

HERITAGE NETWORK



BERKHAMSTED COLLEGIATE SCHOOL
Berkhamsted, Herts.

HN538

Archaeological Evaluation Report



THE HERITAGE NETWORK LTD

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Archaeological Director: David Hillelson, BA MIFA

BERKHAMSTED COLLEGIATE SCHOOL Berkhamsted, Herts.

HN538

Archaeological Evaluation

Prepared on behalf of Berkhamsted Collegiate School

by

Geoff Saunders, BA AIFA

Report no.308

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Contents

	Summary.....	Page i
Section 1	Introduction.....	Page 1
Section 2	Fieldwork	Page 2
Section 3	Discussion & Conclusion.....	Page 7
Section 4	Bibliography.....	Page 8
Section 5	Illustrations	following Page 8

The cover photograph shows an aerial view of the site from the NE (Courtesy Short & Associates, Architects)

Acknowledgements

The fieldwork for this project was carried out by Geoff Saunders and Abigail Rothwell. The report text and illustrations were prepared by Geoff Saunders, and the report was edited by David Hillelson.

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Summary

Site name and address:	Berkhamsted Collegiate School, Castle Street, Berkhamsted, Hertfordshire		
County:	Hertfordshire	District:	Dacorum
Village/town:	Berkhamsted	Parish:	Berkhamsted
Planning reference:	4/0578/05	NGR:	SP 99400 07887
Client name and address:	Berkhamsted Collegiate School, Chesham Road, Berkhamsted		
Nature of work:	Redevelopment	Present land use:	Residential and Educational
Size of affected area:	c.1700m ²	Size of area investigated:	c.70m ²
Site Code:	HN538	Other reference:	n/a
Organisation:	Heritage Network	Site Director:	David Hillelson
Type of work:	Evaluation	Curating Museum:	Dacorum Heritage Trust
Start of work	16/08/2005	Finish of work	18/08/2005
Related HER Nos:	n/a	Periods represented:	19 th /20 th century
Previous summaries/reports:	Heritage Network Report No.279		

Synopsis:

In order to determine the archaeological risk posed by a proposal to construct a new Design Centre on land at the Castle Street Campus of Berkhamsted Collegiate School, Berkhamsted, Hertfordshire, the Heritage Network was commissioned by the developer to undertake a programme of archaeological evaluation in advance of development.

Four trenches were excavated across the proposed development site. The stratigraphy in all the trenches had been heavily disturbed by Victorian and modern activity. Residual pottery sherds of 10th – 12th century date, were recovered from Trenches 2 and 3, indicate earlier activity on or in the vicinity of the site. No features predating the Victorian period were observed.

1. Introduction

1.1 This report has been prepared at the request of *Messrs Fletcher King Howard* on behalf of *Berkhamsted Collegiate School*, as part of an archaeological evaluation of a development site at the junction of Castle Street and Mill Street, Berkhamsted, Herts. The planning consent for the development (ref. 4/00578/05/FUL), controlled by the Dacorum Borough Council (DBC), has granted subject to an archaeological condition imposed in accordance with the provisions set out in Planning Policy Guidance Note No.16 (PPG16) on Archaeology and Planning. The scope of the evaluation was defined in a *Design Brief for Archaeological Evaluation* prepared by the County Archaeological Office (CAO) of Hertfordshire County Council (ref. KB 09/05/2005), acting as adviser to the planning authority. A full specification for the work was contained in the Heritage Network's approved *Project Design*, dated July 2005.

1.2 The study area covers a plot located on the north side of the River Bulbourne. It is bounded by the line of Mill Street on the west, no. 45 Castle Street on the north, the line of Castle Street on the east, and the River Bulbourne on the south. The site is centred on NGR SP 9944 0801. The development proposes the demolition of the existing buildings on the site and the construction of a new Design Centre.

1.3 The site lies within Area of Archaeological Significance (AAS) 21, as designated in the Local Plan. This notes Berkhamsted's medieval origins, and the widespread prehistoric and Roman material already known in the area. The site also lies within 100m of Berkhamsted Castle which is a Scheduled Ancient Monument (SAM 20626). Berkhamsted Collegiate School, originally Berkhamsted Grammar School, is a 16th century foundation and the Old School dates to this period.

