

**WAITHE BECK,
STANTON LE VALE, LINCOLNSHIRE**

**ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF
REPORT**

Site code	WBSV 04
NGR:	TF 19097 94029
LCCM Acc No:	2004.81

Report prepared for the Environment Agency

by

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Summary

- *An archaeological watching brief was undertaken during environmental groundworks at Waithe Beck, near Stainton le Vale, Lincolnshire*
- *The site lies within an area of extensive prehistoric land use, and close to a known Romano-British villa complex*
- *A single undated feature was observed during the watching brief*

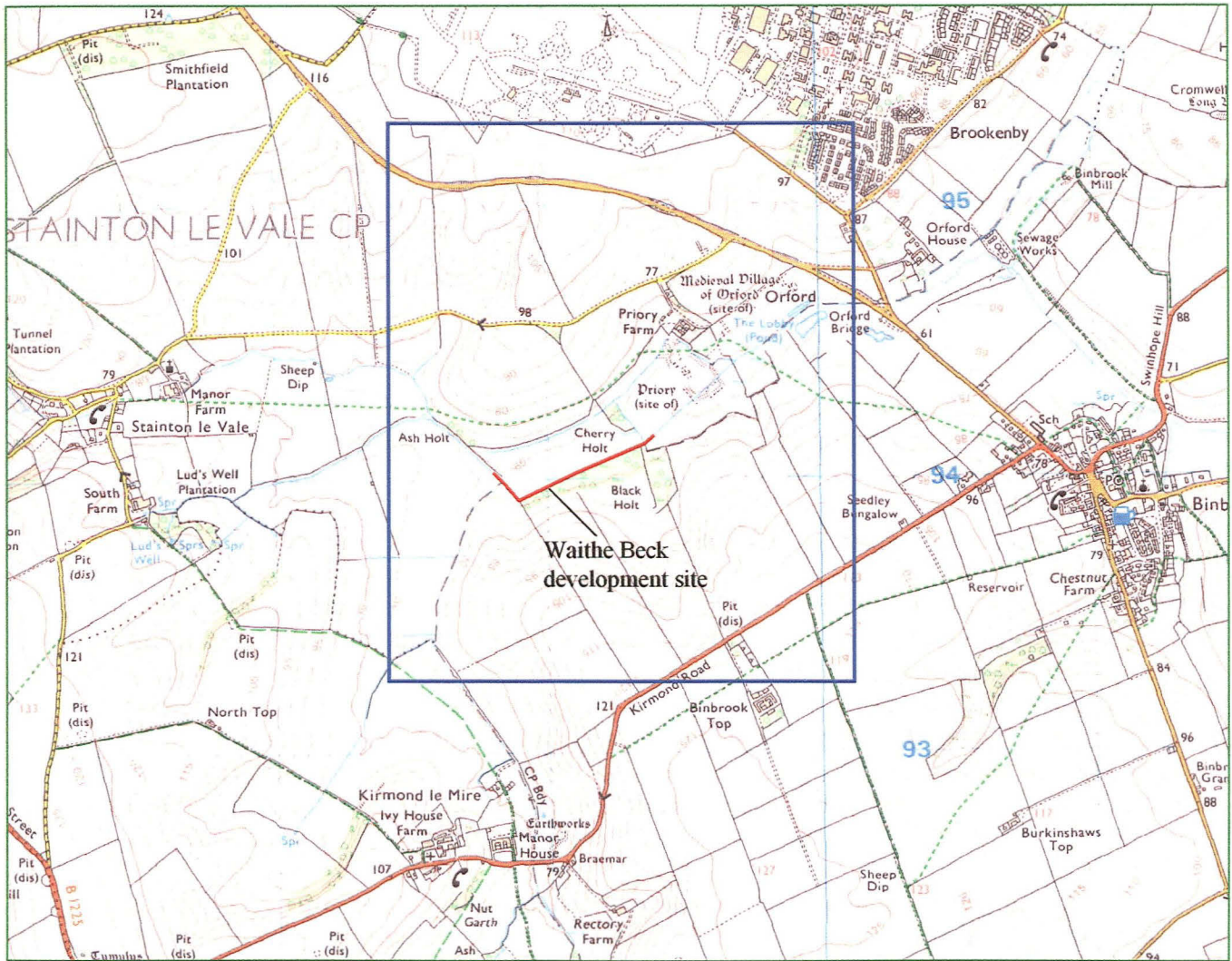


Fig. 1: Location map. The development area is shown in red, and the area covered by fig. 2 outlined in blue. Scale 1:25 000. (O.S. copyright licence no. AL 515 21 A0001.)

