

Archaeological Evaluation on Land at Ringshill Farm, Wouldham Road, Borstal, Kent

NGR Site Centre 571649 165860

Planning Application Number: MC/19/2897



SWAT ARCHAEOLOGY

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Summary

Swale & Thames Survey Company (SWAT Archaeology) was commissioned to undertake an archaeological evaluation on land at Ringshill Farm, Wouldham Road, Borstal in Kent. The archaeological works were monitored by Ben Found, Kent County Council Senior Archaeological Officer.

The fieldwork was carried out in May 2019 in accordance with an archaeological specification (SWAT Archaeology 28th April 2020) submitted to the Local Planning Authority prior to commencement of works.

The Archaeological Evaluation consisted of five trenches, which encountered a relatively common stratigraphic sequence comprising topsoil and subsoil overlying natural geology with some modern features of no archaeological potential.

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Project Background

1.1.1 Swale & Thames Survey Company (SWAT Archaeology) was commissioned to undertake an archaeological evaluation on land at Ringshill Farm, Wouldham Road, Borstal in Kent (**Figures 1. 2**).

1.1.2 In mitigation of the potential impact that the development may have on the buried archaeological resource Kent County Council Heritage & Conservation (KKCHC), who provide an advisory service to Medway Council, requested that a programme of archaeological works comprising an archaeological evaluation be undertaken as one of the proposed planning conditions of the planning application MC/19/2897.

1.1.3 The archaeological evaluation was carried out in May 2020 in accordance with an archaeological specification prepared by SWAT Archaeology (28/04/2020), prior to commencement of works, and in discussion with Ben Found Senior Archaeological Officer at KCHC.

1.1 4 Site Description and Topography

The application site is application site is located just south of the River Medway and to the north of Wouldham Road. The M2 motorway is to the east and Wouldham village to the south. The proposed development is for a new build hay barn and and located south of the existing farm buildings.

The NGR to the centre of the site is NGR 571649 165860 (Figure 1).

The Geological Survey of Great Britain (1:50,000) shows that the PDA is set on Bedrock Geology of New Pit Chalk Formation. Superficial deposits are recorded as Head-Clay and Silt. The geology revealed on site was Orange Brown Sandy Clay with flint inclusions (Plate 4). The PDA is set at an average height of 6.60m-7.20m AOD.

2 ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

2.1 Introduction

Details of previous discoveries and investigations within the immediate and wider area may be found in the Kent County Council Historic Environment Record and have been summarised in the Specification produced by SWAT Archaeology (April 2020) and these include a possible ring ditch within the area of the proposed development (TQ 76 NW 844) and c.600m to the south west another ring ditch (TQ 76 NW 842). In addition Ben Found Senior Archaeological Officer KCC has noted in his response to Medway Council that:

As you note the site does not currently fall within an archaeological notification area, but these are now somewhat outdated and we are currently going through a countywide programme to update these. Your conservation officer is right to highlight the archaeological potential of the site. The farm itself, whilst modernised and extended, is historic and includes a GII listed eighteenth century farmhouse and associated aisled barn (also listed GII). Other farm buildings appear on the Rochester Tithe Map, some of which appear to survive at the site.

There are also several sites of archaeological interest recorded in the immediate vicinity. These include the crop-mark of a ring-ditch, probably representing the plough-flattened remains of a Prehistoric burial mound immediately south of the proposed barn. We became aware of this monument following examination of recent satellite imagery and it was not known at the time that our notification areas were last revised. Other features in the area include crop-marks of enclosures and other features to the south-east, whilst a coin of Iron Age date has been found to the north-east. Finally, I note that the brickearth and head deposits above the east bank of the Medway have been identified as having the potential to contain Palaeolithic artefacts and/or faunal (or other) paleo-environmental remains.

AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

2.2 Specific Aims (SWAT 2020)

2.2.1 The specific aims of the archaeological fieldwork are set out in the Specification (SWAT 2020) were to:

2.1 *The primary objective of the archaeological evaluation is to establish or otherwise the presence of any potential archaeological features which may be impacted by the proposed development and any geo-archaeological remains which may potentially include terrace gravels containing Palaeolithic artefacts and/or Pleistocene faunal and other palaeo-environmental remains. The aims of this investigation are to determine the potential for archaeological activity and in particular the earlier history of the PDA and also any other Prehistoric, Roman and later archaeological activity. In addition if superficial geological deposits are encountered which could be of geo-archaeological interest and include potential for Pleistocene/Palaeolithic remains then provision be allowed for investigation by an appropriate specialist.*

2.2 General Aims

2.2.1 The general aims of the archaeological fieldwork were to;

- establish the presence or absence of any elements of the archaeological resource, both artefacts and ecofacts of archaeological interest across the area of the development;
- 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;

- determine the state of preservation and importance of the archaeological resource, if present, and to assess the past impacts on the site and pay particular attention to the character, height/depth below ground level, condition, date and significance of any archaeological deposits.

