
ARCHAEOLOGICAL SOLUTIONS LTD

**SWAN'S NEST, LAND OFF BRANDON ROAD AND
WATTON ROAD, SWAFFHAM, NORFOLK**

**AN ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION
(TRIAL TRENCHING)**

Authors: Lisa Smith (Field work & report)	
NGR: TF 8238 0759	Report No.4142
Parish: Swaffham	Site Code: ENF 127896
Approved: Claire Halpin MIfA	Project No. 4492
Signed:	Date: September 2012

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Project details			
Project name	Swan's Nest, Land off Brandon Road and Watton Road, Swaffham, Norfolk		
<p>During September 2012 Archaeological Solutions (AS) carried out an archaeological evaluation (trial trenching) on land off Brandon Road and Watton Road, Swaffham, Norfolk (NGR TF 8238 0759). The evaluation was required by the local planning authority in advance of the submission/determination of a planning application for residential development on land off Brandon Road and Watton Road, Swaffham, (NGR TF 8238 0759) (Breckland District Council).</p> <p>A magnetometer survey (Strastscan 2011) identified a large enclosure (c.140m x 160m) in the eastern half of the site (immediately beyond the development area). A possible trackway was also identified. Similar enclosures identified in the region have been dated to the middle Bronze Age.</p> <p>Trial trenching along the eastern boundary of Field 1 (as titled in the geophysical survey report) aimed to demonstrate whether the archaeology in Field 2 extended westwards. The latter would seem not to be the case. Features were only present in Trench 1. Ditch F1010 and its re-cut, F1008, were post-medieval. Ditch F1004 was undated. It contained sparse struck flint. The silt-filled depression, F1006, is interpreted as a natural depression and sparse struck flint overlay the 'feature'.</p>			
Project dates (fieldwork)	September 2012		
Previous work (Y/N/?)	Y		TBC
P. number	P4492	Site Code	ENF 127896
Type of project	Trial Trenching		
Site status	None		
Current land use	Agricultural land		
Planned development	Residential Development		
Main features (+dates)	Undated ditch		
Significant finds (+dates)	Sparse struck flint		
Project location			
County/ District/ Parish	Norfolk	Breckland	Swaffham
HER/ SMR for area	Norfolk Historic Environment Record (NCC HER)		
Post code (if known)	-		
Area of site	c.19.6ha		
NGR	TF 8238 0759		
Height AOD (max/ min)	c.50/60m AOD		
Project creators			
Brief issued by	Norfolk Historic Environment Service		
Project supervisor/s (PO)	Lisa Smith		
Funded by	Abel Homes Ltd		
Full title	Swan's Nest, Land off Brandon Road and Watton Road, Swaffham, Norfolk. An Archaeological Evaluation (Trial Trenching)		
Authors	Lisa Smith		
Report no.	4142		
Date (of report)	September 2012		

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SWAN'S NEST, LAND OFF BRANDON ROAD AND WATTON ROAD, SWAFFHAM, NORFOLK

AN ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION (TRIAL TRENCHING)

SUMMARY

During September 2012 Archaeological Solutions (AS) carried out an archaeological evaluation (trial trenching) of land at Swan's Nest, off Brandon Road and Watton Road, Swaffham, Norfolk (NGR TF 8238 0759). The evaluation was required by the local planning authority in advance of the submission/determination of a planning application for residential development on land off Brandon Road and Watton Road, Swaffham, (NGR TF 8238 0759) (Breckland District Council).

The site comprises a c.19.6ha field on the edge of Swaffham. Finds of Roman and medieval date are known from the area. Surface finds from the vicinity have included Roman jewellery and Roman and medieval coins. Excavations in advance of development to the immediate south of the site revealed Roman enclosures/field boundary ditches, elements of which may continue into the proposed development site. Prehistoric features were also identified.

Field walking of the site recovered a total of 58 flakes (551g) of struck flint and 38 fragments (837g) of burnt flint (Quinn & Peachey 2012). The struck flint appears to range from later Mesolithic to Bronze Age in date, but is dominated by scrapers, piercers and debitage whose technology suggests an earlier Neolithic origin. The struck flint was present across the site with possible clusters in the centre of the site and north west corner. A single body sherd (11g) of Roman pottery was found, and three medieval sherds. The sherds may be the result of manuring though two medieval were contained in the same grid square. A silver coin, a half groat, likely dates from 1582-1600.

