

Archaeological Evaluation of Land at Conningbrook Park, Wetland Mitigation Ashford, Kent

Site Code: CNW-EV-22

NGR Site Centre: 603440 144134

Planning Application Number: 22/00051/AS



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Abstract

Swale & Thames Survey Company (SWAT Archaeology) was commissioned to undertake an archaeological evaluation on Land at Conningbrook Park, Wetland Mitigation, Ashford in Kent. The archaeological programme was monitored by the Senior Archaeological Officer at Kent County Council.

The archaeological works have investigated the extents of the proposed development area using thirty one trenches, each measuring between 20m and 34m in length. Two short contingency trenches were excavated to confirm the course of Palaeochannel revealed during geoarchaeological investigation in Test-Pit 115 in Trench 7.

Although preservation conditions were considered favourable only one discrete feature of general Iron Age date was revealed in contingency Trench 33 and spindle whorl of Late Iron Age was retrieved from subsoil in the same trench.

Palaeochannel was exposed in Trenches 7 and 33. Old courses of at least two streams were revealed in southern part of the site (Trenches 4, 5 and 6) and a flood plain associated with potential third stream was revealed in northern extent. These discoveries were not accompanied by any findings of archaeological interest and just confirm re-establishment of natural water courses in the area. No archaeological finds or features were present within Trenches 1-32.

The archaeological evaluation has been successful in fulfilling the primary aims and objectives of the Specification and has assessed the archaeological potential of land intended for development. The results from this work are showing that development proposals won't be having any impact on buried archaeological resource and will be used to aid and inform the Senior Archaeological Officer of any further archaeological mitigation measures that may be necessary in connection with any future development proposals.

Archaeological Evaluation of Land at Conningbrook Park, Wetland Mitigation Ashford, Kent

NGR Site Centre: 603440 144134

Site Code: CNW-EV-22

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 Conningbrook Park, Wetland Mitigation Ashford, Kent (Figure 1).

1.1.2 The proposed development comprises the construction of a wetland mitigation area involving the division of the area into a series of beds separated by the creation of berms. Water levels within the wetland area will be controlled by the installation of several water channels supported by a network of water pipes and a pumping station in the southwest corner of the evaluation area. Management of silt and soil erosion will be via the construction of several weir chambers distributed across the evaluation area and through excavating a series of spreader channels.

1.1.3 A planning application (22/00051/AS) has been submitted to Ashford Borough Council and the following conditions were imposed on the permission with regard to archaeology:

Condition: Prior to the commencement of development the applicant, or their agents or successors in title, will secure:

- *geoarchaeological field evaluation works in accordance with a specification and written timetable which has been submitted to and approved by the Local Planning Authority; and*
- *further geoarchaeological and Palaeolithic period investigation, recording and reporting, determined on the results of the evaluation, in accordance with a specification and timetable which has been submitted to and approved by the Local Planning Authority;*
- *Programme of post-excavation assessment and publication*

Reason: To ensure that feature of geoarchaeological and Palaeolithic interest are properly examined, recorded, reported and disseminated.

1.1.4 *Condition: Prior to the commencement of development the applicant, or their agents of successors in title, will secure:*

- *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*
- *Further archaeological investigation, recording, reporting, determined by the results of the evaluation, in accordance with a specification and timetable which has been submitted to and approved by the Local Planning Authority;*
- *Programme of post excavation assessment and publication.*

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

1.1.5 This document responds to a second condition and presents the results of archaeological field evaluation which was carried out over the course of 11 days in June 2022 (see Table 1 below). The evaluation was carried out in accordance with an archaeological Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI) prepared by Wessex Archaeology (2022), prior to commencement of works.

1.2 **Timetable**

1.2.1 A timetable for the archaeological programme of works, to date, is provided below;

Task	Dates	Personnel/Company
Archaeological Desk-Based Assessment	2020/2021	Wessex Archaeology
Geoarchaeological Deposit Model and Desk-Based Assessment	2020/2021	Wessex Archaeology
Submission of the Written Scheme of Investigation	March 2022	Wessex Archaeology
Archaeological Evaluation: Fieldwork	6 th -21 st June 2022	SWAT Archaeology
Archaeological Evaluation Report	This document	SWAT Archaeology
Geoarchaeological Field Evaluation and Palaeolithic Period investigation	Forthcoming	SWAT Archaeology

Table 1 *Timetable for the archaeological programme of works*

1.3 Site Description, Topography and Geology

1.3.1 The proposed development area (PDA) is located 2.8 km northeast of the centre of Ashford and 3.2 km southwest of the village of Wye. It comprises an irregular parcel of land of c.4.7 ha, comprised of two fields.

1.3.2 The PDA forms a part of the Great Stour Valley floodplain and is flooded seasonally by the Great Stour. It has a surface height of between 31 and 32 m above Ordnance Datum (OD), with the surrounding land at a similar topographical level.

1.3.3 The Geological Survey of Great Britain shows that the natural geology at the PDA (Proposed Development Area) consists of a bedrock comprising Folkestone Formation - Sandstone. Sedimentary Bedrock formed approximately 101 to 126 million years ago in the Cretaceous Period and Gault Formation – Mudstone, sedimentary Bedrock formed approximately 101 to 113 million years ago in the Cretaceous Period. Local environment previously dominated by shallow seas. Bedrock geology was capped by River Terrace Deposits comprising Sand and Gravel. Superficial Deposits formed up to 3 million years ago in the Quaternary Period in local environment previously dominated by rivers.

1.4 Scope of Report

1.4.1 This report has been produced to provide initial information regarding the results of the archaeological field evaluation. The results from this work will be used to aid and inform the Senior Archaeological Officer (KCC) of any further archaeological mitigation measures that may be necessary in connection with any future development proposals.

2 Archaeological and Historical Background

2.1 Introduction

2.1.1 The archaeological and historical background was assessed in prior desk-based assessment (WA 2021a), which considered the recorded historic environment resource within a 1 km study area of the evaluation area. A summary of the results is presented below, with relevant entry numbers from the Kent Historic Environment Record (HER) and the National Heritage List for England (NHLE) included. Additional sources of information are referenced, as appropriate.

2.1.2 Further details of previous discoveries and investigations within the immediate and wider area may be found in the Kent County Council Historic Environment Record (HER) and have been summarised in correspondence with the KCCHC Senior Archaeological Officer.

2.2 Archaeological and historical context

Palaeolithic (970,000–10,700 kya)

2.2.1 The Palaeolithic and geoarchaeological context of the Site is considered in detail in Section 3.

Mesolithic (9,300–4,300 BC)

2.2.2 No Mesolithic activity has been identified within the evaluation area or its surrounding areas, but two flint scatters were discovered in colluvial/alluvial deposits in the East Great Stour valley at Smeeth, near Sellinge 7km southeast of the evaluation area (Glass 1999; Welsh 1998).

Neolithic–Iron Age (4,300 BC–AD 43)

2.2.3 During the later prehistoric periods, the broader landscape of Ashford is known to have supported well-settled and widespread prehistoric communities since the Neolithic period through to the Late Iron Age. These communities altered the landscape from that of one covered in dense woodland, as part of the ‘Forest of Anderida’, to a managed and farmed landscape with forest and wildwood clearings providing open wood pasture (Ashford Borough Council 2017).

2.2.4 Although there is abundant evidence of occupation in Ashford, the only discovery within 1km of the evaluation area relates to the recovery of a Bronze Age copper alloy socketed axe. Yet, the evaluation area’s proximity to the River Great Stour would have made it favourable land for use as farmland or settlement. However, any settlement would probably have been located slightly further away from the river to avoid the seasonal flooding, possibly on the higher ground to the west or east of the evaluation area.

2.2.5 The lack of evidence within the landscape could be related to a lack of previous archaeological intrusive investigation. Cropmarks of two possible ring ditches, are located 470m to the northeast of the evaluation area. These have yet to be investigated through intrusive archaeological surveys but are likely to be prehistoric. They would imply a prehistoric community was present in the landscape though at which point in time remains unknown.

Romano-British (AD 43 – 410)

2.2.6 Archaeological evidence of a Roman presence in Ashford is abundant in the southern section of the town with a large Roman roadside settlement discovered at Westhawk Farm, Kingsnorth, 5km to the southwest of the evaluation area. However, evidence in the northern section of the town is scarce, possibly as a result of activity being focused to the south. Only a single find is recorded in the KHER within the 1km study area comprising a fragment of a Roman vessel 510m to the north of the evaluation area.

2.2.7 A possible Roman road ran from Ashford to Canterbury on a similar alignment to Canterbury Road. Roman roads would often be a hub for past activity with a known Romano-British farmstead in Wye found 600 m to the west of its projected alignment (Brindle et al 2017). It is possible that further settlements may have existed along the route, maybe in the Kennington area. Therefore, it is possible that there was a more defined Romano-British presence within this landscape than the current archaeological evidence is implying.

Early Medieval (AD 410 – 1066)

2.2.8 Little is known of the settlement pattern or use of the landscape within Ashford until the creation of the town sometime during the 9th century (Ashford Borough Council 2017). The evidence that has been uncovered shows a focus of activity in the Willesborough area of the town approximately 3km to the south of the evaluation area. Minor settlements are also thought to have existed at some of the surrounding villages, now districts within the town, by the Late Anglo-Saxon period such as Kennington, 1.3km to the northwest of the evaluation area.

Medieval (AD 1066 – 1540)

2.2.9 The closest settlement to the evaluation area recorded in the Domesday Book of 1086 is the manor of Kennington though many of the villages located in the wider landscape (Sevington, Wye, Brook) had been established by this time too. Most of Ashford fell under the jurisdiction of the Abbey of St Augustus in Canterbury both prior to and following the Norman Conquest.

2.2.10 There is evidence within the archaeological record and in documentary sources that there was a well-settled and prosperous agricultural society in Ashford during the medieval period. This was first recognised as early as 1243 when Henry III granted the town a charter to hold a market for livestock. Later during the 15th and 16th centuries cloth and wool trade flourished with much of the agricultural landscape around Ashford and around many of the dispersed settlements in the wider region of the Borough given over to use as pasture for grazing of sheep. Several medieval moated sites, symbols of medieval aristocrats are present within Ashford that point towards a concretion of wealth and status in the countryside (Ashford Borough Council 2017).

2.2.11 A medieval manor house known as Conningbrook Manor is thought to have existed to the south of the evaluation area, possibly close to the later post-medieval house that is also known as Conningbrook Manor. There are almost no records of the manor as it was part of the larger manor of Kennington and was not recorded separately in documentary evidence. However, Ashford Archaeological Society have conducted investigations along the north-eastern bank of

Conningbrook Lakes and revealed the medieval remains of a Conningbrook Chapel, a former church associated with the Manor, along with a medieval well.

Post-medieval (AD 1540 – 1900)

2.2.12 Conningbrook Manor is a 17th century Grade II Listed house located 650m to the south of the evaluation area (TR 04 SW 267). Possibly the replacement of an earlier medieval manor house, the listed building was later developed into a working farmstead with farm buildings constructed to the east (MKE 87368). It is likely that the land to the north of the farmstead including the evaluation area fell with the landholdings of the manor during the postmedieval period.

2.2.13 In addition to Conningbrook Manor farmstead, several other farms were established during the post-medieval period pointing to a well organised and highly developed farming community in the area. A contributing factor to their establishment may have been the creation of a network of drainage ditches in the farmland around the evaluation area to help control the seasonal flooding of the area by the River Great Stour. This would have meant that the lands use of farming was more stable and could be more profitable.

