ARCHAEOLOGICAL SOLUTIONS LTD

ST LUKE'S CHURCH SITE, STRAFFORD STREET, LONDON E14

AN ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION

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NGR: TQ 3727 7972	Report No. 3354
District: LB Tower Hamlets	Site Code: SLJ 09
Approved: Claire Halpin MIFA	Project No. 3575
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OASIS SUMMARY SHEET

Project details			
Project name	*St. Luke's Church Site, Strafford Street, London E14: An archaeological evaluation.*		
Project description *In August 2009, Archaeological Solutions (AS) carried out a programme of an archaeological evaluation of St. Luke's Church Site, Strafford Street, London (NGR TQ 3727 7972). The evaluation was undertaken in compliance with a planning condition attached to the planning permission for the construction of new residential units and the re-development of the church building.* *The site is located in the north-eastern corner of the Isle of Dogs, to the south of Canary Wharf.* *The evaluation revealed no archaeological features or finds. Deep natural alluvial and river terrace deposits present on the site were assessed for their environmental potential, but this proved to be low.*			
Project dates (fieldwork)	*03/08/2009*		
Previous work (Y/N/?)	*N*	Future work (Y/N/?)	*TBC*
P. number	*3575*	Site code	*SLJ 09*
Type of project	*Archaeological evaluation*		
Site status	-		
Current land use	*Existing buildings demolished*		
Planned development	*Residential dwellings*		
Main features (+dates)	-		
Significant finds (+dates)	-		
Project location			
County/ District/ Parish	*Greater London*	*East London*	*Tower Hamlets*
HER or SMR for area	*Greater London SMR*		
Post code (if known)	*E14 8LT*		
Area of site	*c. 820m^2*		
NGR	*TQ 3727 7972*		
Height AOD (max/min)	*c. 2m*		
Project creators			
Brief issued by	*EH GLAAS*		
Project Officers	*Zbigniew Pozorski*		
Funded by	*Kingsbury Construction Ltd*		
Full title	*St. Luke's Church Site, Strafford Street, London E14. An archaeological evaluation.*		
Authors	*Pozorski, Z.*		
Report no.	*3354*		
Date (of report)	*August 2009*		

ST LUKE'S CHURCH SITE, STRAFFORD STREET, LONDON E14

AN ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION

SUMMARY

In August 2009, Archaeological Solutions (AS) carried out a programme of an archaeological evaluation of St. Luke's Church Site, Strafford Street, London (NGR TQ 3727 7972). The evaluation was undertaken in compliance with a planning condition attached to the planning permission for the construction of new residential units and the re-development of the church building.

The site is located in the north-eastern corner of the Isle of Dogs, to the south of Canary Wharf.

The evaluation revealed no archaeological features or finds. Deep natural alluvial and river terrace deposits present on the site were assessed for their environmental potential, but this proved to be low.

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 In August 2009, Archaeological Solutions (AS) carried out a programme of archaeological evaluation of St. Luke's Church Site, Strafford Street, London (NGR TQ 3727 7972; Figs. 1 & 2). The evaluation was commissioned by Kingsbury Construction Ltd in compliance with a condition of planning consent required by the local planning authority (LB of Tower Hamlets Development Control). This consent was for the demolition of existing buildings on the site and the construction of a new three- and five-storey development comprising a new church, church hall and office space for community use, 21 residential units and a parsonage (Plan. Ref. PA/04/0880).

1.2 The archaeological evaluation was undertaken according to advice from English Heritage Greater London Archaeological Advisory Service (EH GLAAS) and a written scheme of investigation (specification) prepared by AS (dated 21/07/2009) and approved by EH GLAAS. The evaluation conformed to the Institute of Field Archaeologists (IFA) *Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Evaluation* (revised 2001).

1.3 The primary objective of the project was to determine the location, extent, date, character, condition, significance and quality of any surviving archaeological remains liable to be threatened by the proposed development. The evaluation also aimed to identify areas of previous ground disturbance on the site.

Planning policy context

1.4 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).

1.5 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.

1.6 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 Situated in the north-eastern corner of the Isle of Dogs, the site is bordered to the north by Strafford Street and to the south by Havannah Street. Adjacent to the east is St Luke's Church and an associated outreach centre. The majority of the surrounding area comprises residential housing.

2.2 The site being subject to archaeological evaluation covers an area of c.820m^2 and was occupied by St Luke's House, formerly the vicarage to St Luke's Church but later converted to residential flats/apartments. This building had been demolished to slab level prior to current development.

