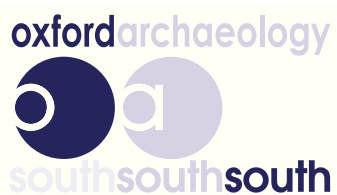


Land at High Street
Wanborough
Wiltshire



Archaeological
Watching Brief Report

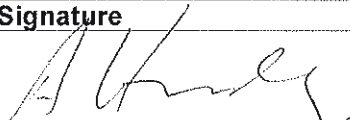


April 2010

Client: Hanbury Developments Ltd

Issue No:1
OA Job No: 4514
NGR: SU 210 835

Client Name: Hanbury Developments Ltd
 Client Ref No: n/a
 Document Title: Land at High Street, Wanborough, Wiltshire
 Document Type: Watching Brief Report
 Issue/Version Number: One
 Grid Reference: SU 210 835
 Planning Reference: APP/U3935/E/07/2043077
 OA Job Number: 4514
 Site Code: WANHIS09
 Invoice Code: WANHISWB
 Receiving Museum: Swindon Museum and Art Gallery
 Museum Accession No: TBC
 Event No: 1

Issue	Prepared by	Checked by	Approved by	Signature
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Document File Location W:\PROJECTS\Wiltshire WI\4514_WanboroughHighStreet_WB
 Graphics File Location Servergo/oaupubs1_RtoZW_codes/WANHISWB
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Land at High Street, Wanborough, Wiltshire

Archaeological Watching Brief Report

Written by Robin Bashford

with contributions from Steven Leech and illustrated by Julia Moxham

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Summary

Between February and April 2010, Oxford Archaeology (OA) were commissioned by Hanbury Developments Ltd to undertake an archaeological watching brief at Land at High Street, Wanborough, Wiltshire (SU 210 835). The work was undertaken during groundworks associated with the construction of new housing, following the demolition of the existing garage and the removal of the associated fuel storage tanks.

A condition was placed on the planning consent that an archaeological watching brief be undertaken during groundwork for the new development.

The watching brief revealed Gault Clay, directly overlain by modern made ground deposits, or heavily truncated by the installation of the fuel tanks. No archaeological deposits were observed during the course of the watching brief. It seems likely that the site has been levelled during the construction of the garage in the mid-late 20th century.

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Location and scope of work

- 1.1.1 Planning permission was granted to remove an existing building and underground fuel bunkers at a plot of land known as Land at the High Street, Wanborough (SU 210 835), and to build new dwellings on the site.
- 1.1.2 The archaeological advisor (County Archaeologist, Wiltshire County Council) to the local planning authority (Swindon Borough Council) deemed that the site is located in an area of archaeological interest, although recognised that “*previous impacts to the site will have significantly disturbed the sub-surface*” (Letter from Roy Canham WCC, dated 01.08.2006, ref. RACMJU/05RAC138). Consequently, a condition was placed on the planning consent that an archaeological watching brief be undertaken during groundwork for the new development.
- 1.1.3 Prior to the work, Oxford Archaeology (OA) produced a Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI) detailing how they would implement the requirements of the condition (OA, 2009). The WSI was approved by WCC in October 2009 and groundworks on site began in February 2010.

1.2 Geology and topography

- 1.2.1 The site is located on the boundary between Gault Clay and Head deposits (BGS Sheet 252) – the latter formed through erosion and solifluction under periglacial conditions. The site lies on a north-facing slope at a height of approximately 110m above OD, and prior to the recent development, consisted of 20th-century buildings (a former garage) in a plot of land of c 0.2 hectares. Most of the plot was covered with tarmac or hard-standing.

