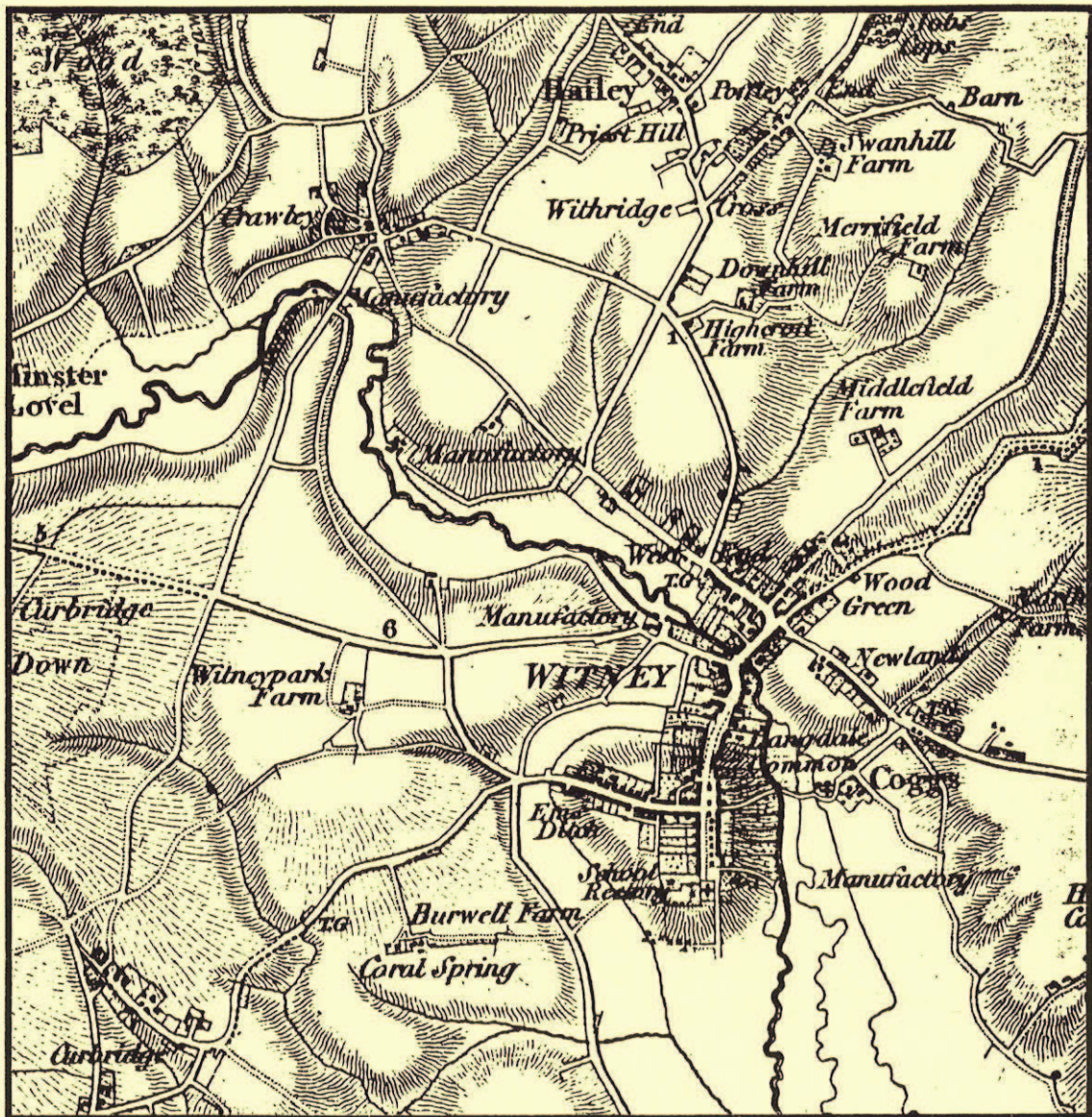


# WEST WITNEY COMMUNITY SITE WITNEY, OXFORDSHIRE

ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION



OXFORD ARCHAEOLOGICAL UNIT

AUGUST 1994

# WEST WITNEY COMMUNITY SITE, WITNEY OXFORDSHIRE

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OXFORD ARCHAEOLOGICAL UNIT  
JULY 1994

