

ARCHAEOLOGICAL  
SERVICES  
DURHAM UNIVERSITY

on behalf of  
Persimmon Homes

Easington Dog Track  
Peterlee  
Co Durham

archaeological evaluation

report 5197  
October 2019

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## **1. Summary**

### **The project**

- 1.1 This report presents the results of an archaeological evaluation conducted in advance of a proposed development at Easington Dog Track. The works comprised the excavation of evaluation trenches and test pits across the site.
- 1.2 The works were commissioned by Persimmon Homes and conducted by Archaeological Services Durham University.

### **Results**

- 1.3 A field boundary ditch, present on maps until the 1930s, was recorded in Trench 11. No other archaeological features were identified.
- 1.4 A considerable thickness of made ground was present in all trenches in the centre of the race track. The made ground extends beneath foundation depth for the new development and therefore any archaeological resource beneath it will not be affected by the development.

### **Recommendations**

- 1.5 No further scheme of archaeological works is recommended in relation to this development.

## 2. Project background

### Location (Figure 1)

- 2.1 The site is located at Easington (Moorfield) Greyhound Stadium, Peterlee, County Durham (NGR centre: NZ 4167 4438). It covers an area of approximately 2.36 ha. To the east is the B1432 Sunderland Road. On other sides is open farmland. The cottage of Hill Crest, although included in the site boundary, is excluded from the proposed development.

### Development proposal

- 2.2 A housing development with associated access and services is proposed for the site.

### Objective

- 2.3 The objective of the scheme of works was to assess the nature, extent and potential significance of any archaeological resource within the proposed development area, so that an informed decision may be made regarding the nature and scope of any further scheme of archaeological works that may be required in relation to the development.

### Research Objectives

- 2.4 The regional research framework (Petts & Gerrard 2006) contains an agenda for archaeological research in the region. The scheme of works has the potential to address agenda items:

#### Late Bronze Age and Iron Age

Li Settlement

Lii Landscapes

Lv Material culture: general

#### Roman

Riv Native and civilian life

Rv Material culture

#### Later medieval

MDi settlement

MDii Landscape

### Specification

- 2.5 The works have been undertaken in accordance with a Written Scheme of Investigation provided by Archaeological Services Durham University (reference DS19.435) and approved by the planning authority. When unexpectedly great thicknesses of recent made ground were identified covering much of the site, making normal trial trenching techniques impractical, it was agreed in a telephone conversation between Archaeological Services and the County Archaeology Officer on 15th October that five of the proposed trenches need not be excavated and a further eight should be replaced with smaller test pits. This amendment was confirmed in person by the County Archaeology Officer during a site visit on 17th October.

### Dates

- 2.6 Fieldwork was undertaken in the w/c 14th October 2019. This report was prepared for October 2019.

### **Personnel**

- 2.7 Fieldwork was supervised by Andy Platell. This report was prepared by Andy Platell, with illustrations by David Graham. The Project Manager was Daniel Still.

### **Archive/OASIS**

- 2.8 The site code is **EDT19**, for **Easington Dog Track 2019**. The archive is currently held by Archaeological Services Durham University and will be transferred to County Durham Archaeological Archives in due course. Archaeological Services Durham University is registered with the **Online Access to the Index of archaeological investigationS project (OASIS)**. The OASIS ID number for this project is **archaeol3-371582**.

### **Acknowledgements**

- 2.9 Archaeological Services Durham University is grateful for the assistance of personnel from DWW Contracting Services Ltd. in facilitating this scheme of works.

## **3. Landuse, topography and geology**

- 3.1 At the time of this evaluation, the proposed development area comprised a disused greyhound racing stadium.
- 3.2 The racing track itself is almost level at an elevation of approximately 105m OD. However, it projects out from the natural ground surface (which slopes gently down towards the north-west), so that there is a steep 7m to 8m high bank down to the surrounding fields along its western and northern sides. The track is possibly cut into the natural slope on its southern and eastern sides since the stadium buildings are raised about 2m above the track level. The car park to the south-east is slightly higher again, at elevations between 110m and 113m, and slopes gently towards the north-west in parallel with the fields outside the stadium.
- 3.3 The underlying bedrock geology of the area comprises Permian dolostone of the Ford Formation, which is overlain by Devensian diamicton till (The British Geological Society).

