



Archaeological Interim Assessment Report

Phase I and Phase II

Neatscourt, Sheppey, Kent

July 2009

SWAT. Archaeology
Swale and Thames Archaeological Survey Company
School Farm Oast, Graveney Road
Faversham, Kent
ME13 8UP
Tel: 01795 532548 or 07885 700 112

ARCHAEOLOGICAL INTERIM ASSESSMENT REPORT

Neatscourt Phase I and Phase II Queenborough & Rushenden Regeneration NQR-EX-08

Planning Reference: SW/06/1468 & SW/07/01

Report No. 2009/DB/003/1

Prepared By:	Submitted To:	Organisation:	Date:
SWAT Archaeology	Mark Williams (Agent)	BAM Nuttall Limited	17/07/2009
	Mark Wakeman (Quantity Surveyor)	BAM Nuttall Limited	17/07/2009



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School Farm Oast, Graveney Road
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ME13 8UP

Tel; 01975 532548 or 07885 700 112

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ARCHAEOLOGICAL INTERIM ASSESSMENT

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1 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 Swale & Thames Archaeological Survey Company (SWAT), under the direction of Dr Paul Wilkinson, is currently contracted by BAM Nuttall Limited to conduct the archaeological investigations associated with proposed remediation works at the Queenborough and Rushenden Regeneration Site, Neatscourt, Isle of Sheppey in Kent.
- 1.2 Initial archaeological investigations were carried out between October 2008 and June 2009 continuing today in the form of an intermittent watching brief. Further works may also be required in order to fully examine and record a prehistoric mound (see below).
- 1.3 This interim assessment report has been produced in order to provide a summary of the results obtained from ongoing archaeological excavations in accordance with requirements set out within approved Archaeological Project Designs (Oxford Archaeology 2007, SWAT Archaeology 2008 & Kent County Council 2006) and in discussion with Heritage & Conservation, Kent County Council.
- 1.4 This report thus provides a concatenation of information previously covered within weekly reports, as well as an earlier interim report (SWAT 2009), in order to provide an insightful overview of the results obtained. Full post excavation analysis and assessment is currently in progress and will be submitted following completion of all archaeological works associated with the project (see below).
- 1.5 For the sake of clarity, this interim report divides the site into five areas, thus superseding the confusing plot references previously adopted. Any further/additional archaeological assessment will comply with this format. Table 1 (below) provides a breakdown of these areas, which are shown on Figure 1.

Area	Description
A	Area A is located within the north western extents of the site and covers areas previously identified as Plots 1A, 1Da, 1Db and 1E, along with the Rushenden relief road embankment and adjacent car park extension (also referred to as the IMG site).
B	Area B incorporates areas previously identified as Plots 1B.1 and 1B.2.
C	Area C is defined by the extents of the area previously identified as Plot 1B.3.
D	Area D comprises approximately half of the area previously identified as Plot C.
E	Area E consists of the remaining half of the area previously identified as Plot C.

Table 1: Site Areas referred to in the text

- 1.6 This interim assessment report has been produced on behalf of BAM Nuttall Limited (Principal Contractor) and will be submitted directly to Mr Mark Williams (Agent) for distribution.

2 METHODOLOGY

2.1 Area A

- 2.1.1 Archaeological mitigation within Area A comprised preservation in situ (deferred until detailed planning) within areas formally recognised as Plots 1A, 1Da, 1Db and 1E. That said, an intermittent watching brief was carried out during the removal of topsoil, in accordance with the Archaeological Project Design.

- 2.1.2 The car park extension area was subject to an intensive (constant) watching brief during the removal of the topsoil, as was the area assigned to the Rushenden relief road project. In addition to the watching brief, however, an archaeological excavation of an area c. 0.75 ha in extent was required to further assess archaeological remains revealed during the archaeological evaluation (Trench 2, Trench 78 and Trench 79).

2.2 Area B

- 2.2.1 Archaeological mitigation within Area B comprised a watching brief during topsoil stripping for construction purposes within the area formally recognised as Plots 1B.2. A constant archaeological presence was maintained during the removal of topsoil within the eastern extent of Area B, whilst a more intermittent policy was adopted within the western extent of the area (2007: 10)

- 2.2.2 Within the northern extent of Area B a small strip, map and sample exercise was required in order to determine the presence or absence of archaeological features associated with those recorded on a previously excavated site, now beneath the existing A249 (Plot 1B.1). Constant archaeological monitoring was carried out during the removal of topsoil and hardcore within this area. Potential archaeological features were then examined, as detailed below.

2.3 Area C

- 2.3.1 The whole of Area C, formally known as Plot 1B.3, was subject to a strip, map and record exercise, as specified within the project design (2007:9). Topsoil was removed in strips of

approximately 20m from the eastern extent of the site to the western boundary with Area B. It was considered unnecessary to excavate in alternate strips, as described in the project design.

2.4 Areas D and E

2.4.1 The whole of Area D and Area E, formally known as Plot 1C, was subject to a strip, map and sample exercise, as specified within the project design (2007:9). Topsoil was removed in strips of approximately 20m from the eastern extent of the site to the western boundary with Area C. As with Area C, it was considered unnecessary to excavate in alternate strips, as suggested in the project design.

3 SCHEDULES AND TIMETABLES

3.1 SWAT Archaeology maintained a constant presence on site from 13th October 2008 until 12th June 2009, during which time the above works were carried out. Since then an intermittent watching brief has been maintained during final areas of topsoil strip, in accordance with the project design. Further archaeological fieldwork has been requested by Kent County Council following the identification of a prehistoric mound within Area B. This is covered further below.

