ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION AT LAND ADJACENT TO BLUE HOUSE FARM, BEDLINGTON, NORTHUMBERLAND

EVALUATION REPORT

JUNE 2018

PRE-CONSTRUCT ARCHAEOLOGY

Archaeological Evaluation at Land Adjacent to Blue House Farm, Bedlington, Northumberland

Site Code: NCB 18

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1. NON-TECHNICAL SUMMARY

1.1 Pre-Construct Archaeology was commissioned by R & K Wood Planning LLP, on behalf of Rabinda Bariana of Blue House Farm, to undertake archaeological investigations on land adjacent to Blue House Farm, Bedlington, Northumberland. The proposed development covers *c.* 0.64 hectares, centred at National Grid Reference NZ 24198 82464.

1.2 The work was undertaken pre-determination of a planning application for the construction of 11 dwellings at the site. The archaeological investigation was required, as part of the planning process, to inform the Local Planning Authority (LPA), Northumberland Conservation Team and the Client, of the character, date, extent and degree of survival of archaeological remains at the site.

1.3 A desk-based assessment undertaken in 2017 examined a 1km search radius from the centre of the site. The assessment concluded that there was low potential for prehistoric, Roman, early medieval and medieval remains with high potential for post-medieval remains relating to the buildings associated with Blue House Farm.

1.4 The subsequent trial trenching evaluation was undertaken in March 2018 and initially comprised eight machine excavated trenches (Trenches 1-8) each measuring 10m x 1.5m located across three paddocks. Trenches 1-5 were sited to the west of the extant farmhouse to investigate the farm outbuildings noted on the 19th century Ordnance Survey maps and Trenches 6-8 were sited north of the farmhouse to investigate the potential for any survival of archaeological remains of significance. Trench 6 located in the north-western paddock was not excavated due to unsuitable ground conditions and the locations of Trenches 5 and 7 were altered to avoid obstructions.

1.5 Natural geological material (Phase 1) comprising glacial till was encountered in all trial trenches. Such material comprised firm sandy clay or clay in Trenches 1-4, 7 & 8 and sand in Trench 5.

1.6 Phase 2 represents the truncated remains of demolished post-medieval farm outbuildings noted on 19th-century Ordnance Survey maps associated with Blue House Farm. These structural remains comprised a north-south aligned masonry wall that was partially exposed at the eastern end of Trench 2 and part of a masonry structure that was exposed within the eastern part of Trench 4. A substantial feature recorded in Trench 8 was recorded at the north-eastern part of the site in Trench 8 that represents post-medieval industrial activity of undetermined function.

1.7 Phase 3 represents early modern features and deposits associated with the demolition of the farm outbuildings and subsequent levelling activity at the site. The demolition features comprised irregular shaped features recorded in Trenches 1, 2, 4 & 5 and deposits of varying compositions and thickness recorded in Trenches 1, 2, 3, 4 & 7 represents the subsequent levelling activity at the site.

1.8 The archaeological evaluation established that archaeological remains of low significance associated with farms outbuildings are situated in the area of the proposed development.

1.9 It is considered that no further archaeological mitigation is required in advance of any development at the site.

2. INTRODUCTION

2.1 Project Background

2.1.1 This report details the results of archaeological investigations undertaken in March 2018 on land adjacent to Blue House Farm, Bedlington, Northumberland. The proposed development covers *c*. 0.64 hectares of land centred at National Grid Reference NZ 24198 82464 (Figure 1 and 2). The archaeological investigation was commissioned by R & K Wood Planning LLP on behalf of Rabinder Bariana and undertaken by Pre-Construct Archaeology Limited (PCA) pre-determination of a planning application for the construction of 11 dwellings at the site.

2.1.2 An archaeological desk-based assessment (PCA 2017) concluded that there was low potential for prehistoric, Roman, early medieval and medieval remains and high potential for post-medieval remains associated with the outbuildings of Blue House Farm.

2.1.3 The trial trenching evaluation comprised 7 trenches of varying sizes positioned to investigate the locations of proposed building plots in order to identify the archaeological potential of the site (Figures 2 & 3).

2.1.4 The project was undertaken on the recommendation of Northumberland County Council Conservation Team (NCCCT). A Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI) prepared by Pre-Construct Archaeology (PCA 2018) was approved by NCCCT prior to commencement of the archaeological work.

2.1.5 The Online Access to the Index of Archaeological Investigation (OASIS) reference number of the project is preconst1-318578.

2.2 Site Location and Description

2.2.1 The proposed development is located to the west and north of the Grade II Listed Blue House Farm, Bedlington, Northumberland at central NGR NZ 24198 82464 (Figure 1 & 2). The site is located *c*. 400m to the west of Bedlington and *c*. 800m to the north-east of Nedderton (Figure 1).

2.2.2 The site itself is an irregular-shaped parcel of land comprising three paddocks bounded to the west by Nedderton Colliery Old Road and an arable field, to the north by a rough pasture field and to the south and east by the grounds and buildings associated with Blue House Farm and an arable field.

2.2.3 At the time of the investigations the paddocks were used for pasture with the site covering an area of *c*. 0.64 hectares, measuring up to *c*. 150m east-west by *c*. 90m north-south.

2.3 Geology and Topography

2.3.1 The bedrock geology of the area is comprised of Pennine Middle Coal Measures Formations mudstone, siltstone and sandstone; sedimentary Bedrock formed approximately 309 to 312

million years ago in the Carboniferous Period when the local environment was previously dominated by swamps, estuaries and deltas (BGS 2017).

2.3.2 The superficial geology within the proposed development area is comprised of till (Devensian-Diamicton) formed up to two million years ago in the Quaternary Period when the Local environment was dominated by ice age conditions (BGS 2017).

2.3.3 No geotechnical data specific to the current scheme was available prior to the production of this report.

2.3.4 The entire South-East Northumberland Coastal plain is low lying, with land rarely rising above 70m AOD. There are some gentle summits and the land slopes eastwards to the coast. The study site is relatively flat and lies at a level of *c*. 50m AOD. The Green Letch watercourse lies *c.* 400m to the east, whilst the Netherton Letch lies approximately 850m to the north-west. Larger watercourses include the River Wansbeck *c*. 2.9km to the north and the River Blyth 2.4km to the south. The North Sea lies 7.6km to the east.

2.3.5 The countryside around the town of Bedlington beyond the valley of the Blyth is typical of the generally flat, occasionally undulating landscape of the coastal plain. It is a countryside divided into large fields, usually in arable but some under pasture, with dispersed farms, thin hedges and only relatively little tree cover.

2.3.6 The topography of the site itself gently slopes downwards from south to north. Ground level in the southern part of the site was recorded at a maximum height of 51.76m AOD in Trench 1 this gradually sloping downwards to the north where ground level was recorded at a minimum height of 48.36m AOD in Trench 8.

2.4 Planning Background

2.4.1 The archaeological evaluation was carried out pre-determination of a planning application for the residential development of 11 dwellings. The archaeological investigation was required, as part of the planning process, to inform the Local Planning Authority (LPA) of the character, date, extent and degree of survival of archaeological remains at the site. The aim was to provide results which should inform a decision regarding further archaeological mitigation measures if required.

2.4.2 The requirement to undertake the archaeological investigation is in line with planning policy at a national level, as set out in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) (Department for Communities and Local Government 2012). The NPPF came into effect in 2012, replacing Planning Policy Statement 5: 'Planning for the Historic Environment' (PPS5) (DCLG 2010), to provide updated guidance for LPAs, property owners, developers and others on the conservation and investigation of the historic environment. Heritage assets - those parts of the historic environment that have significance because of their historic, archaeological, architectural or artistic interest - remain a key concept of the NPPF, retained from PPS5. Despite the deletion of PPS5, the PPS5: Planning for the Historic Environment -

Practice Guide (English Heritage, DCMS and DCLG (revised) 2012), remains a valid, UK Government-endorsed, document.

2.4.3 Chapter 12 of the NPPF 'Conserving and enhancing the historic environment' describes, in paragraph 126, how LPAs should '...set out in their Local Plan a positive strategy for the conservation and enjoyment of the historic environment' and details, in paragraph 128, that 'In determining applications, LPAs should require an applicant to describe the significance of any heritage assets affected, including any contribution made by their setting. The level of detail should be proportionate to the assets' importance and no more than is sufficient to understand the potential impact of the proposal on their significance. As a minimum, the relevant [Historic Environment Record] HER should have been consulted and the heritage assets assessed using appropriate expertise where necessary. Where a site on which development is proposed includes or has the potential to include heritage assets with archaeological interest, LPAs should require developers to submit an appropriate desk-based assessment and where necessary [the results of] a field evaluation'.

2.4.4 Northumberland County Council's Conservation Team has responsibility for archaeological development control in relation to the historic environment. No Specification for the archaeological work was produced by the Local Planning Authority, instead a Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI) compiled by PCA (PCA 2018) was submitted for approval by NCCCT prior to the archaeological evaluation commencing. Trench 6 located in the north-western paddock was not excavated due to unsuitable ground conditions and the locations of Trenches 5 and 7 were altered to avoid obstructions. These amendments to the WSI were agreed in consultation with NCCCT.

