

NICO/02



# NICOLL FARM STABLES, ELSTREE

*Archaeological Evaluation*

*commissioned by Darren Andrews Homes*

*November 2013*

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HA Job no.: NICO/02  
NGR: TQ 18358 96002  
Parish: Elstree & Borehamwood  
Local authority: Hertfordshire

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# NICOLL FARM STABLES, ALLUM LANE, ELSTREE AND BOREHAMWOOD, HERTFORDSHIRE

## Archaeological Evaluation

*Headland Archaeology Ltd conducted an archaeological evaluation on land at Nicoll Farm Stables, Allum Lane, Elstree and Borehamwood, Hertfordshire, in order to provide information on its archaeological potential before the construction of five houses on the site. The work was commissioned by Darren Andrews Homes. Seven trenches were excavation within the Development Area (DA). No archaeological remains were revealed, with the stratigraphy consisting of dumps of modern made-ground directly overlying the natural silty-clay deposits. Any earlier soil horizons had been truncated during the modern development of the site, removing any potential for earlier archaeological remains to be uncovered.*

## 1 INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 Planning background

Darren Andrews Homes (the client) has secured planning permission from Hertfordshire County Council for residential development of land at Nicoll Farm Stables (Planning Ref: 10/0021/13). This involves the demolition of existing stables / buildings, and construction of five houses on the site. The site lies just off Allen Lane just to the west of Nicoll Farm (centred at TQ 18358 96002), and covers an area of approximately 0.25ha. This area is henceforth referred to as the Development Area (DA).

Due to the proximity of the DA to known archaeological remains and because of the potential impact of the proposed development on sub-surface archaeological remains, Hertfordshire County Council's Historic Environment Unit (CHEU) advised that a programme of archaeological investigation be undertaken. This was to consist of intrusive archaeological trial trench evaluation, and to be carried out in advance of any development. These works were requested in accordance with government guidance as set out in National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF 2012).

The CHEU produced a brief (CHEU 2013) for the works. A Written Scheme of Investigation was then prepared and submitted by Headland Archaeology (UK) Ltd (2013) on behalf of the client. As part of the WSI production process, Headland Archaeology undertook consultation with the CHEU regarding the requirements for the trial trench evaluation. A suitable trenching sample was

agreed and Headland Archaeology then undertook the site works and produced a report (this document) on the results.

### 1.2 Site Location and Description

The DA lies immediately to the west of Nicoll Farm, Allen Lane, Elstree, and is centred on NGR TQ 18358 96002. It is bordered by open fields to the north and west, Nicoll Farm to the east, and Allum Lane to the south. The current land use is agricultural and consists of a number of stables / buildings in the southern part of the site, with equestrian equipment and open paddock / car-parking areas in the northern part.

Ground-level across the DA slopes down towards the northwest, and the site has apparently been regarded to form a number of different levels, with the entrance to the site at c122.5mAOD, the paddock at 120mAOD, and the car-parking area at the rear of the site between 118 and 119mAOD.

The underlying geology is London Clay (<http://www.bgs.ac.uk/> - accessed 16.7.2013). Geotechnical investigations undertaken on the site in 2013, consisting of five boreholes, uncovered made-ground (a brown sandy clay with occasional gravel, ash, brick, concrete, and charcoal) to depths of between 0.7 and 1.5m (with the exception of the paddock area where made-ground was exposed to a depth of 2.5m). This overlay the London clay – an initial horizon of firm orange-brown blueish-grey silty-sandy-clay to depths of between 2.5 and 4.6m; beneath which was a stiff brown-blue-grey silty-sandy-clay (Geotechnical & Environmental Associates, 2013).

## 1.3 Archaeological Background

The Hertfordshire Historic Environment Record (HER) was consulted during the preparation of this document (HER enquiry number: 125/13).

Findspots of prehistoric flints and Roman pottery have been recorded to the south-west of the DA, along Allum Lane (HER157). Roman clay extraction pits were also recorded in this area (HER768). This reflects the fact that there was some early activity in this general area.

The rural location of the site means that remains associated with medieval / post-medieval field systems may exist. Nicoll Farm itself was constructed in c1500 – the farmhouse is a timber-framed open hall house (Listed Building Grade II: 1642040). A bay was added in c1600, and further alterations made in the 17<sup>th</sup>, 18<sup>th</sup>, and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries. The barn and byre (Listed Building Grade II: 164205) date from the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries. Remains associated with the grounds of the post-medieval Nicoll Farm may therefore exist on the site.