3 METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

3.1.1 All fieldwork was conducted in accordance with the methodology set out in the Specification (SWAT 2020 and KCC Manual of Specifications 'B') and carried out in compliance with the standards outlined in the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists' Standards Guidance for Archaeological Evaluations (CifA 2017).

3.2 Fieldwork

3.2.1 A total of six evaluation trenches was excavated across the Site (Figures 1, 2, 3).

3.2.2 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 natural or archaeological horizon, under the constant supervision of an experienced archaeologist.

3.2.3 Where appropriate, trenches, or specific areas of trenches, were subsequently hand-cleaned to reveal features in plan and carefully selected cross-sections through the features were excavated to enable sufficient information about form, development date and stratigraphic relationships to be recorded without prejudice to more extensive investigations, should these prove to be necessary. All archaeological work was carried out in accordance with KCC and CifA standards and guidance. A complete photographic record was maintained on site that included working shots; during mechanical excavation, following archaeological investigations and during back filling.

3.3 Recording

3.3.1 A complete drawn record of the evaluation trenches comprising both plans and sections, drawn to appropriate scales (1:20 for plans, 1:10 for sections) was undertaken. The plans and sections were annotated with coordinates and aOD heights. These are retained in the site project archive.

3.3.2 Photographs were taken as appropriate providing a record of excavated features and deposits, along with images of the overall trench to illustrate their location and context. The record also includes images of the Site overall. The photographic record comprises digital photography. A photographic register of all photographs taken is contained within the site project archive.

3.3.3 A single context recording system was used to record the deposits. A full list is presented in Appendix 1. Layers and fills are identified in this report thus (100), whilst the cut of the feature is shown [100]. Context numbers were assigned to all deposits for recording purposes. Each number has been attributed to a specific trench with the primary number(s) relating to specific trenches (*i.e.* Trench 1, 101+, Trench 2, 201+, Trench 3, 301+ etc.).

4 RESULTS

4.1 Introduction

4.1.1 A total of five evaluation trenches were mechanically excavated under archaeological supervision.

4.2 Stratigraphic Deposit Sequence

4.2.1 A relatively consistent stratigraphic sequence was recorded comprising a mix of topsoil sealing an intact subsoil of orange sandy clayey silt overlaying the natural yellow brown silty clay.

4.2.2 Appendix 1 provides the stratigraphic sequence for all trenches. Figures 1-5 provide a site plan and trench location plan, trench plans and sections while Plates 1-10 include selected site photographs.

4.3 Overview

4.3.1 The trenches were located across the footprint of the proposed building to ensure full coverage of potential archaeological remains.

5 FINDS

6.1 No finds of any archaeological merit were recovered from the archaeological evaluation.

6 Discussion

6.1 Archaeological Narrative

The archaeological investigation failed to expose any meaningful archaeology apart from modern deposits. The primary objective of the archaeological evaluation was to establish presence of any potential archaeological features. The evaluation revealed absence of archaeological features, deposits and artefacts.

Prior to trench excavation the gravelly patches visible at the top were scanned for lithics but none were found. The evaluation comprised excavation of six evaluation trenches.

Trench location was designated to intercept potential ring ditch features visible as crop mark on aerial photograph from 2013 as identified in the KCC HER records.

Five trenches (1, 2, 3, 4 and 6), 1.8m wide, were excavated to the depth of 0.35m. Trench 1, 2 and 6 were 20m long while trenches 3 and 4 were 15m long.

A simple stratigraphical sequence was exposed across the trenches. Mid reddish brown sandy loam with moderate flint – Head deposit (02) was overlaid by 0.2m thick Top soil (01) layer consisting of dark brown loam with flints.

The uppermost 0.1m of Head deposit had narrow linear features – plough scars associated with modern ploughing/cultivation and this part of context was removed by trenching in order to achieve clear natural surface.

On south end of trench 1, 1.3m deep test pit was excavated through Head deposit revealing underlying natural chalk gravel and sand. This test pit was excavated in the centre of the postulated ring feature.

Three modern features were investigated, a modern stake hole [203] exposed in trench 2, root patch (605) and a modern pit [603] exposed in trench 6.

Stake hole [203] was square in plan with 60mm sides. Feature was filled with soft dark brown sandy silt (204) and had well defined edges. No anthropogenic inclusions were found in the feature however soft compaction of the infill and its similar properties to top soil and well defined edges indicate that feature is very likely modern.

