The results of an Archaeological Evaluation and Rapid Historic Building Assessment at Oakwood Park, Oakwood Road, Maidstone, Kent

SWAT. Archaeology
Swale and Thames Archaeological Survey Company
School Farm Oast, Graveney Road
Faversham, Kent
ME13 8UP
Tel: 01795 532548 or 07885 700 112

Nov 2007

Oakwood Park, Oakwood Road, Maidstone, Kent

Archaeological Evaluation and Rapid Historic Building Assessment

NGR: 574687 155435

Site Code: OWP-EV-07

Report for

Development Engineering Solutions

November 2007

SWAT. ARCHAEOLOGY
Swale and Thames Archaeological Survey Company
School Farm Oast, Graveney Road
Faversham, Kent
ME13 8UP
Tel; 01975 532548 or 07885 700 112

Contents

List of Figures

Archaeological Evaluation and Rapid Historic Building Assessment at Oakwood Park, Oakwood Road, Maidstone, Kent

NGR: 574687 155435

Site Code: OWP-EV-07

SUMMARY

Swale & Thames Survey Company (SWAT) carried out an archaeological evaluation of land at Oakwood Park, Oakwood Road, Maidstone, Kent, on 30th and 31st October 2007. Kent County Council Heritage and Conservation (KCCHC), on behalf of Maidstone Borough Council requested that an Archaeological Evaluation be undertaken in order to determine the possible impact of the development on any archaeological remains. The work was carried out in accordance with generic requirements as specified by the Archaeological Officer, Kent County Council. The evaluation revealed no archaeological features and no finds were recovered. The deposit model on site comprised calcareous silty sands (Hythe Beds) overlying frost shattered brash limestone (Kentish Ragstone). Terracing within the eastern extent of the site resulted in upper levels of the natural geology being removed prior to the construction of existing surfaces. If any archaeological deposits were present on site they would have been destroyed during this earlier phase of construction. Despite natural geology surviving within the eastern extents of the site, no deeply buried archaeological remains were present within the excavated trenches suggesting that the proposed development presents little or no impact upon the local archaeological resource.

INTRODUCTION

Swale & Thames Survey Company (SWAT) was commissioned by Development Engineering Solutions Ltd on behalf of Monro Homes Ltd to carry out an archaeological evaluation at the above site. The work was carried out in accordance with the requirements set out within an Archaeological Specification (KCC 2007) and in discussion with the Archaeological Officer, Kent County Council. Initial phases of the evaluation were carried out in October 2007.

SITE DESCRIPTION AND TOPOGRAPHY

Maidstone is located approximately 7km south of the Medway Towns and 16km east of Sevenoaks, adjacent to the southern extent of the North Downs. The proposed development site is situated within 1km to the west of the town's historic core (NGR: 574687 155435), within the south east corner of the Oakwood Park estate (Fig. 1). The site measures approximately 0.3 hectares in area and is currently occupied by 19th century farm buildings, along with more recent additional small scale development associated with the farm (Fig 2). The western extents of the site have been landscaped and terraced to form level construction surfaces for the farm buildings which cover approximately 40% of the total area. The

remaining 60% of the site falls naturally away to the east, dropping in elevation by approximately 3m (from 53.68m AOD to 50.16m AOD), recently used as pasture. Timber fences within this area divide the site into small paddocks. The site is bounded on the southern extent by ragstone walling and mature shrubbery.

According to the Geological Survey, the underlying geology of the site comprises Hythe Beds overlying Kentish Ragstone. Geotechnical test pitting carried out by Ground Solutions Group in 2007 confirmed the presence of sands and gravels associated with 'Hythe Formations' within the lower lying areas of the site to the east. On higher ground, however, within the courtyard areas of the farm buildings, the absence of drift geology was noted.

PLANNING BACKGROUND

An outline planning application (PAN: MA/06/0001) for 21 dwellings, along with associated access, car parking and services at the above site was submitted to Maidstone Borough Council (SBC). Kent County Council Heritage and Conservation (KCCHC), on behalf of Maidstone Borough Council, requested that an *Archaeological Evaluation* and a *Programme of Building Recording* be undertaken in order to determine the possible impact of the development on any archaeological remains and to provide a rapid assessment of existing buildings extant within the site. The following conditions were attached to the planning consent:

No development shall take place until the applicant, or their agents or successors in title, has secured the implementation of a programme of archaeological work in accordance with a written specification and timetable which has been submitted to and approved by the Local Planning Authority.

