

Archaeological Evaluation of Land at Gibbs Hill Farm, Grigg Lane, Headcorn, Kent TN27 9LY

Site Code: GHB-EV-21

NGR Site Centre: 584317 144458

Planning Application Number: MA/20/501240



Report for;

Persimmon Homes South East

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SWAT ARCHAEOLOGY

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| | | |
|----------|--|----------|
| 1 | INTRODUCTION | 1 |
| 1.1 | Project Background | 1 |
| 1.2 | Timetable | 2 |
| 1.3 | Site Description and Topography | 2 |
| 1.4 | Scope of Report | 2 |
| 2 | ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND HISTORICAL BACKGROUND..... | 3 |
| 2.1 | Introduction | 3 |
| 2.2 | Historic Environment Record (HER) | 3 |
| 2.3 | Overview (KCC 2020)..... | 3 |
| 2.4 | Recent investigations in the area | 3 |
| 3 | AIMS AND OBJECTIVES..... | 3 |
| 3.1 | General Aims | 3 |
| 3.2 | General Objectives | 4 |
| 4 | METHODOLOGY..... | 4 |
| 4.1 | Introduction | 4 |
| 4.2 | Fieldwork..... | 4 |
| 4.3 | Recording | 5 |
| 5 | RESULTS | 5 |
| 5.1 | Introduction | 5 |
| 5.2 | Stratigraphic Deposit Sequence | 6 |
| 5.3 | Archaeological Narrative..... | 6 |
| | <i>Trench 1 (Figure 3, Plates 1 and 2)</i> | <i>6</i> |
| | <i>Trench 2 (Figure 3, Plates 3 and 4)</i> | <i>6</i> |
| | <i>Trench 3 (Figure 4, Plates 5 and 6)</i> | <i>6</i> |
| | <i>Trench 4 (Figure 4, Plates 7 and 8)</i> | <i>7</i> |

| | | |
|-----------|---|-----------|
| | <i>Trench 5 (Figure 5, Plates 9 and 10)</i> | 7 |
| | <i>Overview</i> | 7 |
| 6 | FINDS | 8 |
| 6.1 | Overview | 8 |
| 7 | DISCUSSION | 8 |
| 7.1 | Introduction | 8 |
| 7.2 | Archaeological Narrative | 8 |
| 7.3 | Conclusions | 8 |
| 8 | ARCHIVE | 9 |
| 8.1 | General | 9 |
| 9 | ACKNOWLEDGMENTS | 9 |
| 10 | REFERENCES | 9 |
| 11 | APPENDIX 1 – TRENCH TABLES | 11 |
| 12 | APPENDIX 2 – HER FORM | 13 |

Tables

| | |
|---|---|
| Table 1 Timetable for the archaeological programme of works | 2 |
|---|---|

Plates

| | |
|---|----|
| Plate 1 Trench 1, viewed from the southeast | 15 |
| Plate 2 Representative Section RS1..... | 15 |
| Plate 3 Trench 2, viewed from the southeast | 16 |
| Plate 4 representative Section RS2 | 16 |
| Plate 5 Trench 3, viewed from the northwest..... | 17 |
| Plate 6 Representative Section RS3..... | 17 |
| Plate 7 Trench 4, viewed from the southeast | 18 |
| Plate 8 Representative Section RS4..... | 18 |
| Plate 9 Trench 5, viewed from the southwest | 19 |
| Plate 10 Representative Section RS5..... | 19 |

Figures

| | |
|----------|--|
| Figure 1 | Site Location Plan |
| Figure 2 | Site Plan |
| Figure 3 | Trench 1 and Trench 2 Plans and Sections |
| Figure 4 | Trench 3 and Trench 4 Plans and Sections |
| Figure 5 | Trench 5 Plan and Section |

Summary

Swale & Thames Survey Company (SWAT Archaeology) were commissioned by Persimmon Homes South East to undertake an archaeological evaluation on land at Gibbs Hill Farm, Grigg Lane, Headcorn, Kent TN27 9LY. The archaeological programme was monitored by the Principal Archaeological Officer at Kent County Council.

The Archaeological Evaluation consisted of five trenches, which recorded a relatively common stratigraphic sequence comprising topsoil and subsoil overlying natural geology. Evidence for modern landscaping associated with the former farm was present within the central area of the site.

Despite the archaeological potential of the site no finds or features of interest were present.

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.

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NGR Site Centre: 584317 144458

Site Code: GRB-EV-21

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Project Background

1.1.1 Swale & Thames Survey Company (SWAT Archaeology) were commissioned by Persimmon Homes South East to undertake an archaeological evaluation on land at Gibbs Hill Farm, Grigg Lane, Headcorn, Kent TN27 9LY (Figure 1).

