



# **BT Cable Ducting near 1150**

RAF Lakenheath, Suffolk

**Client:**  
IDL for MOD

**Date:**  
April 2018

LKH 407  
Archaeological Monitoring Report  
SACIC Report No. 2018/038  
Author: Simon Cass  
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# BT Cable Ducting near 1150 LKH 407

Archaeological Monitoring Report

SACIC Report No. 2018/038

Author: Simon Cass

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Editor: Jo Caruth

Report Date: April 2018



## HER Information

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**Site Code:** LKH 407  
**Site Name:** BT Cable Ducting near 1150  
**Report Number** 2018/038  
**Planning Application No:** N/A  
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### Disclaimer

Any opinions expressed in this report about the need for further archaeological work are those of Suffolk Archaeology CIC. Ultimately the need for further work will be determined by the Local Planning Authority and its Archaeological Advisors when a planning application is registered. Suffolk Archaeology CIC cannot accept responsibility for inconvenience caused to the clients should the Planning Authority take a different view to that expressed in the report.

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Date: 30/04/2018

Approved By: Jo Caruth

Position: Senior Project Officer

Date: 11th May 2018

Signed:

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## **Summary**

Monitoring of the excavation of new cable ducting trenches around Buildings 1130, 1150, 1155, 1158 and 1159 at RAF Lakenheath revealed a single natural hollow. Several unrecorded services were encountered, some protected by hardened concrete slabs, indicating that this area has been partially disturbed previously, in addition to possible landscaping along the western side of Building 1158. No other finds or deposits of archaeological relevance were observed during the course of this monitoring.





## **1. Introduction**

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As part of the base-wide monitoring of groundworks at RAF Lakenheath, Suffolk Archaeology CIC was informed of the planned excavation of new BT cable ducting on land around Building 1150, due to be carried out in February 2018. This was in an area of interest, adjacent to areas of known dense Roman archaeological remains and potentially including relict desiccated peat deposits of environmental interest.

## **2. Geology and topography**

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The site lies on land south of the runways and is generally flat, with some slight undulations (possibly due to airbase construction and landscaping), with the cable route leading between several buildings. The underlying bedrock geology is recorded as Holywell Nodular Chalk and New Pit Chalk formations, sedimentary bedrock formed approximately 90 to 101 million years ago in the Cretaceous Period in a local environment previously dominated by warm chalk seas. This is overlain by superficial deposits of Cover Sand, formed up to 3 million years ago in the Quaternary Period in a local environment previously dominated by windblown deposits (BGS 2018).

## **3. Archaeology and historical background**

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RAF Lakenheath airbase lies on a rich archaeological resource, including (but not limited to) a broad area of Roman and Early Anglo-Saxon occupation that has been identified from a series of archaeological excavations, mostly to the south and west of the proposed disturbance.

This site is especially important because it is in close proximity to the extensive late Iron Age to Late Roman settlement around Caudle Head (a natural mere), of a type characteristic of the Fen edge area with multiple ditched enclosures, having its origins in the later Iron Age and with activity continuing on into the early Anglo-Saxon period, where the Saxon deposits in some cases overly the Roman occupation (Caruth 2005).

Archaeological features have been found within the northern part of this project during the course of several different archaeological investigations.

In 1996, monitoring during the construction of heating ducts identified Roman features, including pits, ditches and postholes, in trenches between buildings 1155 and 1158.

Later in 2000 excavation in advance of a small extension to building 1155 uncovered features at depths of between 0.5m and 0.85m indicating late Iron Age/early Roman activity, possibly part of an early settlement area on the edge of wet ground to the south which was then abandoned in favour of or subsumed into the settlement closer to Caudle Head.

Buildings 1157, 1159 and 1164 (to the northeast of the cable duct trench) were monitored during 1998 when 1157 was demolished at the northern end of the range of buildings, 1159 was re-skinned and a new building (1164) erected at the southern end. This work recorded the presence of three undated ditches, thought potentially to relate to the Roman and later settlement around Caudle Head (Sommers, 1998).

The site also had some potential for buried soils and Aeolian sand which had been identified nearby.

