

# HERITAGE NETWORK



## 'ROTHAVEN' Rossway Lane, Wigginton, Herts.

HN591

*Archaeological Evaluation Report*



# THE HERITAGE NETWORK LTD

*Registered with the Institute of Field Archaeologists as an Archaeological Organisation*

Archaeological Director: David Hillelson, BA MIFA

## 'ROTHAVEN' Rossway Lane, Wigginton, Hertfordshire

HN591

### *Archaeological Evaluation*

*Prepared on behalf of Dean Lovatt Esq*

by

David Kaye, BA PIFA

Report no. 357

*July 2006*

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*The cover illustration shows evaluation trench 1, looking west*

## Acknowledgements

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

The Heritage Network would like to express its thanks to Mr and Mrs Lovatt; Gary Telling, Mr T's Services; and Kate Batt and the staff of the County Archaeology Office, Hertfordshire County Council, for their co-operation and assistance in the execution of this project.

## Summary

<b>Site name and address:</b>	'Rothaven', Rossway Lane, Wigginton		
<b>County:</b>	Hertfordshire	<b>District:</b>	Dacorum
<b>Village/town:</b>	Wigginton	<b>Parish:</b>	Wigginton
<b>Planning reference:</b>	N/A	<b>NGR:</b>	SP 95550 08980
<b>Client name and address:</b>	Dean Lovatt, 'Rothaven', Rossway Lane, Wigginton, HP23 6JB		
<b>Nature of work:</b>	New housing	<b>Former land use:</b>	Existing housing
<b>Site status:</b>	None	<b>Reason for investigation:</b>	Direction of local planning authority (PPG 16)
<b>Position in planning process:</b>	Predetermination	<b>Project brief originator:</b>	Local authority
<b>Size of affected area:</b>	c.2220m <sup>2</sup>	<b>Size of area investigated:</b>	c.50m <sup>2</sup>
<b>Site Code:</b>	HN591	<b>Other reference:</b>	n/a
<b>Organisation:</b>	Heritage Network	<b>Site Director:</b>	David Hillelson
<b>Project type, methods etc.:</b>	Evaluation	<b>Archive recipient:</b>	Dacorum Heritage Trust
<b>Start of work</b>	12/06/2006	<b>Finish of work</b>	13/06/2006
<b>Related SMR Nos:</b>	None	<b>Periods represented:</b>	Unknown
<b>Oasis UID</b>	heritage1-15750	<b>Significant finds:</b>	No significant finds
<b>Monument types:</b>	n/a		
<b>Physical archive:</b>	n/a		
<b>Previous summaries/reports:</b>	n/a		

**Synopsis:** In order to determine the archaeological risk posed by a proposal to construct two new houses on land at 'Rothaven', Rossway Lane, Wigginton, Herts, the Heritage Network was commissioned by the owner to undertake a programme of archaeological evaluation in advance of a planning application.

Two 15 x 1.6m wide trenches were excavated. A bank and ditch marking the boundary of 'Smarts Wood', a defined ancient woodland which occupies the eastern third of the site, was recorded in both trenches and was visible as an earthwork beyond the northern and southern limits of the property. No other features or deposits were revealed, and no artefacts which might indicate that there was ancient occupation in the immediate vicinity of the site.

Any development of the site has the potential to further disturb the relict boundary to 'Smart's Wood', and such development to the east of this line could detrimentally affect the character of the surviving woodland. Nevertheless, the risk that development to the west of this line would affect archaeological remains of any significance should be considered to be low.

# **1. Introduction**

**1.1** This report has been prepared on behalf of *Dean Lovatt Esq* as part of a programme of archaeological evaluation on a proposed development site at 'Rothaven', Rossway Lane, Wigginton, Herts.

**1.2** In accordance with the provisions set out in Planning Policy Guidance Note No.16 (PPG16) on Archaeology and Planning, the client had been advised by the local planning authority, Dacorum Borough Council (DBC), that information concerning the archaeological potential of the development site should be included in any application for planning consent. The scope of the required work was defined in discussions with the County Archaeology Office (CAO) of Hertfordshire County Council, acting as adviser to the planning authority.

**1.3** 'Rothaven' lies on the western side of Rossway Lane, centred on NGR SP 95550 08980, approximately 2km south-east of the village of Wigginton (Figure 1). The site falls within the Archaeological Alert Area centred on the line of Grim's Ditch, as designated in the District Local Plan, and immediately to the south of the limits of the area scheduled as an Ancient Monument (SAM 35348). It also lies across the boundary of an ancient woodland known as 'Smarts Wood' (Figure 7).

**1.4** Excavations on the line of Grim's Ditch c.500m east of the present site (HER 11476), recovered flints and ceramic artefacts dating from the Iron Age onwards. A number of cropmarks (HER 3762, 4849 and 4850), representing a series of enclosures of unknown date, lie less than 500m to the north of the site (Figure 7).

**1.5** The development proposes the demolition of the existing buildings on the site and the construction of two new dwellings, garages and associated driveways (Figure 2). On the basis of the known archaeology in the vicinity of the site, it is considered likely that the development would encounter archaeological features and deposits dating from the prehistoric period onwards.

