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ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION REPORT

Intermediate School, RAF Lakenheath ERL 118

A REPORT ON THE ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION, 2001
(Planning app. no. F/2000/368)

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Field Team
Suffolk C.C. Archaeological Service

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Contents

List of Figures	i
Acknowledgements	i
Summary	i
SMR information	i
1. Introduction	1
2. Methodology	1
3. Results	1
4. Discussion	5
5. Recommendations for further work	7
Appendix 1: Brief and specification	
Appendix 2: List of contexts	

List of Figures

1. Site location plan	2
2. Location of construction area and nearby archaeological sites	3
3. Trench location plan	4
4. Plan of trenches and feature location	6
5. Feature and trench sections	8

Acknowledgements

This project was funded by MOD Defence Estates (USF) and was monitored by Bob Carr (Suffolk County Council Archaeological Service, Conservation Team). The work was carried out by Jo Caruth from Suffolk County Council Archaeological Service, Field Team.

Finds processing was carried out by Jo Wright and pottery identification by Cathy Tester. Site illustrations are by Amy Jones.

Summary

Archaeological evaluation in advance of the construction of new classrooms at the Intermediate School at RAF Lakenheath, revealed a number of ditches, one of which was dated to the first half of the first century AD. The site lies on a north-south slope, the top half of which has been truncated and the bottom buried under accumulated soils. The presence of the ditches, but general absence of finds and occupation debris, may suggest that this site lies on the periphery of the Late Iron Age and Early Roman settlement present c. 150m to the south.

SMR information

Planning application no. F/2000/368
Date of fieldwork: July 26th 2001
Grid Reference: TL 727 802
Funding body: MOD Defence Estates (USF)

1. Introduction

An archaeological evaluation was carried out in advance of the construction of a new classroom extension to the Intermediate School at RAF Lakenheath (see Fig. 1). The site lies towards the bottom of a small east-west aligned valley near the south-west corner of the air base and a large proportion of the development area had been levelled and had tennis courts built on it. Recent archaeological work has identified Iron Age, Roman and Early Saxon settlement occupation on the opposite side of the valley, to the south of the site (ERL 089, ERL111 and ERL 112) and Roman finds were reportedly recovered from this area pre-1950 (ERL 022) although there is some doubt about the precise location of these finds (see Fig. 2).

The aim of the evaluation was to establish the nature and condition of any archaeological deposits existing on the site and to identify the date and form of these, to enable an archaeological conservation strategy to be formed as set out in the Brief and Specification for archaeological evaluation (see Appendix 1). It was thought that parts of the site might be truncated and one of the aims was to establish the extent of this truncation

2. Methodology

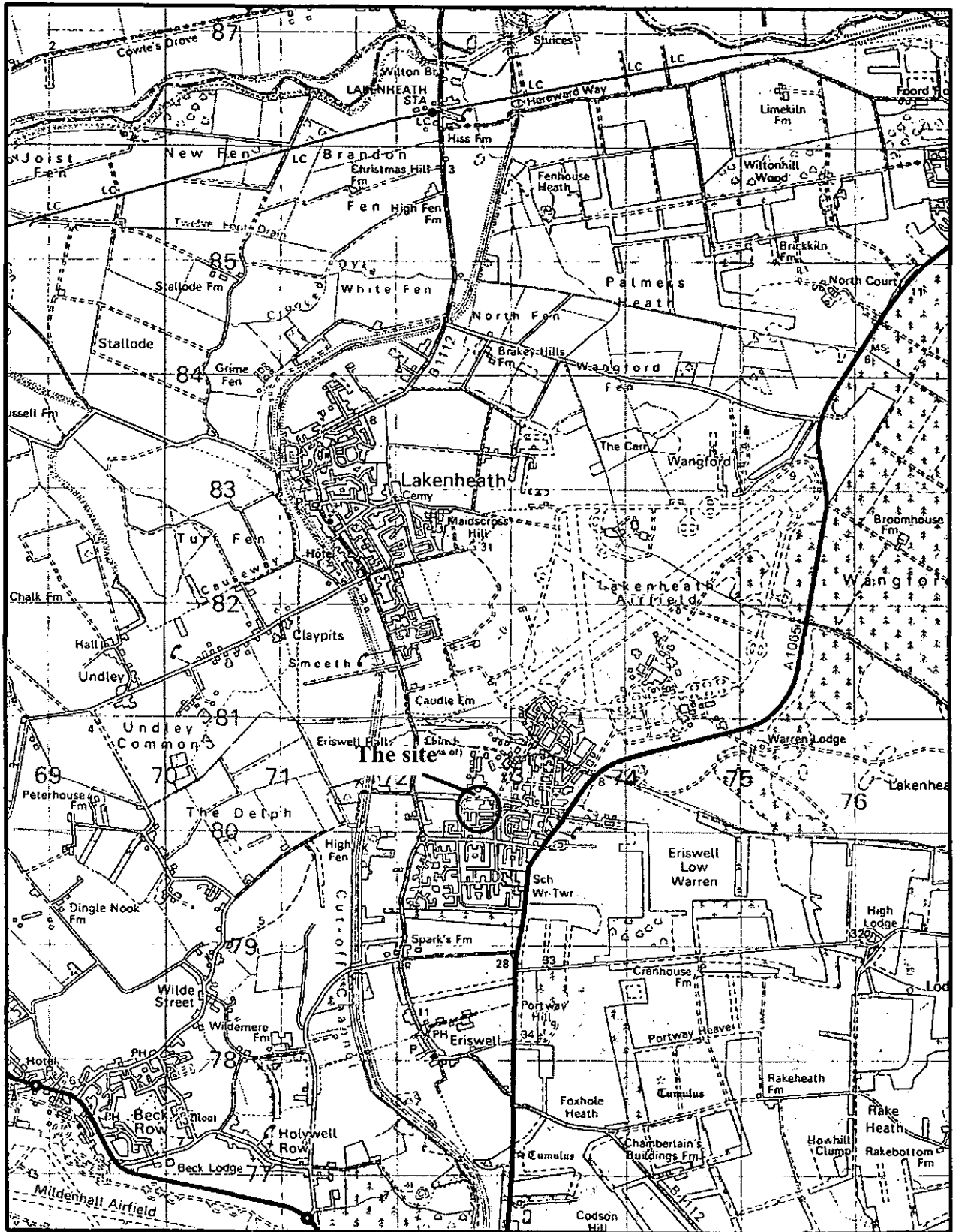
Three trenches totalling 105m in length (3.6% of the development area) were dug by a 360° tracked excavator using a 2m wide toothless bucket (see Fig. 3). It was necessary to increase the percentage of trenching from that recommended in the Brief and Specification in order adequately to determine the extent of the truncation of the subsoil surface and then to evaluate the two very different halves of the site. Overlying soil layers identified in the south end of trench 1 and trench 2 were partially removed by machine in order to establish the depth to subsoil and the presence of underlying features but were otherwise left intact. Archaeological features were sectioned by hand and all finds retained. Sections of the features and trench sides were drawn at 1:20 and trench plans at 1:50. Black and white print and colour slide photographs were taken of all stages of the excavation.