1.3 Archaeological and historical background

- 1.3.1 The following information is reproduced from the online version of The Victoria County History of Wiltshire (<http://www.british-history.ac.uk/report.aspx?compid=66551>).
- 1.3.2 The parish of Wanborough, 3 miles east of Swindon, is roughly rectangular in shape, some 5 miles long and varying from a mile to 2 miles in width. Before 1884 a long narrow strip of land to the east, including Earls court Farm, was a detached portion of Wanborough situated geographically in the parish of Little Hinton. In the 11th century Wanborough and Little Hinton together formed a single estate, though the charter describing the boundaries is open to suspicion. A charter of 854 apparently describes the boundaries of Little Hinton, and the Domesday entry suggests that Earls court, while formerly attached to Wanborough, had by 1086 been separated from it. Its subsequent tenorial history renewed the connection. In 1884 the detached part was absorbed into the civil parish of Little Hinton, leaving Wanborough with an area of 4,514 a. In 1964 an area in the extreme north-west of the parish, including Little Nythe and Covingham Farms, was beginning to be developed by the corporation of Swindon as part of its expansion programme.
- 1.3.3 Geographically the parish is divided roughly in half, the southern section lying on the chalk downs. The shape of the parish conforms to a pattern found along the scarp slope of the Chalk both westwards into Wiltshire and eastwards into Berkshire, each parish having chalk uplands as well as greensands and clays for meadow and pasture. Upper Wanborough, around the church, is on an Upper Greensand spur commanding a

view north over Lower Wanborough and south over Liddington. The northern half of the parish towards the shallow valley of the River Cole is successively Gault, Lower Greensand, and Kimmeridge Clay. The chalk scarp rises behind the village, reaching 800 ft at Foxhill on the parish boundary. Most of the Chalk lies between 600 ft and 700 ft. Two coombs pierce the eastern boundary between the Ridgeway and the Icknield Way, the larger containing two chalk pits. Below the scarp the land falls gently away to the river, to below 300 ft, and is drained by the Cole, its tributary stream the Lidd, and several smaller streams, providing abundant meadowland and marsh. There is little wood in the parish, although there is evidence of illegal felling during the 16th century. Stone was quarried at Berrycombe in the 16th century and marl was taken from Inlands at least from the end of the 13th century.

- 1.3.4 Wanborough's reputation as the 'key of Wessex', the site of two battles between rival Saxon kings, is not accepted by modern scholars, but the southern boundary follows the 'Folces Dic', or 'Thieves Way', the ancient hundred boundary, which may represent the march between tribal spheres of influence. Archaeological and placename evidence [suggests] Neolithic and Bronze Age activity in the south of the parish and Early Iron Age coins have been found. The parish lies athwart three ancient trackways which run along the line of the chalk downs. The 'Rogues Road', north of the 'Thieves Way', winds along the valley at the foot of the scarp, running south of Earls court, through the Breach and Horpit, skirting the Marsh and thence entering Liddington. The road running west from Little Hinton towards Swindon, passing through Upper Wanborough, follows for part of its course the line of the Icknield, or Ickleton Way, and a mile to the south runs the Ridgeway.
- 1.3.5 The Roman occupation left considerable traces in the parish. Ermine Street runs diagonally through the whole length of Wanborough, the lower part of the village lying along its route. The Cunetio (Mildenhall) road, branching from Ermine Street, near Covingham Farm, forms part of the western boundary of the parish. At the junction of these roads lies a large settlement which has been tentatively identified as Durocornovium. Considerable structural remains, for at least two centuries used as a stone quarry, as well as individual finds, including a large coin hoard, attest an occupation from the first century to the end of the Roman period. Another theory places Durocornovium at Popplechurch in the extreme south of the parish, identifying the Covingham site as a trading site, the other being a staging post. Pagan-Saxon material has been found in the parish, including a cemetery at Foxhill.
- 1.3.6 The later settlement pattern of Wanborough is complex and its scattered nature seems to be of early origin. The position of Upper Wanborough, including the church, on the Icknield Way but west of Ermine Street, suggests that it might be the original nucleus of the village. In this respect Wanborough follows its neighbours to the east, many of which are placed just above the spring line. The pattern of Lower Wanborough was governed to some extent by Ermine Street and the 'Rogues Road', but also by the position of the common land. The distinction between East and West Wanborough occurs by the end of the 13th century, and suggests that Lower (presumably East) Wanborough was then of reasonable size. This division persisted for administrative purposes during the 16th and 17th centuries, although by the 18th century smaller areas, such as Hydes, Foxbridge, and Redlands were being used for the purposes of poor relief. Some other areas of settlement in the parish probably precede this division: apart from Earls court, Horpit dates from the middle of the 13th century at the latest, and Nythe and 'La Hyde' occur as settlements by the end of that century. Moor Leaze also probably originated at this time, and the Breach occurs as a settlement a century later.

