

Archaeological Investigation in advance of Development at Abbey Farm House, Church Street, Higham in Kent

Site Code AFH-EV-14

NGR 571744 174220



Date of Report 02/07/2014

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SUMMARY

Swale & Thames Survey Company (SWAT Archaeology) carried out an archaeological investigation on land at Abbey Farm House, Church Street, Higham (Fig.1). Planning permission has recently been granted (Application 20130817) for the erection of a detached building to provide a double garage and stores ancillary to the residential dwelling. However, the site is Scheduled Monument 230022 and Scheduled Monument Consent was required and obtained prior to the archaeological investigation taking place.

The specification of archaeological works provided by Wendy Rogers, Senior Archaeologist at KCC Heritage and the Scheduled Monument Consent from The Secretary of State as advised by Paul Roberts, Inspector of Ancient Monuments for Sussex & Kent, and was based on the assumption that any archaeology exposed within the footprint of the proposed building would be preserved in situ with no impact from the proposed reinforced concrete slab and ring beam construction.

Archaeological investigation took place on 17th to the 18th June 2014 with a 2 ton 360" machine equipped with a smooth bucket. The depth of excavation was closely monitored by SWAT archaeologists in consultation with the nominated structural engineer to the depth required for the foundation design. At this level, some archaeological features, probably chalk block foundation walls were revealed and recorded.

The archaeological investigation has therefore been successful in fulfilling the primary aims and objectives of the Specification.

1. INTRODUCTION

Swale & Thames Survey Company (SWAT Archaeology) was commissioned by Matthew Ledger of Abbey Farm House, Church Road, Higham, Kent to carry out an archaeological investigation at the above site. The work was carried out in accordance with the requirements set out within an Archaeological Specification (KCC 2014), Scheduled Monument Consent and in discussion with the Senior Archaeological Heritage Officer, Kent County Council and Paul Roberts, Inspector of Ancient Monuments for Sussex & Kent. The investigation was carried out on the 17th and 18th of June 2014.

2. SITE DESCRIPTION AND TOPOGRAPHY

The site is located east of St Mary's Church and situated on the site of the former St Mary's Priory (Fig. 2). Rochester town centre is about 3.5 miles to the south-south east. The site itself is about 5mOD. The National Grid Reference is NGR 589677 163827

According to the Geological Survey of Great Britain (1:50,000) the underlying surface is anticipated to be Lambeth Group: Sand, Silt and Clay, however there may be deposits of Alluvium (BGS 1:50,000 digital).

Archaeological investigation revealed a moderate compact dark gray black topsoil (01) about 0.18m deep overlaying compact subsoil (02) mid gray brown silty soil about 0.25m thick which in turn overlaid the compact archaeological horizon (03) with a matrix of light to mid sandy brown soil with very frequent chalk flecks and frequent fragments of post-medieval building materials.

3. PLANNING BACKGROUND

Planning permission (application 20130817) has been granted for the erection of a detached building to provide a double garage and stores ancillary to the residential dwelling. Condition 4 dealt with archaeological matters:

Condition 4: No development shall take place until the applicant, or their agents or successors in title, has secured the implementation of,

i. archaeological field evaluation works in accordance with a specification and written timetable which has been submitted to and approved by the Local Planning Authority; and

ii. following on from the evaluation, any safeguarding measures to ensure preservation in situ of important archaeological remains and/or further archaeological investigation and recording in accordance with a specification and timetable which has been submitted to and approved by the Local Planning Authority

Reason to ensure appropriate assessment of the archaeological implications of any development.

4. ARCHAEOLOGICAL and HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

In the immediate area of the Proposed Development Area are the remains of St Mary's Priory founded in 1148 by the daughter of King Stephen and it can be considered a royal foundation. The site was excavated by P J Tester from April 1966 with work completed in September 1966. The excavation was funded by a grant towards the cost by the Kent Archaeological Society and published in the *Archaeologia Cantiana* Vol. LXXXII 1967. The archive from the excavation is to be found in the library of the Kent Archaeological Society situated in Maidstone Museum. Tester writes in the opening page of the report that: "A resistivity survey was carried out by Mr K W E Gravett and Mr J E Caiger made a large scale plan on which subsequent discoveries could be plotted" (Tester 1967: 143). Despite a thorough search of the archive neither item could be found. It had been suggested by KCC Heritage that there could be evidence for trenches dug by Tester in the vicinity of the proposed development. Again no evidence could be found in the archives.

