

**RIVERSDELL HOUSE, CHERTSEY,  
SURREY KT16 9AU**

**AN ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING  
BRIEF**

**PCA REPORT NO: R11465**

**SITE CODE: SRDH13**

**LOCAL PLANNING AUTHORITY:  
RUNNYMEDE BOROUGH COUNCIL**

**PLANNING APPLICATION NO.:  
RU.11/0884**

**JULY 2013**



**PRE-CONSTRUCT ARCHAEOLOGY**



DOCUMENT VERIFICATION

RIVERSDELL HOUSE, CHERTSEY, SURREY KT16  
9AU

AN ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF

Quality Control

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# **RIVERSDELL HOUSE, CHERTSEY, SURREY KT16 9AU**

## **AN ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF**

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**Site Code:** SRDH13

**Central National Grid Reference:** TQ 04040 66705

**Local Planning Authority:** Runnymede Borough Council

**Planning Application No.:** RU.11/0884

**Written and Researched by:** Stuart Watson  
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October 2012

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**July 2013**

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## CONTENTS

1	Introduction .....	3
2	The Archaeological Sequence.....	4
3	Conclusions .....	6
4	Acknowledgments.....	7
5	Bibliography .....	7
6	Site Photographs .....	8

## APPENDICES

Appendix 1: OASIS Form .....	10
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## ILLUSTRATIONS

Figure 1: Site Location.....	12
Figure 2: Trench Location.....	13
Figure 3: Plan of Trench 1 .....	14
Figure 4: Sections 1 & 5, Transect 1 .....	15

## 1 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 This is a summary report of an archaeological watching brief undertaken by Pre-Construct Archaeology Limited on land at the site of the former Riversdell House, Guildford Street, Chertsey, Surrey KT16 9AU (Figure 1). The investigation took place on the 18<sup>th</sup>, 19<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> June 2013 and the archaeological work was implemented to monitor the remediation of contaminated ground, which involved bulk excavation. This work was in advance of the proposed redevelopment of the site for a hotel. The site is centred at National Grid Reference TQ 04040 66705
- 1.2 The archaeological watching brief was carried out in accordance with an approved Written Scheme of Investigation (Mouchel 2013) which was prepared in response to an archaeological planning condition attached to the planning permission for development, received from Runnymede Borough Council (planning application reference: RU.11/0884).
- 1.3 The former Riversdell House, a three-storey office building constructed in the c. 1990s, had recently been demolished as the precursor to the proposed development. Its former footprint occupied approximately one-third of the south-eastern part of the site while the remainder was given over to hard-standing used as a car-park.
- 1.4 At the time of the investigation Riversdell House had been demolished, the site had been levelled and a layer of crushed demolition debris overlay the former buildings' footprint.
- 1.5 Geotechnical investigations conducted at the site (RSA 2011) identified varying levels of contamination with particularly high indicators centred on geotechnical bore-hole number 4 (WS/DCP4) located central to the site within the car-park area.
- 1.6 The archaeological methodology was to monitor the excavation of a 5m x 5m area to allow the removal of the contaminated deposits, consisting of a VOC plume, with the proviso that the excavated area would increase if the contamination extended over a wider area.
- 1.7 This in fact turned out to be the case and the excavation was extended to both the east and west of the original 5m square, with an eastern extension measuring 5m<sup>2</sup> and a western extension measuring 9m northeast-southwest x 4m northwest-southeast, giving a total excavated area of approximately 86m<sup>2</sup> (Figure 2). The excavation was dug down to an average depth of 2.60m below ground level, typically 10.90m OD.
- 1.8 The work was commissioned by Mouchel limited on behalf of the main contractors Barnes Construction. The project was managed by Chris Mayo and supervised by Stuart Watson; both of Pre-Construct Archaeology Limited. The project was monitored on behalf of Surrey County Council by Nick Truckle.
- 1.9 The site was assigned the code SRDH13.

