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**Former Community Centre  
Doddshill Road/Manor Road,  
Dersingham, Norfolk**

**Archaeological Evaluation by Trial Trenching**



**Prepared for: Fleur Homes Ltd**

**OASIS Ref: norfolka1-373795**

**Grid Ref: TF 6932 3000**

**Planning Ref: 18/01579/FM and 17/01336/OM**

**NMS No: 2019.325**

**NCCES Ref: CNF46390**

**HER: ENF146933**



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## Contents

<i>Summary</i> .....	1
Introduction.....	2
Project Background.....	2
Planning Background.....	2
Geology and Topography .....	4
Geology .....	4
Topography.....	4
Archaeological and Historical Background .....	5
Sources.....	5
HER Data.....	5
Cartographic evidence .....	6
Photographic evidence .....	6
Previous archaeological excavations .....	6
Methodology.....	7
General .....	7
Objectives .....	7
Methods.....	7
Archive.....	8
Results .....	10
Archaeological Finds .....	18
Ceramic Building Material .....	18
Discussion .....	19
<i>Acknowledgements</i> .....	20
<i>Bibliography and Sources</i> .....	21
Appendix 1a: Context Summary .....	23
Appendix 1b: Feature Summary .....	23
Appendix 2a: Finds by Context – Ceramic Building Material .....	23
Appendix 2b: Finds Summary .....	23
Appendix 3: Historical Periods .....	24

## **Figures**

- Figure 1 Site location with selected HER data
- Figure 2 Location of trenches
- Figure 3 Trench 3, plan and section
- Figure 4 Trench 4, plan and section

## **Plates**

- Cover The site, looking northwest, after trenching
- Plate 1 Trench 3, Posthole 100, looking south, 0.5m scale
- Plate 2 Trench 4, Posthole 104, looking south, 0.5m scale

## **Tables**

- Table 1 Site archive quantification

Client: Fleur Homes Ltd  
Location: Former Community Centre Doddshill Road/Manor Road,  
Dersingham, Norfolk  
District: Borough Council of Kings Lynn and West Norfolk  
Planning Reference: 18/01579/FM and 17/01336/OM  
Grid Reference: TF 6932 3000  
HER No: ENF146933  
NMS No: 2019.325  
OASIS ID: norfolka1-373795  
Dates of Fieldwork: 20th-21st November 2019

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## **Summary**

*NPS Archaeology carried out informative archaeological trial trenching in advance of a proposed residential development at the Former Community Centre, off Doddshill Road/Manor Road, Dersingham, Norfolk. The work was in response to a brief issued by Norfolk County Council Environment Service, with fieldwork and reporting funded by Fleur Homes Ltd.*

*The programme of work entailed the excavation of five trenches, of which only two contained archaeological features in the form of postholes dating to the post-medieval period. Significant and widespread truncation of the site had occurred with the cutting of a c. early 19th century terrace with the purpose of levelling the site for the construction of buildings, some of which still stand. This truncation is believed to have removed any potential archaeological remains of greater antiquity across the area tested.*

