

ARCHAEOLOGICAL TRIAL TRENCHING REPORT:

TRIAL TRENCHING ON LAND NEAR STATION ROAD, BURNHAM MARKET, NORFOLK

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Report prepared for MJS Construction (March) Limited

By
Allen Archaeology Ltd
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Allenarchaeology



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Cover image: General site shot facing north

Executive Summary

- MJS Construction (March) Limited commissioned Allen Archaeology to undertake an archaeological informative trial trenching within a programme of archaeological mitigatory works, as part of planning consent prior to a new residential development on land at Church Pightle, Station Road, Burnham Market Norfolk.
- Burnham Market lies within a wider landscape of known archaeological interest with remains dating from the prehistoric period, some Iron Age and Roman evidence, and settlement in the Saxon period.
- The proposed trial trenching methodology entailed the excavation of 4 trenches, each measuring 25m long and 1.8m wide. Whilst not required, a contingency trench measuring 20m x 1.8m was planned for.
- The four trenches revealed very few archaeological features; a northeast to southwest gully in Trenches 1 and 2 revealed no dating; however it was sealed beneath an alluvial layer that in Trench 4 was found to contain a late Saxon pot sherd as well as two prehistoric flints. One irregular-shaped feature in Trench 2 was probably a modern tree-bowl.

1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 Allen Archaeology Limited (AAL) were commissioned by MJS Construction (March) Limited to undertake an archaeological evaluation by informative trial trenching within a programme of archaeological mitigatory works, as part of planning consent prior to a new residential development on land at Church Pightle, Station Road, Burnham Market Norfolk.
- 1.2 The fieldwork, recording and reporting conformed to current national guidelines as set out in the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists 'Standard and guidance for archaeological field evaluations' (ClfA 2020), the Historic England document 'Management of Research Projects in the Historic Environment' (Historic England 2015) and 'Standards for Development-Led Archaeological Projects in Norfolk' (Robertson et al. 2018) with reference to regionally identified research aims (Medlycott 2011). The fieldwork was undertaken by two experienced field archaeologists between the 28th September and 1st November 2020.

2.0 Site Location and Description

- 2.1 The proposed development area was located off Station Road in Burnham Market, Norfolk, in the administrative district of King's Lynn and West Norfolk. The site was approximately 0.34 hectares and contained an existing dwelling with garden. The site is centred at National Grid Reference (NGR) 522158 374194.
- 2.2 The bedrock geology comprises Lewes Nodular Chalk Formation, Seaford Chalk Formation, Newhaven Chalk Formation, Culver Chalk Formation and Portsdown Chalk Formation with overlying superficial deposits of Head: clay, silt, sand and gravel (<http://mapapps.bgs.ac.uk/geologyofbritain/home.html>).

3.0 Planning Background

- 3.1 Planning permission was granted on 4th June 2020 for the '*Demolition of detached bungalow and erection of 3 x 2-storey dwellings and 1 x garage at Church Pighle, Station road, Burnham Market, Norfolk, PE31 8HA*' (Planning Reference 19/01731/F), with conditions, including:
 - A) *No development shall take place until an archaeological written scheme of investigation has been submitted to and approved by the local planning authority in writing.*
 - B) *No development shall take place other than in accordance with the written scheme of investigation approved under condition A and,*
 - C) *The development shall not be occupied until the site investigation and post investigation assessment has been completed in accordance with the written scheme of investigation approved under condition A and the provision to be made for analysis, publication and dissemination of results and archive deposition has been secured.*
- 3.2 The brief for the works indicated that an archaeological trial trench evaluation was required to establish the archaeological implications of the development on the below ground archaeological assets (Hickling 2020), and to allow the determination of the nature and extent of any further archaeological mitigation that may be required, prior to or during the development.

- 3.3 The approach adopted was consistent with the recommendations of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), with the particular sections of relevance being Paragraphs 189 and 202 of 'Section 16. Conserving and enhancing the historic environment' (Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government 2019).

