# Archaeological Evaluation (Phase 4) of land East of Battle Road, Hailsham, East Sussex

NGR: TQ 589 101 Site Code: HBS/EV/15

(Planning Application Number: WD2009/2705/MEA)



## SWAT. Archaeology

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# Archaeological Evaluation (Phase 4) on land East of Battle Road, Hailsham, East Sussex NGR: TQ 589 101 Site Code: HBS/EV/15

#### SUMMARY

Swale & Thames Survey Company (SWAT Archaeology) carried out an archaeological evaluation (Phase 4) on land to the east of Battle Road, Hailsham, East Sussex, in April 2015. A planning application (WD2009/2705/MEA) for the construction of a new residential development, along with associated access, car parking and services at the above site was submitted to Wealden District Council (WDC) whereby East Sussex County Council on behalf of Wealden 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 Specification (SWAT 2015) and in discussion with the Archaeological Officer, East Sussex County Council. The archaeological evaluation has been successful in fulfilling the primary aims and objectives of the Specification. Despite the archaeological potential of the surrounding area, coupled with good preservation of Weald Clay and Alluvium surviving on site no archaeological remains were revealed during the archaeological evaluation.

#### INTRODUCTION

Swale & Thames Survey Company (SWAT Archaeology) was commissioned by Hillreed Developments 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 (SWAT 2015) and in discussion with the Archaeological Officer, East Sussex County Council. The evaluation was carried out on the 12<sup>th</sup> to 14<sup>th</sup> April 2015 and is the last phase of archaeological investigation carried out on land east of Battle Road, Hailsham, East Sussex.

The first phase of fieldwork was an archaeological evaluation on the route of the proposed access road situated to the west of the site (Figure A). The evaluation was shown to be appropriate, and proved that archaeological deposits survived on site. In particular Trenches 7 & 8 confirmed that potential archaeological features identified in Area 5 by the Geophysical Survey carried out by Stratascan in October 2010 can be dated to the Medieval period and soil analysis indicates post-Roman farming activity in the area.

Phase 2 was an archaeological evaluation in 2011 of land to the north of the access road (Figure A). The archaeological investigation carried in this area on eight evaluation trenches

revealed a 19<sup>th</sup>-20<sup>th</sup> century drainage field system enclosed by a large watercourse ditch located at the bottom of the hill This large watercourse ditch is shown on the Ordnance Survey maps (1<sup>st</sup> Edition) and contained residual pottery dating from the 10<sup>th</sup>-11<sup>th</sup> centuries onwards. However, given the wide date range of the pottery sherds recovered it is unlikely the watercourse is any earlier than the Post-Medieval period.

A number of post-medieval and early modern disturbances were also revealed in the area under investigation, most of which are shown on the Stratascan Geophysical survey.

Phase 3 was an area of development investigated in a comprehensive geophysical survey by Stratascan and the two areas of anomalies highlighted in the report investigated with evaluation trenches with poor results.

Phase 3 was land adjacent to Phase 2 and Phase 4 is land to the east of Phase 3 (Figure A).

#### SITE DESCRIPTION AND TOPOGRAPHY

The application site is located on the east side of Battle Road and Battle Crescent is to the west of the site. White House Primary School is to the south east of the site. Harebeating Farm and Longleys Farms are located to the north east. The entire site consists of eight pasture fields which slope from east to west. Numerous ponds and watercourses are located across the site. The area of Phase 4 is the pasture field on the far east of the site and to the east of Phase 3. The National Grid Reference for the centre of the site is NGR TQ 589 101. The underlying geology of the site consists of Weald Clay (British Geological Survey South Sheet, Edition Solid 2001). The drift geology is Alluvium.

#### PLANNING BACKGROUND

A planning application (WD2009/2705/MEA) for the construction of a new residential development along with 55 extra care units, an education establishment and 4000 sq. m of office space, a health centre and other community facilities was submitted to Wealden District Council (WDC) and approved. East Sussex County Council on (ESCC) behalf of Wealden 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 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 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 ESCC and WDC of any further archaeological mitigation measures that may be necessary in connection with the development proposals.

#### ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND

The Archaeological record, both in and around Hailsham is diverse. Gregory Chuter (East Sussex County Council) states that "In the wider landscape there is a wealth of evidence for a focus of Mesolithic, Neolithic activity around the edge of what is now the Pevensey Levels. Evidence of Bronze Age activity in the Hailsham area is low, but the internationally important site at Shinewater, Eastbourne shows that this landscape was being heavily utilised and managed". Furthermore, the archaeological evidence from the Iron Age and the Romano-British periods is only recently started to emerge, "as demonstrated by the results of geophysical survey and evaluation excavation west of Hailsham". During the medieval period, the site "is likely to be in the agricultural hinterland associated with the town of Hailsham, and certainly the HLC suggests the current landscape pattern was formed in the 16th

century".

Palaeolithic Period (750,000BC-10,000BC) The prehistoric period around Hailsham is very poorly represented (as result of the landscape at that time) and is comparable with patterns observed elsewhere on the Pevensey Levels. Archaeological evaluation, excavations and field walking have only produced ephemeral evidence in the Hailsham area and there is no evidence, as yet of the Palaaeolithic period within the assessment area.

#### Mesolithic Period (10,000BC-4,000BC)

Finds outside the 1km radius of the assessment area include a Mesolithic medium tranchet axe 1.5km west of Hailsham (HER ref: MES5175) and a group of Mesolithic flint artefacts 1.3km to the south at Saltmarsh Farm (HER ref: MES5159). Two further Mesolithic flint scatters (HER refs: MES15529 and MES15530) have been recorded north of Hailsham, and to the north of Hailsham at Upper Horsebridge (MES7145). Field walking by Chris Butler in 2009 to the north of Hailsham and around the edges of the Pevensey Levels found numerous Mesolithic cores, microliths and debitage. Butler notes that the Mesolithic sites around the Pevensey Levels occur just above the 5m contour level where they have not been covered by the subsequent accumulation of peat (2009A). It is considered that the

Levels provided an ideal landscape for hunting and fishing and the presence of Mesolithic flint work on the edges of the Levels may hint at longer stay camps.

#### Neolithic Period (4,000BC to 2,500BC)

Evidence for occupation in the Hailsham area during the Neolithic era includes a Neolithic polished axe head (HER ref: MES4365). Two fragments of Neolithic polished flint hand axes were found by Chris Butler in field walking to the north of Hailsham in 2009 and may suggest that woodland clearance was taking place at the time (Butler 2009B).

*The Bronze Age (2500BC-800BC)* The Bronze Age saw in Sussex extensive evidence of dense settlement activity with it is thought continued use of the Pevensey Levels for hunting and fishing with agricultural settlements on the higher ground (Woodcock 2003). A scatter of flints (HER ref: MES7145), which dates from the Bronze Age were found close to the site. A series of crop marks at Longleys Farm, Hailsham (HER ref: MES7299) may also date from this period.

#### Iron Age

The East Sussex HER does not show records of Iron Age archaeology within the assessment area. It is likely that the Pevensey Levels were flooded from the sea which may have lead to less activity in the area. However, a late Iron Age silver coin (HER ref: MES14025) was found within the neighbouring parish of Hellingly.

#### Romano-British

The predominant feature of the Roman infrastructure within Britain is arguably the extensive network of Roman roads connecting administrative centres, towns and military posts that increased the flow of trade, goods, communications and troops. The sphere of influence within this area of East Sussex would have been the Saxon Shore Fort situated at Pevensey, built during the latter 3<sup>rd</sup> century. There are no records contained within the HER for Romano-British archaeology within the assessment area, though an ephemeral scatter of pottery (HER ref: HER15531) was found north of Hailsham. An archaeological evaluation undertaken by Oxford Archaeology at Woodholm Farm (HER ref: MES15544) revealed a series of ditches and and a settlement at Arlington, to the south west of Hailsham has also been recorded. Anther Roman settlement has recently been discovered during development work at Wellbridge Farm on the west side of Hailsham (per. corress: Chuter G.)

#### Anglo-Saxon

Again, the East Sussex HER does not show records of Anglo-Saxon archaeology within the assessment area apart from a possible Saxon glass bead (MES9706).

