

**59 MAIN ROAD
ROMFORD
LONDON BOROUGH OF HAVERING**

ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF



**Essex County Council
Field Archaeology Unit**

JULY 2008

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As part of our desire to provide a quality service, we would welcome any comments you may have on the content or the presentation of this report.

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ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF

Client: Great Homes Ltd

NGR: TQ52238977

Site Code: MID 07

Oasis No.: essexcou1- 28360

Dates of Fieldwork: 8th August 2007 to 7th May 2008

SUMMARY

An archaeological watching brief was undertaken on groundworks for the construction of a block of retirement apartments at 59 Main Road, Romford between August 2007 and May 2008. Prior to the commencement of groundworks an existing building ('Highlands') on the site had been demolished.

Three small pits and a short length of ditch were identified and recorded. However, no dating evidence was recovered. One of the pits was of probable recent date whilst the other features may have been post-medieval or earlier. The ditch and one of the pits clearly pre-dated the construction of the former building in the first half of the 20th century.

No evidence for the London to Colchester Roman road or any contemporary landscape or settlement was found. This supports negative evidence from previous archaeological investigations at 63, 63a and 69 Main Road and suggests that there is no Roman settlement on the north side of Main Road between Gidea Avenue and Heath Drive. The exact location of the London to Colchester Roman road is still unknown. It may lie directly beneath the present-day road or perhaps slightly to its south, given that there is a noticeable northwards kink in the route of Main Road in the immediate vicinity of the site.

1.0 INTRODUCTION

This report describes the results of the archaeological monitoring of groundworks associated with the construction of a block of retirement apartments at 59 Main Road, Romford. The fieldwork was commissioned by Great Homes Ltd and carried out by the Essex County Council Field Archaeology Unit (ECC FAU) in accordance a written scheme of investigation prepared by ECC FAU (2007). The project was monitored by David Divers of the Greater London Archaeology Advisory Service.

The development (planning application ref: P1013.06) comprised the demolition of an existing building ('Highlands') and the construction of a new block of retirement apartments in its place. Because the site was located in an area of perceived archaeological potential, and following PPG16 guidance, English Heritage's Greater London Archaeological Advisory Service (GLAAS) recommended to the Local Planning Authority (London Borough of Havering) that a full archaeological condition be placed on planning permission. The archaeological fieldwork was undertaken in response to this condition.

The site archive will be deposited with the Museum of London. A digital version of this report will be submitted, along with a project summary, to the Online Access to the Index of Archaeological Investigations (OASIS) (<http://ads.ahds.ac.uk/project/oasis>).

2.0 BACKGROUND (Fig. 1)

2.1 Topography and Geology

Main Road (A118) is located on the north eastern side of Romford and is a busy route-way linking the A12/A127 interchange at Gallows Corner with the town centre. The development area consisted of a flat, roughly rectangular plot, 85m long by 30-35m wide, located within the suburb of Gidea Park on the north side of Main Road. The plot had formerly been occupied by a large house ('Highlands') which was almost completely demolished by the time of the first site visit. The area to the front and east of the house comprised hard standing with lawned garden containing a tree and large hedge to the rear. Further trees were located around the periphery of the property. A cellar was noted in the south-east corner of the house.

The underlying geology comprised sand and gravel of the Black Park Gravel Formation overlying London Clay.

2.2 Archaeological and Historical Background

Romford is located on the Roman road from London to Colchester and is possibly the site of a Roman posting station (official way-side inn) at *Dvrolitvm*, mentioned in the 2nd Century document known as the Antonine Itinerary. Main Road is believed to broadly reflect the line of the London to Colchester Roman road.

Although there is some finds evidence for a Roman presence in the Gidea Park area (GLSMR 60042) the exact position of the Roman road or the existence of any adjacent road-side settlement has not been established. Three archaeological evaluations undertaken by ECC FAU to the east of the site at 63, 63a and 69 Main Road (Barker 2004, Gadd 1998 and Roy 2003) failed to find any evidence of the road or associated activity. Similar negative results were recorded during trenching further east at St. Neots Sports Ground (GLSMR 062182) by Passmore Edwards Museum and at Romford Golf Course (NMR 1439446) by the Museum of London.