Modern (AD 1901 – Present)

2.2.14 Historic mapping from the middle of the 19th century up to present day shows the evaluation area has not changed in almost 180 years and that its use has, since this the production of the earliest detailed cartographic map of the area, been for farming. The only distinct variation is the later creation/expansion of the drainage ditches present within the evaluation area. Apart from the later excavation of Conningbrook Quarry and suburban expansion of former villages, such as Kennington, the wider area has remained undeveloped.

2.2.15 The only significant alteration to the landscape during this period was the construction of the of the railway line to the west of the evaluation area that formed part of the Southeastern Railway. Set on its own embankment, the construction of the line severed the agricultural landscape that existed between Willesborough Road and Blackwall Road in two.

2.2.16 Geophysical survey in the fields on the western side of the railway line, 240m to the west of the evaluation area, revealed a number of linear anomalies. These were later investigated as part of an archaeological evaluation and identified to be the remains of post-medieval or possibly medieval, field boundaries (SWAT 2018). The discovery indicates that the more regular large open field system that we see today was previously subdivided into smaller fields likely under ownerships of several individuals. The later re-organisation of the field system was

probably a result of the Enclosure Acts from the 17th-19th centuries that saw land ownerships boundary changes and the removal of former medieval strip field systems.

- 2.2.17 The KHER records a World War II Supermarine Spitfire crash sites 280m to the southwest of the evaluation area. The aircraft is noted to have crashed on 11th September 1944 following engagement with German fighter craft.

3 PALAEOLITHIC ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND GEOARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND

3.1 Introduction

- 3.1.1 The Palaeolithic archaeological and geoarchaeological potential of the evaluation area has been specifically highlighted and was assessed in a prior Palaeolithic archaeological and geoarchaeological desk-based assessment, which included the production of an initial deposit model and the creation of a Geoarchaeological Landscape Characterisation (GLC) (WA 2021b). The results are summarised below.

3.2 Previous Palaeolithic archaeological and geoarchaeological investigations related to the proposed development

Harrison Collection (1980s-1990s)

- 3.2.1 Aggregate extraction beginning in the early 20th century and increased towards the end of the century at the Conningbrook Quarry, located immediately south and west of the evaluation area and mapped by the BGS as River Terrace Deposits 3 of the River Great Stour. When aggregate extraction began producing artefactual and faunal material, a team led by David Harrison conducted regular site visits, recovering Pleistocene fauna and artefacts both from the conveyor, excavations and amateur collections (ASE 2017b).
- 3.2.2 Finds included the discovery of a bison horn core and the presence of intact Holocene and Pleistocene deposits of the Great Stour. The collected flint artefacts contained a range of material including handaxes (Lower Palaeolithic), Levallois cores (Middle Palaeolithic) and a blade point (Upper Palaeolithic; Jacobi et al 2006; Jacobi 2007). The blade point is typotechnologically diagnostic of the Lincombian-Ranisian-Jerzmanowician (LRJ) technocomplex. The LRJ is regarded to be the first Upper Palaeolithic techno-complex in Britain (Jacobi and Higham 2011), dated early in late MIS 3 (40–29 kya).
- 3.2.3 The faunal material recovered from base of the sequence has been attributed by Carrant and Jacobi (2011) as belonging to the Pinhole Mammal Assemblage Zone (MAZ), which is consistent with MIS 3 (57-29kya) (Carrant and Jacobi 2011 ASE). The material and records are now curated at the Harrison institute (ASE2017a).
- 3.2.4 As part of the program of mitigation

associated with redevelopment of the former Conningbrook Quarry, a series of radiocarbon dates on faunal material recovered by Harrison has been produced by the Oxford Radiocarbon laboratory (ASE 2017b). These are:

OxA-1069 Bone, mammoth 33200 ± 1300 BP

OxA-1610 Bone, mammoth $\delta^{13}C = -21.0$ 35200 ± 1600 BP

OxA-1611 Bone, mammoth $\delta^{13}C = -26.0$ 38600 ± 2400 BP

OxA-1612 HZM58.14184, bone, w.rhino $\delta^{13}C = -21.0$ 34000 ± 1400 BP

OxA-1613 HZM58.14184, bone, w. rhino $\delta^{13}C = -26.0$ 35000 ± 1500 BP

OxA-1644 Bone, mammoth $\delta^{13}C = -26.0$ 37300 ± 1900 BP

OxA-1645 HZM58.14184, bone, w. rhino $\delta^{13}C = -26.0$ 33600 ± 1200 BP

3.2.4 These radiocarbon dates are consistent with a Middle Devensian date (MIS 3; 57–29 kya).

Geoarchaeological Interpretation of Geotechnical Site Investigations at Conningbrook Manor Pit, Kennington, Kent. (ASE2017a)

3.2.5 In 2017, in advance of development works at Conningbrook Lakes (the former quarry area), ASE reported on the results from a watching brief, integrating their results with previous geotechnical works at the Site, which identified the extent of intact Pleistocene and Holocene sediments.

3.2.6 The study confirmed the survival of Quaternary deposits at the Conningbrook Lakes site and a stratigraphy consistent with the deposits investigated by Harrison. They also identified additional intact Pleistocene Head deposits and Holocene alluvium across the site which was previously believed to have been removed by aggregate extraction.

Geoarchaeological Test Pits 1-8 and 12-15 at Conningbrook Manor Pit, Kennington, Kent. (ASE 2017b)

3.2.7 Following the above report, ASE conducted a geoarchaeological evaluation of the area directly west and south-west of the evaluation area which included an updated model incorporating their previous works. Small amounts of CBM (ceramic building material) were recovered from the made ground but no artefacts or faunal material was recovered from the intact Pleistocene deposits. A series of environmental samples and a single OSL sample have been taken but, as yet the results have not been reported.

3.2.8 The results of the evaluation determined the extent of disturbance from the quarrying activity and highlighted areas of intact Quaternary deposits. They concluded that, aside from minor

mitigation works comprising a watching brief for the remaining phases of works, the development would not affect the intact deposits of archaeological significance and recommended that the samples be processed along with further analysis of the Harrison collection.

3.2.9 Conningbrook Park, Ashford, Kent: Pleistocene and Palaeolithic Desk-Based Assessment. QUEST, University of Reading (Allen 2019)

3.2.10 In 2019 QUEST assessed the Pleistocene potential of an area of land at Conningbrook Park located to the north of the present evaluation area and the previously investigated Conningbrook Lakes (ASE 2017b). The works demonstrated intact Pleistocene deposits were present in this area and interpreted as:

- River Terrace Deposits – Terrace 3 of the River Great Stour
- Head-Brickearth, and
- Floodplain Alluvium

3.3 Geoarchaeological Landscape Characterisation (GLC)

Introduction

3.3.1 The initial deposit model and Geoarchaeological Landscape Characterisation (GLC) produced for the evaluation area (WA2021) used the results of the recent and existing GI works (Geo-environmental 2021; RSK 2018), previous geoarchaeological investigations (ASE 2017a; 2017b; Allen 2019), BGS mapping (BGS online viewer) and a LiDAR survey to identify the principal superficial deposits across the evaluation area, defining their extent (where possible) and providing an initial assessment of their geoarchaeological and archaeological potential.

LiDAR

3.3.2 Environment Agency LiDAR data coverage for the Proposed Scheme was examined but no evidence was apparent for any buried landform features, such as palaeochannels or gravel eyots.

Stratigraphy

3.3.3 The stratigraphy encountered across the deposit modelling area is divided into three main units: Topsoil, Alluvium and Sands and Gravels. Deposits of Head and Made Ground were also recorded from the immediate vicinity of the evaluation area. These units are listed and described below.

Topsoil

- 3.3.4 Topsoil was recorded across the evaluation area and was present in all window samples along Transect 1. The Topsoil was characterised as a rooted sandy clay ranging in thickness from 0.20m at 0.00m bgl (32.26m OD) in WAWS2 to 0.30m at 0.00m bgl (32.40m OD) in WAWS5. This deposit represents modern soils formed along the current with floodplain of the River Great Stour.

Made Ground

- 3.3.5 Made Ground has been identified surrounding the evaluation area and is mostly associated with the 20th century quarrying. No made ground has been recorded within the evaluation area.

Alluvium

- 3.3.6 Alluvium was recorded in all boreholes across the evaluation area (WAWS1-8). Deposits generally consisted of fine-grained firm to soft silty and sandy clays. The units are described as clast free with occasional rooting in the upper levels. The alluvium ranges in thickness from 0.60m at 0.30m bgl (32.27m OD) in WAWS7 to 1.80m at 1.30m bgl (32.06m OD) in WAWS2.

Head

- 3.3.7 Whilst sediments identified as Head have been identified in the wider area, no Head deposits are recorded within the evaluation area.

Sands and Gravels

- 3.3.8 Sands and Gravels were recorded in three boreholes in the evaluation area (WAWS4, WAWS6 and WAWS7) sealed by Alluvium. WAWS6 recorded 0.2m+ at 1.80m bgl (30.69m OD) and WAWS7 recorded 1.10m at 0.90m bgl (31.67m OD) highlighting an increase in thickness and height consistent with river terrace deposits.

- 3.3.9 The lithological descriptions are generally consistent suggesting a clayey fine to coarse sand with the exception of WAWS6 which includes a gravelly component of sub angular to sub rounded flint. These deposits reflect fluvial deposition consistent with the BGS mapping of terrace deposits although the clay component within the lithology could suggest an element of solifluction/colluvial processes being present.

Bedrock

- 3.3.10 Although no interventions within the evaluation area have reached bedrock, the BGS attributes it to the Folkestone and Gault formations.

3.4 Palaeolithic archaeological and geoarchaeological potential

- 3.4.1 The Palaeolithic potential of the evaluation area can be considered in relation to zones of Palaeolithic archaeological potential provided by the Great Stour Basin Palaeolithic Project (Kent County Council 2015). The evaluation area falls within Palaeolithic Character Areas designated SP_34 and SP_36 and is located immediately west of the SP_37.
- 3.4.2 SP_34 has been suggested to contain Holocene alluvial deposits, underlain by later Pleistocene terraces deposits of the Great Stour, with late Pleistocene slope and can be underlain at its edges by Pleistocene slopewash. SP_36 is characterised as areas with poorly dated later Middle Pleistocene or Late Pleistocene (500,000-10,000 BP) terrace deposits and Head-Brickearth, whilst SP_37, located on the north/east side of the Great Stour valley has been identified as containing fluvial terrace deposits (attributed by the BGS as Terrace 4), most likely dating to the later middle Pleistocene (500-300kya).
- 3.4.3 The archaeological and geoarchaeological potential of the Quaternary deposits identified within the Site by the GLC are considered below.

Fluvial Sands and Gravels

- 3.4.4 The fluvial sands and gravels within the evaluation area are Pleistocene and belong to the terraces of the Great Stour. The age of these deposits is unclear, and they could include more than one terrace. However, they are likely to include deposits broadly equivalent to those located on the opposing western bank at Conningbrook Quarry (ASE 2017a, 2017b).
- 3.4.5 The deposits at Conningbrook Quarry have produced the Middle Devensian (59-27 Kya) faunal material, along with broadly contemporary Upper Palaeolithic archaeology (a blade point), as well as other Palaeolithic artefacts, which may be reworked from earlier deposits (handaxes and Levallois core) and a blade point (early Upper Palaeolithic; Jacobi et al 2006; Jacobi 2007). There is potential for similar early Upper Palaeolithic archaeology and paleoenvironmental evidence to occur with these deposits within the Site. Furthermore, if earlier terrace deposits are also present, these have broad potential to contain earlier contemporary, as well as reworked, Palaeolithic archaeology.