Prior to the evaluation the asphalt surface of the tennis courts had been removed by the contractors and a small part of the sub-base had also been removed. This was stopped once it was realised that subsoil and an archaeological feature were being exposed and this surface (trench 4) was included in the evaluation work (see Fig. 3).

3. Results

Archaeological features were found in all three trenches, most of which were ditches (see Fig. 4 and Appendix 2). The subsoil could be seen to be truncated on the north side (up the slope) of the site and deeply buried at the lower, south side of the site, the changeover from truncation to burial seemed to occur roughly in the centre of the former tennis courts.

Four ditches, two east-west aligned (0002 and 0017) and two north-south aligned (0019 and 0021) were identified in the northern half of the site (see Figs. 4 and 5). 0002 was made up of three and 0017 of one small cut between 0.3 and 0.6m wide and 0.1 and 0.24m deep. Both were filled with grey sand with occasional iron panning. Ditch 0019 was 1.6m wide and 0.16m deep and was filled with brown sand, had a shallow profile and cut ditch 0017. Ditch 0021 was 1.1m wide and 0.43m deep. This was filled with even grey-brown sand and was cut by a modern electricity trench. No finds were recovered from any of these features. It is likely that all of these features were truncated. Trench 1 ran north to south down the natural slope, starting in the grass at the north edge of the site and continuing into the tennis courts and trench 3 ran east to west in the grass immediately north of the tennis courts. Generally sand subsoil was found at c. 0.18m below the grass and immediately under the sub-base for the tennis courts, which was c. 0.3m deep. There was a c. 12m wide depression up to 0.3m deep (0.5m from ground level to subsoil) in the centre of trench 3 which was filled with grey sand (see section 0023, Fig. 5) and ditch 0017 could be seen surviving beneath it. An undated surface feature (0016) of burnt sand, 0.6m long by 0.4m wide, was seen in the centre of trench one, probably demonstrating roughly the point at which the truncation of the subsoil finished.

