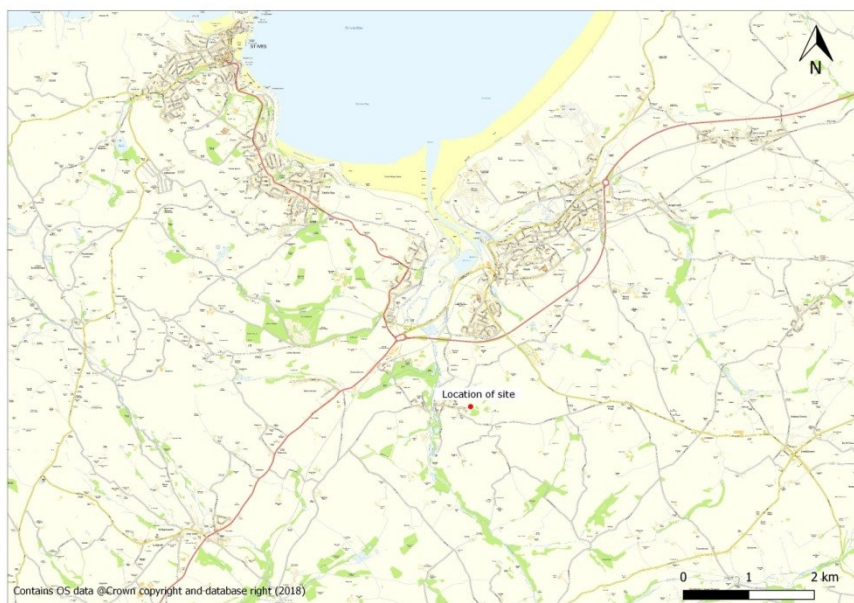


Site Name: St. Erth (east), housing development	
Grid ref (10-fig): SW 55480 35056 (centre)	Report No: 2018R050
Parish: St. Erth	PA: PA17/10407
Site Type: Greenfield in close proximity to SSI. Part to be developed for new housing.	
Period: Post Med	Form:
Description: Watching brief on the footprints of three houses under development. Close to an area associated with sand and clay extraction in the early 20 th century which is now a geological SSSI.	
<p>The CAU project number is 146823</p> <p>The project's documentary, digital, photographic and drawn archive is maintained by Cornwall Archaeological Unit, Cornwall Council, Fal Building, County Hall, Treyew Road, Truro, TR1 3AY. The contents of this archive are listed below:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Projects file containing site records and notes, project correspondence and administration, \\CAU\Archive\Sites S\St Erth east housing WB 146799 2. Digital photographs stored in the directory: \\CAU\Archive\Sites S\St Erth east housing WB 146799 3. This report text is held in digital form as: \\CAU\Archive\Sites S\St Erth east housing WB 146799\Report\St Erth east housing wb short report 	
Land Use (Area): Mixed housing and former arable	Land Use (Site): Greenfield
OASIS No. cornwall2-3326573	Date of Site Visit: 16 th August 2018
Name. Cornwall Archaeological Unit, Economic Growth and Development, Cornwall Council, Fal Building, County Hall, Treyew Road, Truro. TR1 3AY. Tel Nos: 01872	



Cornwall Archaeological Unit (CAU) was commissioned by Laurence Associates to undertake a watching brief as part of a planning condition during the initial groundworks for the construction of three houses to the east of St. Erth village. The site immediately adjoins that of one of the St. Erth sand/clay pits, now a SSSI (Fig 1).

Although it had been proposed to undertake a full topsoil strip across the site, initial investigation using a mechanical excavator showed that ground levels had been artificially raised by nearly a metre within the western edge of the site. Four trial trenches were excavated on an east-west alignment across the development site confirming the initial findings.

Given that the proposed foundation trenches would not, as result, intersect any underlying archaeological deposits, it was recommended that further archaeological recording would only be required if trenching during construction activities would exceed the depth of the redeposited material.

The results from the watching brief are presented here by area (see Fig 3).

Figure 1: Location of site.

