

# Land North of Barkby Road , Syston

## Interim Report on Archaeological Evaluation



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## KEY DOCUMENT INFORMATION

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## ABBREVIATIONS

AOD Above Ordnance Datum

HER Historic Environment Record

NHLE National Heritage List for England

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# 1 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1.1 York Archaeology has been commissioned by RPS on behalf of Taylor Wimpey (UK) Ltd to undertake an archaeological trial trench evaluation on land to the north of Barkby Road, Syston, Leicestershire (hereafter referred to as the Site, centred on National Grid Reference NGR SK 63773 11093, Figure 01).
- 1.1.2 The fieldwork was undertaken from 11th – 27<sup>th</sup> September 2023 .
- 1.1.3 The following is an interim report upon the findings in the field. A full report will follow within 6 weeks. The findings and conclusions within this summary are an accurate representation of the significance of all the features on site. The conclusions drawn in this report will be brought forward into the final report, which will be consistent with those findings.
- 1.1.4 The trial trenching has demonstrated that the southern field within the proposed development area contains features of Roman date – covering c. 0.3 ha. A plan showing the proposed mitigation area is included as Figure 9 within this report. The heritage interest in this site can be properly safe guarded by attaching a condition to any consent granted requiring the archaeological excavation and recording of this zone (plus off site assessment, analysis, reporting and archiving) with allowance of an associated buffer (not more than 15% of the identified area). There will be no requirement for any further archaeological work elsewhere within this site

# 2 LOCATION, GEOLOGY AND TOPOGRAPHY

## 2.1 Location, Topography and Geology

- 2.1.1 The Site is located on land to the north of Barkby Road, Syston Leicestershire (NGR SK 63773 11093, Figure 01). This is on the eastern edge of the town of Syston, c.2.5km east of the A46, c.1.2m north of the village of Barkby and c.1.3km south of the village of Queniborough.
- 2.1.2 The Site measures 8.3ha in area and comprises two field fields with a hedgerow separating the southern part of the Site. It is bounded along the western side by a hedgerow and residential housing beyond this, by amenity grassland to the north, Queniborough Road to the east and Barkby Road to the south. A public right of way is also present within the Site boundary.
- 2.1.3 The Site is positioned on an area of high ground which slopes slightly down to the south. At its highest point the site is c.62m above Ordnance Datum (AOD).
- 2.1.4 The underlying geology is recorded by the British Geological Survey (BGS) as comprising Branscombe Mudstone Formation with a superficial deposit of Birstall Member - Sand and gravel present close to the northwest boundary of the Site (BGS 2023).
- 2.1.5 The Cranfield Soil and Agrifood Institute characterises the soils as slightly acid loamy and clayey soils with impeded drainage (Cranfield Soil and Agrifood Institute 2023).

## 2.2 Archaeological Background

- 2.2.1 This section draws on data from the *Archaeological and Heritage Assessment* undertaken by The Environmental Dimension Partnership Ltd in (2021) and is supplemented with an additional 1km radius search of the Leicestershire Historic Environment Record (HER), Historic England research

records, and the NMR Excavation Index, accessed via Heritage Gateway (<https://www.heritagegateway.org.uk/gateway/>).

### **Prehistoric**

- 2.2.2 There are six recorded prehistoric heritage assets within 1km of the Site.
- 2.2.3 A double ditched cropmark, running north-northwest to south-southeast and a possible enclosure (HER: MLE783) are known from aerial photography approximately 290m north of the Site. These are currently undated, but are considered to be possibly prehistoric.
- 2.2.4 The site of a possible long barrow (HER: MLE438) was identified at Barkby, approximately 630m east of the Site. Worked flint was additionally discovered in an adjacent field and has been identified as Neolithic/Early Bronze Age.
- 2.2.5 Other Bronze Age findspots include: an Early Bronze Age barbed and tanged arrowhead (HER: MLE6295) which was found in 1990 320m west of the Site; a flanged Bronze age axe (HER: MLE6286) was found approximately 850m northeast of the Site and a small diametered Bronze Age ring (HER: MLE24678) which was found in 2001 via metal detecting, approximately 850m north of the Site boundary.
- 2.2.6 Additionally fieldwalking across the Site has identified a small scatter of worked flint (Clarke 2023).
- 2.2.7 Further prehistoric sites are known within the wider landscape.
- 2.2.8 In a field, approximately 1km southwest of the Site, field walking has produced finds from a range of dates, including; worked flints dated to the Early Mesolithic to Early Bronze Age (HER: MLE20393); medieval pottery (HER: MLE20394); post medieval pottery and clay pipe (HER: MLE20395) and undated slag (HER: MLE20396).
- 2.2.9 Further to the north (approximately 780m from the Site) , a series of adjoining rectangular enclosures are known from cropmarks (HER: MLE785). Although not definitively dated, these are believed to be Iron Age.
- 2.2.10 Under 1.5km north of the Site, a geophysical survey and archaeological trial trench evaluation revealed multiple features, including a pair of parallel ditches that were thought to bear resemblance to a Neolithic cursus (Masden 2000). Later phases of investigation found a late Neolithic pit (Hall 2002), pottery and continuation of the possible cursus (Malone 2000).
- 2.2.11 Approximately 1.5km to the east of the Site an evaluation consisting of geophysical survey and archaeological trial trenches found evidence for Iron Age settlement and land management, as well as a Neolithic tool (Edwards 2010).

### **Romano-British**

- 2.2.12 During the 19<sup>th</sup> century, in the field directly to the east of the Site, various finds were recovered from a sand ridge including a Roman glass bottle and pottery (Monument Number: 319491)
- 2.2.13 There are three other Romano-British findspots present within a 1km radius of the Site. These include a brooch (HER: MLE18292) which was found approximately 680m east of the Site during trial trenching ahead of developments south of Ridgemere Lane in 2009. The brooch was not associated with any archaeological features. A Roman coin (HER: MLE7734) was recorded in 1800 as having been found at Moody bush, approximately 950m east of the Site. Another Roman coin was found approximately

850m northwest of the Site (HER: MLE7784) this was identified as a copper alloy copy of a 'AE4' Roman coin, dating to the mid-4th century.