A magnetometer survey (Strastascan 2011) identified a large enclosure (c.140m x 160m) in the eastern half of the site (immediately beyond the development area). A possible trackway was also identified. Similar enclosures identified in the region have been dated to the middle Bronze Age.

Trial trenching along the eastern boundary of Field 1 (as titled in the geophysical survey report) aimed to demonstrate whether the archaeology in Field 2 extended westwards. The latter would seem not to be the case. Features were only present in Trench 1. Ditch F1010 and its re-cut, F1008, were post-medieval. Ditch F1004 was undated. It contained sparse struck flint. The silt-filled depression,

F1006, is interpreted as a natural depression and sparse struck flint overlay the 'feature'.

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 During September 2012 Archaeological Solutions (AS) carried out an archaeological evaluation (trial trenching) on land off Brandon Road and Watton Road, Swaffham, Norfolk (NGR TF 8238 0759; Figs. 1 - 2). The evaluation was required by the local planning authority in advance of the submission/determination of a planning application for residential development on land off Brandon Road and Watton Road, Swaffham, (NGR TF 8238 0759) (Breckland District Council).

1.2 A fieldwalking survey (Quinn & Peachey 2012) and a geophysical survey had previously been undertaken (Stratascan 2011).

1.3 The project adhered to a brief for an archaeological evaluation issued by Norfolk County Council Historic Environment Service (NCC HES, dated 24th July 2012), *Brief for Archaeological Evaluation By Trial Trenching of Land at Swan's Nest, Brandon Road, Swaffham, Norfolk* (ref CNF 41975), and a specification prepared by AS (dated 25/07/12), approved by NCC HES.

1.4 The project complied with the appropriate sections of Gurney, D, 2003, 'Standards for Field Archaeology in the East of England', *East Anglian Archaeology Occasional Paper 14*. The evaluation was also conducted according to the Institute for Archaeologists' *Code of Conduct and Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Field Evaluations* (revised 2008).

1.5 The brief required the recovery of information regarding the extent, date, phasing, character, function, status, state of preservation and significance of any surviving archaeological remains on the site. It required a programme of trial trenching, in order that the results of an archaeological evaluation could be submitted with the planning application so that an informed and reasonable planning decision can be taken when the results of the evaluation have been considered.

Planning policy context

1.6 The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF 2012) states that those parts of the historic environment that have significance because of their historic, archaeological, architectural or artistic interest are heritage assets. The NPPF 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. The NPPF requires applications to describe the significance of any heritage asset, including its setting that may be affected in proportion to the asset's importance and the potential impact of the proposal.

1.7 The NPPF aims to conserve England's heritage assets in a manner appropriate to their significance, with substantial harm to designated heritage assets (i.e. listed buildings, scheduled monuments) only permitted in exceptional circumstances when the public benefit of a proposal outweighs the conservation of the asset. The effect of proposals on non-designated heritage assets must be balanced against the scale of loss and significance of the asset, but non-designated heritage assets of demonstrably equivalent significance may be considered subject to the same policies as those that are designated. The NPPF states that opportunities to capture evidence from the historic environment, to record and advance the understanding of heritage assets and to make this publicly available is a requirement of development management. This opportunity should be taken in a manner proportionate to the significance of a heritage asset and to impact of the proposal, particularly where a heritage asset is to be lost.

2 DESCRIPTION OF THE SITE

2.1 The town of Swaffham is situated c.20km east of Kings Lynn and c.50km west of Norwich in the Breckland district of Norfolk. The evaluation site comprises a slightly irregular parcel of land including four agricultural fields on the south side of the town. Brandon Road (A1065) forms the western boundary of the site and Watton Road (B1077) the east. It is bounded to the north and west by residential suburbs of the town and factory buildings are situated adjacent to the south-west corner. The remaining surrounding land comprises agricultural fields.

3 TOPOGRAPHY, GEOLOGY & SOILS

3.1 The evaluation site is situated in the gently undulating Breckland landscape c.7km to the south of the River Nar. It is situated on a shallow slope rising from c.50m AOD on its eastern edge to c.60m AOD on its western edge.

3.2 The underlying geology of the area comprises Upper Cretaceous Chalk overlain by clay, silty clay and sandy silt soils.

4 ARCHAEOLOGICAL & HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Prehistoric

4.1 The area of Swaffham to the north of the evaluation site, now occupied by residential suburbs has produced a sparse distribution of Neolithic artefacts including a flint axehead and scrapers (HER 2652), flint tools (HER 25140) and a retouched flake (HER 36282).