## **4. Methodology**

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The cable duct trench and junction boxes were excavated with a c.3 tonne mechanical excavator fitted with a narrow-toothed bucket (0.4m wide) to a depth of up to 0.95m below surface level. Several visits were made to the site during the excavation to monitor the work and records were made of representative sections showing the general stratigraphy along the trenches. Paper records were made on pro-forma SACIC context sheets and a full digital photograph record made of the trenches and exposed sections (at 16megapixels). The site was surveyed with a GS08plus Leica Viva GPS unit where possible – some foliage and building interference prevented surveying along the entire length of the route.

## **5. Results**

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The cable trenches were of a uniform width and depth (0.4m wide and 0.5m deep) and the junction boxes between 1.2m and 1.9m long and 0.8 and 1.2m wide and excavated to 0.95m deep. The observed stratigraphy in the areas seen to the east and north of Building 1150 was generally 0.05m of turf and thin silty sand topsoil over 0.3-0.4m of slightly greyish/brownish fine yellow sand (windblown sand) subsoil deposits (0001) (Fig. 3, sections 1-5). These overlay the natural geology of clean mid yellow/orange sharp sands at a depth of approximately 0.45-0.5m. No features were seen in the trenches between buildings 1155 and 1158 where archaeological deposits had been



seen previously, but opportunities were limited by the combination of the shallow depth of the trenches which only just penetrated to the natural geology and the frequent modern disturbance. Behind building 1150 the excavation the trench and a junction box showed the ground gradually falling away (Fig. 3, sections 1 and 2). Pale grey and grey-brown sand layers were included in the soil profile, but no cultural material was seen suggesting that it represents the edge of shallow, naturally filled, hollow rather than archaeological deposition. The basal fill in section 2 was a dense iron-panned orange sand. Possible desiccated peaty deposits were found under topsoil at the north end of the trench (Fig 3, section 4) but too little could be observed to interpret this further.



Plate 1. Trench 1, representative section facing northeast.

A short trench excavated east of building 1130 (Fig. 2) was also monitored. A similar sandy topsoil occasionally truncated by modern deposits was revealed, but the underlying soil from the centre of the trench southwards was a little darker with a gradually sloping profile until no geological natural was seen (Fig. 3, Sections 6-9). The density and dark hue of the deposit hinted that it might have represented the fill of an archaeological feature cut along its length by the trench, but this could not be confirmed. No archaeological finds were recovered.

Context no	Description
0001	Pale, sometimes mottled sand underlying topsoil in trench behind buildings 1150 and 1155. Some variation in colour from grey-brown through to a more yellowy hue. Occasional small stones. No cultural material. Buried soil
0002	Thin layer of orange sand under topsoil behind 1150, probably modern fill. Over 0003
0003	Lower darker orange sand layer, also probably modern fill. Overlies 0001 at the point where the natural starts to fall away eastwards.
0004	Grey sand with few inclusions under 0001. Upper fill of natural hollow.
0005	Dark coarse orange sand under 0001, and probably the same as 0007 under 0004.
0006	Pale yellow brown sand under 0005
0007	Dark coarse iron panned orange sand under 0004.
0008	Mottled pale brown sand under modern deposits in trench behind 1130. Gets a little deeper to the south and maybe feature fill, although clean and sterile looking
0009	Dense grey-brown clean sand seen under mixed topsoil at the south end of the trench. It continued below the base of the trench and may be the same possible feature fill as 0008.
0010	Layer of dark material under topsoil possibly representing desiccated peaty deposits.

Table 1. Context description.

## 6. Finds and environmental evidence

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No finds were recovered during this project and no environmental samples were taken.

## 7. Discussion and conclusions

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Although several features have been seen previously in the near vicinity of this cable duct trench, none were seen during this work. The presence of previous cables crossing the trench (also seen in previous work) indicates a level of localised disturbance across the area, but these did not significantly truncate natural geology. The area where features were most likely to be encountered coincided with some of the more significant truncation including a reinforced concrete pad over buried cables, two footpaths, landscaping of the local surface immediately adjacent to Building 1158 and a small hedge, all of which could have obscured ephemeral archaeological features.

The absence of archaeological deposits in the southern extent of the duct trench supports evidence from the 1996 monitoring at LKH 192 (Tester and Caruth, 1996), adjacent to this length of trench and seems to imply that the Roman settlement did not extend into this area.