4.0 Archaeological and Historical Background

- 4.1 Burnham Market lies within a wider landscape of known archaeological interest with remains dating from the prehistoric period onwards. Metal detecting in 2002-3 on fields south of the site have recovered early Neolithic and later prehistoric worked flints, as well as 9 Roman coins, 2 post-medieval coins and a jetton, as well as other metal objects (Norfolk Historic Environment Record (NHER) reference 42561).
- 4.2 Southwest of the site, further metal detecting recorded Roman, medieval and post-medieval coins, as well as Roman, middle and late Saxon, medieval and post-medieval metal objects, including a Roman finger ring and a late Saxon brooch in the style of an Arabic coin (NHER reference 44627).
- 4.3 Burnham Market was a significant settlement in the Saxon period, mainly focussed to the east of the centre of the current village (Davies 2011, 126), c.600m to the east of the site. It was probably the centre of a large estate, as demonstrated by large quantities of middle Saxon pottery and high-quality continental metalwork, suggesting the site was a trading centre or market (NHER reference 18496).
- 4.4 At the time of the Domesday Survey, Burnham Market was known as Brunaham or Bruneham, and was held by St Benedict's of Ramsey (<http://www.domesdaybook.co.uk/norfolk1.html#burnham>), before and after the survey.
- 4.5 Metal detecting in fields to the southwest recovered material including a medieval key, spindle whorl and hooked tag (NHER reference 36155).
- 4.6 Approximately 200m to the north is 18th century Burnham Westgate Hall; within its parkland are a complex group of medieval to post-medieval features, including trackways, banks and ditches (NHER reference 35951).
- 4.7 Approximately 100m to the southwest of the site there is a series of cropmark field systems, with at least one being dated to the post-medieval period (NHER reference 26989).

5.0 Aims and Objectives

- 5.1 The purpose of the evaluation trenching was to gather sufficient information for the Historic Environment Officer to be able to make a decision regarding the management of sub-surface heritage assets at the site.
- 5.2 Evidence was gathered to establish the presence/absence, nature, date, depth, quality of survival and importance of any archaeological deposits to enable an assessment of the potential and significance of the archaeological remains, and to allow for the determination of any appropriate strategies to mitigate the effect of the proposed development upon the archaeological resource.

6.0 Methodology

- 6.1 The proposed trial trenching methodology entailed the excavation of 4 trenches, each measuring 25m long and 1.8m wide. In addition, a contingency trench measuring 20m x 1.8m was included, if needed, to provide further clarification about the form, extent or significance of archaeological features or deposits encountered. Due to the limited results of the work the contingency trench was not required.
- 6.2 The evaluation trenches were accurately located using a survey grade GPS receiving RTK corrections. In each trench a mechanical excavator fitted with a 1.8m wide toothless ditching bucket was used to remove topsoil, subsoil and underlying non-archaeological deposits in spits no greater than 100mm in thickness. The process was repeated until the first archaeologically significant or natural horizon was exposed. All further excavation was then by hand. Machine excavation was monitored at all times by an experienced field archaeologist.
- 6.3 A full written record of the archaeological deposits was made on standard Allen Archaeology Limited context recording sheets. Archaeological deposits were drawn to scale, in plan and section at an appropriate scale (usually 1:20 or 1:50), with Ordnance Datum heights being displayed on each class of drawing. Full colour photography formed an integral part of the recording strategy, and all photographs incorporated scales, a directional arrow and an identification board where appropriate.

7.0 Results

Trench 1

- 7.1 The earliest deposit found in Trench 1 was natural geology 102, a yellow brown sandy gravel. This was truncated by a shallow northeast to southwest orientated undated gully [103] which contained a single fill 104, a mid-grey brown sandy silt that was 0.35m thick. This was overlain by 101, a mid-brown grey alluvium that was 0.20m thick. The latest deposit was the topsoil 100, a firm dark brown silty loam 0.20m thick (Plate 1). Following discussions with the planning archaeologist, sondages were excavated in the middle and west end of the trench, through the natural geology 102 to confirm the deposit was not archaeological.



Plate 1: Gully [103], looking southwest, 1m and 0.20m scale

Trench 2

- 7.2 The earliest deposit found in Trench 2 was the natural geology 202. Truncating this was cut [203], a northeast to southwest orientated gully which was a continuation of [103] from Trench 1 (Plate 2). It contained a mid-grey brown sandy silt 0.35m thick, 204, and was sealed by alluvium 201. Truncating 201 was tree-bowl [205], an irregular-shaped feature with an uneven base containing 206 a mid-grey brown sandy silt and modern roots. These were sealed by alluvium 201 that was 0.20m thick and 0.20m thick topsoil 200.



