

Archaeological Evaluation of land at The Willows, Rushenden Hill, Queenborough, Kent ME11 5LA

Site Code: RHQ-EV-24

NGR Site Centre: 590535 171390

Planning Application Number: 22/503302/FUL



Report for;

Mr Stephen Reed

30/11/2024

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SWAT ARCHAEOLOGY

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Summary

Swale & Thames Survey Company (SWAT Archaeology) were commissioned by Mr Stephen Reed to undertake an archaeological evaluation of land at The Willows, Rushenden Hill, Queenborough, Kent ME11 5LA. The works have been carried out as part of a planning condition which required an archaeological evaluation to further characterise the potential archaeological impact from any proposed development. The archaeological programme was monitored by the Senior Archaeological Officer at Kent County Council.

The archaeological investigation was carried out using two trenches, measuring between 17.2m and 30.4m in length and 1.8m in width. The natural geology was encountered within both trenches with good preservation condition recorded within the northern extent of the site where natural geology was recorded at a depth of approximately 0.65m below the existing ground surface. Disturbance associated with the former use of the site was recorded within Trench 2 where all former topsoil and subsoil had been removed, replaced by redeposited stone.

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.

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Site Code: RHQ-EV-24

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Project Background

1.1.1 Swale & Thames Survey Company (SWAT Archaeology) were commissioned by Mr Stephen Reed to undertake an Archaeological Evaluation of land at The Willows, Rushenden Hill, Queenborough, Kent ME11 5LA (Figure 1).

1.1.2 A planning application (PAN: 22/503302/FUL) was granted for the demolition of an existing dilapidated dwelling and erection of two (2 No.) dwelling houses within the existing curtilage by Swale Borough Council (SBC) whereby Kent County Council Heritage and Conservation (KCCHC), on behalf of SBC, requested that an archaeological evaluation be undertaken in order to determine the possible impact of the development on any archaeological remains. The following Condition was added to the planning approval:

(4) No development shall take place until the applicant, or their agents or successors in title, has secured the implementation of a programme of archaeological work in accordance with a written specification and timetable which has been submitted and approved by the Local Planning Authority.

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

1.1.3 The archaeological evaluation, which comprised the excavation of two trenches measuring between 17.2m and 30.4m in length and 1.8m in width, was carried out over the course of one day in November 2024 (see Table 1 below). The evaluation follows the submission of a Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI) prepared by Swale & Thames Survey Company (SWAT Archaeology) in October 2024 and was carried out in accordance with said archaeological WSI prior to commencement of works.

1.2 Site Description and Topography

1.2.1 The site is centred on NGR 590535 171390 situated on Rushenden Hill overlooking the West Swale with Queenborough to the north and Rushenden Marshes to the south (Figure 1). The

proposed site is roughly rectangular in plan encompassing an area of approximately 2,200sq.m with ground levels relatively flat at a height of approximately 18m Ordnance Datum (OD) (Figure 2). Demolition of the dilapidated dwelling had been carried out prior to this evaluation.

- 1.2.2 The Geological Survey of Great Britain 1:50,000) shows that the PDA (Proposed Development Area) that the local geology at the Application Site consists of London Clay Formation- Clay and Silt. Superficial Deposits are not recorded.

1.3 Timetable

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

Task	Dates	Personnel/Company
Submission of the Written Scheme of Investigation	October 2024	SWAT Archaeology
Archaeological Evaluation – Fieldwork	25 th of November 2024	SWAT Archaeology
Archaeological Evaluation Report	This document	SWAT Archaeology

Table 1 Timetable for the archaeological programme of works

1.4 Scope of Report

- 1.4.1 This report has been produced to provide initial information regarding the results of the archaeological 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 proposed development area is located close to a number of archaeological sites which are identified on the KCCHER database. The archaeological WSI (SWAT, 2024 p3 (5.1 – 5.3)) provides a summary of the historical and archaeological background, provided herewith:

The Proposed Development Area (PDA) is located close to a number of archaeological sites which have been identified on the KCCHER database and include at about 250m SW a number of earthworks have been identified as possible salt mounds (TQ 97 SW 1116). The foreshore has a number of wooden shipwrecks including a derelict barge (TQ 97 SW 1074) and wooden shipwrecks (TQ 97 SW 1131).

Historic mapping shows that in 1871 the PDA (Proposed Development Area) had a coastal path marked, a pilot mark on top Rushenden Hill (MAP 1). The OS map of 1929 show plots and buildings including a building on the PDA (MAP 2).

Aerial photographs show that in 1940 the PDA was garden or allotment plots with a building. The aerial photograph of 2008 shows the plot developed with two buildings (AP 2). A recent photograph shows the derelict building about to be demolished (Photo 1).