## 2 THE ARCHAEOLOGICAL SEQUENCE

See Figures 3 & 4. Plates 1, 2 & 3

### 2.1 Phase 1: Natural

2.1.1 Seen in the base of the excavated trench, TR1, was a natural deposit [6], a mid greyish green/blue clay grey with moderate amounts of very small mollusc shells as an inclusion. This natural clay deposit was encountered at between c. 2.85m below ground level (10.54m OD) to 2.60m below ground level (10.89m OD) and is interpreted as alluvium, deposited by flood events of the nearby River Bourne.

2.1.2 This in turn was overlain by natural deposit [5] composed of dark reddish brown peat, with frequent inclusions of organic plant matter (fibric peat). The top of this deposit was encountered at 2.10m below ground level (11.35m OD). This is interpreted as a natural peat deposit formed when the local palaeoenvironmental was dominated by wetlands formed along the banks of the River Bourne.

2.1.3 This was overlain by natural deposit [4], dark grey plastic clay with no inclusions. This natural clay deposit was encountered at between c. 1.24m below ground level (12.15m OD) to 1.60m below ground level (11.79m OD) and is interpreted as alluvium, deposited by flood events of the River Bourne.

2.1.4 Partly overlaying [4] was natural deposit [3] (only observed in the original 5m<sup>2</sup> excavation and adjacent north-western extension). This was a 0.25m thick layer of mid orange brown silty clayey sand with no inclusions, the top of which was encountered at 0.95m below ground level (12.43m OD) and is interpreted as a natural alluvial deposit. The British Geological Survey (internet source 1) records superficial deposits of alluvial clay, silt, sand and gravel in this location and deposit [3] is thought to part of that formation.

### 2.2 Phase 2: Post-Medieval/Modern

2.2.1 Overlaying the natural deposit [3] and only observed in the original 5m<sup>2</sup> excavation was context [2], a thin band (20 to 100mm thick) of pale grey mortar with frequent inclusions of crushed shell as a temper. The top of this deposit was encountered at 0.90m below ground level (12.45m OD) and it is interpreted as the mortar base of possibly a garden wall or path thought to be associated with the former post-medieval gardens of Cowley House, which occupied the site until the late 1960s (Figure 4, Plate 2).

2.2.2 Overlaying [3] was layer [7]. This was 0.60m-thick and comprised dark grey silty clayey sand with occasional fragments of CBM and a very occasional ferrous nail as inclusions. The top of this layer was encountered at 0.20m below ground level (13.19m OD) and is interpreted as a post-medieval garden soil deposit, likely to be associated with the gardens of Cowley House (Figure 4, Plate 3). Ceramic Building Material (CBM) fragments from [7] (brick and peg tile) have been spot-dated to the late 19<sup>th</sup>/early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries (B. Seddon, PCA finds specialist, pers.comm.) and an iron hand made nail from the same context is probably 19<sup>th</sup>

century.

- 2.2.3 Partly overlaying context [2] and context [4] was layer [1]. This was a 0.50m-thick deposit of dark orange brown silty sand with inclusions of moderate fragments of CBM, occasional oyster shell and very occasional Clay Tobacco Pipe (CTP) stem. The top of this layer was encountered at 0.45m below ground level (12.95m OD) and is interpreted as post-medieval made ground, possibly a levelling layer associated with the construction of Cowley House gardens. A CTP stem recovered from this context had a spot date of 1580-1910, but more likely 1730+ (C. Jarrett, PCA finds specialist, pers.comm.).
- 2.2.4 Cutting down through layers [1], [2], [3], and [4] was modern structure [8], a 0.80m wide by 5m long (at least) by 1.13m thick concrete ground beam aligned north-west by south-east, the top of which was encountered at 0.25m below ground level (13.14m OD). Likely to have been cast *in-situ*, this structure is thought to be part of the foundations of a supermarket building that stood on the site in the 1980s, prior to the site being developed with Riversdell House post-1985. The concrete beam was within construction cut [9] and backfilled with rubble [10].
- 2.2.5 Overlaying all of the above layers was a 0.50m-thick layer of modern made-ground composed of concrete crush material from the recent demolition of Riversdell House. The top of this deposit forms the current ground surface at between c.13.39m OD to 13.45m OD.
- 2.2.6 No other archaeological finds or features from any era were encountered during this part of the investigation.