3.2 A breakdown of times and dates associated with each phase of the project is detailed in Table 2 below.

Area	Plot	Activity	Start	Completion	
A	1A	Topsoil strip (intermittent monitoring)	11/08	12/08	
	1Da	Topsoil strip (intermittent monitoring)	11/08	12/08	
	1Db	Topsoil strip (intermittent monitoring)	11/08	12/08	
	1E	Topsoil strip (intermittent monitoring)	11/08	12/08	
	IMG		Topsoil strip (constant monitoring)	22/10/08	31/10/08
			Sample excavation	3/11/08	14/11/08
		Detailed excavation	17/11/08	23/11/08	
B	1B.1	Topsoil strip (constant monitoring)	9/3/09	10/3/09	
		Sample excavation	15/3/09	16/3/09	
	1B.2	Topsoil strip (intermittent monitoring)	16/3/09	present	
		Pond area	8/6/09	12/6/09	
C	1B.3	Prehistoric mound	8/6/09	12/6/09	
		Topsoil strip	18/5/09	29/5/09	
D	1C	Sample excavation	22/5/09	12/6/09	
		Topsoil strip	13/10/08	4/11/08	
		Sample excavation	30/10/08	19/12/08	
		Detailed excavation	5/1/09	13/3/09	

E	1C	Topsoil strip	13/10/08	31/10/08
		Sample excavation	3/11/08	19/12/08

Table 2. Archaeological timetable

4 REVIEW OF THE ARCHAEOLOGICAL FIELDWORK

4.1 Area A (Figure 2)

- 4.1.1 Archaeological investigations within Area A were concluded on the 23rd November 2008. Results have clearly shown that the majority of archaeological deposits are comprised of dumped and washed in alluvial/colluvial material most likely associated with an area of higher ground to the immediate south (where the current IM Group is located). Investigations revealed burnt clay filled pits present within the upper alluvial horizon, along with plenty of washed in pottery (on the same horizon) dating between the Iron Age and Medieval periods.
- 4.1.2 To the east, an additional area of excavation (within the proposed location for the Rushenden relief road) revealed the presence of Roman pits and a Roman ditch all cut into the natural geology that dropped away to the north. Two extra areas excavated to the northwest produced no further archaeological deposits.
- 4.1.3 Evaluation slots have revealed the presence of shallow natural marsh channels that have subsequently been filled by washed in (or dumped) domestic and industrial waste. Briquetage was present within one particular channel overlying cess and layers of burnt clay. No evidence for the presence of brine tanks or in-situ burning would therefore suggest that the salt production occurred elsewhere within the surrounding landscape.
- 4.1.4 The IMG site has now been covered and will be preserved in-situ, protected beneath imported clay, providing the lower formation of the proposed IMG car park extension.
- 4.1.5 An intermittent watching brief and metal detector survey is being conducted within Plots 1A, 1Da, 1Db & 1E, as specified within the Archaeological Project Design. No archaeological features were revealed.

4.2 Area B (Figure 3)

- 4.2.1 Archaeological investigations within Area B comprised an intermittent watching brief during the initial topsoil strip, followed by the rapid examination of archaeological features cutting into the upper alluvial deposits. With the exception of modern creek fill (as shown on Figure 3) two areas were of archaeological concern.
- 4.2.2 Within the western extent of Area B, machine excavation was temporarily stopped in order to examine archaeological features present within the lower alluvial sequence (Figure 3a). A burnt Bronze Age pit was represented, surrounded by undated post holes, possibly indicative of a small temporary shelter. Five undated pits were also present.
- 4.2.3 An intensive watching brief was carried out during the removal of topsoil within Plot 1B.2 from March to May 2009, during which time the presence of an upper alluvial deposit was recognised, as well as an area of redeposited silts and clays (see Figure 3b). Further examination of this deposit has shown it to be artificial in nature, with truncating cremation and inhumations within the upper horizon. Initial investigations of the artificial mound provided the possibility for the presence of a multiphase burial mound, or barrow. The presence of human remains, within both a burial and cremation context, strongly supports this theory as does the presence of enclosure ditches. Post holes suggest the presence of a structure atop the mound, while dense charcoal erosion and fills of the surrounding ditches may indicate the presence of funeral pyres.
- 4.2.4 The Strip, Map and Record exercise carried out within the northern extent of Area B (formally 1B.1) revealed the continued presence of alluvium, truncated by shallow modern ditches. No archaeological features were present within this area.

4.3 Area C (Figure 4)

- 4.3.1 Excavations within the southern extent of Area C have revealed the presence of parallel ditches (possibly representing former droveways) along with an associated enclosure that disappears beneath the southern baulk into the adjacent site. The level of preservation and alignment of the ditches suggest a continuation of archaeological features into the south-eastern extent of Area D (see below). Pottery associated with these features has now been dated to the Early Medieval period, suggesting a contemporary relationship with the settlement to the northeast.
- 4.3.2 Directly adjacent, a parallel ditch turns to the north, continuing through the centre of the site. Provisionally dated to the Roman period, this feature represents a former boundary

associated within the cremation cemetery. The frequency of archaeological features to the west of this ditch is by far lower than that to the east.

4.3.3 An earlier Iron Age ditch is also present within Area C, along with a contemporary quarry pit. Directly to the east of this ditch a circular enclosure has been positively dated to the Iron Age (Figure 4a). A series of pits, one of which contained Bronze Age pottery, were located within the northern extent of the site and may relate to archaeological features revealed during the construction of the A249 link road. Within the north-eastern extent of Area C a single undated inhumation and six Roman cremations were excavated (Figure 4b).

