



# Land to rear of Cleeve Cottages, Icknield Road, Goring Archaeological Evaluation Report

December 2017

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## ***Land to rear of Cleeve Cottages, Icknield Road, Goring***

### ***Archaeological Evaluation Report***

*Written by Robert MacIntosh*

*With illustrations by Aiden Farnan and Magda Wachnik*

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## Summary

Oxford Archaeology (OA) was commissioned by Elegant Homes (Goring) Limited to undertake an archaeological evaluation at the site of a proposed housing development at land to the rear of Cleeve Cottages, Icknield Road, Goring, Oxfordshire (SU 6078 8157). The site sits towards the base of slope with hills rising to the west and north. The route of the *Icknield Way*, a Roman routeway with possible prehistoric origins, is thought to pass nearby to the Site.

Six trenches, positioned to cover the area of impact were excavated across the Site. A small number of possible archaeological features were observed and all were sample excavated, but did not yield any material culture, and it is entirely possible these had resulted from relatively recent bioturbation.

A SW-NE orientated 15m wide flinty loam-rich deposit was recorded overlying chalk-rich colluvium. This was investigated in a number of sondages, where it was consistently composed of a high density of flint nodules and gravel loosely packed within a reddish-brown silty matrix measuring between 0.2 – 0.4m thick, but with no evidence for any metaling, compaction, or wheel ruts on its' surface. Although this deposit is orientated parallel to the contours of the hill-slope to west and north (as would be expected of a routeway) it is probable that it was a result of a significant but localised colluvial event rather than representing a man-made surface.

Deposits of chalk-rich colluvium containing flint nodules extended below the flinty-gravel spread to a depth of c. 3m below ground level where chalk bedrock was encountered.



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## Acknowledgements

Oxford Archaeology would like to thank for commissioning this project. Thanks is also extended to Richard Oram who monitored the work on behalf of South Oxfordshire District Council / Oxford County Council for their advice and guidance.

The project was managed for Oxford Archaeology by Ben Ford MCIFA. The fieldwork was directed by Robert MacIntosh. Survey and digitizing was carried out by Aidan Farnan.

## 1 INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 Scope of work

- 1.1.1 Oxford Archaeology (OA) was commissioned by Elegant Homes (Goring) Limited to undertake an archaeological trial trench evaluation at the site of a proposed housing development at land to the rear of Cleeve Cottages, Icknield Road, Goring, Oxfordshire.
- 1.1.2 The work was undertaken in regard to Planning Ref. P16/S3001/O. A brief was set by Richard Oram and a Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI) was produced by OA detailing the Local Authority's requirements for work necessary to inform the planning process (OA, May 2017). This document outlines how OA implemented the specified requirements, and details the results of that work.

### 1.2 Location, topography and geology

- 1.2.1 The site lies on the northern edge of Goring, south-east of Icknield Road, immediately northeast of Goring Fire Station (SU 6078 8157). It lies at approximately 54.6m OD and the underlying geology is the Holywell Nodular Chalk Formation.
- 1.2.2 No superficial deposits are recorded on the BGS geology mapping site: (<http://mapapps.bgs.ac.uk/geologyofbritain/home.htm>), however the adjacent hillside to the north-east has resulted in substantial colluviation within the site.

### 1.3 Archaeological and historical background

- 1.3.1 The development site is located in an area of archaeological potential near to the supposed route of the *Icknield Way*. This route, whose precise course and position is unknown at this point, is thought to have been an important Roman, if not prehistoric, thoroughfare, which broadly runs in NE to SW direction along the Chiltern hills, following the Ridgeway.
- 1.3.2 The origin of the name is uncertain, with various theories as to its etymology (Thomas 1913). It does appear as one of the four principal routes traversing Britain in the Laws of Edward the Confessor, which purport to originate in the 11<sup>th</sup> century, but do not appear in written form until the 12<sup>th</sup> century: "*id est Watlingestrete, Fosse, Hykenildstrete, Erningstrete, quorum duo in longitudinem regni, alii uero in latitudinem distenduntur*". However, it differs from the other chief Roman roads in that instead of a straight definitive course across England it is made up of irregular tracks frequently altering in direction and doubtfully continuous (Karlslake 1926), and it is likely the Roman road follows the route of earlier prehistoric trackways.
- 1.3.3 No settlement evidence has been positively recorded along this section of the trackway. However, a number of findspots indicate prehistoric and Roman settlement in the vicinity. Neolithic and Bronze Age pottery has been recorded to the west of the site (PRN 2039) and a prehistoric flint tool has been recorded to the north of the proposed development (PRN 27656). Two cropmarks directly across the Thames from the site may represent Bronze Age round barrows (ADS – NMR\_NATINV-1315966). A

Roman coin has been recorded to the south east (PRN 26232) and a Roman glass bead was also recovered to the north west of the application site (BERK-793E02).

## **2 EVALUATION AIMS AND METHODOLOGY**

### **2.1 Aims**

2.1.1 The project aims and objectives were as follows:

- i. Determine the character of any remains present;
- ii. Ensure that deposits were removed (where appropriate and practicable) by proper controlled archaeological methods;
- iii. Determine or estimate the date range of any remains from artefacts or otherwise;
- iv. Determine the potential of the deposits for significant palaeo-ecological information.
- v. Investigate the potential for any evidence for the Icknield Way, a probably Roman routeway, perhaps with pre-historic origins

### **2.2 Methodology**

2.2.1 Mechanical excavation was undertaken using an appropriate machine using a toothless bucket and under direct supervision by an archaeologist, and taken to the archaeological horizon. Top soil and subsoil were separated into spoil heaps either side of the trench.