Alluvium

- 3.4.6 The Pleistocene Sands and Gravels in the Site are overlain by Holocene alluvium. The deposit modelling showed that the Holocene alluvium accumulated upon an uneven Pleistocene surface highlighting potential eyots forming islands of sands and gravel deposits and channelling which could be suggestive of braiding or an older route of the Great Stour. Such eyots may have formed a focus for archaeological activity by prehistoric human groups during

the late Upper Palaeolithic and/or Mesolithic. The alluvium record in GI from the evaluation area is minerogenic, with low potential to preserve significant paleoenvironmental evidence or material for radiocarbon dating. Whilst palaeoenvironmental remains (such as pollen) are likely to be present, they may be derived from large source areas within the catchment and are thus of limited precision and value. Such minerogenic alluvium does, however, have the potential to contain, or mask, archaeological features and layers, alluvium still has the potential to contain or mask archaeology, although thus far no archaeology has been recorded / known from the alluvium in the area of the evaluation area.

3.4.7 Currently there is insufficient GI coverage across the evaluation area to precisely determine the presence/absence of peat which can often be locally present or existing as more extensive beds. It is possible that there may be highly localised peats preserved, either along the margins of the floodplain or in palaeochannel features. Where present these deposits would have a high geoarchaeological potential. The topography of the underlying Pleistocene deposits suggests highs and lows, the latter potentially forming depressions in which peat or other fine-grained deposits may have accumulated.

3.5 Recent investigations in the area

3.5.1 There are no known recent archaeological investigations within the area.

4 Aims and Objectives

4.1 Archaeological evaluation

General aims

4.1.1 The general aims (or purpose) of the evaluation, in compliance with the ClfA Standard and guidance for archaeological field evaluation (ClfA 2014a), are to:

- provide information about the archaeological potential of the site; and
- inform either the scope and nature of any further archaeological work that may be required; or the formation of a mitigation strategy (to offset the impact of the development on the archaeological resource); or a management strategy.

General objectives

4.1.2 In order to achieve the above aims, the general objectives of the evaluation are to:

- determine the presence or absence of archaeological features, deposits, structures, artefacts or ecofacts within the specified area;

- establish, within the constraints of the evaluation, the extent, character, date, condition and quality of any surviving archaeological remains;
- place any identified archaeological remains within a wider historical and archaeological context in order to assess their significance; and
- make available information about the archaeological resource within the site by reporting on the results of the evaluation.

4.2 Palaeolithic evaluation

General aims

4.2.1 The general aims (or purpose) of the evaluation, in compliance with the ClfA Standard and guidance for archaeological field evaluation (ClfA 2014a), are to:

- provide information about the Palaeolithic archaeological and geoarchaeological potential of the site;
- consider the possible significance of any Palaeolithic archaeological and geoarchaeological evidence present in the context of national and regional research priorities and agendas, and
- inform either the scope and nature of any further Palaeolithic archaeological work that may be required; or the formation of a mitigation strategy (to offset the impact of the development on the archaeological resource); or a management strategy.

General objectives

4.2.2 In order to achieve the above aims, the general objectives of the evaluation are to:

- to establish the potential for Quaternary deposits in the site to preserve significant Palaeolithic archaeological and geoarchaeological remains;
- to establish the potential of the Quaternary deposits to preserve significant paleoenvironmental evidence;
- where appropriate, obtain samples from Quaternary deposits for palaeoenvironmental assessment and scientific dating;
- make available information about the archaeological and geoarchaeological resource within the site by reporting on the results of the evaluation; and

- to make recommendations for further work, where appropriate, including for paleoenvironmental assessment and scientific dating of retained samples from Quaternary deposits.

5 METHODOLOGY

5.1 Introduction

5.1.1 All fieldwork was conducted in accordance with the methodology set out in the Specification (Wessex 2022) and carried out in compliance with the standards outlined in the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists' Standards Guidance for Archaeological Evaluations (ClfA 2014).

5.2 Fieldwork

5.2.1 A total of thirty three evaluation trenches were excavated (Figure 2). Each trench was initially scanned by a metal detector for surface finds prior to excavation. Excavation was carried out using a mechanical excavator fitted with a toothless ditching bucket, removing the overburden to the top of the first recognisable archaeological horizon, under the constant supervision of an experienced archaeologist.

5.2.2 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 ClfA 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.

5.2.3 On completion, the trenches were made safe and left open in order to provide the opportunity for a curatorial monitoring visit. Backfilling was carried out once all recording, surveying, and monitoring had been completed.

5.3 Recording

5.3.1 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 OD heights.

5.3.2 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 project archive.

- 5.3.3 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 as [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.).

6 Results

6.1 Introduction

- 6.1.1 The archaeological works have investigated the extents of the proposed development area using thirty one trenches, each measuring between 20m and 34m in length. Two short contingency trenches were excavated to confirm the course of Palaeochannel revealed during geoarchaeological investigation in Test-Pit 115 in Trench 7.

- 6.1.2 Although preservation conditions were considered favourable only one discrete feature of general Iron Age date was revealed in contingency Trench 33 and spindle whorl of Late Iron Age was retrieved from subsoil in the same trench.

- 6.1.3 Palaeochannel was exposed in Trenches 7 and 33. Old courses of at least two streams were revealed in southern part of the site and a flood plain associated with potential third stream was revealed in northern extent. These discoveries were not accompanied by any findings of archaeological interest and just confirm re-establishment of natural water courses in the area. No archaeological finds or features were present within Trenches 1-32.

6.2 Stratigraphic Deposit Sequence

- 6.2.1 A relatively consistent stratigraphic sequence was recorded across the majority of the Site comprising topsoil sealing intact subsoil, which overlay the natural geological drift deposits. The topsoil generally consisted of dark organic brown sandy clay with frequent roots overlying the subsoil which consisted of light to mid grey silt clay with moderate small rounded stones and occasional charcoal flecks. Natural geology at upper level comprised yellow-grey to dark blue-grey silt-sand-clays with moderate to frequent manganese, interbedded with orange clay-silt with infrequent manganese and abundant iron pan.

6.3 Archaeological Results

Trenches 1-33 (Figures 2-7, Plates 2-6)

- 6.3.1 Trench 1 was placed in southern part of the site in NW-SE alignment and measured 30 metres in length by 1.8metres in width and 0.45metres in depth. The overburden comprised 0.25metres-thick topsoil (101) and 0.1metres-thick subsoil (102). It exposed natural geology context (103) comprising mid orange-brown silty-clay with rare concentrations of iron pan and manganese and large patches of light yellow-brown silty-clay. There were also few outcrops of blue-grey silty-clay. No archaeological cuts, deposits or artefacts were revealed in this Trench. Geoarchaeological Test-Pit TP101 was excavated at south-eastern end of this trench and the results of geoarchaeological investigation are presented in separate report.
- 6.3.2 Trench 2 was placed in southern part of the site in N-S alignment and measured 16.3metres in length by 1.8metres in width and 0.6metres in depth. The overburden comprised 0.3metres-thick top-soil and 0.1metres-thick sub-soil. Trench has exposed natural geology context (203) comprising mid orange-brown silty-clay with rare concentrations of iron pan and manganese and infrequent large patches of light yellow-brown silty-clay. No archaeological cuts, deposits or artefacts were revealed in this trench. Geoarchaeological Test-Pit TP117 was excavated at northern end of this trench and the results of geoarchaeological investigation are presented in separate report.
- 6.3.3 Trench 3 was placed in southern part of the site in E-W alignment and measured 27.6 metres in length by 1.8metres in width and 0.4metres in depth and 0.7metres in depth at eastern end. The overburden comprised 0.3metres-thick topsoil (301) and 0.1 to 0.3metres-thick subsoil (302). Trench has exposed natural geology context (303) comprising firmly compacted light grey-brown clay-silt with frequent manganese and iron pan. No archaeological cuts, deposits or artefacts were revealed in this trench. Geoarchaeological Test-Pit TP100 was excavated at northern end of this trench and the results of geoarchaeological investigation are presented in separate report.
- 6.3.4 Trench 4 was placed in southern extent of the site in NE-SW alignment and measured 24.3 metres in length by 1.8metres in width and 0.8metres in depth and 1metre in depth at its south west end. Overburden comprised 0.3metres-thick top-soil (401) and also 0.3metres-thick sub-soil (402). Trench has exposed natural geology context (403) comprising mid brown-grey clay-silt with frequent manganese, iron pan and lenses of grey silty-clay. A natural watercourse [404] was exposed within north-eastern extent of this trench. Feature was evaluated 0.3metres further down and investigation has revealed steep-sided natural channel backfilled with context (405) comprising firmly compacted blue-grey-brown clay-loam with moderate to

frequent iron pan and manganese. No archaeological cuts, deposits or artefacts were revealed in this trench and in old stream's backfill. One modern land drain housing red earthenware pipe was exposed alongside south-eastern edge of the stream which was also revealed in evaluation Trenches 5 and 32.

- 6.3.5 Trench 5 was placed in southern part of the site in NW-SE alignment and measured 22.80metres in length by 1.8metres in width and 0.67metres in depth. Overburden comprised 0.3metres-thick top-soil (501) and 0.2metres-thick sub-soil (502). Trench has exposed natural geology context (503) comprising orange-grey clay-silt with moderate manganese, iron pan and infrequent outcrops of blue-grey silty-clay. A natural course of an old stream was exposed at south-eastern end of this trench. Feature was also revealed in evaluation Trenches 4 and 32. Archaeological sieving of sub-soil from this trench did not revealed any artefacts. No archaeological cuts or deposits were revealed here. Geoarchaeological Test-Pit TP105 was excavated at north-western end of this trench and the results of geoarchaeological investigation are presented in separate report.
- 6.3.6 Trench 6 was placed in southern part of the site in NE-SW alignment and measured 30.80metres in length by 1.8metres in width and 0.55metres in depth. Overburden comprised 0.25metres-thick top-soil (601) and 0.2metres-thick sub-soil (602). Trench has exposed natural geology context (603) comprising orange-grey clay-silt with moderate manganese, iron pan and several outcrops of blue-grey silty-clay. A natural course of an old stream was exposed at north-eastern end of this trench. Similar but different natural feature was also revealed in evaluation Trenches 4, 5 and 32. No archaeological cuts, deposits or artefacts were revealed here. Geoarchaeological Test-Pit TP103 was excavated at north-eastern end of this trench and the results of geoarchaeological investigation are presented in separate report.
- 6.3.7 Trench 7 was placed in southern part of the site in NW-SE alignment and measured 34.1metres in length by 1.8metres in width and 0.55metres in depth. A perpendicular extension was dug at its south-eastern extent end measured 5.8metres in length and 1.8metres in width. Overburden comprised 0.35metres-thick top-soil (701) and 0.2metres-thick sub-soil (702). Trench has exposed natural geology context (703) comprising orange-grey clay-silt with moderate manganese, iron pan and several outcrops of blue-grey silty-clay. No archaeological cuts, deposits or artefacts were revealed here. Geoarchaeological Test-Pit TP115 was excavated at south-eastern end of this trench and it exposed Palaeochannel in NE-SW alignment capped by 0.2metre-thick band of orange clay-silt with frequent iron pan. The course of Palaeochannel was confirmed within excavated extension and in contingency Trench

