

**An Archaeological Evaluation at 9-15 Harefield Road, Uxbridge, London  
Borough of Hillingdon**

**Site Code: HFU 06**

**Central National Grid Reference: TQ 0540 8456**

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Pre-Construct Archaeology Limited, June 2006**

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June 2006**

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## **1 ABSTRACT**

- 1.1 This report details the results and working methods of an archaeological field evaluation undertaken by Pre-Construct Archaeology at 9-15 Harefield Road, Uxbridge, London Borough of Hillingdon. The central National Grid Reference of the site is TQ 0540 8456. The field evaluation was undertaken between 12<sup>th</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup> June 2006. The commissioning client was Duncan Hawkins of CgMs Consulting Ltd on behalf of McCarthy and Stone.
- 1.2 The evaluation comprised four trenches located within the footprint of the proposed development, within the back gardens of the existing properties.
- 1.3 The evaluation identified the presence of the natural river gravels overlying Eocene London Clay. A possible 17<sup>th</sup> century gravel extraction cut was identified, and overlying this were several horticultural horizons, dated to no earlier than the 17<sup>th</sup> century. They were continuously reworked throughout subsequent centuries up to the present, the latest phase being contemporary with the use of the site as back gardens for the four properties on Harefield Road.

## **2 INTRODUCTION**

- 2.1 An archaeological evaluation was carried out between the 12<sup>th</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup> June 2006 by Andrew Sargent of Pre-Construct Archaeology Limited, and was commissioned by Duncan Hawkins of CgMs Consulting Ltd on behalf of McCarthy and Stone. The evaluation was undertaken within the back gardens of the properties at 9-15 Harefield Road, which are to be demolished and the site redeveloped for new retirement homes.
- 2.2 The proposal for the fieldwork (Hawkins 2006) specified the excavation of four trenches. These were to be excavated in accordance with PPG 16 and local policies, in order to assess the nature, extent and date of any archaeological remains encountered, and to locate any areas where archaeological deposits have been truncated. In particular, the evaluation was intended to establish the existence or otherwise of evidence for land division or agricultural activity dating from the Neolithic, Bronze Age or Iron Age, for which there is substantial precedent in the area.
- 2.3 The site is located on Harefield Road (B467), which forms its eastern edge. It is bounded by Uxbridge Court House to the South, m ODern residential housing to the west, and 20<sup>th</sup> century housing to the north. The site is rectangular in shape with an approximate area of 0.2ha. On the east side it is occupied by four, three storey, semi-detached properties dating from 1914-1934. Each has a substantial back garden running to a back lane that occupies the western edge of the site. These gardens contain a number of shed and garage structures.
- 2.4 The National Grid Reference of the site is TQ 0540 8456.
- 2.5 The evaluation was supervised by the author, project managed by Chris Mayo and was monitored on behalf of English Heritage by Kim Stabler.
- 2.6 The site was given the code HFU 06.

