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**ARCHAEOLOGICAL SOLUTIONS LTD**

**STATION HOUSE, ASPENDEN ROAD,  
BUNTINGFORD, HERTFORDSHIRE**

**ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION**

Authors: Zbigniew Pozorski MA (Fieldwork & report) Gary Brogan BSc (editor)	
NGR: TL 3646 2889	Report No. 3300
Parish: Aspenden St Mary	Site Code: AS 1152
Approved: Claire Halpin MIFA	Project No. 3191
Signed:	Date: May 2009

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<b>Project details</b>			
Project name	<i>Station House, Aspenden Road, Buntingford, Hertfordshire.</i>		
Project description	<p><i>In May 2009, Archaeological Solutions (AS) carried out an archaeological trial trench evaluation of land at Station House, Aspenden Road, Buntingford, Hertfordshire (NGR TL 3646 2889). The evaluation was undertaken in compliance with a planning condition related to the demolition of two buildings, the conversion of Station House and the erection of new housing (Plan. Ref. 3/2155/07/FP).</i></p> <p><i>The evaluation revealed an undated posthole, a tree hollow, and modern yard surfaces and demolition debris.</i></p>		
Project dates (fieldwork)	<i>14/05/2009</i>		
Previous work (Y/N/?)	<i>Y</i>	Future work (Y/N/?)	
P. number	<i>3191</i>	Site code	<i>AS 1152</i>
Type of project	<i>Trial trench evaluation</i>		
Site status	<i>-</i>		
Current land use	<i>Disused offices of Station House.</i>		
Planned development	<i>Residential redevelopment</i>		
Main features (+dates)	<i>One undated posthole</i>		
Significant finds (+dates)	<i>-</i>		
<b>Project location</b>			
County/ District/ Parish	<i>Hertfordshire</i>	<i>East Herts</i>	<i>Aspenden St Mary</i>
HER/ SMR for area	<i>Hertfordshire HER</i>		
Post code (if known)	<i>SG9 9JB</i>		
Area of site	<i>c. 1700m<sup>2</sup></i>		
NGR	<i>TL 3646 2889</i>		
Height AOD (max/ min)	<i>91-92m AOD</i>		
<b>Project creators</b>			
Brief issued by	<i>Historic Environment Unit, Hertfordshire County Council</i>		
Project supervisor/(PO)	<i>Zbigniew Pozorski</i>		
Funded by	<i>Bleriot Construction Ltd</i>		
Full title	<i>Station House, Aspenden Road, Buntingford, Hertfordshire; Archaeological Evaluation</i>		
Authors	<i>Pozorski, Z.</i>		
Report no.	<i>3300</i>		
Date (of report)	<i>May 2009</i>		

**OASIS SUMMARY SHEET**

# STATION HOUSE, ASPENDEN ROAD, BUNTINGFORD, HERTFORDSHIRE

## ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION

### SUMMARY

*In May 2009, Archaeological Solutions (AS) carried out an archaeological trial trench evaluation of land at Station House, Aspenden Road, Buntingford, Hertfordshire (NGR TL 3646 2889). The evaluation was undertaken in compliance with a planning condition related to the demolition of two buildings, the conversion of Station House and the erection of new housing (Plan. Ref. 3/2155/07/FP).*

*The evaluation revealed an undated posthole, a tree hollow, and modern yard surfaces and demolition debris.*

### 1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 In May 2009, Archaeological Solutions (AS) carried out an archaeological trial trench evaluation of land at Station House, Aspenden Road, Buntingford, Hertfordshire (NGR TL 3646 2889; Figs. 1 & 2). The evaluation was commissioned by Bleriot Construction Ltd., in compliance with a condition of planning consent required by the local planning authority (based on the advice of Hertfordshire County Council Historic Environment Unit – HCC HEU; Planning Ref. 3/2155/07/FP). It is proposed to redevelop the site for residential use and works comprise the demolition of two buildings, the conversion of Station House to two dwellings, the construction of two pairs of semi-detached houses and one terrace of four houses, and improvements to road access to the site.

