Archaeological Evaluation at 11-17 Castle Dene, Maidstone, Kent

October 2008

SWAT. Archaeology
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11-17 Castle Dene, Maidstone, Kent

Archaeological Evaluation Assessment

NGR: 575412 157884
Site Code: CDM-EV-08

Report for
Simon Wright Homes

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SUMMARY

Under the direction of Dr Paul Wilkinson, Swale & Thames Survey Company (SWAT) carried out an archaeological evaluation at 11-17 Castle Dene, Maidstone, Kent, between 8th – 10th July 2008. The evaluation, comprising trial trenching was undertaken in order to determine the possible impact of the development on any archaeological remains. The work was carried out in accordance with the requirements set out within an Archaeological Specification (Kent County Council 2008) in discussion with the Archaeological Officer, Kent County Council. Eight evaluation trenches were originally requested. A common stratigraphic sequence was recognised across the site comprising topsoil overlying subsoil and natural geology. No archaeological features or finds were present on site. A geoarchaeological assessment also concluded that natural geology comprised bedrock of Lower Cretaceous age, and thus no Holocene alluvium or terrace gravels were present. With this in mind, it is suggested that proposed development will have no archaeological impact.

INTRODUCTION

Swale & Thames Survey Company (SWAT) was commissioned by Simon Wright Homes to carry out an archaeological evaluation at the above site. The work was carried out in accordance with the requirements set out within an Archaeological Specification (KCC 2008) and in discussion with the Archaeological Officer, Heritage & Conservation, Kent County Council. The evaluation was carried out in July 2008.

PLANNING BACKGROUND

A planning application (MA/07/2139) for the erection of 14 dwellings along with associated access, car parking and services at the above site was submitted to Maidstone Borough Council (MBC). Kent County Council Heritage and Conservation (KCCHC), on behalf of Maidstone Borough Council, requested that an *Archaeological Evaluation* be undertaken in order to determine the possible impact of the development on any archaeological remains and to provide a rapid assessment of existing buildings extant within the site. The following conditions were attached to the planning consent:

No development shall take place until the applicant, or their agents or successors in title, has secured the implementation of a programme of archaeological work in accordance with a written specification and timetable which has been submitted to and approved by the Local Planning Authority.

Requirements for the archaeological evaluation comprised trial trenching targeting a

minimum of 5% of the impact area, with trenches designed to establish whether there are any archaeological deposits at the site that may be affected by the proposed development. The results from this evaluation will be used to inform KCCHC and MBC of any further archaeological mitigation measures that may be necessary in connection with the development proposals.

SITE DESCRIPTION AND TOPOGRAPHY

The proposed development site is located on the periphery of Maidstone, overlooking the River Medway. The site centre is taken to be at NGR 575412 157884. The site encompasses *c* 0.5 hectares and currently comprises existing rear gardens laid to lawn, which slopes dramatically from east to west at approximate heights of between 17m AOD (west) to 28m AOD (east). The site is within the administrative area of Maidstone Borough Council. According to the maps of the British Geological Survey, the site lies on a mixed geology of exposed Hythe Beds at the southernmost and lowest part; a narrow band of Sandgate Beds. Recent work by Chris Pine and Archaeology South East close by, to the north, has encountered hitherto unrecorded cappings to the solid geology of finely laminated sands and gravels of geoarchaeological significance. Similar deposits may be present on the application site[1].

ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND

The application site lies along the alignment of the Rochester to Hastings Roman road and approximately 200m north from the finding of a Roman burial and a Roman coin. Allington Castle is close by, across the River Medway. Therefore unrecorded geoarchaeological remains may be present on the site.[2]

AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

The purpose of the evaluation, as set out within the Archaeological Specifications was to:

i) Establish whether there are any archaeological deposits at the site that may be affected by the proposed development. The excavation is thus to ascertain the extent, depth below ground surface, depth of deposit, character, significance and condition of any archaeological remains on site.

ii) Establish the extent to which previous development on the site has affected archaeological deposits.

Additional aims were to:

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[1] Kent County Council (2008: 4)

[2] Kent County Council (2008: 5)

iii) Gather sufficient information to enable an assessment of the potential and significance of any archaeological remains to be made and the impact development will have upon them.

iv) Enable an informed decision to be made regarding the future treatment of any archaeological remains and consider any appropriate mitigatory measures either in advance of any planning application and/or during development.

Specific aims included[3]:

v) Is there any further evidence of Roman activity in the development area? How does this relate to previous findings within the surrounding area, such as the road?

vi) Is there any evidence for prehistoric and/or medieval activity within the development area?

vii) Is there any evidence for post-medieval activity on the site?

viii) What potential is there on site for geoarchaeological and palaeoenvironmental deposits such as terrace gravels and alluvium?

ix) Has modern disturbance reduced archaeological potential?

