

**ORCHARD HOUSE,  
BROAD BLUNSDON,  
SWINDON,  
WILTSHIRE.**

**NGR: 414890.190588 (centred)**

## **ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION**

November 2016  
Report No. 1170



**ARCHAEOLOGICAL CONSULTANCY, MANAGEMENT & FIELD SERVICES**

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**Quality Assurance**

This Document has been compiled and authorised in accordance with AMS's Quality Procedures (BS EN ISO 9001: 2008)

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## **SUMMARY**

On 16<sup>th</sup> November 2016 Foundations Archaeology undertook a programme of archaeological evaluation on land at Orchard House, Broad Blunsdon, Swindon, Wiltshire (NGR: 414890.190588 - centred). The project was commissioned by David Boyce of MDB Steel.

The works comprised the excavation and recording of two evaluation trenches within a proposed development area.

The evaluation has identified the presence of a possible Medieval ditch at the northern edge of an area of relatively level ground, which was situated at the south of the site. The ditch most likely represented the northern boundary of a terrace, which extended beyond the south of the site and, as such, the southern part of the site is probably situated at the northern edge of a Medieval or later settlement backland terrace.

The northern part of the site comprised sloping ground, which contained soft, waterlogged peat deposits located downslope from the terrace to the south. The archaeological potential for this part of the site is therefore considered low.

## **GLOSSARY OF ARCHAEOLOGICAL TERMS AND ABBREVIATIONS**

### **Archaeology**

For the purpose of this project, archaeology is taken to mean the study of past human societies through their material remains from prehistoric times to the modern era. No rigid upper date limit has been set, but AD 1900 is used as a general cut-off point.

### **CBM**

Ceramic Building Material.

### **Medieval**

The period between AD 1066 and AD 1500.

### **Natural**

In archaeological terms this refers to the undisturbed natural geology of a site.

### **NGR**

National Grid Reference from the Ordnance Survey Grid.

### **OD**

Ordnance datum; used to express a given height above sea-level. (AOD Above Ordnance Datum).

### **OS**

Ordnance Survey.

### **Post-medieval**

The period between AD 1500 and AD 1900.

### **Prehistoric**

The period prior to the Roman invasion of AD 43, traditionally sub divided into; *Palaeolithic* – c. 500,000 BC to c. 12,000 BC; *Mesolithic* – c. 12,000 BC to c. 4,500 BC; *Neolithic* – c. 4,500 BC to c. 2,000 BC; *Bronze Age* – c. 2,000 BC to c. 800 BC; *Iron Age* – c. 800 BC to AD 43.

### **Roman**

The period traditionally dated AD 43 until AD 410.

### **Saxon**

The period between AD 410 and AD 1066.

## 1 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 This report presents the findings of an archaeological evaluation undertaken by Foundations Archaeology on 16<sup>th</sup> November 2016 on land at Orchard House, Broad Blunsdon, Swindon, Wiltshire (NGR: 414890.190588 - centred). The project was commissioned by David Boyce of MDB Steel.
- 1.2 The evaluation was conducted in accordance with the approved Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI), prepared by Foundations Archaeology (2016), *Standards for Field Evaluation and Assessment in Wiltshire* (CAS 1995) and *CIfA Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Evaluation* (2014).
- 1.3 The code of conduct of the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists (CIfA) was adhered to throughout.

## 2 PROJECT BACKGROUND

- 2.1 Planning permission has been requested for the erection of a single dwelling and associated works under planning application number **S/14/0950/SASM**.
- 2.2 The site is located within the Conservation Area of Broad Blunsdon. It is bounded by Chapel Hill and a drainage ditch to the west and by residential dwellings to the south, east and north. The underlying geology is recorded as *Hazelbury Bryan Formation* and *Kingston Formation* (undifferentiated) - sandstone, siltstone and mudstone, with no superficial deposits recorded (BGS – online viewer). The site is situated on an escarpment slope, on land which generally slopes downwards from south to north. The southern part of the site was located at approximately 126m AOD, whilst the northern part of the site was situated at approximately 123m AOD. At the time of the fieldwork the study area comprised a former grassed-over garden.
- 2.3 A Roman road (*Ermin Street*) is located approximately 450m to the southwest of the site. The site is likely to have been located within the late Saxon estate of Broad Blunsdon. There is no clear evidence for the location of the Saxon settlement, but it may have been focussed around the church and Manor farmhouse, as in the Medieval period. At Domesday, the estate, known as *Blontesdone*, was held by Robert in tenure from Edward of Salisbury and had formerly been held by ‘Aki’ *Tempus Rex Edwardus*; although, a smaller part of the estate may also have been held by ‘Lang’, prior to the Conquest. The Grade II\* listed Church of St Leonard, which is probably of 13th century origin, is located approximately 450m to the northeast of the site.
- 2.4 The site therefore contained the potential for significant archaeological features and deposits, predominantly associated with the Roman, Medieval and Post-medieval periods. This did not prejudice the works against the recovery of finds or features associated with other periods.

