

Archaeological Evaluation of Land at Old Mill Farm, Penfold Hill, Leeds, Kent ME17 1RJ

Site Code: OMF-EV-24

NGR Site Centre: 582471 153716

Planning Application Number: MA/22/505703/FULL



Report for;

WB Chambers

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SWAT ARCHAEOLOGY

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Summary

Swale & Thames Survey Company (SWAT Archaeology) were commissioned by WB Chambers to undertake an archaeological evaluation on land at Old Mill Farm, Penfold Hill, Leeds, Kent ME17 1RJ. 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 programme was monitored by the Senior Archaeological Officer at Kent County Council.

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 no archaeological finds or features were present within any of the four trenches 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 Senior Archaeological Officer of any further archaeological mitigation measures that may be necessary in connection with any future development proposals.

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1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Project Background

1.1.1 Swale & Thames Survey Company (SWAT Archaeology) were commissioned by WB Chambers to undertake an archaeological evaluation of land at Old Mill Farm, Penfold Hill, Leeds, Kent ME17 1RJ (Figure 1).

1.1.2 A planning application (PAN: MA/22/505703/FULL) for the erection of polytunnels with associated drainage and landscaping was submitted to Maidstone Borough Council (MBC) whereby Kent County Council Heritage and Conservation (KCCHC), on behalf of MBC, 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:

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

- i. archaeological field evaluation works in accordance with a specification and written timetable which has been submitted to and approved by the Local Planning Authority;*
- ii. further archaeological investigation, recording and 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; and*
- iii. programme of post excavation assessment and publication. The development shall only proceed in accordance with the approved details.*

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

Reason: To ensure that features of archaeological interest are properly examined and recorded, and that due regard is had to the preservation in situ of important archaeological remains.

Details are required prior to the commencement of development because ground works are involved.

(MA/22/505703/FULL, Condition 6, 16th June 2023)

- 1.1.4 The archaeological evaluation, which comprised the excavation of four trenches measuring up to 25m in length and 1.8m in width, was carried out over the course of two days in February 2024 (see Table 1 below). The evaluation follows the submission of a Heritage Assessment produced by PHA Planning in 2022. The evaluation was carried out in accordance with an archaeological Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI) prepared by SWAT Archaeology (2023), 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
Heritage Assessment	November 2022	DHA Planning
Submission of the Written Scheme of Investigation	September 2023	SWAT Archaeology
Archaeological Evaluation – Fieldwork	31 st January 2024 and 2 nd February 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 582471 153716 to the north-west of the hamlet of Ashbank and on the north side of Penfold Hill (Figure 1). To the south is situated the Grade II Listed Battel Hall and south-west are situated the Sewage Works. To the west freshwater springs are recorded and to the north the detached residence of Larch Croft.
- 1.3.2 Ground levels slope towards the northwest at heights ranging from approximately 54.3m Ordnance Datum (OD) to 61.4m OD, within a rural farming landscape and working farm. The Geological Survey of Great Britain shows that the site is located on Hythe Formation-Sandstone and Limestone interbedded, 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 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 (PDA) is located close to a number of archaeological sites which are identified on the KCCHER database. A search of the KCCHER was carried out on the 1st of August 2023, centred on the proposed site with a search radius of 500m. The search provided a relatively low number of records of Listed Buildings. There are no Scheduled Monuments, World Heritage Sites, registered battlefields or registered parks and gardens. The PDA resides in the Landscape of Local Value on the Maidstone Borough Council Local Plan Policy Map but is not situated within a Conservation Area.

2.1.2 The site is located just to north-west of the hamlet of Ashbank and on the north side of Penfold Hill (Figures 1-3). To the south is situated the Grade II Listed Battel Hall and south-west are situated the Sewage Works whilst to the west are freshwater springs and to the north the detached residence of Larch Croft. 4

2.1.3 Approximately 10m south (Figure 4) of the south access road is the probable site of a tumulus (TQ 85 SW 18). To the west the remains of a Belgic rubbish pit were found in 1961 (TQ 85 SW 16) and to the north Anglo-Saxon burials were found in 1910 with grave goods (TQ 85 SW 7). Slightly outside the development area on the west side the probable remains of a Roman building were found in 1961 (TQ 85 SW 20).