**1.6** The aim of the evaluation has been to consider the location, extent, date, character, condition, significance and quality of any such remains which were 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.

**1.7** 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 study area consists of a 53 x 40m plot on the west side of Rossway Lane, which slopes slightly from west to east. The eastern third of the site is covered by mature trees which form part of 'Smarts Wood'.

**2.2** The drift geology of the area is formed of plateau drift and clay-with-flints of the Batcombe association (SSEW 1983). This is characterised on the present site as a mixture of yellowish brown clay and dark yellowish brown sandy clay. The topsoil is 0.12m in depth and consists of a very dark grey loose, silty clay.

### METHODOLOGY

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

**2.4** The trenches were triangulated from known points using fibreglass tape measures.

**2.5** Two trenches were opened using a tracked mini-digger fitted with a 0.8m wide toothless bucket, under close archaeological supervision (Figure 3).

**2.6** Trenches were machined to the first significant archaeological horizon. Spoil from the machining was inspected for archaeological artefacts.

**2.7** All potential archaeological features and deposits were sampled to ascertain their nature, depth, date, and quality of preservation.

**2.8** All identified contexts were photographed and recorded using the appropriate proforma. Scaled plans and sections were drawn on drafting film at scales of 1:20 and 1:50.

### RESULTS

#### Stratigraphy

**2.9** The stratigraphy observed within Trench 1 consisted of 0.12m of very dark grey (10YR 3/1) loose, silty clay topsoil overlying 0.12m of yellowish brown (10YR 5/4) friable, sandy clay subsoil. The natural geology was a strong brown (10YR 5/6) clay.

**2.10** The topsoil in Trench 2 varied in depth from 0.12m at the eastern end to 0.25m at the western end. The brown (10YR 5/3) subsoil contained frequent flints <40mm in length.

#### Trench 1

<b>Length (m):</b>	15	<b>Width (m):</b>	1.6	<b>Maximum Depth (m):</b>	0.4	<b>Orientation</b>	E-W
<b>Level at East End of Trench (mOD)</b>		<b>Top</b>	178.99	<b>Level at West End of Trench (mOD)</b>		<b>Top</b>	179.84
		<b>Base</b>	178.89			<b>Base</b>	179.44
<b>Context</b>	<b>Type</b>	<b>Description</b>			<b>Dimensions (m)</b>		
					<b>Length</b>	<b>Width</b>	<b>Depth</b>
101	Layer	Bank.			1.6+	5.0+	-

102	Layer	Very dark grey (10YR 3/1) loose, silty clay. Topsoil.	15+	1.6+	0.12
103	Layer	Yellowish brown (10YR 5/4) loose, silty clay, frequent sub-oval flints <40mm. Subsoil.	15+	1.6+	0.15
104	Layer	Strong brown (10YR 5/6) firm clay and brownish yellow (10YR 6/6) firm sand and gravel. Natural.	15.2+	1.6+	-

2.11 Trench 1 was located at the northern end of the site and revealed the remnants of a bank and ditch [101] which ran north-south across the site before meeting the northern boundary (Figure 4, Plate 1).

**Trench 2**

<b>Length (m):</b>	15	<b>Width (m):</b>	1.6	<b>Maximum Depth (m):</b>	0.35	<b>Orientation</b>	E-W
<b>Level at East End of Trench (mOD)</b>		<b>Top</b>	179.91	<b>Level at West End of Trench (mOD)</b>		<b>Top</b>	180.11
		<b>Base</b>	179.61			<b>Base</b>	179.71
Context	Type	Description	Dimensions (m)				
			Length	Width	Depth		
201	Layer	Bank.	1.6+	3.5	0.2		
202	Layer	Very dark grey (10YR 5/3) loose, silty clay. Topsoil.	15+	1.6+	0.12		
203	Layer	Brown (10YR 5/3) firm, silty clay, frequent sub-oval flints <40mm. Subsoil.	4.3+	1.6+	0.12-0.15		
203	Layer	Strong brown (10YR 5/6) firm clay and brownish yellow (10YR 6/6) firm sand and gravel. Natural.	15.+	1.6+	-		

2.12 Trench 2 was located at the southern end of the site and revealed the remnants of a bank and ditch [201] running in line with feature [101] seen in Trench 1 (Figure 4, Plate 2). It was clearly visible continuing on the same alignment on the adjacent land to the south.

**FINDS ASSESSMENT**

**Iron Objects**

2.13 Two pieces of iron slag weighing 65g were recovered from the bank [201]. No other evidence of ironworking was found on the site, though excavations 3km to the west at Dellfield, Berkhamsted, produced evidence of a shaft furnace. Quantities of ironworking slag have been also been found at Cow Roast, 1km to the north of the site and at Tring, 3km to the north west (Bryant and Niblett, 1997). These sites have been dated to the Iron Age period.

2.14 Due to the limited and fragmentary nature of this assemblage, and the lack of dating evidence from the same context, no further work is proposed on these items.

**Pottery**

Three pieces of heavily abraded, unstratified, modern pottery, weighing a total of 10g, were recovered from the spoil of the trenches. This assemblage is not considered to be of any archaeological value.

