PHASE III, CEDARS PARK, STOWMARKET

AN ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION (FIELD WALKING AND METAL DETECTOR SURVEY)

SMR Number: SKT 018

****

HERTFORDSHIRE ARCHAEOLOGICAL TRUST
REPORT NO. 975

PHASE III, CEDARS PARK, STOWMARKET

AN ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION (FIELD WALKING AND METAL DETECTOR SURVEY)

Rhodri Gardner PhD
1st November 2001

NGR: TM 0600 5855
PARISH: Stowupland
SITE CODE: SKT 018

THE SEED WAREHOUSE, MAIDENHEAD YARD
THE WASH, HERTFORD SG14 1PX

TEL (01992) 558170
FAX (01992) 553359

Registered Charity No. 281819
E-mail: herts.archtrust@virgin.net
www.hertfordshire-archaeological-trust.co.uk

****

PHASE III, CEDARS PARK, STOWMARKET

AN ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION (FIELD WALKING AND METAL DETECTOR SURVEY)

SUMMARY

During Autumn 2001, a programme of field walking and metal detecting was undertaken on land off the A1120 Creeting Road, Stowmarket, prior to the development of Phase III of the Cedars Park housing development.

The field walking was undertaken in good conditions of visibility and revealed a dense scatter of Romano-British pottery across the site, in particular within the western part of the site. Metal-detector survey of the site revealed few items other than modern agricultural iron fittings.

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 During Autumn 2001, Hertfordshire Archaeological Trust (HAT) carried out a field walking and metal detector survey on land off the A1120 Creeting Road, Stowmarket (centred on NGR TM 0600 5855) (Fig. 1). The survey was commissioned by Crest Nicholson (Eastern) Limited, in advance of proposals (application no. 632/98) to develop the land for residential use incorporating 92 dwellings, associated ancillary services/access and an Open Space (Planning Application No. 632/98). The work was undertaken as a requirement of Suffolk County Council and was based on advice from Suffolk County Council Archaeology Service Conservation Team (SCC AS).

1.2 The investigation was undertaken according to a brief for archaeological evaluation issued by SCCAS (initially dated 22/12/98, with later revisions) and an additional *Cedars Park Phase 3 Strategy* produced by SCC AS and a specification prepared by HAT (dated 06/01). The evaluation also complied with the Institute of Field Archaeologists' (IFA) *Standards and Guidance for Archaeological Field Evaluations* (revised 1999).

1.3 The aims of the evaluation were set out in the *Cedars Park Phase 3 Strategy* document (Section 2). The principal aims of the evaluation were:

- To establish whether any sites exist in the area.
- To assess whether such sites are of sufficient importance to merit preservation *in situ*.
- To identify the date, extent and function of any sites identified.
- To provide sufficient information to construct an archaeological conservation strategy (preservation, recording etc.)

1.4 This phase of evaluation was required by SCCAS to include:

- A programme of systematic field walking and metal detecting to determine the extent, date, and significance of artefactual evidence within the ploughsoil.

- Subsequent geophysical survey, as appropriate.

- Trial trenching.

1.5 This report deals with the fieldwalking and metal detecting phase of the evaluation.

2 DESCRIPTION OF THE SITE Figs.1 & 2

2.1 The proposed development area comprises land parcel of approximately 5 hectares. It is bounded to the north by the A1120 Creeting Road. To the east, it is bounded by an extant hedge and ditch with previous phases of the Cedars Park development beyond (phase II). To the south the land continues as arable for approximately 400m beyond the limits of the proposed development, though in part it is bounded by land associated with the adjacent sewage works. To the west, the site is immediately bounded by a trackway facilitating access to the sewage works. A small compound currently occupied by the Environment Agency lies within the area of the site adjacent to the western trackway, approximately 200m south of the north western corner of the site. The area of the proposed Open Space lies to the immediate west, across the access track to the sewage works and contained within the north west corner of an arable field (presently under stubble).

2.2 The area of proposed development slopes down from a high point at its north-western corner where it lies at c. 51m AOD down to the south-east at a level of c. 40m AOD. The site occupies undulating high ground above the valley of the River Gipping, a tributary of which runs along the far south eastern edge of the Cedars Park development area. Topographically, the proposed area of development encompasses the eastern half of a clearly visible promontory above the valley (Fig. 1).

2.3 The site was in arable cultivation at the time of the survey (recently ploughed and allowed to sufficiently weather). The area of the proposed Open Space (as noted above) was covered with stubble and unploughed at the time of the survey, and thus could not be subject to fieldwalking.

2.4 The site lies in Stowmarket parish, on the boulder clay plateau that covers much of East Anglia. The prevailing natural drift geology consists of blue-green or orange clays with some localised patches of sand and gravel (Sommers, 1995). The wider area of the Cedars Park development lies on boulder clay (Moore *et al.,* 1988) with some more fertile river loam toward the bottom of the valley. The soils are generally characterised as calcareous clayey soils of the Hanslope association, which predominate throughout the Gipping Valley. To the north of the site (beyond the current A14 trunk road) fine loamy over clayey soils of the Beccles 1 association

prevail. Deposits of riverine alluvial clays of the Midelney association (Soil Survey of England and Wales, 1983) dominate the valley bottom itself.

