

**FORMER GREAT HEATH PRIMARY
SCHOOL, ST JOHN'S CLOSE,
MILDENHALL, SUFFOLK, IP28 7PT:
ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION**

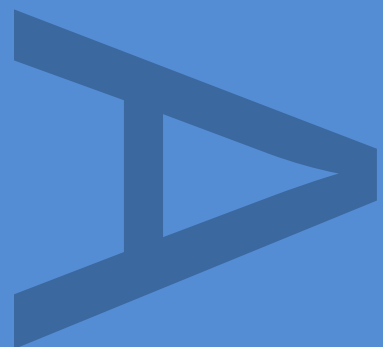
**LOCAL PLANNING AUTHORITY: Forest
Heath District Council**

**PLANNING APPLICATION NUMBERS:
F/2012/0659/FUL**

PCA REPORT NO: R11430

SITE CODE: MNL694

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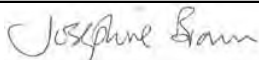

PRE-CONSTRUCT ARCHAEOLOGY

FORMER GREAT HEATH PRIMARY SCHOOL, ST
JOHN'S CLOSE, MILDENHALL, SUFFOLK, IP28 7PT:

ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION

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**ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION AT THE FORMER GREAT
HEATH PRIMARY SCHOOL, ST JOHN'S CLOSE,
MILDENHALL, SUFFOLK, IP28 7PT**

Site Code : MNL 694

Central NGR: TL 715 755

Local Planning Authority: Forest Heath District Council

Planning Reference: F/2012/0659/FUL

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ABSTRACT

This document details the results of an archaeological trial trench evaluation at the former Great Heath Primary School, St John's Close, Mildenhall, Suffolk. The work was commissioned by the Castleoak Group to assess the archaeological implications of redevelopment of the site as a care home.

Four 30m trenches were excavated in order to investigate the footprint of the proposed new building. No archaeological features or finds were present. Beneath the modern overburden, an undated former ploughsoil sealed under a layer of wind-blown sand was recorded. The natural geology also had plough-marks associated with this period of cultivation.

1 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 This document details the results of an archaeological trial trench evaluation at the former Great Heath Primary School, St John's Close, Mildenhall, Suffolk (Figure 1). The work was commissioned by the Castleoak Group and was carried out in order to assess the archaeological implications of proposed redevelopment of the site as a care home (Planning Reference: F/2012/0659/FUL).
- 1.2 A Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI) for an archaeological trial trench evaluation within the proposed development area (Hinman 2013) was prepared in response to a request for archaeological evaluation by Dr Jess Tipper of Suffolk County Council Archaeological Service's Conservation Team (SCCAS/CT).
- 1.3 The site comprises a roughly rectangular area occupied by the concrete footings of a 1960s school building and outbuildings, surrounded to the south and west by the asphalt former school playgrounds. To the north and west of the site are school playing fields, to the east is a housing estate built in the 1960s, and to the south is a small area of undeveloped scrubland.
- 1.4 The topography of the site and surrounding area is broadly flat. In the wider landscape, the ground falls away westwards towards the fen edge and rises gradually to the east and south-east. The underlying bedrock is mapped as Late Cretaceous Zig Zag Chalk, overlain by Quaternary river terrace deposits of sand and gravel (British Geological Survey). The River Lark flows from east to west approximately 1.5km south of the site. The site lies on the edge of the Breckland, an area (in north-west Suffolk and south-west Norfolk) of thin, acid soils which has historically been used mainly for sheep grazing, rabbit warrens and, in the last two centuries, coniferous plantations.
- 1.5 The archaeological context of the site and known historic land-use are discussed in a previous desk-based assessment prepared by CgMs Consulting (Meager 2010). The closest known archaeological site recorded in the Suffolk Historic Environment Record (HER) is a possible Roman floor surface reportedly found by a member of the public during digging in a back garden on Scott Avenue less than 100m to the south (HER MNL487). Early 19th-century maps and the 1882 Ordnance Survey map show the site as lying towards the south-western edge of 'College or Great Heath', an area of Breckland heath, close to a presumably cultivated area called 'The Field' (Figures 4 and 5; Meager 2010). The site appears to have been undeveloped until the construction of the school in

the late 1960s, indicating potentially good conditions for archaeological preservation should any remains be present.

