

**Lambourn Close,
Tilehurst**

An Archaeological Watching Brief

for

Hicks Builders (Woodley) Ltd

May 1997

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An Archaeological Watching Brief**

by M J Saunders

Report 97/30

Introduction

This report documents the results of an archaeological watching brief carried out at land to the rear of 12-22 Downing Road, Tilehurst, Reading, Berkshire (SU6656 7367). The work was commissioned by Hicks Builders (Woodley) Ltd, 15 Headley Road, Woodley, Berkshire, RG5 4JB.

A planning application (96/0419) has been submitted to Reading Borough Council for the construction of three houses to the rear of 12-22 Downing Road, Tilehurst. The site is bounded to the north by Lambourn Close and to the south-east by Park Lane. A condition on the granting of planning permission requires that a programme of archaeological monitoring and recording be conducted during topsoil removal, test-pitting and digging of trenches for foundations and service runs. This is in accordance with the Department of the Environment's Policy and Planning Guidance Note, **Archaeology and Planning** (PPG 16, 1990). The watching brief was carried out to a specification approved by Mr P Fasham, Principal Archaeologist for Babbie Public Services, who act as planning consultants to Berkshire County Council. The fieldwork was undertaken by Steve Ford during May 1997 and the site code is LCT97/30.

Location, Topography and Geology

The site is located in Tilehurst, on the eastern outskirts of Reading and to the south of the River Thames (Fig. 1). The site is level and the geology is shown to be plateau gravel over Reading Beds (BGS 1946).

Archaeological Background

The site has been identified as being in an area of high archaeological potential and lies on the Taplow gravel terrace noted for its concentrations of Palaeolithic flint implements. Taplow terrace gravels have been dated in the Middle Thames area to the Ipswichian or Devensian phase (Wymer 1968, 90) and form part of a sequence of gravel terraces which have been deposited by the Thames and its tributaries over the last 700,000 years. During this time Europe underwent a series of climatic changes, with glaciations interspersed with warmer periods when the ice sheets retreated (Gates 1975, 13). At the same time there were fluctuations in world sea level and the land masses were uplifted (*ibid.*) These processes resulted in the river systems passing through alternate phases of downcutting and deposition which in turn established the floodplain at successively lower levels (*ibid.*). What remains of these ancient floodplains are now evident as terraces raised above the present river level, forming a sequence usually in descending order of age (*ibid.*) Six terraces, including the floodplain, have been recognised in the Reading area and the complicated history of erosion and deposition has been added to by the fact that the Rivers Kennet, Loddon and Blackwater all join, or have joined, the River Thames near Reading (Wymer 1968, 129).

The many hundreds of stone implements found at sites in the Reading area indicate that humans frequently occupied this part of the Thames Valley (*ibid.*). Flint

tools abandoned by passing nomadic bands of hunter-gatherers were washed into the rivers and became incorporated into the gravel of the terraces (Gates 1975, 13). The Sites and Monuments Record lists many Palaeolithic flint tools for the Reading area and a flint hand axe (SMR 1732) and flint flakes have been found in the immediate area of the site.

Objectives and Methodology

The purpose of the watching brief was to determine the presence/absence, extent, condition, character, quality and date of any archaeological deposits within the whole of the area of development. Should archaeological features be present these were to be hand excavated and fully recorded, except where access was not possible. All spoilheaps were to be monitored for finds.

Results

The digging of foundation trenches for three house plots was monitored on three separate days during May 1997 (Fig. 2). In plot 1 the stratigraphy consisted of 0.25 m of topsoil over 0.05-0.10 m. of gravelly subsoil over c. 0.70 m. of clayey gravel. A concrete cess pit was noted in the northern corner of this plot but no archaeological features were present and no finds were recovered from the spoilheaps. The trenches in plot 2 were all of similar depth (approx. 1.10 m.) although the depth of topsoil was less at 0.05 m. over 1.05 m. of clayey gravel. Again, no archaeological features were present and no finds were recovered from the trenches or from the spoilheaps. A modern pit was present on the southern part of this plot. Plot 3 was also monitored, the trenches being, on average, 1.10 m. deep and 0.70 m. wide. Here 0.30 m. of topsoil overlay 0.15 m. of gravelly subsoil which in turn overlay 0.65 m. of orange