4.4 Area D (Figure 5)

2.4.1 To date, 18 cremations have been fully recorded and lifted within the Area D. The scattered distribution of these features, especially when considered with similar deposits located within the immediate area (i.e. during archaeological investigation associated with the construction of the A249) suggests the absence of a defined cemetery, although the boundary ditch within Area C needs to be taken into consideration. Figure 5a provides an illustration of a cremation cluster within the northern extent of Area D.

2.4.2 The presence of a prehistoric ditch system and potential pond/quarry within the south-eastern extent of the site (Figure 5c) suggests the possibility for additional prehistoric settlement (Figure 5c). Given the absence of contemporary features within the peripheral area of either Area D or Area E, it is considered likely that should such a settlement exist then it would be located beyond the extents of the site, possibly down slope to the south.

2.4.3 Within the north-eastern extent of the site, the third group consists of a small series of parallel medieval linear features that bear resemblance to those located within the area now occupied by the A249. Directly adjacent, a 'pit complex' is dated to the Roman period (Figure 5b).

4.5 Area E (Figures 6-8)

4.5.1 Archaeological investigations within Area E have identified three distinct areas; a double-ditched enclosure, a domestic/communal structure and amorphous peripheral anomalies.

4.5.2 From the outset, the enclosure was clear. The rectangular shape in plan, coupled with distinctly dark shell-rich fill provided clear evidence for human occupation on the high plateau of Area E. The evaluation trench (Trench 67) excavated by Oxford Archaeology

(Wheaton 2007) had clearly indicated the presence of parallel linear features along with large pits, which at the time were interpreted as large tree boles and potential modern field boundaries (2007:25). This, however, can now be discounted. The double-ditched enclosure can be clearly seen (Figure 6) with internal divisions, structures evident from post holes in the north-western extent of the enclosure, and circular corral areas to the immediate south.

- 4.5.3 Pottery retrieved from the southern double ditches has provided an 11th-12th century date for the enclosure, with residual elements of 8th and 9th century occupation. At present time the alignments, the profiles and the primary fills of the northern and western extent of the enclosure suggest a contemporary date.
- 4.5.4 Directly to the south of the southern enclosure ditch, a curving ditch connects to the primary enclosure forming a smaller corral or paddock. No internal features are present within this area. The anomalies shown on Figure 3 represent later root action.
- 4.5.5 As with the western enclosure, features within the eastern extent of Area E were instantly recognised as being of considerable importance. The archaeological evaluation had highlighted this area as an archaeological hotspot, with features ranging from an east-west orientated linear feature, a partially articulated juvenile cattle burial and a series of unexcavated pits (2007:26). Once again, distinct patterns are clear. Two sets of parallel ditches can be recognised, with connecting cross ditches, pits and frequent post holes. Pottery dating to the 11th-12th century was retrieved, suggesting a contemporary relationship with the western enclosure.
- 4.5.6 The eastern area has revealed the extensive presence of post holes, ditches and pits that have been attributed to a Saxon/Early Medieval building. Saxon pottery sherds were retrieved and, in addition, one of the largest regional collections of Mid-Late Saxon Ipswich Ware. It is the first major pottery assemblage, representing long term multi-period occupation in the same location, from the Isle of Sheppey. The distribution of postholes and structural ditches is shown on Figure 8. Interpretation for the structural elements has already been provided in an earlier interim report (SWAT 2009) and will be considered further during post excavation analysis.
- 4.5.7 The distinct nature and characteristics indicative of the eastern and western settlement areas tend to phase out towards the southwest. Within this area the anomalies become more amorphous and indistinct and the distribution of surface artefacts such as pottery,

bone and shell becomes incredibly rare. Examination of approximately 50% of these features has revealed the presence of natural tree boles rather than archaeological features. It is suggested at this stage that this area of the natural plateau may have undergone some kind of tree clearing exercise predating the adjacent settlement.

4.6 A summary of the burial deposits

- 4.6.1 A total of 28 stratigraphic groups interpreted as cremation assemblages and two inhumations were excavated during Phase I and II of the archaeological excavations at Neatscourt, Isle of Sheppey. All the burial assemblages had suffered varying degrees of truncation resulting in a variation of preservation. All of the assemblages were partially exposed during the mechanical excavation of the overburden; the surface of the archaeological horizon lay directly beneath the overburden suggesting that the original ground surface has been truncated, both through natural and mechanical processes over the years. The spatial distribution of the cremations can be characterised as being of sporadic clusters distributed sparsely mainly within the northern and western areas of the site.
- 4.6.2 Of the 20 cremation assemblages excavated during Phase I, four assemblages represented only a surface scatter or group of pottery with no identifiable cut and one assemblage had been heavily truncated with only a few fragments of pottery and cremated bone surviving. All of the cremations excavated during Phase I are currently assumed to be of Roman date. Within all the Phase I cremation assemblages between one and five pottery vessels were represented and cremated bone was found in each assemblage in varying quantities.
- 4.6.3 Eight possible cremation assemblages and two inhumations were excavated during the Phase II excavations. Of the eight possible cremation assemblages, two were interpreted as being the remains of possible prehistoric unurned cremation deposits and were associated with an as yet unexcavated mound or barrow of prehistoric date. Five cremation assemblages each containing the remains of one or more pottery vessels and varying quantities of cremated bone are of Roman date. A heavily disturbed deposit of burnt bone may represent a further truncated cremation of this period.
- 4.6.4 Two inhumations were excavated during Phase II. A heavily disturbed burial associated with the mound may represent the remains of a prehistoric crouched burial. A second heavily disturbed inhumation encountered during the access road strip on the northern edge of the site, adjacent to the Phase I excavations, is likely to be of Anglo Saxon date. The grave was orientated approximately east west with the head at the east end.

- 4.6.5 A further three potential inhumations, a possible prehistoric burial and two possible Anglo Saxon burials have been identified in plan associated with the prehistoric mound or barrow. These are yet to be excavated.

