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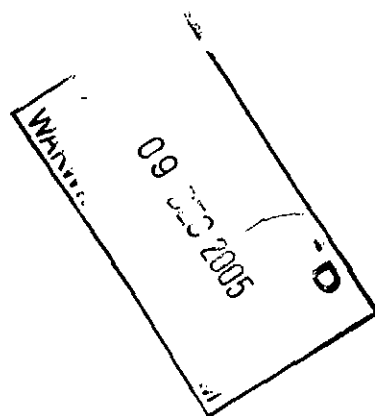


Gloucestershire

COUNTY COUNCIL

An Archaeological Evaluation of land to the rear of

**25a Grange Road
Bidford on Avon
Warwickshire**



**for Andrew Murphy
(Stansgate Planning Consultants)**



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Site details

Site address: Land to the rear of 25a Grange Road, Bidford-on-Avon, Warwickshire

OS NGR: 410251 251880

Site type: Evaluation

Client: Andrew Murphy (Stangsgate Planning Consultants)

Landowner: Stuart Homer (Croft Barn Developments Ltd.)

GCCAS Job code: BOA 05

Planning ref: 05/02354/FUL

Date of fieldwork: 23rd and 24th November 2005

Date of Report: 6th December 2005

Author: Neil Wright

Recipient museum: Warwickshire Museum

Archived finds: Yes

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Summary

Gloucestershire County Council Archaeology Service were commissioned by Stansgate Planning Consultants, on behalf of Stuart Homer, to carry out an archaeological evaluation of land to the rear of 25a Grange Road, Bidford on Avon, Warwickshire. The works were carried out at the request of the Warwickshire County Council Archaeological Officer (Anna Stocks), as substantial Romano-British remains were known to the immediate west of the site (MWA 7125/6). The proposed development comprises the construction of six detached dwellings (05/02354/FUL). Fourteen possible archaeological features were recorded during the evaluation, five of which were dated to the Romano-British period (2nd century AD+). Five ephemeral archaeological features in the north end of trench 4 may indicate pre-Romano-British activity in the area. The archaeological features were encountered at between 0.56 and 0.72m in depth below the present ground level.

1 Introduction

1.1 Gloucestershire County Council Archaeological Service (GCCAS) were commissioned by Stansgate Planning Consultants, on behalf of Stuart Homer, to carry out an archaeological evaluation of land to the rear of 25a Grange Road, Bidford on Avon, Warwickshire (OS NGR 410251 251880). The Warwickshire County Council Archaeological Officer (Anna Stocks) requested that an archaeological field evaluation was carried out in regard to the proposed erection of six detached dwellings. A total of five trenches were machine excavated, fulfilling the requirement of the brief that 50m (1.5m wide) of linear trenching was excavated. A contingency of an extra 15% of linear trenching was provided for in the brief (Stocks 2005) but was not required by the Warwickshire planning Archaeologist. The evaluation was carried out on 23rd and 24th November 2005 by Neil Wright, with assistance from Julian Newman and Sam Palmer.

1.2 The evaluation was completed in accordance with the requirements of the brief issued by the Warwickshire Planning Archaeologist (Stocks 2005). The evaluation was also carried out in accordance with the 'Standards and Guidance for Archaeological Field Evaluations' produced by the Institute of Field Archaeology (IFA 2001). The Archaeology Service is an Institute of Field Archaeologist, Registered Archaeological Organisation (IFA RAO 42).

1.3 Thanks are due to: Jo Vallender (GCCAS) for managing the project; Stuart Homer (landowner) for commissioning the work; Andrew Murphy (Stansgate Planning Consultants) and Julian Newman and Sam Palmer (GCCAS) for assistance on-site.

2 Site location (Figure 1)

Bidford on Avon is located in south-west Warwickshire, c.10km west of Stratford on Avon. The site is located to the rear of 25a Grange Road, c.165m to the north east of the parish church. The site is geologically located on the Second Terrace River Gravels (BGS 2005).

3 Archaeological background

The summary below considers the archaeology within 100m of the site and has utilised information provided by the staff of Warwickshire Sites and Monuments Record (MWA), historic maps and the reports of previous archaeological work in the area.