Modern pit [603] was rectangular in plan, however only north east part of the feature was exposed measuring 1.95m by 1.2m. Feature was 0.23m deep with shallow sides and slightly concave base with linear narrow groves at the base most likely leftover machine bucket teeth. Feature was filled with re-deposited top soil (01) containing occ. blotches of re-deposited natural (02). Modern brick fragment and clear white glass – bottle base was recovered from the feature.

Root patch (605) was sub oval in plan measuring 0.35m by 0.25m and was 0.05m deep. Context was mid compaction, dark brown loam. Prior to excavation feature appeared as dark brown sub oval patch. After removing 20mm of the context it appeared in a form of single dark smaller patches diffusing into natural (602).

6.2 Conclusions

- 6.2.1 The archaeological evaluation has been successful in fulfilling the primary aims and objectives of the Specification. Development proposals are not likely to impact on archaeological remains.
- 6.2.2 This evaluation has, therefore, assessed the archaeological potential of land intended for development. The results from this work show that the proposed development is not likely to impact on any archaeological remains.

7 ARCHIVE

7.1 General

- 7.1.1 The Site archive, which will include; paper records, photographic records, graphics and digital data, will be prepared following nationally recommended guidelines (SMA 1995; ClfA 2014; Brown 2011; ADS 2013).
- 7.1.2 All archive elements will be marked with the site/accession code, and a full index will be prepared. The physical archive comprises 1 file/document case of paper records & A4 graphics and will be retained by SWAT Archaeology until a Kent museum archive procedure is in place.

8 ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

- 8.1.1 SWAT would like to thank the developer for commissioning the project. Thanks are also extended to Ben Found Archaeological Officer, Kent County Council, for his advice and assistance.
- 8.1.2 Bartek Cichy supervised the archaeological evaluation and survey and illustrations were produced by B. Cichy. Paul Wilkinson MCIfA edited the text for this report.

9 REFERENCES

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Compiled by: SWAT Archaeology (PW). The Office, School Farm Oast, Faversham, Kent

Dated 21st May 2020.

Appendix 1: Trench Tables

Trench Table

Trench 1 Dimensions: 20m x 1.8m Depth: 0.35m Trench alignment: NE-SW Ground level at NE end: 7.27m OD Ground level at SW end: 7.52m OD			
Context	Interpretation	Description	Depth (m)
101	Topsoil	Firm compaction, dark brown loam with occ. flint scatter (sub-angular broken nodules), chalk crush at the top. Sharp boundary with underlying horizon.	0.00-0.25
102	Subsoil Head	Firm compaction, mid reddish brown, clayey loam with moderate sub-angular flint (<100mm). Diffused boundary with underlying horizon.	0.25-0.70
103	Subsoil Head	Firm compaction, mid reddish brown. Getting brighter downwards. Gravely sandy loam. Gravel is sub-angular and angular flints (<100mm). Wavy sharp boundary with underlying horizon.	0.70-1.00
104	Subsoil Head	Compact with loose lenses, light whitish buff gravely sand. Gravel is chalk fine gravel (<30mm), flints sub-angular and angular (<100mm). Buff coarse sand pocket.	1.00-1.30+

Trench 2 Dimensions: 20m x 1.8m Depth: 0.33m Trench alignment: NW-SE Ground level at NW end: 7.44m OD Ground level at SE end: 7.73m OD			
Context	Interpretation	Description	Depth (m)
201	Topsoil	Firm compaction, dark brown loam with occ. flint scatter (sub-angular broken nodules), chalk crush at the top. Sharp boundary with underlying horizon.	0.00-0.2
202	Subsoil Head	Firm compaction, mid reddish brown, sandy loam with moderate sub-angular and angular flints (<80mm).	0.2-0.33+
203	Stake-hole	Square (60mm side)	
204	Fill of [203]	Mid compaction dark brown sandy silt	

Trench 3 Dimensions: 15m x 1.8m Depth: 0.35m Trench alignment: NE-SW Ground level at NE end: 7.52m OD Ground level at SW end: 7.65m OD			
Context	Interpretation	Description	Depth (m)
301	Topsoil	Firm compaction, dark brown loam with occ. flint scatter (sub-angular broken nodules), chalk crush at the top. Sharp boundary with underlying horizon.	0.00-0.2
302	Subsoil Head	Firm compaction, mid reddish brown, sandy loam with moderate sub-angular and angular flints (<80mm).	0.2-0.35+