# WEST WITNEY COMMUNITY SITE, WITNEY OXFORDSHIRE

## INTRODUCTION

The Oxford Archaeological Unit undertook an evaluation on behalf West Oxfordshire District Council in an area proposed for the construction of community facilities. The work was carried out on the 14th of July 1994 according to a specification set by Oxfordshire County Archaeological Officer.

## LOCATION (see fig. 1)

The site is situated at the junction between Valence Crescent and Edington Road, Witney (NGR SP 3392 0995). The development site evaluated is approximately 0.6 hectare in size. The site is approximately 105m above Ordnance Datum (OD); the highest area was to the W and N, the ground slopes gently away to the E.

## GEOLOGY

The geology of the area consists of Oxford clay with overlying drift deposits of gravel and quartzite pebbles.

## ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND

In 1991 and 1992 The Cotswold Archaeological Trust undertook an evaluation and excavation in advance of housing development on the N side of Valence Crescent, between Deer Park Road and Edington Road. The 1991/1992 work, just NW of the proposed West Witney Community site, established the presence of a mid Iron Age settlement. The layout of the site included ditches, postholes, hut circles and daub as well as evidence for metal working. The pottery, although small, suggest a date in the latter part of the middle Iron Age, probably 3rd-1st century BC. The archaeological deposits were well preserved due to the later use as a Deer Park (G Walker 1991).

The surrounding area formed part of the Bishop of Winchester's medieval deer park, the 1279 Bampton Hundred Rolls mention that the Bishop of Winchester has a free park.... and there are references to Witney Park on Plot's map of 1677 (J Steane 1985). Until recently developed for housing by Bovis Homes Ltd, the site was farmland associated with nearby Park Farm.

## Bibliography

Graeme Walker 'Deer Park Road, Witney, Oxon, Archaeological Evaluation' Cotswold Archaeological Trust 1991

John Steane 'Witney Park Farm' *CBA 9 Newsletter* No. 15 1985

## STRATEGY

Four trenches were excavated with a JCB mechanical excavator using a toothless ditching bucket. Each trench measured 15m x 1.55m. Trench 1 was positioned parallel to Valence Crescent and Trenches 2, 3 and 4 were positioned within areas of proposed buildings.

The topsoil and overburden were removed by the JCB, down to the natural subsoil and spoil was monitored for finds. Any features were hand dug to establish their character, quality and date.

## SUMMARY

The only archaeological feature located was an undated E-W ditch, 406 in Trench 4. A shallow pit, 106, in Trench 1 was probably a geological anomaly. In all four trenches two earlier layers were encountered below the present topsoil. No finds were recovered from these layers.

## RESULTS (see fig. 2, and 3)

### Trench 1

Trench 1 was orientated approximately ENE-WSW at the N end of the site near to an existing area of tree planting and 25m from Valence Road.

The natural geological deposits were exposed at a depth of 0.48m below the present ground surface. There were small exposures of Oxford Clay but most of the trench was a mixture of sandy silt, gravel and sub-rounded quartzite pebbles.

A possible feature 106 was investigated which measured 0.95m in width and 0.09m in depth. Feature 106 had a roughly rounded shape in plan with a rounded bottom. No finds were recovered from the fill, 107, a pebbly orangey brown clay silt. Although regular in shape, the shallow profile and similarity of the fill to the natural subsoil, suggests this feature was a geological anomaly caused by periglacial disturbance.

The fill 107 was overlaid by layer 104 which consisted of a light brown clay silt with 20%-30% sub-rounded quartzite pebbles which varied in size from 0.02m to 0.10m. The junction between the bottom of this layer and the natural subsoil was often undulating and indistinct probably indicating the pebbles had been disturbed from the natural subsoil by cultivation. No finds were recovered from this layer to date the deposit.