3 TOPOGRAPHY, GEOLOGY AND SOILS

3.1 The site lies at approximately 2m AOD and is underlain by alluvium (sand, silt and clay), which overlies the Lambeth Group. A site investigation report provided by the client indicated that the alluvium consists of soft to firm consolidated, compressible silty clay, and contains layers of silt, sand, peat and basal gravel. The Lambeth Group is made up of the Upnor Formation, Reading Formation and Woolwich Formation.

3.2 A series of boreholes sunk across the site demonstrated that 'made ground' extends to depths between 0.4m and 0.8m. Beneath this were layers of sandy clay/clay, equated to alluvium, which extend down to depths ranging between 2.3m to 4.5m below ground level. Beneath these stratum were noted layers of the Lambeth formation, including the grey shelly clays of the

Woolwich Formation (Fastrack Geotechnical Services 2008b).

4 ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

4.1 The London Borough of Tower Hamlets, and particularly the Isle of Dogs has produced a dearth of evidence for occupation or activity in all prehistoric periods from the Palaeolithic, Mesolithic and Neolithic (Lewis 2000 a, b and c) to the Bronze Age and Iron Age (Brown and Cotton 2000) in comparison to the plethora of evidence from the central London Boroughs to the west (including Westminster, Camden, Hackney and Southwark). However archaeological investigations in the vicinity have frequently encountered prehistoric layers/stratigraphy including Bronze Age peat c.150m to the east (GLSMR MLO98942), late Pleistocene/early Holocene sand and gravel layers c.250m to the south-east (GLSMR MLO75416) and a Neolithic to Bronze Age palaeochannel c.350m to the south-east (GLSMR MLO98945). Finds in the vicinity have been limited to a probable Mesolithic flint scraper and Neolithic and Bronze Age pottery c.250m to the west (GLSMR MLO77583) and repeated instances of potentially Neolithic or Bronze Age fire-cracked flint washed onto gravel spreads (i.e. GLSMR MLO99471 and MLO74313).

4.2 Despite the establishment of the Roman and Saxon urban centres of London, the Isle of Dogs continued to remain a relatively unexploited area of low-lying ground to the east of the nucleated settlement of London. Sparse Roman settlement has been suggested by a series of 2nd century AD gullies, pits and stakeholes recorded c.300m to the south-west (GLSMR MLO77584), while Roman pottery sherds have also been recovered c.150m to the south-west (GLSMR MLO98161).

4.3 The Isle of Dogs remained a sparsely populated marshland prior to its drainage in the 13th century, which allowed a small population to be supported by working the cornfields, meadows and pasturelands (Weinreb and Hibbert 1983, 423). A medieval nucleated settlement at Limehouse was situated c.900m to the north (GLSMR 080962) but is known to have become deserted, probably due to a catastrophic breach in the riverside embankment which occurred in 1488 and resulted in the area returning to its original marshy condition. Evidence for activity to the south of Limehouse on the Isle of Dogs (and in the vicinity of the site) comprises the location of the 13th century Pontefract or Pomfret Bridge c.350m to the south-east (GLSMR MLO19458) and an undated but probable late-medieval ditch c.100m to the north-east (GLSMR MLO74314).

4.4 Previously known as *Stepney Marsh*, The name *Isle of Dogges* first occurs in the *Thames Descripto* of 1588, apllied to a small island in the south-western part of the peninsular. The area was successfully re-drained in the 17th century by Dutch engineers and by later 17th century the area was known as the *Isle of Dogs* or *Blackwell Levels*.

4.5 The urbanisation of the Isle of Dogs began in the 19th century following

the construction of the West India Docks in 1802, c.400m to the east. The area became an important area for trade and the East India Docks were subsequently opened in 1806, followed by the Millwall Dock in 1868. In 1909 the three docks were unified with locks and the Isle of Dogs could once again almost be described as a genuine island. By 1901 21,000 people lived on the Isle of Dogs. Post-medieval archaeology associated with the docks and the mills that were situated on their banks is prolific in the vicinity, as are layers of made ground such as those noted in the geotechnical report (see 3.2). The closest recorded post-medieval archaeology to the site comprises building footings, wells and cess pits c.150m to the north-west (GLSMR MLO75419 and MLO99472).

4.6 During World War II the docks were heavily bombed and destruction was extensive in the area. Unexploded bombs from this period continue to be discovered today. After the war the docks underwent a brief resurgence and were refurbished in 1967, but due to the containerisation of shipping soon became obsolete and the last dock (the West India and Millwall Dock) closed down in 1980. During this decline the area descended into a severely dilapidated state with serious social deprivation and mass unemployment.

4.7 In 1981 the London Docklands Corporation was established to redevelop the area and proceeded to promote the construction of new office space and transport infrastructure, notably Canary Wharf and the Docklands Light Railway.

