

Proposed residential development at Ashwell Lane, Glastonbury, Somerset

NGR 351331, 138314

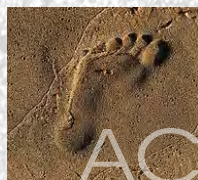
Results of archaeological evaluation

Prepared by:
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On behalf of:
Mr J. Field

Document No: ACW639/3/0

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AC archaeology

PROPOSED RESIDENTIAL DEVELOPMENT AT ASHWELL LANE, GLASTONBURY, SOMERSET

NGR: 351331, 138314

Results of an archaeological trench evaluation

Summary

An archaeological evaluation in support of a planning application for residential development on land off Ashwell Lane, Glastonbury, Somerset, was carried out by AC archaeology Ltd during April 2014. The evaluation has revealed some evidence for archaeological activity across the site. This comprised a number of shallow, ditch-like, features of probable medieval date, a fire pit or hearth and a possible occupation spread. A small quantity of artefacts was recovered as a result of the evaluation, comprising largely animal bone and pottery sherds, including a small ceramic group dated to the 11th to 12th century.

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 This report sets out the results of an archaeological evaluation on land off Ashwell lane, Glastonbury, Somerset. The location of the site is shown on Fig.1.
- 1.2 The work was carried out by AC archaeology Ltd during April 2014 and was undertaken on behalf of Mr J Field. It was requested by the Somerset County Council Senior Historic Environment Officer (SCCSHEO) in order to identify the nature of potential heritage assets on the site prior to the determination of an outline planning application for the construction of up to 11 houses, arranged around a new access road to form a cul-de-sac. The precise design has yet to be determined.
- 1.3 The site lies on the east side of Glastonbury and covers approximately 0.48 hectares. It is bounded by Ashwell Lane to the north and is set within established field boundaries. The land is currently used as rough pasture and is a former orchard. The north-west area has been terraced. The underlying geology comprises sedimentary mudstone of Langport Member, Blue Lias Formation and Charmouth Mudstone Formation formed during the Jurassic and Triassic periods.
- 1.4 The evaluation was directed in the field by Daniel Brace. The project was managed by Peter Cox. This report was written by Daniel Brace with additional comments and editing by Peter Cox. AC archaeology Ltd is most grateful to Steven Membery of Somerset County Council for his advice.

2. ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND

- 2.1 The Somerset Historic Environment Record (hereafter SHER) records a watching brief having been undertaken within the boundary of the application area in 2003 (Hollinrake, 2003 & SHER PRN 16886). The monitoring recorded the presence of seventeen archaeological features including ditches, gullies and pits. Finds from these features included a small amount of prehistoric pottery, a relatively large amount of 10th century pottery and some medieval pottery.

It was concluded that the site might be part of a high status Anglo-Saxon settlement which had probably been abandoned by the 14th century. This asset has great evidential value for the potential it has to yield further evidence for the settlement, its type, form, date and extent. It also has historic value for its potential to connect the settlement with the monastic and royal connections of the town of Glastonbury.

- 2.2 The 1st edition Ordnance Survey map of 1887 shows that the application area was an orchard associated with Higher Edgarley Farm. The plot was recorded as Home Orchard on the 1821 Glastonbury Parish Map and appears to retain this function throughout the 19th and 20th centuries. The plot boundaries remained unchanged throughout this period.
- 2.3 In addition to the watching brief carried out in 2003 a setting assessment has been undertaken to consider the potential effects on Glastonbury Tor and St Michael's Church (Cottam 2014).

3. METHODOLOGY

- 3.1 The evaluation was undertaken in accordance with a project design prepared by AC archaeology (Cox 2014) and approved prior to commencement on site. The evaluation comprised a c. 3% sample of the area of proposed development; five trenches in the northern part of the site, each c. 10m x 1.30m in plan, and two long trenches towards the southern boundary, 15m x 1.30m and c. 80m x 1.30m respectively. These two longer trenches are to be used for laying a new drain across the site, unassociated with the planning application. The positions of the trenches, as excavated, are shown on Fig. 1.
- 3.2 All soil removal was undertaken under the control and direction of the Site Archaeologist. Topsoil and overburden were removed by mechanical excavator, using a wide toothless bucket, and ceased at the level at which archaeological deposits or natural subsoil was exposed.
- 3.3 All archaeological deposits revealed were recorded using the standard AC archaeology Ltd *pro forma* recording system, comprising written, graphic and photographic records, and in accordance with AC archaeology Ltd's *General Site Recording Manual, Version 2* and the prepared project design (Cox 2014). 'Negative' or blank trenches were recorded using trench records forms. Detailed sections or plans were produced at 1:10 and 1:50 respectively. All site levels relate to Ordnance Datum (m OD) and were collected via a Leica Viva GS08 digital GPS system.
- 3.4 The archive has been prepared using the site code ACW639.