3 ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND (Figs. 1 & 2)

3.1 The archaeological and historical background to the site is presented in detail in the desk-based assessment carried out by HAT for the Cedars Park Strategic Development Area (Murray & Last 2001)

Prehistoric

3.2 The evidence for prehistoric remains in this area is somewhat sparse, and appears to be concentrated in the vicinity of the valley bottom. Evidence includes a Neolithic or Bronze Age retouched flint blade found close to the river, c. 1 km to the south (SMR SKT 013) and mainly Iron Age pits and postholes close to the previous findspot (SKT 011). The lack of known prehistory has often been held to be due to the difficulty of cultivating the relatively heavy clay soils of the region prior to the introduction of Roman ploughing technology. However, it may equally be due to the generally accepted fact (§4 of the updated SCCAS brief) that the results of fieldwalking and aerial photography tend to be poor on these soils, which may mean that prehistoric sites are under represented in the landscape. Consequently, any prehistoric settlement in the area remains to be characterised.

Roman

3.3 It is for the Roman and Late Iron Age ('Belgic') periods that the most significant evidence of activity exists, suggesting a well-developed Romano-British landscape. Within the proposed development area a dense scatter of surface finds has been identified (SKT 018) in the central western portion of the site. Finds from this site include tiles (both *tegulae* and floor tiles) and pottery (including central and east Gaulish samian, colour coated wares, micaceous greyware flanged ringed bowls and a Dressel amphora). These pottery types are consistent with a 2nd century date. More recently, metal detector finds have been made, including an inscribed silver ring, a bronze ring, a Colchester type brooch and possibly a fragment of a mirror (Murray & Last 2001). There are numerous finds scatters in the surrounding area, including 3rd (SKT 002) and 1st/2nd (SKT 007) Roman coins.

3.4 More substantial sites are also known nearby. Approximately 1 km to the north west SKT 008 revealed a 1st century AD pottery kiln that produced Belgic style products, though some post-conquest military influence is suggested (Plouviez, 1989). SUP 009, some 1.5 km to the north east is a substantial scatter of Belgic and Roman finds (predominantly Roman, dating the site to the 1st to 4th centuries AD) covering an area of 1.7 ha at Park Farm. Immediately to the east of the site excavations by HAT in 1999/2000 (SUP 017) prior to phase II of the Cedars Park development revealed further evidence of the Iron Age/Romano-British occupation in the area. These findings are covered in detail elsewhere (see Vaughan 1999, McDonald 1999, Seddon 2000 and Murray & Last 2001).

Saxon

3.5 There is no evidence for Anglo-Saxon activity in the area of assessment.

Medieval

3.6 A number of medieval sites are known in the surrounding area of Stowmarket. SKT 011, the site which also yielded late prehistoric material (§3.1), revealed a moated site containing two clay floored buildings of late 12th/early 13th century date within a larger enclosure (Martin, 1981). A similar unexcavated moated site, which are common throughout this part of Suffolk, is known 1.5 km to the north at Crown Farm (SUP 002). A 13th century pottery scatter is also known, just 200m to the north (SUP 004). A watching brief undertaken just to the east of the town of Stowmarket recovered some medieval pottery (SKT 025). An aisled hall, now in the Museum of East Anglian life, was constructed around 1340 on the site of Edgars Farm, where earlier occupation is also known (Webster and Cherry, 1972). Further evidence of medieval occupation has been revealed just to the north of the area of assessment in the form of a scatter of medieval pottery (SKT 029). There is also documentary evidence of the site of Thorney Hall in the centre of Stowmarket (SKT 012).

Post-medieval

3.7 Remains of the post-medieval period have been encountered at Crown Farm (SUP 002), amongst the finds scatter at Park Farm (SUP 001) and during the previous HAT excavations at Cedars Park (SUP 017). In addition, some 0.8 km to the west a footbridge over the river Gipping is recorded as early as 1575 (SKT 023) and the Combs Mill watermill is known some 0.75 km to the south west on the river Rattlesden (SKT 020).

4 FIELD WALKING METHODOLOGY Figs. 2 & 3

4.1 The area of assessment was subjected to an archaeological field walking survey. A narrow strip along the eastern boundary of the site, extending for its whole N-S length was unavailable for examination as it had been used to deposit spoil from new large service pipe trenching works to the east. As noted above, SCC AS required the fieldwalking survey to extend into the area of the proposed Open Space to the west. The field had not been ploughed, however, at the time of the survey and this area was consequently excluded from the works.

4.2 The field walking was based on a line walking system with transects at 20 m intervals. It adhered to the methodology devised by Essex County Council Archaeological Advisory Group (now ECC HAMP). This has been widely adopted for use elsewhere, enabling comparison with other regional surveys. The techniques used have been described by Medlycott (1992). All of the survey was undertaken according to the Ordnance Survey National Grid.

