ARCHAEOLOGICAL SOLUTIONS LTD

FORMER AMBERSTONE NURSERY, AMBERSTONE, HAILSHAM, EAST SUSSEX

AN ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION

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NGR: TQ 59	695 11016	Report No: 4581
District: Weal	den	Site Code: AS 1686
Approved: C	laire Halpin	Project No: 5688
Signed:		Date: 21 May 2014 Revised: 01/08/2014

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OASIS SUMMARY SHEET

Project details						
Project name	Former Sussex	Amberstone	Nursery,	Amberstone,	Hailsham,	East

Between the 9th and 13th of May 2014, Archaeological Solutions Ltd carried out an archaeological trial trench evaluation at the former Amberstone Nursery, Amberstone, Halisham, East Sussex (NGR TQ 59695 11016). The evaluation was commissioned by Heyford Developments Ltd and was undertaken to accompany a planning application for the proposed residential development.

In the event the evaluation revealed evidence of modern (20th century) activity, comprising five pits and a single ditch. Two abraded struck flints were found.

Project dates (fieldwork)	$9^{th} - 13^{th}$ of May	2014	
Previous work (Y/N/?)	N	Future work (Y/N/?)	N
P. number	5688	Site code	AS 1686
Type of project	Archaeological T	rial Trench Evaluation	
Site status	-		
Current land use	Storage area		
Planned development	Residential		
Main features (+dates)	Modern (20 th Cei	ntury): five pits and one o	litch
Significant finds (+dates)	Two abraded str	uck flints	
Project location			
County/ District/ Parish	East Sussex	Wealden	Hailsham
HER/ SMR for area	East Sussex HE	R	
Post code (if known)	BN27 1PE		
Area of site	c. 2.1ha		
NGR	TQ 59695 11016		
Height AOD (min/max)	7.50/ 14.00		
Project creators			
Brief issued by	Requirement of L	East Sussex County Cou	ncil
Project supervisor/s (PO)	Zbigniew Pozors	ki	
Funded by	Heyford Develop	ments Ltd	
Full title	Former Ambers	stone Nursery, Ambers	stone, Hailsham, East
		haeological Evaluation	
Authors	Z. Pozorski; A.R.R. Mustchin (Editor)		
Report no.	4581		
Date (of report)	21 May 2014 (Revised 01/08/2014)		

FORMER AMBERSTONE NURSERY, AMBERSTONE, HAILSHAM, **EAST SUSSEX**

AN ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION

SUMMARY

Between the 9th and 13th of May 2014, Archaeological Solutions Ltd carried out an archaeological trial trench evaluation at the former Amberstone Nursery. Amberstone, Halisham, East Sussex (NGR TQ 59695 11016). The evaluation was commissioned by Heyford Developments Ltd and was undertaken to accompany a planning application for the proposed residential development.

In the event the evaluation revealed evidence of modern (20th century) activity, comprising five pits and a single ditch. Two abraded struck flints were found.

1 INTRODUCTION

- Between the 9th and 13th of May 2014, Archaeological Solutions Ltd (AS) carried out an archaeological trial trench evaluation at the former Amberstone Nursery, Amberstone, Halisham, East Sussex (NGR TQ 59695 11016; Figs. 1-2). The evaluation was commissioned by Heyford Developments Ltd and was undertaken to accompany a planning application for the proposed residential development of the site (Fig. 4).
- 1.2 The evaluation was undertaken in accordance with a requirement of the East Sussex County Council (ESCC) Assistant County Archaeologist (Greg Chuter), and was undertaken according to a written scheme of investigation (specification) prepared by AS (dated 24/04/2014) and approved by ESCC. The project adhered to the Institute for Archaeologists' (IfA) Code of Conduct and Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Field Evaluation (revised 2008).

