

**AN ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION
AT THE
BRISLEY FARM SCHOOL SITE, ASHFORD, KENT**

**NGR 598920 140440
(TQ 989 404)**

**Project No. 3767
Site Code: BFS 09**

ASE Report No. 2009032

**by
Diccon Hart**

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Abstract

Archaeology South East was commissioned by CgMs Consulting Ltd on behalf of their client to undertake an archaeological evaluation of land at the Brisley Farm School Site, Ashford Kent.

A total of eleven trenches, totalling some 324m, were excavated across the site to reveal the underlying natural Weald Clay at a maximum height of 45.23m AOD in the far northwest corner of the site (Trench 1), falling away to 42.59m AOD to the east (Trench 4) and 42.81m AOD to the southeast (Trench 12).

A small, residual assemblage of struck flint attests to at least limited activity of Mesolithic date in the vicinity of the site. A handful of ditches may be considered to form part of a Mid-Late Iron transitional or Late Iron Age field system based on correlations in alignment with dated features from surrounding excavation areas. Much of the activity on the site, however, is medieval in date, comprising a variety of pits, postholes and ditches that probably form part of the agricultural landscape centred on a small medieval farmstead recorded immediately to the north of the site. A handful of post-medieval ditches demonstrate the survival of an essentially agricultural landscape into the modern period.

The archaeological horizon was sealed by a sequence of subsoil and topsoil that reflect the previous agrarian character of the site, though the presence of some areas of made ground also attest to recent activity associated with the construction of the surrounding housing.

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Site Background

- 1.1.1 Archaeology South East was commissioned by CgMs Consuslting Ltd., on behalf of their client to undertake an evaluation at the proposed Brisley Farm school site, Ashford, Kent. The site is centred on NGR 589920 140440 and its location is shown in Figure 1.

1.2 Geology and Topography

- 1.2.1 The British Geographical Survey Map (Sheets 288-9/304/305/306) for the area shows the underlying geology to comprise Weald Clay over Hastings Beds. The site consists of a currently vacant grassed plot, with an area of hard standing to the northwest. It is bounded to the west and south by Coulter Road and to the east by residential housing. An unmade footpath (Green Lane) forms the northern boundary to the site.

1.3 Planning Background

- 1.3.1 It is proposed to develop the site with residential housing.
- 1.3.2 A *Written Scheme of Investigation* setting out the scope of the work was subsequently produced by Archaeology South-East (ASE 2009) and duly submitted to and approved by the KCC Heritage Conservation Group.
- 1.3.3 All communication regarding the site should be addressed to CgMs Consulting Ltd who will disseminate the information as required.

1.4 Scope of Report

- 1.4.1 This report details the results of a Stage 1 archaeological evaluation of the site. The work was undertaken between 11th and 16th February 2009 by Diccon Hart (Senior Archaeologist) and Chris Russell and Liane Peyre (Assistant Archaeologists). The fieldwork was managed by Jon Sygrave (Project Manager) and the post-excavation analysis was managed by Jim Stevenson (Project Manager).

2.0 ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND

2.1 Archaeology South-East have previously undertaken archaeological investigations on numerous adjacent sites. Only a brief outline of this extensive and complex site can be given here and the reader is directed to the various texts and publications to date given below (Bibliography). The following summary is reproduced from the *Written Scheme of Investigation* (ASE 2009).

2.2 Archaeology South-East have carried out evaluations and six excavations at Brisley Farm between 1998 and 2004 on Areas 1 to 9 of the Ward Homes housing development (Figs. 6 and 7). The total area so far subject to excavation has been 6.43ha, with the most significant remains discovered in Areas 3 and 4. These areas were subject to extensive archaeological excavation, with 100% fill removal in the most significant part. The analysis of this material and first draft of the monograph is complete and has demonstrated that the sites are of at least regional importance and elements are nationally significant.

2.3 The work has afforded a unique opportunity to chart the landscape development of a wide area south of Ashford over at least three millennia. Human activity has been identified from the Bronze Age, Early-Late Iron Age, Roman, Saxon, Medieval and Post Medieval periods culminating in a WWII encampment and the late 20th - 21st century housing development.

2.4 Summary of Key Elements of the Landscape History

2.4.1 *Late Bronze Age –Early Iron Age*

A Late Bronze Age, co-axial field system, was evident in excavation Areas 3-4 and Area 6. This co-axial system has also been identified at the nearby sites of Westhawk Farm (Booth et al 2008) and Christchurch School (Stevenson, forthcoming) and is characterised by distinctive, thin gullies with a very pale fill. It seems likely that this field system was extensive, possibly extending across the south Ashford landscape.

2.4.2 *Iron Age and Romano-British*

Overlying the Bronze Age field ditches were the complex remains of a Late Iron Age settlement that developed from c.150BC through to and post, the Roman Conquest in 43AD. This was most intensive in excavation Areas 3 and 4 where rapidly dug and infilled ditches created a complex sequence of overlying enclosures. In general terms, the settlement included enclosed and unenclosed elements, a cremation cemetery, (possibly arranged around a circular space, similar to that found at Westhampnett, Hampshire, (Fitzpatrick 1997),) and several ring gullies and other general occupation evidence. Of great interest were two burials with weapons (warrior-burials) placed within square ditched enclosures, probably forming barrow monuments. These were located within the settlement area and dated to c.AD10 and AD 40-50. Such burials are rare in the south-east and are reminiscent of a continental tradition that is more widespread in northern England. These are thought to represent the latest of these types of burial to be found in the country and probably also in Europe. These burials became the focus for veneration into the Roman period, although the rest of Brisley Farm is turned over to fields by this time with the imposition of a newly aligned ditch system. The establishment and intensification of activity at Westhawk Farm, 500m to the east sees the decline of Brisley Farm with probable abandonment by the mid-late 2nd century AD.

2.4.3 *Saxon*

One feature has been C14 dated to the Saxon Period

2.4.4 *Medieval and Post-Medieval*

Evidence for a farmsteads dating from 13th to 16th century has been forthcoming from Areas 2a and Area 8 (Pightlands). This includes structural elements, fields and paddocks. Post-medieval activity has also been identified in Area 7.

2.4.5 *World War II Remains*

The area to the north of the site was used as an RAF encampment during the Second World War. During the excavation of Area 8, a bomb crater was found which anecdotal and documentary evidence suggests caused the deaths of several airmen. This crater was respectfully excavated, with the consent and assistance of the MOD. No human remains were recovered although general debris of 1940's date was present.

2.5 *Geology and topography*

2.5.1 Brisley Farm lies within the Weald Clay vale in the upper valley of the Great Stour River at around 40-45m AOD. To the immediate north, there is Gault Clay, followed by the Lower, Middle and Upper Chalk of the North Downs, which lie 8km (5 miles) north. To the south the expanse of the Weald continues at around until the former sea-cliff line bordering Romney Marsh 4.8km (3 miles) away is reached.

2.5.2 At a site-specific level, the exposed Weald Clay (British Geological Survey Sheet No. 288-9/304/305/306, 1:50000) varies from bright yellow to various shades of brown. This is interspaced with bands of manganese rich clay silts, particularly prevalent on the slopes of Coleman's Kitchens Wood (Area 6 excavation). There are also considerable pans of manganese within / on the surface of the clay on the flatter ground caused by successive episodes of standing water. Immediately to the south of Area 9, on the lower ground, there is a wide east west aligned deposit of Alluvium. The land rises to the northwest where an outcrop of the Cretaceous Lower Greensand Hythe Beds and Atherfield Clay occurs, forming a hill known as Coleman's Kitchens Wood which at some time in the past has been extensively quarried.

3.0 ARCHAEOLOGICAL METHODOLOGY

3.1 Methodology

- 3.1.1 The methodology comprised the mechanical excavation, under constant archaeological supervision, of 11 evaluation trenches, totalling some 324m of trenching, as set out in Figure 2 (Trenches 1-9 and 11-12). With the agreement of CgMs Consulting Ltd. and KCC Archaeological Officer, a further five trenches towards the southeastern corner of the site were not excavated due to the very wet ground conditions (Trenches 10 and 13 -16). Some minor revision to trench locations was necessary due to existing site conditions and obstructions.
- 3.1.2 All trenches were scanned using a Cable Avoidance Tool prior to excavation. Excavation was undertaken in spits of no more than 0.10m to the top of the underlying natural substrate, or to the top of archaeological deposits, whichever was higher. Topsoil and subsoil were stockpiled separately and backfilled in sequence.
- 3.1.3 All deposits were recorded using ASE standard context sheets, with colours recorded using visual inspection. The trench was recorded on plastic drawing film at appropriate scales.
- 3.1.4 A full photographic record (digital, colour slide and black and white) was made.
- 3.1.5 Spoil heaps and trench bases were scanned using a metal detector and by eye, for unstratified artefacts.
- 3.1.6 Ground conditions during the evaluation works proved exceedingly wet as a result of recent very heavy rain. Consequently and in agreement with the KCC Archaeological Officer, hand excavation of exposed archaeological features was minimal.
- 3.1.7 Trenches were dewatered prior to backfilling. All trenches were backfilled and compacted by machine but no further reinstatement was undertaken.