2.5 Archaeological and Historical Background

The background is taken from the Desk-Based Assessment prepared by PCA (PCA 2017), the research and writing of those authors is acknowledged.

2.5.1 There are no prehistoric assets noted within the 1km search radius of the proposed development, however, prehistoric remains are noted throughout the Northumberland Coastal Plain within the wider landscape. Although there will have been at least transient human activity on the coastal plain around Bedlington since the end of the last glaciation, around 10,000 years ago, the first substantial archaeological evidence in the vicinity of the town listed on the HER comprised a cluster of five Bronze Age Cist Burials (HER 11747). These were discovered during development of a council estate in 1934-5 at Millfield, a site now incorporated in the southern part of the town, overlooking the valley of the River Blyth, *c*. 2.2km to the south-east of the study site.

2.5.2 Additional Bronze Age remains were noted in the form of cinerary urns recovered in the 19th century to the south of Nedderton in Plessey Quarry (HER 11427), and a Bronze Age cist uncovered at Clifton in the 20th century (HER 11701).

2.5.3 A possible prehistoric enclosure is visible as a cropmark on aerial photographs on land south of Sleekburn Cottage Farm, *c*. 2.4km to the north-east of the study site. Only part of the cropmark site remains; the portion in the adjacent field has been destroyed by quarrying.

2.5.4 The study site lies within a landscape which was densely occupied by agricultural settlements and extensively farmed during the Late Iron Age and early Roman period. A pattern of late prehistoric and early Roman small farmstead ditched enclosures is well documented on the South-East Northumberland Coastal Plain. Numerous rectilinear enclosures have been identified on aerial photographs (Burgess 1984, 163; Petts & Gerrard 2006, 37). Several examples of such small ditched settlements, thought to represent single household farmsteads, were excavated by George Jobey from the 1950s to 1980s, including at Burradon, located *c*. 9.8km to the south of the proposed development. These investigations were generally conducted as rescue excavation ahead of the destruction of the sites by development and with limited time and resources excavation focused on the ditch circuit and internal areas. More recent large-scale developer funded excavation in advance of housing schemes and opencast mining have revealed evidence for a wider range of settlement types and in some cases for extensive field systems associated with settlements (Proctor 2009; Hodgson *et al.* 2012).

2.5.5 Numerous cropmarks of enclosures identified on aerial photographs are listed on the HER in the region. The density of such cropmarks in the Wansbeck Valley implies that this area of the Northumberland Coastal Plain was intensively exploited by later prehistoric and early Roman period communities. The settlement distribution along both the north and south banks of the Wansbeck and along its major tributary streams suggest that the proximity to watercourses was a significant factor in determining their location. Without excavation, it is not possible to determine their date and origin, but the form of the cropmarks broadly indicates that they are likely to represent Iron Age settlements. As discussed above, the excavated examples of such sites along the coastal plain has revealed occupation of Late Iron Age to early Roman date, with many having earlier origins as unenclosed settlements. This work has also revealed that occupation of these enclosed settlements ceased by the second century AD at the latest (Proctor 2009; Hodgson *et al*. 2012).

2.5.6 Although there is no evidence for Roman occupation around Bedlington there is evidence of activity in the early medieval period from both documentary and archaeological sources. The earliest documentary evidence for this area relates to the purchase of the estate of Bedlington by Bishop Cutheard of Durham in the early tenth century. Documentary sources also refer to an early church, which is supported by some carved stones in the present church that are thought to be tenth century in date. The discovery of possible tenth-century Viking grave goods somewhere in Bedlington in the 19th century also provides supporting evidence of activity at this time.

2.5.7 Medieval activity is noted in the nearby area as by 1069AD the body of St Cuthbert is recorded as having laid within Bedlington for one-night en route to Lindisfarne. The Boldon

Book of 1183 provides much evidence about the settlement at this time and refers to a Bishop's hall and court, a mill and a fishery. The Boldon Book also notes a number of tenants including eight cottagers and the number of bovates within the township. Although the church in Bedlington is not mentioned in the entry, it was certainly there by the 1180s as fabric within the structure survives from this time.

2.5.8 The Grade II Listed Netherton Blue House Farm lies c. 10m to the west of the proposed development. The structure dates from the early 18th century and is depicted throughout the sequence of maps identified during the desk-based assessment.

2.5.9 Armstrong's map of 1769 shows the name of *Blue House* between Netherton and Bedlington, although no structures are apparent. By the time of Fryer's map of 1820 a range of three buildings are depicted with the name *Blue House*. It is not until Greenwood's map of 1828 that the site is shown in greater detail with road layout and four structures noted at Blue House. The tithe map of 1843 depicts the general layout of the site which shows part of Blue House Farm situated within the proposed development boundary. The Tithe apportionment notes a Thomas and James Hall occupying the *messuage and farm called Blue House (*a messuage is a dwelling house with outbuildings and land assigned to its use).

2.5.10 The Ordnance Survey map of 1866 shows Blue House as a square complex comprised of numerous ranges. Small outbuildings are also noted to the west within the development boundary with garden plots observed to the west and the south. To the north-west lies Howard Pit (Netherton Colliery) as well as numerous terrace rows.

2.5.11 The Ordnance Survey map of 1897 shows each individual structure that made up the farm; some of which lies within the proposed development area. The house remains largely unchanged on the Ordnance Survey maps of 1924 and 1947. On the Ordnance Survey map of 1981-86 the western north-south range of Blue House Farm has been demolished and a large opencast is noted to the north that would have truncated any remains of Netherton Colliery.

2.5.12 The modern listing of the farmhouse notes that the house is dated *ANNO 1716* on the lintel of the central first floor window. The two-storey house is comprised of squared stone at the front of the property, rendering at the rear, and a welsh slate roof.

2.5.13 Two pits are located within the nearby vicinity; Frances pit *c.* 546m to the north-east and Howard Pit *c*. 283m to the north-west. Both were part of Netherton Colliery and were sunk in 1849 and 1836 (respectively). The colliery closed in 1974.

2.5.14 The Netherton Waggonway was built in 1829 from Netherton to staithes in Morpeth running across fields to the north of the proposed development. It joined Frances and Howard Pit and Netherton Hall Colliery in Bedlington (Warn 1976).

2.5.15 Early waggonway systems were usually designed so that full waggons would travel under their own weight, on a gradual downhill incline, with horses pulling the empty vehicles uphill

to the coal workings for reloading (Warn 1976). Early rails were typically of oak, ash or birch, usually approximately four inches square, with sleepers between, with a variety of gauges in use. Early lines were single track, with a buffer zone to either side where lines passed through private property. Double-tracked lines were certainly in existence in the 18th century, although many remained single track, facilitating vehicular movement with a series of sidings and passing places.

2.5.16 The wagons were also initially made entirely of wood, with a brake to regulate the downhill descent, while from the mid-18th century wooden axles were replaced by iron ones and cast-iron wheels were eventually introduced. Upgrade of the rails was inevitable, with 1794 often quoted as being the date of the first recorded use of two-foot long malleable iron rails, at Walbottle Colliery in Newcastle. A survey of 1810 noted that although traditional wooden waggonways remained in extensive use in the Tyneside area, replacement of wooden rails with metal ones was taking place on most routes.

3. Aims and Objectives

3.1 Project Aims

3.1.1 The project aims were to fulfil the requirements of the local planning authority by undertaking an appropriately specified scheme of archaeological work. The primary aim of this work was to identify and describe the nature and significance of any surviving archaeological remains within the proposed development area to enable an understanding of the potential impact that the proposed development would have on any archaeological remains of significance if present. The results are to be used to inform decisions regarding further mitigation measures that may be required at the site.

3.2 Research Objectives

3.2.1 *Shared Visions: The North-East Regional Research Framework for the Historic Environment* (NERRF) highlights the importance of research as a vital element of development-led archaeological work (Petts and Gerrard 2006). By setting out key research priorities for all periods of the past, this research agenda allows archaeological projects to be related to wider regional and national priorities for the study of archaeology and the historic environment.

4. ARCHAEOLOGICAL METHODOLOGY

4.1 Fieldwork

4.1.1 The fieldwork was undertaken in compliance with the codes and practice of the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists and the relevant CIfA standard and guidance document (CIfA 2014 a, b & c). PCA is a CIFA Registered Organisation. All fieldwork and post-excavation was also carried out in accordance with the Yorkshire, the Humber & The North East: Regional Statement of Good Practice (SYAS 2011).

4.1.2 The project was managed in line with principles set out in Historic England's 'Management of Research Projects in the Historic Environment' (MoRPHE) published in 2006.

4.1.3 The trial trenching evaluation was carried out on the 12th to 16th of March 2018.

4.1.4 The archaeological evaluation comprised 7 No. Trenches of varying lengths that were set-out using a Leica Viva Smart Rover Global Navigation Satellite System (GNSS), with pre-programmed co-ordinate data determined by an office-based CAD operative. The trenches were located across the site on variable alignments and position to target proposed individual building plots.