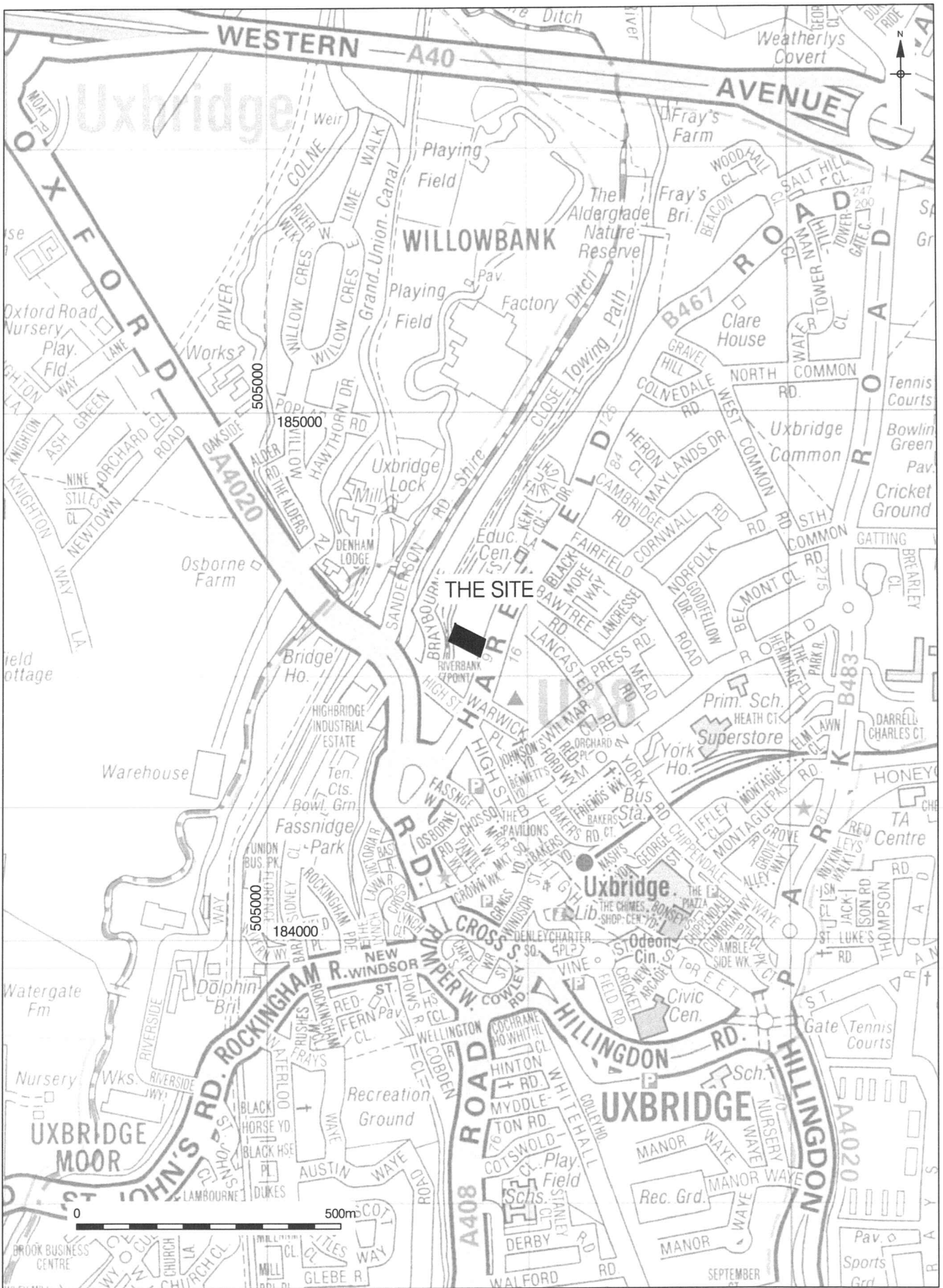
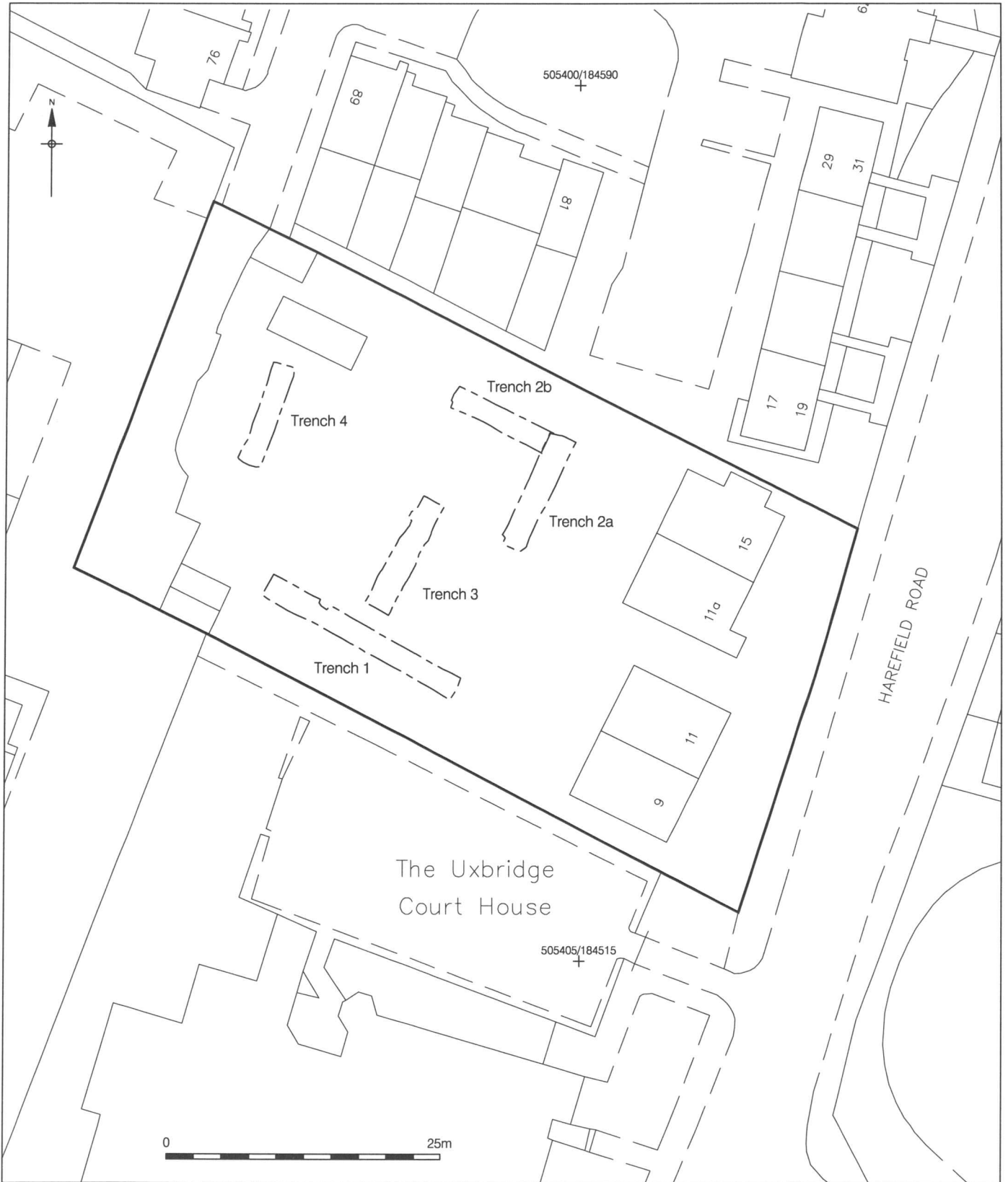


Figure 1  
Site location  
1:10,000



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Figure 2  
Trench location  
1:500

### **3 GEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND**

- 3.1 No geotechnical information was available for the site, although reference to the 1:50,000 Solid and Drift Geology map of Beaconsfield (Sheet 255) published by the British Geological Survey indicates the site to be underlain by superficial river gravels overlying the solid Eocene London Clay. This was confirmed during the evaluation. The site is situated on a gentle slope falling from a maximum height of 40.80m OD in the east towards the Fray's River in the west.

### **4 ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND HISTORICAL BACKGROUND**

- 4.1 No previous archaeological investigations have taken place on the site. The following archaeological and historical background is summarised from an Archaeological Desk Based Assessment of the site written by Duncan Hawkins of CgMs Consulting (2004).

