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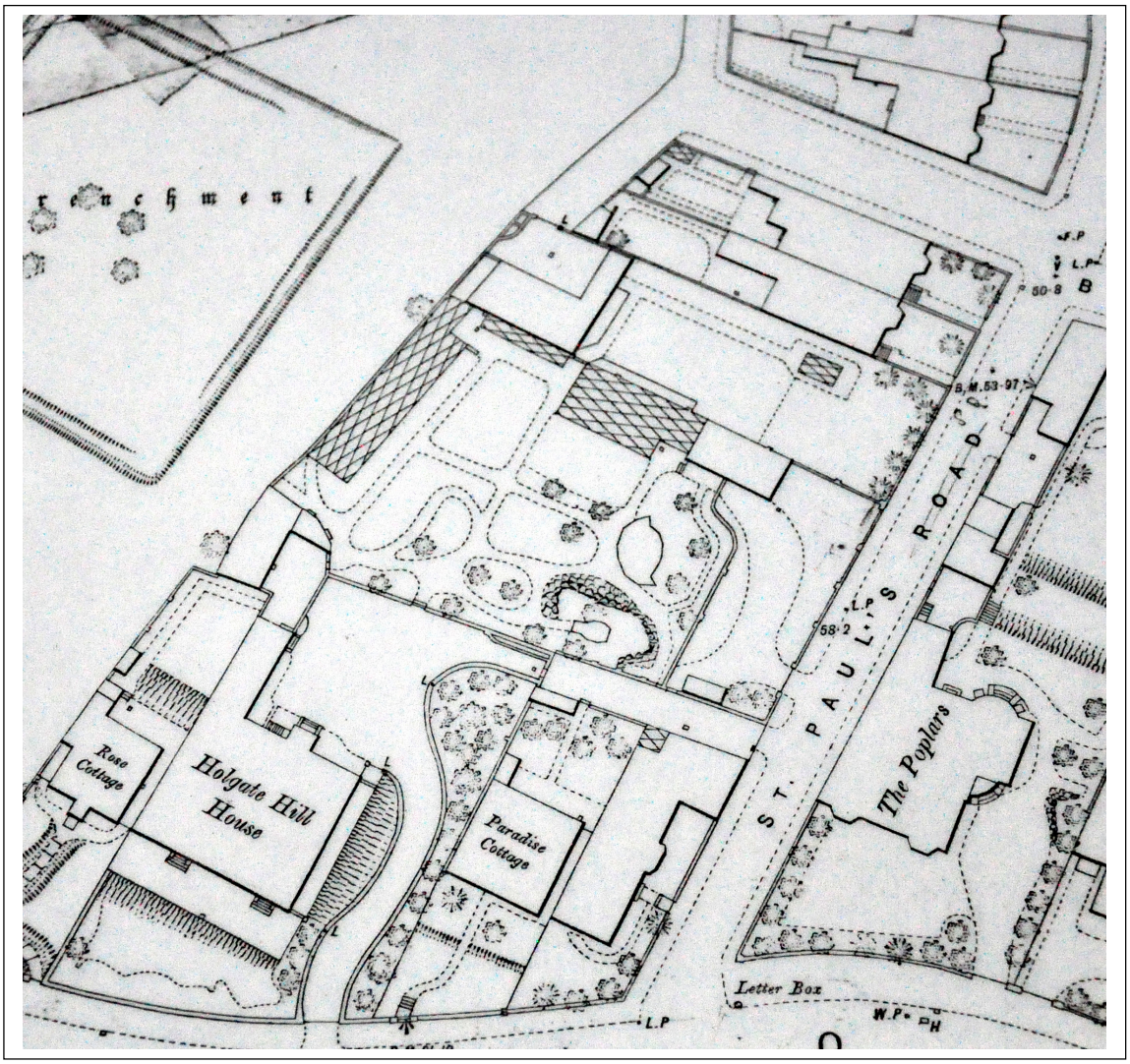
ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF REPORT

Ærcern Archæology Report No. 2011/001

Land Adjacent Number 40 Saint Paul's Square, York
AA11 WB01



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30 Saint Paul's Mews, York. YO24 4BR

HER Information

Planning Application No:	**10/02593/FUL**
Date of Fieldwork:	**23rd Aug, 24th Aug, 25th Aug, 30th Aug, 1st Sept, 2nd Sept, 2011**
Grid Reference:	**SE 5903 5132**
Funding Body:	**Mr. Andrew Gardiner**
Curatorial Officer:	**John Oxley**
Project Officer:	**Duncan Stirk**
HER Reference:	**EYO4590**
Oasis Reference:	**aecernar1-114823**

Digital report submitted to Archaeological Data Service:
http://ads.ahds.ac.uk/catalogue/library/greylit

Contents

1 Summary

An archaeological watching brief was carried out on land adjacent to 40 Saint Paul's Square, York (SE 5903 5132); AA11WB01, to fulfil a condition attached to planning application (10/02593/FUL) for the construction of a detached dwelling and parking spaces.