3.1 Prehistoric

3.1.1 Prehistoric material, in the form of flintwork, was recorded from the area to the south of Tower Hill, c.200m to the east of the proposed development site (MWA 4811) and to the north of Grange Road (MWA 4035). A Palaeolithic handaxe is also recorded c.100m north east of Bidford Bridge, c.300m to the west of the proposed development site (MWA 6131). Mesolithic and Neolithic implements are recorded from nearby (MWA 6624) and two pieces of Bronze Age gold "ring money" have also been found in the Bidford area.

3.1.2 A possible Iron Age cemetery is recorded from in High Street at Bidford on Avon (MWA 602), although doubt has been cast on the date of this material, which might also be Anglo Saxon. Iron Age coins have also been found to the south of Tower Hill (MWA 6637).

3.2 Roman

3.2.1 Bidford lies on the line of Icknield Street (MWA 445), a Roman road which runs from Yorkshire to join the Fosse Way near Bourton-on-the-Water in the Cotswolds. Roman coins and brooches were found to the south of Tower Hill (MWA 5697), various finds of Roman date are recorded from the area north of Grange Road (MWA 4036) and coins and other metal finds have been recovered from c.500m to the north of Bidford (MWA 2337).

3.2.2 Roman material was recovered from immediately to the west of the proposed development area during excavations in 1991 at 21-23 Icknield Street (MWA 7125, see Figures 1 and 2). Evidence from the evaluation trenches shows that the central and eastern parts of the site contain evidence of an extensive Romano-British settlement which appeared to be well preserved. Features revealed included 4th century timber buildings which probably overlaid earlier occupation of 1st century and 2nd century date. Further excavations at Icknield Street failed to locate further evidence for Roman occupation, although post-medieval material was recovered (MWA 7126).

3.3 Medieval and later periods

3.3.1 An Anglo Saxon cemetery was located in Bidford, close to the ford where Icknield Street crossed the Avon. About 200 burials and 32 cremations are known from this site, many of which were accompanied by grave goods (MWA 605). Evidence for domestic occupation was also found during excavation at the site (MWA 608, 6132). An Early Medieval strap-end (MWA 9798) and an Anglo Saxon Brooch (MWA 5696) have also been recorded in the Tower Hill area (MWA 5698) and medieval finds are recorded from the area to the north of Grange Road (MWA 4037, 7808, 8269). The Medieval church of St Lawrence is located c.165m to the south west of the proposed development site.

3.3.2 The site of Avonside House is located c.200m to the south-east of the proposed development area (MWA 8529). The house is of the Arts and Crafts tradition and had well documented gardens, planted in the 1920s and 30s.

3.4 Cartographic evidence

The First Edition Ordnance Survey map (1891) shows the site as open land, lying to the south west of Tower Hill. The western boundary of the site appears to have been the eastern edge of an orchard, to the rear of properties fronting Icknield Street. The site has remained undeveloped through to the present, although it currently survives only as an "island" between Icknield Court, Icknield Way, Icknield Road and Grange Road.

4 Purpose of the evaluation

4.1 Archaeological fieldwork, to the immediate west of the site (MWA 7125/6), recorded evidence of extensive Romano-British settlement, comprising timber buildings and associated features, dating to the 4th century AD. There was a possibility that the development site would contain similar deposits. The Brief for Archaeological Field Evaluation (Stocks 2005) requested that an evaluation was carried out as the archaeological implications could not be adequately assessed, based on the previous information alone.

4.2 The purpose of the evaluation was *"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 Five trenches were machine excavated using a 1.2m wide toothless ditching bucket, mounted on a 3-4 tonne mini-digger. The trenches were excavated through the grassed area to the north of 25a Grange Road.

5.2 All undifferentiated topsoil or overburden of recent origin within the trenches was removed down to the first significant archaeological horizon. In archaeological evaluations the objective is to define rather than totally remove deposits. Full excavation was therefore confined to the least significant remains, which may allow underlying stratigraphy and features to be exposed and recorded. Within significant levels partial excavation, half-sectioning, the recovery of dating evidence, sampling and the cleaning and recording of structures were preferred to full excavation. The location of the trenches is shown on Figure 2.

5.3 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.

5.4 All deposits were recorded on pro-forma context sheets and a plan and section were drawn on plastic film. Site and trench location plans, indicating north and based on the Ordnance Survey maps, were prepared. Levels Above Ordnance Datum (AOD) were recorded for archaeological deposits as required in the brief.

