



Diglis Basin, Diglis Dock Road and
Diglis Basin Link Road
Worcester

**Archaeological Investigation
Report**



October 2006

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Developments Ltd**

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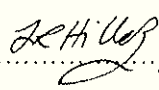
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Diglis Basin, Diglis Dock Road and Diglis Basin Link Road, Diglis Lane, Worcester

ARCHAEOLOGICAL INVESTIGATION REPORT

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SUMMARY

Between October 2005 and August 2006 Oxford Archaeology (OA) carried out an archaeological investigation at Diglis Basin, Diglis Dock Road (NGR SO 8500 5380) and Diglis Basin Link Road, Diglis Lane, Worcester (NGR SO 85295 53473). The work was on behalf of Taylor Woodrow Developments Ltd in advance of the construction of 459 new dwellings and a link road. The investigation comprised a watching brief on remediation work within the Diglis Basin site, and a strip map and sample excavation on the site of a proposed link road.

A possible 11th-century boundary ditch was revealed on the site of the link road, which may have defined the limits of two properties fronting Bath Road. The construction of a house and the disposal of general waste had disturbed much of the site.

Alluvial deposits were seen during the watching brief, at a depth of c 2 m below ground. They were overlain by dumps of industrial and waste material. A large 19th-century trench, which may have housed a tank or machinery associated with the docks, was also revealed. No other archaeological evidence was seen.

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Location and scope of work

- 1.1.1 Between October 2005 and August 2006 Oxford Archaeology (OA) carried out a watching brief at Diglis Basin, Diglis Dock Road (NGR SO 8500 5380) and a strip map and sample excavation on Diglis Basin Link Road, Diglis Lane, Worcester (NGR SO 85295 53473). The work was on behalf of Taylor Woodrow Developments Ltd in advance of the construction of 459 new dwellings and a link road (Planning Ref: P03L0182). A brief (WCMAS 2004) was set by James Dinn, Archaeologist for Worcester City, in line with PPG16 and the archaeological policies in the City of Worcester local Plan (1991-2001; BE20-BE24) and the emerging Local Plan (1996-2011; Revised Deposit, BE20-BE26). OA and CgMs Consulting worked in partnership on the project, and produced a specification (CgMs 2005a and 2005b) and a Written scheme of Investigation (WSI - OA 2006a) detailing how the archaeological requirements of the work would be met.
- 1.1.2 The Diglis Basin development site lies to the south of the centre of Worcester, c 0.5 km from Worcester Cathedral, on the eastern bank of the River Severn. The site is c 10.5 ha in area and comprised structures and canal basins associated with the docks. The proposed link road lies to the east of this area, between Bath Road to the east and Diglis Lane to the west, comprising an area of approximately 0.2 ha. Two residential properties and associated gardens occupied the link road site (Fig. 1).

1.2 Geology and topography

- 1.2.1 The site lies on the flood plain of the River Severn. The solid geology comprises Mercia Mudstone, overlain by drift deposits comprising glacial sands and gravels, below alluvium (British Geological Survey, Sheet 1999). Diglis Basin lies between 15.5 m and 16 m above OD (aOD).
- 1.2.2 The link road site is situated on a steep hill, which lies at 14.68 m aOD at the west (Diglis Lane) end, rising to 24.30 m aOD at the east (Bath Road) end.

1.3 Archaeological and historical background

- 1.3.1 The application site has been subject to a desk-based assessment (DBA), which has been included in the Environmental Statement presented with the planning application (EC Harris, 3rd revision, 2003). The DBA is summarised below.

Diglis Basin

- 1.3.2 The main site to the west comprises glacial sand and gravels cut by a broad palaeochannel. A geoarchaeological borehole survey (OA 2006b) suggests that a broad palaeochannel crosses the site; from its apparent size this could be a former channel of the Severn. The deposits are overlain by Roman and medieval alluvial deposits, below 1.2 – 3.4 m of imported ground.
- 1.3.3 It has been suggested that a Roman harbour lies within the site, located close to the mouth of the Frog Brook. The existence of the Roman harbour has been based on the results of discoveries made during excavation of the river navigation locks in the mid 19th century. No archaeological fieldwork has been undertaken to confirm this theory.
- 1.3.4 No medieval remains are recorded from the site, though the floodplain was undoubtedly used during this period. A hermitage dedicated to St Ursula is recorded from the Diglis area, though its location is not known.
- 1.3.5 The site was recently the site of an early 19th-century canal basin, with upstanding remains of the original warehouses, associated structures, basins and canals. A record of standing buildings within the Canal Conservation Area has been undertaken and submitted as part of the Environmental Statement.
- 1.3.6 An archaeological field evaluation, comprising the excavation of two trenches has been carried out within the Worcester and Birmingham Canal Conservation Area. No significant archaeological remains of building foundations, wharf surfaces, paths etc, were identified by the evaluation (Archenfield Archaeology 2003). However, there may have been some confusion with the relationship between natural and redeposited alluvium.
- 1.3.7 A field evaluation carried out by OA (OA 2005) revealed no evidence of Roman or medieval archaeology. The truncated remains of Victorian/modern brick-built

warehouse structures and floors associated with canal/riverside activities were identified to the west of the development site.

