PRE-CONSTRUCT
ARCHAEOLOGY
LINCOLN

**ARCHAEOLOGICAL
WATCHING BRIEF REPORT;
FRONT STREET, MORTON,
GAINSBOROUGH, LINCOLNSHIRE**

NGR: SK 8091 9153
SITE CODE: FSM01
LCNCC ACC. NO: 2001.43
Planning ref.: M00/P/0288

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Report prepared for
Brightsolo Ltd.
by Chris Clay
May 2001

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Summary

- *An archaeological watching brief was undertaken during groundworks for the construction of a new Co-op store on land off Front Street, Morton, Gainsborough, Lincolnshire.*

- *The area had been extensively disturbed by the foundations of a former school building. Archaeological features were not detected, and consequently, it was concluded that the development was unlikely to impact upon the archaeological resource.*

The site
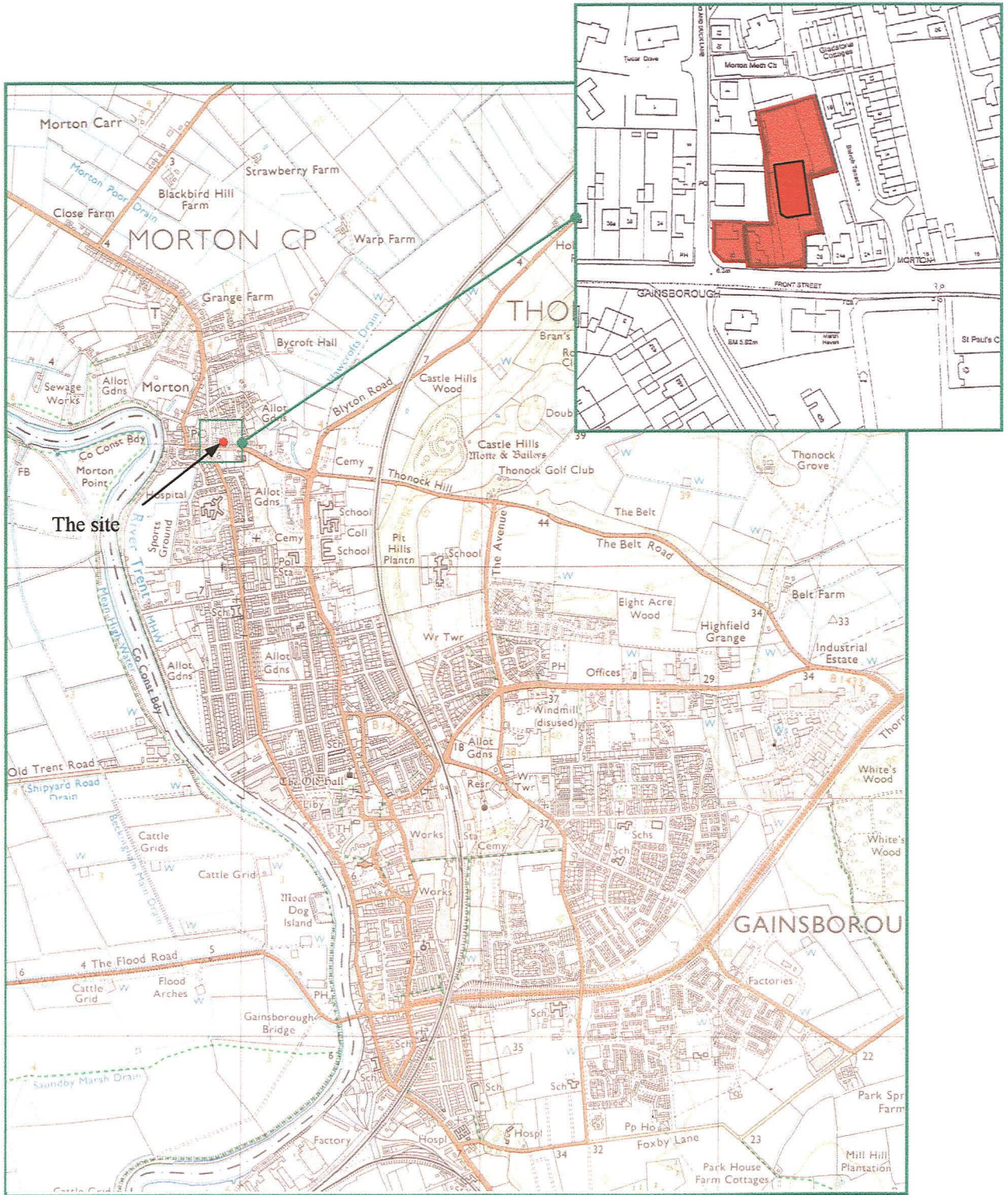
Fig.1: Site location, showing position of building footprint (scale 1:25,000, inset 1:2,500). (OS Copyright License No. A1 515 21 A0001)
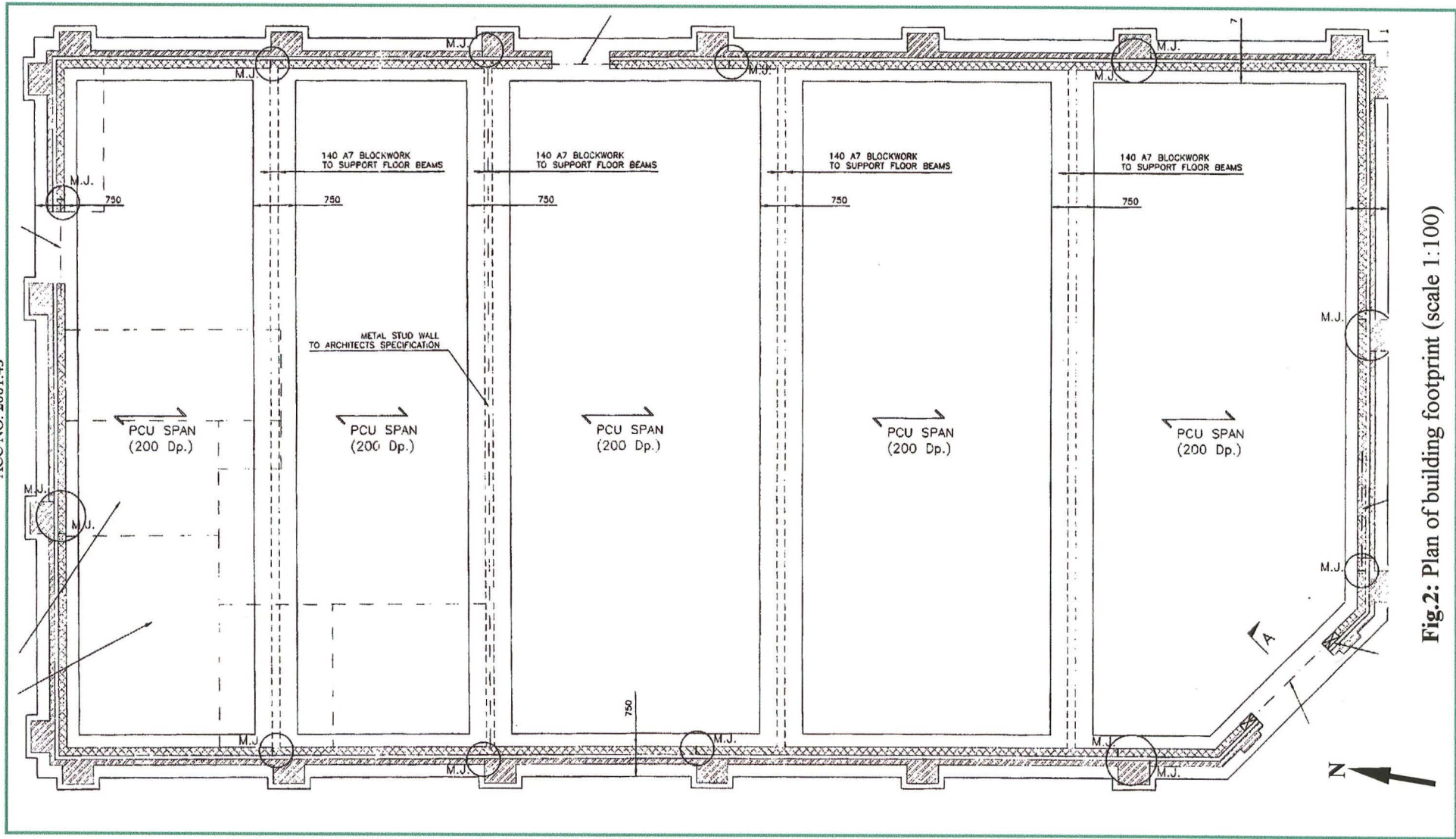
Fig.2: Plan of building footprint (scale 1:100)

140 A7 BLOCKWORK
TO SUPPORT FLOOR BEAMS

140 A7 BLOCKWORK
TO SUPPORT FLOOR BEAMS

140 A7 BLOCKWORK
TO SUPPORT FLOOR BEAMS

140 A7 BLOCKWORK
TO SUPPORT FLOOR BEAMS

METAL STUD WALL
TO ARCHITECTS SPECIFICATION

PCU SPAN
(200 Dp.)