1.6 Four trial trenches (Figure 2; Plates 1, 2, 3 and 4, respectively), each measuring 30m in length by 1.8m wide and totalling 120m in length, were excavated and recorded on 13th-14th May 2013. Evidence of a former cultivation soil (9) buried under wind-blown sand deposits (8) was found in Trenches 2, 3 and 4. The cultivation soil contained plough-marks (13).

2 ARCHAEOLOGICAL METHODOLOGY

- 2.1 Four 30m trial trenches were excavated. Trenches 1, 2 and 3 were repositioned slightly from the proposed layout in the Written Scheme of Investigation in order to correspond more closely with the footprint of the new care home. Trench 4 was laid out in line with the WSI (see Figure 2).
- 2.2 The ground reduction was carried out under archaeological supervision using a wheeled JCB backhoe loader. A 0.50m-wide toothed bucket was initially used to break through the thick asphalt. A toothless ditching bucket was used for the rest of the stripping. Topsoil and subsoil deposits were removed in spits down to the level of the clean natural geology where potential archaeological features could be observed and recorded.
- 2.3 OD heights and trench locations were recorded using a Leica 1200 GPS rover unit. Archaeological features (limited here to plough-scars) were hand-drawn on permatrace at a scale of 1:20. The sequence of deposits in each trench was recorded using pro-forma recording sheets. A 1:20 scaled section showing the sequence of deposits (a buried ploughsoil capped by a wind-blown sand layer) in Trench 2 was also drawn. Monochrome and colour digital photographs were taken of the trenches, archaeological features and sample sections; general site shots were also taken. Trenches were scanned visually for finds and with a metal-detector during machining; spoilheaps were also checked.

3 ARCHAEOLOGICAL SEQUENCE

Natural geology and topography

- 3.1 The natural geology in the majority of the trenches comprised compact, fine mid yellowish-orange sand with patches of degraded chalk and areas of iron-staining (7). At the east end of Trench 4, the underlying chalk bedrock (10) outcropped. The interface between the chalk and the sand was obscured by a modern drainage pipe trench. The exposure of the bedrock from beneath the overlying river terrace deposits corresponds with an imperceptible rise in ground level to the east and south-east of the site. The natural ground surface in the vicinity of Trenches 2 and 3 is undulating, with the trenching identifying a natural dip in the eastern part of Trench 2/ north end of Trench 3 (6.80m OD at its lowest point).

Overburden

- 3.2 In Trenches 1, 2 and 4, a layer of asphalt (5), the former school playground surface, lay across the area of the trenches to a thickness of between 0.07m and 0.17m. Underlying this asphalt (5), a layer of building sand and small rounded flints (6), used as levelling material, was present to a thickness of 0.05m to 0.22m.
- 3.3 In Trench 3, which was positioned directly along the west side of the former school building, a layer of modern bedding soil and paving (14), which had a thickness of 0.20m to 0.34m, was found extending along the length of the trench. This lay above the layer of building sand and flints (6), here present to a depth of between 0.18 and 0.41m.

Buried Ploughsoil: Undated

- 3.4 Under the modern overburden in Trenches 2, 3 and 4 was a layer of wind-blown sand (8), a mid reddish-brown clean sand which had a depth of between 0.15m and 0.32m. This overlaid a cultivation layer (9) of dark brownish-grey silty sand with occasional thin horizontal lenses of wind-blown sand stratified throughout the layer (Figure 3; Plate 5). Layer (9) had a thickness of 0.22m to 0.38m. At the interface of (9) and the natural sand (7) was a series of north-west to south-east-aligned plough-marks (13), present in the central part of Trench 2, the northern part of Trench 3, and the western part of Trench 4. The most extensive were those in Trench 2 (Figure 2; Plate 6). The

plough-marks were consistently spaced 0.40-0.50m apart but were extremely ephemeral (no more than a few centimetres deep).

