

INDEX DATA	RPS INFORMATION
Scheme Title A259 Bexhill + Haslings Western + A259 Haslings Eastern Bypass	Details Archaeological Trial Trenching Evaluation
Road Number A259	Date September 1995
Contractor Wessex Archaeology	
County East Sussex	
OS Reference	
Single sided <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Double sided A3 5 Colour 0	

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**A259 BEXHILL AND HASTINGS WESTERN AND A259 HASTINGS  
EASTERN BYPASSES**

**Archaeological Trial Trenching Evaluation**

Prepared on behalf of :

**Chris Blandford Associates**  
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by :

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September 1995  
Wessex Archaeology Ref: 39211 b

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Table 1      Finds totals by area, context and trench

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Plate 2      Area 18 - Downoak Farm, Trench 64 from the south-west. Scale is 2 m

Figure 1      Location of A259 Bexhill and Hastings Western and A259 Hastings  
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Figure 2      Trench location plan: Area 13 - Nutbrown Farm

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Figure 4      Trench location plan: Area 9 - North-east of Little Worsham Farm

Figure 5      Trench location plan: Area 11 - Lankhurst Farm and Area 12 - Downoak  
Farm

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The project was commissioned by Chris Blandford Associates on behalf of the Highways Agency. The assistance during the course of the evaluation of Chris Blandford Associates is acknowledged. Thanks are also due to the landowners and tenants for their co-operation and for allowing access to their land.

The project was managed for Wessex Archaeology by Roland Smith. The fieldwork was directed by Christine Butterworth, who also compiled this report, and was carried out by John Hart and Jon Martin with Andrew Hutcheson and driver Mick Ellis. The finds were assessed by Moira Laidlaw. The illustrations were prepared by Julian Cross.

**A259 BEXHILL AND HASTINGS WESTERN AND A259 HASTINGS  
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## **1 INTRODUCTION**

This report describes the results of the second phase of field evaluation involving the excavation of trial trenches in designated areas within the route corridor of the published schemes for the A259 Bexhill and Hastings Western and A259 Hastings Eastern Bypasses (Figure 1). The evaluation trenches represent the latest in a series of archaeological investigations commissioned by Chris Blandford Associates, on behalf of the Highways Agency. Results of a desk-based assessment, fieldwalking survey, test pitting and geophysical survey have already been presented in the Environmental Statements published for each scheme in September 1994 (A259 Bexhill and Hastings Western Bypass, Volume 2, Report 8 and A259 Hastings Eastern Bypass, Volume 2, Report 6). These documents present a full description of the location, topography and geology of the published schemes, the archaeological background to the wider area and the results of previous archaeological assessment and evaluation work. That information is, therefore, not repeated here.

The areas proposed for further archaeological evaluation in the form of trial trenching were designated by Chris Blandford Associates' Archaeologist after consideration of the results of the desk-based assessment and minimally-intrusive archaeological evaluation. The suggested location of trenches within each area and the methods for the evaluation were set out in the 'Invitation to Tender' document prepared by Chris Blandford Associates dated 13 March 1995.

The results of the second phase of the evaluation involving the excavation of 30 trenches, the majority of which were in harvested arable fields, are presented in this report. The results of the earlier phase of evaluation are described in Wessex Archaeology Report 39211 a (June 1995).

## **2 AIMS AND OBJECTIVES**

The aims of the trial trenching evaluation as set by Chris Blandford Associates were to:

- a) verify the nature, extent, quantity and survival of archaeological evidence in the areas designated as being of potential archaeological importance following assessment of the results from the minimally-intrusive archaeological evaluation
- b) sample colluvial and alluvial deposits located during excavation and evaluate the results for their palaeo-environmental potential

- c) evaluate the archaeological potential of areas within the proposed route corridor which either were not suitable for minimally-intrusive investigation or to which access could not be gained during the previous stages of archaeological evaluation

The results of the trial trenching evaluation were to be reviewed and their importance assessed to enable recommendations for further investigation or preservation prior to the start of construction.

