

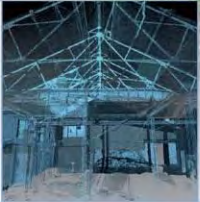
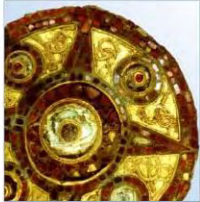
Bicester Office Park, Oxford Road, Bicester Oxfordshire: Archaeological Evaluation Report

National Grid Reference Number: SP 57634 21610

AOC Project No: 23757

Site Code: OXCMS.2018.68

Date: July 2018



ARCHAEOLOGY

HERITAGE

CONSERVATION

Bicester Office Park, Oxford Road, Bicester, Oxfordshire: An Archaeological Evaluation Report

On Behalf of: JH Consulting
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National Grid Reference (NGR): SP 57634 21610 (centred)

AOC Project No: 33709

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This document has been prepared in accordance with AOC standard operating procedures.

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Non-Technical Summary

During June 2018, AOC Archaeology Group undertook an archaeological evaluation at the site of the proposed Bicester Office Park, Oxford Road, Bicester, Oxfordshire (NGR SP 57634 21610) for JH Consulting. The work comprised of the excavation of 19 trenches, to establish the presence and character of surviving archaeology.

This report summarises the results of the evaluation. The archaeological evaluation revealed a sparse scatter of archaeological features. In total 10 of the trenches were negative. The geology of the site was revealed as 'Cornbrash', limestone rubble in a soil matrix of grey brown clayey silt to the northwest, with alluvial deposits consisting of bands of silt, gravel and bluish grey silty clay, lying across the site to the east and south. The site lay at 65mOD and was generally level. On the eastern side of the site, the natural substrate indicates a braided river channel was present, as seen in earlier excavations (AOC 2014). An undulating deposit of clayey peat was also visible in the southeastern limit of the site overlying archaeology.

The earliest archaeological evidence comprised a single abraded flint collected from the topsoil. The only dated feature was a ditch located in Trench 10, which contained a single sherd of Roman pottery. Another ditch sealed by alluvium and peat was observed in trenches 19, 20 and 21, but is undated. Several shallow irregular pits were also identified along with a single posthole observed in Trench 22, which also are undated.

An OASIS form has been completed and an electronic copy of the evaluation report will be deposited with the Archaeological Data Service (ADS). The site archive will be prepared in accordance with local and national guidance and will be held at AOC Archaeology until a suitable Oxfordshire depository is available.

1 Introduction

The Site

- 1.1 This report documents the interim results of an archaeological evaluation undertaken by AOC Archaeology Group in June 2018 at the site of a proposed development scheme for the creation of the Bicester Office Park and is part of the wider Bicester Business Park development. The site is located on the east side of Oxford Road, Bicester, Oxfordshire, and is centred on National Grid Reference (NGR: SP 57634 21610; Figure 1).
- 1.2 The Site comprises a sub-rectangular parcel of previously un-investigated land, c. 3.4ha in size (Figure 2). This area lies to the south-east of A41 Oxford Road. The proposed development area ('the Site') is bounded to the south by Bicester Avenue and the Wyevale Garden Centre and to the north-east by a Tesco superstore. The site sits on roughly level ground c.65mAOD. The current land use is as arable land.
- 1.3 The Site is part of a larger development area (Planning Ref: 07/01106-OUT) that has been subject to a number of previous archaeological investigations by Network Archaeology in 2007 and AOC Archaeology in 2013 and 2014. These investigations were carried out to the north (the Tesco site) and to the south and east. The south-western corner of the development remained un-excavated at this time as it lay outside of the initial 2007 Bicester Business Park site boundary.

Planning Background

- 1.4 The local planning authority is Cherwell District Council. Archaeological advice to the Council is provided by Richard Oram, Planning Archaeologist for Oxfordshire County Council.
- 1.5 The archaeological evaluation aims to further inform Chapter 10 'Buried Heritage (Archaeology) & Built Heritage' of the Bicester Office Park Environmental Impact Assessment Volume 1 Environmental Statement.
- 1.6 A Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI) for the work was produced prior to fieldwork being undertaken (AOC 2018). This provided a detailed programme of work for the excavation of a 4% sample of the site, comprising 22 no. 30m by 1.8m evaluation trenches (Figure 2).
- 1.7 The detailed WSI was designed in accordance with current best archaeological practice and local and national standards and guidelines and defined the methodology for the evaluation. It was designed in accordance with the Written Scheme of Investigation (AC 2017a and 2017b), current best archaeological practice and local and national standards and guidelines:
- Department for Communities and Local Government – National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) (DCLG 2012).
 - Historic England – Management of Archaeological Projects (HE 2015a).
 - Chartered Institute for Archaeologists – Standards and Guidance for Archaeological Field Evaluations (CIfA 2014a).
 - Chartered Institute for Archaeologists – Code of Conduct (CIfA 2014b).

2 Geology and Topography

- 2.1 The site covers an area of 3.4. hectares and is located on an area of generally level ground at an approximate height of 65m AOD.
- 2.2 The British Geological Survey (BGS 2017) indicates that the base geology is Kellaways Clay, overlain by a band of alluvium, likely to be associated with a former stream channel. At the west of the site is the underlying 'cornbrash' of limestone rubble in a soil matrix of grey brown clayey silt.

3 Archaeological and Historical Background

- 3.1 The following information has been extracted from The Bicester Office Park Environmental Impact Assessment Volume 1. Environmental Statement. Chapter 10 Buried Heritage (Archaeology) & Built Heritage' (2017) which gives a full assessment of the likely significant effects on buried and built heritage.

The Prehistoric and Roman (Pre AD410)

- 3.2 Oxfordshire lies close to the limits of Palaeolithic occupation and, as a result of the climatic fluctuations which characterised the Pleistocene, hominid presence in the county must have been intermittent. It is also characterised by marked differences in the availability of lithic resources. This variation is to some extent reflected in the distribution of artefacts and must have exerted some influence on hominid behaviour. Although the Palaeolithic evidence from the county is not exceptionally rich, these circumstances give it a particular interest. No evidence for early human occupation is recorded within the 1km study area.
- 3.3 The Mesolithic evidence from Oxfordshire is not rich. Of the Mesolithic sites recorded in the HER data 66% are classified as findspots, a further 19% as artefacts scatters (including artefacts scatters of mixed date) and 14% as finds from sites predominantly related to activity of other periods (Mullin et al 2011).
- 3.4 The ESA records two heritage assets of Mesolithic date within 1km of the Site. One record falls within the Site boundary: a Mesolithic flint scatter recorded during trial trenching evaluation of the Site. The other record is also a Mesolithic flint assemblage contained within tree throw holes situated to the north-east of the Site.
- 3.5 In contrast to the Mesolithic, the evidence for the Neolithic in Oxfordshire is rich, and has benefited from a long history of research. The HER records four heritage assets of Neolithic date within 1km of the Site, including a small assemblage of artefacts dating to the Neolithic recovered during an excavation of middle Iron Age to Roman Settlement and a Neolithic axehead found c. 270m west of the Site. The evaluation which took place within the Site itself recorded features such as postholes and ditches which date to prehistory; possibly even as early as the Neolithic. A fragment of a Neolithic polished flint axe was the earliest find recorded during an evaluation to the south-east of the Site.
- 3.6 Many of the evaluations and excavations carried out in the vicinity of the Site have recorded multi-period settlement including evidence from the Bronze Age. The Bronze Age provides a useful bias towards standing monuments and in Oxfordshire such monuments consist largely of barrows and cairns. Evidence of Bronze Age monuments was recorded at the multi-period Site investigated to the west of the Site which revealed evidence of possible Bronze Age round barrows and finds of collared urn pottery sherds. Other HER records from this period include a Bronze Age ditch enclosure which was recorded to the north-east of the Site and a burial recorded during extensive investigations to the south of the Site during the Wendlebury-Bicester A421 Dualling works.

- 3.7 The majority of Iron Age evidence within 1km of the Site goes hand in hand with Roman activity recorded. Iron Age pottery was found within a ditch which was potentially the same date as St Edburga's Priory which was significant as; in general, the period is poorly represented apart from in an early Roman transitional period. An extensive arrangement of shallow curvilinear ditches and larger linear ditches dating from the late Iron Age were recorded at the Bicester MOD Site to the south and east of the Site; again, this was a multi-period Site.
- 3.8 There has been a settlement at or near Bicester since Roman times. In the middle of the first century AD the Romans established and fortified the town of Alchester at the intersection of Akeman Street (Cirencester to St Albans) and a road from Towcester to Dorchester, a location approximately 1.5 kilometres south of the present town (Cherwell District Council 2011) and directly south of the Site. The Roman Town of Alchester is a Scheduled Monument. Multiple investigations in and around the Alchester Site have produced evidence of the Roman settlement as well as earlier activity in the area.
- 3.9 To the west of the Site, multiple investigations revealed an Iron Age to Roman farmstead and to the east of the Site, further Roman activity was recorded where earlier activity had been also found. To the north of the Site, prior to the development of Bicester Village, investigations revealed remains of a low status rural Romano-British settlement which showed evidence of possible water management. Finally, a ditch dating to the Roman period was recorded to the north-east of the Site within Bicester Town Centre.

The Early Medieval (AD 410 – AD 1066) and Medieval Periods (AD 1066 – AD 1485)

- 3.10 The early medieval period is one of important social, political, economic, cultural and ethnic change. Archaeological evidence, traditionally given second place in terms of authority to documentary evidence, is being given increasing precedence in efforts to resolve the difficulties of interpreting the early medieval period. The modern settlement of Bicester evolved with the Anglo-Saxon farmers who settled on the Cornbrash, a flaggy type of limestone, either side of a ford over the River Bure and close to the existing Saxon Minster of St Edburga's. The first group of farms were established in the vicinity of what became the Manor of King's End followed by a later settlement on the east side of the Bure which became the Manor of Market End.
- 3.11 The HER records multiple heritage assets within 1km of the Site dating to this period; many of which are within and associated with the historic core of Bicester. Assets of note include an evaluation behind the Kings Arms Hotel) which revealed possible Saxon structures including Grubenhous and a series of ditches and gullies. An Anglo-Saxon ditch orientated north to south was found underlying possible horticultural deposits of medieval date during an evaluation on Chapel Street (Site 16). Possible fishponds of medieval date (Site 30) were likely built for Bicester Priory on marshy ground to the north-east of the Site and further evidence of this period was revealed at the Minster and Priory (Site 31) itself when excavation recorded features of late Saxon to post-medieval date. Prior to construction of a housing development, medieval remains (Site 38-40) in the form of building foundations, a Holloway, causeway, quarries and ridge and furrow were recorded. A medieval inhumation was recorded during the extension of Bicester Library and was thought to be associated with St Edburga's Priory (Site 41).

The Post-Medieval (AD 1485 – Present)

- 3.12 The first reference to Brewer Street is from 1608, when it was named Brewhouse Street. Brewerstreet Farmhouse, directly south of the site dates to the 15th century, with 16th and 19th century alterations. It is Grade 1 listed (List Entry No. 1281258) and is a half-timbered two-storey house.

- 3.13 The site itself is depicted on the first edition Ordnance Survey Map with one northern field and five southern fields. During the 20th century, the divisions were gradually removed, leaving just two fields, divided by a footpath aligned east-west.