### 3 CONCLUSIONS

- 3.1 The watching brief demonstrated that much of the site had been previously developed, not only by the construction of Riversdale House in the early 1990s, whose footprint was confined to the approximately one third of the south eastern part of the site, but also by previous development in the 1960s/1970s, the footprint of which extended across the majority of the site. This consisted of a supermarket building with a smaller laundrette structure built on the south eastern corner. Only a narrow strip fronting Riversdell Close remained undeveloped and this may account for the survival of post-medieval garden soil [7] noted during the investigation. Otherwise much of any potential surviving archaeological deposits appear to have been severely impacted upon by the above mentioned modern developments.
- 3.2 Only limited evidence for the post-medieval period was observed during the investigation; context [7] was the remains of a garden soil layer and context [2] the remains of a shelly mortar layer. Both are believed to have been associated with the gardens of Cowley House. Cowley House became the residence of the poet Abraham Cowley (born 1618, died 1667), one of the leading English poets of the 17th century (internet source 1). The house itself was located adjacent to the northeast of the study area, while the houses' former gardens occupied the study site itself. Cowley House is believed to have had Elizabethan origins with major alterations in the Georgian and Victorian periods. It was demolished in the 1970s (Mouchel 2011).
- 3.3 The source of the contamination is most likely to be from the laundrette shown on a 1985 map<sup>1</sup>. The contamination was identified on site as 'dry-cleaning fluid' or Tetrachloroethylene (Robin Crowthers, JP Chick & Partners, pers.comm.). The contamination peaked at thousands of parts per million around borehole 4 before dropping back to hundreds of parts per million 5m away at the edge of the trench. It seems likely that the laundrette was disposing of the fluid into the (broken?) drains or a container of the fluid was disposed of into the ground during demolition in the 1980s. Either way the fluid, whose distinctive odour was strongly detectable during the archaeological works, had soaked into the peat layer which was effectively sealed in above and below by alluvial clay deposits. The peat layer was removed in all directions until acceptable limits of the contamination were reached.
- 3.4 The natural alluvial and peat deposits are evidence of the sites close proximity to the River Bourne, approximately 40m to the west of the site.
- 3.5 No evidence for prehistoric, Roman, medieval or early post-medieval activity was observed during this investigation.

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<sup>1</sup> This map was unearthed by Robin Crowthers of JP Chick & Partners and is in his possession (a photocopy was obtained, not reproduced here). It shows a drainage plan submitted to the local council in May 1985, but is believed to originate from the 1970s. It shows most of the study site occupied by a supermarket captioned 'NETMOS'. The south east corner of the building is occupied by a laundrette, likely to be the source of the contamination.



## **4 ACKNOWLEDGMENTS**

- 4.1 The author would like to thank Mouchel Limited on behalf of Barnes Construction for commissioning the work, Robin Crowthers, JP Chick & Partners for assistance, Chris Jarrett for CTP dates and Berni Seddon for CBM dates. PCAs CAD department provided the illustrations. Chris Mayo was project manager and edited this report.

## **5 BIBLIOGRAPHY**

### **5.1 Printed sources**

Mouchel. July 2011, *Riversdell House, Chertsey. Archaeological Desk Based Assessment*. Unpublished report by Mouchel Heritage.

Mouchel. January 2013, *Written Scheme of Investigation for Archaeological Watching Brief, Riversdell House, Chertsey*. Unpublished report by Mouchel Heritage.

RSA Geotechnics Limited, November 2011. *Phase II investigation, Riversdell House, Guildford Street, Chertsey, Surrey*. Unpublished Bore-Hole log by RSA Geotechnics Ltd, Needham Market, Suffolk.

