

# Excavations at Redhouse, Adwick Le Street, Doncaster





# **Excavations at Redhouse, Adwick Le Street, Doncaster**

Bronze Age, Iron Age and Roman occupation

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# Chapter 1

## Introduction

### Project background

From May 2000 to June 2017, MOLA (Museum of London Archaeology) undertook a programme of archaeological excavations and watching briefs at Adwick Le Street, 6.5km to the north-west of Doncaster (Fig 1.1). They revealed evidence for Bronze Age, Iron Age and Roman activity. The excavations were originally commissioned by Jacobs Babbie (formally Babbie Group) on behalf of Teesland Management Services Ltd, who had been granted planning consent for the construction of a retail park. The most recent works were commissioned by RPS Heritage, on behalf of their clients Redhouse Developments and Cromwell Property Group.

The development area, totalling 70ha was initially divided into a series of areas for the purposes of geophysical surveying which were then targeted during subsequent excavations and watching briefs (Figs 1.1 and 1.2). Part of a Roman road forming the principal routeway linking Doncaster to York, via Castleford and Tadcaster and known locally as the Roman Ridge (SAM SY1179) survived as a standing earthwork monument in the eastern part of the area.

### Location, topography and geology

Topographically, the development area was within a triangular parcel of land on a valley side rising from approximately 35m above Ordnance Datum (aOD) in the north-east corner of the site to approximately 50m aOD in the south. Further afield, the land rises gradually to the west to around 90-100m aOD around the villages of Hooton Pagnell and Brodsworth. Whereas the land to the north and east falls gently from the A638 towards the stream of the 'Old Ea Beck', Adwick and Carcroft commons. The area is bounded by the A1M motorway on its western side and by the Great North Road (A638) on its northern and eastern sides. The southern boundary is defined by Long Lands Lane.

The geology comprises Upper Magnesian Limestone, with areas of colluvial soils, red clay and Middle Permian Marl (BGS 2022). During the excavation, the natural substrate varied across the area in both depth and composition, ranging from solid horizontal strata in the north-east, central and southern part of the area to decayed, fragmented beds comprising a soft powdery cream coloured limestone in the extreme north-west between the rock were deposits of red brown clay.

### Historical and archaeological background

Most of the activity previously identified in the area comprised cropmark data showing a landscape of dispersed enclosures set within associated field systems thought to date to the Iron Age and Roman periods. Recorded cropmarks extend from Hooton Pagnell c3.5km to the west to cropmarks visible within the wider Redhouse development area. A further extensive landscape of prehistoric and Roman enclosures and fields was located to the north at Campsall (c5.5km), and at Burghwallis (c3.5km). Several investigations have also been undertaken at sites just to the south of Redhouse such as Pickburn Leys (1.5km), Balby Carr (15km) and Rossington (12km) all of which recorded extensive remains of Iron Age/Roman settlements set within field systems. More recent investigations at Rossington, investigated an enclosure and associated ditches, which were found to be integral parts of an extensive field system previously visible as cropmarks in the surrounding landscape (Powell *et al* 2020). At Outwood Academy just 0.8km to the east of Redhouse, further remains of an Iron Age/Roman ditched field system were identified (Tuck and Dawson 2012).

Within the Redhouse area, cropmarks visible on aerial photographs showed a landscape of enclosures set within rectangular fields and trackways defined by ditches thought to be of Roman date (HER 02691/01). A desk-based assessment and geophysical survey (Badcock and Merrony 1995) were followed by evaluation works (NA 1996) which confirmed the presence of the cropmark features. The subsequent mitigation works outlined below confirmed the presence of an extensive Iron Age/Roman landscape comprised of enclosures, field systems and trackways.

### Mitigation works

The mitigation works began in May 2000 with the excavation of an Iron Age enclosure (E1) and a section of the Roman road (Upson-Smith 2002; Meadows and Chapman 2005) (Fig 1.2). Further areas within the development area were allocated for excavation and/or watching brief recording. Enclosures E2, E4 and E7 were subject to excavations in 2001 (NA 2005 and Simmonds 2016) and E3 was identified during a watching brief undertaken at the same time. Enclosure E5 was examined as part of a watching brief in 2003 and the excavation of enclosure E8 was conducted between October and December 2004 (Upson-Smith 2006).