1.2 The archaeological evaluation was undertaken according to a design brief issued by HCC HEU (dated 10/06/2008), and a specification prepared by AS (dated 16/06/2008) and approved by HCC HEU. The project conformed to the Institute of Field Archaeologists (IFA) *Code of Conduct and Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Field Evaluation* (revised 2001) and *Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Desk-Based Assessment* (revised 2001), as well as the document *Standards for Field Archaeology in the East of England*, East Anglian Archaeology Occasional Paper 14 (Gurney 2003).

1.3 The aim of the archaeological evaluation was to determine, as far as was possible, the location, extent, date, character, condition, significance and quality of any surviving archaeological remains liable to be threatened by the proposed development. It was important to establish the presence or absence of any remains relating to the railway station, and to identify any activity of earlier date associated with medieval or Roman settlement associated with the major contemporary roads. It was also important to understand the level of

truncation on the site and also to ascertain whether it would be possible to mitigate the development proposals to accommodate any surviving archaeological remains within the area of proposed redevelopment.

1.4 A previous programme of historic building recording of Station House was carried out by AS in 2008, as part of the planning condition (Williams & Prosser 2008).

### **Planning policy context**

1.5 The relevant planning policies which apply to the effect of development with regard to cultural heritage are Planning Policy Guidance Note 15 'Planning and the Historic Environment' (PPG15) and Planning Policy Guidance Note 16 'Archaeology and Planning' (PPG16) (Department of the Environment).

1.6 PPG16 (1990) is the national Planning Policy Guidance Note which applies to archaeology. It states that there should always be a presumption in favour of preserving nationally important archaeological remains *in situ*. However, when there is no overriding case for preservation, developers are required to fund opportunities for the recording and, where necessary, the excavation of the site. This condition is widely applied by local authorities.

1.7 PPG15 (1994) is the national Planning Policy Guidance Note which applies to the conservation of the historic environment by protecting the character and appearance of Conservation Areas and protecting listed buildings (of architectural or historical interest) from demolition and unsympathetic change and safeguarding their settings as far as is possible. This condition is also widely applied by local authorities.

## **2 DESCRIPTION OF THE SITE**

2.1 Buntingford is a large village in the northern part of Hertfordshire. It is approached from the south by the A10 London – Cambridge road which follows the course of Roman Ermine Street, which now bypasses the village to the west and continuing north (Fig. 1). The old line of Ermine Street continues through Buntingford and forms a spine around which the village has evolved. The river Rib flows through the centre of the village on its way south to join the Lea at Hertford. The Greenwich Meridian passes just to the east of the village. Buntingford is surrounded by open countryside characterised by large fields and sparse woodland. There are several smaller hamlets in the vicinity including Aspenden to the south, Chipping to the north and Wyddial to the north-east.

2.2 The site lies to the south of the historic core of Buntingford, to the south of Aspenden Road, a few metres west of its junction with the road which leads north-west into the town centre from the A10 (Fig. 2). The site contains the former Station House in its west part. The building is set on a north-south axis at the west side of an irregularly-shaped disused industrial yard area

measuring c. 1700m<sup>2</sup>. Two modern outbuildings to the south and east of Station House were recently demolished as part of this redevelopment. The site is surrounded by late 20<sup>th</sup> century suburban housing on all sides apart from the north-east where the Station Inn public house remains.

### **3 TOPOGRAPHY, GEOLOGY AND SOILS**

3.1 There is a gentle slope across the whole site downwards to the west and south-west and the nearby river. The site lies at approx 92-93m AOD.

3.2 Geologically, the formation of East Hertfordshire took place only relatively recently. The lowest geology comprises a layer of fine clay formed when the area of south-eastern England was still under the ocean. The drift geology consists mainly of glacial London Clay. The local soils are of the Ludford association described as deep well drained fine loamy, coarse loamy and sandy soils, locally flinty and in places over gravel (Soil Survey of England and Wales 1983).

