Archaeological Evaluation

Land adjacent to the Bull Inn, Bull Lane, Bethersden, Ashford, Kent TN26 3LB

NGR: TQ 92285 39810

Planning Ref: PA/2024/1442 (Appeal Ref. APP/E2205/W/25/3368725)

Site Code: EV BLB 26

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22 September 2026

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Archaeological evaluation report

Project Code:	EV BLB 26
Planning Ref:	PA/2024/1442 (Appeal Ref. APP/E2205/W/25/3368725)
Client:	Esquire Developments Ltd
Local Authority:	Ashford Borough Council
NGR:	TQ 92285 39810 (centred)
Report No:	56410.3.1
Prepared by:	Francis Leung and George Carstairs
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An archaeological evaluation on land adjacent to the Bull Inn, Bull Lane, Bethersden, Ashford, Kent TN26 3LB (NGR: TQ 92285 39810 (centred); Figs 1 and 2) was conducted by Canterbury Archaeological Trust (CAT) between 3 and 8 August 2026. The work was commissioned by Esquire Developments Ltd, who propose the erection of up to 32 dwellings including access from Bull Lane, parking, landscaping, open space and associated infrastructure and earthworks (all matters reserved except 'means of access'; Planning Ref. PA/2024/1442).

This report presents the results of seventeen archaeological evaluation trenches excavated across the proposed development area. The results of the evaluation revealed archaeological features distributed mostly to the southwest and northeast sides of the site, and that this resource survived at a minimum depth of 0.4m below the existing ground level.

Archaeological features were recorded in nine trenches of the seventeen trenches, comprising linear features, pits / post-holes and features which represent in situ burning. Most of the features are undated, with the exception of the linear features from trenches 11 and 17, which could be dated to the Roman period (first century BC – first century AD). The presence of in situ burning, a possible charcoal pit and fragments of fired clay & slag from across the site might suggest production activities in the past. However, due to the lack of dating evidence, it is uncertain whether they all belong to the same period or represent multiple phases of production activity. Based on the results of the evaluation, the scale of the production was probably small and largely local.

Project contributors

Project Manager:	Mark Williams
Supervisor:	George Cartstairs
Fieldwork:	Heather Hanson, Francis Leung
Reporting:	Francis Leung
Finds processing:	Martha Carter, Rosalind Mocroft

Acknowledgements

The project was commissioned by Esquire Developments Ltd.

The archaeological evaluation was monitored by Heritage Conservation Group, Kent County Council.

1 Introduction

1.1.1 An archaeological evaluation on land adjacent to the Bull Inn, Bull Lane, Bethersden, Ashford, Kent TN26 3LB (NGR: TQ 92285 39810, centred; Figs 1 and 2) was conducted by Canterbury Archaeological Trust (CAT) between 3 and 7 August 2026.

1.1.2 The work was commissioned by Esquire Developments Ltd. The proposed development comprises of the erection of up to 32 dwellings including access from Bull Lane, parking, landscaping, open space and associated infrastructure and earthworks (all matters reserved except 'means of access'; Planning Ref. PA/2024/1442).

1.1.3 Ashford District Council, as the Local Planning Authority (LPA), refused planning permission for the proposed development 7 March 2025. An appeal was made by Esquire Developments Ltd on 23 September 2025 and planning permission granted on 9 April 2026, subject to conditions, including the following archaeological condition:

> 31. No development shall take place until the Appellant, or their successors in title, have secured:
>
> i. Archaeological field evaluation works;
>
> ii. Further investigation, recording and reporting as determined by the evaluation; and
>
> iii. A programme of post-excavation assessment and publication all in accordance with a specification and timetable submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority.

1.1.4 The Kent County Council (KCC) Heritage Conservation Group (HCG) act as archaeological advisers to the LPA. The site lies in an area of archaeological potential although a small number of archaeological interventions means that the archaeological record for this area is somewhat lacking in detail. Due to the potential impact that the development works may have on the buried archaeological resource, and in accordance with the provision of the National Planning Policy Framework (MHCLG 2024), Esquire Developments commissioned Canterbury Archaeological Trust (CAT) to prepare a WSI and undertake an archaeological evaluation in order to determine the presence or absence of potential archaeological remains in advance of development works and thereby fulfil part i. of planning condition 31. The archaeological works will be monitored by the KCC HCG.

1.1.5 The archaeological evaluation will comprise the excavation of a total of seventeen evaluation trenches positioned across the footprint of the development scheme. Several trenches (1, 3, 9, 10, 16 & 17) were shifted, rotated or shortened, as the original locations of these trenches were within areas that are now heavily vegetated (see 7. Results section below). Trench 15 was also split into two to avoid a semi mature hawthorn in the middle of the original set out of the trench.

1.1.6 The purpose of the evaluation was to inform on the potential below ground archaeological resource surviving within the proposed development area (PDA). The results will enable the LPA to formulate the scope of any further archaeological mitigation works that may be required in line with existing national and local planning policy and guidance.

1.1.7 This report sets out the results of the evaluation and will seek to define the extent and nature, so far established, of any significant archaeological resource within the PDA.

2 Location, geology and topography

2.1.1 The Proposed Development Area (PDA) is situated on the south-western side of the village of Bethersden, which is located c 8.9 km west-south-west of Ashford in Kent (Fig 1).

2.1.2 The PDA consists of two open and undeveloped fields with tree-lined boundaries, set between Bull Lane to the north and the A28 to the east (Fig 1). It is bounded to the north by Bull Lane, and some residential properties along this road; to the east by the A28, with the corner between the two roads occupied by the Grade II listed Bull Inn, and a further property (Oak Tree Cottage) to its south fronting the A28. It is bounded to the south and west by more undeveloped agricultural land.

2.1.3 Bedrock geology within the PDA is mapped as Weald Clay Formation (mudstone) with no overlying superficial deposits, although a band of Alluvium (clay, silt, sand and gravel) is recorded to the immediate southwest of the site, along with a small area of River Terrace Deposits, 2 (sand and gravel; BGS on-line), with the potential for these superficial deposits to extend within the PDA.

2.1.4 The PDA is located at a height range of c 26–40m above Ordnance Datum (OD), being higher in the north-east extent and lowest to the south-west along the river valley (a minor tributary of the River Beult).

3 Designations

3.1.1 The PDA does not affect or directly impact upon any World Heritage Sites, Scheduled Monuments, Registered Battlefields, Registered Parks and Gardens, or Conservation Areas.

3.1.2 The Grade II Listed Bull Inn (NHLE 1070806; HER TQ 93 NW 49) on Ashford Road, immediately north-east of the PDA, which dates to c 1700. This building had a separate stable-block (NHLE 1070807; HER TQ 93 NW 52) suggesting the inn originated as a coaching inn.

4 Archaeological and historical background

4.1.1 The archaeological and historical potential is based on the proximity of known archaeological and historical remains to the PDA; this was set out within the WSI (CAT 2026) and is reproduced below. The results give reference to the on-line Kent Historic Environment Record (KHER on-line), maintained by KCC HCG, for a search radius of 500m from the centre of the site (NGR TQ 92285 39810) although features located further afield were also considered.

Prehistoric (c 500,000 BP – AD 43)

4.1.2 The site lies in a broad area of potential associated with Palaeolithic activity, with evidence surviving in Alluvial and River Terrace Gravels, some of which may encroach into the south-western end the site. Such riverside locations were often the focus of activity in the prehistoric and later periods (Rogers 2025).

4.1.3 Although this area was probably woodland until the later medieval period there is growing evidence of prehistoric activity close to key routeways through the woodland, such as the Ashford Road, which lies on the eastern side of the PDA (ibid).

Romano-British (AD 43 – 450) and Anglo-Saxon (AD 450–1066)

4.1.4 The earliest evidence of archaeological activity in proximity to the PDA comprises a Dupondius of Domitian (HER TQ 93 NW 2) which was found between 1933 and 1936 in the garden of No. 1 Beacon Cottages in south-east Bethersden, 590m east of the PDA.

4.1.5 Although most likely remaining wooded during this period, there is nonetheless the possibility that isolated farmsteads were developed within cleared areas in the woodlands at this time, which later developed into the medieval and post medieval small holdings known around this site (Rogers 2025).

Medieval (AD 1066–1540) and Post-Medieval (AD 1540-1900)

4.1.6 The site lies south-west of the historic core of Bethersden which may have developed from the twelfth century, focused around St Margaret's Church, which lies c 575m north-east of the PDA. However, there is currently limited evidence for activity associated with the medieval period within the PDA and its immediate environs.