2.2.2 Trenches 1, 2, 5 and 6 all had to be moved slightly or shortened to fit within the available working area.

2.2.3 Potential features were hand excavated and recorded to establish their character.

2.2.4 A number of sondages were excavated through layers using a mechanical excavator and a toothless bucket to further the understanding of the deposit sequences.

2.2.5 A GPS was used to locate the positions of the trenches after they were excavated, to record the positions of features and deposits and to take levels.

2.2.6 After completion, all trenches were backfilled, with the top soil and subsoil being returned in the correct order.

## **3 RESULTS**

### **3.1 Introduction and presentation of results**

- 3.1.1 The results of the evaluation are presented below, and include a stratigraphic description of the trenches that contained archaeological remains. The full details of all trenches with dimensions and depths of all deposits can be found in Appendix A. Finds data and spot dates are tabulated in Appendix B.
- 3.1.2 Context numbers reflect the trench numbers unless otherwise stated e.g. pit 102 is a feature within Trench 1, while ditch 304 is a feature within Trench 3.

### **3.2 General soils and ground conditions**

- 3.2.1 There were two distinct soil sequences observed within the trenches. The natural geology of patchy chalky silt colluvium was present in all trenches, deep sondages (excavated by the geotechnical contractors during the archaeological fieldwork) revealed that below the colluvium solid chalk bedrock was present, at an average depth of between 2 - 3m below existing ground level. In the NW and SE of the site the chalky silt hill wash was overlain by a medium yellowish grey sandy silt subsoil, and over this a dark brownish grey sandy silt topsoil. However, running through the site from SW to NE was a deposit of flint nodules sitting in a depression in the chalky silt hill wash, in some places with visible banding, it averaged 0.3m in depth. Over this spread of flint nodules was the same subsoil and topsoil seen elsewhere on the site.
- 3.2.2 Ground conditions throughout the evaluation were generally good, and the trenches remained dry throughout. Archaeological features, where present, were easy to identify against the underlying natural geology.

### **3.3 General distribution of archaeological deposits**

- 3.3.1 Features of possible archaeological origin were present in Trenches 1, 2 and 3. In Trenches 2 and 3 the possible features excavated were cut through the chalky silt hill wash, in Trench 1 the excavated feature was cut through a flint gravel deposit. The flint-rich deposit, which ran in a broadly SW-NE direction, measured c 15m wide, and at least 60m long and was observed in Trenches 1, 2, 4, 5 and 6. Its northern edge was seen in Trenches 1 and 2, and its southern edge in Trench 6 – to both north and south of this were deposits of chalk-rich colluvium. Within Trenches 4 and 6 the flint deposit covered the entire extent of the trenches, and sondages were excavated through it to the depth of the underlying chalk-rich colluvium below.

### **3.4 Trench 1 (Figs 2, 3, 5 and Plates 1 and 2)**

- 3.4.1 Trench 1 was 20m long and orientated NE-SW, it had to be moved slightly from its original location due to the presence of a large pre-existing spoil heap. The majority of the base of the trench comprised large flint gravel / flint nodules loosely packed within a reddish-brown silty-loam matrix, on average 0.6m from the surface. The northern limit of the flint deposit was present in the north-western half of the trench. One pit [104] was cut into the top of the flint gravel. Pit 104 was 0.9m in diameter and sub-circular in shape. It has steep sloping sides and a level base, it was 0.3m in depth. Its

single fill (105) was a dark brown silty gravel, with flint inclusions. No archaeological artefacts, or soil samples were recovered.

### **3.5 Trench 2 (Figs 2, 4, 5)**

3.5.1 Trench 2 was 18m long and orientated NW-SE, it had to be moved and shortened due to ecological fencing. The north-west end of the trench was on average 0.4m in depth and bottomed on chalky silt colluvium, the south-east end of the trench was on average 0.7m in depth and bottomed on the flint deposit. The north-west limit of the flint deposit was present in the middle of the trench and lined up with the edge of the same deposit exposed in Trench 1. A ditch [204] was located in the north-western end of the trench running on a E-W alignment. Ditch [204] was 1.2m in width at its widest point and 0.2m in depth, it had a near vertical sloping south-eastern edge, a stepped north-western edge and a flat base. Its single fill (205) was a friable light grey chalky silt with flint inclusions. No archaeological artefacts, or soil samples were recovered.

### **3.6 Trench 3 (Figs 2, 4, 5 and Plates 3 and 4)**

3.6.1 Trench 3 was 20m long and orientated NE-SW. The trench was on average 0.69m in depth and bottomed onto a chalk-rich silt colluvium throughout its entire length. It contained two possible archaeological features. A possible pit [304] and a short linear [308]. [304] was 1.8m in diameter and sub-ovoid in shape with moderately sloping sides and a concave base and 0.36m deep. Its single fill (305) was a friable greyish brown silty clay with flint and chalk fragment inclusions. Linear [308] was orientated NE-SW, and measured 2.6m in length, 0.8m in width with an undulating base varying to a maximum depth of 0.34m. It had a wide V-like profile and a single fill was a friable light greyish brown silt with frequent chalk and flint inclusions, but no archaeological artefacts.

### **3.7 Trench 4 (Figs 2, 4, 5 and Plates 5 and 6)**

3.7.1 Trench 4 was 20m long and orientated NE-SW. The trench was on average 0.82m in depth and bottomed onto flint gravel. No features were present in this trench. Sondages excavated through the flint deposit revealed loosely packed nodules and gravel within a reddish-brown silty-loam matrix and 0.48m deep.

### **3.8 Trench 5 (Figs 2, 3, 5)**

3.8.1 Trench 5 was 20m long, orientated NE-SW, and was moved slightly to accommodate the altered positions of the other trenches. The trench was on average 0.8m deep and came down onto a deposit of flint gravel / flint nodules loosely packed within a reddish-brown silty-loam matrix. A sondage through the gravel revealed it was 0.2m in depth. No features were present in this trench.