Ground reduction and foundation trenching for the construction of a detached dwelling was monitored over six visits between 23rd August and 2nd September 2011. A deep sequence of colluvial hillwash and make-up deposits, sealed by modern garden soil was recorded. The geological sand and gravel was seen in the deepest of the foundations, where it was cut by large ill-defined features; possibly representing quarrying activity of unknown date. Finds dating to the *Roman and medieval periods were recovered from the overburden during the archaeological work.*

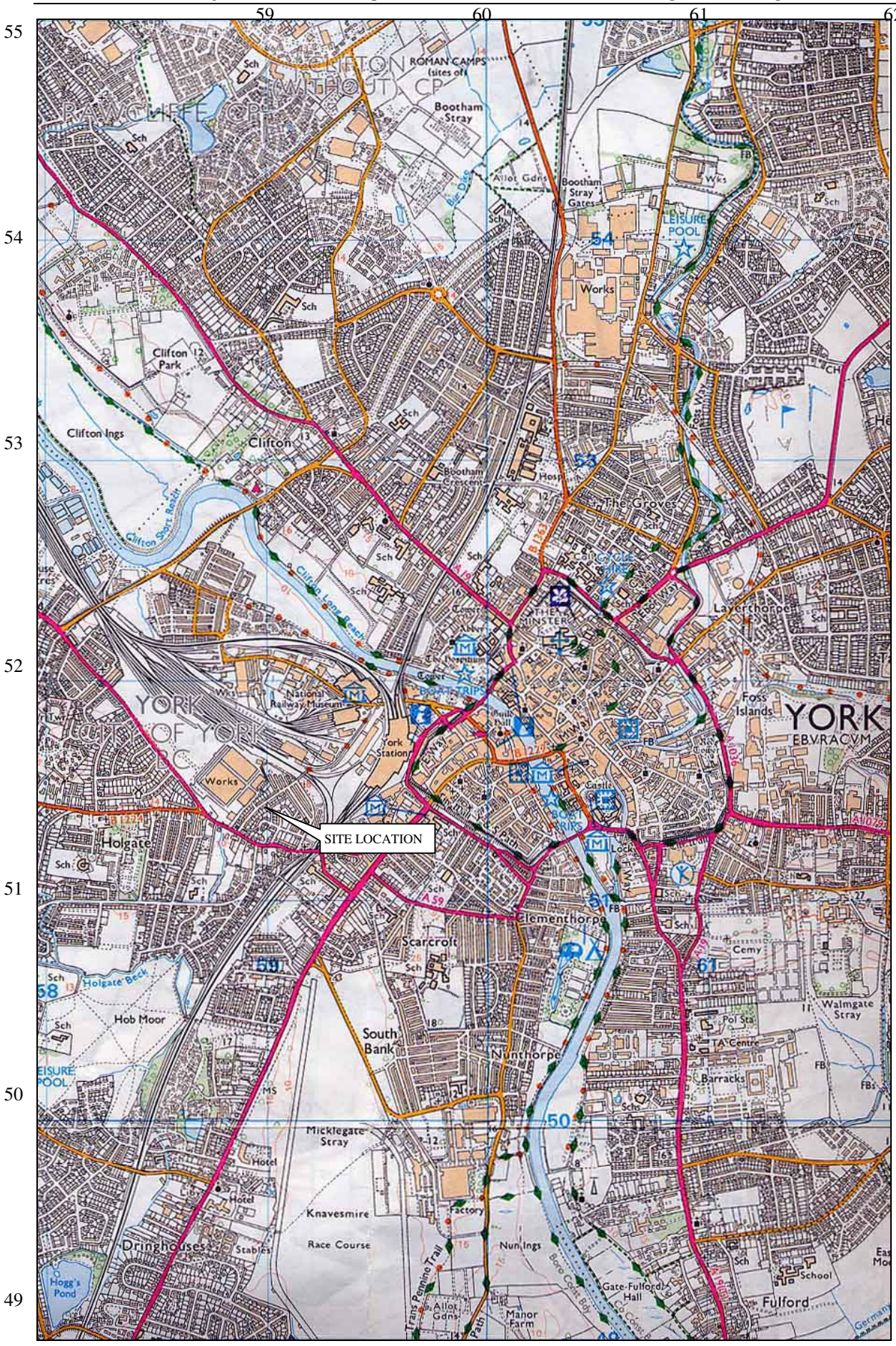

Figure 1. Site Location (NGR SE 5903 5132).

2 Site Location, Geology, Topography and Land Use

The site is located in extramural York, near to the former centre of Holgate village (Figure 1). The site was formerly gardens located at NGR 5903 5132. Prior to the development the site was slightly sloping, between 17.32m and 18.50m above ordnance datum (AOD), and was covered with scrub vegetation. The drift geology is Devensian sand and gravel till, overlying sandstone of the Sherwood group (British Geological Survey, 2011). The site is bounded to the SE by St. Paul's Square, and by residential buildings and gardens on the three other sides.

