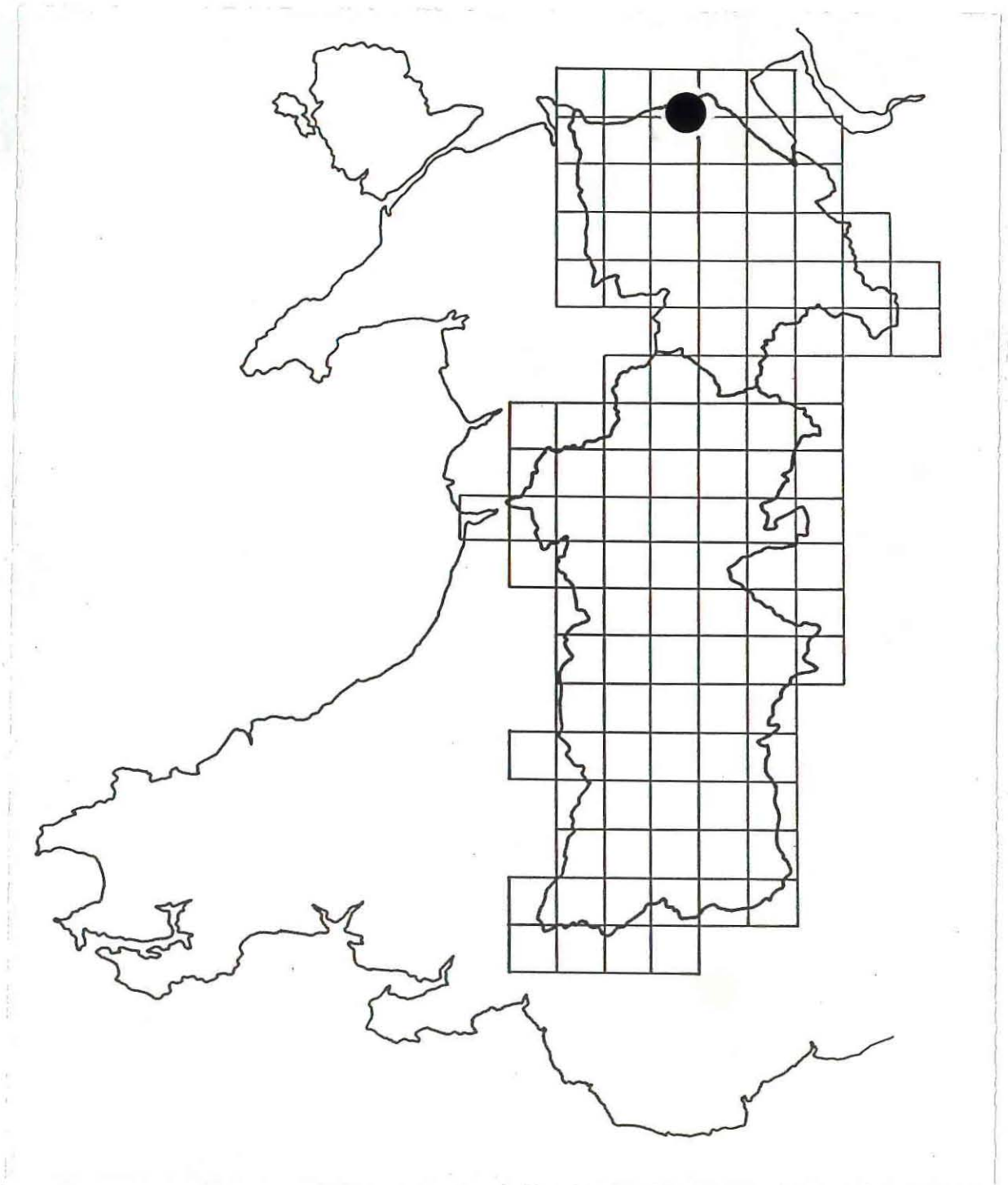


2 The Avenue, Prestatyn, Clwyd

ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION



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Report prepared for Mr N T Jones

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1 Introduction

1.1 The Clwyd-Powys Archaeological Trust (CPAT) was commissioned in June 1993 by Mr N.T.Jones of 2, The Avenue, Prestatyn, Clwyd, to carry out an archaeological evaluation at the above address. This was required in order to determine the archaeological sensitivity of the area, which is the subject of a planning application for a new dwelling (Rhuddlan Borough Council Planning Application: 2/PRE/0297/92/P).

