

Archaeological Evaluation at Howt Green Farm, Sheppey Way, Bobbing, Kent



NGR: 589575 166122: Site Code: HGF-EV-14

(Planning Reference: SW/13/0501)

Date of Report: 11/04/14

Amended 07/05/2014

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Archaeological Evaluation at Howt Green Farm, Sheppey Way, Bobbing, Kent

NGR 589575 166133

Site Code: HGF-EV-14

1. Summary

Swale & Thames Survey Company (SWAT Archaeology) carried out an archaeological evaluation at Howt Green Farm, Sheppey Way, Bobbing in Kent. Planning permission was granted for the construction of a new fruit cold store on agricultural land with accompanying hard standing and a small extension to an existing store – (Planning Reference SW/130501), whereby the Swale 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 the requirements set out within an Archaeological Specification (KCC 2014) and in discussion with the Principal Archaeological Officer, Kent County Council. The results of the excavation of the five evaluation trenches revealed that limited archaeological features were present in Trenches 2, 3 and possibly 1. The natural geology was observed in all of the trenches and this comprised of brickearth. The Archaeological Evaluation has therefore been successful in fulfilling the primary aims and objectives of the Specification.

2. Introduction

Swale & Thames Survey Company (SWAT) was commissioned by Lambert and Foster 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 2014) and in discussion with the Principal Archaeological Officer, Kent County Council. The evaluation was carried out from the 7th to 9th April 2014.

3. Site Description and Topography

The site was located northwest of Sheppey Way in the hamlet of Howt Green within a large orchard that was partially grubbed out to make way for the development and on an area of rough, disturbed ground southwest of the orchard within the farm yard. Bounded by existing orchards to the north and east, Sheppey Way to the southeast and farm buildings to the west, the site was relatively L shaped and measured approximately 93m x 87.5m and sloped gently to the southeast at approximately 24m to 25m aOD (above Ordnance Datum). According to the British Geological Survey, the site lies on Head deposits, and pale brown sandy silty clay in the form of Brickearth was exposed in all trenches.

4. Planning Background

Swale Borough Council granted planning permission for the development reference SW/13/0501 consisting of the construction of a new fruit cold store and accompanying hard standing and access

road and a small extension to an existing building. On the advice of the Principal Archaeological Officer, Kent County Council, a programme of archaeological works in the form of an initial archaeological evaluation, was attached to the consent:

(Condition 9) 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.

Requirements for the archaeological evaluation comprised a targeted evaluation of the impact area with six trenches designed to establish whether there were any archaeological deposits at the site that may be affected by the proposed development. The results from this evaluation will be used to inform KCC of any further archaeological mitigation measures that may be necessary in connection with the development proposals.

5. Archaeological and Historical Background

Over the past three years ongoing mitigation work by SWAT Archaeology, just over a kilometre north of the proposed development site at Coleshall Farm, has revealed an extensive range of human activity from Neolithic pits (c.3350-2800BC) to Medieval field systems (c.1125-1350AD) (Wilkinson 2012). Prior to the work carried out by SWAT, Pre-Construct Archaeology (PCA) found evidence of Mesolithic to Iron Age remains in the neighbouring vicinity (Bishop & Bagwell 2005) and later Medieval activity in 2000 (PCA Unpublished document 2000). Just over a kilometre south of Howt Green Farm, Canterbury Archaeological Trust in 2008 uncovered a large high status Migration Period Anglo Saxon cemetery and earlier prehistoric ring ditches at The Meads between Bobbing and Sittingbourne (Weekes 2012).

As the proposed development site at Howt Green Farm was sandwiched between these two areas of high archaeological activity, it was likely some evidence of Man's past would be found during the evaluation

There are limited listings in the Historical Environment Record (HER) of recorded findings closer to Howt Green Farm. Between 2000 and 2002 Thames Valley Archaeological Services carried out excavations at the site of a new crematorium and cemetery off of Stickfast Lane, approximately half a kilometre southwest of the development site. Work in 2000 revealed late Bronze Age to early Iron Age pits, ditches and gullies (HER Number TQ 86 NE 135), and further work in 2002 exposed post Medieval activity (HER Number TQ 86 NE 137).

6. Aims and Objectives

The main aims of the evaluation were to determine the potential for archaeological remains to be present within the area of proposed development groundwork and how they could be affected by such works, with the nature, significance and condition of any archaeological remains found to be assessed and documented in the evaluation report.

7. Methodology

The Specification called for the mechanical excavation of six trenches measuring 30m long and 1.8m to 2m wide. Half of the area within the farm yard earmarked for the proposed hard standing had already been surfaced and used as a storage area for fruit bins, and therefore the trench allocated for that area was not dug, leaving five trenches to be excavated, of which one was only partially excavated in agreement with the Principal Archaeological Officer KCC. A 5 tonne 360° tracked mechanical excavator with a flat-bladed ditching bucket was used to remove the topsoil **(001)** and subsoil **(002)** to expose the natural geology **(003)** and/or the archaeological horizon. All trenches had at least one 1.5m wide sondage cut into the end of the trench to assess the geology and measured 30m long and between 1.8m to 2m wide. All archaeological work was carried out in accordance with the specification. A single context recording system was used to record the deposits, and context recording numbers were assigned to all deposits for recording purposes. These are used in the report and shown in **bold**. All archaeological work was carried out in accordance with SWAT and IFA standards and guidance, and in accordance with the standards set out in the KCC generic requirements which formed Part B of the Archaeological Specification.