And:

No development shall take place until the applicant, or their agents or successors in title, has secured the implementation of a programme of building recording in accordance with a written specification and timetable which has been submitted to and approved by the Local Planning Authority.

Requirements for the archaeological evaluation comprised trial trenching targeting a minimum of 5% of the impact area, with trenches designed to establish whether there are any archaeological deposits at the site that may be affected by the proposed development. The results from this evaluation will be used to inform KCCHC and MBC of any further archaeological mitigation measures that may be necessary in connection with the development proposals. Requirements for the historic building survey comprised the rapid

assessment of standing buildings, along with a walkover survey to identify any surface evidence for tank trap or any other wartime defensive features (KCCHC 2007:4).

ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND

The application site commands a large area which would have had a commanding view over the Medway valley below likely making it an attractive site for past activity. A Second World War anti-tank ditch also runs through the north west corner of the site and an Iron Age pit is recorded 350m to the north and a Neolithic axe 475m to the south west (KCCHC 2007:2.2).

The proposals include demolition of the farm buildings on site, some of which appear to date back to at least the mid nineteenth century when the farm was named Bower Mount. The Bower is shown on the spot in Edward Hasted's late eighteenth century survey of Kent and the farm is likely to date from this period at the latest (KCCHC 2007:2.2).

AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

The purpose of the evaluation, as set out within the generic KCC Archaeological Specifications was to:

i) establish whether there are any archaeological deposits at the site that may be affected by the proposed development. The excavation is thus to ascertain the extent, depth below ground surface, depth of deposit, character, significance and condition of any archaeological remains on site.

ii) establish the extent to which previous development on the site has affected archaeological deposits.

Particular issues that were addressed were:

- Is there any evidence of prehistoric Roman activity on the site?
- Is there any evidence of medieval activity on the site?
- Are there any remains of post-medieval significance on the site including standing buildings or wartime remains?
- Are there any remains of geo-archaeological or palaeo-environmental significance?
- What are the existing impacts on the site's archaeological potential?
- What impact would the proposed development have on any remains present?

METHODOLOGY

Trial trenching commenced on the 30th October 2007, with the excavation of eight trenches each measuring 1.50m in width and approximately 22m in length (see Appendix 1). Trench locations were allocated by KCCHC forming part of the specification, although occasional amendments were required on site (see Results below). Each trench was initially scanned for surface finds prior to excavation. Excavation was carried out using a 360° mechanical

excavator fitted with a toothless ditching bucket, removing the overburden to the top of the first recognisable archaeological horizon, under the constant supervision of an experienced archaeologist. Trenches were subsequently hand-cleaned to reveal features in plan and carefully selected cross-sections through the features were excavated to enable sufficient information about form, development date and stratigraphic relationships to be recorded without prejudice to more extensive investigations, should these prove to be necessary. All archaeological work was carried out in accordance with KCC and IFA standards and guidance. A complete photographic record was maintained on site which included working shots during mechanical excavation, following archaeological investigations and during back filling.

A single context recording system was used to record the deposits. A full list is presented in Appendix 1. Layers and fills are recorded (**100**). The cut of the feature is shown [**100**]. Context numbers were assigned to all deposits for recoding purposes; these are used in the report (in **bold**). Each number has been attributed to a specific trench with the primary number(s) relating to specific trenches (*i.e.* Trench 1, **100**+, Trench 2, **200**+ etc.)

MONITORING

Curatorial monitoring was carried out during the course of the evaluation by KCCHC at which time, methodologies and preliminary results were discussed. An additional trench (Trench 9) was requested by KCCHC.

RESULTS

Trial Trenching

A common stratigraphic sequence was recognised across the site comprising topsoil/overburden directly overlying natural calcareous sands (Hythe Beds) and sandy limestone (otherwise known as Kentish Ragstone). A single context recording system was used to record the deposits. Layers and fills are recorded (**100**). The cut of the feature is shown [**100**]. Context numbers were assigned to all deposits for recording purposes; these are used in the report, where necessary (in **bold**).

The topsoil/overburden consisted of friable mid grey brown slightly sandy silt overlying the fine moderately compact orange sand natural drift deposits where mechanical excavation ceased and careful examination and investigation for truncating features was carried out. Within the higher terraced areas of the site a clear line of horizon beneath made ground gave way to natural limestone. All potential features were examined but proved to represent nothing more than natural root boles and animal burrows, presumably associated with latter farmland activity. Appendix 1 provides the full stratigraphic sequence for all trenches including levels above ordnance datum (AOD).