- 4.1.1 An important upper Palaeolithic site was found 125m west of the study site at Three Ways Wharf, 101-5 Oxford Road, in the valley of the River Colne. A series of alluvial deposits overlying the river gravel contained a large assemblage of worked flints, including flakes, blades and cores, in association with horse and deer bones. The site was described as a hunter-gatherer campsite dated to c. 8000BC. No evidence for this alluvial sequence has been found closer to the study site, although residual Mesolithic flintwork has been recovered from 126 High Street, Uxbridge, and late Pleistocene or early Holocene faunal remains were recovered from High Street in 1953.
- 4.1.2 A ditched Bronze Age field system was recorded on the site of the Chimes Shopping Centre, together with Bronze Age pottery fragments, daub, burnt flint, struck flint and a perforated clay slab. Bronze Age activity was also recorded at the aforementioned Three Ways Wharf site, and on the site of the former Jewson's builders' centre south east of the study site on the opposite side of Harefield Road. This latter investigation revealed a mid Bronze Age ditch and two truncated Bronze Age or early Iron Age cut features. Additionally, residual, probably late Prehistoric, flintwork was recovered from 118 High Street. Collectively this evidence suggests a mature agricultural landscape around central Uxbridge, originating in the late Neolithic or early Bronze Age, and serving established Bronze Age communities. However, no evidence for Neolithic, Bronze Age or Iron Age activity was found on the site of 114 High Street between the Fray's River and the study site, possibly suggesting that this area was pastureland during this period.

- 4.1.3 There is very little evidence for Roman activity from central Uxbridge and none from the immediate vicinity of the study site.
- 4.1.4 It has been suggested that Uxbridge originated as an Anglo-Saxon settlement, although there is no archaeological or historical evidence that definitively proves this.
- 4.1.5 In the Domesday Survey of 1086 Uxbridge was part of Colham Manor. By c. 1200 it had developed as a market centre for the surrounding district, and possessed a daughter chapel to Hillingdon Church. By 1600 Uxbridge was the principal corn market for south Buckinghamshire and west Middlesex. In the late medieval and early post-medieval periods the town was a linear settlement stretching along the Oxford to London road from the crossing of the River Colne. Reference to John Rocque's map of 1754 indicates that the study site lay outside the built-up area in agricultural or horticultural land. This situation appears to have persisted through the 19<sup>th</sup> century and into the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, the only notable feature being Harefield Road, which was called Pages Lane until it was renamed at some time between 1866 and 1896. The site was redeveloped in its existing form between 1914 and 1934, and has since remained unchanged.



## **5 ARCHAEOLOGICAL METHODOLOGY**

- 5.1 The evaluation comprised four trenches, two measuring c. 20 x 2m and two measuring c. 10 x 2m. The longer trenches were positioned within the northern and southern areas of the site; Trench 1 (south) was linear in shape running east-west, whilst Trench 2 (north) was reconceived as an L-shaped trench due to the presence of a significant garage and shed complex at the western end of the garden. The shorter trenches, numbers 3 and 4, were both linear, running north-south with similar east-west alignments in the central and central-western areas of the site respectively (see Figure 2). The trenches were excavated in accordance with the specifications outlined in the method statement for the site (Hawkins 2006).
- 5.2 Excavation of the trenches was undertaken using a JCB mechanical digger. All of the trenches were excavated in spits with a toothless grading bucket under archaeological supervision.
- 5.3 Very few discrete archaeological features were encountered, and machining was halted once natural sandy gravels had been located along the length of the each trench. A sondage was excavated at the southern end of Trench 4 to investigate the nature of the geology underlying these gravels. The trenches were cleaned using appropriate hand-tools. The average depth below ground surface to the natural geology was between 0.40 and 1.00m across the site. Any deposits and features identified were investigated, photographed and recorded using the single context recording method, and pro-forma context and planning sheets. Plans and sections were drawn at a scale of 1:10 and 1:20 respectively where appropriate.
- 5.4 A spot height of 40.80m OD was located in the middle of Harefield Road opposite properties 17 and 18. This was transferred to the site to create two temporary benchmarks atop the brick wall bounding the western edge of the site, benchmark A at a height of 37.68m OD and benchmark B at a height of 37.08m OD.

## 6 TRENCH SUMMARY

### 6.1 TRENCH 1 (See Figure 3)

6.1.1 Trench 1 was orientated east-west and measured approximately 20.0m long by approximately 2.0m wide, with a depth of approximately 0.40m along its length and approximately 1.16m in the cut feature at its east end.

6.1.2 The earliest deposit encountered in the trench was a natural mid yellowish orangey brown gravel deposit [10], at a maximum height of 36.84m OD at its eastern end, sloping very gently downward toward a height of 35.87m OD at its western end.

6.1.3 This deposit was truncated at the eastern end of the trench by a near-vertical cut [7] running approximately north-south, forming the western edge of a feature that continued beyond the limit of excavation. This feature was 1.16m deep, originating at a height of 36.84m OD and dropping to a minimum height of 35.68m OD. It may have been excavated for the purpose of gravel extraction. The feature contained three fills, the primary [6] being a pale to mid brownish grey silty clay, at 36.31m OD and approximately 0.40m thick, containing a residual prehistoric struck flint, a residual sherd of late Iron Age or early Roman flint and sand tempered ware, and a sherd of 17<sup>th</sup> century black-glazed red earthen ware that may date the deposit. The secondary fill [5] was a pale to mid greyish brown sandy silt, at a maximum of 36.83m OD and 0.50m thick, and may have accumulated over time due to erosive processes operating on the surrounding landscape. The tertiary fill [4] was a reddish mid brown mix of sandy silt and CBM fragments at 36.61m OD and 0.35m thick, which may have been deposited as a ground levelling layer during the construction of the existing houses between 1914 and 1934.