- 2.2.14 There is additionally a potential Roman road located approximately 800m northeast of the Site boundary (HER: MLE8839). This road is attested by documentary evidence which notes that in 1396 the main road from Melton to Leicester was called 'Le Strete', the Glebe Terrier of 1612 also makes this mention. Physical evidence of the road, although currently not excavated, is indicated by earthworks visible through LIDAR survey, as well as geophysical survey undertaken in 2011 which suggests the route of the road near Kirby Bellars, a further 9km north-east of site. This road followed the route of the current Melton road.

### **Early Medieval**

- 2.2.15 In the field directly to the east of the Site, early Saxon inhumations with finds including pottery, buckles, a sword and spearhead (Monument Number: 319491) were recovered from a sand ridge during the 19<sup>th</sup> century.
- 2.2.16 An Anglo Saxon burial (HER MLE781) was recorded in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century located under 800m north of the Site. No human remains were recorded, but the burial was believed to represent one rich male burial with grave goods of a bronze vessel with beaded rim, a legged bowl, a glass vessel, a decorated pottery vessel, an iron shield boss, a sword and a spearhead.

### **Medieval**

- 2.2.17 In the Domesday Book (1086), Syston was recorded as a settlement of 30 households, which makes it one of the largest 40% of settlements recorded in Domesday (Powell-Smith 2023). The Site is located approximately 1.15km southwest of the parish church (NHLE: 1074467), suggesting that it was far outside the historic core. The parish church is a Grade I listed building constructed in the 13<sup>th</sup> century with additional 14<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> century works.
- 2.2.18 Barkby, which is located 850m south of the Site, is recorded in the Domesday Book as a settlement with a population of 30 households, which would also put it in the largest 40% of settlements recorded in Domesday (Powell-Smith 2023). The parish church in Barkby (NHLE: 1074500) is dated to the 13<sup>th</sup> century with Victorian restoration work. It is Grade I listed.
- 2.2.19 A possible medieval windmill location (HER: MLE1004) is known from place name evidence on historical maps approximately 420m northwest of the Site.
- 2.2.20 A medieval 'moot' site (HER: MLE437; Monument Number 319499) is suggested by documentary evidence 950m southwest of the Site.

### **Post medieval**

- 2.2.21 Within 100m southeast of the Site boundary there is a 19<sup>th</sup> century farmhouse and barns (HER: MLE23363).
- 2.2.22 Approximately 470m northwest of the Site a windmill location (HER: MLE787) is known through 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> century cartographical evidence.

### **Undated**

- 2.2.23 A possible moated site (HER: MLE17316) is known, under 600m east of the Site boundary. This was first noted by geophysical survey in 2009. A potential stone wall (HER: MLE17317) was also detected in this geophysical survey, but neither feature was found during later trial trench evaluation.
- 2.2.24 Approximately 560m southwest of the Site, a possible square stone structure (HER: MLE8733) was detected by geophysical survey in 1999. This remains undated. This survey also suggested the presence of an east-west running ditch (HER: MLE8732).

### **3 SITE-SPECIFIC AIMS AND OBJECTIVES**

#### **3.1 Aims**

3.1.1 The general aims of the fieldwork are:

- To assess the evidence for prehistoric activity on the Site, particularly Mesolithic, Neolithic and Bronze Age;
- To identify the presence of any archaeological remains to be affected by any intrusive aspects of the development;
- To attempt to quantify any such archaeological remains which are encountered by identifying, for example, their form, nature, state of preservation and date;

#### **3.2 Objectives**

3.2.1 The objectives for the project are:

- To identify the nature and extent of any archaeological remains on the Site;
- To create a record of any identified archaeological remains;
- To undertake a programme of post-excavation analysis, with reference to the research questions set out in section 4.3 below;
- To compile a suitably detailed report presenting the results of the programme of archaeological monitoring;
- To disseminate the results of the evaluation work in an appropriate format;
- To determine the scope and aims of a mitigation strategy if required; and
- To undertake the above in accordance with the ClfA Code of Conduct and relevant Standard and Guidance documents, and all other industrial guidance.

#### **3.3 Research Agenda**

3.3.1 The archaeological evaluation provides an opportunity to contribute to Research Themes and Objectives outlined in the East Midlands Heritage: An Updated Research Agenda and Strategy for the Historic Environment of the East Midlands (Knight et al 2012) (Interactive Digital Platform available at: <http://www.researchframeworks.org/emherf>).

Mesolithic c.9500 – c.4000 cal BC



<b>2.1 Periods of transition</b>
2.1.2: What can analyses of sites contribute to studies of continuity and change during the Mesolithic period?
2.1.3: How may we elucidate further the transition from the later Mesolithic to the earlier Neolithic?
<b>2.3 Identification of site types</b>
2.3.2: How far may studies of the size, shape and locational characteristics of lithic scatters and analyses of the associated lithic artefacts contribute to the identification of site types in the later and earlier Mesolithic?
2.3.3: What range of structural remains may survive on open-air sites across the region (particularly below alluvium and other masking deposits)?
2.3.4: How can we enhance the lithic scatter data retrieved during fieldwalking to clarify the size and shape of activity foci?
2.3.5: How far can we elucidate by targeted excavation the character of sites represented by surface lithic scatters?
<b>2.4 Lithic artefact chronologies</b>
2.4.1: Can we refine further by detailed typological analyses of survey and excavation the chronology of Mesolithic lithic industries, and in particular those overlapping Late Upper Palaeolithic and earlier Neolithic traditions?
<b>Neolithic and Early to Middle Bronze Age c.4000–c.1150 cal BC</b>
<b>3.1 Dating</b>
3.1.1: How may radiocarbon and other scientific dating methods be applied most effectively to refining the period's imprecise chronological framework?
3.1.2: How can we date more precisely the various regional styles of Neolithic and earlier Bronze Age pottery?
3.1.3: Can we further refine lithic artefact chronologies within the region?
<b>3.2 Continuity of hunter-gatherer traditions</b>
3.2.1: To what extent may hunter-gatherer subsistence traditions have continued into the Neolithic?
3.2.2: Can we discern continuities or discontinuities in the distributions of later Mesolithic and earlier Neolithic lithic scatters?
3.2.3: How may environmental sampling strategies assist in elucidating the transition from later Mesolithic to earlier Neolithic economies?
<b>3.3 Introduction, character and development of agriculture</b>