4 DISCUSSION

- 4.1 The buried ploughsoil (9) was deepest in Trenches 2 and 3, where it was preserved in a slight dip in the original natural ground level. The ploughsoil contained no dateable finds.
- 4.2 Early- to mid-19th-century maps and the 1882 1st Edition Ordnance Survey map show the site as being located in 'College or Great Heath', an area of heathland (Figures 4 and 5; Meager 2010, 11). It appears to have still been heathland when the 1904 OS map was surveyed (Meager 2010, 11). By 1945, an aerial photograph appears to show the land under some form of cultivation (The Geoimformation Group 2013). However, by the time of the 1958 Ordnance Survey map the area had once again reverted to heath, being called 'Little Heath' (Meager 2010, fig. 6).
- 4.3 Thus it seems that either during or between the World Wars this part of Great Heath was brought under cultivation for a short period before reverting to heathland by 1958.
- 4.4 The identified ploughsoil cannot be definitively related to this brief period of documented recent cultivation. However, these maps and aerial photographs do suggest that this was marginal land in agricultural terms, brought into cultivation for short periods at times of particular pressure on food production but quickly allowed to fall back into disuse when demand lessened. After this short phase of cultivation, the ploughed ground surface was quickly buried under a layer of wind-blown sand, a phenomenon typical of the Breckland landscape.
- 4.5 With the exception of this undated ploughsoil, no archaeological features or finds were present in the trenches. The ground surface in the area has been levelled prior to the laying of the asphalt playground surfaces, accounting for the shallow depth at which the natural geology was encountered in Trenches 1 and 4 (0.36m (7.60m OD) and 0.64m (7.43m OD) below modern ground level, respectively).

5 ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

PCA would like to thank the commissioning client Castleoak and Dr Jess Tipper for monitoring the project on behalf of Suffolk County Council Archaeological Service. Thanks to Josephine Brown of the PCA CAD Department for preparing the figures. The fieldwork was carried out by Tom Woolhouse and Karl Hanson. This report was edited by Tom Woolhouse.