4.2 Excavations on land adjacent to the south of the evaluation site recorded a single late Bronze Age/early Iron Age pit in the north-western corner of the investigated area, c.60m from the edge of the evaluation site (HER 41938; Albion Archaeology 2005). Low quantities of early to middle Iron Age pottery were also recovered from a single ditch, although this feature was subsequently demonstrated to be Roman (Albion Archaeology 2006).

Roman

4.3 The evaluation site is situated a short distance to the north-west of the site of a known Romano-British settlement (HER 17420 and 28566), which has to date only been characterised by surface finds including metal, coins and pottery. Fieldwalking and metal detecting on land to the north of the evaluation site have also recovered a scatter of Roman artefacts (HER 28213 and 29724).

4.4 Archaeological investigations on land adjacent to the south of the evaluation site (Albion Archaeology 2005 and 2006) recorded two Roman ditches whose alignments suggest they continue into the evaluation site, as well as a Roman quarry pit and drying oven (HER 41938). These features were situated in the north-eastern part of the investigated area, with one ditch aligned north-south and a second, branching from the first on a northwest-southeast alignment. Both appear to continue into the central-western area of the evaluation site. They have been interpreted as a rectangular field/enclosure system and associated activity on the periphery of a rural settlement of unknown extent to the east.

Medieval

4.5 The place-name Swaffham derived from the Old English for 'homestead of the Swabians', a tribal group that may have arrived with the Angles and Saxons. By the time of the Domesday Book three manors were associated with Swaffham, and by the mid 12th century a Benedictine monastery had been founded. To the north of the site numerous Saxon and medieval finds, including metalwork and pottery have been recovered by fieldwalking and metal detecting (HER 28213, 28217, 29724 and 2652). By the 14th and 15th centuries Swaffham flourished based largely on the sheep and wool industry, forming the basis for a stable post-medieval town.

Post-medieval

4.6 In the post-medieval period the evaluation site remained in the agricultural hinterland to the south of Swaffham, as illustrated by the 1st edition (1880s) Ordnance Survey map. The OS map depicts the only development in the vicinity of the site as the 'Swans Nest' house adjacent to the north-east of the site, where it remains extant in the present day. Also depicted further north, on the eastern side of Watton Road is the Swaffham Union Workhouse (HER 38034), which was built in 1836 and demolished in 1926.

5 PREVIOUS ARCHAEOLOGICAL INVESTIGATIONS

5.1 Field Walking and Metal Detector Survey

5.1.1 Field walking of the site recovered a total of 58 flakes (551g) of struck flint and 38 fragments (837g) of burnt flint (Quinn & Peachey 2012). The struck flint appears to range from later Mesolithic to Bronze Age in date, but is dominated by scrapers, piercers and debitage whose technology suggests an earlier Neolithic origin. The struck flint was present across the site with possible clusters in the centre of the site and north west corner. A single body sherd (11g) of Roman pottery was found, and three medieval sherds. The sherds may be the result of manuring though two medieval were contained in the same grid square. A silver coin, a half groat, likely dates from 1582-1600.

5.2 Geophysical Survey

5.1.2 The magnetometer survey (Strastascan 2011) identified a large enclosure (c.140m x 160m) in the eastern half of the site (immediately beyond the development area) (Figs. 3 - 4). A possible trackway was also identified. Similar enclosures identified in the region have been dated to the middle Bronze Age.

6 METHODOLOGY

6.1 The magnetometer survey identified a large enclosure in the eastern half of the site, and immediately outside the proposed development area (Figs.3 - 4). Trenching along the eastern boundary of Field 1 (as titled in the geophysical survey report) aimed to demonstrate whether the archaeology in Field 2 extended westwards.

6.2 As stipulated in the brief three 30m long trial trenches were excavated, located along the eastern boundary of Field 1 (as defined in the geophysical survey) (Figs. 2 - 4). One trench was placed 70m north of the southern boundary of Field 1, with the other two placed along the field boundary.

6.3 Undifferentiated overburden was removed under close archaeological supervision using a 180° back acting mechanical excavator fitted with a 1.60m wide toothless ditching bucket. Thereafter, all further investigation was undertaken by hand. Exposed surfaces were cleaned as appropriate and examined for archaeological features and finds. Deposits were recorded using *pro forma* recording sheets, drawn to scale and photographed.

