NAA

ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION REPORT

Northern Archaeological Associates Ltd

Marwood House
Harmire Enterprise Park
Barnard Castle
Co. Durham
DL12 8BN

t: 01833 690800

e: kt@naaheritage.com

w: www.naaheritage.com

WANGO LANE, AINTREE, MERSEYSIDE

prepared for

Mullberry Homes Ltd

Project No.: 1513

Text: Alex Hartley

Illustrations: Dawn Knowles

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Associates

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01833 690800

info@naaheritage.com

www.naaheritage.com

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Manager	Karl Taylor	
Draft	Alex Hartley	
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District	Aintree
Planning Ref	DC/2017/02298
Grid Ref	SJ 3879 9840
Dates of Fieldwork	03 February 2020 – 07 February 2020

WANGO LANE, AINTREE, MERSEYSIDE

ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION

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ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION

Summary

A trial-trench evaluation was carried out on land at Wango Lane, Aintree, Merseyside (NGR SJ 3879 9840), in February 2020. The work was undertaken by Northern Archaeological Associates on behalf of Mullberry Homes Ltd.

These evaluation works are required as a condition of planning consent for a proposed development of up to 43 residential units, with vehicular access, landscaping, and associated works (Planning Ref: DC/2017/02298). The trial trenching is designed to assess the presence, significance, and extent of any archaeological remains within the development area. This information will be used by Merseyside Environmental Advisory Service (MEAS) to assess if there is the need for further archaeological mitigation, before or during construction. To achieve this, MEAS recommended that 14 25m-long evaluation trenches be excavated, evenly distributed across the development area.

A previous heritage assessment, carried out by CgMs in 2014, highlighted the potential for prehistoric remains to be present within the site boundary, due to the recovery of lithics in and around the site.

Due to groundworks associated with the construction of a road, three of the trenches could not be opened and others had to be moved from their proposed locations. Although rising ground water and flooded trenches presented less than ideal conditions for excavation, this did not impact on the identification of archaeological remains within the remaining trenches.

Ten trenches returned negative results and a single trench yielded the remains of a ditch. There were no finds or deposits suitable for palaeoenvironmental sampling and the feature was not illustrated on any historic mapping and was therefore, undated. The Heritage Assessment had highlighted the potential for prehistoric deposits to be present within the development area, but no significant archaeological remains were revealed. There are no recommendations for further archaeological mitigation.

1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1 This document reports on the results of an archaeological trial-trench evaluation on land at Wango Lane, Aintree, Merseyside (NGR SJ 3879 9840), undertaken in February 2020. The work was carried out by Northern Archaeological Associates Ltd (NAA) on behalf of Mullberry Homes Ltd in order to meet a requirement of planning consent (condition 8) for a proposed development of up to 43 residential units, with vehicular access, landscaping, and associated works (Planning Ref: DC/2017/02298).

1.2 All archaeological works were undertaken in accordance with a Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI) (NAA 2019) approved by Merseyside Environmental Advisory Service (MEAS). The WSI contained proposals for 14 trenches measuring 25m in length by 1.8m wide to be excavated within the development area (Fig. 2). Upon commencement of the archaeological work, a large portion of the site had been stripped and a roadway laid down through the centre of the area. This meant three planned trenches (5, 13, 14) could not be excavated and, following consultation with MEAS, they were removed from the scope. The positions of the remaining trenches were altered to avoid areas of spoil, waterlogged areas and trees.

1.3 All archaeological works were undertaken in accordance with relevant standards, guidance and best practice published by English Heritage (2008) and Historic England (2015a) and the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists (CIfA) (2014a; 2014b). All archaeological fieldwork was subject to post-excavation assessment and reporting. If warranted, the results of the work will also be published in an appropriate journal. Copies of all reports will be deposited with the Historic Environment Record (HER) held by MEAS, the recipient museum service and English Heritage.