## 1.4 Aims and Objectives

In general, the purpose of the evaluation was to identify and assess the particular significance of any element of the historic environment that may be affected by the relevant proposal (including by development affecting the setting of a heritage asset) (NPPF National Planning Policy Framework). This was achieved by determining and understanding the nature, function and character of any remains on the site, in their cultural and environmental setting.

The local and regional research contexts are provided by Research and Archaeology Revisited: a Revised Framework for the East of England, East Anglian Archaeology Occasional Paper 24 (Medlycott, M. 2011, ed.); Research and Archaeology; A Framework for the Eastern Counties (Glazebrook 1997; Brown & Glazebrook 2000). Evidence retrieved during the works is analysed in light of the objectives contained in these frameworks.

The aims of the investigation include:

- establishing the depth and character of archaeologically 'sterile' overburden
- identifying, characterising and dating any potential archaeological remains within the site; and establish the need or

otherwise for preservation *in situ* of if suitable for the development.

- defining any constraints encountered during the evaluation and any potential constraints for further archaeological fieldwork (e.g. areas of disturbance, service locations, etc.)
- to establish the extent of occupation, if any, associated with Nicoll Farm
- to establish the extent of occupation, if any, associated with the Roman finds to the south-west of the site.

## 2 METHODOLOGY

### 2.1 Site works

The fieldwork took place on the 11<sup>th</sup>, 12<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> November 2013 and was carried out in accordance with the WSI (Headland Archaeology 2013) and the Brief (CHEU 2013). Seven trenches were excavated (Illus 1), spread evenly around the site and covering an area of 132m<sup>2</sup>.

Further excavation took place in the area around Trench 2, where an area c14m by 18m (252m<sup>2</sup>) was machine-excavated down to the natural. The CHEU was informed of this before implementation.

A JCB equipped with a toothless ditching bucket was used to remove topsoil and subsoil in controlled spits under constant archaeological direction. Machine excavation continued until the top of the underlying geological sediments or the first significant archaeological horizon were encountered.

Further excavation required to satisfy the objectives of the evaluation was continued by hand. The stratigraphy of the trench was recorded in full.

### 2.2 Recording

All recording was in accordance with the code of practice of the Institute for Archaeologists (IfA) and the CHEU Brief (2013). The trenches and contexts were given unique numbers. All recording was undertaken on pro forma record cards that conform to accepted archaeological standards. All stratigraphic relationships were recorded.

An overall site plan at an appropriate scale and relative to the National Grid was compiled. The site plan was accurately tied in to the National Grid and a scale version is shown in Illus 1.

A digital photographic record was taken and a metric scale was clearly visible in record photographs.

## 2.3 Reporting and Archives

The results of the works are presented below. A summary report has been prepared for submission to the OASIS database (headland4-159073).

The resulting archive will be organised and deposited in a registered museum (Elstree and Borehamwood Museum - accession number applied for) to facilitate access for future research and interpretation for public benefit. It is recommended that the finds comprising modern material are not retained. All archive preparation will be undertaken in accordance with guidelines published by the IfA on behalf of the Archaeological Archives Forum (July 2007).

## 3 RESULTS

### 3.1 Discussion

The technical detail of contextual information can be found in Appendix I. The following narrative is designed to interpret that technical detail and categorise its significance.

Natural deposits (102, 202, 302, 402, 502, 603, 703) were observed in all trenches at varying levels – between 0.45 and 2.5m beneath the present ground-surface. This was a silty-clay deposit, in a mixture of colours from light to dark grey, dark green, black, yellow-brown, etc.

There was no indication of any earlier soil horizons across the DA. Instead, the ground appears to have been truncated down to the natural deposits. In some places, such as in Trench 3, truncation of the land appears to have cut further into the natural deposits. The land was then raised / levelled with modern brick rubble – the different layers of leveling deposits could be seen in Trenches 6 and 7. This is likely to have taken place in advance of the modern development of the site, with the different quantities of modern brick rubble being accounted for by the desire to level the land. For example, Trench 2, in the northern part of the site, was originally very low-lying so a greater quantity of brick rubble was needed to level the site here.

