

**ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION REPORT:
TRIAL TRENCHING ON LAND OFF ARGENTS MEAD, HINCKLEY, LEICESTERSHIRE**

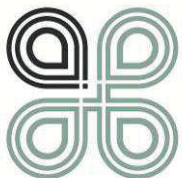
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Report prepared for Press and Starkey

By
Allen Archaeology Limited
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Contents

Executive Summary	1
1.0 Introduction.....	2
2.0 Site Location and Description.....	2
3.0 Planning Background.....	2
4.0 Archaeological and Historical Background.....	3
5.0 Methodology	3
6.0 Results (Figures 2 – 7).....	4
Trench 1 Extension (Figure 3).....	4
Trench 3 (Figure 3).....	5
Trench 4 (Figure 4).....	6
Trench 5 (Figure 5).....	6
Trench 6 (Figure 6).....	7
Trench 7a (Figure 7).....	7
Trench 7b (Figure 7)	8
7.0 Discussion and Conclusions.....	9
8.0 Effectiveness of Methodology.....	9
9.0 Acknowledgements	9
10.0 References.....	9

List of Plates

Plate 1: General view of brick path, 101, looking east. 1 and 2m scales	5
Plate 2: Representative north facing section in trench 3, 1m scales	5
Plate 3: Southwest facing section of linear [405].....	6
Plate 4: Irregular and large feature [504], looking northeast	7
Plate 5: South facing section of Trench 6. 1m scales	7
Plate 6: South facing section in trench 7a, 1m scales	8
Plate 7: Southwest facing section of Trench 7b. 1m scales.....	8

List of Appendices

Appendix 1: Context Summary List	11
Appendix 2: Figures	14

List of Figures

Figure 1: Site location with proposed development area in red.....	14
Figure 2: Site plan showing trench locations (incl. previous evaluation in green) with superimposed archaeology in black, modern services and disturbances in grey.....	15
Figure 3: Trench 1 Extension plan and section.....	16
Figure 4: Representative section of trench 3, see Figure 2 for location	17
Figure 5: Trench 4 plan and section	18
Figure 6: Trench 5 plan and sections.....	19
Figure 7: Trench 6, 7a and 7b sections, see Figure 2 for locations	20

Document Control

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Executive Summary

- Allen Archaeology Limited (hereafter AAL) was commissioned by Press and Starkey to undertake an archaeological evaluation by trial trenching on land off Argents Mead in Hinckley, Leicestershire, as a condition of planning permission for construction of a new leisure centre.
- The proposed development site is located in an area of some archaeological interest, west of the 12th century Benedictine Hinckley Priory and south of Hinckley Castle. Previous archaeological works on the site recorded a possible medieval pit and 19th century garden terracing associated with a demolished former vicarage at the northwest end of the site. There was also evidence of more recent levelling and landscaping of the site.
- Five trenches were excavated, after which areas were extended around Trenches 1, 4 and 5 to further clarify the nature and extent of the archaeological resource. A brick path associated with the 19th century vicarage was recorded in Trench 1, and an undated linear feature was recorded in Trench 4. A large shallow pit or terracing features was exposed in Trench 5 and a small modern pit was recorded in Trench 6. The remainder of the site was characterised by modern landscaping and services.

1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 Allen Archaeology Limited (hereafter AAL) was commissioned by Press and Starkey to undertake an archaeological evaluation by trial trenching on land off Argents Mead in Hinckley, Leicestershire as a condition of planning permission for construction of a new leisure centre.
- 1.2 The works were undertaken in line with a specification prepared by this company (AAL 2014) and followed the national guidelines set out by the Institute for Archaeologists in '*Standard and guidance for archaeological field evaluations*' (IfA 1999, revised 2001 and 2008). All relevant English Heritage guidelines on archaeological best practice were followed (<http://www.english-heritage.org.uk/professional/advice/advice-by-topic/heritage-science>).
- 1.3 The documentary archive will be submitted to Leicestershire Museums, Arts and Records Service within six months of the completion of the report where it will be accessible under the museum accession code X.A147.2014.

2.0 Site Location and Description

- 2.1 Hinckley is located approximately 19km southwest of central Leicester, in the administrative district of Hinckley and Bosworth Borough Council. The proposed development site itself (hereafter referred to as 'the site') is located within the grounds of the former council offices, east of Argents Mead, centred on NGR SP 4285 9374. The site is bordered by a car park to the south, Hinckley Medical Centre to the east, the former vicarage and its grounds to the west and parkland to the north.
- 2.2 The bedrock geology comprises Mercia Mudstone with superficial deposits of Oadby Member Diamicton (<http://mapapps.bgs.ac.uk/geologyofbritain/home.html>).

3.0 Planning Background

- 3.1 A planning application was submitted for the '*erection of leisure centre with associated parking and infrastructure*' (Reference 14/00342/FUL). Prior to determination of the application, a programme of non-intrusive and intrusive investigations were undertaken, comprising desk-based research (Finn 2014a), monitoring of geotechnical boreholes (Finn 2014b), and evaluation by trial trenching (Finn 2014c). Planning permission was subsequently granted in June 2014. As a condition of planning permission, a further programme of archaeological evaluation was required in order to provide further information upon the nature and extent of the archaeological resource.
- 3.2 The approach adopted is consistent with the recommendations of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), with the particular chapter of relevance being '*Chapter 12: Conserving and enhancing the historic environment*' (Department for Communities and Local Government 2012).