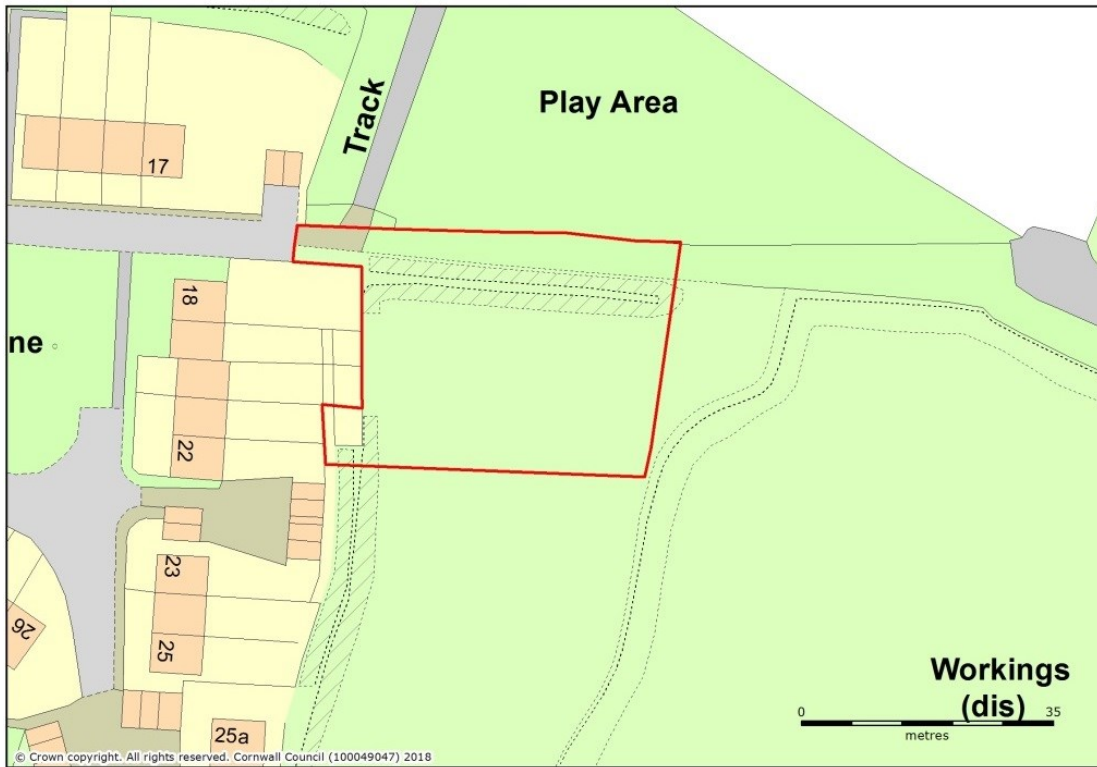


Fig 2: The extent of the development area at St. Erth.

A total of 5 contexts were recorded. Context numbers were issued in a continuous sequence (101)-(105).

The excavation was carried out using a 3 tonne swing shovel fitted with a 1.2m wide grading bucket. The initial plan was to remove the topsoil (101) from the area to be examined and then to strip the underlying material down to the natural or to archaeological features, whichever was revealed first. The topsoil stripping was undertaken in the footprint of the areas designated as Plots 1 and 2 (see Fig 2 for locations).

The topsoil (101) across the site was a dark brown loose silty clay topped with vegetation and contained fragmented stones as well as modern waste material; the deposit was no more than 0.1m thick and covered the whole of the site under investigation. As the second phase of the soil removal was carried out in Trench 1 it became apparent that the layer initially classified as a natural subsoil was in fact re-deposited material which had been placed over an old topsoil layer.



Fig 3: Extent of site with trench locations.

Within Plot one, the removal of the topsoil revealed (102): a reddish-brown friable silty clay <0.35m deep containing common stone inclusions of fragmented shillet. This was initially interpreted as a natural subsoil, but was found to overlay (103): a buried topsoil.

When (103) was revealed, it was determined that an evaluation trench (T1) (Fig 3) should be excavated within Plot 1 to provide data on the extent and depth of the buried deposit and to determine whether it was an underlying soil layer or a large ditch or hollow.

Trench 1 was 3m long, 1.5m wide and 1.4m deep; it was orientated north to south and located near the centre of Plot 1. The trench revealed the presence of (102): the redeposited subsoil and (103): a dark brown friable silty clay buried topsoil 0.69-0.81m deep containing sparse stone inclusions. This overlaid (104): a dark reddish-brown friable silty clay natural subsoil containing sparse stone inclusions.

A second evaluation trench (T2) was then excavated in the south-eastern corner of Plot 1. This was 2m long, 1.7m wide and over 1m deep. The trench revealed that (102), the redeposited subsoil, reached a depth of 0.5m, and overlaid (103), at this location at a depth of 0.43m from surface. This, in turn again overlaid (104): the natural subsoil.

To determine if buried topsoil (103) continued to the east, two further evaluation trenches (T3 and T4) were excavated in the eastern plot (Plot 2).

The western trench (T3) was 2.7m long, 1.4m wide and 1.4m deep. Topsoil (101) was less than 0.1m deep and the fill of the trench: (105) was a reddish-brown friable silty clay. This was excavated to a depth of 1.4m, where excavation was stopped. At the bottom of the trench a purple plastic bag was revealed embedded in this material. There were no indications of the presence of (103) which must have lain at a greater depth than the base of the trench.

The eastern trench (T4) was 2.4m long, 0.5m wide and 1.3m deep. The topsoil was less than 0.1m deep. The fill of the trench (105) was a reddish-brown friable silty clay, and was excavated to a depth of 1.3m from surface where it became more compacted, possibly indicating a natural rise within an underlying ground surface.

No finds were recovered from any of the trenches and no archaeological features were uncovered.



Figure 4: View of Trench 1 and (103) buried topsoil overlying the top of the natural subsoil (104), (1m scale).