With reference to 1st and 2nd edition OS mapping, prior to the 20th century the site (59 Main Road) lay undeveloped and within the estate and parkland of Gidea Hall. Gidea Hall has its origins as a medieval manor, replaced by an 18th century mansion. Gidea Park was developed from 1911 onwards as a garden suburb and the hall itself demolished in 1930.

The recently-demolished building on the site, 'Highlands', was a substantial former house that fronted onto Main Road. It was built as part of the Gidea Park garden suburb, appearing on the 3rd edition (c.1924) OS map and was subsequently enlarged to the rear.

3.0 AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

3.1 General aims

The aim of the work was to determine the location, extent, date, character, condition, significance, and quality of any surviving archaeological remains exposed during the groundworks.

3.2 Objectives

The research objectives for the project were undertaken with reference to those laid out in *A research framework for London archaeology 2002* (Nixon, et al 2002).

The specific objective of the investigation was to:

- Identify, record and investigate the Roman road or any contemporary landscape or roadside occupation remains associated with it.

4.0 METHOD

Archaeological observation was undertaken on the building contractor's excavation of foundation trenches and associated deep groundworks for service trenches. Watching brief visits were co-ordinated to coincide with episodes of foundation cutting. Most of the foundation trenches were observed, apart from a small area in the south centre of the building footprint and a highly disturbed area, formerly occupied by a cellar, in the south-east corner. All work was carried out in accordance with IFA (Institute of Field Archaeologists) by-laws and guidelines (2001) and complied with Standards and Practices for Archaeological Fieldwork in London (GLAAS 1999). Standard ECC FAU excavation, artefact collection and recording methodologies were employed throughout.

5.0 FIELDWORK RESULTS

The results of the watching brief undertaken on construction groundworks are set out below in sections 5.1 and 5.2. Individual context numbers are cited in brackets and further context information is included in Appendix 1.

The foundation trenches varied in width from 0.6m to 0.8m and in depth from 0.9m to 1.3m, and were excavated across the central part of the site, largely overlying the former house footprint (Fig. 1). In the less disturbed former garden area in the north (rear) of the site, a typical trench section consisted of 0.2m of topsoil (1) above 0.25m of brown clay silt subsoil (2) overlying 0.45m or more of natural orange sandy gravel. Within the footprint of the former building the topsoil had generally been completely removed and the subsoil truncated. In parts, modern rubble overlay subsoil and in others it directly overlay natural gravel.

The section of service trench 1, excavated between the new building and Main Road, comprised c.0.15m of tarmac and concrete above a similar depth of orange gravel make-up. This overlay a 0.15-0.20m thick band of dark brown ash containing fragments of modern brick and a thin (c.0.05m) intermittent layer of buff sand. Beneath this, c.0.3m of brown clay silt subsoil sealed the natural orange gravel which was exposed at the foot of the trench

section. Service trench 2, located a few metres to the north-east, also cut through modern hard-standing deposits, though topsoil survived close to the southern property boundary.

5.1 Foundation Trenches

Three features (4, 6 and 10), that may have been small pits or post-holes, were observed in section only. A larger ditch (8) was also recorded. No dating evidence was recovered from any of these features. All features were overlain by modern/disturbed deposits and had all probably been truncated to some degree. Features 4, 6 and 8 cut natural gravel and feature 10 appeared to cut subsoil.

Pit 4, in the north-west of the site (Fig. 2), was small and poorly-defined. It was 0.5m wide by 0.42m deep, with a concave profile (Fig. 3, Section 4), and was filled with grey brown silty clay (3). Pit 6 was recorded in section in the north-east of the development area (Fig. 2). This measured 0.36m wide by 0.46m deep, was steep-sided with a concave base (Fig. 3, Section 2) and was filled with gravelly clay silt fill (5). The third pit (10) was observed in the corner of a foundation trench in the south-east of the site (Fig. 2). This was in excess of 0.3m long and wide and 0.42m deep. It had near-vertical sides and a flattish bottom (Fig. 3, Section 3) and was filled with mid greyish brown clay silt (9) (Plate 1). Pit 10 appeared to cut the adjacent subsoil (2) and may therefore be of more recent date than the other undated features.

