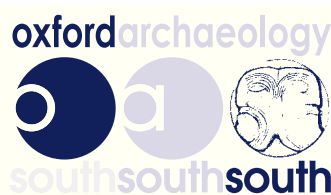


The Nurseries Main Street Duns Tew Oxfordshire



Archaeological Watching Brief Report



April 2012

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The Nurseries, Main Street, Duns Tew, Oxfordshire

Archaeological Watching Brief Report

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Summary

Between December 2011 and March 2012 Oxford Archaeology conducted an archaeological watching brief during the construction of nine new dwellings on a site known as the Nurseries, Main Street, Duns Tew, Oxfordshire (centred at NGR SP 4530 2836). The watching brief observed that the majority of the site had been subject to modern truncation. No evidence for medieval activity, such as truncated deposits or residual features suggesting that the deserted medieval village to the north extended into the area, was observed.

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Scope of work

- 1.1.1 Oxford Archaeology (OA) was commissioned by Stuart Wright of the PYE Homes Group to undertake an archaeological watching brief on the proposed site of nine new dwellings, including garages, access, landscaping and associated development on land known as “The Nurseries” (previously known as Longfield), Main Street, Dun Tews.
- 1.1.2 The work was undertaken as a condition of Planning Permission (planning ref: 10/01785/F). A brief was set by Richard Oram, the Planning Archaeologist for Oxfordshire County Council (OCAS 2011), detailing the Local Authority's requirements for work necessary to discharge the planning condition, OA produced a Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI) showing how it would meet these requirements (OA 2011).
- 1.1.3 All work will be undertaken in accordance with local and national planning policies (PPS5).

1.2 Location, geology and topography

- 1.2.1 The village of Duns Tew is situated approximately 20 km north of Oxford (Fig. 1). The site is located on level ground on the western edge of the village, on the southern side of Main Street (NGR: SP 4530 2836). The proposed development area lies at approximately 135 m above OD and the underlying geology is clay and limestone (Geological Survey of Great Britain, Sheet no. 217).
- 1.2.2 Prior to the start of development the site was a level open area composed mostly of crushed stone hardstanding with grassed landscaped margins. There were the truncated remnants of two concrete block and brick buildings on the eastern edge of the site.

1.3 Archaeological and historical background

- 1.3.1 The archaeological background contained within the brief (OCAS, 2011) states that: “The site is located immediately to the south and south-east of the site of possible medieval earthworks identified from aerial photographs (PRN 17171). These are possibly part of a deserted part of the medieval settlement. A watching brief carried out 100 m to the north-west of the site and adjacent to the medieval earthworks recorded an undated well (EOX 853), which could also suggest settlement areas further west than the current extent of the village. The site is also located 260 m north-east of a cropmarked sub-rectangular feature and linear features, identified from aerial photographs, which, as they are aligned parallel to the existing ridge and furrow, might relate to medieval field systems (PRN 16164).”



- 1.3.2 The site has also been subject to a desk-based assessment (DBA) carried out by OA (OA 2009). The results from this assessment are similar to those described above but also noted that an Anglo-Saxon brooch had been found within (or close by) the site, however there were no other recorded discoveries of this period from within the site or study area.

2 PROJECT AIMS AND METHODOLOGY

2.1 Aims

2.1.1 The general aims of the watching brief were to:

- (i) Preserve by record any archaeological deposits, structures or features encountered during the course of ground intrusions;
- (ii) Seek to establish the extent, nature and date of any archaeological deposits, structures or features encountered within the scope of the ground intrusion;
- (iii) To secure the analysis, conservation and long-term storage of any artefactual/ecofactual material recovered from the site;
- (iv) To disseminate results through the production of a unpublished client ('grey literature') report.

2.1.2 A specific aim of the watching brief was to determine if the deserted medieval village, evidence for which can be observed within the field on the opposite side of the Main Street, extended within the development area.

2.2 Methodology

2.2.1 The remit of the watching brief was to observe all works that may disturb or destroy below ground archaeological remains. These works included topsoil stripping, excavation of foundation and service trenching, access roads and landscaping. The watching brief was conducted as a site presence during the undertaking of any of the above works.

2.2.2 All spoil generated by the machine excavations was examined for the presence of archaeological artefacts.

2.2.3 All features and deposits were issued with unique context numbers, and context recording was in accordance with established OAS practices. Bulk finds were collected by context. Black-and-white negative photographs and a digital photographic record was taken of all excavations, general settings and archaeological sections.