33. Further detailed results of geoarchaeological investigation are presented in separate report.

- 6.3.8 Trench 8 was placed in southern part of the site in NW-SE alignment and measured 30.88metres in length by 1.8metres in width and 0.61metres in depth. Overburden comprised 0.3metres-thick top-soil (801) and 0.2metres-thick sub-soil (802). Trench has exposed natural geology context (803) comprising orange-grey clay-silt with moderate manganese, iron pan and several small outcrops of blue-grey silty-clay. No archaeological cuts, deposits or artefacts were revealed here.
- 6.3.9 Trench 9 was placed in southern part of the site in NE-SW alignment and measured 34.58metres in length by 1.8metres in width and 0.61metres in depth. Overburden comprised 0.3metres-thick top-soil (901) and 0.2metres-thick sub-soil (902). Trench has exposed natural geology context (903) comprising orange-grey clay-silt with moderate manganese, iron pan and several large and small outcrops of blue-grey silty-clay. No archaeological cuts, deposits or artefacts were revealed here. Geoarchaeological Test-Pit TP104 was excavated at north-eastern end of this trench and the results of geoarchaeological investigation are presented in separate report.
- 6.3.10 Trench 10 was placed in southern part of the site in NE-SW alignment and measured 33.44metres in length by 1.8metres in width and 0.65metres in depth. Overburden comprised 0.3metres-thick top-soil (1001) and 0.2metres-thick sub-soil (1002). Trench has exposed natural geology context (1003) comprising orange-grey clay-silt with moderate manganese, iron pan and several small outcrops of blue-grey silty-clay. No archaeological cuts, deposits or artefacts were revealed here. Geoarchaeological Test-Pit TP102 was excavated at south-western end of this trench and the results of geoarchaeological investigation are presented in separate report.
- 6.3.11 Trench 11 was placed in southern part of the site in NW-SE alignment and measured 30.57metres in length by 1.8metres in width and 0.46metres in depth. Overburden comprised 0.3metres-thick top-soil (1101) and 0.2metres-thick sub-soil (1102). Trench has exposed natural geology context (1103) comprising orange-grey clay-silt with moderate manganese, iron pan and several outcrops of blue-grey silty-clay. No archaeological cuts, deposits or artefacts were revealed here.
- 6.3.12 Trench 12 was placed in southern part of the site in NE-SW alignment and measured 31.17metres in length by 1.8metres in width and 0.58metres in depth. Overburden comprised 0.32metres-thick top-soil (1201) and 0.18metres-thick sub-soil (1202). Trench has exposed

natural geology context (1203) comprising orange-grey clay-silt with moderate manganese, iron pan and several outcrops of blue-grey silty-clay. No archaeological cuts, deposits or artefacts were revealed here.

- 6.3.13 Trench 13 was placed in southern part of the site in NW-SE alignment and measured 32.78metres in length by 1.8metres in width and 0.42metres in depth. Overburden comprised 0.2metres-thick top-soil (1301) and 0.13metres-thick sub-soil (1302). Trench has exposed natural geology context (1303) comprising grey to light orange-grey clay-silt with moderate manganese and iron pan. No archaeological cuts, deposits or artefacts were revealed here. Geoarchaeological Test-Pit TP107 was excavated at south-eastern end of this trench and the results of geoarchaeological investigation are presented in separate report.
- 6.3.14 Trench 14 was placed in southern part of the site in NE-SW alignment and measured 30.08metres in length by 1.8metres in width and 0.55metres in depth. Overburden comprised 0.25metres-thick top-soil (1401) and 0.15metres-thick sub-soil (1402). Trench has exposed natural geology context (1403) comprising grey to light orange-grey clay-silt with moderate manganese and iron pan. No archaeological cuts, deposits or artefacts were revealed here. Geoarchaeological Test-Pit TP106 was excavated at south-western end of this trench and the results of geoarchaeological investigation are presented in separate report.
- 6.3.15 Trench 15 was placed in southern part of the site in NW-SE alignment and measured 28.22metres in length by 1.8metres in width and 0.46metres in depth. Overburden comprised 0.3metres-thick top-soil (1501) and 0.1metres-thick sub-soil (1502). Trench has exposed natural geology context (1503) comprising orange-grey clay-silt with moderate manganese and iron pan. No archaeological cuts, deposits or artefacts were revealed here.
- 6.3.16 Trench 16 was placed in southern part of the site in NE-SW alignment and measured 30.96metres in length by 1.8metres in width and 0.45metres in depth. Overburden comprised 0.3metres-thick top-soil (1601) and 0.1metres-thick sub-soil (1602). Trench has exposed natural geology context (1603) comprising grey to light orange-grey clay-silt with moderate manganese and iron pan. No archaeological cuts, deposits or artefacts were revealed here.
- 6.3.17 Trench 17 was placed in northern part of the site in NE-SW alignment and measured 34.84metres in length by 1.8metres in width and 0.54metres in depth. Overburden comprised 0.3metres-thick top-soil (1701) and 0.1metres-thick sub-soil (1702). Trench has exposed natural geology context (1703) comprising grey to light orange-grey clay-silt with moderate manganese and iron pan. No archaeological cuts, deposits or artefacts were revealed here.

Geoarchaeological Test-Pit TP108 was excavated at north-eastern end of this trench and the results of geoarchaeological investigation are presented in separate report.

- 6.3.18 Trench 18 was placed in northern part of the site in NW-SE alignment and measured 31.80metres in length by 1.8metres in width and 0.44metres in depth. Overburden comprised 0.25metres-thick top-soil (1801) and 0.1metres-thick sub-soil (1802). Trench has exposed natural geology context (1803) comprising orange-grey clay-silt with moderate manganese and iron pan. No archaeological cuts, deposits or artefacts were revealed here. Modern land drain was exposed here.
- 6.3.19 Trench 19 was placed in northern part of the site in NE-SW alignment and measured 30.52metres in length by 1.8metres in width and 0.6metres in depth. Overburden comprised 0.3metres-thick top-soil (1901) and 0.1metres-thick sub-soil (1902). Trench has exposed natural geology context (1903) comprising grey to light orange-grey clay-silt with moderate manganese and iron pan. No archaeological cuts, deposits or artefacts were revealed here. Geoarchaeological Test-Pit TP109 was excavated at north-eastern end of this trench and the results of geoarchaeological investigation are presented in separate report.
- 6.3.20 Trench 20 was placed in northern part of the site in NW-SE alignment and measured 36.80metres in length by 1.8metres in width and 0.52metres in depth. Overburden comprised 0.3metres-thick top-soil (2001) and 0.15metres-thick sub-soil (2002). Trench has exposed natural geology context (2003) comprising grey to light orange-grey clay-silt with moderate manganese and iron pan. No archaeological cuts, deposits or artefacts were revealed here. Geoarchaeological Test-Pit TP110 was excavated at north-western end of this trench and the results of geoarchaeological investigation are presented in separate report. Two modern land drains were revealed here.
- 6.3.21 Trench 21 was placed in northern part of the site in NE-SW alignment and measured 31.10metres in length by 1.8metres in width and 0.46metres in depth. Overburden comprised 0.2metres-thick top-soil (2101) and 0.1metres-thick sub-soil (2102). Trench has exposed natural geology context (2103) comprising grey to light orange-grey clay-silt with moderate manganese and iron pan. No archaeological cuts, deposits or artefacts were revealed here. Modern land drain was exposed within north-eastern extent of this trench.
- 6.3.22 Trench 22 was placed in northern part of the site in NW-SE alignment and measured 31.82metres in length by 1.8metres in width and 0.55metres in depth. Overburden comprised 0.3metres-thick top-soil (2201) and 0.15metres-thick sub-soil (2202). Trench has exposed natural geology context (2203) comprising grey to light orange-grey clay-silt with moderate

manganese and iron pan. No archaeological cuts, deposits or artefacts were revealed here. Geoarchaeological Test-Pit TP111 was excavated at north-western end of this trench and the results of geoarchaeological investigation are presented in separate report.

- 6.3.23 Trench 23 was placed in northern part of the site in NE-SW alignment and measured 30.80metres in length by 1.8metres in width and 0.57metres in depth. Overburden comprised 0.3metres-thick top-soil (2301) and 0.1metres-thick sub-soil (2302). Trench has exposed natural geology context (2303) comprising grey to light orange-grey clay-silt with moderate manganese and iron pan. No archaeological cuts, deposits or artefacts were revealed here.
- 6.3.24 Trench 24 was placed in northern part of the site in NE-SW alignment and measured 35.2metres in length by 1.8metres in width and 0.52metres in depth. Overburden comprised 0.3metres-thick top-soil (2401) and 0.1metres-thick sub-soil (2402). Trench has exposed natural geology context (2403) comprising grey to light orange-grey clay-silt with moderate manganese and iron pan. No archaeological cuts, deposits or artefacts were revealed here. Geoarchaeological Test-Pit TP116 was excavated at south-western end of this trench and the results of geoarchaeological investigation are presented in separate report.
- 6.3.25 Trench 25 was placed in northern part of the site in NW-SE alignment and measured 34.2metres in length by 1.8metres in width and 0.54metres in depth. Overburden comprised 0.3metres-thick top-soil (2501) and 0.15metres-thick sub-soil (2502). Trench has exposed natural geology context (2503) comprising grey to light orange-grey clay-silt with moderate manganese and iron pan. No archaeological cuts, deposits or artefacts were revealed here. Geoarchaeological Test-Pit TP112 was excavated at north-western end of this trench and the results of geoarchaeological investigation are presented in separate report. One modern land drain was exposed here.
- 6.3.26 Trench 26 was placed in northern part of the site in NE-SW alignment and measured 27.50metres in length by 1.8metres in width and 0.45metres in depth. Overburden comprised 0.2metres-thick top-soil (2601) and 0.1metres-thick sub-soil (2602). Trench has exposed natural geology context (2603) comprising grey to light orange-grey clay-silt with moderate manganese and iron pan. No archaeological cuts, deposits or artefacts were revealed here. Modern land drain was exposed within south-western extent of this trench.
- 6.3.27 Trench 27 was placed in northern part of the site in NE-SW alignment and measured 28.20metres in length by 1.8metres in width and 0.44metres in depth. Overburden comprised 0.25metres-thick top-soil (2701) and 0.1metres-thick sub-soil (2702). Trench has exposed natural geology context (2703) comprising grey to light orange-grey clay-silt with moderate

manganese and iron pan. No archaeological cuts, deposits or artefacts were revealed here. Modern land drain was exposed within north-eastern extent of this trench.

- 6.3.28 Trench 28 was placed in northern part of the site in NW-SE alignment and measured 28.60metres in length by 1.8metres in width and 0.58metres in depth. Overburden comprised 0.3metres-thick top-soil (2801) and 0.1metres-thick sub-soil (2802). Trench has exposed natural geology context (2803) comprising orange-grey clay-silt with moderate manganese and iron pan. No archaeological cuts, deposits or artefacts were revealed here. Two modern land drains were exposed here.
- 6.3.29 Trench 29 was placed in northern part of the site in NE-SW alignment and measured 30.6metres in length by 1.8metres in width and 0.56metres in depth. Overburden comprised 0.3metres-thick top-soil (2901) and 0.15metres-thick sub-soil (2902). Trench has exposed natural geology context (2903) comprising grey to light orange-grey clay-silt with moderate manganese and iron pan. No archaeological cuts, deposits or artefacts were revealed here. Two modern land drains were exposed in this trench.
- 6.3.30 Trench 30 was placed in northern part of the site in NW-SE alignment and measured 26.02metres in length by 1.8metres in width and 0.51metres in depth. Overburden comprised 0.3metres-thick top-soil (3001) and 0.1metres-thick sub-soil (3002). Trench has exposed natural geology context (3003) comprising orange-grey clay-silt with moderate manganese and iron pan. No archaeological cuts, deposits or artefacts were revealed here. One modern land drain was exposed here.
- 6.3.31 Trench 31 was placed in northern part of the site in NE-SW alignment and measured 29.13metres in length by 1.8metres in width and 0.7metres in depth. Overburden comprised 0.3metres-thick top-soil (3101) and 0.2metres-thick sub-soil (3102). Trench has exposed natural geology context (3103) comprising grey to light orange-grey clay-silt with moderate manganese and iron pan. No archaeological cuts, deposits or artefacts were revealed here. Modern land drain was exposed within central part of this trench.
- 6.3.32 Trench 32 was placed in southern part of the site in N-S alignment and measured 7.3 in length by 1.8metres in width and 0.6metres in depth. Overburden comprised 0.3metres-thick top-soil (3201) and 0.2metres-thick sub-soil (3202). Trench has exposed natural geology context (3203) comprising orange-grey clay-silt with moderate manganese and iron pan. No archaeological cuts, deposits or artefacts were revealed here. One modern land drain was exposed here.