The Site

4.8 The 1869 to 1875 Ordnance Survey maps depict the site as undeveloped, but adjacent to terraced houses bult along Strafford Street and Thomas Street. The map depicts the West India and Millwall Dock to the east and north, with streets laid out between the exisiting housing and docks, suggesting the site is on the cusp of being urbanised.

4.9 By 1896 the site has been incorporated into a grid of urban streets with Strafford Street to the north and Havannah Street to the south. The site contains the vicarage of the adjacent St Luke's Church. In 1916 a hall ws built adjacent to the east, followed by the relocation of St Lukes Church to the same area between 1954 and 1970, and the construction of a Club on the old site of the church in 1973, suggesting significan ground disturbance and alteration on the eastern border of the site. During this time the vicarage remained largely unchanged but is converted into residential flats/apartments. By 1973 the increased urbanisation of the surrounding area resulted in the redevelopment of the streets to the south and truncation of Havannah Street forming the modern cul-de-sac.

5 METHODOLOGY

5.1 Advice from EH GLAAS required the excavation of a single trial trench. The trench, measuring 5 x 5m, was excavated in a location approved by EH GLAAS (Fig. 2). The trench location was also determined by the presence of root protection areas in the northern and southern parts of the site. The trench was stepped to allow safe access, given the depth of the natural gravel deposits. Following investigation, sampling and recording, steps were removed to allow photography. After this was completed the trench was immediately backfilled for safety reasons, following agreement with EH GLAAS.

5.2 Topsoil and overburden were excavated by a 180° mechanical excavator fitted with a toothless ditching bucket under close archaeological supervision. 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. Environmental samples were taken as appropriate including monolith samples of alluvium and other natural deposits. These samples were taken according to on-site advice and under the supervision of Dr Rob Scaife. In addition, excavated spoil was checked for finds and the trench was scanned by metal detector.

6 DESCRIPTION OF RESULTS

6.1 Trench 1

S end, W facing *0.00 = 2.14m AOD*		
0.00 – 0.25m	L1000	Rubble.
0.25 – 0.55m	L1001	Buried topsoil. Black, soft sandy silt with CBM.
0.55 – 1.15m	L1002	Levelling layer. Light to mid yellow, loose sand with gravel.
1.15 – 2.15m	L1004	Alluvium. Dark grey, compact clayey silt.
2.15 – 3.35m	L1005	Natural. Light yellow, loose sand.
3.35m+	L1006	Natural. Light brown, loose gravel.

Table 1. Sample section 1.

No archaeological features or finds were identified during the evaluation. In the north-western corner of the trench a modern sewerage trench was present. The deposits located above Alluvium L1004 comprised levelling deposits of likely modern date.

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 central part of the site was covered by modern CBM rubble L1000, created during the recent demolition of St Luke's House. The principal upper most deposit was Topsoil L1001, partially buried beneath rubble. Below, a levelling layer of sand (L1002) and a deposit of mid brownish grey, friable sandy silt with CBM (L1003) were present.

8.2 Natural deposits were present at *c.* 1.15m below the existing ground level, comprising alluvium L1004 which commonly overlay the basal deposits. L1004 was 1m in depth and capped a layer of sand L1005, which was 1.20m deep. At the base of the trench, at *c.*3.35-3.40m below ground level, gravel deposit L1006 was present. This sequence of three natural sediments appeared to be bedded horizontally, with no slope evident.

9 DISCUSSION

9.1 Despite a potential for archaeological remains on the site, no features or finds were present. The deposits present in Trench1 comprised relatively recent demolition/levelling layers overlying alluvial deposits.

9.2 The uppermost deposits likely relate to the modern development and redevelopment of the site.

9.3 The alluvial sequence was described and sampled on site by Dr Robert Scaife of Palaeopol, and his report is appended (Appendix 1). The site has little in the way of further potential for the recovery of significant palaeonvironmental evidence.

DEPOSITION OF THE ARCHIVE

Archive records, with an inventory, will be deposited at the London Archaeological Archives and Resource Centre (LAARC). 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 Kingsbury Construction Ltd for their co-operation and funding of the project and for their assistance (in particular Mr Sunil Arjan and Mr Hitesh Bhudia). AS is also pleased to acknowledge their agents, JCMT Architects, for their assistance (in particular Mr Stephen Richter).

AS gratefully acknowledge the input and advice of Mr David Divers of English Heritage Greater London Archaeological Advisory Service (EH GLAAS), and Krystyna Truscoe at of the Greater London Sites and Monuments Record (EH GLSMR).