### **4 ARCHAEOLOGICAL & HISTORICAL BACKGROUND**

#### *Prehistoric*

4.1 There is very little evidence for prehistoric activity in the vicinity of the town of Buntingford. Individual finds of a Neolithic basalt axe (HER 219), a Bronze Age barbed flint arrowhead (HER 220) and a late Iron Age coin of Cunobelinus (HER 6450) have all been recovered from within Buntingford to the north of the site. Further potential sites have been identified to the north of the town by aerial photography but the exact nature and period of these remains unclear.

#### *Romano-British*

4.2 Hertfordshire is generally characterised as a wealthy and populous area during the Romano-British period. One of the principal Roman roads, Ermine Street, runs approximately south-east to north-west through Buntingford, comprising the modern London Road as it passes directly adjacent to the eastern border of the site. Although no evidence of Roman settlement has been identified in the town of Buntingford, a cropmark of a Roman building, probably a corridor villa, has been identified c. 200m west of the site (HER 13219) and perpendicular ditches (HER 2255 2257), one of which contained Roman pottery have been recorded c.300-600m south of the site. Further Roman coins and pottery have been recovered from Alswick Hall Farm c.1.4km north-east of the site as well as a Roman coin from Aspenden Hall c.1.25km west of the site.

## *Medieval*

4.3 There is no evidence for a Saxon settlement at Buntingford and the Saxon predecessor of Buntingford was in fact located in the vicinity of St. Bartholomew's Church, Layston, before being superseded by settlement at Buntingford in the medieval period, which had more favourable access to communication routes. At the time of the Domesday survey the land around Buntingford was divided between several manors and parishes and the site is present on the eastern boundary of the parish of Aspenden and fronts onto the line of Ermine Street (modern London Road, and further north, High Street), one of the two trading routes. 14<sup>th</sup> century settlement of Buntingford was located along the High Street (formerly Ermine Street) with main buildings adjacent to the street and non-domestic and ancillary buildings to the rear. The market place was situated along the southern end of the High Street along with the Chapel of Ease (HER 10084), c. 500m north of the site, thought to have been on the site of modern St. Peter's by the 13<sup>th</sup> century. As the site is located south of the market place and medieval settlement, it appears to have been unaffected by this traffic despite its location on the former Ermine Street. All other recorded medieval sites in proximity to the site are to the north, within the known medieval extent of the settlement.

## *Post-medieval & early modern*

4.4 The town seems to have prospered in the post-medieval period, surpassing other settlements in the district but the site remained beyond the extent of the post-medieval town of Buntingford and almost certainly remained in its agricultural hinterland. A windmill in Downhall Field (HER 13385), c. 100m east of the site provides the nearest evidence of post-medieval activity in the area surrounding the site. Further archaeological elements relating to agriculture around post-medieval Buntingford are present within a 1km radius of the site in the form of a post/smock mill (HER 5984) and woodland boundaries (HER 2753). In 1863 the railway station was opened as the Buntingford branch of the Great Eastern Railway. The existing Station House dates from 1870s and it was a subject to Historic Building Recording programme carried out by AS in 2008 (Williams & Prosser 2008).

## *Modern*

4.5 The Station House was, until 1965, the British Rail station building at the terminus of the branch line from St Margarets to Buntingford. Since 1965 the railway has been dismantled and the Station House converted into offices.

4.6 The A10 was diverted to the west in 1986 when the Buntingford bypass was built to ease congestion through the town, thus truncating the landscape to the south and west of the site. No further archaeological remains, from any period, were recorded during the construction of the A10 bypass in the vicinity of the site, other than possible ditches of Roman date to the south of the site (HER 2255 / 2257).

## 5 METHODOLOGY

5.1 To evaluate the presence of any archaeological remains, the HCC HEU brief required trial trenching of a 5% sample of the site. Three trenches, measuring 10m x 2m, were excavated in locations approved by HCC HEU (Fig. 2).

5.2 The trenches were mechanically excavated using a 360° excavator fitted with a toothless ditching bucket. Top soil and undifferentiated overburden were removed mechanically under close archaeological supervision. All further investigation was undertaken by hand. Exposed surfaces were cleaned by hand and examined for archaeological features and finds. 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 with a metal detector.

