

## Land at MOAT HOUSE

## Great Easton, Essex

HN674

Report No. 426

<b>Site name and address:</b>	Land at Moat House, Great Easton, Essex		
<b>County:</b>	Essex	<b>District:</b>	Uttlesford
<b>Village/town:</b>	Great Easton	<b>Parish:</b>	Great Easton
<b>Planning reference:</b>	UTT/0426/06	<b>NGR:</b>	TL 6112 2544
<b>Client name and address:</b>	Mr A Chinneck, Newton Chinneck Ltd, 40 High Street, Puckeridge, Ware, Herts		
<b>Nature of work:</b>	Residential development	<b>Present land use:</b>	Park grounds
<b>Site status:</b>	None	<b>Reason for investigation:</b>	Direction of local planning authority (PPG 16)
<b>Position in planning process:</b>	After full determination (as a condition)	<b>Project brief originator:</b>	Local authority
<b>Size of affected area:</b>	c. 2750m <sup>2</sup>	<b>Size of area investigated:</b>	c. 145m <sup>2</sup>
<b>Site Code:</b>	GECMH07	<b>Other reference:</b>	HN674
<b>Organisation:</b>	Heritage Network	<b>Site Director:</b>	David Hillelson
<b>Project type, methods etc.:</b>	Evaluation	<b>Archive recipient:</b>	Saffron Walden Museum
<b>Start of work</b>	21.06.07	<b>Finish of work</b>	27.06.07
<b>Related SMR Nos:</b>	None	<b>Periods represented:</b>	Modern
<b>Oasis UID</b>	heritage1 - 28913	<b>Significant finds:</b>	None
<b>Monument types:</b>	Gully – uncertain date, Animal burial – uncertain date, Posthole – uncertain date, Boundary ditch – late post medieval/modern, bank – late post medieval/modern		
<b>Physical archive:</b>	Animal bone, slag, charcoal, pottery, glass, tile		
<b>Previous summaries/reports:</b>	none		

**Narrative:**

In order to meet the requirements of a condition on the planning permission for residential development on land at Moat House, Great Easton, Essex, the Heritage Network was commissioned by the owners to undertake a programme of archaeological evaluation.

The study area lies on the eastern edge of the historic core of Great Easton, centred on NGR TL 6112 2544. Moat House is presently used as a residential care home and the site is situated in its grounds. At present the site is used as a garden and woodland. It is bounded by farmland on the eastern side and by the B184 road to the west. The development proposes the construction of an extension to the existing building, and a new residential home with an associated store, car park and access road.

The site lies immediately adjacent to a medieval moated site to the west, three arms of which survive, around the north, west and south of Moat Cottage (HER 1190 & 1191). Cartographic evidence indicates that the moat originally included an eastern arm. Moat Cottage is a 17<sup>th</sup> century timber framed building with elements dating to the 16<sup>th</sup> century.

A medieval motte and bailey castle lies approximately 280m to the west (HER 1178). It is a Scheduled Ancient Monument (NMR 31221) and stands immediately adjacent to Easton Hall. Although Great Easton appears to have its origins in the medieval period, chance finds of late Bronze/early Iron Age date (HER 1175) and Romano-British pottery sherds (HER 1176) from the village, suggest activity in the vicinity from the prehistoric period onwards.

Five trial trenches were excavated across the development area. The machining was conducted under direct archaeological supervision using a JCB wheeled excavator fitted with a 1.6m wide toothless ditching bucket. The spoil from machining was inspected for archaeological artefacts (Figure 2).

**Trenches 1 and 2**

Trenches 1 and 2 were located within the footprint of the proposed new residential care home, on a level area of lawn, to the north of the existing building.

Trench 1 was aligned north-south, measured 1.6 x 25m and had a maximum depth of 1.2m. The stratigraphy in the trench consisted of a layer of firm, very dark greyish brown (10YR 3/2) clayey silt topsoil over a subsoil of hard, greyish brown (10YR 5/2) clay. Beneath this lay the natural geology of firm, yellowish brown (10YR 5/6) flinty clay with patches of sand and gravel. Three features were observed in the trench: gully [101], animal burial [103],

and posthole [105].