6.1.4 Overlying these deposits and extending the full length of the trench was a mid greyish brown sandy silt [3], at 37.21m OD and 0.65m thick at most. This was a horticultural horizon worked throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> century and possibly derived from earlier soils on the site. Lenses of CBM and pottery fragments suggest several refuse dumping events throughout the life of the soil, rendered homogenous by extensive reworking. Cut into this deposit at the eastern end of the trench was a fairly linear feature [9] at 37.05m OD, approximately 3.20m east-west and 0.98m deep. This may represent some form of horticultural event, perhaps a hedge or tree, subsequently grubbed out and back-filled with deposit [8], a mid greyish brown silty sand at 37.05m OD and 0.98m thick. This may have been derived from the surrounding topsoil, and contained two residual prehistoric struck flints and a Mesolithic or early Neolithic flint blade.

6.1.5 The trench was sealed by a modern concrete driveway [1] at 37.21m OD and 0.10m thick, bedded on a mid brown gravel layer [2] at 37.11m OD and 0.04m thick.

## 6.2 TRENCH 2 (See Figure 4)

6.2.1 Trench 2 was L-shaped, orientated east-west (measuring approximately 12.0m along its northern edge) with a north-south dog-leg at its eastern end (measuring approximately 10.0m along its eastern edge). It was 0.30m deep in its northeast corner, gradually descending to approximately 1.0m deep at the end of its southern extension and approximately 0.50m deep at the end of its western extension.

6.2.2 The earliest deposit located in this trench was natural yellowish orangey mid brown sandy gravel [17] at a height of 36.56m OD in the northeast corner of the trench, descending to 35.86m OD at the southern extent of the trench and 36.09m OD at the western extent of the trench

6.2.3 Overlying this deposit was a pale yellowish greyish brown silty sand layer [16] at 36.66m OD and 0.24m thick, representing an undated horticultural horizon. A probable posthole [14] was cut into this layer in the northeastern end of the trench at 36.66m OD. It was between 0.60 and 0.70m in diameter, 0.39m deep and was back-filled by deposit [13], a mid greyish brown sandy silt. In the southern end of the trench deposit [16] was overlain by a pale to mid greyish brown silty sand layer [15] at 36.58m OD and 0.43m thick at most. This may represent a subsequent horticultural phase, again 19<sup>th</sup> century or earlier in date, the deposit having survived later reworking in this area of the trench due to the downward-sloping topography of the deposits beneath.

6.2.4 Sealing these deposits was a further horticultural topsoil horizon consisting of mid greyish brown sandy silt at a height of 36.99m OD and 0.51m thick at most. This deposit appeared fairly homogenous, although it did contain lenses of sand and CBM fragments, most notably in the southern region of the trench. Subsequent reworking has obscured any more detailed stratigraphy within this layer, but it can be surmised that its history included several episodes of deposition. In particular, the aforementioned lense may represent ground levelling during the construction of the existing houses, and thus be contemporary with deposit [4] in trench 1. The CBM fragments within the deposit as a whole suggest that it can be dated to the 20<sup>th</sup> century. A concrete garden path [11], 0.05m thick, ran along the northern edge of the trench at a maximum height of 36.87m OD.

### 6.3 TRENCH 3 (See Figure 5)

- 6.3.1 Trench 3 was orientated north-south and measured approximately 10.0m x 2.0m. It was approximately 0.40 to 0.50m along its length, descending to approximately 0.70m at its northern end.
- 6.3.2 The earliest deposit found in the trench was a natural yellowish orangey mid brown sandy gravel layer [25] at a maximum height of 36.54m OD at its southern end and descending gradually to 36.12m OD at its northern end. Overlying this in the northwest corner of the trench was a natural mid yellow coarse sand layer [24] at a height of 36.12m OD.
- 6.3.3 A white crushed and compacted chalk deposit [23], at 36.33m OD and 0.05 to 0.10m thick, overlay the natural gravel in the central area of the trench. It is possible that this deposit was laid down by human agency, perhaps as some form of surface, although no finds were associated with it.
- 6.3.4 These deposits were overlain by a pale greyish brown silty sand layer [22] at 36.67m OD and 0.13m deep. This is probably an old horticultural horizon dating to the 19<sup>th</sup> century or earlier.
- 6.3.5 A feature [21] measuring 6.30m north-south, visible along the western edge of the trench and continuing eastward beyond the limit of excavation, was cut through this deposit at a height of 36.67m OD. Its' purpose appears to have been twofold: first, to provide a construction trench for brick wall footing [20], and second, to provide a pit for the disposal of copious amounts of burnt rubbish [19], comprising CBM fragments, pottery sherds, clay pipe fragments, glass fragments, and other domestic refuse. The footing [20] was constructed from creamy yellow and red frogged bricks, forming a structure measuring 3m north-south and continuing eastward beyond the limit of excavation. It had a maximum height of 36.77m OD and probably once supported a garden shed or other service building. The bricks suggest a 20<sup>th</sup> century date. The backfill deposit [19], at a height of 36.67m OD, contained much 19<sup>th</sup> century pottery, suggesting that the whole event should be dated to the earlier 20<sup>th</sup> century, probably around the time of the construction of the existing houses, 1914-1934.
- 6.3.6 The trench is sealed by a mid greyish brown sandy silt topsoil [18], at 37.01m OD and 0.50m thick, that had been reworked throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

