



Northamptonshire  
County Council

# Northamptonshire Archaeology

Archaeological Evaluation

Buckton Fields,

Northamptonshire

August 2006



Christopher Jones  
Anne Foard-Colby  
Carol Simmonds

September 2006

Report 06/131

## Northamptonshire Archaeology

2 Bolton House

Wootton Hall Park

Northampton NN4 8BE

t. 01604 700493 f. 01604 702822

e. [sparry@northamptonshire.gov.uk](mailto:sparry@northamptonshire.gov.uk)

w. [www.northantsarchaeology.co.uk](http://www.northantsarchaeology.co.uk)



**NORTHAMPTONSHIRE ARCHAEOLOGY**  
**NORTHAMPTONSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL**  
**SEPTEMBER 2006**

*NGR SP 7468 6514*

**ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION**  
**BUCKTON FIELDS,**  
**NORTHAMPTONSHIRE**  
**SEPTEMBER 2006**  
**REPORT 06/131**

*STAFF*

Project Manager Anthony Maull BA

Fieldwork Christopher Jones

Peter Haynes

Text Christopher Jones

Anne Foard-Colby Cert Ed

Carol Simmonds BA

Finds Andy Chapman BSc

Illustrations Hale Moharramzadeh BA, MA

Carol Simmonds

*QUALITY CONTROL*

	Name	Signed	Date
Checked by	P. Chapman		
Verified by	A. Maull		
Approved by	S. Parry		

BUCKTON FIELDS, NORTHAMPTONSHIRE

**OASIS REPORT FORM**

<b>PROJECT DETAILS</b>		
Project title	Buckton Fields, Northamptonshire	
Short description	An archaeological evaluation was undertaken by Northamptonshire Archaeology at Buckton Fields, Northamptonshire, on behalf of the Environment Dimension Partnership (EDP) for their clients Ensign Group Ltd, in August 2006. Twenty four 50m trenches were excavated across the eastern part of the development area. The evaluation identified a number of natural geological features/variatioins within field 2. A Mesolithic flint flake was found at the interface between the subsoil and one of the natural striations. The features all corresponding with a series of anomalies identified from geophysical survey and aerial photography. It was also successful in recovering the remnants of the surviving anti-aircraft battery structures dating from World War II, confirmed by the presence of two linear ditches. No other archaeological features were present.	
Project type	Field Evaluation, Trial Trenching	
Previous work	Geophysical survey and Desk Based Assessment	
Future work	Field evaluation on fields to the west	
Monument type And period		
Significant finds		
<b>PROJECT LOCATION</b>		
County	Northamptonshire	
Site address	Buckton Fields, Northamptonshire	
Easting	4747	
Northing	2651	
Height OD		
<b>PROJECT CREATORS</b>		
Organisation		
Project brief originator	The Environmental Dimension Partnership	
Project Design originator	Northamptonshire Archaeology	
Director/Supervisor	Christopher Jones	
Project Manager	Anthony Maull	
Sponsor or funding body		
<b>PROJECT DATE</b>		
Start date	August 2006	
End date	August 2006	
<b>ARCHIVES</b>	<b>Location (Accession no.)</b>	<b>Content (e.g. pottery, animal bone etc)</b>
Physical		
Paper		Site records, Photographs/Slides, Drawings/Reports
Digital		CD ROM
<b>BIBLIOGRAPHY</b>		
	Journal/monograph, published or forthcoming, or unpublished client report (NA report)	
Title		
Serial title & volume		
Author(s)		
Page numbers		
Date		

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**ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION**  
**BUCKTON FIELDS,**  
**NORTHAMPTONSHIRE**  
**AUGUST 2006**

*ABSTRACT*

*An archaeological evaluation was undertaken by Northamptonshire Archaeology at Buckton Fields, Northamptonshire, on behalf of the Environment Dimension Partnership (EDP) for their clients Ensign Group Ltd, in August 2006. Twenty four 50m trenches were excavated across the eastern part of the development area. The evaluation identified a number of natural geological features/variations within field 2. A Mesolithic flint flake was found at the interface between the subsoil and one of the natural striations. The features all corresponding with a series of anomalies identified from geophysical survey and aerial photography. It was also successful in recovering the remnants of the surviving anti-aircraft battery structures dating from World War II, confirmed by the presence of two linear ditches. No other archaeological features were present.*

**1 INTRODUCTION**

Archaeological evaluation (trial trenching), was undertaken by Northamptonshire Archaeology (NA) during August 2006 on land proposed for housing and associated infrastructure. Northamptonshire Archaeology was commissioned to undertake the work by The Environment Dimension Partnership (EDP) on behalf of their clients the Ensign Group Ltd in order to inform a planning application for the construction of housing plots and associated infrastructure at Buckton Fields, Northamptonshire (Fig 1; NGR SP 7468 6514).