1.2 A brief was prepared on behalf of Rhuddlan Borough Council by their archaeological advisers, the Clwyd Archaeology Service, a part of Clwyd County Council. This summarised the planning background, archaeological interest, aim of the evaluation and specified the approach to be followed in conducting the evaluation. It was considered that both a desk-top study of available records relating to the area and a limited amount of small-scale trial trenching would be necessary.

1.3 Following discussions between CPAT and Clwyd Archaeology Service, a written specification for the evaluation, containing the objectives and methods to be used, was prepared by CPAT and submitted to Mr Jones for approval.

1.4 The specification and corresponding quotation for the evaluation were verbally accepted by the client in June 1993 and confirmed in writing later. The desk-top study and fieldwork were subsequently carried out in early July and this report prepared immediately afterwards.

2 Location and Land-Use

2.1 The application site is a rectangular strip of ground approximately 50m north-west/south-east by 15m north-east/south-west which is presently part of the garden of 2, The Avenue, Prestatyn. The plot is located at a point (SJ 0713 8278) slightly to the east of the centre of Prestatyn and adjoining the A547 Gronant Road.

3 Geology

3.1 The Glacial and post-Glacial deposits and stratigraphy in the environs of the site appear to have an important bearing upon the archaeological record, and may be summarised as follows, based on the work of the Geological Survey (Ordnance Survey 1970). The site is depicted as lying on Boulder Clay, but it also lies near the boundary of glacial sands and gravels to the north and calcareous tufa deposits of post-glacial date to the east.

3.2 The tufa deposits, which probably formed in hollows in the surface of the Boulder Clay from springs emerging from the Carboniferous Limestone outcrops to the south (Brassil 1978; Neaverson 1947), are in themselves of archaeological and palaeoenvironmental significance. Recent archaeological investigations in Prestatyn (Bell *et al.* 1992) have shown that the Prestatyn tufa deposits are likely to be more extensive than those mapped by the Geological Survey and *in situ* or redeposited tufa deposits might be anticipated within the area of the proposed development.

4 Archaeological Desk-Top Assessment

4.1 A desk-based review has been undertaken of all the readily available primary and secondary sources of archaeological information relating to an area within a radius of about 500 metres of the proposed development. There are no recorded archaeological finds within the area of the proposed development, but the review clearly shows that it lies within an area of high archaeological potential, with previous finds and structures within the environs of the site representing a wide range of periods including the Mesolithic, Neolithic, Bronze Age, Roman, possibly Early Medieval and Medieval periods.

4.2 Archaeological recording undertaken during the 1920-30s by F.G. Smith (1926-7) during the construction of the adjacent Bryn Newydd housing estate (CAR 2256; see references to sites in the Clwyd Archaeological Record in Appendix 1) provides evidence of considerable and probably complex evidence of archaeological activity relating to various different periods. Much of this work does not meet modern standards of recording and consequently the dating of some of this evidence is uncertain. It is clear, however, that tufa deposits up to about 1 metre thick (Brassil 1978; Brassil 1991, fig 32; Neaverson 1942) sealed a buried land surface containing an assemblage of early Mesolithic chert artefacts (Clark 1938; Clark 1939; Wainwright 1963; Jacobi 1975, Jacobi 1980). Two radiocarbon dates of the 9th millennium BP have been obtained for carbonized hazel nut shells recovered from this deposit (David 1991).

4.3 Work recently undertaken by CPAT (Bell *et al.* 1992) on the Nant Hall Road development site (centred at SJ 069832), about 400 metres to the north and downslope of the Bryn Newydd site, suggests that these tufa deposits were continuing to form and be redistributed in the period up to end of the 6th millennium BP, preserving evidence of late Mesolithic/early Neolithic activity including middens composed of edible marine molluscs. Recent work at this site, in an area adjacent to earlier prehistoric and possibly Roman finds (CAR 1971), has also provided evidence of continuing archaeological activity into the Neolithic period, during the 5th millennium BP, relating to significant changes to the coastal environment.

4.4 Apart from sealing and thus preserving evidence of early human activity, the Prestatyn tufa deposits are important in providing a calcareous environment preserving marine and land molluscs and animal bone and plant remains of the period between the 9th and 6th millennia BP, and thus constituting an important source of evidence for the environment and economy during these periods. These sites are of major archaeological importance in view of the scarcity of evidence for early Mesolithic settlement and activity in this region and in view of the fact that the deposits cover a crucial period between the late Mesolithic and early Neolithic period, for which little evidence is available nationally, when it is assumed that early peripatetic hunter-gatherer groups adopted a more sedentary way of life. Little analytical work has yet been undertaken on the Prestatyn tufa deposits, though the potential is clearly indicated by studies undertaken by McMillan (1947) who has provided a preliminary list of molluscs identified from the Prestatyn tufa deposits.

