

Landscape Research Centre Ltd.

Archaeological Report

West Heslerton, North Yorkshire



17th December, 1993

24th and 26th January, 1994

16th May, 1994

NYCC HER	
SNY	19198
ENY	6426
CNY	—
Parish	3060
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Introduction

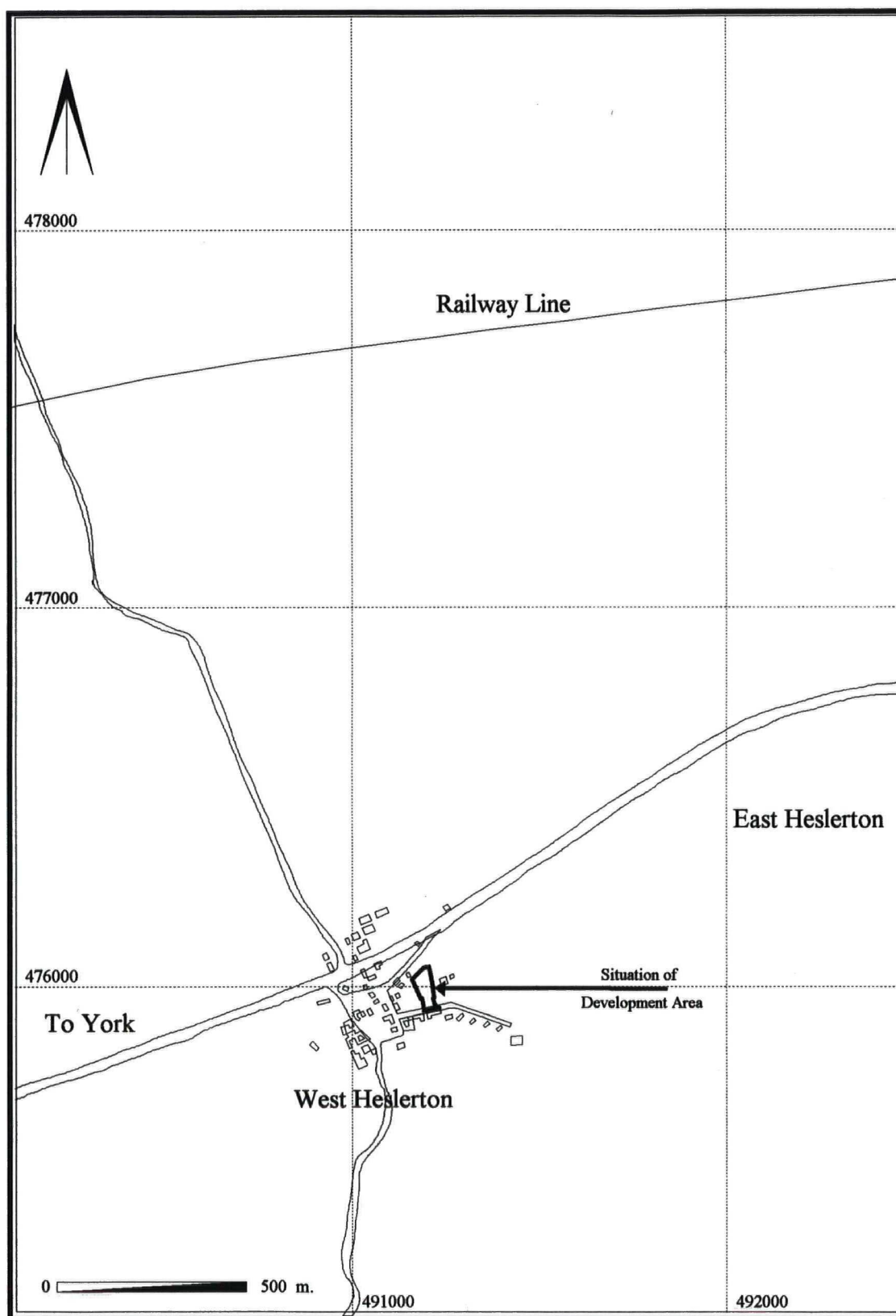
The following is a report resulting from an archaeological investigation associated with the construction of new houses in High Street, West Heslerton, North Yorkshire. The situation of the development was on the north side of High Street in an area of open ground. Previous housing development to the east had uncovered the foundations of a medieval house. The geographic location of the development is shown in Plan One (page 3).

Summary

The development area has a number of planned houses which I have numbered 1-5 on the digitised plan of the area (Plan Two on page 4). I will use these numbers to discuss the archaeological features associated with each part of the development. For houses one, two, three and four the areas were not stripped below the level of the topsoil, thus the only evidence for archaeological features was to be seen in the sections of the construction trenches for the house footings. These were excavated by a machine with a metre wide bucket and varied in depth from 60cm to 150cm, depending on the underlying geology, which is chalk and clay, in places covered by layers of sandy loam and/or blown sand. A number of features of archaeological origin were found, and these will be discussed in detail below (see Plan Three, page 5, for the position of these features.). In addition, Appendix One gives a short description of each of the eight contexts which were investigated during the course of the development. I have also included the four plans used in the text at a larger scale, on A3 sheets. The photograph on the front cover is a view of the wall footing (Context eight) from the west. Three further views of this context and one photograph of Context seven, showing a tree hole as an example, are included on pages 9 and 10 at the rear of this report.

