

ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION REPORT:
TRIAL TRENCHING ON LAND OFF BROAD LANE, ROCHDALE, GREATER MANCHESTER

Planning Reference: 22/00998/FUL
NGR: SD 91177 11291
AAL Site Code: ROBL24
OASIS Reference Number: allenarc1-532169



Report prepared for Barratt and David Wilson Homes North West

By
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Allenarchaeology



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Cover image: General view of the site, looking southeast

Executive Summary

- Allen Archaeology Limited was commissioned by Barratt and David Wilson Homes North West to undertake an archaeological evaluation by trial trenching on land off Broad Lane, Rochdale, Greater Manchester, as a condition of a planning application for a residential development.
- The evaluation was undertaken to gather sufficient information for the Planning Archaeologist at Greater Manchester Archaeological Advisory Service to be able to decide on the management of sub-surface heritage assets. Evidence was gathered to establish the presence/absence, nature, date, depth, quality of survival and importance of archaeological deposits to enable an assessment of the potential and significance of the archaeological remains.
- The evaluation trenching comprising 7no 50m x 2m and 1no 15m x 2m trenches, demonstrated that there were no archaeologically significant deposits or features within the area investigated. The only features recorded were a blockwork wall in Trench 3, possibly associated with a late-20th century outbuilding or the boundary of Silver Hill farm, and two parallel undated gullies in Trench 5, probably representing a former field boundary.
- Elsewhere it was noted that modern material had been dumped in the eastern part of the site as a levelling deposit. Seen in Trenches 4 and 7.

1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 Allen Archaeology Limited (AAL) was commissioned by Barratt and David Wilson Homes North West to undertake an archaeological evaluation by trial trenching on land off Broad Lane, Rochdale, Greater Manchester, to provide information on the archaeological potential and impact of development on the site, as a condition of a planning application for a residential development.
- 1.2 All works were carried out in accordance with the agreed upon Written Scheme of Investigation (AAL 2024), as well as current national guidelines, as set out in the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists (CIfA) 'Standard for archaeological field evaluations' (CIfA 2023a), 'Universal guidance for archaeological field evaluation' (CIfA 2023b), and 'Code of conduct' (CIfA 2022). All relevant Historic England guidelines on archaeological best practice was followed (<https://historicengland.org.uk/advice/find/a-z-publications/>).
- 1.3 The documentary and physical archive generated by the evaluation has been assembled in accordance with national guidelines in 'Archaeological Archives, A guide to best practice in creation, compilation, transfer and curation' (AAF 2011), and in accordance with the Data Management Plan for the site (see AAL 2024 Appendix 1).
- 1.4 The area is not covered by a receiving museum. The digital archive, including the site records and the report, will be deposited with the Archaeology Data Service (ADS). The digital record format will comply with ADS archiving standards and Guides to Good Practice (<https://guides.archaeologydataservice.ac.uk/g2gp/Main>).

2.0 Site Location and Description

- 2.1 The development site is located off Broad Lane, approximately 400m to the north of the M62 motorway, between a residential suburb of Rochdale and the Kingsway Business Park. The site is approximately c.2.5ha and centred at NGR SD 91177 11291 (Figure 1).
- 2.2 The bedrock geology comprises of Pennine Lower Coal Measures Formation - mudstone, siltstone and sandstone formed approximately 319 to 318 million years ago in the Langsettian Substage period overlain with a superficial geology of diamicton hummocky glacial deposits formed in the Devensian period (<http://mapapps.bgs.ac.uk/geologyofbritain/home.html>).

3.0 Planning Background

- 3.1 A planning application has been submitted for 'Residential development of up to 64 dwellings, including part demolition and refurbishment of Grade II Listed Building Silver Hill Farmhouse and associated buildings, together with new vehicular access points, car parking, boundaries, landscaping, creation of open space, and other associated works on land at Silver Hill Farm and Plot W of Kingsway Business Park, Broad Lane and Lower Lane, Rochdale, OL16 4PT (Planning Reference 22/00998/FUL). GMAAS were consulted and recommended that a programme of archaeological works is secured through a planning condition worded as follows:

No development shall take place until the applicant or their agents or successors in title has secured the implementation of a programme of archaeological works. The works are to be undertaken in

accordance with a Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI) submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority. The WSI shall cover the following:

1. Informed by the updated North West Regional Research Framework, a phased programme and methodology of investigation and recording to include:

a) historic building recording of the Silver Hill Farm complex

b) a site walkover to identify and record any surviving features or remains of the farm enclosure

c) a watching brief to be maintained during primary infrastructure works across Plot W, with results used to inform the necessity of watching briefs in other areas

d) informed by the above, more detailed excavation (subject of new WSI)

2. A programme for post-investigation assessment to include:

a) analysis of the site investigation records and finds

b) production of a final report on the significance of the archaeological and historical interest represented.

3. Deposition of the final report with the Greater Manchester Historic Environment Record.

4. Dissemination of the results commensurate with their significance.

5. Provision for archive deposition of the report and records of the site investigation.

6. Nomination of a competent person or persons/organisation to undertake the works set out within the approved WSI.

Reason: In accordance with NPPF Section 16, Paragraph 205 - Local planning authorities should require developers to record and advance understanding of the significance of any heritage assets to be lost (wholly or in part) in a manner proportionate to their importance and the impact, and to make this evidence (and any archive generated) publicly accessible.