- 1.3.8 There have also been watching briefs on selected ground investigation works, including test pits and boreholes (though the site has been subject to very full geotechnical and contamination investigations, only a small proportion have been monitored archaeologically).

Link Road

- 1.3.9 The Roman road from Worcester to Gloucester is thought to have passed through the area of the proposed link road, to the rear of Berwick Street.

2 INVESTIGATION AIMS

2.1.1 Aims

2.1.2 Specific aims were to:

- Locate the suggested Roman harbour.
- Locate the alignment of the Roman road from Worcester to Gloucester, and the identification of roadside settlement or other activity.
- Determine the nature of other Roman remains.
- Determine the location and character of medieval remains, including the hermitage of St Ursula, and remains associated with the Diglis meadows.
- Determine the development of the canal basin and associated industries and structures, including the Worcester Chemical Manure Works.

2.1.3 General aims were to:

- Identify and determine the character, function, form and longevity of any later Prehistoric, Roman, Saxon or medieval occupation activity on the site and place it within its local, regional and national context.
- To examine the ecofactual and environmental potential of archaeological deposits and features.
- To make available the results of the investigation.

3 INVESTIGATION METHODOLOGY

3.1 Scope of fieldwork

Watching brief - main site

- 3.1.1 The Diglis Basin site comprised dumped deposits of contaminated soil, which was to be sterilised or removed in advance of the development. The removal of this soil was monitored as part of the watching brief; often 'hotspots' were excavated to assess the soil contamination levels. Depending on the results of the 'hotspots' it was not always necessary to conduct further ground reduction.

Strip map and sample

- 3.1.2 The link road area was subject to a 'strip and record' exercise, by which the topsoil and overburden was removed by a 360° mechanical excavator fitted with a toothless bucket. Excavation took place to the first archaeological horizon (in this instance the natural geology) under archaeological supervision, archaeological features were excavated and recorded before further groundworks took place.

3.2 Fieldwork methods and recording

- 3.2.1 The exposed excavations were cleaned by hand and the revealed features were sampled to determine their extent and nature, and to retrieve finds and environmental samples. All archaeological features were planned and where excavated their sections drawn at scales of 1:20. All features were photographed using colour slide and black and white print film. Recording followed procedures laid down in the *OAU Fieldwork Manual* (ed D Wilkinson, 1992).

3.3 Finds

- 3.3.1 Finds were recovered by hand during the course of the excavation and bagged by context. Finds of special interest were given a unique small find number.

3.4 Palaeo-environmental evidence

- 3.4.1 A medieval field boundary was revealed during the strip map and sample exercise. It was filled by a well dated, sterile silty clay. Environmental sampling was not considered necessary. No deposits of environmental interest were encountered during the watching brief.

3.5 Presentation of results

- 3.5.1 Section 5 comprises a detailed description of archaeological observations within each area and includes individual context descriptions, with archaeological deposits and features described from earliest to latest. Features are also shown in plan and section, where appropriate (see figures at back of report). General archaeological context information is summarised in the trench inventory (Appendix 1).

4 RESULTS: GENERAL

4.1 Soils and ground conditions

- 4.1.1 The excavations revealed a reddish brown clay silt alluvium within the Diglis Basin site and a reddy brown sandy clay natural deposit (possibly colluvium) within the link road site. The deposits overlying the alluvium were contaminated dumps of gravels and silts, probably derived from excavation within the basin area. The only archaeological features were revealed within the link road site, the fills were derived from the weathering of the natural geology.

- 4.1.2 The bottom of the alluvium was not reached during the basin excavations and the water table was not encountered. Despite the contamination of the overlying soils the watching brief ran smoothly.
- 4.1.3 Excavation within the link road site took place during a particularly dry spell, though this did not hinder the investigation. The excavation was stepped in 3 m from the actual site limits due to its close proximity to neighbouring properties. No features were observed running into the limits of excavation.