### **3 AIMS**

- 3.1 The aims of the archaeological evaluation were to gather high quality data from the direct observation of archaeological deposits in order to provide sufficient information to establish the nature, extent, preservation and potential of any surviving archaeological remains. This would allow reasonable planning decisions to be taken regarding the archaeological provision for the areas affected by the proposed development.
- 3.2 These aims were achieved through pursuit of the following specific objectives:
- i) To define and identify the nature of archaeological deposits on site, and date these where possible;
  - ii) To attempt to characterise the nature of the archaeological sequence and recover as much information as possible about the spatial patterning of features present on the site;
  - iii) To recover a well dated stratigraphic sequence and recover coherent artefact, ecofact and environmental samples;
  - iv) To determine the potential of the site to provide palaeoenvironmental and/or economic evidence and the forms in which such evidence may be present.

### **4 METHODOLOGY**

- 4.1 The WSI stipulated that a single 20m long trench was to be excavated within the proposed development area; however, the trench layout had to be altered, due to the occurrence of soft, unstable peat deposits in the northern, lower part of the site. In the event, a single 4.5m long trench was excavated in the northern part of the site, with a 16.5m long trench excavated in the southern, higher part of the site. The final trench locations are shown in Figure 2.
- 4.2 Non-significant overburden was removed, under constant archaeological supervision, to the top of the archaeological deposits or the underlying natural deposits, whichever was encountered first. This was achieved through the use of a JCB type mechanical excavator, equipped with a toothless grading bucket. Spoil tips were visually scanned for finds.
- 4.3 All excavation and recording work was undertaken in accordance with the WSI and the Foundations Archaeology Technical Manual 3: Excavation Manual.
- 4.3.1 All recording of Trench 1 was undertaken from above, due to the occurrence of deep sections and flooding.

## 5 RESULTS

- 5.1 A full description of all contexts identified during the course of the project is presented in Appendix 1.
- 5.2 **Trench 1:** The trench was situated on ground which sloped downwards from south to north. Natural clay substrates, which also sloped downwards from south to north, were present at an average depth of 1.6m (122m AOD) below the Modern ground surface. These were directly sealed by a relatively substantial, waterlogged soft peat layer (101), up to 0.9m thick. The peat was in turn overlaid by a soil make-up layer (102) and Modern topsoil (103). No archaeological features or finds were present within the trench.
- 5.3 **Trench 2:** The trench was located on relatively flat and level ground, which extended approximately east to west, across and beyond the southern part of the site. The natural clay deposits were present at an average depth of 0.47m (125.75m AOD) below the Modern ground surface. The natural was partially sealed by a clay subsoil (202), which dissipated towards the western end of the trench. The subsoil was subsequently overlaid by Modern topsoil (201).
- 5.3.1 **Features [203]/[207]** comprised a stratigraphically early ditch base [207] and subsequent probable west-northwest – east-southeast aligned ditch re-cut [203]. A single small sherd of pottery, recovered from the fill (204) of the ditch re-cut, indicated a Medieval date for the ditch; although, due to the limited nature of the investigation, a later date could not be entirely ruled out. No other archaeological features or finds were present within the trench.

## 6 DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

- 6.1 The evaluation has identified the presence of a possible Medieval ditch, within Trench 2 at the south of the site. It was located just to the south of, and on a similar alignment to, the northern edge of an area of relatively level ground and most likely represented the northern boundary of a terrace, which extended beyond the south of the site, towards the High Street (Figures 2 and 4). It remained uncertain if the terrace represented a natural or man-made feature. The southern part of the site is therefore probably situated at northern edge of a Medieval or later settlement backland terrace.
- 6.2 Trench 1 was situated within an area of soft, waterlogged peat deposits, which were situated downslope from the terrace located to the south. The archaeological potential for this part of the site is therefore considered low.
- 6.3 The archive is currently held at the offices of Foundations Archaeology, but will be deposited within 12 months with Swindon Museum. A short note will be submitted for publication in the relevant local archaeological journal and an OASIS form will also be submitted to ADS.



## **7 BIBLIOGRAPHY**

CAS. 1995. *Standards for Field Evaluation and Assessment in Wiltshire*. Unpublished. (County Archaeology Service).

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## **8 ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

Foundations Archaeology would like to thank Melanie Pomeroy-Kellinger of Wiltshire Council Archaeology Service and David Boyce of MDB Steel for their help during the course of the project.

