

**LAND REAR OF 65 HIGH STREET,
WALKERN, HERTFORDSHIRE**

AN ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION

Authors: Zbigniew Pozorski MA (field work & report)	
NGR: TL 2894 2619	Report No. 3773
District: East Hertfordshire	Site Code: AS 1400
Approved: Claire Halpin MIFA	Project No. 3580
Signed:	Date: March 2011

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OASIS SUMMARY SHEET

Project details			
Project name		<i>Land rear of No 65 High Street, Walkern, Hertfordshire</i>	
<p><i>In March 2011 Archaeological Solutions (AS) carried an archaeological evaluation of land to the rear of No.65 High Street, Walkern, Hertfordshire (NGR TL 2894 2619). The evaluation was commissioned by Ms Ruth Smith and was undertaken in compliance with a planning condition attached to planning permission for the construction of a residential development comprising a single detached dwelling with associated access/parking.</i></p> <p><i>The site is located within an Area of Archaeological Significance No 29, as identified on the Local Plan. The latter incorporates the extent of the medieval settlement of Walkern. The site also lies within Walkern's Conservation Area, with the late Saxon parish church of St Mary located to the east. Therefore the site had a potential for medieval and post-medieval archaeological remains.</i></p> <p><i>In the event the evaluation revealed no archaeological features or finds.</i></p>			
Project dates (fieldwork)		29/03/2011	
Previous work (Y/N/?)		N	Future work (Y/N/?)
P. number		3850	Site code
			AS 1400
Type of project		An Archaeological Evaluation	
Site status		Within Area of Archaeological Significance No 29 and Conservation Area	
Current land use		Rear garden	
Planned development		Detached dwelling with associated access/parking	
Main features (+dates)		-	
Significant finds (+dates)		-	
Project location			
County/ District/ Parish		Hertfordshire	East Hertfordshire
			Walkern
HER/ SMR for area		Hertfordshire HER	
Post code (if known)		SG2 7NT	
Area of site		c. 700m ²	
NGR		TL 2894 2619	
Height AOD (min/max)		c. 87m	
Project creators			
Brief issued by		HCC HEU	
Project supervisor/s (PO)		Zbigniew Pozorski	
Funded by		Ms Ruth Smith	
Full title		Land rear of No 65 High Street, Walkern, Hertfordshire. An Archaeological Evaluation	
Authors		Pozorski, Z.	
Report no.		3773	
Date (of report)		March 2011	

LAND REAR OF 65 HIGH STREET, WALKERN, HERTFORDSHIRE

AN ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION

SUMMARY

In March 2011 Archaeological Solutions (AS) carried an archaeological evaluation of land to the rear of No 65 High Street, Walkern, Hertfordshire (NGR TL 2894 2619). The evaluation was commissioned by Ms Ruth Smith and was undertaken in compliance with a planning condition attached to planning permission for the construction of a residential development comprising a single detached dwelling with associated access/parking.

The site is located within an Area of Archaeological Significance No 29, as identified on the Local Plan. The latter incorporates the extent of the medieval settlement of Walkern. The site also lies within Walkern's Conservation Area, with the late Saxon parish church of St Mary located to the east. Therefore the site had a potential for medieval and post-medieval archaeological remains.

In the event the evaluation revealed no archaeological features or finds.

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 In March 2011 Archaeological Solutions (AS) carried an archaeological evaluation of land to the rear of No 65 High Street, Walkern, Hertfordshire (NGR TL 2894 2619; Figs. 1 & 2). The evaluation was commissioned by Ms Ruth Smith and was undertaken in compliance with a planning condition attached to planning permission for the construction of a residential development comprising a single detached dwelling with associated access/parking (East Hertfordshire District Council Planning Ref. P03/1295/08/FP).

1.2 The evaluation was undertaken in accordance with a brief issued by Hertfordshire County Council Historic Environment Unit (HCC HEU; dated 22/02/2010) and a written scheme of investigation (specification) prepared by AS (dated 14/02/2011) and approved by HCC HEU. The project conformed to the Institute for Archaeologists (IfA) *Code of Conduct and Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Field Evaluation* (revised 2008), as well as the document *Standards for Field Archaeology in the East of England* (Gurney 2003).