### **3.9 Trench 6 (Figs 2 and 3)**

3.9.1 Trench 6 was 12m long and orientated NW-SE, it had to be both moved and shortened to leave space for machine access. It was on average 0.8m deep and largely came down onto chalky silt hill wash. The southern edge of the flint gravel was visible in the northern end of the trench. No archaeological features were present.

### **3.10 Finds and environmental summary**

- 3.10.1 No finds were recovered during the evaluation, from either visual scanning of the spoil heaps or as a result of hand-excavation.
- 3.10.2 No soil samples were taken during the evaluation.

## 4 DISCUSSION

### 4.1 Reliability of field investigation

- 4.1.1 The evaluation trenching was distributed evenly within the Site boundary across the area that will be impacted by the proposed development. The geology was well understood with chalk bedrock observed at 2-3m below ground level (within the geotechnical holes), which was overlain by colluvial deposits deriving from the hillslopes to the north and west.
- 4.1.2 A large spread of gravel was fully investigated both in plan and in section (with a series of sondages), this was interpreted as a colluvial phenomenon. An archaeological horizon was identified near to the top of the colluvial sequence and each of the handful of cut features was hand-excavated, but no finds were recovered. It is possible these features were a product of animal or plant root activity.
- 4.1.3 The work was conducted in good light and in good weather and can be considered to be very reliable.

### 4.2 Evaluation objectives and results

- 4.2.1 The evaluation did not encounter any remains of the Icknield Way or any other significant archaeological features. A number of undated possible archaeological features were encountered at a clear horizon near to the top of the colluvial sequence.

### 4.3 Interpretation

- 4.3.1 A number of possible archaeological features were hand excavated, but they did not yield any material culture, and it is entirely possible these resulted from relatively recent bioturbation. The SW-NE wide flint-rich deposit seen to overly chalk-rich colluvium was investigated in a number of sondages, where it was consistently recorded as comprising a high density of flint nodules and gravel loosely packed within a reddish-brown silty matrix, with no evidence for any metallurgy, compaction, or wheel ruts. It is probable that it was deposited as part of a colluvial event rather than representing a man-made surface.

### 4.4 Significance

- 4.4.1 No visible previous truncation was identified within the evaluation trenches at the Site, therefore it can be suggested with reasonable confidence that the lack of any datable archaeological features suggests there is probably no significant archaeology at the Site.
- 4.4.2 The lack of any evidence for a formal road surface that may equate to the *Icknield Way* would suggest that this routeway follows a course outside of the Site limits.



## APPENDIX A TRENCH DESCRIPTIONS AND CONTEXT INVENTORY

Trench 1						
General description					Orientation	N-S
Trench revealed the boundary between chalky hill wash (102) and flint gravel (103) in a line running NE-SW, 102 continuing onwards beneath the gravelly flint. One pit was cut into the flint gravel (103).					Length (m)	20
					Width (m)	2
					Avg. depth (m)	0.60
Context No.	Type	Width (m)	Depth (m)	Description	Findings	Date
100	Layer	-	0.1	Topsoil, dark brownish grey sandy silt, with small stone inclusions	-	-
101	Layer	-	0.5	Subsoil, medium yellowish grey sandy silt with occasional chalk and flint inclusions	-	-
102	Layer	-	-	Chalk and silt hill wash	-	-
103	Layer	-	-	Flint gravel, in a matrix of brownish grey sandy silt	-	-
104	Cut	0.9	0.3	Steep sloping sides and a flat base	-	-
105	Fill	0.9	0.3	Fill of 104, dark brown silty flint gravel.	-	-

Trench 2						
General description					Orientation	NW-SE
Trench contained the boundary between chalky hill wash (203) and flint gravel (202), as seen in trench 1. One ditch was cut into the chalky hill wash (203).					Length (m)	18
					Width (m)	2
					Avg. depth (m)	0.4-0.7
Context No.	Type	Width (m)	Depth (m)	Description	Findings	Date
200	Layer	-	0.1	Topsoil, dark brownish grey sandy silt, with small stones	-	-
201	Layer	-	0.6	Subsoil, medium yellowish grey sandy silt with occasional chalk and flint inclusions.	-	-
202	Layer	-	-	Flint gravel in a matrix of brownish grey sandy silt.	-	-
203	Layer	-	-	Chalky silt hill wash, some flint nodule inclusions.	-	-
204	Cut	1.2	0.3	Cut of small ditch, with steep SE edge and stepped NW edge. Level base.	-	-
205	Fill	1.2	0.3	Fill of 204, a friable light grey chalky silt, with flint inclusions.	-	-

Trench 3						
General description					Orientation	NE-SW
Trench contained two features. A pit and a ditch. Neither contained finds.					Length (m)	20
					Width (m)	2
					Avg. depth (m)	0.69
Context No.	Type	Width (m)	Depth (m)	Description	Finds	Date
300	Layer	-	0.14	Topsoil, friable medium brownish grey silty clay	-	-
301	Layer	-	0.31	Subsoil, firm medium greyish brown silty clay, with chalk flecks	-	-
302	Layer	-	0.24	Firm, medium greyish brown silty clay with chalk inclusions	-	-
303	Layer	-	0.26	Friable, light brownish grey silty clay with flint gravel inclusions	-	-
304	Cut	1.8	0.36	Cut of pit, moderately sloping sides and a shallow concave base	-	-
305	Fill	1.8	0.36	Fill of 304, a friable medium brownish grey, silty clay with gravel inclusions	-	-
306	Layer	-	-	Chalky silt hill wash	-	-
307	Fill	0.8	0.34	Fill of 308, firm light greyish brown silt with chalk and flint inclusions	-	-
308	Cut	0.8	0.34	Cut of ditch, with steep straight sides and an irregular base	-	-