3.3.1: When was the transition from nomadic to semi-sedentary and sedentary communities and to what extent did this vary in different landscapes?
3.3.4: When did the first field and boundary systems develop, how did this vary regionally and what processes may underlie their development?
<b>3.4 Exploitation of different landscape zones</b>
3.4.3: Can we further refine our knowledge of the selective use of particular landscapes for ritual, agriculture and other activities?
<b>3.5 Settlement patterns</b>
3.5.1: How may we characterise more effectively the frequently ephemeral structural traces that might relate to settlement activity?
3.5.4: What may analyses of surface lithic scatters teach us about developing settlement patterns in the region?
<b>Late Bronze Age and Iron Age c.1150 cal BC–AD 43</b>
4.4 Middle Iron Age settlements (c.450 – 100 BC)
4.4.1: Why were settlements increasingly enclosed during this period and to what extent may the progress of enclosure have varied regionally?
4.5.3: How may nucleated and other settlements have developed in the Roman period?
4.6 Field systems and major linear boundaries
4.6.1: Can we shed further light upon the development of field and boundary systems?
<b>Romano-British AD 43-c.410</b>
<b>5.4 Rural settlement patterns and landscapes</b>
5.4.1: How did the Conquest impact upon rural settlements and landscapes?
<b>5.5 The agricultural economy</b>
5.5.4: Can we chart more closely the processes of agricultural intensification and expansion and the development of field systems?
<b>5.6 Artefacts: production, distribution and social identity</b>
5.6.1: What resources moved in and out of the region during this period?
5.6.3: How may studies of the production, movement and consumption of pottery contribute to understanding of the regional economy?
5.6.6: What can artefact research contribute to studies of eating, drinking

and other manifestations of social identity?
<b>Early Medieval c. AD 410–1066</b>
<b>6.1 Demography and the identification of political and social groups</b>
6.1.1: What may be deduced about changes in diet, mortality and other demographic variables from osteological studies of Anglo-Saxon cemeteries, and how might this have varied spatially and over time?
6.1.2: What was the relationship between indigenous communities and Germanic populations, and how may this have varied spatially and over time?
6.1.4: How far may studies of dress be advanced by analyses of inhumations, and how may dress accessories reflect social or political groupings?
<b>6.2 Ritual and belief</b>
6.2.2: Can ‘sub-Roman’ or ‘British’ cemeteries and cemeteries dating from the late seventh to ninth centuries be identified?
6.2.3: Can we characterise more precisely Anglo-Saxon and Viking cemeteries and identify temporal or spatial variability in funerary traditions?
<b>6.7 The agricultural economy and rural landscape</b>
6.7.3: How early may crop rotation and the open-field system have developed, and how may this relate to other agricultural innovations such as mouldboard ploughs, water meadows and land-drainage?
<b>High Medieval 1066–1485</b>
<b>7.7 The agrarian landscape and food-producing economy</b>
7.7.1: Can we shed further light upon the origins and development of the open-field system and its impact upon agricultural practices?
7.7.3: What can we deduce about changes in woodland management and animal or crop husbandry (including new crops, crop rotation, field systems, more intensive cultivation of clay soils and larger animals, particularly sheep)?

## 4 METHODOLOGY

### 4.1 General Conditions

- 4.1.1 All works were undertaken in accordance with the WSI as approved by Sophie Clarke, the Senior Conservation Officer for Charnwood Borough Council, according to standards and guidance in Standard and Guidance: For an Archaeological Field Evaluation (ClfA 2020) and Code of Conduct (ClfA 2021).

## **4.2 Archaeological Trench Evaluation**

- 4.2.1 A total of 33 trial trenches measuring 50m by 1.8m were excavated (Figure 02; Table 1) by a 360° mechanical excavator using a 1.8m wide toothless ditching bucket.
- 4.2.2 All trenches were located with reference to the Ordnance Survey National Grid by GPS, Leica CS15/GS15 RTK Differential GNSS.
- 4.2.3 All machining was conducted under constant archaeological supervision, with stripping and spoil removal arranged so as to avoid any tracking across the stripped surface. Prior to excavation, areas were scanned with a CAT scanner to locate any services that may not be shown on the services plan supplied by the client.
- 4.2.4 Trenches were excavated to the first archaeological horizon. Stratigraphy was removed in spits no greater than 250mm.
- 4.2.5 Topsoil and subsoil were stored separately at a safe distance from the trench edge. Spoil was checked for artefacts, including the use of a metal detector when deemed appropriate. No finds were recovered from the topsoil or subsoil.
- 4.2.6 All features identified were hand-cleaned. Following scanning by a metal detector features were sample excavated to characterise their nature and to recover any datable artefacts.
- 4.2.7 Linear features were excavated with a minimum of a metre long slot, located by the trench edge where possible.
- 4.2.8 Feature fills were removed by contextual change (the smallest usefully definable unit of stratification) and/or in spits no greater than 100mm.