Above layer 104 was a light brown clay silt, 103 which contained only the occasional quartzite pebble. The layer was well sorted with no sign of pebbles being brought up from the layer below (context 104). Although it lacked any indication of former humic content it probably indicates a stable soil typical of grassland. No finds were recovered from this layer to date the deposit.

Layer 103 was overlaid by the present topsoil layer 102.

The topsoil 102 was overlaid by spreads of clay and stone which was clearly of recent origin either being dumped during the construction of Edington and Valence Road or during the construction of the nearby Deer Park surgery. This dumping was not seen in the other three trenches.

### Trench 2

Trench 2 was orientated approximately NNW-SSE within an area of proposed retail units and car parking.

The natural geological deposits were exposed at a depth of 0.36m-0.40m below the present ground surface. The Oxford Clay was more extensive with fewer patches

of gravel and pebbles mixed into the clay. The sequence of layers within the section were similar to that seen in Trench 1 and almost certainly represent a continuation of these layers. The Oxford clay was overlaid by a pebbly clay silt, 202. Layer 202 was overlaid by layer 201 which was in turn overlaid by the present topsoil 200. A gravel filled land drain ran down slope to Edington Road but there were no archaeological features in the trench.

### Trench 3

Trench 3 was orientated approximately ENE-WSW within the area of the proposed Public House. The natural geological deposits were exposed at a depth of 0.43m below the present ground surface. The trench revealed a mix of patches of Oxford Clay and areas of clay silt with pebbles and gravel. The sequence of layers above this was similar to that seen in Trench 1. In addition two land drains were located. A stone filled land drain at the W end ran approximately E-W and then turned to run N-S. At the E side of the trench a vertical sided mole drain also ran E-W along the trench.

### Trench 4 (see fig. 3)

Trench 4 was orientated approximately NNW-SSE within the area of the proposed Play School. The natural geological deposits were 0.48m below the present ground surface. The trench revealed a mix of patches of Oxford Clay and areas of clay silt with pebbles and gravel. The sequence of layers above this were similar to that seen in Trench 1.

An E-W ditch, 406, was located at the N end of the trench; a 1.55m length was exposed and the ditch continued beyond the limits of the trench. The ditch showed clearly in plan and was cut into the natural clay silt. It measured 0.70m in width and 0.36m in depth. Ditch 406 had a V-shape profile with 45° sides and the fill, 405, consisted of a mid grey clay silt with the occasional quartzite pebble. The fill produced no finds and had a uniform appearance with no sign of any gradual accumulation of material within it. The ditch fill had no sign of charcoal or signs of any environmental potential.

The ditch 406 was overlaid by a yellowish brown clay silt, 403, which contained up to 25% pebbles. Layer 403 varied throughout the trench with variable amounts of pebbles, probably reflecting the underlying geology. Where it overlaid the ditch some pebbles appeared to be 'dragged' over the truncated ditch fill 405, but generally there were fewer pebbles directly over the ditch.

Layer 403 was overlaid by a dark yellowish brown clay silt, 402 which was in turn overlaid by the present topsoil 401.

## CONCLUSIONS

The only archaeological feature located was an undated ditch 406.

The geological deposits suggest more extensive areas of Oxford Clay down slope in the SE area of the site. Areas which contained more silt, gravel and pebbles appeared to be in the higher area to the N. This may indicate the limits of an area slightly more favourable to the dispersed settlement located to the N in 1991/1992 evaluation/excavation (Cotswold Archaeological Trust 1991).

The ditch although undated did not by its character suggest a recent date associated with an old field boundary. It was sealed by the earliest layer, so tentatively it could possibly have been a peripheral element of the mid Iron Age settlement.