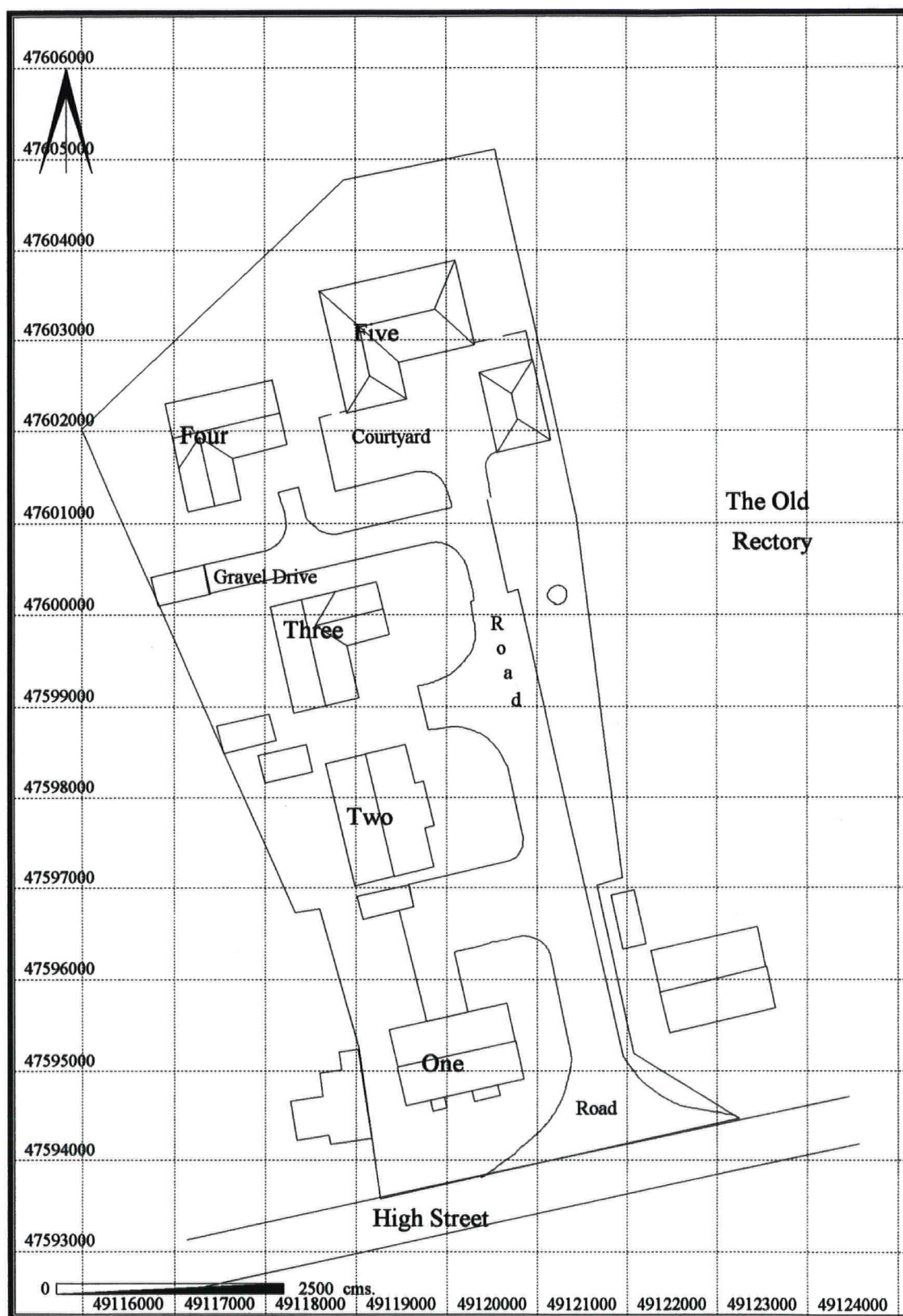
House One (17/12/93)

This area, closest to High Street and on an east/west alignment with the medieval house discovered during previous development to the east, was covered with a layer of recently deposited rubble. In the recent past, a number of oak trees were uprooted and removed from this area, and the holes from this removal were clearly visible in the sides of the construction trenches. A small pit (Context one) was seen in section in the east wall footing near the southern corner of this house. The pit was oval in shape and had a flat-based U profile. The fill was a sandy loam, with a medium sandy texture, Munsell colour 10YR4/3. The pit had a piece of wood in the upper part of the fill, implying that this fill is of a relatively recent date, as it is known that wood does not survive deposition for long periods in the soils of this area. The lower part of the fill was disturbed by tree root action and animal burrows and no further finds were discovered.