4.1.5 Trench 5 had to be relocated to the south and shortened to allow for clear access to the southernmost paddock, Trench 7 had to be relocated to the east to avoid an outbuilding and Trench 6 was not investigated due to unsuitable ground conditions. The table below summarises the dimensions of each trench:

Trench	Length (m)	Width (m)	Maximum depth (m)
1	11.00	1.50	0.50
2	9.60	1.50	0.62
3	9.70	1.50	0.72
4	10.20	1.50	0.74
5	8.78	1.50	1.00
7	10.20	1.50	1.10
8	9.18	1.50	0.80

Trench summary

4.1.6 All trenches were mechanically-excavated by a JCB backhoe loader with toothless ditching bucket under archaeological supervision. The trenches were excavated to the top of the first significant archaeological horizon, or the clearly defined top of the geological substratum, whichever was reached first. All potential archaeological features were identified and marked at the time of machine clearance of overburden.

4.1.7 The investigation of archaeological levels was by hand, with cleaning, examination and recording both in plan and in section, where appropriate. Investigations within the trenches followed the normal principles of stratigraphic excavation and were conducted in accordance

with the methodology set out in the field manual of PCA (PCA 2009) and the Museum of London Site Manual (Museum of London 1994).

4.1.8 Deposits and cut features were individually recorded on the *pro-forma* Trench Recording Sheet and Context Recording Sheet. All site records were marked with the unique Site Code NCB18. All archaeological features were excavated by hand tools and were recorded in plan at 1:20 and by GPS or in section at 1:20 using standard single context recording methods. The height of all principle strata and features was calculated in metres above Ordnance Datum (m AOD) and indicated on appropriate plans and sections.

4.1.9 A detailed photographic record of the evaluation using SLR cameras (35mm film black and white prints for archive purposes) and by digital photography. All detailed photographs included a legible graduated metric scale. The photographic record illustrated both in detail and general context archaeological exposures and specific features in all trenches.

4.2 Post-excavation

4.2.1 The stratigraphic data for the project comprises written and photographic records. A total of 57 archaeological contexts were defined in the seven trenches (Appendix 2). Post-excavation work involved checking and collating site records, grouping contexts and phasing the stratigraphic data (Appendix 3). A written summary of the archaeological sequence was then compiled, as described in Section 5.

4.2.2 No artefactual or ecofactual material was recovered from the evaluation trenches.

4.2.3 The palaeoenvironmental sampling strategy of the project was to recover bulk samples where appropriate, from well dated stratified deposits covering the main periods or phases of occupation and the range of feature types represented, with specific reference to the objectives of the evaluation. To this end no appropriate deposits were encountered and no samples were taken. No other biological material was recovered.

4.2.4 The complete Site Archive, in this case comprising only the written, drawn and photographic records (including all material generated electronically during post-excavation) will be packaged for long term curation. In preparing the Site Archive for deposition, all relevant standards and guidelines documents referenced in the Archaeological Archives Forum guidelines document (Brown 2007) will be adhered to, in particular a well-established United Kingdom Institute for Conservation (UKIC) document (Walker, UKIC 1990) and the most recent CIfA publication relating to arching (CIfA 2014c).

4.2.5 When complete, the site archive will be deposited at the Great North Museum, Newcastle upon Tyne, under the site code NCB 18. The depositional requirements of the museum which the Site Archive will be ultimately transferred will be met in full. A completed transfer of title deed will accompany the Site Archive on deposition.

5. RESULTS: THE ARCHAEOLOGICAL SEQUENCE

During the archaeological investigation, separate stratigraphic entities were assigned unique and individual context numbers, which are indicated in the following text as, for example [123]. The archaeological sequence is described by placing stratigraphic sequences within broad phases, assigned on a site-wide basis in this case. An attempt has been made to add interpretation to the data and correlate these phases with recognised historical and geological periods. The figures can be found in Appendix 1 with the context index and stratigraphic matrix located in Appendix 2 and 3 respectively. A selection of plates can be found within Appendix 4.

5.1 Phase 1: Geological substratum

5.1.1 Phase 1 represents the geological material exposed within all seven trenches which generally comprised firm sandy clay or clay ([101] Trench 1; [201] Trench 2; [301] Trench 3; [501] Trench 5; [704] Trench 7; [801] Trench 8) with the exception soft sand [401] encountered in Trench 4 (Figures 4-10; Plates 1, 2, 4, 5, 7, 9 & 10).

5.1.2 The maximum and minimum height of the upper interfaces of geological substratum was 51.26m AOD in Trench 1 within the southern part of the site and 47.64m AOD in Trench 8 within the north-eastern part of the site, respectively.

5.1.3 The depth at which natural geological material was encountered varied across the site from maximum and minimum depths below ground level of 1.00m in Trench 5 and 0.20m in Trench 2, respectively. The relatively substantial depth below ground level at which the natural geological material was encountered in Trench 5 was due to a group of substantial early modern intercutting features and therefore does not reflect the natural topography at this location.

5.2 Phase 2: Post-medieval

5.2.1 Phase 2 represents post-medieval activity at the site. The truncated remains of structural elements of outbuildings were recorded at the southern part of the site that are likely to be associated with Netherton Blue Farmhouse that lies adjacent to the site. A substantial feature recorded at the north-eastern part of the site is presumed to represent post-medieval industrial activity.

5.2.2 A short length of a north-south aligned stone wall, [203], was partially exposed at the eastern end of Trench 2 within a narrow construction cut, [204], cutting the natural geological deposit [201] (Figure 5; Plates 2 & 3). It was exposed for a maximum distance of 0.88m, continuing beyond the northern limit of excavation, and was at least 0.29m wide. The wall itself survived to only a single course of roughly hewn limestone blocks (max 233mm x 111mm x 94mm to min 460mm x 304mm x 149mm) bonded with a light brownish grey lime mortar. Although this wall probably represents part of the farm outbuildings that are depicted

on 19th century and subsequent 20th century Ordnance Survey maps, due to the limited exposure of this wall its definitive interpretation remains uncertain.

5.2.3 Part of a masonry structure, [402], was exposed within the eastern part of Trench 4 (Figure 7; Plate 5). This comprised a single course of roughly hewn limestone blocks (max 440mm x 360mm x 70mm to min 90mm x 70mm x 60mm) that was exposed for a maximum area of 1.22m east-west by 0.82m north-south (Plate 6). The masonry was laid directly onto the natural geological deposit, [401], with no visible construction cut observed. This structure probably represents part of a farm outbuilding as discussed above, however, due to its limited survival its function is unclear and may represent part of a masonry surface or alternatively the basal course of a wall.

5.2.4 An irregular shaped feature, [805], was recorded cutting the natural geological deposit within the western part of Trench 8 (Figure 10; Plate 10). It was partially exposed for a distance of 1.46m east-west by >0.78m north-south, truncated to the south by a substantial linear feature, [803], and continued to the north beyond the limit of excavation. Its single *c*. 60mm thick backfill comprised weakly cemented dark greyish brown silty sand, [804], that contained fragments of brick and charcoal. The function of this feature was not established and could potentially be contemporary with substantial linear feature [803] discussed below.

5.2.5 At the eastern end of Trench 8 a *c*. 0.21m thick black ash deposit, [806], was exposed for a maximum distance of 3.22m east-west by 1.00m north-south. This deposit may represent post-medieval levelling activity or alternatively could represent a dump of colliery waste material.

5.2.6 Part of a substantial presumed to NW-SE aligned linear feature, [803], was recorded along the southern edge of Trench 8 for a maximum distance of 10.00m by at least 1.50m wide (Figure 10; Plate 10). Its single recorded backfill, [802], comprised firm mid grey silty clay that was at least 0.60m deep. This feature was not fully excavated due to depth constraints and its function was not established.

5.3 Phase 3: Early modern

5.3.1 Phase 3 represents 20th-century activity associated with the demolition of the farm outbuildings and the subsequent levelling activity at the site.

5.3.2 Eight irregular shaped features recorded across the south-western part of the site in Trenches 1, 2, 4 & 5 probably represent 20th-century activity associated with the demolition of the farm outbuildings (Figures 4, 5, 6 & 7; Plates 1, 2, 4 & 7). The dimensions of each demolition feature are summarised in the table below:

Trench No.	*Cut No.*	*Fill No.*	*Length (m)*	*Width (m)*	*Depth (m)*
1	[106]	[105]	2.66	>1.50	0.20
2	[206]	[205]	>1.40	0.79	0.10
2	[208]	[207]	1.86	>0.32	0.28

2	[210]	[209]	>1.33	1.06	0.17
4	[404]	[405]	>1.09	1.48	n/a
5	[504]	[502], [503]	3.52	>1.50	0.68
5	[512]	[511]	>1.70	>1.50	0.40
5	[514]	[505]-[510], [513]	>5.86	>1.50	1.02

Table 1: Dimensions of Phase 3 Demolition Features

5.3.3 The backfills of these demolition features generally comprised soft to firm clay or silty clay and contained varying quantities of stone, brick and ceramic building material. The exception was the backfills of the three substantial intercutting features, [504], [512] & [514], recorded in Trench 5 that contained various compositions of gravel, sand, silt, coal and crushed shale (Figure 8, Section 5; Plates 7 & 8). Although these features have been interpreted as demolition features, the backfills are probably waste material derived from nearby colliery workings.