2.2 Historic Environment Record (Accessed 27/11/2024)

2.2.1 The HER records the following sites, within proximity to the proposed development:

HER Number	Name
TQ 97 SW 90	Site of Queenborough pottery works, Queenborough
TQ 97 SW 43	Unknown
TQ 97 SW 42	Unknown Barge
TQ 97 SW 1073	Derelict barge
TQ 97 SW 1075	Derelict barge
TQ 97 SW 1074	Derelict barge
TQ 97 SW 58	Possible saltmound
TQ 97 SW 59	Possible saltmound
TQ 97 SW 41	Unknown
TQ 97 SW 1132	Part of wooden boat
TQ 97 SW 1128	Remains of carvel built wooden boat
TQ 97 SW 1120	Rectangular feature, Queenborough
TQ 97 SW 1129	Wreck of Flat Bottomed Barge
TQ 97 SW 1079	Chalk Wharf, Queenborough
TQ 97 SW 1131	Wooden wreck in very poor condition
TQ 97 SW 1130	Stern of wooden boat
TQ 97 SW 1046	Group of four concrete pontoons(?)
TQ 97 SW 1119	Wharf, Queenborough
TQ 97 SW 89	Queenborough Glass Bottle Works
TQ 97 SW 1117	Earthwork/possible saltmound, Rushenden Hill/Marshes

Table 2 Historic Environmental Record (500m radius)

2.2.2 The KCC HER provides a clear pattern of recorded sites within and around the western Swale Estuary predominantly dominated by derelict barges, wharfs and wrecks typical of riparian

activity present across the Isle of Sheppey. These monuments are referenced in Table 2 above, which details sites recorded within a 500m radius of the development area.

- 2.2.3 Of particular interest would be the Queenborough pottery works, along with the chalk wharf to the east and the salt mounds to the west. The pottery works dated to the early 20th century, were known as the Pyramid Works, and are believed to have produced sanitary wares within large bottle kilns. The site was demolished in the early 1990s. The salt mounds to the southwest are recorded as being post-medieval in date, although earlier medieval mounds are known to exist along the Swale estuary.

2.3 Consultation (Kent Council Heritage & Conservation)

- 2.3.1 As part of the planning process, and in consultation with KCC, the Principal Archaeological Officer has stated the following.

The application site lies on Rushenden Hill which lies as an elevated location within the Rushenden Marshes. Such locations as has been seen elsewhere on Sheppey, e.g. at Neatscourt have proven to be attractive locations for ancient settlement and other activities that exploit the resources of the marsh lands. Evidence of the exploitation of the marshlands for salt working can be seen in earthworks located to the west of the property and Rushenden Hill.

(Email dated: 24/05/2023, Reference: 22/503302/FULL The Willows)

3 AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

3.1 Introduction

- 3.1.1 The specific objectives of the archaeological fieldwork were set out in a Written Scheme of Investigation (SWAT Archaeology 2024: 6.1) as stated below:

The primary objective of the archaeological evaluation is to establish or otherwise the presence of any potential archaeological features which may be impacted by the proposed development. The aims of this investigation are to determine the potential for archaeological activity and in particular the earlier Prehistoric, Roman, early medieval and later archaeological activity.

3.2 General Aims

- 3.2.1 The general aims (or purpose) of the evaluation, in compliance with the ClfA *Universal Guidance for Archaeological Field Evaluation* (ClfA 2023), were:

- To determine the presence or absence of archaeological deposits or remains;

- To record the character, date, location, and preservation of any archaeological remains on Site; and
- To record the nature and extent of any previous damage to archaeological deposits or remains on site.

3.3 Specific Aims

3.3.1 The specific aims of the investigation were:

- To excavate two trenches within the site to expose the surface of any underlying archaeological horizon or the natural ground;
- To clean the base and representative sections of the trench and record it in both plan and representative section;
- To partially excavate any identified archaeological features so as to ascertain their extent, form, function and, where possible, date;
- To inform the need (or otherwise) for any future archaeological works on the site by means of an illustrated report.

3.4 General Objectives

3.4.1 The objectives of the investigation were:

- To undertake the archaeological evaluation to provide further information prior to the construction of the proposed development;
- To undertake work in accordance with national and local best practices and guidelines;
- To archaeologically record any deposits, features or structures of significance;
- To analyse any remains with reference to the existing documentary evidence for historical development and land use;
- To produce a written account to include summary, site description, deposit descriptions, deposit levels (relative to Ordnance Datum) and conclusions;
- To disseminate the findings of the work in an illustrated report, integrating the findings of the archaeological evaluation to produce as comprehensive a record as possible; and
- Provide an ordered archive.