### **5.2 Internet Sources**

- 1: British Geological Survey; <http://mapapps.bgs.ac.uk/geologyofbritain/home.html>
- 2: Cowley House; [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Abraham\\_Cowley](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Abraham_Cowley)

## 6 SITE PHOTOGRAPHS



Plate 1 D1/18. Overall view of the excavation looking NE. Original 5m<sup>2</sup> trench in centre (with old piles) with later extensions to trench to the NW and SE. Scale 2m.

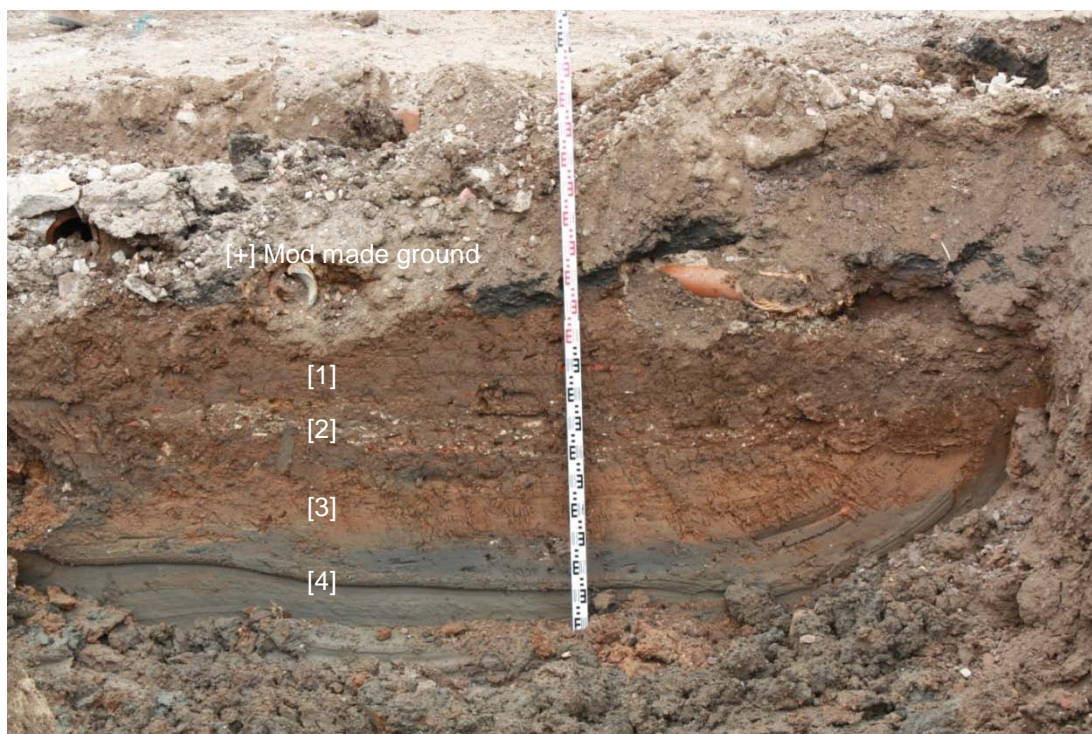


Plate 2. D1/3. Part of section 1 in TR1 showing layers; [1] Post-med made ground, [2] Shelly mortar lens, [3] natural silty clayey sand and [4] natural alluvial clay. Scale: staff at 2.20m looking NW.





*Plate 3. D1/20. Section 5 NW extension of TR1 showing layers; [7] post-med garden soil, [3] natural alluvial silty clayey sand, [4] alluvial clay, [5] peat and [6] alluvial clay. Scale: staff at 4m looking N.*