3 Archaeological and historical background

The site lies in an area of archaeological importance, which in the Roman period was thought to contain two roads (RCHMY 1, Roads 9 & 11) leading to the Colonia from Aldborough (*Isurium Brigantum)* to the NW. The Mount, to the SE of the site, was a focus for Roman and Anglian cemeteries due to the confluence of roads and its prominent position in the landscape. An outlying burial of the Roman period cemetery was discovered during building work at the Kilima Hotel (129 Holgate Road) to the south of the site (Ottoway, 2011: 334). Other burials, cremations and monuments were found during railway works at and around Holgate Bridge in 1837 to 1839 (RCHME 1, 1962: 100).

Other archaeological investigations to the east of the site were undertaken in 1992, at what was then known as Holgate Cattle Dock (YAT 1992.17) and in 1999 at adjacent site St. Paul's Green. These projects revealed a series of peat-filled hollows from which a Neolithic axe and pottery were recovered as well as a Roman water pipe. Also revealed were a minor Roman road, a second cobble road or surface and a Roman pit (Ottoway, 2011: 329). To the west of the site on Holgate Hill (NGR 5895 5133) there was a now built over earthwork, surveyed by George Benson (Benson, 1904), and excavated by P. Corder in 1936 (RCHME 3, 1972). This earthwork is likely to have dated to the civil war, possibly one that was captured on Holgate Hill by Scottish forces in 1644 (RCHME 3, 1972), however Corder also recorded medieval occupation. Negative archaeological work was undertaken at 12-22 Watson Street in 1985, at 37 St. Paul's Square in 1988, and 17 St. Paul's Square in 1991.

The proximity of the development site to these archaeological remains suggests that it is within an area formerly occupied by a Roman cemetery and that groundworks related to the development may reveal archaeological remains of this period.

Saint Paul's Square is occupied by houses that according to Persner and Neave (2002: 260) were laid out from c. 1855 onwards. The site is on land that was previously part of the gardens belonging to Holgate Hill House, latterly Nordic House, built in 1858 (Pevsner & Neave 2002: 260), that was owned in the 19th century by Henry Tennant, the general manager of the North Eastern Railway from 1870 to 1891.

4 Methodology

The groundworks for the construction of a domestic dwelling on land adjacent to Number 40 Saint Paul's Square, York were the subject of this monitoring work. The archaeological work was allocated the Site Code AA11WB01 and Historic Environment Number (HER) number EYO4590, and was a condition attached to planning application 10/02593/FUL.

The archaeological work was conducted in accordance with an Archaeological Scheme of Investigation written by John Oxley of City of York Council Planning & Sustainable Development Group (Oxley, 2011).

Monitoring of the excavation of foundations and ground reduction was carried out over six visits on the 23rd, 24th, 25th and 30th Aug, and 1st and 2nd Sept 2011. The work involved the monitoring of ground reduction and the excavation of foundation trenches and drainage for a single building, to determine the presence of archaeological features.

The ground level was reduced and terraced under archaeological supervision over a number of sessions. The archaeological horizon was not reached during this process, so a test pit was excavated by machine in the western corner to determine at what level it existed. Following the ground reduction the western extent of the site was slightly low, so this was made up with approximately 0.1m of spoil. The foundation trenches and drains were excavated with a 360˚ mechanical excavator using a variety of toothless and toothed buckets. Also part of this phase of work was the excavation of a percolation test-pit at the eastern boundary of the site. The base and sides of the foundation trenches were then scanned with a metal detector using a non-discriminatory setting to find iron and other metal objects. The exposed surfaces were then cleaned by hand to better reveal changes in colour and composition that would indicate the presence of archaeological deposits and features. All observed deposits were allocated unique context numbers and recorded on *pro-forma* recording forms. Possible archaeological features were visible in the base of some trenches, but sample excavation of the features was ruled out by the building contractor. All archaeological deposits were drawn in a series of 1:20 scale sections and 1:50 scale plans, and photographed. The graphics in this report have been produced using Adobe illustrator software.

