

Archaeological Evaluation on land at The Orchard, High Street, Etchingham, East Sussex

April 2009

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Archaeological Evaluation on land at
The Orchard, High Street, Etchingham,
East Sussex

NGR: 571238 126146

Site Code: TOE/EV/09

(Planning Application Number: RR/2006/1266/P)

Report for
Barrett Haskins Designs

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SUMMARY

Swale & Thames Survey Company (SWAT) carried out an archaeological evaluation on land at The Orchard, High Street, Etchingham, East Sussex. A planning application (PAN: RR/2006/1266/P) for the construction of a new detached domestic building with a detached garage along with associated access, and services at the above site was submitted to Rother District Council (RDC) whereby East Sussex County Council, on behalf of Rother District 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 the requirements set out within an Archaeological Method Statement (SWAT, Mar 2009) and in discussion with the County Archaeologist's Office, East Sussex County Council.

The Archaeological Evaluation encountered no archaeological features in any of the four trenches, suggesting that there are no archaeological remains surviving within the site.

The Archaeological Evaluation has therefore been successful in fulfilling the primary aims and objectives of the Specification.

INTRODUCTION

Swale & Thames Survey Company (SWAT) was commissioned by Barrett Haskins Designs to carry out an archaeological evaluation at the above site. The work was carried out in accordance with the requirements set out within a Method Statement (SWAT, Mar 2008) and in discussion with the County Archaeologist, East Sussex County Council. The evaluation was carried out on April 20th 2009.

SITE DESCRIPTION AND TOPOGRAPHY

The application site was located to the west of the old centre of Etchingham but due to expansion is now located in the centre of the village. The National Grid Reference for the new development is NGR 571238 126146. The underlying geology of the site, according to the British Geological Society, consists of Sandstones and Siltstones of the Ashdown Formation. The site overlooks the valley of the River Dudwell to the south and is near its confluence with the River Rother. Alluvial deposits associated with the rivers and colluvial hillwash are likely to be encountered.

PLANNING BACKGROUND

A planning application (PAN: RR/2006/1266/P) for the construction of a new detached domestic building with a detached garage along with associated access at the above site was submitted to Rother District Council (RDC). East Sussex County Council, on behalf of Rother District Council, requested that an *Archaeological Evaluation* be undertaken in order to determine the possible impact of the development on any archaeological remains. The following condition was 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 field evaluation works in accordance with a specification and written timetable which has been submitted to and approved by the Local Planning Authority.

Requirements for the archaeological evaluation comprised trial trenching designed to assess the impact of the development across the application area. The trenches are 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 East Sussex County Council and RDC of any further archaeological mitigation measures that may be necessary in connection with the development proposals.

ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND

The area surrounding High Street, Etchingham has a number of archaeological remains noted within the established HER. Primarily of note is the C14th church of St. Mary and St. Nicholas, (MES 3799), which lies only 150m to the east of the site. In close proximity to this is the possible remains of a moat, (MES 3800) which it is said once, "...encircled the churchyard at Etchingham." No traces of this now remain visible.

AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

The purposes of the evaluation, as set out with the Method Statement (2009) included:

1. Assessing the likely impact of the proposed development on the archaeological remains using the results of the fieldwork
2. Assessing the impact of past development on the site's archaeological potential.
3. Assessing the potential of the site to contain nationally important remains.
4. Contributing to the environmental, geoarchaeological and landscape history of the area.

METHODOLOGY

Trial trenching was carried out on 20th April 2009, with the excavation of four trenches measuring 1.25m in width and 10m in length (see below). Trench locations were agreed prior to the excavation between the East Sussex County Archaeologist and SWAT. The area of the trenches 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 were excavated to enable sufficient information about form, development, date and stratigraphic relationships to be established and recorded without prejudice to more extensive investigations, should these prove to be necessary. All archaeological work was carried out in accordance with the Method Statement.

A single context recording system was used to record the deposits. A full list is presented in Appendix 1. Layers and fills are recorded thus (**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 and shown in bold.

MONITORING

Curatorial monitoring was carried out during the course of the evaluation.