5.5 The site archive will be temporarily stored at Shire Hall, Gloucester under site code BOA 05, issued by GCCAS. It is intended that it will eventually be deposited with the Warwickshire Museum.

6 Results of the evaluation (Figures 2 to 4)

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 ().

6.1 Trench 1 (Figure 3)

6.1.1 This trench measured c.12m in length by c.1.6m in width and a maximum of 0.88m in depth below the present ground level. At the base of the trench (measured at between 34.43m and 34.55m Above Ordnance Datum) was the undisturbed natural subsoil (103). It comprised a clean light orangey and reddish brown sand, with patches of small rounded gravel (c.10%). The top of (103) was encountered at between 0.64m and 0.88m in depth below the present ground level.

6.1.2 Cut into the top of (103) was linear feature [104]. Its full dimensions were not visible, but it measured c.0.27m in depth, had steep sides (c.80°) and a rounded base. It was filled by a mid-dark reddish brown sandy clay (105), which contained rare charcoal flecks (<2%) and had evidence of bioturbation. Feature [104] was interpreted as a ditch, of unknown date. The top of [104] was at 34.45m AOD, approximately 0.62m in depth below the present ground level.

6.1.3 Overlying (105) was a mixture of light orangey and reddish brown sand, with patches of small rounded gravel and mid-light sandy clay (102). This was interpreted as the horizon between natural (103) and overlying deposit (101). It contained rare charcoal flecks (<2%) and measured a maximum of 0.2m in depth. Overlying horizon (102) was a mid-light orangey brown sandy clay (101), which contained rare charcoal flecks and gravel (<2%). It measured a maximum of 0.4m in depth and was interpreted as buried garden soil/ploughsoil. A dark greyey brown silty clay topsoil (100) overlay (101) and measured a maximum of 0.28m in depth below the present ground level.

6.2 Trench 2

6.2.1 Trench 2 measured c.9m in length by c.1.6m in width and a maximum of 0.93m in depth below the present ground level. At the base of the trench (measured at between 34.45m and 34.50m AOD) was the undisturbed natural subsoil (203). It comprised a clean light orangey and reddish brown sand, with patches of small rounded gravel (c.10%). The top of natural (203) was encountered at between 0.8m and 0.93m in depth below the present ground level.

6.2.2 Overlying (203) was a mixture of light orangey and reddish brown sand, with patches of small rounded gravel and mid-light sandy clay (202). This was interpreted as the horizon between natural (203) and overlying deposit (201). It contained rare charcoal flecks (<2%) and measured a maximum of 0.15m in depth. Overlying horizon (202) was a mid-light orangey brown sandy clay (201), which contained rare charcoal flecks and gravel (<2%). It measured a maximum of 0.45m in depth and was interpreted as buried garden soil/ploughsoil. A dark greyey brown silty clay topsoil (200) overlay (201) and measured a maximum of 0.35m in depth below the present ground level. No archaeological deposits were recorded within trench 2.

6.3 Trench 3

6.3.1 This trench measured c.10m in length by c.1.6m in width and a maximum of 0.8m in depth below the present ground level. At the base of the trench (measured at between 34.70m and 34.87m AOD) was the undisturbed natural subsoil (303). It comprised a clean light orangey and reddish brown sand, with patches of small rounded gravel (c.10%). The top of natural (303) was encountered at between 0.7m and 0.8m in depth below the present ground level.

6.3.2 Overlying (303) was a mixture of light orangey and reddish brown sand, with patches of small rounded gravel and mid-light sandy clay (302). This was interpreted as the horizon between natural (303) and overlying deposit (301). It contained rare charcoal flecks (<2%) and measured a maximum of 0.2m in depth. Overlying horizon (302) was a mid-light orangey brown sandy clay (301), which contained rare charcoal flecks and gravel (<2%). It measured a maximum of 0.35m in depth and was interpreted as buried garden soil/ploughsoil. A dark greyey brown silty clay topsoil (200) overlay (201) and measured a maximum of 0.25m in depth below the present ground level. No archaeological deposits were recorded within trench 3.

6.4 Trench 4 (Figures 4)

6.4.1 Trench 4 measured c.12m in length by c.1.6m in width and a maximum of 0.72m in depth below the present ground level. At the base of the trench (measured at between 34.99 and 35.83m AOD) was the undisturbed natural subsoil (410). It comprised a clean light orange and reddy brown sand, with patches of small rounded gravel (c.10%). The top of (410) was encountered at between 0.55m and 0.72m in depth below the present ground level. Thirteen possible archaeological features were recorded cut into (410).