Trench 4 Dimensions: 15m x 1.8m Depth: 0.33m Trench alignment: NW-SE Ground level at NW end: 7.70m OD Ground level at SE end: 8.15m OD			
Context	Interpretation	Description	Depth (m)
401	Topsoil	Firm compaction, dark brown loam with occ. flint scatter (sub-angular broken nodules), chalk crush at the top. Sharp boundary with underlying horizon.	0.00-0.25
402	Subsoil Head	Firm compaction, mid reddish brown, clayey loam with moderate sub-angular flint (<100mm). Diffused boundary with underlying horizon.	0.25-0.33+

Trench 6 Dimensions: 20m x 1.8m Depth: 0.35m Trench alignment: NW-SE Ground level at NW end: 6.61m OD Ground level at SE end: 6.96m OD			
Context	Interpretation	Description	Depth (m)
601	Topsoil	Firm compaction, dark brown loam with occ. flint scatter (sub-angular broken nodules), chalk crush at the top. Sharp boundary with underlying horizon.	0.00-0.25
602	Subsoil Head	Firm compaction, mid reddish brown, clayey loam with moderate sub-angular flint (<100mm). Diffused boundary with underlying horizon.	0.25-0.33+
603	Pit	Sub-rectangular in plan, partially exposed in trench – Machine pit with shallow sides and concave uneven base with linear grooves (tooth bucket marks).	0.25-0.46
604	Fill of [603]	Re-deposited top-soil mixed with little bit of natural (602)	0.25-0.46
605	Natural feature, root patch	Natural (602) with dark brown patches. Context width: 0.35m	0.25-0.36

Kent County Council HER Summary Form

Site Name: Land at Ringshill Farm, Wouldham Road, Borstal, Kent

SWAT Site Code: RING/EV/2020

Site Address: As above

Summary:

Swale and Thames Survey Company (SWAT) carried out Archaeological Evaluation on the development site above. The site has a planning application for the erection of a grain store whereby Medway Council requested that Archaeological works 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 meaningful archaeology.

District/Unitary: Medway Council

Period(s):

NGR (centre of site to eight figures) NGR 571649 165860

Type of Archaeological work: Archaeological Evaluation

Date of recording: May 2020

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

Geology: Underlying geology is Bedrock Geology of New Pit Chalk Formation

Title and author of accompanying report: Wilkinson P. (2020) Archaeological Evaluation of Land at Ringshill Farm, Wouldham Road, Borstal, Kent

Summary of fieldwork results (begin with earliest period first, add NGRs where appropriate)

