

Archaeological Evaluation

**Land at Ashen Road,
Ridgewell,
Essex**

NGR: TL 72877 42348

**ASE Project No: 190096
Site Code: RIAR 19**

ASE Report No: 2019099



April 2019

Archaeological Evaluation

Land at Ashen Road,
Ridgewell,
Essex

NGR: TL 72877 42348

Planning Ref: BTE/17/01325/OUT

ASE Project No: 190096
Site Code: RIAR19

ASE Report No: 2019099
OASIS id: 348897

By Mark Germany

With contributions by
Isa Benedetti-Whitton, Luke Barber, Elke Raemen and Lucy Sibun

Illustrations by Sara Munoz

| | | |
|----------------------------------|---------------|-----------------|
| Prepared by: | Mark Germany | Archaeologist |
| Reviewed and approved by: | Mark Atkinson | Project Manager |
| Date of Issue: | April 2019 | |
| Version: | 1 | |

Archaeology South-East
27 Eastways
Witham
Essex
CM83YQ

Tel: 01376 331470
Email: fau@ucl.ac.uk
Web: www.ucl.ac.uk/archaeology-south-east

Abstract

This report presents the results of an archaeological evaluation carried out by Archaeology South-East on land at Ashen Road, Ridgewell, Essex. Essex County Council Place Services recommended and monitored the archaeological work. The fieldwork was commissioned by Arcady Architects, on behalf of Beacon Hill Homes, in advance of residential development of the site. The fieldwork took place from 18th to 20th March 2019.

Evaluation of the c.0.80ha site comprised the investigation of seven trenches. Three of these contained a low density of archaeological remains, comprising ditches and pits, across the north of the site.

A single ditch found to cross the northwest corner of the site is of post-medieval/modern date. The rest of the recorded features, a ditch and three small pits, are of unknown date. However, although undated by artefacts, one pit contained a cremation burial and is likely to be of pre-medieval date. There is no indication that this is associated with other archaeological features and it is probably an isolated occurrence.

It is judged that the development of this site will have a low impact upon the archaeological resource of this vicinity of Ridgewell.

CONTENTS

- 1.0 Introduction**
- 2.0 Archaeological Background**
- 3.0 Archaeological Methodology**
- 4.0 Results**
- 5.0 Finds**
- 6.0 Environmental Samples**
- 7.0 Discussion and Conclusions**

Bibliography
Acknowledgements

APPENDICES

- Appendix 1: Archaeological Negative Trenches: List of Recorded Contexts
- Appendix 2: Environmental remains
- Appendix 3: HER Summary
- Appendix 4: OASIS Form

TABLES

- Table 1: Quantification of the site paper archive
- Table 2: Quantification of the artefact and environmental samples
- Table 3: Trench 1 list of recorded contexts
- Table 4: Trench 2 list of recorded contexts
- Table 5: Trench 3 list of recorded contexts
- Table 6: Quantification of hand collected bulk finds
- Table 7: Summary of results of cremated bone analysis

FIGURES

Cover Image: General site view

- Figure 1: Site location with EHER information
- Figure 2: Trench location plan with features
- Figure 3: Trench 1: sections and photographs
- Figure 4: Trench 2: sections and photographs
- Figure 5: Trench 3: sections and photograph
- Figure 6: Trenches with no features

1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Site Background

1.1.1 Archaeology South-East (ASE), the contracting division of UCL's Institute of Archaeology Centre for Applied Archaeology, was commissioned by Arcady Architects, on behalf of Beacon Hill Homes, to undertake an archaeological evaluation by trial-trenching on land at Ashen Road, Ridgewell, Essex.

1.1.2 The evaluation was undertaken in fulfilment of an archaeological condition attached to planning consent.

1.2 Location, Geology and Topography

1.2.1 The site is located to the north-east part of the village of Ridgewell, in the Braintree District of Essex, c.2km south of the Essex/Suffolk border (NGR TL 72877 42348; Fig. 1). The 0.80ha site comprises a roughly rectangular area of overgrown land bounded by Ashen Road to the west and Tilbury Road to the north. It is bounded to the east and south by gardens of adjacent properties and agricultural land.

1.2.2 According to the British Geological Survey (BGS 2019), the superficial geology of the site is identified as chalky till (boulder clay) deposits of the Lowestoft Formation. The underlying solid geology is mapped as chalk of the Lewes, Seaford, Newhaven and Culver Formations.

1.2.3 Ridgewell is on relatively flat ground at c.80m AOD on a plateau of gently undulating hills situated between the valleys of the Rivers Colne and Stour, to the north and south respectively. The plateau is dissected by a number of small streams that feed into these valleys.

1.2.4 The near surface geology of the site comprises friable, brownish grey topsoil, resting on pale brownish grey friable to firm subsoil, overlying natural deposits. Both layers have infrequent flecks of charcoal and small- to mid-sized gravel stones. The thicknesses of the topsoil and subsoil are 0.22-0.33m and 0.09-0.26m, respectively.

1.3 Planning Background

1.3.1 A planning application (Ref: BTE/17/01325/OUT) has been submitted to Braintree District Council proposing the construction of eighteen new dwellings, with associated landscaping and infrastructure.

1.3.2 An archaeological Desk-Based Assessment (DBA) was carried out by Archaeological Solutions in 2016 (Archaeological Solutions 2016). This document, combined with the specialist advice provided by Essex County Council (ECC) Place Services on a previous application, established that there are known archaeological remains in the Ridgewell area and that there is the potential for remains to be present on the development site. In their capacity as archaeological advisors to Braintree District Council, ECC Place Services recommended that archaeological investigation was undertaken prior to development.

- 1.3.3 Consequently, a condition was attached to planning consent specifying the need for an archaeological evaluation by trial trenching before any construction work could begin.
- 1.3.4 A Brief of Works, stipulating the scope and minimum standards of the evaluation, was issued by ECC Place Services (2019). A Written Scheme of Investigation was produced by ASE in response (ASE 2019), that was submitted to ECC Place Services and approved in advance of the fieldwork.

1.4 Scope of Works

- 1.4.1 An archaeological evaluation by trial-trenching was undertaken ahead of building construction at Ashen Road, Ridgewell, Essex between 18/3/19 to 20/3/19. The work was supervised by Mark Germany (ASE Senior Archaeologist) and monitored on behalf of Braintree District Council by ECC Place Services.
- 1.4.2 This report presents the results of the archaeological evaluation. It describes and discusses the archaeological remains encountered and assess the potential for further remains to be present across the wider site.

2.0 ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND

2.1 Introduction

2.1.1 The majority of the following background information comes from the desk-based assessment, which Archaeological Solutions produced for the site in 2016 (Archaeological Solutions 2016). All of the following findings lie within 1km of the site. The locations of the most pertinent sites and findspots are shown on Figure 1.

2.2 Prehistoric

2.2.1 Flint artefacts from fieldwalking near Ridgewell Hall, c.600m east of the site, include pieces of prehistoric worked flint, blade cores, flakes, blades, core-rejuvenation flakes, workshop waste, and axe cores (EHER 7033). Some of the earlier items are possibly Late Mesolithic/Neolithic.

2.2.2 Other features of archaeological interest within that same area are two ring-ditches, one large and one small, and cropmarks of a trackway and field system (EHER 7032). The ring-ditches are possibly remnants of prehistoric barrows.

2.3 Roman

2.3.1 Excavation during the late 18th century discovered remains of a Roman villa in a field c.300m south-west of Ridgewell (EHER 6975). The site of this villa overlooks a postulated Roman road between Colchester and Cambridge (EHER 6996). However, no hard evidence in support of this road was found when its route was archaeologically evaluated in 1995 (Heppell 1995).

