ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION REPORT: TRIAL TRENCHING ON LAND OFF LONDON ROAD, BOSTON, LINCOLNSHIRE

Planning Reference: Pre-Planning
NGR: TF 3254 4255
AAL Site Code: BOLO 11
Museum Accession Number LCNCC: 2011.419
OASIS Reference Number: allenarc1-114412

Report prepared for Globe Consultants Limited
On behalf of NHS Shared Services

By
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The Authority on Archaeological Planning Services

REGISTERED ORGANISATION IfA

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Cover image: Trench 6 following machine excavation, looking south-east

Executive Summary

- Allen Archaeology Limited was commissioned by Globe Consultants on behalf of NHS Shared Services to undertake an archaeological evaluation by trial trenching in advance of a residential development on land off London Road in Boston, Lincolnshire.

- The site lies in an area of significant archaeological interest, close to a recently excavated Romano-British settlement.

- The evaluation failed to identify any finds or features of archaeological significance. The sequence exposed comprised a series of natural alluvial deposits, likely to represent the Barroway Drove and Terrington Beds, overlain by spreads of modern demolition material and topsoil.

1.0 Introduction

1.1 Allen Archaeology Limited (hereafter AAL) was commissioned by Globe Consultants Limited on behalf of NHS Shared Services to carry out an archaeological evaluation on land off London Road in Boston, Lincolnshire, in advance of the submission of a planning application for a residential development.

1.2 The archaeological scheme of works conforms to current national guidelines, as set out in the Institute for Archaeologists *'Standard and guidance for archaeological field evaluation'* (IfA 1994, revised 2001 and 2008), the local guidelines in the *Lincolnshire Archaeological Handbook* (LCC 2011) as well as a specification prepared by this company (AAL 2011).

1.3 The documentary and physical archive will be submitted to 'The Collection' (Lincoln Museum) by its submission date of December 2012 and will be stored under the Museum Accession Number LCNCC: 2011.419.

2.0 Site Location and Description

2.1 Boston is situated approximately 45km south-east of central Lincoln, close to the outfall of the River Witham into The Wash, approximately 8km to the south-east. The proposed development is to the south of the historic core of the town, south of London Road and west of the A16, and comprises an irregular shaped block of land of c.2.1 hectares, currently occupied by a range of disused NHS hospital buildings. The site centres on NGR TF 3254 4255.

2.2 The bedrock geology comprises Ancholme Group Clays, overlain by the Barroway Drove Beds; older marine saltmarsh deposits of Neolithic and earlier date. Immediately to the south of the site the Barroway Drove Beds are sealed by the younger marine deposits of the Terrington Beds (British Geological Survey 1995).

3.0 Planning Background

3.1 A planning application has not yet been submitted for the development. The development proposals currently entail the demolition of the existing buildings and the construction of 29 apartments and 41 town houses with associated garaging, parking and public open space. It has been requested by the Senior Historic Environment Officer at Heritage Lincolnshire, advising Boston Borough Council, that a programme of archaeological evaluation by trial trenching be undertaken on the site in order to provide further information concerning the archaeological potential of the proposed development area. This is in line with the guidelines concerning the historic environment set out in PPS5 (Department for Communities and Local Government 2010).

4.0 Archaeological and Historical Background

4.1 The site is situated in an area of significant archaeological interest. Evidence for prehistoric activity in the area is sparse, as is it is likely to be buried at depth beneath silt layers deposited by successive marine transgressions.

4.2 There is substantial evidence of Romano-British activity nearby. Recent investigations off St. Thomas Drive, less than 100m to the south of the site exposed evidence for a small farmstead of 2nd to 3rd century AD date, comprising a number of pits and ditches, producing a typical domestic assemblage of pottery, animal bone and evidence for crop processing (Lincolnshire Historic Environment Record (hereafter LHER) Reference 13841). A rectangular earthwork located 400m to the north-west was believed by Stukeley to represent a Roman fort, but it is considered more likely nowadays to be a medieval moated enclosure (LHER Reference 10028).

4.3 The site lies to the south of the historic core of Boston, in the suburb of Skirbeck. Skirbeck is a name of Old Norse derivation, meaning 'the clear stream' (Cameron 1998). Boston does not appear in the Domesday Book of 1086 AD, but Skirbeck is listed, largely under the ownership of Count Alan. His estates were populated by nineteen freemen and thirteen villagers, along with their dependents, and also included two churches and two priests. A smaller estate was owned by Eudo son of Spirewic (Morgan and Thorn 1986).

4.4 Boston itself is first documented c.1130, and became a major port in the medieval period, due to the Haven that allowed sea going vessels access to Lincoln and other inland centres via the Witham. The town was a port of the Hanseatic League, and also attracted the monastic orders of the Dominicans, Franciscans, Carmelites and Augustinians (Thompson 1856). The decline of the wool trade in the 15th century and the silting up of the Haven caused decline in the trade in the late medieval and post-medieval periods.

4.5 Historic map evidence indicates that from at least the later 19th century the site was occupied by Norton House, a large private residence with associated outbuildings, gardens and areas of woodland. This was annotated as a 'Sanatorium' by the time of the 1951 Ordnance survey map. The site was redeveloped later in the century.

5.0 Methodology

5.1 A brief was prepared by the Senior Historic Environment Officer at Heritage Trust of Lincolnshire for a trial trenching strategy comprising a 2% sample of the proposed development area. However, due to the presence of the buildings on the site limiting the area available for investigation, and security issues associated with anti-social behaviour and drug use on and around the site an alternative strategy was agreed to provide information in advance of the submission of an application. The agreed strategy entailed the excavation of five test pits, each measuring 5m long by 1.6m wide, in areas of green space available for investigation. As there was space on site and time available during the fieldwork, a sixth test pit was also excavated.

5.2 In each trench, topsoil, subsoil and underlying non-archaeological deposits were removed by mechanical excavator with a toothless ditching bucket in spits no greater than 100mm in depth, until the natural geology was encountered. A sondage was also excavated by machine in each trench to observe the deeper stratigraphic sequence and to detect any potential buried land surfaces.