6 REFERENCES

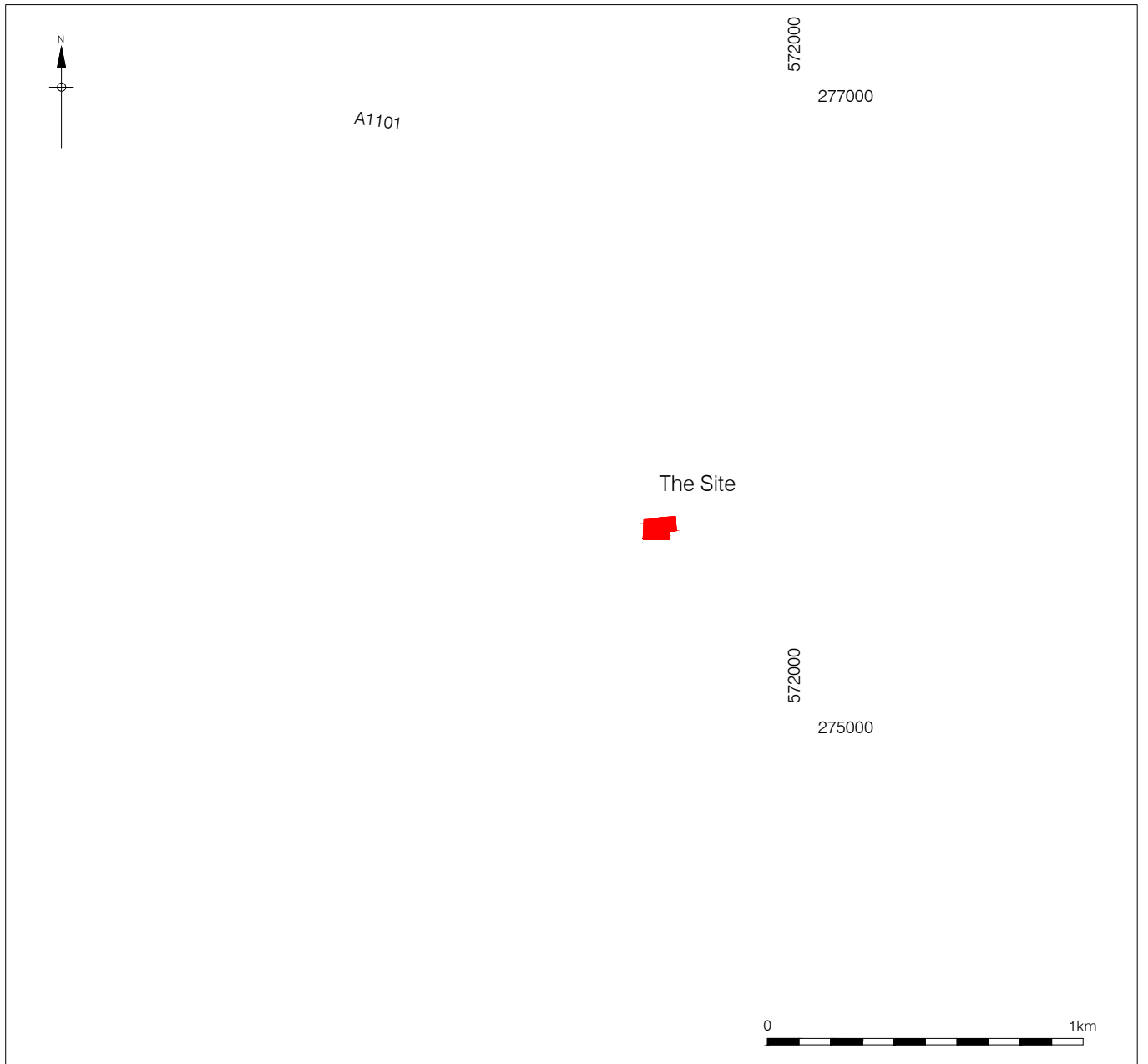
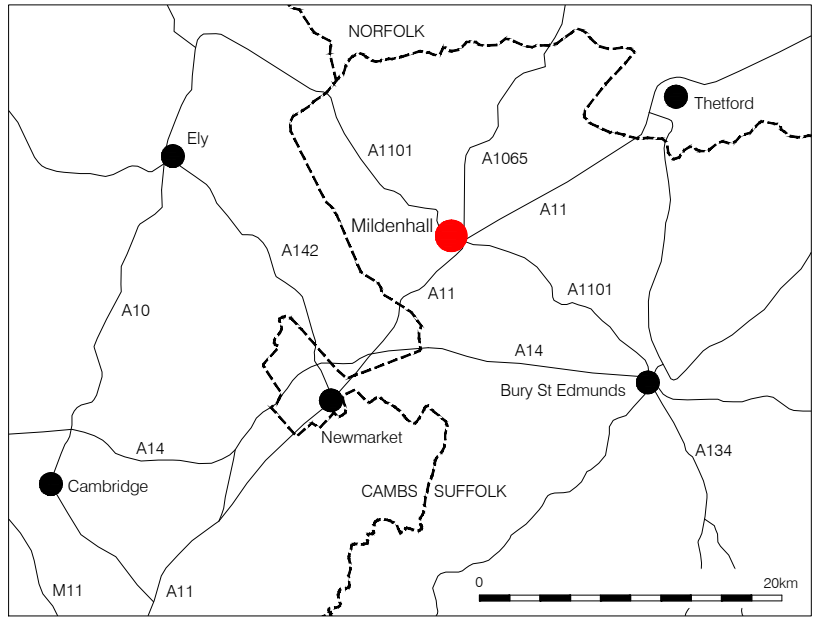
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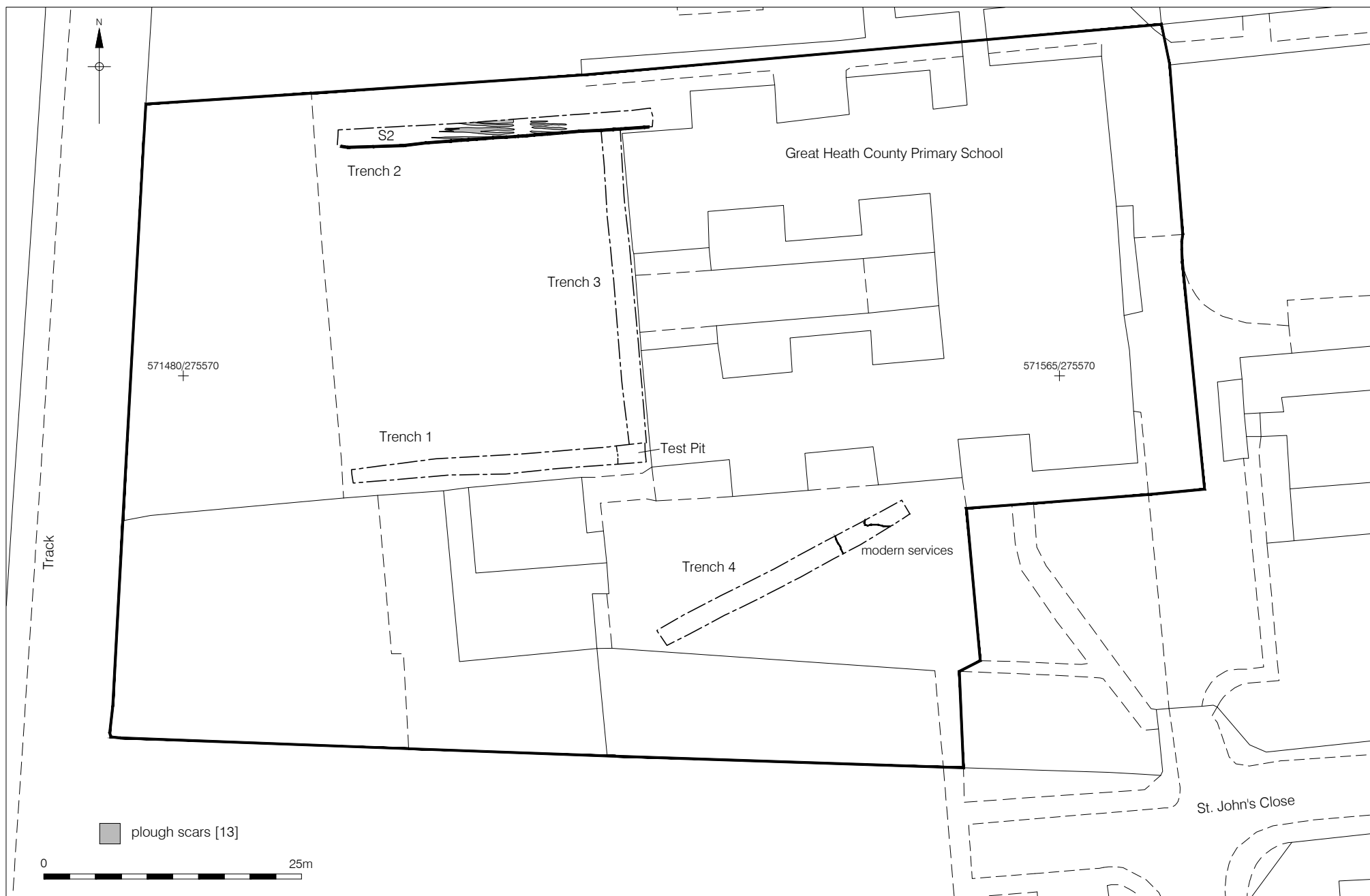
Hinman, M. 2013 *Written Scheme of Investigation for an Archaeological Evaluation at Great Heath Primary School, Mildenhall, Suffolk*. Pre-Construct Archaeology