3.2 Aims and Objectives

- 3.2.1 The aims of the fieldwork were set out in the *Written Scheme of Investigation* and are herein reproduced in full:
- *The purpose of the evaluation is to establish whether there are any significant archaeological deposits at the site that may be affected by the proposed development.*
 - *The evaluation is thus to:*
 - i. *ascertain the extent, depth below ground surface, depth of deposit, character, date, significance and condition of any archaeological remains on site;*
 - ii. *establish the extent to which previous development and/or other processes have affected archaeological deposits at the site; and*
 - iii. *establish the likely impact on archaeological deposits of the proposed development.*

3.3 Quantification of Archive

Table 1. Site Archive Quantification

Number of Contexts	103
No. of files/paper record	1 files
Plan and sections sheets	1
Bulk Samples	none
Photographs	1 colour slide film, 1 black and white and digital
Bulk finds	1 box
Registered finds	none
Environmental flots/residue	1 box

4.0 RESULTS (Figs. 3-5)

4.1 Overburden

- 4.1.1 Typically, the overburden recorded on the site consisted of a sequence of subsoil and topsoil consistent with the previous agricultural usage of the site. Where surviving, these layers were of fairly uniform thickness, with the topsoil measuring between 0.30m and 0.50m and subsoil measuring between 0.10m and 0.24m. Importantly, however, the topsoil appears to survive only in the far northern and western limits of the site (Trenches 2, 5 and 7). Elsewhere on the site, the topsoil appears to have been previously stripped and replaced by a layer of recent made ground. Generally this made ground measures between 0.35-0.45m in depth, though a depth of 0.75m was recorded to the west of the site in Trench 5.
- 4.1.2 Alluvial deposits sealing the underlying Weald Clay were also noted in Trenches 4 and 12. Both these trenches were situated in particularly low-lying areas of the site (with natural Weald Clay typically lying below c. 43.00m AOD) and as such have clearly suffered episodes of frequent flooding in antiquity.

4.2 Trench 1 (Fig. 3)

- 4.2.1 Length: 30.00m Width: 1.80m Depth: 0.40m
Orientation: northwest-southeast

- 4.2.2 Table 2. List of Recorded Contexts – Trench 1

Number	Type	Description	Max. length	Max. width	Max. depth	Max. height (m AOD)
1/001	Deposit	Subsoil	Tr.	Tr.	0.30m	45.43m
1/002	Deposit	Natural	Tr.	Tr.	-	45.23m
1/003	Cut	Ditch	1.80m	0.40m	0.20m	44.43m
1/004	Deposit	Ditch fill	2.00m	0.40m	0.20m	44.43m
1/005	Cut	Ditch	1.97m	1.90m	0.47m	45.00m
1/006	Deposit	Ditch fill	1.97m	1.90m	0.47m	45.00m

4.2.3 Summary

Natural mid yellow Weald Clay (1/002) was encountered at a maximum height of 45.23m AOD at the northwestern end of the trench, falling away to 44.70m to the southeast.

Two ditches on similar northeast-southwest alignments were recorded within this trench. The larger of the two was situated towards the northwestern end of the trench and comprised a ditch measuring some 1.90m wide with irregular rounded profile [1/005] and filled with mid yellowish brown silty clay (1/006). To the east was a smaller gully [1/003], also with rounded profile and filled with light yellowish brown silty clay (1/004).

Both ditches were sealed by a layer of mid greyish brown silty clay subsoil (1/001). The topsoil in this part of the site had been previously stripped and banded during the creation of a contractors compound.

4.3 Trench 2 (Fig. 3)

4.3.1 Length: 30.00m Width: 1.80m Depth: 0.50m
Orientation: east-west

4.3.2 Table 3. List of Recorded Contexts – Trench 2

Number	Type	Description	Max. length	Max. width	Max. depth	Max. height (m AOD)
2/001	Deposit	Topsoil	Tr.	Tr.	0.29m	44.47m
2/002	Deposit	Subsoil	Tr.	Tr.	0.20m	44.17m
2/003	Deposit	Natural	Tr.	Tr.	-	44.01m
2/004	Cut	Ditch	2.10m	0.85m	0.12m min	43.25m
2/005	Deposit	Ditch fill	2.10m	0.85m	0.12m min	43.25m

4.3.3 Summary

Natural mid yellow Weald Clay (2/003) was recorded at a maximum height of 44.01m AOD at the western end of the trench, sloping down to 43.18m AOD to the east.

A small north-south aligned ditch [2/004] was recorded towards the western end of the trench. The feature was filled with light grey silty clay (2/005) but was not bottomed due to water ingress. A further three irregular features were investigated but proved to comprise little more than concentrations of manganese within the natural clay, underlining the poorly drained character of the site.

These features were sealed by the subsoil (2/002) and topsoil (2/001).

4.4 Trench 3 (Fig. 3)

4.4.1 Length: 30.00m Width: 1.80m Depth: 0.75m
Orientation: northeast-southwest

4.4.2 Table 4. List of Recorded Contexts – Trench 3

Number	Type	Description	Max. length	Max. width	Max. depth	Max. height (m AOD)
3/001	Deposit	Made ground	Tr.	Tr.	0.28m	43.81m
3/002	Deposit	Subsoil	Tr.	Tr.	0.24m	43.31m
3/003	Deposit	Natural	Tr.	Tr.	-	43.06m
3/004	Cut	Pit	0.70m	0.50m	0.27m	42.99m
3/005	Deposit	Pit fill	0.70m	0.50m	0.27m	42.99m
3/006	Cut	Gully	1.95m	0.60m	0.12m	42.91m
3/007	Deposit	Gully fill	1.95m	0.60m	0.12m	42.91m

4.4.3 Summary

Natural mid yellow Weald Clay (3/003) was encountered between 43.06 m and 43.03m AOD.

A small northwest-southeast aligned gully [3/006] with rounded profile and fill of light yellowish brown silty clay (3/007) was recorded towards the northeastern end of the trench. At the far northeastern end of the trench was a sub-circular pit [3/004], filled with mid greyish brown silty clay (3/005). A single abraded sherd of medieval pottery

dated to the mid 12th – early 13th century was recovered from this fill.

Both features were sealed by the subsoil, (3/002), in turn overlain by a layer of recent made ground (3/001).

4.5 Trench 4 (Fig. 3)

4.5.1 Length: 25.00m Width: 1.80m Depth: 0.70m
Orientation: north-south

4.5.2 Table 5. List of Recorded Contexts – Trench 4

Number	Type	Description	Max. length	Max. width	Max. depth	Max. height (m AOD)
4/001	Deposit	Made ground	Tr.	Tr.	0.45m	43.09m
4/002	Deposit	Subsoil	Tr.	Tr.	0.10m	42.79m
4/003	Deposit	Alluvium	Tr.	Tr.	0.15	42.69m
4/004	Deposit	Natural	Tr.	Tr.	-	42.59m

4.5.3 Summary

Natural mid yellow Weald Clay (4/004) was observed at a maximum height of 42.59m AOD at the southern end of the trench, falling away to 42.39m AOD to the north. This was sealed by a layer of grey alluvial clay (4/003), in turn overlain by a layer of subsoil. The subsoil was overlain by a layer of recent made ground (4/001). Due to water ingress and the presence of land drains, this trench was only excavated to a length of 25.00m.

No archaeological features were observed.

4.6 Trench 5 (Fig. 4)

4.6.1 Length: 50.00m Width: 1.80m Depth: 0.50m
Orientation: east-west

4.6.2 Table 6. List of Recorded Contexts – Trench 5

Number	Type	Description	Max. length	Max. width	Max. depth	Max. height (m AOD)
5/001	Deposit	Made ground	Tr.	Tr.	0.75m	45.94m
5/002	Deposit	Buried topsoil	Tr.	Tr.	0.52m	45.19m
5/003	Deposit	Natural	Tr.	Tr.	0-	44.71m
5/004	Cut	Ditch	2.28m	0.89m	0.25m	44.63m
5/005	Deposit	Ditch fill	2.28m	0.89m	0.14m	44.63m
5/006	Cut	Ditch	2.45m	0.50m	0.12m	44.59m
5/007	Deposit	Ditch fill	2.45m	0.50m	0.12m	44.59m
5/008	Cut	Ditch	2.80m	0.20m	0.09m	44.64m
5/009	Deposit	Ditch fill	2.80m	0.20m	0.09m	44.64m
5/010	Cut	Ditch	2.86m	0.35m	0.10m	44.71m
5/011	Deposit	Ditch fill	2.86m	0.35m	0.10m	44.71m
5/012	Deposit	Ditch fill	1.44m	0.70m	0.20m	44.52m
5/013	Deposit	Ditch fill	1.44m	0.70m	0.20m	44.75m
5/014	Cut	Ditch	2.90m	0.16m	-	44.63m
5/015	Deposit	Ditch fill	2.90m	0.16m	-	44.63m

4.6.3 Summary

Natural Weald Clay (5/003) was encountered at a maximum height of 44.57m AOD at the northern end of the trench, falling away to 43.93m AOD to the south.