OAU  
A Parkinson  
July 1994

APPENDIX 1: Table of Contexts

WEST WITNEY COMMUNITY SITE, WITNEY (WIWW 94)					
Context	Type	Depth (m)	Length (m)	Width (m)	Comments
<b>TRENCH 1</b>					
101	Layer	0.07-0.24			Recently dumped material
102	Layer	0.17-0.20			Topsoil
103	Layer	0.11-0.15			
104	Layer	0.10-0.15			
105	Layer	-			Natural undisturbed subsoil
106	Cut	0.09		0.95	Probably a natural feature
107	Fill	0.09			Fill of 106
<b>TRENCH 2</b>					
200	Layer	0.17-0.26			Present topsoil
201	Layer	0.11			
202	Layer	0.09			
203	Layer	-			Natural undisturbed subsoil
<b>TRENCH 3</b>					
300	Layer	0.22-0.24			Present topsoil
301	Layer	0.08-0.10			
302	Layer	0.10			
303	Layer	-			Natural undisturbed subsoil
304	Cut			0.40	Land drain
305	Fill				Fill of land drain
<b>TRENCH 4</b>					
401	Layer	0.24-0.28			Present topsoil
402	Layer	0.10-0.12			
403	Layer	0.10-0.14			
404	Layer	-			Natural undisturbed subsoil
405	Fill	0.36			Fill of 406
406	Cut	0.36		0.70	Ditch running approx. E-W