#### 6.4 TRENCH 4 (See Figure 6)

- 6.4.1 Trench 4 was orientated north-south and measured approximately 10.0m x 2.0m. It was approximately 0.80m deep along its length and 1.40m deep in a sondage at its southern end.
- 6.4.2 The earliest deposit in the trench was a pale bluish grey clay [33] at a height of 35.50m OD. This was identified as the natural Eocene London Clay. Overlying this was a pale orangey brown clay layer [32] at a height of 35.82m OD and 0.33m thick. This, also natural, provides a transition zone to the overlying yellowish orangey mid brown sandy gravel layer [31]. This, at a height of 35.98m OD and 0.16m thick, is the natural gravel layer found in all the other trenches, and represents the limit to which the remainder of the trench was excavated. A gradual slope downward to the north was observed, reaching a minimum height of 35.69m OD.
- 6.4.3 Overlying these deposits were three horticultural layers. The first and earliest, [30] at 36.15m OD and 0.19m thick, was composed of mid to dark greyish brown sandy silt. The second, [29] at 36.43m OD and 0.36m thick, comprised pale yellowish greyish brown silty sand. Finally, overlying these was a mid greyish brown sandy silt layer [28], at a height of 36.68m OD and 0.31m thick. This is the modern topsoil, reworked throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> century.
- 6.4.4 The topsoil was sealed to the south by a grit/sand/silt mix topped by woodchips [27] at 36.74m OD and 0.06m thick, and to the north by a pale grey brick-built parking bay surface bedded on a gritty sand makeup layer [26] at 36.68m OD and 0.36m thick at most.

