

**An Archaeological Evaluation at the
former Neal's Scrap Yard, Gilesgate,
Durham.**



Opening Trench 2

ARS Ltd Report No. 2011/49
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Executive Summary

In June 2011 Archaeological Research Services were commissioned by ECUS Ltd, to undertake and archaeological evaluation at former Neal's Scrap Yard, Gilesgate, Durham.

Due to the close proximity of the St Mary Magdalene's Chapel, there was potential to discover archaeological evidence, either structural or non-structural, relating to the chapel. Upon opening the trenches it was clear that the site has undergone extensive modifications in the past, stripping away any archaeology which may have existed. Prior to the area being used as a scrap yard, landfill had been deposited across the entire site. The landfill layers present in both trenches, particularly at the depth observed in Trench 1, indicate why there is so much visible slumping present in the area. There were no features of archaeological or historical significance found in either of the trenches.

Given the nature of this site and the extent of the disturbance, it is suggested that any archaeology which may have been present has likely been removed or destroyed during the landfill. It is therefore recommended that no further archaeological work need take place on site.

1. Introduction

- 1.1 This document reports the findings of an archaeological evaluation undertaken by Archaeological Research Services Ltd, commissioned by ECUS Ltd. at former Neal's Scrap Yard, Gilesgate, Durham.