Plate 2: Gully [203], looking northeast, 0.20m scale

Trench 3

- 7.3 The earliest deposit in Trench 3 was the natural geology 302. Overlying this was 0.25m thick alluvium 301 and a 0.20m thick topsoil.

Trench 4

- 7.4 The earliest deposit in Trench 4 was the natural geology 402. Sealing this was a 0.62m thick alluvium, 401, noticeably thicker here than in other trenches and probably representing a buried soil layer. A complete rim sherd from a 9th – 11th century Thetford type-ware costrel pottery vessel, (Appendix 1) and two flint fragments, one of which was a utilised flake of potentially Neolithic or early Bronze Age date (Appendix 2) were retrieved from it. Overlying this was 0.30m thick topsoil 400. Sealing this was modern made ground deposit 405, a compact mid brown sandy clay, 0.70m thick, which was itself sealed by 403, a compact mid grey sandy clay layer, 0.20m thick. The latest deposit was an orange sand and cobble surface for a modern driveway 404 and was 0.15m thick (Plate 3).



Plate 3: Representative section in Trench 4 looking northeast, scales are 1m

8.0 Discussion and Conclusions

- 8.1 Trenches 1 and 2 revealed a shallow northeast to southwest orientated gully. Although this respected the line of an existing modern hedgerow, it was sealed by an alluvial layer, so is unlikely to be modern. The alluvium was noted in all trenches and was noticeably thicker in Trench 4, where a sherd of late 9th – 11th century pottery and two prehistoric worked flints were recovered.
- 8.2 Feature [205] in Trench 2 was an irregular-shaped feature with an uneven base with significant amounts of roots and bioturbation, and was most likely a tree-bowl.

9.0 Effectiveness of Methodology

- 9.1 The methodology for the archaeological investigations was appropriate for the site and identified few archaeological deposits.

10.0 Acknowledgements

- 10.1 Allen Archaeology Limited would like to thank MJS Construction (March) Limited for the commission and Wordingham Plant Hire for the machine and driver.

11.0 References

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Appendix 1: Pottery

By Paul Blinkhorn

A single sherd of pottery weighing 71g occurred in context 401. It is a fragment of late Anglo-Saxon – Saxo-Norman (late 9th – 11th century) Thetford-type Ware (e.g. Rogerson and Dallas 1984).

The sherd is the complete rim and neck from a costrel, a type of handled liquid-container, and a somewhat unusual product of the Thetford Ware tradition. Some were quite large, with complete examples known with a capacity of 12 pints (c. 6.8 litres; Dallas 1993, 145). They occur at the manufactories in Thetford (e.g. *ibid.* fig. 153; Rogerson and Dallas 1984, fig. 176), but are relatively rare. For example, they made up just 0.7% of all the rim sherds examined by Rogerson and Dallas from the town (*ibid.* 121). They cannot be closely dated, and appear to have been made throughout the life of the industry (*ibid.* 126).

Such vessels are a very unusual find at ‘ordinary’ domestic settlements, and most commonly occur at sites associated with travellers, particularly ports. Its presence here perhaps reflects Burnham’s status as a market centre of international importance in the Anglo-Saxon period.

Bibliography

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Rogerson, A, and Dallas, C, 1984, *Excavations in Thetford 1948-59 and 1973-80* East Anglian Archaeology **22**

Appendix 2: Worked Flint

By Sarah Bates

Two pieces of flint were recovered from the site. There is a small unpatinated flake, long and slightly curving but with its distal end missing. Both lateral edges have been utilised and there is some slight possible retouch. The dorsal face is multifaceted and the piece is from a core struck from at least two ends. The scars are not blade-like and the 'platform' is irregular with no evidence for its particular preparation.

A very small narrow fragment, patinated greyish white and with a small area of cortex surviving at one end/side, is damaged at its pointed end. The edges of the piece are also damaged and in most areas this is accidental. There is a small area, near the broken tip, where the edge damage may be use-related so it is possible that the fragment was used as a small point, but this is uncertain.

Both flints were found in alluvial layer 401.

The utilised flake is evidence of activity in the vicinity of the site during the prehistoric period. It is not closely datable but a Neolithic or earlier Bronze Age date seems most likely. The very small patinated fragment may be from a struck flake and might, possibly, have been utilised.