5 FURTHER ARCHAEOLOGICAL WORK

- 5.1 A post excavation assessment report is in preparation in the format required by the archaeological specification for this excavation. The report will include a full description of the archaeological features along with their spatial and stratigraphic relationships and, specialist assessment of the pottery, human remains and other artefacts. It will also contain a description of the context of the site in its landscape and its archaeological significance to the area. Following the implementation of specialist recommendations, a final analysis report containing a description of all the archaeological material will be prepared followed by publication of the results in an appropriate format.

David Britchfield
On behalf of SWAT Archaeology
17th July 2009

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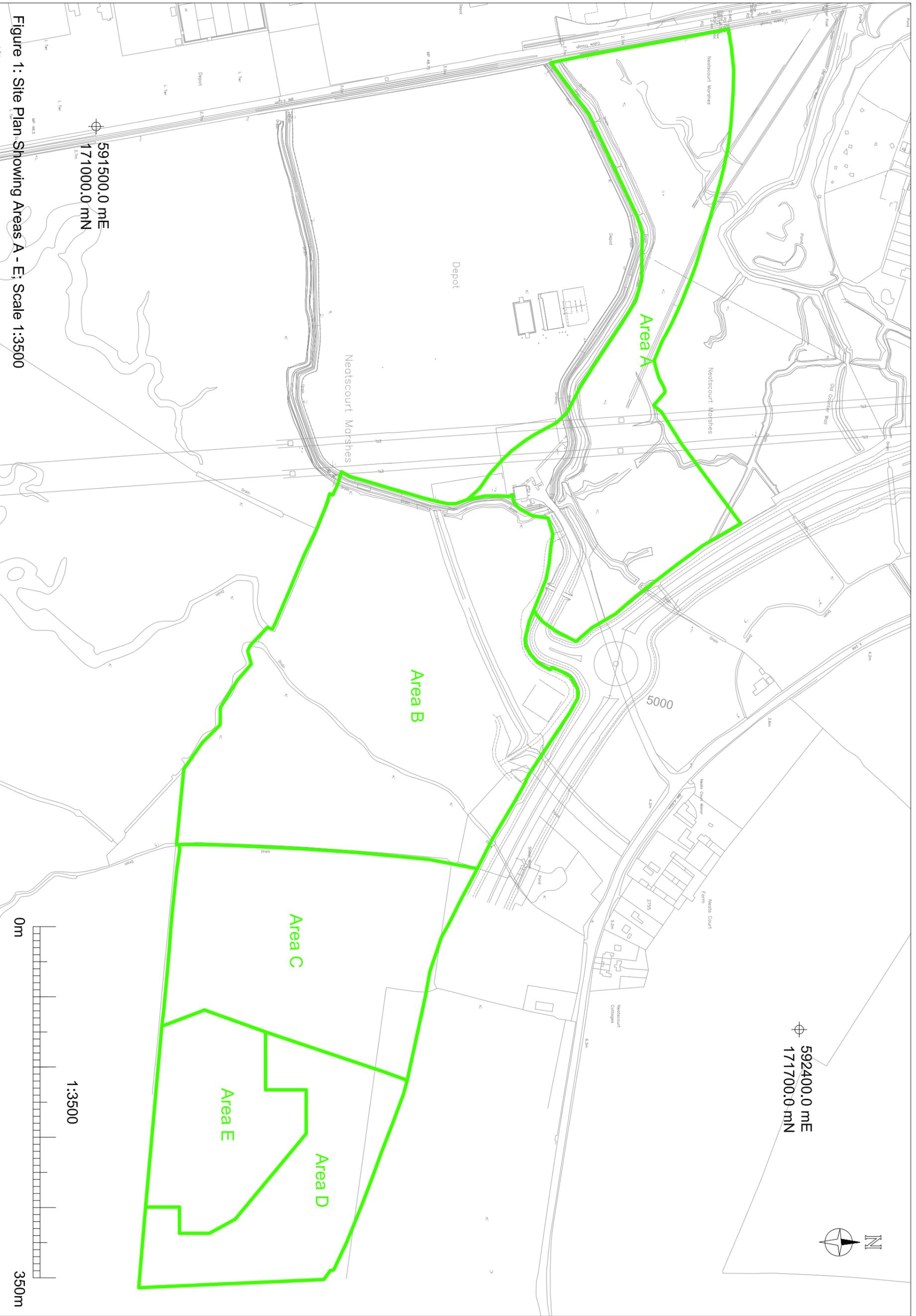


Figure 1: Site Plan Showing Areas A - E; Scale 1:3500

LEGEND	
	Early Neolithic
	Bronze Age
	Iron Age
	Late Iron Age/Early Roman
	Roman
	Saxon
	Medieval
	Post Medieval