*Medieval* Hailsham is recorded in the Domesday Book of 1086 as *Hamelsham* (though the entry would indicate the absence of a nucleated settlement) and its first church is recorded in 1229. It is not until the second half of the 13<sup>th</sup> century that Hailsham develops into a market town. It is during this period that reclamation of the Pevensey Levels began, although much of the area was again inundated in the 15th century. Although there is little archaeological evidence for Medieval activity within the 1km search area (there is only one listed building; DES5171, a 15<sup>th</sup> century house), a small number of coins and metal artefacts have been found (by metal detector users) around the parish. The HER lists a buckle (HER ref: MES14200) from Hailsham and several artefacts from the neighbouring parish of Hellingly: silver coins (SME Refs: MES13951 and MES14824) and a sliver brooch (HER ref: MES13950).

It was thought possible that domestic activity, such as that recorded by Archaeology South East, 400m to the south of the proposed development site at Vicarage Road (Stevens 2001) and agricultural activity, as at Woodholm Farm (HER ref: MES15544) may also be encountered within the confines of the proposed development site. Similar archaeology has been encountered at New Romney, Kent, where ephemeral Medieval activities took place within a similar reclaimed marshland (author) and in fact Medieval activity has been discovered on the proposed development site and suggests Medieval farming activity.

#### Post-Medieval

During the 16<sup>°°</sup> century, Hailsham had an established leather industry, rope working and market. The 'town' developed from no larger than a village to become one of the thirteen post towns of Sussex (established in 1670). It is during this expansion that many of the surviving historic buildings, forming the nucleus of Hailsham, were built (for example DES6283 and DES5730).

Consequently, the Post Medieval period within the assessment area is represented by several HER records, most of which relate to housing situated within the nucleus of the settlement. These buildings predominantly date to the 18<sup>th</sup> century (DES5740, DES5130, DES5125, DES5428, DES6577, DES5869, DES6332, DES6680 AND DES5872 (the Vicarage)). Hotels (DES5741 and DES5153) are also listed. There are also a number of farmhouses (DES6288, DES6281 and DES5127, which also had a windmill (DES5866)).

However, there are no listed buildings and there is no evidence of Post-Medieval archaeology within the proposed development site.

#### AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

The purpose of the evaluation, as set out with the Archaeological Specification (SWAT 2015) 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 any previous development on the site has affected archaeological deposits.

Particular issues that should be addressed by the evaluation include:

□ Assessing the likely impact of the proposed development on the archaeological remains using the results of the fieldwork

- □ Assessing the potential of the site to contain nationally important remains
- □ Establishing the degree of Roman and medieval activity on the site
- □ Establishing the degree of prehistoric activity on the site

Additional aims were to:

- iii) Gather sufficient information to enable an assessment of the potential and significance of any archaeological remains to be made and the impact development will have upon them.
- iv) Enable an informed decision to be made regarding the future treatment of any archaeological remains and consider any appropriate mitigatory measures either in advance of and/or during development.

## METHODOLOGY

Trial trenching was carried out on 12<sup>th</sup>-14th April 2015, with the excavation of ten trenches each measuring 1.9m in width and between 26m/32m in length (see below). Trench locations were agreed prior to the excavation between ESCC and SWAT. 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, or if not revealing the natural geology. The work was carried out under the constant supervision of an experienced archaeologist. Trenches were subsequently hand-cleaned to reveal any archaeological

features. The trenches were levelled to the Ordnance Datum by GPS. A full photographic record of the work was kept and will be part of the site archive. All investigative work was carried out in accordance with the archaeological specification (SWAT 2015), East Sussex Archaeological Guidelines and IFA guidelines. A single context recording system was used to record the natural deposits. Layers and fills are recorded (**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 advice was available during the course of the evaluation.

#### RESULTS

A common stratigraphic sequence was recognised across the site comprising topsoil/turf overburden (001) overlying subsoil (002), beneath which the natural geology comprised Weald Clay (003). The topsoil/overburden consisted of friable dark grey brown silty clay with occasional to moderate inclusions of sub-rounded – angular flints. A clear line of horizon gave way to subsoil comprising mid-brown grey slightly sandy clay overlying Weald Clay where mechanical excavation ceased and careful examination and investigation for truncating features was carried out. The depth of the overlying layer varied, with the depth of the natural geology being located c.0.31-0.43m below the existing ground level.