Walkover survey

The walkover survey was initially carried out on 30th August 2007 by David Britchfield, in respect of the Archaeological Specification (2007:4.1-4.3). Additional perambulation was undertaken by David Britchfield and Adam Single (KCC Archaeological Officer) on 31st October 2007. The survey was carried out in order to identify the possible presence of Second World War anti-tank defences that had been identified on maps included within the Historic Environment Record at Kent County Council. However, no such earthworks were visible on site. In order to provide confirmation, an additional test pit (Trench 9) was excavated adjacent to the terraced western bank. No archaeological features were present.

Historic Building Assessment

An additional examination of documentary sources and map regression exercise was carried out by KCC following the submission of the specification. Early nineteenth century maps show the site as open farmland suggesting that an early eighteenth century (or earlier) date for the farm was inaccurate. It was agreed with the Archaeological Officer at Kent County Council that the building survey was not necessary in this case. As a result, a complete photographic record was made of the site, including all standing buildings that will form part of the sites archaeological and historical archive.

FINDS

No archaeological finds were present.

PROJECT CONSTRAINTS

No constraints were associated with this project.

DISCUSSION

The archaeological evaluation on land at Oakwood Park, Oakwood Road, Maidstone revealed that extensive terracing possibly associated with the construction of the nineteenth century farm, had truncated the upper levels of the existing geology within the western extents of the site. Remaining trenches excavated on the east facing slope did not encounter any archaeological remains, suggesting that none survive within the immediate vicinity of the site.

The possible presence of Second World War anti-tank defences was taken into consideration, although no earthworks were visible within the extents of the site. Confirmation of absence was provided following the excavation of a small trial pit (Trench 9) on the plotted course of the ditch. When viewed on site, the topography showed evidence that terracing of the natural slope occurred in the early part of the nineteenth century. This in itself would have provided a natural defensive earthwork. With this in mind it is likely that any additional 20th century defensive earthworks are located on the higher ground to the west, within the adjacent playing fields. This design would have proved far more effective, creating a double ditch and

bank profile rather than single ditch and bank. That said, no evidence for such a feature was visible, although it should be noted that extensive landscaping would have been carried out to create level playing surfaces.

IMPACT ASSESSMENT & SUGGESTED MITIGATION

Full development proposals at present time comprise the construction of 21 dwellings, along with associated access, services, car parking and landscaping[1]. Engineering designs associated with the sloping east face of the site are, however, unknown. In the event that finished ground levels remain constant, the depth of foundations trenches, services, access and car parking are likely to require the excavation of material exceeding 0.50m in depth. That said, the lack of not only secure archaeological features but also any residual archaeological material within any of the trenches would strongly suggest that no archaeological deposits are present within the site extents. As a result, no further archaeological mitigation is recommended.

CONCLUSION

The archaeological evaluation has been successful in fulfilling the primary aims and objectives of the Specification. Despite natural geology surviving within the eastern extents of the site, no deeply buried archaeological remains were present within the excavated trenches suggesting that the proposed development presents little or no impact upon the local archaeological resource.

This evaluation has therefore assessed the archaeological potential of land intended for development. The results from this work will be used to aid and inform the Archaeological Officer (KCCHC) of any further archaeological mitigations measures that may be necessary in connection with the development proposals.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

SWAT would like to thank Development Engineering Solutions Ltd for commissioning the project. Thanks are also extended to Heritage and Conservation (Kent County Council) for their advice and assistance, in particular Adam Single (Archaeological Officer). Paul Wilkinson and David Britchfield carried out the archaeological fieldwork. This report was edited and collated by Paul Wilkinson.

November 2007

[1] Up to date proposals can be viewed at: http://www.planningportal.gov.uk

REFERENCES

IFA (1999) *Standards and Guidance for Field Archaeological Evaluations*

Kent County Council (2005) *Kent Historical Town Survey; Archaeological Assessment Document:* ***Maidstone***

Kent County Council (2007) *Specification for an Archaeological Evaluation and Rapid Historic Buildings Assessment on land at Oakwood Park, Oakwood Road in Maidstone.* Heritage & Conservation

CONTENTS OF SITE ARCHIVE

Correspondence:

Photographs: 255 digital images (10.1 mega pixel), SWAT film nos. 07/OWP, including those used in this report

Photocopies of Ordnance Survey and other maps:

Drawings: One A3 permatrace site drawing, comprising site plans and notes.