1.1.2 A planning application (PAN: MA/20/501240/FULL) for the creation of 17 No. two, three, four, and five bedroom dwellings with associated roads, car parking 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;

and

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

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

(MA/20/501240/FULL, Condition 8, 1st July 2021)

1.1.4 The archaeological evaluation, which comprised the excavation of five trenches measuring between 19m and 25m in length and 1.5m in width, was carried out over the course of two days in August 2021 (see Table 1 below). The evaluation was carried out in accordance with an

archaeological Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI) prepared by SWAT Archaeology (2021), 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 |
|---|---|--------------------------|
| Archaeological desk-Based Assessment | September 2019 | Groundworks Archaeology |
| Submission of the Written Scheme of Investigation | December 2020 | SWAT Archaeology |
| Archaeological Evaluation – Fieldwork | 23 rd and 24 th August 2021 27 th August 2021 | 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 584317 144458 and is situated on vacant ground of approximately 5,930 square metres in area, located adjacent and to the south of Griggs Lane (Figure 1). The southern and eastern boundaries open out to agricultural land, while the western boundary is demarcated by a recently completed housing development. The River Beult (a Site of Special Scientific Interest) is located approximately 1km to the south of the proposed site, on the other side of Smarden Road and the railway line.

1.3.2 Ground levels are relatively level and a height of approximately 22m Ordnance Datum (OD), with no significant changes in level. The Geological Survey of Great Britain shows that the natural geology comprises Weald Clay Formation (Mudstone) with no superficial deposits 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 impacts of the proposed development are also considered and presented in an Impact Assessment (Section 5). 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 approximately 760m northeast of the Headcorn Conservation Area which includes 23 Listed buildings within and around the historical core of the town. An Archaeological Desk-Based Assessment dated September 2019 by Groundworks Archaeology has suggested a low potential for the presence of archaeological remains for all periods up to the medieval period which was considered low to moderate potential. The potential for post-medieval remains was considered as moderate to high.

2.1.2 Further details of previous discoveries and investigations within the immediate and wider area may be found in the Kent County Council Historic Environment Record (HER) and have been summarised in correspondence with the KCCHC Senior Archaeological Officer.

2.2 Historic Environment Record (HER)

2.2.1 The KCC HER records show just three sites within a 500m radius of the proposed development: a listed building at 16 and 18 Wheeler Street (TQ 84 SW144), a Grade II Listed former Toll House (TQ 84 SW 177) and a multiyard farmstead at Chantry Farm (MKE82267).

2.3 Overview (KCC 2020)

2.3.1 The following historical and archaeological overview was provided in correspondence with KCCHC:

The site of the application lies in an area which has most recently revealed evidence of Iron Age occupation around the current more post medieval village core. There is potential for prehistoric or later remains to survive on this site.

2.4 Recent investigations in the area

2.4.1 There are no known recent archaeological investigations within the area.

3 AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

3.1 General Aims

3.1.1 The specific aims of the archaeological fieldwork were set out in a Written Scheme of Investigation (SWAT Archaeology 2021) 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 period and also any Roman, medieval and later archaeological activity.

- *The programme of archaeological work should be carried out in a phased approach and will commence with evaluation through trial trenching. This initial phase should determine whether any significant archaeological remains would be affected by the development and if so, what mitigation measures are appropriate. Such measures may include further detailed archaeological excavation, or an archaeological watching brief during construction work or an engineering solution to any preservation in situ requirements.*

(SWAT Archaeology 2021: Section 6)

3.2 General Objectives

3.2.1 The general objectives of the archaeological fieldwork were therefore;

- To determine the presence or absence of archaeological features, deposits, structures, artefacts, or ecofacts within the specified area;
- To establish, within the constraints of the evaluation, the extent, character, date, condition, and quality of any surviving archaeological remains;
- To place any identified archaeological remains within a wider historical and archaeological context in order to assess their significance; and
- To 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 2021) and carried out in compliance with the standards outlined in the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists' Standards Guidance for Archaeological Evaluations (CIfA 2014).

4.2 Fieldwork

4.2.1 A total of five evaluation trenches were excavated (Figure 2). Each trench was initially scanned by 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. A photographic register of all photographs taken is contained within the project archive.

4.3.3 A single context recording system was used to record the deposits. A full list is presented in Appendix 1. Layers and fills are identified in this report thus (100), whilst the cut of the feature is shown as [100]. Context numbers were assigned to all deposits for recording purposes. Each number has been attributed to a specific trench with the primary number(s) relating to specific trenches (*i.e.* Trench 1, 101+, Trench 2, 201+, Trench 3, 301+, etc.).