1.0 Introduction

Pre-Construct Archaeology (Lincoln) was commissioned by the Environment Agency to undertake an archaeological watching brief during the groundworks for a landscaping project on a stretch of the Waithe Beck near Stainton le Vale, Lincolnshire.

These works were undertaken to fulfil the objectives of a formal project brief issued by the Built Environment Officer for Lincolnshire County Council, and a project specification prepared by Pre-Construct Archaeology (Lincoln). This approach is consistent with the recommendations of *Archaeology & Planning: Planning Policy Guidance Note 16* (Department of the Environment, 1990), *Management of Archaeological Projects* (English Heritage, 1991) and *Standards and guidance for archaeological watching briefs* (IFA, 1999).

Copies of this report have been deposited with the commissioning body and the County Sites and Monuments Record. Reports will also be deposited at Lincoln City & County Museum, along with an ordered project archive for long-term storage and curation (evaluation and watching brief).

2.0 Site location and description (figs. 1-3)

The stretch of the Waithe Beck subject to landscaping works is situated c. 2km east of the village of Stainton le Vale and 9.3km north-east of Market Rasen, in the administrative district of West Lindsey. It lies within a valley, running roughly from west to east, on the eastern side of the Lincolnshire Wolds, with a height above sea level of approximately 65m.

The development area comprised a stretch of the Waithe Beck some 500m long, which was artificially straightened at an earlier date; the Beck enters this area running from north-west to south-east, turning sharply at the corner of the field to run north-east through the larger part of the works. The south-east side of the Waithe Beck is bordered by established woodland (Black Holt) in the base of the valley: to the north-west, an extensive arable field rises up the slope to the Priory Farm access road. To the north-east of the development area, the straightened Beck runs through the earthwork remnants of Orford Priory. The parish boundary between Stainton le Vale and Binbrook follows the altered course of the Beck, as does the administrative boundary between West and East Lindsey.

The local drift geology consists of Head deposits in the western part of the project, changing to fluvio-glacial sands and gravels in the east. Both deposits overlie Upper Cretaceous Ferrisby Chalk (British Geological Survey, 1990).

Central National Grid Reference TF 19097 94029.

