

Witham Archaeology

A Report to Craig Brand Architectural and Highway Design
on behalf of Mrs V Duncombe

August 2012



**168 NORWOOD ROAD, MARCH
CAMBRIDGESHIRE**

Archaeological Trial Trench Evaluation

R Trimble

168 NORWOOD ROAD, MARCH, CAMBRIDGESHIRE

Event Number: ECB 3823
OASIS ID.:withamar1 - 133041
Planning Application No.: F/YR12/0186/F
NGR: TL 4105 9758

Archaeological Trial Trench Evaluation

<i>Contents</i>	<i>Page</i>
SUMMARY	1
1.0 INTRODUCTION	1
2.0 SITE LOCATION, TOPOGRAPHY & GEOLOGY	1
3.0 ARCHAEOLOGICAL & HISTORICAL BACKGROUND	2
4.0 AIMS & OBJECTIVES	2
5.0 METHODOLOGY	3
6.0 RESULTS	3
7.0 DISCUSSION & CONCLUSION	3
8.0 ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	4
9.0 BIBLIOGRAPHY	4
10.0 PROJECT/ ARCHIVE DETAILS	5
10.1 Project Information.....	5
10.2 Archive Details.....	5

Colour plates

<i>Plate 1 - Topsoil removal in progress, looking southeast</i>	<i>6</i>
<i>Plate 2 - Pre-excavation view of the trench, looking northwest; 2m and 1m scales.....</i>	<i>6</i>
<i>Plate 3 - Cut [004], looking southwest; 1m scale</i>	<i>7</i>
<i>Plate 4 - Cut [007], looking north; 1m scale</i>	<i>7</i>

Illustrations

- Fig. 1 Site Location Map - Scale 1: 50 000
- Fig. 2 Site Location Plan - Scale 1:100 (inset 1: 2000)
- Fig. 3 Plan & Section Drawing (Scale 1:50)

168 NORWOOD ROAD, MARCH CAMBRIDGESHIRE

ARCHAEOLOGICAL TRIAL TRENCH EVALUATION

SUMMARY

An archaeological trial trench evaluation was undertaken by Witham Archaeology on the proposed site of a new house and integral garage in grounds currently forming part of 168 Norwood Road, March Cambridgeshire.

Archaeological investigations in 2006, on land approximately 150m northeast of the site, had revealed late Iron Age and Roman field systems, together with concentrations of pottery indicating proximity to an area of occupation (probably located further to the north). Further to the east, on the Northern Office site, archaeological fieldwork in 2001 and 2002 located evidence of late Bronze to Middle Iron activity, including a crouched inhumation and ditches associated with field systems and a droveway. There were also indicators of late Iron Age activity and Roman pits and gullies. Roman finds have also been made to the west and southwest of the site.

A single evaluation trench, centrally positioned within the footprint of the proposed house at No 168 Norwood Road, revealed natural sand and silt at 0.20 – 0.35m below existing ground. Root disturbances from shrubs removed as part of the evaluation were visible across the base of the trench (particularly the northwest end) and two small areas of apparent discolouration from diesel or oil were noted. An undated concentration of stone within a shallow hollow was also recorded.

From the results of the evaluation, it may be concluded that there is a relatively low potential for archaeologically significant remains in the area of the proposed house. Any remains associated with the Romano-British activity recorded in 2006 are likely to be low density in character and associated with the wider field system.

1.0 INTRODUCTION

This report describes the results of an archaeological trial trench evaluation undertaken by Witham Archaeology on the proposed site of a new house and integral garage in the grounds of No. 168 Norwood Road, March, Cambridgeshire. The project - commissioned by Craig Brand Architectural Design Services on behalf of Mrs V Duncombe – was carried out in response to a planning condition imposed by Fenland District Council. Fieldwork was completed during the period 14th to 15th August 2012.

The information in this document is presented with the proviso that further data may yet emerge. Witham Archaeology cannot, therefore, be held responsible for any loss, delay or damage, material or otherwise, arising out of this report. The document has been prepared in accordance with the Code of Conduct of the Institute of Field Archaeologists.

2.0 SITE LOCATION, TOPOGRAPHY & GEOLOGY

The town and parish of March in the administrative district of Fenland, Cambridgeshire lies c. 21km east of Peterborough (see Fig. 1).