5 RESULTS

5.1 Introduction

5.1.1 All trenches were mechanically excavated under archaeological supervision. Trenches were positioned in order to cover as many areas of the site as possible. Individual trench results are discussed below.

5.1.2 The site, as shown on Figure 2, provides the trench layout and distribution of archaeological features. Figures 3-5 illustrate the results for each individual archaeological evaluation trench

along with representative soil sequence sections. Plates 1-10 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.

5.2 Stratigraphic Deposit Sequence

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

- 5.2.2 The topsoil generally consisted of dark brown clay silt, moderate roots and occasional small rounded stones, topped with grass, overlying the subsoil which consisted of pale brown orange silt. Natural geology comprised mottled mid orange, brown, silty clay with occ. iron/manganese panning (Weald clay Formation). Variations in this sequence occurred in Trench 3 and Trench 4, as described in detail below.

5.3 Archaeological Narrative

Trench 1 (Figure 3, Plates 1 and 2)

- 5.3.1 Within the northern extent of the site, Trench 1 was excavated on an NW-SE alignment and measured approximately 25m in length with a maximum depth of 0.43m (Figure 3, Plates 1 and 2). Natural geological deposits were recorded at a level ranging between 21.89m OD and 22.03m OD. No archaeological finds or features were present in Trench 1.

Trench 2 (Figure 3, Plates 3 and 4)

- 5.3.2 Trench 2 was located within the northeastern area of the site (Figure 3) and was excavated on a NW-SE alignment (Plates 3 and 4). This trench measured 20.1 m in length, with a maximum depth of 0.36m (Figure 3). Natural geological deposits were recorded at a level ranging between 22.02m OD and 22.06m OD.

- 5.3.3 At the southern extent of the trench the subsoil (202) was left *in situ* due to the presence of asbestos and a modern 100mm diameter plastic drainage pipe. No archaeological finds or features were present in Trench 2.

Trench 3 (Figure 4, Plates 5 and 6)

- 5.3.4 Located within the central area of the site (Figure 4), Trench 3 measured 23.6m in length with a maximum depth of 0.31m. Natural geological deposits were recorded at a level ranging between 22.03m OD and 22.09m OD.

- 5.3.5 The stratigraphic sequence differed within this central area of the site. Linear concrete beams overlying redeposited gravel (303) had been constructed directly on the natural geology (304). These beams were spaced approximately 1m apart and covered an area measuring approximately 500sq.m. In between each beam redeposited chalk was used to fill the internal gaps. The absence of any subsoil within this area would suggest that the soils matrix occurring elsewhere on site had been removed prior to the construction of the beams. A thin layer of grass (301) had formed on top of the redeposited chalk (302).
- 5.3.6 Within the northwestern extent of the trench a live electric cable was encased in a cast iron pipe and was left *in situ*. No archaeological finds or features were present in Trench 3.

Trench 4 (Figure 4, Plates 7 and 8)

- 5.3.7 Within the southern extent of the site, Trench 4 was excavated on an NW-SE alignment and measured approximately 24m in length with a maximum depth of 0.89m (Figure 4, Plates 7 and 8). This trench was noticeably different from the other evaluation trenches due to the depth of the subsoil (402). Natural geological deposits were recorded at a level ranging between 21.89m OD and 22.03m OD forming a dip in the upper surface of the natural geology (403). The subsoil (402) was relatively consistent and was formed of a series of waterborne silts and clay, suggesting that this area of the site was susceptible to flooding. The presence of modern land drains within the deeper areas of the trench would certainly support this hypothesis. Modern fragments of tile and CBM were retrieved from the subsoil along with an iron horseshoe that was pressed into the lower natural geology (403).
- 5.3.8 With the exception of the modern CBM and an Iron horseshoe no archaeological finds or features were present in Trench 4.

Trench 5 (Figure 5, Plates 9 and 10)

- 5.3.9 Within the southern extent of the site, Trench 5 was excavated on an NE-SW alignment and measured approximately 19m in length with a maximum depth of 0.38m (Figure 5, Plates 9 and 10). Natural geological deposits were recorded at a level ranging between 22.03m OD and 22.03m OD. No archaeological finds or features were present in Trench 5.

Overview

- 5.3.10 Despite the potential for archaeological remain no finds or features were present within the proposed site. With the exception of the central area of the site the subsoil and topsoil remained relatively well intact suggesting good levels of preservation. Within the central area natural geology was recorded at a level of approximately 22.05m OD which is still consistent with the

rest of the site. This would suggest that the construction of the concrete beams would have had minimal impact on archaeological remains, should they have been present.