1.3 The aims of the project were:

- > to establish whether any archaeological deposits exist in the area, with particular regard to any which are of sufficient importance to merit preservation in situ;
- > to identify the date, approximate form and purpose of any archaeological deposit within the application area, together with its likely extent, localised depth and quality of preservation;
- > to evaluate the likely impact of past land uses, and the possible presence of masking colluvial/ alluvial deposits, along with the potential for the survival of environmental evidence:

➤ to provide sufficient information to construct an archaeological conservation strategy dealing with preservation, the recording of archaeological deposits, working practices, timetables and orders of cost.

Planning policy context

- 1.4 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.
- 1.5 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 site is located on the north-eastern outskirts of Hailsham, *c*. 8km north-east of the resort town of Eastbourne (Fig. 1). Hailsham town centre is *c*. 900m to the south. The site fronts the A271 Magham Road to the north-west.
- 2.2 The site is a large (c. 2.1ha) sub-triangular plot comprising the former Amberstone Nursery. Currently, the site is largely unoccupied although numerous disused vehicles and derelict light storage buildings are present.

3 TOPOGRAPHY, GEOLOGY AND SOILS

3.1 The site occupies a south-east-facing slope between 7.50m and 14.00m AOD. The solid geology of the area comprises the sandstone and siltstone of the Wealden Group (British Geological Survey 1978). The site's soils are those of the Wickham 1 association, described as 'slowly permeable seasonally waterlogged fine

silty over clayey, fine loamy over clayey and clayey soils' (Soil Survey of England and Wales 1983, 16).

4 ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

- 4.1 The site fronts the A271 Magham Road, which runs eastwards from Hailsham, to the east of its junction with Battle Road. The Sussex historic landscape characterisation map records the site as horticultural land (HER HES47457), comprising Amberstone Nurseries and greenhouses between 1914 and 1945. The site does not occupy an Archaeological Notification Area, although the medieval and post-medieval complex of Amberstone Grange Farm (ANA No. 1787; HER DES11160) lies 500m to the east. Horselunges Wood (ANA No. 1597; HER DES10952) lies 150m to the north of the site and demarcates a significant number of Mesolithic sites.
- 4.2 Land at Battle Road, to the immediate west of the site, was subject to archaeological investigation in 2009 (HER EES15461; Holden and Watson 2009). Although 37 trenches were excavated across two, separate phases of work, no archaeologically sensitive features were encountered (*ibid.*). However, residual finds from the plough soil comprised a single prehistoric flint blade (HER MES22936) and occasional post-medieval and modern artefacts. The remains of a timber post-medieval footbridge, which formally spanned an east to west aligned stream, were also recorded to the immediate west of the site (HER MES22935). Natural deposits of Weald Clay with occasional iron panning were encountered in the base of all trenches at a depth of 0.20m to 0.30m.
- 4.3 Hailsham and its environs has been the subject of extensive archaeological investigation, particularly those areas to the north and east of the town's historic core (Harris 2008). Early occupation evidence, dating to the Mesolithic and Neolithic periods, appears to have been focussed along the gravel terraces of the Cuckmere Valley, to the north. The area around Park Farm (1.2km to the north-west of the site), in particular, has produced four concentrations of Mesolithic flints (HERs MES15528, MES15530 and MES15529). A Neolithic polished flint axe was also found in *c.* 1961 during drain digging on Park Road (HER MES4365). A rectilinear cropmark, possibly representing an enclosure of Bronze Age to medieval date, is present *c.* 80m to the east of the site (HER MES7299). The alignment of the cropmark is at odds to the existing field boundaries. Further evidence of Bronze Age activity is known from the internationally important site at Shinewater (Wilkinson and Holmes 2010).
- 4.4 Evidence of Iron Age and Romano-British occupation of the Hailsham area has, until recently, been scarce (Harris 2008). The Pevensey Levels, to the south of the site, constitutes reclaimed wetland (see below) and presents a dearth of early settlement evidence. In the Romano-British period, the main focus of local activity would have been the 3rd century Saxon Shore Fort at Pevensey (*ibid.*). The only Roman evidence close to the site comprises a few sherds of pottery found during field walking at Park Farm (HER MES15531).