Ctxt	Cat.	Type	No.	Comp.	Cort.	Pat.	E.dam.	Comment
401	utfl	utilised flake	1	1	1	0		sm, long flake, distal end missing, both lat edges utilised/ poss slight ret
401	flak	chip	1	1	0	1	Yes	sm pointed narrow chip/ fl fragment, may not be struck, ??possible us of tip/broken

Table 1: Flint Catalogue

Appendix 3: Context Summary List

Trench 1

Context	Type	Description	Length (m)	Width (m)	Thickness/depth (m)	Interpretation
100	Layer	Firm dark brown silty loam with occasional stones			0.20	Topsoil
101	Layer	Firm mid brown grey silty loam with occasional irregular chalk and flint			0.20	Alluvium
102	Layer	Yellow brown sandy gravel with lenses of red clay, frequent inclusions of irregular small to medium sized flint				Natural geology
103	Cut	Northeast to southwest orientated gully with moderate sloping sides and a concave base			0.35	Cut of gully
104	Fill	Mid grey brown sandy silt with occasional irregular shaped stone and flint			0.35	Silting in [103]

Trench 2

Context	Type	Description	Length (m)	Width (m)	Thickness/depth (m)	Interpretation
200	Layer	Firm dark brown silty loam with occasional stones			0.20	Topsoil
201	Layer	Firm mid brown grey silty loam with occasional irregular chalk and flint			0.20	Alluvium
202	Layer	Yellow brown sandy gravel with lenses of red clay, frequent inclusions of irregular small to medium sized flint				Natural geology
203	Cut	Northeast to southwest orientated gully with moderate sloping sides and a concave base			0.35	Cut of gully
204	Fill	Mid grey brown sandy silt with occasional irregular shaped stone and flint			0.35	Silting in [203]
205	Cut	Irregular-shaped feature with gentle sloping sides and a uneven base	1.20	0.50	0.12	Treebowl
206	Fill	Firm mid grey brown sandy silt, occasional irregular shaped stone and flint	1.20	0.50	0.12	Backfill of [205]

Trench 3

Context	Type	Description	Length (m)	Width (m)	Thickness/depth (m)	Interpretation
300	Layer	Firm dark brown silty loam with occasional stones			0.20	Topsoil
301	Layer	Firm mid brown grey silty loam with occasional irregular chalk and flint			0.25	Alluvium
302	Layer	Yellow brown sandy gravel with lenses of red clay, frequent inclusions of irregular small to medium sized flint				Natural geology

Trench 4

Context	Type	Description	Length (m)	Width (m)	Thickness/depth (m)	Interpretation
400	Layer	Firm dark brown silty loam with occasional stones			0.30	Topsoil
401	Layer	Firm mid brown grey silty loam with occasional irregular chalk and flint			0.62	Alluvium
402	Layer	Yellow brown sandy gravel with lenses of red clay, frequent inclusions of irregular small to medium sized flint				Natural geology
403	Deposit	Compact mid grey sandy clay			0.20	Made ground
404	Deposit	Orange sand and gravel			0.15	Modern drive way
405	Deposit	Compact mid grey sandy clay, occasional flecks of bitumen			0.70	Made ground