3.2 Following discussions with GMASS and the client it was agreed that an archaeological evaluation by trial trenching could be undertaken in place of the watching brief. A Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI) outlining the scope of works was submitted (AAL 2024) and granted approval by GMAAS. This report presents the results of the trial trenching.

3.3 The approach adopted is consistent with the recommendations of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), 'Conserving and enhancing the historic environment' (Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government 2024).

4.0 Archaeological and Historical Background

4.1 A publication 'Farmers and Weavers: Archaeological Investigations at Kingsway Business Park and Cutacre Country Park', by Richard Gregory, Peter Arrowsmith, Ian Miller and Michael Nevell 2021 has been produced that afforded the opportunity to investigate the archaeology of the Kingsway

Business Park prior to construction and below is a summary of the archaeological and historical background from the publication. Full references are available in the original publication.

- 4.2 Mesolithic flint tools have been recovered from the bed of Hollingworth Lake (Greater Manchester Historic Environment Record (GMHER) 290.1.0), Turf Hill, Piethorne Valley (GMHER 297.1.0), New Nook, Blackstone Edge (GMHER 5338.1.0), and Whittaker Moor (GMHER 8867.1.1).
- 4.3 A bronze palstave from Crompton Moor (GMHER 5926.1.0), and a socketed spearhead from Piethorne, Milnrow have been recovered from areas close to the site. An urned Bronze Age cremation urn and a perforated stone axe-hammer were recorded at Low House Farm, Milnrow, further possible barrow sites have been recorded at Thornham Fold (GMHER 9934.1.0) and at Turf Hill in the Piethorne Valley (GMHER 10341.1.0).
- 4.4 Evidence for Iron Age activity within the area is sparse. Excavations (North West Archaeological Surveys 1992) at Castle Steads, north of Bury suggest a late Iron Age/early Roman-period settlement and a possible Iron Age enclosure has been found in the Piethorne Valley, at Turf Hill (GMHER 10337.1.0).
- 4.5 A possible Roman road (road 720a; Margary 1967, 403) is suspected to have traversed the Kingsway Business Park, running from Manchester across the Pennines towards Ilkley. Several coin hoards and coins, querns, and metal finds were recorded at Tunshill to the east of the site, whilst a stone with a late Roman inscription was discovered at Low House Farm (GMHER 2730.1.1).
- 4.6 The evidence for medieval activity within the area is based largely on placename evidence and the Domesday Survey of 1086. During this period the area lay within the parish of Rochdale. Rochdale is mentioned by name as 'Recedham' in the Domesday Survey, the 'ham' being Old English for a settlement. Whilst 'Reced' might have been the Celtic name for the River Roch or from Old English meaning 'hall'.
- 4.7 Rochdale was a focus for settlement in the post-Conquest period, with construction of a motte-and-bailey castle at Castle Hill. It is likely that during the late 11th / 12th century the administrative units within the parish were formalised into four main townships, Butterworth, Hundersfield, Spotland, and Castleton.
- 4.8 The medieval townships of Butterworth and Castleton also contained a fairly large area of common land (known as Buersill Moor), and this probably encompassed much of what is now covered by the Kingsway Business Park.
- 4.9 Many of the early historical references to Buersill Moor have been collated (Fishwick 1889. 71-3; 1913, ix, 30-4) and these indicate that, initially, medieval rights to the moor were in the hands of various owners/occupiers. It is also clear that some encroachment onto this common land had occurred by the mid-14th century since there are documentary references to buildings.
- 4.10 Ancient deeds for Buersill Moor contained in a 1626 survey make reference to areas of potential medieval settlement including Dig Gate to the south of the site and Lady House to the east. The deeds also refer to areas of early enclosure encompassing the site including le Blackley Hey and le Layst.

- 4.11 Prior to the construction of the Kingsway Business Park, several landscape features were identified which may have had their origins in the medieval period. One of these was a possible early enclosure, potentially relating to Sir John Bryon's enclosure of Buersill Moor in 1519. Three evaluation trenches were excavated across its postulated boundary, but no archaeological features were recorded. Other potential landscape features with medieval origins within the area include Moss Side Lane and Moor Bank Lane, both depicted on Yates' map of 1786.
- 4.12 The seventeenth and eighteenth centuries witnessed a series of significant changes to the form and use of the landscape within the Kingsway Business Park. This period is defined by the eventual enclosure of the moorland and the construction of rural dwellings, farm buildings, and associated routeways.
- 4.13 Silverhill Farm, within the eastern half of the site, is a former Yeoman House assumed to date from c.1789 as indicated by the date stone above the main door inscribed "Charles and Esther Beswick, 24th August 1789." The Tithe apportionment from 1844 describes the farm site as including "Houses, building, garden, enclosure and yard" and until the 20th century, contained within the historic enclosure. During the 20th century, the farm expanded with substantial modern agricultural sheds erected to the south east as well as development within the trapezoid enclosure to the north of the Farmhouse. In the early 21st century, a number of these later outbuildings were demolished. (Turley Heritage 2022).