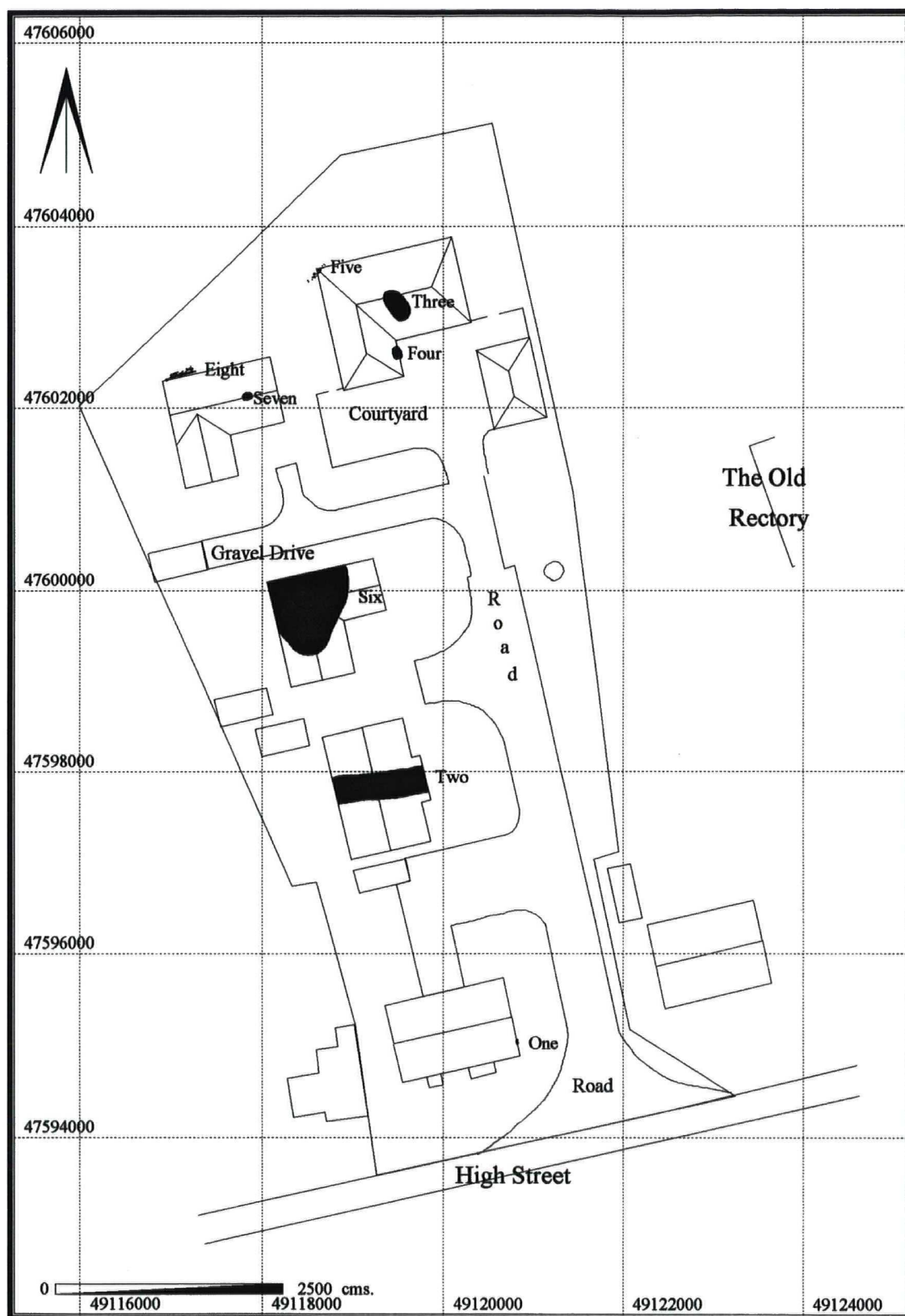
Plan One Scale 1:16000

Plan showing the geographic location of the development area. The village of West Heslerton is shown, along with the position of East Heslerton. The A64 runs to the north of the village of West Heslerton. The plan is in absolute co-ordinates based on the Ordnance Survey grid. The grid is at 1 kilometre intervals.



Plan Two Scale 1:675

Plan showing the development area in more detail. The development area is shown in relation to High Street and the Old Rectory. The numbers are the numbers assigned to the houses by the Landscape Research Centre Ltd and are used to discuss each area of development in the text below. The grid is at 10 metre intervals.



Plan Three Scale 1:675

Plan showing the numbers of the features observed during the course of the development. These numbers are used to discuss the features in more detail in the text below. The grid is at 20 metre intervals.