2.2 Consultation

2.2.1 KCCHC were consulted of the planning application when the following response was provided:

The site of proposed works lies within an area of archaeological potential associated with prehistoric and Roman activity. A possible Bronze Age barrow is suggested south of the application site and similar remains may extend northwards into the application site itself. Within the site is the discovery of a Romano-British pit with cultural material. This may be an isolated finding, but it may represent part of an occupation site. Given the extent of known archaeological sites in the wider area, this site has potential for archaeological remains, especially of prehistoric and Roman date.

(KCCHC Reference: 22/505703, Consultation dated: 25 January 2023)

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 2023; 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), are to:

- *Determine, record and report on the nature, extent, preservation, and significance of archaeological remains within a defined area. The scope of work will be described in a project design that is fit for purpose and will be carried out by suitably qualified persons in accordance with that design and the ClfA code of conduct and give due regard to the guidance for archaeological field evaluation. All archaeological field evaluations will result in a report, published accounts where appropriate, and a stable, ordered, accessible archive.*

3.3 General Objectives

3.3.1 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.

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 (ClfA 2023).

4.2 Fieldwork

- 4.2.1 A total of four 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.
- 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 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+, Trench 2, 201+, Trench 3, 301+, etc.).

5 RESULTS

5.1 Introduction

- 5.1.1 All trenches were mechanically excavated under archaeological supervision. Trenches were positioned in order to cover as many areas of the site as possible as set out in the WSI.
- 5.1.2 The site, as shown on Figure 2 provides the trench layout with Figure 3 and Figure 4 illustrating the results for each individual archaeological evaluation trench. Plates 1-14 consist of photographs of features and selected trenches that have been provided to supplement the text.
- 5.1.3 Appendix 1 provides the stratigraphic sequence and contextual information for all trenches, 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. The topsoil generally consisted of relatively loose dark grey, brown silty clay with occasional sub angular stone, and moderate rooting, overlying the subsoil which consisted of firm dark red brown silty clay with occasional rounded stones. The natural geology largely comprised stiff mid orange, brown, silty clay (Hythe Formation) although variations did occur across each trench, as described further below.

5.3 Archaeological Narrative

Trench 1 (Figure 3, Plates 1-4)

- 5.3.1 Within the southern extent of the site (Figure 2), Trench 1 was excavated on an E-W alignment and measured approximately 25m in length, 1.8m in width with a maximum depth of 0.42m (Figure 3). Natural geological deposits were recorded at a level ranging between 61.05m OD and 61.10m OD. This trench was slightly relocated due to the presence of an overhead power line which limited the length of the trench.
- 5.3.2 This trench was located within an existing trackway providing access to the surrounding working field and so display relatively intense soil erosion and flooding. Within the central and western

extents of the trench vehicle ruts were clearly visible and modern live water irrigation pipes present. No archaeological finds or features were present in Trench 1.

Trench 2 (Figure 3, Plates 5-8)

5.3.3 Trench 2 was located within the northwestern area of the site (Figure 2) and was excavated on a N-S alignment. This trench measured 25m in length, 1.8m in width and a maximum depth of 0.50m (Figure 3). Natural geological deposits were recorded at a level ranging between 55.79m OD and 55.22m OD.

5.3.4 The natural geology (203) varied from that recorded in Trench 1, with moderate natural fragments of sandstone being recorded within the southern extent of the trench. No archaeological finds or features were present in Trench 2.

Trench 3 (Figure 4, Plates 9-12)

5.3.5 Located adjacent to Trench 2, within the northwestern corner of the site (Figure 2), Trench 3 measured 25m in length with a maximum depth of 0.52m. Natural geology was recorded at a level ranging from 53.78m OD to 54.04m OD.

5.3.6 More frequent fragments of sandstone were present within the natural horizons (303) particularly within the southwestern extent of the trench (Plate 12). No archaeological finds were retrieved from Trench 3.

Trench 4 (Figure 4, Plates 13-14)

5.3.7 Trench 4 was the southern-most trench recorded within the northern extent of the site (Figure 2). Excavated on a NW-SE alignment Trench 4 measured approximately 25m in length with a maximum depth of 0.48m. Natural geological deposits were recorded at a level ranging between 53.46m OD and 55.29m OD.

5.3.8 More frequent fragments of sandstone were present within the natural horizons (403) with a swathe of sand present within the southwestern extent of the trench (Plate 14). No archaeological finds were retrieved from Trench 4.

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 Old Mill Farm, Penfold Hill, Leeds in Kent has investigated the extents of the proposed development area using four trenches, measuring approximately 25m in length and 1.8m in width. The natural geology was encountered within all trenches at an average depth of approximately 0.48m below the existing ground surface, directly underlying subsoil and topsoil. Within the southern extent of the site (Trench 1) partial truncation of the upper geological surface had occurred through vehicle rutting and water erosion, expected due to the trench's location within an existing trackway.