8. Monitoring

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

9. Results

Five trenches were excavated during the evaluation with a common stratigraphic sequence being identified although Trench 5, in the area of the farm yard, had a different sequence due to reduction work that had occurred previously. The four trenches in the grubbed out orchard revealed the upper strata of natural superficial geology consisting of friable pale orange brown fine sandy silty clay (brickearth) with flecks of manganese **(003)**. All features cut this context. Above this geological context was a subsoil **(002)** measuring approximately 0.07 to 0.17m thick that appeared to be very similar in colour and composition to the natural geology with the added inclusion of chalk flecks most likely resulting from marling, a farming practice to balance out the pH level of the soil. Covering the subsoil was topsoil **(001)** composed of loose mid to dark grey sandy silty clay chalk flecks and occasional flint nodules between 0.23m to 0.31m thick.

Trench 1

Trench 1 was located at the extreme northwest end of the development site within the orchard and was aligned northeast/southwest. This trench measured 30m long, 2m wide and up to 0.40m deep with a sondage cut at the southwest end. One feature was sampled, possibly a ditch terminus **[101]**, although the results were inconclusive. This feature measured 2.53m long, 0.47m wide and up to 0.24m deep with the terminus at the south-southwest end. This feature had a sharp break of slope of approximately 60° and a flat base and was filled by **(100)**, a loose light brown grey silty clay with rare

chalk flecks, common manganese flecks and rare angular flints. No cultural material was retrieved from this feature.

Trench 2

Trench 2 was located to the southwest of the orchard, was aligned north/south and measured 30m long, 2m wide and up to 0.35m deep with a sondage at the southern end. A southeast/northwest aligned ditch [201] ran across the trench and measured 2.4m long, 0.48m wide and up to 0.35m deep with a sharp break of slope at roughly 50° and a slightly concave base. This feature was filled by (200), a friable light grey brown silty clay with rare carbon flecks, burnt and struck flint, fired clay fragments and rare flecks of flint tempered pottery. This was the only identifiable feature seen in this trench.

Trench 3

Trench 3 was located at the northeastern edge of the orchard, was aligned northwest/southeast and measured 30m long, 2m wide and up to 0.42m deep with a sondage at the north end.

This trench produced two features including a small subcircular kiln [301] of unknown date at the southern end of the trench. The kiln measured 0.74m long, 0.67m wide and up to 0.11m deep with steep edges to the south of approximately 80° shallowing out at the north with edges of around 50° and a flat base. A thin band of fired natural geology ringed the inner deposits consisting of a lower fill (301) up to 0.11m thick of friable dark black brown silty clay with abundant carbon and rare chalk flecks and pea grit. Two small fragments of sub-ceramic material were found within this context and may represent the remains of kiln furniture. Partially covering this deposit was what appeared to be the partially collapsed 'roof' of the kiln (300) composed of redeposited natural, a friable pale yellow brown silty clay up to 0.09m thick with rare chalk and carbon flecks. Neither context contained diagnostic artefacts, but this feature had the appearance of a 'one shot' kiln.

At the north end of the trench a teardrop shaped feature [304], possibly a ditch terminus was sampled. This feature measured at least 0.97m long, 0.64m wide and up to 0.37m deep and was aligned northeast/south west with a sharp top break of slope at 75° at the south-southwest edge shallowing to 40° at the north-northwest edge and a concave base that angled down to the south-southwest. An artefact sterile deposit (303) of mottled pale grey brown and orange brown clayey silt with rare carbon and chalk flecks and occasional manganese flecks filled this feature.

Trench 4

Trench 4 was located at the southeast end of the orchard, was aligned northeast/southwest and measured 30m long, 2m wide and up to 0.40m deep with a sondage cut at the northeast end. Plough marks and two French drains were seen in the trench, and anomalies were hand cleaned, but no

archaeological features were found, though struck flints, burnt flints and ceramic fragments were found in the subsoil **(002)**.

Trench 5

Trench 5 was situated within the farmyard to the southwest of the orchard and was located where an area of concrete hard standing would be created. The trench was meant to be 30m long, but in consultation with the Heritage Officer, KCC it was decided that due to the soil conditions revealed within the first 15m of the trench and the depth of these imported soils, further excavation of the trench would cease and a separate sondage dug at what would have been the end of the trench at the 30m point. The trench was aligned northwest/southeast and measured 15m long, 2 m wide and up to 0.81m deep with the sondage measuring 1.90m long, 1.50m wide and up to 0.70m deep. It appears at some time the soil in this area had been drastically reduced, as the depth of the trench was twice as deep as the trenches in the orchard. Above the natural geology which was exposed at the bottom of the trench and sondage was a layer **(006)** up to 0.12m thick similar to the subsoil seen in the orchard. Sealing this layer was a 0.30m thick layer of stiff blue grey clay **(005)** sealed by a 0.45m thick layer of firm mid orange brown clay **(004)**. No features were seen in this trench, and it is likely that due to the possible reduction of the ground level here, any archaeological features would have been destroyed.