4.1.7 Development remained mostly confined to the area of the church (along The Street) in the early post-medieval period, though there is evidence of some outlying buildings in the vicinity appearing in this period, such as the Grade II Listed Bull Inn (NHLE 1070806; HER TQ 93 NW 49) on Ashford Road, immediately north-east of the PDA, which dates to c 1700. This building had a separate stable-block (NHLE 1070807; HER TQ 93 NW 52) suggesting the inn originated as a coaching inn, suggesting considerable traffic along Ashford Road. However, in the main, in this period the area was dominated by agriculture, with many isolated farmsteads recorded in the vicinity, including:

- Bridge Farm (HER MKE82937) a farmstead with a row plan, 150m south-south-east of the PDA;
- an Outfarm west of Bethersden (HER MKE88692) consisting of a field barn with no associated yard, 210m east-north-east of the PDA;
- Lovelace (HER MKE82940), a dispersed multiyard plan post-medieval farmstead, 230m north of the PDA;
- a yard south of Low Wood (HER MKE82938), recorded as aa regular L-plan post-medieval farmstead, 350m east of the PDA;
- a yard in Bethersden (HER MKE8869), described as an outfarm with a loose-courtyard plan with buildings (including an oast house - HER TQ 94 SW 171) to two sides of the yard and a secondary yard, 470m north-east of the PDA;
- Buckhall Farm (HER MKE82902), a farmstead with a row plan, 530m west of the PDA.

4.1.8 Other activity in the area, recorded on the First and later Editions of the Ordnance Survey map show some minor development and expansion of the village, including the building of a National School (HER TQ 94 SW 157), on School Road, 285m north-east of the PDA.

4.1.9 The HER also records a milestone on Ashford Road (HER TQ 93 NW 91), 270m north-east of the PDA.

Modern (AD 1900-present)

4.1.10 The modern period saw a southerly expansion of the village so that, at present, the site lies immediately south-west of the settlement. The only modern features recorded on the HER are two wartime Anti-Aircraft (Diver) Batteries: number 143 (HER TQ 94 SW 174), located 215m north of the PDA, and number 125 (HER TQ 93 NW 117) located 220m south-west of the PDA, both occupied from 25 June 1944.

4.1.11 Aerial photographs from 1940, 1960 and 1990 show the PDA as undeveloped fields, and more recent satellite images show no significant changes.

5 Aims and objectives

5.1.1 The aim of an archaeological field evaluation as defined by the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists (CIfA; 2023a) is to:

determine, record and report on the nature, extent, preservation and significance of archaeological remains within a defined area. The scope of the work will be described in a project design that is fit for purpose and will be carried out by suitably competent persons in

accordance with that design and the CIfA Code of conduct and give due regard to the guidance for archaeological field evaluation. All archaeological field evaluations will result in a report, published accounts where appropriate, and a stable, ordered, accessible archive.

5.1.2 The evaluation will provide sufficient information for all parties concerned, particularly the LPA, to devise appropriate mitigation strategies, if required. An evaluation may therefore result in the need for an agreed mitigation strategy and the implementation of further archaeological works to fulfil the planning conditions.

5.1.3 The principal objective of the evaluation work is to determine the nature and extent of survival of archaeological remains on the site. The purpose of the evaluation is thus to ascertain the extent, depth below ground surface, depth of deposits, character, significance and condition of any archaeological remains on site.

5.1.4 Site specific objectives were outlined in the WSI (CAT 2026), as follows:

- determine whether any medieval and/or post-medieval features, associated with field boundaries and agricultural activity within the site, remain extant within the PDA;
- place and assess any archaeological remains revealed within the context of other recent investigations in the immediate area and within the setting of the local landscape; and
- identify any later development impacts which may have removed or otherwise compromised the survival of archaeological remains.

5.1.5 Assessment of the evaluation results will provide guidance on what additional mitigation measures would be appropriate. Such measures may, for example, include archaeological excavation prior to development and/or an archaeological watching brief during construction work. The results of the evaluation works will also inform later investigation and assessment/analysis.

6 Methodology

6.1.1 The archaeological investigations were carried out in accordance with the WSI (CAT 2026), and to professional standards as set out in CIfAs' *Standard for archaeological field evaluation* (2023a) and *Universal guidance for archaeological field evaluation* (2023b). CAT is a Registered Archaeological Organisation (RAO) with CIfA and conforms to their by-laws, standards and policy statements.

6.1.2 All archaeological work was undertaken by professional archaeologists in the employ of CAT.

6.1.3 In undertaking all works, the archaeological contractor abided by CIfAs' *Code of Conduct and Code of approved practice for the regulation of contractual arrangements in field archaeology.*

6.1.4 All fieldwork and subsequent reporting were conducted by an archaeologist of recognised competence, suitably experienced in work of this character. Monitoring, management and oversight of the archaeological work was undertaken by Mark Williams, Project Manager at CAT.

6.1.5 The archaeological evaluation comprised the excavation of seventeen trenches within the PDA. Except for trenches 1 & 17, each trench is cut to a length of 30m and to a width of 2m (see 7. Results section below). Mechanical excavation was limited to the removal of topsoil and subsoil to expose the uppermost archaeological deposits or the natural geological surface, whichever was higher. Ground reduction was undertaken under constant archaeological supervision using a 360° tracked mechanical excavator fitted with a flat-bladed grading bucket. All undifferentiated overburden was removed in spits of *c* 100–200mm thickness.

6.1.6 Following mechanical clearance, the archaeological features and the exposed soil profiles were photographed and recorded on CAT developed recording app *Stratstack*. The trenches and archaeological features were tied to the Ordnance Survey (OS) grid in real time using a differential GNSS Leica Viva GS08, using Leica Smart Net data via live internet feed with a positional accuracy of better than 20mm (3D).

6.2 Health, safety and welfare

6.2.1 All site investigation works were conducted in accordance with a project specific risk assessment and method statement (CAT 2026), and CAT's Company Policy and Procedural Manual for Health, Safety and Welfare (CAT 2024c).

6.2.2 All CAT operatives held valid Construction Skills Certification Scheme (CSCS) cards. CAT is a member of Constructionline and is Acclaim SSIP (Safety Schemes in Procurement) accredited.

6.2.3 All necessary precautions to the satisfaction of the statutory or other service authorities and the landowner concerned were taken to avoid interference with, or damage to, their services, and to comply with any applicable codes of practice. Prior to excavation, all trench locations were scanned using a cable avoidance tool.

6.3 Project archive

6.3.1 The project archive has been prepared in accordance with the procedures laid down in Historic England's 2015 *Management of Research Projects in the Historic Environment* (MoRPHE), the archiving guidelines set out by the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists (CIfA 2020), and the Archaeological Archives Forum guidelines (Brown 2011).

6.3.2 The results from this work are held within the site archive under project code EV BLB 26, archive number [56410].

6.3.3 All fieldwork records have been collated and checked for consistency and a full digital copy made. A digitised plan of the archaeological resource has been compiled using AutoCAD and QGIS. Photographic records have been catalogued and cross-referenced with trench records.

6.3.4 All retained artefacts recovered during the project have been processed, catalogued, and packaged in accordance with the United Kingdom Institute for Conservation guidelines (UKIC 1990). The finds have all been washed and marked where appropriate.

6.3.5 All bulk finds are presently retained as part of the project archive and are stored by context in polybags held in 'standard' ($0.4 \times 0.3 \times 0.2 m^3$ with 0.1m deep lift off lid, capacity $0.03 m^3$) or 'half sized' ($0.4 \times 0.3 \times 0.1 m^2$ with 0.1m deep lift off lid, capacity 0.015 cubic metres) brass wire-stitched museum boxes (1.9mm double kraft-lined, pH 6.5–8) supplied by the Ryder Box Co.

6.3.6 All registered finds have been stabilised and are stored in sealable plastic containers, with silica gel and a humidity indicator strip, as required.

6.3.7 The project archive is presently held in the offices of CAT (92a Broad Street, Canterbury, Kent, CT1 2LU). Upon completion of the project, the project archive will be transferred to an approved local archive receiving body as recommended by KCC.

7 Results

7.1 Introduction

7.1.1 All seventeen trenches were cut during the evaluation. Several trenches (1, 3, 9, 10, 16 & 17) were shifted, rotated or shortened, as the original locations of these trenches were within areas that are now heavily vegetated. Trench 15 was also split into two to avoid a semi mature hawthorn in the middle of the original set out of the trench.

7.1.2 The evaluation results are presented in trench tables listed below. Context data is expressed as thickness of deposit/feature and depth below ground level (BGL) in metres to the top of the deposit.

7.2 Geology

7.2.1 Bedrock geology within the PDA is mapped as Weald Clay Formation (mudstone) with no overlying superficial deposits. This was observed in all trenches, at a depth of between between 0.4m – 0.7m BGL.

7.3 Trench 1

(Figure 2)

7.3.1 Trench 1 was aligned north to south and measured 25m in length and 2.1m in width. The top of the geology was recorded at a depth of 0.6m(N) – 0.6m (S) BGL.