Previous Archaeological Work

- 3.14 An archaeological trial trench evaluation was undertaken within the wider development area in 2007. This focused on the east and south-east of the Site and within the area to the north of the current development area (the Tesco Site). The evaluation identified a quantity of exceptionally well-preserved Mesolithic flint, which possibly suggests the presence of in situ deposits nearby. Possible evidence of late prehistoric and Roman settlement was also encountered including post holes and drip gullies which potentially were associated with circular buildings. Boundary ditches were also identified. Whilst some of these ditches were clearly post-medieval others were thought to be late prehistoric. The evaluation was preceded by a desk-based assessment and a geophysical survey and a chapter on archaeology and heritage was initially included in the 2007 Environmental Statement (ES).
- 3.15 As a result of the 2007 evaluations AOC undertook more detailed archaeological investigations on the Tesco site between November 2013 and January 2014. The excavations revealed a sequence of at least seven Bronze Age buildings and associated activity on either side of a relict watercourse. The buildings were represented by postholes, forming two roundhouses that were kept in good repair and rebuilt, probably across generations, and are likely to represent elements of a farmstead. The relative permanence of settlement is also indicated by the presence of three cremation burials at the top of the hill above the farmstead. Other postholes represented fences, which may have enclosed stock enclosures or settlement boundaries on flat ground either side of a river. Roman and post-medieval features were also identified on the Site.
- 3.16 The 2007 evaluation undertaken in the southern and eastern parts of the wider site revealed several archaeological features which were undated or of post-medieval origin. Fragments of Romano-British pottery were, however, recovered from subsoil in one of the trenches. Seven trenches were excavated in the east of the Site, of which three, all positioned on the eastern edge of the Site, contained archaeological remains. This suggests the presence of concentrations of archaeological activity on the eastern edge of the Site. Prehistoric flints were recovered along with fragments of Romano-British and Medieval pottery.

4 Methodology

- 4.1 A WSI prepared by AOC (AOC 2018a) and a Risk Assessment/Method Statement (RAMS) prepared by AOC (2018b) defined the site procedures for archaeological evaluation, in agreement with JH Consulting and Richard Oram, Oxfordshire County Council. These documents detailed how the evaluation would be undertaken. All work was carried out in accordance with local and national guidelines (CIfA 2014, EH 2006, EH 1991). Provision was made for a report as defined in the WSI. The trench location was defined by AOC Archaeology group (Figure 2).
- 4.2 Upon arrival at site a large spoil heap containing substantial modern building material was identified to the north of site, over the area in which trenches 1-3 were to be located, and a large billboard was directly over the location of Trench 7. After a discussion with Richard Oram, it was decided that Trench 7 could be moved to the east to avoid the billboard and associated utilities whilst the area to the north it would not be evaluated.

- 4.3 The archaeological evaluation was carried out in June 2018. The machining was carried out using a 13 tonne tracked machine with a smooth bladed ditching bucket under the constant supervision of Jaime Megan Levell.
- 4.4 A unique site code for the project (OXCMS.2018.68) was assigned by Oxfordshire Museums Service, and used as the identifier for finds, records, and archives.
- 4.5 The evaluation was supervised by Jaime Megan Levell, Project Supervisor (AOC), under the overall direction of Catherine Edwards (Operations Manager). Richard Oram of Oxfordshire County Council monitored the site on behalf of Oxford County Council.
- 4.6 In the field, context numbers were allocated according to trench number e.g. context 4001 is in Trench 4. In this report, the table of stratigraphy lists the stratigraphic sequence by trench and a full list of all features is given in Appendix A, the context register.

5 Aims of the Investigation

- 5.1 The general aims of the archaeological evaluation were as follows:
- To establish the presence/absence of archaeological remains within the site.
 - To determine the extent, condition, nature, character, quality and date of any archaeological remains encountered.
 - To assess the ecofactual and environmental potential of any archaeological features and deposits.
 - To determine the extent of previous truncations of the archaeological deposits.
 - To enable the Archaeological Advisor to Oxfordshire County Council to make an informed decision on the proposed development and the necessity for any further assessment / mitigation works.
 - To make available to interested parties the results of the investigation.

6 Results

Negative Trenches

- 6.1 The 19 excavated trenches across the site (Figure 2) revealed a sparse scatter of archaeological features, however 10 trenches contained no archaeological remains. The negative trenches were recorded as 5, 7-9, 11-15 and 17.
- 6.2 The natural deposit observed in the majority of the negative trenches, was recorded as 'Cornbrash' composed of limestone rubble in a soil matrix of grey brown clayey silt or a gravelly silt alluvial natural, varying in colour between light grey to mid grey yellow. In the majority of trenches, the natural was overlain by subsoil which in turn was overlain by topsoil. The exceptions to this, however, were trenches 9, 12, 13, 15 and 17 which indicated deposits of blue grey alluvium and/or a dark grey brown silty clay peat deposit. Trench 13 also contained a second alluvial layer overlying the peat which has been interpreted as a flood deposit.
- 6.3 The peat recorded in Trench 13 has been sampled, both as monolith samples (one at each end of the trench) and also as a baulk samples excavated in 0.05m spits in a 1m by 1m sq. The results of the samples will be added as an addendum to this report when available.



Plate 1: Trench 7



Plate 2: Trench 9



Plate 3: Sample Section Trench 9



Plate 4: Sample Section Trench 13



Plate 5: Trench 17

Positive Trenches

Trench 4 (Figure 5)

Table of Stratigraphy

| Context No | Depth | Height of Deposit, OD | Description/Interpretation |
|------------|-------|-----------------------|---|
| 4001 | 0.20m | 65.92m | Modern Overburden |
| 4002 | 0.20m | 65.72m | Topsoil |
| 4003 | 0.20m | 65.52m | Subsoil |
| 4004 | NFE | 65.32m | Light brown yellowy compacted gravelly silt natural |

- 6.4 Trench 4 was oriented north, northwest – south, southwest to the north of the site. The naturally lain deposit of brown yellowy compacted gravelly silt was recorded at an upper height of 65.32mOD. A single feature, cutting into the natural, was observed in this trench, as a sub-circular shallow pit, [4005], which was visible adjacent to the LOE, and measuring 0.55m by 1.35m and 0.27m deep. The pit had moderately steep curving sides and a single fill of compacted mid yellow grey silty clay, (4006), contained no dating evidence. It is not clear how this pit was utilised although it could be a tree bole.
- 6.5 Overlying the above, the trench was sealed by 0.16m thick mid grey brown silty clay subsoil (4003), in turn overlain by topsoil (4002) and a modern overburden (4001).
- 6.6 A modern pit, visibly cut through the topsoil, containing plastics and modern demolition material was observed to the north of the trench and was not excavated.



Plate 6: Trench 4



Plate 7: Pit [4005]

Trench 6 (Figure 6)**Table of Stratigraphy**

| Context No | Depth | Height of Deposit, OD | Description/Interpretation |
|------------|-------|-----------------------|----------------------------|
| 6001 | 0.34m | 65.65m | Topsoil |
| 6002 | 0.07m | 65.31m | Subsoil |
| 6003 | 0.09m | 65.24m | Alluvial |
| 6004 | NFE | 65.15m | Natural |

- 6.7 Trench 6 was oriented east, northeast–west, southwest to the north of the site. The naturally lain deposit of brown yellowy compacted gravelly silt was recorded at an upper height of t 65.15mOD. The single feature in this trench was a sub-circular irregular shallow pit, [6006], visible running into the LOE, measuring 1.18m by 1.1m and 0.22m deep. The pit had irregular sloping sides with an undulating base. A single fill of soft dark blueish grey silty clay, (6005), contained no dating evidence. It is not clear how this pit was utilised and could a tree bole.
- 6.8 Overlying the above, the trench was a 0.09m thick mid dark blueish grey silty clay alluvium (6003), in turn overlain by subsoil (6002) and topsoil (6001).



Plate 8: Pit [6006]



Plate 9: Trench 6

Trench 10 (Figure 7)**Table of Stratigraphy**

| Context No | Depth | Height of Deposit, OD | Description/Interpretation |
|------------|-------|-----------------------|----------------------------|
| 10001 | 0.25m | 65.62m | Topsoil |
| 10002 | NFE | 65.37m | Natural |

- 6.9 Trench 10 was oriented east–west to the north of the site. The naturally lain ‘Cornbrash’ limestone rubble in a soil matrix of grey brown clayey silt was recorded at a 65.37mOD. The single feature observed in this trench, was a northwest – southeast orientated linear feature, likely a boundary ditch [10004], measuring 0.9m wide and 0.26m deep. The linear had a shallow ‘V’ shaped profile with a single fill of blue grey alluvial silty clay (10003), containing a single Roman ceramic pottery sherd. The fill is likely deposited naturally as an alluvial deposit, suggesting it was open for a time.



Plate 10: Ditch [10004]



Plate 11: Trench 10

6.10 Overlying the above was a 0.25m thick layer of topsoil (10001).

Trench 18 (Figure 8)

Table of Stratigraphy

| Context No | Depth | Height of Deposit, OD | Description/Interpretation |
|------------|-------|-----------------------|-----------------------------|
| 18001 | 0.16m | 65.35m | Topsoil |
| 18002 | 0.12m | 65.19m | Subsoil |
| 18003 | 0.23m | 65.02m | Organic Clayey Peat deposit |
| 18004 | NFE | 64.79m | Natural |
| 18005 | 0.05m | 65.07m | Alluvial |

6.11 Trench 18 was oriented northwest-southeast, to the south of the site. The naturally lain deposit of gravelly silt alluvium was recorded at 64.79mOD. Cutting into the natural was a single feature recorded as a sub-oval irregular shallow pit, [18006], measuring 2.75m by 1.05m and 0.31m deep. The pit had irregular sloping sides with an undulating base with a single fill of soft dark brown clay peat deposit (18007), which contained no dating evidence. The similarity of fill (18007) to the organic peat deposit (18003) which over lies the trench suggests that this pit was filled during the same process that formed the overlying the deposit (18003).

6.12 As discussed above, the pit is overlain by 0.23m depth of a clayey peat deposit (18003) which in turn was overlain by a thin band of light-yellow grey loose alluvium (18005) which is in turn was overlain by a light brownish grey silty clay subsoil 0.12m thick and 0.16m deep deposit of mid grey brown silty clay topsoil.



Plate 12: Pit [18006]



Plate 13: Trench 18

Trench 19 (Figure 9)**Table of Stratigraphy**

| Context No | Depth | Height of Deposit, OD | Description/Interpretation |
|------------|-------|-----------------------|-----------------------------|
| 19001 | 0.22m | 64.84m | Topsoil |
| 19002 | 0.12m | 64.62m | Subsoil |
| 19003 | 0.28m | 64.25m | Organic Clayey Peat deposit |
| 19004 | 0.07 | 63.97m | Alluvial |
| 19005 | NFE | 63.90m | Natural |
| 19006 | 0.25 | 64.50m | Alluvial |

- 1.1 Trench 19 was oriented east-west in the south of site and contained a single archaeological feature. Naturally-lain silty gravel (19005) was the lowest deposit recorded, laying generally level 63.90mOD. In the centre of the trench, a linear ditch [19008], was oriented southeast-northwest, measuring 0.70m wide and 0.25m deep, with a concave profile. The pit was filled by (19009), an organic fill of dark brownish grey silty clay with no finds present. Ditch [19008], was also visible in trenches 20 and 21 on the same alignment.
- 1.2 Overlying the above was a thin alluvial deposit (19004), which was overlain by an organic clayey silt deposit (19003) only visible in the eastern half of the trench. Above (19003), was alluvial deposit (19006) which was in turn overlain by subsoil (19002) and topsoil (19001).