A total of five ditches were recorded within this trench, all situated towards the northern end of the trench. Four of these ditches lay on a northeast-southwest orientation and include a group of three small gullies [5/008], [5/010] and [5/014], filled with similar deposits of mid greyish brown silty clay (5/009), (5/011) and (5/015). The group may be dated to the 19th century on the basis of pottery of that date recovered from fill (5/009), though some *possible* residual Roman CBM was recovered from fill (5/011).

The final northeast-southwest aligned feature in this trench comprised a more substantial ditch [5/004] with irregular profile. A sequence of three fills were recorded in this feature, including a primary fill of organic dark grey silty clay (5/005), overlain by a layer of light bluish grey clay (5/012), in turn sealed by a deposit of organic dark grey silty clay with fragments of wood (5/013). An environmental sample was taken from fill (5/005) but yielded only uncharred wood and root fragments. Given the similarity in orientation to the dated ditch group described above, it is possible that this feature is of a similar 19th century date.

A final ditch on a northwest-southeast alignment lay to the south of the above group. This consisted of a shallow ditch cut with rounded profile [5/006], filled with mid greyish brown silty clay (5/007). 19th century pottery was recovered from this feature.

These features were sealed by a buried topsoil horizon of dark greyish brown silty clay (5/002), capped by a thick layer of recent made ground (5/001).

4.7 Trench 6 (Fig. 4)

4.7.1 Length: 30.00m Width: 1.80m Depth: 0.50m
Orientation: northwest-southeast

4.7.2 Table 7. List of Recorded Contexts – Trench 6

Number	Type	Description	Max. length	Max. width	Max. depth	Max. height (m AOD)
6/001	Deposit	Made ground	Tr.	Tr.	0.35m	44.90m
6/002	Deposit	Subsoil	Tr.	Tr.	0.10m	44.60m
6/003	Deposit	Natural	Tr.	Tr.	-	44.50m
6/004	Cut	Ditch	1.80m	0.30m	0.10m	44.05m
6/005	Deposit	Ditch fill	1.80m	0.30m	0.10m	44.05m
6/006	Cut	Ditch	1.80m	1.40m	0.40m	44.05m
6/007	Deposit	Ditch fill	1.80m	1.40m	0.40m	44.05m
6/008	Cut	Pit	1.29m	1.16m	-	44.05m
6/009	Deposit	Pit fill	1.29m	1.16m	-	44.05m

4.7.3 Summary

Natural Weald Clay (6/003) was encountered at a maximum height of 44.60m AOD at the northwestern end of the trench, falling away to 44.14m AOD to the southeast.

Two parallel ditches on a broadly northeast-southwest alignment were observed towards the western end of the trench. The larger of the two ditches [6/006] had a broadly 'V' shaped profile and was filled with light grey silty clay (6/007). A piece of residual flint debitage, possibly Mesolithic in date, was recovered. The smaller ditch to the west [6/004] had a more rounded profile and was filled with mid greyish brown silty clay (6/005).

A small ovoid pit [6/008] with light greyish yellow silty clay fill (6/009) lay at the far southeastern end of the trench. However, this was not investigated due to water ingress.

The features described above were sealed by the subsoil of the site (6/002), sealed by recent made ground (6/001).

4.8 Trench 7 (Fig. 4)

4.8.1 Length: 30.00m Width: 1.80m Depth: 0.80m
Orientation: northwest-southeast

4.8.2 Table 8. List of Recorded Contexts – Trench 7

Number	Type	Description	Max. length	Max. width	Max. depth	Max. height (m AOD)
7/001	Deposit	Made ground	Tr.	Tr.	0.35m	44.48m
7/002	Deposit	Buried topsoil	Tr.	Tr.	0.33m	44.32m
7/003	Deposit	subsoil	Tr.	Tr.	0.24m	44.12m
7/004	Deposit	Natural	Tr.	Tr.	-	43.98m
7/005	Deposit	Ditch fill	1.80m	0.71m	0.10m	43.98m
7/006	Cut	Ditch	1.80m	0.71m	0.10m	43.98m

4.8.3 Summary

Natural Weald Clay was encountered at a maximum height of 43.98m AOD at the northwestern end of the trench, sloping down to 43.55m AOD to the southeast.

A small ditch or gully on a broadly ENE-WSW orientation was investigated towards the northern end of the trench. This consisted of a shallow cut with rounded profile [7/006], filled with mid brownish yellow silty clay (7/005). A small sub-circular feature was investigated towards the centre of the trench but proved to comprise little more than a variation in the underlying natural clay, perhaps the result of rooting.

These features were sealed by a layer of subsoil (7/003), in turn overlain by a layer of topsoil (7/002). The sequence was capped with a layer of recent made ground (7/001).

4.9 Trench 8 (Fig. 4)

4.9.1 Length: 30.00m Width: 1.80m Depth: 0.85m
Orientation: north-south

4.9.2 Table 9. List of Recorded Contexts – Trench 8

Number	Type	Description	Max. length	Max. width	Max. depth	Max. height (m AOD)
8/001	Deposit	Made ground	Tr.	Tr.	0.60m	44.75m
8/002	Deposit	Subsoil	Tr.	Tr.	0.24m	44.15m
8/003	Deposit	Natural	Tr.	Tr.	-	43.95m
8/004	Deposit	Ditch fill	1.80m	0.97m	-	43.52m
8/005	Cut	Ditch	1.80m	0.97m	-	43.52m
8/006	Deposit	Ditch fill	1.80m	1.39m	-	43.61m
8/007	Cut	Ditch	1.80m	1.39m	-	43.61m
8/008	Deposit	Ditch fill	1.80m	0.47m	-	43.60m
8/009	Cut	Ditch	1.80m	0.47m	-	43.60m
8/010	Deposit	Posthole	0.44m	0.41m	-	43.61m
8/011	Cut	Posthole fill	0.44m	0.41m	-	43.61m
8/012	Deposit	Posthole	0.33m	0.28m	-	43.65m
8/013	Cut	Posthole fill	0.33m	0.28m	-	43.65m
8/014	Deposit	Ditch fill	1.97m	1.38m	-	43.74m
8/015	Cut	Ditch	1.97m	1.38m	-	43.74m
8/016	Deposit	Ditch fill	1.12m	0.22m	-	43.67m
8/017	Cut	Ditch	1.12m	0.22m	-	43.67m
8/018	Deposit	Reworked natural?	7.20m	1.80m	-	43.67m
8/019	Deposit	Reworked natural?	7.20m	1.80m	-	43.47m

4.9.3 Summary

Natural Weald Clay (8/003) was encountered at a maximum height of 43.95m AOD at the northern end of the trench, falling away to 43.41m AOD to the south.

A variety of archaeological features were recorded in this trench, but, due to water ingress, none were subject to excavation. The earliest identifiable archaeological deposits appeared to consist of ill-defined areas of reworked natural clay and include (8/018) and (8/019). The exact nature and origin of these deposits remains poorly understood, largely the result of the limited exposures afforded by the evaluation. It is perhaps likely that these deposits represent the fills of undefined features, particularly with regard to (8/019), whose northern limits describe a northwest-southeast alignment comparable with ditch [8/015] to the north. Pottery dating to the mid 12th – mid 13th centuries AD and one piece of residual flint debitage was recovered from deposit (8/018).

Feature [8/015] was a substantial ditch measuring some 1.38m in width, filled with light greyish yellow silty clay (8/014) from which 12th – 13th century AD pottery and a piece of residual, possibly Mesolithic, flint debitage, was recovered. It is possible that this feature is equivalent to ditch [11/005] to the southeast. A further small gully with rounded terminus [8/017] was observed immediately to the southwest of ditch [8/015]. This feature was filled with light greyish yellow silty clay (8/016) and lay on a northeast-southwest orientation broadly perpendicular to ditch [8/015]; the two may well be associated.

The remaining ditches observed within this trench comprise a group of three east-west aligned ditches. These include [8/005], [8/007] and [8/009], all of which were filled with comparable deposits of dark grey silty clay, mottled with iron mineralisation (8/004), (8/006) and (8/008) respectively. Fragments of 19th century brick recovered from (8/006) suggest a fairly modern dated for at least one of these features.