Table 1. Trench 1 context summary

TR 1	Length: 25m	Width: 2m	Orientation: N-S	Ground level: 35.073m OD (N) – 34.227m OD (S)		
Context	**Interpretation**	**Description**	**Thickness (m) N-S**	**Depth BGL N-S (m)**	**Date**	
100	Topsoil	Light greyish brown friable clayey silt	0.12 - 0.1	--	Modern	
101	Subsoil	Light brown firm clayey silt, with rare small manganese inclusion	0.27 - 0.28	0.12 – 0.1	Undated	
102	Possible mixed layer?	Mid yellowish brown very firm silty clay, with occasional small manganese inclusion	0.18	0.39 – 0.41	Undated	
103	Geology	Light to mid yellowish brown mottled with light grey very firm silty clay, with occasional small manganese inclusion	--	0.6 – 0.6	--	

7.3.2 No archaeological features or deposits were observed. A southwest-northeast aligned field drain was noted towards the north end of the trench.

7.3.3 The natural geology (103) was sealed by a possible mixed layer (102). (102) was then overlain by subsoil (101) and topsoil (100).

7.4 Trench 2

(Figures 2 and 3; Plate 6)

7.4.1 Trench 2 was aligned east to west and measured 30m by 2m. The top of the bedrock geology was encountered at 0.48m (E) – 0.44m (W) BGL.

Table 2. Trench 2 context summary

TR 2	Length: 30m	Width: 2.1m	Orientation: E-W	Ground level: 34.895m OD (E) – 34.789m OD (W)		
Context	**Interpretation**	**Description**	**Thickness (m) E-W**	**Depth BGL (m) E-W**	**Date**	
200	Topsoil	Light greyish brown friable clayey silt	0.11 - 0.09	--	Modern	

201	Subsoil	Light brown firm clayey silt, with rare small manganese inclusion	0.21 - 0.27	0.11 - 0.09	Undated
202	Possible mixed layer?	Mid yellowish brown very firm silty clay, with occasional small manganese inclusion	0.19 – 0.17	0.36 – 0.4	Undated
203	Fill of [204]	Mid yellowish brown mottled with light grey, with occasional small manganese inclusion	0.09	0.55	Undated
204	Cut of gully	SE-NW aligned linear. L: 1.7m W: 0.58m (Not excavated)	0.09	0.55	Undated
205	Fill of [206]	Mid-dark greyish brown loose clayey silt (Not excavated)	--	0.55	Modern
206	Cut of modern feature	NW-SE aligned linear. L: 1.8m W: 0.58m (Not excavated)	--	0.55	Modern
207	Geology	Light to mid yellowish brown mottled with light grey very firm silty clay, with occasional small manganese inclusion	--	0.48 – 0.44	--

7.4.2 Trench 2 contained a southeast-northwest aligned gully/ linear feature [204] towards the east end of the trench. This feature is undated. An additional modern feature [206], southeast-northwest aligned, was noted to the west end of the trench. This modern feature was not excavated.

7.4.3 The feature [204] was sealed by a possible mixed layer (202). (202) was then overlain by subsoil (201) and topsoil (200).

7.5 Trench 3

(Figures 2 and 3)

7.5.1 Trench 3 was aligned north to south and measured 30m by 2m. The trench was shifted 9.7m south from the original location. The top of the bedrock geology was encountered at 0.55m (N) – 0.55m (S) BGL.

Table 3. Trench 3 context summary

TR 3	Length: 30m	Width: 2m	Orientation: N-S	Ground level: 35.51m OD (N) – 34.606m OD (S)		
Context	**Interpretation**	**Description**		**Thickness (m) N-S**	**Depth BGL (m) N-S**	**Date**
300	Topsoil	Mid greyish brown friable sandy silt		0.25	--	Modern
301	Subsoil	Mid greyish brown firm silty clay		0.3	0.25	Undated
302	Geology	Mid yellowish red friable silty clay with rare manganese inclusion		--	0.55	--

7.5.2 No archaeological features or deposits were observed. A northwest-southeast aligned field drain was noted towards the south end of the trench.

7.5.3 The natural geology (302) was sealed by subsoil (301). (301) was then overlain by topsoil (300).

7.6 Trench 4

(Figures 2 and 4; Plates 3 & 7)

7.6.1 Trench 4 was aligned northeast to southwest and measured 30m by 2m. The top of the bedrock geology was encountered at 0.7m (NE) – 0.64m (SW) BGL.

Table 4. Trench 4 context summary

TR 4	Length: 30m	Width: 2m	Orientation: NE-SW	Ground level: 36.4m OD (NE) – 34.772m OD (SW)		
Context	**Interpretation**	**Description**		**Thickness (m) NE-SW**	**Depth BGL (m) NE-SW**	**Date**

400	Topsoil	Light greyish brown friable clayey silt	0.13 – 0.14	--	Modern
401	Subsoil	Light brown firm clayey silt, with rare small manganese inclusion	0.35 – 0.34	0.13 – 0.14	Undated
402	Possible mixed layer?	Mid yellowish brown very firm silty clay, with occasional small manganese inclusion	0.25 – 0.25	0.39 – 0.39	Undated
403	Fill of [404]	Light yellowish grey very firm silty clay	0.08	0.66	Undated
404	Cut of possible linear	NW-SE aligned linear with concave sides and flat base. L: 2m W: 0.74m	0.08	0.66	Undated
405	Geology	Light to mid yellowish brown mottled with light grey very firm silty clay, with occasional small manganese inclusion	--	0.7 – 0.64	--

7.6.2 Trench 4 contained a southeast-northwest aligned possible linear feature [404] towards the centre of the trench. This feature is undated.

7.6.3 The feature was sealed by a possible mixed layer (402). (402) was then overlain by subsoil (401) and topsoil (400).

7.7 Trench 5

(Figure 2)

7.7.1 Trench 5 was aligned north to south and measured 30m by 2m. The top of the bedrock geology was encountered at 0.5m (N) – 0.5m (S) BGL.

Table 5. Trench 5 context summary

TR 5	Length: 30m	Width: 2m	Orientation: N-S	Ground level: 37.632m OD (N) – 36.867m OD (S)		
Context	**Interpretation**	**Description**		**Thickness (m) NW-SE**	**Depth BGL (m) NW-SE**	**Date**
500	Topsoil	Mid greyish brown friable sandy silt		0.2	--	Modern
501	Subsoil	Mid greyish brown firm silty clay		0.3	0.2	Undated
502	Possible paleochannel	Dark brown manganese clay spread. L: 3.1m W: 1.8m (Not excavated)		--	0.5	Geological
503	Geology	Mid yellowish red friable silty clay with rare manganese inclusion		--	0.5	--

7.7.2 No archaeological features or deposits were observed. However, a possible paleochannel was noted towards the centre of the trench. This geological feature was not excavated.

7.7.3 The natural geology (503) was sealed by subsoil (501). (501) was then overlain by topsoil (500).

7.8 Trench 6

(Figure 2)

7.8.1 Trench 6 was aligned east to west and measured 30m by 2m. The top of the bedrock geology was encountered at 0.54m (E) – 0.58m (W) BGL.

Table 6. Trench 6 context summary

TR 2	Length: 30m	Width: 2m	Orientation: E-W	Ground level: 33.786m OD (E) – 33.757m OD (W)		
Context	**Interpretation**	**Description**		**Thickness (m) E-W**	**Depth BGL (m) E-W**	**Date**
600	Topsoil	Light greyish brown friable clayey silt		0.14 - 0.11	--	Modern
601	Subsoil	Light brown firm clayey silt, with occasional small manganese inclusion		0.23 – 0.23	0.14 - 0.11	Undated
602	Possible mixed layer?	Mid yellowish brown very firm silty clay, with occasional small manganese inclusion		0.15 – 0.19	0.4 – 0.37	Undated

603	Geology	Light to mid yellowish brown mottled with light grey very firm silty clay, with occasional small manganese inclusion	--	0.54 – 0.58	--

7.8.2 No archaeological features or deposits were observed.

7.8.3 The natural geology (603) was sealed by a possible mixed layer (602). (602) was then overlain by subsoil (601) and topsoil (600).

7.9 Trench 7

(Figure 2)

7.9.1 Trench 7 was aligned north to south and measured 30m by 2m. The top of the bedrock geology was encountered at 0.58m (N) – 0.54m (S) BGL.

Table 7. Trench 7 context summary

TR 7	Length: 30m	Width: 2m	Orientation: N-S	Ground level: 34.124m OD (N) – 33.387m OD (S)		
Context	**Interpretation**	**Description**		**Thickness (m) N-S**	**Depth BGL (m) N-S**	**Date**
700	Topsoil	Light greyish brown friable clayey silt		0.13 – 0.13	--	Modern
701	Subsoil	Light brown firm clayey silt, with occasional small manganese inclusion		0.37 – 0.3	0.13 – 0.13	Undated
702	Possible mixed layer?	Mid yellowish brown very firm silty clay, with occasional small manganese inclusion		0.21 – 0.23	0.45 – 0.38	Undated
703	Geology	Light to mid yellowish brown mottled with light grey very firm silty clay, with occasional small manganese inclusion		--	0.58 – 0.54	--

7.9.2 No archaeological features or deposits were observed.

7.9.3 The natural geology (703) was sealed by a possible mixed layer (702). (702) was then overlain by subsoil (701) and topsoil (700).