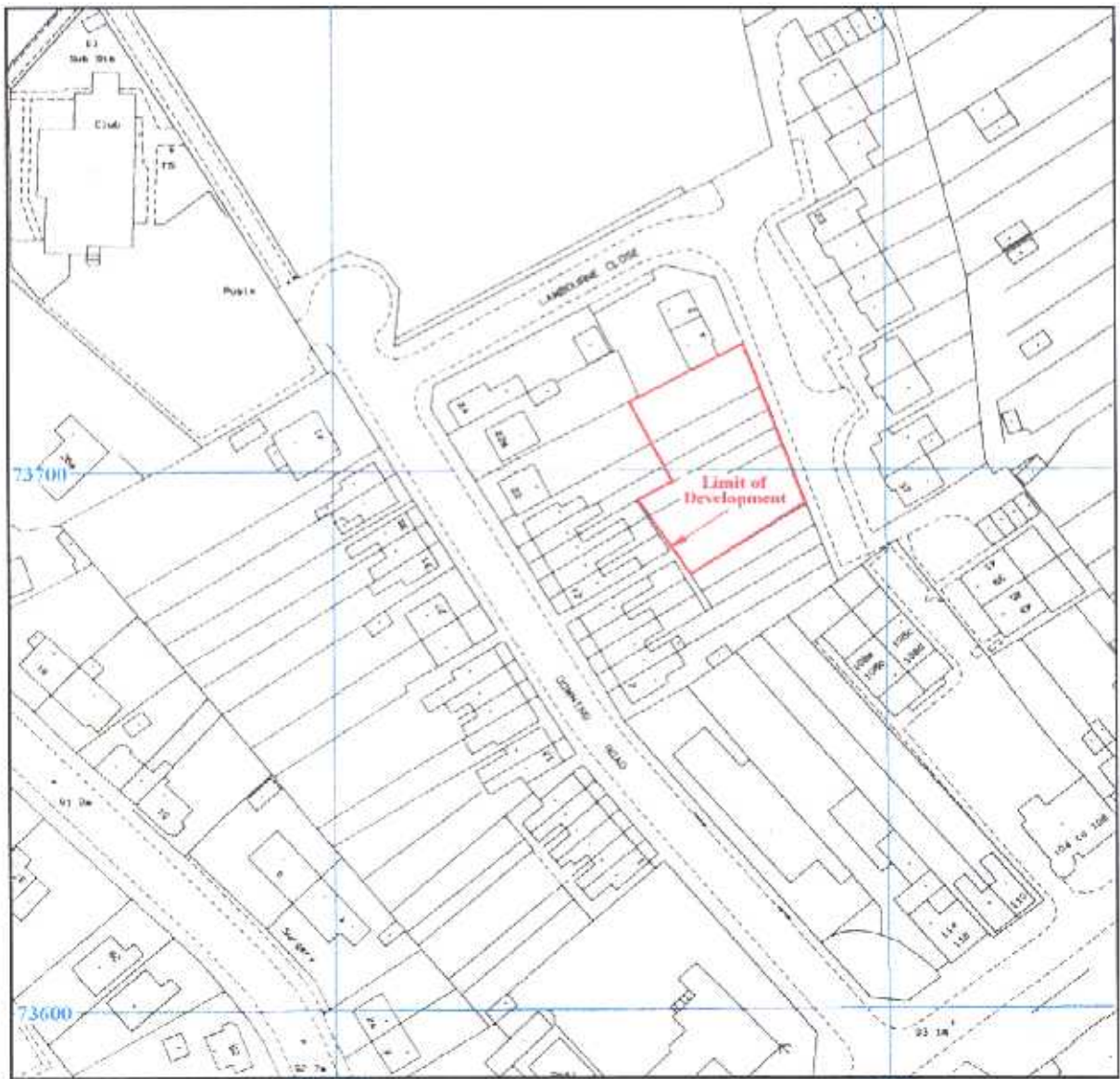
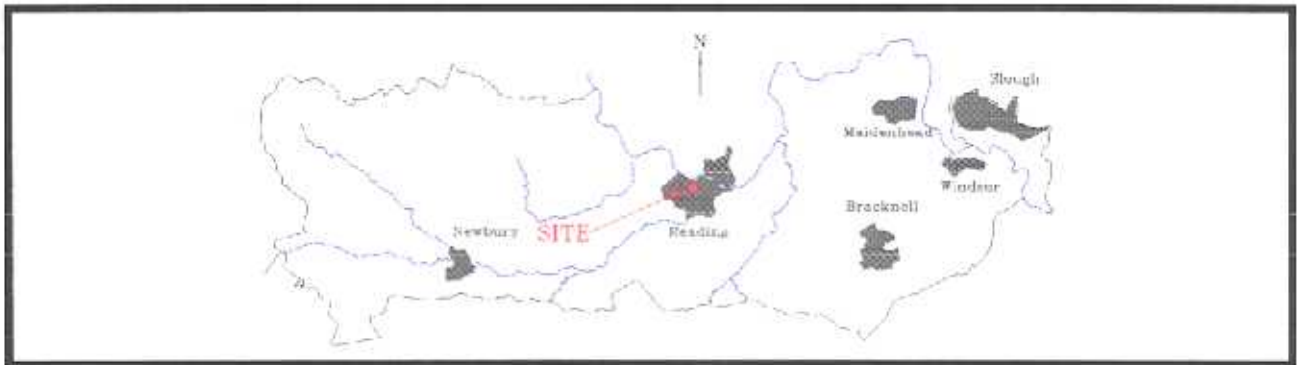
brown clayey gravel. No features were present and no artefacts were recovered either from the trenches or from the spoilheaps. Representative trench sections from each building plot were drawn (Fig. 3) and photographically recorded.

