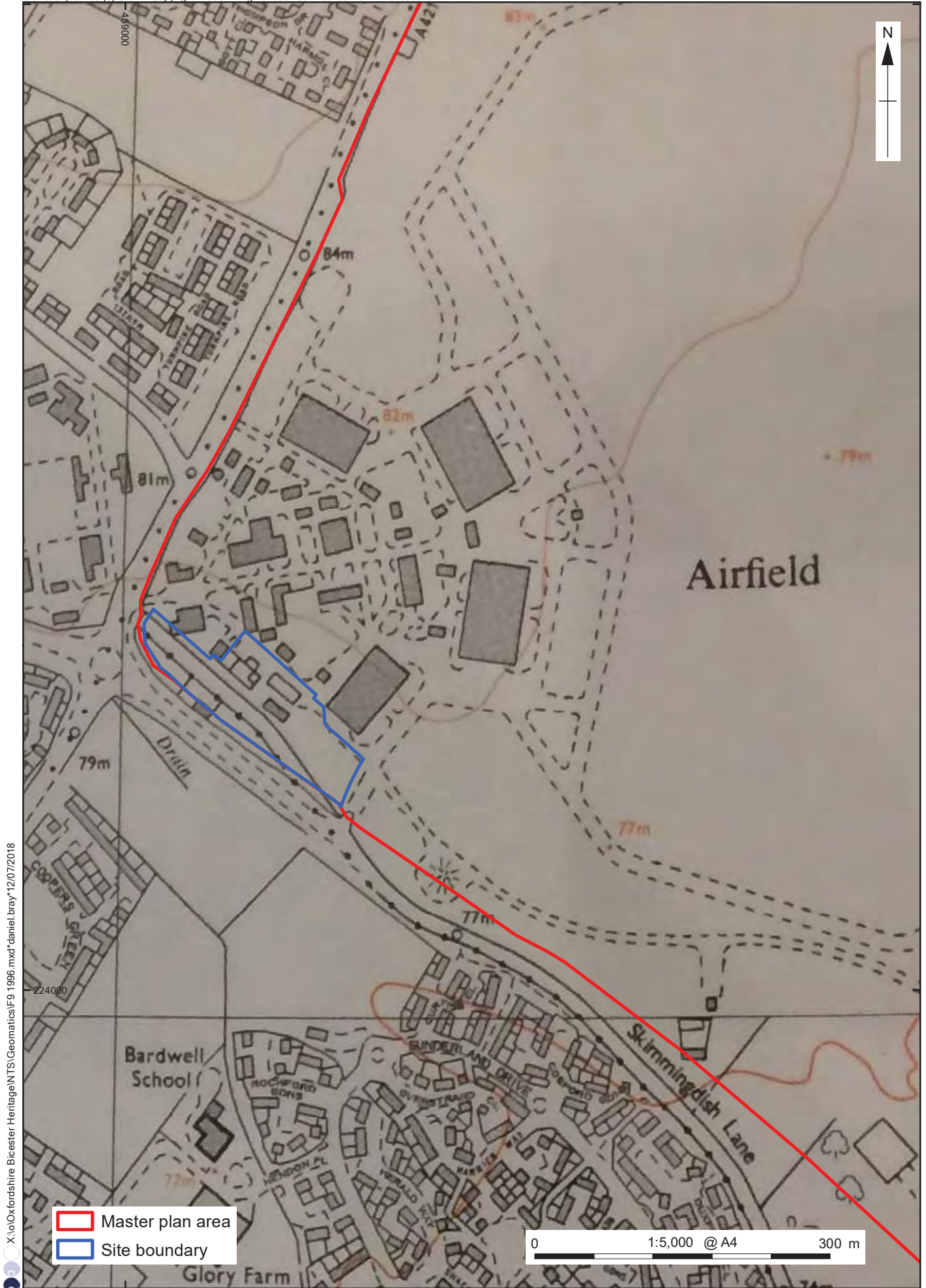


Figure 9: Ordnance Survey Map (1996)



Figure 10: Proposed scheme

Not to scale



Plate 1: View south-west across the south-eastern end of the site



Plate 2: General view along the north-eastern boundary of the site



Plate 3: General view west across the car storage area



Plate 4: General view south across the car storage area



Plate 5: View south-east along the former alignment of Skimmingdish Lane



Plate 6: View north-west along the former alignment of Skimmingdish Lane



Plate 7: General view south-east along the northern edge of the treed area



Plate 8: General view south-west towards the treed area



**Head Office/Registered Office/
OA South**

Janus House
Osney Mead
Oxford OX20ES

t: +44 (0) 1865 263 800
f: +44 (0) 1865 793 496
e: info@oxfordarchaeology.com
w: <http://oxfordarchaeology.com>

OA North

Mill 3
Moor Lane
Lancaster LA1 1QD

t: +44 (0) 1524 541 000
f: +44 (0) 1524 848 606
e: [oanorth@oxfordarchaeology.com](mailto: oanorth@oxfordarchaeology.com)
w: <http://oxfordarchaeology.com>

OA East

15 Trafalgar Way
Bar Hill
Cambridgeshire
CB23 8SQ

t: +44 (0) 1223 850500
e: [oaeast@oxfordarchaeology.com](mailto: oaeast@oxfordarchaeology.com)
w: <http://oxfordarchaeology.com>



Director: Gill Hey, BA PhD FSA MCifA
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