## **4. Historical and archaeological background**

- 4.1 An archaeological desk-based assessment of the site has already been completed (Archaeological Services 2018), the results are summarised below.
- 4.2 There is no known archaeological resource of prehistoric or Roman date within the proposed development area. The presence of activity in the surrounding area indicates that there is some potential for remains of this date to exist within the proposed site boundary.
- 4.3 The proposed development area would have been located within the town field of the Easington settlement during the medieval period. There is some potential for cultivation remains associated with this to survive, which would be of limited significance.

- 4.4 The former Easington Greyhound Stadium is located within the proposed site boundary, and its track and buildings survive. Landscaping and groundworks associated with its construction may have removed remains from earlier periods.
- 4.5 A geomagnetic survey of the site has been completed (Archaeological Services 2018), the results of which are summarised below.
- 4.6 The majority of the surveyable area was found to contain a great deal of ferrous and/or fired waste materials, probably introduced during levelling or infilling works at the site.
- 4.7 No features of likely archaeological significance have been identified in the survey.

## **5. The evaluation trenches**

### **Introduction**

- 5.1 At the start of excavation works it became immediately apparent that the area within the race track contained a considerable depth of made ground that rendered conventional trial trenching techniques impractical. Two trenches (nos. 12 and 20) were excavated at either end of the track to confirm this made ground was present throughout, and then proposals were submitted to the County Archaeology Officer for a variation to the works specification. While this was being discussed, a third trench (no. 13) was excavated in this area. Following agreement with the County Archaeology Officer, the remaining trenches inside the track (nos.14-19, 21-22) were replaced by test pits to prove the depth of the made ground. Trenches 1-5 were not excavated and trenches 6-11 were excavated conventionally.
- 5.2 Trench 6 was rotated to avoid a suspected septic tank belonging to Hill Crest cottage, Trench 7 was shortened to avoid services that had been identified at either end, Trench 8 was relocated c.15m to the north-east to avoid blocking the main access to the site and Trench 9 was rotated to avoid blocking access to both Hill Crest and the site. Trenches 10 and 11 were excavated as proposed in the WSI. The locations of the trenches and test pits as excavated are shown in Figure 2. Trench and test pit data are summarised in Table 2.
- 5.3 Trenches were excavated by a JCB equipped with a toothless ditching bucket and working under archaeological control. Test pits were excavated with a toothless 0.6m-wide trenching bucket. This bucket also had to be reverted to for excavation of Trench 6 as this proved to contain particularly compact made ground that the ditching bucket could not break through.

### **Trenches 1 to 5**

- 5.4 These trenches were not excavated since they proved to have been located along the length of the steep, 7-8m high bank that forms the western edge of the dog track (Photo 1). It would not have been possible to excavate them without first undergoing extensive engineering works to create a level work platform, and even if this had been done, it is improbable that the machine would have reached the base of the bank. In any case, this bank is not going to be removed by the proposed development so any archaeological deposits under it will not be affected.

### **Trench 6**

- 5.5 Trench 6 was 10m long. Natural subsoil, a yellow-brown sandy silty clay [3], was identified at a depth of 0.7m below the ground surface, at an elevation of 106.64m OD. Over this was a very compact deposit of bricks and concrete lumps [5: 0.65m deep]. This was overlain by a thin deposit of roadstone gravel [4: 0.05m thick]. A particularly large slab of concrete filling the southern end of the trench was left *in situ* in case it was capping the postulated septic tank. No archaeological features were identified and no artefacts recovered.

### **Trench 7**

- 5.6 Trench 7 was 13m long. Natural subsoil, a yellow-brown sandy silty clay [3], was identified at a depth of 0.3m below the ground surface, at an elevation of 109.80m OD. Over this was a deposit of brick fragments and roadstone gravel in a dark grey-brown sandy silt [6: 0.3m deep]. Two modern postholes, each 0.35m in diameter and only partly filled by loose soil, were cut into the northern end of the trench. Apart from these, no features were identified and no artefacts recovered (Photo 2).