6 FINDS

6.1 Overview

- 6.1.1 With the exception of modern CBM and an iron horseshoe, no archaeological finds were retrieved during this evaluation.

7 DISCUSSION

7.1 Introduction

- 7.1.1 The archaeological works on land at Gibbs Hill Farm Grigg Lane, Headcorn, Kent, has investigated the extents of the proposed development area using five trenches, each measuring between 19m and 25m in length and 1.5m in width.

- 7.1.2 Within the northern and southern extent of the site the natural geology was encountered at an average depth of approximately 0.4m below the existing ground surface, directly underlying a subsoil sealed by the extant topsoil, at a level of c. 22m OD. The central area of the site differed in as much as there was no subsoil present, the site having been stripped prior to the construction of concrete beams infilled with chalk. The eastern area of the site was similar to the northern and southern areas just with a deeper subsoil most likely caused through localised flooding within an undulated area of the natural landscape.

7.2 Archaeological Narrative

- 7.2.1 The archaeological investigation has been successful in evaluating the proposed development site for the possibility of archaeological remains. Although preservation conditions were favourable, particularly in the northern and southern extent of the site, no archaeological remains were present.

- 7.2.2 The central area of the site appeared to have been subject to previous landscaping; the presence of concrete beams and redeposited layers of chalk may be associated with recent farming activity on the site. The actual purpose of the concrete beams is unclear. Prior to the establishment of the modern farm the site was largely arable.

7.3 Conclusions

- 7.3.1 The archaeological investigation 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 would like to thank Persimmon Homes South East 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.

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SWAT Archaeology (2021) *Specification for an Archaeological Evaluation on Land at Gibbs Hill Farm, Grigg Lane, Headcorn, Kent TN27 9LY*

11 APPENDIX 1 – TRENCH TABLES

| Trench 1 | Dimensions: 25.1m x 1.5m Depth: 0.43m Ground Level: 22.35m OD – 22.43m OD | | |
|-----------------|--|---|------------------|
| Context | Interpretation | Description | Depth (m) |
| (101) | Topsoil | Soft, dark brown clay silt, moderate roots and occasional small, rounded stones, topped with grass | 0.00-0.12 |
| (102) | Subsoil | Pale brown orange silt sand with moderate gravel and rare CBM flecks | 0.12-0.32 |
| (103) | Natural | Mottled mid orange brown sandy clay with occasional iron/manganese panning (Weald Clay Formation - Mudstone). | 0.32-0.43+ |

| Trench 2 | Dimensions: 20.1m x 1.5m Depth: 0.61m Ground Level: 10.51m OD – 10.54m OD | | |
|-----------------|--|---|------------------|
| Context | Interpretation | Description | Depth (m) |
| (201) | Topsoil | Soft, dark brown clay silt, moderate roots and occasional small, rounded stones, topped with grass | 0.00-0.19 |
| (202) | Subsoil | Light grey/brown silty clay, very compact | 0.19-0.31 |
| (203) | Natural | Mottled mid orange brown sandy clay with occasional iron/manganese panning (Weald Clay Formation - Mudstone). | 0.31-0.36+ |

| Trench 3 | Dimensions: 23.6m x 1.5m Depth: 0.31m Ground Level: 22.40m OD – 22.44m OD | | |
|-----------------|--|---|------------------|
| Context | Interpretation | Description | Depth (m) |
| (301) | Topsoil | Mid grey sand silt, moderate rooting, occasional small rounded stones, topped with grass | 0.00-0.04 |
| (302) | Formation | Redeposited chalk | 0.04-0.14 |
| (303) | Formation | Redeposited gravel | 0.14-0.20 |
| (304) | Natural | Mottled mid orange brown sandy clay with occasional iron/manganese panning (Weald Clay Formation - Mudstone). | 0.20-0.31+ |

| Trench 4 | Dimensions: 24.9m x 1.5m Depth: 0.89m Ground Level: 22.38m OD – 22.44m OD | | |
|-----------------|--|--|------------------|
| Context | Interpretation | Description | Depth (m) |
| (401) | Topsoil | Soft, dark brown clay silt, moderate roots and occasional small, rounded stones, topped with grass | 0.00-0.24 |
| (402) | Subsoil | Soft, dark grey/brown silty clay. | 0.24-0.81 |

| | | | |
|-----------------|---|---|------------------|
| Trench 4 | Dimensions: 24.9m x 1.5m Depth: 0.89m Ground Level: 22.38m OD – 22.44m OD | | |
| Context | Interpretation | Description | Depth (m) |
| (403) | Natural | Mottled mid orange brown sandy clay with occasional iron/manganese panning (Weald Clay Formation - Mudstone). | 0.81-0.89+ |

| | | | |
|-----------------|--|---|------------------|
| Trench 5 | Dimensions: 19.36m x 1.5m Depth: 0.38m Ground Level: 22.09m OD – 22.38m OD | | |
| Context | Interpretation | Description | Depth (m) |
| (501) | Topsoil | Mid grey sand silt, moderate rooting, occasional small rounded stones, topped with grass | 0.00-0.13 |
| (502) | Subsoil | Soft, dark grey/brown silty clay. | 0.13-0.36 |
| (503) | Natural | Mottled mid orange brown sandy clay with occasional iron/manganese panning (Weald Clay Formation - Mudstone). | 0.36-0.38+ |