- 4.5 Hailsham is recorded in Domesday Book as *Hamelsham*, whilst its first church was recorded in 1229. However, it did not develop into a market town until 1252; a date that roughly coincides with the reclamation of the Pevensey Levels. Much of the area was again inundated in the 15th century, however. During the medieval period, the site and its surrounding area likely consisted agricultural hinterland associated with the nearby town. Medieval common-edge settlement is recorded at Magham Down (HER MES21461), whilst medieval and post-medieval farmsteads are documented at Harebeating Farm and Amberstone Grange (HERs MES21457 and MES21459).
- During the 16th century, Hailsham was noted for its leather and rope working industries and for its market (Harris 2008). In 1670, it was also established as one of Sussex's thirteen post-towns, and thus incorporates a number of historic listed buildings. Close to the site, post-medieval evidence includes the site of a 16th to 17th century timber framed building at Friars Oak (HER MES22416). Early modern evidence comprises a roundhouse, toll house, a brewery, the site of Hailsham Union workhouse, and 18th century farmhouses at Harebeating Farm and Amberstone Grange (HERs MES5158, MES6953, MES16629, MES6954, MES23418 and MES23425). The modern period is represented by a WWII Spitfire crash site on Battle Road (HER MES7926) and the WWII casualty hospital at Park Wood (HER MES7300).
- As previously noted, the historic landscape characterisation map suggests 4.7 that the site's landscape pattern was formed in the early 20th century, specifically as Amberstone Nurseries (HER HES47457). The site is labelled as Amberstone Nursery on Ordnance Survey maps from 1932 onwards, when two large buildings. along with associated secondary structures, were located in the north-eastern corner of the site. Earlier cartographic sources, dating between 1876 and 1910, depict the site as agricultural land. In the late 19th century, the site formed parts of two agricultural fields with an east/ west aligned field boundary running across the southern area. By 1899, however, the northernmost field had been subdivided, thus creating a large part of the site's eastern boundary. By 1910, the southern field boundary had been superseded by a second, similarly aligned boundary closer to Magham Road.

5 **METHODOLOGY**

- Nine trenches were excavated using a mechanical 360° excavator fitted with a toothless ditching bucket (Fig. 2). The trench locations were agreed prior to the commencement of works, and were sited so as to best avoid existing obstructions. Trenches 3 and 4 measured 36m x 1.80m, Trench 5 measured 37m x 1.80m and the remaining trenches measured 40m x 1.80m. The locations of some of the trenches had to be slightly amended to avoid derelict structures and immobilised vehicles.
- Topsoil and undifferentiated overburden were mechanically excavated under 5.2 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 1)

Sample section 1A (DP 2): north end, south-west facing				
0.00 = 13.18m AOD				
0.00 – 0.18m L1000 Topsoil. Dark brownish grey, friable, sandy silt.				
0.18m +	L1001	Natural light to mid yellow, compact, clay.		

Sample section 1B (DP 3): south end, south-west facing 0.00 = 12.53m AOD				
0.00 – 0.31m L1000 Topsoil. As above.				
0.31m + L1001 Natural clay. As above.				

Description: No archaeological features or finds were present.

Trench 2 (Fig. 2; DP 4)

Sample section 2A (DP 5): north end, south-west facing				
0.00 = 13.68m AOD				
0.00 - 0.28m	L1000	Topsoil. As above, Tr. 1.		
0.28m +	L1001	Natural clay. As above, Tr. 1.		

Sample section 2B (DP 6): south end, south-west facing 0.00 = 12.03m AOD			
0.00 – 0.21m L1000 Topsoil. As above, Tr. 1.			
0.21m +	L1001	Natural clay. As above, Tr. 1.	

Description: No archaeological features or finds were present.

Trench 3 (Figs. 2 and 3; DP 7)

Sample section 3A (DP 8): north end, south-west facing 0.00 = 10.98m AOD			
0.00 - 0.39m	L1000	Topsoil. As above, Tr. 1.	
0.39m +	L1001	Natural clay. As above, Tr. 1.	