## APPENDIX 1: OASIS FORM

**OASIS ID: preconst1-154245**

### Project details

Project name	RIVERSDELL HOUSE, CHERTSEY, SURREY KT16 9AU AN ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF
Short description of the project	An archaeological watching brief was undertaken by Pre-Construct Archaeology Limited on land at the site of the former Riversdell House, Guildford Street, Chertsey, Surrey. The watching brief demonstrated that much of the site had been previously developed by the construction of Riversdale House in the early 1990s, and by previous development in the 1960s/1970s which had severely impacted any potential surviving archaeological deposits. The archaeological work was to monitor the remediation of contaminated ground which involving excavating one trench, later extended, down to 2.60m below ground. This in advance of the proposed redevelopment of the site as a hotel. Only limited evidence for the post-medieval period was observed during the investigation; the remains of a garden soil layer and the remains of a shelly mortar layer both believed to have been associated with the gardens of Cowley House, the 17th century home of the poet Abraham Cowley, demolished in the 1970s. Natural alluvial deposits of clays, peat and silty clayey sand were recorded; evidence of the sites close proximity to the River Bourne. No evidence for any prehistoric, Roman, medieval or early post-medieval activity was observed during this investigation.
Project dates	Start: 18-06-2013 End: 21-06-2013
Previous/future work	No / No
Any associated project reference codes	SRDH13 - Sitecode
Any associated project reference codes	RU.11/0884 - Planning Application No.
Type of project	Recording project
Site status	Local Authority Designated Archaeological Area
Current Land use	Vacant Land 1 - Vacant land previously developed
Monument type	FOUNDATION Modern
Monument type	MORTAR LAYER Post Medieval
Monument type	GARDEN SOIL Post Medieval
Significant Finds	CBM Post Medieval
Significant Finds	CTP Post Medieval
Investigation type	"Watching Brief"
Prompt	Direction from Local Planning Authority - PPS

### Project location

Country	England
Site location	SURREY RUNNYMEDE CHERTSEY former Riversdell House, Guildford Street, Chertsey, Surrey.
Postcode	KT16 9AU.
Study area	86.00 Square metres
Site coordinates	TQ 04040 66705 51 0 51 23 21 N 000 30 16 W Point
Lat/Long Datum	Unknown
Height OD / Depth	Min: 11.00m Max: 12.00m

### Project creators

Name of Organisation	Pre-Construct Archaeology Limited
Project brief originator	Local Authority Archaeologist and/or Planning Authority/advisory body

Project design originator	Mouchel
Project director/manager	Chris Mayo
Project supervisor	Stuart Watson
Type of sponsor/funding body	Developer
Name of sponsor/funding body	Barnes Construction

#### Project archives

Physical Archive recipient	Surrey History Centre
Physical Contents	"Ceramics"
Digital Archive recipient	Surrey History Centre
Digital Contents	"Ceramics"
Digital Media available	"Images raster / digital photography", "Images vector", "Text"
Paper Archive recipient	Surrey History Centre
Paper Contents	"Stratigraphic"
Paper Media available	"Context sheet", "Matrices", "Photograph", "Plan", "Report", "Section", "Unpublished Text"

#### Project bibliography 1

Publication type	Grey literature (unpublished document/manuscript)
Title	RIVERSDELL HOUSE, CHERTSEY, SURREY KT16 9AU: AN ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF
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Issuer or publisher	Pre-Construct Archaeology Limited
Place of issue or publication	London
Description	A4 client summary report, bound with blue covers

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Entered on	17 July 2013

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Figure 1  
Site Location  
1:20,000 at A4