4.0 Archaeological and Historical Background

- 4.1 A preceding desk-based assessment identified the site as being of archaeological interest (Finn 2014a), located on land belonging to the former Benedictine Hinckley Priory, which was situated immediately to the west of the site and reputedly founded at the end of the 12th century by Robert le Bossu. To the north of the site is Hinckley Castle, which was first documented in 1151, and is believed to have been established by Hugh de Grentemaisnel. To the northwest of the site is the parish church of St. Mary.
- 4.2 A new vicarage was established towards the northwest corner of the development site in 1872-3, and was demolished during construction of the former council offices in 1965-7. The council offices were demolished in 2014.
- 4.3 A number of archaeological interventions have taken place on the site. The first of these comprised monitoring of an electricity cable trench (Finn 2013), running across the park to the north of the site and along the site's western boundary. The monitoring exposed modern deposits infilling the castle's outer ditch at the north end of the route, with topsoil over modern deposits and natural clay south of this. The cable trench entered the site immediately west of the former council offices and exposed demolition rubble, floor surfaces and wall foundations of outbuildings associated with the former vicarage in this area, in cable runs along both sides of the car park, in the northwest corner of the site. South of this, and adjacent to the current access road, evidence for probable 19th century brick garden terraces was recorded, as well as modern demolition rubble.
- 4.4 In April 2014, archaeological monitoring was conducted during geotechnical works across the development area (Finn 2014b). The works indicated significant ground reduction in the northern part of the site associated with the construction of the former council offices. In the grassed area in the southern part of the site the borehole evidence suggested the creation of a level terrace for the former tennis courts, with ground reduction to the north and ground raising to the south, potentially sealing earlier archaeological horizons in this zone.
- 4.5 In May 2014, two evaluation trenches were excavated in this grassed area (Finn 2014c). Both trenches exposed in excess of 1m of modern made ground, associated with recent landscaping and the former tennis courts that occupied this part of the site. A single truncated pit was exposed in Trench 1, which produced two sherds of medieval pottery.

5.0 Methodology

- 5.1 The fieldwork was undertaken by a team of experienced field archaeologists over a period of eight days, between Tuesday 23rd September and Friday 3rd October 2014. A programme of trial trenching entailing the excavation of five trenches each measuring 20m in length had been agreed with the Senior Planning Archaeologist at Leicestershire County Council. These trenches were numbered 3 to 7, to avoid confusion with Trenches 1 and 2 previously excavated on the site (Finn 2014c). Each trench was located using a survey grade Leica GS08 RTK NetRover GPS, allowing millimetre accurate real-time precision. One of the trenches was split into two halves (Trenches 7a and 7b) to not disturb a footpath and live services that were still in use.
- 5.2 Following completion of the trial trenching works, it was agreed to progress directly onto a programme of further mitigation works, comprising the excavation of a series of strip, map and

record areas where features and deposits of potential archaeological interest were identified. These works were focussed on the areas of Trenches 1, 4 and 5.

- 5.3 All mechanical excavation was undertaken using a tracked excavator fitted with a toothless ditching bucket. Topsoil, subsoil and underlying non-archaeological deposits were removed in spits no greater than 0.1m in thickness. The process was repeated until the first archaeological significant horizon or the uppermost natural horizon (geology) was exposed. All further excavation was undertaken by hand.
- 5.4 Each deposit or layer was allocated a unique identifier (context number), and accorded a written description, a summary of these are included in Appendix 1. Three or four digit numbers within square brackets in this report reflect cut features (e.g. land drain [405]).
- 5.5 A full written record of the archaeological deposits was made on standard AAL context recording sheets. Archaeological deposits were drawn to scale, in section (at scale 1:20), with Ordnance Datum (OD) heights being displayed. All planning was undertaken with the Leica GS08 RTK NetRover GPS. Colour photography formed an integral part of the recording strategy, and all photographs incorporated scales, an identification board and directional arrow. A selection of these images is reproduced below.

6.0 Results (Figures 2 – 7)

Trench 1 Extension (Figure 3)

- 6.1 An area was extended around Trench 1 of the previous evaluation, measuring approximately 16m north – south and 12m east – west. At the base of the sequence was the natural geology, 100, at a depth of approximately 1.30m-1.68m below the current ground surface. It was sealed by a c.0.21m thick layer of disturbed natural, 103.
- 6.2 Towards the north end of the trench was a 0.42m thick levelling and bedding layer, 102, associated with an east to west aligned path of red, handmade bricks of a probable 18th or 19th century date, 101. The path measured approximately 1.58m wide and extended beyond the limit of excavation to the east and west. The bricks had been laid on their side and were bonded with mortar. Along the northern edge were intermittent remains of a brick kerb (Plate 1).
- 6.3 An early 20th century landscaping deposit, 104, was recorded along the western side of the trench and measured c.0.60m thick. It was cut by a number of modern land drains. Layer 104 was sealed by another landscaping and levelling layer, 105, and topsoil 106.



Plate 1: Brick path, 101, looking east. 1 and 2m scales

Trench 3 (Figure 3)

- 6.4 Trench 3 was located in a grassed area at the south end of the site. The natural geology, 301, was encountered approximately 1.06m below the current ground surface. It was sealed by two 0.46m modern landscaping layers, 302 and 303, producing occasional small modern brick fragments. The uppermost deposit was a 0.47m thick topsoil, 300 (Plate 2).



Plate 2: Representative north facing section in Trench 3, 1m scales

Trench 4 (Figure 4)

- 6.5 Trench 4 was located in a car parking area at the southeast corner of the site. At the base of the sequence was the natural geology, 401, encountered at approximately 1.36m below ground surface. It was cut by an undated northeast to southwest aligned linear feature [405], which contained a single silting deposit, 406. The trench was extended to trace the continuation of this feature, but it was truncated just west of the trench by an area of modern disturbance.
- 6.6 At the north end of the trench was a wide irregular cut, [409], aligned broadly north – south, with a large ceramic pipe. It was backfilled with a layer of cinder/slag 407 and a dark grey silty clay 408 (Plate 3).