The required work forms part of a two-staged approach to the site, with stage 1 forming the current works consisting of the excavation of 24 trenches (42-65) in the eastern part of the site. Stage 2 will involve the excavation of a further 41 trenches (1- 41) in the western fields. Due to access issues, it is unclear when the second stage of work will be undertaken.

The evaluation met the requirements of the specification issued by the Environmental Dimension Partnership (EDP 2006), and approved by Northamptonshire County Council's Senior Environmental Planner, archaeological advisor to the Planning

Authority on 10th July 2006.

Monitoring of the programme of fieldwork was carried out by Northamptonshire County Council's Senior Environmental Planner. All procedures complied with the Northamptonshire County Council Health and Safety provisions and Northamptonshire Archaeology Health and Safety at Work Guidelines and NA's Excavation and Recording manual. All works were conducted in accordance with the IFA *Standards and Guidance for Archaeological field Evaluation* (1999) and the *Code of Conduct of the Institute of Field archaeologists* (1998, revised 2000).

The purpose of the archaeological evaluation was to determine and understand the potential nature, function, character and date of any archaeological evidence at the site in its environmental and cultural setting.

## **2 BACKGROUND**

### **2.1 Topography and geology**

The proposed development site lies in a field to the north of Northampton known as Buckton Fields or Whitehills. Bounded on the east by the A508 Harborough Road North, to the north by Brampton Lane, the site currently consists of rough grassland and scrub. The site is on a hillside, sloping down to the west at between 115m to 103mOD.

The geology of the site is mapped by the British Geological as Northampton Sand and Ironstone, together with smaller areas of Upper Lias Clay and Lower Estuarine Series deposits (Fig 2; British Geological Survey, England and Wales, sheet No. 185, 1980 edition).

### **2.2 Archaeological & Historical Background**

Archaeological desk-top assessment, geophysical survey (two stages were carried out in 1999 and 2005) and a limited amount of field walking has been undertaken across the site area. There is an extensive range of archaeological information for the general area to the north of Northampton, consisting primarily of prehistoric and Roman material and documented World War II features. In particular, the area near the river to the west of Buckton Fields contains crop mark evidence for prehistoric and Roman sites.

The two stages of archaeological geophysics identified several anomalies. In the first stage possible enclosure ditches were identified in field 1 and several anomalies

indicating position of ditches and pits (Masters 1999). Evidence for activity was confirmed in 2005 when a trackway and a rectilinear enclosure (see below) were identified (Butler 2005). In addition evidence of quarrying and other disturbance was highlighted.

A local amateur archaeologist/historian noted the presence of four earthworks in what has been labelled Field 3. These included a motte or ringwork in the north-west corner of field 3, a trapezoidal platform on the northern boundary, a promontory bank and ditch thrusting north from the southern boundary and a possible oval enclosure to the east cut by the A508 (Welsh, 1990).

### **2.3 Historic Environment Record**

A number of archaeological sites have been identified within the development area.

A rectilinear enclosure measuring approximately 80m long and 50m wide (Fig 2, A) was located during the geophysical survey in 2005 and may be of prehistoric date. In addition a large anomaly, possibly of geological origin was recorded to the south of the survey area. Aerial photographs show parallel ditches (SMR 4637) which may represent a trackway leading to the enclosure referred to above (Fig 2). They were also identified during the geophysical survey (Butler 2005).

Further sub-circular enclosures, with associated pits and ditches (SMR 9992) were identified during geophysical survey at the eastern end of the Field 1. They include possible sub-rectangular and circular enclosure ditches, as well as linear and pit type responses. Field walking during 1999 produced prehistoric and Roman finds in this area.