### **3 METHODS**

The proposed trial trenching areas, the location of trenches and the method of working were set out in Chris Blandford Associates' 'Invitation to Tender' document. Trench locations were illustrated on a series of 1:2,500 plans provided for use in the field (Drawing nos. 10059/RC/047/A, 10059/RC/476, 10059/RC/477, 10059/RC/478, 10060/RC/029/A, and 10060/RC/236). Area numbers were allocated by Chris Blandford Associates and are retained in this report for consistency. Trench numbers were allocated in the field, continuing from the sequence established during the earlier phase of evaluation. A total of 30 trenches was excavated in Areas 9, 11, 13, 14 and 18.

The trenches were located in the field by off-sets and/or triangulation from existing field boundaries. Some repositioning was necessitated by unsuitable topography and by the presence of services. All except two trenches were c. 30 m long and all were c. 1.8 m wide. The trenches were carefully backfilled after excavation.

The trenches were machine excavated, under constant archaeological supervision, using a toothless ditching bucket. Excavation was to be taken either to the top of any archaeological features or to the top of the bedrock; in practice, it was only necessary to excavate ploughsoil from the majority of trenches, since this directly overlay natural bedrock deposits. Thereafter the trenches were cleaned as necessary and potential archaeological features were investigated by hand. A soil sample was taken from one feature which contained carbonised material but no other samples were taken. All trenches were surveyed, levelled and recorded using the standard recording system of Wessex Archaeology to provide a full written, graphic and photographic record.

### **4 TRIAL TRENCHING RESULTS**

Figure 1 shows the area locations and Figures 2-5 show the positions of the trenches within each area. The areas are described in this report from west to east along the proposed route corridor. All of the trenches except those at Kiteye Farm were excavated in fields occupied earlier in the year by cereal crops, now harvested. Summary soil descriptions for each area are presented below but trench descriptions

are not tabulated since only ploughsoil/topsoil overlay natural bedrock deposits in the majority of trenches: full details are available in the archive. A summary of the total number and weight of finds by area, context and trench is presented in Table 1.

#### **4.1 Area 13: Nutbrown Farm (Figure 2)**

Six trenches (Trenches 57-62) were excavated east of Hooe on ground falling south towards the Pevensey Levels. The area trenched lies between the 10 m OD and 2 m OD contours, and is crossed by a south-facing dry valley at its north-eastern end.

Ploughsoil in this area consisted of dry, compact, very pale brown silty loam usually c. 0.2 m deep, but with a maximum depth of 0.3 m. Four worked flints were recovered from the ploughsoil in Trenches 57 and 58 but no other finds from it were noted. Undisturbed natural bedrock deposits of silty clay, sandy silt and clayey sand lay below ploughsoil in all trenches. Colluvium comprising strong brown silty loam up to 0.7 m deep, was recorded in the lowest, central part of Trench 61 and at the south-eastern end of Trench 57, where it was 0.35 m deep. A single abraded sherd of Roman pottery was found in the deeper colluvium in Trench 61, but no other finds were recovered from it.

A single archaeological feature of probable prehistoric date, an oval 'hearth', 0.49 m long, 0.4 m wide and 0.09 m deep, was recorded in Trench 58. There was no evidence of burning of the surrounding soil, the feature being defined by a marked density of charcoal flecks and fragments. A single piece of worked flint was found in the feature, a bulk soil sample of the fill of which was retained but has not been analysed. A post-medieval field boundary ditch, formerly ran in the base of the dry valley through Trench 61, but the ditch was replaced by a field drain and infilled in recent years. No other features were recorded in Area 13.

#### **4.2 Area 14: Kiteye Farm (Figure 3)**

One complete trench and c. 10 m of a second trench (74, 75) of a proposed total of six were excavated at Kiteye Farm. Field conditions comprised pasture and the ground was too hard for machine-excavation with a toothless bucket after the recent prolonged dry weather. The area lies immediately north of the Combe Haven stream, occupying a slope which falls between the 40 m OD and 30 m OD contours.

Turf and very dry, compact, light yellowish brown, silty clay topsoil up to 0.2 m deep overlay undisturbed natural bedrock deposits of silty clay (Plate 1). No archaeological features were recorded in Area 14 and all datable finds recovered from the topsoil, including four sherds of pottery and one of glass, are of post-medieval or modern origin. Also recovered from the topsoil were thirteen small pieces of metalworking slag of which nine are possibly smelting slag.

