

Archaeological Investigation and Assessment of Land at the site of the former St John's Hall, St. Fidelis Road, Erith, Bexley



NGR: 550886 178525

Site Code: SJH/EV/16

(Planning Application: 13/00837/FUL)

SWAT Archaeology

The Office, School Farm Oast

Graveney Road Faversham, Kent, ME13 8UP

Email: info@swatarchaeology.co.uk

Tel.: 01795 532548 and 07885 700112

Contents

List of Figures.....	3
List of Plates.....	3
1. Summary.....	4
2. Introduction.....	4
3. Site Description and Topography.....	4
4. Planning Background.....	5
5. Archaeological and Historical Background.....	5
6. Aims and Objectives.....	5
7. Methodology.....	7
8. Monitoring.....	7
9. Results.....	7
10. Discussion.....	9
11. Finds.....	9
12. Conclusion.....	9
13. Acknowledgements.....	9
14. References.....	9
15. OASIS Summary Form.....	20
16. Appendix 1. Concordance List.....	18

List of Figures:

Figure 1 – Location of site

Figure 2 – Trench location

Figure 3- Trench location in detail

Figure 4- Sections

List of Plates:

Plate 1 – Site view

Plate 2 – Detail of well

Plate 3 – Trench 1

Plate 4 – Trench 2

Plate 5 – Trench 3

Plate 6 – Trench 4

Plate 7 – Section Trench 1

Plate 8 – Section Trench 2

Plate 9 – Section Trench 3

Plate 10 – Section Trench 4

Plate 11 – Geological Test Pit A

Plate 12 – Geological Test Pit B

Archaeological Investigation and Assessment of Land at 124 St Johns Hall, Erith, Bexley

NGR: TQ 550190 175004

Site Code: BEX-EV-16

1. Summary

Swale & Thames Survey Company (SWAT) carried out an archaeological investigation and assessment of land at St Johns Hall, Erith in the London Borough of Bexley. A Planning Application (13/00837/FUL) to demolish the existing building and the erection of three storey building comprising a total of 4x3 bed terrace houses and a three storey building comprising 12x2 bed flats was submitted to the London Borough of Bexley, whereby the 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 (SWAT Archaeology) and in discussion with Mark Stevenson Archaeology Advisor (South London). The results of the four evaluation trenches revealed that no archaeological features were present. The natural geology of sand and gravel was reached at an average depth of 0.45-0.55m below the modern ground surface.

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

2. Introduction

Swale & Thames Survey Company (SWAT) was commissioned by Skillcrown Homes Ltd to carry out an archaeological investigation and assessment at the above site. The work was carried out in accordance with the requirements set out within an Archaeological Specification (SWAT 2016) and in discussion with the Archaeological Advisor (South London). The evaluation was carried out from the 24th to 26th August 2016.

3. Site Description and Topography

The development site is situated on the north-west side by West Street, on the south-west side by St Fidelis Road which is adjacent to the 'Bronze Age Way' (A2016). To the south is the Europa Trading Estate and to the north-west the West Bexley College. The River Thames is about 260m to the north-

east. The site slopes from about 3m OD on the north-east area to about 5m OD on the south west boundary.

The underlying geology is mapped as Thanet Formation- Sand. The Superficial Geology is recorded as Taplow Gravel Formation- Sand and Gravel (BGS 2015). The geology revealed on site was light orange brown sand with gravel inclusions.

4. Planning Background

The London Borough of Bexley gave planning permission for development of land for a residential development and associated infrastructure.

On the advice of the Mark Stevenson Archaeological Advisor (South London) a programme of archaeological works in the form of an initial archaeological evaluation was attached to the consent:

6 *No development shall take place within the site until the applicant has secured the implementation of a programme of archaeological work in accordance with a written scheme of investigation which has been submitted by the applicant and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority.*

Reason: To ensure that adequate archaeological records can be made in respect of the site and in the interests of the heritage of the area.

The results from this evaluation will be used to inform the London Borough of Bexley of any further archaeological mitigation measures that may be necessary in connection with the development proposals.