2.4 Medieval

2.4.1 The Domesday Book suggests that the settlement pattern of Ridgewell during the late Saxon and early medieval periods was non-nucleated and comparatively populous.

2.4.2 Most of the fabric of the parish church of St Lawrence is 14th century (EHER 7059). Earlier elements, however, are reused in parts of its fabric.

2.4.3 The wider vicinity of the site has a small number of moated sites, which are probably medieval, possibly as early as the 12th-13th century (EHER 7013, 6977, 6974). The nearest example of such to the site is Bowles Hall. It overlooks the site from the north-west and it is currently undergoing restoration. Its rectangular moat is no longer evident, having been destroyed in c.1970 (EHER 7055; ECC 2019).

2.5 Post-Medieval and Modern

2.5.1 The Chapman and Andre map of 1777 records Bowles Hall as an outlier, separate from the main body of Ridgewell, most of which is focussed to the south around a pair of conjoined triangular greens.

2.5.2 The 1840 tithe map shows the area surrounding the site and Bowles' Farm in more detail. Bowles' Farm is depicted as several buildings, the nearest to the site being the listed farmhouse. A line of trees is depicted along the road which

leads south towards the main village core. The apportionment records that the site was then used as an orchard.

- 2.5.3 Subsequent historic OS mapping shows the site much as it appears today, though the 1876 1st edition map shows it as surrounded by trees and Parsons Farm now appears to its north. Early 20th-century editions show a large structure within the site; perhaps illustrating an area of concrete or an animal pen. This feature is no longer extant by 1961, when the site is depicted as an area of orchard.

2.6 Project Aims and Objectives

- 2.6.1 The general aims of the archaeological work were to determine as far as reasonably practicable, the location, extent, date, character, condition, significance and quality of any surviving archaeological remains, and by such enable Essex County Council Place Services to make an informed decision as to whether any further archaeological work is needed to address the archaeological condition.

- 2.6.2 As identified in the WSI, the archaeological work was judged to have potential to contribute to the following specific research objectives:

- The regional research framework notes that “*the origins and development of different medieval rural settlement needs further research, also the dynamics of medieval settlement*” (Medlycott 2011, 70). In this instance does the probable medieval settlement across the Ashen Road extend to the development site? Are there small-scale crofts/tofts by the road junction?
- Is there any evidence for Roman settlement activity, specifically, to inform on settlement typology (Medlycott 2011, 47)
- Is there evidence of ribbon development from Ridgewell?

3.0 ARCHAEOLOGICAL METHODOLOGY

3.1 Fieldwork Methodology

- 3.1.1 The archaeological investigation of the site consisted of seven trenches, each measuring 30m long and 1.8m wide (labelled Trenches 1-7; Fig. 2). A tracked mechanical excavator, under archaeological supervision and equipped with a 1.8m wide toothless ditching bucket, divested each trench and of its topsoil and subsoil in turn, so that its underlying surface of natural could be visually inspected for possible presence of archaeological features and finds. All seven trenches were able to be stripped in their intended locations. Trench 7 was additional to the original six, being requested by monitoring officer, Teresa O'Connor, during the fieldwork.
- 3.1.2 Use of a Digital Global Positioning System (DGPS) enabled accurate levelling, placement and planning of each trench and its archaeological contents.
- 3.1.3 The archaeological features were excavated by hand, and recorded on *pro-forma* trench sheets.
- 3.1.4 Digital photographs were taken of every archaeological feature and trench, and of work in progress.
- 3.1.5 Finds, where present, were recovered from all excavated features and deposits. Where present in bulk and clearly modern, only a representative sample was collected to provide dating evidence. All collected artefacts were processed and retained for specialist identification and study.
- 3.1.6 Only one deposit was selected for bulk sampling, for the retrieval of environmental remains and small artefacts, since most of the features were either modern or un-dated.

3.2 Archive

- 3.2.1 The site archive is small and mainly composed of paperwork, and digital files and photographs. A small amount of cremated bone is the single exception. The intended recipient for the site archive is Braintree Museum. The contents of the site archive are tabulated below (Tables 1 and 2).

| | |
|----------------------|----|
| Context sheets | 12 |
| Section sheets | 1 |
| Plans sheets | 0 |
| Colour photographs | 0 |
| B&W photos | 0 |
| Digital photos | 49 |
| Context register | 0 |
| Drawing register | 1 |
| Watching brief forms | 0 |
| Trench Record forms | 7 |

Table 1: Quantification of site paper archive

| | |
|--|-------------|
| Bulk finds (quantity e.g. 1 bag, 1 box, 0.5 box 0.5 of a box) | 1 bag |
| Registered finds (number of) | 0 |
| Flots and environmental remains from bulk samples | 1 small bag |
| Palaeoenvironmental specialists sample samples (e.g. columns, prepared slides) | 0 |
| Waterlogged wood | 0 |
| Wet sieved environmental remains from bulk samples | 0 |

Table 2: Quantification of artefact and environmental samples

4.0 RESULTS

4.1 Summary

- 4.1.1 The locations of the seven trenches are shown on Figure 2. Each was 30m long by 1.8m wide and located in their agreed positions, the exception being Trench 7, which was an additional trench requested by the ECC Place Services Archaeological Advisor during the fieldwork.
- 4.1.2 A general deposit sequence of 0.22-0.35m thickness of topsoil over 0.09-0.16m of subsoil over the natural deposit was recorded. Where present, the archaeological features cut natural and lay directly beneath subsoil. The topsoil [001] consisted of brownish grey friable silty clay, and the subsoil [002] composed pale brownish grey friable silty clay. Brownish orange plastic silty clay natural with infrequent small gravel stones [003] underlay both.
- 4.1.3 Three trenches were established to contain archaeological remains in the north of the site (Trenches 1, 2 and 3). These remains are described in sections 4.2-4.4. The four negative trenches are given summary description in section 4.5 and further deposit details are presented in Appendix 1.
- 4.1.4 The visibility of the recorded features against the surrounding natural was good. There were no signs of site ground truncation or disturbance.

4.2 Trench 1 (Fig. 3)

| Context | Type | Interpretation | Length m | Width m | Depth m | Height m AOD |
|---------|-------|-----------------------|----------|---------|-----------|--------------|
| 1/001 | Layer | Topsoil | 30 | 1.8 | 0.23-0.35 | 82.42-82.89 |
| 1/002 | Layer | Subsoil | 30 | 1.8 | 0.15-0.16 | |
| 1/003 | Layer | Natural | 30 | 1.8 | - | |
| 1/004 | Cut | Ditch | 2.9 | 0.84 | 0.20 | |
| 1/005 | Fill | Primary fill of 1/004 | 2.9 | 0.75 | 0.05 | |
| 1/006 | Fill | Upper fill of 1/004 | 2.9 | 0.80 | 0.15 | |
| 1/007 | Cut | Ditch | 1.8 | 0.75 | 0.20 | |
| 1/008 | Fill | Single fill of 1/007 | 1.8 | 0.75 | 0.20 | |

Table 3: Trench 1 list of recorded contexts

- 4.2.1 Trench 1 was located at the northern end of the site and orientated roughly east/west. It contained two ditches, one at each end of the trench.
- 4.2.2 Ditch [1/004], at the west of the trench, ran NE/SW. It had a broad concave profile and a deposit sequence consisting of a primary fill of orange-brown silty clay [1/005], probably derived from the surrounding natural, and an upper fill of dark brown silty clay [1/006], which may have come from the topsoil. Primary fill [1/005] contained a single small sherd of pottery of possible medieval (13th-14th-century) date, five fragments of undiagnostic (but possibly c.16th-century) CBM and an iron socketed tool of 19th/early 20th century date. Other large pieces of iron scrap were not retrieved.