1.4 A desk-based archaeological assessment and historic buildings impact assessment for the site, prepared by the Heritage Network in March 2005 (Report no. 279), demonstrated that none of the buildings proposed for demolition were of intrinsic cultural merit or value, but that there was a moderate to high risk that evidence for activity from the Roman to Medieval periods might survive on the site.

1.5 The aim of the evaluation has been to consider the location, extent, date, character, condition, significance and quality of any such remains which are liable to be threatened by the development, and to provide a local and regional archaeological and historical context for them, in accordance with the current published regional research agenda (Glazebrook 1997, Brown and Glazebrook 2000), if they were discovered.

1.6 The present report is intended to provide the planning authority with sufficient data to allow it to consider the archaeological implications of the proposed development, and to determine what further, if any, mitigation measures may be required to allow the development to proceed.

2. Fieldwork

SITE TOPOGRAPHY AND GEOLOGY

2.1 The site is situated in the valley of the River Bulbourne, to the north lies the Grand Union Canal. The site lies on fairly level ground at approximately 105m AOD, the River Bulbourne running on an east to west alignment immediately to the south of the site.

2.2 The underlying geology of the area is gravel and flint.

METHODOLOGY

2.3 All work was carried out in accordance with the approved *Project Design*, current health and safety legislation, and IFA standards.

2.4 The trenches were located by triangulation from known points using fibreglass tape measures.

2.5 Four trenches were opened using a tracked 360⁰ mini-digger fitted with a 0.75m wide toothless ditching bucket (see Figure 2). No access was available for a fifth trench defined in the *Project Design* and, with the permission of the County Archaeology Office, it was abandoned. Spoil from the machining was inspected for archaeological artefacts. Trenches were machined to the first significant archaeological horizon.

2.6 The trenches were cleaned by hand, and all potential archaeological features and deposits were sampled to ascertain their nature, depth, date, and quality of preservation.

2.7 All identified contexts were photographed and recorded using the appropriate pro-forma. Scaled plans and sections were drawn on drafting film at a scale of 1:50.

RESULTS

Trench 1

2.8 Trench 1 was located in the middle of the eastern side of the site within the car park area. It measured 10.00m in length and 2.00m in width, had a maximum depth of 1.35m, and was aligned north-west – south-east.

2.9 The stratigraphy in the trench consisted of a layer of gravel and sand which formed the surface for the car park. Beneath this was a layer of mixed hardcore and aggregate, laid down for levelling prior to the gravel, over mixed, very dark greyish brown (10YR 3/2), silty sand and gravel with frequent modern debris. Beneath this lay the natural yellowish brown (10YR 5/6) clayey gravel and flints.

2.10 The southern side of the western half of the trench had been disturbed by modern wall [101], which was observed from just beneath the surface running on an east – west alignment. The wall was three courses deep by two courses wide, was constructed of modern frogged bricks and was located on a concrete footing.

2.11 In the centre of the trench a large modern soakaway was observed. The soakaway contained modern bricks and rubble and a modern car exhaust.

2.12 No archaeological features or deposits were observed within this trench.

Trench data

Context	Type	Description	Dimensions (m)
101	Structure	Modern red brick wall foundation observed running along the edge of the trench on an east – west alignment.	Length: 3.50m+ Width: 0.40m

Trench 2

2.13 Trench 2 was located in the north-east corner of the site. It measured 10.00m in length and 2.00m in width, had a maximum depth of 1.30m, and was aligned north-west – south-east.

2.14 The stratigraphy in the trench consisted of a loose, very dark grey (10YR 3/1), silty sand topsoil over a mixed, very dark greyish brown (10YR 3/2), silty sand with gravel and frequent rubble and brick building demolition debris. Beneath this lay the natural geology of yellowish brown (10YR 5/6) clayey gravel and flints.

2.15 The trench had been heavily disturbed by service pipes and soakaways, a total of two cast iron water pipes, two soakaways, a ceramic storm drain, and a brick lined inspection chamber were observed in the trench.