- 1.3.7 The sites of several medieval houses lying away from the main areas of settlement are similarly identifiable. Cold Court, with the chapel of St. Katherine, surrounded by a moat and close to the great fishpond, was situated south of the stream known as the Lidd in Wanborough Marsh. Hall Place, the home of the Polton family at the beginning of the 15th century and of Thomas Brind as late as 1633, seems to have been a little to the east of Lower Wanborough. The chapel of St. Ambrose, probably attached to the house, has left traces in a field called 'Ambrose', which has visible evidence of disturbance.
- 1.3.8 By the later 18th century, before the inclosure of the common, houses in Lower Wanborough were grouped around the edge of the common lands. These were of irregular shape, straddling Ermine Street and providing, in effect, a large village green. The western boundary of the lands is marked by a line of houses stretching from the Marsh, through Warnage, to the foot of Kite Hill, the southern boundary by Rotten Row, and the eastern by the houses at Horpit. Many of these houses on the fringes of the former common still stand. Along Rotten Row there are three or four of the 17th or 18th centuries, which before inclosure would have faced north across the common. At Horpit, Elm Farm, a thatched stone-built farm-house, dates from the 18th century and close by there are one or two other houses with thatched roofs probably of 17th- or 18th-century date. There are also a few houses of about the same period in that part of Lower Wanborough which lies along Ermine Street at the bottom of Callas Hill. Among these are two thatched inns, the 'Plough' and the 'Harrow', both of which stand at right-angles to the road and were no doubt once of some importance as coaching inns. During the 19th century there was some expansion of Lower Wanborough along Berrycroft Row and northwards along Ermine Street.
- 1.3.9 The village of Upper Wanborough, which lies to the east of the church, contains buildings mostly of the 18th and 19th centuries but there are a few thatched cottages of earlier date. Kite Hill, which runs parallel to Ermine Street and is one of the roads linking Upper and Lower Wanborough, was built up with council houses between the two World Wars. In the mid 20th century there has been some private building development in Upper Wanborough on lands belonging to the former Warnage Farm. In 1968 there was a village shop in Upper Wanborough but the post-office was at Lower Wanborough.
- 1.3.10 The scattered settlement pattern necessitated a network of roads and tracks particularly across the meadows and common lands in the north of the parish. Thus a track from Berrycroft Row led north through Foxbridge to Swanhill and then west to the parish boundary at Wick Lane. This was also the line followed by the fencing around pasture land during the 16th century. A green lane leading north from the bottom of Kite Hill, still clearly to be seen in the 1960s, joined the track at Berrycroft Row. Another track, since disappeared, linked Horpit with West Town, Little Hinton, in the 18th century.
- 1.3.11 Wanborough, which was assessed as a whole, was the fifth most highly-rated fiscal unit in the county in 1334. There were 201 poll-tax payers in 1377, making the parish the largest unit in the hundred of Thornhill. In 1545 there were 5 tax-payers to the Benevolence of that year and to the subsidy of 1576 Wanborough contributed £4 15s. In 1801 the population was 793, rising to over a thousand in 1831; partly as a result of emigration to Canada, the figure fell, amounting to 764 in 1911. By 1961 with many people who worked in Swindon making their homes in Wanborough, the figure had risen again to 972.