Plate 3: Southwest facing section of linear [405]. 1m scales

- 6.7 Both features were sealed by landscaping layers, 404 and 403, and a modern bedding layer 402 and tarmac surface 400.

Trench 5 (Figure 5)

- 6.8 Trench 5 was located in a car parking area towards the east side of the site. Natural geology, 501, was encountered approximately 0.50m below the modern ground surface. It was cut by a large irregular shallow sided feature [504], measuring more than 8m x 6m across with an approximate depth of 0.64m (Plate 4). It contained two undated grey silty sand fills, 505 and 506 and was sealed by a 0.17m thick landscaping deposit 503, and a bedding layer, 502 and tarmac surface 500.



Plate 4: Irregular cut [504], looking northeast. 2m and 1m scales

Trench 6 (Figure 6)

6.9 Trench 6 was located in the centre of the site in an access road. At the base of the sequence the natural geology 601 was encountered 1.34m below the modern ground surface, sealed by two modern levelling/landscaping layers 603 and 604. This was in turn sealed by modern tarmac 600 and a bedding layer 602 (Plate 5).



Plate 5: South facing section of Trench 6. 1m scales

Trench 7a (Figure 7)

6.10 Trench 7a was located in a grassed area towards the west end of the site. The natural geology, 7001 was sealed by a 0.30m thick former garden soil, 7002, probably associated with the former vicarage. Above this layer was a 0.17m thick layer of brick rubble, 7003 representing

material associated with the demolition of the former vicarage. It was cut by a small pit [7004] containing modern domestic waste. The uppermost deposit was a modern topsoil, 7000 (Plate 6).



Plate 6: South facing section in trench 7a, 1m scales

Trench 7b (Figure 7)

6.11 Trench 7b was situated southeast of 7a, across a former access road. Natural geology, 701, was encountered approximately 1.83m below the modern ground surface, and sealed by two modern made ground/landscaping layers, 703 and 704. Above this was a bedding layer, 702, and modern tarmac surface, 700 (Plate 7).



Plate 7: Southwest facing section of Trench 7b. 1m scales

7.0 Discussion and Conclusions

- 7.1 There was no clear evidence for medieval activity recorded, and no trace of the potential medieval pit encountered during the previous evaluation in Trench 1, which appeared to be located in an area of modern disturbance associated with a number of drains and other services. The previous archaeological desk-based assessment indicated that the site may be farmland associated with the adjacent Hinckley Priory (Finn 2014a) and the lack of medieval activity recorded during the current works appears to confirm this. A small linear feature recorded in Trench 4 could conceivably be a property boundary associated with this phase of activity but no dating evidence was recovered to confirm this date.
- 7.2 The site appears to have remained as farmland during the post-medieval period as indicated by historic mapping (Finn 2014a), and there is no further evidence of archaeological activity recorded on the site until the 19th century, as represented by a brick path in Trench 1. This is likely to be associated with the former vicarage in the northwest corner of the site. Demolition material associated with the vicarage and its outbuilding was recorded in Trench 7.
- 7.3 Throughout the remainder of the site, the trenching exposed only modern services, and modern landscaping and levelling layers associated with the terracing of the site in the 19th and early 20th centuries, and for the construction of the recently demolished council offices, and its associated car parking, access roads and landscaping.

8.0 Effectiveness of Methodology

- 8.1 The methodology employed has proven that there may be some 19th century garden remains present within the development area although the majority of the site appears to have been heavily disturbed by later landscaping and services.

9.0 Acknowledgements

- 9.1 Allen Archaeology would like to thank Press and Starkey for this commission. Thanks go to Pellikaan Construction for providing plant and welfare for the project.

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Appendix 1: Context Summary List

Trench 1 Extension

Context	Type	Description	Interpretation
100	Layer	Dark orange brown sandy silt with grey lenses and rare chalk flecks, sealed by 103	Natural geology
101	Masonry	Red brick with mortar bonding, 2 courses and flanking kerb, E-W oriented, 1.58m wide and 10.40m in length, approximately 0.22m thick, seals 102, sealed by 105	Brick path
102	Layer	Firm light greyish brown sandy silt with frequent brick fragments and occasional small rounded pebbles, 0.48m thick, seals 103, sealed by 101	Levelling/bedding layer for path
103	Layer	Moderately firm light orangey brown sandy silt, with rare angular flint, 0.24m thick, seals 100, sealed by 102, 104	Disturbed/redeposited natural
104	Layer	Loose dark orangey very sandy silt, frequent rounded pebbles and organic patches, 0.60m thick, seals 103, sealed by 102	Modern made ground
105	Layer	Moderately compact mid orangey brown sandy silty clay, sealed by 106, seals 101	Modern landscaping deposit
106	Layer	Moderately compact mid brown sandy silty clay	Topsoil

Trench 3

Context	Type	Description	Interpretation
300	Layer	Compact mid brown sandy loam with frequent round pebbles and occasional flint, 0.29-0.47m thick, seals 302	Topsoil
301	Layer	Compact light orangey brown sandy loam with moderate chalk flecks and angular flints, sealed by 303	Natural geology
302	Layer	Moderately firm mid orangey brown sandy loam, with common brick fragments between 10 and 15cm, common rounded pebbles up to 7cm diameter. 0.16-0.37m thick, sealed by 300 and seals 303	Landscaping layer
303	Layer	Moderately firm mid yellowish brown sandy silt, frequent rounded small pebbles, 0.46 thick, sealed by 302 and seals 301	Landscaping layer