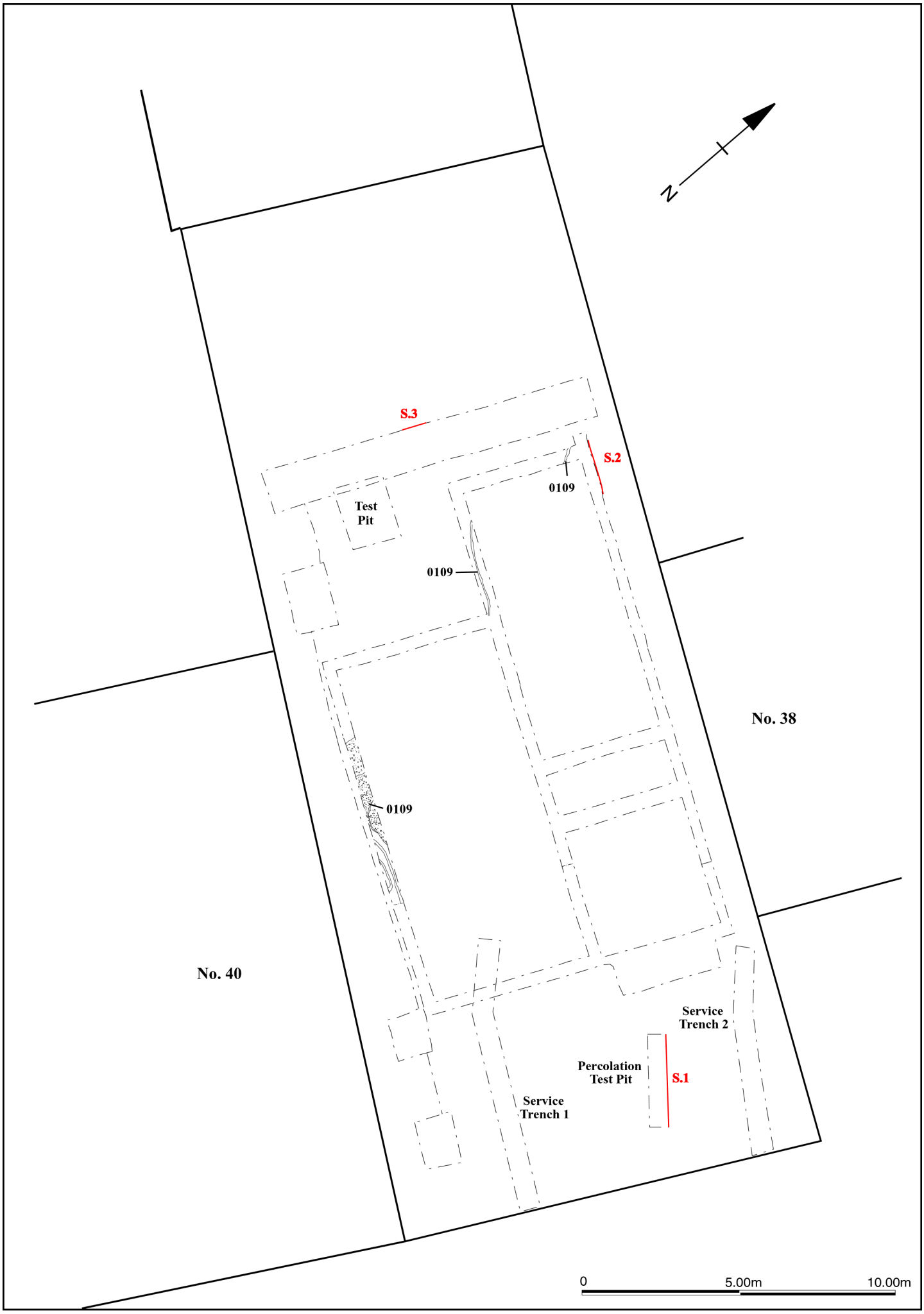

Figure 2. Trench Location Plan

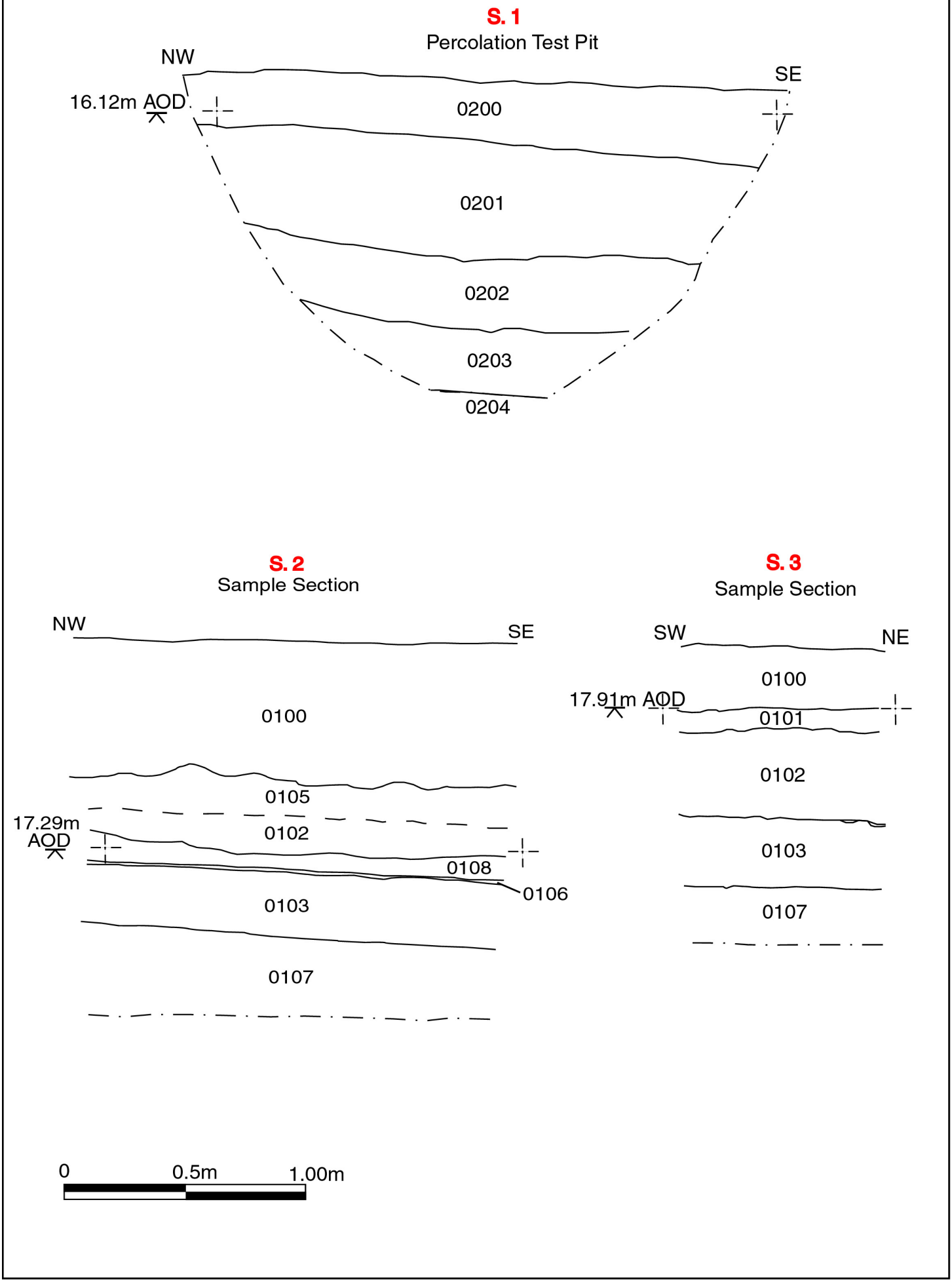

Figure 3. Sections

5 Results

5.1 Test Pit 1

Following the terracing of the site and general ground reduction, two small test-pits were excavated by machine. The first of these, **Test Pit 1**, was located in the western corner of the building footprint. It measured 1.75m by 2.05m, and was 1.13m deep from the reduced ground level or 1.73m Below Ground Level (BGL) at approximately 16.77m AOD.

Plate 1. Test Pit 1 facing S (Scale 1m)

The geological natural, a light brown gravely sand deposit **0104,** was visible at the base of the test-pit. This was sealed by a 0.77m thick deposit of homogenous reddish brown silty sand, that contained occasional fragments of ceramic building material (CBM), **0103**. This is almost certainly an accumulation of colluvial hillwash, probably also modified by ploughing. Over this was a 0.21m thick deposit of reddish brown silty sand and clay sand, **0102**. This was superficially similar to the colluvium, but had been imported to the site and was clearly intended to level up the area. Deposit 0102 was overlain by a 0.15m thick deposit of mixed light orange brown sand, mid grey brown and reddish brown clay sand **0101**. This was initially thought to be a general level of garden disturbance and make-up, however this was subsequently seen to follow a NW-SE alignment, and is likely to be part of a modern bedding trench or shallow ditch.

5.2 Percolation Test Pit