2.16 Floor surface [201] was observed in the north-west end of the trench immediately beneath the topsoil. The surface was constructed from brick fragments and small stones, and had been cut by a cast iron water pipe. The floor surface is likely to be associated with the structures that previously occupied the Castle Street frontage and were demolished in the mid 20th century.

2.17 A single abraded sherd of early medieval sandy ware was recovered unstratified from the trench, the sherd is undiagnostic and probably of 10th – 12th century date.

2.18 No further archaeological features, deposits, or artefacts were observed in the trench.

Trench data

Context	Type	Description	Dimensions (m)
201	Layer	Floor surface of brick fragments and small stones.	Length: 0.60m+ Width: 0.50m+

Trench 3

2.19 Trench 3 was located in the centre of the site. It measured 10.00m in length and 2.00m in width, had a maximum depth of 1.30m, and was aligned east – west.

2.20 The stratigraphy in the trench consisted of a loose, very dark grey (10YR 3/1), silty sand topsoil, over a mixed, very dark greyish brown (10YR 3/2), gravelly silty sand with frequent modern building debris. Beneath this was the natural geology of yellowish brown (10YR 5/6) clayey gravel and flints.

2.21 A modern live electricity cable run down the southern section of the west half of the trench, a live rubber water pipe crossed the western half of the trench on a north – south alignment.

2.22 Brick wall [301] was observed in the western half of the trench, the wall ran down the trench on an east – west alignment before turning through a right angle to run north – south. The wall was constructed of red brick bonded with sandy mortar, two courses wide and survived to a depth of seven courses. The bricks, which were not frogged, suggest a 19th century date for the structure. The structure may represent the rear of one of the properties which previously occupied the Mill Street frontage.

2.23 Brick structure [302] was observed immediately to the east of, and butted up against, wall [301]. The structure consisted of a wall which ran across the trench on a north – south alignment and a wall which ran at right angles to this down the centre of the trench towards the eastern end. The structure was constructed of frogged red bricks two courses wide bonded with sandy mortar and it survived to a maximum of nine courses. The structure likely dates to the late 19th or early 20th century and may represent either an extension to [301] or a separate outhouse.

2.24 Brick lined pit [303] was observed immediately to the east of, and butted up against, structure [302]. The pit measured approximately 2.1m square by a depth of approximately 1.0m, the top of the pit had been sealed by a brick surface. The brick lining was constructed from red bricks loosely bonded with sandy mortar, the bricks were a mixture of frogged and unfrogged indicating that they had likely been reused from another structure. The pit was filled with modern 20th century domestic rubbish including, glass bottles, porcelain, metal objects, and animal bones. The original function of the pit is unclear.

2.25 No further archaeological features or deposits were observed within this trench.

Trench data

Context	Type	Description	Dimensions (m)
301	Structure	Red brick wall foundation observed within the western end of the trench on a east – west alignment. 19 th century wall foundation.	Length: 3.35m+ Width: 0.35m
302	Structure	Red brick foundation observed in the centre of the trench and comprising two walls. 19 th /20 th century structure, possible extension to [301].	Length: 2.00m+ Width: 1.30m
303	Structure	Square brick lined pit, contained mixed 20 th century domestic rubbish.	Length: 2.10m Width 2.10m Depth: 1.00m

Trench 4

2.26 Trench 4 was to be located to the rear of the caretakers house on Mill Street. Unfortunately this trench was unable to be excavated.

Trench 5

2.27 Trench 5 was located in the centre of the western half of the site. The trench measured 10.00m in length by 2.00m in width, had a maximum depth of 1.20m, and was aligned approximately north – south.

2.28 The stratigraphy in the trench consisted of a layer of very dark grey (10YR 3/1), silty sand topsoil over a mixed, very dark greyish brown (10YR 3/2), silty sandy gravel. Beneath this lay the natural geology of yellowish brown (10YR 5/6) clayey gravel .

2.29 Wall [501] was observed running across the trench on an east – west alignment immediately below the topsoil. The wall was two courses wide and only survived to a depth of a single course. The wall, which was of frogged red bricks, likely dates to the late 19th or 20th century.