The plot for the new house (see Fig. 2) is situated on the southeast side of Norwood Road, in gardens southwest of No. 168, at NGR TL 4105 9758. The plot included an area of sunken lawn to the east, raised shrub beds and an access road (mostly covered by grass) extending along the southwest boundary of the property.

The area of the site is generally level, situated on drift deposits of March gravel over solid geology of Ampthill clay (British Geological Survey, Solid & Drift, 1:50 000: <http://maps.bgs.ac.uk/geologyviewer/>). Historically, the area formed part of dry land on the fen island now occupied by the town of March.

3.0 ARCHAEOLOGICAL & HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

The area around March is rich in evidence of former settlement and there have been numerous finds of Neolithic, Iron Age and Roman date.

Iron Age and Roman field systems were recorded during a series of archaeological investigations (including trial trenching, open area excavation and watching brief) on land approximately 150m northeast of No. 168 Norwood Road. Earlier activity was suggested by worked flint contained in the fill of a pit, while concentrations of pottery and charcoal-rich deposits in ditches in the northwestern part of the area (c. 200m northeast of the current site) indicated proximity to an area of Roman occupation (Cooper 2007).

Further to the east, an evaluation and excavation in 2001 and 2002 at the Northern Office site, revealed Late Bronze Age to modern remains. Late Bronze Age to Middle Iron Age features included a crouched inhumation, field systems defined by ditches and gullies, and possibly a droveway. Pottery from the fill of a ditch aligned with the earlier field system indicated continuity of some elements of the field system into the late Iron Age/Romano-British periods. The investigations also located Roman pits and gullies, a medieval ditch and various modern features (O'Brien and Keir 2003).

A Roman stamped handle was reported to have been found to the west of the site, on Russell Avenue at NGR TL 408 977 (CHER No. 05905), and two ditches, possibly of Roman date, were recorded during an evaluation at Smith's Chase to the southwest (CHER MCB 18456).

March was given to the monastery of Ely in around AD1000 and at the time of the Domesday Survey in 1086 was valued as part of the parish of Doddington. During the medieval period the settlement at March developed as a port, outstripping the parent parish of Doddington. The introduction of the railway to March in the mid 19th century resulted in a period of intense growth leading to the development of the modern town (Pugh 2002, 116-123).

4.0 AIMS & OBJECTIVES

The principal objectives of the project, as set out in a Witham Archaeology specification of 13th August 2012, were to:

- *provide information on the presence/absence, nature, date and quality of survival of archaeological deposits and remains which might be contained within the site, at the depth of proposed construction disturbance, and to assess the importance of such remains in terms of their local, regional and national context.*
- *assess the possible scale of development impact on any remains and provide information which might influence development design so that impact on any remains can be avoided or minimised.*
- *provide information that will allow the local planning authority to reconcile development proposals with their policy for preserving archaeological remains and make an informed and reasoned decision on a planning application.*
- *provide site specific archaeological information which (if necessary) would allow for the design and integration of timing and funding of any further archaeological work (or other mitigating strategy) which might be required in advance of or during any subsequent development programme.*
- *produce a project archive for deposition with the appropriate museum and from which the potential for further study and academic research could be assessed.*
- *provide information for accession to the Cambridgeshire Historic Environment Record (HER).*

5.0 METHODOLOGY

The footprint of the proposed house and garage was assessed through the excavation of a single trench, c. 15m long and 1.6m wide. The position of the trench (see Fig. 2), aligned with the long axis of the proposed building, was agreed with the Historic Environment Team, Cambridgeshire County Council in advance of fieldwork.

Topsoil and other recent deposits were removed from the area by means of a mechanical excavator fitted with a c. 1.6m wide toothless ditching bucket. The base of the resulting trench was cleaned by hand and photographed. Features of potential archaeological origin were then investigated by hand excavation to determine character, extent and date.

A general plan of the trench was produced at scale 1:50 and sections were drawn at scale 1:20. The photographic record, including general views of the area and views of specific features as excavated, was compiled in 35mm monochrome and digital colour. Context descriptions were made on *pro forma* recording sheets. The position of the trench, set out by Craig Brand Architectural and Highway Design, was checked by reference to fixed reference points on the existing house and boundaries.

6.0 RESULTS (see Fig. 3)

Geological deposits of light orange-brown sandy silt (005) were encountered at around 0.20 to 0.35m below existing ground level.

