

**An Archaeological Watching Brief At Newport Free Grammar School,
Newport, Essex**

Central National Grid Reference: TL 5190 3475

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October 2004**

Site Code: NP13

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1 ABSTRACT

- 1.1 This report details the results and working methods of an archaeological watching brief undertaken by Pre-Construct Archaeology Limited during the excavation of a car park at Newport Free Grammar School, Newport, Essex. The Central National Grid Reference for the site is TL 5190 3475. The watching brief was undertaken between the 19th August 2004 and the 1st September 2004. The work was commissioned by CgMs Consulting on behalf of Newport Free Grammar School.
- 1.2 Documentary evidence suggested that a medieval castle was once located in Newport although its exact position is unknown.
- 1.3 No evidence of the postulated castle was found on site.
- 1.4 Natural and modern deposits were exposed, with no archaeological features or artefacts being present.

2 INTRODUCTION

- 2.1 An archaeological watching brief was conducted by Pre-Construct Archaeology Ltd ahead of development at Newport Free Grammar School, Bury Water Lane, Newport, Essex. The watching brief was undertaken from the 19th August 2004 to the 1st September 2004 and was commissioned by CgMs Consulting on behalf of Newport Free Grammar School.
- 2.2 The ground works covered the site of two tennis courts on the northern side of Bury Water Lane. This area measured 70m East to West and 27m North to South The National Grid Reference for the site is TL 5190 3475.
- 2.3 The archaeological consultant was Duncan Hawkins of CgMs Consulting and the site was monitored for Essex County Council by Richard Havis. The watching brief was project managed for Pre-Construct Archaeology Limited by Jon Butler and was conducted by the author according to procedures set down in the Method Statement¹ and followed the research agendas laid down in Research and Archaeology: A Framework for the eastern Counties: 1. Resource assessment; 2. Research Agenda & Strategy; Newport Historic Town Project Assessment Report.
- 2.4 The area was excavated using a 360° mechanical excavator with an archaeologist in attendance to monitor the work and record the deposits in plan and in section.
- 2.5 The site archive consisting of an artefact and recording sheets and a plan will be deposited with Saffron Walden Museum.
- 2.6 The site was allocated the code NP13

¹ Butler, J., July 2004, Method Statement for an Archaeological Watching Brief at Newport Free Grammar School, Newport, Essex, Pre-Construct Archaeology Ltd unpublished document.