4. RESULTS

- 4.1 Three trenches contained evidence for archaeological activity (Trs 2, 5 & 6) in the form of 'cut' features. These are described below, while 'negative' trenches are summarised in Table 4.

Trench 2 (Plan Fig. 1, sections Fig. 3a-b, Plates 1-3)

- 4.2 This trench was aligned east to west and is a continuation of a drainage trench located at the southern extent of the site, on pasture gently sloping down from north to south. It was approximately 85m in length with a width of 1.30m. A maximum depth of approximately 700mm was excavated through topsoil and subsoil before revealing natural clay with silt and mudstone. A series of features were investigated at various locations along the trench. A number of gullies were considered to be agricultural in origin and have not been recorded. Excavation of the

remaining features revealed them to be of probable archaeological origin, representing a fire pit and a ditch or drainage channel. The layer sequence for this trench is described in Table 1.

Table 1: Trench layer sequence

Context	Depth (mm)	Description	Interpretation
2000	120mm	Dark grey-brown silty clay. Loose and soft	Topsoil / turf
2001	310mm	Mid grey-brown clay with silt	Subsoil
2002	300mm	Cut of probable fire pit containing charcoal and burnt clay; observed in section only	Cut of fire pit / hearth
2003	>200mm	Mid grey-brown sandy clay. Firm, with very scarce dark charcoal flecks	Upper fill of [2002]
2004	> 140mm	Mid red-brown burnt clay (hard)	Secondary fill of [2002]
2005	c.100mm	Brown-black clayey silt with abundant charcoal	Primary fill of [2002]
2006	310mm+ (varied)	Light yellow-brown clay and mudstone Firm and compacted	Natural geology
2007	370mm	Cut of possible NW-SE aligned linear ditch feature. Slightly ephemeral	Cut of ditch or natural channel (?)
2008	370mm	Mid reddish grey-brown silty loam. Friable	Fill of [2007]

Feature F2002

4.3 A section approximately 1m in length was recorded at the mid-west end of the trench, against the south facing baulk. This was undertaken to document the extent and constitution of a pit-like feature, believed to be a fire pit or hearth. This feature was sealed beneath the topsoil (2000) and was sub-circular in plan. In section it was c. 0.87m wide and had a depth of c. 0.30m. It had sloping sides tapered to a broadly concave base. It contained three fills (2003-2005), of which the primary fill was composed of very dark brown-black silty clay containing charcoal; indicative of burning activity. A small quantity of burnt clay was also recovered from the secondary fill. Due to the indications of singular or multiple *in situ* burning activities, this feature represents a small fire pit or hearth of unknown date.

Feature F2007

4.4 Where exposed in plan, this feature appeared to be a north-west by south-east aligned linear ditch, with a width of 1.12m and a depth of 0.37m. It was recorded toward the east end of the trench and had a gentle profile with slightly ephemeral concave sides and an irregular, flat base. It contained a single fill, context 2008. The silty nature of the fill is suggestive of a gradual or water borne deposition of material. No finds were recovered from the fill of this feature, and while the function of the feature remains unclear, it is likely to represent a medieval or later field boundary or drainage channel associated with past land usage.

Trench 5 (Plan Fig. 2c, section Fig. 2d, plates 4-5)

4.5 This trench was aligned north to south, situated in the central north part of the site on pasture sloping down to the south. The remnants of a terraced earthwork were faintly visible, sloping upwards toward the north end of the trench. The trench was 11.40m in length with a width of 1.30m. A maximum depth of approximately 700mm was excavated through topsoil and subsoil before revealing natural clay with silt and mudstone. A single deposit was revealed which, on excavation, is likely to be of archaeological origin and may represent an occupation horizon (5003). The layer sequence for this trench is described in Table 2.