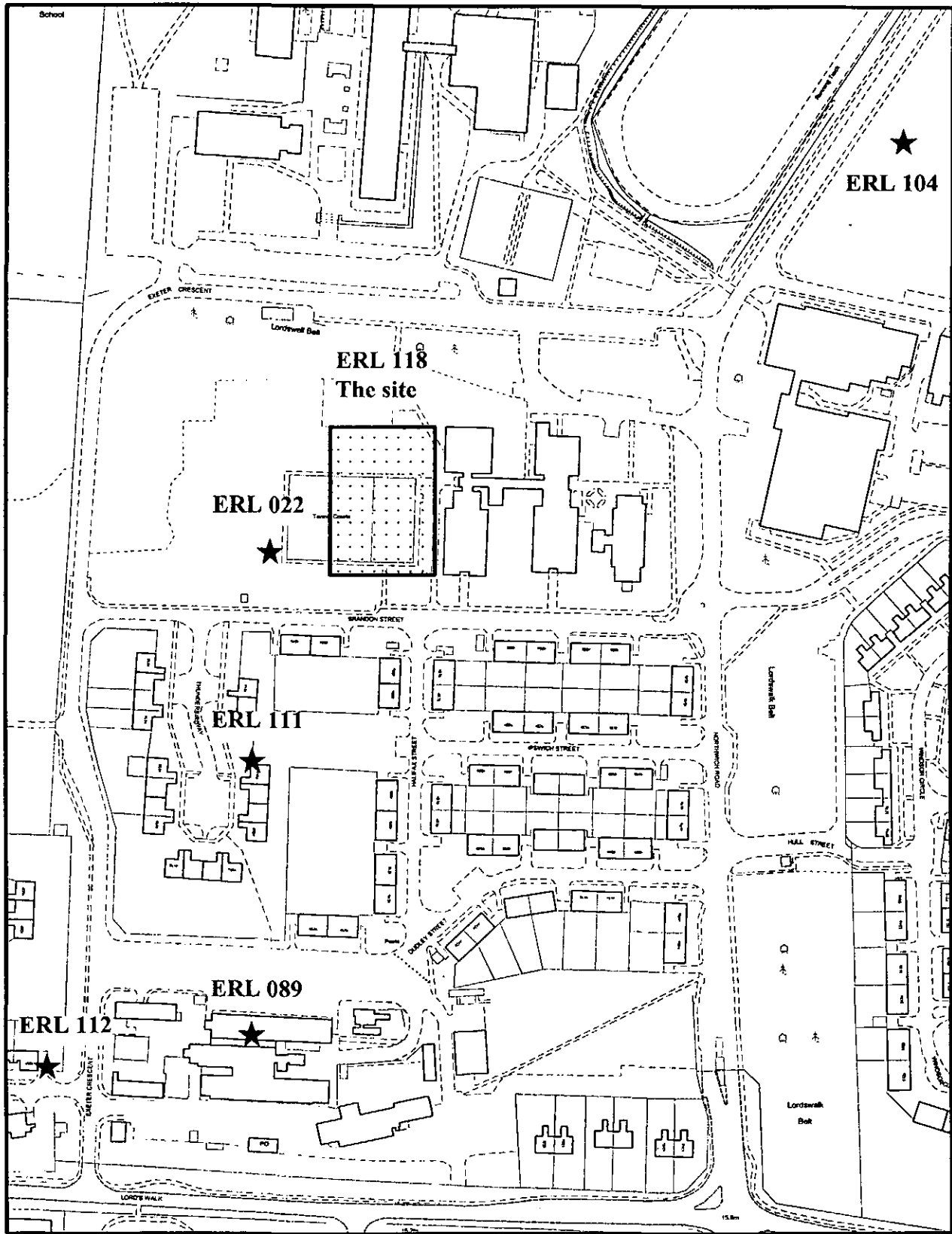


Scale 1:50000



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Figure 1 Site location plan



Scale 1:2500



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Figure 2 Location of construction area and nearby archaeological sites