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APPENDIX 1
SPECIALIST REPORT

Strafford Street, Canary Wharf: The environmental and geoarchaeological potential

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1.) Introduction

The development site at Strafford Street, Canary Wharf was visited on the 4th August 2009. An evaluation trench was machine excavated which allowed sediments overlying the basal gravels to be examined for their environmental and artefactual archaeology. Other than modern, contemporary building rubble/overburden and domestic rubbish, no significant archaeology was observed. The geoarchaeology was examined, described and sampled for future analysis if required.

This region of London has, in the past, been subject to a substantial number of such archaeological assessments by virtue of the extensive urban renewal. In general, these studies have produced a substantial amount of valuable palaeo-environmental information. These data have accrued because the River Thames floodplain and its tributary river valleys contain substantial deposits of organic peat and humic mineral sediments which formed under waterlogged anaerobic conditions. These sediments, in some cases, date back to the end of the last cold stage (the Devensian) and contain well preserved pollen and plant macrofossils. In proximity to this site are analyses along the line of the Docklands Light Railway (Scaife 1999, 2008, 2009) and the Jubilee Extension Line (Sidell *et al.* 2000; Scaife 2000). These studies have allowed detailed reconstruction's of the past vegetation, environment and archaeology.

Unfortunately, the site at Strafford Street has proven less useful than the above sites. This is due to the depositional environment at this particular locality. Here, there are no comparable peat or even humic sediments. There is, instead, a ca. 3.45m sequence of riverine sands and silts which have little organic content. This stratigraphy was described on site as follows. Colours are taken from a standard Munsell colour chart.

Depth metres.

0 – 0.97	Made ground. Dark soil containing building rubble and modern domestic rubbish.
0.97 – 1.69	Grey-brown silty clay. Brown mottles from decayed plant rootlets and gleying. 10YR 3/2.
	Coal (anthracite) at 0.80m.
1.69 – 1.76	Transition between sandy loam and overlying silty clay.
1.76 – 2.40	Marly sand/loam. Pale/buff brown (10 YR 6/6) with white calcareous (?tufa) inclusions. Small angular to sub-angular pebbles to 30mm and flint (80mm) at 1.80m.
	Colour change becoming progressively more orange/yellow-brown (10YR 6/6) downwards (oxidisation). Sand becoming medium and coarse downwards.
2.40 – 2.96	Sand with occasional small angular flints (to 10mm) Grey (10YR 4/2 to 5/3).
2.96 – 3.45	Grey and brown coarsely laminated medium and coarse fluvial sand (7.5YR 5/8). Laminations of 5-10mm.
3.45 -	Basal, coarse gravel. Water table at this height.

2.) Discussion

The Holocene alluvial sediments described above typically overlie a coarse basal gravel. This is thought to be of last glacial (Devensian) date and was deposited as a result of high-energy fluvial discharge. This may have been seasonal discharge in a periglacial environment with unstable soils and minimal vegetation cover. This allowed reworking of older, interglacial terrace gravels on to the lower floodplain.

At other sites, palaeochannels of early Holocene age may contain mineral and organic fills. Usually, however, there is a hiatus between the gravels and peat formation which started to accrete during the middle Holocene period (Sidell *et al.* 2000; Wilkinson *et al.* 2000. This was in response to regionally rising post-glacial relative (to land) sea level. This caused ponding back of freshwater river systems, here the Thames and its tributaries, and higher ground water tables. This provided suitable, anaerobic conditions for peat formation in the valleys. Fluctuations of relative sea level (RSL) and local topography also caused a number of differing phases of such peat accumulation with intervening alluvial sedimentation (Devoy 1977, 1980, 1982, 2000). Late prehistoric peat (Neolithic-Bronze Age) in many areas formed under floodplain alder carr woodland. With increasing wetness there was an intervening phase of change to wet grass-sedge-reed fen prior to the deposition of alluvium. This

culminated in the late prehistoric/early historic period with widespread deposition of floodplain alluvium.

At this site, the above typical sequence, differs in that there is strong evidence for fluvial conditions throughout. The basal gravels of Devensian age are overlain by medium-coarse laminated fluvial sand. Thus, it appears that the excavation site falls probably within a palaeochannel which ran through the floodplain which probably has the peat alluvial sequences described from nearby sites (e.g. the Docklands Light Railway). Initially, this fluvial regime was of low-medium energy and became progressively less with time and sediment infilling. Interestingly, as the energy became less, the sediments appear more calcareous. Whilst not wholly tufa, calcium was being accreted in the base rich water to give a loamy sediment.

At a depth of 1.76 to 1.69m there is a transition to a greyer, more obviously alluvial silt/clay sediment. It is possible that this sediment unit correlates with the upper alluvium of historic age which occurs as a veneer over many Thames and its tributary floodplains.