#### **4.3 Area 9: North-east of Little Worsham Farm (Figure 4)**

The 11 trenches (79-89) excavated to the north of Little Worsham Farm lie immediately west of fields trenched during the first phase of evaluation (Area 9, Trenches 11-21). The area extends obliquely across a north-facing spur overlooking the Combe Haven Valley, falling from over 20 m OD at its highest to c. 4 m OD in the north-east and c. 10 m in the south-west. A tributary stream joins the Combe Haven from the valley at the steeper, western side of the spur; the eastern valley is dry.

Ploughsoil comprised a dry, compact, very pale brown loamy clay, usually c. 0.23 m and rarely up to 0.37 m in depth. Ploughsoil overlay varied natural bedrock deposits of clay, silty or sandy clay with occasional areas of compact fine sand or sandstone and iron-panning. Four pieces of worked flint were recovered from the ploughsoil (Trenches 82, 83 and 86), together with fragments of post-medieval tile and brick. No pottery was found in Area 9.

No certain archaeological features were found but one possible ditch was excavated in Trench 85. Aligned from west - east across the spur, the ill-defined feature was c. 1.5 m wide and had a maximum depth of 0.25 m. It was filled with very occasionally charcoal-flecked, light yellowish brown, loamy clay; no finds were recovered and the feature is, therefore, undated. Field drains (not excavated) were noted in Trenches 82-84 but no other features were observed.

#### **4.4 Area 11: Lankhurst Farm (Figure 5)**

Four trenches (70-73) were excavated on rising ground not far to the south-east of a single trench opened during the earlier evaluation (Area 11, Trench 51). The land falls to the north-west, towards a tributary stream of the River Brede. The trenches were between the 30 m OD and 24 m OD contours.

Ploughsoil, dry, compact, very pale brown silty clay, 0.2 m-0.4 m deep, overlay natural bedrock deposits of hard, occasionally iron-panned, silty clay. A single worked flint was recovered from the ploughsoil (Trench 73), as were two conjoining sherds of possible medieval pottery (Trench 70) but all other datable finds from Area 11, including a further three sherds of pottery and ten pieces of tile, were of post-medieval date. Six pieces of slag were also found of which four pieces are smelting slag. No archaeological features were recorded in Area 11.

#### **4.5 Area 18: Downoak Farm (Figure 5)**

Seven trenches (63-69) were excavated in a field immediately north-east of an area in which one trench was excavated during the first phase of the evaluation (Area 12, Trench 52). The land falls gradually between the 24 m OD and 16 m OD contours towards the stream described above, which flanks the south-eastern boundary of the field. Although it was intended that six trenches should be excavated in this area, one

had to be opened as two 15 m long trenches, separately numbered (66 and 67), to avoid excavating under below power cables.

Compact, dry, very pale brown silty clay ploughsoil, ranging in depth between 0.2 m and 0.32 m was recorded overlying natural bedrock deposits of hard silty clay with occasional patches of iron-panning (Plate 2). Five pieces of worked flint were recovered from the ploughsoil (Trenches 65, 67 and 68) and a single sherd of post-medieval pottery was also found (Trench 65). No archaeological features were recorded in Area 18.

## **5 THE FINDS**

All finds collected were retained, cleaned and quantified by number and weight according to material type within each context. The assemblage was scanned to provide information regarding the range, nature and date of the artefacts represented. This information is briefly discussed by material type below. Total quantities of artefacts are presented by context, trench and area in Table 1.

### **5.1 Ceramic Building Material**

A total of 22 fragments of post-medieval ceramic building material (332g) was recovered from five trenches in Areas 14, 9 and 11. All are probably tile fragments, with the exception of three which are of glazed brick. One of the tile fragments is also glazed and the largest piece of tile has a square peg hole. The remaining fragments are small and featureless.

### **5.2 Glass**

A single sherd of modern, colourless, bottle glass (not retained) was noted in Trench 74 at Kiteye Farm.

### **5.3 Metalwork**

A single piece of post-medieval iron, part of a small curved collar probably from a piece of farm machinery, was also noted in Trench 74 at Kiteye Farm. It was not retained.