Initially the identified World War II defensive site (Fig 2 SMR 4426) was interpreted as Bronze Age ring ditch complex, but further aerial survey and geophysical survey confirmed the irregular nature of the anomalies, which were then re-interpreted as the site of WWII search light / gun emplacement structures (EDP 2006).

## **3 OBJECTIVES**

The main objective of the archaeological excavation, as defined in the Design Brief, was to determine whether significant archaeological remains, and in particular

- To assess determine the nature, character and date of any archaeological remains present on the site



- To assess the degree of truncation caused by modern activity.
- To place the archaeology of the site within its local, regional and national archaeological context.
- To define any potential constraints for further archaeological fieldwork including areas of disturbance, service locations etc.
- To inform research and conservation issues including the need for further fieldwork or preservation in situ.

## **4 METHODOLOGY**

### **4.1 Trial Excavation**

A total of twenty four trenches 50m long (numbered 42-65) were excavated using a 360° mechanical excavator fitted with a 1.8m wide toothless ditching bucket under continuous archaeological supervision. The topsoil surviving subsoil (where observed) were removed to reveal the first significant archaeological layers or in their absence the natural substrate. All trenches were located in relation to the OS national Grid by Leica system 1200 GPS and levels were related to the Ordnance Datum. Trenches were only machine excavated after the grass area encompassing each trench was checked by the EDP ecologist after having been mown by landscape contractor to a height of 200mm due to the possible presence of grass snakes.

The trenches were positioned to examine the results from the geophysical and crop mark evidence as well as features suggested by Welsh (Fig 2 & 3; Welsh 1995). Trenches were numbered 42 – 65 with any features within each trench being numbered using the trench number as a prefix (i.e. layer 4201 was in Trench 42).

The character, composition and general depositional sequence of the site stratification were recorded on pro-forma sheets, with a unique context number being allocated to each distinct deposit and feature. This was supported by a full photographic record comprising both 35mm monochrome negatives with associated prints, and colour transparencies

All trenches were backfilled upon completion of the works.

All records completed during fieldwork have been compiled into a comprehensive and fully cross-referenced site archive.

## 5 RESULTS

### 5.1 Trial Excavation

#### *General soil sequence*

Natural Ironstone, sand and clay were encountered at the base of all trenches at a depth of between 0.35m-0.73m. The area of sandy clay was present in a central spit through fields 2 and 3, in the vicinity of trenches 50, 51, 63 and 64 (Fig 3). This was overlain in all the trenches by a subsoil deposit of light mid brown sandy soil with occasional small stones which varied between 0.10m- 0.27m thick, which was sealed by a topsoil layer of soft dark brown soil with isolated pebbles and root disturbance, with a maximum thickness of 0.35m. The only difference in the soil sequence observed in trench 55 which comprised an additional, deeper subsoil at the western end of the trench mirroring a change in contour.

#### *Field 2 (trenches 42-54)*

This field is situated within the north-east corner of the application area and contains a series of possible archaeological features recovered during geophysical survey and air photographic survey. Of the 13 trenches excavated, 6 (Trenches 43, 50-54) were positioned in order to ascertain the nature of the cropmarks and geophysical anomalies. Machine excavation, hand cleaning and limited investigation revealed a number of geological features (Fig 4) within the underlying natural geology in all of the trenches apart from Trench 52. The geological features were all found to define subtle changes within the underlying natural strata in the form of irregular, linear and curvilinear silt-filled striations or in the case of Trench 43 a distinct change in the underlying natural Ironstone and sand corresponding to a sharp break of contour. Due to the presence of a flint flake on the surface of one of the striations [5405] within trench 54, it was sample excavated and found to contain a very sterile, leached, light, yellow sand (5404) (Fig 5, Section 1).

Other features of note were within Trench 52, where two parallel linear ditches were identified aligned north to south. One of these was excavated, [5205]. It measured 1.5m wide by 0.25m deep and was filled by a soft sandy silt (5204), with inclusions of brick and clinker (Fig 5 Section 2). The ditches relate to anti-aircraft battery structures dating from World War II.

The remaining 7 trenches (Trenches 42, 44-49) were devoid of archaeological features.