The upper alluvium has been subject to drying out as human developments from the Romano-British period took place influencing the local hydrology.

It can be noted that this excavation and sediment sequence does add some useful palaeo-geographic knowledge to the local area in providing evidence of the position of the palaeo-river channel which traversed this region.

3.) Environmental sampling and analysis

Overall, the sequence observed offers little potential for environmental analysis. The almost total lack of organic material negated sampling for plant macrofossils and thus providing material for radiocarbon dating.

The lower sediments comprise largely sands which are not suited to pollen or diatom analysis and therefore any potential for reconstructing local vegetation and depositional environment.

The upper alluvial unit comprising silt and clay may have some potential for pollen preservation. However, due to drying out and oxidation preservation is likely to be poor. Furthermore, without material suited to radiocarbon dating, any data obtained would be 'floating' within the known chronology of the region. Pollen might, however, provide a broad indication of the age of the sediments by comparison with known sequences.

As noted, there was no necessity to take bulk samples for macrofossil analysis. However, a stratigraphical (monolith) column was obtained for more detailed stratigraphical descriptions or attempts at pollen and diatom analysis.

4.) Conclusions

The following principal points have been made.

* The sediment sequence here appears to have been deposited in a fluvial channel in which predominantly sands were deposited.

* This contrasts with many other local sites which have peat and fine-grained alluvium.

* The nature of the sediments means that the site has little potential for palaeo-environmental reconstruction or dating using pollen, diatom, macrofossil analysis and radiocarbon dating.

* No archaeology was found and probably reflects the fact that this was a river environment.

* Study of this site has, however, proven useful in providing data on the position of the palaeo- river channel.

* Monolith samples were taken if attempts at pollen or diatom analysis are required.

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DP 12. Trench backfilling. View NNE.