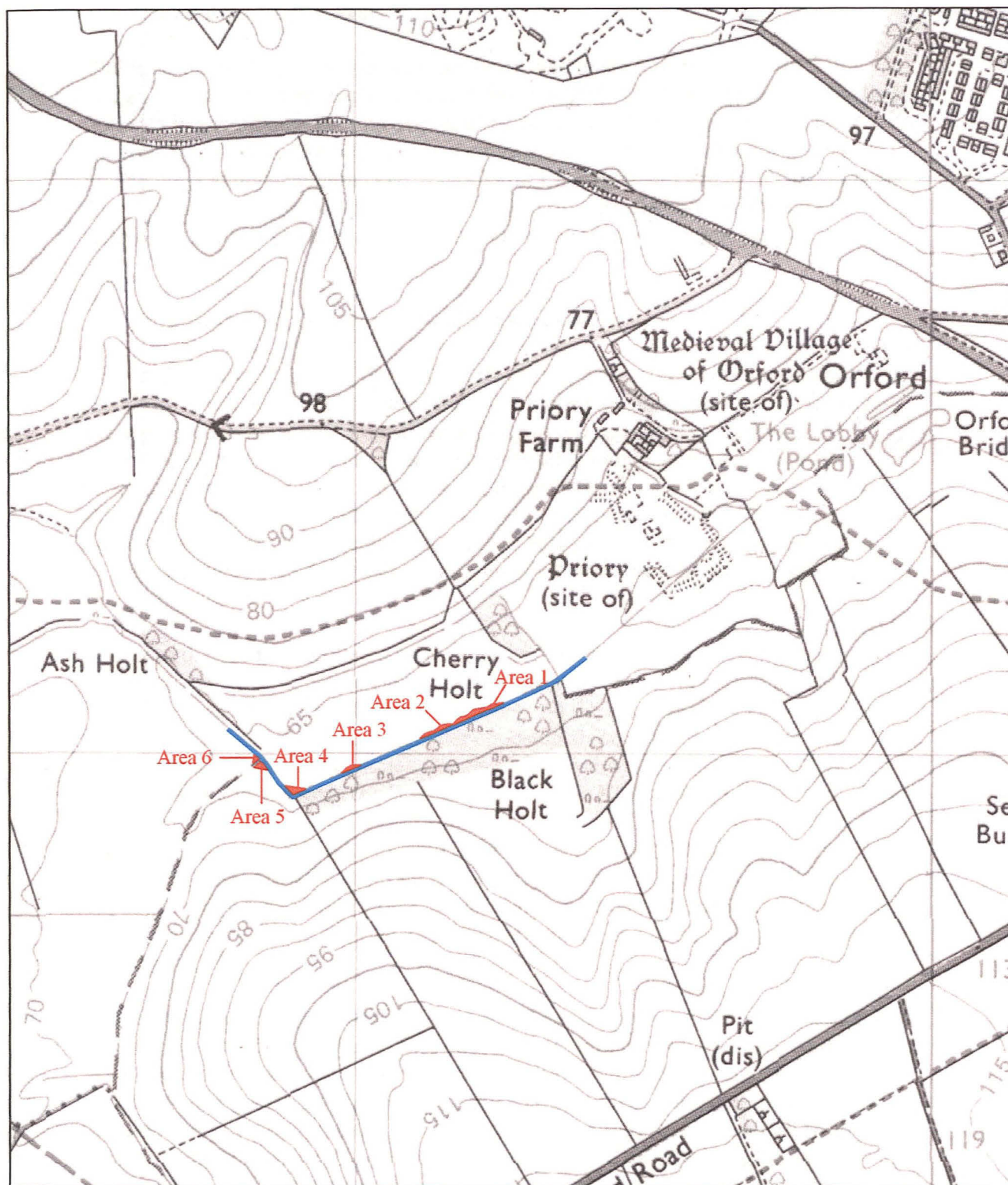


Fig. 2: Location map showing the region of the development zone. The relevant section of the Waithe Beck is shown in blue, and the areas of works in red. Scale 1:10 000. (O.S. copyright licence no. AL 515 21 A0001)

3.0 Planning background

The Environment Agency is a statutory body, and as such is exempt from archaeological planning constraints as defined in PPG 16 (1990). However, the body operates in accordance with its own code of conduct, which, in full consultation with Lincolnshire County Council, has necessitated the undertaking of a programme of archaeological investigation. The Senior Built Environment Officer of Lincolnshire County Council recommended the undertaking of a detailed desktop assessment (Allen, 2003), and this was used for informing the current programme of works.

4.0 Archaeological and historical background

The Lincolnshire Sites and Monuments Record lists a single prehistoric artefact – a Neolithic stone axe – found approximately 100m to the north of the Waithe Beck. However, the evidence of prehistoric activity in the surrounding landscape is extensive. A cropmark resembling a Late Neolithic henge monument (Scheduled Ancient Monument 27919) is situated on the north bank of the Waithe Beck, some 800m upstream of the development site, and is associated with two Bronze Age bowl barrows, while cropmarks indicating Bronze Age round barrows have also been noted in the area, indicating the presence of a ritual landscape whose use extended over many generations.

Closer to the development area are a range of cropmarks believed to represent prehistoric enclosures, associated with farming and other secular land use. Most of these lie along the course of the Waithe Beck, on the rising land on the south side of Black Holt wood, while one lies on the opposing slope to the north of the Beck, and a very extensive enclosure complex lies on a west-facing slope to the south-west of the development site, between the Waithe Beck and the Kirmond Road.

Also to the south-west of the development area is the site of a major Romano-British villa, whose associated features cover an area of some 3 hectares; a mosaic floor was exposed by a previous excavation. In addition, a scatter of Romano-British pottery almost 1km west of the site indicates widespread activity in this area during the Roman period.