### **Trench 8**

- 5.7 Trench 8 was 20m long. Natural subsoil, a yellow-brown sandy silty clay [3], was identified at a depth of 0.3m to 0.4m below the ground surface, at elevations between 110.30m and 110.82m OD. Over this was a thin deposit of brown sandy silt that was only present in the northern half of the trench [7: 0.1m deep]. This was overlain by a deposit of brick fragments and roadstone gravel in a dark grey-brown sandy silt [6: 0.3m deep]. No archaeological features were identified and no artefacts recovered (Photo 3).

### **Trench 9**

- 5.8 Trench 9 was 20m long. Natural subsoil, a yellow-brown sandy silty clay [3], was identified at a depth of 0.4m to 0.7m below the ground surface, at elevations between 110.10m and 110.52m OD. Over this was a deposit of brown sandy silt [7: 0.2m deep] that was possibly the former topsoil before construction of the stadium. This was overlain by a deposit of brick fragments and roadstone gravel in a dark grey-brown sandy silt [6: 0.3m deep]. In the northern third of the trench this was overlain by a thin layer of crushed dolomite [10: 0.1m thick] and then the whole trench was overlain by a thin layer of roadstone gravel [4: 0.1m thick]. No archaeological features were identified and no artefacts recovered (Photo 4).

### **Trench 10**

- 5.9 Trench 10 was 20m long. Natural subsoil, a yellow-brown sandy silty clay [3], was identified at a depth of 0.3m below the ground surface, at elevations between 110.84m and 111.54m OD. This was directly overlain by the topsoil [1: 0.25m deep] and then a thin deposit of roadstone gravel [4: 0.05m deep]. No archaeological features were identified and no artefacts recovered (Photo 5).

### **Trench 11**

- 5.10 Trench 11 was 20m long. Natural subsoil, a yellow-brown sandy silty clay [3], was identified at a depth of 0.3m below the ground surface, at elevations between 111.88m and 112.19m OD. A ditch [F9: 3.0m wide] filled by a red-brown silty sand [8] crossed the northern end of the trench on a north-west to south-east alignment. This was in the correct location and on the correct alignment to be a field boundary ditch recorded on Ordnance Survey plans until the stadium was constructed in 1934.

The whole trench was overlain by topsoil [1: 0.25m deep] and then a thin deposit of roadstone gravel [4: 0.05m deep].

### **Trenches / Test Pits 12 to 22**

- 5.11 These trenches and test pits were all located within the centre of the racing track. Natural subsoil [3] was reached in some places towards the eastern side of the track, at a minimum depth of 0.8m below the ground surface towards the eastern ends of Trenches 12 and 20, but at greater depths westwards. It was not reached at all in test pits along the western side of the track, even though these were excavated to depths of 2.5m (or 3.25m in the case of Test Pit 22). It became siltier and less stony towards the north. Above the natural subsoil was a deposit of made ground consisting of mixed silt, clay, stone, brick fragments and concrete lumps [2]. Occasional plastic items were present throughout this deposit indicating that it is of post-war date and therefore not part of the original racetrack. Above it was a thin topsoil [1: 0.15m deep]. Two interconnected land drains, filled by made ground, were identified cut into the natural subsoil in the base of Trench 12. No other features were identified in any of these trenches or test pits (Photos 6-8).

## **6. The artefacts**

- 6.1 No artefacts were recovered.

## **7. The palaeoenvironmental evidence**

- 7.1 No material suitable for palaeoenvironmental assessment was identified.

## **8. The archaeological resource**

- 8.1 A field boundary ditch, present on maps until the 1930s, was recorded in Trench 11. No other archaeological features were recorded in any of the other excavated areas.
- 8.2 A considerable thickness of made ground was present in all trenches in the centre of the race track. The made ground extends beneath foundation depth for the new development and therefore any archaeological resource beneath it will not be affected by the development.

## **9. Impact assessment**

- 9.1 Development of the site is unlikely to impact on any archaeological deposits.

## **10. Recommendations**

- 10.1 No further scheme of archaeological works is recommended in relation to this development.