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Fig. 1 Site location plan

Scale 1:25,000 at A4

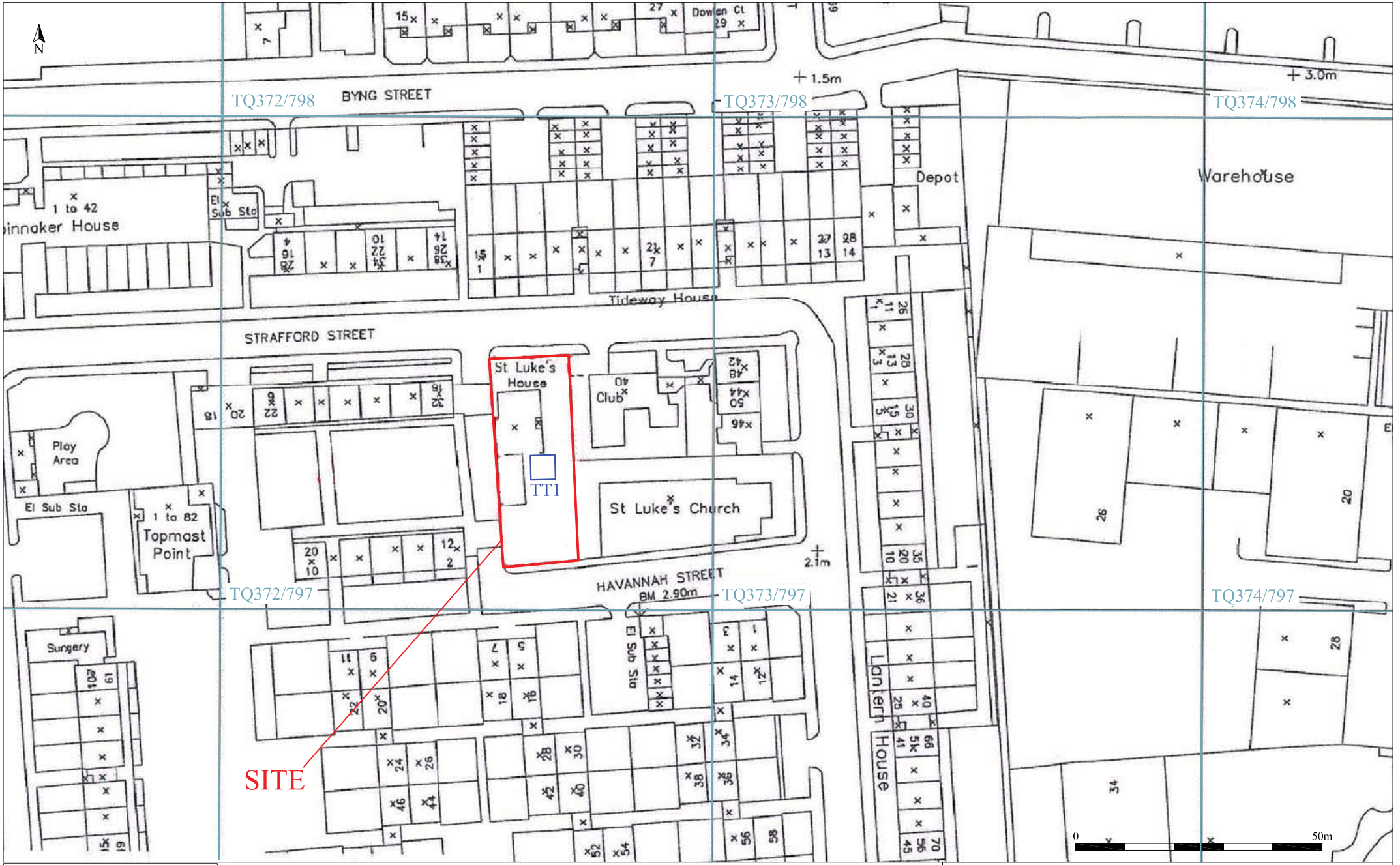

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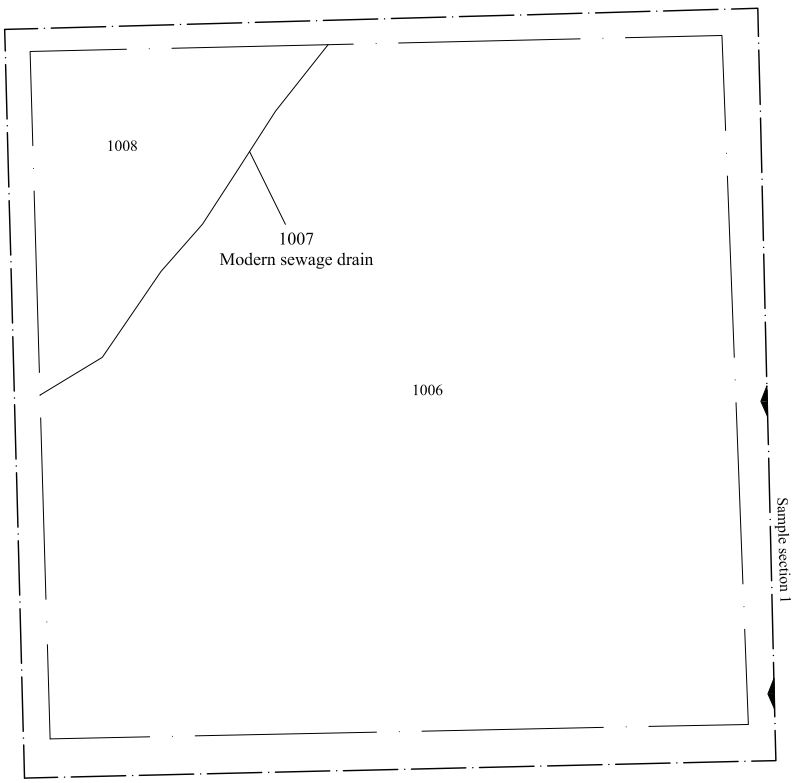
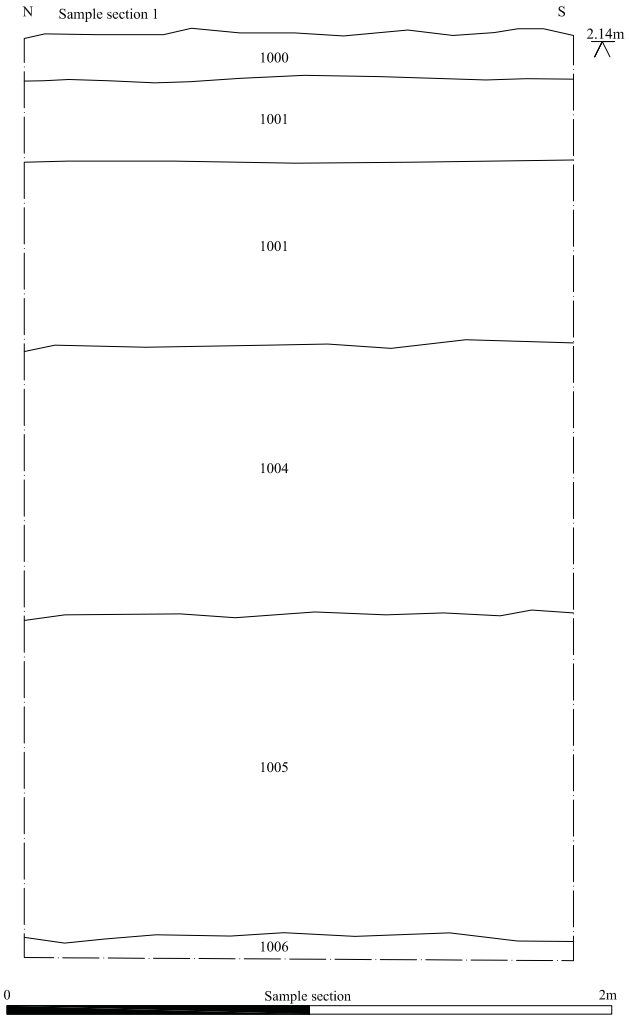
Fig. 2 Trench location plan