5.3.4 The subsequent levelling activity at the site is represented by deposits recorded in Trenches 1, 2, 3, 4 & 7 (Figures 4-7 & 9, Sections 1-4 & 7). These deposits comprised various compositions of sand, clay and silt and had combined maximum and minimum thicknesses of 0.70m in Trench 7, in the northern part of the site and 0.12m in Trench 2, in the southern part of the site, respectively. All levelling deposits contained various quantities of brick, ceramic building material and stone which was probably derived from the demolition of the former farm outbuildings at the site. The dimensions and descriptions of each levelling deposit are summarised in the table below:

Trench No.	*Context No.*	*Thickness (m)*	*mAOD*		*Description*
			Highest	*Lowest*	
1	[102]	0.32	51.60	51.34	Firm mid grey brown clayey silt
2	[202]	0.12	50.55	50.49	Loose mid greyish brown silty sandy clay
3	[302]	0.33	49.84	49.64	Loose mid brownish grey sandy clay
4	[403]	0.31	50.17	49.69	Firm mid greyish brown sandy clay
7	[702]	0.44	48.67	48.48	Firm blueish grey clay
7	[703]	0.26	48.48	48.08	Firm dark brownish grey clay

Table 2: Dimensions of Phase 3 Levelling Deposits

5.4 Phase 4: Modern

5.4.1 Modern features recorded at the site that represent late 20th-century to modern use of the land include two shallow pits, [104] and [807], in Trench 1 & 8, respectively and a posthole, [303], in Trench 3.

5.4.2 Topsoil comprised soft dark grey sandy silt ([100] Trench 1; [200] Trench 2; [300] Trench 3; [400] Trench 4; [500] Trench 5; [700] Trench 7; [800] Trench 8) and varied in thickness

across the site from a maximum of 0.31m in Trenches 4 & 5 to a minimum of 0.24 in Trench 1.

5.4.3 The existing ground surface at the site ranged from a maximum height of 51.76m AOD in Trench 1 to a minimum of 48.36m AOD at Trench 8.

6. DISCUSSION

6.1 Geological, as well as archaeological, deposits and features were encountered during the trial trenching evaluation and have been assigned to four phases of activity:

6.2 Phase 1 represents natural geological material. This comprised varying compositions of sand and clay observed in Trenches 1-4, 7 & 8 and sand in Trench 5. Natural geological deposits were observed at a maximum uppermost height of 51.26m AOD in Trench 1 at the southern part of the site, gradually sloping to a minimum height of 47.64m AOD in Trench 8 within the north-eastern part of the site.

6.3 Phase 2 represents heavily truncated post-medieval structural elements of farm outbuildings recorded in Trenches 2 & 4 that are probably associated with Blue House Farm. Masonry structures recorded at the site included a wall in Trench 2 and a masonry structure interpreted as a possible surface or wall in Trench 4. A substantial linear feature recorded in Trench 8 is interpreted as a late post-medieval industrial feature of undetermined function.

6.4 Phase 3 represents 20th-century activity associated with the demolition of the farm outbuildings and the subsequent levelling of the site.

6.5 Phase 4 represents modern activity at the site including two shallow pits recorded in Trenches 1 & 8 and a posthole recorded in Trench 3. Topsoil and turf formed the present ground surface and was recorded across all trenches.

6.6 It is concluded that no features of archaeological significance were recorded within any of the trenches investigated. The truncated masonry structures associated with the farm outbuildings of Blue House Farm are of low archaeological significance. No further work is required on the information recovered during the evaluation with the Site Archive, including this report, forming the permanent record of the archaeological work undertaken.

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7.2 Online Sources

The **British Geological Survey** website: www.bgs.ac.uk. This was consulted for information regarding the geology of the study area.

8. ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS AND CREDITS

Acknowledgements

Pre-Construct Archaeology would like to thank R & K Wood Planning LLP for commissioning the archaeological investigations on behalf of Rabinda Bariana. The role of Nick Best, Northumberland County Conservation Team, is acknowledged.

PCA Credits

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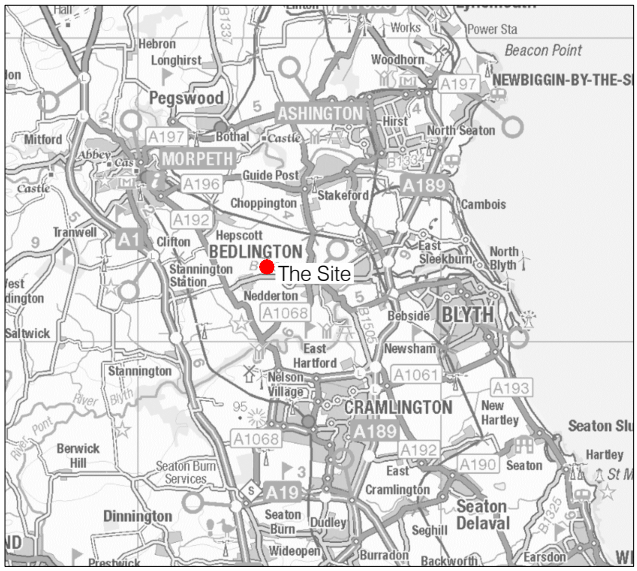
Report: Aaron Goode