House Two (17/12/93)

In the area covered by this part of the development, the topsoil was not stripped off, thus no features were visible on the surface. The soil in this area was generally a blown sand, thus the construction trenches were at their deepest in this area, because of the need to keep removing the blown sand until a more solid underlying geology was reached, in order to obtain a firm foundation. A number of tree holes were visible, but the only feature of possible archaeological significance was a spread of small chalk rocks, ranging in size from 5cm to 15cm in diameter (Context two), which lay above the blown sand. They appeared to have a rough east/west orientation across the centre of house two, and the width of the spread was on average about three metres. Possible interpretations for this spread may be either the remnants of a wall or the remains of a road, but it is also possible that this spread is of a relatively recent date, as much of this area has been disturbed in the recent past.

House Five (24-25/1/94)

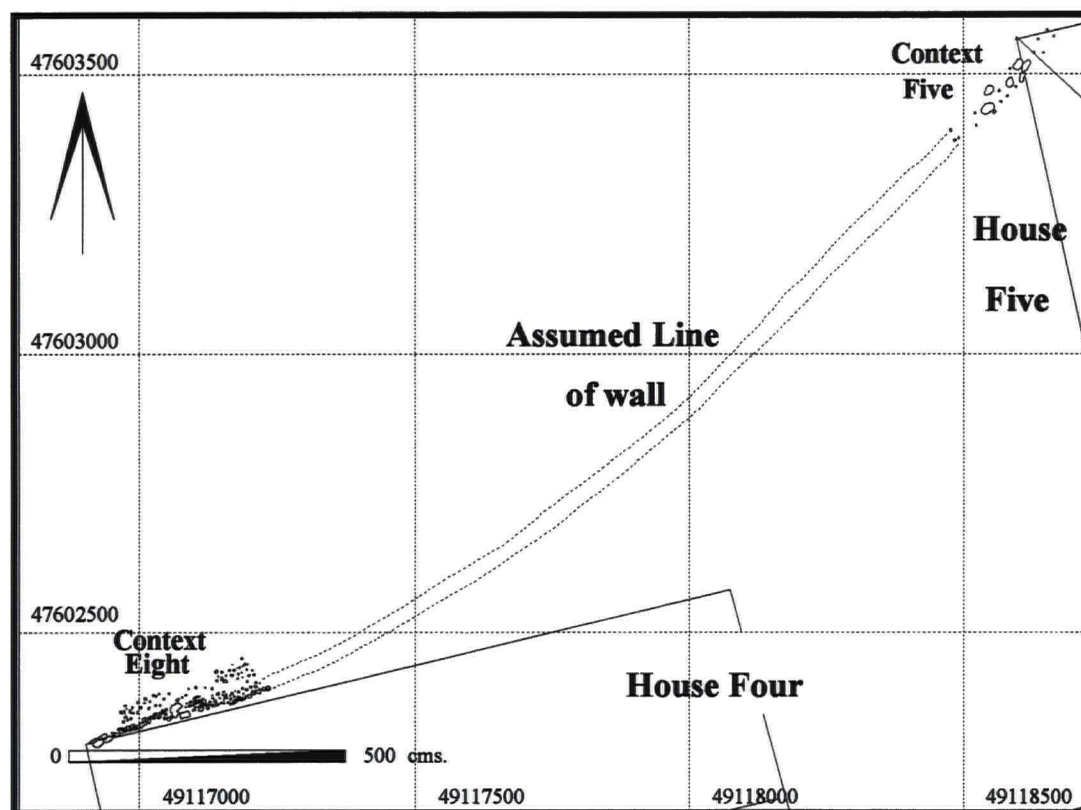
This area was stripped to just below the level of the topsoil before development, and thus allowed for a more comprehensive archaeological inspection. Two features were immediately apparent, the first (Context three) being a spread of chalk rubble in a red chalk/clay matrix. The extent of this feature was 3.6 by 2.4 metres and a section was excavated through the feature. The feature was 45cm deep, and the shape of the feature was oval with a shallow V profile. No finds were discovered and there were no interactions with other features, thus the age of the feature cannot be established. The second feature was a sub-rectangular pit (Context four), which was excavated using a half section across the centre of the pit. Finds from the top fill (sandy loam with 20% chalk inclusions, Munsell colour 10YR4/3) were animal bone (including a hoof) spread evenly across the extent of the feature, and two fragments of pottery. A primary fill differentiated by less chalk inclusions (Sandy loam with 10% chalk inclusions, Munsell colour 10YR4/3) also had animal bone finds, predominantly in the western side of the feature. A third pottery sherd was found on the base of the feature. The feature was cut into chalk bedrock and had a flat-bottomed U profile. The pottery was not diagnostic and thus no date can be assigned to the pit without further specialist analysis.