The Domesday Survey of 1086 already associates Orford with Binbrook, rather than recording it as a separate entry. Both settlements were on Guy of Craon's land, and were assessed together at a taxable value of a prosperous 40 shillings; there is no record of the population, but both ploughland and pasture were in use, and arable farming was extensive enough for the community to support its own mill (Morgan and Thorn, 1986). The remains of the medieval village of Orford are visible as two discrete arrays of earthworks, to the north and the north-east of the development area: it is believed that the village may have been repositioned when the site directly downstream of the development area was dedicated as a nunnery. Orford nunnery itself, a Premonstratensian priory, was established in the mid-12th century, and dissolved as part of the Reformation in the reign of Henry VIII: the associated earthworks (fig. 2) include a complex of fishponds fed by diverting the original course of the Waithe Beck (Everson *et al.* 1991).

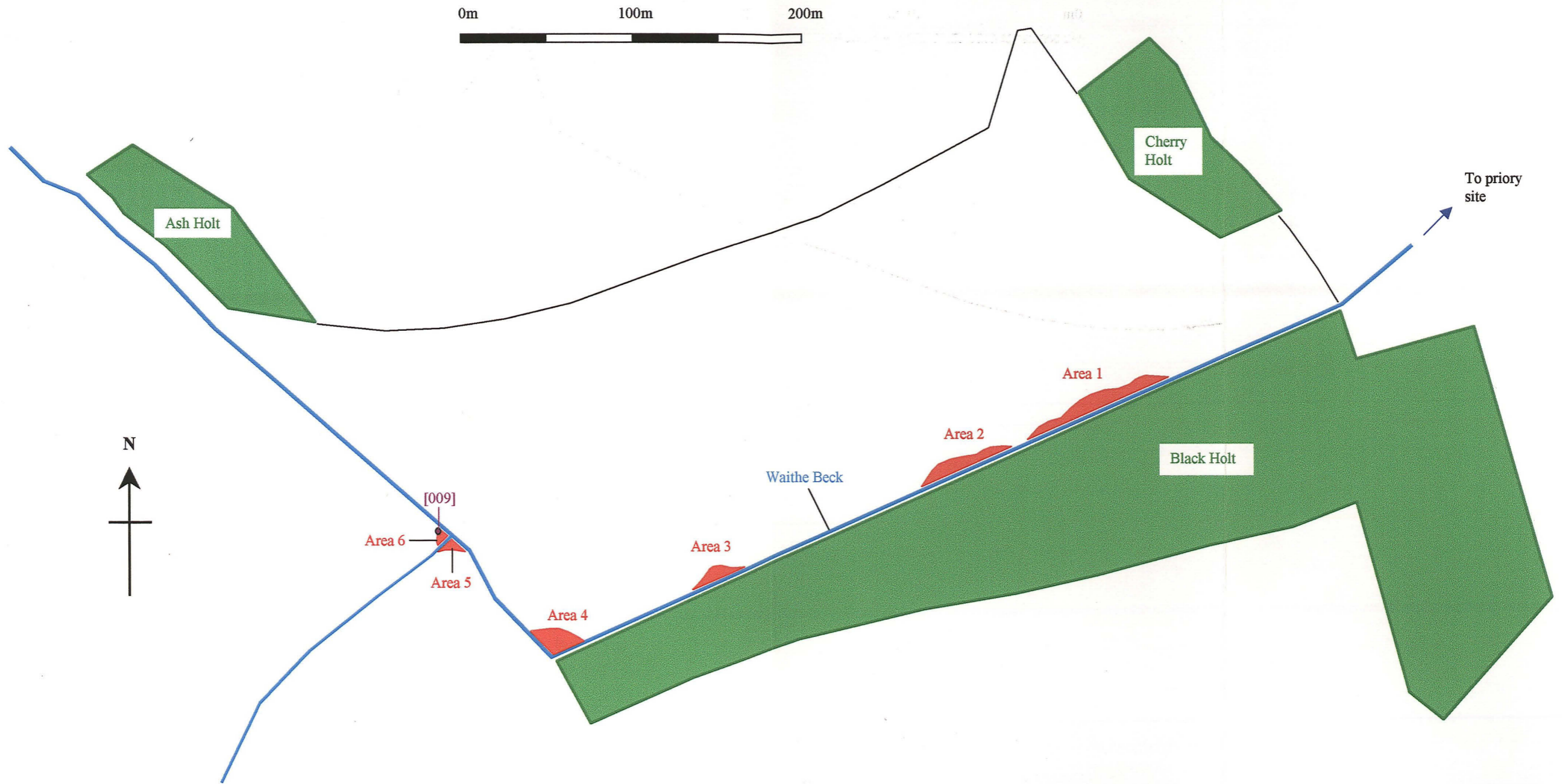


Fig. 3: Plan of the development project, showing the individual areas of works (red). The Waithe Beck is shown in blue, areas of woodland in green, and the position of feature [009] in purple. Scale 1:2500.

Medieval pottery has been found near the Waithe Beck to the west of the development area, and the ridge-and-furrow earthworks of medieval strip ploughing are visible to the south-west.

5.0 Methodology

Excavation work took place in six discrete areas along the course of the Waithe Beck, of which four were on the north bank opposite the Black Holt woods, and two further upstream on the west bank, on either side of the mouth of a tributary stream flowing into the Beck from the south-west (Fig. 2). Topsoil had been removed from the landscaping sites before the commencement of the watching brief. The stream bank, which was originally steep to very steep, breaking to vertical near the water's edge, was reshaped in shallow curves, using a tracked 360° excavator with a bulldozer blade mounted in place of a bucket; spoil was moved away and spread on the field behind the works by a bulldozer.