2.0 LOCATION, TOPOGRAPHY AND GEOLOGY

Location

The proposed development (hereafter known as ''the site) is centred at NGR SJ 3879 9840 and is situated immediately to the east of the town of Aintree in an area of flat low-lying land, once a floodplain to the River Alt, at a height of c.12m above Ordnance Datum (aOD) (Fig. 1). The site is an irregularly shaped field of 1.75ha, which is heavily overgrown and populated with numerous self-seeded trees.

Plate 1: Overview of the site, facing west

Geology and soils

2.1 The drift geology for the majority of the study site comprises Shirdley Hill Sand Formation with pockets of boulder clay. The solid geology of the site is Wilmslow Sandstone Formation (British Geological Survey 2018).

3.0 SUMMARY ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

3.1 A previous heritage assessment (CgMs 2014) highlighted the potential for prehistoric (particularly Neolithic) remains to be present within the proposed development boundary. The report identified that the site is the location of a single findspot of a Neolithic flint core and lies south-west of a further findspot of a Neolithic sandstone axe; the latter findspot was evaluated but did not produce any further dating, though did record three undated pits (AOC 2015, 87). A further assessment by AOC (*ibid*.) highlighted the presence of other Mesolithic and Neolithic flints along the M58 corridor and confirmed the presence of further Neolithic and Mesolithic sites in the Alt Valley.

4.0 AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

Archaeological trial-trenching

The main aim of the trial-trenching was to assess the potential for the presence of archaeological remains. Where remains were present, the trial-trenching aimed to confirm their location, extent, nature, date and importance, in order that an informed assessment of the impact of the development upon these remains could be undertaken and a suitable mitigation strategy agreed.

4.1 The objectives of the archaeological trial-trenching were to:

- establish the presence, nature, extent, preservation and significance of any archaeological remains within the trenches;
- provide a detailed record of any such archaeological remains;
- recover and assess any associated structural, artefactual and environmental evidence;
- determine which areas within the footprint of the proposed scheme require archaeological mitigation in the form of preservation in situ, open area investigation in advance of construction, or monitoring of soil stripping during construction works;
- prepare an illustrated report on the results of the trial-trenching to be deposited with the HER held by MEAS and the National Record for the Historic Environment (NHRE);
- evaluate the potential for further unrecorded significant archaeological remains to be present within the site; and
- undertake a scheme of work, in line with current professional standards (English Heritage 2008, CIfA 2014b).

4.2 The requirement for any further mitigation will be agreed through consultation between Mullberry Homes Ltd and MEAS.

5.0 METHODOLOGY

Trial-trenching

5.1 Eleven trial-trenches measuring approximately 25m by 1.8m were excavated within the site. A further three planned trenches were not excavated because these areas had already been subject to groundworks associated with the construction of a road. MEAS was consulted regarding the trench arrangement, and it was agreed necessary to realign some trenches to avoid spoil heaps, areas of waterlogging and trees.

Machine excavation

5.2 The initial site works comprised the stripping of overburden within each trench. The removal of overburden (vegetation, turf, loose stones, rubble, made ground, tarmac, concrete, hardcore, modern building debris, topsoil and subsoil, etc) was undertaken using a back-acting 13-ton mechanical excavator fitted with a ditching bucket. Within the trenches, soil removal was supervised by an archaeologist.

5.3 The excavator removed the overburden, under archaeological supervision, to a depth at which significant archaeological deposits were identified or down to natural subsoil deposits, whichever was encountered first. Mechanical excavation ceased in any areas where archaeological remains deemed to be significant by the monitoring archaeologist were identified. Thereafter, all archaeological work was undertaken by hand.

Hand excavation

5.4 Where structures, finds, soil features or layers of archaeological interest were exposed, the archaeologist cleaned, assessed, and excavated by hand, then sampled and recorded these features as appropriate.

5.5 Hand excavation of archaeological features (where present) was undertaken in order to characterise the site's archaeology and ensure recovery of artefactual and environmental evidence.

Recording

5.6 Trenches were located to the National Grid using a GPS. The data was then transferred to AutoCAD software and reproduced for incorporation within the final report. All levels were tied into Ordnance Datum.

