

Archaeological Evaluation at St Margaret's Church, Church Hill, Bethersden, Kent

Site Code: MAW-EV-23

NGR Site Centre: 610549 164579

Planning Application Number: 22/00382/AS



Report for;
St Margaret's Church
23/04/2024

SWAT ARCHAEOLOGY

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Summary

Swale & Thames Survey Company (SWAT Archaeology) were commissioned by St Margarets Church, Church Lane, Bethersden to undertake an archaeological evaluation on land to the north of the church.

The archaeological evaluation consisted of one trench, which recorded a relatively common stratigraphic sequence comprising topsoil and subsoil overlying natural geology. Despite the archaeological potential of the surrounding area and the favourable preservation conditions recorded no archaeological finds or features were present within the trench excavated.

The archaeological evaluation has therefore 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 KCC Archaeological Officer of any further archaeological mitigation measures that may be necessary in connection with any future development proposals.

Archaeological Evaluation at St Margarets Church, Church Hill, Bethersden

NGR Site Centre: 592799 140348

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Project Background

1.1.1 Swale & Thames Survey Company (SWAT Archaeology) were commissioned by St Margarets Church to undertake an archaeological evaluation on land to the north of St Margarets Church, Bethersden in Kent (Figure 1).

1.1.2 A planning application (22/00382) for the change of use of land to church burial ground was submitted to Ashford Borough Council whereby Kent County Council Heritage and Conservation (KCCHC), on behalf of ABC, requested that an archaeological evaluation be undertaken in order to determine the possible impact of the development on any archaeological remains.

1.1.3 The following conditions were attached to the planning consent:

(3) Prior to commencement of development, the applicant, or their agents or successors in title, will secure the implementation of a phased programme of archaeological work in accordance with a written specification and timetable which has been submitted to and approved by the Local Planning Authority.

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

In addition:

The applicant is advised that the archaeological work required by condition 3, cannot easily be covered by a watching brief and as such Kent County Council Heritage recommend that a single test pit or trench is put into the area to determine the presence/absence of archaeological remains.

1.1.4 The archaeological evaluation, which comprised the excavation of one trench measuring 8m in length and 1.2m in width, was carried out on 8th March 2024 (see Table 1 below). The evaluation

was carried out in accordance with an archaeological Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI) prepared by SWAT Archaeology (2024), prior to commencement of works.

1.2 Timetable

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

<i>Task</i>	<i>Dates</i>	<i>Personnel/Company</i>
Submission of the Written Scheme of Investigation	February 2024	SWAT Archaeology
Archaeological Evaluation – Fieldwork	8 th March 2024	SWAT Archaeology
Archaeological Evaluation Report	This document	SWAT Archaeology

Table 1 *Timetable for the archaeological programme of works*

1.3 Site Description and Topography

1.3.1 The site is centred on NGR 592799 140348 and located to the north of St Margarets Church situated on the north side of the village of Bethersden in Kent.

1.3.2 Ground levels are relatively level at a height of approximately 42m Ordnance Datum (OD) in the south gently sloping to 40m OD within the northern extent of the site. The Geological Survey of Great Britain shows that the site is located on Weald Clay Formation (Mudstone) with no superficial deposits being recorded.

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 KCC Archaeological Officer 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

The Proposed Development Area (PDA) is located close to a number of archaeological sites which are identified on the KCCHER database and these include just to the north of the PDA an outfarm with a loose courtyard plan with buildings on two sides of the yard (MKE 82941).

Just to the south is located Bethersden parish church and is mainly Perpendicular incorporating the remains of an earlier building mentioned in a charter of 1194. The present church was restored in 1873 (TQ 94 SW 47).

The KCCHER entry for the church is:

Though documentary evidence suggests that there was a church here by the 12th century at least, the earliest visible remains seem to be of the early to mid 14th century nave and aisles with its two fine 3 bays of arcading. The Kentish ragstone masonry for the piers and arches is very fine, and still clearly exhibits tooling, mason's marks, etc. There are also 'Decorated' windows above the north doorway and at the west end of the S aisle, but these have been heavily/totally restored in Bathstone externally. The south doorway (into the porch) is, however, still an intact 14th century 2-centred arch. The two light windows at the west end of the N aisle was perhaps late 13th century, but it was totally restored in Bathstone in 1873 (see Pearman (1886), 67). The lower outer aisle walls are also 14th century, and they were heightened in the 15th century when new three light windows were inserted into the south and north aisle walls on either side of the doorways (they all have external square hood moulds and have been heavily restored in Bath stone). Also in the 15th century, crenellated parapets were added to the aisles, and the fine west tower was built (in c 1420-30, according to MacMichael) also with a crenelated parapet and a large semi-octagonal stair turret, that rises above the tower.