The works were monitored from as close a range as safety considerations permitted, and sections were drawn during the excavation in two areas (Fig. 4: vertical surfaces were cut during the works, but were not left standing). Limited hand excavation was carried out after machining where further investigation was required. All layers or features observed were recorded on standard watching brief recording sheets, and drawn at a scale of 1:20. A sketch location plan of the development area was prepared at an approximate scale of 1:2500 (Fig. 3): this was chiefly paced out, as extreme weather conditions precluded use of a 100m tape. A colour photographic record was also maintained, selections from which are reproduced in Appendix 1.

The landscaping work took place on the 18th and 19th of March 2004, and was monitored by the author and C. Clay.

6.0 Results (figs. 3-5)

The site was sealed by 001, a mid-brown sandy loam topsoil up to 0.46m deep, which in all the landscaped areas was cultivated and planted with a brassica crop. Below the topsoil was 002, a layer of orange sandy clay up to 0.54m deep, which may have been a subsoil or dredged material used to reinforce the stream bank. In most of the excavated areas, 002 overlay a varicoloured sand layer 003, grey sandy clay layer 004, which contained lenses of peat, and pale yellowish-grey clayey sand 005 – all these layers were interpreted as natural fluvial deposits. Several of the peat lenses in layer 004 were excavated, but no artefactual material was recovered. In Area 4, which was situated in the angle of the SW corner of the main field, layer 002 overlay a light grey, soft, sandy silty clay, 006, which contained quantities of rounded chalk gravel similar to that visible on the bed of the Waithe Beck. Below 006 was compact silty clay 007, containing discrete patches of chalk gravel and small lenses of black peaty material. On the completion of machining in this area, layer 007 appeared to be cut by a narrow, sinuous channel, filled with rounded chalk gravel and flint fragments in a matrix of clayey sand, but a section across this apparent channel proved that it was in fact a ridge of underlying gravel layer 010 rising up through clay layer 007. These layers were also interpreted as natural.