The presence of a naturally filled hollow reflects the original Breckland topography of dunes and hollows, now filled either with aeolian sands over many centuries, or subject to levelling for airfield construction.

## 8. Archive deposition

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The site archive is currently stored in the offices of Suffolk Archaeology CIC in Needham Market and will be transferred to the County Council HER archive upon completion of the project.

## 9. Bibliography

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British Geological Survey, 2018, Geology of Britain Viewer found at <http://mapapps.bgs.ac.uk/geologyofbritain/home.html>

Caruth, J., 2005, *An assessment of the potential for analysis and publication for archaeological work carried out as RAF Lakenheath between 1987 and June 2005*, SCCAS Report No. 2005/171

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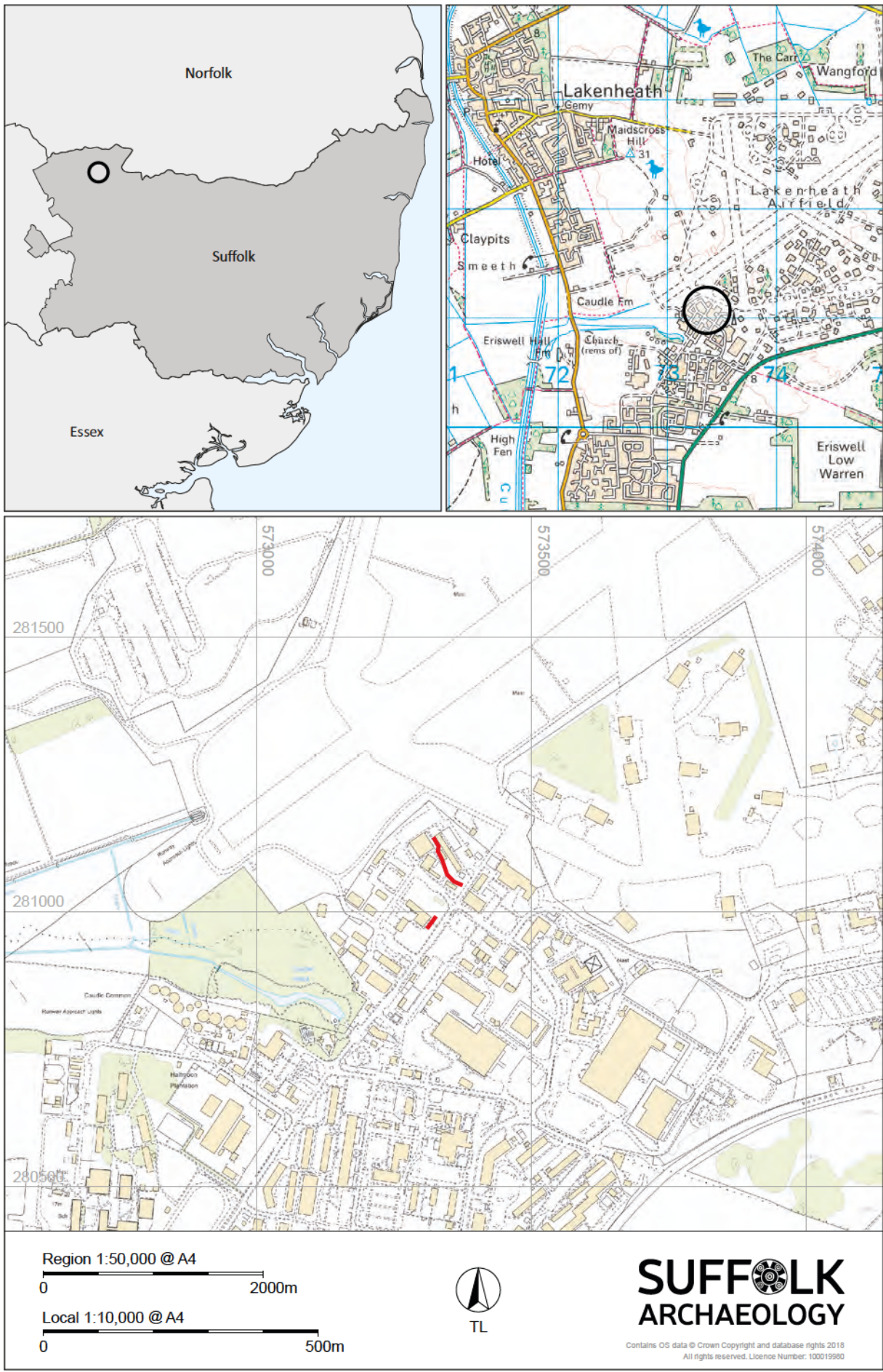