5.3 In each trench all exposed plan and section surfaces were inspected for archaeological features and deposits to determine the stratigraphic sequence. Each context observed was recorded on pro-forma AAL context record sheets, accompanied by section drawings at appropriate scales. A photographic record was maintained throughout the fieldwork with selected shots included as an appendix to this report (see Appendix 1).

5.4 Each layer, deposit or feature was allocated a unique three digit identifier (context number), and accorded a written description, a summary of these are included in Appendix 6. Three digit numbers within square brackets reflect cut features (e.g. cut [304]).

6.0 **Results** (Figures 3 – 8)

6.1 **Trench 1** (Figure 3)

6.1.1 A c.0.25m thick modern topsoil, 100 sealed a similar thickness of modern demolition debris, 101. This in turn sealed two similar subsoil deposits, 102 and 103, also containing small quantities of modern building material. These deposits overlay a grey/brown alluvial silty clay, 106, which a machine excavated sondage showed to be approximately 0.6m thick and sealed a grey alluvial clay, 109 that extended below the limit of excavation at a depth of c.1.85m.

6.1.2 Two modern features were recorded in the trench. At the north end of the trench was a west-south-west to east-north-east aligned vertical cut, [108], which contained a single concrete beam and a spread of crushed brick. This is likely to represent a demolition cut for a modern building, and was backfilled with a compact brown clay, 105.

6.1.3 Approximately central to the trench, a steep sided cut for an electrical cable, [107] ran parallel to demolition cut [108].

6.2 **Trench 2** (Figure 4)

6.2.1 In Trench 2 the uppermost deposit was a modern topsoil, 200, which was 0.3m to 0.4m thick and sealed a c.0.3m thick layer of modern demolition rubble, 201. Below this was a c.1.05m thick brown alluvial clay with grey lenses, 202, which sealed a grey/brown alluvial clay 203, recorded to a depth of 2.1m below the modern ground surface.

6.2.2 A modern electrical cable trench ran across the north end of the trench.

6.3 **Trench 3** (Figure 5)

6.3.1 The topsoil in this trench, 300, was a c.0.3m thick very dark brown silty loam, and sealed an alluvial subsoil, 301, of a similar thickness. This in turn sealed a laminated yellow/brown alluvial silt 302 which was up to 0.85m thick. At the base of the sequence was a dark brown and grey compact alluvial silty clay, 303, which extended below the base of the machine excavated sondage at a depth of approximately 1.8m.

6.3.2 A single linear feature that was over 2.2m wide, [304], ran across the trench on a north-west to south-east alignment. It was steep sided, contained a large concrete pipe at its base, and was backfilled with a mixed deposit of redeposited topsoil and alluvial silt, 305.

6.4 Trench 4 (Figure 6)

6.4.1 During the initial machine excavation an electric cable was exposed running along the length of the trench, and as such the trench was widened northwards to avoid this feature.

6.4.2 Topsoil 400 comprised a 0.15m to 0.35m thick dark brown sandy silt, and sealed a natural alluvial silt, 401. This deposit was c.0.35m thick and sealed a natural alluvial clay, 402, which extended beyond the limit of excavation at approximately 1.6m below the modern ground surface.

6.5 Trench 5 (Figure 7)

6.5.1 The uppermost deposit in this trench was a dark brown topsoil layer, 500, which sealed a demolition horizon of modern building rubble, 501. Below this was an alluvial subsoil, 502, sealing two layers of natural alluvial clays, 503 and 504, extending beyond the limit of excavation at 2.1m.

6.6 Trench 6 (Figure 8)

6.6.1 The topsoil in Trench 6 comprised a c.0.25m thick dark grey/brown silty loam, and sealed 601 a mixed deposit of redeposited topsoil with small quantities of modern building material. Below this was a sequence of alluvial silts, 602 – 606. Lenses 603 and 605 had a darker hue than the remaining deposits and a mottled appearance that may suggest the incorporation of small quantities of degraded organic matter indicative of possible former ground surfaces. Very occasional charcoal flecks were also noted in deposit 605.

6.6.2 At the base of the sequence was a dark/grey brown alluvial clay, 607 extending beyond the depth of the excavated sondage at 1.95m below the existing ground surface.

7.0 Discussion and Conclusion

7.1 No finds or features of archaeological significance were recorded during the trial trenching, and there was no evidence to indicate that the Roman activity identified nearby extends into the current site.

7.2 The stratigraphic sequence was broadly similar throughout the trenches, exposing modern topsoil layers, sealing deposits of modern demolition material, likely to be associated with the construction of the existing buildings on the site, in turn sealing deposits of natural alluvium. For the most part, these are likely to represent the marine saltmarsh deposits of the Barroway Drove Beds, which are of Neolithic and earlier date, and are shown across the entire site on the geology map of the area (British Geological Survey 1995).

7.3 Trenches 3 and 6 at the south end of the site and Trench 4 towards the east side of the site also exposed deposits of pale yellowish brown silts and clayey silts, interpreted as the Terrington Beds; younger marine deposits that have formed from the later prehistoric period onwards. The geology map shows the Terrington Beds overlying the Barroway Drove Beds immediately to the south of the site, although the evidence from this work suggests that they extend slightly further north into the site, with an additional outcrop to the east, in the area of Trench 4.

8.0 Effectiveness of Methodology

8.1 The archaeological evaluation was appropriate to the scale and nature of the proposed development, within the restrictions imposed by the various health and safety issues on the site. It has identified a negligible archaeological potential within the proposed development area, although it must be borne in mind that the current programme of work represents only a small sample of the total site area.

9.0 Acknowledgements

9.1 Allen Archaeology Limited would like to thank Globe Consultants Limited and their client NHS Shared Services for this commission.