6.4.2 In the southern end of trench 4 was linear feature [402]. It was aligned east by west and measured between 0.12m and 0.25m in width and a maximum of 0.06m in depth. Feature [402] was filled by a mid-dark brownish grey sandy clay (403), which contained one sherd of Severn Valley ware pottery and rare flint gravel and charcoal flecks (<5%). It was interpreted as a gully or heavily truncated ditch of probable Romano-British date (2nd to 3rd century AD). The upper surviving level was at c.35.03m AOD, c.0.56m below present ground level.

6.4.3 Three sub-circular features ([404], [406] and [408]) were recorded in the southern end of trench 4. They measured between 0.25m and 0.43m in diameter and a maximum of 0.1m in depth. They were filled by a mid-dark brownish grey sandy clay, (405), (407) and (409), which contained rare flint gravel and charcoal flecks (<5%). These were interpreted as heavily truncated post-holes of unknown date. The upper surviving level of these features was measured at c.35.01m AOD, c.0.58m below present ground level.

6.4.4 Linear feature [420] was aligned north by south and measured at least 0.67m in visible width and 0.27m in depth. It had c.40° sloping sides, a gently rounded base and was filled by a mid-dark brownish grey sandy clay (421). The fill contained five fragments of animal bone, rare flint gravel and charcoal flecks (<5%). Its southern extent remained unclear. It was truncated by ditch [400] and due to this relationship was interpreted as a ditch of probable Romano-British date, although it may have been earlier. Its upper surviving level was at 35.01m AOD, c.0.58m below present ground level.

6.4.5 A sub-rectangular feature [431] was recorded in the centre of the trench. It measured at least 0.57m in length and a maximum of 0.04m in depth. It was filled by a mid-dark orangey brown clayey sand (432). As this feature was truncated by [423] it was interpreted as a feature of Romano-British date. Its upper surviving level was at c.35.14m AOD, 0.57m below present ground level.

6.4.6 Cutting [431] was a linear feature [423], which was aligned north north-east by south south-west. It measured c.0.58m in width and a maximum of 0.28m in depth. It had c.80° sloping sides, a slightly curved base and was filled by a light greyey brown sandy clay (424), which contained occasional gravel (c.15-20%). It was truncated by later ditch [400] and due to this relationship was interpreted as a ditch of probable Romano-British date, or earlier.

6.4.7 Linear [400] cut earlier ditches [420] and [423]. It was aligned north by south and measured a maximum of 1.78m in width and 0.27m in depth. The cut had gently sloping sides (c.30-40°), two 'steps' on its western edge and a gently curving base. The fill (401) comprised a mid greyey brown sandy clay, which contained three sherds of Severn Valley ware and one of a grey sandy ware jar. The fill also contained rare gravel and charcoal flecks (<5%). It was interpreted as a ditch of Romano-British date (2nd to 3rd century AD). Its orientation puts it on approximately the same alignment as Icknield Street (Ryknild Street Roman road). The upper surviving level was at c.34.93m AOD, c.0.72m below present ground level.

6.4.8 Five possible archaeological features ([411], [413], [415], [417] and [419]) were recorded in the northern end of trench 4. Their exact dimensions and form were difficult to establish as they were ephemeral in nature. They measured between 0.03m and 0.05m in depth and were filled by a similar, relatively 'clean' fill of mid-dark orangey brown clayey sand. These were interpreted as probable highly truncated archaeological features, of Romano-British or earlier date. The upper surviving level of these was at between 35.17m and 35.29m AOD, c.0.56m and 0.72m below the present ground level.

6.4.9 Overlying the features was a mixture of light orangey and reddish brown sand, with patches of small rounded gravel and mid-light sandy clay (452). This was interpreted as the horizon between natural (453) and overlying deposit (451). It contained rare charcoal flecks (<2%) and measured a maximum of 0.15m in depth. Overlying horizon (452) was a mid-light orangey brown sandy clay (451), which contained four fragments of ceramic building material (Romano-British or later), rare charcoal flecks and gravel (<2%). It measured between 0.32m and 0.4m in depth and was interpreted as buried garden soil/ploughsoil. A dark greyey brown silty clay topsoil (450) overlay (451) and measured between 0.25m and 0.37m in depth below the present ground level.