4.3 The site was divided into kilometre squares, hectare squares and 20 m blocks within which 2m wide transects were scanned for finds. The site encompassed two kilometre squares either side of easting TM 06. Each of the kilometres was divided

into hectare blocks numbered from 1-100, beginning with 1 at the south western corner of each kilometre. Each hectare was then sub-divided into 20 m blocks, each of which were assigned a letter, starting with 'a' in the north western corner (see Fig. 2). Each 20 m block was then walked, in this case in a north-south direction, with a transect of c.2 m width scanned for finds along their centre. This therefore allows a measured 10% sample to be scanned of each 20m block.

4.4 Each finds type was plotted at 1:2000. The pottery (Fig. 2) was simply plotted on an individual sherd basis, with a simple sub-division into the periods 'Iron Age', 'Roman', 'Medieval', 'Late Medieval' and 'Post-Medieval'. The brick and tile finds (Fig. 3) were plotted according to their standard deviation (SD) from the mean. Normally, by this method a 'significant' scatter is taken to be more than two or more collection units with more than two standard deviations from the mean. For the purposes of adding to fieldwalking statistics being compiled for Essex and Hertfordshire, the following statistical information for each type of find and each type of period is presented as appropriate (Figs. 2 & 3).

STANDARD DEVIATION FORMULA: $\sigma =$

where
- n = the number of 20m transects walked
- $\sum x$ = the sum of the find-type
- $\sum x^2$ = the sum of the find-type individually squared
- μ = the mean of the find-type per 20 m transect
- σ = the standard deviation of the find-type

4.5 Amalgamated plots of all the artefact types (pottery and brick/tile) are presented. The distribution of finds will reflect quantity ('amalgamated'): quality ('finds types'): and period.

5 METAL DETECTOR METHODOLOGY

5.1 A metal detector survey was undertaken in tandem with the field walking survey. This utilised the same grid, and the same two-metre wide transects. The equipment used was a Silver Sabre II detector made by Tesoro. The results of the metal detector survey are presented below.

6 RESULTS

6.1 **Fieldwalking** **(**Figs. 2&3)

6.1.1 Significant quantities of pottery (see appendix 1) and CBM (brick/tile fragments) were recovered from the site. Of the 76 sherds of pottery recovered approximately 80% were Roman, with the remainder predominantly belonging to the post-medieval period. A smaller number of High Mediaeval (12^{th}-14^{th} century) and Late Medieval (15^{th}-16^{th} century) sherds were also recovered, as was a single sherd of Iron Age date.

6.1.2 When plotted, the pottery shows a clear pattern of increased density of Roman wares in the central western portion of the site (hectare squares W2, W4, W5 and E4). This corresponds well with the previously known finds scatter of SKT 018. This suggests strongly that an occupation site of the Roman period lies buried in this part of the assessment area.

6.1.3 Pottery of other periods is scattered in a more dispersed pattern throughout the area of assessment. In general, it is notable that more finds were retrieved from the northern part of the site, on the upper reaches of the promontory. It was also notable that in this upper portion of the assessment area ploughing had quite frequently disturbed the clayey subsoil. This was not observed in the southern, downslope part of the site. This suggests that significant hillwash has occurred, with the ploughsoil being consequently somewhat thinner in the northern part of the site on the higher ground. It is possible, however, that ploughing could therefore have not brought as many finds to the surface in the southern portion of the site as they are buried more deeply.

6.1.4 A high density of sherds spanning the Roman through to post-medieval periods was observed in square E/4/A. This may be due to some as yet unidentified port-medieval activity which has disturbed earlier deposits and thus produced residual Roman and medieval finds. No such feature/disturbance could be identified during field walking.

6.1.5 The distribution of brick and tile fragments shows a very similar pattern of distribution, with a concentration of 'significant' scatters (2 standard deviations above the mean) in the central western portion of the assessment area (hectares W4 and W5). There is again a slight bias toward upslope recovery of brick and tile, again indicating the influence of hillwash.

6.2 **Metal Detector Survey**

6.2.1 The metal detector survey did not reveal any significant artefacts. Numerous finds of modern ironwork and occasional modern copper alloy objects were present within the ploughsoil (e.g. plough fittings, bolt heads, nails and a 20th cap badge). None were retained. Readings from the detector were clear, and items were detected with ease, even when quite deeply (c. 30 cm) buried. It is understood that the field has been subject to extensive metal detecting by local enthusiasts over many years, and it is quite possible that the field has been effectively 'cleaned' of early metal artefacts within the ploughsoil.

7 CONFIDENCE RATING

7.1 It is not felt that any significant factors hindered the evaluation. It was noted by SCC AS prior to the project that the field appeared to have been quite recently ploughed and had not had a particularly long time to weather. However, surface visibility and artefact recovery whilst field walking was very good, and the suitability of the ground conditions to survey were confirmed on site by SCC AS. Metal

detecting was somewhat difficult due to the depth of the furrows but readings were good, even when objects (both ferrous and non-ferrous) were buried to a considerable depth.

8 DEPOSIT MODEL

8.1 On the higher ground in the northern part of the assessment area it was noted that ploughing had occasionally disturbed the clayey subsoil. This was not visible to any significant extent in the lower, southern part of the assessment area. It is suggested that hillwash has reduced the relative depth of the ploughsoil on the higher ground when compared to the southern part of the site nearer to the valley bottom.