5 RESULTS: DESCRIPTIONS

5.1 Description of deposits

Diglis Basin (Figs 2 and 3)

- 5.1.1 The excavations revealed a reddish brown clay silt alluvium (1004) over a dark grey clay silt alluvium (1005). To the south of the site (Area B) 1004 was revealed at 2.3 m (13.7 m aOD), within the centre of the site (Area D) it was revealed at 1.1 m below ground (13.9 m aOD) and 1005 was 1.8 m below ground (13.2 m aOD). In the north of the site (Area H) 1004 was revealed at 2 m below ground (13.4 m aOD).
- 5.1.2 The alluvium was cut by a large pit (1000) within Area B. The pit measured over 13 m wide and over 0.7 m deep, and it was filled with sandy silts and clays (1001 and 1002). The fills were overlain by a dump of clay silts (1003) that contained dumps of leather and 19th and 20th century bottles. Layer 1003 was overlain by 1.3 m of modern overburden (Fig. 3 - Section 1000)
- 5.1.3 Deposits similar to 1003 were seen to overly the alluvium within the other areas. The dumped deposits contained modern building rubble, sheets of metal, glass, stone and pottery.

The link road (Figs 3-5)

- 5.1.4 Colluvium was revealed at 0.7 m below ground (23.4 m aOD) in the east of the site and 1.5 m (12.5 m aOD) below ground in the west of the site. The colluvium was cut by four W-E aligned lengths of ditches (1106, 1114, 1122 and 1128), the ditch segments were between 4 m and 26 m long, up to 0.7 m wide and 0.2 m deep (Fig. 3 - Section 1102 and Fig. 4). They were filled with an orange brown silty clay (1107) that contained pottery dated from the late 11th century to the 14th century. The ditch sections were probably the truncated remains of a single feature.
- 5.1.5 At the western end of the ditch a shallow pit (1132) was observed (Fig. 3 - Section 1118 and Fig. 4). It measured 0.9 m wide and 0.2 m deep and was filled an orange brown silt clay (1133). No finds were recovered. The deposits were overlain by up to 0.5 m of brown silty clay colluvium (1120).

- 5.1.6 At the eastern end of the site a pit (1108) was revealed measuring 0.8 m wide and 0.1 m deep. It was filled an orange brown silt clay (1109) that contained fragments of 13th century tile.
- 5.1.7 A brick-built well (1113) was also revealed in the east of the site. It was not fully excavated but measured 0.9 m in diameter and was constructed from unfrogged 19th-century bricks. A similarly constructed W-E aligned brick wall was revealed to the north (1111), adjoining perpendicular sections of wall were observed to the south. The walls formed the remnants of outhouses and sheds; an associated garden soil was also revealed (1110). The features were associated with the recently demolished properties.
- 5.1.8 Along the southern edge of the site a thick deposit of dumped dark grey brown loam (1112) had been dumped. The deposit contained an abundance of 19th century building material and pottery.
- 5.1.9 The deposits were overlain by a layer of redeposited colluvium below the modern topsoil. The remains of the recently demolished properties (1101), levelling deposits and services (1134) were also evident.

5.2 Finds

Pottery

- 5.2.1 The assemblage comprised a total of 63 sherds of pottery weighing 916 g and came from 5 contexts. The assemblage falls into two distinct groups; the larger assemblage of 45 sherds was recovered from a dumped soil deposit (1112), and is of mid to late 19th-century date and mainly comprises large fresh sherds of typical Staffordshire-type white earthenwares of the period. The remaining assemblage of 18 sherds, from four ditch fills, consists of small, mostly featureless, body sherds of a coarse grey sandy ware. These match Worcester Fabric 55, a cooking pot ware and are dated from the late 11th century to the mid 14th century. The small and featureless nature of the sherds makes positive identification a little uncertain but the sherds from context 1105 appear to be from a typical medieval sagging-based cooking pot. Several sherds are also sooted externally which again suggests a cooking function and, most probably, a medieval date.

Ceramic Building Material (CBM)

- 5.2.2 Two oxidised tile fragments were recovered from pit fill 1109, and are probably from 12th-13th century flat roof tiles or peg tiles.

Animal Bone

- 5.2.3 The animal bone assemblage comprised two ribs from a large mammal, such as cattle, horse or deer, and six small indeterminate fragments. The bones were recovered from the fill of a medieval ditch and were in a good condition, with no traces of burning or gnawing.