Conclusion

From observations made during the watching brief it would seem that no archaeological features or deposits were present on the site, or that if any did exist they were at sufficient depth not to be damaged by the development. No struck flints or flint artefacts of the Palaeolithic or later periods were recovered, either from the trenches or the spoil.

References

- BGS, 1946: **British Geological Survey**, One inch series, Sheet 268, Drift Edition. Keyworth.
- Gates T, 1975: **The Middle Thames Valley. An archaeological survey of the river gravels.** Berkshire Archaeological Committee, Publication no. 1. Reading.
- PPG 16, 1990: **Archaeology and Planning**. Department of the Environment Planning Policy Guidance Note 16. (HMSO).
- Wymer J, 1968: **Lower Palaeolithic Archaeology in Britain, as represented by the Thames Valley.** London.



0 100m

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Lambourn Close, Tilehurst
Berkshire, 1997

Figure 1. Location of site within
Tilehurst and Berkshire.



Lambourn Close, Tilehurst, Berkshire, 1997

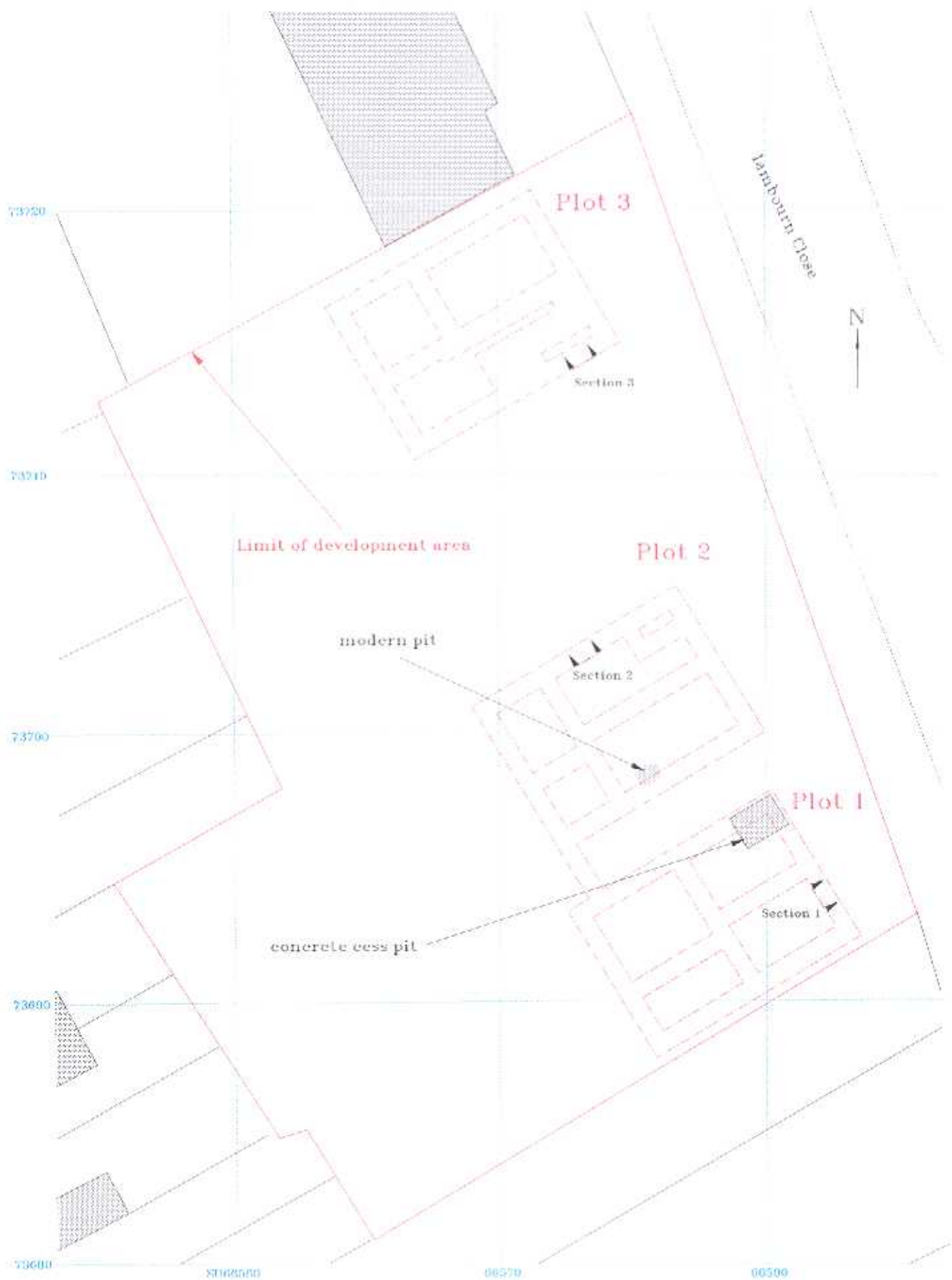


Figure 2. Plan of foundation trenches

20m

LCT97/30

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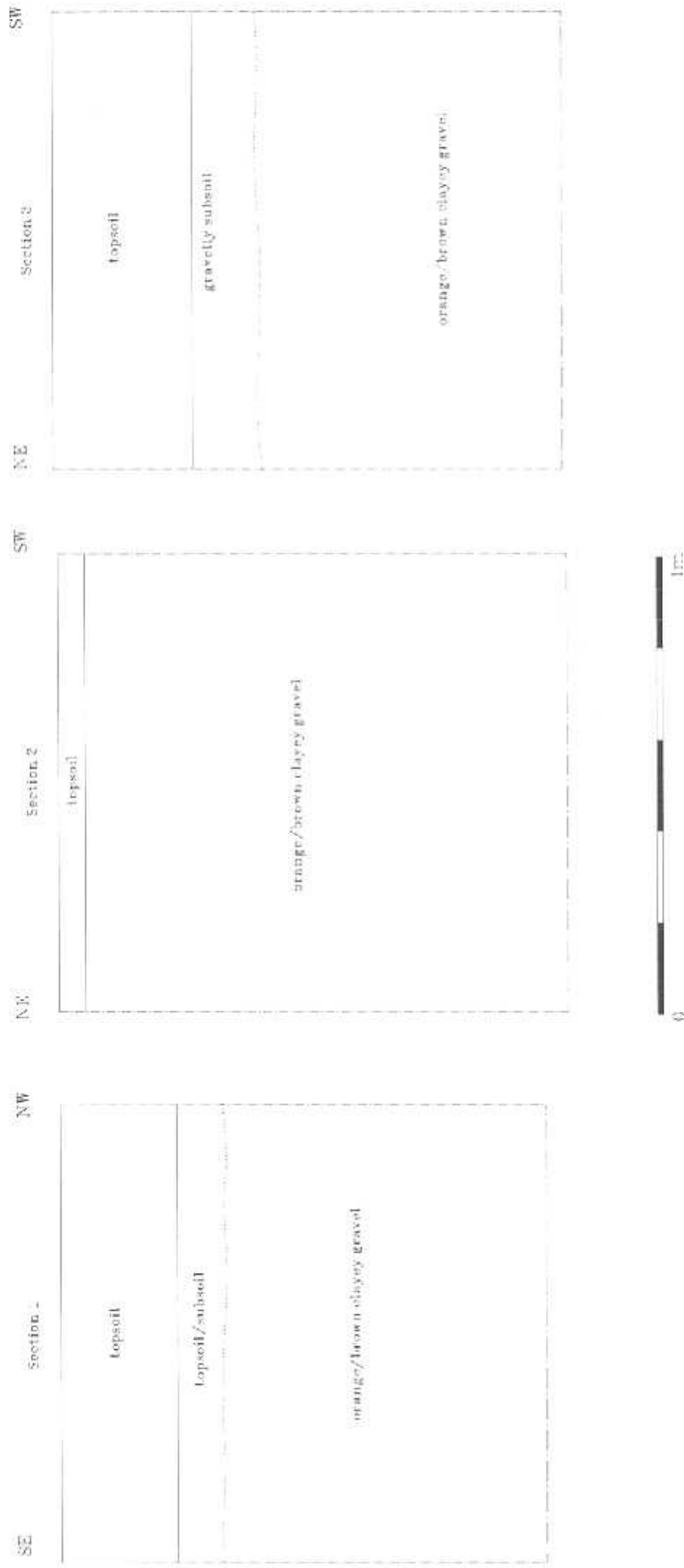


Figure 3. Representative trench sections.