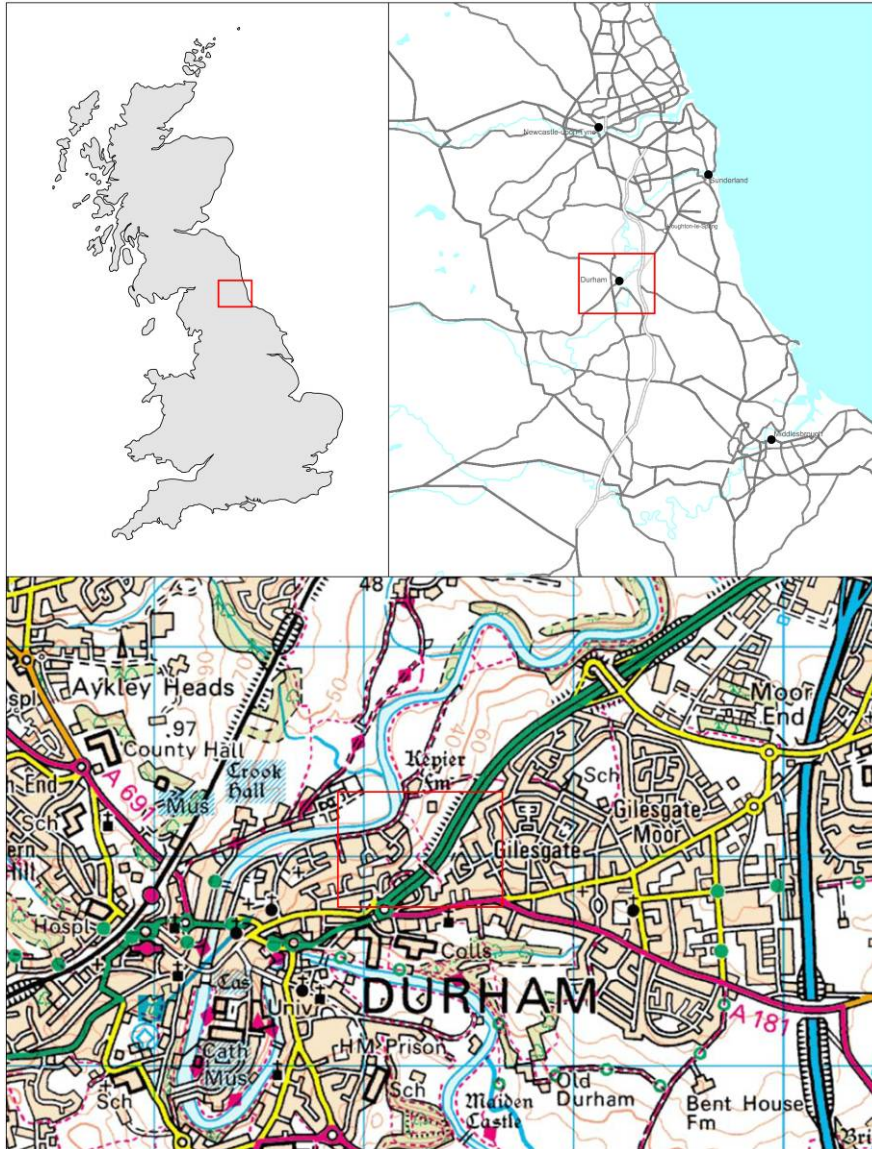


Fig. 1 Location map of the development site.

2. Location and Geology

- 2.1 The site is situated on the north eastern edge of Durham city, centred at NZ 28276 42947, approximately 1 kilometre to the north east of the city centre. The area covers approximately 10570.69sqm. The site is on superficial geological deposits of clay above Pennine middle coal measures comprising mudstone, siltstone and sandstone (BGS online).

3. Background

- 3.1. Until recently the site had been used as an all purpose scrapyard and still has much disturbance and debris relating to this visible on the ground. The site is currently in use as a storage compound for a construction company. Historically the site has been used for storage and several phases of modern buildings are evident on the historic maps. An archaeological desk based assessment undertaken by Andrew Burn of ECUS Ltd in 2011, gives an in depth narrative into the background and history of the site.

4. Aims and Objectives

- 4.1 The aim of the archaeological evaluation was to gather sufficient information to establish the extent, condition, character and date of any archaeological features and deposits within the area of proposed development, and to record any features or deposits at an appropriate level.

5. Methodology

- 5.1 The archaeological evaluation took the form of two evaluation trenches (Fig. 2). The trenches each measured 10 x 2m and were oriented northeast – southwest.
- 5.2 The trenches were opened by machine using a toothless ditching bucket in level spits until the natural was reached, at which point the trench was examined and cleaned by hand. All machine excavation was carried out under careful archaeological supervision.
- 5.5 The deposits were recorded according to the normal principles of stratigraphic excavation. Each context was recorded on pro-forma records which included the following: character and contextual relationships; detailed description (dimensions and shape; soil components, colour, texture and consistency); interpretation and phasing as well as cross-references to the drawn, photographic and finds registers.
- 5.6 The trenches were planned at a scale of 1:50. Trench sides were also drawn in section at a scale of 1:20. All deposits and the base of each trench were levelled and heights are expressed in metres above Ordnance Datum.
- 5.7 A photographic record was maintained including photographs of each trench. All images were taken in black and white print, colour print and digital format, and contain a graduated photographic scale.

6. Evaluation Results

Trench 1 (Figs 3, 4 & 7)

- 6.1 Trench 1 measured 10m in length by 2m in width. A breaker was required in order to penetrate the tarmac layer (001) which constituted the stratigraphically latest layer of the trench. The tarmac layer (001) was a maximum of 0.18m deep. Directly underlying the tarmac (001) was a layer of hardcore (002) which had a depth of 0.3m. A previous road surface (003) underlay the hardcore layer (002) and consisted of a coarse tarmac with a depth of 0.20m. A shallow second hardcore layer (004) underlay the former road surface layer (003) and had a depth of 0.1m. Directly underlying the second hardcore layer (004) was a layer of made ground/ landfill (005). The landfill contained modern plastics, as well as electrical wiring, metal and glass. The depth of this layer could not be determined as it

extended beyond the depth of excavation. Due to the unstable nature of the material, and the confined space to work in, it was not possible to excavate the trench to any great depth, therefore in order to evaluate the landfill deposit, the layer was removed in the northeast corner of the trench to a depth of 3m. Diesel contamination was present in the landfill (004) layer of this trench. There were no features of archaeological or historical significance found in this trench.