Trench data

Context	Type	Description	Dimensions (m)
501	Structure	Red brick wall foundation observed crossing the trench on an east – west alignment. 19 th /20 th century wall foundation.	Length: 2.10m Width: 0.35m

Concordance of finds

Ctxt	Pottery		Glass		Clay Pipe	
	Wt.	No.	Wt.	No.	Wt.	No.
[303]	480	1	610	2	35	1
Tr 2 U/S	5	1				
Tr 3 U/S	15	3				
Total	500	5	610	2	35	1

Pottery

2.30 A total of 5 pottery sherds, weighing 500g, were recovered from one stratified and two unstratified contexts during the present investigation.

2.31 The unstratified pottery consisted of small undiagnostic bodysherds of early medieval sandy wares of 10th – 12th century date. Although the sherds are small and abraded, they are an indication of activity in the vicinity of the site at this time.

2.32 An intact stoneware bottle was retrieved from the mixed backfill of brick lined pit [303]. The bottle is late 19th/20th century in date and the stamp on the side states that it contained Healey Markyate Ginger Ale. The potters stamp on the rear of the bottle is Price, Bristol.

Recommendations

2.33 Given the small size of the assemblage no further work is proposed.

Glass

2.34 A total of 2 intact glass bottles, weighing 610g, was recovered from the mixed backfill of brick lined pit [303]. The bottles are late 19th/20th century in date.

Recommendations

2.35 Given the modern date of the bottles, no further work is proposed.

Clay pipe

2.36 A single bowl from a clay pipe, weighing 35g, was recovered from the mixed backfill of brick lined pit [303]. The clay bowl has been stamped, with the name M.Power, Tobacconist. The final line of the text is unclear. The pipe likely dates to the late 19th/20th century.

Recommendations

2.37 No further work is proposed on this item.

3. Discussion & Conclusion

3.1 Four trenches were excavated in order to investigate the archaeological potential of the present site. Despite the high risk defined in the Desk Based Assessment of the site, that features and finds of medieval date might occur within the study area, and the moderate risk defined for the Roman and Anglo-Saxon periods, no feature predating the Victorian period was observed during the investigation.

3.2 The evaluation has demonstrated that the site has been heavily used during the Victorian and modern periods. The presence of residual pottery sherds of 10th –12th century date within two of the trenches indicates earlier activity either on or in the vicinity of the present site. The Victorian and modern activity is likely to have had a detrimental effect on earlier archaeological remains.

3.3 Although no features pre-dating the Victorian period were observed within the evaluation trenches, there remains a possibility that evidence of earlier activity may survive in any less disturbed areas of the site.

3.4 The depth of overburden across the site varies between approximately 1.00 – 1.30m, this is consistent with the land having been built up or disturbed. The extensive overburden is likely to be the result of the Victorian and modern activity on the site.

Conclusion

3.5 The archaeological evaluation suggests that Victorian and modern activity will have destroyed any evidence of earlier activity across much of the site. There may however be small undisturbed areas where the earlier stratigraphy has been less affected.

3.6 On this basis, there is considered to be a low to moderate probability that the development will encounter archaeological remains pre-dating the Victorian period. There is considered to be a high probability that further Victorian and modern remains will be encountered, the significance of which can be considered to be low.

Confidence Rating

3.7 During the course of the fieldwork, the conditions were generally acceptable for the identification of potential features and deposits, and for their investigation.

3.8 There are no circumstances which would lead to a confidence rating for the work which was less than High.

4. Bibliography

Ashworth, H, & Hillelson, D, 2005 *Berkhamsted Collegiate School, Castle Street, Berkhamsted, Herts. Desk-Based Archaeological Assessment*. Heritage Network March 2005.

Batt, K, 2005 *Design Brief for Archaeological Evaluation – Berkhamsted Collegiate School, Castle Street, Berkhamsted*. Hertfordshire County Council.

Hillelson, D, 2005 *Berkhamsted Collegiate School, Castle Street, Berkhamsted, Herts. Project Design: Archaeological Evaluation*. Heritage Network July 2005.