## **3. Discussion**

**3.1** The proximity of the line of Grim’s Ditch, a linear earthwork generally considered to be of Iron Age origin (protected as a Scheduled Ancient Monument, no.35348), provides the context for the present evaluation. Two trial trenches were located across the site, which lies immediately to the south of the monument but within the local authority’s Archaeological Alert Area, to investigate the potential survival of archaeological remains, particularly from the Iron Age period.

**3.2** The recorded archaeology within Trench 1 consisted of the remnants of a bank and ditch [101] orientated north-south. This feature is clearly visible on the surface, beyond the limits of the site, where it turns on to an east-west orientation, and forms part of the site’s northern boundary.

**3.3** Trench 2 revealed a continuation of the bank and ditch observed in Trench 1. It was also visible on the surface beyond the site’s southern boundary following the same north-south orientation. Two fragments of iron slag were collected from the bank in this trench, which may indicate that iron working was taking place in the vicinity at an unknown period.

**3.4** The site appears to have been landscaped, probably when ‘Rothaven’ was constructed, resulting in some truncation of the bank and the ground to the west of it. The bank and ditch are more prominent beyond the site’s boundaries (Figure 5).

**3.5** Cartographic evidence suggests that bank and ditch formed part of the boundary of ‘Smarts Wood’, which is recorded as Ancient Woodland in the Hertfordshire Historic Landscape Characterization Project (Alison Tinniswood, pers.comm.). The wood is shown on the Tithe Map of 1841 (Figure 6), and the banked and ditched boundary suggests that it may be of Medieval date (Muir 2000).

**3.6** An examination of the County Historic Environment Record demonstrated only a limited level of recorded activity within a 500m radius of the present site (Figure 7). One record covered the excavation of a section of Grim’s Ditch on the line of the A41 by-pass (HER 11476), and the remaining records referred to three undated cropmarks located to the north of the ditch (HER 3762, 4849 and 4850).

### ***Conclusion***

**3.7** The present evaluation has revealed the truncated remains of a bank and ditch which mark the limit of ‘Smart’s Wood’, an Ancient Woodland which occupies the eastern third of the study area. No other archaeological features or deposits were recorded, and no remains which might be associated directly or indirectly with Grim’s Ditch.

**3.8** The development of the site has the potential to further disturb the relict boundary to ‘Smart’s Wood’, and any development to the east of this line could detrimentally affect the character of the surviving woodland. Nevertheless, the lack of any concentrations of artefacts associated with the bank and ditch would suggest that there is little ancient occupation in the vicinity of the site, and, consequently, the risk that development to the west of this line would affect archaeological remains of any significance should be considered to be low.

### ***Confidence Rating***

**3.9** In the course of the fieldwork, weather and ground conditions were generally acceptable for the identification of potential features and deposits, and for their investigation.

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

## **4. Bibliography**

- Bryant, S & Niblett, R, 1997 The Late Iron Age in Hertfordshire and the North Chilterns, in Gwilt, A & Haselgrove, C, *Reconstructing Iron Age Societies*. Oxbow Monograph 71.
- Muir, R, 2000 The New Reading the Landscape: Fieldwork in Landscape History. University of Exeter.
- Soil Survey of England and Wales, 1983.
- Turner, C, 2006 ‘Rothaven’, Rossway Lane, Wigginton, Herts. Project Design: Archaeological Evaluation. Heritage Network.