## **11. Sources**

Archaeological Services 2017 *Easington Dog Track, Peterlee, County Durham: geophysical survey*. Unpublished report **4620**, Archaeological Services Durham University



Archaeological Services 2018 *Easington Greyhound Stadium, Easington, County Durham: archaeological desk-based assessment*. Unpublished report **4686**,  
Archaeological Services Durham University  
Petts, D, & Gerrard, C, 2006 *Shared Visions: The North-East Regional Research Framework for the Historic Environment*. Durham

## Appendix 1: Data tables

**Table 1.1: Context data**

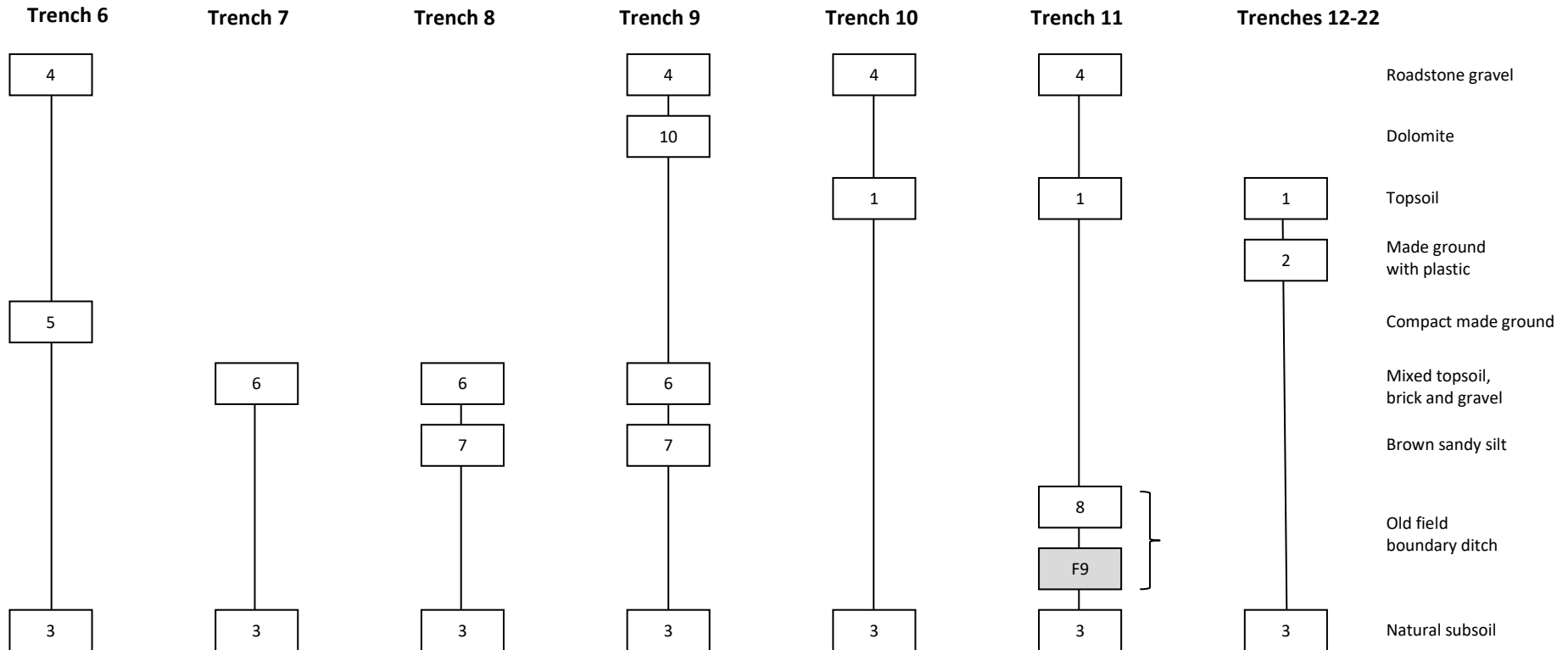
No	Trench / test pit	Description
1	10-22	Topsoil
2	12-22	Made ground in trenches 12-22
3	6-13, 15-16, 19-21	Natural subsoil
4	6, 10-11	Roadstone gravel
5	6	Compact made ground in Trench 6
6	7-9	Mixed topsoil, brick fragments and roadstone gravel
7	8	Mid brown sandy silt
8	11	Fill of ditch F9 – red-brown silty sand
F9	11	Cut of old field boundary ditch
10	9	Crushed dolomite

