

on behalf of  
County Durham and Darlington  
Fire and Rescue Service

Darlington Fire Station  
Darlington

archaeological evaluation

report 5271  
February 2020

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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 Darlington Fire Station. The works comprised the excavation and recording of five evaluation trenches.
- 1.2 The works were commissioned by County Durham and Darlington Fire and Rescue Service and conducted by Archaeological Services Durham University.

### **Results**

- 1.3 A dark grey silt was present below archaeological deposits throughout much of the site. This is thought to be a natural river deposit.
- 1.4 Foundations of 19th century terraced housing and access roads were present throughout the site. In places they had been deliberately grubbed out as part of post-war clearance operations.
- 1.5 Modern tarmac and concrete hardstanding surfaces were present in most trenches.

### **Recommendations**

- 1.6 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 Darlington Fire Station, Darlington (NGR centre: NZ 2923 1429). It covers an area of approximately 0.82 ha. To the north is Darlington Police Station, to the south is Darlington Postal Sorting Office, to the west is the A167 St Cuthbert's Way, and to the east is Park Place.

### **Development**

- 2.2 Planning permission has been granted for a development at Darlington Fire Station, including the construction of a new Fire Station and residential properties. The planning application reference number is 18/01111/FUL.

### **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 was designed to address agenda items

#### **Roman**

Riv: Native and civilian life

Rix: Landscape and environment

#### **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 DS19.645r) and approved by the planning authority. Building recording was also specified as part of the archaeological works; this has been reported on separately (Archaeological Services 2020).

### **Dates**

- 2.6 Fieldwork was undertaken in the w/c 3rd February 2020. This report was prepared for February 2020.

### **Personnel**

- 2.7 Fieldwork was conducted by Jonathan Goldberg-Booth, Laura Watson and Andy Platell (supervisor). This report was prepared by Andy Platell, with illustrations by Janine Watson. The Project Manager was Daniel Still.

### **Archive/OASIS**

- 2.8 The site code is **DFS20**, for **Darlington Fire Station 2020**. 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 **archaeol3-384112**.

### **Acknowledgements**

- 2.9 Archaeological Services Durham University is grateful for the assistance of staff of Darlington Fire Station 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 working fire station.
- 3.2 The area was predominantly level with a mean elevation of approximately 37m OD. It is located less than 100m east of the River Skerne.
- 3.3 The underlying bedrock geology of the area comprises Early Triassic calcareous mudstone of the Roxby Formation, which is overlain by Holocene alluvium (The British Geological Society).

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

- 4.1 A desk-based assessment has already been complete for the site (Archaeological Services 2018). Results of this are summarised below.
- 4.2 While there is limited evidence for prehistoric or Roman period activity in the study area, likely to be as a result of extensive urban development from the post-medieval period onwards, evidence for occupation has been found during archaeological works in the surrounding area. There is some potential that a resource of this date may survive where later developments have not impacted.
- 4.3 The proposed development area would have been located away from the early and later medieval settlement foci. From the 12th century the site was probably within the Bishop's Park and a fishery existed in the vicinity by the 14th century. There is slight potential for ephemeral remains associated with the park or fishery to survive within the proposed development area due to later development.
- 4.4 In the first half of the 19th century the western edge of the site was occupied by buildings associated with a woollen mill and a farmhouse, with agricultural land covering the eastern side. By the later 19th century terraced housing covered the entire site. Archaeological remains associated with post-medieval activity have the potential to survive within the site.

## 5. The evaluation trenches

### Introduction

- 5.1 Five trenches were excavated by a machine working under archaeological control in the locations shown in Figure 2. A mechanical breaker was used to break concrete and tarmac surfaces; this material was then removed using a toothed trenching bucket. Where practical, this was replaced by a toothless ditching bucket as soon as softer deposits were encountered beneath these hard surfaces. Trench size and location were adjusted because of the site constraints. Trenches were then cleaned and recorded by hand.