Table 2: Trench layer sequence

Context	Depth (mm)	Description	Interpretation
5000	200mm	Mid brown silty clay. Loose and soft	Topsoil / turf
5001	400mm	Mid yellow-brown clay with silt. Firm with rare small stones	Subsoil
5002	600mm	Light yellow-brown and grey mottled clay and mudstone. Firm & compacted	Natural geology
5003	200mm	Yellow-brown and grey-blue mottled clay with silt. Compacted	Possible occupation spread

Layer F5003

- 4.6** This layer was sealed by the topsoil (5000) and subsoil (5001) and overlies the natural geology (5002). A sondage revealed that it was c. 0.2m in depth and composed of mid yellow-brown and grey-blue mottled clay with silt. It also contained sparse flecks of charcoal. This feature was initially observed in the north portion of the trench and was thought to be the fill of at least one, if not two, ditches. However, following excavation and additional hand cleaning of the trench section no definable cut was visible and it would appear to represent a medieval occupation spread / horizon visible throughout much of the trench.

Trench 6 (Plan Fig. 2e, section Fig. 2f, plates 6-7)

- 4.7** This trench was aligned east to west, situated in the west central portion of the site on ground sloping down to the south. It was approximately 10.10m in length with a width of 1.30m. A maximum depth of 500mm was excavated through topsoil and subsoil before revealing natural clay with silt and mudstone. A single feature was revealed, which on excavation proved to be of probable archaeological origin and may represent a linear ditch. In addition, the (almost) complete remains of an articulated sheep were recovered from the subsoil at the east end of the trench. The layer sequence for this trench is described in Table 3.

Table 3: Trench layer sequence

Context	Depth (mm)	Description	Interpretation
6000	200mm	Mid brown silty clay. Loose and soft	Topsoil / turf
6001	300mm	Mid yellow-brown clayey silt. Firm	Subsoil
6002	260mm	Cut of north-south aligned ditch or gully	Cut of narrow ditch or gully
6003	260mm	Mid greyish yellow-brown silty clay. Friable	Fill of [6002]
6004	500mm	Light yellow-brown and grey mottled clay and mudstone with occasional stones. Firm & compacted	Natural geology

Feature F6002

- 4.8** Where exposed in plan, this feature appeared to be a north to south aligned linear ditch or gully, with a width of 0.80m and a depth of 0.26m. It was recorded approximately two metres from the east end of the trench, in close proximity to the sheep skeleton. It had a fairly steep profile with concave sides and a rounded base. It contained a single fill, material. A single sherd of medieval pottery was recovered from the fill and while the function of the feature remains unclear, it is likely to represent a medieval or later gully or drainage channel. Of note, a feature investigated in Trench 2, broadly in alignment with F6002, was very ephemeral and was not recorded in detail.

Negative trenches

4.9 The following table sets out a summary of results from trenches devoid of subsoil features.

Table 4: summary of negative trenches

Trench	Depth (mm)	Contexts	Description
1	250mm 250mm+	Topsoil - context 1000 Natural - context 1001	E-W aligned and 15m x 1.3m. Situated in the south-east portion of the site. Trench lies within grassed pasture in a former orchard, with a gentle slope from north to south. Topsoil composed of mid to dark brown silty clay. Natural composed of light to mid yellow-brown clay with silt. No recorded subsoil. Trenches 1 and 2 comprise a long drainage trench running along the southern site boundary
3	200mm 300mm 500mm+	Topsoil - context 3000 Subsoil – context 3001 Natural - context 3002	E-W aligned and 11.6m x 1.3m. Situated in the north-east portion of the site. Trench lies within grassed pasture in a former orchard, with a gentle slope from north to south. Topsoil composed of mid brown silty clay with rare small stones. Subsoil composed of mid yellow-brown clay with silt and occasional root action. Natural composed of light yellow-brown mottled clay with silt. An ephemeral ditch-like feature was noted c. 3m from the west end of the trench; 1m wide and less than 0.1m deep, it was not thought to be archaeological in origin
4	200mm 200mm 400mm+	Topsoil - context 4000 Subsoil – context 4001 Natural - context 4002	N-S aligned and 10.6m x 1.3m. Situated in the central-east portion of the site. Trench lies within grassed pasture in a former orchard, with a gentle slope from north to south and east to west. Topsoil composed of mid brown silty clay with rare small stones. Subsoil composed of mid yellow-brown clay with silt. Natural composed of light yellow-brown and grey mottled clay with silt
7	200mm 200mm 400mm+	Topsoil - context 7000 Subsoil – context 7001 Natural - context 7002	N-S aligned and 11.4m x 1.3m. Situated in the north-west portion of the site. Trench lies within grassed pasture in a former orchard, with a steep slope from north to south (a result of modern terracing). Topsoil composed of mid brown silty clay with rare small stones. Subsoil composed of mid yellow-brown clay with silt. Natural composed of light yellow-brown and grey mottled clay with silt. Topsoil and subsoil deeper at north extent due to modern terracing to initiate a trackway