Trench 4						
General description					Orientation	NE-SW
Trench machined down to the top of flint gravel deposit 403. Two sondages excavated through the flint gravel down to the chalky silt layer (404) beneath. No features were present.					Length (m)	20
					Width (m)	2
					Avg. depth (m)	0.82
Context No.	Type	Width (m)	Depth (m)	Description	Finds	Date
400	Layer	-	0.13	Topsoil, friable light brownish grey silty clay	-	-
401	Layer	-	0.34	Subsoil, firm light greyish brown silty clay with some chalky flecks	-	-
402	Layer	-	0.35	Firm, light greyish brown silty clay with both stone and chalk inclusions	-	-

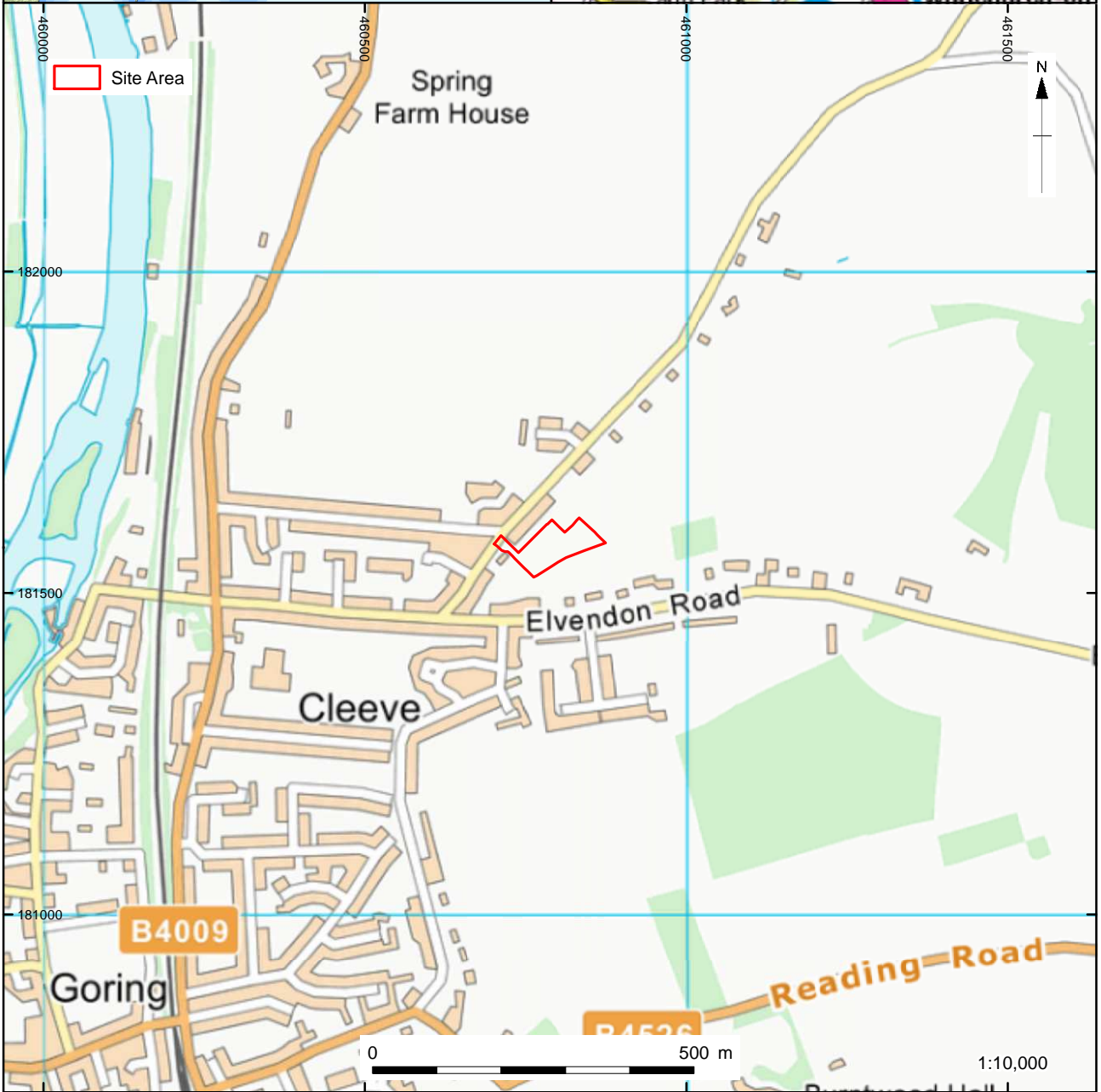
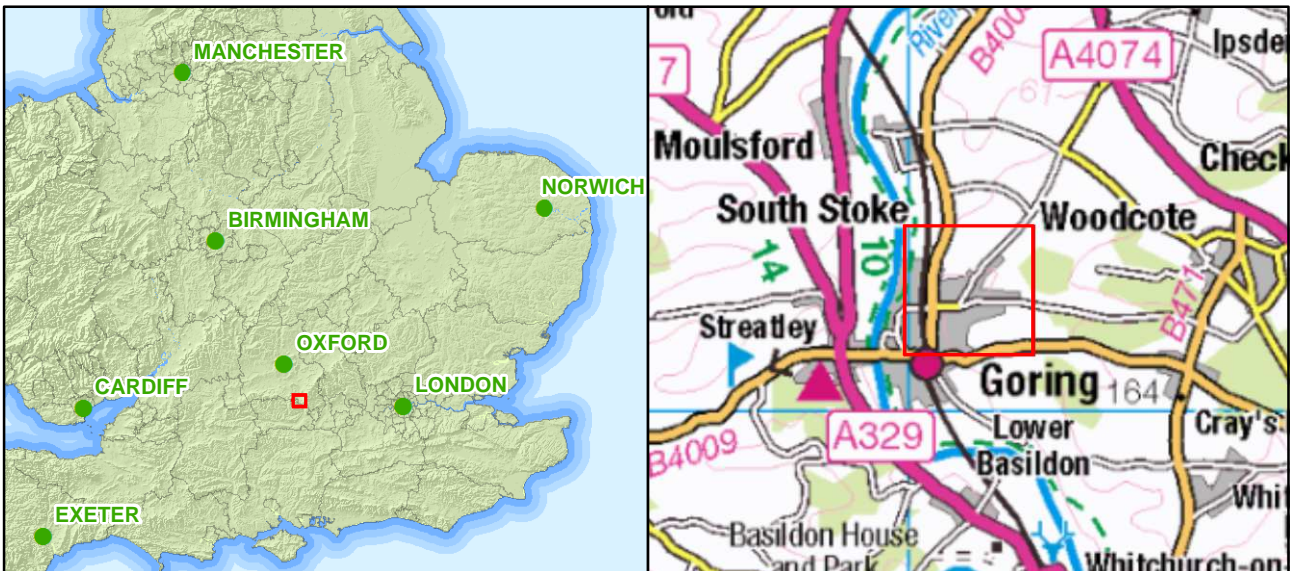
403	Layer	-	0.48	Flint gravel in a matrix of greyish brown silt	-	-
404	Layer	-	-	Chalky silt hill wash	-	-