12 APPENDIX 2 – HER FORM

Site Name: Gibbs Hill Farm, Grigg Lane, Headcorn, Kent TN27 9LY

SWAT Site Code: GHB-EV-21

Site Address: As above

Summary. *Swale & Thames Survey Company (SWAT Archaeology) were commissioned by Persimmon Homes South East to undertake an archaeological evaluation on land at Gibbs Hill Farm, Grigg Lane, Headcorn, Kent TN27 9LY. The archaeological programme was monitored by the Principal Archaeological Officer at Kent County Council.*

The Archaeological Evaluation consisted of five trenches, which recorded a relatively common stratigraphic sequence comprising topsoil and subsoil overlying natural geology. Evidence for modern landscaping associated with the former farm was present within the central area of the site.

Despite the archaeological potential of the site no finds or features of interest were present.

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.

District/Unitary: Maidstone Borough Council & Kent County Council

Period(s): prehistoric, NA

NGR (centre of site to eight figures) NGR 584317 144458

Type of Archaeological work: Archaeological Evaluation

Date of recording: August 2021

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

Geology: Weald Formation (Mudstone)

Title and author of accompanying report: D Britchfield (2021) Archaeological Evaluation of Land at Gibbs Hill Farm, Grigg Lane, Headcorn, Kent TN27 9LY. SWAT Archaeology Report Ref: 32810.01