*Field 3 (trenches 55-65)*

This field is situated within the south-east corner of the application area, within an area of possible earthworks first noted during a field survey by Dr T C Welsh in 1990. However after machine excavation, cleaning and limited hand investigation no archaeological features were identified. The 'earthworks' within the field corresponded with natural undulating topography reflecting the underlying natural geology at the boundary between the Northampton Sand and Ironstone to clays of the Lower Estuarine Series (Figs 2 and 5, Section 3 and 4), the sections detailing the depth variation from east to west within trench 55.

## **6 THE FINDS**

### **6.1 The worked flint** by Andy Chapman

A single struck flint was recovered from context (5404). It is in a light brown vitreous flint and is a small rod-like blade, 23mm long by 4mm wide, retouched along one edge. One end is broken but part of an obliquely aligned, retouched edge survives. This therefore appears to be a broken, obliquely blunted microlithic point of Mesolithic date.

No other finds were recovered from any of the trenches or the spoil heaps.

## **7 CONCLUSIONS**

The evaluation identified a number of natural geological features/variations within field 2 which corresponded with the anomalies found by the geophysical survey and the series of possible cropmarks identified by aerial photography (Fig 4). It was also successful in recovering the remnants of the surviving anti-aircraft battery structures dating from World War II, confirmed by the presence of two linear ditches in Trench 52.

The discrepancy between the plotted anomalies and the results of the trial trenching was probably due to rectification errors. The results from the crop marks and geophysical survey, reported in an earlier report (NA 2005) now appear to show changes across the fields, from the ironstone to sand and clay natural.

No archaeological features were found to correspond with the potential earthworks noted by Welsh in 1995 within field 3. It is likely that these features relate to changes in the natural contours and underlying natural soils, such as the highlighted change from sandy

clay to ironstone, both of which generally match with the British Geological Survey for England and Wales.

The results from the remaining trenches were negative, suggesting that no archaeological remains survive within Stage 1 of the application area. Parallel ditches noted in the SMR (4637) and identified by geophysical survey and aerial photography to the west of the stage 1 works, do not continue into the area as they would have been found within trenches 62-65. However, the lack of archaeological deposits within fields 2 and 3 does not preclude the potential for archaeological remains within field 1 to the west of the current works, where survival of the possible trackway, rectilinear enclosure and a series of sub-circular enclosures may be suggested from cropmark evidence.

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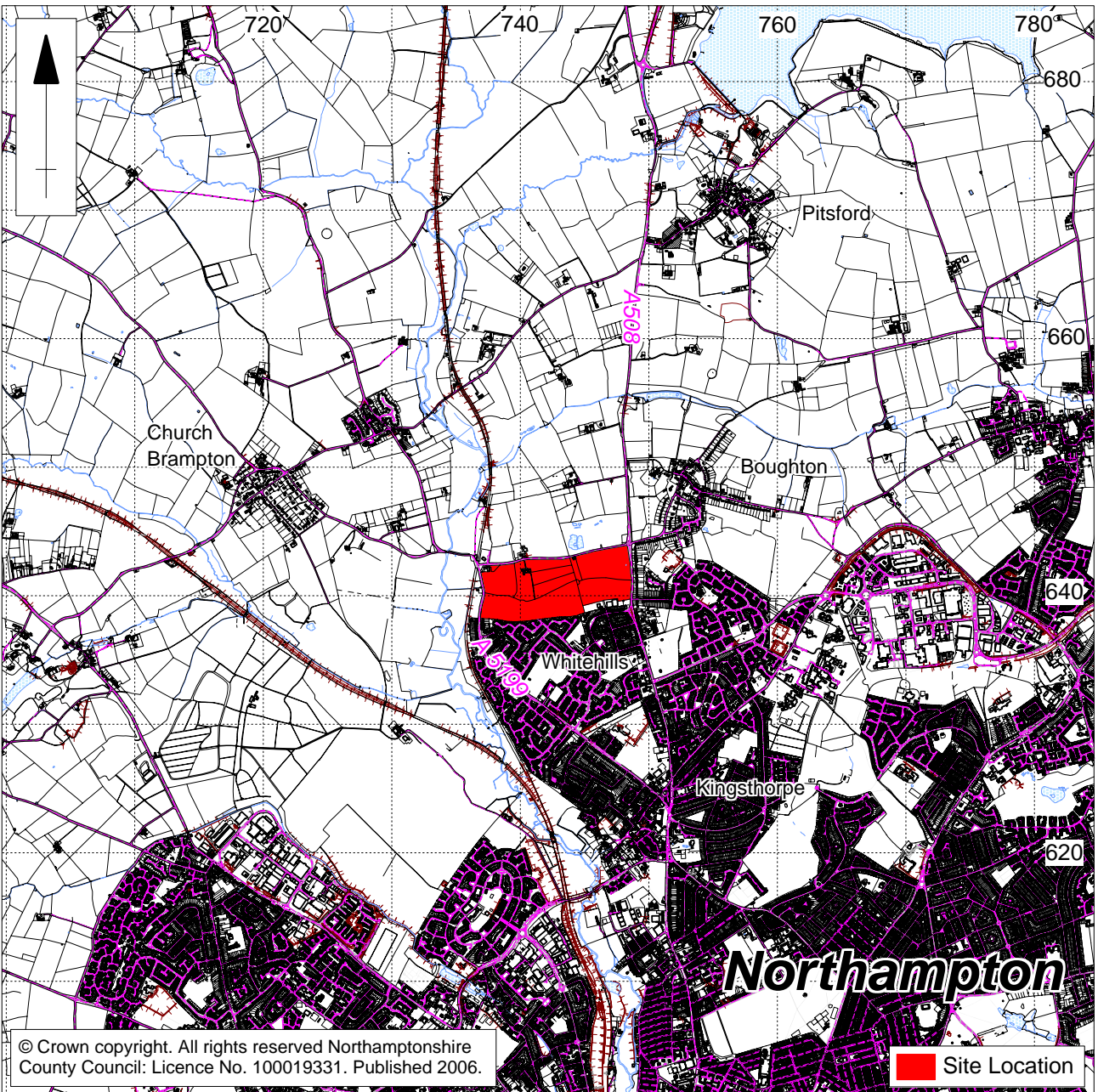
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Welsh, T C, 1995 *Earthworks, Whitehills, Boughton/ Kingsthorpe* Unpublished paper