7.10 Trench 8

(Figure 2)

7.10.1 Trench 8 was aligned east to west and measured 30m by 2m. The top of the bedrock geology was encountered at 0.47m (E) – 0.47m (W) BGL.

Table 8. Trench 8 context summary

TR 8	Length: 30m	Width: 2m	Orientation: E-W	Ground level: 34.33m OD (E) – 33.929m OD (W)		
Context	**Interpretation**	**Description**		**Thickness (m) E-W**	**Depth BGL (m) E-W**	**Date**
800	Topsoil	Mid greyish brown friable sandy silt		0.12 - 0.13	--	Modern
801	Subsoil	Mid greyish brown firm silty clay		0.35 - 0.34	0.12 - 0.13	Undated
802	Geology	Mid yellowish red friable silty clay with rare manganese inclusion		--	0.47 - 0.47	--

7.10.2 No archaeological features or deposits were observed. A southeast-northwest field drain was noted to the west end of the trench.

7.10.3 The natural geology (802) was sealed by subsoil (801). (801) was then overlain by topsoil (800).

7.11 Trench 9

(Figure 2)

7.11.1 Trench 9 was aligned northwest to southeast and measured 30m by 2m. The trench was shifted 4m northeast from the original location. The top of the bedrock geology was encountered at 0.48m (NW) – 0.5m (SE) BGL.

Table 9. Trench 9 context summary

TR 9	Length: 30m	Width: 2m	Orientation: NW-SE	Ground level: 35.365m OD (NW) – 35.648m OD (SE)		
Context	**Interpretation**	**Description**		**Thickness (m) NW-SE**	**Depth BGL (m) NW-SE**	**Date**
900	Topsoil	Mid greyish brown friable sandy silt		0.14 - 0.2	--	Modern
901	Subsoil	Mid greyish brown firm silty clay		0.34 – 0.3	0.14 - 0.2	Undated
902	Geology	Mid yellowish red friable silty clay with rare manganese inclusion		--	0.48 – 0.5	--

7.11.2 No archaeological features or deposits were observed.

7.11.3 The natural geology (902) was sealed by subsoil (901). (901) was then overlain by topsoil (900).

7.12 Trench 10

(Figures 2 and 4; Plates 4, 8 & 9)

7.12.1 Trench 10 was aligned north-east to south-west and measured 30m by 2m. The trench was shifted 4.5m southeast from the original location. The top of the bedrock geology was encountered at 0.48m (NE) – 0.5m (SW) BGL.

Table 10. Trench 10 context summary

TR 10	Length: 30m	Width: 2m	Orientation: NE-SW	Ground level: 0.48m OD (NE) – 0.5m OD (SW)		
Context	**Interpretation**	**Description**		**Thickness (m) NE-SW**	**Depth BGL (m) NE-SW**	**Date**
1000	Topsoil	Light brownish grey friable clayey silt		0.14 - 0.22	--	Modern
1001	Fill of [1003]	Light grey friable silty clay, with rare possible slag fragments		0.15	0.5	Undated
1002	Fill of [1003]	Mid yellowish red friable silty clay. Finds: frequent large slags and rare daubs		0.4	0.5	Undated
1003	Cut of Feature	Roughly N-S aligned, feature with concave sides and rounded base. L: 3m W: 0.7m		0.4	0.5	Undated
1004	Fill of [1005]	Light yellowish red friable silty clay		0.17	0.5	Undated
1005	Cut of pit	Sub-circular pit with steep sides and rounded base		0.17	0.5	Undated
1006	Geology	Mid yellowish red friable silty clay with rare manganese inclusion		--	0.48 – 0.5	--
1007	Subsoil	Mid greyish brown firm silty clay		0.34 - 0.28	0.14 - 0.22	Undated

7.12.2 Trench 10 contained a southwest-northeast aligned feature [1003] and a pit [1005] towards the south of the trench. Both features are undated,

7.12.3 The features were sealed by subsoil (1007). (1007) was then overlain by topsoil (1000).

7.13 Trench 11

(Figures 2 and 5; Plates 5 & 10)

7.13.1 Trench 11 was aligned north to south and measured 30m by 2m. The top of the bedrock geology was encountered at 0.49m (N) – 0.46m (S) BGL.

Table 11. Trench 11 context summary

TR 11	Length: 30m	Width: 2m	Orientation: N-S	Ground level: 33.541m OD (N) – 32.745m OD (S)		
Context	**Interpretation**	**Description**		**Thickness (m) N-S**	**Depth BGL (m) N-S**	**Date**
1100	Topsoil	Light greyish brown friable clayey silt		0.11 – 0.12	--	Modern
1101	Subsoil	Light brown firm clayey silt, with occasional small manganese inclusion		0.2 – 0.2	0.11 – 0.12	Undated
1102	Possible mixed layer?	Mid yellowish brown very firm silty clay, with occasional small manganese inclusion		0.18 – 0.14	0.31 – 0.32	Undated
1103	Fill of [1104]	Light greyish brown very firm silty clay with rare small charcoal inclusion and rare small manganese inclusion. Finds: occasional pottery sherds and rare slags		0.1	0.46	Roman
1104	Cut of linear	NW-SE aligned linear with concave sides and rounded base. (L; 2.44m W: 0.54m)		0.1	0.46	Roman
1105	Fill of [1106]	Light greyish brown very firm silty clay, with rare small manganese inclusion		0.03	0.46	Undated
1106	Cut of pit/ posthole	Semi-circular pit/ posthole with concave sides and flat base (L: 0.3 W: 0.18)		0.03	0.46	Undated
1107	Geology	Light to mid yellowish brown mottled with light grey very firm silty clay, with occasional small manganese inclusion		--	0.49 – 0.46	--

7.13.2 Trench 11 contained a southeast-northwest aligned linear feature [1104] and a pit / posthole [1106] towards the north end of the trench. The linear feature [1004], Roman in date, is cutting the early but undated pit [1106].

7.13.3 These features were sealed by a possible mixed layer (1102). (1102) was then overlain by subsoil (1101) and topsoil (1100).

7.14 Trench 12

(Figures 2 and 5; Plate 11)

7.14.1 Trench 12 was aligned east to west and measured 30m by 2m. The top of the bedrock geology was encountered at 0.4m (E) – 0.4m (W) BGL.

Table 12. Trench 12 context summary

TR 12	Length: 30m	Width: 2m	Orientation: E-W	Ground level: 32.82m OD (E) – 32.967m OD (W)		
Context	**Interpretation**	**Description**		**Thickness (m) E-W**	**Depth BGL (m) E-W**	**Date**
1200	Topsoil	Light yellowish grey friable clayey silt with rare manganese inclusion		0.4	--	Modern
1201	Fill of [1202]	Light yellowish grey friable silty clay with frequent charcoal inclusion		0.1	0.4	Undated
1202	Cut of possible pit	Shallow circular pit with concave sides and flat base. L: 2m W: 1.91m		0.1	0.4	Undated
1203	Geology	Mid yellowish red friable silty clay with rare manganese inclusion		--	0.4	--

7.14.2 Trench 12 contained a possible undated charcoal filled pit [1202] towards the east, though it was also suggested to be a tree bowl.

7.14.3 The feature was sealed by topsoil (1200).

7.15 Trench 13

(Figure 2)

7.15.1 Trench 13 was aligned north to south and measured 30m by 2m. The top of the bedrock geology was encountered at 0.47m (N) – 0.55m (S) BGL.

Table 13. Trench 13 context summary

TR 13	Length: 30m	Width: 2m	Orientation: N-S	Ground level: 33.92m OD (N) – 33.596m OD (S)		
Context	**Interpretation**	**Description**		**Thickness (m) N-S**	**Depth BGL (m) N-S**	**Date**
1300	Topsoil	Mid greyish brown friable sandy silt		0.13 – 0.25	--	Modern
1301	Subsoil	Dark to mid greyish brown firm sandy clay silt		0.34 – 0.3	0.13 – 0.25	Undated
1302	Geology	Mid yellowish red friable silty clay with rare manganese inclusion		--	0.47 – 0.55	Undated

7.15.2 No archaeological features or deposits were observed.

7.15.3 The natural geology (1302) was sealed by subsoil (1301). (1301) was then overlain by topsoil (1300).

7.16 Trench 14

(Figure 2)

7.16.1 Trench 14 was aligned east to west and measured 30m by 2m. The top of the bedrock geology was encountered at 0.55m (E) – 0.5m (W) BGL.