## APPENDIX 1: Stratigraphic Data

CXT	L(m)	W(m)	D(m)	DESCRIPTION	LATER THAN	EARLIER THAN
				<b>Trench 1:</b> 4.50m by 1.70m. Natural (122m AOD) = bright blue grey plastic clay, which contained occasional grey mudstone.	n/a	101
101	4.5	1.7	0.9	Layer of variable brown black grey soft peaty clay silt. In-situ peat layer.	natural	102
102	4.5	1.7	0.5	Layer of mixed white grey chalk marl and clay. Probable make up layer.	101	103
103	4.5	1.7	0.2	Topsoil; dark grey brown clay silt, which contained occasional Modern detritus.	102	n/a
				<b>No archaeological features or finds were present within the trench.</b>		
				<b>Trench 2:</b> 16.50m by 1.70m. Natural (125.75m AOD) = variable light grey orange plastic clay, which contained occasional patches of limestone and mudstone.		
201	16.5	1.7	0.35	Topsoil; dark brown clay silt, which contained occasional Modern detritus.	202	n/a
202	10	1.7	0.23	Subsoil; layer of variable grey orange brown clay silt. Dissipated at 10m from east end of the trench.	natural	201
[203]	10.5	1.32	0.56	<b>West-northwest - east-southeast aligned ditch</b> with a sloping north edge. Only partially present within the evaluation trench. Probable re-cut of earlier ditch [207].	206	204, 205
				Contained fills 204 and 205. Uncertain relationship with subsoil 202.		
204	?	0.64	0.31	Fill of ditch [203]; grey brown clay silt, which contained occasional stones, rare charcoal flecks, as well as <b>a small sherd of earlier Medieval pottery</b> (Jane Timby; pers. comm.) and a small fragment of bone.	[203]	201
205	?	1.32	0.56	Fill of ditch [203]; grey brown clay silt, which contained occasional stones.	[203]	201
206	?	1	0.2	Fill of ditch [207]; dark grey to dark brown clay silt, which contained rare stones.	[207]	[203]
[207]	?	1	0.2	<b>Ditch base</b> with a sloping, rounded profile. Only partially present within the evaluation trench. Contained fill 206.	natural	206