A second test-pit, to test water percolation, was excavated by machine in the eastern portion of the building plot. It was 2.5m long by 0.65m wide, and 1.3m deep from the reduced ground level, or 2.35m BGL. The base was at 14.97m AOD. The geological natural was seen at the base of the test-pit, where it was a mixed light yellow brown and pink brown clay sand **0204**. Over the natural was a 0.26m thick deposit of mottled light yellow brown and reddish brown clay sand and sand **0203**. Deposit 0203 appeared to be disturbed geological natural, probably disturbed by vegetation and ploughing. Over this were two similar deposits, **0202**, a reddish brown silty sand mixed with mid grey brown sandy silt, that was 0.28 to 0.31m thick, and **0201**, a reddish brown silty sand with pebbles, that was 0.42 to 0.52m thick. These deposits had the homogenous appearance of colluvial hillwash that was seen across the site. The test pit was sealed by a mixed reddish brown and grey brown sandy silt deposit containing occasional pebbles and charcoal **0200**, that was between 0.22m and 0.32m thick. A single sherd from the rim of an Anglo-Norman Gritty ware jar, dating to the 11th/12th Century was recovered from this deposit.

Plate 2. Percolation Test Pit facing NE (Scales 0.5m & 1m)

5.3 Foundations

At the rear of the plot along the NW side, a trench measuring 10.8m by 1.9m and between 1.15m and 1.3m deep was excavated for a retaining wall. The base of this was at 16.93m AOD where a deposit of reddish brown sandy silt containing occasional fragments of charcoal and CBM, **0107**, was visible across most of the foundation.