Scale 1:1000 at A4



0 Plan 3m



0 Sample section 2m

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Fig. 3 Plans & sections
Scale plan at 1:50 & sections at 1:25 at A4

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Fig. 1 Site location plan

Scale 1:25,000 at A4

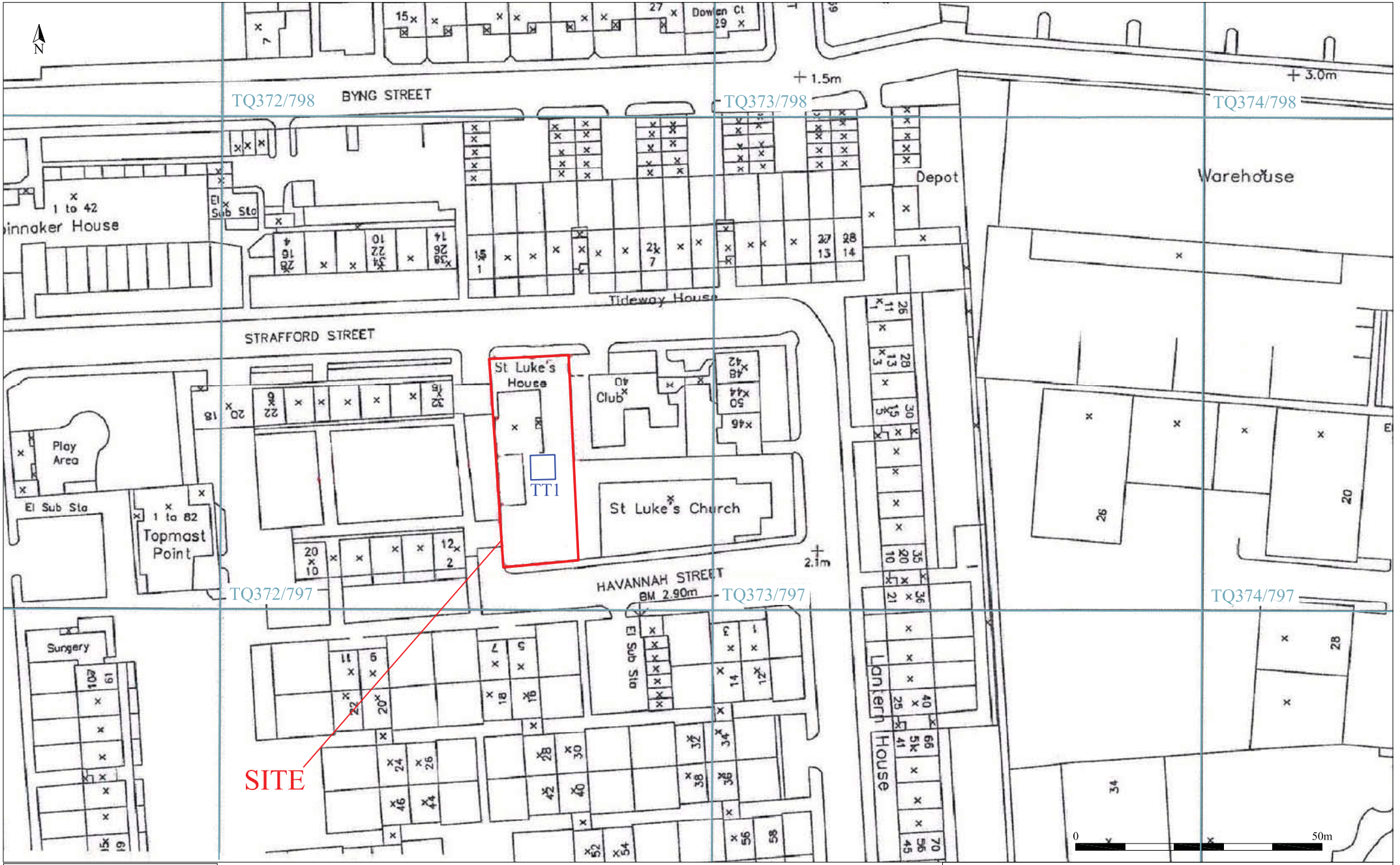