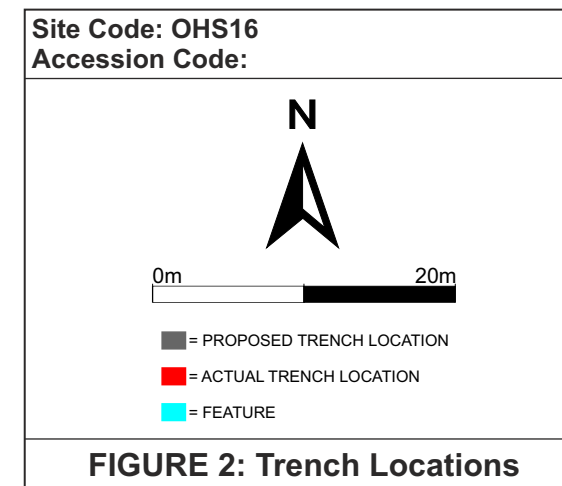
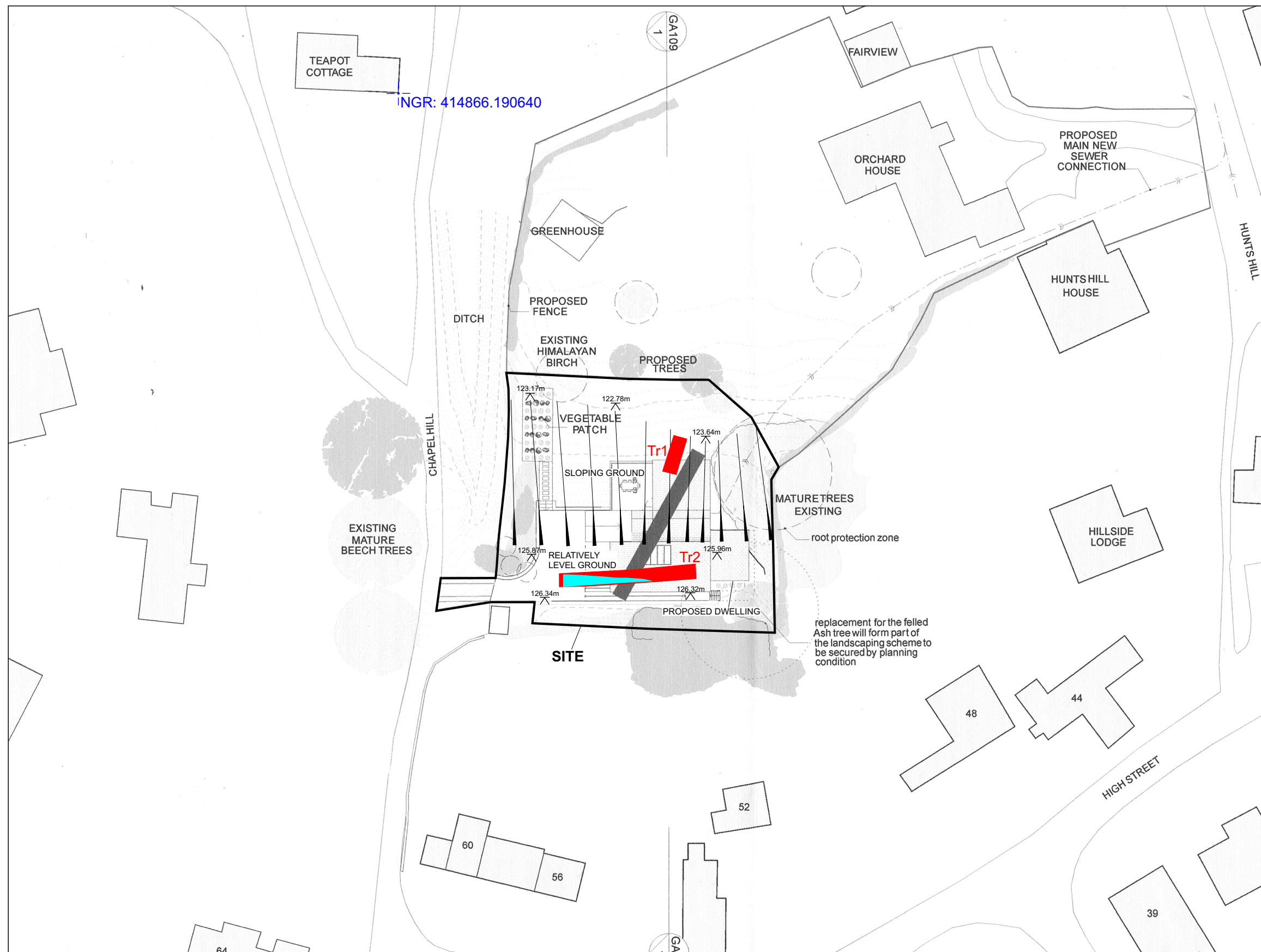
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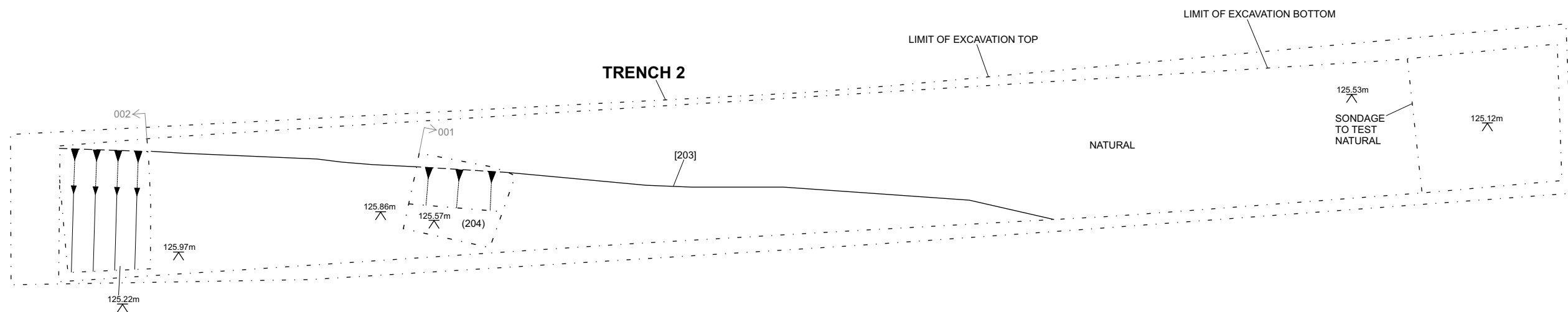
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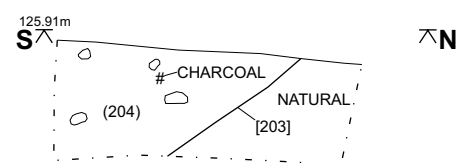
**FIGURE 1: Site Location**







**SEC 001: EAST FACING SECTION [203]**



**SEC 002: WEST FACING SECTION [203] and [207]**

