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An Archaeological Evaluation
of
LAND AT REAR OF 36-38 DENMARK ROAD,
GLOUCESTER.

PREPARED FOR
AGS DEVELOPMENT CONSULTANTS

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Environment Department



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Site details

Site address: Land at rear of 36-36 Denmark Road, Gloucester, Gloucestershire.
OS NGR: SO 8398 1929
Site type: Evaluation
Client: AGS Development Consultants
Planning No: 03/00204/FUL
GSMR No: 22277
Date of fieldwork: 3-4th July 2003
Recipient museum: Gloucester City Museum and Art Gallery
Accession No: 2003/36
Author: Richard Barrett
Date of Report: July 2003

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3 Archaeological, historical and cartographic background

3.1 The following information was taken from the project design (Catchpole 2003), and draws from the information provided by the staff of Gloucestershire County Council Sites and Monuments Record. Historical maps and the reports of previous archaeological work in the area have also been consulted, where relevant.

3.2 The site is situated within the Kingsholm Area of Principal Archaeological Interest as defined in the City of Gloucester Deposits Local Plan.

3.3 This information draws on a desk-based assessment carried out in advance of phase I of development at Denmark Road High School for Girls (Reilly 1994).

The earliest Romano-British occupation at Gloucester was sited at the Kingsholm fort (GSMR 11273), the eastern boundary of which may have been c.500m to the west of the development area.

The original line of Ermine Street (GSMR 7542), which ran from Kingsholm to Cirencester, was just to the south of Denmark Road. Romano-British pottery (GSMR 14410) was retrieved during the construction of Denmark Road High School for Girls in 1909. A Romano-British surface and pits (GSMR 14696) were also recorded within the school grounds in 1992. Other find spots of Romano-British and Saxon date, including cemeteries, are widespread throughout the general vicinity (Garrod and Heighway 1984).

A watching brief, carried out during 1994 during the phase I development at the school uncovered a large ditch, a gully and several pits of Romano-British date. The ditch was orientated south south-west to north north-east, roughly at right angles to the projected line of Ermine Street. The ditch had been backfilled with a large quantity of domestic waste (Reilly 1996).

An evaluation carried out in August 1995 in the area of the new gymnasium for the school provided additional evidence of Romano-British occupation. A large ditch running north-south, backfilled with a large quantity of domestic refuse, was discovered. Amongst this material were fragments of human skull (Piper 1995a). An excavation of the whole gymnasium area in September 1995 followed the above evaluation. This uncovered further evidence of the same ditch and several Romano-British pits. The pits were also backfilled with domestic waste, and dated to the 1st or 2nd century (Piper 1995b).

An archaeological excavation was carried out at Denmark Road High School in 1996 prior to the construction of a suite of science laboratories. The excavation recorded two phases of medieval ridge and furrow aligned north-south, and three Romano-British pits backfilled with household debris (Vallender 1997a).

A further evaluation was carried out in 1997 on tennis courts to the immediate north of the proposed development (Vallender 1997b). A variable depth of overburden was encountered, thought to be due to the activities of the 19th century nursery. The topsoil was worked during the 19th century, which served to abrade all earlier finds and may have destroyed archaeological deposits of the Romano-British period. As the proposed development is also within the area of the nursery it is possible that similar activity may have taken place here. There was no surviving evidence to suggest Romano-British activity within the evaluation site. A number of pottery sherds of this period were retrieved but they were mostly abraded and residual within 18th and 19th century contexts. Evidence for post-medieval ridge and furrow cultivation was recorded.

3.4 Table of sites recorded on the Gloucester UAD in close proximity to the proposed development.

Record (UAD No.)	Name	Easting	Northing	Period	Year - accession No.	Description
61	31Denmark road	383980	219220	Iron age	?	Side sherd of Iron age carinated bowl
62	47Denmark road	383910	219240	Roman	?	Ae3 of Constantine I (AD 306), Ae3 of Constans (AD 337-350)
67	Denmark Rd/Henry Rd	383900	219260	Roman	?	Copper/bronze core of ANTED RIC stater
71	Denmark road	383850	219360	Post-med	1961	Negative RB excavation, post-med material in topsoil only
113	Lansdown road	384000	219400	Roman	1972	Dupondius of Nero
1027	Denmark Rd / Seabroke St.	383890	219260	Roman	2/96 X	Roman lias stone foundation bounding the sunken Ermin street alignment

3.5 Cartographic evidence

3.5.1 The area of the proposed development is situated within Kingsholm, located to the north of and outside the borough of Gloucester (Elrington 1988). It was administratively attached to the city between 1483 and 1662 as a part of the hundred of Dudstone and Kings Barton and is shown on a specimen for a proposed map as being agricultural or horticultural in 1756 (Stratford 1756).