Plate 3. Retaining wall foundation sect facing NW (Scales 0.5m & 1m)

Along the SW property boundary a series of three rectangular foundations was dug. The largest was 1.35m by 2.0m and the smallest 1.25m by 1.45m. These revealed a stratigraphic sequence of deposits consistent with the rest of the site, but were filled with concrete before a level could be taken at the base of each.

Plate 4. Rectangular foundation sect facing SW (Scales 0.5m & 1m)

Foundations for the house measured 17.1m by 10.2m, and varied between 1.5m and 1.9m BGL (from the original ground surface) or 15.85m and 16.45m AOD. The stratigraphic sequence was remarkably consistent across the plot. In places where the foundations were deepest, notably along the SW and NW edges of the building

footprint, a light brown gravely sand deposit **0104** was visible. This was the geological natural that was previously seen in the percolation test pit and recorded as **0204**. This was recorded at 16.5m AOD in the centre of the foundation footprint. Also visible in the deepest foundations was a series of deposits/fills composed of very light creamy white crushed chalk and light pink sand and gravel, grey brown silty sand, very light grey gravel, and reddish brown sandy gravel, all assigned context **0109**. These appeared to be the fills of a series of inter-cutting features. Excavation of a sample of the features, to determine their character and date, was ruled out by the site manager.

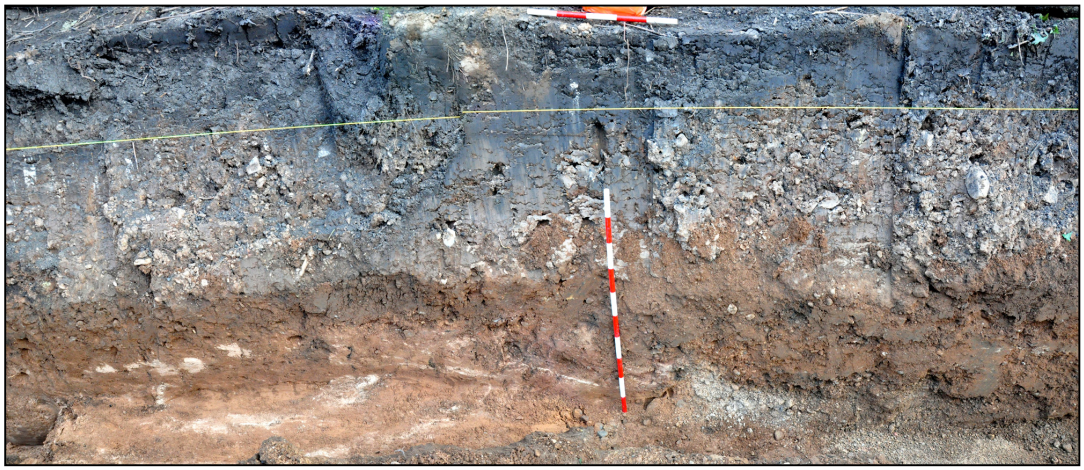

Plate 5. Pit fills 0109 facing SW (Scales 0.5m & 1m)

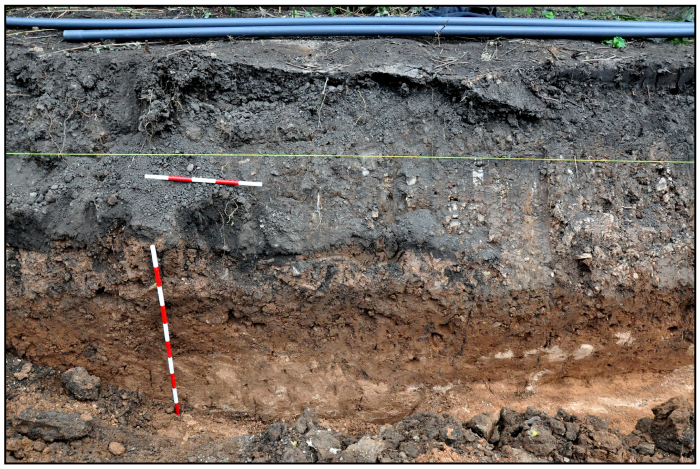

Plate 6. Pit fills 0109 facing SW (Scales 0.5m & 1m)

Plate 7. Pit fills 0109 facing SE (Scales 0.5m & 1m)

Plate 8. Pit fill 0109 facing NW (Scales 0.5m & 1m)

Sealing the fills of the possible cut features was the site-wide deposit of reddish brown sandy silt **0107**, previously seen in the retaining wall trench. This probable hillwash deposit was 0.4m thick in the SW foundation and 0.4m thick in the NW corner of the NE foundation. Over deposit 0107 was similar reddish brown silty sand deposit **0103**, previously seen in a test pit, and probably also primarily composed of colluvial hillwash. This was 0.4m thick along the SW foundation, 0.3m thick in the NW corner of the NE foundation and 0.15m thick in the SE corner of the NE foundation. Two fragments of Roman CBM came from this deposit. Along the full length of the NE foundation a thin (0.02m) lense of creamy white crushed chalk **0106**, was recorded over deposit 0103. It was over 18.4m long and lensed out to the SW, making it over 1.2m wide, and sloped down to the SE from 16.99m AOD to 16.15m AOD. One possible interpretation is that the chalky deposit is part of a path. However the deposit was thin and of consistent thickness, and evidence for erosion by traffic is entirely absent. More likely, the deposit may be part debris from the construction of the adjacent house, number 38 Saint Paul's Square.