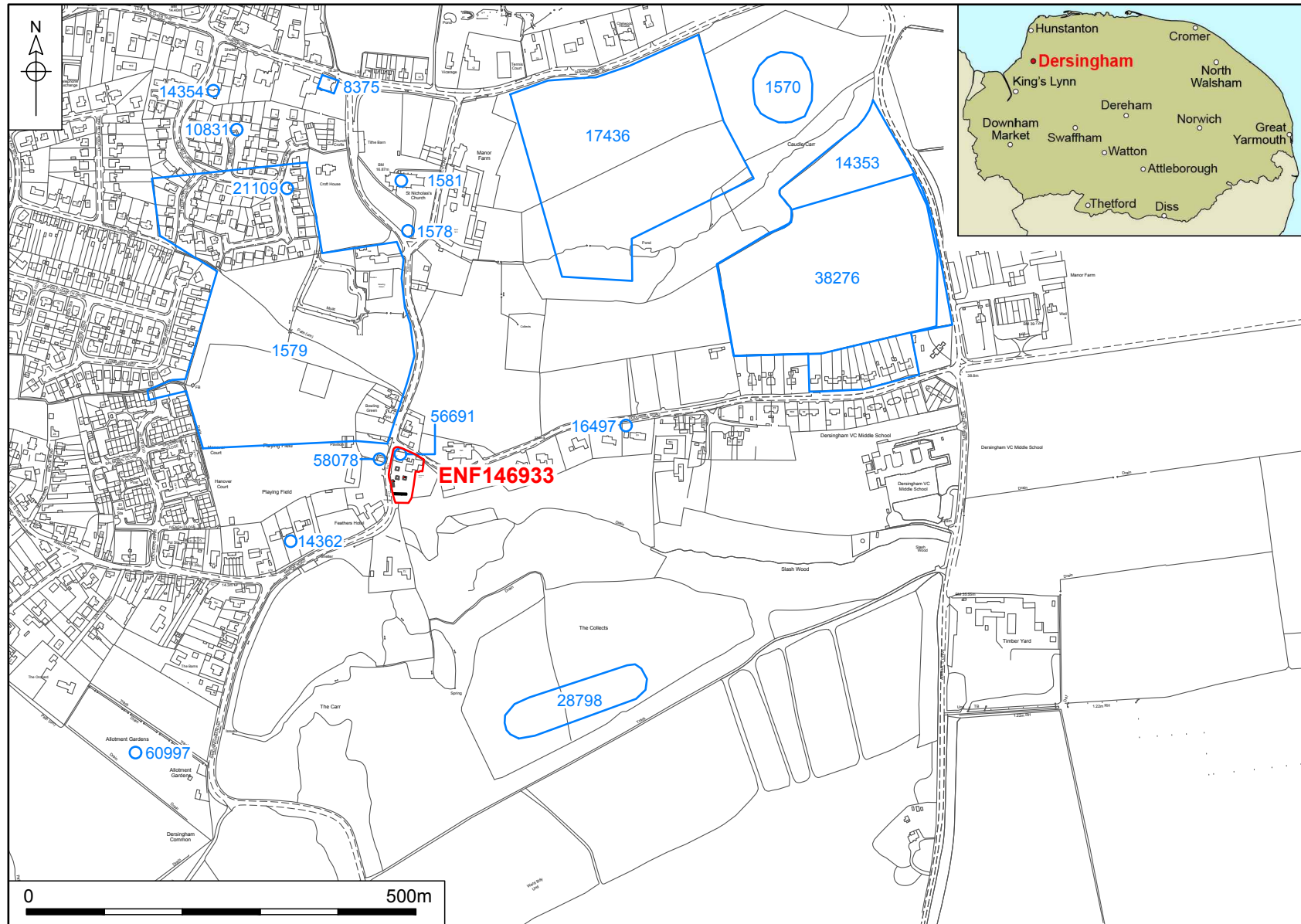
## INTRODUCTION

### Project Background

- 1 NPS Archaeology was commissioned and funded by Fleur Homes Ltd. to undertake informative archaeological trial trenching at the Former Community Centre Doddshill Road/Manor Road, Dersingham, Norfolk (TF 6932 3000).
- 2 The site is situated within the historic core of Dersingham, with ongoing excavations in the near vicinity recording prehistoric and medieval archaeological remains. Historic maps of the site also depict the presence of a large house, possibly of early 19th century date or earlier. Collectively, these factors marked the site out as having potential archaeological interest.
- 3 The evaluated site covered an area of c. 0.37 hectares.

### Planning Background

- 4 The current phase of work was undertaken to fulfil the planning requirements set by Norfolk County Council Environment Service (NCCES) on behalf of the planning authority, the Borough Council of Kings Lynn and West Norfolk.
- 5 The work was conducted in accordance with a Written Scheme of Investigation prepared by NPS Archaeology (Adams 2019) in response to a *Brief for a Programme of Archaeological Mitigatory Work* issued by NCCES (Percival 2019).
- 6 Historic building recording of the former school present on the site is also requested within in the same brief. This phase of work is to be carried out at a later stage and is the subject of a separate report.
- 7 The programme of work was designed to assist in defining the character and extent of any archaeological remains within the area of the proposed development, following guidelines set out in the *National Planning Policy Framework* (Department for Communities and Local Government 2019) and the *King's Lynn & West Norfolk Local Plan* (The Borough Council of King's Lynn and West Norfolk 1998).
- 8 The recipients of this report will be the client, NCCES, and the Borough Council of King's Lynn and West Norfolk.



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Figure 1. Site location with selected HER data. Scale 1:7500

## **GEOLOGY AND TOPOGRAPHY**

### **Geology**

- 9 The site occupies an area where great variation in the bedrock geology occurs, with sandstone and mudstone of the Dersingham Formation present on the western half of the site, and Snettisham Clay present to the east. These cretaceous sedimentary deposits occur along the edge of a carstone ridge located to the immediate east of the site (British Geological Survey 2018).
- 10 Superficial geological deposits above the bedrock are rare in the area; however the presence of a small bar of silty sand alluvium has been recorded on part of the site by the British Geological Survey (2018).
- 11 There was no distinct topsoil formation present on the site, as any such material had probably been removed in modern landscaping. In places a mid-reddish brown silty sand subsoil was present, although modern truncation of its top prevented against accurate estimates of the original depth of this deposit.

### **Topography**

- 12 The site is situated in the southeast of the village of Dersingham in Norfolk, located 12.3km northeast of Kings Lynn.
- 13 The proposed development area consisted of a terrace cut into rising ground originally sloping west towards Manor Road. Consequently, significant anthropogenic modification of the site has occurred; and although this may be contemporary with the construction of the 19th century buildings on the site, it is possible that the landscaping may predate this.
- 14 The terrace area (the site) measures c. 0.37 hectares and slopes gently south to north from 18.59m to 17.11m OD. It is entirely covered by tarmac, with the derelict community centre present in the north of the site. A perimeter fence marks its western and southern boundaries.
- 15 To the immediate west of the site runs Manor Road, and Doddshill Road is present immediately to the north of the site. A mix of undeveloped grasslands with sparse trees is present immediately to the east and south.



## ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

### Sources

- 16 The primary source for localised archaeological information in the county of Norfolk is the Norfolk County Council Historic Environment Record (NHER), which records archaeological discoveries and sites of historical interest. In order to characterise the archaeological potential of the proposed development site, a 500m radius search of the Norfolk Historic Environment Records (NHER) centred on TF 6932 3000 and Norfolk Mapping Project (NMP) data for a 500m radius was purchased. This search recovered 26 separate records within the area and those considered the most relevant to the current site are summarised below.
- 17 To further inform upon the historical background of the site, cartographic and photographic evidence was also consulted through the Norfolk Historic Map Explorer (Norfolk County Council 2012).

### HER Data

#### *Prehistoric*

- 18 The earliest evidence of human activity identified in the near vicinity consists of Mesolithic struck flint found to the northeast (NHER 1570) and to the south of the site (NHER 28798). Little evidence of prehistoric settlement has been found nearby, however occasional flint and ceramic finds dating from the Neolithic, Bronze Age, and Iron Age have been recovered during metal detecting and field walking in the locality (NHER 14353; NHER 17436; NHER 28798).

#### *Romano-British*

- 19 Romano-British activity is not recorded in great abundance surrounding the site, however a few finds have been recovered including fragments of pottery, coins (NHER 14353; NHER 16497), and a brooch (NHER 60997). However, a series of linear cropmarks possibly dating to the Late Iron Age and Romano-British periods have been identified 500m to the northeast (NHER 38276).

#### *Saxon*

- 20 Despite the known Anglo-Saxon origins of Dersingham (Brown 1984), only a handful of pottery sherds recovered during nearby construction groundworks and field walking attest to occupation during this period (NHER 10831; NHER 14354; NHER 14362; NHER 28798).

#### *Medieval*

- 21 Medieval remains are particularly abundant surrounding the site, with the known location of a moated manor present 145m to the northwest (NHER 1579) and the extant church of St Nicholas constructed around AD 1300 350m to the north (NHER 1581). The location of the no longer standing chapel of St Andrew or St Mary lies to the north, approximately 300m away from the site (NHER 1578). Lower status and non-ecclesiastical remains have also been identified in the vicinity, with a large complex of medieval earthworks located 500m to the northeast (NHER 17436). Casual finds dating to this period are also abundant; with pottery sherds found frequently throughout the search radius (NHER 1570; NHER 14356; NHER 14362; NHER 16497; NHER 28798).

### ***Post-medieval***

- 22 A number of extant post-medieval structures are present within the surrounding vicinity of the site, including a 17th century tithe barn (NHER 1572), a 17th century H-shaped house (NHER 8375), and a 19th century Methodist chapel (NHER 58078). A find of particular significance dating to the late 17th century was found during groundworks 400m to the northwest of the site, which consisted of a hoard of 129 silver shillings stored in a silver cup, most probably buried for safekeeping (NHER 21109).
- 23 Upon the site itself is the former Dersingham School built in the mid to late 19th century, which runs along Doddshill Road (NHER 56691). Its earliest phase consists of a single classroom and a large hall, with an additional classroom appearing to have been added shortly after the initial construction.

### **Cartographic evidence**

- 24 The Dersingham Tithe Map dating to approximately 1840 depicts the site as being a developed area, with a northeast-southwest orientated structure present along Doddshill Road (most likely later incorporated to the aforementioned school). To the rear of this structure, two additional buildings are marked present, one of which is presumably a large house (Norfolk County Council 2012).
- 25 The first edition of the OS map, drawn up between 1879 and 1886 also depicts the same structures seen on the older Tithe Map, however an extension of the building along Doddshill Road (now likely the school) is depicted, which now in plan forms an L-shaped structure (Norfolk County Council 2012).

### **Photographic evidence**

- 26 An aerial photograph of the area dating to 1946 depicts considerable changes to the land just south of the school building, with the house to its rear no longer present. This area is instead flat and appears to be covered with tarmac. This indicates that the house was demolished at some point between the late 19th century, and the end of the Second World War. It seems that at this point this part of the site was incorporated into the school as a playground area; remaining in such a form up until the commencement of this programme of work.
- 27 Close examination of a subsequent aerial photograph taken in 1988 depicts a few additional flat-roofed extensions onto the rear of the former school (at this point used as a community centre). These were likely added to the building in the 1960s as detailed on the HER record (NHER 56691).

### **Previous archaeological excavations**

- 28 Two archaeological excavations have recently been conducted by NPS Archaeology 250m to the northeast, and 250m to the north of the site (*White forthcoming a*; *White forthcoming b*), following informative trial trenching by Pre-construct Archaeology (Jackson et al. 2017a; Jackson et al. 2017b). These excavations identified evidence of medieval activity including structures of a domestic nature, with probable Neolithic features also being identified during the evaluative stage.

- 29 Few substantial excavations have occurred in the immediate vicinity of the site; however, a number of watching briefs have been carried out to the west, all of which yielded negative results (see Penn 2005; Webb 2011; Wallace 2013).