### Trench 1 (Figure 3; Photo 1)

- 5.2 This trench was located on a grassed area outside the front of the fire station. It had to be twice relocated eastwards following the discovery of drainage pipes along its western edge. This restricted the space available for excavation and it was excavated to a length of 8m. The lowest deposit encountered, 1.2m below the ground surface and at an elevation of 36.36m OD, was a brown silty clay containing brick and mortar flecks, sherds of 19th-century pottery and clay pipe stem fragments [17: more than 0.3m deep]. Towards the south-west end of the trench, this was overlain by a north-south road surface [F18], consisting of tarmac to the west and a line of stone kerbs to the east. Part of a parallel brick wall [F19] was present in the north-east corner of the trench. These were overlain by a thick deposit of topsoil, a brown silty clay, mixed with occasional patches of yellow clay [20: 0.75m deep]. The drainage pipes that the trench had to be moved to avoid were located at a shallow depth within this topsoil.

### Trench 2 (Figure 3; Photo 2)

- 5.3 Trench 2 was 10m long and located in the car parking area to the south of the fire station building. Natural subsoil, an orange-brown silty clay [11], was identified 1.2m below the car park surface at an elevation of 36.45m OD. Over this was a dark grey silty clay [10: 0.2m deep]. Sherds of 19th-century glazed pottery were present in this deposit. A broad cut [F16], at least 1.5m wide, crossed the western end of the trench on a north-south alignment and was filled with a rubble of concrete and brick fragments [2]. An iron service pipe crossed the centre of the trench. The whole trench was covered by a continuation of the deposit of concrete and brick rubble [2: 0.5m deep] that had been present in the cut at the west end of the trench. This was overlain by three tarmac surfaces with a thin band of dolomite sub-base between the second and third surfaces [1: 0.5m deep].

### Trench 3 (Figure 3; Photo 3)

- 5.4 Trench 3 was 10m long and located to the east of Trench 2, partly in the car parking area and partly in an area of grass to the east. Natural subsoil, an orange-brown silty clay [11], was identified 1.15m below the car park surface at an elevation of 36.43m OD. Truncating this the western end of the trench was a shallow, flat-bottomed cut [F12: more than 2.5m wide by 0.2m deep] that may have been a natural river terrace. It was filled by a deposit of dark grey silty clay [10: 0.15m deep] that was thought to be a continuation of the deposit seen throughout Trench 2. It was overlain by a patchy deposit of orange-brown silty clay [9: 0.1m deep] and then a second deposit of dark grey silty clay [8: 0.1m deep] that this time extended beyond the limits of cut [F12] to cover the whole of the trench.

- 5.5 A thin deposit of mortar [7: 0.02m deep] intermittently overlay the above deposits, and this was overlain by a brick floor surface [F6: 0.18m deep]. This was overlain by a deposit of brick and mortar rubble [5: 0.2m deep] and then a second brick floor surface [F3: 0.08m deep], this time underlain by a clinker bedding horizon [4: 0.04m deep]. Two north-south brick walls [F13 and F14] crossed the east and west ends of the trench respectively between these various floor deposits. The whole trench was overlain by a deposit of brick and concrete rubble [2: 0.25m deep] similar to that seen in Trench 2, and this was overlain by the modern tarmac car park surface [1: 0.15m deep] in the western half of the trench and by topsoil [15: 0.2m deep] in the eastern half.

**Trench 4 (Figure 3; Photo 4)**

- 5.6 Trench 4 was 8m long and located in an area of concrete hardstanding to the east of the fire station building. Natural subsoil, an orange-brown silty clay [11], was identified 0.85m below the surface at an elevation of 36.60m OD. Over this was a dark grey silty clay [10: 0.15m deep]. This was truncated by a wide, east-west aligned cut [F21: 1.5m wide] filled by a deposit of brick and concrete rubble that also filled the remainder of the trench outside the cut [2: 0.3m deep]. This was overlain by a tarmac surface [1: 0.1m deep], then a deposit of dolomite sub-base [22: 0.1m deep] and then the current ground surface of reinforced concrete [23: 0.2m deep].