3 AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

3.1 General Aims

- 3.1.1 The specific aims of the archaeological fieldwork were set out in a Written Scheme of Investigation (SWAT Archaeology 14.02.2023) as stated below;
- 3.1.2 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.

3.2 General Objectives

3.2.1 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.

3.2.2 The site-specific objectives of the archaeological fieldwork were set out in a Written Scheme of Investigation (SWAT Archaeology 2023; 3.3.1) as stated below;

- examine evidence for remains of prehistoric, with the emphasis on the Bronze Age and Iron Age period, settlements in the form of ditches, hearths and pits;
- examine evidence for remains artefacts from the medieval period;
- examine evidence for remains of post-medieval agricultural features such as field boundaries (known from historic maps) and assess if this has impacted on any earlier remains; and
- assess the potential for the recovery of artefacts to assist in the development of type series within the region.

4 METHODOLOGY

4.1 Introduction

4.1.1 All fieldwork was conducted in accordance with the methodology set out in the Specification (SWAT Archaeology 2023) and carried out in compliance with the standards outlined in the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists' Standards Guidance for Archaeological Evaluations (CIfA 2014).

4.2 Fieldwork

4.2.1 A total of one evaluation trench was excavated (Figure 2). The 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.

4.2.2 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.

4.2.3 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, survey, and monitoring had been completed.

4.3 Recording

4.3.1 A complete drawn record of the evaluation trench 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 (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.).

5 RESULTS

5.1 Introduction

5.1.1 The trench was mechanically excavated under archaeological supervision. The trench was positioned in order to cover the site as possible as set out in the WSI. Relocation and re-orientation of the trench would be required when on site obstacles were present.

5.1.2 The site, as shown on Figure 2, provides the trench layout. Plates 1-3 consist of photographs of selected trench views that have been provided to supplement the text.

5.1.3 Appendix 1 provides the stratigraphic sequence and contextual information for the trench, with the location of Representative Sections provided on each Trench plan (Figures 3 and 4).

5.2 Stratigraphic Deposit Sequence

5.2.1 A relatively consistent stratigraphic sequence was recorded across the majority of the site comprising topsoil sealing an intact subsoil, which overlay the natural geological drift deposits.

5.2.2 The topsoil generally consisted of dark brown clay silt, moderate roots, and occasional small rounded stones, topped with grass, overlying the subsoil which consisted of medium orange brown silt. Natural geology comprised mottled mid orange, brown, silty clay (Weald Clay Formation).

5.3 Archaeological Narrative

Trench 1 (Figure 3, Plates 1- 3)

5.3.1 Trench 1 was excavated on an NE-SW alignment and measured approximately 8m in length, 1.2m in width with a maximum depth of 0.56m (Figure 3). Natural geological deposits were recorded at a level of 42.00m OD.

5.3.2 No archaeological finds or features were present in Trench 1.

6 FINDS

6.1 Overview

6.1.1 No archaeological finds were retrieved during this evaluation.

7 DISCUSSION

7.1 Introduction

- 7.1.1 The archaeological investigation at St Margarets Church has investigated the extents of the proposed development area using one trench, measuring 8m in length and 1.2m in width. The natural geology was encountered within the trench at an average depth of approximately 0.35m below the existing ground surface, directly underlying subsoil and topsoil.

7.2 Archaeological Narrative

- 7.2.1 Despite the archaeological potential of the site no archaeological finds or features were recorded within the trench. The recording of an intact subsoil across the majority of the site suggested that preservation conditions are favourable.

7.3 Conclusions

- 7.3.1 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 Arthur Gammon (Church Warden) for commissioning the project.

- 9.1.2 Dr Paul Wilkinson MCIfA carried out the archaeological fieldwork; illustrations were produced by Ravelin Archaeological Services. Dr Paul Wilkinson produced the draft text for this report and was also Project Manager for the project.