4 METHODOLOGY

4.1 Introduction

- 4.1.1 All fieldwork was conducted in accordance with the methodology set out in the Specification (SWAT (2024), Section 7) and carried out in compliance with the standards outlined in the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists' Standards Guidance for Archaeological Evaluations (CIfA 2023).

4.2 Fieldwork

- 4.2.1 A total of two evaluation trenches were excavated (Figure 2, Plates 1 and 2).
- 4.2.2 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. Where appropriate, trenches, or specific areas of trenches, were subsequently hand-cleaned to reveal features in plan and carefully selected cross-sections through the features were excavated to enable sufficient information about form, development date, and stratigraphic relationships to be recorded without prejudice to more extensive investigations, should these prove to be necessary. All archaeological work was carried out in accordance with KCC and CIfA standards and guidance. A complete photographic record was maintained on site that included working shots; during mechanical excavation, following archaeological investigations and during back filling.
- 4.2.3 On completion, the trenches were made safe and left open to provide the opportunity for a curatorial monitoring visit. Backfilling was carried out once all recording, survey, and monitoring had been completed.

4.3 Recording

- 4.3.1 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.
- 4.3.2 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 and drone photography. A photographic register of all photographs taken is contained within the project archive.
- 4.3.3 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 (101), whilst the cut of the feature

is shown as [101]. 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+ and Trench 2, 201+).

5 RESULTS

5.1 Introduction

5.1.1 All trenches were mechanically excavated under archaeological supervision. Trenches were positioned to cover as many areas of the site as possible as set out in the WSI.

5.1.2 The necessity to maintain access to the site meant that Trench 1 could not be fully excavated therefore Trench 2 was extended. This change in the methodology was agreed with KCC during the fieldwork stage of operations.

5.1.3 The site, as shown on Figure 2 provides the trench layout with Figures 3 and 4 illustrating the results for each individual archaeological evaluation trench. Plates 1-6 consist of photographs of features and selected trenches that have been provided to supplement the text. Appendix 1 provides the stratigraphic sequence and contextual information for all trenches, with the location of Representative Sections provided on each Trench plan.

5.2 Stratigraphic Deposit Sequence

5.2.1 A relatively predictable stratigraphic sequence was recorded across the northern area of the site (Trench 1) comprising topsoil sealing an intact subsoil, which overlay the natural geological drift deposits. Within the central area of the site (Trench 2) formally occupied with a single domestic dwelling, the upper topsoil and subsoil had severe moderate levels of truncation, being replaced by modern buildings materials creating hardstanding areas (see below).

5.3 Archaeological Narrative

Trench 1 (Figure 2, Figure 3, Plate 3 and Plate 5)

5.3.1 Within the northern extent of the site (Figure 2), Trench 1 was excavated on an NW-alignment and measured approximately 17.2m in length, 1.8m in width with a maximum depth of 0.65m (Figure 3). Natural geological deposits were recorded at a level of approximately 17.29m OD.

5.3.2 The stratigraphic sequence within this trench consisted of topsoil (101) which sealed an intact subsoil (102) overlaying the stiff clay natural geology (103), recorded at a depth of approximately 0.65m below the existing surface. No archaeological finds or features were present within this trench.

Trench 2 (Figure 2, Figure 4, Plate 4 and Plate 6)

- 5.3.3 Within the southern central area of the site (Figure 2), Trench 2 was excavated on an NE-SW alignment with a length of approximately 30.4m and maximum depth of 0.28m (Figure 4). Redeposited black stone chippings (201) formed the surface of this area, directly overlying the stiff natural clay (202).
- 5.3.4 This trench was slightly relocated further to the north in order to avoid a corridor of live services present along the southern extent of the site (Figure 2). Natural geological deposits were recorded at a level of approximately 17.82m OD. No archaeological finds or features were present within this trench.

6 FINDS

6.1 Overview

- 6.1.1 No archaeological finds were present within the evaluation trenches.

7 DISCUSSION

7.1 Introduction

- 7.1.1 The archaeological investigation on land at The Willows, Rushenden Hill, Queenborough in Kent has investigated the extents of the proposed development area using two trenches, measuring between 17.2m and 30.4m in length and 1.8m in width.
- 7.1.2 The natural geology was encountered within both trenches with good preservation condition recorded within the northern extent of the site where natural geology was recorded at a depth of approximately 0.65m below the existing ground surface. Disturbance associated with the former use of the site was recorded within Trench 2 where all former topsoil and subsoil had been removed, replaced by redeposited stone.