6.3.33 Trench 33 was placed in southern part of the site in NW-SE alignment and measured 10.1metres in length by 1.8metres in width and 0.8metres in depth. Overburden comprised 0.3metres-thick top-soil (3301) and 0.1metres-thick sub-soil (3302). Trench has exposed natural geology context (3303) comprising orange-grey clay-silt with moderate manganese and iron pan. Further machining down has exposed Palaeochannel [3308] capped by 0.2metres-thick band of natural orange-grey clay-silt. Natural feature has had its sections cleaned and during this work a single Pit [3305] was revealed. Feature's infill produced Early to Late Iron Age dating evidence in form of pottery sherds and worked lithics. Further sieving of sub-soil (3302) have yielded couple worked flints and Iron Age spindle whorl.

6.4 Archaeological Narrative

6.4.1 Pit [3305] exposed in Trench 33 was sub-circular in plan with steep sides and mainly flat base. It measured 1.48metres in diameter and 0.66metres in depth. Its backfill comprised two deposits; primary fill (3306) was firmly compacted, orange-grey silt-clay with moderate iron pan and measured 0.1m in averaged thickness. That was capped by a secondary fill (3307) comprising firmly compacted orange clay-silt with frequent amount of iron pan and occasional charcoal flecks. This fill has produced 4 tiny potsherds belonging to the same sherd and two worked flint pieces. The finds were dated to general Iron Age. Additionally archaeological sieving of sub-soil directly overlaying this feature has yielded two pieces of worked flint and Late Iron Age spindle whorl. Feature was interpreted as a storage pit and was dug by people from potential nearby Iron Age settlement located somewhere to the south or southeast outside the evaluated area.

6.4.2 Courses of at least two rivers/streams were revealed in southern part of the site and a flood plain associated with third existing stream was revealed in northern extent. These discoveries were not accompanied by any findings of archaeological interest and just confirm re-establishment of natural water courses in the area.

6.4.3 The steep cut channel [3308] seen in Test Pit 115 Trench 7 is cutting the Folkestone Sands (Lower Greensands). The clay is darkest at the base where it has been filled with wash from the Gault Clay, which overlies the Greensands and was found in Test Pit 105. Also in the clays and waterlogged soils, iron is held in a ferrous state (Fe⁰) which also gives the deposits a black/blackish colour.

6.4.4 The clay gets lighter higher up in the test pit sequence, going brown/yellow at the top where the iron has oxidised, possibly during drier or waterless periods. The sands which are true green at the base of the test pit are heavily oxidized at the top of the sequence, air can easily

penetrate the sands, and the iron incorporates oxygen to become ferric (Fe₂O₃) and is brown in colour (= rust). Hence the lighter colours upwards through the channel infill and the yellows and browns of the Folkestone Formation sands.

- 6.4.5 Clays often have a component of smectite/montmorillonite which readily absorbs and loses water, causing clay to develop cracks in dry periods allowing air to penetrate into the top of the clay. Geoarchaeological test pits confirm the geological mapping at the site, there are Folkstone Sands with overlying Gault Clay. An interpretation is that the Folkestone Beds were subject to gullying and then quickly filled in with wash from the Gault. These gullies can form very quickly in geological terms. Peter Allen (*Pers. Comm.*) has observed in the Dorking area, where there are sands of the Hythe Beds, a footpath on a slope become gullied to a depth of over 1 m in a few months during a wet period.
- 6.4.6 This suggests that nothing too exceptional is needed to get a deep channel. Probably during a period of climatic deterioration in the Holocene decline of the vegetation surface run-off incised the channel and filled it in with the wash from the Gault. The infill could have happened very soon after the incision as gullies in sand tend to have sidewall collapse so the banks become gentler and usually a mix of collapsed sand and (clayey) infill.
- 6.4.7 No archaeological finds or features were present within Trenches 1-32.
- 6.4.8 The absence of any finds within the colluvial subsoil may also suggest that archaeological sites directly north and east of the proposed development area may be relatively minimal.

7 FINDS

7.1 Overview

- 7.1.1 Archaeological field evaluation has produced limited finds in form of tiny pottery sherds, spindle whorl and several worked flint pieces. All finds were derived from contexts registered in contingency Trench 33. The general preference for date is Iron Age.

7.2 Pottery (by Paul Hart)

- 7.2.1 Context (3307) [3305] produced 4 tiny shattered fragments of pottery, weighing less than 1 g in total, which likely derived from the same sherd. The fabric is slightly sandy and includes some occasional fine stone grits and burnt-out organics, the one intact surface showing an orange oxidation over a poorly fired dark brown core. The sand and grits are likely to be natural inclusions within the clay source and the organics an accidental introduction. The sample is far too small to indicate whether any additional tempering agents were or weren't

present within the original matrix and if the local geology contains potting soils that are naturally sandy then they could have been utilised at almost any period. The remains of this sherd are most likely to date between 4000 BC and 75 AD, rather than significantly later. Noting the preference for the use of sandy fabrics that occurred during the Iron Age in Kent, from around 1000/900 BC to 50 AD, there is a slight preference for the sherd to date within this phase, but no specific data is present.

7.3 Weight/spindle whorl (by Paul Hart)

7.3.1 Context (3302) subsoil produced a single intact undamaged pierced clay object, weighing 71 g (including some soil within the central hole). It is almost spherical, 44 mm high by 43-44 mm wide, with a slightly flattened base and a moderately angled top. The exterior of the central hole is a maximum of 14 mm in diameter, while the interior is more typically around 10 mm in diameter. The fabric is fine, with perhaps the intentional addition of some occasional small pellets of grog and it is fired to a bright orange colour. No precise parallels for the form are personally known at present (without research).

7.3.2 If this was used as a spindlewhorl, it is less typically and less likely to be Prehistoric, noting that all of the Later Prehistoric (1550 to 50 BC) spindlewhorls personally seen from Kent so far are smaller and of different shape, while usually being reduced and flint tempered. The presence of grog (if intentional) and the colour of the firing could indicate an Early Roman date between 75 and 125/150 AD, though Roman spindlewhorls are perhaps more often made from reworked pottery sherds.

7.4 Recommendation for pottery

7.4.1 Recommended discharge.

7.5 Lithics

7.5.1 By the time of writing this report, worked lithics assessment was not ready yet. Once it will be completed an updated version of this report will be issued.

8 Discussion

8.1 Introduction

8.1.1 The archaeological works on land at Conningbrook Park, Wetland Mitigation Ashford, Kent, has investigated the extents of the proposed development area using thirty three trenches, each measuring between 15m and 34m in length. Although preservation conditions were considered favourable only one discrete feature dated to Iron Age was revealed in contingency

Trench 33 located in southern part of the site and no archaeological finds or features were present within the other evaluation trenches 1-32.

8.2 Conclusions

8.2.1 The archaeological investigation has been successful in fulfilling the primary aims and objectives of the Specification and has assessed the archaeological potential of land intended for development. The results from this work will be used to aid and inform the Senior Archaeological Officer of any further archaeological mitigation measures that may be necessary in connection with any future development proposals.

8.2.2 Development proposals will have an impact to the depth of 1metre below existing ground level. The results of this work are showing that standalone discrete feature of Iron Age date was revealed in southern part of the site and the general absence of archaeological discoveries in surrounding trenches implies that proposed development won't be having any significant impact on buried archaeological resource at upper levels of the site.

8.2.3 Additionally the results of geoarchaeological investigation (presented in separate report) are showing that the potential Pleistocene deposits and Palaeontological interest are located deeper than the disturbance from wetland-associated groundworks therefore proposed development won't be having any impact on buried archaeological and geoarchaeological resources at lower levels of the site.

8.3 Recommendations

8.3.1 No further work is proposed to take place on this site.

9 Archive

9.1 General

9.1.1 The Site archive, which will include paper records, photographic records, graphics and digital data, will be prepared following nationally recommended guidelines (SMA 1995; ClfA 2009; Brown 2011; ADS 2013).

9.1.2 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 and A4 graphics. The Site Archive will be retained at SWAT Archaeology offices until such time it can be transferred to a Kent Museum.

10 ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

10.1.1 SWAT would like to thank the Client for commissioning the project. Thanks are also extended to Wendy Rogers, Senior Archaeological Officer at Kent County Council, for her advice and assistance.

10.1.2 Joe Cantwell, Bobbie-Jo Campbell, Django Rayner and Peter Cichy carried out the archaeological fieldwork; survey and illustrations were produced by Bartek Cichy and this report was written by Peter Cichy with contributions from Pete Knowles, Bartek Cichy and Paul Hart. Project was directed by Dr Paul Wilkinson MCIfA, FRSA of SWAT Archaeology.

11 REFERENCES

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12 APPENDIX 1 – Core personnel

Project Management - Fieldwork	Role
Dr Paul Wilkinson, MCIfA, FSA	Director
Peter Cichy	Project Manager
Joe Cantwell	Site Supervisor
Django Rayner	Surveyor
Finds	Specialist
Flint	Pete Knowles
Early Prehistoric Pottery	Paul Hart
Later prehistoric and Roman pottery	Dr Malcolm Lyne
Saxon, Medieval and Post Medieval pottery	Luke Barber
Metal finds, glass and oyster	Ges Moody
Conservation support and x-ray photography	Dana Goodburn-Brown, MSc
Samples and human remains	Specialist
Environmental soil processing	QUEST
Faunal, floral micro and macro remains	Dr Mike Allen
Animal Remains (Bones)	Carol White
Palaeomagnetism	Peter Cichy
Human Remains	Dr Chris Dieter
Micro-excavation (cremation burials)	Dana Goodburn-Brown
Post-Excavation and publication	Role
Peter Cichy	Author
Bartek Cichy	Author, illustrator

13 APPENDIX 2 – HER FORM

Site Name: Land at Conningbrook Park, Wetland Mitigation, Ashford in Kent

SWAT Site Code: CNW-EV-22

Site Address: As above

Summary

Swale & Thames Survey Company (SWAT Archaeology) was commissioned to undertake an archaeological evaluation on Land at Conningbrook Park, Wetland Mitigation, Ashford in Kent. The archaeological programme was monitored by the Senior Archaeological Officer at Kent County Council.

The archaeological works have investigated the extents of the proposed development area using thirty one trenches, each measuring between 20m and 34m in length. Two short contingency trenches were excavated to confirm the course of Palaeochannel revealed during geoarchaeological investigation in Test-Pit 115 in Trench 7.

Although preservation conditions were considered favourable only one discrete feature of general Iron Age date was revealed in contingency Trench 33 and spindle whorl of Late Iron Age was retrieved from subsoil in the same trench.