### **5.4 Pottery**

Eleven sherds of pottery were recovered in total, of which one from colluvium in Trench 61 at Nutbrown Farm is of Roman date and two (conjoining) sherds from Lankhurst Farm are possibly of medieval date. The remaining eight sherds are of post-medieval or modern date and include transfer-printed whitewares and stoneware. No pottery was found in north-east of Little Worsham Farm.

## **5.5 Shell**

A single, small and very abraded piece of oyster shell (not retained) was found in Trench 83 north-east of Little Worsham Farm.

## **5.6 Slag**

Twenty pieces of slag and/or fuel ash and clinker were found in Areas 14, 9 and 11. Amongst these, nine small possible pieces of smelting slag, some conjoining, were found in Trench 74 at Kiteye Farm. A further four pieces of smelting slag were found in Trenches 70 and 71 at Lankhurst Farm.

## **5.6 Worked Flint**

Worked flint was recovered from Areas 9, 11, 13 and 18, in nearly every case from ploughsoil contexts. The small assemblage includes flakes, cores, one blade, one core fragment utilised as a borer, one end scraper on a flake, and one spurred piece. Overall, the presence of these diagnostic pieces would suggest a date range in the Neolithic, or possibly Late Neolithic/Early Bronze Age.

# **6 CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

The evidence for archaeological activity within the second phase evaluation trenches was very slight; few finds were recovered and only one excavated feature, the 'hearth' in Area 13 (Nutbrown Farm, Trench 58), was undoubtedly of archaeological origin. Colluvium was recorded only in the dry valley in Area 13 (Trenches 57 and 61).

## **6.1 Area 13: Nutbrown Farm**

Fieldwalking carried out in Area 13 recorded a low-density scatter of unworked burnt flint and slag (10059/RC/047/8/A, fig. A3/2), neither of which was found in the evaluation trenches. No geophysical survey was carried out in this area.

A single feature, a small 'hearth' of probable prehistoric date, was excavated in Trench 58 towards the south-western side of the field, the area from which most of the burnt and worked flint was recovered during fieldwalking.

The recovery of a single sherd of Roman pottery from a moderate depth of colluvium in Trench 61 may be indicative of Roman activity on the higher ground to the north or east, probably beyond the route corridor.

### **6.1.1 Recommendation**

On the basis of these results, no further work in advance of construction is proposed. Observations and recording during topsoil stripping for construction may provide further evidence of prehistoric activity which is more closely datable. The relatively shallow and insecurely dated nature of the colluvium suggest that palaeo-

environmental sampling would not be appropriate unless observations during construction revealed well-dated prehistoric deposits upslope.

## **6.2 Area 14: Kiteye Farm**

The geophysical survey indicated a single linear anomaly of possible archaeological interest in the area of the only completed first phase evaluation trench (10059/RC/047/8/A, Fig A4/8).

A slight depression in the turf/topsoil appears to correspond with the anomaly but is almost certainly the result of modern (but not recent) ploughing and not of archaeological origin.

### *6.2.1 Recommendation*

On the basis of the present results, no further work in advance of construction is proposed. This recommendation should, however, be reviewed following the excavation of the remaining three evaluation trenches in this area.

## **6.3 Area 9: North-east of Little Worsham Farm**

Anomalies were recorded during the geophysical survey (10059/RC/047/8/A, Figs A4/11 and A4/12) and a number of features investigated during the earlier evaluation to the north-east of Little Worsham Farm are likely to correspond with these (Wessex Archaeology 1995, fig. 6). Other anomalies were recorded in areas which have not been trenched.

A single dubious and undated unlinear feature recorded during the current evaluation may be associated with the ditches recorded earlier, suggested as being part of a field system of post-medieval date.

### *6.3.1 Recommendation*

On the basis of these results no further work in advance of construction is proposed. Monitoring of topsoil stripping during construction may, as suggested after the earlier evaluation, establish a plan of the field system and provide further dating evidence. It may also confirm the presence or absence of other anomalies indicated by geophysical survey but not thus far seen during evaluation.

## **6.4 Area 11: Lankhurst Farm**

No archaeological activity was recorded in this area before or during the earlier of evaluation, when a single trench was excavated, nor was any recorded during the second stage of evaluation.

### *6.4.1 Recommendation*

On the basis of these results, no further archaeological work is proposed.