**Trench 5 (Figure 3; Photo 5)**

- 5.7 Trench 2 was 8m long and located in an area of concrete hardstanding to the north-east of the fire station building. A black to very dark grey silty clay [10: 0.6m deep] was identified at a depth of 1.1m below the modern surface. Because of its depth, this was sampled by a machine-excavated sondage, identifying natural subsoil [11], 1.7m below the ground surface at an elevation of 35.95m OD. Over the dark grey silt [10] was a black silt containing frequent brick and mortar grit fragments [24: 0.4m deep]. The base of an east-west wall [F25] was cut into this at the northern end of the trench and the corner of a second one [F26] was part-exposed at the southern end. The whole trench was overlain by a thick deposit of dolomite sub-base [22: 0.55m deep] and then the current ground surface of reinforced concrete [23: 0.15m deep].

## 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 No significant archaeological resource was identified. Remains relating to 19th century terraced housing and their demolition were present.

## **9. Impact assessment**

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

## **10. Recommendations**

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

## **11. Sources**

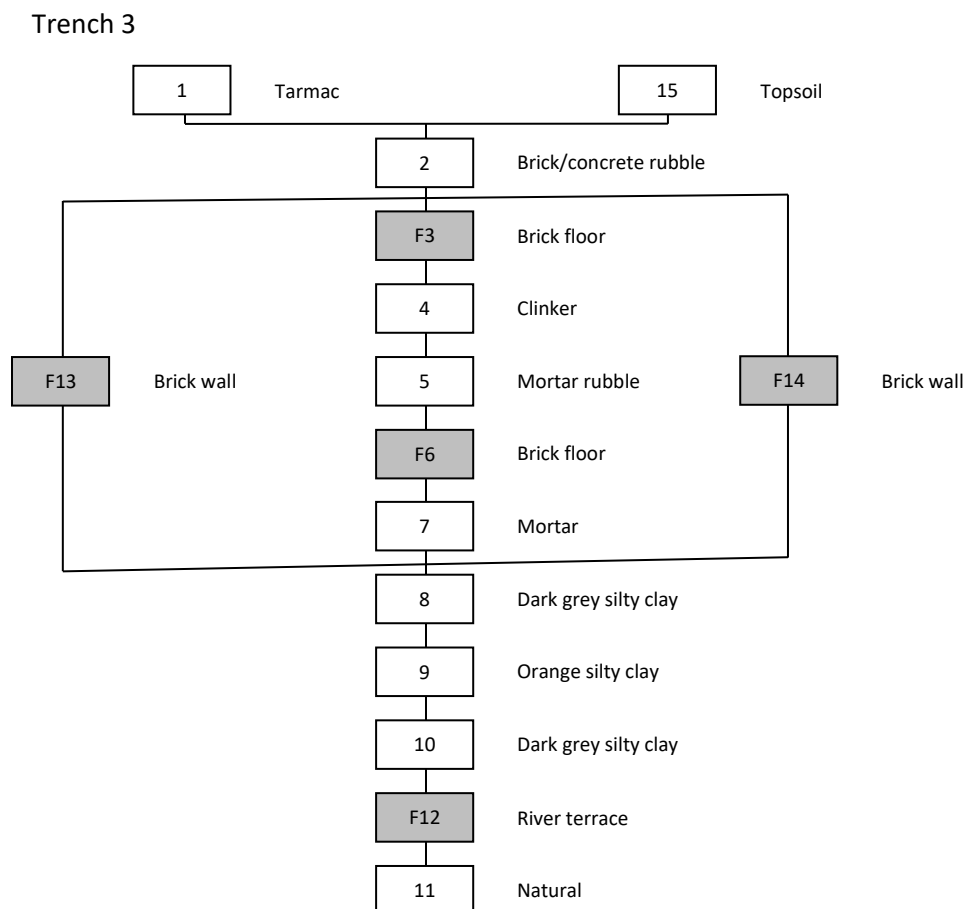
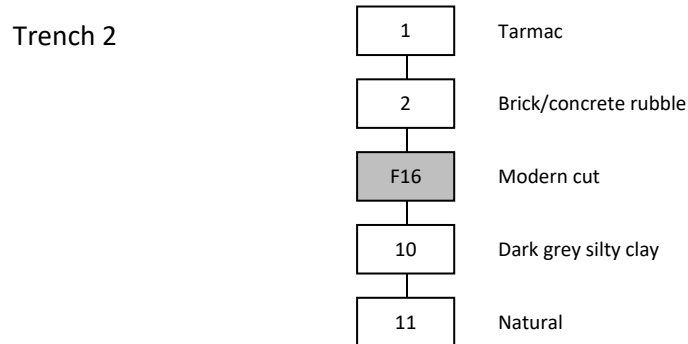
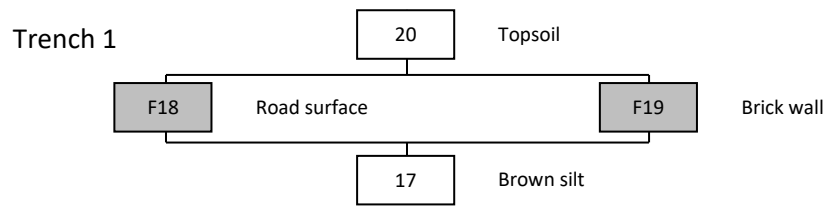
- Archaeological Services 2018 *Darlington Fire Station, Darlington: archaeological desk-based assessment*. Report **4861**, Archaeological Services Durham University
- Archaeological Services 2020 *Darlington Fire Station, Darlington: archaeological building recording*. Report **5254**, Archaeological Services Durham University
- Petts, D, & Gerrard, C, 2006 *Shared Visions: The North-East Regional Research Framework for the Historic Environment*. Durham