2.2.4 A site plan showing the location of any excavations and any recorded sections was maintained (Fig. 2). Section drawings of features and sample sections of trenches were drawn at a scale of 1:20.

3 RESULTS

3.1 Description of deposits

3.1.1 The archaeological record was compiled by recording sample sections during the groundworks phase of the development. Each building plot was excavated separately and the archaeology recorded.

3.1.2 The stratigraphy observed will be described for each plot followed by an overall discussion and conclusion.

**Plot 1(Figs 2 and 3)**

- 3.1.3 This was located in the north-east corner of the site (Fig. 2). Before excavation the northern half of the plot contained the shallow foundations of a modern brick built building together with level crushed stone hardstanding with a thin layer of turf starting to encroach upon the stone. The remainder consisted of a level landscaped grassed area. The south-east corner of the plot had been disturbed by the burying of an underground oil storage tank which had been subsequently dug up and the hole backfilled with demolition rubble. A tarmac access road ran along the western edge of the plot.

Section 5

- 3.1.4 The natural yellow-brown clay (2) was encountered at a depth of 0.5 m below the current ground level. This was directly overlaid by a 0.3 m deep layer of modern crushed stone (4). A thin layer of topsoil and turf (9) had encroached upon the area since the nursery was disused.

Section 6

- 3.1.5 The natural clay, 2, was observed at a depth of 0.45 m below ground level in this area. Overlying it was a 0.25 m deep layer of clean reddish brown silty clay (10). The landscaping layer of topsoil and turf, a 0.2 m deep layer of dark yellow-brown clay loam (1) had been laid above this.

Sections 1, 7 and 9

- 3.1.6 A deeper strata of natural, an olive-grey clay (3), was observed at a depth of 0.9 m below ground level. Overlying this was the yellow-brown natural clay, 2, 0.6 m in depth. The landscaping layer 1 had been laid above that.

Section 8

- 3.1.7 This section intruded upon the existing access road. The deeper natural clay 3 was recorded at a depth of 1.1 m below road level. A 0.6 m deep continuation of layer 2 lay above it. The crushed stone hardstanding 4 had been laid to a depth of 0.35 m above 2. The tarmac access road had been laid upon the stone.

Plot 2 (Figs. 2, 4 and 5)

- 3.1.8 This was located in the south-east corner of the site and comprised level hardstanding.

Sections 16 and 17

- 3.1.9 The olive-grey clay (13), a probable continuation of layer 3, was recorded at a depth of between 0.5 m and 0.7 m below the current ground level. In the southern half of the plot (Section 17) this was overlaid by a 0.2 m deep layer of dark orange-brown silty clay (12). Both layer 12 and 13 were covered by a 0.4 m deep continuation of the crushed stone hardstanding 4.

Plot 3 (Figs. 2 and 5)

- 3.1.10 This plot was situated in the centre of the southern edge of the site.

Sections 18, 20 and 21

- 3.1.11 The underlying natural yellow brown clay (2) was exposed within the base of all three southern sections at an average depth of 0.6 m. Overlying this was a layer of dark grey-brown clayey loam containing fragments of stone and brick, 0.18m to 0.25m in depth



(6). In areas of sections 18 and 21 layer 6 was covered by a 0.55m deep continuation of the layer of crushed stone (4), elsewhere it was covered by a 0.4 m deep continuation of the 20th century mixed soil 16.

- 3.1.12 Along the southern edge of the plot the underlying geology changed to an olive-grey clay (3) (Section 19), otherwise the stratigraphy was similar to sections 20 and 21.

Plot 4 (Figs. 2 and 5)

- 3.1.13 This plot was located in the south-western corner of the site.

Sections 22 and 23

- 3.1.14 The underlying natural clay within this plot was a continuation of the yellow-brown clay (2) along the northern half of the plot (Section 22) changing to olive -grey clay (3) within the southern half (Section 23). In the northern half the natural clay was overlaid by a continuation of the dark grey-brown clay loam (16) containing fragments of crushed stone and modern brick and tile. A continuation of the crushed stone hardstanding (4) extended across the entire plot.

Plot 5 (Figs. 2 and 4)

- 3.1.15 This plot was sited on the western edge of the site and spanned the junction between the stone hardstanding and the grassed areas. Prior to excavation of the foundations a topsoil strip was undertaken along the grassed area removing approximately 0.15 m of topsoil and turf.