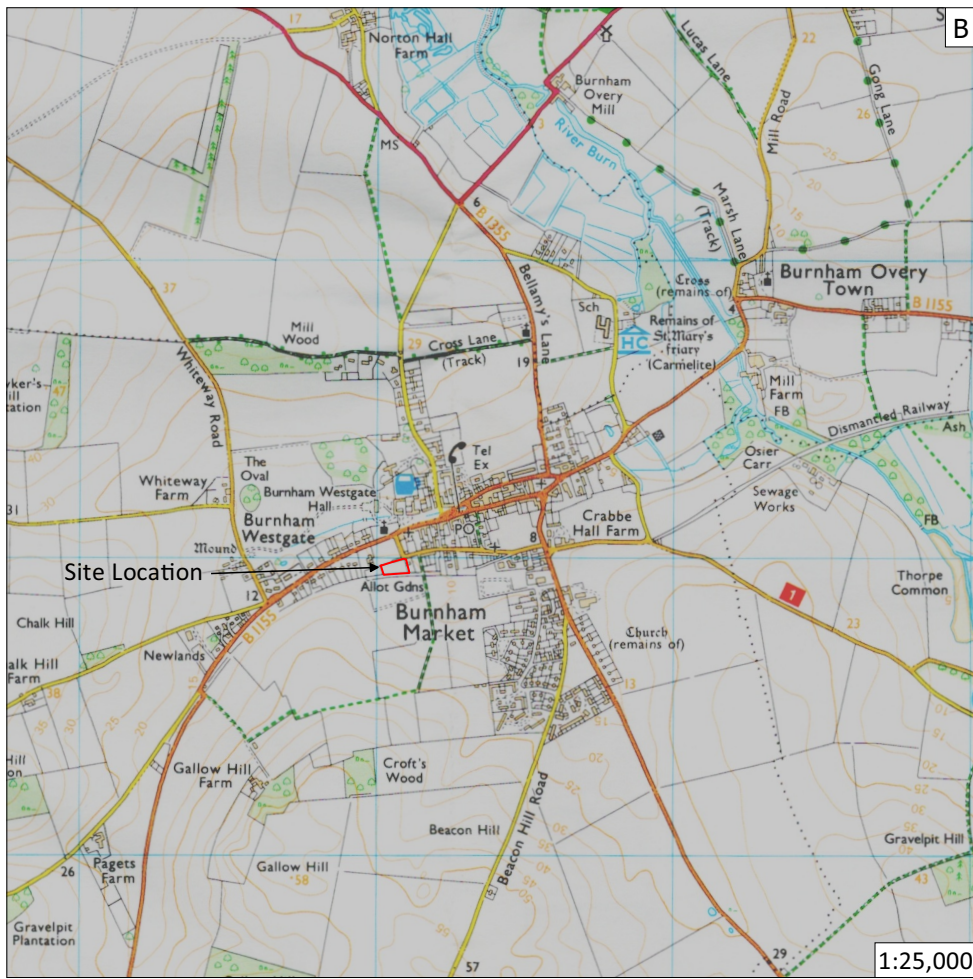
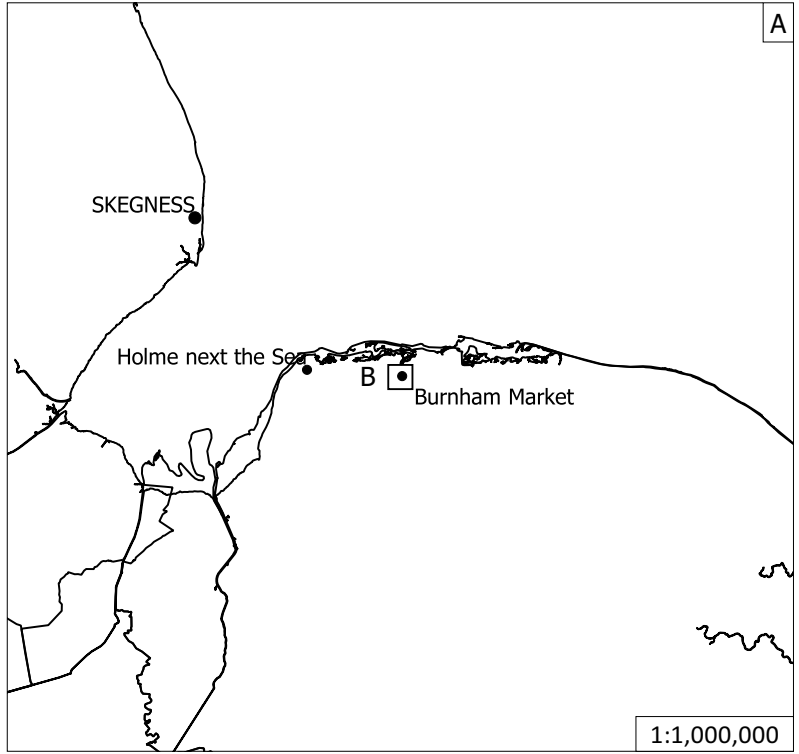
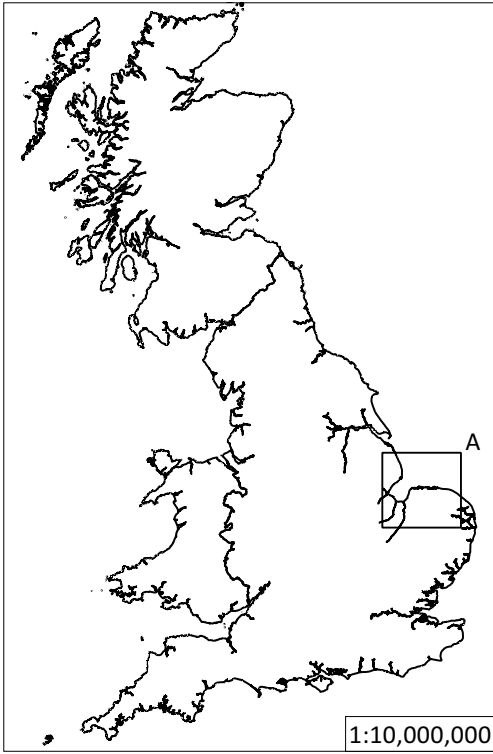