7 RESULTS Figs.2 - 5

Individual trench descriptions are presented below:

Trench 1 (Figs. 2 & 5)

<i>Sample section 1a: N end, east facing.</i> 0.00 = 55.20m AOD		
0.00– 0.39m	L1000	Topsoil. Dark grey, firm, sandy silt with occasional flint gravel and CBM
0.39– 0.72m	L1001	Subsoil. Mid yellow/reddish brown, firm, sandy silt with moderate flint gravel and sparse CBM flecks
0.72m+	L1002	Natural deposits. Mid reddish brown / creamy grey, firm, highly mixed sandy clay with patches of chalk marl throughout.

<i>Sample section 1b: S end, east facing.</i> 0.00 = 55.10m AOD		
0.00– 0.29m	L1000	Topsoil. As above.
0.29– 0.51m	L1001	Subsoil. As above.
0.51m+	L1002	Natural deposits. As above.

Description: Trench 1 contained undated Ditch F1004, Post-medieval Ditch F1010 which was re-cut, F1008. A wide silt-filled depression, F1006, was also recorded.

Ditch F1004 was curvilinear in plan (1.60+ x 0.90 x 0.15m). It had shallow sides and a concave base. Its fill, L1005, was a light yellow brown, soft, silty clay. It contained a struck flint (12g).

Wide silt-filled Depression F1006 was elongated in plan (1.60+ x 1.65 x 0.12m). It had shallow sides and a flattish base. Its fill, L1007, was a mid yellow brown, soft, silty clay with occasional gravel. CBM and struck flint (2g) were found close to the interface with Subsoil L1001. This feature is interpreted as a natural depression.

Post-medieval boundary Ditch F1010 was linear in plan (1.60+ x 0.89 x 0.41m). It had irregular steep sides and a flattish base. Its fill, L1011, was a mid grey brown, soft, silty clay with occasional flint gravel and

CBM. It contained CBM (6g), a clay pipe stem fragment (1g) and oyster shell (15g). Ditch F1010 was re-cut, F1008.

Re-cut Ditch F1008 was linear in plan (1.60+ x 0.94 x 0.45m). It had irregular steep sides and a flattish base. Its fill, L1009, was a dark grey brown, soft, silty clay with occasional flint gravel. It contained 15th – 16th century pottery (9g), CBM (8g) and glass (11g).

Trench 2 (Figs. 2 - 4)

<i>Sample section 2a: N end, east facing.</i>		
<i>0.00 = 54.60m AOD</i>		
0.00– 0.40m	L1000	Topsoil. As above Tr.1.
0.40– 0.75m	L1001	Subsoil. As above Tr.1.
0.75m+	L1002	Natural deposits. As above Tr.1.

<i>Sample section 2b: S end, east facing.</i>		
<i>0.00 = 54.45m AOD</i>		
0.00– 0.44m	L1000	Topsoil. As above Tr.1.
0.44– 0.72m	L1001	Subsoil. As above Tr.1.
0.72m+	L1003	Natural deposits. Mid brown, firm, sandy clay with frequent flint nodes.

Description: Trench 2 contained no archaeological features or finds

Trench 3 (Figs. 2 - 4)

<i>Sample section 3a: N end, east facing.</i>		
<i>0.00 = 54.30m AOD</i>		
0.00– 0.44m	L1000	Topsoil. As above Tr.1.
0.44– 0.72m	L1001	Subsoil. As above Tr.1.
0.72m+	L1003	Natural deposits. As above Tr.2.

<i>Sample section 3b: S end, east facing.</i>		
<i>0.00 = 54.10m AOD</i>		
0.00– 0.45m	L1000	Topsoil. As above Tr.1.
0.45– 0.73m	L1001	Subsoil. As above Tr.1.
0.73m+	L1003	Natural deposits. As above Tr.2.

Description: Trench 3 contained no archaeological features or finds.

8 CONFIDENCE RATING

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

9 DEPOSIT MODEL

9.1 The stratigraphy was uniform across the site with Topsoil L1000 overlying Subsoil L1001 which in turn overlay the natural deposits (L1002).

9.2 Topsoil L1000 was a dark grey, firm, sandy silty with occasional flint gravel and CBM (0.29 – 0.45m thick). Subsoil L1001 was a mid yellow/reddish brown, firm, sandy silt with moderate flint gravel and sparse CBM flecks. It varied in thickness between 0.22m (Tr.1b) and 0.35m (Tr.2a). The natural deposits were encountered at depths of between 0.51m (Tr.1) and 0.72m (Trs. 2 & 3).