METHODOLOGY

Trial trenching commenced on the 8th July 2008, with the excavation of eight trenches; each measuring 1.5m in width and between 8m and 33m in length (see Fig. 2). Trench locations were allocated by KCC and formed part of the specification. Following the removal of modern overburden, each trench was initially scanned for surface finds prior to more extensive mechanical excavation. Excavation was carried out using a 360° 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. 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 IFA standards and guidance. A complete photographic record was maintained on site, which included working shots during mechanical excavation, following archaeological investigations and during backfilling.

A single context recording system was used to record the deposits. A full list is presented in Appendix 1. Layers and fills are recorded (**100**). The cut of the feature is shown [**100**].

[3] Kent County Council (2008: 6)

Context numbers were assigned to all deposits for recording purposes; these are used in the report (in **bold**). Each number has been attributed to a specific trench with the primary number(s) relating to specific trenches (*i.e.* Trench 1, **100+**, Trench 2, **200+** etc.)

MONITORING

Curatorial monitoring was carried out during the course of the evaluation by KCC at which time, methodologies and preliminary results were discussed.

RESULTS

General

A common stratigraphic sequence was recognised across the site comprising topsoil and subsoil directly overlying natural sandy clays and gravels. The topsoil (**100**, **200**, **300** etc.) consisted of dark grey brown silty clay with moderate rooting and occasional rounded stones, overlying the subsoil comprising light orange brown silty clay with occasional rounded stone and sand lenses (**102**, **202**, **302** etc.). A clear line of horizon gave way to natural Sandgate Beds, with seams of natural gravels (**103**, **203**, **303** etc.) where mechanical excavation ceased and careful examination and investigation for truncating features was carried out. Appendix 1 provides the stratigraphic sequence for all trenches, with representative profiles illustrated in Figs. 3-7.

Deposit Model

A full stratigraphic deposit model for each trench is provided in Appendix 1. No archaeological features were revealed and no finds were present throughout the duration of the evaluation.

Geoarchaeological Assessment

In accordance with requirements set out within the archaeological specification[4], attendance by a geoarchaeological specialist was arranged and a programme of test pitting to involve up to four 2m by 2.5m machine pits was agreed with the County Archaeologist. An assessment is provided in Appendix 2.

PROJECT CONSTRAINTS

No constraints were associated with this project.

CONCLUSION

The archaeological evaluation has been successful in fulfilling the primary aims and objectives of the Specification. A common stratigraphic sequence was recognised across the site comprising topsoil overlying subsoil and natural geology. No archaeological features or finds were present on site. The geoarchaeological assessment has concluded that natural

[4] Kent County Council (2008: 7)

geology comprised bedrock of Lower Cretaceous age, and thus no Holocene alluvium or terrace gravels were present.

This evaluation has, therefore, assessed the archaeological potential of land intended for development. The results from this work will be used to aid and inform the Archaeological Officer (KCC) of any further archaeological mitigation measures that may be necessary in connection with the development proposals.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

SWAT would like to thank Simon Wright Homes for commissioning the project. Thanks are also extended to Kent County Council for their advice and assistance, in particular Adam Single (Archaeological Officer). Finally, thanks are due to the site team who assisted the author, namely: James Madden and Dan Quinly. All surveying and illustrations were produced by Digitise This. This report was edited and collated by Dr Paul Wilkinson (SWAT).

David Britchfield, October 2008

SUMMARY OF SITE ARCHIVE

Quantity of Archaeological Records

Photographs: 32 digital images, 8 Colour Slides

Drawings: Two A3 permatrace site drawings, comprising feature plans (and associated sections.

Finds: See Appendix B

Context Register including: Context Register (1), Drawings Register (1), Photographic Register (1), Levels Sheets (x), Environmental Samples Register (x), Environmental Sheets (x) and Context Sheets (24)

REFERENCES

IFA (1999) *Standards and Guidance for Field Archaeological Evaluations*

Kent County Council (2008) *Specification for ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION AT 11-12 CASTLE DENE, MAIDSTONE, KENT,*

Museum of London Archaeological Services (1994) *Archaeological Site Manual.* 3rd ed.