4.2.3 Narrow and less-regular ditch [1/007], at the east end of the trench, ran north/south. It had moderate sloping sides and a concave base. Its single fill was akin to the surrounding natural, and therefore possibly backfill. No finds were retrieved from it, and its southern continuation was not identified in Trench 7.

4.3 Trench 2 (Fig. 4)

| Context | Type | Interpretation | Length m | Width m | Depth m | Height m AOD |
|---------|-------|----------------------|----------|---------|---------|--------------|
| 2/001 | Layer | Topsoil | 30 | 1.8 | 0.22 | 82.55-82.95 |
| 2/002 | Layer | Subsoil | 30 | 1.8 | 0.09 | |
| 12/003 | Layer | Natural | 30 | 1.8 | - | |
| 2/004 | Cut | Ditch | 1.8 | 1.10 | 0.18 | |
| 2/005 | Fill | Single fill of 2/004 | 1.8 | 1.10 | 0.18 | |
| 2/006 | Cut | Pit | 1.2 | 0.6 | 0.4 | |
| 2/007 | Fill | Single fill of 2/006 | 1.2 | 0.6 | 0.4 | |
| 2/008 | Cut | Pit | 1.0 | 0.6 | 0.38 | |
| 2/009 | Fill | Single fill of 2/008 | 1.0 | 0.6 | 0.38 | |

Table 4: Trench 2 list of recorded contexts

4.3.1 Trench 2 was located in the NW of the site and was orientated NW/SE. It revealed a ditch and two pits, evenly spaced along it.

4.3.2 Ditch [2/004] ran SW/NE and was possibly a southward continuation of ditch [1/004] in the west end of Trench 1. It was clearly defined, broad and shallow. Its single fill [2/005] was dark grey firm silty clay, from which no finds were retrieved.

4.3.3 Circular pit [2/006], to the southeast of the ditch was a small, shallow, concave feature with a single fill. It contained no finds.

4.3.4 Pit [2/008] was found in the southeast of the trench. An elongated oval in plan, it had steep, slightly irregular sides, and its single fill contained no artefacts.

4.4 Trench 3 (Fig. 5)

| Context | Type | Interpretation | Length m | Width m | Depth m | Height m AOD |
|---------|-------|----------------------|----------|---------|-----------|--------------|
| 3/001 | Layer | Topsoil | 30 | 1.8 | 0.29-0.31 | 83.12-83.60 |
| 3/002 | Layer | Subsoil | 30 | 1.8 | 0.10-0.13 | |
| 3/003 | Layer | Natural | 30 | 1.8 | - | |
| 3/004 | Cut | Pit | 0.4 | 0.4 | 0.13 | |
| 3/005 | Fill | Single fill of 3/004 | 0.4 | 0.4 | 0.13 | |

Table 5: Trench 3 list of recorded contexts

4.4.1 Trench 3 was located in the northeast part of the site and was orientated north/south. It had one feature.

- 4.4.2 Pit [3/004], in the middle of the trench, had a bowl-like cut. It measured 0.4m wide by 0.13m deep and its content consisted of numerous pieces of charcoal and cremated human bones. Its fill was very dark and evident against the surrounding natural. The trench had no other features.
- 4.4.3 Neither the pit or its surrounding vicinity had signs of baking or scorching. Being identified in the field as a potential simple, unurned, cremation burial, the pit fill was collected as bulk soil sample <1>.
- 4.4.4 The processing of the sample confirmed fill [3/005] to contain numerous fragments of charcoal and a moderate amount of cremated human bone (c.280g) deriving from an adult individual. The gender was not determinable, and there were no accompanying finds. The analysis of the cremated bone is presented in section 5.5.

4.5 Archaeological Negative Trenches (Fig. 6)

- 4.5.1 Trenches 4, 5, 6 and 7 revealed no archaeological remains.
- 4.5.2 Further details of the recorded deposit sequence in each of these trenches can be found in Appendix 1.

5.0 FINDS

5.1 Introduction

5.1.1 A small assemblage of finds was recovered during the evaluation on land at Ashen Road, Ridgewell. All finds were washed and dried or air dried as appropriate. They were subsequently quantified by count and weight and bagged by material and context. The hand-collected bulk finds are quantified in Table 6; further material recovered from the residues of a single bulk soil sample is quantified in Appendix 2. All finds have been packed and stored following ClfA guidelines (2014).

| Context | Pottery | | CBM | | Ironwork | | Crem bone | |
|--------------|----------|----------|----------|------------|----------|------------|-----------|---------------|
| | Ct | Wt (g) | Ct | Wt (g) | Ct | W (g) | Ct | Wt (g) |
| 1/005 | 1 | 4 | 5 | 360 | 1 | 388 | | |
| 3/005 | | | | | | | - | 279.75 |
| <i>Total</i> | <i>1</i> | <i>4</i> | <i>5</i> | <i>360</i> | <i>1</i> | <i>388</i> | <i>-</i> | <i>279.75</i> |

Table 6: Quantification of hand-collected bulk finds

5.2 Pottery by Luke Barber

5.2.1 The evaluation recovered a single sherd of post-Roman pottery from the site (fill [1/005] of ditch [1/004]). This consists of a slightly abraded oxidised bodysherd tempered with ill-sorted fine and medium quartz. Although the form of the vessel cannot be ascertained, the fabric is very much in keeping with Colchester ware of the mid 13th to 14th centuries.

5.3 Ceramic Building Material by Isa Benedetti-Whitton

5.3.1 Five pieces of ceramic building material (CBM), weighing 360g, were collected from ditch fill [1/005]. The original form was not completely clear due to the fractured nature of the CBM. Based on the apparent thickness, it is either c.16th-century floor tile or Roman brick. The former in this instance seems more likely, as the quartz rich fabric with sparse calcareous inclusions is more like the fabric of floor tile imported from the Low Countries throughout the 1500s than Roman CBM; however, as stated, the condition of the recovered CBM render it largely undiagnostic.

5.4 Bulk Metalwork by Elke Raemen

5.4.1 Ditch fill [1/005] contained an iron socketed agricultural or horticultural tool. It is complete, with triangular blade, and is of 19th- or early 20th-century date.

5.5 Cremated Human Bone by Lucy Sibun

5.5.1 The evaluation uncovered a single cremation deposit [3/005], which was recovered as bulk soil sample <1>.

5.5.2 The assemblage was recovered and processed as an environmental sample with bone presented in fractions of 2-4mm, 4-8mm and >8mm for analysis. Recording and analysis of the bone followed the procedures outlined by

McKinley (2004). The assemblages were examined to record the degree of fragmentation and fragment colour. The presence and weight of fragments from all skeletal areas (skull, axial skeleton, upper limb and lower limb) was noted. Age estimations were carried out with reference to Bass (1987) and Buikstra and Ubelaker (1994) but age estimations were only possible as 'adult'. The material was also examined for the presence of possible staining on bone and for animal bone.