A walk over of the site indicated that the plan of the priory drawn by Tester could be seen to follow the raised outlines in the turf of the site. The Abbey Farm House seems to contain a number of surviving upstanding walls of the priory, and a short length of wall, probably part of the south wall of the nave remains standing. At the foot of the wall a number of pieces of worked stone were found, and Roman brick and tile.

5. AIMS and OBJECTIVES

The purpose of the evaluation, as set out within the Archaeological Specification (KCC 2014) is to:

- Clarify the presence/absence of archaeological remains within the footprint of the proposed garage;
 - Provide sufficient information for the SMC process;
 - Provide sufficient information to guide foundation design and further mitigation measures (part ii) of planning condition).
-
- 1.6 This scheme of archaeological works is based on the assumption that any archaeology within the footprint of the proposed garage will be preserved in situ through design. The garage foundations will avoid disturbance of the archaeology. Provisional foundation details will need to be agreed with English Heritage and the County Archaeologist prior to works commencing on site. Following assessment of the investigation results, amendments to the foundation designs may need to be undertaken to ensure no impact on archaeology. If archaeology is encountered there will need to be further discussions with English Heritage, the County Archaeologist and the developer regarding further mitigation. These further mitigation measures and the final foundation designs will need to be agreed with English Heritage and the County Archaeologist prior to being formally submitted to the LPA to address part ii) of the planning condition.

6. METHODOLOGY

Trial trenching on the proposed footprint of the building was carried out on 17th June 2014 with the excavation of the topsoil. Excavation was carried out using a tracked 360° mechanical excavator fitted with a toothless ditching bucket, removing the overburden to the top of the first recognisable archaeological horizon, **(03)**, under the constant supervision of an experienced archaeologist.

All archaeological work was carried out in accordance with the specification issued by KCC. 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 KCC and IFA standards and guidance.

7. MONITORING

Due to the lack of extensive archaeological remains, curatorial monitoring was not carried out during the course of the evaluation, but email contact was maintained throughout the fieldwork. A site visit by the Principal Archaeological Officer KCC and the English Heritage Inspector of Ancient Monuments for Sussex and Kent followed on from the investigation when the on-site work was discussed.

8. RESULTS

The archaeological investigation stopped at the archaeological horizon **(03)** which was the formation level for the proposed reinforced concrete ring beam. At this level the archaeological horizon consisted of general demolition debris, lime mortar lumps, post-medieval roof tile fragments, charcoal flecks and the occasional modern brick fragments.

In cleaning off this surface by hand a number of possible chalk walls or foundations were exposed. Chalk foundation **(04)** bonded with coarse, sandy yellow mortar, and aligned east-west, a possible chalk and flint wall **(05)** bonded with coarse, sandy yellow mortar, and aligned east-west. A possible flint wall **(06)**, not fully exposed and bonded with a coarse brown sandy yellow mortar, and aligned north-south. A possible wall on the same north-south alignment **(06)**, and **(08)** was exposed in the north and south ring beam trench. See Table (1) below for OD heights of the possible walls.

| Context number | Existing ground level | Depth of (poss) wall | Depth below ground |
|----------------|-----------------------|----------------------|--------------------|
| (04) | 4.72m OD | 4.43m OD | 29cm |
| (05) | 4.78m OD | 4.44m OD | 34cm |
| (06) | 4.66m OD | 4.42m OD | 24cm |
| (07) | 4.87m OD | 4.43m OD | 44cm |
| (08) | 4.37m OD | 4.65m OD | 28cm |

9. FINDS

No finds were retrieved from the investigation

10. DISCUSSION

The investigation at Abbey Farm House, Church Street, Higham, Kent has revealed limited archaeology. The archaeological investigation has been successful in fulfilling the primary aims and objectives of the Specifications. A common stratigraphic sequence was recognised across the site of consisting of the archaeological horizon **(03)** which in turn was sealed by a layer of subsoil **(02)** under topsoil **(01)**.