10.0 References

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Appendix 1: Colour Plates

Plate 1: West facing section of sondage in Trench 1, looking west-south-west. Note electric cable in cut [304] to right of shot

Plate 2: Trench 2 following machine excavation, looking south

Plate 3: Trench 3 following machine excavation, looking north-north-east

Plate 4: South facing section of sondage in Trench 4, looking north

Plate 5: Trench 5 following machine excavation, looking north-north-west

Plate 6: South facing section of sondage in Trench 4, looking north

Appendix 2: Context Summary List

CBM = Ceramic Building Material (e.g. brick and tile)

Trench 1

Context No.	Type	Description	Interpretation
100	Layer	Dark grey/brown sandy silt, frequent root disturbance. Seals 101, 105	Modern topsoil
101	Layer	Yellow/brown silty sand with clay lenses, moderate modern building rubble. Seals 102, 103, 104	Levelling deposit of modern construction debris
102	Layer	Dark brownish grey sandy silt, rare CBM. Sealed by 101, seals 106, cut by [107].	Subsoil deposit/re-worked alluvial material
103	Layer	Dark brownish grey sandy silt. Similar to 102 but more modern building debris. Sealed by 101, seals 106, cut by [107], [108]	Subsoil deposit/re-worked alluvial material
104	Fill	Mixed yellow/brown clay and sand silt, occasional CBM and charcoal flecks. Contained by [107], sealed by 101	Backfill of cable trench [107]
105	Fill	Compact brown clay, occasional CBM. Contained by [108], sealed by 100	Backfill of demolition cut [108]
106	Layer	Compact grey/brown silty clay with orange flecks. Sealed by 102, 103, cut by [107], [108], seals 109	Natural alluvial clay of Barroway Drove Beds formation
107	Cut	Very steep sided linear cut, aligned WSW – ENE. Contains 104, cuts 102, 103, 106	Cut for electrical cable trench
108	Cut	Very steep sided linear cut, aligned WSW – ENE. Contains 105. Concrete beam and brick rubble at base of cut	Demolition cut, robbing out modern feature.
109	Layer	Sticky dark grey clay. Sealed by 106	Natural alluvial clay of Barroway Drove Beds formation

Trench 2

Context No.	Type	Description	Interpretation
200	Layer	Dark grey/brown silty loam. Seals 201	Modern topsoil
201	Layer	Mixed deposit of modern building rubble and yellow/brown sand. Sealed by 200, seals 202	Modern demolition material
202	Layer	Laminated brown silty clay with grey lenses. Sealed by 201, seals 203	Natural alluvial clay of Barroway Drove Beds formation
203	Layer	Dark grey/brown clay. Sealed by 202	Natural alluvial clay of Barroway Drove Beds formation

Trench 3

Context No.	Type	Description	Interpretation
300	Layer	Very dark brown silty loam, frequent roots. Seals 301, 305	Modern topsoil
301	Layer	Orange/brown slightly clayey silt, occasional small stones and roots. Sealed by 300, cut by [304], seals 302	Subsoil/re-worked alluvium
302	Layer	Light yellowish brown loose silt. Sealed by 301, cut by [304], seals 303	Natural alluvial silt of Terrington Beds formation
303	Layer	Mottled dark brown and grey compact silty clay. Sealed by 303, cut by [304]	Natural alluvial clay of Barroway Drove Beds formation

Context No.	Type	Description	Interpretation
304	Cut	Steep sided linear cut aligned NW – SE. Contains 305, cuts 301, 302, 303. Sealed by 300	Cut for large modern concrete pipe
305	Fill	Mixed pale yellow/brown silt and dark brown silty loam. Contained byn [304], sealed by 300	Backfill of cut [304]

Trench 4

Context No.	Type	Description	Interpretation
400	Layer	Dark brown sandy silt, frequent roots and occasional small stones. Seals 401	Modern topsoil
401	Layer	Light orange brown sandy silt. Sealed by 400, seals 402	Natural alluvial silt of Terrington Beds formation
402	Layer	Compact orange/grey silty clay. Sealed by 401	Natural alluvial clay of Barroway Drove Beds formation

Trench 5

Context No.	Type	Description	Interpretation
500	Layer	Dark brown silty loam, frequent roots and occasional small stones. Seals 501	Modern topsoil
501	Layer	Mixed deposit of modern building rubble and yellow/brown sand. Sealed by 500, seals 502	Modern demolition material
502	Layer	Dark brown/grey compact sandy clay. Sealed by 501, seals 503	Subsoil/re-worked alluvium
503	Layer	Compacted orange/brown sandy clay, grey clay mottling. Sealed by 502, seals 504	Natural alluvial clay of Barroway Drove Beds formation
504	Layer	Compact dark grey/brown clay. Sealed by 503	Natural alluvial clay of Barroway Drove Beds formation

Trench 6

Context No.	Type	Description	Interpretation
600	Layer	Dark grey/brown silty loam, occasional charcoal and CBM, frequent roots. Seals 601	Modern topsoil
601	Layer	Compact dark grey/brown silty clay, occasional modern building rubble. Sealed by 600, seals 602	Redeposited topsoil mixed with building rubble
602	Layer	Orange/brown sandy silt, grey clay lenses. Sealed by 601, seals 603	Natural alluvial silt of Terrington Beds formation
603	Layer	Mottled grey and orange clayey silt. Sealed by 602, seals 604	Alluvial silt. Darker hue may suggest slight very degraded organic component
604	Layer	Pale greyish brown clayey silt. Sealed by 603, seals 605	Natural alluvial silt of Terrington Beds formation
605	Layer	Mottled grey and orange clayey silt. Very occasional small charcoal flecks. Sealed by 604, seals 606	Alluvial silt. Darker hue may suggest slight very degraded organic component. Presence of charcoal may indicate human activity
606	Layer	Yellow brown sandy silty clay. Sealed by 605, seals 607	Natural alluvial silt of Terrington Beds formation
607	Layer	Dark grey/brown slightly sandy clay	Natural alluvial clay of Barroway Drove Beds formation