Figure 1. Site location showing monitored trenches (red)

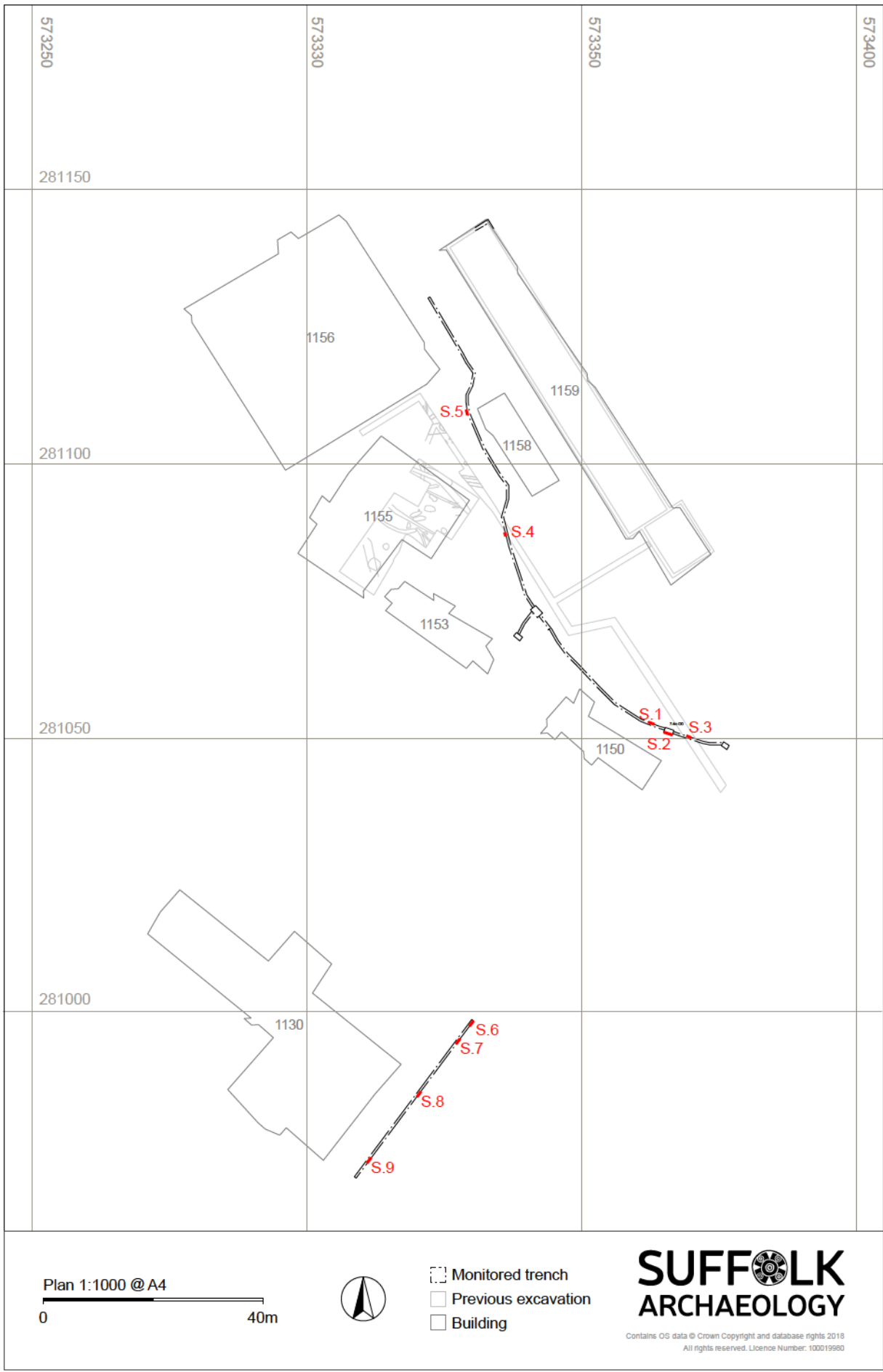


Figure 2. Location of monitored trenching alongside current airbase buildings