Ditch 8 was observed in several adjacent trench sections (Plate 2) associated with the construction of a fire escape stair (Fig. 2) but was not visible in wall foundation trench sections further west. The ditch was aligned east-west and perhaps curved slightly to the south-west. It was 1.2m wide and 0.57m deep with 50°-60° sides and a flattish base (Fig. 3, Section 1), and was traced for a distance of c.4m. Although a few modern finds appeared to have been pushed into the top of the ditch, the bulk of the brown gravelly clay silt fill (7) was finds-free.

Several other cut features were observed that contained clearly modern finds and were probably associated with the demolished 20th century building. One large feature containing a banded gravel fill also contained dried grass and was clearly of recent origin. A dark silt layer (Fig. 2) was noted along the north-west side of the new building. This was sealed between two layers of gravel and initially appeared to be of potential archaeological significance. However, closer examination revealed that the silt contained pieces of plastic and was therefore probably associated with a modern pathway around the edge of the former building.

5.2 Service Trenches

Two service trenches (1 and 2) were observed to the south of the building (Fig. 2). Service trench 1 led from the front door of the new building to the corner of the existing gateway on the main Road frontage. This curving trench was approximately 18m long by 0.35m wide and 0.85m deep. One large feature (Fig. 2) containing further fragments of 'frogged' brick was observed cutting through the modern brown ash layer. No remains of archaeological significance were identified.

A second service trench (trench 2) ran from the new building to the Main Road frontage a few metres to the north-east of the first. Trench 2 was shallow, only cutting through modern overburden and topsoil, and did not expose, or intrude below, the potential archaeological horizon.

6.0 CONCLUSIONS

No dated archaeological remains were identified. Pit 6 and ditch 8 were both located within the footprint of the former building and therefore are likely to pre-date its construction in the first half of the 20th century. No boundaries are shown crossing the site on the first two editions of the Ordnance Survey map suggesting that if ditch 8 was the remains of a significant boundary, rather than say a short drainage channel, it is likely to have been in existence and passed out of use prior to the second half of the 19th century. Pit 10 may have been the most recent of the recorded features. It had a greyer, more modern looking fill, and its location immediately in front of the former building suggests it was in some way associated with that structure. The lack of general unstratified finds of archaeological significance also suggests the absence of settlement activity in this vicinity prior to the development of Gidea Park.

7.0 ASSESSMENT OF RESULTS

The general aim of the fieldwork has been achieved in that the remains of four archaeological features were identified and recorded within the development area. One of these features appears modern, whereas the remainder are likely to be post-medieval, or perhaps earlier, in date. However, it is not possible to attribute any real significance to these remains due to their limited number, their scattered distribution and their complete lack of datable finds.

Other than along the line of its foundation trenches, truncation from the former building did not appear to have been too severe. Surviving depths of archaeological remains were relatively substantial implying that there had been little truncation to the natural gravel surface although, clearly, there had been episodes of levelling and disturbance above it. Archaeological remains were identified both within the footprint of the former building and beyond, suggesting that its construction had had a negligible effect on survival and that the overall small number of archaeological features was a genuine reflection of the archaeological potential of the site.

No evidence of the Roman road or any contemporary landscape or settlement was found. This further supports the results from the three other near-by sites (namely 63, 63a and 69 Main Road) where no Roman evidence was found. It therefore seems unlikely that there is any Roman settlement on the north side of Main Road between Gidea Avenue and Heath Drive. The exact location of the London to Colchester Roman road in this part of Romford is still unknown. It may lie directly beneath the present-day road or perhaps slightly to its south, given that there is a noticeable northwards kink in the route of Main Road in the immediate vicinity of the site.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The fieldwork was commissioned by Martin Gray of Arcady Architects on behalf of Great Homes Ltd. Their co-operation and assistance throughout the fieldwork is gratefully acknowledged. The archaeological watching brief was undertaken by Trevor Ennis of the ECC Field Archaeology Unit. Report illustrations were by Andrew Lewsey (ECC FAU). The project was managed by Mark Atkinson of ECC FAU and monitored on behalf of the local planning authority by David Divers of GLAAS.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- | | | |
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APPENDIX 1: CONTEXT DATA

All dimensions given in metres.