During the excavation of the construction trenches no further archaeological features were observed until the machine uncovered some large chalk boulders in the extreme north/west corner of the footings for house five. On inspection these appeared to be the remnants of a wall footing (Context five) with a SW/NE orientation and the remains were cleaned and planned. The structure of the footings were of chalk boulders placed on top of each other before being filled in with smaller pieces of chalk mixed with the same sandy clay matrix into which they were constructed. The wall had been slighted and only part of the footings remained. The surrounding area was cleaned back to establish the orientation of the wall line, but there were no finds to establish the date of the wall. If the orientation of the wall remained the same, it was thought that it would again be seen when the footings for house four were excavated, and this was indeed the case.

House Three (17/5/94)

The footings for this house were excavated on the 17/5/94, along with the footings for house four. No features were observed during the construction of these footings, primarily because they were excavated into the spoil that had been removed from the construction of the footings for houses one and two, which was then spread onto this area. The footings thus only went below the previous ground level to a maximum

depth of between 20cm and 30cm. However, just below the level of the old topsoil, a spread of chalk rubble, with the chalk rocks being between 3cm and 15cm in diameter, was observed (Context six). Found in this spread were fragments of modern bottle glass and a pencil, thus indicating a recent date for this context.



Plan Four Scale 1:135

Plan showing the wall footings (Features Five and Eight) in more detail.. The plan is at a scale of 1:60. Note the remains of the wall slighting to the north of the southernmost part of the wall footing. The grid is at 5 metre intervals

House Four (17/5/94)

The footings for this house were excavated on the 17/5/94, along with the footings for house three. The northern part of this area was characterised by a layer of blown sand, overlying the geology of chalk natural. During the cleaning back of the topsoil, three finds were observed, all from the north/eastern area of house four. These were two old iron nails and the base of a green-glaze jar. A feature (Context seven), was observed in one of the wall footings (see Plan Three for the position of the features). The feature had three distinct layers, the primary and tertiary layers being of sand with the secondary layer comprising of sand and chalk. There were no finds from any of these layers and the nature of the fills suggest that this was the remnants of an old tree hole. The secondary layer was almost certainly an animal burrow, thus the conclusion is that this was a natural feature. However, during the excavation of the northernmost wall

footing, the remnants of the wall footing (Context eight) observed during the excavation of the footings for House five, was again uncovered. The wall line was cleaned back to establish the NE/SW orientation, before being planned. A section of the wall was then excavated to establish the profile of the wall. (See Section one for details). Finds from this section include animal bone, a fragment of green-glaze pottery and a piece of a clay pipe, establishing the date of the wall as being at least after the introduction of tobacco. From the section it became apparent that the wall had been slighted to the north, as the bulk of the remaining wall was in a round based wide V profile footing to the south, with smaller chalk rocks scattered to the north. The wall was totally slighted to the east, where the remnants of a tree hole had removed all traces of the wall, and had also been totally removed to the west. It thus appears that after the initial slighting of the wall, a number of later developments continued the process of removal, with tree planting accounting for much of the later removal of the wall.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, it can be stated that the area of current development had no structural housing remains, whereas the remains of a medieval house had been noted and excavated in the earlier housing development to the east. In all, eight features were observed during the construction of the wall footings, with three of these consisting of chalk or rubble spreads (Contexts Two, Three and Six). Two pits were observed, with Context One being of probable modern origin, and Context Four having no dateable archaeological finds. Context Seven was a tree hole. Contexts Five and Eight were part of a slighted wall, with only the partial wall footings remaining. The wall can be dated to circa the 17th century by the find of the clay pipe remnant and the sherds of green-glaze pottery.



Photograph One

The photograph shows the wall footing (Context eight) from the west. The scale bar is three metres long.



Photograph Two

The photograph shows the wall footing (Context eight) from the east. The scale bar is three metres long. Note the remains of a tree hole in the left foreground and the wall sighting to the north (right centre) of the photograph.



Photograph Three

The photograph shows the wall footing (Context eight) from the south. The scale bar is three metres long. Note in the centre right (east) how even the partial remains of the footing have been totally removed by the later planting of trees, themselves recently uprooted



Photograph Four

The photograph shows the remains of a tree hole (Context seven) from the south west. The scale bar is three metres long. This is an example of the number of tree holes which were visible during the construction of the modern footings, caused by the recent uprooting of a number of oak trees.