- 1.3.12 Thomas Langley, Vicar of Wanborough (1563– 1581), was chaplain to Archbishop Cranmer in 1548 and a member of the Geneva congregation in 1556. He wrote an abridged version of Polydore Vergil, a treatise on the Sabbath translated from the Italian, and various Latin verses. Sir Charles Hedges (d. 1714), lord of the manor of Wanborough by 1704, was a judge of the Admiralty Court, Secretary of State (1700–6), and a judge of the Prerogative Court of Canterbury. William Sandys Wright Vaux (1818–85), son of William Vaux, Vicar of Wanborough, was Keeper of the Department of Coins and Medals at the British Museum (1861–1870). A. D. Passmore (d. 1958), the Wiltshire antiquary, lived in the parish. He contributed many articles to the Wiltshire Archaeological and Natural History Magazine and made a large collection of antiquities.
- 1.3.13 It is understood by OA that significant archaeological deposits indicating medieval occupation were detected on an adjacent site (pers. comm. M. Pomeroy-Kellinger, County Archaeological Officer, WCC).

2 EVALUATION AIMS AND METHODOLOGY

2.1 Aims

- 2.1.1 To preserve by record any archaeological remains that the development may have removed or damaged within the impacted area.
- 2.1.2 To signal, before the destruction of the material in question, the discovery of any significant archaeological finds, for which the resources allocated were not sufficient to support a treatment to a satisfactory and proper standard.
- 2.1.3 To make available the results of the investigation.

2.2 Methodology

- 2.2.1 The watching brief monitored all works that may have disturbed or destroyed below ground archaeological remains. This included strip foundation trenches for the new development, and associated service trenches.
- 2.2.2 All deposits were issued with unique context numbers, and context recording was in accordance with established OA practices (OA Field Manual, 1992). No finds were retained. Colour transparency and black-and-white negative photographs were taken of all trenches.
- 2.2.3 Site plans were drawn at a scale of 1:200. Sample section drawings were drawn at a scale of 1:20. Full trench sections were not drawn as complex stratigraphy was not present.

3 RESULTS

3.1 Stratigraphy

- 3.1.1 All monitored trenches revealed Gault Clay, at an average level of 50.10m OD (100). This was directly overlain by modern made ground (101).
- 3.1.2 The ground disturbance did not expose stratified remains or significant features.
- 3.1.3 No archaeological features or deposits were encountered that appeared worthy of preservation *in situ*.
- 3.1.4 No deposits were encountered which were suitable for environmental/organic sampling.

3.2 Finds summary

- 3.2.1 Modern brick and concrete were present throughout deposit 101, but no finds were retained during the watching brief.