11. CONCLUSION

The investigation has assessed the archaeological potential of the land and revealed features that are likely to be foundations or walls of a possible post-medieval date. The results of this report should aid English Heritage and Gravesham Borough Council in their decisions on foundation construction and design.

12. ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

SWAT Archaeology would like to thank Beverley Willis and Matthew Ledger for commissioning this project. Thanks are also extended to Simon Mason, Principal Heritage Officer, Kent County Council and Paul Roberts, Inspector of Ancient Monuments for Sussex & Kent for their advice and assistance. Paul Wilkinson supervised the fieldwork which was undertaken by Simon Holmes and Matthew Charlwood. Site survey and illustrations were produced by Jonny Madden for Digitise This. The project was managed and report written by Paul Wilkinson.

Paul Wilkinson

Dated 02/07/2014

13. REFERENCES

Specification for an Archaeological Investigation at Abbey Farm House, Church Street, Higham (KCC Heritage 2014)

Scheduled Monument Consent for an Archaeological Evaluation to inform a proposal for a new garage and stores (Re: S00083748)

Archaeological Desk-based Assessment and Map Regression in advance of Development at the former St Marys Priory, Higham, Kent (SWAT Archaeology 2014)

STANDARD AND GUIDANCE for archaeological field evaluation (IFA 14 October 1994. Revised September 2001 and October 2008)

| Kent County Council HER summary form | | |
|--|--------------------|------------------|
| Site Address: Abbey Farm House, Church Lane, Higham, Kent | | |
| Summary: An archaeological investigation on the footprint of a proposed new building on a Scheduled Monument site revealed possible post-medieval walls | | |
| District/Unitary: Gravesham | Parish: Higham | |
| Period(s): Medieval or Post Medieval | | |
| NGR (centre of site : 8 figures): 571744 174220 (NB if large or linear site give multiple NGRs) | | |
| Type of archaeological work (delete) | | |
| Evaluation: X | Watching Brief | Field Walking |
| Documentary study | Building recording | Earthwork survey |
| Excavation: | Geophysical Survey | Field Survey |
| Geoarchaeological investigation | | |
| Date of Recording: 17 th , 18 th June 2014 | | |
| Unit undertaking recording: SWAT Archaeology | | |
| Geology: not exposed | | |
| Title and author of accompanying report: Wilkinson. P, 'An Archaeological Investigation at Abbey Farm House, Church Road, Higham, Kent' | | |
| Summary of fieldwork results (begin with earliest period first, add NGRs where appropriate) The footprint of a proposed new building on a Scheduled Monument site was excavated down to foundation formation level. A series of possible walling was exposed at this level. | | |
| Location of archive/finds: SWAT School Farm Oast, Graveney Rd., Faversham | | |
| Contact at Unit: Paul Wilkinson | Date: 02/07/2014 | |

APPENDIX 2 – Plates



Plate 2. The excavated area (looking north-west). Plate 3 (below) looking south-east