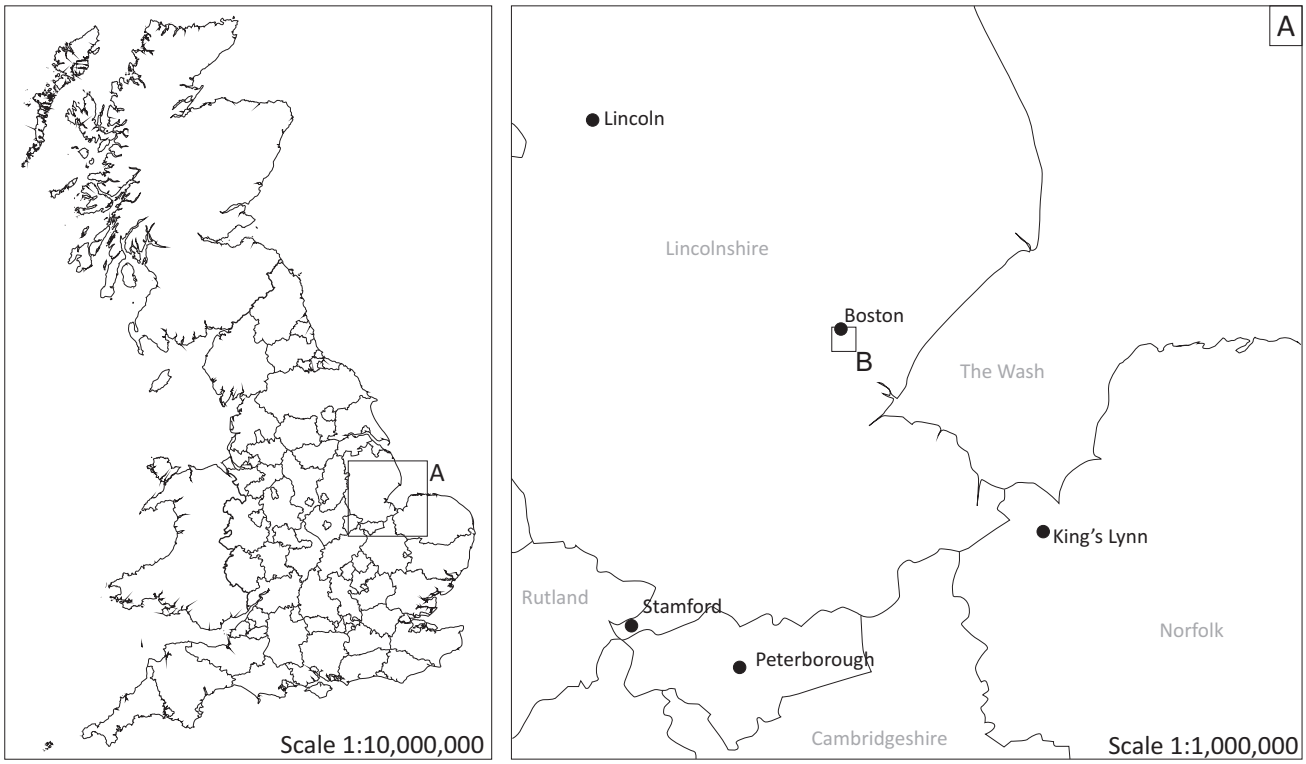

Figure 1: Site location at scale 1:25,000, with site outlined in red

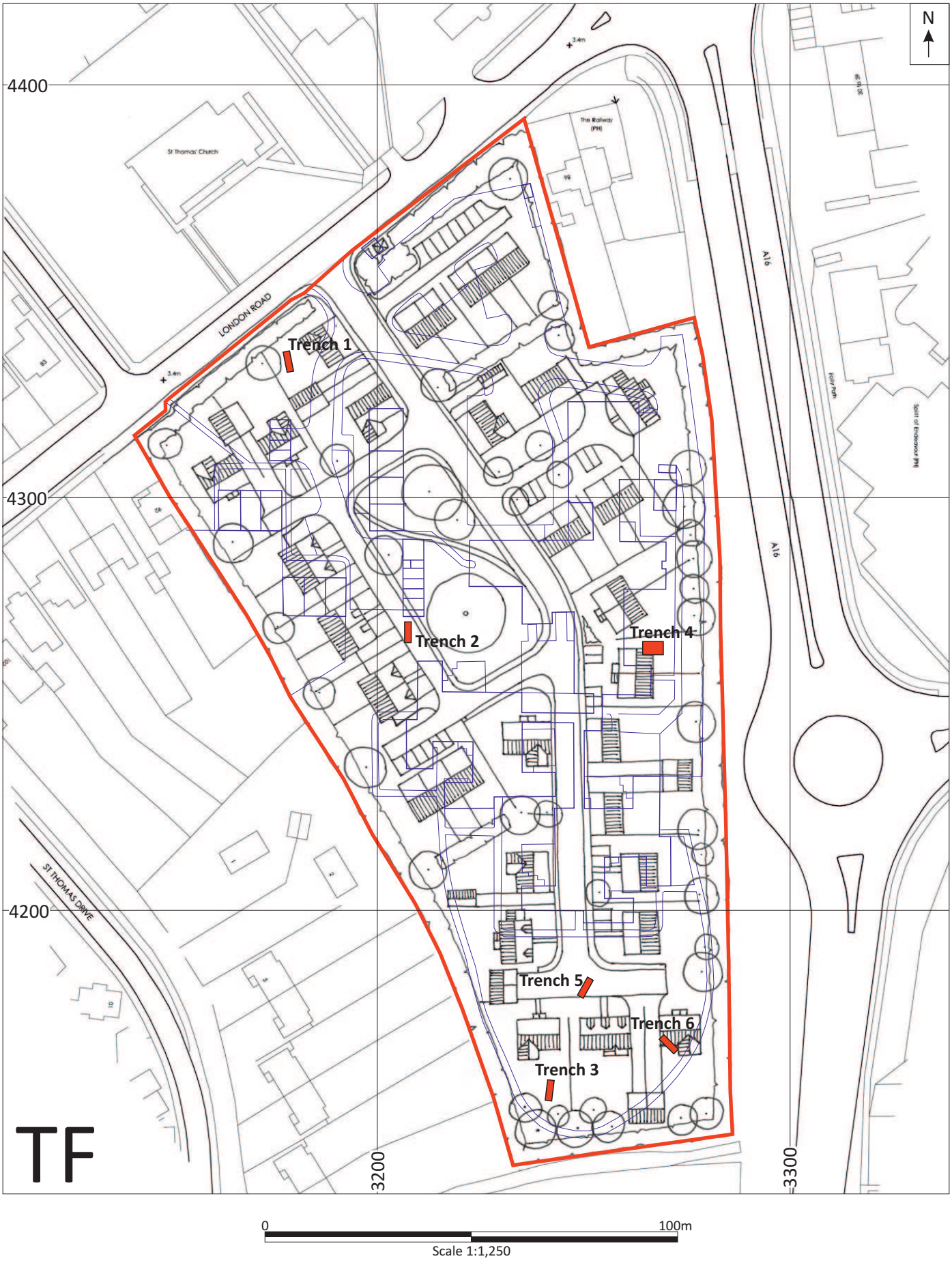

Figure 2: Site plan at scale 1:1250, showing proposed development with existing site layout superimposed in blue. Evaluation trenches and site boundary in red