Areas of root disturbance (002) from the modern shrubbery were evident across the base of the trench, with a particular concentration at the northwestern end, where a number of shrubs had been removed in advance of excavation. Deposits in the areas of disturbance were contiguous with the existing topsoil (001) and surviving roots were evident in a number of the 'features'.

Two irregular patches of moderately compact to compact mid and dark grey sandy silt with greenish brown patches – both recorded as (003) – were identified in the south-eastern half of the trench. Fumes of fuel were noted in both areas and part excavation of one of the patches revealed a poorly defined 'cut', [004], with irregularities in profile which might be attributed to a process of discolouration caused by the infiltration of diesel or another type of fuel or oil. The excavated 'feature', measuring c. 0.85 by 0.45m by 0.13m deep might be attributable to an attempt to burn out tree roots.

A concentration of rounded stones (006), up to a 40mm across in size, in a matrix of moderately compact to compact, light greyish-brown silty clay was identified at the northwest end of the trench. The deposit was confined to a shallow hollow, [007], sub-oval in plan, and measuring 0.54 x 0.32m by 80mm deep. There were no finds associated with the deposit, which may have had a geological origin or have been the result of activities connected with gardening.

The existing topsoil, (001), was moderately compact, light/mid grey silty sand varying in thickness from 0.20m to 0.35m.

7.0 DISCUSSION & CONCLUSION

Trial trenching at No. 168 Norwood Road revealed geological deposits of sandy silt at shallow depth. Root disturbance caused by shrubs removed as part of the current investigation were visible in several areas across the base of the trench and two small areas of probable staining from oil or some type of fuel were identified. A small, undated, concentration of stone in the north-western part of the trench could have had an archaeological significance but was more likely to have resulted from a natural anomaly or gardening activity. There were no finds from the site and there was no evidence of features to suggest later prehistoric or Roman occupation comparable to that identified on nearby sites to the east and northeast (see Section 3.0 above). The area may have lain within the wider field system associated with the Roman settlement to the northeast, characterised by widely dispersed boundary ditches and a low density of archaeological deposits.

8.0 ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The author of this report would like to thank Mr Craig Brand, the owners of 168 Norwood Road Mr and Mrs Duncombe, and Dan McConnell of the Historic Environment Team, Cambridgeshire County Council for their assistance in ensuring a successful outcome to the project.

9.0 BIBLIOGRAPHY

Brown, N. & Glazebrook, J. (eds) 2000 *Research and Archaeology: a framework for the Eastern Counties*. East Anglian Archaeology Occasional Papers **8**

Glazebrook, J. (ed.) 1997 *Research and Archaeology: a framework for the Eastern Counties*. 1; resource assessment. East Anglian Archaeology Occasional Papers **3**

O'Brien, L & Keir, W 2003 *March Northern County Offices, The HQ Site, March Cambridgeshire. An Archaeological Excavation. A Late Bronze Age to Middle Iron Age ritual and agricultural landscape at March, Cambridgeshire*. HAT Report **1108**

Pugh, R B 2002 *North Witchford Hundred: March, A History of the County of Cambridge and the Isle of Ely; Ely, N. And S. Witchford and Wisbech Hundreds*. Victoria County History

Spencer, C 2007 *Prehistoric and Roman Remains at Norwood Road, March. An Archaeological Evaluation, Excavation and Watching Brief*. CAM ARC Report No. **901**

10.0 PROJECT/ ARCHIVE DETAILS

10.1 Project Information

PLANNING APPLICATION No.: F/YR12/0186/F

FIELD OFFICER: R Trimble

NGR: TL 4105 9758

CIVIL PARISH: March

HER EVENT NO.: ECB 3823

DATE OF INTERVENTION: 14-15th August 2012

TYPE OF INTERVENTION: Trial Trench Evaluation

UNDERTAKEN FOR: Craig Brand Architectural and Highway Design on behalf of Mrs V Duncombe

10.2 Archive Details

PRESENT LOCATION: Witham Archaeology, Unit 6, Sleaford Station Business Centre, Station Road, Sleaford, NG34 7RG

FINAL LOCATION: The Archaeology Store, Cambridgeshire County Council

MUSEUM ACCESSION No.:-

ACCESSION DATE: - October 2012

The Site Archive Comprises:

Context Records	7
Plans at Scale 1:50	1
Section Drawings at Scale 1:20	2
Colour Digital Photographs	10
Monochrome Photographs	4
Set of Site Notes	1

It is intended that transfer of the archive in accordance with current published requirements will be undertaken following completion of this project.