Sections 10, 11, 12, 13, 14 and 15

- 3.1.16 The natural clay (13) was observed at a depth of between 0.15 m and 0.4 m below the current ground level. This layer was exposed at the surface within the area of the topsoil strip (section 11)
- 3.1.17 In the centre of the plot (Section 10) the natural was overlaid by a 0.15 m deep layer of orange-brown silty clay (12). Within the southern edge of the plot (section 12) the natural was overlaid by a 0.4 m deep layer of modern disturbed material. In the north-west corner of the plot the natural had been cut by an irregular steeply sloping feature (14) greater than 1 m in depth which had been backfilled with a mix of redeposited material and modern demolition rubble (15). The feature possibly forming a modern soak-a-way pit.
- 3.1.18 The backfill 15 and layer 12 were covered by a 0.2 m deep layer of crushed stone (11), a probable continuation of layer 4.
- 3.1.19 Within the excavations for the garages the crushed stone hardstanding 4 was observed directly overlying the natural clay 13 (sections 14 and 15).

Plot 6

- 3.1.20 This was located in the north-west corner of the development area. The stratigraphy observed was similar to that recorded in Plot 5 and it was not recorded separately.

Plot 7 (Figs. 2 and 3)

- 3.1.21 This plot was sited in the centre of the northern edge of the development area and lay partially within the area of hardstanding.



Sections 2, 3 and 4

3.1.22 The yellow-brown natural clay 2 was exposed within the base of all the sections. On the western half of the plot this was directly overlain by the crushed stone hardstanding 4 (section 2). Within the south-west corner of the plot (section 4) the clay was overlain by a roughly circular area of reddish brown clay (8) approximately 6 m in diameter and 0.15 m deep. The discolouration of the deposit suggested that it might be associated with burning. Lying directly above this deposit was a 0.15 m deep layer of black gritty silty sand (7). Overlying this and layer 2 within section 3 was a 0.2 m deep layer of grey-brown clay loam (6) containing fragments of modern brick.

3.2 Finds

3.2.1 Large quantities of modern artefacts including numerous sherds of ceramic flower pots and modern frogged bricks were recovered during the course of the watching brief. These were evaluated on site but not retained. Sherds of 19th and 20th century pottery were recovered from layers 6 and 16. No dating evidence prior to the 19th century was encountered.

3.3 Environmental remains

3.3.1 Due to the recent nature of the deposits observed it was considered that no additional information would be obtained by palaeo-environmental sampling.

4 DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

4.1.1 The observations from the watching brief show that the development area had been subject to significant truncation in the past.

4.1.2 Observations within the sections show that modern (20th century) deposits such as the crushed stone hardstanding (4 and 11), the gravel pathway and other modern disturbances in most areas directly overlie the natural clay with no intervening soil horizons. This suggests that the area has been truncated and the material removed off site, after which the modern contexts were deposited presumably to support the weight of vehicles using the site. In the few areas where a buried soil horizon was observed above the natural clays it was of a post-medieval 20th century date.

4.1.3 A visual survey of the surrounding areas, especially the field on the opposite side of the road, showed that they displayed evidence for activity such as ridge and furrow and possible building mounds. The development area was almost level prior to work starting. These observations would also suggest that the area had been disturbed in the past.

4.1.4 No significant archaeological stratigraphy was observed during the course of the watching brief. Because of the extent of the truncation of the area it was impossible to determine if this was due to a lack of evidence or if the material had been removed.

4.1.5 This disturbance made it impossible to determine if the medieval deserted village extended into the development area either through stratigraphic evidence or by inference from residual finds.



APPENDIX A. ARCHAEOLOGICAL CONTEXT INVENTORY

Context	Type	Depth	Width	Length	Comments	Finds	Date
1	Layer	0.3 m	-	-	Topsoil and turf	Flowerpot	C20th
2	Layer	0.6 m	-	-	Natural clay	-	-
3	Layer	> 0.1 m	-	-	Natural clay	-	-
4	Layer	0.45 m	15 m	15 m	Modern hardstanding	-	C20th
5	Layer	0.15 m	10 m	15 m	Modern hardstanding	-	C20th
6	Layer	0.2 m	-	-	Buried soil horizon	Flowerpot	C20th
7	Lens	0.15 m	6 m	6 m	Burnt material	-	-
8	Layer	0.15 m	6 m	6 m	Burnt/baked natural clay	-	-
9	Layer	0.2 m	-	-	Topsoil and turf	-	-
10	Layer	0.25 m	-	-	Subsoil	-	-
11	Layer	0.25 m	10 m	10 m	Modern hardstanding	-	C20th
12	Layer	0.25 m	-	-	Natural ?	-	-
13	Layer	> 0.8 m	-	-	Natural clay, continuation of layer 3	-	-
14	Pit	> 0.8 m	> 2m	> 2 m	Modern feature, possible soak-away pit	-	C20th
15	Fill	> 0.8 m	> 2m	> 2 m	Fill of feature 14	Brick, concrete	C20th