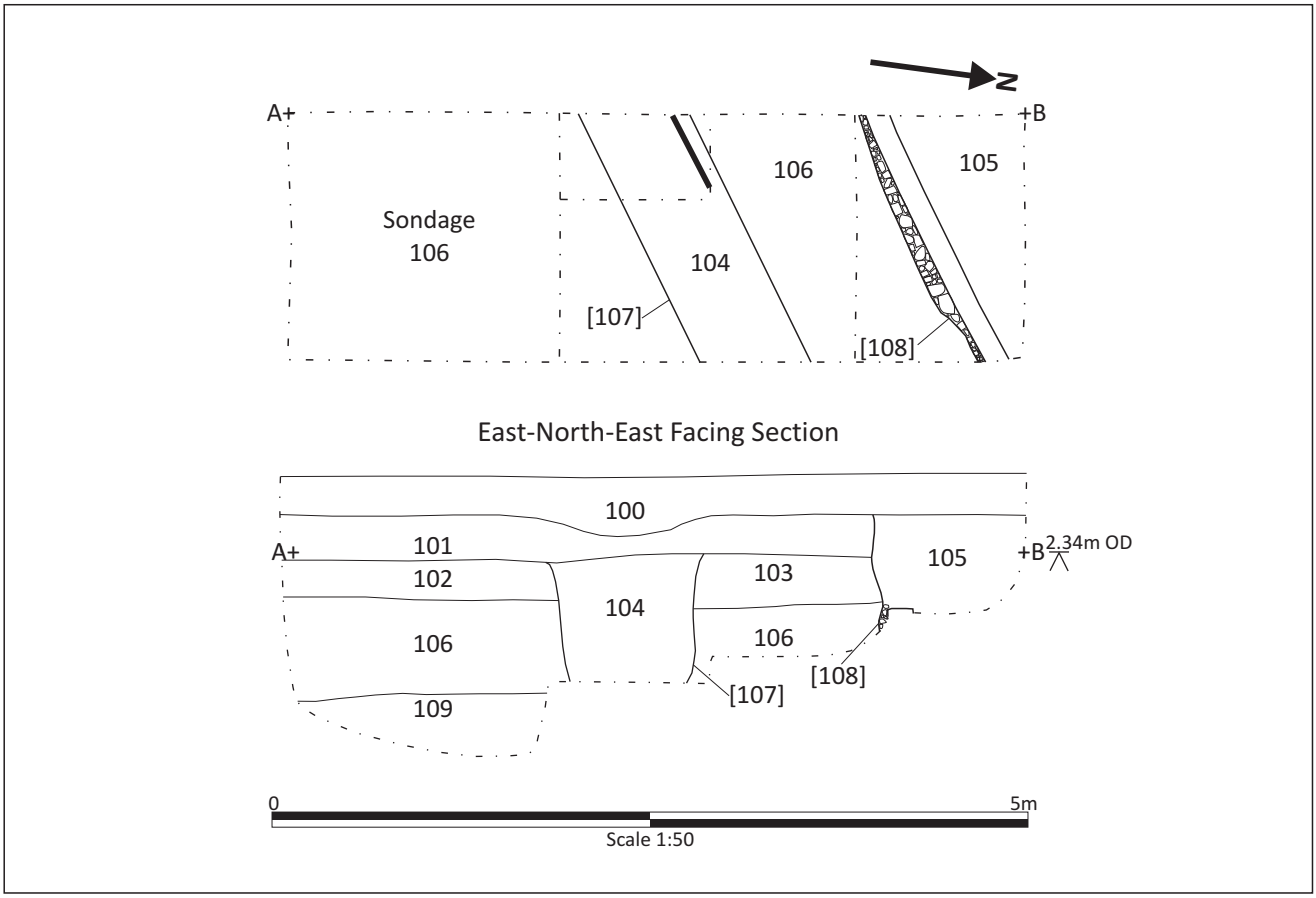

Figure 3: Trench 1 plan and section at scale 1:50

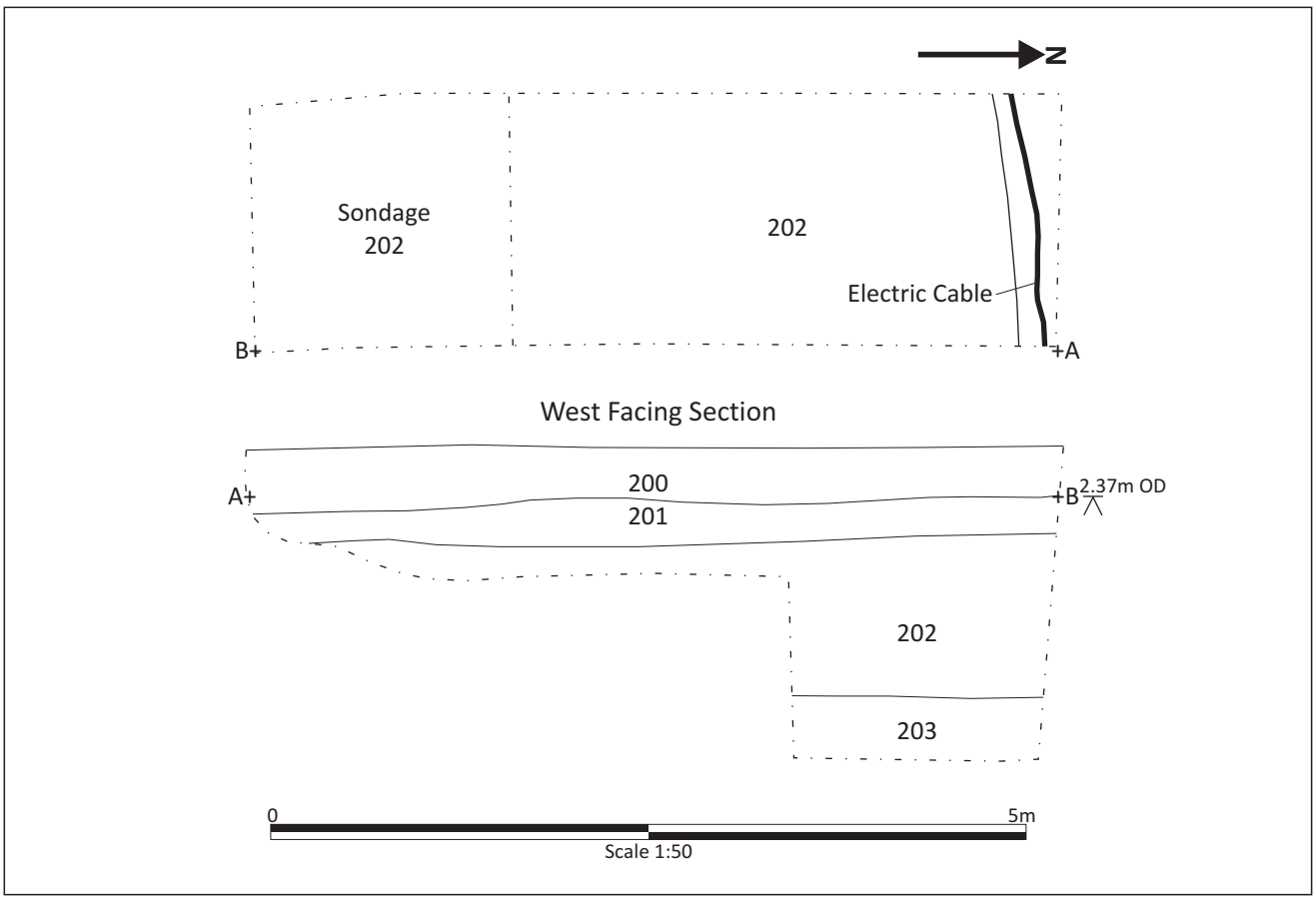