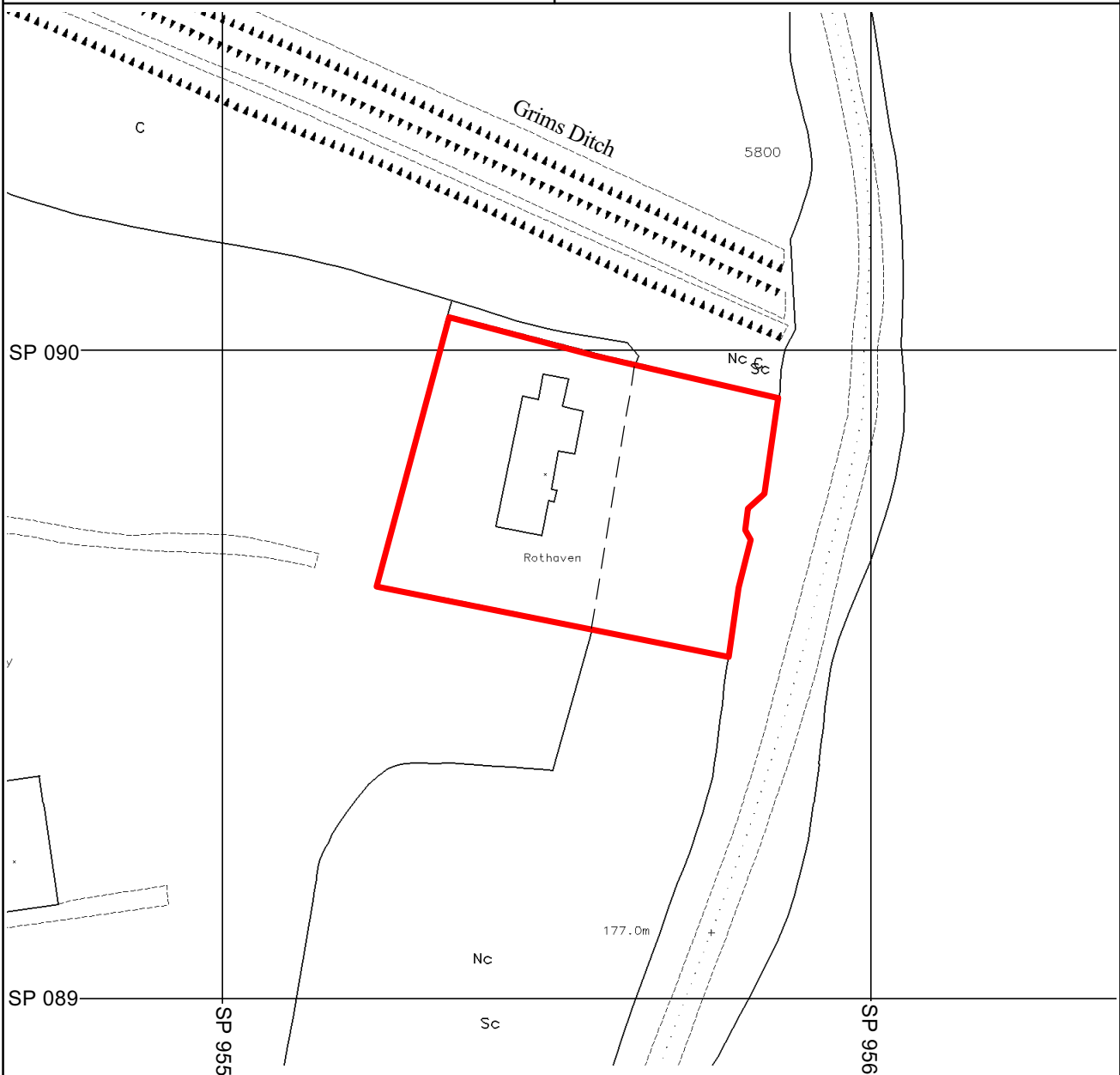
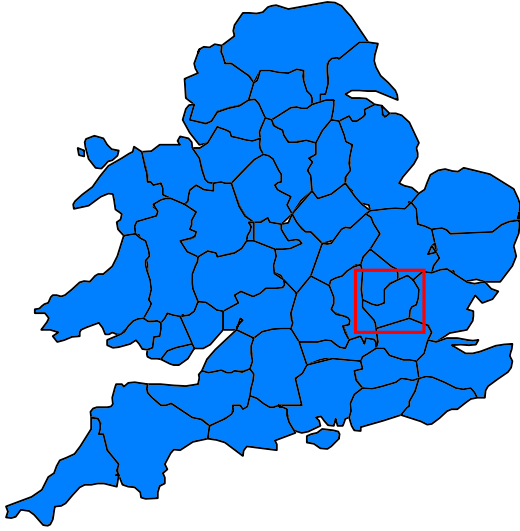
## **5. Illustrations**

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- Figure 2 ..... Site layout, existing and proposed
- Figure 3 ..... Trench and feature Location
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- Figure 6 ..... Site location in relation to Tithe Map, 1841
- Figure 7 ..... HER entries, archaeological alert areas & Ancient Woodland
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- Plate 1 ..... Trench 1, looking west
- Plate 2 ..... Trench 2, looking west