EXCAVATIONS AT REDHOUSE, ADWICK LE STREET, DONCASTER

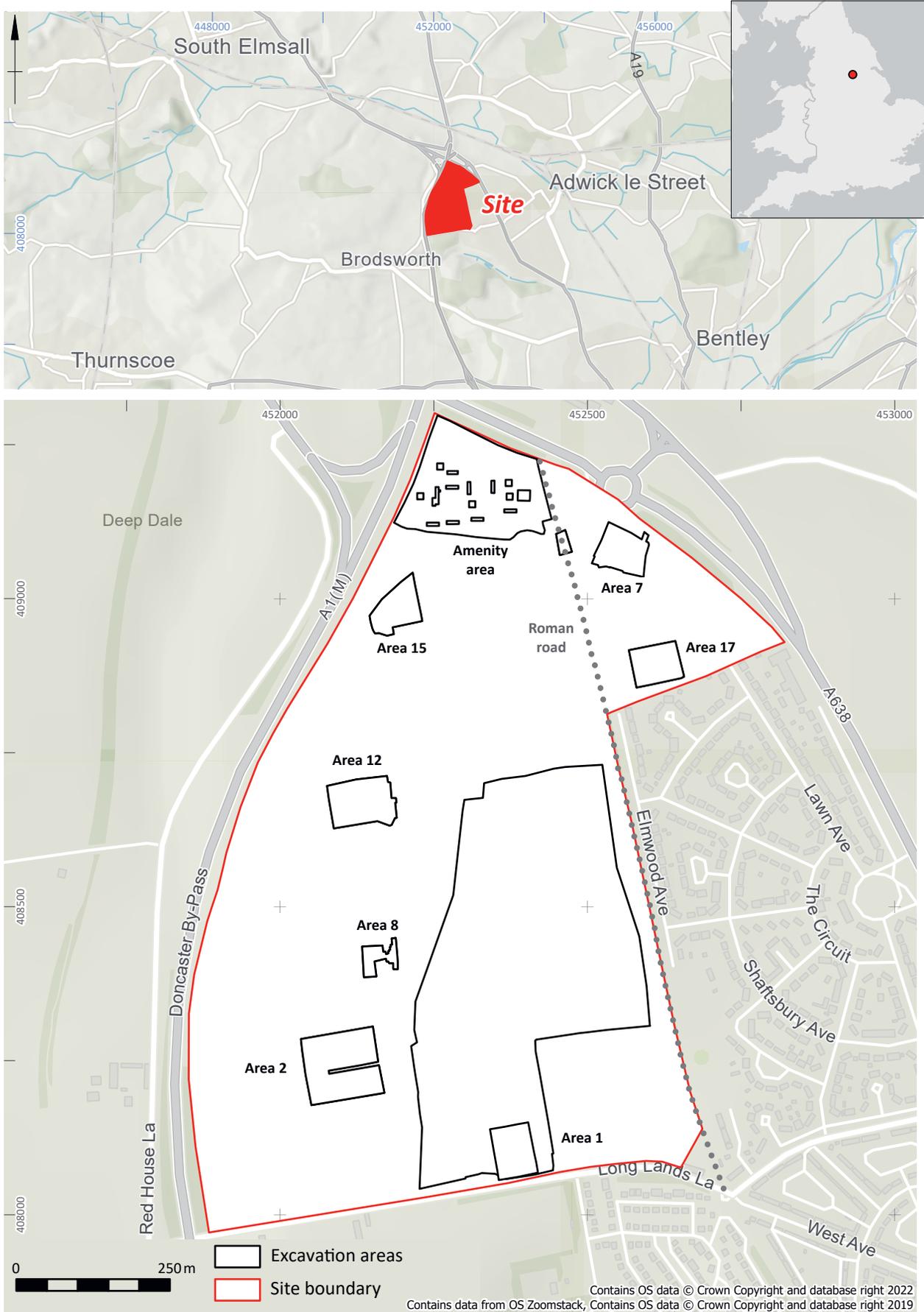


Figure 1.1. Site location

INTRODUCTION

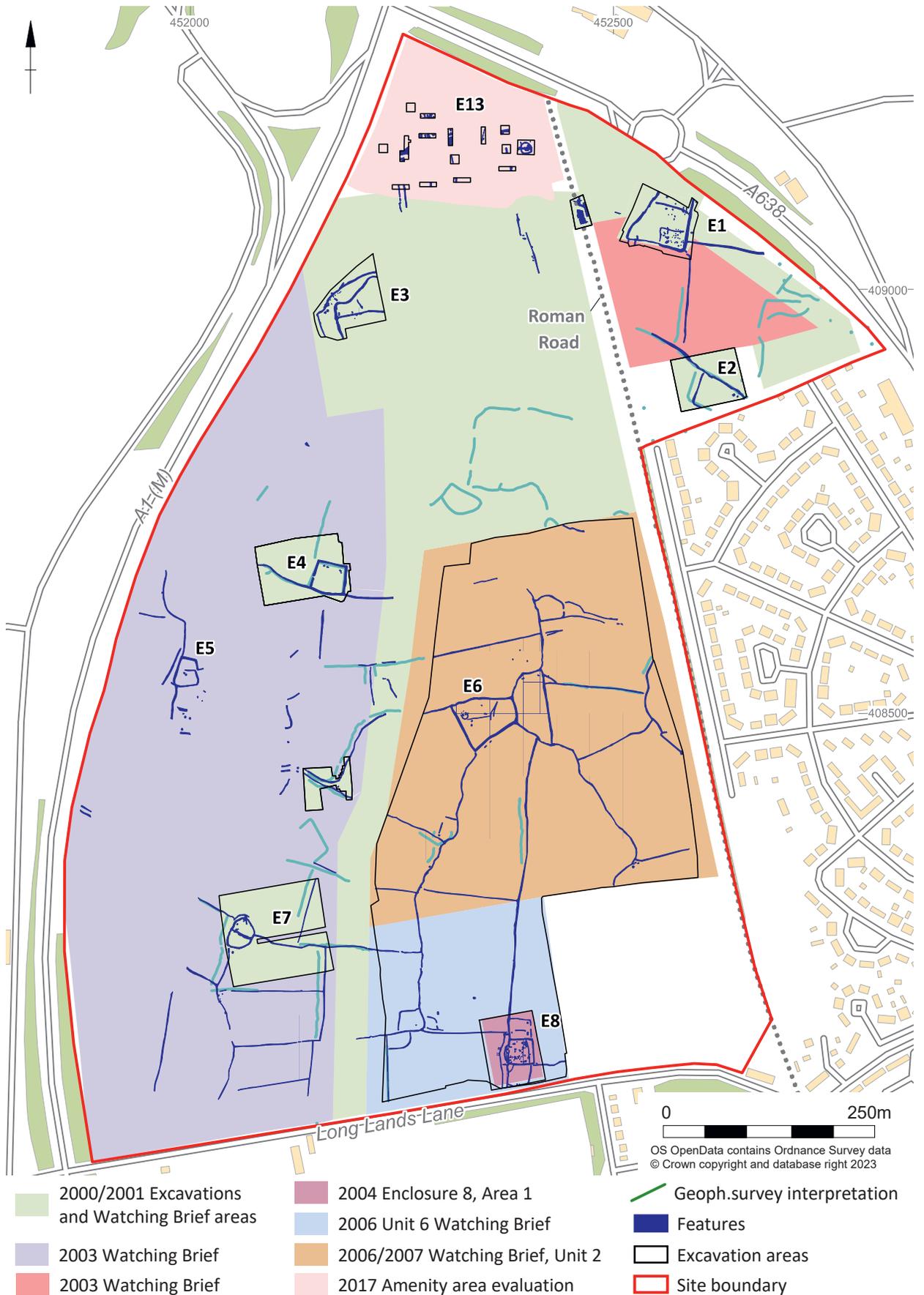


Figure 1.2. Archaeological works

EXCAVATIONS AT REDHOUSE, ADWICK LE STREET, DONCASTER

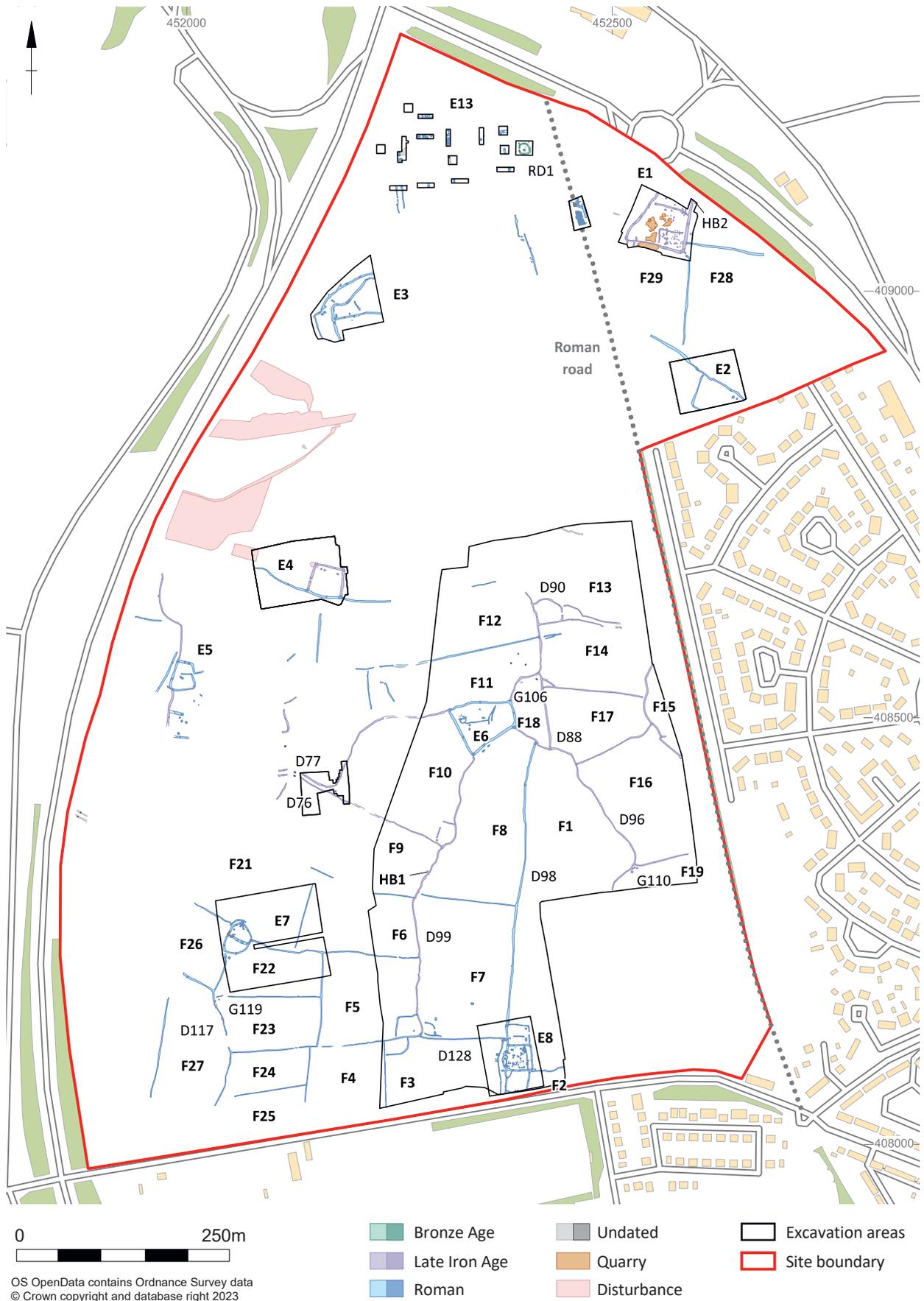


Figure 1.3. All features phased plan

Enclosure E6 and the surrounding fields and the wider area around enclosure E8 were investigated between November 2006 and January 2007 (Upson-Smith 2007). Finally, in 2017, the very northern part of the area was investigated which contained enclosure E13 and a ring ditch. These final works comprised archaeological evaluation consisting of eight trenches, six small areas and a single mitigation area (Simmonds 2017). The results of all of the archaeological works undertaken have since been reported on (Preece 2022).