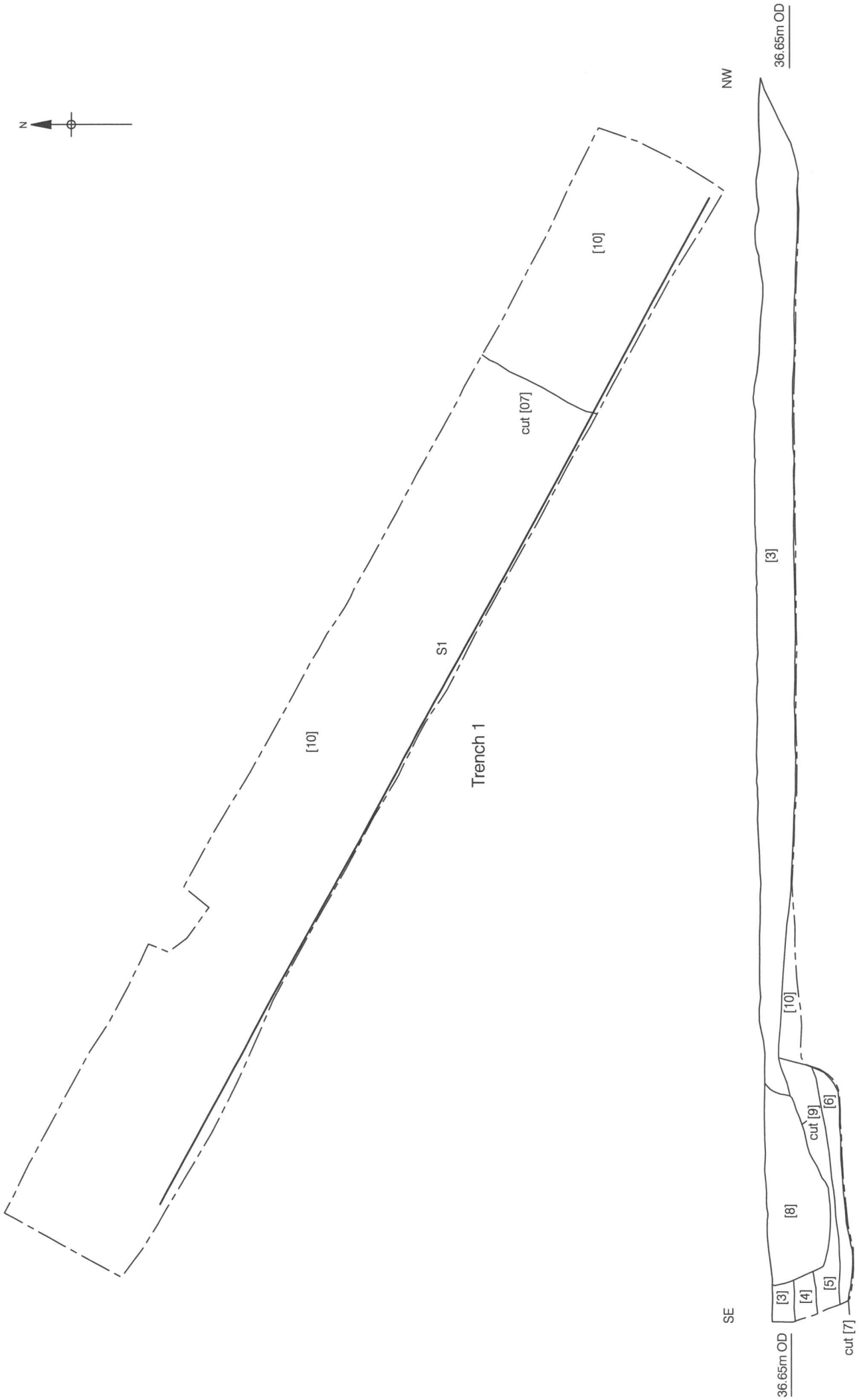


Figure 3  
Plan of Trench 1 and Section 1  
1:80

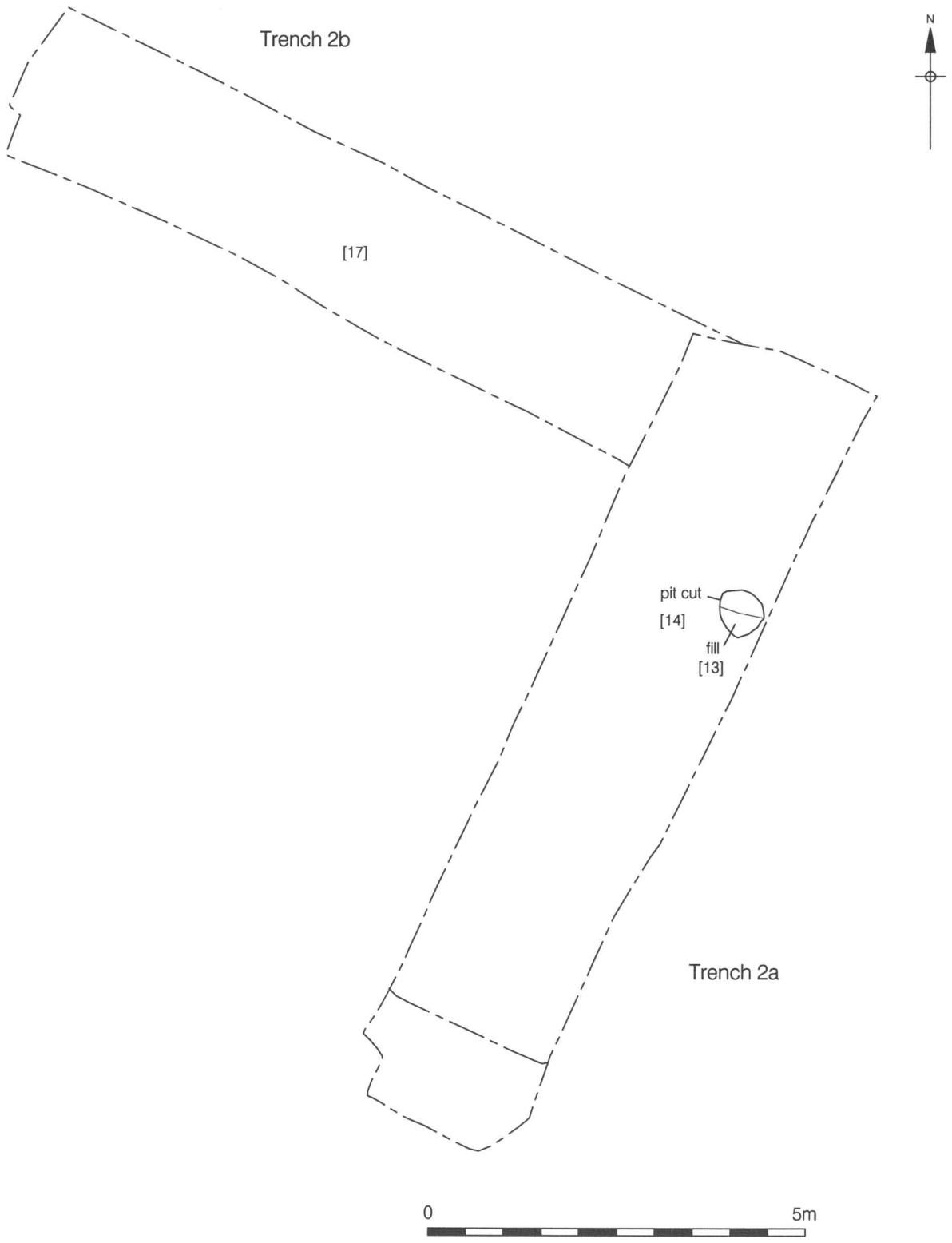
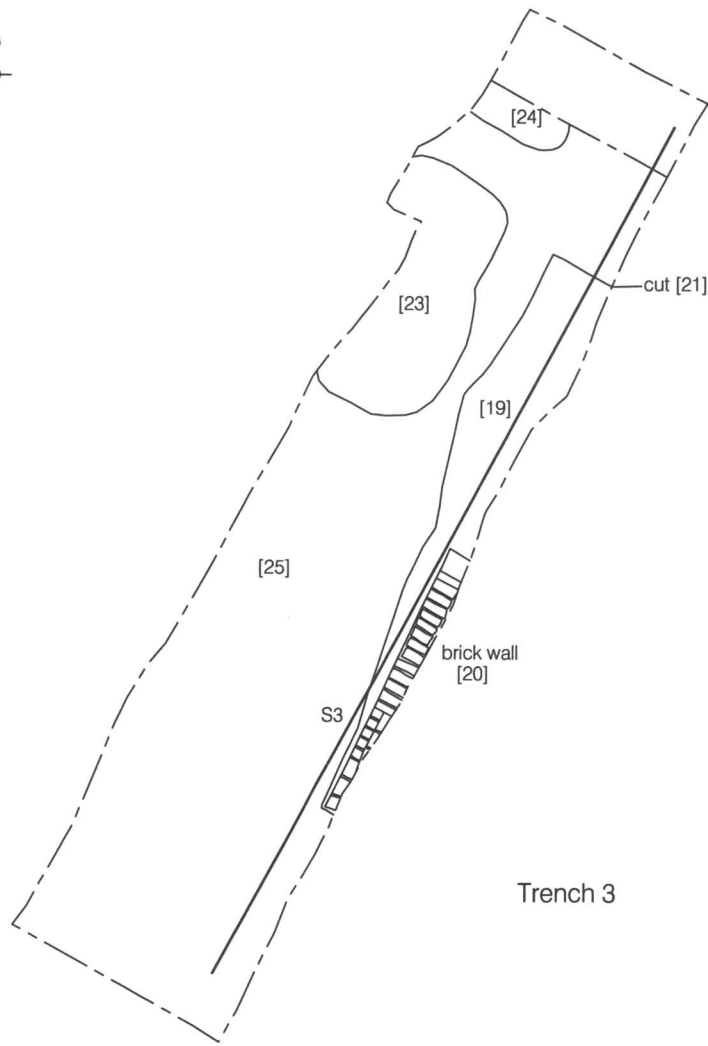
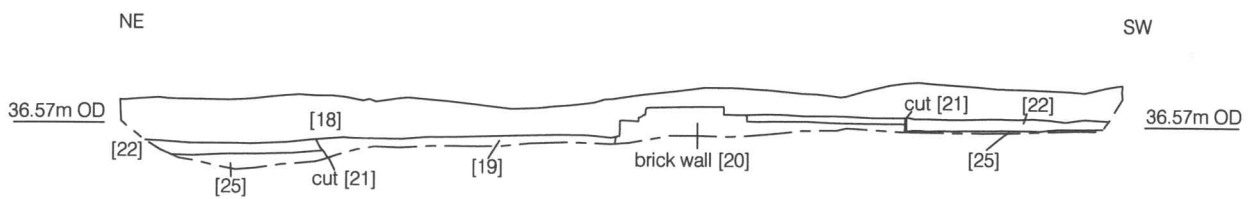