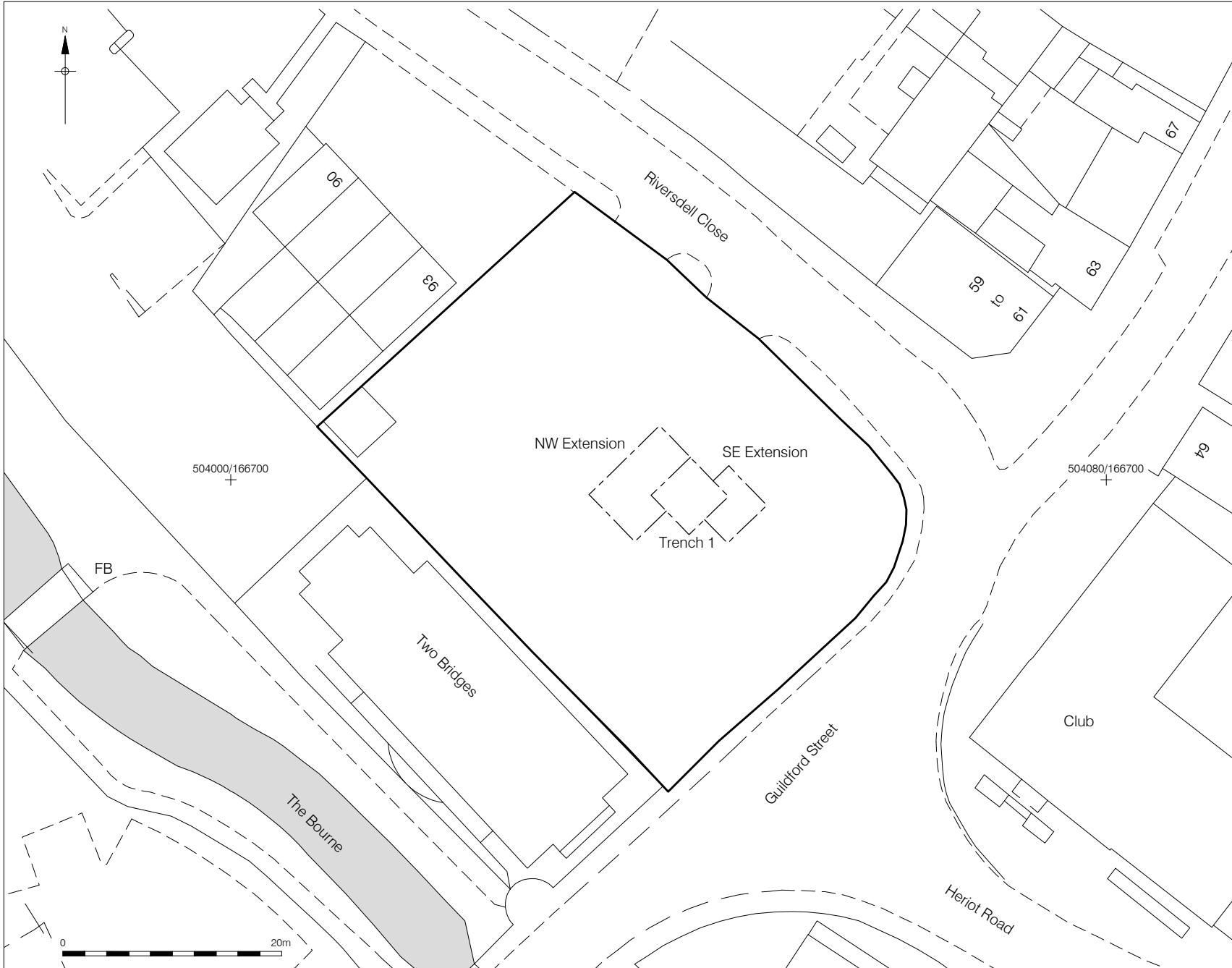