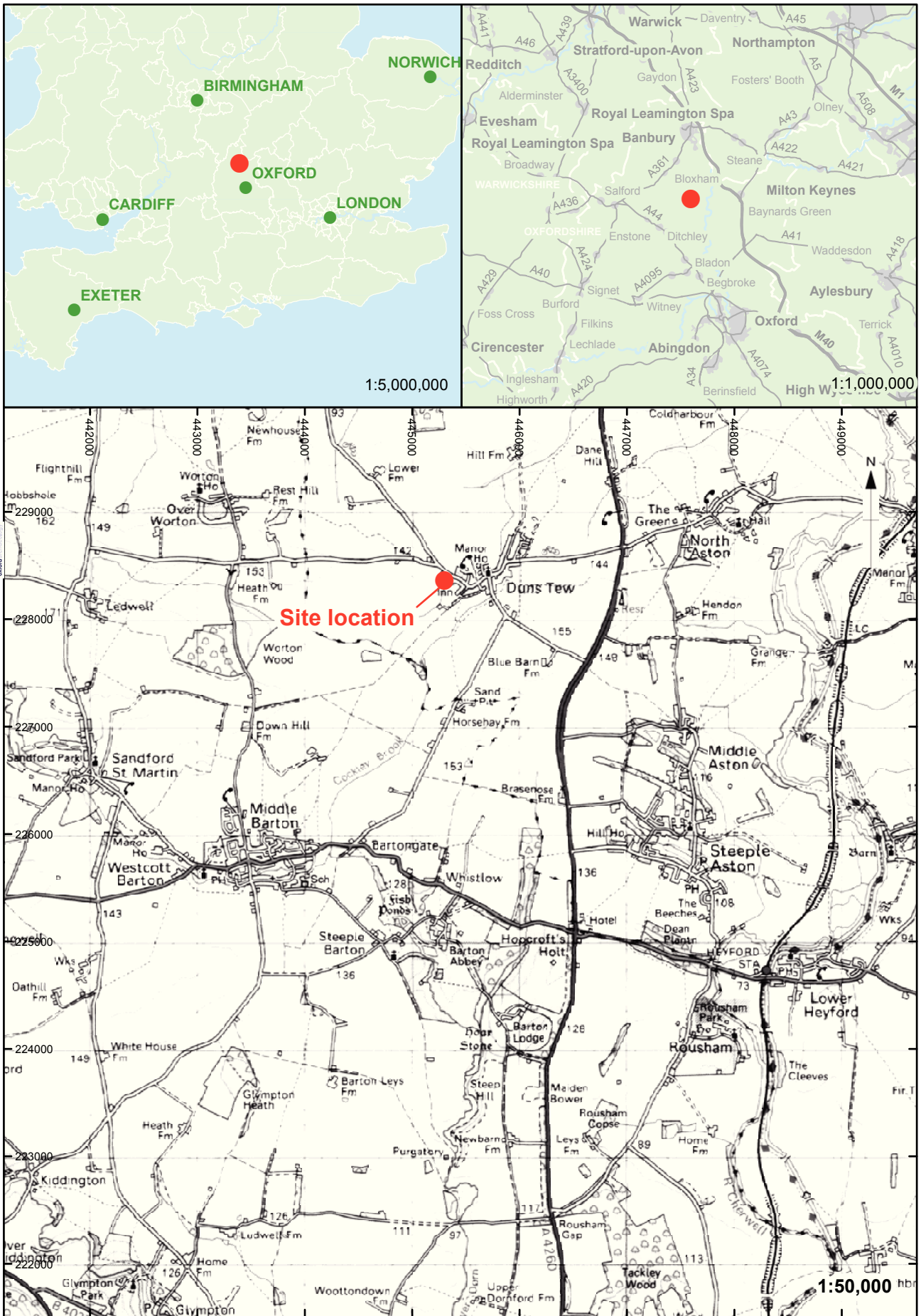
APPENDIX B. BIBLIOGRAPHY AND REFERENCES

- OA, 2009 Longfield, Duns Tew, Oxfordshire : Desk Based Assessment, Oxford Archaeology
- OA, 2011 Longfield, Duns Tew: Written Scheme of Investigation, Oxford Archaeology
- OCAS, 2011 Longfield, Duns Tew: Design Brief for an Archaeological Watching Brief, Oxfordshire County Archaeological Service