Sample section 3B (DP 9): south end, south-west facing				
0.00 = 9.93m AOD				
0.00 - 0.33m	L1000	Topsoil. As above, Tr. 1.		
0.33m +	L1001	Natural clay. As above, Tr. 1.		

Description: Three pits (F1002, F1004 and F1006) were present within the trench.

Pit F1002 was circular in plan (1.20 x 0.57+ x 0.28m; DP 10), but extended beyond the western end of the trench. That part exposed had steep sides and a flattish base. Its single fill (L1003) comprised a mix of friable, mid brown silty sand and compact, yellow clay. It contained frequent modern (20^{th} century) window glass.

Pit F1004 was rectangular in plan (1.32 x 0.62 x 0.16m; DP 11). It had steep sides and a flattish base. Its single fill (L1005) comprised friable, mid to dark brown sandy

silt with some compact, yellow clay. It yielded 20th century slate roof tile and ferrous metal fragments.

Pit F1006 was also rectangular in plan (1.30 x 0.67 x 0.11m; DP 12). It had gently sloping sides and a slightly concave base. Its single fill (L1007) comprised friable, dark brown clayey silt. L1007 yielded modern (20^{th} century) debris.

Trench 4 (Fig. 2; DP 13)

Sample section 4A (DP 14): west end, south-south-west facing 0.00 = 12.91m AOD			
0.00 – 0.26m L1000 Topsoil. As above, Tr. 1.			
0.26m +	L1001	Natural clay. As above, Tr. 1.	

Sample section 4B (DP 15): east end, south-south-west facing 0.00 = 10.80m AOD				
0.00 – 0.21m L1000 Topsoil. As above, Tr. 1.				
0.21m +	L1001	Natural clay. As above, Tr. 1.		

Description: No archaeological features or finds were present.

Trench 5 (Figs. 2 and 3; DP 16)

	Sample section 5A (DP 17): north end, west facing 0.00 = 9.45m AOD				
0.00 - 0.09m	L1000	Topsoil. As above, Tr. 1.			
0.09 – 0.47m	L1008	Modern made ground. Dark grey, loose, sandy silt with frequent CBM fragments and debris.			
0.47m +	L1001	Natural clay. As above, Tr. 1.			

Sample section 5B (DP 18): south end, west facing 0.00 = 8.70m AOD			
0.00 - 0.19m L1000 Topsoil. As above, Tr. 1.			
0.19 – 0.29m	L1008	Modern made ground. As above.	
0.29m + L1001 Natural clay. As above, Tr. 1.			

Description: Three modern features (Pits F1009 and F1012, and Ditch F1014) were present within the trench.

F1009 was sub-rectangular in plan (2.15+ x 1.21 x 0.17m; DP 19). It had gentle to steeply sloping sides and flattish base. Its single fill (L1010) comprised compact, light brown/ grey clayey silt. This feature yielded CBM and pieces of modern (20^{th} century) flower pot. Fill L1010 was cut by Pit F1012, a small feature (0.40+ x 0.20+ x 0.20m+) containing concrete; F1012 was not excavated.

Ditch F1014 was linear in plan ($2.00+0.54 \times 0.14m$; DP 20), and was aligned northwest to south-east. It had moderate to steeply sloping sides and flattish base. Its single fill (L1015) comprised loose, dark greyish brown sandy silt. L1015 contained modern (20^{th} century) ferrous metal fragments. Pieces of slag and glass were also present.

Trench 6 (Fig. 2; DP 21)

Sample section 6A (DP 22): west end, south facing		
0.00 = 11.82m AOD		
0.00 - 0.29m	L1000	Topsoil. As above, Tr. 1.
0.29m +	L1001	Natural clay. As above, Tr. 1.

Sample section 6B (DP 23): east end, south facing 0.00 = 9.95m AOD		
0.00 - 0.27m	L1000	Topsoil. As above, Tr. 1.
0.27m +	L1001	Natural clay. As above, Tr. 1.

Description: No archaeological features or finds were present.