7.2 Archaeological Narrative

- 7.2.1 The absence of any archaeological remains, i.e. prehistoric, Roman and/or medieval, is surprising given the archaeological record associated within and around the Swale estuary. The site is located on high ground overlooking Southend and the Grain peninsula to the north and the lower Swale marshes to the west and south. Such a location would have made an ideal spot for defence, navigation, and even domestic and agrarian settlement during the earlier archaeological periods. Disturbance of the site, however, is noted and the absence of any surviving subsoil and topsoil within the central (highest) area of the site may suggest that

relatively extensive erosion has taken place. Any shallow archaeological features may therefore have been lost.

7.2.2 Two archaeological trenches were excavated with the total area of the site evaluated measuring approximately 88.7sq.m, giving a sample excavation size of 4.1%, within the site which measures 2,200sq.m. It is possible that archaeological remains are present in areas beyond the extent of the trenching, although modern disturbance associated with services trenches and the former dwelling would need to be taken into consideration. Figure 5 provides an impact plan of the proposed development, including proposed and known impacts.

7.2.3 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 will be used to aid and inform the Principal Archaeological Officer of any further archaeological mitigation measures that may be necessary in connection with any future development proposals.

8 ARCHIVE

8.1 General

8.1.1 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).

8.1.2 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.

9 ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

9.1.1 SWAT Archaeology would like to thank Mr Stephen Reed for commissioning the project. Thanks are also extended to Simon Mason, Principal Archaeological Officer at Kent County Council, for his advice and assistance.

9.1.2 David Britchfield BA (Hons) MCIfA of Ravelin Archaeological Services carried out the archaeological fieldwork; illustrations were produced by Ravelin Archaeological Services. David Britchfield produced the draft text for this report. The Project Manager for the project was Dr Paul Wilkinson.

10 REFERENCES

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SWAT Archaeology, 2024, Specification for an Archaeological Evaluation of Land at The Willows, Rushenden Hill, Queenborough, Kent

11 APPENDIX 1 – TRENCH TABLES

Table 3 Trench 1, Representative Section RS1

Trench 1 RS1	Dimensions: 17.2m x 1.8m Ground Level: 17.9m OD – 18.1m OD		
Context	Interpretation	Description	Depth (m)
(101)	Topsoil	Mid to dark brown silty clay with occasional small, rounded stones, topped with grass	0.00-0.27
(102)	Subsoil	Dark brown, grey silty clay with occasional rooting and small rounded stones	0.27-0.54
(105)	Natural	Stiff grey, brown clay with occasional rooting - Natural	0.54-0.65+

Table 4 Trench 2, Representative Section RS2

Trench 2 RS2	Dimensions: 30.4m x 1.8m Ground Level: 18.4m OD – 18.6m OD		
Context	Interpretation	Description	Depth (m)
(201)	Surface	Redeposited hardcore and crushed stone	0.00-0.12
(202)	Surface	Stiff yellow brown clay with occasional rooting - Natural	0.12-0.28+

Site Name: Land at The Willows, Rushenden Hill, Queenborough, Kent ME11 5LA

SWAT Site Code: RHQ-EV-24

Site Address: As above

Summary. *Swale & Thames Survey Company (SWAT Archaeology) were commissioned by Mr Stephen Reed to undertake an archaeological evaluation of land at The Willows, Rushenden Hill, Queenborough, Kent ME11 5LA. The works have been carried out as part of a planning condition which required an archaeological evaluation to further characterise the potential archaeological impact from any proposed development. The archaeological programme was monitored by the Senior Archaeological Officer at Kent County Council.*

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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.

District/Unitary: Swale Borough Council & Kent County Council

Period(s): Modern

NGR (centre of site to eight figures) NGR 590535 171390

Type of Archaeological work: Archaeological Evaluation

Date of recording: November 2024

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

Geology: London Clay Formation- Clay and Silt.

Title and author of accompanying report: D Britchfield (2024) Archaeological Evaluation of Land at The Willows, Rushenden Hill, Queenborough, Kent. SWAT Archaeology Ref. RHQ-EV-2024