Overview

The results of the excavation of the five evaluation trenches revealed that archaeological features were present in Trenches 1, 2 and 3. These comprised of a possible ditch terminus in Trench1, a linear in Trench 2 and a possible linear terminus and a small kiln in Trench 3.

10. Finds

No ceramic dating material was retrieved from the features, but struck flints were found within the ditch in Trench 2, and small flecks of flint tempered pottery was recovered from that feature. The subsoil and topsoil did produce struck flints which were retained for further analysis along with the flints from ditch **[201]**. Paul Hart, a lithic specialist has looked at the material and postulates a period of Late Neolithic/Early Bronze Age.

11. Discussion

The development site at land at Howt Green Farm has been evaluated and found to contain one small well preserved kiln, one ditch and two possible ditch termini suggesting prehistoric activity within the area earmarked for development, but many of the evaluation trenches on the Iwade site at Coalhall Farm produced similar features, and further mitigation on that site has revealed a multiperiod archaeological landscape spanning the prehistoric to the Medieval. The proposed groundworks is for reduction of the site in the north-west quadrant which will destroy any archaeological features, and a topsoil strip then build up of levels in the north-east quadrant which may impact on any archaeological

features yet to be revealed. From the present surface the archaeological horizon is about 30-40cm below ground level.

12. Conclusion

The archaeological evaluation has been successful in fulfilling the primary aims and objectives of the Specification. A common stratigraphic sequence was recognised across the site comprised of topsoil **(001)** overlaying subsoil **(002)** overlaying the natural sandy silty clay **(003)**. Some archaeological activity was found during the evaluation including a small 'one shot' kiln which suggests prehistoric activity. The evaluation has, therefore, assessed the archaeological potential of land intended for development.

13. Acknowledgements

SWAT would like to thank Lambert and Foster for commissioning this project. Thanks are also extended to Simon Mason, Kent County Council Principal Archaeological Officer for his advice and assistance. Julie Martin supervised the fieldwork, assisted in the field by Neil Chaney, Dan Quinlan and Andrew Souter. Illustrations were produced by Jonny Madden for Digitise This. The project was managed and report edited by Paul Wilkinson.

Julie Martin. 11th April 2014

Paul Wilkinson 07/05/14

14. References

Bishop B. and Bagwell M. 2005. Iwade: Occupation of a North Kent Village from the Mesolithic to the Medieval Period. PCA Monograph 3.

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

HER Data 2013

Kent County Council *Specification for an Archaeological Evaluation at Howt Green Farm, Sheppey Way, Bobbing, Kent 2104*

Weekes, J. 2012, CAT Interim Reports, Arch Cant CXXXII; 291-305

Wilkinson, P. 2013, Archaeological Excavations on Land Adjacent to Coleshill Farm, Iwade, Kent (Areas 1 & 2)