## **6.5 Area 18: Downoak Farm**

Fieldwalking carried out in Area 18 showed a moderate concentration of unworked burnt flint and slag (10060/RC/029/6/A, fig. A3/2), neither of which was recovered from the evaluation trenches. No geophysical survey was carried out in this area.

No archaeological features were seen in the evaluation trenches.

### **6.5.1 Recommendation**

On the basis of these results, no further archaeological work is proposed.

## 7 REFERENCES

Chris Blandford Associates 1994. 'A259 Hastings Eastern Bypass Environmental Statement: Volume 2, Report 6: Cultural Heritage' Ref: 10060/RC/029/6/A

Chris Blandford Associates 1994. 'A259 Bexhill and Hastings Western Bypass Environmental Statement: Volume 2, Report 8' Ref: 10059/RC/047/8/A

Wessex Archaeology 1995. 'A259 Bexhill and Hastings Western and A259 Hastings Eastern Bypasses: Archaeological trial trenching evaluation' Ref: 39211a

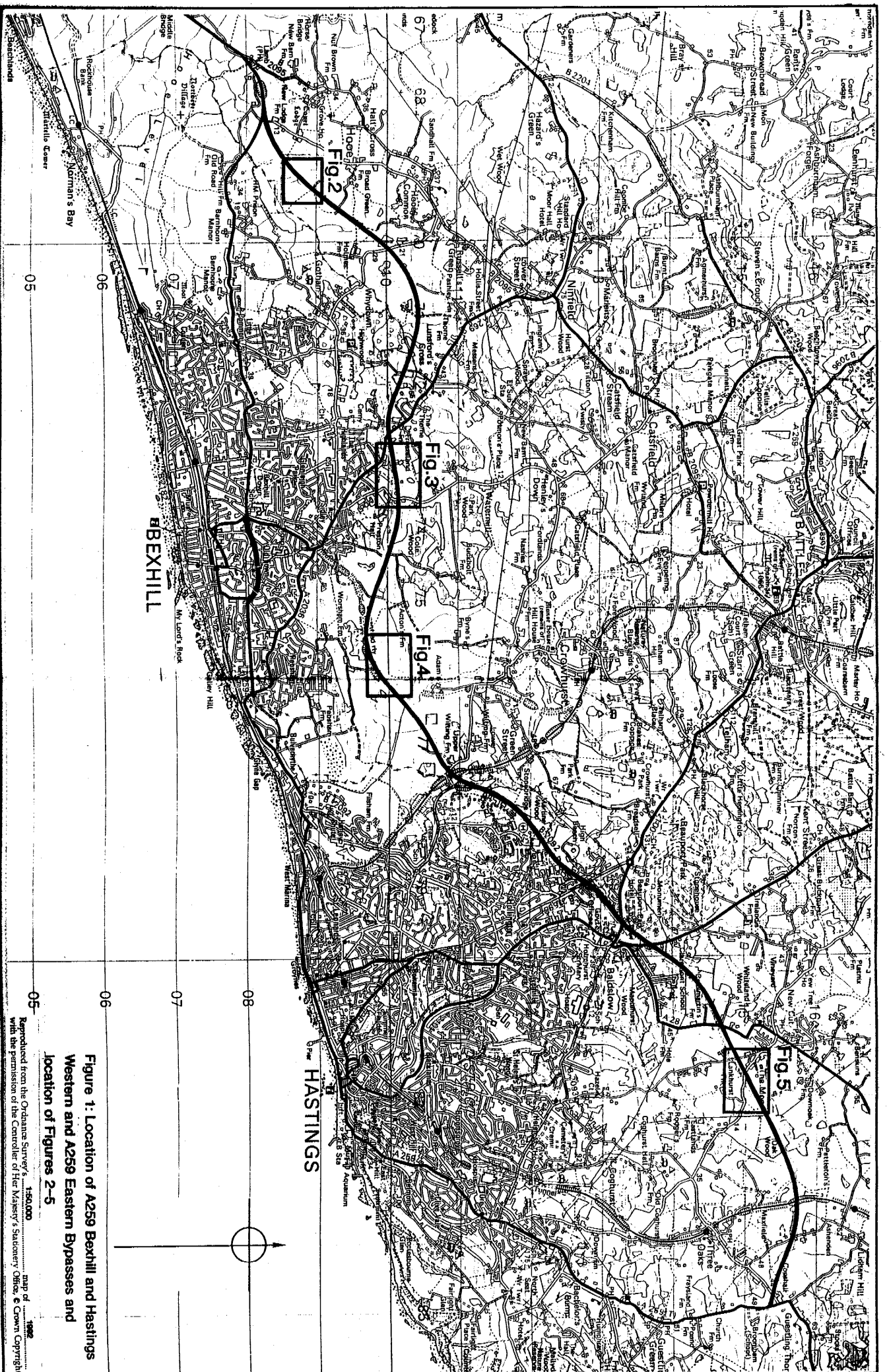
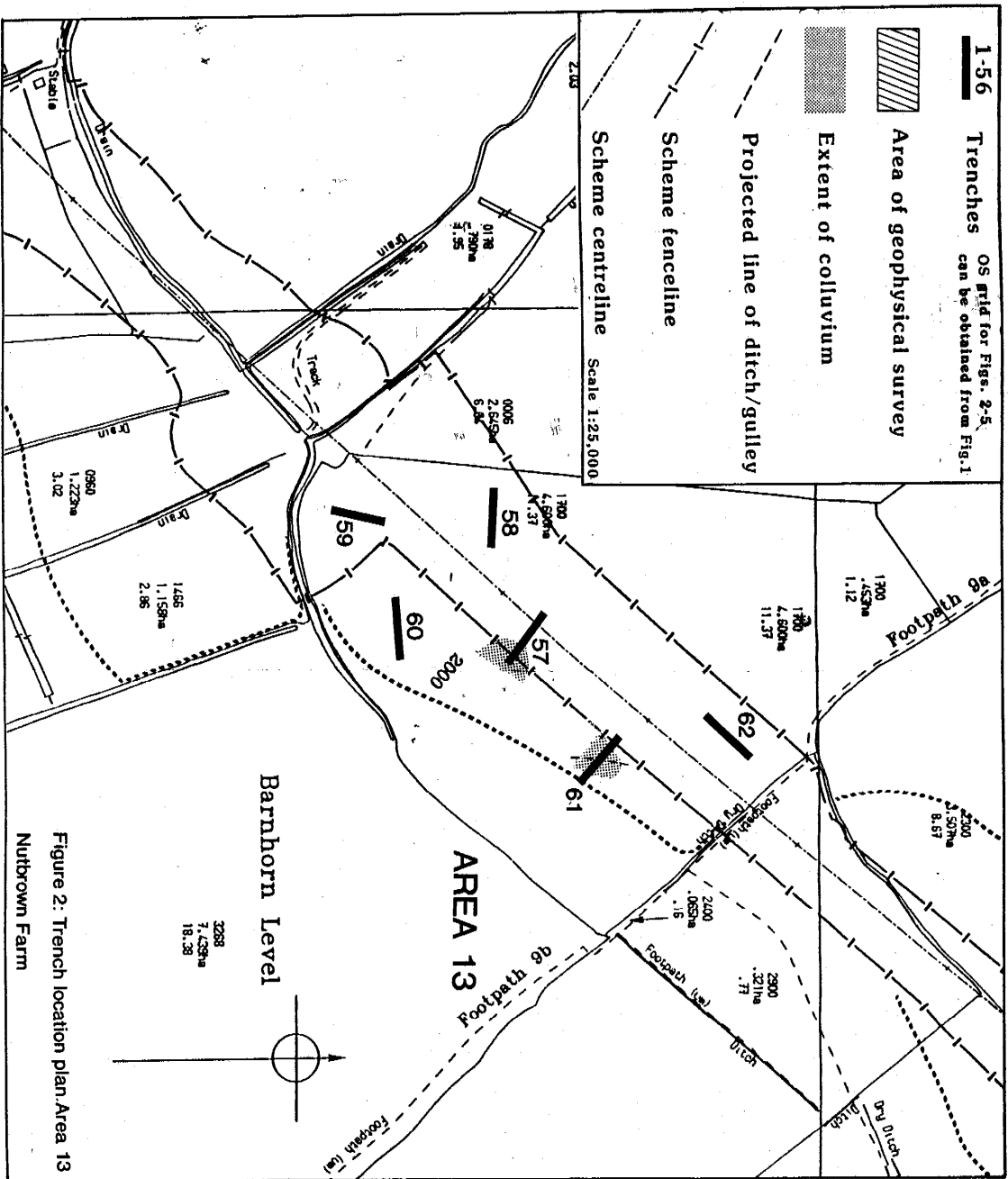
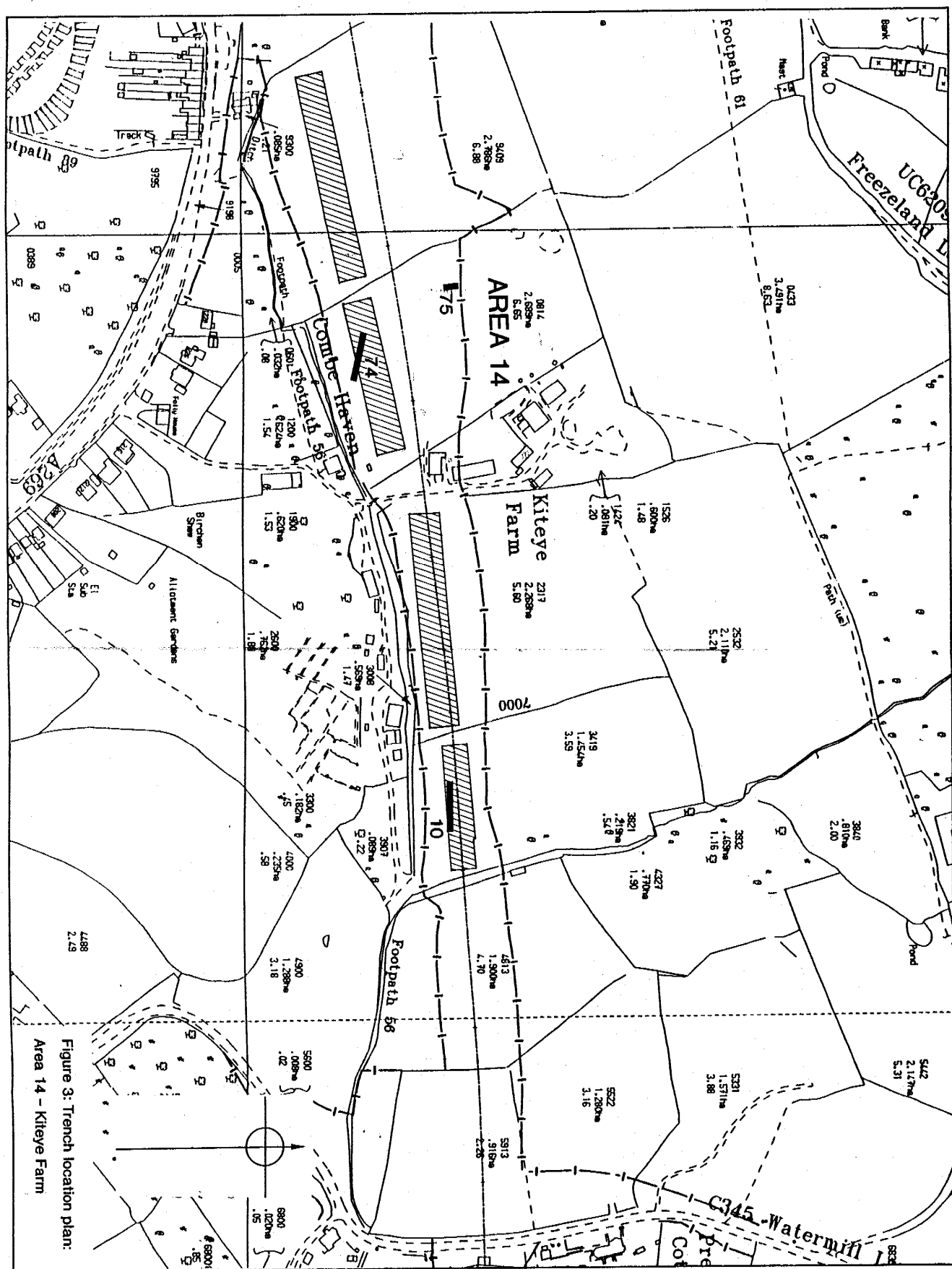