RESULTS

A common stratigraphic sequence was seen across the site where topsoil/turf overburden (**100**) lay above a subsoil layer (**101**), which in trench 1 overlaid modern features. In trenches 2 and 3 the topsoil and subsoil layers overlay silty deposition layers, (**202**) and (**203**) and (**302**), (**303**) and (**304**). In trench 4 they overlay thicker silty deposits which may resemble the basal layers of a pond, (**402**), (**403**), (**404**), and (**405**). The topsoil/overburden consisted of friable dark grey brown clay silt. A clear line of horizon gave way to subsoil comprising mid brown orange silty clay which was redeposited. The depth of the overlying layers varied. Appendix 2 provides a stratigraphic sequence for the trench.

Trench 1

(13 x 1.25m)

Trench 1 was located at the eastern end of the site. Aligned approximately north-south, this trench was positioned to identify and confirm the impact that would be caused during construction of the detached garage of the proposed development. It measured 13m in length and contained a modern ditch [**104**], along with a few unnumbered modern features. The topsoil (**100**) here was 100mm in thickness and below this lay a thick layer of subsoil, at least some 0.44m in depth, of redeposited brown-orange silty clay which contained brick

fragments, (101). Within this deposit and measuring 0.95m in width with a depth of 0.25m, was ditch [104] which was filled by a sandy gravel mix (102), at the top and a more sandy mix at the base, (103) and also dated to the modern period. To the north, were four more circular and sub-circular features all dating from the C19th-C20th from the brick and other dumped materials within.

Trench 2

(17.50 x 1.25m)

Trench 2 was located along the southern edge of the site. Aligned approximately east-west, this trench was designed to mitigate the impact caused by the construction of the access road to the garage. The topsoil (200) here was also around 100mm in thickness and below this also lay the subsoil, here some 0.40m in depth, this was composed of the same redeposited brown-orange silty clay and also contained brick fragments, (201). Further evidence that the subsoil is redeposited came from the discovery of a piece of green plastic sheeting from the interface with the layer below this, (202), which was a layer of black-grey silt some 100mm thick. Below this was a layer of grey-brown sandy silt, (203) from which was retrieved a few sherds of Victorian pot. This measured between 0.15 and 0.20m in thickness except at the western end where it filled a natural hollow and increased to a depth of 0.50m.

Trench 3

(12.50 x 1.25m)

Trench 3 was located diagonally across the centre of the site. Aligned approximately northwest-southeast, this trench was designed to assess the impact caused by the construction of the eastern part of the house and grounds. The topsoil (300) here was the usual 100mm in thickness and below this lay the subsoil, here also some 0.40m in depth, this was composed of redeposited brown-orange silty clay and contained brick fragments, (301). The layer below this, (302), was a layer of black-grey silt some 100mm thick. Below this was a layer of grey-brown sandy silt, (303), both of these equating to contexts (202) and (203). Between these two contexts was a layer of brown-grey silt, (304) which increased in thickness towards the south, to a maximum of 0.20m, where it appears to encounter an area of darker silts, possibly on the edge of an old pond.

Trench 4

(19 x 1.25m)

Trench 4 was located diagonally towards the western end of the site. Aligned approximately northeast-southwest, with a bend five metres from the northern end so this last portion was aligned north-south, this trench was designed to assess the impact caused by the construction of the house. The topsoil (400) here was the standard 100mm in thickness, tapering to the north and below this lay the subsoil, here some 0.50m in depth, this was composed of redeposited brown-orange silty clay, (401). The layer below this, (402), was an

uneven layer of black-grey silt which was up to 1m thick, possibly equivalent to context (302). Below this was a small patch of grey-yellow sandy silt, (403), only 70mm in thickness, but 0.60m long, this context lay at the base of a natural hollow. Stratigraphically below this, but on the southern side of the hollow was deposit (404) which was a grey brown sandy silt. In the northern spur of this trench another context was seen below (401), this was (405) which was a grey silt at least 0.30m in thickness.

FINDS

No archaeological finds of any significance were recovered during the course of the evaluation. Bricks and pottery from the C19th to the C20th were found throughout the contexts.