PCU SPAN
(200 Dp.)

PCU SPAN
(200 Dp.)

PCU SPAN
(200 Dp.)

PCU SPAN
(200 Dp.)

750

750

750

750

750

750

M.J.

N

1.0 Introduction

Pre-Construct Archaeology (Lincoln) were commissioned by Brightsolo Ltd. to undertake an archaeological watching brief during groundworks for the construction of a new Co-operative Society store on land off Front Street, Morton, Gainsborough. This was undertaken to fulfill a planning requirement issued by West Lindsey District Council.

This report details the results of the fieldwork. It is written to conform to both national and local guidelines as set out in the Lincolnshire County Council document *Lincolnshire Archaeological Handbook: A Manual of Archaeological Practice* (LCC, 1998).

2.0 Location and description

The village of Morton is situated in the administrative district of West Lindsey, and adjoins the north side of Gainsborough, approximately 25km north-west of Lincoln. The site consists of an area of approximately $1750m^2$, and is located on the northern side of Front Street, to the east of Dog and Duck Lane. It centres on NGR SK 8091 9153. School buildings, which have now been demolished, previously covered most of the site, and 28 Front Street still stands in the south west corner.

The local geology consists of second terrace deposits of sand and gravel, overlying a solid geology of Keuper Marl (British Geological Survey, 1967).

3.0 Planning background

Planning permission was sought for the demolition of existing structures and the erection of a new foodstore and associated infrastructure (planning ref M00/P/0288). The permission was granted by West Lindsey District Council, subject to the undertaking of an archaeological watching brief on all groundworks.

4.0 Archaeological and historical background

The earliest settlement evidence for the area comes from the Saxon period and consists of two ninth century coins found near Gainsborough. These finds were a *lunette* penny of Aethelred I of Wessex (866-71), and a coin of Aethelred II of Northumbria (840-8) (Blackburn, 1993). Coin finds are rare for this period and may be indicative of local settlement activity.

There was definitely some form of settlement activity at both Gainsborough and Morton by the early eleventh century, as Gainsborough was used by the fleet of Swein and Canute as a temporary base in 1013-4 (Everson, 1993), with the Viking invaders also making use of the sharp bend in the river at Morton as a safe haven, in which to

moor their ships. The suffix '-borough' is also indicative of a Saxon *burh* or fortified settlement (Mills, 1993). This was probably created to watch over this important stretch of the Trent, which was navigable from the sea and provided a sheltered harbour (Sawyer 1998). An early post-Conquest castle is also known to have been built in the area, a ringwork having been constructed at Thonock, approximately 1km east of the current site (Everson, Taylor & Dunn, 1991).

The place-name of Morton itself derives from Old English, meaning 'farmstead in moorland or marshy ground' (Mills 1993), and was probably a farmstead supplying the neighbouring community in Gainsborough. In the Domesday Book, lands at Morton are recorded as being part of a royal jurisdiction based in Kirton-in-Lindsey. Other property was held by Ivo Tallboys (Morgan & Thorn, 1986).

A major phase of settlement expansion began in the early thirteenth century when Gainsborough was re-established as a planned town, to replace the Late Anglo-Saxon trading centre at Torksey, further south on the Trent (Everson 1991). However, very little evidence of medieval settlement in Gainsborough survives, other than the Old Hall, which was established in the first half of the fifteenth century (Pevsner & Harris, 1989).

There is no comparable evidence for the medieval period surviving in Morton. The earliest surviving components of the village date from the early eighteenth century. These structures may reflect the commercial benefit to the area of Gainsborough developing as a port for the trans-shipment of goods from sea going vessels to barges (Pevsner & Harris 1989).

5.0 Methodology

Prior to the commencement of the watching brief, the former school building was demolished, leaving large amounts of brick and concrete rubble around the site. In places, some of the concrete/tarmac surfacing of the school car park and playground, remained in situ. Most of this area was at the northern end of the site, away from the location of the building footings.

An archaeologist was present during all groundworks, which involved the digging of foundation trenches, service trenches and access roads by mechanical excavator. The archaeological fieldwork was carried out by the author between January 11th and 22nd 2001. All plan and section surfaces were examined and intermittently cleaned to allow the detection and recording of archaeological features/deposits.

The foundation trenches were excavated to a maximum depth of 1.6m using a JCB fitted with a 0.6m wide toothed trenching bucket.

