

Land east of Bennet Road Highbridge Somerset

Archaeological Evaluation



for
Planning Potential

on behalf of
ERC Developments Ltd
(Travelodge)

CA Project: 880265
CA Report: 17694

December 2017



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SUMMARY

Project Name:	Land east of Bennet Road
Location:	Highbridge, Somerset
NGR:	333050 148025
Type:	Evaluation
Date:	20–21 November 2017
Planning Reference:	11/17/00096
Location of Archive:	To be deposited with the Somerset Museums Service
Site Code:	BRDH 17

In November 2017, Cotswold Archaeology carried out an archaeological evaluation of land near the junction of Isleport Road and Bennett Road, Highbridge, Somerset.

The evaluation recorded a sequence of sterile alluvial deposits to a depth of at least 1.3m below present ground level. These alluvial deposits reflect the site's location within the former course of the historic River Siger, which was still flowing in the prehistoric and Roman periods. No archaeological features or deposits were identified, and there was no evidence for significant activity at the site.



1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 In November 2017, Cotswold Archaeology (CA) carried out an archaeological evaluation of land near the junction of Isleport Road and Bennett Road, Highbridge, Somerset (centred at NGR: 333050 148025; Fig. 1). The evaluation was commissioned by Planning Potential, acting on behalf of ERC Developments Ltd (Travelodge).
- 1.2 Planning permission for the construction of a new Travelodge hotel, plus associated access, car parking and landscaping, has been granted by Sedgemoor District Council, conditional on a programme of archaeological work (planning ref: 11/17/00096; Condition 17).
- 1.3 The evaluation was carried out in accordance with a detailed Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI) produced by CA (2017) and approved by Steve Membery of the South West Heritage Trust (SWHT; the archaeological advisors to Sedgemoor District Council). The evaluation was also in line with *Standard and guidance for archaeological field evaluation* (ClfA 2014), *Management of Research Projects in the Historic Environment (MoRPHE) PPN 3: Archaeological Excavation* (Historic England 2015) and *Management of Research Projects in the Historic Environment (MORPHE): Project Manager's Guide* (Historic England 2016).

The site

- 1.4 The evaluation site is located to the north-east of Highbridge. It lies approximately 430m west of the M5 motorway and approximately 1.3km north of the River Brue. It occupies a tetrahedral parcel of land measuring c. 0.35 ha in extent. It is bound by Isleport Road to the north and by unoccupied grassland to the west, south and east. Streams/drainage ditches run along the site's northern and southern edges.
- 1.5 The site is currently unoccupied and is covered in grass, with dense vegetation along the edges. There are patches of concrete rubble throughout the site.
- 1.6 The site is on relatively low-lying ground within the Somerset Levels, at an elevation of c. 6m above Ordnance Datum (aOD). The site is within the former course of the historic River Siger, which appears to have been blocked in the early medieval period and survives today as a substantial palaeochannel.

- 1.7 The local landscape is characterised by drainage ditches (known as 'rhynes'), cut to alter and control the water flow from the Levels.
- 1.8 The underlying bedrock geology of the site is mapped as Charmouth Formation mudstone, which formed in the Jurassic Period. This is overlain by Tidal Flat deposits of clay, silt and sand (BGS 2017).

2. ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND

- 2.1 The following text is summarised from a desk-based heritage assessment produced for an immediately adjacent site (Cotswold Archaeology 2016).

Prehistoric (pre-AD 43) and Roman (AD 43–AD 410)

- 2.2 The site is within the former course of the historic River Siger, which was still flowing in the prehistoric and Roman periods. As such, there is only limited potential for the presence of remains dating to these periods within the site. It is probable that any such remains would be buried under deep alluvial layers (see below).

Early medieval (AD 410–1066) and medieval (1066–1539)

- 2.3 During the early medieval and medieval periods, changes in drainage and coastline affected the evaluation site environs, with a continued process of sand deposition and silt build up eventually blocking minor sea inlets. A 10th-century charter reference suggests that the River Siger was blocked by this time. The accumulation of alluvial deposits appears to have peaked in the 14th century but continued into the post-medieval period, leading to a gradual expansion of settlement.
- 2.4 To the south-west of the evaluation site, medieval occupation layers have been recorded cut into alluvium deposits that sealed Roman remains.
- 2.5 The earthwork remains of a rectangular enclosure lie to the south of Isleport Farm, and it has been suggested that this enclosure is medieval in date. Isleport Farm itself dates to 1414.
- 2.6 An aerial photograph from 1946 shows traces of ridge and furrow within the evaluation site, indicating that it was exploited for agriculture in the medieval period.