Finds: 1 box (as per KCC guidance)

Context Register including: Context Register (1), Drawings Register (1), Photographic Register (1), Levels Sheets (x), Environmental Samples Register (x) and Context Sheets (4)

APPENDIX 1 - Context Summary

Oakwood Park, Oakwood Road, Maidstone, Kent

Site Code: OWP-EV-07

	Context No.	Extent	Upper Level (AOD)	Depth	Description
Trench 1	(100)	E	51.37m	0.00 – 0.35m	Mid grey brown, slightly sandy silt with inclusions comprising occasional rounded stones. Mildly rooted. **Topsoil**
		W	53.15m	0.00 – 0.80m	
	(101)	E	51.02m	0.35m+	Fine moderately compact orange slightly silty sand. Calcareous sands of Hythe Beds. **Natural drift deposits**.
		W	52.38m	0.80m+	
Trench 2	(200)	N	53.31m	0.00 – 0.10m	As (**100**). **Topsoil.**
		S	52.01m	0.00 – 0.37m	
	(201)	N	NA	Not present	As (**101**). **Natural drift deposits**
		S	51.64m	0.37m+	
	(202)	N	53.21m	0.10m+	Frost shattered brash sandy limestone. Kentish Ragstone. **Natural solid geology**
		S	NA	Not present	
Trench 3	(300)	E	51.11m	0.00 – 0.40m	As (**100**). **Topsoil.**
		W	51.87m	0.00 – 0.37m	
	(301)	E	50.71m	0.40m+	As (**101**). **Natural drift deposits**
		W	51.50m	0.37m +	

	Context No.	Extent	Upper Level (AOD)	Depth	Description
Trench 4	(400)	N	52.22m	0.00 – 0.41m	As (**100**). Limestone dump mixed within this deposit. **Topsoil.**
		S	50.56m	0.00 – 0.39m	
	(401)	N	51.81m	0.41m+	As (**101**). **Natural drift deposits**
		S	50.17m	0.39m+	
Trench 5	(500)	N	52.87m	0.00 – 0.39m	As (**100**). **Topsoil.**
		S	52.37m	0.00 – 0.47m	
	(501)	N	52.48m	0.39m+	As (**101**). **Natural drift deposits**
		S	51.90m	0.47m+	
Trench 6	(600)	E	54.06m	0.00 – 0.39m	As (**100**). **Topsoil.**
		W	54.75m	0.00 – 0.41m	
	(601)	E	53.67m	0.39m+	As (**101**). **Natural drift deposits**
		W	54.34m	0.41m+	
Trench 7	(700)	NE	54.79m	0.00 – 0.10m	Made ground comprising crushed hardcore with occasional modern inclusions such as plastic, steel pins etc. **Existing surface.**
		SW	54.82m	0.00 – 0.11m	
	(701)	NE	54.69m	0.10m+	As (**202**). Upper levels truncated through terracing activity. **Natural solid geology.**
		SW	54.71m	0.11m+	
Trench 8	(800)	NW	54.57m	0.00 - 0.26m	Topsoil mixed with modern hardcore and construction/demolition debris. **Existing surface.**
		SE	54.44m	0.00 – 0.12m	
	(801)	NW	54.31m	0.26m+	As (**202**). Upper levels truncated through terracing activity. **Natural solid geology.**
		SE	54.32m	0.12m+	
Trench 9	(900)	Trench	54.92m	0.00 – 0.34m	As (**100**). **Topsoil.**
	(901)	Trench	54.58m	0.34m+	As (**202**). Upper levels truncated through terracing activity. **Natural solid geology.**