## APPENDIX 1: SITE CONTEXT DATA

Trench no.	Context	Type	Description	Trench Depth (metres)
42			No archaeology present	0.40
43			No archaeology present	0.56
44			No archaeology present	0.73
45			No archaeology present	0.60
46			No archaeology present	0.70
47			No archaeology present	0.60
48			No archaeology present	0.51
49			No archaeology present	0.62
50			No archaeology present	0.54
51			No archaeology present	0.45
52	5204	Fill	Fill of ditch [5205] sandy silt with small stones and brick fragments and clinker, 1.5m wide and 0.05m deep	0.55
	5205	Cut	Cut of linear ditch aligned N-S measuring 1.5m wide by 0.25m deep, with shallow sloping sides and flat base.	
	5206	Fill	Fill of [5207], similar to (5204) on surface	
	5207	Cut	Cut of linear ditch aligned N-S, unexcavated	
53			No archaeology present	0.56
54	5404	Fill	Fill of natural striation [5405] light yellow, clean sandy clay with some ironstone fragments and small Mesolithic flint flake,	0.51
	5405	Cut	Cut of natural striation, aligned NE-SW with flat base	
55			No archaeology present	0.98
56			No archaeology present	0.50
57			No archaeology present	0.54
58			No archaeology present	0.60
59			No archaeology present	0.53
60			No archaeology present	0.35
61			No archaeology present	0.63
62			No archaeology present	0.59
63			No archaeology present	0.56
64			No archaeology present	0.54
65			No archaeology present	0.49