5.5.3 The cremated bone assemblage is quantified in Table 7, below. The totals include both identifiable and unidentifiable material.

| Context | Sample | WEIGHT (grams) | | | | AGE | SEX | IDENTIFIABLE | | | |
|---------|--------|----------------|--------|-------|--------|-----|-----|--------------|---|---|---|
| | | 2-4mm | 4-8mm | >8mm | Total | | | S | A | U | L |
| 3/005 | 01 | 22.03 | 162.71 | 95.01 | 279.75 | A | ? | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |

Table 7: Summary of results of cremated human bone analysis

Note: (S= skull, A = axial, U= upper limb, L = lower limb)

5.5.4 The total weight of cremated human bone from [3/005] was 279.75 grams, which constitutes approximately 17.2% of the expected weight from a single cremation (McKinley 1993, 285). However, only a 25% sample of the 2-4mm residue was sorted, meaning that the final total of cremated bone is likely to be slightly higher. The division of fragments according to size revealed that the majority of the assemblage was recovered from the 4-8mm fraction (58.2%), although most of this (64%) was less than 20mm. The largest individual fragment was identified as ulna shaft and measured 42mm. Diagnostic fragments that allowed for identification of bone areas such as the skull, axial, upper limb and lower limbs were all present in the assemblage. No animal bone was present in the cremated bone assemblages and no areas of staining were recorded on bone fragments.

5.5.5 The assemblage appears to represent a single individual, with no repeated elements noted. Fused sutures were recorded on a skull fragment, indicative of an adult individual. Unfortunately, the fragmentation of the remains meant that it was not possible to make an assessment of sex.

5.5.6 No evident pathology was observed in the cremated bone assemblage. With regards to the degree of oxidation of the organic component of bone, it was noted that 99-100% of the assemblage was fully oxidised white (>c. 600° C) which suggests a highly efficient cremation process (Holden *et al.* 1995a, b, McKinley 1993).

6.0 ENVIRONMENTAL SAMPLE by Mariangela Vitolo

6.1 Summary

6.1.1 During evaluation work, a single bulk soil sample was taken from fill [3/005] of cremation burial [3/004] in order to retrieve environmental remains and to assist with finds recovery.

6.1.2 The sample, measuring c.10L in volume, was processed by flotation in its entirety. The flot and residue were captured on 250µm and 500µm meshes respectively and were air dried. The residue was passed through graded sieves of 8, 4 and 2mm and each fraction sorted for environmental and artefactual remains (Appendix 2b). Artefacts recovered from the sample were distributed to specialists, and are incorporated in the relevant sections of this report where they add further information to the existing finds assemblage. The flot was scanned under a stereozoom microscope at 7-45x magnifications and its contents recorded (Appendix 2a).

6.1.3 The sample produced a rather small flot, dominated by uncharred rootlets and sediment. No charred plant macrofossils were recovered and charcoal amounted to 20% of the flot matrix, but all fragments were <2mm in size. Charcoal fragments were also comminuted in the residue and no identification work was carried out because of its paucity. The absence of charred plant macrofossils is probably due to the feature type.

7.0 DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

7.1 Overview of stratigraphic sequence

- 7.1.1 All seven trenches have revealed simple deposit sequences comprising topsoil and subsoil overlying the natural deposit. The overburden layers vary in thickness, with the topsoil being generally twice the thickness of the subsoil. The minimum and maximum thicknesses of each are: 0.22-0.40m and 0.08-0.26m respectively.
- 7.1.2 Where present, the recorded archaeological remains underlie the subsoil and cut the surface of the undisturbed natural deposit. The fills of the identified features are generally greyer, darker and less orange than the underlying natural, making them relatively easy to distinguish.

7.2 Deposit survival and existing impacts

- 7.2.1 The archaeological horizon of the site coincides with the top of the underlying natural deposit, since everything above it has been disturbed by ploughing and cultivation.
- 7.2.2 The trenching has discovered no clear evidence for the site having undergone other truncation/disturbance (such as quarrying) and/or natural erosion.

7.3 Discussion of archaeological remains by period

- 7.3.1 A total of six archaeological features have been found in three trenches (Trenches 1, 2 and 3), all within the north half of the site. They comprise small ditches, pits and a cremation burial. All but one of them have no dating evidence.

Post-medieval

- 7.3.2 Ditches [1/004] and [2/004] probably constitute parts of the same NE/SW orientated former boundary that ran across the northeast of the site. The primary fill of [1/004] contains possibly post-medieval CBM and more clearly 19th/early 20th-century scrap iron, as well as a sherd of presumably residual medieval pottery. This indicates a post-medieval to modern date for these boundary remains; however, no such boundary is shown on historic mapping of the site. It is possible that this was a minor boundary or drain which cut across the corner of the field between Ashen Road and Tilbury Road.

Undated

- 7.3.3 North/south orientated ditch [1/007] is irregular, small, and untraced southwards into Trench 7. Small pits [2/006] and [2/008] in Trench 2 vary in shape and are of uncertain function. Neither have dating evidence.
- 7.3.4 Pit [3/004] in Trench 3 is evidently an unurned cremation burial, as indicated by its charcoal-rich fill and its quantity of cremated human bone. Given the lack of artefactual dating evidence from this burial, it could be of later prehistoric, Roman or even Early Saxon date. It is noted that no similar features were found in adjacent Trenches 4 and 7; it is not uncommon for burials such as this

to occur in isolation or in very small clusters in the landscape.

7.4 Potential impact on archaeological remains

- 7.4.1 Any construction groundworks extending beyond 0.3m depth below the existing land surface will have the potential to disturb below-ground archaeological remains present within this site. However, the evaluation has demonstrated that these are sparsely distributed and are either post-medieval/modern or un-dateable. Their contribution to understanding of land use within Ridgewell during the past is slight.
- 7.4.2 The only feature of note is the cremation burial, which implies that human activity was taking place within the vicinity, most likely either during the later prehistoric, Roman or (less likely) Early Saxon periods. As previously noted, it is probably that an isolated feature.
- 7.4.3 The impact of the housing development on the historic resource of Ridgewell is judged to be low since the site has few archaeological features, most of which are undatable or post-medieval/modern.

7.4 Consideration of research aims

- 7.4.1 None of the project-specific research aims as expressed in section 2.6 are able to be addressed by the results of the trenching evaluation, as the site has no datable features of demonstrably pre- post-medieval/modern date, other than the otherwise undated cremation burial in Trench 3.
- 7.4.2 Given the low incidence of features and finds it is likely that this roadside location, at the junction of the Ashen and Tilbury Roads has always been used as agricultural land, at least since the medieval period. The recovery of a single sherd of medieval pottery merely reflects the presence of occupation activity in the wider vicinity of the village.
- 7.4.3 The cremation burial likely predates the medieval settlement, but the site has no potential to inform understanding of Roman period land use and settlement, particularly in relation to the nearby villa site.

7.5 Updated Research Agenda

- 7.5.1 The findings of the archaeological work are too minimal to justify an updated research agenda.

7.5 Conclusions

- 7.5.1 The evaluation has demonstrated the presence of small quantity of archaeological remains within the northern part of the development site.
- 7.5.2 A single ditch across the northwest corner of the site is of post-medieval/modern date. The rest of the recorded features are of unknown date. However, although undated by artefacts, the single cremation burial in the northeast of the site is likely to be of pre-medieval date. There is no indication that this is associated with other archaeological features and it is probably an

isolated occurrence.