5.7 A drawn record of all archaeological features was made at an appropriate scale. Sections/profiles were drawn at a scale of 1:10 and their location identified on the appropriate trench plan. Representative sections of blank trenches and plans of archaeological features were drawn at a scale of 1:20. Drawings will include appropriate data on levels relative to Ordnance Datum.

5.8 Written descriptions of archaeological features/deposits were recorded on pro-forma context sheets, using standard archaeological recording conventions.

5.9 A photographic record of the site was made using digital photography and monochrome prints in accordance with Historic England guidance (Historic England 2015b).

6.0 RESULTS

6.1 Of the 14 proposed trenches, only 11 were excavated. Trenches 5, 13, and 14 were not excavated as these areas had been disturbed by the construction of a road prior to the commencement of archaeological investigations. It was also necessary to move or realign other trenches to avoid spoil heaps, trees or other obstructions. The excavated trenches were on average 25m long and 1.8m wide.

Plate 2: Trench 3, facing west

6.2 Ground water was an issue where it was necessary to excavate below the level of the water table. This was little as 0.3m below the modern ground surface in some trenches, so many of them became flooded soon after they had been opened. All trenches were inspected for potential remains before flooding, and those that required hand investigations were drained by pump.

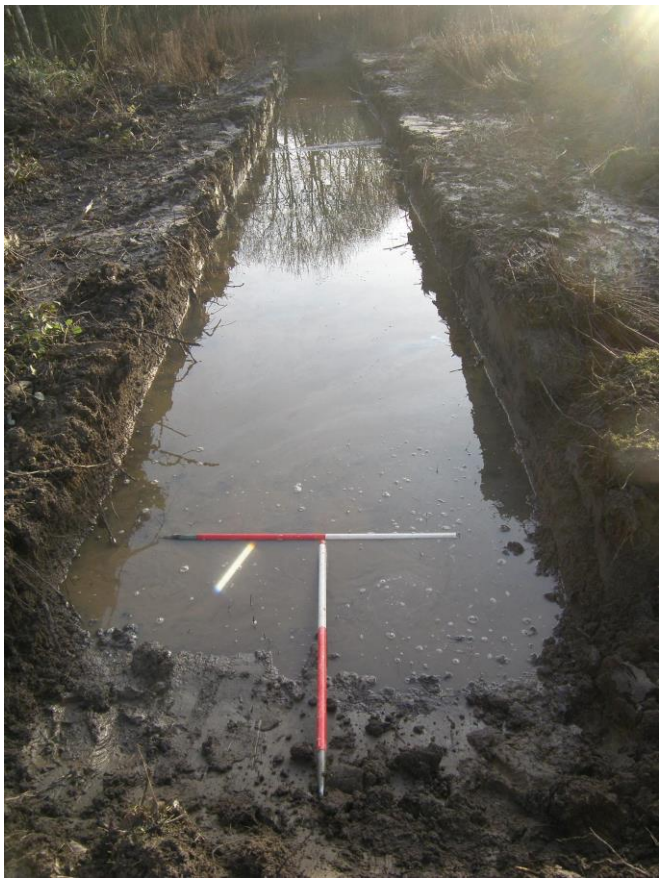

Plate 3: Trench 12 flooded, east facing

6.3 A dark, loamy topsoil (layer **1**) was present across the site, which was recorded to be between 0.25m and 0.45m thick. The topsoil overlay alluvial-silt subsoil deposits, except for in Trenches 2, 3, and 4 at the western limits of the site where it was observed to sit directly on top of natural sands and clays (layer **2**).

Plate 4: Trench 1, east facing

6.4 Most trenches were devoid of features and will not be described in detail here, but are summarised in Appendix 1, Table 2. Several trenches contained deposits that required hand investigations, but only Trench 10 produced features of archaeological potential.

Trench 10 (Fig. 2)

6.5 Ditch **3** was observed to cross Trench 10 on a south-southwest/north-northeast alignment. It had steep sides, a flat base, and measured approximately 1.65m wide and 0.45m deep. Three naturally formed fills were recorded, and none yielded any finds.