DISCUSSION

The evaluation carried out on land at The Orchard, High Street, Etchingham did reveal a number of features, but these were either of modern or natural origin. Below the topsoil in all of the trenches was a layer of redeposited brown-orange silty clay which contained fragments of Victorian or C20th building materials and in the case of most of the trenches, this lay above silty layers which also contained modern material.

In trench 1 a number of modern deposits were seen in the trench and a single ditch also of the modern period. In trenches 2-4 beneath the redeposited layer a sequence of silty layers were seen. This points towards this area, which is bounded by higher ground on all sides, hillslopes to the north and west, roadway to the south and a slope up to the modern park on the east, once having been, if not a pond, then at least a waterlogged area of some sort. The finds of modern, possibly Victorian, pot in context (203) show that this area was open until moderately recently. The 'redeposited' silty clay layer found across all the trenches may be seen as some form of capping of this marshy area, or possibly even a dump of soil in a handy unused area during re-construction of the roadway or even during building of the railway, or may possibly have included these finds whilst being worked as a farm field, see below. The plastic sheeting found in trench 2 could either point to the 'redeposited' layer being very recent or could possibly point to a single isolated modern burial of domestic rubbish.

Unfortunately the map regression of the area shows nothing in the area concerned at all. A blank space means that the area was most likely to have been an open field at this time. The archaeological evidence from this evaluation does point towards a wet and silty area being exposed at some time in the recent past, however, this may date from before the first edition OS Map, or the absence of any detail in this area may be an unusual omission by the usually conscientious makers. The tithe map does show a structure in this area, but this appears to be on the top of the slopes to the north of the development area. It is possible that the bricks found may have come from this structure, as nothing of this is now visible.

CONCLUSION

The archaeological evaluation has been successful in fulfilling the primary aims and objectives of the Method Statement. Despite the archaeological potential of the surrounding area, no significant 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 (East Sussex County Council) of any further archaeological mitigations measures that may be necessary in connection with the development proposals.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

SWAT would like to thank Barrett Haskins Designs for commissioning the project. Thanks are also extended to the County Archaeologists Office (East Sussex County Council) for their advice and assistance. Paul Wilkinson carried out archaeological fieldwork, illustrations were produced by Jonny Madden of Digitise This. This report was edited and collated by Dr. Paul Wilkinson.

REFERENCES

Institute for Archaeologists (IfA) Rev (2008) *Standard and Guidance for archaeological field evaluation.*

www.archaeologists.net/modules/icontent/inPages/docs/codes/fldeval2.pdf

SWAT (2009) *Archaeological Method Statement: Archaeological Evaluation. The Orchard, High Street, Etchingham, Sussex.*

CONTENTS OF SITE ARCHIVE

Correspondence

Photographs: Photographs (35).

Photocopies of Ordnance Survey and other maps:

Drawings: One A3 permatrace site drawing, comprising trench plan and associated sections.

Finds: Modern pot sherds and brick fragments.

Context Register including: Context Register (1), Drawings Register (1), Photographic Register (1), Trench Sheets (4), Environmental Samples Register (x) and Context Sheets (20)