6 DISCUSSION AND INTERPRETATION

6.1 Reliability of field investigation

- 6.1.1 The Diglis Basin site had been subject to extensive landscaping and remodelling. The only deposits observed were associated with 19th/20th-century dockside activity and levelling/dumped deposits. No residual material remains were revealed within the deposits. However, the contamination of the soil with heavy metals meant that the removed soil could not be extensively examined.
- 6.1.2 The investigation to the south of the site involved the monitoring of 'hot spots'. These were rarely more than 5 m wide and may have missed more localised evidence of archaeological activity. However, as stated above, the lack of residual finds indicated that activity on the site prior to the 19th century was unlikely.
- 6.1.3 The link road site had also been subject to disturbance, though this was confined to the area of the recently demolished property. It is possible that archaeological evidence associated with earlier structures was destroyed by the construction of the property. The site had also been extensively raised by the deposition of colluvium and garden soils; this is clearly shown in the deposit model (Fig. 5).

6.2 Overall interpretation

- 6.2.1 There was no evidence for any pre-industrial activity at the Diglis Basin site. The site predominantly comprised dumped deposits of modern waste. A large trench was exposed that may have housed a tank or similar structure, though no other structural remains associated with the docks were found.
- 6.2.2 The only archaeological evidence on the link road site was a boundary ditch and two pits. These were probably dated to the 12th or 13th century and the ditch may have defined the limits of two properties extending off Bath Road. No evidence for any associated yard activity or the remains of any properties were revealed. Structural remains may have lain to the north of the site or been destroyed during the construction of the recently demolished property.
- 6.2.3 However, the limited finds assemblage may indicate that the boundary ditch lay within a field some distance from any settlement, the development of properties on Bath Road may date to the post-medieval period.

7 APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1 ARCHAEOLOGICAL CONTEXT INVENTORY

Area	Context No.	Type	Thickness (m)	Comments	Finds	Date
Diglis Basin	1000	Cut		Trench		
	1001	Fill	0.5	Trench fill		
	1002	Fill		Trench fill		
	1003	Layer		Levelling		
	1004	Layer		Alluvium		
Link Road	1100	Layer	0.3	Topsoil		
	1101	Layer	1.3	Demolition		
	1102	Layer	0.2	Subsoil		
	1103	Layer		Natural		
	1104	Cut	0.17	Ditch		
	1105	Fill	0.17	Fill of ditch	Pot	L11th- M14th
	1106	Cut	0.17	Ditch		
	1107	Fill	0.17	Fill of ditch	Pot	L11th- M14th
	1108	Cut	0.08	Pit		
	1109	Fill	0.08	Pit fill	CBM	12-13th
	1110	Layer	0.4	Garden soil		
	1111	Structure		Wall		
	1112	Layer	0.78	Garden soil	Pot	M-L19th
	1113	Structure		Well		
	1114	Cut	0.1	Ditch		
	1115	Fill	0.1	Fill of ditch		
	1116	Cut	0.11	Ditch		
	1117	Fill	0.11	Fill of ditch	Pot	L11th- M14th
	1118	Cut	0.1	Ditch		
	1119	Fill	0.1	Fill of ditch	Pot	L11th- M14th
	1120	Layer	1	Colluvium		
	1121	Layer	0.3	Levelling		
	1122	Cut	0.13	Ditch		
	1123	Fill	0.13	Fill of ditch		
	1124	Cut	0.16	Ditch		
	1125	Fill	0.16	Fill of ditch		
	1126	Cut	0.22	Ditch		
	1127	Fill	0.22	Fill of ditch		
	1128	Cut	0.26	Ditch		
	1129	Fill	0.26	Fill of ditch	Bone	
1130	Cut	0.1	Ditch			
1131	Fill	0.1	Fill of ditch			
1132	Cut	0.21	Pit			
1133	Fill	0.21	Pit fill			
1134	Other	0.21	Service trench			

APPENDIX 2 POTTERY AND CERAMIC BUILDING MATERIAL

By John Cotter

Introduction and Methodology

The assemblage comprised a total of 63 sherds of pottery weighing 916 g and came from 5 contexts.

All the pottery was examined and spot-dated (Table A2.1). For each context the total pottery sherd count and weight were recorded on an Excel spreadsheet, followed by the context spot-date which is the date-bracket during which the latest pottery types in the context are estimated to have been produced or were in general circulation. Comments on the presence of datable types were also recorded, usually with mention of vessel form (jugs, bowls etc.) and any other attributes worthy of note (eg. decoration etc.).

Date and Nature of the Assemblage

The assemblage falls into two distinct groups; the larger assemblage of 45 sherds, from a dumped soil deposit (1112), is of mid to late 19th-century date and mainly consists of large fresh sherds of typical Staffordshire-type white earthenwares of the period. The remaining assemblage of 18 sherds, from four ditch fills, consists of small, mostly featureless, body sherds of a coarse grey sandy ware.