Figure 2: Site Plan of Area A (IMG) Showing Phasing; Scale 1:500

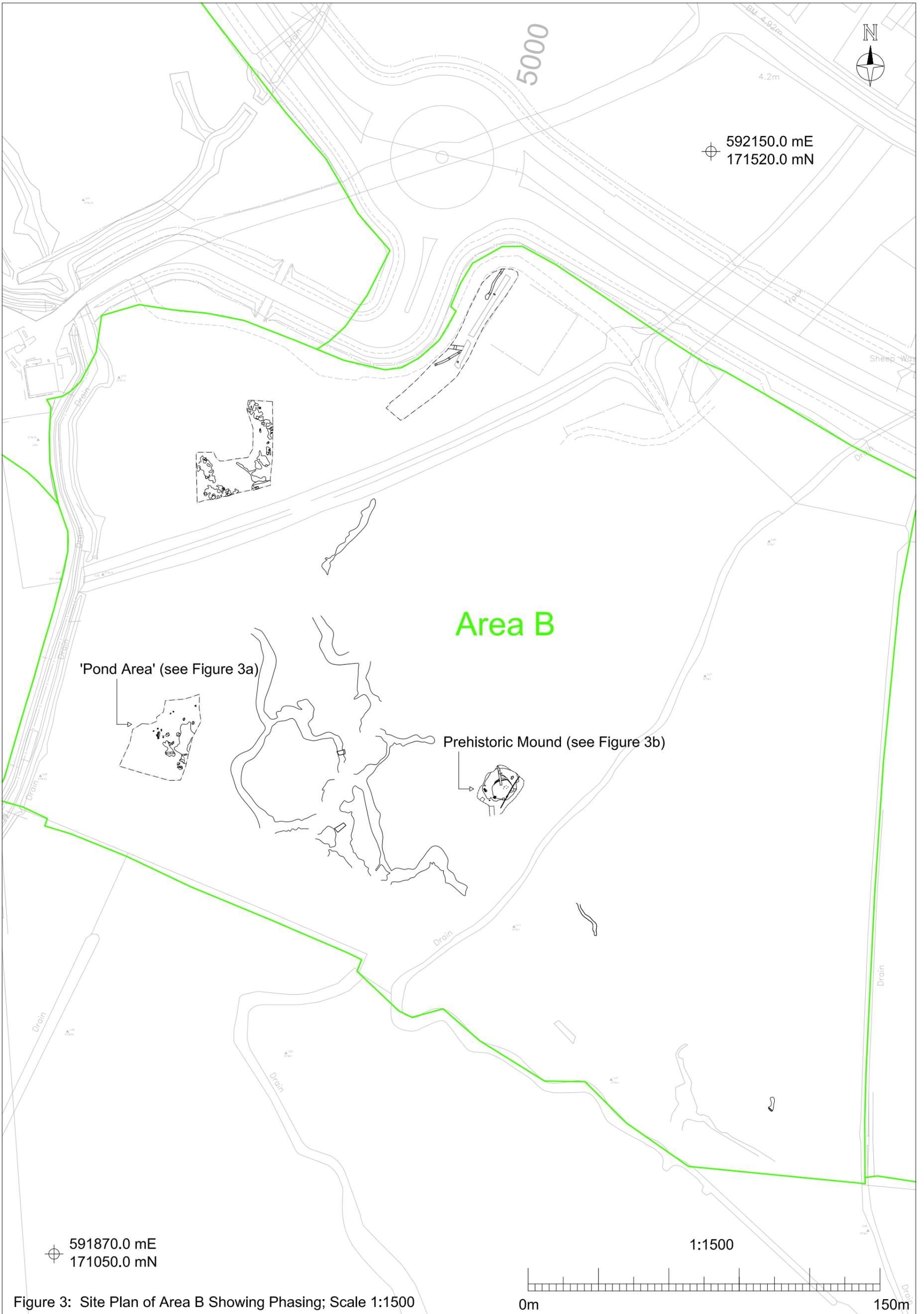


Figure 3: Site Plan of Area B Showing Phasing; Scale 1:1500

LEGEND	
	Neolithic
	Bronze Age
	Iron Age
	Late Iron Age/Early Roman
	Roman
	Saxon
	Medieval
	Post Medieval



Figure 3a: Plan of 'Pond Area' Showing Phasing; 1:200



LEGEND	
	Neolithic
	Bronze Age
	Iron Age
	Late Iron Age/Early Roman
	Roman
	Saxon
	Medieval
	Post Medieval