APPENDIX 1 - Context Summary

Land at The Orchard, High Street, Etchingham, East Sussex

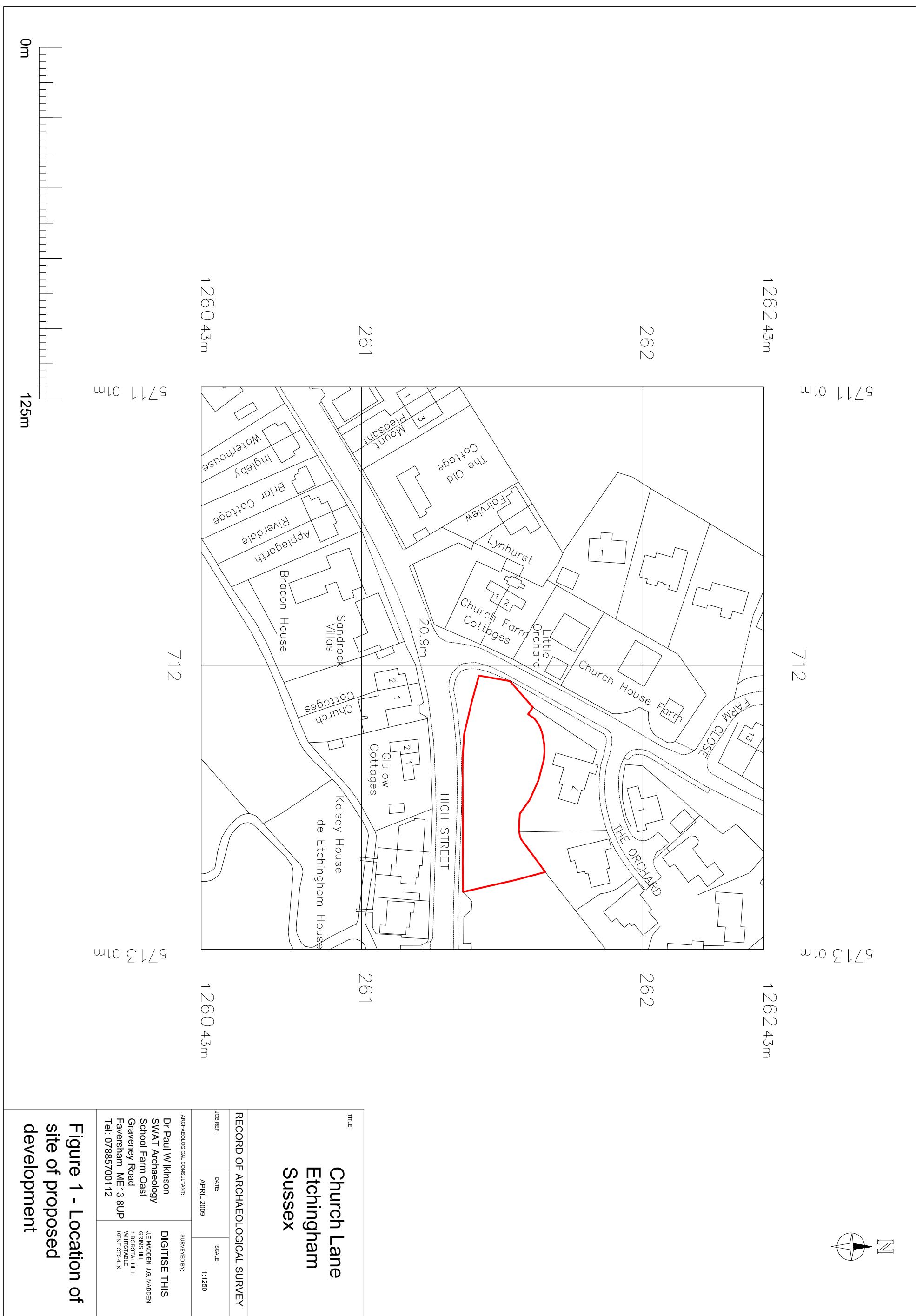
Site Code: TOE/EV/09

	Context No.	Stratigraphic Extents	Description
Trench 1	(100)	0.00-0.10m	Turf/topsoil. Friable dark grey brown silty clay.
	(101)	0.10-0.54m+	Subsoil. subsoil comprising mid brown orange silty clay.
	(102)	0.15m thick	Fill of [104] Sandy gravel
	(103)	0.20m thick	Fill of [104] Sandy silt
	[104]	0.35m depth	Cut of ditch.

	Context No.	Stratigraphic Extents	Description
Trench 2	(200)	0.00-0.10m	Turf/topsoil. Friable dark grey brown silty clay.
	(201)	0.10-0.50m	Subsoil. subsoil comprising mid brown orange silty clay.
	(202)	0.50-0.60m	Black grey silt
	(203)	0.15-0.50m thick	Grey brown sandy silt

	Context No.	Stratigraphic Extents	Description
Trench 3	(300)	0.00-0.10m	Turf/topsoil. Friable dark grey brown silty clay.
	(301)	0.10-0.50m	Subsoil. subsoil comprising mid brown orange silty clay.
	(302)	0.50-0.60m	Black grey silt
	(303)	0.60-0.75m	Grey brown sandy silt
	(304)	0.15m thick	Brown grey silt

