

ARCHAEOLOGICAL SOLUTIONS LTD

FRIEND'S SCHOOL, SAFFRON WALDEN, ESSEX

AN ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION (Phase 1)

Authors: Tim Schofield (fieldwork and report)	
NGR: TL 5400 37600	Report No: 3832
District: Uttlesford	Site Code: SW58
Approved: Claire Halpin	Project No: 2732
Signed:	Date: June 2011



**INVESTORS
IN PEOPLE** | Bronze

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Project details			
Project name	<i>Friends School, Saffron Walden, Essex. An archaeological evaluation (Phase 1)</i>		
Project description (250 words)			
<p><i>In June 2011 Archaeological Solutions (AS) conducted an archaeological trial trench evaluation on the west side of the Friends School grounds, Mount Pleasant Road, Saffron Walden, Essex (central NGR TL 5390 3765).</i></p> <p><i>The site lies within an area of archaeological potential. An archaeological evaluation/excavation in 1994 on the southern boundary of the proposed development revealed Late Bronze Age/early Iron Age occupation evidence including pits and Middle Bronze Age flints from topsoil (HER 14594; Ecclestone 1994). Flint flakes of Neolithic date had also been previously found in the area (HER 507). Later activity on the western side of the proposed development area is evidenced by significant quantities of Belgic pottery found in the vicinity of the water tower in 1934 (HER 504). Romano-British pottery has also been found in the area (HER 505). This all tends to be indicative of the presence of later Iron Age/Romano-British settlement on the western side of the school site.</i></p> <p><i>An archaeological evaluation was undertaken on the then accessible parts of the proposed development site by AS in 2006 (Ilson 2006). Four trenches were excavated in the western part of the site near to the water tower. No archaeological remains were identified, and extensive plough scarring was identified in one of the trenches.</i></p> <p><i>The recent evaluation (Trenches 3 - 5) revealed no archaeological features or finds.</i></p>			
Project dates (fieldwork)	<i>June 2011</i>		
Previous work (Y/N/?)	<i>Y</i>	Future work(Y/N/?)	<i>Y</i>
P. number	<i>2732</i>	Site code	<i>SW58</i>
Type of project	<i>An archaeological evaluation</i>		
Site status	<i>-</i>		
Current land use	<i>School</i>		
Planned development	<i>Residential / School / Infrastructure</i>		
Main features (+dates)	<i>-</i>		
Significant finds (+dates)	<i>-</i>		
Project location			
County/ District/ Parish	<i>Essex</i>	<i>Uttlesford</i>	<i>Saffron Walden</i>
HER/ SMR for area	<i>Essex HER</i>		
Post code (if known)			
Area of site	<i>12.3 hectares (whole school site)</i>		
NGR	<i>TL 5400 37600</i>		
Height AOD (max/ min)	<i>88.07 / 87.46 AOD</i>		
Project creators			
Brief issued by	<i>Essex County Council Historic Environment Management Team</i>		
Project supervisor/s (PO)	<i>Tim Schofield</i>		
Funded by	<i>Hill Partnerships Ltd</i>		
Full title	<i>Friend's School, Saffron Walden, Essex. An Archaeological Evaluation</i>		
Authors	<i>T Schofield</i>		
Report no.	<i>3832</i>		
Date (of report)	<i>June 2011</i>		

FRIENDS SCHOOL, SAFFRON WALDEN, ESSEX AN ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION (Phase 1)

SUMMARY

In June 2011 Archaeological Solutions (AS) conducted an archaeological trial trench evaluation on the west side of the Friends School grounds, Mount Pleasant Road, Saffron Walden, Essex (central NGR TL 5390 3765).

The site lies within an area of archaeological potential. An archaeological evaluation/excavation in 1994 on the southern boundary of the proposed development revealed Late Bronze Age/early Iron Age occupation evidence including pits and Middle Bronze Age flints from topsoil (HER 14594; Ecclestone 1994). Flint flakes of Neolithic date had also been previously found in the area (HER 507). Later activity on the western side of the proposed development area is evidenced by significant quantities of Belgic pottery found in the vicinity of the water tower in 1934 (HER 504). Romano-British pottery has also been found in the area (HER 505). This all tends to be indicative of the presence of later Iron Age/Romano-British settlement on the western side of the school site.