5.0 Methodology

- 5.1 A trenching strategy was agreed with the Planning Archaeologist at GMAAS, comprising 7no 50m x 2m and 1no 15m x 2m trenches (Figure 2). The fieldwork was conducted by a team of experienced field archaeologists over a period of approximately 5 working days, between 10th and 14th December 2024, and was supervised by the author.
- 5.2 The trenches were located on site using a Leica GS08 RTK NetRover GPS. In each trench, topsoil, subsoil and underlying non-archaeological deposits were removed, in spits no greater than 0.1m in thickness, by a 360° tracked excavator with a toothless ditching bucket. The process was repeated until the first archaeologically significant or natural horizon was exposed. All further excavation was carried out by hand.
- 5.3 A full written record of the archaeological deposits was made on standard AAL trench recording sheets. Archaeological deposits were drawn in plan (at scale 1:50 or 1:20, as appropriate) and section (at scale 1:20), with Ordnance Datum heights displayed on each class of drawing. Digital photography formed an integral part of the recording strategy, and all photographs had scales, an identification board and directional arrow.
- 5.4 Archaeological finds were bagged with site code, context number and material written on the finds bag and were returned to the office of AAL for processing before being sent to appropriate specialists. Environmental samples were taken of relevant fills and were also processed at the offices of AAL.

6.0 Results

- 6.1 The programme of works comprised 7no. 50m x 2m and 1no. 15m x 2m trial trenches located across an agricultural field (Figure 2). Two trenches (Trenches 3 and 5) contained either discrete features or masonry, while the remaining were archaeologically sterile.
- 6.2 In the western part of the site the natural yellow clay subsoil was directly overlain by modern turf and topsoil, in Trenches 1, 6 and 8. In Trenches 4 and 7 on the eastern side of the site there were substantial deposits of made ground containing modern material between the subsoil and topsoil. Deposits of made ground were also noted in Trench 2 which was adjacent to the farm buildings (Figure 5).
- 6.3 A description of each trench containing archaeological features is provided below. Archaeologically sterile trenches are not discussed further in this report. A context summary with additional descriptive information is provided in Appendix 3.

Trench 3 (Figure 43)

- 6.4 Trench 3 was located in the northern part of the site, to the east of the farm buildings. Overlying the clay natural, 303, was a 0.18m thick deposit of dark grey sandy silt, 302, possibly representing a buried topsoil horizon. This deposit was overlain by a 0.39m thick deposit of made ground, 301, which was cut by construction trench [305] for a late-20th century wall, 304, of concrete block construction. The backfill, 306, of the construction trench contained modern material including plastic (Plate 1).
- 6.5 No floor surfaces associated with the wall were recorded, and it was not clear whether the wall was part of a building or an external boundary.



Plate 1: Concrete block wall 304 in Trench 3. 1m scale

Trench 5 (Figure 4)

- 6.6 Trench 5 was located in the southwestern part of the site. At the northern end of the trench two parallel linear features cutting the natural subsoil, 501, were recorded in plan and section.
- 6.7 The northernmost of the two features, [504], was aligned ENE-WSW and comprised a shallow gully 0.69m wide and up to 0.30m deep, with concave sides and base. The gully contained two fills, 505 overlain by 506, neither of which contained any cultural material (Plate 2).



Plate 2: WSW-facing section of gully [504], 1m and 0.40m scales

- 6.8 To the south of [504], a parallel gully, [502], was more irregular in plan, ranging in width from 0.39m to 1.02m, and with a depth of only 0.18m. It had a single fill, 503, which did not contain any cultural material (plate 3).



Plate 3: WSW-facing section of gully [502], 1m and 0.40m scales

7.0 Discussion and Conclusions

- 7.1 Within the area investigated, the evaluation trenches identified archaeological deposits and features in two trenches.
- 7.2 In Trench 3 a modern wall of concrete block construction was recorded. As no other associated walls or floor surfaces were encountered it was unclear whether the wall was associated with a demolished outbuilding or whether it represents a former external boundary. The blockwork used in the construction of the wall was identical to that observed in standing outbuildings to the northwest of Trench 3, and the wall certainly dated to the latter half of the 20th century.
- 7.3 In Trench 5 two parallel narrow gullies, likely to represent a former field boundary were recorded, but neither of the features was dated by pottery or other finds. The features did not directly reflect any of the field boundaries on historic mapping but were on the same alignment as a boundary in the fields to the east and may represent an abandoned continuation of this boundary.
- 7.4 Elsewhere within the area investigated, no archaeological features were recorded. There was a notable deposit of modern made ground in the eastern part of the site, observed in Trenches 4 and 7, where considerable depths of modern material had been dumped as a levelling deposit.

8.0 Effectiveness of Methodology

- 8.1 The trial trenching methodology employed was suited to the scale and nature of the project in determining the nature of the archaeology present and the potential impacts of the proposed development.

9.0 Acknowledgements

- 9.1 Allen Archaeology Limited would like to thank Barratt and David Wilson Homes North West for this commission.

10.0 References

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Appendix 1: Context Summary List

Trench 1

Context	Type	Description	Length (m)	Width (m)	Thickness (m)	Interpretation
100	Layer	Friable, dark grey, sandy silt	>50	>1.80	0.2	Topsoil
101	Layer	Compact, light orange yellow, silty clay	>50	>1.80	>0.13	Natural geology

Trench 2

Context	Type	Description	Length (m)	Width (m)	Thickness (m)	Interpretation
200	Layer	Firm, dark brown, gravels and brick; silty inclusion	>15	>1.80	0.29	Made Ground
201	Layer	Firm, dark bluish brown, sandy silt	>15	>1.80	0.36	Buried Soil
202	Layer	Compact, dark brown, sandy silt	>15	>1.80	0.17	Subsoil
203	Layer	Compact, mid yellowish brown, sandy clay	>15	>1.80	>0.12	Natural Geology