Other features recorded within this trench include a group of two postholes [8/011] and [8/013]. Both were filled with similar deposits of mid brown silty clay (8/010) and (8/012).

These features were sealed by a layer of subsoil (8/002). The topsoil in this part of the site appears to have been previously stripped, for the subsoil horizon (8/002) was sealed by a layer of recent made ground (8/001).

4.10 Trench 9 (Fig. 5)

4.10.1 Length: 30.00 Width: 1.80m Depth: 0.75m
Orientation: northeast-southwest

4.10.2 Table 10. List of Recorded Contexts – Trench 9

Number	Type	Description	Max. length	Max. width	Max. depth	Max. height (m AOD)
9/001	Deposit	Topsoil	Tr.	Tr.	0.45m	44.28m
9/002	Deposit	Subsoil	Tr.	Tr.	0.30m	43.83m
9/003	Deposit	Natural	Tr.	Tr.	-	43.63m
9/004	Deposit	Ditch fill	1.80m	1.15	0	43.59m
9/005	Cut	Ditch cut	1.80m	1.15m	-	43.59m
9/006	Deposit	Ditch fill	1.80m	0.84m	-	43.55m
9/007	Cut	Ditch cut	1.80m	0.84m	-	43.55m
9/008	Deposit	Ditch fill	1.80m	0.22m	-	43.43m
9/009	Cut	Ditch cut	1.80m	0.22m	-	43.43m
9/010	Deposit	Posthole fill?	0.59m	0.48m	-	43.43m
9/011	Cut	Posthole cut?	0.59m	0.48m	-	43.43m
9/012	Deposit	Ditch fill	1.80m	0.52m	-	43.48m
9/013	Cut	Ditch cut	1.80m	0.52m	-	43.48m

4.10.3 Summary

Natural Weald Clay (9/003) was recorded at a maximum height of 43.63m AOD at the northeastern end of the trench, sloping down to 43.39m AOD to the southwest.

A group of two parallel ditches on northwest-southeast orientations were observed at the northeastern end of the trench. These ditches were not excavated due to water ingress. These include ditches [9/005] and [9/007], both of which were filled with similar deposits of mid yellowish brown silty clay (9/004) and (9/007). A further ditch [9/013] on a similar northwest-southeast alignment was recorded towards the centre of the trench.

A final ditch was observed towards the southern end of the trench. This consisted of a ditch cut on a slightly different WNW-ESE orientation to those described above [9/009], filled with light yellow silty clay (9/008), mottled with iron mineralisation. This ditch appeared to cut a small ovoid feature [9/011], filled with mid yellowish brown

silty clay (9/010) that may represent a small posthole. Again, water ingress prevented the excavation of these features

These features were sealed by a layer of subsoil (9/002), in turn overlain by a layer of recent reworked topsoil (9/001).

4.11 Trench 10

4.11.1 NOT EXCAVATED

4.12 Trench 11 (Fig. 5)

4.12.1 Length: 30.00m Width: 1.80m Depth: 0.95m
Orientation: northwest-southeast

4.12.2 Table 11. List of Recorded Contexts – Trench 11

Number	Type	Description	Max. length	Max. width	Max. depth	Max. height (m AOD)
11/001	Deposit	Made ground	Tr.	Tr.	0.60m	44.12m
11/002	Deposit	Subsoil	Tr.	Tr.	0.30m	43.57m
11/003	Deposit	Natural	Tr.	Tr.	-	43.32m
11/004	Deposit	Ditch fill	13.45m	0.73m	-	43.32m
11/005	Cut	Ditch	13.45m	0.73m	-	43.32m
11/006	Deposit	Ditch fill	1.34m	1.39m	-	42.78m
11/007	Cut	Ditch	1.34m	1.39m	-	42.78m
11/008	Deposit	Ditch fill	1.36m	1.26m	-	42.78m
11/009	Cut	Ditch	1.36m	1.26m	-	42.78m

4.12.3 Summary

This trench was excavated in two sections to a cumulative of 30.00m, due to the presence of services.

Natural Weald Clay (11/003) was encountered at a maximum height of 43.32m AOD at the northwestern end of the trench, falling away to 42.53m AOD to the southeast.

Three possible ditches were observed in this trench, though none were investigated due to water ingress. These include a northwest-southeast aligned ditch [11/005] (probably equivalent to ditch [8/015] to the northwest) and two northeast-southwest aligned ditches [11/007] and [11/009]. All three ditches were filled with a similar light greyish yellow silty clay (11/004), (11/006) and (11/008) that prevented the definition of any stratigraphic relationships between the three features. A single sherd of pottery dating to the mid 12th – mid 13th centuries AD was recovered from fill (11/004). Due to water ingress, none of these features were excavated.

These three ditches were sealed by a layer of subsoil (11/002), in turn sealed by a layer of recent made ground (11/001). The subsoil horizon included frequent lenses of grey alluvial clay towards the base of the deposit that suggests episodes of flooding of this part of the site.

4.13 Trench 12 (Fig. 5)

4.13.1 Length: 30.00m Width: 1.80m Depth: 0.90m max.
Orientation: East-west

4.13.2 Table 12. List of Recorded Contexts – Trench 12

Number	Type	Description	Max. length	Max. width	Max. depth	Max. height (m AOD)
12/001	Deposit	Made ground	Tr.	Tr.	0.60m	43.86m
12/002	Deposit	Subsoil	Tr.	Tr.	0.20m	43.31m
12/003	Deposit	alluvium	Tr.	Tr.	0.20m	42.81m
12/004	Deposit	Natural	Tr.	Tr.	-	43.11m
12/005	Deposit	Pit fill	0.85m	0.77m	-	42.56m
12/006	Cut	Pit cut	0.85m	0.77m	-	42.56m
12/007	Deposit	Pit fill	0.58m	0.50m	-	42.57m
12/008	Cut	Pit cut	0.58m	0.50m	-	42.57m
12/009	Deposit	Pit fill	0.94m	0.80m	-	42.57m
12/010	Cut	Pit cut	0.94m	0.80m	-	42.57m
12/011	Deposit	Pit fill	0.57m	0.48m	-	42.64m
12/012	Cut	Pit cut	0.57m	0.48m	-	42.64m
12/013	Deposit	Ditch fill	4.00m	0.35m	-	42.70m
12/014	Cut	Ditch cut	4.00m	0.35m	-	42.70m
12/015	Deposit	Pit fill	0.47m	0.33m	-	42.64m
12/016	Cut	Pit cut	0.47m	0.33m	-	42.64m
12/017	Deposit	Pit fill	0.31m	0.24m	-	42.71m
12/018	Cut	Pit cut	0.31m	0.24m	-	42.71m

4.13.3 Summary

Natural Weald Clay (12/004) was observed at a maximum height of 43.11m AOD at the western end of the trench, falling away to 42.67m AOD to the east.

A variety of possible small pits or postholes were observed in this trench, though due to water ingress few were investigated. These include pits [12/006], [12/008] and [12/010] at the far eastern end of the trench and [12/012], [12/016] and [12/018] towards the centre of the trench. All six features were filled with similar deposits of light grey silty clay (12/005), (12/007), (12/009), (12/013), (12/015) and (12/017). Fragments of 12th-13th century AD pottery were recovered from fills (12/005) and (12/017).

The final feature observed in this trench consisted of a small ditch or gully on a WNW-ESE orientation [12/014], filled with light grey silty clay (12/013). It is possible that this ditch may be equated to ditch [9/009] recorded to the west (see above) and probably represents a small field boundary.

These features were sealed by a clearly defined layer of alluvial clay (12/003), overlain by the subsoil of the site (12/002), in turn sealed by a layer of recent made ground (12/001).

4.14 Trenches 13-16

14.14.1 NOT EXCAVATED

5.0 THE FINDS

- 5.1 A small assemblage of finds was recovered during the excavations (Table 13). Finds were recovered from eleven different contexts and include pottery, ceramic building material (CBM), flint, slag and stone.