1.3 The evaluation aimed to determine the location, extent, date, character, condition, significance and quality of any surviving archaeological remains liable to be threatened by the proposed development. In particular, it aimed to establish the presence or absence of any remains relating to the medieval or

post-medieval settlement, or any evidence of earlier activity (prehistoric, Roman or late Saxon).

Planning policy context

1.4 PPS5 states that those parts of the historic environment that have significance because of their historic, archaeological, architectural or artistic interest are heritage assets. The Planning Policy Statement aims to deliver sustainable development by ensuring that policies and decisions that concern the historic environment recognise that heritage assets are a non-renewable resource, take account of the wider social, cultural, economic and environmental benefits of heritage conservation, and recognise that intelligently managed change may sometimes be necessary if heritage assets are to be maintained for the long term. It aims to conserve England's heritage assets in a manner appropriate to their significance. It states that opportunities to capture evidence from the historic environment and to contribute to our knowledge and understanding of our past, and to make this publicly available, should be taken, particularly where a heritage asset is to be lost.

2 DESCRIPTION OF THE SITE

2.1 The site to the rear of No. 65 High Street is located within the village of Walkern, Hertfordshire (Fig. 1). The village is situated approximately c. 2km west of Stevenage. The site lies to the rear of the eastern frontage of the High Street (B1037), which runs through the village. It lies within an Area of Archaeological Significance No 29, as identified on the EHDC Local Plan. The latter incorporates the extent of the medieval settlement of Walkern. The site also lies within Walkern's Conservation Area (CA), with the late Saxon parish church of St Mary located to the east.

2.2 The site comprises a roughly rectangular plot of land to the rear of the eastern frontage of the High Street (Fig. 2). The northern and southern boundaries of the site are formed by The Robin Hood Public House and No.69 High Street respectively. To the immediate east of the site lies a residential garden associated with Robin Cottage. The site covers an area of approximately 700m² and is currently occupied by yards and residential gardens associated with Nos.65 and 67 High Street. Access is achieved via Totts Lane to the rear.

3 TOPOGRAPHY, GEOLOGY AND SOILS

3.1 The site lies at approximately 87m AOD, on a moderate slope within the valley of the River Beane, which flows through the village of Walkern (Fig. 1). The Walkern area is located on a bed of plateau drift (variable gravelly clays), with localised deposits of gravel and alluvium occur close to the River Beane (British Geological Survey 1978). Soils of the area comprise those of the Hornbeam 2 association, which are described as deep fine loamy clayey soils with slowly permeable subsoils and slight seasonal waterlogging,

suitable for cereals and grassland rotation (Soil Survey of England and Wales 1983).

4 ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Prehistoric

4.1 There is little evidence for prehistoric settlement in the area surrounding Walkern and there is little to suggest that the valley of the River Beane was significantly occupied. Metal-detector finds comprise five Bronze Age tools (HER 11537), including an axe head, located c. 400m to the south-west of the site. The regional pattern of prehistoric settlement sees little exploitation of the heavier claylands until the Bronze Age (Hunter 1999). However, the virtual absence of material remains in the vicinity of the site has led to suggestions that agricultural activity did not begin in earnest until the mid 1st millennium BC (Going & Hunn 1999). Works at Yew Tree Public House, only 50m to the north of the site, revealed a large isolated pit containing sherds of mid to late 1st century date and building materials (Pozorski & Rozwadowski 2009).