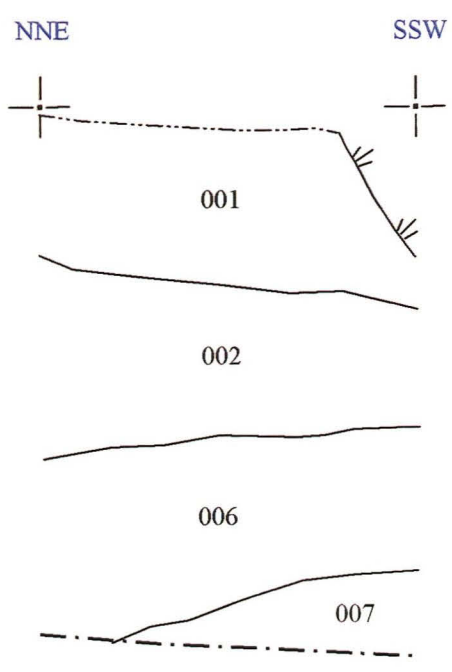
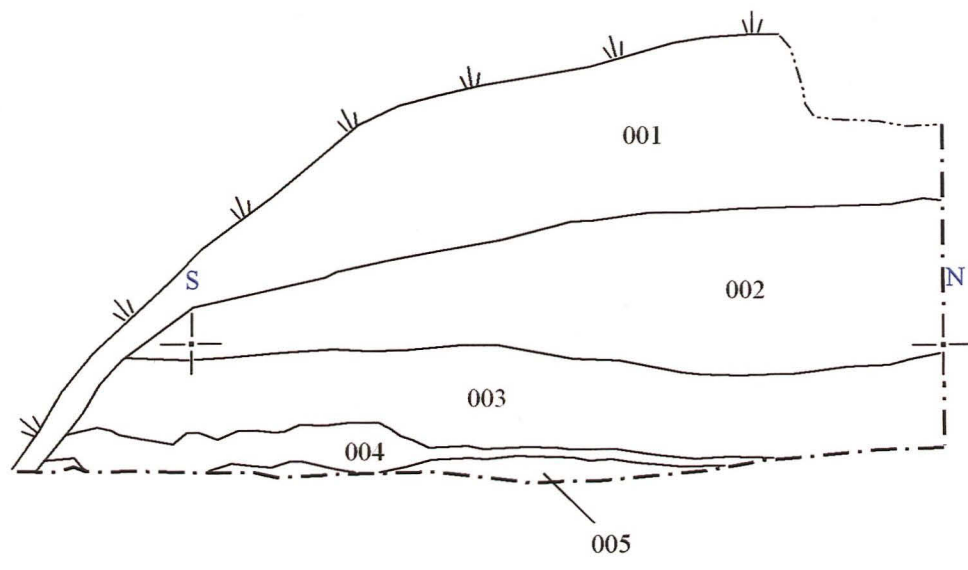


Fig. 4: Section in Area 1 (top) and sample section in Area 4 (above), showing the variety of fluvial deposits. Scale 1:20.

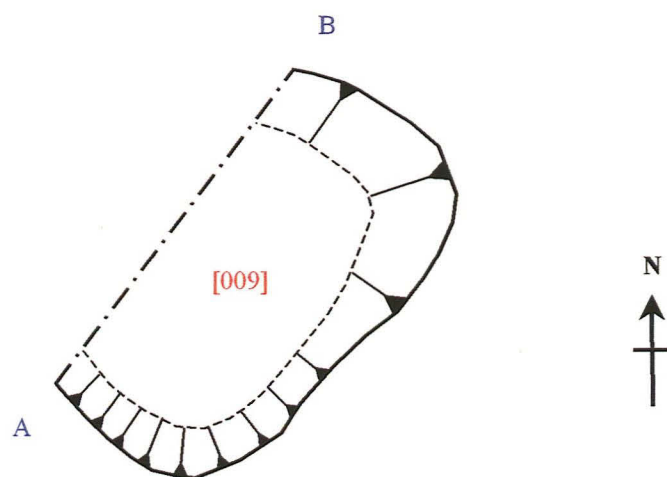
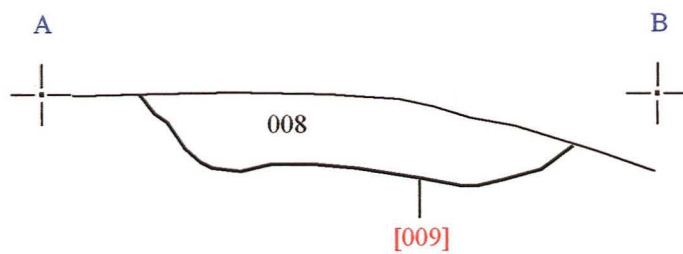


Fig. 5: Section and plan drawing of feature [009]. The unexcavated part of the feature was outside the area of works. Scale 1:20.