**Plate 14: Trench 19**

Trench 20 (Figure 10)**Table of Stratigraphy**

| Context No | Depth | Height of Deposit, OD | Description/Interpretation |
|------------|-------|-----------------------|-----------------------------|
| 20001 | 0.18m | 64.54m | Topsoil |
| 20002 | 0.19m | 64.36m | Subsoil |
| 20003 | 0.17m | 64.17m | Alluvial |
| 20005 | NFE | 63.76m | Natural |
| 20006 | 0.18m | 64.00m | Organic clayey peat deposit |
| 20007 | 0.06 | 63.82m | Alluvial |

- 1.1 Trench 20 was oriented east-west to the south of site and contained three archaeological features. Naturally-lain silty gravel mixed with dense alluvial clay (20005) was recorded as the natural at an upper height of 63.76mOD. Sondages were hand excavated to establish the character of the undulating natural. In the centre of the trench, was linear ditch [20009], oriented southeast-northwest, measuring 1.08m wide and 0.25m deep, with a concave profile and an organic fill of dark brownish grey silty clay (20008). No finds were present. Ditch [20009] was also visible in trenches 19 and 21 also.
- 1.2 Pits [20012] and [20014], were recorded as irregular shallow pits filled with alluvial silty clays, (20011) and (20013), similar to deposit (20007). No dating evidence was recovered.
- 1.3 Overlying the above was a thin alluvial deposit (20007), which was overlain by an organic clayey peat deposit (20006). This was covered by an alluvial deposit (20003), which was only observed the eastern half of Trench 20, which was in turn overlain by subsoil (20002) and topsoil (20001).

**Plate 15: Ditch [20009]**

Trench 21 (Figure 11)**Table of Stratigraphy**

| Context No | Depth | Height of Deposit, OD | Description/Interpretation |
|------------|-------|-----------------------|----------------------------|
| 21001 | 0.2m | 64.72m | Topsoil |
| 21002 | 0.2m | 64.52m | Subsoil |
| 21003 | 0.05m | 64.32m | Alluvial |
| 21004 | 0.15m | 64.27m | Alluvial |
| 21005 | NFE | 64.12m | Natural |

- 1.1 Trench 21 was oriented east-west to the south of site and contained a single archaeological feature. Naturally-lain silty gravels mixed with dense alluvial clays, (21005), was recorded at an upper height of 64.12mOD. Sondages were excavated using the mechanical excavator, to establish the character of the undulating natural. In the centre of the trench, was a linear ditch [21009], oriented southeast-northwest and measuring 0.5m wide and 0.15m deep. The ditch had a concave profile and an organic fill of dark brownish grey silty clay (21010). No finds were present. Ditch [21009] is visible in trenches 19 and 20.
- 1.2 The above was sealed by a thin alluvial deposit (21004), which is in turn overlain by a later alluvial deposit (21003), which was in turn covered by subsoil (21002) and topsoil (21001)

**Plate 16: Trench 21**

Trench 22 (Figure 12)**Table of Stratigraphy**

| Context No | Depth | Height of Deposit, OD | Description/Interpretation |
|------------|-------|-----------------------|----------------------------|
| 22001 | 0.25m | 65.67m | Topsoil |
| 22002 | 0.25m | 65.32m | Subsoil |
| 22003 | NFE | 65.07m | Natural |

- 1.3 Trench 22 was oriented northwest-southeast to the south of the site and contained two archaeological features. Naturally-lain dense alluvial clay (20005) was recorded at 65.07mOD. A Cutting into the natural was a sub-oval irregular shallow pit, [22005], measuring 1.9m by 0.8m and 0.17m deep. The pit had irregular sloping sides with a flat base filled by a compacted light blueish grey silty clay (22004). No finds were present. A post-hole was recorded in the centre of the trench [22007] and had steep sloping sides and a concave base. The post hole was filled by a single dark bluish grey charcoal rich deposit (22006) which contained fragments of animal bone. No dating evidence was observed.
- 1.4 The trench was sealed by 0.25m of subsoil (22002) overlain topsoil (22001)

**Plate 17: Pit [22007]**

7 Finds

| Trench | Context | Find |
|--------|---------|---|
| 9 | 9001 | Post-medieval pottery |
| 10 | 10003 | Roman pottery |
| 11 | 11001 | Post-medieval pottery, clay tobacco pipe, animal bone, worked flint |
| 13 | 13001 | Post-medieval pottery, shell |
| 14 | 14001 | Post-medieval pottery |
| 16 | 16001 | Roman pottery, Post-medieval pottery |
| 17 | 17001 | Roman pottery, Post-medieval pottery, post-medieval tile |
| 19 | 19001 | Post-medieval pottery, clay tobacco pipe |
| 20 | 20001 | Iron object |
| 22 | 22002 | Iron object |
| 22 | 22006 | Animal bone |

- 7.1 Finds were recovered primarily from topsoil deposits with the exception of one sherd of Roman pottery recovered from ditch [10004] and animal bone recovered from posthole [22007]. The earliest dated find recovered from topsoil deposits was a single flint proximal flake recovered from (11001). Roman pottery was recovered from the topsoil in trenches 16 and 17. Post medieval pottery, glass, metalwork and clay pipe were recovered from trenches 9, 11, 13, 14, 16, 17, 19, 20 and 22. Small amounts of animal bone were recovered from topsoil in Trench 11.

8 Conclusions

- 8.1 The archaeological evaluation of 19 trenches at the site of the proposed Bicester office park revealed a sparse scatter of archaeological features, although 10 of the trenches were negative. The geology of the site was revealed as 'Cornbrash', limestone rubble in a soil matrix of grey brown clayey silt to the northwest, with alluvium consisting of bands of silt, gravel and bluish grey silty clay lying across the site to the east and south. The site lies at 65mOD and was generally level. On the eastern side of the site, the geology indicates a braided river channel was present, as seen in the excavations to the northeast of site (AOC 2014). An undulating deposit of clayey peat was visible in trenches 13, 18, 19 and 20 overlying the archaeology. Two monolith samples and bulk peat samples taken at spits of 0.05m, were taken in Trench 13 to establish flora and fauna presence as well as possible human habitation which was not visible in the evaluation. A further report will discuss the environmental findings in detail.
- 8.2 The earliest archaeological evidence comprised a single abraded flint collected from the topsoil in Trench 11. The flint broadly dates to the prehistoric periods but is not diagnostic. There is no

evidence for concentrated or widespread habitation or activity on the site in the Mesolithic or Neolithic periods. This contrasts with adjacent sites which have been rich in finds of such dates.

- 8.3 The only dated feature was ditch [10004] in Trench 10, which contained a single sherd of Roman pottery. This ditch was on a northwest-southeast alignment only visible in Trench 10 and was naturally infilled (10003). Abraded Roman pottery was also recovered from the topsoil. The Roman pottery and ditch may relate to the wider landscape as previous excavations to the west of site found evidence for a low status Romano-British settlement and a Roman ditch was uncovered as part of excavations at to the north (AOC 2014).
- 8.4 A linear observed in trenches 19, 20 and 21 is undated and was sealed by alluvial and peat deposits. The linear was orientated southeast-northwest with a dark grey brown clayey silt fill containing gravel inclusions. The ditch was sampled, as was the overlying peat (in Trench 13), which could potentially provide information on use and date of the ditch.
- 8.5 A well-formed posthole in Trench 22 remained undated, with no further postholes visible on site. Postholes observed in previous excavations to the north suggested formed part of the Bronze Age round houses along with drip gullies. Trench 22 located towards the edge of the early river channel and correlations can be drawn between the results of the two sites.
- 8.6 A number of shallow irregular pits observed in trenches 4, 6, 18, 20 and 22 remain undated, at this stage the significance of these features cannot be ascertained.

9 Publication and Archive Deposition

- 9.1 Due to the nature of the results at this stage of the archaeological investigation, publication is expected to be limited to a summary in the local fieldwork round-up. An OASIS form has been completed (Appendix B). It is foreseen that an electronic copy of the evaluation report will be deposited with the Archaeological Data Service (ADS).
- 9.2 The site archive will be retained at AOC until Oxford has archive space available. The archive will be prepared in accordance with guidelines for the preparation of excavation archives for long-term storage (UKIC 1990) and (Brown & AAF 2011). The archive will be security copied and a copy deposited with the London HER.

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Appendices

Appendix A – Context Register

| Context | Description | Length | Width | Depth |
|---------|----------------------------|--------|-------|-------|
| (4001) | Overburden | 30.00m | 1.80m | 0.20m |
| (4002) | Topsoil | 30.00m | 1.80m | 0.20m |
| (4003) | Subsoil | 30.00m | 1.80m | 0.20m |
| (4004) | Natural | 30.00m | 1.80m | NFE |
| [4005] | Cut of Shallow Pit | 1.35m | 0.55m | 0.27m |
| (4006) | Fill of Shallow Pit [4005] | 1.35m | 0.55m | 0.27m |
| | | | | |
| (5001) | Topsoil | 30.00m | 1.80m | 0.29m |
| (5002) | Natural | 30.00m | 1.80m | NFE |
| (5003) | Subsoil | 30.00m | 1.80m | 0.18m |
| | | | | |
| (6001) | Topsoil | 30.00m | 1.80m | 0.34m |
| (6002) | Subsoil | 30.00m | 1.80m | 0.07m |
| (6003) | Alluvial | 30.00m | 1.80m | 0.09m |
| (6004) | Natural | 30.00m | 1.80m | NFE |
| (6005) | Fill of Irregular Pit | 1.10m | 1.80m | 0.25m |
| [6006] | Cut of Irregular Pit | 1.10m | 1.80m | 0.25m |
| | | | | |
| (7001) | Topsoil | 30.00m | 1.80m | 0.26m |
| (7002) | Natural | 30.00m | 1.80m | NFE |
| | | | | |
| (8001) | Topsoil | 30.00m | 1.80m | 0.26m |
| (8002) | Natural | 30.00m | 1.80m | NFE |
| | | | | |
| (9001) | Topsoil | 30.00m | 1.80m | 0.26m |
| (9002) | Subsoil | 12.00m | 1.80m | 0.10m |
| (9003) | Alluvial | 11.00m | 1.80m | 0.09m |
| (9004) | Natural | 30.00m | 1.80m | NFE |
| | | | | |
| (10001) | Topsoil | 30.00m | 1.80m | 0.25m |
| (10002) | Natural | 30.00m | 1.80m | NFE |
| (10003) | Fill of Ditch [10004] | 3.50m | 0.90m | 0.26m |
| [10004] | Cut of Ditch | 3.50m | 0.90m | 0.26m |
| | | | | |
| (11001) | Topsoil | 30.00m | 1.80m | 0.22m |
| (11002) | Subsoil | 30.00m | 1.80m | 0.11m |
| (11003) | Natural | 30.00m | 1.80m | NFE |
| | | | | |
| (12001) | Topsoil | 30.00m | 1.80m | 0.24m |
| (12002) | Subsoil | 30.00m | 1.80m | 0.20m |