Romano-British

4.2 There appears to have been fairly intensive exploitation of the area during the Romano-British period, with remains at Stanbro Common, Walkern (HER 9354), Robins Hall and Great Collens Wood confirming a pattern of farm-holdings along the Beane valley (Going & Hunn 1999). Excavations at Boxfield Farm further westwards revealed part of a Romano-British field system, a small 2nd century cremation, a coin hoard, a corn drier and a series of ponds (Going & Hunn 1999). There is further evidence of Roman activity at Walkern with a cinerary urn (HER 1529) and a large oval pit containing late Iron Age grog-tempered and early Roman sherds, fired clay, and animal bone found at The Yew Tree public house site 50m to the north (Williamson *et al* 2007; HER 16240). Given the virtual absence of prehistoric activity in the area contrasting with the significant Roman presence, many of the undated cropmarks of linear ditches and enclosures (HER 11223) may date to this period.

Saxon and medieval

4.3 The manor of Walkern or *Walchra* (HER 2656) is first mentioned in the Domesday Book of 1086 with a priest, suggesting that the church was in existence since Saxon times (Morris 1976). Walkern's wooden church was replaced by flint and clunch between 1042 and 1066 (HER 2909) and the extant church of St Mary's comprises a Grade I listed structure with 11th century nave, early 12th century south aisle and later additions. The place-name probably derives from the Old English *wealc-ærn*, or a house for washing cloth, suggesting the presence of an early fulling mill on the River Beane (Gover *et al* 1970, 141). No further medieval remains are recorded in proximity to the site other than a possible moat at Finches End (HER 6400).

Post-medieval and later

4.4 The post-medieval history of Walkern sees the gradual expansion and development of the village (Page 1912). Post-medieval and later buildings are recorded in proximity to the site (Appendix 1), as well as a number of former farm complexes and agricultural structures (HERs 4842, 13358 & 13363). No. 98 High Street (HER 10804), c. 100m south from the site, is a Grade II listed building dating from the early 1700s, and an archaeological evaluation at land to the rear located former boundaries dating to the post-medieval period. The High Street has also revealed evidence for a late 19th or early 20th century cess pit (HER 16241) and early 20th century allotments within medieval glebe land (HER 13719). Later industrial activity is attested by the erection of a maltings (HER 5401) and a brewery (HER 5450) forming part of the Victoria Works built along the High Street in c. 1790.

4.5 Extensive previous archaeological investigation has been undertaken by AS at The Yew Tree public house on the High Street and only 50m to the north of the site. An evaluation revealed a uniform deposit model across the site, comprising a dark greyish brown silty clay topsoil 0.22 to 0.36m in depth overlying a mid reddish brown clay natural drift geology (Williamson *et al* 2007). The evaluation revealed post-medieval and later north-east to south-west aligned drainage gullies cut into the natural drift geology, indicating that the site has probably always been used for agricultural purposes (*ibid.*). A subsequent watching brief revealed a very similar stratigraphy with the natural drift geology at c. 0.50m below existing ground level (Pozorski & Rozwadowski 2009).

The site

4.7 The historic building listing for Nos. 65 and 67 High Street reveal that the eastern street frontage adjacent to the site is occupied by a Grade II listed 17th century house, now divided into two properties (IoE No. 159683; Appendix 2). The parish of Walkern tithe map (HALS Ref. DSA4/109/2), which dates to 1839, clearly shows that the site consisted of a garden to the rear of a property fronting the High Street, although it was not listed in the accompanying tithe award (Ref. DSA4/109/1). The enclosure map of 1849 (Fig. 4; Ref. QS/E/68) confirms that the site remained as an undeveloped garden, although Ordnance Survey maps dating from 1899 and 1924 suggest that Nos. 65 High Street may have been in use as a 'Smithy'.

5 METHODOLOGY

5.1 Three trenches were excavated using a mechanical 360° mini-excavator fitted with a toothless ditching bucket (Fig. 2). The trench locations were approved by HCC HEU and were situated within the footprint of the proposed dwelling and within the location of the access/parking areas. Trench 1 was shortened slightly due to the presence of temporary cabins in the eastern end of the site. Trench 1 measured 6m x 1.80m, Trench 2 was 12m x 1.80m and Trench 3 measured 5m x 1.80m

5.2 Topsoil and undifferentiated overburden were mechanically excavated under close archaeological supervision. Exposed surfaces were cleaned by hand and examined for archaeological features. Deposits were recorded using *pro forma* recording sheets, drawn to scale, and photographed as appropriate. Excavated spoil was searched for finds and the trenches were scanned by a metal detector.