Figure 1: Site location outlined in red

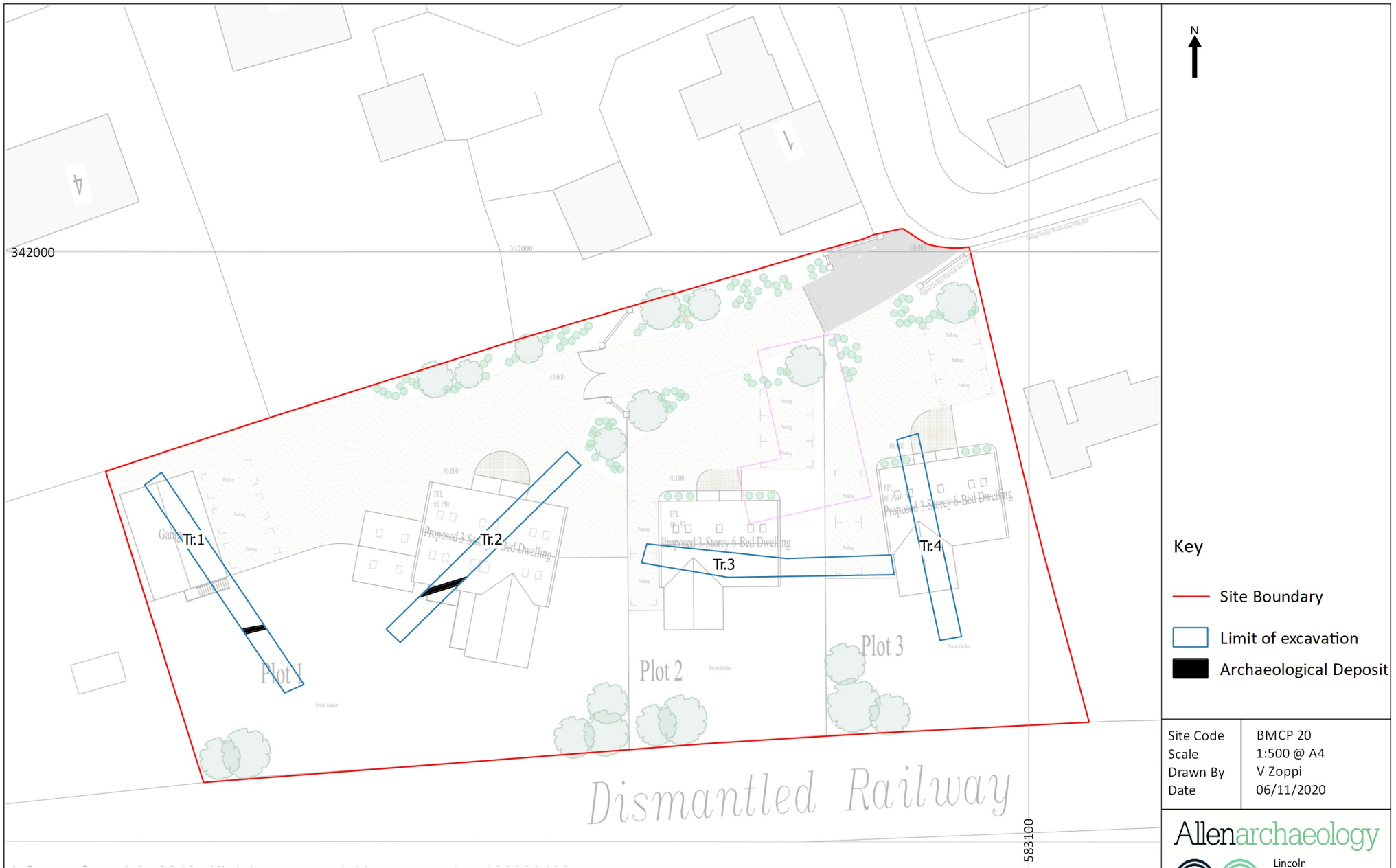
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- Key**
- Site Boundary
 - Limit of excavation
 - Archaeological Deposit