- Gully [101] was aligned north-west – south-east and had steeply sloping, concave sides and a flat base. It measured 0.4m wide and had a maximum depth of 0.10m. The feature contained a single fill (104) of firm, dark greyish brown (10YR 4/2) clay with frequent medium angular flints and occasional charcoal flecks. The fill yielded no archaeological artefacts. The alignment of the feature does not appear to relate to either the existing site boundaries or the surrounding field system. The feature may represent part of a boundary or drainage system which predates the existing boundaries.
- Animal burial [103] was sub-ovoid in shape and aligned north – south, it had gently sloping, concave sides and an uneven base. It measured 1.10m long and had a maximum depth of 0.07m. The width was not ascertained as the feature extended beneath the eastern baulk of the trench. The single fill (104) of friable, greyish brown (10YR 5/2) sandy clay with frequent charcoal inclusions contained three fragments of slag, and lupine animal bone. The bone consisted of fully fused foreleg, leg and foot remains and one tooth. There was evidence of osteoporosis on the digital and proximal ends of the long bones. No datable artefacts were retrieved from the animal burial.
- Post hole [105] was sub-circular with steeply sloping, concave sides and an irregular base. It measured 0.35m in diameter and had a maximum depth of 0.10m. The single fill of firm, greyish brown (10YR 5/2) sandy clay contained no archaeological artefacts.

Trench 2 was aligned east – west, measured 1.6 x 10m and had a maximum depth of 0.75m. The stratigraphy consisted of a layer of firm, very dark greyish brown (10YR 3/2) sandy clay topsoil over a subsoil of firm, dark greyish brown (10YR 4/2) sandy clay. Beneath this lay the natural geology of yellowish brown (10YR 5/6) soft clayey sand. No archaeological features, deposits, or artefacts were observed in this trench.

### **Trench 3**

Trench 3 was located in the wooded area towards the northern end of the site within the footprint of the proposed residential care home. The trench was aligned north-west – south-east, measured 1.6 x 19.80m and had a maximum depth of 0.75m. The stratigraphy consisted of a firm, very dark greyish brown (10YR 3/2) silty clay topsoil over a subsoil of friable, greyish brown (10YR 5/2) sandy clay. Beneath this lay the natural geology of soft, light yellowish brown (10YR 6/4) clayey sand with patches of sandy gravel. The subsoil was not apparent in the central part of the trench. The trench showed evidence of root disturbance. Two features were observed in the trench: ditch [301], and bank [303].

- Ditch [301] was linear and aligned north-east – south-west with steeply sloping straight sides and a flat base. It measured 1.90m wide and had a maximum depth of 0.95m. The feature contained a single fill (302) of hard, dark greyish brown (10YR 4/2) silty clay with moderate medium flints, occasional charcoal fragments and evidence of root disturbance. The fill contained fragments of late post-medieval/modern glass and tile, and a single sherd of modern pottery. Several animal bone fragments were also collected from the fill, the majority being bird, although there was a single larger leg and foreleg bone with the proximal ulna unfused.
- Bank [303] was linear and aligned north-east – south-west It had created a depression in the natural with gently sloping concave sides and a rounded base. The exposed area of the bank measured 0.65 x 0.80m and had a maximum depth of 0.40m from the existing surface. The bank comprised greyish brown (10YR 5/2) silty clay (304) and had moderate medium flints and occasional charcoal fleck inclusions. It yielded several fragments of late post-medieval/modern tile and a single fragment of slag.

Features [301] and [303] lay adjacent to each other within the trench and have been identified as a possible late post medieval/modern boundary ditch with and associated bank. The alignment of the boundary is apparent in the surface on either side of the trench as it is still in the process of silting up.

### **Trenches 4 and 5**

Trenches 4 and 5 were located in the wooded area to the north of the site, within the footprint of the proposed car park and adjacent store. Trench 4 was aligned north – south and measured 1.6 x 24.80m with a maximum depth of 1m. Trench 5 was aligned east – west and measured 1.6 x 8m with a maximum depth of 1.25m. The stratigraphy in both trenches consisted of a firm, very dark brown (10YR 3/2) silty clay topsoil over a subsoil of firm, yellowish brown (10YR 5/6) sandy clay. Beneath this lay the natural geology of firm, yellowish brown (10YR 5/4) sandy clay with flints and patches of gravel. No archaeological features, deposits or artefacts were observed in these trenches.