APPENDIX 2 - KCC Summary Form

Site Name: *Oakwood Park* **SWAT Site Code:** *STC-07-EV*	
Site Address: *Oakwood Park, Oakwood Road, Maidstone, Kent*	
Summary: *Swale & Thames Survey Company (SWAT) carried out an archaeological evaluation of land at Oakwood Park, Oakwood Road, Maidstone, Kent, on 30th and 31st October 2007. Kent County Council Heritage and Conservation (KCCHC), on behalf of Maidstone Borough Council requested that an Archaeological Evaluation be undertaken in order to determine the possible impact of the development on any archaeological remains. The work was carried out in accordance with generic requirements as specified by the Archaeological Officer, Kent County Council. The evaluation revealed no archaeological features and no finds were recovered. The deposit model on site comprised calcareous silty sands (Hythe Beds) overlying frost shattered brash limestone (Kentish Ragstone). Terracing within the eastern extent of the site resulted in upper levels of the natural geology being removed prior to the construction of existing surfaces. If any archaeological deposits were present on site they would have been destroyed during this earlier phase of construction. Despite natural geology surviving within the eastern extents of the site, no deeply buried archaeological remains were present within the excavated trenches suggesting that the proposed development presents little or no impact upon the local archaeological resource.*	
District/Unitary: *Maidstone*	**Parish:**
Period(s): **Tentative:** *19th century - Modern*	
NGR (centre of site : 8 figures): *NGR: 574687 155435* **(NB if large or linear site give multiple NGRs)**	
Type of archaeological work (delete) *Evaluation*	
Date of Recording: *30th October 2007*	
Unit undertaking recording: *Swale & Thames Survey Company (SWAT)*	
Geology: *Hythe Beds*	
Title and author of accompanying report: *Britchfield, D. & Wilkinson P. (2007) Oakwood Park, Oakwood Road, Maidstone, Kent: Archaeological Evaluation*	
Summary of fieldwork results (begin with earliest period first, add NGRs where appropriate) *As above* **(cont. on attached sheet)**	
Location of archive/finds: *SWAT*	
Contact at Unit: *Paul Wilkinson*	**Date:** *10 November 2007*

