

Report 2745



nps archaeology

Archaeological Watching Brief at Ouse Lane, Hickling, Norfolk

ENF126350

Prepared for
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| | |
|---------------------|------------------------------|
| Location: | Ouse Lane, Hickling, Norfolk |
| District: | North Norfolk |
| Grid Ref.: | TG 4111 2294 |
| Planning Ref.: | PF/10/0696 |
| HER No.: | ENF126350 |
| OASIS Ref.: | 108854 |
| Client: | P J Spillings (Builders) Ltd |
| Dates of Fieldwork: | 9, 10, 19 and 23 May 2011 |

Summary

An archaeological watching brief was conducted for P J Spillings (Builders) Ltd ahead of the construction of a new village hall in Hickling, Norfolk. The excavation of trenches for the foundations and associated services were monitored by an archaeologist.

No archaeological features were recorded, however, a peaty deposit was observed in the base of one of the stanchion pits.

1.0 INTRODUCTION

A proposal to construct a new village hall at Ouse Lane, Hickling, Norfolk required a programme of archaeological works to mitigate the potential impact of the construction works on the archaeological resource. Trenches for the foundations and associated services for this new build were dug in the field to the west of Ouse Lane under archaeological supervision.

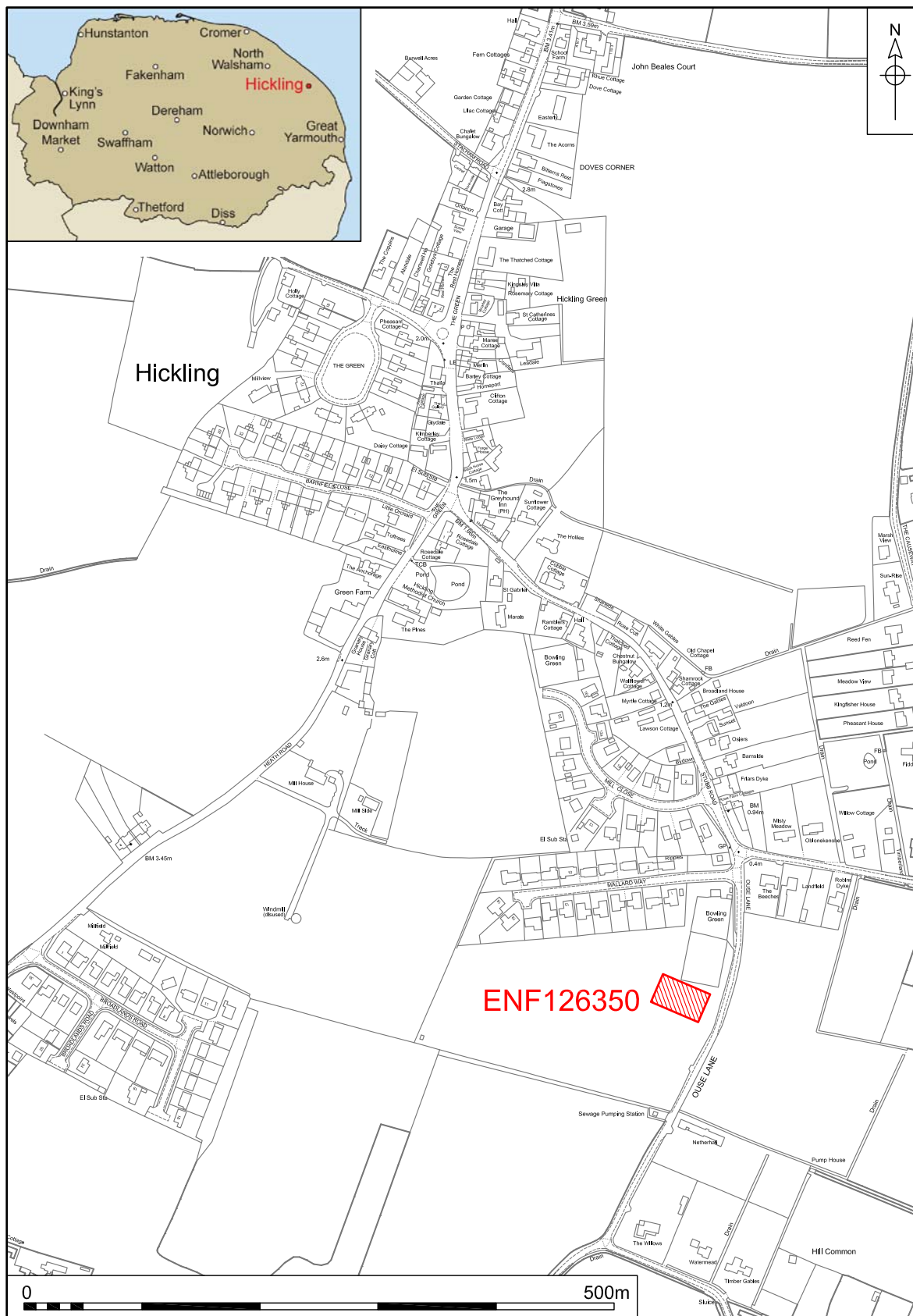
This work was undertaken to fulfil a planning condition set by North Norfolk District Council (Ref. PF/10/0696) and a Brief issued by Norfolk Heritage environment Service (Ref. CNF41788). The work was conducted in accordance with a Project Design and Method Statement prepared by NPS Archaeology (Ref. NAU/BAU2745/DW). This work was commissioned by Cyril Sweett and funded by P J Spillings (Builders) Ltd.

