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Conservation
Services

27 JAN 2006

Highways & Planning
Directorate

**LAND OFF BELTON LANE,
GRANTHAM, LINCOLNSHIRE**

**ARCHAEOLOGICAL
WATCHING BRIEF REPORT**

Site code:	BLAG 05
NGR:	SK 91911 36578
LCCM Acc No:	2005.229
Planning refs.:	S04/1782/35
PCA job no.:	197

Report prepared for Heart Homes Ltd.

by

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January 2006



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yes

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Summary

- An archaeological watching brief was undertaken during the groundworks for a development of seven houses on land off Belton Lane, Grantham, Lincolnshire.
- During topsoil stripping, faint traces of medieval ridge and furrow were identified.
- No further features of archaeological significance were observed during the excavation of five of the house plots, and the watching brief was therefore curtailed following agreement with the Planning Archaeologist.



Figure 1: Location map at scale 1:25 000.
The development site is shown in red.
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1.0 Introduction

Pre-Construct Archaeology (Lincoln) was commissioned by Heart Homes Ltd. to undertake an archaeological watching brief during the groundworks for a residential development on land off Belton Lane, Grantham, Lincolnshire.

These works were undertaken to fulfil the objectives of a formal project brief issued by the South Kesteven Planning Archaeologist, and a project specification prepared by Pre-Construct Archaeology (Lincoln). This approach is consistent with the recommendations of *'Lincolnshire Archaeological Handbook: A Manual of Archaeological Practice'* (LCC, 1998), *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, the South Kesteven Planning Archaeologist, 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.

2.0 Site location and description (figs. 1 & 2)

The town of Grantham is within the administrative district of South Kesteven, approximately 35km south-south-west of Lincoln in the Witham valley, some 18km north of the source of the River Witham and 48km west of its outfall in the Wash. The town centre lies on the west bank of the river, but the modern settlement extends up both sides of the valley.

The development is to north-east of the town centre, approximately 100m east of the River Witham, on the west side of Belton Lane near its junction with the A607. The site is set back from Belton Lane, with a new entrance road between two existing properties, and previously formed part of their grounds: it comprises a single irregularly shaped plot of land, bordered on the south side by a public footpath, and to north and east by the grounds of other properties. At the beginning of the watching brief, the site was under grass, with small flowerbeds near the houses. Its eastern end was partitioned off from the main portion by a high hawthorn hedge, which was not completely removed during the works; the rest of the site had previously been divided on an east-west line by a row of mature trees and shrubs, which had been cut down immediately before the commencement of the watching brief.

The local drift geology of the area consists of older river sand and gravel, deposited along the course of the River Witham. This overlies a solid geology of Middle Lias grey sandy clay and micaceous clay (British Geological Survey, 1972).

Central National Grid Reference: SK 91911 36578.