9 DISCUSSION

9.1 A consistent scatter of both pottery and brick/tile finds is present within the central western portion of the site, corresponding closely with the previously identified finds scatter of SKT 018.

9.2 The concentration of Roman pottery (Fig. 2) in the immediately adjacent hectare squares is particularly marked. The brick and tile plot (Fig. 3) also clearly pinpoints the area around the original findspot of SKT 018. The evidence therefore strongly indicates the presence of an occupation site on the brow of the promontory. A number of bowl and dish rims of Roman date support this. Material is comparable with other assemblages recovered close by to the west during recent HAT investigations. The marked scatter of brick and tile of (some of which is clearly of Romano-British date) may be suggestive of the presence of a building of this period on the site.

9.3 The pottery assemblage recovered from this survey consists of c.80% Roman wares with very few Iron Age sherds.

9.4 The pattern of subsoil disturbance by ploughing indicates that there is likely to have been a noteworthy amount of hillwash, with correspondingly thinner ploughsoil encountered on the higher ground at the northern end of the site.

9.5 A dense scatter of multi-period pottery was recovered from square E/4/A. Though no obvious disturbance was identified during field walking this may correspond to a post-medieval or modern feature, as yet uncharacterised.

9.6 The survey did not cover the field to the west where the proposed ‘open space’ may be located as conditions were unsuitable for this type of evaluation. However it might be suggested, given the distribution of finds observed in this study, that significant remains associated with the likely occupation site identified here would extend into the field to the west.

12 ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The Trust is grateful to Crest Nicholson Residential (Eastern) Limited for funding the archaeological evaluation and for their assistance (in particular Messrs Trevor Wright and Gerry Balmonte).

The Trust would also like to acknowledge the input and advice of Ms Jude Plouviez of SCC AS.

REFERENCES

Brown, N & Glazebrook, J (eds.), 2000, *Research and Archaeology: A Framework for the Eastern Counties. 2. Research Agenda and Strategy,* East Anglian Archaeology Occasional Papers 8

Glazebrook, J, (ed.), 1997, *Research and Archaeology: A Framework for the Eastern Counties. 1. Resource Assessment,* East Anglian Archaeology Occasional Papers 3

Gibson, C, forthcoming, *Cedars Park, Stowmarket,*

Institute of Field Archaeologists, 1994 (revised 1999), *Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Evaluations.*

McDonald, T, 1999, *Cedars Park, Stowmarket, Site A, Phase II; An Archaeological Excavation, Interim Report,* HAT Report 617

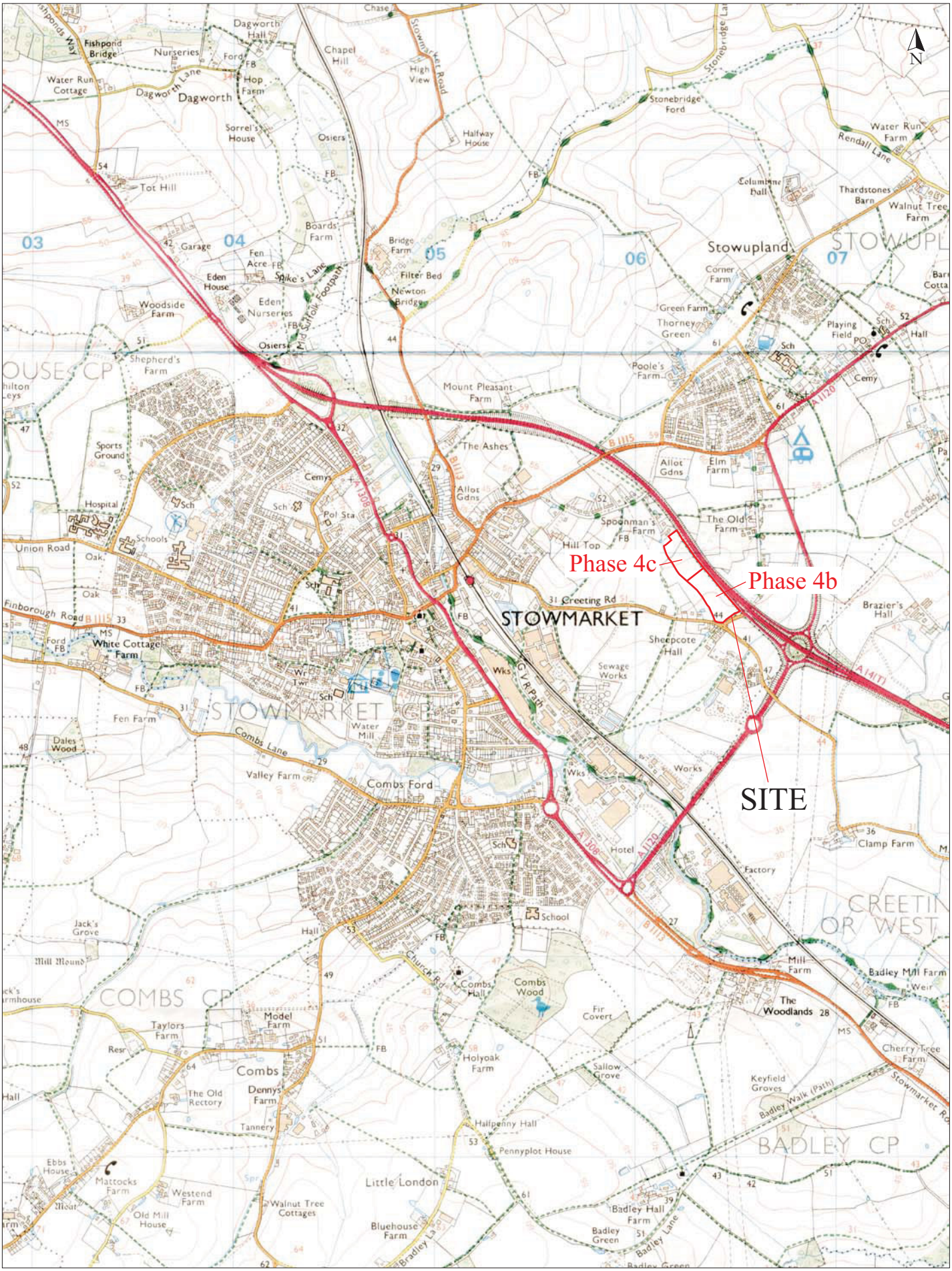
Medlycott, M, 1992, *Archaeological Fieldwalking in Essex: A Brief Description of Methodology*, Essex County Council