## **4.3 Recording and Sampling**

- 4.3.1 Plans of all contexts including features were surveyed using a GPS, Leica CS15/GS15 RTK Differential GNSS, and show at least: context numbers, all colour and textural changes, principal slopes, levels expressed as O.D. values.
- 4.3.2 Sections were drawn on drafting film in pencil at a scale of 1:10/1:20/1:50 (as appropriate) and show the same information, but levelling information was given in the form of a datum line with O.D./arbitrary value. The locations of all sections were surveyed.
- 4.3.3 Digital images of each context were taken together with general views illustrating the principal features of the excavations.
- 4.3.4 Written records were maintained as laid down in the YA recording manual (York Archaeology 2015).
- 4.3.5 The location of any artefacts was recorded by context/spit fill numbers.

## **5 RESULTS- TRIAL TRENCHES**

### **5.1 Southern Field**

5.1.1 In the southernmost field, Trench 10 (figure 7) contained two ditches at a 90° angle to each other, forming a corner of a potential enclosure. Pottery of Romano-British date ( 41 sherds of grey ware and mortaria) were recovered from these ditches. It is possible that a further ditch in Trench 3 (figure 6), further to the northwest, represents a continuation of this feature, although this is uncertain. An undated pit was also found in this trench. Aside from these features, focused in the south-western part of the field, only furrows were present.

### **5.2 Middle Field**

5.2.1 In the middle field, of all the trenches excavated, only furrows were identified at the eastern end of the field, in Trenches 20 and 21 (figure 3).

### **5.3 Northern Field**

5.3.1 In the northernmost field, furrows were identified across five of the seven trenches. (figure 2). The one feature was limited to a post-medieval linear feature in Trench 28 (figure 4), from which pottery was recovered.

## **6 CONCLUSION**

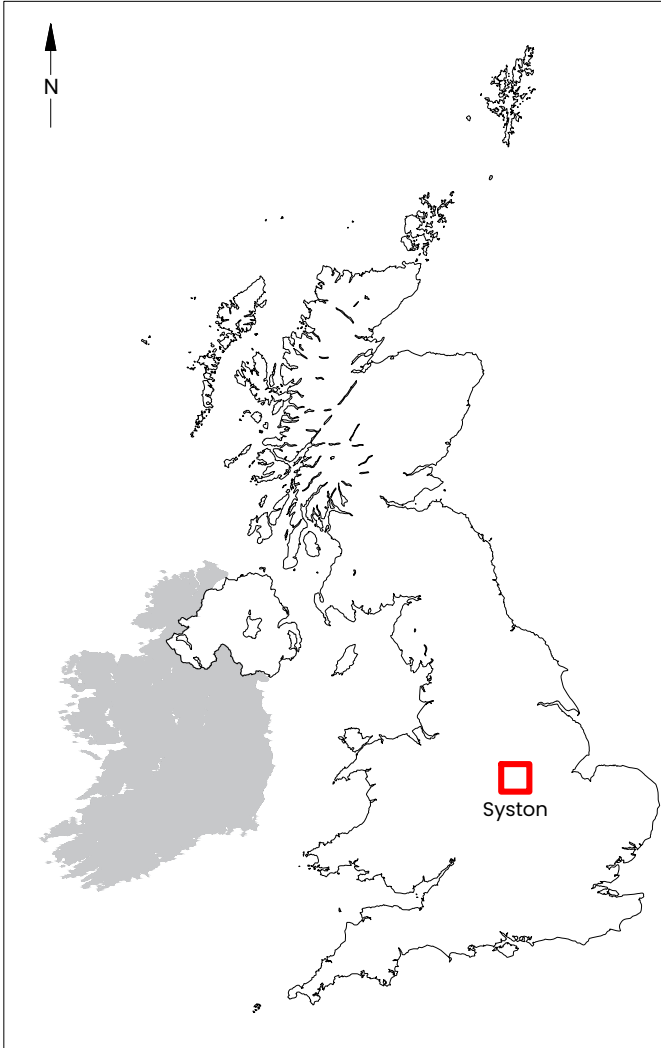
### **6.1**

6.1.1 This interim report has shown the presence of archaeology within 2 trenches in the southern field of the PDA. This is centred around two Roman ditches found in trench 10, with a potential continuation in trench 3. Conclusions drawn in this report will be brought forward into the final report within 6 weeks.

6.1.2 The trial trenching has demonstrated that the southern field within the proposed development area contains features of Roman date – covering c. 0.3 ha. A plan showing the proposed mitigation area is included as Figure 9 within this report. The heritage interest in this site can be properly safe guarded by attaching a condition to any consent granted requiring the archaeological excavation and recording of this zone (plus off site assessment, analysis, reporting and archiving) with allowance of an associated buffer (not more than 15% of the identified area). There will be no requirement for any further archaeological work elsewhere within this site

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## FIGURES



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Figure 01 - Location Map  
Land North of Barkby Road, Syston