6 DESCRIPTION OF RESULTS

Trench 1 (Fig. 2, DP 3-4)

<i>Sample section 1A (DP 5): Central part, N facing</i> <i>0.00 = 86.85m AOD</i>		
0.00 – 0.58m	L1000	Brownish mid grey, friable, sandy silt with frequent modern rubbish.
0.58 – 0.90m	L1001	Subsoil. Light to mid brown, compact, clayey silt with occasional CBM fragments.
0.90m+	L1002	Natural yellowish light brown, compact, silty clay and loose gravel.

Description: No archaeological remains or finds were revealed.

Trench 2 (Fig. 2, DP 6-7)

<i>Sample section 2A (DP 8): Central part, N facing</i> <i>0.00 = 87.20m AOD</i>		
0.00 – 0.52m	L1003	Topsoil. Brownish mid grey, soft, sandy silt.
0.35 – 1.10m	L1001	Subsoil. As above, Tr. 1.
1.10m +	L1002	Natural clay with gravel. As above, Tr. 1.

Description: No archaeological remains or finds were revealed.

Trench 3 (Fig. 2, DP 9-10)

<i>Sample section 3A (DP 11): Central part, E facing</i> <i>0.00 = 87.00m AOD</i>		
0.00 – 0.48m	L1003	Topsoil. As above, Tr. 2.
0.48 – 1.05m	L1001	Subsoil. As above, Tr. 1.
1.05m +	L1002	Natural clay with gravel. As above, Tr. 1.

Description: No archaeological remains or finds were revealed.

7 CONFIDENCE RATING

7.1 It is not felt that any factors inhibited the recognition of archaeological features or finds.

8 DEPOSIT MODEL

8.1 The site was commonly overlain by Topsoil L1003, a brownish mid grey, soft, sandy silt (0.45 – 0.60m thick). It overlay Subsoil L1001, a light to mid brown, compact, clayey silt with occasional CBM fragments (0.30 – 0.75m thick). Within the eastern end of the site (Trench 1) the uppermost deposit was L1003, the topsoil mixed with modern rubbish and re-deposited to provide level ground. L1003 overlay Subsoil L1001.

8.2 The natural geology, L1002, was present at 0.90 – 1.15m below the existing ground level and comprised a yellowish light brown, compact, silty clay and loose gravel.

9 DISCUSSION

9.1 The site had a potential for archaeological remains, in particular for medieval and post-medieval archaeology relating to the settlement of Walkern. Prehistoric remains have also been found in the vicinity of the site, within the Yew Tree Public House site to the north.

9.2 In the event no archaeological features or finds were revealed. Little evidence of previous truncation appeared to have taken place, and no residual finds were recovered.

10 DEPOSITION OF THE ARCHIVE

10.1 Archive records, with an inventory, will be deposited with any donated finds from the site at Stevenage Museum. The archive will be quantified, ordered, indexed, cross-referenced and checked for internal consistency.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Archaeological Solutions would like to thank Ms Ruth Smith for funding the project and for her assistance.

AS would also like to acknowledge the input and advice of Ms Alison Tinniswood of Hertfordshire County Council Historic Environment Unit.

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Williamson, I., Greene, R., Schofield, T., Unger, S. & Woolhouse, T., 2007, *Land adjacent to the Yew Tree Public House, Walkern, Hertfordshire: an archaeological evaluation*. Archaeological Solutions Ltd unpublished report No. 2962

Soil Survey of England and Wales (SSEW), 1983, *Legend for the 1:250,000 Soil Map of England and Wales*. SSEW, Harpenden

APPENDIX 1 HISTORIC ENVIRONMENT RECORD DATA (HER)

The following sites are those that lie within a 1km radius of the assessment site. The table has been compiled from data held by the Hertfordshire Historic Environment Record (HHER).