No meaningful archaeology found

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

Contact at Unit: Paul Wilkinson



MAP 1. KCC HER Data map

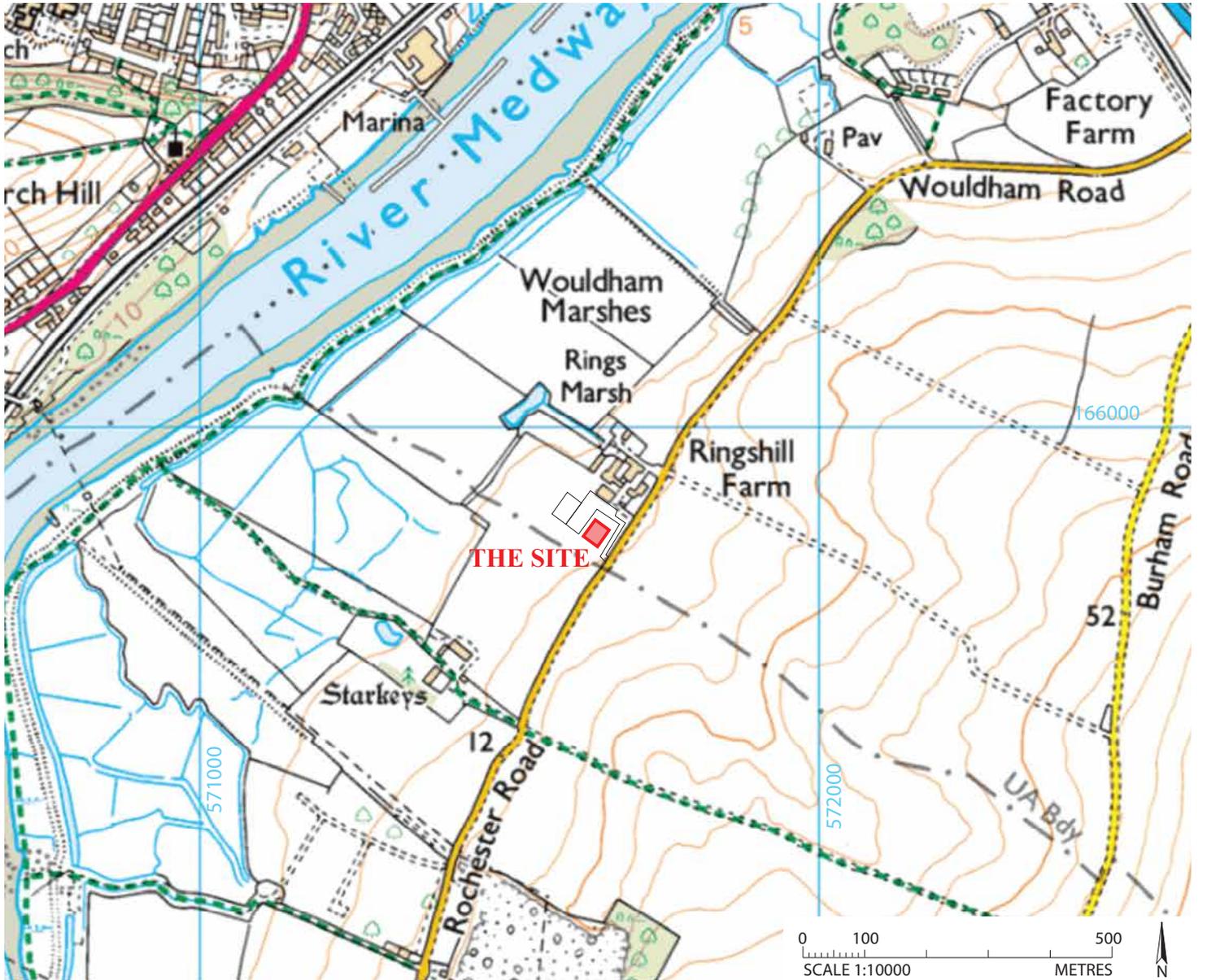
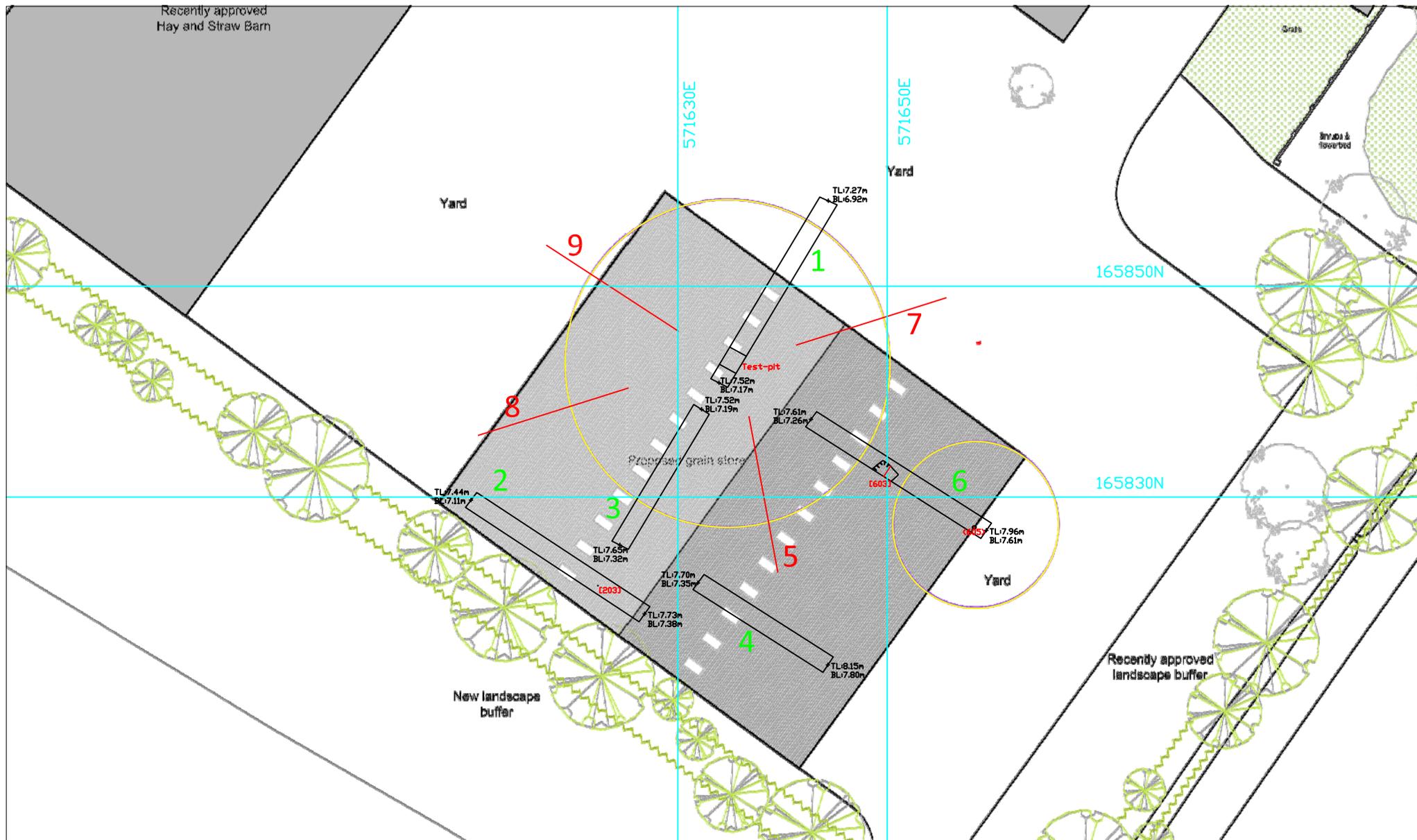
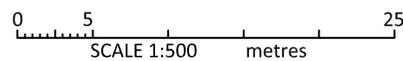