| Context | Description | Length | Width | Depth |
|---------|--------------------------------|--------|-------|-------|
| (12003) | Natural | 30.00m | 1.80m | NFE |
| (13001) | Topsoil | 30.00m | 1.80m | 0.25m |
| (13002) | Subsoil | 26.30m | 1.80m | 0.10m |
| (13003) | Peaty Deposit | 30.00m | 1.80m | 0.34m |
| (13004) | Natural | 30.00m | 1.80m | NFE |
| (13005) | Powdered Limestone deposit | 13.40m | 1.80m | 0.06m |
| (13006) | Alluvial | 30.00 | 1.80m | 0.05m |
| (14001) | Topsoil | 30.00m | 1.80m | 0.28m |
| (14002) | Subsoil | 30.00m | 1.80m | 0.11m |
| (14003) | Natural | 30.00m | 1.80m | NFE |
| (15001) | Topsoil | 30.00m | 1.80m | 0.24m |
| (15002) | Subsoil | 30.00m | 1.80m | 0.15m |
| (15003) | Alluvial | 30.00m | 1.80m | 0.16m |
| (15004) | Natural | 30.00m | 1.80m | NFE |
| (16001) | Topsoil | 30.00m | 1.80m | 0.34m |
| (16002) | Subsoil | 30.00m | 1.80m | 0.14m |
| (16003) | Natural | 30.00m | 1.80m | NFE |
| (17001) | Topsoil | 30.00m | 1.80m | 0.28m |
| (17002) | Subsoil | 30.00m | 1.80m | 0.27m |
| (17003) | Alluvial: same (17005) | 30.00m | 1.80m | 0.19m |
| (17004) | Natural | 30.00m | 1.80m | NFE |
| (17005) | Alluvial: Same as (17003) | 30.00m | 1.80m | 0.19m |
| (18001) | Topsoil | 30.00m | 1.80m | 0.16m |
| (18002) | Subsoil | 30.00m | 1.80m | 0.12m |
| (18003) | Peaty Deposit | 30.00m | 1.80m | 0.23m |
| (18004) | Natural | 30.00m | 1.80m | NFE |
| (18005) | Alluvial | 30.00m | 1.80m | 0.05m |
| [18006] | Cut of pit/tree bole | 2.75m | 1.05m | 0.31m |
| (18007) | Fill of pit/ tree bole [18006] | 2.75m | 1.05m | 0.31m |
| (19001) | Topsoil | 30.00m | 1.80m | 0.22m |
| (19002) | Subsoil | 30.00m | 1.80m | 0.12m |
| (19003) | Peat Deposit | 30.00m | 1.80m | 0.28m |
| (19004) | Alluvial | 30.00m | 1.80m | 0.07m |
| (19005) | Natural | 30.00m | 1.80m | NFE |
| (19006) | Alluvial | 30.00m | 1.80m | 0.27m |

| Context | Description | Length | Width | Depth |
|---------|-----------------------------|--------|-------|-------|
| 19007 | Void | - | - | - |
| [19008] | Cut of Ditch | 1.80m | 0.70m | 0.25m |
| (19009) | Fill of Ditch [19008] | 1.80.m | 0.70m | 0.25m |
| | | | | |
| (20001) | Topsoil | 30.00m | 1.80m | 0.18m |
| (20002) | Subsoil | 30.00m | 1.80m | 0.19m |
| (20003) | Alluvial | 30.00m | 1.80m | 0.17m |
| 20004 | Void | - | - | - |
| (20005) | Natural | 30.00m | 1.80m | NFE |
| (20006) | Peaty Deposit | 30.00m | 1.80m | 0.18m |
| (20007) | Alluvial | 30.00m | 1.80m | 0.06m |
| (20008) | Fill of Ditch [20009] | 1.80m | 1.08m | 0.43m |
| [20009] | Cut of Ditch | 1.80m | 1.08m | 0.43m |
| 20010 | Void | - | - | - |
| (20011) | Fill of Shallow Pit [20012] | 1.35m | 1.15m | 0.25m |
| [20012] | Cut of Shallow Pit | 1.35m | 1.15m | 0.25m |
| (20013) | Fill of Shallow Pit [20014] | 0.85m | 0.65m | 0.15m |
| [20014] | Cut of Shallow Pit | 0.85m | 0.65m | 0.15m |
| | | | | |
| (21001) | Topsoil | 30.00m | 1.80m | 0.20m |
| (21002) | Subsoil | 30.00m | 1.80m | 0.20m |
| (21003) | Alluvial | 30.00m | 1.80m | 0.05m |
| (21004) | Alluvial | 30.00m | 1.80m | 0.15m |
| (21005) | Natural | 30.00m | 1.80m | NFE |
| 21006 | Void | - | - | - |
| 21007 | Void | - | - | - |
| 21008 | Void | - | - | - |
| [21009] | Cut of Ditch | 1.80m | 0.50m | 0.15m |
| (21010) | Fill of Ditch [21009] | 1.80m | 0.50m | 0.15m |
| | | | | |
| (22001) | Topsoil | 30.00m | 1.80m | 0.25m |
| (22002) | Subsoil | 30.00m | 1.80m | 0.25m |
| (22003) | Natural | 30.00m | 1.80m | NFE |
| (22004) | Fill of Shallow Pit [22005] | 1.9m | 0.8m | 0.17m |
| [22005] | Cut of Shallow Pit | 1.9m | 0.8m | 0.17m |
| (22006) | Fill of Posthole [22007] | 0.55m | 0.55m | 0.27m |
| [22007] | Cut of Posthole | 0.55m | 0.55m | 0.27m |

Appendix B- Specialist Reports

The Finds

Kylie McDermott

Pottery

A total of twelve (130g) sherds of pottery were examined from eight contexts, five of which are Roman and seven post-medieval. The pottery has been quantified using sherd count (SC), weight (g) and estimated number of vessels (ENV) and identified, where possible, with reference to the National Roman Fabric Reference Collection type series and the Museum of London fabric reference type series (medieval to post-medieval) (Table 1). The data have been recorded on an Excel spreadsheet to be included with the site archive.

A basic identification of the Roman pottery has been undertaken for this interim report and will undergo further identification by a regional specialist for inclusion in the full report.

Roman

The Roman pottery was recovered primarily from topsoil deposits, also containing post medieval pottery, with the exception of one sherd (1, 10g) of unidentified (UNID?) roman pottery collected from the fill (10003) of a ditch [10004].

The topsoil deposits contained unsourced sandy grey ware (SAND, AD50-400) (2,10g, context (13001)) (1,8g, context (16001)), one sherd of unidentified Roman pottery (8g) (context (16001)) and one sherd (18g) of East Gaulish Samian (EG SAM) (AD 150-300) (context(17001)).

Post-medieval

The post-medieval pottery was recovered entirely from topsoil deposits. The earliest wares present include one (10g) sherd of London-area post-medieval slipped red ware with yellow glaze (PMSRY, 1480-1650) (context (11001)), one sherd (11g) of a post-medieval fine red ware bowl with brown glaze (PMFRB, 1580-1700) (context (14001)) and one (3g) sherd of post-medieval red ware with black glaze (PMBL, 1580-1700) (context (17001)).

The later fabrics present in the assemblage are English stoneware (ENGS, 1700-1900) (1,3g, context (9001)) (1,3g, context (19001)) and one (10g) sherd of a refined white earthen ware plate, decorated with willow pattern (TPW WIL, 1805-1990) from context (11001).

| context | fabric | form | dec | SC | wt (g) | ENV | comments | E-L DATES |
|--------------|--------|-------|-----|----|--------|-----|---------------------------|------------|
| 9001 | ENGS | | | 1 | 3 | 1 | | 1700-1900 |
| 10003 | UNID? | | | 1 | 10 | 1 | | |
| 11001 | TPW | PLATE | WIL | 1 | 10 | 1 | | 1780--1990 |
| 11001 | PMSRY | | | 1 | 10 | 1 | | 1480-1650 |
| 13001 | SAND | | | 2 | 10 | 2 | unsourced sandy grey ware | AD50-400 |
| 14001 | PMFRB | BOWL | | 1 | 11 | 1 | | 1580-1700 |
| 16001 | UNID? | | | 1 | 8 | 1 | | |
| 17001 | EG SAM | | | 1 | 18 | 1 | | AD 150-300 |
| 17001 | PMBL | | | 1 | 3 | 1 | | 1580-1700 |
| 19001 | ENGS | | | 1 | 3 | 1 | | 1700-1900 |
| 20001 | PMBL | | | 1 | 11 | 1 | | 1580-1700 |
| Total | | | | 12 | 97 | 12 | | |

Table 1: Pottery Assemblage from Bicester Office Park

Glass

Two small fragments of 19th century glass were recovered; one (3g) turquoise body fragment of a rectangular bottle (context (16001)) and one (8g) turquoise marble, most likely from a codd stopper soda bottle (context 2001).

Clay Tobacco Pipes

Two fragments of clay tobacco pipe; one (<1g) stem and one (6g) bowl were identified in contexts (19001) and (11001).

The bowl fragment (context (1001)) is incomplete making it difficult to date.

Worked flint

A single (1, 5g) flint proximal flake was recovered from (context (11001)).

Ceramic Building Material

One (43g) post-medieval peg tile fragment was recovered from topsoil context (16001) and one (31g) fragment of ceramic drain pipe was collected from context (13001)

Metalwork

One (18g) fragment of iron, possibly a hinge, was recovered from topsoil context (21001). A single (1, 15g) iron nail was also recovered from topsoil (context (13001)). A small unidentified fragment of iron was found in subsoil context (22002).

Animal Bone

Very few fragments of animal bone and shell were recovered.

Context (13001) contained two (13g) fragments of oyster shell.

Animal bone was recovered from contexts (11001); one (<1g) sheep/goat phalange and context (22006); and four small (<1g) fragments of unidentified bone.

Appendix C – Oasis Form

OASIS ID: aocarcha1-323641

Project details

| | |
|--|--|
| Project name | Bicester Office Park, Oxford Road, Bicester, Oxfordshire |
| Short description of the project | A trial trench evaluation to determine the location, extent, date, character, condition, significance and quality of any surviving archaeological remains liable to be threatened by the proposed development. |
| Project dates | Start: 11-06-2018 End: 21-06-2018 |
| Previous/future work | Yes / Not known |
| Any associated project reference codes | 07/01106-OUT - Planning Application No. |
| Type of project | Field evaluation |
| Current Land use | Cultivated Land 4 - Character Undetermined |
| Monument type | DITCH Roman |
| Monument type | DITCH Uncertain |
| Monument type | PITS Uncertain |
| Significant Finds | POT Roman |
| Significant Finds | POT Post Medieval |
| Methods & techniques | "Environmental Sampling", "Sample Trenches" |
| Development type | Urban commercial (e.g. offices, shops, banks, etc.) |
| Prompt | Planning condition |
| Position in the planning process | After full determination (eg. As a condition) |

Project location

| | |
|-------------------|--|
| Country | England |
| Site location | OXFORDSHIRE CHERWELL BICESTER BICESTER OFFICE PARK, OXFORD ROAD, BICESTER, OXFORDSHIRE |
| Postcode | OX26 1AN |
| Study area | 3.4 Hectares |
| Site coordinates | SP 57634 21610 51.889623037315 -1.162443339917 51 53 22 N 001 09 44 W Point |
| Height OD / Depth | Min: 63.48m Max: 66.31m |