## 6 DESCRIPTION OF RESULTS

Trench 1 (Figs. 2-3, DPs 5-7)

*Sample sections:*

<i>Sample Section 3 (DP 7)</i>		
<i>North-east end, south-east facing</i>		
<i>0.00 = 91.52m AOD</i>		
0.00 – 0.39m	L1001	Tarmac surface of yard.
0.39 – 0.51m	L1002	Demolition layer. Greyish CBM rubble and gravel.
0.51 – 0.56m	L1003	Made ground. Layer of chalk.
0.56m +	L1004	Natural clay. Brownish yellow, compact silty clay.

<i>Sample Section 2</i>		
<i>South-west end, south-east facing</i>		
<i>0.00 = 91.51m AOD</i>		
0.00 – 0.30m	L1000	Demolition layer of orange CBM rubble.
0.30 – 0.70m	L1002	Demolition layer. As above.
0.70m +	L1004	Natural clay. As above.

*Description:*

Trench 1 contained one feature F1005. It had an irregular shape and profile (1.40 x 0.75 x 0.23m; DP 6) and contained a single fill L1006. The latter was a brownish yellow, friable clayey silt. F1005 was likely a tree hollow.



## Trench 2 (Figs. 2-3, DPs 8-10)

*Sample sections:*

<i>Sample Section 5 (DP 10)</i> <i>North-east end, south-west facing</i> <i>0.00 = 92.48m AOD</i>		
0.00 – 0.32m	L1009	Made ground. Black ash and rubble, with lenses of sand.
0.32 – 0.63m	L1010	Subsoil. Mid greyish brown, firm silty clay.
0.63m +	L1004	Natural clay. As above.

<i>Sample Section 6</i> <i>South-east end, south-west facing</i> <i>0.00 = 92.52m AOD</i>		
0.00 – 0.16m	L1009	Made ground. As above.
0.16 – 0.20m	L1003	Made ground. As above.
0.20 – 0.58m	L1010	Subsoil. As above.
0.58m +	L1004	Natural clay. As above.

*Description:*

Trench 2 contained one feature, F1007. It was circular (0.48 x 0.47 x 0.11m; DP 9) and located in the central part of the trench, and may represent the base of a posthole. It had moderately steep sides and a flattish base. Its single fill, L1008, was dark greyish brown, firm silty clay.

## Trench 3 (Figs. 2-3, DPs 11-12)

*Sample sections:*

<i>Sample Section 8 (DP 12)</i> <i>North end, west facing</i> <i>0.00 = 91.17m AOD</i>		
0.00 – 0.16m	L1009	Black rubble. As above.
0.16 – 0.25m	L1003	Made ground. As above.
0.25 – 0.32m	L1010	Subsoil. As above.
0.32m +	L1004	Natural clay. As above.

<i>Sample Section 7</i> <i>South end, west facing</i> <i>0.00 = 91.63m AOD</i>		
0.00 – 0.32m	L1009	Black rubble. As above.
0.32 – 0.38m	L1003	Made ground. As above.
0.38 – 0.55m	L1010	Subsoil. As above.
0.55m +	L1004	Natural clay. As above.

*Description:*

Trench 3 contained no archaeological features or finds. A modern service traversed the trench.

## **7 CONFIDENCE RATING**

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

## **8 DEPOSIT MODEL**

8.1 The upper deposit was former yard surfaces and demolition rubble. In the south-west part of the site, demolition layer L1000, CBM fragments and rubble, was located across the southern half of Trench 1 and this was partially overlying a tarmac yard surface L1001 present across the northern half of the trench. Within Trenches 2 and 3, L1009, a made ground layer of black ash and rubble, was the uppermost deposit. These layers varied in depth from 0.15m to 0.50m below existing.

8.2 Below the layers of rubble and building materials in each trench was a thin (c. 0.05 – 0.08m) made ground or bedding layer of chalk L1003. This was possibly the basal layer of the former station yard surfaces.

8.3 Subsoil (L1010) was located within Trenches 2 and 3. This was mid greyish brown, firm silty clay with chalk. It contained occasional small CBM fragments and was c. 0.30m deep. Its presence suggests that parts of the site, at least, have not been subjected to heavy truncation in the post-medieval to modern periods.