Figure 1: Site location map, scale 1:10000.



Green number - trenches excavated
Red number - unexcavated trenches



Ringshill Farm, Wouldham evaluation 05.05.2020

Figure 2: Trench location in relation to development and potential ring ditches.

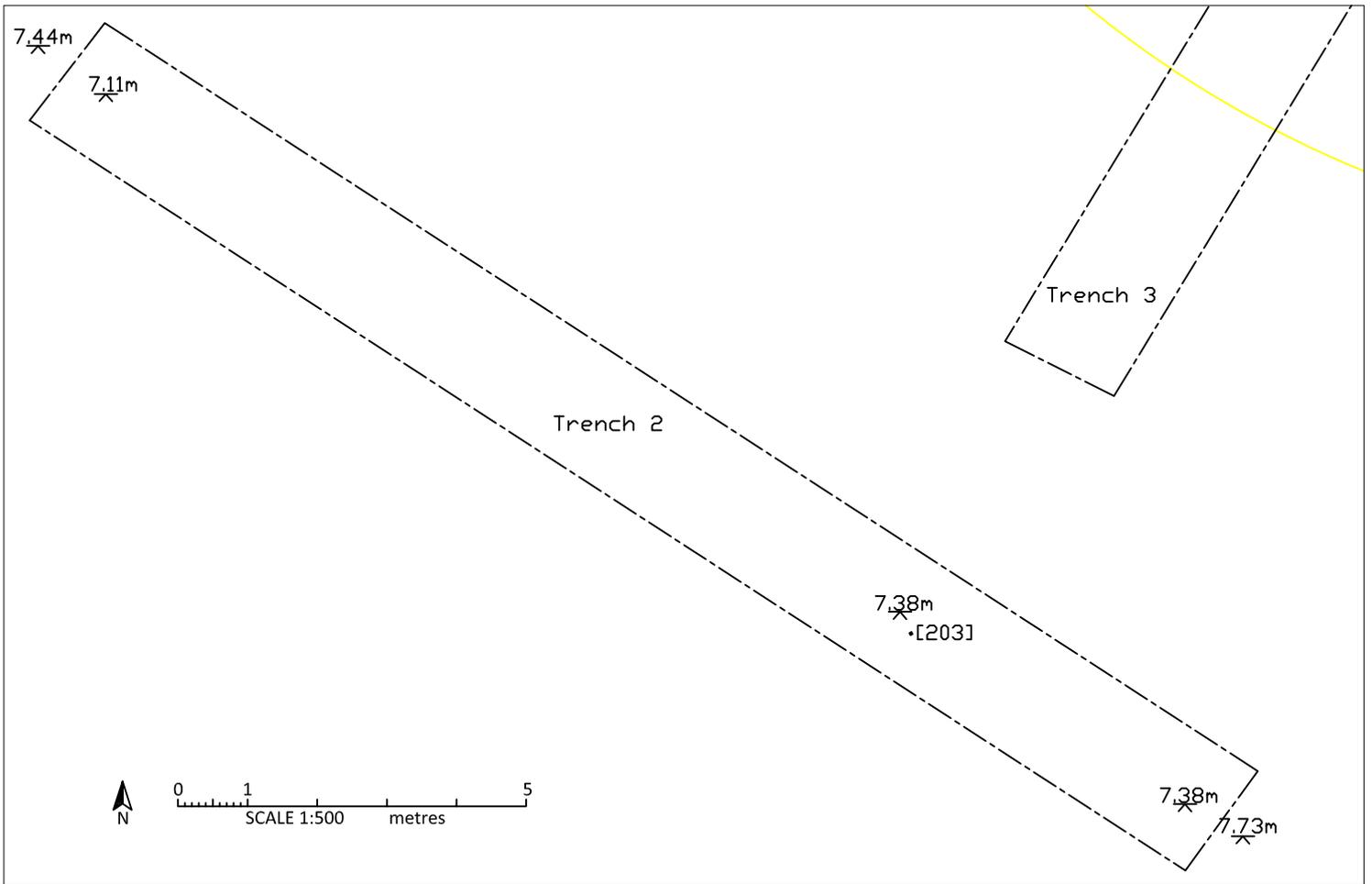


Figure 3: Plan of trench 2

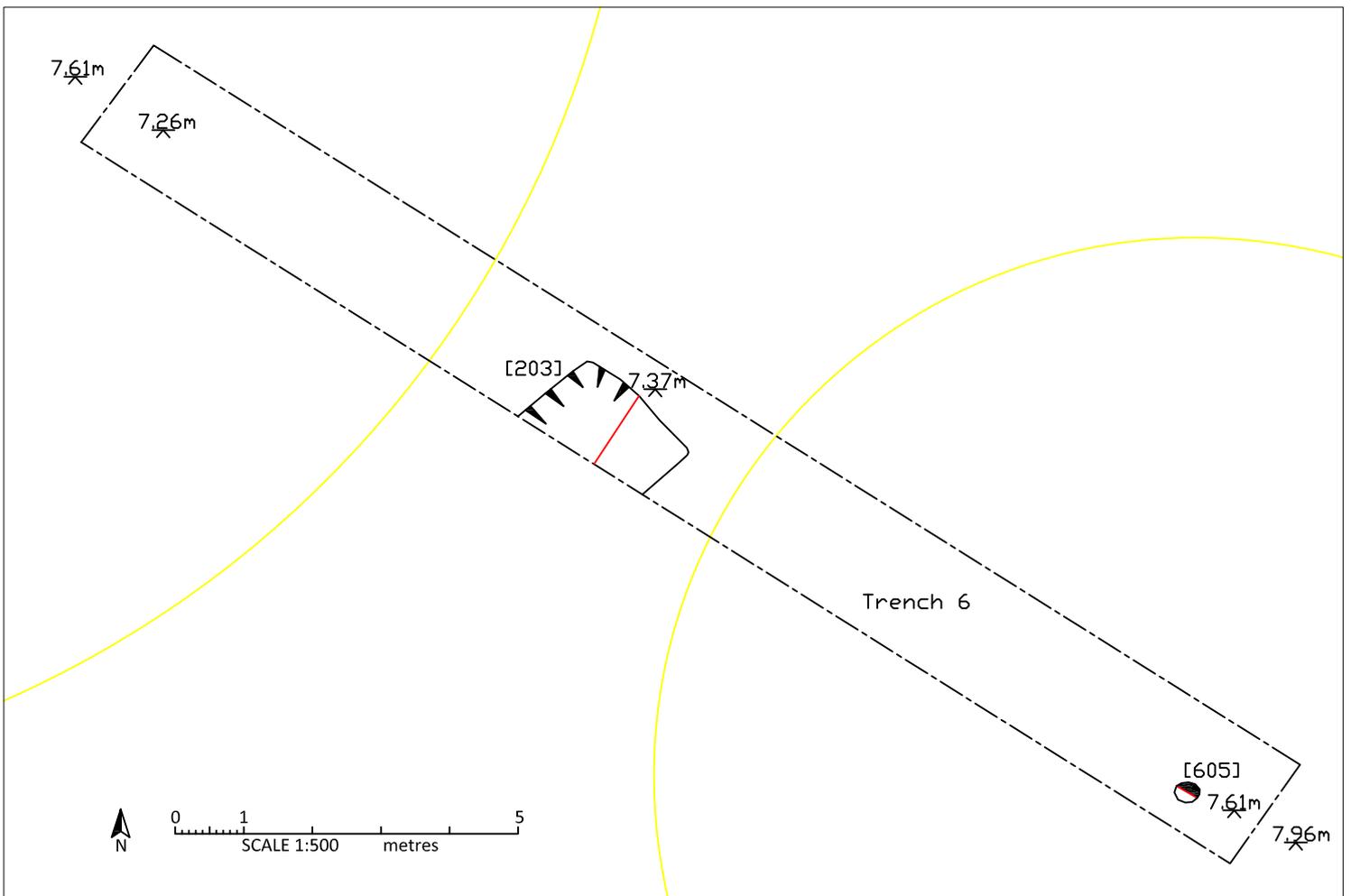