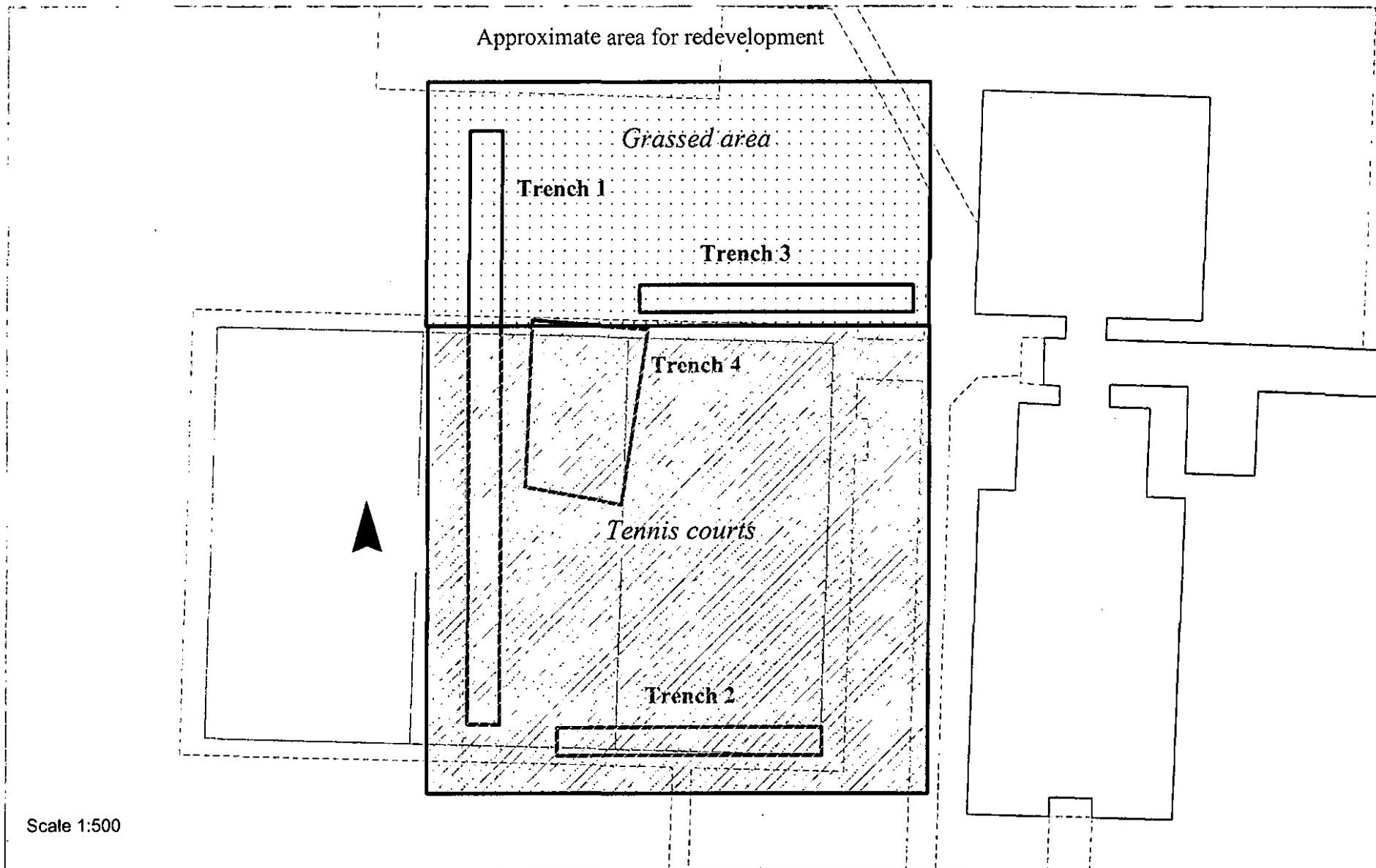


Figure 3 Trench Location Plan

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At c. 35m along trench 1 a thin layer of buried soil could be seen surviving under the sub-base and this gradually increased in depth as additional layers survived until at the south end subsoil was at 1.04m under three distinct soil layers (see sections 0024-0027, Fig. 5 for trench 1 profiles). These were buried topsoil (0004), over a layer of, possibly wind blown, even orange-brown sand (0005), over a brown sand layer (0006). A single undated, grey sand filled ditch, (0014) 0.6m wide x 0.22m deep ran southwest to northeast at the south end of this trench under all these layers (see Figs. 4 and 5). Trench 2 ran east-west through the south end of the tennis courts. This showed the same soil layers as in the south end of trench 1 and subsoil was at 1m at the west end and 0.85m at the east. Under the soil layers at the eastern end of the trench was a southeast-northwest aligned ditch (0007), c. 1.6m wide and 0.12m deep (see Figs. 4 and 5). The upper fill (0010) appeared to be slump of layer 0006 over grey sand in the base of the cut (0008). A single sherd of pottery, fragmented by the machine, from a Late Iron Age jar was found in 0010. The fabric of this has been identified by Cathy Tester as black surfaced ware, probably from the second quarter of the first century AD, either contemporary with or immediately before the Roman conquest. This has a similar date to the pottery found under the near-by housing on Thunderbird Way (ERL111). In the centre of the trench was the northern butt end (0012), c. 1.3m wide and 0.36m deep, of a north-south aligned ditch (see Figs. 4 and 5). This lay under, and the top was filled with, 0006 below which was grey sand interspersed with dense bands of charcoal rich sand (0011). No finds were recovered from this ditch. A possible brown sand posthole (0013) was identified at the west end of the trench (see Figs. 4 and 5) but the even nature of the fill and appearance of the edges resembled the characteristics of features thought to be naturally formed on previous excavations on the base.

3.1. Levels

Whilst the tennis court area was roughly level, the grassed area north of it was on a gradual slope which rose by c. 0.4m over the 15m length (see Fig. 5, sections 0024, 0025, 0026 and 0027). Under the grassed area, subsoil was found at c. 20cm below the grass. Trench 3, also in the grassed area, had subsoil at 18cm at either end and at c. 52cm in the centre of the slight hollow. Under the north end of the tennis courts the sub-base surface was less than 5cm higher than subsoil under the adjacent grassed area and the base of the made-up ground was at c. 35cm below this, implying a minimum of 30cm of truncation of the subsoil at this point. At c. 35m along trench 1 the natural slope meant that subsoil was no longer truncated and by the end of trench 1 (57m from its north end) it lay 1.04m below the ground surface. In trench 2 this profile was continued, with subsoil at between 0.85 and 1m below ground level.

4. Discussion

This evaluation has revealed the presence of archaeological features across the site. These are predominantly ditches and most are undated. The ditches on the south side of the site lie under c. 1m of accumulated deposits and one of these is dated to the first half of the first century AD, which is comparable with the features identified to the south of the site. The remaining ditches have fairly sterile-looking fills, but do align at right angles to each other suggesting the possibility that these form boundaries or plot divisions. The trenching has shown a dramatic difference in the depths of deposits and level of preservation from one side of the site to the other. Subsoil is clearly truncated on the north side of the tennis courts where these were levelled, and from the shallow depth of the surviving features in trench 3, also appears to be truncated to a lesser extent under the grass on the north side. Approximately halfway across the tennis courts the effect of the natural slope means that the truncation finishes and there is a gradual build up of overlying deposits. It appears that the valley represented here was originally steeper than it is now, being deeper at the floor and higher nearer the top. The only finds recovered were a broken sherd of Late Iron Age pottery and a worked flint, most of the ditches having clean fills that are not indicative of settlement within the immediate area. Evidence of