7.2 Archaeological Narrative

- 7.2.1 Despite the archaeological potential of the site no archaeological finds or features were recorded within any of the trenches. The recording of an intact subsoil across the whole site combined with an historic farming land use would suggest that preservation conditions are reasonably favourable should archaeological finds and/or features be present beyond the extent of the trenches.

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 Senior 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 Tim Chambers at WB Chambers for commissioning the project. Thanks are also extended to Wendy Rogers, Senior Archaeological Officer at Kent County Council, for her advice and assistance.
- 9.1.2 David Britchfield BA (Hons) MCIfA 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 MCIfA, FRSA of SWAT Archaeology.

10 REFERENCES

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SWAT Archaeology (2023) *Written Scheme of Investigation for an Archaeological Evaluation on Land at Old Mill Farm, Penfold Hill, Leeds, Kent*

Websites

Chartered Institute for Archaeologists: <https://www.archaeologists.net/>

British geological Society: <https://www.bgs.ac.uk/>

Kent County Council Historic Environment Record:

<https://webapps.kent.gov.uk/KCC.ExploringKentsPast.Web.Sites.Public/SingleResult.aspx?uid=TKE1046>

11 APPENDIX 1 – TRENCH TABLES

Trench 1	Dimensions: 25m x 1.8m Average Depth: 0.42m Ground Level: 61.41m OD – 61.48m OD		
Context	Interpretation	Description	Depth (m)
(101)	Topsoil	Relatively loose dark grey, brown silty clay with occasional sub angular stone and moderate rooting	0.00-0.18
(102)	Subsoil	Firm dark red brown silty clay with occasional rounded stones	0.18-0.42
(103)	Natural	Firm mid red brown silt clay	0.42+

Trench 2	Dimensions: 25m x 1.8m Average Depth: 0.50m Ground Level: 55.22m OD – 55.79m OD		
Context	Interpretation	Description	Depth (m)
(201)	Deposit	Relatively loose dark grey, brown silty clay with occasional sub angular stone and moderate rooting	0.00-0.25
(202)	Subsoil	Firm dark red brown silty clay with occasional rounded stones	0.25-0.50
(203)	Natural	Firm mid red brown silt clay	0.50+

Trench 3	Dimensions: 25m x 1.8m Average Depth: 0.52m Ground Level: 54.30m OD – 55.04mOD		
Context	Interpretation	Description	Depth (m)
(301)	Topsoil	Relatively loose dark grey, brown silty clay with occasional sub angular stone and moderate rooting	0.00-0.24
(302)	Subsoil	Firm dark red brown silty clay with occasional rounded stones	0.24-0.52
(303)	Natural	Firm mid red brown silt clay	0.52+

Trench 4	Dimensions: 25m x 1.8m Average Depth: 0.48m Ground Level: 53.84m OD – 55.79m OD		
Context	Interpretation	Description	Depth (m)
(201)	Deposit	Relatively loose dark grey, brown silty clay with occasional sub angular stone and moderate rooting	0.00-0.25
(202)	Subsoil	Firm dark red brown silty clay with occasional rounded stones	0.25-0.48
(203)	Natural	Firm mid red brown silt clay	0.48+

Site Name: Land at Old Mill Farm, Penfold Hill, Leeds, Kent ME17 1RJ

SWAT Site Code: OMF-EV-24

Site Address: As above

Summary. *Swale & Thames Survey Company (SWAT Archaeology) were commissioned by WB Chambers to undertake an archaeological evaluation on land at Old Mill Farm, Penfold Hill, Leeds, Kent ME17 1RJ. 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 programme was monitored by the Senior Archaeological Officer at Kent County Council.*

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District/Unitary: Maidstone City Council & Kent County Council

Period(s): Modern

NGR (centre of site to eight figures) NGR 582471 153716

Type of Archaeological work: Archaeological Evaluation

Date of recording: February 2024

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

Geology: Hythe Formation

Title and author of accompanying report: D Britchfield (2024) Archaeological Evaluation of Land at Old Mill Farm, Penfold Hill, Leeds, Kent ME17 1RJ. SWAT Archaeology Ref. OMF-EV-2024