	Context No.	Stratigraphic Extents	Description
Trench 4	(400)	0.00-0.10m	Turf/topsoil. Friable dark grey brown silty clay.
	(401)	0.10-0.60m	Subsoil. Subsoil comprising mid brown orange silty clay.
	(402)	0.10-1.20m+	Black grey silt
	(403)	0.10m thick	Grey yellow sandy silt
	(404)	1.20m+ thick	Grey brown sandy silt
	(405)	0.30m thick	Grey silt



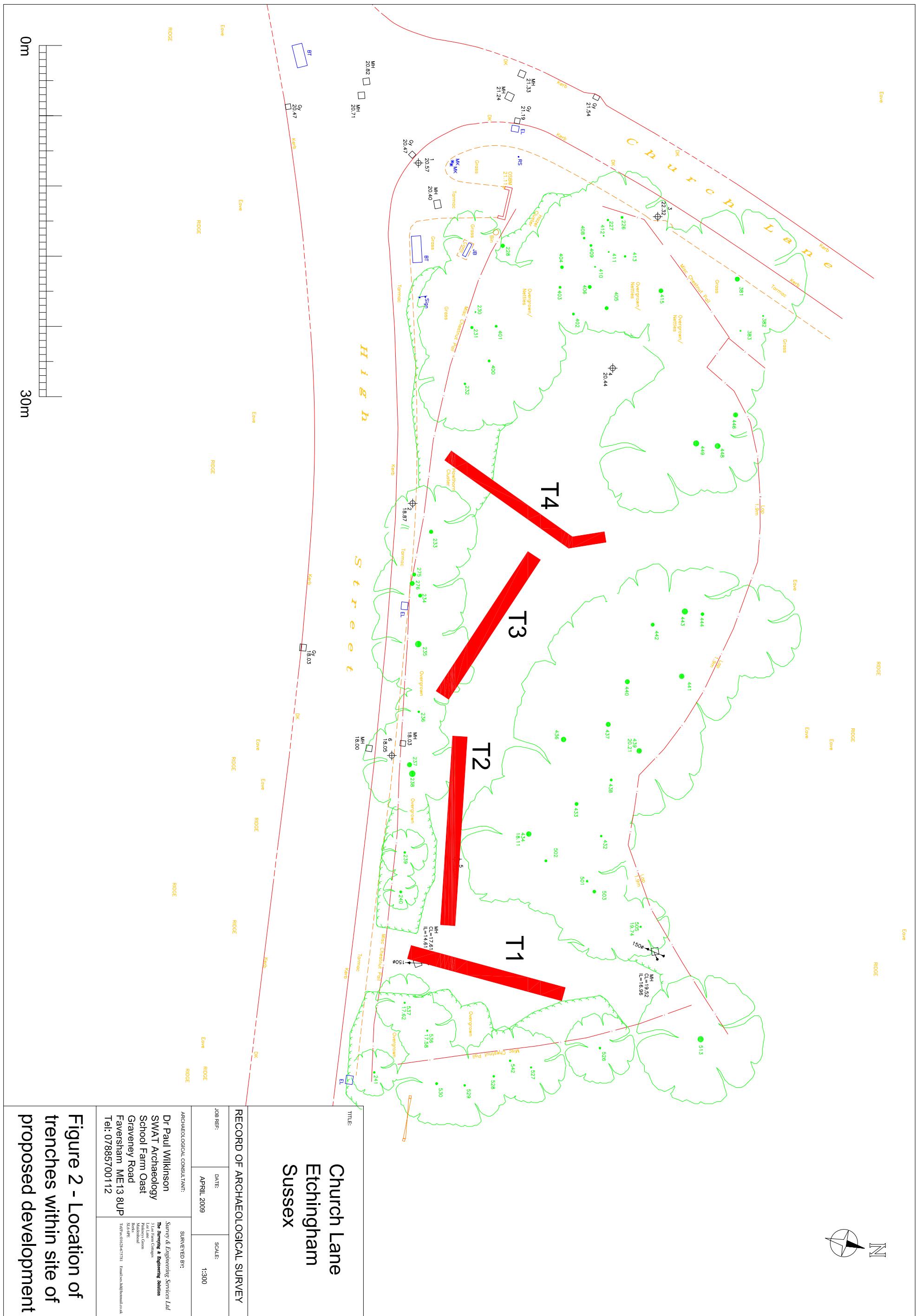