## Discussion

The archaeological evaluation of the site has demonstrated no definitive evidence of archaeological activity predating the late post-medieval. The alignment of ditch [101] in Trench 1 indicates that it may predate the existing boundaries, although only the base of the feature survives, suggesting that it has limited potential for further information. The large depth of subsoil observed in Trench 1 may represent a levelling deposit imported to create the existing lawn which is likely to be contemporary with or post-date the construction of the present house. The fieldwork did not reveal any evidence concerning the eastern arm of the medieval moat sited to the west. This arm of the moat lies outside of the areas affected by the proposed development.

On the basis of these findings, it is considered that only late post-medieval/modern boundaries, and further similar or related features are likely to be disturbed by the proposed development. The risk that significant occupation features will be disturbed can be considered to be low.

## Illustrations:

Figure 1	Site location
Figure 2	Trench location
Figure 3a	Trench 1 plan
Figure 3b	Feature sections
Figure 4	Trench 3 plan and section
Plate 1	Gully [101] looking north-west
Plate 2	Animal burial [103] looking east
Plate 3	Posthole [105] looking north
Plate 4	Ditch [301] looking south-west

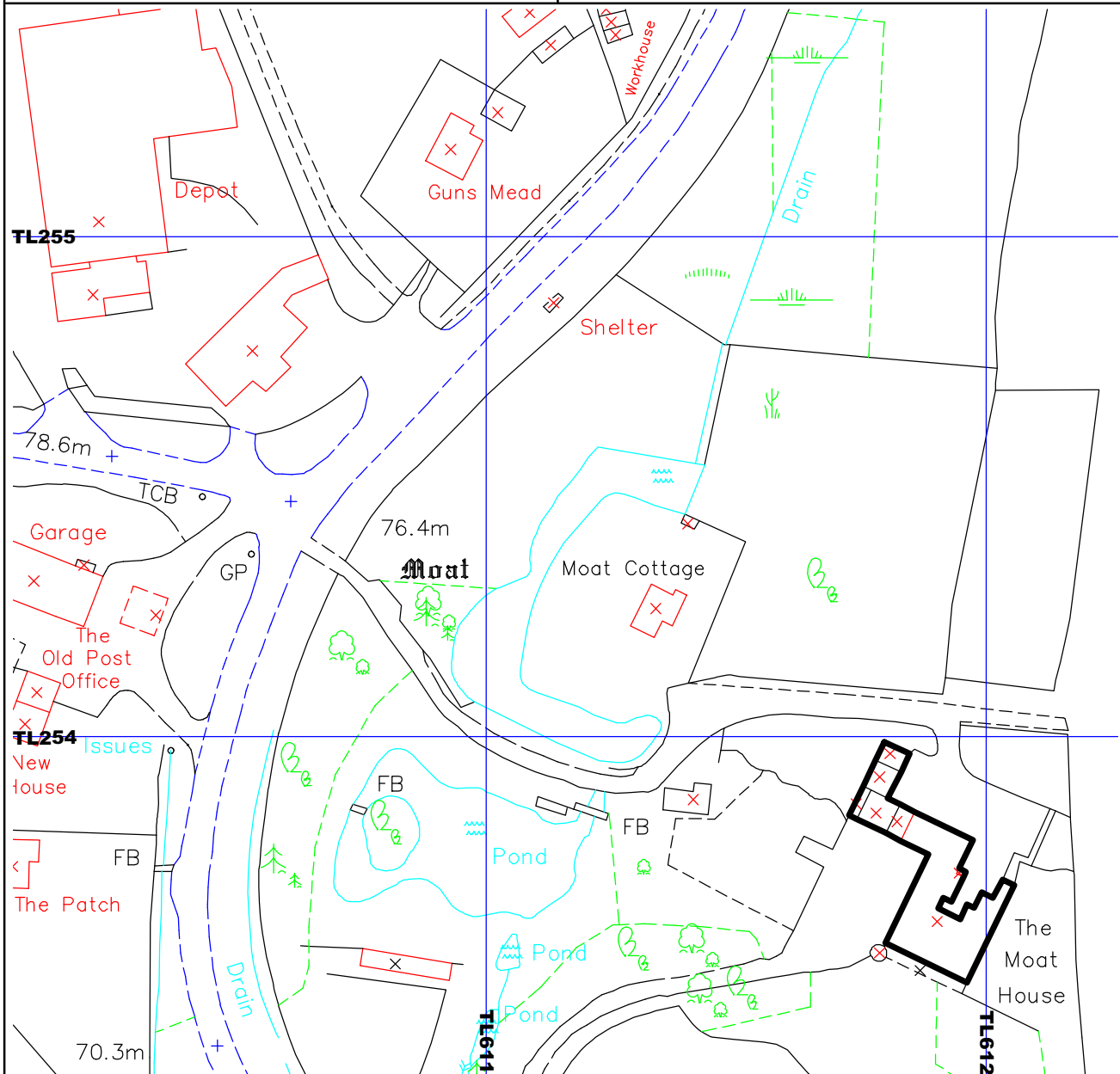
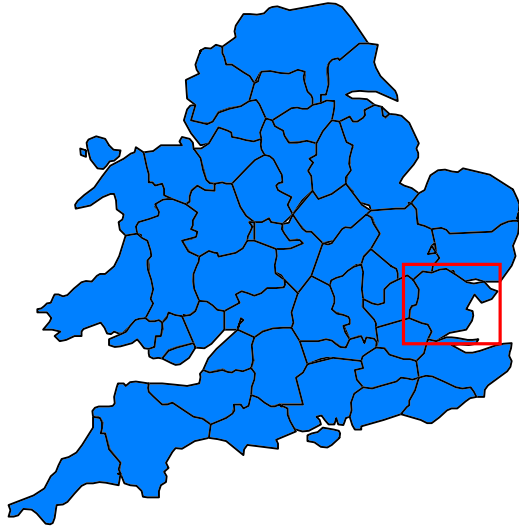
Alison Hudson  
September 2007