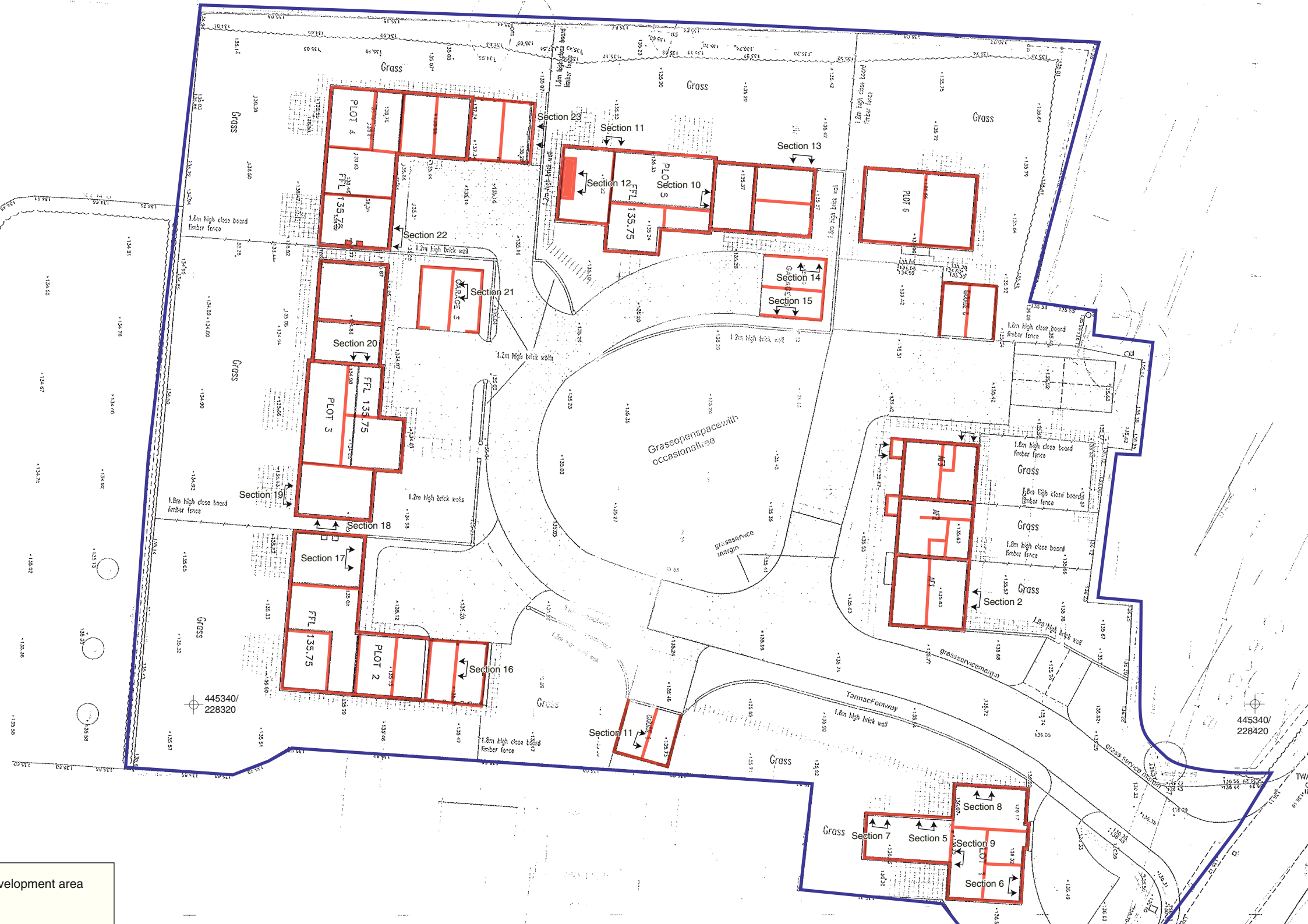
APPENDIX C. SUMMARY OF SITE DETAILS

Site name:	The Nurseries, Main Street, Duns Tew, Oxfordshire
Site code:	DTNM 11
Grid reference:	Centred at NGR SP 4530 2836
Type of watching brief:	Construction of 9 new dwellings. Work included the machine excavation of foundation and service trenches and landscaping.
Date and duration of project:	December 2011 to March 2012
Area of site:	Approximately 0.6 hectares
Summary of results:	The watching brief showed that the majority of the site had been truncated by modern activity, probably during its last use as a commercial plant nursery. No significant archaeological stratigraphy was observed during the course of the watching brief.
Location of archive:	The archive is currently located at Janus House and will be deposited with the Oxfordshire Museums Service under the accession number OXCMS:2011.197