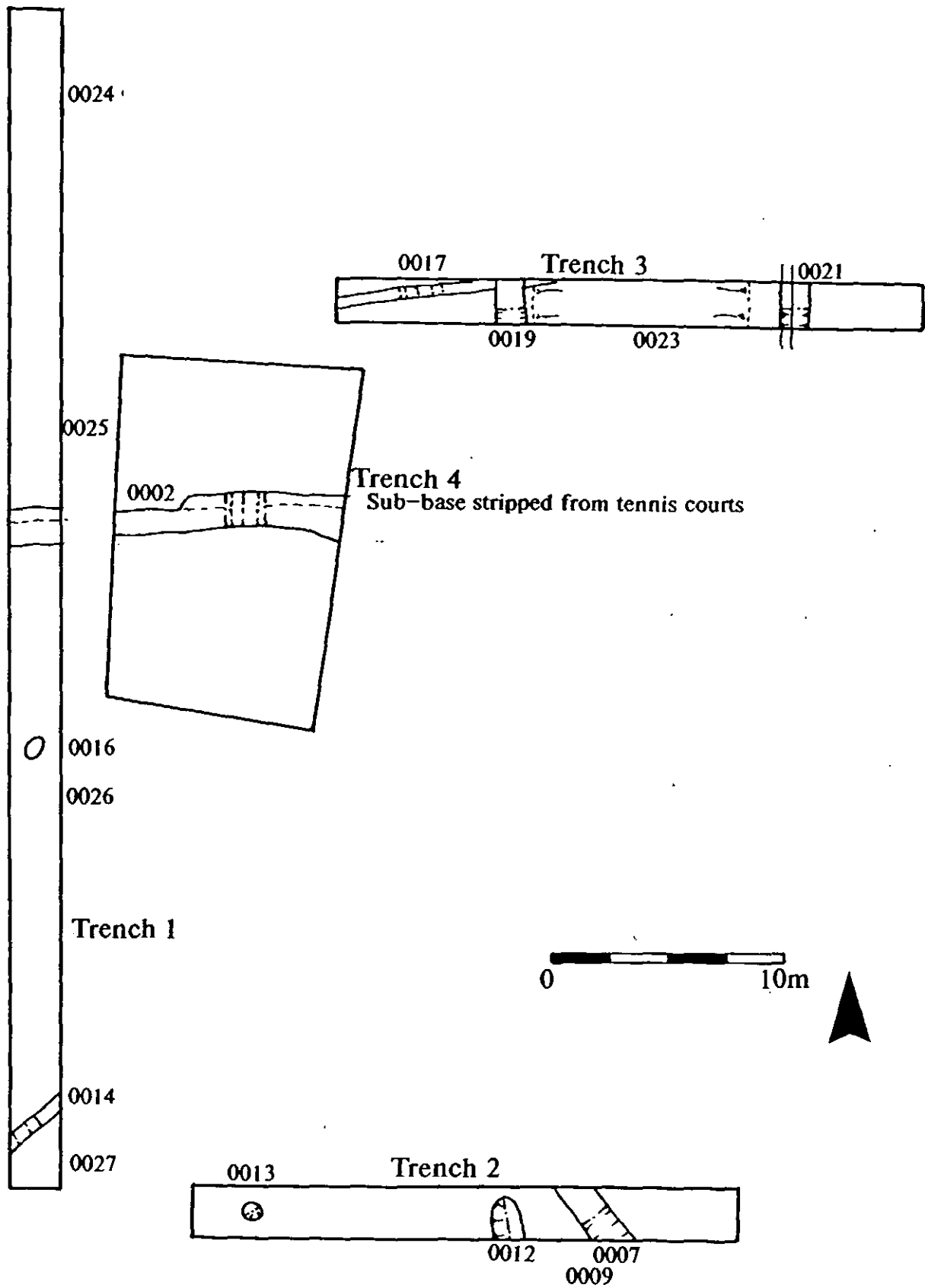


Fig. 4 Plan of trenches and feature location

more intensive occupation has been found on the opposite slope and it may be that this site represents activity on the periphery of that occupation. However it is possible that the truncation of the northern ditches may have distorted the evidence, destroying the more vulnerable features and only leaving the remnants of the most substantial.

5. Recommendations for further work

The very shallow depth of the subsoil in trench 3 and the north end of trench 1 means that any archaeology at this end is at risk from almost any aspect of the construction work, but primarily the site strip of the building footprint. Formation levels are not yet decided and it is therefore not certain how much of the sub-base material will have to be removed during the course of building works, however the small area of stripping clearly shows that features are exposed immediately below this, 0.35m below the current level. However the fact that features are already severely truncated suggests that only a proportion of, and the deeper, features survive, thus reducing the value of the information available. The sparse finds seem to suggest that this area is not within intense settlement and that the pattern of features seen in the evaluation is likely to be representative of the whole area. It is, therefore, recommended that the archaeology in the northern half of the site could be adequately recorded by a process of continual monitoring during the site strip. Due to the very shallow depth of topsoil, it might be necessary to agree a procedure of stripping that would involve a two stage strip to allow the recording of exposed features before destruction, but, given the present evidence for the size and density of the features, the recording work could be done rapidly. A contingency plan to record any unexpected, more complicated archaeology (e.g. stray burials) should be considered. Over the southern half of the site the archaeology is well protected by buried soils and is unlikely to be at risk of damage from any part of the construction programme, except the digging of deep trenches (e.g. for drains, footings etc.), and it is therefore recommended that these are subject to standard monitoring. It should be noted that 'dig levels' are not yet available and therefore the projected level of archaeological destruction is speculative.