Trench 3

Context	Type	Description	Length (m)	Width (m)	Thickness (m)	Interpretation
300	Layer	Compact, dark grey, silt	>50	>2	0.16	Topsoil
301	Layer	Loose, silt, brick and hardcore	>50	>2	0.39	Made Ground
302	Layer	Compact, very dark grey, sandy silt	>50	>2	0.18	Buried Topsoil
303	Layer	Compact, yellowish brown, clay; occasional	>50	>2	>0.35	Natural Geology
304	Cut	E-W wall; cement binding	5.31	0.28	-	Modern Wall
305	Fill	E-W linear; vertical sides, base not excavated			-	Wall Cut
306	Cut	Compact, mixed yellow, brown and black, silty sand			-	Deliberate Backfill

Trench 4

Context	Type	Description	Length (m)	Width (m)	Thickness (m)	Interpretation
400	Layer	Firm, dark brown, silt	>50	>2	0.21-0.40	Topsoil
401	Layer	Compact, dark brown, sandy silt	>50	>2	0.04-0.28	Made Ground
402	Layer	Compact, dark bluish brown, sandy silt	>50	>2	0.15-0.32	Buried Soil
403	Layer	Compact, light brown, silty clay	>50	>2	>0.07	Natural Geology

Trench 5

Context	Type	Description	Length (m)	Width (m)	Thickness (m)	Interpretation
500	Layer	Friable, very dark grey, sandy silt			0.36	Topsoil
501	Layer	Firm, light orange brown, sandy clay, occasional small rounded stones			>0.16	Natural Geology
502	Cut	E-W linear; shallow concave sides, flat base		1.10	0.18	Ditch or Hedgerow
503	Fill	Firm, very dark brown, silt; frequent small and medium sub-angular stones			0.18	Natural Silting
504	Cut	E-W linear; shallow concave sides, concave base		1.06	0.28	Ditch or Hedgerow
505	Fill	Loose, very dark grey, sandy silt; occasional small rounded stones			0.12	Natural Silting
506	Fill	Friable, dark grey, sandy silt; mottled orange yellow clay			0.15	Backfill of hedgerow

Trench 6

Context	Type	Description	Length (m)	Width (m)	Thickness (m)	Interpretation
600	Layer	Friable, dark grey, sandy silt			0.43	Topsoil
601	Layer	Compact, light yellowish brown orange, silt			>0.35	Natural Geology

Trench 7

Context	Type	Description	Length (m)	Width (m)	Thickness (m)	Interpretation
700	Layer	Friable, dark grey, sandy silt			0.20	Topsoil
701	Layer	Friable, mid brown, silty clay; moderate gravel			0.51	Made Ground
702	Layer	Compact, dark grey, sandy silt			0.21	Buried Soil
703	Layer	Compact, light orange brown, silty clay; occasional small rounded stones			>0.2	Natural Geology

Trench 8

Context	Type	Description	Length (m)	Width (m)	Thickness (m)	Interpretation
800	Layer	Friable, very dark grey, sandy silt			0.44	Topsoil
801	Layer	Friable, mid orange brown, sandy silt; moderate small rounded stones			>0.22	Natural Geology