The land remained agricultural while the city of Gloucester expanded to the North. In 1820 there was reference to some buildings in the area, but there were no buildings present on the proposed development site (Elrington 1988).

3.5.2 Ordnance Survey maps

The area is referred to as Kingsholm Nursery in 1886 (OS 1886) and shown as tree covered. At that time Denmark Road was present, as was Heathville Road but only to the south of Denmark Road. Seabroke Road to the west was shown as a field boundary or a narrow trackway.

The site is shown as being within an undeveloped area (field?) in 1900 (OS c. 1900). Heathville Road by then continued north of Denmark Road. By 1924 buildings, presumably the existing houses, had been constructed at 36 Denmark Road and 43 Heathville Road. The property boundaries at 36 and 38 Denmark Road were in their current locations and a more complex arrangement of small enclosures was present at the rear of 43 Heathville Road (OS 1924).

4 Purpose of the evaluation

In the IFA document referred to at 1.2 above:

The purpose of the evaluation will be "to gain information about the archaeological resource ... including its presence or absence, character and extent, date, integrity, state of preservation and relative quality, in order to make an assessment of its worth in the appropriate context, leading to: the formulation of a strategy for the preservation or management of those remains; and/or the formulation of an appropriate response or mitigation strategy to planning applications or other proposals which may affect adversely such archaeological remains, or enhance them; and/or the formulation of a proposal for further archaeological investigation within a programme of research." (IFA 2001).

5 Methodology

5.1 A 25m and a 5m long (1.52m wide) trench were excavated to evaluate the area of the proposed development, as required in the brief. The trenches were opened by machine and were excavated to the upper level of archaeological deposits or the natural deposits, whichever was encountered first. All faces of the trenches were cleaned using appropriate hand tools, where safe to do so. All investigation of archaeological levels was by hand, with cleaning, examination and recording both in plan and section, where appropriate. The locations of the trenches are shown on Figure 2.

5.2 All deposits were recorded on a pro-forma context sheet and photographed. These photographs included black and white prints, colour transparencies (on 35mm film) and digital, illustrating in both detail and general context the principal features. A site location plan indicating north and based on the Ordnance Survey 1:2500 map (OS 1996) was prepared. Levels above Ordnance Datum were recorded for archaeological deposits as required in the brief.

5.3 The site archive will be temporarily stored at Shire Hall, Gloucester under a unique site code, GSMR 22277 issued by the County Sites and Monuments Record Officer. It is intended that it will eventually be deposited with Gloucester City Museum and Art Gallery under accession number 2003/36.

6 Results

6.1 The results of the evaluation are outlined below, with the deposits discussed in stratigraphic order starting with the earliest. Cut numbers are shown in square brackets [] and other context numbers are shown in rounded brackets ().

6.2 Trench 1 (Figure 2)

The trench was located in the north part of the proposed development area, to the immediate north of the car park. It was orientated roughly north-west to south-east and measured 5m long by 1.52m wide. The natural drift deposits (102) were recorded at the base of the trench at a average depth of 14.21mAOD (Above Ordnance Datum). A single feature was within the trench cutting the natural.

Cut [103] was a 1.80m wide linear feature, oriented north to south in plan. The single fill (104) of this probable soakaway [103], was grey brown silty clay, with frequent small to large inclusions, including large concrete blocks. This feature was not excavated below a depth of 13.84mAOD.

Above was a layer of grey brown silty clay (101), up to 0.43m deep, with a moderate amount of small to large stone inclusions containing modern and post-medieval artefacts, including building rubble. It was interpreted as a modern levelling layer. Sealing (101), was the topsoil, a grey brown silty clay (100), with occasional small to medium sized stone inclusions, up to 0.30m deep.