Murray, J & Last, J, 2001, *Cedars Park, Stowmarket, Suffolk, Proposed Stategic Development Area; An Updated Archaeological Desk-Based Assessment,* HAT Report 877

Seddon, T, 2000, *Cedars Park, Stowmarket, Phase II; An Archaeological Evaluation,* HAT Report 788

Vaughan, T, 1999, *Cedars Park, Stowmarket, Suffolk, Site A, Phase II; An Archaeological Evaluation*, HAT Report 532

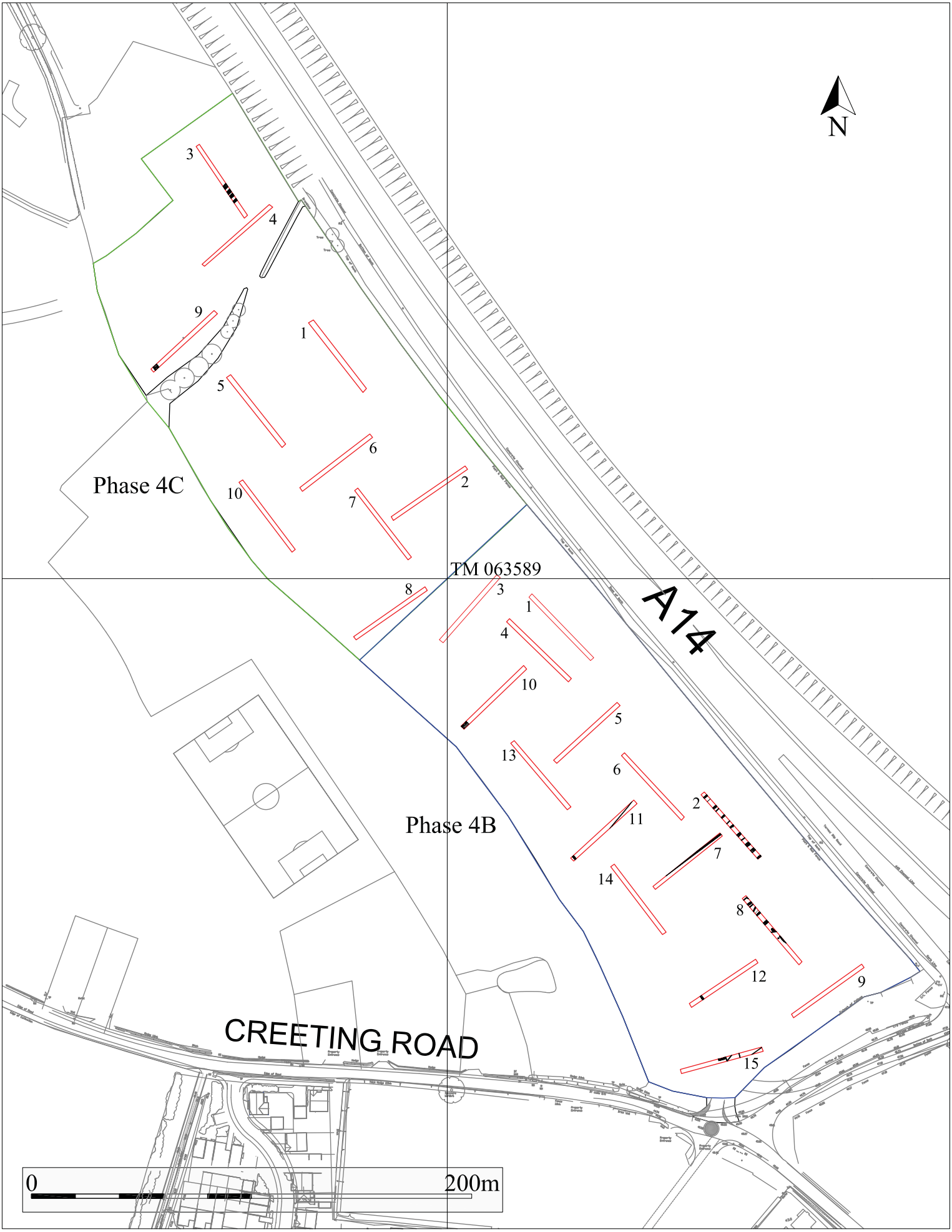
APPENDIX 1



Archaeological Solutions Ltd

Fig. 1 Site location plan

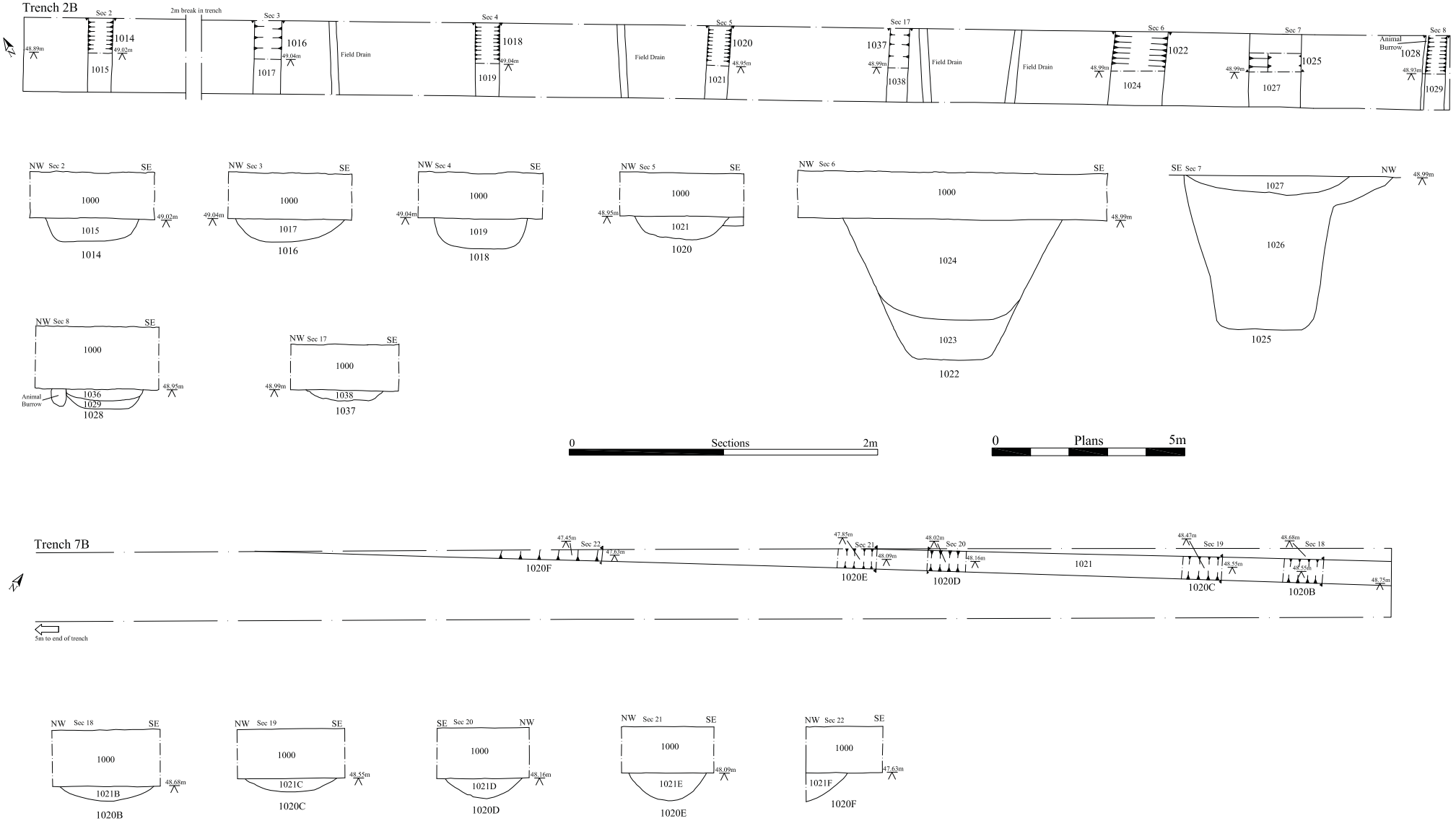
Scale 1:25,000 at A4



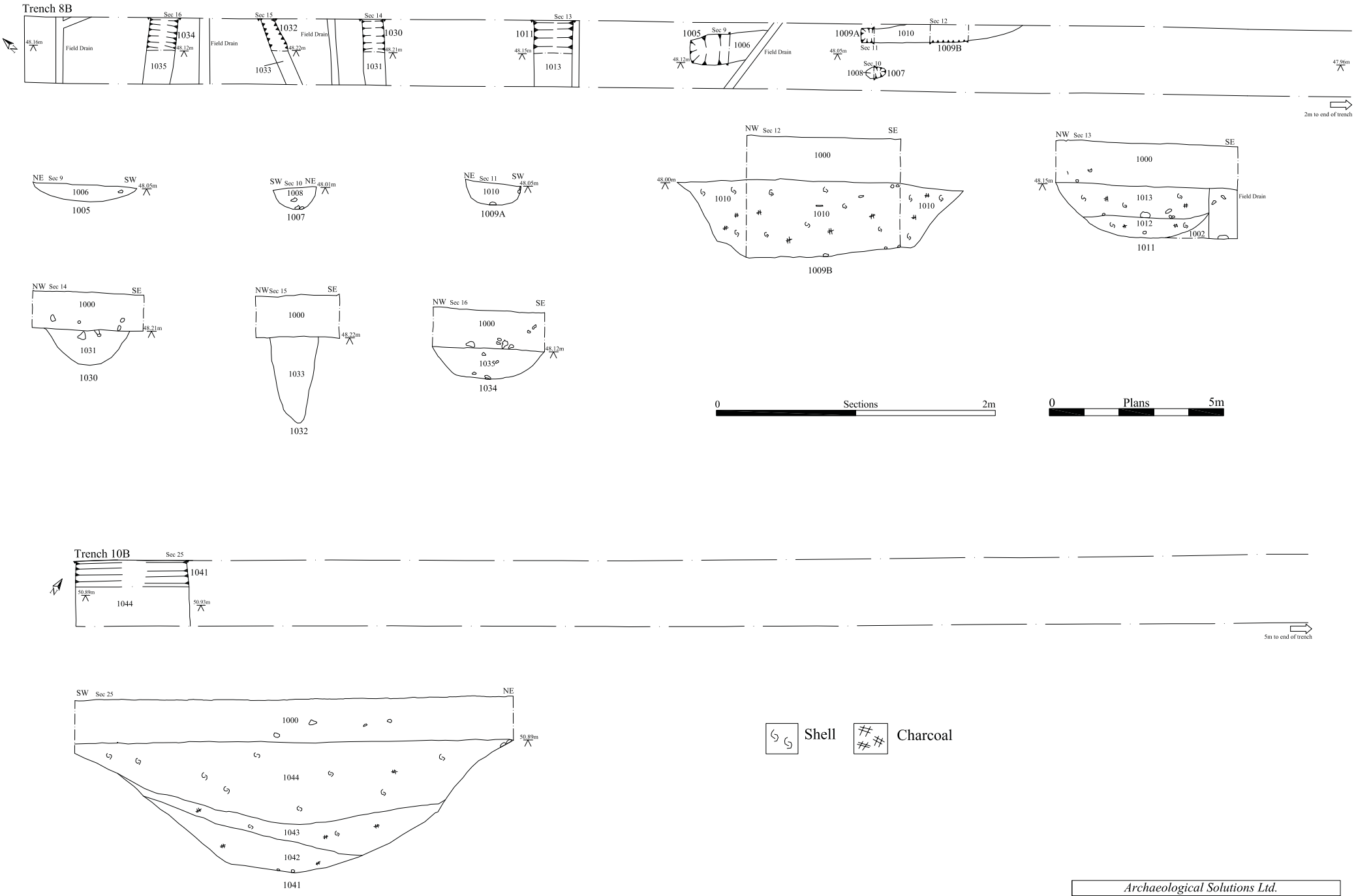
Archaeological Solutions Ltd

Fig. 2 Trench Location Plan

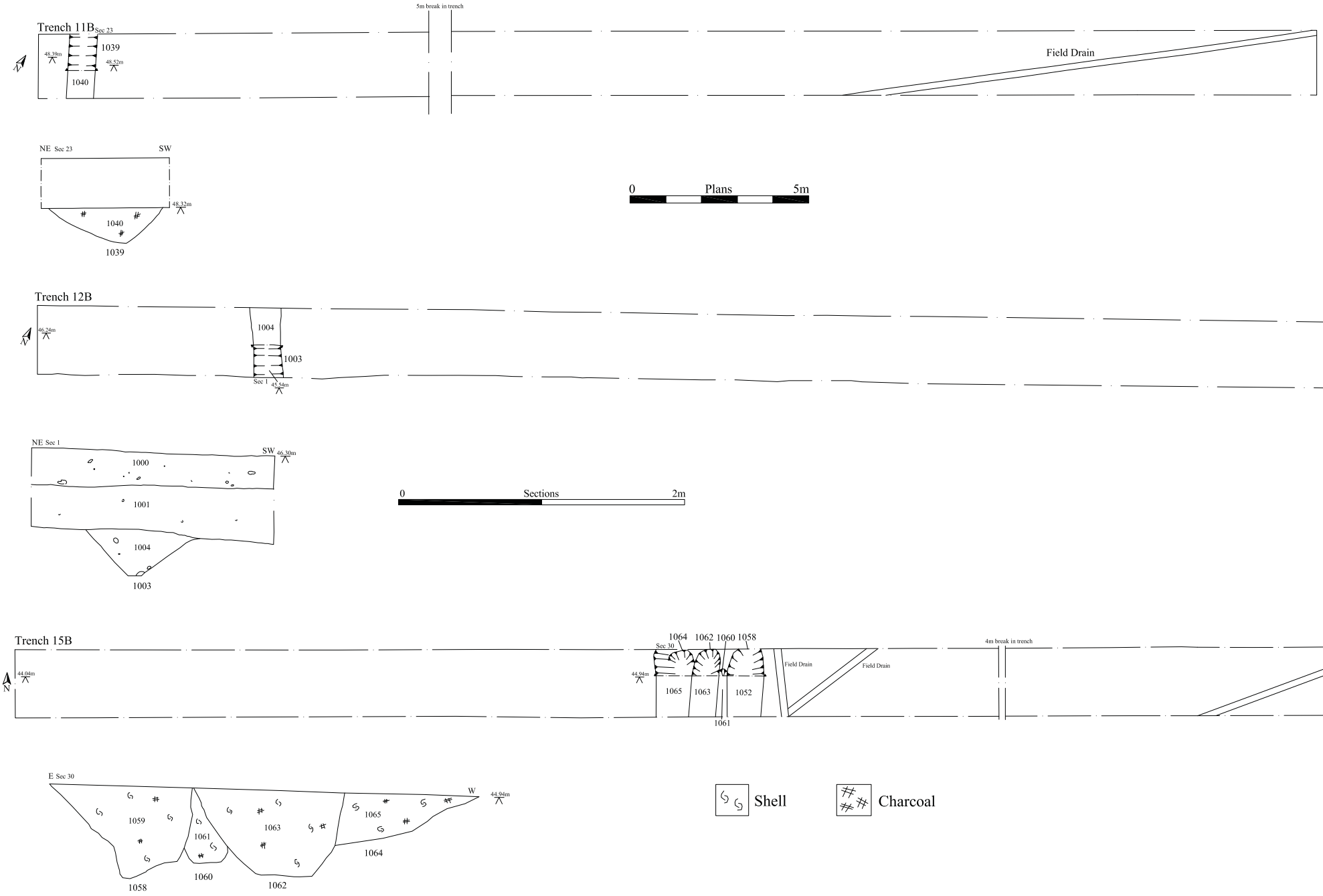