Trench 4

Context	Type	Description	Interpretation
400	Layer	Tarmac, seals 402	Tarmac surface
401	Layer	Compact light grey/brown clay, with frequent chalk flecks and infrequent flint, sealed by 404, cut by 405, 409	Natural geology
402	Layer	Loose layer of red sand with a band of grey stones, with frequent angular medium sized stones throughout, 0.40m thick, seals 403, is sealed by 400	Levelling layer for tarmac
403	Layer	Loose dark brownish grey silty sand with occasional medium sized rounded pebbles, 0.62m thick, seals 404, sealed by 402	Landscaping layer
404	Layer	Moderate to loose mid greyish brown sandy silt with infrequent small pebbles, 0.30m thick, seals 406, sealed by 403	Made ground
405	Cut	Linear, E-W oriented, steep sides, concave base, 0.80m wide and 0.36m deep, cuts 401, filled by 406	Cut of undated linear feature
406	Fill	Firm light greyish brown compact sand and silt with occasional organic patches, 0.80m wide and 0.36m thick, fills 405, sealed by 404	Natural silting of linear [405]

Context	Type	Description	Interpretation
407	Fill	Compact dark reddish grey slag/cinder, fills 409, sealed by 408	Backfill of drain
408	Fill	Moderate dark grey silty clay, infrequent sub angular flint between 7 and 8cm, 0.20 to 0.45m thick , seals 407, is sealed by 404	Backfill of drain
409	Cut	Linear, N-S oriented, irregular stepped sides, cuts 401, contains 407, 408	Cut of modern drain

Trench 5

Context	Type	Description	Interpretation
500	Layer	Tarmac, seals 502	Tarmac
501	Layer	Firm mid brown/orange silty sand with occasional chalk fragments, cut by 504	Natural geology
502	Layer	Loose red sand with rubble and medium sized grey stones, 0.22m thick, seals 503, sealed by 500	Levelling layer for tarmac
503	Layer	Dark brownish clay with occasional small rounded pebbles, 0.18m thick, seals 506, sealed by 502	Made ground
504	Cut	Irregular in plan, steep irregular sides, flat base, cuts 501, filled by 505	Cut of probable modern landscaping feature
505	Fill	Soft mid grey moderately compact sand, with frequent sandstone and medium sized pebbles, 0.37m thick, sealed by 506	Primary backfill of [504]
506	Fill	Soft dark grey sand, with frequent round small pebbles and occasional charcoal flecks, 0.26m thick, sealed by 503, seals 505	Secondary backfill of [504]

Trench 6

Context	Type	Description	Interpretation
600	Layer	Tarmac, seals 602	Tarmac surface
601	Layer	Firm mid brownish orange silty sand with occasional chalk flecks and flint fragments, is sealed by 604	Natural geology
602	Layer	Loose grey sand with frequent sub-angular stones, 0.50m thick, seals 603, sealed by 600	Levelling layer for tarmac 600
603	Layer	Moderately firm light orangey brown silty sand, 0.10m thick, seals 604, sealed by 602	Levelling/landscaping layer
604	Layer	Moderately firm dark greyish brown silty sand, 0.68m thick, seals 601, sealed by 603	Levelling/landscaping layer

Trench 7a

Context	Type	Description	Interpretation
7000	Layer	Loose dark brown sandy silt with frequent tree roots and occasional small fragments of bricks, 0.31m thick, seals 7005	Topsoil
7001	Layer	Firm brownish grey silty clay with occasional chalk flecks, disturbed by tree roots, sealed by 7002	Natural geology
7002	Layer	Loose dark brown silty loam with rare charcoal flecks and frequent small rounded pebbles, 0.32m thick, sealed by 7003, seals 7001	Former garden soil
7003	Layer	Firm light orangey brown sandy silt with very frequent large fragments of bricks, 0.17m thick, cut by [7004], seals 7002	Demolition layer
7004	Cut	Semi-circular in plan, 0.60m diameter, excavated until modern nature revealed by modern finds, cuts 7003, filled by 7005	Cut of modern pit

Context	Type	Description	Interpretation
7005	Fill	Loose dark brown sandy silt with infrequent rounded pebbles, fills [7004], sealed by 7000	Backfill of modern pit

Trench 7b

Context	Type	Description	Interpretation
700	Layer	Tarmac, seals 702	Tarmac
701	Layer	Firm light orangey brown silty clay with frequent chalk flecks and occasional angular flints, sealed by 7004	Natural geology
702	Layer	Loose dark brown sand with frequent white and grey angular stones, 0.60m thick, seals 703, sealed by 700	Levelling layer for tarmac
703	Layer	Firm dark greyish brown sandy silt with infrequent small rounded pebbles, 0.80m thick, seals 704, sealed by 702	Made ground
704	Layer	Light greyish orange sandy silt with infrequent rounded pebbles of assorted sizes, 0.90m thick, seals 700, sealed by 703	Made ground