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Figure 1: Site location



Development area

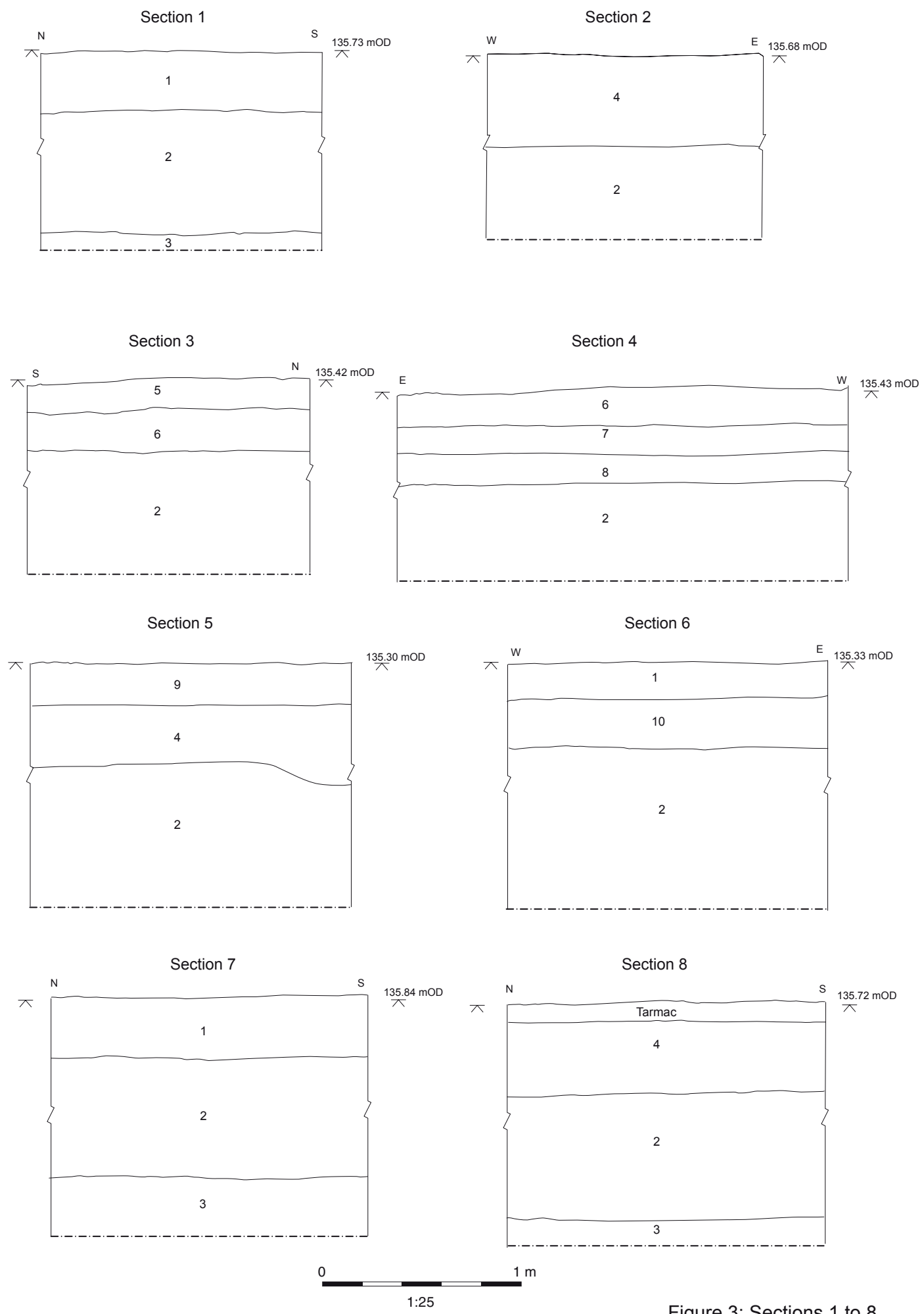