8.4 At the base of the stratigraphic sequence, some 0.55-0.70m below the existing ground surface, was natural silty brownish dark yellow, compact silty clay L1004.

## **9 DISCUSSION**

9.1 Despite the potential for archaeological remains no well-defined and dated features were recorded. The only archaeological feature found within the site was F1007 (Trench 2), a shallow undated posthole. A probable tree hollow was located in Trench 1. The evaluation did not reveal features or deposits relating to construction of the railway or Station House in 19<sup>th</sup> century, other than the remnants of make-up layers for the former yard surfaces. No evidence of activity pre-dating the 19<sup>th</sup> century was identified. The surviving subsoil in Trenches 2 and 3 suggests that parts of the site at least had not been heavily truncated by the 19<sup>th</sup> century development.

9.2 The research potential of the site is limited.

## 10 DEPOSITION OF THE ARCHIVE

10.1 Archive records, with an inventory, will be deposited with the finds from the site, at Hertford 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.

### ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Archaeological Solutions would like to thank Mr Pierre Bleriot of Bleriot Construction Ltd for funding the works and for his assistance, and the assistance of Kirby Cove Architects (in particular Mr Russell Hatton).

AS also would like to thank staff at the Hertfordshire County Council Historic Environment Record, for their assistance, and the staff at the Hertford Record Office. AS gratefully acknowledge the input and advice of Ms Alison Tinniswood of HCC Historic Environment Unit.

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## APPENDIX 1 HISTORIC ENVIRONMENT RECORD SUMMARY SHEET

<b>Site name and address:</b>	Station House, Aspenden Road, Buntingford, Hertfordshire
<b>County:</b> Hertfordshire	<b>District:</b> East Herts
<b>Village/Town:</b> Buntingford	<b>Parish:</b> <b>Aspenden St Mary</b>
<b>Planning application reference:</b>	3/2155/07/FP
<b>Client name/address/tel:</b>	Bleriot Construction Ltd
<b>Nature of application:</b>	Residential re-development
<b>Present land use:</b>	Former Station House; offices and gardens
<b>Size of application area:</b>	<b>Size of area investigated:</b> c.1700 sq m
<b>NGR (8 figures):</b>	TL 3646 2889
<b>Site Code:</b>	AS 1152
<b>Site director/Organisation:</b>	Archaeological Solutions Ltd
<b>Type of work:</b>	Archaeological Trial Trench Evaluation
<b>Date of work:</b>	14/05/09
<b>Location of finds/Curating museum:</b>	Hertford Museum
<b>Related SMR Nos: -</b>	<b>Periods represented: -</b>
<b>Relevant previous summaries/reports: -</b>	Williams, M & Prosser, L, 2008, <i>Station House, Aspenden Road, Buntingford, Hertfordshire; Historic Building Recording</i> , AS Report No. 3117
<b>Summary of fieldwork results:</b>	<i>In May 2009, Archaeological Solutions (AS) carried out an archaeological trial trench evaluation of land at Station House, Aspenden Road, Buntingford, Hertfordshire (NGR TL 3646 2889). The evaluation was undertaken in compliance with a planning condition related to the demolition of two buildings, the conversion of Station House and the erection of new housing (Plan. Ref. 3/2155/07/FP).</i>  <i>The evaluation revealed one undated posthole, a tree hollow, and modern yard surfaces and demolition debris.</i>
<b>Author of summary:</b> Zbigniew Pozorski	<b>Date of Summary:</b> May 2009

## PHOTOGRAPHIC INDEX



DP 1. Station House, Aspenden Road, Buntingford. Taken from E.



DP 2. The site with Trenches 1 and 2. Taken from SSW.



DP 3. SW part of the site with Trench 1. Taken from E.



DP 4. Works in Trench 3 and site entrance from Aspenden Road. Taken from SW.



DP 5. Trench 1. Taken from NE.



DP 6. Tree bole F1005, Trench 1. Taken from NE.



DP 7. Trench 1, NE end. Sample section.  
Taken from SE.



DP 8. Trench 2. Taken from SE.



DP 9. Posthole F1007, Trench 2. Taken  
from NNW.