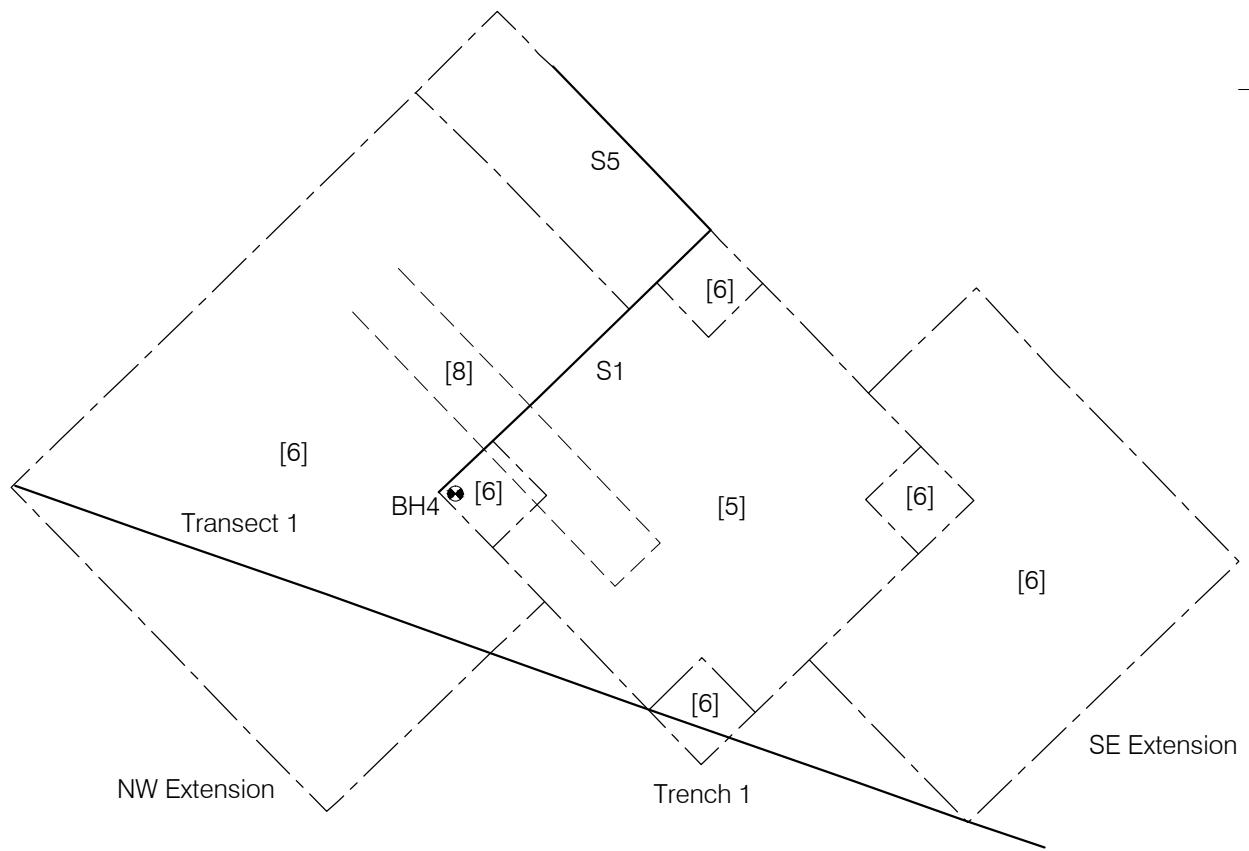