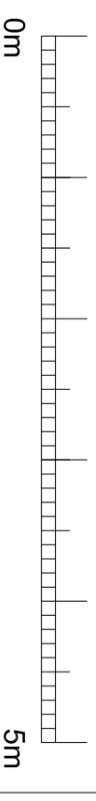
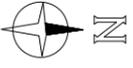
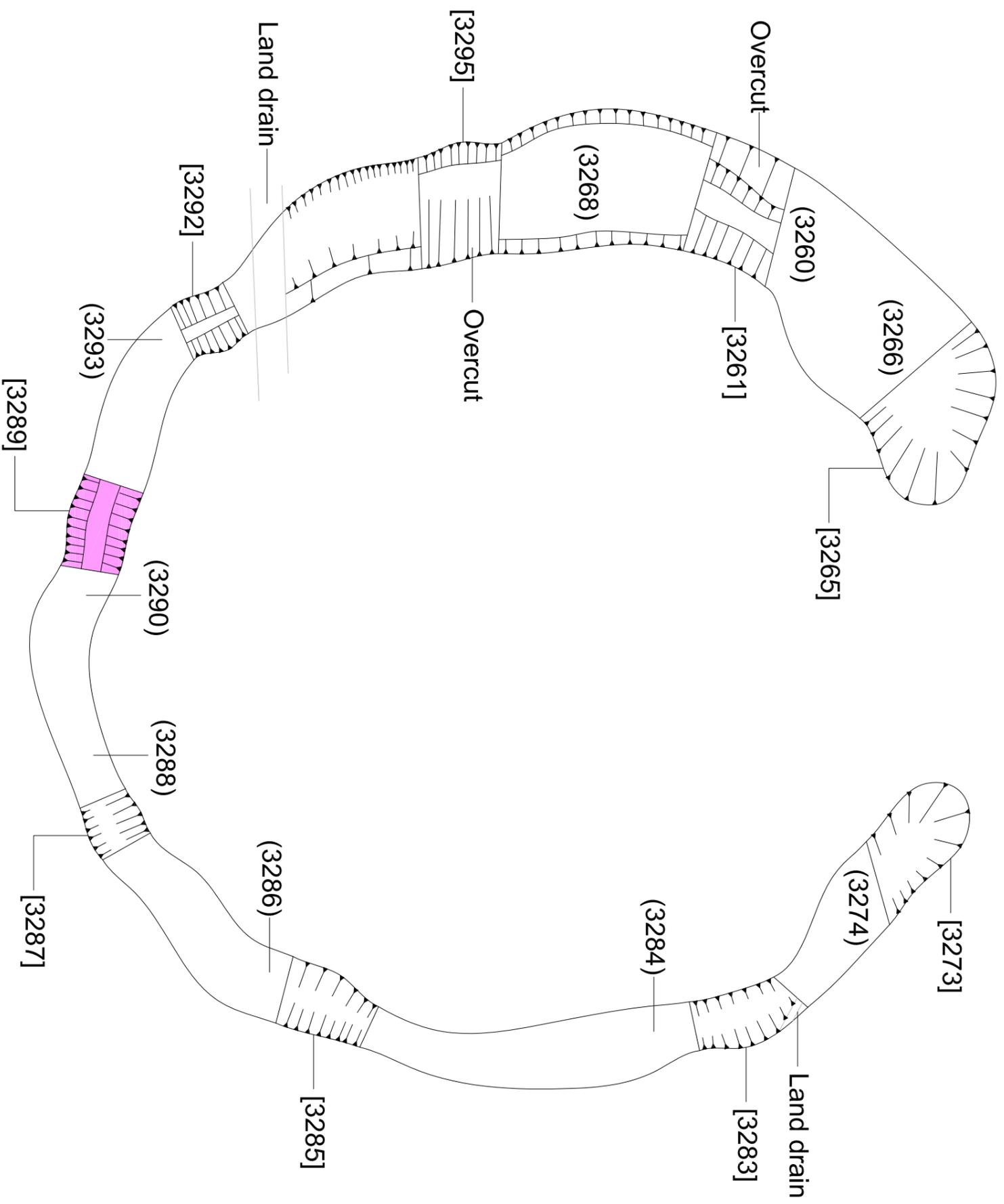
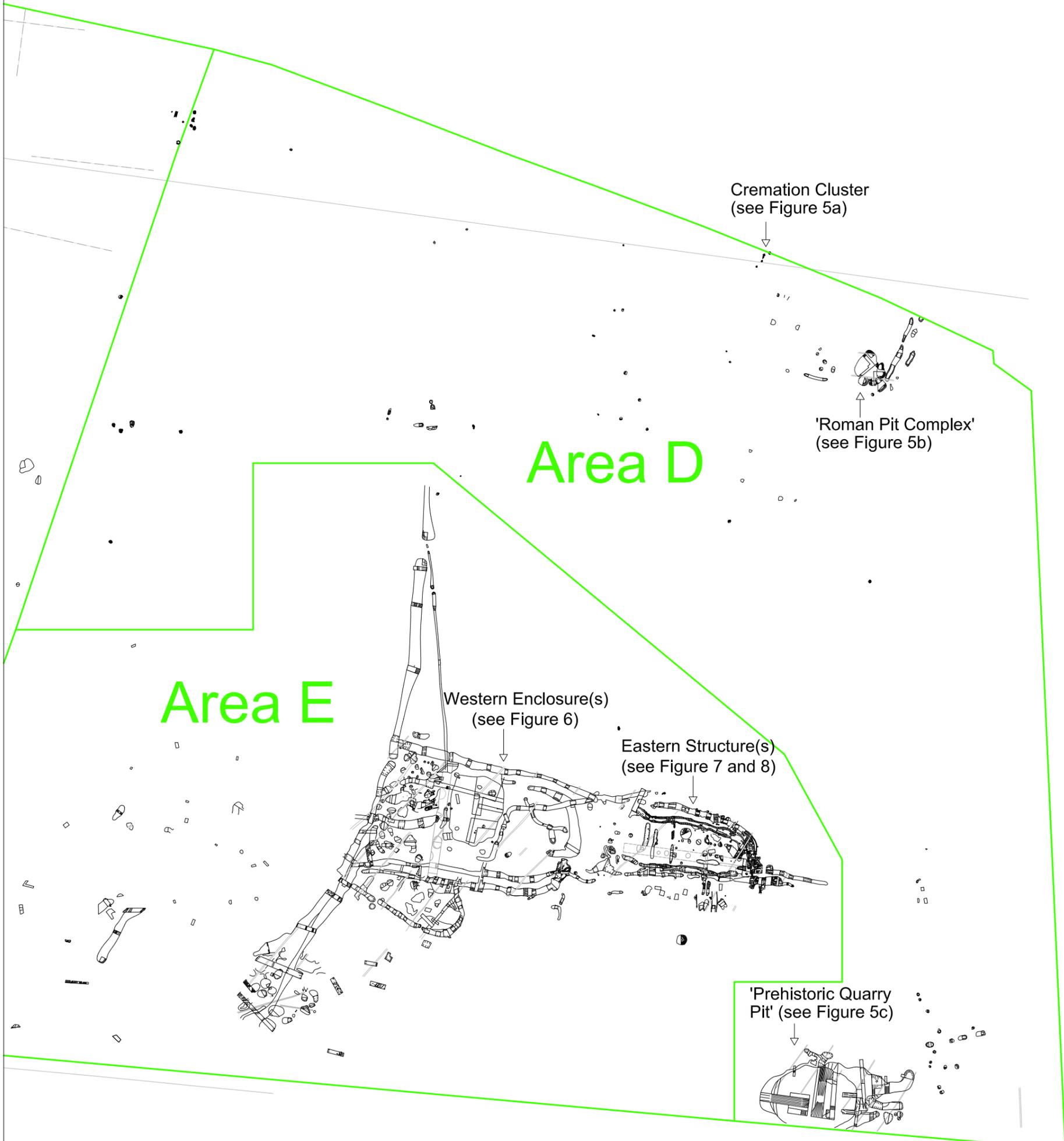