4.5 Other evidence of early activity is recorded by Smith (1926-7) on a number of "islands" of Boulder Clay within these tufa deposits, including two inhumation cemeteries, hearths, a cockle shell midden, and chance finds of Medieval pottery. Finds associated with various features suggest activity over a broader area contemporary with the evidence preserved beneath the tufa deposits and possibly continuing into the Neolithic period. The inhumation cemeteries, which totalled about 20 graves, are possibly of several periods

but are not closely dated - Mesolithic, Neolithic and Early Medieval dates have been suggested at various times (cf Caselden 1992).

4.6 Other archaeological finds in the environs of the site, which include a macehead (CAR 2259), a Bronze Age copper alloy chisel (CAR 2260), a leaf-shaped stone borer and lead spindlewhorl (CAR 2261), a stone axe of hammer (CAR 2280), a polished stone axe (CAR 2285), a shafthole adze (CAR 4217), and two finds of Roman coins (CAR 1974, 2235), provide evidence of continuing activity into the later prehistoric and Roman periods which is of regional significance.

5 The Field Evaluation

5.1 Two evaluation trenches, each 2.0m x 2.0m, were laid out within the area (shown as A and B on Fig.2). In consultation with Mr N.T.Jones the position of Trench B was altered slightly from the original recommendations in the brief to avoid the position of a former pond. Each trench was excavated manually to the level of the undisturbed C horizon and the successive horizontal surfaces and vertical sections examined in detail and one of the latter in each trench drawn at a scale of 1:10. A photographic record of each trench was also made as required in the brief.

5.2 The proximity of both the re-sorted calcareous tufa and the sand and gravel deposits were clearly reflected in the soil profiles of both trenches. The uppermost A horizon consisted of a grey-brown friable sandy loam containing occasional tufa and chert fragments of local origin above a mid-brown more compact and stonier B horizon. Between the two an intermediate layer, the AB horizon some 0.05m thick, was characterised by a zone of more intense tufa-fragment deposition (Fig 3). The underlying C horizon consisted of grey gravel lenses contained in a clean orange-yellow sand.

5.3 No archaeological features were present in either trench, although artefacts representing the modern, post-medieval and prehistoric periods were randomly present in the disturbed upper soil horizons.

5.4 Material recovered from the upper soil horizons of both trenches is as follows:-

- Post-medieval pottery, 23 sherds
- Flint/chert, 34 fragments, of which one shows evidence of probable retouch and may be classed as prehistoric
- Slag, 2 lumps, one probably from lead working
- Glass, 2 pieces, brown coloured with heavy patination (including part of a bottle neck)
- Clay pipe, 1 fragment
- Bone, 2 fragments
- Modern pottery/tile, 3 sherds
- Tufa/calcareous material, 17 pieces
- Shell, 1 small fragment

6 Conclusions

6.1 The site lies on an area of glacial sands and gravels which are therefore present further to the south than was previously recorded by the Geological Survey. The presence of small amounts of tufa in the soil layers would suggest that an area or areas of tufa may be found locally.

6.2 No archaeological features were discovered during the excavation.

6.3 The artefacts recovered from the excavation and their distribution in the soil demonstrate that the ground has been disturbed and that some post-medieval activity occurred locally although perhaps only rubbish disposal.

6.4 The flint/chert recovered represents mainly redeposited material of natural origin. However, the single fragment of chert exhibiting retouch would tend to confirm the likelihood, already noted in the desk-top assessment, that the environs of the site have experienced a degree of prehistoric activity. No stratigraphic evidence for any such activity was revealed by the excavation.

7 Acknowledgements

The writer would like to thank Mr W.J.Britnell and Mr R.Hankinson of CPAT for their advice and assistance in the preparation of this report.

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Appendix 1

CAR 1971 Nant Hall Finds (SJ 07058313) (PRN-101933)

Prehistoric and Roman finds scatter found in Fields 56/56b in 1920-30s including a reasonably large assemblage (c 470) Mesolithic and Neolithic flint and chert lithics and two bone counters and a lead spindlewhorl of possible Roman date.