5. THE FINDS

By Emma Firth

5.1 A small assemblage of finds was recovered during the course of the evaluation. The majority of the finds were of post medieval date and largely comprised fragments of ceramic building material (post medieval brick and roof tile fragments) and post medieval and modern pottery. The finds are summarised by trench and material type in Table 5.

Iron

5.2 A single corroded iron nail was recovered from Trench 2 (2000) and is probably handmade. Dating is uncertain; it could be medieval or post-medieval.

Flint

5.3 A small worked flint core was recovered from Trench 4 (4001) and is of a fine, brown 'waxy' flint with no cortex.

Ceramic Building Material

5.4 Fourteen (271g) fragments of ceramic building material were recovered from topsoil and subsoil contexts within Trenches 1, 2, 3, 4 and 5. All the fragments are of a hard, bright orange micaceous fabric and derive from medieval/post medieval roof tiles and bricks. The differences between medieval and post-medieval fabrics can be hard to distinguish, so all the material has been assigned a post medieval/medieval date range.

Fired Clay

- 5.5** Three fragments (5g) of fired clay were recovered from Trench 5 (contexts 5001 and 5003) and all are small amorphous lumps of uncertain date and function.

Post Medieval/Modern Pottery

- 5.6** A small number of post-medieval local Donyatt, red, earthenwares with internal, clear, glazes and a single modern blue and white transferware sherd were recovered from the subsoil (4001) in Trench 4.

Medieval Pottery

- 5.7** A total of 21 sherds (166g) of medieval pottery was recovered, including one decorated sherd from Trench 1 (topsoil) and a single leached calcareous sherd from Trench 6 (context 6003).
- 5.8** The most interesting group of finds were recovered from the subsoil 5001 within Trench 5, comprising 15 sherds (127g) of medieval pottery, and from context 5003 comprising five calcareous tempered sherds (17g); all with a potential date range from the 11th to 13th century AD.
- 5.9** The fabrics may be summarised as follows:

Variants of Bath A type Fabrics: Eight sherds in fired dark brown or reduced grey with rounded quartz, fine chert inclusions and calcareous inclusions (probably chalk) in a silty, slightly micaceous clay matrix. There are also voids from leached calcareous inclusion. Includes two conjoining sherds from an everted rim with external bevel, a simple flat topped rim which is slightly cupped and thickened at edge, a base from a cooking vessel and five plain body sherds. All sherds have quite abraded surfaces and are thought to be Bath A Type fabrics, with a potential date range from the 11th to 13th century.

Calcareous Fabric: two plain body sherds in a leached calcareous type fabric, ?North Wilts type fabric bearing similarities with fabrics from Great Somerford. This fabric has 11th - 12th century date.

Ham Green Fabric A: Single sherd from a 12th – mid 13th century jug, in a fine sandy fabric fired to a pale cream colour with a grey core. Body sherd with applied strip decorated with diamond rouletting decoration. Comparable with Barton (1963, fig 1: 8; Fig 3:52) and commonly found on the Fabric type A jugs.

Misc quartz tempered: two sherds of reduced, hard fired quartz tempered fabric with few inclusions other than quartz. One tiny rim sherd might possibly be Roman but it is too small to identify with any certainty.

- 5.10** The pottery fabrics have parallels with other assemblages found in Glastonbury, for example at the High Street Site (Vince, 2004). Many of the sherds are moderately to well abraded which might indicate that they are no longer in their primary depositional context. Trench 2 (2001) also yielded a single sherd of medieval pottery which is likely to be a Bath A variant. The sherd is an upright, simple rim from a small jar.