HER	NGR TL	Description
Prehistoric		
11537	2850 2620	Group of five fragmented Bronze Age tools, including an axe-head, found by detector in the fields bordering Walkern to the west
Romano-British		
1529	288 258	An almost complete Roman cinerary urn, and the neck and handle of a large glass decanter, found on the site of the School at Walkern in 1925
16240	28950 26278	A large oval pit found during monitoring of groundworks and containing late Iron Age grog-tempered and early Roman sherds, fired clay, and animal bone
Anglo-Saxon (AD 410 – 1066)		
2909	2928 2657	St Mary's comprises a Grade I listed Anglo-Saxon church with 11 th century nave, early 12 th century south aisle and later additions
Medieval		
2656	291 265	Domesday Book has an entry for the manorial estate of 'Walchra' and the village of Walkern is thought to date to the medieval period
6400	2878 2620	Supposed moat at Finches End
Post-medieval		
4842	2895 2650	Grade II* listed dovehouse at Manor Farm dates to c. 1700
5401	2874 2579	Former malting on the High Street form part of the Victoria or Walkern brewery
5450	2874 2575	The Victoria Works comprise a former brewery of yellow brick with red brick edged buttresses and window heads
10804	2885 2622	98 High Street is a Grade II listed building dating from the early 1700s from behind which an evaluation uncovered post-medieval boundaries and an unusual foundation deposit
11163	2920 2651	Bridgefoot Farm is a 15th century open hall house, with post-medieval farm buildings
11164	28920 26550	Manor Farm is a most-medieval farmstead with good brick farmhouse built c. 1700 but with earlier origins
11609	2860 2600	Evaluation north and south of Moors Ley found no archaeological features, but a post-hole, small pit, and a shallow elliptical feature, all undated, were excavated in the area south of the road
13358	29077 26662	Site of College Farm, which was a post-medieval farmstead burnt down in early 20 th century, with surviving 18 th century granary
13359	29118 26301	The pound is shown as a square walled enclosure, in the centre of a green which is now the wide junction of Winters Lane with Totts Lane
13360	28817 26137	Site of 19 th century chapel, and surviving graveyard along

		Froghall Lane
13361	29042 26576	Independent Chapel on the High Street dates to 1811 and is Grade II listed
13362	28960 26230	A 'Methodist Chapel (Wesleyan)' is marked behind the High Street, facing what is now Totts Lane
13363	28850 25952	Site of post-medieval Finches Farm, but only the house survives
13364	28687 25875	Rooks Nest is a 17 th century farmhouse replacing an earlier house
13365	29290 26505	Cambridge Cottages are shown running down the east side of the lane now called Bockings, from Church End
13719	28955 26280	Ancient glebe land along the High Street divided into allotments in early 20 th century
15837	28725 25843	Rooks Nest Farm was largely replaced in the 19 th and later 20 th centuries, and demolished in 2006
16241	28920 26315	Late 19 th or early 20 th century cess pit on the High Street frontage
Undated		
461	2892 2642	A puddingstone quern found in a rockery outside the White Lion in 1955
11223	2853 2612	Cropmark of a curvilinear enclosure or macula to the south of Froghall Lane

APPENDIX 2 CONTENTS OF THE ARCHIVE

Records	Number
Brief	Y
Specification	Y
Registers	4 (Context, Drawing, Photo, Digital Photo)
Context Sheets	4
Site drawings A1	0
Site drawings A3	0
Site drawings A4	1
Site photographs b/w	6
Site photographs colour slides	6
Digital Photographs	13