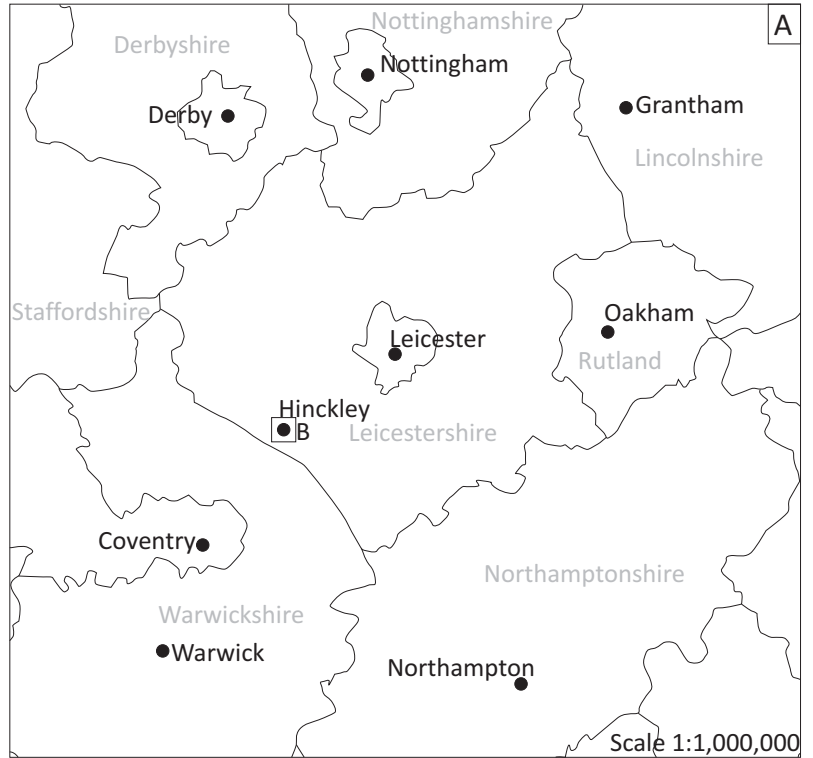
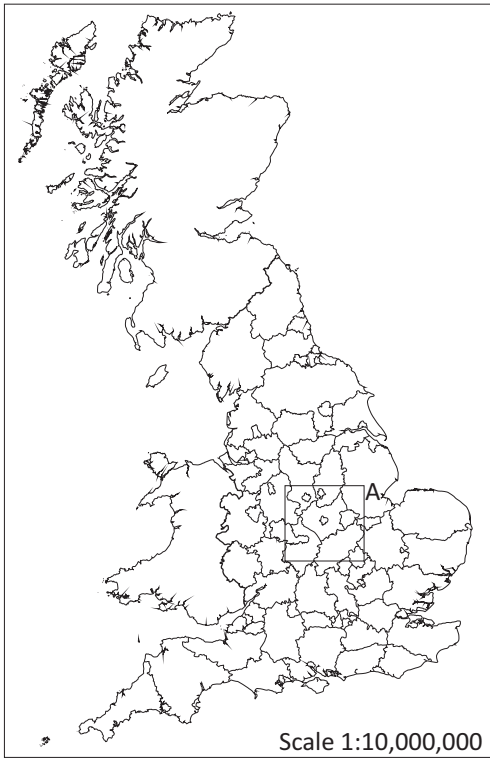