A disused water tower, dating from 1913, lies immediately outside the western edge of the development site, within the school grounds. It is listed Grade II and was built by J Custerson to the design of Borough Architect AH Forbes for the Saffron Walden Waterworks (HER 15596). A former covered reservoir is also present to the north east of the tower, predating the water tower and shown on OS maps from the later 19th century. It has been converted for use as an art space building (the Octopus Gallery). A former sanatorium in the school grounds, also built in 1913 and later converted for use as Gibson House for the use of the Junior School, is also present. The buildings were subject to an historic building impact assessment by AS in 2006 (Prosser et al 2006).

An archaeological evaluation was undertaken on the then accessible parts of the proposed development site by AS in 2006 (Ilson 2006). Four trenches were excavated in the western part of the site near to the water tower. No archaeological remains were identified, and extensive plough scarring was identified in one of the trenches.

The recent evaluation (Phase 1 Trenches 3 - 5) revealed no archaeological features or finds.

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 In June 2011, Archaeological Solutions Limited (AS) conducted an archaeological trial trench evaluation of Phase 1 of land at Friend's School, Mount Pleasant Road, Saffron Walden, Essex (central NGR TL 5390 3765) (Figs.1-2). The evaluation was carried out in compliance with a planning condition attached to planning approval for the construction of a new junior school with associated parking, 31No. affordable homes, 18No. 55+ units and 27No. dwellings with garaging, parking, landscaping and play areas (Uttlesford Planning Ref. UTT/0188/10).

1.2 The evaluation (trial trenching) was conducted in accordance with a brief issued by ECC HEM (dated 03/2011), and a written scheme of investigation prepared by AS (dated 03/2011), and approved by ECC HEM. The project followed the procedures outlined in the Institute of Field Archaeologists' *Code of Conduct and Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Evaluation* (revised 2008). It also adhered to the relevant sections of *Standards for Field Archaeology in the East of England* (Gurney 2003).

1.3 The objectives of the trial trench evaluation were to determine the location, extent, date, character, condition, significance and quality of any surviving archaeological remains liable to be threatened by any future development.

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 lies some distance to the south of the centre of Saffron Walden, and currently comprises the buildings and grounds of Friend's

School, which was relocated here in 1879. The school site as a whole encompasses some 12.3ha and lies at c. 90m AOD.

3 ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

3.1 The site lies within an area of archaeological potential. An archaeological evaluation/excavation in 1994 on the southern boundary of the proposed development revealed late Bronze Age/early Iron Age occupation evidence including pits and Middle Bronze Age flints from topsoil (HER 14594; Ecclestone 1994). Flint flakes of Neolithic date had also been previously found in the area (HER 507). Later activity on the western side of the proposed development area is evidenced by significant quantities of Belgic pottery found in the vicinity of the water tower in 1934 (HER 504). Romano-British pottery has also been found in the area (HER 505). This all tends to be indicative of the presence of later Iron Age/Romano-British settlement on the western side of the school site. It was deemed particularly important to identify any further evidence of Iron Age or Romano-British occupation, in addition to any evidence of earlier prehistoric activity.

3.2 A disused water tower, dating from 1913, lies immediately outside the western edge of the development site, within the school grounds. It is listed Grade II and was built by J Custerson to the design of Borough Architect AH Forbes for the Saffron Walden Waterworks (HER 15596). A former covered reservoir is also present to the north east of the tower, predating the water tower and shown on OS maps from the later 19th century. It has been converted for use as an art space building (the Octopus Gallery). A former sanatorium in the school grounds, also built in 1913 and later converted for use as Gibson House for the use of the Junior School, is also present. The buildings were subject to an historic building impact assessment by AS in 2006 (Prosser *et al* 2006).