These match the description and photographs of Worcester-type sandy unglazed ware (Fabric 55) in the Worcestershire online pottery typology (www.worcestershireceramics.org).

Worcester Fabric 55 is a cooking pot ware and is dated from the late 11th century to the mid 14th century. Some of the smaller, more abraded and gritty examples present here could easily pass as Iron age pottery (Lisa Brown pers. comm.), but on balance they are probably just coarser examples of Fabric 55. The small and featureless nature of the sherds makes positive identification a little uncertain but the sherds from context 1105 appear to be from a typical medieval sagging-based cooking pot. Several sherds are also sooted externally which again suggests a cooking function and, most probably, a medieval date.

Two oxidised tile fragments were recovered from pit fill 1109 are probably from early (12th-13th century?) flat roof tiles or peg tiles. These provide some corroboration for the suggested pottery dates.

Table A2.1 Incidence of pottery by context

Context	Spot-date	Sherds	Weight	Comments
1105	c1075-1350	2	9	Prob sagging base from cook pot in Fabric 55 Worcester-type sandy unglazed ware. Prob sooted
1107	c1075-1350	3	9	Small abraded bss Fabric 55
1112	c1850-1900	45	858	Mid 19C+ style Staffs mass-produced white earthenwares etc. Yellowware incl mixing bowl & prob frag of sanitary ware (WC?). Eng porcelain. Black glazed teapot ware. Late Notts stoneware jar base. Cylindrical corduroy dec preserve jars in white earthenware and mod grey stoneware
1117	c1075-1350	7	22	Fabric 55. Bss. Some small & abraded, some sooted
1119	c1075-1350	6	18	Fabric 55. Bss. 1 larger sooted bs, 5 small scraps
TOTAL		63	916	

APPENDIX 3 ANIMAL BONE*By Lena Strid*

The animal bone assemblage from WCM101341 comprised two ribs from a large mammal, such as cattle, horse or deer, and six small indeterminate fragments (see table A3.1). The bones were in a good condition, with no traces of burning or gnawing.

Table A3.1 Incidence of animal bone by context

Context	Species	Element	Weight (g)
1129	Large mammal	Rib	13
1129	Large mammal	Rib	8
1129	Large mammal	Indeterminate	3

APPENDIX 4 BIBLIOGRAPHY AND REFERENCES

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APPENDIX 5 SUMMARY OF SITE DETAILS

Site name: Diglis Basin, Diglis Dock Road and Diglis Basin, Link Road, Diglis Lane, Worcester

Site code: WCM101341

Grid reference: SO 8500 5380 and SO 85295 53473

Type of work: Watching Brief on ground reduction and strip map and sample excavation ahead of a new link road.