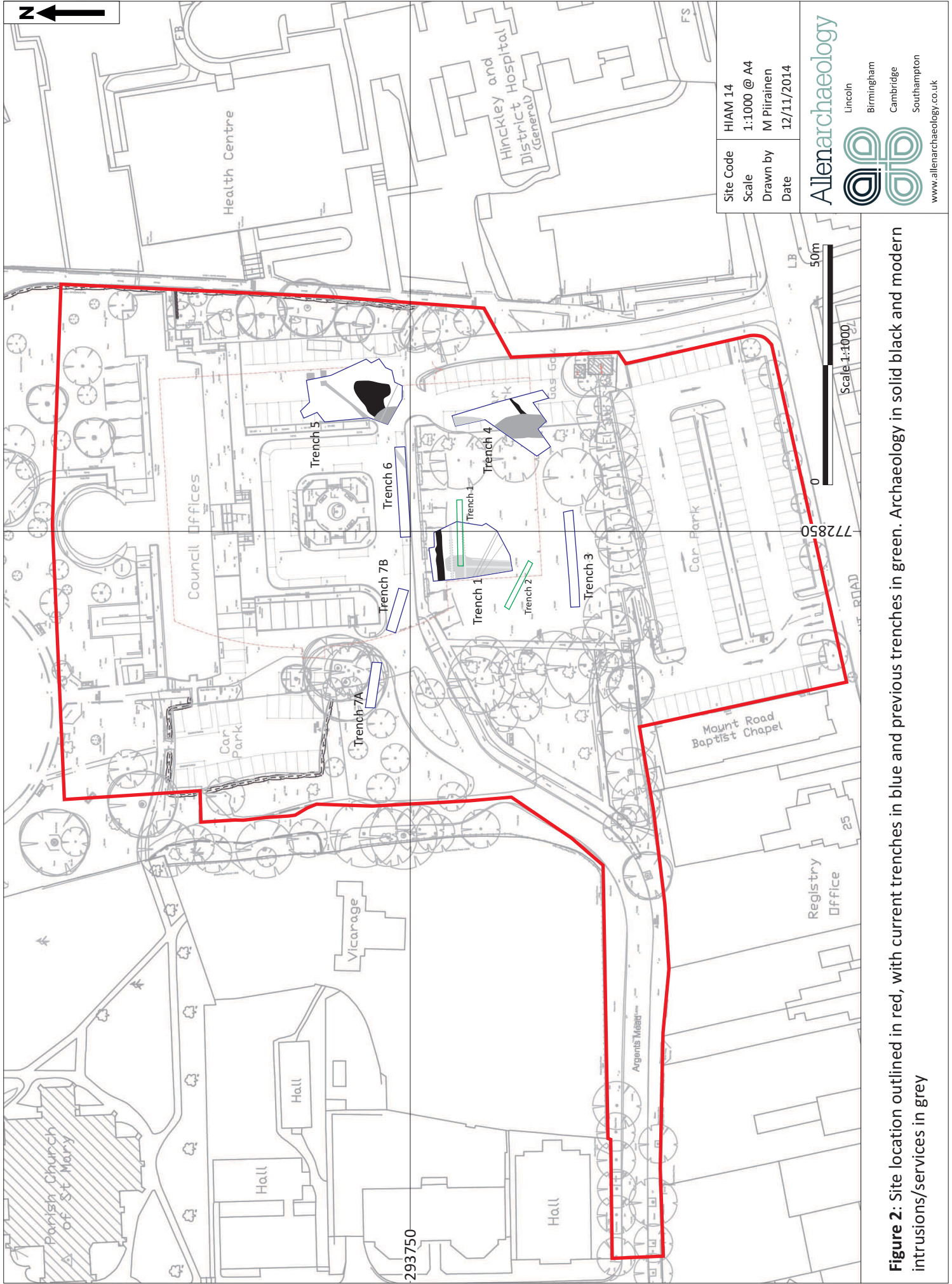
Figure 1: Site location outlined in red
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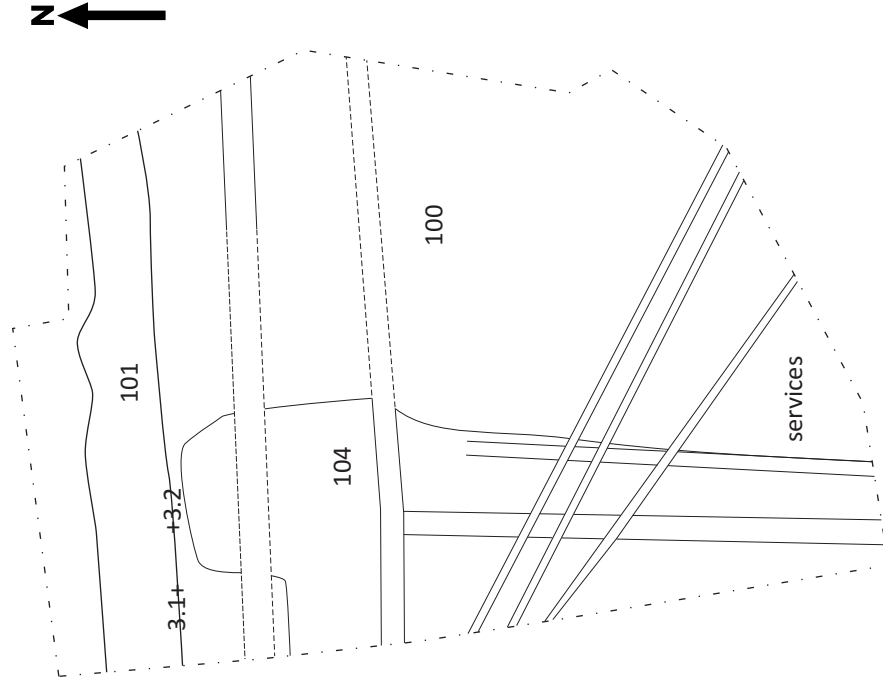


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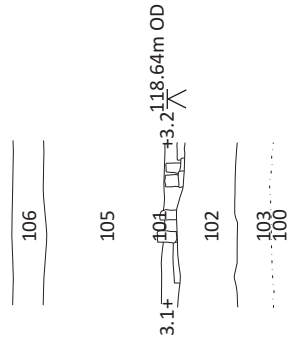
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Figure 2: Site location outlined in red, with current trenches in blue and previous trenches in green. Archaeology in solid black and modern intrusions/services in grey