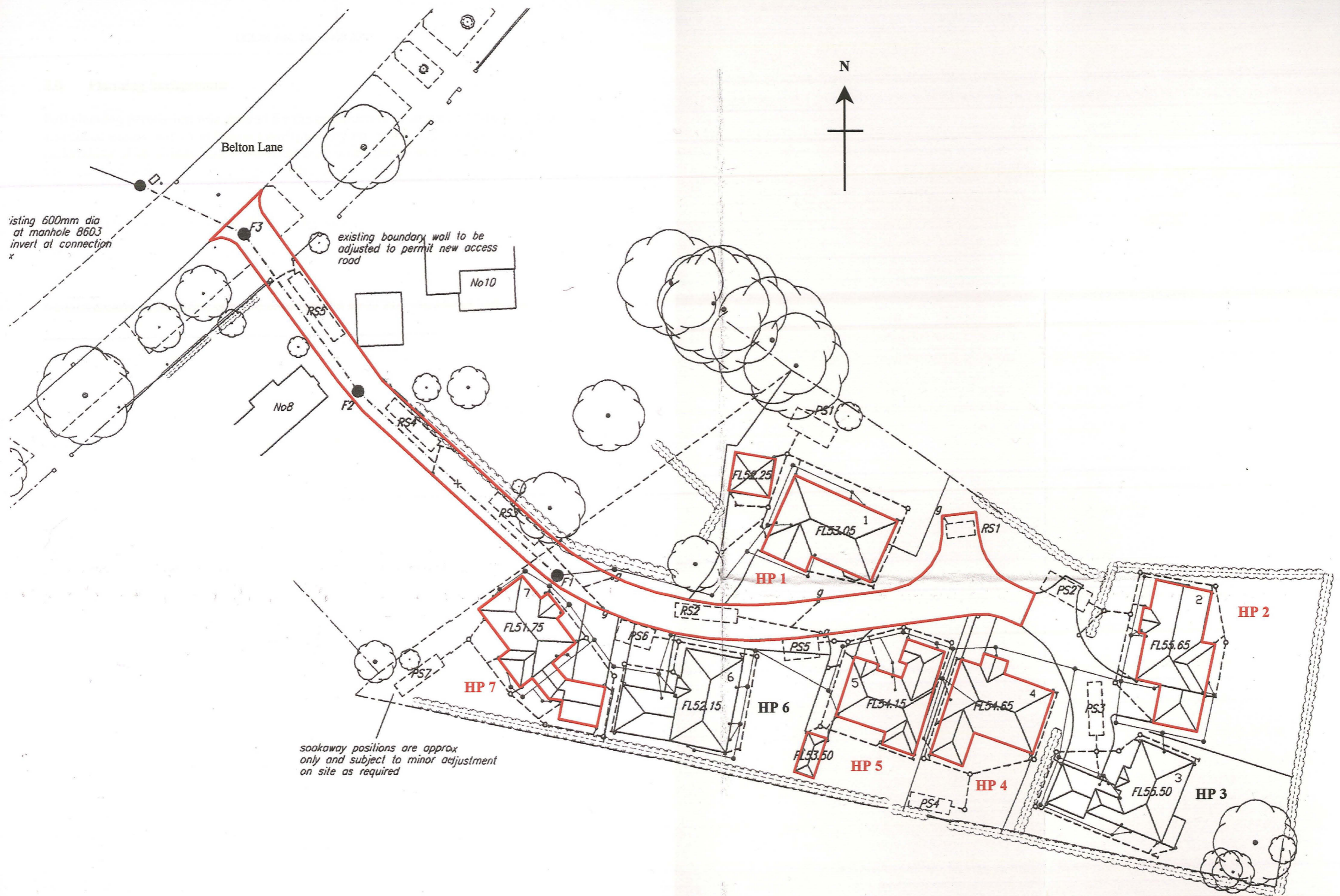


Figure 2: General site plan at scale 1:500. The areas in which the watching brief was carried out are outlined in red. (Plan reproduced by permission of developer.)

3.0 Planning background

Full planning permission was granted for the construction of seven new houses and an associated access road from Belton Lane (planning ref. S04/1782/35), subject to the undertaking of an archaeological watching brief on all groundworks; resulting in the preparation of a detailed archaeological report and ordered project archive.

4.0 Archaeological and historical background

The earliest archaeological evidence from the area dates to the Middle Palaeolithic, represented by a single flint hand axe. Small amounts of Neolithic material have been recovered: at Little Gonerby, on the northern outskirts of Grantham, 2 Late Neolithic/Early Bronze Age ceramic vessels and a stone axe, associated with one human cremation burial and two inhumations, were discovered in 1875, while numerous flint and pottery scatters attest further prehistoric activity from the Neolithic, Bronze Age and Iron Age periods. The distribution of these findspots runs along the Witham Valley and the higher ground overlooking the river (May, 1976).

Grantham itself has yielded little in the way of Romano-British material, although some pottery was discovered from the grounds of Grantham House, 450m south-west of the current site (SMR data). The main focus of settlement at this time appears to have been at Saltersford, on the southern periphery of Grantham. The site controlled a ford where the Salt Way, a prehistoric and Roman road, crossed the Witham. Numerous villas have also been recorded in the Grantham area (Whitwell, 1992).