Figure 2 - Location of trenches within site of proposed development

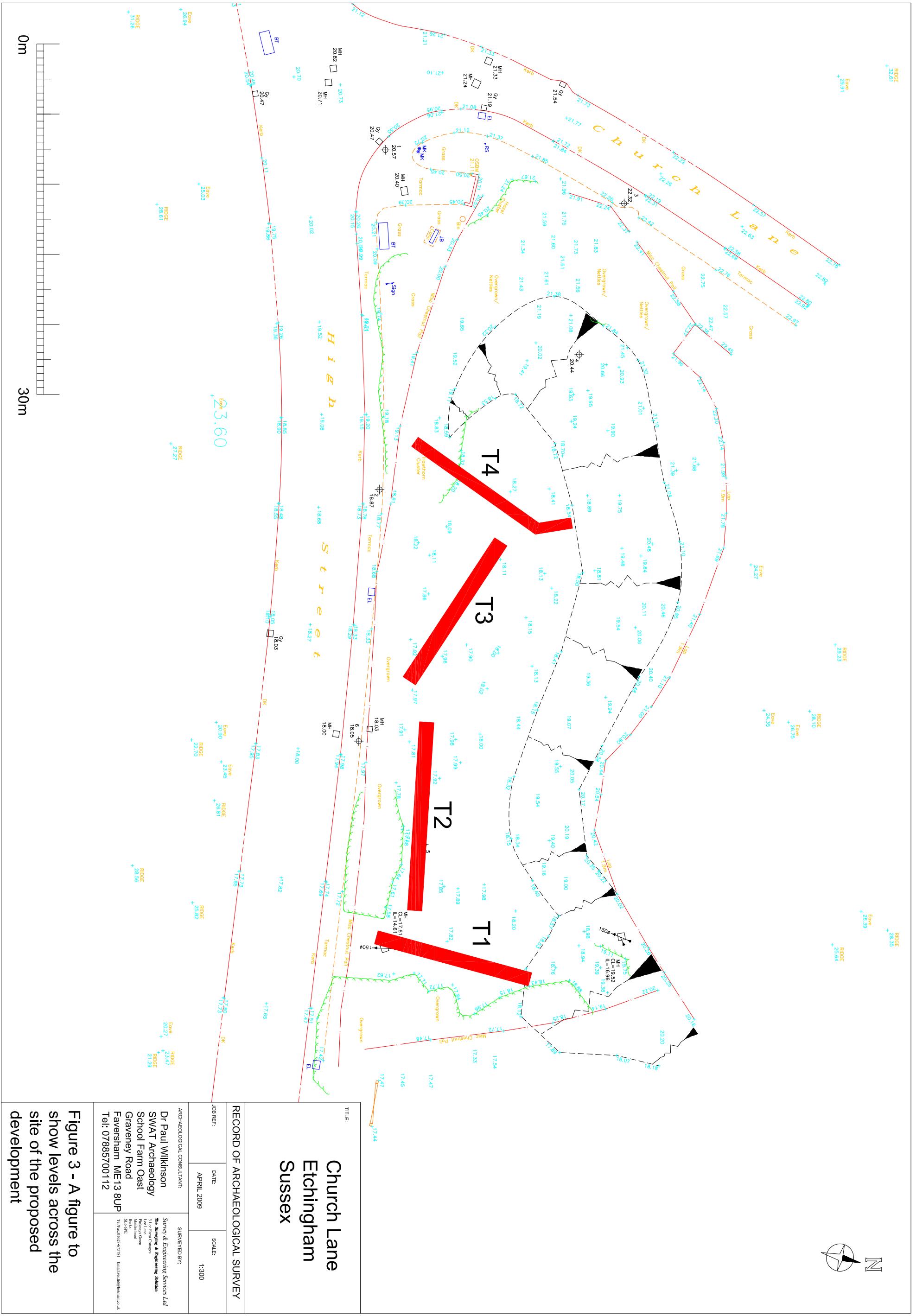


Figure 3 - A figure to show levels across the site of the proposed development