4 DISCUSSION

4.1 Interpretation

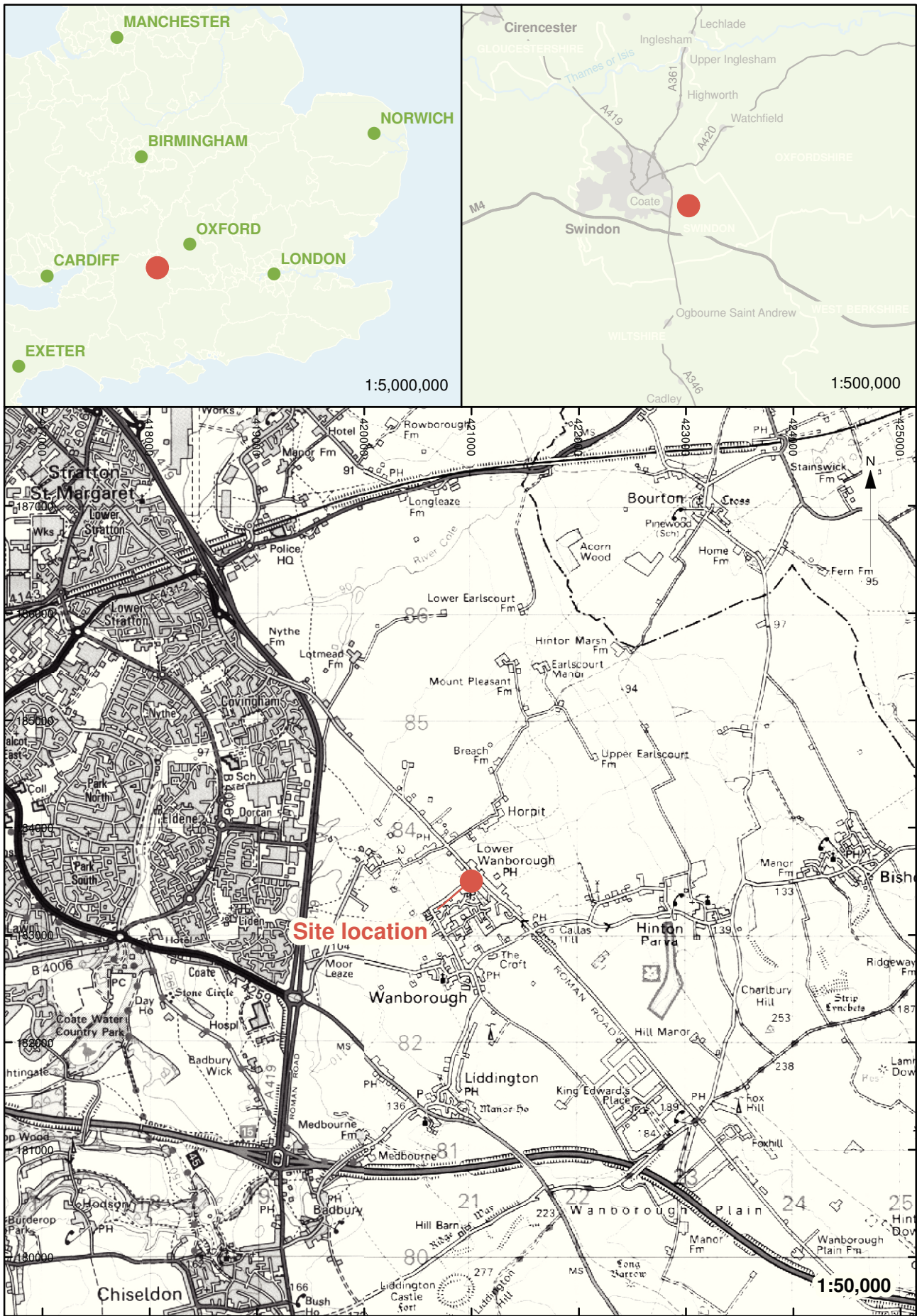
- 4.1.1 No features or deposits of archaeological significance were revealed during the watching brief. Given that the Gault Clay was directly overlain by modern made ground, it seems likely that the site has been levelled during the construction of the garage, and that any archaeological remains have been destroyed during this process.

APPENDIX A. BIBLIOGRAPHY AND REFERENCES

- | | | |
|-----------------------|------|---|
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| Hey, G. and Lacey, M. | 2001 | Evaluation of Archaeological Decision-making Processes and Sampling Strategies. |
| Oxford Archaeology | 1992 | Fieldwork Manual, (Ed. D Wilkinson, first edition, August 1992) |
| Oxford Archaeology | 2000 | OA Environmental Sampling Guidelines and Instruction Manual |

APPENDIX B. SUMMARY OF SITE DETAILS

Site name:	Land at High Street, Wanborough, Wiltshire
Site code:	WANHIS09
Grid reference:	SU 210 835
Type:	Watching Brief
Date and duration:	February – April 2010
Summary of results:	<p>Between February and April 2010, Oxford Archaeology (OA) were commissioned by Hanbury Developments Ltd to undertake an archaeological watching brief at Land at High Street, Wanborough, Wiltshire. The work was undertaken during groundworks associated with the construction of new housing, following the demolition of the existing garage and the removal of the associated fuel storage tanks.</p> <p>The watching brief revealed Gault Clay, directly overlain by modern made ground deposits, or heavily truncated by the installation of the fuel tanks. It seems likely that the site has been levelled during the construction of the garage in the mid-late 20th century.</p>
Location of archive:	The archive is currently held at OA, Janus House, Osney Mead, Oxford, OX2 0ES, and will be deposited with Swindon Museum and Art Gallery in due course, under the following accession number: TBC