Trench 5						
General description					Orientation	NE-SW
Trench machined down to the top of flint gravel deposit 503. One sondage was excavated through the flint gravel down to the chalky silt layer (504) beneath. No features were present.					Length (m)	20
					Width (m)	2
					Avg. depth (m)	1
Context No.	Type	Width (m)	Depth (m)	Description	Finds	Date
500	Layer	-	0.2	Topsoil, dark brownish grey sandy silt	-	-
501	Layer	-	0.2	Subsoil, yellowish brown sandy silt with occasional white chalk flecks	-	-
502	Layer	-	0.2	Yellowish grey sandy silt with white chalk inclusions	-	-
503	Layer	-	0.2	Flint gravel in a matrix of brownish grey sandy silt	-	-
504	Layer	-	-	Chalky silt hill wash	-	-
505	Layer	-	0.2	Flint gravel in a matrix of brownish grey sandy silt	-	-

Trench 6						
General description					Orientation	E-W
Trench revealed the boundary between chalky hill wash (603) and flint gravel (604) in a line running NE-SW, 603 continuing onwards beneath the gravelly flint. There were no archaeological features.					Length (m)	12
					Width (m)	2
					Avg. depth (m)	0.8
Context No.	Type	Width (m)	Depth (m)	Description	Finds	Date
600	Layer	-	0.2	Topsoil, Greyish brown sandy silt	-	-
601	Layer	-	0.4	Subsoil, Brown sandy silt with occasional stone inclusions	-	-
602	Layer	-	0.2	Flint gravel in a matrix of dark brownish grey silty sand	-	-
603	Layer	-	-	Chalky silt hill wash	-	-
604	Layer	-	-	Flint gravel, in a matrix of dark brownish grey silty sand	-	-