(Fig. 2; DP 24) Trench 7

Sample section 7A (DP 25): west end, south facing 0.00 = 10.12m AOD		
0.00 – 0.18m	L1000	Topsoil. As above, Tr. 1.
0.18m +	L1001	Natural clay. As above, Tr. 1.

Sample section 7	Sample section 7B (DP 26): east end, south facing		
0.00 = 8.40m AOD			
0.00 - 0.22m	L1000	Topsoil. As above, Tr. 1.	
0.22m + L1001		Natural clay. As above, Tr. 1.	

Description: No archaeological features or finds were present.

(Fig. 2; DP 27) Trench 8

Sample section 8A (DP 28): north end, west facing		
0.00 = 8.51m AOD		
0.00 - 0.20m	L1000	Topsoil. As above, Tr. 1.
0.20m +	L1001	Natural clay. As above, Tr. 1.

Sample section 8B (DP 29): south end, west facing 0.00 = 7.85m AOD		
0.00 – 0.20m L1000 Topsoil. As above, Tr. 1.		Topsoil. As above, Tr. 1.
0.20m +	L1001	Natural clay. As above, Tr. 1.

Description: No archaeological features or finds were present.

(Fig. 2; DP 30) Trench 9

	Sample section 9A (DP 31): west end, south facing		
	0.00 = 10.15m AOD		
0.00 – 0.23m L1000 Topsoil. As above, Tr. 1.		Topsoil. As above, Tr. 1.	
	0.23m +	L1001	Natural clay. As above, Tr. 1.

Sample section 9B (DP 32): east end, south facing 0.00 = 8.49m AOD		
0.00 – 0.24m L1000 Topsoil. As above, Tr. 1.		Topsoil. As above, Tr. 1.
0.24m + L1001 Natural clay. As above, Tr. 1.		

Description: No archaeological features or finds were present.

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 L1000, a friable, dark brownish grey sandy silt (0.15-0.40m thick). In the eastern part of the site (Trench 5) L1000 sealed modern made ground (L1008; 0.10-0.50m thick).
- The natural clay geology (L1001) was present at a depth of 0.15-0.40m below current surface level.

9 DISCUSSION

9.1 Although the site had potential for archaeological remains, particularly prehistoric remains, the project encountered only modern (20th century) features, relating to the former nursery and subsequent land use. Two abraded struck flints were, however, recovered from Topsoil L1000. Further prehistoric evidence may be present on the more level ground to the north of the site.

10 **DEPOSITION OF THE ARCHIVE**

10.1 Archive records, with an inventory, will be deposited with Eastbourne Heritage Service, under Accession No. 2014.35. The archive will be quantified, ordered, indexed, cross-referenced and checked for internal consistency. The two struck flints recovered from Topsoil L1000 will accompany the archive.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Archaeological Solutions Ltd (AS) would like to thank Mr Jonathan Tomlinson of Heyford Developments Ltd for commissioning and funding the project, and Mr Nick Emms of Discovery for his assistance.

AS would also like to acknowledge the input and advice of Mr Greg Chuter of East Sussex County Council, and Mr Jonathan Seaman of Eastbourne Heritage Service.

Thanks also go to the East Sussex Historic Environment Record for the provision of HER data.

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APPENDIX 1 CONTENTS OF THE ARCHIVE

Records	Number
Brief	N
Specification	Υ
Registers	1 (Context, Drawing, Drawing Sheet, Digital Photo)
Context Sheets	16
Site drawings A1	0
Site drawings A3	2
Site drawings A4	0
Site photographs b/w	0
Site photographs colour slides	0
Digital Photographs	35