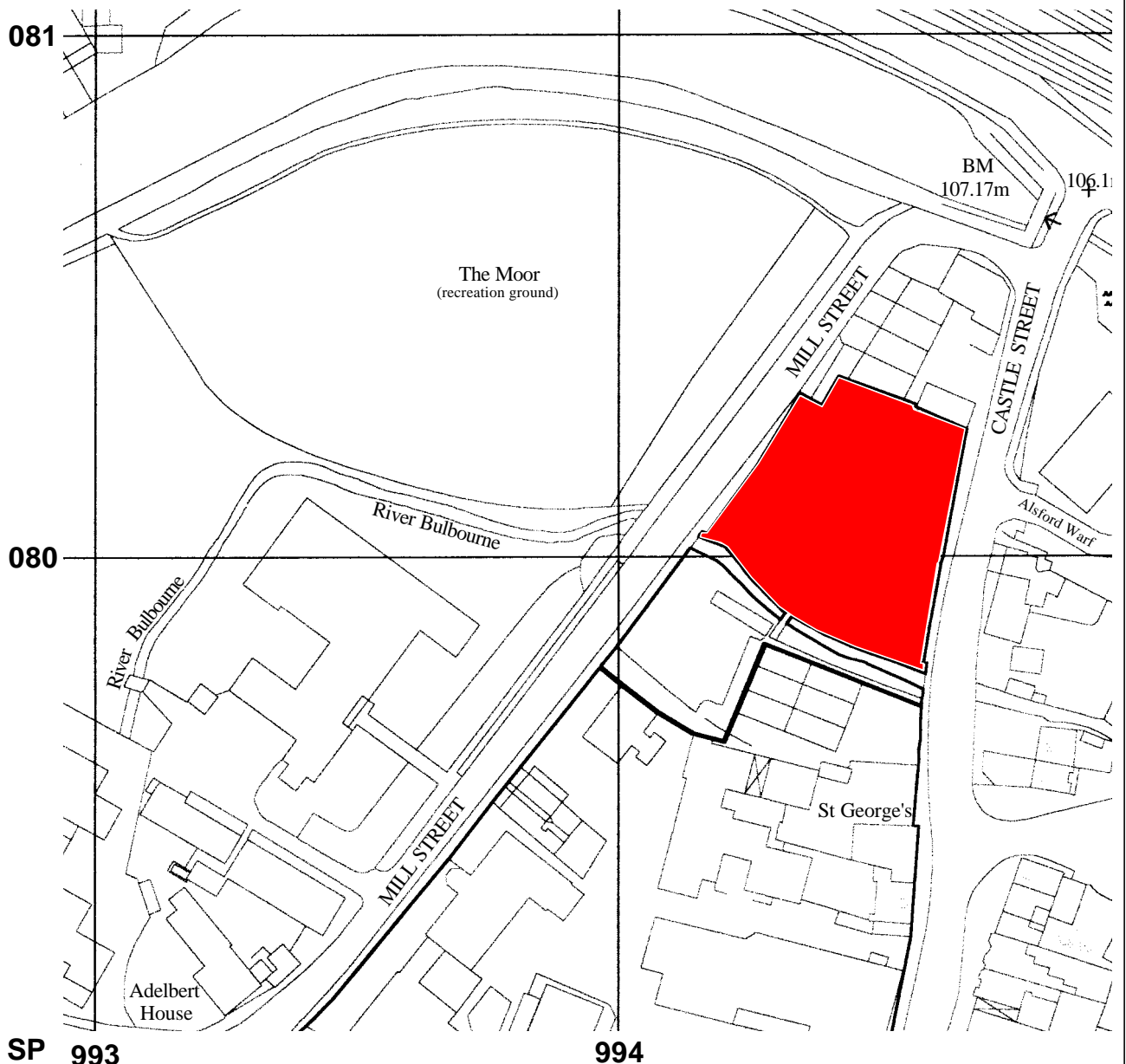
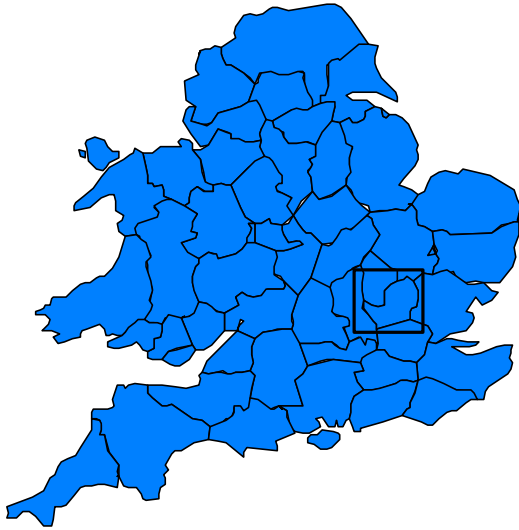
5. Illustrations