5. Archaeological and Historical Background

The application site lies within an Area of Archaeological Potential, details of which have been sourced by the Greater London HER team at gher@english-heritage.org.uk

The development site is in an Area of Archaeological Potential, details of which have been sourced by the Greater London HER team at gher@historicengland.org.uk

To the west of the site residual Roman building material has been recorded. There is also evidence for a substantial medieval stone walled building.

6. Aims and Objectives

According to the SWAT Archaeological Specification, the aims and objectives for the archaeological work were to:

2.3 The principle objective of the Archaeological Evaluation following demolition of the building (but not its foundations) is to establish the presence or absence of any elements of the archaeological resource across the area of the proposed development site.

2.4 To ascertain the extent, depth below ground surface, depth of deposit if possible, character, date and quality of any such archaeological remains by limited sample excavation.

2.5 To determine the state of preservation and importance of the archaeological resource if present.

2.6 The opportunity will also be taken during the course of the archaeological programme to place and assess any archaeology revealed within the context of other recent archaeological investigations in the immediate area and within the setting of the local landscape and topography

2.7 Should archaeological remains be found, further archaeological investigation may be required. This work will be covered by a separate specification and not form part of the present work.

The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and Heritage Assets clarifies a developers responsibilities in paragraphs 12.8 and 14.1.

Paragraph 12.8 states:

In determining applications, local planning authorities should require an applicant to describe the significance of any heritage assets affected, including any contribution made by their setting. The level of detail should be proportionate to the assets' importance and no more than is sufficient to understand the potential impact of the proposal on their significance. As a minimum the relevant historic environment record should have been consulted and the heritage assets assessed using appropriate expertise where necessary. Where a site on which development is proposed includes or has the potential to include heritage assets with archaeological interest, local planning authorities should require developers to submit an appropriate desk-based assessment and, where necessary, a field evaluation.

Paragraph 14.1 states:

Local planning authorities should make information about the significance of the historic environment gathered as part of plan-making or development management publicly accessible. They should also require developers to record and advance understanding of the significance of any heritage assets to be lost (wholly or in part) in a manner proportionate to their importance and the impact, and to make this evidence (and any archive generated) publicly accessible. However, the ability to record evidence of our past should not be a factor in deciding whether such loss should be permitted.

The aims set out in the SWAT Specification (2015) for the site required a phased approach to the mitigation of the development site commencing with an evaluation and watching brief, with the results influencing the possibility of further work on the site such as further mitigation in the form of an excavation depending upon the amount and significance of any possible archaeological remains.

7. Methodology

The Archaeological Specification called for an evaluation by trial trenching comprising four trenches within the footprint of the proposed development. A 12.5 ton 360° tracked mechanical excavator with a flat-bladed ditching bucket was used to remove the topsoil and subsoil to expose the natural geology and/or the archaeological horizon. 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 ClfA standards and guidance.

8. Monitoring

Curatorial contact was available during the course of the evaluation.

9. Results

The evaluation has identified no archaeological features (Figures 3-4).

Trench 1

The plan is recorded in Figure 3 and Section Figure 4 (see also Plate 3). The trench lay on an SE-NW alignment and measured approximately 18.6m by 1.8m.

Undisturbed natural geology **(103)** was identified across the trench as sandy silt at the SE end of the trench, at a depth of approximately 0.49m below the present ground surface. No archaeology was revealed or artefacts recovered.

Adjacent well shaft **[105]**. See also Plates 1 & 2

A circular well-like feature measuring 1.6m in diameter and 0.72m in depth was revealed less than a metre to the north of north-western end of evaluation trench 1 beneath a concrete surface comprising a part of a recently demolished building. The shaft was void inside and covered with thin metal sheet preventing it from back-filling. A ceramic rainwater drain pipe was running into the well from north-east. The salvaged bricks used for its constructions were mostly yellow and red without mortar or any bonding material.

Trench 2

The plan is recorded in Figure 3 and Section Figure 4 (see also Plate 4). The trench lay on an NE-SW alignment and measured approximately 15.50m by 1.8m.

Undisturbed natural geology **(202)** was identified across the trench as sandy silty soil throughout the trench, at a depth of approximately 0.56m below the present ground surface. Topsoil was about 60cm thick **(201)** with mid compaction, dark brown loam with abundant bush and tree roots. No archaeology was revealed or artefacts recovered.