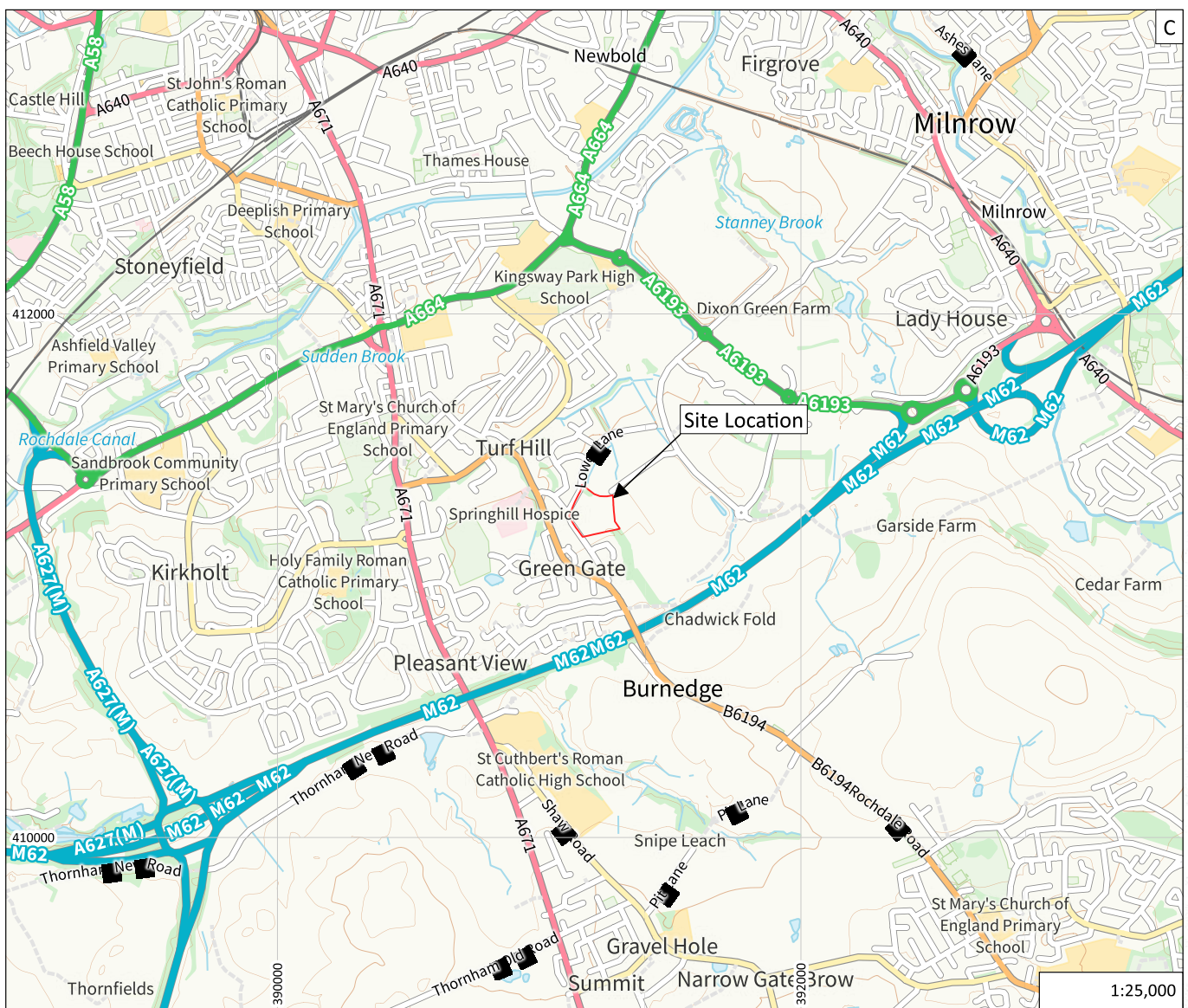
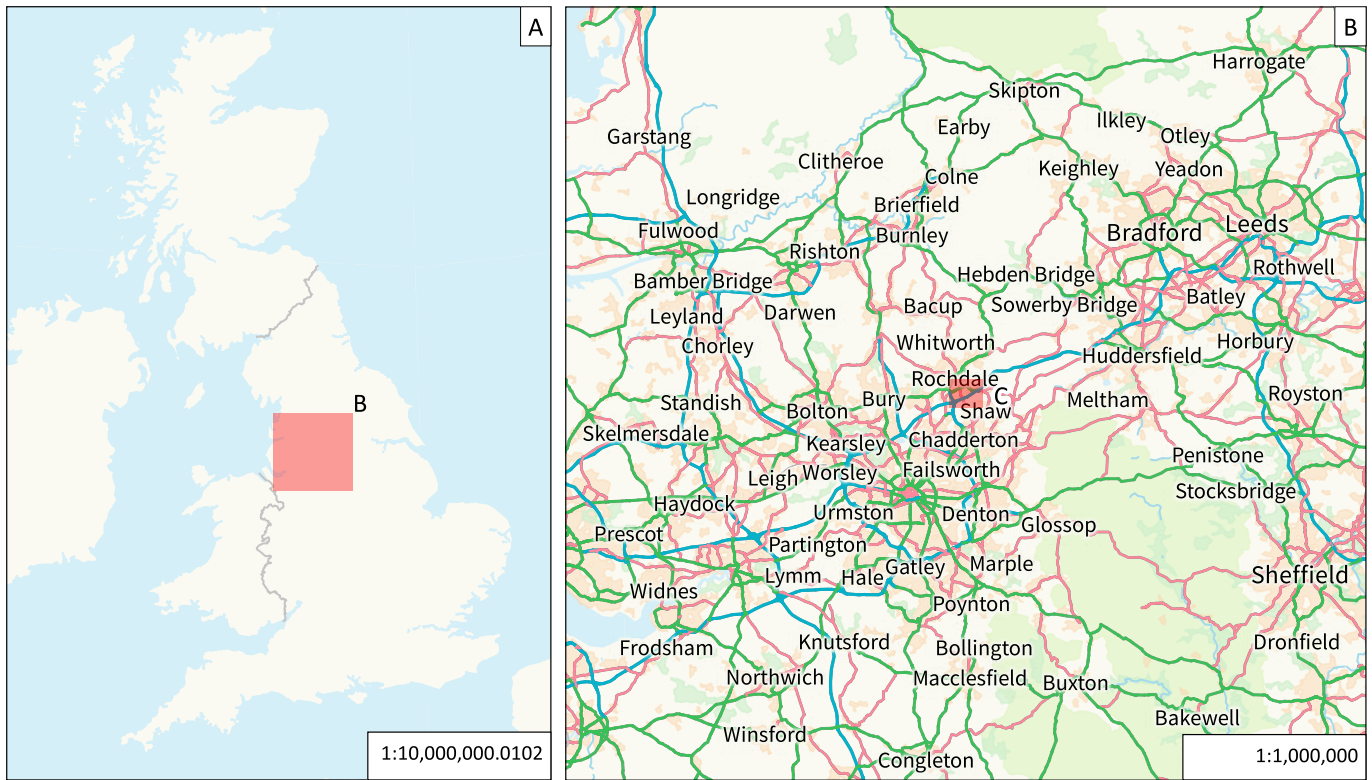