Table 14. Trench 14 context summary

TR 14	Length: 30m	Width: 2m	Orientation: E-W	Ground level: 35.311m OD (E) – 34.347m OD (W)		
Context	**Interpretation**	**Description**		**Thickness (m) E-W**	**Depth BGL (m) E-W**	**Date**
1400	Topsoil	Mid greyish brown friable sandy silt		0.25 – 0.2	--	Modern
1401	Subsoil	Dark to mid greyish brown firm sandy clay silt		0.3 – 0.3	0.25 – 0.2	Undated
1402	Geology	Mid yellowish red friable silty clay with rare manganese inclusion		--	0.55 – 0.5	--

7.16.2 No archaeological features or deposits were observed.

7.16.3 The natural geology (1402) was sealed by subsoil (1401). (1401) was then overlain by topsoil (1400).

7.17 Trench 15

(Figure 2)

7.17.1 Trench 15 was aligned north to south. It is split into upper and lower trenches. The upper trench measures 16m by 2m and the lower trench measures 12m by 2m. The top of the bedrock geology was encountered at 0.5m (N) – 0.55m (S) BGL.

Table 15. Trench 15 context summary

TR 15	Length: 16m and 12m	Width: 2m	Orientation: N-S	Ground level: 35.149m OD (N) – 35.555m OD (S)		
Context	**Interpretation**	**Description**		**Thickness (m) NW-SE**	**Depth BGL (m) NW-SE**	**Date**
1500	Topsoil	Mid greyish brown friable sandy clay silt		0.25	--	Modern
1501	Subsoil	Dark to mid greyish brown sandy clay silt		0.25	0.25	Undated
1502	Geology	Mid yellowish red friable silty clay with rare manganese inclusion		--	0.5	--

7.17.2 Trench 15 was split into two parts to avoid a semi mature hawthorn in the middle of the original set out of the trench.

7.17.3 No archaeological features or deposits were observed.

7.17.4 The natural geology (1502) was sealed by subsoil (1501). (1501) was then overlain and topsoil (1500).

7.18 Trench 16

(Figure 2)

7.18.1 Trench 16 was rotated from the original west to east to the present southwest to northeast alignment. It measured 30m by 2m. The trench. The top of the bedrock geology was encountered at 0.55m (NW) – 0.55m (SE) BGL.

Table 16. Trench 16 context summary

TR 16	Length: 30m	Width: 2m	Orientation: SW-NE	Ground level: 33.02m OD (SW) – 33.517m OD (NE)		
Context	**Interpretation**	**Description**		**Thickness (m) NW-SE**	**Depth BGL (m) NW-SE**	**Date**
1600	Topsoil	Mid greyish brown friable sandy clay silt		0.25	--	Modern
1601	Subsoil	Dark to mid greyish brown sandy clay silt		0.3	0.25	Undated
1602	Geology	Mid yellowish red friable silty clay with rare manganese inclusion		--	0.55	--

7.18.2 No archaeological features or deposits were observed.

7.18.3 The natural geology (1602) was sealed by subsoil (1601). (1601) was then overlain and topsoil (1600).

7.19 Trench 17

(Figures 2 and 6; Plate 12)

7.19.1 Trench 17 was rotated from the original west to east to the present southwest to northeast alignment. It measured 20m by 2m. The top of the bedrock geology was encountered at 0.4m (SW) – 0.45m (NE) BGL.

Table 17. Trench 17 context summary

TR 17	Length: 20m	Width: 2m	Orientation: SWN-E	Ground level: 31.744m OD (SW) – 32.716m OD (NE)		
Context	**Interpretation**	**Description**		**Thickness (m) SW-NE**	**Depth BGL (m) SW-NE**	**Date**
1700	Topsoil	Mid greyish brown friable sandy silt		0.2 – 0.25	--	Modern
1701	Subsoil	Mid greyish brown firm silty clay		0.2 – 0.25	0.2 – 0.25	Undated
1702	Fill of [1703]	Mid greyish brown firm silty clay. Finds: pottery sherds and slags		0.15	0.4	Roman
1703	Cut of linear	W-E aligned linear with flat sides and rounded base. (L: 2.5m+ W: 0.55m)		0.15	0.4	Roman
1704	Geology	Mid yellowish red friable silty clay with rare manganese inclusion		--	0.4 – 0.45	-

7.19.2 Trench 17 contained a southeast-northwest aligned linear feature [1703] towards the southwest end of the trench. The linear feature [1703] is dated to the Roman period.

7.19.3 The feature was sealed by subsoil (1701). (1701) was then overlain by topsoil (1700).

8 Finds

8.1.1 Finds were only retrieved from a few trenches during the evaluation (Table 18). The assemblage includes mostly of slag fragments and burnt clay pieces. Roman pottery sherds were recovered from trenches 11 and 17, both could be dated to around first century BC – first century AD.

Table 18, Finds Assemblage

Trench	Context	Material/Type	Spot-date	Quantity	Weight (g)
1	104	Fired clay	Undated	8	192
10	1002	Slag	Undated	31	4259
10	1002	Fired clay	Undated	8	1046
11	1103	slag	Undated	2	37
11	1103	pottery	Roman - 1st BC-1st AD	21	162
17	1702	Slag	Undated	95	2909
17	1702	pottery	Roman - 1st BC-1st AD	16	81

9 Discussion and conclusions

Geology and natural feature

9.1.1 Bedrock geology within the PDA is mapped as Weald Clay Formation (mudstone) with no overlying superficial deposits. The natural geological deposits were observed in all trenches, from roughly 0.4m to 0.7m BGL. The natural is comprised of firm silty clay with occasional small manganese inclusion. The colour of these deposits ranges from light-mid yellowish brown to mid yellowish red and is occasionally mottled with light grey patches.

9.1.2 To the north and west of the site, in trenches 1, 2, 4, 6, 7 & 11, a band of possible mixed layer was observed between the subsoil and the natural layers (roughly 0.31m to 0.45m BGL). This layer has a darker tone of yellowish brown and was, therefore, distinguished from the lighter natural. In trenches 2, 4 & 11, the archaeological features could be seen sealed by this mixed layer.

9.1.3 A southwest-northeast linear natural feature was noted towards the centre of trench 5. This is interpreted as a possible paleochannel.

Archaeological features

9.1.4 A total of nine archaeological features were recorded comprising four linear features, three pits/post-holes, one feature which showed in situ burning and one modern feature. Features were recorded in six trenches and distributed mostly to the southwest and northeast sides of the PDA.

9.1.5 Most of the features from this site are undated and the only datable evidence came from the Roman linear features from trenches 11 and 17.

9.1.6 Pottery from these linear features [1104] and [1703] can both be dated to the first century BC – first century AD. Slag fragments were also recovered from these features, especially from [1703]. Both linear features are roughly southeast-northwest aligned and have similar depth and width. It is possible that they might have been parts of the same linear feature. However, no similar linear feature could be noted from trenches 12 and 16, which are roughly situated between trenches 11 and 17.

9.1.7 A feature which showed in situ burning [1003] was found in trench 10, to the east side of the PDA. Fragments of fired clay and slag were recovered from it, although the finds could not

provide an accurate dating for the feature. A small pit/post-hole [1005], just south of the feature feature, is also undated.

9.1.8 A possible charcoal pit [1202] was found in trench 12, towards the southwest of the PDA. No finds were retrieved from this feature and, therefore, the pit remains undated.

9.1.9 The presence of a burnt feature, a possible charcoal pit and fragments of fired clay & slag from across the site might suggest dispersed production activities in the past. However, due to the lack of dating evidence, it is uncertain whether they all belong to the same period or represent multiple phases of production activity. Based on the results of the evaluation, the scale of the production was probably small and largely local.

9.2 Statement of significance

9.2.1 The evaluation has identified evidence of sparse archaeology within the proposed development area. Two southeast-northwest linear features from the Roman periods were found to the south and west of the site (trenches 11 & 17). Two other similar linear features were found to the northeast (trenches 3 & 4), although they remain undated. Based, on the current evaluation results, however, it is uncertain whether any of these linear features could be connected to form a field boundary system. The discovery of a the feature with in situ burning in trench 10, a possible charcoal pit in trench 12 and fragments of fired clay & slag from across the site might suggest production activities in the past. However, they are also undated, and it is uncertain whether or how they relate to each other or to the aforementioned linear features.

9.2.2 These discoveries help build an understanding of the archaeological activity within the area, which lies just outside of the development of the historic core of Bethersden. The archaeological evidence might help the understanding of the suggested isolated farmsteads that were developed around this area during or just before the medieval times. As such the archaeological resource within the PDA is considered of local significance.

9.3 Development impact

9.3.1 Archaeological features were recorded mostly to the southwest and northeast sides of the proposed development area, being present in nine of the seventeen trenches. The archaeological resource lies at a depth ranging from 0.4m to 0.66m below the present ground surface.