APPENDIX ONE

West Heslerton High Street Housing Development

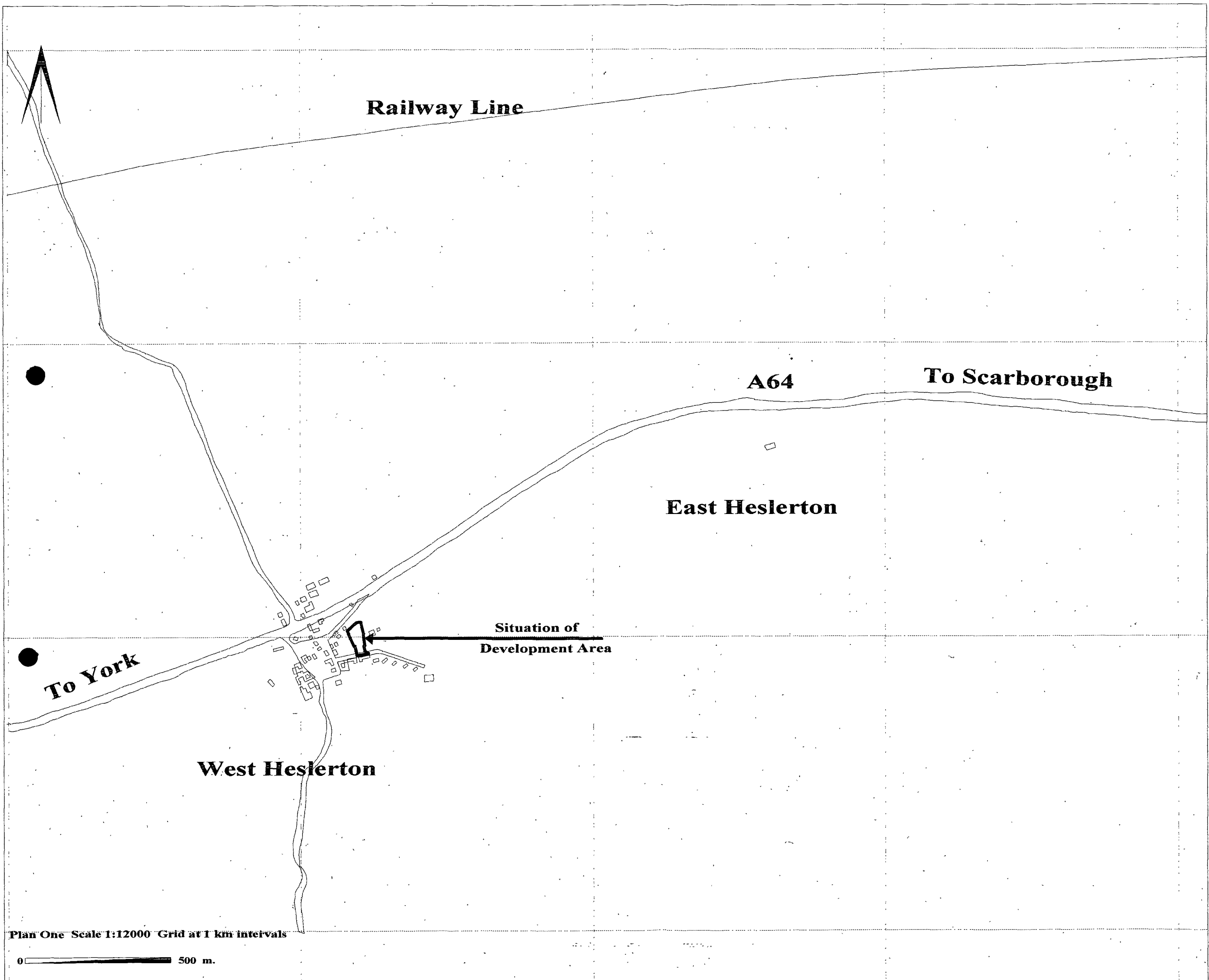
Context:	00001
Type:	PIT
Shape:	RECTANGULAR
Profile:	FLAT- BASED U
Length:	50
Breadth:	24
Depth:	64
Soiltype:	SANDY LOAM
Soil_textr:	MEDIUM SANDY
Munsell:	10 YR 4/3
Notes:	ONE FIND OF A PIECE OF WOOD INDICATING A MODERN ORIGIN FOR THIS FEATURE