Scale: 1:1500 @ A3



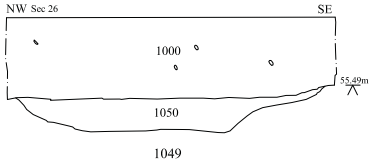
Archaeological Solutions Ltd.
Fig. 3 Plans and sections
Scale Plans at 1:100, sections at 1:25

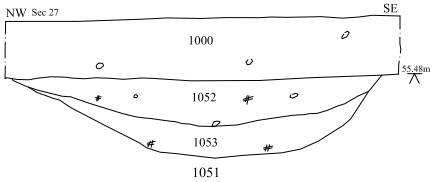


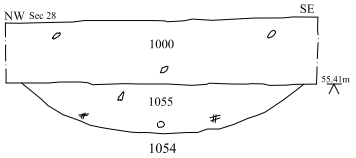
Archaeological Solutions Ltd.
Fig. 4 Plans and sections
Scale Plans at 1:100, sections at 1:25

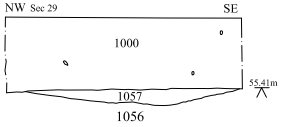


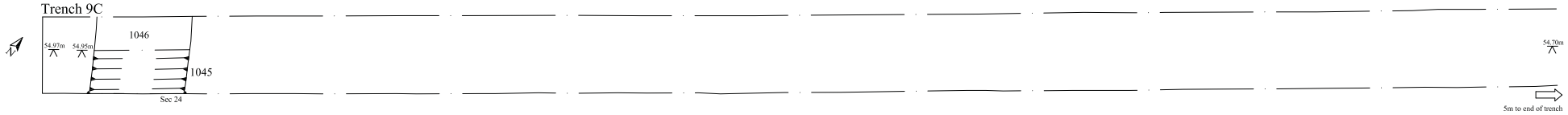
Archaeological Solutions Ltd.
Fig. 5 Plans and sections
Scale Plans at 1:100, sections at 1:25

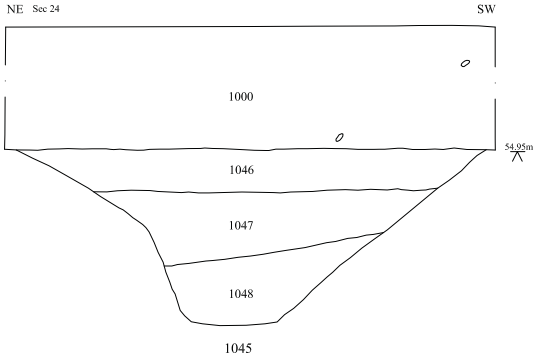












Charcoal

0 Sections 2m

0 Plans 5m

Archaeological Solutions Ltd.
Fig. 6 Plans and sections
Scale Plans at 1:100, sections at 1:25