6.5 Trench 5

6.5.1 This Trench measured c.7m in length by c.1.6m in width and a maximum of 0.55m in depth below the present ground level. At the base of the trench (measured at between 35.43m and 35.44m AOD) was the undisturbed natural subsoil (502). It comprised a clean light orangey and reddish brown sand, with patches of small rounded gravel (c.10%). Mid greyey brown mottling could be seen within (502), and was interpreted as root action. The top of natural (502) was encountered at between 0.5m and 0.55m in depth below the present ground level.

6.5.2 Overlying (502) was a mid-light orangey brown sandy clay (501), which contained rare charcoal flecks and gravel (<2%). It measured a maximum of 0.30m in depth and was interpreted as buried garden soil/ploughsoil. A dark greyey brown silty clay topsoil (500) overlay (501) and measured a maximum of 0.25m in depth below the present ground level. No archaeological deposits were recorded within trench 5.

7 Pottery report (Dr Jane Timby)

7.1 Introduction

The archaeological work resulted in the recovery of a very small group of eight sherds of Roman pottery weighing 387 g and four fragments of ceramic building material (CBM), possibly of post-Roman date. Pottery was associated with just three contexts (401, 403 and 451) and the tile with one (451). The sherds were in fresh condition with an overall average sherd size of 48g, which is particularly high, suggesting relatively undisturbed contexts. For the purposes of the assessment the sherds were scanned to assess their likely chronology and quantified by sherd count and weight.

7.2 Description of pottery

7.2.1 Seven of the sherds recovered are from the Severn Valley ware industry (fabric code SVW OX (Tomber and Dore 1998, 148-9)) and one from a grey sandy ware jar (GREYSY). There are two SVW OX rims, one from an everted rim jar (451), the other from a bowl, or more likely a colander (401). One of the bodysherds is probably from a tankard.

7.2.2 The SVW OX industry is a long-lived one with a fairly conservative output. All the sherds recovered could date to the 2nd century although the bowl/colander form is one that could continue into the 3rd century.

7.2.3 The chronology of the assemblage would thus appear to be similar to some of that recovered from 21/23 Ickneild Street but lacks any late Roman wares also documented at this site (WCC 1991). However, it should be noted that the assemblage from Grange Road is very small and very limited in composition.

7.3 Ceramic building material

One larger and three small fragments of CBM were recovered from context (451) which are probably all from the same item. This is a flat tile of quite thin dimensions (10-11 mm), which might argue for it being post-Roman in date.

7.4 Further work

The assemblage is clearly of some interest, particularly in view of the good condition and size of the sherds. However, the smallness of the group limits further discussion and any further inferences about the status, overall chronology and nature of the occupation. No further work is recommended at this stage on the pottery.

8 Conclusion

8.1 Fourteen possible archaeological features were recorded during the evaluation (one in trench 1 and thirteen in trench 4). The undated linear feature recorded in trench 1 was measured at c.34.45m AOD, c.0.62m in depth below the present ground level.

8.2 Thirteen possible archaeological features were recorded within trench 4, which were measured at between 35.17m and 35.29m AOD, c.0.56m and 0.72m in depth below the present ground level. They comprised: a gully; three ditches; an uncharacterised feature; three postholes and five ephemeral features. Only two of the features, gully [402] and ditch [400], contained datable material and have been provisionally dated to the Romano-British period (2nd to 3rd century AD). Given the stratigraphy in trench 4, suggesting three possible phases of activity, it is likely that the majority of the features also date to the Romano-British period. However, it is possible that some of the undated and more ephemeral features could be of prehistoric date.

8.3 Given the proximity of the Romano-British settlement at 21-23 Ickneild Street, and the similar alignment of ditch [400] to Ryknild Street Roman road, the features recorded during this evaluation are considered to be a continuation of this settlement. The features appear to be largely confined to the north-west of the site, suggesting an easternmost extent of this settlement.