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

Contact at Unit: Paul Wilkinson

Date: 21/02/2024

PLATES



Plate 1 Location of Trench 1, prior to excavation, viewed from the east



Plate 2 Trench 1, during excavation, viewed from the southeast



Plate 3 Trench 1, viewed from the west



Plate 4 Trench 1, viewed from the east



Plate 5 Trench 2, prior to excavation, viewed from the south



Plate 6 Trench 2, during excavation, viewed from the south



Plate 7 Trench 2, viewed from the south



Plate 8 Trench 2, viewed from the north



Plate 9 Trench 3, prior to excavation, viewed from the north



Plate 10 Trench 3, during excavation, viewed from the north



Plate 11 Trench 3, viewed from the northeast



Plate 12 Trench 3, viewed from the southwest



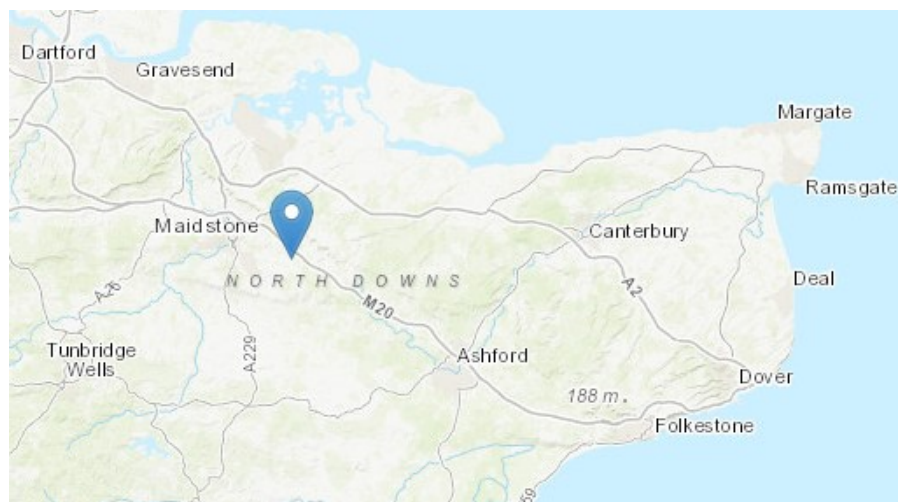
Plate 13 Trench 4, viewed from the southeast



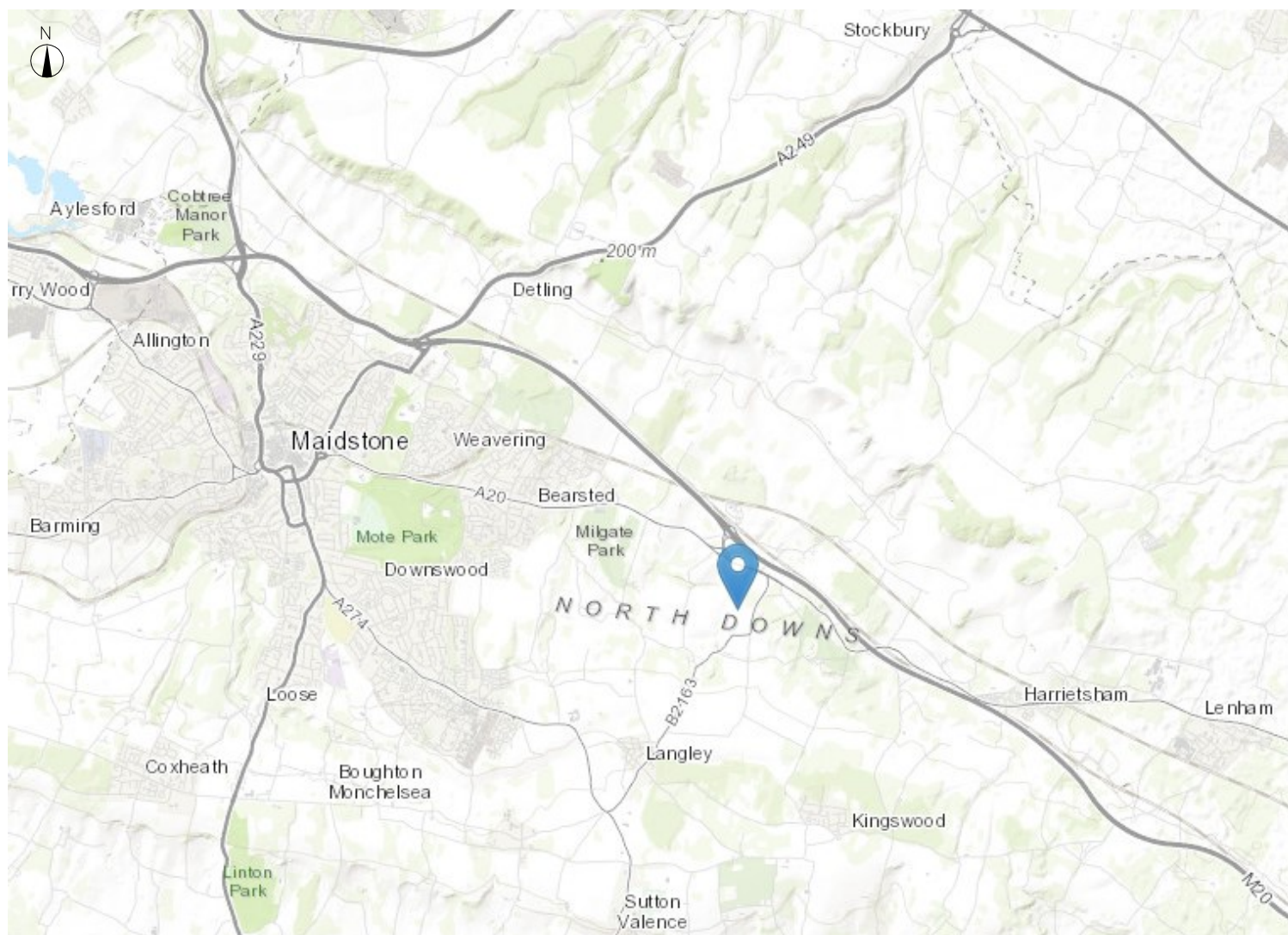
Plate 14 Trench 4, viewed from the northwest