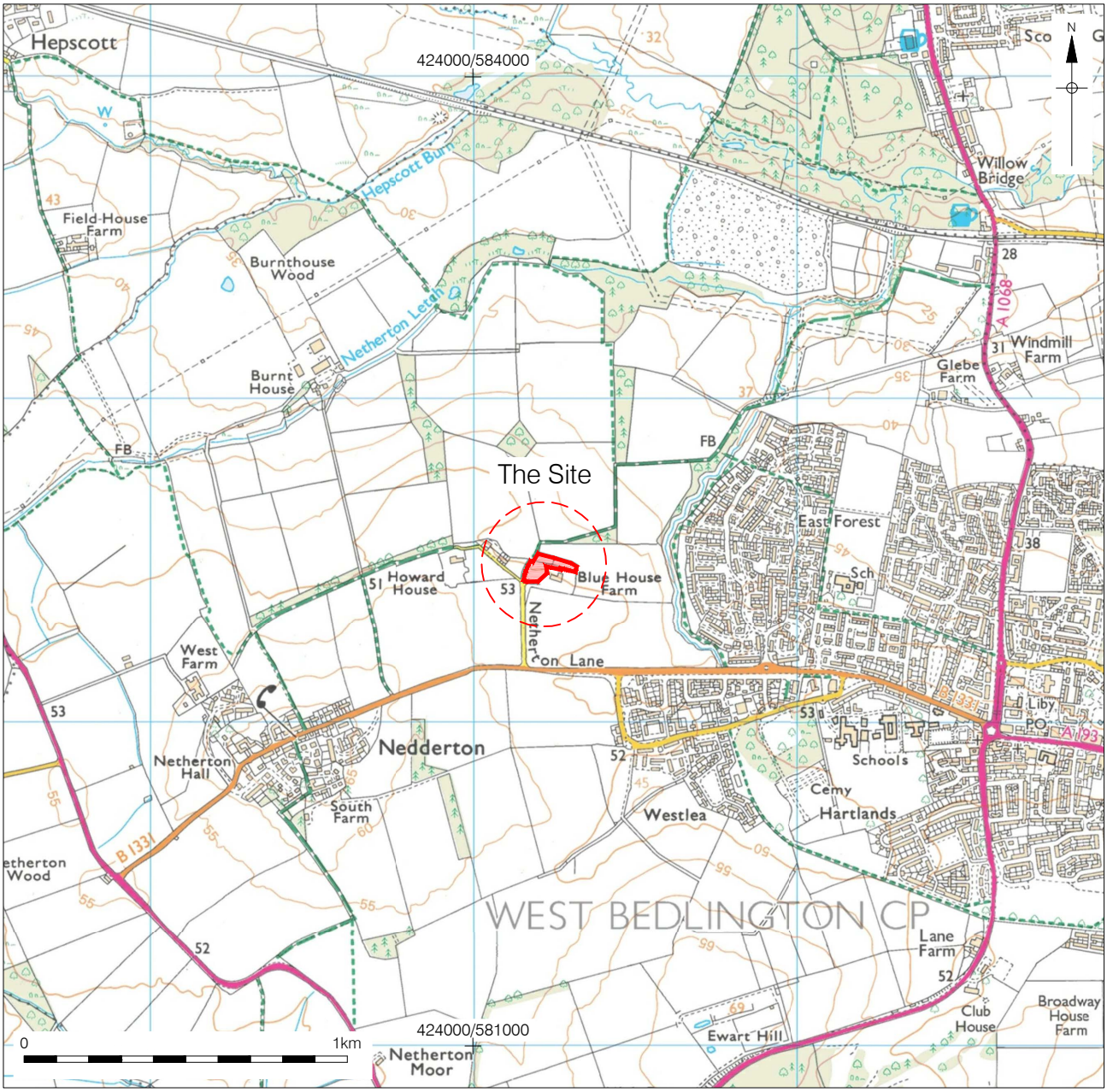
Project Manager: Jennifer Proctor

CAD: Anna Tonelli

APPENDIX 1: FIGURES

Figure 1: Site Location



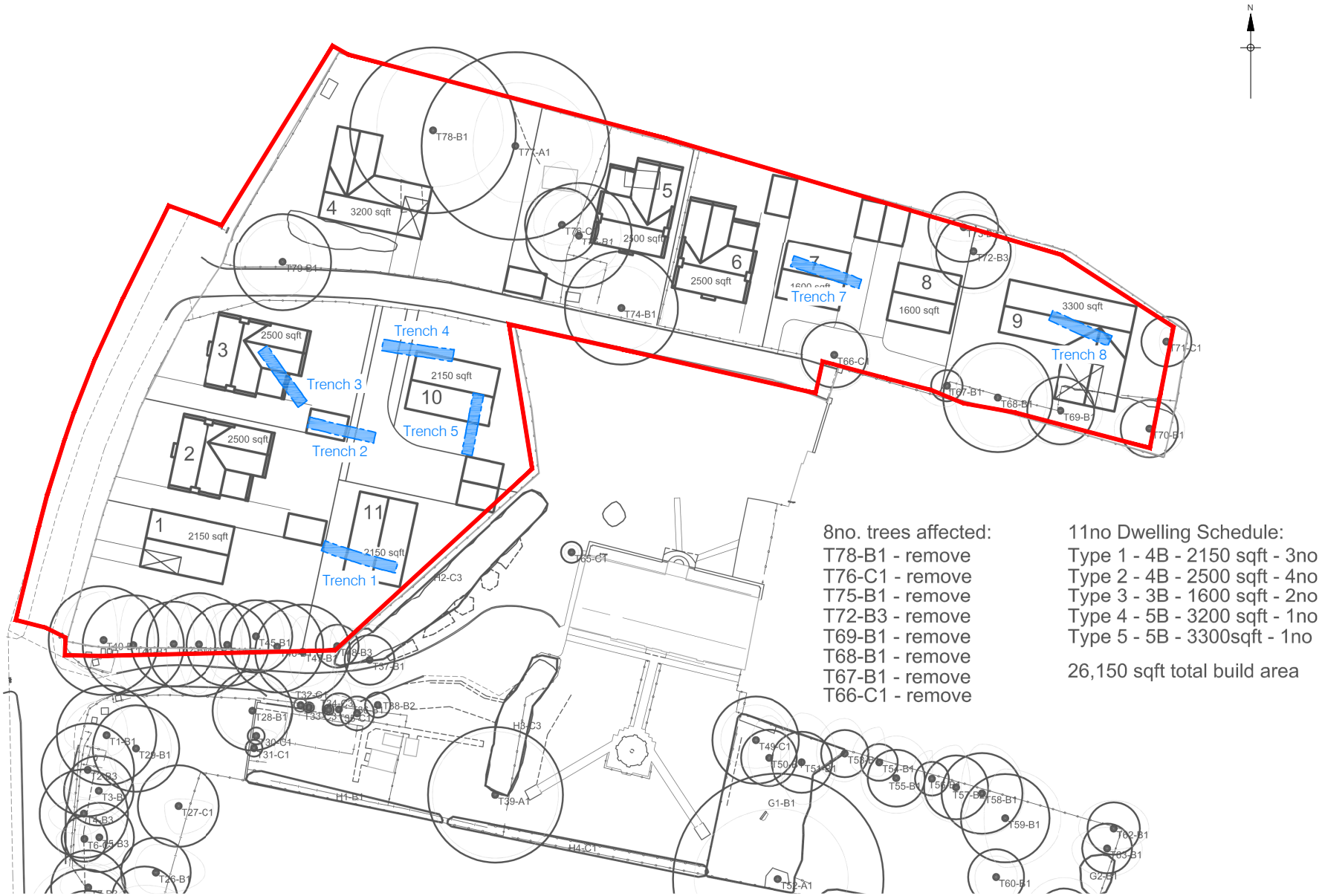


09/04/18 AT

Figure 1
Site Location
1:2,000,000, 250,000 & 20,000 at A4

27/04/18 AT

Figure 2
Detailed Site and Trench Locations
1:800 at A4



09/04/18 AT

Figure 3
Proposed Layout
1:800 at A4

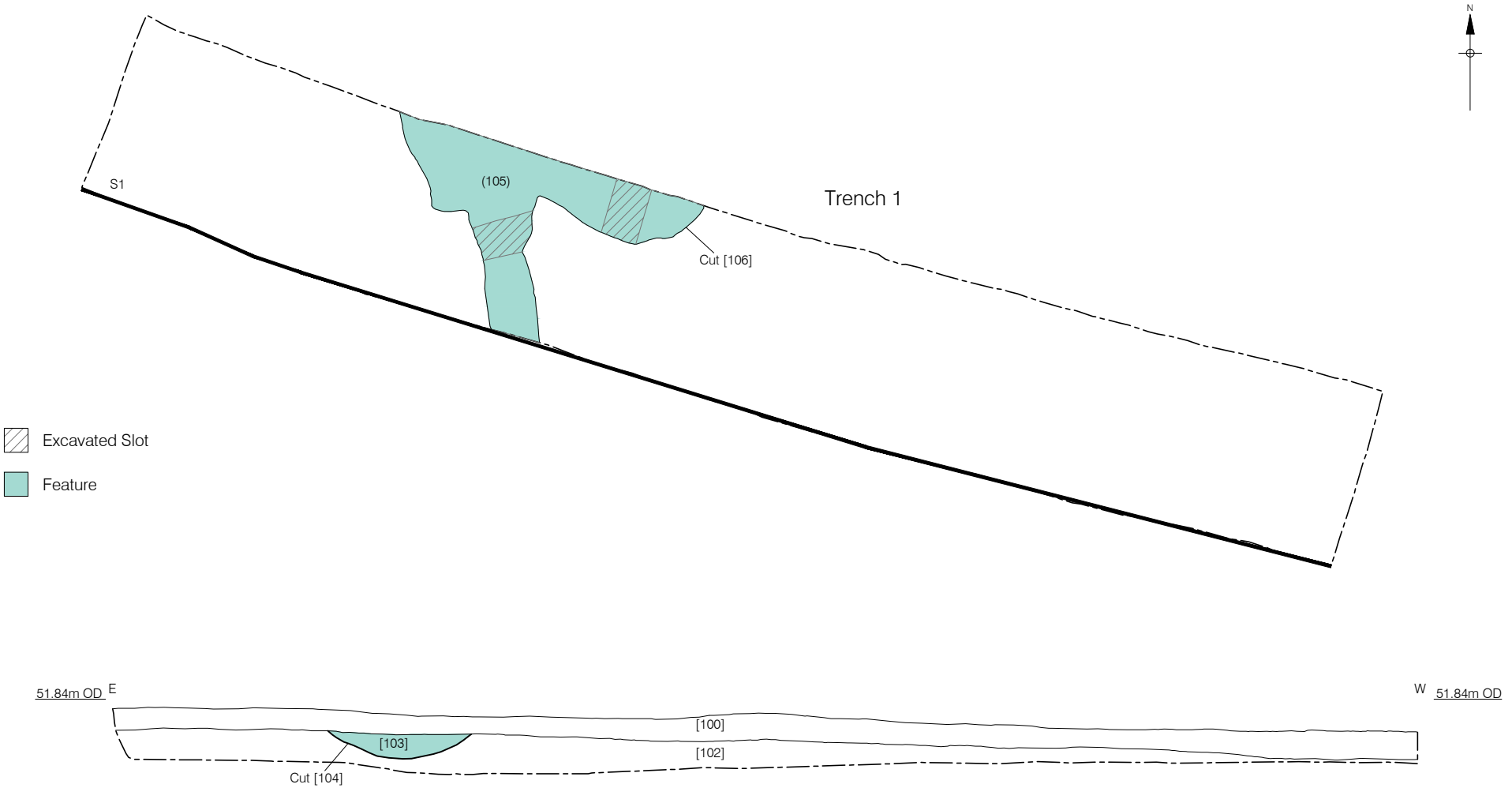


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Figure 4
Plan and Section Trench 1
1:50 at A4