Websites

SWAT Archaeology <http://www.swatarchaeology.co.uk/#reports2012>



Plate 1 - Google Earth aerial view of Development Site



Plate 2 – Location shot of Trenches 1-4, looking northwest



Plate 3 – General shot of Trench 1, looking northeast



Plate 4 – General shot of Trench 2, looking north



Plate 5 – General shot of Trench 3, looking northwest



Plate 6 – General shot of Trench 5, looking northeast, 1m scale



Plate 7 – Trench 3 Kiln [302], looking west-southwest, 1m scale




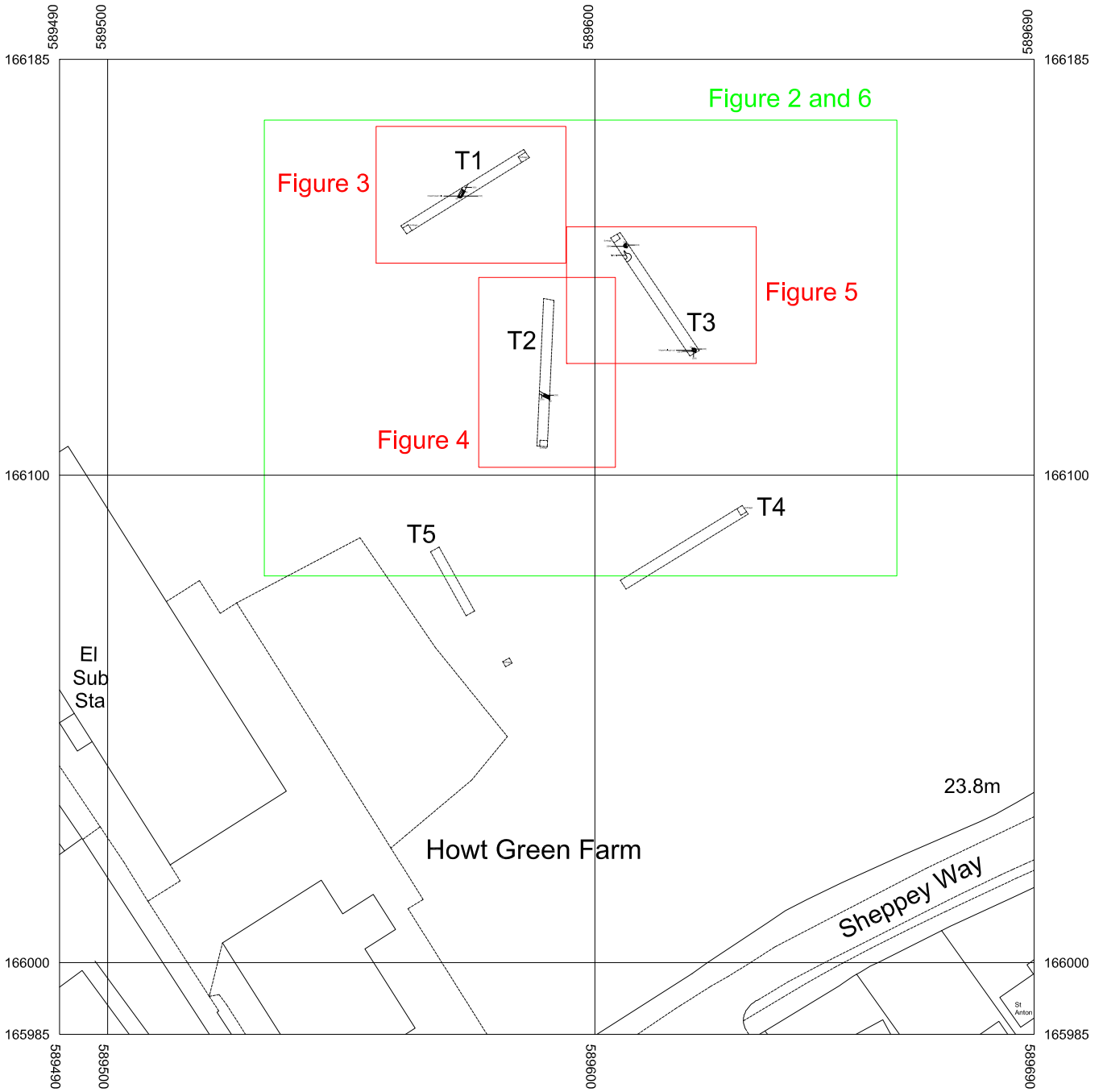
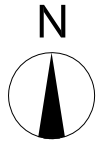
Plate 8 – Trench 2 Linear [201], looking southeast, 1m scale



Plate 9 – Trench 1 Linear terminus? [101], looking north-northeast, 1m scale

SECTION C - COMPLETION OF FIELDWORK

Date Fieldwork Completed:	9 th April 2014	Was fieldwork monitored by KCC/EH/Other?	
Further Fieldwork Anticipated:	YES	Who?	Simon Mason
Map attached showing site location and extent of intervention?			
Attached			
Summary of results (Continue on separate sheet if necessary):			
<p>Five trenches were excavated during the evaluation with a common stratigraphic sequence being identified although Trench 5, in the area of the farm yard, had a different sequence due to reduction work that had occurred previously.</p> <p>The results of the excavation of the five evaluation trenches revealed that archaeological features were present in Trenches 1, 2 and 3. These comprised of a possible ditch terminus in Trench1, a linear in Trench 2 and a possible linear terminus and a small kiln in Trench 3.</p> <p>No ceramic dating material was retrieved from the features, but struck flints were found within the ditch in Trench 2, and small flecks of flint tempered pottery was recovered from that feature. The subsoil and topsoil did produce struck flints which were retained for further analysis along with the flints from ditch [201]. Paul Hart, a lithic specialist has looked at the material and postulates a period of Late Neolithic/Early Bronze Age.</p>			
Agreed Reporting Stages and Program:			
Name:	Paul Wilkinson MifA		
On behalf of:	SWAT Archaeology		
Signed:		Date:	07/05/14

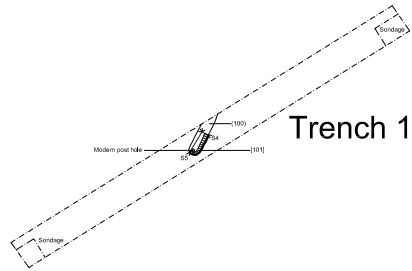
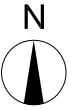