The Heritage Network Ltd, 11 Furnmston Court, Icknield Way, Letchworth, SG6 1UJ

THE HERITAGE NETWORK LTD

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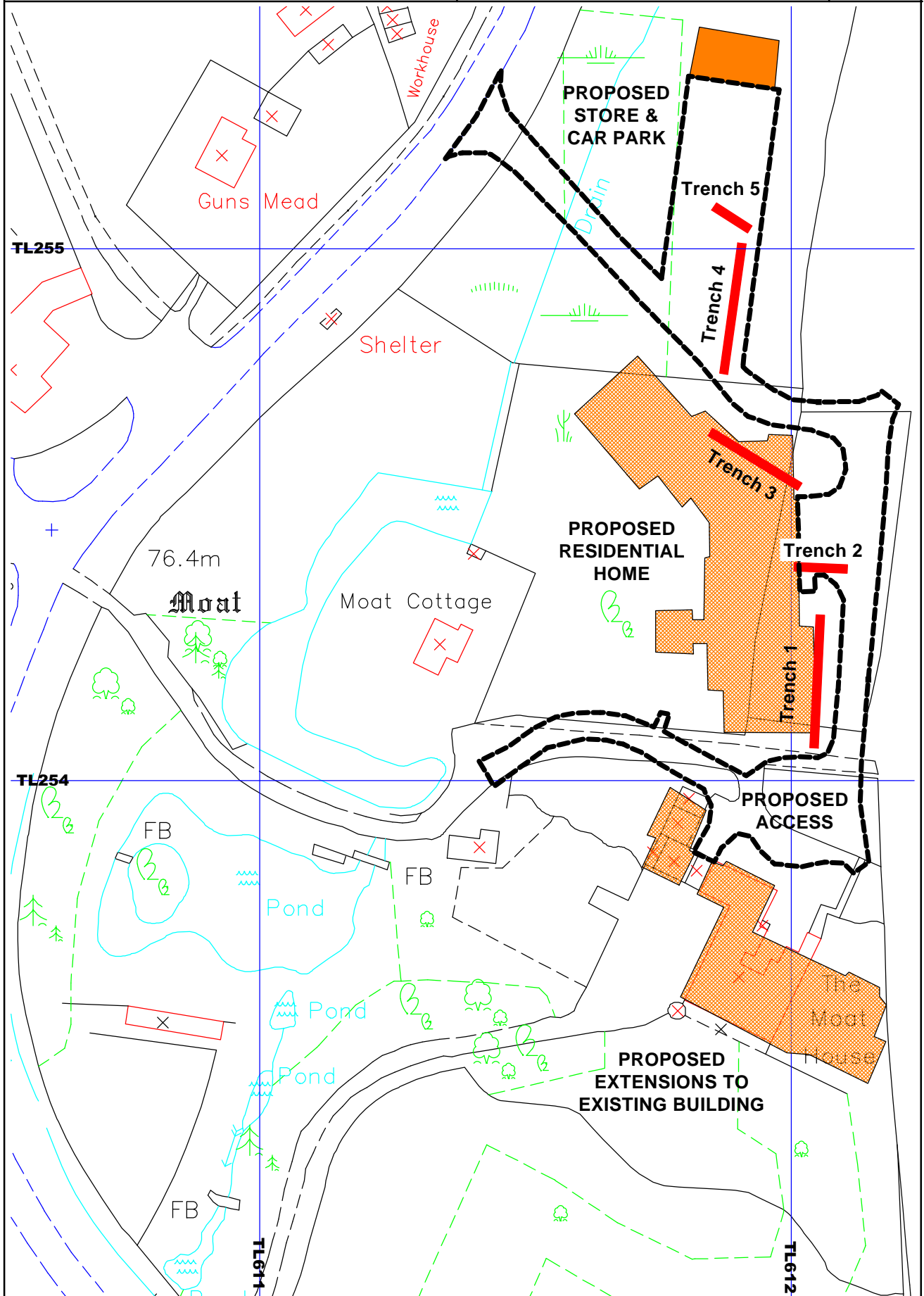