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'Rothaven', Rossway Lane,  
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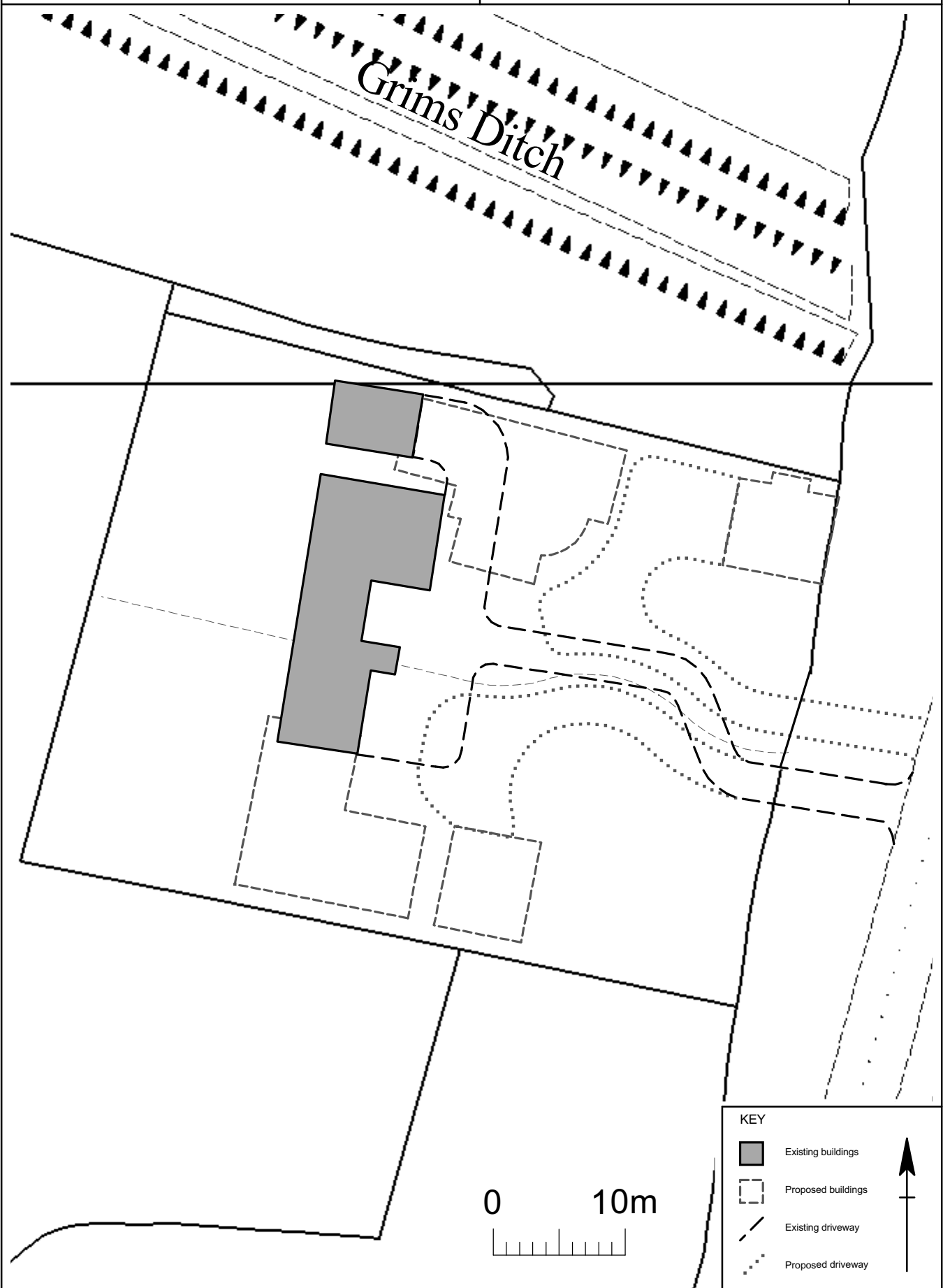


Site Location

Scale 1:1000

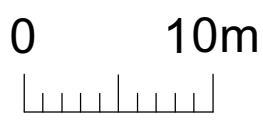
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Figure 1



KEY

- Existing buildings
- Proposed buildings
- Existing driveway
- Proposed driveway