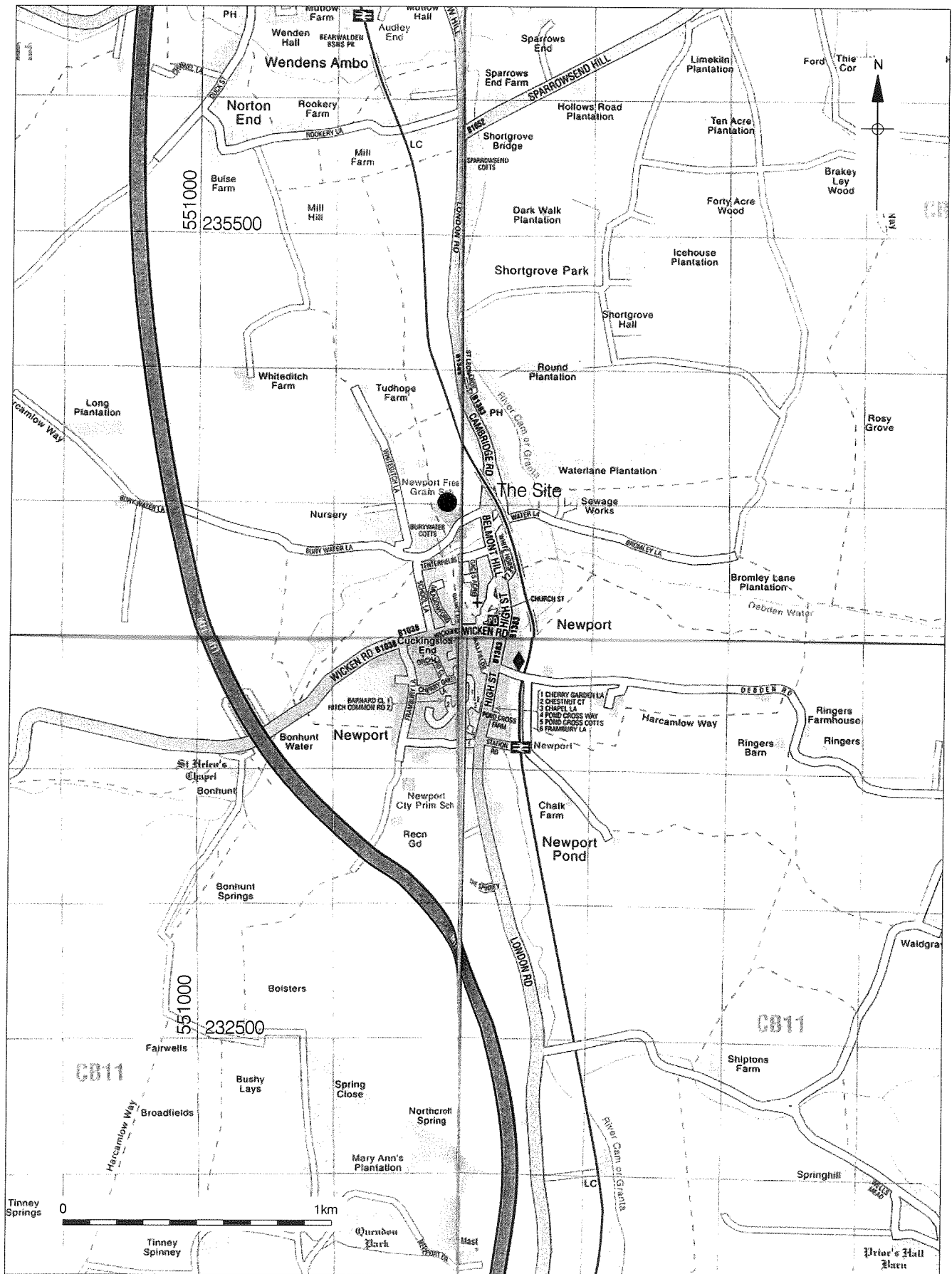
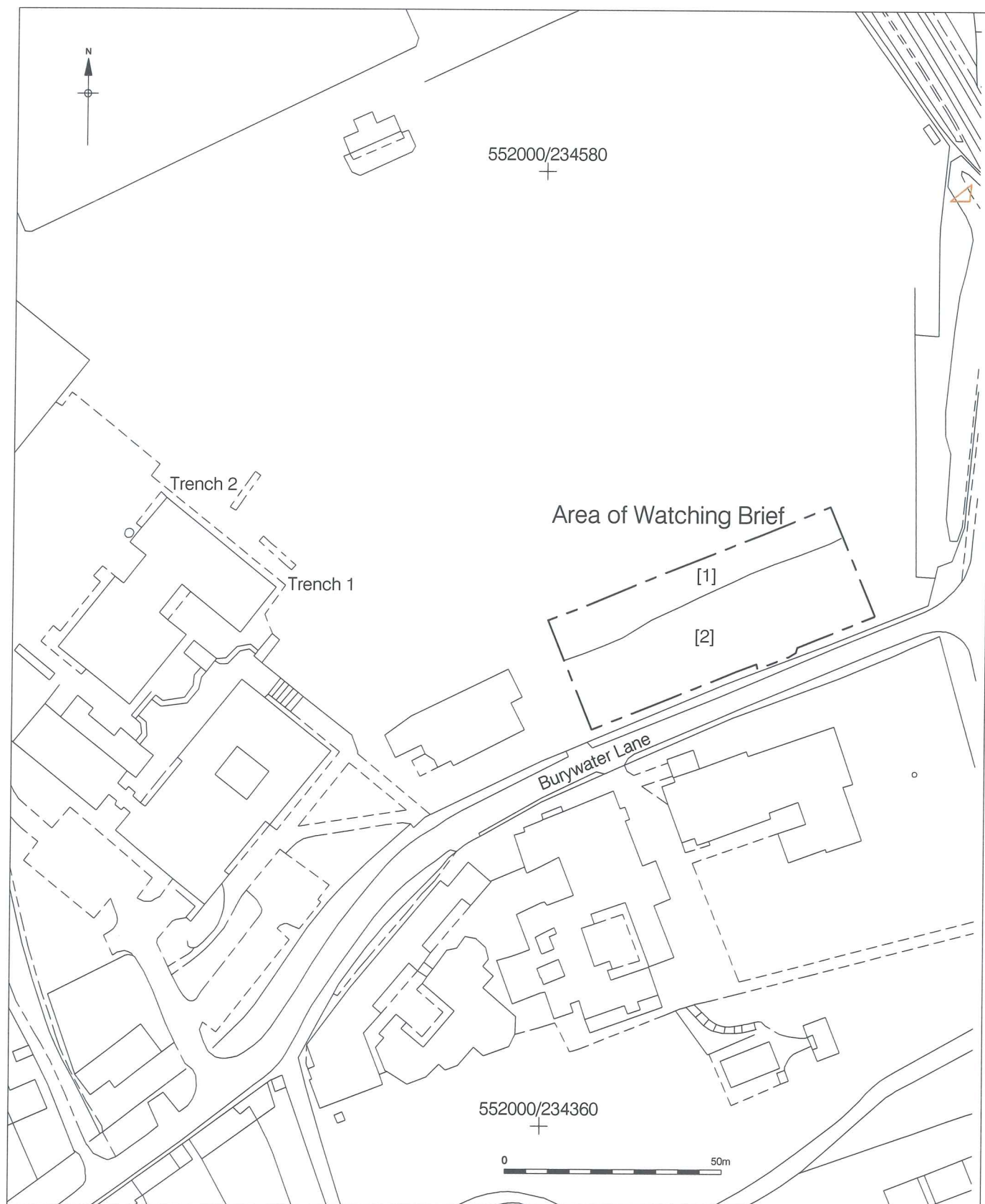