Figure 4  
Plan of Trench 2, showing pit [14]  
1:80



Trench 3



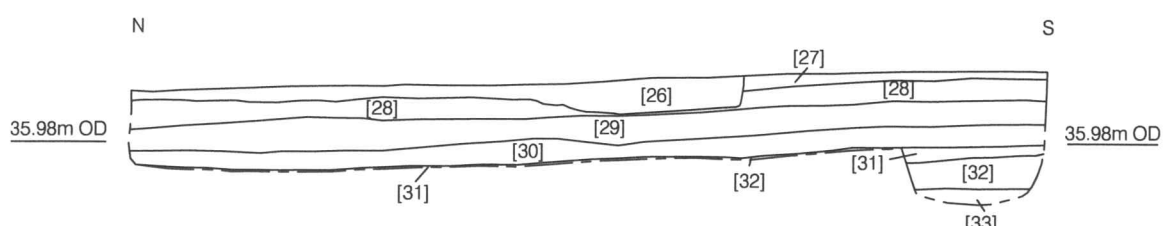
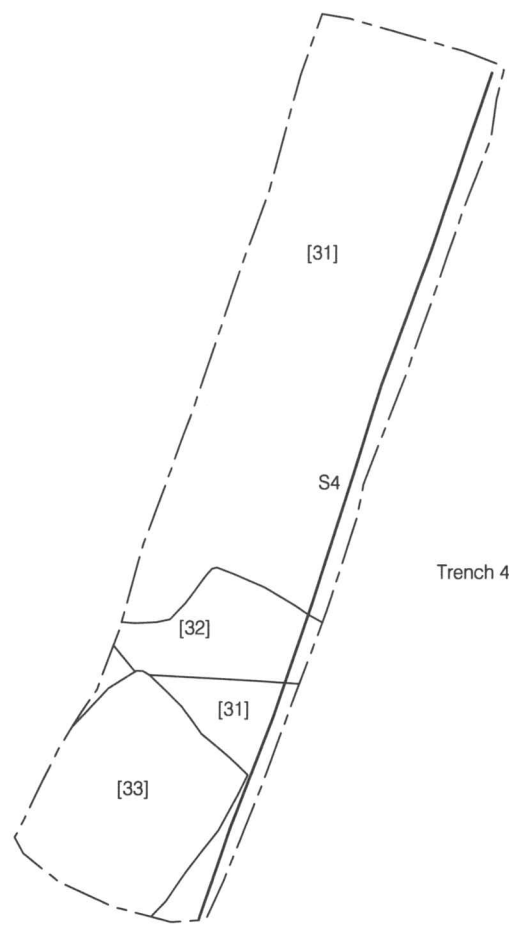
Section 3

Trench 3, northwest facing



Figure 5  
Plan of Trench 3 and Section 3  
1:80





Section 4  
Trench 4, west facing



Figure 6  
Plan of Trench 4 and Section 4  
1:80

## **7 TRENCH SUMMARY**

### **7.1 TRENCH 1 (See Figure 3)**

7.1.1 Natural gravel [10] was truncated by a near-vertical cut [7] running approximately north-south, forming the western edge of a feature that continued beyond the limit of excavation, likely to have been a gravel quarry pit. The primary fill was dated to the 17<sup>th</sup> century. The feature was sealed by a sandy silt [3], a horticultural horizon worked throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> century and possibly derived from earlier soils on the site. A linear feature [9] cut at this level contained two residual prehistoric struck flints and a Mesolithic or early Neolithic flint blade.

### **7.2 TRENCH 2 (See Figure 4)**

7.2.1 A natural sandy gravel [17] was sealed by a silty sand layer [16] representing an undated horticultural horizon. An undated probable posthole [14] was cut into this layer in the northeastern end of the trench. Subsequent horticultural layers completed the sequence.

### **7.3 TRENCH 3 (See Figure 5)**

7.3.1 Natural sandy gravel [25] was sealed by natural sand [24]. Overlying this was a chalk deposit [23], possibly deliberately deposited although undated. Horticultural horizons and 19<sup>th</sup> – 20<sup>th</sup> century remains were also found.

### **7.4 TRENCH 4 (See Figure 6)**

7.4.1 A pale bluish grey clay [33] was sealed by further clay layer [32], and then by sandy gravel layer [31]. Overlying these deposits were three horticultural layers, and then topsoil.