The 10 trenches were excavated in the last area to be assessed for this development (Figure 1). The trenches were covered in topsoil (001) measuring up to 0.15m thick over a mid-brown grey silty clay subsoil (002) that measured up to 0.12m thick, with rare small gravel. This subsoil overlies the natural Weald Clay comprised of mid-grey yellow orange clay (003).

#### **1. RESULTS OF THE ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION**

#### Trench 1

This trench was placed in east-west alignment and measured 29.20metres long by 1.9metre wide and 0.38metre in depth and exposed natural yellow-grey silt-clay (Weald clay) geology (103) with moderate manganese and iron stones flecks. That was capped by 0.15metre-thick

colluvium deposit (104) but it appeared only in the eastern end of evaluation trench (2metres from its end) and contained Early Modern and Modern finds including tractor parts and planting pots (plate 48). That was overlaid by 0.05metre-thick subsoil/plough-soil (102) and capped on top by the most recent overburden (101) that was moderately compacted dark-grey mixture of a silt and loam with moderate peat content and infrequent ironstone flecks and measured 0.15metre in average thickness.

Additional machine-dug sondage was excavated through (104) to establish its depth and ensure that was not concealing any earlier cuts of archaeological interest.

#### Plates: 4046-4048

#### Trench 2

This trench was placed in east-west alignment and measured 32.10metres long by 1.9metre wide and 0.37metre in depth. Trench exposed natural yellow-grey silt-clay (Weald clay) geology (203) with moderate manganese and iron stone flecks. That was overlaid by 0.05metre-thick subsoil/plough-soil (202) and capped on top by the most recent overburden (201) that was moderately compacted dark-grey mixture of a silt and loam with moderate peat content and infrequent ironstone flecks and measured 0.17metre in average thickness.

Plates: 4049-4051

#### Trench 3

This trench was placed in north-south alignment and measured 26.90metres long by 1.9metre wide and 0.38metre deep and exposed yellow-grey silt-clay natural geology (303) (Weald Clay) with moderate to abundant manganese and infrequent ironstone flecks. That was overlaid by 0.05metre-thick subsoil/plough-soil (302) and capped on top by the most recent top-soil (301) that comprised moderately compacted dark-grey mixture of a silt and loam with moderate peat content and infrequent ironstone flecks and measured 0.18metre in average thickness.

Plates: 4052-4057

#### Trench 4

Was placed in north-south aligned and measured 28.20metres by 1.9metre and 0.4metre in depth and exposed natural geology (403) of yellow-grey silt-clay (Weald clay) with moderate clay ironstone (Plate 60) and occasional outcrops of flat calcareous ironstone (Plates 61 and 62) and manganese flecks. That was overlaid by 0.05metre-thick subsoil/plough-soil (402) and capped on top by the most recent overburden (401) that was moderately compacted

dark-grey mixture of a silt and loam with moderate peat content and infrequent ironstone flecks and measured 0.14metre in average thickness.

Plates: 4058-4062

#### Trench 5

This east-west aligned trench measured 29.80metres by 1.9metre and 0.37metre in depth and exposed yellow-grey silt-clay natural geology (Weald clay) (503) with infrequent iron stones (clay ironstones) and moderate manganese flecks. That was overlaid by 0.05metrethick subsoil/plough-soil (502) and capped on top by the most recent overburden (501) that was moderately compacted dark-grey mixture of a silt and loam with moderate peat content and infrequent ironstone flecks and measured 0.14metre in average thickness. Patches of plough-soil (502) were squashed into natural clay surface as a result of heavy plant movement on-site during wet/damp weather conditions. Subsoil layer produced an early modern and modern finds during stripping.