Figure 4: Trench 2 plan and section at scale 1:50

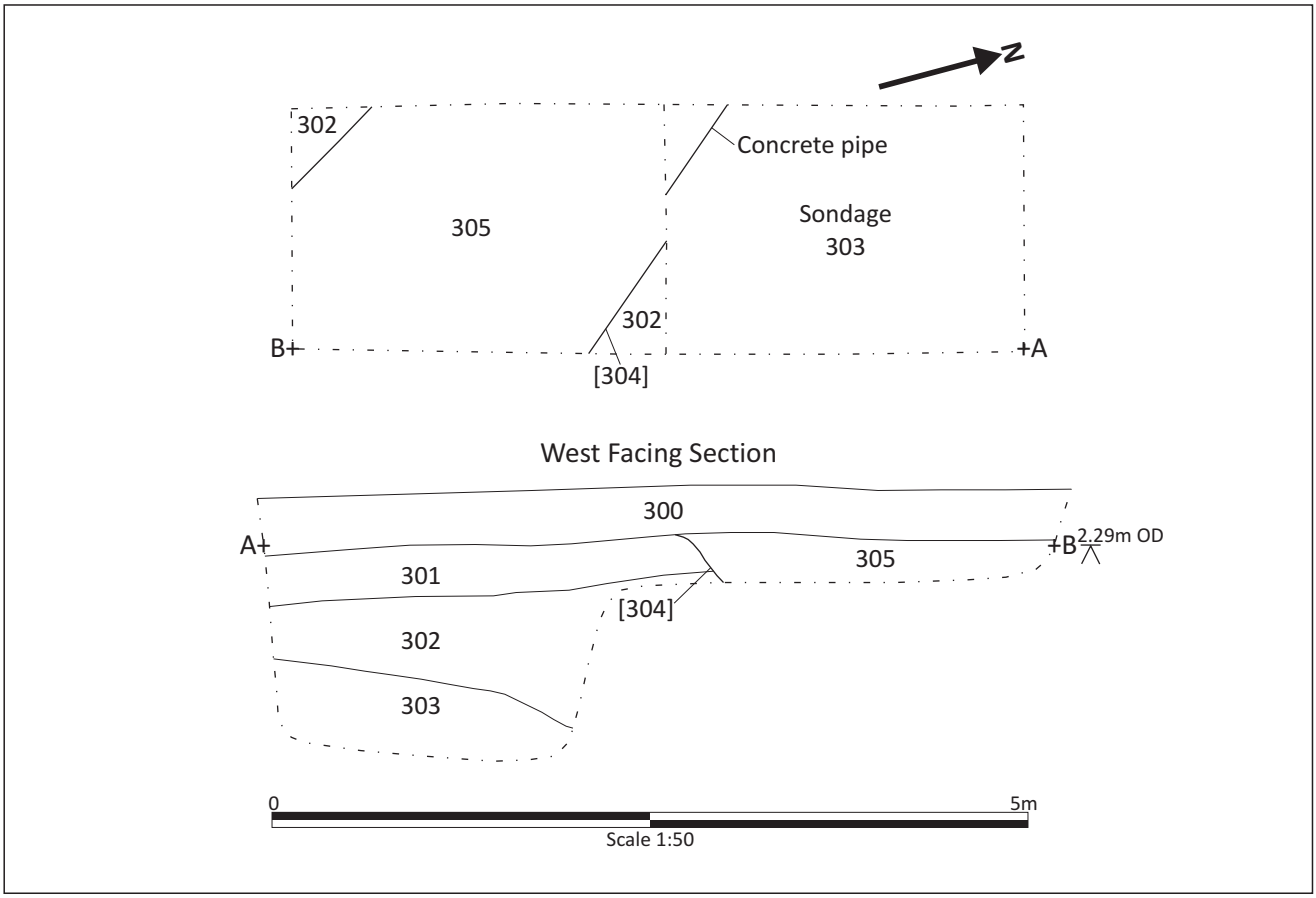

Figure 5: Trench 3 plan and section at scale 1:50

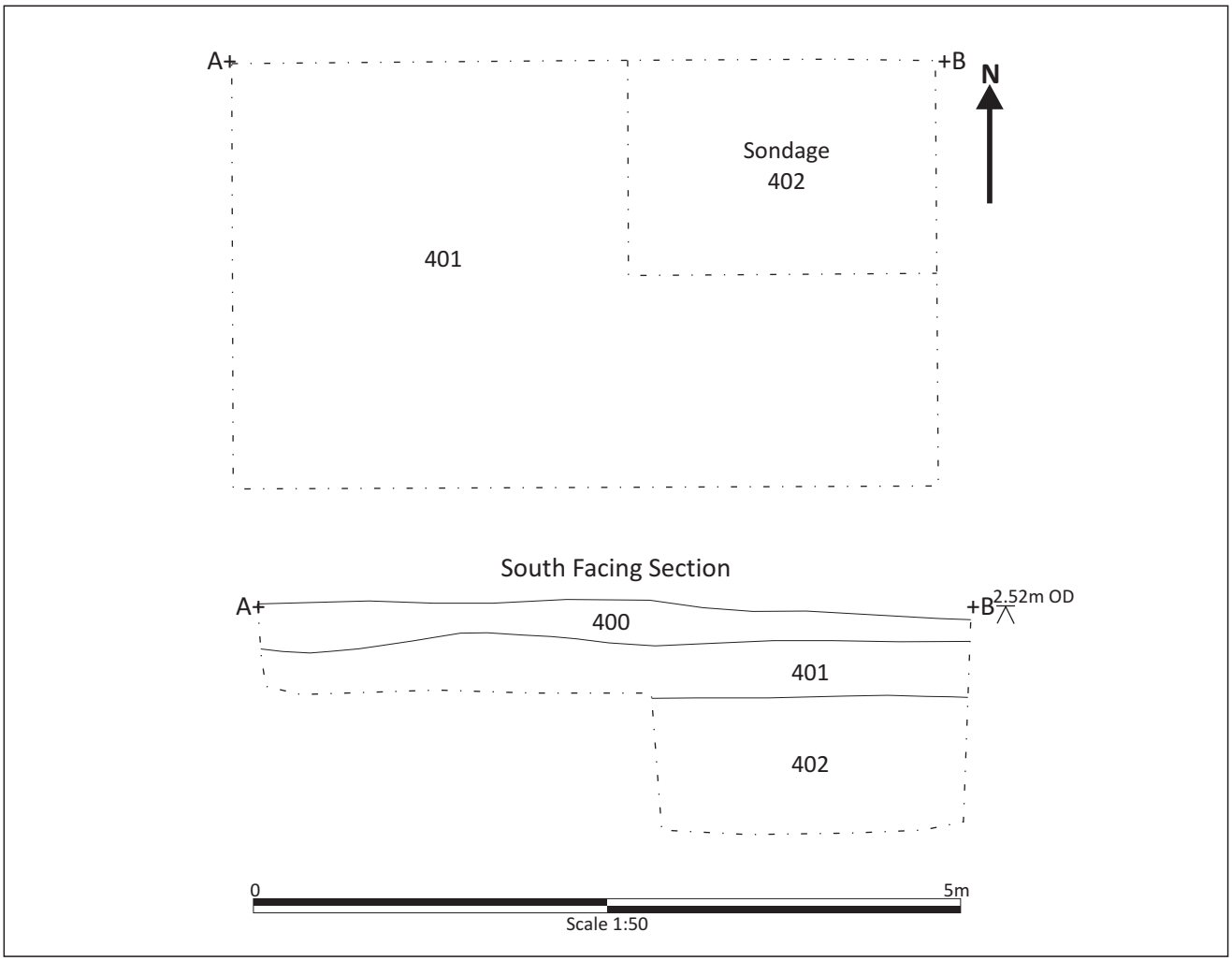