- 5.7.3 It is judged that the development of this site will have a low impact upon the archaeological resource of this vicinity of Ridgewell.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Archaeological Solutions. 2016, *Land at Ashen Road, Ridgewell, Essex. An archaeological desk-based assessment*. Unpubl. AS rep. 5255

Archaeology South-East. 2019, *Archaeological Evaluation: Land off Ashen Road, Ridgewell, Essex. Written Scheme of Investigation*

Bass, W. 2005, *Human Osteology: A Laboratory and Field Manual*. Missouri Archaeological Society, Special Publications, No. 2

Buikstra, J. and Ubelaker, D. 1994, *Standards for data collection from human skeletal Remains*, Fayetteville. Arkansas Archaeological Survey Report 44

ClfA 2014, *Standard and guidance for the collection, documentation, conservation and research of archaeological materials*

ECC Place Services. 2019, *Brief for trial trenching and excavation. Braintree District Historic Environment Characterisation Project*

Heppell, E. 1995, *Archaeological evaluation on a Roman road at Ridgewell*, unpubl. ECC FAU project rep. 184

Holden, J.L. Phakley, P, and Clement, J.G. 1995a, 'Scanning electron microscope observations of incinerated human femoral bone: a case study', *Forensic Science International*, 74, 17-28

Holden, J.L., Phakley, P. and Clement, J.G. 1995b, 'Scanning Electron Microscope Observations of heat-treated human bone', *Forensic Science International*, 74, 29-45

Rumble, A. 1983, *Domesday Book. Essex*, Philimore

McKinley J. 1993, 'Bone fragment size and weights of bone from modern British cremations and their implications for the analysis of archaeological cremations', *Int. J Osteology*, 3, 283-7.

McKinley, J.I. 2004, 'Compiling a skeletal inventory: cremated human bone', in Brickley, M. and McKinley, J.I. (eds.), *Guidelines to the Standards for Recording Human Remains*, British Association for Biological Anthropology and Osteoarchaeology and Institute for Field Archaeology, 9-12

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

ASE thanks Arcady Architects and Beacon Hill Homes for commissioning the archaeological work and Teresa O'Connor of ECC Place Services for her guidance and monitoring on behalf of the LPA. Mark Germany supervised the archaeological fieldwork. Natalie Gonzalez assisted the fieldwork and undertook the site surveying. Sara Munoz produced the figures for this report. Gemma Stevenson project managed the fieldwork and Mark Atkinson managed the post-excavation work.

Appendix 1: Archaeologically negative Trenches: List of Recorded Contexts

| Trench | Context | Type | Interpretation | Thickness m | Height m AOD |
|---------------|----------------|-------------|-----------------------|--------------------|---------------------|
| 4 | 4/001 | Layer | Topsoil | 0.23-0.27 | 82.77-83.11 |
| 4 | 4/002 | Layer | Subsoil | 0.11-0.13 | |
| 4 | 4/003 | Layer | Natural | - | |
| 5 | 5/001 | Layer | Topsoil | 0.30-0.33 | 82.06-82.55 |
| 5 | 5/002 | Layer | Subsoil | 0.15-0.26 | |
| 5 | 5/003 | Layer | Natural | - | |
| 6 | 6/001 | Layer | Topsoil | 0.27-0.19 | 82.02-82.43 |
| 6 | 6/002 | Layer | Subsoil | 0.16-0.19 | |
| 6 | 6/003 | Layer | Natural | - | |
| 7 | 7/001 | Layer | Topsoil | 0.30-0.40 | 82.56-83.07 |
| 7 | 7/002 | Layer | Subsoil | 0.17-0.18 | |
| 7 | 7/003 | Layer | Natural | - | |

Appendix 2: Environmental sample remains

2a: Residue quantification (* = 1-10, ** = 11-50, * = 51-250, **** = >250) and weights in grams**

| Sample Number | Context | Context / Deposit Type and Parent Context | Sample Volume (L) | Sub-Sample Volume (L) | Charcoal >4mm | Weight (g) | Charcoal 2-4mm | Weight (g) | Burnt Bone >8mm | Weight (g) | Burnt Bone 4-8mm | Weight (g) | Burnt Bone 2-4mm | Weight (g) | LandSnail Shell | Weight (g) | Other (eg. pot, cbm, etc.) (quantity/ weight) |
|---------------|---------|---|-------------------|-----------------------|---------------|------------|----------------|------------|-----------------|------------|------------------|------------|------------------|------------|-----------------|------------|---|
| 1 | 3/005 | Pit/ Posthole | 10 | 10 | ** | 4 | **** | 8 | *** | 95 | **** | 166 | **** | 92 | * | <1 | Mag.Mat. >2mm (***/6g) Mag.Mat. <2mm (****/4g) |

2b: Flot quantification (* = 1-10, ** = 11-50, * = 51-250, **** = >250) and preservation (+ = poor, ++ = moderate, +++ = good)**

| Sample Number | Context | Weight (g) | Flot Volume (ml) | Volume Scanned (ml) | Uncharred (%) | Sediment (%) | Charcoal >4mm | Charcoal 2-4mm | Charcoal <2mm |
|---------------|---------|------------|------------------|---------------------|---------------|--------------|---------------|----------------|---------------|
| 1 | 3/005 | 11 | 40 | 40 | 30 | 20 | | ** | **** |

Appendix 3: HER Summary

| | |
|---|--|
| Site name/Address: Ashen Road, Ridgewell | |
| Parish: Ridgewell | District: Braintree |
| NGR: TL 72877 42348 | Site Code: RIAR19 |
| Type of Work: Evaluation by trial-trenching | Site Director/Group: Mark Germany Archaeology South-East |
| Date of Work: 18/3/19 – 20/3/19 | Size of Area Investigated: 0.8ha |
| Location of Finds/Curating Museum: Braintree | Funding source: developer |
| Further Seasons Anticipated?: No | Related HER No's: |
| Final Report: Essex Archaeology and History (summary) | OASIS No: 348897 |
| Periods Represented: Medieval, post-medieval/modern, undated | |
| <p>SUMMARY OF FIELDWORK RESULTS: Archaeological trial trenching in advance of residential development on land along Ashen Road, Ridgewell, revealed a post-medieval/modern ditch, an undated ditch and three small undated pits, all located within the north of the site. One pit was clearly an unurned cremation burial. A single medieval pot sherd was recovered from the post-medieval ditch.</p> | |
| Previous Summaries/Reports: None | |
| Author of Summary: Mark Germany | Date of Summary: 15/4/19 |

Appendix 4: OASIS Form

OASIS ID: archaeol6-348897

Project details

| | |
|------------------------------------|--|
| Project name | Ashen Road, Ridgewell, Essex |
| Short description of the project | Archaeological trial trenching in advance of residential development on land along Ashen Road, Ridgewell, revealed a post-medieval/modern ditch, an undated ditch and three small undated pits, all across the north of the site. One pit was clearly an unurned cremation burial. |
| Project dates | Start: 18-03-2019 End: 20-03-2019 |
| Previous/future work | No / Not known |
| Associated project reference codes | RIAR19 - Sitecode 190096 - Contracting Unit No. |
| Type of project | Field evaluation |
| Site status | None |
| Current Land use | Cultivated Land 3 - Operations to a depth more than 0.25m |
| Monument type | DITCH Post Medieval |
| Monument type | PIT Uncertain |
| Monument type | CREMATION BURIAL Uncertain |
| Significant Finds | POTTERY Medieval |
| Significant Finds | TILE Post Medieval |
| Methods & techniques | "Sample Trenches" |
| Development type | Rural residential |
| Prompt | Planning condition |
| Position in the planning process | After full determination (eg. As a condition) |

Project location

| | |
|-------------------|--|
| Country | England |
| Site location | ESSEX BRAINTREE RIDGEWELL Land at Ashen Road |
| Postcode | CO9 4RP |
| Study area | 8015 Square metres |
| Site coordinates | TL 72877 42348 52.052045291623 0.52158640359 52 03 07 N 000 31 17 E Point |
| Height OD / Depth | Min: 82.42m Max: 83.6m |