Figure 1: Site location outlined in red



Lower Lane, Rochdale
Site Code: ROBL24

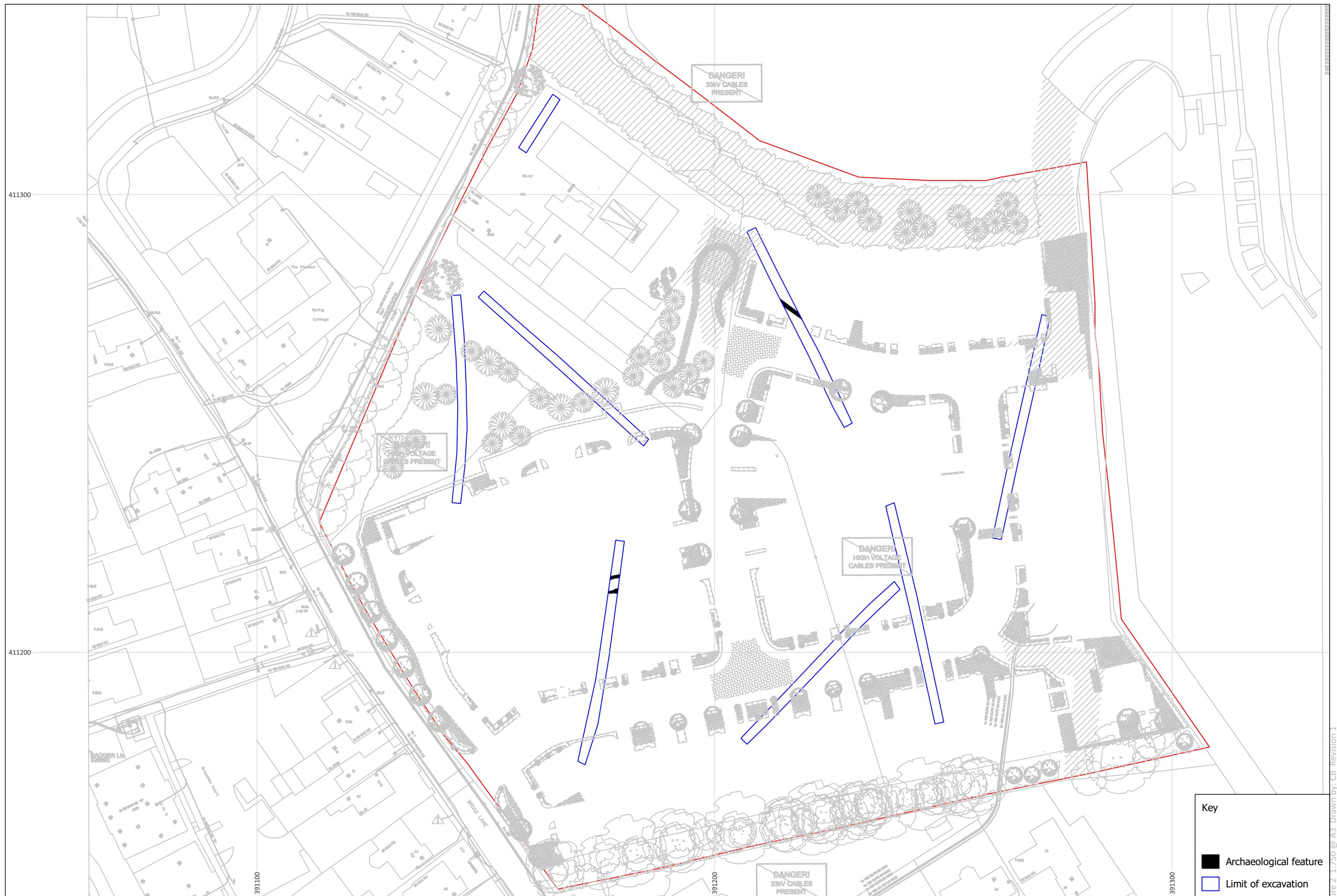
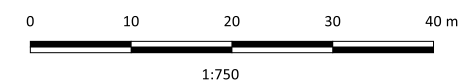