Figure 3: Sections 1 to 8

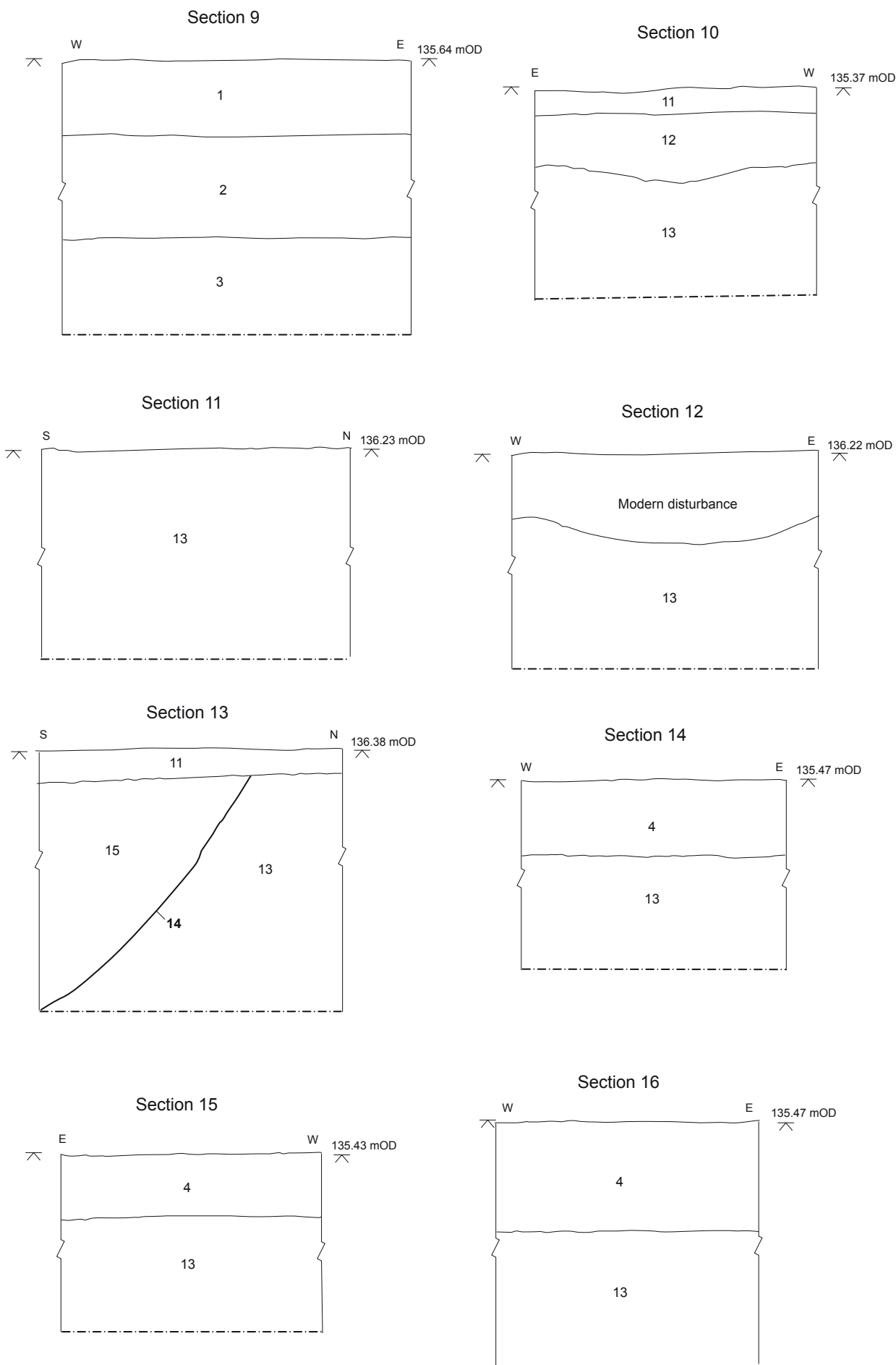
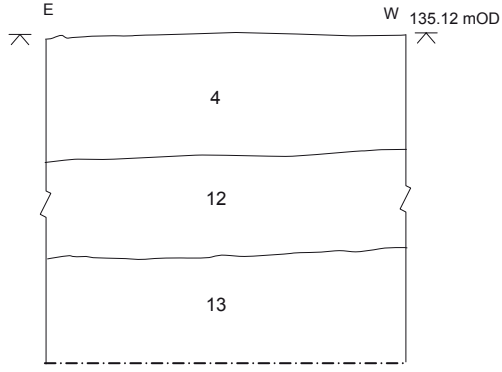