## **METHODOLOGY**

### **General**

- 30 The methodology for the archaeological trial trenching followed the agreed Written Scheme of Investigation (Adams 2019), where the mitigation strategy for the works is presented in full (Appendix 4).
- 31 Archaeological procedures conformed to the *Standards For Development-Led Archaeological Projects in Norfolk* (Robertson et al. 2018) and guidelines issued by the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists (CIfA 2014a). The archaeological trial trenching was conducted within the context of the regional archaeological framework (Medlycott 2011).

### **Objectives**

- 32 The objective of the trial trenching was to determine as far as reasonably possible the presence or absence, nature, location, extent, date, quality, condition, and significance of any surviving archaeological deposits within the development area.
- 33 The archaeological project aimed to provide appropriate and adequate data to permit informed decisions regarding any requirement for future archaeological mitigation work on the Former Community Centre, Doddshill Road/Manor Road, Dersingham, Norfolk and to make the results of the work accessible.

### **Methods**

- 34 The brief required that a 5% sample of the proposed development area should be evaluated by trial trenching. A brief issued by NCCES stipulated the excavation of five trenches across the proposed development area, three measuring 4m x 4m, one measuring 10m x 1.8m, and one measuring 20m x 1.8m. Two small adjustments had to be made on-site to the lengths of two of the trenches to allow adequate machine access, with the proposed length of Trench 4 reduced by 1.50m and the proposed length of Trench 5 reduced by 3.00m.
- 35 Both before the breaking of the tarmac, and prior to mechanical excavation of the overburden, each trench location was scanned with a CAT to check for buried services.
- 36 Machine excavation was carried out by a 7 tonne hydraulic 360° excavator equipped with a breaker to break through the tarmac, and a toothless ditching bucket to remove material overburden above the archaeological horizons. All mechanical excavation was monitored and supervised by a suitably experienced archaeologist. Machining was stopped at the first identifiable archaeological deposits, the natural geology, or when trench depth reached 1.20m.
- 37 All trench surfaces revealed by machine were hand-cleaned and any archaeological deposits were excavated by hand. On completion of the work, all trenches were backfilled by machine.

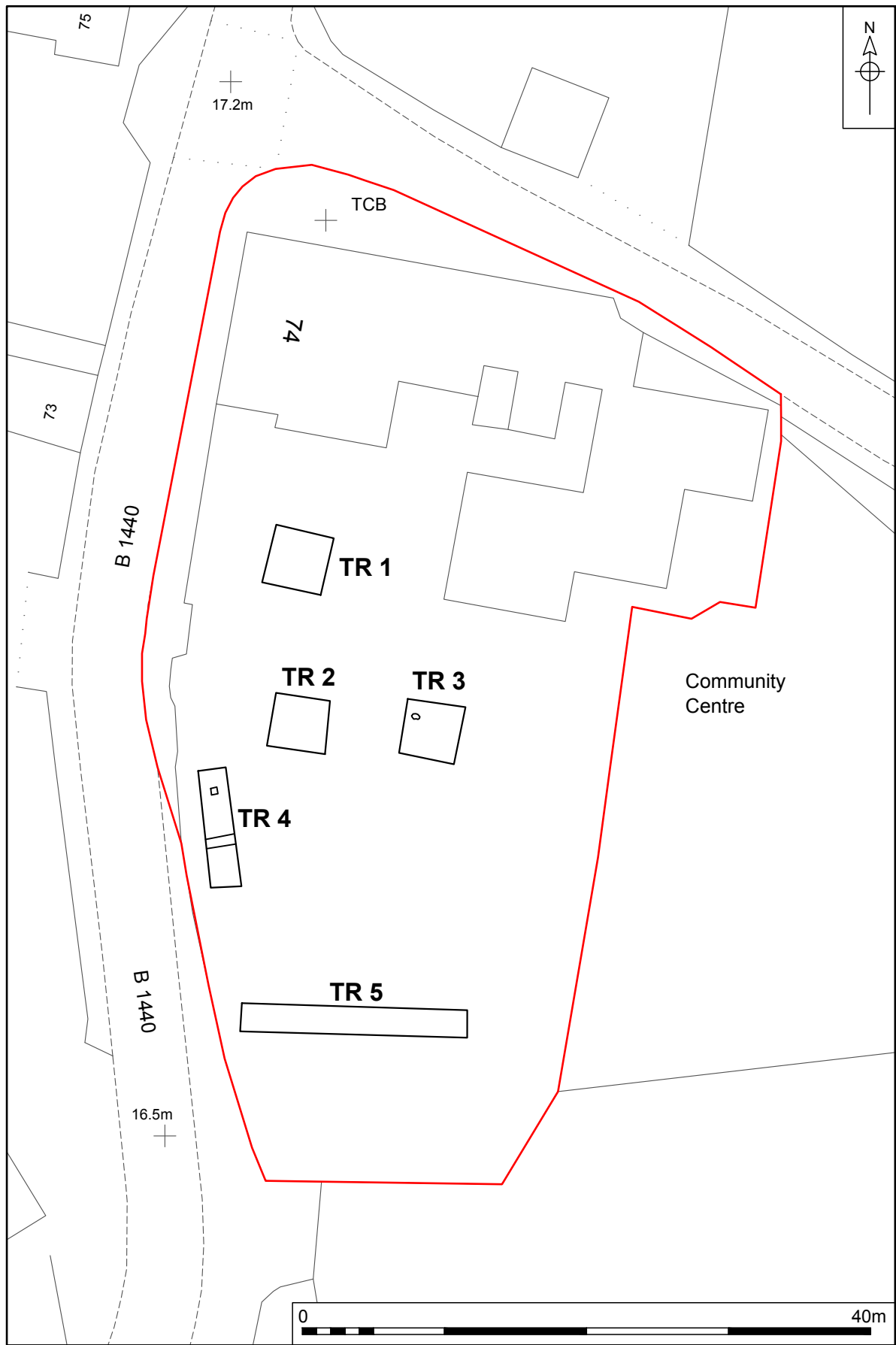
- 38 Spoil, exposed surfaces, and features were scanned with a metal-detector. During this process, only modern material was retrieved and thus was not retained.
- 39 All archaeological features and deposits were recorded using NPS Archaeology pro forma. Trench locations, plans, and sections were recorded at appropriate scales. Digital photographs were taken of all relevant archaeological features and deposits where appropriate. A section profile was recorded for all trial trenches whether or not archaeological features were present.
- 40 Modern make-up layers, levelling deposits, and the tarmac were not given context numbers despite featuring in the vertical stratigraphy, as they were without archaeological significance.
- 41 Spot heights were all recorded using a Leica GS16 GPS.
- 42 Site conditions were good, with dry weather throughout the excavation.