Animal Bone

- 5.11** A total of 121 (433g) of animal bone were recovered from Trench 6 (context 6001). The animal bone is thought to be sheep, although no formal identification has yet been made. Its date is likely to be post-medieval and it was recovered from the subsoil.

Trench	Context	Material	no	wt (g)	Eve* (pottery only)	Comments
1	1000	Cbm	1	25		Hard fired, micaceous post medieval roof tile
	1000	Medieval Pottery	1	1	1	Pale (iron poor), hard fired fine sandy fabric, with applied strip and clear glaze, 13th – 14th century
4	4001	Cbm	3	102		Hard fired, micaceous post medieval roof tile
	4001	Flint	1	11		Small , brown waxy flint, possibly a core fragment
	4001	Modern Pottery	1	2	1	Blue and white transferware
	4001	Post Medieval Pottery	1	45	1	Red earthenware with clear internal glaze, hard fired fabric with no inclusions. Somerset origin (possibly Donyatt).
2	2000	Cbm	7	98		Brick and tile fragments in a fine, bright orange fabric with light clay pellets
	2000	Medieval Pottery	1	14	1	Upright, simple rim, thickened at edge, in a chert tempered fabric, fine clay matrix with fine sand and mica and leached calcareous natural inclusions (small voids). Probably a Bath A variant.
	2000	Iron	1	10		Corroded, square headed/square shanked small nail, probably handmade and likely to be of medieval/post medieval date.
3	3000	Cbm	2	26		Hard fired, roof tile fragment possibly medieval or post medieval
5	5001	Cbm	1	20		Hard fired, micaceous post medieval roof tile fragment
	5001	Medieval Pottery	13	127	11	1. Bath A type Fabrics: Eight sherds of fine micaceous fabric, fired dark brown with fine chert inclusions and calcareous inclusions that have sometimes leached. Includes two conjoining sherds from an everted rim with external bevel, simple flat topped rim which is slightly cupped and thickened at edge, base from a cooking vessel and five plain body sherds. All have quite abraded surfaces and are a grey/brown colour throughout. 2. Calcareous Fabric: two plain body sherds in a leached calcareous type fabric North Wilts (Great Somerton) type fabric with an 11th - 12th Century date. 3. Ham Green Fabric A: Single sherd from a 12th -13th century jug, in a fine sandy fabric fired to a pale cream colour with a grey core. Body sherd with applied strip decorated with diamond roulette decoration. Comparable with Barton (1963, fig 1: 8; Fig 3:52) and commonly found on the "A" type vessels. 4. Misc quartz tempered: two sherds of reduced, hard fired quartz tempered fabric with few inclusions other than quartz. One tiny rim sherd might possibly be Roman but it is too small to identify with any certainty.
	5001	Fired Clay	2	4		Small fragment of fired clay, smooth and free of inclusions
	5003	Medieval Pottery	5	17		Leached calcareous fabric, all plain body sherds 11th – 12th century
	5003	Fired Clay	1	1		Small and amorphous
	6	6001	Animal Bone	121	433	
	6003	Medieval Pottery	1	7		Leached calcareous fabric, plain body sherd, reduced

Table 5: Quantification of Finds by Material type and by Trench

*Eve estimated vessel equivalent

6. COMMENT

- 6.1** The trench evaluation has identified limited evidence for archaeological activity across the site, with just a few recorded archaeological features in the central and southern located trenches. The features recorded appear to be industrial and agricultural in nature; represented by the presence of a fire pit and former ditches. There is no evidence for structures.
- 6.2** A small quantity of medieval pottery (21 sherds) and animal bone was recovered from a number of the trenches. Medieval pottery recovered from an occupation horizon (5003) within Trench 5 is of particular note although these may be intrusive.