Figure 6: Trench 4 plan and section at scale 1:50

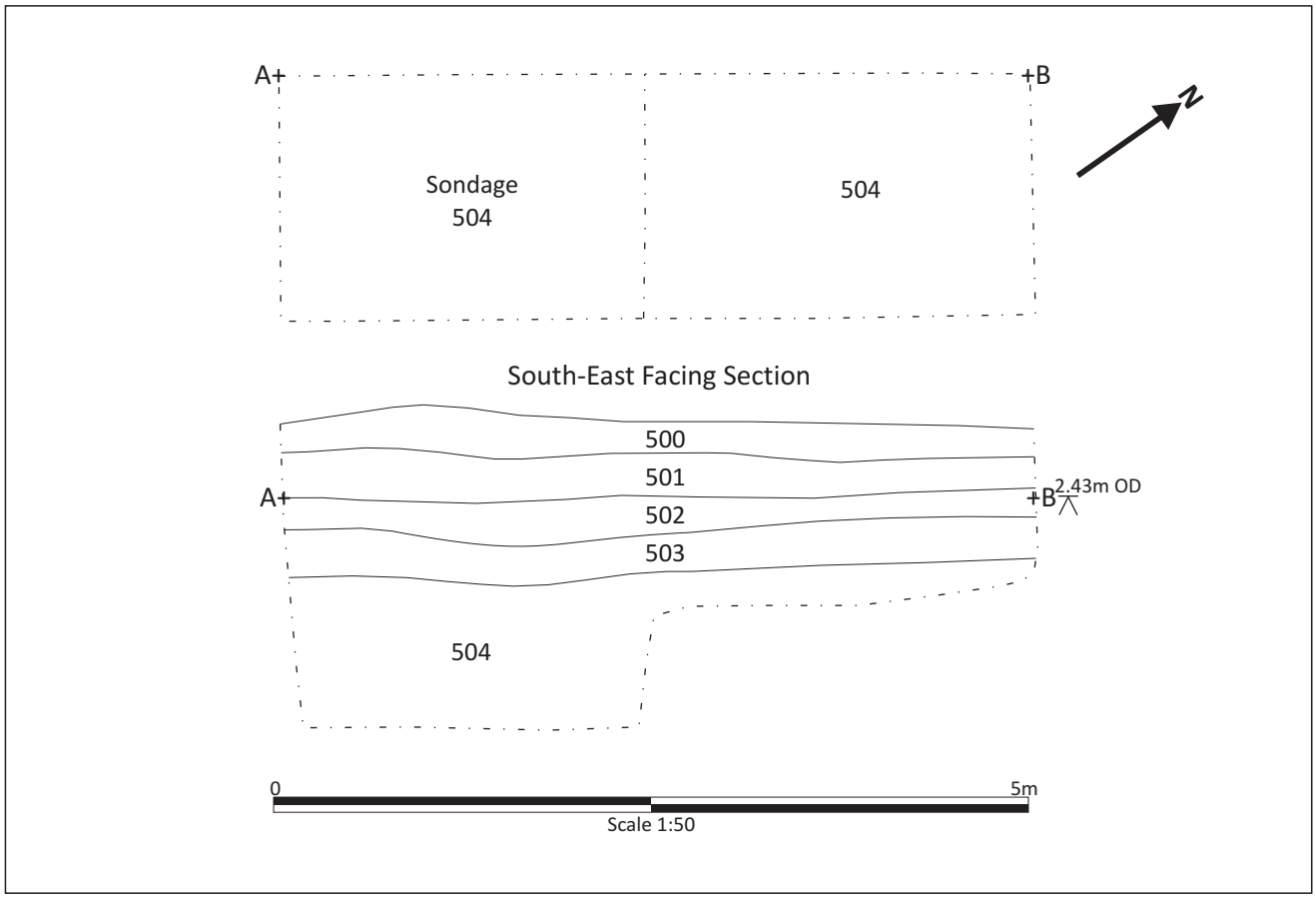

Figure 7: Trench 5 plan and section at scale 1:50