### **Archive**

- 43 The site archive is currently held at the office of NPS Archaeology. Upon completion of the project, the documentary archive will be prepared and indexed following guidelines obtained from the relevant museum and relevant national guidelines (ClfA 2014b). The archive, consisting of all paper elements created during recording of the archaeological site, including digital material, will be deposited with Norfolk Museums Service.
- 44 Subject to written consent and donation by the landowner, all archaeological finds recovered by the current work will also be deposited with Norfolk Museums Service.
- 45 A summary form of the results of this project has been completed for Online Access to the Index of archaeological investigationS (OASIS) under the reference norfolka1-373795, and this report will be uploaded to the OASIS database.
- 46 The contents of the site archive is summarised in Table 1.

<b>Item</b>	<b>No.</b>
Contexts	10
Files/paper record sheets	1/12
Plan and section sheets	1
Photographs	31
Finds	3


Table 1. Site archive quantification



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Figure 2. Location of trenches. Scale 1:400

# RESULTS

Trench 1				
		<b>Figure 2</b>		
		<b>Location</b>		
		Orientation	n/a	
		<b>Dimensions</b>		
		Length	4.00m	
		Width	4.00m	
		Depth	0.75 m	
		<b>Levels</b>		
		East top	17.11m OD	
		West top	17.35m OD	
Context	Type	Description and Interpretation	Thickness	
106	Deposit	Subsoil	0.30m	
Discussion				
<p>No archaeological features or deposits were observed in this trench. Truncation of the archaeological horizons or the natural during the cutting of the terrace does not appear to have occurred in this part of the site, with a layer of mid-reddish brown silty sand subsoil <b>106</b> present above the natural. The top of this deposit however has likely been truncated away along with any topsoil that would have been present during construction and groundworks. Underlying the tarmac a series of modern leveling deposits consisting of an orange sand and mortar-rich rubble hardcore were observed.</p>				

## Trench 2



### Figure 2

#### Location

Orientation	n/a
-------------	-----

#### Dimensions

Length	4.00m
--------	-------

Width	4.00m
-------	-------

Depth	0.60m
-------	-------

#### Levels


North top	17.31m OD
-----------	-----------

South top	17.39m OD
-----------	-----------

### Discussion

No archaeological features or deposits were observed in this trench. Underlying the tarmac, modern levelling deposits consisting of orange sand and a mixed pale greyish brown silty sand had been deposited on top of the natural, suggesting a degree of truncation had likely occurred to any former archaeological horizons in this part of the site.

## Trench 3

	<b>Figures 2, 3; Plate 1</b>	
	<b>Location</b>	
	Orientation	n/a
	<b>Dimensions</b>	
	Length	4.00m
	Width	4.00m
	Depth	0.60m
	<b>Levels</b>	
North top	17.39m OD	
South top	17.92m OD	

Context	Type	Description and Interpretation	Thickness
100	Deposit	Posthole	0.12m
101	Deposit	Brown sandy silt fill of posthole <b>100</b>	0.12m

### Discussion

A single posthole **100** was present in this trench. It was sub-circular in plan with a diameter of 0.3m, and a depth of 0.12m. The posthole was filled with deposit **101**, a mid-greyish brown sandy silt with occasional small pebble inclusions, from which two fragments of late medieval/post-medieval ceramic building material were recovered. This feature was sealed by a bluish grey clay, which represented the primary modern levelling layer deposited above the natural which itself was likely truncated away during the excavation of the terrace. Additional levelling deposits consisting on brick hard-core and mixed mortar-rich silt underlay the tarmac.