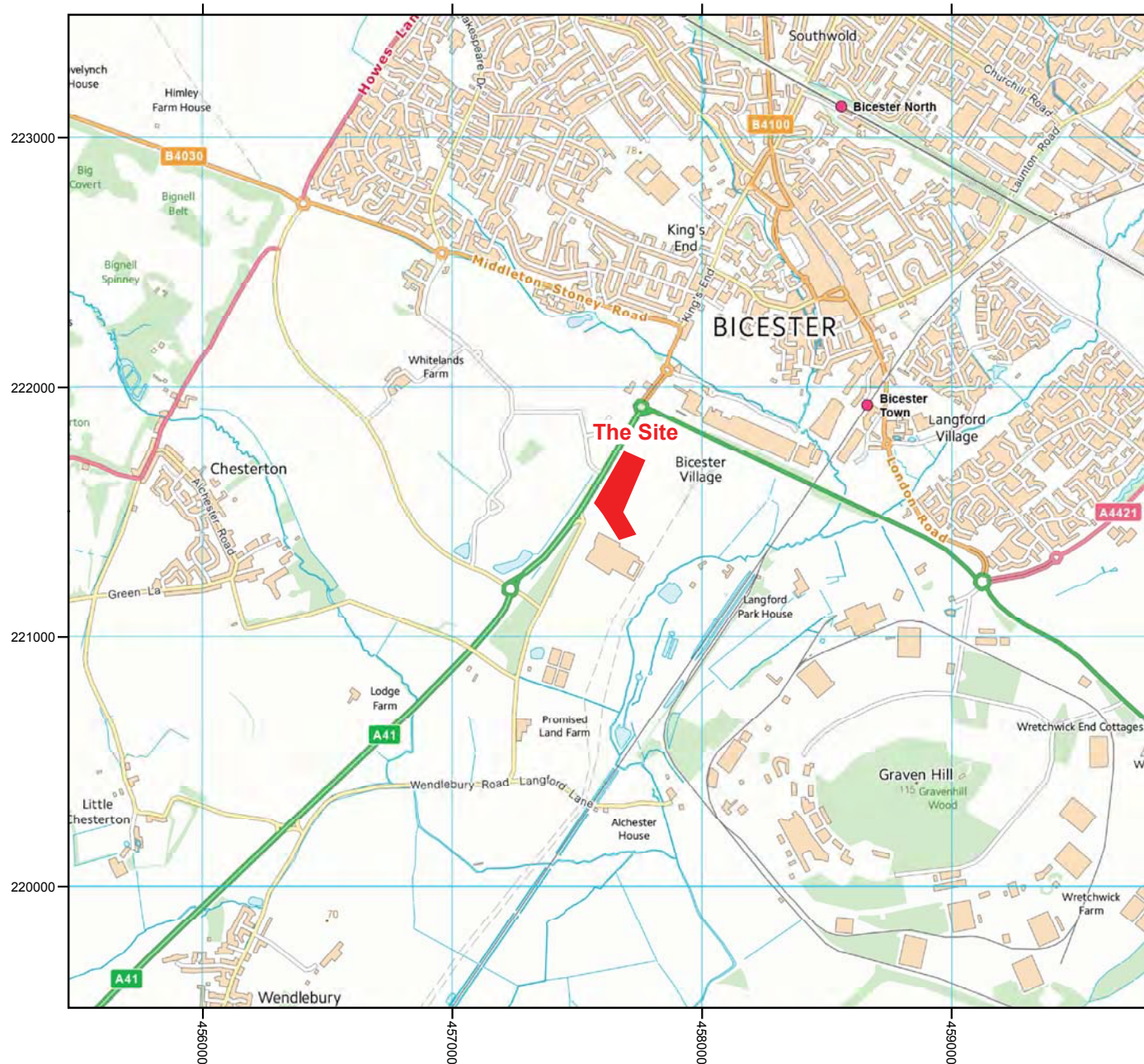
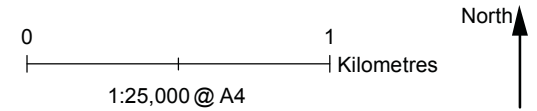
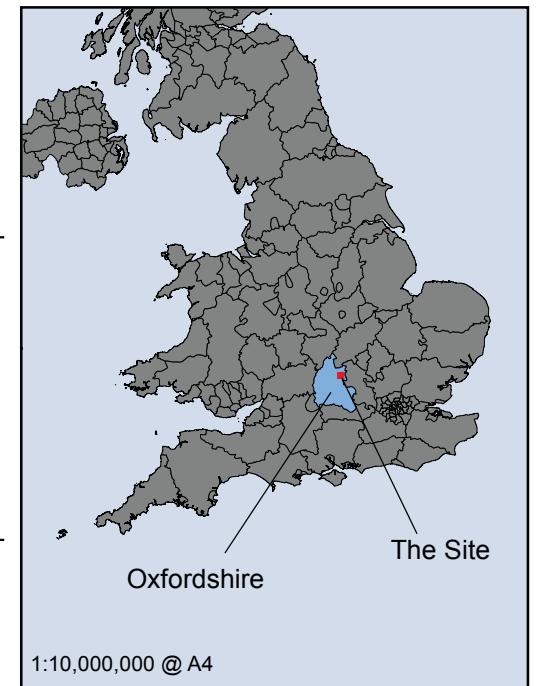


Figure 1:
Site Location



Contains Ordnance Survey data
© Crown Copyright and database right 2018.



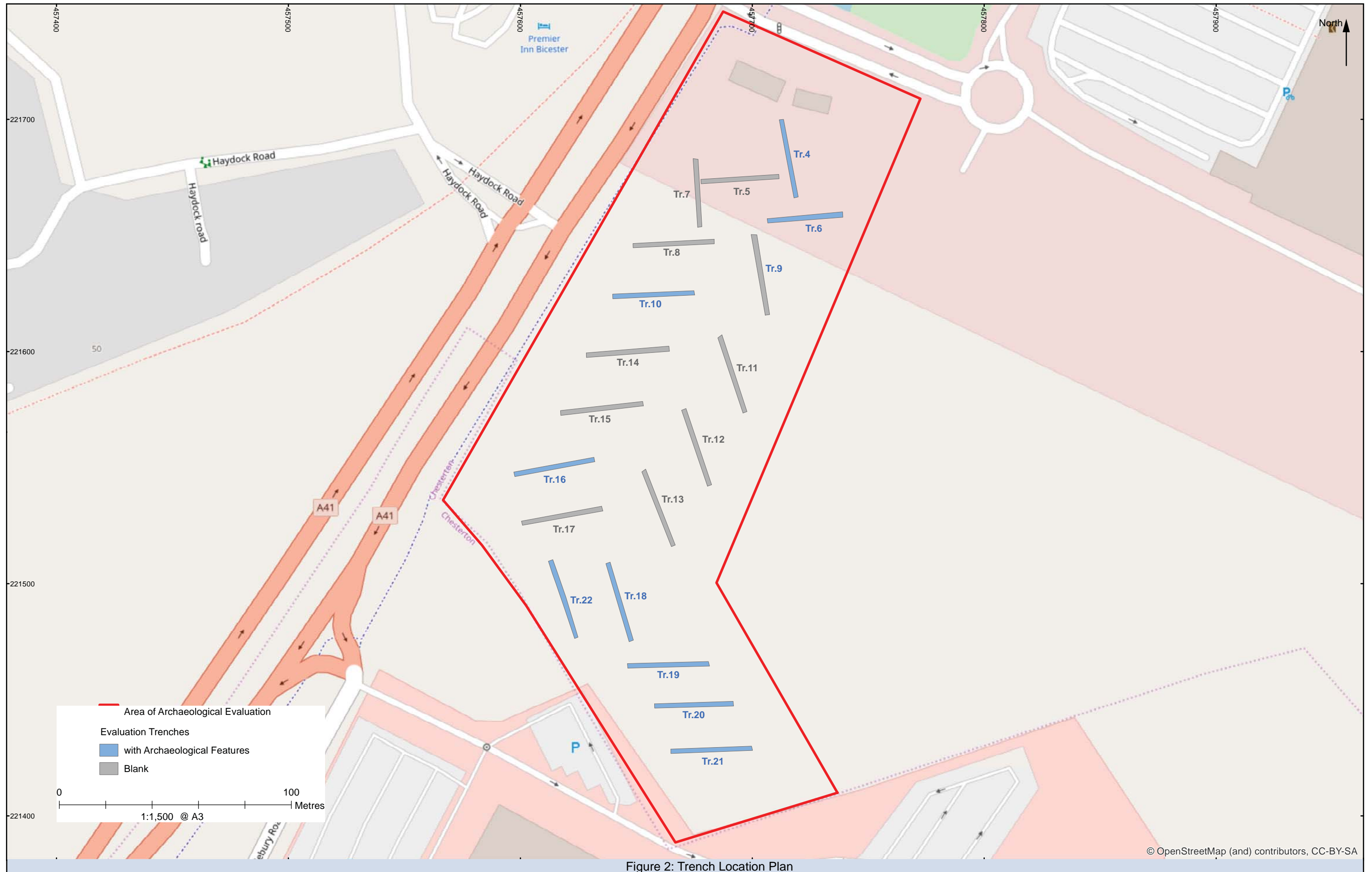


Figure 2: Trench Location Plan

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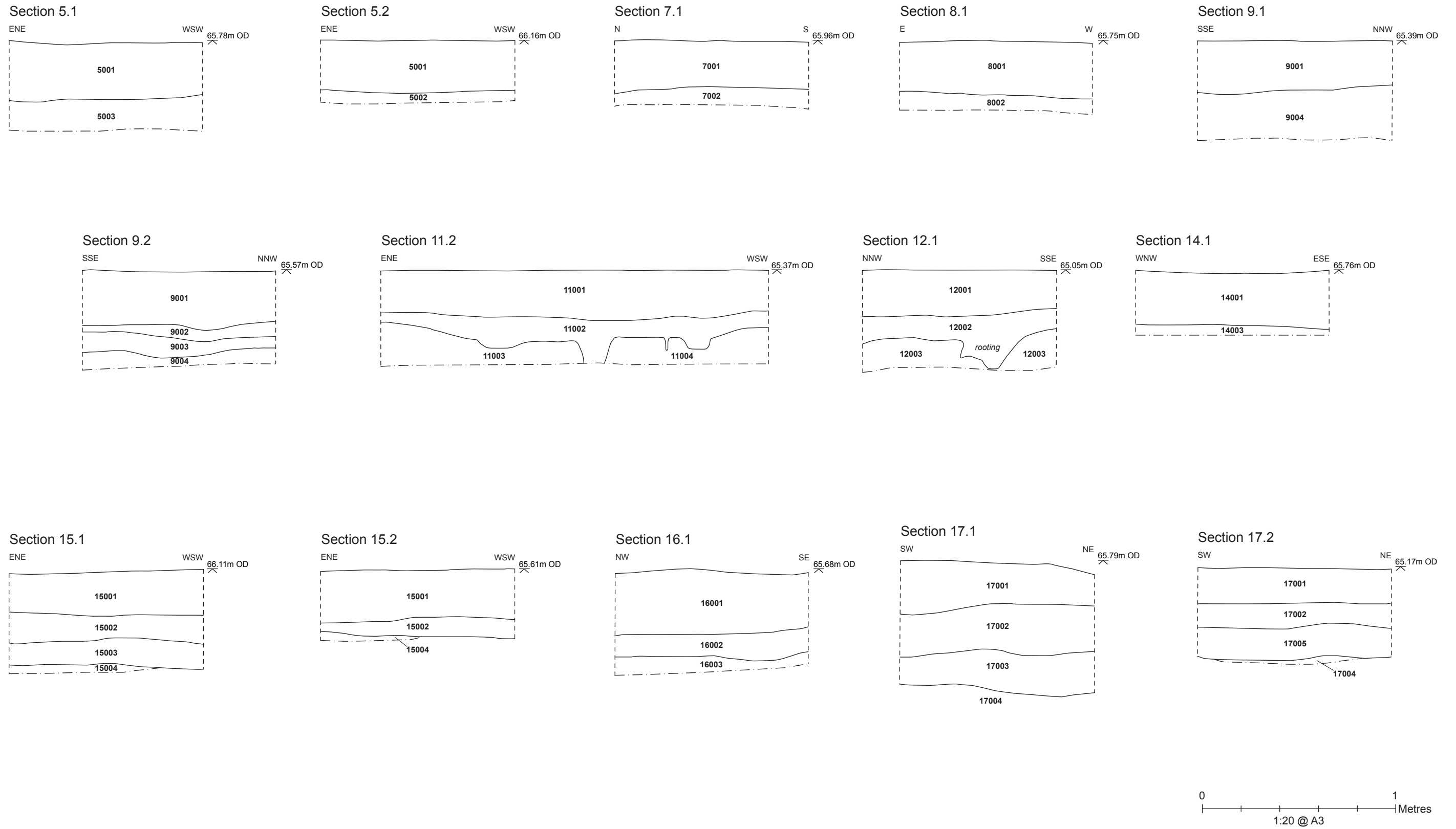
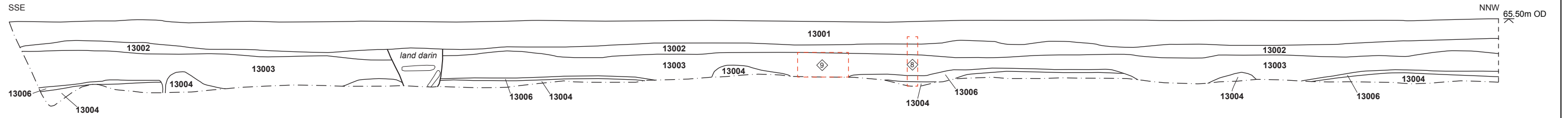
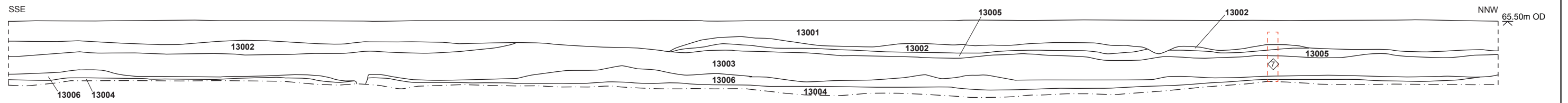