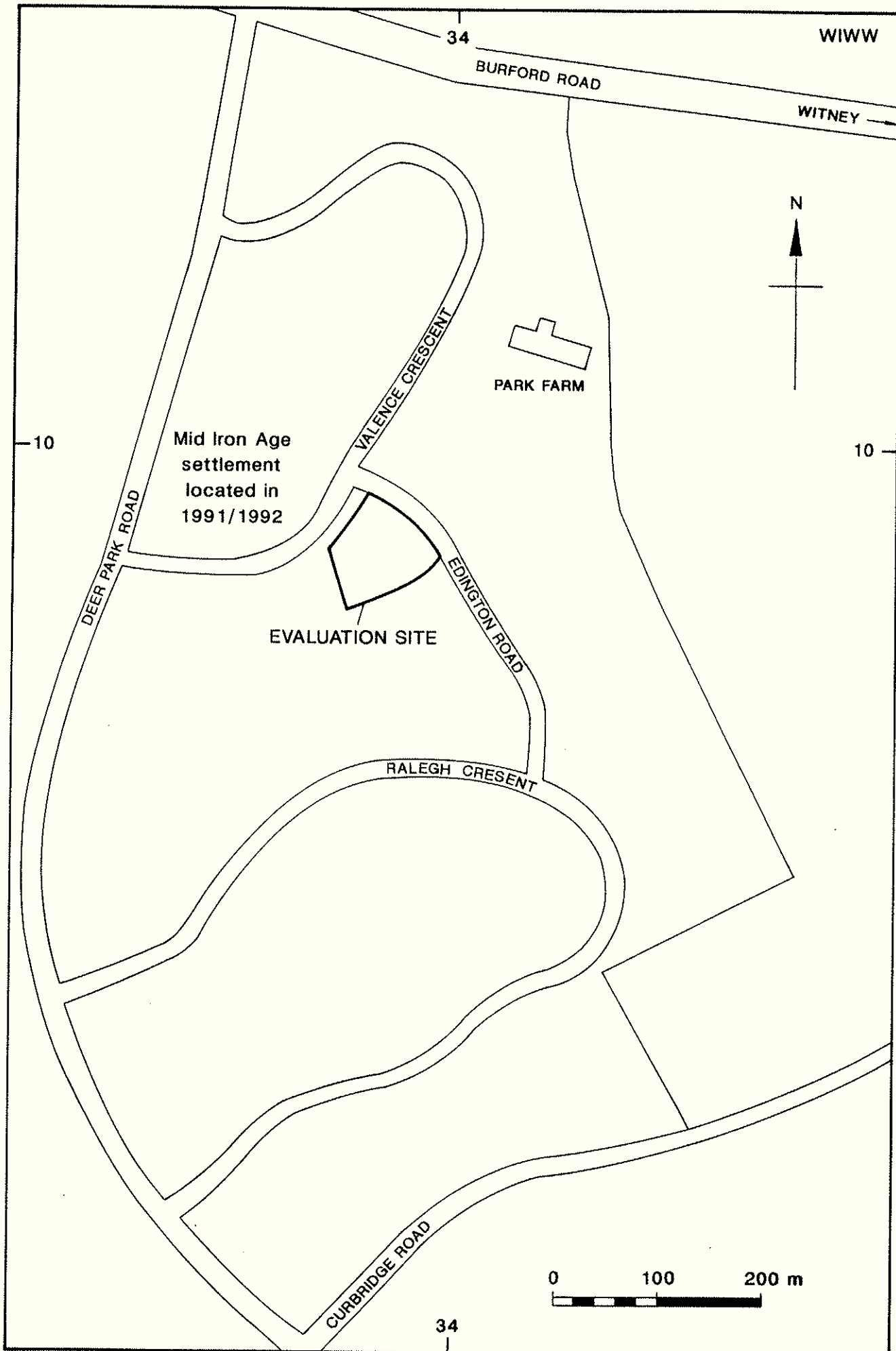


figure 1: Location of evaluation site

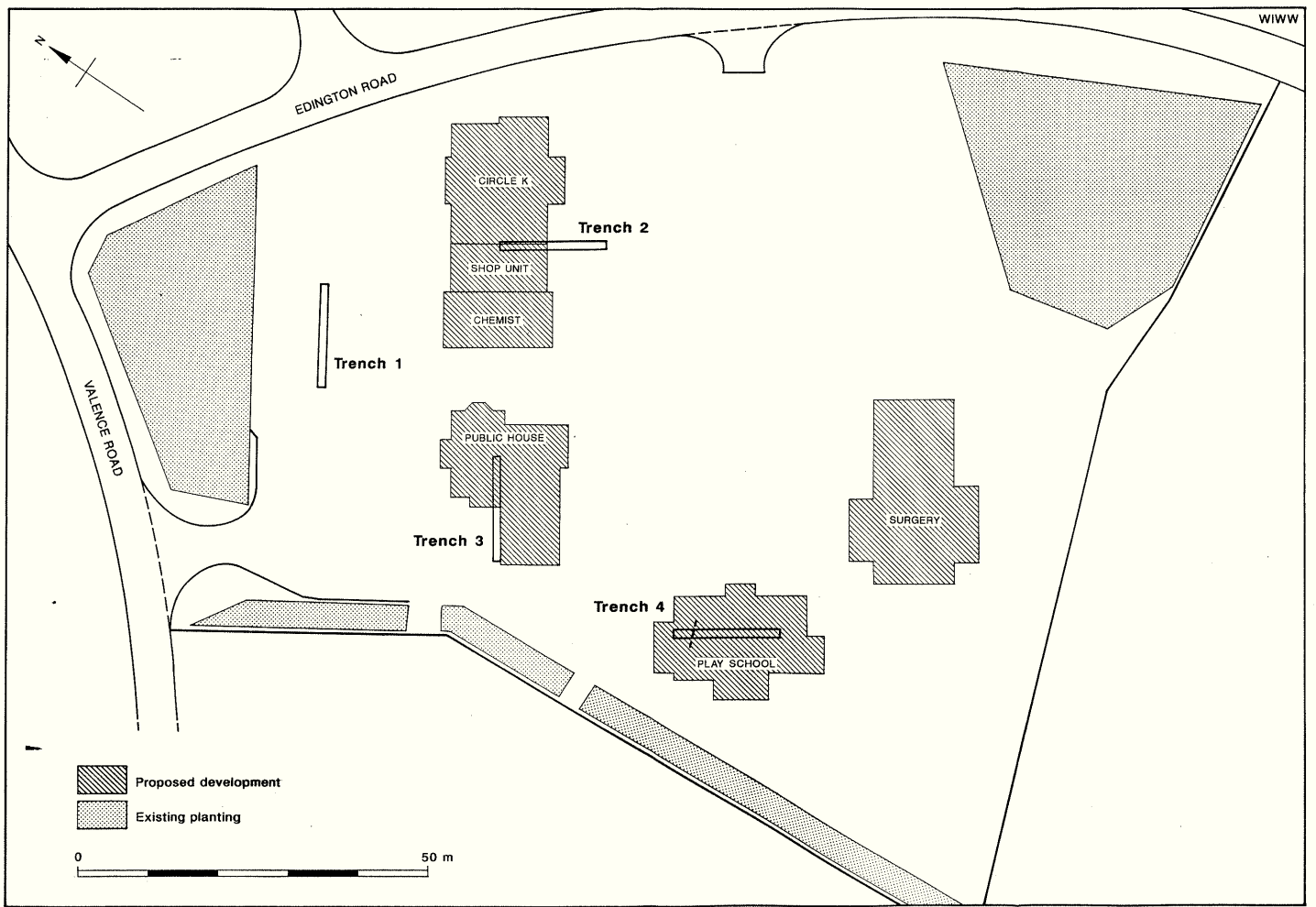


figure 2: Location of trenches in relation