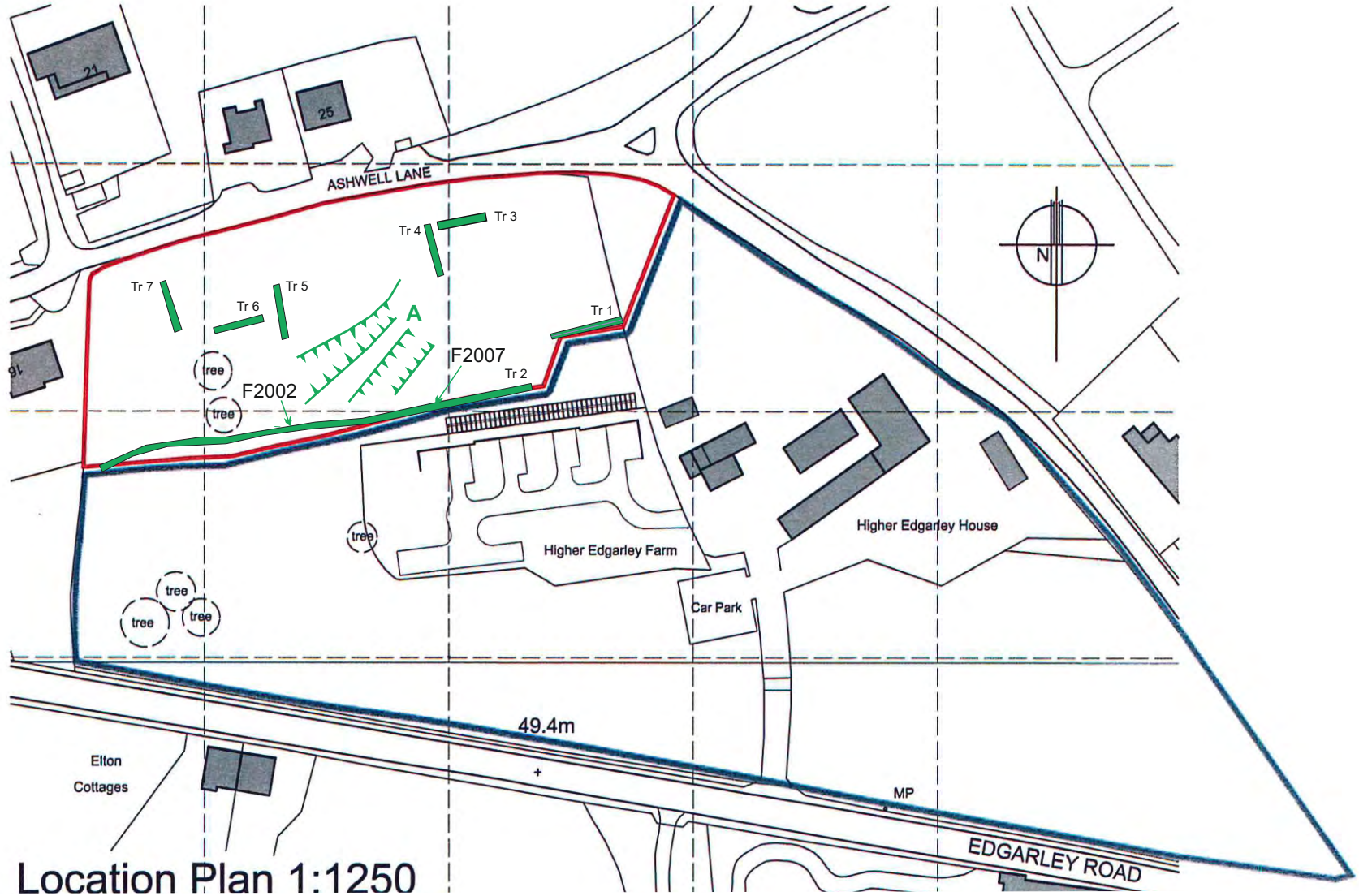
- 6.3** A series of positive linear earthwork features were identified across the central and eastern part of the site (Marked A on Fig. 1). They are broadly aligned north-east by south-west, approximately two to three metres apart and survive to a height of at least 0.3m. The earthworks survive in a fair state of preservation and appear not to have been subject to ploughing. Aerial photographs indicate that the features may once have been more extensive and related to the former orchard; they may have served as drainage channels.
- 6.4** The evaluation has found no evidence to support the previous interpretation of extensive archaeological features and finds of 10th century AD date (Hollinrake 2003).

7. REFERENCES

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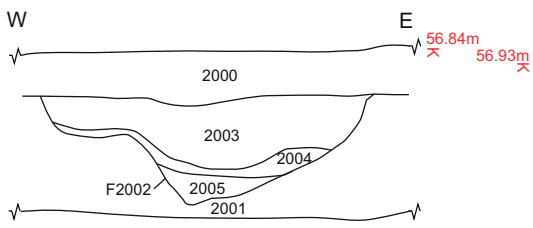
NOTES

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- 2. Any discrepancies are to be reported to the architect.
- 3. This drawing is copyright.