Map of UK (NTS)



Map of North Kent (NTS)



Courtesy of National Library of Scotland

Figure 1 Site Location Plan

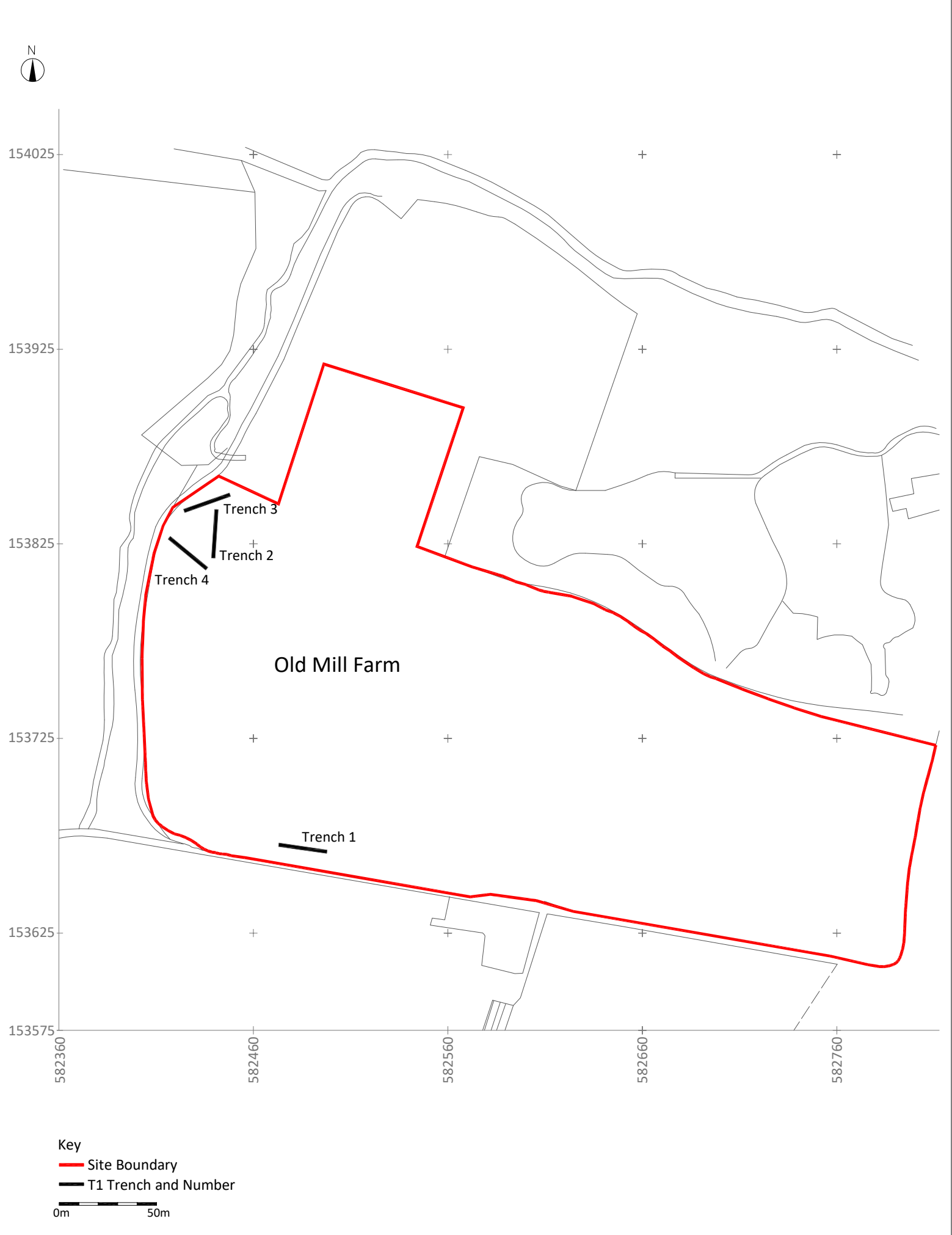