Context	Pottery	wt (g)	CB M	wt (g)	Flint	wt (g)	Stone	wt (g)	Slag	wt (g)
3/005	1	8								
5/009	1	4	1	<2	3	112			1	<2
5/011			2	<2	2	6				
6/007					1	4				
8/006			3	454						
8/014	1	38			1	4			1	102
8/018	2	8			1	16				
11/004	1	14					1	34		
12/003			4	52						
12/005	6	30								
12/017	1	2								

Table 13. Finds Quantification

5.2 The Pottery by Luke Barber

- 5.2.1 The archaeological work recovered 13 sherds of post-Roman pottery, weighing 102g, from seven individually numbered contexts. With the exception of a single (3g) 19th- century bodysherd in glazed red earthenware from [5/009] the assemblage is of the medieval period. On the whole many of the sherds show signs of slight to moderate abrasion suggesting some possible reworking and/or attack from acidic ground conditions.
- 5.2.2 The medieval assemblage is dominated by coarsewares of mid 12th- to mid 13th- century date. All are tempered with moderate medium/coarse sand and moderate/abundant shell to 2mm. The majority consist of cooking pot bodysherds, sometimes blackened by sooting [12/005], others notably more abraded [8/018]. Context [3/005] produced a single heavily abraded sherd from a 12th- century cooking pot with flaring beaded rim (8g) while a less abraded down-turned club rim was recovered from [11/004]. The latter piece (14g) is probably of mid 12th- to mid 13th- century date. The only other feature sherd in this fabric consists of an abraded bodysherd (39g) from a large cooking pot/ storage jar with applied thumbled strip from [8/014]. Context [12/017] produced a single scrap (1g) of an oxidised coarse sand tempered vessel of late 12th- to 13th- century date. Considering the periods represented the assemblage is too small to hold any potential for further analysis.

5.3 The Ceramic Building Material by Sarah Porteus

- 5.3.1 A total of 10 pieces of ceramic building material (CBM) weighing a total of 514g were recovered from four contexts. Building material was fragmentary and incomplete.
- 5.3.2 Two flakes from context [5/011] are possibly Roman in date, both are highly fragmentary weighing 1g in total and likely to be residual to the context. The form of the material cannot be identified. One flake is of an orange-red fabric with sparse

black iron rich inclusions and moderate red silt inclusions and sparse fine quartz. The second flake is of a pale orange fabric with abundant calcareous speckling and sparse red iron rich inclusions.

- 5.3.3 The remainder of the material is post-medieval in date. A flake from context [5/009] and fragments of a field drain pipe from context [12/003] were both in a red-orange sandy fabric with sparse black iron rich inclusions, calcite speckling and coarse cream silt inclusions up to 5mm. Three abraded fragments of the one reduced brick were recovered from context [5/006]. The brick has a deep impressed frog with maker's mark '..EL' stamped inside. The brick is made of an orange sandy fabric with sparse-moderate medium sized quartz grains and sparse black iron rich speckling and occasional red silt balling and burnt organics. All the post-medieval material is believed to be mid 19th to early 20th century in date.
- 5.3.4 The assemblage is small and fragmentary and is of no potential for further analysis. No further work is required.

5.4 The Slag by Luke Barber

- 5.4.1 Context [5/009] produced a single fragment (1g) of clinker. This would be in keeping with the 19th- century date of this deposit. The only other slag consists of a piece (103g) of dense aerated iron smithing slag from [8/014].

5.5 Prehistoric flintwork by Chris Butler

- 5.5.1 A small assemblage of three pieces of worked flint weighing 19g was recovered during the work, and is summarised in Table 14.
- 5.5.2 The assessment comprised a visual inspection of each bag, counting the number of pieces of each type of worked flint present, noting details of the range and variety of pieces, general condition, and the potential for further detailed analysis. Classification follows Butler 2005. A hand written archive of the assemblage was produced at this stage, together with an excel database. Those pieces of flint that were obviously not worked were discarded during the assessment.
- 5.5.3 The raw material is a dark grey to black coloured flint with one piece having a blue-grey patination.

Context	Type
6/007	1 fragment (3g)
8/014	1 blade fragment (2g)
8/018	1 two-opposing platform bladelet core (14g)

Table 14: The Flintwork

- 5.5.4 This small assemblage is entirely debitage, and comprises three pieces that are all possibly Mesolithic. Previous work at Brisley farm has produced a significant assemblage of Mesolithic flintwork, although the Ashford area has little other evidence for Mesolithic activity, with most sites being situated further west into the Weald or in eastern Kent.
- 5.5.5 This small assemblage has little potential for further study. It is recommended that no further work be undertaken on this assemblage, although the flintwork should be retained for possible further study in the future. A short summary paragraph should

be included in the report and the handwritten assessment summary retained in the archive.

5.6 Geological Material by Luke Barber

- 5.6.1 A single heavily weathered piece (34g) of Kentish Ragstone was recovered from [11/004]. This rock type is available naturally in the vicinity of the site and the current piece shows no sign of working.

5.7 The Environmental Samples by Lucy Allott

- 5.7.1 A single environmental sample <01> was taken from ditch fill (5/005), rich in fragments of dark possibly charred wood. The sample was processed in a flotation tank and the flots and residues retained on 250µm and 500µm meshes respectively. The residue was sorted for environmental and artefact remains and the flot was scanned under a stereozoom microscope at x7-45 magnification.
- 5.7.2 The sample contains uncharred wood fragments, small uncharred roots and a small quantity of land snail molluscs only. No charcoal fragments are present and no other archaeological remains have been recovered from the sample. This site has a very high water table and during the archaeological works the features quickly became saturated, giving the appearance that the wood was charred.
- 5.7.3 The feature may be dated to the 19th century by analogy to other dated features in the same group. No further work is recommended for this sample.

6.0 DISCUSSION

6.1 Introduction

- 6.1.1 The evaluation has demonstrated the survival of archaeological features across the entirety of the investigated area; minimal trenching was undertaken in the far eastern part of the site but one may assume that the range of features observed elsewhere on the site probably also extend into this area.
- 6.1.2 Much, if not all, the activity represented by these features appears to be agricultural in character, comprising occasional pits and postholes and variety of ditches that probably served as field boundaries and drainage features. This is certainly consistent with the picture of a largely agricultural landscape apparent from work in the immediate vicinity of the site (e.g. Brisley Farm Areas 6, 7, and 8).
- 6.1.3 Dating this activity is more problematic, however, due in no small part to the lack of reliable dating evidence recovered during the fieldwork. Nevertheless, when taken in conjunction with a spatial analysis of the various ditch alignments in relation to those of surrounding excavations, it is possible to formulate some broad observations regarding chronological and spatial development on the site. It should be stressed, however, that although some of the ditches present in previous excavation Areas 6-8 in all likelihood continue into the School Site, the fairly limited data set derived from the evaluation only allows the general characterisation given below.

6.2 Mesolithic

- 6.2.1 The three pieces of possible Mesolithic flint debitage recovered were all residual in later contexts. However, this flintwork is an addition to the already fairly significant Mesolithic flint assemblage collected from the previous phases of work at Brisley Farm. As a whole, this assemblage is important evidence of activity in the area in this period, especially as the Ashford area has little other evidence for Mesolithic activity, with most sites being situated further west into the Weald or in eastern Kent.

6.2 Iron Age

- 6.2.1 Although no finds of Middle-Late Iron Age Transitional or Late Iron Age date were recovered during the course of the investigation, it is possible to postulate such a date for a handful of ditches based on a correlation in alignment with dated ditches recorded in surrounding excavation areas. These include ditches [2/004], [3/006] and [7/006], all of which find parallels in orientation with dated ditches recorded to the north of the site (Areas 7 and 8) and, more tentatively, to the south (Area 6) and in all likelihood, form part of a wider field system.

6.3 Roman

Two small fragments of CBM have been tentatively dated to the Roman period on the basis of fabric alone. Both pieces occur as a residual element within the post-medieval ditch [5/010].

6.4 Medieval

- 6.4.1 The finds assemblage retrieved during the evaluation is dominated by 12-13th

century material. Securely dated features of this date include pit [3/004], postholes [12/006] and [12/018] ditch [8/015]/ [11/004] and the spread of reworked natural (8/018). Other features which may be tentatively assigned to this phase on the basis of orientation include ditches [12/016]/[9/009], [6/004] and [6/006] and possibly deposit (8/019).

- 6.4.2 The predominance of medieval finds from the evaluation is unsurprising given the evidence for a medieval farmstead immediately to the north of the subject site in Area 8 (ASE 2004). The various features ascribed to this period on the subject site probably form part of the same agricultural landscape. Interestingly, much of the activity recorded in Area 8 appears to date to the 13th-14th centuries AD, whereas finds retrieved during the course of the current investigation appears to be slightly earlier, dating to the 12th-13th centuries AD. However, these dates are based on very small sherd counts (often just single sherds) and should be considered provisional.
- 6.4.3 It is perhaps worth mentioning that the fairly large medieval boundaries identified in the southeast corner of excavation Area 8 do not appear to continue (at least on the same scale) into the School Site. This seems to suggest (and backs up the recent analysis of the previous excavations) that Green Lane, which forms the northern limit of the current site, was extant in the medieval period and formed a spine to plots and enclosures.

6.5 Post-medieval

- 6.5.1 Securely dated features of post-medieval date include [5/008] and [8/006] and the alluvial layer (12/003), all of which contained 19th century material. Additional ditches that may be ascribed to this period on the basis of both similarities in orientation and typically dark grey fills include ditches [5/004], [5/010] and [5/006], [9/013], [9/007] and [9/005] and possibly [8/007] and [8/009]. Again, these features seem to be largely agricultural in character and probably represent small field boundaries or drainage ditches.