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

Contact at Unit: Paul Wilkinson

Date: 30/11/2024

PLATES



Plate 1 Aerial view of the site, viewed from the northeast

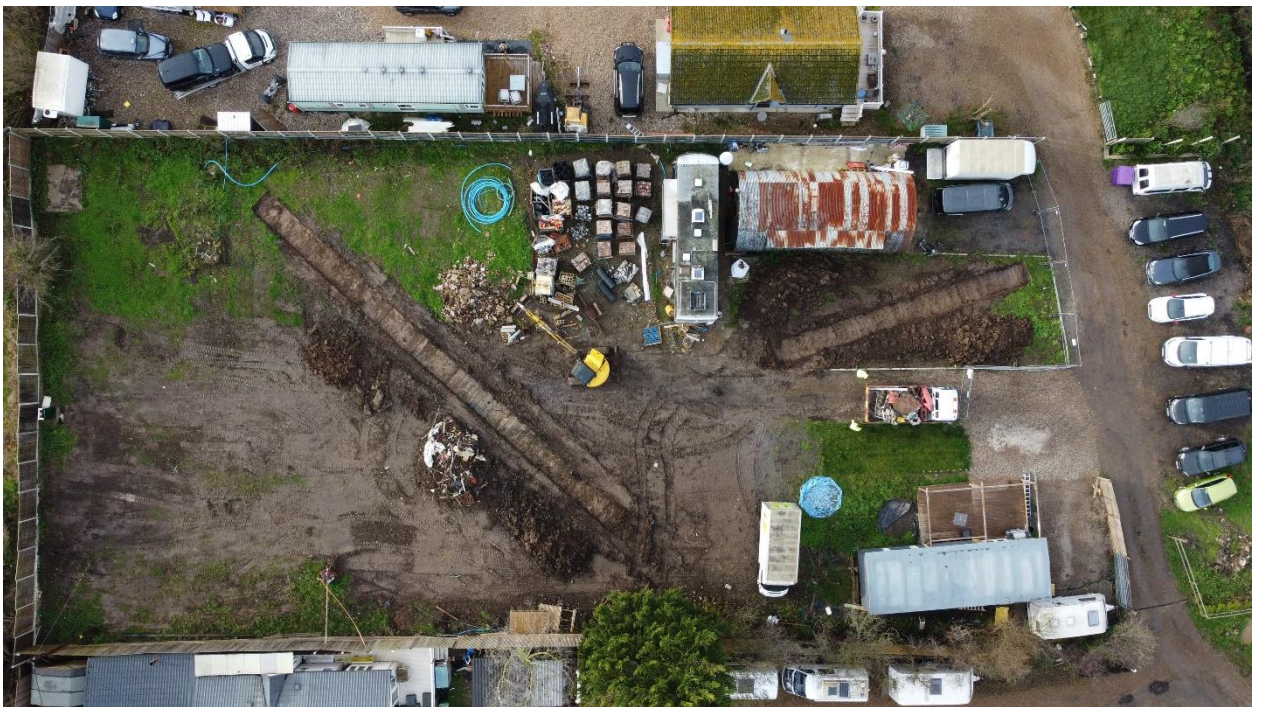


Plate 2 Aerial view of the site following the excavation of the two trenches



Plate 3 Excavation of Trench 1, viewed from the northeast