APPENDIX 2 HER SUMMARY SHEET

Site name and address:	Former Amberstone Nursery, Amberstone, Halisham, East Sussex
County: East Sussex	District: Wealden
Village/Town:	Parish: Hailsham
Planning application	-
reference:	
Client name/address/tel:	Heyford Developments Limited
Nature of application:	Pre-application, residential development
Present land use:	Garden
Size of application area:	Size of area investigated
c.2.1ha	630m2
NGR (8 figures):	TQ 59695 11016
Site Code:	AS 1686
Site director/Organization:	Archaeological Solutions Ltd
Type of work:	Trial trench evaluation
Date of work:	09 – 13/05/2014
Location of finds/Curating	Eastbourne (Accession No. 2014.35)
museum:	
Related SMR Nos:	Periods represented: Late Neolithic/Early Bronze Age
Relevant previous	-
summaries/reports: -	
Summary of fieldwork results:	In May 2014 Archaeological Solutions (AS) carried an archaeological evaluation at land at former Amberstone Nursery, Amberstone, Halisham, East Sussex (NGR TQ 59695 11016). The evaluation was commissioned by Heyford Developments Limited and was undertaken to accompany an environmental impact assessment as part of a planning application for proposed residential development. In the event the evaluation revealed evidence of modern (20 th century) use of the site in form of 5 pits and a ditch. Two residual fragments of
	worked flint of late Neolithic to Early Bronze Age origin were also recovered.
Author of summary:	Date of Summary:
Z Pozorski	May 2014

PHOTOGRAPHIC INDEX



DP 1. Trench 1. Looking north-west.



DP 3. Trench 1, south end. Sample section 1B. Looking north-east.



DP 5. Trench 2, north end. Sample section 2A. Looking north-east.



DP 2. Trench 1, north end. Sample section 1A. Looking north-east.



DP 4. Trench 2. Looking north-west.



DP 6. Trench 2, south end. Sample section 2B. Looking north-east.



DP 7. Trench 3. Looking north-west.



DP 9. Trench 3, south end. Sample section 3B. Looking north-east.



DP 11. Trench 3, Pit F1004. Looking west-north-west.



DP 8. Trench 3, north end. Sample section 3A. Looking north-east.



DP 10. Trench 3, Pit F1002. Looking northwest.



DP 12. Trench 3, Pit F1006. Looking south-south-west.



DP 13. Trench 4. Looking west-north-west.



DP 15. Trench 4, east end. Sample section 4B. Looking north-north-east.



DP 17. Trench 5, north end. Sample section 5A. Looking east.



DP 14. Trench 4, west end. Sample section 4A. Looking north-north-east.



DP 16. Trench 5. Looking north.



DP 18. Trench 5, south end. Sample section 5B. Looking east.



DP 19. Trench 5, Pit F1009. Looking northwest.



DP 21. Trench 6. Looking west.



DP 23. Trench 6, east end. Sample section 6B. Looking north.



DP 20. Trench 5, Ditch F1014. Looking north-west.



DP 22. Trench 6, west end. Sample section 6A. Looking north.



DP 24. Trench 7. Looking west.



DP 25. Trench 7, west end. Sample section 7A. Looking north.



DP 27. Trench 8. Looking north.



DP 29. Trench 8, south end. Sample section 8B. Looking east.



DP 26. Trench 7, east end. Sample section 7B. Looking north.



DP 28. Trench 8, north end. Sample section 8A. Looking east.