This programme of work was designed to assist in defining the character and extent of any archaeological remains within the proposed redevelopment area, following the guidelines set out in by *Planning Policy Statement 5: Planning for the Historic Environment* (Department for Communities and Local Government 2010).

The site archive is currently held by NPS Archaeology and on completion of the project will be deposited with the Norfolk Museums and Archaeology Service (NMAS), following the relevant policies on archiving standards.

2.0 GEOLOGY AND TOPOGRAPHY

The site is located within a disused playing field adjacent to Ouse Lane, north of Hickling Broad and to the south of the main village of Hickling (Fig. 1).



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Figure 1. Site location. Scale 1:5000

The site sits on bedrock of natural Crag consisting of sand and gravel, with superficial deposits of Happisburgh Glacigenic diamictons (sands, gravels with laminated silts and clays) and Breydon Formation peat (www.bgs.ac.uk).

The topsoil consists of around 0.30m of pale-brown sandy silt and is topped with rough grass. The subsoil is around 0.60m deep, has a greyish-orange brown 'mottled' appearance and consists of silty clay. The 'natural' deposits are pale-orange sand.

The site was easy to access and the work was undertaken in fine weather.

3.0 ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Records of the archaeology and historic environment around the development site were sourced from the Norfolk Historic Environment Record (NHER) and the most relevant examples are shown below.

Hickling Broad, which is a Scheduled Monument (SMR Number: MNF8387), lies to the south of the current site. The NHER states that it is part of a high level drainage system which is heavily embanked, stands almost one metre above sea level and was created by the medieval extraction of clay and peat. One notable find from the broad was a Bronze Age palstave, dredged up in 1972. The broad was also used as a seaplane base during the First World War when the Yarmouth roads were affected by storms. Hickling Broad is the largest of the broads, with approximately 202 hectares of water within a larger 485 hectares of water, reed beds and marsh, making this Norfolk's largest archaeological site.

Another nearby landmark is a windmill known as Tower Mill, that can be seen standing in a field to the west of the site and is a Grade II listed building (MNF8394). It was constructed around 1818, and was last in use around 1900.

The NHER also states that a World War II searchlight battery and associated buildings were located within the field where the current site is located, alongside Ouse Lane. A cookhouse, store and an ammunition store still stand at the very northern limit of the site today. Other earthworks and a pillbox associated with the searchlight battery have since been levelled and no longer survive.