9.3.2 The proposed development of the site will include a variety of groundworks, including but not exclusively, landscaping, foundation trenches and/or piling, drainage and utility trenches. Some of which have the potential to impact on the archaeological resource. Even through sample excavation has demonstrated the potential for archaeological features survive to shallow depths (0.4m – 0.66m BGL), the potential impact of the development on the archaeological resource is considered to be low.

9.4 Confidence rating

9.4.1 The evaluation is considered to have determined the nature, character, and extent of archaeology surviving within the PDA.

9.4.2 The evaluation was sufficiently resourced and conducted during a period of dry and warm weather. The overall confidence rating is therefore considered fair.

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Appendix 1. Kent County Council HER Summary Form

Site Name: Bull Lane, Bethersden	
Site Address: Land adjacent to the Bull Inn, Bull Lane, Bethersden, Ashford, Kent TN26 3LB	
Summary: An archaeological evaluation on land adjacent to the Bull Inn, Bull Lane, Bethersden, Ashford, Kent TN26 3LB (NGR: TQ 92285 39810 (centred) was conducted by Canterbury Archaeological Trust (CAT) between 3 and 8 August 2026. The work was commissioned by Esquire Developments Ltd, who propose the erection of up to 32 dwellings including access from Bull Lane, parking, landscaping, open space and associated infrastructure and earthworks (all matters reserved except 'means of access'; Planning Ref. PA/2024/1442). The evaluation comprising seventeen trenches excavated across the proposed development area.	
District/Unitary: Ashford Borough Council	**Parish:** Bethersden
Period(s): Roman	
NGR: TQ 92285 39810 (centred)	
Type of archaeological work: Evaluation	
Date of Recording: 3 and 8 August 2026	
Unit undertaking recording: Canterbury Archaeological Trust	
Geology: Weald Clay Formation (mudstone)	
Title and author of accompanying report: Land adjacent to the Bull Inn, Bull Lane, Bethersden, Canterbury Archaeological evaluation report Author: Francis Leung	
Summary of fieldwork results (begin with earliest period first, add NGRs where appropriate): Archaeological features were recorded in nine trenches of the seventeen trenches. The results of the evaluation revealed archaeological features distributed mostly to the southwest and northeast sides of the proposed development area, and that this resource survived at a minimum depth of 0.4m below the existing ground level. The archaeological features from this site include linear features, pits / post-holes and a burnt feature. Most of the features are undated, with the exception of the linear features from trenches 11 and 17, which could be dated to the Roman period (first century BC – first century AD). The presence of a burnt, a possible charcoal pit and fragments of fired clay & slag from across the site might suggest production activities in the past. However, due to the lack of dating evidence, it is uncertain whether they all belong to the same period or represent multiple phases of production activity. Based on the results of the evaluation, the scale of the production was probably small and largely local.	
Location of archive/finds: Canterbury Archaeological Trust, 92A Broad Street, Canterbury, Kent, CT1 2LU	
Contact at Unit: Canterbury Archaeological Trust	Date: 01/09/2026

	PROJECT Land adjacent to the Bull Inn, Bull Lane, Bethersden, Ashford, Kent TN26 3LB	DRAWN BY FL	SCALE(S) 1:1500@A4
		DATE 27/08/2026	LAST REVISION –/–/––
	COMMENTS Contains Ordnance Survey data @ Crown Copyright and database right 2023. CRS: OSGB36 / British National Grid	CHECKED —	
		REF/DRG NO. 56410.3.1_EV BLB 26_FIG01	