Figure 3: Trenches 5, 7, 8, 9, 11, 12, 14, 15, 16 and 17 - Sample Sections

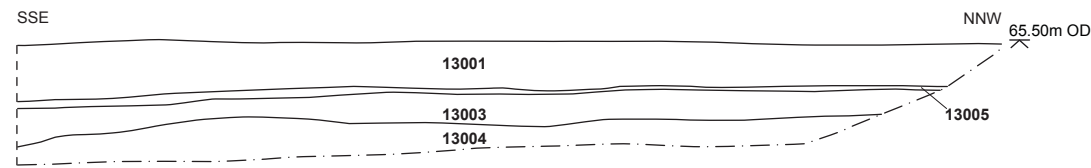
Section 13.1a



Section 13.1b



Section 13.1c



Environmental Sample

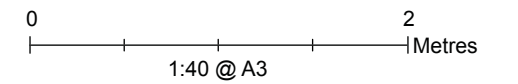


Figure 4: Trench 13 - Sample Sections

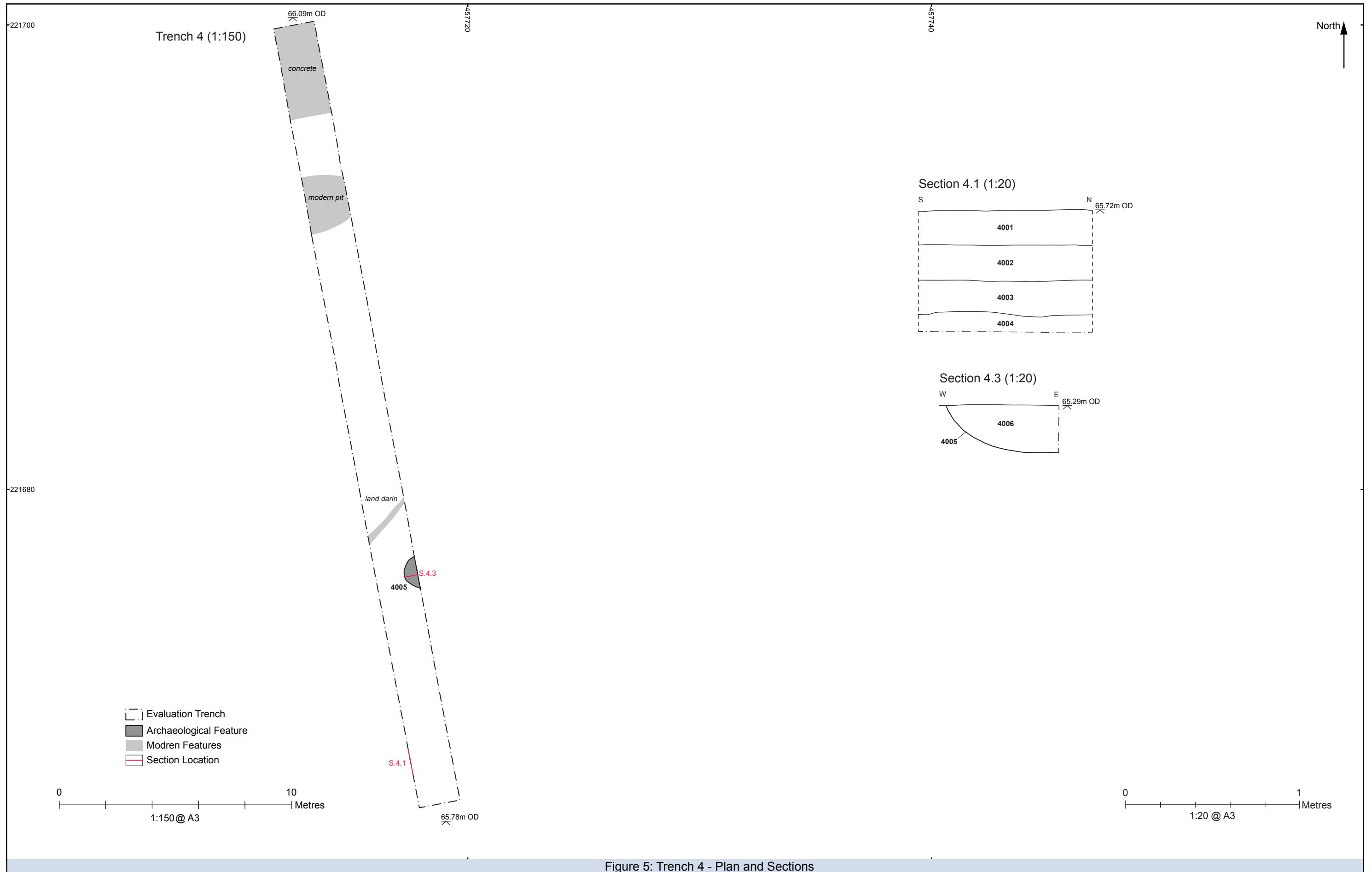


Figure 5: Trench 4 - Plan and Sections