APPENDIX 1 – Context summary

Castle Dene, Maidstone

Site Code: CDM-EV-08

Context Number	Trench	Type	Interpretation	Description	Extents	Section No	Plan No.	Artefact dating	Comments (Alignment/soil type/Group Number etc)	Assigned Period
100	1	L	Topsoil	Dark grey brown silty clay with moderate rooting and occasional rounded stones	0.00-0.22m	Fig. 4	Fig. 2	x	x	x
101	1	L	Subsoil	Light orange brown silty clay with occasional rounded stone and sand lenses	0.22-0.90m	Fig. 4	x	x	x	x
102	1	L	Natural geology	Light orange brown sandy clay natural – Sandgate Beds	0.90m+	Fig. 4	Fig. 2	x	x	x
200	2	L	Topsoil	As 100 above	0.00-0.21m	Fig. 4	Fig. 2	x	x	x
201	2	L	Subsoil	As 101 above	0.21-0.53m	Fig. 4	x	x	x	x
202	2	L	Natural geology	As 102 above	0.53m+	Fig. 4	Fig. 2	x	x	x
203	2	L	Natural geology	A compact natural sandy gravel seam	0.53m+	Fig. 4	Fig. 2	x	x	x
300	3	L	Topsoil	As 100 above	0.00-0.22m	Fig. 5	Fig. 2	x	x	x
301	3	L	Subsoil	As 101 above	0.22-0.50m	Fig. 5	x	x	x	x
302	3	L	Natural geology	As 102 above	0.50m+	Fig. 5	Fig. 2	x	x	x
303	3	L	Natural geology	A compact natural sandy gravel seam	0.50m+	Fig. 5	Fig. 2	x	x	x
400	4	L	Topsoil	As 100 above	0.00-0.33m	Fig. 5	Fig. 2	x	x	x
401	4	L	Subsoil	As 101 above	0.33-0.64m	Fig. 5	x	x	x	x
402	4	L	Natural geology	As 102 above	0.64m+	Fig. 5	Fig. 2	x	x	x
500	5	L	Topsoil	As 100 above	0.00-0.21m	Fig. 5	Fig. 2	x	x	x
501	5	L	Subsoil	As 101 above	0.21-0.53m	Fig. 5	X	x	x	x
502	5	L	Natural geology	As 102 above	0.53m+	Fig. 5	Fig. 2	x	x	x
600	6	L	Topsoil	As 100 above	0.00-0.21m	Fig. 6	Fig. 2	x	x	x

Context Number	Trench	Type	Interpretation	Description	Extents	Section No	Plan No.	Artefact dating	Comments (Alignment/soil type/Group Number etc)	Assigned Period
601	6	L	Subsoil	As 101 above	0.21-0.49m	Fig. 6	x	x	x	x
602	6	L	Alluvium?	Mid-dark grey silty clay with occasional charcoal flecks and rounded stones	0.49-0.67m	Fig. 6	x	x	x	x
603	6	L	Natural geology	As 102 above	0.67m+	Fig. 6	Fig. 2	x	x	x
700	7	L	Topsoil	As 100 above	0.00-0.41m	Fig. 6	Fig. 2	x	x	x
701	7	L	Subsoil	As 101 above	0.41-0.53m	Fig. 6	x	x	x	x
702	7	L	Natural geology	As 102 above	0.53m+	Fig. 6	Fig. 2	x	x	x
800	8	L	Topsoil	As 100 above	0.00-34m	Fig. 6	x	x	x	x
801	8	L	Subsoil	As 101 above	0.34-0.75m	Fig. 6	x	x	x	x
802	8	L	Natural geology	As 102 above	0.75m+	Fig. 6	Fig. 2	x	x	x

APPENDIX 2 – Geoarchaeological Assessment

CASTLE DENE, MAIDSTONE, KENT: FIELDWORK REPORT

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INTRODUCTION AND GEOLOGICAL CONTEXT

Fieldwork at Castle Dene, Maidstone was carried out in order to assess the nature of the underlying sediment at the site. The site is on the valley-side slope above the right (east) bank of the River Medway on the northern outskirts of Maidstone. The valley-side rises steeply over a distance of *ca.* 0.5km from a level just below 10m OD beside the river to a closed contour at 60m OD. The site is about 0.1km from the river at a level of *ca.* 20m OD. The British Geological Survey (1:50,000 Sheet 288 Maidstone 1976) shows the site to be underlain by the Lower Cretaceous Hythe Beds, described as 'sandy limestone and calcareous sand'. Below the site the valley floor is narrow, with alluvium forming a discontinuous floodplain, no more than 50m in width on either side of the river.

INTERPRETATION

Two trenches to a depth of 2.5m and about 20m apart were opened using a JCB. Both trenches exposed between 0.3m and 0.75m of top soil resting on red to yellow, structureless medium sand. It seems very likely that this sand represents the Hythe Beds, possibly *in situ*, but more likely displaced downhill by natural slope processes and possibly including material from the Sandgate Beds and Folkestone Beds which outcrop successively upslope from the site, above the Hythe Beds; both of which are sandy. These Beds are all bedrock of Lower Cretaceous age, and thus no Holocene alluvium or terrace gravels were present.