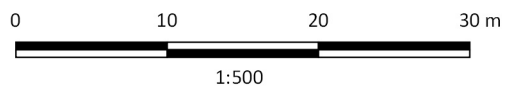
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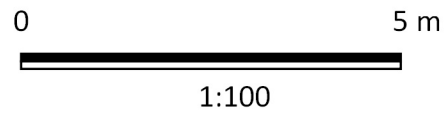
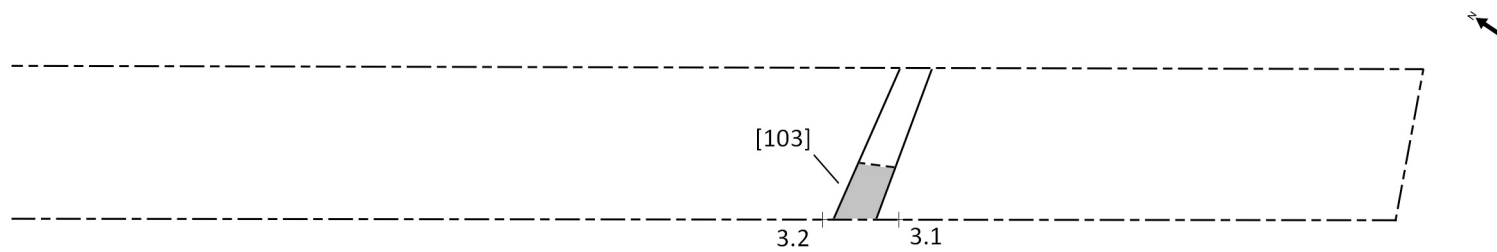
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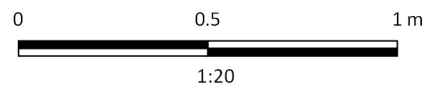
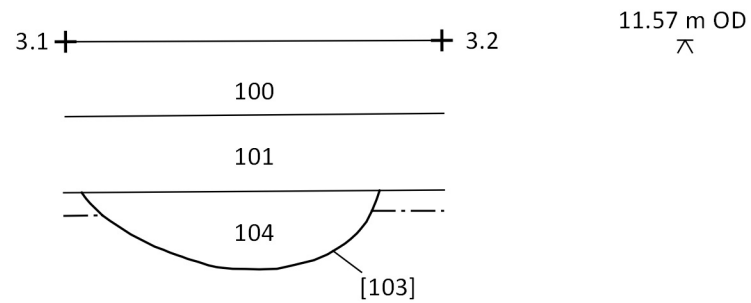
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Figure 2: Trench locations superimposed over proposed development plan (plan provided by the client)





East-Northeast facing section



Key

- Limit of excavation
- Sondage
- Archaeological deposit

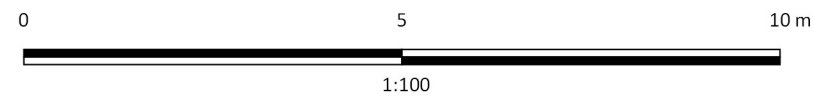
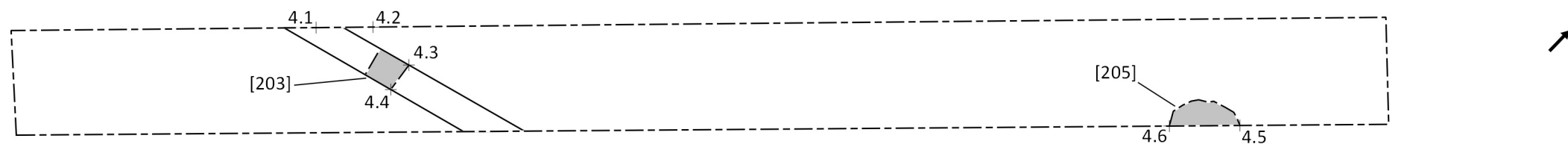
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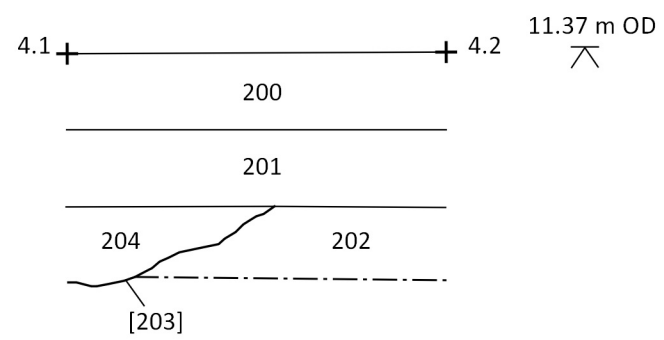
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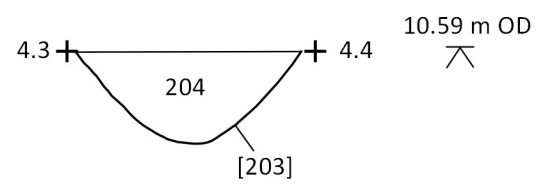
Figure 3: Plan and section of Trench 1