6.6 The primary fill (**6**) was a heterogeneous mixture of dark grey sandy-silts and yellow-brown clays which represents a first phase of infilling. Deposit **5** constituted the second and main fill of the ditch and was comprised of a dark brown-grey sandy loam which represents colluvium derived from the local topsoil. The third and uppermost fill, deposit **4**, was a light yellow-brown silty-sand probably deposited through alluvial processes

6.7 The fills indicate that the ditch may have been partially recut (**16**) between fills **4** and **5**,but it is possible that the potential recut instead represented a natural erosion of fill **5** caused by

water flowing along the base of the ditch, which may also have been responsible for the alluvial nature of fill **4**.

*Plate 5: Ditch **3**, north facing*

6.8 Ground water proved problematic during hand excavation; the sides of the ditch were constantly eroding and filling the base, which gave an indication as to how quickly the ditch may have silted up.

6.9 No diagnostic finds or deposits suitable for palaeoenvironmental sampling were recovered and the ditch was undated.

7.0 DISCUSSION

7.1 The Heritage Assessment (CgMs 2014) highlighted the potential for prehistoric remains to be present within the site boundary, due to the recovery of lithics in and around the site.

7.2 The evaluation recorded a single feature Ditch **3**, located at the north-east corner of the site. It appeared to have respect the alignment of the adjacent Leeds-Liverpool canal, which is a short distance away to the east, but was not revealed in trenches 8 or 9 further to the south (Fig 2). No feature in this location is illustrated on any of the historic maps consulted within

the Heritage Assessment (ibid). Due to the lack of diagnostic artefacts or supporting cartographical evidence, the ditch is undated and its origin is uncertain.

7.3 Although rising ground water and flooded trenches presented less than ideal conditions for excavation, this did not impact on the identification of archaeological remains.

8.0 CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

8.1 The evaluation aimed to assess the presence, nature, extent, preservation, and significance of any archaeological remains. Ten out of the 11 excavated trenches returned negative results, and the only feature revealed was an undated ditch in the north-east corner of the site.

8.2 The results of the evaluation suggest that significant archaeological remains are unlikely to be present within the development area, and further work is considered unnecessary.

9.0 ARCHIVE DEPOSITION

9.1 The full archive from the archaeological investigations, including paperwork, drawings, photographs, and digital data, is to be deposited with National Museums Liverpool.