Plates: 4063-4066

#### Trench 6

This east-west aligned trench measured 32.60metres by 1.9metre and 0.35metre in depth. Machined strip exposed natural geology (603) comprising yellow-grey silt-clay (Weald clay) with infrequent iron stones (clay ironstones) and moderate manganese flecks. That was overlaid by 0.05metre-thick subsoil/plough-soil (602) and capped on top by the most recent top-soil (601) that was moderately compacted dark-grey mixture of a silt and loam with moderate peat content and infrequent ironstone flecks and measured 0.15metre in average thickness. Also infrequent patches of a plough-soil (602) have been squashed into natural geology surface as a result of heavy machinery movement that took place on-site during very wet ground conditions.

Plates: 4067-4068

#### Trench 7

This trench was placed in east-west alignment and measured 32.10metres by 1.9metre and 0.35metre in depth and exposed natural yellow-grey silt-clay geology (703) with infrequent ironstones and moderate manganese flecks. That was overlaid by 0.05metre-thick subsoil/plough-soil (702) and capped on top by top-soil (701) comprising moderately compacted dark-grey mixture of a silt and loam with moderate peat content and infrequent

ironstone flecks. Overburden measured 0.17metre in average thickness. Also a patches of plough-soil containing a Modern inclusions were squashed down into natural clay surface.

Plates: 4069-4070

#### Trench 8

Was north-south aligned and measured 34.40metres long by 1.9metre wide and 0.4metre deep. Trench has exposed yellow-grey silt-clay (Weald clay) natural geology (803) with occasional clay ironstones and manganese flecks. A wheel ruts were noticed as a faint grey-brown discolorations and these have produced an early modern finds (Overlook Plates 76-77 and surface finds plates 73-75). That was overlaid by 0.05metre-thick subsoil/plough-soil (802) and capped on top by the most recent vegetation and top-soil (801) that was moderately compacted dark-grey mixture of a silt and loam with moderate peat content and infrequent ironstone and manganese flecks. Deposit measured 0.12metre in average thickness.

Plates: 4071-4075

#### Trench 9

This north-east; south-west aligned evaluation trench measured 35.60metre by 1.9metre and 0.17metre in depth. Exposed natural geology (903) consisted of yellow-grey, partially green hue silt-clay with cess element and infrequent ironstone flecks and iron-manganese nodules (evidence for a flooding). Several wheel ruts were noted as a faint scars of plough-soil that has been squashed down into natural clay surface. These produced an Early Modern/ Modern finds during the strip (plate 80). That was overlaid by 0.02metre-thick subsoil/plough-soil (902) and capped on top by the most recent vegetation/overburden (901) that was moderately compacted dark-grey mixture of a silt, loam and peat and measured 0.1metre in average thickness.

Plates: 4078-4080

#### Trench 10

Was placed in north-south alignment and measured 36.20metres by 1.9metre and 0.36metre in depth. Trench cuts through top-soil and sub-soils and exposed yellow-grey silt-clay natural geology (1003) with moderate iron and manganese flecks. That was overlaid by 0.04metrethick subsoil/plough-soil (1002) and capped on top by the most recent overburden (1001) that comprised moderately compacted dark-grey mixture of a silt and loam with moderate peat content. Deposit measured 0.12metre in average thickness. Several patches of greybrown plough-soil (wheel ruts) were squashed into natural clay surface. Top-soil (1001) produced an Early Modern/ Modern find during excavation.

Plates: 4081-4089

**Context list: (T=trench number) T01** -Overburden **T02** – Intermediate Modern plough-soil layer (no sub-soil) **T03** – Natural silt-clay of Weald Clay formation.

**THE FINDS** The earliest pottery found during the evaluation dates from the early 20<sup>°</sup> century. No other finds were retrieved.

#### DISCUSSION

The evaluation carried out on land (Phase 4 and Figure A and 1) at Battle Road, Hailsham has been shown to be appropriate, and prove that no archaeological deposits survive on this area of the site. A conclusion reinforced by the Stratascan geophysical survey which shows no anomalies. However, the archaeological work on this development site in Phases 1-3 shows that Medieval farming activities took place on a landscape predominantly pasture enclosed by Medieval ditches and no doubt located on the edge of water meadows given the sites location and its nearest road name- Marshfoot Lane.

#### CONCLUSION

The archaeological evaluation has been successful in fulfilling the primary aims and objectives of the Specification. 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 (ESCC) of any further archaeological mitigations measures that may be necessary in connection with the development proposals. Accession code for Eastbourne Museum is 2016.36.

#### ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

SWAT would like to thank Hillreed Developments Ltd for commissioning the project. Thanks are also extended to Greg Chuter, Archaeological Officer for East Sussex County Council for his advice and assistance. Peter Cichy, Bartosz Cichy, Marcin Grabowski carried out the archaeological fieldwork, The project was managed and report produced by Dr Paul Wilkinson MCifA.

#### REFERENCES

IFA (2014) Standards and Guidance for Field Archaeological Evaluations

SWAT Archaeology (2010) Specification for a Programme of Archaeological Evaluation and Assessment of Land east of Battle Road, Hailsham, East Sussex

Stratascan (2010) Geophysical Survey Report: Land East of Battle Road, Hailsham, East Sussex

## **CONTENTS OF SITE ARCHIVE**

Correspondence Photographs: 28 Digital photographs SWAT Film nos. P4134091-28. Photocopies of Ordnance Survey and other maps. Drawings: Three A3 permatrace site drawing, comprising trench plans and

associated sections. Finds: No finds Context Register including: Context Register (1), Drawings Register (1), Photographic Register (1), Levels Sheets (1), Environmental Samples Register (0) and Trench Recording Sheets (10)

Location of the archive: Temporarily held by SWAT Archaeology. Accession number for Eastbourne Museum is 2016.36.

# Appendix 1.

# Sussex HER summary sheet

HER enquiry								
number								
Site code	HBS/EV/15							
Project code	n/a							
Planning reference	WD2009/2705/MEA							
Site address	Land east of Battle Road, Hailsham, East Sussex							
District/Borough	Wealden District Council							
NGR (12 figures)	589205 101427							
Geology	Weald Clay							
Fieldwork type			Eva n	aluatio				
Date of fieldwork	12th -14th April 2015							
Sponsor/client	Hillreed Homes Ltd							
Project manager	Peter Cichy							
Project supervisor	Paul Wilkinson							
Period summary n/a	Palaeolithi c	Mesolit	hic	Neolithic		Bronze Age		Iron Age
	Roman	Anglo- Saxon		Medieval		Post- Medieval		Other
Project summary (100 word max)	No archaeological features or finds were revealed or recovered in this phase of archaeological evaluation							
Museum/Accessio n No.	2016.36							

# Plates



Plate 1. Trench 1 (looking east)



Plate 2. Trench 2 (looking east)



Plate 3. Trench 3 (looking north)



Plate 4. Trench 4 (looking south)



Plate 5. Trench 5 (looking west)



Plate 6. Trench 7 (looking west)



Plate 7. Trench 8 (looking north)



Plate 8. Trench 9 (looking north-east)



Plate 9. Trench 10 (looking south)



Plate 10. General view of site (looking south)