Trench 2 (Figs 5, 6 & 7)

- 6.2. Trench 2 measured 10m in length by 2m in width. A layer of broken tarmac and rubble (006) covered this trench to a depth of 0.20m. Directly underlying the rubble (006) was a layer of hardcore (007), which existed to a depth of 0.80m in the northeast end of the trench, and 0.10m in the south west. Directly underlying the hardcore was a layer of made ground/ landfill (008), as in Trench 1. This landfill layer was considerably shallower in Trench 2 than in Trench 1, with depths between 0.2m and 0.6m deep, suggesting that this area was the top of the slope which declines to the north. The landfill (008) in this trench had heavy diesel contamination throughout. There were no features of archaeological or historical significance found in this trench.

7. Discussion

- 7.1. Due to the close proximity of the St Mary Magdalene's Chapel, there was potential to discover archaeological evidence, either structural or non-structural, relating to the chapel. Upon opening the trenches it was clear that the site has undergone extensive modifications in the past, likely stripping away any archaeology which may have existed. The landfill layers present in both trenches, particularly in Trench 1, indicate why there is so much visible slumping present in the area. Prior to the area being used as a scrap yard landfill had been deposited across the whole site. There were no features of archaeological or historical significance found in either of the trenches.
- 7.2. Given the nature of this site and the extent of the disturbance, it is suggested that any archaeology which may have been present, has likely been removed or destroyed during the landfill. It is therefore recommended that no further archaeological work need take place on site.

8. Publicity, Confidentiality and Copyright

- 8.1. Any publicity will be handled by the client.
- 8.2. Archaeological Research Services Ltd will retain the copyright of all documentary and photographic material under the Copyright, Designs and Patent Act (1988).

9. Statement of Indemnity

- 9.1 All statements and opinions contained within this report arising from the works undertaken are offered in good faith and compiled according to professional standards. No responsibility can be accepted by the author/s of the report for any errors of fact or opinion resulting from data supplied by any third party, or for loss or other consequence arising from decisions or actions made upon the basis of facts or opinions expressed in any such report(s), howsoever such facts and opinions may have been derived.

10. Acknowledgements

- 10.1 Archaeological Research Services Ltd would like to thank all those involved with this work, in particular Lee McFarlane, Assistant Archaeology Officer for County Durham, and Andrew Burn, Heritage Consultant of ECUS Ltd.

11. References

Burn, A. 2011. *Former Neal's Scrapyard, Gilesgate, Durham, County Durham. Archaeological Desk Based Assessment.*

Websites:

British Geological Survey: *www.bgs.ac.uk*

APPENDIX I – CONTEXT REGISTER

Context No.	Trench	Description
001	1	Tarmac
002	1	Hardcore
003	1	Tarmac
004	1	Hardcore
005	1	Made ground/ landfill
006	2	Rubble
007	2	Hardcore
008	2	Made ground/ landfill
009	2	Natural clay