Trench 3

The plan is recorded in Figure 3 and Section Figure 4 (see also Plate 5). The trench lay on an NE-SW alignment and measured approximately 16.75m by 1.8m.

Undisturbed natural geology **(302)** was identified across the trench as brown clayey sandy silt throughout the trench, at a depth of approximately 0.45m below the present ground surface. Topsoil was about 60cm thick **(301)** with mid compaction, dark grey clay silt mixed with demolition rubble. No archaeology was revealed or artefacts recovered.

Trench 4

The plan is recorded in Figure 3 and Section Figure 4 (see also Plate 6). The trench lay on an NE-SW alignment and measured approximately 18.75m by 1.8m.

Undisturbed natural geology **(403)** was identified across the trench as brown clayey sandy silt throughout the trench, at a depth of approximately 0.541m below the present ground surface. Topsoil was about 15-34cm thick **(401)** with mid compaction, dark grey clay silt mixed with demolition rubble. No archaeology was revealed or artefacts recovered.

Following on-site consultation with Mark Stevenson Heritage Advisor from Historic England a geological test-pits A and B were machine excavated to establish geological sequence of natural deposits and to check the nature and to look for potential traces of an early human activity within upper natural deposit containing riverbed silts.

Geological Test-pit A (in Trench 1)

Plan Fig.3, Plate 11

Geological Test-pit A was excavated at south-eastern end of Evaluation Trench 1. A lower natural comprising yellow and orange silty-sand gravel **(104)** was encountered c1.3metre below an initially excavated base of evaluation trench 1. All spoils from excavated upper natural **(103)** were thoroughly searched but no lithics or any anthropogenic-origin inclusions were noted.

Geological Test-pit B (in Trench 4)

Plan Fig.3, Plate 12

Geological Test-pit B was excavated at north-eastern end of Evaluation Trench 4. A lower natural comprising yellow and orange silty-sand gravel **(404)** was encountered c0.9metre below an initially excavated base of evaluation trench 4. All spoils from excavated natural layer **(103)** were examined but any anthropogenic-origin inclusions and/or lithics were noted.

10. Discussion

The archaeological evaluation failed to reveal any archaeological features. The evaluation trenches was located in an area where there had been impact from modern development and no archaeology was revealed in either of the four trenches or two test pits.

11. Finds

No finds were recovered.

12. Conclusion

The evaluation trenches at the proposed development site revealed no archaeological features and no artefacts were retrieved.

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 mixed with demolition rubble **(101)** sealing the subsoil **(102)**. Therefore, this evaluation has been successful in fulfilling the aims and objectives as set out in the planning condition and the Archaeological Specification.

13. Acknowledgements

SWAT Archaeology would like to thank the client, Skillcrown Homes Ltd for commissioning the project. Thanks are also extended to Mark Stevenson Archaeology Advisor (South London). Illustrations were produced by Bartek Cichy. The fieldwork was undertaken by Peter Cichy and the project was managed and report written by Dr Paul Wilkinson MCIfA.

14. References

Chartered Institute for Field Archaeologists,. *Standard and Guidance for archaeological field evaluation* (Revised 2014).

SWAT Archaeology (03/08/2016) *Written Scheme of Archaeological Investigation and Assessment of land at St John Hall, St Fidelis Road, Erith, Bexley Heath*

PLATES



Plate 1: Site view looking south, well feature 105 visible in foreground, evaluation trenches 1 and 3 in mid-ground and trench 2 in background. Point five and point three metre scales.



Plate 2: Showing detail of well feature 105. Point five and point three metres scales, looking south.



Plate 3: Evaluation Trench 1 looking south-east. Half and point three metre scales.



Plate 4: Evaluation Trench 2 looking south-west. The wall of recently demolished building visible alongside to the right. Half and point three metre scales.



Plate 5: Showing Evaluation Trench 3 looking north-east. Half and point three metre scales.



Plate 6: Evaluation Trench 4 looking south-west. Half and point three metre scales.



Plate 7: Representative section 1.1 in Trench 1. Looking south-west, point three and point five metre scales.