Plate 4 Excavation of Trench 2, viewed from the south



Plate 5 Trench 1, viewed from the southeast

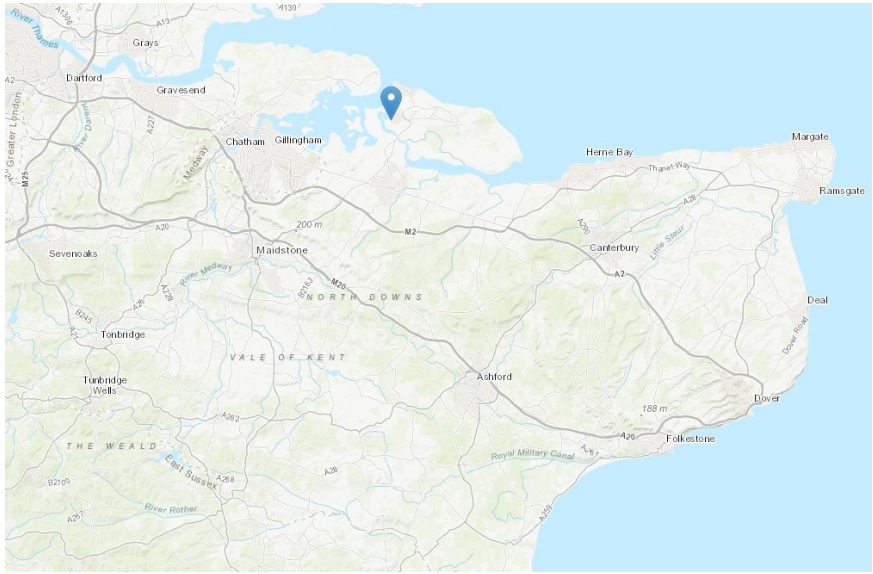


Plate 6 Trench 2, viewed from the northeast

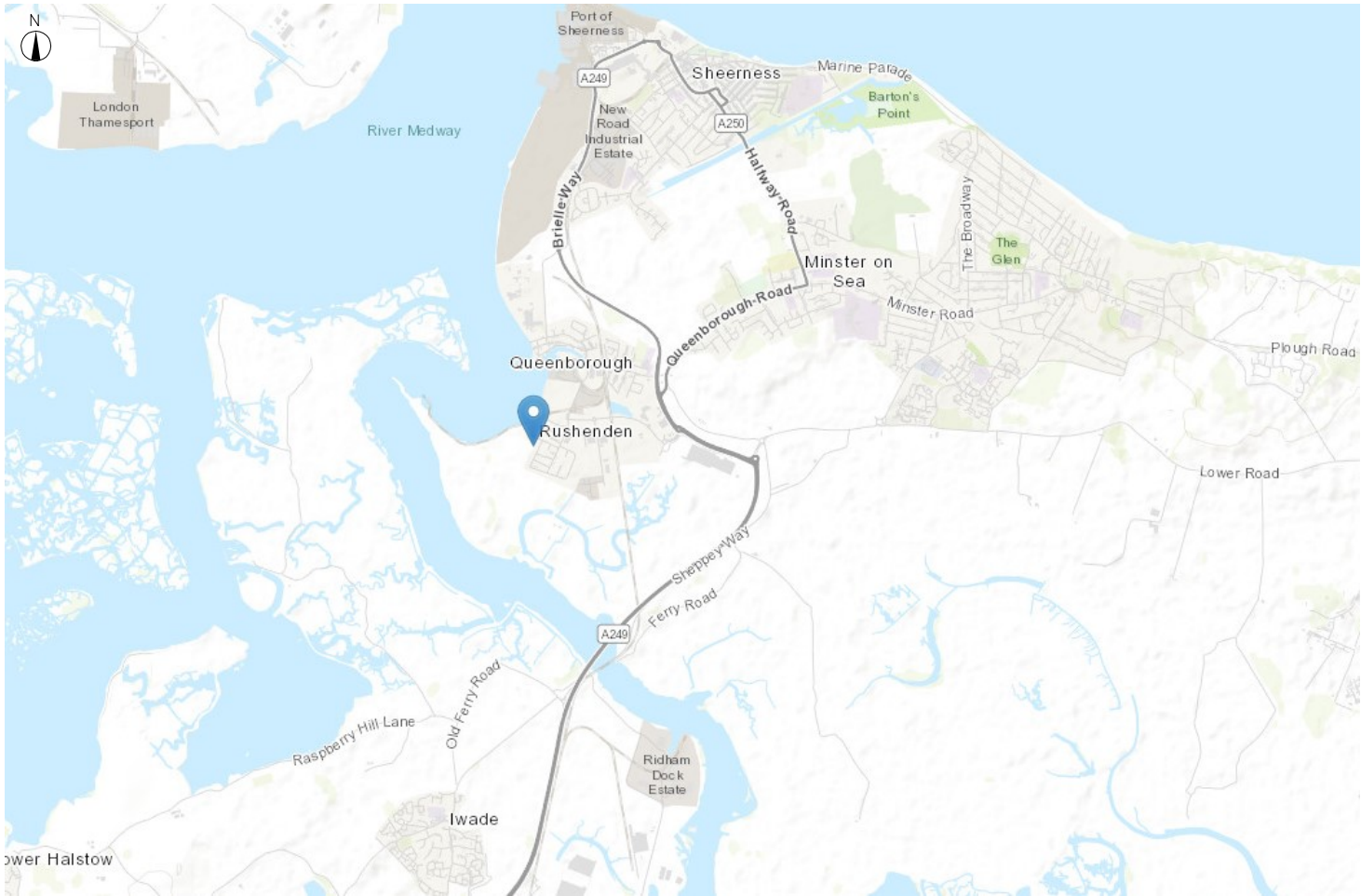
FIGURES



England (NTS)



Kent (NTS)



Map courtesy of National Library of Scotland (NTS)