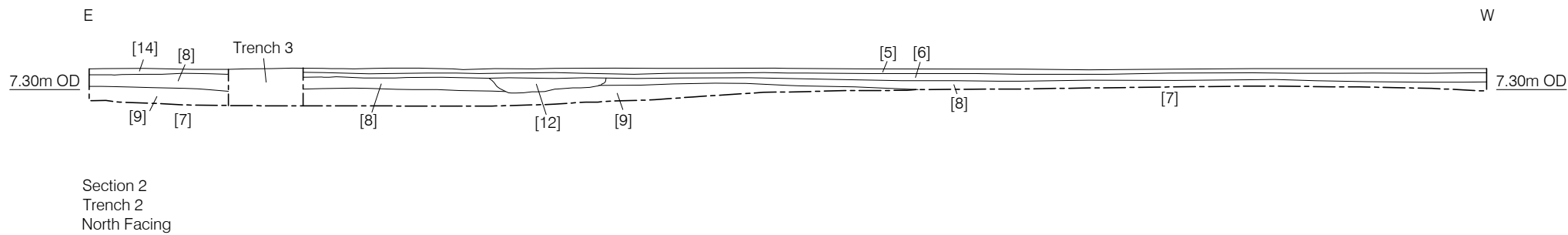
Meager, R. 2010 *Archaeological Desk-Based Assessment, Great Heath Primary School, St. John's Close, Mildenhall, Suffolk, IP28 7NX*. CGMS Consulting Ltd.