APPENDIX 3 – KCC Summary Form

<table>
<tr><td colspan="2">Site Name: Former 11-17 Castle Dene, Maidstone, Kent
SWAT Site Code: CDM-08-EV</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="2">Site Address: As above</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="2">Summary: Under the direction of Dr Paul Wilkinson, Swale & Thames Survey Company (SWAT) carried out an archaeological evaluation at 11-17 Castle Dene, Maidstone, Kent, between the 8th – 10th July 2008. The evaluation, comprising trial trenching was undertaken in order to determine the possible impact of the development on any archaeological remains. The work was carried out in accordance with the requirements set out within an Archaeological Specification (Kent County Council 2008) in discussion with the Archaeological Officer, Kent County Council. Eight evaluation trenches were originally requested. A common stratigraphic sequence was recognised across the site comprising topsoil overlying subsoil and natural geology. No archaeological features or finds were present on site.</td></tr>
<tr><td>District/Unitary: Maidstone</td><td>Parish:</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="2">Period(s):
Tentative: Modern</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="2">NGR (centre of site : 8 figures): NGR: 575412 157884
(NB if large or linear site give multiple NGRs)</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="2">Type of archaeological work (delete)
Evaluation</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="2">Date of Recording: July 2008</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="2">Unit undertaking recording: Swale & Thames Survey Company (SWAT)</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="2">Geology: Hythe Beds and Sandgate Beds</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="2">Title and author of accompanying report:
Britchfield, D (2008) 11-17 Castle Dene, Maidstone, Kent: Archaeological Evaluation</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="2">Summary of fieldwork results (begin with earliest period first, add NGRs where appropriate) As above (cont. on attached sheet)</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="2">Location of archive/finds: SWAT</td></tr>
<tr><td>Contact at Unit: Paul Wilkinson</td><td>Date: 8th October 2008</td></tr>
</table>