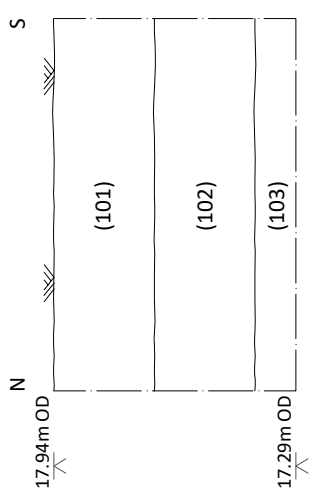
Key
 Site location

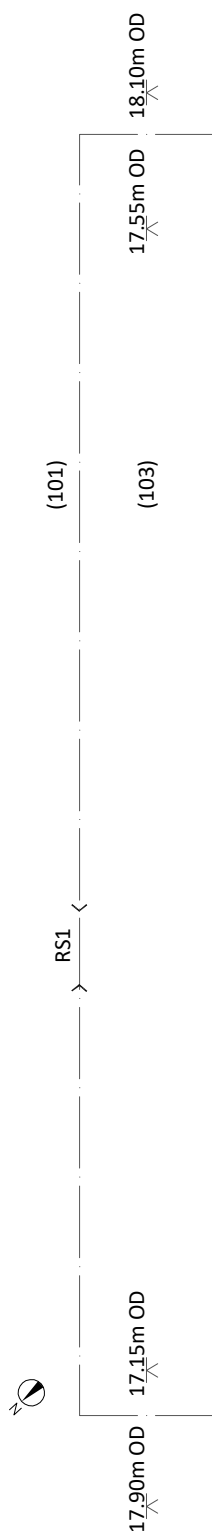
Figure 1 Site Location Plan



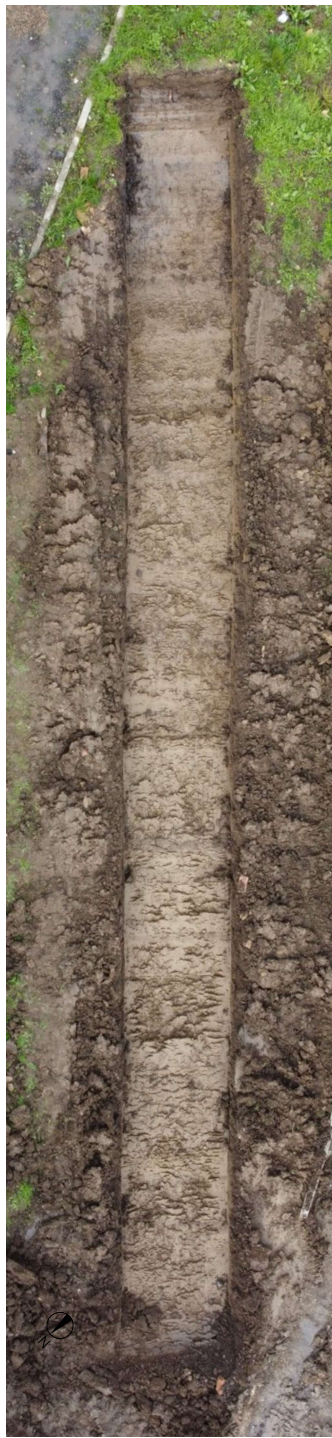
Figure 2 Site Plan



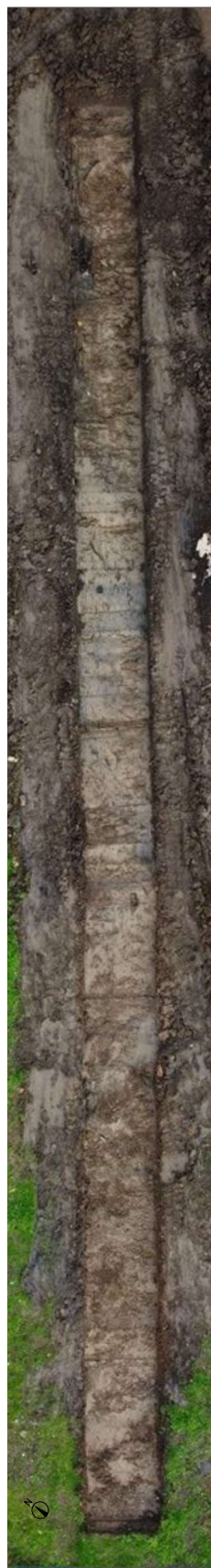
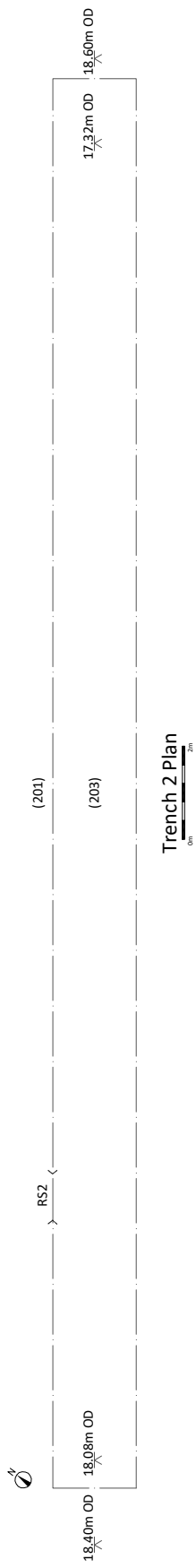
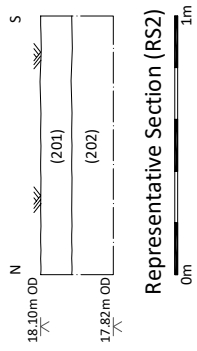
Representative Section (RS1)