Disclaimer

Any opinions expressed in this report about the need for further archaeological work are those of the Field Projects Division alone. The need for further work will be determined by the Local Planning Authority and its archaeological advisors when a planning application is registered. Suffolk County Council's archaeological contracting service cannot accept responsibility for inconvenience caused to clients should the Planning Authority take a different view to that expressed in the report.

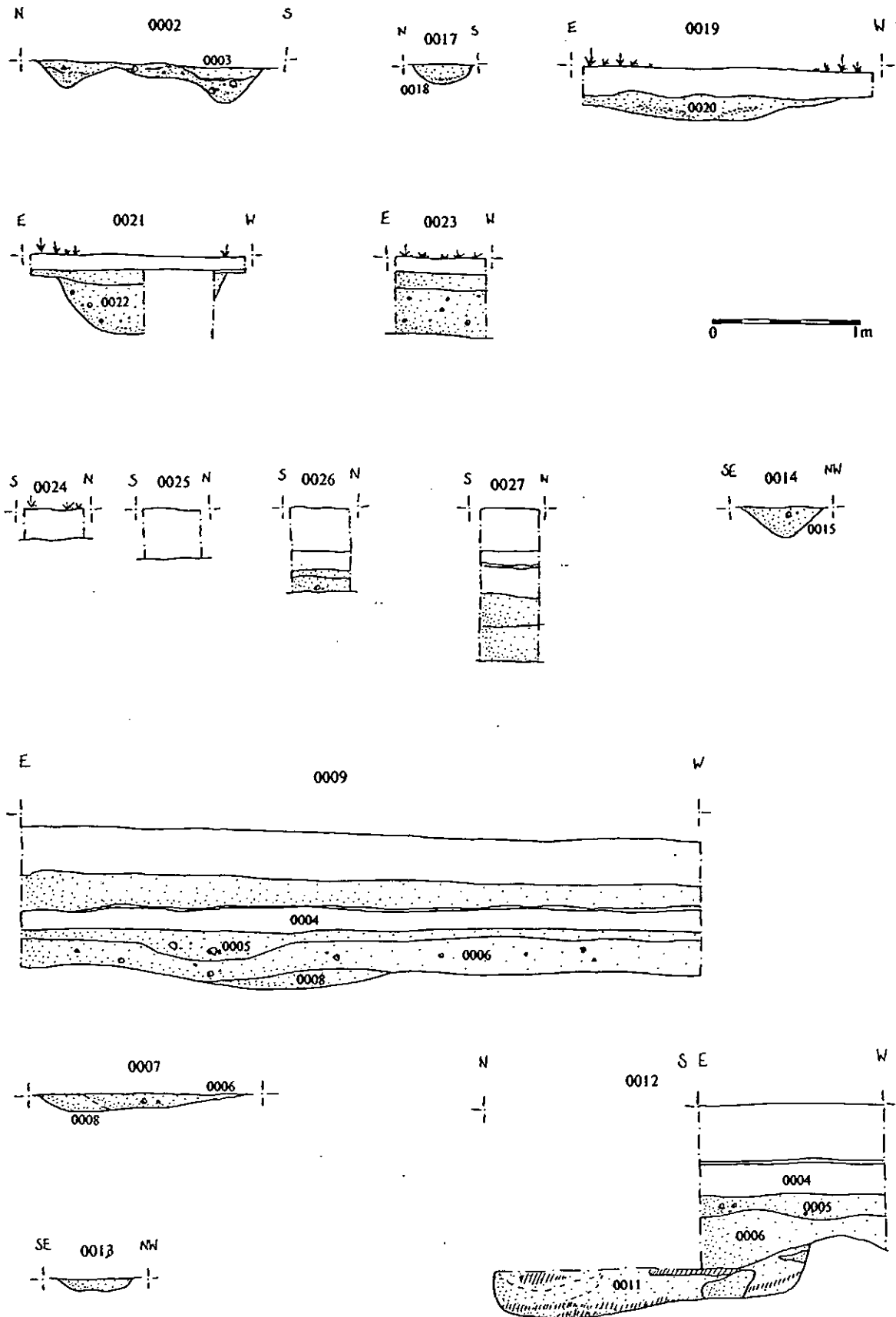


Fig. 5 Trench and feature sections

**SUFFOLK COUNTY COUNCIL
ARCHAEOLOGICAL SERVICE - CONSERVATION TEAM**

Brief and Specification for an Archaeological Evaluation

INTERMEDIATE SCHOOL, RAF LAKENHEATH

Evaluation by trial trench

1. Background

- 1.1 An application (F/2000/368) has been made to build an extension to the Intermediate School at RAF Lakenheath.
- 1.2 The Planning Authority has been advised that any consent should be conditional upon an agreed programme of work taking place before development begins (Planning Policy Guidance 16, paragraph 30 condition). An archaeological evaluation of the application area will be required as the first part of such a programme of archaeological work in the school wing area; decisions on the need for, and scope of, any further work will be based upon the evaluation. In the area of the new tennis courts the archaeological work will involve monitoring during groundworks (soil stripping).
- 1.3 The development lies at TL 727 802. The County SMR records Roman material from here pre-1950 (ERL 022) but the precision of the location of this record has not been tested. However recent work has identified Roman activity to the south (Thunderbird Way). There is also the potential for prehistoric activity. Examination of small engineering test pits on this site suggested that deposits may be truncated on the north edge of the tennis courts but better preserved to the south.
- 1.4 All arrangements for the field evaluation of the site, the timing of the work, and access to the site, are to be negotiated with the commissioning body.