APPENDIX 4 – Figures

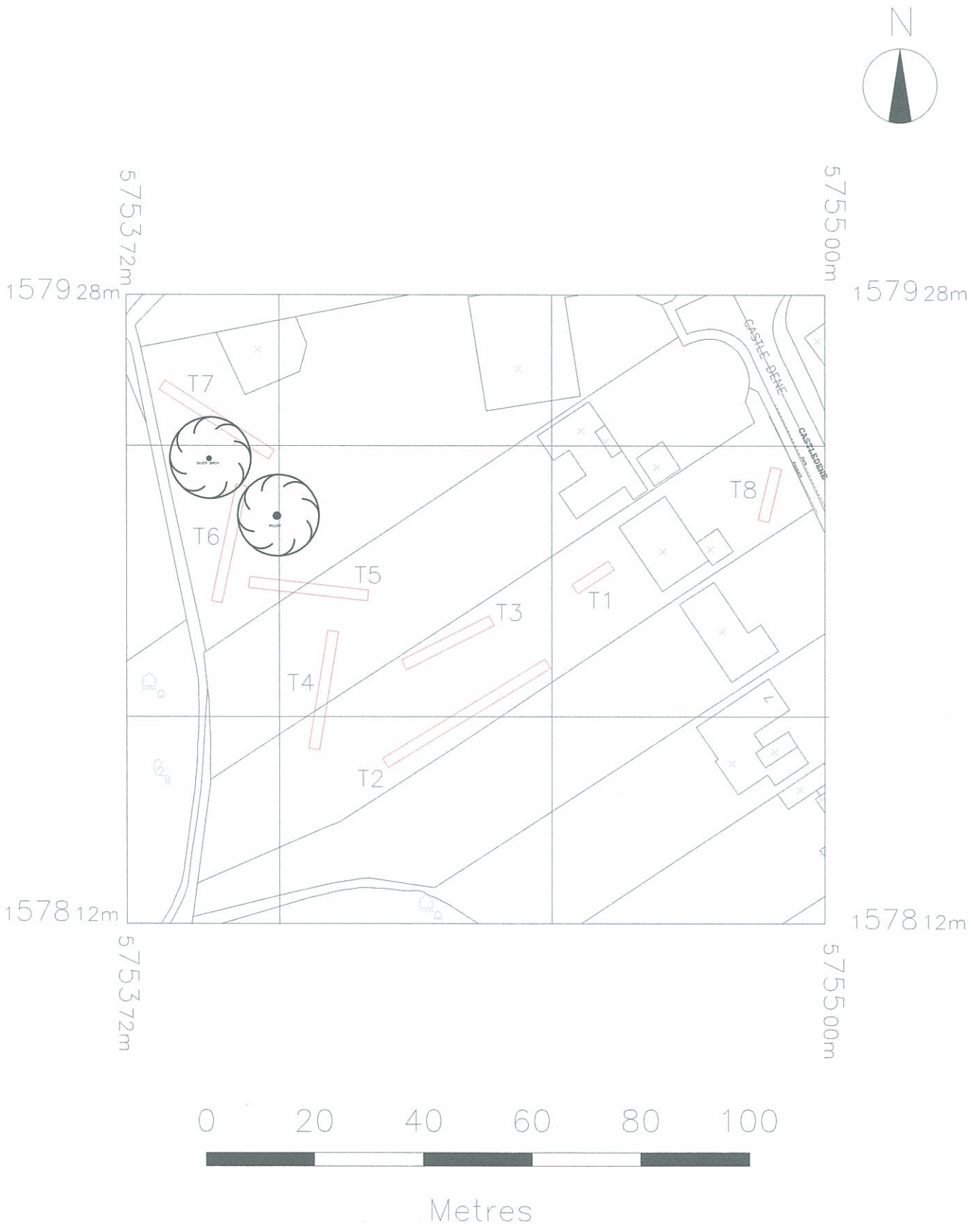

Figure 1: Location of site of proposed development 1:1000