Trench 1 Plan



Trench 1 Plan



Trench 2 Plan

0m 2m

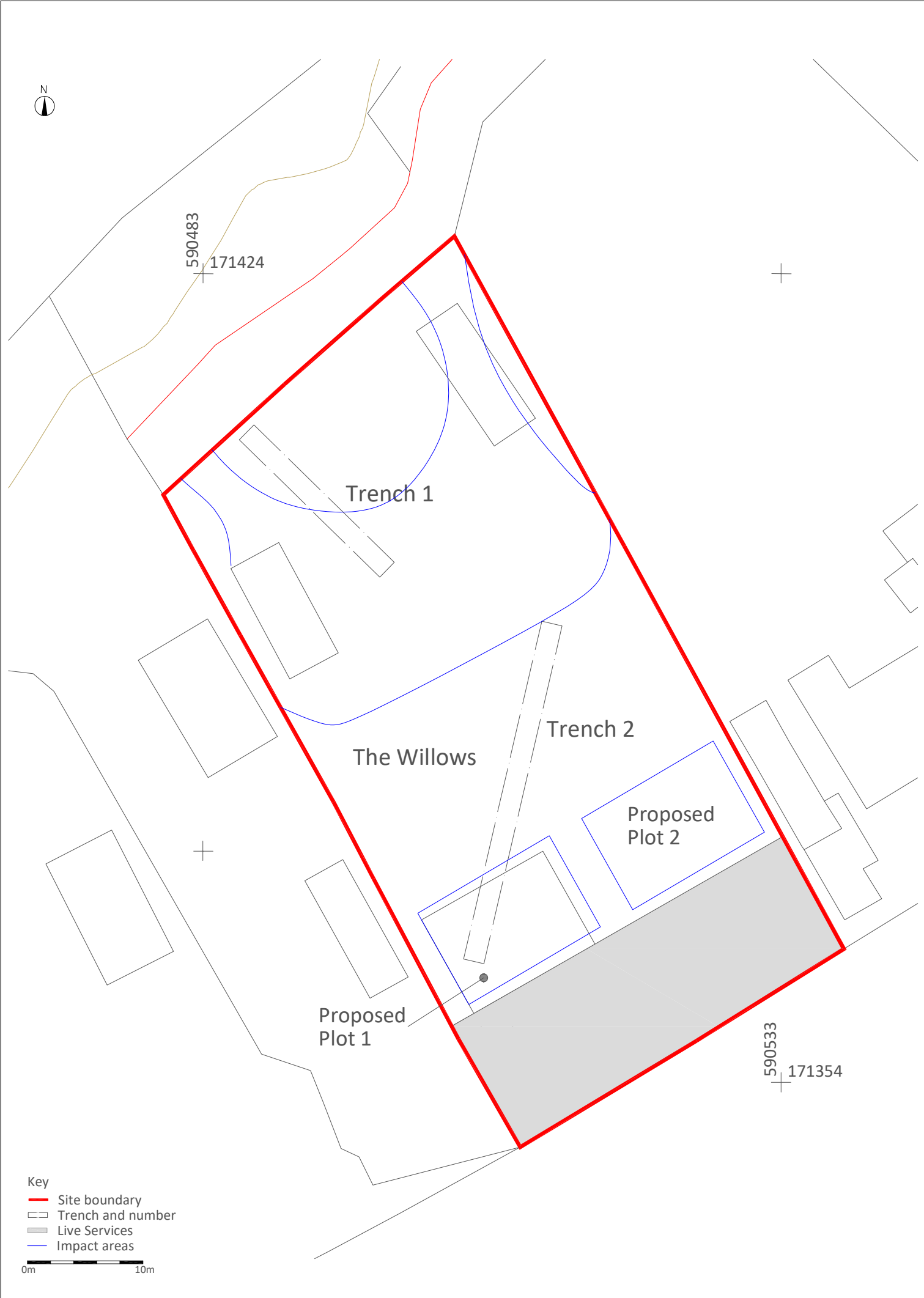


Figure 5 Impact Plan