Project creators

| | |
|----------------------|------------------------|
| Name of Organisation | Archaeology South East |
|----------------------|------------------------|

| | |
|------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| Project brief originator | Essex County Council Place Services |
| Project design originator | Archaeology South-East |
| Project director/manager | Gemma Stevenson |
| Project supervisor | Mark Germany |
| Type of sponsor/funding body | Developer |

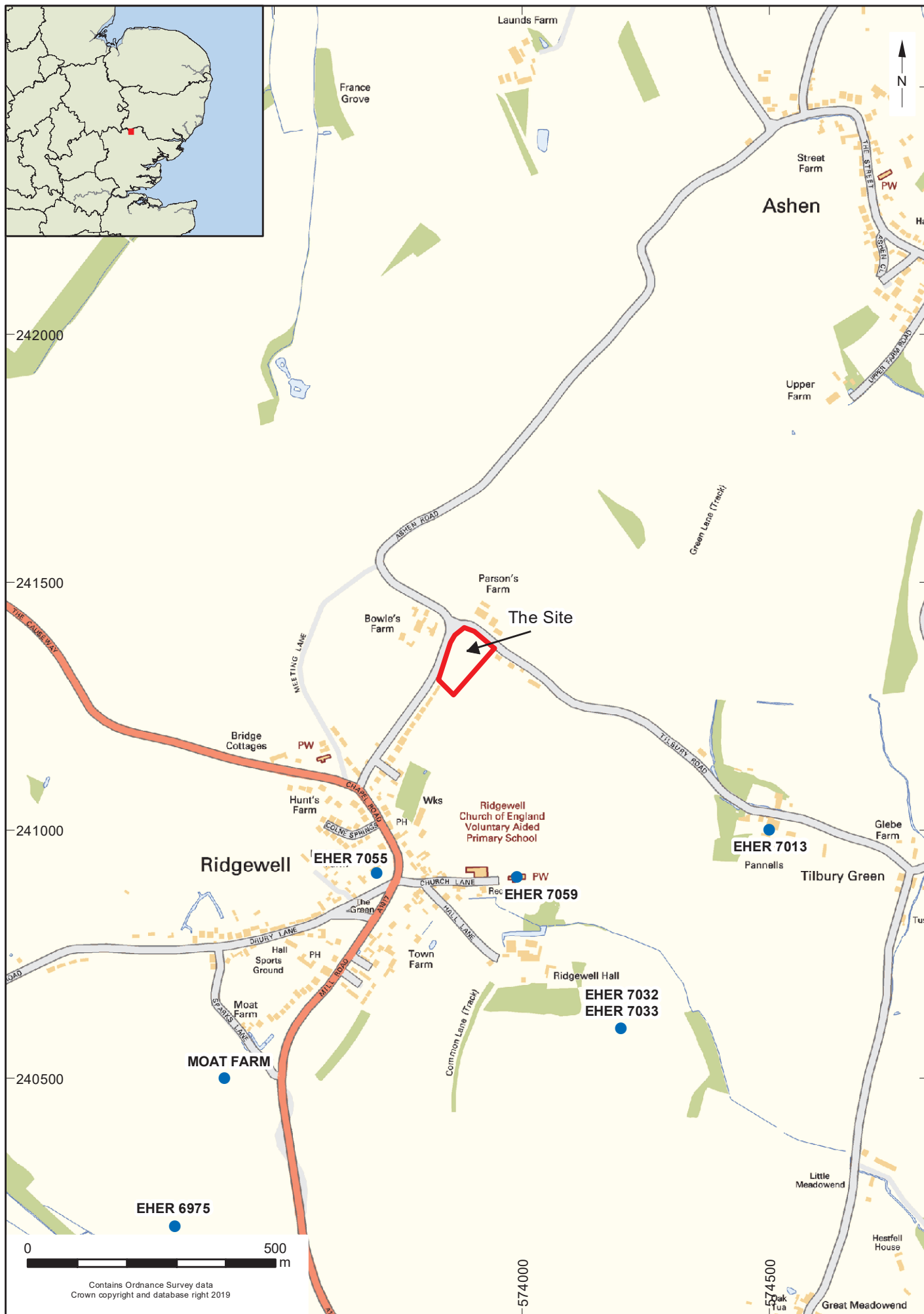
Project archives

| | |
|----------------------------|--|
| Physical Archive recipient | Braintree Museum |
| Physical Contents | "Ceramics", "Human Bones" |
| Digital Archive recipient | Braintree Museum |
| Digital Contents | "Ceramics", "Human Bones", "Stratigraphic", "Survey" |
| Digital Media available | "Images raster / digital photography", "Images vector", "Survey", "Text" |
| Paper Archive recipient | Braintree Museum |
| Paper Contents | "Ceramics", "Human Bones", "Metal", "Stratigraphic", "Survey" |
| Paper Media available | "Plan", "Section", "Context sheet" |

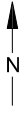
Project bibliography

| | |
|-------------------------------|---|
| Publication type | Grey literature (unpublished document/manuscript) |
| Title | Archaeological Evaluation. Land at Ashen Road, Ridgewell, Essex |
| Author(s)/Editor(s) | Germany, M. |
| Other bibliographic details | ASE rep. 2019099 |
| Date | 2019 |
| Issuer or publisher | Archaeology South-East |
| Place of issue or publication | Witham |
| Description | A4. PDF. Approx 28 pages of text, tables and figures. |

| | |
|------------|---|
| Entered by | Mark Atkinson (mark.atkinson@ucl.ac.uk) |
| Entered on | 23 April 2019 |