Figure 2: Plan of excavation area



Key

- Archaeological feature
- Limit of excavation

Silver Hill Farm, Rochdale
Site Code: ROBL24

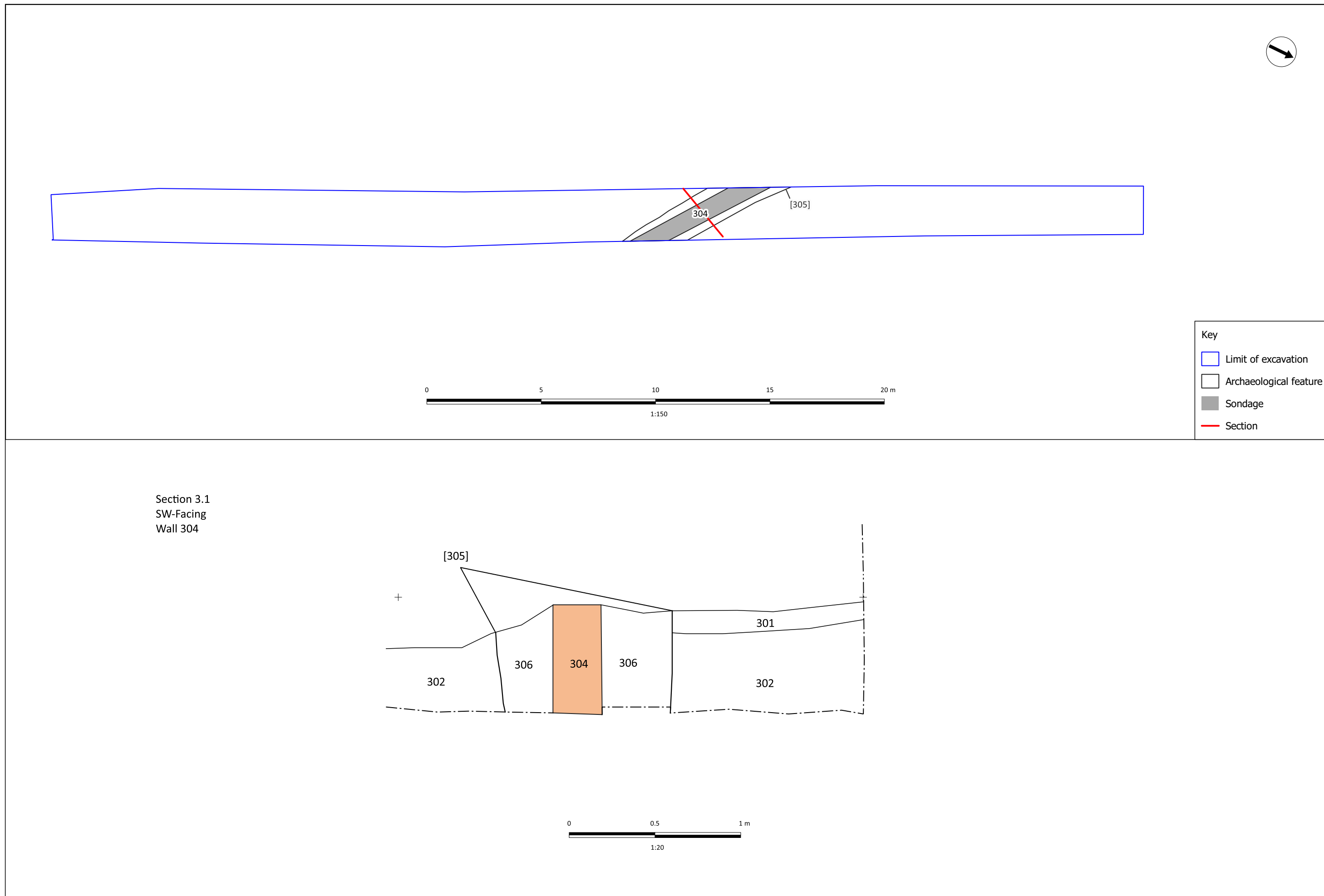


Figure 3: Plan and sections of Trench 3

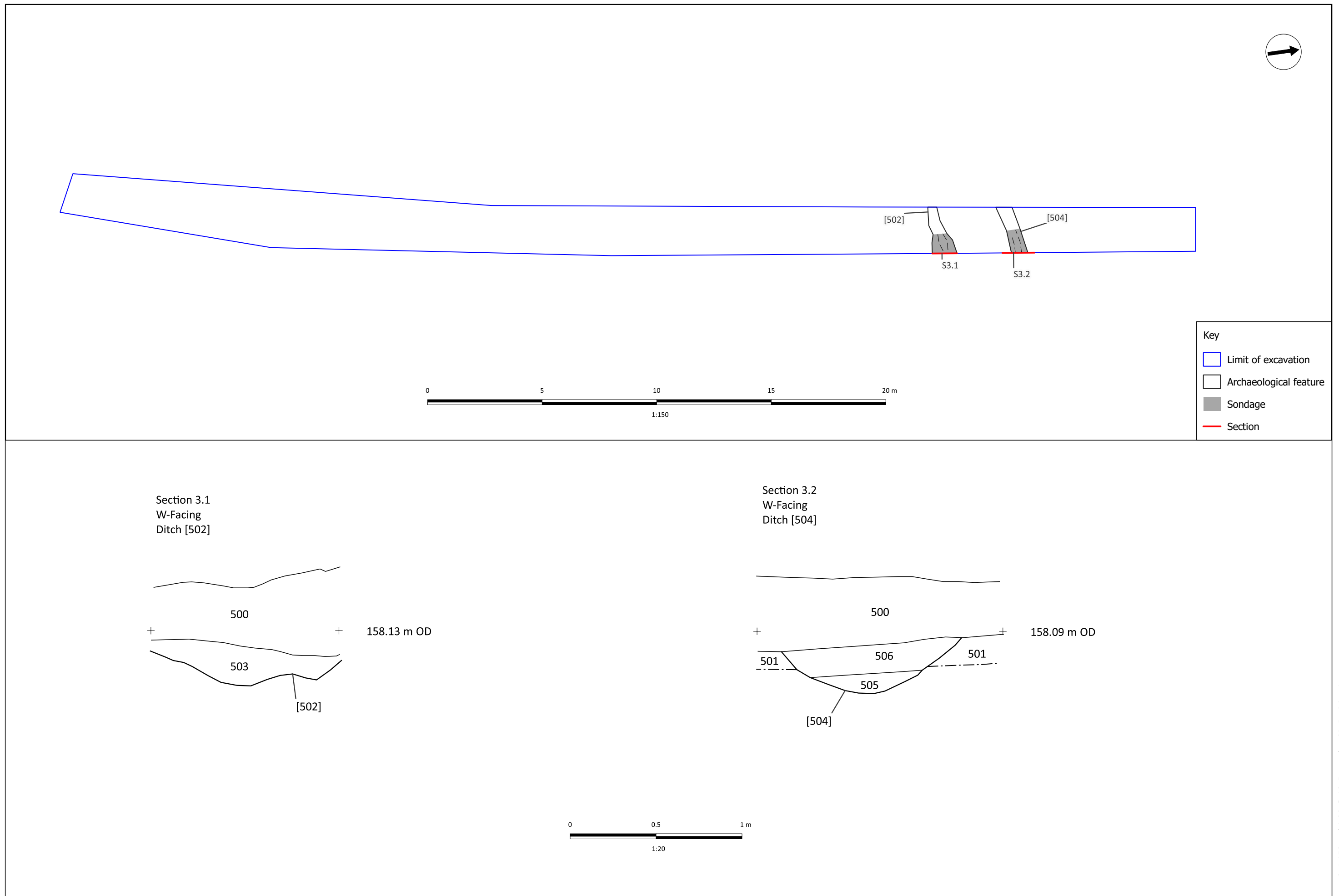
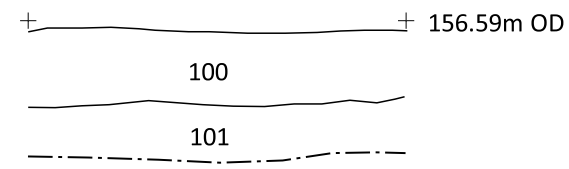
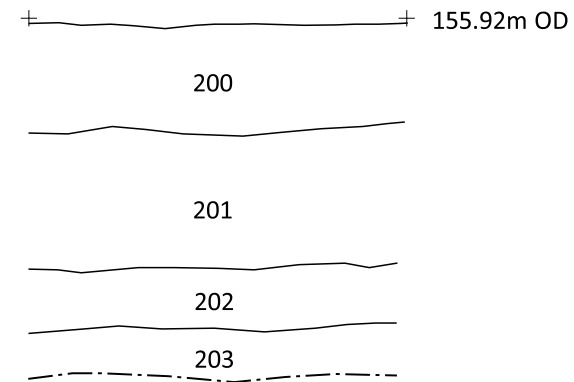