10 DISCUSSION

10.1 The recorded features are tabulated:

Trench	Context	Description	Date
1	F1004	Ditch	Undated
	F1006	Natural Silt-filled Depression	-
	F1008	Re-cut of Ditch F1010	Post-medieval
	F1010	Ditch	Post-medieval

10.1 Features were only present in Trench 1. No archaeological features or finds were recorded in Trenches 2 and 3. Ditch F1010 and its re-cut, F1008, were post-medieval. Ditch F1004 was undated. It contained sparse struck flint. The silt-filled depression, F1006, is interpreted as a natural depression and sparse struck flint overlay the 'feature'.

10.2 The magnetometer survey (Strastascan 2011) identified a large enclosure (c.140m x 160m) in the eastern half of the site (immediately beyond the development area). A possible trackway was also identified. Similar enclosure identified in the region have been dated to the middle Bronze Age. Trenching along the eastern boundary of Field 1 (as titled in the geophysical survey report) aimed to demonstrate whether the archaeology in Field 2 extended westwards. The latter would seem not to be the case.

11 DEPOSITION OF ARCHIVE

11.1 The archive will be deposited with the Norfolk Museum Service.

12 ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Archaeological Solutions Ltd is grateful to Abel Homes Ltd for their co-operation and funding the evaluation (in particular Mr Paul Legrice for facilitating access and Mr Tony Abel).

AS is also pleased to acknowledge the input and advice of Dr Ken Hamilton of Norfolk Historic Environment Service.

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ENF127896 Swans Nest TT

Concordance of finds by feature

Feature	Context	Trench	Description	Spot Date	Pottery	CBM (g)	Other
1004	1005	1	Fill of ditch				S. Flint (1) 12g
1006	1007	1	Layer				S. Flint (1) 2g
1008	1009	1	Fill of re-cut	16 th / 18 th C	(2) 9g	8	Glass (3) 11g
1010	1011	1	Fill of ditch			6	Clay Pipe Stem (1) 1g Oyster Shell (1) 15g

SPECIALIST REPORTS

The Pottery

by Peter Thompson

Ditch F1008 (L1009) contained two pottery fragments weighing 10g. The first fragment weighing 6g is an abraded late medieval/transitional sherd in a sandy fabric, also containing sparse medium to coarse quartz, red iron mineral or clay pellets, and rare white calcareous inclusions. The sherd contains faded green glaze on both surfaces. The second fragment (4g) is hard fired with a similar feel to CBM and is oxidized orange throughout, and is probably post-medieval (c.16th-18th century). It contains sparse medium to coarse quartz and rare fine calcareous material and but few other visible inclusions and is hard fired.

The context also contained 8 fragments (7g) of post-medieval CBM in a coarse sandy fabric. A similar fragment weighing 5g came from Linear F1010 (L1011).