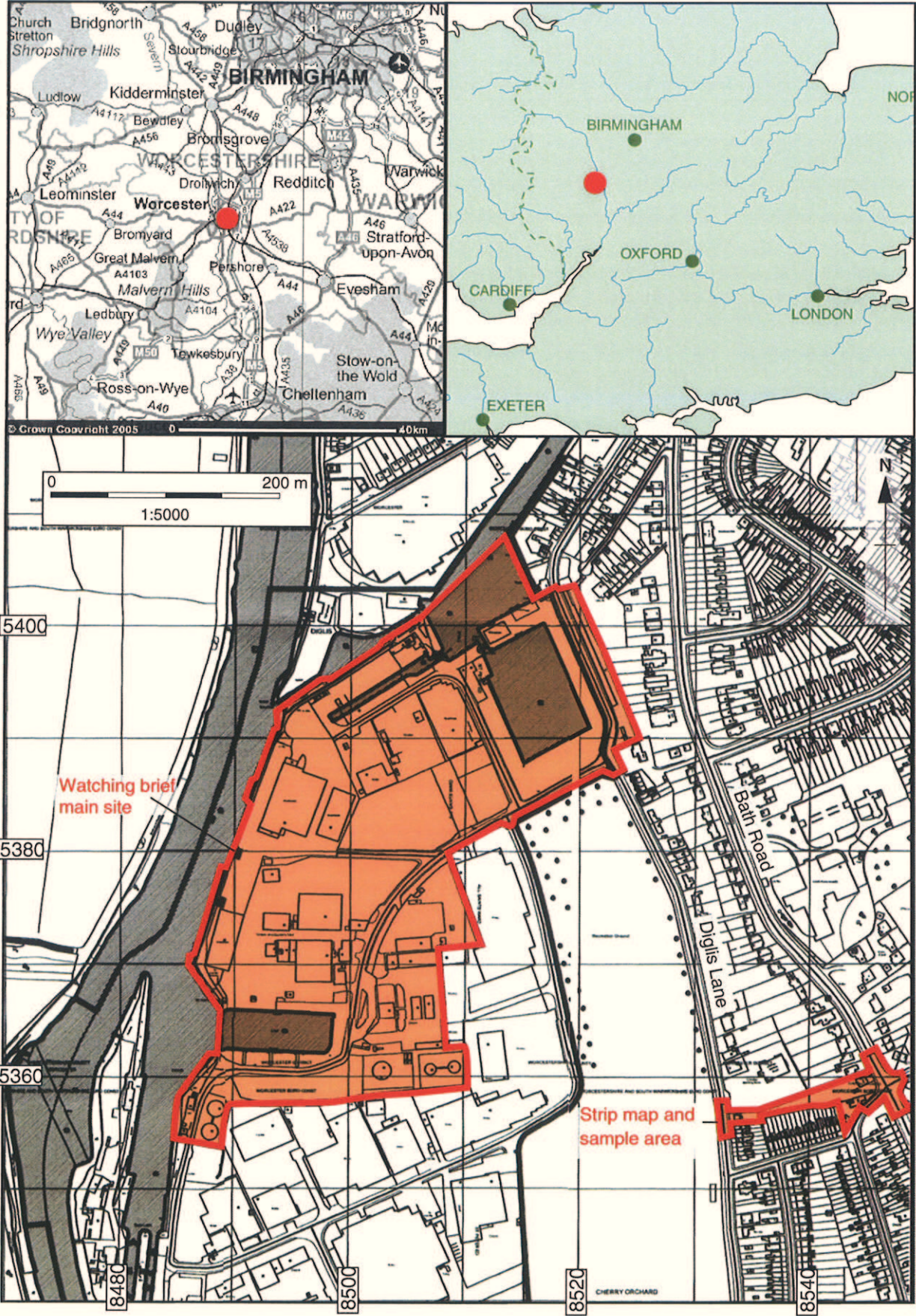
Date and duration of project: October 2005 to August 2006

Area of site: c 11 ha

Summary of results: Medieval boundary ditch separating two properties fronting Bath Road and associated pits.

Location of archive: The archive is currently held at OA, Janus House, Osney Mead, Oxford, OX2 0ES, and will be deposited with Worcester City Museum in due course, under the following accession number: WCM101341