3.3 An archaeological evaluation was undertaken on the then accessible parts of the proposed development site by AS in 2006 (Ilson 2006). Four trenches were excavated in the western part of the site near to the water tower. No archaeological remains were identified, and extensive plough scarring was identified in one of the trenches.

4 METHODOLOGY

4.1 A series of trial trenches are to be excavated within the areas proposed for current development. The trenches are to be excavated in two phases, as areas become accessible. For Phase 1, three trenches were excavated (Trenches 3 – 5; Fig. 2). These were excavated using a mechanical excavator fitted with a toothless ditching bucket. Two further trenches proposed for Phase 1 could not be excavated at the current time, as they occupy a running track this is

currently in use. They will be excavated as part of the Phase 2 evaluation.

4.2 Undifferentiated overburden was mechanically excavated using a 180° wheeled mechanical excavator fitted with a toothless ditching bucket, under close archaeological supervision. Thereafter all further investigation was undertaken by hand. Exposed surfaces and sections were cleaned as appropriate and examined for archaeological features and finds. Deposits were recorded using *pro-forma* recording sheets, drawn to scale and photographed. Excavated spoil was checked for finds and the trenches were scanned by metal detector.

5 DESCRIPTION OF RESULTS

Individual trench descriptions are presented below:

Trench 3 Figs.2-3

<i>Sample Section</i> <i>East end, south facing</i> <i>0.00m = 90.54m AOD</i>		
0.00 - 0.25m	L1000	Playing Field. Mid greyish brown, compact, sandy silt with frequent small flint and occasional chalk fragments
0.25 – 0.60m	L1001	Buried Topsoil. Mid orange brown, compact, sandy silt with frequent CBM
0.60 – 0.65m	L1002	Subsoil. Mid yellowish brown, firm, sandy silt with frequent chalk flecks and flint
0.65m+	L1003	Natural. Whitish grey, firm, chalk with frequent flint nodules.

<i>Sample Section</i> <i>West end, south facing</i> <i>0.00m = 90.21m AOD</i>		
0.00 - 0.45m	L1000	Playing Field. As above.
0.45 – 0.62m	L1001	Buried Topsoil. As above.
0.62 – 0.82m	L1002	Subsoil. As above.
0.82m+	L1003	Natural. As above.

Description: No archaeological features or finds were present.

Trench 4 Figs.2-3

<i>Sample Section</i> <i>North end, west facing</i> <i>0.00m = 90.05m AOD</i>		
0.00 - 0.23m	L1000	Playing Field. As above, Tr.3.
0.23 – 0.63m	L1001	Buried Topsoil. As above, Tr.3.
0.63 – 0.74m	L1002	Subsoil. As above, Tr.3.
0.74m+	L1003	Natural. As above, Tr.3.

<i>Sample Section</i> <i>South end, south facing</i> <i>0.00m = 89.38m AOD</i>		
0.00 - 0.27m	L1000	Playing Field. As above, Tr.3.
0.27 – 0.56m	L1001	Buried Topsoil. As above, Tr.3.
0.56 – 0.66m	L1002	Subsoil. As above, Tr.3.
0.66m+	L1003	Natural. As above, Tr.3.

Description: No archaeological features or finds were present.

Trench 5 Figs.2-3

<i>Sample Section</i> <i>North end, west facing</i> <i>0.00m = 89.33m AOD</i>		
0.00 - 0.14m	L1000	Playing Field. As above, Tr.3.
0.14 – 0.24m	L1001	Buried Topsoil. As above, Tr.3.
0.24 – 0.34m	L1002	Subsoil. As above, Tr.3.
0.34m+	L1003	Natural. As above, Tr.3.

<i>Sample Section</i> <i>North end, west facing</i> <i>0.00m = 89.20m AOD</i>		
0.00 - 0.19m	L1000	Playing Field. As above, Tr.3.
0.19 – 0.62m	L1001	Buried Topsoil. As above, Tr.3.
0.62 – 0.67m	L1002	Subsoil. As above, Tr.3.
0.67m+	L1003	Natural. As above, Tr.3.

Description: No archaeological features or finds were present.