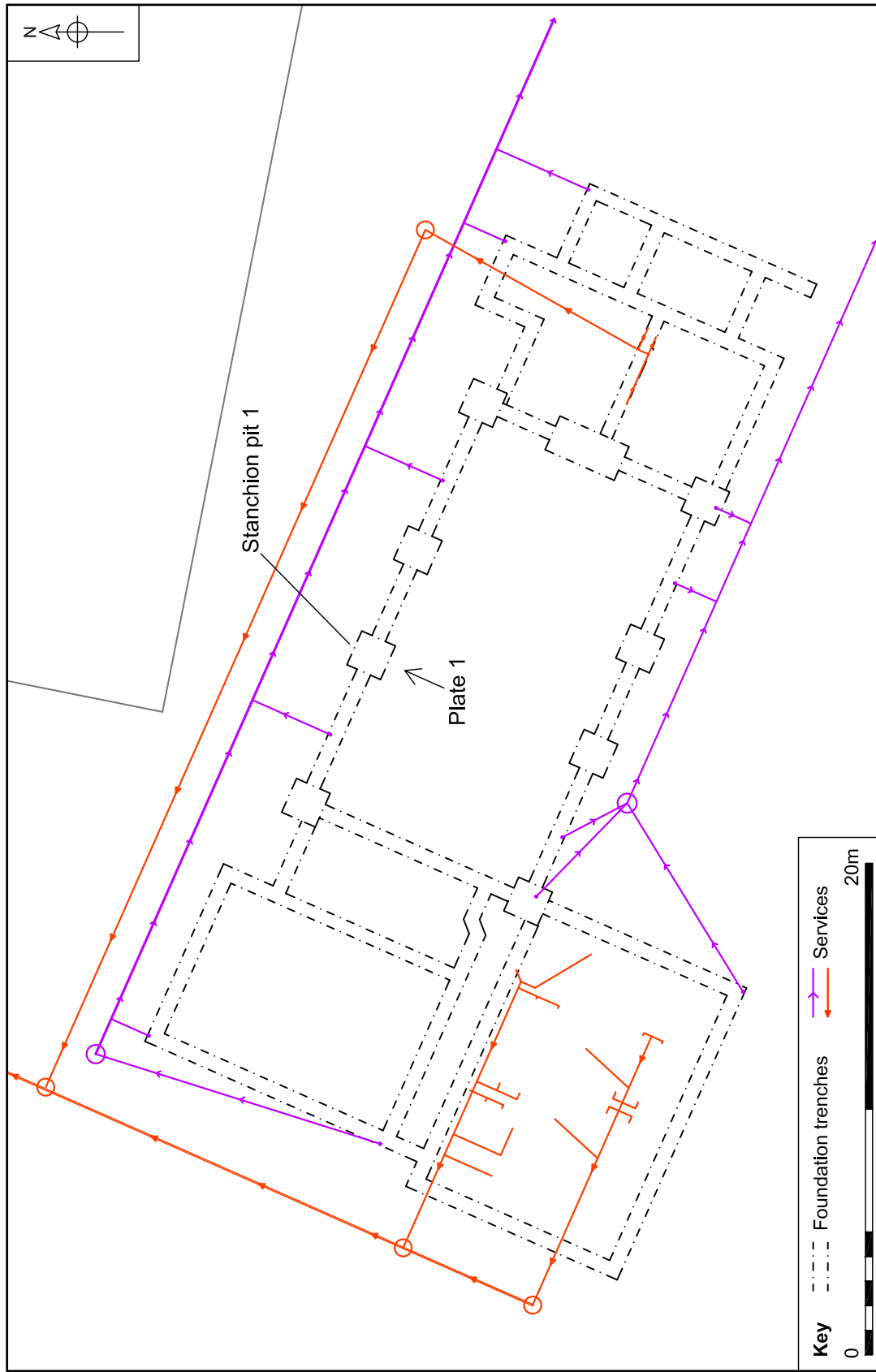
Several medieval strap and harness fittings, medieval and post-medieval pottery sherds have also been recorded through fieldwalking and metal detecting in the vicinity of the site on Ouse Lane.