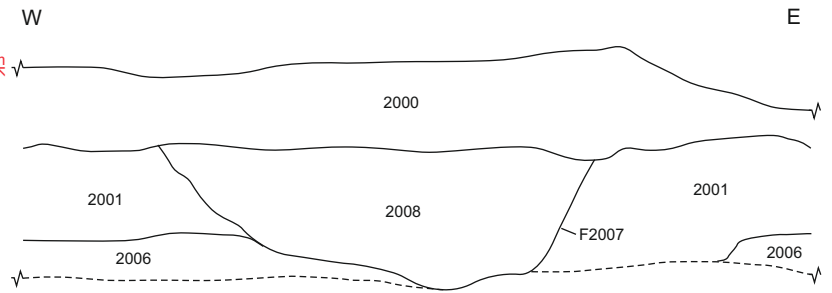


Location Plan 1:1250

a) Section, F2002

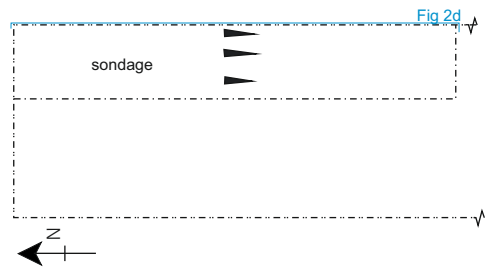


b) Section, F2007

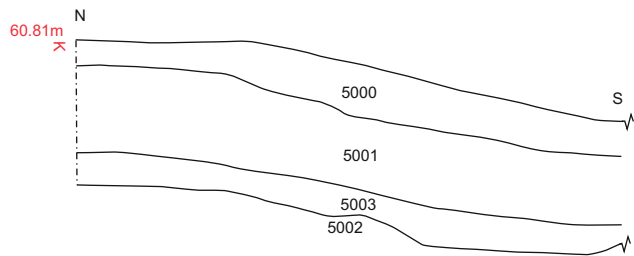


Trench 5

c) Plan

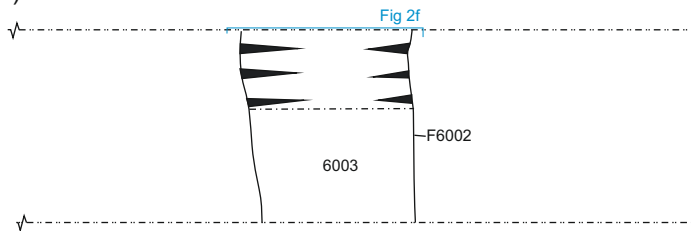


d) Section, F5002

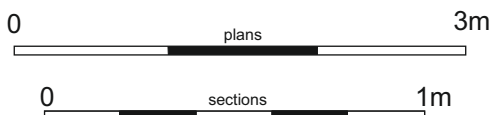
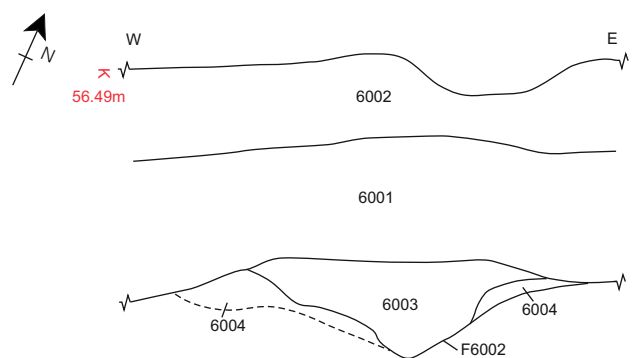


Trench 6

e) Plan



f) Section, F6002



PROJECT
Proposed Residential Development off
Ashwell Lane, Glastonbury

TITLE

Fig. 2:
Plans and sections of Trenches 2, 5 and 6



Plate 1:
General view along Trench 2,
from the east (scales 2 x 1m)



Plate 2: South facing section of F2002 (scale 1m)



Plate 3: South facing section of F2007 (scale 1m)



Plate 4:
General view along Trench 5
from the north (scale 2 x 1m)



Plate 5: West facing section of deposit 5003 (scales 2 x 1m)



Plate 7: South facing section of deposit F6002 (scale 1m)



Plate 6: General view along Trench 6 from the east (scales 2 x 1m)

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