APPENDIX 3 HER SUMMARY SHEET

Site name and address:	Land rear of 65 High Street, Walkern, Hertfordshire
County: Hertfordshire	District: East Hertfordshire
Village/Town:	Parish: Walkern
Planning application reference:	East Hertfordshire District Council Planning Ref. P03/1295/08/FP
Client name/address/tel:	Ms R Smith
Nature of application:	Construction of a dwelling with associated access/parking
Present land use:	Garden
Size of application area: c.200m ²	Size of area investigated 700m ²
NGR (8 figures):	TL 2894 2619
Site Code:	AS 1400
Site director/Organization:	Archaeological Solutions Ltd
Type of work:	Trial trench evaluation
Date of work:	29/03/2011
Location of finds/Curating museum:	Stevenage
Related SMR Nos:	Periods represented: None
Relevant previous summaries/reports: -	-
Summary of fieldwork results:	<p>In March 2011 Archaeological Solutions (AS) carried an archaeological evaluation of land to the rear of No. 65 High Street, Walkern, Hertfordshire (NGR TL 2894 2619). The evaluation was commissioned by Ms Ruth Smith and was undertaken in compliance with a planning condition attached to planning permission for the construction of a residential development comprising a single detached dwelling with associated access/parking.</p> <p>The site is located within an Area of Archaeological Significance No 29, as designated on the Local Plan, which incorporates the extent of the medieval settlement of Walkern. The site also lies within Walkern's Conservation Area, with the late Saxon parish church of St Mary located to the east. Therefore the site had a potential for medieval and post-medieval archaeological remains.</p> <p>In the event the evaluation revealed no archaeological features or finds.</p>
Author of summary: Z Pozorski	Date of Summary: March 2011

PHOTOGRAPHIC INDEX



DP 1. Land rear of 65 High Street, Walkern.
View W.



DP 2. The site. View E.



DP 3. Trench 1. View ENE.



DP 4. Trench 1. View E.



DP 5. Trench 1, central part. Sample
section. View S.



DP 6. Trench 2. View WNW.



DP 7. Trench 2. View W.



DP 8. Trench 2, central part. Sample section. View S.



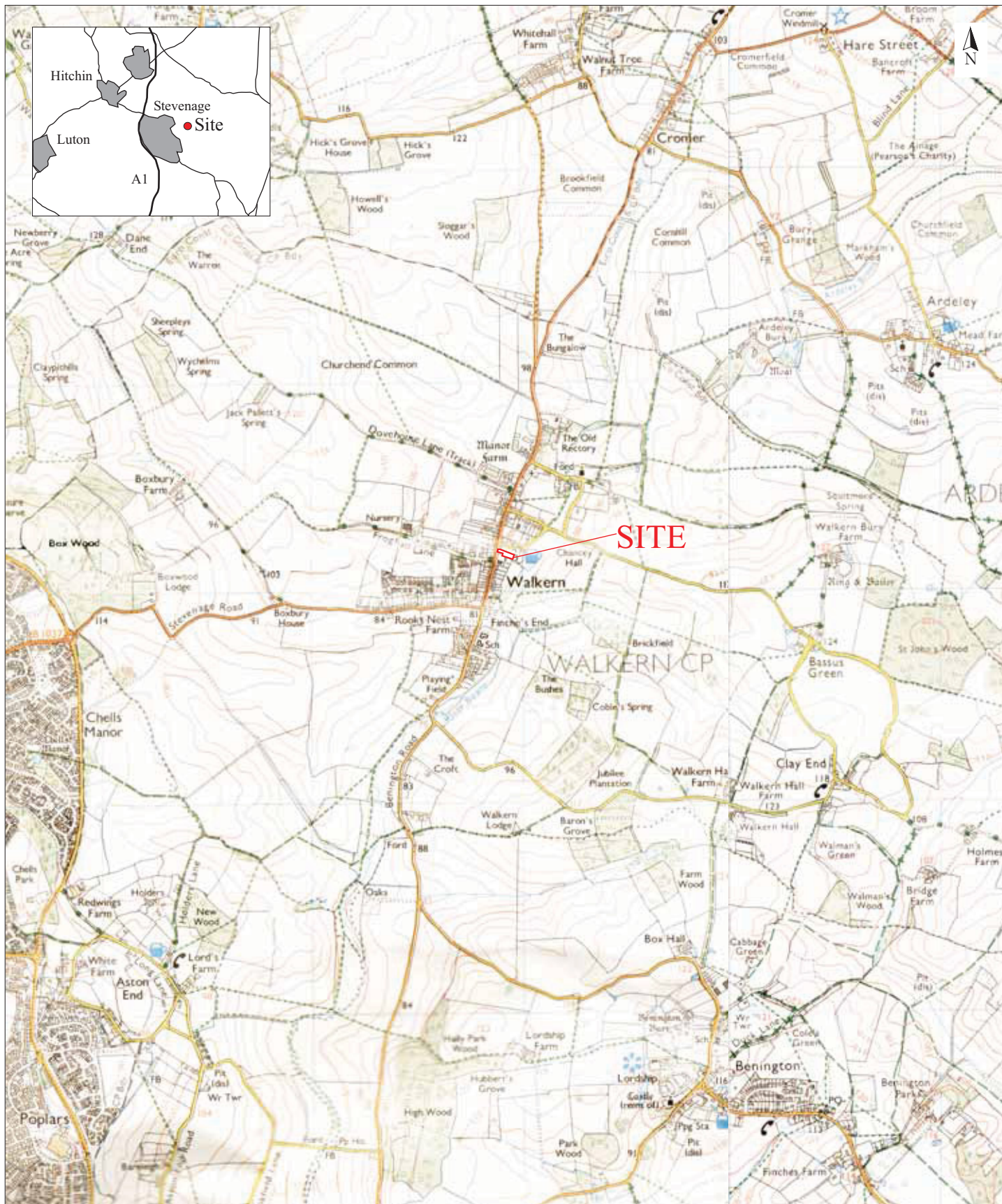
DP 9. Trench 3. View SW.