Figure 4a: Plan of Ring Ditch Showing Phasing; 1:50



Figure 4b: Plan of Cremations; Scale 1:20



Area E

Area D

Cremation Cluster
(see Figure 5a)

'Roman Pit Complex'
(see Figure 5b)

Western Enclosure(s)
(see Figure 6)

Eastern Structure(s)
(see Figure 7 and 8)

'Prehistoric Quarry
Pit' (see Figure 5c)

1:1000

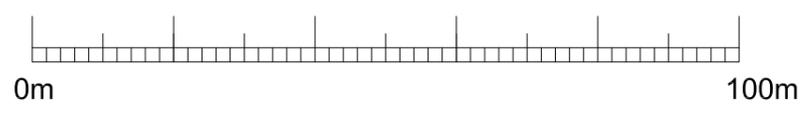


Figure 5: Site Plan of Area D and E; Scale 1:1000

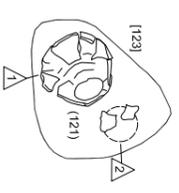
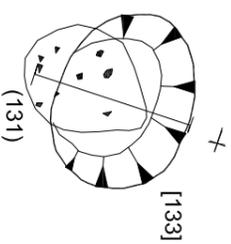
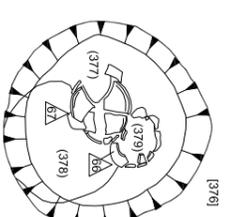
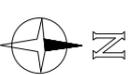
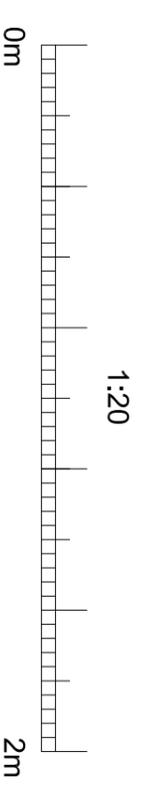


Figure 5a: Plan of Cremations; Scale 1:20



LEGEND

Yellow	Neolithic
Pink	Bronze Age
Orange	Iron Age
Red	Late Iron Age/Early Roman
Green	Roman
Blue	Saxon
Dark Blue	Medieval
Light Green	Post Medieval