7.0 CONCLUSIONS

- 7.1** Archaeological features have been demonstrated to survive across the entirety of the investigated area. These appear to be largely agricultural in character and probably relate to wider agricultural landscapes ranging in date from the Mid-Late Iron Age to post-medieval periods. Although there was no direct evidence for the Bronze Age co-axial field system found in the earlier excavations, it is entirely possible that the system continues into this area and its ephemeral ditches remained undetected.

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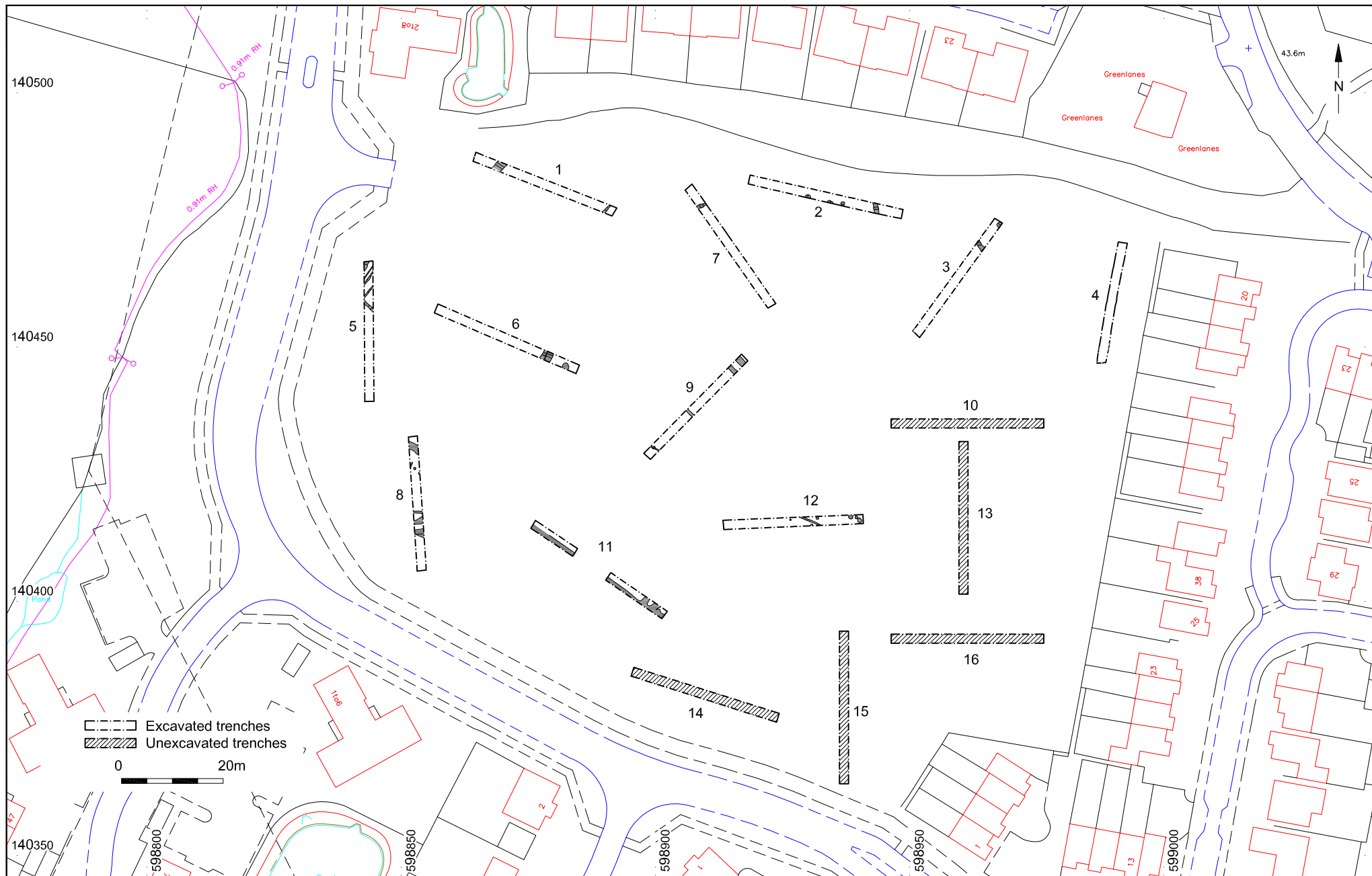
SMR Summary Form

Site Code	KPS08					
Identification Name and Address	Brisley Farm School Site, Ashford, Kent					
County, District &/or Borough	Ashford, Kent					
OS Grid Refs.	NGR 589920 140440					
Geology	Weald Clay					
Arch. South-East Project Number	3767					
Type of Fieldwork	Eval. ✓	Excav.	Watching Brief	Standing Structure	Survey	Other
Type of Site	Green✓ Field	Shallow Urban	Deep Urban	Other		
Dates of Fieldwork	Eval. 11- 16.02.09	Excav.	WB.	Other		
Sponsor/Client	CgMs Consulting					
Project Manager	Jon Sygrave					
Project Supervisor	Diccon Hart					
Period Summary	Palaeo.	Meso.	Neo.	BA	IA✓	RB
	AS	MED ✓	PM ✓	Other Modern ✓		
<p>Archaeology South East was commissioned by CgMs Consulting Ltd on behalf of their client to undertake an archaeological evaluation of land at the Brisley Farm School Site, Ashford Kent.</p> <p>A total of eleven trenches, totalling some 324m trenching, were excavated across the site to reveal the underlying natural Weald Clay at a maximum height of 45.23m AOD in the far northwest corner of the site (Trench 1), falling away to 42.59m AOD to the east (Trench 4) and 42.81m AOD to the southeast (Trench 12).</p> <p>A small, residual assemblage of struck flint attests to at least limited activity of mesolithic date in the vicinity of the site. A handful of ditches may be considered to form part of a Mid-Late Iron Transitional or Late Iron Age field system based on correlations in alignment with dated features from surrounding excavation areas. Much of the activity on the site, however, is medieval in date, comprising a variety of pits, postholes and ditches that probably form part of the agricultural landscape centred on a small medieval farmstead recorded immediately to the north of the site. A handful of post-medieval ditches demonstrate the survival of an essentially agricultural landscape into the modern period.</p> <p>The archaeological horizon was sealed by a sequence of subsoil and topsoil that reflect the previous agrarian character of the site, though the presence of some areas of made ground attest to recent activity associated with the construction of the surrounding housing.</p>						



© Archaeology South-East		Brisley Farm School Site	Fig. 1
Project Ref:3767	Feb 2009	Site Location Plan	
Report Ref: 2009032	Drawn by: HLF		