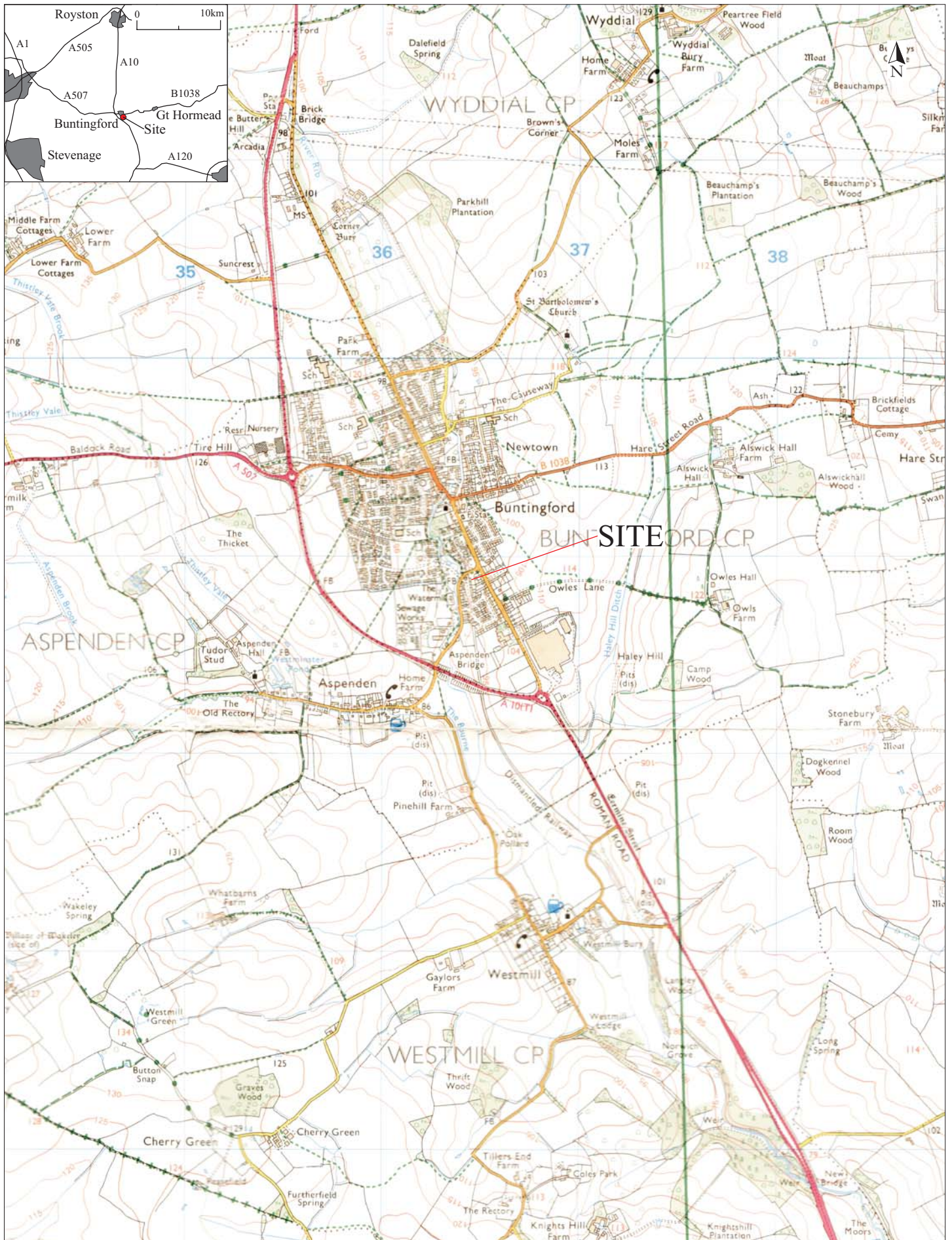
DP 10. Trench 2, NW end. Sample section.  
Taken from SW.



DP 11. Trench 3. Taken SSE.