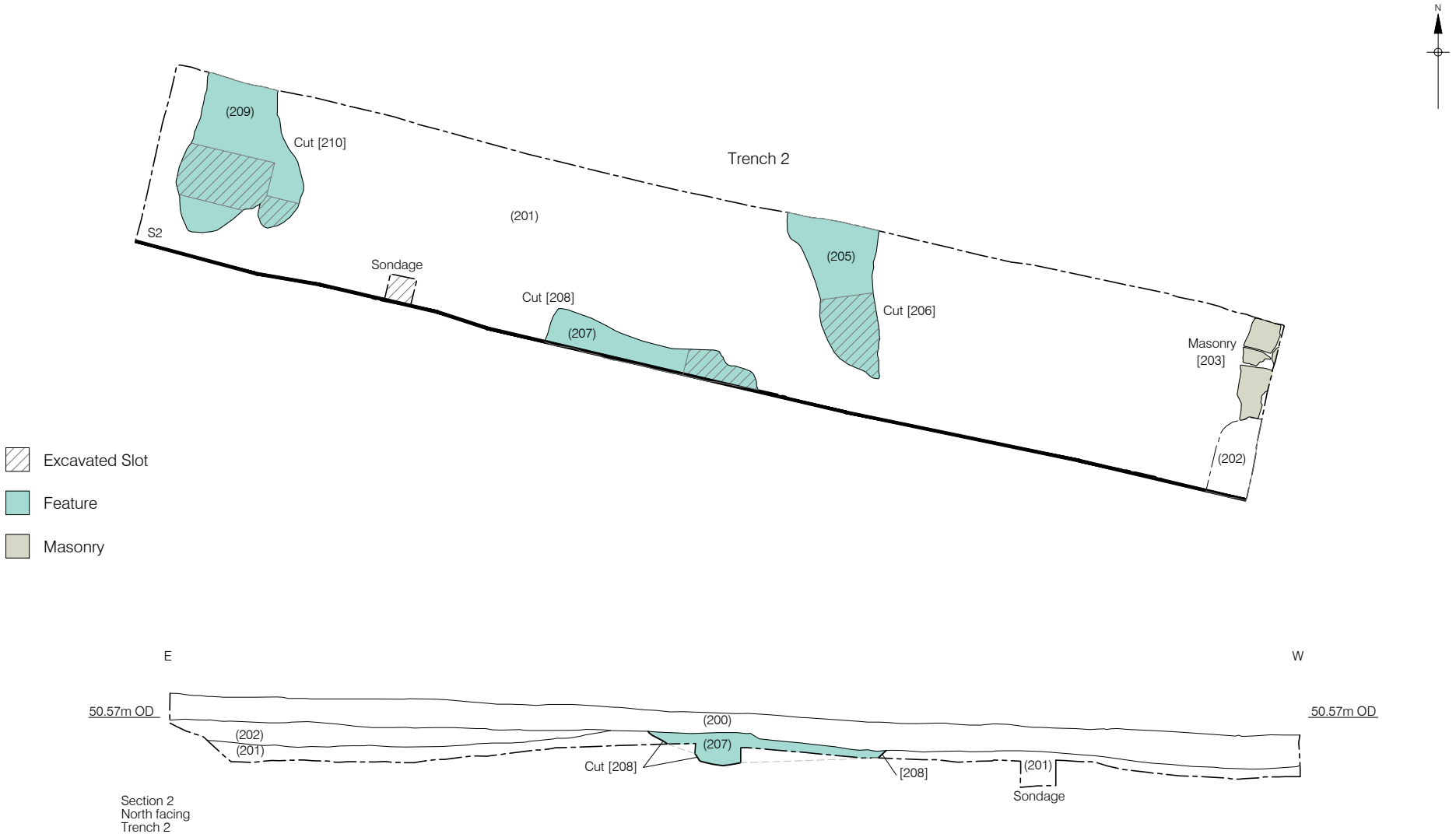

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Figure 5
Plan and Section Trench 2
1:50 at A4

31/05/18 AT

Figure 6
Plan and Section Trench 3
1:50 at A4

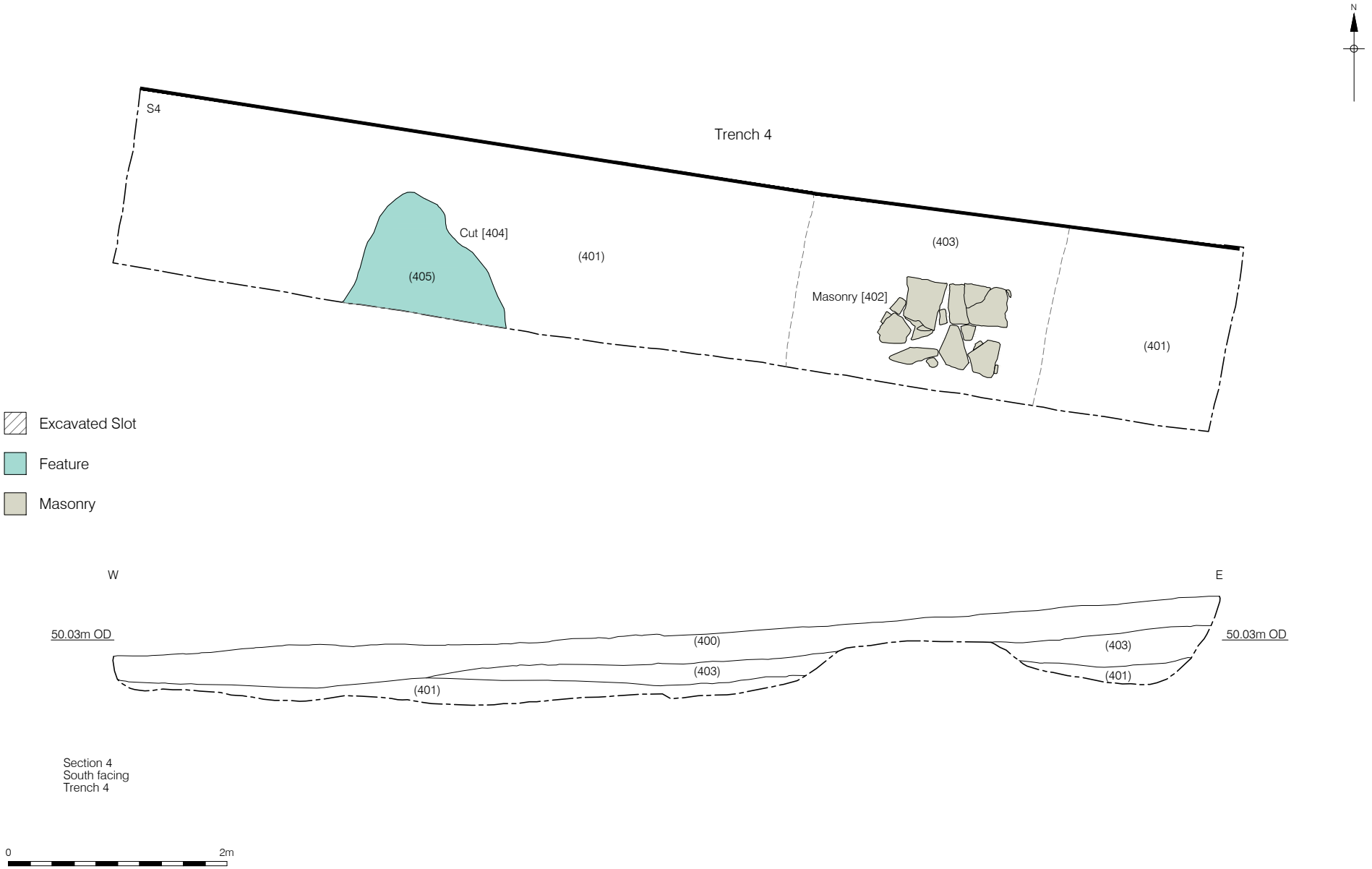

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Figure 7
Plan and Section Trench 4
1:50 at A4