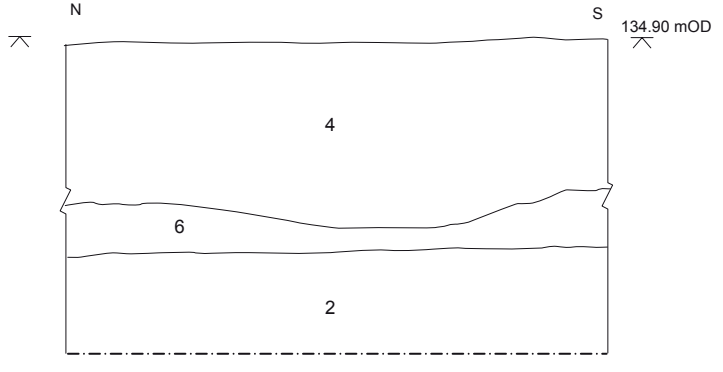
Figure 4: Sections 9 to 16



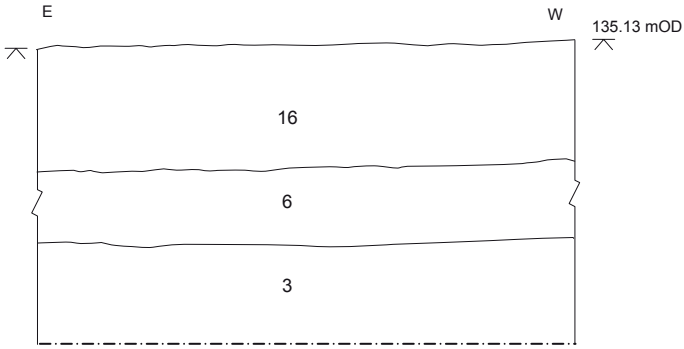
Section 17



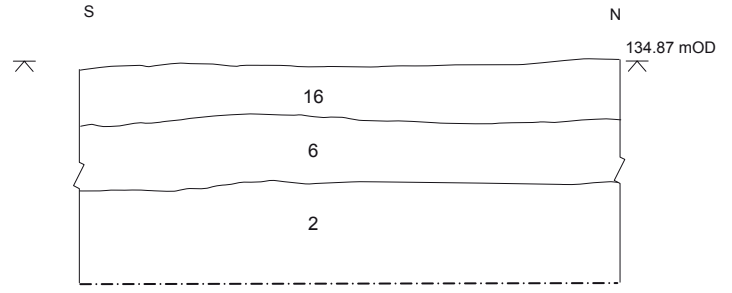
Section 18



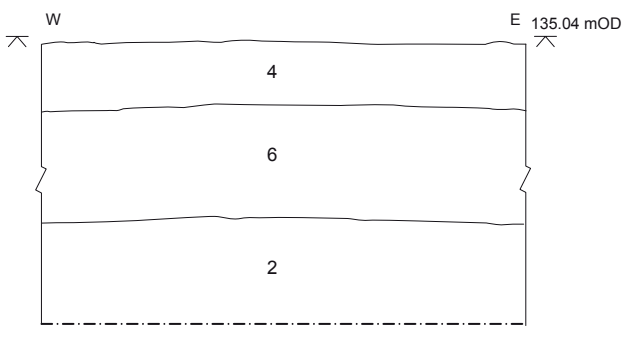
Section 19



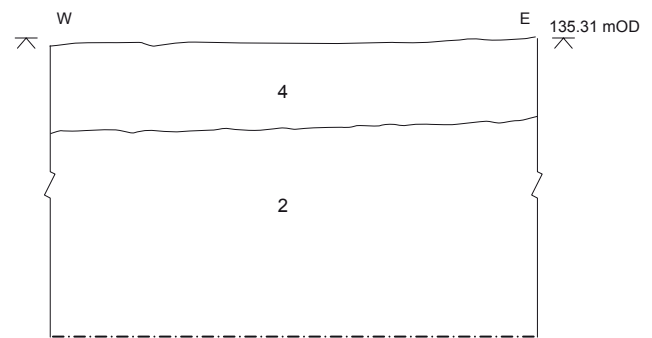
Section 20



Section 21



Section 22



Section 23

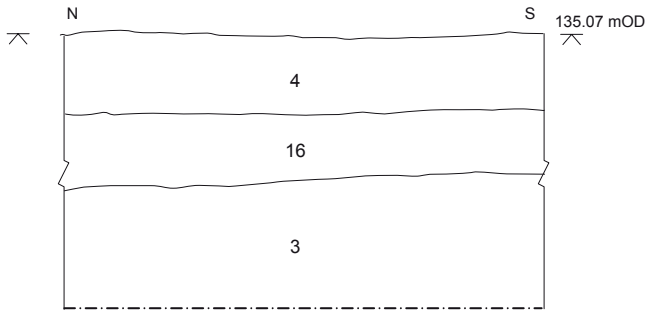


Figure 5: Sections 17 to 23



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