Table 1.2: Trench data

Trench	Test pit	Length (m)	Depth (m)	Glacial Geology	Made ground	Depth (m)	Features	Comments
1		n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	None	Unexcavated
2		n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	None	Unexcavated
3		n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	None	Unexcavated
4		n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	None	Unexcavated
5		n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	None	Unexcavated
6		10	0.2-0.7	Yellow brown sandy clay	Compact brick/concrete rubble [5]	0.7	None	
7		13	0.3	Yellow brown sandy clay	Brick rubble and roadstone [6]	0.3	2 modern postholes	
8		20	0.3-0.4	Yellow brown sandy clay	Brick rubble and roadstone [6]	0.3-0.4	None	
9		20	0.4-0.7	Yellow brown sandy clay	Brick rubble and roadstone [6]	0.2-0.5	None	
10		25	0.2-0.3	Yellow brown sandy clay	none	n/a	None	
11		25	0.2-0.4	Yellow brown sandy clay	none	n/a	Field boundary ditch	
12		20	0.8-1.3	Yellow brown silty clay	Building rubble inc. plastics in silt [2]	0.8-1.3	2 modern field drains	
13		15	1.4-1.9	Yellow brown silty clay	Building rubble inc. plastics in silt [2]	1.4-1.9+	None	Full depth of made ground not established
	14	2	2.5	n/a	Building rubble inc. plastics in silt [2]	2.5+	n/a	Full depth of made ground not established
	15	2	1.3	Yellow brown silty clay	Building rubble inc. plastics in silt [2]	1.3	None	
	16	2	1.2	Yellow brown silty clay	Building rubble inc. plastics in silt [2]	1.2	None	
	17	2	0.4	n/a	Building rubble inc. plastics in silt [2]	0.4+	n/a	Abandoned due to water ingress
	18	2	2.4	n/a	Building rubble inc. plastics in silt [2]	2.4+	n/a	Full depth of made ground not established
	19	2	2.4	Yellow brown silty clay	Building rubble inc. plastics in silt [2]	2.4	None	
20		20	0.9-1.3	Yellow brown silty clay	Building rubble inc. plastics in silt [2]	0.8-1.3	None	
	21	2	1.8	Yellow brown silty clay	Building rubble inc. plastics in silt [2]	1.8	None	

Trench	Test pit	Length (m)	Depth (m)	Glacial Geology	Made ground	Depth (m)	Features	Comments
	22	2	3.25	n/a	Building rubble inc. plastics in silt [2]	3.25+	n/a	Full depth of made ground not established

## Appendix 2: Stratigraphic matrices





Photograph 1: Proposed location for Trench 3, looking north, and showing height and steepness of bank



Photograph 2: Trench 7, looking north



Photograph 3: Trench 8, looking south



Photograph 4: Trench 9, looking west



Photograph 5: Trench 10, looking south-east



Photograph 6: Trench 13, looking north





Photograph 7: Trench 20, looking west and showing increasing depth of made ground