2. Brief for the Archaeological Evaluation

- 2.1 Establish whether any archaeological deposits exist in the area.
- 2.2 Identify the date, approximate form and purpose of any archaeological sites within the application area.
- 2.3 Evaluate the likely impact of past land uses, and the possible presence of masking colluvial/alluvial deposits.
- 2.4 Evaluate whether waterlogged organic deposits are likely to be present in the proposal area.

- 2.5 Provide sufficient information to construct an archaeological conservation strategy, dealing with preservation, the recording of archaeological deposits, working practices, timetables and orders of cost.
- 2.6 The developer or his archaeologist will give the Conservation Team of the Suffolk County Archaeological Service (Suffolk County Council, Shire Hall, Bury St Edmunds IP33 2AR. Telephone/Fax: 01284 352443) five working days notice of the commencement of ground works on the site, in order that the work of the archaeological contractor may be monitored
- 2.7 If for some reason the approved evaluation design is not carried through in its entirety the evaluation report may be rejected, or, if appropriate, the 'precautionary principle' may be applied and untested areas included in areas defined for the final mitigation strategy.
- 2.8 An outline specification which defines certain minimum criteria is set out below.

3. **Specification**

- 3.1 Trial trenches are to be excavated to cover a minimum 2% of the site area and be positioned to sample all areas of the site. Linear trenches are thought to be the most appropriate sampling method. Trenches should be a minimum of 1.5m wide; the length of trench to fulfil the percentage requirement should be computed on the nominal basis of 1m wide trenches. The trench design must be approved by the Archaeological Service Conservation Team before field work begins.
- 3.2 The topsoil may be mechanically removed using an appropriate machine fitted with toothless bucket and other equipment. All machine excavation is to be under the direct control and supervision of an archaeologist. The topsoil should be examined for archaeological material.
- 3.3 The top of the first archaeological deposit may be cleared by machine, but must then be cleaned off by hand. There is a presumption that excavation of all archaeological deposits will be done by hand unless it can be shown there will not be a loss of evidence by using a machine. The decision as to the proper method of further excavation will be made by the senior project archaeologist with regard to the nature of the deposit.
- 3.4 In all evaluation excavation there is a presumption of the need to cause the minimum disturbance to the site consistent with adequate evaluation; that significant archaeological features, e.g. solid or bonded structural remains, building slots or post-holes, should be preserved intact even if fills are sampled.
- 3.5 There must be sufficient excavation to give clear evidence for the period, depth and nature of an archaeological deposit. The depth and nature of colluvial or other masking deposits must be established across the site.
- 3.6 Any natural subsoil surface revealed should be hand cleaned and examined for archaeological deposits and artefacts. Sample excavation of any archaeological features revealed may be necessary in order to gauge their date and character.
- 3.7 Metal detector searches must take place at all stages of the excavation by an experienced detector user.

- 3.8 All finds will be collected and processed (unless variations in this principle are agreed with the Conservation Team of SCC Archaeological Service during the course of the evaluation).
- 3.9 Human remains must be left *in situ* except in those cases where damage or desecration are to be expected, or in the event that analysis of the remains is shown to be a requirement of satisfactory evaluation of the site. However, the excavator should be aware of, and comply with, the provisions of Section 25 of the Burial Act 1857.
- 3.10 Plans of the archaeological features on the site are to be drawn at 1:20 or 1:50, depending on the complexity of the data to be recorded. Sections should be drawn at 1:10 or 1:20 again depending on the complexity to be recorded. Any variations from this must be agreed with the Conservation Team.
- 3.11 A photographic record of the work is to be made, consisting of both monochrome photographs and colour transparencies.
- 3.12 Topsoil, subsoil and archaeological deposit to be kept separate during excavation to allow sequential backfilling of excavations.

4. **General Management**

- 4.1 A timetable for all stages of the project must be agreed before the first stage of work commences, including monitoring by the Conservation Team of SCC Archaeological Service.
- 4.2 The composition of the project staff must be detailed and agreed (this is to include any subcontractors).
- 4.3 A general Health and Safety Policy must be provided, with detailed risk assessment and management strategy for this particular site.
- 4.4 No initial survey to detect public utility or other services has taken place. The responsibility for this rests with the archaeological contractor.
- 4.5 The Institute of Field Archaeologists' *Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Desk-based Assessments* and for *Field Evaluations* should be used for additional guidance in the execution of the project and in drawing up the report.

5. **Report Requirements**

- 5.1 An archive of all records and finds must be prepared consistent with the principle of *Management of Archaeological Projects*, English Heritage 1991 (particularly Appendix 3.1 and Appendix 4.1).
- 5.2 The data recording methods and conventions used must be consistent with, and approved by, the County Sites and Monuments Record.
- 5.3 The objective account of the archaeological evidence must be clearly distinguished from its archaeological interpretation. The conclusion should include a statement of the archaeological potential of the site.