COLOUR PLATES



Plate 1 - Topsoil removal in progress, looking southeast



Plate 2 - Pre-excavation view of the trench, looking northwest; 2m and 1m scales

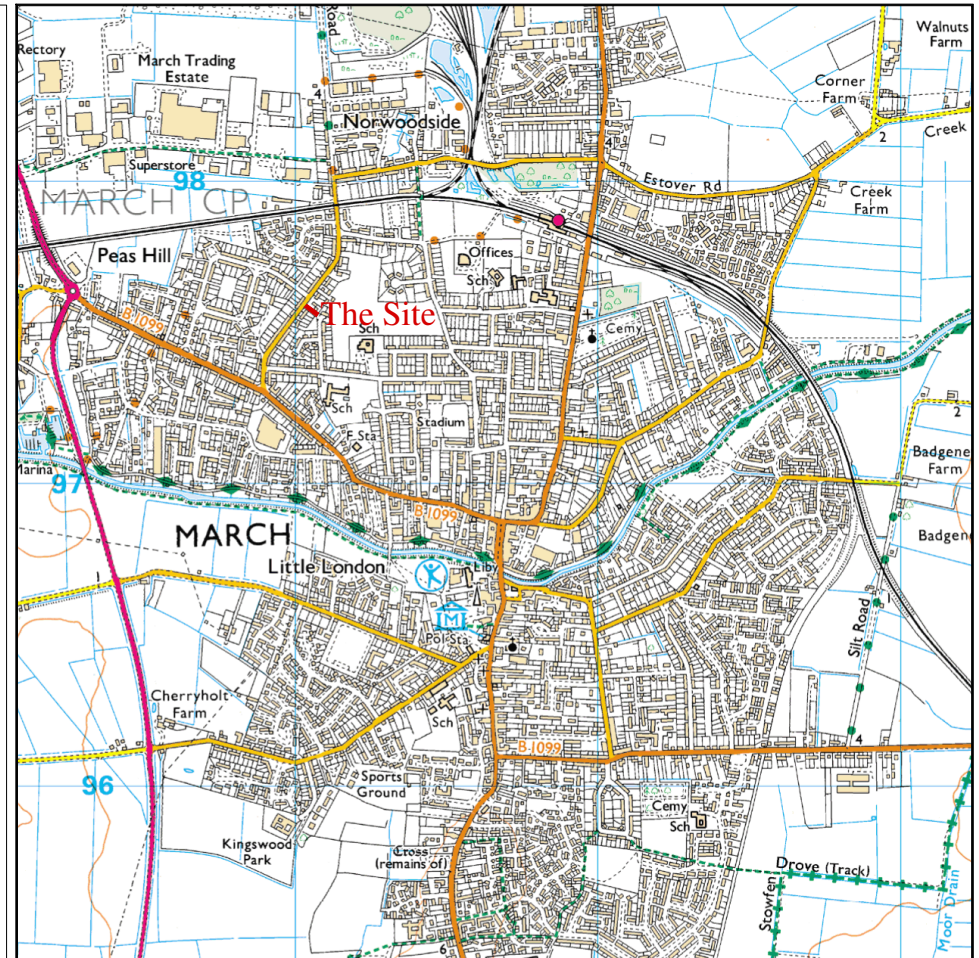
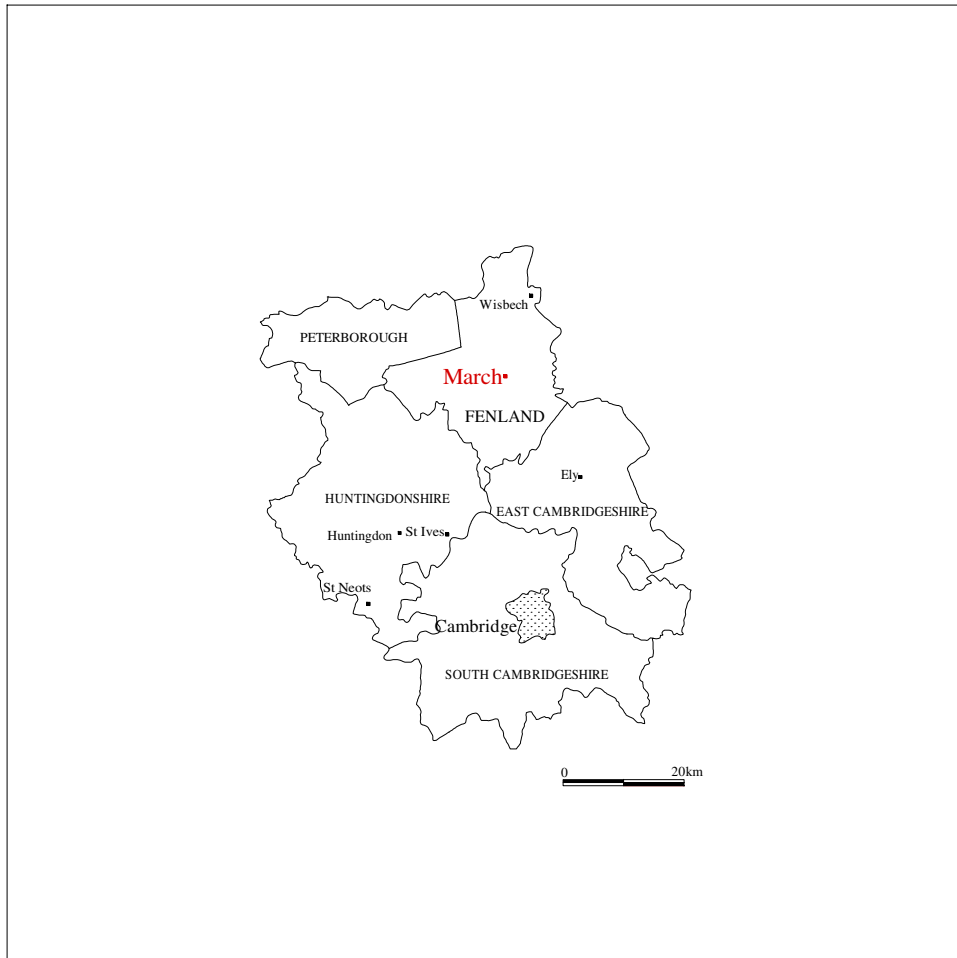
COLOUR PLATES