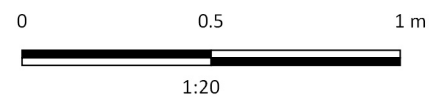
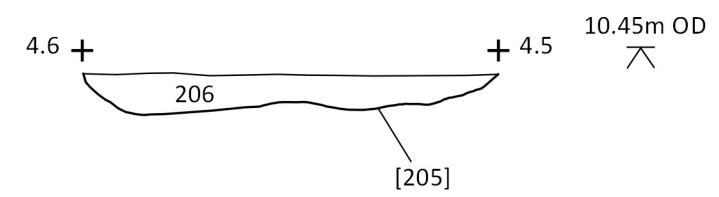
Southeast-facing section



Southwest-facing section



Northwest-facing section



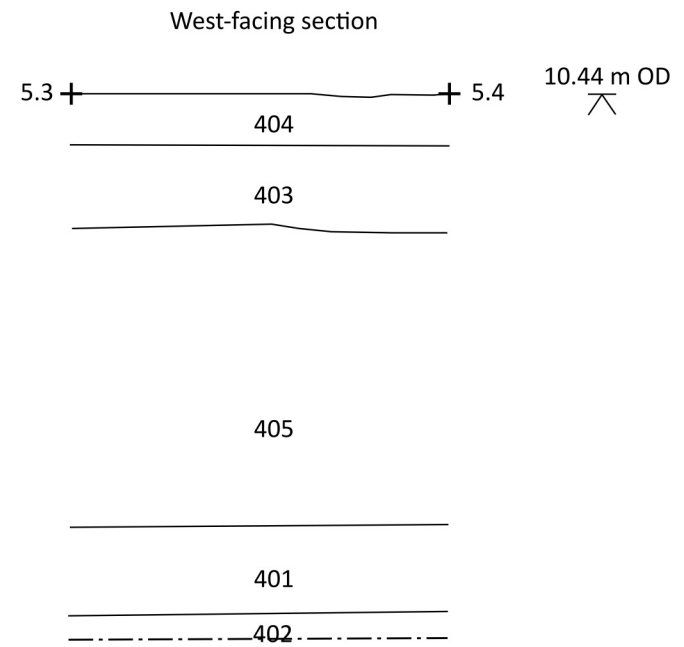
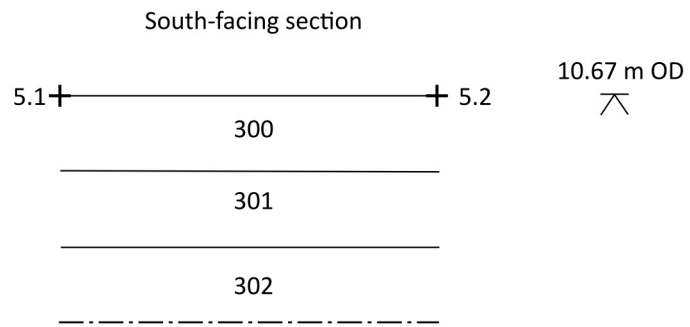
Key

- Limit of excavation
- Sondage
- Archaeological deposit

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Date	06/11/2020



Figure 4: Plan and sections of Trench 2



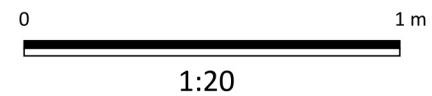
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Figure 5: Representative sections of Trench 3 and 4





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