Topsoil was only observed in Trench 7 (701), as this was the only turfed area evaluated. All seven trenches revealed significant quantities of modern made ground (101, 201, 301, 401, 501, 601, 702). This

consisted primarily of brick rubble, with lumps of concrete, stone, and metal inclusions, set within a mixed silty-clay and gravelly deposit (likely to be redeposited natural).

Three modern pits (or deposits of modern made-ground / brick rubble which had sunk into the natural) were observed on the site. These comprise a sub-linear pit (104) measuring at least 1.8m in length by 1.2m in width, containing pieces of modern brick, metal and white china in Trench 1; and two circular pits (304 & 306 observed in section) c. 0.8m in diameter in Trench 3, filled with a concrete post-base / concrete demolition rubble respectively. These are modern features likely to be associated with the landscaping within the DA and the creation of the extant buildings and equestrian facilities. They are not considered to be of archaeological interest.

### 3.2 Description of the significance

The local and regional research contexts are provided by *Research & Archaeology: A framework for the eastern counties volumes 1 & 2* (Glazebrook 1997 & Brown and Glazebrook 2000) updated in *Research and Archaeology Revisited: A Revised Framework for the East of England* (Medlycott 2011) outline various gaps in knowledge in the Hertfordshire area. Due to the limited evidence for any activity of archaeological significance revealed by the evaluation, the site does not allow for detailed comment on these research aims. However the results from the trial trench evaluation contributes to our general understanding of the development and use of the DA during the post-medieval / modern periods.

### 3.3 Conclusion

Trial trench evaluation has revealed no archaeological features or deposits. It has shown that land within the DA has been truncated down to the level of the natural, resulting in the removal of any former soil horizons and the destruction of any archaeological potential. Following this, brick rubble deposits were used to level the site, presumably as part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century development on the site. The existing stables and were constructed between 1935 and 1965, with the horse exerciser and hay-barn being constructed between 1992 and 1996.

These results correspond with the results of the geotechnical investigations, which showed significant quantities of made-ground (greatest in the paddock area in the northern part of the site), directly overlying the natural.



This has meant that any earlier archaeological remains which may have once existed on the site have been removed. The proposed development will not, therefore, have any impact on any archaeological deposits.

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## 5.1 APPENDICES

### 5.1.1 Trench Register

Trench	Orientation	Description	Length (m)	Depth of overburden (m)	Max depth (m)
1	N-S	Made ground (101), brick rubble based deposit with concrete, stone, metal inclusions mixed with re-deposited gravelly clay natural, 1m thick. Underlain by dark grey and dark green silty clay natural.	12.5	1	1
2	E-W	Made ground (201), re-deposited natural silty clay with frequent brick rubble, concrete and metal inclusions. Multiple dump lenses in the build up, lower frequency of inclusions towards base of deposit. Underlain by natural of light yellow brown and mid grey silty clay with gravel pockets and lenses.	14	2.5	2.5
3	E-W	Made ground (301), re-deposited silty clay and gravels with moderate plastics, brick rubble, concrete and metal inclusions.	11	0.9	0.9
4	NE-SW	Made ground (401), brick rubble based deposit with concrete, stone, metal inclusions mixed with re-deposited gravelly clay natural, 1m thick. Underlain by natural dark grey and dark green silty clay.	11	0.85	0.85
5	N-S	Made ground (501), large concrete slabs with frequent brick rubble and metal inclusions. Very loose with big voids. Underlain by natural of black silty clay with gravel inclusions.	10	1.9	1.9
6	NW-SE	Made ground (601), concentrated brick rubble with gravel and occasional concrete block fragments. Overlying made ground (602), re-deposited dark grey silty clay with occasional brick and metal inclusions and a high frequency of broken tile. Underlain by natural of light yellow grey silty clay.	12	0.45	0.6

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7	N-S	Topsoil, dark brown-grey, clayey silt, loose with occasional small brick rubble inclusions. Underlain by made ground (702), layers of levelling deposits including a clay, concentration of brick rubble layer and mixed silty clay, gravel and brick rubble band. Underlain by natural of dark grey and yellow brown silty clay.	12	1.4	1.4
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## 5.1.2 Context Register