Site outline

Evaluation trench

0 25 50 m

Figure 1. Proposed development location

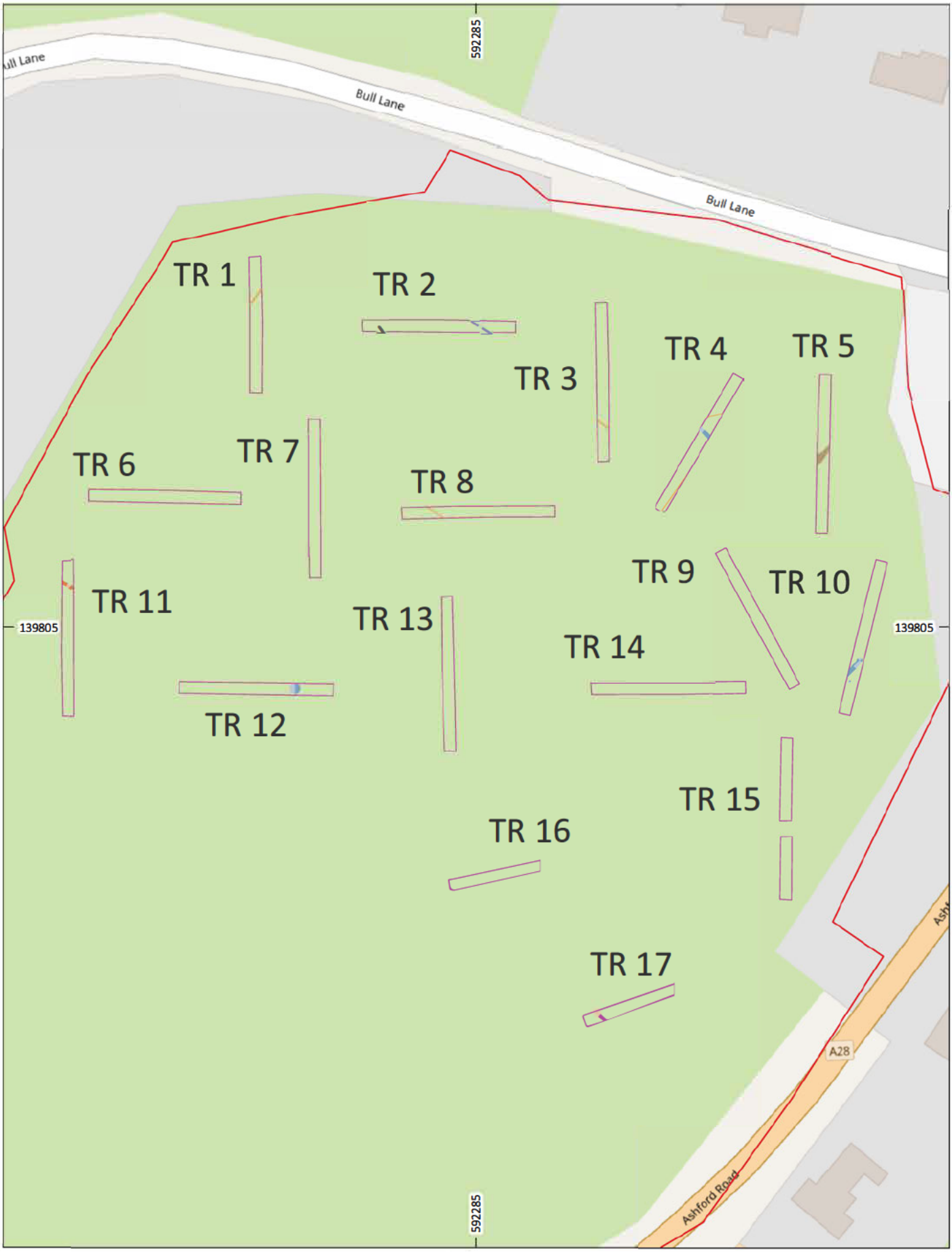

Figure 2. Trench locations plan with features

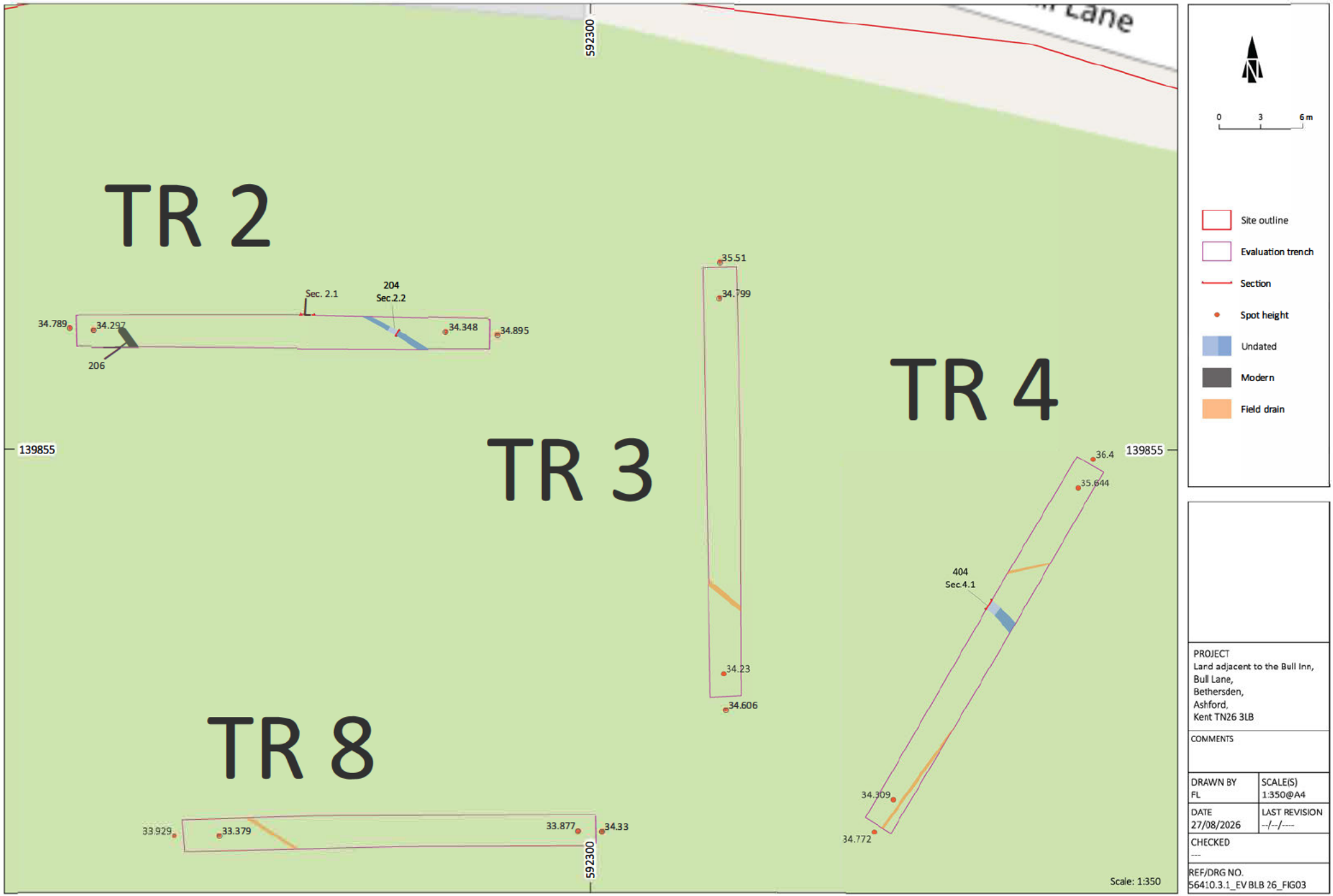

Figure 3. Plan of evaluation trenches 2, 3, 4 & 8

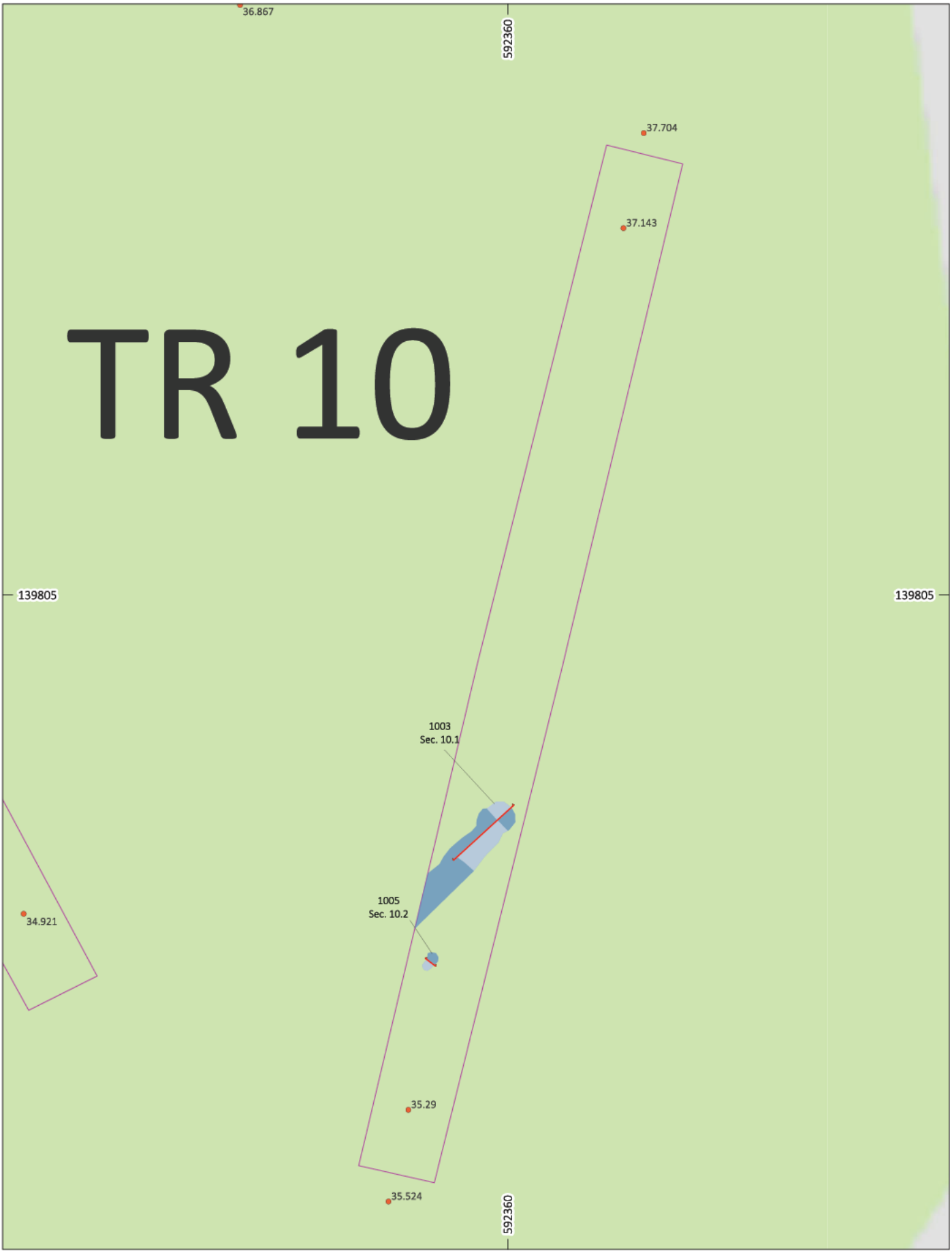

Figure 4. Plan of evaluation trench 10

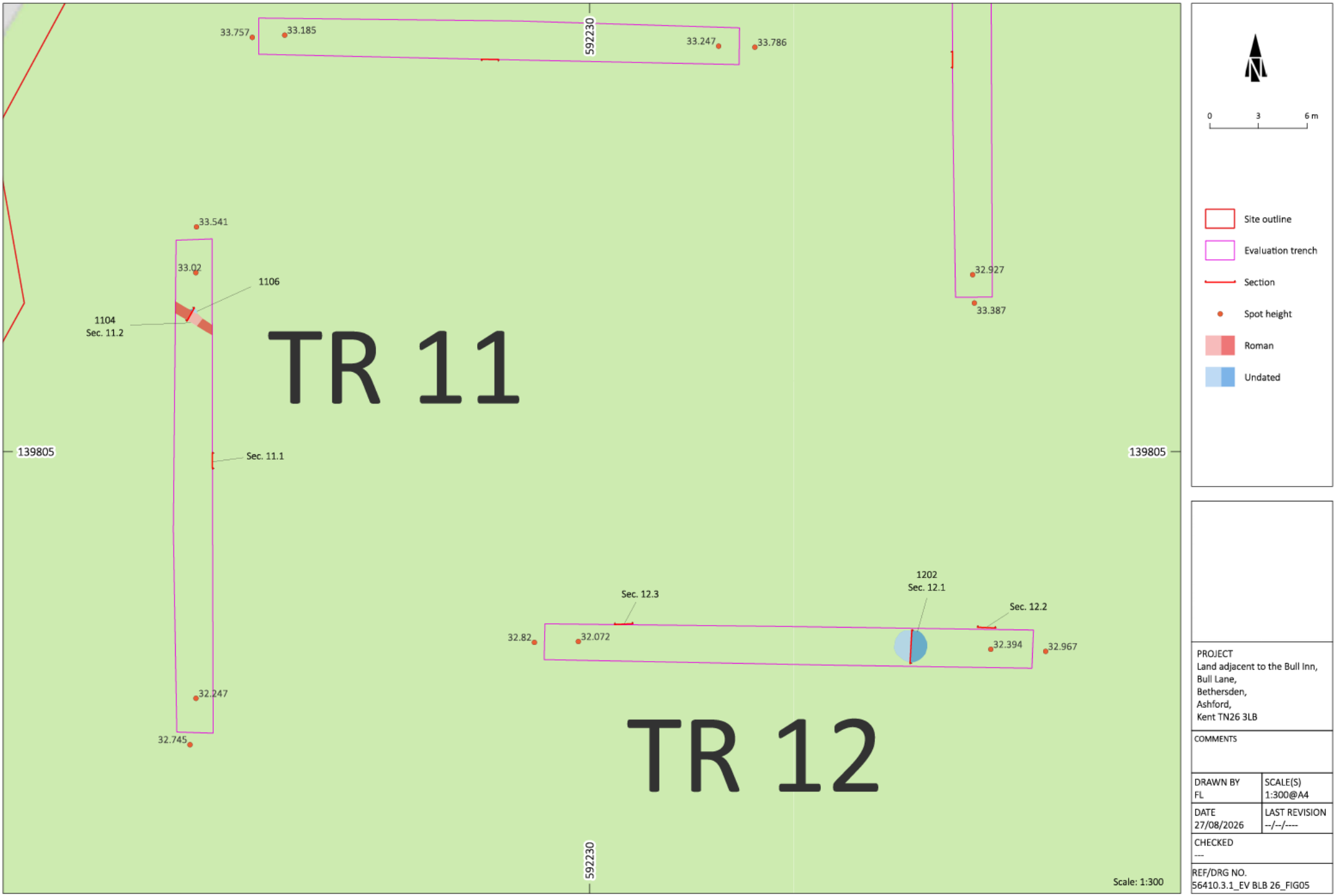

Figure 5. Plan of evaluation trenches 11 & 12

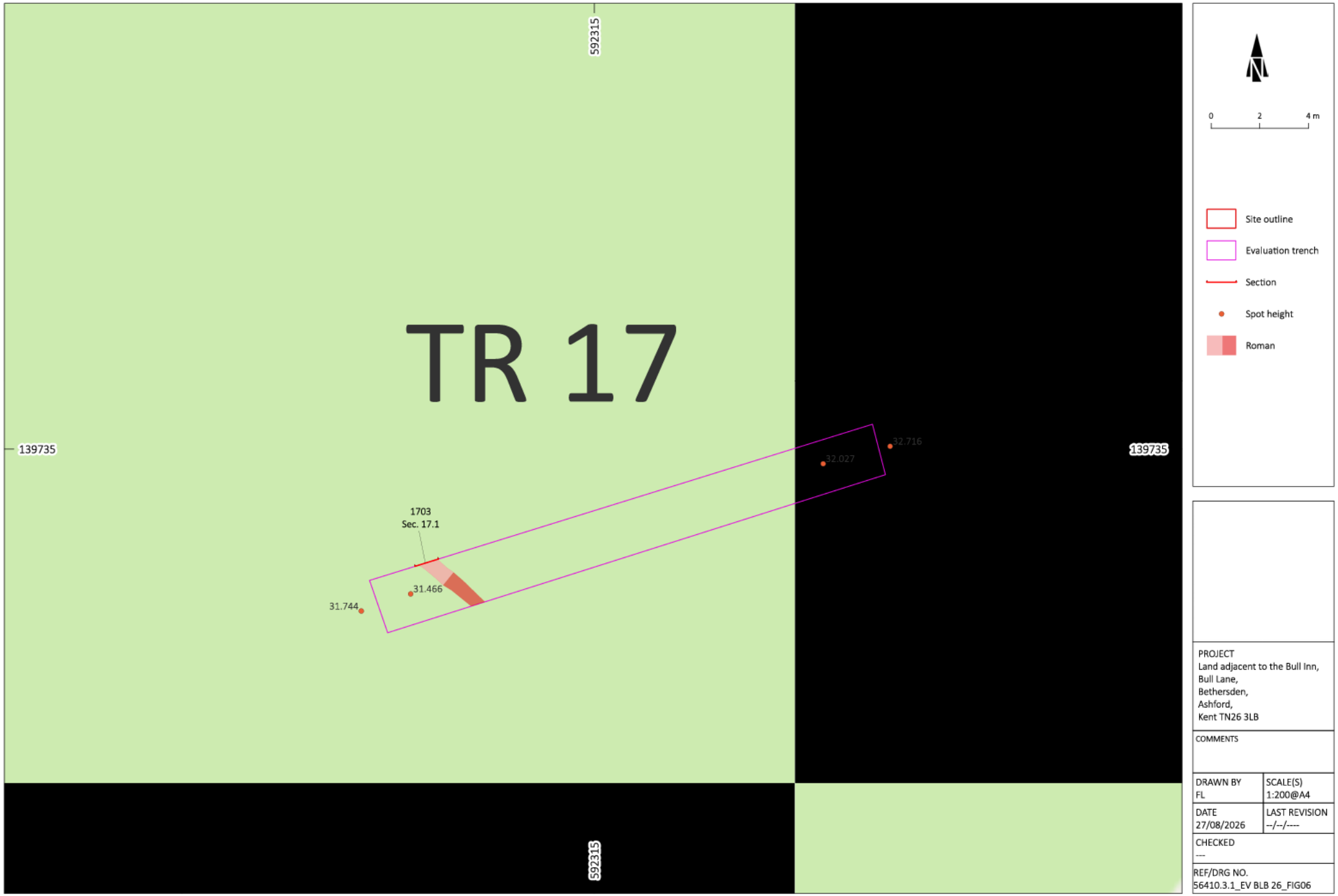

Figure 6. Plan of evaluation trench 17

Plate 1. Pre-excavation view of proposed development area, looking northwest

Plate 2. Pre-excavation view of proposed development area, looking southeast