DP 10. Trench 3. View S.

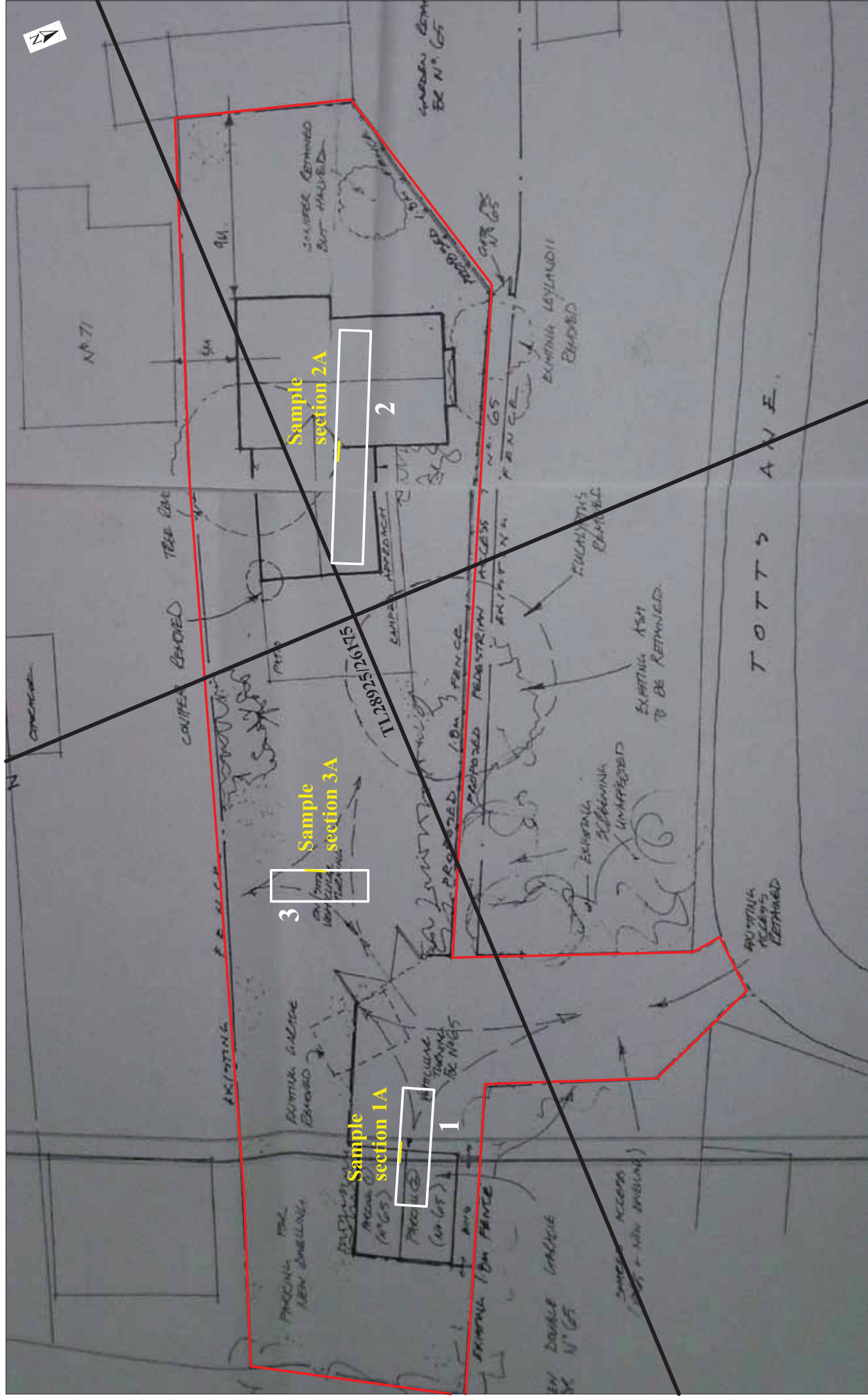


DP 11. Trench 3, central part. Sample section. View W.



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Fig. 1 Site location
 Scale 1 : 25,000

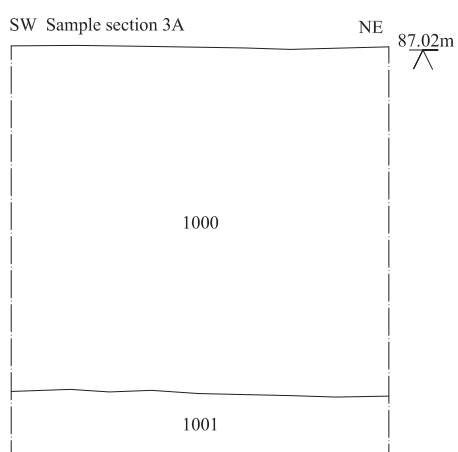