Figure 2  
Trench Location  
1:500 at A4

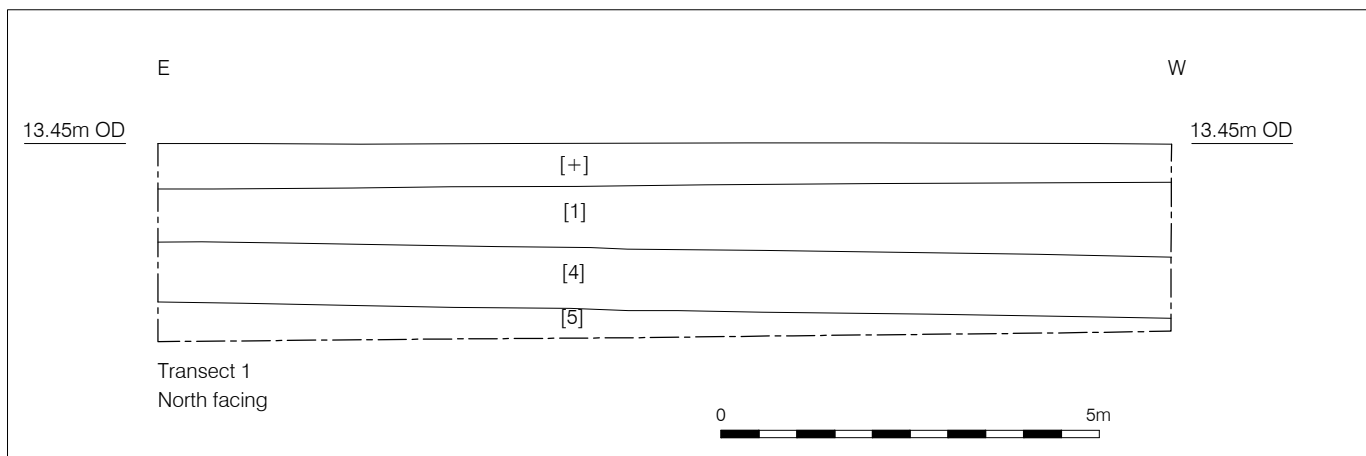
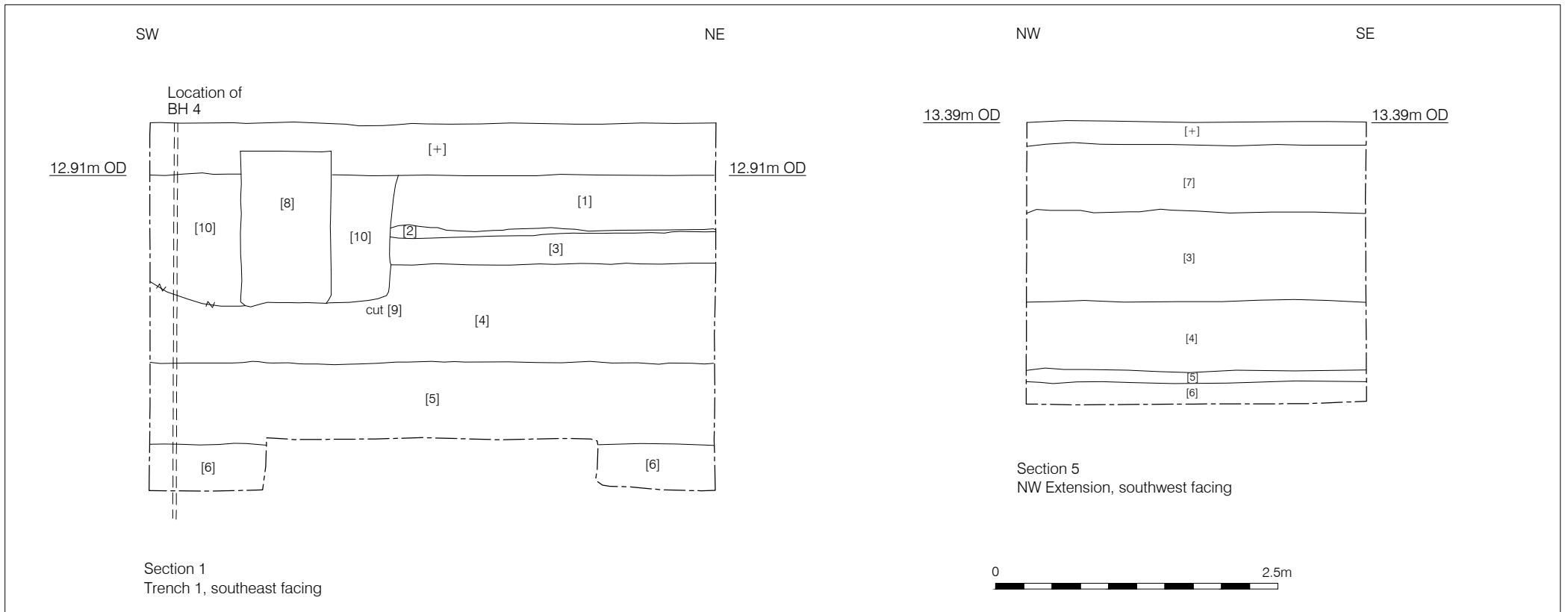


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Figure 3  
Trench plan  
1:100 at A4





# PCA

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