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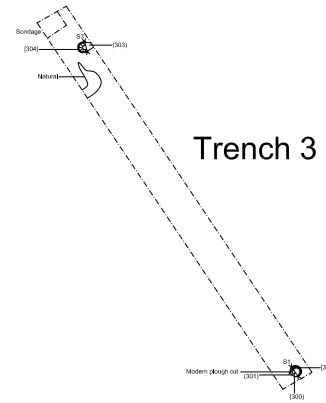


Figure 1: Location of site

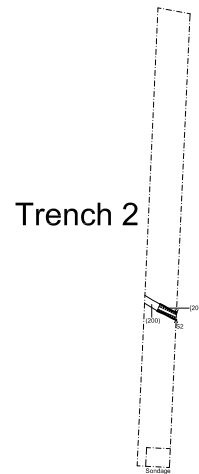
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166168.0mN



Trench 1



Trench 3



Trench 2

589645.0mE
166105.0mN

Trench 5

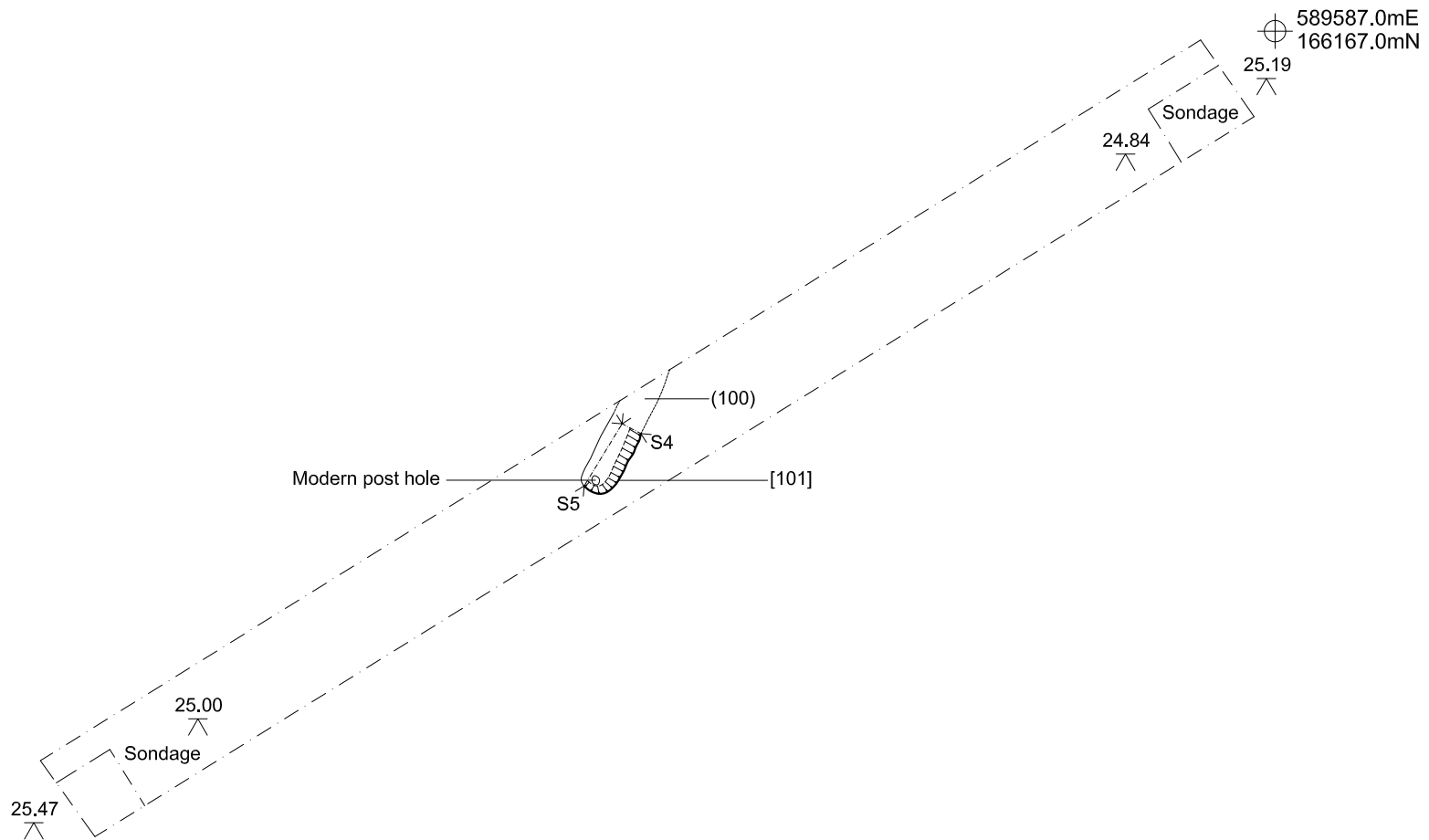
Trench 4

1:500@A4

0m

50m

Figure 2: Evaluation trenches with archaeological features present

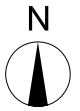


589558.0mE
166146.0mN