Figure 4: Plan of trench 6

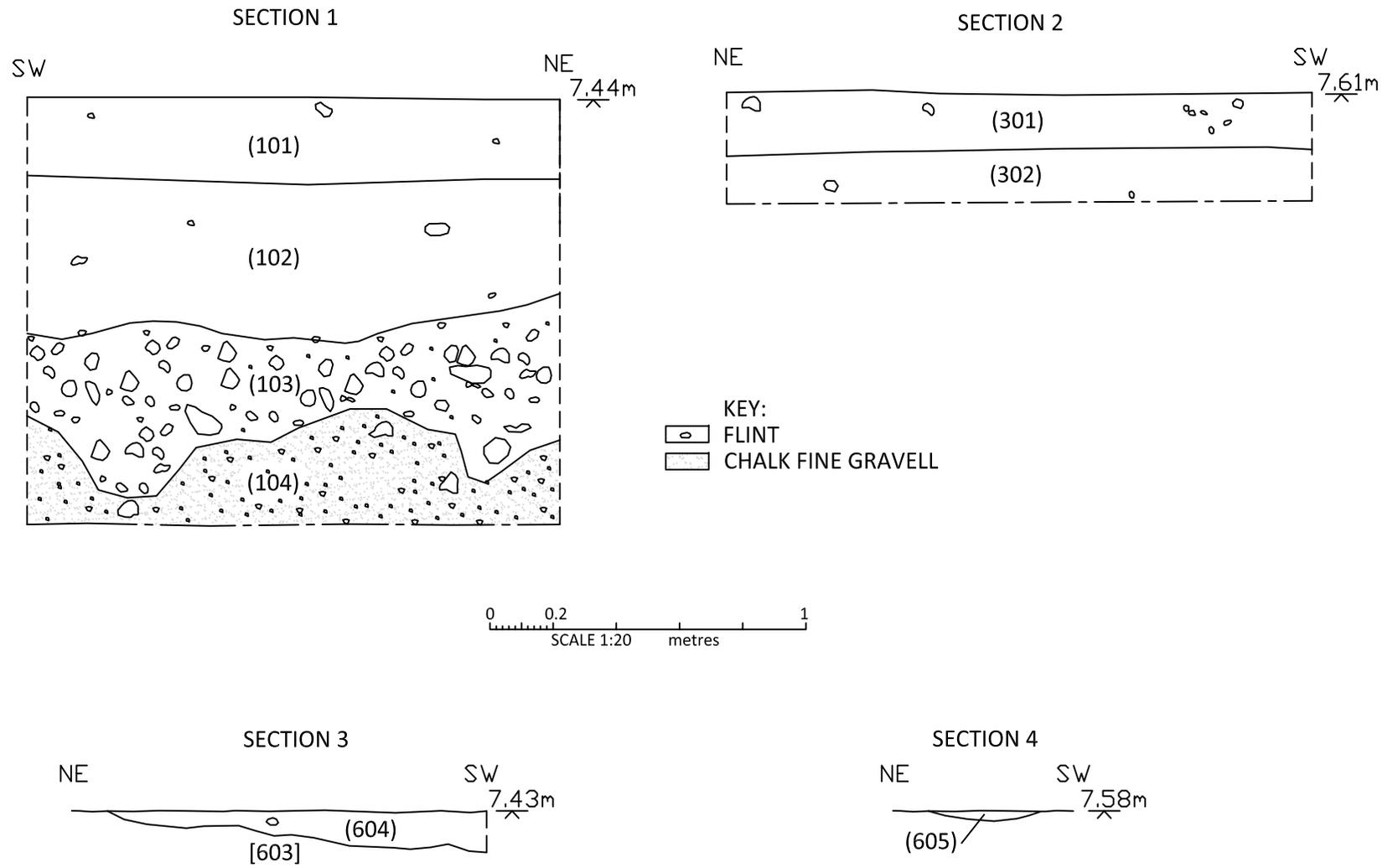


Figure 5: Sections

Plates



Plate 1. looking west at the site



Plate 2: Looking SSW at trench 1



Plate 3: Natural Head sediment was exposed across the site.



Plate 4: Section of test pit excavated through Head deposit located in south end of Trench 1



Plate 5: Looking SSW at trench 3



Plate 6: Modern square stake hole exposed in trench 3



Plate 7: Looking NNW at trench 4



Plate 8: Looking NNW at trench 6



Plate 9: Looking SSW at section through root patch (605)



Plate 10: Looking south at modern feature [603]. Machine marks are visible at the base. Fragment of brick and glass bottle fragment were recovered from this feature