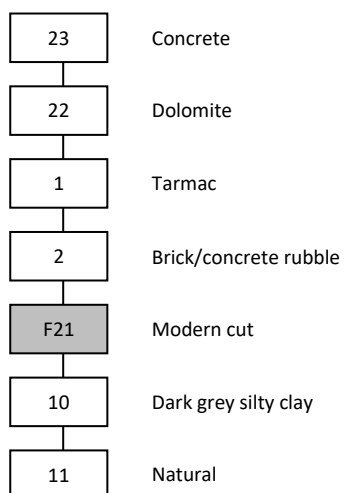
## Appendix 1: Context data

No	Trench	Description
1	2/3/4	Tarmac
2	2/3	Rubble made ground
F3	3	Brick floor surface
4	3	Clinker bedding for brick floor F3
5	3	Mortar rubble
F6	3	Brick floor surface
7	3	Mortar surface
8	3	Dark grey silty clay
9	3	Orange-brown silty clay
10	3	Dark grey silty clay
11	3	Natural - orange-brown silty clay
F12	3	Shallow cut containing 9 and 10
F13	3	Brick wall at E end of trench
F14	3	Brick wall at W end of trench
15	3	Topsoil
F16	2	Rubble-filled cut
17	1	Rubble at base of trench
18	1	Former road surface
19	1	Brick wall
20	1	Topsoil
21	4	Rubble-filled cut
22	4-5	Dolomite sub-base
23	4-5	Reinforced concrete
24	5	Black silt with brick and mortar grit
F25	5	Wall foundation
F26	5	Wall foundation