A single feature was partly exposed in the NW corner of Area 6. This feature, [009], extended to NW outside the excavated area, and lay directly below the ploughsoil. The exposed part of [009] was excavated, proving to be roughly rectangular in shape, with very rounded corners. Fill 008 was a mid greyish-brown sandy clay with frequent small pebbles, and contained no dating evidence.

7.0 Discussion and conclusion

A single archaeological feature was exposed during the excavations associated with the landscaping project; otherwise, only natural water-borne deposits were seen. Since feature [009] extended outside the excavated area, it is unclear whether it represents one side of a pit or the terminal of a ditch: fill 008 contained no indications of its date or purpose.

8.0 Effectiveness of methodology

The methodology chosen effectively demonstrated the low level of archaeological remains in the development area, and was adequate to the requirements of the archaeological record: a more detailed level of archaeological intervention would not have been necessary.

9.0 Acknowledgements

Pre-Construct Archaeology (Lincoln) would like to thank the Environment Agency for this commission, and J. E. Spence and Son (contractors) for their co-operation during the watching brief.

10.0 References

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11.0 Site archive

The documentary and physical archive for the site is currently in the possession of Pre-Construct Archaeology. This will be deposited with Lincoln Museum within six months from the completion of the project.

Appendix 1: Colour plates

Plate 1 (right): General shot of the development area, looking S from the NE corner of the main field, towards Black Holt. The working plant is visible near the centre of the picture.



Plate 2 (left): General shot of the development area, showing the completed Area 3 in the foreground, and work in progress on Area 4 in the background, looking W.

Plate 3 (right): Working shot – machining in progress on Area 1, looking WSW (upstream).



Plate 4 (left): Section cut during excavation of Area 1, looking WSW (upstream).

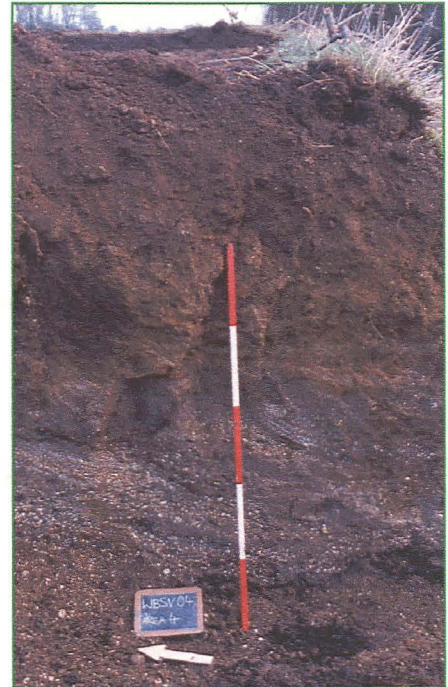


Plate 5 (top left): General shot of the development area, looking E (downstream) towards Area 3.

Plate 6 (top right): Section cut during excavation of Area 4, looking ENE.

Plate 7 (above left): Area 6 after machine and hand excavation, looking NNW: feature [009] is visible at the top right of the excavated area.

Plate 8 (left): Feature [009] post-excitation, looking NW.

Appendix 2: List of contexts

- 001 Topsoil: mid-brown sandy loam with patches of grey clay
- 002 Orange sandy clay with grey clay lenses: possible subsoil or bank material
- 003 Mottled orange/brownish-yellow slightly clayey sand: natural fluvial deposit
- 004 Grey sandy clay with lenses of black sandy peat and organic matter: natural fluvial deposit
- 005 Light yellowish-grey clayey sand: natural fluvial deposit
- 006 Light grey, soft, sandy silty clay with c. 40% rounded chalk gravel: natural fluvial deposit
- 007 Compact silty clay, mottled mid-brown/mid-grey, with patches of chalk gravel and peaty material: natural fluvial deposit
- 008 Fill in feature [009]: mid greyish-brown friable sandy clay containing frequent small pebbles and occasional flint fragments
- 009 Cut feature, partially exposed in the edge of Area 6
- 010 Rounded chalk gravel with flint fragments in a matrix of mid-grey to mid-brown clayey sand: natural fluvial deposit