Context	Type	Description	Period
1	Topsoil	Dark grey brown sandy clay silt, 0.2m thick	-
2	Subsoil	Brown to greyish brown clay silt, 0.25m thick	-
3	Fill of 4	Grey brown silty clay	Post-med.?
4	Pit	0.5m wide x 0.42m deep	Post-med.?
5	Fill of 6	Brown clay silt	Post-med.?
6	Pit	0.36m wide x 0.46m deep	Post-med.?
7	Fill of 8	Brown gravelly clay silt	Post-med.?
8	Ditch	4m+ x 1.2m x 0.47m deep	Post-med.?
9	Fill of 10	Mid greyish brown clay silt	Modern?
10	Pit	0.3m+ x 0.3m+ x 0.42m deep	Modern?

APPENDIX 2: CONTENTS OF ARCHIVE

SITE NAME: 59 Main Road, Romford

SITE CODE: MID 07

Index to Archive:

1. Introduction

- 1.1 GLAAS Advice letter
- 1.2 ECC FAU WSI

2. Research Archive

- 2.1 Client Report

3. Site Archive

- 3.1 Context Record Register
- 3.2 Context Records (1-10)
- 3.3 Plan Register
- 3.4 Section Register
- 3.5 4 x A4 plan/section sheets
- 3.6 Location plan
- 3.7 Photographic Register
- 3.8 Site Photographic Record (1 Set of colour print-outs + digital images on disk)
- 3.9 Miscellaneous notes/plans

Finds

No finds were recovered/retained

APPENDIX 3: OASIS SUMMARY SHEET

OASIS DATA COLLECTION FORM: England

[List of Projects](#) | [Search Projects](#) | [New project](#) | [Change your details](#) | [HER coverage](#) | [Change country](#) | [Log out](#)

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OASIS ID: essexcou1-28360

Project details

Project name	Archaeological Watching Brief at 59 Main Road, Romford
Short description of the project	A watching brief was undertaken at 59 Main Road, Romford between August 2007 and May 2008 during groundworks for the construction of a new block of retirement apartments. Three small pits and a short length of ditch were identified. No dating evidence was recovered. No evidence for the London to Colchester Roman road or any contemporary landscape or settlement was found.
Project dates	Start: 08-08-2007 End: 07-05-2008
Previous/future work	No / No
Any associated project reference codes	1802 - Contracting Unit No.
Type of project	Recording project
Current Land use	Other 3 - Built over
Monument type	PITS Uncertain
Monument type	DITCH Uncertain
Significant Finds	NONE None
Investigation type	'Watching Brief'
Prompt	Direction from Local Planning Authority - PPG16

Project location

Country	England
Site location	GREATER LONDON HAVERING ROMFORD 59 Main Road, Romford
Study area	2550.00 Square metres
Site coordinates	TQ 5223 8977 51.5856929511 0.197571860267 51 35 08 N 000 11 51 E Point

Project creators

Name of Organisation	Essex County Council Field Archaeology Unit
Project brief originator	Greater London Archaeological Advisory Service
Project design originator	Essex County Council Field Archaeology Unit

Project director/manager Mark Atkinson
Project supervisor Trevor Ennis
Type of sponsor/funding body Developer