Cropmarks that could possibly represent a field system of Iron Age to Roman date (MNF54312) have also been recorded at nearby Manor Farm, to the south-east of the current site.

4.0 METHODOLOGY

The objective of this watching brief was to mitigate the potential impact of the construction works on the archaeological resource by monitoring groundworks, recording any archaeological remains within the development area.

The Brief required that a programme of archaeological monitoring be undertaken on all excavations of foundation trenches, service trenches, drains and soakaways, pipelines and cable trenches associated with these works.



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Figure 2. Trenches and services monitored. Scale 1:250

Machine excavations were carried out with a tracked hydraulic 360° excavator equipped with a toothless ditching bucket and operated under constant archaeological supervision.

Spoil, exposed surfaces and features were scanned with a metal-detector. All metal-detected and hand-collected finds, other than those which were obviously modern, were retained for inspection.

No environmental samples were taken.

All archaeological features and deposits were recorded using NPS Archaeology pro forma. Trench locations, plans and sections were recorded at appropriate scales. Monochrome photographs and colour digital photographs were taken of all relevant features and deposits where appropriate.

Site conditions were good, with the work taking place in fine weather.

5.0 RESULTS

Turf and topsoil at the site had already been removed by machine and a layer of hardcore had been laid down before monitoring began. The foundation trenches and service trenches were dug with a 0.4m-wide bucket and all groundworks were monitored (Fig. 2).

The foundation trenches varied between 3m and 8m in length, were between 0.45m and 1.05 deep and between 0.40m and 0.70m wide. There were two service trenches; one was 0.50m wide and 1.60m deep which connected a sewage pipe from the new build to the main sewer on nearby Mallard Road and the other was also 0.50m wide, was 0.60m deep and 28m long (two land drains were seen within this trench).

Four pairs of deep stanchion pits (2.20m deep) were created all of which were sterile apart from Stanchion Pit 1 which contained an isolated peaty deposit at its base (Plate 1). Stanchion Pit 1 (Fig. 2) measured 0.70m by 0.70m and was 2.20m deep. Three deposits were seen in section and were recorded from ground level as the unshored pit was too deep to enter. The upper deposit was subsoil [01] which was 0.9m deep and consisted of greyish orange brown clayey silty sand, Below deposit [01] was a deposit [02] which was approximately 0.7m deep and consisted of mottled greyish brown and orange silt. The lowest deposit was visible for at least 0.6m and consisted of a very dark brown organic peaty silt material.

No archaeological features were encountered during these works.



Plate 1. Deposits in Stanchion Pit, looking north

6.0 CONCLUSIONS

The Norfolk Historical Environmental Records states that a World War II search battery and associated building were possibly located within the field where the new village hall was to be constructed. During the course of the watching brief no evidence of WWII features was recovered, suggesting that features were not located in this particular position. Other earthworks and a pillbox associated with the searchlight battery have since been levelled and no longer survive. The cookhouse, store and an ammunition store possibly still stand at the very northern limit of the site today.

No archaeological features were encountered. An isolated peaty deposit was recorded in one of the stanchion holes at 1.6m below the ground surface.

Acknowledgements

The author would like to thank P J Spillings (Builders) Ltd who funded the work and Cyril Sweett who commissioned it.

The fieldwork was undertaken by John Ames and Lilly Hodges, David Dobson produced the graphics and Jayne Bown edited the report.

Bibliography and sources

Department for Communities and Local Government 2010 *Planning Policy Statement 5: Planning for the Historic Environment* TSO. Norwich

<http://www.bgs.ac.uk/opengeoscience/home.html> accessed 12.08.11

Appendix 1: Context Summary

| Context | Type | Description | Period |
|---------|---------|--|-----------|
| 01 | Deposit | Greyish orange brown silty sand, | Uncertain |
| 02 | Deposit | Mottled greyish brown and orange silt | Uncertain |
| 03 | Deposit | Very dark brown organic deposit with dark and reddish inclusions | Uncertain |