6.0 Results

The uppermost deposit, (001), was a ubiquitous layer of building rubble, resulting from the demolition of the former school building. The base of this deposit lay no more than 0.1m below the modern ground surface. Beneath (001) was an homogenous dark brown sandy soil, (002), which was up to 1.6m deep and predominant throughout much of the building footprint. On the western side of the footprint, and extending no more than 2m eastwards, this deposit was replaced by a slightly lighter brown, but otherwise identical deposit, (004), which had a maximum depth of 1.3m. Both (002) and (004) contained large quantities of building rubble. They appeared to represent former soil horizons that had been heavily disturbed by the building and recent demolition of the school.

Sealed below layers (002) and (004) was the natural geology, (003), consisting of a yellowish brown sand. The height of the upper surface of this layer fluctuated, with a maximum depth of 0.3m being exposed within the western half of the foundation trench.

No archaeological features were exposed during the watching brief, and there were was also a total absence of artefactual material, either within the trenches, or as unstratified surface finds.

7.0 Effectiveness of methodology

The methodology chosen was appropriate to the development. A more intensive form of archaeological investigation was unnecessary; as the watching brief demonstrated that the site was already heavily disturbed by previous building activity, and that consequently there were no surviving stratified deposits.

8.0 Acknowledgements

Pre-Construct Archaeology (Lincoln) would like to thank the client, Brightsolo Ltd, and the building contractors, Butler Construction, for their cooperation during the fieldwork.

9.0 References

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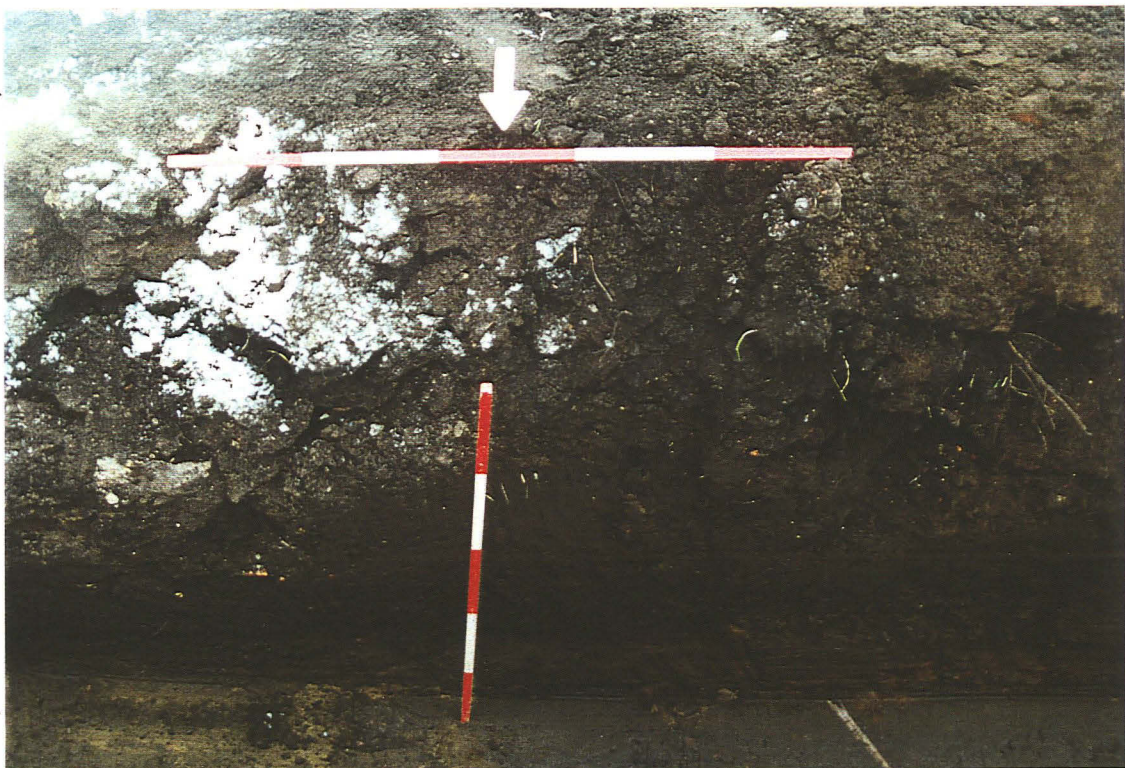
10.0 Site archive

The documentary archive for the site is currently in the possession of Pre-Construct Archaeology. This will be deposited at Lincoln City and County Museum within six months. Access to the archive may be gained by quoting the global accession number 2001.43.

11.0 Appendices

11.1 Colour plates

P1: General view of the site, looking north

P2: Sample shot of foundation trench section, looking south

11.2 List of archaeological contexts

Context	Description
001	Rubble layer
002	Disturbed soil horizon
003	Disturbed soil horizon
004	Natural