 Figure 4: Plan and sections of Trench 5

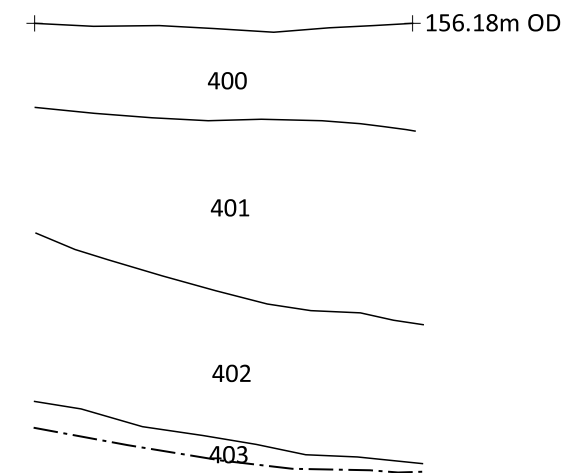
Section 5.1
E-Facing
Trench 1



Section 5.2
SE-Facing
Trench 2

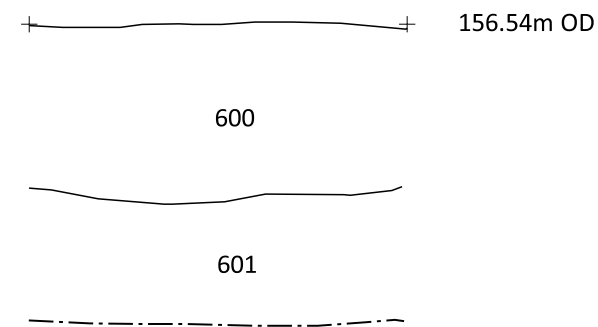


Section 5.3
W-Facing
Trench 4

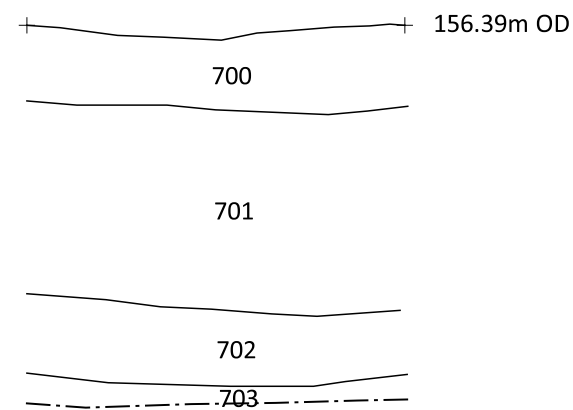


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Section 5.4
NW-Facing
Trench 6



Section 5.5
NE-Facing
Trench 7



Section 5.6
NE-Facing
Trench 8

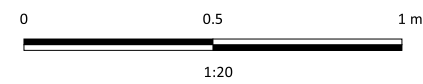
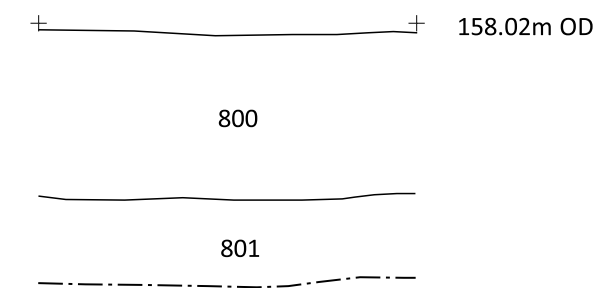


Figure 5: Representative sections



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