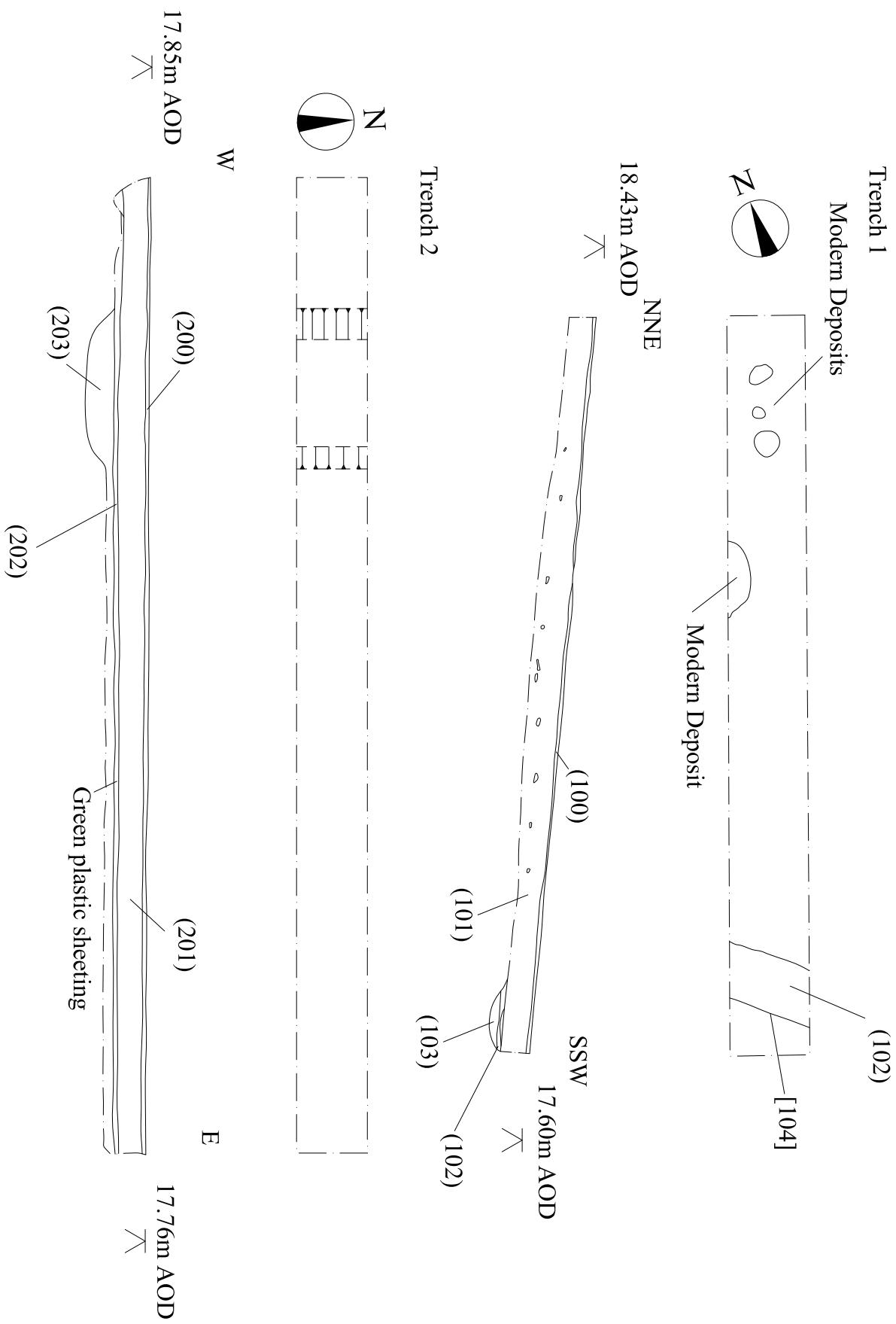


Figure 4: Trenches 1 and 2, plan and sections 1:100

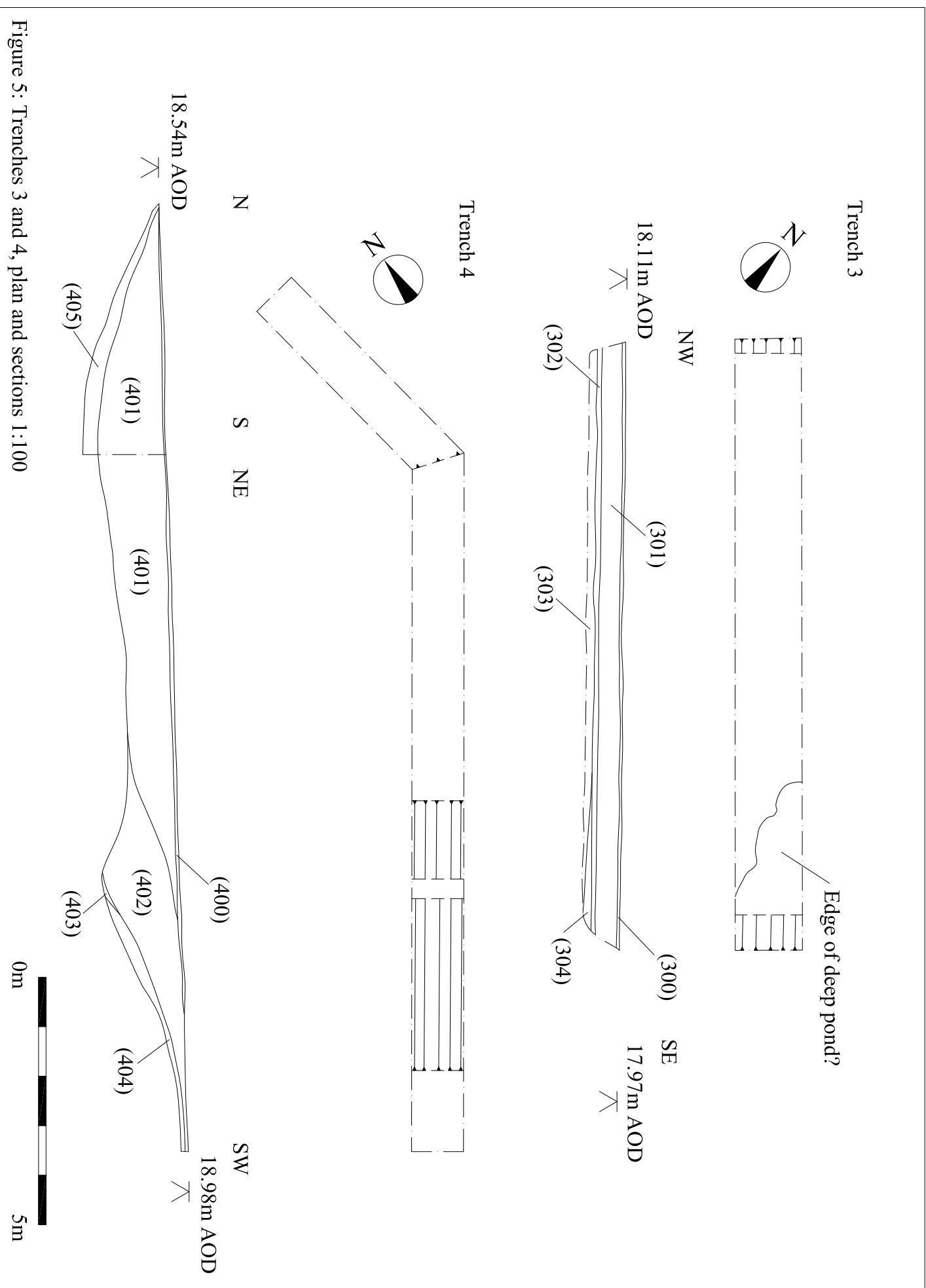


Figure 5: Trenches 3 and 4, plan and sections 1:100