SWAT Archaeology Ref. GHB-EV-2021

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

Contact at Unit: Paul Wilkinson

Date: 27/08/21

PLATES



Plate 1 Trench 1, viewed from the southeast



Plate 2 Representative Section RS1



Plate 3 Trench 2, viewed from the southeast



Plate 4 representative Section RS2



Plate 5 Trench 3, viewed from the northwest



Plate 6 Representative Section RS3



Plate 7 Trench 4, viewed from the southeast



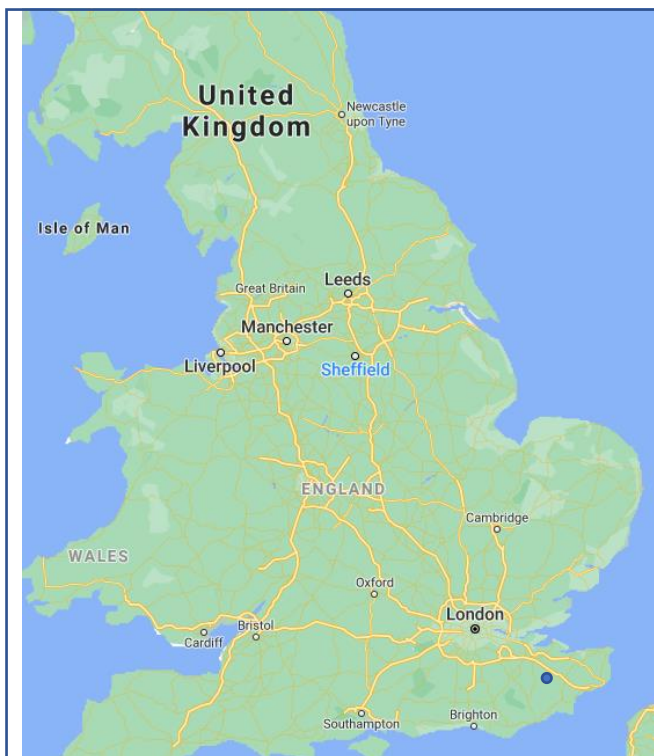
Plate 8 Representative Section RS4



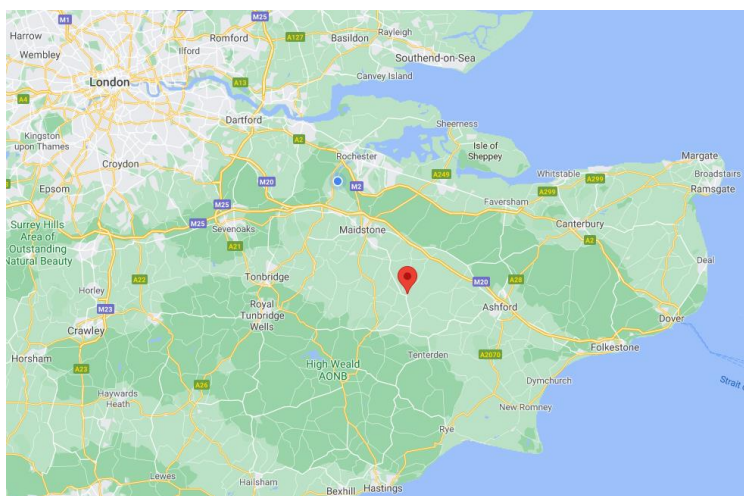
Plate 9 Trench 5, viewed from the southwest



Plate 10 Representative Section RS5



England (Not to scale)

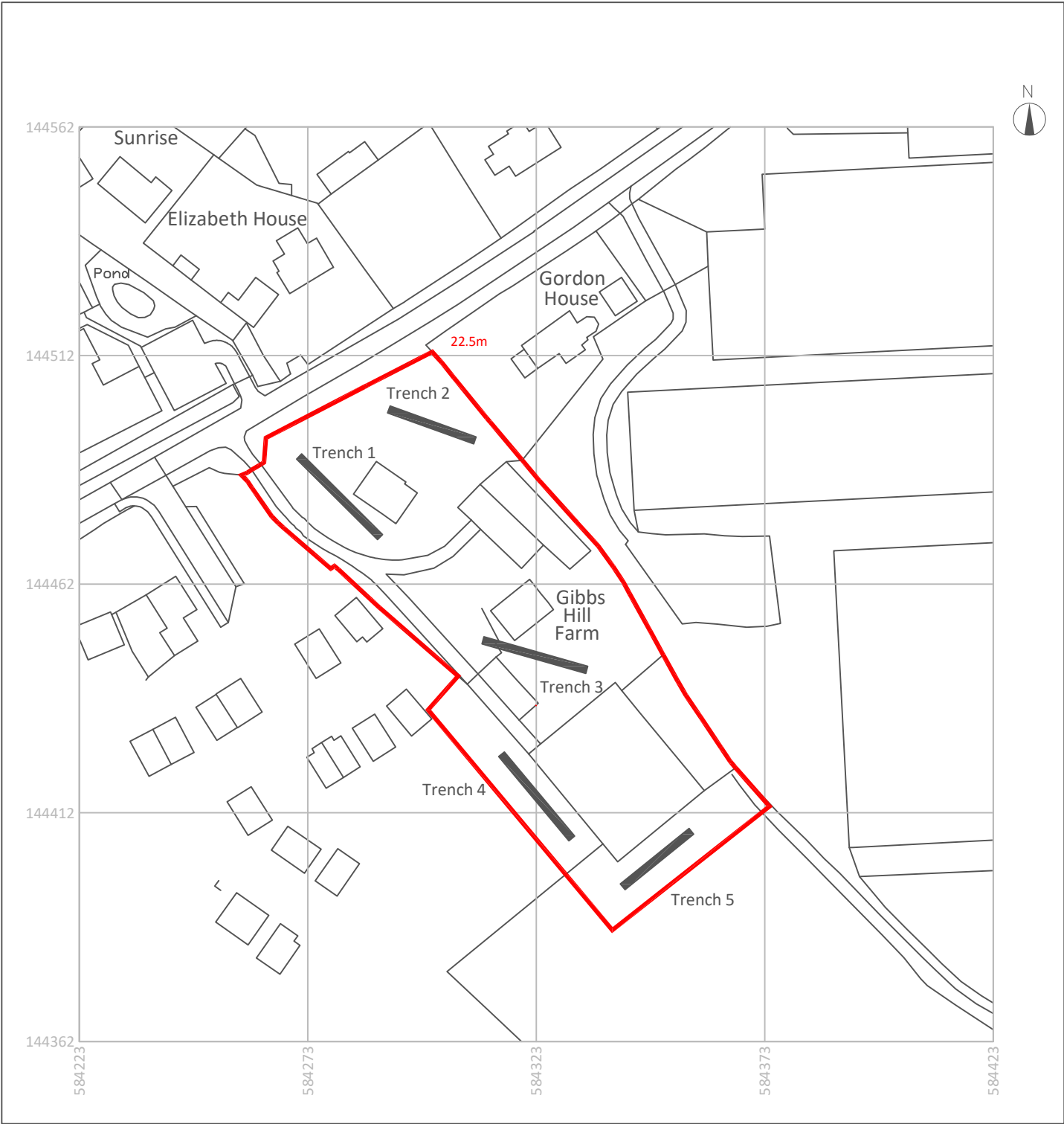


Kent (Not to scale)