Plate 3 - Cut [004], looking southwest; 1m scale

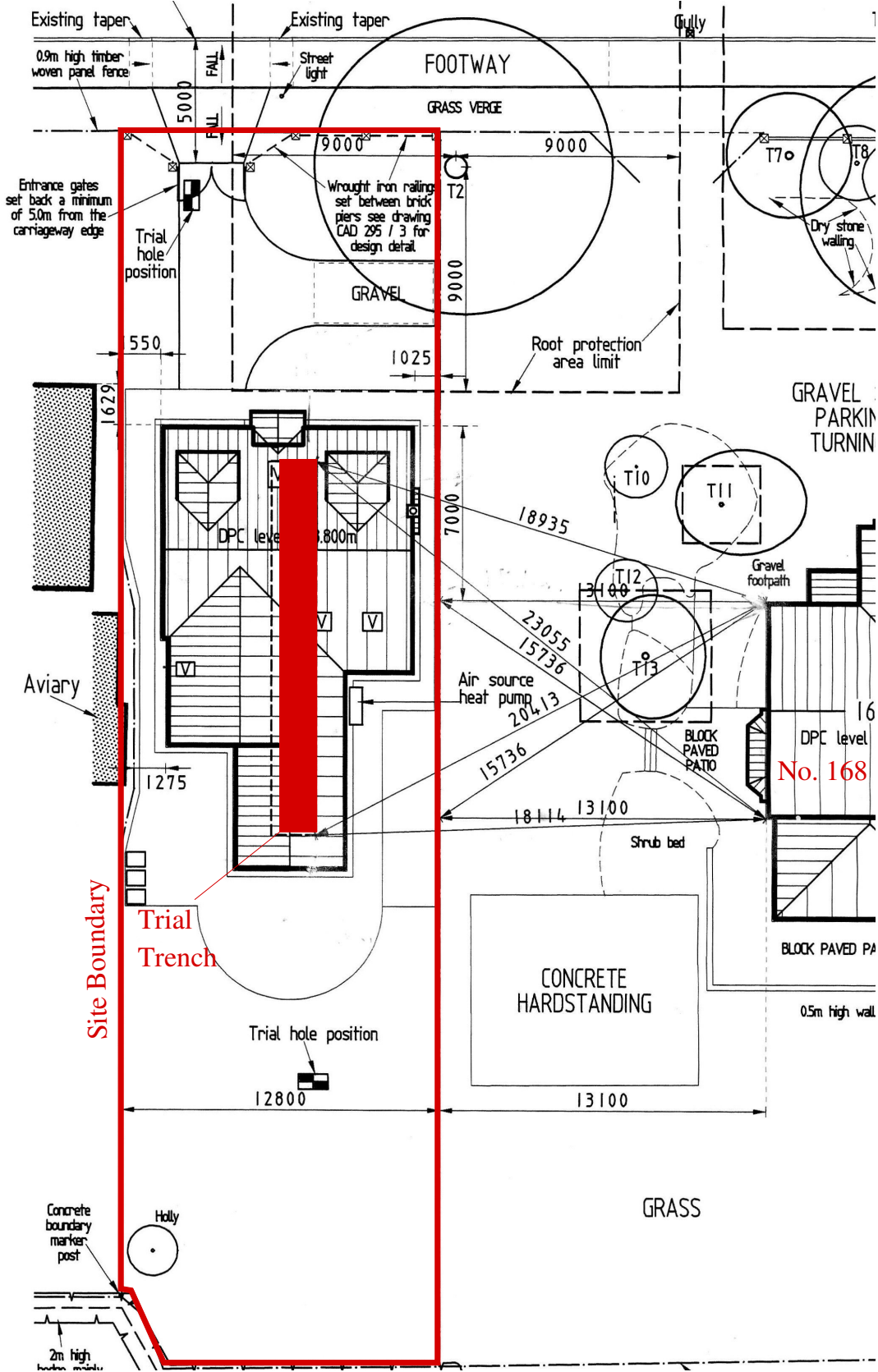


Plate 4 - Cut [007], looking north; 1m scale



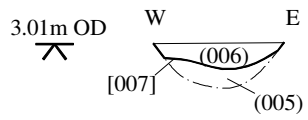
Produced from the Explorer 1:25 000 Ordnance Survey map with the permission of Ordnance Survey on behalf of The Controller of Her Majesty's Stationery Office. © Crown Copyright
Licence No.: WL1005704

NORWOOD ROAD