Figure 1: Location of A259 Bexhill and Hastings Western and A259 Eastern Bypasses and location of Figures 2-5

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For key refer to Figure 2

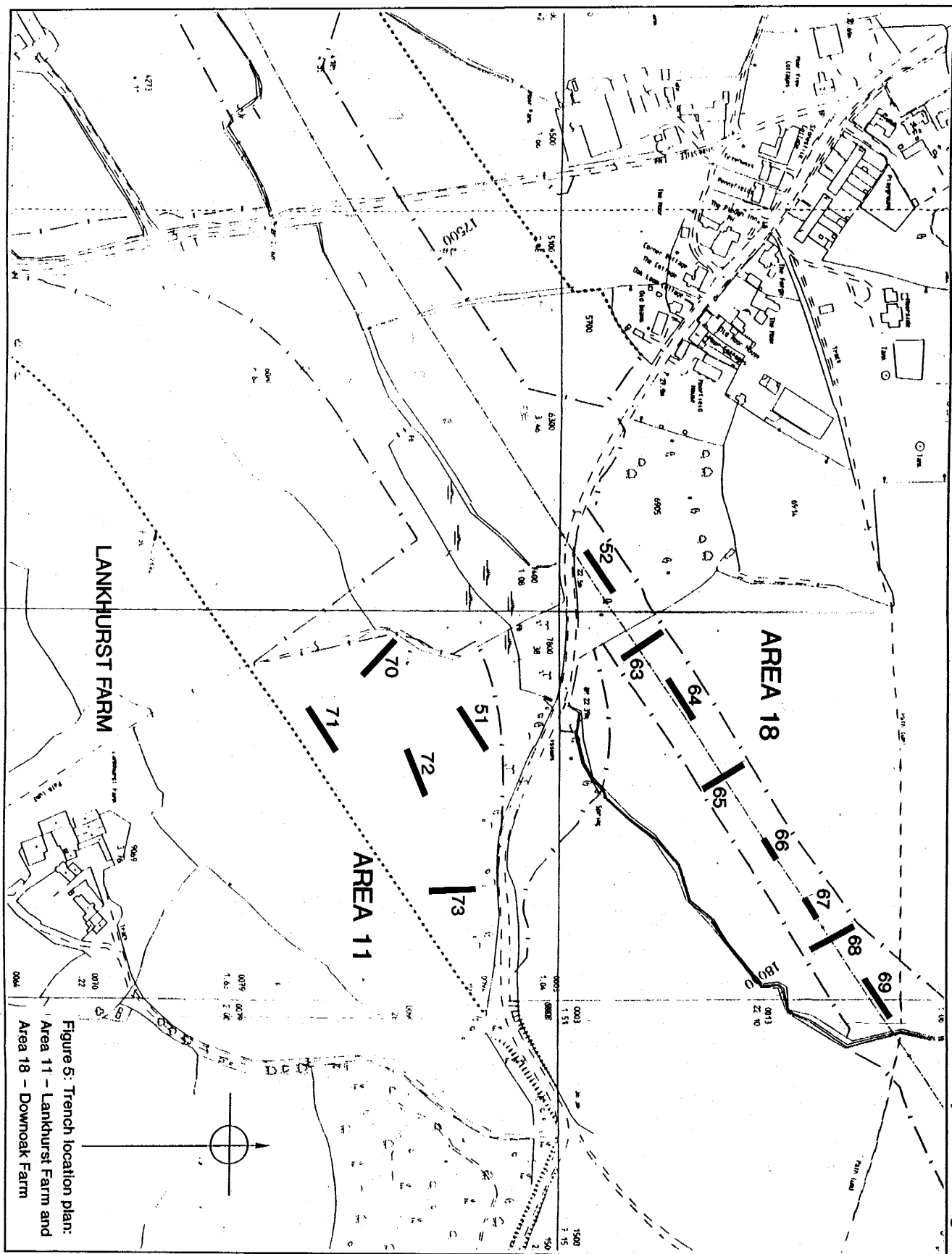


Figure 5: Trench location plan:  
Area 11 - Lankhurst Farm and  
Area 18 - Downoak Farm

# COMBE HAVEN