Location of site

Figure 1 Site Location Plan



- Key
- Site Boundary
 - Trenches



Figure 2 Site Plan

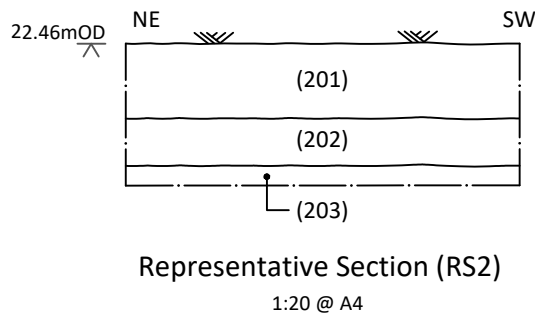
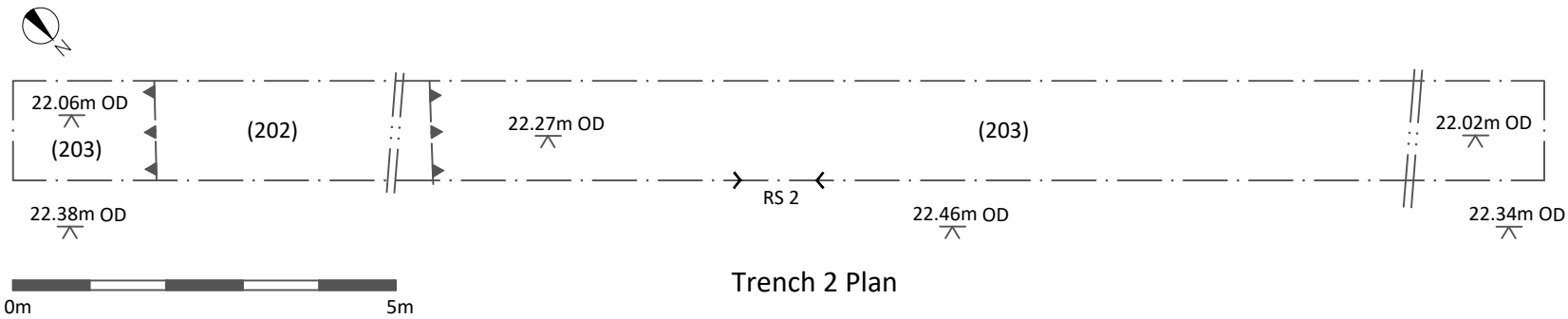
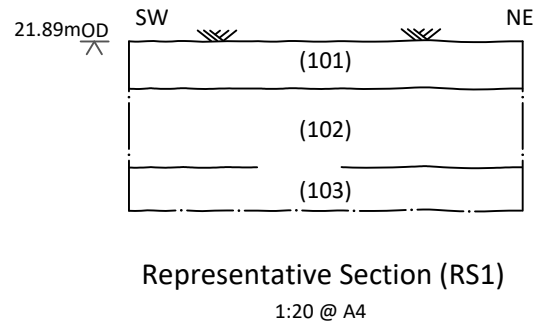
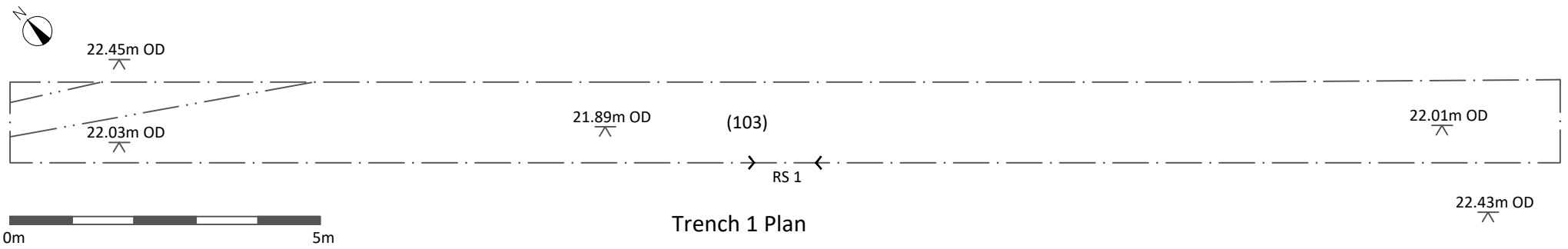
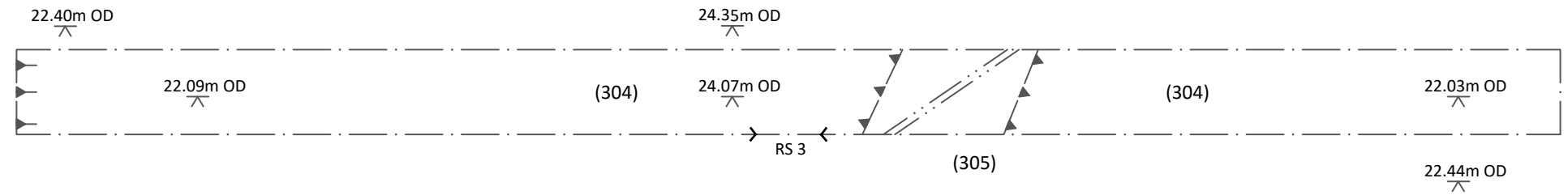
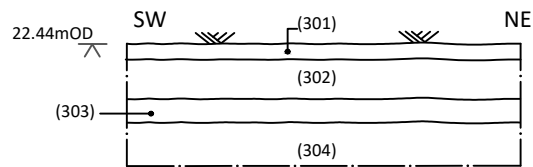