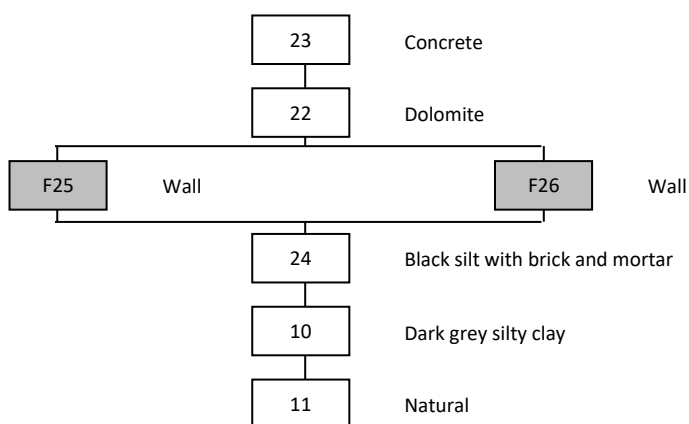
## Appendix 2: Stratigraphic matrices



#### Trench 4



#### Trench 5







Photograph 1: Trench 1, looking north



Photograph 2: Trench 2, section, looking south





Photograph 3: Trench 3, section, looking south



Photograph 4: Trench 4, looking south

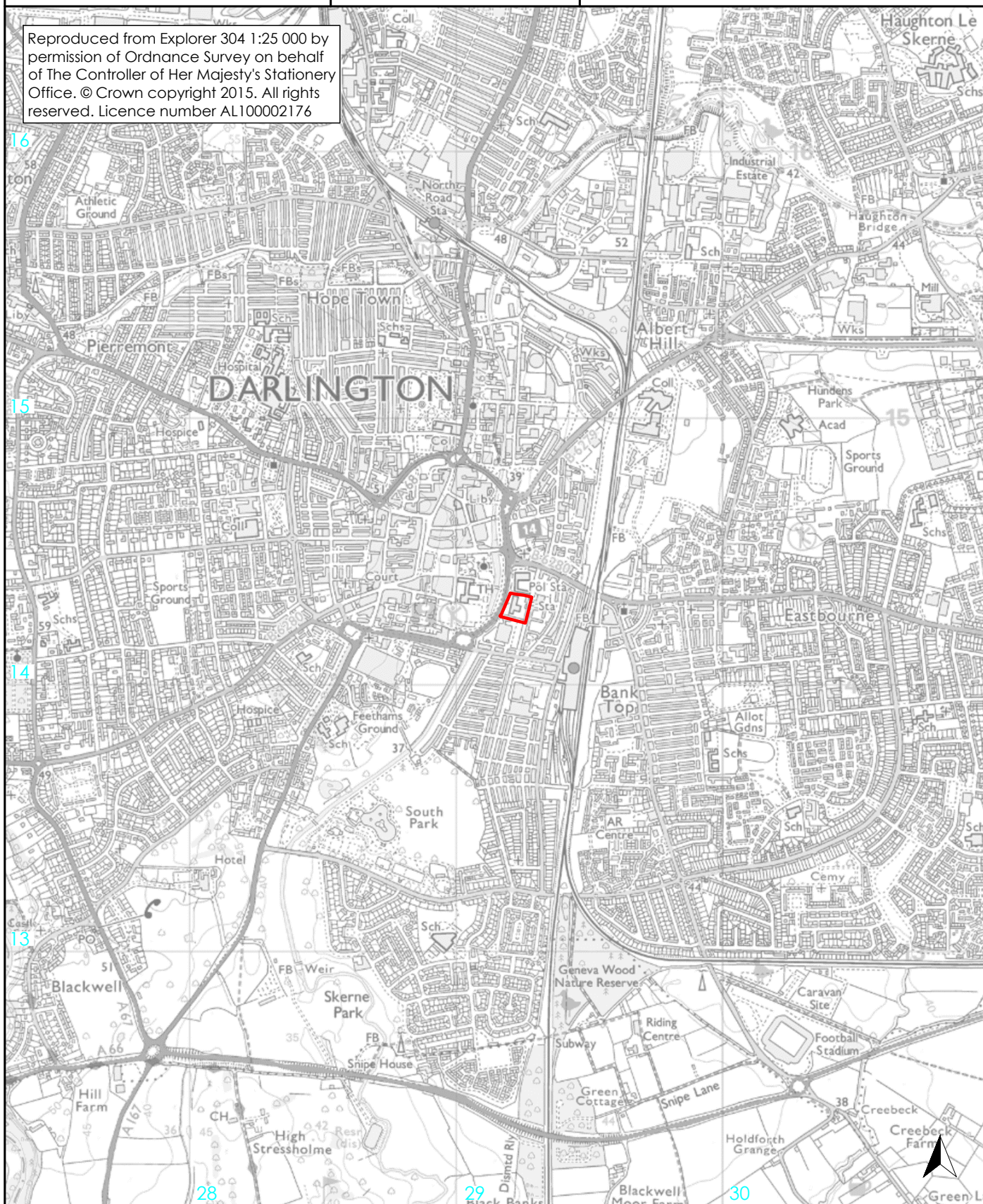




Photograph 5: Trench 5, deeper sondage, looking north-east



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site boundary

0 1km  
scale 1:20 000 for A4 plot

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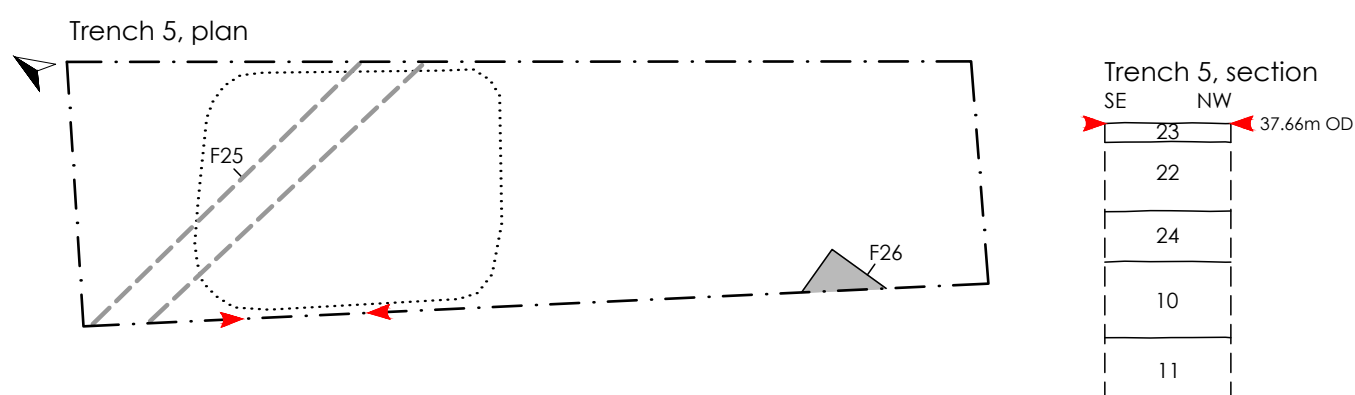