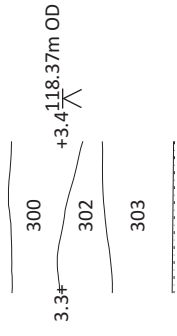
Trench 1 Extension Plan



Trench 1
South Facing Section



Trench 3
North Facing Section

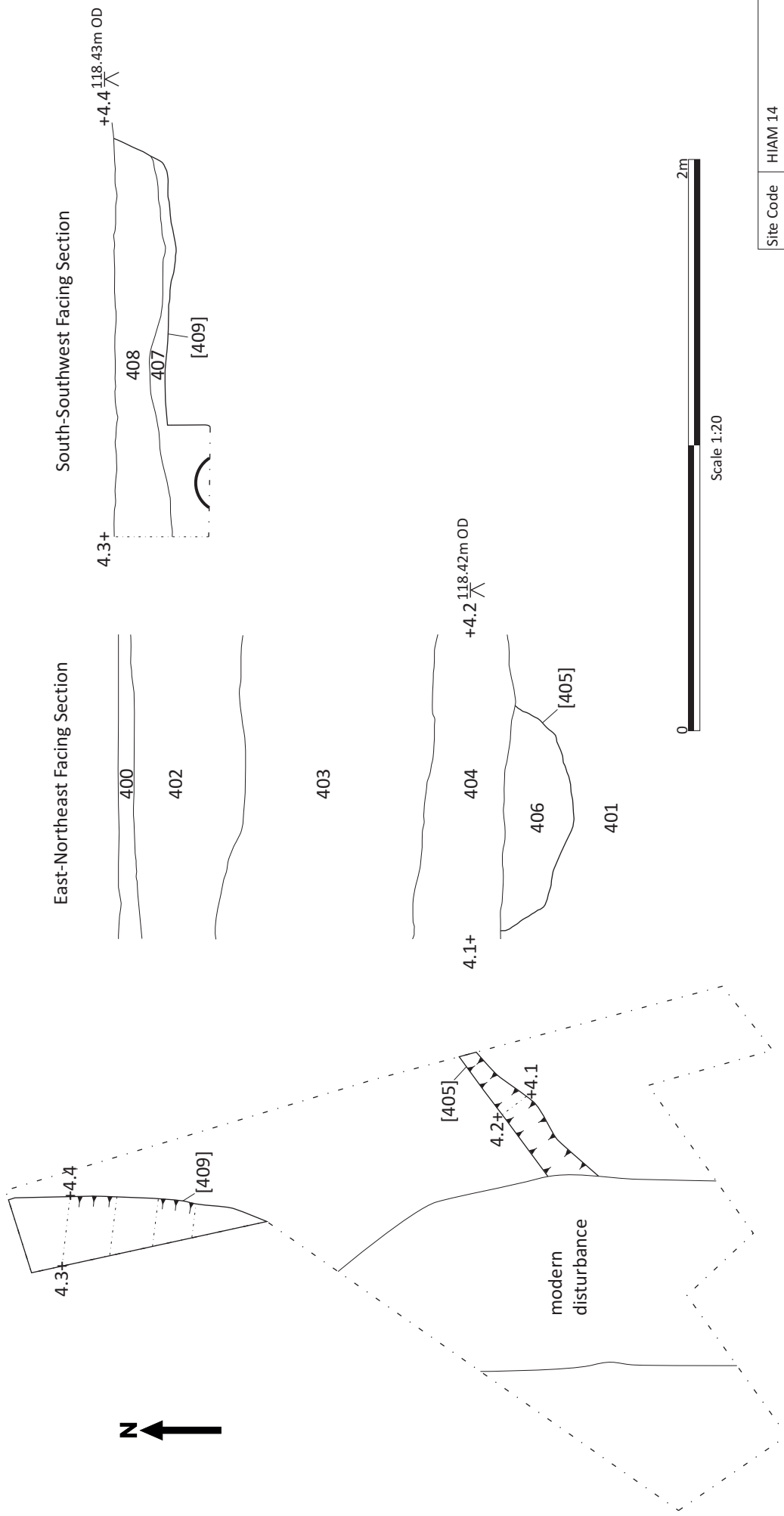


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Figure 3: Trench 1 Extension plan and section, Trench 3 section