Plate 8: Representative section 2.1 in Trench 2. Looking south-east, point five and point three metre scales.



Plate 9: Representative section 3.1 in Trench 3. Looking south-east, point three and point five metre scales



Plate 10: Representative section 4.1 in Trench 4. Looking south-east, point three and point five metre scales.



Plate 11: Geological Test-pit A in Trench 1. Looking south-west, point three and point five metre scales.



Plate 12: Geological Test-pit B in Trench 4. Looking south-east, point three and point five metre scales.

Appendix I

Concordance List

Trench 1

Context No.	Type	Description	Interpretation
101	Deposit	Dark grey, clayey-silt soil mixed with demolition rubble. Thickness 0.15-0.34m	Recent demolition and overburden.
102	Deposit	Dark brown-grey clayey-sandy-silt with infrequent demolition rubble.	Levelling deposit.
103	Deposit	Brown clayey-sandy-silt with infrequent gravel inclusions. Thickness 0.8-1.25m.	Upper natural
104	Deposit	Orange silt-sand gravel	Lower natural
105	Structure	Circular one-course dry brick built shallow well-like feature. It truncates uppermost deposits. Diameter of 1.6m max depth 0.72m	Rainwater conveyor (drain) tank

Trench 2

Context No.	Type	Description	Interpretation
201	Deposit	Dark grey, clayey-silt soil mixed with demolition rubble. Thickness 0.15-0.34m	Recent demolition and overburden.
202	Deposit	Dark brown-grey clayey-sandy-silt with infrequent demolition rubble.	Levelling deposit.
203	Deposit	Brown clayey-sandy-silt with infrequent gravel inclusions. Thickness 0.8-1.25m.	Upper natural
204	Deposit	Orange silt-sand gravel	Lower natural

Trench 3

Context No.	Type	Description	Interpretation
301	Deposit	Dark grey, clayey-silt soil mixed with demolition rubble. Thickness 0.15-0.34m	Recent demolition and overburden.
302	Deposit	Dark brown-grey clayey-sandy-silt with infrequent demolition rubble.	Levelling deposit.
303	Deposit	Brown clayey-sandy-silt with infrequent gravel inclusions. Thickness 0.8-1.25m.	Upper natural
304	Deposit	Orange silt-sand gravel	Lower natural

Trench 4

Context No.	Type	Description	Interpretation
401	Deposit	Dark grey, clayey-silt soil mixed with demolition rubble. Thickness 0.15-0.34m	Recent demolition and overburden.
402	Deposit	Dark brown-grey clayey-sandy-silt with infrequent demolition rubble.	Levelling deposit.
403	Deposit	Brown clayey-sandy-silt with infrequent gravel inclusions. Thickness 0.8-1.25m.	Upper natural
404	Deposit	Orange silt-sand gravel	Lower natural

OASIS and HER Summary Form

Site Name: Land at the former St Johns Hall, St Fidelis Road, Erith, Bexley Heath

SWAT Site Code: SJH/EV/16

Site Address: As above

Summary:

Swale and Thames Survey Company (SWAT) carried out Archaeological Evaluation on the development site above. The site has planning permission for residential housing whereby the London Borough of Bexley requested that Archaeological Evaluation be undertaken to determine the possible impact of the development on any archaeological remains.

The Archaeological Monitoring consisted of an Archaeological Evaluation which revealed no archaeology.

District/Unitary: London Borough of Bexley

Period(s): n/a

NGR (centre of site to eight figures) 550886 178525

Type of Archaeological work: Archaeological Evaluation

Date of recording: August 2016

Unit undertaking recording: Swale and Thames Survey Company (SWAT. Archaeology)

Geology: Underlying geology is Thanet Formation- Sand

Title and author of accompanying report: Wilkinson P. (2016) Archaeological Investigation and Assessment of Land at St Johns Hall, St Fidelis Road, Erith, Bexley

Summary of fieldwork results (begin with earliest period first, add NGRs where appropriate) No archaeology found

Location of archive/finds: SWAT. Archaeology. Graveney Rd, Faversham, Kent. ME13 8UP

Contact at Unit: Paul Wilkinson

Date: 07/09/2016



Figure 1: Site location map, scale 1:5000.