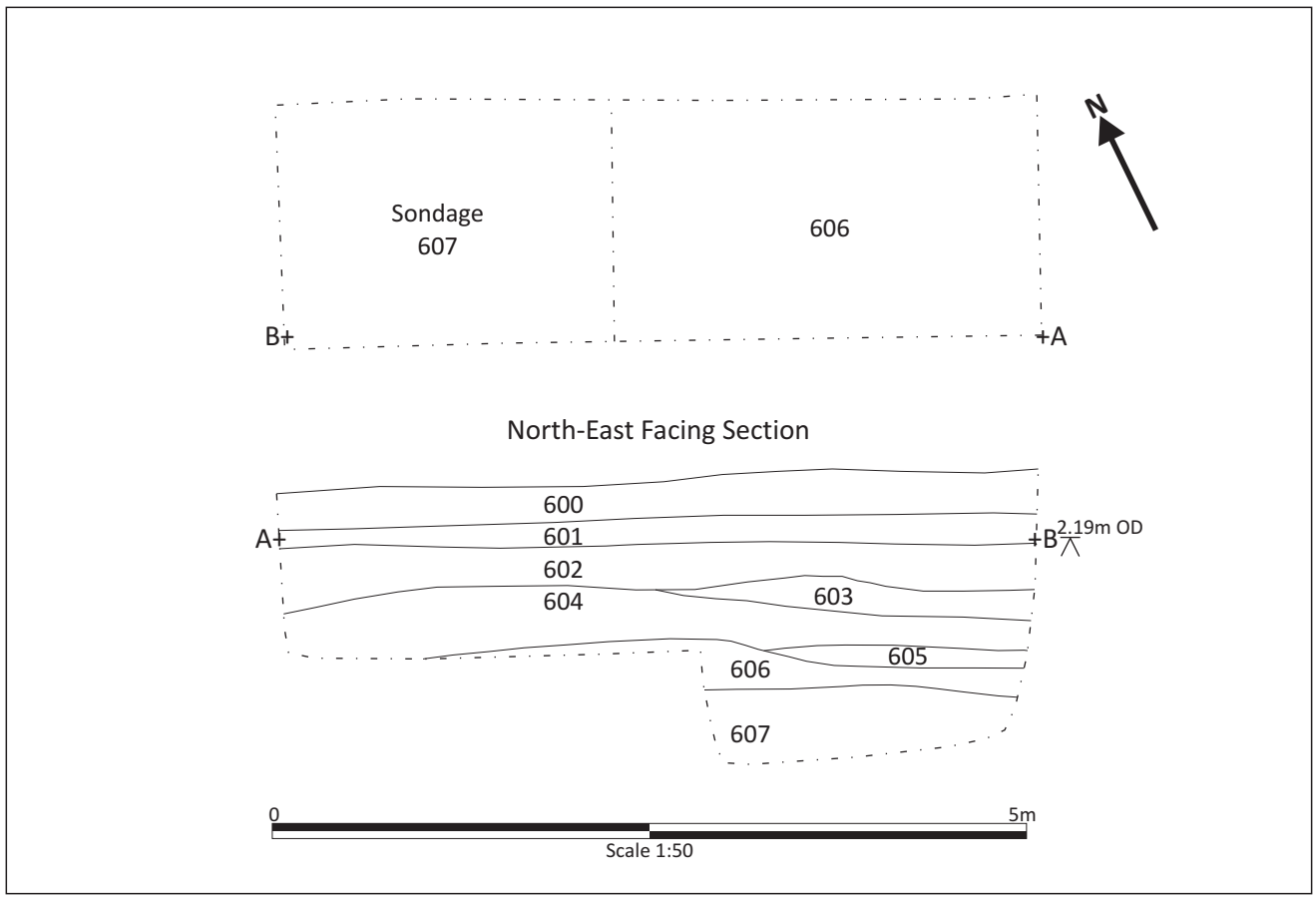

Figure 8: Trench 6 plan and section at scale 1:50

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