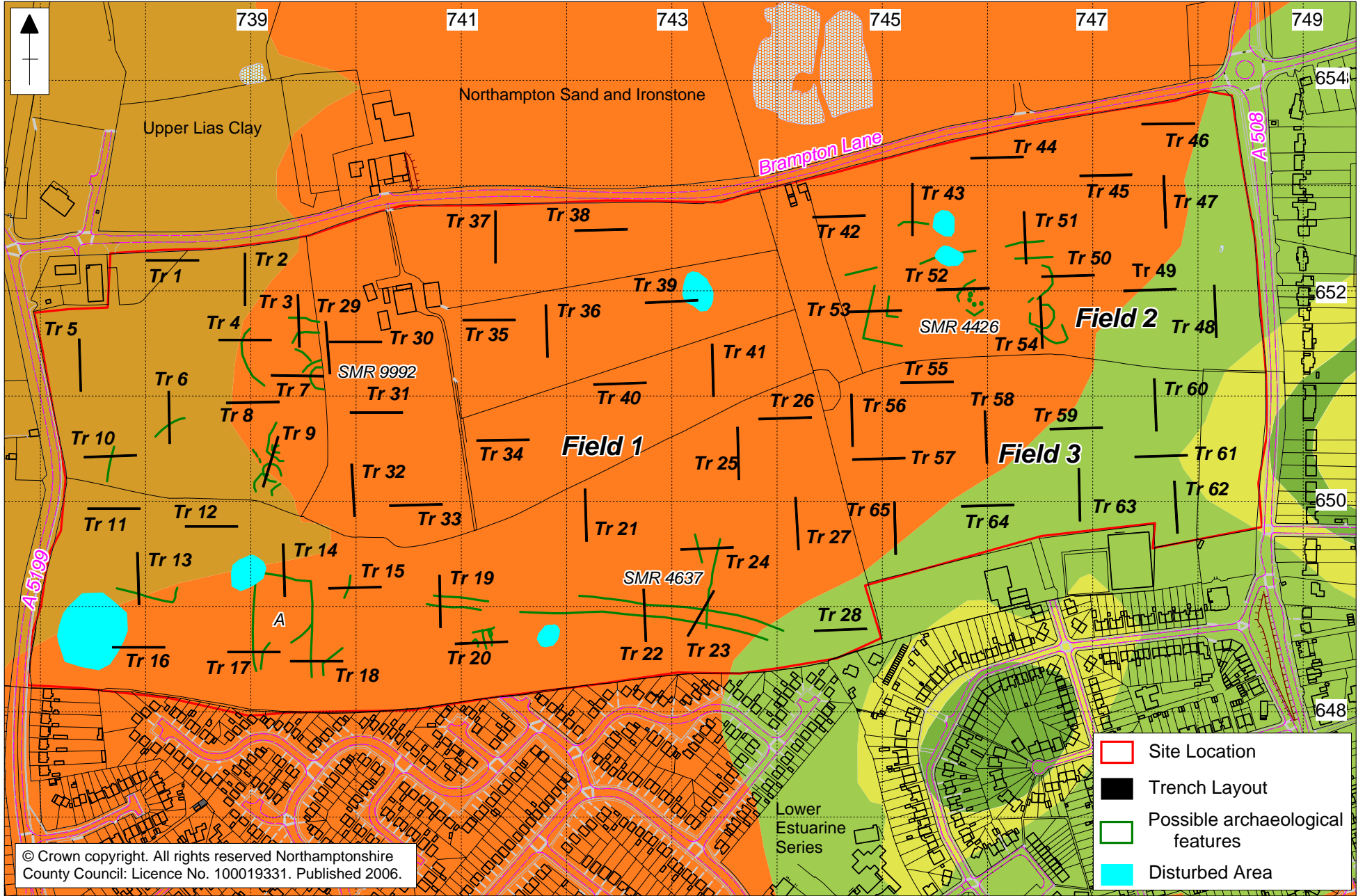


Scale 1:50,000

Site Location Fig 1

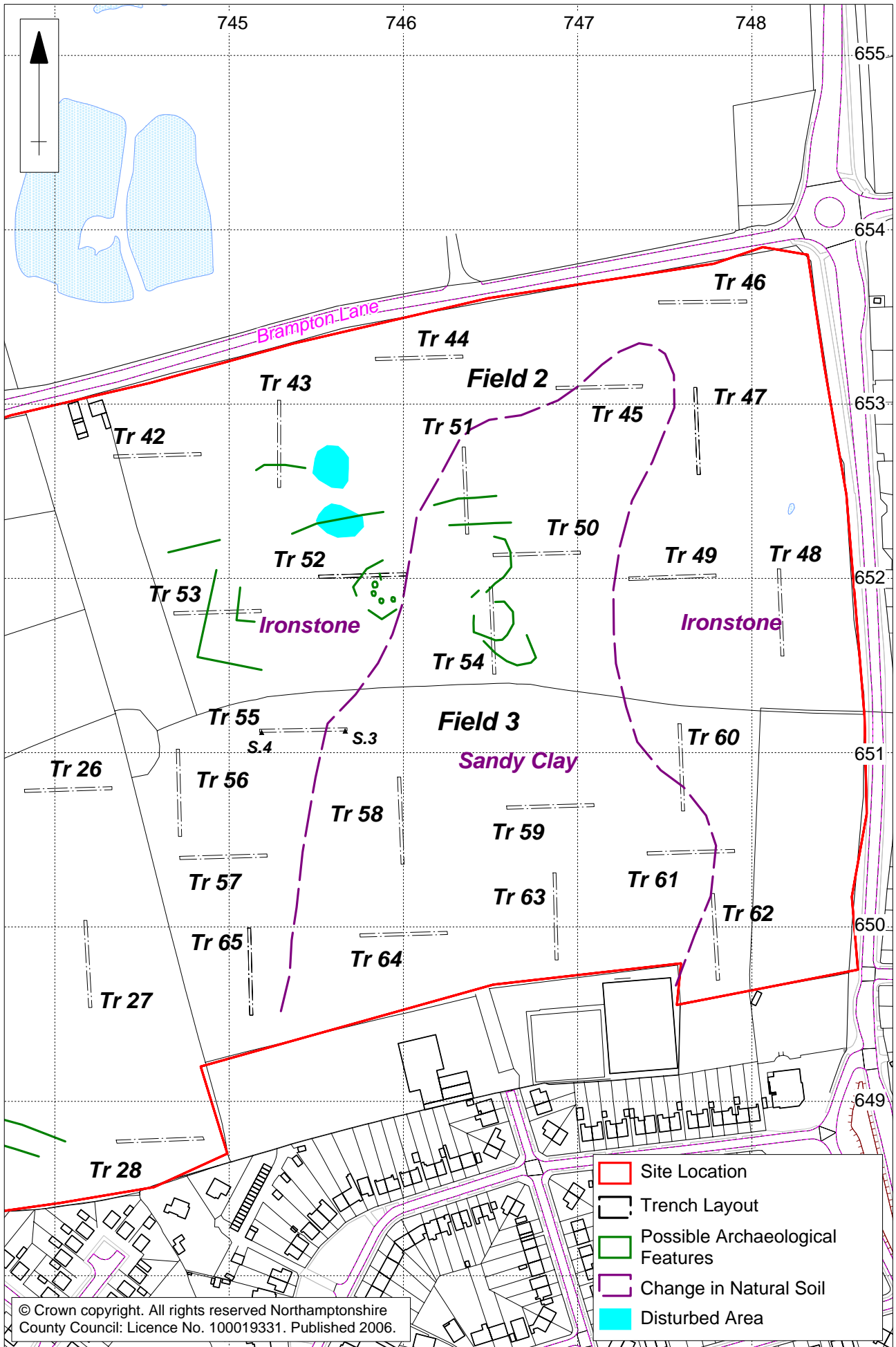
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Geology, Cropmarks & Trench Layout Fig 2



