

Archaeological Evaluation of Land off Badsell Road, Five Oak Green, Tonbridge, Kent



NGR: TQ 6490 4480

Site Code: FOUR/EV/15

(Planning Application: 14506168/FULL)

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1. Summary

Swale & Thames Survey Company (SWAT) carried out an archaeological evaluation of land just off Badsell Road at Capel Grange Farm, Five Oak Green, Tonbridge in Kent. A Planning Application (14/506168/FULL) to develop this site for a Solar Photovoltaic Park and associated infrastructure was submitted to Tunbridge Wells Borough Council, 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 (Wardell Armstrong Archaeology Sept 2015 and KCC Specification Manual Part B) and in discussion with the Senior Archaeological Heritage Officer, Kent County Council. The results of the excavation of six evaluation trenches revealed that no archaeological features were present within the trenches. The natural geology of Tunbridge Wells Sand Formation was reached at an average depth of between 0.30m and 0.40m below the modern ground surface. The Archaeological Evaluation 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 Capel Grange Solar Energy 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 (WSA 2015) and in discussion with the Senior Archaeological Heritage Officer, Kent County Council. The evaluation was carried out on the 16th and 20th October 2015.

3. Site Description and Topography

The proposed development site is situated 120m to the south of Five Oak Green in an area dominated by orchards. Tonbridge is located about 5km to the west and the town of Royal Tunbridge Wells lies to the west. The overall area of development is about 22 hectares. The site is generally flat at about 20-25m aOD apart from the south-east corner which rises to about 25m to 30m aOD.

The underlying geology is mapped as interbedded sandstone and siltstone associated with the Tunbridge Wells Sand Formation. The Superficial Geology is recorded as a combination of Clay and Silt (BGS 2015).

4. Planning Background

Tunbridge Wells Borough Council gave planning permission (14/506168/FUL) for development of land just off Badsell Road at Capel Grange Farm, Five Oak Green, Tonbridge in Kent for a Solar Photovoltaic Park and associated infrastructure.

On the advice of the Wendy Roger, Senior Archaeological Officer (KCC) a programme of archaeological works in the form of an initial archaeological evaluation was attached to the consent:

(Condition 7) 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 scheme of investigation and timetable which has been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority.

Reason: To ensure that features of archaeological interest are properly examined and recorded.

The results from this evaluation will be used to inform KCC Heritage and Tunbridge Wells Borough Council 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 with little known archaeology. However recent archaeological investigations at Knells Farm and Hadlow Place have found evidence of Iron Age settlement.

There is no archaeological activity of note in the Proposed Development Area (PDA) until the Later Medieval period where there is documentary evidence that shows the settlement of Capel, 930m west of the PDA being present in 1226 (WAA 2015: 3).

The KCC HER suggests that several farm buildings in the vicinity of the PDA have medieval origins with the closest being Badsell Mains Farmhouse 115m to the east of the PDA.

Archaeological finds include a copper alloy ring about 980m to the south-west of the PDA (KCC HER Ref: MKE 75070). The earliest map of the area is the 1843 Capel Tithe Map of 1843 that shows the PDA was under three separate owners. The site at that time was a combination of fields and woodland and little has changed to the present day apart from the gradual reduction of woodland and the creation of orchards in the early 20th century (WAA 2015: 3).

6. Aims and Objectives

According to the WAA Archaeological Specification, the aims and objectives for the archaeological work were to ensure that:

“Where archaeological remains are present the programme of archaeological evaluation by trial trenching will aim to interpret and characterise them. In addition the fieldwork will help inform upon the significance of the potential impacts of the development. The results of the evaluation will be used to inform the Local Planning Authority and allow an informed decision to be made upon the requirement for any further archaeological work should significant archaeological deposits and features be revealed.’ (WAA 2015: 3).