Plate 1. Trench 3, Posthole **100** looking south, 0.5m scale



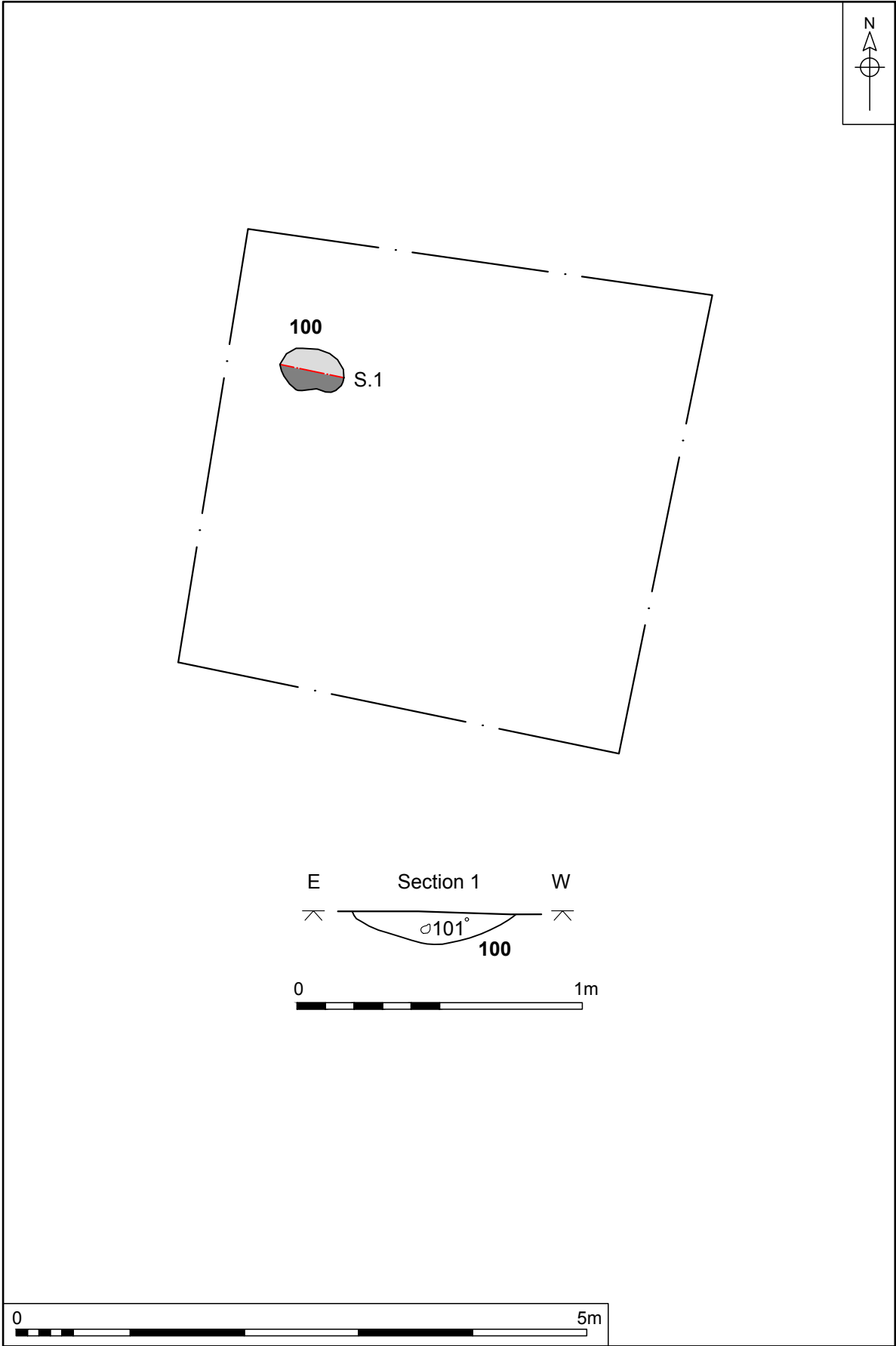


Figure 3. Trench 3, plan and section. Scale 1:50 and 1:20

## Trench 4



### Figures 2, 4; Plate 2

#### Location

Orientation Northwest – Southeast

#### Dimensions

Length 8.45m

Width 1.80m

Depth 1.20m

#### Levels

Northwest top 17.44m OD

Southeast top 17.83m OD

Context	Type	Description and Interpretation	Thickness
104	Cut	Square posthole	0.10m
105	Deposit	Fill of posthole 104	0.10m
107	Cut	Modern foundation trench	1.20m
108	Deposit	Rubble in trench 106	1.20m
109	Deposit	Subsoil	1.20m

### Discussion

A single feature of archaeological interest was present in this trench. Posthole **104** located in the northwest end of the trench was square in plan and had a shallow square profile. It was filled with a pale yellowish-brown silty sand **105** with occasional small pebble inclusions, from which a single fragment of post-medieval ceramic building material was recovered.