STRUCK FLINT

Trench 1 L1005

Broad thick flake. No retouch, and not patinated. Sharp not mint

Trench 1 L1007

Snapped flake with possible light retouch. Not patinated

PHOTOGRAPHIC INDEX



1
Trench 1 looking north



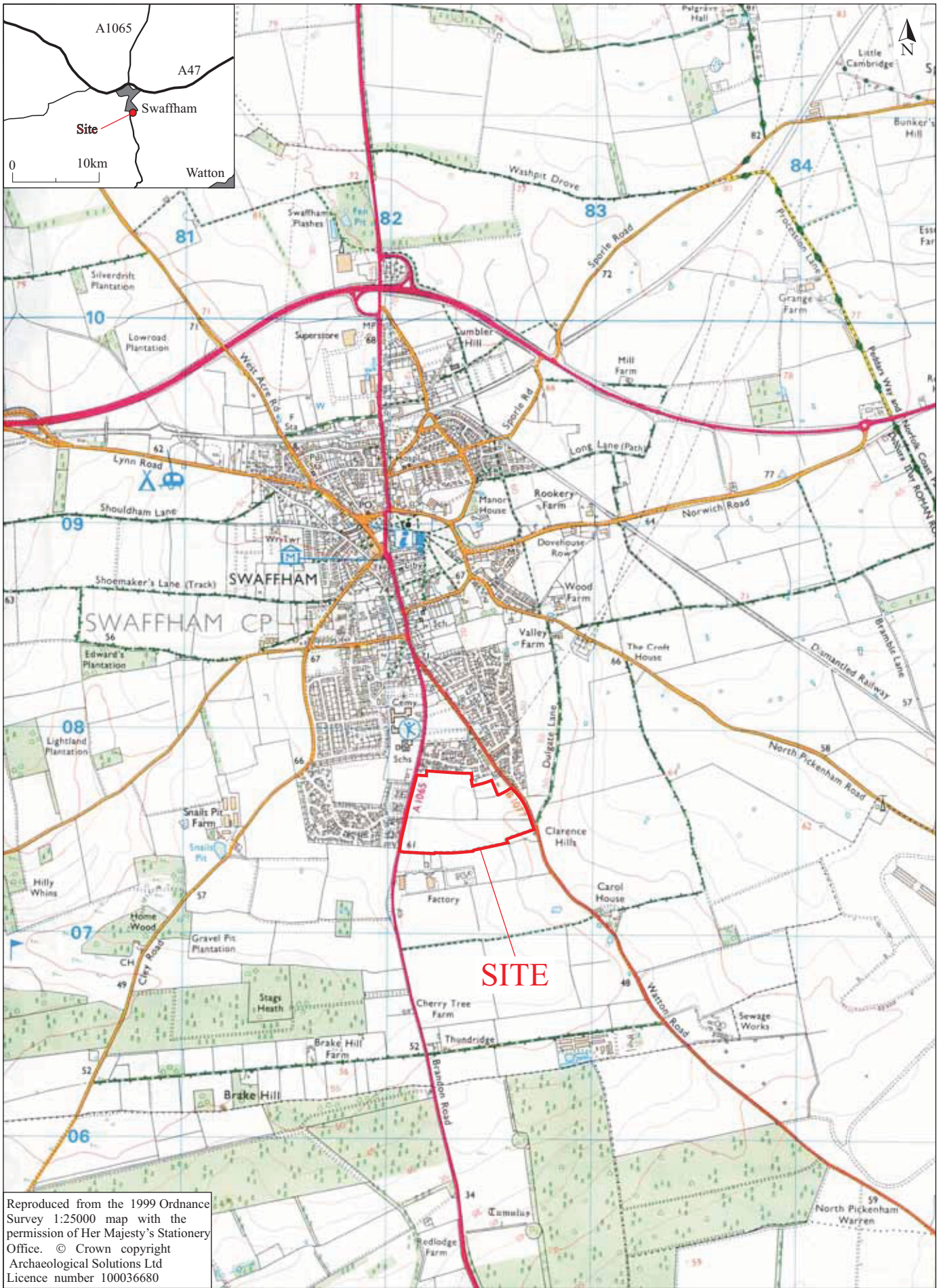