Context Number	Trench	Description	Dimensions and cut/fill details
101	1	Made ground	See trench register
102	1	Natural	See trench register
103	1	Fill of Pit	Dark black grey, silty clay, loose with brick, metal and white china inclusions. L 1.8m+ W 1.2 D unexcavated.
104	1	Pit cut	Sub-linear feature in plan, not excavated. L 1.8m+ W 1.2 D unexcavated.
201	2	Made ground	See trench register
202	2	Natural	See trench register
301	3	Made ground	See trench register
302	3	Natural	See trench register
303	3	Fill of Pit	Dark black silty clay with gravel inclusions, loose. Diameter 0.85m, unexcavated. Filled with concrete post base.
304	3	Pit cut	Circular, Diameter 0.85m, not excavated. Modern featured filled with concrete post base.
305	3	Fill of Pit	Dark black silty clay with gravel inclusions, loose. Diameter 0.8m, unexcavated. Filled with concrete demolition rubble.
306	3	Pit cut	Circular, Diameter 0.8m, not excavated. Modern featured filled with concrete demolition rubble.
401	4	Made ground	See trench register
402	4	Natural	See trench register
501	5	Made ground	See trench register
502	5	Natural	See trench register
601	6	Made ground	See trench register
602	6	Made ground	See trench register
603	6	Natural	See trench register
701	7	Topsoil	See trench register
702	7	Made ground	See trench register
703	7	Natural	See trench register

5.1.3 *Photographic register*

Frame no.	Colour	Black & white	Digital	Direction	Description
1			2246	W	Building footings area excavated around trench 2
2			2247	W	Building footings area excavated around trench 2
3			2248	W	Building footings area excavated around trench 2
4			2249	W	Building footings area excavated around trench 2
5			2250	N	Building footings area excavated around trench 2, section shot
6			2251	S	Building footings area excavated around trench 2, section shot
7	1	1	2252	W	Trench 4
8			2253	W	Trench 4
9	2	2	2254	N	Trench 1
10			2255	N	Trench 1
11			2256	N	Trench 5, southern half test pit
12			2257	N	Trench 5, southern half test pit
13			2258	W	Trench 5, southern half test pit, section shot
14			2259	S	Trench 5, northern half
15			2260	S	Trench 5, northern half
16			2261	E	Trench 5, northern half, section
17	3	3	2262	W	Trench 3, eastern half of trench
18	4	4	2263	W	Trench 2
19			2264	W	Trench 2
20			2265	NW	Trench 2
21			2266	NW	Trench 2
22	5	5	2267	E	Trench 3, western half of trench
23			2268	NW	General shots of stripped footings for building in area of trench 2
24			2269	NW	General shots of stripped footings for building in area of trench 2
25			2270	W	General shots of stripped footings for building in area of trench 2
26			2271	W	General shots of stripped footings for building in area of trench 2