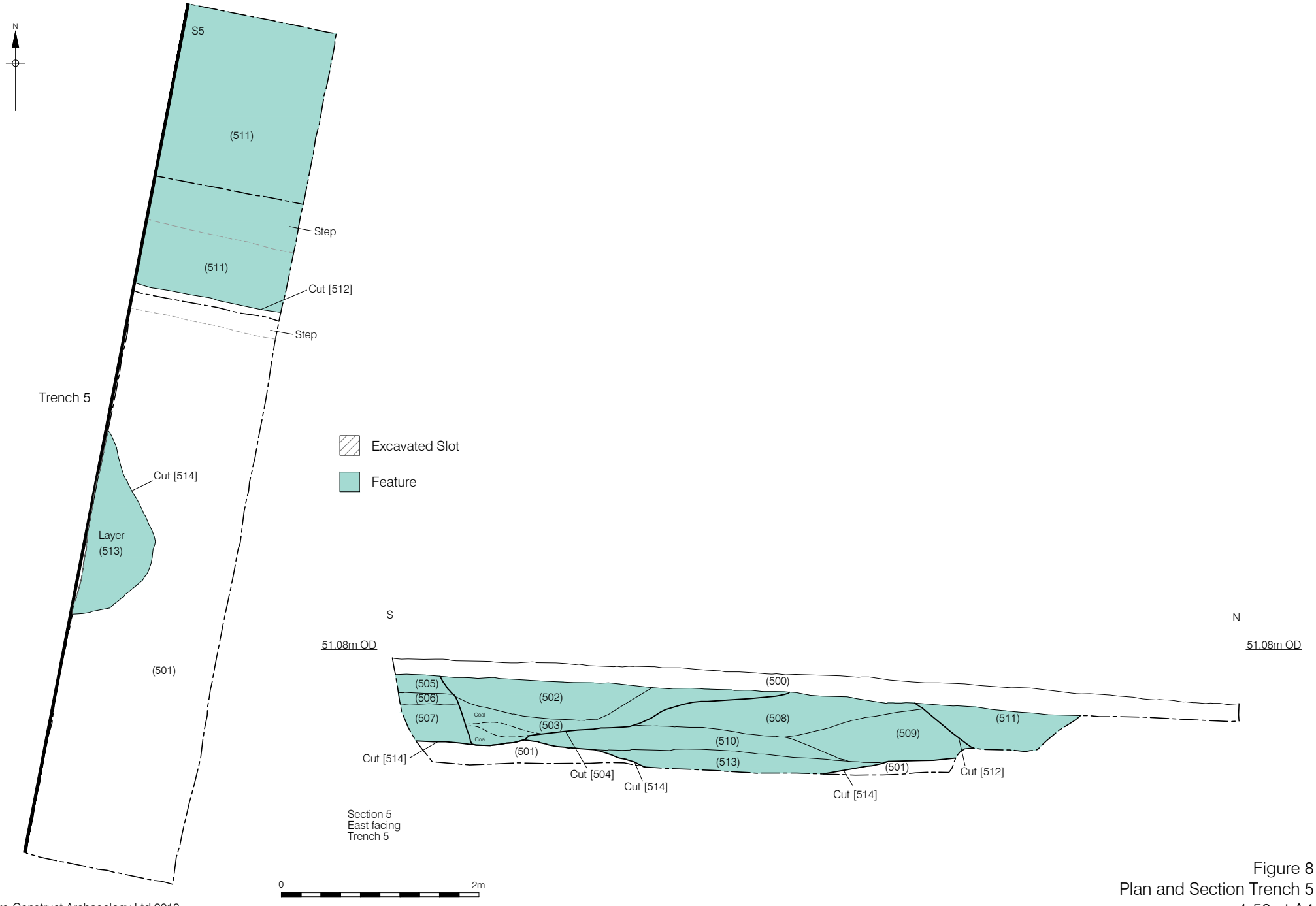

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Figure 8
Plan and Section Trench 5
1:50 at A4

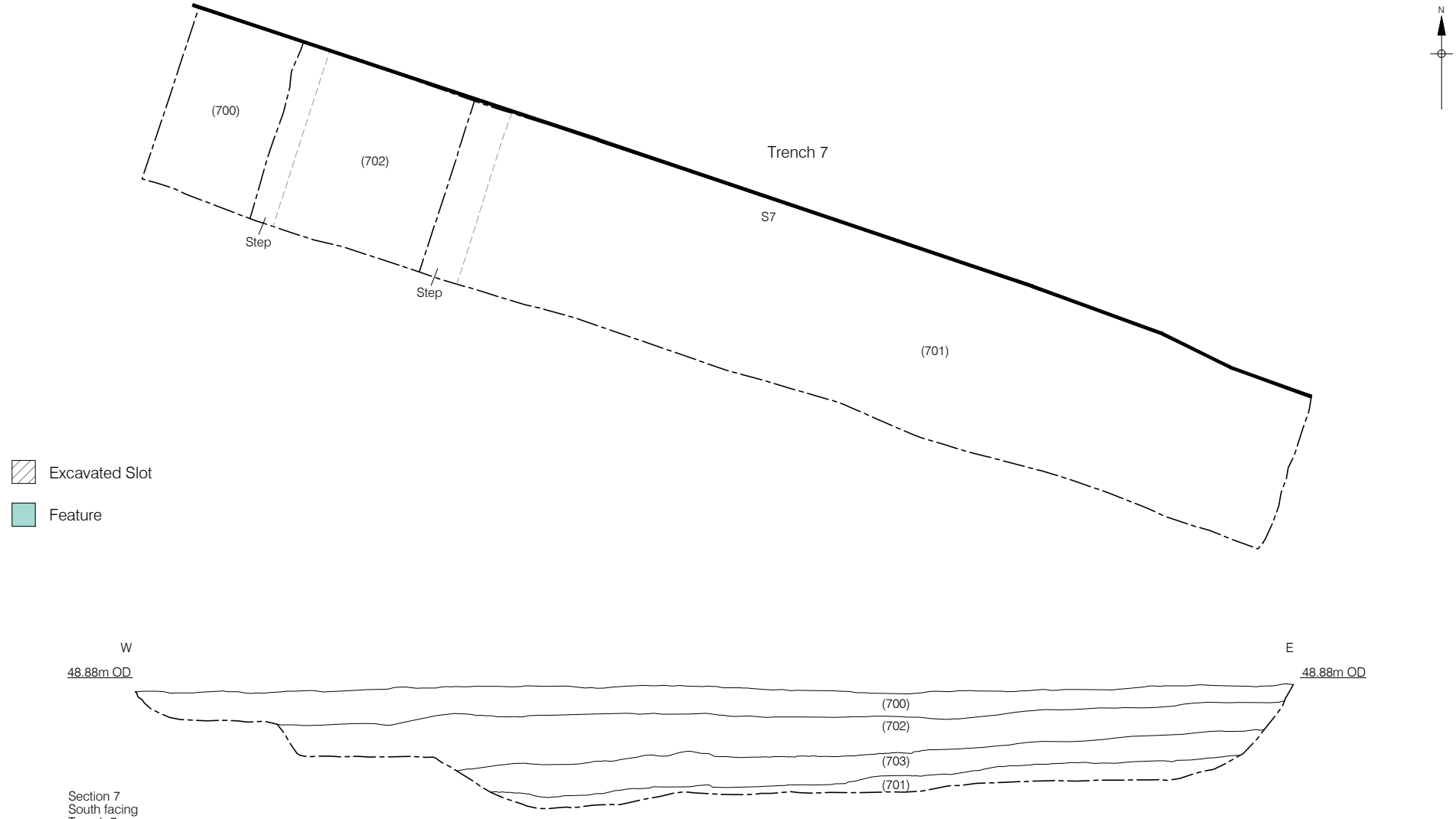

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Figure 9
Plan and Section Trench 7
1:50 at A4