- 5.4 An opinion as to the necessity for further archaeological work and its scope must be given. A second phase will not be embarked upon until the primary fieldwork results are assessed and the need for further work is established. A second phase cannot be developed in detail at this stage.
- 5.5 Finds must be appropriately conserved and stored in accordance with *UK Institute of Conservators Guidelines*. The finds, as an indissoluble part of the site archive, should be deposited with the County SMR if the landowner can be persuaded to agree to this. If this is not possible for all or any part of the finds archive, then provision must be made for additional recording (e.g. photography, illustration, analysis) as appropriate.
- 5.6 The site archive is to be deposited with the County SMR within three months of the completion of fieldwork. It will then become publicly accessible.
- 5.7 Where positive conclusions are drawn from a project (whether it be evaluation or excavation) a summary report, in the established format, suitable for inclusion in the annual 'Archaeology in Suffolk' section of the *Proceedings of the Suffolk Institute for Archaeology*, must be prepared and included in the project report, or submitted to the Conservation Team by the end of the calendar year in which the evaluation work takes place, whichever is the sooner.
- 5.8 County SMR sheets must be completed, as per the county SMR manual, for all sites where archaeological finds and/or features are located.

Specification by: J Plouviez

Suffolk County Council
Archaeological Service Conservation Team
Environment and Transport Department
Shire Hall
Bury St Edmunds
Suffolk IP33 2AR

Tel: 01284 352448

Date: 11 October 2000

Reference: /RAFLakSchool10

This brief and specification remains valid for 12 months from the above date. If work is not carried out in full within that time this document will lapse; the authority should be notified and a revised brief and specification may be issued.

If the work defined by this brief forms a part of a programme of archaeological work required by a Planning Condition, the results must be considered by the Conservation Team of the Archaeological Service of Suffolk County Council, who have the responsibility for advising the appropriate Planning Authority.

Appendix 2 Eriswell 118 CONTEXT LIST

opno	feature	comp	location	Identifier	description	cuts	cutby	over	under	fi	spotdate
0001				Unstratified finds	Unstratified finds from the whole site						
0002	0002		Tr.1+	Ditch	Shallow double ditch running E-W across the site. Filled with pale grey sand.						
0003	0002		Tr. 4	Ditch section	1.2m length of ditch 0002 excavated under tennis courts. Both cuts filled with a single fill of grey sand. Fills from each cut indistinguishable from each other. No finds. Stony lower fill suggests infilled rather than natural silting, fe panning only occurs in the fill stoppoing at the feature edge - water effects?						
0004			Tr. 1	Layer	Buried topsoil and turf line			0005			tennis courts
0005			Tr. 1	Layer	Orange-brown slightly stony sand under 0004. No finds, clean and well mixed			0006			0004
0006			Tr. 1	Layer	Brown sand under 0005. Lots of animal disturbance. Overlies natural and features.			0007,			0005
								0010,			
								0014			
0007	0007		Tr. 2	Ditch	NW-SE aligned ditch, very shallow filled with 0008 and 0010						0006,
											0008
0008	0007		Tr. 2	Ditch fill	Even grey-brown sand fill of 0007. No finds.			0007			0010
0009			Tr. 2	Section	Section of north facing trench face. Shows layers 0004-0006 and ditch 0007.						
0010	0007	0006?	Tr. 2	Ditch fill	Brown sand fill of ditch 0007. Overlies 0008 and may be slumped 0006. LIA 1st century pottery recovered from it.			0008		y	1-50AD
0011	0012		Tr. 2	Ditch fill	Orange-grey-brown sand fill of 0012. Has dense bands of charcoal rich sand interspersed within it. No finds			0012			0006
0012	0012		Tr. 2	Ditch	Butt end of north-south aligned ditch filled with 0011. Steep sided with flat base						0011
0013	0013		Tr. 2	Posthole	Brown sand filled posthole. Very similar to a type of natural feature seen elsewhere on the base. No finds						
0014	0014		Tr. 1	Ditch	NE/SW aligned ditch at south end of trench 1. Grey sand fill, 0015. Triangular profile. Under 0006						0006
0015	0014		Tr. 1	Ditch fill	Grey sand, no finds						
0016	0016		Tr. 1	Surface spread	Surface spread of burnt sand in centre of the trench, at edge of truncation. No feature below. 60cm x 40cm. No dating						
0017	0017		Tr. 3	Ditch	E-W aligned ditch in trench 3. Pale grey sand fill, 0018, shallow basin profile			0019			0018
0018	0017		Tr. 3	Ditch fill	Pale grey sand fill of ditch 0017. No finds			0019			0017
0019	0019		Tr. 3	Ditch	Very shallow north-south aligned ditch cutting 0017	0017					0020
0020	0019		Tr. 3	Ditch fill	Dark brown sand fill of ditch 0019. Dense black/brown layer at base.	0017		0019			
0021	0021		Tr. 3	Ditch	North-south ditch at east end of trench 3. Cut by electric cable on west side.			Electric cable			0022
0022	0021		Tr. 3	Ditch fill	Grey sand fill of 0021. No finds. Cut by electric trench			Electric cable	0021		
0023			Tr. 3	Section	Section of trench 3, north facing in centre of trench through slight hollow.						
0024			Tr. 1	Section	Section of trench 1 face. North end						
0025			Tr. 1	Section	Section of trench 1 face. 18m from north end						
0026			Tr. 1	Section	Section of trench 1 face. 35m from north end						
0027			Tr. 1	Section	Section of trench 1 face. South end						