Figure 1..... Site location

Figure 2.....Trench location

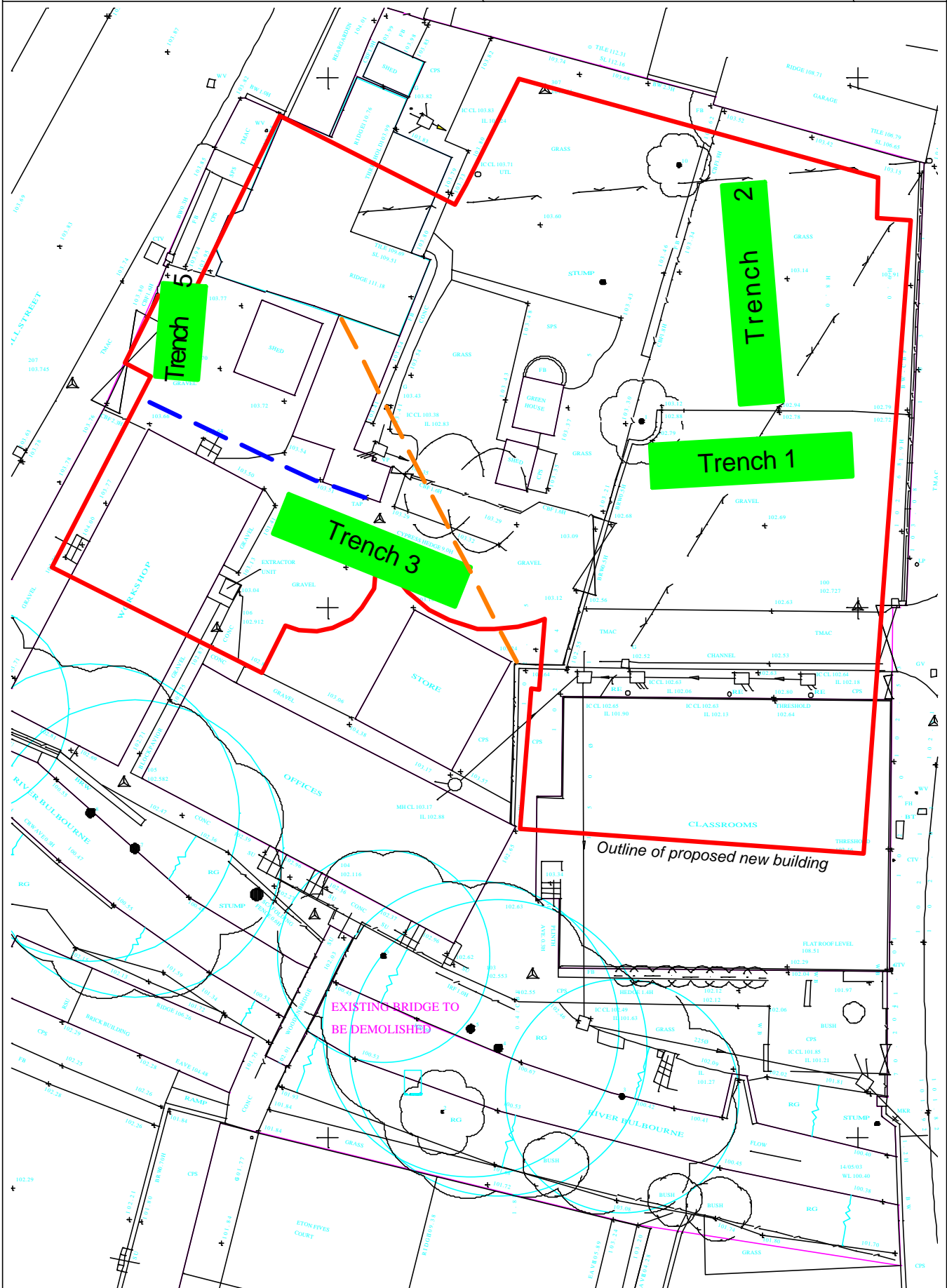
Figure 3.....Trench sections and plans

Figure 4.....Trench sections and plans



Site Location

Scale 1:1250