10 REFERENCES

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SWAT Archaeology. Site specific details WSI

APPENDIX 1 – TRENCH TABLE

Trench 1 Dimensions: 7m x 1.2m Depth: 0.35m Ground Level: 42 OD			
Context	Interpretation	Description	Depth (m)
(101)	Topsoil	Soft, dark brown clay silt, moderate roots, and occasional small, rounded stones, topped with grass	0.00-0.18
(102)	Subsoil	Soft, dark grey/brown silty clay.	0.18-0.24
(103)	Natural	Mottled mid orange, brown, silty clay	0.24-0.35+

APPENDIX 2 – HER FORM

Site Name: St Margarets Church, Church Hill, Bethersden, Kent

SWAT Site Code: MAR-EV-2024

Site Address: As above

Summary. *Swale & Thames Survey Company (SWAT Archaeology) were commissioned by St Margarets Church, Bethersden, Kent to undertake an archaeological evaluation on land. The works have been carried out as part of a planning condition which required an archaeological evaluation in order to further characterise the potential archaeological impact from any proposed development.*

The archaeological evaluation has been successful in evaluating the proposed development site for the possibility of archaeological remains. Despite the archaeological potential of the surrounding area and the favourable preservation conditions recorded no archaeological finds or features were present within any of the five trenches excavated.

District/Unitary: Ashford Borough Council

Period(s):

NGR (centre of site to eight figures) NGR 592799 140348

Type of Archaeological work: Archaeological Evaluation

Date of recording: March 2024

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

Geology: Weald Clay Formation

Title and author of accompanying report: Dr Paul Wilkinson (2024) Archaeological Evaluation of Land at St Margarets Church, Bethersden, Kent

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

Contact at Unit: Paul Wilkinson

Date: 19/04/2024



Plate 1. View of start of Trench 1 (looking west)



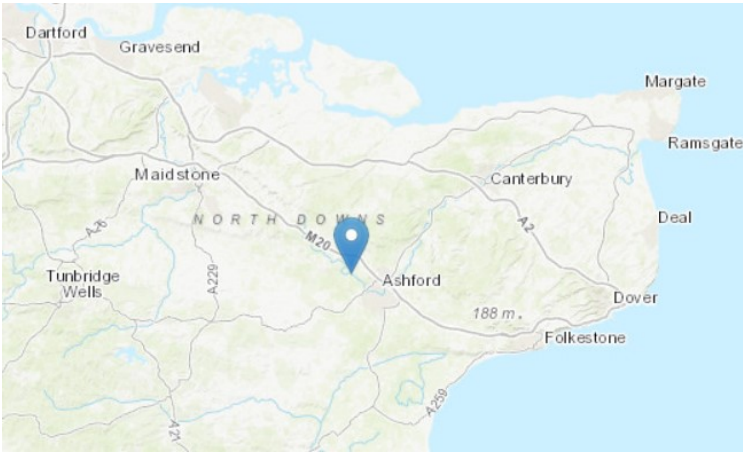
Plate 2. View of Trench 1. (looking west)