6.3 Trench 2 (Figure 2)

The trench was located in the western part of the proposed development area. It was orientated roughly north-south and measured 25.70m long by 1.52m wide. The natural drift deposits were recorded at the base of the trench at a average depth of 14.36mAOD (Above Ordnance Datum). Five features within the trench cut the natural, these will be discussed from north to south.

Cut [205] was sub-oval in plan, 0.42m wide and its eastern side was outside the evaluation trench. The single fill (206) of this possible large posthole or pit [205], was a dark grey brown sandy clay, more than 0.32m deep, with the occasional small to medium sized stone inclusions. The feature contained Roman pottery (see artefact table).

Cut [203] was linear in plan, oriented roughly east to west and 1.66m wide. The single fill (204) of this ditch [203], was a dark brown sandy clay, more than 1m deep, with occasional small to medium sized stone inclusions. The ditch contained Roman pottery (see artefact table).

A curved linear feature, 0.40m wide was recorded in the central part of the trench, with only its western side within the trench. Three slots ([207], [209] and [213]) were excavated through this feature and recorded individually, to keep the artefacts separate.

Cut [207] was the northern slot through the curved linear feature. The ditch [207] was 0.44m wide at this point, with a single fill (208), of dark brown sandy clay, up to 0.43m deep. The ditch contained Roman pottery (see artefact table).

Cut [209] was the central slot through the curved linear feature. The ditch [209] was 0.45m wide at this point, with a single fill (210), of brown sandy clay, more than 210mm deep. The ditch contained Roman pottery (see artefact table). This slot was not fully excavated because the ditch was truncated by feature [211].

Cut [213] was the southern slot through the curved linear feature. The ditch [213] was 0.61m wide at this point, with a single fill (214), of dark brown sandy clay, up to 0.51m deep. The ditch contained Roman pottery (see artefact table).

Cut [211] was sub-oval in plan, and measured 0.32m in diameter, it was cut into the curved ditch (210) within the slot for [209]. The single fill (212) of this possible posthole [211], was a dark brown sandy clay, up to 0.50m deep, with occasional small to medium sized stone inclusions. The possible posthole contained Roman pottery (see artefact table).

Cut [217] was linear in plan, oriented roughly north-south and 150mm wide. This very shallow feature appeared to have a southern terminus within the trench, and it continued north beyond the evaluation trench. The single fill (218) of this ditch [217], was a brown sandy clay, up to 20mm deep, with occasional small to medium sized stone inclusions. No artefacts were recovered during the excavation of this feature.

Cut [215] was sub-oval in plan, and measured 120mm by 160mm in plan. The single fill (216) of this possible posthole [215], was a grey brown sandy clay, up to 200mm deep, with occasional small to medium sized stone inclusions. No artefacts were recovered during the excavation of this feature.

Above was a layer of grey brown silty clay (201), up to 0.48m deep, with a moderate amount of small to large stone inclusions containing Roman to modern artefacts. It was interpreted as a garden soil. Sealing (201), was the topsoil, a grey brown silty clay (200), with occasional small to medium sized stone inclusions, up to 220mm deep.

6.4 Artefact Table

Context	Artefact material	Artefact type	No.	Wt gms	Date	Notes	Bags
200	bone	animal	1	17			1
200	ceramic	pottery	7	158	Roman		1
204	bone	animal	36	412			1
204	ceramic	pottery	194	3132	Roman		1
204	metal	Fe	1	9			3
206	bone	animal	46	140		Iron nail	1
206	ceramic	daub	1	38			1
206	ceramic	pottery	23	132	Roman		1
208	bone	animal	1	14			1
208	ceramic	pottery	35	554	Roman		1
210	bone	animal	52	292			1
210	ceramic	pottery	74	869	Roman		1
212	ceramic	pottery	53	392	Roman		1
214	bone	animal	5	78			2
214	ceramic	pottery	16	1012	Roman		1
							2

It was not possible to utilise the services of a pottery specialist in the time frame allotted to this project. The Roman pottery specialist used by the Archaeology Service is currently on a research project in Bulgaria.

The pottery consists of Samian, Grey Ware, Severn Valley and Black Burnish Ware, which is probably of a 2nd century date (*pers. com.* Phil Greatorex, City Archaeologist).