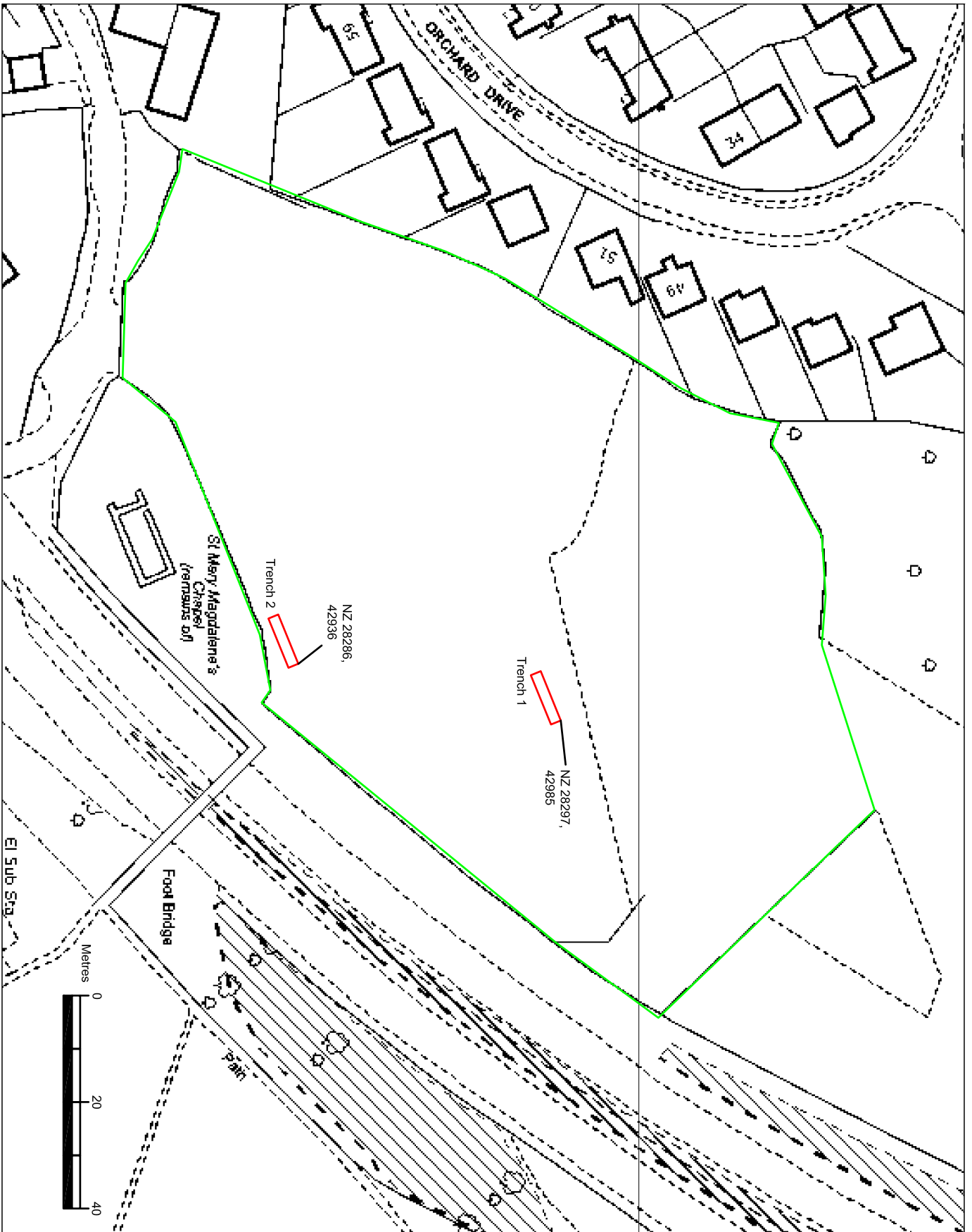


Figure 2

Trench location plan

Scale = 1:1000 @ A4

Key:



Trench



Site boundary

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Ordnance Survey data if applicable
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Figure 3: Trench 1 showing landfill deposit, and test depth in northeast corner.