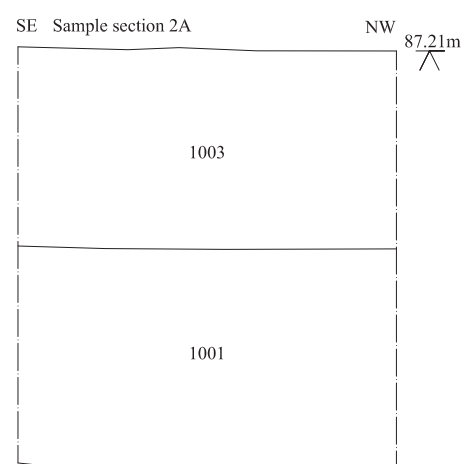
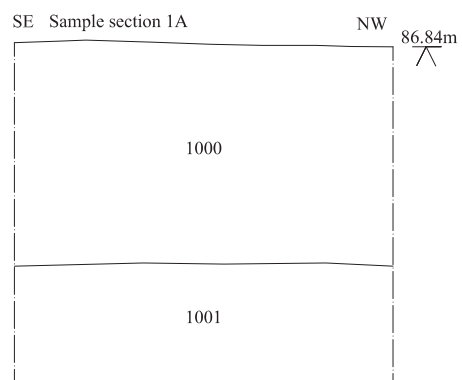


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Fig. 2 Sample section location plan

Scale 1:250 at A4





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Fig. 3 Sample sections

Scale 1:20 at A4