7 Conclusions

7.1.1 The evaluation recorded six archaeological features, with four securely dated to the Roman period. The large east-west ditch [203], is oriented parallel with the original line of Roman Ermine Street. It is possible that this large ditch probably formed the northern (rear) boundary ditch for properties along the northern side of Ermine Street, within the Roman settlement area. The other features are further evidence of Roman occupation and activity on this site, which is attested to by the large amount of Roman artefacts recorded during the evaluation.

7.1.2 The average depth of the post-medieval and modern deposits has been recorded at 0.59m below the existing ground level, below which are the in-situ Roman deposits. The nature and scale of these deposits presently suggests Romano-British property division adjacent to the line of Ermine Street, and are not considered to be of national importance, but do add to the corpus of local information regarding Romano-British activity in the area of the former Kingsholm fort. A flexible approach to the design of the foundations of the proposed development, may ensure that the archaeological deposits on the site can be preserved in-situ, which would be in line with current planning and policy guidance, therefore minimising the impact on the known archaeological deposits.

8 References

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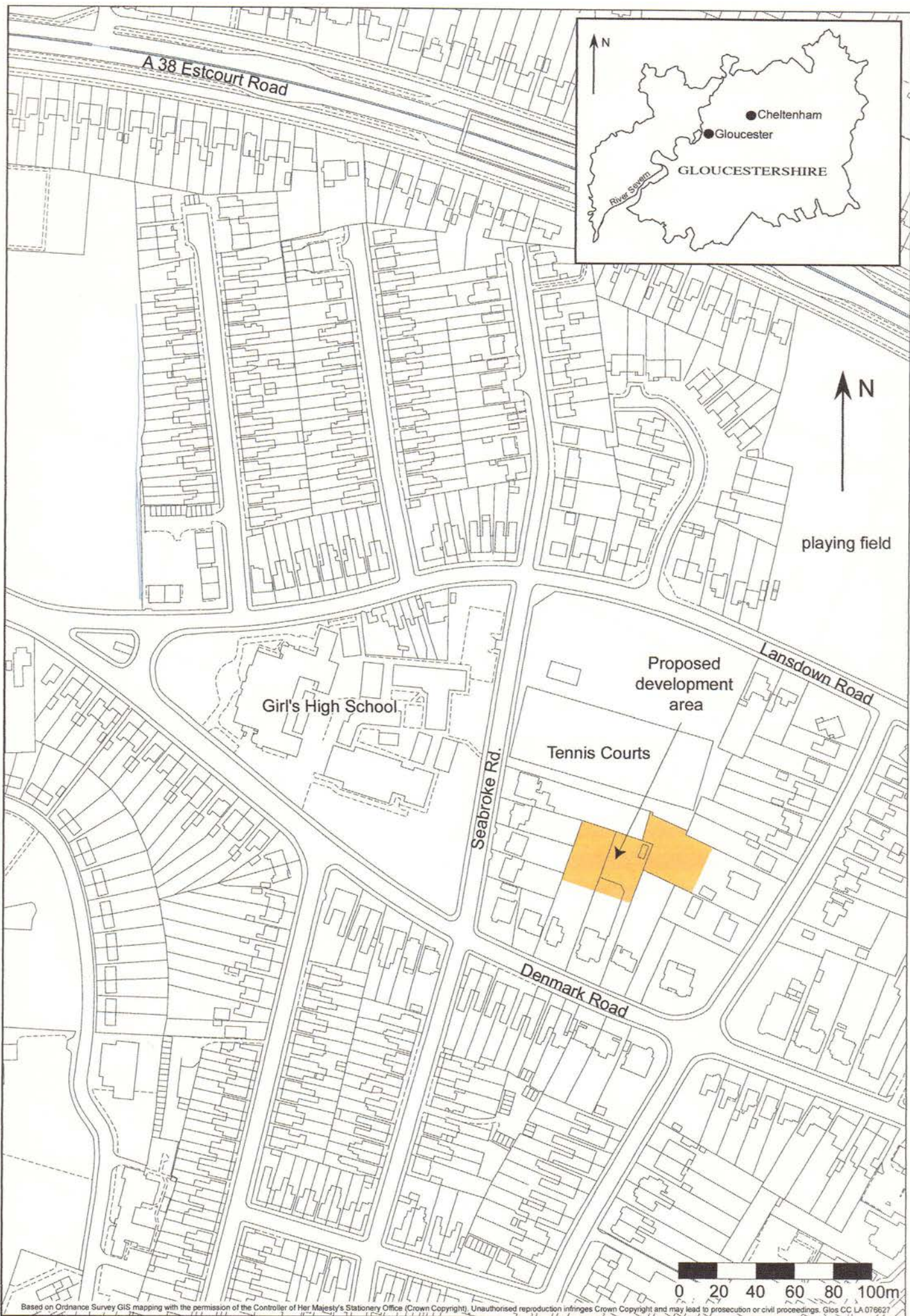
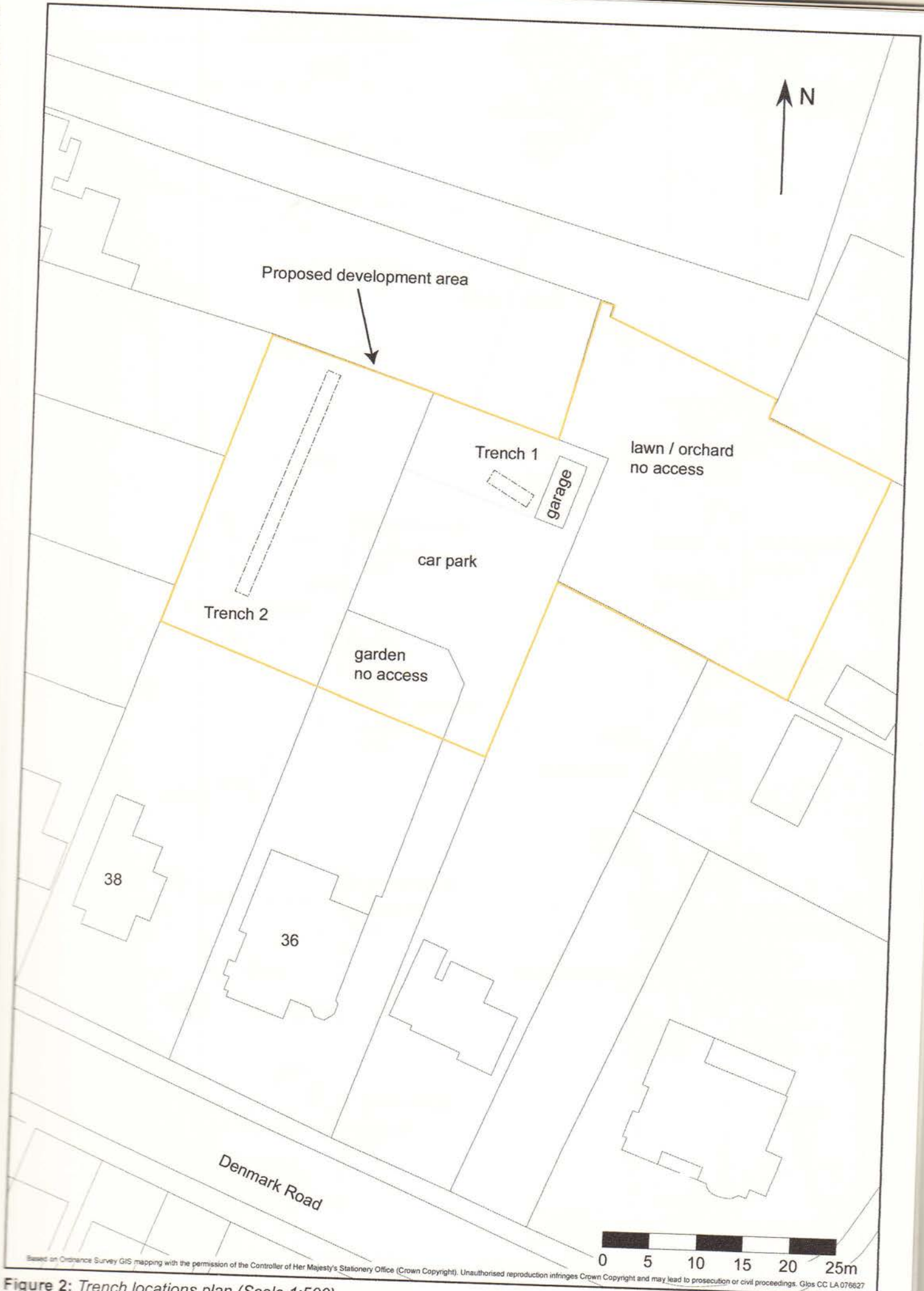