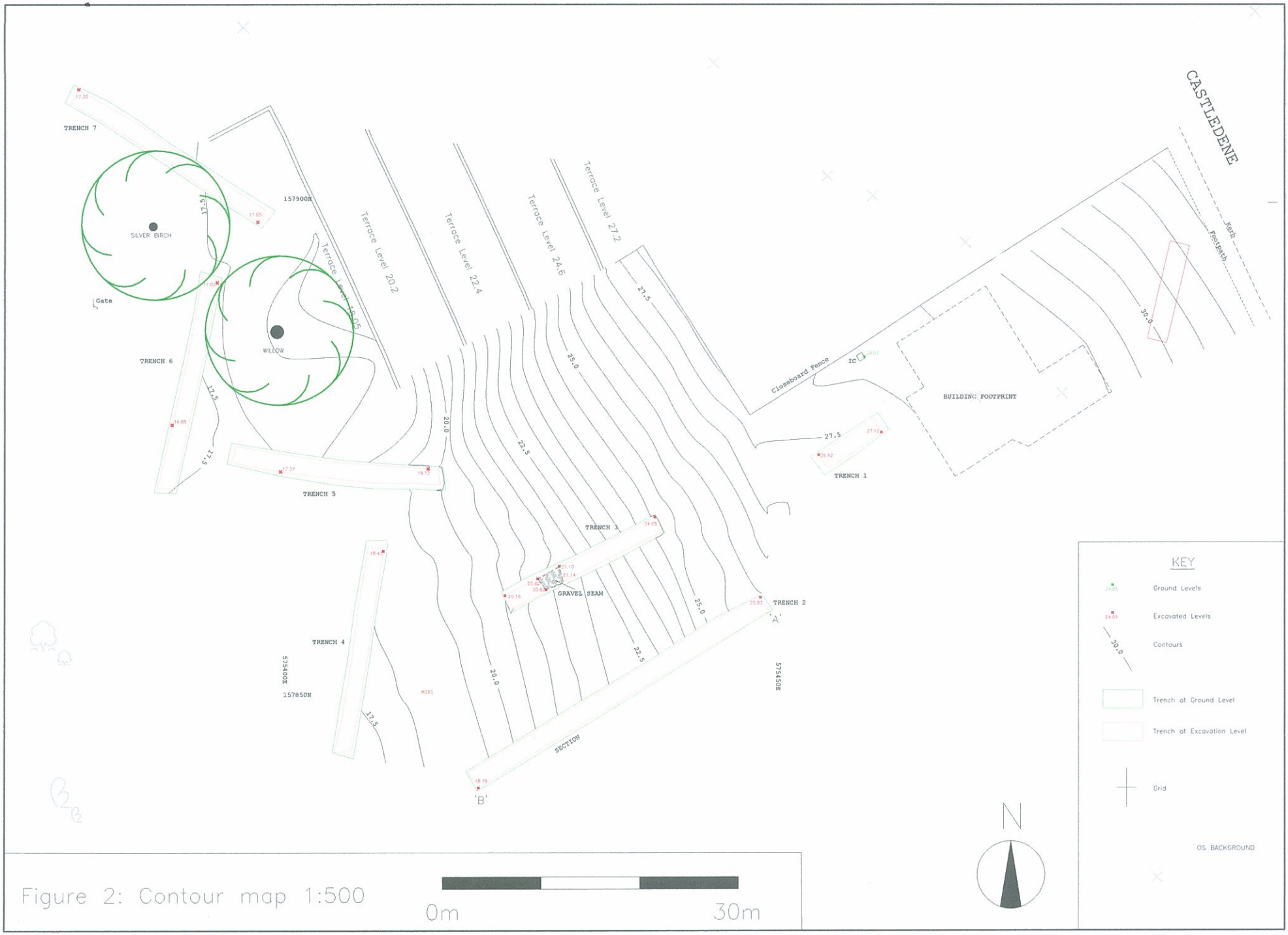

Figure 2: Contour map 1:500

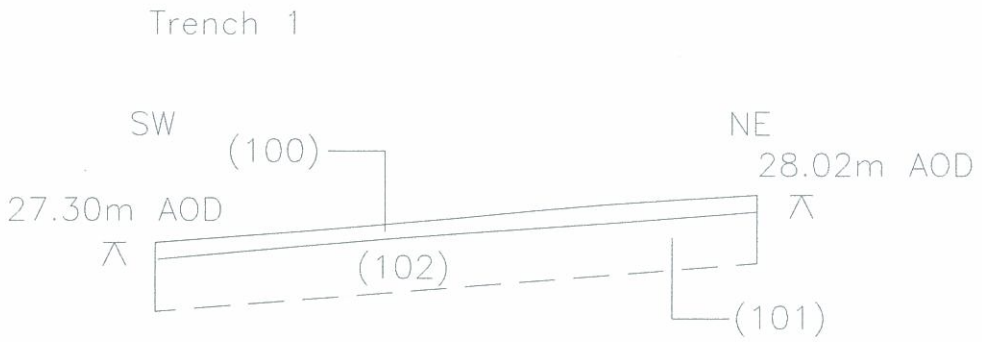

Figure 3: Section 1:100