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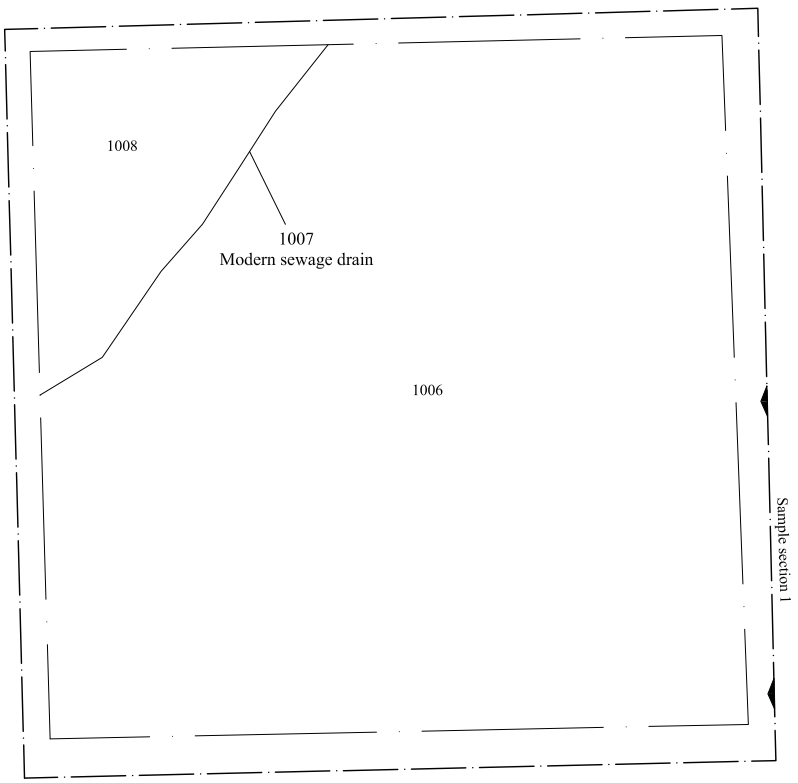
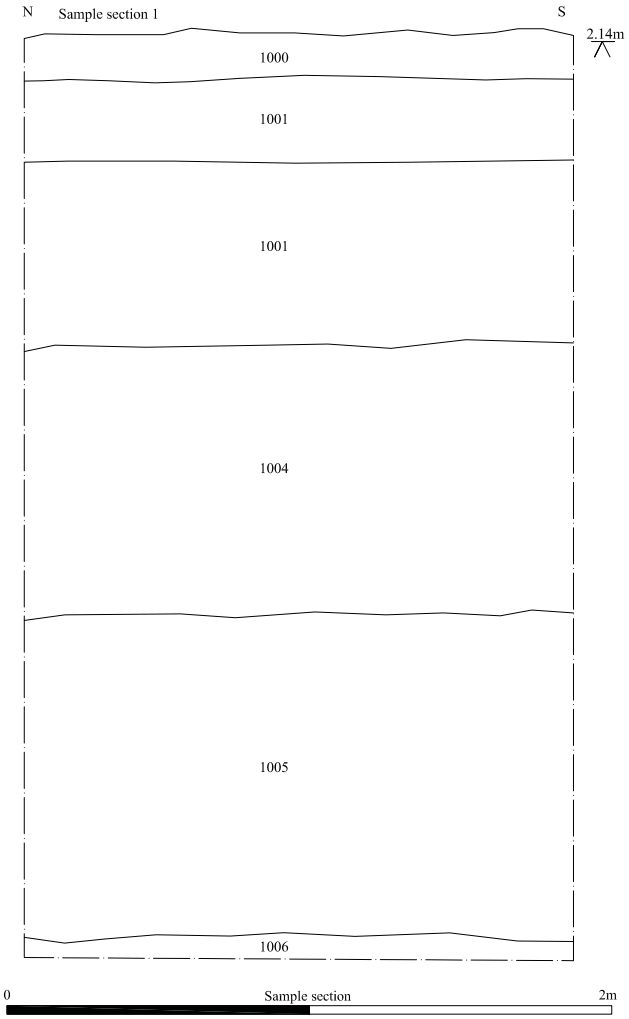
Fig. 2 Trench location plan

Scale 1:1000 at A4



0 Plan 3m



0 Sample section 2m

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Fig. 3 Plans & sections
Scale plan at 1:50 & sections at 1:25 at A4