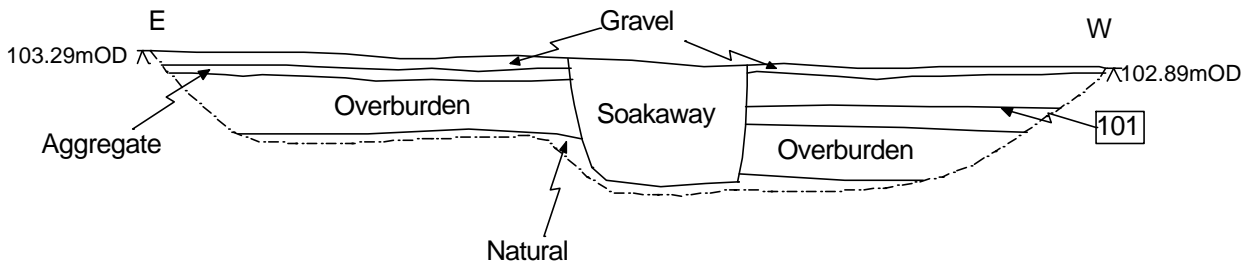


Proposed Trench Layout
(base plan courtesy Short & Associates)

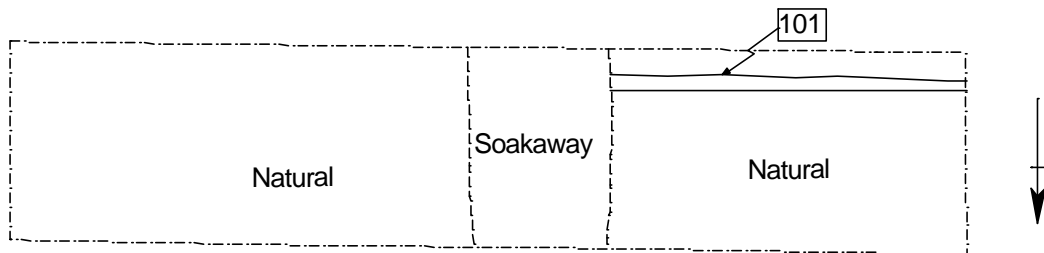
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Figure 2