References: Davies 1949; Wainwright 1963; Bell *et al.* 1992

CAR 1974 Bryn Newydd Find (SJ 07298251) (PRN-101935)

Late 4th century Roman coin, probably Constantius II, found at Bryn Newydd. Exact findspot unclear.

References: Smith 1930.

CAR 2235 Bryn Newydd Area Finds (SJ 07298273) (PRN-102206)

Four Roman coins of Titus Constantine II Maximus and Constantine the Great. Found during the 1920-30s during construction of the Bryn Newydd housing estate.

References: Davies 1949.

CAR 2256 Bryn Newydd Cemetery and Working Floor (SJ 07248270) (PRN-102228)

Complex site including two inhumation cemeteries of about 20 graves of uncertain date but possibly of several periods (Mesolithic, Neolithic or Early Christian), shell midden (cockles), hearths and working floor. Mesolithic, Neolithic, and Medieval finds recorded.

References: Smith 1926-7; Clarke 1938; Clark 1939; Davies 1949; Jacobi 1975; Brassil 1978; Brassil 1991; David 1991; Caselden 1992.

CAR 2259 Homefield Find (SJ 07698287) (PRN-102232)

Macehead of fine textured grey granite found in 1930 and a circular stone with perforation found in 1926. Both found close to an old mine shaft.

References: Davies 1949.

CAR 2260 Hengoed Find (SJ 06858293) (PRN-102233)

Copper alloy chisel, rough cast, possibly Early Bronze Age, found in garden at depth of 4 feet in 1928.

References: Davies 1949.

CAR 2261 South Linden Walk Finds (SJ 07368245) (PRN-102234)

Leaf-shaped borer of grit and a biconical spindlewhorl of lead. Found in foundations of house called Farcroft in 1924.

References: Davies 1949.

CAR 2280 Linden Walk Find (SJ 07288250) (PRN-102253)

Hand axe or hammer found in Boulder Clay in about 1932-3.

References: Smith 1933.

CAR 2285 Prestatyn Churchyard Find (SJ 06758274) (PRN-102258)

Ground and polished axe of welded siliceous tuff polished both ends. Found in 1923 in the fill of modern grave. Now in St Asaph Museum.

References: Davies 1949.

CAR 4217 Aberconway Path Stone Adze (SJ 075828) (PRN-102667)

Shafthole adze, of greywacke possibly derived from drift. Chance find during construction work.

References: Manley and Greuter 1983.

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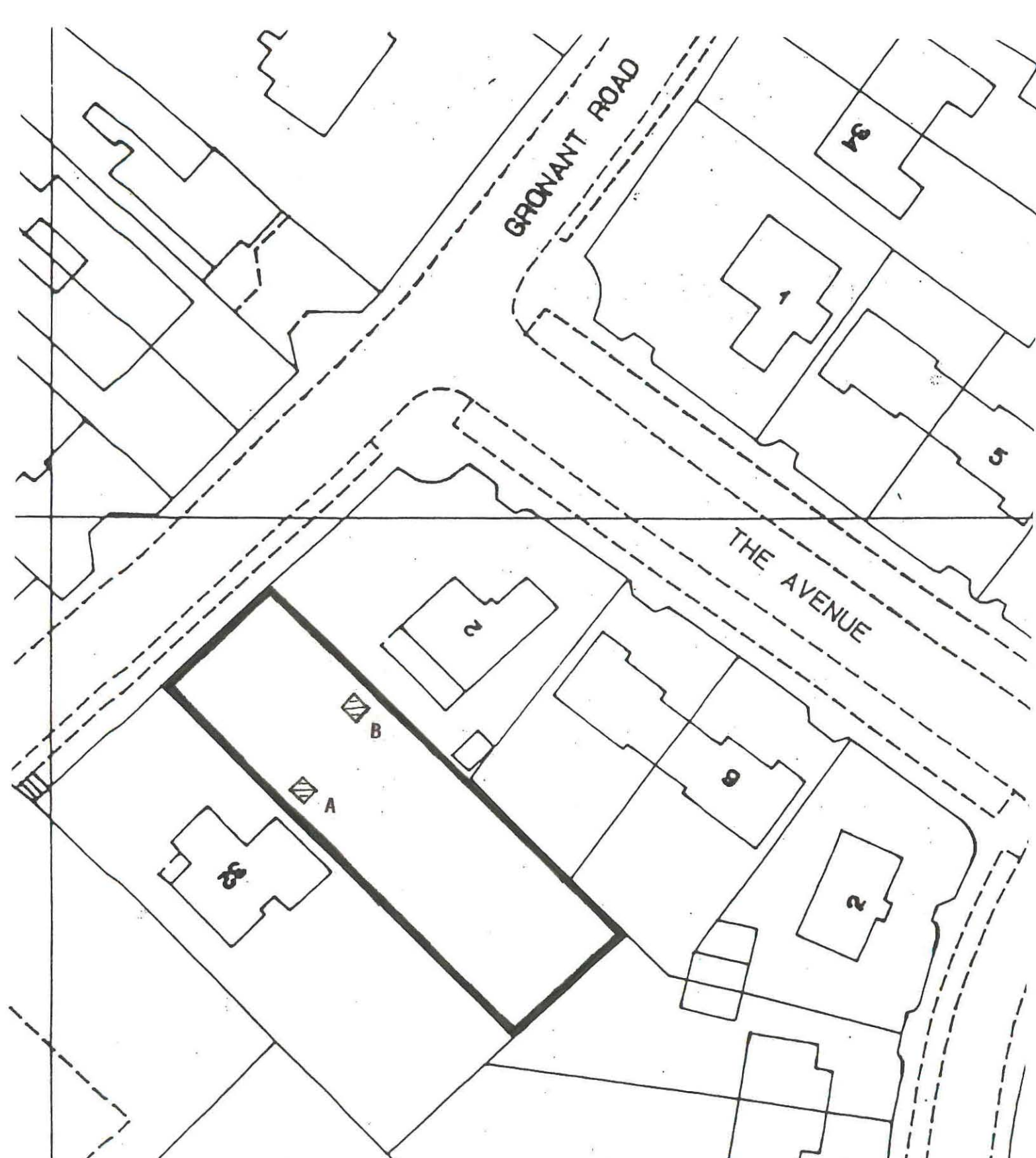