Scale at A4 - varies  
Drawn by MI





Figure 02 - Site Plan  
9156 - Land North of Barkby Road, Syston

Scale at A3 - 1:1200  
Drawn by MI



**Key**

- Site Boundary
- Archaeological Feature
- Intervention
- Furrow
- Modern

Figure 03 - Plan Of Northern Area  
9156 - Land North of Barkby Road, Syston

Scale at A3 - 1:1000  
Drawn by MI



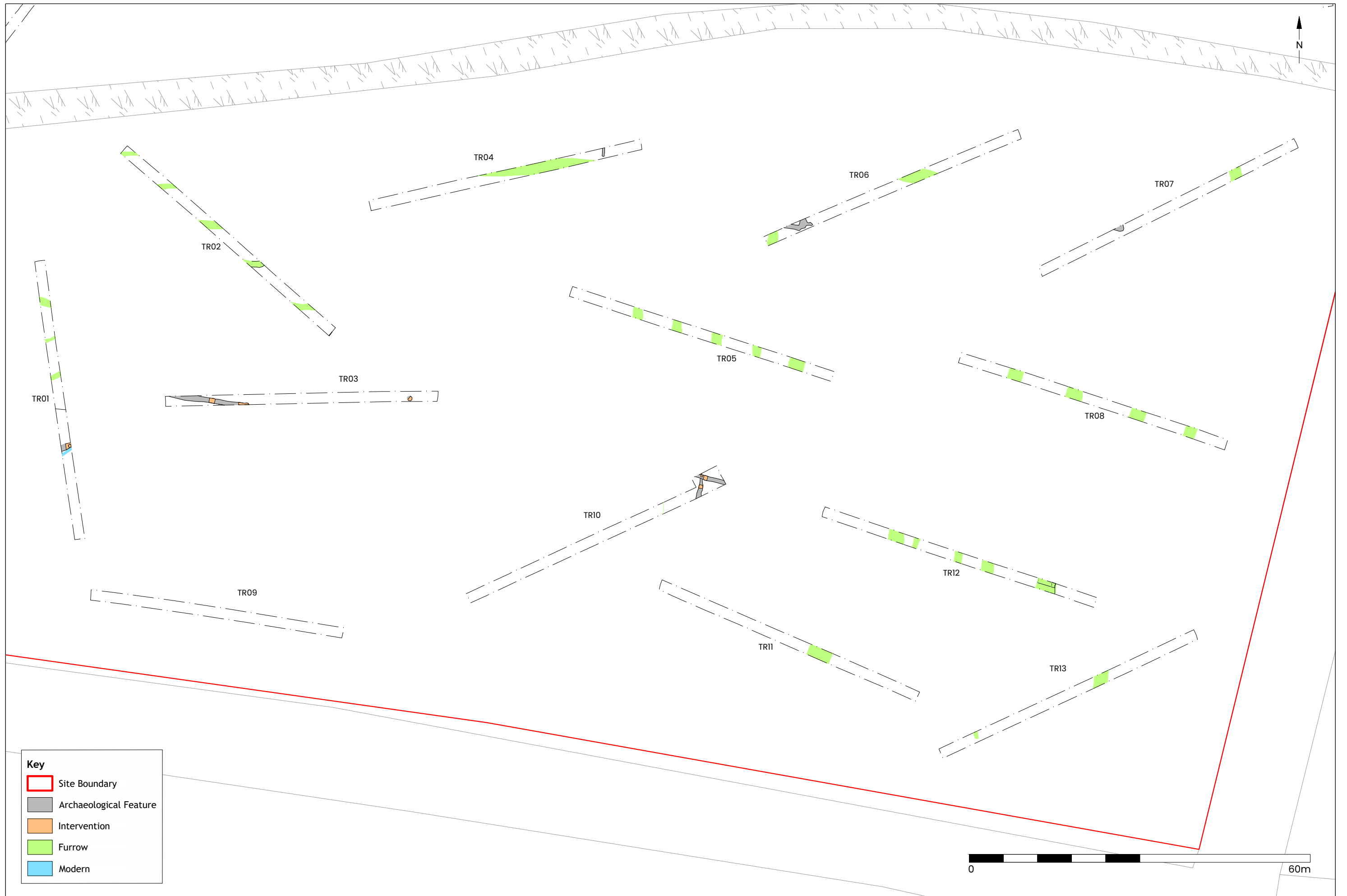
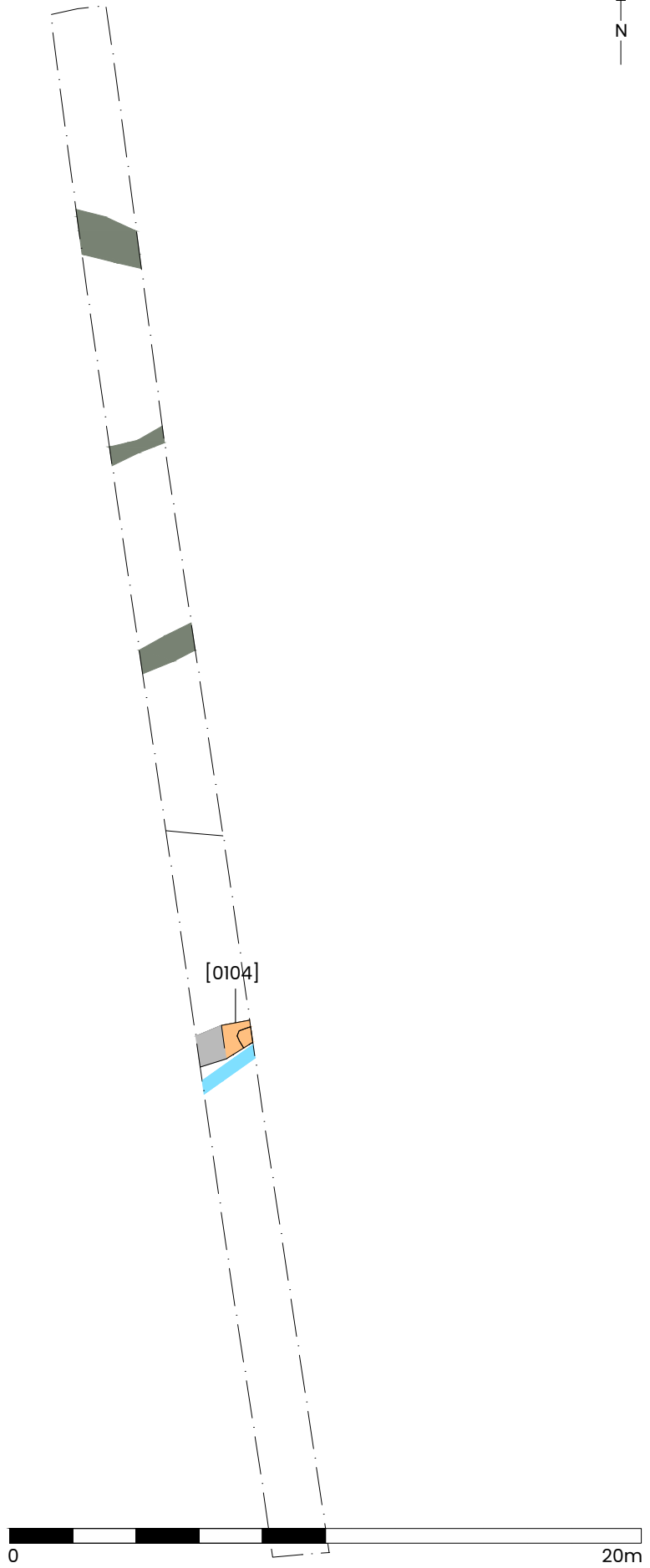
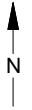
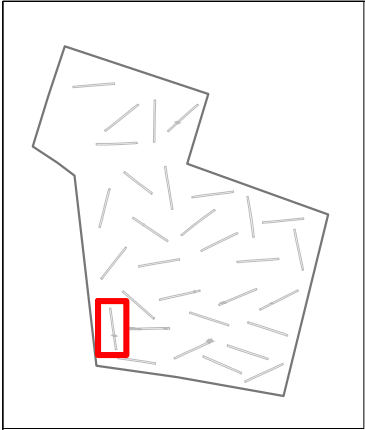