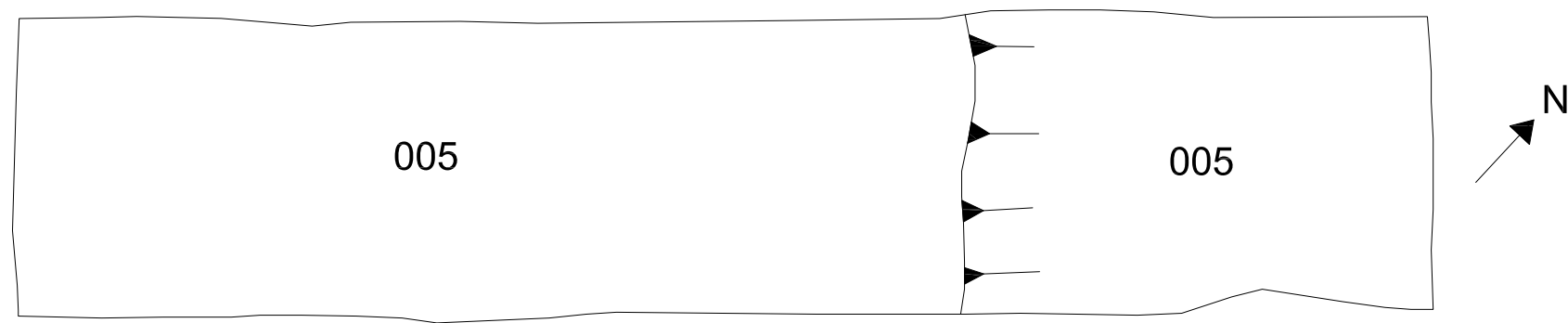
Figure 4: North facing section of Trench 1 showing two levels of hardcore and tarmac.



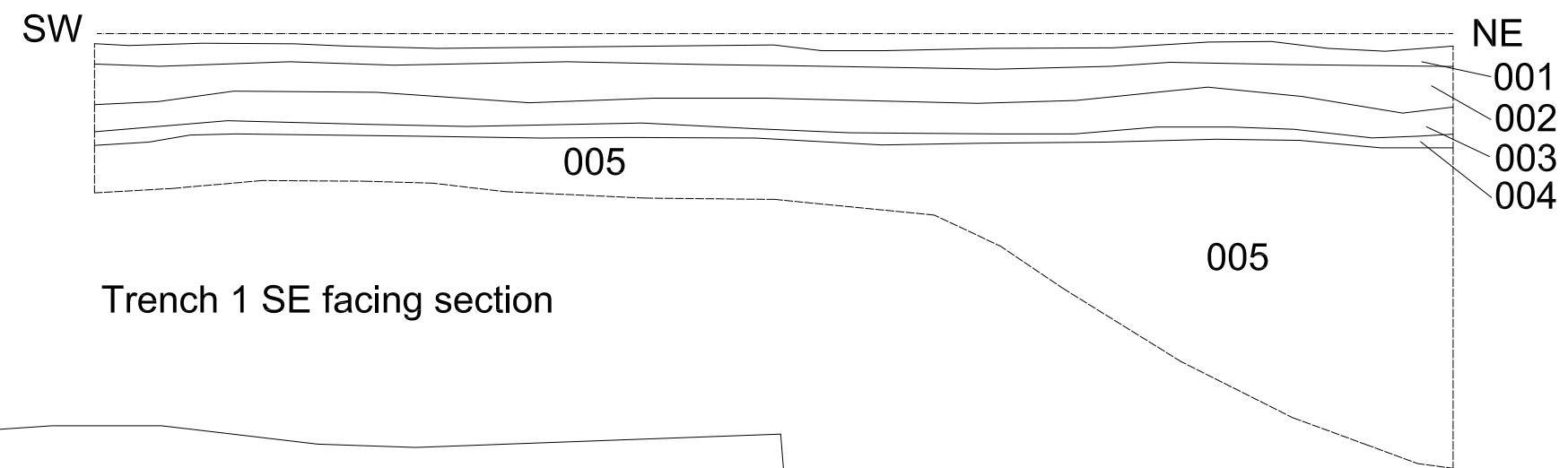
Figure 5: Trench 2 Showing landfill deposit.