Figure 1
Site Location
1:20,000



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Figure 2
Location of Watching Brief
1:1250

3 ARCHAEOLOGICAL & HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

- 3.1 The archaeological and historical background of Newport is covered in the Historic Town Assessment for Newport in detail. The following is a summary.
- 3.2 From place name and documentary evidence Newport was in origin a Saxon royal manor with a market. There is documentary evidence for a castle but its location has not been fixed. The market was transferred from Newport to Saffron Walden in 1141 with a resulting decline in the fortunes of Newport. By the late 13th century the market was restored at which time the settlement achieved borough status. The town's economy in the medieval period was based on the market, the wool trade and the growing of saffron. The town declined with the growth of Saffron Walden but revived in the 18th and 19th centuries with the construction of the turnpike and the railway².
- 3.3 There have been a number of small excavations and watching briefs in Newport in the last twenty years of which the most significant was that at the Carnation Nursery site which failed to find any structural remains of St Leonard's Hospital. Several medieval sherds of pottery have been found at the Church House, Belmont House and St Leonard's sites³.
- 3.4 An Archaeological Evaluation had previously been conducted by Pre-Construct Archaeology Ltd at Newport Free Grammar School in February 2004. Two trenches were excavated to the east of existing school buildings and to the west of the watching brief area. These trenches revealed two ditches. One contained a fragment of abraded Roman pottery whilst the other was of 19th century date. Both were most likely field boundaries, one of possible Roman date⁴.

² Essex County Council, 1999, Newport Historic Town Project Assessment Report, p2-3

³ Essex County Council, 1999, Newport Historic Town Project Assessment Report, p4-5

⁴ Mattinson, R., March 2004, An Archaeological Evaluation at Newport Free Grammar School, Newport, Essex, CgMs Consulting unpublished report.

4 ARCHAEOLOGICAL METHODOLOGY

- 4.1 The site was excavated using a 360° mechanical excavator, with an archaeologist in attendance to monitor the work and record the deposits.
- 4.2 The ground works covered an area of 70m East to West and 27m North to South. The majority of the area was reduced by only 0.20m to 0.40m to make a roughly level surface for the car park. To the north end of the site, there was a sharp rise in the level of the ground. Here a maximum depth of 0.90m was reduced. This sharp rise was at its highest and steepest at the North West of the site. It became shallower towards the North East of the site, where it declined in height and became level with the surrounding ground. A ramp was dug to connect the proposed car park to the sunken road immediately to the south of the site (Bury Water Lane). This was 7m wide, East to West, 20m in length, North to South, and dug to a maximum depth of 1.5m. There were two Islands of unreduced ground immediately to the East and West of the ramp. These measured 5m East to West and 20m North to South.
- 4.3 Recording on site was undertaken using the single context recording system. Sample sections were drawn to a scale of 1:10. Contexts were numbered sequentially and recorded on pro-forma context sheets.
- 4.4 Following machine clearance, all faces of the trench that required examination were cleaned using appropriate hand tools. All investigation of archaeological levels was, by hand, with cleaning, examination and recording in section.

5 ARCHAEOLOGICAL SEQUENCE

5.1 Natural Deposits

- 5.1.1 A natural deposit consisting of a clean dark red brown sandy silt layer [3] was revealed at a level of 10.07m OD. This layer over 1.20m thick and continued beyond the base of the excavated area.

5.2 Modern Deposits

- 5.2.1 Overlying the natural deposit was a 0.50m thick dump layer of modern sand [2], recorded at a top level of 11.645 OD. Above this sand was a topsoil of light grey brown silt [1], which was 0.30m thick. A Victorian coin, c1890 was discovered in this layer. The layer was recorded at a level of 12.499m OD.

6 CONCLUSIONS

- 6.1 Despite close examination of all deposits, no non-modern cut features were discovered during the excavation ground works. A single artefact was found, this was the Victorian coin minted in 1890.
- 6.2 No evidence of the postulated castle was found on site and no pottery dating to the medieval period was recovered.