2
Feature 1004 looking south-east



3
Feature 1006 looking west



4
Features 1008 and 1010 looking east



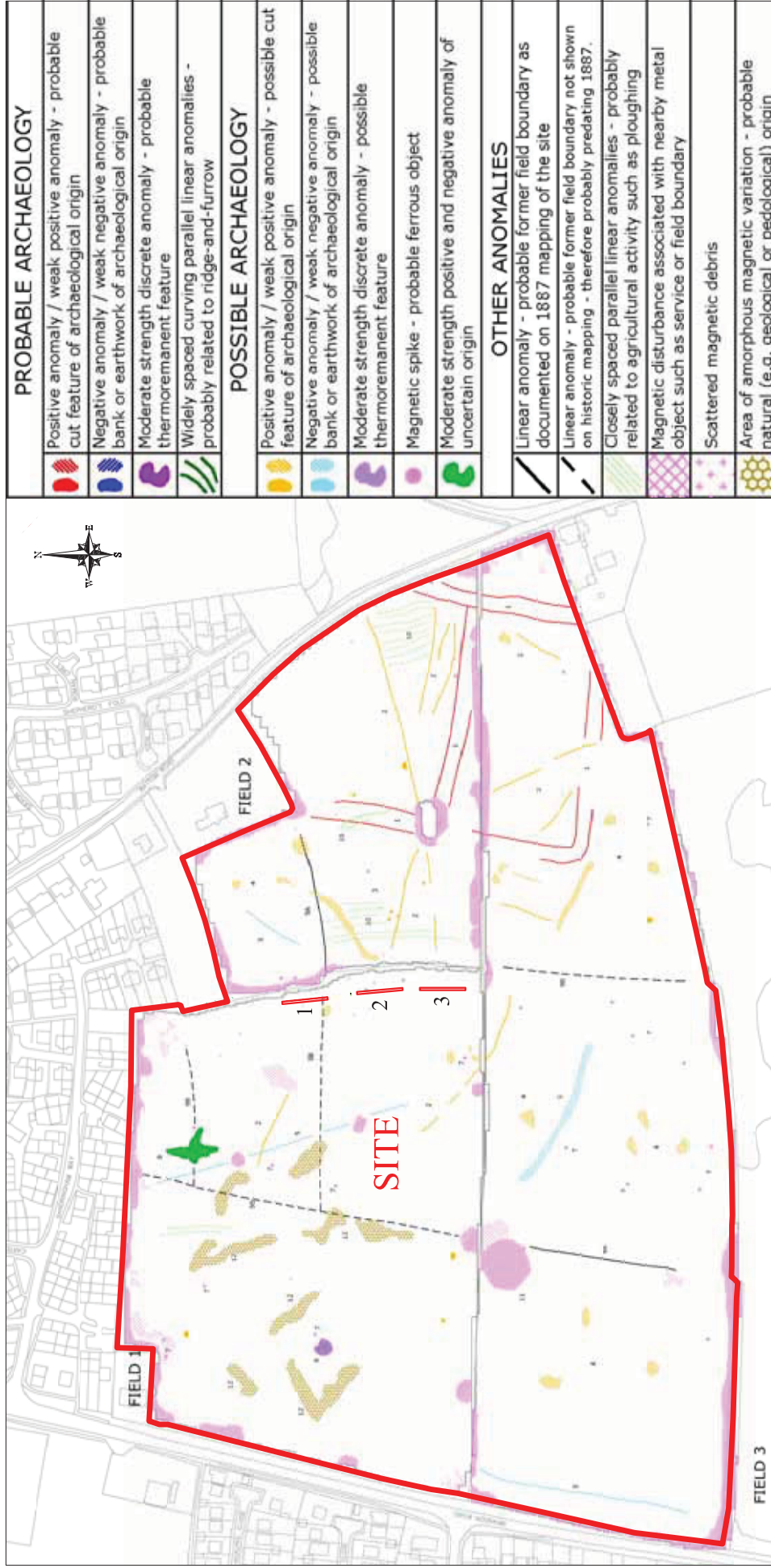
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Fig. 1 Site location plan
 Scale 1:25,000 at A4