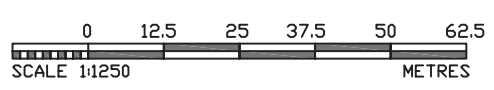
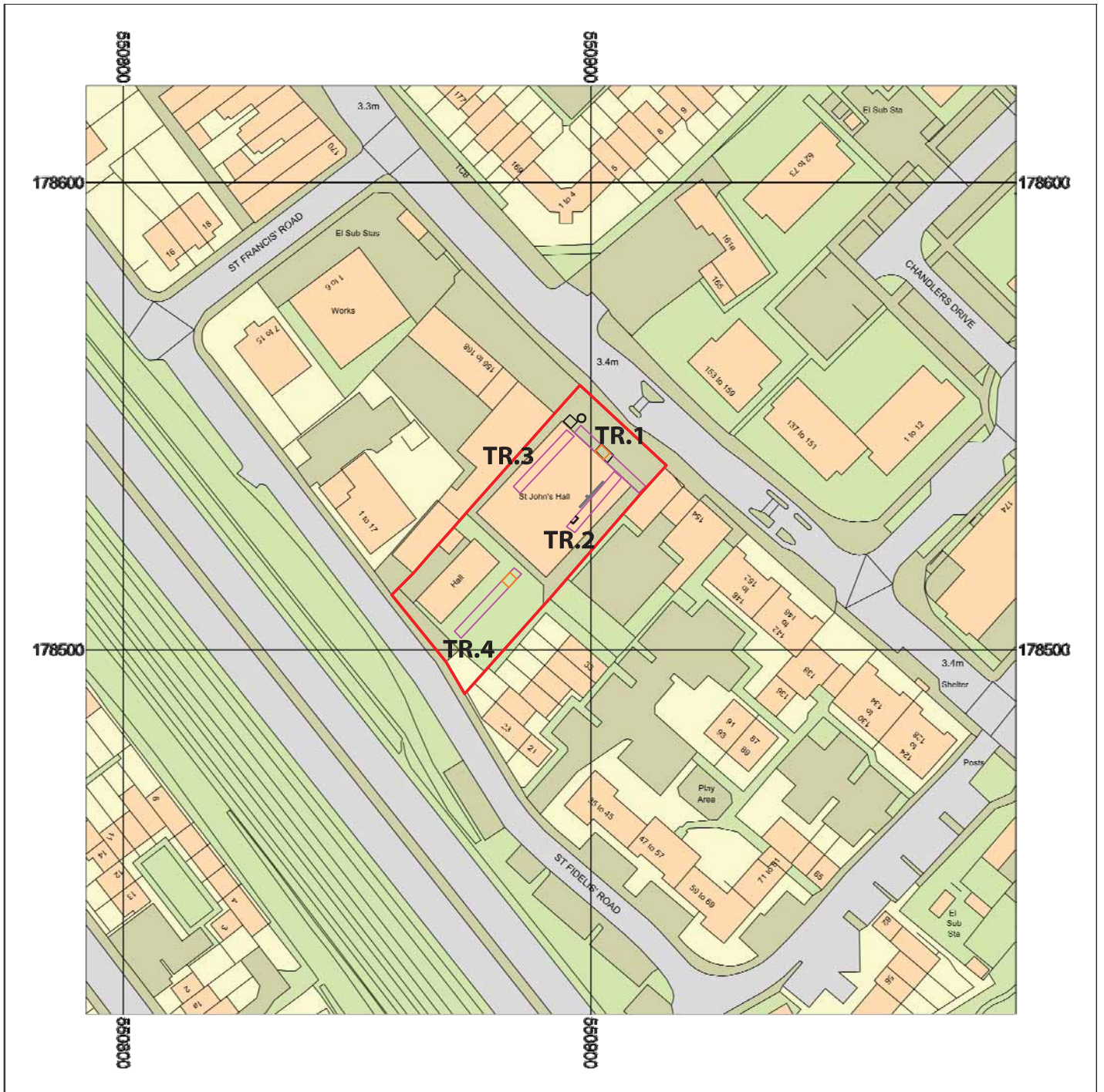


Figure 2: Site location map, scale 1:1250.