Fig 2 Plan of Application Area and Trench Locations Scale 1:500

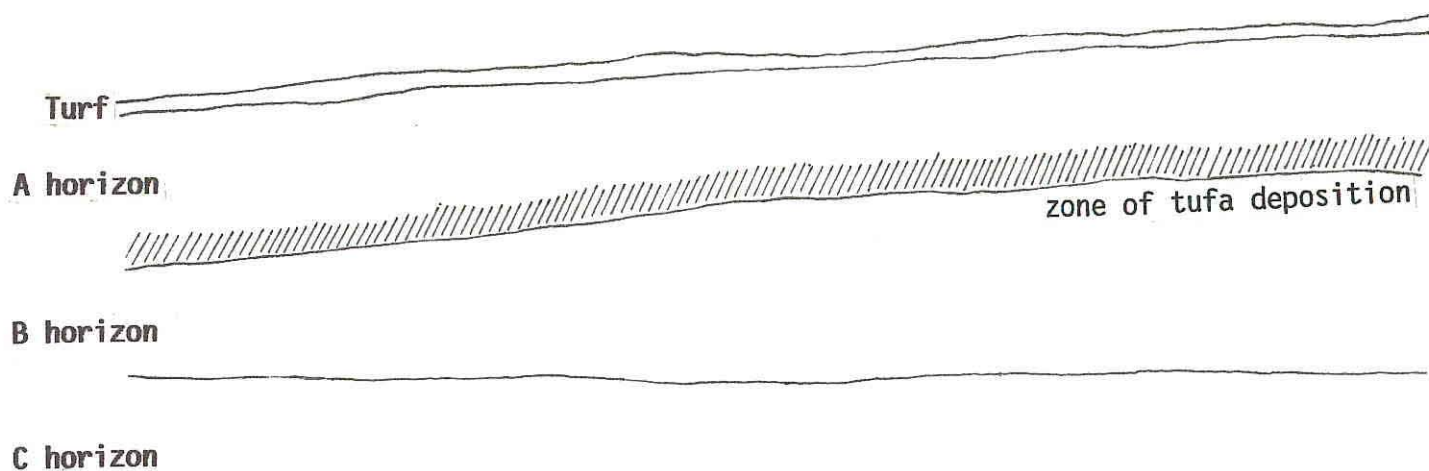
Key



Area of Planning Application



Trenches



- A horizon** - Moderately stony, friable grey-brown sandy loam
- B horizon** - Fairly compact mid-brown sandy loam, stone content increases with depth
- C horizon** - Grey gravel lenses within a matrix of clean orange-yellow sand

Fig 3 Section of Trench A Scale 1:10