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APPENDIX 1

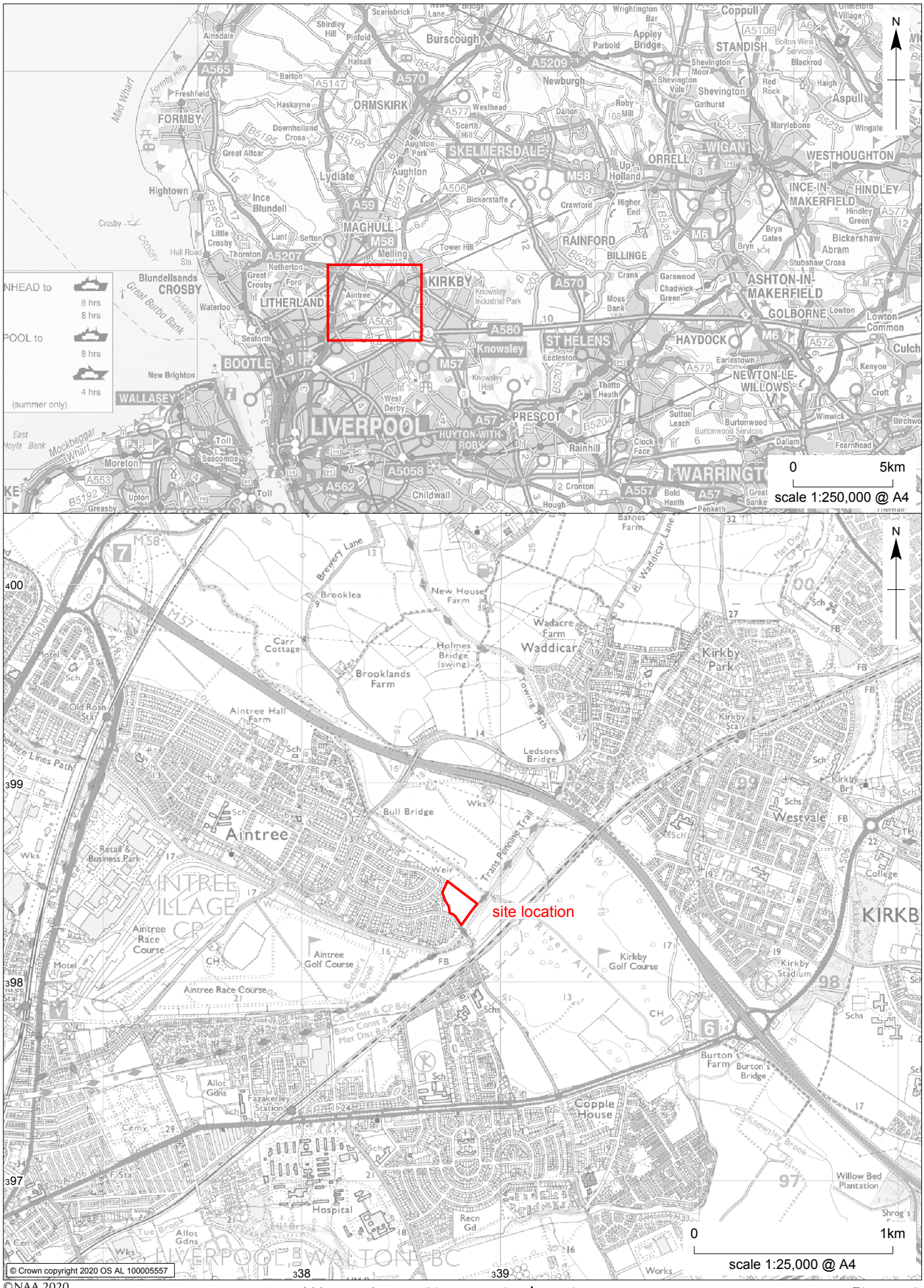
CONTEXT CATALOGUE AND TRENCH SUMMARY

Table 1: Context catalogue

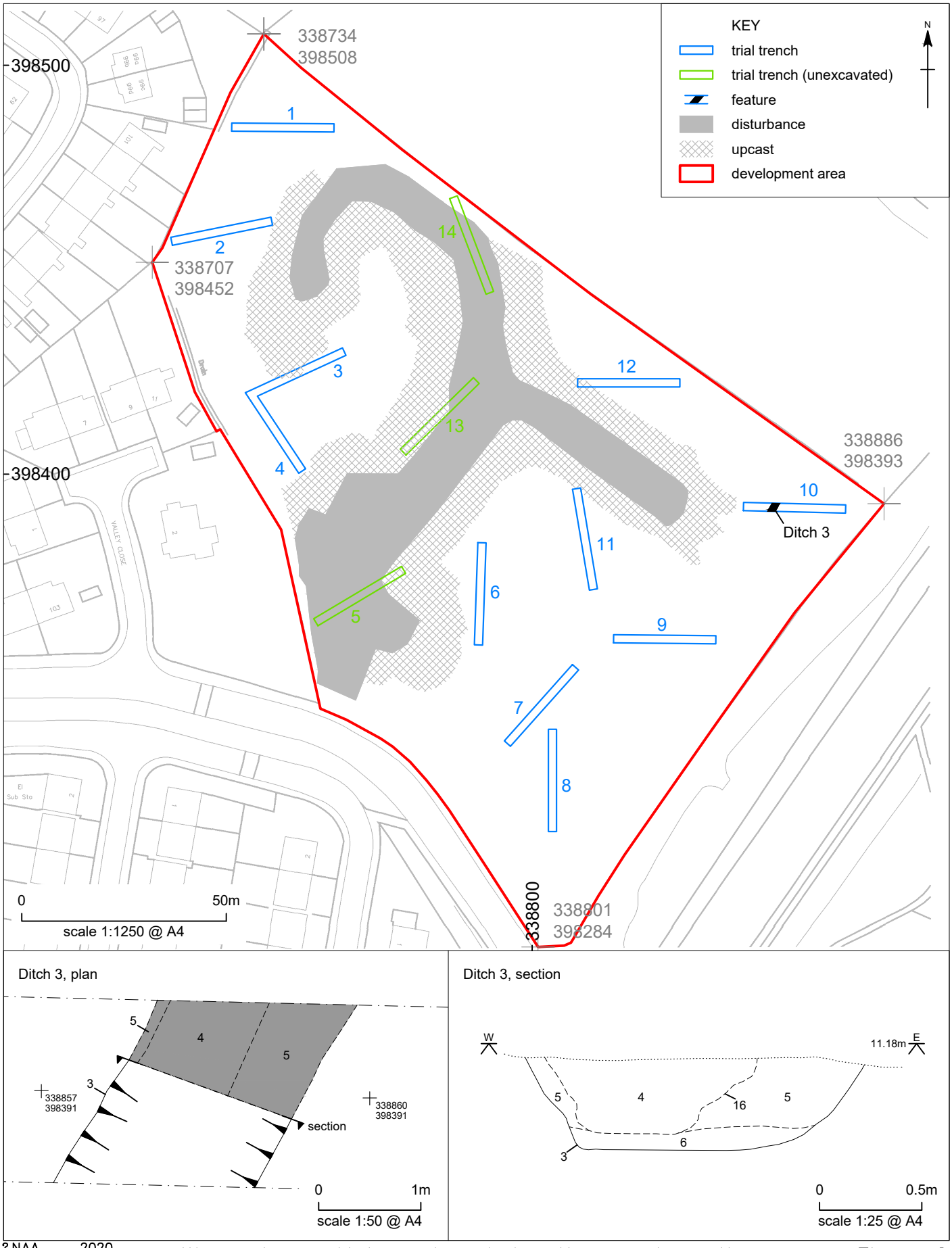
Context	Interpretative description	Trench
1	Topsoil	All
2	Natural	All
3	Cut of ditch	10
4	Tertiary fill of ditch 3	10
5	Secondary fill of ditch 3	10
6	Primary fill of ditch 3	10
7	Subsoil	1
8	Subsoil	4
9	Subsoil	6
10	Subsoil	7
11	Subsoil	8
12	Subsoil	9
13	Subsoil	10
14	Subsoil	11
15	Subsoil	12
16	Cut of tertiary fill of ditch 3	10

Table 2: Trench summary

Trench	Length (m)	Width (m)	Depth of trench (m)	Max. thickness of topsoil (m)	Max. thickness of subsoil (m)	Features present	Contexts
1	22	1.8	0.55	0.30	0.25	-	1, 2, 7
2	21	1.8	0.40	0.40	-	-	1, 2
3	24	1.8	0.40	0.40	-	-	1, 2
4	21	1.8	1.10	0.45	0.40	-	1, 2, 8
5	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
6	25	1.8	0.60	0.30	0.30	-	1, 2, 9
7	28	1.8	0.55	0.30	0.30	-	1, 2, 10
8	21	1.8	0.65	0.30	0.35	-	1, 2, 11
9	27	1.8	0.80	0.30	0.50	-	1, 2, 12
10	25	1.8	0.70	0.45	0.25	Ditch	1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 13
11	25	1.8	0.70	0.35	0.35	-	1, 2, 14
12	24	1.8	0.75	0.35	0.40	-	1, 2, 15
13	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
14	-	-	-	-	-	-	-



Wango Lane, Aintree: site location *Figure 1*



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Wango Lane, Aintree: trench locations and results

Figure 2