The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and Heritage Assets clarifies a developer's 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 WAA Specification (2015) for the site required a phased approach to the mitigation of the development site commencing with an evaluation, with the results influencing the possibility of further work on the site such as further mitigation in the form of a watching brief or 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 six trenches within the footprint of the proposed development. A 2.5 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 WAA, SWAT and IFA standards and guidance.

8. Monitoring

Curatorial monitoring was not available during the course of the evaluation.

9. Results

The evaluation has identified no archaeological features within the six trenches (Figure 1).

Trench 1

9.1 The plan is recorded in Figure 1 (see also Plate 1). The trench lay on an ENE to WSW alignment and measured approximately 25m by 1.20m.

Undisturbed natural geology (**103**) was identified across the trench as sandy clay silt, at a depth of approximately 0.40m (22.01mOD) below the present ground surface at 22.41m OD at the WSW end of the trench.

The natural geology was sealed by a clean layer of light grey to brown subsoil (**102**) 0.21m thick.

Above this was a dark layer of topsoil (**101**) 0.19m thick, dark brown to black in colour and containing small stones and charcoal, but otherwise relatively clean. This probably represents a post-medieval to modern topsoil layer filled with a high organic content from agricultural or orchard use.

Trench 2

9.1 The plan is recorded in Figure 1 (see also Plate 2). The trench lay on an N to S alignment and measured approximately 25m by 1.20m.

Undisturbed natural geology (**203**) was identified across the trench as sandy clay silt, at a depth of approximately 0.38m (21.72mOD) below the present ground surface at 22.10m OD at the N end of the trench.

The natural geology was sealed by a clean layer of light grey to brown subsoil (**202**) 0.18m thick.

Above this was a dark layer of topsoil (**101**) 0.20m thick, dark brown to black in colour and containing small stones and charcoal, but otherwise relatively clean. This probably represents

a post-medieval to modern topsoil layer filled with a high organic content from agricultural or orchard use.

Trench 3

9.1 The plan is recorded in Figure 1 (see also Plate 3). The trench lay on a ESE to WNW alignment and measured approximately 25m by 1.20m.

Undisturbed natural geology **(303)** was identified across the trench as sandy clay silt, at a depth of approximately 0.41m (22.05mOD) below the present ground surface at 22.46m OD at the WNW end of the trench.

The natural geology was sealed by a clean layer of light grey to brown subsoil **(302)** 0.21m thick.

Above this was a dark layer of topsoil **(301)** 0.20m thick, dark brown to black in colour and containing small stones and charcoal, but otherwise relatively clean. This probably represents a post-medieval to modern topsoil layer filled with a high organic content from agricultural or orchard use.

Trench 4

9.1 The plan is recorded in Figure 1 (see also Plate 4). The trench lay on an N to S alignment and measured approximately 25m by 1.30m.

Undisturbed natural geology **(403)** was identified across the trench as sandy clay silt, at a depth of approximately 0.37m (22.24mOD) below the present ground surface at 22.61m OD at the N end of the trench.

The natural geology was sealed by a clean layer of light grey to brown subsoil **(402)** 0.17m thick.

Above this was a dark layer of topsoil **(401)** 0.20m thick, dark brown to black in colour and containing small stones and charcoal, but otherwise relatively clean. This probably represents a post-medieval to modern topsoil layer filled with a high organic content from agricultural or orchard use.

Trench 5

9.1 The plan is recorded in Figure 1 (see also Plate 5). The trench lay on an NNE to SSW alignment and measured approximately 25m by 1.20m.

Undisturbed natural geology **(503)** was identified across the trench as sandy clay silt, at a depth of approximately 0.39m (22.61mOD) below the present ground surface at 23.00m OD at the SSW end of the trench.

The natural geology was sealed by a clean layer of light grey to brown subsoil **(502)** 0.19m thick.

Above this was a dark layer of topsoil **(501)** 0.20m thick, dark brown to black in colour and containing small stones and charcoal, but otherwise relatively clean. This probably represents a post-medieval to modern topsoil layer filled with a high organic content from agricultural or orchard use.