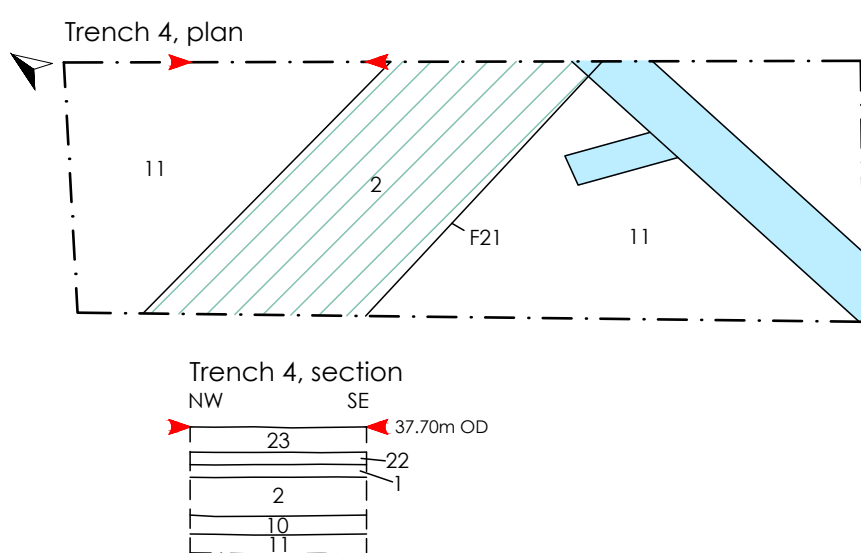
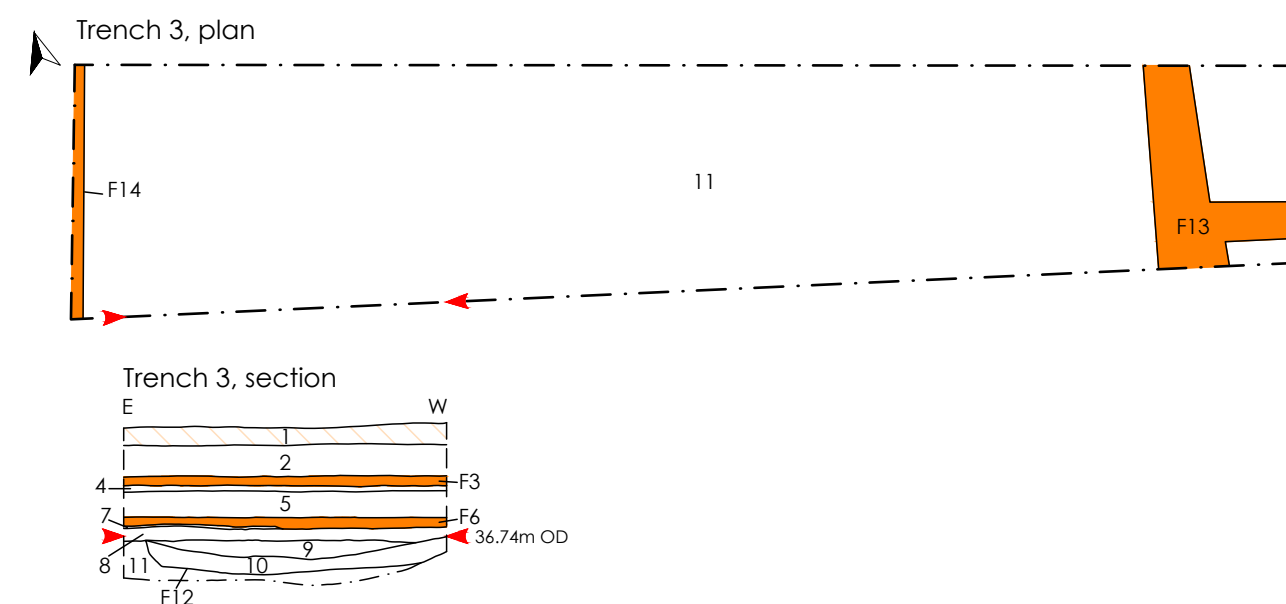
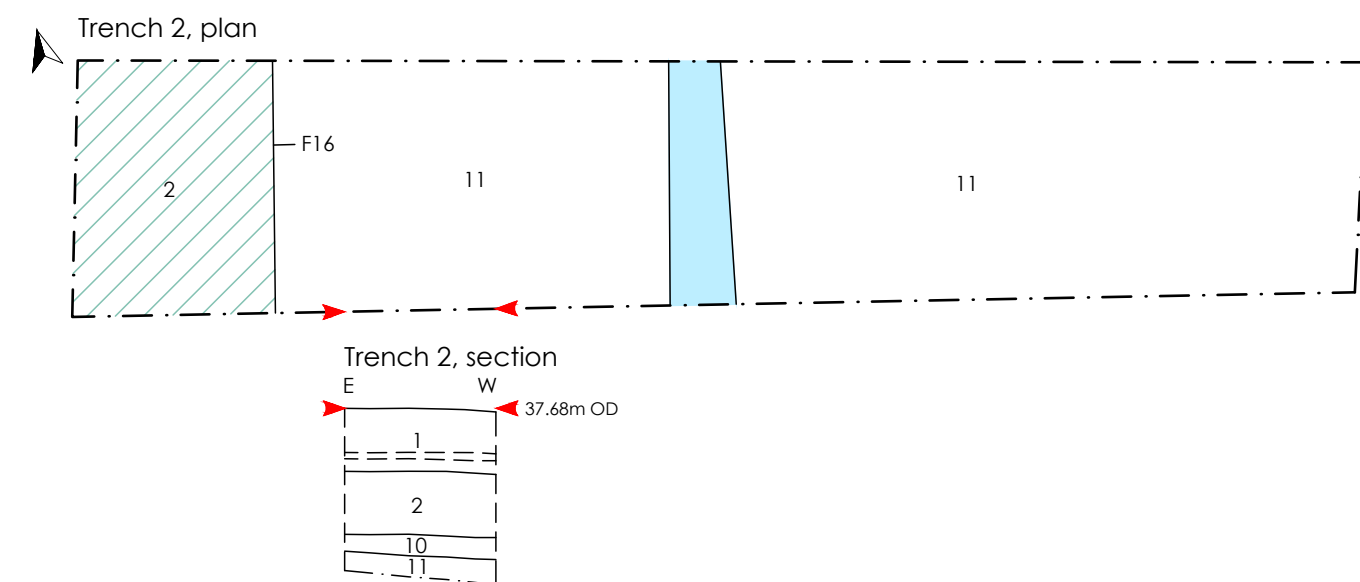
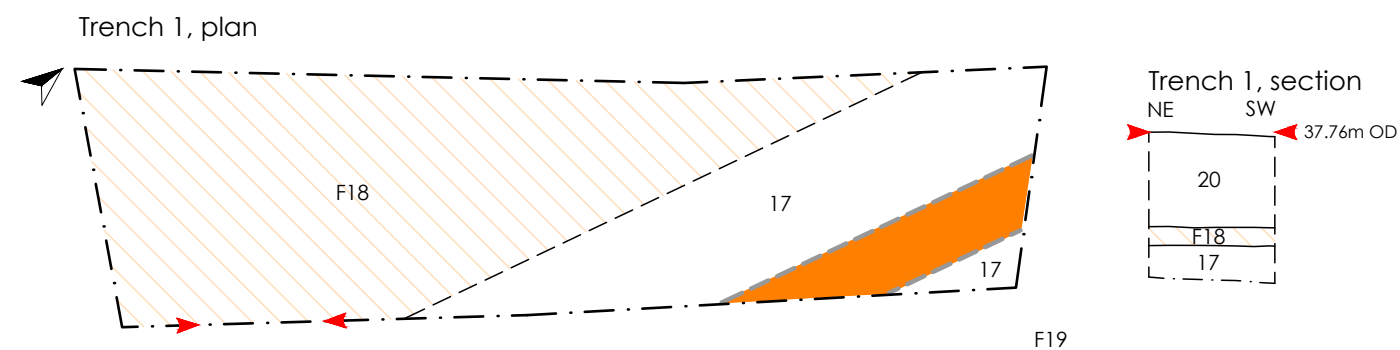
Figure 2: Trench locations

0 50m  
scale 1:1000 for A4 plot

 site boundary  
 trench







- edge of excavation
- removed wall
- deeper sondage
- section
- height m OD
- pipe
- brick
- stone
- rubble filled modern cut
- road surface removed

0 3m  
scale 1:60 for A3 plot

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Figure 3: Trench plans and sections