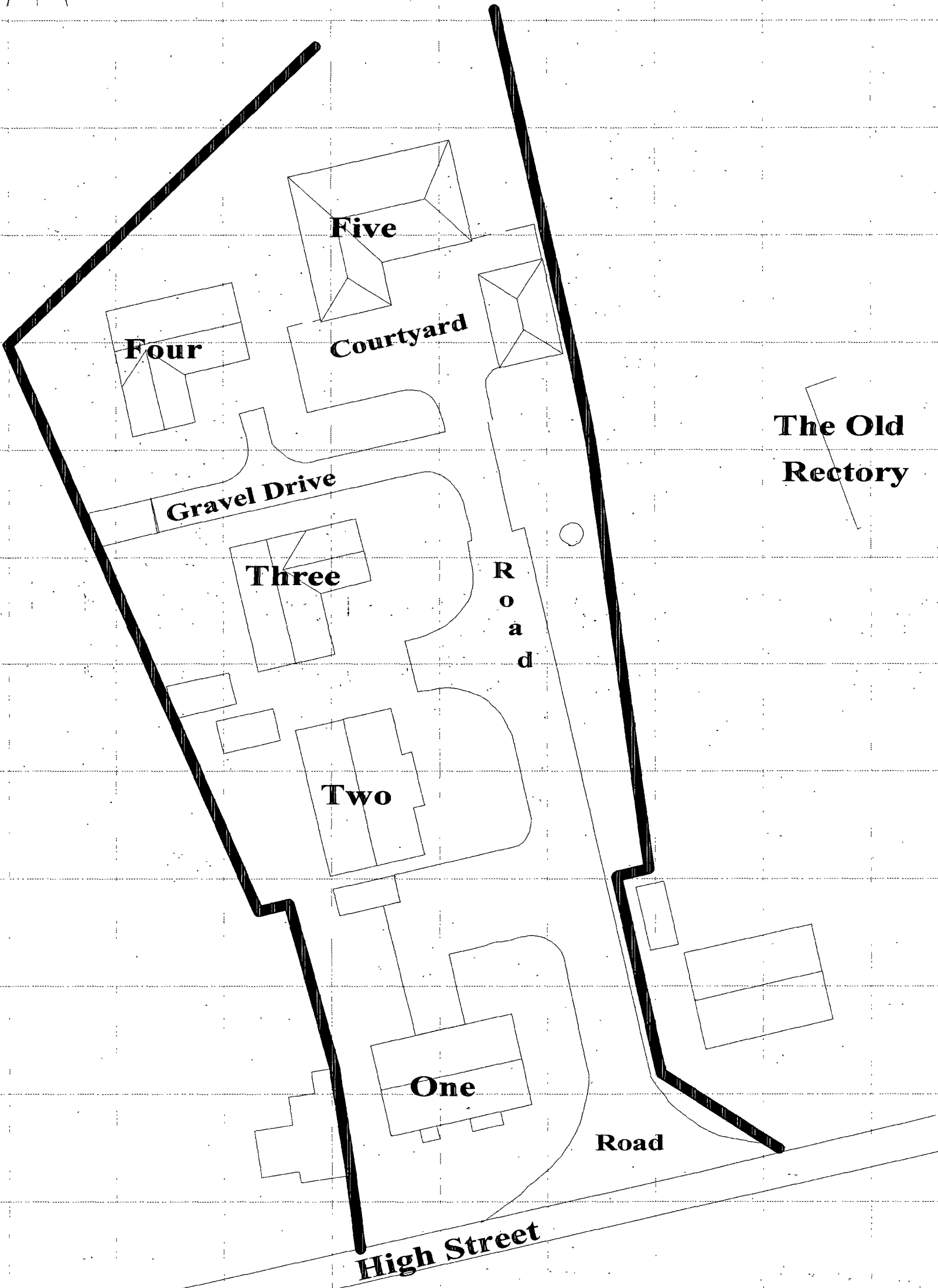
Context:	00002
Type:	CHALK RUBBLE SPREAD
Shape:	LINEAR
Profile:	IRREGULAR
Length:	1000
Breadth:	300
Depth:	35
Soiltype:	SANDY CLAY
Soil_textr:	FRIABLE
Munsell:	5 YR 4/6
Notes:	SOIL TYPE AND TEXTURE WERE ASSIGNED TO THE SOIL MATRIX . POSSIBLE WALL REMNANT OR ROAD BUT MORE LIKELY TO BE MODERN IN ORIGIN . NO FINDS