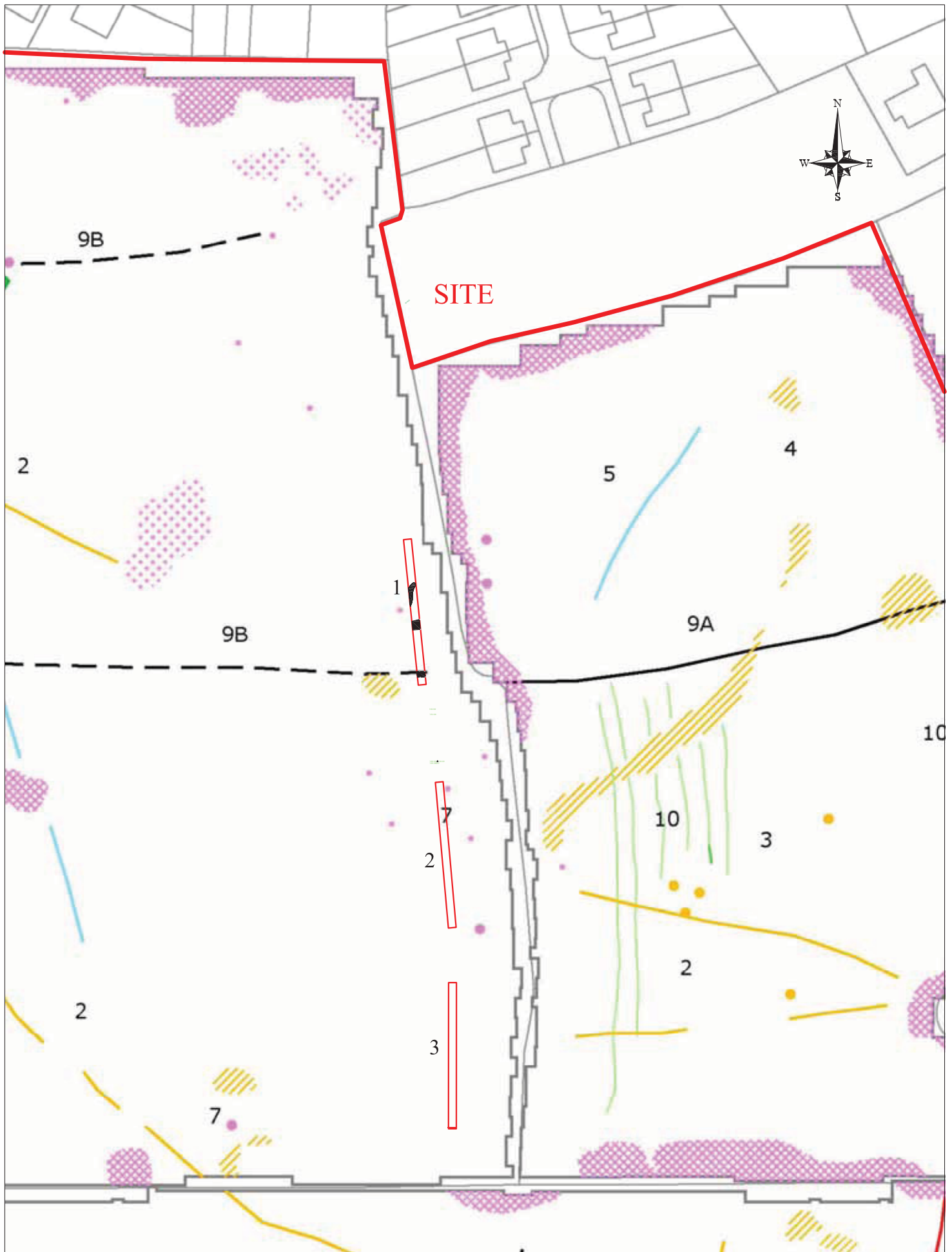


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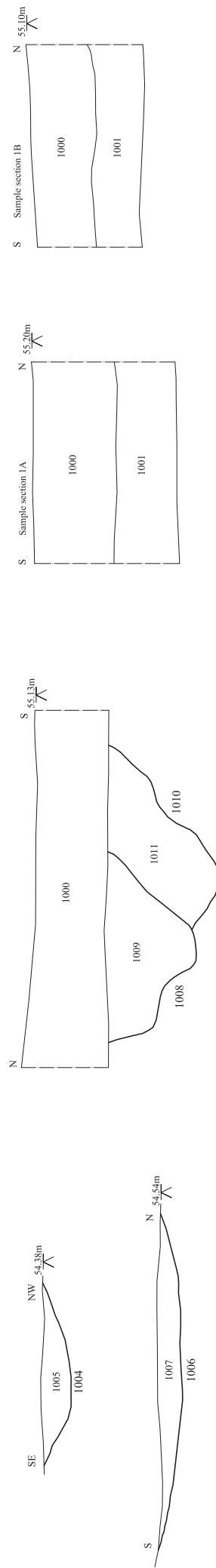
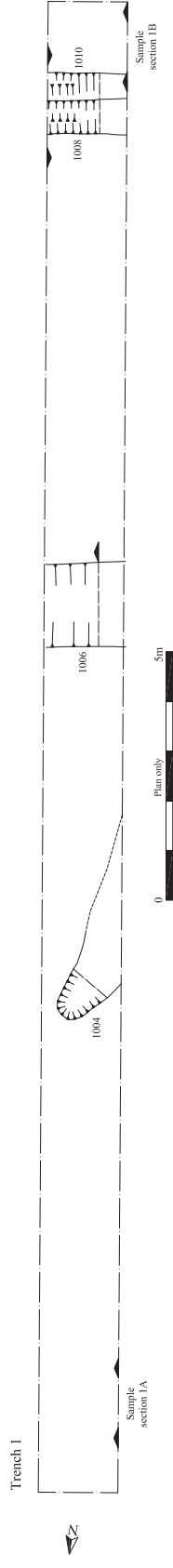
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Fig. 2 Detailed site location plan
 Scale 1:4000 at A4



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Fig. 3 Geophysics survey
 Scale 1:4000 at A4



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Fig. 4 Trench data on geophysics survey
 Scale 1:1000 at A4



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Fig. 5 Trench plan and sections
 Scale Plans 1:100, sections 1:20 at A3