Project archives

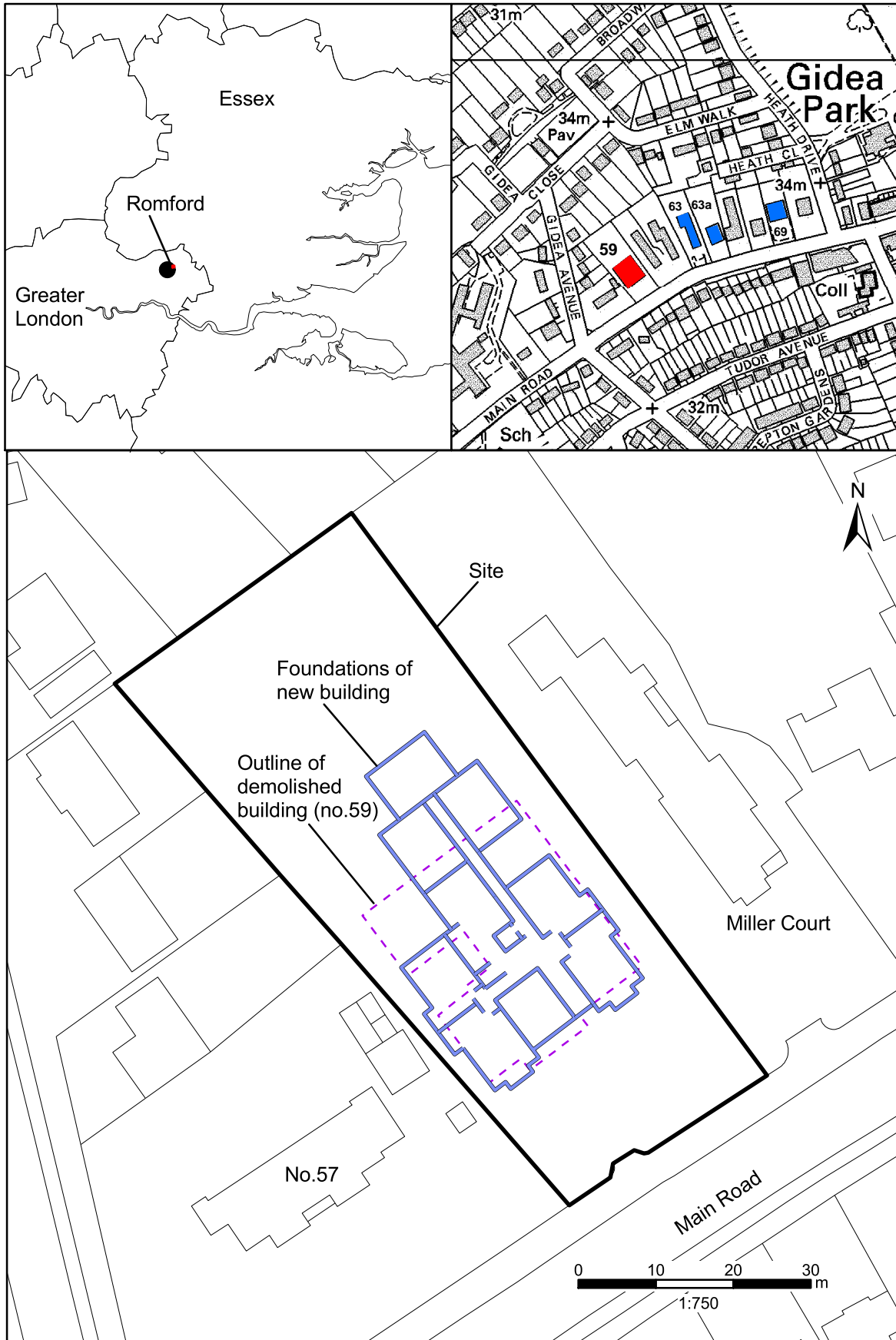
Physical Archive Exists? No
Digital Archive recipient Museum of London
Digital Archive ID MID 07
Digital Contents 'Stratigraphic'
Digital Media available 'Images raster / digital photography'
Paper Archive recipient Museum of London
Paper Archive ID MID 07
Paper Contents 'Stratigraphic'
Paper Media available 'Context sheet', 'Miscellaneous Material', 'Photograph', 'Plan', 'Report', 'Section'