Trench 6

9.1 The plan is recorded in Figure 1 (see also Plate 6). The trench lay on a ENE to WSW alignment and measured approximately 25m by 1.20m.

Undisturbed natural geology **(603)** was identified across the trench as sandy clay silt, at a depth of approximately 0.42m (22.34mOD) below the present ground surface at 22.76m OD at the WSW end of the trench.

The natural geology was sealed by a clean layer of light grey to brown subsoil **(602)** 0.22m thick.

Above this was a dark layer of topsoil **(601)** 0.20m thick, dark brown to black in colour and containing small stones and charcoal, but otherwise relatively clean. This probably represents a post-medieval to modern topsoil layer filled with a high organic content from agricultural or orchard use.

No archaeology features or archaeological artefacts were recovered from any of the six trenches.

10. Discussion

Despite the dearth of archaeological sites in the vicinity of the PDA it was expected that the evaluation may produce evidence of archaeological activity. But no archaeology was found. It may be that as at least 50% of the site is waterlogged for most of the year previous peoples found more appropriate sites to farm and settle.

11. Finds

No finds were found.

12. Conclusion

The evaluation trenches at the proposed development site revealed no archaeological features or artefacts.

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 **(100)** sealing the subsoil **(101)** which overlay the natural geology of Tunbridge Wells Sand **(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, Capel Grange Solar Energy Ltd for commissioning the project. Thanks are also extended to Wendy Rogers, Senior Heritage Officer, Kent County Council. Illustrations were produced by Jonny Madden for Digitise This. The fieldwork was undertaken and the project was managed and report written by Dr Paul Wilkinson BA (Hons) FRSA, MCifA.

Paul Wilkinson

26/10/15

14. References

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

Wardell Armstrong Archaeology (Sept 2015) *Written Scheme of Investigation for an Archaeological Evaluation*

KCC Specification Manual Part B

KCC HER data 2015

PLATES



Plate 1 – Trench 1 under excavation (looking ENE)



Plate 2 – Trench 2 (looking S)



Plate 3 – Trench 3 looking WNW, 1m scale.



Plate 4 – Trench 4 looking south, 1m scale.



Plate 5 – Trench 5 looking SSW, 1m scale



Plate 6 – Trench 6 looking WSW, 1m scale.

Kent County Council HER Summary Form

Site Name: Land off Badsell Road, Five Oak Green, Tonbridge, Kent

SWAT Site Code: CAP/EV/15

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 a Solar Farm whereby Kent County Council Heritage and Conservation (KCCHC) 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: Tunbridge Wells Borough Council

Period(s):

NGR (centre of site to eight figures)

Type of Archaeological work: Archaeological Evaluation

Date of recording: October 2015

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

Geology: Underlying geology is Tunbridge Wells Sand Formation

Title and author of accompanying report: Wilkinson P. (2015) Archaeological Evaluation at Land off Badsell Road, Five oak Green, Tonbridge, Kent