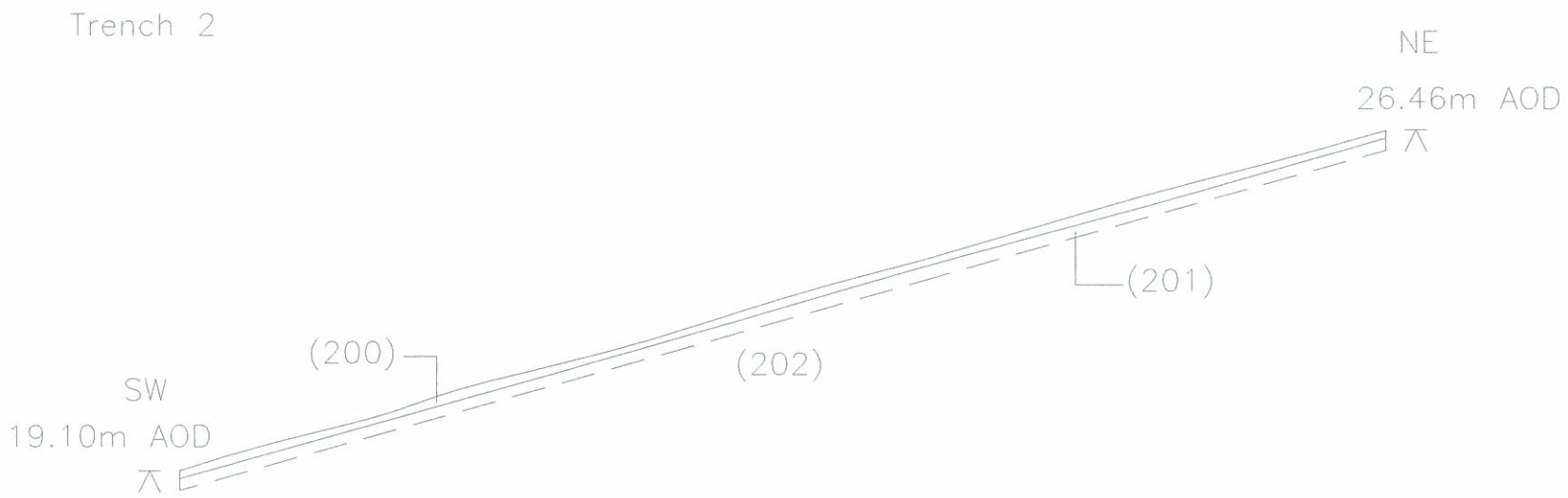

Figure 4a: Section 1:200

Figure 4b: Plan 1:200

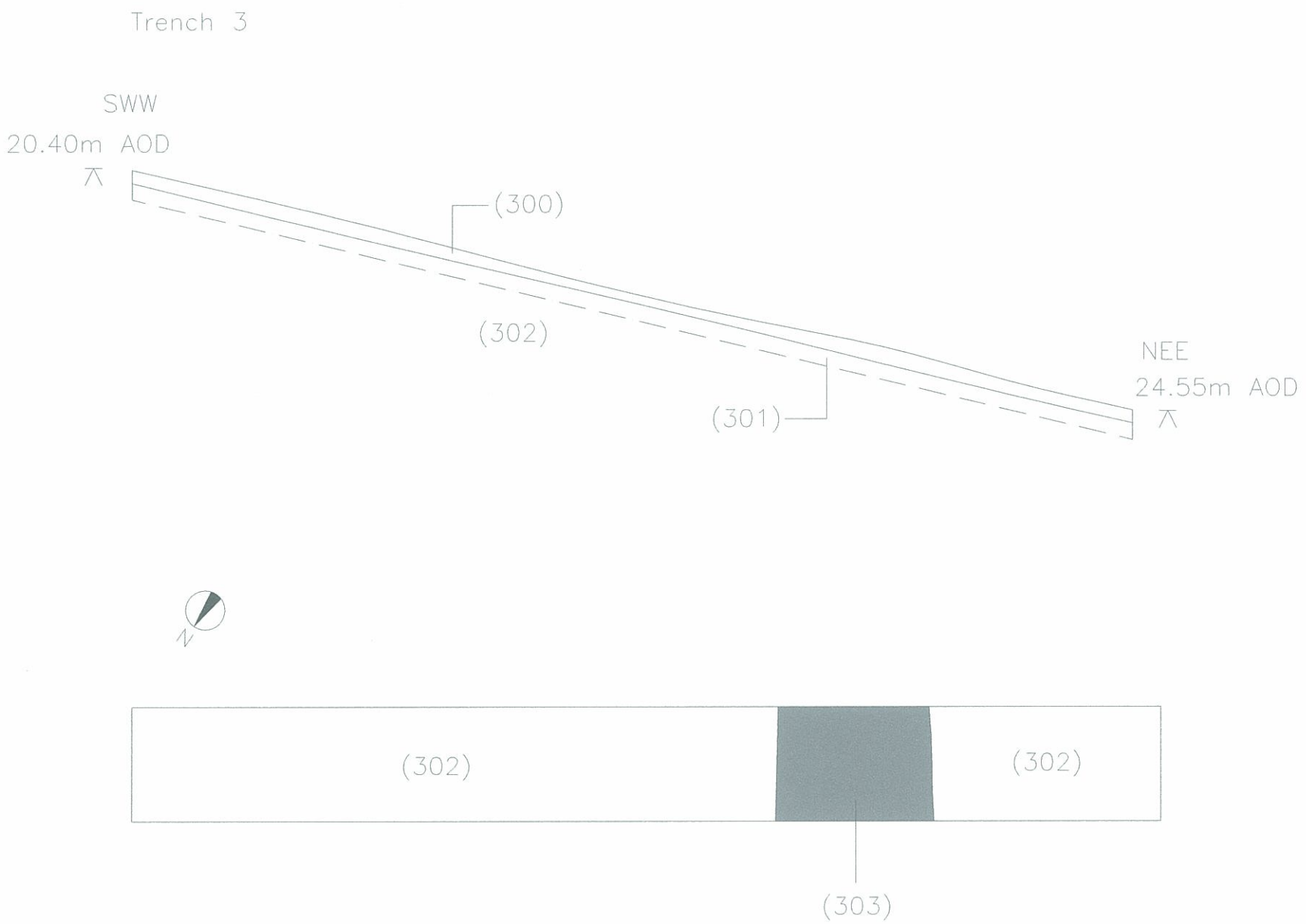

Figure 5: Section and Plan 1:100