**APPENDIX C****SITE SUMMARY DETAILS**

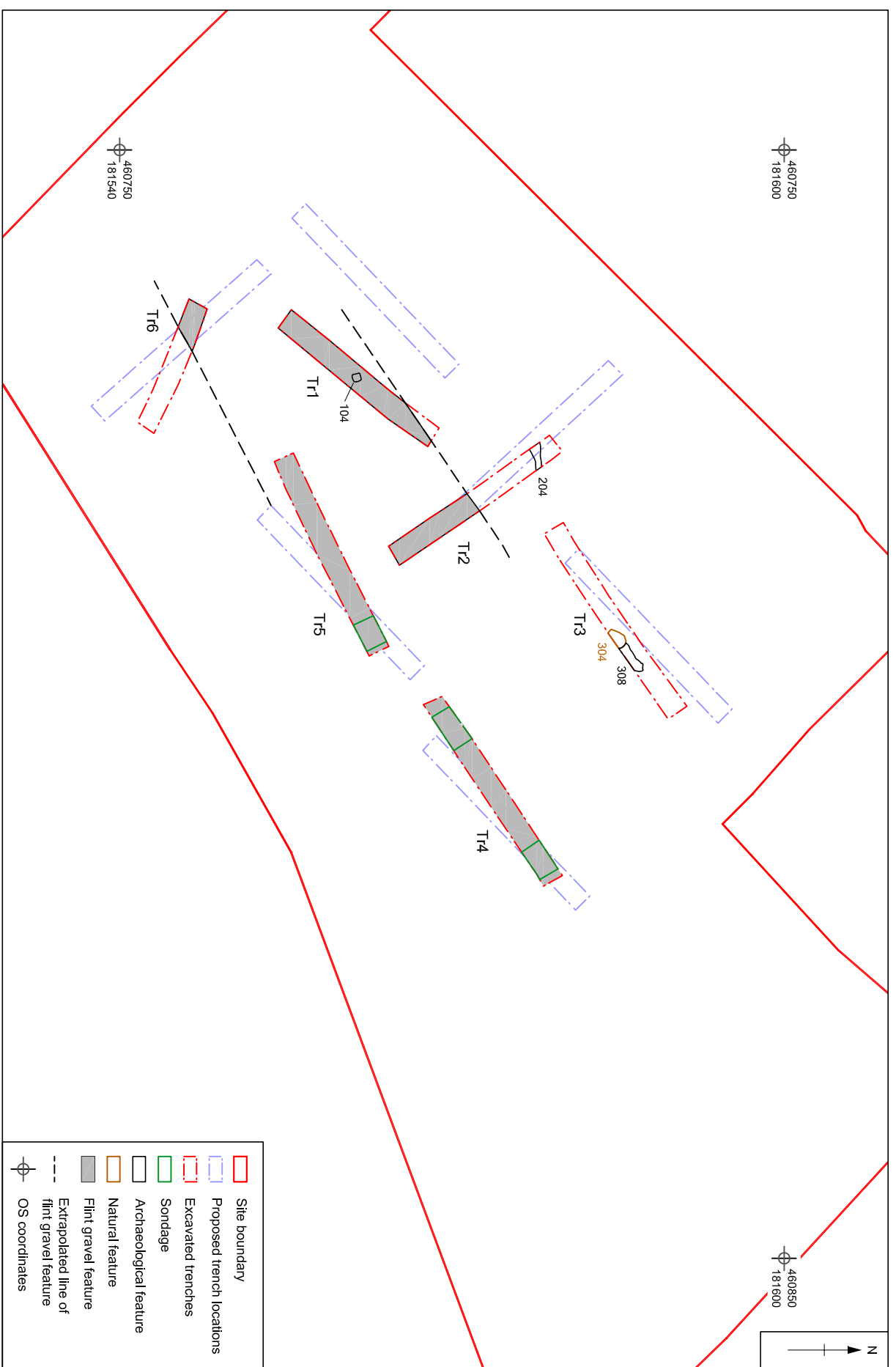
<b>Site name:</b>	Land to rear of Cleeve Cottages, Icknield Road, Goring
<b>Site code:</b>	GOIR17
<b>Grid Reference</b>	SU 6078 8157
<b>Type:</b>	Evaluation
<b>Date and duration:</b>	September 2017, 1 week
<b>Area of Site</b>	c. 0.3 ha
<b>Location of archive:</b>	The archive is currently held at OA, Janus House, Osney Mead, Oxford, OX2 0ES, and will be deposited with Oxfordshire Museums Service in due course, under the following accession number: OXCMS : 2017.87
<b>Summary of Results:</b>	<p>Oxford Archaeology (OA) was commissioned by Elegant Homes (Goring) Limited to undertake an archaeological evaluation at the site of a proposed housing development at land to the rear of Cleeve Cottages, Icknield Road, Goring, Oxfordshire (SU 6078 8157). The site sits towards the base of slope with hills rising to the west and north. The route of the <i>Icknield Way</i>, a Roman routeway with possible prehistoric origins is thought to pass nearby to the Site.</p> <p>Six trenches, positioned to cover the area of impact were excavated across the Site. A small number of possible archaeological features were observed and all were sample excavated, but did not yield any material culture, and it is entirely possible these had resulted from relatively recent bioturbation.</p> <p>A SW-NE orientated 15m wide flinty loam-rich deposit was recorded overlying chalk-rich colluvium. This was investigated in a number of sondages, where it was consistently composed of a high density of flint nodules and gravel loosely packed within a reddish-brown silty matrix measuring between 0.2 – 0.4m thick, but with no evidence for any metaling, compaction, or wheel ruts on its' surface. Although this deposit is orientated parallel to the contours of the hill-slope to west and north (as would be expected of a routeway) it is probable that it was a result of a significant but localised colluvial event rather than representing a man-made surface.</p> <p>Deposits of chalk-rich colluvium containing flint nodules extended below the flinty-gravel spread to a depth of c 3m below ground level where chalk bedrock was encountered.</p>