In the post-Roman period, the focus of settlement shifted northwards, and by the end of the Saxon period, Grantham was an established community of over a thousand individuals (Pevsner & Harris, 1989). The town's relative importance was indicated by the foundation of a mint, which was in operation by the end of the 10th century AD (Sawyer, 1998).

The Domesday Survey of AD 1086 records Grantham as a royal manor, with no other landowners. Before the Norman Conquest '*Queen Edith had a hall there*': it is unclear whether King William I still maintained it as a royal residence. The population is listed as 111 households of townsmen, 72 households of poor peasants (*bordars*), and 77 tofts – houses with gardens or fields attached – of free men owing service to the King as landholder. Land use was chiefly arable, with a small amount of pasture. A church is listed, with a further 8 tofts in its own jurisdiction, and 4 mills, reflecting the extent of arable cultivation within the manor (Williams and Martin, 1992).

5.0 Methodology (fig. 2)

The groundworks began on 31st August 2005, when topsoil stripping commenced in the north-eastern corner of the site. Further visits were made to monitor this activity on 1st, 5th, 6th, 8th, 12th, and 14th September when the topsoil stripping was completed. On 15th and 16th September excavation for a new sewer was monitored.

Excavation of the house footings began on 29th November 2005 when benching for house-plot 1 started. Daily monitoring visits were made until 9th December for the foundation trenches in house-plots 4, 5, 2, and 7 (which was finished on 12th December). Plots 1 and 2, located on the higher ground, were benched or levelled by 360° tracked excavator before the foundation trenches were laid out: in the case of plot 1, this involved the removal of up to 0.65m of soil on the easternmost 6m of the plot; while in plot 2, this was little more than a ground clearing exercise. Excavation was carried out using a combination of a 15-ton 360° excavator and various JCB 180° excavators using a 0.6m flat-bladed digging bucket.

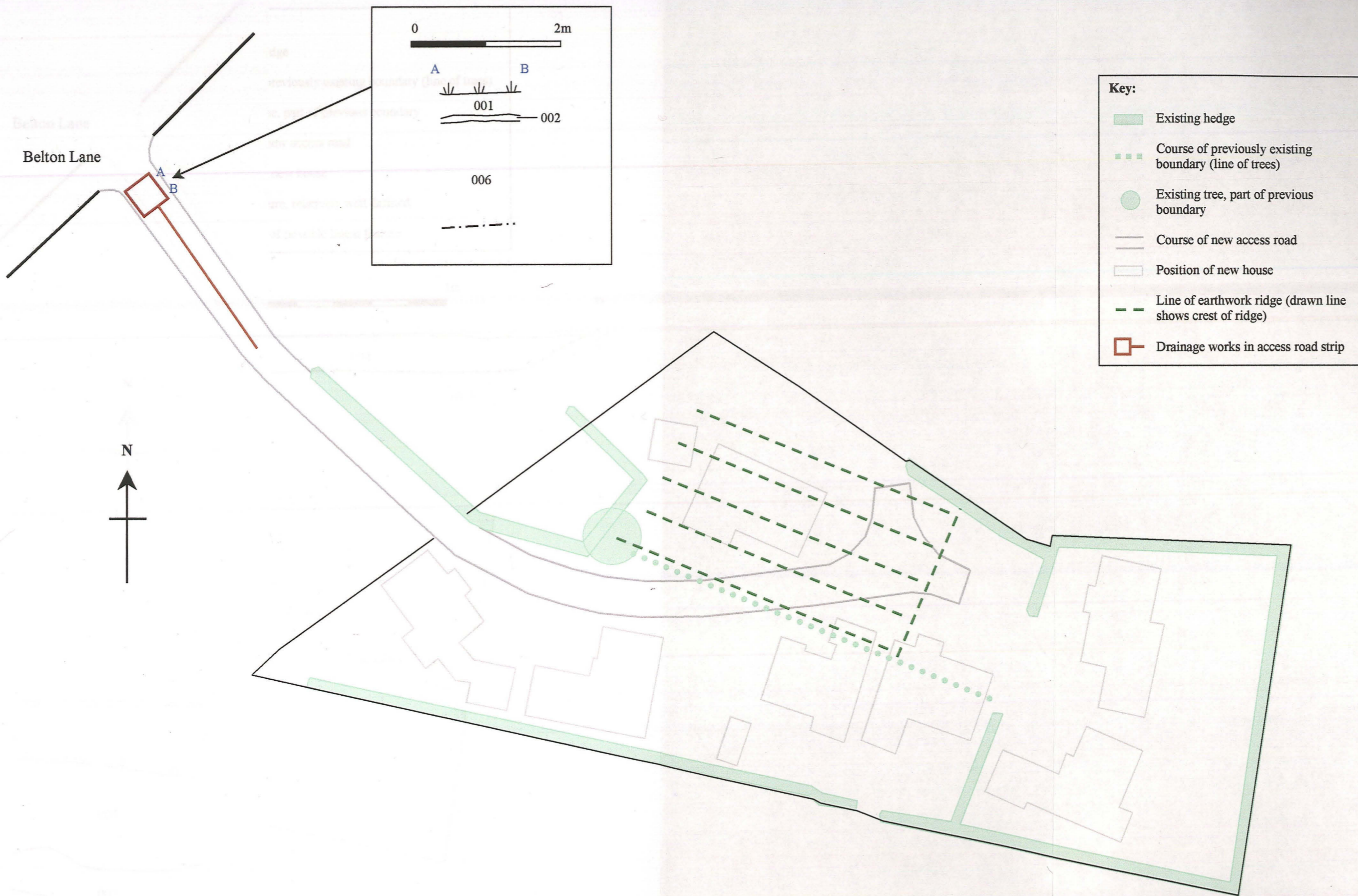
All archaeological deposits or features observed were sample excavated and recorded on standard watching brief record sheets. Sections were drawn at scale 1:20, and features were located on an overall site plan. Where no archaeological features were observed within a house plot, a 1.0m wide sample section was drawn. A colour photographic record of all groundworks monitored was also maintained, but the first film exposed proved to be faulty, and no photographs of the initial topsoil strip could be reproduced; a selection from the surviving photographs appears in Appendix 1. The watching brief was carried out by C. Clay, R. D. Gardner, W. Munford and S. A. Savage.