Palaeochannel was exposed in Trenches 7 and 33. Old courses of at least two streams were revealed in southern part of the site and a flood plain associated with potential third stream was revealed in northern extent. These discoveries were not accompanied by any findings of archaeological interest and just confirm re-establishment of natural water courses in the area. No archaeological finds or features were present within Trenches 1-32.

The archaeological evaluation has been successful in fulfilling the primary aims and objectives of the Specification and has assessed the archaeological potential of land intended for development. The results from this work are showing that development proposals won't be having any impact on buried archaeological resource and will be used to aid and inform the Senior Archaeological Officer of any further archaeological mitigation measures that may be necessary in connection with any future development proposals.

No further work is recommended.

District/Unitary: Ashford Borough Council

Period(s): Late Bronze Age, Iron Age, Late Iron Age

NGR (centre of site to eight figures) 603440 144134

Type of Archaeological work: Archaeological Field Evaluation

Date of recording: June 2022

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

Geology: Folkestone Formation - Sandstone. Sedimentary Bedrock formed approximately 101 to 126 million years ago in the Cretaceous Period and Gault Formation – Mudstone, sedimentary Bedrock formed approximately 101 to 113 million years ago in the Cretaceous Period. Local environment previously dominated by shallow seas. Bedrock geology was capped by River Terrace Deposits comprising Sand and Gravel. Superficial Deposits formed up to 3 million years ago in the Quaternary Period in local environment previously dominated by rivers.

Title and author of accompanying report: Peter Cichy (2022) Archaeological Evaluation of Land at Conningbrook Park, Wetland Mitigation, Ashford in Kent

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

Contact at Unit: Paul Wilkinson

Date: 30/06/2022

PLATES



Plate 1 View of the site from the southeast



Plate 2 Palaeochannel [3308] and Pit [3305] exposed in Trench 33. South-facing section with one-metre scales.



Plate 3 Trench 1, viewed from the southeast with one-metre scale



Plate 4. An old river course exposed in Trench 5. Viewed from the southeast with one metre scale.



Plate 5 Trench 12, viewed from the southwest with one metre scale.

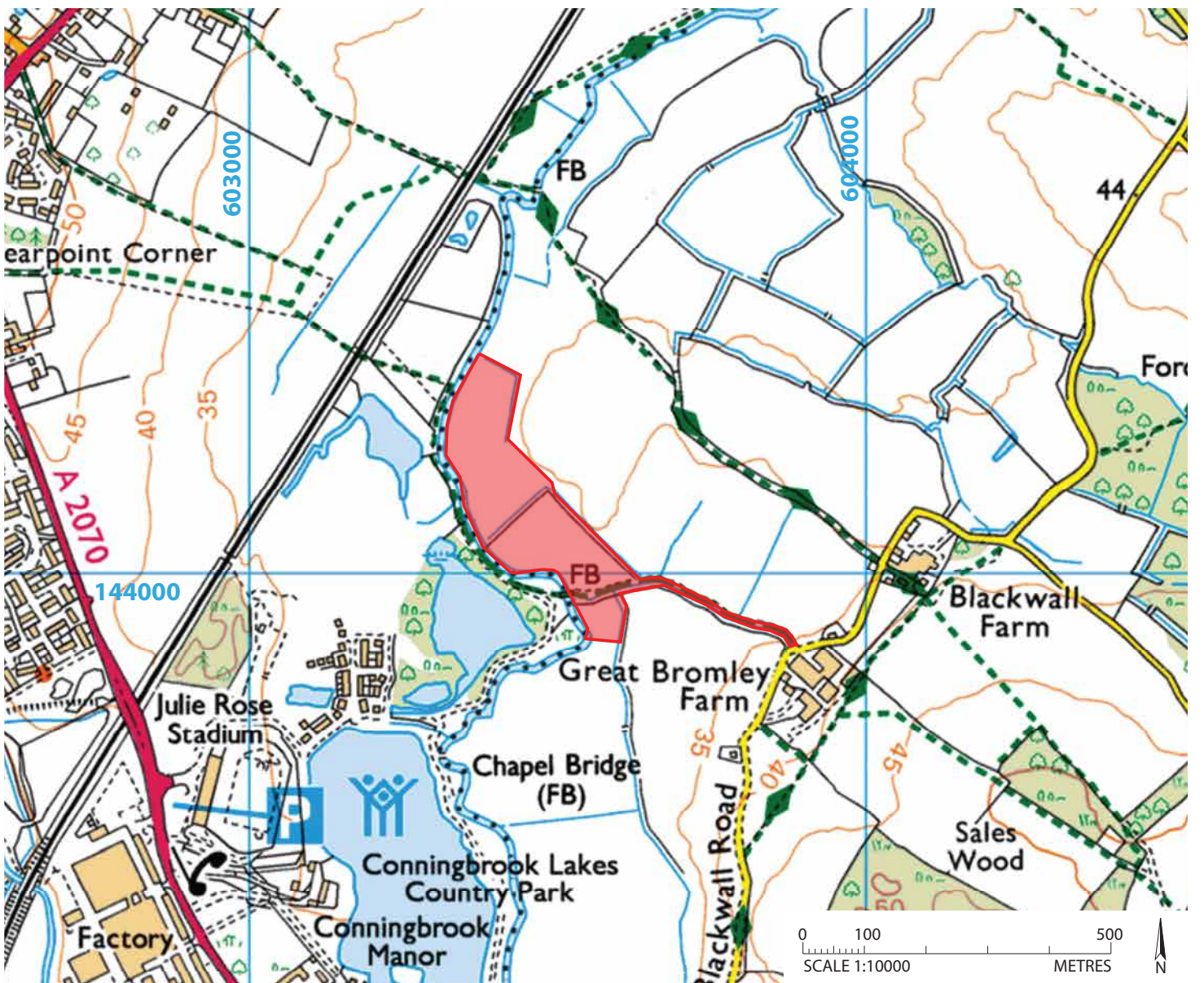
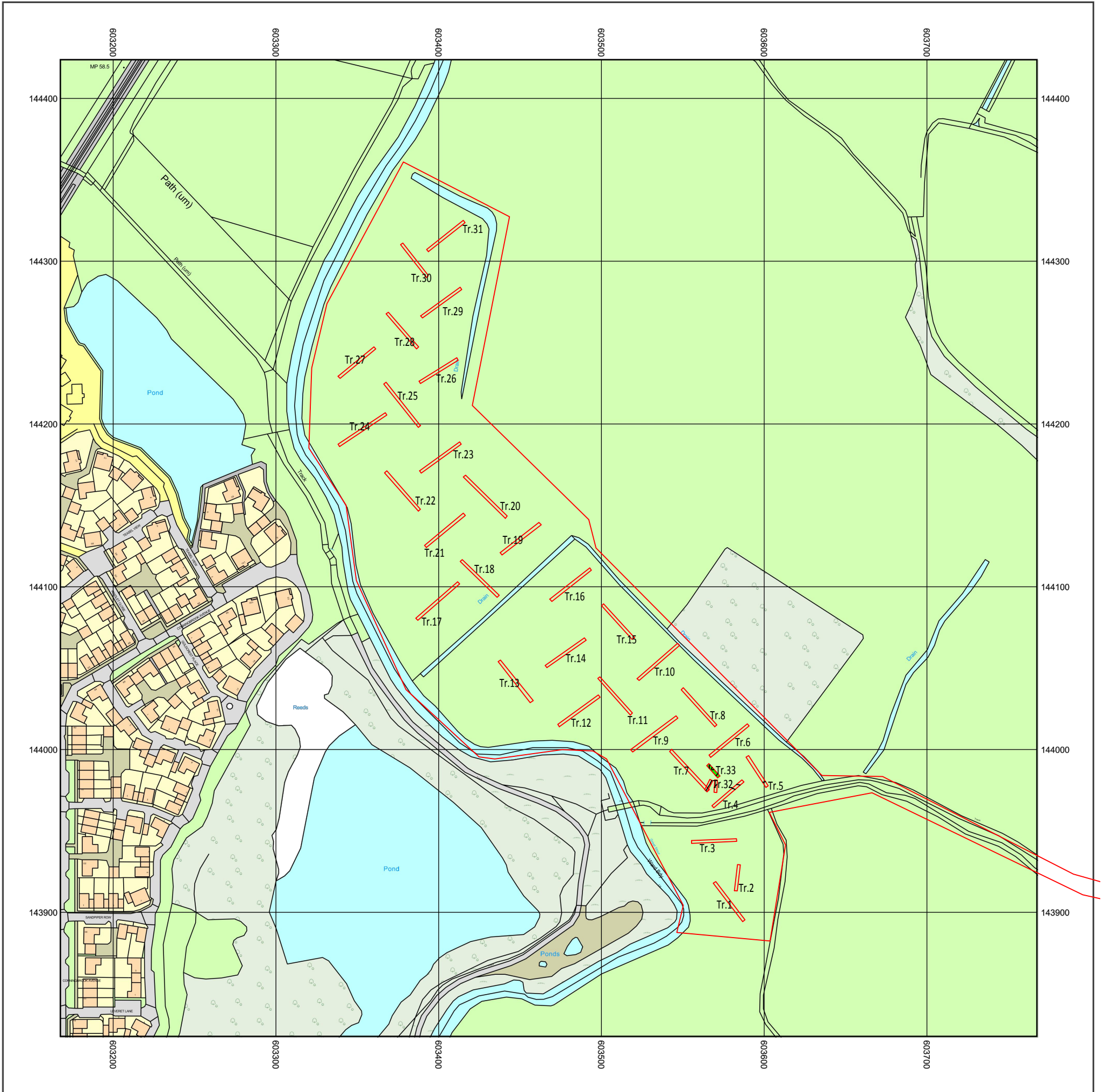
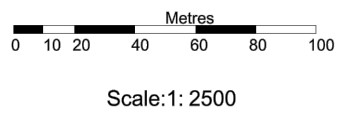


Figure 1: Site location map, scale 1:10000.