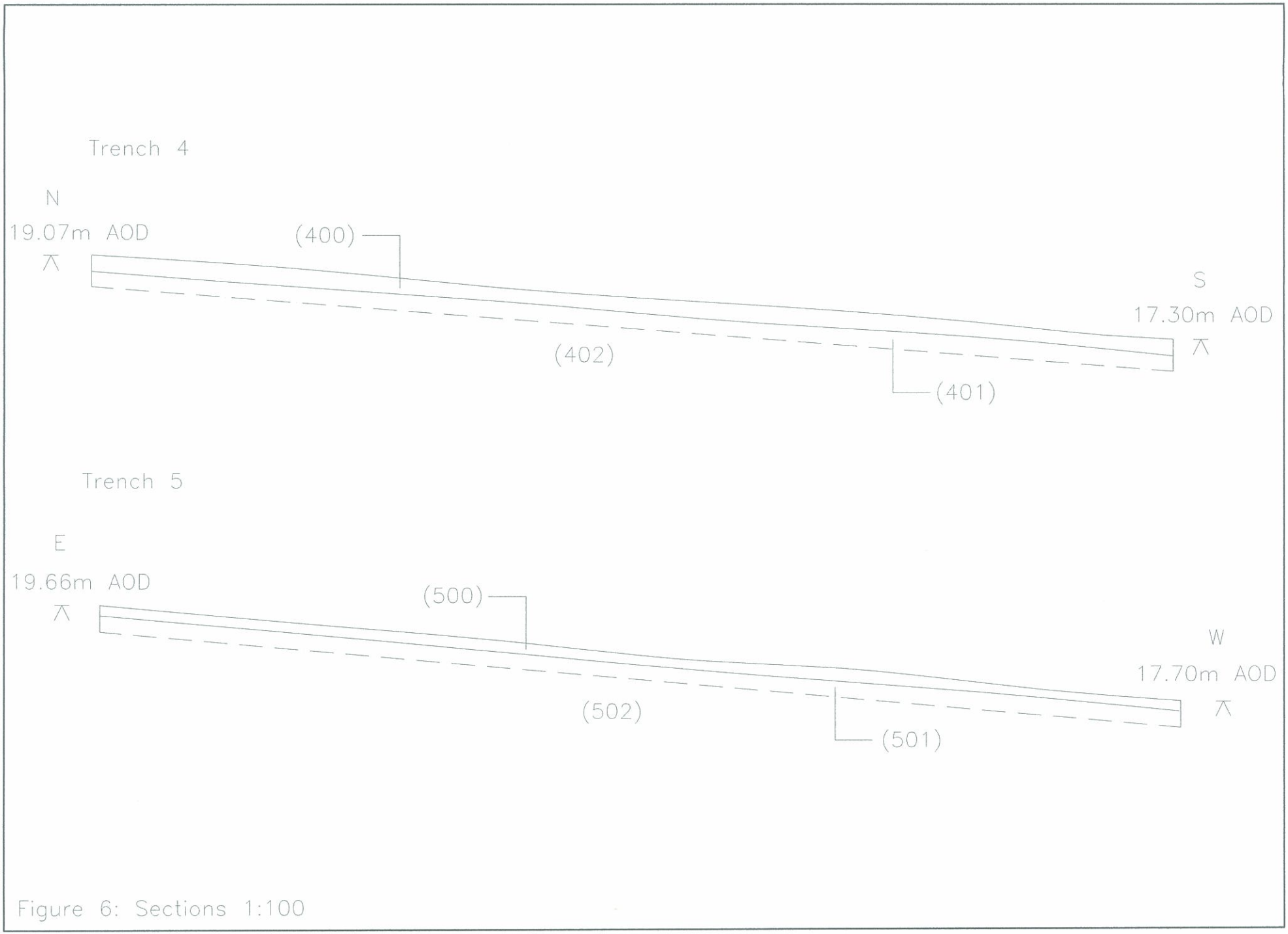

Figure 6: Sections 1:100

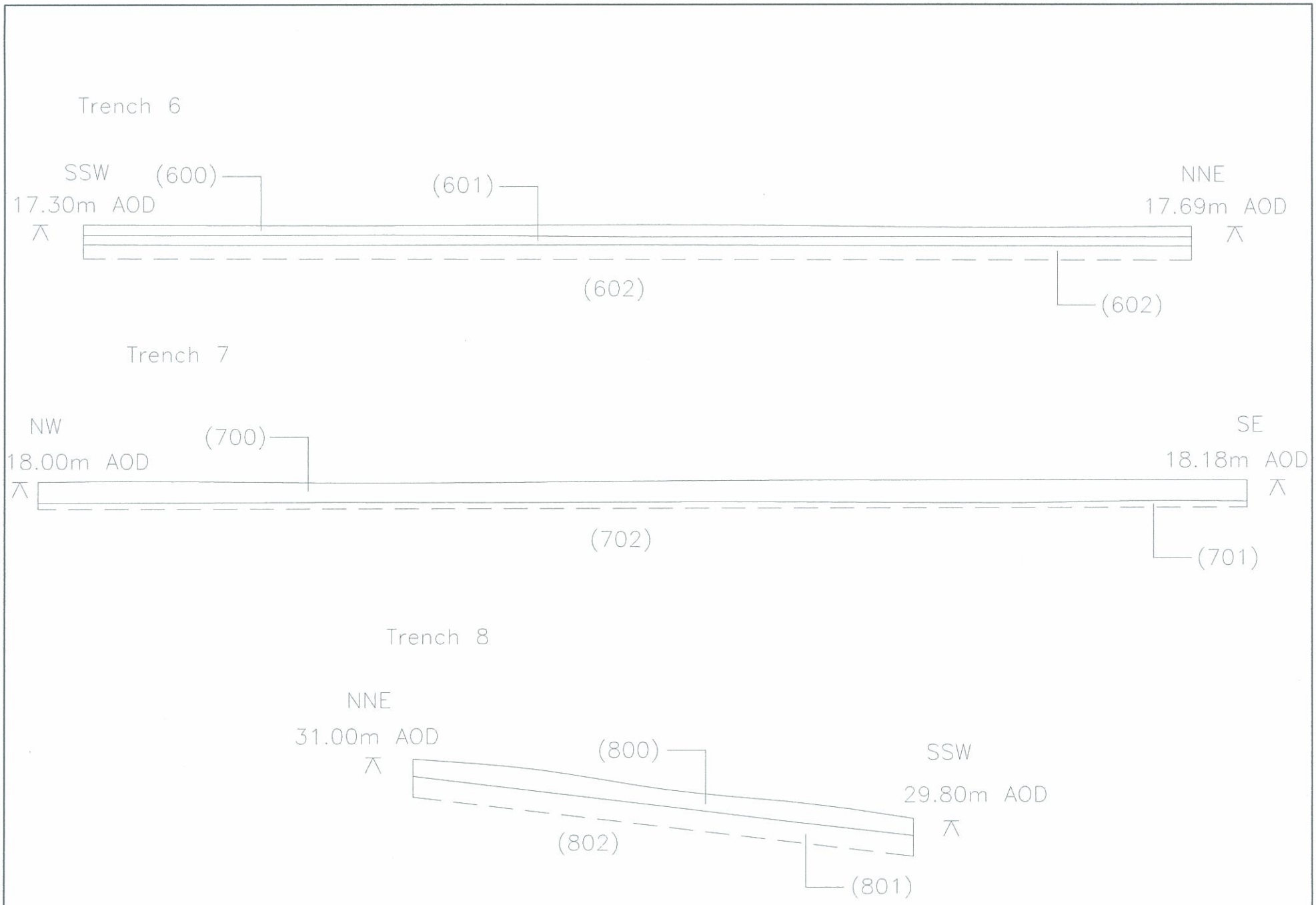

Figure 7: Sections 1:100