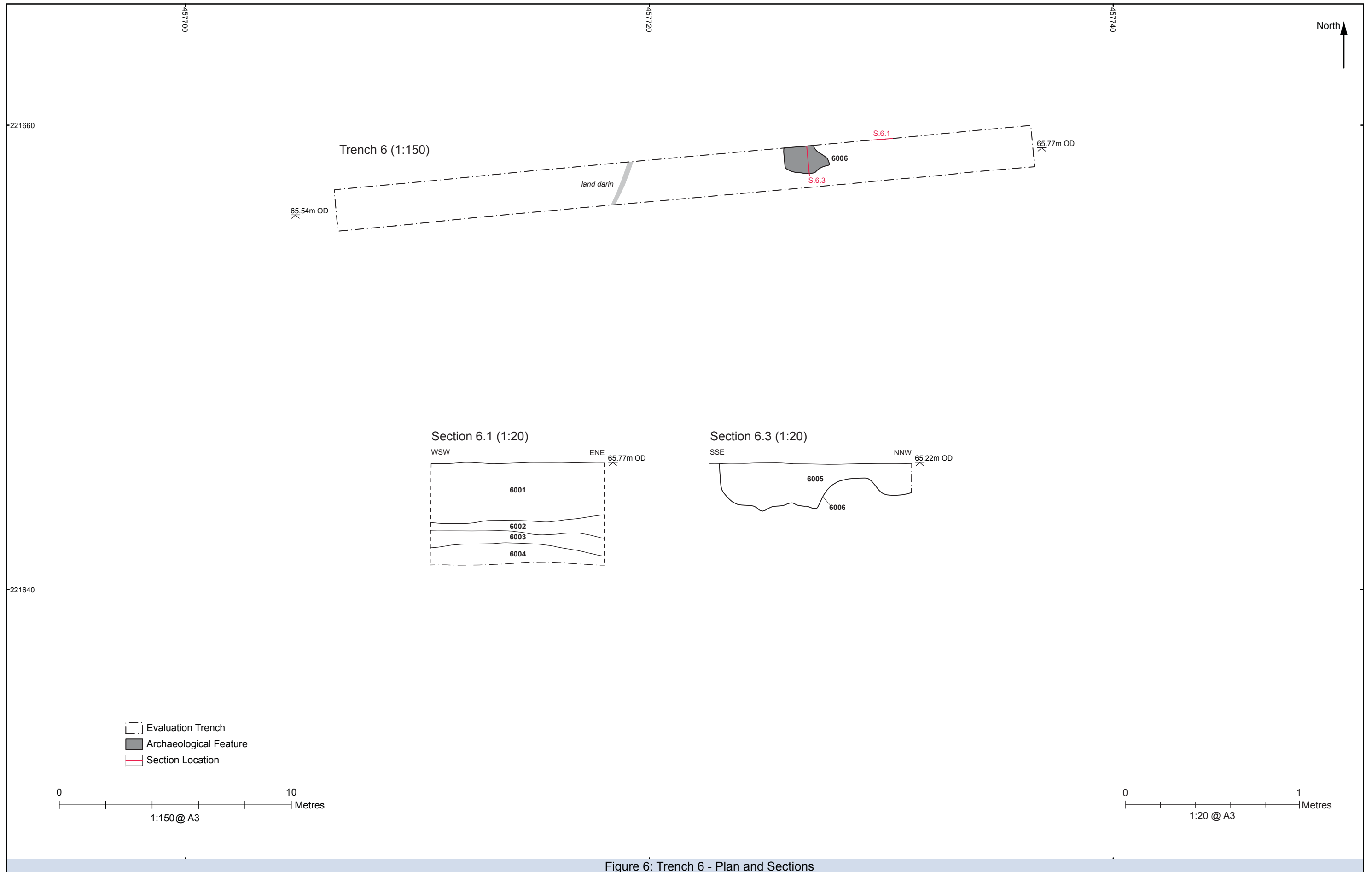


Figure 6: Trench 6 - Plan and Sections

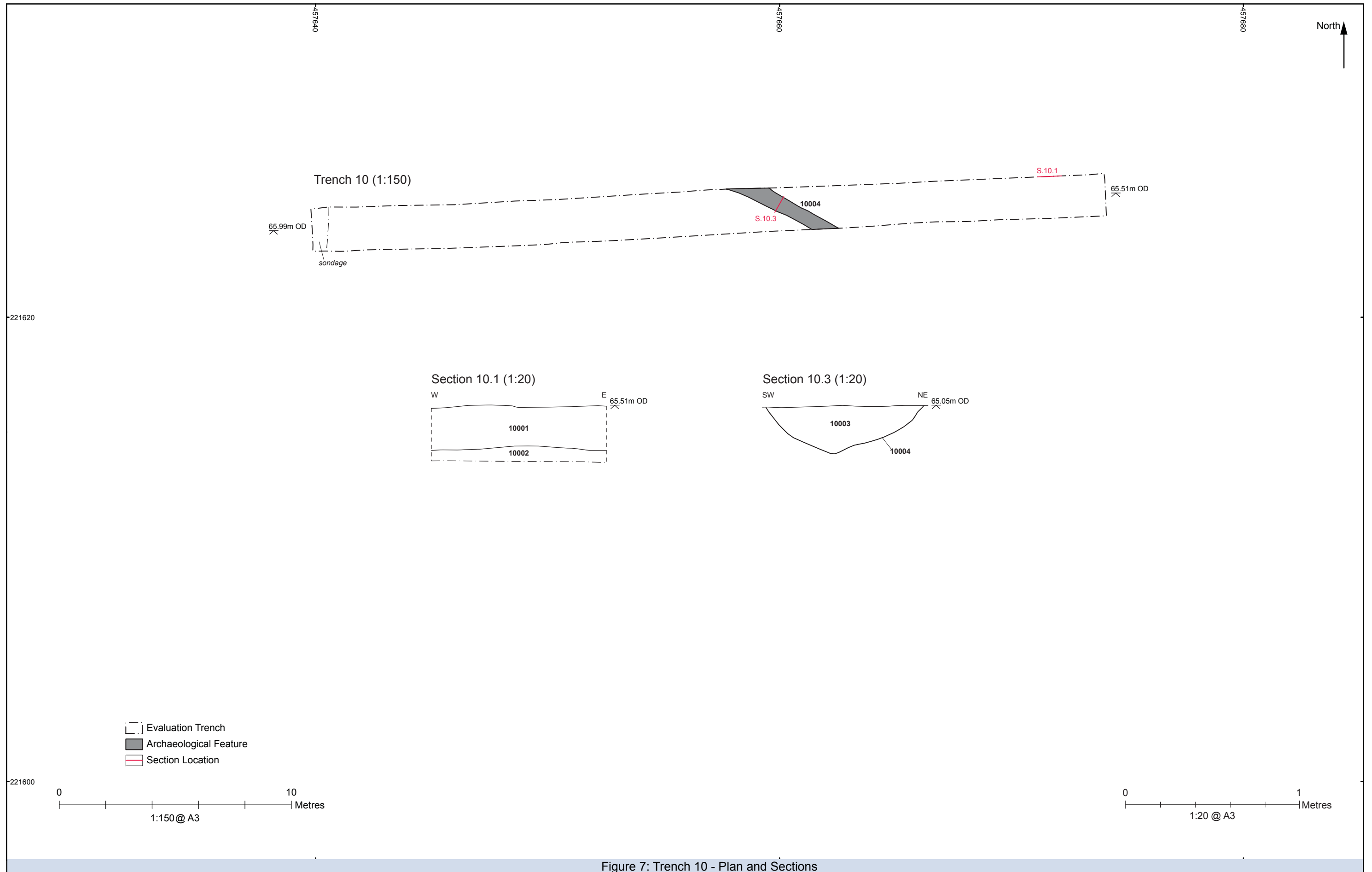


Figure 7: Trench 10 - Plan and Sections

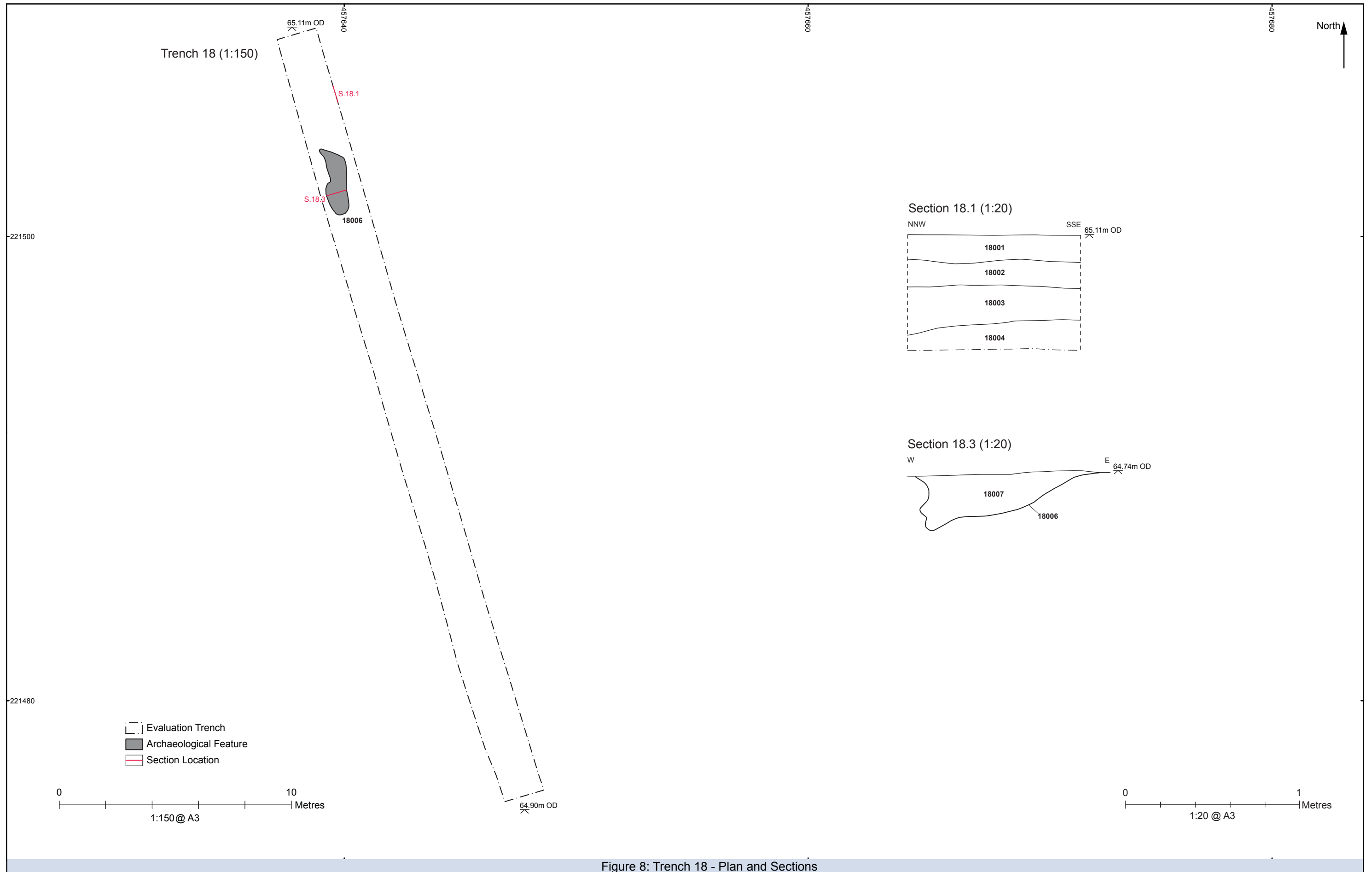


Figure 8: Trench 18 - Plan and Sections

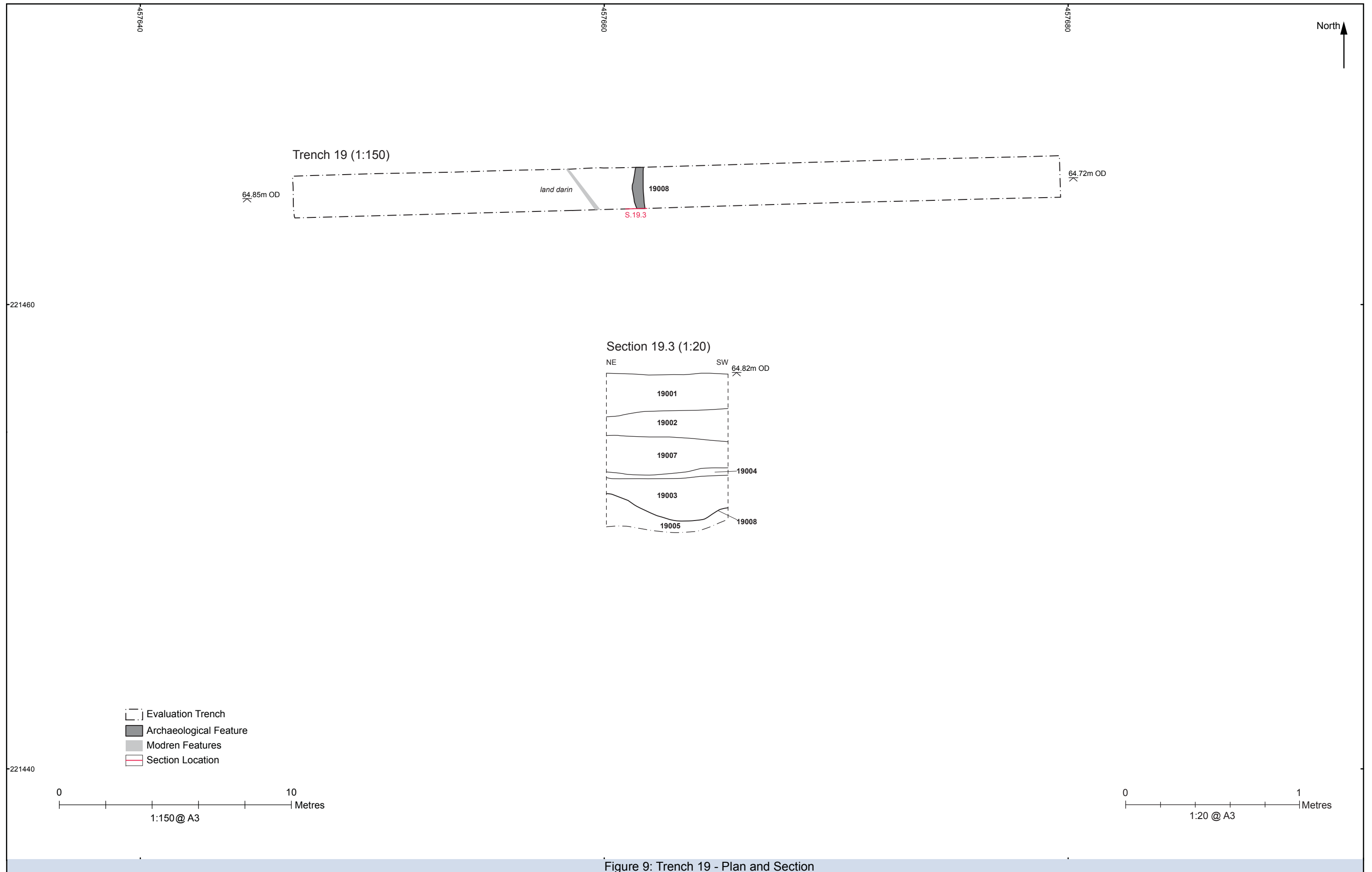


Figure 9: Trench 19 - Plan and Section

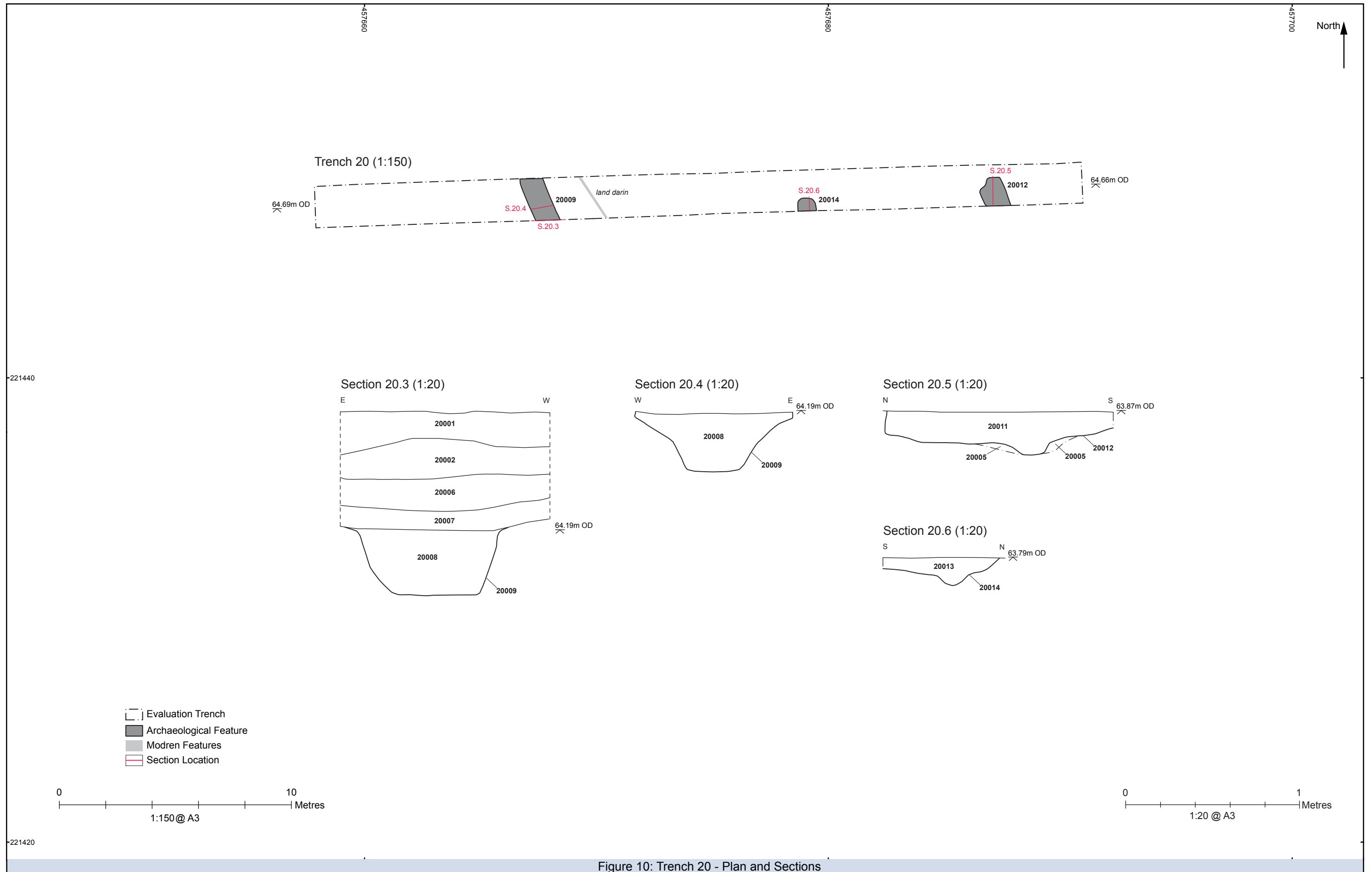