As with Trench 1, truncation of the archaeological horizon or the natural during the cutting of the terrace does not appear to have occurred in this part of the site, with a layer of mid-reddish brown silty sand subsoil **109** present above the natural. Subsoil **109** sealed posthole **104**.

Towards the centre of Trench 4, a modern (20th century?) foundation trench **107** of a now absent wall was present. It cut one of the lower mixed topsoil-like levelling deposits, and was sealed by a thin band of orange levelling sand and the tarmac. The foundation trench was filled with **108**, a mortar and silt matrix with abundant large flint cobbles covered in cement bonding. This feature is of no archaeological significance.

## Trench 4



Plate 2. Trench 4, Posthole **104** looking south, 0.5m scale

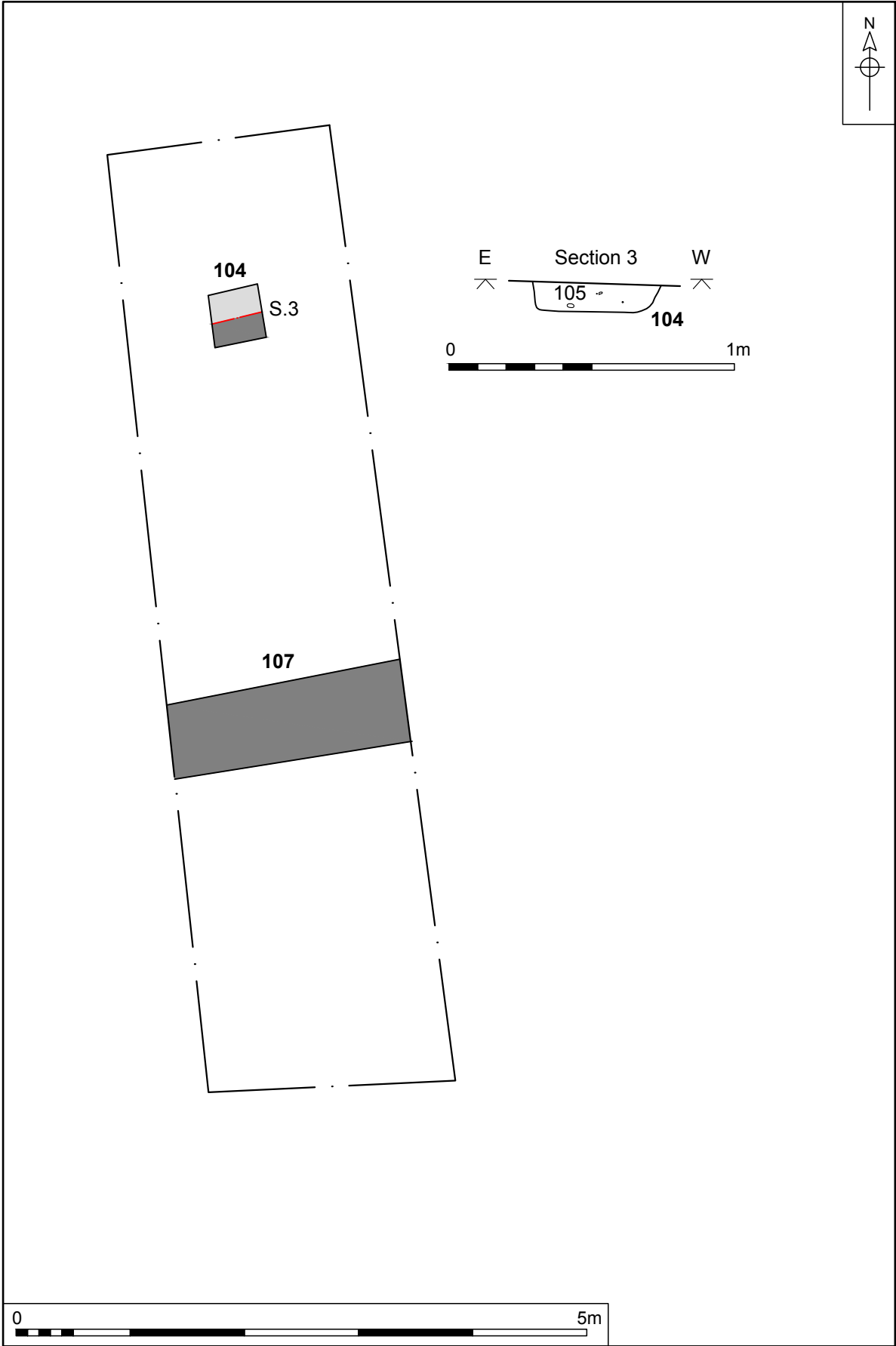


Figure 4. Trench 4, plan and section. Scale 1:50 and 1:20

## Trench 5



**Figure 2**

### Location

Orientation	East-West
-------------	-----------

### Dimensions

Length	16.00m
--------	--------

Width	1.80m
-------	-------

Depth	1.20m
-------	-------

### Levels

East top	18.42m OD
----------	-----------

West top	18.27m OD
----------	-----------

Context	Type	Description and Interpretation	Thickness
110	Deposit	Subsoil	0.30m+

### Discussion

No archaeological features or deposits were observed in this trench. Underlying the tarmac, modern levelling deposits consisting of orange sand and a bluish grey clay had been deposited upon the natural, suggesting a degree of truncation occurred in this part of the site during the cutting of the terrace. In the far west of the trench where the terrace cut is not present, undisturbed subsoil **110** was present, which consisted of a reddish brown silty sand with occasional small pebble inclusions. The total depth of this deposit was not established with the trench reaching a maximum depth of 1.20m.