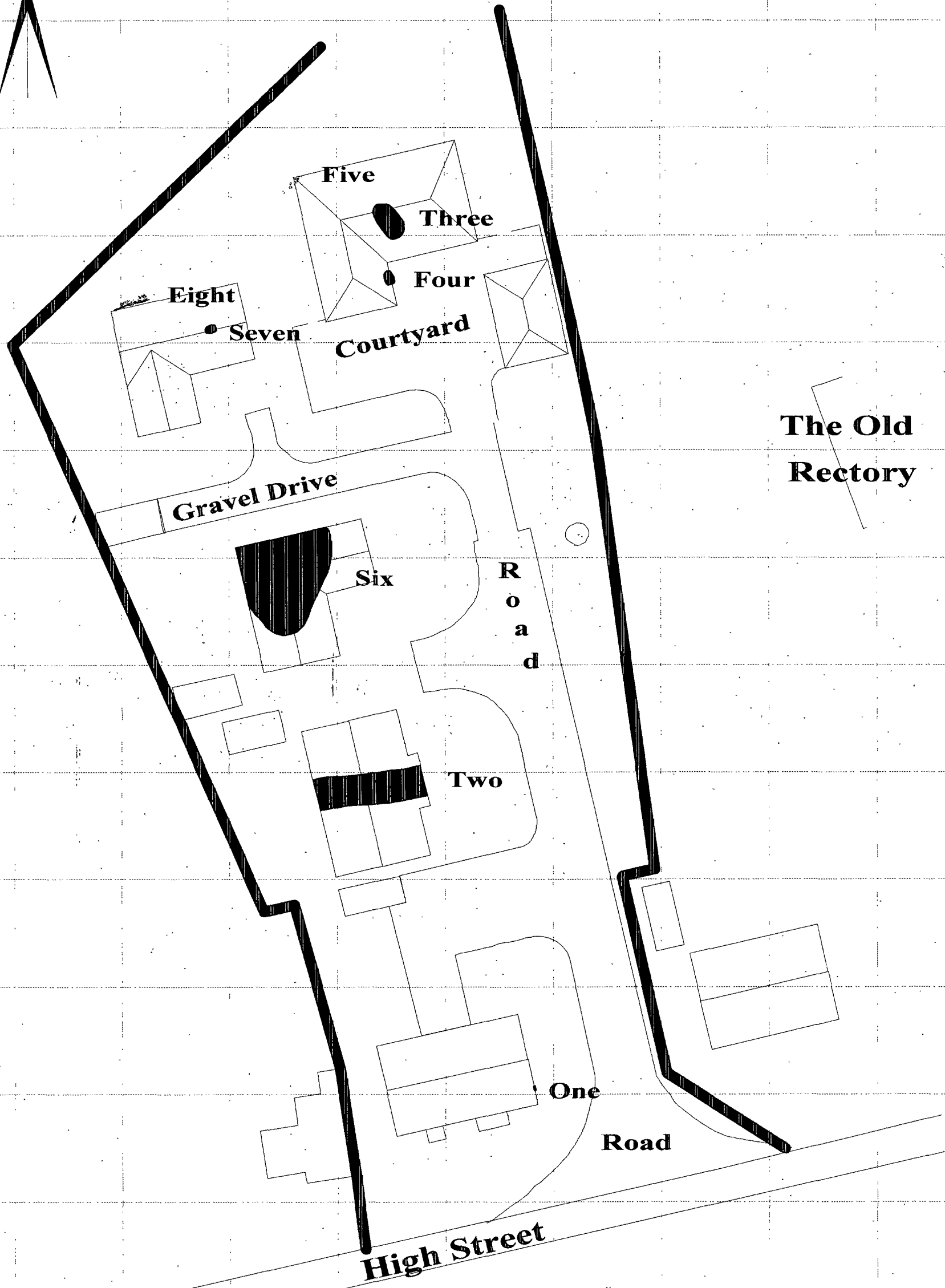
Context:	00003
Type:	CHALK RUBBLE SPREAD
Shape:	OVAL
Profile:	SHALLOW V
Length:	360
Breadth:	240
Depth:	45
Soiltype:	SANDY LOAM
Soil_textr:	MEDIUM SANDY
Munsell:	10 YR 4/3
Notes:	CHALK RUBBLE IN RED SANDY CLAY MATRIX. POSSIBLE INFILL OF A SMALL HOLLOW. NO FINDS.

Context:	00004
Type:	PIT
Shape:	SUB-RECTANGULAR
Profile:	FLAT-BASED U
Length:	134
Breadth:	95
Depth:	85
Soiltype:	SANY LOAM
Soil_textr:	MEDIUM SANDY
Munsell:	10 YR 4/3
Notes:	PIT WITH TWO DISTINCT FILLS. FINDS OF ANIMAL BONE AND POTTERY. NOT DATED AT THIS TIME.
Context:	00005
Type:	WALL FOOTING
Shape:	LINEAR
Profile:	WIDE V
Length:	260
Breadth:	38
Depth:	33
Soiltype:	SANDY CLAY
Soil_textr:	FRIABLE
Munsell:	10 YR 5/3
Notes:	REMNANTS OF SLIGHTED WALL FOOTING. PROBABLE EXTENSION OF CONTEXT EIGHT. NO FINDS.
Context:	00006
Type:	CHALK RUBBLE SPREAD
Shape:	IRREGULAR
Profile:	IRREGULAR
Length:	905
Breadth:	853
Depth:	42
Soiltype:	SNADY LOAM
Soil_textr:	MEDIUM SANDY
Munsell:	10 YR 4/3
Notes:	CHALK RUBBLE SPREAD WITH MODERN FINDS.

Context:	00007
Type:	NATURAL
Shape:	ROUND
Profile:	V
Length:	109
Breadth:	82
Depth:	78
Soiltype:	SANDY LOAM
Soil_textr:	MEDIUM SANDY
Munsell:	10 YR 4/3
Notes:	NATURAL FEATURE. ALMOST CERTAINLY A TREE HOLE.
Context:	00008
Type:	WALL FOOTING
Shape:	LINEAR
Profile:	WIDE V
Length:	333
Breadth:	35
Depth:	31
Soiltype:	SANDY CLAY
Soil_textr:	FRIABLE
Munsell:	10 YR 5/3
Notes:	MORE SUBSTANTIAL REMAINS OF WALL FOOTING. SLIGHTED CHALK FRAGMENTS TO THE NORTH.







Plan three Scale 1:400 Grid at 10 m intervals





**Assumed Line
of wall**

Plan Four Scale 1:60 Grid at 5 m intervals

0 500 cms.