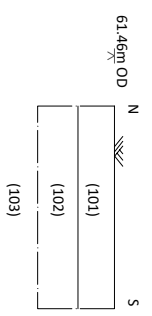
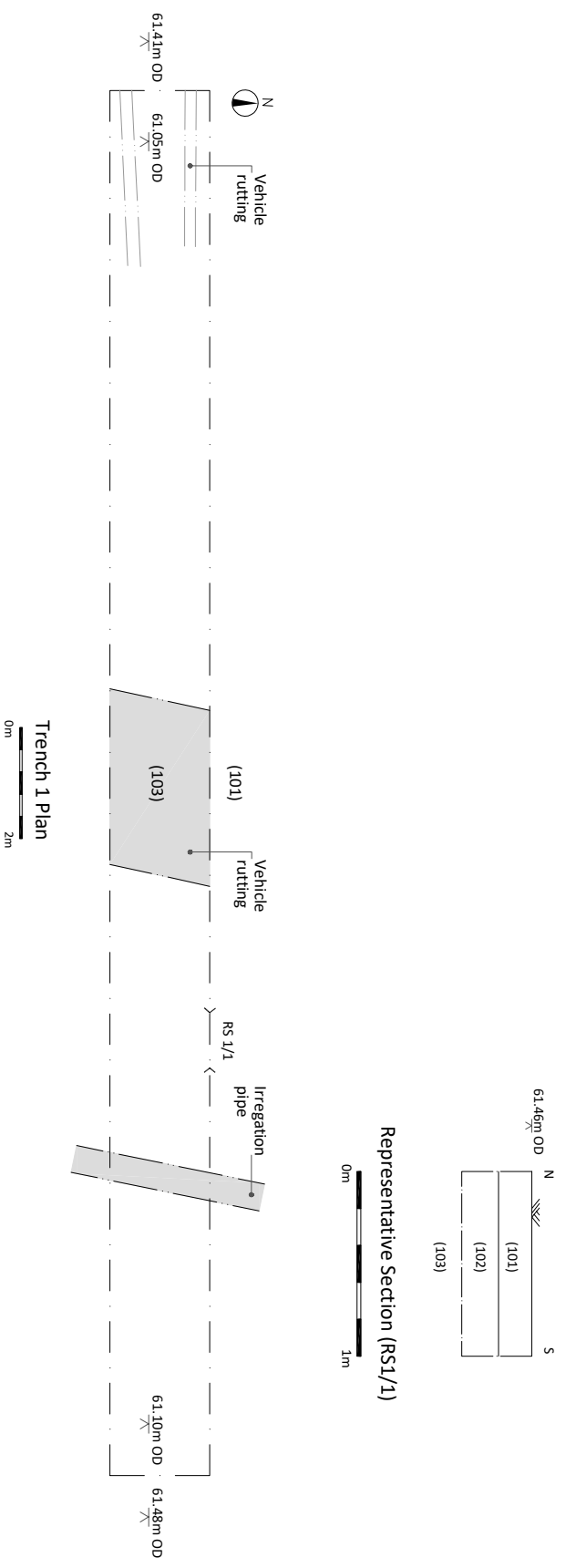
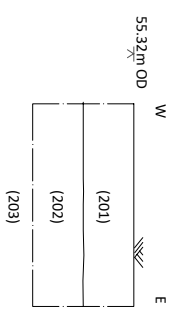
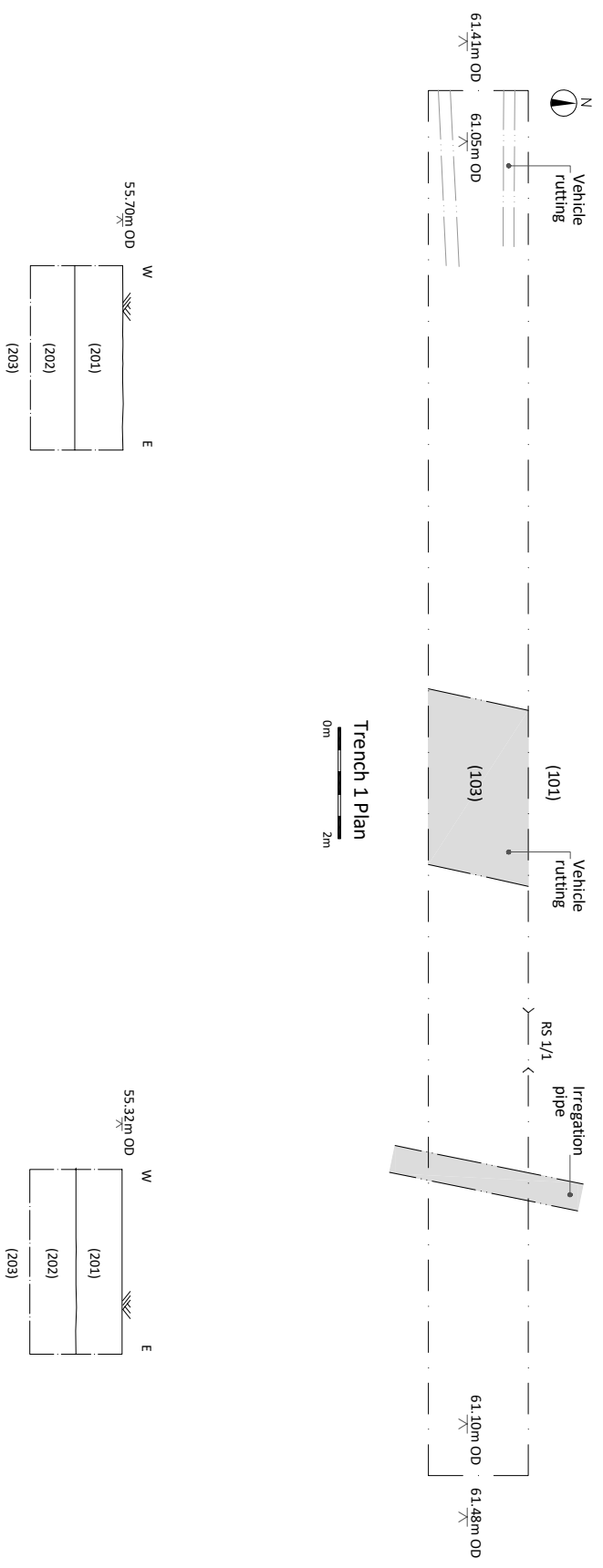