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KEY:
█ Trench with archaeology

Figure 2: Trench location in relation to OS map

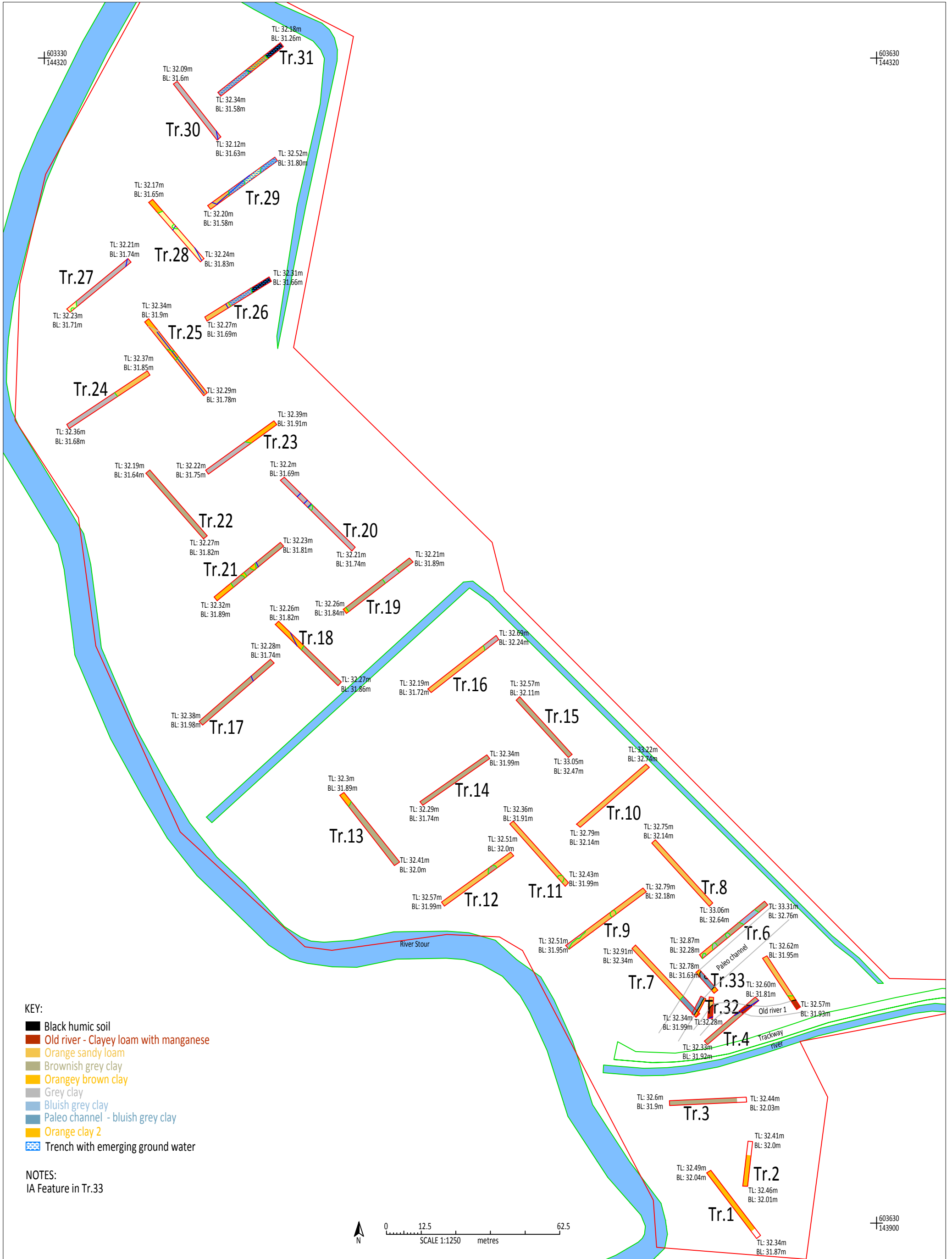


Figure 3: Trench location

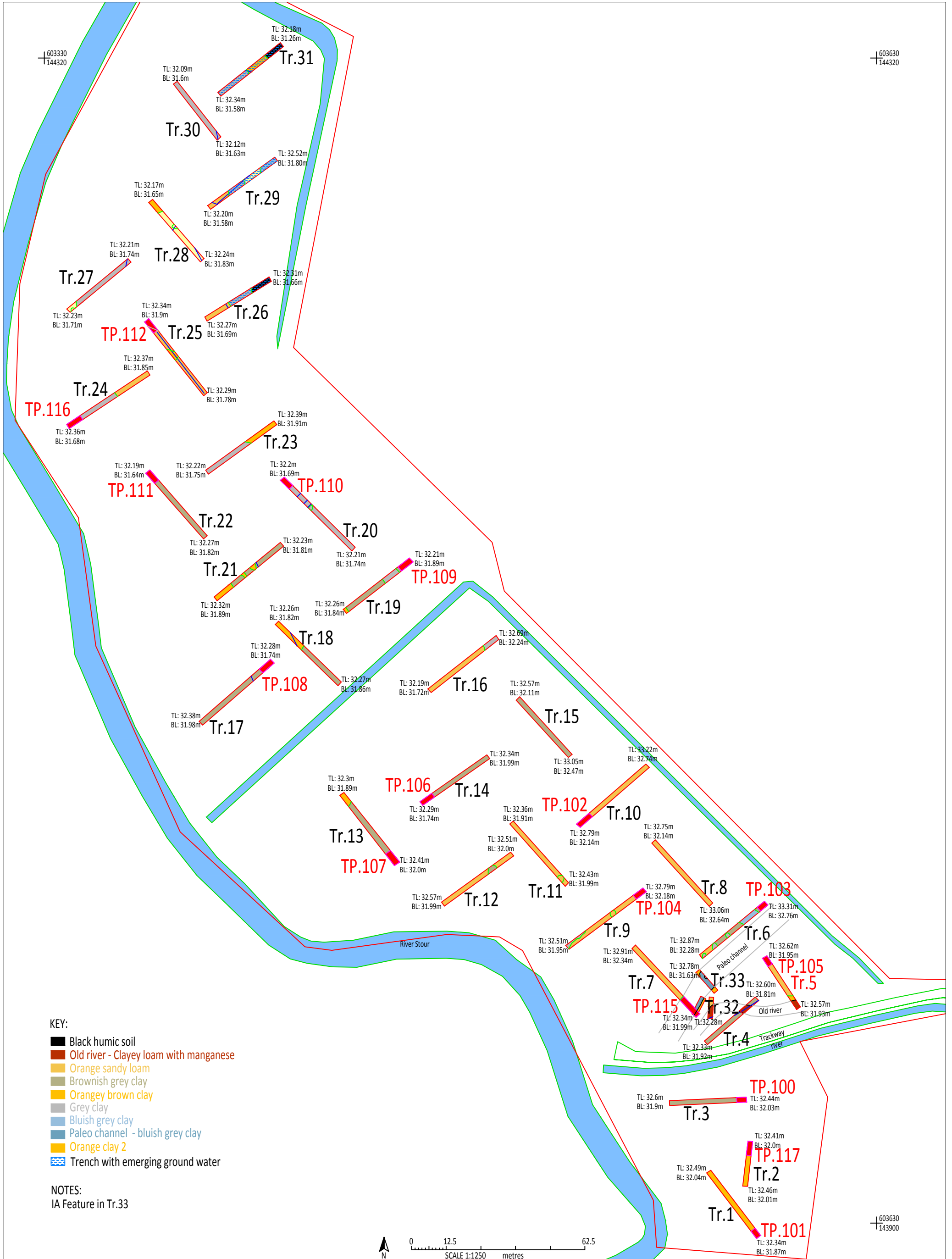
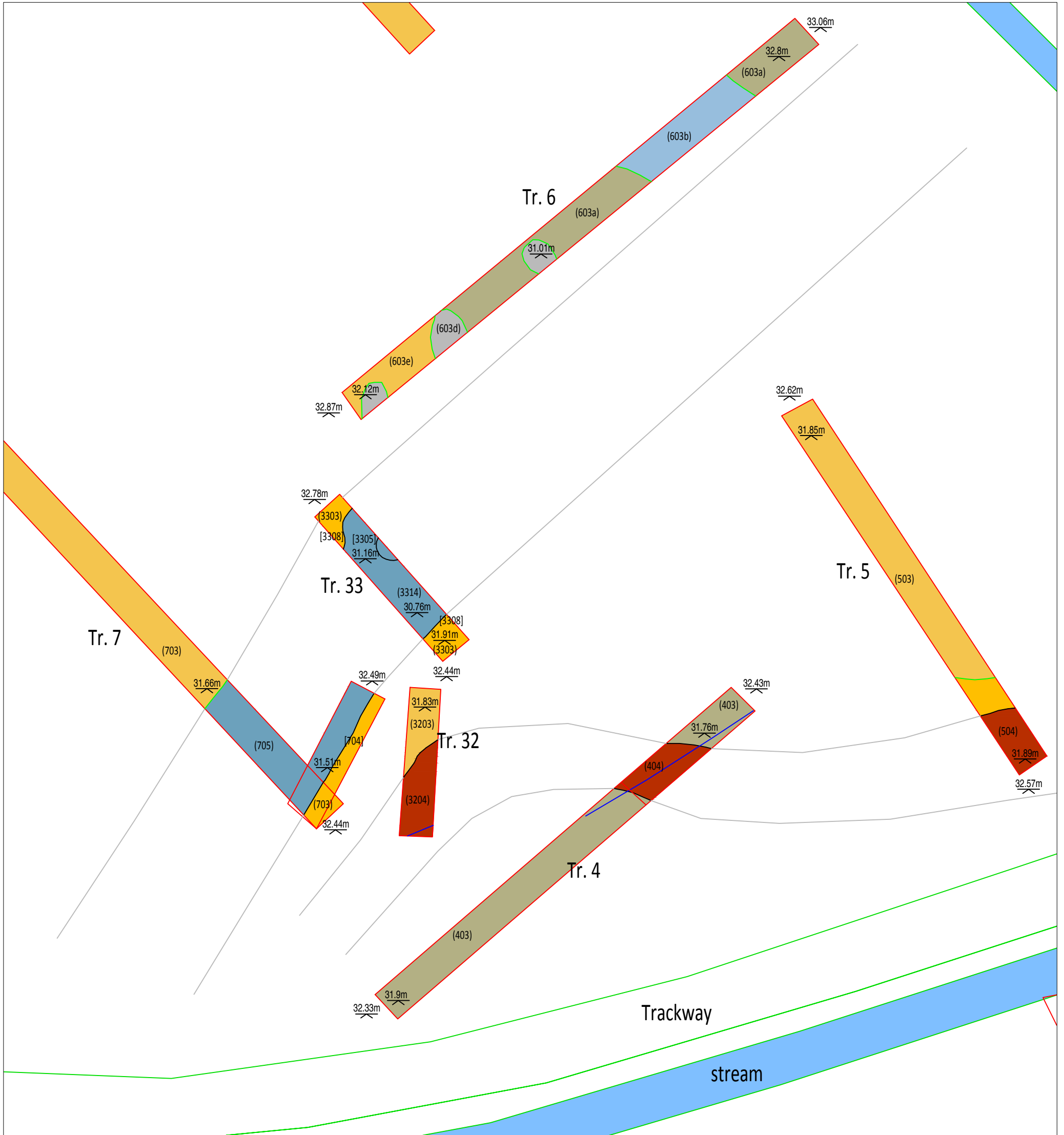
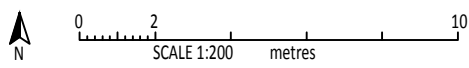


Figure 3b: Trench and geotechnical test pits (red) location



KEY:

- Black humic soil
- Old river - Clayey loam with manganese
- Orange sandy loam
- Brownish grey clay
- Orangey brown clay
- Grey clay
- Bluish grey clay
- Paleo channel - bluish grey clay
- Orange clay 2

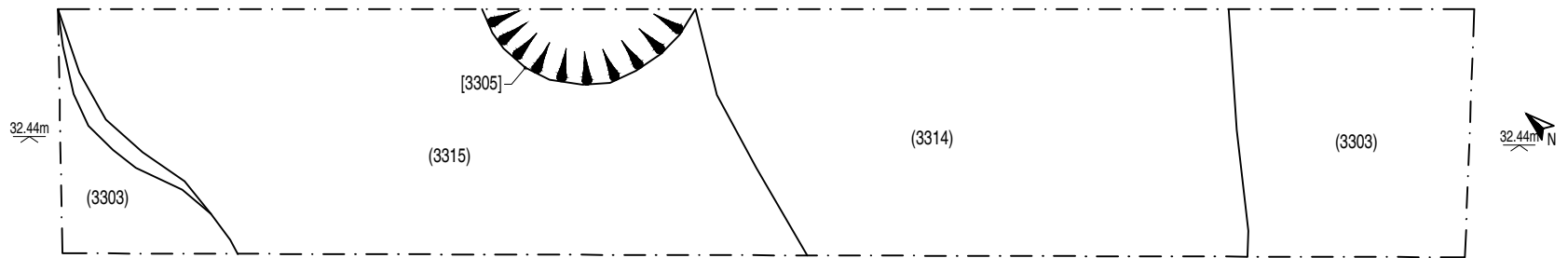


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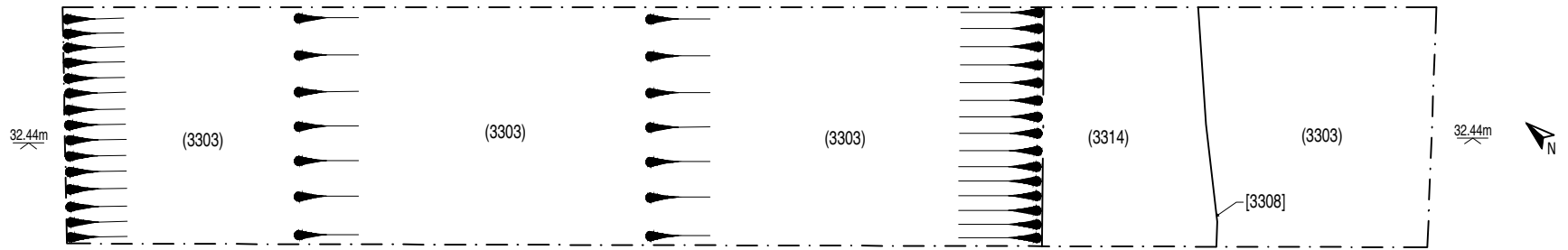
IA Feature in Tr.33