Plate 9. Sample section NE foundation facing NE (Scales 0.5m & 1m)

Plate 10. Sample section NE foundation facing NE (Scales 0.5m & 1m)

Over chalky deposit 0106, and seemingly limited to the NW end of the NE foundation was a 0.1m thick deposit of dark brown organic ashy sandy silt **0108**. Over this, across the whole site was a deposit of reddish brown silty sand and clay sand **0102**, that was 0.21m-0.5m thick. Along the NE side of the plot deposit 0102 was overlain by a mid grey brown sandy silt deposit **0105**, that was recorded over an area measuring 15.23m by 3m by 0.25m thick. This lensed out to the SW and appeared to level out the slope which formerly dropped away to the NE. Two joining fragments from the rim of a Roman pottery vessel were recovered from this deposit. Elsewhere in the plot a mixed deposit of light orange brown sand, mid grey brown and red brown clay sand, **0101**, was recorded in sample sections, and was 0.1m to 0.15m thick. In retrospect, this appears to be the result of horticulture, planting beds and general garden activity. At least part of this deposit seems to be the fill of a NW-SE aligned linear feature such as a planting bed or shallow ditch, that was noted retrospectively on photographs. The whole plot was sealed by a deposit of very dark grey sandy silt garden soil, **0100**, that varied in thickness between 0.35m and 0.65m.

5.4 Service Trenches

Two service trenches were dug between the house foundations and the street to the SE. The first of these was 8.6m long and 0.7m wide and 0.7m deep. Its base was at 16.03m AOD, where the light brown gravely sand geological natural 0104 was visible. Over it was a 0.4m thick reddish brown silty sand deposit, which is probably the same deposit seen in the percolation test pit 0202, and the widespread colluvium deposit 0107. This was sealed by a very mixed reddish and grey brown deposit, which was probably a machine disturbed deposit 0200, also seen in the nearby percolation test pit.

Plate 11. Service trench 1 facing NE (Scale 0.5m & 1m)

Plate 12. Service trench 1 facing SE (Scale 0.5m & 1m)

The second service trench was 7.5m long by 0.7m wide and 0.6m deep. The geological natural was not seen in this trench. The reddish brown colluvium, 0107 and 0103, was visible with a combined depth of 0.3m. This was sealed by the thin chalky deposit 0106, 0.1m of deposit 0102, and 0.2m of deposit 0200.

Plate 13. Service trench 2 facing NE (Scales 0.5m & 1m)

Plate 14. Service trench 2 facing SE (Scales 0.5m & 1m)

Plate 15. General site shot facing SE

6 Finds & environmental Evidence (Ailsa Mainman & Jane McComish)

Finds were collected from 4 contexts, as shown in the table below.

Context	Pottery		CBM		Fired clay		Miscellaneous	Spotdate
	No.	Wt/g	No.	Wt/g	No.	Wt/g		
100	1						very abraded base of a colour-coated beaker	?3rd Cent
103			1	75			fragment of Roman brick, 22mm thick, slightly reduced core, very abraded, fabric R5	Roman
103			1	75			fragment of Roman imbrex, 75g in weight, 20mm thick, reduced core, fabric R6	Roman
105	2						small collared rim (in two pieces) with rouletted decoration on collar, oxidized fabric . Possibly Ebor ware	? Roman
200	1						squared rim from an Anglo-Norman gritty ware jar	11th/12th cent
Total	4		2	150				

Table 1. Finds quantities

7 Discussion & Conclusions

Archaeological monitoring of groundworks on land adjacent to number 40 St. Paul's Square has confirmed that undated archaeological deposits are present on the site. These archaeological deposits were however, protected from disturbance by the groundworks by a considerable depth of overburden. Logistical considerations prevented any excavation of the archaeological deposits visible in parts of the deepest foundations, and no datable finds were recovered from them. Despite this, an interpretation of the deposits may be tentatively put forward. In plan, these deposits appear to be the fills of inter-cutting features, probably pits. The fills themselves are diverse: dirty sand, well-sorted gravel, sand and gravel, and chalky bands with minimal anthropogenic material other than charcoal evident. The form of the pits and the nature of the infill is typical of quarrying activity.