Figure 1: Site location (Scale 1:2500)



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Figure 2: Trench locations plan (Scale 1:500)

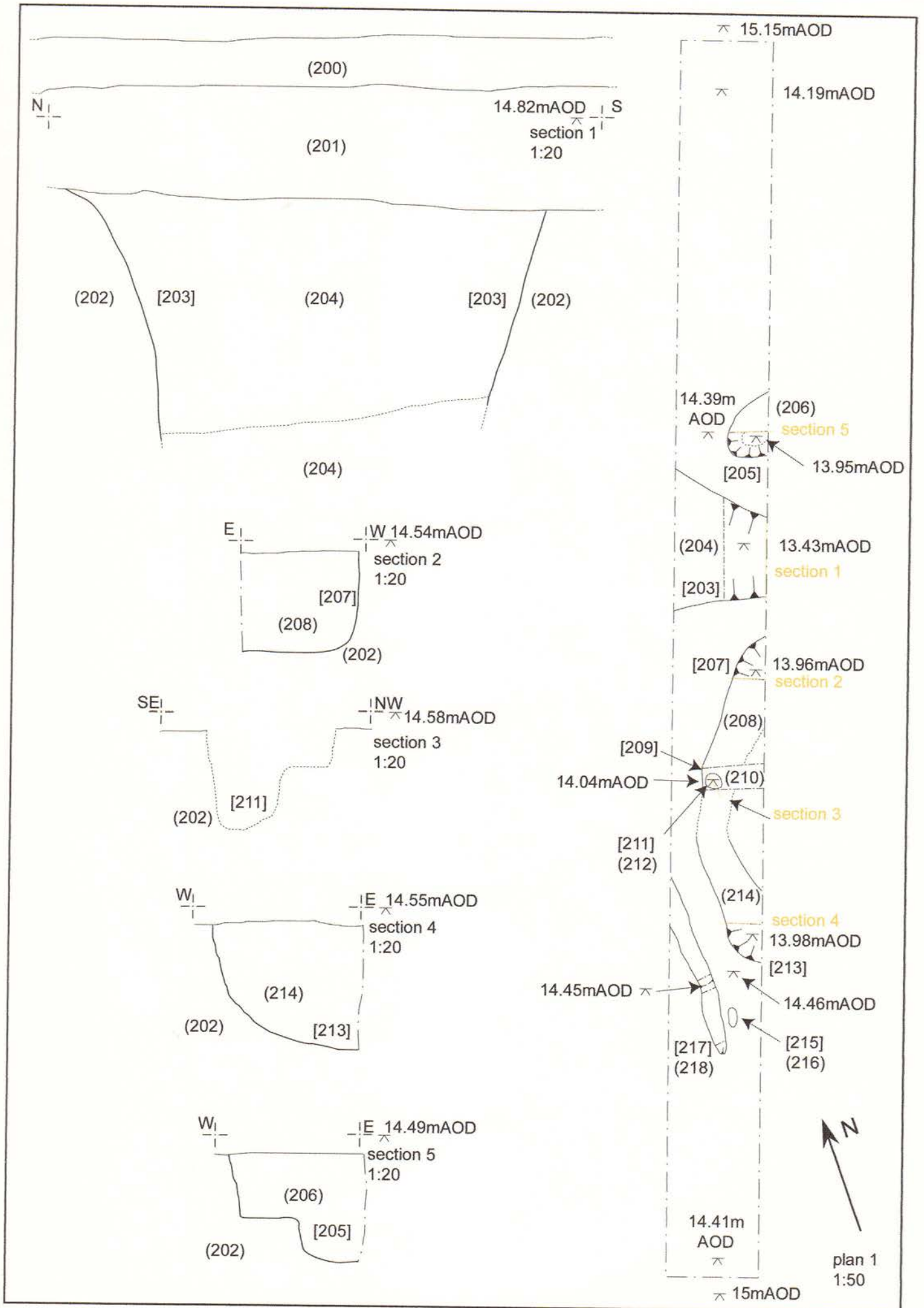


Figure 3: Trench 2 plan and sections (Scale 1:50 and 1:20)