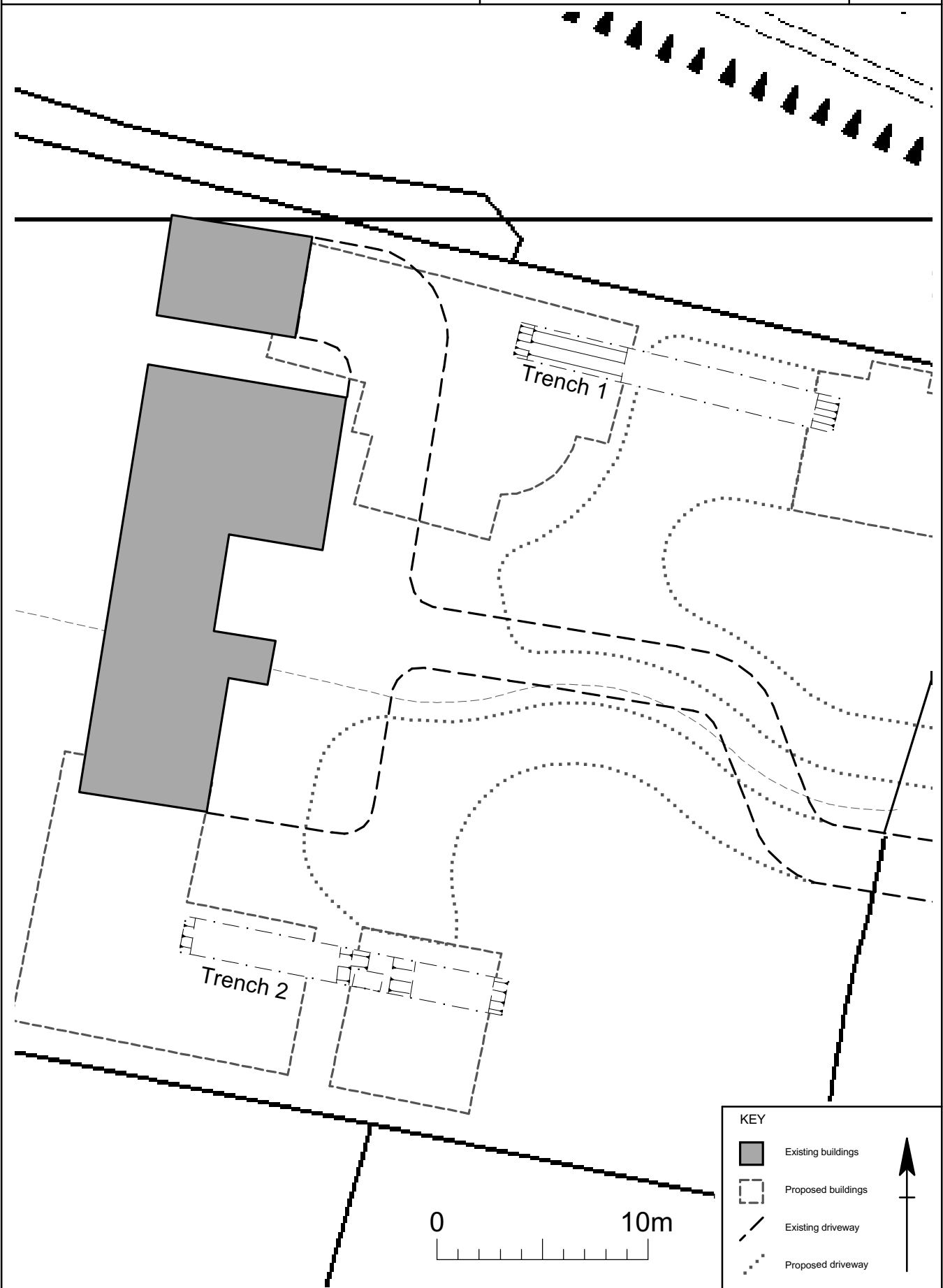
Site layout, existing and proposed

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Scale 1:400

Figure 2



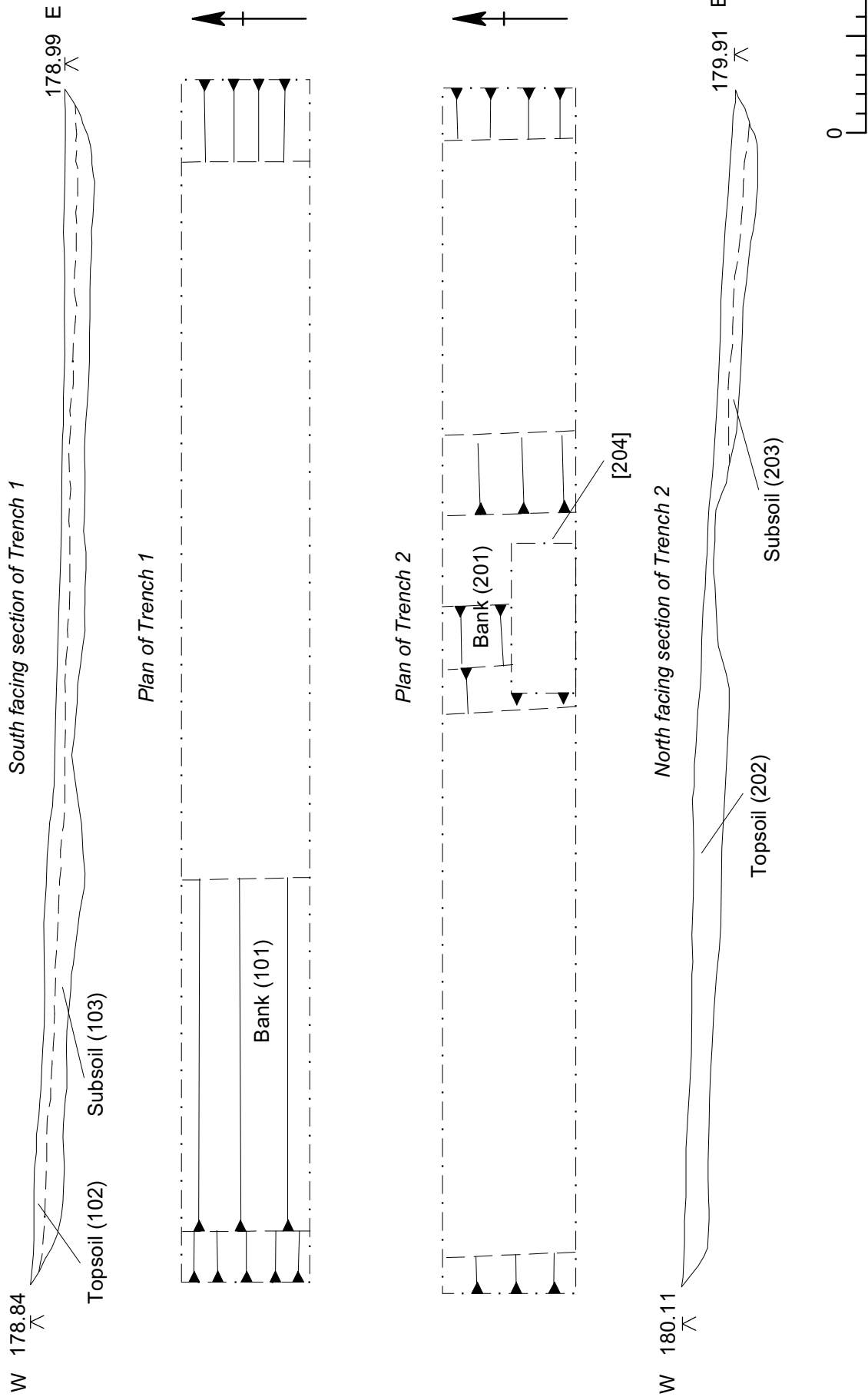


Trench and feature location

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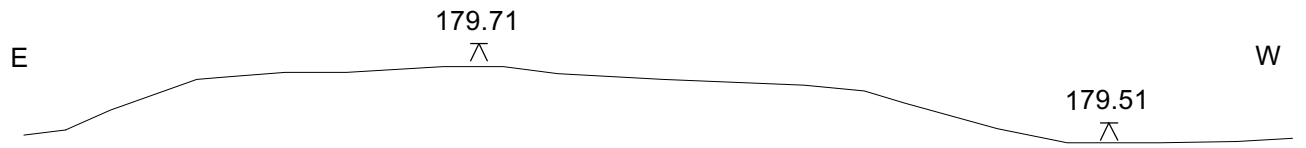