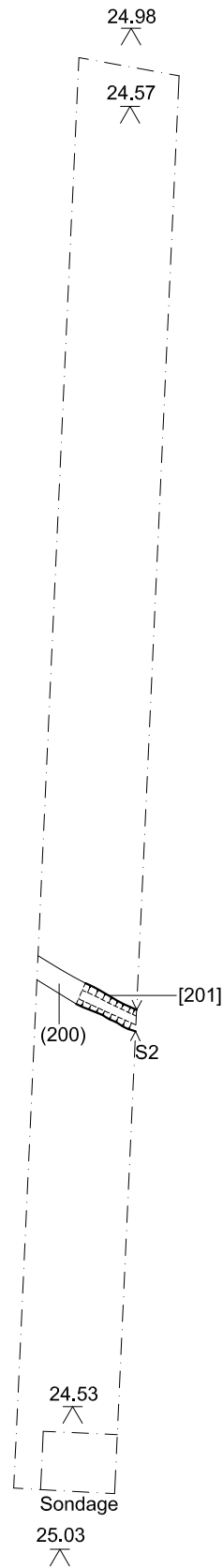
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Figure 3: Trench 1



⊕ 589598.0mE
166136.0mN



⊕ 589579.0mE
166105.0mN

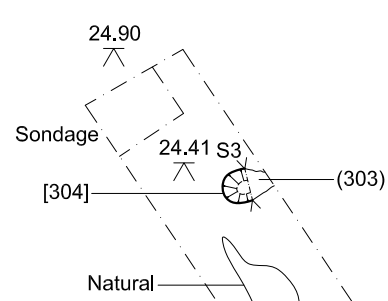
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0m



15m

Figure 4: Trench 2

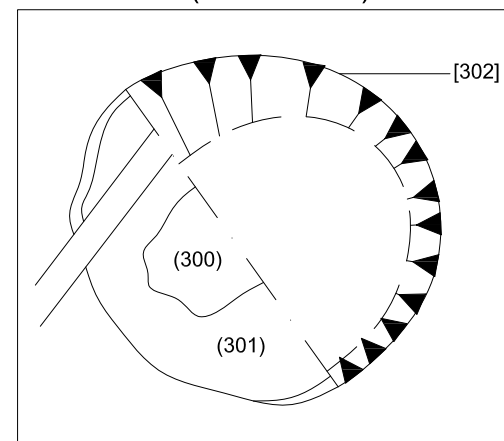


⊕ 589626.0mE
166147.0mN

1:150@A4



Plan of kiln (not to scale)



⊕ 589597.0mE
166126.0mN

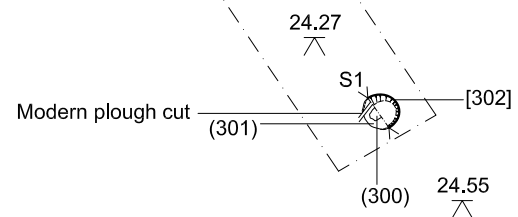
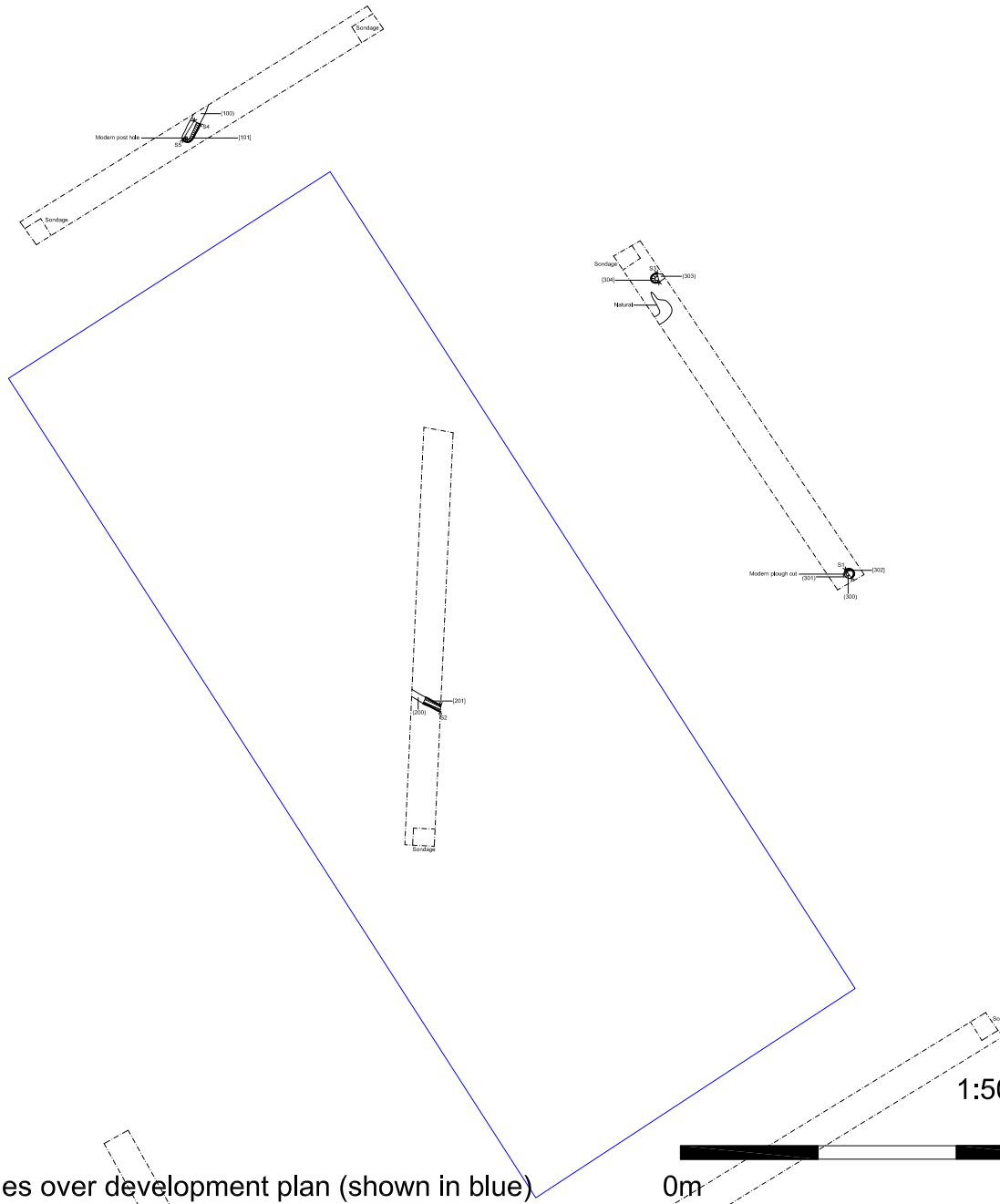