Project bibliography 1

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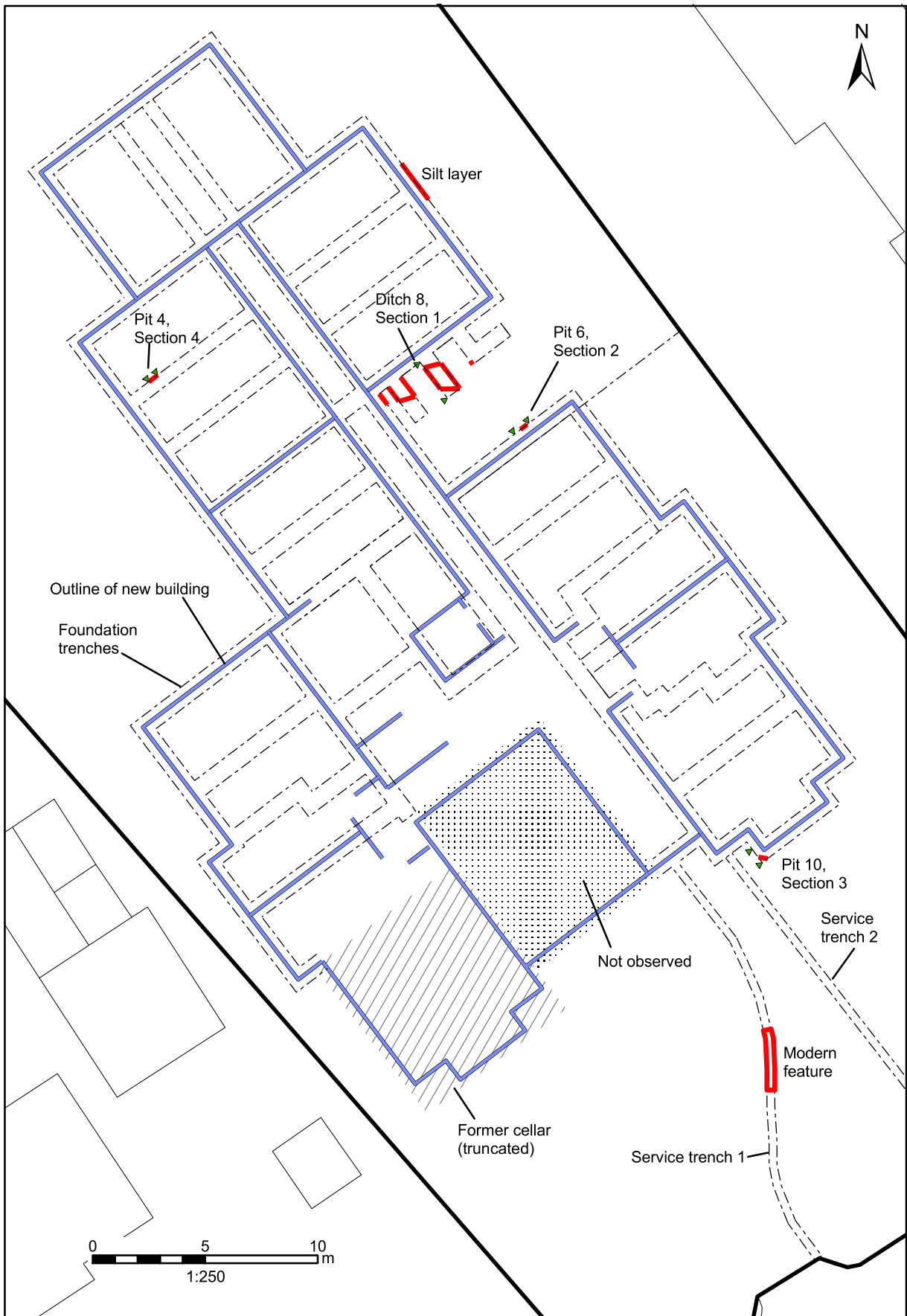
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Fig.1. Site location



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Fig.2. Location of observed features