Plate 3. Overview of trench 4, looking northeast (scale 1m)

Plate 4. Overview of trench 10, looking northeast (scale 1m)

Plate 5. Overview of trench 11, looking south (scale 1m)

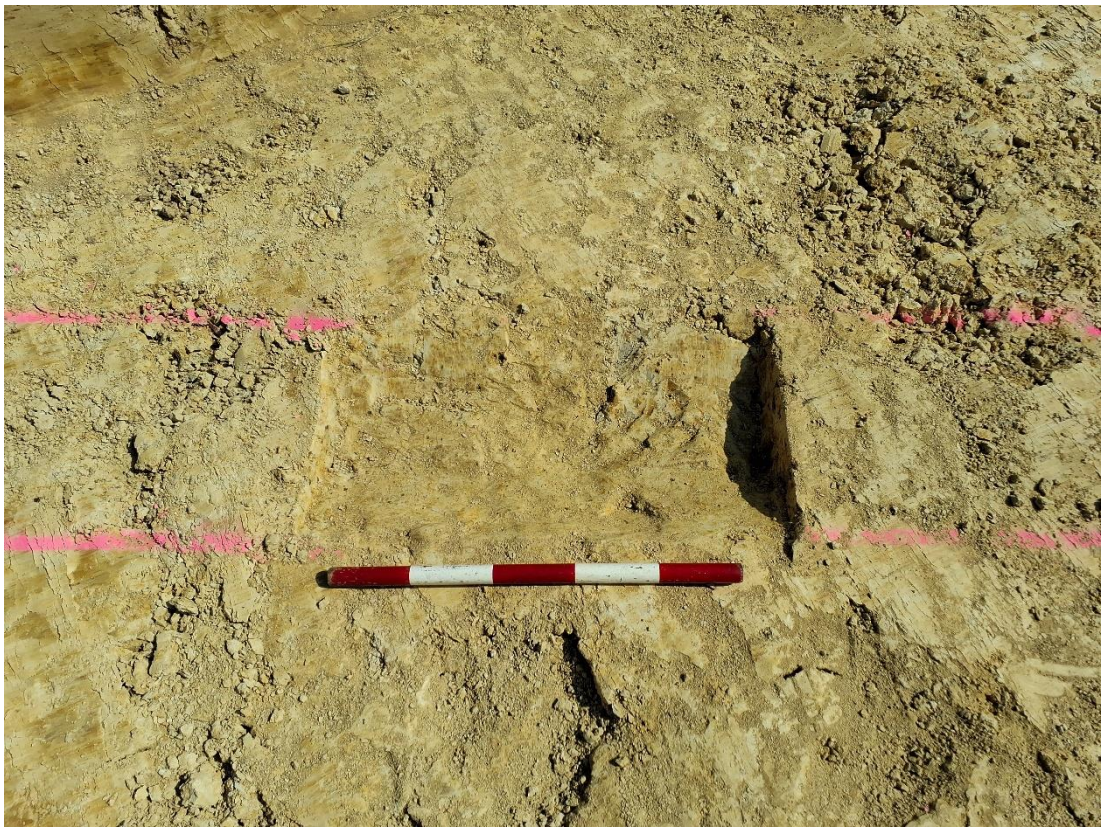

Plate 6. Trench 2, linear [205], looking northeast (scale 0.5m)

Plate 7. Trench 4, linear [404], looking southwest (scale 1m)

Plate 8. Trench 10, burnt feature [1003], looking northeast (scale 0.5m)

Plate 9. Trench 10, pit/post-hole [1005], looking northeast (scale 0.5m)

Plate 10. Trench 11, linear [1104] and pit/post-hole [1106], looking northeast (scale 1m)

Plate 11. Trench 12, charcoal pit [1202], looking east (scale 1m)

Plate 12. Trench 17, linear [1703], looking northwest (scale 0.5m)