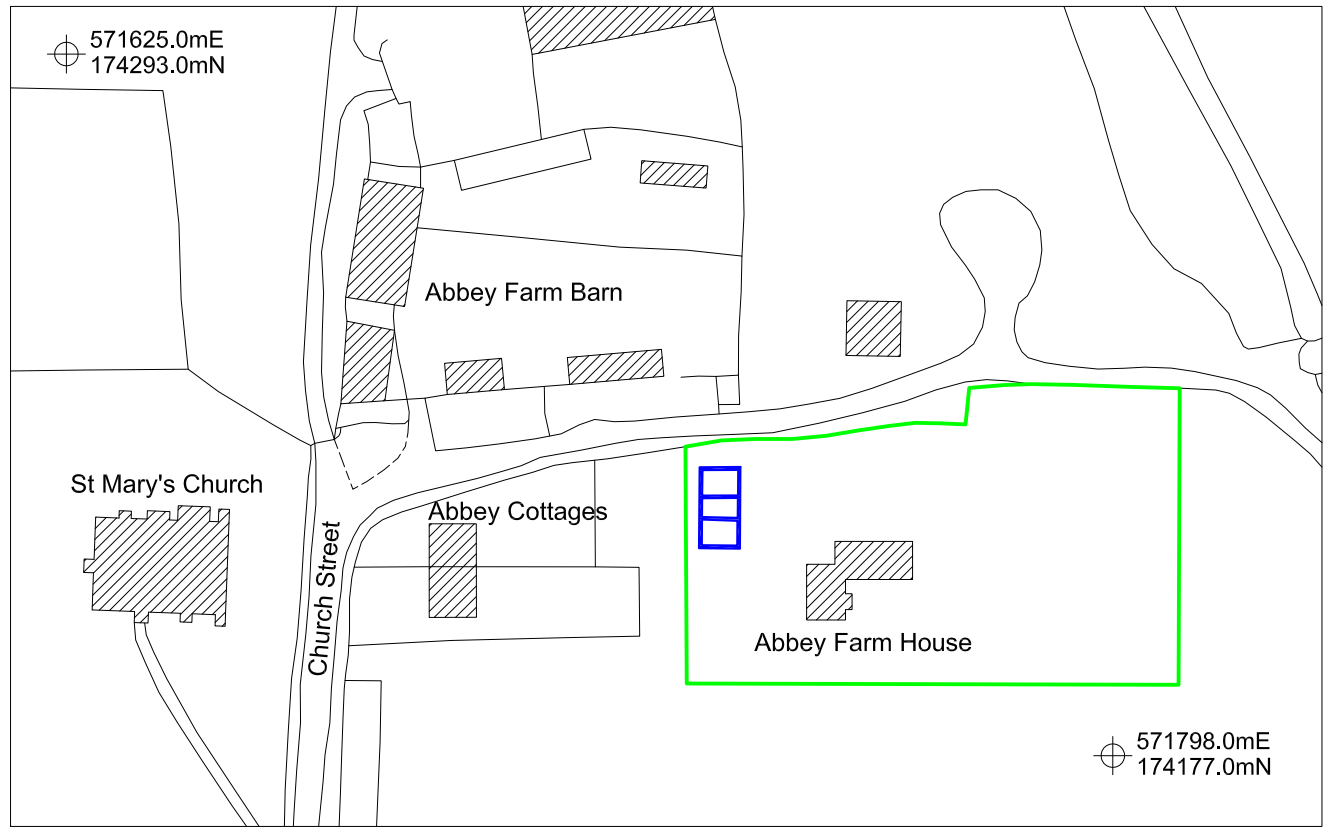
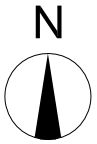