6 CONFIDENCE RATING

6.1 It is not felt that any factors inhibited the recognition of archaeological features and finds during the archaeological investigation.

7 DEPOSIT MODEL

7.1 The site was overlain by Topsoil L1000, a dark, brownish grey, friable, sandy silt with frequent flint gravel and occasional CBM (0.12-0.39m thick). L1000 overlay Subsoil L1001, a mid yellowish grey, friable, sandy silt with frequent flint gravel and occasional CBM (c.0.25m thick).

7.2 The natural chalk, L1002, was present at 0.36 – 0.68m below the existing ground level and comprised a whitish grey, firm, chalk with frequent flint nodules.

8 DISCUSSION

8.1 No evidence of Iron Age or Romano-British activity was found to support the previous finds made on the vicinity of the water tower. The trenches revealed no archaeological features.

9 DEPOSITION OF THE ARCHIVE

Archive records, with an inventory, will be deposited with the finds (Saffron Walden Museum). The archive will be quantified, ordered, indexed, cross-referenced and checked for internal consistency. In addition to the overall site summary, it will be necessary to produce a summary of the artefactual and ecofactual data.

10 ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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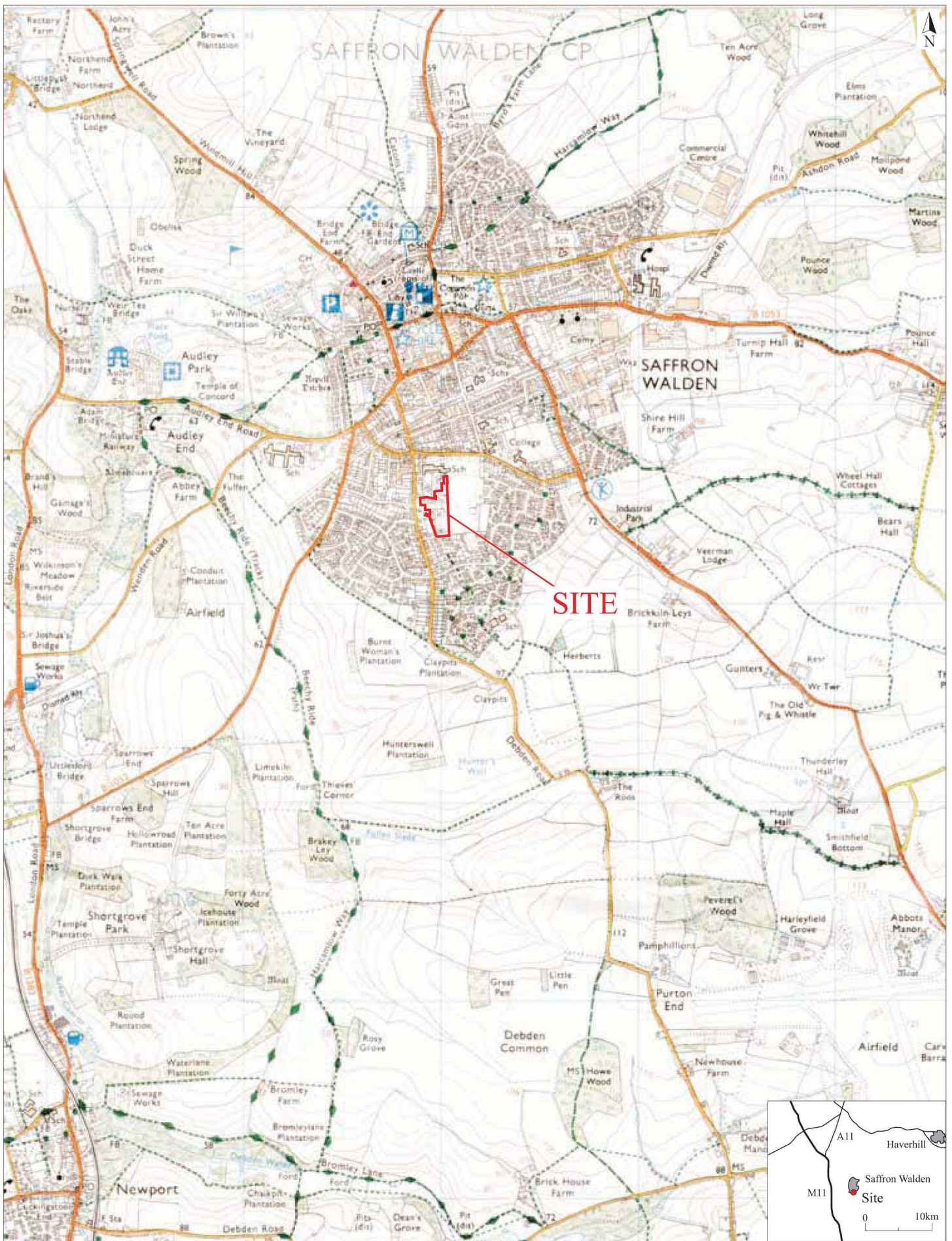
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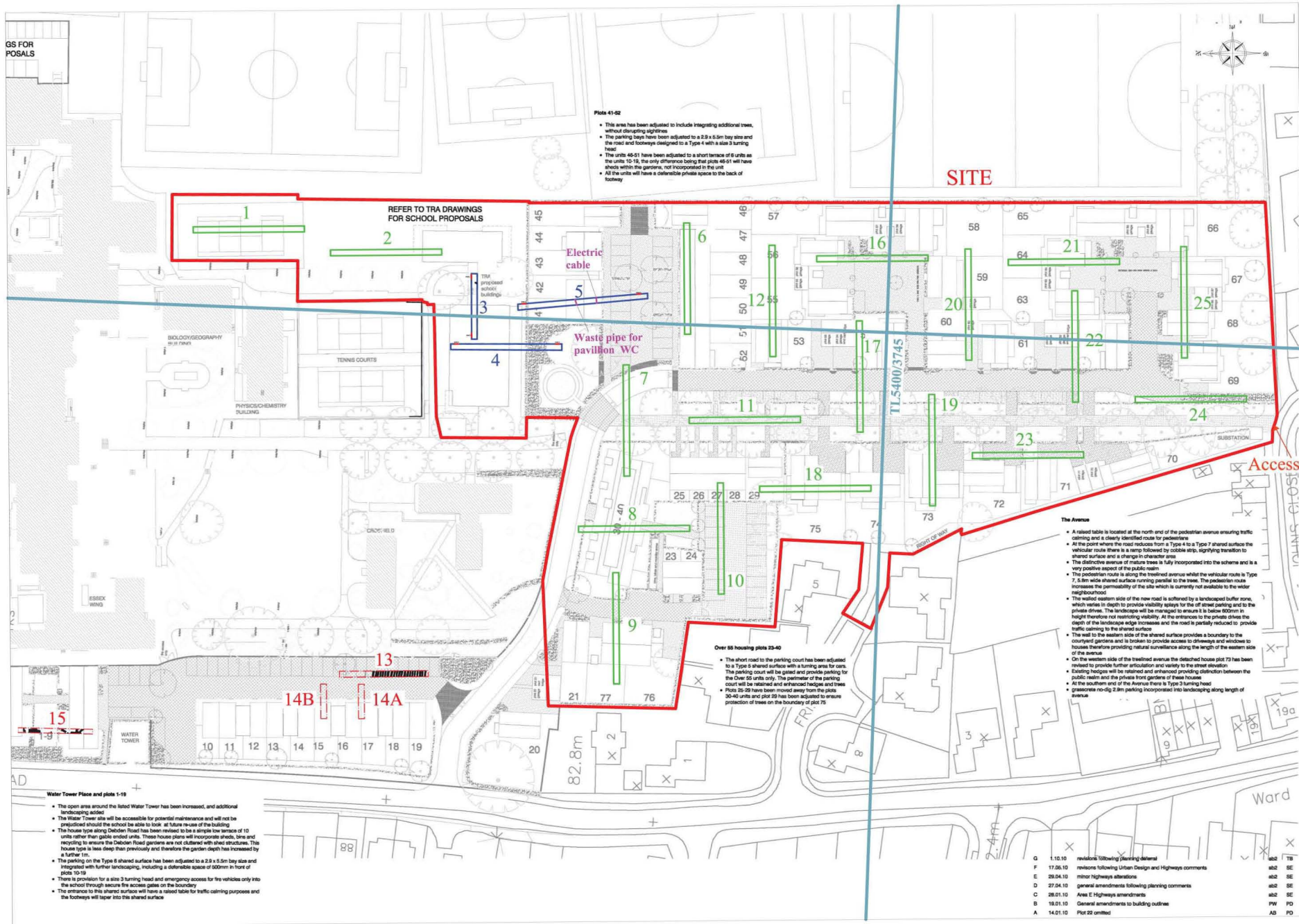