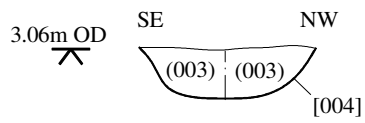


Based upon drawing No. CAD 295/1 Rev. B
 Supplied by Craig Brand Architectural &
 Highway Design (additions in red)

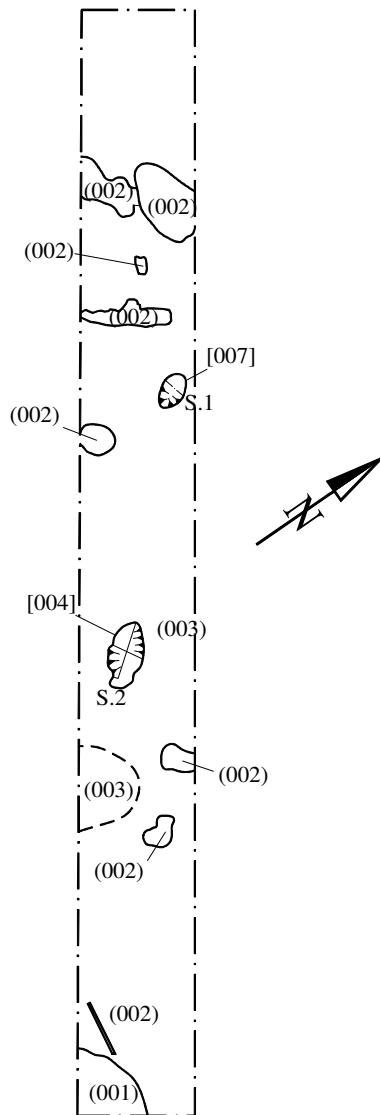
Sections at Scale 1:50



Section 1



Section 2



Witham Archaeology

Unit 6, Sleaford Station Business Centre, Station Road,
Sleaford, NG34 7RG

Tel/Fax: (01529) 300890

Email: info@withamarchaeology.co.uk

© Witham Archaeology