Figure 04 - Plan Of Southern Area  
9156 - Land North of Barkby Road, Syston

Scale at A3 - 1:600  
Drawn by MI

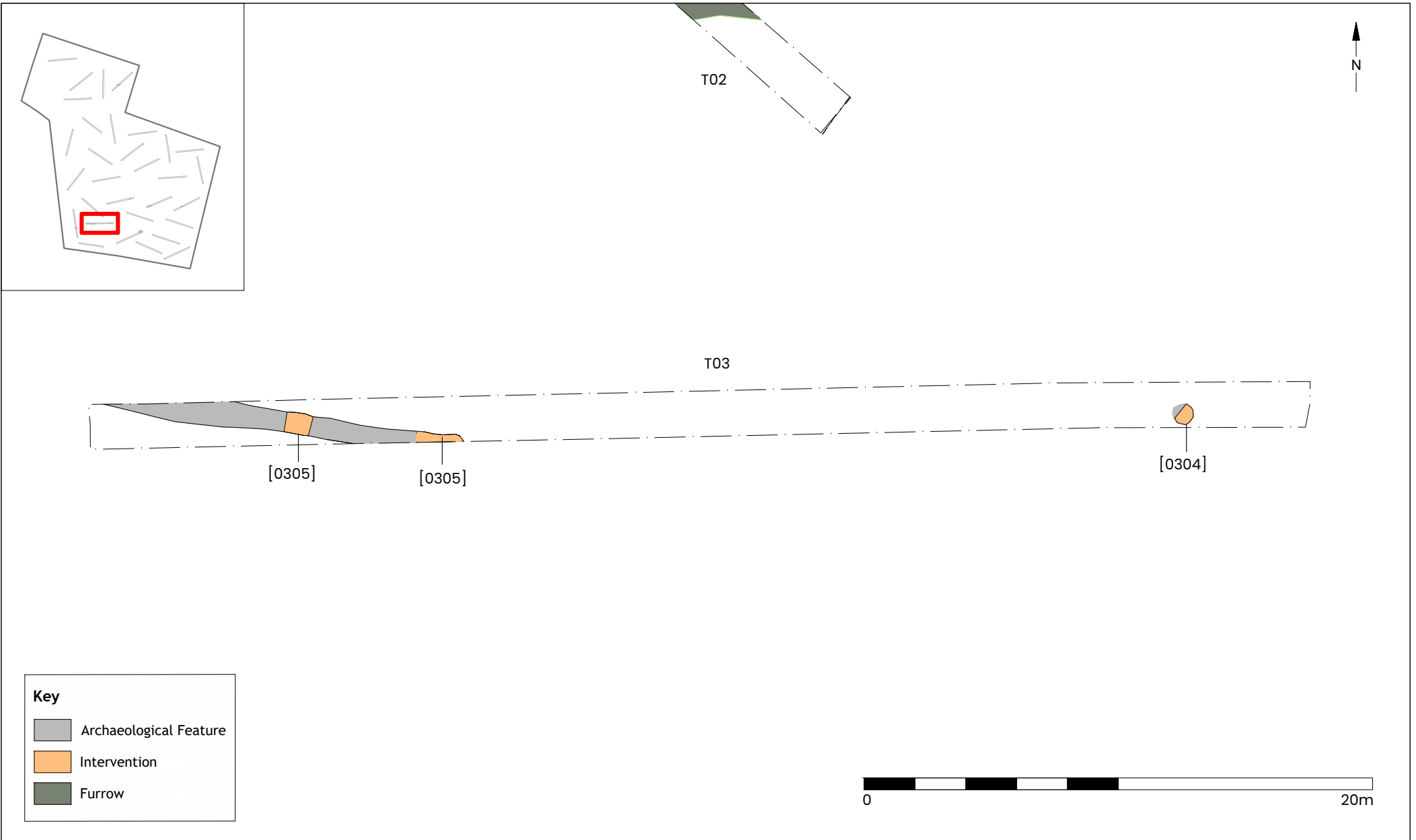


Key	
	Archaeological Feature
	Intervention
	Furrow



Figure 05 - Plan Of Trench 01  
9156 - Land North of Barkby Road, Syston

Scale at A4 - 1:200  
Drawn by MI