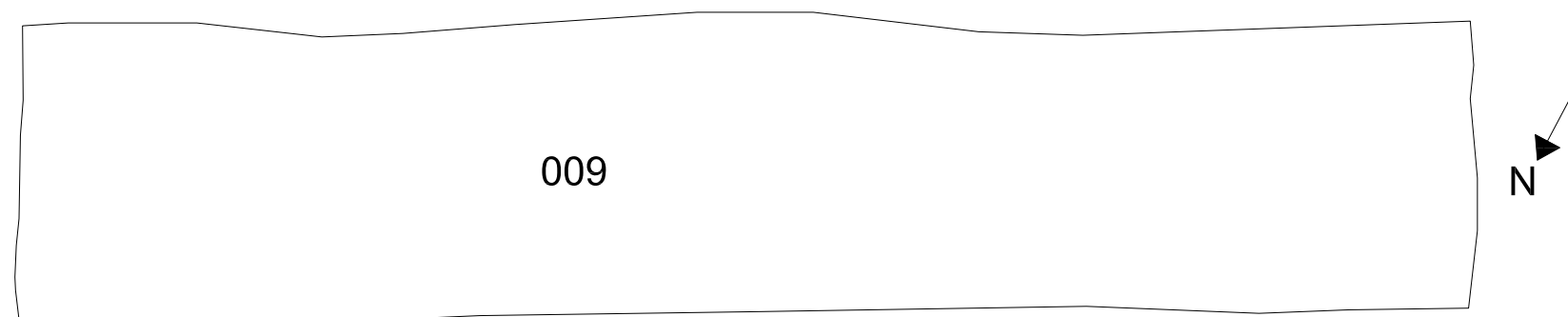
Figure 6: Trench 2 North facing section showing landfill deposit over clay.



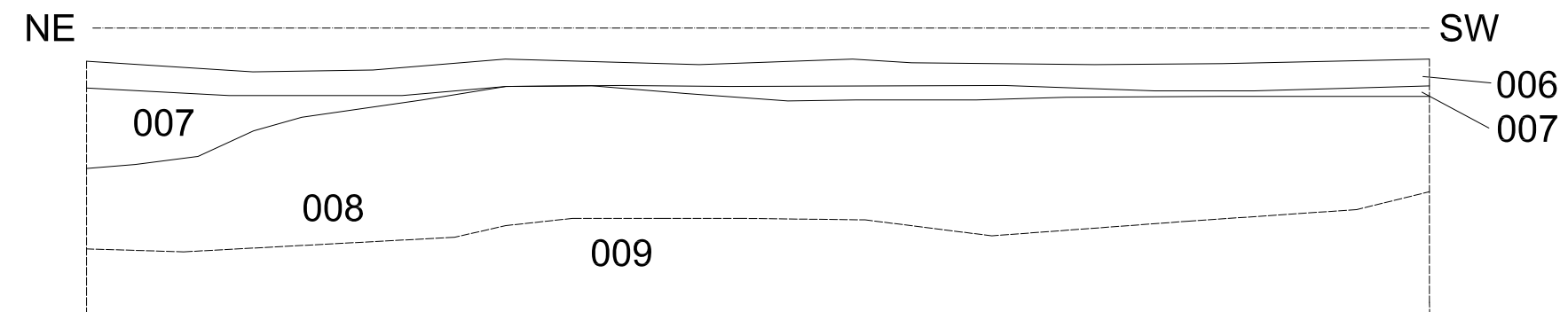
Trench 1 plan



Trench 1 SE facing section



Trench 2 plan

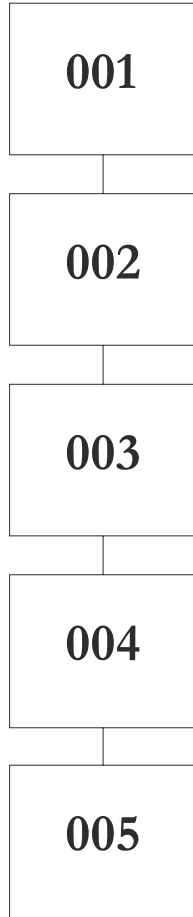


Trench 2 NW facing section

Key: 

APPENDIX III – HARRIS MATRIX

Trench 1



Trench 2