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Project Ref: 3767

Feb 2009

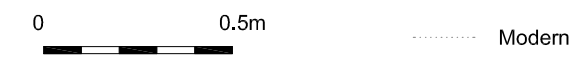
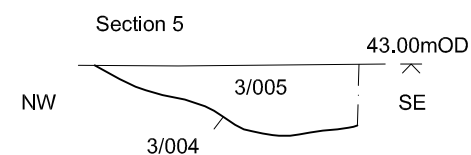
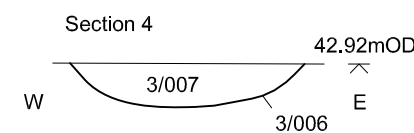
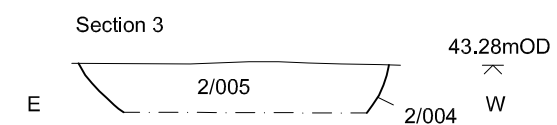
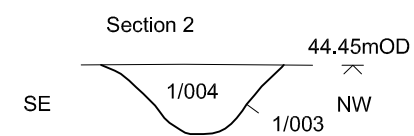
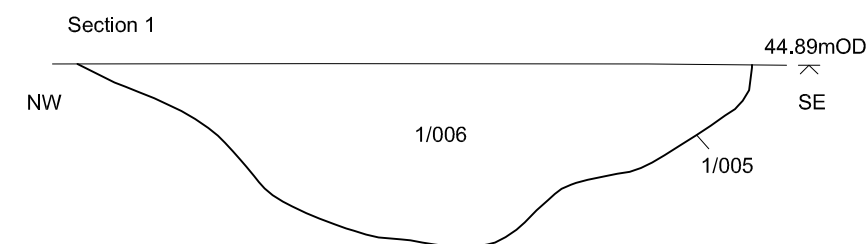
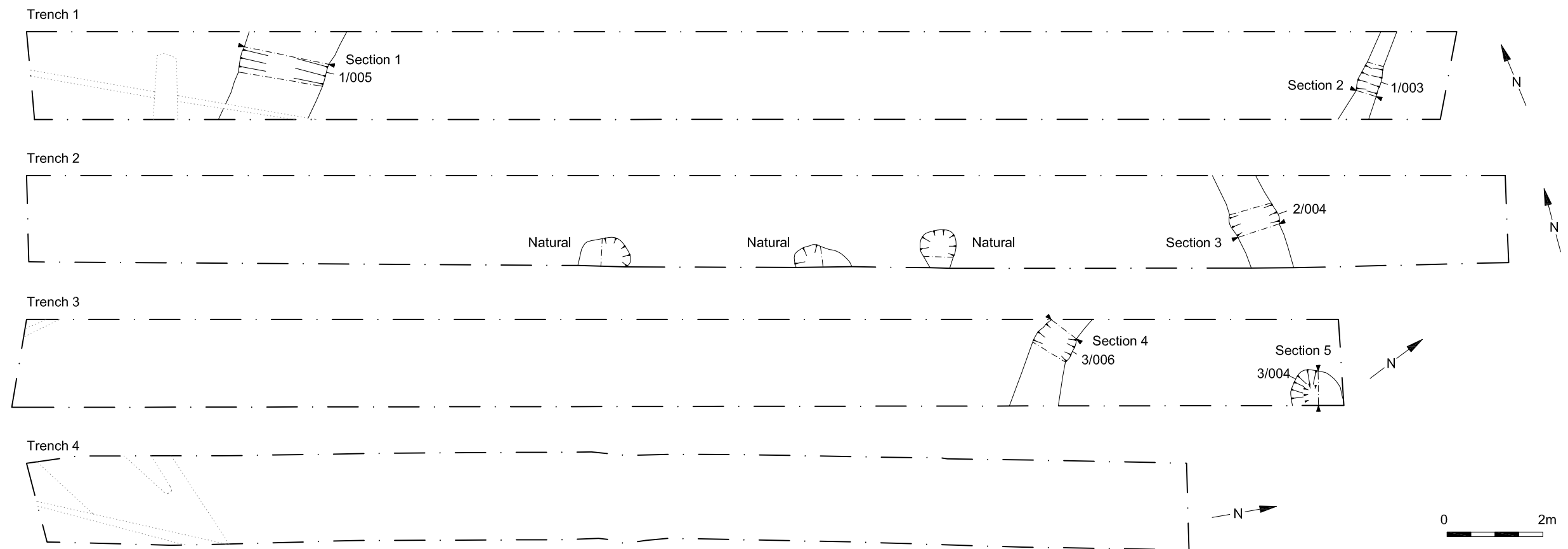
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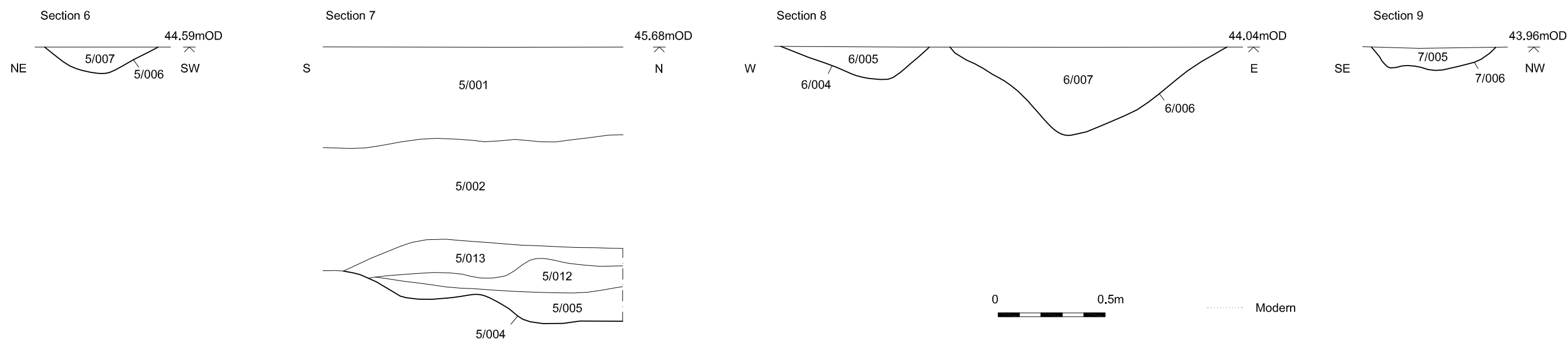
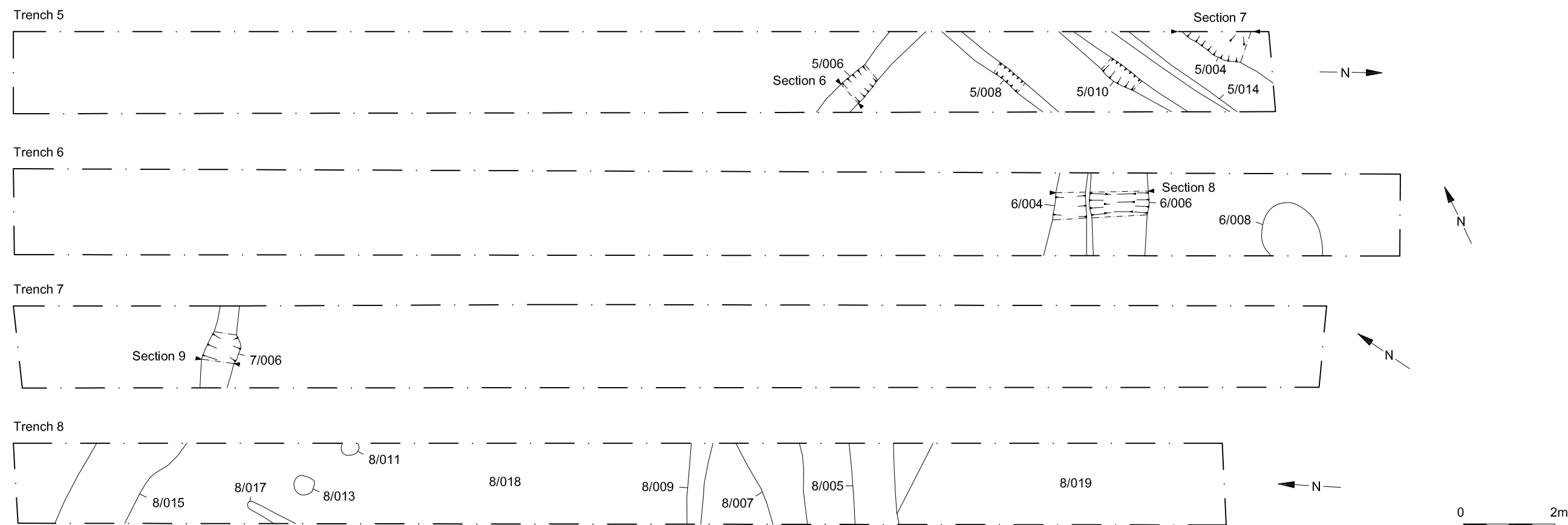
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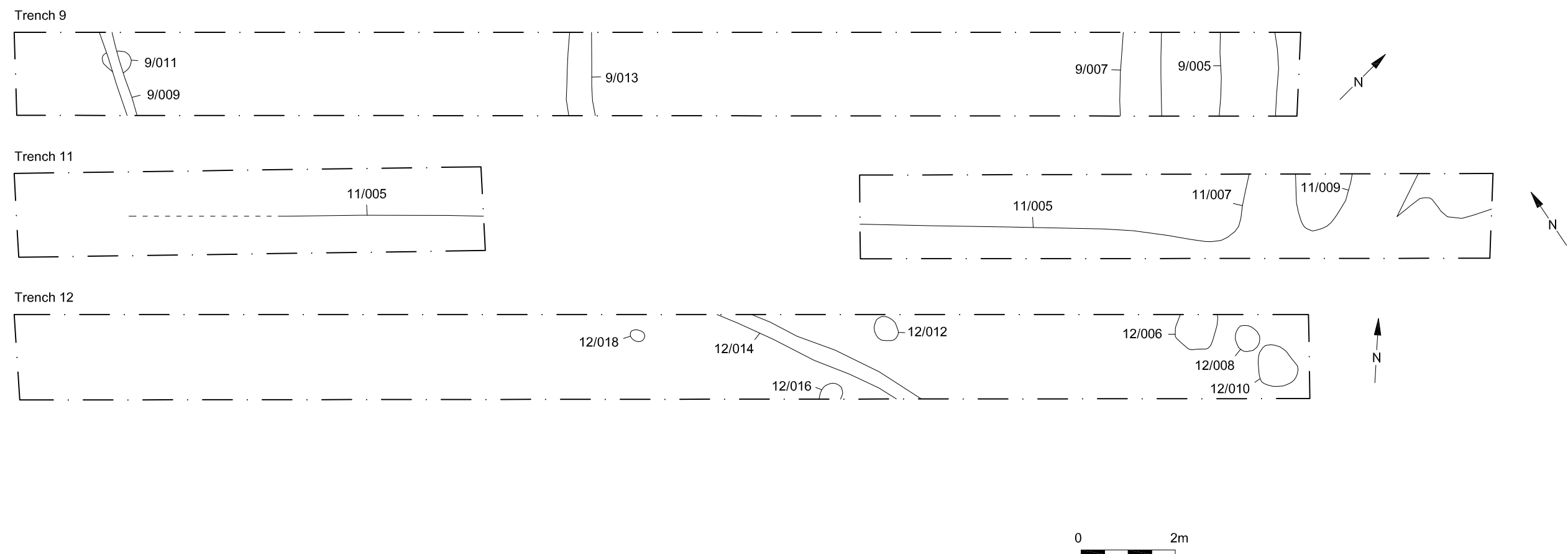
Brisley Farm School Site