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Figure 1: Site location

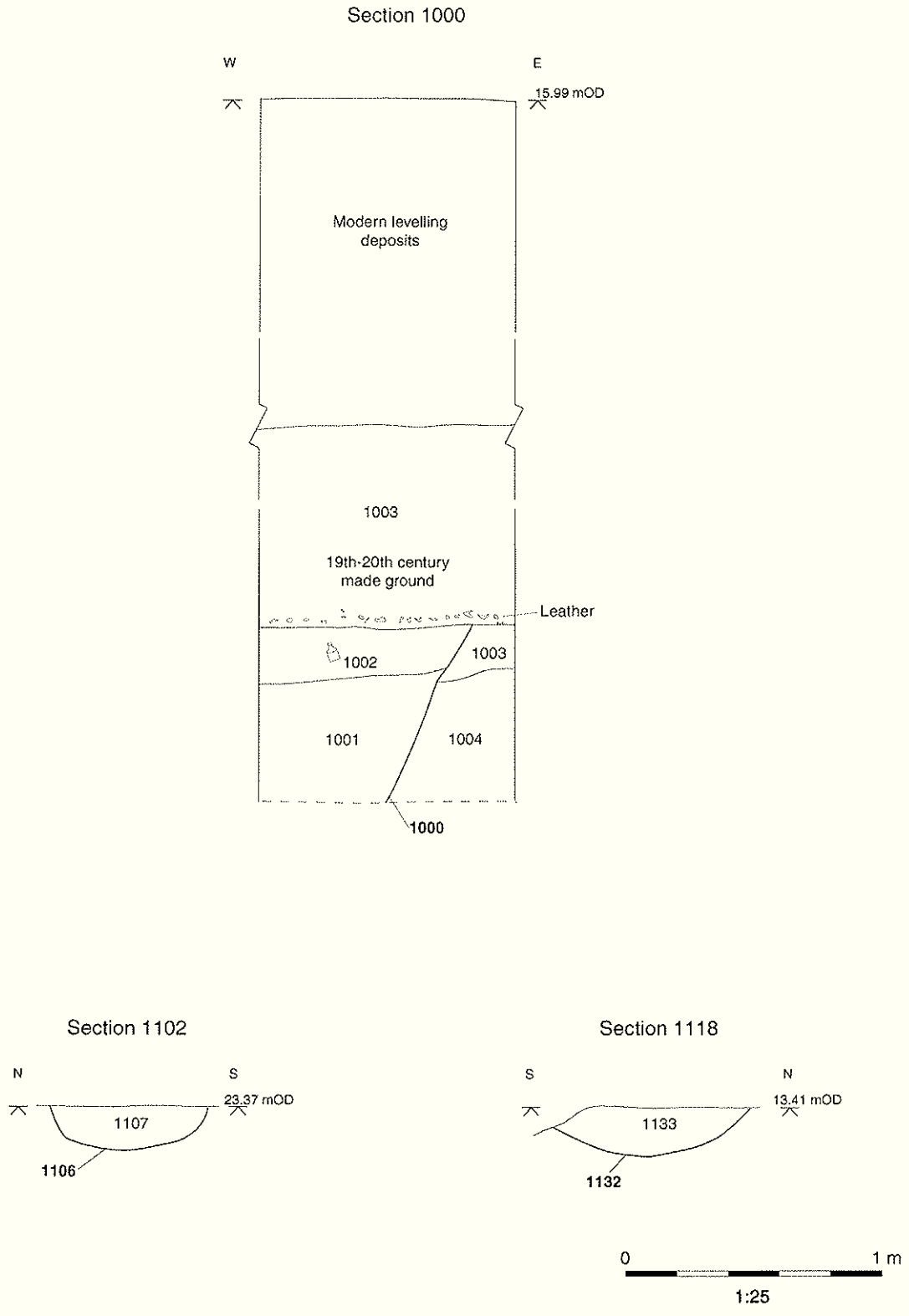


Figure 3: Sections

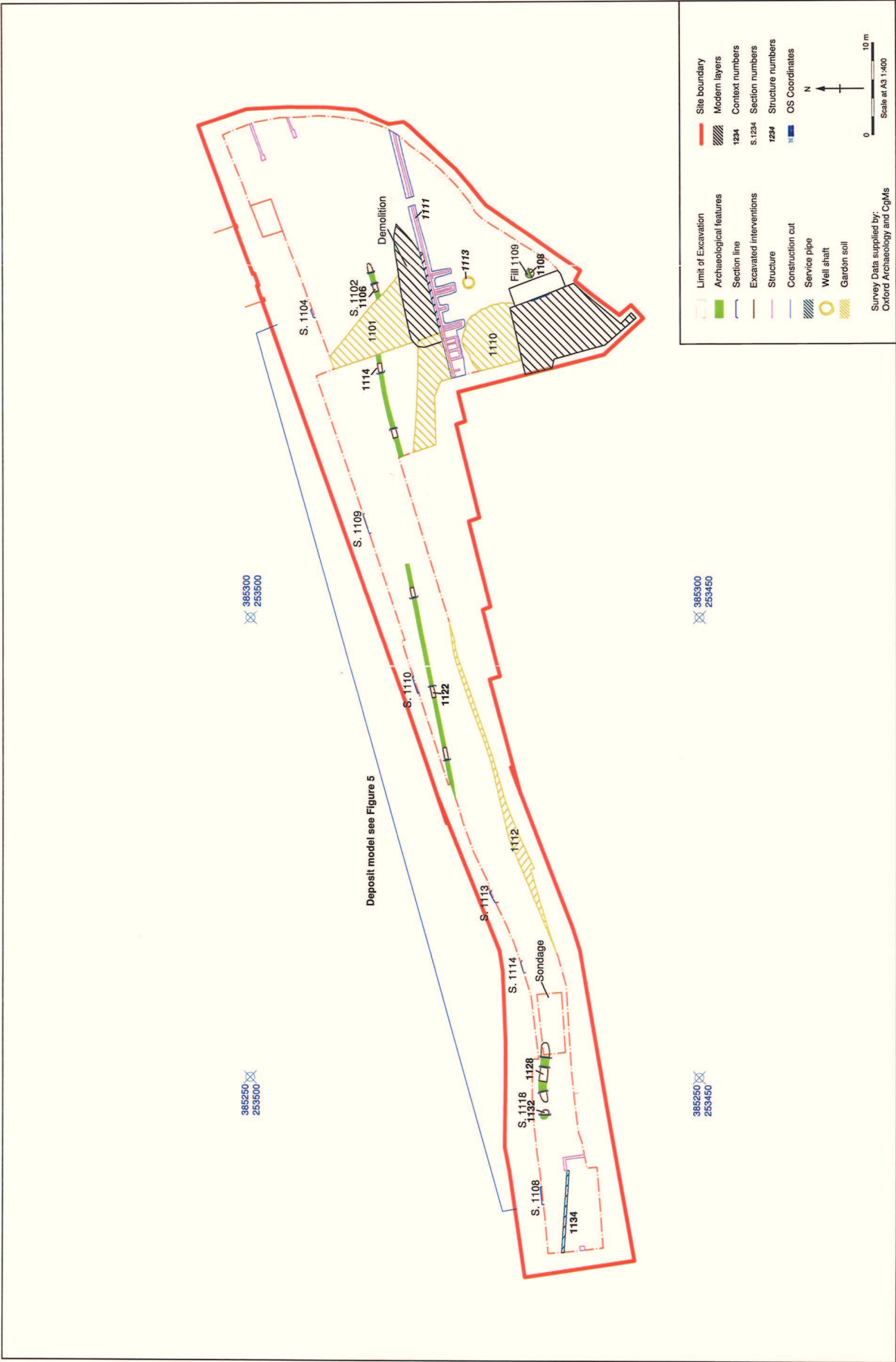
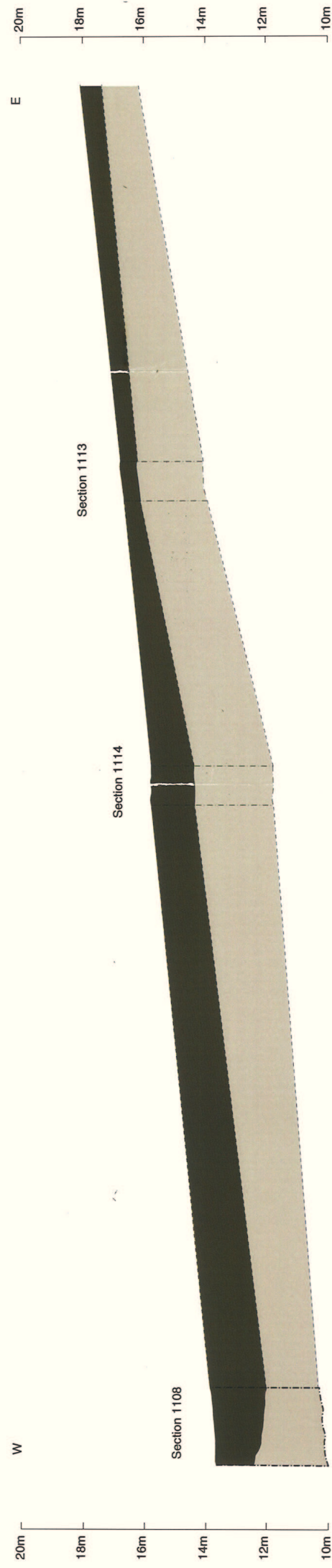