APPENDIX 3 – Figures

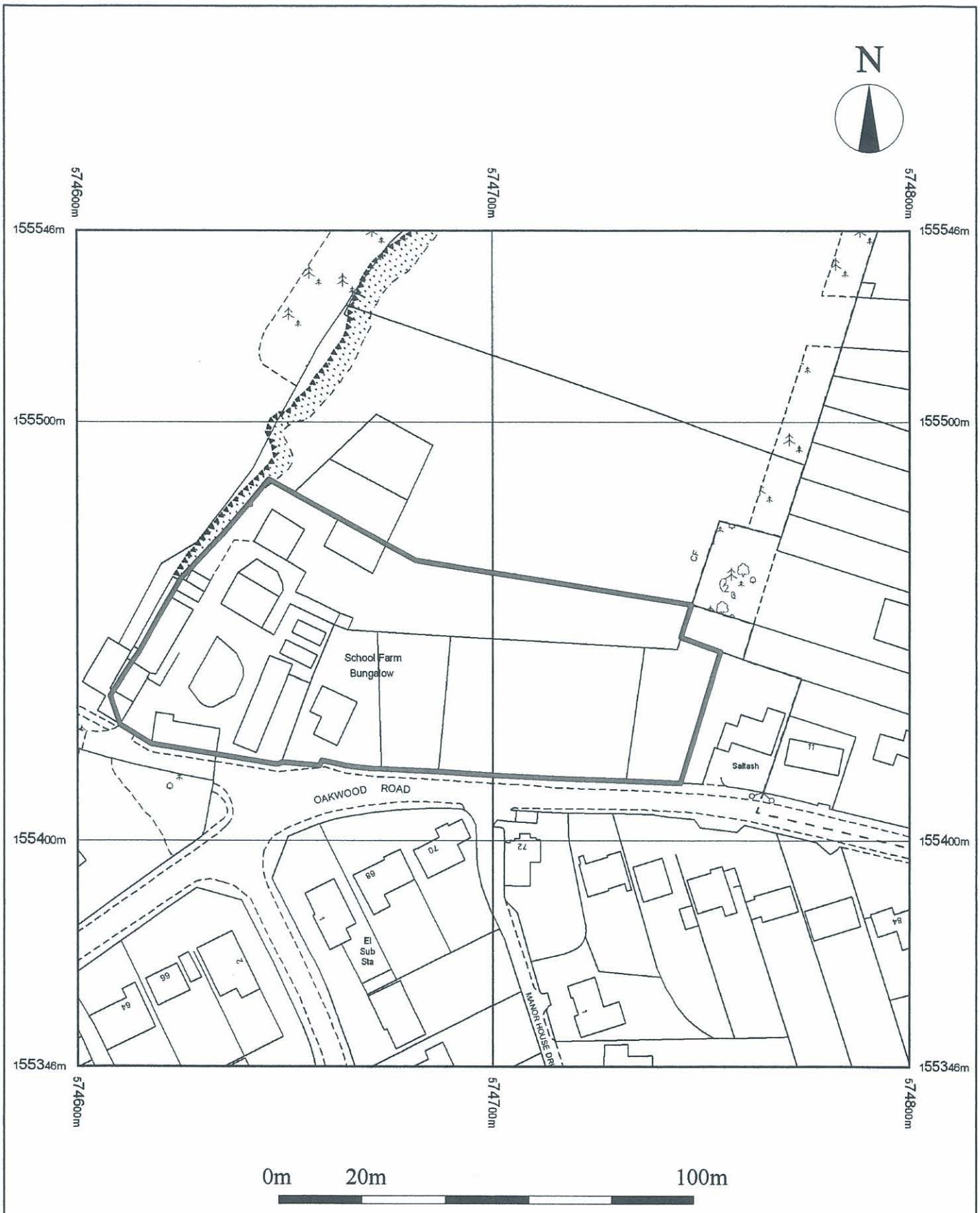

Figure 1: Location of site of proposed development

Scale 1:1250

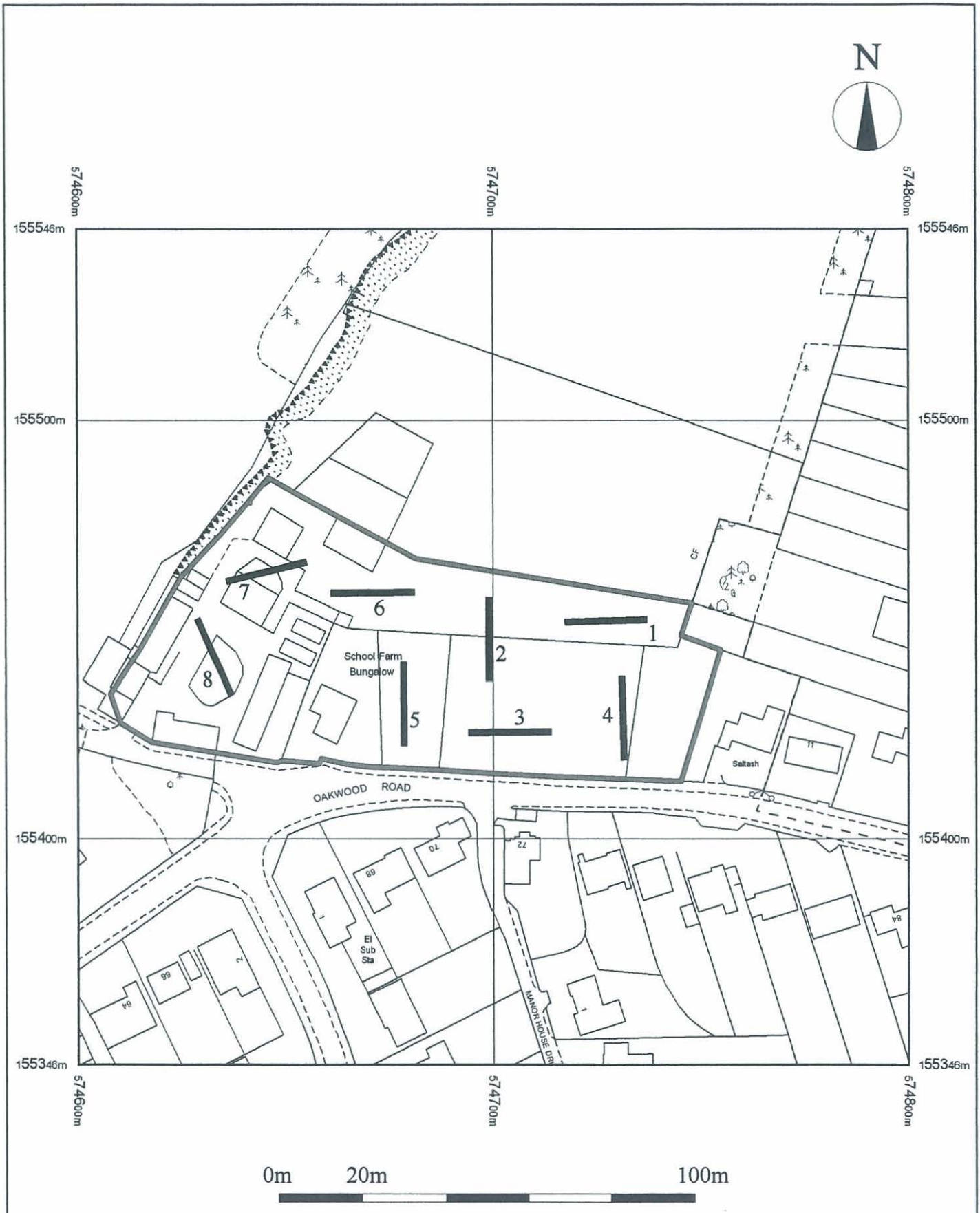

Figure 2: Location of test trenches within site of proposed development Scale 1:1250