Figure 2 Site Plan showing Trench locations



Representative Section (RS1/1)



Representative Section (RS2/2)

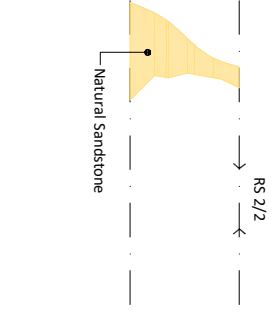
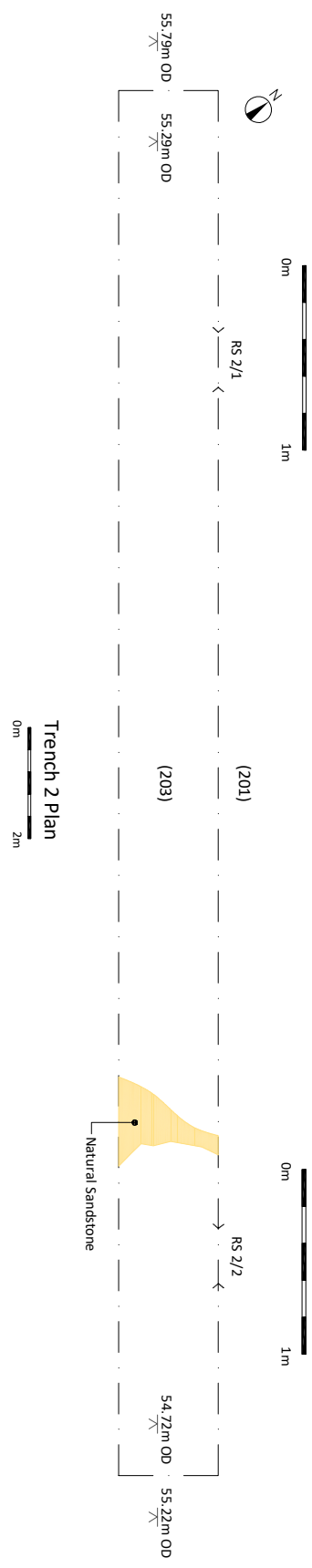
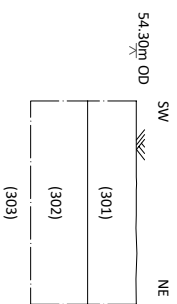
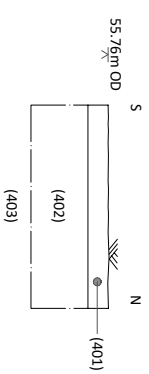
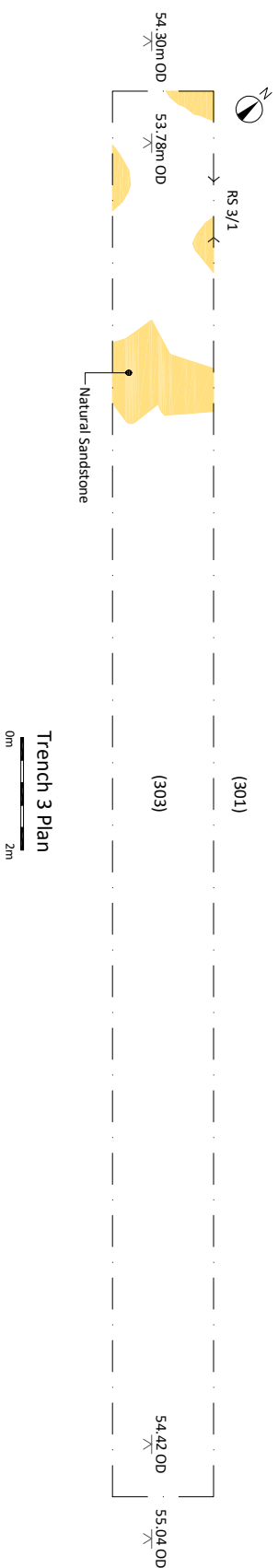


Figure 3 Trenches 1 and 2 Details



Representative Section (RS3/1)

0m 1m



Representative Section (RS4/1)

0m 1m

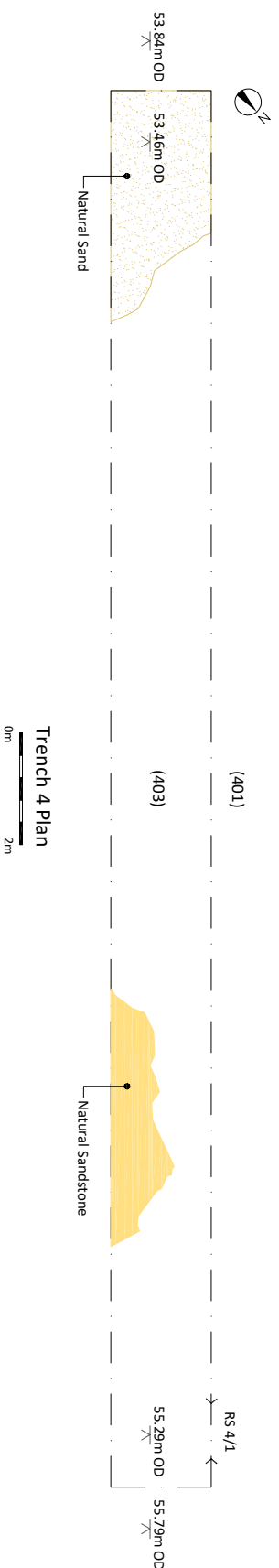


Figure 4 Trenches 3 and 4 Details