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Figure 1: Site location

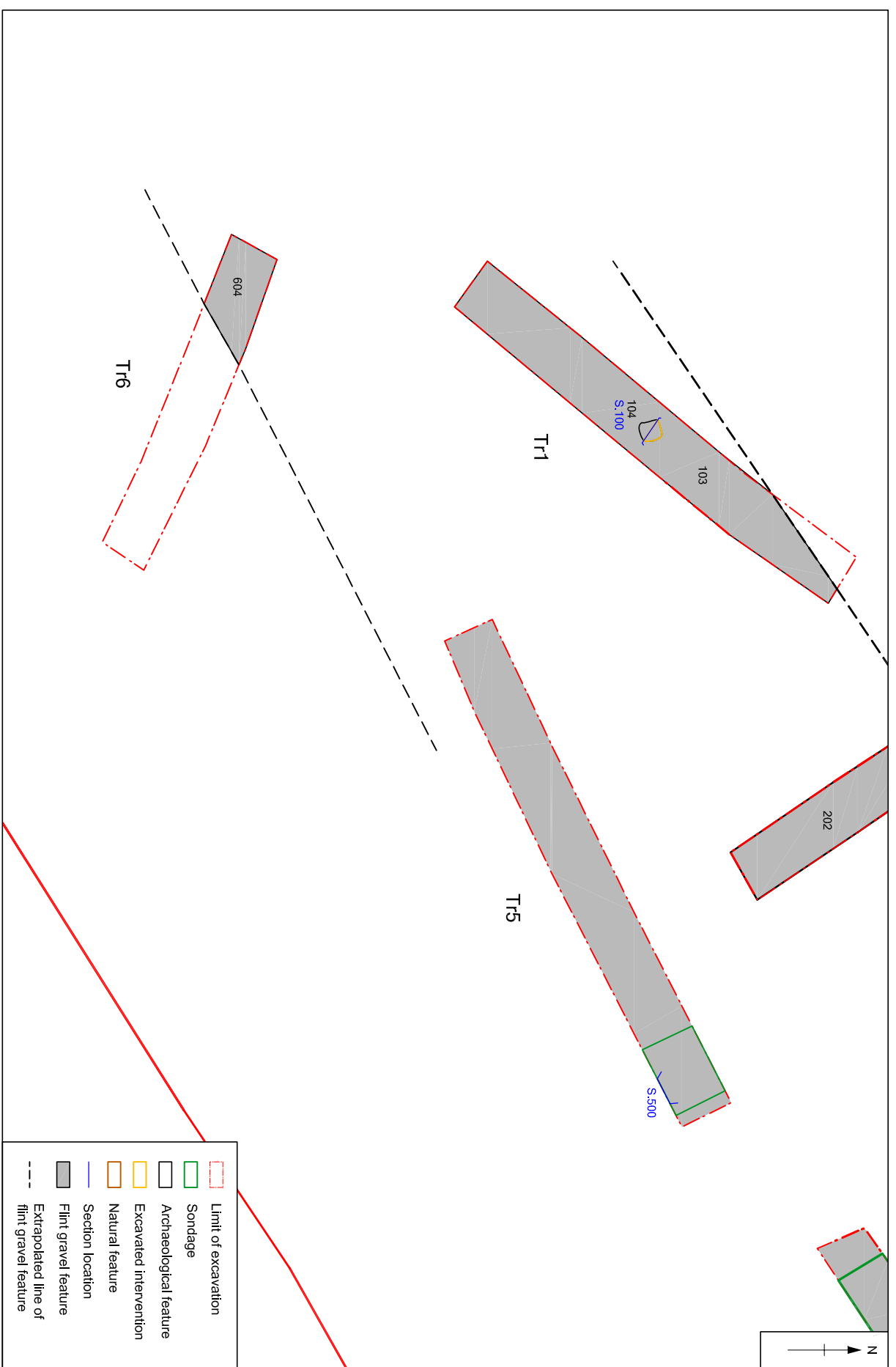


	Site boundary
	Proposed trench locations
	Excavated trenches
	Sondage
	Archaeological feature
	Natural feature
	Flint gravel feature
	Extrapolated line of flint gravel feature
	OS coordinates

Figure 2. Trench location map

Survey Data supplied by :  
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Figure 3. Trenches 1, 5, and 6