Post-medieval (1540–1800) and modern (1800–present)

- 2.7 The land around Highbridge was enclosed in the 18th century and drainage schemes were enacted in order to improve flood control.
- 2.8 The earliest map depicting the evaluation site is the 1841 Tithe map of Burnham, which depicts the site as within pasture plots. Later 19th-century plans show that the boundaries between these plots were marked by drainage ditches.
- 2.9 An aerial photograph from 1946 shows two linear features, likely representing subsidiary drainage ditches, within the evaluation site.

3. AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

- 3.1 As defined by the WSI (CA 2017), the objective of the evaluation was to provide further information about the likely archaeological resource within the site, including its presence/absence, character, extent, date, integrity, state of preservation and quality. This information will enable Sedgemoor District Council to identify and assess the particular significance of any archaeological heritage assets within the site, consider the impact of the proposed development upon that significance and, if appropriate, develop strategies to avoid or minimise conflict between heritage asset conservation and the development proposals, in line with the *National Planning Policy Framework* (Department of Communities and Local Government 2012).

4. METHODOLOGY

- 4.1 The fieldwork comprised the excavation of three trenches (Fig. 2). All trenches were 30m long and 2m wide. The locations of T1 and T3 were adjusted slightly on site to avoid a service and a wet area. Trenches were set out on OS National Grid (NGR) co-ordinates using Leica GPS and surveyed in accordance with *CA Technical Manual 4: Survey Manual*.
- 4.2 All trenches were excavated by a mechanical excavator equipped with a toothless grading bucket. All machine excavation was undertaken under constant archaeological supervision to a depth of 1.1m–1.2m bpgl (below present ground level).

- 4.3 Deposits were assessed for their palaeoenvironmental potential in accordance with *CA Technical Manual 2: The Taking and Processing of Environmental and Other Samples from Archaeological Sites*. No deposits were identified that required sampling.
- 4.4 CA will make arrangements for the deposition of the project archive with the Somerset Museums Service.
- 4.5 A summary of information from this project, as set out in Appendix B, will be entered onto the OASIS online database of archaeological projects in Britain.

5. RESULTS

- 5.1 This section provides an overview of the evaluation results. A detailed summary of the recorded contexts can be found in Appendix A.
- 5.2 Excavation in all three trenches was halted at a depth of 1.1m–1.3m bpgl without encountering the natural substrate. The three trenches featured a similar sequence of three compact clayey alluvial layers overlain by subsoil and topsoil (Fig. 3, Sec. AA).
- 5.3 No archaeological features were identified and no finds were retrieved. Modern ceramic drains were identified in all three trenches.

6. DISCUSSION

- 6.1 The evaluation recorded a sequence of sterile alluvial deposits to a depth of at least 1.3m bpgl. These alluvial deposits reflect the site's location within the former course of the historic River Siger, which was still flowing in the prehistoric and Roman periods. No archaeological features or deposits were identified, and there was no evidence for significant activity at the site.

7. CA PROJECT TEAM

- 7.1 Fieldwork was undertaken by Jonathan Orellana, assisted by Christina Tapply and Victoria Parsons. This report was written by Jonathan Orellana. The report

illustrations were prepared by Charlotte Patman. The project archive has been prepared for deposition by Jessica Cook and Hazel O'Neil. The project was managed for CA by Derek Evans.

8. REFERENCES

BGS (British Geological Survey) 2017 *Geology of Britain Viewer*
<http://www.bgs.ac.uk/discoveringGeology/geologyOfBritain/viewer.html>

Accessed 10 November 2017

Cotswold Archaeology 2016 *ALDI, Isleport, Highbridge, Somerset: Archaeological Desk-Based Assessment* CA typescript report **16457**

Cotswold Archaeology 2017 *Land east of Bennett Road: Written Scheme of Investigation for an Archaeological Evaluation*

Department of Communities and Local Government 2012 *National Planning Policy Framework*