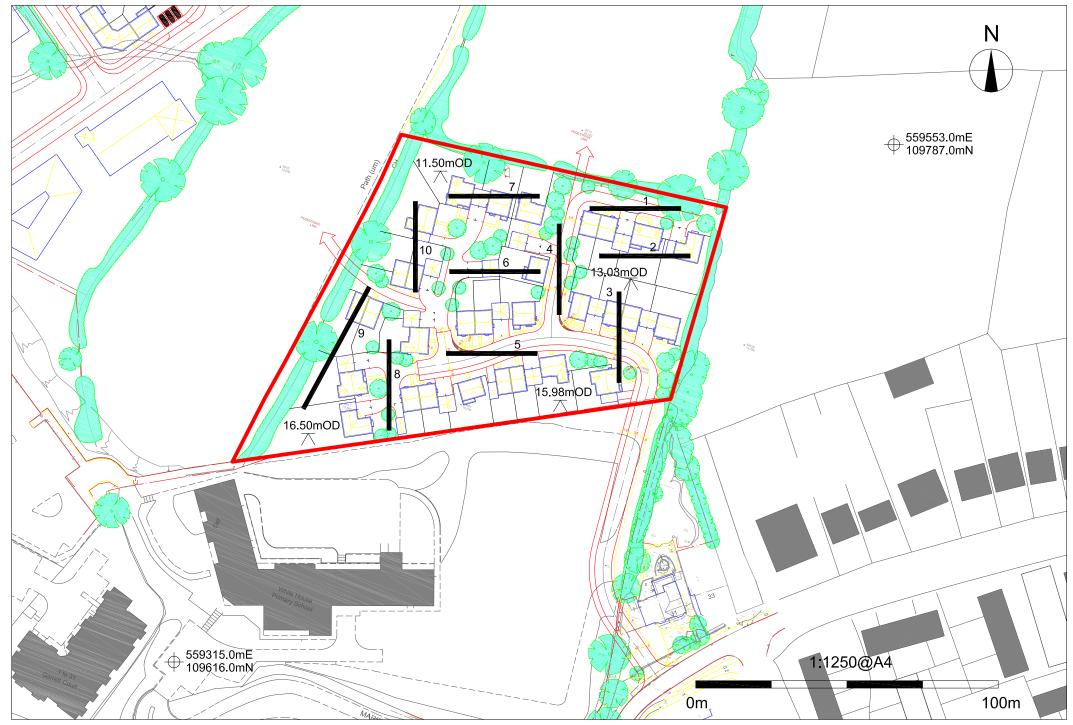


Figure 1: Location of ten archaeological evaluation trenches in Phase 4

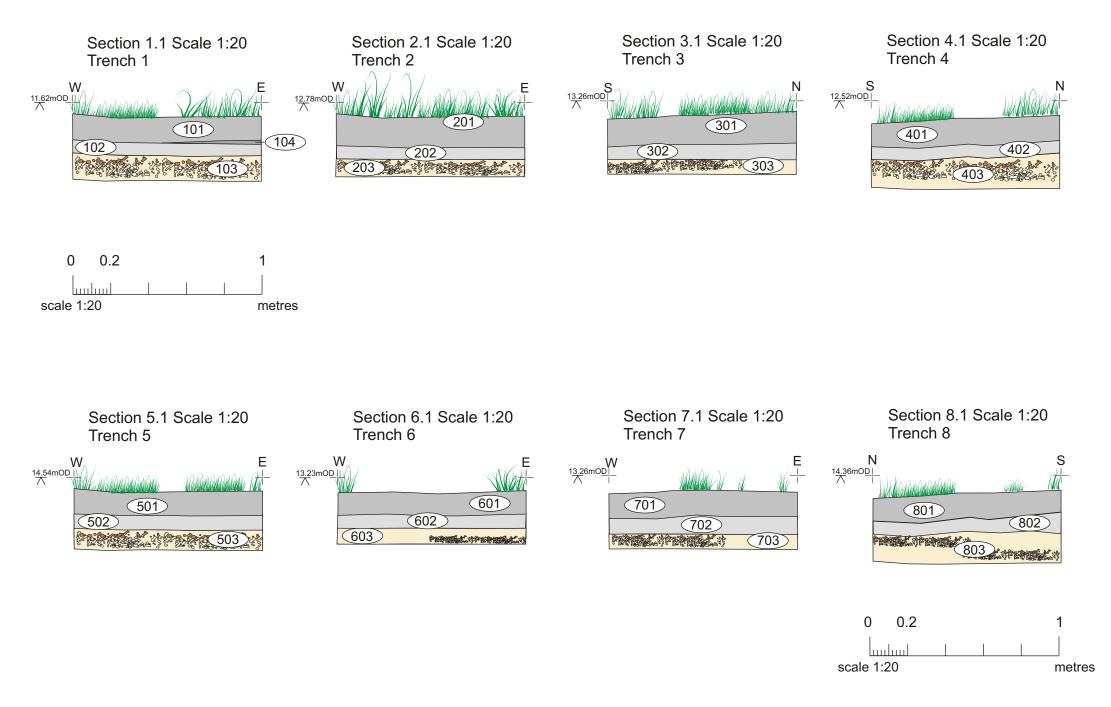


Figure 2: Representative Sections in Trenches 1-8 scale 1:20



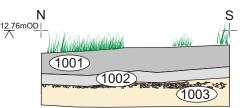




Figure 3: Representative Sections in Trenches 9 and 10 scale 1:20