Figure 3 Trenches 1 and 2 Details

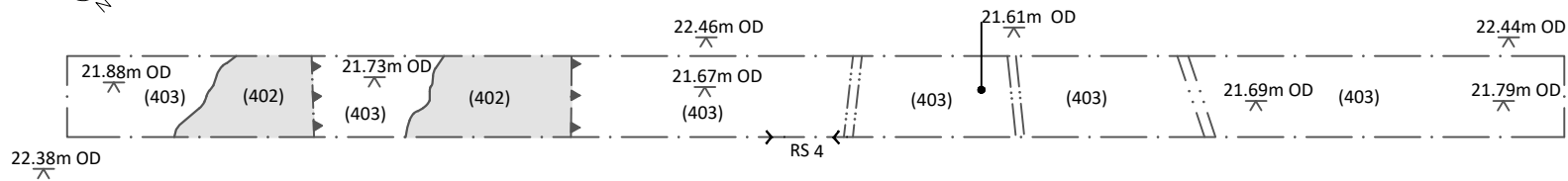


Trench 3 Plan

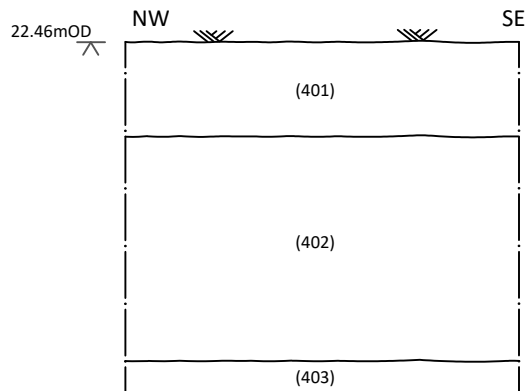


Representative Section (RS3)

1:20 @ A4



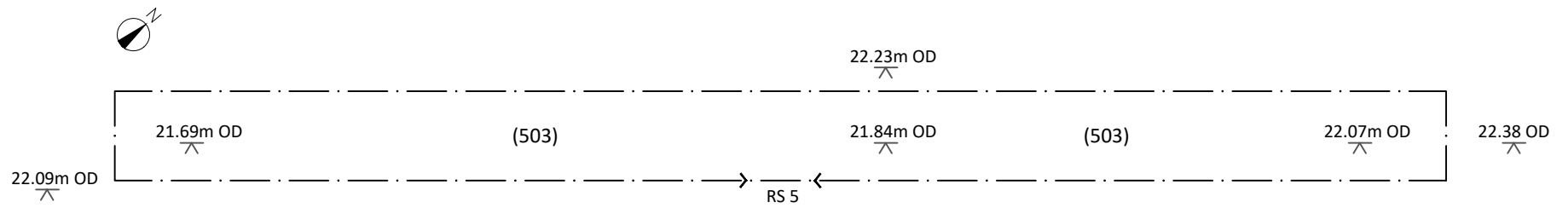
Trench 4 Plan



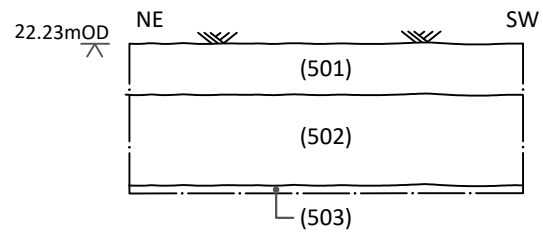
Representative Section (RS4)

1:20 @ A4

Figure 4 Trenches 3 and 4 Details



Trench 5 Plan



Representative Section (RS5)

1:20 @ A4

Figure 5 Trench 5 Details