9 References

- | | | |
|--|------|---|
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| IFA | 2001 | <i>Standards and Guidance for Archaeological Evaluations</i> . London. |
| Stocks, A | 2005 | Brief for Archaeological Field Evaluation. Warwickshire County Council Museum Field Services. |
| Timby, J R | 2005 | Pottery Assessment. |
| Tomber R & Dore J | 1998 | <i>The National Roman fabric reference collection</i> , Museum of London/ English Heritage/ British Museum. |
| Warwickshire County Council Museum Service | 1991 | <i>21 and 23 Ickneild Street, Bidford-on-Avon, Warwickshire: archaeological evaluation</i> . WCC typescript report. |

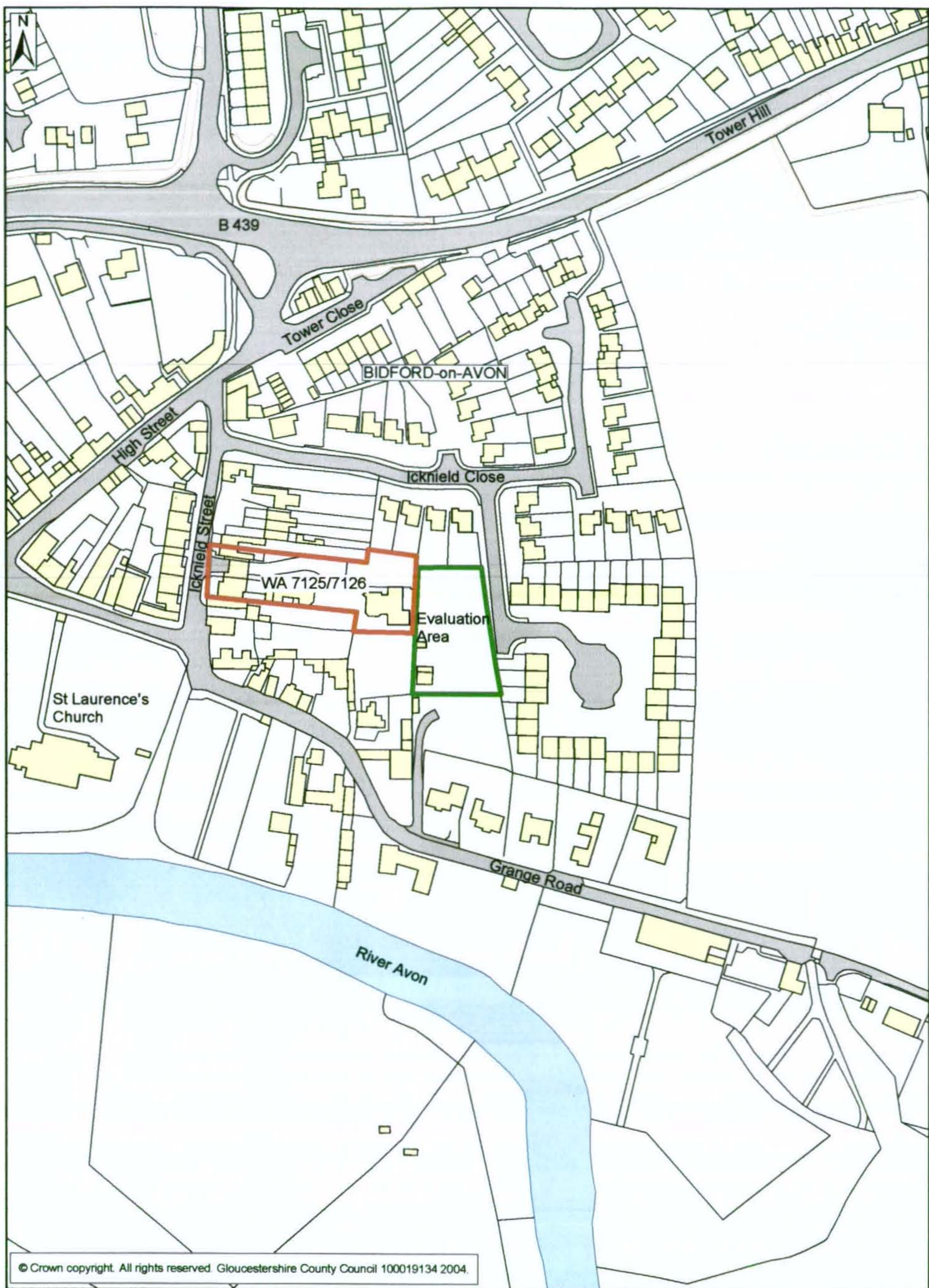


Figure 1: Site location plan, showing 1991 evaluation (WA 7125/7126) (Scale 1:2000).