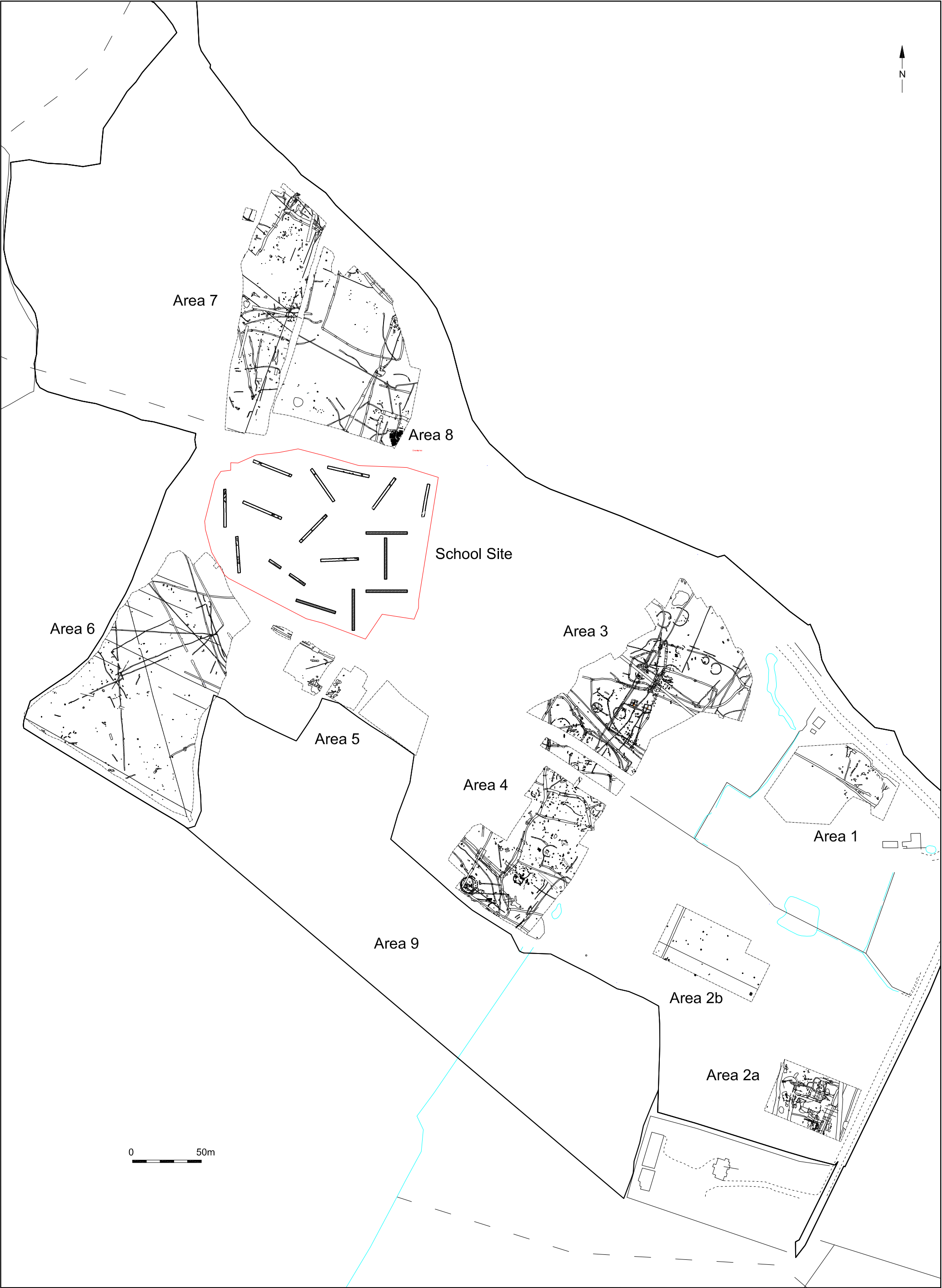
Trench location

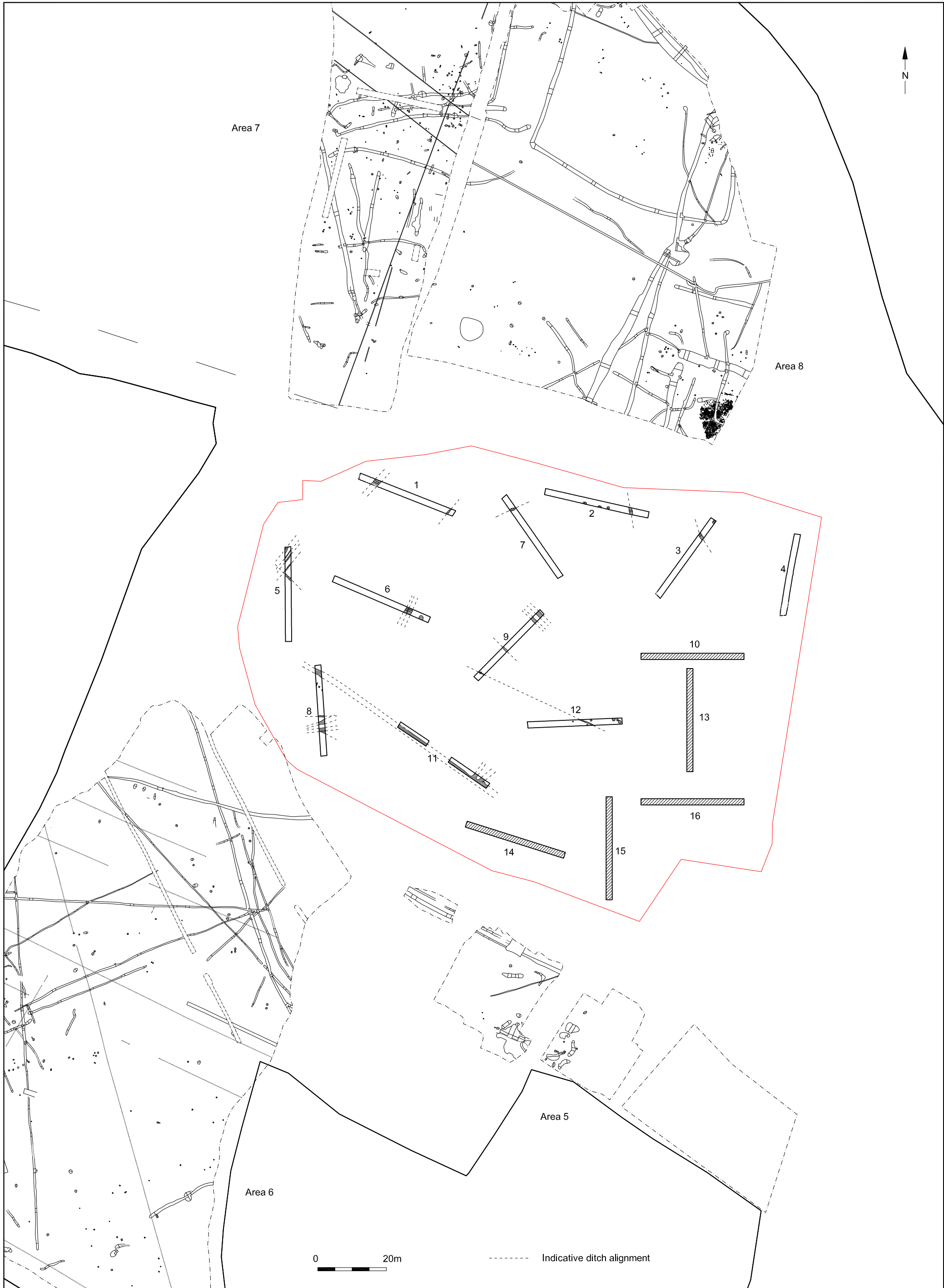
Fig. 2











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