7 BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Brown, N. & Glazebrook, J. (eds.),** 2000, Research and Archaeology: A Framework for the Eastern Counties, 2. Research Agenda & Strategy, East Anglian Archaeology Occasional Papers 8
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- Mattinson, R.,** March 2004, An Archaeological Evaluation at Newport Free Grammar School, Newport, Essex, CgMs Consulting unpublished report.

8 ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

- 8.1 Pre-Construct Archaeology would like to thank Duncan Hawkins CgMs Consulting for commissioning this watching brief on behalf of Newport Free Grammar School.
- 8.2 The author would like to thank Jon Butler for his project management and Josephine Brown for the illustrations.

APPENDIX 1 CONTEXT DESCRIPTIONS

Context	Type	Description	Interpretation
1	Layer	Light grey brown top soil (10% sand 30% clay 60% silt) frequent modern brick rubble	Topsoil
2	Layer	Light yellow orange sand (100%) frequent pebbles	Modern dump
3	Layer	Loose dark red brown (40% sand 60% silt) occasional flint nodules	Natural

Appendix 2

Site Matrix



OASIS DATA COLLECTION FORM

[List of Projects](#) | [New project](#) | [Change your details](#) | [HER coverage](#) | [Log out](#)

Printable version

OASIS ID: preconst1-4387

Project details

Project name Newport Free Grammar School

Short description of the project An archaeological watching was conducted on the removal of two tennis courts which were to be replaced by a car park. Documentary evidence suggested that a medieval castle occupied the area of the school. No archaeological deposits or cut features were discovered, one post-medieval find (Victorian coin) was discovered. No medieval finds were discovered and no evidence of the postulated castle was found on site.

Project dates Start: 19-08-2004 End: 01-09-2004

Previous/future work Yes / No

Any associated project reference codes NP13 - Sitecode

Type of project Recording project

Site status Local Authority Designated Archaeological Area

Current Land use Other 14 - Recreational usage

Significant Finds COIN C.1890 Post Medieval

Investigation type 'Watching Brief'

Prompt Direction from Local Planning Authority - PPG16

Project location

Country England

Site location ESSEX UTTLESFORD NEWPORT Newport Free Grammar School

Study area	1890 Square metres
National grid reference	TL 5190 3475 Point
Height OD	Min: 10.07m Max: 8.67m
Project creators	
Name of Organisation	Pre-Construct Archaeology Ltd
Project brief originator	Local Authority Archaeologist and/or Planning Authority/advisory body
Project design originator	Pre-Construct Archaeology
Project director/manager	Jon Butler
Project supervisor	Mike Bazley
Sponsor or funding body	Newport Free Grammar School
Project archives	
Physical Archive Exists?	No
Digital Archive Exists?	No
Paper Archive Exists?	No
Project bibliography 1	
Publication type	An unpublished document/manuscript
Title	An Archaeological Watching Brief at Newport Free Grammar School, Newport, Essex
Author(s)/Editor(s)	Bazley, M.

Date	2004
Issuer or publisher	Pre-Construct Archaeology Ltd
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OASIS:

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**ESSEX HERITAGE AND CONSERVATION RECORD/ESSEX
ARCHAEOLOGY AND HISTORY SUMMARY SHEET**

Site name/Address: Newport Free Grammar School, Burywater Lane, Newport, Essex	
Parish: Newport	District: Uttlesford
NGR: TL 5190 3475	Site Code: NP13
Type of Work: Watching Brief	Site Director/Group: Mike Bazley/Pre Construct Archaeology Limited
Date of Work: 19/08-01/09/04	Size of Area Investigated: 70m by 27m
Location of Finds/Curating Museum: Saffron Walden	Funding source: Newport Free Grammar School
Further Seasons Anticipated?: No	Related EHCR No.s: None
Final Report: Bazley M, 2004, An Archaeological Watching Brief at Newport Free Grammar School, Newport, Essex, Pre-Construct Archaeology unpublished report.	
Periods Represented: Post-Medieval	
<p>SUMMARY OF FIELDWORK RESULTS:</p> <p>A natural deposit consisting of a clean dark red brown sandy silt layer was revealed at a level of 10.07m OD. Overlying the natural deposit was a thick dump layer of modern sand [2], recorded at a top level of 11.645 OD. Above this sand was a topsoil of light grey brown silt [1], which was 0.30m thick.</p> <p>No archaeological cut features were revealed; one post medieval find (a Victorian coin) was recovered. No other finds were retrieved from the site. No evidence of the castle, which was postulated to occupy the general area, was found on site.</p>	
<p>Previous Summaries/Reports:</p> <p>Mattinson, R., March 2004, An Archaeological Evaluation at Newport Free Grammar School, Newport, Essex, Pre-Construct Archaeology unpublished report</p>	
Author of Summary: Mike Bazley	Date of Summary: 2 nd September 2004