Site Location

Scale 1:1250

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Figure 1

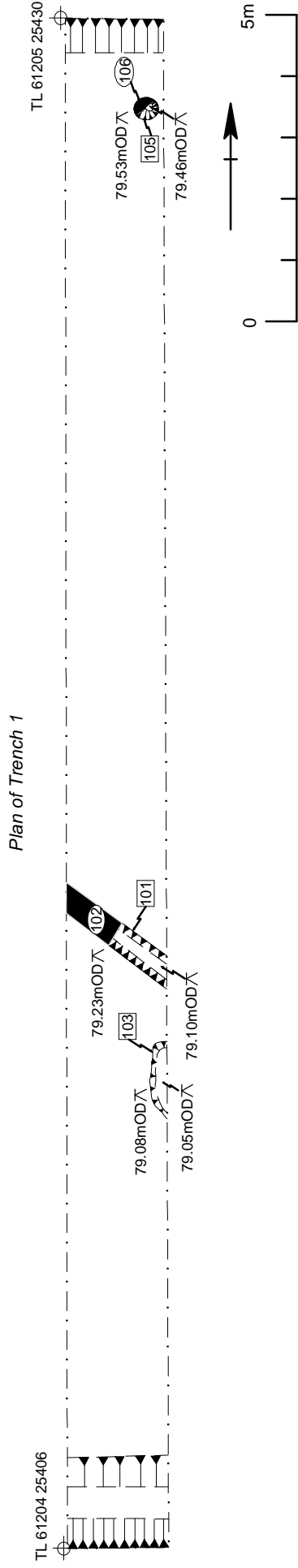


New Build and Trench Layout

Scale 1:1000

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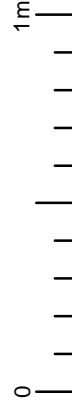
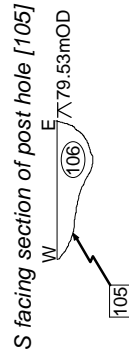
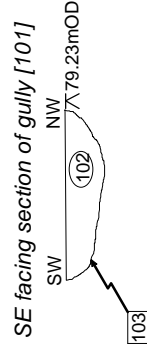
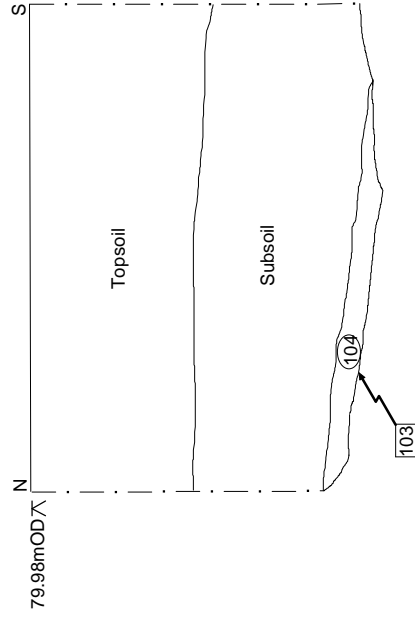
Figure 2