Photograph 8: Test pit 22, looking north. Note plastic at depth in made ground

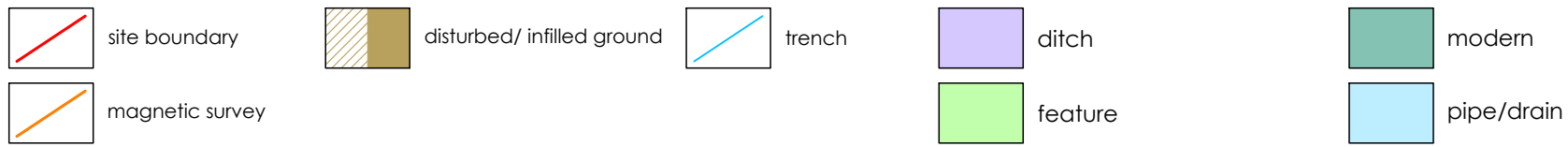
Figure 1: Site location

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 site location

0  1km  
scale 1:25 000 for A4 plot



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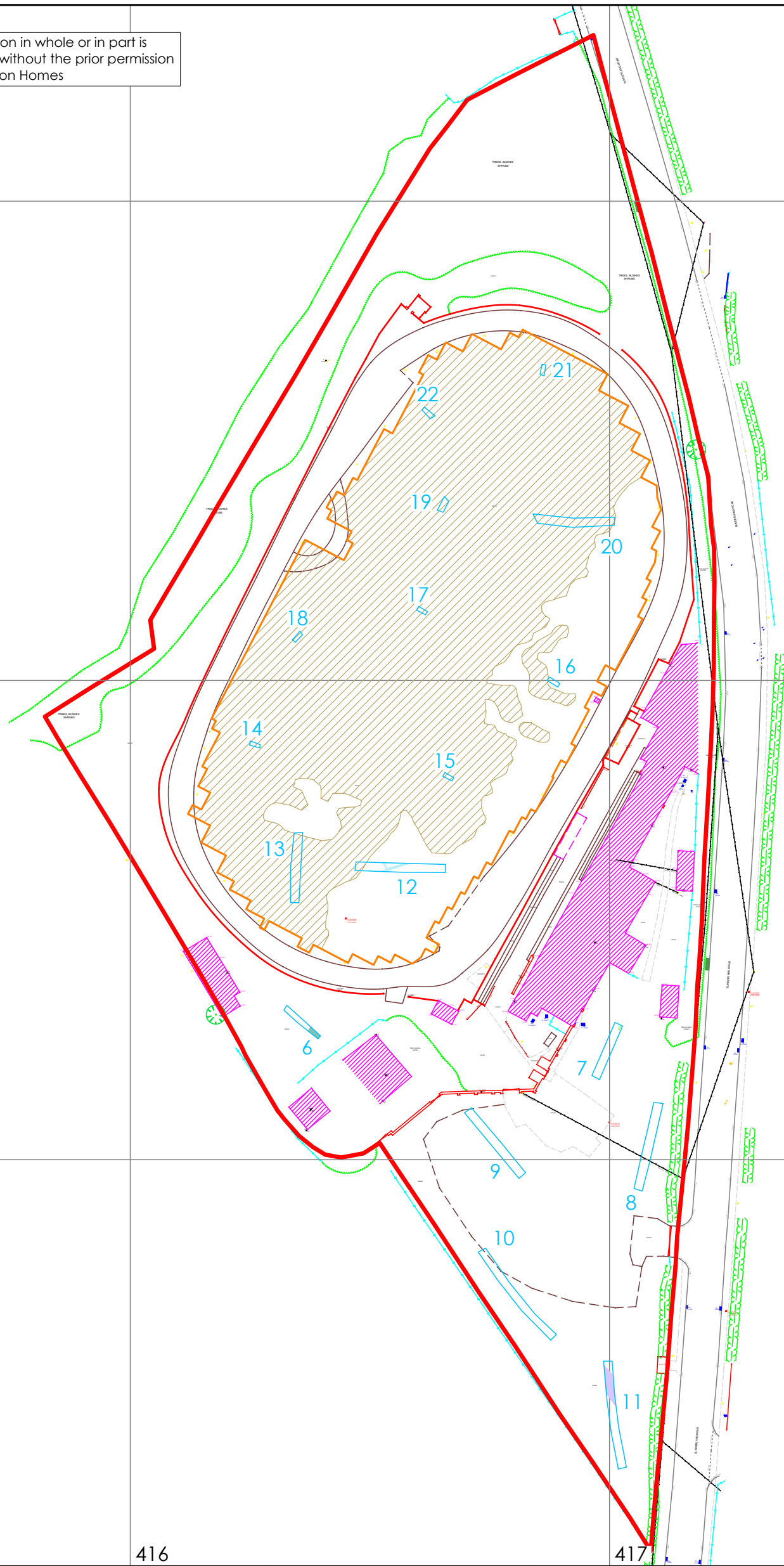
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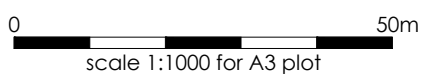
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Figure 2: Trench locations

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Figure 3: Trench plans and sections