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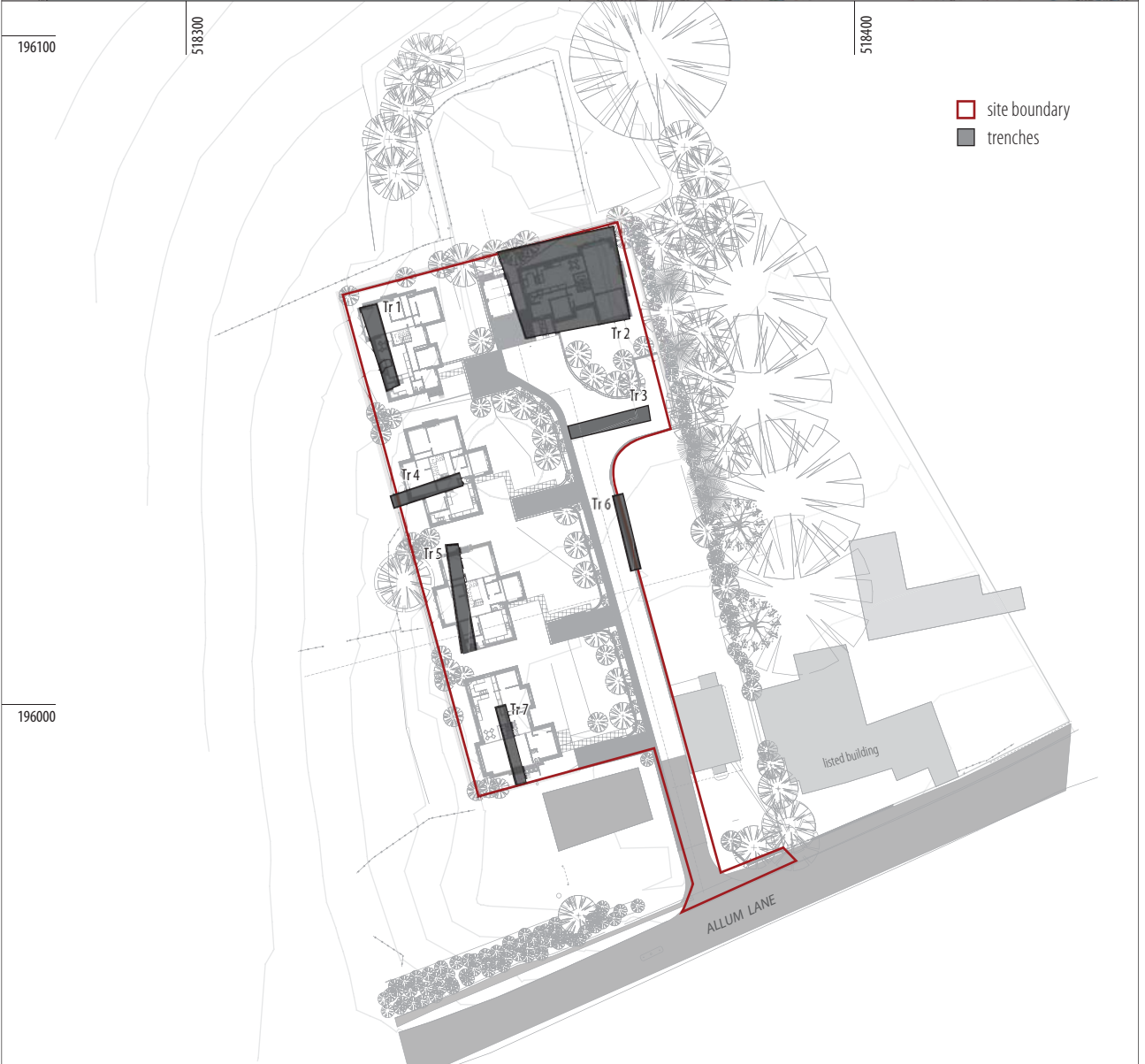
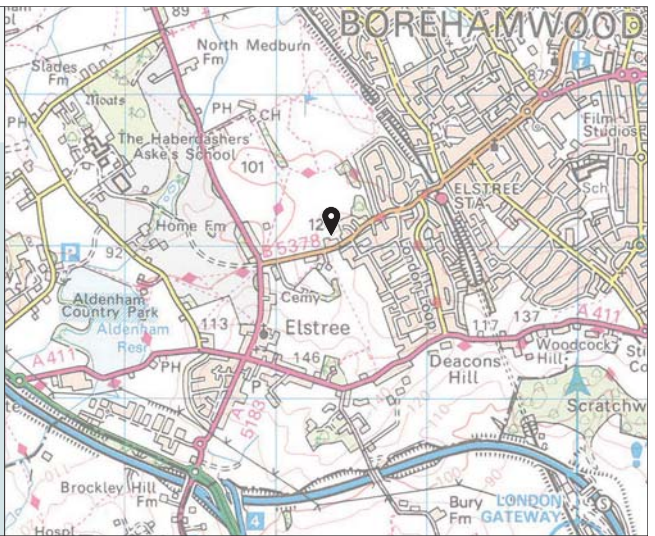
27			2272	n/a	General site shots
28			2273	n/a	General site shots
29			2274	n/a	General site shots
30			2275	n/a	General site shots
31			2276	n/a	General site shots
32			2277	n/a	General site shots
33			2278	n/a	General site shots
34			2279	n/a	General site shots
35	6	6	2307	S	Trench 7
36			2308	W	Trench 7 section
37	7	7	2309	S	Trench 6

5.1.4 Drawings register

Drawing no.	Plan	Section	Description
1		1:10	Trench 7 baulk section
2		1:10	Trench 6 baulk section
3		1:10	Trench 1 baulk section