Figure 4: Plan of trenches and projected paleo channels

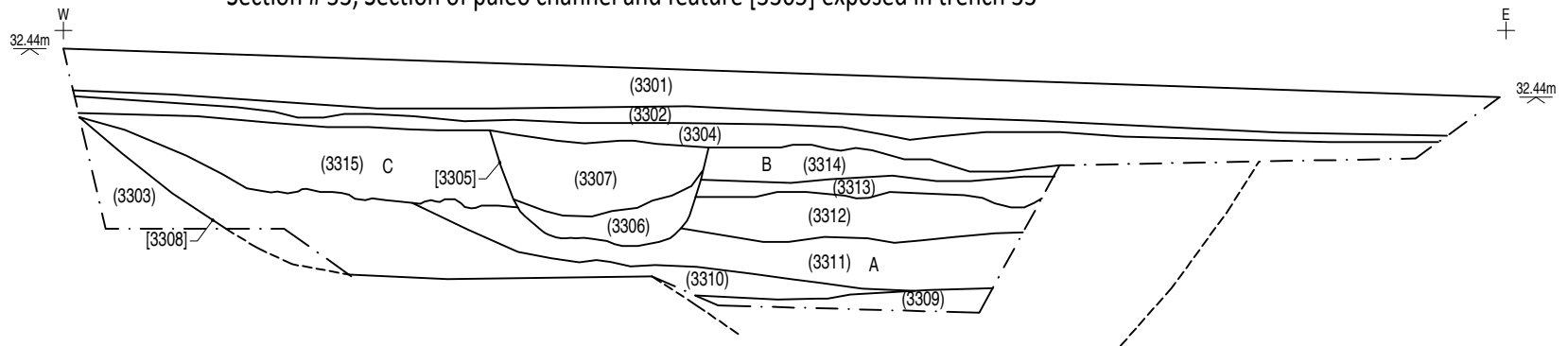
Plan # 33a, Plan of IE feature [3305] exposed in trench 33



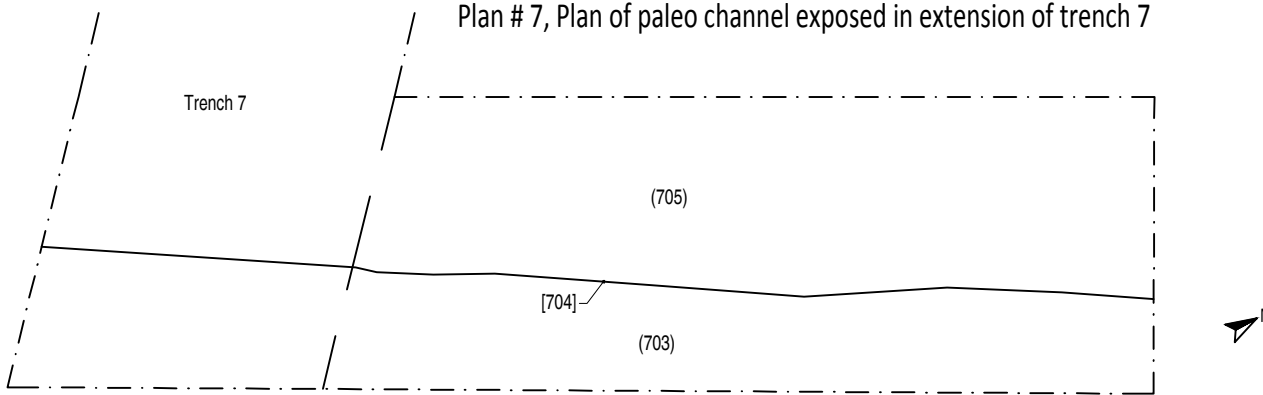
Plan # 33b, Plan of paleo channel exposed in trench 33



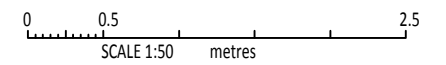
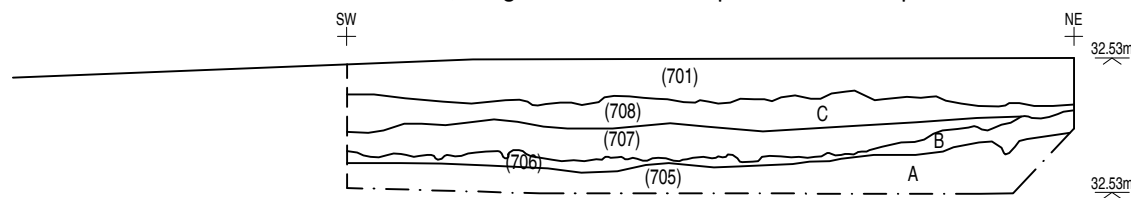
Section # 33, Section of paleo channel and feature [3305] exposed in trench 33



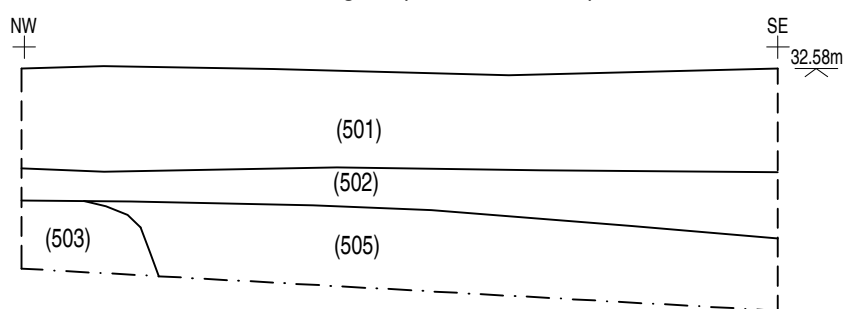
Plan # 7, Plan of paleo channel exposed in extension of trench 7



Section # 7, Longitudinal section of paleo channel exposed in trench 7



Section # 7, Section of the edge of paleo channel exposed in trench 5



Section # 31, Section of the soil sequence aside drain ditch exposed in trench 31

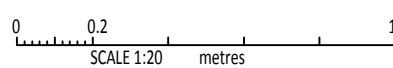
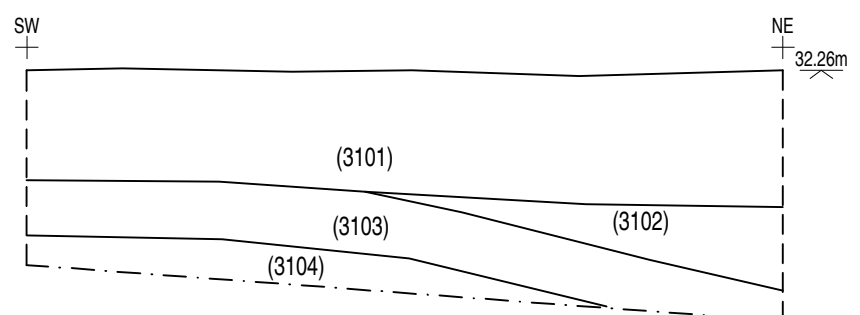
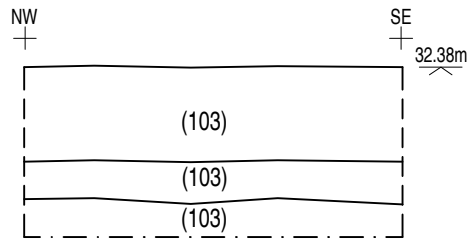
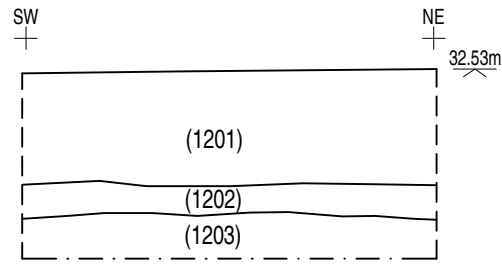


Figure 5: Plan and sections of feature and paleo channels

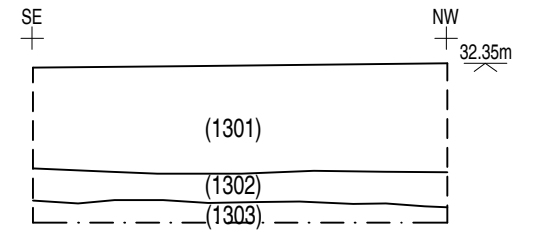
Section # 1
Section of the soil sequence exposed in trench 1



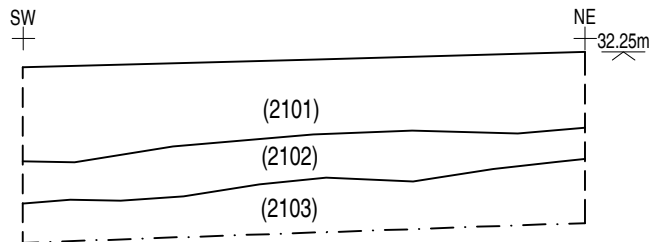
Section # 12
Section of the soil sequence exposed in trench 12



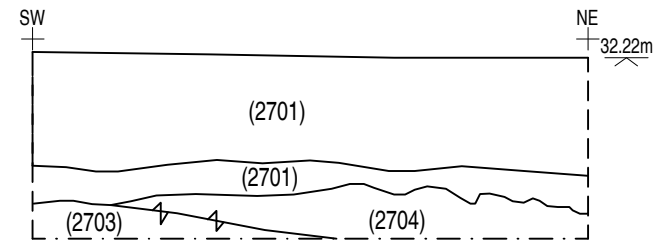
Section # 13
Section of the soil sequence exposed in trench 13



Section # 21
Section of the soil sequence exposed in trench 21



Section # 27
Section of the soil sequence exposed in trench 27



Section # 28
Section of the soil sequence exposed in trench 28

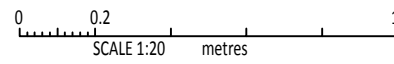
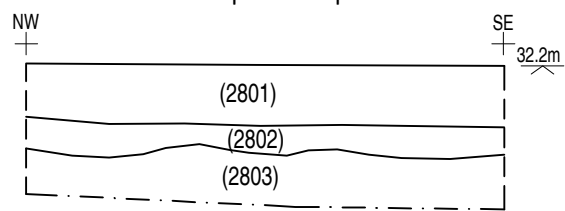


Figure 6: Representative sections