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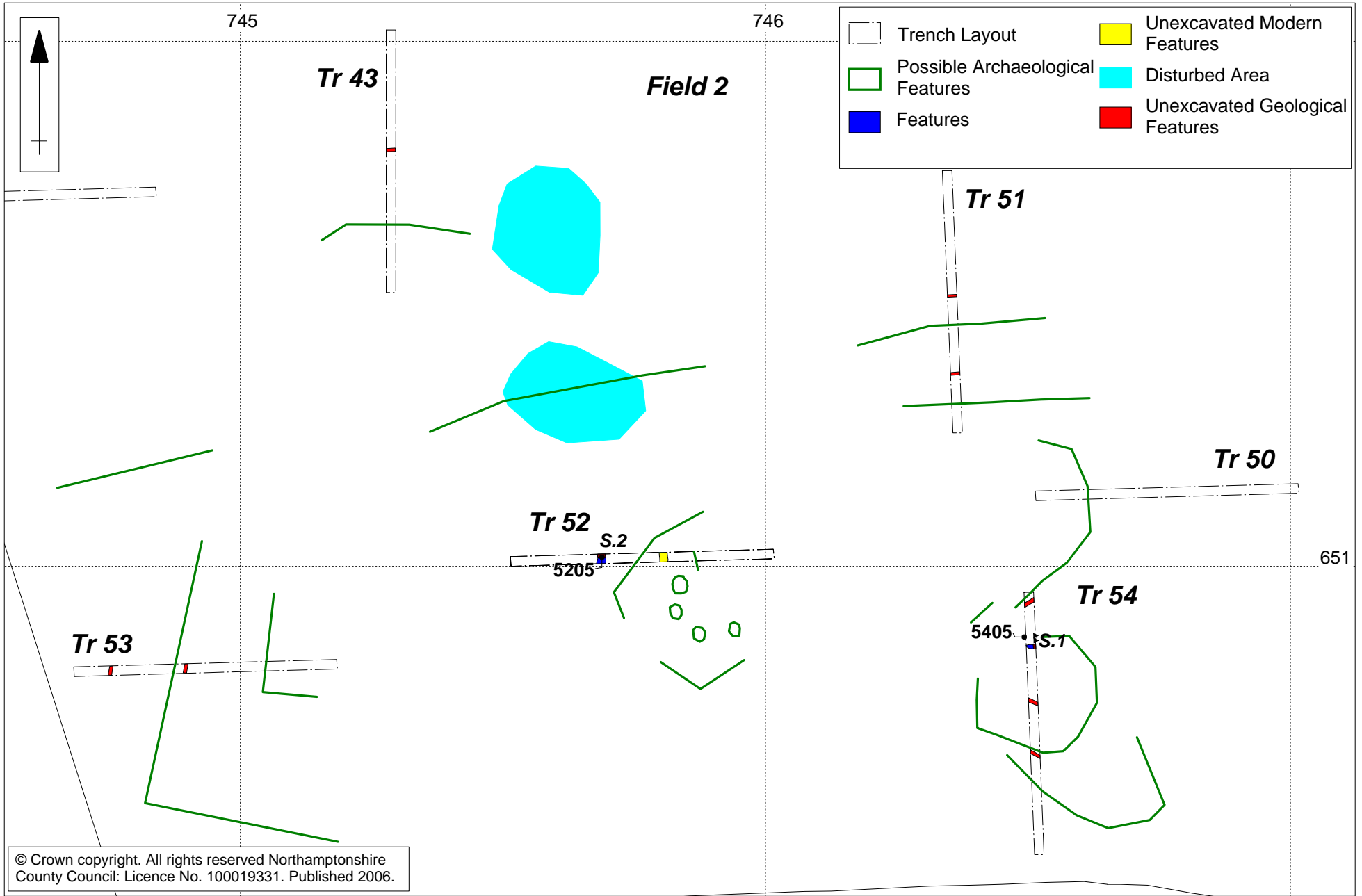
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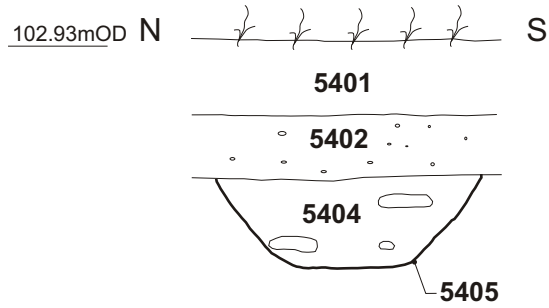
Stage 1 Layout Fig 3

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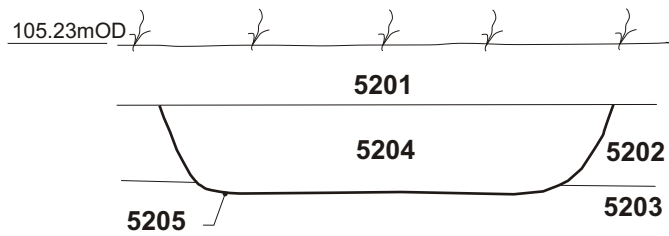
Plan of Trenches 43, 50-54 Fig 4



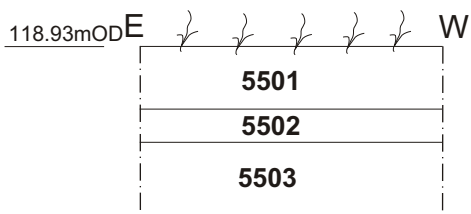
**Section 1- Trench 54**



**Section 2- Trench 52**



**Section 3- Trench 55**



**Section 4- Trench 55**