Following the completion of house plot 7, the watching brief was discontinued after consultation with the Planning Archaeologist for South Kesteven District Council.

6.0 Results (figs. 3 and 4)

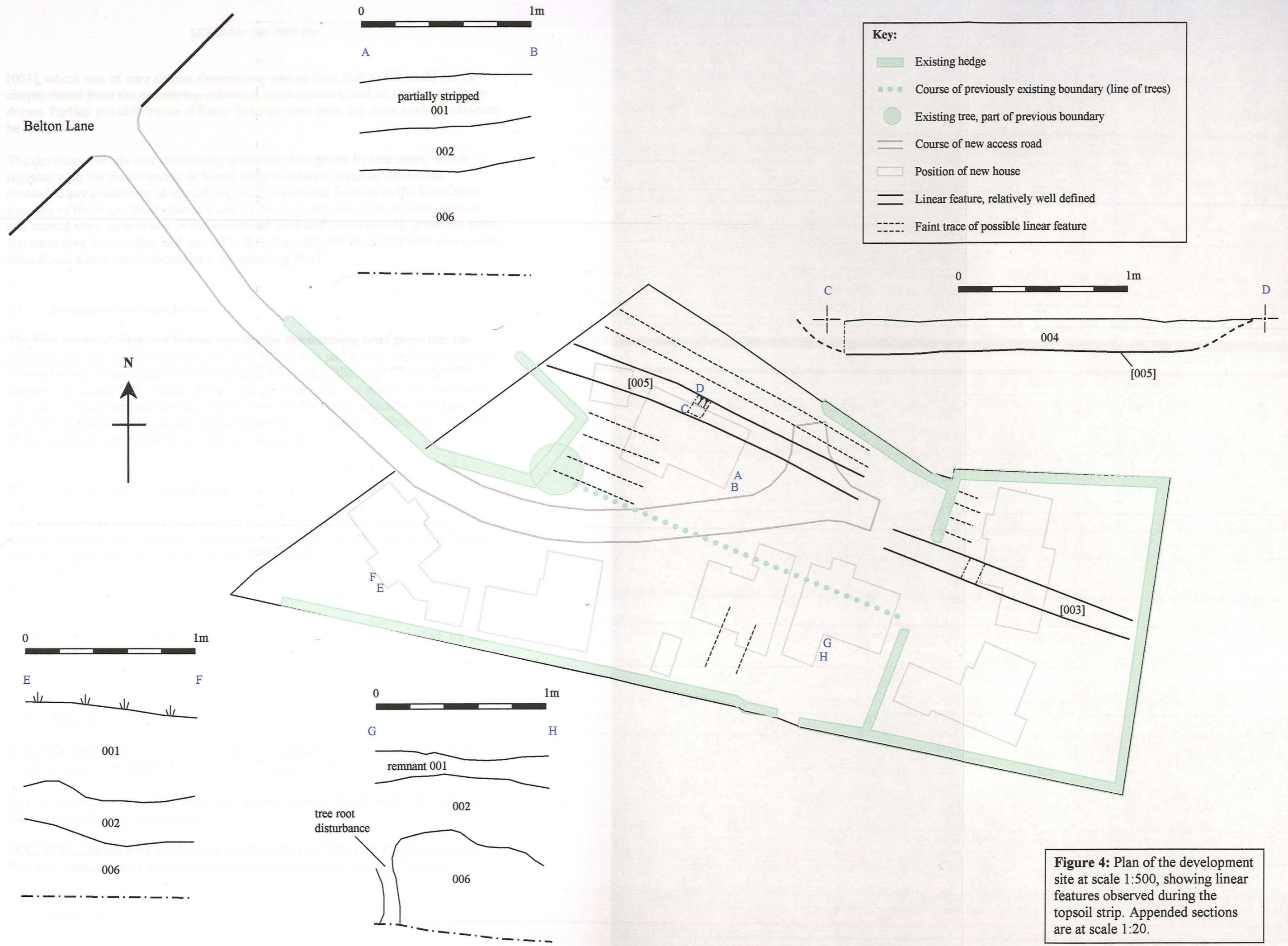
The underlying natural geological deposits in the development area consisted of a pale yellowish-brown coarse sandy gravel, context 006. The natural sand was sealed by a mid-brown slightly clayey sand subsoil, up to 0.30m deep, numbered 002. Three potsherds were retrieved from this context: one from a Nottingham Glazed Ware jug dating to the 13th century; the base of a Nottingham Glazed Ware jug dating to the late 13th-14th century, and a handle from a Bourne D Ware jug of the mid 15th-16th century (Appendix 2). This was overlain by the modern topsoil, 001, a dark brownish-grey silty sand containing occasional fragments of natural flint, pebbles, gravel and modern refuse with spreads of recent ash, which covered the site to a thickness of 0.15m on the higher ground, increasing to 0.4m at the base of the slope.

Before and during the initial topsoil strip, very slight traces of ridge-and-furrow earthworks were observed in the area of the site, running approximately east-south-east to west-north-west down the length of the site. No surface features could be seen before stripping to the east of the dividing hedge: in the main part of the site, five slight ridges were visible, of which the most southerly lay directly to the north of the dividing row of trees. All these ridges appeared to terminate in a very shallow bank running north-south across their eastern ends; the bank could not be seen to extend to the south of the trees. Once the topsoil had been removed, a single linear feature was tentatively identified to the east of the hawthorn hedge, and another, on a different line, to the west of it. These were difficult to identify clearly, but where seen were investigated by machine sondage in two areas, where the resulting furrows were numbered [003] and [005]. The western furrow [005] was 2.5m in width, 0.2m deep, and filled with a clean dark greyish brown silty sand 004 (plate 1), whereas furrow



- Key:**
- Existing hedge
 - Course of previously existing boundary (line of trees)
 - Existing tree, part of previous boundary
 - Course of new access road
 - Position of new house
 - Line of earthwork ridge (drawn line shows crest of ridge)
 - Drainage works in access road strip

Figure 3: Plan of the development site at scale 1:500, showing the earthworks visible on the ground surface. Inset shows a sample section of the manhole pit in the access road at scale 1:50.