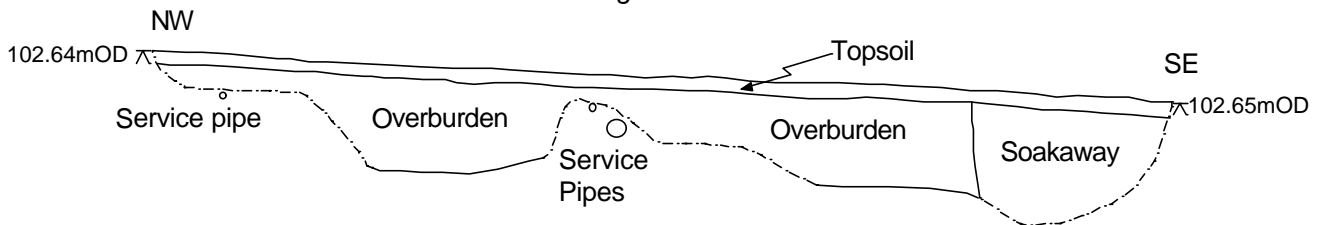
North facing section of Trench 1



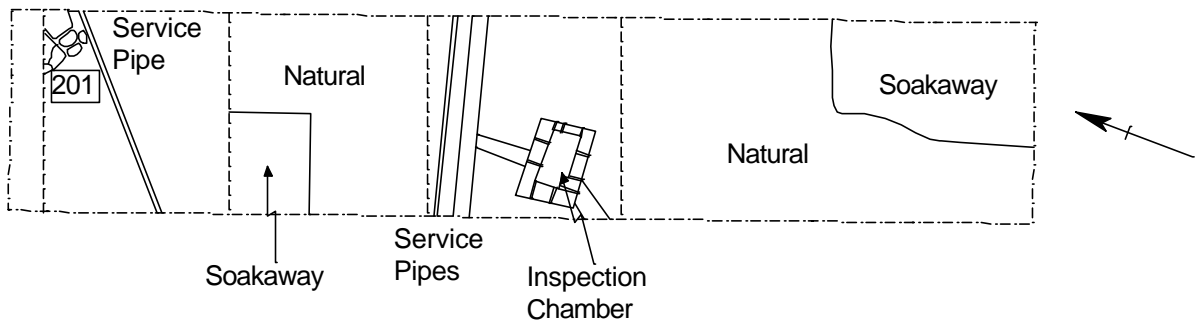
Plan of Trench 1



Southwest facing section of Trench 2



Plan of Trench 2

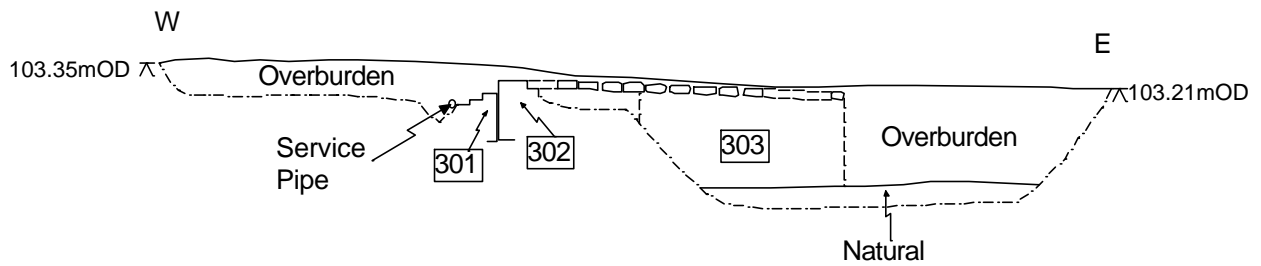


Trenches 1 & 2 : sections and plans

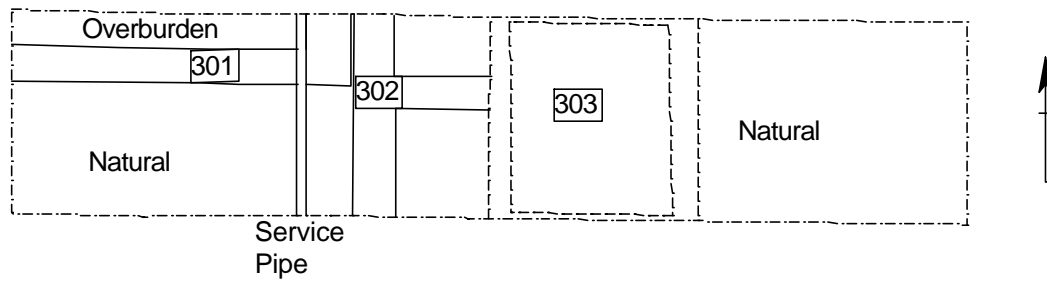
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Figure 3

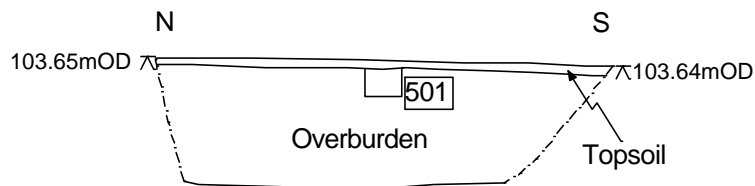
South facing section of Trench 3



Plan of Trench 3



East facing section of Trench 5



Plan of Trench 5