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Figure 1: Site location

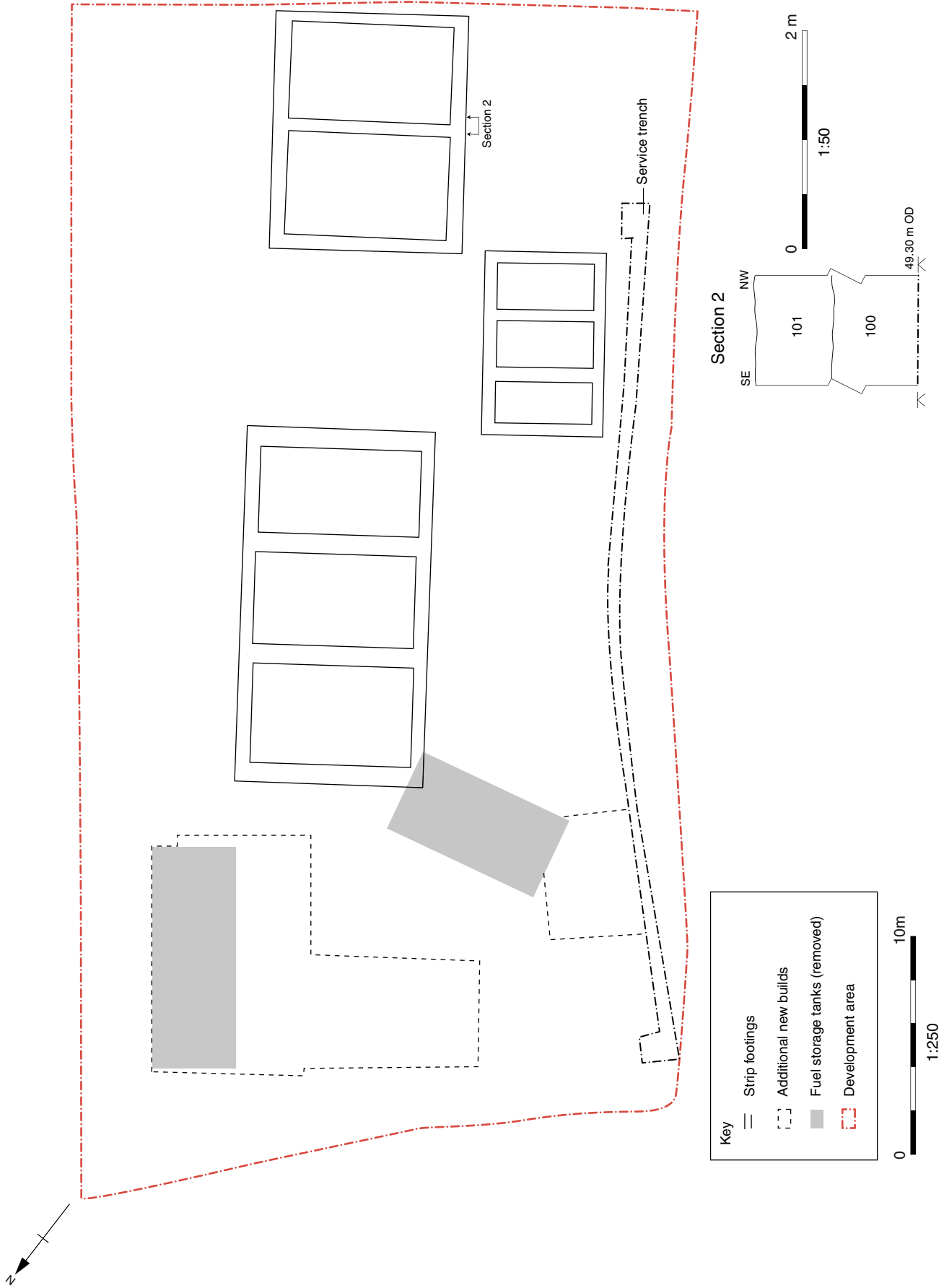


Figure 2: Site plan and sample section



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