## 5.1.5 HER Summary

<b>Site name and address:</b> Nicoll Farm Stables, Allum Lane, Elstree & Borehamwood		
<b>County:</b> Hertfordshire	<b>District:</b> Borehamwood	
<b>Village/Town:</b> Borehamwood	<b>Parish:</b> Elstree & Borehamwood	
<b>Planning application reference:</b> 10/0021/13		
<b>HER Enquiry reference:</b> 125/13		
<b>Funding source:</b> Private		
<b>Nature of application:</b> Housing		
<b>Present land use:</b> Stables, sheds and ménage		
<b>Size of application area:</b> 0.25ha	<b>Size of area investigated:</b> 0.25ha	
<b>NGR (to 8 figures minimum):</b> TQ 18358 96002		
<b>Site code (if applicable):</b> NICO13		
<b>Site director/Organization:</b> James Newbould (MIfA) – Headland Archaeology		
<b>Type of work:</b> Evaluation		
<b>Date of work:</b>	<b>Start:</b> 18.11.13	<b>Finish:</b> 28.11.13
<b>Location of finds &amp; site archive/Curating museum:</b> Elstree & Borehamwood Museum		
<b>Related HER Nos:</b> LB1642040, LB164205	<b>Periods represented:</b> N/A	
<b>Relevant previous summaries/reports:</b> N/A		
<p><b>Summary of fieldwork results:</b>  <i>Headland Archaeology Ltd conducted an archaeological evaluation on land at Nicoll Farm Stables, Allum Lane, Elstree and Borehamwood, Hertfordshire, in order to provide information on its archaeological potential before the construction of five houses on the site. The work was commissioned by Darren Andrews Homes. Seven trenches were excavation within the Development Area (DA). No archaeological remains were revealed, with the stratigraphy consisting of dumps of modern made-ground directly overlying the natural silty-clay deposits. Any earlier soil horizons had been truncated during the modern development of the site, removing any potential for earlier archaeological remains to be uncovered.</i></p>		
<b>Author of summary:</b> James Newbould	<b>Date of summary:</b> 10/12/2013	