Programs

The Geoimformation Group 2013 viewed using Google Earth 7.0.3.8542







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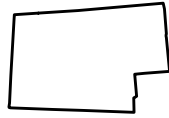
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Figure 3
Section 2
1:125 at A4





The Site



APPENDIX 1: CONTEXT REGISTER

Context	Cut	Type	Trench	Comments
1	-	Trench	1	Trench 1
2	-	Trench	2	Trench 2
3	-	Trench	3	Trench 3
4	-	Trench	4	Trench 4
5	-	Layer	1,2,4	Asphalt playground surface
6	-	Layer	1,2,3,4	Builder's sand with flints. Levelling layer.
7	-	Geology	1,2,3,4	Natural sand
8	-	Layer	2,3	Wind-blown sand
9	-	Layer	2,3,4	Buried cultivation soil
10	-	Geology	4	Natural chalk
11	-	Layer	4	Buried cultivation soil (Same as (9))
12	-	Layer	2	Concrete footing
13	-	Feature	2,3,4	Plough scars
14	-	Layer	3	Garden soil

APPENDIX 2: PLATES

PLATE1: Trench 1, view west



PLATE 2: Trench 2, view west



PLATE 3: Trench 3, view south



PLATE 4: Trench 4, view south-west



PLATE 5: Trench 2, north-facing sample section showing buried ploughsoil (9) sealed below wind-blown sand (8)



PLATE 6: Trench 2, view east showing showing plough-scarring



PLATE 7: General overview of area of trenching, view south-west



APPENDIX 3: OASIS FORM

OASIS ID: preconst1-150728

Project details

Project name	ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION AT THE FORMER GREAT HEATH PRIMARY SCHOOL, ST JOHN'S CLOSE, MILDENHALL, SUFFOLK
Short description of the project	This document details the results of an archaeological trial trench evaluation at the former Great Heath Primary School, St John's Close, Mildenhall, Suffolk. The work was commissioned by Castleoak to assess the archaeological implications of redevelopment of the site as a care home. Four 30m trenches were excavated to best investigate the footprint of the proposed new build while avoiding the pre-existing building re-enforced concrete footings. This excavation revealed a cultivation surface buried under a layer of wind blown sand, the natural also had plough marks marked in from the cultivation layer
Project dates	Start: 13-05-2013 End: 14-05-2013
Previous/future work	Yes / No
Any associated project reference codes	MNL694 - Sitecode
Any associated project reference codes	F/2012/0659/FUL - Planning Application No.
Type of project	Field evaluation
Site status	None
Current Land use	Community Service 1 - Community Buildings

Monument type	PLOUGH MARKS Uncertain
Significant Finds	NONE None
Methods & techniques	"Sample Trenches"
Development type	Urban residential (e.g. flats, houses, etc.)
Prompt	Planning condition
Position in the planning process	After full determination (eg. As a condition)

Project location

Country	England
Site location	SUFFOLK FOREST HEATH MILDENHALL The former Great Heath Primary School
Postcode	IP28 7PT
Study area	4800.00 Square metres
Site coordinates	TL 715 755 52 0 52 21 00 N 000 31 05 E Point

Project creators

Name of Organisation	Pre-Construct Archaeology Ltd
Project brief originator	PCA
Project design originator	Mark Hinman

Project director/manager Mark Hinman

Project supervisor Tom Woolhouse

Type of sponsor/funding body CastleOak

Project archives

Physical Archive Exists? No

Digital Archive recipient Suffolk County Council

Digital Contents "none"

Digital Media available "GIS", "Images raster / digital photography", "Survey"

Paper Archive recipient Suffolk County Council

Paper Contents "Survey"

Paper Media available "Notebook - Excavation", ' Research', ' General Notes"

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Entered on 16 May 2013

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