The development site is located on the York glacial moraine, which is largely composed of sand and gravel, and has in the past been extensively exploited for aggregate sand and gravel for building and road surfacing. The author has excavated similar features on the moraine on sites to the west, at 95 Front Street in Acomb (Bruce, 2007), and to the east, near Grimston Bar (Stirk, 2004). The quarry pits on both sites proved post-medieval in date with the main activity occurring in the 18th and 19th centuries. Significantly, this is a period when roads around York were turnpiked and resurfacing with gravel was the responsibility of the local residents (Stirk, 2004). Quarrying of sand and gravel in the moraine certainly occurred in other periods, although perhaps not on the same scale as the 18th and 19th centuries, so without datable finds the pits must remain undated.

A series of colluvial hillwash deposits overlay the phase of possible quarrying activity. This is entirely typical of deposits on a slope, and was likely combined with and/or caused by cultivation of the land. The finds recovered from these deposits were Roman and medieval in date, and are almost certainly residual, probably moving downslope in the hillwash from their original location, and getting mixed with other finds in the process. The absence of 18th/19th century finds in these deposits does however somewhat undermine the hypothesis that the underlying quarrying is of that date. The colluvium deposits are therefore also undated.

The final phase of activity on the site was levelling the ground for the adjacent building, Number 38 St. Paul's Square. A chalk deposit and overlying levelling layers are undated by finds, but probably post-date construction of the adjacent number 38 which is late 19th century in date. The overlying garden deposits relate to the use of the site in the late 19th and 20th century as a garden belonging to Holgate Hill House. The Ordnance Survey map dated 1891 (see cover plate) suggests that the plot was not part of the formal garden, which lay to the SW, and may therefore be part of a vegetable garden. The deep rich topsoil deposits seen across the site would support this interpretation. There was no evidence during the work for the small building depicted on the 1891 O.S. map.

The probably residual finds dating to the Roman period that were recovered from the hillwash indicate that there was Roman period activity in the vicinity. Almost certainly the Roman road was nearby, and the associated cemetery is attested by the skeleton at the Kilima Hotel. No evidence for road or cemetery was seen on the development site, and it is possible that quarrying may have removed any such remains. Frequent small fragments of undiagnostic bone were present in the hillwash deposits, possibly evidence for a disturbed burial; but equally this may be food debris. Many areas of the site were not excavated down to the natural geology, so the existence of Roman period remains that were not disturbed by the groundworks cannot be ruled out on the site.

9 List of contributors and acknowledgements

The archaeological work was commissioned and funded by Mr. Andrew Gardiner.The watching brief was carried out by Duncan Stirk from Aecern Archaeology. Production of site plans and sections was carried out by Duncan Stirk, the specialist finds report was produced by Ailsa Mainman and Jane McComish of York Archaeological Trust Specialist Services, and the report was checked by Maria Vinnels.

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Appendix 1. Context list

Context	Type	Description
100	Topsoil	V. dk grey sandy silt. Sitewide by 0.35m-0.65m thick. Garden soil.
101	Make-up	Mixed lt orange brown sand & mid grey brown & red brown clay sand. Sitewide by 0.1m-0.15m thick. Make-up and disturbance from garden activity.
102	Make-up	Reddish brown silty sand & clay sand. Sitewide by 0.21m-0.5m thick. Make-up deposit.
103	Colluvium	Reddish brown silty sand, occ sm CBM frags. Sitewide by 0.23m-0.77m thick. Colluvial hillwash deposit.
104	Natural	Lt brown gravelly sand. Sitewide. Geological natural?
105	Make-up	Mid grey brown sandy silt. >15.23m x > 3m x 0.25m thick. Make-up levelling layer along NE side of site.
106	Surface	Creamy white crushed chalk. >18.4m x >1.2m x 0.02m thick.
107	Colluvium	Reddish brown sandy silt, occ sm CBM frags. Sitewide by >0.4m thick. Colluvial hillwash deposit.
108	Organic layer	Dark brown ashy sand silt. 0.1m thick. Organic deposit over chalk surface 106. 0.1m thick.
109	Quarry Pit	Banded V. lt cream white crushed chalk & lt pink sand & gravel, grey brown silty sand, very lt grey gravel, & reddish brown sandy gravel. Possible fills of quarry pits.
200	Make-up	Mixed reddish brown & grey brown sandy silt. Occ sm pebbles & occ flacks charcoal. 0.22m-0.32m thick.
201	Colluvium?	Reddish brown silty sand. Mod small pebbles. 0.42m-0.52m thick. Colluvial hillwash deposit?
202	Colluvium?	Reddish brown silty sand mixed with mid grey brown sandy silt. 0.28m-0.31m thick. Colluvial hillwash deposit?
203	Disturbed	Mottled lt. Yellow brown & reddish brown clay sand & sand. 0.26m thick. Disturbed natural deposit.
		natural
204	Natural	Lt. Yellow brown & pink brown clay sand. Geological natural.