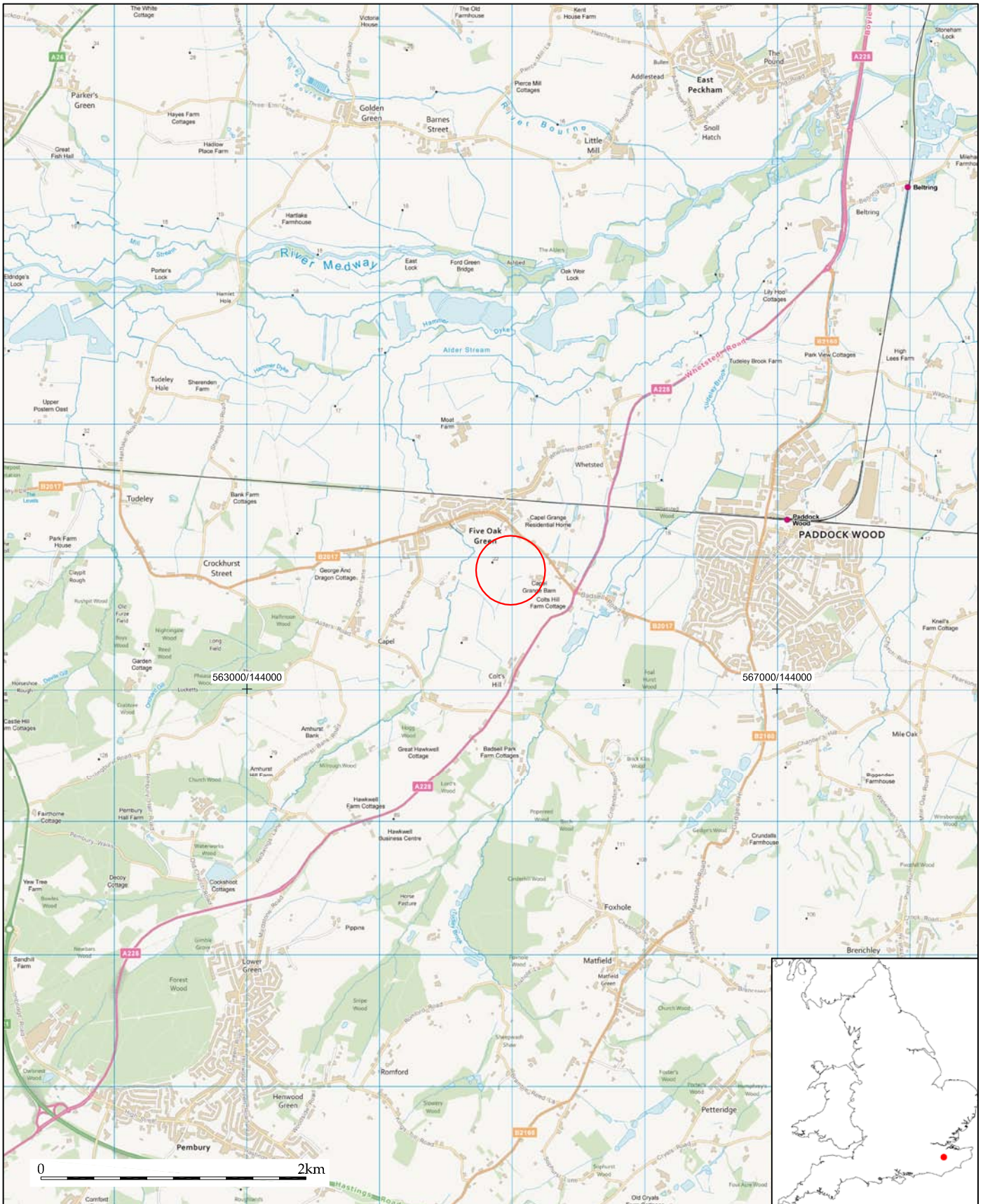
Summary of fieldwork results (begin with earliest period first, add NGRs where appropriate)

No archaeology found

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

Contact at Unit: Paul Wilkinson

Date: 26/10/2015






 <p>Wardell Armstrong Archaeology 2015</p>	<p>PROJECT: Land off Badsell Road, Five Oak Green, Tonbridge, Kent</p> <p>SCALE: 1:40,000 at A4</p> <p>REPORT No: CP11510</p> <p>CLIENT: Solar Energy Limited</p> <p>DRAWN BY: AB</p> <p>DATE: September 2015</p> <p>FIGURE: 1</p>	<p>KEY:</p> <p> Site location</p>	 <p>Reproduced by permission of Ordnance Survey on behalf of The Controller of Her Majesty's Stationery Office. © Crown copyright. All rights reserved. Licence number 100019512</p>
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Figure 1: Site location.