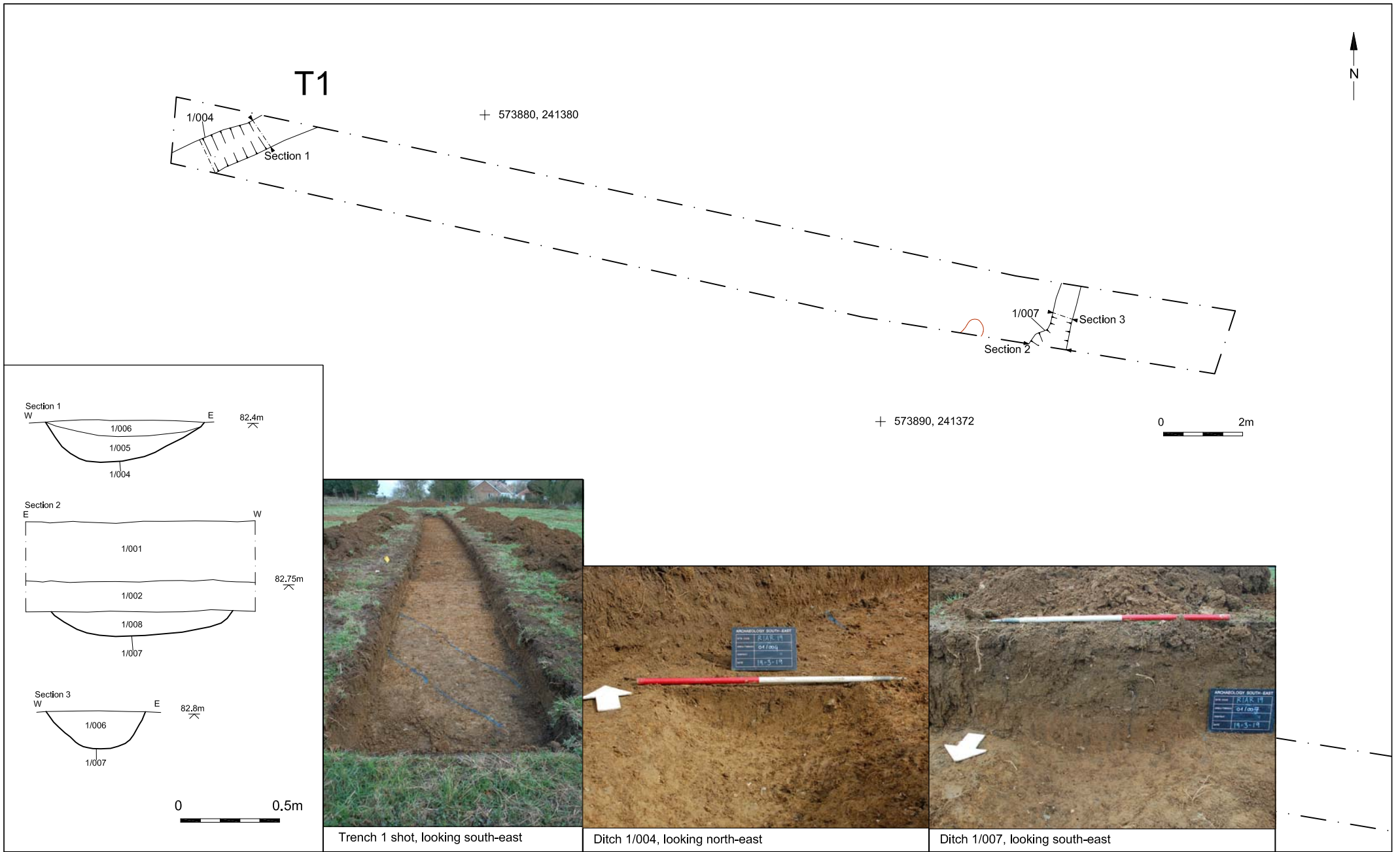


| | | | |
|--------------------------|--------------|-------------------------------------|--------|
| © Archaeology South-East | | Land at Ashen Road, Ridgewell | Fig. 1 |
| Project Ref: 190096 | March 2019 | Site location with EHER information | |
| Report No: 2019099 | Drawn by: SM | | |

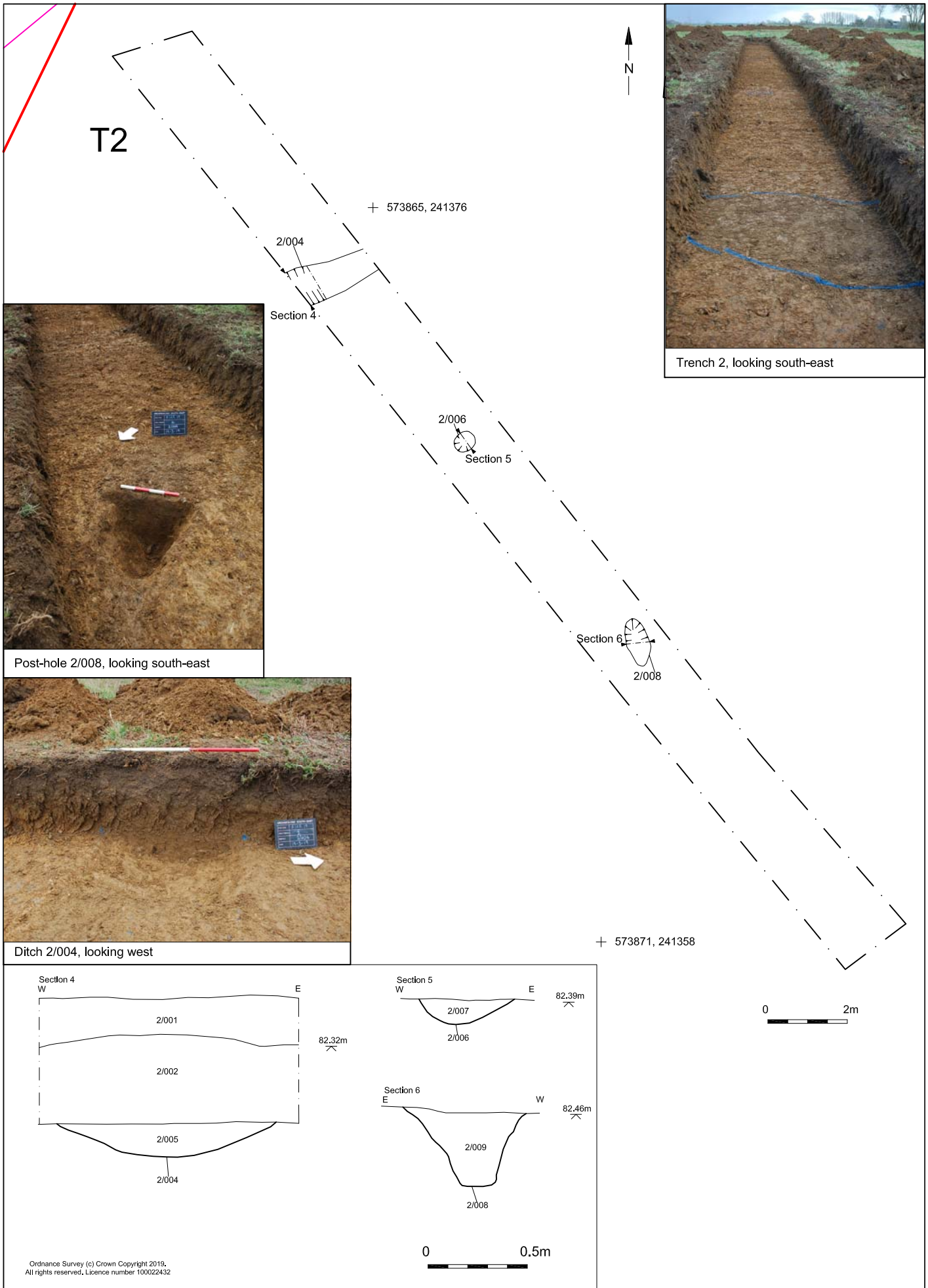


Ordnance Survey (c) Crown Copyright 2019.
All rights reserved. Licence number 100022432