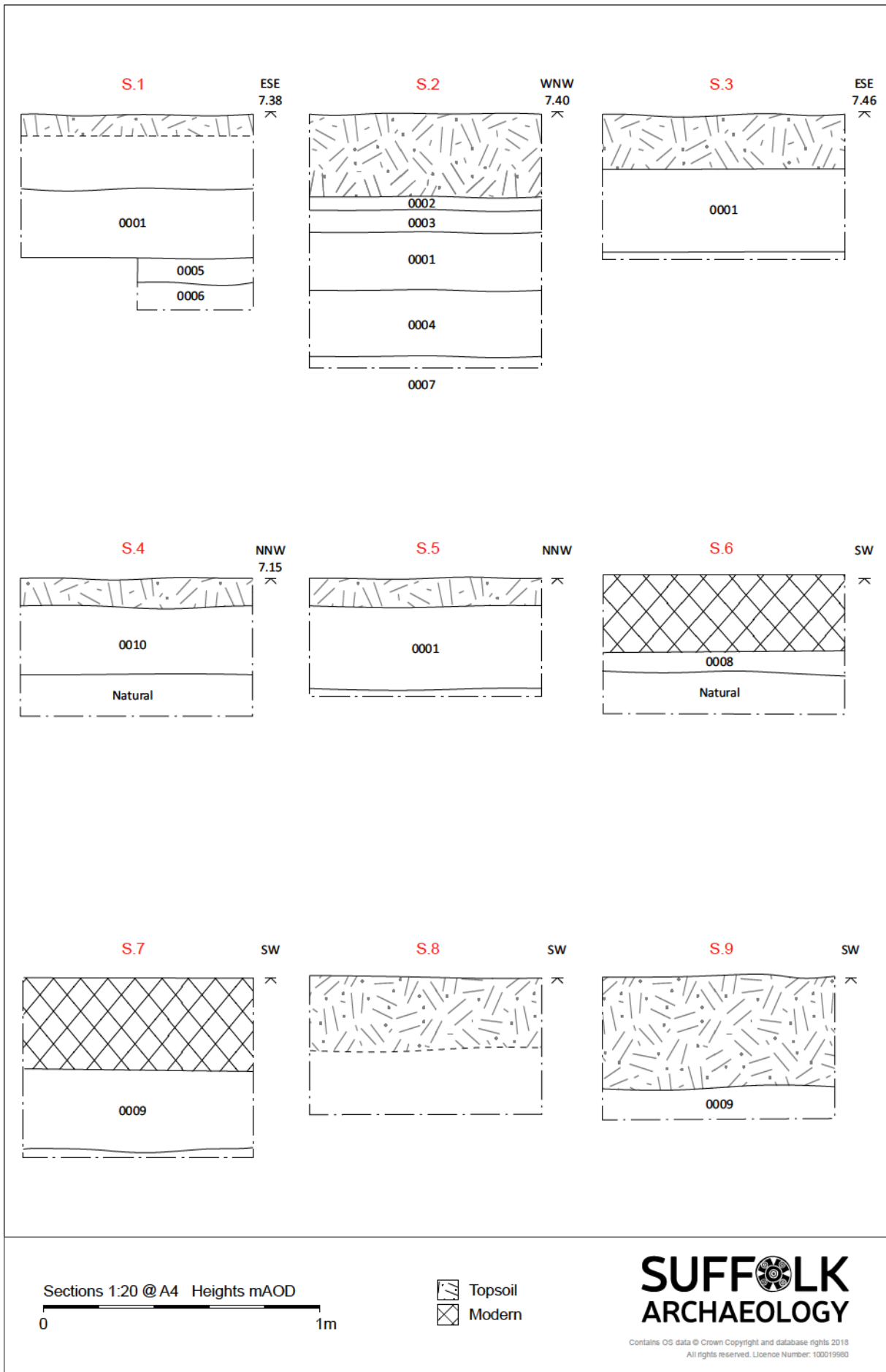


Figure 3. Representative sections along monitored trenches



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