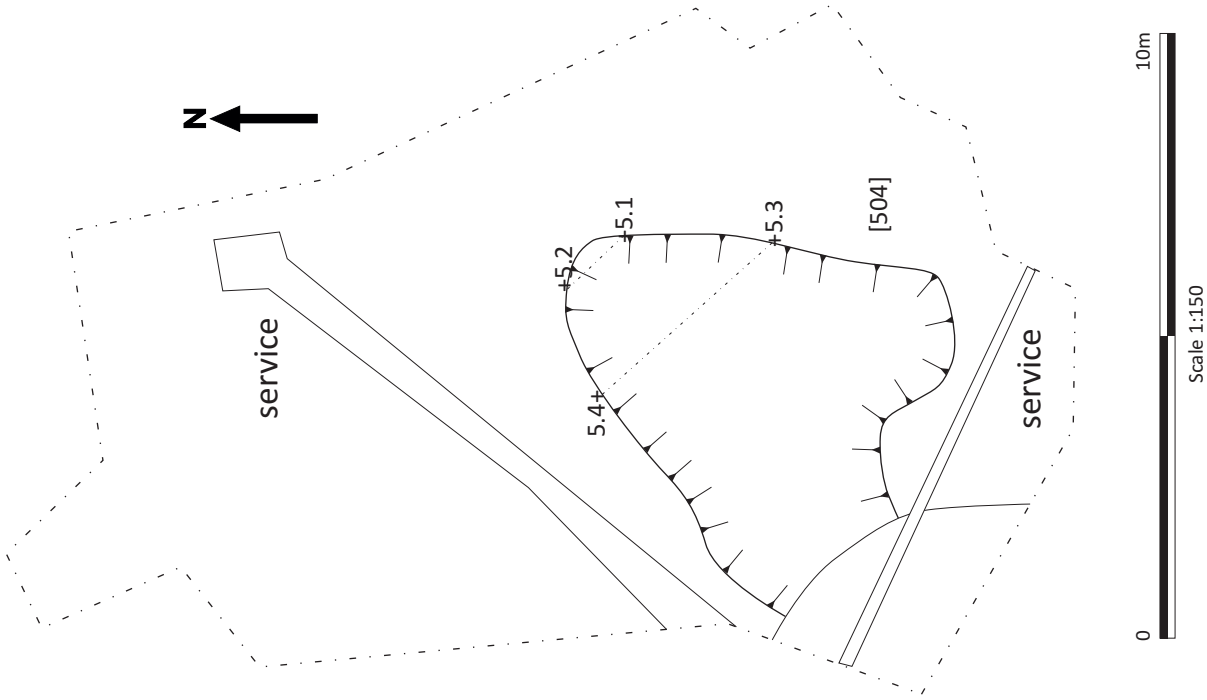


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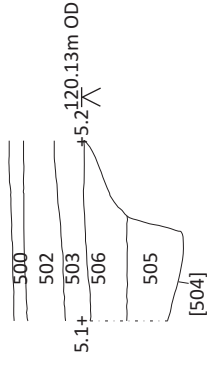
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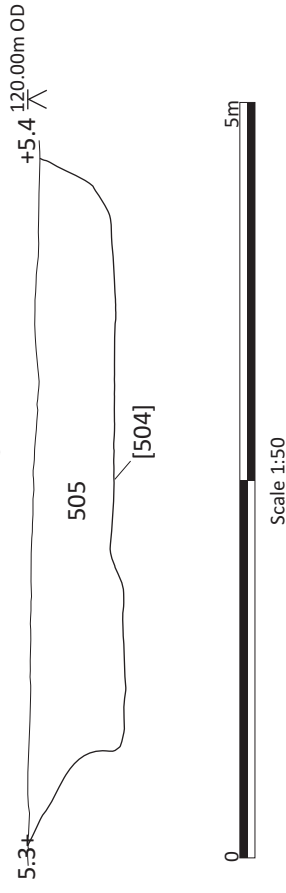
Figure 4: Trench 4 plan and sections



Northeast Facing Section



Northeast Facing Section

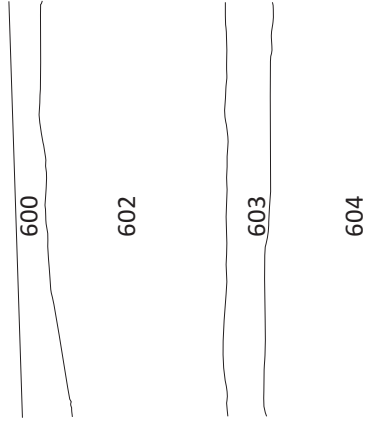


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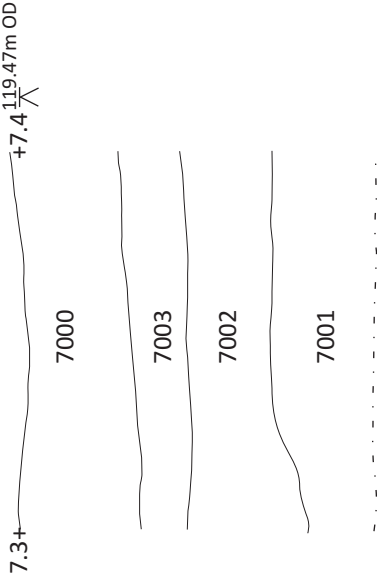
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Figure 5: Trench 5 plan and sections

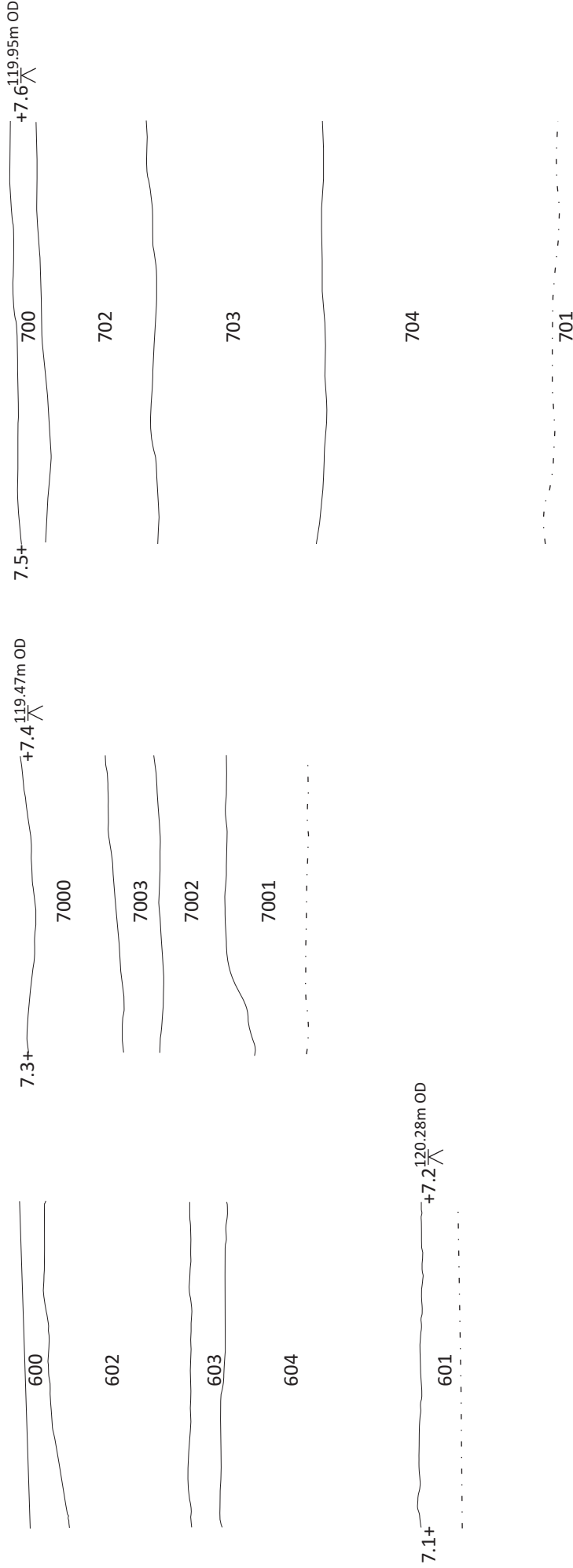
Trench 6
North Facing Section



Trench 7a
South Facing Section



Trench 7b
Southwest Facing Section



Scale 1:20

Site Code	HIAM 14
Scale	1:20 @ A4
Drawn by	D Podlinski & M Piirainen
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Figure 6: Trenches 6, 7a and 7b sections



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