APPENDIX A: CONTEXT DESCRIPTIONS

Trench No.	Context No.	Type	Context interpretation	Description	L (m)	W (m)	D (m)
1	100	layer	topsoil	dark brown silty clay	>30	>2	0.1
1	101	layer	subsoil	light greyish brown silty clay with occasional small stones	>30	>2	0.05
1	102	layer	alluvium	compact light grey clay	>30	>2	0.48
1	103	layer	alluvium	compact light bluish grey clay	>30	>2	0.25
1	104	layer	alluvium	compact light pinkish brown with occasional mottles of manganese	>30	>2	>0.2
2	200	layer	topsoil	dark brown silty clay	>30	>2	0.15
2	201	layer	subsoil	light greyish brown silty clay	>30	>2	0.15
2	202	layer	alluvium	compact light greyish brown clay	>30	>2	0.45
2	203	layer	alluvium	compact light bluish brown clay with occasional mottles of manganese	>30	>2	0.25
2	204	layer	alluvium	compact light brownish pink clay with occasional mottles of manganese	>30	>2	>1
3	300	layer	topsoil	dark greyish brown silty clay	>30	>2	0.2
3	301	layer	subsoil	light greyish brown silty clay	>30	>2	0.15
3	302	layer	alluvium	compact mid brownish grey clay with mottles of orangey manganese	>30	>2	0.2
3	303	layer	alluvium	compact light orangey grey clay with mottles of orangey manganese	>30	>2	0.25
3	304	layer	alluvium	compact mid brownish grey clay with mottles of orangey manganese	>30	>2	>0.3

APPENDIX B: OASIS REPORT FORM

PROJECT DETAILS		
Project name	Land east of Bennett Road, Highbridge, Somerset	
Short description	<p>In November 2017, Cotswold Archaeology carried out an archaeological evaluation of land near the junction of Isleport Road and Bennett Road, Highbridge, Somerset.</p> <p>The evaluation recorded a sequence of sterile alluvial deposits to a depth of at least 1.3m below present ground level. These alluvial deposits reflect the site's location within the former course of the historic River Siger, which was still flowing in the prehistoric and Roman periods. No archaeological features or deposits were identified, and there was no evidence for significant activity at the site.</p>	
Project dates	20–21 November 2017	
Project type	Evaluation	
Previous work	None	
Future work	Unknown	
PROJECT LOCATION		
Site location	Highbridge, Somerset	
Study area (m ² /ha)	c. 0.35 ha	
Site co-ordinates	333050 148025	
PROJECT CREATORS		
Name of organisation	Cotswold Archaeology	
Project Brief originator	N/A	
Project Design (WSI) originator	Cotswold Archaeology	
Project Manager	Derek Evans	
Project Supervisor	Jonathan Orellana	
MONUMENT TYPE		
	None	
SIGNIFICANT FINDS		
	None	
PROJECT ARCHIVES		
	Intended final location of archive	Content
Physical	N/A	N/A
Paper	Somerset Museums Service	Trench forms, section drawings
Digital	Somerset Museums Service	Digital survey, digital photos
BIBLIOGRAPHY		
CA (Cotswold Archaeology) 2017 <i>Land east of Bennett Road, Highbridge, Somerset: Archaeological Evaluation</i> CA typescript report 17694		