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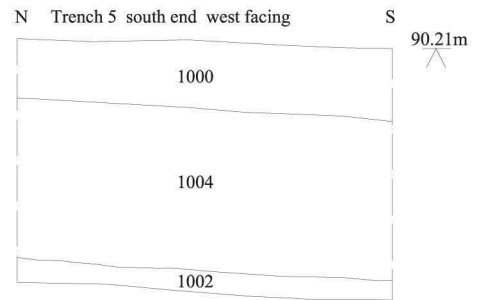
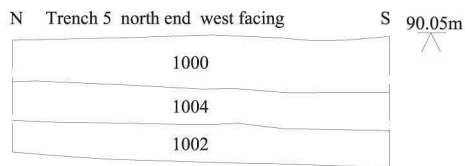
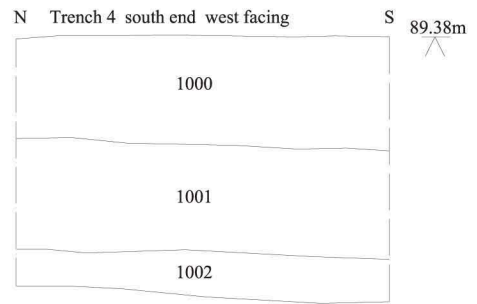
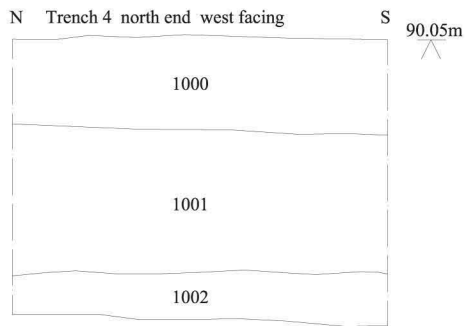
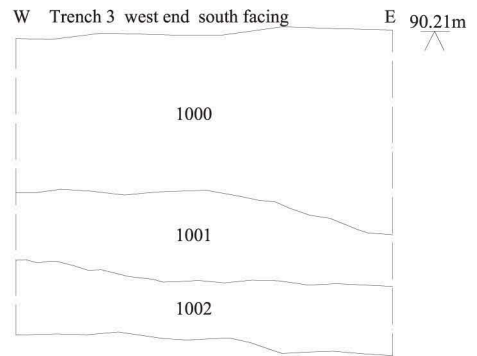
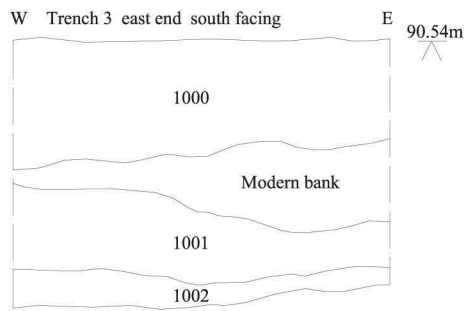
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Fig. 1 Site location plan
 Scale 1:25,000



- Phase 1 trenches
- Phase 2 trenches
- Previously excavated trenches

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Fig. 2 Trench location plan
 Scale 1:1000 at A3



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Fig. 3 Sample sections
 Scale 1:20 at A4