Survey Data supplied by :  
OA

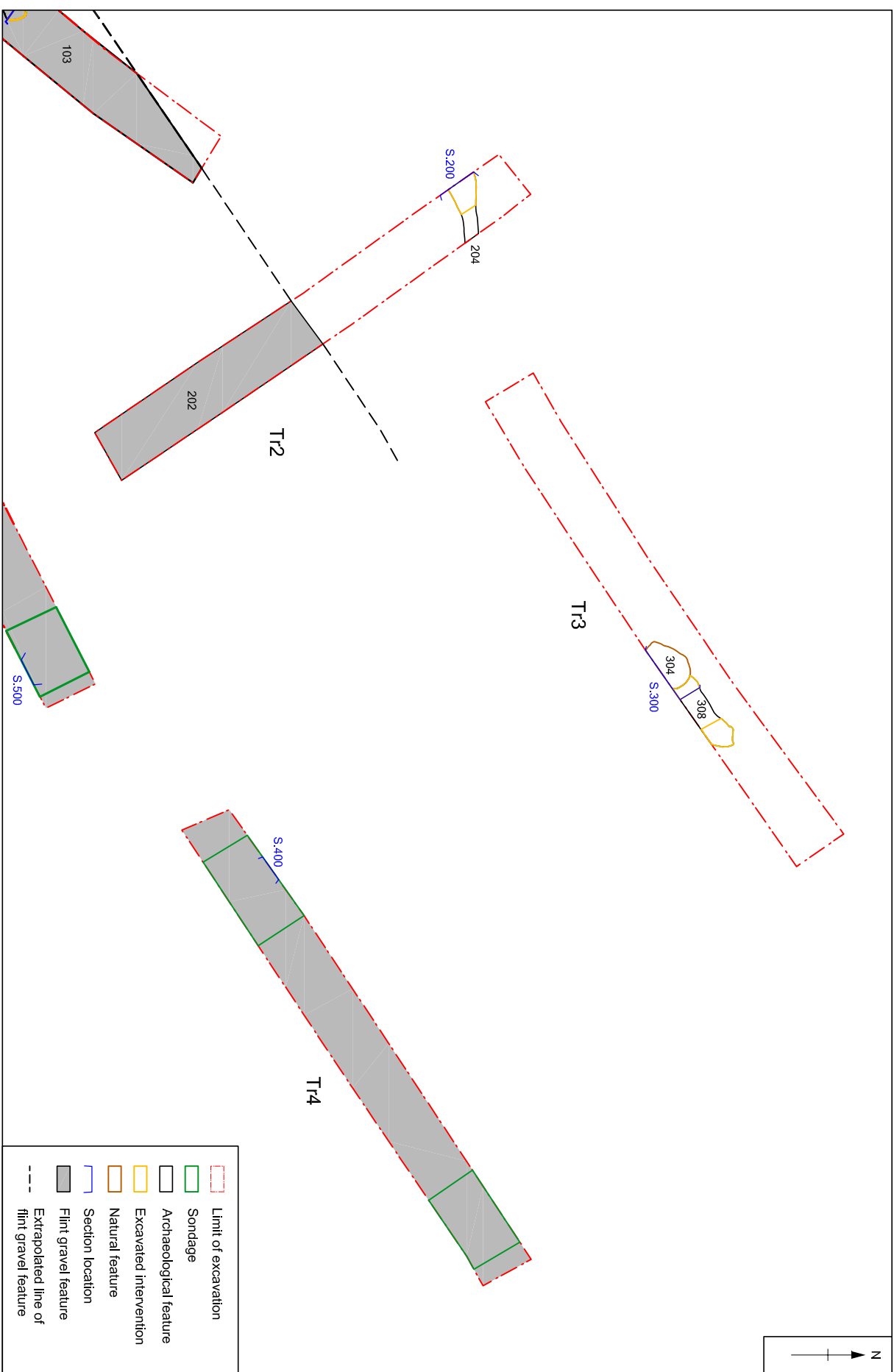


Figure 4. Trenches 2, 3, and 4

Survey Data supplied by :  
OA

Scale at A4 1:200

CHECKED BY: GJ 19092017



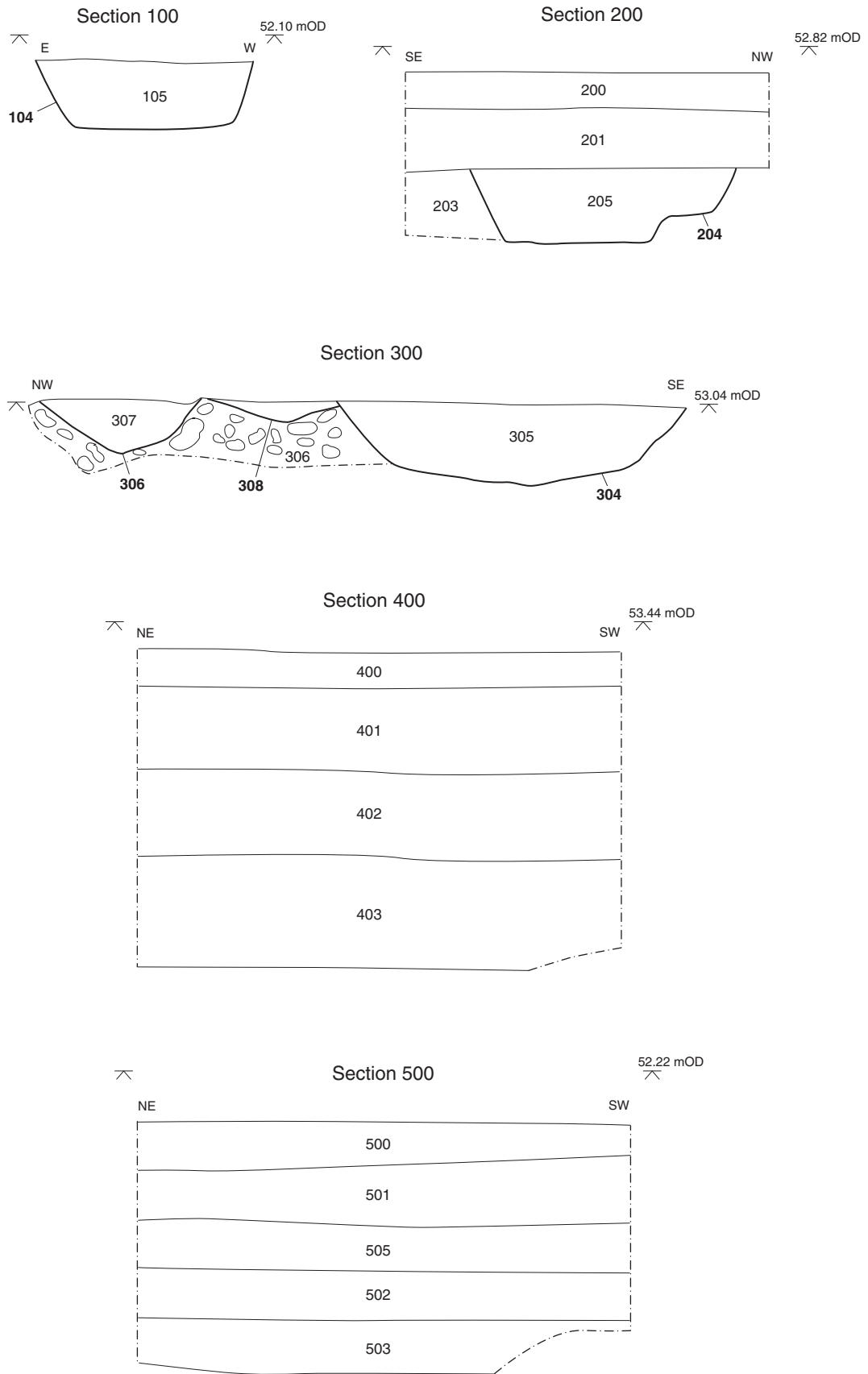


Figure 5: Sections 100-500



Plate 1: General shot of Trench 1, looking SW



Plate 2: Section 100, Feature 105, looking SW

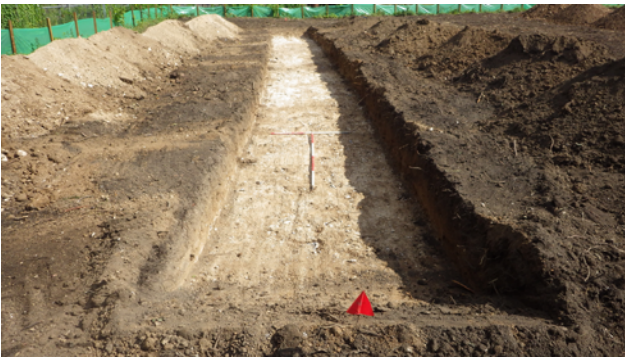


Plate 3: General shot of Trench 3, looking NE



Plate 4: Section 300, looking SE



Plate 4: General shot of Trench 4, looking NE



Plate 4: Section 400, showing full sequence of deposits, looking NW





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