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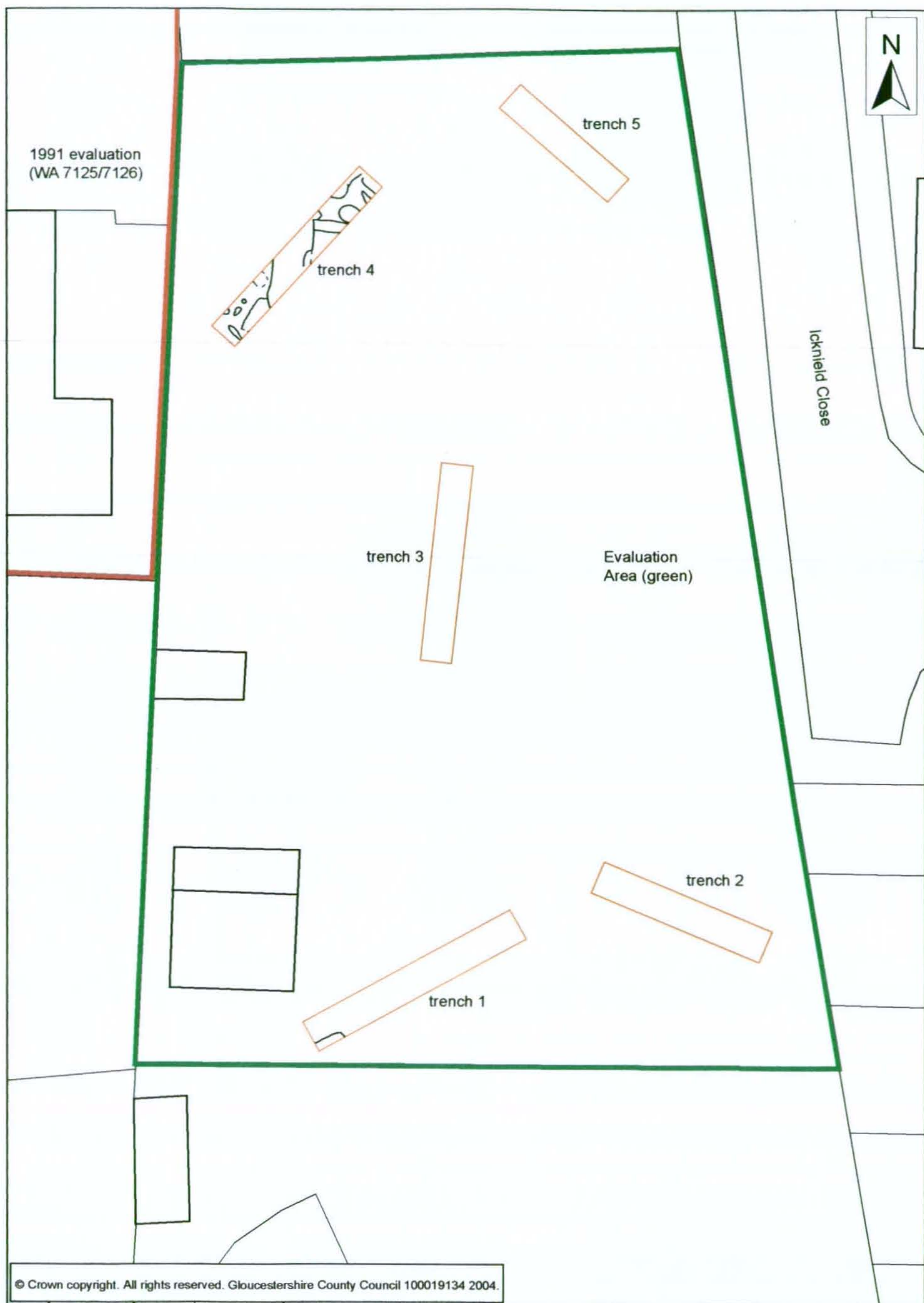


Figure 2: Trench location plan (Scale 1:250).