[003], which was of very ...
 distinguished from the ...
 drawn. Further possibilities of ...
 Belton Lane

The development ...
 together with the ...
 produced any ...
 features in the foundation ...
 natural ...
 from South ...

The first traces of ...
 show that the ...

0 1m
 E F
 001
 002
 006

0 1m
 G H
 remnant 001
 002
 tree root disturbance
 006

0 1m
 C D
 004
 [005]

Figure 4: Plan of the development site at scale 1:500, showing linear features observed during the topsoil strip. Appended sections are at scale 1:20.

[003], which was of very similar dimensions, was so faint that its fill could not be distinguished from the underlying subsoil at close quarters, and no section could be drawn. Further possible traces of linear features were seen, but none could confidently be identified.

The development site was extensively disturbed throughout by tree roots, which, together with the manoeuvring of heavy plant in adverse weather conditions, precluded any possibility of identifying such evanescent features in the foundation trenches of the house plots (plates 5 and 6). No deposits other than topsoil, subsoil and natural were seen in any of the monitored plots and consequently, when the most representative house-plots had proved archaeologically sterile, permission was sought from South Kesteven to discontinue the watching brief.

7.0 Discussion and conclusion

The faint traces of ridge and furrow seen during the watching brief show that the development site occupies agricultural land which was part of the medieval open field system before the development of housing in this area in the late 19th / early 20th century. It is uncertain whether these slight remains were not seen to the south of the central boundary because they had never been present there, indicating that this boundary dated from at least the medieval period, or because a difference in land use on the southern side had destroyed them completely.

8.0 Effectiveness of methodology

The methodology employed was entirely adequate to the requirements of the archaeological record, allowing the project to be reassessed after the most potentially significant areas had been monitored with little result.

9.0 Acknowledgements

Pre-Construct Archaeology (Lincoln) would like to thank Heart Homes Ltd. for this commission, and RJK Construction Ltd. for their co-operation during the watching brief.

10.0 References

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11.0 Site archive

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

Appendix 1: Colour Plates



Plate 1 (top left): General shot of the site after the initial topsoil strip, looking west towards Belton Lane from the eastern end of the site.

Plate 2 (top right): The northern side of the site after topsoil stripping, looking west from the west side of the dividing hedge, showing furrow [005] running towards the house.

Plate 3 (above left): Drainage works: the section of the manhole cut excavated within the new access road.



Plate 4 (bottom left): Working shot during the foundation trench excavations: levelling the sites of house plots 2 and 3, looking south-west from the north side of the site. All 3 fragments of pottery found in the subsoil came from the area shown here.

Plate 5 (right): Excavation of the foundation trenches in house plot 5, looking south-west. The extent of tree-root disturbance in the area can be seen from the piles of roots pulled out while machining.



Plate 6 (left): Sample section in house plot 5, showing tree root disturbance; looking south-east.

Plate 7 (right): The completed foundation trenches in house plot 1, looking east. Natural 006 is exposed at the top of the slope only.



Plate 8 (left): Sample section in house plot 1, relatively undisturbed by tree roots, looking north-east. The extent of surface disturbance from heavy plant can still be seen.

Appendix 2

Pottery Archive BLAG 05

Jane Young

contex	cname	full name	sub fabric	form type	sherds	weight	part	description	date
002	BOU	Bourne D ware	smooth	large jug	1	93	handle	wide strap handle; central thumbed handle join	mid 15th to 16th
002	NOTGR	Nottingham glazed ware Reduced Bodied		jug	1	23	base	abraded; stacking scar on base	late 13th to 14th
002	NOTGL	Nottingham glazed ware Light Bodied	sandy fabric	jug	1	15	BS	abraded	13th

Appendix 3: List of contexts

- 001** Dark brownish-grey sandy topsoil containing modern refuse and ash
- 002** Mid brown, slightly clayey sand subsoil
- 003** E-W aligned trace of a linear feature, seen in plan but not identifiable on excavation
- 004** Dark greyish-brown silty sand fill in furrow [005]
- 005** E-W running furrow on N side of site
- 006** Natural sand and gravel deposits