Figure 4: Link road site

Western End of Site



Eastern End of Site

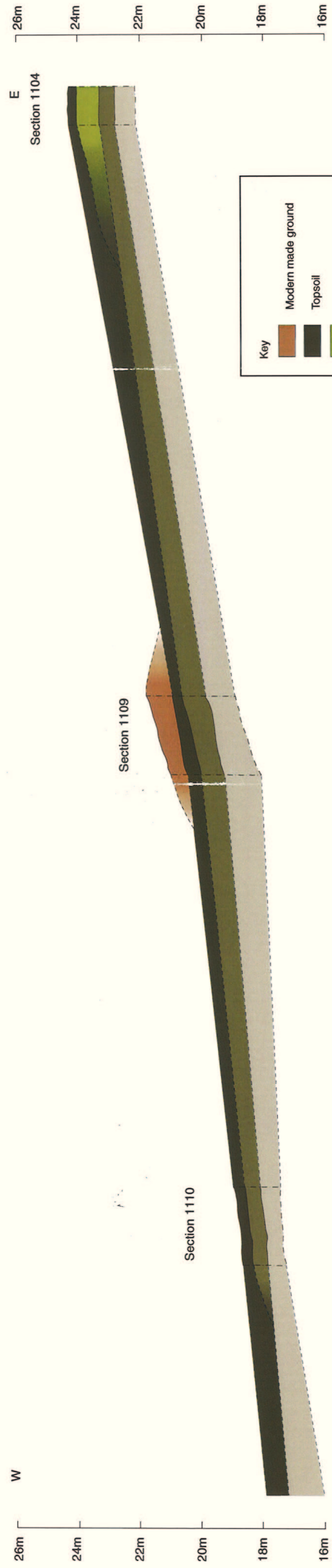


Figure 5: Deposit model



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