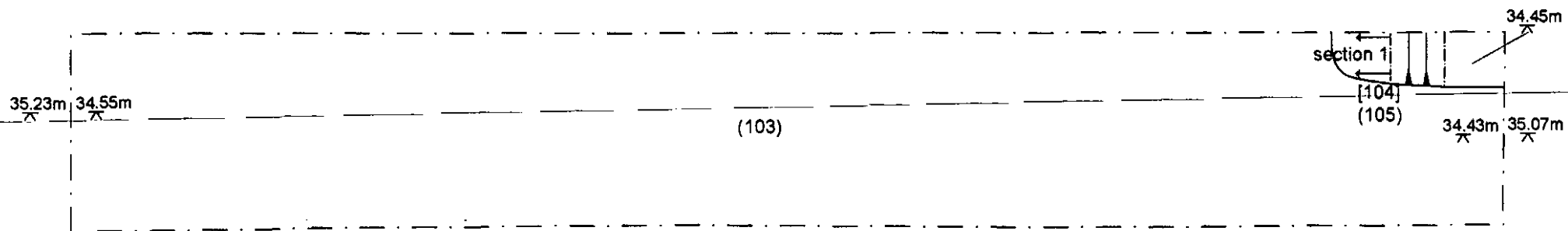


Figure 3a: Plan of trench 1 (Scale 1:50)

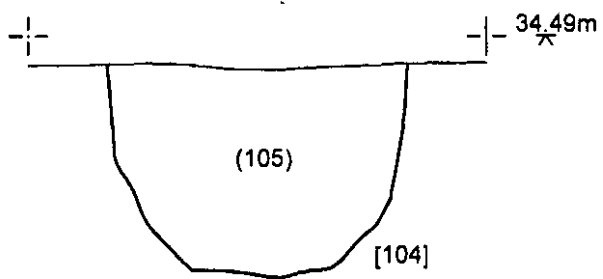


Figure 3b: Section 1, south-west facing of feature [104] (Scale 1:10).

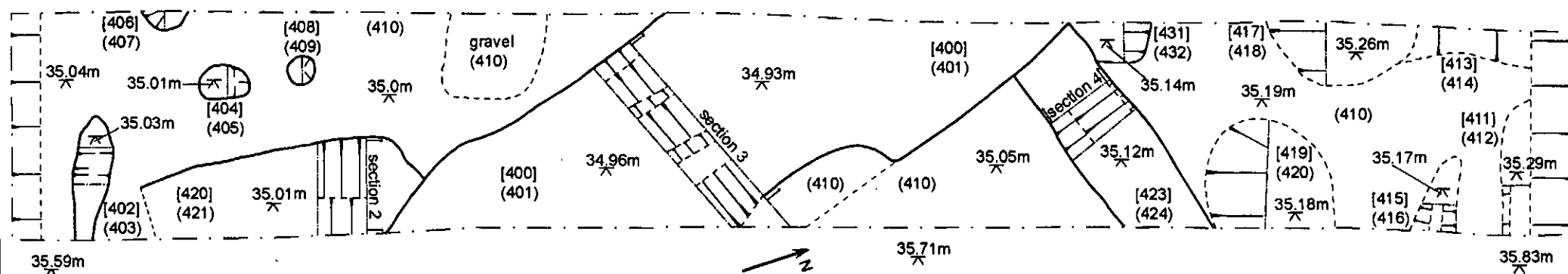


Figure 4: Plan of trench 4 (Scale 1:40).

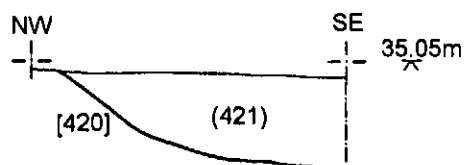


Figure 5a: Section 2, south-west facing of [420] (Scale 1:20).

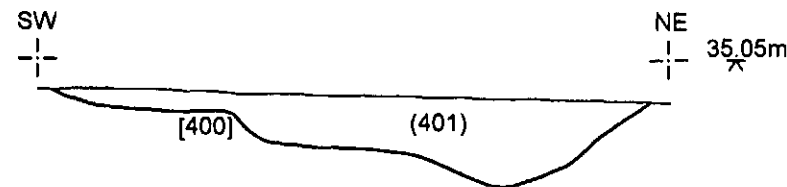


Figure 5b: Section 3, south-east facing of [400] (Scale 1:20).

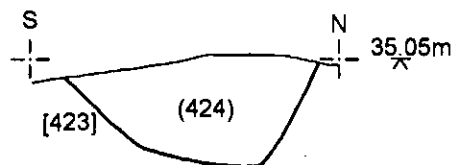


Figure 5c: Section 4, east facing of [423] (Scale 1:20).

Figure 4: Plan and sections of trench 4.