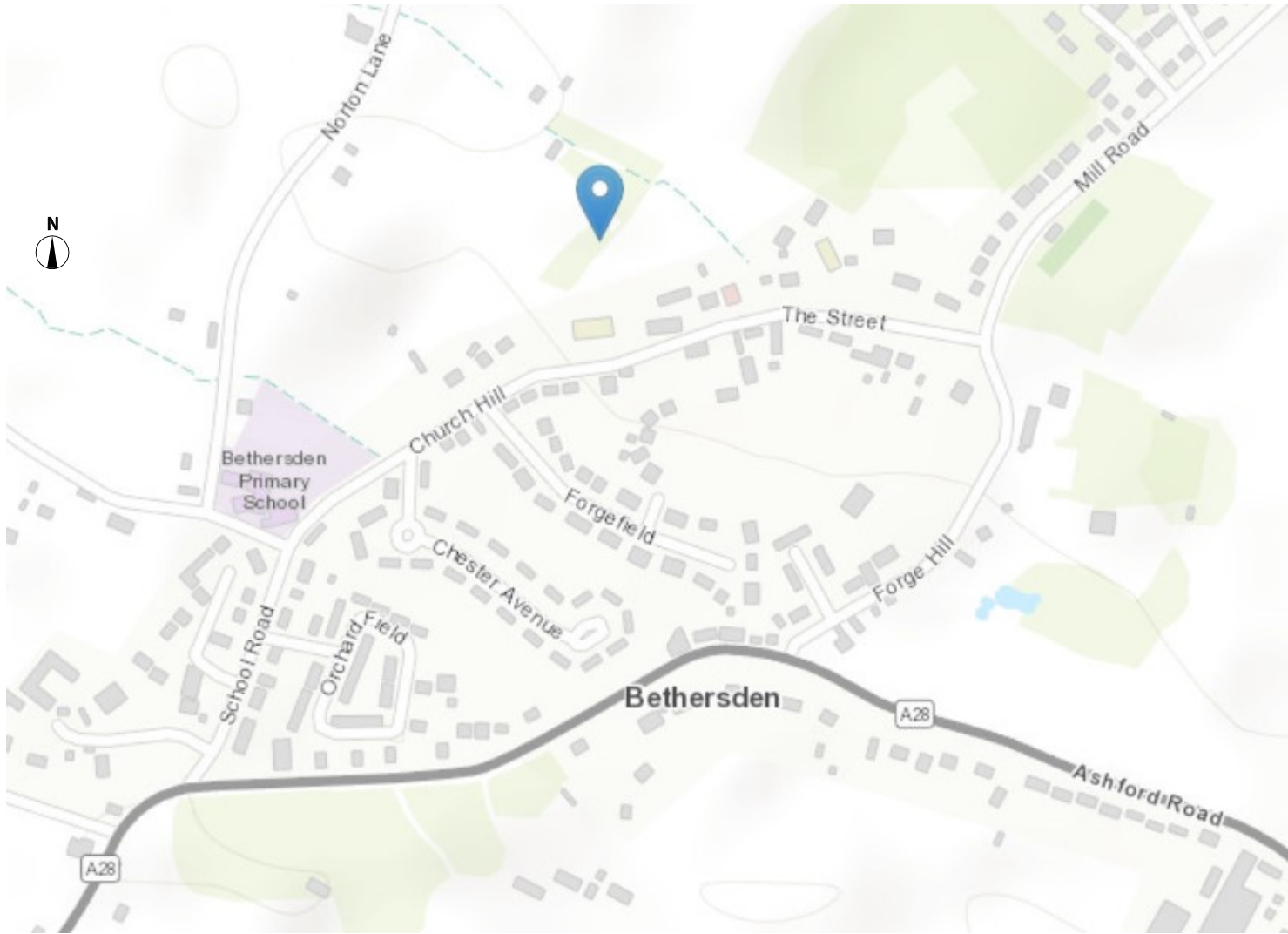
Plate 3 Trench 1, viewed section (looking south-east



Map of UK (NTS)