### Archiving

Doncaster Museum are presently unable to take in archaeological archives and the Redhouse archive will therefore be held temporarily at MOLA Northampton. Doncaster Museum has agreed to take in the Redhouse archive once they are again able to accept archaeological deposits. The accession numbers for Redhouse project are DONMG:2000.112, DONMG:2000.113 and DONMG:2000.114.

### Site phasing

Archaeological features dating from the early Bronze Age through to the Roman period were identified across the development area (Fig 1.3 and Table 1.1). The stratigraphic analysis combined with the artefactual evidence has enabled a chronological sequence to be established, which is summarised below.

Evidence for Bronze Age activity was identified during the 2017 works in the northern part of the area and comprised a ring ditch (RD1). The ring ditch defined a burial monument as at least two of the six pits within its interior comprised early Bronze Age cremation burials. The remnants of pottery vessels from the early Bronze Age were also found in three of the pits.

Table 1.1. Periods of activity

Period	Activity
Bronze Age 2000 BC - 700 BC	Ring ditch Cremation burials Pits
Middle Iron Age 400 BC - 100 BC	Inhumation burial
Late Iron Age 100 BC - AD 60	Enclosures Field system Trackway Structures Cremation burial Pits Quarrying
Roman AD 60 - 450	Enclosures Field system Road Structures Oven Pits

During the Iron Age period, initial landscape elements began to be established by the inhabitants which comprised ditched enclosures and an associated field system. A crouched inhumation pit burial, radiocarbon dated to the middle Iron Age period, was identified adjacent to one of the field ditches and may be an indication that some of the field ditches were established prior to this event. There was continuous occupation from the Iron Age into the Roman period with the establishment of new enclosures and the expansion of a more rectilinear field system. The Iron Age enclosures were incorporated into this activity while newly established enclosures utilised the existing field system.