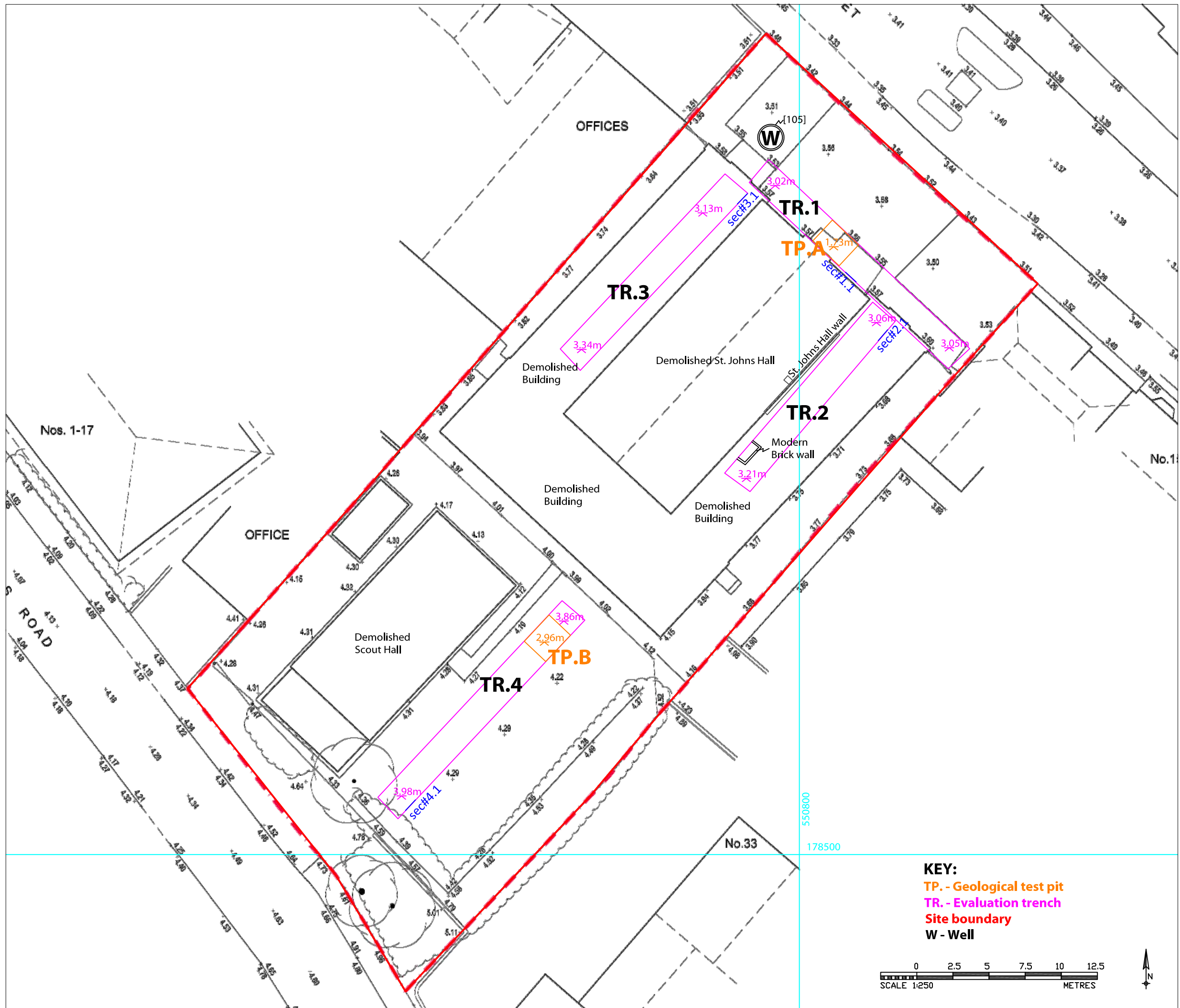


Figure 3: Site survey plan, scale 1:250.