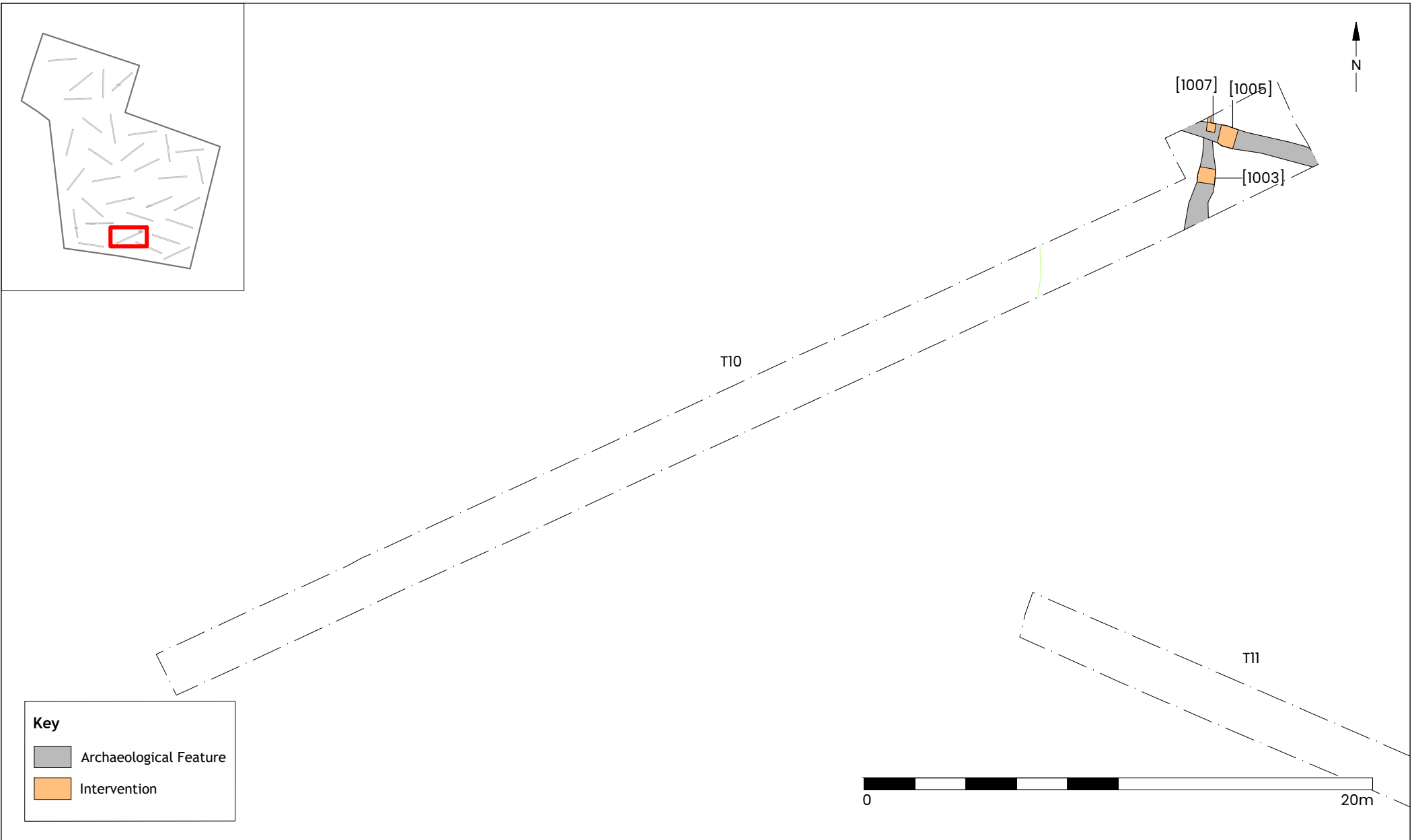
**Key**

- Archaeological Feature
- Intervention
- Furrow



Figure 06 - Plan Of Trench 03  
9156 - Land North of Barkby Road, Syston

Scale at A4 - 1:200  
Drawn by MI



**Key**

- Archaeological Feature
- Intervention



Figure 07 - Plan Of Trench 10  
 9156 - Land North of Barkby Road, Syston