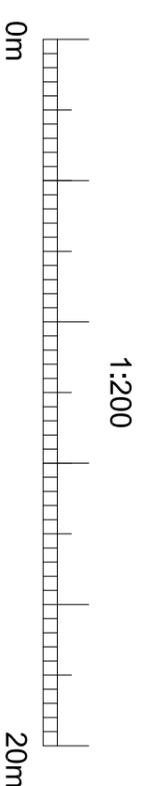


Figure 5c: Plan of Prehistoric Quarry Pit Showing Phasing; Scale 1:200

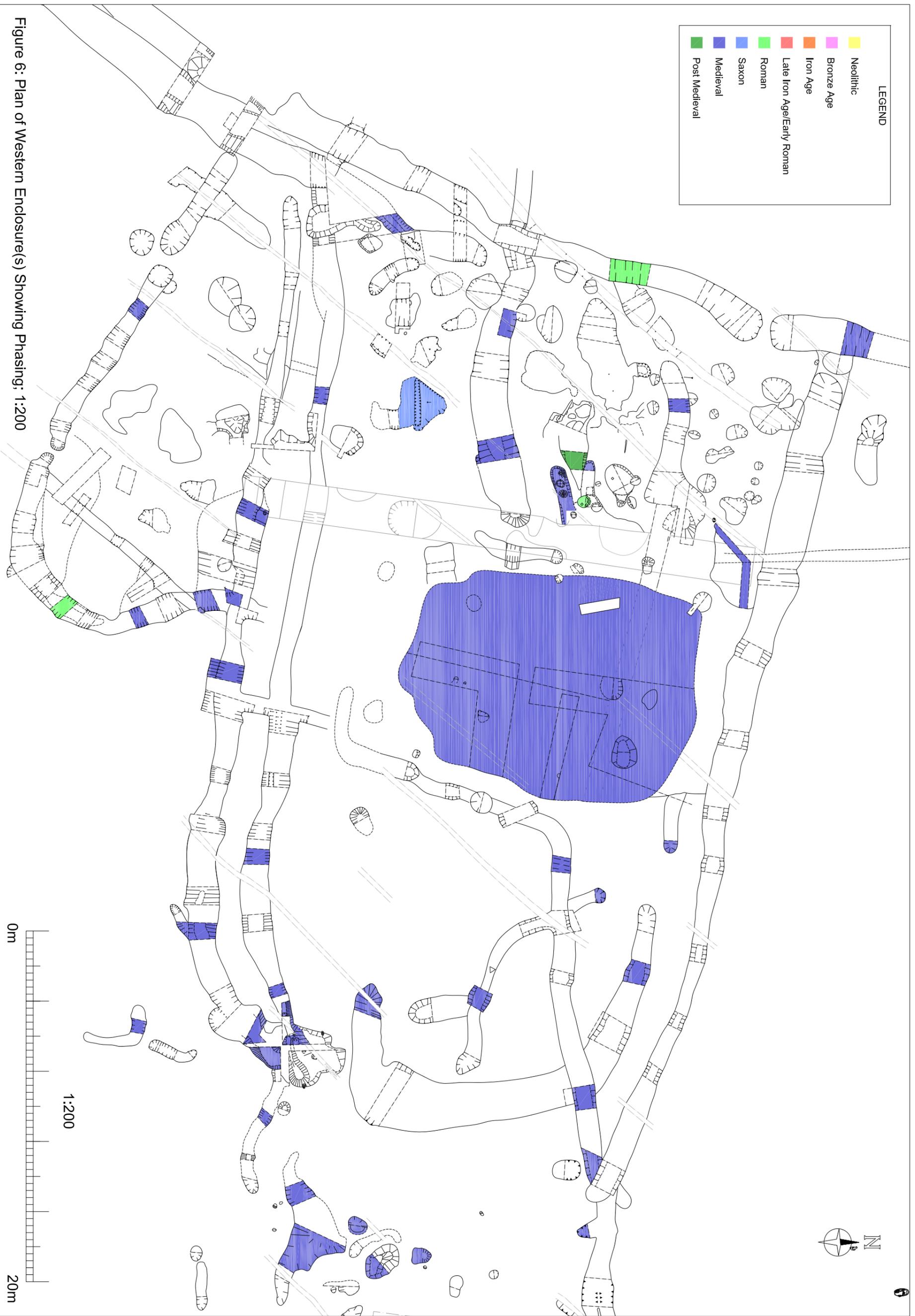
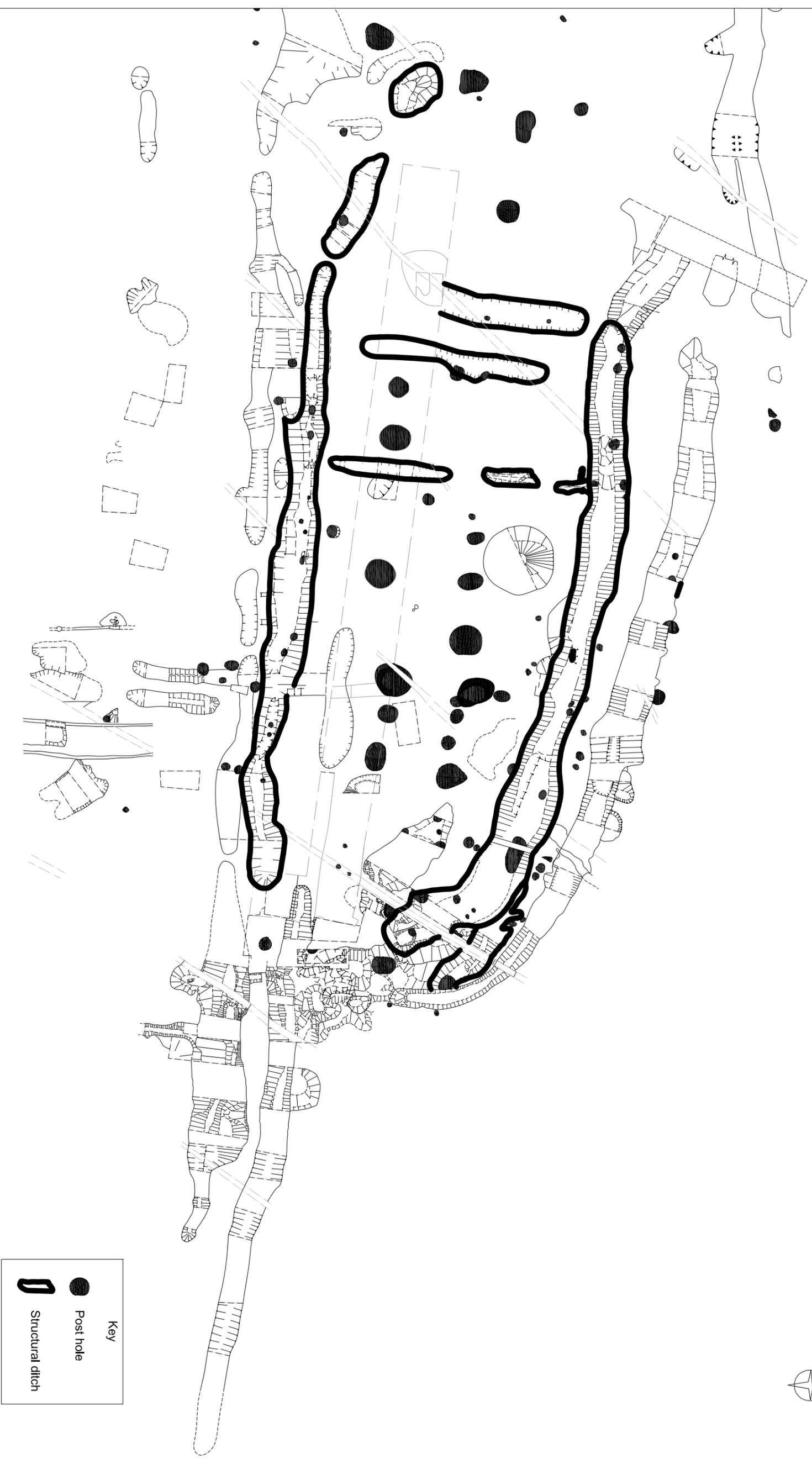


Figure 6: Plan of Western Enclosure(s) Showing Phasing; 1:200



Figure 7: Plan of Potential Eastern Structure(s) Showing Phasing; Scale 1:150



Key

- Post hole
- ▭ Structural ditch

1:150

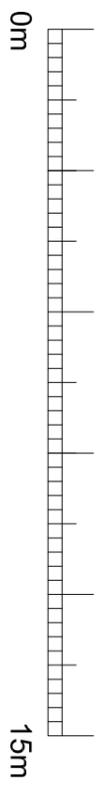


Figure 8: Plan of Potential Eastern Structure(s) highlighting post holes and ditches; Scale 1:150