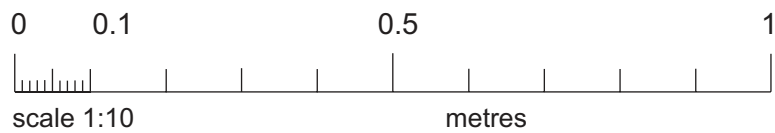
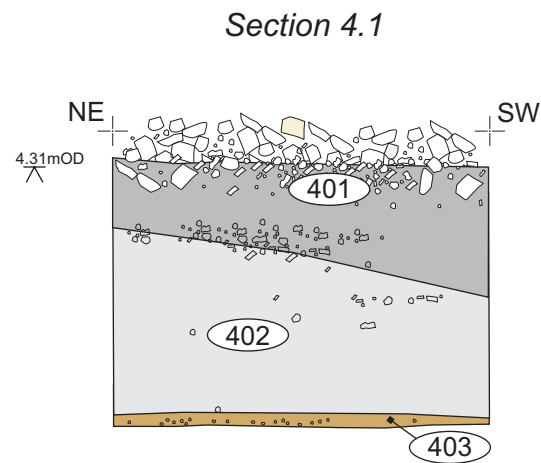
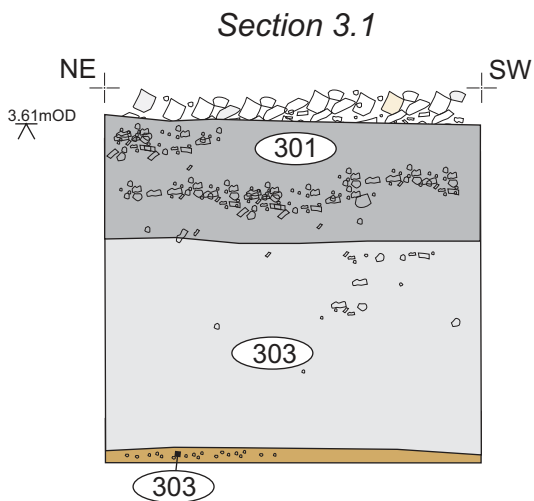
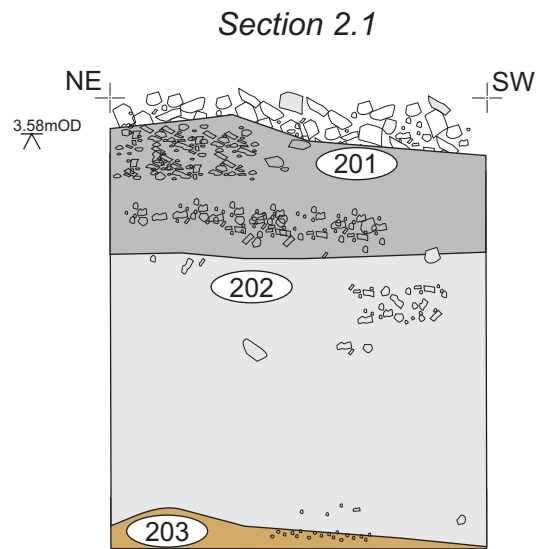
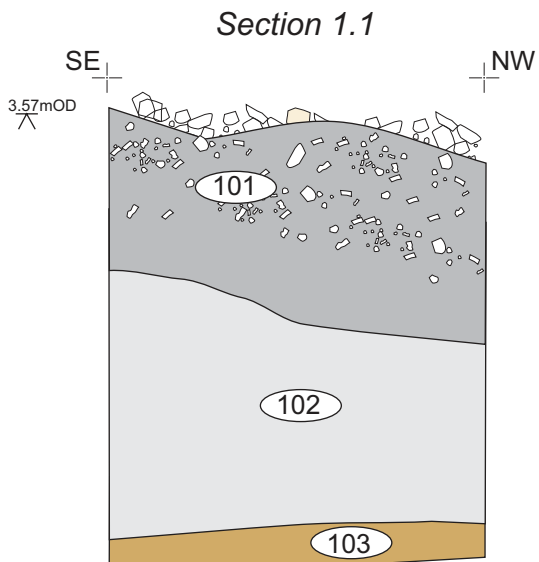


Figure 4: Representative sections s.1.1, s.2.1, s.3.1 and s.4.1.