Scale at A4 - 1:200  
 Drawn by MI

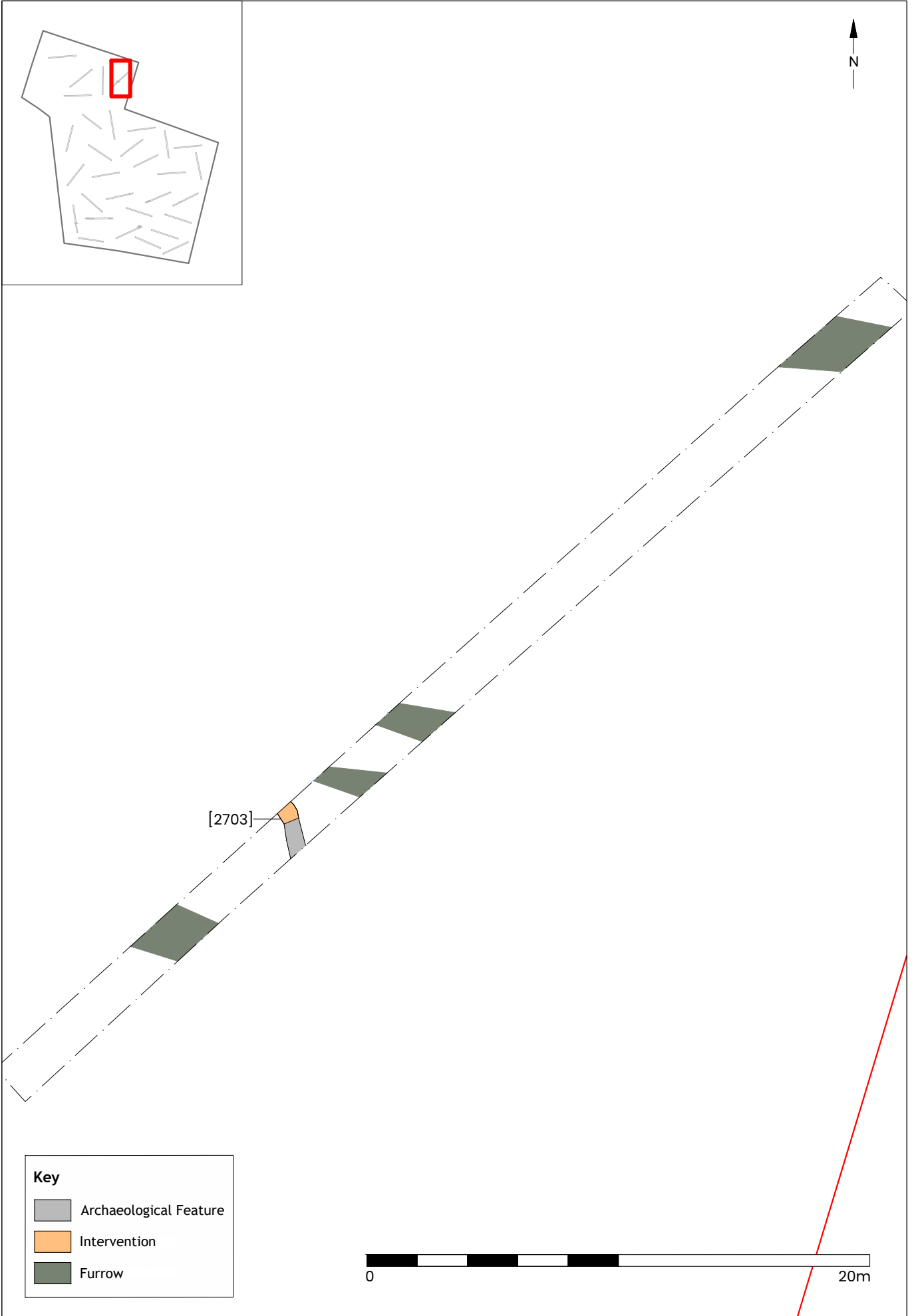


Figure 08 - Plan Of Trench 28  
9156 - Land North of Barkby Road, Syston

Scale at A4 - 1:200  
Drawn by MI

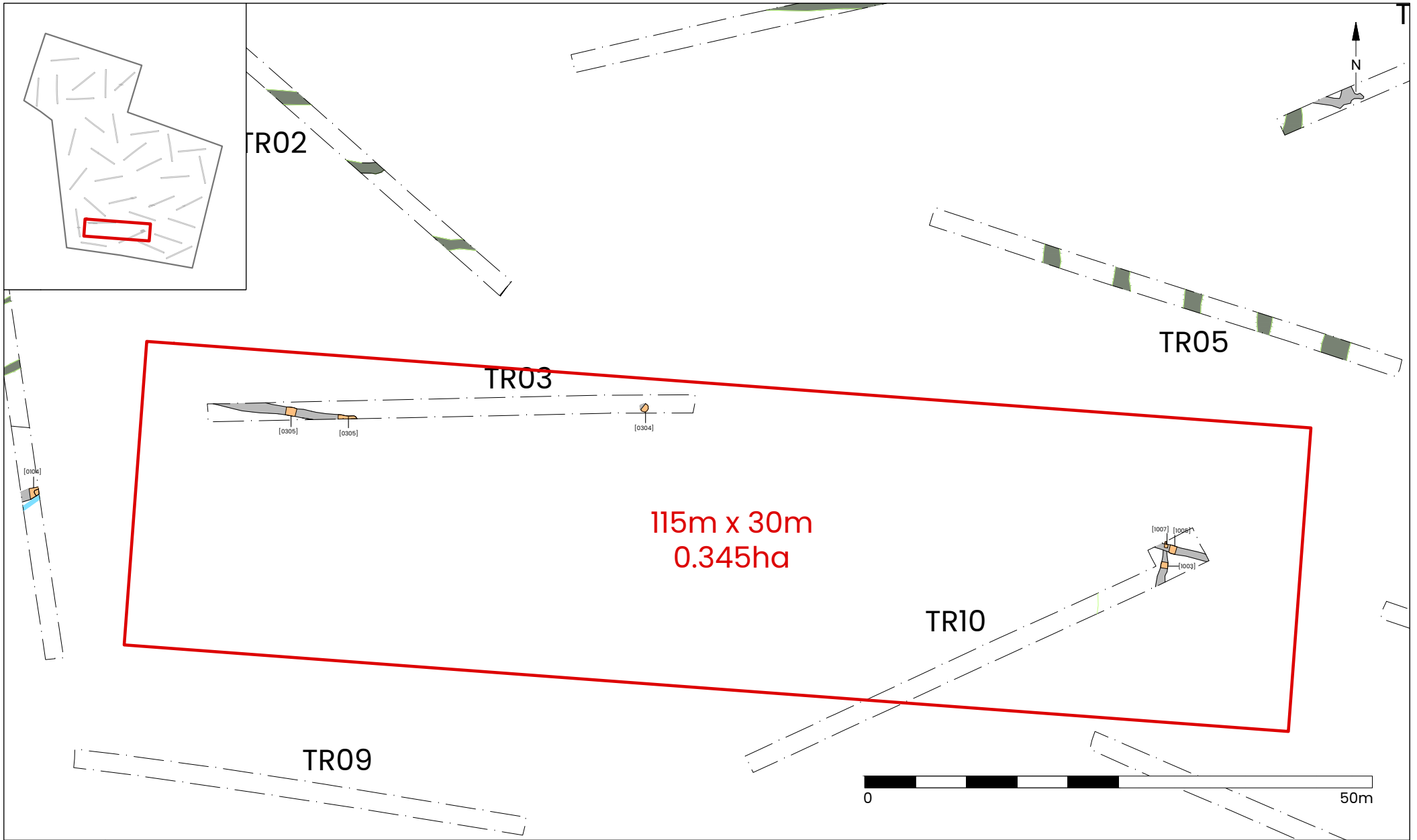


Figure 09 - Proposed Excavation Area  
9156 - Land North of Barkby Road, Syston

Scale at A4 - 1:500  
Drawn by MH