## ARCHAEOLOGICAL FINDS

### Ceramic Building Material

*Sue Anderson*

- 47 Three fragments (95g) of ceramic building material were recovered from the site (Appendix 2a). Two pieces were from posthole fill **101**, comprising a basal flake of pantile in a fine sandy fabric and a piece of late medieval or post-medieval brick in a fine sandy poorly mixed fabric. The latter was overfired with lines of vitrification internally and a dark grey/purple surface, perhaps a waste product of brick manufacturing in the area. A small fragment of another post-medieval brick in a poorly mixed fine sandy fabric was found in posthole fill **105**.

## **DISCUSSION**

- 48** The archaeological evaluation by trial trenching at the Former Community Centre Doddshill Road/Manor Road, Dersingham, Norfolk recorded only two features of archaeological interest in two of the five trenches excavated. Both of the postholes identified date to the post-medieval period and probably belong to structures present on the site prior to the construction of the school; neither however could be confidently related to the early 19th century buildings depicted on the historical maps of the site.
- 49** Evidence of significant truncation of the natural resulting from the cutting of the terrace was seen across the site, however areas of undisturbed ground were observed towards the far west of the site in Trenches 1, 4, and 5, where subsoil deposits were still present. If significant archaeological remains were previously present on the site, they were most probably lost during the cutting of the terrace. There is the potential for archaeological remains to be present to the east of the area impacted by terracing.
- 50** Recommendations for further archaeological mitigation work (if required, based on the evidence presented in this report) will be made by Norfolk County Council Environment Service.

## ***Acknowledgements***

NPS Archaeology would like to thank Fleur Homes Ltd. for commissioning NPS Archaeology to carry out the project.

Fieldwork and surveying was carried out by Richard Williams and Joshua White.

The project was monitored on behalf of NCCES by John Percival, with NMP and HER data supplied by Peter Watkins. The project was managed for NPS Archaeology by David Adams.

The report was authored by Joshua White, illustrated by David Dobson, and edited by David Adams.



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## Appendix 1a: Context Summary

Context	Category	Cut Type	Fill Of	Description	Trench
100	Cut	Posthole		Posthole	3
101	Deposit		100	Fill of posthole 100	3
102	-			VOID	
103	-			VOID	
104	Cut	Posthole		Square posthole	4
105	Deposit		104	Fill of posthole 104	4
106	Deposit			Subsoil	1
107	Cut			Foundation trench	4
108	Deposit		107	Fill of trench 107	4
109	Deposit			Subsoil	4
110	Deposit			Subsoil	5

## Appendix 1b: Feature Summary

Period	Category	Total
Post-medieval	Posthole	2

## Appendix 2a: Finds by Context – Ceramic Building Material

Context	Fabric	Form	No	Wt/g	Abr	Length	Width	Height	Comments	Date
101	fs	PAN	1	14	+				flake	pmed
101	fsx	LB	1	62	+				overfired, partial vitrification in layers within matrix	lmed/pmed
105	fsx	LB	1	19					no surfaces	pmed

## Appendix 2b: Finds Summary

Period	Material	Total
Post-medieval	Ceramic Building Material	3

### Appendix 3: Historical Periods

Period	Date From	Date To
Prehistoric	-500,000	42
Early Prehistoric	-500,000	-4,001
Palaeolithic	-500,000	-10,001
Lower Palaeolithic	-500,000	-150,001
Middle Palaeolithic	-150,001	-40,001
Upper Palaeolithic	-40,000	-10,001
Mesolithic	-10,000	-4,001
Early Mesolithic	-10,000	-7,001
Late Mesolithic	-7,000	-4,001
Late Prehistoric	-4,000	42
Neolithic	-4,000	-2,351
Early Neolithic	-4,000	-3,001
Middle Neolithic	-3,500	-2,701
Late Neolithic	-3,000	-2,351
Bronze Age	-2,350	-701
Early Bronze Age	-2,350	-1,501
Beaker	-2,300	-1,700
Middle Bronze Age	-1,600	-1,001
Late Bronze Age	-1,000	-701
Iron Age	-800	42
Early Iron Age	-800	-401
Middle Iron Age	-400	-101
Late Iron Age	-100	42
Roman	42	409
Post Roman	410	1900
Saxon	410	1065
Early Saxon	410	650
Middle Saxon	651	850
Late Saxon	851	1065
Medieval	1066	1539
Post-medieval	1540	1900
Modern	1900	2050
World War One	1914	1918
World War Two	1939	1945
Cold War	1945	1992
Unknown	--	--

*After English Heritage Periods List, recommended by Forum on Information Standards in Heritage available at: <http://www.fish-forum.info/inscript.htm>*