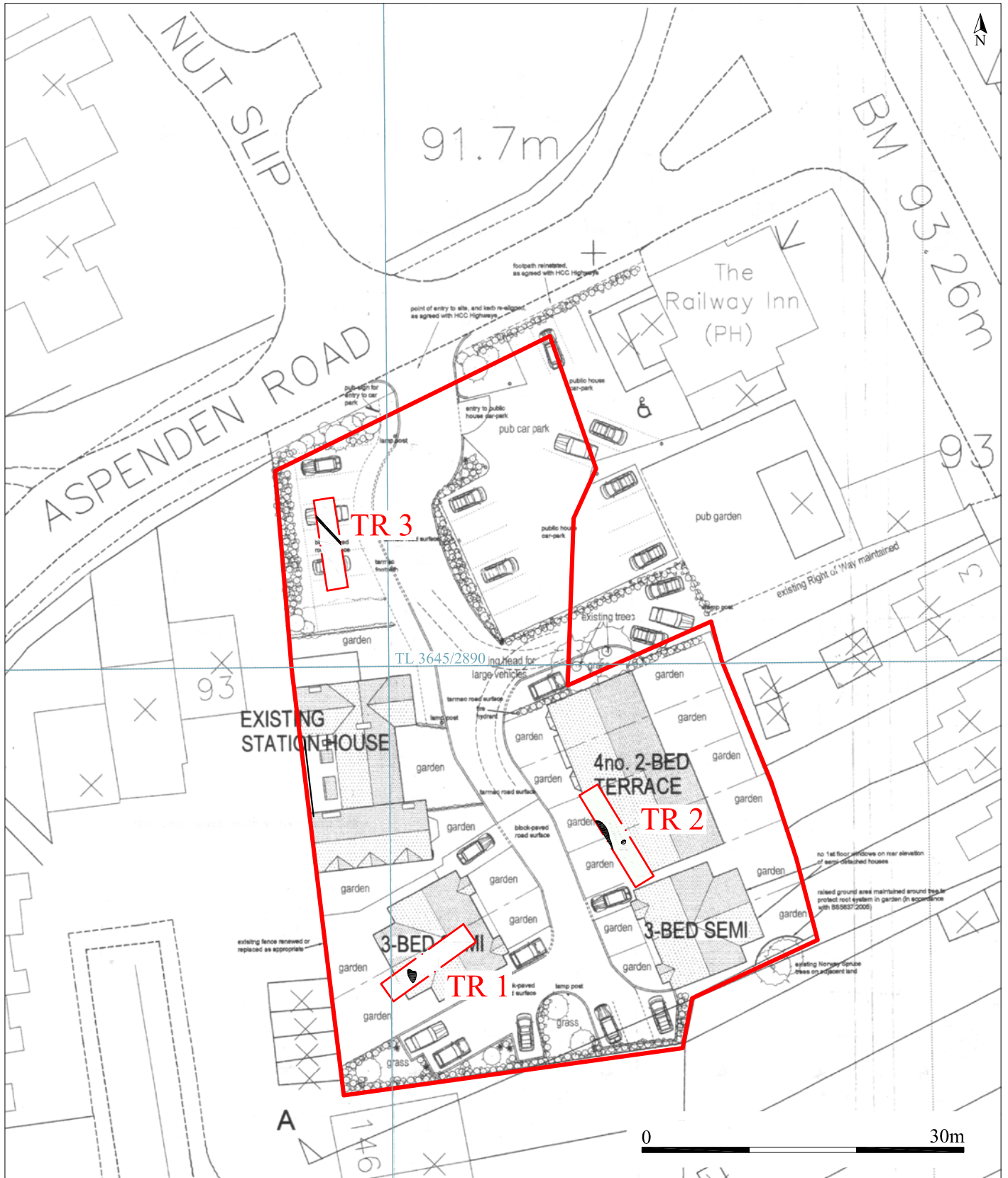


DP 12. Trench 3, N end. Sample section.  
Taken from W.