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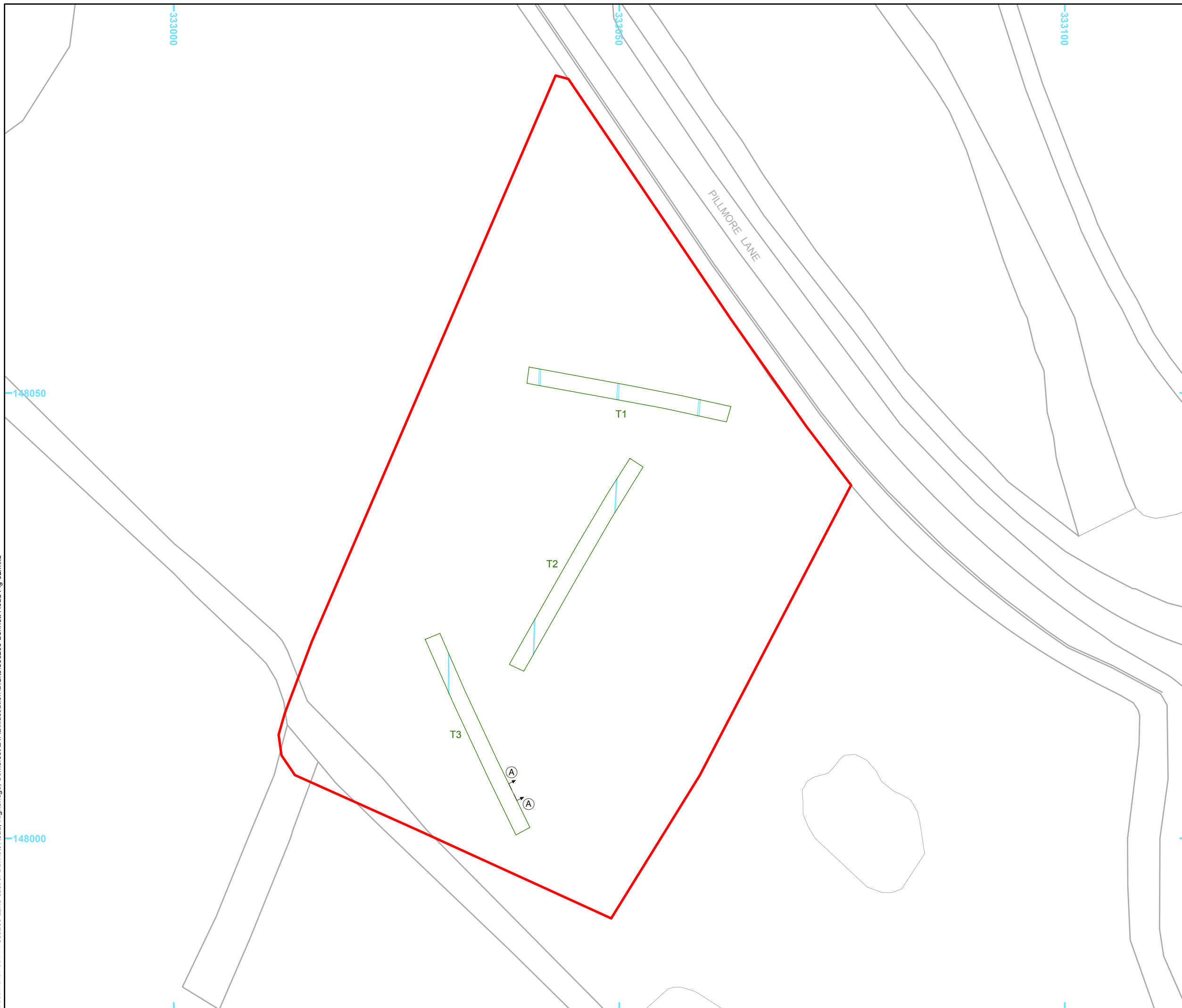
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PROJECT TITLE
 Land east of Bennett Road, Highbridge,
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FIGURE TITLE
 Site location plan

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CHECKED BY	DJB	DATE	04/12/2017		
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- site boundary
- evaluation trench
- field drain
- A A section location



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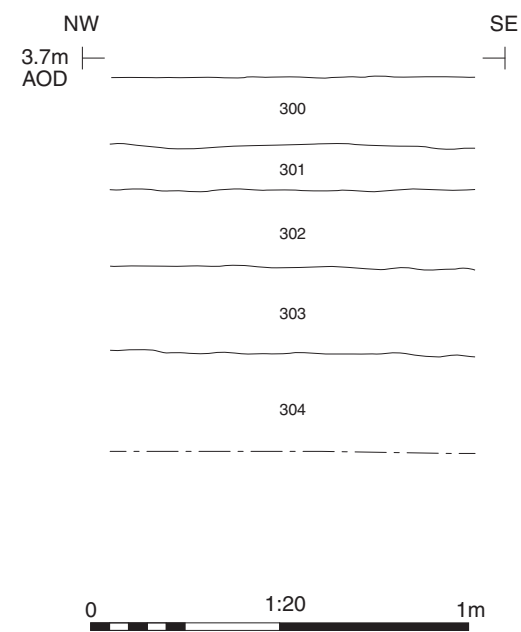
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PROJECT TITLE
Land to the East of Bennett Road,
Highbridge, Somerset

FIGURE TITLE
Trench location plan

DRAWN BY	CP	PROJECT NO	880265	FIGURE NO.
CHECKED BY	DJB	DATE	04/12/2017	2
APPROVED BY	DE	SCALE@A3	1:400	

Section AA



Trench 3, looking south-east (scale 1m)



Section of Trench 3 showing sequence of alluvial layers, looking north-east (scale 1m)


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PROJECT TITLE
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FIGURE TITLE
Trench 3: section and photographs

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