Figure 5: Trench 3

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166168.0mN

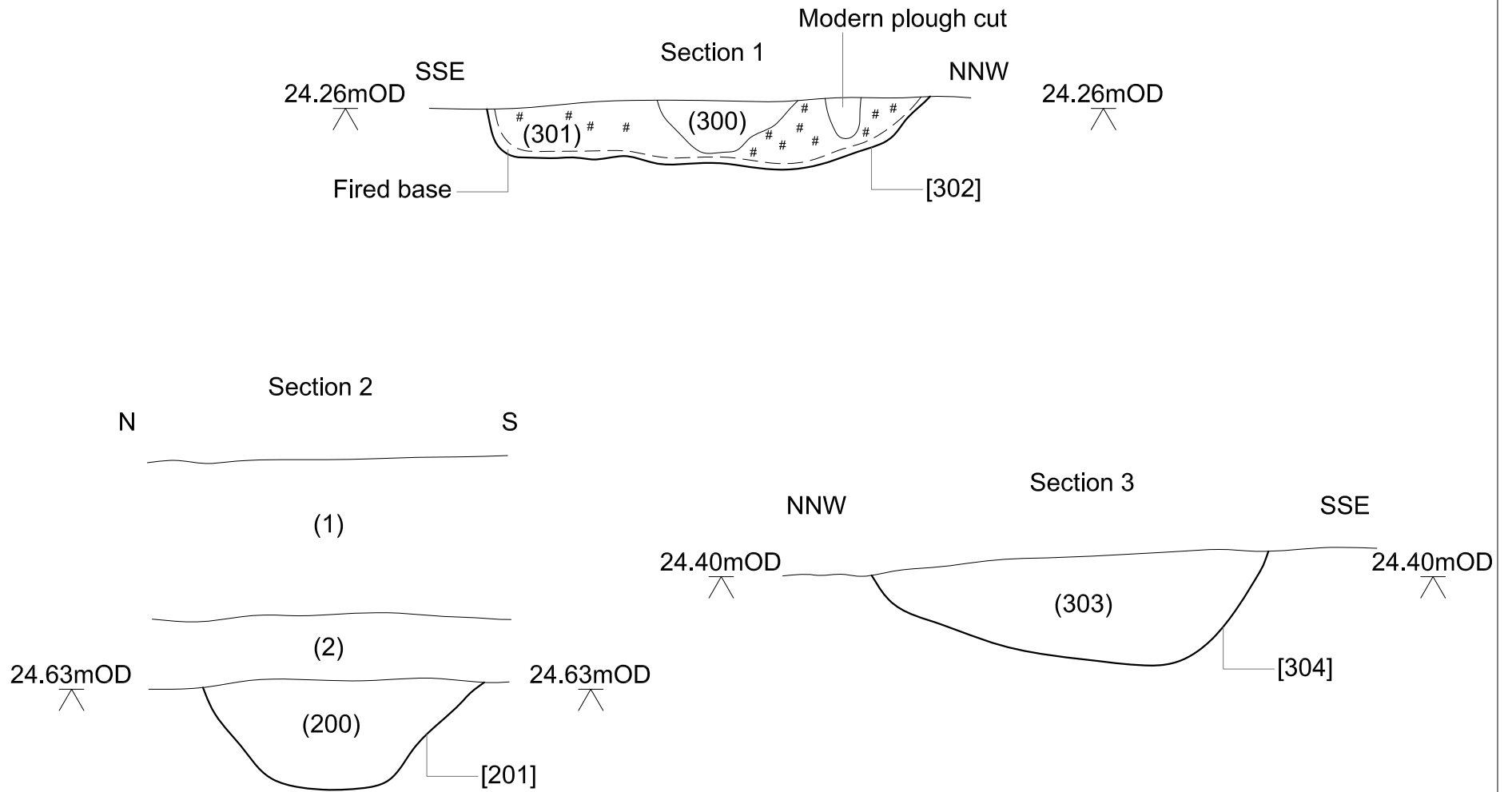


589645.0mE
166105.0mN