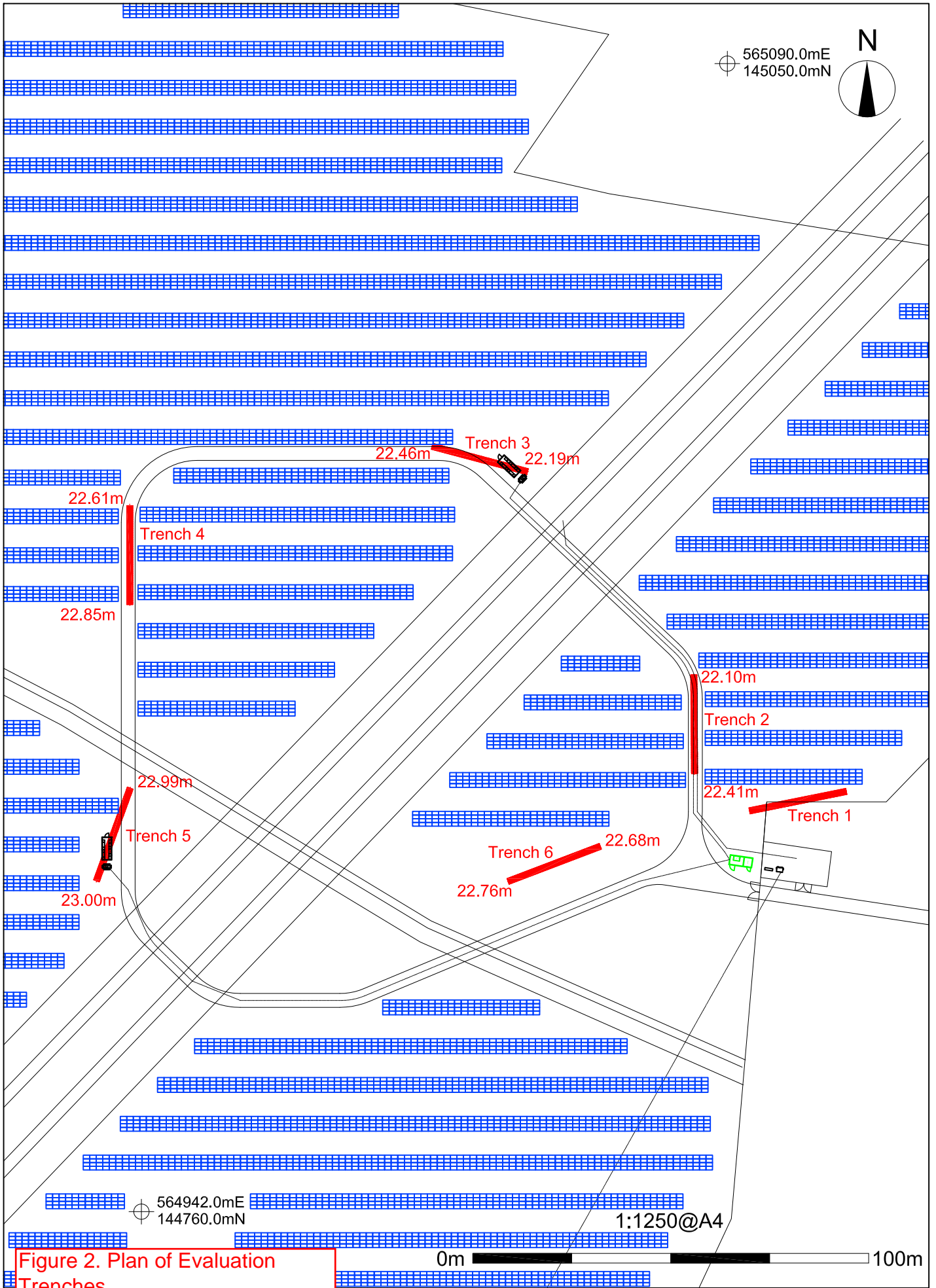


Figure 2. Plan of Evaluation Trenches