## 8 CONCLUSIONS

- 8.1 The earliest deposit was found in the sondage at the southern end of Trench 4, and comprised the Eocene London Clay at a height of 35.50m OD. This, after a discoloured transition zone, underlay the sandy river gravels exposed in all trenches. The gravels show a gradual downward slope from east to west toward the Fray's River, from a maximum of 36.84m OD at the eastern end of Trench 1 to a minimum of 35.60m OD at the northern end of Trench 4. In addition a gradual downward slope to the north in Trenches 3 and 4 (with a natural sand deposit at the northern end of the former), and a more pronounced slope to the south in Trench 2, indicate the possible existence of a palaeochannel running approximately east-west across the site between these two trench groups.
- 8.2 Overlying these natural deposits in Trench 3 was an intriguing crushed chalk deposit, possibly indicative of human activity predating the remaining horticultural horizons, which cover the entire site. Significantly, no alluvium was found in any of the trenches that might have preserved prehistoric remains in situ. However, prehistoric flints and, in particular, a Mesolithic or early Neolithic flint blade found in topsoil deposits in Trench 1, add to the growing body of evidence suggesting significant prehistoric occupation of this area. Meanwhile, the absence of any ditches cut into the natural gravels compares well with negative evidence from the nearby site at 114 High Street and supports the suggestion that this immediate area may not have been divided into fields in the Bronze Age.
- 8.3 The possible gravel extraction cut at the eastern end of Trench 1 is perhaps the earliest definite feature on the site, with pottery from its primary fill dating to the 17<sup>th</sup> century. All existing horticultural deposits observed across the site cannot be dated any earlier than this, and most represent reworking and deposition throughout the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. The posthole in Trench 2, cut into the lowest horticultural horizon recorded in that area of the site, may perhaps date to the earlier part of this period. The latest horticultural horizons found across the site represent the creation of the back gardens associated with the existing houses built 1914-1934 and their subsequent reworking throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The brick-built footing found in Trench 3 can also be dated within this period.
- 8.4 No features definitely earlier than the 17<sup>th</sup> century have been found during this investigation, and the excavations have proved that any earlier deposits have been almost completely destroyed by subsequent horticultural activity. We therefore recommend that no further archaeological investigation is necessary on this site.

## **9 ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

- 9.1 Pre-Construct Archaeology would like to thank Duncan Hawkins of CgMs Consulting for commissioning the evaluation on behalf of McCarthy and Stone.
- 9.2 The author would like to thank Josephine Brown for the CAD illustrations and Chris Mayo for project management and editing. Thanks also to Tiva Montalbano for her valued assistance.

## **10 BIBLIOGRAPHY**

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## APPENDIX 1 – LIST OF CONTEXTS

Context No	Trench No	Description
1	1	Concrete driveway
2	1	Makeup for [1]
3	1	20 <sup>th</sup> century horticultural horizon
4	1	CBM levelling layer
5	1	Fill of [7]
6	1	Fill of [7]
7	1	Possible gravel extraction cut
8	1	Fill of [9]
9	1	Cut of possible horticultural nature
10	1	Natural gravels
11	2	Concrete garden path
12	2	20 <sup>th</sup> century horticultural horizon
13	2	Fill of [14]
14	2	Posthole
15	2	Horticultural horizon
16	2	Horticultural horizon
17	2	Natural gravels
18	3	20 <sup>th</sup> century horticultural horizon
19	3	Bonfire remains – fill of cut [21]
20	3	Brick-built footing for garden service building
21	3	Cut for [20] and [19]
22	3	Horticultural horizon
23	3	Crushed chalk deposit – surface?
24	3	Natural sand
25	3	Natural gravels
26	4	Parking bay surface
27	4	Woodchip surface
28	4	20 <sup>th</sup> century horticultural horizon
29	4	Horticultural horizon
30	4	Horticultural horizon
31	4	Natural gravels
32	4	Natural clay
33	4	Natural clay – Eocene London Clay

## APPENDIX 2 – OASIS DATA COLLECTION FORM

OASIS ID: preconst1-16060

### Project details

Project name	An Archaeological Evaluation at 9-15 Harefield Road, Uxbridge, London Borough of Hillingdon
Short description of the project	An archaeological field evaluation undertaken by Pre-Construct Archaeology at 9-15 Harefield Road, Uxbridge, London Borough of Hillingdon comprised four trenches located within the footprint of the proposed development, within the back gardens of the existing properties. The evaluation identified the presence of the natural river gravels overlying Eocene London Clay. A possible 17th century gravel extraction cut was identified, and overlying this were several horticultural horizons, dated to no earlier than the 17th century. They were continuously reworked throughout subsequent centuries up to the present, the latest phase being contemporary with the use of the site as back gardens for the four properties on Harefield Road.
Project dates	Start: 12-06-2006 End: 14-06-2006
Previous/future work	No / No
Any associated project reference codes	HFU 06 - Sitecode
Type of project	Field evaluation
Site status	None
Current Land use	Other 5 - Garden
Methods & techniques	'Sample Trenches'
Development type	Urban residential (e.g. flats, houses, etc.)
Prompt	Planning condition
Position in the planning process	After full determination (eg. As a condition)

### Project location

Country	England
Site location	GREATER LONDON HILLINGDON UXBRIDGE 9-15 Harefield Road, Uxbridge
Postcode	UB8
Study area	2275.00 Square metres
National grid reference	TQ 0450 8546 Point
Height OD	Min: 35.80m Max: 36.84m

### Project creators

Name of Organisation	Pre-Construct Archaeology Ltd
Project brief originator	CgMs Consulting
Project design originator	Duncan Hawkins
Project director/manager	Chris Mayo
Project supervisor	Andrew Sargent
Sponsor or funding body	McCarthy and Stone (Developments) Ltd.

### Project archives

Physical Archive recipient	LAARC
Physical Contents	'Ceramics','Glass','Worked stone/lithics'
Digital Archive recipient	LAARC
Digital Contents	'Stratigraphic'
Digital Media available	'Images raster','Spreadsheets','Survey'
Paper Archive recipient	LAARC
Paper Contents	'Stratigraphic','Survey'
Paper Media available	'Context sheet','Map','Photograph','Plan','Section','Survey'

### Project bibliography 1

Publication type	Grey literature (unpublished document/manuscript)
Title	An Archaeological Evaluation at 9-15 Harefield Road, Uxbridge, London Borough of Hillingdon
Author(s)/Editor(s)	Sargent, A
Date	2006
Issuer or publisher	Pre-Construct Archaeology Ltd
Place of issue or publication	London
Description	A4 document

Entered by	Archivist (archive@pre-construct.com)
Entered on	27 June 2006