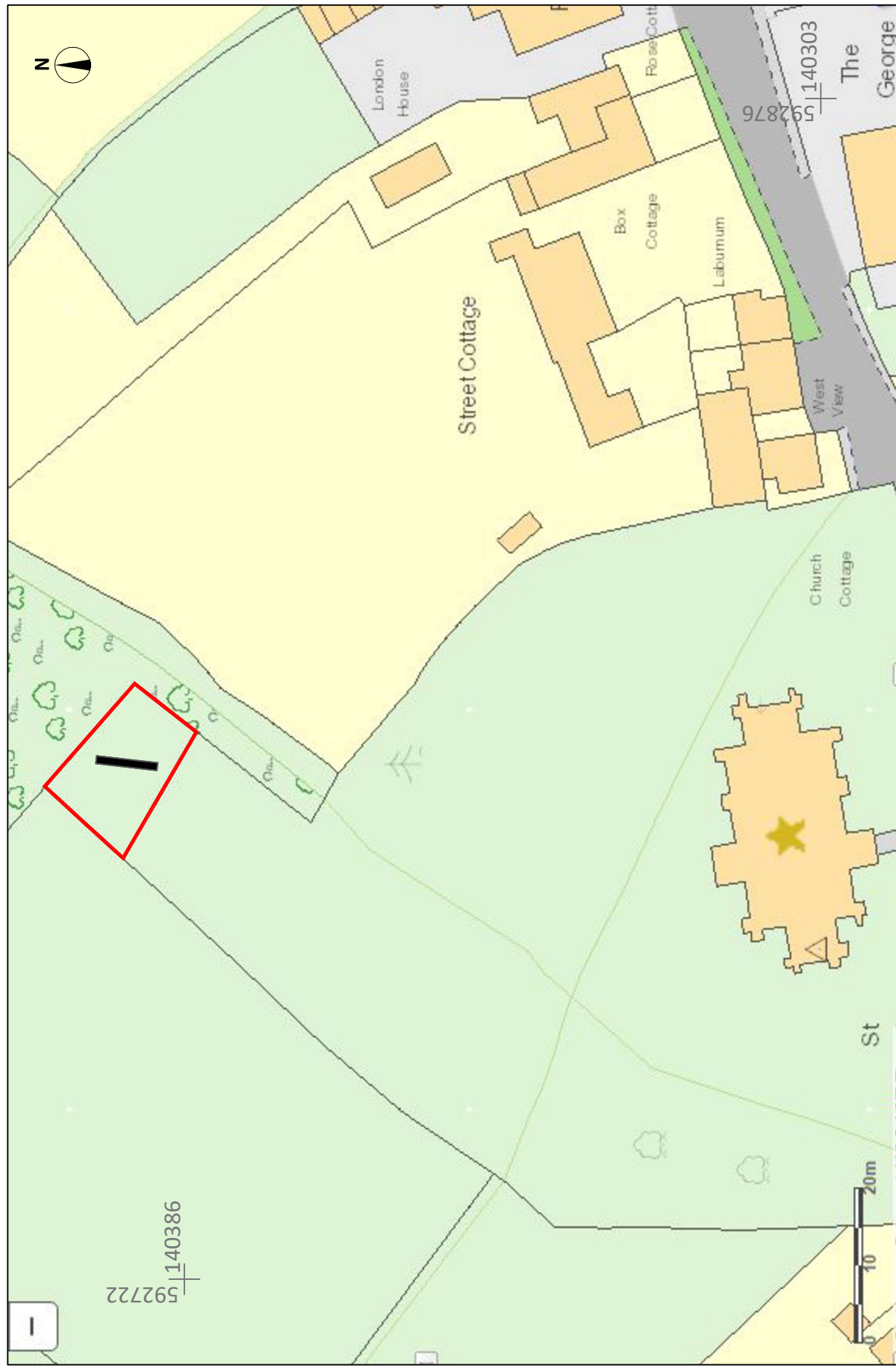


Map of Kent(NTS)



Courtesy of National Library of Scotland

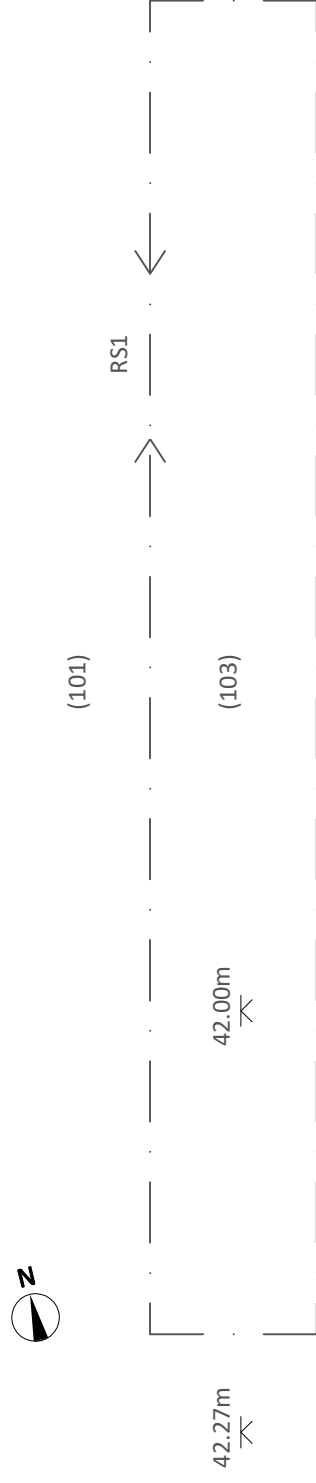
Figure 1 Site Location Plan



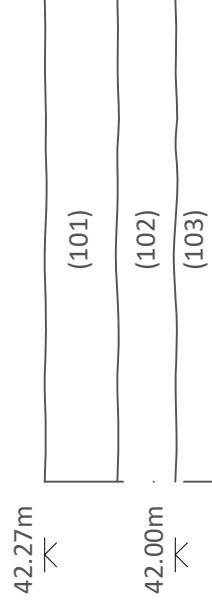
Courtesy of KCC HER Map

Key
— Site boundary
— Trench

Figure 2 Site Plan



Trench 1 Plan



Representative Section RS1

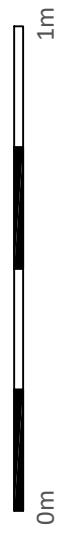


Figure 3 Trench Details