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Figure 3

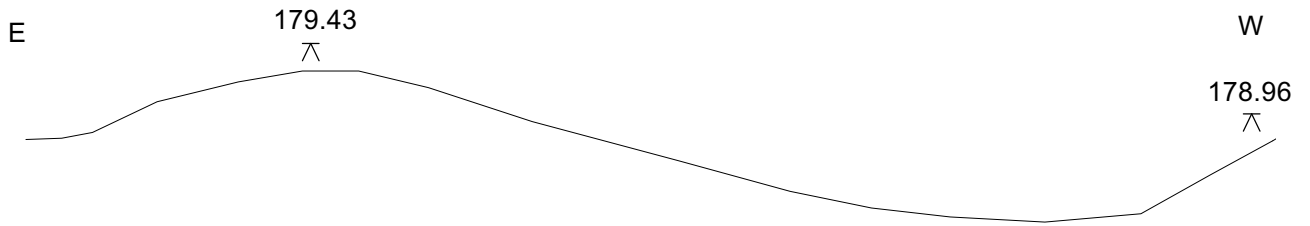


Trench plans and sections

North facing profile of bank and ditch in Trench 2



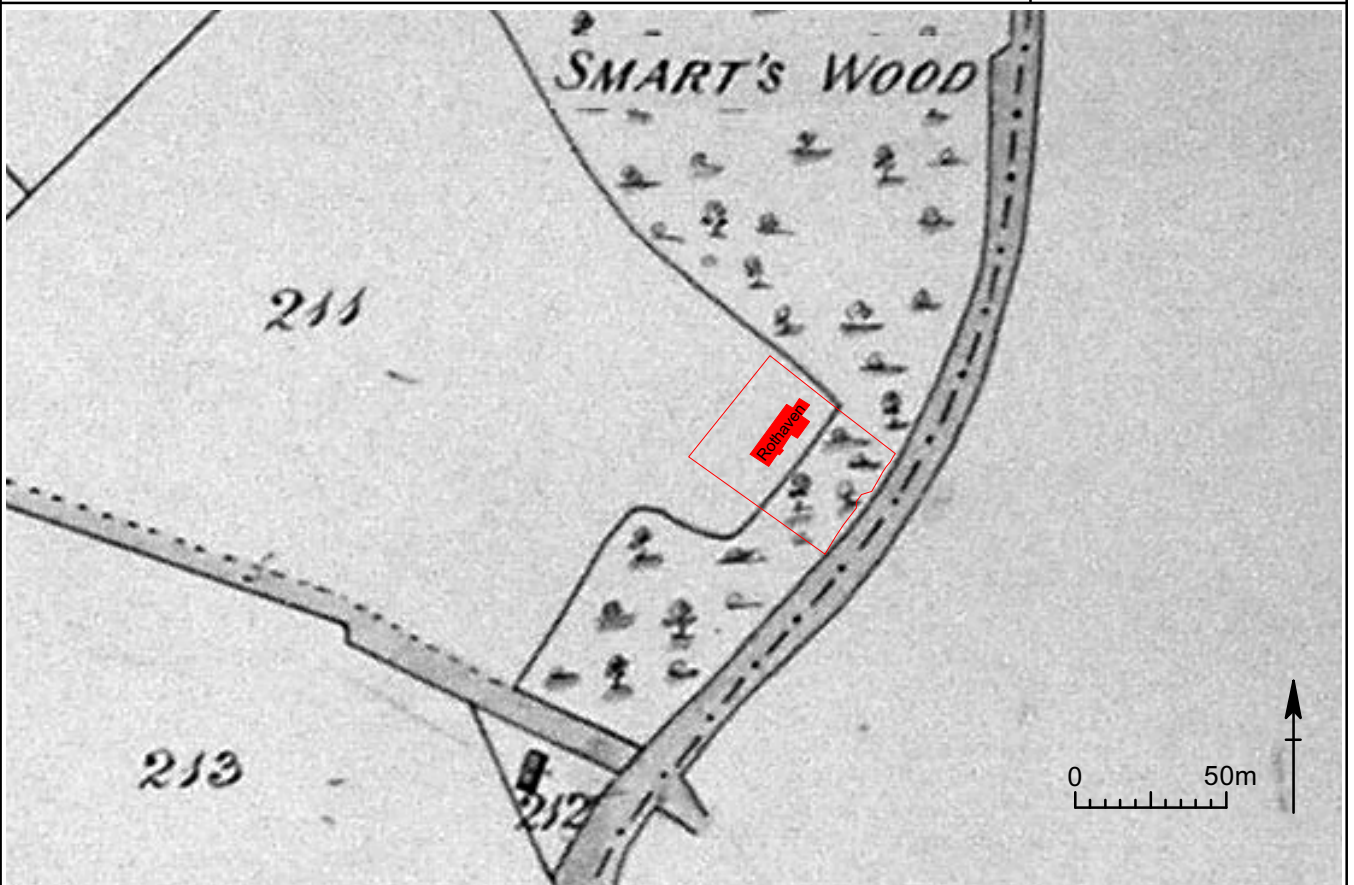
Profile of bank and ditch beyond southern site boundary