to proposed development

WIWW

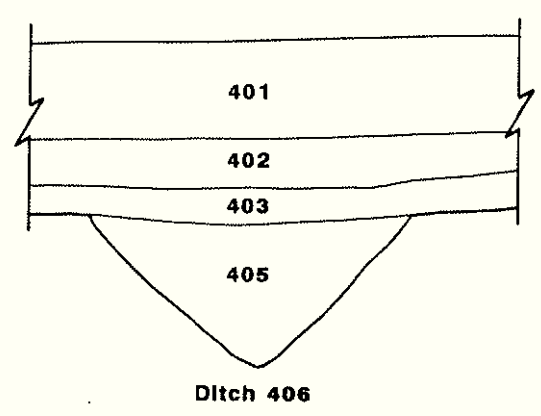
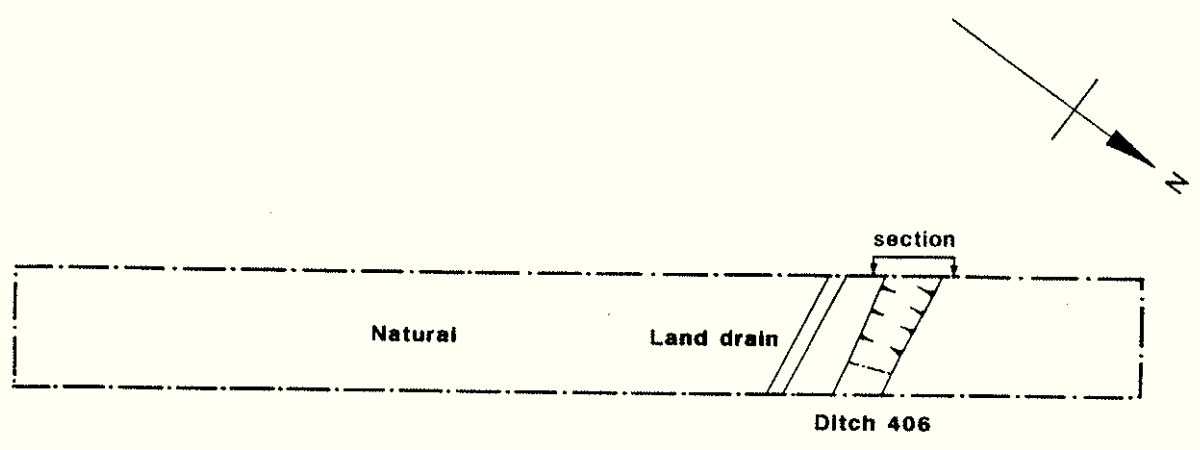


figure 3: Plan of trench 4 & section of ditch 406