Plate 4 Chalk block foundations (04) looking north



Plate 5 Chalk and flint foundation or wall (05) looking south



-  Site boundary
-  Foundation trench

1:1250@A4

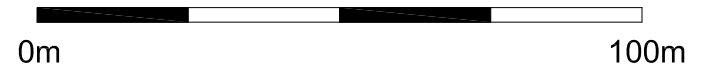


Figure 1: Location of site

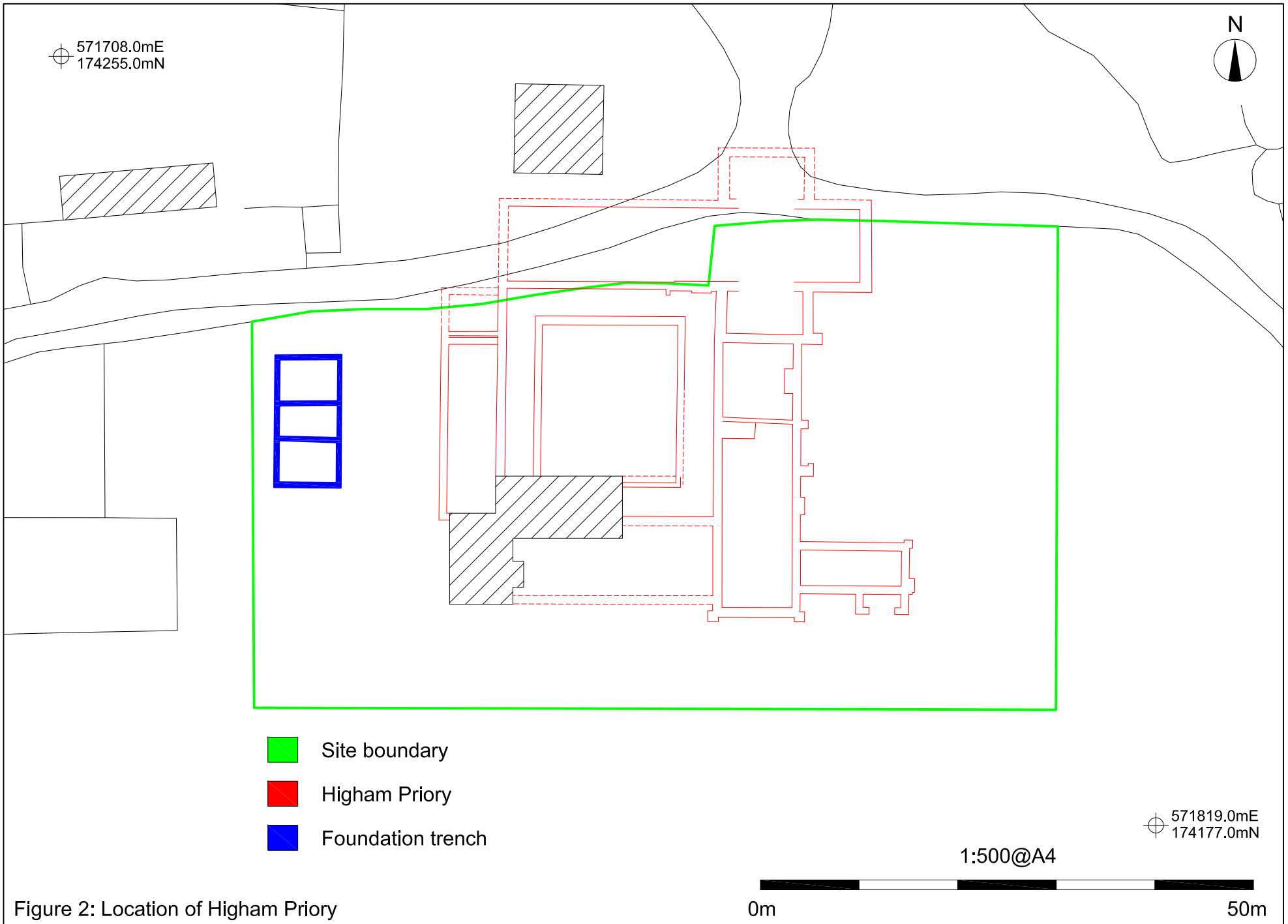
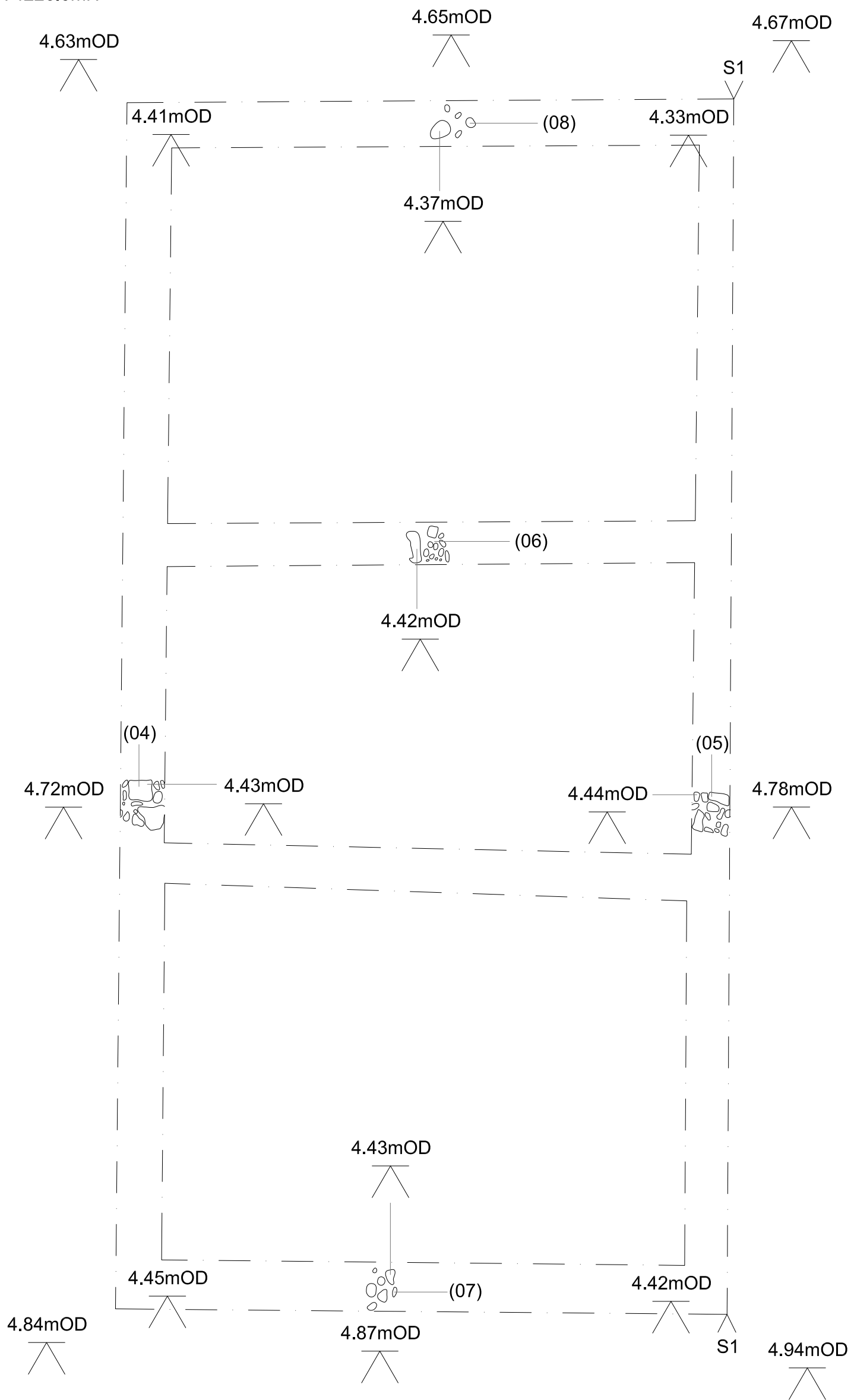
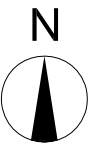


Figure 2: Location of Higham Priory

571728.0mE
174226.0mN



571738.0mE
174210.0mN

1:50@A3



Figure 3: Area of excavation

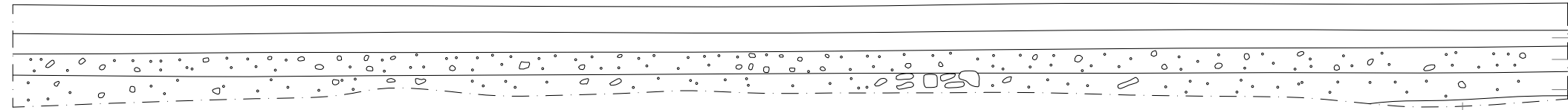
N

Section 1

S

4.67mOD

4.67mOD



(01)

(02)

(03)

Exposed Natural

1:50@A3

0m

5m

Figure 4: Section