Figure 6: Evaluation trenches over development plan (shown in blue)

0m

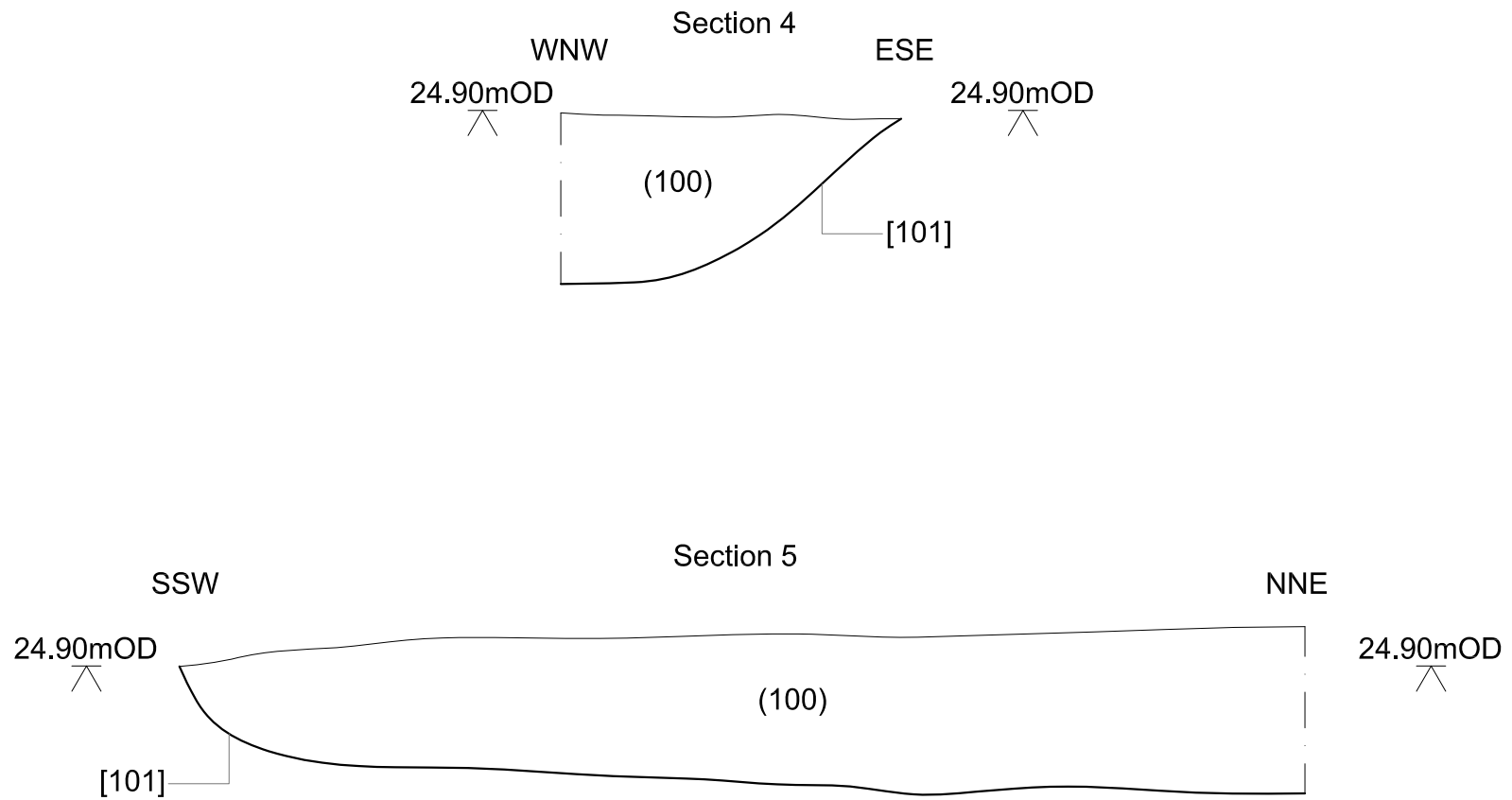
50m



1:10@A4



Figure 7: Sections



1:10@A4



Figure 8: Sections