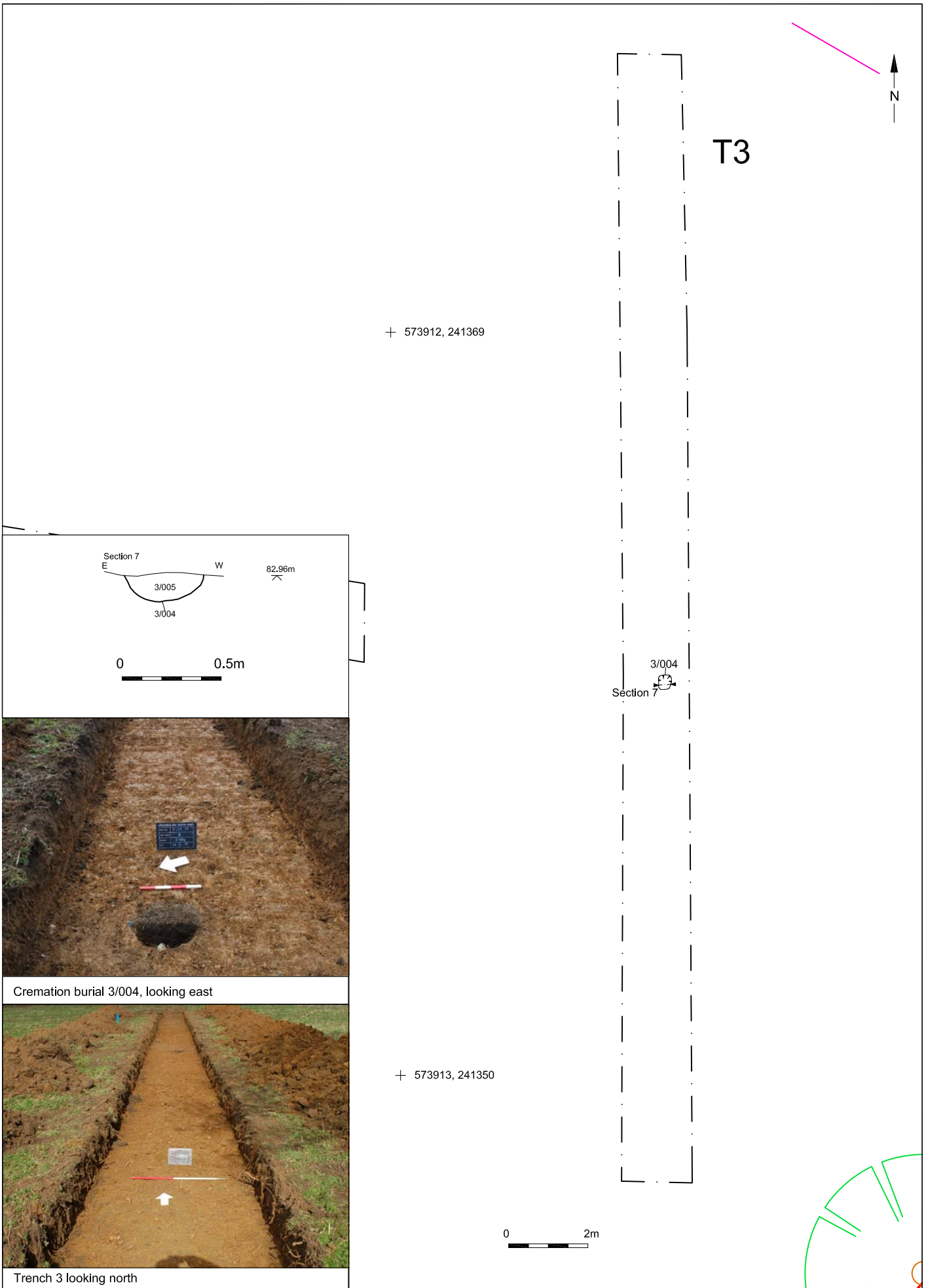
| | | | |
|---------------------------------|--------------|------------------------------------|-------|
| © Archaeology South-East | | Land at Ashen Road, Ridgewell | Fig.2 |
| Project Ref: 190096 | March 2019 | Trench location plan with features | |
| Report Ref: 2019099 | Drawn by: SM | | |



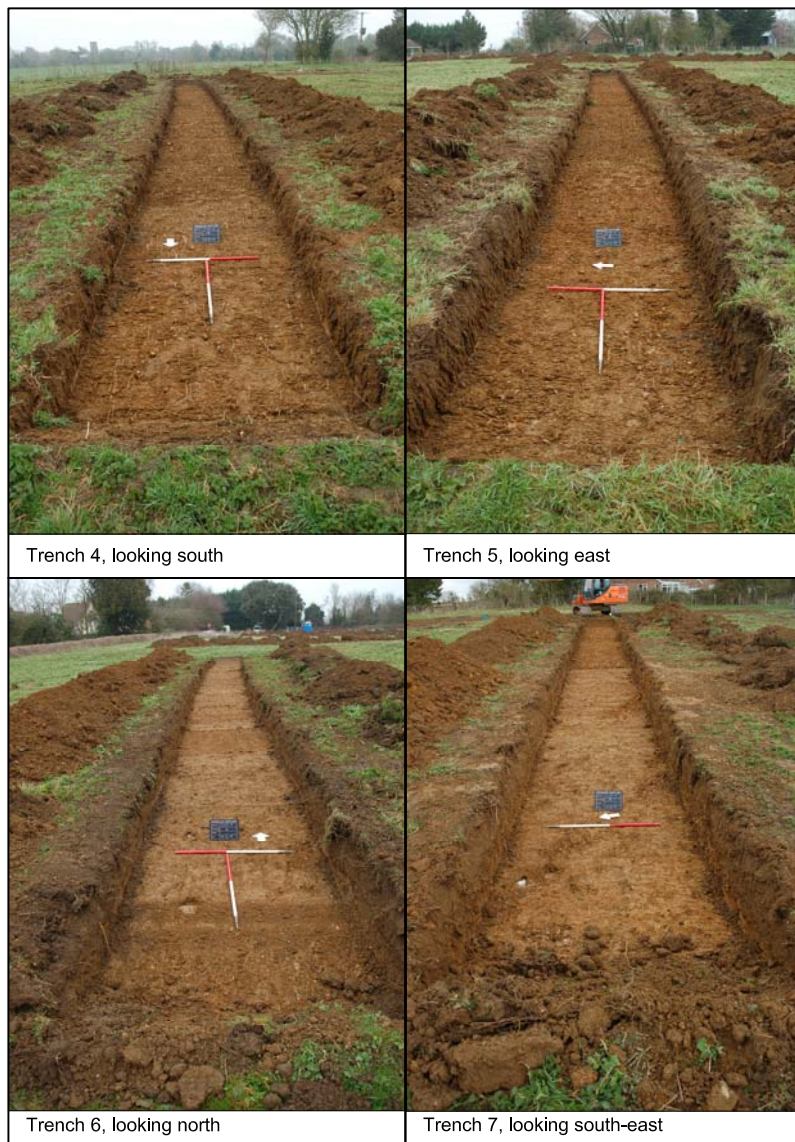
| | | | |
|---------------------------------|--------------|--|-------|
| © Archaeology South-East | | Land at Ashen Road, Ridgewell | Fig.3 |
| Project Ref: 190096 | March 2019 | Trench 1: plan, sections and photographs | |
| Report Ref: 2019099 | Drawn by: SM | | |



| | | | |
|--------------------------|--------------|--|-------|
| © Archaeology South-East | | Land at Ashen Road, Ridgewell | Fig.4 |
| Project Ref: 190096 | March 2019 | Trench 2: plan, sections and photographs | |
| Report Ref: 2019099 | Drawn by: SM | | |



| | | | |
|--------------------------|--------------|---|-------|
| © Archaeology South-East | | Land at Ashen Road, Ridgewell | Fig.5 |
| Project Ref: 190096 | March 2019 | Trench 3: plan, section and photographs | |
| Report Ref: 2019099 | Drawn by: SM | | |



| | | | |
|--------------------------|--------------|-------------------------------|-------|
| © Archaeology South-East | | Land at Ashen Road, Ridgewell | Fig.6 |
| Project Ref: 190096 | March 2019 | Blank trench photographs | |
| Report Ref: 2019099 | Drawn by: SM | | |

Sussex Office

Units 1& 2
2 Chapel Place
Portslade
East Sussex BN41 1DR
tel: +44(0)1273 426830
email: fau@ucl.ac.uk
web: www.ucl.ac.uk/archaeologyse

Essex Office

27 Eastways
Witham
Essex
CM8 3YQ
tel: +44(0)1376 331470
email: fau@ucl.ac.uk
web: www.ucl.ac.uk/archaeologyse

London Office

Centre for Applied Archaeology
UCL Institute of Archaeology
31-34 Gordon Square
London WC1H 0PY
tel: +44(0)20 7679 4778
email: fau@ucl.ac.uk
web: www.ucl.ac.uk/caa