Trench 1 plan

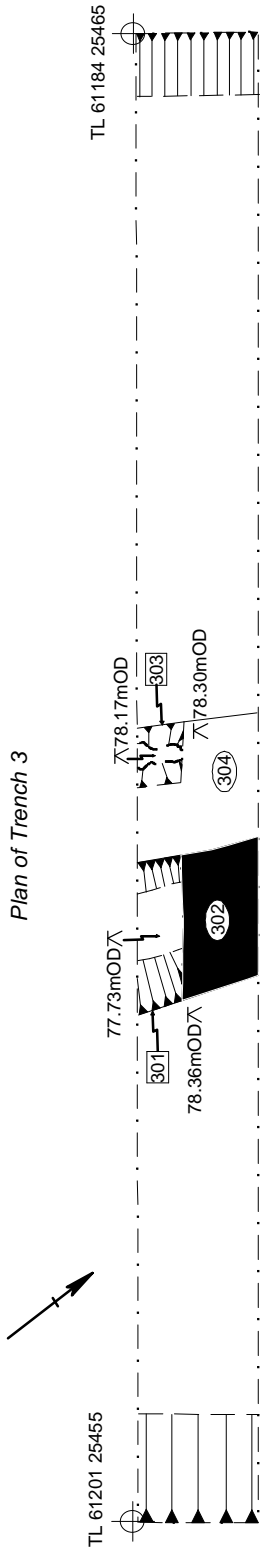
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Figure 3a

West facing section of trench 1 including section of animal burial [103]

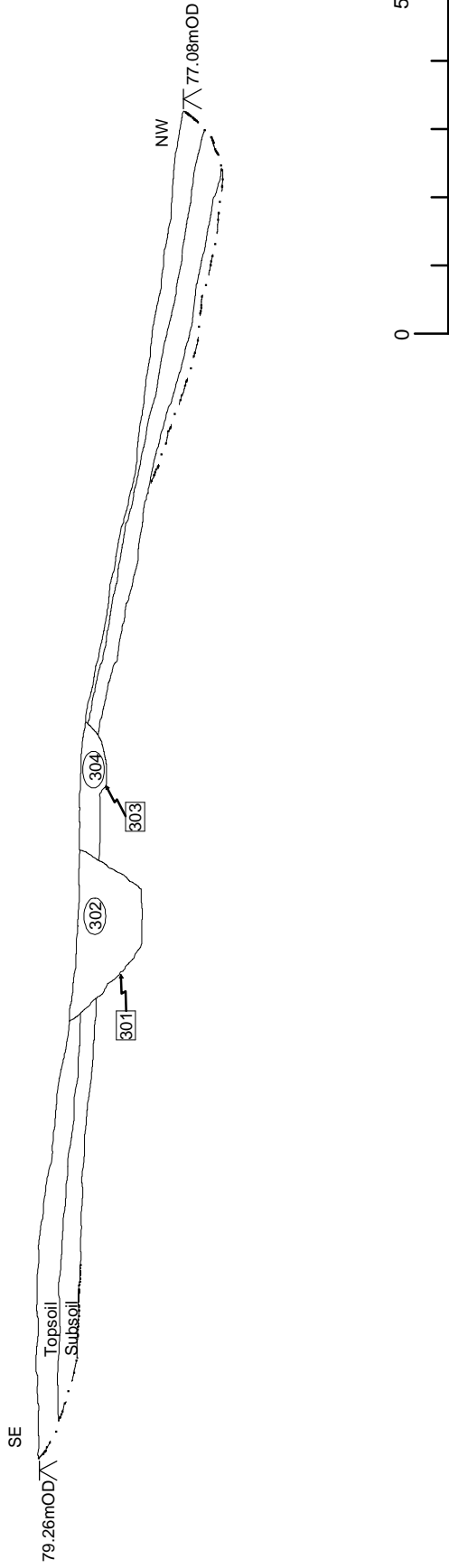


Trench 1 sections

Scale 1:20  
Figure 3b



North east facing section of Trench 3



Trench 3 plan and section





Plate 1: Gully [101] looking north-west



Plate 2: Animal burial [103] looking east





Plate 3: Posthole [105] looking north



Plate 4: Ditch [301] looking south-west