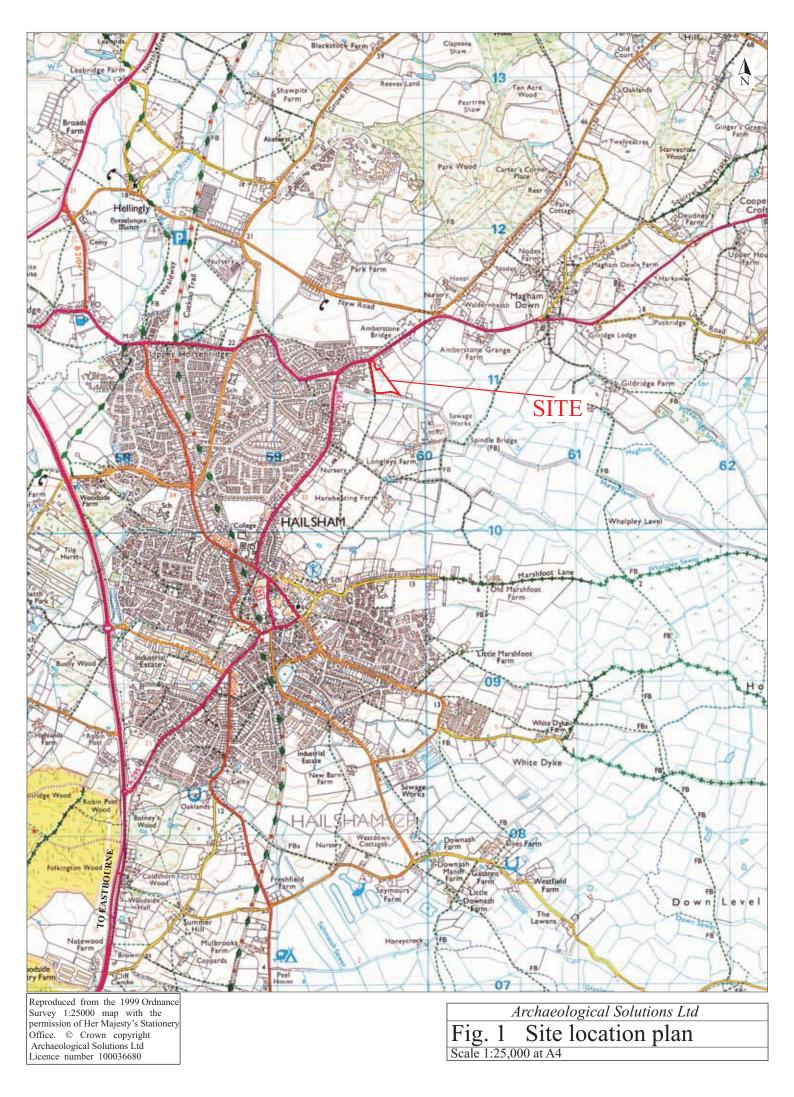
DP 30. Trench 9. Looking west.



DP 30. Trench 9, west end. Sample section 9A. Looking north.

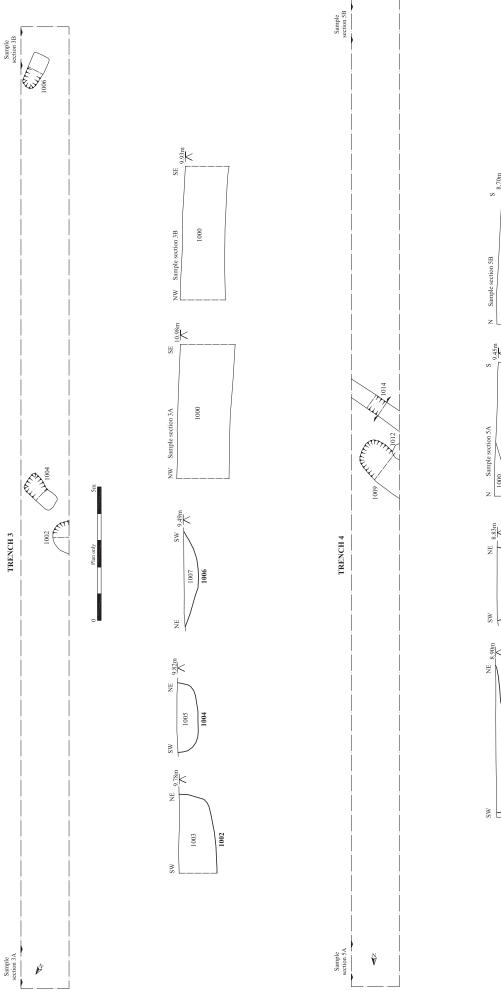


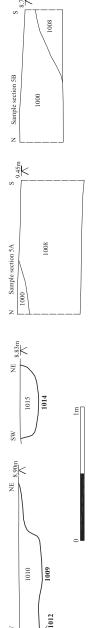
DP 31. Trench 9, east end. Sample section 9B. Looking north.





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Fig. 2 Detailed site location plan
Scale 1:2000 at A4







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Fig. 4 Proposed development plan
Scale 1:1500 at A4