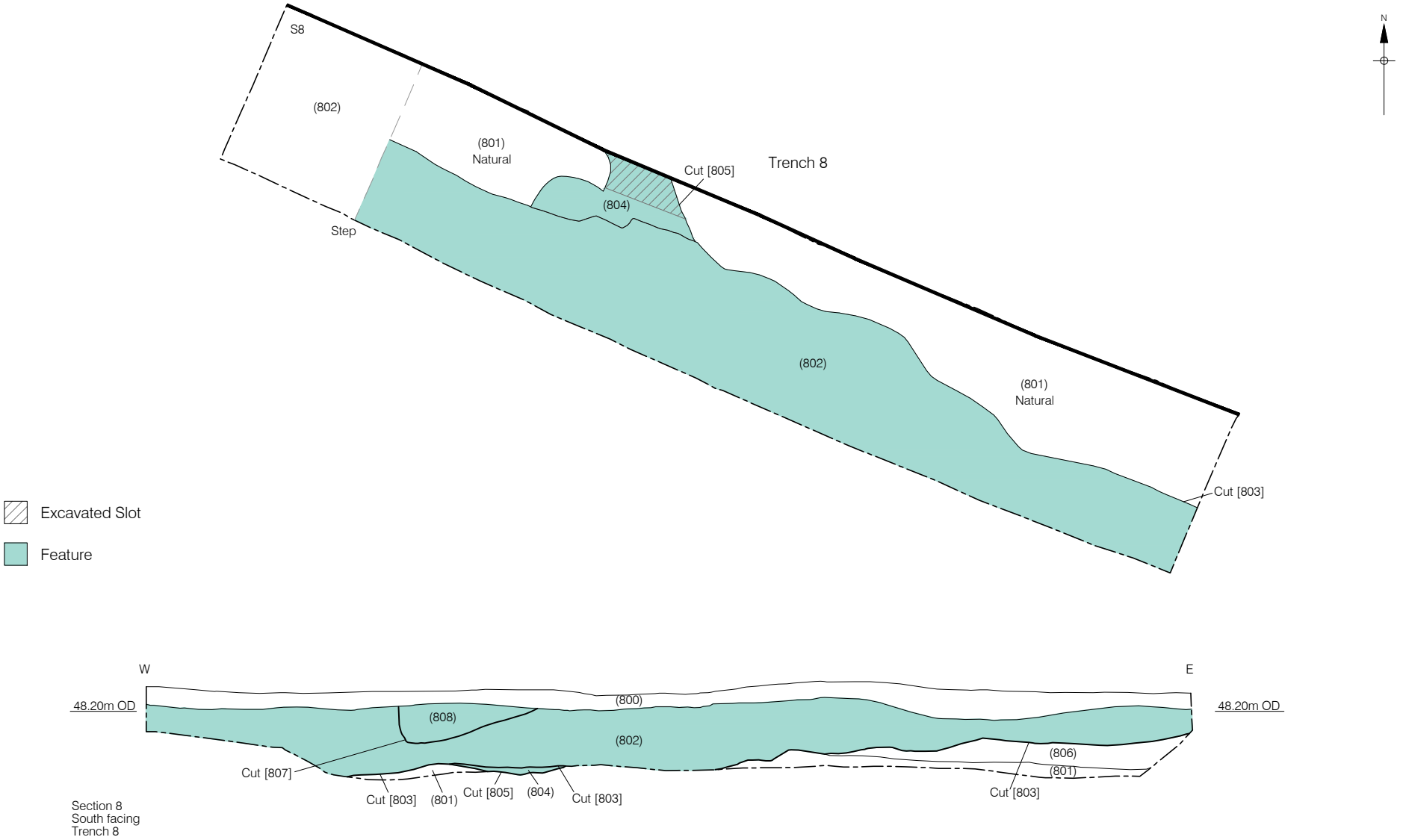

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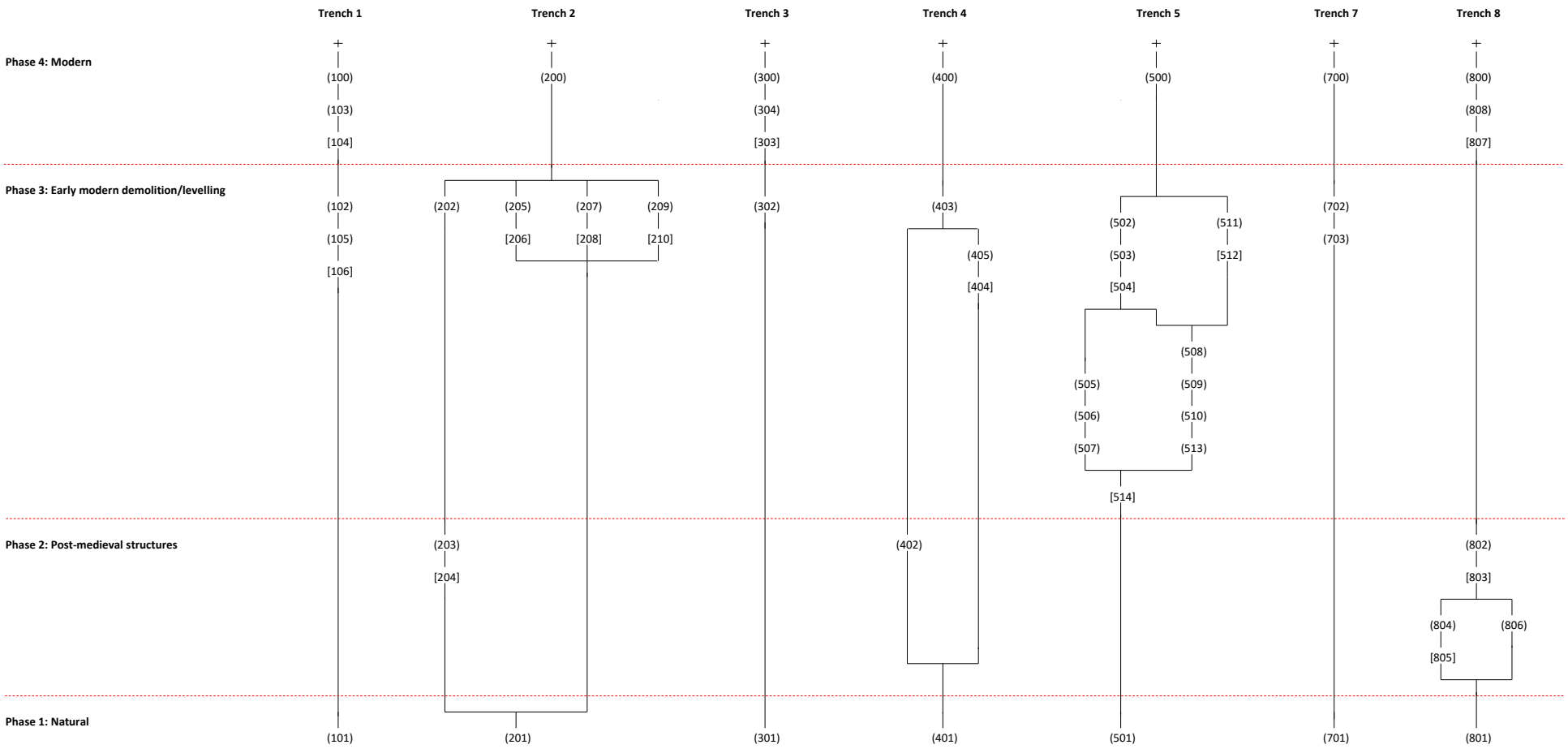
Figure 10
Plan and Section Trench 8
1:50 at A4

APPENDIX 2: CONTEXT INDEX

Context	*Phase*	*Group*	*Type 1*	*Type 2*	*Fill of*	*Interpretation*
Trench 1						
100	4	-	Deposit	Layer	-	Topsoil
101	1	-	Deposit	Layer	-	Natural
102	3	-	Deposit	Layer	-	Levelling
103	4	-	Deposit	Fill	104	Fill of modern feature
104	4	-	Deposit	Layer	-	Modern feature filled by (103)
105	3	-	Deposit	Fill	106	Fill of demolition feature
106	3	-	Deposit	Cut	-	Demolition feature filled by (105)
Trench 2						
200	4	-	Deposit	Layer	-	Topsoil
201	1	-	Deposit	Layer	-	Natural
202	3	-	Deposit	Layer	-	Levelling
203	2	-	Masonry	Wall	204	Wall
204	2	-	Cut	Linear	-	Construction cut for wall [203]
205	3	-	Deposit	Fill	206	Fill of demolition feature
206	3	-	Cut	Discrete	-	Demolition feature filled by (205)
207	3	-	Deposit	Fill	208	Fill of demolition feature
208	3	-	Cut	Discrete	-	Demolition feature filled by (207)
209	3	-	Deposit	Fill	210	Fill of demolition feature
210	3	-	Cut	Discrete	-	Demolition feature filled by (209)
Trench 3						
300	4	-	Deposit	Layer	-	Topsoil
301	1	-	Deposit	Layer	-	Natural
302	3	-	Deposit	Layer	-	Levelling
303	4	-	Cut	Discrete	-	Posthole filled by (304)
304	4	-	Deposit	Fill	303	Fill of posthole
Trench 4						
400	4	-	Deposit	Layer	-	Topsoil
401	1	-	Deposit	Layer	-	Natural
402	2	-	Masonry	Wall	-	Wall
403	3	-	Deposit	Linear	-	Levelling
404	3	-	Cut	Discrete	-	Demolition feature filled by (405)
405	3	-	Deposit	Fill	404	Fill of demolition feature
Trench 5						
500	4	-	Deposit	Layer	-	Topsoil
501	1	-	Deposit	Layer	-	Natural
502	3	-	Deposit	Fill	504	Fill of irregular feature
503	3	-	Deposit	Fill	504	Fill of irregular feature
504	3	-	Cut	Discrete	-	Irregular feature filled by (502), (503)
505	3	-	Deposit	Fill	514	Fill of irregular feature
506	3	-	Deposit	Fill	514	Fill of irregular feature
507	3	-	Deposit	Fill	514	Fill of irregular feature
508	3	-	Deposit	Fill	514	Fill of irregular feature
509	3	-	Deposit	Fill	514	Fill of irregular feature
510	3	-	Deposit	Fill	514	Fill of irregular feature
511	3	-	Deposit	Fill	512	Fill of irregular feature

512	3	-	Cut	Discrete	-	Irregular feature filled by (511)
513	3	-	Deposit	Fill	514	Fill of irregular feature
514	3	-	Cut	Discrete	-	Irregular feature filled by (505), (506), (507), (508), (509), (510), (513)
Trench 7						
700	4	-	Deposit	Layer	-	Topsoil
701	1	-	Deposit	Layer	-	Natural
702	3	-	Deposit	Layer	-	Levelling
703	3	-	Deposit	Layer	-	Levelling
Trench 8						
800	4	-	Deposit	Layer	-	Topsoil
801	1	-	Deposit	Layer	-	Natural
802	2	-	Deposit	Fill	803	Fill of irregular feature
803	2	-	Cut	Discrete	-	Irregular feature filled by (802)
804	2	-	Deposit	Fill	805	Fill of irregular feature
805	2	-	Cut	Cut	-	Irregular feature filled by (804)
806	2	-	Deposit	Layer	-	Levelling
807	4	-	Cut	Discrete	-	Modern feature filled by (808)
808	4	-	Deposit	Fill	807	Fill of modern feature

NCB18: Blue House Farm, Bedlington, Northumberland



APPENDIX 4: PHOTOGRAPHIC PLATES

Plate 1: Trench 1, general view, east direction of view, 1m scale

Plate 2: Trench 2, general view, east direction of view, 1m scale

Plate 3: Trench 2, Masonry Wall [203], east direction of view, 0.5m scale

Plate 4: Trench 3, general view, west direction of view, 1m scale

Plate 5: Trench 4, general view, west direction of view, 1m scale

Plate 6: Trench 4, Masonry [402], north direction of view, 0.5m scale

Plate 7: Trench 5, general view, south direction of view, 1m scale

Plate 8: Trench 5, east facing section (oblique view), southwest direction of view, 1m scale

Plate 9: Trench 7, general view, east direction of view, 1m scale

Plate 10: Trench 8, general view, east direction of view, 1m scale

P C A

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