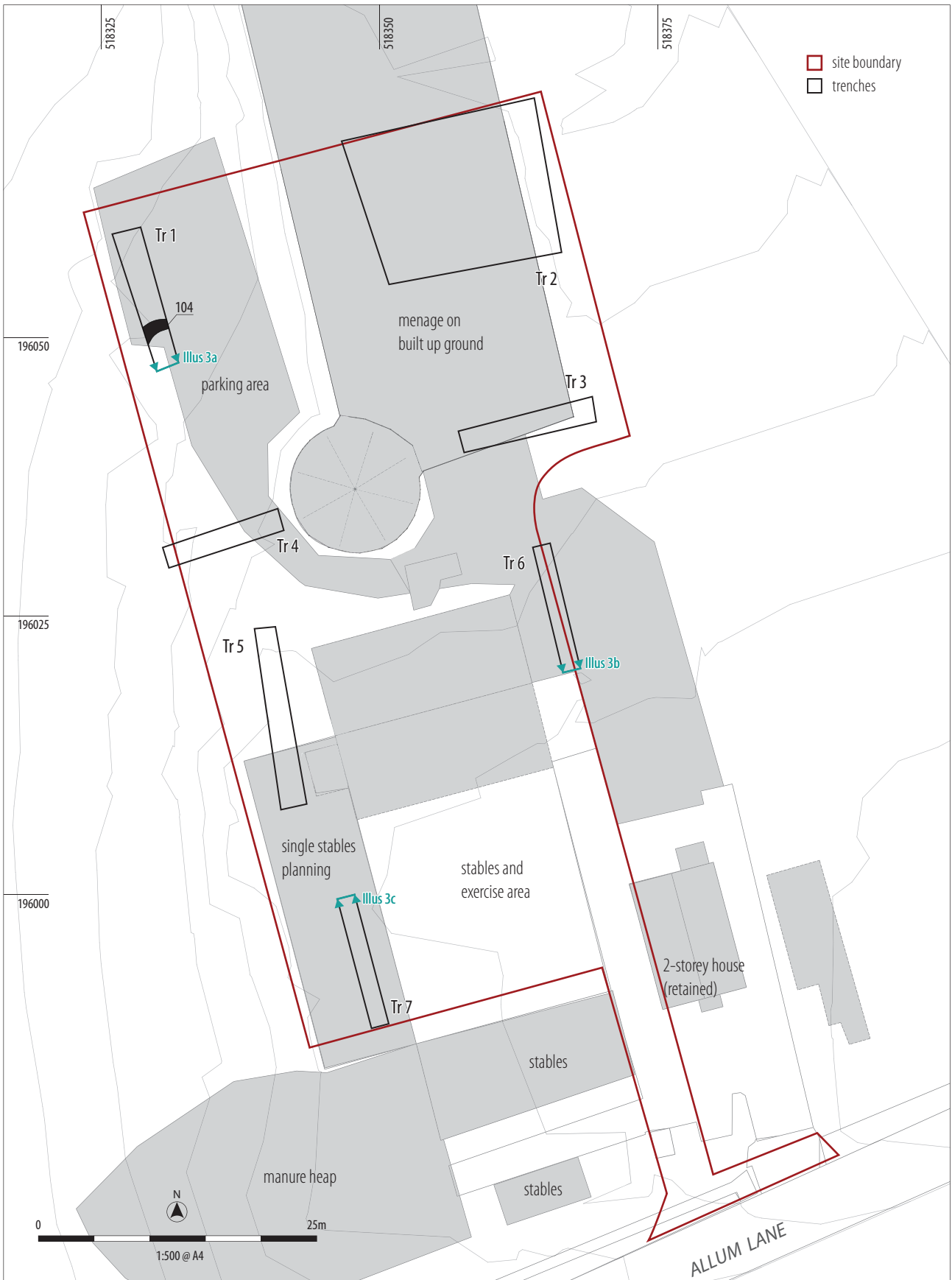


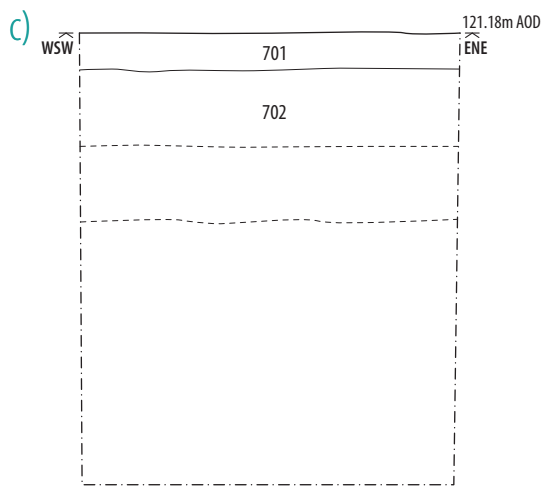
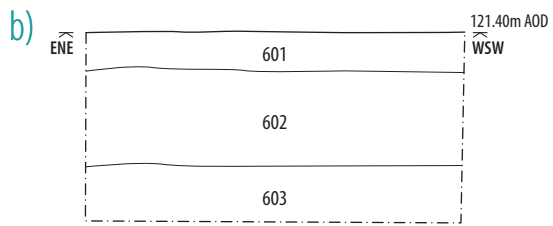
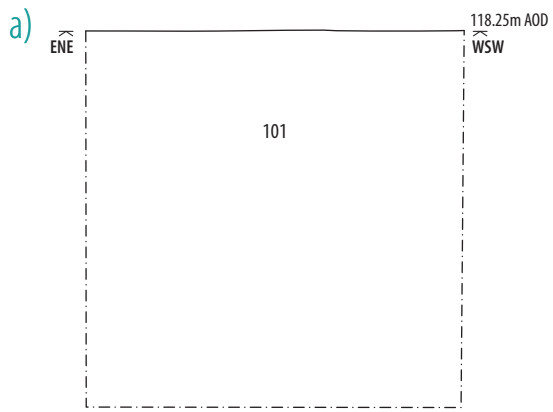
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scale 1:1,000 @ A4











**Illus 4**  
Trench 1, looking north, 1m scale



**Illus 5**  
Trench 2, looking north-west, 1m scale



**Illus 6**  
Eastern half of Trench 3, looking west, 1m scale



**Illus 7**  
Trench 4, looking west, 1m scale



**Illus 8**  
Northern half of Trench 5, looking south, 1m scale



**Illus 9**  
Trench 6, looking south, 1m scale



**Illus 10**  
Trench 7, looking south, 1m scale



**Illus 11**  
Section in trench 5, 1m scale