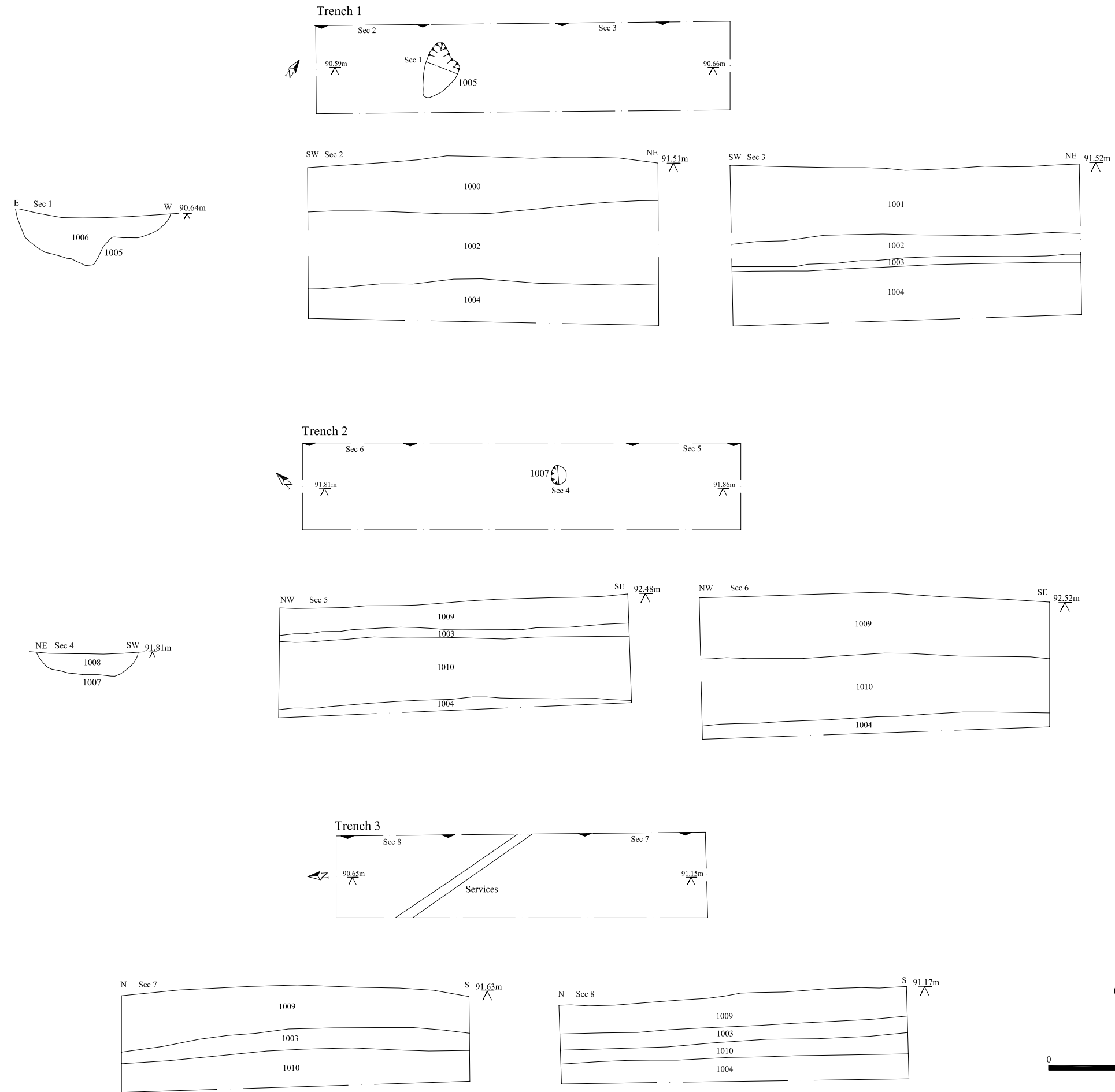
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**Fig. 1 Site location plan**  
 Scale 1:25,000 at A4



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**Fig. 2 Trench location plan**  
 Scale 1:500 at A4





0 Feature sections 50cm

0 Plans only 5m

0 Trench edge sections 2m

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**Fig. 3 Trench plans and sections**  
 Scale Plans 1:100, long sections 1:25, feature sections 1:20 at A3