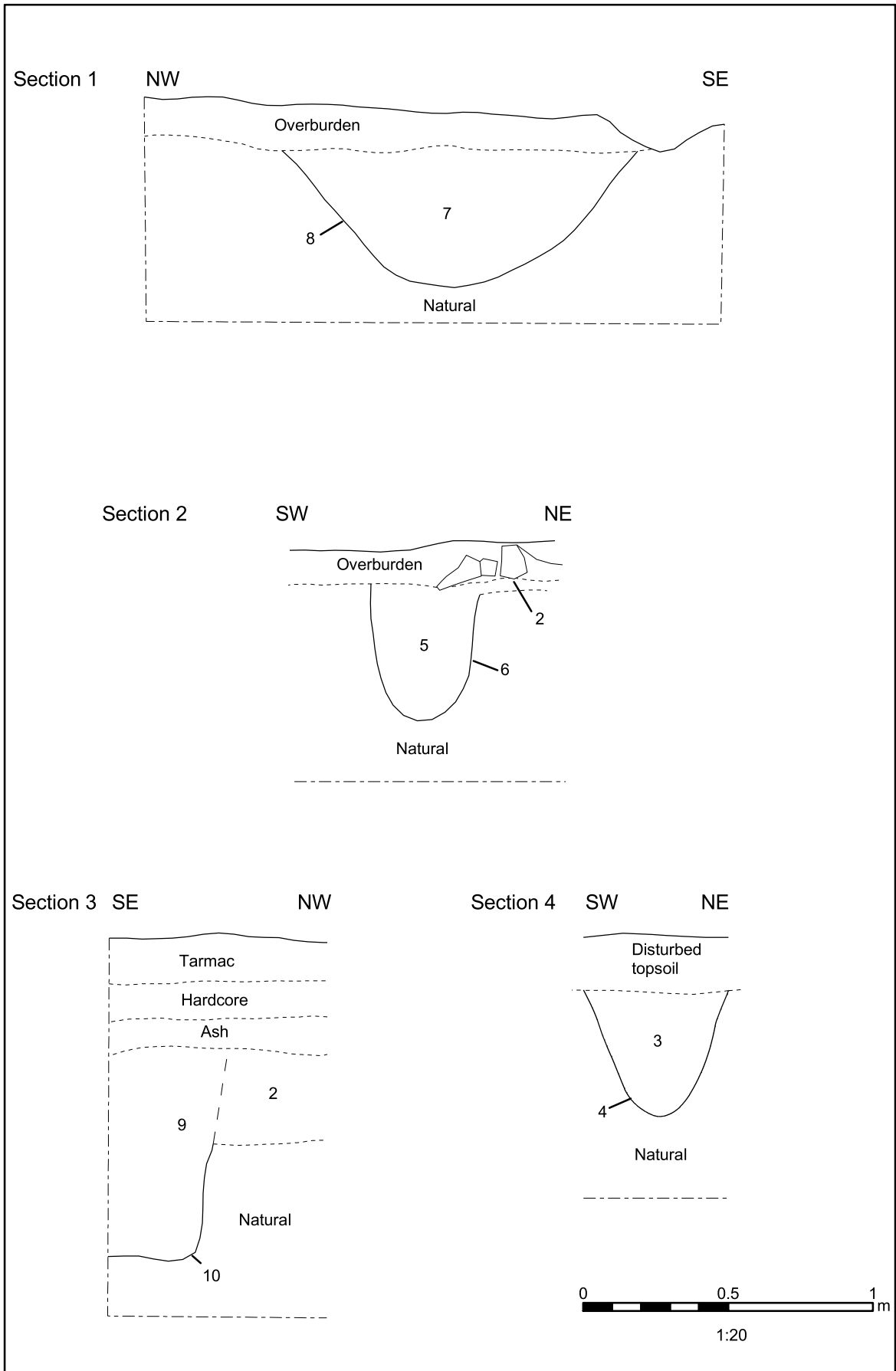


Fig.3. Sections



Plate 1. Pit 10 looking south-west



Plate 2. Ditch 8 looking east