Figure 10: Trench 20 - Plan and Sections

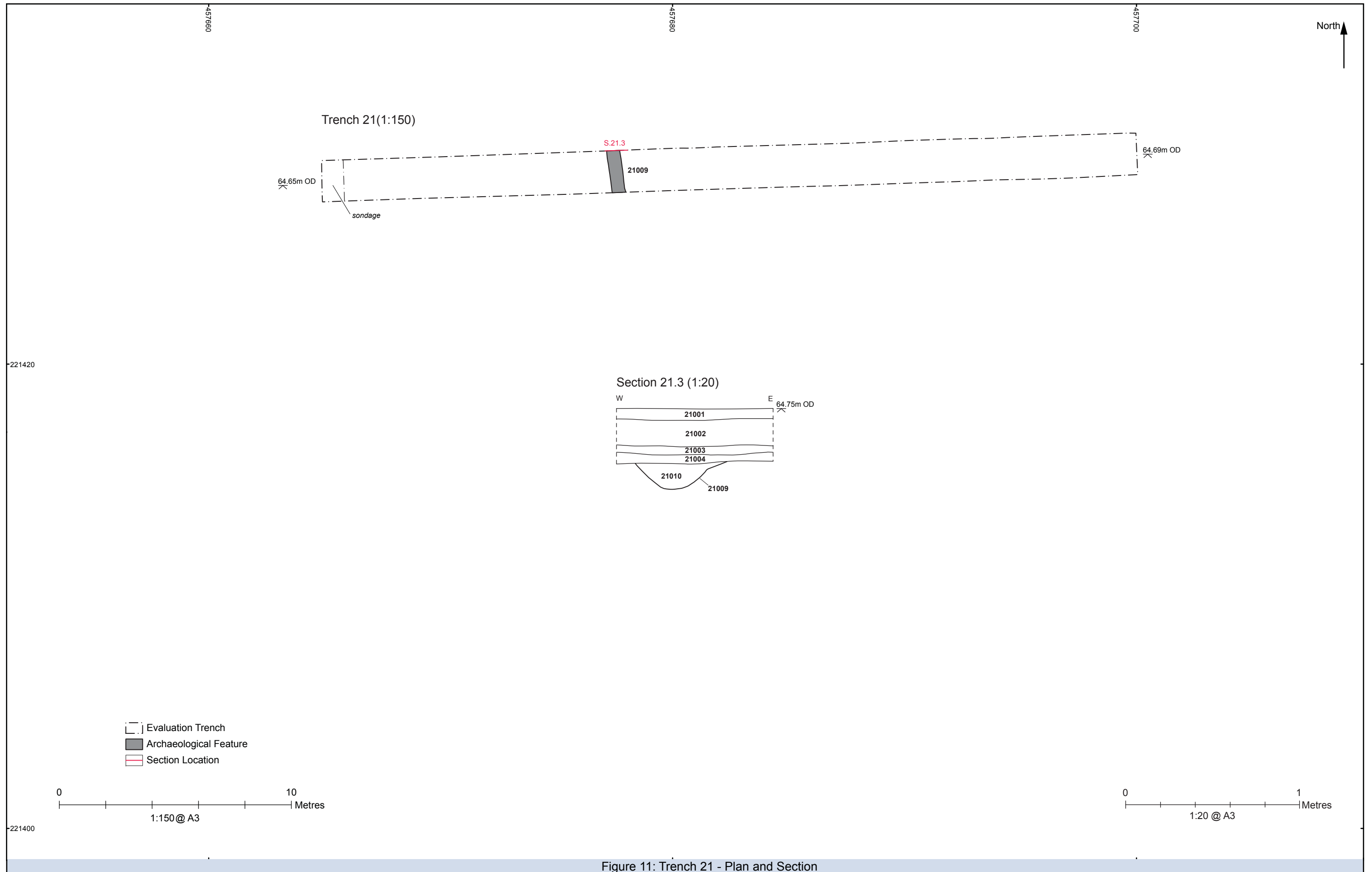


Figure 11: Trench 21 - Plan and Section

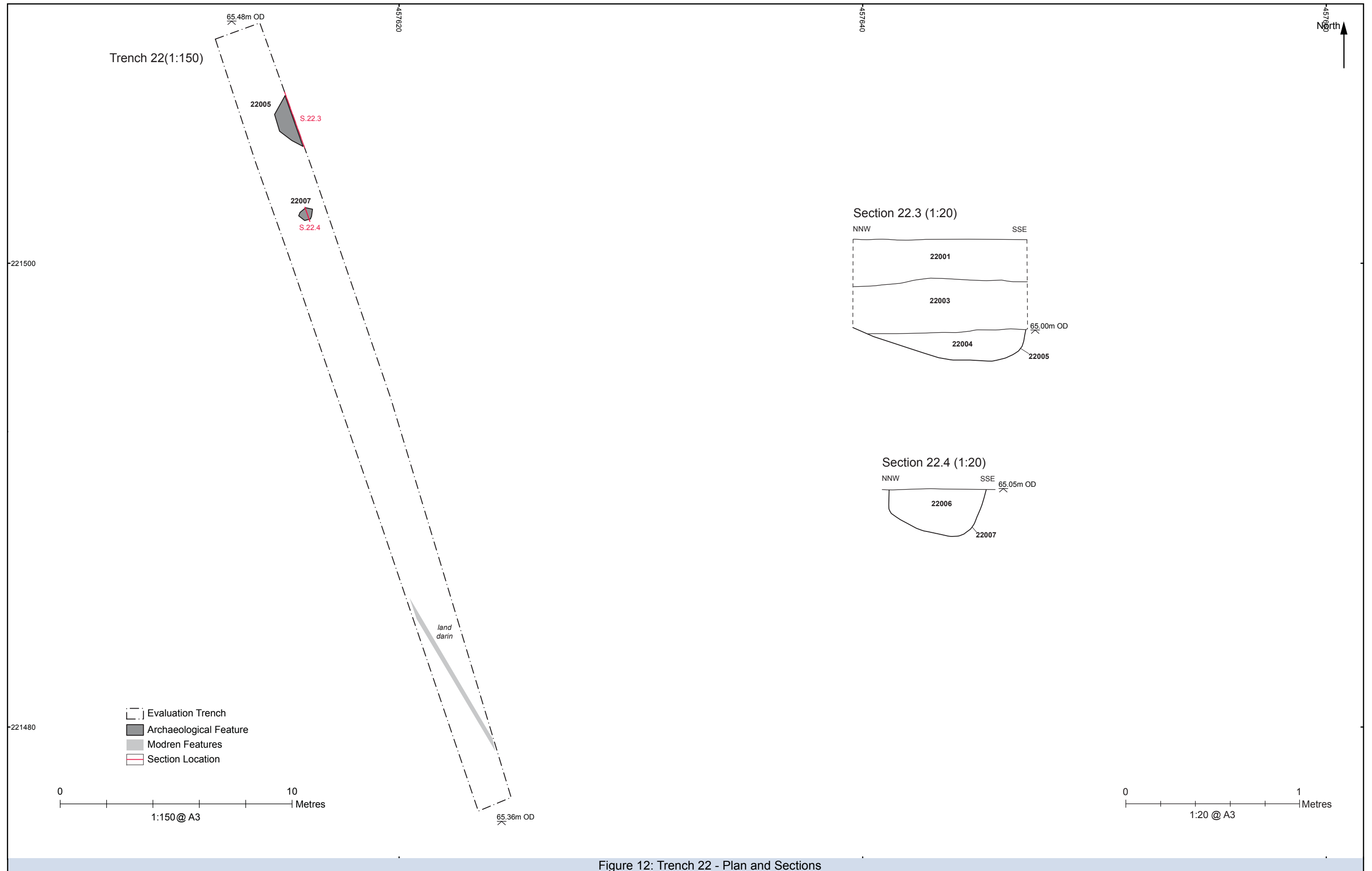
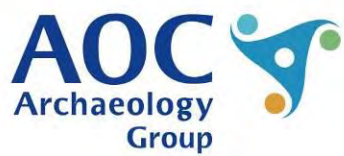
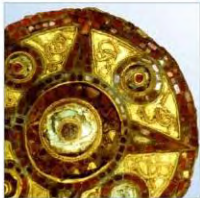


Figure 12: Trench 22 - Plan and Sections



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