Recorded profiles of boundary ditch to Smart's Wood

Scale 1:20

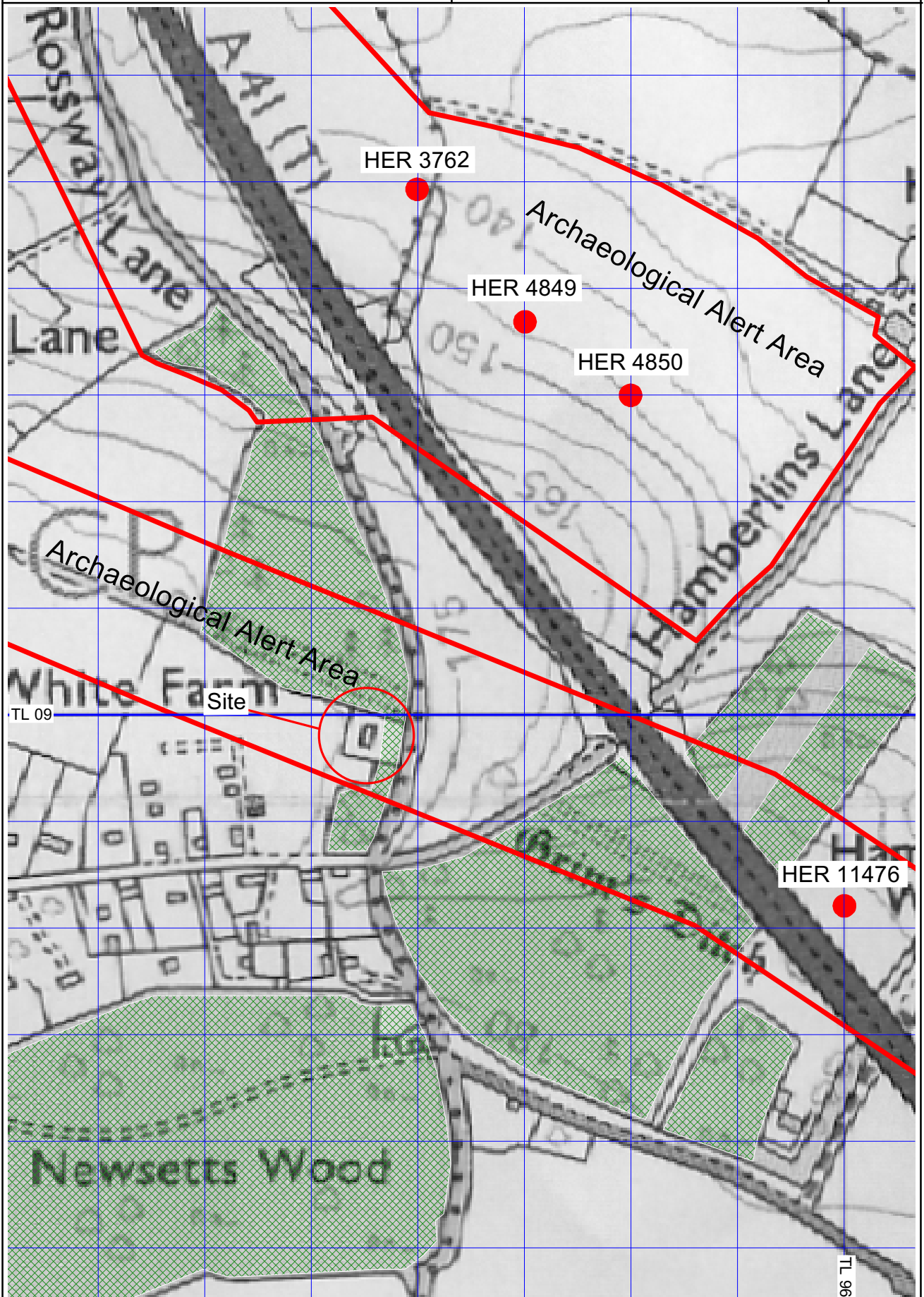
Figure 5



Site location in relation to the Tithe Map, 1841 (HALS DSA4.118.2)

Scale 1:2500

Figure 6



HER entries, archaeological alert areas and areas of Ancient Woodland

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Scale 1:5000

Figure 7





Plate 1: Trench 1, looking west



Plate 2: Trench 2, looking west